

**REPORT TO COUNCIL FROM THE 241<sup>ST</sup> STATED MEETING OF THE  
SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**

**March 12-13, 2018**

**Ginter Park Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall  
3601 Seminary Avenue, Richmond, VA**

The Rev. Charles Davenport and I attended this Synod meeting as Commissioners of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. The opening theme was on Dry Bones from the Ezekiel text. There were three powerful presentations on the first day. The Rev. Jon Barton from the Virginia Council of Churches spoke on Environmental Injustice with Indigenous Peoples in this country, a root cause of which was the Doctrine of Discovery. This began with the Christian church and was based on Christian scripture. He spoke about how this has persisted for more than five centuries, so that these people continue to be systematically denied their human rights. He went on to say that we need to understand what is still happening, and seek to rectify it.

The Rev. Veronica Cannon from Charlotte Presbytery gave a lesson on “Emancipation and Black Presbyterianism” including the growth of Black Presbyterian Churches in the later 1800’s, and specifically a history of the Catawba Presbytery.

The Rev. Jerry Cannon, Pastor of CN Jenkins Memorial Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, in his energetic, infectious style,” drove home the critical need for the next generation of African American leadership,” as the Moderator stated in his report to the Commissioners. This was an introduction to the major work of the Assembly, “The Next Generation Initiative.”

“THE NEXT GENERATION INITIATIVE seeks to respond to the crisis and need to identify the next generation of African American pastors to serve in the congregations of our presbyteries. “This initiative is one in which the Synod can build partnerships with existing ministries and missions of our denomination. These might include: Johnson C. Smith Seminary, Union Presbyterian Seminary, existing associations of African American Leadership within the PCUSA, PMA, and the Office of the General Assembly.

“This initiative is complemented by the resources and talents of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, resonates with our legacy and purposes and suggests to us a defining mission around which we focus our energies, rally our resources, and make a significant contribution to the larger church.” (Taken from a handout given to Commissioners at the meeting.)

The Black Caucus has already begun work on this Initiative, and a motion was made:

“That the Synod Assembly empower the Executive Committee to appoint a ‘team’ to plan a strategy to move the Initiative forward to include such features as:

- a. conversation and collaboration with identified partners
- b. a timeline for actions and engagement
- c. a process to share the initiative with member presbyteries
- d. a projection of funding needs
- e. consideration for staff support and consultation.”

The motion included that “a sum of \$6000.00 be allocated for the team to cover expenses related to meetings, travel, production, interviews, research, etc.”

The motion was unanimously approved.

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In other business, proposals relative to the Kate B. Reynolds Trust were referred back to the Certification Committee for further clarification.

The Presbytery Initiative Committee received one application for a grant from the Associate Presbyters of NC, co-sponsored by Coastal Carolina and New Hope Presbyteries. Also participating were Salem, WNC, and Charlotte Presbyteries. The request was for \$3000 to hold a three-day retreat in the Fall of 2018 to explore ideas on how presbyteries can help congregations in conflict in a positive way. The grant was approved.

This was my first experience as a Commissioner to Synod, and I found it to be a rewarding and enlightening experience. I look forward to further work with this group.

Dot Descieux, Elder Representative