

# Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting summary



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Winter Meeting - Synod of Lakes and Prairies - Mount Olivet Retreat Center - Farmington, Minnesota - Jan. 18-20, 2009

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](mailto:dsweep@lakesandprairies.org).

## Cheryl Biller elected moderator, Bob Bouton elected vice moderator

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies elected and installed Elder Cheryl Biller of Northern Plains Presbytery as moderator of the synod for 2009 during its winter meeting Jan. 18-20 at Mount Olivet Retreat Center, Farmington, Minn. The synod also elected and installed the Rev. Bob Bouton, East Iowa Presbytery, as vice moderator.



Biller

Biller and her husband, Curt, reside in Fargo, N.D. She is an elder in First Presbyterian Church in Moorhead, Minn., serves as moderator of the Emerging Churches Coaching Team in Northern Plains Presbytery, and is the presbytery's representative to Presbyterian Clearwater Forest. She serves on the synod's Program Coordination Committee.

She holds a master's degree in plant pathology from North Dakota State University, and works with farmers, nursery and greenhouse personnel, crop consultants and some homeowners to produce healthy and bountiful green things.

A retired pastor, Bouton and his wife, Sherrie, reside in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Bouton earned his master of divinity degree from Dubuque (Iowa) Seminary. He also holds a doctorate from McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Ill.

He has chaired several synod committees and has served numerous times as a synod commissioner. He recently completed a two-year term on the synod's Administrative Review Task Force on the Presbytery of Dakota, and is beginning his second term on the synod's Finance and Nominating committees.



*Elder Cheryl Biller (center), Northern Plains Presbytery, was installed as moderator of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for 2009 during installation services Monday evening, Jan. 19, led by Elder Ward Sessing (right), Twin Cities Area Presbytery, 2008 synod moderator. The Rev. Bob Bouton (left), East Iowa Presbytery, was installed as vice moderator.*

## Sessing ends moderator term

Elder Ward Sessing, Twin Cities Area Presbytery, finished his term as moderator of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies at its winter meeting, and challenged the synod to work toward unity.

"We should also recognize that without unity, we can not have community," Sessing said. "As we look around our communities of faith, at all levels, we quickly recognize that we are indeed a diverse group with a wide variety of different ideals, but there is also a history of deep love and concern for each other and for our God."

The complete text of Sessing's final message will be posted on the synod's Web site in the coming weeks.

## **Synod creates task force to study synod as governing body**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies voted to create a Special Administrative Review Task Force on the future of the synod and authorized the synod's moderator to appoint the members of the group.

The task force has been asked to study the history of synods and their changing role in the church's ministry and mission, to review proposals in recent Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 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 will be made up of five volunteer members, none of which will be current staff members of the synod.

## **Synod adjusts funding reduction for Dakota Presbytery**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies voted to adjust its allocation of Comprehensive Presbytery Mission Support (CPMS) funds for Dakota Presbytery to percentage reductions from prior year funding rather than set-dollar reductions. For 2009, the change produces a reduction of \$15,000, rather than \$25,000, from Dakota's 2008 allocation of \$100,000.

For several years before and including 2006, the synod's CPMS funding of Dakota Presbytery had been \$150,000 annually. Beginning in 2007, the synod started to reduce CPMS funding of Dakota Presbytery by \$25,000 a year, resulting in funding of \$125,000 in 2007 and \$100,000 in 2008.

In bringing the motion to the floor, the Rev. Bob Bouton, representing the synod's Finance Committee, said the consistent \$25,000 reductions put a greater burden on the presbytery with each reduction taking a larger proportion of funds.

The synod action calls for its Program Coordination Committee to "give a good-faith effort to limit the reduction in CPMS funds for the Presbytery of Dakota to 15 percent annually." It also calls for the committee to "give a good-faith effort to keep the CPMS funds available for the Presbytery of Dakota at least equal to the amount of Comprehensive Presbytery Staff Support (CPSS) that is paid to the other 15 presbyteries."

