



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 Friday, February 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 Conference Report

On Sunday, January 15th, a congregational gathering was held to reflect on 2016 and look ahead to 2017. Metro District Superintendent Paul Kottke was present to preach and preside. Following worship and a delectable potluck luncheon, some discussion and business took place. That gathering used the three-dimensional framework of Up (our relationship with God), In (our relationship with ourselves and one another), and Out (our relationship with the world) to both look back and forward. Finally, the gathering—also a called church conference for the purpose of official votes—ratified the slate of leadership positions for SOH in 2017, as well as a resolution laying down broad guidelines for the use and investment of proceeds from the sale of the former Emmanuel UMC property. Anyone interested in details pertaining to these actions, as well as financial information for 2016 and 2017, may call or come by the church office.

United Methodists and Immigration

The United Methodist Church, in its Book of Discipline's Social Principles, says this about the rights of immigrants:

We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination. We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all. We oppose immigration policies that separate family members from each other or that include detention of families with children, and we call on local churches to be in ministry with immigrant families.

About foreign workers, the Social Principles say:

For centuries people have moved across borders in search of work. In our global world this is still a relevant and increasing form of immigration. Improved wages, better working conditions, and jobs available are reasons for immigration due to work opportunities. Workers from other countries are in many societies an important resource to fill the society's need of workers. But foreign workers too often meet exploitation, absence of protecting laws, and unreasonable wages and working conditions.

We call upon governments and all employers to ensure for foreign workers the same economic, educational, and social benefits enjoyed by other citizens. Foreign workers also need a religious fellowship, and we call for the churches to include these in their care and fellowships and to support them in their efforts for better conditions.

For more information, you can go online to

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-is-the-united-methodist-stance-on-immigration-reform>

and read as much as you want, including how some UM congregations are opening their doors as sanctuary churches.

Letter from the President of the UMC Council of Bishops responding to the executive order on immigration:

Today, I stand with colleagues representing several faith traditions to strongly denounce President Trump's widespread attack on immigrants and refugees. President Trump's reckless, ill-conceived executive orders will divide families, impose a religious test for Muslims facing forced migration, penalize communities providing sanctuary and wall off the United States from our neighbors. These actions are expensive, unnecessary and profoundly antithetical to our values of compassion, dignity and justice for all individuals regardless of nationality, religious affiliation or legal status.

The biblical witness is clear and unambiguous. Walls are unbiblical. Hospitality is biblical. Denying one's neighbor is unbiblical. Welcoming the stranger is biblical. It is not surprising that Judaism, Christianity and Islam teach the reign of God as a banquet to which all peoples are invited. We are to welcome the sojourner, love our neighbor and stand with the most vulnerable among us. These very values from our sacred texts and faith traditions are currently reflected in the mandate of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and must not be usurped by any executive order. Orders, legislation or administrative actions that would have the U.S. State Department disqualify refugees from protection and resettlement based on their nationality or religion are a denial of the very principles this nation was built upon, contradict the legacy of leadership our country has offered the world, and dishonor our shared humanity.

Jesus was explicit in his teachings. In Matthew's gospel Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." (Matthew 10:40).

Refugees and immigrants arrive among us, not only with their needs, but also bearing gifts of energy, resourcefulness, love of liberty and hope. These gifts have always contributed to the renewal of our society and the church.

Above all, these strangers bring to us the Christ. When we welcome a stranger we welcome Jesus, and when we welcome Jesus we welcome our creator. Refugees, immigrants, those yearning to be free—these are the ones whom Jesus spoke about when he said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

Repeatedly Jesus tells his disciples:

"For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25)

The original Greek language is far more poetic, powerful and prophetic. In finer translations of the Greek language, we hear Jesus saying:

"Whoever seeks to build a wall around their soul shall destroy it; whoever tears down the wall (around their soul) shall bring their soul to a living birth."

The very soul of our country is at stake. When we abandon strangers who are at risk of bigotry, xenophobia and violence we not only destroy their hope, we destroy our own souls. When we fail to assist the refugees fleeing danger, we not only place them in harm's way, we do harm to our own souls. When we build walls of concrete, or walls of divisive rhetoric, or walls of fear, or walls of immoral immigration policies, we build a wall around our own souls.

