



237TH ASSEMBLY
“SEEKING AFTER THE LIVING GOD”
Isaiah 43:18-17

“WHO MOVED MY CHEESE” video drove commissioner conversations as the **237th Synod of the Mid-Atlantic** discussed topics of Racial Reconciliation and Revisioning the Synod. Might the last of the 16 PCUSA synods reorganized after the 1983 Reunion, with its historical baggage and present opportunities, become a relevant participant at engaging Ruling and Teaching Elders, presbyteries, and congregations in transformative conversations taking us into deeper waters? In the face of campaign sound bites, violent rally images and a political season unlike any seen by this generation, are Presbyterians from North Carolina to Delaware willing to **risk submerging themselves below their southern politeness** to admitting that all is not right with the world and Christ Church? Can we talk? Can we have civil discussion? Can we begin to discuss Kingdom solutions? “I’m just saying...”

Vice Moderator, Alice Tewell, **set the context** as the Assembly’s Worship and Devotional leader. Her illustrations were on point and her message pierced our hearts as she exclaimed - “Black Lives Matter!” In the face of Baltimore, Orlando, Ferguson, and New York, are all lives valued equally? Aren’t people of color children of God too? Whether the goal of creating an environment within this region in which Presbyterian Christians can or will discuss the **greatest issues of our time** was met, the jury is still out; however, we can affirm that such conversations can occur. Conversations must occur with all stakeholders seated around the table who are serious about “Seeking after the Living God.” We can do this if we become better listeners, remove the walls that separate us, become more inclusive, and willing to adapt to the changes that impact our lives and God’s creation.



Coordinator for Intercultural Ministry, Sterling Morse, provided commissioners with two choices for contemplation. He juxtaposed opposing images; one of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., marching holding hands with diverse neighbors; the second image portrayed an African American man with hands up. **Sadly, we are living with the latter image**, even though King’s Dream was to develop a Beloved Community. He demonstrated that the Confession of 1967 speaks to our current situation by stating, “*To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as God’s reconciling community. This community, the church universal is entrusted with God’s message of reconciliation and shares God’s labor of healing the enmities which separate people from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church maintains continuity with the apostles and with Israel by faithful obedience to his call.*” Morse read from Isaiah 43:18-19 “**Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.**”



What new synod cheese is there to discover or create? How does the synod prepare a table in the

region in which all are welcome? Who are persons and groups living in the margins, but are needed around the table?

Additional conversation focused upon the March 7, 2016 Presbyterian Outlook Article by Moderator



Heath Rada. His article became homework for commissioners in preparation for Tuesday’s discussion. Rada asserts that, “Presbyterians are struggling with how a predominantly white denomination can be part of a multiracial future.” Then he offers a new way forward by suggesting a number of steps. We have highlighted two of them here: 1) **“For the next two years, the PC (USA) should focus on racism and dismantling white privilege**—using that as a lens through which to consider all its work. 2) The PC(USA) needs to move away from old structures that no longer work and figure out “what is the next structure,” better suited for a smaller church.” Synod Moderator David Sanders commented, “God is leading us in a different direction as evidenced in the 237th Assembly. We are about to do a new thing!”

REPORTS, ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

Stated Clerk Report: Three guest presenters were introduced: Clayton E. Rascoe, Executive Director of Massanetta Springs; Kim Bobo, Executive Director of Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy; and Sterling Morse, Coordinator for Intercultural Ministries – Racial Ethnic/Women Ministries (PMA). The 2014 COR Report was submitted to the OGA; The Synod responded to the General Assembly’s Boundary Mandate through its discernment process, writing a final report, and participating in the Dallas Boundary Consultation that included 15 of the 16 synods. No synod voted to change its geographical boundaries at this time. The Synod Permanent Judicial Commission dismissed four complaints. Attention was given to 2015 unpaid per capita; see grid on the last page of this publication. The Synod Clerk stood and signed with religious leaders across Virginia on the Syrian refugee Crises, New Rules on Solitary Confinement, Sensible Gun Control, and Virginia Health Care Coverage Gap in support for Medicaid Expansion. He has been active with the Moral Monday Movement and Interfaith Dialogues between Christians, Muslims and Jews.



Big Tent: Jim Moseley gave an overview on the Synod-Wide Big Tent Event. Massanetta Springs can house it. The dates are to be determined. Attendees would include Presbytery Execs, Stated Clerks, Synod Commissioners, and Synod Officer/Staff. Invitees would include Representatives of our constituency groups including Latino, Korean, Women of Color, Black Caucus, Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men and other identified immigrant groups such as Ghanaians, Cameroonians etc. AND possibly seminarians and Young Adults...and itinerating mission co-workers...and possibly CRE’s from various presbyteries... Presbyteries will be asked to underwrite cost of attendees. Synod is asked to provide scholarships for racial ethnics. More to come!

