

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Volume 30, Issue #1
January 2026

The *Connexion*

On the Christian Journey... with Pastor Christopher

The holidays are over. The routines return and the new year often feels much like the old. This can be a heavy season. Even as they slowly begin to lengthen, the short days and long, dark nights weigh heavily with the festive lights taken down and the decorations put away. In this darkness, many people suffer from some sort of anxiety or depression disorder, often called S.A.D. or Seasonal Affective Disorder. If you do not, chances are you are close to someone who does. Seasonal Affective Disorder happens when a lack of sunlight affects our moods and ability to cope effectively. Spiritual Affective Disorder can also be a condition when we've had prolonged stress and life is disturbingly uncertain. Sound familiar?

I assure you, feeling afraid, uncertain, down, and depressed is no sin. It doesn't mean you are separated from God. In fact, our disease may be a recognition that the world is dis-ordered and that things aren't right. This is where the prophets begin, after all – and there is an entire book of the Bible called Lamentations! We are not alone.



Life can be serious business. Certainly, watching the daily news can give the impression that there is little good to find in the world. Yet God so loves the world! God sees the good and calls us toward it. On Epiphany, we read the story of Herod's treachery, but his fearsome violence could not stop hope. Darkness does not overcome light. Perfect love casts out fear. There is another way. We are called to a different path, to go "home by another way."

As we begin a new sermon series in these weeks between Epiphany and Lent, I am struggling to find words, to be constructive, to see and listen for where God is leading – and I am thankful that I am not walking the path alone. During this sermon series, we will acknowledge the full range of our emotions and be reminded that God understands what it is to be human. To be tempted. To laugh. To cry. To be angry. To hope. In the coming weeks, we will begin to look at spiritual practices to get us out of the "bleak mid-winter" blues and into the light of our lives. While not a replacement for medical resources or counseling to address and alleviate depression, we will shine a light on the 'blahs' and see how experiencing the everyday activities of our lives as blessing—as filled with God's radiance – can offer us a chance to be filled with the Light in whom we believe. We affirm that the very act of "arising" each day is a gift from God. Blessings on your journey.

~Pastor Christopher

A look at 2025 Events – by Bonnie Milburn

HOCROC stands for: Hospitality, Community Relations, and Outreach Committee

Looking back on 2025. Your HOCROC committee did some fun things. We started the year off with a fund raiser for heating and air conditioning, sold cinnamon rolls on Super Bowl Sunday and raised 900.00. We also did Valentines bags for our shut ins. **Note: we'll do that again, details will be in the bulletin on Jan. 18th**

March 30 was our first carry in dinner of the year with 28 attending, enjoyed by all.

April 19, our small group met in the kitchen, where we laughed and shared good time make resurrection rolls for everyone attending Easter service.

May 11, we gave a carnation to every lady there for Mother's Day.

June 15, we had service in Fellowship Hall and celebrated Father's Day (*and our ASP Mission Team*) with a brunch that 70 attended.

July 6, we had church service at Gunn Park Shelter #3, followed by a carry in dinner, which was well attended!

What better time than August for our good old fashioned ice cream social. My head was spinning from so many flavors.

September was the men's fish fry, and we stepped up once again to help. There were a lot of fish, shrimp , hush puppies, and fried potatoes consumed that evening!

October 12, we sponsored the "Second String Quartet" in the Sanctuary in the afternoon. They performed as a fundraiser and donated all the proceeds (\$1110 all told) to Feeding Families! This event was well attended by the community.

We held our annual soup luncheon on the 24th of October and raised \$401.01 for our programming. Then came Trunk or Treat, several of our members showed up with decorated cars, a few in costumes. Nov. 9 was another well attended carry in dinner after church

Dec. started out with the Nativity Showcase, we had almost 100 Nativities, and well over 100 visitors from the community and even out of town. We are glad to be a part of Christmas on the Bricks!

