



OCTOBER 5, 2007

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

Synod news, events, activities

- 1. SYNOD SCHOOL SETS RECORD, MAKING PLANS FOR 2008**
- 2. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES TO DECLINE ACROSS SYNOD**
- 3. DAKOTA TASK FORCE DISCUSSES PARTNERSHIPS**
- 4. SYNOD PARTICIPATES IN BOP SABBATICAL PLAN**
- 5. PENDING GA APPROVAL, SYNOD APPROVES FUNDS FOR NEW CHURCH**

News, events around the presbyteries

- 6. 48 MISSIONARIES PREPARE FOR MISSION CHALLENGE '07**
- 7. CROSBY SENIOR SERVICES TO BREAK GROUND FOR LIVING CENTER**
- 8. SIOUX CITY CHURCH PLANS 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**
- 9. WESTMINSTER WOODS AUCTION TO BENEFIT YOUTH MINISTRY**

National conferences, meeting news

- 10. MODERATORS' CONFERENCE SCHEDULED NOV. 16-18 IN LOUISVILLE**

National PC(USA) news

- 11. FOG TASK FORCE ASKED TO RECOMMEND ADDITIONAL STUDY**
- 12. COLUMBIA SEMINARY OFFERS HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE**
- 13. KIRKPATRICK URGES PC(USA) TO KEEP ECUMENICAL COMMITMENT**
- 14. MODERATOR SEES NEW ENERGY ACROSS THE PC(USA)**
- 15. ANTI-TORTURE GROUP URGES CHURCHES TO SHOW ABU GHRAIB FILM**

1. SYNOD SCHOOL SETS RECORD, MAKING PLANS FOR 2008: Synod School continues to set participation records. According to the report presented by Tammy Rider, Twin Cities Area commissioner and a member of the Synod School Committee, 618 people took part in Synod School at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa, in July. That total represents a 4.7 percent increase above 2006 when 590 participated. Synod School took place July 22-27. Participants included 581 Presbyterians, seven Roman Catholics and at least 30 others who were members of either a Methodist, United Church of Christ, Jewish, Reformed Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or other congregation. Participants came from 172 towns in 18 states and two Canadian provinces. Plans are already in the works for Synod School 2008, scheduled July 27-August 1 at Buena Vista

University. The Rev. Scott Nesbitt, pastor of First United Presbyterian Church in Clinton, Iowa, is slated as convocation speaker.

2. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES TO DECLINE ACROSS SYNOD: Church membership within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination across the Synod of Lakes and Prairies has declined 39.7 percent since the end of 1980, according to statistics presented at the fall meeting of the synod. During that time, church membership fell from 263,757 to 159,134. During the period of Dec. 31, 2005, through Dec. 31, 2006, membership decreased 3 percent, falling from 164,080 to 159,134. Declines of 5 percent or more from the end of 2005 to the end of 2006 occurred in the presbyteries of Des Moines (6.39%) and Northern Waters (5.04%). Two presbyteries showed declines of less than 2 percent — Twin Cities Area (1.08%) and Winnebago (1.51%).

3. DAKOTA TASK FORCE DISCUSSES PARTNERSHIPS: The Administrative Review Task Force on the Presbytery of Dakota met with several leaders of the presbytery in August, discussing congregational partnerships and self determination. JoAnn Simser, task force member and synod commissioner from the Twin Cities Area Presbytery, presented the task force report to the synod earlier this week. The report noted that "partnership was a big part of the discussion [with presbytery leaders], especially partnerships between Dakota churches and churches in the geographic presbyteries." The report continued, "We have a model to follow: there is already a partnership that seems to be working between Bdecan Church in Tokio, N.D., and the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Devils Lake, N.D." The report also indicated that presbytery leaders expressed a need for self determination. "There is much resistance to the idea of transferring churches to geographic presbyteries, as has been in the case of earlier task forces and commissions on this topic," the report stated. The next meeting of the task force is scheduled Oct. 25-26 at the synod offices in Eagan, Minn.

