



FEBRUARY 1, 2008

You can find the synod online at www.lakesandprairies.org and on MySpace at www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies.

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1. SESSING ELECTED SYNOD MODERATOR AT WINTER MEETING: Elder Ward Sessing of the Twin Cities Area Presbytery was elected and installed as the moderator of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for 2008, and Cheryl Biller, an elder commissioner from the Presbytery of Northern Plains, was elected and installed as the vice moderator. Sessing, who serves on the synod's finance committee, is a member of the Presbyterian Church of the Way in Shoreview, Minn. He and his wife, Margie, have two children. At Church of the Way, Sessing has served as an elder and chaired the commissions for finance and facilities, and outreach and evangelism. Sessing, also currently moderator of the Presbytery of Twin Cities Area, is president of Sessing Architects Inc., a general practice firm. Biller and her husband, Curt, reside in Fargo, N.D., with their two dogs. She is an elder in First Presbyterian Church in Moorhead, Minn., synod commissioner, serves as moderator of the Emerging Churches Coaching Team with the presbytery, and is a representative to

Presbyterian Clearwater Forest. For the synod, she has served continuously on the Program Coordination Committee. A summary of the synod meeting can be found at www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SYNSUMMARY-WINTER08.pdf.

2. FROM MYSTICS TO REBOOTING TO SYNOD SCHOOL: Several new articles have been posted to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies Web site, from a review of Martha Whitmore Hickman's "Healing After Loss," to a top-10 list for preaching, to a look at mystics, to "Shelf Life" – a sermon. There are new Synod School 2008 ads and the brochure for Clearwater 2008. These things and more can be found at www.lakesandprairies.org.

3. SYNOD EXTENDS TERM OF DAKOTA ADMIN REVIEW TASK FORCE: The Synod of Lakes and Prairies extended the term of the Administrative Task Force on the Review of the Work of the Presbytery of Dakota for one more year, instructing the task force to have a final report and recommendations no later than the January 2009 meeting. The synod also instructed the task force, which was created at the January 2007 meeting, to present progress reports at each meeting of the synod during 2008. The resolutions of the task force noted, " ... there is no intention, at this time, of dissolving the Presbytery of Dakota or to a wholesale assignment of the churches of the presbytery to geographic presbyteries." The complete progress report of the task force can be found at <http://www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/DAKOTA-ADMIN-TF-JAN-08.pdf>.

4. NORTHERN PLAINS CONDUCTS FIRST VIDEO CONFERENCE MEET: The Presbytery of Northern Plains conducted its first ever presbytery meeting by video conference Jan. 25. Commissioners participated in the meeting from four sites throughout North Dakota – West Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown and Minot. The Rev. Chuck Traylor, executive presbyter, begins his February 2008 "Chat with Chuck" noting, "The January 25 Presbytery meeting, our first held by video conferencing, was more than I could have hoped for! I was deeply moved at how the worship service proceeded. I thought the folks at the various sites became ever more comfortable with the video format as the day went on. Phil Brown, synod executive for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, who joined us in West Fargo to witness this historic event, was very impressed. Phil wrote, 'How special and helpful to be included in the maiden voyage of your conferenced presbytery meeting. I thought it to be very well done, and, I know, we always have plenty to learn from these experiences to improve on our processes. ... In the meantime, how far you've come and the rest of us are watching to learn. Thank you.'" The full "Chat with Chuck" will be posted soon on the presbytery's Web site, www.northernplainspresbytery.com.

5. TWIN CITIES PRESBYTERY RESTORES CAPETZ' ORDINATION: The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area voted Jan. 26 to restore the ordination of Paul Capetz, an openly gay man, as minister of word and sacrament. Capetz had laid aside his ordination in 2000 in response to the 1997 addition of G-6.0106b to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Book of Order. The section requires ordained church officers to practice "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and woman or chastity in singleness." In asking the presbytery to restore his ordination, Capetz declared a principled objection or "scruple," noting that he could not affirm G-6.0106b, and cited the 2006 General Assembly's authoritative interpretation of The Book of Order section G-6.0108 that allows candidates to raise principled objections and reaffirms the presbytery's responsibility to determine fitness of candidates. This story and photo can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08063.htm.

6. NORTHERN PLAINS PLANS 'PHYSICAL' OFFICE MOVE: The "physical" offices of the Presbytery of Northern Plains, currently in Fargo, N.D., will relocate by the end of February to First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks, N.D. The new mailing address for the office is 5555 South Washington, Suite A, Grand Forks, ND 58201. The address is effective

immediately. The new, one-room office will house Laurie Elhard, communications coordinator, and office equipment. Other staff members – the Rev. Chuck Traylor, executive presbyter; Michael Lochow, stated clerk, and Bill Weispfenning, treasurer – will operate from “virtual” offices – wherever their telephone and computer happen to be. The most complex part of having only one person in an office is allowing individuals to easily connect to off-site staff members. To address this concern, the office will use a phone system that enables calls to the presbytery to connect to any staff member. The new phone numbers are 701-772-0783 and fax 701-775-7599 and should be operating by Feb. 4. The toll free number, 800-243-3432, remains the same. In addition, the staff has switched to a different Internet service and will no longer be receiving emails through fargocity.com. The staff’s new email addresses are the Rev. Traylor, exec.presbyter@gmail.com; Lochow, sc.pbynp@gmail.com; Weispfenning, pnptreasurer@gmail.com; and Elhard, pnpoffice@gmail.com.

