

Volume 27, Issue #3

April 2023



The Connexion

On the Christian Journey... with Pastor Christopher

Have you been looking for a sign? You may have noticed we have one again!



It was a long journey from the destruction of the old letterboard and limestone sign by a drunk driver last May to the completion of our new digital sign last week. I am thankful for the Trustees, our work crew, for our contractors: Darren Crays from Designing Edge Graphics,

Max Fanning of Romax Electric and Joe Tourtillott, who did the stonework; as well as Dick Hedges memorial and other benefactors who provided the amount above the insurance settlement to complete our project.

The "roof" top was recovered from the original and extensively refurbished, with our new logo lit by efficient LED lights replacing the older cross and flame that was damaged. I am delighted with how that roof now points to the historic building cornerstone that was kind of hidden from sight before. **The new sign, like all we do, should point our neighbors to the cornerstone that is Jesus, the Christ.**

I've been asked why we are adding things that "aren't our own" to the sign. First, I firmly believe all that we have, including this sign, is given to us by God as a blessing with which we are to bless others. I also believe God is working beyond our own walls. That's the Wesleyan theological reason we'd promote other's events on our sign. There is also a practical reason. Social and psychological research demonstrates that people tune out information they don't think applies to them. So, for those not already a part of our church, if we only promote ourselves, they'll quickly tune the sign out. The best marketing and social media advice says that promoting others generates both goodwill and interest, making our own messages and invitations more likely to be noticed and positively received. So, welcoming FSCC Rodeo visitors, promoting community items and charitable projects, and highlighting Fort Scott Chamber partner's events makes all the things we promote that *are* "about us" more effective!

We do, of course, need to have clear boundaries that guide how we'll use the sign and Trustees will continue to clarify those. We will normally have 4-6 slides looping, with 1 or 2 of them, maximum, being about other groups. I've also been asked and, yes, we will also begin adding back some of the encouraging sayings and Bible verses that the old letterboard was known for – if you have a suggestion, let me know!

And there will be a LOT of things happening at First that the new digital sign will help us invite people to! This newsletter has just a few of them – and watch for lots more in the May and June newsletters too!

As always, I am blessed and grateful to be here in Fort Scott and on the journey with you!

~Pastor Christopher



**Maundy Thursday
April 6
Good Friday
April 7**

Join us at 7pm each night for special services that take us deeper in to the story of Christ's passion and prepare us to truly experience and share the light of Easter!

Giving Generously & Leaving a Legacy – Special Presentation 2pm, Sunday, April 16th



On April 16th, the Sunday after Easter, Pastor Christopher will join in leading worship here with Rev. Dr. Dustin Petz, and then at 2pm afternoon there will be a special program with our Network partners and other local congregations. Please plan to join us and feel free to invite friends from other local congregations or organizations that might find this information helpful to them.

In his presentation, Giving Generously & Leaving a Legacy, he will focus on giving now and estate planning. Petz will share ways to maximize your giving during life (via IRA and other means) and provide considerations for charitable giving through estate planning to support the church and leave a lasting legacy.



Rev. Petz is the current President and CEO of the Kansas Methodist Foundation and has been appointed there as his ministry setting for the Great Plains Conference since 2018. He is passionate about helping individuals and families be good stewards of the resources God entrusted them. Dustin also has a desire

to see churches, agencies, and institutions invest their resources in socially responsible ways. In his role, Dustin helps individuals, churches, and related organizations activate their ministry potential in their community. *He serves on the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church as Chair of the Fiduciary, Foundation, and Property Matters Committee and the Investment Committee. Dustin is a graduate of Kansas State University with a Bachelor of Science, Agribusiness. He received a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Saint Paul School of Theology, a Master of Theology (Th.M.) from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) from Wesley Theological Seminary.*

Healthy Congregations Retreat in Manhattan - April 25/26

Our congregation and community have been blessed by the Healthy Congregations program of the Great Plains Annual Conference.

