

**DAKOTA PRESBYTERY CONSULTATION  
REPORT  
CAMP RIMROCK  
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA  
MARCH 31 – APRIL 2, 2006**

After two previous attempts, the Presbytery of Dakota was able to have their Consultation, March 31-April 2, 2006. The meeting was held at Camp Rimrock near Rapid City, South Dakota. This is a preliminary report to be presented to the Presbytery of Dakota at their Spring Stated Meeting at the Lindsey Memorial Presbyterian Church, Poplar, Montana, May 5-7, 2006, for their review and approval.

There were representatives from United Dakota, Lindsey Memorial, Makaicu, Red Eagle Memorial, Makasan, Pine Ridge, Porcupine, Cedar, Flandreau First, Ascension, Goodwill and Pejutazizi churches. These representatives came from the Montana, Pine Ridge, Lake Andes, Flandreau, Sisseton and the Minnesota areas. Ms. Sallie Cauresma, Associate, Native American Congregational Enhancement, Louisville, KY and Rev. Buddy Monahan from the Native American Consulting Committee of the General Assembly were also present. There were a total of 40 people in attendance at the meeting. The Friday evening supper was provided by the Pine Ridge area churches, the Saturday morning breakfast by Sallie Cauresma of the General Assembly, the Saturday lunch by the Montana area churches, Saturday supper by the Sisseton area churches, Sunday breakfast by volunteer reps, and the Sunday lunch by Rev. Buddy Monahan of NACC.

The Consultation covered three topics: 1) How can we strengthen our local churches? 2) How can we strengthen our Presbytery? 3) A discussion time to identify important issues for the Presbytery. Each section was presented by the leader for the section with small group discussions and a time to report back. The last item, "Identification of important issues" was a group discussion. There was time taken for devotions on three separate occasions and a Sunday morning Worship service with the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The leaders for each section were: Rev. Ron McKinney and Rev. Simon Looking Elk. Mrs. LaVonne Looking Elk was responsible for the Worship and meal schedules. The participation in the discussion groups as well as the in the whole assembly went very well.

The Consultation was made necessary by the changes that are forthcoming concerning Dakota Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly. Perhaps the greatest concern was the news that the Synod would eventually have to cease providing Comprehensive Presbytery Mission Strategy (CPMS) funds. The amount of \$150,000 which the Synod provides per year as a subsidy in support of our Pastors and Commissioned Lay Preachers has been a tremendous help, but due to the decline in membership and financial giving throughout the national church, the Synod and General Assembly has had to make changes in program and staff. The cessation of financial assistance will create even more problems for the Presbytery of Dakota. The Presbytery is very grateful to the Synod for all the support they have given in the past. The Synod and others have suggested that the Presbytery of Dakota needs to review its work and begin to prepare for loss of the CPMS funds. There appeared to be a belief among the participants that if we lose the funds, the Presbytery of Dakota will have to be dissolved.

This Consultation was an effort to address the issues that the Presbytery faces today. There was discussion on how we can strengthen our local churches and the Presbytery so that we could be a more viable presbytery. The opinion is that if we have strong local churches, we will have a strong Presbytery. The Consultation utilized the expertise and experience of all who attended in order to begin to identify what the local churches and Presbytery needs to do. The participants reminded themselves that they must always remember to identify persons who will follow up on the goals agreed upon. We just cannot talk and not do anything. We must become serious about our commitment to the Lord and His church; because the general consensus is that we do not want our Presbytery to be dissolved.

The following is a report of the discussion topics and the responses to the topics. The responses indicate that there is much work to be done - some will require a tremendous amount of commitment and work. There just was not enough time to decide who would do the work and follow up with what needs to be done. After much discussion, the general thought and feeling was that we need to have another meeting in order to concentrate on the responses and so to develop a guidance tool to help us accomplish the goals. In addition, we must identify which Presbytery Committees will be assigned to work on certain tasks. It appears that one of greatest challenges facing our local churches is to work on developing programs that would strengthen their work and they would become more responsible and accountable. There is a general feeling that we need to spend greater time on the financial issues in order to develop a more suitable and workable plan for taking care of financial responsibilities and becoming more self-sufficient.

