

Greetings to the Saints of Mission Presbytery!

Well, we just had a most interesting General Assembly. A weeks' worth of deliberation was squeezed into about 3 days, and most of the business to come before this year's assembly was forwarded to the 225th Assembly in 2022. But there was still plenty to do. I hope that you all have received and shared the bulletin inserts we sent you that were prepared by Presbyterian Outlook. If not, here are a few highlights:

- We elected two new Co-Moderators, Ilona Street-Stewart, a Native American and exec for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, and Gregory Bentley, an African-American and local pastor of a church in Alabama
- We did all the “core and critical” business, identified by the Committee on the Office of General Assembly as those things which HAD to happen before the next Assembly or some of the wheels would come flying off
- While we took a stand against racism in several actions, it became clear that there are still miles to go.
- One of the pieces of business the Assembly voted to deal with now, rather than in 2022, was the report of the state of Native American congregations and their places of worship, and an action plan to begin repairs on those properties.



One of the best things about my time in the Presbytery of Santa Fe was getting acquainted with the saints of the Laguna Pueblo, about an hour west of Albuquerque. If you were at the General Assembly in 1996, held in Albuquerque, you were served communion from chalices and patens made by a Ruling Elder of the Laguna congregation. Mollie is a work of art herself. Kind, patient, generous, a woman of few words. And if you've been in my office, you've seen a few of Mollie Curtis's works.

A colleague of mine came to visit one year on the Laguna Feast Day, so we went out to the pueblo and took part in some of the festivities. Mollie was there displaying her pottery pieces in a booth, and I couldn't help but bring a few home with me. One of them was the larger bear in the picture below. I was attracted to it because, as you can see, most of the other works are painted in earth tones. This bear, however, had a patch of blue. When I asked her what the blue stood for, she said "Oh, I just felt like it." So I laughed and moved on. Later, when I was talking to the man who had been her pastor



for several years, he said that was her way of saying “Oh, I’m not going to tell you!” What I learned from Mollie, and her pastor, and my friend Nelson Capitan (who served as a commissioner to this year’s assembly) is that trust is never assumed, but is built over time. Over a long time. I’ll probably never know what that patch of blue means, but I know now that it was a bit presumptuous of me to ask.

I learned this week in a conversation with our Synod Presbyters and Stated Clerks that our neighbors in Eastern Oklahoma have 19 Native American congregations in their bounds. With 19 congregations, that will be a large amount of work to be done. The conversations have begun about how we might partner with Eastern Oklahoma in doing some mission trips to help with that work. I’m excited about that. However, thanks to Mollie and Nelson and many others, I know that the first “work” we may need to do there, before showing up with hammers and paint, would be more along the line of “companioning:” listening, learning, building community. Watch and listen for more details as plans come together. But in the meantime, I hope we can take an opportunity to connect with, and companion with, our Native American brothers and sisters.

Presbyter “Sightings” (as it were)

July 2 - Meet with San Antonio region pastors and Commissioned Pastor Task Force

July 3 - Office closed for the July 4 Holiday

July 6-12 - Sallie on Vacation

July 14 - Meet with Staff and Synod Personnel Committee

July 16-17 - Virtual meeting with Committee on the Office of General Assembly

July 18 - Memorial service for Susan Sampsell Albright in Frisco, TX