



USA MISSION EXPERIENCE WEB EXCLUSIVE

## USA Mission Experience Devotional

By Danelle Crawford McKinney

Note: This devotional was prepared by Danelle Crawford McKinney for those who traveled to South Dakota in September 2010 with the Presbyterian Women's USA Mission Experience. Though it was prepared for participants' use during the trip, we offer it here in faith that you might be able to use it in your own worship. The hymns listed are found in the Dakota hymnal, *Dakota Odowan*,\* but they also are listed in English and are familiar to many. Consider sharing one of these devotions with your small group or church as you learn about Native Americans and celebrate the gifts of your Native sisters and brothers in Christ.

\* The Dakota Mission of the American Missionary Association and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, John Poage Williamson and Alfred Longly Riggs, editors, 1879. Reprinted by the American Tract Society, Oradell, New Jersey, 1969.

### How To Use This Devotional

The following devotional was written specifically for Presbyterian Women's September 2010 USA Mission Experience trip to Dakota Presbytery. The daily schedule was designed to guide the group to the activities and events for each day.

The main scriptural basis for this devotional is Psalm 23. A short reflection on each portion of Psalm 23 has a connection to each particular area that was visited. Along with the scripture, a natural element for the day is listed. This element is something that the women might see while in the designated area.

There also is a direction chosen for each day. The direction represents a color that is symbolic of something on the medicine wheel, or has a connection to the designated area. These special focuses are meant to assist in understanding the ties we all have to the Native American's journey here on Earth.

Included in each devotion is a current social issue that Native Americans are faced with today. These issues are designed to help the reader become familiar with the struggles of Native Americans today and to help the reader reflect on how the Creator might speak to them to find ways to serve.

Near the end of each devotion, there are some challenging questions for the reader to consider. The questions are not intended to create concrete plans, but rather to generate some thinking about where the Lord is leading and guiding.

Each devotion includes a song in praise to *Wakan Tanka* (Great Spirit). These songs were given to the Dakota, and they are still praising God with them to this day.

Finally, the prayer at the end of each devotion is left open for anyone who feels led by the Holy Spirit to those things that can be experienced in the now. This is designed to allow the participant to speak from the heart, as this can be a very powerful tool to utilize during devotion.

## Language Lessons

A quick lesson on speaking Dakota/Lakota

The vowel sounds are as follows:

*a* is long as in “father”

*e* sounds like “ay” as in “way”

*i* sounds like “ee” as in “sleep”

*o* sounds like “oh” as in “slow”

*u* sounds like “ooo” as in “tube”

All consonants are pronounced as written, with the following exceptions:

*h* makes the guttural “kh” sound

*s* makes the “sh” sound

Danelle C. “*Iyanka Wiyon* (Running Woman)” Crawford McKinney is the first Dakota woman ordained in the PC(USA). She is a descendant of Charles R. Crawford, one of the first Dakota ministers in the area. An enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (*oyate* means “people”), Danelle was raised by her parents, the late Herbert Crawford and the late Sophie LaBatte Crawford. She is a fourth-generation Presbyterian, and graduated from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Danelle also has served the PC(USA) on many committees, but is most proud that she was considered a “Founding Mother” of the National Network of Presbyterian College Women.

Danelle is known to many as a partner to her sister, Rogene Crawford, because they both sang together from a young age. She is now married to Ronald K. McKinney (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) who is the Native American student advisor at South Dakota State University. Together they have three children, Alethia (14), Madison (11) and Ronston (6). The family lives in Flandreau, South Dakota; both Danelle and Rogene work at the Flandreau Indian School, a government-run, off-reservation boarding school for Native American students.