## ***HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL CHURCHES***

(The discussion groups addressed the issue by age groups)

### **Age Group 0-10**

1. Educate the children to: We are a church of love, the special love of Christ, sacrificial love which accepts us and is willing to die for us.
2. This is a church of love shown forth in various ways - through praise and joy, peace and comfort, where Goodness is shown, where Christian values are taught in preparing for life.
3. This is a church which lets us be who we are, and which lets us have room and liberty for native expression of the Gospel.
4. How do we relate to the parents to let them know how important it is to continue their children's attendance, when they themselves do not attend? We are concerned to keep them in fellowship. We may need to go to their homes.
5. We are a church which teaches the vitality of prayer and the activity of the Holy Spirit.
6. We are witnesses to the Good News; let the Gospel be expressed variously - singing, drama, art, and let each person be celebrated for he/she is not simply tolerated, but is a precious child of God.

## **Youth**

1. Teach the youth about biblical principles, culture, singing groups, singing the Dakota hymns. Teach them the cultural virtues: wisdom, humility, respect, generosity, compassion, courage and patience.
2. Parents and grandparents should be more involved with children. Try to involve and think up more modern ways to bring in the children and teens.

## **Young Adults 18-30**

1. This is a casual and contemporary group.
2. They need technology (power point, etc) to be used during worship.
3. Provide a place for them to express themselves.
4. Be more welcoming – let them know they are accepted as they are.
5. Provide more communication about church and ask young adults to participate.
6. Offer some kind of incentives for participation in program of the church.
7. Have present church members be better role models for them.

## **Middle adults 30 - 50 years:**

1. Let them know someone is out there who is thinking of them and concerned about them.
2. Have a visitation schedule and let them know they are welcome in the church. Sometimes they feel pushed out.
3. Sometimes they feel like are judged for their actions and feel they are not wanted – let them know Jesus loves them as they are and so do you.
4. Sometimes people in this group have addictions and need help.
5. Offer Sunday school for their children and let them know they are welcome to stay.
6. Perhaps offer contemporary worship and music for a worship time.

## **Older people**

1. They should be role models - someone they can turn to for leadership, for direction, to stand on principles of truth, be faithful and have integrity.
2. Ways to reach out to young people: Go door to door with invitation, visit with them and encourage them – offer a sense of inspiration; leave them a planning calendar with activities.
3. Let them know they are needed in our churches, they are our culture, learn to respect our elders, look up to them – we need their wisdom and experiences.
4. We need their stories of life – once they are gone we will lose important information. We may feel guilt for not asking and receiving information.
5. Make them feel they are still needed in the church.
6. This group was brought up to believe nothing but the Bible but today's kids believe newspapers but question the Bible.

## **50 – 65 years**

1. Regular worship services which include singing Dakota hymns.
2. Offer times for Bible Study.
3. Have the Elders take leadership roles: find ways to support pastor, home, hospital, jail and nursing home visitation.
4. Have older ladies have “Ladies Aid” group and be mentors for younger ladies.
5. Have church learn to respect the elderly in families, church and community.
6. Provide weekly activities for them.
7. Plan revival services where they can participate

## ***HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN OUR PRESBYTERY?***

### **How or where can we find resources (local, regional, national) to help our Presbytery?**

#### **Plan I (local)**

1. Develop a church budget which provides information for items for which money is needed. Examples: Pastor’s salary, operating expenses, per capita, etc.
2. Educate the Elders, church officers and church members about the church budget
3. Develop a stewardship program – delegate responsibility – suggest possible ways of raising funds like Indian taco sales, garage sales, etc.
4. Develop a community newsletter to keep people informed about what is happening with their church.

#### **Plan II (regional)**

1. Develop ways to network with larger churches: a) Designate someone to do networking, b) ministers do public relations work with other churches.
2. Being in contact with others will provide spiritual benefits and build lasting relationships.

#### **Plan III (national)**

1. Question to consider: What do we need these resources for? (Answer) To keep the church going, with the goal being self-sufficient and for future church projects.
2. We need to write grants to find funds – contact churches all over the nation, church groups and non- profit organizations.

### **How can we help Dakota Presbytery committees find ways to have meetings and get their work done?**

1. Utilize conference call meetings and e-mail communication.
2. Perhaps meet once a year to cut down on costs.
3. It will be important to get younger members involved – help the younger ones understand work of church.
4. Help those who are elected to committees to make a commitment.

5. Find ways to communicate about meetings, etc.
6. Have the local church accept responsibility of supporting their church members who are committee members.
7. Do some fundraising to help committee members: have a bazaar at a meeting, allocate funds, etc.
8. Maybe break Presbytery into regional areas for committee membership.
9. Make every effort to continue as a presbytery, but also work towards growing.
10. "Support the shepherd" in the church work – the leader.
11. Perhaps develop a new "Mission Statement" to support the situation of the presbytery.

