

# SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC 251<sup>st</sup> ASSEMBLY HIGHLIGHTS UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY

An amazing planning team contributed to an impactful Hybrid Synod Assembly held on Union Presbyterian



Seminary Campus, March 10-11, 2023. The Team included WD Hasty, Moderator Addie Peterson, Stephen Scott, and Vice Moderator David Cho. But when one adds Cindy Kohlmann, Connectional Presbyter (NEW) who staged and provided technical support, and Preacher and Presenter Cesar Carhuachin, March Madness had nothing on this Dream Team. The synod is blessed to have such talented leadership who willingly promote the mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** The Synod Stated Clerk challenged the assembly to move beyond simple land acknowledgement to the next action step of repair and to provide reparation for Native American church properties. In October 2022, twelve Synod Executives traveled to Utah, New Mexico and Arizona to view the buildings, churches and sacred land. The 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly called upon the Presbyterian Mission Agency to document the physical needs of all Native American church properties and create a fund for repairing those churches. The result documented that approximately \$5.5 million dollars in repairs are needed to various churches. A Native American and Native Alaskan Fund <https://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/nativeamericanchurches/> held at the Presbyterian Foundation has been established for funding the effort to rebuild. The 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2022) took action on Directing the Office of the General Assembly to Issue Apologies and Reparations for the Racist Closure of the Memorial Presbyterian Church, Juneau, Alaska. This action includes the reparation of \$220,000 to the Native American and Native Alaskan Fund which will be received from the PMA in 2023. Commissioners, Churches and Presbyteries are encouraged to contribute to the fund using the link above.



**WORSHIP AND COMMUNION:** Vice Moderator David Cho introduced Rev. Dr. César G. Carhuachín, Mission Co-Worker in Baranquilla, Colombia at the School of Theology, Reformed University of Colombia as the preacher. The sermon was titled “Mission and Poverty.” The Assembly was reminded of the missionary journeys of Barnabas and Mark to Cypress and Asia Minor and also how the Holy Spirit guided them to Macedonia. César is on a seven-month interpretation assignment in the United States which will allow him and his wife (Dania) to visit churches, presbyteries, synods and other groups to share the work they are doing in Colombia, South America. The Lord’s Supper was observed.



**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:** During the Hybrid Assembly, Commissioners, Corresponding Members and Guests had several opportunities to participate in small group discussions in response to the five plenaries; even those on zoom, vigorously engaged in dynamic discussions. During plenary one and two, Dr. Alonzo Johnson, Coordinator for the PCUSA Self Develop of People Program, challenged all to explore ways that Matthew 25 intersects with the Poor People’s Campaign.



The Synod and the Presbyterian Mission Agency previously drew on the knowledge and expertise of Dr. Liz Theoharis, Co-Chair of the National Poor People's Campaign in order to connect the dots. Dr. Theoharis was the key-note presenter during the 250<sup>th</sup> Synod Assembly last September. Alonso's power packed an information filled presentation; it used professional and personal stories to illustrate how poverty connects to justice and how racism intersects with poverty. His guiding questions for breakout group discussions included (1) When you heard the word "Poor" for the very first time, what did it mean to you; and (2) Where do you see Christ among the poor? One commissioner raised a question during plenary as to what can the CHURCH do beyond discussion of these issues to impact laws and public policies? One way is to register and attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days which will focus on bringing about a more peaceful world. "Swords into Plowshares: Achieving Enough for All & Pursuing Peace" is the theme of the April 25-27 conference, [Presbyterian Office of Public Witness](#) in Washington, D.C.

**PLENARIES THREE AND FOUR** provided a deep dive into Matthew 25. David Eunil Cho and WD Hasty



delivered an eye-opening presentation on the Demystification of Matthew 25. Too many Presbyterians view the Vision of Matthew 25 as a political movement of the Left and because of this misguided understanding, resistance results. Some churches and presbyteries are already doing Matthew 25 work, but don't realize it. David and WD went to extreme measures to state what Matthew 25 is NOT! They provided conversation and strategies to implement Matthew 25 into churches and presbyteries. Three myths illustrated were (1) Matthew 25 is a Liberal and Political Agenda: Matthew 25 comes from Matthew 25:31-46, The parable of the Sheep and Goats "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me". (2) Systemic Issues are Not Real: Do you believe there is systemic racism in America survey poll (Harris Poll – 2022) revealed that ¼ people did not believe and 53% white people were unconvinced that it existed. (3) We can never be Matthew 25 Churches for ??? Reasons: whether you identify as Matthew 25 or not, following God and doing what matters to God is a principle and calling, we've all been doing something that matters to God. This video and slides are posted on the website!

