

Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting summary



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Spring Meeting - Synod of Lakes and Prairies - Mount Olivet Retreat Center - Farmington, Minnesota - May 2-4, 2010

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 task force statement sent to GA stated clerk for distribution

A statement from the Administrative Review Task Force on the Future of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies that calls on commissioners of the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to "give sincere and thorough consideration to the overtures before them regarding the future role of synods in our church" was affirmed by synod commissioners this week when they met at the Mt. Olivet Retreat and Conference Center, Farmington, Minn.

The task force, established by action of the synod at its January 2009 meeting, was created to study the history of synods and their changing role in the church's ministry and mission, to review proposals in recent PC(USA) history to dissolve or remove synods from the denomination's organizational structure, to examine the changing role and need of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies to serve as a governing body, to consider the synod's role as a supportive resource to presbyteries and other parts of the denomination, and to make recommendations.

The task force's statement noted in part, "While we have taken no options off the table regarding the role of the synod in the future, we are clear that this synod has not only carried out effectively the ecclesiastical roles assigned to all synods, but has also fulfilled roles in support of its member presbyteries that go beyond those that are mandated."

It continued, "Underscoring the statement in [Overture] 58 that in 40 years of existence, there have been no studies on the value of synods, we believe that it would be premature to dissolve synods until such time as the work of our task force and the studies of others might be concluded."

Youth delegates seek relevancy

Three youth advisory delegates to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies called on the church to think of its young adults in terms of mission, membership and worship, and they did so under the umbrella of relevancy.

The youth advisory delegates spoke this week when the Synod of Lakes and Prairies met at Mt. Olivet Retreat and Conference Center, Farmington, Minn.

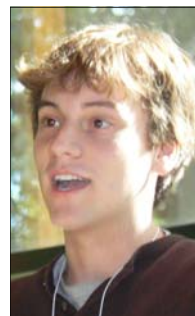
Luke Bennewitz of New Berlin, Wis., and a delegate from the Presbytery of
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Schwickerath



Meester



Bennewitz

Synod sets 2011 per capita level

Following a year in which the Synod of Lakes and Prairies did not increase its per capita apportionment, the synod voted this week to approve a 10 cent per capita increase for 2011 when it held its spring meeting at Mt. Olivet Retreat and Conference Center, Farmington, Minn.

The synod's per capita apportionment increased from \$4.80 to \$4.90.

Per capita is based on the membership of each presbytery on Dec. 31 two years prior to the budget year.

Per capita provides "funds necessary for the synod to do its essential ecclesiastical work," according to the background information provided by the synod's Program Coordination Committee.

Youth delegates (continued)

Milwaukee said that a mission conference strengthened him at a time when he struggled with his faith. Bennewitz called on the church to “really stress mission work,” adding the church should seek “more innovative ways to do that.”

Gina Meester of Omaha, Neb., and a delegate from Homestead Presbytery said a contemporary worship is not necessarily a way to attract young adults to church. Instead, she said, traditional worship can be equally as relevant to young adults.

Chad Schwickerath of Ankeny, Iowa, and a delegate from the Presbytery of Des Moines said the church needs to “emphasize the importance of being a member.”

Schwickerath said the church currently appears to be split between two extremes, with one side “very focused on structure” to the exclusion of others and the other side “increasingly focused on people” and losing its ability to be separate from the world. “There’s only a thin line between the two,” he said.

The Rev. Mike Hibbs, chairperson of the synod’s Program Coordination Committee, invited the youth advisory delegates to speak at the end of his committee’s report to the synod.

Hibbs said the overriding theme of his conversation with the youth advisory delegates was relevance. “We’ve got to be relevant for them and for everyone else,” he said.

Synod lays out distribution of Heiserman grant funds

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies decided this week to allocate approximately \$62,000 to which the synod has access through the Heiserman grant program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The synod plans to provide \$50,000 of the funds to support the “Parish Resident Internship Program” at Church of All Nations, Minneapolis, which requested the funds with the support of the Twin Cities Area Presbytery. The Office of the General Assembly of the PC(USA) is listed as a partner on the program in the amount of \$10,000.

The synod also plans to use \$12,000 to support the “Military Sensitivity Training Initiative.” The synod is seeking a partner in that funding.

A stipulation of Heiserman funding is that funded programs reflect “partnership between or among two or more” governing bodies.

