

**SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**  
**Report to the 242<sup>nd</sup>**  
**Administration Committee Report**

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The Rationale for Reinstating the  
Synod Executive and Stated Clerk Position to Fulltime Status

“A New Day! A Different Time!”

The Synod of the Mid Atlantic (SOMA) Executive Committee (EC) works diligently between Assemblies to marshal the synod into a new day that speaks with urgency to the times. When the General Assembly (GA) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA) reaffirmed that there would be synods and that the number of synods would remain at 16, the question about the immediate future of synods was put to rest for the moment.

The GA then provided mandates for the synods to follow. Synods were instructed to enter a time of discernment in order to establish a new identity based on an emerging sense of purpose, partnership, context and call through a collaborative process between synods and presbyteries. The SOMA recruited and facilitated the work of a Discernment Committee chair by one of its presbytery executive. The committee worked for two years. In collaboration with neighboring synods, presbyteries, 12-synod related groups, commissioners and participation in an All Synod Consultation in 2016 in Dallas, the SOMA future has been informed significantly. This process of completing these mandates within the SOMA created new possibilities, energy and motivation and a restart for the synod.

The EC has reviewed the work evolving from Synod Assemblies and provided legs for moving forward. Recognizing that the value of the SOMA is increasing across the region, the synod needs to market and interpret this mission more effectively. The EC and synod assemblies have affirmed the value, ministry and work of this mid-council; and through the SOMA:

- It speaks truth to power through statements against hate groups and resolutions for a fair federal budget
- Engages in addressing white privilege, race, racism and reconciliation through presentations, plenaries and small groups
- Respond to gigantic shifts in presbytery staff leadership by facilitating executive search committee orientation, conducting background checks and providing executive to executive clearance checks
- Staff is attending presbytery meetings, meeting collegially with presbytery leaders, conducting workshops in presbyteries, preaching during presbytery meetings and in churches and providing leadership to the PCUSA on the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Committee on General Assembly
- Recognizes that it is has the largest concentration of African American Churches, Members and Clergy in the PCUSA, therefore it must take the lead in addressing the critical shortage of capable leaders for the churches, councils and beyond

- Acknowledges the need to have its chief ecumenical office in the region to represent it and give voice to the Presbyterian witness to the Virginia Council of Churches, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, and the Interfaith Dialogue Coalition.

Work from Synod Assemblies generated by the task of Discernment has identified areas of ministry that all councils of the church are currently struggling with to find workable solutions. They include, but are not limited to Young Adult Ministry, New Immigrant Ministries, Race and Reconciliation. Just a few weeks ago, August 12<sup>th</sup> was the one year remembrance of the rallies in Charlottesville, VA in which three persons lost their lives. In the heart of the Mid-Atlantic, we have acknowledged that Presbyterians cannot be static; Churches cannot be static; Presbyteries cannot be static; and the Synod cannot be static.

If the largest of 16 synods in the PCUSA containing eight of the twenty largest presbyteries cannot be become an incubator for mission, ministry and engagement, then the synod will become extinct. However, the EC views the synod as an organic body of Christ being reformed and is looking forward with energy, imagination, vigor and love to this new day and new time!

The reduction of the Synod Executive and Stated Clerk position occurred at a period in the denomination where the future of synods was very hazy. This haziness was impacted even more in the Mid-Atlantic Region because of historic tensions between some presbyteries and the synod. The tension was further exacerbated when one presbytery in the region overtured the GA to do away with synods. Consequently, some in the region had good reason to believe synods were on their last leg of existence. Added to the debate, a former Synod Executive and Stated Clerk whose availability was significantly hampered due to the illness of a daughter and wife and needing to travel back and forth to his residence in Buffalo NY. Reports to synod by staff then clearly indicated that the SOMA should begin transitioning towards closure.

It was during the SOMA 230<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the Executive and Stated Clerk Position was reduced from fulltime to part-time. Duties were reduced significantly. The critical and time consuming function of visiting presbyteries was removed, yet relationship building is the life-blood of ministry. Every healthy synod should have strong relationships with its presbyteries. After all, Christ gave us this witness as a model.

GA Mid-Council Committee commended the SOMA on its 2016 and 2017 Synod Minutes submitted to the 223<sup>rd</sup> GA and urged the synod to “Include photos and narratives of the mission work being done in the synod as part of the minutes.” Size, function and mission differ in all 16 synods. It is the context that determines the mission and ministries. The stats below provide a comparison to consider listing specifics to each synod:

<b>Synod</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Churches</b>	<b>Staffing</b>
Alaska-Northwest	36,800	210	Part-time Stated Clerk
Boriquen (Puerto Rico)	5,967	73	Part-time Stated Clerk
Covenant	118,282	699	Full-time Executive Part-time Stated Clerk
Lakes and Praises	110,646	808	Full-time Executive Part-time Stated Clerk

Lincoln Trails	93,816	597	Full-time Executive Part-time Stated Clerk
Living Waters	83,294	639	Full-time Executive/Stated Clerk
Mid-America	52,175	419	Full-time Executive/Stated Clerk
Mid-Atlantic	249,741	1,355	
Northeast	159,617	1,075	Full-time Executive Full-time Stated Clerk
Pacific	58,039	379	Full-time Executive Part-time Stated Clerk
Rocky Mountains	30,610	208	Part-time Stated Clerk
South Atlantic	198,143	885	Full-time Executive/Stated Clerk
Southern California/Hawaii	53,574	245	Fulltime Executive/Stated Clerk
Southwest	23,672	152	Fulltime Executive/Stated Clerk
Sun	129,044	776	Fulltime Executive Part-time Stated Clerk
Trinity	168,003	1,116	Full-time Executive Part-time Stated Clerk

Fulltime Executive Staffing is critical for the day to day operations of the SOMA. The Presbyterian Church is clear in providing a call process and conditions wherein those who are called to a specific position are employed in a manner that frees them to perform the work without encumbrances. If the SOMA wants to thrive during “a time which tries the souls of women and men”, then the fulltime position of the Executive and Stated Clerk is required.

Please see the attached position description for details of the duties and accountability for the Fulltime Synod Executive and Stated Clerk. Please note that this position was fulltime since the inception of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic in 1988.