

2008 School of Christian Mission, July 25-30, in Grand Island

The Nebraska School of Christian Mission will be held July 25-30, 2008, at the Mid-Town Holiday Inn, in Grand Island, Neb. The weekend school is July 25-27. It begins on Friday evening at 6 p.m. and concludes at 1 p.m. on Sunday. The weekend school is a compressed session and therefore fewer class sessions. The weekday school is July 27-30. It begins on Sunday at 6 p.m. and ends on Wednesday at 1 p.m. This session has an extra day, so the classes are not as compressed and the schedule is a little more relaxed. The weekend session is usually the most attended.

The theme for this year's School of Christian Mission is "Living the Sacred." "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good," concludes the unfolding story of God's creation of the earth and all its living creatures as revealed in Genesis, Chapter 1. How are we as God's people to understand the story in the midst of human acts of racism, violence and earthly destruction?

Native American traditions teach us that creation includes all that comes from God and all that comes from the heart and mind of God is sacred. Native traditions call on its people to value life as God values life. To be a created people is to be relationally connected to all people everywhere, as well as to all God has created.

To believe in Jesus is to love as God loved and live as Christ lived, valuing all creation. To believe in Jesus is to live in the way of Christ, freeing the oppressed, healing the sick and wounded, clothing the naked, welcoming all. To believe in Jesus is to follow the sacred commandment to love as God loved. To believe in Jesus is to embrace the sacredness of life.

While God has given humanity the gift of life and relationship, too often we have created barriers between people and lands. We have acted in ways that violate the sacredness of life and do not make for peace.

As followers of Christ, as Christians in communion, let us deepen our understanding of what it means to live in sacred harmony. Then, let us walk together in ways that lead to peace and reconciliation.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH STUDY—"I Believe in Jesus" taught by Bishop Ann Sherer

The study deals with four key components, namely (a) the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, (b) the meaning of faith in Jesus, (c) whose faith counts and (d) faith in Jesus in a post-modern world.

GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY—"Israel/Palestine" taught by the Rev. Lyle Schoen

This study's purpose is to (a) Explore history and complexities of relationships between Israel and Palestine. (b) Issues in the lives of the peoples. (c) Use/abuse of religion in mid-eastern and U.S. policies (d) Considering our influence in U.S. policy to achieve justice and peace for Palestine and Israel (e) the role of media in reporting the Israel-Palestine conflict (f) Israel and Palestine communities in the U.S. and their influence or lack thereof on U.S. policies.

GIVING OUR HEARTS AWAY: NATIVE AMERICAN SURVIVAL—Rev. Sharee Johnson and Rev. Tim Byington teachers

The purposes of this study are to learn about the inter-relatedness between indigenous people and their land, to identify selected key issues affecting the Native Americans in the US and to examine the root causes of these issues, to understand and appreciate the "Give Away" culture of the Native Americans in the areas of spirituality, ecology, language, storytelling, food and to lead the participants to act as responsible US citizens and Christians in accompaniment and solidarity with Native Americans.

Some important issues to be discussed include: Myths concerning Native Americans, sovereignty issues and definition of tribe, economic development and gaming, unemployment and alcoholism, the place of the church in Native American spirituality.

This study will search for appropriate ways for United Methodists to be engaged in mission with Native Americans. What are contemporary needs and how best can those needs be met? How do we cooperate with tribal structures and be sensitive to cultural issues?