

Synod Meeting Highlights – A summary

June 2009 – Also published on synodsun.com

As is happening with many governing bodies and ministry groups in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Synod of the Sun is maintaining its commitment to mission work while undergoing a transition in organization and major budget cuts.

The Synod is again looking at major cuts in its operating budget and possibly some staff reduction for 2010. In the past 11 years, synod staff has been reduced by half to less than 5 full-time positions and giving to synod by presbytery funding of synod mission has been cut in half.

To describe the Synod's commitment to mission, despite these challenges, we've outlined several of the actions and reports from the June 1-2 meeting of the Synod held in San Antonio. The most exciting highlights the awarding of ministry grants and the new mission project: Solar Under the Sun.

Mission Network Grants

The Synod of the Sun awarded more than \$25,000 to help fund eight ministry events and projects through the Mission Network Grant program. The next deadline to apply for these grants is October 1, please click on "Mission Network Grant" found on the Synod home page: synodsun.com.

Some of the recipients included: A multicultural conference for youth, partnership event of Christian Educators and Austin Seminary and a gathering of Synod's Presbyterian Women. Synod commissioners also took action to enable funding for this grant program to continue.

Solar Under the Sun

The Solar Under the Sun project will enable mission work teams from across the 11 presbyteries of this synod to help add solar energy to power clean water systems or schools or clinics and more in under-served communities from the U.S., Mexico, Haiti and beyond. This new mission initiative, based at Ferncliff Conference Center in Arkansas Presbytery is partnering with the Living Waters for the World program to conduct its first trial installation of solar energy in Haiti in early July.

We hope the program will be ready to accept volunteer mission teams by early next year, after facilities, education and training systems are in place. A new website: solarunderthesun.org will be launched later this summer when information from the Haiti trip is received.

Growing excitement for Solar Under the Sun is shared by many. The moderator for Presbyterian Women in the Synod, Sheron Antczak reported that PW will be adding its support to the new Solar Under the Sun mission project.

Disaster Communications

General Presbyter Mike Cole of New Covenant Presbytery reported to the Synod's Communications Group that volunteers and funds are desperately needed for Hurricane Ike recovery. Donations to the planned multi-year effort so far have totaled little more than one percent of the Presbyterian-related funds for recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. New Covenant Presbytery is developing a communications campaign and synod will promote it when it is ready. In the meantime, tell your congregations and presbyteries that there is a great shortage of volunteers.

Contact PC(USA) Volunteer Villages: 866-732-6121 or pcusa.org/pda.

Communications and *The Presbyterian SUN*

We expect that 2009 is the last year for *The Presbyterian SUN* our every-member publication which is delivered to about 75,000 Presbyterian addresses bi-monthly. There will be no issue this summer, but it will be published in September and the final issue is set for November.

An alternative publication is being planned for limited print and extensive electronic distribution. The online news site aimed to serve all synods of the PC(USA) is developing more teams of editors and assistant editors this year. The news network is called Presbyterian Neighbor News. Please visit PNNews.org to sign up for the weekly news digest.

Diversity Among Synod Commissioners

The Governance Group of the Synod addressed concerns of diversity within the new organizational structure of synod work, by proposing this motion which was adopted on June 2:

“In order to more fully live into the synod’s vision of increased diversity, the synod shall elect 6 at large commissioners reflective of its racial ethnic diversity for two year terms. The synod’s nominating committee, with the advice of the synod’s (Committee On Representation), presbyteries, and the cross-cultural mission network, will create and maintain a pool from which the racial ethnic commissioners will be nominated. These at large commissioners will begin serving in 2010, and the procedure will be reevaluated in 2013.”

This action increases the total number of synod commissioners to 50. The six at-large members will be comprised of three ministers, three elders.

Form of Government Response

Commissioners read a response drafted by the Governance Group to the Form of Government

Task Force report. That PC(USA) task force will be making a final report to the General Assembly Mission Council this fall. Your input is welcome by the task force no later than June 30. Please visit pcusa.org/formofgovernment.

Covenant with Texas Presbyterian Foundation (which serves all four states of the synod) will be studied and renewed at the Synod's November meeting.

The upcoming events highlighted by our new Stated Clerk, the Rev. Raafat Zaki, are listed on the Synod's home page. Please click “Events” on synodsun.com to learn more about:

JOURNEY TOWARD UNITY: A Cross Cultural Journey Through the Bible – September 25-26 in Dallas.

The Multicultural Youth Conference at Presbyterian Mo-Ranch Assembly, July 9-12.

Synod Youth Workshop held at the University of Tulsa, July 13-18.

Crossing Borders: Encountering God conference in Phoenix, AZ, April 15-17, 2010. (Co-sponsored by Synods of the Sun and the Southwest.)

Synod staff and commissioners remember the mission of our presbyteries in prayer and ask for your prayers for the diverse ministry of the Synod and the PC(USA). Thank you.