

Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting summary



2115 Cliff Drive
Eagan, MN 55122
651.357.1140

Winter Meeting - Synod of Lakes and Prairies - Mount Olivet Retreat Center - Farmington, Minnesota - Jan. 16-18, 2011

The Synod Meeting Summary is an unofficial report of synod actions 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.

Public Witness director says political power is found at grass-roots level

Calling Washington, D.C., a “seductive environment,” J. Herbert Nelson, director of the Office of Public Witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said, “You can become enamored with that environment.”

And Nelson makes sure he spends time away from his office in the capital because he believes that political power rests on the local level.

Nelson spoke Monday evening during the winter meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies.

“Our work is not just speaking truth to power; it is discipleship,” he said. He said the church needs to be “leading biblically, speaking theologically and acting faithfully.”

Nelson does that by promoting political advocacy through the church away from the nation’s capital – an advocacy that must come from the local, grass-roots level. Such advocacy, he believes, can lead to solutions to the complex problems faced by the nation.



J. Herbert Nelson

(Continued, see “Public Witness” on Page 2)

Presbyterian Homes moves forward under 5-year strategic plan



Presbyterian Homes and Services is following a new five-year strategic plan and Dan Lindh, president of the Roseville, Minn.,-headquartered services organization, spoke about the plan Jan. 17 at the winter meeting of the Synod and Lakes and Prairies.

Leading an organization ranked as the nation’s fourth-largest not-for-profit service provider of services to the aging by the respected “AAHSA-Ziegler 100” report, Lindh said PHS currently serves approximately 17,800 older adults each year, including 12,000 “under our roofs” in 6,096 units, and 5,800 in the community. PHS has facilities located in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa.

Highlighting the organization’s five-year plan, Lindh said the plan includes seven initiatives: (1) structure and leadership, (2) home- and community-based services, (3) development of a second geographic area, (4) traditional

(Continued, see “Presbyterian Homes” on Page 4)

Find synod info online

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

SDOP Committee funds 3 projects

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies' Self Development of People Committee announced three grants totaling \$50,000 to three organizations in the presbyteries of Northern Plains and Twin Cities Area.

The committee awarded a grant of \$25,000 to the International Market of the Immigrant Development Center in Moorhead, Minn. The funds are allocated toward a plan to secure a market plaza for immigrant products and small businesses.

"Project Come Up" of Full Faith Ministries in Minneapolis received \$15,000 to help it establish a client list and purchase lawn care and snow removal equipment. The project works in cooperation with several Black church youth outreach programs, and mental health and drug counseling initiatives to gain employment skills and income as business owners.

The SDOP committee granted \$10,000 to the "Permit and License Project" of the Kurdish Youth of America in Fargo, N.D. The funds will be used to help individuals in immigrant communities obtain motor vehicle licenses, creating a wider range of employment options.

Public Witness *(continued from Page 1)*

Addressing the bitter discourse that currently characterizes both sides of the political spectrum, Nelson said, "We have not learned very well to listen. ... We are trying to find the answer on the extreme right or the extreme left."

The answers, he said, are complex, but the current political climate prevents cooperation in problem solving.

He added, "There's no community being built" because it's politically impossible for a member of one party to sit down with a member from the other party.

"What we see in Washington is a lot of posturing," he said, because members of Congress must work in front of "media that don't let go 24 hours a day."

And the answers, he said, are not as simple as the ones proposed by the far right and far left. And political leaders, he said, are "fighting to stay away from the complexity of issues."

The solutions, he said, must come from the local level. "There's power in what we have on the ground," he said, and added a caution, "If we the people don't take [the power] back, Congress will run amok."

One of the ways the Office of Public Witness plans to work toward strengthening the grass-roots political movement is through Ecumenical Advocacy Days slated in Washington March 25-28. Experts will train participants on policy issues and advocacy, culminating with lobby visits in the nation's capitol. Details are available at <http://advocacydays.org/>.

Racial ethnic ministry grants awards

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies' Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry granted more than \$17,000 in scholarships for 12 students during the 2010-11 academic year.

In addition, the committee distributed a total of \$4,000 in institutional awards for tribal colleges within the "boundaries of the synod and Cook College."

Synod approves support 'in concept' for Pres House refinancing effort

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved "in concept" a recommendation from its Finance Committee to support refinancing on a residential apartment building owned and operated by the Presbyterian Student Center Foundation, commonly known the Pres House, in Madison, Wis.

To support the refinancing, the synod will pledge up to \$2.5 million of synod investments as collateral for the refinanced loan.

The synod empowered the Finance Committee to negotiate details of the financial arrangement.

Refinancing, if successful, is expected to increase cash flow for Pres House.

