NOTES FOR FUTURE LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEES
SEPTEMBER 2001

HOTEL

At Least Eighteen Months Before the Conference

Starting at least eighteen months before the conference date, receive the space usage list from the Site Selection Working Group and the archive binder from the Archive Group. Determine which hotels have sufficient space based on historical needs. Contact hotels about availability for conference dates and get preliminary costs for:

• Room rates for Friday block and Saturday block (based on historical usage). Room blocks should be all double-doubles flat rate for single, double, triple or quad occupancy. Determine if the hotel’s toll-free telephone number may be used for making conference room reservations.

• Rooms for PSD District Board may be needed for Thursday night as well.

• Meals and meal costs.

• Meeting room usage fees. Meeting space is typically free based on a food and beverage minimum.

• Based on hotel costs and the Board’s desires, determine whether the PSD Board Meeting will be held at the hotel on Friday and if so, be sure to include the space required when planning space usage with the hotel.

• Determine whether separate space will be required for youth programming. Youth programming will vary from year to year. Contact a representative who will be responsible for youth programming and determine their needs.
• Include space needed for on-site child care. Child care needs vary from year to year and may include a variety of ages. Hotel guest rooms and/or conference rooms may be needed. Historically, the number of children in child care has been small. At the 2001 conference, there were only three children in child care and they were ages 7-9.

• Make sure that you include space for a post-mortem meeting with PSD representatives and current and future local arrangements committees. This space could be a conference room or coffee shop.

• If you have precise space needs for any activity, such as the labyrinth, make sure room dimensions are sufficient for that activity.

• Identify space appropriate for the gathering of participants in the banner parade prior to the parade and for posting the district banner and congregational banners.

Clarify at this point who should sign the contract with the selected hotel. Invite a member of the Selection Group to tour one or two possible hotels best suited for the conference, based on facilities and costs. Consideration in selecting a hotel should include easy freeway access, low- or no-cost parking, availability of free hotel shuttle to airport, access to public transportation and nearby points of interest. Also consider handicap accessibility into and within the hotel and smoke-free public spaces. Consult with Site Selection Group to make final selection. Request contract from final hotel choice. Negotiate details. The contract should include locking in meal prices so they do not change after the budget has been finalized. Obtain assurance that if menus change a comparable selection will be offered at the locked-in price. Include handicap accessibility in the agreement. The date for releasing unreserved rooms should be no sooner than one month before the conference and/or should correspond to your registration schedule, for example, an early-bird deadline, if you have one. The contracted food and beverage minimum will be key to budgeting and the setting of registration fees. Send contract to Site Selection Group for approval.

As the program is developed and finalized, space needs negotiated in the hotel contract are likely to change. Make sure that as such changes are conveyed to the hotel, you reach an agreement with the hotel about how those changes may affect the food and beverage minimum. The if food and beverage minimum changes, sign a new agreement. Keep in mind that such changes will affect the conference budget and registration fees

**Approximately Two Months Before the Conference**

Be aware that the hotel guest room cut-off date is approaching. Check to make sure that room reservations have been made for the guest speakers. If the hotel is likely to be sold out during the conference period, you may want to make a few room reservations in the
names of local arrangements committee members as a way to hold space for unanticipated
needs. Make sure that if these rooms are not going to be used that the reservations are
cancelled prior to the hotel’s cancellation deadline.

One Month Before the Conference

Obtain current hotel menu selections and decide on menu choices. Make sure that there are
vegetarian options for each meal. To keep costs down, a hotel may permit you to select a
luncheon menu item for a dinner at slightly more than the luncheon cost but less then other
dinner items. Selecting low-cost menu items is critical to maintaining a low registration fee.
On the other hand, do not spend so little on food costs that you might fall beneath your food
and beverage minimum.

Discuss with the hotel arrangements for conference coffee breaks and any cash bars. Since
you have budgeted for these, make sure you have a mechanism for keeping these items
within the budget. For example, the price of coffee or soft drinks is based on the numbers
served. You may want to limit the total number of items that will be served rather than
agreeing to pay for the total items used. To keep costs low, we only offered coffee and a
few soft drinks. Some people expressed a desire for snack items. If these are to be
offered they must be included in the initial budget.

