

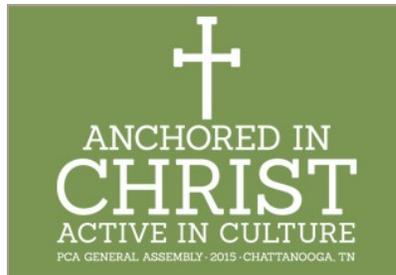


## PCA General Assembly Report 2015

*Alexander S. Brown, Minister*

ON WEDNESDAY July 1<sup>st</sup>, at our monthly Social Dinner I will give you a personal report about this year’s General Assembly. As every year I will touch on some of the highlights of the Assembly to make you aware of some of the issues that are at work within our denomination, but to give you a quick snapshot of the week I wanted to share with you Jason Helopoulos’ report that appeared last week on Kevin DeYoung’s blog.

Jason Helopoulos is an Assistant Pastor to Kevin DeYoung at University Reformed Church, which recently left the United Reformed Church and came into the PCA. His overview of the activities of the Assembly week is, I think, fair and accurate and hopefully will give you a quick insight into what happened and what is going on with the PCA.



**Location:** This year’s General Assembly was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

**Moderator:** The PCA elected Mr. Jim Wert as Moderator of the 43rd General Assembly. Mr. Wert serves as a ruling elder at Intown Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He has been actively involved in all levels of the church’s courts.

**2014 Numbers\*:**

Churches & Missions:	1,831	(increase of 23 from 2013)
Professions of Faith:	9,425	(increase of 299 from 2013)
Membership:	358,516	(decrease of 1,318 from 2013)
Total Family Units:	136,849	(decrease of 477 from 2013)
Long Term Missionaries:	596	(decrease of 24 from 2013)
Two Year Missionaries:	115	(decrease of 3 from 2013)
Missionary Interns:	230	(decrease of 46 from 2013)
Two Week Missionaries:	4,599	(decrease of 211 from 2012)
RUF:	125 campuses in 42 states and in 60 Presbyteries	

\*The Stated Clerk noted that less than half of PCA churches report their statistics. He believes the PCA actually would have shown modest growth in 2015 if all churches did report their statistics.

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## July Calendar

### Sunday

9:30 a.m. Sunday School  
“Why We Trust the Bible”

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship  
“Joshua”

6:00 p.m. Evening Worship  
“The Pastoral Letters”

Children’s Church, Nursery available

- Sun 6/28 Guest Minister  
Mr. Ed Forester, IPC  
(AM & PM Worship)
- Wed 7/1 “First Wednesday”  
Social Dinner & GA  
Report - see pg. 2
- Sat 7/4 4th of July Holiday
- Sun 7/5 Sacrament of the Lord’s  
Supper (10:30 a.m.)
- Mon 7/6, 20 Ladies Bible Study  
(6:00 p.m., Chilton home)
- Thu 7/9 CE Committee  
(4:00 p.m., Brown home)
- Tue 7/21 Stated Session Meeting  
(6:00 p.m., GIPC)
- Tue 7/28 Mission Committee  
(6:00 p.m., Huddlestons)
- Thu 7/30 B&G Committee  
(6:30 p.m., GIPC)

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## General Assembly Report

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### Major Issues/Actions of this Assembly

- Civil Rights:** Ligon Duncan, the Chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary, and Sean Lucas, Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, brought a personal resolution to the General Assembly floor seeking to acknowledge and confess the PCA's sins and failures during the Civil Rights era. This personal resolution came to the floor with a unanimous recommendation from the Overtures' Committee that it be referred to next year's Assembly.
- Sabbath:** North Texas Presbytery sent an overture to the Assembly seeking to establish a study committee to consider revisions to Westminster Confession of Faith 21-8, Westminster Larger Catechism 117 and 119, and Westminster Shorter Catechism 60 and 61. The main concern expressed was the "recreation clause," which prohibits recreation on the Sabbath day. As noted in the overture, many ordinances take an exception to the Standards on this point. The study committee was soundly defeated on the floor by a vote of 662-248-9.
- Paedocommunion:** Paedocommunion continues to be a "hot topic" in the PCA. The Committee on the Review of Presbytery Records (RPR) cited two different presbyteries for actions related to pastors being ordained or transferring into their bounds, who took exceptions to Westminster Larger Catechism 177. WLC 177 states that the Lord's Supper should only be administered "to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves." Minority reports were filed regarding both of these cases and the Assembly adopted both minority reports on votes of 535-245-37 and 438-315-35.
- Officer Trials:** An overture came to the Assembly seeking to change the Book of Church Order. This change would have required officers to testify in cases involving doctrinal issues. This suggested change generated more debate than one would expect. Concerns were expressed about "witch hunts" and the fear of being required to take "the stand." This was the closest vote at the Assembly. A substitute motion to answer the overture in the negative was adopted by a vote of 477-455-15.
- Complementarianism:** The PCA continues to be a solidly complementarian denomination. The Committee on the Review of Presbytery Records (RPR) cited the Philadelphia Presbytery for sustaining the ordination exams of a candidate who was not "100% sure the New Testament itself teaches a universal prohibition on women eldership" (\*I wrongly stated in the original post that this pastor is now moving to the RCA. He has not filed to do so and continues to be a member of the Philadelphia Presbytery. My apologies.). A minority report emerged from RPR recommending that the Assembly not cite Philadelphia with an exception of substance on this matter. The Assembly was overwhelming in its vote on this issue, rejecting the minority report by a vote of 258 in favor and 554 against.

