



# Keeping in Touch

An e-newsletter for ministry partners in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies

**OCTOBER 10, 2008**

You can find the synod online at [www.lakesandprairies.org](http://www.lakesandprairies.org) or on My Space at [www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies](http://www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies).

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**1. SYNOD MEETING SUMMARY POSTED ON SITE:** A summary of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies fall meeting Sept. 28-30 has been posted to the synod's Web site at [www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SYNSUMMARY-FALL08.pdf](http://www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SYNSUMMARY-FALL08.pdf). The summary contains information about the report and related motions to the final report of the Administrative Review Task Force on Dakota Presbytery (complete report and associated motions can be found at [www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/DAKOTA-ADMIN-TF-FINAL-9-08.pdf](http://www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/DAKOTA-ADMIN-TF-FINAL-9-08.pdf)). The summary also contains information about the synod's upcoming collegiate ministries conference, synod policy related to Peacemaking Offering and report on Synod School. ([Return to top](#))

**2. FLOOD RECOVERY REMAINS IOWA PRIORITY:** The most up-to-date needs for flood recovery in the Presbytery of East Iowa can be found at <http://www.pbyeastia.org/tp40/page.asp?ID=155667>. In the Presbytery of North Central Iowa, queries should be addressed to Kaylene Hoskins, the presbytery's disaster assistance coordinator, at 319.233.1747. The Web site of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance also continues to highlight the needs in the presbyteries of East Iowa and North Central Iowa – <http://www.pcusa.org/pda/response/usa/midwestflooding-ia-urgentneeds.htm>. ([Return to top](#))

**3. TWIN CITIES PRESBYTERY LISTS RACIAL, ETHNIC RESOURCES ON WEB SITE:** Dennis Sanders, communications specialist for the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, has created a special page on the presbytery's Web site to provide links to a substantial number of resources – especially immigration resources – that can be helpful for racial, ethnic ministry. Sanders is inviting visitors to the page, noting, "Please look it over and let me know what you think and how it can be improved." The page can be found at [www.ptcaweb.org/RESOURCES/racialetnicministries.htm](http://www.ptcaweb.org/RESOURCES/racialetnicministries.htm). ([Return to top](#))

**4. MULTICULTURAL CONFERENCE SET IN MINNEAPOLIS:** A one-day leadership conference for multicultural ministry, "Coming Together," is slated Friday, Oct. 17, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Christ Church International, 3015 13th Ave. S., Minneapolis. The conference, according to its promotional materials, "brings together experienced practitioners to give churches Biblical inspiration and practical skills for leading in multicultural settings." Keynote speakers are Cheryl Sanders, senior pastor of Third Street Church of God in Washington, D.C., and Michael Emerson, teacher at Rice University, Houston, Texas, and author of "Divided by Faith." Registration information can be found at <http://www.comingtogethertc.org/registration.htm>. ([Return to top](#))



## The Sower

**5. SYNOD PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN PUBLISH LATEST NEWSLETTER:** The

Presbyterian Women of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies have published their latest edition of The Sower, the

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group's newsletter. Elizabeth Swee, the group's moderator, writes in this issue, "Often we have good intentions about making life easier for those around us. My husband recently put all of my email in a special folder so it would be easier for me to collect data and respond without having to go through all of the spam and unwanted emails. One problem: he neglected to tell me that he did this. I was waiting for answers, wondering why I had not received any mail from anyone in a long time, why I had not heard from my grandsons, children. It was only when I complained that I had not heard from anyone in a long time did he explain what he did. It really is easier for me, now that I know! But it would have been helpful to know up front. The same can be said for leadership teams." The rest of her column, and the complete newsletter, can be found at [www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SOWER-9-08.pdf](http://www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SOWER-9-08.pdf). ([Return to top](#))

#### **6. LATEST 'COMPARATIVE STATISTICS' RELEASED:**

The latest copy of "Comparative Statistics," the booklet that summarizes data on membership, finances and ministers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination, is now available in booklet form and online. Released Oct. 3, the data are for the end of the year 2007. Deborah Kapp, the Edward F. and Phyllis K. Campbell associate professor of urban ministry at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, wrote, "Like most annual physicals [it] surfaces good news, issues of concern that attention, and data that may be just plain interesting to ponder." The information in the booklet can be found at [www.pcusa.org/research/compstats/cs2007.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/research/compstats/cs2007.htm). A number of past editions of the publication are available at [www.pcusa.org/research/compstats](http://www.pcusa.org/research/compstats). ([Return to top](#))



