

**Synod of the Covenant Commissioners' Report
For the Synod Assembly in March 2018 in Adrian, MI
And the Called Assembly Meeting held April 2018 Via Teleconference**

The March 2018 Synod Assembly met on the 15th – 17th of that month at the Weber Center in Adrian, Michigan. The commissioners' retreat portion of the meeting included an informational segment for Commissioners led by Christian Iosso, Director of the Advisory Social Witness Policy Committee of the General Assembly. His presentation focused on the book, *Five Risks Presbyterians Must Take for Peace: Renewing the Commitment for Peacemaking in the PC (USA)*. Commissioners had read the book before attending the retreat.

On March 17th the assembly met to conduct business which included the following:

- Authorizing spending up to \$5,000 from Peacemaking Funds to help with the establishment of the Presbyterian Peace Network for Korea including a luncheon at General Assembly.
- Authorizing up to \$3,000 from Peacemaking Funds to help with Scholarships for Synod Presbyterian Women to attend the 2018 Churchwide Gathering August 2-5, 2018.
- Receiving a report from the Committee on Representation and Inclusiveness (CORI) followed by the election of moderators, committee members, and a member to the Board of Trustees for the coming year.
- Approving three overtures to General Assembly: (1) "Regarding the Appropriate Boundaries of Religious Liberty," (2) "On Affirming and Celebrating the Full Dignity and Humanity of People of All Gender Identities," and (3) "On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church."
- Approving a policy statement on authorization of funds and Synod contracts with outside entities.
- Approving a motion to direct the staff to provide a directory of Synod officers, staff, commissioners, committee moderators and members along with their contact information. (Currently there is none making it difficult to communicate with other members of the Synod on Synod business.) Concern was expressed that the contact information might be shared with and used by non-members wishing to do harm. The assembly agreed that the staff would contact members to gain their permission to publish their contact information and that distribution would be limited to commissioners and members only. As of this report, the staff has not provided the requested and approved directory.

The Moderators Committee of the Synod of the Covenant called the meeting of the Synod Assembly on April 26, 2018, for the purpose of recommending to the Synod Assembly that the Synod of the Covenant send an Overture to the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to answer the 05-03 Overture from the Presbytery of Cincinnati. This called meeting was not in compliance with various provisions of the manual of operations of the Synod of the Covenant.

The Moderator, Ruling Elder Johanna Jozwiak (Lake Huron), called the meeting to order and informed the commissioners of the way in which the meeting would be handled. This included the possibility that a commissioner's voice could be muted from the call if the course of their conversation was deemed unacceptable or excessive.

In discussion of the Synod's Response to the Overture, many voices were heard including those of stated clerks from Presbyteries within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant. Over and over again, a variety of voices pointed to the lack of understanding of the polity of the church as many things included in the Synod's Response to Overture 05-03 did not comply with the *Book of Order* or the *Manual of the General Assembly*.

A few key points of concern brought up were the need for the proposed sub-committee of the Moderator's Committee, which would be charged with dealing with the Synod's response to the "Cincinnati" Overture, to have access to legal counsel, the lack of Synod leadership using the *Seeking to Be Faithful Together* statement while directing and encouraging its use for others, the further division that taking this action will create, and the election of two overture advocates and an alternate when only one advocate is permitted.

As we approach the summer months, little information has been received regarding the Mobile Health Fair ministry (a mission of the Synod). Typically, this Mobile Health Fair visits summer programs in the Presbytery of Cincinnati, and we have no information to share at this time.

In the fall, the Presbytery of Cincinnati has requested that perhaps we host a "Mission to the USA" church leader from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India or Sri Lanka for three weeks (October 12 through November 2). If you are interested in your church hosting a "Mission to the USA" church leader for any segment of this three week time period, please contact either of us.

Rebecca "Becky" Lindsay, Ruling Elder Commissioner to the Synod of the Covenant
Reverend Dr. Deborah Uchtman, Teaching Elder Commissioner to the Synod of the Covenant