## **Synod votes to continue presbytery staffing support at current level**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies voted to continue the current financial staffing support to its presbyteries for a full-time presbyter through 2010 at the current \$40,000 per year level through Comprehensive Presbytery Staff Support funds. The motion also noted that the support will not be based on full-time executive or general presbyter staffing.

The intention of the action is to remove from the table any concern about the synod's staff support for 15 of its presbyteries. The Presbytery of Dakota, without staff, does not receive staff support funds.

## **Racial ethnic ministry grants awards**

The synod's Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry granted \$19,000 in scholarships to 15 student for the 2008-09 academic year.

More than half of the awards went to students studying at seminaries, including Virginia Union, Louisville, Louisville and Luther.

In addition, the committee approved a total of \$1,900 in five institutional awards for Native American community colleges: Sisseton Wahpeton, Cankdeska Cikana, Fond du Lac, Fort Peck, and Oglala Lakota. Each college received \$380.

### **Find synod info online**

You can find the Synod of Lakes and Prairies online at [www.lakesandprairies.org](http://www.lakesandprairies.org) and find the synod's MySpace page at [www.myspace.com/synod-oflakes](http://www.myspace.com/synod-oflakes)

## Synod elects Jay Wilkinson to another term as stated clerk

Following some levity provided by its Personnel Committee Sunday evening, the Synod of Lakes and Prairies elected Elder Jay Wilkinson to serve another term as its stated clerk.

Wilkinson has been serving as stated clerk/treasurer since October 2005.

Bev Raske, elder commissioner, and Scott Prouty, clergy commissioner, both from Minnesota Valleys Presbytery, added some humor to the stated clerk nominating process. With Raske at the podium, Prouty interrupted the proceedings, carrying a newspaper and pointing out the major events of the coming week, including the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and the upcoming presidential inauguration. It was Raske who "noticed" a short item on the front page about the nomination of Wilkinson as stated clerk.

Wilkinson has served the synod since 1993, elected at that time as director of finance and treasurer.

Wilkinson is presently finishing a term on the session at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Woodbury, Minn. He served eight years as a director and chair of the finance committee of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program Inc. He also served eight months as acting president of PILP.

He and his wife, Kathie, make their home in Woodbury. Wilkinson holds a bachelor's degree in business from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and a master of business administration from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He is also a certified management accountant.

## Local Arrangements Committee recruits for 2010 General Assembly

The Committee on Local Arrangements for the 219th General Assembly, scheduled July 3-10, 2010, at the Minneapolis Convention Center, is beginning to recruit volunteers, according to the report presented to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies at its winter meeting Jan. 18-20.

The Presbytery of Twin Cities Area is slated as host for the General Assembly, while the presbyteries of Minnesota Valleys and Northern Waters have joined in the effort in a ministry of hospitality to commissioners and guests. The theme of the 219th General Assembly is "Rivers of Living Water."

In a letter distributed to pastors and clerks of session, the committee indicates a two-stage recruitment effort. "First we will be seeking people to fill leadership roles on the various committees," the letter stated. "Then in the fall of 2009 we will be contacting you for the name of a person from your congregation to serve as a contact for information and to help recruit volunteers."



*Extra, Extra, read all about it ... With newspaper in hand Scott Prouty, along with Bev Raske, added a bit of levity to the nomination of Jay Wilkinson.*

## COR monitors diversity issues

The report of the synod's Committee on Representation, presented at the meeting, noted the committee continues to "focus on diversity issues even as the governing body leadership increasingly is concentrated in a homogenous profile."

The report noted, "Many presbytery reports comment that they are committed to the principles of participation and representation ... but note the difficulties of implementing these same provisions."

The report indicated that the committee "discussed the need to incorporate [its] responsibilities into targeted expectations."

Elona Street-Stewart, synod associate for racial-ethnic ministries, who presented the report, indicated that several presbyteries submitted incomplete reports or reports with blank sections.