

TOWER TIDINGS

The Eighty-Fifth Epistle of John – “Willing to Get Wet” 2-1-26

As a general but unwritten rule, the first pastor’s pen of the new year is one that should be filled with the hopes and aspirations and opportunities that come with all new things – exploring potential, seeking out better things for life, (trying out those Christmas gifts we just received!), drawing upon the well of endless possibilities Jesus came to reveal to us as we awaken more and more to God’s reality in the world.....but most years don’t start like this, do they?

I will refrain from echoing the multiple instances of injustice and suffering inflicted upon the many by a powerful few, but we all know things are shockingly bad in our country and our world. Pollyanna would counsel that we simply keep looking on the bright side of things; Annie promises that “the sun will come out tomorrow;” Bobby McFerrin encourages us to “not worry; be happy” – which is all well and good (and I would argue necessary!), but such encouragement alone fails to help much in actually dealing with the challenges before us; in fact, if such sentiments become fixations, they Encourage things that never help, such as withdrawal or indifference or apathy towards all the wrongs we face. “It’s someone else’s problem” we think – until it begins to affect us personally; “the system will rebalance itself” we think – until we notice the national tilt has hit and bypassed the old rebalancing structures; “It couldn’t happen here” we think – until it happens here. The horrors of today are not the kinds of things to dissolve in the face of cheerful thinking. Such thinking is essential, but not nearly enough to empower real hope. No, hope, when it is real – such as when it is desperately needed – is a life-directing thing, an orientation not only of thought and heart but life and activity; what we personally invest ourselves in, gives shape and grounding to our hopes for the future and helps those hopes to materialize. There’s an old proverb that says “you can’t really learn to swim until you’re willing to get wet.” Immersion in the troubles of the world provides the only real hope of understanding those problems, and understanding those problems is essential to their remediation.

It is helpful to realize that such immersion is a way to grasp the whole reason for Jesus and his physical, contextual, historical presence in our world; God immersed Godself into this big, hot mess we call humanity. He did so in order to work a two-way understanding between God and ourselves – the understanding of God’s relatability to our human frailties and brokenness, and our understanding of the healing, redemptive, renewing offer of grace offered to deal with that frailty and brokenness. The two understandings are meant to mesh together, resulting in the elusive harmony that is found only through faith, a turning of the self toward the Other, knowing the Other is already turned towards us.

(Continued)

FEBRUARY 2026



LECTIONARY

- **February 1, 2026**
4th Sunday After the Epiphany
Micah 6:1-8
Psalm 15
(*G419, N627, P164, UM74*)
Corinthians 1:18-31
Matthew 5:1-12
- **February 8, 2026**
5th Sunday After the Epiphany
Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)
Psalm 112:1-9(10)
(*G755, N697, UM833*)
Corinthians 2:1-12(13-16)
Matthew 5:13-20
- **February 15, 2026**
Transfiguration Sunday
Exodus 24:12-18
Psalm 99
(*G57, N687, UM819*)
2 Peter 1:16-21
Matthew 17:1-9
- **February 18, 2026**
Ash Wednesday
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Psalm 51:1-17
(*G421/422/423, N657, P19*
5,
UM785)
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
- **February 22, 2026**
1st Sunday In Lent
Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7
Psalm 32(*G446, N642, P184, SH527, UM766*)
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

I would put it to you that this worrisome year before us is best approached by a willingness to immerse ourselves in whatever challenges arise, for us personally or any who find their lives compromised by injustice, oppression, violence, exclusion, or any of the many ways we humans have chosen to treat each other inhumanly. The constancy of our calling as people who follow God's son – not just proclaim the name of Jesus, mind you, but follow the principles of His life amongst us – is more than up to the task at hand. For when we follow Jesus, when we take on God's will as our own priority, the power to endure does not depend on us alone.



Ruth Fellowship

Ruth Fellowship will meet February 12 at 10:00 in the Kay Duffield Library. Nancy Heyer will present a program about Hospice. Join us!

February 21 10 a.m. **GEMS will gather** at Rosauer's Huckleberry cafe for conversation, warm beverage of your choice and warm fellowship. Anyone wanting to chat is welcome. If you have questions please call Tish at 370-6572.