4. SYNOD PARTICIPATES IN BOP SABBATICAL PLAN: The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved participation in a joint program with the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide sabbatical-support grants to pastors in small congregations — those with congregations with fewer than 200 members. The Board of Pensions has designated a total of \$330,000 annually for three years to fund its commitment, and each synod will receive a proportion of the total each year. The synod will receive a total of \$30,000 annually to issue 10 grants of \$3,000 each. The program has been endorsed by the general and executive presbyters within the synod. Bart Brenner, interim executive presbyter in South Dakota Presbytery, is developing procedure and application forms for the program.

5. PENDING GA APPROVAL, SYNOD APPROVES FUNDS FOR NEW CHURCH: The Synod of Lakes and Prairies approved funding — pending approval of General Assembly funding — of the Chain of Lakes Area new church development project of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. The new church would be located in northeastern metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St. Paul, roughly between the Lino Lakes and Blaine communities. If approved by the General Assembly, the funding schedule for the project in 2008 would include from \$50,000 from presbytery, \$32,000 from the General Assembly and \$15,500 from the synod. According to the funding plan the church would receive annually decreasing amounts through 2012.

6. 48 MISSIONARIES PREPARE FOR MISSION CHALLENGE '07: The stage is set for twin events that mark the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s most concerted effort to enlist support for the denomination's global mission in decades. Forty-eight PC(USA) missionaries

have gathered on the campus of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary as they prepare to spend the month of October visiting 144 of the denomination's 173 presbyteries as part of "Mission Challenge '07." Each visit has been scheduled for one week, during which the missionaries will visit presbytery meetings, worship services and various groups in congregations and presbyteries. The complete story is located at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07627.htm. Synod presbyteries on the visit schedule are Central Nebraska, Dakota, Des Moines, Homestead, Milwaukee, Minnesota Valleys, Missouri River Valley, North Central Iowa, Northern Plains, Northern Waters, Prospect Hill, South Dakota, Twin Cities Area, and Winnebago.

7. CROSBY SENIOR SERVICES TO BREAK GROUND FOR LIVING CENTER: Crosby Senior Services, Crosby, Minn., will break ground on Heartwood Senior Living Community at 3 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 10. The ceremony will take place at the corner of Third Avenue and Fourth Street NE. This is just steps away from the Cuyuna Regional Medical Center, where the approximately 180,000-square-foot community will be constructed. There will be a reception immediately following at the Crosby-Ironton Presbyterian Church at 30 Hallett Avenue in Crosby. "Heartwood will be a welcome first for this region," says Jac McTaggart, senior services administrator for the Cuyuna Regional Medical Center, which joined forces with Presbyterian Homes & Services to create Crosby Senior Services. The almost \$23 million community will serve approximately 150 seniors in 98 senior living, assisted living, and memory care apartment homes. It is anticipated to be completed next fall. Information about Cuyuna Regional Medical Center can be found at www.cuyunamed.org and information about Presbyterian Homes & Services can be found at www.preshomes.org.

8. SIOUX CITY CHURCH PLANS 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: First Presbyterian Church of Sioux City, Iowa, will celebrate its 150th anniversary – "Welcome Home" – Oct. 12-14. Events include a Homecoming Pizza Party Friday, Oct. 12, at 6 p.m.; a Ginny Owens Concert Saturday, Oct. 13, at 3:30 p.m. at the church; worship Sunday, Oct. 14, at 11 a.m.; and an all-church dinner at noon in the fellowship hall. The history of the church can be found at <http://www.1st-presbyterianchurch.org/history.shtml>.

9. WESTMINSTER WOODS AUCTION TO BENEFIT YOUTH MINISTRY: When various items from the Westminster Woods Camp are auctioned Saturday, Oct. 20, the beneficiaries of any income will be youth ministries in the Presbytery of Central Nebraska, according to a note in the Oct. 1 issue of "Monday Morning in the Presbytery," a weekly newsletter of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley. The Presbytery of Central Nebraska discontinued camping activities this year at Westminster Woods, located near Lexington, Neb., and the property is for sale.