According to background information provided by the synod’s Program Coordination Committee, the internship program, directed by the Rev. Jin Kim, pastor of Church of All Nations, is intended to “more directly mentor, nurture and encourage pastoral interns through transforming leaders to help transform the church.” Kim wrote, “Our goal is to couple intensive theological reflection with active mentoring in the context of a teaching congregation.”

The military sensitivity training “would provide travel, lodging and meal compensation for up to 15 individuals” to participate in a training program developed by Alan Fehr, director of psychological health in the North Dakota National Guard, according to the background information provided by the committee.

Synod commends moderator candidates

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies voted this week to commend two ministers for “the willingness to stand for moderator” of the 219th General Assembly that takes place in July in Minneapolis.

The Rev. Brad Carlross, synod commissioner from the Presbytery of Northern Waters, offered the motion to commend the Rev. Eric Nielsen, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Eau Claire, Wis., and former synod moderator, and the Rev. Jin Kim, pastor of Church of All Nations, Minneapolis, Minn., and moderator of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, for standing for the moderator post of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Carlross said, “I think that its to be commended that we have a synod that wants to be involved.”

The moderator is elected during the biennial gathering, and then moderates the assembly. The moderator then serves two years as the General Assembly’s goodwill ambassador.

Synod approves 2011 presbytery support budget

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies this week approved a 2011 budget for comprehensive presbytery mission and staff support in the amount of \$674,420.

The amount includes \$590,000 for comprehensive presbytery staff support and \$84,420 for comprehensive presbytery mission support.

From the \$590,000 staff support item, 14 of the synod's 16 presbyteries will each receive \$40,000. Winnebago Presbytery is budgeted for \$30,000 and Dakota Presbytery is funded through mission support.

The comprehensive mission support total is divided among Dakota, Homestead and Northern Plains presbyteries, with Dakota budgeted for \$61,420, Homestead for \$20,000 and Northern Plains for \$3,000.

Background information received from the synod's Program Coordination Committee stated, "The amounts which are recommended to the synod for comprehensive presbytery mission support have been negotiated among the presbyteries in previous years and were requested by presbyteries this year."

4 presbyteries share in redevelopment grant

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved a recommendation from its Finance Committee to allocate \$16,000 per year for 2011, 2012 and 2013 from the Synod Church Development Fund to support the efforts of Homestead, Missouri River Valley, Central Nebraska and Prospect Hill presbyteries to contract with the Center for Parish Development to provide training for teams, and provide resources for the teams, coaches and congregational Bible studies.

In a grant request submitted by the presbyteries, it described the nature of the program as "congregational comprehensive spiritual transformation, mission redevelopment and leader cultivation of 36 congregations throughout the four partner presbyteries through training of congregational and presbytery teams."

It stated, "The process will involve workshops, Bible studies and accountability through cluster resourcing and individual coaches for each congregation."

The proposal listed its target audience as "small, poor, dispirited congregations that are ripe for rejuvenation." It noted these congregations "retain sufficient resources of people, finances and community to effect a change in their recent trend of decline."

Synod concurs with presbytery's collegiate ministries overture

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies concurred this week with Overture 102 from the Presbytery of North Central Iowa that calls on the General Assembly Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to reestablish an Office of Collegiate Ministries as "a vital and integral part of the ministry and mission of the church."

The overture, generated by participants at the synod's Collegiate Ministries

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Synod responds to GA letter

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies this week directed its stated clerk to send a letter of appreciation to the moderator of the 218th General Assembly, stated clerk, and executive director of the General Assembly Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for their response to the recently passed Arizona immigration law.

Their response was sent to the U.S. Congress, expressing the "conviction that you must enact comprehensive immigration reform this year." In response to the Arizona law, their letter stated, "The bigotry, trauma and fear that will result from the recent new law ... serves to underscore the necessity of action."

The synod's Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry recommended the action, noting the denomination's response "to be clear, concise and consistent with PC (USA) policies." The committee did note, however, that it "does not intend that this [letter of appreciation] would constitute endorsement."

Collegiate ministries (continued)

Conference last fall, also includes language that directs the GAMC to direct the reestablished office “to prepare a strategy for mission in higher education in concert with middle governing bodies, congregations, and, where possible, ecumenical partners.”

The request to concur with the overture, brought to commissioners by the synod’s Ecclesiastical Relations Committee, came about after the committee met via telephone with Heather Libich, director of youth and young adult ministries at First Presbyterian Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Libich, who was responsible for bringing the overture to the presbytery, said the overture is necessary to establish a higher priority for collegiate ministries within the denomination.

