

SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC
246th STATED MEETING-VIRTUAL
September 14, 2020

Report from Dot Descieux, Commissioner, Ruling Elder.

Ordinarily the meeting is held over two days in Richmond, but due to the constraints imposed by the pandemic, it was condensed into a single day by Zoom. Some 49 persons were in attendance.

Theme of the meeting was MATTHEW 25. It was convened by Moderator Mawuna Gardesey at 9:30 am.

The Rev. Warren Lesane, Stated Clerk was recognized. Welcome was extended by the Rev. Gregory Bentley, 224th General Assembly Co-Moderator; worship was celebrated by the Rev. Felecia Hardy, Synod Vice Moderator. Rev Diane Moffett gave her pre-recorded address on Matthew 25.

The Synod of the Mid-Atlantic is a Matthew 25 Synod, and is recommending that our 14 Presbyteries and more than 1300 sessions commit themselves to Dismantling Structural Racism, Building Vital Congregations, and Eradicating Systemic Poverty. Plenary One addressed the Pandemic of Racism in light of current affairs from the historic place in Montgomery, Alabama, a Museum of Lynchings in America. Several presbyteries shared highlights from their Montgomery Immersion Experience in January, and what they are doing as a result of that experience.

The assembly was directed into breakout rooms for discussion on what presbyteries and congregations can do to address the problem of Structural Racism. This is a listing of brainstorming suggestions and comments from people in my group:

- Look at current behaviors and understand that racism exists
- Must provide education; there are emotional aspects
- Understand denial of racism, how racism has not gone away, but has evolved
- We didn't do it, but we are perpetuating it
- The system has not progressed as much as have some individuals
- Meaningful diversity training is needed; Synod should create a piece and offer it to presbyteries for their use

- Don't accuse anyone; instead say "look how far we've come, and where can we go now?"
- Look for work already being done and join in; don't have to reinvent the wheel
- Matthew 25 focuses on work already going on
- Aim efforts at work, not individual feelings
- Use conversation and readings to help build trust
- Utilize diversity training, pilgrimages, books, education
- Share worship and fellowship with people of other races
- Read books ahead of meetings, then have small group discussions (such as at presbytery or session meetings)
- Involve youth
- Trip to Montgomery or DC museum
- "It's not enough to put it into your budget, your mission statement, or a sign on your lawn; it must be a transformation of your heart."

Notes from the Business Meeting.

- Per capita will remain at \$1.15. Presbyteries in distress can be forgiven one quarter of their total this year.
- Grants have been frozen for now, in anticipation of more dire need resulting from Covid.
- \$150,000 has been set aside for Matthew 25 Grants; limits are set at \$6,964 per presbytery.
- \$52,500 is for leadership development of people of color.
- Warren's term as Stated Clerk runs through 2021; any concerns must be presented prior to the March meeting.
- Synod meetings for 2021 will be Saturday, March 13 (probably virtually), and September 13-14, place to be determined.
- Felecia Hardy from New Hope Presbytery and Stephen Scott of Salem Presbytery were elected and installed Moderator and Vice-Moderator, respectively.

The meeting was concluded around 3:00 pm.