For Christmas this year we decided to adopt a few people in nursing homes. We settled on the 5 residents of Hillside Guest Home. We went first to visit with them, to find out some things they may want. With lists in hand we WENT SHOPPING!!!! The gifts, given on behalf of First UMC, were deeply appreciated!

Finally we hosted a brunch in Fellowship Hall during our Dec. 28 service and several of us have been involved in hosting the FSCC Basketball teams for meals during the semester break.

We are already planning some great things for 2026, hope all will try to attend.

Your HOCROC Team: Bonnie (chair), Susan(secretary) Linda, Joyce, Pat, Peggy, Suzie, Don, and Debra



OLD FORT GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY HAS A NEW HOME!

*This message is coming to you from Susan Karleskint,
President of Old Fort Genealogical Society.*

After months of problems, our doors will open January 12th!



Our new location is 2801 S. Horton in the Professional Building (Location of the previous Western Insurance across from the hospital).

Our beginning hours will be 9:30am to 3:00pm five days a week. We are excited about our new building. It has the look of a library and has tremendous amounts of space for visitors to spread out and do research.



We are also in need of volunteers. We are just asking a few people to give 1/2 day per week. You would not be asked to do research work unless you choose to do so. Come out and take a look at our new location!

FAITH BUILDERS IN JANUARY

In January we will complete our study of "On the Way to Bethlehem" and begin the multimedia study "The Twelve Apostles." These ordinary men were chosen by Jesus to bring God's plan to the world. We will see these men help bring changes in ways that would reverberate across time for two thousand years. Come join us in fellowship. ~Ron Wood



United Women in Faith

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.

If you have questions, please call, text or email. Debra Wood, President (620) 215-3407 email: dollywood.2019@gmail.com

Our meeting dates for 2026 will be:

February 12, March 13, June 11, August 13, September – TBD, October 8 , December 10

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

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



FIRST UMC SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT –

MARCH 1 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 a copy. The deadline for completing and returning these applications to the church office will be March 1.



IF YOU DON'T WANT CHURCH TO FEEL ROUTINE...

- Pray before you go.
- Worship on the drive there.
- Get there early.
- Invite someone.
- Bring your Bible.
- Take notes.
- Talk to people.
- Sing out loud.
- Join a team and serve.
- Apply the message to your week.

SEASONS

Submitted by Kathy Probis

The Wednesday Writer's group have published a book entitled "Seasons". Twelve of our members contributed poetry and short stories about the seasons. One member did the artwork while another donated her time to edit the limited-edition book.



Debbie Ford, Pat Hartford and I are each included in this book. Books are available at Hedgehog, Ink! Bookstore, as well as the Chamber of Commerce. Also, the Fort Scott Library will have copies to check out and one has been donated to the First UMC Church Library!

ARTICLES NEEDED FOR FEBRUARY / 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!**

and I'll be candid, folks...

I ran that same "articles needed" blurb last January and have shared similar requests every month from the pulpit, in email, and here. We usually get maybe 2-3 submitted articles a month, and a maybe couple vague suggestions for topics. That's maybe 1 to 2 pages. I would very much like to hand making the Newsletter off to Kristin – but right now I create over 90% of the content.

Do you want a monthly Church newsletter in this format? Is this valuable? Are you reading it?

I appreciate everyone who has regularly shared info and even just ideas – but what is really needed is more ready to publish material. Because we get so little, I can't hand this task off to Kristin and several times over the past year, I have almost just not created one. I find the deadline stressful and frustrating because I am scrambling to work up almost everything published. I did skip October of 2024, and folks rallied to supply material... once. Then it dropped off again. So... something needs to change.

What has kept me at it for the past year is that a couple of you take copies to shut-ins and it becomes a reason to visit – but we could create such reasons in many ways. So, I need some feedback – and we need your participation! Or, if this format has run its course and is not valuable, that's OK! – If that's the case, then let's end this and figure out better ways to communicate what's happening at Fort Scott First UMC!

Deadline for a possible February edition will be Monday, January 26th - but earlier is better!

