



THE MESSENGER

Red Oak First United Methodist



Thoughts From Pastor Jenn

“Christians should be the most refreshingly unoffendable people on a planet that seems to spin on an axis of offense.” – Brant Hansen

What a convicting statement this was to me when I started reading the book “Unoffendable” by Brant Hansen.

Knowing that I can be offended at the drop of a hat and that my temper has a fuse about as short as a match, this book study has been challenging and convicting to me. (I can thank my mom’s side of the family, the Eastin’s, for my short temper. The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree!) I’m being utterly candid with you folks because I hope it will encourage you to also admit that there are times when you get offended and want to hang onto that grudge for days, months....gulp....or even years!

This is the reason why I have chosen to preach a sermon series during Lent on the concept of choosing to be unoffendable, and why I have set a challenge before all of us to be unoffendable during Lent and beyond.

Beloved, anger and resentment are not what God wants for us. Time and time again, the Bible encourages us to, “get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice,” Ephesians 4:31. Instead God asks us to, “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you,” Ephesians 4:32. God wants what is best for us, so why do we question God’s ways?

Hansen believes that part of our doubts goes back to our lack of trust in God. It makes sense. If we trust God to handle everything in the world and in our every day lives, then what use is anger? The answer is...it’s useless and causes harm to others and mostly, to us. It is prideful to assume we know the way life must go. When we believe this, we are saying that we don’t believe God is getting it right. OUCH!

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is about trust, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight,” Proverbs 5-6. The verses right after this instruct us in how to be healthy. (Just a note, evil in the verse could also be read as anger). “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil (anger). This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones,” Proverbs 3:7-8.

Friends, Lent is a popular time to abstain from something. Popular things to give up are chocolate, soda, and other sugary desserts, sometimes with the hope of dropping a few pounds. If we want to get healthier, one of the ways to do this is to be unoffendable and to let go of our anger and resentment. Who knows, it might lower your blood pressure, and you may drop a few pounds too!

I hope and pray that you will join me in striving to be unoffendable during Lent. Who knows...maybe we will create a habit and that habit will pour over to other people and we will spread the “unoffendable bug” that will cause all Christ-followers to become the most refreshingly unoffendable people on the planet! Dream big with me friends!

Contact Us!

Pastor Jennifer Van Nostrand

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Cell Phone: 712-438-0740

Finance January

General Contributions: 8,996.31

Thrift Store: 4,634.22

Total Expenses: 15,342.30

Total Mission Contributions: 600.00

**Average Sunday Attendance for
January 47.5**

A Wesleyan Journey: From Member to Pastor

On February 17, 2026, at 5:30 p.m., Red Oak First United Methodist Church held a special charge conference with District Superintendent, Rev. Kwang Song in attendance. The sole purpose of the gathering was to consider Julie Wolfe's entry into the candidacy process toward becoming a local licensed pastor.

Twenty-six members of the congregation gathered for the occasion, unanimously affirming Julie's next step in answering God's call. It was described as a holy and joyful evening, filled with gratitude and tender memories.

One member recalled two previous "Saints" services and shared that after losing her daughter, Julie came to sit with her in the depths of grief—a quiet, steady presence embodying Christ's love when it was needed most. Another spoke of knowing Julie since childhood and watching her grow up within the church, sharing, "She is a wonderful woman with a big heart. I will miss her hugs and her presence—Hawthorne is lucky to have her." Still another reflected on Julie's authenticity and her natural ability to share the Word of God and the love of Jesus with clarity and faithfulness.

Julie's story is deeply rooted in the life of Red Oak. Baptized on November 25, 1976, likely alongside her siblings David and Amy in her family home—she has been part of this congregation for as long as she can remember. Her earliest memories include Christmas Eve services and Sunday School classes, foundations that would shape a lifetime of faith and service.

In high school, Julie discovered her love for ministry while helping younger children in Sunday School. That desire to share God's message continued to grow. During the tenure of Pastor Nancy Schultz, she was first asked to fill the pulpit at Red Oak. Shortly thereafter, she began lay speaking at churches throughout Southwest Iowa.

