

**SYNOD OF THE COVENANT RESPONSE TO  
ITEM 05-01 FROM THE 222<sup>nd</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016**

In 2014, the Synod of the Covenant initiated a discernment process in response to the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly 2014 action and reported the 222<sup>nd</sup> GA 2016 as follows:

Synod of the Covenant Response to the 221<sup>st</sup> GA (2014) item 05-04

In response to the 221<sup>st</sup> GA (2014) item 05-04, the Synod of the Covenant invited all eleven of its presbyteries and neighboring synods into conversation to discuss possible boundary changes and/or new partnerships. Regretfully, we were unable to fulfill the 221<sup>st</sup> (2014) GA item 05-04 as issued. However, what did emerge from our contextual discernment process was a renewed purpose and sense of call as a *Just- Peace* church.

Recommendations:

1. That the Synod of the Covenant maintain its current geographic boundaries.
2. That the Synod of the Covenant be permitted to affirm its calling as a *Just-Peace* church.
3. That the Synod of the Covenant invite the presbyteries and congregations that lie within its bounds to adopt *The Five Peacemaking Affirmations*.

Since then, the Synod continued the discernment to live out the calling of A Just-Peace church. This is evident in our continuous self-evaluation and organizational redevelopment. The Synod Assembly convenes trice annually. In spring, the Synod welcomes new and returning commissioners with a three-day retreat, which includes faith nurture, education and reflection, and orientation, preceded or followed by a brief business meeting of the Assembly. In the summer, the one-day Assembly is focused on conversations with and receiving reports from the 11 presbyteries, which are presented by presbytery/coordinating council moderators. The context of mission, challenges and opportunities, is the focus of these community conversations. The Annual Assembly is a two-day in November and begins with a seminar led by the International Mission Partners from the Synod's Mission to the USA program as they conclude their itineration with congregations. The seminar is followed by worship and often a visit by the GA Moderator. The next day is designated as the annual assembly business.

We continue to conduct the Mobile Health Fair Ministry program, the Mission to the USA program, and the Welcome Refugee initiative. The Synod continues to resource presbyteries as invited, and especially during transitions in leadership, and other constitutional requirements in presbytery minutes review, consultations, referrals, and PJC. The synod is in process of renewing the covenant agreements with PCUSA related institutions within the bounds and maintain ecumenical and interfaith relations. We have recently concluded a deliberate and lengthy process to review and update the Synod Bylaws and Manual of Operations.

The Synod continues to support various new and continued initiatives generously, reduce the cost, and refrain from increasing per capita apportionment. The Synod conducts its mission within the bounds in partnership with presbyteries and congregations, and with GA entities, in order to effect change in church and society. Through the Welcome Refugees initiative, the Synod allocates resources to help support congregations in order to demonstrate the love and teachings of Jesus through genuine hospitality, as well as with the three-year focus on Christian-Muslim relations through the Mission to the USA program. Synod also deploys six young adults to organize and conduct free health fairs through the Mobile Health Fair ministry. Synod funding also include the ecumenical mission of the Ohio Council of Churches, in addition to other engagements in the local and regional communities.

Support for Campus Ministry programs continues in public universities and colleges. The Synod maintains a focus on multicultural and diversity, which include the Cabinet of Racial Ethnic Affairs, Black Clergy Pastoral Care Retreats, and Korean Pastors and Spouses retreats. In addition, the Synod continues to administer R/E Program grants, New Covenant Grants, Higher Education and Seminary Scholarships, and Peacemaking Scholarships. Synod also maintains vibrant partnerships with the Synod Presbyterian Women, and the Covenant Gathering (former Synod School in partnership with Synod of Lincoln Trails), and PCUSA related mission networks, and international partnerships.

Since the 222<sup>nd</sup> GA 2016, through the efforts of the Moderators' Committee, there was an added effort to improve the committee structure of the Synod of the Covenant. The Synod Assembly established a task group of diverse commissioners to review the Bylaws and Manual of Administrative Operations. Those proposals were voted on at the November 3-4, 2017 Synod Assembly. This effort was the result of the evaluation of the Synod's Moderators Committee, which also follow up on the process of implementation.

The Synod's Moderators Committee will continue to evaluate the work of the synod as mandated by synod policy to "Guide the synod in its review of the vision and mission directions of its life and work" which include reviewing the organizational structure, policies, and mission focus of the Synod of the Covenant annually, and report to the General Assembly biennially.