

First United Methodist Church

310 North Rowley, Mitchell, SD 57301

Rev. Keith Nelson, Lead Pastor

keith@mitchellfumc.org

605.630.6586

Jesus had the incredible ability to see what was going on in a person's heart or mind. There are times I wish I had that same ability, being able to see into the heart of a person and better understand what they need, what they are longing for, or simply to see how God is working in their lives. I had such a moment just the other evening.

The moment came at the end of the **Ash Wednesday** service. I was waiting at the front of the worship space to see if anyone was still in need of having their forehead marked with the sign of the cross. There's always a few, either musicians, tech people, nursery workers, those who had to step out of the service for a moment, etc. I had announced that I would wait up front for a few moments after the service for anyone who was still seeking the mark of the ashes.

So, there were a few people that came to me. I made the mark, I spoke the words. But then I noticed a child beside me. I wondered what he needed. There are some kids in our church family that want to give or get a quick hug. I first thought maybe this was the case. So, I bent down to get on his level and gave this young man my attention. He spoke a few words. I wasn't sure I understood him correctly, so I said, "What was that?" He spoke the words again, "**I want a darker cross.**"

In my 30+ years of ministry I have never had someone make that statement to me on an Ash Wednesday; that they wanted a darker cross. I've seen plenty of people sort of brushing away the excess ash in an attempt to "lighten" the mark. But I've never had anyone request a darker cross. It was in this moment that I wished I could see more clearly into this child's heart and understand what was going on within him.

Was he noticing his friends had a darker mark...so he wanted one too, was he sensing this was a special moment, was God nudging him in some way, did a family member say he needed a "redo" on his cross? These were the questions that flashed through my mind in an instant. But in the end, I didn't know the deeper reason for his request. I couldn't see what was **in his heart**, which is what I had just spoken about in my meditation that evening. I simply responded to his request and made the cross darker. He was happy. I was happy. And I'm simply trusting God's Spirit to do what was needed in that moment in that boy's life.

As we journey through this season of Lent, I am trusting that God will be at work in my heart and in all our hearts. I know that God can see clearly the need, the motives, the hurts, the desires, etc., in my heart and in all our hearts. May our combined prayer be that we would each grow in our faith in this holy season, and that we would each be ready and willing to respond to God's movement and mark in our lives. **May the cross become more visible in all our lives in this season so that Christ can become more visible in our world.**

Serving Together,
Pastor Keith

-He everybody, this Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent. Come join us for worship as we take these first steps toward the cross together. Sunday Morning Worship is at 8:30 and 11:00 am. Sunday School begins at 9:45. This Sunday also begins the sermon series "Creed." This series is based on Rev. Adam Hamilton's book "Creed" which examines the Apostles Creed and the place of significance it has in our faith. The "Creed" books are available in the office for \$15. There will also be several small group opportunities during the week. Check our Facebook page or the worship bulletin for more details.