



for you...

The Messenger

Red Oak First United Methodist Church ♦ Jenn Van Nostrand, Pastor ♦ February 2023

From Jenn's Pen

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'" Isaiah 43:1
Do you know what it is like to be chosen?

Perhaps you were chosen as part of an election process?
Or maybe you were chosen to be a part of a sports team?
Or chosen from a pool of applicants for a job you applied for?
Were you chosen as a prom or homecoming queen or king?

What does it feel like to be chosen?
What does it feel like to not be chosen?
To not get picked for the team.
To not get the job you wanted.
To be looked over for someone more popular or beautiful?

We were all chosen.
Chosen by God.

But sometimes we struggle to believe it, don't we? Maybe it's because we are full of shame or maybe we are so used to being disappointed that we don't want to get our hopes up too much for fear of finding out we were not actually chosen. Sometimes we believe being chosen by God is something for other people, for special ones like saints or clergy or mission workers.

But the truth is, we are ALL, everyone of us, CHOSEN by God. We were CHOSEN to be a part of the family of God. God loves us and continues to CHOOSE us.

Who chose you?
Not your classmates,
Not the team captain,
Not your boss nor co-workers,
Not your constituents,
God chose you.
God continues to choose you.
And God trumps them all!

Honestly, I think being chosen is one of the best feelings one could have. During this month of February, when we celebrate love and the ones we CHOSE to be with, wouldn't it be nice to share the feeling of being chosen with those we encounter?

This month, CHOOSE someone in your sphere of influence to love on. Maybe it will be in a tangible way, like blessing them with a gift or money. It could be spending time with them. It could be encouraging them by sharing your story of how God has worked in your life. However the Holy Spirit prompts you, be open to choose someone and make them feel CHOSEN, as you were CHOSEN by God!

Pastor Jenn



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



From left: Holly Paulson, Pastor Jenn, Ellen & Dwight Meyer.

January 22nd was another special Sunday at Red Oak First UMC. We welcomed three new members! All three are United Methodists who transferred their church memberships after relocating to Red Oak. The congregation welcomed the three through our traditional UMC liturgy. Following this, the entire congregation honored their baptisms by gathering green stones from the baptismal font as an act to keep growing in their faith. After the service, a reception was held...including a very special “United Methodist cake” by Jane Waltz. A special Sunday indeed!

A note from Holly Paulson:

When I was in Confirmation, our pastor told us that “People come to church for a variety of reasons. Some come for the stained glass windows. Some come for the music. Some come for the preaching.” When I first visited Red Oak First UMC, I could see that this church excels in all those areas...and more!

The first Sunday I visited Red Oak First UMC, I was surprised when the door opened even before I could reach for the handle. Greeters I'd never met welcomed me with smiles and warm greetings. A few steps later I entered the sanctuary. It took my breath away. The warmth of the dark wood...the vibrant stained glass windows...the powerful altar...all showed a long heritage of love and Christian devotion in this community. **I fell in love with the church.**

I was early, so I chose a seat right in the middle of the room. As people began to arrive and take their seats, EVERY PERSON who made eye contact with me smiled and welcomed me. Several even made a special effort to come over and visit. They were so warm and friendly, I felt like they were genuinely glad I was there. **I fell in love with the people.**

The music was amazing. After spending a lifetime in music, the music in church is VERY important to me. Following the service, I asked if I could join the choir. Tim, the director, was so enthusiastic in assuring me I'd be welcome, I attended the very next rehearsal. The choir was the most fun and friendly church choir I'd ever experienced. **I fell in love with the choir.**

The other priority in choosing a church home for me is the pastor. When I came to Red Oak First UMC, the church was transitioning from the former pastor. After a few months with guest speakers, Pastor Jenn arrived. That very first Sunday, she blew me away with her sermon. And knowledge. And enthusiasm. And warmth. **I fell in love with the pastor.**



A large reception was held after the service to welcome our new members.

I love everything about Red Oak First United Methodist Church. I've found my forever church. I feel SO BLESSED to now be a member.



Contrary to the rumors, our new members did not join church just so they could have “Jane Cake.” (Although that would certainly be another good reason.)

Red Oak First UMC in the Community

Nishna Productions Prom



Among our many community-church partnerships, Nishna Productions is close to the hearts of many of our members. This organization focuses on caring for and enriching the lives of people with disabilities. Nishna Productions arranges countless events for their residents and clients throughout the year. Their newest event is the Nishna Prom. As always, members of our church helped provide food for the reception and attended the night to lend their support.

