

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) elects first Native leader of General Assembly

People in the [July 29, 2020](#) issue



Elona Street-Stewart (Photo courtesy of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))

In a landslide vote on June 20, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) elected its first Native American moderator of a General Assembly.

Elona Street-Stewart, a member of the Delaware Nanticoke tribe, ran for comoderator of the 2020 General Assembly alongside Gregory J. Bentley, pastor of Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.

The pair's goal was to promote diversity within the denomination. Back in April, when they announced their joint run, Bentley, who is black, told Presbyterian News Service he believed that together, he and Street-Stewart represented "the pain of our past" as well as the "possibilities of the future."

Street-Stewart, a ruling elder and the executive of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, is also the first Native American person to be a synod executive within the PCUSA, which is 90 percent white.

Following her installation as comoderator, Street-Stewart told denominational reporters that what the world needs right now is a church that doesn't fear diversity. "White supremacy is a hard issue because there's a lot of fear involved," she added.

While concerns about the coronavirus will initially keep the duo from doing much travel, Street-Stewart said that once travel restrictions are lifted, she and Bentley plan to be very conspicuous. They want to challenge the prevailing ideas of what Presbyterian leadership looks like.

"We aren't going to fit the profile. We aren't going to fit the measurements that people want in all places," she said. "We might fit the description of something that people fear or couldn't imagine." —*Christian Century* staff