

NEW SONG

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

Presbytery of South Dakota Newsletter | February/ March 2017

Gunter: Rev. Gunter Kaiser and Wife Thea

By Commissioned Ruling Elder, Marian Cramer

Thunder rumbled above the small, white – spired, prairie church where the twelve-member choir were working on the phrase FOR THY USE OUR SOULS PREPARE in the anthem SAVIOR LIKE A SHEPHERD LEAD US. A blinding flash of lightning illumined the interior of the sanctuary. At the same moment, ear-splitting thunder rocked the Old Presbyterian Church as three elders and their new pastoral candidate, all wearing dripping felt hats, walked through the door. That was the day Rev. Kaiser arrived.

Rev. Kaiser was born in Kassel, Germany in 1926. WWII raged in Germany that spring morning in 1943 when a detachment of the German Army appeared at his school and hauled all the boys away in a truck as German soldiers. He survived the war but his hands were injured and deformed. He received excellent medical attention and was able to type, write with a pen, and use a shotgun when hunting pheasants. Rev. Kaiser was educated in German Universities and then attended Dubuque Seminary in Iowa.

In the summer of 1955, as a young seminary graduate Rev. Gunter Kaiser was called to Spirit Lake Presbyterian Church of rural DeSmet. When the Kaiser ministry began, announcements in the bulletin included worship service, Sunday school time, choir practice and once a month Ladies Aid. It was a spiritual diet for survival but was not one to promote spiritual strength and growth.

The time was at hand for change. With the arrival of Rev. Kaiser, a Renaissance or Awakening of the little church seems to have begun. Could it be, God sent power in the lightning storm on his arrival and had given Gunter an extra charge of energy? In his first pastorate in a new location not only was HE busy, but so were all of his parishioners. He never asked people to work but rather told people what he expected them to do, and when to do

Continued on Page 4



Search for Mission Coordinator

**Looking for the right person
to lead the Presbytery of South
Dakota into the future.**

The Presbytery of South Dakota is diligently searching for an individual to serve as the Mission Coordinator. The Mission Coordinator will help strengthen this Presbytery for the future. To help us find the right person we need your help. Do you know someone who would be great for the job? Or do you yourself have interest in serving in this way? Contact Jerry Lutkemeier, the Moderator of the Presbytery, at jdutkem@tnics.com with any question or to apply.

Meet Marcus Brooks



On February 24th the Presbytery of South Dakota will consider Marcus Brooks as certified and ready to receive a call. Marcus comes to the Presbytery through the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Sioux Falls.

Marcus Brooks was born in Buffalo NY, and moved to Sioux Falls at the age of 5 because of his father's work in the VA. Marcus is the oldest of 8 children, six of which are adopted. Marcus tells that growing up in this large family, expanded by love, prepared him for ministry. He learned patience and understood the power of love to bind a group of people together.

Marcus went on to receive his Bachelors at University of South Dakota in media, and became a radio reporter at SD Public Broadcasting. While, working as a reporter, God planted an idea in his head to become a military chaplain. He says, "It just felt out of the blue and caught me by surprise." He sought the advise of Rev. Val Putnam who he had known by participating in youth programs at First Presbyterian of Sioux Falls. She directed him to the seminary and to a VA Chaplain. And that is where his new journey began.

While Marcus attended seminary he served as a Deacon and Youth Leader at Westminster. He

did hospital visitation, and home visits. Marcus also participated in Military Chaplain training every summer for 5 weeks where he shadowed different chaplains on different bases. Marcus graduated from seminary in May of 2016, and is now serving as a Mental Health Chaplain at the VA hospital.

When asked why Military Chaplaincy, Marcus says at first he didn't understand why God was directing him in that way, but then when he started doing the work it just made sense—he fit in and felt at home. Perhaps because his father was in the military, but Marcus describes a sense of kinship with the service men and women. Marcus also explains that military chaplaincy is much like pastoral ministry, in that you are on a daily walk with the people. A military chaplain plans chapel services, provides counseling, baptizes individuals and marries couples.

The thing that excites and scares Marcus the most is, as he says, "Not being the smartest person in the room." It is a scary thought to him that people will come to him with deep pain and struggles and he will never have all the answers. But what excites him, is how he has seen the Holy Spirit show up in times like those. When, he doesn't have the words, or the perfect prayer, he has seen how somehow the spirit is able to work through their conversation and guide the individual to the truth.

Marcus asks for your prays for guidance as he seeks the next steps of him in ministry.

Upcoming Women's and Men's Retreat at Pioneer



Need a time to get away? To be with people of faith, study scripture, and be in God's creation? Well, please join one of our Camping programs upcoming retreats. Our Camping program will be hosting a women's Retreat March 17-19th, and a Men's Retreat April 28-30th. Both weekend events will be held at Pioneer Camp. For more information about these events and other Camps visit pioneerrimrock.camp

February Presbytery Meeting

By Rev. Kevin Veldhuisen, Stated Clerk and Interim Mission Coordinator

On February 24th, we will be gathering as a presbytery at First Presbyterian Church in Huron. We have a very full day and I encourage you all to attend. Some of the highlights of the meeting include a time of discussion with Kerry Rice, Associate Stated Clerk and Director of Ordered Ministries within the Office of the General Assembly. Kerry will spend time with us discussing the transitions that are happening throughout the denomination and share with us the knowledge he has gained along his travels.

We will also be voting on the proposed amendments to the constitution (Book of Order). Information will be included in the pre-mailing, but additional information is on our website under the Resources tab. I encourage you to take some time and prayerfully discern each amendment.

