



Gathering Together · Nurturing Innovation · Strengthening Communities
Reuniéndonos Juntos · Animando Innovación · Fortaleciendo Comunidades
다같이 모이기 · 공동체를 강화하기 · 혁신을 키워나가기

Report of the Synod Leader Harold M. Delhagen September 2016

I continually marvel at the process we are engaged in through our *New Way Forward*. From the beginning of our listening process we framed this as a journey. Our initial exercise included reflections about packing for our journey and asking what we would need to leave behind, what we would find important to take with us and what new things we may need to bring along. This has been a rich process for framing our *Way*. While our course continues to be guided by our core values it is important that we stop on occasion and prayerfully reflect upon what new things we will need to pack and shed as we move onward. Our time of gathering with our larger Synod Assembly is a valuable time for us to listen carefully to one another as we prepare for another two years of our journey. I hope that many of our Mission and Ministry Commission members will be present at our Synod Assembly both to listen and to inform the larger community of what we have experienced so far on our journey

(For continuity I have left my previous benchmarks and recommendations in grey with a smaller font.)

I. Prophetic and Justice based initiatives

1. To develop a comprehensive plan to further and deeply address issues of racism and white privilege. These initiatives must affect and influence our presbyteries and their congregations to more fully engage in this essential conversation. This plan must include:
 - A. Repositioning the expectations of our Working Group on Race to engage in an active review of our Synod's life and work and to report at least twice a year to the Mission and Ministries Commission on the status of our prophetic goals of addressing white privilege and racism both within our Synod Community and throughout the broader communities in which we serve.

Benchmark 1.A.

To report January, June and September 2016 as well as the Synod Assembly in October 2016 on the status of the Working Group on Race and its review of our larger Synod life through the lens of overcoming racism and barriers of privilege.

June 2016: The Working Group on Race will be meeting just prior to our commission meeting and I will include a verbal update on their work. A significant discussion is planned to balance the various interests and concerns of race with many different racial/ ethnic stories within our Synod Community. We began with a first focus on racism and the African American story alongside the need to learn about white and majority privilege. This work has gone well, but very slow mostly due to the challenges of schedules. At the same time other communities within our Synod long to have their stories included. My hope is to have a plan for a pathway forward agreed upon at the Working Group meeting.

September 2016: The Working Group on Race seems to have found clarity in its work. They have met with *Crossroads Anti-Racism and Training* and decided to use this group to lead us in a pre-Synod Assembly event. We are hoping that this event will encourage interest by our member presbyteries to hold smaller regional training/learning events throughout our Synod. The Working Group on Race would like to provide financial incentives in the form of grants to host presbyteries utilizing funds from the Robert Washington Fund.

A. To convene a Synod task force to design and implement at least one Sankofa like immersion event to further educate our community on the realities of racism with in our Synod community and the broader communities we serve. A Sankofa often will include a 3-5-day bus trip through significant sites related to our history of white privilege and racism. It includes facilitated cross racial dialog of participants.

C. This task-force will be convened by our Synod Networker and supported by the Synod Leader and at least one member of the Working Group on Race.

Benchmark 1.B.

To report these plans by June 2016 and to hold the event near the time of our Synod wide Assembly.

June 2016: A Sankofa Task Force has been at work and is expected to make a report to the Working Group on Race just prior to our June Commission Meeting.

September 2016: A Planning Team has participated in a Sankofa and we are ready to set plans in place to host one or more Sankofa immersion learning experience in 2017.

- B. To work with the offices of the General Assembly and others to facilitate the creation of regional opportunities which engage in reflection upon the roots and effects of white privilege. These may be in the form of sub-regional workshops or the promotion of existing programs.

Benchmark 1.C.

To report at least two of these opportunities to the June 2016 Commission meeting and to have them completed by the end of 2016.

June 2016: The national White Privilege Conference was held this April in Philadelphia. A small number of members of our Synod participated including our Stated Clerk, Nancy Talbot who was able to gather many of our members for ongoing conversation.

Plans are underway to further address and provide education in this area at our Synod Assembly.

September 2016: Plans are now in place for a pre-synod event addressing White Privilege, White Supremacy and anti-racism education.

- C. To continue to work with each of the following Racial Ethnic Caucuses to determine both viability and possible futures. In pursuing this work it is important to recognize that, with the exception of the Latin American/Hispanic Caucus, the caucuses listed below have little if any organizational structure. These remain essential identifiers of the significant racial ethnic communities within the Synod.

