



Karen Hartsfield, Teaching Elder and Ginny Shanda, Ruler Elder represented Transylvania as commissioners to the Synod meeting.

Like so many other councils of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in these days of COVID-19, the Synod of Living Waters held its annual meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup> virtually, via Zoom teleconference. The meeting began with a spirited and inspirational worship service with music provided by the Rev. Wil Berger, liturgy led by the Rev. Sally Hughes and outgoing moderator the Rev. Tom Lovell, and a sermon by outgoing Permanent Administrative Commission (PAC) moderator (and immediate past synod moderator) Ruling Elder Leonard Jordan in which he challenged us to consider this time of “being in the wilderness” as a time and place to experience God's presence, comfort, direction, and strength.

With over fifty commissioners, presbytery and synod staff members, General Assembly agency leaders, and covenant partners in attendance, the meeting mainly focused on the synod’s historic mission efforts. Susan Sumrall (Ruling Elder at Briarwood Church in Jackson, Mississippi) was elected and installed as Moderator, and the Rev. Doodle Harris (Associate Pastor of Highland Church in Louisville, Kentucky) was elected and installed as Vice-Moderator.

We were joined by a record number of college/university presidents and other staff from among our covenant partners, each of whom spoke passionately about their institutions and their many creative and innovative responses to operating during a pandemic, just a few of which include: one institution providing free textbooks to its students, another using its next-door neighbor as a learning lab, while another is using this time to expand its online offerings into a local prison. Another is offering a tuition-free master’s degree to all students who complete an undergraduate degree at the institution.

The report from the synod’s “Living Waters for the World” mission also focused on creativity and innovation – as the organization has now both successfully held a completely virtual Clean Water U training event, and perhaps even more significantly, successfully completed a water purification system installation without the initiating partners traveling to the country that received the system.

Because of the 2020 restrictions on travel and gatherings, the synod is entering 2021 in a strong financial position, with increased opportunities to expand presbytery partnerships and ministries as it strives to live out its acceptance of the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s Matthew 25 Invitation. Its new budget includes increases to both our ministry with Cultural Affinity Groups, and also increases to the Campus Ministries of all twelve presbyteries.

In his report, Presbyterian Mission Agency representative William McConnell noted that as of this date six (50%) of the synod’s presbyteries and 69 (12%) of the synod’s churches have also accepted the Matthew 25 Invitation. Hope was expressed by the synod’s leadership that 2021 will be time of healing and restoration in our nation, and that the synod’s resources will be utilized to expand our ministries of justice and reconciliation.

Another historic mission effort within our bounds is our Presbyterian Women’s sponsorship of Mission Haven at Columbia Theological Seminary and Furlow Home at Louisville Presbyterian Theological

Seminary – which house Presbyterian Mission Co-workers while they are temporarily in the U.S. These homes are in need of significant renovation. In celebration of Mission Haven’s 70 years of existence, each Presbyterian Woman in the synod is being asked to donate \$7 to a special fund, and each presbytery is being asked to donate \$70. It was reported that PAC has committed \$700 to *each* of the homes (for a total of \$1,400) on behalf of the synod – and in lieu of an offering in the worship service which was impossible at a virtual meeting, those present were urged to make additional contributions to the cause through the synod.

Here are a few other important facts and meeting highlights:

- Finances:
  - The synod’s total assets are: \$1,824,746. A little over \$1.1 million of that is invested in the McDowell and Mildred Stock/OG Henry Funds.
  - The 2021 budget as adopted is: \$401,833, down slightly from \$410,029 in 2020.
- All three Regional Representatives from the Board of Pensions who have responsibility for parts of the synod were present at the meeting, and were both informative (through their spokesperson, Keenan Rodgers) and responsive to concerns raised (particularly related to the recent changeover to a new prescription drug plan).
- During the meeting, a new covenant between Pikeville University and the Synod of Living Waters was signed by Synod Executive Dr. Greg Goodwiller and Pikeville University President Dr. Burton J. Webb. In all, the synod is in a covenant partnership with thirteen institutions which are listed below. Those institutions with an asterisk were represented at our meeting and brought greetings:
  - Belhaven University\*
  - Buckhorn Home for Children
  - Centre College
  - Coalition for Appalachian Ministry
  - Columbia Theological Seminary
  - King University\*
  - Knoxville College
  - Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
  - Maryville College\*
  - University of Pikeville\*
  - Rhodes College
  - Stillman College\*
  - Tusculum College\*

This report is submitted by the Communications and Technology Committee of the synod’s Permanent Administrative Commission. It may be shared, reprinted, or distributed, and excerpts may be used in commissioner’s presbytery reports as desired. The committee is grateful for all who helped make this first electronic meeting a huge success, and looks forward to assisting the synod as it continues to expand its use of technology to accomplish its mission to the glory of God.