Originally this was going to be a typical greenmonkey irreverent piece about interfaith dialogue (or the almost exclusive “duality” of interfaith dialogue) as described by some 219th General Assembly commissioners this blogger heard, but I have changed my mind.

Over heard from Committee #8 (Ecumenical and Interfaith relations) was a dialogue that should give us hope. Committee #8 was tasked among other items with consideration on two important papers; the first was “Christian and Jews: People of God”, and the second was “Toward an Understanding of Christian-Muslim Relations”. Without getting into the incongruity of the titles, these were two very different works with different recommendations, and two different outcomes.

The first was presented as a finished study guide but was referred back for further work and reflection due in large part to the lack of a voice from Middle Eastern Christians, many of whom are Presbyterians. The second paper was presented as a beginning, a start on a work that would be completed over the course of 4 years. This paper was almost unanimously approved by the committee to be accepted by this GA, but the deliberations were the revelation.

Many of the supporters in the committee stood and said that their local Congregations were desperate for materials that would help them engage in a dialogue about Islam and with their Muslim neighbors. D E S P E R A T E.

So can we conclude that 1) there is genuine desire to engage with the Muslim community, and 2) there is a critical need for the PCUSA to provide appropriate study materials?

This cynic believes so.