



Volume 29, Issue #2  
**February 2025**



# The Connexion

## On the Christian Journey... with Pastor Christopher

It has been quite a week. I'm still learning about connections that I have to those who perished in the flight from Wichita to DC. A classmate of my son's, several friends of friends. One couple from my home church had spent the last couple of weeks assisting with the ice-skating events held in Wichita and thus had gotten to know many of the skaters, families and coaches. Many who had been celebrating and thriving suddenly gone. As Christians, we know that suffering and death do not have the final word, yet events like this shake us. It seems sudden and senseless. A shift from the way things are supposed to be. I've also been involved, either directly in counseling and advocacy, or on the fringes of, several other conversations this week – about bearing witness and being brave. I know a number of people who are seeing their rights, their ability to make choices about themselves and their future stripped, controlled, and criminalized. People being scapegoated and victimized for being different or lacking some paperwork. These tragedies are not a sudden plane crash. They unfold slowly and deliberately, yet they can be just as

devastating to families and communities and I believe lead us away from Christ. It has been a heavy couple of weeks...

and I am called to speak and speak out – and to do so in a way that heals and helps rather than divides and diminishes. It is hard work. I often fall short. Yet this is the task of pastoral and prophetic ministry. Of discipleship.

Through all of this, I've been reading Luke 4. As I said in worship last week, Luke 4 – the story of Jesus' visit to his hometown synagogue is the assigned lectionary gospel reading, and while I often don't follow the lectionary, it is amazing to me how often this set of readings, chosen to share the story of Jesus and the story of the Church over a 3 year period through the annual liturgical cycle of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and 'ordinary times' winds up speaking precisely to the current moment.

Imagine a sermon proclaiming hope and urging mercy and connection

enraging an audience... these are the times we live in – and these stories of Scripture written two and three thousand years ago illustrate, inform, comfort, and challenge. As I am walking through these times, I was struck by the image of Jesus walking through the crowd. I don't think it's a miracle where he just "disappears." I think it's a process.

I envision people in the crowd who realize their anger is misplaced, that their actions are harmful. People who experience repentance and are not following the mob. They are confused but they realize throwing Jesus off the cliff is wrong... *(Continued on next page).*

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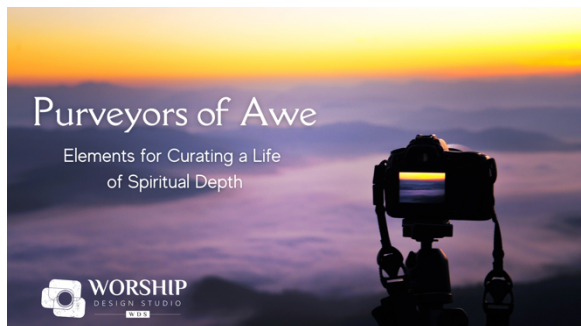
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## On the Christian Journey, continued.

that those stories about the foreigners - Naaman and the widow – are to teach. That maybe this man who read from Isaiah of reconciliation and hope is the way that happens. That their call is to join Jesus in making a way... Through these stories we learn how to let the Spirit fill our plans with purpose and our wounds with healing. Through February we will continue the Six Stone Jars series then in Lent we will do something a little different.



*Lent is about repentance and often we tend towards a heavy feeling. This year, sparked in large part by an the insight about people in the Luke 4 crowd above, we will instead look at ourselves as “Purveyors of Awe.” What if, instead of “fighting” for what we believe we sought to bring peace about it? It strikes me that this is what Jesus does – he does not capitulate or give in, but he also rarely escalates. He creates space for others to recognize and respond. We do need to repent – and some of that is from our own patterns of control and scapegoating. Marcia McFee writes: “I have come to believe that one of the most important things that spiritual leaders and communities can do is promote the idea and experience of awe to the wider community—to those who will never walk through the doors of the church. We can make the world a better place, not only by inviting people into the church community, not only by programs that alleviate suffering (and all that is right and good), but also by inviting people to be simply and deeply well. Awe and its elements have a role in that wellbeing and spiritual leaders can create events and opportunities for the greater community to experience this.” We will journey through lent seeking to become deeply devoted disciples of Christ who point others to the wonder of our creator, redeemer, and sustainer.*

### Upcoming KOMB Radio Schedule:

A recording of our services will run every other week at 1pm on 103.9 (or occasionally 98.3 if there's a Chiefs or Royals game conflict).