Christ calls us to tear down the walls around our souls that we might live fully and abundantly. Thus, I call on the Trump administration and the U.S. Congress to rescind the harmful executive orders and save the soul of our country. I call upon the people of The United Methodist Church to see the face of Christ in the refugee. Say "no" to the walling off of our country and our hearts and say "yes" to their hope – our hope – for new life. Let us unite and work together to bring the soul of this country to a living birth!

*Bishop Bruce R. Ough, President
Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church
January 30, 2017*

Giving Electronically

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 meets in the Card Room on the second floor, and is currently working through the Old Testament book of First Samuel.

Monday Bible Study

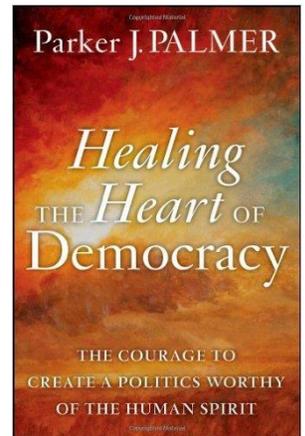
Only two more Mondays (February 6th & 13th) at 10:30 a.m. for the "Courage to Conquer" study. This group shares a simple lunch following the study each week. ALL are welcome and invited to attend.

Lent Study Coming Up in March

America is hurting. No matter where one falls on the political spectrum, it is undeniable that our ability to talk with each other, to empathize with each other, to compromise and get things done, is broken. No political system is perfect, but the American republic has been a democratic trendsetter for hundreds of years. Recent decades have shown that legacy to be in distress. So how do we heal?

Starting the first Sunday in Lent, March 5th, Spirit of Hope will be looking at this important work through the lens of Parker Palmer's important book *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. Pastor Chris will begin a sermon series based on the book, and he will also be facilitating a combined Sunday morning discussion group. Both regular Sunday morning groups will be participating, and everyone is invited to join in. There will be good discussion and some powerful insights into our role as Christians and citizens in our communities. The group will meet in the Parlor beginning at 9 a.m.

If you want to get a copy of the book, you can go to your favorite online or bricks and mortar bookseller. Pastor Chris will be ordering a few copies, as well, for those who have difficulty tracking one down or need financial assistance to purchase the book.



2 Lenten Studies in 1! (and a Daniel Fast meal!) The Daniel Fast / 29 Gifts Study

On Wednesday evenings starting on March 8 – April 5th, from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., we will be experiencing the **spiritual disciplines** of fasting and giving. **The Daniel Fast** is a 21-day partial fast, inspired by the book of Daniel. It will feed your soul . . . strengthen your spirit . . . and renew your body. We also will be giving something each day for 29 days, taken from Cami Walker's book, "**29 Gifts**".

Come and be blessed through sacrifice and giving!

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! And if you would like to contribute with a solo, or with someone else, as a gift of music on a Sunday morning.

Diversity Ally Training at SOH

Wonder how to make a difference in the conflict-ridden world we live in today? A great opportunity has been arranged by the new Englewood group Friends of Diversity. On **Wednesday, February 22nd, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.**, a training session led by Jenny Pool Radway, an adjunct professor at the University of Denver (learn more at www.diversecommunities.net) will happen in the Parlor. Five slots have been set aside for members and friends of SOH. Talk with Pastor Chris to register. What exactly is diversity ally training?

Allies are people who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society's patterns of injustice and take responsibility for changing these patterns. Allies include men who work to end sexism, white people who work to end racism, heterosexual people who work to end heterosexism, able-bodied people who work to end ableism, and so on. Part of becoming an ally is also recognizing one's own experience of oppression. For example, a white woman can learn from her experience of sexism and apply it in becoming an ally to people of color, or a person who grew up in poverty can learn from that experience how to respect others' feelings of helplessness because of a disability. Come to our training and learn how to get to know people, find out what they're up against, and support them in their struggles. In essence, how to be an ally - getting involved, supporting people and not staying on the sidelines.

See How They Love One Another

Can you make a phone call? Write a note? Drive a car? Pray? Chat? Bake a casserole? Comfort someone grieving a loss? Celebrate a birthday or anniversary?

If you answer yes to any of these, you can be a part of the newly reorganized congregational care effort of SOH. Come meet with others who want to make sure we are all looked after. **Tuesday, February 21st, at 11 a.m.**, bring your own sack lunch and join up with this new missional community. We'll pray together, have some good conversation, and envision how we can best care for one another. All are invited, welcome, and encouraged to come see what this new thing will look like.

