

TOWER TIDINGS

The Eightieth Epistle of John – “Making Distractions Count”

The Eighty-First Epistle of John – “A Great Parable”

2-26-25

Once upon a time there were two powerful men in the same community. They each had great wealth and great possessions; they each owned great tracts of land on opposite sides of the town, living in great mansions and running great farms and great factories. In other words, each had it great.

Until one day they each noticed the greatness of the other.

A thought crossed each of their minds at the same time, the thought that the other had greater than they did. This set off a series of great competitions and great animosities that left the town in great consternation for they were greatly dependent upon the jobs and commerce these two great figures oversaw. Their great fear of losing their jobs or status or stability kept the people silent in the face of the growing contest between the two oligarchs; without concern for those who ran their affairs, their competition grew greatly; egos took over, blinding them to anyone but the other.

Each man sought greater wealth, greater power, greater influence, and greater gain from the community; production was greatly increased while wages were greatly reduced; politicians were greatly lobbied by each, with those politicians agreeing to great loyalties to their benefactor, loyalties which had them dismiss the great needs of their constituents. The two men greatly increased in wealth and power and possessions and land, which only had their sense of competition greatly increase. When finally all the wealth and power and possessions and land had been consumed by the two men, they discovered their great egos had led to great wrath against each other; hatred filled their being, and a great determination grew in each of them that, if they could not gain more status and power for themselves, they could at least work to remove status and power from their counterpart.

Thus, they began great campaigns to devour each other. They burned through their great wealth pursuing great lawsuits against each other; they pursued great efforts to out-technology the other to have greater products to sell and have greater crops to market; they pressed their workforce towards greater production with greater efficiency with greater salary reductions, but found these practices produced greater flaws and greater imperfections in their products and greater toxicity and greater nutritional compromise in their crops as the great increase in pesticides and chemicals used made people greatly sick. It also produced a great reduction in worker health and moral; great was the exodus of qualified workers as they sought greater abundance elsewhere.

In the end, having experienced great losses of wealth and power and status and land, the two former oligarchs found themselves facing each other in the greatness of their ruin. The town was greatly reduced in population, the land greatly reduced in its fertility, their status greatly reduced to ignobility. The only great thing that remained was their great hatred for the other, whom they each still regarded as having it greater than they did. Their demise continued to be great as they found

MARCH 2025



Ash Wednesday
— Lent Begins

LECTIONARY

- **March 2, 2025**
Transfiguration of Our Lord
Exodus 34: 29-35
Psalm 99
2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2
Luke 9:28-36 [37-43a]
- **March 5, 2025**
Ash Wednesday
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isa 58:1-12
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5: 20b—6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
- **March 9, 2025**
1st Sunday of Lent
Deut. 26: 1-11
Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16
Romans 10: 8b-13
Luke 4: 1-13
- **March 16, 2025**
2nd Sunday of Lent
Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27
Phil. 3:17—4:1
Luke 13: 31-35
- **March 23, 2025**
3rd Sunday of Lent
Isiah 55: 1-9
Psalm 63: 1-8
1 Cor. 10: 1-13
Luke 13: 1-9
- **March 30, 2025**
4th Sunday of Lent
Josh. 5: 9-12
Psalm 32
2 Cor. 5: 16-21
Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

themselves on their deathbeds at the same time. They were greatly alone due to the greatness of suffering they had caused to others; they were both greatly irritated at the thought that the other might outlive them; and they were greatly concerned that the other's death may be less painful than their own. They had no worry, however, for both died in great misery for having made the great mistake of attributing great significance to things instead of people.

And great was the relief of the remaining townsfolk at their passing.

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He [Jesus] said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." – Matthew 22:36-40

God's Grace Be With You,

John W. ...



Afghan Drop By Drop Fund is Ready

The Afghan family we are helping, a widow and 4 young adult daughters, is now in Pakistan, thanks to our church support that helped the family leave Afghanistan safely. The oldest daughter already has UN Refugee status; with our help, she is now with the U.S. State Department and will be coming to Missoula through the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The mother and other 3 daughters are waiting in Pakistan to be vetted for legal refugee status in January. The girls are still vulnerable to forced marriages with male relatives if they cannot leave soon. Our Drop by Drop Fund will support them while they wait and during their first 90 days in Missoula through our Welcome Corps sponsorship. Afghan Support Team members will be glad to talk with you about this effort.

Your donations in any amount will go directly to support this family. To donate, you can bring or send a check to church with Afghan Drop by Drop on the memo line. OR go to BREEZE at FUMC online and select the Afghan Drop by Drop Fund.

- "Drop by drop a river is made." - Afghan proverb

Spread the Word!

