

# The Bell Tower

February 2015

NEDERLAND COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of caring friends and neighbors . . . growing to live our motto: *open doors, open minds, open hearts*



## Business, Decently and in Order

— Hansen

Our congregation is part of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the largest and oldest Presbyterian denomination in this country. With nearly 2 million members, and with our hands involved in every sort of ministry initiative imaginable, organization is important.

In the PCUSA the Session is responsible for managing a congregation. The seven Elders on our Session (who are voted on by members of the congregation) meet monthly to handle the general health of the church, consider ways for us to thrive, and deal with the ministry of administration. We study and pray, discuss and vote, laugh and yawn... Think of it as a sanctified version of a town or company Board of Trustees.

And the national level, we have an office headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, which deals with the day-to-day business of the denomination. But the real fun happens every two years at the General Assembly, when Pastors and Elders from all over the nation serve for one intense week. They are delegates, not representatives, so we choose them to act on the inspiration of the Spirit, not to simply represent the will of any group of persons. Those delegates come from all over the nation to study and pray, discuss and vote, plead and barely sleep. Think of it as a holy version of Congress, although for all the fellowship that strengthens the body, there is also painful argument and division.

Geographically and temporally we need something to connect the local to the whole. So, the PCUSA gathers all its congregations into 171 bodies, called "Presbyteries". Most of those are regionally determined, although a few are based on ethnic connection.

Ours is the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks, stretching from the Front Range to the Nebraska Panhandle. (Colorado also has Presbyteries of Western Colorado, Denver, and Pueblo.) Presbyteries meet four times a year, and at each meeting we have worship and prayer, educational programs and

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## Ordination and Installation

*Congratulations to our newest Deacon and Elders!*

David Ford, Marylou Harrison, Nancy Lynd & Jim Reis were ordained and installed on 25 January, to join the two leadership boards of our church! David joins the Deacons, whose ministry is one of caring and prayer. Marylou, Nancy & Jim become Elders on the Session,

whose ministry is one of vision for the church to thrive and administration.

The tradition in many churches is for anyone who has been ordained previously, to lay their hands on the shoulders of the new folks. Consider how a cloud of witnesses laid hands on them before, and others before that, and others before that, all the way back to Jesus looking into Peter's face. No wonder they are smiling in this picture!



## New Worship Series

Our next worship series, for the month of February, is "It's Kinda Like..." Rarely in God's Word do we find direct, specific definitions about the things that matter the most to us. Instead, we get metaphors, similes, analogies, parables, and stories, as though God is more interested in our imagination than legalism.

So, we read in Psalm 23 that God is kinda like a shepherd, caring for us even in deep despair. Jesus tells us in Matthew 15 that sin is kinda like rubbish, and that all the things we try to do on our own, without God, even the things that seem good, that stuff should just get tossed into the sewer. And what's the whole point of this Christianity thing? Despite all the bad news we hear about mean churches and terrible messages, the Bible says that we the church are supposed to be kinda like Good News for everyone.

## Coffee and Conversation

Every Thursday, 9 am, at The Train Cars back room, everyone is invited for coffee and conversation about life, faith, church and everything in between.

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## Charter for Compassion

Nederland Community Presbyterian Church is now partnered with the Charter. Just what does that mean? Let's begin on page 4.

## Compassionate Communities Initiative

Basalt, Gunnison, Lakewood, LoDo Neighborhood, and Telluride are Colorado

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committee reports. It is an opportunity for church leaders to share ideas and support each other. And, inevitably, we deal with church business that requires discussion and formal voting. Think of it like some religious version of county or state politics.

**Anyone can attend** a Presbytery meeting, but in those business decisions, congregations are designated a certain amount of votes, depending on size. At NCPC we have one vote for the Pastor and one vote for an Elder who the session commissions. A medium-sized church like St Andrew in Boulder might have one vote for their Pastor and two votes for their Elders. A larger church like First Pres in Boulder might have six votes for their six pastors and four votes for their Elders. (I don't know the exact numbers, but the idea is that Presbyteries attempt to find a balance of representation for small and large churches, pastor and lay-person, as well as racial and gender representation.)

**The next meeting for the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks is 6-7 February at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Fort Collins.** This one promises to be a bit more exciting than our regular meetings—perhaps more inspiring, perhaps disheartening—because part of the business on the docket will be to respond to the General Assembly.

