



The SPIRIT

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Spirit of Hope United Methodist Church
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Bishop Karen Oliveto to Visit SOH on Whistle Stop Tour

The new bishop of the UMC's Mountain Sky Area (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, and a lonely Idaho congregation), Karen Oliveto, is concluding her windshield tour of the entire area with the Denver Metro District. On Tuesday, January 10th, she will stop by Spirit of Hope at 4:20 in the afternoon, and would love to hear your thoughts on how SOH is striving to be a vital presence in the community. She will only be with us for about 15 minutes before moving on to her next (and last) stop, so don't be late! Let's have a good crew turn out to say howdy and show our support for Bishop Oliveto's ministry among the people of the Rocky Mountain Conference.

If you'd like another opportunity to meet and greet the bishop, she will be eating lunch on Monday and Tuesday, and dinner on Monday, at area churches. Talk to Pastor Chris if you'd like information on that.

All-Church Celebration

Sunday, January 15th, an all-church gathering and church conference will be held to celebrate Spirit of Hope's accomplishments in 2016, as well as to look ahead to 2017. There will be a few official votes to take, but for the most part it will be a time to thank God and one another for the blessing that is SOH. Information about proposed capital projects will be available, in addition to reports from the leaders of the congregation. The leadership slate for the year will also be put forward, along with the budget for the year and final financial information from 2016. We'll enjoy a good potluck meal and hear from our District Superintendent, the Reverend Paul Kottke, who will be presiding over the gathering.

District Superintendent to Preach January 15th

The Reverend Paul Kottke, District Superintendent for the Metropolitan District of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church, will join SOH for worship and bring the message on Sunday, January 15th. Paul served as pastor of University Park UMC for over two decades until he was appointed to the cabinet by Bishop Stanovsky a year and a half ago. He has been a trailblazing and thoughtful leader throughout his career, and is now sharing his considerable wisdom and talents with our district. Put the date on your calendar, and let's have a big turnout to hear Paul's vision for how the people called Methodist can be a vital presence in the 21st century.

Giving On-line

Now is a great time to start using the online giving option at church. It's easy for us to forget to get our checks in the plate when our schedule gets hectic during vacation and get-away season. But the church finances feel the pinch. Why not give it a try? If you need help, just call the office and talk with Chris or Laurel. You can also go to the SOH website and its secure donations page to give a one-time gift or sign up for regular contributions to be automatically processed.

Meridian Bible Study Is On for 2017

Wednesday mornings at 10:30, you will find a dedicated bunch learning about the Bible, praying together, and just generally having a good time. The Englewood Meridian is located at 3455 South Corona, just a couple of block north of Hampden. The group generally meets in the Card Room on the second floor. For a couple of weeks in January the study will be held elsewhere to accommodate remodeling, however, so call the church office for updated information on where to find it.

Beginning January 11th, the group will be exploring the Old Testament books of First and Second Samuel. These tell the story leading up to and including the life, leadership, and loss of King David. Beginning with Hannah, Samuel, and King Saul, these stories are full of intrigue. A real soap opera! ALL are welcome to join in as the group tackles this compelling material.

Monday Bible Study Picks Back Up January 9th

The Courage to Conquer Bible Study, utilizing material produced by David Jeremiah, will resume at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, January 9th. Tthis group shares a simple lunch following the study each week. ALL are welcome and invited to attend.

Christ's Birthday Fund

It's been a longstanding tradition with the Englewood church to contribute to Christ's Birthday Fund as a way to send out a blanket holiday greeting to the people of the congregation. Lucille Weaver has kept this going the last few years, and so we also dedicate this year's greeting to her memory. Proceeds will go toward the Helping Hands Fund to help folk in need during this cold season of the year.

A Franciscan Blessing

The following blessing was offered on Christmas Sunday to close worship that morning. It was requested that it be included here for more of us to be able to appreciate it. The author's name is unknown.

*May God bless you with discomfort...
at easy answers, hard hearts,
half-truths, and superficial relationships.
May God bless you so that you may live
from deep within your heart
where God's Spirit dwells.*

*May God bless you with anger...
at injustice, oppression,*

*and exploitation of people.
May God bless you so that you may
work for justice, freedom, and peace.*

*May God bless you with tears...
to shed for those who suffer from pain,
rejection, starvation and war.
May God bless you so that you
may reach out your hand
to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.*

*And may God bless you with
enough foolishness
to believe that you can make a difference
in this world, in your neighborhood,
so that you will courageously try
what you don't think you can do, but,
in Jesus Christ you'll have all the strength necessary.*

*May God bless you to fearlessly
speak out about injustice,
unjust laws, corrupt politicians,
unjust and cruel treatment of prisoners,
and senseless wars,
genocides, starvations, and poverty that is so pervasive.*

*May God bless you that you remember
we are all called
to continue God's redemptive work
of love and healing
in God's place, in and through God's name,
in God's Spirit, continually creating
and breathing new life and grace
into everything and everyone we touch.*

See How They Love One Another

In the early centuries of the church, its people were best known for the strength of their community. Each looked after the others and met needs as they arose. There are so many opportunities for us to care for one another, and the thoughtfulness of the people of Spirit of Hope is on display on a regular basis. You call one another, send cards, visit, give rides, take food, go to lunch together—it is truly beautiful. Plans are in the works to get a little more organized, to make sure no one falls through the cracks. If you wish to be part of the process, call the office and leave a message.

