

NOWATA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER



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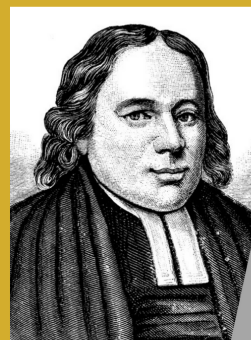
The Joy of Spiritual Family

Written by Pastor Jeffrey Rickman

Timothy Keller is a famous Reformed pastor in New York City. He has published many books that I have found to be helpful and faithful. Keller has more recently been saying more on social media, substantial yet terse remarks on the social and political challenges of our day. I wasn't sure why he had made this recent change until I read an interview with him in which he said that the biggest challenge in ministry today is just how polarized our society has become.

Large numbers of pastors are leaving because of how upsetting congregational life has become. It is common in churches of all sizes for constituents to group together and require the whole congregation to share in their group's approach to politics, pandemic, hygiene, or any other content one might find on the news. The extremes on both the left and the right have seemed to grow more extreme.

A lot of folks don't want to listen to anything about Jesus until they are sure that the person speaking shares the same loyalties as the listener. I would rail against this, but the reality is that many pastors, for a long time, have used their pulpit to promote political loyalties. Many people in my position have betrayed the trust given them by preaching something other than Christ and him crucified. After decades of this, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised when people refuse to listen until they have done all they know to verify that the speaker is speaking in good faith.



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Oceans are nothing to God,
and they should be no
obstruction to his people in
respect to the love they
should bear one towards
another

THOMAS COKE
"An Address to the Pious and
Benevolent" - 1786

Nowata First United Methodist

The problem is that messed up people (all of us) will use messed up litmus tests for the voices they choose to trust. This explains, I think, our society's current crisis: loss of trust in institutions. Gatekeepers in every sector have betrayed the trust given them; it isn't just pastors. It is especially sad, though, that those given the leadership of the church, the only institution dedicated to Christ, have sinned against the people every bit as badly as other worldly institutions.

What is there to be done in such a time, when the scales have fallen off the eyes of people and pastors are exposed to great scrutiny? How should we live when outside worldly forces work to divide the body of Christ against itself? I think all we can do is to be faithful and earnest. We cannot control others; we can barely control ourselves by the power of the Holy Spirit. My purity and safety cannot depend upon other people; it can only rest upon Christ. This is what gives me the grace required to be in intimate connection with those who might disagree with my political loyalties or opinions on science or nature or any other variety of things that make bids for my affections. If my primary affection is for Christ as known in the scriptures, then I can forsake all my other loyalties for the sake of connection to others in Christ.

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"If my primary affection is for Christ as known in the scriptures, then I can forsake all my other loyalties for the sake of connection to others in Christ."

And I think the reality is that if someone is willing to divide the body of Christ because of other loyalties they have, then it is probably for the best that they fall away. If they haven't learned to love Jesus so that they learn to graciously bear with others, then the church had already failed to instill in them the mind of Christ. Rather than pushing rope and trying to convince goats to be sheep, perhaps it is good to have a time of culling the herd. It is a sad thing to watch a once mighty Christendom fall, but I think we are realizing that a lot of it was built on a foundation other than Christ. It was always destined to fall away.

I rejoice that God is purifying his church. I rejoice that he blessed me above many pastors with two wonderful rural churches filled with people who love Jesus and want to be bound together despite our differences. As American society has divided and turned against one another, this church's people have consistently, daily, exercised grace with one another. Because of your doing this, we don't look like the world. In this sense, and hopefully many other senses in the future, we look a bit like the Kingdom of God.

I'm very glad to serve as a pastor here and am happy to do so as long as you likewise benefit from my presence. Continue to pray for our church, that we can remain united and gracious despite all of the forces seeking to drive us apart!

Corner of Appreciation

We want to express our appreciation for those who serve our church in various ways on Sundays and throughout the week.

We appreciate Doug Maddux, Amber Staehle, and David Hindman reading scripture in worship in December.

Thank you to Gwen Clingan who helped plant pansies in the North flower bed.

We are grateful to Mesa Holt, Cyndi Trammel, Bobby Wilson, Gwen Clingan, Bud Callison, and TJ Owens who helped prepare the sanctuary for Advent.



