



## **226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Salt Lake City, Utah**

**June 25<sup>th</sup> – July 4<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Committee work online (June 25<sup>th</sup> – June 27<sup>th</sup>)**

**Travel (June 28 -29)**

**General Assembly Plenary ( June 29 – July 4)**

### **The Presbytery of the Highlands sends 2 Elders, 2 Ministers and 1 Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAA)**

The Presbytery Nominating Committee presents the following Ruling Elders and Ministers to serve as Commissioners at the 2024 General Assembly meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The presbytery will elect two ruling elders and two teaching elders to serve.

The committee asks the presbytery to consider issues of diversity when choosing candidates. This includes criteria such as gender, age, racial/ethnic diversity, size of church, diversity of churches, and providing an opportunity to those who have not attended to participate. The following is this the applications of Elders and Ministers who have applied to be commissioners to the 226<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

# Ruling Elder Applicants Vote for 2

## **Elder Craig Barth**

### **Presbyterian Church in Morristown**



#### ***Local Church Involvement***

Current: 2nd Term on Session on Worship & Music Committee,  
Former Chair of W&M,  
Rep from Communications and Tech To Session.

Additional Current: Safety Committee, Youth Music Mentor, Welcoming Committee,  
Comm & Tech Assistant. Adult Education Committee.

#### ***Presbytery Involvement***

Current: Synod Permanent Judicial Commission and itinerant substitute church  
music leader.

Former: Administrative and Coordinating Team and served on an Administrative  
Commission to help a church in crisis.

#### ***Have you attended the General Assembly as a Commissioner before?***

Yes, GA 220 in 2012 for Newton Presbytery – serving on the Ecumenical and  
Interfaith Committee and as a YAAD in 1972

#### ***Tell us about yourself:***

Lifelong Presbyterian, though not afraid to seek the Spirit's movement in the most  
seemingly surprising places. Happily married to my wife Elizabeth (30 years). Two  
(fully employed) sons. Private Practice Audiologist (35 years).

#### ***What excites you or concerns you about GA?***

I have seen the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Love, at  
times, infiltrate all Council levels of this Denomination. It requires listening with  
both our ears and our heart, and parking personal agendas at the door.

Reformed and always reforming seems to be the overarching goal at both the G.A.  
and the local church level. I expect the 226th G.A. to be as important (though more  
peaceful) than the 220th. God is calling us to be more efficient with our  
administrative structures and systems on all Council levels, yet have especially this  
Council continued to be our social witness to the world at large

***What excites you or concerns you about the church today?***

We, as a gathered faith community of believers and seekers, we no longer have the comfort or complacency of being the "social norm." in our local communities. Yet, the call to "witness and worship" is as strong today as ever before. How? Does that mean the future Church will re-form back to an Upper Room? Will it be an Online Community with no geographic bounds, serving in place of, or besides, our brick and mortar? This is both a joy and concern that will energize me for years to come.

**Elder Alec Jain**

**Presbyterian Church of Morris Plains**



***Local Church Involvement***

- Finance Committee and Finance Chair
- Served on Session
- Preschool Committee
- 150 year celebration committee
- Community outreach ministries

***Presbytery Involvement***

- Presbytery meetings
- Permanent Judicial Commission
- Administration and Coordinating Team
- Presbytery Budget and Finance Committee
- Interfaith NJ Coalition

***Have you attended General Assembly before –***

yes. 2020 for Newton Presbytery, the Pandemic virtual assembly

***Tell us about yourself:***

Married 18 years with 3 children. US government employee for 22 years. Active in bridging church/community to our family.

***What excites you or concerns you about the General Assembly?***

- GA is an opportunity for me and the local church to learn more and develop more of our spiritual walk.
- GA is where our local, regional and national topics can have a voice and result.
- GA to some is complex and difficult to navigate but I feel one person has a voice at GA and can make a change.

***What excites you or concerns you about the church today?***

- The church recently has become more appealing to more people, offering more services to its community.
- It has become a place more transparent and a place where you can have your spiritual walk at all degrees.
- My concerns are lack of ability for younger members to participate, letting more families engage there.

**Elder Scott Riker  
Highlands Church, Long Valley**



***Local Church Involvement***

When three local churches shared a ministry and then merged, I was involved in the process and served on several PNCs. Served on Session and finance and budget committees. Implemented last Sunday lunch to bring the congregation together. During the Pandemic set up ZOOM meetings , implemented sanctuary camera and sound system. I have lead Bible studies and filled the pulpit.

***Presbytery Involvement***

Served as a commissioner for the church. Have attended many seminars and workshops. Served on Administration and coordinating Team and the Presbytery budget team during the Presbytery Transition. Always loved worship at Presbytery meetings.

***Have you attended General Assembly Commissioner before?*** Attended last GA in 2022 in Louisville. Served on the Polity committee. Enjoyed the process of crafting motions. Lead the committee in prayer and was inspired by the learning of the stories of commissioners and staff.

***Tell us about yourself.***

When I retired from working in IT for 47 years, I wanted to become more involved in the church. My faith strengthens me and encourages me in all I do.

***What excites you or concerns you about GA?***

Excited to see what has been accomplished by committees and commissions that were set up I 2022. Concerned that they may not achieve they could. The world

needs the church so badly. Looking forward to the group worship. Concerned about the kind of environment Salt Lake City will provide.

***What excites you or concerns you about the Church today?***

Concerned about what is happening with the church today. I see a church with substantial assets that does not seem to find its way to meet the needs of the world. I see very faithful , dedicated, and creative people risk being ground down and burnt out by the world. I am excited that I might have a chance to make a difference.

