

Ministry milestones in northwest Sioux Falls

By the Rev. Heidi Binstock

WestSide Lutheran Church in northwest Sioux Falls had a busy fall with many milestones.

On Sept. 7, WestSiders held their last service at the McCrossan Boys Ranch chapel, where they had worshiped for almost three years. Like all who come to McCrossan, it was time to move on. We gave thanks for that place and the many things that happened there, including baptisms, confirmations and the formation of our congregation.

We then moved into our new building, worshipping there for the first time on Sept. 14. We sat on folding chairs and crowded 140-plus people in for a fun service. South Dakota Synod Bishop David Zellmer; the Rev. Bill Tesch, associate to the bishop and director for evangelical mission; and members from our partner churches joined us for this milestone in the life of our congregation.

In October we dedicated the building and had an open house for the community—we have been actively making the place look lived in ever since.

During 2014, WestSide's average worship attendance at McCrossan was 65 people. Since moving into the new building, we have had an average worship attendance of 118. We recently held a first step to membership event that included 11 new households.

Most exciting, we get to see the relief, hope and joy that enters into people's lives when the gospel enters in. It's good stuff!



We give thanks for the many resources that have been given and continue to be given to support us in this mission. We look forward to all that will happen in 2015. □

For more information about WestSide, visit its website at www.westsidelutheran.com.



Author bio:

Binstock is the mission developer for WestSide Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls.

The photos on this page were taken at the first worship service in the new building of WestSide Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls.

Group fights hunger in South Dakota county

By the Rev. Jackie Braun

One of the questions before the McCook County Ministerial Association has been “How do we provide food to those who face empty fridges, freezers and cupboards?” At the same time, folks at Zion Lutheran Church in Bridgewater were discussing how to provide food after the local grocery store closed.

After attending a Partners Against Hunger training session, the association set up a time for Diane Briest of Feeding South Dakota to visit last fall. Participants included area pastors, service providers, school professionals, county employees and those simply interested in the topic of hunger.

Briest provided the group with a tremendous amount of information about Feeding South Dakota, as well as about hunger in the U.S., South Dakota and McCook County. We learned about terms such as “food deserts,” which are urban or rural areas without ready access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. “Food insecurity” exists when individuals’ access to enough food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.

We also learned that statistics supported what we already knew—we have hunger in our community.

Building on a holiday tradition

The group decided to build on a tradition of serving holiday boxes to area families, using the free and reduced guidelines as a guide but not a requirement. We hoped to expand the number served throughout the county and increase the amount of food sent home.

In addition, area pastors took a hands-on approach. Hoping to learn from those already providing food to our community, they experienced what it takes to organize, coordinate, assemble and distribute food boxes to those in need. Let me tell you, we learned a lot!

In November we distributed 71 boxes countywide, which is almost double past efforts. We served mostly families with children in school or small children at home. We reached more than 300 individuals, serving fairly equally adults and children.

After clearing through many of the staples in the food pantry and making an emergency run to the grocery store to supply the November boxes, it became apparent we needed a different solution. So we asked area churches, businesses and charitable organizations to sponsor portions of the holiday meal either through monetary donations or providing the product. The meal included all the fixings for a

Christmas dinner, excluding dessert (we didn’t think of everything!).

The response has been amazing. We raised enough money to cover the entire holiday meal, provide extra food for the month and restock the pantry. Plus, the local grocery stores have been willing to help. Much of the items were purchased locally, helping to keep a vital access to fresh and affordable food in our community. In addition, we have supplemented the boxes with food from Feeding South Dakota, which helps us steward the resources we have been given.

On Dec. 15 volunteers braved a winter storm to gather and assemble 97 boxes. We also provided food boxes to some of McCook County’s seniors.

And we aren’t done yet—at presstime the association was planning for a holiday box distribution before Easter.