5th Sunday Service



The fifth Sunday of the month is cause for celebration! That's when we worship with our sister church in Villisca. On January 29th, we had a combined worship service full of music and testimonies from throughout the congregation. Pastor Jenn led us in prayer and liturgy. Our Red Oak choir led us in singing. And people throughout the congregation shared their witness of God in their lives. Following the service, everyone gathered for a huge potluck buffet served with nonstop visiting and laughing. Pigeon Pitch was the perfect end to a perfect day. The next 5th Sunday Service will be on April 30th at Red Oak. Don't miss it!

LENT

We're approaching the season of Lent. Most of us know about Lent — it lasts 40 days, leads to Easter, and suggests giving up something. But there's more to remember about this very special season.

40 days

For most Christians, including United Methodists, Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. This time period on a calendar lasts 46 days, but United Methodists and many other protestant denominations don't count Sundays in Lent. Each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter." On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

The forty days of Lent represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, fasting and enduring the temptations of Satan in preparation for his ministry. It's a time of self-examination and reflection. United Methodists are encouraged to focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples, and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others. Lent is a perfect time to add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional or praying through a Lenten calendar, to draw ourselves nearer to God.

Ash Wednesday

The first day of Lent is marked by Ash Wednesday. There are instances in the Old Testament where people used ashes to symbolize penance, mourning, and humiliation. United Methodists first adopted an official ritual for Ash Wednesday that involves the use of ashes in the 1992 Book of Worship. Ashes demonstrate an awareness of mortality and an intent to repent. The ashes used for Ash Wednesday often come from burnt palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday. Through the service of ashes on the first day of Lent, we come before God recognizing our humanity, repenting of our sin, and remembering who we are and who we can be.

Fasting

For ancient Hebrews, fasting was a form of penance and humility before God. Early Christians also fasted to remember Jesus' 40-day fast before his public ministry. John Wesley fasted regularly, calling it one of the "acts of piety," along with praying and studying the Bible. Although the United Methodist church doesn't require fasting during Lent, it is often encouraged. Every mealtime or any time you feel hunger pangs, use that time for praying instead of eating. It's an opportunity to focus on your spiritual hunger instead of your physical hunger. If you can't or don't want to fast from food, choose something else that consumes your focus. Determine a period of time each day or week to abstain from or restrict certain types of food like chocolate or pizza, TV, social media, shopping, gossip, laziness, or anything else you normally "covet."

The Color Purple

The first color used for Christian liturgical vestments was white, the color of the Resurrection. By the Middle Ages, other colors had been adopted. Purple, the color of kings, was quickly associated with Christ. The red-toned purple of Lent reminds us of the color of blood and symbolizes the Lord's Passion.

Almsgiving

Lent emphasizes the Christian call to almsgiving or caring for others. Jesus gave special attention to the poor. Although this should be an ongoing focus of our, it is especially relevant during Lent.

LENT at Red Oak First UMC

Lent begins February 22nd with Ash Wednesday.

Please join us for a very special

Service of Ashes
Wednesday, February 22nd, 6:30 pm
in the Chapel



Our Lenten Bible Study and Sermon Series are based on *The Grace of Les Misérables* by Matt Rawle. Sunday messages include:

- February 26: Grace Well Received; Luke 6:32-36
- March 5: When Grace and Justice Collide; Matthew 5:38-48
- March 12: The poor are always with you; Matthew 25:31-46
- March 19: The Gift of Love; 1 Corinthians 13
- March 26: Building the Barricade; Luke 19:28-44
- April 2: Palm Sunday; John 12:12-19
- April 9: Easter; The Blessed Garden, A hopeful Vision; John 20:1-8

To order the book for our Bible Study, contact the office by February 13th. The cost is \$10. The Study begins February 28th at 10 am.

MOVIE IN THE AFTERNOON

Although Les Mis will be playing at The Orpheum in Omaha, we're bringing it closer to home so everyone can see this amazing movie that is the basis for our Lenten Sermons and Bible Studies.