Review space usage needs with the hotel. Program changes and hotel demands and
opportunities are likely to have changed over time. For example, we were able to arrange
for better rooms for some events because other organizations had cancelled their events.

Approximately Two Weeks Before the Conference

Meet at the hotel and walk through conference rooms. Reconfirm which events will be in
which rooms at which time. If any workshops have been cancelled since publication of the
registration brochure, notify the hotel of changes in space needs. Reconfirm locations for
registration and for exhibits. Make sure that the room to be used for the bookstore is
available for set-up at least a half day before the bookstore opens. Determine if exhibit
space will be available without charge for set-up prior to the opening of the exhibits. If there
is a labyrinth, it will also require set-up time. Make sure that the hotel agrees to turn off all
telephones in conference rooms for other than calls within the hotel. (During the 2001
conference there was approximately $100 in telephone calls made from conference rooms
by unknown persons that the hotel sought to charge to the conference.)

Confirm menu choices and discuss approximate “meal covers”–the guarantee of meals to be
served at that time. (These will typically be finalized approximately three days before the
conference begins.) Confirm arrangements for any cash bars–number of bartenders,
minimum income required to avoid bartender charge, etc. We did not offer any snacks at
receptions. If desired, they will increase the budget and needed registration income.

Arrange with the hotel for audio-visual needs for non-workshop events. (We did not budget
for any audio-visual expenses for the workshops because hotel charges for video equipment, flip charts, and telephone lines for computer modems are exorbitant. Make sure that you notify the Program Planning Committee to tell speakers that they will be responsible for their own equipment.) The budgeted audio-visual needs should include microphones for speakers as well as for meal times so that announcements may be made during meals. You will also need a piano for the worship service and choir rehearsal on Sunday. Discuss with the entertainer the microphones necessary for the performance on Saturday night. Lapel and wireless microphones are considerably more expensive than stand microphones.

Reconfirm with the hotel the physical set-up for each function—number, kind and location of platforms, lecterns, tables, etc. Make sure that you understand terms used by the hotel to describe sets. Discuss how chairs should be set up for each event.

Arrange with the hotel for how workshop space and meeting rooms will be posted. Will the hotel include all events on a video screen? Will they post signs outside rooms indicating the events within? If changes are made in allocation of space during the conference, how will attendees be notified?

Determine who will be the Conference and hotel contact persons on site at the hotel during the conference.

Three Days Before the Conference (or as Desired by the Hotel)

Based on registrations, provide guaranteed meal covers, including numbers of vegetarian meals, for each meal function. Review documentation of set-ups and audio-visual needs for accuracy.

During the Conference

Check each room to be used for a conference event approximately one-half hour before the event to make sure the set-up is according to the plan. Keep in touch with the hotel representative about how many meals can be added for each event through on-site registration. Determine how long before the event requests for additional meals may be received. Make sure that you know whom to contact if there are problems in heating, cooling, microphones or noise from adjacent events. Check to make sure that conference events are correctly posted. Serve as a liaison with workshop participants and the hotel. On Saturday morning and again on Sunday morning, obtain from the hotel registration desk the number of guest rooms used the prior night by conference attendees and the computer lists of rooms used by conference attendees (“in house guest lists”). If possible, include non-conference in house lists to make sure that all conference attendees were coded properly to be credited toward the conference room minimum. These lists need to be obtained promptly from the hotel because they may not be retained in the hotel's computer system.
After the Conference

Upon receipt of the proposed bill from the hotel, review it carefully for erroneous or disputed items prior to payment.

BUDGET

Ten Months Before the Conference

Using the budget from the most recent conference, develop budget categories. Replace hotel costs with new figures. The forecast figures for the registration categories will depend on the conference location. Examine historical registration figures for metropolitan and non-metropolitan conferences. Recognize that some historical figures include significant youth registrations that are no longer likely to occur because of diminution of youth programming at annual conferences. Consider all factors that might affect attendance in reaching a forecast of conference attendance. For example, if the conference is in a non-metropolitan area there are likely to be more Friday night dinners and Saturday-Sunday breakfasts served.