Coming Up in January

- January 8 from 7am-10am
Delaware Methodist Church
Breakfast
- January 11 at 6:30pm
Administrative Board
meeting
- January 16
Sara Beth R.'s birthday
- January 20
Laura B.'s birthday
- January 16
Carl G.'s birthday
Doug M.'s birthday
- January 30
Potluck after worship

Happening Every Week

Worship: Sundays at 11am

Women's Prayer Group:
Wednesdays at 10:30am

Bible Reading Hour:
Thursdays at 6:30pm

Office Hours: Monday-Friday
from 9am-Noon

Contact Us

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A History of First United Methodist Church of Nowata (Part 4):

Information gathered & compiled by Mrs. Chas E. Shafer & Floy Y. Shafer

This photo was taken outside our second building sometime between 1913 & 1918. The Reverend Robert L. Selle (Pictured on the far left) presided over the congregation between 1916 & 1918. Not everyone in the picture is named but there is a short list on the back of the original (2nd Photo). An alternate list in our archive has the following list:

Back Row -
Rev. R.L. Selle
(Unknown Woman)
Mrs. Hagan
Lara Pense
Mrs. Snodgrass
Mrs. Cully

Second Row -
"Hagan Boy"
Robert Selle
John Selle
Hazel Hagan
Paisy Snodgrass
"Hagan Girl"

For reference everyone in the photo is facing to the south where the courthouse currently stands and to their left (Photographer's right) is North Maple Street.

For more information about our church's history you can visit our website:
<http://www.nowataumc.org/history>



An easy way to promote our church and share about your faith is to share our church's online content. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. We are also airing a new podcast as well! If you are unsure how find our content or share it with your friends, please stop by the church office on a weekday so that Pastor Jeffrey or Sara Beth can teach you how!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nowatamethodist
Twitter: @NowataUMC
YouTube: Nowata United Methodist Church
Podcast: Nowata Methodist Podcast

Methodist Singers at the Nowata Nursing Center

Written by Bobby Wilson

At last, the wait was over!

On the evening of December 12, 2021, our choral group came together to honor the birth of our Lord by spending time together with the residents of Nowata Nursing Center.

Truly, the most rewarding form of joy is that which is shared with others. As we are all too aware, 2021 has been a trying time for all, but particularly for our brothers and sisters living in the nursing and assisted living facilities in our area. Because of the various protocols in effect regarding the health and public safety requirements imposed, visitation to these facilities have been quite restrictive. As a result, our group of dedicated singers were overjoyed at the opportunity to share an evening of Christian fellowship and beautiful Christmas singing with the beautiful residents at Nowata nursing center.

It is a source of amazement and gratification to witness the outpouring of support from our friends and neighbors who give of their time and talent to join us on these occasions. We have had wonderful participation in the past, but I was truly amazed at the turnout this time. By an unofficial count we had upwards of 30 wonderful (and by Sara Beth's description,)

ROBUST singers. We were joined by members of other churches and folks from the community who wished to be part of this effort. We were very pleased to have Nowata County's Sheriff, Jason McClain, Undersheriff Sandy Hadley, and Deputy Sheriff Derrick Schmidt join with us. It is rather nice to have a singing Sheriff's department. Our community is blessed to have Law Enforcement personnel who care for and understand the needs of the entire community and give of their time to join with us to, in our small way, bring Christmas cheer where we are able.



The highlight of the evening was of course, the participation of the residents in the singing and general fellowship. As always, copies of the proposed songs were provided to Ms. Joanie Fisher, Director of activities at the center, for distribution to the residents for their use and use them they did! I am not sure that they did not out sing our group.

By all measures, the evening was an outstanding success for all! Of immense importance was, as always, the magical music furnished by Sara Beth. She and her ubiquitous keyboard transformed a great evening into a marvelous and wonderful evening for everyone.

Many, many thanks to all who participated. I don't have to explain what your participation meant to the residents; it was plain to see in their faces and in their voices and eyes. Truly the best of emotions for all to see.

Also, many thanks to the staff at Nowata Nursing Center. They do their absolute best to care for their charges. These folks are a beacon of caring and responsibility.

In closing, I hope to be able to schedule more frequent singings for the centers in our area, so will be haranguing everyone again. For those of you who were unable to join with us this time please try to do so in the future. I assure you that you will feel blessed.