

RELIGION

PASTOR’S COLUMN

My vow is ...



CAROL
DESCHEPPE

FIRST LUTHERAN
CHURCH, MILFORD

We are a couple of weeks into the New Year. Did you make a New Year’s resolution, and is it still alive and well? Are you still committed to it? Are your resolutions focused on physical health, mental health or spiritual health? Do you have other aspirations not specifically related to your health (but isn’t everything related to health)? Studies show that health-focused resolutions are the most commonly selected.

A Forbes survey from 2023 identified that 62% of people feel pressured to making a resolution and 8%

of them have dropped it by the end of January. Given that statistic, most are probably still on task with their resolutions. Twenty-two percent back away from their resolution(s) by the end of February, and another 22% by the end of March. I’m not sure what that says about us. Was the resolution not really important in the first place? Are we not committed? Were you feeling pressured to come up with a resolution to have a response when someone asked what your resolution is?

Sometime ago, I read a poem by Rachel Macy Stafford named “My Vow to Soften.” I thought about the words of that poem again as we began a new year. Maybe those thoughts and words could become the focus of a resolution for me or for you. I don’t know about you, but I’ve had more harsh and hateful words than I can endure. Can we please try something different?

The first stanza of the poem reads:

“I’ve had enough of my hard edges. I’m tired of straining my voice. I’d like to loosen up and laugh a little more, be positive rather than negative.”

It’s hard to find laughter and positivity in the midst of the negativity in today’s world. Mutual respect and civil discourse seem to be rare or missing. Stafford’s poem goes on to express many beautiful and compassionate expressions of what her vows for a time of softening would look like. The link to her poem is below, but here are a few excerpts:

- I vow to listen to opinions. I don’t always have to be right. I don’t always have to agree or have the last word.
- I vow to remember he is in the process of becoming; she is in the process of finding her way. And they are more apt to do it if I stop telling them how.
- I vow to greet my family — and myself — with a loving smile, no matter what happened yesterday. Grudge-

holding only hurts us all.

- I vow to pause before correcting. I will take a moment to consider if the mistake even needs to be mentioned.
 - I vow to be a voice of encouragement in a demeaning world.
 - I vow to be softer today than I was yesterday — a softer voice, a softer posture, a softer touch, a softer thought, a softer timetable.
 - I vow to be softer toward the imperfect human being inside me and the one beside me.
- By being softer I can hear more, learn more, feel more, and love more. Do any of these resonate with you or do you have some you would add to the list? I vow to _____. Think and pray about it and fill in the blank. A few of mine are:
- I vow to extend grace when my first reaction is judgment.
 - I vow to more quickly see and generously embrace the goodness in others.

- I vow to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly (Micah 6:8)
- If you are committed to weight loss, more time in the gym, or other goals in the new year, good for you! We can all benefit from aspirations to seek greater physical health. But don’t stop there. I encourage you to consider making your own vows of “softening.” Maybe, just maybe, we should begin this year digging deeper and being a voice of quiet, fostering dialogue and peace, seeking justice where it is devoid, loving our neighbor (yes, all of our neighbors), stop overlooking and/or repeating hate-filled words, and excluding others who are all made in God’s image.
- We have an opportunity to begin anew to offer something different to the world. Individually and collectively, we can be the source of an invitation for someone to feel included, valued and loved.

AREA CHURCH LISTINGS

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Foundation Church, Spencer
Rev. Nicholas Hanges, Senior Pastor
1410 W. 18th St.
712-262-6292
foundationspencer.com
• Sunday School K-12, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Prayer/Fellowship, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.
• Kids Church Sunday, 10 a.m.
• Wednesday All Ages, 6:30 p.m.

BAPTIST

Baptist Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. James Marshall
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

First Baptist Church, Spencer
Rev. Tim Smith
1200 Grand Ave.
712-262-1325
firstbaptistspencer.com
• Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.
• Sunday Upward Look — KICD 1240 AM, 10 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday AWANA, 4 p.m.
• Sunday FBC Youth Group, 6 p.m.

CALVARY CHAPEL

New Life Worship Center, Spencer
Rev. Tracy Baugh
1217 Fourth Ave. W.
712-262-3125
• Sunday Bible Church, 10 a.m.
• Wednesday Prayer, 6:30 p.m.

CATHOLIC

St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Hartley
Rev. Kevin Richter
260 N. Fourth Ave. W.
712-928-2626
• Primghar St. Athony, Sunday, 8 a.m.
• Hartley St. Joseph, Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Milford
Rev. Brian Hughes
1305 Okoboji Ave.
712-338-2274

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Ruthven
Rev. Paul Kelly
1801 Rolling St.
712-852-3187

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Spencer
Rev. Kevin Richter
1111 Fourth Ave. W.
712-262-3047
• Saturday Service, 4:30 p.m.
• Sunday Service, 11 a.m.

