

Greetings,

My name is Nicole Castellano, and I was lucky enough to attend the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly this past June as a Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD) representing the Presbytery of Santa Fe. Going into this experience, I had little to no idea of what to expect. I was scared, excited, but most of all ready to learn more about the church and denomination that I care so deeply for.

All of the YAAD's were flown in two days prior to the beginning of the assembly. Within these two days, we received training on what to do in our assigned committee and on the plenary floor, met with candidates for moderator and co-moderators, and learned more about one another. I have never met such an incredible group of young individuals. They all exemplified leadership, strength, and compassion. We all still talk on a day to day basis updating each other on our lives and what is going on in our churches and presbyteries. The bond between all of us is strong and present, something I will always cherish.

Committee work was interesting, yet exhausting. I was on Committee 6, which was Church Polity and Ordered Ministry. Big key issues for my committee included parental and family leave, disciplinary cases, and session membership. Committee work took up two days total, with meetings from nine in the morning, to eleven at night. In most cases, a committee is assigned about 7 to 8 pieces of business to handle. My committee had a total of 24 pieces of business, so I got really lucky! While the days were long, the business was very interesting and I was able to go into plenary fully prepared to handle this business in front of the assembly.

Plenary meetings were familiar to me. I was able to attend a plenary meeting back in 2012 at the 220<sup>th</sup> GA. I knew they could get intense, and very long. Days were really long for me because the day before plenary began, I developed the worst head cold. I am sure that the commissioners around me were tired of hearing my coughing and sneezing for 12 hours a day 3 days straight! While trying to manage and ignore my cold, I was able to delve into business and comprehend all the information that was being given to me. While advisory delegate votes do not count on plenary floor, I liked the job of being able to advise commissioners on how a certain piece of business should be handled. While some votes did not go the way I wanted, most of them did, and I was told by many commissioners that they were listening to the YAAD's and to not be afraid to have our voice heard. The co-moderators, Vilmarie Cintron-Olivieri and Cindy Kohlmann, handled the assembly very well and made sure that each voice was heard and that topics of concern were given a fair amount of time to be discussed.

GA was the most amazing and spiritual experience I have ever had and I would do anything to go back and relive it. I met so many astounding individuals, heard the most exceptional sermons, and grew a strong love for church politics. Our presbytery has a wonderful group of youth. I advise you all to listen and make conversation with those in your church, in hopes that one of them in the future will want to serve this presbytery in such a high honor as I did. I am so thankful that the Presbytery of Santa Fe deemed me the best candidate to serve and represent all of you as a YAAD.

Blessings and Peace,  
Nicole Castellano