Church Council Meeting, Wednesday, February 15th, at 6:30 p.m.

Church Council meetings are open to anyone who would like to see how the sausage of SOH leadership gets made! Seriously, though, meetings last about two hours and focus on the mission and vision of the congregation, as well as making some decisions about the life of the church.

CROSSPOINTS UMW

The CROSSPOINTS UMW will have their regular meeting on Thursday, February 9th, at 10:00 a.m. at Spirit of Hope UMC, 3885 S. Broadway, Englewood. Please join us for refreshments, business meeting and program. Presenter is Kay Cowlshaw giving a book review on "My Sister, The Father." This meeting is open to all women of Church. Come and see what we are doing!!

Humane Society of the South Platte Valley

A wonderful letter was received from Leslie Maisonneuve, Shelter Director for the Human Society of the South Platte Valley, thanking our wonderful congregation for organizing and implementing a fundraiser for the shelter. They appreciate all of the cat and dog food and other goodies that will help keep the animals happy while they wait for their forever home.

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.

One Big Happy Family

We read the story in worship now and then. That one about Jesus' first time preaching in Nazareth, his home town. How he read from Isaiah, and everyone was so impressed. But then he said some things that torqued them off, about how God cared about people beyond Israel as much as, maybe more than, Israel itself. The home town crowd turned on him, and he ended up narrowly avoiding a vicious death by stoning.

What isn't mentioned in that story is the role his family—mother, father, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins—played, or didn't, that day. We know that families in Palestine back then didn't scatter like we do today. They relied on one another for both protection and provision. Extended families lived together, often in compounds, and worked together in the family business, whatever that might be. Peter and Andrew's family, like James and John's, was in the fishing industry, for example. Jesus' family was in the construction business. We think of him as a carpenter, but it was probably something more involved than that, and his extended family would have been in it together. If you were building something in the Nazareth area, you may very well have called on Jesus' folk to get'r'done.

So families supported and provided for one another, but they were also invested in protecting one another. Law enforcement and the legal system didn't work the same then as they do now in our culture. If you were going to be kept safe, you had to have people who ensured your security in a treacherous world. Jesus' extended family were his people. So where were they when the rest of the townspeople were ready to dispose of him? They didn't stand up for him, at least so far as Luke reports it. Might they actually have been amongst the crowd ready to do him in? That's a troubling thought, isn't it?

The upshot of that whole situation is that Jesus had to leave home. That meant leaving the folk who had always protected and provided for him, the folk with whom he'd lived, worked, and played, side by side, for his three decades of life. Initially, he was sort of adopted by Peter's crowd in Capernaum, but something new began to happen. As he shared the good news of God's power and presence in the world, a new "family" began to emerge. Rather than being defined biologically or geographically, this family was composed of people who were drawn to a new vision of life together. God is doing a new thing, not by the blood of birth, but by the blood of the new covenant in Jesus Christ. All are invited. All are welcome. All will find a home here.

This new family is the church. So, when we think of how we are to live together, this is the model. We care for one another. We teach newcomers, young and old and odd, the family business. We show the world a new way of being that is not exclusive, but rather radically inclusive and expansive. There's always room at the table for one more.

This family doesn't distinguish between its identity and its mission, either. Jesus balanced the Up, In, and Out dimensions of his life, and so does the church family. We devote ourselves to developing our relationship with God (Up), our relationship(s) with one another (In), and our relationship(s) in the rest of the world (Out). These same dimensions also apply to each of us personally, as well as to our households. If the three dimensions are out of balance, so are we. To grow, as God's family, is to maintain that balance. We don't see ourselves as a family apart from our mission. Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of South Broadway and beyond is both what we do and who we are!

During this season after Epiphany, and extending through the year, Spirit of Hope will be growing into a more deliberate and intentional focus on discipleship. I am pretty excited about seeing the journey we've been on for the last couple of years (through the Whole Church Initiative and now 3DM) beginning to mature and involve more of us in this vision for the congregation and community. By this time next year, I trust we will be seeing a different sort of fruit than we have for a while. I'm grateful and glad to be part of this family on mission, and I hope you are, too!

In Christ's peace,

Chris