

TOWER TIDINGS

The Seventy-Second Epistle of John – “Dealing with Uncle Fred”

We all have an Uncle Fred, I believe – that one relation (or perhaps friend or neighbor) who regularly, determinedly, unreservedly spouts an opinion that is so off the wall, so harmful, so wrong, so ignorant, that we find ourselves with our mouths open and our minds seething at the wrongness before us.

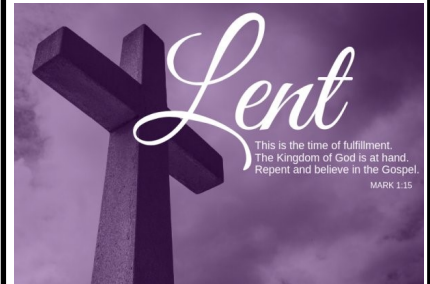
(Disclaimer: I don’t actually have an Uncle Fred! But know of many who do.....)

In such moments, we can’t help but ask ourselves some obvious questions: What do you do when people you know and love head down a path you simply cannot understand or support? When they support a political candidate who goes against so many of their own personal values? When they do things to themselves that damage their health (smoking, drinking, etc.)? When they misrepresent themselves or state something that you know is a complete fabrication? When they say one thing, and do precisely the opposite?

Do we remove them from our email contact list? Or “unfriend” them on Facebook? Do we make ugly faces at them or try to ridicule their ideas? Do we decide to send them no gift for Christmas or birthdays? Or do we write them a nasty note telling them how wrong they are? Do we purposely fail to offer them the last cookie on the plate, or intentionally not hold the door open for them? Do we gossip about them behind their back, making sure others know how wrong they are – or at least to make sure those others know we think they are wrong? Do we make an effort to intentionally avoid their presence, or schedule our vacations so that we won’t be found in the same place and time?

I have found so very many people share with me their troubled souls over the disagreements they have with loved ones. This is no new phenomenon, for as a pastor I come across such tensions all the time, and even experience some in my own relations. I am

FEBRUARY 2024



LECTIONARY

• **February 4, 2024**
5th Sunday after the Epiphany
Isaiah 40: 21-31
Psalms 147: 1-11, 20c
1 Corinthians 9: 16-23
Mark 1: 29-39

• **February 11, 2024**
Transfiguration Sunday
2 Kings 2: 1-12
Psalms 50: 1-6
2 Corinthians 4: 3-6
Mark 9: 2-9

• **February 18, 2024**
1st Sunday in Lent
Genesis 9: 8-17
Psalms 25: 1-10
1 Peter 3: 18-22
Mark 1: 9-15

• **February 25, 2024**
2nd Sunday in Lent
Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16
Psalms 22: 23-31
Romans 4: 13-25
Mark 8: 31-38



fortunate that across the board my family's love for each other far exceeds any partisan or issue stance. But for many, the degree of tension seems somehow different these days, when that love seems displaced by difference. It's as if there is a rise in aggravation that accompanies the inconsistencies we see in others (and perhaps that they see in us!), causing our love to feel strained to the breaking point; the intimacy we once enjoyed and even counted on now seems to be dissolving, or worse -- gone altogether.

So how do we navigate the precarious nature of our strained relationships, especially in times like these?

Hopefully we all realize that there is quite a lot of futility to be found in pursuing the ideas of the second paragraph above; none of them really address the differences we struggle with – they are more reactionary, emotive responses intended to strike back, perhaps cathartic in nature but likely vengeful in spirit – and we all know the tendency of the human subject when struck is to instinctually, spontaneously strike back. Such ideas could also be implemented to protect ourselves from harmful thoughts or mind frames or unhealthy, unhelpful perspectives – but, again, such separation would do little to address the differences we face.

No, if love is really there, albeit possibly unrecognizable through the onion layers of irrational perspectives, that love needs to be trusted all the more; any chance of it resurfacing depends upon our willingness to trust in its presence (even if there is not the same resolve in the other) as a motivator for staying engaged.

And what does trusting in this love look like? There are so very many lists of advice out there; well, here are some of the things I find most helpful:

Don't feed the fire – (see note on paragraph 3!) – avoid actions, statements, body language, or behavior that will obviously escalate things negatively; we often know triggers that set off those whom we love and can navigate around them to retain civil interaction.

Listen more than speak – knowing that 97.3% of all tension in the world is due to a failure to listen fully to outside input (and, yes, I made that percentage up! But it seems about right.....)

