

MISSOULA FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
WELCOMES ALL PEOPLE OF ANY AGE, GENDER, COLOR, ETHNICITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, ECONOMIC STATUS,
OR PHYSICAL ABILITY INTO THE FULL LIFE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THIS CONGREGATION.

TOWER TIDINGS

The Sixty-Second Epistle of John: “The Lenten Teeter-Totter”

The approach of Lent always puts me in a ponderous mind frame. There’s a weight to this season which is unique and by design – confession, repentance, a higher degree of honesty about ourselves, fasting, ashes, and darkness all come together in the attempt to move one deeper into the true self as it also tries to move us all closer to the divine. But the approach is tenuous, the steps taken are shaky; we find no real reinforcement for this journey in greater society, where most effort is put into the messages of self-sufficiency and “I’m OK, you’re OK” ideology. Most of us do not find it natural to consider our limitations and fallibility; we hate to be wrong about anything, especially ourselves.

And yet, there are quite a few who dwell too long in such lands, where a sense of one’s self-value is decimated, where neglect or attack or diminishment by others is a regular affair. The withering effect of such treatment can become normalized in one’s life; hear the message “you’re no good” too often, from external sources or from internal, and one begins to believe this horrible untruth.

I have found that Lent is actually a dangerous time for these reasons – as it seeks to purify and confess, it can lead to damage in self-perception and esteem. I meet with too many people who doubt their lovability, who question their value in many ways, helped along by a cold and heartless environment at home, or at school, or at work, or generally in the world.

This is why I believe that the most important element in this season is not confession, nor honesty about self, nor repentance or fasting or redemption; I believe that the most important element in Lent is balance. Let me explain what I mean.....

The things of Lent which do damage (and I’m borrowing form from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s The Cost of Discipleship here) are

MARCH 2023



LECTIONARY

• **March 5**
2nd Sunday in Lent
Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalms 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17

• **March 12**
3rd Sunday in Lent
Daylight Savings Time Begins
Exodus 17: 1-7
Psalms 95
Romans 5:1-11
John 4:5-42

• **March 19**
4th Sunday in Lent
UMCOR Sunday
1 Samuel 16: 1-13
Psalms 23
Ephesians 5: 8-14
John 9:1-41

• **March 26**
5th Sunday in Lent
Ezekiel 37: 1-14
Psalms 130
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

when the journey is imbalanced, such as when we practice:

Confession without pardon

Redemption without transformation

Honesty without confirmation

Fasting without devotion

Humility without affirmation

Prayer without listening.

Repentance without change

In contrast, Lent serves much more of its purpose when it accompanies the gravitas of sorrow and self-abasement with the consistent response of grace-involved value. Key to this response is to center on grace as God's gift rather than any measurable externality; one thing the world can never consistently provide is the inner peace of knowing one's profound, eternal value which is at the heart of the Lenten emphasis. Lent exists not to bring a spirit down, but to bring that spirit to life by removing the need to be encumbered by self-loathing or any sense of worthlessness. The world is good at reinforcing such messages; faith is essential to countering their effect.

If you know me, you know I am a creature of visuals; I find that images and pictures can help bring forth messages of value that go beyond words. In this vein, I have often thought of the visual for Lent being a teeter-totter, the variety found on school playgrounds the world over. A teeter-totter only works if there is an interplaying balance between the sides; balance itself is not the end goal so much as interaction between two opposite entities; the fun is in consistently correcting imbalances. Perhaps this is a good way to think of not only our Lenten journey, but our faith journey overall ; to consistently correct our spiritual imbalances at the invitation of a fulcrum God?

God's Grace Be With You,

John



Thank-you for turning out for our February 5th potluck to share southwest cuisine and information about the work of our Arizona Justice For Our Neighbors (AZJFON). We are in the midst of raising money for our annual pledge of \$2000.00 to AZJFON and you can contribute any amount by donating to First UMC and designating the donation to AZJFON.

Thank-you for helping our neighbors at the border!



For sixteen months we have been making sack lunches for the Poverello Center every Saturday morning. This is especially important during the winter months. There are faithful sandwich makers from 1st UMC, as well as from the UCC, two scout troops and some Lutherans. Perhaps this is something you would like to help with. We have the system down to a fine science so you probably won't need to devote more than an hour at a time. Just one Saturday a month or every other month can make a huge difference. If you are interested, please contact Lorraine Carlson @ madamecarlson@gmail.com or 406-274-6230.

HOW TO CONTACT

Church Pledges and Donations

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

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

If you give online there is a dropdown menu under the line with the amount that allows you to designate where the money goes. You can also text to give at (406) 998-1982 with a donation amount and keyword like pledge or building. You are also welcome to mail in your donation. Leslie Uhlenbruck,

Tower Tidings April Deadline:

March 14th

Special thanks to Nancy Eik and April Padget for helping edit *Tower Tidings*.

