



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN of the Synod of Lakes & Prairies gather together

By Maggie Horak

Presbyterian Women of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies gathered June 16-19 at the Hilton Garden--Riverfront in Sioux City, Iowa. The in-person gathering was a welcome 'normal' and the Spirit was present and active: guiding the worship, programming, events and conversations. Praise be to God!

The Worship Leader was Rev. Danelle Crawford McKinney of Lawrence, Kan. She brought us to and through a new worship experience by focusing on nature, the mighty Missouri River, the land on which we stood encouraging and exploring our faith with Creator God. Many thanks to her for sharing her culture with all attendees and her creative ministry!

Thank you to our music leader team of Rev Kristi Holler (South Dakota Presbytery) and Pat Penn (East Iowa Presbytery) that led the group in joyful song. And a first-ever Gathering Choir: just wonderful!

A first-time pre-gathering event took a road trip to Bancroft and Walthill, Neb. to learn about and walk in the steps of Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte. Thank you to Marilyn Stone (Milwaukee Presbytery) for arranging and leading that successful opportunity. She also led an Open Forum, a de-brief of sorts, to discuss what they saw and experienced and how issues continue to occur today.

Fifteen workshops were offered during the 3-day event. We were blessed to have Rev. Dr. Clifford Canku bring us a 2-part workshop: Winds over Dakota. The story of the Dakota Presbytery: the only non-geographic presbytery in PC(USA), its history, stories, struggles, and future. A time of open and truthful conversation. Other workshops included: Rev Jan Christensen (Horizon's Bible Study), Rev Danelle Crawford McKinney (Native American Culture: Storytelling), Sue Kimball (Creative Ministry), Leasa Thompson (Beyond Joy/story of the potter), Marilyn Stone (Gifts of PW), Kathleen Keefer (Peace-making/social justice), Homestead PW CT (Road trip experience), Tammy Shull (Iowa WINS/Immigration), Rev Kitch Shatzer (PDA), Rev Carolyn Grice (Matthew 25), Christy Abraham (ABCs of LGBTQIA+), Rogene Crawford & Gina Burshiem (Lessons from modern-day Indigenous Boarding School) and Coleen Globke & Kelsey Andrews (All About U Adoptions/PW 2020 Thank Offering Grant Recipient).

Gift cards were collected and divided between:

- Lila Mae House, Sioux City, IA: a safe, healthy environment where adult survivors of sex trafficking can rest, heal recover and develop life skills necessary to become empowered, independent and self-sufficient women.
- All About U Adoptions: PW 2022 Thank Offering Recipient. Mission: to empower everyone involved in the adoption process.

- A book and jewelry exchange occurred with proceeds going to the PWS Native American College Scholarship Fund.

The Gathering Offering was split between

- Marion Medical Mission (seeks to share the love of Christ with the extreme poor in Africa by providing all in need with a sustainable source of clean, safe drinking water)
- Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte Center (Restoration of her medical clinic, cultural and educational spaces along with an outdoor amphitheater and community garden.

Presbyterian Women installed a new Moderator (Louise Van Poll from Huron, SD/South Dakota Presbytery) and a new chair of PWS Search Committee (Hope Dougherty from Manitowish Waters, WI/Northern Waters Presbytery). The group thanked Moderator Sue Medsker/Central Nebraska Presbytery for her service and leading the group through the time of the pandemic.

We mourn the loss of Rev Kathleen Splitt's father who passed away Thursday evening and she had to leave the Gathering and lift Kathleen and her family in prayer.

Many thanks to the Gathering Committee:

Sue Kimball/Des Moines Presbytery: Stage art and gathering artwork/icon

Terri Sherman: All things hotel- and financial-related!

Beth Jensen: Program development, Leader in keeping all on-task!

Maggie Horak: Workshop and Registration coordination

Beth & I began the journey of preparing for this Gathering on October 31, 2019. Throughout the pandemic, thanks to Zoom and 'meeting in the middle', the Spirit guided our plans, encouraged our minds and bodies, and carried our burdens. Greatest blessings of this opportunity: developing relationships, caring for each other and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.