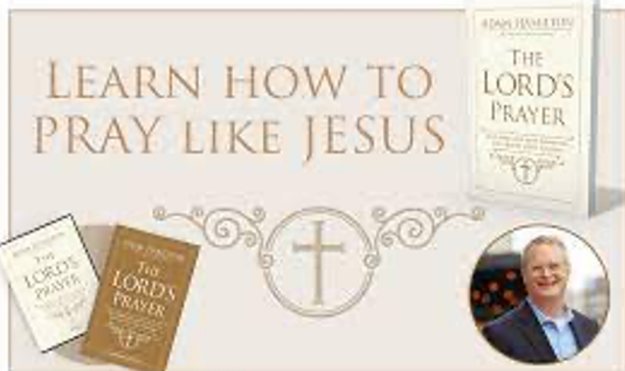
To date, we have received 2 annual grants, totaling \$2000, for us to spend on projects that improve the social, physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the congregation and community. So far, we have used those funds to add benches and a sign to the labyrinth project at

3rd and Crawford and launch our Shepherd's Center / Adventures in Learning program focused on building fellowship and lifelong learning for retired adults.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, April 25th and 26th, you are invited to join Pastor Christopher at a Healthy Congregations retreat in Manhattan, Kansas to learn about new opportunities and prayerfully brainstorm other ways we might benefit from these grants and programs. The meals and hotel night are paid for by the conference, we just have to register and get there. We do need to reserve our spot and hotel by Thursday, April 6th – so if you are interested (you do not need to have previously been involved) – let us know!



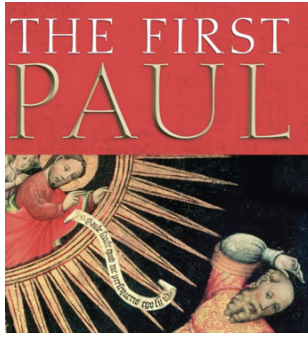
9:30am Sundays - Faith Builders in April – You are invited!



On Palm Sunday, we will be finishing our discussion of a video “The Gospel of John.” On Easter Sunday, we’ll be discussing a Seder meal. Then we will begin reviewing and discussing an Adam Hamilton DVD study of “The Lord’s Prayer.” This discussion will last six weeks, and will be another one of Adam’s excellent studies. This will start April 16 and any of these days would be a good time to join us! We invite you to become part of our group as we continue our walk with Christ. We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Please come join us in fellowship and discussion. The group meets at 9:30am in the classroom near the mini-parlor next to the sanctuary.

Short Term Study Groups led by Pastor Christopher begin in 3rd week in April!

A seminary friend once told me that his devout, go to church 2 and 3 times a week and read the Bible every single day grandmother would NOT read Paul. "Because he endorsed slavery... and didn't like women."



Is that true?

Paul is a complex figure, both loved and despised for generations. Over half the texts of the New Testament are either attributed to him or are about his encounter on the road to Damascus, transformation, and subsequent church planting journeys.

How could the letters of Paul be used both to inspire and proclaim radical grace... and to endorse systems of oppression? What are we to make of the apparent conflicting emphases of these texts?

In one of my favorite books, "The First Paul," Marcus Borg and Dom Crossan consider the reasons for Paul's mixed reputation and give an accessible approach to the best of recent biblical and historical scholarship. We will use their book and a United Methodist approach to Scripture to consider who Paul was, what Paul believed, and how that message found in the letters attributed to him may have been shaped by the changes in the early decades of the church. Most importantly, we'll reflect on how all that informs our life "in Christ" today. The books are \$11 – I've ordered 15 copies that will be here in early April, and we can get more as needed. Advance readings will be forthcoming and then the study groups will meet on Monday mornings at 10am, beginning April 17th OR Thursday evenings at 6pm, beginning April 20th (*I am asking for a minimum of 3-4 committed members per group*). I'm excited to share this study with you. I hope you'll join one of these sessions as we learn more about Paul's journey, and our own. Sign up at the back table in the sanctuary or call or email the church office to reserve your book and spot!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL in JUNE!