Visioning and Identity: Commissioners spent considerable time discussing “New Cheese” / “New Vision” for the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic. Through a process facilitated by Sterling Morse, Commissioners reaffirmed the work completed by the 2015 Synod Discernment Committee. **Therefore, the Synod is called to:**



- Engage presbyteries and bring them together to create a new vision of God’s Community
- Offer regional events to get people to connect with the larger church
- Become the bridge for building relationships
- Participate in Mission work together
- Educate the church on what the synod does
- Help small churches to find their cheese
- Break down barriers so that we don’t impose our privilege on others
- Invite younger generation back to church
- Invite those without money, power and influence to the regional Big Tent

Nomination Committee: The membership for four designated committees was approved. Vacancies exist on synod committees from the following presbyteries: **AKAP** – Jubilee 2018, Speer Trust 2018; **CHA** – Jubilee 2018; **EVA** – Nominating 2017; **NHO** – Nominating 2018, Representation 2018, Jubilee 2018; **SAL** – Representation 2016, Jubilee 2016, Permanent Judicial 2021; and **WNC** – Nominating 2016. The Assembly reaffirmed Massanetta Springs Board of Trustees membership and Dr. Roberta Miller was approved to serve on the Westminster Presbyterian Homes Board. The Assembly approved a five-year-term for SPJC Members elected in the class of 2021 in order to comply with the three-class rule.

Finance Committee: Synod per capita will remain at **\$.80 for 2017**. The Presbytery Initiative budget funding plan was approved using the 20 quarters rolling average of 4% formula. Concerns were expressed about presbyteries failing to complete 2015 per capita support. The outstanding balance was more than \$6,000.00; namely from Salem (\$3,419.25); Peaks (\$1,563.50); Coastal Carolina (\$240.00) and New Castle (\$687.00). AKAP paid its balance after the 2015 cutoff date.

Grants and Awards Committee: The committee approved **scholarships and grants totaling \$63,550.00**. Awards included Euler Scholarships to five seminarians totaling \$31,757.00; Moseley Scholarship awarded two high school students totaling \$4,913.00; New and Small Church Grants were awarded to six churches totaling \$21,880.00 included Good Hope (WNC) \$1,300; Capitol Hill (NAT) \$1,580; Robinson Memorial (WNC) \$4,000; Silver Hill (CCA) \$5,000; Rosewood (JAM) \$5,000; and Anchor of Hope (ABI) \$5,000. A Visionary Fund Grant of \$5,000 was awarded to UKirk Campus Ministry (WNC).

Administration Committee: The committee approved medical benefits reallocation into a retirement annuity for the Synod Administrator. Tasks are to bring a **Synod Child Policy to the 238th Assembly** and evaluate the Executive/Stated Clerk. Carson Rhyne was approved as the Synod Treasurer. Administration will oversee the Presbytery Minute Review. Commissioners are urged to complete synod evaluation forms.

Presbytery Initiatives Committee: The committee approved funding projects totaling \$16,450.00. Proposals include the Virginia Council of Churches Faith Leadership Summit for \$1,000.00; New Pastor’s

Training for \$1,500.00; Women’s Spirituality Retreat for \$2,000.00; Presbyterian Women Stop Hunger Now for \$2,950.00; and the Leadership Institute for \$9,000.00.

Kate B. Reynolds: The Certifying Committee authorized Wells Fargo Bank to distribute \$592,088.00 in equal shares to **450 retired teaching elders** who met its guidelines. Each distribution check amounted to \$1,315.75. The committee meets June and December.

Speer Trust Fund: The committee approved six applications totaling \$30,000.00 from churches in Presbyteries of the PEA, NAT, CCA, NHO and WNC.

Synod Per Capita is calculated on General Assembly’s 2014 presbyteries membership multiplied times the **2016 rate of \$.80 per member**. The grid below lists the 14-presbyteries, executive leadership, stated clerks, 2014 presbytery membership and 2016 per-capita totals for each presbytery in the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.

<u>PRESBYTERIES</u>	<u>EP/GP/TP/LEADER</u>	<u>STATED CLERKS</u>	<u>2014 MEMRS</u>	<u>PER CAPITA .80</u>
Abingdon (ABI)	Randall Webb	Bill Parish	3,603	\$2,882.40
Atlantic Korean American	Nam Hong Cho	Nam Hong Cho	2,530	\$2,024.00
Baltimore (BAL)	Interim Mary Gaut	Catherine Blacka	14,898	\$11,918.40
Charlotte (CHA)	Betty Meadows	Tamara Williams	33,825	\$27,060.00
Coastal Carolina (CCA)	William Reinhold	William Reinhold	26,262	\$21,009.60
Eastern Virginia (EVA)	Liza Hendricks	John Tamm	15,514	\$12,411.20
National Capital (NAT)	Wilson Gunn	Sara Coe	31,089	\$24,871.20
New Castle (NEW)	James Moseley	Robert Schminkey	8,630	\$6,904.00
New Hope (NHO)	Ted Churn	Ted Churn	28,314	\$22,651.20
Peaks (PEA)	Nancy Dawson	Hugh Springer	15,388	\$12,310.40
Salem (SAL)	Samuel Marshall	David Vaughan	26,514	\$21,211.20
Shenandoah (SHE)	Roy Martin	Kerry Foster	14,080	\$11,264.00
The James (JAM)	Carson Rhyne	Carson Rhyne	20,539	\$16,431.20
Western North Carolina WNC	Bobbi White	Cam Murchison	15,974	\$12,779.20
TOTALS			257,160.00	\$205,728.00

IMPORTANT DATES

June 18-25, 2016 - 222ND General Assembly in Portland, OR

September 12-13, 2016 - 238TH Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, Richmond, VA

October 28-30, 2016 – Moderator’s Conference, Louisville, KY

STAY TUNE FOR THE 2017 SYNOD-WIDE BIG TENT!!!