THE 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

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*

Genevieve Padget Slote, *Administrative Assistant*

Cheryl Bauer, *Administrative Assistant Sub*

Jim Bauer, Donna McCammon, and
Cara Lightfield *Office Volunteers*

Leslie Lindley, *Treasurer*

Leslie Uhlenbruck, *Financial Secretary*

Craig Gohl, *Custodian*

Greg Boris, *Chancel Choir Director*

Sarah Schmill, *Hand Bell Choir Director*

Luke Larson, *Organist and Pianist*

VACANT, *Children and Youth Ministries*

Director

VACANT, *Nursery Attendant*

For more information or to reach First UMC staff, please call the church office, 406-549-6118, or E-Mail us at FUMCmissoula@gmail.com



Toolbox for Inspiration

"Keep on being the light. Keep on shining. Keep on loving. Keep on caring.
Keep on smiling. Keep on." Rachel Marie Martin

United Women in Faith

Our UWF has offerings for all meeting times: morning, afternoon, and evening. Check out what's happening and choose to participate in these active mission opportunities.

March 2 – General Meeting, 1:30 pm in the KDM Library for a Memorial and Prayer and Self Denial. All women welcome! Call Elaine Williams for information, 406-529-1325.

Hosts: Ruth Circle.



March 9 – Ruth Circle meets at 10:00 am in the KDM Library. Betsy Wilcox will speak about Intermountain Children's Home. Contact is Judy Whiddon, 406-239-4187. "Please Join us!"

March 15 – Vespers meets at 1:00 pm in the KDM Library. If you are interested, you are invited to call Patsy Hodges, 406-493-0961.

March 16 – GEMS meets at 6:00 pm in the KDM Library to prepare Easter treats for shut-ins. Contact Lisa Jackson for further information or if you would like to join this effort, 406-552-2936 or lisameckjack@gmail.com.

March 23 – Annual Giving Day for the Legacy Fund. Please contact our local treasurer if you have questions, Kathie Snodgrass, 406-541-8639.

March 28 – Fourth Tuesday Book Group meets at 11:00 am in the KDM Library to discuss Phoebe: A Story, a novel by Paula Gooder. Laurie Ball is the contact for this group, 406-926-2936.

The First UMC Foundation is offering the **Foundation Scholarship** to someone who attends regularly or is an active member of Missoula First UMC and is continuing their post-secondary education. The scholarship honors Olive M. Reichel, Ella Turmell, Gordon and Nettie Reynolds, Archie Joscelyn and Katie Payne. The application form is available through the church office or online on the church website: <http://www.firstumcmissoula.org/> then go to the

Getting Involved page. Scroll down until you see the Foundation Logo and the scholarship link is below that.

The deadline for submitting applications is April 15th.

Mail to: Missoula First UMC Foundation

P.O. Box 7646

Missoula, MT 59807.



UNITED METHODIST
FOUNDATION

January Food Bank Drive - 2023

Food orders/cash donations: \$2,032.91 collected and delivered.

Donated items: 87 lbs. of food and supplies delivered.

Birthday kits: 16 Birthday Kits put together/delivered.

A very special “thank you” to Genevieve Padget Slote and Cheryl Bauer and to Pastor John and our Youth Group for helping put the birthday kits together.



Tzedakah Pocket Offers Hope

2023 continues to be a challenge for us with so many requests for assistance coming our way. The assistance requests we have received so far have been expensive ones. It's still early in the year so funding is still available from other sources and the housing market is still depressed so we see little call for “Rent/Deposit” assistance right now. “Lodging” requests are intermittent and the “Lodging” requests we have received so far this year have been weather and illness related. Our “Other” category is where we have seen the largest number of requests. These include payment of storage unit rents so people don't lose all their possessions while they try to find housing, payment for car repairs for those living in their cars, settling outstanding debts so applying for housing is possible, a bus ticket for a young man trying to get home to family, buying gas/gift cards, etc. We can't predict when we will get assistance requests or how much will be needed to satisfy each request but we are here to

help and, as always, we do as much as we can with what we have. We appreciate the congregation's support of this ministry. Without you there is no funding to assist those who come to us for help. A recap of assistance provided by our church's Tzedakah Pocket ministry is shown here.



Tzedakah Summary

2023 Donations: \$1,273.43

Assistance Paid	February 2023			Year- To- Date 2023		
	Amount	Fam.	Child.	Amount	Fam.	Child.
Lodging	\$ 242.37	2	1	\$ 738. 01	5	1
Rent/ Sec. Dep.	\$ 0	0	0	\$ 0	0	0
Other	\$ 1,358.83	6	5	\$ 2,948.26	14	9
TOTAL	\$ 1,601.20	8	6	\$ 3,686.27	19	10

IN OUR PRAYERS...