Over the years, Julie became a devoted youth leader, investing countless hours mentoring young people with compassion and wisdom. She fondly recalls her time working with youth, especially during LOGOS ministry. Alongside LOGOS, she faithfully taught Sunday School, later serving as Sunday School Superintendent, where she had the privilege of working with and supporting so many dedicated and inspiring Sunday School teachers. These years of nurturing children and youth remain some of her most meaningful ministry memories.

In addition to her work with youth and Christian education, Julie has faithfully served for many years as a board member, helping guide the mission and direction of the church.

Alongside her ministry, Julie has built a strong family life. She and her husband Pat have raised their sons Tristan and Corbin grounded in faith, modeling Christ's grace both at home and within the church community.

Julie's pastoral journey has also been closely tied to Hawthorne United Methodist Church. Hawthorne was among the first churches where she began filling the pulpit shortly after starting to lead at Red Oak. After Hawthorne lost their pastor in December 2023, Julie stepped in, filling the pulpit throughout 2025, minus a few Sundays. After serving most of that year, she felt a clear call to become their pastor in 2026. As of early 2026, she has been assigned to Hawthorne for the year. Upon completion of her local licensing classes in June, the Bishop will be able to officially appoint her as their Pastor.

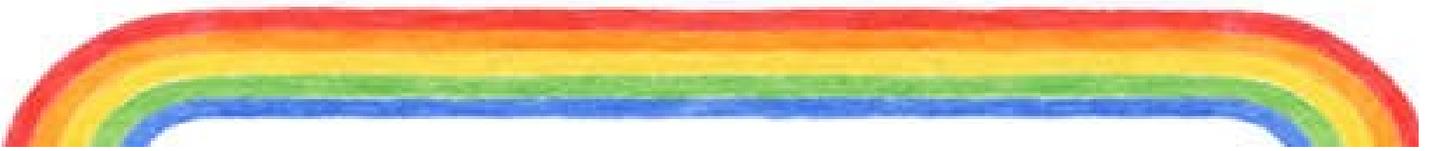
When asked what she looks forward to most in this new chapter, Julie shared her excitement about continuing to build relationships with the members of Hawthorne. When asked about her greatest concern, her answer reflected her heart: faithfully representing the Word. "It's always been important to me to represent the gospel well and bring people to Jesus," she said.

Julie wants her Red Oak church family to know they are a blessing to her and that she plans to continue worshiping regularly with her family. She is especially grateful to serve a church so close to home, allowing her to worship in Red Oak with her husband, son, and church family before driving the short distance to Hawthorne to serve there as well.

When asked how her home church can support her, her answer was simple: "Lots of prayers. Hugs are great too." She shared that hearing the kind words spoken during the charge conference deeply touched her heart. "Serving God in this capacity is a great honor," she said. "I hope I can always serve in a way that brings honor and glory to His Holy name."

Though she may soon carry the title of pastor, those who know her best understand something even more meaningful: Julie is a shepherd formed among her own people—loved deeply, affirmed wholeheartedly, and faithfully stepping into the calling God has placed before her.

-Nicole Solberg Administrative Assistant



LET'S DO SOMETHING!

The Villisca UMC and Red Oak First UMC Lenten project will be collecting ingredients for Pizza Kits. This is an entire circuit project. Included in the circuit is Corning, Griswold, Red Oak and Villisca. We will be collecting Pizza kits for each location's food pantries. We will collect these items starting February 18th and will stop Easter Sunday. These kits give families all the makings for a Pizza night. Everything is available to them, including the instructions! It's fun for all! The church that collects the most Pizza kits will get to keep the Do Something trophy!

Join the A-Team Circuit for the 2nd Annual....

Circuit Care Challenge

This Lenten season the A-Team Circuit will be collecting Pizza Kits for our local Food Pantries! The participating church who collects the most kits will win the Circuit Cares Trophy!



LET'S DO SOMETHING!

The "ingredients" for the Pizza Kits are:

- 1 Prebaked Crust (non-refrigerated)
- 1 pkg Pepperoni (non-refrigerated)
- 1 Can of mushrooms (optional)
- 1 Can of olives (optional)
- Canned Pizza Sauce
- Shredded Cheese
- Set of Instructions for Baking

March 29th -One BIG Sunday Three great reasons to attend



The best way to start your day is with breakfast with 50 or more of your closest friends! Right? Join us at **9:30am for a breakfast** before our joint service with our Villisca friends. Bring your favorite breakfast dish to share!