As you may be aware, there were a few controversial proposals at last summer's biannual General Assembly. At that large meeting, Pastors and Elders designated from every Presbytery gathered to discuss a wide range of issues. They accepted some overtures, such as a proposal for our pension board to divest from holding stock in a few companies that profit from the ongoing war in Israel-Palestine. The PCUSA had been successful in convincing other businesses to treat workers more fairly, but our engagement with these three companies was repeatedly ignored, so the church made a hard decision. On the other hand, the church voted against a proposal to divest completely from fossil fuels companies. It seemed to many people a very broad overture, and was sent back to committee for more study.

Some of the GA actions were binding, especially formal statements on peacemaking and ecumenism, structural minutiae, and a joyful election of our next Moderator, Heath Rada. (He is our public leader for two-years, something between

a Presbyterian Pope and organizational spokesperson. And I can assent that he is a heckuva good guy!) Other actions require further discussion and voting, namely when there are proposals to amend our Book of Order. (That book is the constitution of our church.)

In the US government, when Congress passes a law, generally it becomes enacted only when the President signs it. In the PUCSA, when the General Assembly—again, composed of regular Pastors and Elders designated from every Presbytery—passes an amendment, the issue is then sent to all 171 Presbyteries, and only if a majority of them approves it does it finally become enacted. At our upcoming Presbytery meeting, we will be voting on a handful of items that were approved last summer.

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### General Assembly Amendments

**Book of Confessions to include a twelfth profession of faith: *The Belhar Confession comes from South Africa, in response to their process of racial reconciliation and attempt to draw the church into unity.***

**An amendment to the Book of Order that strikes the language of marriage as “a civil contract between a woman and a man,” and adds language that recognizes the right (not requirement) of a Session to permit and Minister to perform a wedding for “two people, traditionally a man and a woman”.**

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Some of these amendments are just plain boring, such as how to review ordination exams for new pastors, or how small a Presbytery can be. Others are important but not very controversial, such as more inclusive wording on how to work with other religious traditions, or requiring congregations to have a child protection policy. (We did that last year.)

One amendment is so rare and remarkable that it requires a 2/3 majority: to include a new formal statement in our Book of Confessions. Many of us know the Apostles' Creed and if we grew up Catholic, we might have memorized the Nicene Creed. Some of us grew up with the Presbyterian Catechisms or studied the Westminster Confession of Faith. Maybe you've read some of the lofty statements that came out of the Reformation, after World War II, in response to nuclear proliferation, or when the PCUSA was officially formed. We have 11 official professions of faith, and a 12th has been proposed. The Belhar Confession (read it here: [www.pcusa.org/](http://www.pcusa.org/)

[resource/belhar-confession](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession)) comes from South Africa, in response to their process of racial reconciliation and attempt to draw the church into unity. Accepting it doesn't change anything about church law or practice, but it would be a powerful statement.

And to save the hardest for last . . . we are voting about marriage.

The last General Assembly voted on two overtures about marriage. First, the regular Pastors and Elders designated from around the country approved a motion (by a vote of 371-238) that basically says Ministers may not be disciplined for conducting wedding services for same-gender couples in states where that is legal. That is an interpretive item of church policy (a lower level of church procedure), so it was enacted immediately.

Second, the General Assembly passed an amendment to the Book of Order (by a vote of 429-175) that strikes the language of marriage as “a civil contract between a woman and a man,” and adds language that recognizes the right (not requirement) of a Session to permit and Minister to perform a wedding for “two people, traditionally a man and a woman”. Despite quick journalism, the Presbyterian definition of marriage remains unchanged: “Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family.” But most assuredly, this amendment was the loudest proclamation for gay marriage by any church body as large as the PCUSA.

And though the amendment passed, it has not been approved, and is not yet enacted.

So, we are in the season where 171 Presbyteries, including Plains and Peaks, will be voting. I do not write this to add to the controversy, or to sway your opinion, but to make sure everyone is aware of the process, and our place in it. Of course you are welcome to talk to me anytime, and last year Session invited the congregation to talk with them. Doors are open, not for fighting, but with plenty of room for listening, questions, reading Scripture, and sharing perspectives.

We are a very diverse community, trying to figure out how to follow God. We are part of a larger tradition of holy men and women, who got it right sometimes, and have been wrong at other points. We are never going to agree about everything, but we can agree to walk this road together.

## Nederland Food Pantry *Fundraiser*

Saturday February 21 at 6:00 p.m.

Community Center



Silent Auction donations are still needed. Contact the Food Pantry if you, or your business, have an item or service to donate.

### Mission Report

— Dennis Whalen

The Nederland Food Pantry provided approximately 66,800 pounds of food to households in 2014, and over the past two years the Food Pantry has served over 800 individual families from our community.

