

Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting summary



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Winter Meeting - Synod of Lakes and Prairies - Mount Olivet Retreat Center - Farmington, Minnesota - January 20-22, 2008

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

Ward Sessing elected moderator, Cheryl Biller vice moderator for 2008

Elder Ward Sessing of the Twin Cities Area Presbytery was elected and installed as the moderator of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for 2008, and Cheryl Biller, an elder commissioner from the Presbytery of Northern Plains, was elected and installed as the vice moderator.

Sessing, who serves on the synod's finance committee, is a member of the Presbyterian Church of the Way in Shoreview, Minn. He and his wife, Margie, have two children. At Church of the Way, Sessing has served as an elder and chaired the commissions for finance and facilities, and outreach and evangelism. Sessing is currently president of Sessing Architects Inc., a general practice firm that does a great deal of religious projects.

Biller and her husband, Curt, reside in Fargo, N.D., with their two dogs. She is an elder in First Presbyterian Church in Moorhead, Minn., synod commissioner, serves as moderator of the Emerging Churches Coaching Team with the presbytery, and is a representative to Presbyterian Clearwater Forest. For the synod, she has served continuously on the Program Coordination Committee.

The Rev. Todd Allen, (left) pastor of Presbyterian Church of the Way in Shoreview, Minn., led the installation of officers at Monday night's worship service.



Sessing



Biller

Steven wraps up moderator term

The term of Donna Steven as moderator ended with the January meeting. She noted in her report, "I look forward to this meeting with mixed emotions – joy and excitement in meeting and welcoming aboard new synod commissioners and YAD's and sadness in knowing that my own five years of service as a commissioner are ending."

An elder commissioner from North Central Iowa Presbytery, Steven is a commissioned lay pastor, serving First Presbyterian Church, Lakota, Iowa.

Steven's final message to the synod will be posted on the synod's Web site in the coming weeks.

Find synod information online

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

Synod extends term of Dakota Administrative Review Task Force

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies extended the term of the Administrative Task Force on the Review of the Work of the Presbytery of Dakota for one more year, instructing the task force to have a final report and recommendations no later than the January 2009 meeting.

The synod also instructed the task force, which was created at the January 2007 meeting, to present progress reports at each meeting of the synod during 2008.

The resolutions of the task force noted, "... there is no intention, at this time, of dissolving the Presbytery of Dakota or to a wholesale assignment of the churches of the presbytery to geographic presbyteries."

The task force also listed three conclusions in the report it submitted to the synod. The first noted, "Any plan to integrate the churches of Dakota Presbytery into geographic presbyteries is doomed to failure. The people of Dakota do not want it to happen. The geographic presbyteries involved are not prepared to deal with the problems inherent in the cultural differences."

The second stated, "Ignoring the requirements of the Book of Order is not an option." And the third cited the need to extend the service of the task force, noting, "The task force must continue its work with the participation of, and cooperation of the Presbytery of Dakota in light of the necessity of declining mission support dollars from the synod."

Higher Education task force seeks new directions for its next steps

The Task Force on Higher Education, created by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies at its May 2007 meeting, sought new direction "... to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit as it advises the Ecclesiastical Relations Committee of the future role of campus ministry in the synod."

To date the task force has researched the role of campus ministry in other synods, evolution of financial support for campus ministry, existing challenges and projections for reduced funds. A new directive to the task force presents a specific time for reporting back to the committee regarding a decreased funding base, funds development and synod priorities.

The task force has been directed to report to the Ecclesiastical Relations Committee before the fall meeting of the synod in October. Current synod funding for campus ministries is allocated through 2009.

Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry awards \$17,000 in scholarships

The Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies awarded \$17,000 in student scholarships in 2007, according to the committee's report to the synod.

Elona Street-Stewart, the synod's associate for racial ethnic ministry, reported that more students applied this year than in the past two years.

Synod approved loan for Church of All Nations

Contingent on the approval of the Presbytery of Twin Cities Area, the synod approved a synod loan in an amount not to exceed \$200,000 for the Church of All Nations in Columbia Heights, Minn.

The purpose of the loan is to replace the roof of the church building, regrade the parking area and repair the foundation.

SDOP Committee awards \$25,000 grants to support 2 initiatives

The Self Development of People Committee awarded \$25,000 to support a community food cooperative between local farms and Pine Point Elementary School on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota, and another \$25,000 to support the development of an immigrant and refugee owned-and-operated small business market for Fargo, N.D., and Moorhead, Minn.

The SDOP report, noting the White Earth Farm-to-School Project, cited its cultural relevance, the participation of those involved in the program and the connectedness of the project to the community as reasons for its award receipt. The program includes production and processing of Native American plants for use in the school and distribution in the community.

A site visit, including participation from the Presbytery of Northern Waters and the national SDOP committee, took place last summer.

The second grant supports Immigrant Micro Enterprise, an effort to develop an immigrant and refugee owned-and-operated small business market. The group plans to develop a market plaza that is international in scope that will import items and offer prepared ethnic foods.

Most of grant support will be used for entrepreneurial training, and for support to find a place to lease.

GAC report cites candidates, Twin Cities host 2010 event

The 2008 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will take place in San Jose, Calif., in June and, according to Manley Olson, the Synod of Lakes and Prairies representative on the General Assembly Council, a "major action will be electing a stated clerk to replace Cliff Kirkpatrick, who is not seeking reelection."

Olson's GAC report, presented to the synod, stated, "Nominations [for stated clerk] are now closed. There have been no official statements yet, but once the committee announces its nominee it is expected there will be several who will be nominated from the floor."

At this time there are only two announced candidates for moderator, Olson's report noted, but there are "rumors of more."

Olson also pointed out that the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area will be the host for the 2010 General Assembly. He said the presbyteries of Minnesota Valleys and Northern Waters will share in host responsibilities.

His report stated, "A General Assembly takes a lot (1,500 or so) of volunteers and there will be opportunities for folks from throughout the synod to be a part of the event."

The theme for the 2010 General Assembly will be "Rivers of Living Water."

COR sets 2008 focus

The Committee on Representation of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, in its report, noted the continuing challenge of fulfilling the constitutional commitment to inclusiveness and participation.

Noting that challenge, the committee laid out three elements of its 2008 focus. It will "continue to address the ongoing challenges and processes. ... Examine ways to recruit young adults and persons with disabilities. ... Assist committee structures to be more receptive and able to welcome them."