



Synod of Lakes and Prairies Spring 2023 Meeting Summary

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies met in person for the first time since Fall, 2019 at the Mt. Olivet Retreat Center near Farmington, MN on April 30-May 2, 2023. We worshipped together, heard reports from various entities, met in committees, took actions in the business meeting, learned about Trauma Informed Ministries, and most importantly enjoyed being together in person. The following is some information about our time together.

Stoles by Sue Rutherford



Sue Rutherford, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, pieced and sewed new stoles for the Synod Moderator and Vice-Moderator. The Synod logo is depicted as well as 16 stripes representing the 16 Presbyteries, which make up the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. During the meeting, commissioners, staff, and other guests gathered around Synod Moderator Sue Medsker, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of Central Nebraska, and Synod Vice-Moderator Jeff Dickinson, Ruling Elder, Presbytery of Missouri River Valley, to pray over the stoles.

(Pictured above are Jeff Dickinson, Vice-Moderator and Sue Medsker, Moderator; below the assembly blesses the stoles)



Remembrance of Ruling Elder Ernest E. Cutting past Synod Stated Clerk

During the Synod Executive report, Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart remembered the service of Ruling Elder Ernie Cutting to the Synod as the Synod Stated Clerk, serving in that role from 1993 – 2003. He passed away on March 26, 2023, at the age of 81. His memorial service was held on April 29, 2023, at his home congregation, Macalester Plymouth United Church, St. Paul, Minn. Ernie was active in the leadership of the PC(USA), on many levels, for more than 40 years. He was Moderator of the Presbytery of St. Paul during the merger of the St. Paul and Minneapolis Presbyteries.

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Trauma Informed Ministry

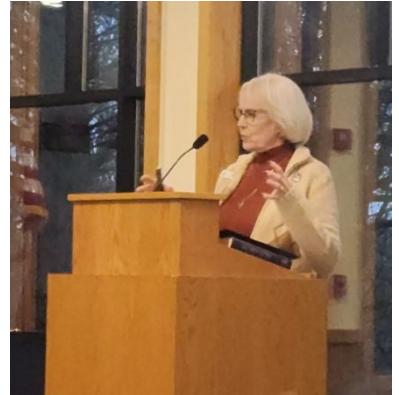
Carrie Burke from LeaderWise spent Monday morning and Monday afternoon with us talking about “Trauma Informed Ministry.” She began by asking “What do we need to feel safe in a place?” and “What are signs/clues that a place is safe or unsafe?” She noted there is no hierarchy of trauma and people process it in very different ways. Trauma re-wires a person’s brain around issues of safety, which is the key to healing trauma. Recognizing that people who have experienced trauma will “seek safety all the time forever” is a key to trauma-informed ministry. **The Transforming Communities/Vital Leaders Committee will be sponsoring three follow up sessions with LeaderWise for the Synod to attend via Zoom on Thursdays, May 25, June 1, and June 15 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. (CDT). [Click here to register.](#)**

Reports

Commissioners heard reports from Ken Green of the [Board of Pensions](#). Ken noted that there will be news from the Board of Pensions in June about changes for January 2024 and that they were holding two conferences with mid-council leaders to discuss how to rebuild the plan to serve more congregations.

Kyle Nolan of the [Presbyterian Foundation](#), shared that the Presbyterian Foundation has an online giving platform which congregations can use. It’s mobile and computer friendly. Stewardship Navigator is another program which is available online and free to churches at [stewardshipnavigator.com](#). Financial information can also be found at [churchfla.org](#) using the code PCUSA. On this website are many resources and videos available for churches to use.

General Assembly Mission Engagement Officer, René Myers (pictured to the right) introduced herself to us and offered to be the first point of contact for anyone seeking information from the denomination. She shared a video of thanks for the engagement of each of our presbyteries <https://vimeo.com/822680946/c5f9a00d01>.



Erin Anderson, the new Executive Director at Clearwater Forest Camp and Retreat Center (the Synod is one of five owners). Clearwater is available for retreats for churches, presbyteries, committees, and other groups.



Two members of the **Restorative Actions Task Force**, Milissa Carter, and Phil Romaine showed a video which they are using for promotion and education (<https://youtu.be/t5VBh78dWdw>). They are working on a new website. The curriculum “A Time to Repair” is available on the website for use for educational purposes. [Restorative Actions website](#), [Curriculum](#).

