

# TOWER TIDINGS

## The Seventy-First Epistle of John – “Reversing the Question”

I wonder what this new year will bring into my life? And into yours?

Much of the same as last year, I would predict. Many of the same worries, fears, anxieties, frustrations, and disorienting realities that made the year something we’d rather not repeat. But, upon deeper reflection, there were many more, less obvious graces and blessings that occurred – my grandchildren being introduced to new wonders and sharing their spontaneous joy that fills our hearts; the quiet kindnesses I see in so very many people around me, from a handshake to a smile to a supportive word; justice advocates working tirelessly to correct society’s brokenness; the beauty of changing seasons and cloud-accented sunsets and snow-clarified air; the individual conversations where something of the heart is shared through tears and laughter, to the encouragement of us both. So very much good occurred but in quieter, less amplified ways, which is perhaps the very nature of goodness – unwilling to pronounce its presence for fear of a lesser motivation (read, pride).

It is the mark of good beginnings to start in such ways, reflecting upon the challenges of the past but not forsaking the more subtle but ample blessings that may pass by relatively unnoticed. Such attentions can help us do more effectively what all humans do at the turning points of life – **consider what is coming**. It is, though, only a starting point for moving into what shall be; the past confines us to the facts of our experiences and the turnings of matters beyond our control or even our understanding. They may provide us with a template for future possibilities but give us no guarantee that those guidelines will be followed.

Looking towards the future may thus seem like a fruitless enterprise where fate rules all; but fate does not rule all, at least in any life that has felt its effect upon its context. This is the basic premise of our faith, where we understand that **we are not**

JANUARY 2024



### LECTIONARY

- **January 7**  
**Epiphany Sunday**  
**Baptism of the Lord**

*Isaiah 60: 1-6*  
*Psalms 72: 1-7, 10-14*  
*Ephesians 3: 1-12*  
*Matthew 2: 1-12*

- **January 14**  
**2nd Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Human Relations Day**

*1 Samuel 3: 1-10*  
*Psalms 139: 1-6, 13-18*  
*1 Corinthians 6: 12-20*  
*John 1: 43-51*

- **January 21**  
**3rd Sunday after Epiphany**

*Jonah 3: 1-5, 10*  
*Psalms 62: 5-12*  
*1 Corinthians 7: 29-31*  
*Mark 1: 14-20*

- **January 28**  
**4th Sunday after Epiphany**

*Deuteronomy 18: 15-20*  
*Psalms 111*  
*1 Corinthians 8: 1-13*  
*Mark 1: 21-28*  
*John 1: 1-14*

**bystanders to existence but co-creators and motivated players in the narrative of God's creation.** We each have so many parts to play in so many aspects of God's handiwork, invited to lend our efforts to worthy causes and meaningful community and creation's stewardship....the list is long of things we are asked to consider for the positive movement of life, ours and others, towards a better tomorrow.

It is for these reasons that there is a much more important question that should be raised anytime we feel the effects of time's transition, a question we don't find as spontaneous perhaps, but a question God places before us as co-investors in creation, namely:

**I wonder what I may bring into this new year?**

I wonder what good I might do for others, what blessing I might bring to the world, what help I may offer in ways I've not done before? I wonder about intentionally changing my attitude towards others who are not like me or do not share my opinion? I wonder how I may check my automatic judgement mechanism and give more benefits-of-a-doubt? I wonder how I might apply more automatic grace to those who cut me off in traffic, or send me hostile emails, or dump leaves from their yard into mine while they think I'm not looking (and, yes, this happened!)?

Every beginning is an invitation to hope for better things to come, but invitations are seldom helpful unless one gives an intentional response. And the response to hope that leads to life requires investment. We may hope that the world improves, and we are invited to consider what such improvement looks like, but consideration alone will never create a better tomorrow; **it is what we bring into the world – and what inspires what we bring – that makes hope real.**

Viktor Frankl – whom I consider one of my historical mentors – was a survivor of the concentration camps of World War II. Of that experience, he had this to say regarding what he learned: “It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather **what life expected from us.** We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.” (Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning).

After all, isn't what we bring into this next year what largely determines what we will experience in our lives?

