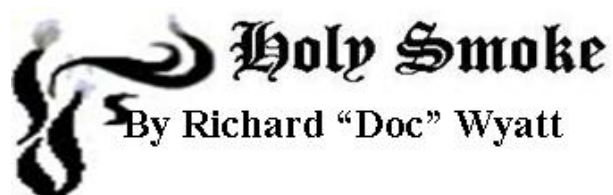



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Homesteader - October 7, 2014



### What Did They Say?

This summer, I have heard more comments than usual about what "they" said at the General Assembly this summer...not all of which have been completely accurate. So, I thought it might be helpful to share some of the things that were done.

One thing that might be most helpful is to clarify just who the "they" are. First, what the General Assembly is NOT. It is not national staff. It is not a group of 'experts' gathered or hired to tell us what's what. The General Assembly is made of folk just like us. In fact, it is us! Every other year each presbytery elects some of their church members and pastors to join with similar folk from across the country to discuss, debate, and discern how the Holy Spirit is leading our church on a variety of issues.

How are these folk selected? In Homestead, our Nominating Committee solicits members in churches to express their interest to be our commissioners. This past summer we sent two pastors and two ruling elders who were voted by the churches' representatives at a presbytery assembly.

Who determines what issues are brought to each General Assembly? Again, it's us. In each presbytery, the people from the churches decide

SOMETHING ELSE...ABORTION. Many have misunderstood our General Assembly commissioners' statements on abortion. Our commissioners have issued several statements. Here is some of what has been said:

This Assembly regards the destruction by parents of their own offspring before birth, with abhorrence, as a crime against God and against nature. (GA, 1869)

The fetus is a human life to be protected by the criminal law from the moment when the ovum is fertilized. (GA 1965)

Women should have full freedom of personal choice concerning the completion or termination of their pregnancies. (GA 1970)

The strong Christian presumption is that since all life is precious to God, we are to preserve and protect it. Abortion ought to be an option of last resort.

Abortion is not morally acceptable for gender selection or to obtain fetal parts for transplantation.

We affirm that abortion should not be used as a method of birth control.

We affirm the ability and responsibility of women, guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, in

what they would like our General Assembly commissioners to talk about. This summer, one of the ideas from Homestead was included. At a presbytery meeting, people from our churches voted to send an overture to the General Assembly about organizing synods. All of the issues at General Assembly start with action by the churches' representatives at a presbytery meeting.

Now, for some things our churches' members said:

ISRAEL. The General Assembly commissioners said several things concerning Israel:

1. The Presbyterian commitment to peace in Israel and Palestine was endorsed.
2. The right of Israel to exist was clearly affirmed.
3. Reiterated that there should also be a Palestinian state.
4. A decision was made to divest from three companies which make products specially designed to enable Israel to oppress the Palestinians within Israel. These companies, after a decade of attempted dialog with the PCUSA, refused to talk about the Church's concerns. The PCUSA benevolence guidelines prohibit investment in such activities.
5. The PCUSA continues to invest in hundreds of companies doing business in Israel.

HOMOSEXUAL ISSUES. The General Assembly commissioners took a couple of actions:

1. If the state law allows same-sex marriages, the commissioners said that a pastor would not be prohibited from officiating at such ceremonies. Note: *No pastor can be required to marry anyone. No session can be required to permit marriage ceremonies of anyone in their church.* It was recognized that same-sex couples are active members in many churches, and if a pastor is asked by a member to perform a marriage, the response should first be pastoral toward the congregation's members.
2. Asked presbyteries whether our Book of Order should be changed to read:

*"Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites*

the context of their communities of faith, to make good moral choices in regard to problem pregnancies.

We call upon Presbyterians to work for a decrease in the number of problem pregnancies thereby decreasing the number of abortions. (GA 1992)

In life and death, we belong to God. Life is a gift from God. Life is precious to God, and we should preserve and protect it. (GA 2006)

Humans are empowered by the spirit prayerfully to make significant moral choices, including the choice to continue or end a pregnancy. Human choices should not be made in a moral vacuum, but must be based on Scripture, faith and Christian ethics. For any choice, we are accountable to God. (GA 2006)

As can be seen from these samplings, our commissioners have said many things on abortion. Such statements of a General Assembly speak only for the commissioners at that assembly. Not for the church as a whole. And not even for subsequent assembly commissioners. They are statements by people of faith, trying to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit, and offered to the whole church for prayerful consideration.

At Homestead's next PRIMETIME! (November 20 at Clarkson) our commissioners to this summer's General Assembly will share with us some of their work on our behalf.

A booklet of the proposed changes to our Book of Order will be given to each church at the November assembly as well.

The vote on all amendments will be at the February 2015 meeting.

## THANK YOU HOMESTEAD!

*What a great surprise to receive the check for Beaver Crossing Friday! We had 1 of our final meetings with the Beaver Crossing Long Term Resource Committee this week. Our site managers and case workers had 19 cases from the Beaver Crossing tornado. Some didn't meet the criteria but many received help. The benefit*

*the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community."*

No pastor can be required to marry anyone. No session can be required to permit marriage ceremonies of anyone in their church.

*at our York church donated \$1307.00 with an add'l \$100.00 to be sent. Our portion from Presbytery was \$3064.68 and we were overwhelmed. This paid for a lot of windows, contract roofing, etc. Sincere thanks to Homestead Presbytery for their support.*

cont'd.....

*Connie Rucker (First Pres., York)*

### Blessing Opportunity 2 Corinthians 9:7-8



Make a donation to the [Habitat for Humanity - Presby Build](#)

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### Keep Thinking...

You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try.  
-Beverly Sills

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