

**TELLING THE STORY: Stories of Ministry on the Margins**  
**Rocky Mountain Annual Conference 2016**  
**Friday, June 10, 2016: The Westin Westminster**



**THE SCRIPT**

**“Telling the Story”**

**Youngsook Kang**

Our theme for Annual Conference is “Ministry on the Margins.” What do the Margins look like? Where are the Margins in your community?

The Margins are the places where Jesus would have gone, filled with people that he would not have overlooked. He walked with the stranger, the foreigner, and the outsider. People marginalized by their work, their language, and their place in society. But rather than reaching down to them, he met them on common ground, eating with them and embracing them in the midst of their situations.

Even while he taught in the synagogues, it was the people that Jesus met along the way who received his greatest lessons. The woman at the well, the tax collector, and the children he welcomed with open arms were all considered outsiders in their own community. But he embraced them all, and offered them the kingdom of God through his words and actions.

As Reggie McNeal says, “Churches (on the Margins) look not only to their own resources and ideas for the community, but they are moving from ministry *for* the community and *in* the community, to ministry *with* the community.”

This is a vision of ministry that looks outside of our comfortable surroundings, and into the world that surrounds us. These are churches that look outside their doors, and into their communities. They have become the mobile church, no longer focused on bringing people through their doors, but sending people out of their doors and into the community. This is what John Wesley meant when he said, “the world is my parish.” Not striving to be noticed by the world’s leaders, but walking alongside its common people.

Each of our churches has an opportunity to take up Jesus’ work among the marginalized populations among us. In fact, many of you are already doing this. We would like to show a few examples of churches that are

leading the way into ministry on the Margins, those who have taken the church outside of their doors and into the world.

**Lay Leaders: Tell the story of “Ministry on the Margins”**

**Margaret Hotze & Kunle Taiwo**

Faithful and fruitful disciples in Rocky Mountain Conference are doing exciting and vital work on the margins as we cultivate the tree of life in our conference and in the world.

Speaking of cultivating, many churches now have community gardens to share and grow with their communities. We see these women from the Haven, a residence for women recovering from addiction, working in the earth to bring healing their souls as well as bodies.

Many churches support their local food banks. Parker UMC assembles “Blessing Bags” containing food items, an item of warmth, and love notes for church members to carry in their cars and give to the homeless.

Mile High Pikes Peak people at Ubuntu Day support and participate with direct food service at Café 180, which seeks to eliminate hunger and social barriers by feeding people whether or not they can pay.

Many churches work to meet clothing needs in their community. Some have groups that sew: St. Luke’s Itch to Stitch group supports local hospitals, warmth for warriors, knits for kids, and more; Lakewood, Smoky Hill, and other church groups are working on the “40 Days for Girls” project, making girls’ hygiene kits. Newcastle makes quilts for an orphanage in Uganda. Ladies of Genoa, an ecumenical group, sews for the Little Dresses/Little Britches project. So far they have sent 192 dresses and britches to children around the world.

Some churches provide clothing for local shelters. Gillette UMC sponsors a weekly clothing swap. Twice a year they have a big event, where volunteers read Bible stories to children while their mothers shop. Hilltop UMC has an annual big Christmas Giveaway, during which they donate food, clothing, and toiletries to the Rescue Mission in Salt Lake City.

And then on to needs for shelter: we see here members of Carbondale building for Habitat for Humanity and Durango church members in their “Lights for Literacy” project, installing lights for the Navajo Reservation in Shiprock, New Mexico, so that children have enough light to do their homework.

And here church members from Ogden do flood recovery work in Estes Park and volunteer with Habitat to meet needs of local residents.

Newcastle’s UMW sponsors an Annual Luncheon with women from other community churches as a fund raiser. This year the funds were for repairs to Senior Center's roof.

FUMC Colorado Springs goes further afield to the margins in Nicaragua, to help build latrines.

**Christ calls us to provide for those in need.**

There are unique ways of working with those on the margins: Colorado Springs FUMC sponsors “Rides for Rubbish”—walking with people from the soup kitchens to pick up trash in exchange for bus passes, and twice a year the church Youth provide meals.

Mountain Vista in Utah has a sports ministry, which engages people who might not otherwise be involved with the church.

Many churches minister to those in prison. We see the Springs Bible study ministry at Fremont Correctional Facility and these pictures from Mike Spahr of Kairos Ministry to adult offenders at Bent County Correctional in Las Animas, CO. Fort Collins also sponsors a Peaks on Prison ministry.

