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This General Assembly was the “first service” I’d done for the presbytery (besides a few divine ordinations!) since having a baby at the start of the pandemic. So naturally, I approached the whole thing like a new parent: knowing I had a lot of work to do and knowing I would never know enough about what I was doing (despite all the reading I’d done and the dozens of people who had given me advice). And like a baby achieving new feats each day in their new world, we truly grew, and did, so much, in such a short time, that I forget what all we did! I read an article this week about how the denomination will continue relevant conversations with the Episcopal Church and thought: that’s great! And it took me another couple minutes before I realized: oh, wait, my committee did that! If you haven’t reviewed anything about what General Assembly looked like, or all the work that was accomplished, I can very highly recommend this recent summary: <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2022/7/12/summary-general-assembly-actions/>

It was an arduous sleepy-eyed journey, not unlike new parenthood, figuring out how to do all these things on Zoom, in person, and both, alongside other committee members. I always relish the connectional nature of our denomination, though, and greeting all sorts of different people while we figured out which headphones don’t mute properly, was **technically** lovely... I also had the great privilege of getting to see Cristi Scott Ligon, Therese Howell, and Laura M. Cheifetz in action. And I’ll never tire of seeing women from Middle Tennessee bring grace and grit and good humor to parliamentary procedure. Loorrd, just saying the words parliamentary procedure makes me want to groan... there are many terms and phrases in our polity that feel exclusionary, but these leaders and several others made thoughtful efforts to understand, and to be better understood, so that no one would feel unwelcome or left behind. Like all things, nothing was perfect, but good work was done. And there is still lots of good work to do!

It was difficult knowing that given the amount of work we had to do and the limitations of our safety measures, no item of business or person could always be appreciated to the level they should be—there was a suggestion that was made late one evening, when everyone was obviously tired from several hours of Zoom, about adding a domestic violence training to the boundary trainings we pastors receive, and I hope our smaller bodies of process will hear that suggestion, and other good ones like it, that didn't make it through the assembly this time. But overall it was a good lesson for me in trusting the process, even the parliamentary ones, and of trusting that siblings in our denomination had done a good work that we as an assembly could then approve quickly with enthusiasm. It was especially encouraging, for me, to see things like family leave and broader inclusive language measures passed with great support. Personally, it was also enlightening, as a young parent, to have a lot of freedom in choosing what childcare I thought we would need. The General Assembly policy for childcare was basically that: get what your family needs, so that you can serve fully, as you have been called to serve here.

Instead of trying to plan for all of the different childcare needs of the Assembly, and provide for them (that'd be expensive, tedious, and impossible to do well!), caregivers picked what worked for them: you could bring your family with you, have someone travel to be with your child at home, or you could hire help—even for the online portions, which is essential. No one can Zoom with a toddler for longer than a **hard** 70 seconds! Becoming a parent, especially now in all the uncertainties of our world's best plans, I know how hard it can be to serve the church without feeling like we're letting loved ones down in the process. Flexible options for caregivers are cost effective and graceful. I'm excited to continue to hear more new voices, especially as more caregivers of all kinds are inspired into the life of the denomination.