



The **Annual Meeting** of the Synod was held April 27-29, 2025, at Mt. Olivet Retreat Center in Farmington, MN. The meeting was moderated by RE Jeff Dickinson, Missouri River Valley (with many prayers for our Vice-Moderator, TE Lisa Johnson, Twin Cities Area, who was unable to be with us).

Elder Suzzane Kelly, CEO, Minnesota Council of Churches, brought greetings and briefed the assembly on the 27 member denominations representing Historic Black, Mainline Protestant, Peace Churches, and Greek Orthodox judicatories, working together to manifest the unity of the body of Christ. She shared how the Council's ministries build common good in the world through Refugee Services, Racial Justice, Respectful Conversations and Interfaith Relationships programs. Reporting on the impact of federal funding cuts and cessation of immigration arrivals, she described the pain of immediate staff reductions for all but 2 refugee service staff and 11 total staff for overall mission. She expressed appreciation for the long and faithful support from the synod, and for the representatives from our presbytery and synod leadership. (Photo credit Philip Hussong.)



Our worship focused on the Journey from Lament to Joy. Jim Bear Jacobs, Co-director for Racial Justice, Minnesota Council of Churches, preached on Matthew 25.

Pictured left to right, Moderator Jeff Dickinson, TE Sarah Dickinson, Missouri River Valley, and Jim Bear Jacobs.



Jim Bear Jacobs led a presentation on storytelling using personal scenarios that illustrated the connections between our values, relationships and historical truths. mnchurches.org/what-we-do/healing-minnesota-stories

Commissioners engaged in telling specific stories about people and places that evoked compassion, generosity, and belonging to each other and God.

Synod voted to maintain per capita at the current rate of \$5.50 and will continue to give each presbytery \$10,000 for staff support. Dakota Presbytery receives \$21,000 for mission support.



The **Restorative Actions** report was brought by RE Milissa Carter (Oak Grove PC, Bloomington, Minn.). The foundation of Restorative Actions is to acknowledge the wealth that has been denied Afro-American and Indigenous communities as a result of America's history of racism (estimated to be about 15% of total white household wealth). Key to Restorative Actions is surrendering control as well as the funds to Afro-American and Indigenous peoples. In the past few months, the Afro-American Restorative Trust has granted over \$117,000 from their trust. Carter highlighted two organizations which received grants, the Healthy Root's Institute and the Paul Robeson House of Princeton. Presbyteries and congregations are invited into these conversations about repair. New ideas on ways to support this project include a portion of proceeds from property sales, a portion of undesignated bequests and endowments or earnings, as well as contributions to administrative support for the trusts since costs for administrative support are not taken from donations to the trusts. restorativeactions.org.

The **Self-Development of People Committee** was recertified through 2027 and is eager to partner with community organizations in the coming year. They asked commissioners, congregations and presbyteries to seek out initiatives that might be eligible for funding and refer them to the synod committee. The application will be available on the synod website. The committee just was notified during the synod meeting that there will be \$47,000 for grants in 2026 for projects in the synod. Additionally, proposals may also be considered by a presbytery SDOP if it is certified. lakesandprairies.org/self-development-of-people

The **Committee on Racial Equity Ministries (CREM)** awarded scholarships to 8 students in 2024. The students came from 4 states and 4 presbyteries and attended 6 schools and universities. The scholarship application will be available on the synod website and announced in regular communications, but CREM asks commissioners and presbyteries to promote and distribute the information in their newsletters, websites and youth gatherings. The committee continues to review policies and anti-racism training materials for future engagement and was a sponsor for the 2024 Overcoming Racism Conference in November at Metropolitan State University in Saint Paul. The 2024 conference theme, Overcoming Racism, Reparations in Action, explored actions to rectify the harm of racism. People from across the synod attended.

The **Transforming Communities/Vital Leaders** committee is compiling a directory of coaches available in the Synod. Anyone who is a trained coach is invited to be included by filling out the form available on the Synod website at lakesandprairies.org. A new grant program was approved to foster vitality for congregations or a new 1001 worshipping community to support new creative ministries, witness and outreach. The initial deadline is August 31, with grants being awarded in September. In addition, up to eight grants of \$1,000 are available to groups of pastoral leaders who form a cohort to support each other. The grants could be used for a facilitator to help convene and lead the cohort, for study materials, or even a day retreat to get started. For more information, contact **Gordon Moen**.

The Sankofa pilgrims from the fall 2024 pilgrimage to locations of the Civil Rights Movement shared several stories from their transformative journey and the power of learning to help us to dismantle structural racism (one of the three tenets of the Matthew 25 movement in the PCUSA). The Sankofa image reminds us to go back in order to see and learn so that we can move forward with hope and vision of a better future.



Sankofa pilgrims posing for a photo as they enter Selma, Ala.



This image of the Sankofa Bird was first used by General Assembly Co-Moderators Elona Street-Stewart and Gregory Bentley. This portrayal shows the Sankofa standing in the Mississippi River, which represents our area. (Image by Deb DeMeester)

Do you have a story of hope from your congregation or presbytery? Please share it with gmilloy@lakesandprairies.org or ddemeester@lakesandprairies.org. We love to support and encourage our congregations and presbyteries in their endeavors!

Commissioners were encouraged to participate in supporting the General Assembly in Milwaukee (summer 2026) as well as the Presbyterian Women Gathering in June 2025, lakesandprairies.org/presbyterian-women.



Thank you to John Thedens, RE, East Iowa (trumpet) and Gordon Moen, TE, North Central Iowa (guitar) for providing music during worship.

The next Synod Meeting will be September 28-29, virtual.

The Meeting Summary is an unofficial report of synod actions published shortly after each meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. Comments regarding the publication should be addressed to gmilloy@lakesandprairies.org.