June 1, 2020

Dear Commissioner or Advisory Delegate:

As outlined in the *Manual of the General Assembly*, one of the responsibilities of the Stated Clerk is to provide to commissioners and advisory delegates an electronic packet of information about each candidate who is standing for Co-Moderator. This year we have three sets of Co-Moderator candidates standing for Co-Moderator.

This booklet contains the following information for all candidates standing for Co-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020): a photograph, biographical sketch, personal statement regarding the candidate’s sense of call to the office, a written presentation by the presbytery having jurisdiction over the candidate (if that council has endorsed him or her), and the candidate’s responses to a questionnaire developed by the Stated Clerk.

The candidates have chosen the layout for their material within the space limitations provided.

The election of the Co-Moderators will take place during the plenary session of the General Assembly on Friday evening, June 19, 2020. The process that will be used can be found in Standing Rule H.1.c.(4).

God’s blessings to you as you continue to pray and prepare for the General Assembly.

In the name of the Christ we serve,

[Signature]

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Questions for Candidates for
Moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Using no more than 500 words for each response, please answer Questions 1 through 3 (required) and two additional questions.

1. **Required:** The theme of the 224th General Assembly (2020) was set to be “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” based upon Romans 12:2. In light of the pandemic, the Stated Clerk has now called for the theme to be “From Lament to Hope.” How do we help the church both lament our recent losses while also living into new hope?

2. **Required:** The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (*Manual of the General Assembly*, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

3. **Required:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to individuals, families, communities, and economies and has challenged the church in numerous ways. What changes have you seen in the church during the pandemic, and what lessons might we learn? How can the church’s witness be strengthened as a result of COVID-19?

4. How can the church community make room for all people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?

5. We live in a world full of fear and uncertainty. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen our ministry of showing God’s love to all?

6. In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do dialogue and witness help Presbyterians support those of other religious traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence?

7. What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?

8. What is your elevator speech about what it means to be Presbyterian?
Learning from the Past...
Living in the Present...
Looking to the Future!

Elona & Gregory

224TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Together for Co-Moderators

fb.me/ElonaAndGregory
Instagram: @elonaandgregory
@ElonaAndGregory
ElonaandGregory@gmail.com
https://engagingleaders.org/elona-gregory/
For Presbyterians, the call of God to serve is confirmed by God. It is our duty to respond to the presence of our Risen Christ and to embrace our beloved denomination.

Faithfully yours,
Elona Street-Stewart and Gregory Bentley

Bentley said, “Together, we embody both the pain of ‘I am very excited about partnering with Elona,” Street-Stewart said. “Together, we embody both the pain of our collective past and the possibilities of a preferred future...a future of vitality and fruitfulness in the church. God is doing a new thing in the PCUSA and I am grateful to be a part of it.” Adds Street-Stewart, “What we talk about in the church today, what challenges us in society today, are not just issues, but people and relationships. Our opportunity today is to personify what the gospel is about, for all the people it is about.”

For both Street-Stewart and Bentley, that includes a deep embrace of the church’s Matthew 25 initiative. In approaching the cultural-geographic-political differences across diverse communities, the two ask, how might we better recognize the diversity and mutuality of gifts around us? “We live in a world house,” Bentley says, to which Street-Stewart adds, “We’re woven together, interdependent, our lives and futures tied to one another, across the generations into the future.”

The personal stories of Bentley and Street-Stewart have shaped the inclusive message they will bring to the role of co-moderator. “God has used the Presbyterian Church in a mighty way to mold and shape me into the person God created and called me to be,” Bentley recalls. “At a time when the state of Alabama was only required to provide for schooling up to the fifth grade, my maternal grandmother, Virginia B. Howze, was able to finish high school because of a mission school founded by the (then-) Northern Church. My mother, Juanita B. Hattaway graduated from the only Historically Black College founded by the (then-) Southern Church, Stillman College, of which I am an alum as well. It was the PCUSA that taught me how to blend head and heart, to nurture the ‘learning and the burning.’”

Street-Stewart is a descendant of the Delaware Nanticoke tribe, whose ancestral home was just across the Chesapeake Bay from the convention center in which the 224th General Assembly was to be held. “Even before becoming Presbyterian, this church nurtured me, welcomed me, educated me and encouraged my voice. It is through these decades of service that my voice, and with me the voices of ‘All my Relations,’ emerged to speak from truths often overlooked. Gregory and I represent the people who have been a part of this church from the beginning—but often not in roles that have allowed them to bring their full selves.” If elected with Bentley, Street-Stewart would be the first Native American moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

In Native American heritage, the river that connects and binds this country together—the Mississippi—is sacred and life-giving. In African heritage, the Sankofa bird looks back to see forward, symbolic of the wisdom in learning from the past to ensure a strong future. Together, profoundly shaped by their own forebears and profoundly committed to the future of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Street-Stewart and Bentley embody an understanding of what will shape this church toward a flourishing and vibrant future.
Elona Street-Stewart

Origins
- Born and raised in Philadelphia, PA
- Member of the Delaware – Nanticoke Tribe
- Married 46 years to Rev. H. David Stewart
- 4 Adult children, 4 grandchildren, 3 grand-dogs
- Lived in Los Angeles and Richmond, CA; Pendleton, OR
- Resident of Saint Paul, MN for 35 years

Education
- Early generation Upward Bound student, Swarthmore College
- Graduate of Occidental College, Los Angeles, BA - Anthropology

Church Involvement
- Ordained Ruling Elder, First Presbyterian, Pendleton, OR – 1982
- Member, Deacon, Elder at Faith PC, Oakland; Dayton Avenue and New Life PC, St. Paul
- Attended all but four General Assemblies since 1981 as corresponding member, committee resource or commissioner
- Various service in Eastern Oregon Presbytery and Synod of the Pacific, Twin Cities Area Presbytery and Synod of Lakes and Prairies
- Past and current elected service on Council on Church and Race, Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns, national racial ethnic caucuses, Committee on Relocation of GA agencies after Reunion, Presbyterian Women, Committee on Representation, Self-Development of People [40 yrs], Mission Priorities, Native American Coordinating Council
- Recent term as ecumenical liaison to Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
- Led Synod of Lakes and Prairies to become first Matthew 25 synod in PCUSA
- Engaged in restructuring of several councils of churches and interfaith partnerships

Community Advocacy
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability strategies
- Economic empowerment and housing zones
- Led community agencies and state-district collaborations

Employment
- Children’s Initiative Developer of 9 Family Centers and their governing boards
- Mentor to parents and community leaders on juvenile justice, gender/race equity, environmental advocacy, government relations and public policies
- Synod administrative support for Dakota Presbytery
- Executive for Synod of Lakes and Prairies: 2015 - present

Awards and Recognitions
- MN Indian Education Parent of the Year
- Selected presenter to Laura Bush’s Helping America’s Youth Initiative
- Named one of top 10 school board members, Council on Urban Boards of Education
- National Racial Equity Community Empowerment Award, Pacific Education Group
- Governor’s MLK award for racial justice and Spirit of Gandhi Pathway to Nonviolence
- Woman of Faith Award [2010], Presbyterian Women, PCUSA
- 2018 Alumni Seal Award for Professional Achievement, Occidental College

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Uf1JH36i-SM]

Elona and Ralph Scissons, Fern Cloud, and Irvin Porter
Family
- Married to Diann Bentley with two daughters, Miriam and Johari

Education
- Graduate of Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, major in Biology and minor in Chemistry; the only HBCU (Historically Black College and University) founded by the Southern Church
- Graduate of the Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Master of Divinity, Atlanta, Georgia

Employment
- Served as a dental assistant in the United States Army Reserve
- Teacher, physical science and Biology
- Ordained in 1998 to the ministry of Word and Sacrament at the Northern Heights Presbyterian Church, Selma, Alabama

Church & Community Involvement
- Moderator of Committee on Representation and the Commission on Ministry
- Chairman of Minority Affairs for the Tuscaloosa County (Alabama) Democratic Party
- President, Huntsville chapter, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- Life Member, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Member, North Alabama School for Organizing
- Past president, National Black Presbyterian Caucus
- Pastor, Fellowship Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Alabama
We Are Called

For Presbyterians, the call of God to serve is confirmed by God’s people in community. Leadership is not just an individual call, but a gift conferred and cultivated by the community. That has truly been the case, for Elona and Gregory, as we celebrate our roots in the collective spiritual fortitude of our communities of origin – Native American and African American.

Neither of us considered the possibility of running for the office of Moderator of General Assembly prior to the insistence of colleagues and mentors across the PCUSA. The community brought us together, as it should be: two persons of color in such a time as this, who, through extended conversation with one another, felt the Spirit moving and saw the immediate connections in our theology, cultural heritage, and church experiences.

Only after prayerful discernment listening for the whisper of that still small voice of God could we step forward to be considered for such a remarkable honor.

Together we understand this call and shared candidacy as an opportunity to bring our personal experiences and the collective experience and wisdom of our people to the task of helping the PCUSA become the best version of itself. We sincerely believe we can help to facilitate a path to a preferred future, in part through the perspective and resilience forged by our collective past. We believe God has shaped us for such a time as this to faithfully respond to and navigate the cataclysmic times in which we live: to use the best of our past as a guidepost rather than a hitching post, to guide us through this pandemic and to build solidarity with those whom Jesus called “the least of these.”

We know what we’ve been through to get here and made it by grace, persistence, curiosity, and hope. Like the Sankofa bird of our logo, we look back beyond this time of uncertainty and fear to learn from those who have gone before, even as we look forward to a faithful and fruitful future. We stand here together today to bring gifts of our people to bear upon the PCUSA being and becoming all that God has called it to be.

The ministry of the church is more important now than imagined even just two months ago. The dangers of COVID-19 are obvious, but we also believe this pandemic presents an opportunity for us to be the body of Christ in such a way as to be a compelling witness of the exhibition of the kingdom of God to the world.

We are resolute in our response to this call to serve as co-moderators to those present in the church today and for those whose participation is just beginning to unfold. As elected commissioners from the presbyteries of North Alabama and Twin Cities Area to the 224th General Assembly, we humbly seek the yet broader voice of confirmation of a shared call as co-moderators, to serve our Risen Christ and our beloved denomination.

Faithfully yours,

Elona Street-Stewart and Gregory Bentley
The theme of the 224th General Assembly (2020) was set to be “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” based upon Romans 12:2. In light of the pandemic, the Stated Clerk has now called for the theme to be “From Lament to Hope.” How do we help the church both lament our recent losses while also living into new hope?

ELONA SAYS:

Loss, despair, anguish, belonging will be the order of the day when the Assembly convenes and virtually connects people across the church.

