

NEW SONG

Listening for the ways God is working
in the Presbytery of South Dakota.

Presbytery of South Dakota Newsletter | December 2018/January 2019



New Presbytery Logo Portrays Spirit-Filled Servant Leadership in South Dakota



"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." - Mark 10:45

The new Presbytery of South Dakota logo was unveiled at our October presbytery meeting. Graphic designer Caitlin Pisha, who grew up at Tuthill Community Presbyterian Church, put together a helpful summary of the meaning of the logo's imagery for us.

State: Our Context

A literal representation of the area we serve.

Hand: Servant Leadership

We model our lives after Christ, who came to serve, not to be served. The hand is a symbol for servant leadership. We are practical people, motivated to serve. We use our hands, living in humility and boldness to serve our communities.

Flame: God's Spirit

Just as fire rested on the disciples at Pentecost, the same fire resides in us. Like the Olympic Torch being passed, we have a legacy of reflecting God's passion and love for his people. It is by God's Spirit alone that we are able to go, do, and serve.

A Place of Hope

Hope Co-op Reaches Those Who Had Given Up on Church

By Pastor Chad Ensz

What would you expect to find in a downtown Sioux Falls brewery on a Thursday evening? Beer? Likely. Small groups conversing? Sure. Others playing table games? Also a possibility. But, a Bible study group? Probably not...unless you come to Woodgrain Brewery. Welcome to Thirsty Thursday.

Whether one is thirsting for beer (or lemonade), knowledge, or community, Thirsty Thursday is all about satisfying thirst. At the outset, we started at the very beginning of the Bible (because why not, right?) and we just read a little and then talked about it. We have followed the same pattern ever since. We read a little and then we talk about it -- rinse and repeat. There is no expectation that anyone has read any of the Bible before, all questions are welcomed, and so are different viewpoints. We challenge each other and we grow in our faith together as we make sense of how God has been and continues to be involved in the world around us (including our own lives!).

A community grew around Thirsty Thursday with people from all walks of life (some have never been to church, some grew up in the church and fell away, and still others were previously burned by the church and vowed never to return).

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Meet Pastor Andrew



Andrew Bellisle was commissioned as a CRE at our presbytery meeting last month and is serving as Minister of Discipleship and Youth at Westminster in Rapid City. Andrew took the time to answer some questions for us as we seek to get to know him and welcome him to our presbytery.

Tell us a little about yourself.

Southern raised and mountain-made, I live for the glorious adventure God has set before me. I grew up just south of Atlanta, living and breathing soccer and music. So... I went to college to study music at Belmont University in Nashville, TN. During my time there, I found another interest too—rock climbing.

These combined interests led me to serve with A Christian Ministry in the National Parks (ACMNP). It was through that ministry that I met my amazing bride, Laura...that I discovered my pastoral calling...and that I was connected to Denver Seminary. One step led to another as God faithfully brought me to this wonderful church, Westminster in Rapid City.

What drew you to explore and accept the call to serve at Westminster?

The previous Executive Director of ACMNP, Spencer Lundgaard, became a huge mentor in my life. He helped me land a scholarship for seminary. He married my wife and me. And he even served as my official “school” mentor throughout seminary. Well it turns out that Spencer went to Princeton with our Senior Pastor at Westminster, Bob Jacobs. The two have stayed connected for years through a covenant group of colleagues. Once again, Spencer connected the dots in my life and encouraged me to explore the opportunity.

Westminster is a loving, welcoming and committed congregation. Laura and I were pretty quickly drawn to everything; we discovered it’s family. I am particularly excited to learn what created such a collaborative culture that so wholeheartedly buys in to mission. And I obviously have much to learn from Bob.

What are you most excited about as you begin your ministry?

I don’t think I could have written a job description that I wanted more. In a single day, I go from planning a back-packing trip, to teaching a student drum lessons, to planning a sermon, to encouraging our LifeGroup leaders. I love the breadth of what I am allowed to do here, even as an associate. And I feel like I’m getting to throw everything I have on the table, saying, “Here God, what will you use today?”

How can we be praying for you?

Even though I love the breadth of my job, I have always endangered myself by spreading too thin. Bob and I have a lot on our plate here, and I have much to learn still about managing a full-time pastor’s schedule. Please pray for patience and wisdom as I discern ways to love Westminster’s community well, while still prioritizing my own family and passions.