Benchmark 1.D.1

Korean Caucus: To continue to assist in the process of dismissal of a congregation with the Eastern Korean Presbytery. Report by June 2016

June 2016: This work continues to move forward. I regularly meet with leaders of Eastern Korean Presbytery (EKP). I will be writing a more detailed article for our next e-blast communication due out next month.

At this time our mediation work within EKP has led all parties to reach agreement on a path forward that avoids engaging in judicial actions and, more importantly, provides a way that is both healing and provides opportunities for future relationship building.

I encourage our Commission Members and their presbyteries to support the overture from EKP to the 222nd General Assembly (Attachment 1-3). While we would not like to abandon the idea of geographically based presbytery boundaries and avoid creating an atmosphere where congregations pick and choose who to align with – we need to hold this concern in balance with the significant challenges of language barriers. As we move to embrace these same challenges within our Synod Community perhaps we are called to be the place where such intracultural community building occurs.

In the meantime, we need to recognize that the essential work of mutual accountability required of a presbytery cannot effectively happen when a significant language barrier exists. In our past, we assumed that immigrant groups would transition over time and the need for non-geographic language based presbyteries would diminish. New patterns of immigration, where people move back and forth between countries and the flow of new immigrants continues, makes the old concept obsolete.

September 2016: Our support of the overtures related to the needs of our Korean Members was quite successful. Our work in supporting reconciliation within the Eastern Korean Presbytery has also proven to be highly beneficial and is nearly complete.

Benchmark 1.D.2

Korean Caucus: To deepen the sense of solidarity between the Synod and our Korean members by engaging in a continuing education event in which I travel with members of our Korean Community to South Korea in order to more fully understand their story of faith and immigration. April 2016.

June 2016: This was a significant learning opportunity with many new relationship opportunities for me personally and for our Synod community. I would like to plan a Synod trip to South Korea next April.

September 2016: Plans are on-going

Benchmark 1.D.3

Latin American/Hispanic Caucus: This is our only fully functioning caucus at this time. I will plan to remain in conversation with its leadership and to make one personal visit with this caucus by September 2016.

June 2016: Plans are underway to meet with leaders of our Hispanic Caucus June 14th.

September 2016: A meeting was held this summer with the leadership of the Hispanic caucus. A strong working relationship has been developed. We were able to partner with caucus members in supporting a youth leadership event at Holmes Conference Center this past month. One area of significant concern is the lack of full time Hispanic pastoral leadership positions throughout our region.

Benchmark 1.D.4

Native American Caucus: I have had this as an unmet benchmark throughout 2015 and will redouble my efforts to have at least one personal visit with our Native American members to discuss ways to support their presence within our Synod community by September 2016.

June 2016: Our Synod Networker will be making a visit through Long Island this summer and will include a visit to our Native American community there. We will then look to build upon this for the fall.

September 2016: Our Synod Networker had a productive meeting with leaders of the Shinnecock Native American Community. This resulted in generating a new Innovation Grant proposal and other new initiatives that may hopefully re-engage our Native American communities.

Benchmark 1.D.5

The African American Caucus: I will redouble my efforts to facilitate a new conversation with black leaders throughout our Synod Community to explore new options for gathering black voices and supporting the ministries of our traditionally African American churches by September 2016.

Benchmark 1.D.6

To discern, through the above initiatives (1.D.1-5), if there is passion and commitment for holding a new form of convocation of our racial ethnic communities and to report findings by June 2016.

June 2016: Both are ongoing.

September 2016: Lack of forward movement in this area remains a significant concern.

II. Working Together/Supporting Presbyteries

June 2016: This work continues to increase in both its demands and opportunities. It is clear that through more active engagement with our presbyteries and their leader we have reduced the amount of energy previously required for our PJC process. The Mediation Training event, the development of a Mediation Network, the revival of our Synod Leader Collegium and Gathering of Stated Clerks, new opportunities for Transitional Leader training, as well as the vibrant work of our new NNY COM Network are all contributing to our goal of supporting presbyteries and their congregations. Plans for another Presbytery Convention are underway for November 11-12, 2016.

Benchmark 2.A

To assist the leadership of Newark Presbytery to finish their design and implementation of a new missional plan and structure that will be self-sufficient by September 2016.

June 2016: My work in this continues to ebb and flow depending on the needs at any given moment. The Stated Clerk will provide a more detailed report.

Benchmark 2.B

To gather each of the sub-regional clusters which emerged through the Presbytery Convention to develop next steps by September 2016.

June 2016: I have been unable to meet this benchmark while I have attempted to reduce travel in the past quarter. I have been able to increase my use of Go-To-Meetings as a way to stay in touch.

