



SYNOD CONVENES WITH NEW FORMAT: INSTALLS EXECUTIVES

Meeting October 20-21, 2006 for the first time since electing Elder Mary Lynne Flowers as Executive for Administration/Stated Clerk, and Clint McCoy as Executive for Partnerships, Commissioners, Youth Advisory Delegates and presbytery executive and synod support staff met at Stony Point Conference Center as Synod Assembly.

Celebrative worship was a center piece and included the installation of the new co-executives as well as the joyful observance of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Musical highlights in the worship included the soulful music of Warren Cooper during the installation service and the beauty and grace embodied in the music and dance of Isaias Rivera and family, as prelude to communion, from Tabernaculo de Adoracio, Lawrence, MA, a Latino new church development. Elder Robert Washington of New York City Presbytery preached at the installation service, offering a history of the synod and its mission, and then moving to the text from Luke 5, inviting synod commissioners to heed Jesus' instructions to push their boats into the deep waters where God's best gifts are, even when there is greater risk of leaving the shore, but trusting that God will provide, just as the disciples trusted Jesus when their nets were empty and he gave them new instructions that resulted in the nets being filled to overflowing. Other service leaders included the Moderator, Elder Kay Shields, who asked the constitutional questions of synod and those being installed, and offered the installation prayer and laying on of hands. Other leaders included the Rev. Cass Shaw, Albany General Presbyter who gave the charge to Clint, elder Bob Baum of Long Island Presbytery who gave the charge to Mary Lynne, the Rev. Cheryl Ann Elfond, Interim EP in Susquehanna Valley Presbytery who charged Clint and Mary Lynne together as partners and colleagues in ministry, the Rev. Charles Ring of Newton Presbytery (and vice-chair of the Executive Search Committee) who gave the charge to the Synod Assembly. Elder James Tse provided piano accompaniment. The Rev. Agnes Blackmon of New York City Presbytery officiated the service of communion, held in the round at the close of the Assembly, welcoming everyone to the table in Jesus' name.

The assembly itself had a new feel. Intended to be a twenty-four hour gathering around worship and mission through celebration and interpretation, the Assembly moved almost seamlessly from worship to work, as the two new executives reported as part of the worship, and the Assembly then divided into its five Presbytery Part-

nership Groups as Commissioners and Youth Advisory Delegates discussed and planned for regional mission opportunities. Synod business and decision-making occurred following the meeting of the PPGs. Most strategic decisions were made by the Synod Council, which met in advance of the Assembly, bringing a multi-faceted report for the Assembly's endorsement, including declarations brought by the synod's Public Policy Advocacy Network (PPAN) with regards to a



moratorium on the death penalty, and taking a position in opposition to torture. A new policy regarding synod honoraria was reviewed. PPGs reported on their progress. Some reports were extremely creative, combining laughter with the importance of the synod mission that was unfolding close to home. Some PPGs reported they were having some difficulty finding traction, frustrated that they were not moving forward faster.

The synod budget was approved with modest conversation, including some concern over cuts in higher education, one of several areas of the budget hit hard by total cuts of more than \$100,000 over total requests. See more details on Page 2. It was reported that there has been a 31% reduction in unified mission support over the last five years, a disconcerting trend.

Saturday found commissioners attending workshops arranged by the Synod Council and offered by the PC (USA) Washington Office, the PC(USA) United Nations office, the *Moveable Feast* (church development and transformation educational offerings for congregations and presbyteries) and *Stewardship*. PPGs and invited agencies told their stories, visually and in person, through the first Mission Market Place hosted by the Synod Assembly, giving opportunity for discussion among commissioners and presenters.

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INTERIM MINISTRY TRAINING: Feb 12-16, 2007

Co-sponsored by the Synod of the Northeast and Princeton Theological Seminary, registrations are being taken now for **Week One Interim Ministry Training**,

planned for the PTS Center for Continuing Education February 12-16, 2007. Faculty will be the Revs. Cheryl Montgomery and Scott Lumsden. \$567 fee in-

cludes class time, meals, lodging and some materials. Commuter fee: \$271. Additional information is available on the web at www.ptsem.edu/ce or

www.synodne.org, on the home page. Or contact the seminary directly at: 800-622-6767 ext 7990; email coned@ptsem.edu.