Standing Committee Reports

All five of the Synod Standing Committees reported.

Transforming Communities/Vital Leaders (TCVL) reported:

Synod School 2023 – July 23-28, registration is open. [Click here to view the PowerPoint](#).

Leadership Summit 2023 met in April in person and some virtual. 63 people from 15 of our presbyteries participated. The theme was Becoming a Trauma-Informed Church.

Art of Transitional Ministry training Week 2 was held online April 17-21.

Art of Transitional Ministry Week 1 training will be held online in October.

In partnership with the Communications Committee, scholarships are available for individuals and groups to attend the Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference, September 25- 27 in Minneapolis, [click here for more information and to apply](#).

The Academy is a Commissioned Pastor training program sponsored by eight presbyteries. In July of 2022 five people completed the program; there are 19 in the current cohort.

The **Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry (CREM)** reported on the annual Racial Ethnic Student Scholarships selected at the Fall meeting. The Racial Ethnic Student Scholarship Fund is an educational assistance program designed to encourage American Indian and students of color in their preparation for academic success in higher education. Application awards are based on personal achievement, financial need and recommendations from teachers and pastors. Funds for this program are provided by the Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministry.

Profile:

- 10 students were eligible for consideration and were awarded scholarships ranging from \$1000 to \$4000.
- Half are new students. One of these is our first to attend an HBCU -
- Morehouse College.
- The students identified as African American, Korean American, Sudanese, Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and multiracial.
- They come from Des Moines, East Iowa, Missouri River Valley, and Twin Cities Area presbyteries and are enrolled in 6 colleges and universities, and 3 seminaries, across 6 states.

During the year, CREM corresponds with the students and provides devotional and other study materials.

CREM also approved institutional awards to 13 tribal colleges within the boundaries of the Synod.

CREM was a sponsor of the 2022 Overcoming Racism event, “The Power of Truth Telling.” This event draws a large audience of people from across our region.

The **Finance Committee** shared that the Synod had an operating surplus in 2022, but a deficit after value decreases in the investment portfolio. The goal of providing services and ministries to presbyteries and communities in equal measure to congregation and presbytery receipts was achieved for the year. Programs, services and ministries of \$745,000 were provided compared to \$731,000 in receipts for the year.

In November 2022, the **Communications Committee** offered a three-part webinar series led by Mark Sundby and Mary Kay DuChene of LeaderWise on the book *Pathways to Belonging* and the topic of loneliness.

The committee is partnering with the Transforming Communities/Vital Leaders Committee to offer scholarships to individuals and groups to attend the Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference in September.

Plans are underway to offer an online face-to face event in the fall.

The **Personnel Committee** held annual conversations with individual synod staff in November and December 2022. The committee is developing resources and workshops for presbyteries and their personnel committees, with a focus on best practices, clarification of roles, and safe and equitable work environments.

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Ernie practiced law focusing on family law, matters relating to non-profit organizations, and guardianships and conservatorships. Over the course of his career, as something of a personal ministry, he supported the quality of life and financial well-being of some 130 individuals entrusted to his care by Ramsey County Court. Ernie was known for his down-to-earth nature and dry sense of humor. He approached life with open congeniality and interest in people. He was unfailingly kind. Ernie is survived by his wife, their children, grandchildren, siblings, and extended family.

Presbyterian Women reported that The Justice & Peace Committee sponsored the book study “What Kind of Christianity” with the author Dr. Yoo. This book group began in our Synod and is offered Churchwide. The Native American Concerns Committee hosts a Native American book study open to anyone in the Synod. Two women from our Synod have been selected to attend the USA Mission Experience to the southern border in Arizona next October. Representatives will be available to speak throughout the Synod about their trip after their return. These women will be great resources to use as congregations and Presbyteries delve into immigration and border issues.

The next Synod meeting is October 1-2, 2023, Sunday-Monday via Zoom.

2024 Synod Meeting dates, mark your calendars!

- April 28th – 30th, Sunday - Tuesday
- October 6th – 7th, Sunday - Monday

To keep up with Synod programs and other Synod news sign up for the e- newsletter, “Keeping in Touch” [here](#).

Visit the Synod’s website at www.lakesandprairies.org.

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