



Synod of Lakes and Prairies  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

# Keeping in Touch

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

November 21, 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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# HAPPY THANKSGIVING

## 1. SKYPE BRINGS MODERATOR TO COLLEGIATE MINISTRIES EVENT:



When time and distance would typically prevent someone from speaking at an event, there is an affordable solution - if there is Internet access. When Elona Street-Stewart, synod associate for racial ethnic ministries, Duane Sweep, synod associate for communications, and Sylvia Wilson, associate for collegiate ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wanted the moderator of the 218th General Assembly to speak at the first ever regional collegiate ministries conference last week in Dubuque, Iowa, they faced a few challenges. Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow is kept very busy as moderator. When a group wants the moderator to speak at an event, the request must go through the General Assembly office. Those who set the moderator's schedule turned down the request submitted by the synod. However, that didn't mean that Reyes-Chow wanted to miss the event. In fact, when Street-Stewart talked to Reyes-Chow at a conference in Louisville, he suggested that he appear via the Internet through Skype. Sweep blogged about how it was done on the synod's MySpace site at [www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies](http://www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies). ([Return to top](#))

## 2. JOHN KNOX ENROLLS SCOTT ANDERSON AS CANDIDATE:

The John Knox Presbytery voted in Dubuque, Iowa, Nov. 18 to enroll Scott Anderson, a partnered gay man, as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). This action of the presbytery advances Anderson to the last stage of the ordination process in preparation for a final decision on his entry into the ministry. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08867](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08867). ([Return to top](#))

## 3. PALMER'S TWINS AT HOME, ON STRICT EATING, SLEEPING SCHEDULE:

When the Presbytery of Central Nebraska received word Tuesday, Nov. 11, from Cory Palmer that Angie Palmer, office manager for the Presbytery of Central Nebraska, gave birth to twins - son Emmett and daughter Emersyn - what followed was not expected. On Wednesday, Angie distributed the following note to the presbytery: "I wanted to let everyone know that I am doing well physically and that I am requesting your prayers for my two new babies, Emersyn and Emmett. They were fine yesterday but as the night went on they started having some problems. They are not doing as well as they should be and are currently on IVs and are being kept in the nursery for observation. They are not exactly sure what is

pensions, racial  
ethnic education

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**And a few more**

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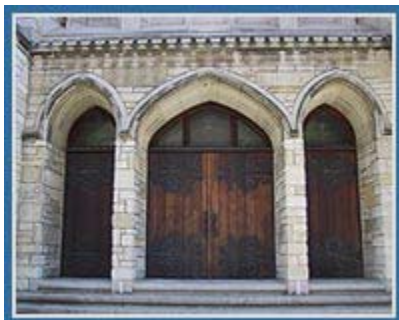
[22.](#) And concerning  
questions  
of stewardship

wrong but they are not eating very well and they are not holding their temperature like they should. Both Cory and I could really use some prayers right now. It is very difficult to just wait while you place your children in God's hands." Many prayers followed. On Sunday, Nov. 16, Angie wrote, "I just wanted to let everyone know that Emmett and Emersyn came home last night. They still are being kept on a strict eating and sleeping schedule. We also have to closely watch Emersyn's body temp but everything else looks good for both of the babies. Our family wants to thank everyone for their prayers. It was very overwhelming to receive all of the emails and the phone calls to let us know that my family was being prayed for during this difficult time. I also want to thank those people that stopped by the hospital. My family and myself strongly believe that it was all of your prayers that brought our babies home this early. A few days ago it just did not look like it would be this soon. Thank you again to everyone." Angie can be contacted at [office@centralnepresby.org](mailto:office@centralnepresby.org). ([Return to top](#))



#### 4. HILLCREST FAMILY SERVICES LOOKS TO

**FUTURE:** Hillcrest Family Services in Dubuque, Iowa, a social service provider and a ministry partner of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, is embarking on a fund-raising campaign that has much broader implications than money. The campaign, "Forming Promise People," is founded on the six promises of Hillcrest. Promotional material for campaign notes, "Tomorrow starts now. Tomorrow is about changing our lives so that we can change the lives of children and families in need." The campaign is incorporating the five promises of America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth." Those promises for each child served are caring adults, safe places, healthy tarts, effective education and opportunities to serve. Hillcrest added a sixth promise - opportunities for a spiritual connection. Campaign material notes, "In the next 10 years, we will, through new partnerships, alliances, mergers, and/or acquisitions of other human services agencies and not-for-profits within the Midwest, advance our mission. Special efforts to collaborate will take place in Illinois and Wisconsin, with subsequent mission partners in Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan and Indiana following." More information about contributing to Hillcrest can be found at [www.hillcrest-fs.org/giving.html](http://www.hillcrest-fs.org/giving.html). ([Return to top](#))



