

March 18, 2008

TO: Commissioners, Youth Advisory Delegates, Corresponding Members and
Friends of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies

FROM: Phil Brown
Synod Executive

SUBJECT: The Meeting of the Synod Assembly
April 27 - 29, 2008

*O unwearied One who stalks us down all our days,
Bring us up short, now, and breathe deeply into us
For we come breathless to you from fretful times and frangible relations,
Our attention distracted, our energy drained,
Our intentions splintered, our love glazed over,
Our hopes unmet, our faith frayed.*
(opening to “Breathe Deeply into us,” My Heart in My Mouth– Ted Loder)

*When the journey gets too hard, when we feel depleted,
When our compassion turns to complaining,
When our efforts toward justice and mercy seem to get nowhere,
It's time to remember the humility part – that it is God who has made us
And not we ourselves; that the saving of the world
Or even one part of it is not on our shoulders.
It is then we can come unto God, and God will give us rest.
With rest we'll remember what it is we are about.*
(“Come Unto Me,” Kneeling in Jerusalem– Ann Weems)

Does this reflect a familiar rhythm of your Lenten journey, your walking the path towards Jerusalem...breathless, distracted, zapped, complaining, even ineffective...eager for Easter to be over and done with?

Just a few months back I was inquiring about any commitments, any changes you may have made through your Advent/Christmas journey into 2008. Here we are now traveling towards Holy Week and Easter. Somehow, for many of us in this New Year, we can more readily identify our lives with the words of the prayers at the top of the page ...crowded calendars; over-run with the details of living and little or no time to practice Sabbath...no real opportunity to celebrate Resurrection...to reflect and to be nourished by these High Holy Days.

Comments about the continuing winter conditions, even as I write, are among the most common I hear. “Enough already!!” The few warmer days of last week combined with the added evening light from Daylight Savings Time provided ample motivation to head for a nice evening walk. Unlike previous weeks, hoards of walkers, joggers, bikers and more found their way outside as well, offering glad praise for the visible signs of a new season underway.

Again, we have had the opportunity to make the journey into what is now Holy Week – leading us into another fresh season as we seek a new faithfulness as disciples of Jesus Christ. What will you and I choose to make of it?

In the meantime and looking towards the April 27-29 meeting of the Synod Assembly...

This mailing contains materials for the upcoming spring meeting of the synod; such as, logistics and the agenda. In addition, an additional mailing of material to those of you serving particular committees. **Personnel** will receive the agenda and proposal regarding salary administration for 2009. **Ecclesiastical Relations (ERC)** and **Program Coordination** will receive a mailing before we gather at Mt. Olivet. And, **Finance** papers are to be mailed out about ten days prior to the meeting.

Please consider matters that will be help you prepare for your role as a synod commissioner or Youth Advisory Delegate and the spring meeting.

- **Prior to the April meeting, check out the synod's Web site, www.lakesandprairies.org.** I encourage you to explore this site regularly as a means to become informed. It is important for you to learn what you can about the synod, its ministry and mission in order to serve as a helpful interpreter to your presbytery.

In addition, Duane Sweep, the synod's Associate for Communications has established a blog site (www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies). Check out the blog and the interactions in response. Check out the music – the result of Duane's searching for Christian musicians from within each presbytery. (Please be aware that categories posted at the top of the synod's page are not a part of or under the control of the synod.)

Also, if you are not currently receiving the synod's e-newsletter, **Keeping in Touch**, please let Mary Taaffe know during the synod meeting.

- **“Cell phone etiquette” to be added to the Norms for Synod Meetings.** Your evaluations of the synod's winter meeting expressed strong concern regarding phones being on and calls being taken during our meeting time. The Steering Committee is requesting that phones be turned “off” or at least to “vibrate only” in order not to interrupt the committee or assembly. It may be that you need to connect on an “urgent” call during the meeting time. There is a way to arrange it so that you cause minimal disruption to the common good.
- **Reaching out to one another** is vital to cultivating a sense of community for the synod. Most evaluations reflected satisfaction with the growing experience of hospitality during the gatherings at Mt. Olivet. A few comments do acknowledge feelings of being left out during meal time as people tend to group with familiar faces. We urge you to be vigilant, to reach out and draw in folks who may be sitting or standing alone throughout our days together.
- **Jill Hudson, Coordinator for Governing Body Relations**, will be with us during the entire spring meeting. Her purpose is to listen to and learn about the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. In addition she will lead and interact with us during our “education” time regarding what's going on around the denominations with middle governing bodies. We'll say more at the meeting.

THANK YOU!