**CELEBRATING MATTHEW 25:** Dr. Cho highlighted stories and videos from churches and presbyteries

across the Synod that demonstrated the implementation of Matthew 25 and commissioners were captivated by them. CCC highlighted its Bilingual Youth Event, "When did we see you?" The program is providing workshops for youth to connect their passions with God. AKAP, Bethany Korean PC celebrates its Mission Team's building an indoor gym and multi-purpose center in Honduras for education and worship.



SHE, Trinity PC celebrates its Step-by-Step and Brick by Brick- unearthing the walls of a building to find bricks that were originally laid by enslaved people, uncovering building's past and the history of those indigenous and enslaved people of the land. WNC celebrates eight Matthew 25 churches and the presbytery addressing poverty, affordable housing, healthcare, and early childcare grants. Grants will help establish and develop building living space, and properties to serve those with low incomes. EVA, Kings Grants PC celebrates its Hunger Ministry Team and educational programs that support various efforts to

dismantle racism. It feeds the hungry and advocates for the marginalized. NHO, St. Paul PC is less than 40 members situated in rural Franklin County NC. 20% of the children here live in food insecure families. Hunger is one of the first signs of poverty. Since March 2020, 35 bag lunches are provided for the homeless; it consistently hosts full-service events that feed hundreds. In 2022, they served 5137 families that represented

14,819 individuals. They have self-service facilities in two refrigerators in our walk-up pavilion that are on a 'take what you need basis'. The church has resumed serving hot meals once a week to 50 – 60 people



- Building congregational vitality
- Dismantling structural racism
- Eradicating systemic poverty

[www.presbyterianmission.org  
/ministries/matthew-25/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/)

in Blessings Soup Kitchen. Synod of the Mid-Atlantic celebrates allocating \$150,000.00 to support presbyteries (a) Becoming a Matthew 25 Presbytery, and/or (b) Move Matthew 25 to the next level, or (c) Assist Churches to become Matthew 25. Black, Indigenousness and People of Color Churches (BIPOC) are allocated \$52,500.00 to develop leadership skills. Many congregations in presbyteries are doing Matthew 25 work, but have not formally embraced being Matthew 25. We wait for other churches to fully embrace the Vision of the Presbyterian Church USA to share your stories.

**PLENARY FIVE:** Mission Co-Worker César Carhuachín shared an international perspective on poverty from the ministry which he serves. Steps away from the Reformed University where he teaches, he comes face to face with some of Columbia's most marginalized people. He encounters Venezuelan refugees who seek to survive by selling candy on the streets. The United Nations estimated that 3.4 million Venezuelans have fled their homeland, where political repression has created severe economic hardship and shortages of food and medicine. Carhuachín expounded on biblical themes such as neighbor love and God's concern for impoverished people. Beyond the Barranquilla campus, he puts the teaching into practice among the refugees. He engages them on the streets and in their homes, in his home and in Columbia's Presbyterian congregations. According to the United Nations, the highest number of Venezuelan refugees-more than 1 million- are living in Columbia.



**SCHOLARSHIPS:** Emails have been received from college/seminary recipients from the 251<sup>st</sup> Synod Assembly.



*"Thank you so much! I am thrilled to know that this support will continue. It is very much appreciated. I will also mail a thank-you note to the Grants Committee." "I am so excited!!! The note will be coming shortly." "I am sincerely honored to have been selected as the recipient of the Euler scholarship 2023-24. Thank you for your generosity, which will allow me to concentrate more on my studies and fulfill my calling to the Christian ministry."* Stultz and Euler Scholarships awarded \$31,000 to students enrolled in PCUSA

colleges and seminaries. They included Rien Freeman (SAL- \$5,000.00), Joshua Gilhart (BAL - \$7,000), Kanyugi Gichuki (JAM - \$7,000), Andrew Hall (NAT - \$6,000), and Donna Graves (EVA - \$6,000).