Joyful Noise

The choir has been making beautiful music as it leads the congregation in worship. If you care to join in, practices are Sundays following fellowship time right there in the sanctuary by the piano. All are welcome!

CROSSPOINTS UMW

The CROSSPOINTS UMW will have their regular meeting on Thursday, January 12th, at Spirit of Hope UMC. They will begin at 10:00 a.m. with a business meeting and refreshments. Then our program will be on Latin America given by Betsy Keyack telling us about women, families and the economies of Latin America. She has visited some of these countries as well as Cuba, so it should be an interesting program. All women are welcome at our meetings.

Metro District UMW

The Metro district UMW will have their “Mission Mentoring and Celebration!” on Saturday, January 21st, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This takes place at University Park UMC, 2180 S. University Blvd. Pre-registration is not required. Morning beverages will be served and a light snack will be available during a short break. The program will start promptly at 9:00 a.m. This is a good time to see what the Metro District is doing and it is so close. Metro Unit Members are welcome! Please bring canned food for a local food bank.

Rollin Wagon Opportunity

Wanting to learn more about investing, or interested in joining a group of investors? Did you know there is an investment club that meets right in your church? Go to www.rollinwagon.com for more information. We welcome novice and experienced investors alike – it’s a great place to learn. Unlike some investment clubs there is not a large buy in amount and the monthly cost is minimal. We’d love to have you visit to see what we’re about. If you’d like to visit, please send us an email via the web site so that we can meet you at the security door prior to the meeting.

Belonging, Believing, and Becoming in 2017

You've seen our bulletin. On the cover, we always have those three words—belong, believe, become—front and center. As we set out on the journey through 2017 together, it makes sense to revisit why those are there. Why would you say we put them out there? What do they mean to you? Are they in the right order? How might they speak differently to a visitor than a regular? How do they play out in our life together at SOH? Good questions, all.

You have been hearing about the Whole Church Initiative (WCI) and SOH's participation in it for over a year now. As we wrapped up the formal part of that process, the two aspects of our life together that came to the top as priorities were relationship and discipleship. This seems fitting. Spirit of Hope has used the "three b's" for several years now, and they have effectively served as a sort of description of what happens here. The first and last, belong and become, parallel the findings of the WCI team. The middle, believe, is a sort of bridge between the other two. Nice, eh?

Belonging is about relationship. It is first of the three because that is where most people today (especially folk under 40) begin. It is also primary in the DNA of our biblical faith. Relationship is vital to our existence with one another and with God. It is, in fact, essential to God's triune self. I love that when people come to visit SOH for worship, or other times, for that matter, they sense the warmth and welcome you offer. No matter who they are or what they bring. You are good at this.

Believing is rooted in trust and obedience, which is why it is a good bridge from belonging to becoming. It's not first about agreeing with a set of facts or doctrines. It is about relinquishing the idea that you are in control. It is about acknowledging that you don't know it all and that it takes a lifetime (and more!) of humble receptivity to be made over into the person God created you to be. Faith is not a free-for-all, but it isn't a tightly constricted cell, either. Jesus talks about being tied to him as an easy and light burden. Paul talks about being transformed by the renewing of our minds. This is a life-giving adventure, not a prison.

Becoming is the logical next step. Once we've found a safe place to be, and begin to turn our lives from self-centered to self-aware and Christ-centered, then we start to see a difference. It is impossible to walk with Christ and not be changed. John Wesley called it sanctification, but it is really just about reclaiming that in us that God described as good from the very beginning, and which we tend to be accomplished at avoiding. We find ourselves more attuned to how God sees the world around us, and our checkbooks and calendars begin to reflect that awareness. Our faith is expressed in action, and we are different.

During this season after Epiphany, which is all about the light of Christ breaking into the darkness, we will explore in more depth this connection between relationship and discipleship, from belonging to becoming. Ministries of SOH will begin with these emphases in mind, and we will be working to craft a more explicit disciple-making culture. It won't, indeed can't, happen overnight. It will happen over time, and will establish a deep and lasting base on which the mission of SOH can build and impact the world around us. I look forward to seeing how belonging, believing, and becoming both expand and deepen for SOH in the coming year.

In Christ's peace,

Chris