Livestreamed at:
spencersacredheart.com/
onlinemass

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Trinity United Church of Christ, Hartley
140 N. Fifth Ave.
712-728-2889

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Spencer Family Church, Spencer
Rev. Larry Neiderhiser
905 Fifth St. SW
712-262-7298
spencerfamilychurch.org
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday Kid’s Church, 10:30 a.m.
• Wednesday Life Group, 7 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Spencer
1701 W. 11th St.
712-262-6172
• Sunday Sacrament Meeting, 10 a.m.
• Sunday School; Primary and Youth Meetings, 11:10 a.m.
• Sunday Men’s Priesthood Meeting and Women’s Relief Society, 12:10 p.m.

CONGREGATIONAL

Grace Congregational Church, Greenville
Rev. Tonna Parsons
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

EPISCOPAL

The Way Station, Spencer
Rev. Beth Preston
120 W. Fourth St.
712-580-5463
revbethpreston@gmail.com
• Sunday Service, 3 p.m.

St. Alban’s Episcopal Church, Spirit Lake
Rev. Carolyn Tuttle
23rd and Zenith
712-336-1117
• Sunday Mass/Eucharist, 10 a.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church, Storm Lake
Rev. Stacey Gerhart
121 W. Marina Road
712-202-6624
• Sunday Eucharist, 10 a.m.

EVANGELICAL FREE

Riverside Evangelical Free Church, Linn Grove
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Ignite: 6:30 p.m.
• Salt Youth: 7:15 p.m.

CrossWinds Church, Spencer
Campus Rev. Jordan Gowing
Rev. Dr. Kurt Trucksess
1900 Grand Ave, Suite A
712-584-3151
spencer@crosswinds.tv
• Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN

First Christian Church, Spencer
(Disciples of Christ)
Pastor Interim
915 Fourth Ave. SW
712-262-2945
• Sunday Service, 9:30 a.m.
In-House and Facebook Live
• Wednesday Kids Sunday School: 4:30 p.m.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

First Congregational Church, Peterson
712-295-7150
• Sunday Worship, 8:45 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10 a.m.

First Congregational Church, Spencer
Rev. Dr. Shazzy Britz
DCYM Katie Baltis
1212 First Ave. W.
712-262-4392
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Adult Sunday School, 9 a.m.
• Sunday School, 4 years old to fifth grade, 9:30 a.m.
• Adult Bible Study Tuesday, 10 a.m., Wednesday 7 p.m.
• Spencer Congo Youth Wednesday’s, Middle School, 6-7 p.m., High School, 7-8 p.m.
Livestream on YouTube
All are welcome

LUTHERAN

Hope Lutheran Church, Everly
Rev. Dan Taylor
206 N. Washington St.
712-834-2767
• Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
• Sunday School and Adult Education, 9 a.m.
Services livestreamed on YouTube at “Hope Lutheran Church — Everly, IA”

Lost Island Lutheran Church, Graettinger
Rev. Peter Morlock
• Sunday Service, 8:45 a.m.
• Fellowship, 9:45 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10 a.m.

St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran, Hartley
Rev. Christopher Nitzel
60 N. Central Ave.
712-728-2711
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
• Sunday School 10 a.m.
• Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.
• Confirmation, 11 a.m.
• Choir Practice, 11 a.m.

Harbor of Joy Lutheran Church, Milford
Rev. Tim Voth
1204 L Ave.
712-338-2355
• Sunday Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday School, 8:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

First Lutheran Church, Milford
1525 Three Cross Road
Rev. Perry Aalgard, Senior Pastor
Rev. Brian Jack, Associate Pastor
712-338-4514
3cross.org
• Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.
• Education/Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Royal
Rev. Dr. Mark F. Wilms
207 Church St.
712-933-2229
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Church, Ruthven
Rev. Eric Patten
• Sunday Service, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

First Lutheran Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. Tonna Parsons
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Bethany Lutheran Church-ELCA, Spencer
15 W. 14th St.
712-262-2327
bethluthspencer.com
• Worship, 9 a.m.