Kocourek installed as moderator, Prouty is vice moderator

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies installed Elder Ardeth Kocourek, South Dakota Presbytery, as moderator of the synod for 2011 when it met Jan. 16-18 at Mount Olivet Retreat Center, Farmington, Minn. The synod also installed the Rev. Scott Prouty, Minnesota Valleys Presbytery, as vice moderator.

Kocourek, Martin, S.D., describes herself as a "transplanted Iowan, who thinks of herself as an educator."

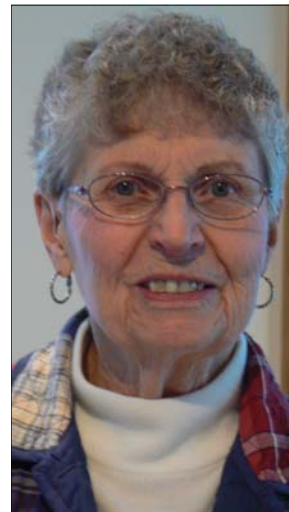
She has been a teacher and library-media specialist in the Bennett County (S.D.) Schools, part-time instructor for Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, S.D., a farm homemaker and operator, member of the South Dakota State Library Commission, and a 4-H and extension leader.

Kocourek holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, and a master's degree from New York University.

For the synod she serves on the Personnel and Synod School committees.

Prouty, a clergy commissioner from the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys, was ordained as a minister of the word and sacrament in 1995 at First Presbyterian Church in Redwood Falls, Minn., where he has now served as pastor since 2002.

He received a bachelor's degree from Mankato (Minn.) State University in speech communications with a minor in gerontology and earned his Master of Divinity degree from the University of Dubuque (Iowa) Theological Seminary.



Ardeth Kocourek



Scott Prouty

Synod sets collegiate ministry as priority

Acting on a recommendation from its Ecclesiastical Relations Committee, the Synod of Lakes and Prairies voted to establish collegiate ministries, including campus-, congregational- and chaplaincy-based ministries, as a programmatic priority.

The synod also voted to partner with the General Assembly Office of Collegiate Ministries.

Presbyterian Homes *(continued from Page 1)*

services, (5) improved financial position, (6) optimizing fundraising, and (7) low-income older adults.

Under the structure and leadership initiative, PHS plans to “establish a new management structure that focuses and positions us for the future and, in so doing, to excel in leadership development and growth of people,” Lindh’s presentation stated. He also pointed out that PHS will “continue strong internal development people systems ... based upon our core Christian beliefs and values.”

The home- and community-based services initiative emphasizes growth in services provided away from its residency-based facilities. The goal is to increase the number served in home- and community-based services from the current level of 5,800 to 60,000.

The “second geographic area” initiative calls on PHS to select a “metropolitan area where PHS can have a concentrated hub-and-spoke system very similar to that in the Twin Cities area.”

To continue its development of traditional facilities, PHS plans to develop new campuses on a modest scale and experiment with smaller communities that are “well connected to the services of the entire PHS system,” according to the organization’s website.

PHS will attempt to improve its financial position through efficiency in operations, and increasing liquidity, reducing long-term debt and growing its endowment.

To optimize fundraising, PHS plans to “grow philanthropy, to build endowment, strengthen mission benevolence and assure quality-of-life programs like spiritual care and wellness,” its website states.

Noting that the final initiative of the plan identifies services for low-income, older adults, Lindh pointed out that 20 percent of those currently served “under our roofs” are very low income. The initiative calls for PHS to “provide more services for very low-income, older adults, integrating and-or coordinating those services with existing PHS communities.”

In addition to speaking about PHS, Lindh also presented reports on the other service providers affiliated with Presbyterian Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, including facilities in Ackley, Dubuque and Washington, Iowa, and Lincoln, Neb.

Synod receives funding for Military Sensitivity Training

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies, in partnership with the Synod of Living Waters, has received a \$12,000 Heiserman Grant to support a “Military Sensitivity Training Initiative.”

Heiserman funding is issued through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to programs that reflect partnership between a synod and at least one other governing body.

The funding for military sensitivity training will support travel, lodging and meal compensation for up to 15 individuals to participate in the training program.

The grant is the second Heiserman Grant the synod has received. The first grant, which totaled \$50,000, supports the “Parish Resident Internship Program” at Church of All Nations in Minneapolis.

Synod extends time for final task force report

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies received an interim report from its Administrative Review Task Force on the Future of the Synod, and extended the task force’s time for a final report to no later than April 1.

The motion also stated that “the final report shall be referred to the synod’s Steering Committee for recommendations to the synod no later than the January 2012 meeting.”