

Report to Transylvania Presbytery

November 6, 2018

On October 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> I had the opportunity to attend the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Assembly of the Kentucky Council of Churches held at Jeffersontown Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky as a delegate of the Transylvania Presbytery. With the meetings coming one day after the horrific race-based attack at the Jeffersontown Kroger, just a few miles away, the gathering of brothers and sisters of the Kentucky Council of Churches community was an important face of unity and solidarity in the midst of a time characterized by so much hate.

The theme of this year's assembly, "A House Divided," brought to the forefront of discussion and prayer our divided society and divided Church. As I write this report on election day, 2018, I am reflecting on the vision of unity in the Church held up at the Council meetings. I cherish the gathering together reflected in the faces of those gathered around that rooms from different church bodies, different parts of Kentucky, and different social locations in our country. I pray that a united Church can show a model to our country, suffering so under division and alternate visions of our current social needs, of not just civil dialogue, but of loving dialogue.

Dr. Leah Schade, of Lexington Theological Seminary, was our keynote speaker on Thursday the 25<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Schade, author of *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red/Blue Divide (forthcoming)*, presented work from her research on pastors' experiences with politically controversial issues and the response of their congregations. She offered examples of ways to broach these issues in Biblical and non-threatening ways that reflect our shared, common values. I highly recommend checking out her book.

On Friday, Bishop Marvin Frank Thomas of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church presented our second keynote presentation. Bishop Thomas strongly admonished the Churches for not doing more to actively unite our "divided house." As he reminded us, 11am on Sunday still remains the most racially divided time in our society. He urged us to consider ways of worshiping together on a regular basis.

Bishop Thomas also brought to our attention the importance of the work of the Council. Many state Councils are no longer supported by enough churches to hold gatherings such as ours, they are not as heterogeneous as ours, nor are they as able to be active in voicing concerns with their state legislatures. Our Council of Churches continues to be a strong voice for justice and mercy in our Commonwealth, and we are fortunate to be able to be active participants.

The theme for the 2019 assembly will be "Reclaiming Jesus." If you have not had the opportunity to read the statement released on Ash Wednesday of this year by an ecumenical group of Church leaders, I highly recommend checking it out. It can be found at [www.reclaimingjesus.org](http://www.reclaimingjesus.org).

I want to thank the Presbytery for allowing me to serve as your delegate to the Kentucky Council of Churches Assembly once more. Next year's meeting will be held in Morehead, and I encourage you to find a way to attend.

Elizabeth Underwood, First Presbyterian Church, Richmond KY