And who could be more on the margins than those who are trafficked, treated as slaves? We see here different churches promoting awareness of human trafficking in the community through an “umbrella defense.”

And then, right in our own Conference, something exciting: a new worshipping community has begun: An experimental Samoan worship service in Kearns, Utah. We welcome this service to meet the needs of this group of people.

Rocky Mountain Methodists are involved in the community! In VIM trips, UMCOR, and mission trips to locations within our Conference and throughout the world.

**We give thanks for all who hear and respond to God’s call to be in ministry with all God’s people.**

**Response: Imagining the Community**

**Kristi Hornick**

Matthew 25:35-36:

*Jesus said, for I was hungry and you fed me.*

*I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink.*

*I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.*

*I was naked, and you gave me clothing.*

*I was sick, and you cared for me.*

*I was in prison, and you visited me.*

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ guide us to first SEE those on the margins, becoming aware of the injustices and needs of society and then to ACT, planting, nurturing, and harvesting. What happens when we not only see, but act? What happens within others, ourselves, and communities?

Transformation.

## *Telling the Story 2016*

From darkness and desperation to awareness and fulfillment

From turmoil and chaos to tranquility and peace

From being complacent to being passionate

From scarcity to abundance

From brokenness to healing and restoration

From death to vibrancy of life

It is because of your commitment to cultivate the tree of life, to see ALL of us on the margins and act, our needs are met. I am not homeless. I am accepted, fed, clothed, mentored, loved, and safe. You rescued me, restored me, and gave me back my dignity. You saw my humanity, showed me I was worthy. You helped me reconcile with myself, God, loved ones, and my community. I am not just surviving. I am thriving. More importantly, I have realized abundant life, a life with new relationships, hopes, dreams, and possibilities. You and I are connected, always.

Jesus wouldn't see just someone's circumstance---his/her needs, disenfranchisement, loneliness, sickness, or criminal record---Jesus would see and embrace his/her full personhood. Let us imagine an entire society where we see like Jesus and act in faith—with zero inhibitions---so that our passions intersect with and meet the needs of God's people and world.

### **Communal Response:**

To this mission we bring our ancient dreams, our dreams, our abundant dreams, our boldest dreams. We imagine a new story for God's people. Amen.

### **Cabinet: Tell the story of "Ministry on the Margins"**

**Melanie Rosa and Jeff Rainwater**

Life changing ministry to those on the margins of society is happening all over the RMC

Metropolitan District: Each morning the world comes to the Evanston Center in the Metropolitan district: more than 100 students, representing 20 different countries. All differences fall away, as they become united in their hope to become English-speaking US citizens. Within the walls of the Evanston Center, their presence serves as a daily testimony of strangers becoming friends.

Nearly 400 people also participate in Twelve Step programs throughout the week. "I attend men's AlAnon meetings here on Tuesdays and Saturdays." said a grieving husband, following the funeral for his wife. "We say the Lord's Prayer together at the close of each meeting. THIS place is my church."

**We build reconciliation, one relationship at a time.**

Mile High Pikes Peak District: The Food pantry at Trinity, Colorado Springs gives away about 150,000 meals per year. The church offers a worship service for the folks who come to the food pantry. Here people receive food not only for their families but, food for their souls, and extra food to feed their neighbors in need.

First UMC Castle Rock received a Legacy Grant from the Conference to start a program serving children with special needs, both on Sunday mornings and after school. These children participate in events at the church such as the Children's Christmas Musical. One child had been asked to leave several other preschools in Castle Rock for disruptive behavior. He has been a part of the Castle Rock First program for two years now.

Utah/Western Colorado District: This past year First UMC, Durango started the "Sleeping Mats Ministry" in which volunteers make sleeping mats from recycled plastic grocery bags that are given to the local homeless shelters. Norton Hindley, from Durango First, started the "Lights for Literacy" Ministry, where youth install solar lights in the Navajo Reservation in Shiprock, New Mexico. Children on the reservation can now do their homework at night.

### **Ministry is about building relationships and trust with our neighbors**

Peaks and Plains: Faith UMC in Sterling adopted Marisa, who came to them homeless and addicted to Meth. With their help she got into rehab and found housing. After she got out of rehab, Marisa was baptized. She wore a "Just Do It" t-shirt that the whole church signed. She is flourishing.

First United Methodist Church, Boulder CO, has entered into an agreement to build upon their very valuable downtown property, a shelter for youth and young adults. They will do this in collaboration with Attention Homes, which has served homeless youth for years.