Since the budget needs to be completed long before the programming is determined, get as much preliminary information about program detail as the Program Planning Committee Chair can provide. Get bids from vendors for the costs of such items as name tags, printing of registration brochures, and mailing of registration brochures (postage rates may change, a mailing service may be desirable because of the complexity of compliance with postal regulations for bulk mail). In order to obtain a bid for printing of the registration brochure you may need to provide a sample brochure from a previous year. Be aware however, that the bid based on that brochure may limit design choices made by those designing the brochure for your conference. Various graphic features will increase printing costs. Check entertainment costs in your area to make sure the budgeted item is sufficient. Be sure to be realistic about audio-visual costs and the cost of floral decorations. The budget for the 2001 conference did not include snacks with coffee breaks and receptions. For conferences outside the metropolitan area, planners may want to include snacks which may be possible while keeping registration costs reasonable because of lower hotel costs.

Obtain from the Program Planning Council Chair best estimates of the total cost for speakers, including honoraria, actual transportation, number of nights in the hotel, number of meals and any conference registration fees. Meals and hotel nights offered to speakers should be realistic. Determine who will pay the honoraria and reimbursement directly to the speakers (the Local Arrangements Committee or the Program Planning Council reimbursed by the Local Arrangements Committee).

Determine figures for all budget items, making sure that you determine budget line items unique to your location. Identify registration options that will maximize attendance. For example, include options that omit Friday night dinner and that omit both breakfasts. Decide a method of pricing that encourages early registration—whether to use early-bird discounts or
late fees. It is important to discourage on-site registration by pricing because on-site registration meal needs may not be possible for the hotel to accommodate and late registrations may affect space needs for various workshops and events, as well as the number of conference handouts printed. It is wasteful to photocopy handouts for potential attendees who do not materialize. Estimate registration numbers based on past years to determine registration income needed to cover projected costs. The budget must be self-supporting. It is advisable to have a budget that predicts more income than expenses to allow for unanticipated costs and registration below expectations. Barring extenuating circumstances, if there is a surplus at the conclusion of the conference, it will be split between the District and the host congregation.

Note that the PSD has a modest fund created from a collection at the 2001 conference designed to subsidize child care costs at future conferences.

Send preliminary budget to Program Coordinator for consultation.

Submit final budget to PSD Board for its approval (late August meeting).

Make sure that you are aware of applicable sales taxes for all hotel charges. For example, sales taxes in the metropolitan area on hotel food and beverage and audio-visual include tax on the service charge as well as on the item.

**BROCHURE AND PUBLICITY**

Nine to Ten Months Prior to the Conference

Assign a graphic artist to design a conference logo to express the conference theme chosen by the Program Council. Obtain a digital version of the logo to be used to establish conference identity in publicity and conference publications.

Contact the PSD Office Manager for all publicity deadlines. These include deadlines for newsletters and congregational mailings.

Begin investigating possible entertainment options. In looking for an entertainer, the consensus of attendees at the 2001 conference was a preference for light entertainment, something that made people laugh at the end of a serious day. Planners might consider omitting the traditional major entertainment event on Saturday night as a cost saving option. Entertainment funds might be used instead for less costly music at the receptions or omitted altogether. The Saturday night dinner might have no entertainment or be the occasion for the award ceremony usually done at Saturday lunch. Saturday lunch might instead be used for table topics. Attendees at the 2001 conference felt that there was insufficient opportunity for networking and that they were generally over-programmed and would have appreciated more time for relaxation.
Eight Months Prior to the Conference

Submit initial conference publicity item, including conference logo, for publication in the PSD Newsletter. This announcement typically occupies approximately one-third of a page in the newsletter.
Identify graphic designer for the conference brochure. Obtain from the printer information about the date by which the brochure design needs to be submitted to be available for timely mailing.

Contact the Program Council Chair to make sure that the preparation of the program is on schedule and to make sure that the Chair understands how critical it is to the entire conference time line that the information is submitted in full detail and submitted when it is due.

Six Months Before the Conference

Obtain program information including schedules of programs and workshops descriptions, from the Program Council Chair. Also obtain photographs of speakers, biographies of the keynote speaker and Judy Lecturer and information about their speeches. Obtain photo and information about entertainer.

Prepare the second publicity piece for the PSD which should include information about speakers and workshops.

Make sure you know who is responsible for every item on the schedule. Who will be responsible for youth supervision and programming? Will responsibility for the Sunday morning forum vest in the Program Council or the Local Arrangements Committee? Will there be a special breakfast for congregational presidents? If so, who is responsible for convening it? Do not assume anything! We discovered repeatedly there were “orphan events” on the schedule for which no one was responsible.