Vespers meets on February 18, 1:30 in the church library.

What's happening with Sunday School?

Thank you for donating the large paper cups and the bottles of water. We're still taking donations for bottles of bubbles and modeling clay. **Thank you!**

YWCA Women's Shelter Health Kits

Ruth Fellowship will assemble health kits for the YWCA. Please consider donating the following items and bringing them to the church. A box will be in the Narthex before church services or you can bring items to the church office.

Here's what items are needed:

- ◆ Hotel sized Soap, Shampoo, Conditioner, and Lotions
- ◆ Combs and/or Brushes
- ◆ Disposable Razors
- ◆ Deodorant
- ◆ Toothpaste/toothbrushes/Toothbrush Covers/Dental Floss
- ◆ Note Pads and Pens (not personalized)



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH**Inspiration Tool Box**

"Sometimes the most loving thing we can do is offer a word of kindness, stay in our lane, and walk away in peace." Lauren Fortenberry



CONGRATULATIONS to Pastor John upon receiving the 2025 Mission Recognition Pin, for his outstanding and continual support of our many endeavors, always with a smile!

NEW YEAR, NEW NEWS – our UWFaith unit is now facilitated by a Steering Committee rather than by elected leaders. Circles and groups will still meet at their designated times and carry out their mission projects, but there will be no regularly scheduled unit meetings unless specially announced. So, watch for calendar announcement throughout the year. If you have questions, please call or text Elaine at 406-529-1325 or Tish at 406-370-6572.

FEB 18, ASH WEDNESDAY 5 p.m. Souper Supper in the Fellowship Hall. There will be a free will donation for our mission work. Committee organizers are Kathie Snodgrass (406-531-1569) and Denalie Bruins (406-549-9646).

GEMS Circle

ATTENTION! Calling all women of faith - especially working gals, moms, college students - United Women in Faith **GEMS Circle** is now gathering on Saturday mornings. If you'd be interested in coffee, conversation and community, please join us at Rosauer's Huckleberry Café on Feb 21, at 10 a.m. Bring your hand work and your hopes for our current theme "**Mapping Our Way Forward.**"

Have questions or comments? Text or call Tish at 406-370-6572.

LOOKING AHEAD – MARCH 18 – All church potluck following church service in the Fellowship Hall. An Irish theme? Come and find out! So, mark your calendars!

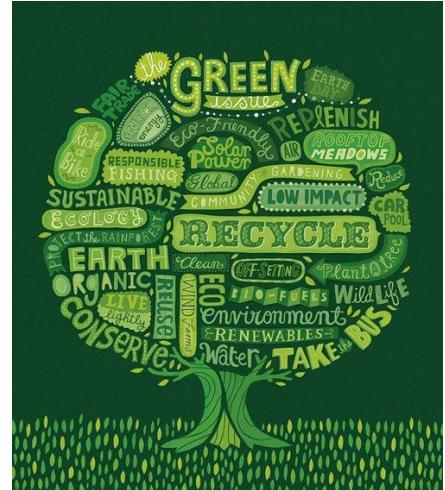
Green Team Hosts Feb. 22 Potluck on Green Investing

Good food! Great conversation! Money! They're all on the agenda after church on Sunday, Feb. 22, when First Church's Green Team joins Missoula's Families for a Livable Climate for a presentation on "green investing."

Mike Wood and Keith Fichtner will introduce the topic while we eat lunch, then will open the floor to your questions. What is green investing? What's my first step? Will this cost me money or make me money? We know you have dozens of great questions for our presenters!

Mike is leading a green investment campaign for Families for a Livable Climate and is using our congregation for a trial run of a longer, more detailed workshop he and Keith hope to present for the larger Missoula community in March or April.

Keith is a financial adviser for Edward Jones in Missoula, and a graduate of the University of Montana. He works with retirement accounts, stocks and bonds, and the financial world every day, so gives our program a dose of real-world know-how.



Sustainable investing allows each of us to support companies and projects that make a positive impact on the environment and society, ensuring our investments contribute to a better world. It aligns our money with our values.