September 2016: Great progress has been made in this area. Logistic for the Presbytery Convention are in place.

We are seeing significant conversations emerging as a result of last year's Convention. Monmouth and West Jersey are holding a joint presbytery meeting this fall with a grant from our Synod to pay for a guest speaker and lunch. A joint COM network continues to grow throughout central New York. There are many conversations occurring between presbyteries around sharing staff and other functions. It is clear that every presbytery is interested in exploring new partnerships.

Benchmark 2.C

To report to the June and September Commission meetings additional ways we might support our presbyteries.

June 2016: Ongoing

III. Leadership

Our commitment to supporting our presbyteries and our aspirations to become the Beloved Community will require significant changes in the nature of our leadership. Our church in every dimension is predominately white, upper middle class and above the age of 50. The pool of potential leaders outside of this dominant demographic are poorly identified. A task force of the Mission and Ministries Commission has met and will bring the following recommendation to the Commission:

Proposal 1: The Robert L. Washington Leadership Fund

That the Synod of the Northeast establish the Robert L. Washington Leadership Fund for the training of racial ethnic, young and other marginalized individuals who have been identified by their communities as potential leaders. Applicants will be identified by or through the work of the Mission and Ministries Commission, presbyteries, caucuses and other entities within our Synod community. The Synod through its Commission will establish a small review team of between 3 and 5 persons (named by the Commission Moderator) who will:

- a. Identify educational training programs that will best develop the skills and abilities of potential leaders.
- b. Determine a range of financial and other resources necessary to support successful development of leadership abilities and skills essential for leading our future church and consistent with the values of *The New Way Forward*.
- c. To recruit potential leaders with the priority given to racial ethnic, young and other marginalized individuals.
- d. To create an initial corpus of this fund with the transfer of monies in the amount of \$25,000 from the Leadership Designated Fund. Additional funds would be provided through our new Funds Development Initiative, and from the potential repurposing of the temporarily restricted portion of the Wurffel, Sills and Walker funds." That this review team be identified by March 2016 with a first report to the Commission at the June 2016 meeting.

Benchmark 3.A

To facilitate the creation of the Robert L. Washington Leadership Review Team along with refined application criteria, approved training options and standards, funding, and communications, with a report to the June 2016 Commission meeting.

June 2016: Attachment 4 is a detailed proposal to be reviewed by the Administrative Working Group for the use of our Robert Washington Leadership Fund to be used for a Robert Washington Scholars and Fellowship program under the direction of our Committee on Representation on behalf of the Mission and Ministries Commission. I want to express thanks to our Synod Networker, Amaury Tañón-Santos, for his work on this project.

September 2016: We are ready to go! With the help of our consultants we will have all promotional materials available for our Synod Assembly.

Proposal 2. Debt Support for Emerging Leaders

I recommend that a task-force be established by the Commission Moderator to explore the potential to re-purpose a portion of the temporarily restricted portion of the Wurffel, Sills and Walker funds to a relief program for seminary education debt. This task-force would develop criteria, for the amount of funds to be used and well as the process to be used in determining eligibility. This task-force will report to the September commission meeting with recommendations to the October Synod Assembly.

I encourage everyone to read the recent article from our emerging leaders (<http://synodne.org/emergingleaderscommunity>) It is clear that student debt for our pastors has become a crisis for our church.

Other Leadership initiatives are working well, including the growth of our Emerging Leaders group and our Early Ministry Institute and I will continue to provide support as needed for these ministries.

June 2016: I would encourage the Administrative Working Group to move forward on this work through a task force to report back to our September meeting in time for a possible report at our Synod Assembly. I am willing to staff this task force.

September 2016: While this remains an area of great concern and some preliminary research has been done – we have not been able to gather a task force on this yet.

IV. Building and Supporting New Gospel Communities

Essential to our work in the *New Way Forward* is the ongoing creation and preservation of an unencumbered/blue sky environment in which innovation will be supported. This priority has meant that we do not intend to fund direct remedial efforts such as building repair, salary support or other important work to sustain current ministry within presbyteries. We have determined that this is the work of our presbyteries. Our call is to be the incubator and supporter of new initiatives that may not be able to receive the support of a local presbytery. A few areas we will pursue this year include the cultivation and support of new worshiping communities, continued work of listening for opportunities to gather and build networks as well as the refinement and development of our campus ministries. All of these initiatives will be carried out in partnership with our presbyteries.

Benchmark 4.A

To work with our Synod Networker and presbytery leaders to cultivate new Worshiping Communities and to support our Live Wire Network, including the identification of potential members. To provide a report that lists all New Worshiping Communities within the bounds of our Synod by June 2016

June 2016: See the report of the Synod Networker.