### **How can we develop a communication system for the Presbytery?**

1. Must note that this issue has been addressed earlier at another presbytery meeting, but nothing was done.
2. Use the MSN messenger for those who have computers and share information – have meetings etc.
3. Use the conference call method for committees.
4. Develop a website for the Presbytery.
5. Send a letter to churches about ways or place for making computer contacts.
6. Develop a newsletter for the Presbytery – Rogene Crawford of the First Presbyterian Church of Flandreau has volunteered to work on the newsletter.
7. Utilize c-phone packages – when you have free minutes on weekends, use them for presbytery business.

### **How can we address the financial issues concerning our Presbytery?**

1. Find ways to collect the \$17.00 per member per capita – perhaps increase it to \$20.
2. Identify the Treasurers for each church.
3. Provide clarification for use of Per Capita funds to church members.
4. Hold churches and presbytery accountable for their responsibilities.
5. Revive volunteerism – find a way to have pastors and other church leaders to commit themselves to do the work – make financial issue secondary.
6. Send information letters to churches regarding: cost of per capita, importance of doing financial audits, making financial reports, informing all churches and members concerning the CPMS funding, and the changes that are coming in the near future.
7. Make sure the information letters reach the Clerk of Session, Treasurer and Pastor.
8. Develop a program of training for all leadership concerning the Book of Order, Session books, treasurer responsibilities, and telling the story of the work of the church.
9. Develop a brochure on Dakota Presbytery to share with local, regional and national levels of the Presbyterian Church.

### **How can we help our members learn about the Presbyterian Church structure and the Church government process?**

1. Use resources from within the presbytery to mentor and train/educate others such as like Elders, Commissioned Lay Preachers, Deacons and church members.

2. Share any information available with all members of our churches.

### **Dakota Presbytery**

1. Learn by working together in the Presbytery.
2. Advertise ourselves by developing flyers, brochures and sharing them with our local churches.
3. Provide written explanations to be shared – not just verbal information.
4. Provide food and have meetings for sharing information.
5. Develop and have workshop for sharing information – have food.
6. Invite people to come to our church or any time something is happening for sharing information.
7. Develop a website for use locally, regionally and nationally to share information.

### **Synod of Lakes and Prairies**

1. Have meetings with meals.
2. Use “In-house” knowledge about the synod to teach others in the churches of presbytery.
3. Get pamphlets and other information from the Synod to share with others.
4. Provide training at presbytery meetings.
5. Educate the presbytery about how delegates are chosen and when/how do they report?
6. Network with other presbyteries within the synod.

### **General Assembly (Presbyterian Church USA)**

1. Expect accountability from delegates to General Assembly.
2. Share information on who the delegates are to General Assembly meetings.
3. Elect people familiar with the process used at General Assembly, teach others and share your knowledge.
4. Take time to be good mentors – know all steps of church government.
5. Learn about General Assembly through an orientation process.
6. Elect delegates at Fall presbytery meeting.

### ***SELECTION OF IMPORTANT ITEMS FROM THE CONSULTATION***

The following items were chosen as being of utmost importance for the Presbytery to consider:

1. Develop a website for the Presbytery to share information.
2. Collect per capita of \$17 per member and maybe even increase it to \$20 per member.
3. Hold churches accountable for their responsibilities in the Presbytery.
4. Have the local church be responsible for supporting local church member who is on a committee.
5. Develop a brochure to tell the story of the Presbytery.

## Conclusion

The Presbytery owes a debt of gratitude for all those who participated in the meeting. Those who came indicated that they were committed to Lord, to their local churches and presbytery as they covered their own expenses to be at the meeting.

The following items are placed before the Presbytery:

1. The local churches review this report and offer their responses.
2. The Presbytery should review this report and determine what else needs to be done.
3. After reviewing this report, does this necessitate another meeting in order to continue to develop the goals that were identified as things that need to be done?
4. After reviewing this report, decisions need to be made concerning as to **who** will do the work.

I wish to personally thank all those who attended the meeting. Your participation was greatly appreciated and of help to the local churches and the Presbytery. There is no doubt that work needs to be done. We need to always remember the people in the local churches and the Presbytery in our prayers and to review our involvement/commitment as members of our local churches and the presbytery. We need to commit or re-commit ourselves to greater service in thanksgiving for the Love of the Lord and the salvation of our souls through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted:

Rev. Simon Looking Elk  
Stated Clerk  
Presbytery of Dakota