

Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting summary



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

2115 Cliff Drive
Eagan, MN 55122
651.357.1140

October 12, 2017

Fall Meeting
- Synod of
Lakes and
Prairies -
Mount Olivet
Conference
and Retreat
Center -
Farmington,
Minnesota -
Oct. 1-3,
2017

The Synod
Meeting
Summary is
an unofficial
report of
synod
actions
published
shortly after
each meeting
of the Synod
of Lakes of
Prairies.
Comments
regarding
the publica-
tion or re-
quests for
copies
should be
addressed to
dsweep@lakesandprairies.org.

Nelson calls church to respond in to needs of a rapidly changing world



J. Herbert Nelson II

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II doesn't have a message of despair for Presbyterians.

"The church is not dead; it's not dying. It's reforming," Nelson told commissioners and guests when the Synod of Lakes and Prairies conducted its fall meeting Oct. 1-3 at Mt. Olivet Conference and Retreat Center near Farmington, Minnesota.

But because the church is reforming, the work is challenging.

Nelson is not one to retreat from a challenge and not one to allow others to retreat.

Nelson, who has made many trips from Louisville to the bounds of this synod during his short time as stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said,

"The center of the church is not in Louisville. The center of the church is really out with the people where the work has to be done."

During a time of reformation, that which was has to pass away and something new has to take its place, Nelson said, and the time is now.

"The world has shifted around the church and we have probably run just as far as we can to engage another generation doing the same things we were doing," Nelson said.

He spoke to the synod on the Monday following the deadly mass shooting in Las Vegas. The unfolding news story followed him from Louisville to the airport in Atlanta to the airport in Minneapolis – the story of death, the story of guns, of automatic weapons.

"So just since 4 o'clock this morning to [4 this afternoon], the world is turning and changing. Church life is on that same path, and if you think about our lives, we're on that same path," Nelson said.

See "Nelson: 'In the middle.'" on Page 6.

ERC approves higher ed, camp, ecumenical project grants

The synod's Ecclesiastical Relations Committee issued five grants that supported ministry in higher education, camping ministry and a chaplaincy program for a family services organization.

The Presbyterian Student Center Foundation — more commonly known as Pres House — in Madison, Wisconsin, received a \$15,000 grant to support an experimental young-adult community in the Madison area called M-Hub. The grant will help Pres House develop the program that is substantially funded by the Lilly Endowment — an initial grant of \$115,000. The Presbytery of John Knox is also contributing to the project.

The committee also granted \$15,000 to continue the synod's support of the chaplaincy program of Hillcrest Family Services of Dubuque, Iowa.

In the camping area, the committee issued a \$5,500 grant to Clearwater Forest, a Presbyterian camp and conference center, to support a leadership training event planned in conjunction with the UKirk program at St. Cloud State University. The program plans to focus on former Clearwater Forest campers and participants in the campus ministry program.

Clearwater Forest will also receive \$1,500 this year and in 2018 to help defray health insurance costs of staff members.

Synod installs Davis Campbell, Davis to moderator, vice moderator posts

Synod commissioners installed the Rev. April Davis Campbell, a teaching elder from the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, as its moderator, and the Rev. Dan Davis, a teaching elder from the Presbytery of Central Nebraska, as its vice moderator during its Tuesday morning session when it met Oct. 1-3 at Mt. Olivet Conference and Retreat Center near Farmington, Minnesota.



April Davis Campbell



Dan Davis

Davis Campbell is pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Woodbury, Minnesota.

She holds a doctorate in Christian spirituality from Columbia Theological Seminary and a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. She earned her bachelor's degree in speech communication from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Davis Campbell previously served as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Hastings, Minnesota, and has also served as minister for children and families for Robbinsdale (Minnesota) United Church of Christ, and associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, Minnesota.

She is a member of the Alumni Association Executive Council for Princeton Theological Seminary, and she served as a commissioner to the 222nd General Assembly in Portland, Oregon, during the the summer of 2016.

Davis Campbell serves on the synod's Ecclesiastical Relations Committee.

Davis is pastor of Westminster United Presbyterian Church in Minden, Nebraska, and serves on the synod's Program Coordinating Committee.

Prior to coming to Nebraska, Davis served churches in Montana, Kansas and Missouri.

Raised in Kansas City, Davis earned his undergraduate degree at Kansas State University and received his Master of Divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. He was ordained in 1987.

ERC responds in new way to support HoH

The Ecclesiastical Relations Committee responded in a new way to a report from Houses of Hospitality, a previous recipient of synod grant funds. The committee voted to provide a dollar-for-dollar matching grant, up to \$10,000, to support a fund-raising program of this organization that provides housing and an intentional community for young adults working in public service capacities.