God's Grace Be With You,

*John Wanner*



Heaps of thanks to **Laura Bovard** and **Winton** and **Cathy Kemmis** for donating refrigerators so we could store sack lunches for the Poverello Homeless Outreach Teams. We are ever so grateful to you and to all of the faithful volunteers who have made, sacked and bagged 200 sack lunches every week for the last 25 months. What a fun and exciting ministry it has been! If you haven't had a chance to join us for an hour or so on Saturday mornings, or if it has been a while since you last joined us, please contact Lorraine Carlson at [madamecarlson@gmail.com](mailto:madamecarlson@gmail.com). We would love to have you as part of the team.



### Church Pledges and Donations

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

[https://](https://firstumcmissoula.breezechms.com/give/online)

[firstumcmissoula.breezechms.com/give/online](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,  
Financial Secretary

### **Tower Tidings February Deadline:**

February 6th

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

## HOW TO CONTACT THE OFFICE

### Weekday Hours

Monday-Thursday 9-12

Phone: 406- 549-6118

E-Mail: [FUMCmissoula@gmail.com](mailto:FUMCmissoula@gmail.com)

Website: [www.firstumcmissoula.org](http://www.firstumcmissoula.org)

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/1stumcmissoula](https://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](mailto: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*  
Jason Triche, *Hand Bell Choir Director*  
Luke Larson, *Organist and Pianist*  
Cindy Ekstrand, *Sunday School 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](mailto:FUMCmissoula@gmail.com)



### Toolbox for Inspiration:

Kindness, kindness, kindness. I want to make a New Year's prayer, not a resolution. I am praying for courage. Susan Sontag

**Jan. 4** - The Executive Committee will meet 1:30 in the Kay Duffield Memorial Library to plan the program for the coming year. If you have some ideas and want to participate, you are welcome to join in. Call President Elaine Williams if you need info, 406-529-1325.

**Jan. 11** - RUTH FELLOWSHIP - meeting in the KDM Library at 11:00 a.m.  
Call Judy Whiddon at 406-239-4187.

**Jan. 17.** - VESPER is meeting at 1 p.m. in the KDM Library. Every lady is invited to join us. Questions call Patsy Hodges 406-493-0961.

**Jan. 18** - GEMS will be meeting at 6:00 in the KDM Library. We will be working on a service craft project and discussing plans for the upcoming GEMS year. All are welcome! We would love to have you join us. Any questions, please contact Lisa at [lisameckjack@gmail.com](mailto:lisameckjack@gmail.com).

**Jan. 23** - Fourth Tuesday Book Group meets at 11:00 a.m. in the KDM Library to discuss "I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness" by Austin Channing Brown. This is the exciting day that new books are chosen for the year, so come and add your two cents.



Your contributions and the recent donation from our UM Foundation made it possible for us to help make Christmas special for several families who contacted us for assistance. A grandmother needed help getting at least a small gift for her grandchildren who are 9, 5, and 2. She and her daughter are able to pay their bills but don't have enough extra for Christmas presents. We helped with a gift card. A father, whose mother died recently, didn't have enough money to fulfill his 10 year-old daughter's wish to have a Christmas dinner like her grandmother always made. We helped with a gift card. A family was close to being turned out of their motel room, in spite of their hard work and the support of motel staff, unless they were able to pay on the bill they had accrued. We were able to pay half their bill so they can stay until the mother gets paid and they can pay their own way. All three of these families offered grateful hugs and sincere expressions of gratitude that we pass on to each and every one of you with their wishes for a wonderful holiday season. Thank you for your support.

A recap of assistance provided by our church's Tzedakah Pocket ministry is shown here.



## Tzedakah Summary

2023 Donations: \$12,402.03

Assistance Paid	December 2023			Year- To- Date 2023		
	Amount	Fam.	Child.	Amount	Fam.	Child.
<i>Lodging</i>	\$ 400.00	1	1	\$ 3,769.78	22	16
<i>Rent/ Sec. Dep.</i>	\$ 175.00	1	2	\$ 1,770.00	7	12
<i>Other</i>	\$ 460.00	5	4	\$ 8,498.88	65	42
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,035.00</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$ 14,038.66</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>70</b>





## January Food Bank Drive

January is our month to support the Missoula Food Bank and it's already here. The continuing pandemic, inflation, and the fallout from them continue to increase the need for donations to the Food Bank. They also make it a challenge for us to do our January Food Drive but we have always come through and supported our community. We are offering you as many donation options as we possibly can under the circumstances. If you are able, please help us do our part to ensure food security for households in our community. Whatever option you choose, please make your donations of food and/or funds sometime during January.

