

## Summary Highlights of the 227<sup>th</sup> Synod Assembly

The Synod of the Mid-Atlantic convened for its spring Synod Assembly on Monday and Tuesday, March 14 & 15, 2011, at the Roslyn Conference Center in Richmond, Virginia. Here are some of the highlights from that meeting:

- Synod heard a report and update on the Westminster Foundation, which is the Presbyterian campus ministry in the state of Virginia. When synod moved away from being programmatic, two separate campus ministries were spun off – one in Virginia (the Westminster Foundation) and one in North Carolina (Presbyterian Ministries in Higher Education). Each is dealing with financial challenges as it seeks to discern future directions.
- An update was given on the sale of the synod's office building, which is being pursued in the interest of continuing to lower our overhead expenses. A commercial realtor has been engaged to list the property, and has prepared marketing materials. To date, only a couple of parties have expressed very preliminary interest in the property. Synod staff has explored smaller office possibilities in a Richmond church, at Union Seminary and in a commercial office building, while continuing to consider converting to a "virtual" office arrangement.
- The synod adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy developed and proposed by the Administration Committee, with special assistance from Hugh Robertshaw, Commissioner from Shenandoah Presbytery. It was discovered some months ago that the synod did not have such a policy, which has become standard procedure in the corporate world.
- The Finance Committee presented the 2010 year-end budget report, noting that we ended the year with a very small net surplus.
- A discussion was held on the per capita budget for 2012. It was noted that per capita relief to our presbyteries was granted in both 2010 and 2011, in response to the tight financial climate in our nation and church. While the rate remained the same as it had been for several years (\$1.45), the dollar amount asked of our presbyteries was reduced by 50%. The reduction has been covered by accumulated unrestricted governance reserves; those reserves, however, are projected to be depleted by the end of this budget year. Thus, synod approved the Finance Committee's recommendation to keep the 2012 per capita rate at \$1.45, and not to extend the reductions for another year.
- The Presbytery Initiatives Committee elected Elder Sarah Eller (Peaks Presbytery) as its new chair. The Committee recommended approval of the following initiatives: (\$9,500)
  - Massanetta Springs Forty Under Forty Scholarships Bible Conference - \$2,500;
  - Presbyterian Women STOP HUNGER NOW - \$2,000;
  - Rehoboth Black Caucus Group - \$2,500;
  - Haiti Matthew 21 Fish Farm - \$2,500.
- The Grants & Awards Committee, chaired by Rev. Kathryn Jackson (Shenandoah Presbytery), recommended approval of the following scholarships and grants: (\$60,500)
  - **Scholarships**
    - Six returning student Euler Scholarships at \$3,300 each
    - Seven new student Euler Scholarships at \$2,600 each
    - One Stultz Scholarship for \$5,000
  - **Small Church Grants**
    - \$2,500 to support the Foodbank Ministry at Highland Memorial Presbyterian Church, Winchester, Virginia.
    - \$2,500 for the renovation of First Presbyterian Church, Martinsburg, WV.

- \$2,500 to First Presbyterian Church, Norwood, NC for correcting deficiencies in their kids' club building.
  - \$2,500 to Olney Presbyterian Church, Gastonia, NC for renovating the sanctuary.
  - \$2,500 to Washington Dongsan Presbyterian, Gaithersburg, MD to connect water lines.
  - **Visionary Fund Grant**
  - \$2,500 to the Presbytery of Western North Carolina to relocate the resource center.
  - **Peacemaking Fund Grant**
  - \$2,500 to the Presbytery of Baltimore to support their "End of Gun Violence" program.
  - **Minnie Pepper Fund Grant**
  - \$2,500 to First Presbyterian Church, Thomasville, NC to support participation in Heifer International Arkansas conference.
  - **New Emergent Fund Grant**
  - \$2,500 to support the position of El Buen bi-lingual assistant pastor, Winston/Salem, NC.
- The bulk of the time on Tuesday morning was given to a consultation by two members of the General Assembly's Commission on Middle Governing Bodies. That Commission is working to lead our denomination in a reassessment – indeed, a "reinvention" – of our distinctive Presbyterian system of governance. Sam Roberson of Charlotte Presbytery, and Lemuel Garcia of Salem Presbytery distributed a simple questionnaire to all present, which included several folks who responded to the open invitation to participate. Following completion of the questionnaire, which will be compiled and combined with many others for use by the full Commission, Lemuel and Sam moderated a lengthy conversation about our middle governing body: what needs to be preserved, what changed, what's working well, and what's not working. Similar consultations will be held with each of our synods, and numerous presbyteries. And there will be many additional opportunities for everyone to share their thoughts and input over the coming months. Anyone interested in sharing is invited to visit the Commission's website: <http://oga.pcusa.org/mgbcommission/>. The Commission also has a presence on Facebook and Twitter; call the synod office for further information.
  - Bobbi White, General Presbyter of Western North Carolina Presbytery, expressed thanks on behalf of her presbytery for the synod's financial assistance with its legal costs in the past two years. Bobbi also was the preacher and leader for the communion service on Monday evening in the lovely new Bishop's Chapel at Roslyn.
  - The synod approved the meeting dates and place for its meetings in 2012: March 19-20 and September 17-18. It was decided to meet in Richmond each time, as that saves the synod more than \$4,000 per meeting in costs as compared to meeting elsewhere.

From the Desk of David McKee, Executive/Stated Clerk

## Synod Report to Presbytery

The Synod of the Mid-Atlantic met March 14 & 15, in Richmond, Virginia.

Synod committees met and then reported their work. A highlight was the approval of funds to support our proposed move of the Presbytery's Resource Center to Montreat. New Vision, our New Church Development in Conover, also received some funds for the Lifetree Café, a community coffee house program.

On Monday evening, we had a meaningful worship service led by Bobbi White, who took the time to thank the body for its support of our legal fund in the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.

On Tuesday morning, the commissioners and many interested persons met with Sam Roberts and Lemuel Garcia, members of the G.A. Middle Governing Bodies Task Force, to give input.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Stanley  
Synod Commissioner