Our upcoming dates are:

February 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>

March 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>

April 6<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>

May 11<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>

June 8<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

July 6<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>

August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>

September 14<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

October 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>

November 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>

December 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>

**Tell a Friend!**

I look forward to walking these paths with you here in Fort Scott.  
~Pastor Christopher

### ARTICLES NEEDED FOR MARCH/APRIL NEWSLETTERS!

What is your Sunday School class, activity group, or community organizations you are a part of planning for these months? Our church newsletter is a way to let other church members know! Both to invite them, and perhaps more importantly, **to equip all of us to help engage our visitors and neighbors.** Please have an article to [pastor@firstumcfortscott.org](mailto:pastor@firstumcfortscott.org) by about the 21<sup>st</sup> of each month. Thank you!



### SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT – MARCH DEADLINE

Graduating High School seniors and current college students (undergraduates only) who are active at First UMC and interested in completing a Memorials Scholarship application should contact the office to receive an application, which will be posted in early January. The deadline for completing and returning these applications to the church office will be March 1. Memorials committee will then consider applications at a subsequent meeting.

## Training Opportunities for Laity

### Laity Summit – February, 23, 2025 from 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

This is an annual training and community building event aimed at church laity. We have the opportunity to host a “watch party” for the Great Plains Conference on Saturday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Pastor Christopher would like to know who is interested and available.



Laity Summit is a virtual gathering space where we come together to hear about ministry opportunities and collaborations. As a watch party, a group also comes together

in the local church to collaborate and share the experience. Laity Summit is a one-stop connection point to lean in, to grow together, and to prepare our local mission fields for Kingdom Impact across the Great Plains. This virtual event is designed for laity from all churches large or small, rural or urban communities, and established or emerging leaders.

If you are interested, contact the office to sign up and Pastor will handle the registration and set up the watch party. If we have a core group here we will also extend an invitation to nearby United Methodist congregations to join in.

### Schedule

- **1:30 pm Central Welcome** - Bishop Wilson, Conference Lay Leader Lisa Maupin, and Jeff Clinger, Director of Congregational Excellence and Connectional Ministries
- **2:40 pm Central - Breakout Session #1**
- *3:35 pm Central - Break*
- **3:40 pm Central - Breakout Session #2**
- **4:30 pm Central - Closing with Communion**

### Breakout Session Topics

- Living in a Cooperative Parish
- Hospitality / Evangelism
- Clergy / Lay Partnership
- Creative Connections in the Community for Ministry (Mercy & Justice)
- Leadership Lab Youth Group



BeADisciple.com has provided quality online educational experiences with roots in Wesleyan theology since 2006. We offer online studies, workshops and courses on a variety of ministry, formation and leadership topics. All of our courses offer CEU credits. Our goal is to make rich learning experiences accessible to church leaders and laity, no matter their location or life situation.

BeADisciple.com is one of several programs of the [Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship](https://www.institutefordiscipleship.org) at Southwestern College, a United Methodist institution in Winfield, Kansas.

To learn about all of the Institute's ministries, visit [www.institutefordiscipleship.org](https://www.institutefordiscipleship.org)



## UWFaith UPDATES



## United Women in Faith

Our next meeting will be February 13<sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm in the Parlor. This will be a planning meeting for our March events.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of March is our baked potato lunch at 11:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Once again it will be a free will offering, since it is our one fund raising event. We have had great attendance and appreciate the support.

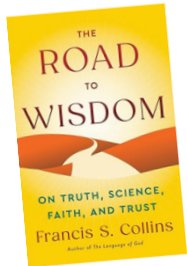
On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the Spring district meeting will be held. District officers of United Women in Faith oversee the meeting with approximately fifty women in attendance. We have the refreshments start at 9:00am. The meeting will be held in the Sanctuary, and it will start at 9:30. Pastor Christopher plans to attend and preside at communion for the gathering.

**All women in the community are invited to come to United Women in Faith meetings.** We are an ecumenical group. For more information visit [www.uwfaith.org](http://www.uwfaith.org). United Women in Faith 2025 program resource is entitled "Carrying Our Faith Forward," the adult curriculum is "Practicing Hope," and the daily prayer guide is "Generations of Grace." There is also a 2025 reading list we encourage all members to explore!

