



Episcopalians and Methodists Working Together For Over a Century in Montana

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Case Study

By The Rev. Valerie Webster



Sheridan, Montana, is a ranching town that also draws retirees and tourists who enjoy fly fishing, hiking, and hunting. Sitting on the banks of the Ruby River and surrounded by the Tobacco Root, the Highlands, the McCarney, the Pioneer, the Ruby, the Gravelly, and the Snowcrest Mountains – Sheridan boasts 735 full-time residents.

Both founded in the 1890s and located on South Main Street, Bethel United Methodist Church and Christ Episcopal Church have engaged in ministry together for decades. During World War II when Christ Episcopal Church was without a priest and motor-travel was limited, members were baptized at Bethel United Methodist Church. Sheridan neighbors and members of Christ Episcopal Church and Bethel United Methodist naturally engage in outreach ministries together—Methodists volunteering in Christ Church’s Woodbank ministry for those needing fuel to heat their homes, and Episcopalians volunteering with Methodists at the local food bank.

From co-sponsoring a Community Thanksgiving Dinner to celebrating both an Ash Wednesday service and a Good Friday Stations of the Cross walk through Sheridan together since 2014, Christ Episcopal and Bethel United Methodist Churches have continued the churches long tradition of ministering together in the name of Christ. Today the Reverends Janis Hansen, Rector of Christ Episcopal Church, and Su DuBree, Pastor of Bethel and two other rural United Methodist Churches, have initiated a



Community Thanksgiving Dinner



Good Friday Stations of the Cross Walk

shared Grief Support Group. While neither church has the resources alone to provide Sheridan with this ministry of compassion, the two churches pooling their resources together, with the help of a professional counselor, are beginning this offering in April at the Methodist Hall.

As Episcopal and Methodist laity and clergy pray and serve together, Christ Episcopal Church and Bethel Unity Methodist Church are able to more effectively be the hands and feet and mouth of Christ in the Ruby River Valley.