

Dear United Church Congregation,

Several years ago I did a 10-week sermon series on "Top Ten" Bible verses and passages that people from this church submitted. It wasn't long enough because more than 10 verses and readings were offered. Looking back at that list of "favorites", however, I am surprised that this Sunday's reading wasn't one of them! Our text for Sunday's worship services is one of the Old Testament readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. It is from Isaiah and seems to be connected to the recommended Gospel reading about Jesus' baptism. In both readings, we are confronted with words that the writers indicate are from God. In Isaiah, it follows that prophetic formula, "Thus says the Lord..." and goes on for the rest of the verses. And the words spoken in both passages speak of God's love of Israel, the newly baptized Jesus, and people who were "formed" by God and live connected to the faith community.

This certainly does not place boundaries on the reach and reality of God's continued love of people. But even from those older words of Isaiah (older than the ancient New Testament writings), all other messages and concerns are swept aside by the powerful and personable words of God's love; as just one-half of one verse puts it: "Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you..." (Isaiah 43:4a). Isn't that a message we search for in any verse or passage we hear or consider a "favorite" of ours? It is a message we can certainly stand to hear again this second Sunday of this new year.

Join us for worship this Sunday at 8 or 9:30 a.m.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7

Sermon: "Striking Pay Dirt"

Sunday morning classes for all ages begin at 11 a.m.

This Sunday is our All-Church Potluck in Graves Hall at 12:15 p.m.

Boards will meet at 1 p.m. and the Executive Council meets at 2 p.m.

Grace and peace,

David