Trinity District: The Trinity District feeds LOTS of people! Limon gives lunch to children throughout the summer and joins Beulah and other churches in providing food for children on weekends. Many churches help Pueblo First in providing a hot breakfast for the homeless every Saturday.

Rocky Ford reaches out to the Hispanic community with a meal and activities every Wednesday. Son Rise in Pueblo West has adopted a low-income apartment building next door as well as the local elementary school. Sargent Community has joined other churches in mentoring kids. First UMC, Canon City is mentoring two families, helping them to transition out of homelessness.

Wyoming District: Churches in Wyoming work with many organizations to help those without homes. First Gillette works with Second Chance Ministries, a prison reentry program, and Yes House, an emergency youth shelter. First Casper works with Central WY Rescue Mission, Life Steps Campus and Seton House. Torrington UMC supports Goshen Help for homeless teens. Cheyenne churches partner with Family Promise offering meals and a place to stay as they transition to stable housing. Grace hosts the day center for these families on a full-time basis.

**Together, our churches are actively working to bring new life and hope to the people of the Rocky Mountain Conference.**

**Response: Imagining the Ministry**

**Eric Strader**

Imagine how our neighbors could be welcomed. Imagine how the stranger could be embraced. Imagine how those searching for wholeness could be welcomed. Imagine where community is created out of its need, but thrives out of a life-giving experience. Imagine the community where all children are welcome to participate in the story of God. Imagine a church that cares about the people beyond its community, the people beyond its city, people beyond its state, the people beyond their country. Imagine a church where we walk with people in the messiness of their lives, as long as it takes. Imagine a person who is at their wits end, lost, confused, desperate can find a place where they are made safe, given food, and told they are not alone. Imagine a place in the world that says to all those who the world discards, judges, and condemns, you matter here.

It is not simply something we imagine, it is something we are: The Church of Jesus Christ; offering hospitality, grace, room, and love when it is desperately needed but more important it is offered to neighbors in our community, strangers we don't know, God's beloved children.

Reaching out to be in ministry on the margins is not about church vitality or growth, it is about being what the church has always been. If we take seriously what the Rabbi Jesus said, we live in tension with a world that often rejects the painful, divisive, heart wrenching, complicated journey, for we believe what we confess, that Jesus Christ has opened the church to people of all ages and nations and races, and...and...and...

Imagine the people of God you are called to welcome next.

**Communal Response:**

To this mission we bring our ancient dreams, our dreams, our abundant dreams, our boldest dreams. We imagine a new story for God's people. Amen.

**Finance: Tell the story of "Ministry on the Margins"**

**Kirsten Barlow and Noreen Keleshian**

Finance and Administration Ministry is privileged to discuss how our connection supports and strengthens ministries with all people in our communities. Your Tithe Plus Mission Giving generously supports outreach in our neighborhoods and beyond to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We were fortunate to have an operating budget surplus in 2015 of about \$73,000. This surplus was transferred to designated funds to further ministries to all people. This included:

- Young people's ministry, to enhance our abilities to engage a diverse range of youth;
- Hispanic/Latino ministry, to broaden our ministries with Hispanic and Latino people;
- Transitional ministry, to support our efforts to help smaller churches transition in ways that best serve their communities.

The explanation of 2015 financial results is in the program book. Please read it and ask us if you have any questions.

**Strong financial systems support ministry on the margins.**

Our connectional system fosters our strong benefits and property management programs, which means more Conference resources are available for program ministries.

We work with the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to offer benefits for active and retired clergy and their families.

These benefit plans are healthy. We are pleased that the actuaries tell us all Conference pension obligations are funded at over 100%.

Our costs for retiree healthcare are paid using both budget money and investments. Our retiree healthcare investment account currently has 40% of the amount the actuaries say we need to fund this commitment into the future. One year ago we were funded at 33%, so we are moving in the right direction.

We want to remind all clergy and spouses on HealthFlex that you get money put in a Health Reimbursement Account, or HRA, for medical expenses if you take the Blueprint for Wellness, either here at Annual Conference or at a Quest facility. The amount per person is increasing from \$200 now to \$225 next year, so we really encourage you to take the Blueprint for Wellness. Last year participation was 67% and we'd love to include more of you and be closer to 100%.

Conference Trustees are responsible for properties and risk management. In 2014 the Annual Conference approved discontinuing Warren UMC, and we retained ownership of that building. It is used by another congregation and a diverse group of approximately 15 different community organizations, many of them ministering to people on the margins.

