

... BRIEFLY

Be Bold: Nonviolence Works

Vol. 78 Summer 2022 Annual Report Edition

presbypeacefellowship.org @presbypeace

General Assembly Good News

by Marilyn White, Austin, TX

The 225th PC(USA) General Assembly held its final plenary on July 9, after an intense three weeks of live committee meetings and virtual plenaries. As the first G.A. with a full docket since 2018, some agenda items had been pending for four years. **The commissioners and advisory delegates brought enthusiasm and energy to their committee work, making some significant decisions on matters of social justice, peacemaking, and environmental concerns.**

While groups like PPF could not participate in person, PPF worked hard over the last months to advocate for fossil fuel divestment, gun violence prevention and many international peace and justice actions. We sponsored a Facebook community for **presbys following GA225** and we had a “team on the ground” in Louisville to provide Livestream reports and interviews with participants from outside of the building. There is much to celebrate from this Assembly.



PPF GA Intern Keeran Woode livestreams an interview with Commissioner and PPFer Christine Caton, who submitted a successful Commissioners' Overture to engage with and consider divestment from corporations that sell any guns.

With many business items concerning fossil fuel divestment on the docket, the Environmental Justice Committee selected a proposal from the Presbyterian Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) recommending that Chevron, ExxonMobil, Marathon Petroleum, Phillips 66 and

Valero Energy be placed on the General Assembly's Divestment/Proscription List. MRTI's presentation stressed a preference for selective rather than comprehensive divestment. The G.A. plenary agreed, and, unfortunately, failed to also recommend the possibility of industry-wide divestment in the future.

The G.A. also approved overtures to reduce the denomination's carbon footprint, protect biodiversity, and fund carbon offsets for staff and conference travel.

The G.A. Committee on Addressing Violence in the USA and the full plenary took prophetic and practical action on issues such as voting rights, bullying and gun violence prevention. PPF celebrates the launch and funding for the “Presbyterian Decade to End Gun Violence,” involving all levels of the church. The PC (USA) became the first major denomination to support the Guns to Gardens movement, as well as the new

Cont. p. 3



1,000 guns dismantled on June 11!

Join an action circle at presbypeacefellowship.org



• Albuquerque, NM - 240	• New Haven, CT - 66
• Aurora, CO - 111	• Oakland, CA - 131
• Bridgeport, CT - 22	• Sandy, UT - 36
• Columbus, OH - 14	• Worcester, MA - 26
• Euclid, OH - 40	• plus hundreds more across 10 locations in Maine.
• Madison, WI - 29	

Save the Dates!
Activist Council Nov. 3-5 See p. 2

Briefly News

New Peace Church Curriculum

In late August, PPF's Peace Church Working Group and the PCUSA Compassion, Peace & Justice Ministry will debut a new curriculum for congregations to explore what it means to be a Peace Church. See presbypeacefellowship.org/peace-church/

Implementation Team

PPF's Interim Executive Director, David Ensign, invites PPF Activist Council members to serve on a new Implementation Team to follow up on last spring's Structure Working Group report. To help, please contact David at david@presbypeacefellowship.org

Presbyterians for Abolition

Presbyterians for Abolition is raising \$10,000 to support three Presbyterian-affiliated groups working directly with people who are incarcerated and their families. We are almost there! Can you make a donation today? Learn more at: <https://linktr.ee/presbyteriansforabolition>

Thank you, Alison Wood!

PPF thanks Alison Wood, as she completes work as Accompaniment Program Coordinator. Alison supported Colombia partners and expanded the program to the Mexico/USA border. She helped steer our Re-visioning team for future planning. Alison will continue in solidarity work along the border. Godspeed, Alison!

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A Peacemaker's Calendar

Aug. 6 & 9 Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days

Aug. 18 – Sept. 15 **Guns to Gardens Action Circle Training** - 12:30 pm ET or 7:30 pm ET options. Join other Presbyterians for online training on safe chop saw and gun dismantling procedures, publicity, pastoral care, fundraising and best practices learned from other Guns to Gardens congregations. See www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence

Sept.–Oct. 2 **Season of Peace** and the Presbyterian Peace and Global Witness Special Offering. specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/peace-global-witness/

Sept. 16-Oct. 10 **International Peacemakers Tour.** presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking

Oct. 6 - Nov. 10 **Guns to Gardens Action Circle Training.** presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence

Nov. 3-5 **Peace Fellowship Activist Council Virtual Gathering.** Daily two hour sessions at a device of your choice! Thurs. 7-9 pm ET, Fri. 4-6 pm ET, Sat. 11 am – 1pm ET. Attend as much as you are able. Look for worship, election of officers, Executive Committee report, Working Group news, Implementation Group news, plus a bit of PPF fun. Learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/ActivistCouncil2022>

Calling All Activists - Join the Activist Council!