#### 5. PRES HOUSE RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT, SEEKS

**CONTRIBUTIONS:** The Rev. Mark Elsdon, executive director of Pres House on the University of Wisconsin, Madison, campus announced this week the release of its 2007-2008 annual report. The report can be found on the Pres House website at <http://www.preshouse.org/pdf/2007-2008%20Pres%20House%20Annual%20Report.pdf>. Elsdon wrote, "As we approach the end of the year please consider including Pres House in your charitable giving. Pres House relies on the gifts of generous individuals to make our ministry on the UW-Madison campus possible." Gifts can

be made online [www.preshouse.org/donate/donation.cfm](http://www.preshouse.org/donate/donation.cfm). ([Return to top](#))

**6. 'SEMINARY ON PRAIRIE' EVENT FOCUSES ON RURAL CHURCHES:** A "Seminary on the Prairie" event is slated Jan. 12-16 at Red Willow Bible Camp, Binford, N.D., that will focus on the "Development and Redevelopment of Rural Congregations and Ministries." This will be the seventh annual "Seminary on the Prairie" event to introduce seminarians to rural ministry during the prairie winter. The event is co-sponsored by Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and Tri-County Ministry, a group of eight ELCA Lutheran churches and one Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation in eastern North Dakota. News concerning the event can be found at [www.tricountyministry.org/news\\_articles](http://www.tricountyministry.org/news_articles). ([Return to top](#))



**7. CLEARWATER FOREST ALREADY POSTS 2009 SCHEDULE:** The year hasn't ended but Clearwater Forest in Deerwood, Minn., a camp ministry of multiple presbyteries and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, has already announced its 2009 schedule. The camp's most recent newsletter noted, "Campers are already looking forward to 2009," and the newsletter invited readers to visit to its website for a preview of 2009 program. It can be found at [www.clearwaterforest.org/2009docs/2009\\_Program\\_Preview.pdf](http://www.clearwaterforest.org/2009docs/2009_Program_Preview.pdf). ([Return to top](#))



**8. PDA PLANS 2 VOLUNTEER VILLAGES IN TEXAS:** Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is taking steps to establish two volunteer villages in southeast Texas to house work teams helping to rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Ike. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s disaster relief agency is working on the effort with New Covenant Presbytery as part of a long-term response plan to the powerful storm, which came ashore near Galveston, Texas, Sept. 13, causing at least \$11 billion in damage to Texas. One volunteer village is proposed for Port Neches, Texas, which is located 10 miles southeast of Beaumont. The site would serve as a base for volunteer work teams rebuilding homes in the Ike-battered Beaumont area as well as Port Arthur, Orange and Bridge City, Texas, along with other nearby communities. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08837](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08837). ([Return to top](#))

**9. PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE SEEKS ASSISTANCE:** Susan Lindsey, coordinator of the Presbyterian Communicators' Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), wrote recently in the organization's newsletter that Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is in serious need of contributions. The newsletter noted, "Hurricane Ike has been described as one of the worst storms in U.S. history. The hurricane left widespread destruction from the Caribbean to Texas, Louisiana and other areas of the United States." Lindsey wrote, "[PDA] needs our help to replenish funds to respond to these communities and to continue to respond to floods and other disasters. Please donate and encourage others within your congregation, presbytery or synod to also contribute. Donations can be given online at [www.pcusa.org/pda](http://www.pcusa.org/pda)." The website also contains stories of areas affected by disasters in the United States and throughout the world. ([Return to top](#))

**10. MODERATOR'S BROTHER-IN-LAW SLAIN IN CALIFORNIA:** Presbyterians have been asked to pray for the family of General Assembly Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow after his wife's brother was killed in a workplace shooting Nov. 14 in California's Silicon Valley. Brian Pugh, Reyes-Chow's brother-in-law, was one of three employees of SiPort - a small Santa Clara, Calif., semiconductor start-up firm - who were shot and killed by Jing Hua Wu, 47, who was recently laid off by the company. Pugh was vice-president for operations of SiPort. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08856.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08856.htm). ([Return to top](#))



**11. PARSONS RESPONDS TO LAY COMMITTEE LETTER:** The Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) released a letter this week from Gradye Parsons, stated clerk, in response to a recent letter from the Presbyterian Lay Committee that was mailed to moderators and clerks of session of PC(USA) congregations. The text of Parsons' letter follows:

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Congregations in your presbytery recently received correspondence from the Presbyterian Lay Committee that contained many factual errors and may cause great misunderstanding. The purpose of this letter is to speak to those errors and misunderstandings.

