

September 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
September 28 - 30, 2008

From time to time ... the only way to understand what is currently happening to us as 21st-century Christians in North America is first to understand that about every 500 years the church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale. ... We are currently living in and through one of those 500-year sales.

(Rt. Rev. Mark Dyer, Anglican Bishop quoted in Sojourners, August 2008, p.29)

The more we grow spiritually, the further from spiritual perfection we realize we are. On this important point of humility, all of the evidence of the ages agrees. With each step of growth, we are opened to new possibilities of growth, of which, in the end, there is no end. Chaos can accelerate spiritual growth, and consequently, the recognition of how much more we need to grow.

(Sacred Chaos, Newby, p.95)

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before God no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

(Hebrews 4:12-13, NRSV)

Not much consolation in the above references! According to some, we, the institutional church, are experiencing a rather harsh reality that we will not escape.

- Using Bishop Dyer's metaphor, the question becomes, "*what are we going to contribute to the giant rummage sale?*"
- And then, Newby's response, "*humbled by the chaos of such a reality, how are we open, or will we become open, to new spiritual growth ... as individuals and as a church community?*"
- Yes, and we also confess our faith in the God of Jesus Christ who does not gloss over this reality ... is at work in the midst of it ... and knows full well who each of us is as we live and respond (or not) to such a reality ... "*what account will we be rendering?*"

You can believe there's more on this subject to come. And, as we join together in the coming fall synod meeting, we will face some of the challenges of the giant rummage sale. Are we dealing with the most important ones? And, who will we become in the response? We, the staff, are eager to be with you as we continue to journey together.

Regarding this mailing...

This is the second mailing in preparation for the fall meeting of the synod. Only a few papers are included:

- The **August Financial Statement**
- The **Stated Clerk's Report**

The **Minutes** of the spring meeting of the synod were sent by email to all of you for whom we have an address. A hard copy will be made available at the synod meeting.

The Final Report of the Administrative Review Task Force for the Presbytery of Dakota will be distributed and introduced briefly on Sunday evening. The full task force will be present to utilize the educational time period Monday evening to provide a thorough presentation and to engage the synod assembly in a discussion of the report. The synod is scheduled to deliberate and act on the report Tuesday morning.

Please consider matters that will help you continue to prepare for your role as a Synod Commissioner or Youth Advisory Delegate.

- **Prior to the September meeting, check out the synod's web site,** www.lakesandprairies.org. Take some time to explore the site. You can find contact information to respond to the natural disasters in Iowa this past summer, links to a variety of resources, and information regarding the ministry and mission of the synod. The site will help you serve as a faithful interpreter to your presbytery.
- **A new news site** for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is being created and the synod is playing a role in the effort. It's called **Presbyterian Neighbor News** and it's online at www.pnnews.org. The site is in its development stages right now, but in the long run it will be a one-stop source for information about the Presbyterian neighborhood. Duane is working on organizational matters pertaining to the site's news production.
- If you are not currently receiving the synod's e-newsletter, **Keeping in Touch**, please let Mary Taaffe know during the synod meeting. The newsletter is published every other week.