

Synod of South Atlantic (SOSA) meeting, April 28-29, 2022

Offered by Charmaine Ponkratz

The Synod of the South Atlantic consists of sixteen presbyteries in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina serving 825 congregations, 164,009 members and 2061 Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. (2020 statistics).

It was the first time since the 2019 meeting that the Synod met in person; been ZOOMing for all the meetings in 2020 and 2021. The Synod managed to conduct the normal business of the body. Rather than focus on the more routine matters, this report is taking the *less is more* approach!

1. **Board of Pensions:** Clark Simmons reported that the Board of Pension dues has held at 37% for the last 5 years but likely to change for next year due to increasing medical care costs.
2. **Presbyterian Foundation:** Robert Hay reported that pre-pandemic the Foundation's online giving program (VANCO) had 700 churches and processed \$9 million per year. In 2020 the program *added* 800 churches and processed \$33 million in giving. That giving increased to \$38 million in 2021. For more information: robert.hay@presbyterianfoundation.org

Additionally, the Stewardship Kaleidoscope is scheduled for September 26-28, 2022. Over 30 workshops spanning theology, practical stewardship planning, creative ventures and legacy programming. Keynote speakers: A. J. Jacobs, Rev. Dawn Hyde, Dr. Michael Bos. Early-bird, group, and first-call discounts; scholarships available. www.StewardshipKaleidoscope.org

3. **Presbyterian Women in the Synod of South Atlantic:** The Triennial is planned for October 21-23, 2022, at Epworth, St. Simons Island, Georgia. (A lovely retreat location....if you've never been there before.) Keynote speaker will be Rev. Cecelia Armstrong, James Island Presbyterian Church.
4. **Grants and Applications** from the Synod of South Atlantic – more information: <https://synodofsouthatlantic.org/grants-and-applications/>
5. **Joyce Lieberman, Synod Executive and Stated Clerk:** as Joyce concluded her report, she announced her plans to retire at the end of September. Her constitutional knowledge, collegiality and authenticity were appreciated and celebrated. The Executive Administrative Commission (EAC) and one additional member from each state will serve as the search committee. As chair of the Budget and Finance Committee I have the privilege of serving on the EAC so if you have referrals for Joyce's replacement, please make that information known to me.

Thank-you for your confidence in electing me to represent Peace River Presbytery; it is truly an honor.

Synod of South Atlantic Commissioner Report Respectfully submitted, Rev. Andy Casto-Waters

I have had the pleasure of serving as a Commissioner to the Synod of South Atlantic for several years. My time began in Foothills Presbytery (SC) and continued when I transferred to Peace River in 2019. I will try not to repeat Charmain's report, but instead would like to offer a few perspectives that may be of benefit for the Presbytery.

The first is that, as noted by Charmaine, Joyce Lieberman will be retiring in October of this year. I have had the opportunity to work with many of our Synod leaders, having been a part of the Synod my entire Presbyterian life. Joyce has brought many gifts to the office, notably her polity knowledge, her pastoral support of Presbytery leaders, and her ability to build connections within our region. She has energized the work of the Synod in many ways and brought an administrative stability that was much needed. Joyce will be missed, and I hope that we will be able to thank her formally and informally for her guidance and leadership.

Our Synod is shifting in many ways. In 2019 at the Atlanta Stated Meeting, we discussed several emerging needs that the Synod should address. Charmaine was part of the group that crafted those goals, and we have sought to live into them. As with everything, the Pandemic disrupted that progress, yet we still have a clear vision and sense of direction. These are:

- *Motion 1: (adopted May 3, 2019)*

In community, through connections and relationships, the purpose of the Synod of South Atlantic through 2021 is to:

**Ensure full integration of diversity in all of its life and work;
Equip and empower transformational leadership;
Provide for mutual enrichment among the leadership of our 16 presbyteries;
and, Use innovative technology to accomplish its purpose, model effective communication strategies, and share best practices.**

Many of us wonder how we are to continue being faithful moving forward after the events of the last few years. The good news is that we do not journey alone. Christ, our companion and Savior, walks the road with us. And we have multiple resources throughout the Synod to call upon. A church in Upstate South Carolina may be launching a similar venture you may be exploring. An urban Georgia church may be pondering a similar shift in mission that your Session is considering. The Synod Office can be a hub and support to help put churches in touch with each other, either by sharing the exciting things happening through Presbytery leaders or by contacting them directly. I would urge us to not try and go it alone, but instead to use the best part of our connectional nature to continue building Christ's Kingdom here in Peace River. We have all learned how important connections with each other are.

Blessed be the tie that binds.

STATED MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 28-29, 2022

EPWORTH-BY-THE-SEA ST. SIMONS ISLAND, GEORGIA



- The Rev. Dr. David Shelor, Synod Moderator, Tampa Bay Presbytery, welcomed first-time and returning Commissioners, first-time and returning Presbytery Leaders, Stated Clerks, Consultants for Racial Ethnic Ministries, the Synod's Presbyterian Women moderator, guests, and staff gathered to conduct the business of the Synod at Epworth-by-the-Sea, St. Simons Island, Georgia, on April 28-29, 2022.
- The Rev. Joyce Lieberman, Synod Executive and Stated Clerk, reported on the status of the Synod, including the membership, the Presbytery and Synod minutes approvals, Synod Permanent Judicial Commission decisions, and her work schedule. The Synod offices moved in 2021 from the First Presbyterian Church, an ECO church, to the St. Augustine Presbytery. She was able to attend more Presbytery meetings by ZOOM in 2021, but has begun to increase her travel as Presbyteries and churches are opening up.
- Joyce also announced her retirement, effective September 30, 2022, and expressed her enjoyment in serving the Synod for the past five years. The Synod body approved her contract extension to that date.
- The Executive Administrative Commission (EAC) reported on the decisions made since the last Synod Stated Meeting:
 - The fall Stated Meeting for 2022 will be held by ZOOM on Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 10:00 am, eastern.
 - The spring Stated Meeting for 2023 will be held on February 22-25, 2023, at Epworth-By-The-Sea, St. Simons Island, Georgia, with tentative plans for an education event with workshops.
 - The fall Stated Meeting for 2023 will be held by ZOOM on Tuesday, November 14 at 10:00 am, eastern.
- The Synod audit for 2021 was completed. The Synod investment policy remained a 70/30 investment ratio. The 2022 budget was approved with per capita remaining at \$1.50 and suggested mission giving remaining at \$1.00.
- The Rev. Debbie Foster, Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk, Foothills Presbytery, facilitated rotating table discussions as to the future of the Synod.



Facilitation groups



Prayer for Joyce