



Yucca Breeze

MARCH 2023

THE UNITED CHURCHES, HOT SPRINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Pastor's Pulpit:

The Season of Lent . . .

The Lenten Season is upon us. A couple of good definitions of Lent include:

The period preceding Easter that in the Christian Church is devoted to fasting, abstinence, and penitence in commemoration of Christ's fasting in the wilderness. In the Western Church, it runs from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, and so includes forty weekdays; and as well, Lent is a solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation by Satan (according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke) before beginning His public ministry. I like both of those definitions. Our Savoir did so much for us! I found the following article on the World Vision website, and liked how they approached the season. I also enjoyed the applications. It is just a good article . . . I hope you like it!!



WEEK 1

***"I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink."* — Matthew 25:35 (NIV)**

Read: John 4:7-14

Jesus begins His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well by asking for a simple drink of water in the hot midday sun. But then He goes deeper. He tells her that physical water can only quench thirst for a while — but He can offer “living water” that brings eternal life. Jesus knew the woman needed — as we all do — both physical and spiritual water to live life “to the full” as God intends (John 10:10). Jesus crossed His day’s social boundaries of gender and ethnicity to speak to this woman as an equal and show that her deepest personal and spiritual needs could only be met by God’s Spirit. Today, over 2 billion people don’t have access to safe drinking water at their homes. For women and girls, this means walking long distances to get water — sometimes in dangerous conditions — for up to six hours a day. The result? Girls have less time for school, which inhibits their futures. Having access to safe, clean water close to home frees women and children from a life spent gathering dirty water. It restores health and opens doors to education, a promising future, and the full life God intends for them.

WEEK 1 (Continued)

Thirst:

Personal: Make a commitment to drink only water this week. Donate the money you would have spent on other drinks to give others access to clean water. **Local:** Think about who could be the “woman at the well” in your community. How could you respond with the gift of living water?

Take Action:

Personal: Make a commitment to drink only water this week. Donate the money you would have spent on other drinks to give others access to clean water. **Local:** Think about who could be the “woman at the well” in your community. How could you respond with the gift of living water?

Pray:

Pray that everyone in the world would have access to clean water and come to know Jesus as the source of Living Water.

WEEK 2

“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.” — Matthew 25:35 (NIV)

Read: John 6:5-14

People saw Jesus healing the sick, so they kept following him, hungry to witness more of these miracles. But traveling through the rugged, hot hills left them tired and hungry. Jesus decided to meet both their physical and spiritual hunger. The story is simple, but amazing:

The disciple Andrew introduces a little boy to Jesus, the boy offers his few loaves and fishes, Jesus accepts his offering, and God multiplies it beyond what anyone was expecting. It’s from such small beginnings that the kingdom of God grows and flourishes.

Hunger:

Hunger and malnutrition are two of the biggest manifestations of poverty. When families can’t afford nutritious food, a vicious cycle begins: Parents are less able to earn a living to provide for their family because they’re weaker, and children are less able to learn and succeed in school, which holds them back from any future progress. Sadly, hunger is a daily reality for 820 million, nearly 1 in every 9 people on the planet. And yet globally we produce enough food for everyone. When we work together in God’s kingdom, we can build a world where what we have gets distributed more fairly.

Take Action:

Personal: During the week, choose one meal a day to fast or eat something simple, like rice and beans. Use that time to meditate on the experience of hunger and pray for the millions of children who go to sleep hungry every night. **Local:** Donate to a neighborhood food bank — you can find them through churches, homeless shelters, or even grocery stores. **Global:** Gift a family a health-boosting goat through World Vision’s Gift Catalog!

Pray:

Ask God for families to receive what they need to grow their own food or have the money to buy it, so their kids can grow healthy and strong.

WEEK 3

"I was sick and you looked after me." — Matthew 25:36 (NIV)

Read: Luke 10:25-37

In Jesus' time, Samaritans and Jews were considered enemies, but when the Samaritan traveler encountered the severely injured man on the road to Jericho, he didn't turn away. Instead, he responded with the utmost care — going above and beyond to make sure the man had everything he needed to recover. This parable is a powerful illustration of someone crossing barriers of race, religion, and culture to treat all people as neighbors. And Jesus' directive is clear: **"Go and do likewise"** (v. 37).

