

**REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK AND EXECUTIVE
241ST SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC
March 12-13, 2018**

Welcome:

Excused: Ruling Elder Ed Terry – BAL and Margaret Washnitzer - NAT

Omnibus Motion: The Assembly will address the Omnibus Motion or Consent Agenda during Plenary Tuesday morning. If any Commissioner wishes to remove an item from this motion, please let the Clerk know by noon today.

Communications: The Stated Clerk's Office communicated with stated clerks and presbytery executives concerning the per capita updates, the need to fill vacant commissioners and synod committee spots and to encourage presbyteries and churches to apply for Synod Peacemaking Funds.

Two Referrals

Kate B. Reynold – The KBR Certification Committees submits amended guidelines for synod action. As such, the Trustees, Wells Fargo Bank, Legal Department has reviewed the edit without objection. Additional updates will be done to the guidelines with the assistance of a lawyer. This matter was referred to the Administration Committee.

Massanetta Springs Camps and Conference Center has submitted its Article of Incorporation for action by the Assembly. Massanetta's Board of Trustees approved a change to its incorporation and now needs the approval of the synod as indicated in its By Laws. This matter was referred to Administration.

Compliances - Presbyteries have been extra slow in providing synod commissioners who are to begin their term in 2018. Their inaction has impacted the office and the nominating committee's ability to assign Designated Committees members. The following presbyteries are out of compliance with the synod standing rules and the clerks of each presbytery will be notified of such:

- NAT has provided two ruling elders instead of one teaching and one ruling elder
- NHO has provided two teaching elders instead of one teaching and one ruling elder
- PEA has provided two teaching elders instead of one teaching and one ruling elder
- SAL has provided one commissioner. A second commissioner will be forthcoming after their March Presbytery Meeting

Per Capita – All but one presbytery completed its per capita giving in 2017. Peaks Presbytery adopted a policy several years ago prohibiting it from paying per capita for churches who requested that no per capita be sent to the synod and general assembly. The Synod Stated Clerk has discussed this matter with Peaks Transitional General Presbyter who is researching it further. The Book of Order G-3.0106 offers guidance on per capita. *"Each council above the session shall prepare a budget for its operating expenses, including administrative personnel, and may fund it with a per capita apportionment among the particular congregations within its bounds. Presbyteries are responsible for raising their own funds and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to their respective synods and the General Assembly. Presbyteries may direct per capita apportionments to sessions within their bounds, but in no case shall the authority of the session to direct its benevolences be compromised."* The synod is grateful to each presbytery for meeting its commitment. Synod Per capita for 2018 is \$.85.

Minutes Review – Copies of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Minute and Records from the 2016 and 2017 Stated Meetings have been submitted for to General Assembly for review. The Synod Stated Clerks will meet March 5-7, 2018 in Dallas Texas to complete the review.

Leadership in Transition - The Synod contains 14 presbyteries. Between mid-2017 thru the end of 2018, nearly 80% of presbytery leaders will or would have retired or relocated to new calls.

1. Abingdon Presbytery – Vacant since 2016
2. Atlantic Korean American Presbytery – The Rev. David Kang was elected Executive/Stated Clerk and began service January 1st
3. Baltimore Presbytery – The Rev. Jackie Taylor is entering the second year of service
4. Charlotte Presbytery – The Rev. Jan Edminston will begin service May 1st. The Rev. Betty Meadow is retiring in March
5. Coastal Carolina Presbytery – The Rev. Bill Reinhold is retiring in October. A Search Committee is at work
6. Eastern Virginia Presbytery – The Rev. Liza Hendrix is entering her fifth year of service
7. James Presbytery – The Rev. Carson Rhyne is retiring at the end of the year
8. National Capital Presbytery – The Rev. Wilson Gunn will retire by the end of the year
9. New Castle Presbytery – The Rev. Jessica MacMillan will be elected the Connectional Presbyter in March. The search continues for a Missional Presbyter. Jim Moseley will move to a new call
10. New Hope Presbytery – The Rev. Ted Churn is entering his sixth or seventh year of service
11. Peaks Presbytery – The Rev. Carl Utley began service as Transitional General Presbyter May 2017
12. Salem Presbytery – The Rev. Steven Scott will begin service as the Transitional General Presbyter March 1st
13. Shenandoah Presbytery – The Rev. Bronwen Boswell began service in October 2017

Office of the General Assembly – Stated Clerk James Herbert II was hosted by the North Carolina Presbyteries for a day fellowship, conversations and lunch. Salem Presbytery took the lead with representatives of both clergy and laity from Coastal Carolina, Charlotte, New Hope and Western NC.