Accomplishing this community service is thanks to the thousands of volunteer hours by the dedicated folks who help gather food from Boulder's Community Food Share and other sources, show up every Saturday, and the first and last Thursdays of the months when the Food Pantry is open to help distribute the food. I believe we live in a special community that is able to provide food and clothing to those in need.

Thanks to the work of the Executive Director, the Food Pantry has won a grant to get a commercial, double wide, refrigerator that will allow the Food Pantry for the first time to have fresh milk available to the clients. This is an additional item we've been hoping to provide for several years, and are excited to have this item available.

The Clothing Closet has been able to purchase some snow pants and other children's clothing items thanks to a donation from the Nederland City. Winter clothes, especially children's winter clothing, are always in high demand, and we're thankful for this donation to help keep the local kids warm.

Remember, the Food Pantry's annual fund raiser will be Feb 21, 6:00 p.m. at the Community Center. It'll include a snack bar, silent auction, and a sock hop with a live band. Also, check out the web site at <http://www.nederlandfoodpantry.org/>.

**Men's Group** meets the third Sunday of each month at 4 pm. All men are welcome, whether you want to share a beer or help plan our next outreach project. This month, 15 February, is at Very Nice.

## Youth Group

The 2014-2015 Youth Group calendar of events is published on our website! Check it out at [www.nederlandcpc.org/youth-group](http://www.nederlandcpc.org/youth-group).

1 February 11:30 – All Youth, with Soup, bowls, and games, to get ready for the Super Bowl Game!

19 Feb 7 pm – All Youth, with dessert

1 Mar 11:30 – All Youth, with lunch and fun!

### Bible Study

*With the new year comes a new Bible study, on Wednesdays at 6:30 in the sanctuary. We started with Ruth, and now for February we move to the New Testament and the Gospel of Mark. The goal is to read closely two chapters a week—so that all are invited to hop in with Mark 3-4 on Wednesday, 4 February, even if you missed the first chapters on 27 Jan.*

**Women's Group** meets the first Sunday of each month. All women are welcome, whether you want to share a drink or just some laughs with new church friends! This February we are going to skip it, because of some silly football game. Next month, 1 March, let's get together at Kathmandu at noon.

### February Anniversaries!

8th Ed and Eleanor Busch

#### February Birthdays!

4	Erik Skeie	20	Roberta McIntosh
6	Donna Collier	21	Judy Hubbard
10	Bette Ventrella	23	John Anderson
12	Gaylord Morrison	23	Samantha Harrison
Missing <i>your</i> birthday? Tell Gary.			

**Don't be taken in** by Dennis's casual "check out the web site" for the Nederland Food Pantry. It is one the best volunteer organization web sites out there; well-designed, easy to navigate and full of pertinent information. Visit it now!

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 "A compassionate city is  
 an uncomfortable city!  
 A city that is uncomfortable  
 when anyone is homeless or hungry.  
 Uncomfortable if every child isn't loved  
 and given rich opportunities  
 to grow and thrive.  
 Uncomfortable when as a community  
 we don't treat our neighbors as  
 we would wish to be treated."  
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— Karen Armstrong, Founder  
The Charter for Compassion

## New T'ai Chi Class

T'ai chi chuan classes lead by Mike Dye in the Chen Man Ching short form (Yang) style are being offered at Nederland Presbyterian Church on Monday evenings from 5:45-6:45 p.m.



T'ai chi is a gentle, slow moving Chinese martial art and meditation based on the fundamental principle of relaxation and release of unnecessary tension. There are many diverse styles of t'ai chi. The style that we are offering at the church - the Yang short form - was brought to the U.S. in 1964 by Cheng Man-ch'ing.

On February 9th we are starting a new round of instruction. Over the course of 15 weeks we will work through the first third of the form consisting of 13 distinct sequences of movement, focusing on posture, alignment, balance, body awareness, mindfulness and relaxation.

We wear normal, loose clothing. Some participants practice in stocking feet; other students who need more arch support wear smooth-bottomed shoes - any clothing you find comfortable is fine. While we stand for most of the hour's instruction, all participants are encouraged to take breaks or sit down as needed.

T'ai Chi classes provide a low-stress learning opportunity. We repeat, repeat, repeat standing moves until their sequences become more automatic. (Most participants practice and fine-tune their forms for years at a time.)

We gather on Mondays 5:45-6:45 in the Fellowship Hall at the Church. (Come in through the back door). All ages are welcome, including seniors and supervised children. Initially we ask for a 15-week commitment, as stances build off each other sequentially. A \$5 per week donation is encouraged, but not necessary.

