

Documents for GA Commissioner, Teaching Elder - Rev. Diane A. Burkland



I have been a member of Donegal Presbytery since my ordination on November 21, 2004. Before I was ordained, I served Central Presbyterian for two years of field education during seminary and in a pastoral assistant capacity after seminary until an interim pastor was called. I also served as co-pastor in an interim capacity at Oxford Presbyterian and as a temporary supply pastor in Philadelphia Presbytery at Aston Presbyterian. I am currently pulpit supply for Parkesburg Presbyterian. I also serve on the spiritual care team at Paoli Hospital as a volunteer chaplain.

My service to Presbytery includes two terms on the Property and Insurance Committee, acting chair for most of that time. I am a member of the OAR Committee. I chaired the administrative commission handling the matter of the three churches who sued to leave the denomination. I was a member of the commission to decide the matter with Bellevue's dismissal to the EPC. In October, 2011, I was an ordination exam reader. I will begin service on the Administration Department in January. Also in 2012, I will be the Presbytery representative to Synod.

I believe this is a significant time in the PC(USA) as we learn how to live together in the aftermath of Amendment 10-A. I am disappointed that not many elders, either teaching or ruling, have entered the nomination process. Perhaps we are weary with all the discussion. Perhaps we are afraid to see what awaits us in terms of overtures to change 10-A. Perhaps we simply do not know what to expect at GA and that uncertainty bothers us. I am willing to enter the process at this time. I want to discover how other presbyteries are handling their differences. I believe the passage of 10-A was a work of the Spirit of God; I want to see where the Spirit is leading now.

In my personal life, this seems to be an appropriate time for me to run for a commissioner position. My husband is supportive of my running for commissioner even though, if elected, I would miss one of our traditional weeks of vacation at the shore. (I count this as at least one element of a "call"!))

Bio. On Ray Meute, Jr.



Ray has served two congregations since being ordained in 1988. He was an Associate Pastor in Pittsburgh, PA, at the Hampton Presbyterian Church. After serving for 8 years he was called to Avondale Presbyterian Church serving now in his 16th year. Ray met his wife Nancy in college and they married upon graduating. They have three children: Josh (24), Caleb (21), and Mindy (16). Ray has served at the Presbytery level on Committees in Evangelism, Stewardship, New Church Development, and Nominating, a three-year Presbytery leadership cycle as Moderator, Peace, Justice, and Care of Creation, and Special Task Forces and Commissions (Discernment Teams and the Steering Committee/Administrative Commission for La Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana de Toughkenamon).

Reason for wanting to attend GA (Ray Meute, Jr.)

I attended the General Assembly in San Jose, CA, as an Observer and Overture Advocate the year that I was Moderator of Donegal Presbytery. I decided then that I would like to serve as a Commissioner to the General Assembly of our fine Presbyterian Church (USA). I say "fine" because there is so much that is very good about our church which is often ignored. This will be my first time to serve as a General Assembly Commissioner. It is a difficult time for our Presbyterian Church (USA) with much unrest and talk of disaffiliation. I would like to support our fine church and work toward its continued vitality. It is also nice that it is being held in Pittsburgh, a city that I luuuuvv!

Background



Several years ago, standing outside of Cairo, Egypt, and praying with a group of men and women who had spent decades dreaming of the construction of the church building which was before us, I was struck by two realities. I noticed the way that commitment to mission – calling forth faith in Jesus Christ amidst the idolatries of this world and offering hope in Jesus Christ amidst the devastations that so many of us experience in this life – undergirds anything worth being a part of in this brief time on earth we are given. And it hit me how quickly I expect anything worth doing to happen and how God’s dreams have their own time.

As we looked upon that unfinished building and shared dreams of people coming to a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ and as we rejoiced and prayed for God’s hand to be at work, I thought of my own service and how I would like it to be marked by both patience and determination. Patience for God’s work in our midst and determination that Jesus Christ be lifted up to this hurting world. I also thought of my own unfinished life, the unfinished work of the congregation I serve, and our unfinished denomination. All unfinished. All imperfect. And all un-abandoned by God.



I’m a life-long Presbyterian (something that at one point I vowed I would never be and at another point I vowed I would never publically proclaim!). Through the linkages that have come over the years, I’ve developed a deep commitment to the Presbyterian Church (USA). Like many, it is a love-hate relationship. There are many things in our theology, polity, and life together for which I am grateful to God – our proclamation of grace, our emphasis on shared leadership, the way we attend to issues of process and power. And there are things about our life together that deeply trouble me – Why do we bicker so much? Why does it take so long to get things done? Why can’t we figure out ways to be multicultural? When will we take seriously a generation-long decline in health and vitality and figure out vital and vigorous ways to witness to Jesus Christ in this rapidly changing world? Out of that commitment and those questions, I want to be a part of God’s work in our unfinished yet still deeply loved denomination.

I'm also a product of this presbytery – baptized at Centre Presbyterian Church, formed for ministry through Camp Donegal, shaped by an internship at Highland Presbyterian Church, and ordained by this presbytery in 1996. For the last 10 years, I've served as pastor of the Chestnut Level congregation. Presently, I am serving as vice-moderator of the presbytery. And in January (the time when many of you will be reading this), I'll be installed as the moderator of Donegal Presbytery. Along the way, I've read ordination exams, taught polity at Lancaster Theological Seminary, and served our church where I've been called.

With this background, I'm offering myself as a commissioner to the 220th General Assembly, should this presbytery choose to send me. I do believe that God has called and equipped me for this task, and, with the blessing and support of family and congregation, I am willing to take the time and energy to serve our church in this way.

WHY I BELIEVE GOD IS CALLING ME AS A GA COMMISSIONER

Over the past year, I've been privileged to talk with a number of our congregations about their congregational life, their understanding of ministry in this world, and their perspective on our denomination. I've also talked with many of our teaching elders, exploring those same questions. On behalf of the presbytery, I've traveled to conferences where we've considered the future of our denomination, and I've spent hours upon hours talking and praying with other leaders in our presbytery. We lift to God all the issues related to our common ministry. We seek ways to help congregations develop life-giving ministries. We urge the presbytery to talk about what divides and unites us, dreaming about a future where Jesus Christ is honored and we discover his grace for us and through us to this world.

I invariably come away from those conversations both overwhelmed and encouraged. We do face huge challenges. These are tender times in our denomination. Congregations, these days, face external and internal threats. Ministry is difficult and confusing and often discouraging.

And yet, I continually discover people who are committed to our Savior and our church. I find possibilities and see God's grace. We do possess the resources to confront our own unfinishedness and to open ourselves to God's work in our midst. And we do serve a God who is Lord of all, Ruler of the universe, and who offers resurrection power through Jesus Christ. I do believe that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that there is hope for me, for the church, and for the world. I do believe that he is the key to human history and thus to my own history and the history of our denomination.

I'm offering myself as a commissioner to General Assembly because through my own work in leadership development, congregational renewal, teaching, and leading in our presbytery I believe I've been prepared to serve our denomination at this level in these days of uncertainty and possibility. If elected, I covet your prayers and look forward to your partnership.