

First United Methodist Church

310 North Rowley, Mitchell, SD 57301

Rev. Keith Nelson, Lead Pastor

keith@mitchelfumc.org

605.630.6586

October 27, 2017

As I type these words, my Uncle Walter (Nelson), retired clergy in the Dakotas Conference, has made that final journey, transitioning from this world into the fullness, glory, and love of God's Kingdom. At 90+ years, it has been quite a life journey for him. He and Aunt Janet have done ministry together in multiple communities in South Dakota and have touched many lives. In all his appointments, Uncle Walter was never my pastor...or was he?

Since October is considered Pastor Appreciation month, I've been taking some time over the past few days to reflect on the pastors who have touched my life. I've brought to mind many those faith-filled men and women who have influenced my faith journey and have helped me become the Jesus follower that I am. Uncle Walter would be one of those pastors.

The first pastor I remember as a little kid was Rev. Pray. (To be honest I don't know his first name. He was always just Rev. Pray.) I remember him standing at the back of the church in his long black robe. At the time I thought he was the tallest man I'd ever seen. Again, that's the perspective of a really young child. 😊 Rev. Bob McBride was another pastor I remember as a youth. He usually had a big smile, a positive gentle word, and a VW Bug that he drove. Rev. Joel Rickenbach was the pastor that confirmed me. Rev. Charles Finney was my pastor in my high school years. There was Rev. Roger Thomas, who I remember stopping out at the farm. He also stopped at USF to visit me at college.

There was Rev. Thom Potenza, Rev. David Vosecky, Rev. Dean Williams, Rev. Dave McCurdy, Sister Thomasine (who was a hospital chaplain with me and we had many great spiritual and faith talks.). Rev. Boyd Blumer was my first DS, who helped guide me and shape me in my first church appointment (and still does here in Mitchell). I think of Bishop Lewis, Bishop Kiesey, and Bishop Ough who have all shaped me as a pastor and a person of faith. I could go on and on...there are so many pastors who have, and continue to influence and shape me in this journey of faith. I don't have the space to name them all.

But back to Uncle Walter...how Uncle Walter touched my life and faith is that he helped me see that pastors are real people. I remember him often wearing his clerical collar, which I found intriguing as a child. But Uncle Walter helped me realize that pastors are real people; they have families, they laugh, they cry, they get flat tires, they go camping, they don't even have all the answers all the time! Though it wasn't until years later that I'd experience what I consider my "call" into ministry, I have a feeling that God was using Uncle Walter to help me see that ministry was/is something that can be a joy-filled and meaning-filled way to serve God.

So, I'm thankful to all the pastors who have (and continue) to touch and shape my life. Today I'm especially grateful to Uncle Walter for his willingness to serve and reflect God's presence, light, and love into my life and the lives of so many others who experienced his ministry over the years and over the landscape of South Dakota. Thank you! God's blessing to you!!

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

This Sunday begins a new sermon series I'm calling it "Dr. Luke's Gratitude Prescriptions," based from the book "The Gratitude Path" by Dr. Kent Millard. Come join us as we focus on living a life of gratitude. Worship on Sunday's is at 8:30 and 11:00 am. Sunday School is at 9:45 am. Mid-week Worship is on Wednesday's at 6:00 pm in the chapel. And I hope you're joining us in the Breakthrough Prayer at 7:07 each day.