Design features in the 2001 brochure were very carefully considered. Use it as a model. In designing your brochure, Make sure that critical conference information is included on portions of the brochure that will not be sent in as part of the registration form. The registration form itself should be on a separate insert so that it does not have to be torn out of the brochure. The return address should include not only the name of the congregation but also, in large bold type, that it is the registration brochure for the Prairie Star District Conference. This will avoid its being set aside because it looked like a congregational newsletter. The non-profit mailing number of the host congregation also must be included. Be sure to have several people carefully proofread the brochure. Take special care to double check all telephone numbers, addresses and e-mail addresses included. Check with the hotel to make sure that the correct registration phone number is included. Some hotels
are only equipped to receive conference room reservations directly at the hotel rather than at their toll-free telephone number. We suggest that instead of asking in an open-ended fashion for dietary needs that you only indicate a check-off for vegetarian meals. By having an open-ended question about dietary needs we received many special requests and people were disappointed that the hotel could not accommodate all of them. With regard to table topics, the brochure needs to clearly state that only those paying for breakfast will be permitted to participate in table topics discussions and that persons identified as table topics leaders must not only be attending the conference but must also be paying for breakfast. In identifying registration options, you may want to re-evaluate the pricing differences among registration options and may want to consider raising youth prices. The pricing for youth should cover more than the actual meal costs for those options. Decide whether to use an early registration discount or a late registration penalty to encourage early registrations. Consider a larger discount/penalty than the $10 used for the 2001 conference.

Make clear which meals are and are not included in the child care fee. We suggest noting that parents of children in child care should plan to have breakfasts with their children at a hotel restaurant or nearby because breakfasts are not included in the child care fee and children may not attend the conference breakfast without a full-price ticket.

If you want to include a list of attendees in the conference packet, you may want to include a check-off on the registration form for permission to include the person’s name, address, phone and e-mail in a conference attendee roster.

**Five Months Before the Conference**

Submit preliminary brochure design to the Program Coordinator. Carefully repeat proofreading each time any changes are made to the brochure draft.

**Four Months Before the Conference**

Send the revised draft brochure to the PSD Office.

Prepare a “poster”—an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of conference publicity—to be sent by the PSD office for posting in congregations.

**Three Months Before the Conference**

In order to determine the number of brochures to print, you will have to consider the following. Determine the total of individuals on the PSD mailing list and the number to be sent to congregations. The PSD will provide you with two lists of mailing labels. One set will be the current list of individual names. The District will advise you about the number of individual names on the PSD mailing list. This is available both on labels and in an electronic format if preferred by a mailing service. The second set of mailing labels includes a label for
each congregation in the District. You will need to make decisions about how many brochures should be sent to congregations of various sizes and locations in light of the location of your conference. The PSD will advise you on this decision.

Make sure that you have an opportunity to proofread the brochure again before it is printed. Authorize the printer to print the brochure. Make sure that you obtain from the printer a copy of the brochure in an electronic format so that it may be posted on the PSD web site.

**Two Months Before the Conference**

Arrange for a group of volunteers or hire a mailing service to label and organize the brochures for mailing. Bulk mailing to individuals requires sorting by zip codes. Arrange for church staff or volunteers to handle the mailing of multiple copies of the brochure to congregations.

**REGISTRATION**

We organized our Committee with a Registrar, an Assistant Registrar and a Chair of On-Site Registration. The Registrar’s responsibilities included all communications with registrants, developing and assigning home hospitality (only a couple of registrants), providing information for those seeking roommates, maintaining a data base of registration information, providing periodic lists for various purposes (hotel meal counts, numbers choosing various workshop options, etc.), and printing name tags. The Assistant Registrar helped the registrar with these tasks. It had been recommended to us to have two people in the registrar function to enable sharing responsibilities when registrations were arriving in large numbers and to enable consulting on registration issues as they arose. The Chair of On-Site Registration was responsible for purchasing folders for conference materials and sticker dots to be used in identifying delegates, as well as determining the content of the conference brochures and organizing a meeting of volunteers to stuff folders and name tags. The On-Site Registrar should also prepare folder inserts regarding local restaurants and nearby attractions.