Even though we will be isolated, we will not be alone. The theme expresses our frustrations and weaknesses making space to acknowledge our interdependence. When we care about people, we form trust and trust builds hope. Hope is the genuine mission of the church, a gift of purpose directed beyond ourselves toward the next generation. This 224th GA will be followed by others. We won’t know who it blesses in the future, what our work means for someone else, how it may restore ministry, or repair suffering. The pandemic has changed lives so much in the last few months. We cry, ‘How long O Lord’ of Psalm 13, and mourn inconsolably like Rachel in Jeremiah 31:16. Right now, we feel abandoned, grieving loved ones, missing social togetherness, and yet experiencing a deeper connection to each other, to the church and to God.

Our lament acknowledges our meeting in a world full of pain, death and injustice. Our lament also reflects our humanity in an infected world and an invocation for God to intervene with righteous repair. When we lament, we grieve what is true: the hard truth of our humanity and separation from God. We were created to live with God in a garden, yet the entire human story has been about separation, and our attempts to belong again. We acutely face what Walter Brueggemann calls a ‘fearful future accompanied by a faithful God.’

When we call the church to lament, we engage in the real despair and healing of injustice. Rachel’s inconsolable weeping is the heart wrenching tragedy of her lost children, removed from the land, erased from shared history, and distressed over an entire nation facing extermination. A story of lament so powerful that God comes to repair the historical trauma of broken people in a violent world, to a nation so needing a promise of hope. God says wipe your tears, for those you mourn, those who have been kidnapped, trafficked, imprisoned, brutalized, or enslaved.

HOPE IS THE GENUINE MISSION OF THE CHURCH, A GIFT OF PURPOSE DIRECTED BEYOND OURSELVES TOWARD THE NEXT GENERATION.

God speaks over chaos, anger, pain and fatigue calling for reparations of wounds suffered across generations, a call for healing the oppression of people and exploitation of land. God reminds us the church could have interrupted the complicity of injustice and exploitation in our national history. God compels us to recognize the invisible but real costs of institutional privilege. ‘I will reward you AND your children will come back home in the healing of the nation.’

Our generation and the next are urged to imagine, after the labor of waiting, relentless uncertainty, and formidable loss, that hope prevails in Jesus, who promised to remember us and restore the KINdom of God. Hope may be buried beneath this pandemic’s health and safety guidelines in the virtual General Assembly distancing from one another. Only in the spiritual solidarity of truth-telling about the brokenness of our communities, understanding the real fear of loss and pain deep in the core of our humanity, can we help the church proclaim hope, the restoration offered in Christ.
LAMENT AND HOPE MUST BE HELD IN CREATIVE TENSION IN THAT WHILE WE LAMENT, WE SUMMON THE COURAGE TO AGREE AND COOPERATE WITH GOD TO BRING ABOUT THE CONDITIONS THAT PROMOTE HEALING, WHOLENESS, AND WELL-BEING.

Jesus of Nazareth expanded and amplified this notion in Matthew 25 when the sheep replied, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my sisters and brothers, you did it to me.”

Dr. Carolyn McCrary, professor of pastoral care and counseling at the Interdenominational Theological Center contends that as African Americans, given our experience in this land, that hope is the only thing that has kept us sane in the midst of insanity. Lament and hope must be held in creative tension in that while we lament, we summon the courage to agree and cooperate with God to bring about the conditions that promote healing, wholeness, and well-being. We survey the contemporary landscape of our existence to locate the places of injury and woundedness that continue to plague our people. And hope begins to well up as we heed the words of Isaiah 58:7 to share our food with the hungry and to provide shelter for the homeless, to clothe the naked and to not turn away from our own flesh and blood.
The Standing Rules state that, “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5)). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

GREGORY SAYS:
1 Timothy 4:12 admonishes us to set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. As co-moderators, Elona and I believe it is a perfect platform to live out the cooperation, communication, and collaboration between ruling elders and teaching elders that is articulated in our polity. We aim to demonstrate in how we relate to one another what a healthy and fruitful relationship between Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders can look like in every council of the church from session to presbytery to synod to general assembly.

Also, we want to be a source of encouragement and inspiration for the body to remind us that God is still with us and is calling us to join God in God’s redemptive and transformative work in the world. To remind the church that if we want to save our lives, we have to give them up for Christ’s sake.

Although institutional maintenance and management is critical for effective ministry, we cannot let our investment in the well-being of the institution supersede our investment in promoting the rule and reign of God. Sometimes we must be reminded that unless a head of grain falls to the earth and dies, it, and we, cannot bear fruit.

ELONA SAYS:
As Co-Moderators, we will always recognize the relationship that endures between Indigenous people and their traditional land wherever we travel.

Additionally, we will acknowledge and give honor to the gifts and ministries of former moderators elected to this office. Collectively, they embodied the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. Through times of celebration, distress, reunion, relocation, and rightsizing, they visited small and large churches, countless meetings, numerous potlucks, lifted up prayers for the people and shared amazing stories of grace and gratitude.

Together, rooted in the faith of our ancestors and profoundly committed to the future of the church, the two of us will exemplify an understanding of how much the church needs to be a place for all people. We know the hardships and challenges of being in the church, but not always included in church history. Our message will be to rekindle the gifts of God already within the church for the world to see.

We recognize the Co-Moderators are called to serve in the most visible role of the church and uphold spiritual solidarity with the people of God through prayer. Right now, we pray for churches working toward the promise of Matthew 25 as they reprioritize resources, innovate worship experiences and navigate the digital divide. We know the people in our churches are strong and resilient and we will survive this crisis by adapting to what we need just as others did before us.

Each day we see the good that comes when we stand together, a ruling elder and teaching elder, modeling the foundation of fair and just representation, and highlighting equity and inclusion. We also commit to lead with cultural
humility, accepting our limitations and learning from those we meet.

We bring an inclusive message to the role of co-moderator shaped by our personal histories. Our experiences in voting rights, housing and food solutions, public witness, and community development prepared us for such a time as this, able to address the uncertainties of the immediate challenges.
The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to individuals, families, communities, and economies and has challenged the church in numerous ways. What changes have you seen in the church during the pandemic, and what lessons might we learn? How can the church’s witness be strengthened as a result of COVID-19?

ELONA SAYS: One of the notable consequences of the pandemic was the unexpected sudden disruption of our lives in this massive societal and humanitarian tragedy around the globe. It affected all activities and personal routines and blurred any distinctions about what was ‘normal.’ Presbyterians and other faith communities had to rapidly mobilize safety precautions and resources and adapt to wave after wave of crisis contingencies. Due to various executive orders to shelter at home and shut down, they faced immediate challenges to communicate, congregate and coordinate. I was meeting with presbytery executives in Dubuque when states’ news hit, and folks left as their governors announced stay orders.

Changes we have seen: Councils and churches prioritized and reassigned staff, rerouted finances, and repurposed facilities. They quickly innovated to remote worship options, electronic meetings, and social media messaging. Grassroot mixtures of collegial associations, stated clerks, mid council executives, office administrators, treasurers, educators, moderators, and technology staff huddled to leverage their scope of authority, interpret complex initiatives, and navigate municipal guidelines. Worship, funerals, weddings, baptisms and communion adapted to revised procedures. My synod organized emerging relief strategies assisted by zoom. Pastors exchanged equipment and instructions for worship services in time for Easter. Conferences went remote. Online participation, became more accessible, exceeding past attendance. Volunteers made masks and supported deliveries of school supplies and groceries. Deacons and COMs phoned prayers through directories. Staff met electronically and payroll and banking rolled out from home offices. Chaplains and grief counselors kept pastoral teams updated. Efforts have been amazing, creative, imaginative, dedicated, tireless, thoughtful, resilient, and exhausting.

We have learned:

- Traumatic stress, absorbed by caregivers, clergy and responders, is cumulative and leads to acute exhaustion, compassion fatigue and diminished recognition of boundaries.
- Mental health, emotional and spiritual care are needed as much as public health and safety cautions.
- Church leadership, mid council management and Board of Pensions need to provide practical, accessible, flexible support and COVID specific relief.

We recognize the need to:

- Deliver online counseling, health assessments, family support, financial management.
- Collaborate on local emergency management, volunteer resources, funeral services, and school support.
- Boost promotion of OGHS, PDA, SDOP, PHP and Matthew 25 opportunities.
- Offer space for lament and self-care in our liturgy.
- Reexamine our polity, theology and practices and assess community relations.
and disaster plans to incorporate flexibility in any response to crisis.

To strengthen our witness, we must:

- Prepare response, recovery and repair plans now for the next disaster.
- Optimize virtual engagement as a necessary and irreplaceable supplement, not limited to emergency usage.
- Adapt structures, policies, and processes faster.
- Protect vulnerable persons in community – elders, sick, poor, incarcerated and oppressed.
- Address racial and economic disproportionality when disaster exposes conditions that cause injustice and inequities in health care and related cost increases.
- Capitalize on technology to access networks and join interfaith exchanges of information.
- Build resilient and smart financial recoveries.

The church needs to flex its spiritual fortitude in public space outside of the pew. This pandemic forced us to separate from our familiar past to really see a new iteration of energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.

GREGORY SAYS:

The church has demonstrated an incredible adaptability and resilience in the wake of this pandemic. One of the most salient ways this has been manifested is through the use of social media and other virtual tools. It has been a learning experience for most of us that we seem to be embracing with the realization that this has to be an essential and indispensable part of how we do ministry in the 21st century. However, although it is an invaluable supplement it is not a substitute for in person gatherings. We will continue to heed the counsel of the Letter to the Hebrews to “forsake not the assembling of ourselves together” while augmenting and enhancing our ministry capacity with the virtual piece.

In many ways, COVID-19 is the crisis that reveals the crisis we were already in. It has, in a manner of speaking, democratized the suffering of the poor and people of color whose conditions, concerns and challenges have been ignored for generations. With so many more now being affected, it can no longer be ignored. Instead of pining and wishing for a return to the status quo ante, we have to commit ourselves to a fundamentally different way of being in the world that is life giving and life sustaining for all God’s children and all of creation. And the Matthew 25 Initiative of the PCUSA is one of the ways that we are addressing this as a denomination by promoting congregational vitality, the dismantlement of structural racism, and the eradication of systemic poverty.
In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do dialogue and witness help Presbyterians support those of other religious traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence?

ELONA SAYS:
The PCUSA is witnessing real demographic and social change here in this country and in the world, accompanied by media and public narratives that message fear, hate speech and acts of violence.

During a Minnesota Education Equity Partnership conference, John A. Powell, director of Haas Institute for Fair and Inclusive Society, UC Berkeley, said “The opposite of racism is belonging.” It has deep implications for defining who the ‘we’ mirrors in a fear of the ‘other.’ This is especially dangerous if the church and other institutions retrench into its historic systems, firmly embedded with racism, without mutual efforts to create inclusive systems created for the emerging multiracial world.

