

MISSION MATTERS – July 2022

July 2022 - Five words that mean a lot of work

“Commissioners, you have been advised.”

That was the statement by one of our Co-Moderators with each piece of business coming before the plenaries of General Assembly 225. And what that meant was seven Missionary Advisory Delegates (MADs), along with Young Adult, Theological Student and Ecumenical Advisory Delegates, had weighed the information, testimony and how we experienced God’s will before casting our decisions.

Those five words constituted a lot of energy on our part.

This Assembly’s MADs included Nancy Smith-Mathers, who serves in South Sudan; Ellen Smith, regional liaison in Eastern Europe; Catherine Chang, the Philippines; Jed Koball, Peru; Cheryl Barnes, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe; Doug Dicks, Israel and Palestine; and me, serving Haiti.

With General Assembly beginning June 18 and running through July 9, we each had a lot of information to digest. Each of us served a committee, and Smith, Dicks and Koball also served as resource people, providing additional information to committees as requested on topics.

Committees met in person at the newly renovated Presbyterian Center over several weeks, rotating to keep numbers to a minimum at one time in response to Covid protocols. Then, from July 5–9, we logged on to participate in the online plenaries. Some of these sessions lasted late into the evening!

Each of us had participated in the weeks before in different committees at the Presbyterian Center. For most of us, it was the first in-person gathering with staff, though all gatherings were

under strict guidelines to reduce exposure to Covid. Indoors, we wore masks and as best we could we practiced social distancing, but it was great being together again.

For five of us, it was our first time as MADs, and Dicks and Smith both had served in past General Assemblies.

In our committees, each of us made new connections and appreciated the hard work that goes into overtures — both creating and supporting them. Several of us were resource people for our regions, jumping back and forth into different committees as needed to answer questions.

When committee work ended in early July, each of us had returned home or to a place in the U.S. to participate in plenaries online from July 5 through 9.

This was by far the most challenging part, at least for me. In addition to recalling the nuance and passion that went into the committee votes, we needed to get up to speed on hundreds of items of business before the Assembly. Quite a number were emotionally charged, particularly those involving divestments, reproductive health, support of abuse survivors and violence.

A highlight of Assembly work for each of us was remaining in touch over text while all plenaries took place. We shared information concerning committee actions we'd taken part in, and we were able to encourage one another during long afternoons and evenings. Especially encouraging was Barnes, who logged in from her home in Malawi in late afternoon and stayed engaged until plenaries ended, some of them into the early morning hours.



Cindy Corell
Mission Co-worker
Haiti
Presbyterian Church (USA)
July 22, 2022