#### **7. OUTLOOK PUBLISHES SUMMARY OF PROPOSED**

**AMENDMENTS:** The  
Presbyterian Outlook

magazine has just published an issue that contains summaries of the constitutional amendments on which presbyteries will vote and The Outlook is printing extra copies. Jack Haberer, Outlook editor, wrote, "Bill Lancaster has prepared a 4-page overview of all the proposed amendments, including brief pro and con arguments for each." Orders for extra copies can be submitted by email to [circulation@pres-outlook.org](mailto:circulation@pres-outlook.org) or by calling Gillian Kunkel, circulation director, at 800.446.6008. Prices for additional copies are \$3 for 1-3 copies; \$2.50 for 4-9 copies; \$2.20 for 10-29 copies; \$2.10 for 50-99 copies; and \$2 for 100 or more. ([Return to top](#))



**8. CHURCH LEADERS COMMENT ON NATION'S FINANCIAL CRISIS:** As the U.S. Congress grappled with a financial services industry bail-out package late last week, leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) took part in the national debate, sending letters to Presbyterians and to Congress. The Presbyterian Washington Office Oct. 6 published background and analysis of the crisis, including General Assembly policy germane to the crisis and its fallout. The full text of the Presbyterian Washington Office background paper, written by Leslie Woods, associate for domestic poverty and

environmental issues: "In response to ailing financial markets and the collapse of a number of large investment banks and AIG, the American International Group, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson arrived on Capitol Hill on Saturday, Sept. 20, with the Administration's proposal to stabilize the tottering financial market. The proposal requested \$700 billion to buy up troubled assets from a broad range of financial institutions." The rest of Woods' paper can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08730](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08730). ([Return to top](#))



**9. GAC HEARS FROM PDA ABOUT 40 EFFORTS:** The unprecedented relief efforts of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in response to more

than 40 "events" that have affected nearly one-quarter of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbyteries were much on the mind of the Justice Committee of the General Assembly Council in Snowbird, Utah, Oct. 1. Sara Lisherness, director of Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministries — which includes PDA — updated the committee on responses to devastating flooding in the Midwest in the spring and hurricane recovery in the aftermath of four summer hurricanes that wreaked havoc in Texas and Louisiana as well as Caribbean island nations such as Haiti and Cuba. The complete story and photo can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08721](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08721). ([Return to top](#))

**10. MASSIVE APPEAL LAUNCHED FOR STORM RECOVERY:** Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, with backing from its parent General Assembly Council, has issued a national appeal to Presbyterians to support relief efforts in 40 presbyteries that have suffered extensive damage from devastating storms so far in 2008. PDA has sent letters to all 189 middle governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and all 11,200 PC(USA) congregations announcing the appeal. ... "These four storms (Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike) have created an immediate need of \$700,000," Synod of the Sunexecutive Judy Fletcher told a gathering of middle governing body staff and GAC members in Snowbird, Utah, Sept. 30. "Two of our smaller churches sent contributions of \$500," she said. "We need tons of \$500 contributions." The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08712](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08712). ([Return to top](#))

**11. MIDDLE GOVERNING BODY LEADERS PONDER POLITY ISSUES:** In their first gathering since the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in San Jose, Calif., middle governing body leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) received denominational updates and pondered strategies for leading their organizations calmly and courageously during a time of change. The annual Polity Conference was held Sept. 24 – 26 at Snowbird, Utah. Of particular interest to the presbytery staff and stated clerks in attendance were discussions related to upcoming votes in the presbyteries on proposed amendments to the constitution of the PC (USA). Other topics included property issues when congregations seek to withdraw from the denomination; presbytery examinations of prospective Ministers of Word and Sacrament; the transformation of funding systems within the PC(USA); immigration issues; and new changes in proposed revisions to the PC(USA) Form of Government. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08710](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08710). ([Return to top](#))

**12. CONSTITUTIONAL MUSING ADDRESSES POLITY CONFERENCE REQUESTS:** The newest Constitutional Musing – No. 15 – has been released by the Constitutional Services office of the Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). According to Joanne Green of Constitutional Services, the musing "is a description/definition of Authoritative Interpretations." The musing can be found at [www.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/musings/note15.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/musings/note15.htm).