The Activist Council gathers virtually and in person to encourage one another in the work of nonviolence in our local churches and communities and to set the direction of PPF's work. We don't act alone. We help one another.

We have grown in our ability to be in community through virtual technology. Activist Council members live all over the United States. We are all ages, with many backgrounds and areas of interest and expertise. **You** are needed to help us move toward a world of nonviolence.

The **ABCs** of the Activist Council are: **A**ffirm the nonviolence of Jesus, **B**e active in PPF, **C**ontribute each year as generously as you are able. We welcome you!

More info at presbypeacefellowship.org/activistcouncil

Nov. 6-18 **Mosaic of Peace 2022.**

Presbyterian Peacemaking Conference in Israel/Palestine. See presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking

Tues. Nov. 8 Election Day

Early Dec. Second Nation-Wide Guns to Gardens Days. For the 10th memorial of the Sandy Hook school shooting, can your congregation join in ridding homes and communities of unwanted guns? See presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence

G.A. Cont.

Gun Relinquishment Protocol of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms.

As the G. A. Immigration Committee met, the nation was shocked by news that 53 immigrants, some of them children, had died inside a truck trailer in San Antonio. If any commissioners had been reluctant to support legally risky forms of aid, this news convinced them to make a bold statement. They led the G.A. to approve these words: "We do hereby declare the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a 'Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church' that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families." G.A. approved programs and budget to strengthen immigration-related work in border areas.

In the area of International Engagement, PPF celebrates: the approval of a Commissioners' Resolution on pursuing nonviolent approaches to ending the conflict in Ukraine; endorsing a peace treaty to finally end the Korean War; and expanding the ongoing conversations about the Doctrine of Discovery to include foreign policy implications. A comprehensive report on Central America adds important context to our understanding of immigration issues.

One of the more controversial positions taken by the General Assembly was to recognize that the laws, policies, and practices of the Israeli government constitute apartheid against the Palestinian people. A small group, including some associated with Christian Zionist organizations, obtained a permit to protest this overture outside the Presbyterian Center where the International Engagement Committee met. Overture advocates and resource people explained to the committee that Israeli law permits discrimination against non-Jews in land use, development, and citizenship rights. To accompany this action, the G.A. approved a study document denouncing Antisemitism and Islamophobia. In a letter to the church explaining the General Assembly action, the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said "The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a huge responsibility as a denomination in a country that provides military aid to Israel, other countries in the Middle East and around the world. Speaking truth to power is inherent in the theological underpinnings of a prophetic voice."

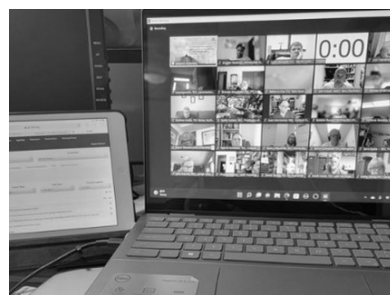
It is encouraging that much of the discussion around an overture about worship resources directed at



veterans and active duty military personnel focused on moral injury and other mental health consequences of combat. In approving the overture, the G.A. added a comment requesting that similar attention be given to those leaving the military as conscientious objectors.

A large part of the docket was devoted to items concerning Race and Gender Justice. The G.A. decided that the time has come to seriously begin the work of reparations and will rely on the new Center for Repair of Historic Harms, part of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, to guide this work through the years ahead. One of the more moving moments of the assembly occurred when white commissioners and delegates recited a litany of repentance, offering an apology to African Americans for the sin of slavery and its legacy.

Though an assembly committee recommended weaker language, the plenary approved a proposed amendment to the PC(USA) constitution to include in a minister's terms of call at least 12 weeks of paid family medical leave for the birth or adoption of a child, care for family members, or healing after a loss. PPF hopes that a majority of presbyteries will approve the change.