Thank you and if any questions, please call, text or email. Debra Wood, President (620) 215-3407 email: [dollywood.2019@gmail.com](mailto:dollywood.2019@gmail.com)

**Save Best Choice Labels for United Women in Faith!**

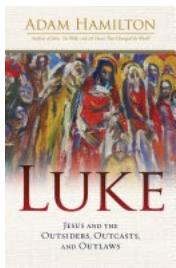
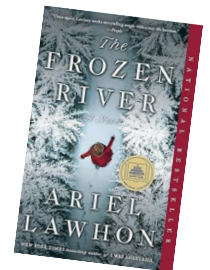
You can leave them in the glass jars by the entrances each week.  
**Thank you!**



### Wednesday Reading Group ~Dorothy Kivett

As we begin February we are discussing The Road to Wisdom by Francis S. Collins. Linda Hessong will be leading the discussion

Next up will be The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon. The ladies Reading/Discussion Group meetings Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. in the library.



### Faith Builders in February

In February, we continue our discussion of "Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws," a multimedia study by Adam Hamilton. Luke tells us of Jesus's care and compassion for all as he welcomes sinners, outcasts, and the lowly. As we discuss Luke, we see Jesus's concern for those who were considered unimportant, and we hear a hopeful and inspiring word for our lives today. Our study of Luke will continue through February and into March when we will begin our Lenten study. We hope you will join us in fellowship and discussion. ~Ron Wood

## WEATHER POLICY



When school is in session, the office generally closes if USD 234 cancels. Groups can make their own call, but we encourage this as a standard. Worship will rarely be canceled unless Pastor cannot make it safely from the parsonage. Ice, rather than snow, would likely drive such decisions. As always, you are encouraged to use your own best judgment.

Updates will be emailed out using our Mailchimp service and posted to our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/firstumcfortscott> For most users,

that can be checked online even without a Facebook account (Sundays and any cancellations that do NOT match USD 234 will also be called into KOMB 103.5)



The annual "Love Thy Neighbor" day at the Kansas Statehouse is coming up on Tuesday, February 4, in Topeka. We hope to see you there!

Last year we had more than 100 advocates join us to meet with lawmakers show their support for Medicaid expansion. **This year's event is more important than ever because we will continue to advocate for Medicaid expansion, but also work to make sure that the Medicaid program continues to be available to those who rely on it for their health care.**

**RSVP to join us February 4 for "Love Thy Neighbor" Day at the Kansas Statehouse**

<https://expandkancare.com/event/love-thy-neighbor-2025/?>

**WHAT:** "Love Thy Neighbor" Day at the Kansas Statehouse

**WHEN:** Tuesday, February 4, 10:00am - 2:00pm

**WHERE:** Meet at Grace Episcopal Cathedral, 701 SW 8th Ave., Topeka, KS 66603

**DETAILS:** Lunch will be provided, as well as a shuttle service to the Statehouse (just a few blocks away). The first 50 registrants will also receive a free t-shirt!

We will provide information for you to take to your legislator about the importance of protecting Medicaid and expanding access to Kansans in the coverage gap. We also encourage participants to schedule a meeting with their legislators ahead of time.



**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS:** Virginia Myers -1, Betty Galan- 1, Connie McKee -3, Jasmine (Davis) Bradley-4, Jim Covey-5, Wyatt Tourtillott -7, James Lipscomb- 7, Noah Allshouse-8, Alex Ward-8, Austin Ward-9, Trina Arndt- 9, David Shepherd- 12, Stephanie Johnson- 12, Janice Patterson- 13, Charlotte Potter-15, Suziee Barlet-16, Xaviar Fowler-22, Cindy Hiatt-26, John Bloesser-27, Peggy Bloesser-28.

**ANNIVERSARIES** - No February Anniversaries in our database.

**Note** we inadvertently left off Daniel and Cindy Valdez's anniversary last month, which was January 20<sup>th</sup>.



## Bereavement Support Group

Mount Carmel Hospice offers a monthly support group for those experiencing loss, called Grief Unveiled. This group is free and open to the public.

For more information, call 620-264-6550.

### GROUP DATES

6:00 pm

2322 S. Main St., Fort Scott

*Use Apothecare Pharmacy Door  
(northeast door)*

January 16

February 13

March 13

April 17

May 15

June 12

July 17

August 14

September 11

October 9

November 1

December 11



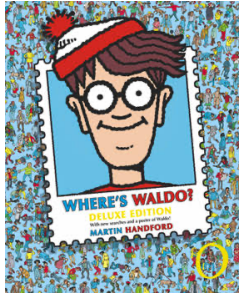
*Mount Carmel Hospice*

A JOURNEY OF COMFORT AND COMPASSION

Mount Carmel Hospice is a service of Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas.



