

First United Methodist Church

310 North Rowley, Mitchell, SD 57301

Rev. Keith Nelson, Lead Pastor

keith@mitchellfumc.org

605.630.6586

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Have you been asked lately what you've given up for Lent?? I have a unique answer for you to give the next time you're asked that question. Tell the person that asks, "I've given up my sanctuary." That will get you a questioning look!! Of course when they ask what you mean by that, you can tell them that literally, you gave up your sanctuary for Lent...so it could be repaired.

I hope the pictures we've shown each Sunday have helped you stay informed about what is going on in the sanctuary. Even though we've all adjusted well, I do have the sense that many of you are looking forward to being back in our main sanctuary. The work is progressing quite well and we believe (and are planning on) that we'll be back in the sanctuary on Sunday, April 9, Palm Sunday. Thank you to everyone for your patience, and your financial, emotional, and prayer support that has helped make this project go so well.

But here's the real question, from my perspective; what have you gained through this experience of "giving up your sanctuary for Lent." You see, just giving something up for the sake of "giving something up" isn't of much value. What is the deeper experience you're looking for? What "gem" of greater value are you hoping to gain for your life or your faith journey?

Here's what I've seen. I've seen a closeness, literally and figuratively, among us all as we've worshipped in the close confines of the Chapel. Yes, there really was one Sunday we had 190 people at our 11:00 am worship service. Most services haven't been that full. But we're a lot closer together in the chapel than we are in the sanctuary. I hope that closeness does not go away. In fact, I would encourage us all to sit closer together, preferably toward the front ☺ once we're back in the sanctuary.

I've also seen a lot of patience. All of us have been moved out of our comfort zone, which isn't always a fun experience. But we've been patient with one another and in fact I've seen instances of someone going above and beyond to help someone in need. **YEA!!** It's also been necessary for us to try doing some things in a new way. Again, we all tend to get set in our ways...yet, we've also learned that doing things different can be OK...and can even be good!!

As a church family we've used this time of "displacement" as an opportunity to experiment and see if offering something new might reach new people. This has been the case. Offering some different worship times and opportunities has connected with some new people, so that our worship attendance has not dropped off because we're not in our sanctuary.

So, next time someone asks you what you've given up for Lent...tell them, "Let me tell you what I've gained." And then share with them your experience of giving up your sanctuary for Lent. All I can say is...**WAY TO GO, CHURCH!** Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

Be sure to join us for worship this Sunday. Pastor Jerry will bring the message. We'll continue in our "Lent...ing" series. This week's word is "Experience...ing." Worship is as 8:30, 9:50, and 11:00 am on Sunday and 6:00 pm on Wednesday. Hope to see you here at Downtown Mitchell First Church – 310 N. Rowley, Mitchell