



Leaders along the path of Jesus

To the pastors and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

In the midst of a beautiful and broken world, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is bold to lift up a [vision for young people](#) that gives us hope for a church that “acknowledges and celebrates youth as the keepers of God’s world, capable of serving as agents of healing, friends to the friendless, and leaders along the path of Jesus.”

Among the settings in which we see this hope for Christ’s church most fully realized is the General Assembly, where the voices and the opinions of young Presbyterians are vital to the body’s communal discernment and decision-making process.

At past assemblies, whenever we felt our energy levels begin to flag, we had only to look toward the example of our Young Adult Advisory Delegates (YAADs) to be renewed. Not only is their enthusiasm contagious, their tireless commitment to the process, the issues, the worship, and the calling to be “leaders along the path of Jesus” is inspiring.

One such leader at the 219th General Assembly (2010) was Dakota Santana-Grace, a son of the Rev. Ruth Santana-Grace, executive presbyter of San Gabriel Presbytery. Dakota, who is now a freshman at Harvard University, approached his role as a YAAD with a great sense of responsibility and excitement at what this body of Presbyterians—by the power of the Holy Spirit—could accomplish together to the glory of God.

Dakota says that what he enjoyed most was watching Presbyterian leaders at work. “What’s cool about Presbyterians is that even if we disagree about something, we’re willing to argue about it and to come together,” he says. “We don’t leave or walk away from the table.”

Among the YAADs who have been elected to serve at the 220th General Assembly (2012) is Hannah Trawick, an 18-year-old high school senior from Salem Presbytery who plans to attend the Presbyterian-related Queens University of Charlotte in the fall.

“I am excited to work with other Presbyterian youth from around the country and learn more about the government of the PC(USA),” Hannah says. “I am also curious to see what the PC(USA)’s mind frame is for the future. Although the votes of the youth delegates do not ‘officially’ count, they do

represent the thoughts of the future leaders of the PC(USA).”

Dakota has some advice to offer this assembly’s YAADs. “Keep an open mind and have fun,” he says. “The YAAD days are long, exhausting, and life changing. Make friends, smile, and talk to fellow YAADs and commissioners—they’re all amazingly interesting and intelligent individuals. Also, be willing to become close with those that are different from you. It is these bonds of friendship that will open our minds to possibilities we can hardly imagine.”

Dakota’s encouraging words are indeed for all of us as we journey together toward Pittsburgh.

Faithfully yours,

Linda Valentine, Executive Director of the General Assembly Mission Council

Grady Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly



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