**Option 1:** Use the 2024 Food-by-the-Case Order Form to order a case of food through the Orange Street Market. The Case Order Form will be distributed as soon as we have the information. Most needed items will be identified by the Food Bank and will be shown on the form with the current price per case. The completed form and your check can be mailed to Missoula First UMC, P.O. Box 7646, Missoula MT 59807 or dropped off at the office during office hours (9-12; Monday-Thursday). Please make your check out to First UMC and put "Food Bank" in the memo line. The office will have extra forms if you need them as well.

**Option 2:** Make a monetary donation and let the Food Bank buy what they need at wholesale prices. Donations can be mailed to Missoula First UMC, P.O. Box 7646, Missoula MT 59807 or dropped off at the office during office hours (9-12; Monday -Thursday). You can also give online. If you mail a check, please make your check to First UMC and put "Food Bank" in the memo line. For online donations, please select the "Missoula food bank" option from the designated giving options.

**Option 3:** Place your food donations in the container located outside the church office. If you are not able to enter the church, you may either buzz the office during office hours when you are at the back door or call the office (549-6118) during office hours for entry to make your donation. Office hours are Monday through Thursday from 9 to 12.

Our Sunday School will assemble the birthday Kits for us from your donations. They will need cake mixes, frosting, candles, cake decorations, party plates/napkins, plastic forks, gift bags, and tin foil pans. Place your donation items in the "birthday-wrapped" container outside the office. As you can imagine, the Birthday Kits are very popular at the Food Bank.

If you have questions, please contact Jane Kisselbach ([janekisselbach@gmail.com](mailto:janekisselbach@gmail.com) or 406-531-6768).

## IN OUR PRAYERS...

### ~Healing and Comfort~

- ✚ Prayers for peace and safety for the people in Gaza, Israel and the Ukraine.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for those affected by recent shootings.
- ✚ Prayers for Cindy for a quick recovery from her allergic reaction.
- ✚ Prayers of healing and comfort for Susan W.'s daughter Paris, who has mental health issues and anorexia.
- ✚ Prayers for a quick recoveries for Jim and Cheryl B. who have the flu.
- ✚ Prayers for a quick recovery from his fall for Fred.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for Selena who is suffering from an ear infection.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for Rocky from her bad cold.
- ✚ Prayers for a Jewish refugee family from Syria who recently relocated to Tish's neighborhood. May their adjustment be pleasant and free of prejudices.
- ✚ Travel mercies for those on the move this month.
- ✚ Prayers for Ella as she tests her Senior Ice Skating skills.
- ✚ Support for a private prayer of special intention.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for those who have lost loved ones and are experiencing sadness during the holiday season.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for Leslie's Dad who suffered a fall. Prayers of strength for her Mother during this time.
- ✚ Prayers of safe travels for Rocky's daughter Margaret.
- ✚ Prayers of healing and strength for Del A. as he begins cancer treatment.
- ✚ Healing and comfort for Barb S., who was hospitalized with vascular dementia.
- ✚ Prayers for Shelly, who is having a surgical procedure.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for a friend of Lawson L. who had a serious fall, breaking his pelvis and crushing his shoulder.
- ✚ Prayers for a speedy recovery for Hollie C.'s mom, Aggie who had surgery for a broken hip.
- ✚ Prayers of relief from pain and a successful surgery for Meghan in January.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for Sean, John, and all others in the military who are far from home this season.
- ✚ Prayers of strength for Nancy who is in memory care.



- ✚ Prayers of courage for Rick who is facing a cancer diagnosis.