## PASTOR TRAVEL



February 4-7 Pastor Christopher will be in Denver for the 2<sup>nd</sup> in-person cohort of his Center for Pastoral Effectiveness track. One of the requirements for clergy in the Great Plains Conference is continuing education. This life-long learning is twofold: spiritual formation and professional development. **Spiritual formation** is the intentional pursuit of the nourishment and renewal of one's relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the use of spiritual disciplines. **Professional development** is the intentional growth of professional identity, and the skills utilized in ministry that will enhance the effectiveness and excellence of the clergyperson. Beginning last year, I am currently addressing both of these aspects through participation in Track 1 of the *Center*

*for Pastoral Effectiveness of the Rockies* with an ecumenical group of fellow clergy. This is a series of 6 in-person retreats and various other check-ins that will incorporate elements of both Spiritual Formation and Professional Development over 140 contact hours. With an ecumenical group of clergy, I am doing some deep work on understanding "family systems" and ways to overcome stubborn emotional barriers and facilitate change, focusing primarily on ourselves as the only person we can really change. This is not vacation time but a deliberate attempt to improve as a person and a pastor.

Then in March, Pastor Christopher and Robin will take some real vacation time. Departing March 1<sup>st</sup> and leading up to their anniversary on March 7<sup>th</sup>, they will travel to Florida to see both their boys coach, including a game against each other when Dordt, where Ian is now Head Coach plays Southeastern University (Lakeland, FL) where Aaron is now a graduate assistant. After they get back Pastor will take a few more days and attend a "**Roots for Your Soul**" clergy retreat offered by the Great Plains Conference for a time of rest and reflection. He will be back in the office March 13.

A pastoral care contact has not yet been determined but will be announced as the dates get closer.

## WORSHIP WHILE PASTOR TRAVELS



On Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> is Transfiguration Sunday. The season of Epiphany comes to an end as we approach Lent. Our guest preacher will be a seminary classmate of Pastor Christopher's. Rev. Emily Stirewalt works with the SilverLink program at Church of the Resurrection in Leawood providing pastoral care to residents of care homes and assisted living situations and she will share on the story of the Transfiguration and what it means to her.

On Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, we will hold an Ash Wednesday service here at First UMC. While Pastor will be out of state, laity from our congregation will share readings, scripture, music, and the imposition of ashes to begin our Lenten journey. Often Lent, and Ash Wednesday in particular, is seen as a heavy time. As we begin the sermon series "Purveyors of Awe" this service will help us name and encounter the beauty of our finite lives and Christ's presence. Repentance is not about beating ourselves up, but embracing the wholeness and beauty God offers in times of both light, and darkness; mountaintops and valleys. Mark your calendar!



Then on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, our Southeast Kansas District Lay Leader Nancy Richwine will be here to share the message. This is the first Sunday in Lent but it is not yet determined if Nancy will share part of the Lenten series or share a message of her own – either way she has an abundance of faith, hope, joy, and life experiences to share and Pastor has enjoyed getting to know Nancy as they both serve on the District Committee on Ministry.

# Black History Month Celebration

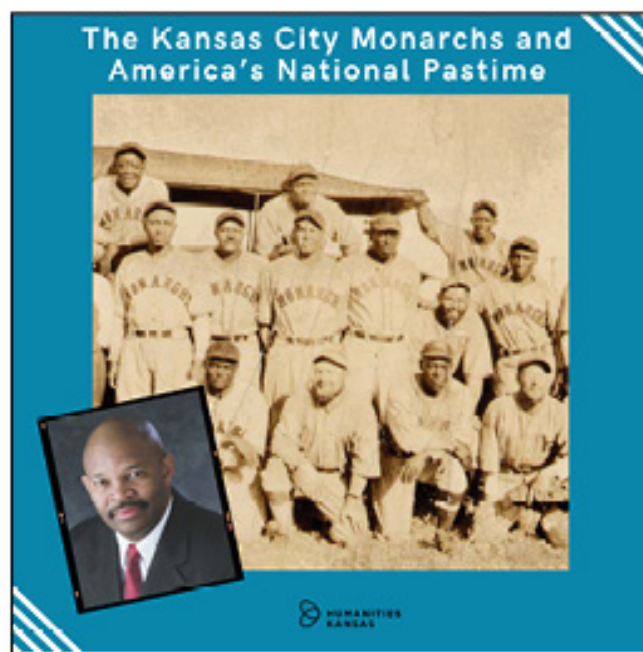
## Lunch & Learn

**"The Kansas City Monarchs  
and America's National  
Pastime"**

**Wed, February 12, 2025  
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Ellis Fine Arts Center  
2108 S. Horton St.  
Fort Scott, KS**



**Join us for the  
Fort Scott T-Mobile Raffle Drawing  
and get a chance to win amazing  
T-Mobile prizes!**



**FREE EVENT  
Bring your lunch  
Drinks, chips and desserts  
will be provided!!**

2020 marked two major milestones for baseball: the Negro Leagues celebrated their 100th anniversary and Major League Baseball merged statistics of these African American players with those of the major league. The history of Negro League baseball in America mirrors the racial strife experienced by African Americans in society. It was plagued by discrimination, racism, and inequity, while its athletes were celebrated for their resiliency, professionalism, and athleticism. The Kansas City Monarchs barnstormed across Kansas and the region to play more than 400 games between 1920 and 1957 against local towns. This talk sheds new light on this sports history and the history of baseball in Kansas.