~Healing and Comfort ~

- ✠ Prayers of comfort for the family and friends of Tyre Nichols, who was beaten to death by police in Memphis. Prayers of continued calm for those protesting, and effectiveness for those working to change the way arrests are handled for BIPOC people.
- ✠ Comfort for those impacted by the earthquake in southern Turkey and Syria. Prayers for those who perished, those who survived, and for their future.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort and new coping skills for a 16-year-old immigrant in Missoula who was recently diagnosed with a genetic eye condition that is not curable and will eventually result in blindness. Prayers of thankfulness for the teacher who is assisting her.
- ✠ Comfort for the injured victims and for the friends and families of those affected by the recent shootings in Israel, and understanding by all that violence will not solve the problems there.
- ✠ Prayers for an individual who inquired about assistance from FUMC, but then refused the offer.
- ✠ Prayers that violence will not increase.
- ✠ Healing for Holly's friend Antonia, who is suffering with an abscess.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort and healing for Robby, who has been diagnosed with lung cancer.
- ✠ Prayers for a rapid recovery for Pastor John and others suffering from colds.
- ✠ Prayers for Cheryl M. who is recovering from Covid.
- ✠ Prayers of joy that Kathie S.'s cousin Randy H, is now walking again and nearly recovered from his ligament strain.
- ✠ Quick recovery from knee replacement surgery for Vicky O.
- ✠ Healing and strength for Dean S., who has sepsis after surgery for bladder cancer, and strength for his family.



- ✠ A good resolution for Molly, who is leaving a difficult situation.
- ✠ Prayers for Al, who suffers from failing eyesight, and is adjusting to living at the Village.
- ✠ Prayers for Cheryl M's dad who is diagnosed with terminal cancer and is having complications from the tests and is has a long wait for necessary information.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Kathy S., who is in hospice in Great Falls.
- ✠ Prayers of strength, healing, and comfort for Phyllis W. who was recently hospitalized and is now recovering at home, but still undergoing tests.
- ✠ Prayers for the brother of Cheryl M. who is likely to lose his kitty to an unknown serious disease soon.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for President Jimmy Carter and his family as his life winds down.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for a friend Ken in Arlee who has cancer, and broke several bones in a recent fall.
- ✠ Prayers of quick recovery for Pastor John in the healing of his knee.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for Genevieve's aunt who is in the hospital.

~In Sympathy~


- ✠ Prayers for the family and friends of Jean S, who recently passed away.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for Jenny H., who was severely injured in a car accident that killed her husband Matt T. in January in Mexico.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Karla L. who lost her mother Edna.

~Praises~

- ✠ Prayers of joy that Ellie B. was able to attend church in person after her long recovery.
- ✠ Prayers of joy for Nancy E., Winton K., and Tom A. who celebrated birthdays this month.
- ✠ Prayers of gratitude for John's recent column in the Missoulian.



Green Notes: Solar Power! Energy Conservation! Recycling!

- In what could be the surest sign that spring is on the way, First UMC's solar panels are once again generating electricity. The sun is out, the power switches are "on," and all systems are go. As we move into the sunniest months of the year, we will be able to see just how much power our installation can produce. SBS Solar believes the 66 panels atop the Education Annex roof can supply 80% of our church's electricity.
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- Just as our solar installation went on line last fall, NorthWestern Energy increased electric rates by 12.5%. That means we need your help to keep First Church's power bills down by conserving electricity wherever and whenever possible. Make sure the lights are off when you leave a room or hallway. Don't leave outside doors open, letting in the cold air. Unplug appliances when they're not being used. And help us look for more ways to conserve. Every kilowatt helps!
 - A hearty welcome to Joanna Duran, the newest member of First Church's composting and glass recycling program. Joanna and her husband recently moved to Missoula; already, she plays in First UMC's handbell choir. And now, the Durans are one of about 50 families participating in our glass and composting efforts. You can join, too! The cost is just \$5 per month. The glass collecting bins and composting container are located along the alley in the yard next door to the church. To join, email sherrydevlin@gmail.com.
 - The Missoula City Council needs your support in its fight to regain the local control needed to regulate single-use plastics. Why is this important? Because plastics are overrunning our planet: Filling up landfills. (Did you know the Missoula landfill will cut into more ground in the North Hills in the next few years?) Polluting our waterways and oceans. Emitting greenhouse gases during plastic production, thereby contributing to global warming. One place to start is by eliminating single-use plastics: Think straws, plastic grocery and shopping bags, plastic cutlery, take-out containers. Tell your Montana legislators that our cities should be able to ban single-use plastics. Fight for local control to protect our environment!



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Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

March Events

- ♦ **Mar. 2: UWF General MTG**, 1:30 p.m. in the KDM Library
- ♦ **Mar. 9: Ruth Circle** - 10:00 a.m. in the KDM Library
- ♦ **Mar. 15: Vespers** - 1:00 p.m. KDM Library
- ♦ **Mar. 16: Gems** - 6:00 p.m. KDM Library
- ♦ **Mar. 28: UWF Book Group**- 11:00 a.m. KDM Library



Weekly Events via Zoom and in person

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

Monday - Friday - Noon-1:00 p.m. - Vigil for Peace and Ukraine in the Sanctuary. Contact Jana S. at jstaton@montana.com if interested in being a vigil monitor.

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 Helen Herbert Parlor. Contact Barry Padget at barryumc@yahoo.com for more information. All are welcome to attend!