### ~In Sympathy~

- ✚ Prayers of comfort for Jan B. and her family following the loss of her relative, Julie, in December.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for Jennifer and her family following the loss of her dad in December.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for the family and friends of John T's friend Trent, who passed in December. Many feel this loss as he brought much joy to many people.
- ✚ Prayers of comforts for those who have lost loved ones this year.
- ✚ Prayers for the family and friends of Sonia, who took her life before Christmas.



### ~Praises and Joys~

- ✚ Prayers of thanksgiving that John D.'s parents are settling in and adjusting to their new place.
- ✚ Prayers of joy that Jennifer and Fred are in their new apartment.
- ✚ Joy that the front window of the church has been fixed and the grease trap in the kitchen cleaned! Prayers of thanksgiving for all who work hard to keep our church functioning and looking good!
- ✚ Prayers of joy for the exchange of hostages/prisoners in Israel/Gaza and the cease fire.
- ✚ Selena sends her grateful thanks for this congregation and all the work good works/deed that happen here.
- ✚ Prayers of thanksgiving for the Poverello Center, Johnson Street Shelter, and all emergency responders.
- ✚ Prayers of thanksgiving for a successful quadruple bypass surgery for Cindy's nephew Tim B., and a quick recovery for him.
- ✚ Grateful prayers of thanks that Tish is improving.
- ✚ Prayers of joy of all the successful Christmas and New Years concerts and events.
- ✚ Prayers of thanksgiving for those who continue to champion issues of human rights and education.
- ✚ Prayers of joy that Nick's mom won a human rights award for adult literacy.



## Green Notes: Calling All First Church Recyclers for 2024!

We're making your New Year's Resolutions easy this year: For the first six months of 2024, First Church families can recycle their glass and food scraps for **FREE!**

Our Green Team has sufficient funding in the recycling account to pay monthly collection fees for our glass and compost programs, so everyone will receive a "vacation" from payments through June 2024.

We hope that added incentive brings even more First Church families to the glass recycling and composting effort, as both are excellent programs that keep material out of Missoula's landfill and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The glass and compost bins are conveniently located along the alley in the backyard of the Missoula Symphony Office, next door to the church. Please be sure to only place glass in the large glass bins, and allowable compost items in the smaller compost bin. A graphic accompanying this article shows what items can and cannot be composted.

Glass to be recycled needs to be clean, but can be any color, shape or size. Please remove any lids or corks. If participation increases, we can easily add more glass bins. And remember: Glass is a great way to replace the use of non-recyclable plastic containers. All glass can be recycled and reused.



The compost we collect also is reused, creating new, healthy soil that is used locally.

Thank you to the 50-plus First Church families who made this program such a success. Now let's add the next 50 families – and take a six-month vacation from fees. Happy 2024!



## Soil Cycle Bucket List

### Please Compost:

Vegetables (raw/cooked)  
Fruits  
Coffee Grounds & Filters  
Loose Leaf Tea  
Mushrooms  
Bread and Grains  
Cereal  
Egg Shells  
Plant and Flower Trimmings  
Shredded Paper (not glossy)  
Used Paper towels & Napkins  
PLA Compostable Containers



### Please Avoid:

Meat & Fish  
Dairy Products  
Produce Stickers, twist ties, rubber bands  
Eggs (egg shells are no problem)  
Excessive Grease, Oil, Fats  
Plastic, Glass, and Metal  
Pet Waste or Litter

For any additional questions  
contact Soil Cycle at:  
[info@soilcyclemissoula.com](mailto:info@soilcyclemissoula.com)





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Instagram:

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

*Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.*

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### **January Events**

- ♦ **1/4:** United Women in Faith Executive Committee will meet 1:30 in the Kay Duffield Memorial Library.
- ♦ **1/11: Ruth Fellowship** will meet in the KDM Library at 11:00 a.m.
- ♦ **1/12: Friday Night Out:** 6:00 p.m., at the Carlson Home, 6314 Hillview Way
- ♦ **1/17: VESPER**s 1:00 p.m. in KDM Library.
- ♦ **1/18:** GEMS will be meeting at 6:00 in the KDM Library.
- ♦ **1/23:** Fourth Tuesday Book Group meets at 11:00 a.m. in the 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 Parlor. Contact Rev. Barry Padgett at [barryumc@yahoo.com](mailto:barryumc@yahoo.com) for more information. All are welcome to attend!