Libich said the church needs to take a new look at collegiate ministries. Collegiate ministries, she said, “is a mission field, not where we’re going out and getting members for our churches. ... We want to place collegiate ministries in mission and not in evangelism and church growth.”

Staff reductions in the GAMC in the fall of 2008 resulted in the removal of an associate and program assistant for collegiate ministries. Collegiate ministry within GAMC’s current structure is one task of many for one individual in the Office of Youth and Collegiate Ministries.

In other action, the synod also authorized up to \$6,000 to cover registration for synod participants to attend the Collegiate Ministries Summit at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn., this summer. The synod’s ERC recommended that the synod offer this assistance “rather than offer a separate fall regional conference.”

Chaplains speak of challenges faced by vets returning from overseas

Making the transition from fighting soldier to citizen is a daunting challenge for veterans – women and men – who return from life and death struggles with emotional as well as physical wounds.



The military veteran who has served in Iraq and Afghanistan “has experienced some things that we really don’t want to know about, ... but as Christians we need to deal with that,” the Rev. Tom Conrey, commissioner to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, told those gathered this week for the spring synod meeting at Mt. Olivet Retreat and Conference Center in Farmington, Minn.

Conrey, a retired Air Force chaplain, and the Rev. Ernest Glenn, a retired Army chaplain, led the educational segment of the meeting, addressing the demands of being a chaplain and the needs of returning military service personnel.

The job of the military chaplains is a difficult one. They live with and minister to the troops in the field. According to materials Conrey and Glenn distributed, nearly 350 Presbyterian chaplains serve with the U.S. armed forces.

“It’s a great joy,” Conrey said of chaplain service. “It’s awesome to work with these men and women.”

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Synod told of MGB overtures going to GA

When Synod Executive Phil Brown spoke to commissioners at the spring meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies this week, he addressed five overtures and two recommendations to the 219th General Assembly that could have an impact on the synod.

The overtures (Nos. 004, 005, 036, 045 and 058) and recommendations (Nos. 042 and 057) will all come before the General Assembly Committee of Middle Governing Body Issues. One of the overtures, No. 005 from the Presbytery of New Hope, calls for the elimination of synods.

Overture 058 calls for the creation of a special committee to explore the roles and relationships of synods and presbyteries.

The complete text of these and other overtures can be found online at www.pcusa.org/ga219.

Chaplains speak (continued)

The materials noted of chaplains, "Because of their ministry of presence and level of trust established, chaplains have more opportunities to present the gospel to non-believers in a week than pastors in a congregation have in months."

However, after the service men and women have returned home, Glenn stressed being attuned to the special needs of veterans. "They come back from where a people's god has been telling others to kill them," he said.

When the veteran returns home, they see religion without restrictions and they see people taking Christianity for granted. The veterans often see themselves as being ignored. "They say we are playing church rather than being church," Glenn said.

That's a contradiction to what the veteran encounters overseas. The chaplains are for them, Conrey said, recounting a time when he spoke at a church program supporting peace. The people at the church objected to his service as a chaplain and, he said, "I was accused of preaching to people and telling them just what they wanted to hear."

Preaching is not high on the list of activities of a chaplain, Conrey pointed out. The chaplain's call is more listening than preaching when they are in a combat zone. It should be the same for others, both Conrey and Glenn said, when the veterans return home. "It's really important that [veterans] have someone they can talk to and have people listen without being judgmental," Conrey said.

Glenn pointed out that some churches and social service agencies are working with returning veterans. "It's not that nothing is being done, but we need a coordinated effort," Glenn said. "These are our boys and girls."

Glenn and Conrey said it's also important to remember the families of military personnel serving overseas. Glenn said personal interaction is important "human to human," and Conrey said "it's really important for the spouses to hear from someone once a day."

And speaking of coordinated efforts, Conrey asked, "How is the school going to know when Billy is acting out that his mom or dad was just deployed?" Developing that joint effort may be one of the most difficult tasks.

The Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel is a vital cog in the ministry of chaplains. Conrey served six years on the council. According to the council's Web site, its role "is the procurement, endorsement, and supervision of chaplains loaned to the armed services by their church."

In many ways, the council is like the presbytery for the chaplains, offering assistance and support to chaplains and their families.

The council Web site also offers a variety of resources for congregations and church governing bodies interested in serving service personnel and their families. The Web site is located at <http://www.pccmp.org/support-for-military-members/>.

The council is a partnership ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America.

Find synod info online

You can find the Synod of Lakes and Prairies online at lakesandprairies.org and you can also find the synod on Facebook.
