

Synod of the South Atlantic
Commissioner Report
Rev. Jessi Higginbotham
April 19 -20, 2018

Thursday, April 19

Meeting began promptly at 12:00 PM. We were welcomed to Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC by Rev. Jana Creighton, Pastor. The meeting began with a lovely lunch and fellowship time provided by Seven Oaks.

Reports were given by the Association of Smaller Congregations (Mary Beene), Columbia Theological Seminary (Julie Bailey), and Thornwell Home for Children (Elliot Smith). Mr. Smith delivered a powerful report about Thornwell, a place for children in the foster care system. Support for programs at Thornwell comes from churches and private donations, no financial support is taken from government agencies. Children at Thornwell are able to stay together with their siblings when they are taken out of their homes due to various reasons.

Committees of the Synod met at 2:15 PM on Thursday. I serve on the Budget and Finance Committee. BFC met with Texas Presbyterian Foundation to discuss moving our funds in trust from the Presbyterian Foundation to the Texas Presbyterian Foundation. We also discussed the question asked of us by the synod: *how can the synod best support the ministries and mission of our presbyteries as they seek to support the witness of congregations?*

At 4:00 PM Rev. Dr. Martha Moore-Keish, professor of Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, gave a wonderful presentation titled “Divine Freedom and Human Religions: A Reformed Theologian Approaches Comparative Theology.”

The day was closed with dinner, worship, and Communion.

Friday, April 20

Meeting reconvened promptly at 9:00 AM with music and singing. Reports were given by different Synod groups – the Hispanic-American Consultant for the Synod spoke honestly about his enthusiasm for Hispanic Ministry, how monies are used to help and support our brothers and sisters in Hispanic Ministry.

The Board of Pensions did a presentation on a new program called “Pathways to Renewal” a reduced dues program for smaller churches without an installed pastor or PNC (search committee) for more than 2 years. The program offers these churches an opportunity for reduced dues for up to 5 years.

A scholarship is being established by the Synod after a generous donation from the Hawkins Family. Funds will be used to give scholarships to seminary students. The scholarship committee was formed from members of each Synod sub-committee, including myself from the Budget and Finance Committee.

The meeting of the Synod of the South Atlantic ended 1 hour early with prayer and all participating parties dispersed to go home.

Respectfully Submitted
Rev. Jessi Higginbotham
Synod Representative for the Presbytery of St. Augustine