First Church's Office Complex for Lease

First Church's office complex at 320 E. Main St. is for lease. We need you to help spread the news to organizations and businesses that might be looking for a new home.

The building offers many amenities: two stories with five-plus offices (could easily be eight), two bathrooms, work rooms and waiting areas, and a basement with safe storage space. The 2,700 square feet-plus provides ample room to meet an organization's staff and customer/client needs.

Parking is available in front of the building, with four dedicated spaces in the alley. Tenants also will appreciate the property's high-visibility street frontage across from the former Missoula Public Library building. A bus stop is out front, there's bicycle parking, and easy walking to downtown businesses and the university. A main-floor entrance ramp provides access for all.

Spread the word! Interested parties can contact First United Methodist Church for more information or a tour of the building: 406-549-6118 or fumcmissoula@gmail.com.



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

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<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 Volunteers*
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*

Tower Tidings
April Deadline:
April 18

A special thanks to Nancy Elk and April Padget for helping edit Tower Tidings.

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

INSPIRATION TOOLBOX

“To do today...Breathe, look for joy, work some, play some, practice gratitude, be kind.

Repeat.” Margaret B. Moss

RUTH: Thurs, March 13, 10 a.m. in the KDM Library. We will be discussing the health kits that we will assemble in April for the YWCA women’s shelter. Travel size donations of toiletries will be appreciated. Join us!
Contact Judy at 406-239-4187.

VESPERS: Wed, March 19, at 1 p.m. in the KDM Library. Welcome newcomers. Questions? Please call Patsy at 406-493-0961.

GEMS: Thurs, March 20, at 6 p.m. in the KDM Library to continue plans for making the Fellowship Hall more inviting and welcoming to all those who visit our church. YOUR input is welcome, especially by those unable to meet during the day. Call Tish at 406-370-6572 for info.

BOOK: Fourth Tuesday Book Group March 25 at 11 am, in the KDM Library to discuss Raise Your Voice: Why We Stay Silent and How to Speak Up by Kathy Khang, a timely read. You are welcome even if you’ve not read the book. Call Kathie for Zoom info at 406-531-1569.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Ruth Circle is still collecting items for the YWCA shelter health kits. Please leave in the Narthex. The Western Mountains District UWF spring gathering, “A Table for ALL” will be held in our church on Saturday April 26, from 8 to 3. Many hands make light work, with many opportunities to be involved. If you would like to help in any way, you may let Elaine know, 406-529-1325. Calling all crafters: For the above event, small fabric tote bags are being made, 12” by 11.” Please call for sewing instructions from Elaine at 406-529-1325 or Kathie at 406-531-1569.



Sunday School - Needs Your Help!

Greetings. We are really in need of Sunday School Teachers, Sunday School Assistants and Nursery Attendants. Please consider joining our Sunday School staff. If you are interested, please call Cindy Ekstrand at 775-560-3381 or call the church office at 406-549-6118.

Thank you! Cindy Ekstrand, Sunday School Director



Tzedakah Pocket Offers Hope

February has shown us the other side of houselessness. Last month we had many requests for rent/security deposits for families (with children) who were able to stay in their housing with our help or be moving into housing with our help. This month we got many requests for interim housing of various lengths from individuals, couples whose children were grown but unable to help, and from couples who had to send their children to stay with relatives out of state until they found housing. It's so hard for these families to find a safe place to stay, especially when the weather is bad. Our congregation has been so generous and so supportive of this ministry, we've been able to help most of the time and, when we can't, we pray for them. May God bless you all for caring.

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



Tzedakah Summary

2025 Donations: \$1,944.61

Assistance Paid	February 2025			Year to Date		
	Amount	Fam.	Child.	Amount	Fam.	Child.
<i>Lodging</i>	\$ 826.20	5	1	\$ 1,106.20	7	1
<i>Rent/ Sec. Dep.</i>	\$ 0	0	0	\$ 1,739.00	4	9
<i>Other</i>	\$ 326.99	3	1	\$ 577.99	6	4
TOTAL	\$ 1,153.19	8	2	\$ 3,423.19	17	14

January Food Bank Drive - 2025

Food orders/cash donations: \$2,426.70.

Donated items: 101 lbs. of food.

Birthday kits: 20 Birthday Kits.

A very special "thank you" to our congregation for the generous donations and for all the support, and to our Sunday School children, parents, and teachers for their donations and for helping to assemble the Birthday Kits.



IN OUR PRAYERS...