If the PCUSA reaches out to engage in interfaith dialogue, it must transform disinformation into a message of racial equity. Dismantling systemic racism in the church requires courage to build inclusive policies, decolonize our practices, and invite those of other traditions to co-transform our structures so that together we can welcome belonging into the center of our relationships. I’ve addressed racism and reviewed policies in the church for over 40 years and will always stand in support of those targeted because they are the ‘other.’

We will experience the KINdom of heaven when we aim for equity, more than diversity. I believe that is possible if we can step into the ‘other’ reality of Matthew 25. It challenges us to open up space and wrestle with our history, our purpose, and the source of our social capital as a white dominant Christian institution. An institution that has hoarded systems of privilege on this continent since the Doctrine of Discovery.

Unless we confess that we have misused the gifts God gave us, we will continue to break our relationship with others. We will perpetuate these fears by blaming victims of hate crimes for the injustice they suffer. When we focus on the poverty, citizenship status, language, or mistaken characteristics of another culture, we imply they aren’t good enough, and we fail to examine the root causes of these stereotypes that erase competency and substitute erroneous identities. Our purpose will be to seek out the source of the hate and work to dismantle it.

Dialogue is based on the art of listening and my hope is that the PCUSA will reimagine its role in interfaith dialogue as a supportive one. If we are serious about interrupting hate speech, we will listen for the other unique spiritual perspectives or cultural experiences that shaped and contributed to that narrative. We’ve been socialized to see our leadership role as more significant than creating safe spaces, but that is exactly what we are called to do. We are called to build integrity in our relationships by creating trust. Everyone in the interfaith dialogue belongs at the table, shaping important questions and response as the lead voice. A strong faith-based interaction relies on greater participation and recognition of diverse voices. If we don’t protect the contribution
of their knowledge to sacred space and work, we remain complicit in the assimilation of other voices by the cultural definitions of who is important and what is normal.

GREGORY SAYS:
When you enter a courtroom, there are multiple places to sit. There’s the judge’s seat, the prosecutor’s table, the defense table, the jury box, and the witness stand. Following the laws of physics, you cannot occupy more than one place at a time to save your life. The witness stand is our proper place as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has called us to be his witnesses to walk and to talk what we have seen and heard of God as revealed in his life, labor, and love. And what we see is a radical inclusivity and a willingness to cross all manner of barriers to connect with and have fellowship with people who do not share our racial, religious, socio-economic, or cultural background. We witness to the radically inclusive and expansive love of God when we step out of the narrow and constricting confines of parochialism and tribalism.

Dr. Martin Luther King reminds us:

“Cowardice asks the question, ‘Is it safe?’ Expediency asks the question, ‘Is it politic?’ Vanity asks the question, ‘Is it popular?’ But conscience asks the question, ‘Is it right?’ And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right.”

We dialogue with and defend people of other faith groups—as well as those who don’t claim any faith group—who are targeted with hate speech and violence because it is right.
What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?

GREGORY SAYS:
Elena and I are excited about the Matthew 25 Initiative. The synod of Lakes and Prairies and Fellowship Presbyterian Church have both signed on. We believe this initiative helps to set us on a faithful trajectory into the future that will engender fruitfulness for years to come.

A critical component of making this go is leadership development.

In Acts 6, we are told of a complaint that is brought by the Hellenistic widows about being neglected in the daily distribution of food. In a stroke of spiritual genius, the apostles effectively create a new office in the church by counseling the aggrieved widows to choose from among themselves “seven men who are in good standing, full of wisdom, and full of the Spirit.” Notice how leadership isn’t imposed from the outside but rather emerges out of the womb of the community. The apostles simply fine tune their vision by laying out the criteria to help them see what is already in their midst. Incidentally, the most recent issue of *Presbyterians Today* lifts up the vital role of deacons in caring for the people.

Going forward, we must fine tune our vision to see the people in our midst whom God has called to lead the faith community in redemptive and transformative ministry in the church and world. And then employ processes and practices that will edify, enhance and equip them to be even more effective in living out God’s call.

Dr. Tod Bolsinger reminds us that leadership is disappointing our people at a rate that they can absorb. And in order to do this, we must start with conviction, stay connected, stay calm, and stay the course. Another way of saying this is to begin with the end in mind, maintain a non-anxious presence in the midst of chaos and conflict (be a thermostat rather than a thermometer), and to keep on keeping on.

ELONA SAYS:
This question is so very important as we adjust to the changes in how the 224th General Assembly will take place and why it will be a virtual assembly. Gregory and I did not hear this as a question about setting new directions, but about the key importance of developing faithful leadership.

The global losses ushered in just since the beginning of the year by COVID 19, increase the urgency of the PCUSA to address the conditions pronounced by Matthew 25. Faithful leadership must be equipped and empowered to deepen their faith and be actively engaged with their community and the world, to break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color and to work to change laws, policies, plans and structures in society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people.

In the face of uncertainty, it is the courage and boldness of all caregivers and responders, the creativity of staff transitioning home space to work space, the dedication and imagination of pastors to lead worship and bring comfort to members, the persistence of teachers to inspire and encourage students, that identifies new directions for leadership development in the PCUSA.

With so many incredible models, I hope we will empower and equip leadership to build inclusive and accessible structures, policies and practices ensuring equity and belonging across
communities separated by distance, economics, national interests, and ideologies. Deep in this hope is a call to be the living church made from the hands and feet of Christ’s ministries.

When the disciples asked Jesus what they should do, Jesus answered, “Seek first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” Walter Brueggemann teaches that the word righteousness concerns public policy and the proper administration of social goods, social power and social access. So here, Christ directed the disciples’ interests to the common good and well being of the community. Today, he might have told them, simply, to be the unity in the community.

Nurturing the energy, curiosity, commitment, and relations of our leadership will strengthen their ability to learn, adapt, adjust and serve in the midst of change. This is not a time to reduce our development resources, but to equip and empower all those who serve. The next generation has arrived and it is time to offer hope for now and action for the future.

We must support Christ’s call to Matthew 25 around the world.

11-12 Because we know that this extraordinary day is just ahead, we pray for you all the time—pray that our God will make you fit for what he’s called you to be, pray that he’ll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something. 2 Thessalonians 1
May 6, 2020

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Re: Endorsement of Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart

Dear Rev. Dr. Nelson,

I write to communicate our presbytery's strong, enthusiastic endorsement of Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart and Teaching Elder Gregory Benson for election as Co-Moderators of the 224th General Assembly.

At our stated meeting on November 16, 2019, after her election as one of our Ruling Elder Commissioners to GA, Elona announced her intent to stand for election as Co-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly. This announcement was met with thunderous applause and cheers, and the presbytery unanimously voted to endorse Elona's candidacy. At our January 26, 2020 stated meeting, Elona shared that Rev. Gregory J. Bentley would stand for election with her, and the presbytery erupted with joy once again as we voted unanimously to endorse them as Co-moderator candidates.

When speaking about her call, Elona cites her own heritage and the dramatic influence of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. on her life as sparking her desire to serve the wider church. A descendant of the Delaware Nansemond Tribe, whose ancestral home was just across the Chesapeake Bay from the Baltimore convention center where the 224th General Assembly was to be held, Elona told our presbytery, "Even before becoming Presbyterian, this church nurtured me, welcomed me, educated me and encouraged my voice." Elona's hope, combined with faith and justice, are the foundation for her life of service.

Elona is a strong and collaborative leader. In 2015, Elona became the first Native American to serve as a synod executive of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), when she was called to lead the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. She has served at the national level of our church since 1980:

- chairing the Council on Church and Race
- chairing the Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns
• serving the national Self-Development of People Committee; Presbyterian Women, Third World Women, Committee on Representation Native American Consulting Committee and General Assembly Nominating Committee

• serving as a member of several administrative commissions, including the Synod Administrative Commission for Dakota Presbytery

Elona was a member of the Relocation Committee of General Assembly Agencies following reunion of the northern and southern branches of our denomination.

Deeply committed to education and social justice issues, Elona was the first Native American elected to serve an urban school board in Minnesota. She was re-elected twice, and served as Chair of the board for one term. She served as a district director on the Minnesota School Boards Association, and also served on the Council of the Great City Schools and the National School Board Association's Council on Urban Boards of Education. She led the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, the American Indian Family Center, the national American Indian Alaska Native School Board Caucus, the St. Paul Children's Collaborative, and The Saint Paul Foundation's anti-racism advisory committee.

Elona's service has been widely recognized and honored. She received our denomination's Women of Faith Award during the 219th General Assembly, and she has received local, state and national awards – including one for transforming the relationship between school, families, and community organizations so that all children might excel academically, culturally and socially.

If elected, Elona would be the first Native American moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Elona deeply embraces our church’s Matthew 25 initiative. When approaching the cultural – geographical – political differences across our communities, Elona asks, “How might we better recognize the diversity and mutuality of the gifts around us? We’re woven together, interdependent, our lives and futures tied to one another, across the generations into the future."

Elona is excited about the possibilities and opportunities for our church. She believes that God is doing a new thing in the PC(USA). As she told our presbytery, "What we talk about in the church today, what challenges us in society today, are not just issues, but people and relationships. Our opportunity today is to personify what the gospel is about, for all people.” Profoundly shaped by her forebears, and profoundly committed to the future of our church, Elona understands and embodies the importance of looking back to see forward: seeking wisdom in learning from the past in order to ensure a strong future.
The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area proudly, enthusiastically and unanimously endorses Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart and Rev. Gregory Bentley for election as Co-Moderators of the 224th General Assembly.

Together in the service of the church,

Barbara Lutter
Stated Clerk

cc: Bobbie Montgomery
Letter of Endorsement for the Rev. Gregory Bentley,  
Candidate for Co-Moderator of General Assembly

I am honored to have been asked to write a note of endorsement for Rev. Gregory Bentley as he faithfully offers his service as Co-Moderator of the General Assembly. I have known Rev. Bentley since he became a minister member of the North Alabama Presbytery in 2012 after being called as pastor to Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, AL. He quickly took part in a weekly clergy prayer and study breakfast group where I was immediately impressed with the depth of his study, his engagement in the material, and his personal devotion to a deep and solid prayer life. I also was fortunate to be in a leadership study with Rev. Bentley for two years (the Barnabas Consort, led by Rev. Stanley Ott), and learned so much from his wide array of reading and study.

I have also served on the Commission on Ministry with Rev. Bentley when he was the moderator during a divisive and stressful time in the North Alabama Presbytery. Rev. Bentley’s leadership was based on prayer and integrity, and he was not afraid to stand by his ethical and moral positions. Rev. Bentley has also held leadership positions in the Huntsville community that focus on social justice issues, demonstrating his breadth of knowledge and his humility in powerful and visible ways. I believe one of Rev. Bentley’s greatest passions is the spiritual nurturing of his congregation at Fellowship. During sabbatical, my husband and I worshiped with Fellowship for several months and were always impressed by Rev. Bentley’s worship leadership and his challenging yet pastoral preaching. We took part in a bible study and came away with many new insights that continue to stretch and grow us.

