



Mountain Sky Area

Rocky Mountain Annual Conference
Yellowstone Annual Conference
of The United Methodist Church
Bishop Elaine J. W. Stanovsky

Bishop's Sand Creek Massacre Blog

Entry #4

March 18, 2014

Blog #3

On July 19, 2009 I preached at the 150th anniversary of the founding of Golden First United Methodist Church, held in a city park. But the simple version of the early history of our churches in Colorado would soon begin to unravel.

In September I preached in Laramie, Wyoming. As I drove to Laramie, once again I saw signs marking the Sand Creek Massacre Trail.

Later in September I met with Northern Cheyenne elders, Otto Braided Hair and Steve Brady in Billings. JuDee Anderson, a member of Sheridan United Methodist Church, had worked on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. She got to know the people and their culture and history. She formed a Native American Ministries Committee at the church. Their ministry has been one of presence. They attend tribal events. Prepare and serve food when it is needed. Simply live in relationship with the Northern Cheyenne. I learned that every year in November, for several days over the anniversary of the Massacre, a Spiritual Healing Run is held. The Run was organized by LaForce "Lee" Lonebear, of the Northern Cheyenne, to teach young people their history and culture and to promote healing. The anniversary date coincides with Thanksgiving week. The Spiritual Healing Run begins at the Massacre Site and ends at the Colorado State Capital. Young people and old people run, but it's not a race and it's not about how fast anyone runs. It's about healing. The Sheridan, Wyoming United Methodists support the run with food preparation and presence.

In October I preached the 125th anniversary at our church in Lander, Wyoming. Again I saw signs for the Sand Creek trail (this is over 500 miles from the site of the massacre.) As I researched this region and its history, I came across a description of the year 1865 as a "bloody

year on the plains” and realized this referred to the rage that the survivors of the massacre carried with them on these Sand Creek trails east to Oklahoma, and north to Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana, but that also spread across 25 years of violence across the great plains.

And before the end of the year I celebrated 150 years with First United Methodist Church in Boulder and Trinity UMC, Denver’s “first church.”

In 2009 I preached at the four United Methodist Churches in Colorado that trace their histories to 1859. What I only learned later was that the early Methodist mission from Kansas and Nebraska to the “Gold Country of Colorado” violated the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie.