



July 14, 2019

PSEC Moderator's Thoughts on General Synod

As Moderator I have been asked to provide some thoughts on this year's General Synod. First let me say that it was wonderfully overwhelming and filled with not only business but also opportunities in worship, education, exhibits and just interacting with other delegates and attendees from all over the globe. It truly gives a greater sense of how vast the reach of the United Church of Christ and the impact we as its members can have to not only our local communities and nation but also the world.

The PSEC was well represented in all aspects of Synod. The diverse delegation representing all Associations and led by our Conference Minister who serves on the UCC Board participated fully. Some served as Committee Chairs to lead the discernment of resolutions, some sang with the combined choir, with one of our very own Ministers having a Solo! Others participated in Service projects while still others joined the march against ICE Raids. Still other members of PSEC came to lead workshops and experience Synod.

Frequently during the week we heard the scripture from John 17: 20-21 where Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one". A prayer in that we are called to put into action as we are commanded to "Love God with all our being and to love our neighbor". It is a commandment that rolls off our tongues but does not always shine in our daily life. It is a struggle sometimes to show that love while disagreeing on particular issues. But Jesus did not pray, "Let them all agree", Jesus prayed for all to be one in God. This commandment becomes the basis of the UCC mission statement that in part reads; "we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all." The experience of Synod brings front and center that although viewed as a progressive or more liberal denomination, we have far to go before we declare victory in welcoming, loving and seeking justice for all in all our local settings. Voices raised in debate of resolutions showed me that there are siblings within the UCC who continue to feel marginalized and less than fully loved and welcomed.

Worship was presented in wonderful ways. Scripture being read in different languages, music from all genres, dances from all cultures and the drums from the members of the indigenous tribes called us back to a time of worship. The Spirit filled the room as we transitioned from a people of varying views to One people praising and worshipping their God.

The theme for this year's Synod was "Shine" based on the scriptures from Matthew 5:13-16 where we are called to be salt and light to the world so that others might be drawn to God. The Rev. Tracy Blackmon reminded us that we are blessed and we are here to be that salt and light to others. In being that salt and light we also must make room for grace, goodwill and forgiveness.

Finally she proclaimed that "The Kingdom of God was NOT coming – it IS here." WE are that Kingdom. That Kingdom called to welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

Much of our time was spent in committee meetings preparing for voting on resolutions that came before the body. Resolutions came from various conferences and included topics such as Opioid Addiction, Privatizing Prisons, Use of Plastic Foam, Support of Rape and Sexual Violence victims, Exhibit Guidelines, and the Covenantal relationship between the local churches and the Associations to name only a few. Over Twenty resolutions were presented. So the question now remains how do we transfer the information from those resolutions to the Associations and the local churches. Each member of the delegation has been asked to present 1-2 resolutions that they feel might be appropriate for our conference to lift up. Those suggestions will be considered and presented at our Fall Conference meeting. Until then I encourage you to reach out to delegates and ask them about their Synod experience. Better yet, consider becoming a delegate for the 2021 Synod in Kansas City and experience it for yourselves.

As Synod came to a close with the final worship service, people seemed filled with the Spirit. Greeting each other, hugging, singing and finally saying good-bye as we all went our separate ways home. Arriving home after a long tiring journey, I sat down and decided to read that day's Still speaking daily devotion. It was based on the scripture from Luke following the Transfiguration. As Vince Amlin reminded us, Jesus returned from the mountain back to the daily work a little cranky. It is tough to return to the daily grind after experiencing such an uplifting event. But he also reminds us that "there is ministry to do, healing needed". Our work continues in our local settings to Welcome all, Love all and seek Justice for all as we spread God's love. So I end with the prayer given by Vince Amlin: "God, today a few thousand UCC leaders come down the mountain from General Synod 32. May the blessing they've received, renew us all. " And all God's people say "Amen"



2019 General Synod Delegates

- Ms. Jennie Strauch, PSEC Moderator