Benchmark 4.B

To Identify Campus Ministry leaders within the bounds of our Synod and to cultivate a network of Campus Ministry that might provide mutual support and direction to our Commission in how we might best move forward in growing this important ministry. Our goal will be to gather this group, by the summer of 2016, with a report to the September 2016 Commission meeting.

June 2016: A webinar is being scheduled for later in June where all stakeholders and Mission Working Group members can share information and future ideas on promoting campus ministries. I have also begun meetings with our ecumenical partners in New York to coordinate this work among our denominations.

September 2016: The webinar was well received and it seems that applicants are adapting well to our new application process. I have been able to personally visit with our new chaplains at Princeton and Rutgers University. It is clear that there is a need to provide greater financial and spiritual support for these important areas of ministry. Plans are underway to hold an exploratory gathering of campus ministers/chaplains within our region and to consider the formation of a network to support their work.

V. Synod-Wide Mission

There are some areas of mission that we support that encompass our entire Synod. These tend to relate to historic and longtime relationships. These include, Mission at the Eastward (MATE), Bloomfield College, Stony Point Conference Center and Parity. As we move toward a new budget cycle in 2017 it is incumbent upon the Commission through the Mission Working Group to conduct a thorough review of these ministries to determine future support.

Benchmark 5.A

To meet with the leadership of each of our four Synod Wide mission partners in order to receive updates and discuss our future relationships. To report initial findings to the Mission Working Group at their June 2016 meeting and to facilitate their recommendations for the 2017 budget at the September 2016 Commission meeting.

June 2016: All of our Synod Mission Partners are undergoing significant change. I will be meeting with the leadership of MATE on July 13th, waiting for details on the future leadership of Parity and delighted at the growth of our Campus Ministry partnership with Bloomfield College. I want to express deep gratitude to Chaplain Teri Ofori for her passionate and creative work both on the Bloomfield campus and among our Synod. She recently served as chaplain and worship leader for a meeting of our Synod Collegium and facilitated the plans for holding our first fundraising event to be held at the College. Thank you Terri.

September 2016: You will notice a change in the 2017-2018 budget lines. Our three traditional areas of Synod have been changed.

Our support for Bloomfield College will remain unchanged at \$40,000 but will now be placed under Campus Ministry/Higher Education.

Support for Parity will be placed under the line for the Robert Washington Fund and will require a new application for 2017.

Our Support for Mission at the Eastward will be discontinued and replaced with potential new grants through our Innovation Fund. I have spent significant time onsite with various parts of this ministry and believe there is great potential for renewal of important parts of this work as well as shedding some parts that are no longer viable. I am grateful for the partnership of the staff of Northern New England Presbytery in this work.

VI. Staffing and Funding For Our Future

June 2016: As noted in my introduction, pressures and changes in work demands upon all staff continue to be a concern. It was my hope that such a task force would already be put in place so that a comprehensive plan might be developed. This work requires significant knowledge of the work of not only staff, but the work of our three Working Groups and our treasurer. I would request that our Leadership Team move forward to establish such a task force.

Director of Operations and Support Staff Supervision: In response to the increasing needs and pressures upon support staff we have contracted with Rev. Steve Plank of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse to serve in a six-month position beginning June 1, 2016 as Director of Operations and Support Staff Supervision. The position description, as approved by both the Personnel Committee and the Leadership Team, is attached (Attachment 5). Basically Steve will serve on my behalf as a supportive and supervisory presence in our Syracuse office for 10 hours each week. Steve will have an office, phone number and email at the Syracuse office and plans to be present most week day mornings. This contract is for the amount of \$8,500/for six months of work and will be reviewed between the 4th and 5th month with the possibility of renewal.

We are also increasing the frequency of full staff meetings and will begin work with a consultant on building team capacity with our next retreat planned for June 9-10.

Synod Mission Coordinator

As we have moved forward in our work of cultivating and supporting mission and ministry, it has become clear that a person is needed who can write and create communication materials, coordinate application and follow-up with our various grant recipients and to carry forward future funds development work once our current funds development contract is completed. Attached (Attachment 6) is a draft of a position description that I hope might be reviewed and further developed before our September meeting.

Our work in developing new communications strategies and practices are clearly working. We have received significant feedback on these improvements. These were most significantly noticed in the communications leading up to our Come to the Table event. This process is now preparing us to begin the next step of funds development. We will need to begin looking at how we will best staff and resource this work as we complete our current contract with Wingo Inc. We do our work in significantly different ways using different tools and resources. We need to determine how to better utilize the skill sets of current staff including additional training as well as consider what new skill sets are needed outside of current staff.

