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August 31, 2018

Homestead Presbytery will be closed Monday September 3, 2018 for Labor Day

Scholarship Available

The Hendrickson Scholarship is now available for someone from Nebraska who *is studying to serve the Presbyterian Church (USA) as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Pastor or Christian Educator.* This Scholarship has just been established with funds invested with the Presbyterian Foundation through the will of Carol Hendrickson and from her husband, Bruce. They were/are very active in the church in Holdrege, NE as well as the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and General Assembly.

There is **\$6,000-\$7,000** available for distribution in September so I would like to ask that you share this with any from your presbytery who might be eligible. There is some urgency since the **deadline for applying is September 15** so that the award can be made at the Fall Synod Meeting at the end of September.

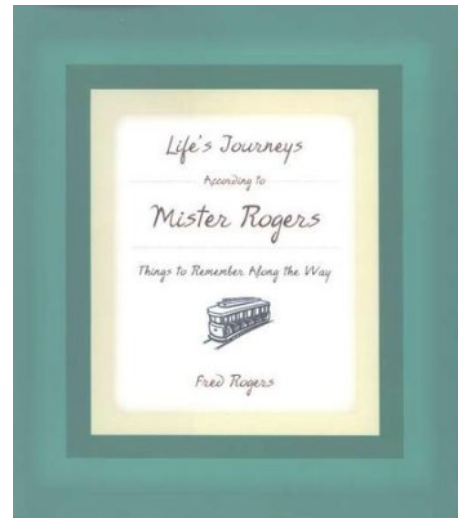
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What happened at the 223rd GA?

Israel-Palestine/Middle East: After spirited debate in the Assembly Committee on Middle East Issues that spilled out into the

Good Reads



Click Image to Order

Adored by preschoolers and parents alike, Mister Rogers was also a much-sought-after graduation speaker, prompting deafening standing ovations at top universities! As you browse the never-before-published speeches and inspiring quotes in this unique and uplifting volume, you'll understand why this soft-spoken Presbyterian minister became a hero in an unpredictable postmodern world.

Go on, Laugh a little

hallways of America's Center (St. Louis' convention center), the assembly raced through the committee's report in just thirty-five minutes on June 22. Among its actions, the assembly:

Asked RE/MAX, LLC, to end its sale and rental of property on occupied, disputed land in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The vote was 393-55.

Voiced support for all efforts to bring Palestinians and Israelis together peacefully.

Asked the state of Israel to fully comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to stop discriminatory practices and called on the U.S. government to rejoin the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Condemned the recent violence along the border between Israel and Gaza.



Worship Without Pretense

by Nicole Neri, Journal Star

Pastor Trevor Rook has a background in comedy, and he isn't afraid to improvise. During a recent Sunday morning service at Neighbors Church, he decided to try a different approach to Holy Communion. After explaining the sacrament's significance, he asked for two volunteers, and suggested they say something more unconventional as they served. As each one approached the table, they heard the words "you are special" as they picked up a piece of bread, and "just as you are" as they dipped it into a chalice of white grape juice.

The phrases were inspired by the television show "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" - a significant influence of the Fallbrook-area church, which started this year and has been built around sincerely loving people as they are, Rook said.

The church began after the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church saw a need for a Methodist church in the developing area in northwest Lincoln, which has two nearby Lutheran churches and a Catholic church. The church meets in the Brookside Apartments at Fallbrook clubhouse at 7300 Tallgrass Parkway.

Blue River District Superintendent Bill Ritter asked Rook and his wife, Alison, who both have experience leading Methodist churches, to charter the new church. They moved to the area from Ord last summer and started reaching out to local residents.

"It started with Alison and me taking one or two people out for coffee," Trevor Rook said. "The DNA was really based on one-on-one conversations." People said they wanted "simplicity and authenticity," said Alison Rook, the church's connections director. They also wanted to worship without pretense, she said.

The church's approach is extremely relevant to modern society, said Nathan Stanton, the Great Plains Conference director of congregational excellence. "They're bringing a unique voice of openness, of worship that is much more informal," Stanton said. "They're chasing after a vision

that ... could create a powerful place for worship and discipleship in the midst of our culture."

Television icon Fred Rogers, who was an ordained Presbyterian minister, was also a part of those conversations.

The Rooks bought and shared copies of the book "The Simple Faith of Mr. Rogers," and discussed Rogers' beliefs as they apply to religion. Rogers' message of self-respect, kindness and dignity resonated in those conversations.

"Naturally, everyone loved the idea of promoting (his) kindness," Trever Rook said. "They wanted a pastor to come in and tell the (biblical) stories and be sincere about it, and to be able to do that with each other."

So they built worship services around that idea.

Because of that, Sundays at Neighbors Church don't have features such as a flashy worship band, because "the more layers of show you put on, the less sincere you get," Trever Rook said. Instead, it's a low-key service with one song leader playing acoustic guitar. Because of this intentional simplification, services feel more laid-back and open to attendees, more like a living room or coffee shop hangout, he said.

Another thing missing from services is the "passing of the plate," a set time where worship leaders solicit donations from members. "If people were sitting in my living room having conversations about God, I wouldn't say, 'Now you gotta pay,'" Trever Rook said.

The Neighbors Church leadership team is finding ways to become fiscally self-sufficient, especially through electronic giving. It also is using methods to grow the church, ranging from social media outreach to providing food to raise awareness. To be sustainable, churches need to have about 150 active and supporting members, Trever Rook said, and Neighbors has about 50 active members.

The church receives support through the Great Plains Conference, which it will need to start contributing to when it officially charts in about three years. Alison Rook said people are getting engaged with the donation process through honest conversations about faith and the church's goals.

Neighbors is building a worship space in the Fallbrook Town Center, alongside restaurants, offices and boutiques. Trever Rook envisions it will also be a workspace, providing free coffee and water during the week, with three services every Sunday. He hopes others will rent the space for meetings and receptions.

The space should be finished by early September, a few weeks before Neighbors' public launch. On Sept. 21, the church will screen the documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor," about Rogers' life, and Amy Hollingsworth, author of "The Simple Faith of Mr. Rogers," will give a presentation about Rogers, his faith and her book.

As Neighbors continues to grow, Alison Rook has been adding more opportunities for discipleship and community outreach. There were small group meetings last year and she wants to implement more youth programming.

Most of all, she said, the church has been adapting to its members' needs, and isn't afraid to experiment with different approaches.

"We're creating a community or space for people who haven't found a space to connect with God," she said.

Trever Rook said people at Neighbors Church want to take a different approach to worship.

"The people we seem to be attracting are amazing, creative thinkers. They want something different," he said. "And oddly enough, what seems to be different is going back to the basics, going back to the original. "I think people feel less threatened. They feel comfortable to come in and be who they are."

Amanda Whited, who went to her first Neighbors service July 8, said she appreciated the accepting and unpretentious environment. "It's not just the basic, 'You have to be a perfect Christian to be here,'" she said. "Like (Trevor Rook) said, everybody makes mistakes and that's OK, as long as you can grow and build off of that."

Whited recently moved to Lincoln with her three children and was raised Presbyterian, but chose Neighbors because she wanted a church and pastor she could relate to. After her first experience, she said she'd be coming back with the whole family. "It won't be this quiet next time when we're all here," she said.

Keep Thinking...

"When we love a person, we accept him or her exactly as is: the lovely with the unlovely, the strong with the fearful, the true mixed in with the façade, and of course, the only way we can do it is by accepting ourselves that way."

-Fred Rogers

Pictures of the Presbytery