

Presbytery Highlights

Highlights from the last stated meeting of the Presbytery of South Dakota held at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Rapid City on June 23-24, 2017

The Presbytery of South Dakota's Annual June meeting was a reminder to everyone in our community where we have been, and provided hope for our future. Rev. Lisa Danielson, Pastor of Lindsey Memorial Church, Martin and Tuthill Community Presbyterian Church shared history of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Ardeth Kocourek, and the wider Presbytery showing the tremendous adversity people of faith had to overcome and the ways God provided. She helped the Presbytery of South Dakota to recognize where we have been, and in turn imagine with great hope where God will lead us in the future.



Building on Rev. Danielson's sermon, guest speaker Kerry Rice (pictured left), Deputy Stated Clerk of the General Assembly for the PC (USA) presented on "Resilience." As the church faces a complex and disorienting culture and future, it is important for us to focus on the ways we can be resilient by focusing on our purpose and calling. The Presbytery of South Dakota has already proved its resiliency in the face of decreased church membership, and that it is still able to maintain connection through a very large geographic area. How will we continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve? To continue to be resilient we have to pray, discern and be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit in and around us. God is working in the past, present and future of our church. How do you see God working?

Past. During the Presbytery meeting we recognized all the service of all the elders who passed away in the last year during the necrology report. We also recognized the more than 30 years of service of Rev. Roland Kemink as he retires from First Presbyterian Church of Onida (pictured right). He has served the Onida church loyally and we look forward to him continuing to serve this presbytery. Our presbytery is only as strong as its members, and we were and are blessed by the presence and perseverance of strong leaders.

The June Presbytery meeting also reminded everyone of our reach beyond the geographic area of South Dakota. Barry and Shelly Dawson visited and reported on their work in nine Southeast Asian countries to serve and share the gospel. Rev. Barry Dawson who formerly served a congregation in Sioux Falls is now a regional liaison with his wife based out of Thailand. They shared of the opportunities to share God's word and hope, such as building schools and sanitary latrines and they also shared the struggles of harassment and persecution of minority groups and the Christian community in some parts of this area. Also, Jil Jennewein of First Presbyterian, Whitewood shared a brief reflection on her trip to Palestine with the PC (USA) Peacekeeping Program. She shared the great hope found in building relationships across cultures, language and religion, and thanked the Presbytery for their support. The Presbytery of South Dakota has in the past and it will continue to seek ways to serve beyond ourselves.



Present. Sometimes (a lot of times) people approach Presbytery meetings with a sense of drudgery. Meetings seem to have too much formal business. Well, this Presbytery meeting sought to change that. There was offered 5 different workshops people could take, from doing a service project (pictured right), to thinking about the future of the church, or growing in our excellence of Christian education. If we are going to be the church of the future our time spent together needs to be more than just “New Business” and “Old Business”.



Our Presbytery meeting also saw growth and development as we tweaked changes of the newly adopted structure (adopted at the October 2016 meeting). The report from the Resource Ministry (formally Nominating Committee) the body was reminded that Ministry teams now choose who their moderator will be, rather than having the person pre-selected. The Presbytery expanded that current provision to allow each ministry to decide, within the group, if they want a vice moderator and to choose who that might be. Furthermore it was reported from the Administration and Coordination Ministry team that when the Presbytery reaches out to help care for a particular church's life and ministry it will be the policy to send at least two representatives from the Presbytery to that church. This will better demonstrate that the Presbytery is made up of a wider body and can provide different perspectives. The structure of the Presbytery of South Dakota is not and should never be stagnant, but should always seek ways to adapt.

Future. Any organization cannot thrive or live up to its potential without a strong focus on the future, with God's help. And there are many exciting opportunities in the future in this Presbytery. Our Stated Clerk and Interim Mission Coordinator, Kevin Veldhuisen shared the joyful information that our Presbytery has been granted a \$50,000 grant from the Presbyterian Mission Agency to help in creating a culture of renewal and transformation within our congregations. One such initiative is coming up soon with the Church Officer Training happening in five different locations this late summer. These events are not so much focused on the “work” that needs to be done but the calling and spiritual ministry of leading congregations to a vital relationship with God. If you attend one of these events be prepared to be inspired.

The Presbytery has reasons to be proud of our history, and reasons to hope for what God has done and will do in our past, present and future.



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