But..... **don't fail to speak when someone's ready to hear** – which often happens if the person feels like you are listening to understand rather than shape a response (which is what we do most often!). The greatest signpost of a person's readiness to hear is when they ask you a sincere question to understand your position. This often represents the moment when respect for each other overrides the differences in opinion that threatened the relationship.

Refuse to hate – I like Corrie Ten Boom's description of hatred – when you hate someone it is like swallowing poison and waiting for the other person to die. Hatred is the antithesis of love – and actively tries to render the latter invisible.

Remember that **the person is always more important than the issue** (we lose sight of this

all the time); and perhaps most importantly,

Maintain your own integrity (for people of faith, the integrity God expects of us). Never strive to be the person others expect you to be; that expectation is only justified in One who knows us better than we know ourselves – **be the person God expects us to be.**

All of these practices find their source in the kind of living Jesus advocated –practicing unconditional love, standing for the truth, prioritizing grace, humbling ourselves before others, refusing to judge lest we be judged, practicing patience and forbearance and compassion while working against injustice and violence and falsehood. None of this is rocket science; but none of these come naturally, either. They are the components of a constructed life following the blueprints of faith, allowing God to guide us when our own designs lead us astray.

Or when Uncle Fred decides to spout his opinion!

God's Grace Be With You,




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,
Financial Secretary

Tower Tidings March Deadline:

March 12

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

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*
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



INSPIRATION TOOLBOX

*Every time you smile at someone,
it is an action of love,
a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.*
Mother Teresa

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Mission u will be offered free via Zoom every Sunday afternoon during February, from 2 to 4:30 pm. The study is Building and Finding Peace in an Anxious World, centering on the Beatitudes, and taught by Rev. Su DeBree. If you have questions, or would like to register, please contact Belinda.Alkula@gmail.com. These are always valuable and timely studies.

GENERAL MEETING: Thurs., Feb. 1 at 1:30 p.m. in the Kay Duffield Memorial Library. There will be a Memorial Service for deceased members and installation of officers for the coming year. Hosts are the Book Group. All are welcome. Contact Peg at 406-542-1543 for more info.

RUTH: Thurs., Feb. 8 at 10:00 a.m. in the KDM Library. For more information call Judy at 406-239-4187.

VESPERS: Wed., Feb. 14, at 1 p.m. in the KDM Library. Visitors and new members always welcome. For additional information please call Patsy at 406-493-0961.

GEMS: Thurs., Feb. 15 in the KDM Library at 6 pm, to work on a project and discuss plans for the coming year. Women who are busy during the day, are always welcomed to this evening group. Call Lisa at 406-552-2936.

BOOK: Fourth Tuesday Book Group, Feb. 27 at 11 am, in the KDM Library to discuss "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. You are welcome whether you've read the book or not. If you wish to join via Zoom, please contact Kathie at 406-531-1569.

LOOKING AHEAD. February event: The Annual Souper Supper will be held on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14 in the downstairs Clara Smith Room at 6:00 p.m. Soup and bread will be served by UWF for a free will offering. If you can help in any way, please contact Kathie, 406- 531-1569. Plates of Valentine treats will also be sold for a donation. This is one of our UWF fundraisers, so if you can provide soup or treats, please let Kathie know, 406-531-1569.

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. There is a box in the Narthex or you are welcome to drop the items in the church office. Items needed are sample sizes of shampoo, conditioner, lotion, deodorant, soap, washcloths, and towels, toothpaste, tooth brushes, dental floss, notepads and pens. Thank-you!



Please join us for our **Ash Wednesday Service** on Wednesday, February 14 at 6:30 p.m. Please join us for our annual soup supper provided by our United Women in Faith at 6:00 p.m. in the Clara Smith Room. Goodwill offering will be taken to support local and global missions. Thank-you for your support and see you there for some delicious food and good fellowship!



Boy Scout Sunday is February 4th and Troop 1919 would like to join the congregation for worship and celebrate with a **potluck after church!** They will bring chili and hope the congregation will join them in bringing sides and dessert! There will be a talent show and they want you to show off your talents!! They will also be selling their famous popcorn as a fundraiser for summer camps!



Please donate to our **Food Drive** sometime before Sunday, February 4th if you are able. Your donation options have been provided elsewhere but, if you need additional information about that, please stop in the office or get in touch with Jane Kisselbach (janekisselbach@gmail.com; 406-531-6768). The two donation boxes (birthday kit donations and food items), previously available outside the office, have been moved to the narthex so please visit them there if you have items to donate. We appreciate your participation!