Included with this document is a set of materials prepared by the 2001 Registrar, Tom Atchison, that includes examples of the e-mail confirmation used, name tags and the registration form, as well as data about the flow of registrations, registration choices, and numbers of attendees from each congregation. Please note that several people thought that the names on the name tags were not printed large enough.

It would have been helpful if our confirmation e-mail had included reminding people that if they are delegates they need to present their credentials at the registration table. Many people either had not brought their credentials or had them packed away, expecting that they would not need them until the next day.
As soon as the registration brochure goes to the printer, the Registrar can begin to design the data base or spread sheet program to be used. Make sure that the Registrar is aware of the variety of lists that will need to be drawn from the registration information so that the data base can be prepared appropriately.

The Registrar also needs to develop a system along with the conference Treasurer and the host church’s bookkeeper to be used for the recording of and deposit of checks received.

Two to Three Weeks Before the Conference
Obtain from the Registrar preliminary information about the numbers of people selecting various workshops. Use these figures to assign appropriately-sized hotel rooms for each workshop. Create a detailed schedule of conference events including room locations.

We used an electronic version of the conference logo to put logo images on each of the items in the conference packet and used a consistent typeface to give the materials a uniform appearance. We photocopied each of the items in a different color to make them easy to locate in the folder and organized the items in a logical order. The items included in the conference folder were the following: schedule of events; list of area attractions, local restaurants and hotel shuttle schedule; a sheet of conference highlights with biographies of principal speakers bookstore, exhibit and labyrinth hours, youth information, business meeting announcement, reception entertainment, Saturday evening entertainer, and Sunday morning forum and worship; conference evaluation form; map of the hotel; and other supplementary materials that might include brochures from the Prairie Star District, and brochures about local attractions.

We deliberately did not include in the packet a list of the names and congregations of the attendees because we were reluctant to provide personal information without having received permission from the attendees. Some attendees commented upon the lack of such a list. If you want to include a list of attendees in the conference packet, you may want to include a check-off on the registration form for permission to include the person’s name, address, phone and e-mail in a conference attendee roster.

Also prepare for photocopying two other documents that will be distributed at the conference, but separate from the registration folder—the order of service for the Welcoming Ceremony and the order of service for the Sunday worship service. Also prepare a handout for attendees serving as banner carriers. This should include where and when they are to gather before the banner parade, where they should turn in their banners and take back their poles before returning to sit in the opening session, where they should sit after the parade, and where and when they are to pick up their banners on Sunday morning.

Make sure that you obtain from the Prairie Star District the colored ribbons to be attached to the name tags for such designations as fair share congregations (UUA and PSD), speakers, PSD board members, etc. We do not recommend trying to attach the ribbons to the name badges prior to the conference because that makes them too cumbersome to organize.
You should also obtain from the PSD office the notebook for registration of PSD delegates. This includes detailed instructions for how credentials should be presented and how delegates should sign in.

**More than a Week Before the Conference**

Take care of the photocopying of materials for the conference folder. Be sure to make sufficient copies of materials to allow distribution to on-site registrants. We also had the photocopy shop make poster-size copies of materials to be put on easels at the conference, such as posters to identify the registration area and to give directions to and hours of the bookstore and youth meeting room.

Also photocopy, in different colors, meal tickets for each meal and some kind of identification to be used by vegetarians to indicate meal preference to the hotel personnel.

**A Week Before the Conference**

Gather together a group of volunteers to stuff the conference folders and to prepare the name badges. Include in the plastic name badge holders the appropriate meal tickets for each registrant. We found it useful to have the name badges printed by the registrar include the meals purchased so that it was necessary only to look at the name badge to determine the meal tickets that should be put in the name badge plastic case for each registrant.

Check to make sure that you have sufficient volunteers committed to assist at the conference in such roles as greeter, registration table volunteer, collector of meal tickets, usher at welcoming ceremony and worship service, etc.

Using 8½ by 11 card stock, print table tents for various purposes. We used these for identifying table topics as well as for identifying persons performing various functions at the on-site registration table such as: Pre-Registered A-L, Pre-Registered M-Z; On-Site Registration; Ribbons; PSD Delegates Present Credentials Here. We included the conference logo on the table tents.