Phil S. Dixon a co-founder of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. He is the author of nine books about baseball, including biographies about Wilber "Bullet" Rogan and John "Buck" O'Neil. In the course of his research, he has interviewed over 500 former Negro League players and family members.

"The Kansas City Monarchs and America's National Pastime" is part of Humanities Kansas's Speakers Bureau, featuring humanities-based presentations designed to share stories that inspire, spark conversations that inform, and generate insights that strengthen civic engagement.

**For more information about "The Kansas City Monarchs" contact the Gordon Parks Museum at (620) 223-2700 ext. 5850 or visit <http://www.gordonparkscenter.org/>.**





**Pastor Christopher is sharing this Open Letter from Faith and Order,  
a part of the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church**



**Committee on Faith and Order**

**The United Methodist Church**

**Bishop David A. Bard, Chairperson**

1011 Northcrest Road • Lansing, MI 48906-1262 [bishop@michiganumc.org](mailto:bishop@michiganumc.org)

January 26, 2025

Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde  
Washington National Cathedral  
3101 Wisconsin Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Bishop Budde,

Grace and peace to you from God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Committee on Faith and Order of The United Methodist Church is a resource for our denomination that provides “a venue and context for ongoing conversation on matters of faith, doctrine, order and discipline” (Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, ¶1445.1). We gathered this weekend to engage in our work and in some of our discussion reflected on the theological conversation happening in the United States at this time, including your sermon at the National Cathedral on January 21.

Your sermon sought to ground national unity in honoring the inherent dignity of all, in honest conversation and in humility. Because you ended your sermon asking the newly elected U.S. President to have mercy on frightened and vulnerable persons, you have been the recipient of vitriol and threats to your well-being. A resolution has even been introduced in the House of Representatives condemning your sermon. At the same time, many voices have risen to support you and we join those voices.

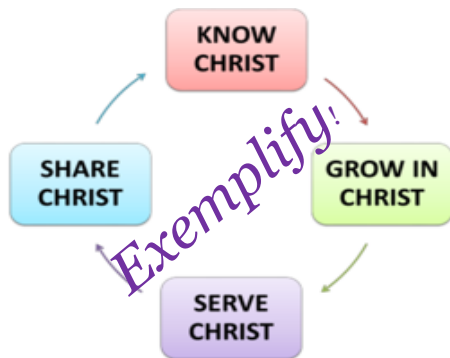
In The United Methodist Church we encourage our bishops to live out “a prophetic commitment for the transformation of the Church and the world.” We say, “the role of the bishop is to be a prophetic voice for justice in a suffering and conflicted world” (The Book of Discipline ¶1403.1.d). We believe this is in keeping with the prophetic tradition of Amos who encouraged us to “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream” and Micah who told us that what the Lord requires is justice, kindness and humility before God. We believe this is in keeping with the ministry of Jesus who took special care for the least. We witnessed such episcopal leadership in you this week. You inspired and encouraged us. As a committee we found your sermon profoundly rooted in the prophetic tradition of our shared Christian faith, while being delivered with gentleness and respect. We are pleased to call you a friend in Christ and offer our prayers.

Grace and Peace,

*David A Bard*

Bishop David A. Bard for The United Methodist Committee on Faith and Order

Cc: Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, President of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church



**Our Mission is:** to share the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to *exemplify* the love of God by *knowing* Christ, *growing* in Christ, *serving* Christ and *sharing* Christ.

*First UMC offers Sunday School gatherings for all ages at 9:30am each Sunday prior to our 10:30am Worship service. We also gather in service and fellowship throughout the week – this newsletter has information about ways you can connect!*

*Thanks for checking it out!*

First United Methodist Church  
301 S National  
Fort Scott, KS 66701-1397

Return Service Requested

*Here is your FEBRUARY 2025  
Newsletter from:*



Visit us online:  
[www.firstumcfsks.org](http://www.firstumcfsks.org)  
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YouTube, Instagram