Join us for a special showing of

Les Misérables In the Chapel
Sunday, February 21st & 28th, 1:30 pm



COMFORT LAMBS

From time to time, we all need a little comfort in our lives. We now have huggable plush lambs to give to anyone who is going through a tough time -- whether they're in our church family or not. If you know someone who would benefit from one of these, tell Nicole in the office. If you would like to sponsor a Comfort Lamb, you can donate \$13 to our Comfort Lamb fund. If you would like to buy a lamb to have at home, you can donate \$15 -- they're no longer on sale so that's the cost of replacing our current "give away" lambs.

Happy Valentine's Day

There is some mystery surrounding Saint Valentine and the holiday devoted to him. One of the most popular legends tells of a priest named Valentine who served during the 3rd century. Emperor Claudius II believed that Roman men would make better soldiers if they weren't distracted by having a wife. So he made marriage illegal. It's said that Saint Valentine wed soldiers to their fiancées in private, breaking the law and being condemned to death by Emperor Claudius II.

Another theory involves Valentine falling for a woman while he was imprisoned. Prior to being put to death, it's said that Valentine wrote a love letter to the woman and signed it 'your Valentine,' creating the tradition of love notes or "Valentines."

Neither legend involves roses or chocolate. So this year, instead of the traditional Valentine gifts, why not show your love through good deeds? They don't have to result in prison time or death sentences. A few suggestions are...

Leave "I Love You" notes
for family members

Bake heart-shaped cookies
for a sick or elderly friend

Forgive someone
who hurt you

Compliment someone so
much that they smile

Cook your family's
favorite meal

Invite a lonely friend
over for coffee

Call a lonely
family member

Video chat with someone you
haven't seen for awhile

Leave a positive comment
in a Facebook group



Help us celebrate Freda's birthday

February 9th is Freda Ruleman's birthday. She'll be **102 years old** and would love to hear from her Red Oak friends. Send birthday cards to:

Freda Ruleman
2729 82nd Place Apt 407E
Urbandale, Iowa 50322



Thank you to all who volunteer to be liturgists! If you would like to read scriptures in a Sunday morning church service, contact me or the church office.

-- Carol Sparr

WE'RE REQUESTING FLOWERS

We're looking for artificial flowers. Any size, shape, or color. If you have any that you no longer need, please donate them! They can be stems, bunches, garlands, or anything floral. Bring them to the church office any Sunday morning or Monday through Friday 9am to 1pm. Thanks!



Soon, you'll be able to support Red Oak First UMC every time you shop online!

Since 1997, iGive.com has helped ordinary people make their shopping count for more. We will soon have information on how to sign up so that you, too, can let your shopping support the programs and missions of Red Oak First UMC. Every time you shop online, approximately 3% of your purchase can go to our church! Watch for updates coming soon.

February

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 10:30 – Nishna Game Day	2 Groundhog Day 	3	4  4-7 Taco Fundraiser for Adrian Guerra
5 9 – Church 10:30 – Sunday School  Mary Marshall  Jane Waltz	6 9 – WIC Clinic  Stan Smith	7 10 – <i>The Chosen</i> Bible Study	8 6 – Choir Practice 6:30 – Youth Group	9  Lena Torbett  Jordan Vrba	10  Adrian Guerra	11 
12 9 – Church 10:30 – Sunday School 11-1 – “Souper” Bowl at Villisca UMC	13  Raymond Olsen	14  10 – <i>The Chosen</i> Bible Study 2 – Women's Fellowship	15 6 – Choir Practice 6:30 – Youth Group  Vayda Fisher	16	17	18
19 9 – Church 10:30 – Sunday School 1:30 – Les Mis Movie 	20  Presidents' Day  Trinity LaMar	21 10 – <i>The Chosen</i> Bible Study  Shrove Tuesday Mardi Gras 6 – Ad Board  Trevyr Selby	22  Ash Wednesday Lent Begins 6 – Choir Practice 6:30 – Service of Ashes 6:30 – Youth Group	23  Nicole Fisher  Donna Walford	24  Aviana Andre	25
26 9 – Church 10:30 – Sunday School 1:30 – Les Mis Movie 	27	28 10 – <i>Les Mis</i> Bible Study  Callie Yeager	 <p>Red Oak First United Methodist Church 600 East Hammond Street Red Oak, Iowa 51566 712-623-2367 Email: office@redoakfumc.org Website: redoakfumc.org Office Hours: 9am – 1pm Monday-Friday</p>			