Determine a price list for special on-site registration requests. Although the registration form itself had several registration options, we encountered a variety of people who had needs for registration options beyond those. For example, families of award winners may want to attend the Saturday lunch only. A minister wanted to attend Friday night but was unable to attend the rest of the conference because of a Saturday wedding. Sometimes a spouse wanted to join a registrant for the Saturday dinner. It is useful to have in advance a price determined for these special needs so that they don’t have to be negotiated and determined in the midst of the registration process.
On-Site Registration
Registrants appreciated that the registration desk for the conference was located right at the entrance to the hotel. We had approximately eight people at the registration desk. This was adequate to handle the flow of registrants without any long lines. Be sure to remind volunteers to smile and be friendly and to recognize that those arriving may have just endured an arduous trip. Since the registration period covers the dinner hour, make some arrangement for food for volunteers at the registration table. We had purchased name tags on elastic strings but had not put the strings through the name tags to prevent tangling. We found, however, that registrants had difficulty inserting the strings by themselves. We recommend having a person available at registration, perhaps at the location where people are getting ribbons, to assist with attaching the elastic strings.

As registrants arrived, we provided them with their name tags and a conference folder. We asked them to check inside their name tag holders to see if they had the correct meal tickets. We directed them to the credentials desk if they were PSD delegates and gave them a handout of information if they were carrying the banner for their congregation. Registrants also have to be directed to a station where they can obtain the appropriate congregational or individual ribbons. It is useful to merge the various lists of those entitled to ribbons to expedite distribution of ribbons at the registration desk.

Many people who had been designated by their congregations as PSD delegates did not come to the registration desk with their credentials. Make sure that you have instructions from the PSD Board about how you are to handle persons who do not have their credentials with them.

Be prepared to receive and secure cash since some on-site registrants preferred to pay in cash. We handled this by having one of the volunteers write personal checks in exchange for the cash received, but if this is done it is important to identify on the memo line of the check the person from whom the cash was received to facilitate proper accounting.

Make sure that as on-site registration and special meal purchases are made at the registration table that a tally is kept of the meals to be added by the hotel above the counts submitted earlier. Make sure that you know how many more meals can be accommodated for each event so that tickets are not sold in excess of capacity.

The On-Site Registration Chair should be instructed to bring a supply of office products such as tape, markers, pens, stapler, paper clips, manilla envelopes, etc.

VISUAL ARTS (BANNERS AND FLOWERS)

The Double Tree Hotel already had many plants and silk flower arrangements throughout the spaces we were to decorate, so we didn’t want to add many more flowers for our event. We had a medium sized basket of pansies on the registration table to make this area look
welcoming, but not take up too much space.

For the center of each table at meals, we had baskets of pansies. We arranged 25 of these, one for the center of each table that we might possibly use. The wait staff placed the number of these arrangements needed on each table before every meal. Adaptable arrangements are key. It was easy for the staff to carry the baskets and store them and We assume they appreciated not having to rearrange flowers or worry about spilling water.

We used five very large hydrangea plants that were in beautiful pots for all of the major events--opening celebration, awards luncheon, Judy Lecture, banquet and worship service. At times we used two of the hotel’s small, low tables to vary their height. Again, having something that was easily moved and arranged, but that had lots of intense color worked well. The Visual Arts Chair was there at the beginning of the conference to place the plants for the first event and show and describe to others what to do for the events where she would not be able to arrange the plants.

For organizing the banner parade, it is helpful to have a diagram of how the pole pieces are joined and to have an extra set of poles. We assisted many individuals who had no idea how the parts were to be assembled.

After the parade was completed the Visual Arts Chair was there to assist the participants as they took their banners off their poles. We had rubber bands for holding the disassembled pole parts together and had each person take his or her own pole pieces We stacked the banners until the space was clear for hanging the banners.

Hanging the banners on fabric walls with four or five T pins on top worked perfectly. We removed the banners on Sunday morning so that individuals could pick them up after breakfast or before the worship service.

STILL TO DO:
BOOKSTORE
CHILD CARE
TREASURER
WELCOMING CEREMONY - MASTER OF CEREMONIES (ANNOUNCEMENTS, LOST AND FOUND EMERGENCIES, CHANGES IN EVENTS)
WORSHIP
TABLE TOPICS