# Opening Worship

## Thursday, September 9, 2010

**Opening Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* #39, "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

**Opening Prayer:** Elder Elona Street-Stewart, Synod of Lakes and Prairies

**Call to Confession:** Reverend Ronald K. McKinney

**Prayer of Confession:** Volunteer

**Assurance of Pardon:** Volunteer

**Scripture:** Psalm 23

**Homily:** Reverend Danelle C. Crawford McKinney

### Unison Prayer to Service

**All:** *Wakan Tanka, pida mayaye*, Great Spirit, we thank you. You call each of us from all directions to serve you in this opportunity. We pray that as we come to listen, learn and share, we may hear your voice calling us to a mission that will have lasting effects on the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota Oyate, just as the original Presbyterian Board of Missions came to serve the people in order to share the Good News.

We pray that the upcoming days will inspire us to respond to the call of all the people. We ask that you will open our hearts and ears to the sounds of the Dakota Territory: not only to the people but to the land, the animals and to all of Mother Earth. Your message to each of us lies in places that we least expect, and we pray that you will help us to use this opportunity to serve you in the way that you call us.

In the name of our *Itancan*, our Chief, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* #38, "He Leadeth Me"

**Closing Prayer:** Reverend Ron McKinney

**Charge and Benediction:** Elder Elona Street-Stewart

## **Devotion**

### **Friday, September 10, 2010**

**Element:** Rocks

**Color:** Yellow

**Direction:** East

**Area:** Glacial Lakes

**Social Issue:** Education

**“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1).**

In many places, you can see how the land is affected by the glaciers that came through here thousands of years ago. When I was little, whenever I saw a picture of Jesus, it was the one where Jesus is holding a small lamb, sitting near a grassy hill with rocks embedded in the ground. Many times now, as I travel here, I still think of that picture and how I learned so much within the walls of a Presbyterian Church Sunday school. This area reminds me of the personal relationship I have with Jesus, because that picture of Jesus holding a lamb conjures an image of compassion.

As David wrote Psalm 23, it's easy to see an image of him out in the fields. It was there that David strengthened his friendship with his Lord. The first line of the psalm reveals that we are without want for things because we are content with being in the presence of God. This area gives a feeling of contentment because of the coolness of the air. The hills also provide a view of peace and serenity.

Today, we look at education as a social issue affecting Native Americans. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has created some challenges for schools. Another challenge has been incorporating Native cultural values into South Dakota curricula in all schools. Retention is another challenge that seems to weigh heavy on the hearts of educators in Native American communities.

In this very area, one of the highest ranked schools in the state is on the reservation. Enemy Swim Day School has been working very hard to meet the standards set by NCLB. It has not been easy, but the school has proven that it can be done. Many Native Americans have found that they are living in two worlds. In one world, they learn through linear concepts; in the other, they are taught in a more holistic way. The key is balance. It is important for Native people to find balance in an ever-changing world.

The challenge before us is this: How can the church incorporate Christianity in an environment that focuses on learning in various ways? Can the church become a link for change in a community that struggles to find balance between “book learning” and cultural teaching? If yes, how?

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* #12 (to the tune of “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?”)

**Prayer:** Volunteer

# Devotion

## Saturday, September 11, 2010

**Element:** Pastures

**Color:** Red

**Direction:** South

**Area:** Southeast Farmlands

**Social Issue:** Racism

**“He makes me lie down in green pastures . . .” (Psalm 23:2a).**

Today marks the ninth anniversary of the attacks on 9/11. Many people asked that day, “*Who* would do such a thing? How could someone hate a country so much that they would do this? They don’t even *know* me!” It is so easy to personalize the hatred. The same is true for a Native American.

When Native people go into a store, they often are met with disapproving eyes. Perhaps someone will coldly come up to them and ask them if they need help. The whole time the Native people are in the store, they are being watched. Those questions mentioned earlier come rising to the surface.

Psalm 23 is most commonly used during times of deep sorrow. When faced with difficult times, a person longs for the times when life was peaceful, comfortable and without any pain. But even in times of difficulty, God manages to provide moments that strengthen and renew, giving us gentle reminders of His overwhelming love.

Today, we look at racism as the social issue affecting Native Americans today. One issue with racism is that there are more Native Americans today who have feelings of hatred toward the majority race in this area. Racism can become a two-way street. There is a man named Jim Miller who once had a vision telling him he must go to the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people to tell them that they can no longer blame the “White Man” for their troubles anymore. The hurt and pain we feel, we do to ourselves. This is a strong message that many American Indians are embracing today as their part toward combating racism.

