



Yucca Breeze

THE UNITED CHURCHES OF HOT SPRINGS, SD

Pastor's Pulpit:

100 or More Through the Door in '24

One of the good goals that I have for the New Year is the above "motto." Let's face it, Covid's effects are slowly but surely beginning to wane, and now we as a church are given the unique challenge of building up His church as we strive to fill up His building. We have a great church. We have oodles of talented and Godly people. We have scores of folks who thrive in leadership positions and I know that I am one of the most blessed pastors in South Dakota! Let me repeat ... we have a great church! Glory to God!

Numerical growth, although not a determining factor, is a fairly good assessment tool of spiritual vitality. Thus, **100 Or More Through the Door in '24** seems not only achievable ... but realistic. If we could just have half of the folks who now watch our services online begin to attend in person once again, we could not only sustain but pass our goal on a weekly basis! Then maybe we could approach next January with a motto such as "125 to Thrive in 2025." Cool beans!

For the rest of this first little article of the New Year, I want to talk about the **4 Circles** of folks that make up every congregation. We also need to keep in mind that the goal is centripetal not centrifugal ... **a movement from outer to inner ... not inner to outer.** I think you'll see what I mean as we talk about the four groups. Let's name them and then touch on each one individually.

The four groups that make up any CHURCH are: Saved and Committed; Saved and Uncommitted; Unsaved but Committed; and finally, Unsaved and Uncommitted.

Group 1: Saved and Committed (our biggest and our best). These folks know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. They love Him and love their church home. They are what I refer to as F.A.T. people: Faithful, Available, and Teachable! These 3T-ers give faithfully of their Time, Talent, and Tithes. We refer to them as "open door-ers" ... meaning pretty much every time the church doors are open they are there! These are the backbone as well as firm foundation for any church and we are so very, very blessed to have many folks in this category.

However, the challenges of aging and energy can be a limiting. And more and more, our Saved and Committed folks need to be added to ... which means that there has to be a **centripetal movement** from the other 3 groups. The best folks who do join our first group is usually from our second, less numerous group: Saved and Uncommitted.

Group 2: Saved and Uncommitted.

These are folks who know and love Jesus more as their Savior than Lord. That is not always the case, because sometimes just the busyness of schedules and activities seem to take more time than there is in a day. These people deep down inside, truly desire to live a committed life. They love their church home and are supportive in every way they can be at this time in their lives. But, they are pretty selective of what they choose to get involved in and with ... understandable to a degree. They are saved and Jesus has done a great deal in their hearts and lives and so on. But for whatever reason, they don't get super involved or overly committed to their church.

It is sad in way, because I've known lots of folks who have lived this way and once they feel the centripetal pull to join the first group (Saved and Committed), they have often commented that they feel that they have missed so much over the years and really struggle with the "why didn't I" question. Keep in mind, it's mainly from this group that the first most critical growth is added to and replenished. Show me a church where people are becoming more committed and I'll show you a church that will remain vibrant and alive. But show me a church where this group remains uncommitted and well ... you can guess the results. Still, there is another group that God many times uses and draws into His church.

Group 3: Unsaved but Committed:

The Unsaved and Committed folks are usually religious, good, moral, conscientious, sensitive, and basically just fine people. Most of these folks believe that all religions are pretty much the same, and it's really more of a preference thing than anything else. Christianity, as long as it doesn't get too fanatical, kind of fits them and their lifestyle. They actually love their church friends, and along with their other social activities, they really enjoy being at their church. They tend to be *3T-ers*, *F.A.T.* and *open door-ers* as well! They are doing all the right things for all the wrong reasons. Jesus is a Savior ... but for them ... He is more of a moral example to follow.

Until ... and I love this until ... God in His timing and in His centripetal way uses the example of His people, and the teaching of His Word, to bring them into a saving relationship with Himself. This is often a long-term process. It's hard to convince moral, good people that they actually need a Savior. Really, only God and God alone can convince someone of that reality. But what is really cool when this happens, is that most of these folks upon conversion, take a place not in the second circle, but go straight to the inner circle of Saved and Committed. And, I might add ... they have a healthy passion for their new found Savior and Lord.

They are indeed bright lights, not only in society, but in the life of any church! These folks are more prevalent in more churches than congregants realize. The biggest difference is that if the church experiences problems or challenges, then these folks often capitulate to the spiritual centrifugal force they feel, and either leave the church for better horizons, or search out a better activity all together that will suit their religious ideas and ideals. This leads us to our final circle of folks who are a part of any church structure: The Unserved and the Uncommitted.

