

Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

Homedale Presbyterian Church in Homedale, ID

What is a Superhero?

He or she appears to be an ordinary human being until circumstances suddenly require a rescue and the Superhero steps in to save the situation. Such a person is Sherman Takatori. Sherman is the husband of the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Homedale, Idaho, a small rural community on the Snake River west of Boise. During ordinary times he contributes music, singing a contemporary Christian song for our special music, and conducts the children's sermon time. He also bakes the communion bread from his sourdough starter. COVID-19 struck and on March 26 Governor Brad Little issued a statewide stay-at-home order. Many churches suspended all services and closed up. Sherman got ready. On Sunday March 26, Homedale Presbyterian Church went on as usual, with no congregation in the pews—we went on the air. Sherman attached his cell phone to a tripod with a bungee cord and live-streamed the entire service over our Facebook page. The response was amazing. Viewers checked in from all over the Northwest, far outside the range of its membership and in far greater numbers. One signed in from British Columbia. A former foreign student watched from Pakistan. The following week the phone was replaced by a camera with Sherman behind the camera. Words to hymns were printed out in large print and shown before the camera so viewers could sing along. The responsive readings were shown for viewer participation. Sherman turned the pages in sync with the music and readings. He learned to cope with an obsolete router, limited broadband, and worn-out internet linkage. However, broadcast limitations did not bring an end to Sherman's other contributions. On the contrary, circumstances continued to demand even more from this versatile individual. As related by nominator, Carolyn Rees, "When we were again able to meet in person, we arrived to hot coffee ready before the service, and freshly baked cookies from a novel

recipe for the fellowship hour. Sherman discovered that our cleaning person was no longer cleaning, so he took on her chores as well. Two core Sunday School teachers resigned their positions. One new teacher was recruited and Sherman took the other class. There were other benefits to the live broadcast; when we reopened there were new people joining us, some of whom came a fair distance. We recognized from the locations of viewers that there were many people in the rural Northwest who were interested in our ministry, and we now envision continuing the live stream service. Rural, agricultural life is quite different from city life; city pastors make references to TV shows and movies never seen out here in an effort to connect with worshipers' daily lives. This falls flat. We are familiar with the life-giving properties of water, the persistence of weeds, the speed with which the seasons pass. A farmer is often faced with a sudden problem he must solve on the spot with available materials. Sherman comes by his versatility from broad life experience. He grew up on a farm and got a scientific education. He is a veteran. He is the go-to man on plant and animal pest control in the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and wrote the manual on control of gophers and voles. He comes up with surprises: a member contributed grapes from her vines. He pressed these into the tastiest communion juice served this side of heaven. Sherman is still filming with the phone but a neat adapter has replaced the bungee cord. So I nominate Sherman Takatori as Superhero of the year of COVID-19."

Submitted in by Carolyn Rees