Minister Members Applicants  
Vote for 2

**Rev. Robin Palmer Burton**

**Highlands Presbyterian Church – Long Valley**

***Presbytery Involvement***

In this Presbytery I am serving on the Committee on Ministry and an Administrative Commission. In previous Presbyteries I have served on a variety of Committees and as chairperson of CPM and Mission. I have also served several terms on the leadership council.

***Have you attended GA before –***

Yes 2014 – Detroit

***Have you attended GA on your own before?*** Yes, 1989, 1991 , 1996, 2012

***Tell us about yourself:***

I am a lifelong Presbyterian, ordained a Deacon at 16, Ruling Elder at 22 and then as a teaching Elder. I embrace the Presbyterian form of government and the shared leadership between Teaching and Ruling Elders.

***What excites you or concerns you about G.A.?***



The world and the PCUSA is ever changing. I look forward to and encouraged by how we as Presbyterians embrace those changes and see where the Holy Spirit is leading us as a denomination. I get excited about worshipping together and gathering with people from the United States and across the world as we share our joys and concerns for our denomination and the world and work together to answers Christ's call to do justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

***What excites you or concerns you about the church today?***

Burdened by the division and desperation I see in the world, I am deeply grieved by the ways I believe God is being mischaracterized and misrepresented, both inside and outside of the church. I look for ways we can come together as Christians and Presbyterians to uplift the church and its people.

**Rev. Rich Gelson**  
**Pilgrim Presbyterian Church**



***Local Church Involvement***

- Solo pastor • Very active as mission partner in various community and county agencies concerning homelessness as well as addiction and recovery.
- Work collegially with local colleagues for the Presbyterian Depot (established when I served the former EMMCO)

***Presbytery Involvement***

- Currently serving on COM • Twice served in the past on the Board of Camp Johnsonburg

***Have you attended General Assembly as a Commissioner before? If so, when?*** No

***Have you attended General Assembly on your own before? If so, when?***

No

***Tell us about yourself:***

- Will be 54 years old this coming November. • M.Div, PTS '97; Ordained since 1998. Have served three 1K (at the time) suburban congregations with a focus on small group discipleship and local missions. Have served two "Pastor Driven" (vs. Program) sized congregations – in my 8th year at Pilgrim after serving a decade at Fairmount. • Happy husband to Rev. Stefanie Muntzel and proud dad to Young Adults Anna, Becca and Crosby. • Singer and songwriter, kayaker, nature photographer

***What excites you or concerns you about G.A.?***

- Excited to experience this level of collegiality, worship, and future discernment while bringing 25 very active years of adaptive experiences to the ministry of GA.
- Excited about Matthew 25 initiative and eager to learn more.
- Concerned about how to practically connect GA outcomes on the local level, especially given the ongoing natural attrition rate, the unyielding cultural shifts away from centralized, institutionalized spirituality and religion, and the impact of the dangerously conflicted political climate in our country.

***What excites you or concerns you about the church today?***

- Worship is both. Exciting because I'm glad and grateful for the Holy Spirit's intercessions and that I still absolutely love preaching and leading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Concerning because streaming worship, empty pews, and sharply declining contributions do not build and sustain community.
- Excited about ongoing progressive conversations and community care, while also concerned about the level of intolerance and hate coming from extremist corners of society.
  - Concerned about my ability to continue being an adaptive leader as well as train and elect other adaptive leaders.

**Rev. Fred Milligan**  
**Community Presbyterian Church**  
**Ringwood – Interim Pastor**



***Have you ever attended GA as a commissioner*** – NO

***Have you attended on your own?*** Yes – multiple times

***Tell us about yourself.***

I am a lifelong Presbyterian and soon to be Honorably Retired Minister of Word and Sacrament. I have served congregations in Chicago, Whitewater Valley, Lackawanna, Mackinac and Philadelphia Presbyteries as well as the General Assembly as Associate for Stewardship Education. I also served as Head of staff of the Santiago Community Church in Santiago, Chile for six years. My attendance at General Assemblies was related to my roles as Executive Director and President of the Urban Presbyterian Pastors Association and Presbyterians for Earth Care as well as staff responsibilities during my time on the General Assembly staff. I have served several terms on the national boards of directors of Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association and Presbyterians for Earth Care and have spoken before G.A. committees during several of the General Assemblies which were considering matters related to these groups. I have drafted successful Commissioners resolutions as well as Presbytery overtures on various matters related to these interests.

In recent years I have become increasingly involved with matters related to the Climate Crisis. I attended the COP26 Climate negotiations in Glasgow, UK in 2021 and the Interim consultations in Bonn, Germany in 2022. I assisted the ACT Alliance office at the U.N. with local activities around the Climate Ambition Summit in NYC in September, 2023.

***What excites you or concerns you about GA?***

I am eager to be engaged with the decision-making processes which will affect the future life and ministry of our denomination.

What excites you or concerns you about the church today? I believe the PCUSA is in a process of adjusting from an "established" church with all the elements of privilege and disconnection from the needs of the poor and excluded that position entailed, to a "church on the margins" with an opportunity to walk in solidarity with, and learn from those on the margins in our world as well as the voiceless creatures. And in doing so we have an opportunity to bear witness to the crucified and risen Christ in our midst and represent a genuine alternative faith community to Christian Nationalism which has enthralled so many Americans. I believe we are the church called forth for this moment in history. It would be an honor to serve the as a commissioner to the next General Assembly