

Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting summary



Synod of Lakes and Prairies
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Fall Meeting
- Synod of
Lakes and
Prairies -
Mount
Olivet
Retreat
Center -
Farmington,
Minnesota -
September
30 - October
2, 2007

Synod approves participation in Board of Pensions sabbatical plan

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved participation in a joint program with the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide sabbatical-support grants to pastors in small congregations — those with congregations with fewer than 200 members.

The Board of Pensions has designated a total of \$330,000 annually for three years to fund its commitment, and each synod will receive a proportion of the total each year. The synod will receive a total of \$30,000 annually to issue 10 grants of \$3,000 each.

The program has been endorsed by the general and executive presbyters within the synod.

Bart Brenner, interim executive presbyter in South Dakota Presbytery, is developing procedure and application forms for the program.

Pending General Assembly approval, Synod approves funds for new church

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved funding — pending approval of General Assembly funding — of the Chain of Lakes Area new church development project of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area.

The new church would be located in northeastern metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St. Paul, roughly between the Lino Lakes and Blaine communities.

If approved by the General Assembly, the funding schedule for the project in 2008 would include \$50,000 from presbytery, \$32,000 from the General Assembly and \$15,500 from the synod. According to the funding plan the church would receive annually decreasing amounts through 2012.

Find synod information online

You can find the Synod of Lakes and Prairies online at www.lakesandprairies.org and you find the synod's MySpace page at www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies.

Also, anyone who wants to subscribe to the online newsletter of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies should contact Duane Sweep, associate for communications, by writing dsweep@lakesandprairies.org or by calling 651.357.1148 — a direct number.

The Synod Meeting Summary is published shortly after each meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. Comments regarding the publication or requests for copies should be addressed to dsweep@lakesandprairies.org.

Synod approves 2008 budget

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved the 2008 unified budget — income, expenses and allocation of per capita assessment. The budget, totaling \$2,287,475, includes \$1,102,000 for ministries in partnership, \$198,880 for ecumenical and institutional ministries, \$23,250 for communication, \$97,850 for synod governance, and \$865,495 for personnel and administration.

Synod grants 3 \$200,000 loans to churches in Minnesota, Iowa

The Finance Committee of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies reported the approval of loans to three churches, each loan in the amount of \$200,000.

The loans were issued to the Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, Minn., in the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, for building renovations; to First Presbyterian Church, Blackduck, Minn., in the Presbytery of Northern Waters, for building a new church; and Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Indianola, Iowa, in the Presbytery of Des Moines, for constructing a new multi-purpose building.

All the actions were taken by the Finance Committee during June 2007. Pursuant to synod policy, the Finance Committee is authorized to take such action between synod meetings.

Synod School sets record enrollment, makes plans for 2008 at Buena Vista

Synod School continues to set participation records.

According to the report presented by Tammy Rider, Twin Cities Area commissioner and a member of the Synod School Committee, 618 people took part in Synod School at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa, in July. That total represents a 4.7 percent increase above 2006 when 590 participated. Synod School took place July 22-27.

Participants included 581 Presbyterians, seven Roman Catholics and at least 30 others who were members of either a Methodist, United Church of Christ, Jewish, Reformed Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or other congregation. Participants came from 172 towns in 18 states and two Canadian provinces.

Plans are already in the works for Synod School 2008, scheduled July 27-August 1 at Buena Vista University. The Rev. Scott Nesbitt, pastor of First United Presbyterian Church in Clinton, Iowa, is slated as convocation speaker.

A flier about 2008 Synod School will be mailed to alumni, congregations and presbytery offices in November. Catalogs and registration information will be mailed and available online at the end of February.

PW organization remains strong

Calling the Presbyterian Women's triennial Synod Gathering "exceptional," LaDonna Fay, moderator of Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, noted that the organization in the synod "is strong."

The organization's July gathering took place at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa, with the theme, "The Quilt of Life."

The women cut and tied 123 fleece lap robes and blankets for nursing homes and child care facilities in the area. They also collected \$200 for the Presbyterian Hunger program by donating 2 centers per meal and then collected an offering of \$4,500 that was divided evenly among Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for victims of Hurricane Katrina; Denise England, who serves a mission in Egypt; and the bicycle project in the Congo.

Synod contracts with Wisconsin accounting firm

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved a Finance Committee recommendation to contract with Bauman Associates, an Eau Claire, Wis., accounting firm, to provide audit services for 2007, 2008 and 2009. The committee noted that costs for certified audits continue to rise faster than the general cost of living and may cause the synod to consider "something less than a full audit" at some time in the future.

Dakota Task Force attends meeting, cites discussion of partnerships

The Administrative Review Task Force on the Presbytery of Dakota met with several leaders of the presbytery in August, discussing congregational partnerships and self determination. JoAnn Simser, task force member and synod commissioner from the Twin Cities Area Presbytery, presented the task force report to the synod.

The report noted that “partnership was a big part of the discussion [with presbytery leaders], especially partnerships between Dakota churches and churches in the geographic presbyteries.” The report continued, “We have a model to follow: there is already a partnership that seems to be working between Bdecan Church in Tokio, N.D., and the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Devils Lake, N.D.”

The report also reported that presbytery leaders expressed a need for self determination. “There is much resistance to the idea of transferring churches to geographic presbyteries, as has been in the case of earlier task forces and commissions on this topic,” the report stated.

The next meeting of the task force is scheduled Oct. 25-26 at the synod offices in Eagan, Minn.

GAC report notes approval of restricted funds grants in synod

Three projects in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies were among 34 restricted funds grants approved in September by the General Assembly Council, according to the GAC report presented by Manley Olson, synod representative on the GAC.

Olson reported GAC-approved restricted funds grants totaled nearly \$133,000. A total of 112 applications were received for 20 different funds.

Receiving funding approval within the synod were First Presbyterian Church, Ely, Minn., for Christian education; Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Neb., for mission work; and Kwanzaa Community Church, Minneapolis, for Sabbath School.

Church membership continues to decline across synod

Church membership within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination across the Synod of Lakes and Prairies has declined 39.7 percent since the end of 1980, according to statistics presented at the fall meeting of the synod. During that time, church membership fell from 263,757 to 159,134.

During the period of Dec. 31, 2005, through Dec. 31, 2006, membership decreased 3 percent, falling from 164,080 to 159,134.

Declines of 5 percent or more from the end of 2005 to the end of 2006 occurred in the presbyteries of Des Moines (6.39%) and Northern Waters (5.04%). Two presbyteries showed declines of less than 2 percent — Twin Cities Area (1.08%) and Winnebago (1.51%).

ERC approves 2 additional higher ed grants

The Ecclesiastical Relations Committee recommended approval of two additional post-secondary education grants from late applications, pending the availability of funds. The funding for these two programs would total \$8,000 in 2008 and \$7,000 in 2009. The requests came from Northern State University United Campus Ministry, Aberdeen, S.D., and the Campus Ministry Program of First Presbyterian Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa.