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Homesteader - September 2, 2014

2014 SYNOD SCHOOL

By Ramona Meester

More than 600 participants attended this year's Synod School at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa. For many who attend, it's like a BIG family reunion - wonderful to see old friends, but it's always good to meet the new people, too!

This year Dean Jeff Dickinson from Missouri River Valley Presbytery greeted arrivals as they entered the registration area. The convocation speaker was Anna Case-Winters who talked about Science and Theology. My classes included Google Docs, Tie Dye, and Thanksgiving is NOT a model for Indian Ministry. Many Teaching Elders attend more serious classes as continuing education, but there is a wide range of classes with something for everyone! A big band provided music for dance on Wednesday night, and the annual teen dance was Thursday night with Rev. Richard Buller as deejay. Artwork by Howard Chapman, artist in residence, was enjoyed by many throughout the week and added to our worship experiences. There were so many evening activities (movies, coffee house with entertainment, mini courses) that it was difficult to choose what to do!

Begin planning now to attend Synod School next year (July 26-31, 2015)! It will be worth your time. Scholarships are available.

Ours is a representative form of government. The four councils compose a tiered system of government. Each council is responsible for its own program, staffing, worship life, budget, and administration of mission. Each council also has distinct responsibilities.

The session is the most local council. Each congregation is led and governed by its session which is responsible for the congregation's worship, programs, property, finances, and membership. The session is composed of persons elected by the congregation - ruling elders and installed pastors. (G-3.0201)

The next larger council is the presbytery, composed of at least ten sessions and ten teaching elders within a certain district. The presbytery is charged with oversight and nurture of the congregations and ministers within its bounds. It may organize, dismiss, and dissolve congregations; oversee congregations without pastors; establish and dissolve pastoral relationships; receive, dismiss and discipline its members; oversee the process by which individuals become teaching elders; and maintain ecumenical relationships. (G-3.0301) The presbytery elects commissioners (voting representatives) to synod and to General Assembly. Powers not specifically delegated "are reserved to the presbyteries." (G-3.0101).

The synod is the next more inclusive council, with at least 3 presbyteries in its region. Synod is responsible for the life and mission of the church and for supporting the presbyteries throughout its region. (G-3.0401) There are currently 16 synods, each with a distinct ministry and mission.

The General Assembly is the council of the whole



Back row: Phillip Anthony, Ray Meester, Janice Stege Front Row: Katie Jasa, Gina Meester, Ramona Meester, Roxie Sullivan



Kathy Keener- Han,
Norfolk



Stephanie Nelson,
Lincoln First



Regarding ruling elders: Presbyterian councils

How many Presbyterians does it take to change a light bulb? It takes a council, in stated meeting, to determine if a new light bulb is in the ministry plan of the council, if there is funding for a new light bulb, and if persons can be called who will faithfully carry out this mission. One of the hallmarks of presbyterian belief and governance is that we don't place much decision-making authority with individuals, who are prone to "idolatry and tyranny." (F-2.05) Instead, decisions about the mission, ministry, and governance of the Presbyterian Church are made by ordered groups of people gathered in "councils." These

church. It meets biennially and deliberates on matters of governance, mission, social witness, and doctrine. (G-3.0501)

The councils are distinct and have assigned responsibilities, yet have "such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church." (G-3.0101) For instance, only the session is empowered to ordain ruling elders and deacons. Only the presbytery is empowered to ordain teaching elders. Yet when a session or presbytery has acted and ordained someone, that ordination is recognized by the whole church. The minister's credentials are valid across the denomination. The ruling elder may transfer membership to any other Presbyterian Church and, upon election by that congregation, serve on the session without being re-ordained; or may assume other duties of ruling elders.

Councils are "composed of presbyters elected by the people" (G-3.0101). Presbyters are teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders (members of a congregation elected by and ordained in a congregation.) When presbyters meet in councils, they are not bound by the will of the people who elected them, but "seek together to find and represent the will of Christ." (F-3.0204) Discernment processes and Roberts' Rules of Order are the tools by which they deliberate. Decisions are reached by majority vote. Councils above the session are composed of teaching and ruling elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible.

And that light bulb? How many Presbyterians does it take in your council?

Alyson Janke is a Ruling Elder, currently serving as the Stated Clerk of John Knox Presbytery. She teaches Presbyterian Polity at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary and serves on the General Assembly Advisory Committee on the Constitution. She and her husband and son own and operate a dairy farm in central Wisconsin.

A call to mission in the Czech Republic

Learn more about mission co-worker, Karen Moritz's work in the Czech Republic. Presbyterian World Mission invites you to share this video of Karen with your congregation and to consider showing the video on World Communion Sunday, October 5th.

[Video](#)

councils, from most local (governs a congregation) to most inclusive (governs the whole denomination), are called session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. (F-3.0203)

cont'd...

Blessing Opportunity *2 Corinthians 9:7-8*



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Keep Thinking...

If the church is to impart to the world a message of hope and love, of faith, justice, and peace, something of this should become visible, audible, and tangible in the church itself.

-David Bosch

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