

# NEW SONG

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

Presbytery of South Dakota Newsletter | August/September

## General Assembly Addresses Way Forward, Peace in the Middle East, Freedom for Captives



The 223rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) was held June 16-23, 2018 in St. Louis, Missouri. Ruling elder Jim Hulbert and teaching elder Chad Ensz served as commissioners for the Presbytery of South Dakota, and Morgan Small served as our youth advisory delegate. This year there were 538 commissioners from 170 presbyteries, as well as 142 youth advisory delegates, 16 theological advisory delegates, 14 mission advisory delegates, and 8 ecumenical advisory delegates—nearly 900 people in total.

The business of the Assembly began in committees, which spent two days wrestling with the particular issues assigned to them with the aid of resource people who spoke to the matters with clarity and detail. Chad served on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations committee and Jim served on the Social Justice Issues committee. Once the committees finished this preliminary work, the plenary reconvened and commissioners and delegates spent the next three days discussing and voting on the business at hand, which ranged from technicalities in the Book of Order to working for peace in the Middle East. In all, 213 items of business were tackled.

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## Fall Retreat for Pastors & CREs

Why do good church people behave badly? Or at least not as well as they might. For over thirty years, church leaders have drawn upon family systems theory to try and make sense of their congregations and the people in them. This year's retreat for pastors and CREs will draw upon your real-life experiences to illustrate family systems theory in a congregational setting. There will be opportunities to share your stories, glean the wisdom of others, and analyze your ministry through a family systems lens. Working together, we'll identify strategies to help you be as effective as possible in your specific system.

All pastors and CREs are invited to this free retreat at our beautiful Pioneer Camp lodge on September 17-19, 2018. This year we welcome back as our speaker and facilitator the Rev. Dr. Mark Sundby, an ordained Methodist minister and licensed psychologist. For the past eighteen years, as executive director of LeaderWise/North Central Ministry Development Center, Mark has specialized in personality and leadership assessment, with

an emphasis on health and wholeness, leadership development, and conflict-skills training.



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# Meet Our New Pastors

We're excited to welcome some new pastors to the Presbytery of South Dakota! We caught up with Rev. Barbara Jean West and Rev. Kathy Saxbury to get to know them a little bit.

## Meet Pastor Barb, Spencer Memorial, Lemmon



### ***Tell us a little about yourself.***

I was born in Lemmon, SD and baptized at Spencer Memorial Presbyterian Church. We moved to Bloomington, Minnesota when I was 9 years old and I graduated from Thomas Jefferson Senior High in 1979. I raised 3 sons as a single mother, while working for the phone

company for 26 years. In 2007 I left the secular world and moved to Marin County to attend San Francisco Theological Seminary. I received my MDiv in 2011 and MATS in 2012. I moved back to Minnesota in 2013 where I did 4 units of CPE at 4 different locations. In 2014 I started a 1001 New Worshipping Community (Reclamation Ministries) and in early 2018 we received the Investment Grant from Louisville. I was ordained at Peace Presbyterian Church on May 12, 2018 and my first official day at Spencer was June 1.

### ***What drew you to explore and accept the call to serve in Lemmon?***

Moving away from Lemmon was very difficult for me and I was always searching for a way to move back home. When I realized several decades ago that would not be financially feasible (nor would it have been the best move for my children) I tried to think of ways I could start a business and live here part of the year. When I decided to attend seminary in 2007 people often asked if I would go back to Lemmon and serve as the pastor. I would always respond with an emphatic "No!" I didn't think I would be a good fit as I am way too liberal politically. But God stepped in and put me into spaces where I came to a compassionate understanding of how/why many people voted for Trump. I am a progressive liberal but haven't come to talk politics. I have come to live, preach, and teach the Gospel message, which means I will talk about justice but not secular politics.

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

Coming to a church where there is already an active youth group and helping that program to grow. As of now, only the youth group meets on Wednesdays, but I am working toward incorporating similar programs that were successful with Reclamation Ministries. We would like to have an adult Bible study and programming for younger children with a meal for anyone in the community. I am also excited that the congregation would like to try doing new things on Sunday mornings. One of the highlights of my summer will be hosting the Community Vacation Bible School. I am only expected to show up and smile but am looking forward to adding a few surprises.

