

COVENANTING SERVICE WITH THE REV. DAVID STEELE
ATHENS P.C.
AND FOUR RIVERS PRESBYTERY

Sunday, October 2, 2016 was a beautiful fall afternoon and family and friends, and members of Athens U.C. and Four Rivers Presbytery gathered in the beautiful sanctuary of Athens U.C. to celebrate and covenant with the Rev. David Steele as he begins his ministry in this place.

Participants in the service processed in to “Holy, Holy, Holy”.

Leita Sheffield, Chair of Athens’ Church Council, extended a warm welcome to all who had come to share in today’s celebration. The Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro, Chair of Four Rivers Presbytery also brought greetings, welcoming all to this special service of worship, covenant and celebration. Takouhi called us to gather in prayer and invited us to join in singing “I Feel the Winds of God.”

Brian Raybould, Chair of the Ministry & Personnel committee, introduced Dave to the gathering. Dave has a varied and extensive background and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new position in Athens. Dave is also a very accomplished musician and singer – he favoured us with a beautiful a cappella rendition of “Ancients Words”.

Sandra Stakenvicius shared the scripture reading from Luke 15:1-7 (reading from the Message Bible). This is the parable of the lost sheep. The Rev. Kim Heath was guest preacher for the day - her message was titled “Willing to Risk the 99”.

This is one of a series of “lost” stories that Jesus tells his followers. We all hate to lose things so these stories make sense – on the surface. But, if we dig a little deeper – would you really leave 99 for 1?

So, what is Jesus’ point? He loves the lost to the point it is irrational.

The first message of this story is that as Christians we need to train ourselves to see God’s mark on everyone. It is our agenda to have the agenda of God. Maybe that is why churches are struggling – we have forgotten what God’s priority is.

The second message is that sometimes we are the ones who are lost and need to be found. Being lost is not such a bad thing because God knows we are lost. When we admit to being lost, then we are ready to be found.

Whether we are lost – or just tired – know that God seeks us out. We are all in partnership. We don’t know the way forward but we are called to follow the One who is The Way.

The Covenanting

Following the singing of “I, The Lord of Sea & Sky”, the Rev. Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro, Chair of Four Rivers Presbytery, Karen McLean, Secretary, and Wayne Harris, Co-Chair of Pastoral Relations, lead us through the covenanting portion of the service beginning by renewing our baptismal faith through the recitation of The New Creed.

Promises were made by Dave, the members and adherents of the Pastoral Charge and the Presbytery. Members of Four Rivers Presbytery present today included Alan Bennett, Ted Brett, Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro, JoAnne Fletcher, Wayne Harris, Kim Heath, Bruce Jackson, Gerry Kerr, Wendy MacLean, Karen McLean, Cathy Ryan and Alfred Stakenvicius.

Presenters of symbols of Dave’s ministry included Leita Sheffield (Bibles), Joyce Campbell (Water of Baptism), Jan Loshaw (Chalice & Paten), Debbie Jozefowicz (Water, Towel & Basin), Brian Raybould (Restorative Justice Book), Rev. Debbie Steele (Bagpipes).

Rev. Takouhi declared a covenant had been made – the congregation responded with a hearty round of applause.

Response to the Covenant

The Athens church choir offered their ministry of music in the lovely “Mold Me, Teach Me, Use Me Lord”. The Rev. Dan Zylstra minister from Athens Christian Reformed Church, shared a reading from Psalm 149:1-5 and welcomed Dave to Athens on behalf of the Athens Ministerial Association.

The Rev. Bruce Demitroff, Chair of Athens Ministerial Association, added his own words of welcome and led us in the Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer.

The offering was collected and will go to the Bay of Quinte Conference Student Bursary Fund to assist students in the ministry programmes of the United Church of Canada.

Dave took a few minutes to thank all who had come to share in today's service as well as those who had worked so hard to put the service together. He also extended special words of thanks to those who had helped him get to this point in his ministry – in particular, his wife Debbie and his sons and the Rev. Kim Heath of Wall St. U.C.

The closing hymn was "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah". Dave led us in the blessing and sending forth and everyone was invited for fellowship and refreshments in the Gathering Place.

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Takouhi Demirdjian-Petro, Chair

Signature on Original Document

Karen McLean, Secretary