**Report of the Synod Visioning Task Force**

April 6, 2024

**For Action:**

The Synod Visioning Task Force recommends that the Synod of South Atlantic approve the following journey statement and guiding values and direct the Synod Visioning Task Force to build its continuing work around this document.

**Our Journey**

The Synod of South Atlantic, PC(U.S.A.) **embodies** the grace and love of Jesus Christ, **cultivates** authentic community within and across presbyteries, and **inspires** impactful ministry, developing leaders so that the Church becomes united in faith, hope, love, witness, and service.

**Guiding Values**

**Grace:** We embody Jesus Christ's teachings by making grace the foundation of the Synod’s work and interactions with others.

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” - Ephesians 2:8-9*

**Love:** We reflect Christ’s love in our lives and work by listening deeply to one another and acting to build up the whole family of God.

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs” - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

**Authenticity:** We welcome the full selves of all who gather at our table, respecting one another and seeking to be open with each other, so that our relationships and interactions are sincere and true to the Christian faith.

*"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” - Romans 12:9*

**Transparency:** We seek to practice openness in the systems and structures of the Synod so that nothing need be hidden from one another.

*“O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.” - Psalm 69:5*

**Unity:** We work to unite the presbyteries and their congregations in faith, hope, love, witness, and service, emphasizing the importance of togetherness and collective purpose within the Synod.

*"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” - Ephesians 4:3*

**Hope:** We welcome the Spirit’s presence that keeps us moving forward in hope, becoming the community God intends.

*“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” - Romans 12:12*

**Faithfulness:** In our faithfulness, we reflect a commitment and devotion to seeing tomorrow today and seek to make that desired future real throughout the Synod.

*“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” - Hebrews 11:1*

**Reforming:** As we are open to God’s reforming work, we develop presbytery and congregational leaders who share their faith and disciple others, using the patterns of the past to help us discern where God is guiding the church for the future.

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” - Matthew 28:19-20*

**Rationale**

The Synod Visioning Task Force was elected by the synod in November 2023. Our members include:

* Rev. Holly Dillon, General Presbyter of Tampa Bay Presbytery
* Rev. Jamil el-Shair, Synod Commissioner and Pastor of Altama Presbyterian Church, Savannah Presbytery
* Rev. Andy James, Stated Clerk of Greater Atlanta Presbytery (co-chair)
* Rev. Danny Murphy, General Presbyter of Trinity Presbytery
* Rev. Christina Greenwalt, Synod Commissioner and Stated Clerk of Central Florida Presbytery
* Elder Jacquelyn Rembert, Synod Commissioner from New Harmony Presbytery (co-chair)

Synod Executive Valerie Young has very ably served as staff to the task force. Ruling Elder Karla Dias from the Synod Committee on Representation was also elected to serve with us but stepped down in February 2024.

The Task Force gathered for its first meeting in-person at Calvin Center in Hampton, Georgia, from January 14-16, 2024. Over the course of our time together, we shared stories and meals and engaged in deep conversation and discernment about the past, present, and future of the Synod of South Atlantic. We spent time with scripture and the Book of Order, particularly the charge of the synod as described at G-3.04, to listen for how God might be speaking into our process through these foundational documents. Our initial conversations were led by Rev. Daris Bultena, Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of South Florida, who guided us through an imaginative process that created the basis of our work.

By the end of our first full day together, we discovered that the traditional ideas of a vision and mission statement were not the best fit for where we found ourselves as a task force—or for where we believe that our Synod is at this moment in our life together. Our mission and vision became clearest when we understood them to be a part of our *journey* together. And so emerged the proposed journey statement that we present to you:

The Synod of South Atlantic, PC(U.S.A.) **embodies** the grace and love of Jesus Christ, **cultivates** authentic community within and across presbyteries, and **inspires** impactful ministry, developing leaders so that the Church becomes united in faith, hope, love, witness, and service.

This journey statement gives us three clear actions that guide all our work on our journey together as a synod. First, we are called to ***embody*** *the grace and love of Jesus Christ* by coming together from our various presbyteries and perspectives to live together in this way on our journey. We are also called to ***cultivate*** *authentic community within and across presbyteries* to build the kinds of relationships in our life together that allow health and wholeness to sprout up all across our synod. Finally, as a synod we are called to ***inspire*** *impactful ministry*, joining in what God is already doing and breathing new life into places that need a message of hope.

Since we cannot do this work on our own, these three actions are supported by the work of *developing leaders* across our synod to support the faithful ministry of our sixteen presbyteries and the hundreds of congregations within our bounds. All of this work builds toward a common goal *so that the Church becomes united in faith, hope, love, witness, and service*.

A journey of this sort needs not only a statement about what we are doing together but also some values to guide us along the way. The eight guiding values of grace, love, authenticity, transparency, unity, hope, faithfulness, and reforming are intended to guide the next steps of our task force and the full implementation of this journey so that we have some guidance for how we agree to work together. We believe that lifting up these values will help our task force and the whole Synod in the future to better discern the priorities for our life together.

From here, if the journey statement and guiding values are approved, the Synod Visioning Task Force will begin to develop a plan for the next steps on our journey. We will be meeting in-person later in April to continue imagining how we believe God is calling us to step out on this journey together. Over the course of the summer and early fall, we expect to open up space for conversation across the synod so that we can listen broadly and deeply with one another for how God is inviting us to shape the journey that is ahead.

We are deeply grateful for your prayers as we continue on this journey together!

**A New Logo and Branding**

A logo with a cross and a boat

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As we embark on this new journey together, the Synod Visioning Task Force is excited to introduce a new logo for the synod that incorporates elements of our journey statement and values into a visual form.

* A *Celtic cross* stands at the forefront as a reminder of the grace and love of Jesus Christ and our historic connection to the Reformed tradition as it emerged in Scotland.
* Some may see a *bowl of water* sitting atop a *table* offering a visual representation of the sacraments that unite us with Christ and with one another.
* Some may see a *ship* that serves as the vessel for our journey, with the central circle of the Celtic cross serving as the ship’s wheel that gives direction amidst the waves.
* The *blue-green color* throughout the logo reminds us of the waters of baptism but also the water that surrounds two sides of our synod and lends itself to our name.
* The *three waves* visible in the central half-circle figure suggest the three states that make up our synod, the three verbs of our journey statement, and the three persons of our Triune God.
* The logo offers flexibility in colors, layout, and caption to fit different circumstances.