7. KATRINA MISSION TRIP OFFERED BY FPC FARGO: First Presbyterian Church of Fargo, N.D., is planning a mission trip to Louisiana in a couple weeks. Currently they have room for more to join them on this journey, according to the Jan. 23 issue of the Northern Plains E-News. The trip is scheduled Feb. 16-23 and the group will work out of Camp Good Earth with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in Houma, La. People with rebuilding skills would be helpful but not necessary, the E-News article states. Housing will be provided by PDA. Additional information can be obtained from First Presbyterian Church of Fargo at 701-293-6311.

8. DUBUQUE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY HOSTS RETIREMENT SEMINAR: The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary is sponsoring a “Growing into Tomorrow Today” seminar on retirement planning in April for Board of Pensions plan members age 50 and older. The seminar, which runs April 16-17, will be presented by The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The event is also open to spouses or fiances of eligible plan members. Registration and additional information can be found at <http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/info/summary.aspx?e=de6eef2a-9f0b-4a86-b89f-793c1b4cbfc0>. The registration deadline is March 21.

9. GREAT PLAINS WEE KIRK CONFERENCE SET MAY 6-8: Designed to inspire, equip, motivate, encourage and provide rest and refreshment for pastors, commissioned lay pastors and leaders of small Presbyterian congregations, the Great Plains “Wee Kirk Conference” will be May 6-8 at the Holiday Inn City Centre, 100 W. 8th St., Sioux Falls, S.D. The conference will include plenary speakers and a choice of seminars. As additional information about the conference becomes available, it will be posted on the Web site of Presbyterians for Renewal, www.pfrenewal.org/home/.

10. REGIONAL BOARD OF PENSIONS REP ADDRESS CHANGES: Effective Feb. 1 the mailing address for the Rev. Douglas Kelly, regional representative for The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) changed to 1302 Platte Falls Road, Suite D, PMB 211, Platte City, MO 64079.

11. CONGREGATIONS ENCOURAGED TO REMEMBER JACK STOTTS: The congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are encouraged to give thanks to God for the life and service of the late Dr. Jack L. Stotts, whose ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) took him from the pastorate to the classroom to the president’s office of two seminaries and into some of the most crucial theological deliberations of his generation, by using “A Brief Statement of Faith” as the Affirmation of Faith on February 10. The section requested for use can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/worship/statementfaith.htm>. An explanatory

note for worship bulletins is also provided at that link. Stotts' full obituary can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08059.htm>.

12. PART I OF CLP SURVEY RELEASED: The first part of the study developed by the Committee on Theological Education and the Office of Vocation to learn how commissioned lay pastors are being prepared and deployed is now available online at www.pcusa.org/clp. The announcement came recently in an email from Marcia Clark Myers, director of the Office of Vocation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In her email she noted that the second part of the study involves a close look at the variety of commissioned lay pastor education programs offered by presbyteries, seminaries, colleges and others. That study is in process by the Center for the Study of Theological Education at Auburn Seminary and will be available in late spring.

13. \$1 MILLION GIVEN FOR CAMPS, CONFERENCE MINISTRY: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation endowment fund to support the denomination's camp and conference ministries. The Donald A. Hostetter Endowment Fund will be used to support a national staff position, to promote, support and strengthen the PC(USA)'s camp and conference center ministries, and coordinate programming efforts among all Presbyterian camps and conference centers. The gift is from the Mark D. Hostetter and Alexander N. Habib Foundation of Boston, according to a press release issued by the Presbyterian Foundation. This story and photos can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08069.htm>.

14. MAZZA ENDORSED FOR MODERATOR BY NEW CASTLE PRESBYTERY: The Rev. Carl Mazza, founder and leader of Meeting Ground, a community-based ministry with the homeless and other marginalized people in Elkton, Md., is the third announced candidate to stand for moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008), next summer in San Jose, Calif. Mazza was endorsed for the highest elected General Assembly office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on Jan. 18 by New Castle Presbytery, based in Newark, Del. This story and photo can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08062.htm>.

15. VAN MARTER TO CHRONICLE, BLOG TRIP TO MISSIONS IN RUSSIA: Presbyterian News Service Coordinator Jerry Van Marter left Feb. 1 for a 12-day assignment in Russia, where he will visit the 10 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission workers in that country and report on their ministries. Accompanied by Gary Payton — the PC(USA)'s area liaison for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland — Van Marter will travel to Moscow, Smolensk and St. Petersburg. In addition to news features about the work of PC(USA) missionaries in Russia, Van Marter will share some personal reflections on a blog. The blog, "From Russia With Love," will be at www.pcusaorgpcnewsrussia.blogspot.com when it becomes operational. The rest of this story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08076.htm>.

16. PRESBYTERIAN PUBLISHING MAKES SALES BUDGET AGAIN: According to the numbers, 2007 was a good year for the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC). The denominational publisher for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) exceeded its budget for the year, with ending sales of more than \$8.4 million, according to information from the PPC. "PPC has made its sales budget for 14 months in a row, which is an extraordinary accomplishment given the fact that the book publishing industry as a whole is still reporting only minimal increases in overall sales," Marc Lewis, the PPC's acting president and publisher, said in a press release. This story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08074.htm>.

17. COKESBURY RUNS VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL SALE: Through Feb. 9, Cokesbury publishing house is discounting its Vacation Bible School materials by 20 percent. Details can be found at www.cokesbury.com or by contacting Cokesbury's Presbyterian churches representative, Ken Bowen, at kbowen@cokesbury.com.