In addition, we will be installing Deb VanOverschelde our new treasurer, Jil Jennewein will give a report on her experiences at the Mosaic Peace Conference, and the Commission on Camping and Faith Formation will discuss this summer's amazing camp program.

2017 Youth Rally

This year Presbyterian Youth Rally will be held from March 31st to April 2nd at Ramkota Hotel in Pierre. Youth Rally is a weekend of learning and growing in faith for youth attending 7th to 12th grade. This year Keynote speakers will be Revs. Bala and Cheryl Khylllep and DWU (Dakota Wesleyan University) praise team will be playing. For more information, you can contact Deb VanOverschelde or visit www.presbyteryofsd.org. Registration is due by March 1st.

New Life in Hurley South Dakota

"We are on a crazy ride!" Pastor Lee Green says with a chuckle in his voice. Lee is a Commissioned Ruling Elder currently serving Harmony Presbyterian Church in Hurley, SD. There is something different about the Harmony Church these days. Yes, over the past 6 years there has been an increase of worship attendance by 85% and they went from no children's Christian education program to now having three Sunday School classes, but the change is more significant than that. The Spirit is alive.

Pastor Lee Green started serving Harmony Presbyterian church some 5 or 6 years ago. When Lee started serving Harmony, many would have seen it as a dying church, but Lee says, "I refused to serve a dying church." Lee is clear that growth and changes that have happened in the Harmony church are not because of him; the congregation and God have done all the hard work. Lee believes

all he did was bring laughter and a sense that God has not given up on this church and these people. Lee says, "If you are not dead, then God ain't done with you yet."

The Spirit's work and action can be seen in Harmony through the beautiful sound of children in worship once again, young people taking on leadership roles, and their genuine sense of community where people challenge and laugh with one another. Now change didn't come easily or overnight. Lee recognizes that change has to be slow, something you ease into, especially in an older, tradition congregation. But now, Lee describes a sense that the whole church is working together on the same path.

Lee says he has truly witnessed the Grace and Mercy of God in the Harmony church, for the Spirit has brought a new lifeblood to this small but loving congregation.

Gunter (Continued)

it. He departed saying, "See you! Bye." Gunter... [initially] turned his eyes upon the men. Perhaps the first change was an organized men's group. It was decided that each man could feed out one calf for the church. They celebrated at the conclusion of this decision with an oyster stew. They later farmed land together called their God's acres.

Changes were also taking place in Ladies Aid, which became United Presbyterian Women, UPW. A Bible study was ordered from the Presbyterian catalog. Activities and missions continued. The Kaisers held their activities in their home. Knitting and sock darning class was held on Saturday afternoon. The knitting class was a huge success, however, darning socks didn't catch on!

In 1956 Senior Citizen groups were not common. Gunter and Thea organized Old Folks Parties that included a potluck dinner, conversation, games and an 'I REMEMBER WHEN' time. The old folks' activities met with great success.

Rev. Kaiser was known to be persistent. If a family was missing on Sunday morning he began calling on the missing on Monday. With bulletin in hand and a smile he stood at the door and knocked. When the door opened Rev. Kaiser handed out his bulletin saying, "You aren't ill? Good, wanted you to know what is going on this week. "His closing was always a quick...Bye...see you."

Gunter, in the pulpit, was like Gunter in the community, messages were to the point. He spread God's word based on biblical passages. He particularly loved to speak on God's work through the heroes of the Bible. 'God is Love' and 'Love One Another' were at the heart of his messages.

Gunter and Thea knew that family was important. On the first Sunday night of the month, a family night was held. Snacks and drinks were served. Thea engineered the fun portion of the program. A white sheet was hung across the corner of the basement. There was a bright light behind the sheet, and Thea did silhouettes of people. The audience would then have to guess who the people

were. The evenings are still remembered fondly.

Roofs sprouted television antennas like weeds in the sixties. KELO had erected a tall tower and studio at Garden City. Gunter looked at the TV. He drove to Garden City with questions for the station manager. He said, "Don't all stations have time they must give to nonprofits like churches?" The manager replied, "The time is fifteen minutes at the beginning and end of broadcast day...5:45AM and 11:45PM" Gunter said, "I'll take that."

Gunter's church took one musical appearance a month. He went to the ministerial association and they filled the rest of the time. The station then gave them a half hour on Wednesday afternoon. Gunter and two of his pastor friends produced a quiz show called "What's in the Book."

Gunter was not quite finished. He was ready to tackle radio. He spoke to the manager of WNAX and offered him material if they needed time filled between shows. Gunter, with the help of his friend Glen, then set up a sound studio at the church. They invited members to read their favorite short Bible verse. These recordings became a big success on the radio and were still heard occasionally in 2000.

In the Huron-Aberdeen Presbytery, Gunter became well known for his work. He had come to the little church he served in 1955 and in 1962 he moved to Africa. Gunter became a Presbyterian leader in the production of radio ministry. He and his wife and daughter, Caroline served both in Zambia and Swaziland.

When he returned from Africa, he served and later retired from Belle Plain Presbyterian Church. Gunter, Thea, and Caroline Kaiser now live in Lake Wales, Florida. Gunter always considered himself the shepherd of his congregation. He never talked down to his parishioners but walked with them. The phrase of the anthem the choir struggled with the stormy night of his arrival may well have become the theme of his ministry. FOR THY USE OUR SOULS PREPARE.

SEE YOU, BYE!