

Are You a GA Junkie?

June 13, 2018

In anticipation of the 223rd General Assembly, which starts this Friday, test your GA knowledge with this true-or-false quiz:



1. The “GA” is a bunch of people in Louisville, Kentucky, who make decisions and foist them on to the rest of us.

False. While there is an Office of General Assembly (OGA) in Louisville, its role is to support the work of the General Assembly, which meets every other year in different cities around the country. The OGA arranges for the General Assembly and implements its decisions but is not itself the decisionmaker. The General Assembly is comprised of 538 commissioners, who are ruling elders and teaching elders from all the presbyteries; they make the decisions.

2. The GA will be held in St. Louis this year and in Baltimore in 2020.

True. Through the Hands & Feet Initiative, the Office of General Assembly is helping our denomination have continuing, positive influences on the host sites.

3. Small presbyteries don’t have equal representation at the General Assembly, and the big presbyteries vote as a bloc.

False. While presbyteries with large membership do send more commissioners to GA, none of our commissioners are intended to be representatives who vote as directed by their constituents. Instead, commissioners are expected to discern the will the God in the moment and to vote their consciences.

4. The GA is an insular process with the same small group of people making decisions without outside input, year after year.

False. Every two years, each presbytery selects its commissioners and usually will commission people who have not previously served. In addition, the GA committees allow active participation by Young Adult Advisory Delegates, Theological Student Advisory Delegates, Mission Advisory Delegates (our international mission co-workers), and Ecumenical Advisory Delegates (ecumenical partners from the US and other countries). These special delegates give advisory votes during the plenary before the commissioners vote on each overture or resolution. Agency staff and other interested parties also give input.

5. GA is divisive because we don’t agree on hard issues, and it weakens the unity of the church.

False. It’s correct that Presbyterians rely on the GA as a place to struggle with hard issues, such as immigration, gun violence, sexuality, patriotism, international peacemaking, and climate change. Affirming that the Church is reformed and always reforming, we believe that God continues to speak to us in new ways when we create intentional space to discern God’s will. When we let go of a desire to win and truly seek clarity around God’s desires, then we can

confront the issues, rather than confront our sisters and brothers, in a way that meets our responsibilities under the Book of Order: to protect our church from errors in faith and practice, to assure the expression of our theology remains true to the biblical standards in our historic confessions; to be a witness for truth and justice in our community and in the world community; to set priorities for the church; and to establish relationships with other churches or ecumenical bodies.

So, how did you do?

5 of 5: You're a GA junkie! You've probably been to a GA and wish you could go back. You can help your colleagues understand the importance of this gathering. Take time to pray for the energy, wisdom, and creativity of our commissioners and YAAD this week and next.

3-4: Not bad! You've got the basics down. Spend some time following the GA business as it progresses at pc-biz.org/#/ to learn more.

0-2: You're just beginning the adventure! You might benefit from reading the daily GA news next week to learn about the decisions being made. Sign up to receive the news electronically each day at ga-pcusa.org/.



Commissioners have voice and vote in assembly committees and when the assembly meets in plenary.



Commissioners can also make motions and offer amendments.