

## **Synod's SDOP approves grants for immigrant organizations**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies' Self-Development of People Committee approved \$45,000 in grants to organizations in Moorhead, Minn., and Iowa City, Iowa, which represent immigrants and low-income residents.

Awards went to the Kurdish Community of America in Moorhead, and to the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa.

The Kurdish Community of America will receive \$30,000 to support its effort to help immigrants overcome language barriers to obtaining driving permits. They hope to do this by adding languages to computerized permit tests.

"Currently only one person per day is allowed a translator" to take the driving permit test, the committee's evaluation of the project stated. "A translator must be found. Taking time off work and scheduling an appointment [for the permit test] can take months."

The report noted that many immigrants "now have to rely on neighbors or an inadequate bus system to get to job interviews, work or school in an area where transportation is necessary."

The Center for Worker Justice will receive \$15,000 to support its advocacy of a county-wide identification-card program.

According to its application for funding, the Center organized as an response to "concerns about mistreatment of immigrants and negative experiences [of] racial minorities ... with local police." The Center is located in Iowa's Johnson County.

The ID program is an effort to "decrease racial profiling and unnecessary arrests or deportations by gaining influence in local law enforcement policies," the application stated.

"We are especially focused on making sure that all county sheriffs and city police will agree to recognize this new form of ID," the application added. The organization already notes support from Iowa City's Human Rights Commission, county supervisors, county attorney and three local newspapers.

"Most importantly," the application noted, "the card could be used as a reliable form of photo ID in any interactions with police. It is clear that individuals who lack ID are often very reluctant to report crimes, since they have reason to fear any interaction with law enforcement. ... This could eliminate some of the unnecessary arrests – and in some cases even deportations – that have occurred locally when immigrants lack a valid photo ID."

The synod maintains its own SDOP committee. The program is a ministry that affirms God's concern for humankind. The website of the national SDOP program of the Presbyterian

Church (U.S.A.) states, "We are Presbyterians and ecumenical partners dissatisfied with poverty and oppression, united in faith and action through sharing, confronting, and enabling. We participate in the empowerment of economically poor, oppressed and disadvantaged people, seeking to change the structures that perpetuate poverty, oppression and injustice."