**13. MIDDLE GOVERNING BODY LEADERS FIND HOPE IN ANXIOUS TIMES:** "We are living in a time during which things change so rapidly that we are always behind the eight-ball," Peter Steinke told the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 2008 Polity Conference on Church Leadership During Anxious Times. Steinke is widely recognized as an expert in helping church leaders understand the complexities of family systems theory as a way to develop healthier congregations. He has also served as a parish pastor, an educator, and a therapist for clergy. He is the author of the best-selling books *How Your Church Family Works* and *Healthy Congregations*. His newest book is *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08708](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08708). ([Return to top](#))

**14. GAC/MGB CONSULTATION PRODUCES AGREEMENT:** Three years into intense conversations about how to rebuild relationships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s General Assembly Council — the 2.2 million-member denomination's church wide mission agency — and the denomination's 199 middle governing bodies, the third annual gathering here this week has produced "An Invitation to Renew Our Commitment and Mission Together." The three-page document, hammered out by a five-person writing team after two days of conversation, outlines: the PC(USA)'s "missional heritage;" "confession" of shortcomings that have characterized the relationship between the GAC and middle governing bodies in recent years; identification of the "cultural context" in which the church seeks to serve today; and themes, values and challenges of the ministry and mission the two groups seek to do together. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08716](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08716).

**15. PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER ACQUITTED IN WEDDING CASE:** The Rev. Janet Edwards, a Presbyterian minister in Pittsburgh, was found not guilty Oct. 2 following a trial on charges that she violated Scripture and the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) when she presided at the marriage of two women. The nine-member Permanent Judicial Commission of Pittsburgh Presbytery unanimously ruled that the constitutions of the PC(USA) and the state of Pennsylvania define marriage as an act between a man and a woman. Therefore, judges said, the ceremony could not have been a wedding ceremony. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08725](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08725). ([Return to top](#))

**16. 'JOINING HEARTS & HANDS' RAISED \$30 MILLION:** The Mission Initiative: Joining Hearts and Hands — a star-crossed five-year campaign to raise \$40 million for new overseas mission workers and new church developments in this country, particularly new immigrant congregations — wrapped up with more than \$30 million raised, honorary campaign chair Tom Gillespie told the General Assembly Council in Snowbird, Utah, Oct. 2. The campaign, launched by the 2002 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), became a six-year campaign that was plagued throughout by staff

turnover and lack of sufficient potential donor data. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08723](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08723). ([Return to top](#))

**17. INPUT SOUGHT FOR NATIONAL COMMUNICATORS CONFERENCE:** Communicators across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are being asked to respond to a survey that will inform the content of the next Presbyterian Communicators Network national conference in Atlanta June 11-13. The PCN national conference will be held in conjunction with the denomination's "big tent" event that will include conferences of 10 PC(USA) groups. Communicators are invited to respond to the survey at [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=b7kSQGH3\\_2fq7tcwLzx2G3vO\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=b7kSQGH3_2fq7tcwLzx2G3vO_3d_3d). Those communicators who include their name and email address at the end of the survey by Oct. 15, will be entered into a drawing to win a copy of the latest edition of "Speaking Faith: The Essential Handbook for Religion Communicators." This edition includes chapters on many of the new communication technologies, as well as a CD-Rom with information, forms and templates, and worksheets. ([Return to top](#))

**18. INTEREST BUILDS AROUND 'BIG TENT' EVENT:** "Join us at the Big Tent!" the General Assembly Council's director of Evangelism and Church Growth Eric Hoey urged council members at their fall meeting in Snowbird, Utah, Sept. 30-Oct. 3. Hoey introduced the event and played a short video promoting it. "Big Tent" is a first-of-its-kind event scheduled for June 11-13 in Atlanta, bringing together 10 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) conferences under the common theme, "... and the word became flesh." The event, has been characterized as "a denominational happening" and "a big Presbyterian family Reunion." The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08733](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08733). ([Return to top](#))