**SMALL CHURCH GRANTS:** Totaled \$20,000 and enabled the following churches to address important mission projects: Anderson Memorial (ABI) was awarded \$5,000 for Handicap Accessibility; Hamilton PC (BAL) was awarded \$5,000 for flooring replacement; Reid Memorial PC (SAL) was awarded \$5,000 to replace an HVAC system; and Sweetwater PC (WNC) was awarded \$5,000 for steeple/roof repairs.

**KATE B. RENOLDS TRUST:** Totaled amount awarded was \$665,765.06. 446 Honorable Retired Ministers in North Carolina Presbyteries each received a distribution of \$1,492.75.

**FINANCES:** Synod 2022 revenue and expenses were in line with the budget. The Assembly approved the following: (a) Automobile reimbursement was increased to 65.5 cents/mile. (b) Granted \$20,000.00 to AKAP for expenses associated with legal matters. (c) Amended the 2023 budget by \$10,000 to provide for communications/publications costs. (d) Synod per capita rate remains at \$1.15 for 2024. (e) A future discernment discussion be held during Assembly regarding possible per capita increases.

**NOMINATIONS:** Presbyteries are asked to ensure that your presbytery is represented on synod committees and commissions. The following leadership was approved: WD Hasty and Felicia Hoyle are Administration Committee Co-Chairs; Amanda Pine and Cassandra Thomas are Emerging Ideas Co-Chairs, and Tom Holden and George Hall are Committee on Representation Co-Chairs.

Committee Vacancies include:

- Committee on Representation NAT, BAL, SAL and WNC
- Jubilee Fund Committee PEA, WNC, and JAM
- Nomination Committee BAL, PEA, WNC
- Synod Permanent Judicial Commission PEA

**SYNOD EXECUTIVE/CLERK:** Female Executives and Stated Clerks were recognized for Women's History Month. ABI and BAL are in compliance with synod standing rules. Synod leadership participated in a consultation with AKAP and Office of the General Assembly concerning remedial complaint and civil case. Presbytery updates: ABI – is a Matthew 25 mid-council; NHO - Bruce Grady, Executive Presbyter; NAT - David Baer Stated Clerk; NEW - Gifted the synod with \$30,000; JAM - Steven Hicks, Stated Clerk; SAL - Formed Executive Search Committee. There are nine civil cases that synod is named as a defendant. Presbyterian Leader Formation includes Floretta Watkins, Elyse Hicks and Bruce Grady and synod pays \$1,500 annually for the three-years. SPJC has three remedial complaints. Executive Committee addressing ministry areas: (1) To Enhance Leadership Skills among Committee Chairs; (2) To Develop a Comprehensive Marketing and Communications Plan. (3) To Address Organizational and Structural Changes necessary so that Matthew 25 might flourish across the region.

**REMINDER:** Every commissioner represents a particular presbytery. Commissioners are the presbytery's access to the work and mission of the synod. Assembly meets twice annually. Commissioners are expected to report synod actions to the appropriate presbytery body following each assembly. Feel free to share this document with the appropriate bodies and churches across your presbytery. Both Word and or PDF copies are included! On behalf of all the commissioners, corresponding members and visitors to the 251<sup>st</sup> Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Assembly we extend immeasurable gratitude and appreciation to Moderator Addie Peterson and Vice Moderator David Cho for their incredible leadership. In addition, synod staff is ready to assist synod committees and presbyteries as needs arise. Reach out to us! Remember that Cindy Hollingshead's birthday is January 21<sup>st</sup> and Tami Scott's birthday is January 28<sup>th</sup>.



**HOLD THE DATE:** September 10-13, 2023, Massanetta Springs Campus/Conference.

#### **ACRONYM KEY**

Abingdon Presbytery	ABI	National Capital Presbytery	NAT
Atlantic Korean American Presbytery	AKAP	New Castle Presbytery	NEW
Baltimore Presbytery	BAL	New Hope Presbytery	NHO
Charlotte Presbytery	CHA	Peaks Presbytery	PEA
Coastal Carolina Presbytery	CCC	Salem Presbytery	SAL
Eastern Virginia Presbytery	EVA	Shenandoah Presbytery	SHE
James Presbytery	JAM	Western North Carolina Presbytery	WNC