There are, of course, many different ways to achieve this goal – and that's where Mike and Keith can help us during their Feb. 22 presentation. How can folks in Missoula, Montana, ensure that their investments go to eco-friendly corporations or projects that match their core values? How can we spot "green" trickery?



By directing capital toward responsible businesses, sustainable investing helps promote better corporate practices and funds critical projects that support the planet's future health and social welfare.

Watch the Green Notes column in each Sunday's announcements between now and then – we'll have additional information on sustainable investing, what it means, and how it happens. And check out our bulletin board just outside the sanctuary for even more details!

Reflect on what matters most to you – whether it's environmental sustainability, social justice or ethical governance – and how these values align with your financial goals. This will help guide your investment decisions.

Then bring a casserole, salad, vegetable or dessert to church on Feb. 22 and join us downstairs in Fellowship Hall for lunch and this great program. Oh, and bring your questions and comments for Mike and Keith. They'll be ready with answers!

Are you interested in helping to make Sack Lunches for the Poverello Center?

We meet every Saturday morning at 9 am to assemble 200 lunches. These are then picked up by the Hot Team to distribute to houseless individuals wherever they find them during the week. We would love to have you be a part of our team. It's lots of fun.

Perhaps you would love to support the Sack Lunches Ministry but are unable to physically make sack lunches for one reason or another. If you'd like, you can donate to "Pov Sack Lunches" by giving a donation to 1st UMC through Breeze or a check on which you have noted "Pov Sack Lunches". As another option, the Pov has suffered from the cutbacks put in place by this administration, making it more and more difficult for them to come up with enough ingredients each week for us to make the full 200 sack lunches. We have some volunteers who generously contribute things like loaves of sandwich bread, or fruit, etc. should we find ourselves short on Fridays when we pick up ingredients from the Pov. If you would like to be put on a list of people who could be available to be notified on Friday afternoons/evenings to pick up items we are short on, like bread, please contact me at madamecarlson@gmail.com. Also, if you have any other questions, please email me. It will be helpful if you identify yourself and your inquiry in the title so I don't inadvertently delete you. Please contact Lorraine Carlson at madamecarlson@gmail.com and I will add you to our Signup Genius. When you receive an email from Signup Genius, please don't delete it.



Church Pledges and Donations

The donation page via the Breeze website can be found at:

<https://firstumcmissoula.breezechms.com/give/online>

Designate where your donation goes when donating online by using the dropdown menu below the donation amount.

You can also donate via text message: (406) 998-1982 include donation amount and a keyword like "Pledge" or "Building".

Mail in donations are also welcome.

Contact:
Leslie Uhlenbruck,
Financial Secretary
First United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 7646
Missoula, MT 59807-7646

CONTACT OUR OFFICE

Weekday Hours

Monday-Thursday 9-12

Phone: 406- 549-6118

E-Mail: FUMCmissoula@gmail.com

Website: www.firstumcmissoula.org

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/1stumcmissoula

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/missoula1stumc/>

PASTOR JOHN

Office: Available Monday-Friday

By phone: 406-549-6118 or
406-396-8966 (cell)

E-Mail: john@FUMCmissoula.com

Hospital visits: Please call John or the office if you know of someone in the hospital. **Home visits:** upon request.

CHURCH STAFF

John Daniels, *Pastor*

Sarah Sandoval, *Administrative Assistant*

Cheryl Bauer, *Administrative Assistant Sub*

Jim Bauer, *Cara Lightfield Office Volunteer*

Leslie Lindley, *Treasurer*

Leslie Uhlenbruck, *Financial Secretary*

Craig Gohl, *Custodian*

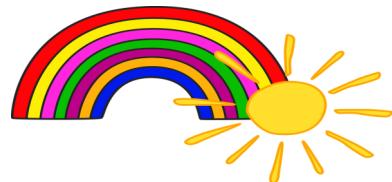
Greg Boris, *Chancel Choir Director*

Jason Triche, *Hand Bell Choir Director*

Luke Larson, *Organist and Pianist*

Cindy Ekstrand, *Sunday School Director*

Lizzie Mills - Low, *Nursery Attendant*



Deadline for March 2026

February 23, 2026

Tzedakah Pocket Offers Hope

2025 was quite a year in many ways. It showed us the great need in our community, but it also showed us the great caring and compassion of our congregation. We could never have helped as many people to the extent needed if it hadn't been for you. We'll see what 2026 brings us and we'll do the best we can.

