



# The Connexion

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

Today I begin year 3 of my appointment to Fort Scott! As I reflect on the past two years, I am grateful. I have not, by a long shot, been the perfect Pastor. There are decisions, statements, and missed opportunities that I regret – but overall I think our time together so far has been very fruitful. Together we are discerning and responding to where God is calling and leading us!

This year’s VBS theme was “*Ready, Set, MOVE! Follow Jesus here, there and everywhere!*” I have been reflecting on that as I enjoyed a remarkably uplifting Annual Conference, then a wonderful, if sometimes difficult, ASP mission trip, and then time with friends and away with Robin on vacation. These experiences

helped me deepen and renew connections, as well as step outside of my comfort zone and use my gifts and creativity in different ways. The first half of our vacation was a watercolor painting retreat with friends from Pretty Prairie. I’m definitely not a skilled painter, but my brushwork and technique are improving and I’ve been motivated to return to my dabbling with iconography again soon. “Writing” icons is a prayer practice from the Eastern Orthodox tradition which uses egg tempera and pigment rather than watercolor, but shares many brush techniques. Prior to this year’s vacation, the last time I was in New Mexico was for a workshop where I began learning about iconography, but I haven’t done any of that since moving here. I think it is time to reconnect with the practice!

One of the last things we did on vacation was visit one of my favorite places on earth – Puye Mesa. Sacred ancestral land of the Santa Clara Pueblo people, yet abandoned since 1600 - I have had the privilege to walk here 3 times now. Each trip has been unique and given me deeper insight into their journey as well as my own. I have reflected on how important it is to remember and honor the past without being confined by it. To be willing to change, even radically, to follow where the Spirit is leading. As we begin year 3 of this partnership in the mission field of Fort Scott, KS, as is always true, we have before us both challenges and opportunities. We do not have all the answers or even all of the questions, but we have our particular insight and understandings. We have gifts and we have a call to share God’s grace and love. I’m excited for all that is happening here at First United Methodist Church and for all those who make the activities and events possible. Together, we are the body of Christ! Blessings on your journey!



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**We were Introduced to the new Bishop**

Bishop David Wilson is the first Native American in the world to serve as a bishop. Evidence of his faith and upbringing were shared through the opening worship and his message. He led the conference with compassion and humor. During his message he stated: “My friends, in this room alone is a great wealth of talented and gifted people. However, there is also a wealth of talents and gifts that is going unused for the kingdom of God not just in this room but across the Great Plains Conference.”

**Clay in the hands of our creator – this year’s theme**

Throughout the conference a potter’s wheel was at the front of the stage with Wanda Jackson of Centering Souls Retreat, Parksville, Missouri molding and shaping clay. Isaiah 64:8 – Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.



The evening session, a service of commemoration and holy communion, included an intentional time of lament. Recognizing the losses of Covid, disaffiliations and our personal losses. Recognizing a time of dissonance while realizing God’s faithful presence in all circumstances. 156 churches disaffiliated this year, 10 churches closed, 750 UMC churches remain, and there are already 3 new launch churches. We lamented lost things, symbolically releasing pain, and demonstrating humility as one who desires to be molded by God by receiving a clay tile created by the potter. We were asked to write a word representing our lament on the back of the tile and to pray over our lament.

Lament tiles were then gathered on Thursday and the potter remade them into a UMC Cross and Flame sculpture which will hang in the conference office. As the pieces symbolically expressed our lament, the remade pieces into the cross and flame represent our unity. As Rev. Adam Hamilton stated in his delegation report, “God has a way of working through division.”

**The conference was filled with hope, encouragement, and lots of reports.**

I was reminded of the interconnectedness of our denomination and the global reach of our ministry. We heard reports from camping, campus ministries, circuit clergy, disaster relief, diversity, equity, and inclusivity. Health, well-being of clergy and laity, UMM, UW in Faith, Global Ministries, Youth Leadership Lab and more...Reinforcing, **we are stronger together than we are apart.** Conference Lay Leader, Lisa Maupin, shared the vital role of laity. She compared it to planting a garden without seeing the results. Lisa reminded us of the Bishop’s words, “Laity has great wealth, talents and gifts of the spirit that are being unused for God’s work. We need to change that.” She asked, are you excited about serving God? God is calling us, you, me... Are we listening? Are we willing to deploy?



