

Rationale for sending letter concerning Islamic prayer to the Stated Clerk of GA and the Co-Moderators of the 222nd GA and resources to understand the issue

Rationale:

The session of 1st Presbyterian Church – Rochelle believes that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should not pray to Allah nor be led in prayer by one who does not acknowledge the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation. We can and should be in relationship with people of any and every faith, seeking common ground where we can find it, but this does not mean that our General Assembly should pray in the name of Allah. This seems exceedingly simple to us. We would not invite a cleric to pray at our annual congregational meeting; so why would those who organize the bi-annual meeting of the General Assembly do so? Our letter appeals to the leadership of the GA to make right a wrong and to ensure that it does not happen again.

Resources:

There is no dispute about what happened at General Assembly concerning the Islamic prayer that was prayed. What is in dispute is whether this should have happened and whether it should happen again. Listed below are a number of web-sites that document this moment.

<https://pres-outlook.org/2016/06/general-assembly-remembers-victims-charleston-orlando-massacres/>

<http://www.layman.org/prayers-allah-offered-pcusas-general-assembly-plenary-session/>

<https://mateenelass.wordpress.com/2016/06/23/wide-is-the-straight-path/>

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/presbyterian.church.u.s.a.caught.reciting.muslim.prayer/89667.htm>

As noted in the second linked article above, the Stated Clerk of the GA (at the time of prayer) offered an apology, later that day, to any who were offended by it. His apology can be viewed in the video of GA noted in that second link. While an apology is nice, it completely side steps the issue of the actual content of this prayer and whether or not it should have been prayed at GA.

Our new Stated Clerk has written a defense of this moment that can be found at the following link: <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/remembering-biblical-narrative-shapes-our-interfai/>. This defense raises more questions than it answers. Surely our interfaith commitments and reaction against Islamophobia don't require or invite us to pray to Allah. There is no defense for such action in the midst of a meeting of the GA.

The Stated Clerk notes that resources have been made available to help those concerned "understand what took place." With all due respect, we understand what took place, believe that it should not have, pray that it never will again and seek to work positively toward that end.