AKAP – Concerns continue to be expressed about the life, health and vitality of the ministry of the Atlantic Korean American Presbytery. There are two Judicial Complaints before the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission which will go to trial possibly in April. Work of SPJC was halted in 2017 because of civil court charges being filed by the complainant and respondent. At least one additional civil charge filed in Maryland District Court in December or January. Consultations have been held with Korean Staff from the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Office of the General Assembly and the Director of the National Korean Caucus. Recently, members of the Synod Executive Committee met via Zoom Call with the Synod Stated Clerk and Executive of Southern California and Hawaii to share its concerns and to discuss possible ways forward. A few more consultations will be held which will include leadership in AKAP in order to help the synod determine the best way to address the needs and state of AKAP. The Executive Committee will provide an update during its reporting time.

The Stated Clerk/Synod Executive has been involved in the Ecumenical Service and has assisted at other levels of the PCUSA. Those activities include:

- In collaboration with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, Warren signed a letter acknowledging that more than 240,000 working Virginians earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but too little to afford health coverage, yet they need health coverage. The Virginia House Appropriations Committee unveiled its budget, which includes tapping the federal Medicaid dollars to expand health care. We recognize that the proposal outlined by Speaker Cox and Appropriations Committee Chair Jones is the result of much work and negotiation between the House leadership, the Governor and many long-time champions of Medicaid expansion. As the Speaker's press release says, "This budget includes a responsible path to increasing healthcare funding for low-income Virginians while ensuring long-sought and conservative reforms to Medicaid." We want to thank everyone involved.
- Warren was one of eight presenters during the June 11 News Conference sponsored by the VICPP. Speakers represented the Episcopal Diocese of VA, VA Annual Conf of the United Methodist, General Baptist Convention, VA Catholic Conference, The Islamic Center of VA, the Jewish Community and the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.
- Through the Virginia Council of Churches, Warren is a member of the General Minister's Search Committee charged with finding an able candidate to follow the very accomplished tenure of retiring General Minister, the Rev. Dr. Jon Barton, who will retire in June 2018 after serving the council faithfully and effectively.
- The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approved the nominations of Joe Morrow to the position of chair and Warren Lesane to the position of chair-elect for the 2018–20 term. They will take office at the conclusion of the General Assembly in June. Warren will serve as vice chair for 2018–20, and then become chair following the 224th General Assembly (2020).
- The Stated Clerk concluded work on the Virginia Council to Bridge the Nutritional Divide. Bishop James Mauney, retired Bishop of the Virginia Synod of the ELCA, and I represented the Virginia Council of Churches on the Governor's Council. It was chaired by the former First Lady of Virginia, Dorothy S. McAuliffe. Accomplishments of the Council are attached.
- Signed on to a joint statement issued by the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches grieving the lives in the mass shooting that took place in Las Vegas, Nevada on October 1, 2017.

Campus Ministry Gathering - John Rogers coordinated 13 campus ministers and campus ministry board members who gathered for 24 hours of conversations on visioning and best practices. Ministries and persons present included John Rogers-Campus Minister at UNC Chapel Hill in Chapel Hill, NC; Don Boulton - Board President and retired Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at UNC Chapel Hill in Chapel Hill, NC; Shannon Waite- Campus Minister at The University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA; Katie Todd- Campus Minister at UKirk Greensboro, NC; Molly Roach- Campus Minister at VCU in Richmond, VA; Shelly Barrick Parsons- Campus Minister at WVU in Morgantown, WV; Nona Holy-Campus Minister at the University of Delaware in Newark, DE; Steve Cheyney- Campus Minister at UNC Charlotte in Charlotte, NC; Holly Ulmer- Campus Minister at the University of Maryland in College Park, MD; Ethel Hornbeck- Campus Minister at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV; Ashley-Anne Masters- Campus Minister at Raleigh Presbyterian Campus Ministry in Raleigh, NC; Ina Siler- previous board member at Faith Point Fellowship in Greensboro, NC (serving Bennett College for Women and North Carolina State A&T University); and Warren Lesane- Synod Executive for the Synod of the Mid Atlantic Richmond; Jess Cook and Claire George Drumheller-Davidson College Presbyterian Campus Ministry.