Finally, Rev. Bentley has been a constant friend. When my mother died five years ago, he took time away from his own affairs to attend her memorial service. As busy as he stays with family (to whom he is very devoted), church, and community, he also takes time to call me if we haven’t seen each other in a while. He is the first person that I would go to in a time of crisis, and I can always rely on him as a prayer partner.

I believe that Rev. Gregory Bentley has established himself in the North Alabama Presbytery as a solid rock and has earned great respect here and in his church community. I see him as a spiritual leader both for the NAP and for the PC(USA) and will be praying that God opens this door to use the gifts Rev. Bentley is so generously offering.

In Christ, for Christ,  
Rev. Rosemary McMahan, H.R.  
North Alabama Presbytery
As co-moderator candidates from opposite coasts, we feel called to serve as ambassadors of our church with all that we are and all that we have! Our vision is a ministry of prayer, presence, listening, encouragement and reconciliation, always seeking to reflect and proclaim the active love, grace and justice of our living God. We see this time in the life of our church as our opportunity and responsibility to reframe our practices and reimagine our role.

https://GA224-MoonSandra.org
moonh.lee@gmail.com

God’s call, our passion!

Facebook - @ GA224MoonSandra
sandra@staugpres.org
God’s call often comes from unexpected sources at unexpected times. In my case, it was in the middle of a casual talk with friends three years ago. We were sharing our thoughts on the church’s readiness to respond to future challenges such as cultural and ideological pluralism, materialism, and the environment. I heard a heart-pounding voice that God could use the unique skills and experiences given to me to serve the church during this unprecedented time of change.

I had just retired from a long career in neuroscience research and teaching and expected to spend my newfound leisure time in other ways. Yet the call continued fresh and strong, along with a sense of urgency to reimagine our church’s future. A sense of purpose began to emerge, along with a heart of passion for God and God’s people.

This irresistible sense of call further crystalized when I met Sandra who surprised me with her similar sense of call. We both love the church and feel that God has given us our experiences in science and mediation/law to share towards the church’s promising future. God’s Call, Our Passion!

For the last four decades, the Lord has blessed me with many opportunities to serve in God’s vineyard, teaching and training me of his church through all levels of councils. The combination of my sacred and vocational calls has never ceased to bring me the joy of discovering God’s love in every corner of God’s creation. Even in times that I doubt my own knowledge and experience for God’s calls, the Holy Spirit continuously feeds fresh oil to fire my passion, lest I burn out my own fragile wick.

These are unprecedented times. We are living with changes that are unequal to what we have ever experienced in the past. As we search for new ways to meet new opportunities, I am excited to stand together for co-moderator with Sandra, a true servant of Jesus with a pure heart and passion for justice and peace. We stand ready to offer the church knowledge, experience and perspectives we acquired from our works in and outside of the church.

God’s grace excites me more than anything else. I am a servant and student. I am ready for new experiences, while serving the children of God with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. We see a new normal and new future, and we have confidence that God who began a good work in us will perfect it through the people whom God has prepared for this age. I am joining the crowd and saying, “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”

I found myself searching for more concrete answers …
one thing became increasingly clear:
Nothing is more concrete and convincing than the Word of God.
Born a preacher’s kid and surrounded by church leaders, growing up I thought of no other career option but ministry. To prepare for seminary, I studied philosophy in college, while intensifying Bible studies, prayer and witnessing. God, however, had a different plan for me. Approaching graduation, I felt a stronger call to study and minister to the human mind.

After earning two Master’s Degrees and a Ph.D. in psychology, I pursued a career in research, teaching and clinical services, with emphases on developmental and adjustment challenges. It was quite stimulating and rewarding, but I found myself searching for more concrete answers to the complexities of human behavior, emotion and intelligence. The emerging field of neuroscience offered a better fit to my intellectual curiosity. I explored mechanisms of structural restoration and functional recovery and published dozens of papers in peer-reviewed science journals. While I learned much from scientific research, one thing became increasingly clear: nothing is more concrete and convincing than the Word of God.

In parallel, the Lord blessed me with many opportunities to serve God’s people. Over four decades, I have served in three presbyteries (New York City, Eastern Korean-American, Northwest Coast) through a variety of responsibilities, including presbytery moderator, stated clerk, chairperson/moderator of the committee on ministry, permanent judicial commission, mission council, administrative commissions, search committees and task forces. In the Synod of the Northeast, while serving as trustee, I was appointed to lead a study committee for immigrant churches and a commission to organize a non-geographic presbytery.

I have previously been elected as a General Assembly commissioner three times, and moderated two committees. I have also learned much from serving on the Advisory Committee on the Constitution and the Presbyterian-Episcopal Dialogue Team. On the congregational level, I have particularly enjoyed teaching young adults, many of whom are now actively serving God’s people. I consider each opportunity a direct call from God, and each call has taught me more about the church, providence, and God’s love.

I am blessed with a wonderful family. With Lynn, who took a leap of faith in marrying me 48 years ago, we have three daughters who

My wife Lynn and I are “blessed with three daughters who are active in Presbyterian congregations. They have given us the joy of grandparenting two boys and two girls.”
work in professional fields and are active in Presbyterian congregations. They have given us the joy of grandparenting two boys and two girls.

I am a Presbyterian through and through. In addition to our theology, we have a polity that gives us a faithful framework for discerning God’s will. I am also a Presbyterian product, so to speak, that has been sewn and shaped by this very church. I was born on the campus of the Pyongyang seminary, which was founded by American Presbyterian missionaries and was the breeding ground of the Great Pyongyang Revival. My secondary school and college were both founded and sponsored by American Presbyterians. My father, a preacher and theologian who served as the moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), studied for his doctoral degree in America on scholarship from this church. My brother has also previously served as a moderator of the PCK. I know firsthand the value of the seeds our World Mission continues to sow in different parts of the world and I am confident we will continue to see the harvest in our land.
Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick  
Personal Statement and Sense of Call

My call to stand for co-moderator came on a morning walk just after sunrise. I was surprised by the call, but soon it filled my heart with gratitude and excitement! Within a few weeks, I met Ruling Elder Moon Lee, who shares the same sense of call and passion for sharing Christ’s love for the world in every way that we can. I am honored to stand for co-moderator with such a faithful, kind, and committed child of God!

Sensing that this call is indeed from the Lord, I see it as a ministry of praying and presence, of loving and listening. If I am elected, this call will take shape by encouraging our church and its communities to serve Christ in prophetic, creative, and caring collaboration with others. New leaders and prophetic voices are emerging in every generation. As this present global change unfolds, it is critical that the church includes ALL people as it proclaims the Gospel and cares for human needs and injustices of all kinds. There is no place for privilege or exclusion in the church. In the unity of the Spirit, the Lord will continue to work through countless people to continue to shape the wonderful church that I love.

It is God’s call and my passion to share the unique combination of experiences and gifts that the Lord has shared with me in my life. Currently, I am the pastor of a congregation and the stated clerk of my presbytery. In the past I have served God as a ruling elder, teacher, writer, mediator and lawyer. As a professional mediator, I learned the importance of deep listening and the reconciliation that begins with sharing stories. As a lawyer, I learned how unjust systems can silence the weak and powerless. This led me to devote as much time as I could to pro bono legal services. As a health teacher (yoga), I guide students to a deeper connection to breath and movement. In each of these roles, I find my greatest reward in caring for and connecting with diverse communities of people.

In faithfulness to the office, and in partnership with Moon Lee, I want to be a part of breathing new life into “dry bones” - rising up to make a holy difference in our communities, welcoming the stranger, freeing the captive, preaching good news to the poor, and proclaiming the time of the Lord’s favor to all of creation. I have steady and gracious support from my husband and extended family. Out of a sense of deep call, and with a bright hope for the church, I offer myself in service to the church as co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly. “God’s Call, Our Passion!”

I love representing our presbytery in ecumenical services!
Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick
Bio

My home base is Jacksonville, Florida, where I was born and raised. I first learned about Jesus and the great stories of the Bible at the Lutheran church that my grandparents helped to charter. I attended public schools and then went on to Stetson University to major in English, followed by law school at the University of Florida where I prepared for a career in law and mediation that I enjoyed for many years. In my legal career, my primary focus was dispute resolution (litigation, trials, and appeals), primarily in the area of employment law. In the last few years, I enjoyed mediation and pro bono work the most.

I met my husband Chuck in law school. In our late 20s, we began to immerse our-selves in the life of our neighborhood Presbyterian church. I taught Sunday School, led a Presbyterian Women’s circle, helped with special events and strategic planning, and was ordained as a ruling elder. Our boys Dan and Tim grew up at the South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church with wonderful friends and mentors!

About 15 years ago, the Holy Spirit got to work on me with some major vocational changes. I started “volunteering” for more things at church like a history month for which I wrote a book and preached the opening message. One day, as I was crossing the St. Johns River on the way to work, God called me to seminary. My sense of call grew and was confirmed by my family and the Presbytery of St. Augustine. I completed my M. Div. at Columbia Theological Seminary in 2009. My education included a three-week study trip to the Middle East (Syria, Jordan, Israel, Egypt) and Greece.

As a teaching elder of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, I serve as the pastor of Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville (since 2015) and the stated clerk of the presbytery (since 2012). My first call was to First Presbyterian Church in Jasper, Florida (2010-2013). I have attended three prior General Assemblies as a stated clerk and committee parliamentarian and served more regionally on presbytery committees, task forces and commissions. In 2013 I visited South Korea on a study trip focused on attending the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

After seminary I found that there was still a demand for my mediation services, and I continued to do that occasionally until I formally retired from the law. I also taught many courses as an adjunct at the Florida Coastal School of Law in public speaking for lawyers, law and religion, and mediation.

Chuck and I have a family of brothers and sisters, children, daughters-in-law and young grandchildren. I enjoy travel, beach and forest walks, and practicing and teaching yoga.
(Top Left) Ordination Service at the Korean Presbyterian Church of Jacksonville

(Above) Joyfully participating in installation of presbytery moderator Mary Mickel

(Above) Hiking and walking are favorite pastimes

(Bottom Center) Serving as clerk at a presbytery meeting (with Diane Wilson, moderator)
The theme of the 224th General Assembly (2020) was set to be “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” based upon Romans 12:2. In light of the pandemic, the Stated Clerk has now called for the theme to be “From Lament to Hope.” How do we help the church both lament our recent losses while also living into new hope?

The COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone. With spiraling unemployment, grocery shortages, anxiety, isolation, and death, this is an unprecedented time of lament. Hope is in demand more than ever. “From Lament to Hope” is a timely theme.

