

Synod Meeting Summary

October 4 and 5, 2020

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies held its Fall Stated Meeting on Sunday October 4 and Monday October 5, 2020 via video conferencing program zoom. This was the second time a zoom meeting was held because of the global pandemic of COVID-19.

Synod Moderator Ruling Elder John McKay (commissioner from the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys) called the meeting to order on Sunday, October 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. Opening worship was led by the General Assembly co-moderators, Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart (Synod Executive) and the Rev.



Gregory Bentley (from the Presbytery of North Alabama). The Rev. Gregory Bentley preached on the Scripture Acts 4:32-37 with a sermon entitled, “The Power of Resurrection Testimony.”

Worship also included a recording of the Matthew 25 hymn, “Jesus Be With Us” <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/welcome-kit/>.



Fellowship Ch-Matt
25 hymn.mov

Recording of “Jesus Be With Us” sung by a Deacon at Rev. Gregory Bentley’s church, [Fellowship Presbyterian Church](#).

Following worship, the co-moderators led the Synod in a discussion on what it means to be an anti-racist organization beginning with a land acknowledgment and reminder of what it means to be a Matthew 25 synod by Elona Street-Stewart. Previous to the meeting, the Synod Steering Committee had asked the Synod commissioners to read the book White Fragility by Robin Diangelo and participate in small book discussion groups led by the Steering Committee members.

Monday, October 5, 2020 started with the Synod Commissioners meeting in their perspective committees to talk about how their committee helps or hinders racial equity and how the Synod can move to being an anti-racist institution.

At 11:00 a.m., John McKay called the business meeting to order. Reports from the staff were first on the agenda with reports from Stated Clerk, Synod Executive, Director of Leadership Development and the Treasurer and Director of Financial Services. We heard about what the staff has been doing during the pandemic and programs which the Synod has offered.

Highlights included: an overview of virtual Synod School 2020, the new coaching program with 20 participants from seven presbyteries, 40 participants in the upcoming virtual Art of Transitional Ministry, and the list of recipients of pandemic grants from the Synod. We are projecting a modest surplus in the Synod's operating budget for 2020 as revenue decreases related to the pandemic have been largely offset with travel and program cost savings. Favorability in the personnel budget is resulting as staffing levels are being managed beneath



budgeted complement.

The Synod's rate of value provided (programs, monetary support, grants, and mission) per dollar of support received (from churches and presbyteries) is projected at \$1.07. Pandemic-related reductions in program value provided in 2020 is being offset by an increase in grant support. To date, \$215,000 in pandemic grants have been awarded to churches, camps, and affiliated campuses.

The Synod recessed at noon and came back together at 5:30 p.m. where the Standing Committees reported. Actions which the Synod took include electing the 2021 Synod moderator, the Rev. Janice Palmer, commissioner from the Presbytery of South Dakota and vice-moderator, the Rev. Brian Entz, commissioner from the Twin Cities Area. The Synod Stated Clerk, the Rev. Pamela Prouty was also elected for another five-year term (2021-2026).

The Synod's 2021 budget was presented from the Steering Committee and approved with a \$44,000 operating deficit (well within the tolerances allowed in our policies for deficits as a percentage of operating reserves held).

The Steering Committee proposed the dedication of \$351,000 from the Synod's undesignated financial assets for commitment to use in support of the Restorative Giving program to fund programs, scholarships, and social justice needs for indigenous American and black American communities which have been historically marginalized in the country.

Closing worship included the installation of the Synod moderator and vice moderator and stated clerk. The Synod also recognized the service of three commissioners who have served six years including the Rev. April Davis Campbell from the Presbytery of Twin Cities Area, Ruling Elder Angela Madison from the Presbytery of Milwaukee and Ruling Elder Nancy Macomber from the Presbytery of East Iowa.

Janice Palmer

Brian Entz

The General Assembly Stated Clerk, the Rev.

J.

Herbert Nelson II joined to commission the General Assembly co-moderators.



J. Herbert Nelson II



Gregory J. Bentley



Laying on of Hands



The next Synod meeting will be May 2-4, 2021. We hope to be back at Mt. Olivet Retreat Center in May, but we do not know yet. The Synod Steering Committee will meet on Monday, March 15, 2021.