Christ the King Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael McGinley
500 Fourth Ave. SW
712-262-2244
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
• Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.
• Services on Facebook, 9 a.m.
Podcast released Sundays

Faith Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Ben Unseth
2912 Highway Blvd.
712-580-4316
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.
Services are streamed on YouTube
flcspencer.org

First English Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Paul Kaldahl
1311 E. 18th St.
712-262-5598
spencer-church.com
• Divine Worship, also broadcast on 1240 AM

and 102.5 FM, 8 a.m.
• Fellowship, 9 a.m.
• Child care in the nursery, 9:15 a.m. to Noon
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
• Bible Class, 9:40 a.m.
• Divine Worship, 10:45 a.m.
• Communion on first and third Sundays.
Services & Bible Class
livestreamed via website

Riverview Terrace Chapel, Spencer
1501 St. Luke Drive
712-262-5932
• Sunday Worship, 10:45 a.m.

St. Luke Home and Services, Spencer
Rev. Perry DeGroot
1301 St. Luke Drive
712-262-5931
• St. Luke Lutheran Home Worship, 10 a.m.
• Riverview Terrace Worship, 10:45 a.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Spencer
Rev. Renae Behrends
900 11th Ave. W.
712-262-1287
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

NONDENOMINATIONAL

Faith Community Church, Milford
805 Okoboji Ave.
Rev. Jennifer Hesebeck
faithcommunitymilford.com
fcc@milfordcomm.net
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

The New Light of the Lakes Friends Church, Okoboji
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Service, 10:30 a.m.
• Group Bible Study, 5 p.m.

Living Word Outreach Ministries, Spencer
Rev. Barb Dean, Lead Pastor
Rev. Mark Feauto, Associate Pastor
905 10th Ave SE
712-262-9545
livingwordspencer.org
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.
• Livestream also available on the website, Facebook and YouTube.

River’s Edge Church, Spencer
Rev. Tim B. Frasher
Pastor Joseph Leggett
701 E. 18th St.
712-580-3013
• Sunday School, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Spirit Life Fellowship, Spirit Lake
Rev. Eric Holdeman
2504 Enterprise Ave.
712-336-0114
• Sunday School, 9 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Maple Grove Church of God, Sutherland
Rev. Michael Hyde
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday School, 11 a.m.

PENTECOSTAL

Faith Pentecostal Church, Spencer
1700 11th Ave. SW
712-262-3368
fpcspencer.com
Rev. Brad Wallace
Rev. Dale Hodges
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Wednesday Bible Study, 6:30 p.m.

REFORMED

Good News Community Church, Okoboji
Rev. Brandon Morrow
1010 Julia St.
712-332-5698
• Sunday Worship Services, 9 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.
• Fellowship. 10:15 a.m.

Hope Church, Spencer
Pastor James Runcorn
919 Grand Ave.
712-262-3016
• Sunday Worship, 8:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m.
• Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Spencer
1910 10th Ave. E.
712-262-5766
• Saturday Sabbath School, 9:45 a.m.
• Saturday Worship, 11 a.m.

UNITED METHODIST

Calvary United Methodist Church, Arnolds Park
Rev. Chris St. Clair
209 N. Okoboji Grove Road
712-332-2447
• Saturday Worship, 6 p.m.
• Sunday Lakeshore Worship, 7:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Dickens United Methodist Church, Dickens
Rev. Donna Gray
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Everly
Rev. Michael Eeten
301 N. Ocheyedan
712-834-2501
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

Community United Methodist Church, Gillett Grove
Rev. Donna Gray
• Sunday Worship, 10:15 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Hartley
361 Eighth Ave.
712-928-2649
• Sunday Church School/Confirmation Classes, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship Service, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Langdon
Rev. Chris St. Clair
• Sunday in-house and Facebook Live Worship, 11 a.m.

First United Church, Sioux Rapids
Rev. Dr. Mike Currier
Rev. Karen Currier
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
Church of Christ, Spencer
Contact Jeff Cookinham
1304 St. Luke Drive
712-262-2294
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.
• Sunday Bible Study, 11:15 a.m.

First United Methodist Church, Peterson
Rev. Tyler Thomsen
103 E. Third St.
• Sunday Worship, 9:15 a.m.
• Sunday Fellowship, 10:15 a.m.
• Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

First United Methodist Church, Royal
Rev. John Battern
408 Church St.
712-933-2489
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Ruthven
Rev. Kathy Kluis
• Sunday Worship, 9 a.m.

First United Church, Sioux Rapids
• Sunday Worship, 10 a.m.

Grace United Methodist Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael Slininger
311 Second Ave. W.
712-262-5970
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

Zion United Methodist Church, Spencer
Rev. Michael Eeten
• Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
• Sunday Worship, 10:45 a.m.

United Methodist Church, Terril
Rev. Terry Luiken
302 S. State St.
712-853-6549
• Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Trinity United Methodist Church, Webb
Rev. Kari A. Etherington
• Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.
• Fellowship, 10:30 a.m.

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