A summary of assistance provided by our church's Tzedakah Pocket ministry for the month of January 2026 and Year End 2025 are shown below. We help whenever we can with as much as we can. Please continue to donate whenever you are able. We can make a difference for those who come to us for assistance.



Tzedakah Summary

2026 Donations: \$688.36

Assistance Paid	January 2026			Year End 2025		
	Amount	Fam	Child.	Amount	Fam	Child
<i>Lodging</i>	\$ 0	0	0	\$ 3,632.52	21	15
<i>Rent/ Sec. Dep.</i>	\$ 0	0	0	\$ 6,830.00	15	29
<i>Other</i>	\$ 377.19	4	6	\$ 10,042.27	57	73
<i>TOTAL</i>	\$ 377.19	4	6	\$ 20,504.79	93	117

Sending mail to the church? Please make sure you have our P.O. Box on the address! Our P.O. Box is 7646, Missoula, MT 59807. We often do not get our mail if it addressed to our street address. Thank-you!!



IN OUR PRAYERS...

~PRAYERS~

Comfort for the family, friends, patients, and co-workers of Michael Pretti, an ICU nurse who was killed by ICE in Minneapolis Friday morning.

Continued prayers for the safety of Rocky's grandchildren and great-grandchildren who live in Minneapolis, especially those with dual USA/Mexico citizenship.

Safety for those affected the extreme cold, ice, and snow back east.

That the upcoming tests will yield a diagnosis and treatment for Jane's friend Candy A, who is ill with an unknown condition.

That we can all figure out how to work together to do something about what ICE is doing.

God bless America. Stand beside her and guide her with the light from above.

That the younger sister of John T's friend will overcome her depression.

That the substitute teachers (such as John T) don't catch the illness that's going around among our public school student and teaches.

That compassion and understanding will be granted from the ICE agents.

That a friend of our congregation who is searching for employment will find a job that will use his skills and education.

~HEALING AND COMFORT~

Comfort for the family and friends of Mary nell Kliber (wife of our former pastor, Bill Kliber), who passed away Saturday evening.

A rapid return to health for U of M students (including our Nursery attendants) from the crud that's going around.

Relief from pain and swelling for Cheryl B. After her knee replacement surgery.

Quick recovery for Shelly T. after her knee surgery.

Safety for peaceful protesters and residents in cities occupied by ICE.

~THANKSGIVING~

Thanksgiving that Winton k is back home, the pain is apparently under control, and he is recovering.

Thanksgiving that Brad W. is back home recovering from influenza and looking better.

Thanksgiving to friends and allies. Ground our world peace and enable NATO to continue its work.

Joy that John D's brother Scott now has a grandson, born to Josh and Alice recently.



First United Methodist Church
300 E. Main Street
P.O. Box 7646
Missoula MT 59807



PH:406-549-6118
E-Mail: FUMCmissoula@gmail.com
Website: www.firstumcmissoula.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/1stumcmissoula
Instagram:
<https://www.instagram.com/missoula1stumc/>

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

February Events

- 2/1- Scouts Annual Chili Feed, 11 a.m. Fellowship Hall**
- 2/8- JuBellation 10:00 a.m. Sanctuary**
- 2/21- GEMS at Rosauers, 10 a.m.**
- 2/7&21- Methodist Men, 8:30 a.m. KDM Library**
- 2/12- Ruth Fellowship, 10 a.m. KDM Library**
- 2/18- Vespers, 1:30 KDM Library**
- 2/24- Book Group, 11:00 a.m. KDM Library**



Weekly Events via Zoom and in person

Sunday Worship - Worship 10:00 a.m. and via Zoom.
(recordings on Facebook or the church website).

Sunday School - During the worship service in the Nursery for kids age 4 and up.

Tuesday - Pastor John's class 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. All are welcome!
Please contact the office for the Zoom link.

Wednesday - Lectionary Bible Class 10:00 a.m. in the Library. Contact Rev. Barry Padgett at barryumc@yahoo.com for more information. All are welcome to attend!