Rise Up

A Report from the PW Churchwide Gathering

By Louise Van Poll

“Rise Up” was the message brought to the opening plenary session by Ruth Santana-Grace, who was speaking on the first word of the PW Churchwide Gathering theme, “Arise, shine, your light has come!” The gathering was held August 2-5 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Santana-Grace's message centered on Exodus 3:7-8, which is God's call to Moses from the burning bush. “I love the five verbs we find in this passage,” Santana-Grace said. “They are when God says I have seen their suffering, I have heard their cries, I know their pain and I am coming to lift them up. This is an affirmation of our call as people of faith.”

God sees, God hears, God knows, and God will come to restore us as people of God.

Santana-Grace was raised in a Presbyterian home. Her father was a minister and her mother was a ruling elder. Both of her parents came from Puerto Rico. She has been ordained for 24 years, having served first in Philadelphia for 13 years and then for 10 years in California. She returned to Philly four years ago and is currently the executive presbyter of Philadelphia.

“The Presbytery of Philadelphia was the first presbytery in the United States,” she said. “I am the first woman and the first person of color to hold this office in the 300-year history of the presbytery.” Santana-Grace said that throughout history, the church has found itself at forks in the road where God calls us out of our bubble of complacency. Some forks in the road of history have been when we confronted slavery, women's suffrage, and equal rights. We are at one of those forks now she said, where we can choose divine guidance or cultural complicity. We are often reluctant to change she said, but when we respond we do extraordinary work.

“The newsfeeds are telling us that something is not right,” Santana-Grace continued. “Some of our current situations show us that we must take a stand. We are in a position to fight the sounds of hate and violence. To bring the hope of the Gospel to others. But we have to choose.”



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A Place of Hope (cont.)

Hope Co-op story, continued from page 1

We are a rather ragtag group of people; on any given night you'll find some of us in dusty work clothes, others in sweats right from the gym, and still others in pj's. That's the beauty of Thirsty Thursday; it's all about community and being present, just as you are.

This community is Hope Co-op. It's grown from "just" a Bible study to an entire community of serving and worshipping Christians. We teamed up with local non-profits to support community efforts and even started some of our own community projects. We also wanted to worship, so we asked ourselves what it would look like for Christians to gather, worship, and serve in ways that were more authentic, candid, messy, and well, more fun. And then, we decided to do it, and "The Table" was born, which is our worship service.

The Table is an uncommon gathering around a common meal. If you've sat around a table enjoying a meal before, then you know everything you need to know about The Table. That's what we do. We enjoy a meal together. But The Table is more than a meal. It is a conversation and connection. The Table is a way to approach questions about God, life, and the mixing of the two. It is a place where bellies and souls alike are fed.

By the grace of God, we have become a place of hope for people who had given up on the church. Our young believers are so committed to this place that they have already begun contributing financially, which is an amazing testament to the power of this community! However, imagine if your church was required to survive on the financial gifts of your newest and youngest participants. You, too, would face the struggle that Hope Co-op faces every day. It takes time and nurturing to reach a self-sustaining financial foundation.

We are so grateful for the support we have received already, and would love for you to join in supporting Hope Co-op. If you can't make it to Thirsty Thursday or The Table regularly, might you consider making a financial gift? Your support goes a long ways to help ensure that the young Christians of our community continue to have a place to study the Bible, worship God, and serve together. Thank you!

Joseph Holt's Pastoral Story, Part 2

Compiled and edited by Marian Cramer, CRE



The first part of this story appeared in the October-November print edition of New Song.

There are two special times I remember that have helped shape my call to ministry.

Christmas 1956: I was home from college. My pastor told me that members of the church wanted to hear me preach. They were like extended family for me, and proud that one of their own had accepted a call to ministry. The pastor said I could preach the Sunday following Christmas. Most often, attendance is limited for that service. He felt safe! But, they all came! I can still see their smiling faces as I stood behind the pulpit. A proud moment! I prepared a sermon on the message of good news from the angels, "peace on earth, good will among all people." I said, "This means all people, regardless of race, color, or creed." The smiles turned to shocked looks of disbelief, mixed with angry stares. Remember, this community of faith is in segregated Georgia, and my family and friends did not include people of color when they thought of this good news. I was told by members as they shook my hand, "How could you, a child of this congregation, say something like that from the pulpit?" I was introduced to the tension that exists between the gospel and the segregated culture of the south. Sometimes, preaching the gospel is not what people want to hear, and they can be critical. Difficult sometimes to remain faithful to serve Jesus Christ as the people are led to be a faithful church.

