

Friday, July 9, 2010

A Fair and Fluid GA

By General Presbyter, Mike Cole:

As I prepare to leave to drive home to Houston and reflect on this GA, two words come to mind: fair and fluid. As this GA worked through a myriad of issues and overtures, it has sought to be fair to all concerned. That doesn't mean that I agree with every action or that every action of the GA is balanced the way I'd like to see, but it does mean that the commissioners tried their best to take all perspectives into consideration in making decisions.

Yes, we'll have another vote on G 6.0106b but the GA vote was fairly close. No, the GA didn't re-define marriage, but they did commend two study papers representing very different perspectives to the church. No, the GA didn't refuse the report from the Middle East Study Committee, but they did significantly improve it to make relations with our Jewish brothers and sisters less tense. Yes, the GA voted to denounce Caterpillar, but they didn't vote to divest. Yes, GA voted to move forward with translation corrections in the Heidelberg Catechism, but they do so in consultation with other Reformed bodies who are also working on a more accurate translation. Yes, GA approved sending the new Form of Government to the presbyteries for a vote, but they did address many of the concerns raised during the period of study. Yes, the GA did approve establishing a commission for Middle Governing Bodies, but they made sure that the commission would be working in response to initiatives from middle governing bodies rather than initiating actions themselves.

This was also a GA that desired to be fluid and flexible. The new Form of Government, the Commission on Middle Governing Bodies, the study papers on Christian marriage and civil union all point to a GA that wants the denomination to be more nimble and adaptable to our rapidly changing context. I see these are positive actions which will enable us to become more missional and transformational in structural ways. There is still a lot of work ahead of us, but the actions of the GA give us a framework for doing God's work together.