**2050.** Jeff Clinger, Congregational Excellence Director led a conversation about the church in 2050. It seems far away, 27 years to be exact. Twenty-seven years ago, it was 1996. Most of us remember 1996. The oldest church in the Great Plains Conference is 180 years old, the newest church today is 3 weeks old. He said, “To be clear, I have no crystal ball, but there are some things we can know. 2050 will be here before we know it, and the question for us is, are we just going to wake up in 2050 and go, ‘Oh my gosh’ here we are. We need to be intentional.” In small groups we discussed: What is our hope for the church of 2050? How do we equip, connect and make disciples of Christ? How do we include all people, social justice, and community involvement? How do we ensure we have a church where everyone can be loved and be safe?



## ***Laity Report, continued:***

### **Youth Service**

The youth service was dynamic, challenging and inspiring. 18-year-old Zander Seth, president of the Conference Council on Youth asked, “Are we ready for the next steps? The United Methodist Church, emphasis on United, needs to be a safe house of God for all the people of God. Be welcoming, inclusive and empowering of our youth now and into 2050.”

### **Business**

The business portion of the annual conference began with a special session May 31 (via zoom). During that session we addressed pre-conference business items, heard the proposed budget, and voted on disaffiliations and closures. Approved 655 / 29.



Business during the conference – June 7-9 included the following:

- Approved formation of a district boundaries committee
- Approved the budget
- Voted to **not** extend the time period for disaffiliation
- Approved resolution to support the creation of a regional conference which would encompass the United States as a separate entity.
- Approved a resolution to increase racial diversity on conference committees, cabinet, etc. equal to or above the minority percentage in the conference.
- Approved a “Building Bridges” resolution to pledge support and guidance for refugees entering the country.

### **Ordination service**

A record number, 54 persons, were recognized for commissioning and ordination on Friday evening.

24 were ordained and 26 commissioned as provisional members including former First UMC intern Spenser Johnson!

### **Hope and encouragement: Throughout the conference I heard many quotes that were meaningful to me)**

- No person should ever be invisible in our church.
- It is up to us to contribute to the lives of others.
- Every soul is a cherished soul.
- We meet God in our encounters with other people. Do they meet God when they encounter us?



It was my honor to represent Fort Scott United Methodist Church as your lay member to annual conference. I was a little overwhelmed and unsure what to expect. I left not only feeling hopeful for the future of our conference but also inspired.

~Jan Hedges, Lay Leader and Lay Member to Annual Conference



**Absolute Country,  
Definitely Gospel**

**Faith's Journey!  
In concert at First UMC**

**Branson's 2021 Gospel Show and  
Group of the Year  
will be here at  
Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup> at 6pm!**

*A Freewill offering will be  
collected for the band.*

**Gifts of the Spirit**

Linda McGee, our summer intern, has been busy working with Fort Scott First UMC members to explore their Gifts of the Spirit. Several sessions have helped members identify such gifts as Healing, Faith, Prophecy and even Working Miracles! The sessions have been both fun and insightful. If you would like to schedule a one-hour session for a Sunday School class or other group, or even a personal one-on-one session with Linda, please text or call her at: 704-369-9403. She will be available throughout the month of July.



**Grief Workshop**

Have you or a loved one experienced deep grief? Perhaps you have lost a spouse or family member, suffered through the breakup of a relationship, struggled with the loss of health, or even the death of a beloved pet. Grief touches all of us, but the process of grieving, and the time it takes, differs for every person. You are invited to an informal workshop about grief, where Linda will share ways to help ourselves and our loved ones through this difficult process.