Christmas 1968: The gym of North Avenue Church, Atlanta, was packed with members, families, students from around the world. The church had developed International Fellowship, a ministry with these students who were studying in Atlanta colleges. Following an international buffet prepared by the students, the church had four kitchens, the 500+ people listened to the students talk about their native countries. Some showed slides. The world had come to the church. One student, John Rafiq, Pakistan, stood and said, "We are all thinking of home, each in our own way. I would like to play some music as we remember home and family." He pulled out a harmonica and started playing Edelweiss. You could have heard a pin drop. The Spirit flowed through us all at that moment of community, and we experienced the good news: Peace on Earth. Goodwill among all people." We all received a blessing that night.

A short summary of my service to God and Christian Churches would include that my call has been to faithfully represent the love of God in Jesus Christ to all people and seek to affirm their worth to God and to one another. I have valued the small church community and accepted the challenges for ministry with limited membership congregations. In presbytery, synod, and general assembly, I have sought to promote Jesus Christ as Head of the Church, as we struggle with polity issues.

Kristi Holler Ordained and Installed

By Rev. Dr. Carolyn Visser



Kristi Holler was ordained as a teaching elder and installed as pastor of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Marion, South Dakota on November 18th at 4:30 p.m. Steven Johnson, Presbytery Moderator presided. Ruling elder Carol Wieman (Emmanuel, Marion), CRE Paul Penn (First, Sioux Falls), Rev. Pat Hammond (First, Sioux Falls), Rev. Chad Ensz (Little Stone, Sioux Falls), and Rev. Dr. Carolyn Visser (Honorably Retired) served on the commission to ordain and install Kristi. The church choir, Emmanuel Voices, sang "Above All Else." The service was followed by a time of fellowship and refreshments. The bulletin for the service and the cake even had the new Presbytery logo on it! It was a truly joyful time for all. Kristi began her full-time call to Emmanuel on November 1st.

Don't Miss These Retreat Opportunities

Winter Escape, January 18-21

Come and escape to a winter wonderland retreat for adults of all ages. Retreat from the stressors of life by snowshoeing, sledding, hiking, and relaxing by the fire at Pioneer Lodge. We'll explore stories from Scripture where God calls his people to seek peace.

Winter Youth Retreat Unplugged, February 15-18

Retreat to Pioneer Lodge to explore how God calls us to unplug from life and plug into Him! We'll spend time sledding, hiking, and playing games. Winter survival activities will be available to those who are interested.



Presbyterians Recognized by Farmers Union

By Trudi Nelson

On November 30, 2018, the South Dakota Farmers Union recognized two Presbyterians with special awards. The presentation occurred in Pierre, SD, during the Farmers Union 103rd Annual Convention. Susan Wismer, a long-time member and elder of the First Presbyterian Church, Britton, was recognized with the Legislative Service Award for her exceptional support of agriculture and rural South Dakota. Susan has served in the SD Legislature for several terms and was a candidate for Governor in 2014. She was re-elected on November 6, 2018, to the South Dakota Senate for another two year term.



Jeff Nelson was also recognized at the South Dakota Farmers Union Convention. He is a long-time member and elder of the First Presbyterian Church, Madison, SD. He received the Ag Ambassador Award for his strong support of agriculture and his collaboration with the Farmers Union during his four decade career with East River Electric Power Cooperative. Nelson retired from East River in 2014 after 24 years as its General Manager.

Rise Up (cont.)

PW report, continued from page 2

And just like Isaiah calls us to 'arise,' we have the opportunity to stand up and reclaim our destiny and to nurture and disciple other people she explained. Evangelism needs to be more than a program, but an incarnation of our proclamation of God's word.

"We need to be building bridges, not walls," she exhorted. "We need to embrace all people and affirm everyone's uniqueness. We need to be a voice for the voiceless and break the silence surrounding abuse and violence against others.

"Throughout my career I have always said that if anything is not coming out of love, it is not of God." That includes actions, words and policies. Santana-Grace said this is her first PW Worldwide Gathering and she is excited to see so many women gathered together. She loves the energy and passion displayed by the gathering, as well as the opportunity to make new friends and be a part of creating change in our world.

"We can move people still," she affirmed. "Because of whose people we are."