The town of Newcastle, with a population of approximately 3,500, sits slightly west of the state's border with South Dakota and Black Hills National Forest. It's a pretty little place that holds strong to the cowboy way of life. Towards the end of 2016 they were still feeling the effects of the economic downturn and the loss of jobs in the energy fields. Suicide rates in Weston County, of which Newcastle is the seat, were the highest in the state.

Christ Church saw a need to reach out to their community. Mike Hutchinson, Senior Warden at Christ Church, wanted to do so in a way that let people know they were always there for anyone to come and meet people, especially people who know the Lord is there and can show others where they might find Him too. Reaching out, to them, means letting folks know they are loved and they have a family in Christ Church.

For a long time Christ Church has been a positive light in their community and recently, through daily radio broadcasts developed by Forward Day by Day, they have brightened that light. The broadcasts have become a vital part of people’s daily lives. The daily meditations were initially only available as booklets of inspirational reflections on a specific Bible passage, chosen from the daily lectionary readings as listed in the Revised Common Lectionary or the Daily Office from the Episcopal Church’s Book of Common Prayer (prayer.forwardmovement.org).

The meditations play at 10:50 AM, Monday through Friday, and are usually no more than five minutes long. Originally, they tried airing them at 6:00 AM, but listeners suggested they be played later in the morning. Christ Church members recorded an introduction to the prayer, which gives their Sunday service time and notes that Father Tom Campbell, of Spearfish, South Dakota, presides over the worship services.

Mike Hutchinson hopes other churches would want to do the same thing for their communities, but the cost of airtime is expensive. The use of the meditations, which can be heard anytime on Forward Movement’s website (www.daybydaypodcast.wordpress.com) is free, but finding the means to spread the Word was a bit more difficult. The Rt. Rev. John Smylie, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming, put forth seed money for the ministry. Then Christ Church was awarded a grant from the Foundation for the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming.

Christ Church had used radio spots for other things in the past. They have been receiving the booklets for years. One day, the idea to share the meditations just came up in conversation and they looked into it. Mr. Hutchinson said it almost didn’t happen because of the cost, but the support from Bishop Smylie and the Foundation made their idea happen. “It’s nice because someone who is homebound can listen. It comforts them to hear it since they can’t come to church anymore. It’s always an uplifting message,” Mr. Hutchinson says, “If it helps one person, it’s good.”

“There aren’t many hands to do work so we wanted things to do without adding more labor.” Mike, his wife Janet, a kindergarten teacher, and Tierny Parrish, Secretary and Treasurer of Christ Church, are at the heart of Christ Church’s congregation and they are all very active in the Newcastle community. There is another member who sets up the altar in preparation for services, but she can’t come to the service because she has to take care of her mother. “They are special people doing a lot of things,” Mr. Hutchinson says. “We always hope [Christ Church] will be a place to come home to. It’s really great that we have support [from the Foundation for the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming] to do ministries. It’s a blessing and a responsibility.” Christ Church welcomes one and all! Tune into AM1240 KASL in Weston County to hear the daily meditations or follow the link above.