

# ***First United Methodist Church***

***310 North Rowley, Mitchell, SD 57301***

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“You do not belong here! You are a weed...you do not belong here!” That was my mantra the other evening as I worked in our garden plot in the Mitchell Community Gardens. It had been a few days since we had done any work in our garden plot, so the weeds had grown quite nicely in that time. So, there I was down on my hands and knees weeding the garden.

Now I’ve chosen to work primarily in the area where the carrots, spinach, and lettuce is planted. The reason for working in that specific area??? Because it is easier for me to determine what is a weed and what is the plant that we want left in the ground. I know what the carrots look like. I know what the spinach looks like. I know what the lettuce looks like. Therefore, it is much easier to identify the weeds, the unwanted plants that are growing in the rows with the good plants. Thus, my mantra, “You are a weed...you do not belong here.”

As I was pulling weeds and repeating my mantra in my head, I started thinking about the garden of my faith-life. You know, Paul talks about the “garden” of our spiritual life that produces fruit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I began to consider the growing conditions for the vine, tree, bush, or whatever plant that was producing this fruit in my life.

This garden work on my hands and knees got me wondering if I’ve been looking for or identifying any weeds in my spiritual garden? Is hatred taking root somewhere in my heart? Are the thorns of impatience or negativity pricking my soul? Are the leaves of evil, lust, or indifference creating darkness within me? Are the seeds of self-indulgence, faithlessness, or harshness being scattered in the soil of my life? Am I intentionally looking for the things in my spiritual life that can take the energy away from God’s nurturing Spirit in my life? Am I looking for the weeds within me and saying, “You are a weed! You do not belong here!” Thus, in identifying it and naming it, this act helps in the next step, plucking or removing it from my inner being.

The problem is, just like in our garden plot here in Mitchell, in the garden of my soul, the weeds keep coming back. It isn’t just a “pull it once and it’s gone” activity, it is a constant, vigilant search for the weeds that have the potential to take the “life and energy” away from the very “fruit” I want to bear in my walk with Jesus.

How about you?? How’s the garden of your soul doing? I’ll bet there’s some good produce growing in your soul. How about weeds? Are you on the “lookout” for them? You can join me in my search...and my mantra. “You are a weed! You do not belong here!!” This simple, yet difficult act, will help God’s good fruit to take deeper root and be more evident in our lives. I’d write more but I see some weeds creeping into the garden! Serving Together,

*Pastor Keith*

Join us for worship on Sunday. Communion will be offered and we’ll also celebrate a baptism. I’ll kick off a new sermon series, “Summer Road Trip – A Journey Through Acts!” During the upcoming weeks we’ll discover the beginnings and early days of this movement we know as the “Christian Church.” Come Join Us! Invite a friend. Worship is at 9:30 am at our downtown location, 310 North Rowley, Mitchell

Though I'm not really much of a gardener, I do help-out in the garden since I will enjoy the produce that comes from it. Plus, it is rewarding to see the progress made when getting rid of the weeds from a section of the garden plot.