Weather Policy: January through March are the most likely times we'll need this, so a reminder. In case of snow - during the week, we follow the USD 234 school district – if they close for weather, we close the office and most events here will be cancelled – check with group leader if unsure.

Sundays are more complicated – generally we will *not* cancel for snow or cold, unless it is so bad Pastor can't make it from the Parsonage (*in which case few others would try*)! However, ice could cause a cancellation, in which case we will announce the closure via a MailChimp email blast, a Facebook post and by calling the radio station. As always, use your best judgement and be safe. ~Pastor Christopher





January Birthdays & Anniversaries:

Bonnie Milburn-8, Joey Beerbower-9, Gayla Croan-11, Maureen Dunshee-11, Susan Karleskint-13, Doug Barlet-17, Pat Harry-19, Cindy Valdez-21, Madalynn Miner-25, Dave Wood-27, Lora Mason-30, Kelley Tucker-30.

Anniversaries:

Edward and Elizabeth Braun-13, Daniel and Cindy Valdez- 20, Mike and Susan Carnes- 28

**Gordon Parks Museum
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Day of Service:**

"Canned & Non-Perishable Food Drive"

**Monday, Jan. 19th, 2025
Gordon Parks Museum
2108 S. Horton St.
Fort Scott, KS**



**"The time is always right
to do what is right."
- Martin Luther King Jr.**

Join us in collecting canned and non-perishable (non-expired) food items for the Beacon Food Pantry in Fort Scott, KS. Suggested donations include:

Canned corn
Canned peas
Canned greenbeans
Canned pork-n-beans
Canned carrots
Macaroni & cheese
Peanut butter
SpaghettiOs
Cereal
Oatmeal
Rice
Soup



Tuna
Ramen noodles (chicken or beef)
Jiffy mix
Instant potatoes
Spaghetti & pasta sauce
Pancake mix & syrup

Other Items:
Toilet paper
Laundry soap
Dish soap
Bar soap

Donations will be collected at the museum from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 19th, 2025.

***We cannot accept items past their expiration date**

Let's make it a GREAT DAY of SERVICE!

For more information please contact the Gordon Parks Museum at
620-223-2700 ext. 5850 or gordonparkscenter@fortscott.edu.

The Dockum Drugstore Sit-In



HUMANITIES
KANSAS

Lunch & Learn: The Dockum Drugstore Sit-In

January 19th | 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Fort Scott Community College

Join us for a powerful Lunch & Learn presentation, "The Dockum Drugstore Sit-In," presented by Dr. Prisca Barnes, founder of Storytime Village, Inc., a Wichita-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting reading among low-income children and families.

In 1958, Black students in Wichita peacefully organized and staged a sit-in at the Dockum Drugstore lunch counter after being denied access to movie theaters and restaurants. Over three weeks, their nonviolent protest helped challenge segregation and advance racial equity. This talk will explore what happened, how the sit-in concluded, its lasting impact on race relations in Wichita, and how similar protests helped shape the broader Civil Rights Movement in America.

Free Lunch Provided

Enjoy free gumbo soup, drinks, and dessert (attendees are also welcome to bring their own lunch).

Photo opportunity with "I Stand For" signs provided by the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes.
This event is **FREE** and open to the public. Join us for food, learning, and meaningful conversation.

For 23 Years, First UMC has sent a team to ASP – here is what we are a part of! Thanks for your support!

ASP Appalachia SERVICE PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT

Summer 2025

Harlan (Bell) County, KY

11 families served (45 people in total)

72 repair projects completed

458 volunteers

16,030 hours of service

\$557,684 in donated volunteer labor

families in **2** counties were served with home repair (1 state)

ASP Service Area

240 families served (533 people in total)

1,314 repair projects completed

7,378 volunteers

258,230 hours of service

\$9M in donated volunteer labor

families in **21** counties were served with home repair (5 states)