There are several petitions regarding discontinuance this year. We expect to sell the church and parsonage in DeBeque, Colorado, the former Zion UM Fellowship building in Colorado Springs, and Merritt Memorial UMC in Denver. Proceeds from the sale of these properties will be used to foster our outreach and vitality with diverse populations.

We plan to retain the former Alameda Heights UMC in Denver, and Gracia Divina, one of our Hispanic/Latino ministries, will have the opportunity to grow and flourish in that space. We will also retain the former St. Paul's UMC in Denver, and our New Church Development Committee has plans to use that space for a new ministry, *Belong*.

**Management of Conference properties and assets supports ministry on the margins.**

Property, pension, and health expenses are necessary costs to achieve our mission. The amount past due to the Conference for these expenses at the end of 2015 was just under \$300,000. Unfortunately this was about \$23,000 higher than the amount at the end of 2014. Eleven churches make up 83% of this arrearage, and we

continue to work with churches to address it.

The Council on Finance and Administration has asked Noreen to send monthly email reminders to pastors, and local church treasurers and finance chairs when these invoices are ready to be paid. We hope you find the reminders helpful and appreciate you staying current on these commitments.

Thanks to your generosity our Conference is financially stable, and we have the resources to do the work that God has called us to do with all people. Through May this year you have given more than \$2.5 million Tithe Plus Mission Giving; and we believe our \$5.6 million budget is achievable.

Members of Conference Council on Finance and Administration, Board of Pension & Health, and Trustees are listed in the nominations report; please talk with any of us if you have questions about financial and administrative ministries of the RMC.

**Your contributions and commitment undergird and support our ministries with all people throughout God's world, including our ministry on the margins. Thank you.**

### Response: Imagining the Kingdom

Dennis Shaw

Jesus didn't have an elevator speech. But if he had (pause) Luke 18: Verses 18 to 23 offer a quality -- distilled -- mission focused -- elevator speech. :

John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, 'Are you the one ...?' Jesus answered, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

Jesus models clarity of focus. He gave the Capernaum synagogue his mission focus and to who – then he went and did it. His focus was mission-shaped.

Healing.

Resurrection.

Hope.

And he offered these to all – perhaps especially to those on the margin in his context.

*Two quick Elevator Speeches from our Financial Report ...*

The Rocky Mountain Conference met its National and Jurisdictional obligation for the second consecutive year and expects to do it again and again. Can we offer an Amen?

Shared programs with Yellowstone are fruitful. Can we offer a second Amen?

Can we give thanks to those conference leaders that accomplished these extraordinary, not small gifts for us?

But is this a moment in our history, an occasion, to bend the arc of our financial trajectory?

Let us imagine resources dedicated to local church vitality ...

Let us imagine resources dedicated to developing worship excellence and creativity at the local church.

Let us imagine resources dedicated to showing local churches how they might be prayerfully and gracefully shown the means how to engage their community – particularly those on the margins -- in their adaptive context.

What is *our* elevator speech that will help *us* creatively re-imagine and adaptively transform the Mountain Sky landscape so that to a future Jane the Baptist, we might point her to what she sees and what she hears. This is the Kingdom imagined.

### Communal Response:

To this mission we bring our ancient dreams, our dreams, our abundant dreams, our boldest dreams. We imagine a new story for God's people. Amen.

### Mission and Ministry: Tell the story of "Ministry on the Margins"

Chris Frasier and Jeff Hirota

Churches in the Rocky Mountain Conference have deep roots in their communities, many having ministered to the same families for well over a hundred years. But in most every community, there is a population beyond our walls who move through very quickly. These are seasonal workers, drawn to fill short-term roles in the economy. Whether they work in agriculture, oil and gas, or the outdoor recreation industry, these people represent a changing mission field.

Our churches are responding to this fleeting population by creating mobile ministries. They are finding points of contact with those who harvest produce, operate drilling rigs, or guide river raft trips. These workers arrive in our region by the thousands every few months, often living far from their homes and families while laboring long hours in tough conditions. They often yearn for the type of stable community demonstrated within our church families.

Here are examples of churches that are reaching out to seasonal workers with simple offerings of care and fellowship.