It is a spiritual theme. Lament in some cultures is an expression of fateful disposition; for Christianity it connotes relational actions. A large number of Psalms are about lament. They are prayers uttered under hopeless situations. The Israelites cried out to God, listening to God’s voice telling them to turn to God. Hope then emerged in God’s steadfast and unfailing love. Thus, lament and hope are not two distinctive mental operations, but together constitute a holistic spiritual experience. In the midst of this fear-provoking pandemic, we are called to reaffirm that nothing in life or death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Two issues demand our attention: (1) how to transform the lament into an opportunity for spiritual renewal, and (2) how to translate the resulting hope into real life actions.

(1) True lament leads to spiritual renewal. We have a commendable tradition of reformation, but theological reformation never gains power without spiritual renewal. Our church has led spiritual awakenings before, and we are called to it again.

I am not foreign to despair; I grew up with poverty, disease and the horrors of war in Korea. The Gospel, witnessed by missionaries from our church 136 years ago, served as a lifeline in war-torn devastation. Christians lifted fervent and continuous prayers of lament up to God. Hope-seekers grew in number. During the 3-year-war, 80% of church buildings were damaged, but the Christian population grew by 250%.

Korean Presbyterians now outnumber members of their mother church and send missionaries to 170 countries. They continue practicing the original teachings of the American missionaries – scripture reading, fervent prayer and joyful witnessing. Daily daybreak prayer and regular revival events are routine. Is God calling us to deepen our spiritual practices and bear fruits from lament here and now?

(2) Hope is a uniquely human attribute and the key antidote against fear and anxiety. Hope, however, comes in many different shapes and sizes. Our hope is anchored in God’s promise. In response to perceived danger, however, people tend to seek tangible goals for an immediate reduction of pain and discomfort. It may be a vaccine or new income sources; God’s promise seems too elusive in comparison. Hope is difficult to convey because it is built on faith. How can we then translate our hope to others? Our constitution provides a guide.
Each council is responsible for a community of “faith, hope, love, and witness” (G-3.0201, 0301, 0401, 0501). These four are interconnected and work together. Genuine love and authentic witnessing can make our hope contagious. In these dreadful times, we hear God declaring, “For I know the plans that I have for you, ... plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.” (Jer. 29:11)

The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

I understand and accept the enormously heavy responsibilities of an ambassador in serving the role of moderator. I would like to highlight three areas within these responsibilities.

First, allow me to lift up the mandate of prayer. A moderator is neither a policy maker nor an administrator. A moderator is a facilitator, enabler and sometimes just a cheerleader, but always a prayer partner. Science has convinced me that human knowledge is too short and the capacity too weak to match the big dreams our mind desires. In prayer, we see the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word, which can and will expand the realm of our understanding and capacity. From the early stages of our discussions of this Assembly, Sandra and I had a prayer plan for the presbyteries. We may be meeting in the virtual world this year, but our prayers will see our dreams realized in the real world.

Second, an ambassador is a witness, sharing the stories of our church. We are a people of resurrection. We “live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20) as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). The moderator-Ambassador is responsible to tell the stories of our saint-Ambassadors in and out of the church, never forgetting we are to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:14).

Finally, the principle of “unity in diversity” is of critical importance for our overall mission. No one can deny that we live in a polarized world that not only condones but also promotes irreconcilable views. Reconciling becomes increasingly difficult, but necessary. Unity is essential for having impact, and true hope can most convincingly be conveyed through a unified voice.

Having served as a moderator numerous times, I have realized that moderator’s role is inherently reconciling different views. The parliamentary discernment process itself is an act of reconciliation toward unity. I have also learned that personal reconciliation of the moderator is critical for group harmony.

I grew up in a culture dominated by Confucianism, in which everything was perceived in classes and orders. Seeing someone else’s point of view was a daunting challenge. My own internal struggle for reconciliation led me to discover the beauty of God’s creation in each individual member of my group. Science taught me that diversity is natural. It’s part of the story that “God saw ... it was very good” (Gen 1:31). In nature, homogeneity is destined to

Unity is essential for having impact, and true hope can most convincingly be conveyed through a unified voice.
extinction, but diversity promises thriving. In the world of diversity, we are not given the option to accept or reject it. The option is either to tolerate it or love it. My choice is the latter. I am learning to love the views that challenge mine. “For by Him all things were created ... and in Him all things hold together.” (Col 1:16, 17)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to individuals, families, communities, and economies and has challenged the church in numerous ways. What changes have you seen in the church during the pandemic, and what lessons might we learn? How can the church’s witness be strengthened as a result of COVID-19?

The pandemic has brought unprecedented changes in every sector of life. The church that normally assumes the responsibility of providing comfort and hope now finds its conventional means inadequate, but we see the Holy Spirit opening new paths. Many congregations have embraced new technologies to meet new and existing worshippers and needs. Congregations unable to offer high-tech live streams and virtual fellowship are rediscovering the value of sharing written and recorded sermons or using real-voice phone lines. Through food drives and senior citizen check-ins, churches are mobilizing communities to meet the increasingly urgent needs of our society’s most vulnerable. We are seeing new connections beyond brick and mortar buildings to the wider world. Some scientists predict this COVID-19 crisis may be just a rehearsal for bigger disasters yet to come. We will come out even stronger, not because we are learning a few new skills, but because we will have stronger faith that God is in full control from the beginning to the end.

With these newly discovered possibilities, we hear God’s calling us to expand our ministries above and beyond what we are programmed to do. First, it’s clear that we are called to expand our hand-feet ministry. We all feel deeply saddened by this recent wave of human suffering, loss of life, financial collapse and anxiety over an uncertain new normal. Disparities are more visible when looking along the lines of race, socio-economic status and locality. Worse yet, the gap between haves and have-nots is predicted to grow wider after the pandemic. Our ministries to vulnerable communities will become even more important and will bring new challenges. This growing need for ministry emphasizes to us the urgency of eradicating systemic poverty and injustice.

Second, the crisis offers the church an opportunity to minister to younger generations. Many congregations are discovering the benefits of using virtual formats, among which is a growing number of worship “attendees.” Some mega-virtual church sites have reported an explosion in millennial and Gen Z attendance. Many are new faith-seekers, questioning whether their dreams are built on sand. Don’t we now have a real opportunity to build connections with new seekers and to discover new ways to build together a stronger faith community for all?

Another area in demand is mental health. It is the prevailing opinion in the mental health community that this crisis will be followed by a steep surge in number of cases along the
entire spectrum of mental illness, ranging from silent to violent cases. In my clinical experience, many want care that goes beyond listening and offering comfort: many demand answers to existential questions. We need to develop a strategy to equip church leaders to detect and manage early symptoms and effectively minister to the needs of this fast growing community.

How can the church community make room for all people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?

Before we ask how to make room for all, we must first ask ourselves: are we eager to listen to stories of ALL people? Or, are our ears biased to personal, social or theological preference? Do we offer equally enthusiastic ears to all stories?

The aphorism “birds of a feather flock together” tells us how easily we can trap ourselves into the pit of selective interest in listening. It’s like “the cocktail party phenomenon,” silencing our ears to the conversations around us, in order to focus on the story of a friend across the table.

Another point of warning comes from studies demonstrating a positive correlation between conviction and bias. That is, the stronger one’s conviction is, the higher chance of one being biased. Although a causal relationship has never been established, we need to heed the warning and be wary that our conviction does not feed bias, since we are a people of conviction, thriving to be passionate of our beliefs and actions.

Fortunately, despite these unsettling tendencies, there is some good news. Selective attention and personal bias can be modified. Their mechanisms are hard-wired, but their operational mode is acquired. The newly coined term “cognitive humility” suggests that our propensity towards bias is tamable. By living the gospel message in the power of the Spirit, our ears can be trained to hear silent voices.

Many silent voices are waiting to be heard in and outside the church. Group dynamic theories teach us that marginalized groups exist in every community. The status of the privileged and marginalized is fluid, constantly changing through power dynamics. We need to train our eyes and ears to identify people who at any given time are being left behind in our church.

Having said that, I would like to make a more specific suggestion for the question of how to make room for others. The power of sympathetic, affectionate listening is well recognized. I have found enormous benefits from adding another layer, which is the spirit of mutual learning. We can vicariously learn new things from others’ experience, particularly from people different from ourselves. I realized early in my professional career that the greatest lessons are often learned from those around us; colleagues, friends, even my students and patients.

Taking the example of young people, older people are used to teaching the younger. In fast-paced modern times, however, our knowledge can quickly be made obsolete and experience inapplicable. Adults feel no shame in bringing a cell phone to a teenager for repair. Are we as a community of God’s children ready to see other issues from younger people’s perspective and reasoning? The “we’ve-gone-through-that stage” reasoning is being challenged when trends which used to last decades now fade in short years or months. The same principle of mutual learning is applicable to people of different races, ethnicities, cultures, orientations, and mental illnesses, to the homeless, prisoners, and others.
What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?

New opportunities call for new directions. At the same, choices made in a crisis often result in regrettable consequences. We remember our Lord asking us to “be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matt 10:16) As we search for new directions, I submit my thoughts in three areas:

(1) Spiritual needs – the Always Normal: Unprecedented waves of changes are coming, but one thing will stay unchanged - the human need for spiritual fulfillment. A growing number of evidence-based studies demonstrate beneficial effects of spiritual health on physical and psychological health. Our aim, however, does not end with health benefits. We are called to “make disciples of all the nations.” (Matt 28:19)

To fulfill this command, we must maintain a burning heart, full of joy and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our rewards should be more than the psychological benefits of “Helper’s High,” but the ultimate joy from being true Matthew 25 disciples. I am certain that “God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ.” (Col. 4:3)

(2) New inclusiveness - the New Normal: Whether ready or not, our neighborhoods will become increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. The melting pot is being filled more and more with cultural pluralism. Conservative estimates show that the number of the post-1970 immigrants and their descendants will comprise the majority of the U.S. population in the next 30 years, indicating that they should occupy at least half of our pews. Future inclusiveness requires proactive actions to make room for prospective immigrant groups. My presbytery is well in advance toward the goal. We are blessed with a wide spectrum of ethnic backgrounds. More than 30% of our members worship in non-English languages.

Listening to and learning from new immigrants are not easy. It is equally, if not more, difficult for new immigrants to understand Americans. Being a first generation immigrant myself, I know how difficult the acculturation process is. Social barriers are everywhere, from silent discrimination to violent hostility.

Despite countless obstacles, their voice is necessary for our future. In search of new directions, outsiders can offer new eyes to identify areas that insiders are blind to. New immigrants can offer a fresh perspective.

(3) Modernization – the Future Normal: The pandemic is sending us a clear message that our church must contempurize. The importance of strengthening technology-driven ministries is self-evident, but it is not enough. We must seek to innovate, rather than react. To look two or even three steps ahead rather than just the immediate step forward. The more uncertain the world is, the more possibilities are opening for us. It’s time to imagine and institutionalize programs for this new future, knowing that Jesus has prepared the way for us.