The challenge before us today is this: Can the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) become a catalyst for change in communities that are infested with racism? If yes, how?

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* #45, “Blest Be the Tie that Binds”

**Prayer:** Volunteer

## Devotion

### Sunday, September 12, 2010

**Element:** Rivers  
**Area:** Central South Dakota

**Color:** Blue  
**Social Issue:** Mascots/Identity

**Direction:** West

**“He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul” (Psalm 23:2b–3a).**

When you stand at the top of the hill overlooking the “Mighty Mo” (Missouri River), it is an awe-inspiring experience. It is easy to see how much of the land looks very much the same as it did 100 years ago.

The people who live along this river are most commonly known as Nakota. My grandmother used to go to school at an Episcopalian school for girls down river from here in a town called Springfield. She would walk home to Santee, Nebraska, across the river, by walking on the ice. My mother was born along the banks of the Missouri River. I believe that God had a special plan for her to raise her children—all of us work with Native American young people through teaching, coaching and serving the community around us both through our work and throughout our everyday lives.

Rivers can be known as the veins that bring life to those who come to them. When I hear this part of the psalm, I see an image of David being at a place in his life that is full of adversity and challenges. These places can become so much easier to bear when approaching the water of life that revives and refreshes. God provides that life-giving nourishment needed for our spiritual growth and renewal. The river is a place to find ourselves. It’s a place to come in order to become familiar with who we are as servants of God.

What these banks do not show is the role that team mascots play in the identity crisis pressing down on today’s American Indians. Native Americans are just as divided as non-Natives on the issue of sports teams using the mascot to stereotype our way of life, so we have to look at this issue from a child’s perspective. Native American children are taught at an early age that their culture is something of value. When a child goes to a game where people are taking their culture and making a mockery of something that they value, it tears at the heart of that child in ways many will never know.

Our challenge set before us today is this: Can Presbyterians find a way to inform the world about the harmful effects of mascots and their impact on Native Americans? If yes, how?

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* #114, “Shall We Gather at the River?”

**Prayer:** Volunteer

# Devotion

## Monday, September 13, 2010

**Element:** Prairies

**Color:** White

**Direction:** North

**Area:** Pine Ridge Reservation

**Social Issue:** Poverty

**“He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3b).**

Once, while I was in college, Dakota Presbytery was having a meeting in this area (Pine Ridge Reservation area). I really wanted to go, but I didn’t have a vehicle or money to get there. Back then, the presbytery had a long-time pastor who served our people faithfully. Reverend Irving Tang, a Dakota minister from China, offered me a ride to the meeting. Once here, everything was taken care of: a place to sleep, food, the comforts of home—everything was provided. Native Americans know how to take care of each other. It’s that simple. It doesn’t matter what the circumstances are. We take care of each other even when we are barely making it ourselves.

When we were little, my sister and I camped with my parents and my nephew (whom I acknowledge as my little brother) at our annual mission meeting. We would get together to sing hymns, share testimonials, learn from the Bible and hear some pretty good preaching. Our riches were found at the front of the tent during the altar call, where we could pray and dedicate ourselves to the work of the Lord.

David certainly knew and understood the idea of God *leading* him. Being in tune with the will of God can be such a rewarding experience in our spiritual lives. For Native Americans, spirituality is a priority of our journey here on earth. Psalm 23:3 is such a wonderful portion of scripture. The relationship that we have with our Lord and Savior is a special one. We welcome God to come into our lives and use us for a special calling, to serve the Kingdom.

Today, we look at the social issue of poverty. It is very hard *not* to notice the symptoms of poverty. The dilapidated homes, the abandoned cars, the unkempt yards you see around you on Pine Ridge Reservation all point to a social issue that cannot be easily missed. Yet, it is largely ignored by the country as a whole.