PPF has an institutional memory over many assemblies. Even with a return to in-person committee meetings, we saw that key voices were not heard at this assembly. Observers had no in-person

access to meetings; virtual open hearings were difficult to navigate and drew minimal participation; and the flow of energy and information previously found in the exhibit hall and at special events sponsored by groups was all missing. If the many young activists concerned about climate change had been present, response to overtures on categorical divestment from fossil fuels might have been different. If young clergy families could have testified in significant numbers about family leave, a decision to grant 12 weeks might have been made in committee instead of plenary. At the very least, committees should hold virtual open hearings during committee time, directly before items of business are considered, instead of expecting commissioners to view the testimony on their own before the committees meet. PPF hopes that changes will be made so that the hybrid assembly in 2024 will increase the variety of voices and perspectives heard by those who discern God's will for our church. Thank you to all who helped make GA 225 a witness to peacemaking.

Please support PPF's G.A. work through our GA225 Celebration Fund at <https://tinyurl.com/whjkbmn3>

Photos: Black Lives Matter banner on PC(USA) headquarters in Louisville; commissioners and others engaged G.A. online.

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Annual Report

2021 Donors – *THANK YOU!*

Thank you to each 2021 donor for your support –670 households giving together !

Please forgive and advise PPF on any mistakes or omissions. All 2022 donors will be included in next year's Annual Report.



Left, All Saints Day 2021 online memorial for PPF saints;
Below, PPF's delegation in June 2021 to Stop Line 3 Tar Sands Pipeline in Northern, MN: *left to right*, Geoff Browning, Lucy Waechter Webb, Christine Caton, Jim Hayes



*In each annual report, we honor the lives of those in our nation-wide community who have died. Just as our partners in Latin America call out the names of the saints, we mark them as ***¡Presente!** In life and in death, we belong to God.*

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 Blacksburg Presbyterian Church, Blacksburg, VA
 John Calvin Presbyterian Church, Annandale, VA
 Presbytery of the Peaks, VA
 Hope Matters, LLC, VA

Thank you, all!

2021, Clockwise from top left, former PPF Executive Director Emily Brewer hosts online Lenten Liberation Bible Study with Rev. Alex Patchin McNeill, Executive Director of More Light Presbyterians; PPF Coordinator of Gun Violence Prevention, Deanna Hollas, with Guns to Gardens chop saw and Shane Claiborne and Mike Martin of RAWtools; PPFers Bruce Gillette and Len Bjorkman celebrate Len's 90th birthday; Lucy Waechter Webb joins PPF as Manager of Communications & Digital Organizing; International Barstow Driver Award party honors activists Doug & Cheryl Hunt of Stockton, CA.





Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

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Annual Report to Donors

General Assembly

Good News! See P. 1-3



PPF's GA Team in Louisville: Ashley Bair,
Keeran Woode and David Ensign

Gun Violence Prevention News

Guns to Gardens – There are still spots open for the Aug. 18- Sept. 15 Action Circle Training. If you miss the first meeting, you can view the recording! These are one hour sessions for six weeks. They prepare congregations for considering and creating a **Guns to Gardens** event to transform unwanted guns into garden tools and other useful items. The next Action Circle training starts Oct. 6- Nov. 10. See presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence

For June 11, the first national Guns to Gardens Day, the count keeps growing as more reports come in. Over 1,000 unwanted guns were dismantled. The next national event will be in early December, the tenth memorial of the Sandy Hook school shooting. The General Assembly commended all congregations taking this action and encouraged every PCUSA congregation to prayerfully consider if they are called to help save lives by ridding homes and communities of unwanted guns.



Photo: General Assembly Co-Moderators Ruth Santana-Grace & Shavon Starling-Louis presided over major actions to prevent gun violence

Federal Action at Last! – Following mass shootings in Buffalo, NY and Uvalde, TX, the Peace Fellowship's Gun Violence Prevention Ministry joined with others across the nation to urge and equip Presbyterians to participate in the June 11 March for Our Lives events and to advocate with their senators and representatives for the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. It was passed by the Senate, House and signed into law by President Biden. The first significant action by Congress to prevent gun violence in almost 30 years, the bill tightens loopholes and enhances background checks for those 18 to 21 years old. It provides mental health and school safety funding. It encourages states to enact Red Flag laws, cracks down on illegal gun trafficking and other steps. **It is not the end of what Congress needs to do. It's the beginning!** Thank you to all who participated in the movement that brought us to this moment. Special thanks to the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness in Washington, DC.