**19. COLUMBIAN PASTOR IS 'AFRAID ALL THE TIME:'** The threat — and reality — of violence lurks just beneath the surface calm of Antioquia, Colombia, says the Rev. Diego Higueta-Arango, a Presbyterian pastor in the mountainous agricultural village where he serves. "Right now is an apparent calm — the violence is more psychological than physical," Higueta told the Presbyterian News Service in a Sept. 25 interview during a break in the orientation of a dozen International Peacemakers who are preparing to itinerate in Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations for the next month under the auspices of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. The Rev. Higueta-Arango recently visited in the Presbytery of Winnebago. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08706](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08706). ([Return to top](#))

**20. PORTUGUESE WOMAN IS UNLIKELY GROUND-BREAKER:** Though she has felt a call to Christian vocation since the age 15, Nini Castanheira has never considered herself a trailblazer in the Presbyterian Church of Portugal. But now the former Portuguese-as-a-second-language teacher is poised to be the first Portuguese native ordained to the ministry in her small denomination. Castanheira is in the second year of a two-year internship, after which she'll be eligible for ordination. "There are more women than men in my seminary (after two years of seminary in Lisbon, Castanheira is now a student in Madrid)," she told the Presbyterian News Service in a Sept. 25 interview while here for International Peacemakers orientation. "But none of them have intended to be pastors ... until me and my colleague." Castanheira also visited the Presbytery of Northern Waters. The complete story and photograph can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08702](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08702). ([Return to top](#))

**21. MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY REPS TO VISIT BOHEMIA TO ADVANCE CZECH CHURCH:** Columbus Day Weekend, a group of travelers from the New World will journey to the Old World — their destination: Prague, the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Bohemia now known as the Czech Republic. In that kingdom, a free people thrived in a hard-working yet comfortable lifestyle highlighted by crowning achievements in history, the arts and letters, culinary skills, music, fine arts and literature. One of its kings, Charles IV, led the secular world and the world of religion as the seat of the Holy Roman Empire. Centuries later, Jan Hus would spearhead the Christian Reform Movement. Then this proud, peaceful nation fell under the control of invaders. Among other Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) groups making the trip are representatives from West Hills Presbyterian Church in Omaha, Neb., as well as a delegation from the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley. The complete story is at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08738](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08738). The details of the Czech partnership are at [www.czechpartner.org/Welcome.html](http://www.czechpartner.org/Welcome.html). ([Return to top](#))

**22. HASTINGS STUDENT NAMED TO NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN TEAM:** Hastings (Neb.) College sophomore Cindy Eschliman, Hutchinson, Kan., was elected to the nine-member national Presbyterian Student Advocacy and Leadership Team (PSALT). PSALT is the decision-making body for the Presbyterian Collegiate Connection and plans events for students, participates in ecumenical Christian student groups, and is a strong voice for young people at the General Assembly level of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The complete story can be found at [www.hastings.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=MD006&SRCN=articledetails&GnavID=144&SnavID=194&TnavID=482&NewsID=1849](http://www.hastings.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=MD006&SRCN=articledetails&GnavID=144&SnavID=194&TnavID=482&NewsID=1849). ([Return to top](#))

A MAGAZINE OF EVANGELICAL CONVICTION

**ChristianityToday**

**23. CHRISTIANITY TODAY LOOKS AT EVANGELICAL VOTE:**

Christianity Today magazine explores how evangelicals will vote in this year's presidential election in two articles that take a look at how evangelicals view both presidential candidates. Through in-depth interviews with leading evangelicals, including Ron Sider, Richard Cizik, Kirbyjon Caldwell, Jim Wallis, Tom Minnery and Tony Campolo, author John W. Kennedy looks at why many evangelicals are taking

notice of Barack Obama despite his liberal record. Kennedy says Obama has gained evangelicals' attention through his ability to speak "the language of faith comfortably" and his willingness to speak openly about his religious views, while John McCain has stayed relatively silent. But "whether evangelical voters can reconcile Obama's talk with his walk remains an open question," says Kennedy. The rest of this article can be found at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/october/18.26.html>. ([Return to top](#))