

# KITCHEN COUNTER MUSINGS OF REV. MARK

July 13, 2025

I rarely take summer vacations. My wife, Lucretia, works with our son as a landscaper making it hard to get away from May to October. But a couple of years ago, I went, alone, to Sun Valley, Idaho where my high-school friend, Jeff, now lives.

The purpose was special. Jeff, my oldest friend, is Jewish and, since he was in high school, he has had a dream of building a temple to his faith. On July 16th of 2023 his dream came true. With Jeff spearheading the fundraising, design and construction, the Wood River Community Temple in Sun Valley was dedicated on that day. Jeff's temple is only the third temple dedicated in Idaho.

As president of the temple society, Jeff encouraged me to come to the dedication, (something he did not have to do). To "sweeten" the offer, Jeff put together a long list of adventures for my stay. Sun Valley was the first ski mountain in the United States, and is now, also, a mecca for fly fishing in the summer. So, we went fly fishing. And mountain biking, hiking, and skeet shooting. The views and vistas were majestic. I even went to a contemporary dance performance where I sat one row behind Mariel Hemingway, one of my first celebrity crushes!

Except for my waders filling with water, most of my time was a delight of "vacation" activities. Yet, by the Sunday of the dedication service, I was beginning to feel like someone who had just eaten their five favorite desserts, but nothing else that day. I needed something, well, "meaty."

On the day of the dedication, six times as many people showed up at the temple as on a normal Sabbath service. Not enough chairs were set up, no one had been assigned to pass out bulletins, the Episcopal priest from the church the temple had rented space from was running late and needed to be met. Who was going to take care of these details?

Me, it turns out. Any minister will tell you that they often also must be the coordinator at special services such as weddings and funerals. And now, in my case, temple dedications. It helps that being the usher, custodian and late guest greeter came naturally to me. By the end of the event, my efforts earned me a nickname from my newfound friends at the Wood River Jewish Center—Shabbos Goy! That's a loving term of endearment for a non-Jewish person who helps in a pinch.

And it was also my favorite part of the trip. My good deed, "mitzvah" in Yiddish, was the meat to the many desserts the trip offered. The Apostle Paul was equally a fan of mitzvahs. In Galatians 5:13, he wrote, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."

I hope all of you are well. Until we see each other again, may we continue to serve one another humbly in love!

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Mark