

Michael Mudgett, EP
November 7, 2018
Report re Synod Assembly Meeting on November 3, 2018
Synod of Southern California & Hawaii

I attended the above referenced Synod Assembly meeting on Saturday November 3, 2018. It was held at St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, in Rolling Hills, CA. Rev. Dr. Michael Wallman was the other synod commissioner from our presbytery who attended.

The highlights were –

1. **Zephyr Point/Dobbins Hall:** Mr. Bedford Holmes, the Director at Zephyr Point Conference and Camp Center, made a presentation about new construction and renovation work at the Dobbins Center on campus. It was built in 1937. It has a storied past. It's part of the "thin space" at ZP. Christ's presence and movement have impacted many lives, many of whom have committed their lives in that Hall to full or part time mission work, pastoral ministry, and dedicated Christian service. It was a moving presentation. It was M/S/A that the Synod make a gift of \$100,000 to the work at Dobbins Hall.
2. **Report from each Presbytery in the Synod:** Reps from each presbytery gave a brief report of the highlights of their respective ministries in 2018. These are some of the more salient points made by the speakers:
 - a. Presby of the Pacific (Rev. Heidi Gamble): *Each year their presbytery has a mission focused presby meeting. *They have presby gatherings called **Public Square** where issues of the day, e.g. racism, white supremacy, poverty, immigration, are discussed and how best our Christian praxis can intersect with these issues. *They have a **Matthew 25 Movement** where they are partnering with other denominations/non-denoms to address issues around immigration. *They've conducted anti-racism training. ***They are planning to meet the Caravan in Mexico with PDA to offer humanitarian assistance. If there is interest in our Presbytery, I will notify Heidi of same.**
 - b. Los Angeles County – USC Chaplaincy, Keck Hospital (Rev. Elizabeth Gibbs-Zehnder): *She is the only full-time protestant minister at this large medical center; whereas there are 8 Catholic priests. *Her position is funded by 3-4 presbyteries in our synod who are close in proximity. *She talked briefly about her mission. *She invited churches to contribute quilts, which she will hand out to those who are in Keck Hospital on Christmas day – **if any quilt ministry in Presbytery of San Diego wants to respond to her plea, contact me and I'll give you contact info.**
 - c. Presby of Los Ranchos (Sue Currie): *PLR is merging Irvine Pres with a congregation formerly known as *The Chrystal Cathedral* (the remnant of Rev. Bob Schuller's church). *No churches are leaving the denomination (they've

already gone). *4 admin commissions are addressing discontent in some congregations. *PLR just celebrated her 50th Anniversary.

- d. Presbytery of Riverside: A tough report. *The presbytery seems to be existing off of funds received from churches leaving. *They are learning to adapt to this new reality as a presbytery.
 - e. Presbytery of Santa Barbara (Sandy Thoits): *The presbytery felt supported by PDA after the 2017 fire and 2018 mudslides. *Synod donated \$5k to help underwrite the **Santa Barbara Presbytery's Mission Conference, which will be held in the first week of February 2019.** * The Presbytery paid off a \$500k loan from the Synod. *They are focusing on building community within the presbytery; reps are visiting each church and asking 3 fundamental questions that flesh out their identity as a congregation and within the presbytery.
 - f. Presbytery of San Gabriel (Rev. N'Yisrela Watts-Afriyie and Diane Frazier): They are using 3 administrative commissions to walk alongside 3 churches to support, encourage, and think creatively about significant issues. They like the creative, positive use of ACs.
 - g. Presbytery of San Fernando (Rev. Ken Baker): They worked with a business consultant to troubleshoot weaknesses in their system. One of the consultant's recommendations was notable: "Your meetings are primarily business meetings. Why don't you fall back on your Reformed tradition and focus more on praying, studying scripture and discerning together?" The consultant is a Baptist. Other recommendations: Develop a disciple-making organism; quit enabling activities that drove the congregations to their present circumstances; emphasize reaching out and not maintaining; develop an "insider's" leadership pipeline; reward fruitfulness not activity – we are about ministry, not property management.
 - h. Presbytery of San Diego (Rev. Michael Mudgett): I had the opportunity to brag about our presbytery. I mentioned: *Our Presbytery has no pending disciplinary actions or churches endeavoring to leave the denomination. *We are implementing our initiative to plant churches, vitalize churches and align form to function. *Cyclical San Diego and their progress to date. *I talked about the motion to designate E&M as the responsible party for implementing the vitalizing congregations initiative. *I made it known that when our Presbytery puts up money toward vitalizing congregations, which we will, we will ask Synod for matching funds from their *Presbyterian Church Congregational Partnering Grants Program*. I conveyed our interest in vitalizing multi-cultural and multi-lingual ministries, and in particular our work at the presbytery level with Iglesia Emmanuel and the S. Sudanese American Presbyterian Fellowship.
3. **Other reports:** (a) Bill Hughes gave a report on camps and conferences; (b) Hughes also reviewed the Synod's financials for 2018 and presented the budget for 2019, which was approved; (c) Rev. Sunny Kang reported on behalf of Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation. Tom English, a **nationally renowned expert on climate change**, led a JPIC conference on global warming, at Solana Beach Pres. The turnout was disappointing.

Sunny also lifted-up Dale Myers as an expert on the subject of Palestinian genocide. I don't recall how JPIC is using Myers.

4. **Conclusion:** Overall, the meeting was good. I had the chance to connect with synod and presbytery leaders. I'm up to date with their initiatives. And I had the opportunity to present our Presbytery and its accomplishments to other leaders in our Synod. It was a good moment.

I left convinced that Zephyr Point is a great resource of our denomination.

I look forward to working with the other 5 commissioners from Presbytery of San Diego to the Synod in 2019 and explore ways to tap into Synod grants/funds to support our work in ministry. I will post the Synod's policy governing grants, entitled *Presbyterian Church Congregational Partnering Grant Program Protocol*. We have more than \$350,000 in **matching funds** designated for our presbytery