~Healing and Comfort ~

- ✠ Prayers for a quick and complete healing for Coleen N. who broke several ribs in a fall.
- ✠ Prayers for a smooth transition for Keith and Laurie B., who moved to Texas in February to be closer to family.
- ✠ Prayers for a safe future for the Afghani refugee family our congregation is supporting.
- ✠ Prayers of a safe gestation for an unborn child.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for the communities affected by ICE raids.
- ✠ Prayers that John T., is recovering well from a fall.
- ✠ Prayers for Rob P. for continued healing for an ongoing issue with his leg.
- ✠ Prayers of quick healing and relief for Jan B., who fell and broke her other arm (not the one she recently had surgery on).
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Elaine's sister in Beaverton, OR, who has cancer.
- ✠ Travel mercies for those who must be out in the winter weather.
- ✠ Prayers of strength, healing, and control of symptoms for Carol A's sister-in-law, Trina, who has already survived cancer and a stroke.
- ✠ Prayers that people of good will can work together to fix our country's problems, especially those of inclusion and support for those who some are attempting to erase.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort and financial stability for federal employees recently terminated from their jobs.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for those suffering from lack of food and aid due to the recent government closure of USAID.



~Sympathy~

- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Cara L's co-worker, whose 19-year-old daughter died of diabetes in February.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Marsha and all the family and friends of Lawson L., who had a heart attack and passed in late February.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Fred, who lost his father in February.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Hollie C. and her family following the loss of their mother, Agnes V., on February 13th.
- ✠ Prayers of Comfort for Barry R and his family for the passing of Tu R.



~Praises and Joys~

- ✠ Prayers of joy that a single dad, who has been working with Jim O., now has permanent housing.
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving for all those who are able to provide assistance to all those needing a hand up this winter.
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving for all those who helped make our basement available as overflow winter accommodations for the unhoused during the bitter cold in February.
- ✠ Prayers of joy for the arrival of Ira and Kay R's new grandson, Matthias (son of Jennifer and Ruben R).
- ✠ Prayers of joy for our new office administrator, Sarah!
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving that Jonathan's life is improving, and for all those who prayed for him.
- ✠ Prayers of joy for the music Paul shared with the congregation in February.

Green Notes: Calling Out Lies, Bearing Moral Witness

The past month has been rough for those of us committed to the cause of environmental protection. We find solace and inspiration in the words of one who knew well the fight against difficult odds. Do not forget the importance of truth telling, of bearing moral witness, of calling out lies. Countless people, famous and unknown, have told the truth in circumstances far more arduous and dangerous than our own.

We offer these words from the Russian author and dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

“To stand up for truth is nothing. You can resolve to live your life with integrity. Let your credo be this: Let the lie come into the world, let it even triumph. But not through me.”

The simple step a courageous individual must take is to decline to take part in the lie, Solzhenitsyn said. “One word of truth outweighs the world.” A word of truth can sustain others by encouraging them, by reminding them that they’re not alone and that honor is always better than dishonor.

Hold onto hope, fellow First Church members. Hold onto truth, so it may be spoken.



Missoula First United Methodist Church Climate Covenant

As people of faith, we have an obligation to care for God’s creation. How we live in this world has meaning and consequences for all beings.

We find our planet in a dire climate crisis. All life forms are at risk because of humankind’s abuses of the earth, sky and water. Millions of plant and animal species face extinction. Humans are suffering, especially those who already are oppressed and therefore less able to cope with the changes brought by a warming world.

We are called to action that reflects our abiding love for God, for one another and for the natural world. We pledge ourselves – as individuals and as the congregation of Missoula First United Methodist Church – to the interconnected responsibilities of caring for creation and seeking justice for the oppressed. All aspects of our congregation’s life will reflect these deep and unwavering commitments.

Therefore:

1. We resolve to accept our moral obligation to be responsible stewards of God’s creation and advocates for social justice. We will transform our despair, anger and sadness about climate change and human suffering into action that helps to heal our world and all of humanity.
2. We resolve to conduct a review of our church’s carbon footprint, and to develop and enact practices that reduce our impact on the Earth. We will educate our congregation and community on these efforts, and will work to inspire change at all levels.
3. We resolve to elevate climate action, and with it social justice, as a primary focus of our ministry. We will take a multi-faceted approach that includes education, communication, direct action and worship.

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Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

March Events

- 3/6 - UWF GENERAL MEETING** 1:30 p.m. KDM Library
- 3/13 - RUTH**, 10:00 a.m. KDM Library
- 3/19 - VESPERS**, 1:00 p.m. KDM Library
- 3/20 - GEMS**, 6:00 p.m. KDM Library
- 3/25 - BOOK GROUP**, 11:00 a.m. KDM Library
- 4/26 - UWF Spring District Mtg** being held at FUMC

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!