Group Four: Unserved and Uncommitted:

The Unserved and Uncommitted attend church for myriads of reasons and for various lengths of time. It really doesn't take much for this group to feel the centrifugal forces of the world, people's opinions, and so forth, and just stop attending church period. It doesn't take much for these folks to justify their lifestyles and such, especially when they compare themselves to the mostly phony baloney people who NEED that religious fix in their lives.

By and large these folks are, however, pretty decent people. What they can't understand about themselves, and can't seem to shake the feeling, is that maybe there really is something to all this religious junk. These folks are what I call "shock jocks!" They love to say or do things, especially in front of church folk, that can't help but provoke some kind of shock response. I have included this group in our church circles because not only do they show up, but many times these folks are the prime candidates for God to Himself. The real shock of these people is when they come to know Jesus as their Savior, and the contrast between who they once were and how they once acted, to how much of a transition and transformation has taken place in their lives. It may take time for these folks to grow spiritually, but usually these folks become the most dedicated and trustworthy first circlers that a church ever has!

So **100 or More through the Door in '24**. It's not only a possibility, but as long as we as a church understand how God is working in various people's lives, then it's doable. Let's strive to continue to be a super part of the Saved and Committed. Let's be open to God's centripetal spiritual movement in our lives. Let's make 2024 the year when we finally begin to live a life we know He wants us to live, and we really want to live!

Blessings, *Pastor David*

Words cannot express the thankfulness in our hearts this Christmas Season! We have received gifts, cards, goodies, hugs, words of encouragement and thankfulness from our church family. We love serving here, and look forward serving together in the New Year ahead.

With God's Blessings and Our Love,
Pastor David and Bernice

NEW BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES!!

"The Fear of the Lord"

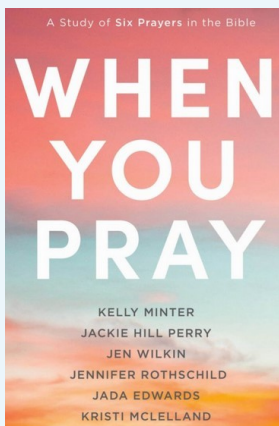
By Michael Reeves

Begins Sunday, January 14th / 8:30 am / Fireside Room

Facilitated by: Sharon Kalvels

The paradox of the gospel is that it frees us from our fears yet leads us to fear. We rejoice in this because the gospel helps us see God rightly. We can at once tremble before Him in all His holiness yet trust Him to deal with all our sins and misplaced fears. In this teaching series, Dr. Michael Reeves cuts through the confusion about the fear of the Lord so that we might grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God that is promised to all those who fear Him.

Dr. Michael Reeves is president and professor of theology at Union School of Theology in the United Kingdom. He is the featured teacher for the Ligonier teaching series [*The English Reformation and the Puritans*](#). He is author of many books, including *The Unquenchable Flame*, [*Delighting in the Trinity*](#), and [*Rejoice and Tremble*](#).

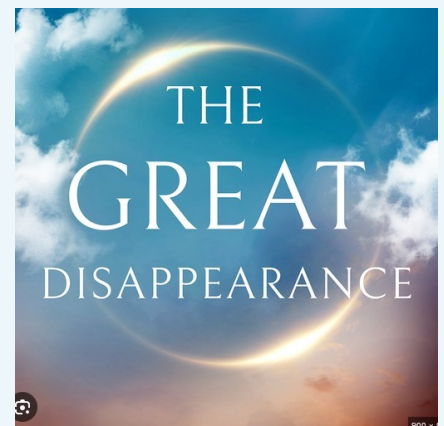


"When You Pray"

The Monday Women's Bible Study resumes on January 8, 2024 at 9:00 am in the Fireside Room. Ladies are invited to the seven week study "When You Pray" which includes six different presenters! Contact Delores Hickman, 605-745-5338.

"The Great Disappearance"

The United Women group will be doing this study by Dr. David Jeremiah. They will resume meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 1:30 pm in the Fireside Room.



TIME TO TURN IN YOUR ANNUAL REPORTS!

- Our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28, 2024.
- We will have lunch immediately after the Worship Service that day (before the Annual Meeting).
- Our Fellowship Team will provide Fried Chicken (please bring a side/entrée/dessert to share).
- Eat some lunch then stay for the Annual Meeting!



