

Yellowstone Currents
A Newsletter of Yellowstone Presbytery
December 2017

Thank you, Susi Ennis, for compiling and sending out the Currents these last two months while I was travelling!

Once again, Curt and I walked 500 miles across northern Spain on the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route. For a thousand years, pilgrims have journeyed to Santiago de Compostela to honor St. James, disciple of Jesus.

We learned many lessons on our trek:

- Simplicity as we lived out of our backpacks for six weeks.
- Guidance as we watched not only for the yellow arrows that guided the Camino path, but for the voice of the Holy Spirit along our way.
- Kindness of strangers as townspeople and other pilgrims encouraged us on our walk.
- Trust in God for strength as each day was a challenge. We walked an average of twelve to fifteen miles a day through mountain passes, villages, cities, farms, fields, and forests.

The first few weeks were particularly difficult for me as I began our journey with a troublesome knee. The verse that became very real to me was 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness." Many, many times I prayed this verse. And every hour, every day I had enough strength to keep walking and to finish the day's journey. I also discovered that my injured knee, wrapped in a brace until it healed, actually created connections with other pilgrims struggling with physical hurts and limitations, which often led to deeper discussions.

God's grace is sufficient. His power is made perfect in weakness. As we enter Advent, we especially give thanks for the birth of the One who is with us always, walking beside us with strength for our day. God's grace is sufficient.

In our hearts. . .We all continue to grieve the loss of our dear presbytery colleagues Jim Kidd and Leon Rathbun. We are so grateful for their lives of faith and service. Please continue to keep their families and congregations in your prayers.

First Presbyterian Deer Lodge Serves Their Community

First Presbyterian Church in Deer Lodge has been reaching out to our community in two ways: 1) Celebrating Trick-or-Treat with our neighbors. First Presbyterian is located on one of the major streets for Trick-or-Treat in Deer Lodge. This year, and last year, we opened our doors on Halloween - offering candy, hot cider or apple juice, soft ginger cookies, and a place to warm-up to children and adults who were Trick-or-Treating. This year we hung orange lights on the sanctuary door railings and placed the table of goodies at the back of the sanctuary. Twelve people from the congregation participated in this event - with presents or presence - and almost 300 children and adults dropped in from the community. A highlight of the evening this year was overhearing a girl turn to the adult with her as they were leaving and say, "This place feels peaceful."

2) Offering a Blue Christmas service. This will be the third year we have organized and hosted the Blue Christmas service, a Christmas service especially for those who have experienced a loss in their life. It was initiated after Deer Lodge experienced a murder-suicide of a well-known family of the community and continues to be a powerful way to recognize our hope in Jesus, while honoring the loss in our lives. The leadership for this service is provided by a wide variety of people from the community and is attended by both the church and unchurched from the community. Each year, there are a few who find this their most meaningful Christmas event. *Thanks so much to Teresa Kendall for this update!*

Stated Clerk Search Committee

As we reluctantly anticipate the retirement of Stated Clerk Debbie Blackburn, the presbytery seeks a new clerk. Applications are available on the presbytery webpage and are due December 15. For more information, please contact Jody McDevitt at jody@fpcbozeman.org. Please keep the search process in your prayers.

Ministry Training Opportunity

The ELCA Montana Synod is leading a program to train lay leaders for pastoral ministry leadership. This is an opportunity for those who are interested in exploring ways to be pastoral leaders in their congregations or in becoming Commissioned Ruling Elders. Rev. Katie Emery, pastor in Terry, is integral to this program. They plan to have a next training retreat in April 2018. If you are interested in learning more speak with Rev. George Goodrich.

Yellowstone Presbytery Clusters

Our clusters typically meet each month. If you have not been a part of a cluster and would like to explore the idea of joining in, please contact one of the following coordinators.

Miles City Cluster - Neva Rathbun (msrev@midrivers.com)
Billings Cluster – Dave Thompson (pastordave@fpcbillings.org)
Butte Cluster - Teresa Kendall (teresakendall@mac.com)
White Sulphur Cluster - Debbie Funke (funkepastor@yahoo.com)

Presbytery Meetings for 2018:

March 2 – 3 St. Andrew Presbyterian, Billings
May 4 – 5 Harlowton Federated Church, Harlowton
Nov. 2 – 3 TBA

Upcoming Opportunities:

Dec. 15 Deadline for Stated Clerk application
Jan. 9 Leadership Council Meeting Billings
Feb. 23-25 Winter Youth Retreat Billings

Remember our Round of Prayer as we keep our churches, ministries, and leaders in prayer:

Sunday, Dec. 3 Rev. Paul Cousins, Honorably Retired, Philipsburg

Sunday, Dec. 10 Rev. William Swanson, Honorably Retired, Dillon

Sunday, Dec. 17 Rev. Lowell Johnson, Honorably Retired, Sioux City, Iowa
Pastor Dave Thompson, First Presbyterian Church, Billings

Sunday, Dec. 31 First Presbyterian Church, White Sulphur Springs

Please send news and announcements to Susan Thomas at ckochner@mcn.net.