In any given ski season, over 100,000 people visit the resort community of Breckenridge, CO. The resort workers are a necessary component to make sure the community thrives. Yet, life as a resort worker in a mountain town is not easy. Father Dyer UMC in Breckenridge devotes much of their local mission effort to this population. On any given Sunday night during the winter, close to 200 resort workers attend the church's Sunday dinner, which provides a free homemade meal and a chance to build community.

Good Pantry provides a variety of options for families and individuals working seasonal jobs. In the off season, food pantry numbers double, while people wait for their next paycheck.

Each July, the church community puts on the treasure sale, a garage sale like no other. Last year's treasure sale raised \$20,000. 100% of the proceeds goes toward Father Dyer's special assistance fund. In the past year, the fund provided snow tires for a resort worker unable to travel to a job, car repairs for a single mother needing to get to class, mortgage assistance and so on.

Alcohol and drug use is a major problem in the Breckenridge community. Father Dyer's jail ministers spend every other Tuesday night offering hope and grace to those who are down on their luck. Last year, they were given special permission to bring ashes on Ash Wednesday, and perform communion on Christmas Eve. The church is in its second year of their "lunch for lifties" program. Each Monday they hand out 50-75 lunches to resort workers who often can't eat lunch while working their shifts.

**We serve our neighbors in our community.**

Here is another story of ministries with seasonal workers in Salida. During the summer, hundreds of people come to the Upper Arkansas Valley to work in the white water rafting industry. These guides come from all over the United States, and some come from other countries. Once the summer rafting season is over, most guides return home. While here for the summer, most guides live out of their vehicles or camp wherever they can find a spot of ground.

Salida United Methodist Church is committed to forming relationships with these raft guides. Each Wednesday night during the summer, the church provides a free dinner. The summer of 2016 marks the 5th year for this adventure of building community with our raft guide friends. The dinners are about more than food. There are games, music, and conversations. An average of 65 guides attend. Each dinner takes at least 15 volunteers to be present for set-up, serving, hosting, and clean-up. And a dozen more folks are needed to prepare the food for the evening.

This summer the church will be exploring ways to deepen their relationship with their raft guide friends. Rev. Calob Rundell, pastor of Salida UMC, will be spending regular hours each week by the river with the guides. Church members will also be take part of trips on the river with guides that they know from the weekly dinners.

**We are deepening our relationship with our neighbors.**

**Response: Imagining the Mission**

**Ryan Canaday**

Let us imagine....sitting with suffering—the act of sitting with real people, who actually experience real suffering in a real world. Just to sit with them. Not to sit with them "in hopes of", or to try to fix it, or offer solutions—that's the temptation isn't it. We want a quick fix to the worlds deepest problems. But to simply sit and share stories. There's a word for this deep spiritual practice.

Storytelling.

Storytelling. It's the basis of relationship building. It's the starting place for redeeming negative turns in the story of the community. It's what helps us cultivate and empower new leaders in the mission of changing the world, of making the world a better place. This is the mission of Jesus, right? Sometimes the mission is so simple—to stand alongside people and whisper: "You can do it. I believe in you. Your story matters." Isn't this what God says to us?

The mission of Jesus was always about storytelling and relationship.

There's a beautiful story in the gospels where Jesus is with his disciples, the ones closest to him. A woman is with them and she begins to pour out expensive perfume on Jesus' head...which is actually a 1st century Jewish ritual of preparing the body for burial. The disciples are outraged: "Jesus, why is she doing this...we could have sold this perfume and given the money to the poor!"

How does Jesus respond? "No, you guys are missing it! This is all she has and she's doing a beautiful act of service—you're missing it." Jesus always sees what others can't see. He's always looking just below the surface to see what's happening.

There's a message there for us, isn't there. Don't miss the relationship that's right in front of you. You don't wanna miss this story. Stay present...because it's happening right here, right now.

- Imagine a community where relationships are honest enough to go to the deepest places.
- Imagine a community where relationships and stories—not doctrine and dogma—are central to its movement.
- Imagine the community that's willing to sit with the broken, the abandoned, the lost, the forgotten, and all those who've been told they're not good enough.

That is the Mission imagined.

### **Communal Response:**

To this mission we bring our ancient dreams, our dreams, our abundant dreams, our boldest dreams. We imagine a new story for God's people. Amen.

### **Words of Commitment in Closing**

**Youngsook Kang**

We give thanks to God for those churches and ministries that are engaging their community in reaching out to people on the margins. Our invitation today is that we walk together. We walk together in a common journey. We walk with the stranger, the foreigner, the outsider. We walk with those on the margins. May the blessings of God of life be with us all.