

Binding together

Covenants hold us together, remind us of where we've been

FARMINGTON, Minn. – Covenants are the “bond that holds us together,” Carol McDonald reminded the attendees at the Synod of Lakes and Prairies’ COM/CPM Leadership Conference last month at the Mt. Olivet Conference and Retreat Center here.

And she reminded attendees, too, that covenants help them “remember how much you have loved each other from the beginning.”

McDonald, who has served more than 40 years in ministry and retired last summer after 25 years in the Synod of Lincoln Trails, most recently as that synod’s executive, has extensive experience in the area of leadership and nurture.

She took the conference theme, “Care,” and used each letter of the word to point out elements that should exist in covenants. Regarding the use of the word’s letters as a memory tool, she said, “It’s the teacher part of me.”

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies’ conference, a longtime winter event, is designed for members of presbytery committees on ministry and committees on the preparation for ministry. Conference organizers typically draw workshop and plenary leadership from across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

McDonald outlined elements of covenants that can be used to create a “pledge” that reflects the relationships in ministry or in the preparation for ministry. While she acknowledged there is no standard form for a covenant, covenants should be examined to look for elements she described.

She encouraged attendees to consider putting covenants in place for relationships among presbyteries, congregations, and ministers, or ministry inquirers or candidates. “It’s like a three-party kind of pledge, a pact,” she said.

And she said covenants should be examined to look for a number of specific elements that should be present. She described those elements as ...

Under “C”

- Call
- Community
- Communication
- Challenge

Under “A”

- Active
- Advocacy
- Acceptance
- Accountability

Under “R”

- Respect
- Resources
- Remember

Under “E”

- Encouraging
- Empower
- Expectations
- Exploring