A season of new opportunities has come. In God’s grace, we can elevate 2020 from the “Year of the Great Lock-Down” to the “Year of the Great Rise-Up.”

God’s call, our passion!
The theme of the 224th General Assembly (2020) was set to be “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” based upon Romans 12:2. In light of the pandemic, the Stated Clerk has now called for the theme to be “From Lament to Hope.” How do we help the church both lament our recent losses while also living into new hope?

There is much to lament. The pandemic has touched the whole human family, but not evenly. It is exposing the illusion of control and widening inequities among people and communities. It emptied school and church buildings, closed community spaces, and shut down many small businesses and social support systems. Human beings have suffered and died alone without the physical support of loved ones or a pastor. It happened so quickly; we felt unprepared.

We help the church lament by encouraging and making space for outward expressions of sorrow and grief. I grew up in a German Lutheran family that rarely expressed these emotions; I know how tempting it is to say, “be strong” and “just move on.” Even as the church remains strong in faith, naming our losses in detail and weeping over them in the presence of God and one another are a part of our strength. We also help the church lament through honest storytelling, openhearted listening, and centering on God’s Word. I believe that the church is called to convene and sponsor vital gatherings and forums that make space for this needed lament. In addition to worship, formats could in-clude fellowship, education, rest and retreat, media in every form, and more.

This season of the COVID-19 pandemic will not end soon. The repercussions of isolation, anxiety, trauma, disruption and uncertainty will be felt for months and years to come. The road is not easy, but we are still together, and the Lord is still with us. As the church turns to God with lament, it comes into God’s presence as a people of hope. As we trust God to hear us, the Spirit gives the gift of new hope. “New hope” is nothing like “going back to normal.” Leaders in the church can help everyone look for and name the concrete manifestations of God’s unfailing grace all around us. We live into new hope with prayer for healing of our planet from the virus and the brokenness that has been exposed. We can help one another in the church address injustice and inequities, serving our communities in a mission that aligns well with our Matthew 25 initiative. “Our hope is built on nothing less” than Jesus Christ as we depend on God’s grace to live into the hope of a more faithful, just, and righteous future.

I offer my deepest condolences for those who have suffered profound losses, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have served God and community in ways they never expected. From the lament of a pandemic, we emerge with the hope of God calling us to new ways of being the body of Christ in a broken world that is healing.
The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer.” Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

The time between assemblies is our “ordinary time” when we glorify God in every part of our daily lives! The moderator (or co-moderator), serving alongside other leaders, is called to pray for the people of God and encourage them in their faith journeys and responses to God’s grace. The ambassador, as a messenger of the good news of the Gospel, visits in our churches, presbyteries and synods, in ecumenical and interfaith contexts, and as called into the world. The moderator is a visible sign of the unity of the Spirit and through witness and action facilitates new and creative connections. The moderator strengthens the bonds of a peace that is honest, mutual, and faithful to Christ.

To tell the stories of the church’s life, the moderator must commit to deep listening. I love to hear how the church is being called in every context where we serve God. What part of God’s mission gives us passion? How are we responding and making a difference? What are our challenges and struggles, and how can we encourage one another? One way the Spirit builds the church is through the moderator’s hearing and sharing the testimonies of our people through preaching, teaching, writing, speaking and other media. All of this is done in continuous prayer for the people of God and for the world that God created and blesses with unfailing love.

For me, the most important part of being moderator is prayer. God’s people have my commitment to pray without ceasing! My combined training and experience as a professional mediator and pastor will also help me live into the role of moderator. Both pastors and mediators practice being present and listening deeply as they care for others and seek their well-being. My mediation experience has taught me how to help individuals and groups with divergent and sometimes deeply adversarial perspectives get to know one another better, tell their stories as they talk out their differences, and seek authentic reconciliation. Mediators learn to point out areas of common interest and needs while respecting difference, diversity, and agency. The combination of my vocational experiences over the course of my 10 years of ordination will help me listen, understand, and connect people; I am a multi-vocational pastor who has also been a lawyer and “law and religion” teacher, yoga teacher, and stated clerk of a presbytery.

If elected, I would look forward to accepting invitations to preach, to be present for celebrations and times of lament, and to lead retreats and workshops. I am a flexible traveler and proficient with electronic gatherings. In carrying out my role, I would seek to connect and unify groups and people. I would encourage the church to open our hearts even more to partners in and outside of our denomination who are seeking justice and responding to needs. My vision of leading as a co-moderator with Moon Lee is to help facilitate our continued movement in the Spirit to be creative, collaborative, nimble and bold as our church serves Christ as one.

For me, the most important part of being moderator is prayer. God’s people have my commitment to pray without ceasing!
The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to individuals, families, communities, and economies and has challenged the church in numerous ways. What changes have you seen in the church during the pandemic, and what lessons might we learn? How can the church’s witness be strengthened as a result of COVID-19?

The pandemic pushed the church into disorientation. Accompanied by the Holy Spirit, we left our buildings and cancelled most of our seasonal events, no matter how treasured. Sometimes we had to debate “the right thing to do,” but other times the way forward was obvious or taken out of our hands. About 40 days into isolation, the decision was made to hold the 224th General Assembly entirely online.

As the world changed, so did the church! Suddenly we were online for worship and community. Groups formed across denominational lines to support pastors and congregations with ideas for technology and adaptation of worship services and sacraments. We remembered that whenever authenticity is paired with creativity (online and in person), people are more drawn to the gospel message! They invite others to join in, such as family members from across the country. Many congregations are reporting the participation of members who had not been able to come to church for physical reasons. With the status quo shaken up, we are reminded of the power of a simple phone call or unexpected act of kindness. We are redefining community by creating new ways to collaborate and to meet and study online. Our outreach is more focused on tasks where our efforts can make an immediate impact — such as collecting canned goods for food ministries, sewing masks, or helping families in distress.

We are learning that the church is more resilient, flexible, and creative than we had imagined. There are believers and seekers who might never come into our buildings that, given the opportunity, desire to connect and participate. Connecting faith communities to one another is fun, and there are no boundaries limiting that collaboration. Virtual meetings can be more inclusive AND a better way to care for God’s creation.

It is understandable that sheltering in place has forced us to focus more on our interior life, to the detriment of our communities or the world. Our witness will be further strengthened when we apply the same passion and creativity we have seen in our churches to our love of justice and peacemaking. In other words, while “re-opening” will present the challenge of incorporating the new things we have learned, it also challenges the church to address the brokenness and inequity that have been exposed and magnified by the pandemic. Our response to the needs of the most vulnerable will show whether this crisis produces the fruit of true spiritual transformation.
In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do dialogue and witness help Presbyterians support those of other religious traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence?

Presbyterians have a clear stance on dialogue and witness. We seek opportunities for “respectful dialogue and mutual relationships” with people of other faith traditions in our local communities and in the world (G-5.0102). We do this “in the faith that the church of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is a sign and means of God’s intention for the wholeness of all human-kind and all creation.”

Despite these words, we often shy away from dialogue and witness. We too often remain frozen with fear that seeks to separate us. We worry that our words will come out wrong, or we won’t know what to say.

In the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the love of God and neighbor, we must continue to overcome these obstacles. As disciples of the Prince of Peace, we must support those of other traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence, historically and in the present. Our work begins with personal investment in the form of honest and open dialogue with individuals and groups. This gives us the honor of learning about their unique journeys and sharing ours. Through listening and authentic sharing, we are able to learn better how to be partners and friends. These times of sharing can begin to dispel prejudice and form lifelong friendships. Relationships are a first step towards transforming hearts and changing systems. We can take part in common causes and beneficial missions.

Dialogue and witness are prophetic actions that lead to change. We cannot wait until more lives are lost and more trauma is inflicted. Sometimes I look at my two beautiful granddaughters and my daughter-in-law who are Jewish and imagine the harm that could come to them because of hate and misunderstanding. I listen to the girls saying prayers at our dinner table and think about what I have seen in the Holocaust museums I have visited in Washington, Jerusalem, and other cities. I attend services and programs at their synagogue and observe that security is always present.

Religious diversity is a part of the life that God has given us and deserves our humility, openness, and respect. I would challenge each of our congregations to become educated about at least one other religious tradition in their community. From there we can begin a dialogue and be open to opportunities to participate intentionally in community mission with other faiths as equal partners. As we build connections, we can live together with joy in our differences under God’s all-encompassing love.

Relationships are a first step towards transforming hearts and changing systems.

God’s call, our passion!
What is your elevator speech about what it means to be Presbyterian?

When a presbytery commission examined me for ordination, one of the teaching elders asked, “what is a Presbyterian?” I have no memory of my response, but I remember what he said to me: “a Presbyterian is a Christian with a particular form of government.” While I have quoted my friend on occasion, my answer today would sound more like a story.

I grew up Lutheran, and my husband grew up Methodist, and we both felt at home at the Presbyterian church. The preaching made us think and also moved our hearts to action. The church wanted us to participate and share our gifts. Our children were valued, and each of our boys met adult mentors who are still lifetime friends.

Christ is the head of our church and, to be sure it stays that way, power and authority are shared by many people. We listen for the will of Christ in groups through prayer, debate, and discussion. We call ours a “representative government.” This can feel messy and slow! But with God’s help, faith always bears fruit. We are a movement that cares about social justice, but even though we mean well, we sometimes forget what is important. That’s when God makes us uncomfortable with prophetic truth-telling so that we will remember and start moving again.

As a Presbyterian, I trust in the God of the Trinity. I believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that everyone in the church is called to serve God and neighbor. That is how I respond to the good news of God’s salvation, peace, shalom.

It is hard for me to remember that I am not in control and that what I think I know may be wrong or incomplete. The same is true for my church at every level. Presbyterians who have a saying: we are reformed and always being reformed, according to the Word of God (and the call of the Spirit). We are open to God’s reform in our government, our doctrine, our worship, and the ways we practice our faith. This can sound like too much change to some. But it is also freeing.

If you want to know more, come and visit the church I serve online or in person. Everyone is welcome, and you will be too!
Office of the Stated Clerk

December 4, 2019

Office of the General Assembly
Attention: Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
100 Witherspoon St.
Louisville, KY 40202

Re: Letter of Endorsement for Co-Moderator Candidate Moon Lee

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its stated meeting of October 25, 2019, The Presbytery of the Northwest Coast elected Moon Lee as a ruling elder commissioner to General Assembly and wholeheartedly and unanimously endorsed him as a candidate for Co-Moderator of the 224rd General Assembly. Elder Lee was ordained by the Korean Central Presbyterian Church of Queens, New York in 1981. He currently is a member of the Community Church of Seattle, a member congregation of the presbytery, the session of which also offers their endorsement.

