



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Status Report on Supporting and Learning from BIPOC Churches, Ministries, And Leaders in the Synod

Provided by Charles B Hardwick, Interim Executive
5/7/21 Administrative Commission Meeting

Ministry Objective: The Synod learns from and supports its BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) churches, ministries, and leaders in the Synod of the Covenant in ways that each of these communities have identified for themselves.

Background:

- Learning from and supporting these communities has historically been largely accomplished via the Cabinet on Ethnic Church Affairs (CECA) and the formerly-called Racial-Ethnic Caucuses (“Caucuses”), although other ministries have also existed, such as the Black Theology and Pastoral Care Retreat.
 - Caucuses include the Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Middle Eastern Caucuses and the Native American Consulting Committee.
- When the General Assembly Administrative Commission took original jurisdiction in February, 2020, it temporarily suspended all ministries (including CECA) with the exception of the Caucuses.
 - However, none of the Caucuses continued to function. Current Synod staff does not have any lists of/contact information for former participants.

Progress-to-Date

- The 2021 Synod budget includes \$20,000 toward this objective and an additional \$5,000 in funding for the Caucuses.
- Informational interviews with Community Organizers Sheena Rolle (Atlanta), Lucy Waechter Webb (Traverse City, MI), and John Welch (Pittsburgh) were held in April, 2021.
- Planning for a 2022 Black Theology and Pastoral Care Retreat has taken first steps.
- Roster of all BIPOC pastors is being developed.
- The 2021 Grants and Scholarships team will give special attention to all BIPOC applicants.



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Highlights from Informational Interviews

- Community organizing offers several helpful tools for networking and the discovery of shared self-interests and future dreams.
 - These self-interests/dreams may concern society at large, local congregations/ministries, or matters internal to the Synod.
- Formal training is critical for the organizer(s), and the Synod may need to send the best candidate for this work to such training.
- Contracting with one half-time lead organizer who then identifies and trains five organizers (one for each racial-ethnic constituency) would be the best approach, though slower than hiring five very part-time organizers. (Time frame = 1 year)
- The initial listening campaign would be a series of virtual one-on-ones to build trust.
- Community organizers often raise additional funds.
- It is critical that Synod staff validates and advocates for the identified self-interests of BIPOC constituents.

Draft of Potential Next Steps for Discussion/Improvement

- Invite a racially-diverse team to make progress toward our objective.
- Hire a lead organizer, and offer training if necessary, to conduct listening campaign and to develop a team of colleagues focusing on each racial-ethnic background.
 - Use \$20,000 in budget toward lead organizer, and \$1,000 for each colleague in 2021.
Ask lead organizer to raise funds or budget necessary amounts in 2022.
- Through the Synod nominating committee, elect one Ruling or Teaching Elder from each racial-ethnic group to join the Synod assembly with voice and vote in 2022.
- Discover shared self-interest of constituencies, and see how they are interrelated.
- Explore the best Synod structure to support these self-interests and future dreams, and implement this structure for 2023 and beyond.