

Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse stated meeting, May 17, 2025

Report on Synod Mission and Ministries Commission

Elder Linda Russell, Commissioner

The Synod of the Northeast's Mission and Ministries Commission held a stated meeting on April 25-26, 2025, in person at Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church, DeWitt, NY. I am assigned to the Mission Working Group. Highlights of the Commission's work follow.

- The Synod is in its third year of discerning a **New Vision Proposal: Reimagining the Church in the World – Bold in Faith, Transformative in Mission, United in Christ** (Isaiah 30:21) which will be presented to the Synod Assembly Meeting for approval on November 15, 2025. To ensure broad participation in this final stage, **Town Hall Listening Sessions** are scheduled for Thursday, May 22 and Monday, June 2, both at 7pm. To register for a Zoom link, go to www.synodne.org home page and click on the Town Hall announcement; or use the Calendar tab at the top of the page and click on the date of your choice. Conversations will cover the Seven Pillars of the core structure, a review of the visioning process, a new way of looking at Synod grants, and plans for regional learning initiatives to equip and connect leaders.
- Synod will launch a **Community Organizing Cohort** in January 2026. The cohort will be led by Rev. Patrick O'Connor, with an introductory Zoom meeting scheduled for fall 2025 (date TBD). This initiative invites pastors and leaders engaged in public ministry to participate in a collaborative learning journey.
- Synod will continue developing a Synod-wide **Commissioned Pastor Training Program** in partnership with the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Proposed curriculum includes: Introduction to Old & New Testament; Reformed Theology; Worship, and Sacraments; Preaching and Public Ministry; Congregational Care; Presbyterian Polity; Christian Education; and Leadership & Administration.
- Synod has created an **Immigration Task Force** to explore how the Synod can support presbyteries and congregations facing immigration-related challenges and threats to vulnerable populations. \$18,000 from unspent 2024 monies has been designated for this support in 2025.
- A grant of \$20,000 per year for three years was awarded to Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana Nueva Vida (Long Island) as part of the **Small Church Residency Program**.
- A Synod-wide **Indigenous Mission Day** with the Jimersontown and Wright Memorial Churches in the vibrant Seneca Nation in Western New York will be held Saturday, June 14, 2025. Volunteers are invited to assist with modest cleaning, repair and landscape projects. Use the "Connectional Ministries" tab on www.synodne.org for more information.
- Efforts are underway to redefine **Synod Grants** and to encourage broader participation. Synod is now using the on-line Foundant grant software. While application forms will now be available in Korean and Spanish as well as English, all responses must be written in English.
- The **Innovation Grant** was established to fund creative new projects that emerge out of and mobilize Presbyterian communities to engage with their local communities in ways that foster person-to-person relationships. The Mission Working Group considered 13 first-year Innovation Grant applications. Two were eliminated for not meeting grant criteria. One was moved and awarded \$4000 from the Youth Leadership Development category. The remaining 10 received grants ranging from \$4500 to \$12,000 (total \$70,800). Eight second-year applications received grants ranging from \$4000 to \$17,600 (total \$69,200). See attached document [*Innovation Grant Award Recommendations 2025*] for brief descriptions of these 18 innovative programs. Under the Synod's new funding structure for 2026, Innovation Grants will be set at \$10,000 in the first year, with an additional \$15,000 available in the second year, *contingent on demonstrated progress and sustainability*.
- Applications for **Emerging Gospel Community Grants** are due August 2025.

Persons with questions about the work and ministry of the Synod are welcome to contact Linda Russell (Westminster-Auburn) at lruss@aol.com or 315-730-6930. See also Synod website: www.synodne.org.