



# Synod Report



*Highlights from the June 2008 Meeting*

## Synod commissioners gather in Tempe

*Four Presbyteries adapting to the changing times with help of Synod events*

At the second of three meetings this year of the Synod of the Southwest, all four presbyteries reported that in a variety of ways, each is redesigning itself to more adequately serve their congregations in advancing the cause of Christ in the two state region.

And it isn't easy.

On the one hand populations are surging in both Arizona and New Mexico providing all kinds of opportunities for ministry. On the other hand, each presbytery is faced with shrinking resources to do ministry – both financial and human.

Decreasing dollars from the denomination to the Synod and its presbyteries explains part of the reason for the shrinking financial resources. And yet, particularly Grand Canyon Presbytery and Santa Fe Presbytery have within their bounds churches and institutions that were begun by the denomination many years ago, but now must be locally supported financially.

And so the redesigning. Santa Fe and Sierra Blanca Presbyteries are deep in conversations that are leading to plans to share staff while maintaining separate identities. Final votes on the developing plan are to be made this fall. Sierra Blanca is also putting its beloved Camp Chimney Springs on the market.

Presbytery de Cristo and Grand Canyon Presbytery are busy thinking through staffing needs and how best to organize themselves for ministry.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Jan DeVries, synod executive/stated clerk, the Synod has been providing excellent leadership events for both clergy and lay

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**The 28 commissioners from the four presbyteries in Arizona and New Mexico gathered for their second of three meetings for the Synod of the Southwest in 2008. The meeting was held at University Church in Tempe early in June.**

## Synod withdraws its overture to General Assembly

Seeking to increase funds for mission, the Synod in March approved an overture to the General Assembly this June that would have allowed the General Assembly Council to invest its unrestricted funds where it might receive the greatest return, rather than being required to invest them with the Presbyterian Foundation.

Unbeknown to the Synod, the overture played into a number of issues bubbling

between the Council and the Foundation – and it created a firestorm. At the June meeting of the Synod in Tempe, AZ, the 28 commissioners from the four presbyteries affirmed action of its moderator, Conrad Rocha, and Jan DeVries to withdraw the overture.

Although the concern for receiving the greatest return possible for invested funds remains, other ways will be pursued in fulfilling this goal of maximizing funds that are available for carrying out the mission of the church.

There are two other measures before the General Assembly meeting in San José, California, somewhat related to the Synod's overture. Both of these would clarify whether the Presbyterian Foundation or the General Assembly Council has the final word as to how certain funds within the Foundation may be used.

### *Synod Meeting Schedule*

*Under the new bylaws of the Synod of the Southwest that went into effect this year, the Synod meets three times a year – spring, summer, and fall.*

*Under the new plan there is no Synod Council that meets between meetings of the Synod, but there is an Executive Committee that can meet if the need should arise.*



Speaking at the meeting of the Synod were Larry Norris from Cook School (left) Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter, Director of Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/PW, General Assembly Council (center) and Bob Lewis, staff person for Native American ministry in the Presbytery of Grand Canyon.

## Synod Briefs

- **Mark Adams** spoke to the Synod about his work the past 10 years with Frontera de Cristo, one of several Presbyterian related ministries along the Mexican-U.S. border. Grappling with immigration issues, he referred to his work as a "ministry of crisis."

- **Liz Toland** reported on her work with Compañeros en Misión, another ministry on the border. Her work is centered in the Mexican state of Sonora where the strongest program is health-care through the work of a licensed nurse who provides weekend workshops for the people.

- **Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter**, Director of Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/PW, General Assembly Council, spoke of the emerging strategy for racial ethnic church growth.

- **Moderator Elect Carrol Blevins** led worship for commissioners during the meeting.

- **Budget reduction.** Because of a decrease in giving from congregations for Synod Mission, the budget for 2008 was reduced by some \$20 thousand.

- **Mission Partnership Funds.** Mission Partnership Funds from the General Assembly in 2009 will be \$593,327, down \$53,080 from what is being received this year.

- **Bob Lewis**, staff person for Native American Ministry for Grand Canyon Pres-

bytery reminded commissioners that one-third of the congregations in Grand Canyon Presbytery are Native American. Seven have commissioned lay pastors and five are led by lay preachers. He reported that he thinks the future in the Presbytery is bright because of what he has seen and learned.

### Synod meets in Tempe

Continued from front page leaders to prepare them for the future. In recent months the Synod has offered seminars on spirituality, multi-culturalism, stewardship, and "Leading Change in the Church" at which leaders were urged to be steady in purpose but flexible in strategy. This last seminar will be followed by four smaller events in 2009 and 2010 to which 10 churches from each state will be invited to participate.

Beginning this summer are a series of seminars for pastors on Biblical preaching with nationally known leaders. Through a grant from General Assembly Council, all expenses except \$100 are covered. The first event is at Ghost Ranch Abiquiu in August and the second event is in October at Ghost Ranch Santa Fe.

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## Cook School selling its campus in Tempe

*Historic mission of training Native American leaders will continue*

Larry Norris, president of Cook School for Christian Leadership, shared with the Synod that the school has sold its 15-acre campus in Tempe, AZ, and officially closed the campus at the end of May.

Although the campus has been sold, the school will continue its historic role of training Native American leadership in the church, through new and creative means. Money received from the sale will be used to establish the Charles H. Cook Foundation to undergird its leadership training role.

Current programs will continue – such as Commissioned Lay Pastors' Program, Workshops on Wheels, and the newly developed Community Leadership Program.

Established initially in Tucson in 1888 through the efforts of Charles Cook, it later moved to the Phoenix area and was responsible for the training of most Native American pastors and lay leaders in the Presbyterian Church as well as several other denominations.



As part of the ceremony to close the Cook School campus, an Indian from British Columbia led a ritual to take down the totem poles that had been originally carved for Charles H. Cook. Tradition dictates that because they were carved at Cook School for Cook School, they must remain at the site and be allowed to rot and go back to nature.