PROJECT DESCRIPTION	HARLAN (BELL) COUNTY, KY	ASP SERVICE AREA
Basic utilities repaired/replaced (plumbing, electrical, septic, well)	4	51
Ceilings/walls repaired	7	183
Doors/windows installed	6	108
Drainage ditches/retaining walls	1	14
Fascia/soffit/guttering	3	29
Floors repaired	12	276
Foundations repaired	1	18
Insulation installed	10	89
Interior/exterior paint	0	119
Porches/steps/ramps	7	178
Roofs repaired/installed	6	92
Room additions completed (bedroom or bathroom)	4	8
Siding repaired/installed	6	62
Underpinning installed	2	27
Total # projects completed	72	1,314









SAVE THE DATE: Local church leadership

Laity Training set for Jan. 20-22

The Great Plains Conference has announced its annual Local Church Leadership Training, scheduled for 7-8:30 p.m on Jan. 20-22. The three-night virtual event will offer focused training for leaders serving on Administrative Boards/Church Councils, Finance Committees, Staff-Parish Relations Committees (SPRC), Boards of Trustees, Lay Leadership/Nominations, and churches using a One-Board/Simplified Structure model.



Conference leaders are encouraging congregations to host local watch parties, noting that gathering leadership teams in the same room promotes collaboration, shared learning, and a stronger sense of purpose for the year ahead. Churches have increasingly used this model, and organizers hope even more congregations will participate together this year.

The event is especially recommended for first-time committee members, who will receive clear guidance about their roles and responsibilities as they begin serving in 2026. Returning leaders, pastors, and anyone seeking a deeper understanding of local church structure are also invited to attend.

Let Pastor Christopher know if you are interested in participating!

LEGACY GIVING

If you are interested in leaving a legacy gift for First United Methodist Church and other charitable causes you support, planning is essential. One resource is the Kansas Methodist Foundation and my friend Rev. Dustin Petz. Here is a opportunity to learn more!

JOIN US FOR

Putting Your House in Order



A three-part series covering:

1. **Estate Planning**
2. **Legacy Giving**
3. **Memorial Planning**

Each hour-long session provides useful information and needed resources to guide you in putting your plans in place. Sessions held via Zoom.

Provide for your spouse and children. **Create** a legacy. **Give** direction to your successors. **Deliver** peace of mind to you and your loved ones.

BONUS! People who complete the program will have **\$500** deposited into their legacy fund at the KMF!



Register today for upcoming sessions!

Sessions will be held via Zoom.

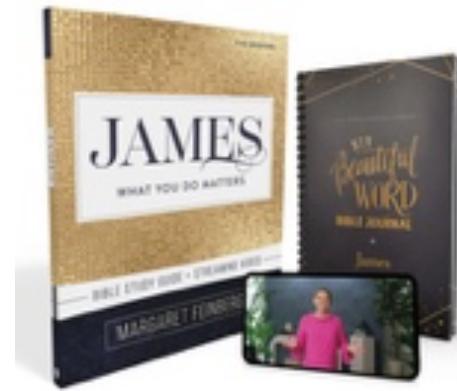
For questions, please contact Tyler Curtis at tyler@kansasmethodistfoundation.org.

NEW BIBLE STUDY - JAMES

Join Pastor Christopher and videos from beloved author Margaret Feinberg to explore the book of James. Attributed to the brother of Jesus, this was one of John Wesley's favorite books of the Bible, known for teaching that "faith without works is dead." Contact the office to sign up!

We'll explore this epistle over several weeks beginning Thur., Jan. 29 at 6pm then meeting roughly every other week through February and March.

Requested donation will be \$15 with scholarships available as needed. I look forward to studying James with you! ~*Pastor Christopher*



NOTE – effective 12/31/25 we have ceased broadcasting our service on the radio every other week due to a lack of feedback versus the significant expense. We continue to stream live to our Facebook page and repost the service to YouTube each Sunday afternoon for those who would like to "listen in."

Visit our website: www.firstumcfortscott.org and click "Online Worship" to easily connect to those streams.

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

Return Service Requested

*Here is your JANUARY 2025
Newsletter from:*



Visit us online:

www.firstumcfortscott.org

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