Sick:

Jesus wants us to show mercy to those who are suffering: not only from injuries but also from any illness of mind or body. When we get sick from a cold or flu, it's an incredible feeling when friends bring soup or help with daily tasks. Imagine what it must be like for those with serious and chronic illnesses like malaria or HIV — especially ones that carry stigma or result in exclusion from their community. The church can demonstrate to the world what it looks like to show mercy, crossing boundaries to care for people in their greatest need.

Take Action:

Personal: Take some time during your morning or lunch break to be completely alone — without other people or electronic devices. Pray and meditate on God's words for those who may be suffering from sickness or pain in isolation. **Local:** Volunteer at a local hospital or senior center. Make cards or write letters for people who are sick. **Global:** Gather a group and host a kit-building party! Fill backpacks or pouches with health and hygiene essentials for people in need.

Pray:

Ask God to give strength and protection to people who are sick, especially children, and that the world's most vulnerable would have access to the medicine they need.

WEEK 4

"I was a stranger and you invited me in." — Matthew 25:35 (NIV)

READ: Luke 14:12-23

The Bible is filled with stories of hospitality. Food is part of many of these stories, but hospitality goes beyond preparing someone a great meal. It means welcoming others — even strangers — into a space of generosity, friendship, and care. By practicing this kind of hospitality, we imitate Jesus, who invites us all to come to Him to find rest (Matthew 11:28). The hospitable host in the Parable of the Great Banquet isn't satisfied with a partially full banquet hall; he wants the table full to bursting! So he keeps inviting guests — even those considered unclean and unworthy — to share in his feast. Similarly, Jesus often ate with people who were considered outsiders and sinners. He taught that the kingdom of God is open and welcoming to all.

WEEK 4 (Continued)

Strangers:

This spring marks the twelfth anniversary of the conflict in Syria — the largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Syrian children and families have witnessed unspeakable violence and borne the brunt of the conflict. Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have welcomed the greatest number of refugees, but there is a need for more than a place of refuge. This crisis needs hope.

Take Action:

Personal: This week, spend a few nights sleeping on the floor to remember the millions of families and children who are fleeing their homes and making long, perilous journeys to safety. **Local:** Research local or national organizations involved in welcoming refugees into your own community, and see if you can volunteer with them. **Global:** Learn more about World Vision's response and how you can help give refugees hope.

Pray:

Ask God to provide life-saving assistance and newfound hope for Syrian refugees.

WEEK 5

***"I needed clothes and you clothed me."* — Matthew 25:36 (NIV)**

Read: Matthew 18:1-6

Throughout history, children have often been exploited — considered second-class citizens or cheap workers. In many parts of the world today, this is still the case. An estimated 152 million children worldwide are involved in child labor, and 85 million of these have hazardous jobs that could harm their physical, mental, or social development. But Jesus doesn't see children as less-than. In fact, when His disciples asked how to be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus told them they must "become like little children" (v. 3) and take "the lowly position" of a child (v. 4). That probably wasn't what they were expecting to hear! But Jesus' teachings often challenged His followers — as they challenge us today — to think differently about the world and our place in it.

Unprotected:

We're to give children and their needs the same care and attention we'd give Jesus. As He makes clear, we should do everything we can to ensure their well-being and prevent anything that might cause "one of these little ones ... to stumble" (v. 6). As we treasure and care for children in this way, we begin to experience life as God intends it in His kingdom.

Take Action:

Personal: Try wearing the same clothes for more than one day in a row. As you do, lift up prayers for the millions of children struggling to get all they need. **Local:** Downsize your wardrobe and donate your gently used clothing to local organizations that support those in need. **Global:** Advocate with us for foreign assistance programs that help keep kids in school.

Pray:

Pray all children and families have the basics they need to thrive: clothes, food, education, and healthcare.

WEEK 6

"I was in prison and you came to visit me." — Matthew 25:36 (NIV)

Read: Luke 4:16-21

In His hometown synagogue, Jesus read from Isaiah 61. Then He explained that He was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of one who would proclaim "good news to the poor," "freedom for prisoners," and "recovery of sight for the blind." He would be the one who "set the oppressed free" (v. 18). Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus put these words into practice. He spent time with the poor and oppressed. He told them about the good news of God's kingdom and how they could be part of it. He fed people, healed people, and cast out demons. He taught a different way of living based on trust in God and explained how we can have freedom in Him.

Oppression:

Across the world today, people face many kinds of oppression. They're caught in situations beyond their control, from sickness and hunger to systemic exploitation and abuse. The global Christian community is called to help people living in the world's hardest places through action and prayer. We're invited to follow Jesus by working to ensure the oppressed are set free. Jesus enters our lives not only to transform us but also to help us transform the world.

