

2022 MODERATOR REPORT

In the spring of 2021, I received a call from David Ackerman inquiring whether or not I would accept nomination to the position of Assistant Moderator of the Penn West Conference. I was told that I would serve for 2 years and then be promoted to Conference Moderator for another 2- year term. The genius of such an arrangement is that one becomes totally familiar with the operation of the conference before ascending to the top spot.

I treated this invitation as a call from God and after a short period of contemplation and prayer, I acquiesced and was nominated and elected at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the conference.

I have been active in the Clarion Association and the Penn West Conference for soon 40 years; however, I quickly learned that my limited experience only revealed the tip of the iceberg in so far as conference operations are concerned. There are multiple committees meeting periodically with many dedicated committee members from across the conference serving thereon and establishing future conference priorities and goals. It is expected that the Assistant Moderator and the Moderator attend and actively participate in each meeting. One soon gets a feel for all that is happening and is planned in the conference. There is a learning curve and after a few months one becomes more comfortable believing that one is contributing to the overall effort. All I can say is thank God for Zoom. I am able to be fully participatory in all conference matters from the comfort of my home office, thus saving 2 or 3 trips a week to Greensburg and an hour and a half commute each way.

Suddenly, in January of 2022 the Conference Moderator, June Boutwell, resigned her position. She left big shoes to fill because she was a former conference minister and an operative in the National church, and was pastor of the largest congregation in Penn West. June's knowledge and experience made her job as moderator seemingly effortless for she had been there and had done that, no matter what issue was being discussed.

At the February 2022 meeting of the Penn West Board, I was persuaded to accept the position of Moderator. As everyone knows, except for paid staff, this conference operates with volunteers and I must say that we need more volunteers everywhere we look. No matter who you are, what skills you may have and where you find yourself on your Christian journey, we need you. Just tell the conference office that you are willing to help us, and we will find a place where we can best utilize your efforts.

Another thing that everyone can be a part of is our Caring for Churches/Caring for Clergy team. We are trying to raise \$500,000, most of which money will be invested so that the income therefrom will be used perpetually to provide mission grants to individual churches throughout the conference for reaching out, strengthening the church or operational support. This program has been a vital part assisting churches with their priorities during the recent past. Everyone can support this effort by making a financial pledge or introducing us to someone who will.

I am also hopeful that we can fund a new church start in the conference. The Birmingham Church in the Pittsburgh Association recently closed and left us a bequest in excess of \$100,000. While this money could plug many holes, I believe we should undertake a feasibility study as to whether and where to locate a new church start. While this will not be an easy task, we are charged to make disciples, and we must reverse the trend across the conference of church closings and shrinking membership.

Please join us in whatever way you are led. Nothing makes stagnation more likely than for you to do nothing!

George R. Kepple

Moderator