Tzedakah Pocket Offers Hope

January has been a very busy month with many requests for lodging because of the cold weather. These requests are in addition to the requests we usually receive. We were able to respond because of your generosity and caring. We will continue to do our best with what we have. Thank you for supporting this ministry. It matters.



Tzedakah Summary

2024 Donations: \$1,149.68

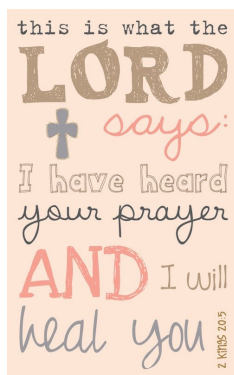
2023 Donations: \$13,411.13

Assistance Paid	January 2024			Year - To - Date 2023		
	Amount	Fam.	Child.	Amount	Fam.	Child.
Lodging	\$ 926.32	3	3	\$ 3,769.78	22	16
Rent/ Sec. Dep.	\$ 0	0	0	\$ 1,770.00	7	12
Other	\$ 334.52	4	2	\$ 8,554.88	66	43
TOTAL	\$ 1,260.84	7	5	\$ 14,094.66	95	71

IN OUR PRAYERS...

~Healing and Comfort ~

- ✠ Prayers for peace and safety for the people in Gaza, Israel and the Ukraine.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for a parishioner's neighbor Anita, who has a low white blood cell count and prayers for a successful surgery for Anita's daughter Julie.
- ✠ Prayers for God's guidance for the United Methodist Church delegates who will be meeting for General Conference in April.
- ✠ Prayers for a smooth and successful dental surgery for Rocky A.
- ✠ Prayers for quick healing for Genevieve's friend Darcy who is recovering from mouth surgery.
- ✠ Courage and healing for Sandy B.'s friend's mother who was just diagnosed with breast cancer.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for Terri, who is recovering from COVID.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for Brad W. who was ill.
- ✠ Prayers of healing, comfort, and strength for friend of John and Terri's who has serious health issues.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for Jon, following a successful surgery.
- ✠ Prayers of recovery and strength for Hollie C.'s mom Aggie, who had surgery for a broken hip.
- ✠ Prayers of strength and healing for Meghan R., who was diagnosed with Crohn's disease.
- ✠ Prayers that Alex finds the cause of the seizures.
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving that Bob was able to have his heart surgery after having it was postponed due to the bad weather.
- ✠ Prayers of quick recovery after a successful knee replacement surgery for Jim G.
- ✠ Prayers for well-being and health for Nick's friend Scott, who was diagnosed with cancer last week.
- ✠ Prayers that Opportunity Resources will be able to find more staff workers.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort and calm for those fearful of what 2024 might bring.
- ✠ Prayers for precipitation, so that we don't have a dry summer marked with wild land fires.



- ✠ Prayers of courage for us to work for change in this country and the world.
- ✠ Prayers that our leaders and members of the Supreme Court make ethical decisions.
- ✠ Prayers of safety for everyone during this cold snap, especially the unhoused.
- ✠ Prayers of strength and health for Randy P.'s grandson Ryan.
- ✠ Prayers for a successful surgery and healing for Rocky A.'s sister-in-law Ann, who will have thoracic surgery February 2nd.
- ✠ Prayers for a successful match for George S.'s second cousin, who needs a heart transplant that will work for his large frame.
- ✠ Prayers for a smooth final semester and continued good health for Gabby as she looks forward to graduating this May.
- ✠ Continued healing for Peg as she continues to recover from pneumonia.
- ✠ Prayers of healing and strength for Kathy Y. after having vascular surgery.
- ✠ Prayers of strength for Joe who is awaiting a plan for back surgery and a successful repair of the problem.
- ✠ Prayers for Laura B.'s cousin Lynn who found a new mass on her lung and will begin chemo. Prayers for her young daughters as well.
- ✠ Prayers of healing for Mark C. who has a terrible cold.



~In Sympathy~

- ✠ Prayers of comfort for Tish's family following the loss of her beloved Aunt Gloria, who recently passed at age 98.
- ✠ Prayers of comfort for the family, friends, and classmates at Sentinel HS of Logan J., who died in a traffic accident on slick roads near Lolo.
- ✠ Prayers for the friends and family of Nancy F. who passed away recently.