10. MODERATORS' CONFERENCE SCHEDULED NOV. 16-18 IN LOUISVILLE: Over the years the moderators' conference of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has come to be known as a wonderful and significant opportunity for moderators of synods and presbyteries to get to know one another, to get to know General Assembly staff, to hear about and learn about best practices, and to be trained in the important ministry of moderating middle governing bodies. This year's conference, "Walking in the Light: Spiritual Leadership for the Church," is scheduled Nov. 16-18 in Louisville, Ky. Participants will have an opportunity to be led in worship by preachers Charles Heyward, pastor, Saint James Presbyterian Church in Charleston, S.C., and Moderator Joan Gray, parish associate, First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Ga.; and in music by Paul Detterman, executive director, Presbyterians for Renewal. Complete details, including registration materials, can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/modconf07.htm>.

11. FOG TASK FORCE ASKED TO RECOMMEND ADDITIONAL STUDY: The General Assembly Council (GAC) voted to ask the task force reorganizing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Form of Government to consider recommending a two-year period of study and feedback of its work before the General Assembly is asked to vote on it. Proponents of the delay said they feared that mistrust in the church and lack of understanding of the changes may doom the proposed revisions to defeat if the Assembly is asked to vote on it at the 2008 General Assembly next summer as scheduled. The complete story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07617.htm>.

12. COLUMBIA SEMINARY OFFERS HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE: The application deadline is Oct. 22 for a unique spiritual renewal experience offered for mid-career pastors by Columbia Theological Seminary's Center for Lifelong Learning. "Journey of Faith: A Pilgrimage of Discernment for Ministry includes a two-week pilgrimage to the Holy Land and two short retreats-one before and one after the pilgrimage. Participant costs for travel, accommodations, meals, and materials for the pilgrimage will be paid through a grant from the CF Foundation, through its Holy Land Pastoral Renewal Program. The only cost for those selected to participate will be a registration fee of \$250. Complete information about the program, including applications, can be found at www.ctsnet.edu/lifelong/continuing_education/pilgrimage.asp.

13. KIRKPATRICK URGES PC(USA) TO KEEP ECUMENICAL COMMITMENT: General Assembly Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick told a group of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s ecumenical leaders Sept. 28 that maintaining the church's historic leadership in ecumenism "will require a major reorientation and recommitment" to the world ecumenical movement. Speaking to the first major consultation on the PC(USA)'s ecumenical stance since its formation in 1983, Kirkpatrick said, "We need to recapture a passionate vision in the PC(USA) for the unity of the church, which now seems to recede into the background." The complete story is located at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07618.htm.

14. MODERATOR SEES NEW ENERGY ACROSS THE PC(USA): General Assembly Moderator Joan Gray says "my gut tells me two things — the level of anger and confusion and mistrust that I think we all experienced after last year's General Assembly has moderated greatly.... and I sense new energy coming up 'from the bottom' of the church, and I see it in a number of ways." Speaking to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) here during its Oct. 2-5 meeting, Gray continued: "Our good, Presbyterian decent-and-in-order genes kicked in after an intense emotional reaction [to the '06 assembly]. We were all fumbling and reaching and trying to make sense of what this meant for our church and how it was going to affect our life together." The complete story is located at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07631.htm.

15. ANTI-TORTURE GROUP URGES CHURCHES TO SHOW ABU GHRAIB FILM: A Presbyterian-founded, church-backed anti-torture group is encouraging congregations to host screenings this month of a recently released documentary about the notorious prisoner abuse scandal involving U.S. soldiers and detainees at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) has arranged for free DVD copies of Ghosts of Abu Ghraib to be provided to the first 950 congregations that register to show the Emmy award-winning film during the week of Oct. 21-28. The church screenings, which are to be followed by discussion, are part of NRCAT's nationwide "Spotlight on Torture" project. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07630.htm.