Synod adopts \$1.47 million budget

The synod's 2018 budget is slightly less than its revised 2017 budget. The 2018 budget approved by synod commissioners this month totals \$1.47 million in expenses, including nearly \$557,000 in partnership ministries, and ecumenical and institutional ministries. The revised budget for the current year totals \$1.49 million.

The 2018 budget includes \$395,049 for council partnership funding, including \$246,030 in comprehensive presbytery support – or slightly more than \$16,000 for each of 15 presbyteries – and \$19,690 for Dakota Presbytery.

Other line items within council partnerships include \$6,000 for disaster/emergency assistance, and \$6,000 for emergency shared assistance grants. A separate line also notes \$3,000 for presbytery staff training.

In the ministries partnership area, under leader development, the synod has allocated \$45,000 for Synod School, \$20,000 for emerging mission, \$17,000 for racial ethnic ministries, \$16,000 for the upcoming Leadership Summit (formerly COM/CPM training), \$10,000 for leadership development, and \$4,000 for moderator training. An additional \$6,300 has been set aside for seminary scholarships through the synod's Hendrickson Fund.

The synod also budgeted \$161,736 for ecumenical and institutional ministries, including \$63,600 to support ministry in higher education; \$45,000 to provide grant support to support ecumenical and institutional projects in the synod; \$24,670 to support ministry development centers; \$20,000 to support ecumenical media resource centers; and \$7,500 for Clearwater Forest, a Presbyterian camp and conference center partly owned by the synod.

The budget also includes a communications budget of \$7,700.

Personnel and administration costs are budgeted at \$837,012, and synod governance is budgeted at \$70,070.

This spring the synod approved a 10-cent increase in its 2018 per capita apportionment. The increase will raise the synod's share of per capita to \$5.40. The per capita apportionment is based on the funds needed for the synod to carry out its "essential ecclesiastical" work.

PCC issues grants to initiative of Iowa presbyteries, Table of Grace community

The synod's Program Coordination Committee issued grants to Iowa presbyteries in their effort to support mental health initiatives in that state, and also supported a new church community in South Dakota.

The committee granted \$10,000 to Iowa presbyteries who are working together to help people in that state who suffer from mental illness. Iowa has substantial shortages in both facilities and providers for mental health care.

The Table of Grace community received a \$5,000 grant to support its work in and around Harrisburg, South Dakota. Table of Grace is a new congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Membership continues decline

The number of members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies has continued its decline through 2016 and at the end of the year stood at 105,557 — a decline of 4.6 percent from the total at the end of 2015.

Membership in the synod stood at 110,646 as of Dec. 31, 2015.

The number of churches within is 788. There were 808 churches at the end of 2015.

Synod School 2018 features Santos, Childers

When Synod School set a participation record in July — 686 was the mark — plans were already being developed for the 2018 midsummer ministry of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies.

Next summer's Synod School runs July 22-27 at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa.

Jason Santos, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s coordinator for Christian formation and national director of UKirk, the denomination's collegiate ministries network, will be convocation speaker. Noted for receiving rave reviews for leading seminars, Santos will explore what it means to dwell in holy rhythms, speaking on the theme, "Dance Joyfully Where'er You May Be."

The Rev. Dr. Jana L. Childers, dean of the seminary and vice president for academic affairs at San Francisco Theological Seminary, will lead evening worship. Childers, also a professor of homiletics and speech communication, is a Presbyterian minister who served congregations in Kansas and New Jersey. A popular conference speaker who preaches often in national and international settings, Childers has been featured on the Hallmark channel's "Great Preachers" series.

Santos will lead morning Taizé prayers.

Synod moves into strategic planning

Noting the completion of extensive revisions to the synod's policies and procedures, which make up the synod's Administrative Manual, Synod Executive Elona Street-Stewart told commissioners, "We move to the next chapter as we continue to develop a greater understanding of our calling as a synod ... in this region."

That "next chapter" is the strategic planning process. "You're all a part of that," she said. "What factors make up the various layers and interconnections of our Presbyterian witness in the synod? What roles and responsibilities do each of us have that help the churches and presbyteries in our synod be more inviting, where leadership grows, mission thrives and strength grows as we build on change?"

An important part of the process, Street-Stewart said, will be the collection of information "in order for the synod to be "in sync" with other institutions of the church, including priorities of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), other synods and presbyteries. She said, "We are very early in our process and have no predetermined end, but we do anticipate assembling diverse teams" to address processes, clarification of purpose, financial sustainability and administrative and personnel capacity.

"Our strengths and successes are fundamental to how we will administer program support, and adapt to structural pressure on our resources," she said. A key part, she said, is determining how the synod can "recommit people and financial resources, locally and church-wide, to serve Christ."