We will meet on **Monday July 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am** in the First UMC Library for about an hour. Linda is also available for personal one-on-one conversations. Please text or call her at: 704-369-9403.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

August 4<sup>th</sup> will be our next Shepherd's Center event. Focused on retired adults, we are growing a recurring program to counteract the negative effects of loneliness and isolation by connecting older adults to empowering programs that foster friendships.

As she wraps up her time with us, Linda McGee will be our keynote and we are working to again have a gardening expert and to introduce chair yoga as an activity. Your input of topics you'd like to see at this and future sessions is requested.





**July Birthdays:** 1-Barbara Gibson, 2-Tayton Majors, 3-Betty Rudick, 7-William Bishop, Jackie Warren, 8-Jerry Elliott, Ken Rienbolt, 9-Nancy Swanwick, Ken Engle, 10-Nic Engle, Melissa Tatro, 11-Nick Magee, 12-Rose Evans, Nathan Magee, Becky Tourtillott, 14-Paige Denton, Melvin Foster, 15-Ken Anderson, 16-Jessica Majors, 17-Tracy Altic, Dylan Hazelbaker, 20-Liam Denning, Gary Cullor, 21-Jan Hedges, John McFall, Susan Regan, 22-Eli Wolf, 23-Charlene Sipe, 26-Kori Page Greaves, 27-Donna Hughes, 28-Morgan Felt, Taliya Wolf, 29-Gladene Reavis,



**July Anniversaries:** 12-Bryan & Cindy Foxx, 16-Ron & Jane Williams, 17-Robert & Jamie Christuski, 20-Larry & Charlotte Swaim, 21 Travis & Jessica Majors, Kelly & Jennifer Slinkard, 26-Reed & Patricia Hartford, 27-Pat & Betty Galan, 30-Saun & Hillary Berry Grant, Allen & Dee Ann Davis.



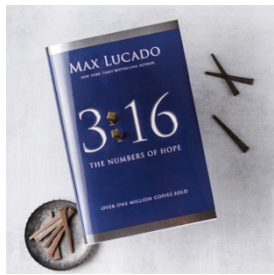
**Happy 320<sup>th</sup> Birthday, John Wesley (1703 – 1791)**

Birthdays are good times for reflection. On June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, we remembered John Wesley’s 320<sup>th</sup> birthday. John Wesley is generally considered the founder of the Methodist movement, a branch of Protestant Christianity with expressions worldwide, including the United Methodist Church.

To support members of his church classes, Wesley developed the following 22 Questions for Self-Examination. How amazing that these questions are still relevant three centuries later, whether our work is global, local, or somewhere in between! If this list seems overwhelming, take the “22 in 22” challenge: try focusing on just one question per day for the next 22 days. Pause. Center-down. Reflect. And come away refreshed and inspired. Source: [John Wesley's 22 questions of self examination \(umc.org\)](http://www.umc.org)

**John Wesley’s 22 Questions of Self-Examination**

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?



### Faith Builders in July

We will spend the first two Sundays in July completing the study, “A New Reformation,” a multi-media program by Rob Fuquay. Then we will begin a five-week study, “John 3:16,” with Max Lucado. Max takes us on a journey to study this one sentence, softly spoken nearly two-thousand years ago, and is as relevant today as when it was first uttered. We hope you will join us in discussion and fellowship. **You are invited! 9:30am Sundays ~Ron Wood**

### United Women in Faith (UWF) News

We will next meet on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 in the Parlor with a program presented by our own Pastor Christopher Eshelman. As we begin year 3 of his appointment here, he will share a bit more about his own journey and practices like labyrinth walking and iconography that help him along his path as an invitation to go deeper into practices of worship and service that assist each of us. Invite a friend!



## United Women in Faith

### If you change phone numbers, addresses or email – please notify the Church Office!

Please help us keep in touch by updating your records frequently – we are still missing lots of cell phone numbers, for example. Do we have yours?

If you are getting emails from us at an address you don't want them – please reply with “Remove from List” and we will do so immediately.



