



**First United Methodist Church**

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**Sidney First United Methodist Church**

Pastor's Ponderings

January 2021

Professor and theologian Henri Nouwen told the story of a student who, many years after graduation, returned to sit in his old professor's office where so many questions had been answered and so many problems had been solved. When the student entered, he told his professor he didn't need anything, he had just come to visit, and to be together.

They sat for a while in silence and looked at each other. One broke the silence by telling the other how nice it was to see him. The other agreed, and then there was silence.

Then the student said, "When I look at you, it is as if I am in the presence of Christ."

The professor was not startled or surprised, and he simply responded, "It is the Christ in you who recognizes the Christ in me."

The student replied with the most healing words Henri had heard in many years. "Yes, Christ indeed is in our midst. From now on, wherever you go, or wherever I go, all the ground between us will be holy ground."

You know, as I read that story, I remember fondly some of my seminary professors. There are more than a few I'd like to visit again, and just sit with, or maybe attend one of their classes. There are some folks I've met in my life who have impacted me much like Henri Nouwen had impacted that student...

Our culture demands that we be productive. Our society insists we should always be doin' things, goin' places, makin' plans and solvin' problems. However, it seems there's a couple problems with this trend: #1 - if you're NOT a problem solver or a planner or a producer then obviously you're some kinda 2<sup>nd</sup> class person and you really need to pick up the pace! And #2 - we don't take time for one another anymore because of #1...

You see, society seems to demand that we constantly drive ourselves to achieve. The goal may be money, recognition, or some other trophy, but in general, our culture doesn't look kindly on those who are not "out there" workin' themselves  $\frac{1}{2}$  to death for a dream.

What I would suggest to you is somethin' entirely counter-cultural: the idea of simply getting together just for the sake of getting together is something to be cherished! We're quite often so busy that when we do finally find time with those we love, respect or admire, we more often than not fail to see the Christ in one another because of this uneasy, unsettled feeling that we really oughta be doin' more than just sittin' around visiting!

I can remember as a kid (think early 1970's) that folks used to go for walks in the evening to see who was out on their front porch. And if you weren't a "walker," then you sat on your front porch to see who was out walking! I clearly remember some of those nites, and I remember my parents and grandparents lamenting the loss of those easy-goin', peaceful times...

But, those times are gone - and I can prove it. Take yourself for a drive (cuz I know you don't have time for a leisurely stroll...!) and look at the houses in town. If a house is newer than about 1990 or so, it has no front porch! AND - more to the point - I'd bet there's probably some kinda privacy fence around the back yard as well...!

It's simple - we don't have time to just sit out on the porch so we can wave at folks who pass by, and really, if someone did walk by, you can almost bet they're not out lookin' to see who's sittin' on their front porch! We're all so busy that when we do finally get to spend time at home, we're exhausted and we don't want to be around people, so we sit behind our fenced in back yards and try to relax a little before we hit it again the next morning.

It's a new year - it's a time for "resolutions" - so here's my suggestion for you: SLOW DOWN!

There's this notion that unless we really make somethin' of ourselves, no one will remember us when we're gone - so we absolutely push ourselves to total exhaustion tryin' to live up to someone else's level of achievement - someone else's standard of "excellence."

However, this life is as transient as the leaves on a tree. We're short-timers here - our real life begins when we enter eternity! The only things you take with you from this world into the next is your relationship with God and you're your relationship with other people. And both of them take time...!!!

It is my prayer for all of us this new year that we invest ourselves more in one another and in God than we do in our careers, our plans and our projects. Make time to just stop and visit, with God first, and your friends second. Jesus once said, "Where two or more are gathered together in My name, there I will be with them."

I hope at the start of a new year I can say, "Yes, Christ indeed is in our midst. From now on, wherever you go, or wherever I go, all the ground between us will be holy ground."

I hope the same for you...

Peace, Pastor Corey

**January 2021**

First United Methodist Church

Our Mission:  
Make disciples of Jesus Christ  
for the transformation of the world.  
(Matthew 28:1-20)

Our Vision:  
To know God, to love God,  
and to serve God and our neighbor.  
(Luke 10:27)

Open Hearts  
Open Minds  
Open Doors



**Sunday Worship Time**

9:30am - Sanctuary

**Sunday School**

8:30 am—Adult Sunday School

**Weekly Bible Studies:**

**Tuesday**

6:30am - Son-Rise Group by Fireplace  
10 am - Romans Bible Study

**Wednesday**

7 am - Men's Breakfast & Bible Study -  
Grandma Jo's

**Thursday**

6:30 pm - Romans Bible Study

**SOUND**

- Jan 3 Loren Hoekema
- Jan 10 Brian Slagle
- Jan 17 Allen Aurich
- Jan 24 Bill Napier
- Jan 31

**MUSIC**

- Jan 3 Valerie Hoekema
- Jan 10 Marva Schiessler
- Jan 17 Nan McMillen
- Jan 24 Carolyn Hays
- Jan 31 Valerie Hoekema