In closing, she quoted a prayer by Martin Luther, stating, "We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it." And then paraphrased a comment from television's "The Voice," saying, "We need to squeeze in all our soulfulness, passion and Holy Ghost power" across the synod.



Elona Street-Stewart

Synod's online in more than 1 place

You can find the Synod of Lakes and Prairies online at <http://www.lakesandprairies.org>. You can also find the synod on Facebook by going to Facebook.com — <http://www.facebook.com> and search for Synod of Lakes and Prairies.

And if you tweet, the synod does @lakesprairies. You can read the synod's tweets at <http://www.twitter.com/lakesprairies>.

Questions? Feel free to contact Duane Sweep, director of communications, at dsweep@lakesandprairies.org.

Synod, Hillcrest renew covenant



The Synod of Lakes and Prairies and Hillcrest Family Services renewed their covenant agreement when the synod met Oct. 1-3 at Mt. Olivet Conference and Retreat Center near Farmington, Minnesota. Signing the covenant document at the close of the meeting are (left to right) Pam Prouty, synod stated clerk; April Davis Campbell, synod moderator; Julie Heiderscheit, president and CEO of Hillcrest; and Elona Street-Stewart, synod executive.

Kimball notes traditions, speakers, gatherings

Presbyterian Women have a solid tradition of giving back, and Sue Kimball, moderator of Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, noted work of the organization through its Celebration and Thank offerings.

The Celebration offerings, born in 1922, have “funded nearly 100 major mission projects that continue to make a difference in the lives of women and children,” Kimball said. The Thank offering, since 1888, has funded programs that provide education, safe housing, clean water, health care, help for prisoners, justice for women “and so much more,” she added.

Kimball also pointed out that Susan Medsker-Nedderman (s.medsker.nedderman@gmail.com) from the Presbytery of Central Nebraska is available to speak about her participation in the 2016 PW Mission Experience to the San Francisco Bay Area, and Sue Ingels (jsingels@netins.net) can speak about her participation in the 2017 PW Global Mission Exchange to Indonesia. Maggie Horak, from the Presbytery of Central Nebraska, having received training from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, can now help others prepare for crisis or disaster situations. Horak can be reached at mmhlin@msn.com.

Kimball made commissioners aware the church-wide PW gathering takes place in Louisville Aug. 2-5, and the synod-wide gathering is planned for 2019 in Ames, Iowa, at the Gateway Hotel and Conference Center where dining, housing, workshops and plenaries will all be on one level in the same building.

Nelson: 'In the middle.' *(Continued from Page 1.)*

And church leaders – the church leaders working among the people – need to be able to respond.

"It's no longer 20 hours of preparation to write something. There's no time for that any more," he said. "A preacher has to be able to theologize about this current event that's on everybody's television set, on everybody's radio, on everybody's iPhone."

It's not just Las Vegas. It's what is happening from day to day in the communities of the churches.

Of course, he said, "One way to get out of that is to just go happy, happy on Sunday morning – hallelujah, hallelujah, praise the Lord. ... Tell a few stories, sit down and be through with it. And then send the people back into the same world."

But he added, "Praise the Lord doesn't work when they find out that one of their loved ones was one of those killed in Las Vegas or that high school or college classroom or the person from their church who was excited for the first time to visit Las Vegas."

The "happy" theology "doesn't touch them this week. It doesn't rid them of the internal pain," he said.

The church today needs to speak to the people in its community every day, every week, all the time. "It means," Nelson said, "our focus has to be on the people on the ground and in the middle of it."

Nelson's call is a call to be relevant in today's world, in today's communities.

"The work is out there where God's people are," Nelson said. "And it's not that we're not God's people, but, you know, we have to equip the church. It's a different age, a different time."

When a church or congregation changes – or adapts – the routine of that church or congregation also changes. "And you know it's hard," Nelson said. "That's hard stuff. That's painful in places because people have to look at the landmarks of their faith and have to make some serious decisions about what they want to hold on to and can't let go of."

Congregations need to look to their strengths and their resources. Nelson said, "The question is," Nelson said, "how can we use what we have for what's best for the kingdom?"

And he added, "That's a challenge for our denomination. ... It can't be done in Louisville; it has to be done out here."

Commissioners recognized for service



The Synod of Lakes and Prairies recognized departing commissioners who were completing their terms when the synod opened its final session at its fall meeting earlier this month. Greg Braatz, synod moderator (center above), handed out certificates to (left to right) Dennis Biehl, Central Nebraska; Fern Cloud, Dakota; John Bowden, Minnesota Valleys; and Marge Landwehr, Northern Plains. Those completing their terms on the synod, but not present were Pat Hammond, South Dakota; James Hulbert, South Dakota; and James Payne, Twin Cities Area.

Photo by Pam Prouty