**Re: Constitution Legal Defense Fund**

The General Assembly did **not** create a \$2 million defense fund, as requested by the

Presbytery of Northern New England. The assembly chose, instead, to create an Extra Commitment Opportunity (ECO) fund that would receive voluntary contributions. The name of the ECO is Constitution Legal Defense Fund and it is numbered E052058. To date, we have received no contributions to this fund, and no money from the per capita budget has been allocated for it.

### **Re: presbyteries' actions about property**

The letter suggests that presbyteries have taken aggressive actions to deprive congregations of their pastors and property via ecclesiastical processes and the secular courts. The letter misrepresents the actions of presbyteries and misinterprets recent General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission cases.

Virtually all actions by presbyteries are reactions to aggressive schismatic behavior by individual congregations and sessions. Of the thirty-nine cases in civil courts, thirty-six have been filed for local sessions. The three filed by presbyteries have sought only that sessions and congregations be required to follow the processes provided by the *Book of Order*. When sessions/congregations have followed those processes, they have usually been dismissed to the reformed denomination of their choice.

It is true that presbyteries served with civil lawsuits have had to expend significant resources in defending our *Book of Order* processes. In the Sundquist v. Heartland Presbytery case, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) recently affirmed the validity of those processes, which include permitting presbyteries to create structures that can respond to civil lawsuits when they arise, but such processes do not provide for aggressive actions by presbyteries.

### **Re: per capita**

The correspondence also states that the GAPJC has given sessions "absolute and unequivocal authority to direct and disburse all funds received from the congregation." This, too, misinterprets the GAPJC's decision. The most recent case contains the following statement: "The congregation's responsibility is not to itself, but to itself in light of its call to 'fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the Glory of God' ( *Book of Order*, G-4.0104)." (Johnston v. Heartland Presbytery)

### **Some final words**

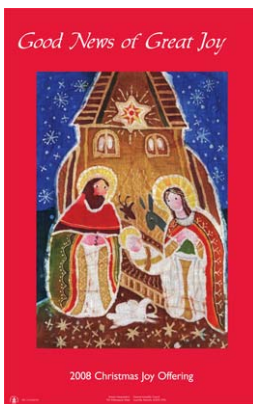
The action of the 218th General Assembly (Item 04-28) reminds all of us, congregations and governing bodies alike, to heed the words of 1 Cor. 6:7 and avoid lawsuits. No doubt, all conversations about dismissal are tough and painful, but as many of you know, they can also be Christ-like. I know that has been the goal in a majority of cases, but fear has sometimes changed the discourse. Hopefully, this recent action of the assembly can help us avoid future civil cases by having established clear presbytery policies.

You may find it helpful to refer to the Advisory Opinions that are posted online(<http://www.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/advisory%20opinion.htm> ), especially #19: "Implementing the Trust Clause for the Unity of the Church," and #22: "Actions of the 218th General Assembly related to G-6.0106b and G-6.0108"). There is also a Constitutional Musing (<http://www.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/musings.htm>) on "Responding Pastorally to Troubled Churches."

Please know that I pray for you daily - that your ministry will flourish, your faith increase, and that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

Yours in Christ,  
Grady Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
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**12. PRESBYTERIANS TODAY MAG TO SPOTLIGHT YOUTH:** Beginning in January, Presbyterians Today magazine will feature a young person between the ages of 12 and 21 in each issue. Susan Lindsey, coordinator of the Presbyterian Communicators' Network is asking communicators to "get the word out to young Presbyterians who are willing to share their thoughts and opinions with the rest of the church. We want to feature young persons from all parts of the country and from all racial ethnic backgrounds." Lindsey said participation is easy. Interested youth and young adults "just complete an online finish-the-sentence questionnaire and send a color photo to [today@pcusa.org](mailto:today@pcusa.org). Additional information and the online questionnaire can be found at [www.pcusa.org/today/spotlight-form.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/today/spotlight-form.htm). ([Return to top](#))



**13. CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING SUPPORTS PENSIONS, RACIAL ETHNIC EDUCATION:** A Presbyterian tradition for almost seventy years, the Christmas Joy Offering is one of the four special offerings designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those in need. Fifty percent of the receipts to the Christmas Joy Offering are distributed to the Board of Pensions for assistance programs that provide support to retired and active church workers and their spouses and families. The other 50 percent supports Presbyterian-related racial ethnic education through the National Ministries Division of the General Assembly Council. Additional information and materials can be found at [www.pcusa.org/cjoffering](http://www.pcusa.org/cjoffering). ([Return to top](#))