**USHERS**

- Jan 3 JS Elwell, Kevin Sittner, Ron Jessen, Brian Sprenger
- Jan 10 James Harmon, Seth Wecker, Allen Aurich, Gene Russel, Greg Sprenger
- Jan 17 Loren Hoekema, Kord McMillen, Mike Mitchell, Drew Glover
- Jan 24 Lanny Schiessler, John Eastman, Brian Slagle, Jacob Frerichs
- Jan 31 Loren Hoekema, Larry Talich, Lanny Schiessler, Bill Michie

**POWER POINT**

- Jan 3 Chuck Hammond
- Jan 10 Wanda Talich
- Jan 17 Kristin Simmons
- Jan 24 Kord McMillen
- Jan 31 Kevin Sittner

**KIDZ TIME**

- Jan 3
- Jan 10
- Jan 17
- Jan 24
- Jan 31

**LECTOR**

- Jan 3 Julie Slagle
- Jan 10 Chuck Liess
- Jan 17 Bonnie Thompson
- Jan 24 Nancy Liess
- Jan 31

**ACOLYTES**

- Jan 3
- Jan 10
- Jan 17
- Jan 24
- Jan 31

**GREETERS**

Church Family,

On behalf of Sarah and myself -

THANK YOU! Again, this last few weeks before Christmas you have showered us with all kinds of cards, gift cards, homemade goodies, gifts and snacks! We greatly appreciate all of you and your continued support and love through the year. It's an honor to be a part of such a caring and generous family. Sarah and I look forward to another great year together. We continue to covet your prayers as well, and encourage each of you to continue your walk with the Lord as we move forward into the new year together. Again, thank you all for your generous outpouring of support, and for your continued presence in our lives!

Pastor Corey & Sarah

**PRAYER FOCUS AD COUNCIL**  
 Stan Flessner, Julie Slagle, Valeta Rosenbaum, Bill Napier, Evie Flessner, Lori Fritz, Tom Millman, Margaret Sprenger, Linda Raddatz, Loren Hoekema

**Remembering in Prayer:**  
 The Families of: Doyle Sanders, Sharon DeNovellis, Ada Johnson

**CHURCHES PRAYING**

STAY TUNED FOR THE NEXT  
 BLOOD DRIVE DATE .....

**January 2021**

Tuesday  
 Sunrise Bible Study @ 6:30 am  
 Romans Bible Study @ 10 am

Wednesday  
 Men's Breakfast & Bible Study @ 7 am (Grandma Jo's)

Wednesday Jan 6 & Jan 20 - G1 Youth Group @ 6 pm

Thursday - Romans Bible Study @ 6:30 pm

Saturday - Jan 9 & 23 - Care Share

Sunday, Jan 10 - Baptism of the Lord - Communion Sun-

**Led By GOD**

Read Isaiah 52:7-12 and Exodus 13:17-22

While reading the January issue of a magazine many years ago I noticed the following quote on the table of contents page: *"But you will not leave in haste or go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, the GOD OF ISRAEL will be your rear guard."* Isaiah 52:12 (NIV). What a great reminder when starting the new year. GOD guides our steps and protects us from behind, comforting words for sure.

Do you make New Year's resolutions? Have you in the past? How long before your plan has dwindled to nothing? I've heard that the first week in January, gym's bring out all their extra machines and equipment and two weeks later they put it all away again. Sounds about right doesn't it. I've made some resolutions but don't actually write them down or tell anyone just in case my plans dwindle out in the first few weeks.

I asked several people in a "New Years Resolution Survey" this year and amongst the usual: lose weight, exercise, get organized, go to bed earlier, the ones I found most interesting were:

*"...get rid of the clutter in my life"*

*"...talk to my kids and listen to them"*

*"...read at least one book each month"*

And my favorite *"...to continue to be open minded and accepting of all mankind. With all the lies and negativity, it's easy to fall into the trap. Also stay off social media which is the biggest spreader of misinformation."*

What does this scripture have to do with us? It is a picture of our spiritual journey from sin to righteousness, from the sin we have committed on earth to our new home in heaven. GOD promises us, "You're not going to leave in haste, it's going to be a long journey for you, but I'm going to protect you and I'm going to tell you to come out from there and be pure, and be holy." HE will make a way of escape, HE'S going to protect you and none of you will be lost. HE'S going to go ahead of us, and also be our rear guard from Satan, his demons and wicked people who try to attack our every step.

Someone wrote the following and I apologize for not knowing who... *"though they shall make all necessary dispatch, yet no more haste than good speed; the LORD, going before, will check all tumultuous and disorderly motions; and HE also will bring up the rear, so that they shall be in no fear of the enemy attacking them behind, and where generally the weaker and more feeble part are; but the LORD will be gathering them up, or closing them, as the word signifies; so that they shall be in the utmost safety."*

My resolution for this year is to grow closer to JESUS, I hope you do the same whether it's ushering in a new year or a new life in CHRIST.

*Prayer:*

*JESUS, I want to go out of 2020 openly, boldly, quietly, and safely, and without fear of my enemies. Thank you for protecting me on all sides. Amen.*

.....Rilla Draper

**MENS 100 CLUB**

It's that time again, when the men of the church have an opportunity to care for our kids in a very unique way! Each man in the church is asked to give \$100 in 2021. These funds go into an account where