If you would like to join us or have any questions please contact Mike Dye at (720)-635-0417 or [mike@mikedye.com](mailto:mike@mikedye.com) - or just show up. We look forward to practicing with you!

*When we are motivated by compassion and wisdom, the results of our actions benefit everyone, not just our individual selves or some immediate convenience. When we are able to recognize and forgive ignorant actions of the past, we gain strength to constructively solve the problems of the present."*

— Dalai Lama XIV

## Charter for Compassion

As a Partner of the Charter for Compassion, we will:

- Help create, build, and sustain a network for Compassionate Communities in our local community and in the worldwide network of communities.
- Take the compassion and compassionate action that we already bring to our community and connect it with the work and hopes of others who have the same vision of a more compassionate and peaceful world.
- Have the opportunity to communicate and connect with others—within our partner sector and across sectors—to share your experiences and learn from others about what they are doing to ignite and grow compassionate action.
- Be assigned a link to NCPIC on the Charter's website so that our work will be visible to others both within your sector and across sectors.
- Gain access to a private Facebook group where the Charter's varied and vibrant Partners can share events, resources, and advice.
- Be invited to listen and participate in Charter regular telephone conference calls—usually including a provocative speaker followed by discussion among our members and partners.
- Receive Charter newsletters to learn of the worldwide activities of the Charter for Compassion International, including events, news, conferences, and other resources that may be helpful and inspiring to us.

Now, more than ever before, it is possible—and indeed, urgently necessary — to tap into common desires for a more compassionate and peaceful world by building a vast interconnected network of compassion among the peoples of the Earth.

### Those who wrote the charter call us:

- To restore compassion to the center of morality and religion
- To return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate
- To ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures
- To encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity
- To cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies

## Compassionate Communities Initiative

communities that are actively organizing to create a compassionate action plan. We will look more at what they are doing in a future newsletter.

In the meantime, the Charter website provides us with some framework for what it means to be a compassionate community.

“...the structure of modern society—of nation states and mega cities and a world population that has grown to over seven billion—often thwarts and distorts this natural desire to be compassionate. The sense of disconnection is so pervasive that unkindness, indifference, and selfishness appear as the norm; compassion, kindness and caring are the outliers.

“The Compassionate Communities program is not a certificate program that offers a seal of approval, nor does it subscribe to a single definition of a Compassionate Community. Instead, the Charter invites communities of all sizes to bring compassion to life in practical, specific ways through compassion-driven actions—in neighborhoods, businesses, schools and colleges, healthcare, the arts, local government, peace groups, environmental advocacy groups, and faith congregations.

“In a Compassionate Community, the needs of all the inhabitants of that community are recognized and met, the well-being of the entire community is a priority, and all people and living things are treated with respect. More simply, in a Compassionate Community, people are motivated by compassion to take responsibility for and care for each other.

“A community where compassion is fully alive is a thriving, resilient community whose members are moved by empathy to take compassionate action, are able to confront crises with innovative solutions, are confident in navigating changes in the economy and the environment, and are resilient enough to bounce back readily from natural and man-made disasters.”

## COMMUNITY TOOL BOX

Although there are no prescriptions or “must do” lists, the Charter does provide a “toolbox” with ideas and suggestions, in addition to networking with other organizations and communities. View links below:

<http://charterforcompassion.org/node/7885>

<http://charterforcompassion.org/cities>

**Like the bee, we distill poison from honey for our self-defense — what happens to the bee if it uses its sting is well known.**

— Dag Hammarskjöld

*Markings*



Violet Aandres; Anastasia and family; Judy Anderson; Rev. Gibney's brother; Don and Betty Hunt; the Irwin family; Linda and Verl Jones; David Lynd;

Karen Moss; Miles Pancoast and family; Rhonda Skeie and her brother Steve Holland; Atashnaa Medicine Shield; Gail and David Skinner; Megen Stadele; love and consideration within the church and denomination; for those who are unable to worship with us regularly; for those serving in the military; for all those caring for aging parents; and for those struggling with the problems at issue in Ferguson and Berkeley, Missouri, Ohio, Brooklyn and beyond.

**Book Club** – Tuesday nights at 6:30 an intellectually diverse and rowdy group (diverse and intellectually rowdy?) gathers in the sanctuary, usually with snacks, to discuss a fun read. Last month, 6 January, we started our new book, *A New Kind of Christianity*, by Brian McLaren.

All are welcome to join! The more perspectives we have, the more fun it's been!

(Careful. McLaren wrote an earlier book called *A New Kind of Christian*. Make sure to get the one with the subtitle, *Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith*.)