Take Action:

Personal: Tie a piece of string around your wrist. When you notice it throughout the day, pray for the millions of children trapped in situations beyond their control. **Local:** Befriend someone who is alone in your community. **Global:** Sponsor a child who lives in poverty.

Pray:

Ask God to give strength, protection, and freedom to children who are currently enslaved and forced to work.



There you go ... a good framework to think through at this special time of year. May we together travel with Christ this Lenten season.

Blessings,
Pastor David



Thank you to our church family for the beautiful flowers, plants, cards and notes; delicious meals; loving hugs and words of comfort; many heartfelt thoughts and prayers; and generous memorials to honor Matt's life.

We are so grateful for your love and for the comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit, as we move through this difficult time.

**May God bless you,
Garry & Pat Strauser and Family**

LENTEN SEASON SCHEDULE AT THE UNITED CHURCHES

WEDNESDAY EVENING LENTEN WORSHIP SERVICES

6:30—7:15 PM / IN THE CHURCH SANCTUARY

February 22nd - Ash Wednesday

March 1st - Lent: Week 1

March 8th - Lent: Week 2

March 15th - Lent: Week 3

March 22nd - Lent: Week 4

March 29th - Lent: Week 5



WEDNESDAY SOUP LUNCHEONS

12:00-1:00 PM / in the Fellowship Hall

At The United Churches

March 1st — March 8th — March 15th

March 22 — March 29

MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

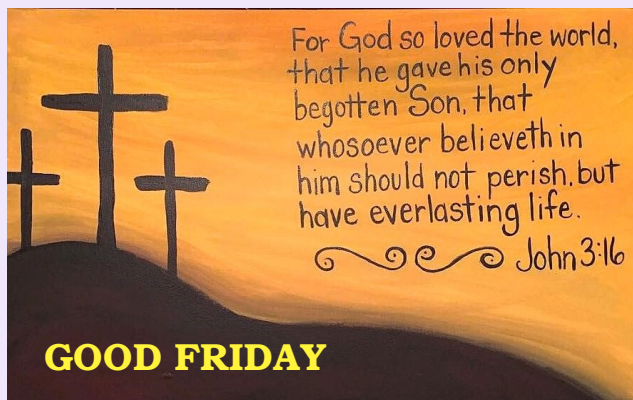
WITH "TWELVE MEN"

April 6th / 6:30—7:15 pm

In the Church Sanctuary

Please Note:

No Community Spaghetti Supper; Basic Needs Boutique; and Bearly Used Boutique that evening.



GOOD FRIDAY

12:00 PM—3:00 PM

The United Churches Sanctuary will be open for those who wish to spend time in prayer and reflection.

GOOD FRIDAY EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE

5:30 PM

AT PRARIE VIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



CHOIRS IN CONCERT AT THE UNITED CHURCHES YOU ARE INVITED!

The *United Churches Choir plus Kids at the Choir* group in conjunction with *The Sandstone Singers* will be presenting an evening of music on **Friday, April 14th, at 6:30 pm**. This event features rehearsal work led by their group leaders, along with a special workshop conducted by Zeke Sharon of California. Sharon is noted for his vocal music arrangements for a cappella ensembles along with his books featuring performance and singing guidance techniques.

Please feel free welcome to attend this free and unique presentation in the church Sanctuary!

KIDS AT THE CHOIR NIGHTS



Beginning **Wednesday, April 5th at 5:30-6:30 pm** at the United Churches, young people are invited to join the Adult Choir for some fun nights of singing together. Those who are in **3rd grade on up** are welcome and **must have a parent bring and stay with them throughout the rehearsal.**

Rehearsal nights will run through May 3rd. **There will be two combined group anthems on Sunday, April 16th and Sunday, May 7th.**

There will also be an **extra rehearsal on Thursday, April 13th (4:30-6:00 pm)** and a **concert with the Sandstone Singers on Friday, April 14th at 6:30 pm in the Church Sanctuary.**

Don't miss this opportunity for singing and making new Christian friends at The United Churches, Hot Springs, SD.



MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

None listed

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 3 Sue Trobee | 25 Jim Zwetzig |
| 5 Nolan Humbracht | 25 Mary Jane Cape |
| 9 Carla Johnson | 27 Thor Swift |
| 12 Sean Cape | 27 Kevin Cape |
| 12 Joann Walker | 30 Carol Posthumus |
| 13 Delores Hickman | |

If your name is not included on the Birthdays and Anniversaries list and you would like it to be added, please contact the church office by email: uc@gwtc.net or call 745-5640.

THIS AND THAT

FOOD PANTRY CLIENT PROFILE:

Number of Active Clients (Visited the pantry in 2023)=190; Single=85; Family=105; Veterans (included in single family count)=72; New Sign-Ups (since Jan 1, 2023)=13; Average Days Open Each Month=16.

UNITED WOMEN:

The United Women will meet on **Tuesday, March 21st** at 1:30 pm in the Fireside Room. We are continuing our study in the book of Psalms.

ITS COMING SOON — MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!

Currently, as we prepare this edition of the Yucca Breeze, there is snow blowing outside the window, with a "heat wave" temperature of **-3° (real feel -28°)** But ... take heart ... spring is coming ... even in South Dakota! So prepare to **SPRING FORWARD (SET YOUR CLOCKS AHEAD 1 HR) ON SATURDAY, MARCH 12TH!**



MARCH MISSION EMPHASIS

HOT SPRINGS MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION NEEDY FUND

The Hot Springs Ministerial Association supports people in need. This fund assists with emergency housing, rent, utilities, transportation and other emergency needs. Hot Springs Ministerial Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our Loose Change offering for March will go toward this mission and will be gathered on Sunday, March 12th. If writing a check, please designate mission offering to: **THE HOT SPRINGS MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION** on our giving envelope. **This mission emphasis is separate from our Food Pantry emphasis.**

"The Hot Springs Ministerial Association was formed by local churches. Our mission is to partner as Christian ministries in Fall River County to follow Jesus' command to love God and love others through: Helping the needy (food pantry, assistance vouchers); Serving our community (finding ways of supporting our entire community); Meeting together as ministry leaders for mutual support (monthly meeting, prayer times); Announcing the good news of Jesus Christ (occasional combined worship services, other events)."

For more information see the HSMA Website at:

<https://www.hsministerial.org/>



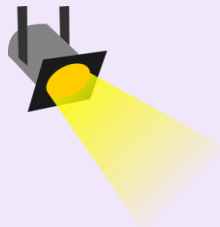
**NO OTHER GOSPEL:
A NEW TEACHING SERIES FROM DEREK THOMAS
SUNDAYS, 8:30 AM — IN THE FIRESIDE ROOM
WITH PASTOR DAVID**

If you get the gospel wrong, you get everything wrong. In first-century Galatia, false teachers infiltrated the church, claiming that faith in Jesus Christ is not enough to be justified in God's sight. Responding to this distortion of the gospel, the Apostle Paul wrote a passionate letter defending the doctrine of justification by faith alone, for he knew what was truly at stake.

In this new video teaching series, Dr. Derek Thomas walks us through the background, teaching, and importance of Paul's letter to the Galatians. While false gospels drive people to despair, the true gospel frees us to rest in Christ alone for our Salvation.

Study topics are:+

1) The Only Gospel; 2) The Apostle's Defense; 3) Threats to the Gospel; 4) Paul Opposes Peter; 5) The Heart of Galatians; 6) Law and Promise; 7) Sons and Heirs; 8) The Cost of Legalism; 9) Set Free in Christ; 10) Standing in Freedom; 11) Walking by the Spirit; 12) Gracious Restoration; 13) Stewards of Grace; 14) Boasting in the Cross.



THE UNITED CHURCHES SPOTLIGHT

This year are again spotlighting each of our three denominations:

BAPTIST ... METHODIST ... PRESBYTERIAN

Who we are ... What we believe ... What we do ... How to join.

If you are not already a member of our church, we would like you to become one, but we want you to make an informed decision. In the upcoming weeks, we will continue spotlighting our three denominations. Information on each denomination will be available as handouts in the Sunday bulletins. There are also information booklets on the table in the Bethany Room.

Please explore who each are, what each believe, what each does, and how to join. When you have decided which denomination the Lord may want you to join, and in light of which one best fits you, let the Pastor know. ***After the Worship Service on Palm Sunday, April 2nd at 11:15 am, there will be a new member's class in the Fireside Room*** where you can come and ask any questions you may have about the differences in each of the denominations, or anything else that may need some final clarification. On ***Easter Sunday, April 9th, we will receive you into membership!***