While Elder Lee has been a member of this presbytery for a relatively short time, during that time he has faithfully served as a member of our Commission on Ministry and has offered significant leadership to our Korean speaking congregations. His service to the denomination is so wide and varied that it is impractical to include it all here, but it includes serving as a GA commissioner many times, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution, Moderator of the Synod of the Northeast and NYC Presbytery and Stated Clerk of Eastern Korean Presbytery.

We believe Elder Moon’s deep understanding of our church, his concern for evangelism, and his cultural perspective uniquely qualify him to co-lead the denomination during these rapidly changing times.

As requested, Elder Lee’s contact information is:

Address: 5410 25th Street NE, Tacoma, WA 98422
Phone: 917-364-1050
Email: moonh.lee@gmail.com

Grace & Peace,

The Rev. Dean R. Strong, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of the Northwest Coast

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
December 17, 2019

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson  
Stated Clerk – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202-1396  

Dear Dr. Nelson:  

The Presbytery of St. Augustine is pleased to notify you of the following unanimous action taken on October 1, 2019: “The Presbytery of St. Augustine endorses Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick to stand for election as Moderator, Co-Moderator or Vice-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly.” We understand that Sandra will be standing as a Co-Moderator Candidate with Moon Lee, ruling elder from the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast.  

Sandra is the Pastor of Kirkwood Presbyterian Church and has served as our Stated Clerk since 2012. We are certain that her background and experience, her sense of compassion and justice, and her love for God and all of God’s people will be a gift to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the role of Co-Moderator.  

Sandra is a former lawyer/mediator and an advocate for fairness and integrity. In a time of tremendous change in our presbytery, she has provided support and encouragement for our leaders and our congregations. Sandra has also attended three prior General Assemblies where she served as a committee parliamentarian while supporting our own commissioners and delegates.  

Rev. Hedrick’s mailing address is: 1337 River Oaks Road, Jacksonville, Florida, 32207.  

Our presbytery will be praying for the work of the General Assembly in 2020 as we serve our Lord Jesus Christ with “one heart and soul.”  

Grace and peace,  

[Signature]  

Rev. Diane Wilson  
Moderator of the Presbytery  

Cc: Bobbie Montgomery  
Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri  
Cindy Kohlmann
The Reverend Marie Mainard O’Connell was born in Springdale, Arkansas, and grew up in Carrollton, Texas. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) from Hendrix College where she graduated with an interdisciplinary major in Holistic Health and a minor in Religion. She later received a Master’s Degree in College Administration from the University of Central Arkansas. While in Conway, she joined First Presbyterian Church of Conway, AR, and was baptized as an adult at the tender age of 23.

After serving as Program Coordinator for the Office of Student Engagement at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, and the birth of their first child, Katie, Marie answered the call to ministry. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Master’s in Divinity from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey in 2012 with a senior project in Human Trafficking, and highest honors in preaching and academics. While in seminary, she interned as a hospital chaplain and gave birth to her second child, Kevin, which she finds to be an important point in her story, because there is always a child somewhere nearby.

She returned to Arkansas; where she found herself the co-moderator and chaplain for the Occupy Little Rock Encampment. She moved to First Presbyterian Church of Little Rock, where she was ordained and pastored for three years. She has enjoyed advocacy work with the state legislature on issues of gun rights in churches and LGBTQ rights.

Following the birth of her third, and, hopefully, final child, Jon, Marie served as the Young Adult Volunteer Coordinator at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center, and then as the Interim Minister for Congregational Care and Fellowship at Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock. Eventually the Spirit led her to the congregation of Park Hill Presbyterian Church in North Little Rock in 2018; where she currently heads a small but mighty staff and leads a congregation just over 100 persons.

Marie has been honored to serve on the Board of the Center for Artistic Revolution, an LGBTQ resource and activist advocacy group, as well as a brief stint as the Interim Director of the Industrial Areas Foundation organization of the Greater Little Rock Organizing Committee in 2016. She is grateful to serve on the leadership team of the Mosaic Church Diversity Circle Discussion Group and she co-founded the Bridge Builders Reading Group, a community book club on issues of race and class. Marie also assisted in founding Mercy Church of Little Rock, a worshiping community of those experiencing homelessness.

She has served on the Presbytery of Arkansas’s Committee for the Future of the Church, assisting in the closure of two congregations, and currently moderates the Committee on Representation. Marie is grateful to serve as a commissioner from Arkansas Presbytery and to stand as Co-Moderator for the 224th General Assembly.

“I feel called to serve as Co-Moderator because of the swift impact of the Coronavirus on the church and families, and the overwhelming sense that ministry is changing rapidly and permanently. The future is now; and we are the hands and feet of Christ for today; let us act like it.
A lifelong Presbyterian, Arthur King Fullerton was born in 1962 in Little Rock to Sam and Fufa Fullerton and grew up in Warren, Arkansas. Both of his parents and his nephew, Walker Fair, are Presbyterian Ruling Elders; and his sister, The Reverend Dr. Fairfax Fullerton Fair, is a Presbyterian Teaching Elder.

Arthur currently serves as a Ruling Elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany, NY. Within Albany Presbytery, Arthur is past chair of the Board of Trustees and past chair of the ad hoc Budget Committee. He was the first openly gay person to serve as Vice Moderator and Moderator of Albany Presbytery and is currently serving on the Presbytery’s Permanent Judicial Commission. He also served as an Overture Advocate on LGBTQ issues for Albany Presbytery to the GA in Detroit and the GA in Pittsburgh.

Arthur has also served as a member and Ruling Elder in other churches, including serving as a Ruling Elder and Trustee of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church in West Hollywood, CA (2003-09); where he also worked with the Lazarus Project. In nine months in South Florida (2003), he worshipped regularly at Second Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale and at Riviera Church in South Miami. Before that Arthur served as Building Chair and Stewardship Chair at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church in NYC (1999-2002) and was active in Presbyterian Welcome (now Parity).

Arthur holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Magna Cum Laude with Departmental Honors in History and Classics (Latin & Ancient Greek) from Tulane University, and is a graduate of the Harvard Business School with a Master of Business Administration (MBA), and the University of Pennsylvania with a Master in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP).

He has served on numerous business, nonprofit and professional boards and committees, and has taught at The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Henderson State University, and The University of Pennsylvania. Recently he helped create the U Penn Coursera Module in Positive Psychology which has had nearly 50,000 different online learners.

Professionally Arthur works as a consultant and investor celebrating God’s blessings by tithing (20 years), living debt free (20 years), and living clean and sober one day at a time by the grace of God and the 12 Steps (25 years). In addition, Arthur is active in the Harvard Business School Alumni Angels of NYC providing venture capital and advice to startups and entrepreneurs. He is proud to represent Albany Presbytery as a Ruling Elder Commissioner to the 224th General Assembly.

“I am standing for Co-Moderator not because I have all the answers, but because I have skills in fundraising, communication, strength spotting, and problem solving which our church needs in this transition.”

Arthur created the University of Pennsylvania MAPP Fete which has brought over 30% of the total program alumni back to campus each fall for seven straight years. He currently serves as Class Rep on the MAPP alumni Board. From 2012 to 2018 Arthur participated as a volunteer fundraiser for the Harvard University Capital Campaign. In 2019 Arthur again volunteered as Class Rep for his HBS class which raised a $61 million 30th reunion class gift.

In addition to church and alumni efforts, Arthur has served on the Board of the Friends of The New York State Library, and as State Development Director for Covenant House where he led teams that raised over $50 million to get homeless kids off the streets in California and Florida. He also raised more funds through his planned giving efforts for Covenant House.

Co-Moderator Candidates Marie Mainard O’Connell and Arthur King Fullerton
https://arthurkfullerton.wixsite.com/futurechurch
Marie: Text or call 214-686-6347     Email: revmariemo@gmail.com     LinkedIn:https://www.linkedin.com/in/marie-mainard-o-connell-3301aa20/ Arthur: Twitter: https://twitter.com/akfullerton     Email:akfullerton@protonmail.com     LinkedIn:www.linkedin.com/in/arthurfullerton/
The theme of the 224th General Assembly (2020) was set to be “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” based upon Romans 12:2. In light of the pandemic, the Stated Clerk has now called for the theme to be “From Lament to Hope.” How do we help the church both lament our recent losses while also living into new hope?

Before the virus struck, the PCUSA was like the ancient Israelites wandering in the Wilderness, pining for Egypt. Egypt was the post WWII era of full pews, bouncing children, and overflowing budgets; a reality long past, but still preferred. Of course, that Egypt also oppressed with segregation, marginalized women, and criminalized LGBTQ folks. As a gay man born in 1962 in the segregated South, and a Xennial minister-mom, we’re glad we left Egypt behind. Thinking back, we know God has been with us through many joys and perils, as God is with us now. Since the virus struck, we ARE lamenting this movement beyond institutions—forced out of our comfortable traditions and into the hearts of those who wish to gather in Spirit where we cannot gather in Body. Many churches won’t give up their buildings or favorite style of worship without a great deal of grumbling and murmuring. Many are even now merely waiting for “when things get back to normal” rather than adapting to the ground rippling under our feet. Part of being the Pandemic Generation is placing our hope in God, that this wilderness is crafting us to trust in our Savior instead of our own power, to feel the wind of the Spirit draw us out of our isolation. God will provide manna and servant leaders along the way—if we follow.

We are not going back to Egypt. We may still be wandering in the Wilderness, but the coronavirus has given us a glimpse of a potential Promised Land. A future Church focused more on relationships than right beliefs; a Church beyond four walls; a Church that seeks to Love God and Love our Neighbor in more than words. A Church that hears Jesus call us to be fishers of people, not building preservationists. A Church unafraid to try and fail and try again at new technologies and practices to reach seekers old and new. We can feel the new church birthing in 1001 New Worshiping Communities, in Earth Care congregations, through Matthew 25 churches, in Young Adult Volunteers, in called seminarians, in Certified Ruling Elders and in renewing CREDO experiences.

We lament by naming our challenges plainly, we cry to God with our grief, we cease to pretend that everything is okay. We lament by feeling the tears of the overworked, the tensions of the anxious, the fears of the powerless, and reminding each other, “We are not alone. Our God goes with us.” And we do not look backwards.

We live into hope when we try something new; when we redistribute resources to those most in need, we train leaders of all kinds to be resilient, we delegate power away from the center, we trust our polity for discernment, and build a sense of responsibility and ownership and purpose for our children, youth and visitors. Our task is to prepare the way for the generations to follow, who have never known Egypt.
The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

What a time to serve as Moderator! Our churches mirror a society stressed and politically divided. Scripture tells us “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” By inference, scripture reminds us God is neither a Democrat nor a Republican, neither an Apple nor an Android user, and our job as co-moderators is to tell that truth in ways our people and the world can understand.