SYNOD-WIDE DISASTER RESPONSE PLANNING?

Prompted by summer flooding in the Susquehanna Valley and other areas, the Synod Council responded to a conversation among presbytery stated clerks who suggested that a synod-wide disaster response plan would be advantageous. Approached through the

Council, Executive Presbyters discussed this suggestion at their semi-annual gathering in September. Their affirmation led Synod Executive for Partnerships Clint McCoy to approach each Presbytery Partnership Group in writing about the possibility of assigning

someone from each partnership group to be part of a planning team, and asked each partnership group to provide financial support from their PPG ministry support funds. There was enough interest among some PPGS that conversation went forward with Presbyte-

rian Disaster Assistance's John Robinson this October, who is willing to provide disaster preparedness training in Presbyterian Circles in 2007. Stay tuned for more information.

COUNCIL APPROVES DECLARATION RE TORTURE

The debate about torture that has continued in the Congress is a debate about the soul of our nation. It is not a debate about terrorists and the best way to secure information from them; it is a question about who we are as a people. The Synod Council approved, and the Assembly endorsed with their approval of the Council's report, a declaration on torture that was presented by the Presbyterian Public Policy Advocacy Network, represented by Ralph Clingan of Newark Presbytery. The declaration opposes the use of torture and all forms

of 'cruel, inhuman or degrading' interrogation by all agencies, employees, or agents of the United States government, and all foreign governments and/or combatants, and supports the application of the Geneva Conventions to all enemy soldiers and the humane treatment with due process for all combatants held by U.S. forces anywhere in the world, and supports the provisions of the Bill of Rights, and the principles of judicial review and congressional oversight over executive branch operations, now including counterterrorism, home-

land security, and domestic surveillance programs, both classified and publicly acknowledged. The full text of the declaration can be found at http://www.synodne.org/filemgmt_data/files/torture.doc



ASSEMBLY CALLS FOR PRESBYTERIES & SESSIONS TO ACT RE: DEATH PENALTY

Acting on a recommendation from the synod's Public Policy Advocacy Network (PPAN), the Synod Assembly approved a proposal that directs the Synod Stated Clerk Mary Lynne Flowers to ask the presbytery Stated Clerks and, through them, Sessions, in states which have or are considering having the death penalty or its reinstatement (such as New York) communicate with elected representatives and governors voicing objection to the death penalty. Subsequent to the

Synod Assembly, Executive for Partnerships Clint McCoy, also an officer in the New York State Council of Churches, signed on to an amicus brief by New York religious leaders and organizations in the People of the State of New York vs. John B. Taylor, putting the synod's most recent action, and its historic position on the death penalty, into practice. The full text of the amicus brief may be found at [http://www.synodne.org/filemgmt_data/files/religious%](http://www.synodne.org/filemgmt_data/files/religious%20amicus%20re%20death%20penalty%2010-24-06%20%282%29.doc)

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2007 SYNOD BUDGET APPROVED WITH REDUCTIONS

With the Budget and Finance Committee noting that unified mission contributions from presbyteries to the Synod of the Northeast have diminished by 31% over the last six years, the 2007 budget was submitted and approved with reductions of more than \$100,000 in response to requests and previously planned

disbursements. Reductions of more than \$10,000 are in the areas of Church Development, Higher Education, Presbytery Partnership Unrestricted Mission Grants and Grants Consultant Services. Smaller reductions are planned for State Councils of Churches, Racial Ethnic Convocation, Mission at the Eastward,

and for Percept demographic services. Synod Executives reported to Synod Council that an additional Extra Community Opportunity designation has been secured through the PC(USA) ECO book for 2007 so that designations may be made through the PC(USA) for New Church Development, to Mission at the East-

ward, and for Higher Education, all of which will add to synod income for these projects. It was reported that synod per capita apportionment, reduced in 2006, will remain unchanged in 2007