

## DAVID PARKER

### Declaration of Candidacy for the Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

*Ruling Elder David Parker (First Presbyterian Church, Statesville, North Carolina) served as Moderator of Salem Presbytery in 2012. He has been active on and has moderated Salem's Executive Council. In 2010 he was a commissioner to the 219th General Assembly in Minneapolis. David has previously served as chair of the North Carolina Democratic Party, two-term chair of the Mitchell Community College Board, and as an Iredell County School Board member. David is a lawyer, having graduated in Economics from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, and from the UNC School of Law. David is a "cradle" Presbyterian from White Memorial Church in Raleigh, NC and is married with three children and one grandchild. He has been elected by Salem Presbytery as a commissioner to the 222nd General Assembly in Portland, Oregon. David's candidacy for Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly was endorsed unanimously by Salem Presbytery on November 7, 2015.*

In declaring as a Ruling Elder candidate for the Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I understand that a Moderator, to paraphrase Reinhold Niebuhr's wonderful prayer, must have the serenity to let folks do the on-going work of the Church to which they have been called, the courage to be a prophetic voice as "Ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace" both inside and out PC(USA) for some 730 days, and the wisdom (with God's help) to know the difference!

For seven of those 730 days, the Moderator has "gavel duties" during the 222nd General Assembly. Chairing a State party in North Carolina through both state and national conventions, moderating Salem Presbytery, and presiding over numerous non-profit and community college board meetings as a volunteer, and countless small group meetings as a practicing attorney for 35+ years has taught me to temper Robert's technicalities with the spirit of the gathering. Hard work can be fun if done in the right spirit ... and a little levity doesn't hurt either, even for Presbyterians!

It is the time between General Assemblies, whether speaking as Ambassador or engaged in PC(USA) appointments and work, that is both the opportunity and the challenge. To sound our prophetic voice with Paul's clarion call certainty, we Presbyterians must envision what we do best given our spiritual, intellectual, and financial capacity in the context of other American spiritual institutions. Moderator Heath Rada has started the visioning process and it requires completion through the GA process in Portland and concrete implementation thereafter. Our vision should be for PC(USA) beyond the next five years, but also over at least the next 25 to 50 years to include the emerging church, our existing models, missional models, and our role as peacemakers.

Both our governance and our leadership models should enable PC(USA) to discern and efficiently implement that vision. We must govern ourselves to best fulfill the overall mission and great ends of the Church, no matter how our ministries are organized and regardless of our moderatorial model.

We Presbyterians emphasize self-governance through continual and conscientious education to discern God's Will (and Word) by being connected with and learning from others, including some with whom we may not immediately agree. This gives us an enormous spiritual and intellectual capacity to answer God's call in this world: 1.6 million believing, Holy Spirit-filled members, 9800 churches, 21,000 Teaching Elders, and 35,000 Ruling Elders willing to be active lay servant-leaders. Adding the resources available through our Presbyterian seminary, college, and university communities, our service agencies, conference centers and their leaders gives us a wonderful springboard for active ministry and for the larger church and society!

As "learning Presbyterians" (led by "Teaching Elders"), we find ourselves in an increasingly segmented world labeled according to TV network, party label, and (all too often) religion. There are too few venues where people of good faith can come together in a sanctuary setting to rationally and prayerfully consider their call to go out into the world in peace, having courage, and loving and serving the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. This can be our mission of reconciliation. Jesus tells us that peacemakers are called the children of God. It is a worthy vision for Presbyterians.

To be active peacemakers, we must be concretely aware of the evolving American demographic. Being nearly 90% of one race or native language or ethnicity is quite simply a recipe for the failure of our mission as the priesthood of all true believers in our increasingly diverse America. We must move as one body of Christ in the world – more as a part of the whole rather than merely as faithful colonies. The current challenges to our corporate being may well find answer in expanding our demographic profile and our peacemaking in the world starting in our own pews, choir lofts, and pulpits.

Going forward, I look forward to meeting and talking with folks both before or during General Assembly and to hearing the thinking about moderating, governance, and the Co-Moderator or Vice-Moderator leadership models – and most importantly, the vision for PC(USA)'s role in this rapidly evolving world.

