

South Dakota 'worshiping community' merges cameras, Christ

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"Through the Lens" has been awarded a \$7,500 seed grant from the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to establish the new worshiping community in the Sioux Falls, S.D., area. The new worshiping community is part of the denominations 1001 New Worshiping Communities initiative.

"Through the Lens" is a community of photographers seeking to take worship outside the four walls of traditional church.

The group of both professional and hobbyist photographers combines the love of finding images through a camera lens with the spiritual aspect that can also be found through that same lens. Anyone with a love of photography is encouraged to join the group for a focusing topic and a thought provoking photo walk. Discussion about resulting images helps to form spiritual connections.

Following the PC(USA) model, the Sioux Falls group is making the shift from an inward-focused, membership-maintenance model of church to a more outward, creative, and disciple-making model of church. The Sioux Falls group of disciples with cameras has a vibrant faith and uses their resulting images to share their faith with friends, neighbors and their communities.

While the "Through the Lens" community is a stand-alone worshiping group, it is supported locally by First Presbyterian Church. "This idea of contemplative photography is a way to meet God and Christ in a way that speaks to the artistic side of people. As a photographer myself, I love the idea and our congregation was eager to offer their support to this new worshiping group," said Charles Ayars, pastor.

"Through the Lens" gathers on the second Sunday each month from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. inside the Queen City Bakery located at 324 East 8th St. in Sioux Falls. On the fourth Sunday of the month the group meets at 12:30 p.m. at a different off-site location each month.

A schedule along with worship inspired photographs can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/throughthelenscommunity>.