**ANNUAL REPORTS
DUE IN OFFICE
NO LATER THAN
TUESDAY, JAN 2ND**

We need to be able to have our Annual Report Booklet available to the congregation on the Sunday *before the meeting* (January 21st). As it takes time to assemble all the documents needed for this report, we really need all our committees and teams to get your reports turned in! You may either drop them off to the church office, or email to uc@gwtc.net.

THANK YOU!



This year we will again be spotlighting of each of our three denominations:
**BAPTIST METHODIST
PRESBYTERIAN**
Who we are ... What we believe
What we do ... How to join.

If you are not a **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, information on each denomination will be available as handouts in the Sunday bulletins. There will also be booklets of information on the table in the Bethany Room.



JANUARY MISSION EMPHASIS

The Joshua Fund

What Is The Joshua Fund?

“Now the LORD said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” (Genesis 12:1-3)

Founded by best-selling author Joel C. Rosenberg and his wife Lynn in 2006, the Joshua Fund (TJF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to “blessing Israel and her neighbors in the name of Jesus, according to Genesis 12:1-3.”

"Our unique 'both/and' approach to ministry is focused on sharing God's love with Jews, Arabs and Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank and neighboring nations (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria & Iraq). Building relationships, coming alongside pastors and ministry leaders on the ground and working primarily through the local church, The Joshua Fund seeks to: Care for the Needy; Equip and Encourage the Body of Believers; Preach the Gospel; Educate and Mobilize the Global Church to learn to Pray, Give and Go."

Our January "Loose Change Offering" for missions will go to this vital ministry. If using an offering envelope, please write "Joshua Fund" on the line designated for missions.

For more information, visit The Joshua Fund Website at: <https://www.joshuafund.com>.



D2D-2 CLASS ... BEGINS IN JANUARY

Those who took part in the D2D-1 class are invited to attend D2D-2 which will begin on Monday, January 8th at 4:00 pm in the Fireside Room.

The ACTS TEAM makes phone calls, visitations, offers in-home communion, sends texts, and basically tries to get in touch with each of our members on a regular basis. This team desperately needs to be reorganized and put into action in 2024. As such, Deann Arneson has agreed to lead this great and needed team! As such, if you have a heart and desire to be a part of this team, please come to the organizational meeting on Sunday, January 14, 2024, at 11:15 AM in the Fireside Room.

**A.C.T.S.
Team**



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

26 Pastor David & Bernice Cook

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Marley White Face | 24 Patricia Coffield |
| 4 Paul Swenson | 27 Aiden Swift |
| 20 Kye Kutz | 27 Katlyn White Face |
| 22 Jerry Wyatt | 31 Jan Speirs |
| 22 Arika Brink | |

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

SPAGHETT SUPPER THANK YOU NOTE:

Our family would like to wish everyone at the United Churches a very Merry Christmas! We would also like to thank you for the spaghetti suppers. They are delicious! We appreciate everyone who works so hard to make these meals. Our family looks forward to this each week. Thank you to the boutiques ladies! They are warm and friendly and I look forward to seeing them each month. With the ever-increasing cost of necessary items, your service has been just what we need to stay within our budget. We are truly thankful for your help. Merry Christmas! Chris & Debbie Brooks, David, Emily, April, Josh, Noah, Tim.

FEEDING SOUTH DAKOTA:

Feeding South Dakota is scheduled in Hot Springs on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 11:00 AM in Butler Park. Folks are encouraged to arrive early to get in line!

LEMONADE:

We keep two full containers of lemonade in the fridge in our upstairs kitchen. If you partake of the lemonade, and the containers get low, please make a new pitcher! We use 10 scoops of lemonade mix to one pitcher of water. Also, please refill the pitchers of water if needed.

THANK YOU:

THANK YOU to all who have been praying for my sons and I over the past two years. My oldest son, Marcus Hansen did get his 2nd kidney transplant in May of this year and is doing wonderfully well and enjoying time with his six year old daughter in Denver, CO. My youngest, Chris Hansen had dealt with spina bifida since his birth, and with his family present on November 16, 2023, he passed away peacefully from complications of that disease. We will be holding a Celebration of Life in AZ on January 20, 2024. The love, care and prayers given to us gave us strength and showed God's love during this time which will never be forgotten.

Peace and blessings to you and your family in 2024.

Marce Largent