**14. 'BIG TENT' WEBSITE LAUNCHED:** In 2009, the Presbyterian Communicators' Network national conference will be held in conjunction with the "Big Tent" event of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) June 11-13 in Atlanta, Ga. Conferences being held at the "Big Tent" include the Presbyterian Communicators' Network national conference, New Immigrant Ministries Convocation, National Multicultural Church Conference, the National Elders Conference, the Racial Ethnic Convocation, the Stewardship Conference, the Peacemaking Conference, the Evangelism and Church Growth Conference, the PHEWA Social Justice Biennial Conference, and the Committee of Preparation for Ministry/Committee on Ministry/Seminary Healthy Ministry Conference. The "Big Tent" even has its own spot on the PC(USA) website at [www.pcusa.org/bigtent](http://www.pcusa.org/bigtent). ([Return to top](#))

**15. EVANGELISM CONSULTATION EXPLORES APPROACHES, TOOLS:** Rick Ufford-Chase launched the two-day Growing Christ's Church Deep and Wide evangelism consultation in Stony Brook, N.Y., with a promise that it would not be like other conferences. The consultation was not opened to the church at large, he said, until he had recruited leaders with an array of theological perspectives. Only then was an open invitation extended. Some participants had come at their own expense. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08838](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08838). ([Return to top](#))

**16. EVANGELISM CONSULTATION PLANTS SEEDS FOR GROWTH:** When the "Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide" consultation began, leaders hoped that it would result in an evangelism movement. When it ended, they sensed that the seeds for that movement had been planted. The two-year grass roots-based evangelism emphasis was adopted by the recent 218th General Assembly in San Jose, Calif., and seeks to grow the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in four areas: membership, discipleship, servanthood and diversity. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08850](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08850). ([Return to top](#))

**17. GAC OFFICES OF RACIAL ETHNIC, WOMEN'S MINISTRIES REORGANIZED:** The Rev. Rhashell Hunter, director of the General Assembly Council's Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women has announced a redesign of the office to focus on racial ethnic and women's leadership development. Five new positions have been created as a result of the redesign, and five existing positions have been eliminated. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08860](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08860). ([Return to top](#))

**18. MODERATOR TALKS OF RACE IN POST-RACE AMERICA:** Writing his monthly column for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the General Assembly, begins, "When 'Barack Obama has been elected President of the United States of America' rang out, I wept, cheered, and prayed. Our world has changed. Our children's view of 'American' will never be the same - here or around the world. While Obama is not just a person of racial designation, we must not underestimate the symbolic nature and corresponding power of having a person of color as president. The memories of my grandparents' struggle through injustice in this country came flooding back. My Filipino grandmother in Alabama struggled with where to sit on the bus because no one knew if she was white or black." The rest of the moderator's column can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08849](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08849). ([Return to top](#))

**19. STATED CLERK OFFERS VIEW ON THANKSGIVING:** The Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the General Assembly, writing his monthly column for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), opened, "Maybe we should skip Thanksgiving this year. After all, it has been a rough fall. Our investment crops have been devastated. Our long election campaign has left us an angry divide. We still have sons and daughters in harm's way. The number of people who are homeless, sick, and hungry grows daily. Perhaps a look back at the roots and the two sets of personalities that make up our Thanksgiving tradition would be helpful at this point." The rest of Parsons' column can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08859](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08859). ([Return to top](#))

**20. 'BIBLEWORKS' LAUNCHES ARRAY OF TOOLS FOR EXEGESIS:** BibleWorks has launched version 8 with an array of innovative tools, essential resources and interactive capabilities to help pastors, seminary students, professors and missionaries in their

exegesis of the Biblical text. With more than 190 Bible translations in nearly 40 languages, 35 original language texts and morphology databases, 29 lexical-grammatical references, plus a wealth of practical reference works, BibleWorks integrates its databases with powerful morphology and analysis tools. More information about the program can be found at [www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com). ([Return to top](#))

**21. YOUTH SEE SPIRITUALITY AS IMPORTANT, RARELY TALK ABOUT IT:** A two-year global research project reveals that today's youth view spirituality as an important part of their lives, though most rarely talk to others about it. Respondents to the far-reaching study, led by Search Institute's Center for Spiritual Development, Minneapolis, Minn., included young people from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds, spanning 17 countries and six continents. The study was sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation. Additional information about the center can be found at [www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org](http://www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org). ([Return to top](#))

**22. AND CONCERNING QUESTIONS OF STEWARDSHIP AT THIS TIME OF YEAR:** The following quote is attributed to Christian author Ben Patterson: "Collecting money in the church is God's way of keeping worship from degenerating into frothy, empty sentimentality." ([Return to top](#))