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## "First Wednesday" Social Dinner

Wednesday, July 1st  
6:30 p.m.

All are invited to a potluck dinner at the home of Betty Young-Smith. The main dish, BBQ Brisket, will be provided; please sign up in the foyer to bring a side or dessert to share. Rev. Brown will share a summary report on the PCA's 43rd General Assembly.

## Building & Grounds

Repairs to the plumbing system have been completed, involving replacement of the electrical panel for the grinder pump and relocating the panel away from the playground area.



The Building and Grounds Committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday, July 30th, 6:30 p.m. at the church. If you have any questions or suggestions about the maintenance of the facility, or would like to use your gifts by serving on the committee, please see Nick Chilton.

## Finance

### Loan Update

Loan Balance 5/26/15	\$724,155
June Payment:	
Interest	\$ 3,548
Principal	\$ 2,400
Total Payment	\$ 5,948

## Men's Ministry

The Men's Fellowship will resume in the fall with a new study based on the book, "The Life of God in the Soul of the Church," by Thabiti Anyabwile. Copies are available in the foyer.

## General Assembly Report

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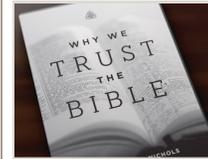
### Issues to Watch

1. **Connectional Nature:** The PCA is a connectional church. However, less than half of its churches report statistics, only 1,320 commissioners attended the Assembly, and most churches do not support the agencies and committees of the denomination. Our ministry and witness would be much stronger if more churches were willing to engage in the courts of the church, support the work of the denomination, or at least report their statistics.
2. **Paedocommunion:** I am concerned that a view and practice which was foreign and marginal in the PCA a decade ago has become part of the fabric of the denomination. In no way do I believe this is a majority or even a significant minority view in the PCA, however, its seeming acceptance as an allowable doctrine in the PCA is worrying. This doctrine is too important to come through the backdoor. If the PCA is going to entertain paedocommunion than a change like this necessitates much thought, study, debate, and discussion. The Apostle Paul made it clear that one must “discern the body” or they eat and drink judgment on themselves (1 Corinthians 11). We dare not wander into the acceptance of this doctrine or its practice unless we truly believe this is what the Scriptures teach. Souls lay in the balance.
3. **Debate Regarding Officer Trials:** The debate regarding officers being required to testify at doctrinal trials was disappointing. Warnings about “witch hunts,” fear of repercussions in civil court, and concern about being able to adequately articulate a personal defense were the most voiced concerns. These are fine concerns to express, but not to rule the day. I fear that we live in a day and age where honesty and forthrightness are little valued. At least in the courts of the church, they must be valued and I would hope and expect that men would be more than willing to honestly and forthrightly express their views on doctrine having been ordained to an office which requires doctrinal fidelity.

### Personal Encouragements

1. **Courage:** Duncan and Lucas’ courageous personal resolution stirred a necessary and needed discussion in the PCA. As most southern denominations, the PCA and its churches failed and sinned in numerous ways during the Civil Rights Era. It is an issue that demands attention. Conversation throughout the week of General Assembly centered upon this resolution. Even more importantly, the debate on the floor was helpful, challenging, and encouraging. I have great hope that next year’s Assembly will seek to address our sins and failures as a denomination and *begin* the long process of healing and reconciliation on this front. The most important moment of the Assembly was the courageous speech made by Rev. Jim Baird, former pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi and founding father of the PCA. Rev. Baird acknowledged his own personal failings and sins during this era and asked for forgiveness. His example set the stage for an extended time of confession and prayer on the final night of the Assembly.

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## Adult Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

*God's revelation:  
where would we be without it?*

In this helpful six-week series produced by Ligonier Ministries, Dr. Stephen Nichols covers topics such as The Authority of Scripture (Inspiration and Inerrancy); The Development of the Canon (Why Sixty-Six Books?); The Clarity of Scripture (Why So Many Interpretations?); and The Sufficiency of Scripture (Scripture for Life).



## Women in the Church

The Monday Evening Bible Study will continue during the summer, meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the first and third Monday of each month at the Chilton home, 106 Arthur J. Moore Drive. The current topic is: *Praying the Names of Jesus*.

The Wednesday Morning Bible Study, along with the Book Group for Women, is set to resume in September.