We view these two years of service as a call to help the Church recognize our unity in the Spirit as one strengthened by our diversity, capable of overcoming the divisions of the world. We look forward to sharing stories of courage in our congregations, praying publicly and privately for the challenges we face, offering encouragement to be God’s people in difficult times, and reminding each other that the only way out of our troubles is through them. We will use our platform to assess challenges to our ministry, advocating with the Office of the General Assembly and the Board of Pensions for change, and seek out younger and broader-based talent. Our goals are to lift up the next generation into leadership during their time of optimism and passion. We want to encourage those with energy to move out front and follow their joy. We give thanks for all who have gone before us, and look with open eyes for the new people God is bringing forth.

“Those outsiders are desperate to have their uniqueness acknowledged as a blessing, not a fault; their questions and doubts honored as seeds of faith.”

“When I was in my 30’s, I was teaching business at a historically black university, and carrying a 12 Step meeting into the county jail. Many of my students were the first in their families to attend college, but the young men in the jail were school dropouts. The contrast lay heavy on my heart. After exploring this sense of call, I moved to NYC to join the Covenant House Faith Community where I worked full time with homeless youth aged 18 to 21. In Faith Community we lived together, took vows of simple living, chaste living, got room and board and $15 a week. I traded a big home for an 8x10 room with a toilet down the hall. After a little over a year, I moved into fundraising and for seven years raised millions of dollars to help get homeless kids off the street. I did this work as an openly gay progressive Presbyterian working primarily with straight conservative Catholic donors. My secret? I focused on what we had in common: wanting to help save homeless kids.”

– Arthur Fullerton

“I wasn’t raised in church—always an outsider in youth groups and worship, my desire for deeper discussions about scripture often led to the dreaded phrase, “I’ll pray for you.”

I longed for a place where my questions were welcomed as a sign of curiosity, and not proof of my inadequacy. In college I found belonging among the agnostics and heretics. Imagine my surprise to learn one day that I really believed in the Resurrection of Christ! My sense persists that people on the edge of church want in. These outsiders are desperate to have their uniqueness acknowledged as a blessing, not a fault; their questions and doubts honored as seeds of faith.”

– Rev. Marie Mainard O’Connell
The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to individuals, families, communities, and economies and has challenged the church in numerous ways. What changes have you seen in the church during the pandemic, and what lessons might we learn? How can the church’s witness be strengthened as a result of COVID-19?

On the plus side the Church is connecting with shut-ins more effectively than ever before. Zoom committee meetings and worship have a near zero carbon footprint. We are learning to be grateful for our many blessings and rediscovering that the Church is not the building, but our relationship with God and neighbors.

The reality of the COVID-19 pandemic is that poor people, immigrants, and people of color are much more likely to catch it and die. This is the truth of our unequal society laid out in body bags. COVID-19 also highlights the dignity and value of all work. Low-income people hold most of those customer-facing positions with long hours and few benefits. Immigrants pick our fruit and process our meat in conditions that are, at best, unhealthy and, at worst, deadly. The poor put their lives on the line every day. We often treat our fellow human beings as disposable rather than as equally beloved children of God. COVID-19 has revealed the stark disparities in our communities, and calls the Church to acknowledge and work against the oppressions of our time. COVID-19 also means our churches must endure in an economy battered by mass unemployment, rising bankruptcies, hunger, homelessness, and the social byproducts of despair: addiction, abuse, and depression, stretching current support networks thin.

The pandemic has revealed many challenges in the home. Parents with children are overwhelmed by the tasks of caregiving, teaching online learning, working from home, and trying to maintain social networks. Some families struggle without the routine of going to church; and need as-yet revealed spiritual supports to fit this new lifestyle. Other families have rediscovered joy and gratitude in a less busy way of being, valuing the ability to worship on their own schedules and may be reluctant to return to earlier ways. The way families engage with church has changed almost overnight, online technology emerged to reconnect some…and leave others in the dark of the digital divide. A new space for justice advocacy has become clear: access to technology and internet as a right and necessity, not a luxury. Our witness can be strengthened by leaning into our challenges.

To help our smaller churches adapt to the changed environment, Arthur would like to raise $5 million in new funds to provide 2,000 of our smaller churches with $2,500 grants to build their online capacity, enabling purchases of good equipment, upgrade Wi-Fi, and purchase subscriptions as needed. Funds might also be spent to connect low income and isolated members who need tech help to participate with our congregations in the virtual world.

To help families, Marie would like to see an emphasis on family ministries based in the home rather than in the church building or by focusing on age-ranges. Looking to the knowledge of our church educators, how can we better empower parents to find comfort and joy with the home as the first classroom of faith? In addition, many pastors refer members to mental health providers when appropriate, but how good might it be to expand this practice as a ministry of the larger Church, providing funding and opportunity? The Presbytery of Arkansas has contracted with a Teaching Elder who is also a licensed counselor to provide access to mental health for pastors, their families, and their church members when possible. Can this model be replicated elsewhere?

“Provide 2,000 of our smaller churches with $2,500 grants to build their online capacity”
How can the church community make room for all people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?

Two keys to following Christ are to follow his example and let people know - “I see you” and “You are welcome here.” The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus meeting strangers, seeing them for who they truly are, and letting these outsiders know he welcomes them – usually by making a request of them. “Draw me a pitcher of water so I may drink.”

Jesus isn’t meeting them “in church.” He’s meeting them out in the street, going about their everyday business, before they are his disciples. This would suggest the church building isn’t the best place to meet new people. Now we’re faced with social distancing as well, and it’s difficult to get close enough to talk! This means that making room for storytelling becomes an intentional choice, and not a happy accident.

As Desmond Tutu shares in his book “The Fourfold Path to Forgiveness,” a necessary step towards healing and forgiveness is to tell one’s story to a safe person, one who will not judge or interrupt with questions, but listen attentively and intentionally to the story’s meaning and impact.

One way a church community can make room for the faith stories of others is simply to ask, and listen. Marie notices that people shed hurt feelings all over the place—Facebook or Twitter are favorite places to complain—and a private message, “Tell me more” can open up a story that needs an audience. Of course that means we need to cultivate a mission of listening as a spiritual practice—and avoid the temptation for judgment and fixing until and if the bearer of the story reveals whether they need to be heard or helped. Often, what the teller needs is for their listener to be safe, to know that they will not be harmed in the telling, and Christians have largely lost the reputation of being safe—we need to earn that reputation back.

Part of making room for storytelling is asking people to walk with us in mission, as a place outside of church where such storytelling is natural. As demonstrated in the Hands and Feet Initiative, mission is something we do “with” not “to” or “for.” Arthur tells this story,

“When I was working in California, I met Don Simmons. At that time he was doing great work with the homeless in San Francisco. One day a bus full of church people on a “mission trip” from another state drove up and stopped by a large homeless encampment under the freeway next door to the church he served. He could see the folks gawking through the window and taking pictures of the homeless. Don knocked on the bus door, climbed on board, introduced himself and asked what they were doing in the neighborhood. The church folks told him they had come to see all the mission points: the prostitutes’ alley, the gay district, the homeless camp -- and the folks said “This is terrible. What can we do?”

I’ll never forget Don’s response: “Get off the damn bus.” How do we make room to hear faith stories of others not in the church?

We get off the bus. We get out of the building.
What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?

“I worshipped at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan from 2000 to 2002. As the Millennium arrived the church had about a dozen members in Sunday worship, a rundown building with a leaky roof and falling plaster, and almost no endowment. By any conventional standard of success, Jan Hus was ready to be closed, but look closer -- Jan Hus served over 5,000 people in the community every month. Think about that. A dozen disciples serving over 5,000 people. We have heard this story before, just not in this way. The lesson I draw from Jan Hus is that Jesus’ miracles of service aren’t just stories, but real-life models for how to do ministry today.” – Arthur Fullerton

“I’ve been in ordained ministry for about eight years. During that time, and before seminary, I experienced the challenges of trying to do ministry early in one’s career, with kids, without a paycheck, without benefits, on a shoestring budget, as well as interim and full time. And what has struck me has been the refrain, “the future of the Church is in part time ministry.” I believe this reality is accelerated by Coronatide (the season of Coronavirus).

I struggle with the name “Tentmaking,” because no one outside the Church gets the reference; most of the world understands this work as part of the “Gig Economy,” though I remain uncomfortable diminishing this ministry model as a mere “gig,” because it is a specific and particular call deserving of more intensive support. As far as I can see, the PCUSA has not fully embraced the reality of the Gig Economy as it impacts our part-time ministry. And I believe this has a way to put all my salary into the one useful benefit needed at the time. If the future is indeed in part-time ministry, we need to find ways to offer the justice and dignity of fully vested benefits to even our lowest paid part time ministry workers. I believe this will do more to free the Spirit and empower called people than any other new initiative.” – Marie Mainard O’Connell

“As far as I can see, the PCUSA has not fully embraced the reality of the Gig Economy”
May 30, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

At our meeting today, the Albany Presbytery voted by overwhelming majority to endorse the candidacy of Ruling Elder Arthur Fullerton for co-moderator of the 224th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Arthur is a member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany, New York, which is within the bounds of Albany Presbytery. Arthur has served his congregation and the wider church faithfully for many years, including as the moderator of our Presbytery in 2018. It is our joy and pleasure to support him as he seeks to serve the General Assembly in this capacity.

Sincerely,
Rev. Rebecca Lawson Putman, Stated Clerk
June 1, 2020

Dear Friends in the Office of the General Assembly,

I wanted to update you on the process of the Presbytery of Arkansas’ endorsement of MWS Marie Mainard O’Connell as she stands for the position of Co-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as a commissioner of our presbytery. This afternoon the Coordinating Team of the Presbytery of Arkansas, the entity which has been given the responsibility and the authority to act on behalf of the Presbytery of Arkansas between meetings or when action is needed expeditiously, visited with MWS Mainard O’Connell about her sense of call to serve Christ’s church at this time in this way. After hearing from her the Coordinating Team unanimously approved endorsing her on behalf of the Presbytery of Arkansas.

The Coordinating Team will report this action to the entire Presbytery of Arkansas at this Saturday’s Zoom Room meeting, at which time Marie will address the Presbytery as a whole. The Presbytery is poised to be totally supportive of MWS Mainard O’Connell. We are also excited that Marie is standing alongside RE Arthur Fullerton, who is also from Arkansas, and who was a member of First United Presbyterian Church of Fayetteville when I served as the Associate Pastor there.

We had planned to have the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry act on her request at their meeting tomorrow, but as other needed actions added up it made more sense for the Coordinating Team to meet and take action today. The entire Presbytery can celebrate with Marie Saturday when we celebrate our connectivity under the theme “All Together. Many Places. One Spirit.”

In Christ,

[Signature]

MWS Leslie Belden
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Arkansas

J. Stewart Smith
General Presbyter

Carol Clark
Presbytery Builder

Julie Price
Presbytery Connector

Kim Palmer
Office Manager

Leslie Belden
Stated Clerk

Brianne Christiansen
Director of Youth Ministries