If you *aren't* getting weekly updates, but would like to - email Zandra in the office at [secretary@firstumcfsks.org](mailto:secretary@firstumcfsks.org) and ask to be added to our distribution list. **Thank you!**

### Upcoming KMDO 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:

- July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>
- August 23<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>
- September 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>
- October 8<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>
- November 5<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>
- December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>

**Tell a Friend!**



### Who Reads the Newsletter?

The first three (3) people who contact Pastor Christopher with the code words “Charles Wesley” will get to pick a hymn for a July worship service. Share the code word in person, by emailing [pastor@firstumcfsks.org](mailto:pastor@firstumcfsks.org) or by calling (316) 833-4974 to pick your favorite hymn! (and no, the hymn you pick does not have to be by Charles Wesley – but he did write a few good ones ☺)



## ASP Mission Trip Follow Up.

When we celebrated ASP Sunday, several of the crew talked about the difficulty of not being able to say goodbye to our homeowners due to some medical issues and of leaving projects unfinished, but learning to trust in the connection to other parts of the body of Christ who would continue the work. Pastor Christopher and Lee also shared about the meaningful experience of hanging the homeowners prized painted sawblade back up so that it would continue to symbolize “home and family” for them. We have received pictures from the family and subsequent work teams of the continuing progress at the “Yard Goats” site. God is good!



## Native American Ministries Sunday – July 23rd

**UNITED METHODIST SPECIAL SUNDAY**  
PLEASE GIVE

**NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY**  
Your generous gift today educates Native American seminarians and empowers Native American outreach.

**THE REV. ROY HILBURN, NATIVE AMERICAN SEMINARY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT**

Please make check payable to your local church or donate online at [www.umc.org/give/NAMS](http://www.umc.org/give/NAMS).

This offering supports the development and strengthening of Native American ministries in the annual conferences, Native American rural, urban, reservation ministries, and communities relating to the General Board of Global Ministries. This offering provides scholarships for Native Americans attending United Methodist schools of theology and it is distributed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministries and The General Board of Global Ministries with 50% remaining in the annual conference for the Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) to administer.

***Pastor Christopher moved our celebration of Native American Ministries to July to connect it with a special event here in Fort Scott and we will have a special guest speaker, Courtney Fowler, former Great Plains Conference Lay Leader, who will share some of her story and information about our Conference work with Native American Congregations and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.***

## A Community Event You Won't Want to Miss!

Wahzhazhe brings to life the rich history of the Osage Nation in a stunningly beautiful stage performance using traditional drumming, costumes, and contemporary dance.

The Friends of Fort Scott National Historic Site in partnership with the National Park Service invite you to a special performance of Wahzhazhe: An Osage Ballet. There are three performances:

July 21 @ 7:30 pm,  
and July 22 at 3 pm and 7:30 pm  
at the Danny and Willa Ellis Family Arts Center at FSCC. For tickets, scan the QR code or visit:  
<https://friendsoffsnhs.ticketspice.com/wahzhazhe>.

JOIN US FOR THREE SPECIAL PERFORMANCES OF  
**WAHZHAZHE**  
AN OSAGE BALLET

*History come to life*

Friends of Fort Scott NHS  
July 21 and 22, 2023

Danny and Willa Ellis Family Fine Arts Center  
2108 Horton St. Fort Scott, KS 66701

[WWW.OSAGEBALLET.ORG](http://WWW.OSAGEBALLET.ORG)

PHOTO CREDIT: OWEN HUTCHESON/THE FAIRFAX CHIEF

## Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup> – Men's Breakfast

We are restarting men's breakfasts with a gathering on Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup> before our regular morning events. Join us at 8:30am for biscuits and gravy and good conversation! All men are invited – bring a friend!



## Are you interested in becoming a member of First United Methodist Church?



We have been blessed by many new friends in worship recently and we have several people who are ready to formally join our congregation. Pastor Christopher would like to schedule a time to meet so newer folks can meet and get to know each other and clarify our vows of membership then set a time to join.

Please contact Pastor Christopher to let him know where you are on your journey of faith!

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

Return Service Requested

*Here is your July 2023  
Newsletter from:*



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