

# ***First United Methodist Church***

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

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One of the things we've tried to stress at our church is that we are all a part of the welcoming and greeting team here at Downtown Mitchell First United Methodist Church. Every one of us can have an impact on whether people feel welcome here...or not feel so welcome. I had an experience while on vacation that really drove this point home.

Many of you have heard me talk about Rocky Mountain National Park. It's where Nancy and I spent much of our vacation in late June. It's a place that both of us love. The views, the scenery, the mountains, the hikes, the wildlife...I mean, what's not to love!!! ☺ However, I did have an experience this summer in the park that made me feel not so welcome. You see, I had a run in with the "Firewood Lady."

Now we all know that a big part of camping is the evening campfire...at least it is a big deal for the Nelson family. The fire is something that we all look forward to. Since we wanted to have a campfire I needed to get some firewood. Fortunately, firewood was for sale at the campground where we stayed. So, I drove over to the place where it appeared the firewood was being sold. I stopped on the road to allow some firewood customers to get their haul to their vehicle. Then I sat there for a moment trying to figure out where to park. But before I could identify the proper parking spot, I heard these words, "Oh no...you can't stop there." I told her I was waiting for people to cross the road and figure out where to park. "Well, you can't stop there!" I pulled ahead and swung into a parking spot.

I approached the little shed that was obviously the point for the firewood sales. A teenager was just finishing his purchase of a bundle of firewood. He was awkwardly trying to pick it up. The Firewood Lady said to him, "Well, you've got a handle staring right at you that you can use." OK...now it's my turn. I walk up and announce I'd like 2 bundles of firewood. I pull a \$50 out of my billfold and ask if she can break a 50-dollar bill. She looks at me and says, "No! What do you think I am, a bank? Come back later, then maybe I can."

So, things just kept going from bad to worse. My last encounter with her two nights later just took the cake. I walked up to the shed on the wrong side of her truck. She said, "Nope, can't come that way. You gotta come around the other side." AAAhhhhhhh..... Fortunately, I did have a smaller bill to make my purchase!

This little encounter with the Firewood Lady sure pressed home the importance of everyone having a part to play in making people feel welcome. The Firewood Lady (and I don't know her story) could have been such a happy part of people's day; selling them ice cream, firewood, etc. But instead, from my experience and what I witnessed, she tended to be a bit unwelcoming. I know I didn't want to deal with her again!

At Love Feast something Cindy Bierman says is so important and so true. She always tells the workers, "Yours might be the only smile a person gets today. So, remember...SMILE!" Good advice at Love Feast! Good Advice at worship! Good advice for living! We are each a part of the welcome team here. Smile! ☺  
Serving Together,

*Pastor Keith*

P.S. Remember this Sunday, July 22, is our Worship in the Park Service. Worship begins at 10:00 am at Hitchcock park – 201 E. Hanson, Mitchell, SD. We'll be at the bandshell. Bring a lawn chair. Bring a friend. And remember, we'll have a potluck following the service. I hope you'll join us!!