

Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse stated meeting, May 18, 2024
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 26-27, 2024 at Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church in DeWitt, NY. I am assigned to the Mission Working Group. Highlights of the Commission's work follow.

Mission Working Group:

Innovation Grants

The MWG received 21 first-time applications and 2 second-year applications to review, requesting a total of \$403,812. The budget for 2024 was \$95,000. All the proposals had merit, which made decision making very difficult. There were multiple applications addressing areas of ministry such as accessibility, children, community building, formerly incarcerated persons, racism, refugees, and leadership training. Even though working group members had studied the applications before the meeting, deliberations and discernment took over four hours. Ultimately 9 of the 21 first-time applications were awarded grants ranging from \$5000 to \$15,000. The year 2 applications received grants of \$4000 and \$7000. These 11 grant recipients come from seven different presbyteries from the north, south, east, and west of the Synod. Details of these grants are summarized in a separate document released by Synod and will be available through the Presbytery Matters e-news. [Note: On March 11 Synod hosted a successful webinar on the grant application process and how to write a good application for an Innovation Grant. Over 50 people attended. This obviously led to the most applications for this grant ever received in a single cycle.]

Campus Ministry Grants

The United Campus Ministry to the University of New Hampshire DBA The Waysmeet Center received a grant of \$3500.

Youth Leadership Development

The "Seneca Falls Ecumenical Youth Group" application from the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls, NY was awarded a grant of \$7500 (the maximum for this category).

Susquehanna Valley Administrative Commission Final Report

Synod Stated Clerk, Rev. Nancy Talbot, introduced Rev. Lorrie Cooney (member of Cayuga-Syracuse and co-chair of the AC), John Goehle (Commissioned Pastor from Susquehanna Valley and member of the AC), and Rev. Greg Garis (Lead Presbyterian for Transformation for Susquehanna Valley since March 2023) who reviewed the AC process and presented in writing and in person the final report of the AC. The process began in 2019 when Synod formed a Special Administrative Review Committee (SARC) to investigate concerns raised by the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley (PSV) leadership and Cabinet related to the functioning of the PSV. The Cabinet of the PSV subsequently requested that Synod form an Administrative Commission with original jurisdiction and Synod's Mission and Ministries Commission granted that request on September 18, 2020. The Susquehanna Valley AC (SVAC) was commissioned and held its first meeting in February 2021. The presenters of this final report stressed the thorough, detailed work undertaken by the SVAC, and both the Synod and PSV stakeholders celebrated the success of this AC. Among other observations, concerns, and recommendations noted in their final report, the AC noted long term viability and financial health of the PSV as a concern and recommended/encouraged the PSV to be open to partnerships or mergers with the neighboring presbyteries. [Note: Members of

Cayuga-Syracuse have been in conversation with PSV (as well as other neighboring presbyteries) since June 2017.]

Transitional Synod Leader:

Rev. Dr. SanDawna Gaulman Ashley shared positive comments about the Synod's discernment process as it develops a "visionary roadmap poised to propel the Synod forward into the future." Starting in June the Discernment Team will begin visiting two sites for each of the grant areas supported by Synod to gain a deeper understanding of the initiatives underway throughout the Synod. She also reported that:

- Synod has solidified a partnership with Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia encompassing areas such as internships, mentorships, lifelong learning, curriculum development, call fairs, and global partnerships. Dialogues have been initiated with Union Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary regarding internships and potential future partnerships respectively.
- The Small Church Residency Review Team has been formed (including Marissa Saunders from Cayuga-Syracuse and Greg Garis from Susquehanna Valley) to prepare processes for evaluating small church residency applications and to provide learning opportunities for congregations.

Report of the Stated Clerk

Rev. Nancy Talbot highlighted the following:

- The Susquehanna Valley AC (see above) is "a good example of how the synod can accompany a presbytery in a time of need."
- Synod Assembly will take place in downtown Albany on October 25-26. As the C-S commissioner to the Synod Mission and Ministries Commission, I am one of the C-S commissioners to this assembly. The pre-assembly event on October 24-25 will feature The Center for Jubilee Practice. Their work "lives at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, climate change, immigration policies, and more." One of the presenters will be Rick Ufford-Chase, formerly the Co-Director of Stony Point.
- The Synod is working to complete its policies on Harassment and Anti-Racism.
- Synod prepared an overture to the 226th General Assembly (2024) to approve the geographic districts of its 19 presbyteries as described in a detailed document. Motion to submit this overture was voted APPROVED by this Commission. The description for Cayuga-Syracuse reads: "The geographic district of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse consists of the counties of Cayuga, Madison (excluding the city of Oneida and the county subdivisions of Brookfield town, Hamilton town, and Madison town), Onondaga, and Oswego, all in the state of New York."

Connectional Ministries Working Group

Connectional Ministries has scheduled a Synod Indigenous Mission Day on September 28, 2024 including the Shinnecock and Brook churches on Long Island. Flyers and promotional materials are forthcoming. The first Synod-wide Indigenous Day Offering held in February received \$600 from small donations. The Presbytery of the Coastlands donated \$20,000 toward the Indigenous Mission Day. The next Synod-wide Indigenous Day Offering is scheduled for June 2, 2024.

Emergency Immigration Funds Grants

Grants in the amount of \$5000 each were awarded to:

- Scarborough Presbyterian Church's Emergency Shelter Partnership run jointly with the Briarcliff Ossining Ministerial Association. They have been housing mostly immigrants new to the country and numbers increased significantly this year.
- The Warren Point Presbyterian Church Community Food Pantry. Over 90% of participants served are immigrant families recently arrived in this country with urgent needs for clothing, food, and shelter. This grant will help provide food.

Persons with questions about the work and ministry of the Synod are welcome to contact Linda Russell at lsruss@aol.com or 315-730-6930.