

GOTHENBURG FIRST UNITED
METHODIST
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RED MARBLES

I was at the corner grocery store buying some early potatoes... I noticed a small boy, delicate of bone and feature, ragged but clean, hungrily appraising a basket of freshly picked green peas. I paid for my potatoes but was also drawn to the display of fresh green peas. I am a pushover for creamed peas and new potatoes. Pondering the peas, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation between Mr. Miller (the store owner) and the ragged boy next to me. 'Hello Barry, how are you today?' 'H'lo, Mr. Miller. Fine, thank ya. Jus' admirin' them peas. They sure look good' 'They are good, Barry. How's your Ma?' 'Fine. Gittin' stronger alla' time.' 'Good. Anything I can help you with?' 'No, Sir. Jus' admirin' them peas.' 'Would you like to take some home?' asked Mr. Miller. 'No, Sir. Got nuthin' to pay for 'em with.' 'Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?' 'All I got's my prize marble here.' 'Is that right? Let me see it', said Miller. 'Here 'tis. She's a dandy.' 'I can see that. Hmm mmm, only thing is this one is blue and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one like this at home?' the store owner asked. 'Not zackley but almost.' 'Tell you what. Take this sack of peas home with you and next trip this way let me look at that redmarble'. Mr. Miller told the boy. 'Sure will. Thanks Mr. Miller.' Mrs. Miller, who had been standing nearby, came over to help me. With a smile she said, 'There are two other boys like him in our community, all three are in very poor circumstances. Jim just loves to bargain with them for peas, apples, tomatoes, or whatever. When they come back with their red marbles, and they always do, he decides he doesn't like red after all and he sends them home with a bag of produce for a green marble or an orange one, when they come on their next trip to the store.' I left the store smiling to myself, impressed with this man. A short time later I moved to Colorado, but I never forgot the story of this man, the boys, and their bartering for marbles. Several years went by, each more rapid than the previous one. Just recently I had occasion to visit some

old friends in that Idaho community and while I was there learned that Mr. Miller had died. They were having his visitation that evening and knowing my friends wanted to go, I agreed to accompany them. Upon arrival at the mortuary we fell into line to meet the relatives of the deceased and to offer whatever words of comfort we could. Ahead of us in line were three young men. One was in an army uniform and the other two wore nice haircuts, dark suits and white shirts...all very professional looking. They approached Mrs. Miller, standing composed and smiling by her husband's casket. Each of the young men hugged her, kissed her on the cheek, spoke briefly with her and moved on to the casket. Her misty light blue eyes followed them as, one by one; each young man stopped briefly and placed his own warm hand over the cold pale hand in the casket. Each left the mortuary awkwardly, wiping his eyes. Our turn came to meet Mrs. Miller. I told her who I was and reminded her of the story from those many years ago and what she had told me about her husband's bartering for marbles. With her eyes glistening, she took my hand and led me to the casket. 'Those three young men who just left were the boys I told you about. They just told me how they appreciated the things Jim 'traded' them. Now, at last, when Jim could not change his mind about color or size....they came to pay their debt.' 'We've never had a great deal of the wealth of this world,' she confided, 'but right now, Jim would consider himself the richest man in Idaho ...' With loving gentleness she lifted the lifeless fingers of her deceased husband. Resting underneath were three exquisitely shined red marbles.

The Moral: We will not be remembered by our words, but by our kind deeds. Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

The Beat

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Gothenburg First United Methodist Church

RAH MEAL PACKING EVENT

A big thank you shout out to all of those who helped us at the Rise Against Hunger Meal Packaging Event. We met our goal of packing 21,680 meals to be sent overseas!! Thank you also to those who support us throughout the year raising money to be able to buy the ingredients for these meals.



FAMILY MATTERS

We continue to keep rolling on with 30-35 in attendance each Wednesday evening. Great food continues to be served by Jodi Hinds, Ruth Walla and Judy Jensen. Stories of Jesus have been presented by Sarah Anderson, with Pastor Jamie leading the way with worship. Karla keep us singing with songs of worship. January 22 was Serving God with our Hands evening. The older group helped with the Meal Packaging Event at the high school. The younger group helped with the organizing and moving of education materials in various classrooms. We continue to see new adults and children each week!! Amazing things are happening at church on Wednesdays from 6-7:45 pm. Come and see what you are missing!!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1— Kadie Anderson, Savanna Porter
- 2— Braeden Sabin, Valerie Peterson
- 5— Patrick Moore
- 7— Ali Bartels
- 10— Kelly McCoy
- 13— Brian Weaver
- 14— Judy Vincent, Lois Johnson
- 15— McKinley McCoy
- 16— Hailey O'Keefe, Trey Bartels
- 17— John Jensen, Steven Windrum
- 18— Cora Bosch, Kathryn Bartruff, Justin Sabin
- 20— Kim Humphrey, Beth Advey, Sharon Sukraw
- 21— Carol Bartels
- 23— Preston Foster
- 24— Brian Brede
- 27— Ashley Abramson
- 28— Mike Anderson, Linda Bowman





Pastor's Perspective

“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.” ~Matthew 4:18-23a

This scripture lesson was read in Sunday worship at the end of January. I am sure that for most of us, this is a familiar passage and a well-loved Bible story even from our childhood. And it is a fun and wonderful story when we keep it safely about holy people a long time ago—we can take it out, look at it, marvel at it, and close the book so that we can go do other things. But when we begin to hear that story as a call for us to drop our “nets” and follow Jesus as we gather up other people to be followers of Jesus, the story becomes a little more uncomfortable.