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Part Two

Conflict of Interest Policy and Form – The purpose of Conflict of Interest standards is to provide safeguards to prevent members of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic from using their position for the purposes that are, or give the appearance of being, motivated by a desire for private financial gain for themselves or others such as those with whom they have family, business or other ties.

Mandates: The General Assembly mandates particular information be included in synod minutes and records. The Synod Clerk reports that the Synod has adopted a Sexual Misconduct Policy and that it has a Manual of Administrative Operations. An alphabetical roster by classes of former members of the SPJC for the last six years is listed in the attachments.

Orientations for New Leaders: A series of synod leadership orientations provided by staff for new committee members, commissioners and permanent judicial commission members. Seventeen new leaders participated in one of the six Zoom training segments. Each segment lasted 55 minutes or less.

Permanent Judicial Commission – The commission continues its work. One Telephone Hearing was held in January resulting in removal of a Stay Order. Two trials will be held in April. One new complaint was received March 1st. The commission has relied heavily on staffing from the Office of the General Assembly to interpret and translate documents in languages other than English. At the end of 2017, Teaching Elder John Goodman completed six years of service as Clerk to the commission. The commissioner elected Bill Parish as Clerk. Carol Haas, moderator continues to provide significant leadership. The commission will be invited to report during the 242nd Stated Meeting.

222nd General Assembly (2016) - [05] Mid Councils:

Considered matters related to the ongoing strengthening and nurturing of the mid councils of the PCUSA. The Mid-Council Committee recommends to synods that they continue conversation and collaboration of ministry and mission between and among synods. This includes synods to offer assistance to struggling synods, including and the possibility of changing boundaries to increase the vitality and viability of synods. Further, the Committee urges synods to undertake an intentional system of review and self-study and to report to General Assembly on a bi-annual basis.

Thanks to Staff: The work of the synod is sometimes intense and thankless; however, I am grateful to a staff that is faithful to the tasks. Please join me in saying, “Thank You” to Tami Scott, Cindy Hollingshead, and Volunteer Sue Brossart. Additional thanks are offered to the Synod Moderator and Vice Moderator.

A thought provoking article and written by the Rev. Raymond Roberts, he addresses the work of the Way Forward Commission and All Agency Review. Dr. Roberts is the guest commentator for the Presbyterian Outlook and introduced to the synod the Belhar Confession.

What we could be: A response to the Way Forward Commission's report

March 2, 2018 by [The Presbyterian Outlook](#)
Guest commentary by Raymond R. Roberts

I had high hopes when the Way Forward Commission was formed.

At the time, Heath Rada, the moderator of the 221st General Assembly, had reported the concern churning through the church. The 222nd General Assembly responded by creating the 2020 Vision Team and The Way Forward Commission. [The mid-term report](#) indicated that the Way Forward Commission was listening.

Yet, now that I've had a chance to read [their report to General Assembly](#), I am extremely disappointed. My discontent falls into three categories: its theological weightlessness, its inattention to our vision problem and two recommendations that depart from core Presbyterian principles.



The Way Forward report lacks theological substance. I hoped the commission would have started with a theological statement about the purpose of the church and its ministry: Who is God? Who are we? What has God called us to do? Who is our neighbor? The Way Forward report is hardly alone in this failure; we see this in other areas, but a thick theological ecclesiology could have given shape and reason for the changes called for in the report.

Second, the report does not address our most significant crisis: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has lacked a compelling, shared vision for decades. The drift that has resulted from this lack of vision is much more responsible for the recent loss of members than any General Assembly decision concerning sexual orientation.

Consider two broad areas where the church has not identified a vision to help us adapt to a changing world: In one the church faces an existential challenge, in the other the church faces an exciting opportunity.