Sunday, March 29th, is the 5th Sunday in March. We will be having a joint worship service with Villisca UMC at **10:30 am**



Come and wave palms with us as we celebrate Palm Sunday!
Service is HERE at 10:30am



Soup-er Bowl Lunch a huge success!

This year our Red Oak UMC friends joined us again.

A HUGE thank you to everyone that helped with this event! We had 13 soups and over 70 in attendance. It would not have been a success without you. We had a LOT of soup and a great crowd! Every table was full and so were everyone's stomachs!



The Administrative Board would like to extend their love and appreciation to Bob Fenstermann for his many years of dedication and invaluable contributions during his time as a Trustee. His knowledge, leadership, and willingness to go above and beyond have played a significant role in our progress, and we are deeply grateful for the abundance of time he devoted to overseeing that not only are the people taken care of, but that the building is as well.

PS- Bob, we are all scared of Mary too.

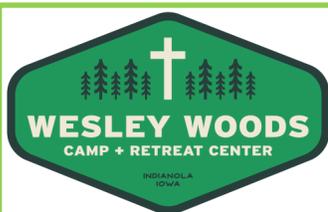


PRAYER REQUEST

We have been praying for:

- Joyce Spangenburg family
- Mark Gregg family
- Allen Eberspacker diagnosis of ALS
- Jeff Fort
- Barry Armentrout
- Bob Lewellen
- Roger Ehmke
- Kyle Stanley
- Mary Fensterman

Please let the office know if you would like someone added to our prayer list or if you know of any shut-ins or people in the hospital that would like a visit from Pastor Jenn.



It's never too early to start thinking about summer camp! Wesley Woods is a

Beautiful Methodist Camp in Indianola, Iowa. Lake Okoboji United Methodist Camp is located just off the shores of West Lake Okoboji. Please visit Wesley Woods online at www.wesleywoodsiaowa.org or Lake Okoboji at www.okobojicamp.com. Camp scholarships are available. Just ask!!



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- Pat Wolfe - 1
- Mick Fisher - 4
- Mark Gregg - 5
- Ryan Adams - 6
- Donald Torbett - 7
- Grant Vrba - 9
- Marlys Fisher - 22
- Katie Walker - 22
- Kathy Harrie - 23
- Ashley Elwood - 28
- Steven Smith - 30
- Adenia Stanley - 30
- Carlos Guerra - 31



March 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1 Service 9am w/ Communion	2	3 Bible Study 10am	4 Nisha Game Day 10:30am	5	6 World day of Prayer 	7 
8 Service 9 am Giving Sunday	9	10 Bible Study Break until 4/15 Women's Group 2pm Prepare Our Hearts w/	11 Spring Planting Dinner 5-6:30 Villisca UMC	12	13	14 
15 Service 9 am	16	17 Happy St. Patrick's Day!	18	19	20 1st Day of Spring 	21
22 Service 9 am	23	24 Ad Board Mtg. 4:15	25	26 Pastor Jenn Orders and Fellowship Day in Des Moines	27	28
29 Palm Sunday Breakfast Potluck 9am Joint service HERE w/Villisca @10:30am	30	31	APRIL 1st 	APRIL 2 Maundy Thursday joint service w/VUMC 7pm service HERE	APRIL 3 Good Friday joint service at VUMC at 7pm	APRIL 4

APRIL 5
EASTER
SUNDAY
 Service 9am
 w/communion

THE RED OAK MESSENGER
NEWSLETTER FOR THE
RED OAK FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
600 E. HAMMOND ST., RED OAK IA 51566

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Church Camp Scholarships

The United Women in Faith was organized in 1869. Its aim has always been to help women, United Methodist Youth, and children. One of the ways that our local unit has tried to help youths and children is by making sure that as many of them as possible can go to church camp. As many of you know, church camp has gotten much more expensive in recent years. It has prevented many children from going. That is one reason we are having a fundraiser dinner. Donations raised during our Spring meal will go towards camp scholarships for Methodist Youth.

We look forward to seeing you at the meal!



United Women in Faith Spring Planting Dinner

Wednesday, March 11th

**5-7pm at the Villisca
United Methodist Church**

Dine in or Carry out

Free will Donation

MENU

Beef and Noodles

Mashed Potatoes

Salads

Dessert

Drink

