

Assembly Highlights - November 2019

The Synod of the Covenant gathered for the Annual Assembly at Christ Presbyterian Church, Toledo, Ohio, November 1-2, 2019. The Assembly elected Rev. Dr. Patricia Megregian of the Presbytery of Mackinac as Synod Moderator, Ruling Elder Susan Vlcek of the Presbytery of Western Reserve as Synod Vice-Moderator, and Rev. David Bartley as Synod Treasurer. The Assembly also elected committee moderators and member.

The Assembly featured a seminar on Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa. The Seminar was led by the Mission to the USA (MUSA) International Mission Partners who had just concluded three weeks with participating congregations within the bounds of the Synod. Participants also reflected on their experience in visiting, preaching, and teaching with host congregations. The 2019 IMPs were: Elder Phares Nyaga from Kenya, Rev. Hany Gad Beshay from Egypt, Rev. Bienvenu Musabyimana from Rwanda, Rev. Dr. Solomon Sule-Saa from Ghana, and Rev. Ini Ukpuho from Nigeria. They were sent out to 7 congregations: Collingwood (Toledo), First Maumee (Maumee, OH), First Willoughby (Willoughby, OH), Lakewood (Cleveland, OH), Ramseyer (Columbus, OH) Northern Lakes Community (Traverse City, MI), First (Boyne City, MI), and the Thumb Churches (Thumb region MI).

The two churches in Mackinac hosted the Rev. Dr. Solomon Sule-Saa. He heads a Christian-Muslim Engagement Institute in Ghana. He converted from Islam to Christianity at age 14.

The 2020 MUSA will continue focus on Christian-Muslim Relations in the Balkans. The Synod Executive plans to accompany the pastors of five congregations on a travel seminar to the region in September, and the congregations they serve will host five guests from the same region. **Pastors and congregations who are interested urged to contact the Synod Executive to plan for both activities.**

The Assembly welcomed the Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr, the Executive Director for the Ohio Council of Churches - www.ohcouncilchs.org - who brought greetings and preached during worship.

The GA Administrative Commission for the Synod attended most of the Seminar, all of the Saturday business meeting of the Synod Assembly, and provided an overview of their work.

The Assembly received and approved the report and recommendations of the Synod Committee for the Presbytery of Mackinac, and dismissed it with thanks. The Synod Executive will continue to work with the Coordinating Council of the Presbytery of Mackinac to fulfill the recommendations.

On the recommendation of the Moderators Committee, the Assembly approved two Overtures to the 224th General Assembly (2020): On establishing a Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day and On Advocating for the Reduction of Firearm Violence.

The Assembly also approved an overture to the Synod of the Covenant on Advocating for the reduction of Firearm Violence addressed to the states of Michigan and Ohio.

The Synod Assembly established a Healing Domestic Violence Fund and a Healing Gun Violence Fund, and allocated \$5,000 for each from the Synod's Peacemaking Funds. The distribution of these funds would be at the discretion of the Synod Executive. The Assembly seeks additional donations to these two funds through the on-line giving option of the Synod of the Covenant -

synodofthecovenant.org/give - or through contributions sent to the Synod Office. The Grants and Scholarships Committee reported on approving two New Covenant Grants and one Racial Ethnic Program Grant. The committee also approved 33 undergraduate scholarship and 2 scholarships for Seminarians.

On the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee, the Assembly approved the 2020 Synod of the Covenant Budget of \$776,916. The Budget included a \$60,000 line item for a new Mobile Health Fair Van to replace the old van. The Synod hopes to raise the funds from donations. The Mobile Health Fair Ministry conducted 30 free health fairs in Michigan and Ohio, June-August 2019.

The Assembly received reports from the Synod Executive who reminded the Assembly of the Synod's mission and identity as a Just-Peace Church and a Matthew 25 Church. Assembly received reports from all committees which included the Committee on Representation and Inclusiveness (CORI), the Peacemaking and Justice, Leadership, Personnel Services, and convened the annual meeting of the Corporation. The Assembly also received a progress report on the ministry of the Cabinet on Ethnic Church Affairs and how CECA has transformed and reconstituted its work.



Respectfully submitted,

Lois Aroian, Clergy Commissioner

Mike Stoll, Elder Commissioner