The challenge: Making disciples of Jesus Christ is a core church function and for decades it has been obvious we are no longer good at it. Statistics don't lie. The repeal of blue laws contributed to waning in Sabbath observance. Colleges that were formed, in part, to give congregational leaders and professionals a critical understanding of the

Bible and the faith lost their denominational distinctiveness. Campus ministries disappeared. Church camps closed. Yet, somehow, in the midst of this visible, much-discussed decline, our denomination never ask how we ought to reform our approach to this core function in a changing world. Can Sunday school be saved? Do we need to create some new institution for Christian education? How do we rebuild campus ministry so we more effectively engage students when they are making decisions about their vocations and place in the world?

The opportunity: New digital technology provides exciting opportunities for the church to communicate, engage in Christian education, worship in new ways, help people grow into a Christian identity, organize and support a thoughtful, Reformed presence in the public sphere — and much, much more. The report does mention a lack of vision concerning communication, but does not ask why we are so late in addressing it. The report should have noted that we've not had a conversation about programing for and leveraging social media. We've not had a conversation about how to encourage distance learning.

We've not had a conversation about how to use technology to enhance worship or how the denomination should support it. This is why the preponderance of video content and music available for use in contemporary worship comes from an evangelical perspective. Our failure to resource contemporary worship played a significant role in allowing the culture of large PC(USA) congregations with successful contemporary services to drift from the center of our theological and moral tradition. Where is the gender-inclusive worship music? Where are short video clips that tell about the work of Presbyterian Women or valiant mission co-workers that can be included in worship or used as a sermon illustration? Why have we not had serious discussion about how worship can be enhanced by new technology?

Let me be clear: The Way Forward Commission didn't need to do the visioning work to address these challenges; it needed to recognize that we haven't been doing the visioning work. This is our real crisis: Our current structure is not producing a vision sufficient to support programing to minister in a changing world. It needed to recommend structural changes to solve our deficit. The call for the creation of a separate A Corp is not nearly enough.

The church at the denominational level can gather experts and get to the balcony on issues facing the whole church. It has (or should have) resources to do things that individual, local congregations cannot — for example, doing polished video production. It can be a clearinghouse for best practices and sharing work done at the local level (creative video clips, etc.). Our church could be stronger, more effective, exciting to be part of and a joy to support. Instead, the report's recommendations promise more of the same.

Let me be blunt: Calls to raise per capita without this vision will likely fall on deaf ears. Too many will say: “Pay more? To keep doing what we’re doing? No, thank you.” It pains me to say this because I know so many of faithful workers at the national office in Louisville and I am inspired by the amazing work that our mission co-workers are doing around the world. It doesn’t have to be this way.

We are dying for a compelling vision of how we will adapt and do effective ministry in a rapidly changing world. General Assembly must find a structure that ensures some group brings new vision to the General Assembly. A church that is finding new ways to make disciples, worship faithfully, do justice and communicate internally and with the larger world can invite commitment and sacrifice.

Finally, I take strong exception to two of the report’s recommendations. First, the recommendation regarding a separate A Corp adds an additional layer of administration and concentrates power in troublesome ways. Others have rightly raised concerns about gender and racial representation that are not adequately addressed in the report.

I am sympathetic, I think, to the idea behind the creation of A Corp: to prevent “back office administrators” from running “the front office” mission and program work. Unfortunately, the proposed structure ensures that this is precisely what will happen. The people with the power (who control the money) will call the shots. This structural flaw is why many congregations combined the board of trustee functions with the programmatic and ministerial session functions. A separate A Corp will not solve our vision deficit. We need to explore other ways to reduce the size and the overreach of legal, financial, human resources and other administrators that was recognized by the All Agency Review committee.

Second, changing the role of the stated clerk to “speak to and for the church in matters of faith and practice, except as the General Assembly directs otherwise” is a polity mistake of the first order. Christ alone is head of the church. The church is never comprised in a person, but constitutes itself when the body of Christ gathers. In Presbyterian polity, stated clerks speak out of the riches of General Assembly pronouncements. The current system of empowering clerks to share the body’s wisdom gives ample room and grounding for stated clerks to exercise leadership in the church and the world. Eugene Carson Blake did not need such power. The proposed changes concentrates too much power in a single person — effectively, a bishop. It is not Presbyterian.

These thoughts are offered with a profound gratitude to the people who have given so much their time to study a very, very complex problem and it is my hope that they contribute to a continued conversation.