September 2016: The work of the Director of Operations has been a blessing to the ministry of our Synod. I will be sharing a review of this position with the Working Group on Administration with the recommendation that this position be continued throughout the interim time needed for the Staffing Taskforce to complete its work.

Recommendation 2 – Establishment of a Staffing Taskforce

That the commission moderator appoint a small task force to study future staff design as well as the function of our current Personnel Committee and that this task force report back to the Commission at their June 2016 meeting.

September 2016: The Commission Moderator has named the taskforce. We will plan to convene this group later this month. Members named:

From Leadership Team -Thia Reggio

From Administrative Working Group - Jacinth Hanson

From Mission Working Group -Steven Fearing

From Networking Working Group - Charlie Smith

From Committee on Representation - Luci Duckson-Brambel

From the Commission at-large - Peter Surgenor

Benchmark 6.A

To work with the Staffing Taskforce by providing guidance and information that will help them prepare preliminary recommendations for our June 2016 meeting with final proposals brought to the September 2016 Commission meeting in time for any necessary action of the October 2016 Synod Assembly.

VII. Funding For Our Future

The initial review of our year-end financial reports looks very good. There has been a healthy balance between areas that required more funds than budgeted for and those where we were able to underspend. Our Treasurer's report will provide these details. Again, I would like to commend our Come to the Table planning team for their effective financial management in which we were able to include about twice as many participants with only a very slight budget overrun. The bottom line is that we are doing significantly more and funding more with close to the same total dollars as previous years.

We need to note that this is all occurring in an environment in which presbyteries are more frequently not paying their per-capita and reducing their mission giving. In recognizing this reality we will need to seek ways to support our presbyteries that are under tremendous financial pressure.

Occasionally we are asked if we should further reduce our part of the per capita. It is clear that the same amount that might be saved will not change the foundation of this problem, and in fact, would further reduce the ability for the church to do new and innovative things since this is often the first area to be cut. I would suggest that we continue to stay ahead of this challenge by increasing our ability to fund new mission and ministry. A second recommendation is to conduct a wealth survey. This could be a short electronic survey of both presbytery and congregational treasurers in which we ask a few simple questions such as a list of the totals for savings and other investment accounts. The report could even be anonymous since the goal would be to simply and honestly report back to the church about our actual wealth. It seems there is a profound myth of scarcity throughout our broader Synod community. It would not be the intention of this survey to find ways to increase giving to the Synod itself but to provide transparent conversation about the real wealth of our community and to then begin to work with our presbyteries to unleash, what we expect to be reports of significant wealth, for the increase of mission and ministry.

Recommendation 3 – Establishment of a Wealth Survey Taskforce

That the Synod Moderator appoint a small task-force of 3-5 persons to design a Synod-wide wealth survey and to plan at least one educational event for presbytery treasurers where best practices could be reviewed and the rationale for conducting a wealth survey could be explained.

June 2016: I have recently become aware that the Presbyterian Foundation may have resources for acquiring the information we are seeking. I will report back on September.

September 2016: On-going

VIII. Development and Communication

Our work with Wingo Inc. has been extremely helpful and has enabled us to make great strides toward our goals of effective communication and funds development. I fully support all the recommendations within the January Wingo report.

Recommendation 4 -That the three working group moderators work with our Wingo consultant and Synod staff be authorized to refine standardized applications forms, review process and staffing recommendations for our various grants and other financial support. They would come to the June 2016 commission meeting with recommendations regarding our understanding of innovation as well as how we interact with presbyteries (See the Wingo report under the Mission and Networks Working Groups).

In addition, I recommend that we put grant making on hiatus (after our January meeting) until our September commission meeting to fully integrate the new forms and procedures, consider the recommendations of the task force, and communicate all of this to the wider Synod community.

June 2016: This work is completed and now available on our new website – which I am confident you will find to be outstanding – Thank you Mieke!

Attachment 7 is two proposals from Mieke Vandersall for a continuation of her work with us. I request that the Administrative Working Group review both proposals and bring forward a recommendation to our Commission.

September 2016: We are still finding our way on this work. Our first Donor Cultivation went very well but did not produce the income we had hoped. Two additional events are planned for this fall as well as a strong end of year appeal. We are also developing materials to encourage greater mission giving from our presbyteries.

IX. Conclusion

Our work continues to flourish. Partnerships with our member presbyteries is strengthening and refinements in our grant making are creating greater clarity.

Harold M Delhagen
Synod Leader

September 2016