### ***How can we be praying for you?***

Please pray that my back continues to heal and that I will maintain my promise to live, teach, and preach the Gospel message (which most certainly will include justice issues) in a way that will help our community grow in love.

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# General Assembly (Continued)

Business highlights included:

- Cindy Kohlman and Vilmarie Cintron-Olivieri were elected as the new co-moderators of the General Assembly.
- The Way Forward report was adopted following extensive debate with the vote to change the structure of the denomination's corporate entity and strive for cost equity among the agencies of GA.
- The Assembly voted to strengthen the role of the stated clerk to speak as the chief ecclesiastical officer of the denomination.
- GA per capita was raised from \$7.35 to \$8.95.
- The Assembly voted NOT to divest from the fossil fuel industry. Instead of divesting, a decision was made to further pressure the big companies in the fossil fuel industry where the PC(USA) has investments
- The church was called upon to celebrate whenever and wherever Israelis and Palestinians come together, and the Mission Agency was called upon to provide information about grassroots organizations working for the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine.

Though certainly exhausted when it was all over, our commissioners expressed a sense of pride for the work our denomination is doing. The PC(USA) called for change, proclaimed the inclusive and welcoming nature of God's kingdom, admitted its failures, took steps toward reconciliation where needed, and made efforts to help those parts of the church that are struggling unnecessarily.

Chad particularly expressed pride regarding GA's partnership with local activists in St. Louis to raise over \$47,000 and march from the convention down to the Justice Center. In too many cities around the country when underprivileged people get arrested for minor crimes, they are unable to pay their bail and end up sitting in jail for long periods (sometimes years) due to backlogged courts. The money raised was donated to the Bail Project, which identifies people in these situations and bails them out so that they don't have to sit in jail until they can have their day in court.

The efforts of the denomination at General Assembly sent a symbolic message but also literally set a couple dozen captives free. There is much about the PC(USA) to be proud of, especially when we boldly proclaim the gospel in ways that make a real difference in peoples' lives.



# Building a Foundation

by Marian Cramer, CRE

*All things bright and beautiful  
All creatures great and small.  
All things wise and wonderful.  
The Lord God made them all.*

A gathering of Presbyterian senior women shared their memories of Sunday School. They were all different, but at the same time, they were all similar. The one I share with you today is the one that spoke clearly to me.

The church bell was ringing when I entered the door to the Sunday School. I quickly took my place in the circle of ten children and the teacher. We held hands and then sang "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (above). We then went to our table with the teacher sitting at the head. Every Sunday there was a new Bible story and we talked about what it was like in the Holy Land at this time. We had clear pictures in our minds of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth and the grown-up Jesus calling by the seaside, "I shall make you fishers of men."

The kind teacher expected serious participation from her group of students. We had to memorize a short Scripture that went with our story for that Sunday. It was amazing to me many years later how many of those Scriptures I recalled. When it was time to attend church, we again formed a circle, held hands, and this time we always sang "Jesus Loves Me." We were told to walk quietly and as we went to join our parents in church.

Those long-ago days in Sunday School are still clear in my memory. Those special days, those special times of teaching became the foundation of my faith.

The entire group of senior ladies agreed on this.



## Meet Our New Pastors (Continued)

Meet Pastor Kathy, First Presbyterian, Onida



### ***Tell us a little about yourself.***

I was born and raised in Northern Colorado, east of Fort Collins. Both sets of grandparents were dairy farmers, and my parents worked outside the home, my dad as a firefighter and my mom as a bookkeeper.

I have two older brothers:

Scott works as a janitor, Mike as a firefighter. I am also blessed that Mike has brought his long-term girlfriend Devon (also a firefighter) and her beautiful 11-year-old daughter Gentry (G Bug) into our lives. I am a widow, my husband Myke passed away in June of 2009. We had three fur babies at the time, whom we lovingly referred to as his, mine, and ours. His was a boxer rescue named Karley, mine was a Border Collie Mix rescue named Comit, and ours was a boxer rescue named Shilo.

They have all crossed the rainbow bridge now, but they brought a lot of love and laughter into our home and are deeply missed.