Our challenge today is this: Can Presbyterian Women find strategies that can help churches and/or individual families combat poverty—not as a bandage over a wound, but long term, so that those struggling can find concrete answers to an ongoing saga?

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* #22, “Amazing Grace”

Sing these words to the tune of “Amazing Grace”:

*Wakan Tanka pida mayan, Wakan Tanka waste* (repeat). The translation of these words is *Great Spirit, thank you; Great Spirit, you are good.*

**Prayer:** Volunteer

# Devotion

## Tuesday, September 14, 2010

**Element:** Badlands

**Color:** Black

**Direction:** Below

**Area:** Wounded Knee Memorial

**Social Issue:** Grief/Historical Trauma

**“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).**

You *cannot* come to the beauty of this land and meet the Lakota people without getting some kind of understanding of the intense *grief* that the people face. Today, it is known as historical trauma, and it takes place right here at the place of the Wounded Knee Memorial.

One common form of grief is guilt. The guilt takes on many forms. Some keep an internal vigil for the ones who have gone, while others try to forget by abusing substances to numb the pain. I once heard it said that when a family experiences a death, the people come to help those who grieve. They come to help absorb the pain for the loss that they experience. After what happened here at Wounded Knee, we *all* grieve. We can't even begin to help one another find healing, because we are still experiencing the same thing.

For the Dakota, Nakota and Lakota people, the historical trauma created a mourning period that spans over several generations. Sitting Bull predicted that it would take seven generations for the people to find healing over the pain that came with the Wounded Knee massacre.

If we reflect on an image of David out in a place of darkness and despair, it does bring comfort to envision a rod and a staff. For American Indians, an eagle staff rallies the spirit within us, and helps us to know that we are being lifted up by *Wakan Tanka*. We follow the staff at powwows and other events. We are thankful that Presbyterian women have come to help absorb our pain, and we know that God has a plan for us to find our way toward healing in this difficult time.

Jesus Christ went to the underworld. Jesus defeated death, and that is the good news of today. We are hopeful for the future. We believe that healing will come to our people once again. We also believe that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will help us with this journey. So many of the people out here are doing so much to help the young people of the reservation, so that future generations can become strong and proud once again.

Our challenge on this day is this: What kind of resources can the church provide to Dakota Territory to help find healing from the grief brought on by historical trauma?

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* 141, “Many and Great, O God, Are Thy Things”

**Prayer:** Volunteer

## Devotion

### Wednesday, September 15, 2010

**Element:** Trees

**Color:** Green

**Direction:** Above

**Area:** Black Hills

**Social Issue:** Land Issues

**“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long” (Psalm 23:6).**

Well, if you're here, you made it! The *Paha Sapa* (Black Hills) is a very rich place. And I don't mean the gold that lies within the veins of the mountains, either! This richness comes from the connection that the Oyate have with the land. It guides, protects and nourishes those who come here.

Right along the side of the president's faces at Mount Rushmore, you can find the face of an Indian chief in a natural formation in the rocks. For the Dakota, Nakota and Lakota people, that face is our *Itancan* (our chief), who is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

David finishes Psalm 23 with a message for our future. It is the message that is central to all that we believe as Presbyterians. Truly understanding these words means that we have a hope that can bring so much to Dakota Territory.

When I was in seminary, I had hard feelings toward the missionaries who came to the Dakotas. I was bitter because I was so focused on what I had lost. My seminary professor Henry Fawcett challenged me. He told me that yes, there were things that were lost, but what the missionaries did was to bring us Jesus Christ! For that, I am *eternally* grateful!

Now, the challenge we face is this: Sharing the Good News is different now than it was 100 years ago. How can the PC(USA) help Dakota Presbytery evangelize to future generations that are waiting for the healing that was prophesied by Chief Sitting Bull? How can we be prepared for the “pendulum shift” of the times, when the gospel is an overwhelming beacon of hope to a hurting people?

**Closing Hymn:** *Dakota Odowan* 113, “Hear the Good News of Salvation”

**Prayer:** Volunteer