## GOLDEN ISLES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Phone: 912.638.2563  
E-Mail: [office@gipc-pca.org](mailto:office@gipc-pca.org)  
48 Hampton Point Drive  
Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

### *Missed a Sunday?*

Sermons are available at:  
[gipc-pca.org/sermons](http://gipc-pca.org/sermons)

## General Assembly Report

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### Personal Encouragements (continued)

- Faithfulness:** The Assembly was firm in its vote citing the Philadelphia Presbytery and their ordination of a man who was not “100% convinced” the New Testament taught a universal prohibition of women eldership. I am not aware of anyone in the PCA advocating for women pastors or elders, but this ordination was a wrong step in a direction we cannot afford to head. Once again, the PCA has stood firm on a doctrine and practice that is often maligned in our current cultural context. This speaks well of its resolve, faithfulness, and submission to the authority of Scripture.
- Prayer:** I was thankful to be a part of an Assembly that spent extended time in prayer. Personally, I have attended twelve General Assemblies, and I can’t remember an Assembly in which we spent as much time in corporate prayer. What an encouragement to the soul and how good it is to practice what we confess and teach. The PCA is a church dependent upon the Lord, confesses such in its theology, and demonstrated such at this Assembly.
- New Leadership:** The PCA is experiencing a transition in generations. The founding fathers are few and far between at the Assembly. The second generation of leaders is moving into the role of seasoned sages. What was increasingly observable at this year and last year’s Assembly is a coalescing strong leadership in the thirty and forty something age groups. These men are serious about the gospel, reaching the lost, and faithfulness in the courts of the church. The future of the PCA appears to be in good hands.
- Unity:** Insiders in the PCA perennially try to label different “camps” within the PCA. No doubt, there are differences in emphasis, trajectory, and commitment among brothers in the denomination. Yet, I was encouraged to witness another year of palpable unity. The PCA still needs to define itself on a number of issues, but in many ways I think it has settled into what it is and shall be. Men are not pushing as hard in one direction or another as they were fifteen or even ten years ago. In my humble opinion, there seems to be more a spirit of unity and harmony around the essentials.

### Overall

As was true of the 42nd General Assembly, so is true of the 43rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, this Assembly won’t create headlines around the world or be noted in histories of the Presbyterian Church. In many ways, I am thankful for that. It was a good Assembly as the church conducted its very routine and ordinary business. We made theological pronouncements, exercised pastoral concern, worshipped, fellowshiped, and encouraged the mission of the Church. May God keep the PCA true to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed Faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

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*This article first appeared at <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2015/06/17/pca-general-assembly-report-2015/>*

## World Missions

GIPC provides prayer and financial support to a number of individuals and families involved in reaching the nations for Christ.

Missionaries depend on our prayers. In order to know what to pray for, newsletters are available in the church foyer.

In a recent update, Pastor Makuku, serving in Kenya wrote:

“ We continue to look to Christ in the ministry He has called us to. He is our Blessed Hope. Please pray that we will be spiritually alert to see the power of God even in the midst of a lot of persecution and failing strength. Persecution here is real and scary. ‘To live is Christ and to die is gain.’”

Shop at AmazonSmile and Amazon will make a donation to:

### Golden Isles Presbyterian Church

**GIPC** is registered with AmazonSmile\*, which will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from eligible purchases to our church.

1. Type [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) into your web browser.
2. Select “Golden Isles Presbyterian Church” as the charity you wish to support.
3. Bookmark [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) so that GIPC benefits every time you shop online!

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**JULY**

*"They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11)*

**Family Worship**

**Old Testament Reading**

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<b>Joshua</b>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		5-6:5	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		6:6-27	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		12,13	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		14,15	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		16,17	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		18,19	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		20,21	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	<b>Judges</b>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		10-11:11	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		11:12-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		14	<input type="checkbox"/>

**JULY**

*"They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11)*

**Family Worship**

**Psalms & New Testament**

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<b>Psalms</b>	126-128	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		129-131	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		132-134	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		135,136	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		137,138	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		139	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		140,141	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		142,143	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		144	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		145	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		146,147	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		148	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		149,150	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	<b>Acts</b>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		18	<input type="checkbox"/>

**JULY**

*"They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11)*

**Private**

**Old Testament Reading**

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<b>Isaiah</b>	63	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		64	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		65	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		66	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<b>Jeremiah</b>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
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21		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		21	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		25	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		26	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		27	<input type="checkbox"/>

**JULY**

*"They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11)*

**Private**

**New Testament Reading**

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<b>Matthew</b>	11	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		21	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		25	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		26	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		27	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		28	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	<b>Mark</b>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		13	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Week beginning JUNE 28**

**Matthew 6:7-8**

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

**Week beginning JULY 5**

**Matthew 6:9-13**

Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**Week beginning JULY 12**

**Matthew 6:14-15**

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**Week beginning JULY 19**

**Matthew 6:16**

And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

**Week beginning JULY 26**

**Matthew 6:17-18**

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.