### ***What drew you to explore and accept the call to serve in Onida?***

What first drew me in to the desire to explore a call to Onida was its proximity to my family. With all of my immediate family still in Colorado and most of my extended family in the west, the past four years in the southeast were a little too far away for me. I missed spending time with my brothers, watching younger relatives growing up, etc. Therefore, to be close enough to drive there in one day rather than two and a half was very exciting to me. However, it was when I first arrived to visit and I was welcomed by complete strangers with hugs and was included as if we had known each other for years, that's when I knew God was calling me to serve this congregation. I had made visits to other congregations in other areas before I visited Onida, and it felt as if something had been missing. When standing in their pulpits I could tell I wasn't meant to serve those churches. Onida was different. I've learned over the years to trust the feeling of calmness that comes over me when I have followed where God is calling me, and I'm blessed that God called me to serve here.

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

I'm excited to learn and grow with my congregation and with the community as a whole. I'm excited to help grow the excitement to attend camp, to go on mission trips, to watch our families grow and thrive as they live and learn in community together.

### ***How can we be praying for you?***

As my first called position, as well as my first time as a solo pastor, I would love prayers as I discover all the ways I can serve Onida, as well as how I can be helpful to our session, deacons, and trustees. I still feel out of my element not having a head of staff to answer to, but I know with prayer and time, I will be able to settle in and serve Onida to the best of my ability.

## Fall Retreat for Pastors & CRE's (Continued)

In addition to our excellent speaker and topic, this retreat will offer opportunities for rest, renewal, and fun as we come together to support each other and form lasting friendships—and to be reminded that we are not alone in this work! Our time together will include meaningful worship and spiritual practices led by our very own Carolyn Visser and Janice Palmer.

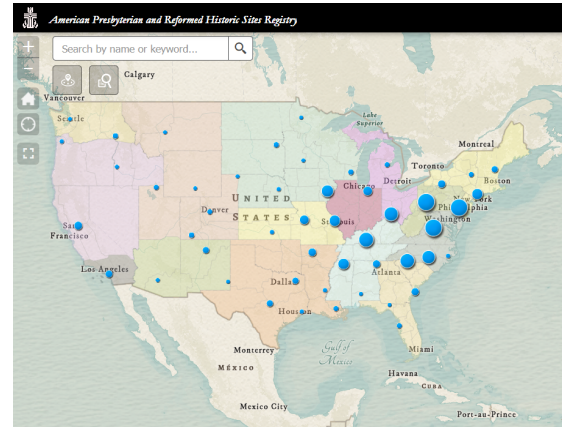
The retreat will begin with breakfast at 8:00am on Monday, September 17 and will conclude by noon on Wednesday, September 19. We encourage you to make the trip out and stay at the Pioneer lodge the night before so we're all ready to get started in the morning.

Though the retreat is free, we do need you to register for it at [pioneerrimrock.camp](http://pioneerrimrock.camp) or by contacting our camp director, Jason Wiedrich ([director@pioneerrimrock.camp](mailto:director@pioneerrimrock.camp)). Directions to the camp can also be found on the website.

This retreat is sponsored by the presbytery ministries of Congregational and Pastoral Care and Camping and Faith Formation. Sessions are asked to give pastors and CREs this time off as a part of their presbytery obligation and NOT to charge them vacation or continuing education time for this event. We also encourage congregations to pay mileage costs for travel to and from it.

We hope to see you all there!

## Historical Sites Registry



The American Presbyterian and Reformed Historic Sites Registry honors places of special significance to the Reformed tradition in the U.S.A. We spotted our very own Veblen church on their map! If you're interested in adding your church to the map, you'll find more information at [www.history.pcusa.org/history-online/presbyterian-history/historic-sites-registry](http://www.history.pcusa.org/history-online/presbyterian-history/historic-sites-registry).

## We Want to Hear Your Story

Just a quick note from me, Kristie Berglund, your presbytery communicator and editor of *New Song*. I'm here to help tell stories of the Spirit's movement and God's faithfulness in our South Dakota churches and neighborhoods.

If you would like to write an article or be interviewed for *New Song*, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [revkberglund@gmail.com](mailto:revkberglund@gmail.com).

# FALL RETREAT

*For Pastors and CREs*





SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2018 | PIONEER CAMP