~Praises and Joys~

- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving for safe travels for John and Terri D.
- ✠ Gratitude for the worship leaders, the scripture readers, the musicians and choir, the team that prepares our worship space and communion, and those who care for our building.
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving to our congregation for the open hearts and hands from the AA community that meets in our building.
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving for the birthday of Eliza Cox. Prayers of blessings on her and may her life continue to flow smoothly.
- ✠ Prayers of thanksgiving for all in the church who helped make the service of Logan J. run smoothly.



Green Notes: United We Eat, First Church Celebrate

Partnership - What a treat – and an amazing success story! About 50 members and friends of First UMC gathered after worship on Sunday, Jan. 21 for an international lunch catered by the refugee-chefs of United We Eat. Wow. Wow. Wow.

In celebration of our church's four-year partnership with UWE, Chef Oumar Keita from Guinea and the United We Eat team prepared salads, vegetarian and chicken entrees, a Guinean peanut brittle and Arabic coffee.



Oumar arrived in the United States in 2016 from Conakry, the capital of Guinea. He is a musician, the son of a ballet dancer who taught him how to sing and dance and tell stories. He's been cooking since he was 10 years old. In Guinean culture, sharing food with someone equalizes your relationship.

United We Eat has utilized First Church's commercial-grade kitchen since 2020, serving very popular weekly takeout meals prepared by chefs from 16 different countries who have resettled in Missoula in recent years.

Mary Poole, director of Soft Landings Missoula and UWE, told lunch-goers that the chefs have served about 18,000 meals through the takeout program. (Customers order the meals online -- they sell out in about 15 minutes – then pick up the ready-to-eat dinners on Tuesday evenings.)

United We Eat has also sponsored three large welcoming dinners for refugees and immigrants in First UMC's fellowship hall. "It was amazing," Poole said, "to observe Muslims break the fast in the church, and sweep up sequins after the Afghan gathering."

The chefs have also held 18 virtual cooking classes in First Church's kitchen, sharing their knowledge with folks all across the nation. And in the process of all this hard work and food preparation, they've earned money for their families.

January's event was sponsored by First UMC's Green Team, which works with United We Eat on a number of recycling and composting initiatives. Poole reported that the UWE kitchen has composted its food scraps for three years, diverting 2,700 pounds of waste from Missoula's landfill – and saved 123 gallons of gas because Soil Cycle picks up and hauls the compost on bicycles.

UWE has also started using compostable containers for its takeout meals, and 60 customers purchased reusable containers during an eight-week pilot program – keeping even more disposable containers out of the landfill. And First Church's Green Team collects and recycles UWE's cardboard (think large boxes used for canned goods and produce). We could always use your help with that effort!

We look forward to many more years of partnership and celebration with the amazing chefs and leaders of United We Eat. What an incredible gift they have given the Missoula community and our congregation. Thank you, Soft Landings and United We Eat. You are a blessing.



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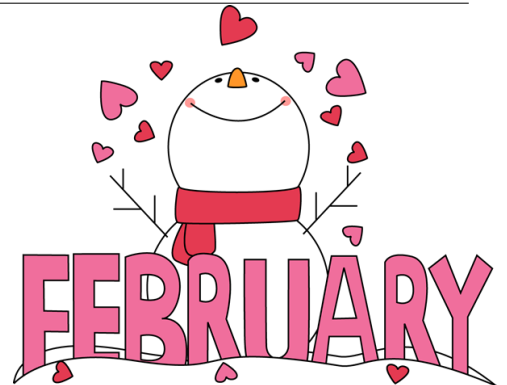
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Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

February Events

- ♦ **2/1: United Women in Faith Executive Committee** will meet 1:30 p.m. in the Kay Duffield Memorial Library.
- ♦ **2/4: Boy Scout Sunday and Potluck**
- ♦ **2/8: Ruth Fellowship** will meet at 10:00a.m. in the KDM Library.
- ♦ **2/14: VESPERS** will meet at 1:00 p.m. in KDM Library.
- ♦ **2/14: UWF Soup Supper:** 6:00 p.m. in the Clara Smith Room
- ♦ **2/14: Ash Wednesday Worship Service 6:30 p.m.**
- ♦ **2/15: GEMS** will be meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the KDM Library.
- ♦ **2/27: 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 for more information. All are welcome to attend!