



Sausages

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I'm not sure there's a better word to describe the work of our General Assembly: sausage-making. It's messy. There are lots of pieces and parts that make up the end product. It only happens because of some serious technical expertise. In the end, though, we are glad for what comes out of the process. Sausages.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) completed its biannual discernment into God's will for the church. Commissioners from every presbytery across the country came. Members and pastors of rural churches in small towns and big churches in cities. Chaplains and teachers, lawyers and farmers. Seniors and youth. We invited ecumenical delegates from partner denominations around the world to help advise us. It was big, messy, and technology-dependent. In the end, we pray that we've moved the church – in word and deed – closer to God's desires for us.

The topics discussed ran the gamut of issues connected only to the church (e.g. new rules of discipline) to the church's stance on fossil fuels, abortion, voting rights, and gun violence. Some would say that's going too far and that the church should not be political.

It is true that the church is prohibited from picking candidates or campaigning on their behalf. We won't tell you for whom you should vote. That is a matter of your wise decision-making and persuasion as a Christian.

The church, however, does get involved in the life of our country. Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka, who spoke at our last Presbytery Gathering, just shared a [wonderful interview](#) with Ann Gibbs, regarding lifelong discipleship. During the interview, he made reference to an approach he uses at his church: "If you're talking about it out there, we should be talking about it in here." When matters of our communal life affect us, the church should be prepared to speak on it and to consider whether and how the bible might guide us. Jesus didn't shy away from topics like welfare for the poor, marriage, taxes, health care, money, and the government. We might not always agree on how to interpret Jesus' response to secular issues, but we should be prepared to dive into the debate to see if our Christian faith can help guide our response. If we believe that all matters are under God's authority, then I pray we can open ourselves to the possibility that God intends for the church to serve as God's agent in all matters. Suggesting that the church stay out of these important issues silences the bible and the church's witness.

So, we get sausages. We will share more about the specific items of business that might affect us in the months to come. A few will require the vote of a majority of presbyteries in order to take effect, so your voice will be still heard though the General Assembly has adjourned. Stay tuned to learn more.

My deep hope is that you will take away that this process was not a perfunctory process that led to predetermined outcomes from a select few in Kentucky. People just like you prayed, studied, advocated, and worked long hours to discern God's intentions. We might not get it perfectly, but we have done our work faithfully. Thanks be to God!