In addition to its work with the holiday boxes, Zion has been quietly busy. On Dec. 1 members opened a food pantry sponsored by the John D. Hofer Trust and the Muench Fund Trust, as well as in-kind and monetary donations. The Bridgewater Food Pantry will be open the first and third Tuesday of every month from 2:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Throughout Advent, when we anticipate the coming of Christ, we were blessed to experience Christ coming over and over again through those bearing the light of Christ. It has been wonderful to experience the beauty and wonder of Christ freeing us up, paving the way for us, so we can simply care for our neighbors in ways we have been equipped to share. It is so much fun to be a small part of the Spirit moving through our lives.

Thank you, Partner’s Against Hunger and the South Dakota Synod, for providing us resources and an opportunity to meet area service providers. Thank you for sharing your resources with others so people can find canned goods and boxed items when they open their cupboard. □



Author bio:

Braun is pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Salem.

‘Pueblo de Dios’ goes to camp

Pueblo de Dios (people, or community, of God) is a congregation under development in the South Dakota Synod. Its primary focus is reaching out to the Latino community of Sioux Falls.

Pueblo de Dios is being “birthed” with love and support from Augustana Lutheran Church through joint ministry ventures in urban Sioux Falls.

Led by the Rev. Jeanette Clark, youth from *Pueblo de Dios* have experienced camp and continue to learn and grow (see photos below).

“Our youth participated in Mission Quest for Teens and learned new ways to serve,” Clark said. “Our middle school youth and day campers learned about the church year. Now, when we talk about Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, I know they will have a more solid understanding of these important holidays.” □



Upcoming events

Synod assembly

May 29-30, 2015

Calvary Lutheran Church, Rapid City

www.sdsynod.org/15assembly



Bishop's Golf Tournament

July 13, 2015

Westward Ho, Sioux Falls

www.sdsynod.org/15golf



St. Dysmas celebrates 25 years of ministry to inmates

On Ascension Day, May 14, 2015, St. Dysmas of South Dakota will celebrate its 25th anniversary as an ELCA congregation.

St. Dysmas has two locations: behind the walls of the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, served by the Rev. Bob Chell; and behind the walls of Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield, served by the Rev. Kwen Sanderson.

Planted by Prison Congregations of America (PCA), St. Dysmas has grown into two vibrant, healthy congregations that proclaim the gospel to men in prison.

Perhaps the key to this ministry is the outside visitors who are welcomed each week from area congregations. For many inmates this is the only opportunity they have to talk with someone who isn't paid to be in the prison or who isn't a fellow inmate.

Those who visit remark about the gracious and hospitable welcome they receive.

While Chell and Sanderson proclaim the gospel, it is through these outside visitors that the men experience the

gospel message of grace and acceptance.

The PCA model is unique in that pastors are called by the inmate congregation, not hired by the warden or sent by the church. This, coupled with weekly visitors from outside the walls, gives them a life and vibrancy that transcends their setting.

Because nearly all jobs available to inmates pay 25 cents an hour, St. Dysmas is sustained through the gifts of congregations (and congregational groups like Women of the ELCA), which provide one-third of its budget. Individual gifts provide the other two-thirds. The South Dakota Synod, PCA and the ELCA provide support and resources, but no financial support.

PCA's mission is to plant congregations. Once a church is strong enough, they move on to plant another. There are currently 26 congregations in 13 states with three more slated to open in 2015.

South Dakota congregations are invited to join in the celebration of St. Dysmas' 25 years of ministry as they rededicate themselves to the next 25 years. More information and resources will be available at the South Dakota Synod Assembly in Rapid City, May 28-30. □



The screenshot shows the top portion of the St. Dysmas website. At the top left is the logo: "St. Dysmas of South Dakota" with "AN ELCA CONGREGATION" underneath. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links: "home", "about us", "support", "visiting", and "contact us". Below the navigation is a dark blue banner with the text "Join us VISIT or GIVE" in white. The main content area features a photograph of two men in white shirts looking at an open book. Overlaid on the bottom right of the photo is the text "Hope Beyond Bars" in a serif font.

You can learn more about St. Dysmas by visiting its website at www.stdysmas.com.