What does it mean to “fish for people,” especially when the type of fishing that Jesus and the disciples would have imagined would have been net fishing that caught multiple fish at any time?

I am not sure that I know the answer, but for over a year now we have been using the ideas found in the Fresh Expressions movement of Christian formation. This movement encourages “The Church” (“I am the church...you are the church...we are the church together!) to leave our buildings and to gather with people where/when they already gather—and then tell the stories of Jesus and how we have seen God working in our lives. Celebrate Recovery and Family Matters have grown out of that movement...and so we have also grown in some surprising ways.

Our average weekly attendance in worship is now 97—which might surprise those of you who attend Sunday worship. Sunday worship attendance has continued to decline as other activities begin to be scheduled during the time that we are used to being dedicated to worship attendance and Sunday School. Sunday mornings no longer just belong to us.

So, if we are going to “drop our nets” and fish for people who will become followers of Jesus, we have to be alert to opportunities to gather at other times and places. This year we will be discerning where, and how, God is inviting

us to share our faith stories with those who have perhaps never heard them before. This may be a different way of thinking about “Church” for many of us; it is certainly not the Church that I thought I was saying “Yes!” to when I was ordained in 1992.

The Great Plains Conference is providing us a tool to help with our discernment and something that can help us take up our call to follow Jesus. This tool is an online survey called “Readiness 360;” you will have seen other articles about this tool in our newsletter this month. We are asking all of you to take the time to fill out this survey. This will help us recognize where we are in our willingness to reach out to others, and even to provide some ideas of training that we can undertake if we discover that we are not quite yet ready.

Those that Jesus called became disciples of Jesus. To be a disciple was to be an apprentice to master, to Jesus. Those disciples followed after him and saw the work that he did. He taught them by story and example, and as they grew in their understanding and ability, he began to send them out in the world. That is our task in these days—to go out and share the Good News with all whom we meet—especially to those who don’t already know the stories.

Please take the time to fill out the Readiness 360 Survey; it should take no more than 20 minutes. If you need assistance with filling out the survey, or need access to a computer to do so, please contact the church office or talk to Pastor Jamie.

The link to the login page can be found at the top right of the readiness360.org page, or can be accessed directly here: <https://readiness360.org/login/> Click the “Get Started” button under “For Church Participants” and type in the survey code (2611251874). You do not need a PIN; one will be emailed to you once you complete the registration page (the first page once they enter the code) and you can use it to log back in if you are not able to complete it in one sitting or somehow get logged off.

Mark your Calendars!



RETIRED PERSONS LUNCH BUNCH

Can you name several famous couples? Come join us for Retired Persons Lunch Bunch on Wednesday, February 5th at 11:30 am. I am sure you will become familiar with some famous and some not so famous couples. Wear your red and white, bring your favorite dish to share, and come join the festivities. Love will be in the air.



CELEBRATE RECOVERY 12-STEP STUDY

Celebrate Recovery will be starting a Step–Study Bible Study Wednesday nights at 7 pm in the Library. This will begin February 5th. The Celebrate Recovery 12-Step Study in more of an in-depth study than the Saturday night open share groups. It is essentially the “meat and potatoes” of the Celebrate Recovery ministry. The purpose of this program is to allow us to become free from life’s hurts, hang-ups, and habits. If interested, see Kevin or Jodi.



LOOKING FOR BOOKS

Celebrate Recovery is working on a library for A New Hope at the church and A New Hope jail ministry. If you have any Christian devotionals or books for helping heal hurts, we would appreciate them. The inmates are asking for devotionals, journals and Bibles.

VALENTINE’S DAY POTLUCK

On Sunday February 16th, please join us following late service for a Valentine’s Day Potluck dinner. You are invited to bring your favorite dish to share and enjoy good food and fellowship. Hope to see you at lunch!!



THANK YOU!

Celebrate Recovery, A New Hope jail ministry would like to thank Robin and Lynnette Stevens for supplying cookies every other week for our Sunday night at the jail. You are greatly appreciated!!

THANK YOU!

Huge appreciation goes out to any and all who helped clean our parking lots and sidewalks during December and January!! We had some significant snow fall and your efforts definitely do not go unnoticed!!

ASH WEDNESDAY

Please join us on Wed. Feb. 26th at 6:45 pm for Ash Wednesday services. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall for supper and worship service will follow. See you there!