

One in a *Ver*Million

Meet Rev. Rick Pittenger

By Travis Gulbrandson
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In his more than 25 years as a pastor, the Rev. Rick Pittenger has experienced many things. But the new leader of Vermillion's First United Methodist Church said the most memorable of these occurred at an outdoor service – a “Camp Sunday.” For Communion, bread and grapes were distributed. “I held the grapes and I had two Communion stewards on either side holding the bread,” Pittenger said. Parents would come through the line and carefully pluck one grape off the vine, and children would more often than not try to grab a handful, inadvertently squeezing them in the process. “It got to the end of the line, and there was a young

“Now, the parent in me wanted to say, ‘I’ve got enough grapes and she looked at me, and she said, ‘How many should I take?’”

woman I hadn’t seen in church before,” Pittenger remembered. “It was a 680-member church, so it was a pretty big church, but I pretty much knew (everyone) after three years.” The young woman did not take a grape when she reached the head of the line. “She had this panicked look on her face,” Pittenger said. “She looked at the grapes and she looked at me, and she said, ‘How many should I take?’ “Now, the parent in me wanted to say, ‘I’ve got enough grapes for one grape each,’ but the Holy

Spirit nudged me to say, ‘Take as many as you need.’ With that, she took two,” he said. Pittenger said he is not sure why she took only two. “Maybe she needed a little more to feel like she was a person a worth,” he said. “That’s my favorite story. I get goosebumps when I tell it. I can’t imagine what else I could have said that would have made her feel accepted.” Out of that experience Pittenger took a phrase he still uses. “All of us have those two-grape days,” he said.



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