We have again been invited to participate in a community Vacation Bible School with our friends at First Presbyterian. It will be Monday, June 26th through Friday, June 30th. We are tentatively planning to again do a joint VBS celebration Sunday, which would be held here at First UMC on Sunday, July 2nd! We will need lots of volunteers, food donations and other help to make this a successful week – please mark it on your calendar and watch for more details in the May and June newsletters!

Remember to Save Best Choice Labels for United Women in Faith! you can leave them in the glass jars by each entrance each week. Thank you!



Upcoming Special Offerings

United Methodist Student Day May 7th, 2023

The United Methodist Student Day offering provides for over 70 scholarships available for United Methodist students to further their education and enrich the life of the Church. The Gift of Hope Scholarship is administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. One hundred percent of the offering received goes to this scholarship fund.



Native American Ministries Sunday



– Local Date to Be Determined, Seeking a possible connection with FSNHS

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.



CASA needs volunteers to advocate for kids in Bourbon County. Court Appointed Special Advocates® (CASA) are community volunteers, just like you, who stand up and speak out to help abused and neglected children courtrooms and communities. Scan the QR code for more information and share it with others!



INTRODUCING LINDA MCGEE, M.A. – a “summer field experience intern” who will be with us from about May 4th to August 8th. After a career in corporate risk management, Linda felt a calling to become a therapist and she is currently a licensed marriage and family therapist with an established practice in Florida.



During the pandemic, she started an accredited Ph.D. in Counseling and Psychological Studies with Regent University in Virginia. She is nearly finished with that, with plans to graduate in Summer 2024. *She also happens to own and spend summers on her family’s historic farm about 25 minutes northeast of Fort Scott, which happily leads her to working with us this summer to complete her doctoral program’s supervised field experience requirements.*

Linda and Pastor Christopher have visited several times and he has formally agreed to serve as her field experience supervisor as she helps First UMC with all sorts of projects. *Linda will volunteer between 15 and 20 hours a week in May, June, and July.* We note she is not (yet) licensed as a therapist in Missouri and Kansas as Florida does not have a reciprocity agreement here, but she will be able to appropriately offer short-term “Christian counseling” drawing on her strengths and experience, if you would find that helpful.

She writes: “Through my own 60-ish years of life experience, I have helped clients work through difficult issues, many of which I have also faced, including grief, anxiety, and life-changing transitions (such as retirement, divorce, relocation, and illness). Here is the summary of our proposal to her program supervisor. *“Overall, provide competent services to support the Pastoral and Leadership Teams at First United Methodist Church of Fort Scott, Kansas, especially through development and delivery of community outreach efforts aligned with the First UMC Church mission. Maintain regular office hours to support congregational pastoral counseling needs, especially when Pastor Eshelman is out of town. Volunteer with Feeding Families weekly meal distribution at the church. Support other church activities as requested by Pastor Eshelman that support the work of the Church and the goals of the Field Experience. A personal goal for me will be to understand whether my retirement career might include a part-time role in the Church or with Shepherd’s Centers, and where my strengths and abilities might fit organizationally to contribute to the work of the Church.”*

I am thrilled to work with Linda this summer and am confident she will be a blessing to First UMC and we to her. This really feels like the Spirit working among us!– *Pastor Christopher*



April Birthdays: 2-Lynn Chaney, Nicolas Norris, Griffin Swain, 3-Alyssa Popp, 4-Douglas Barlet, 6-Rose Stoughton. 9-Kyistin Bishop, 1-Tom Coyan, 13-Magne Norris, 16- Connor Harry, 19-Leslie Reynolds, 19-Darren Tucker, 20-Lee Culbertson, Koda Ballou, 23-Annie Temple, Kyle Altic, 24-Robert Christuski, 25-Miles Allshouse, Lindon Bishop, 30-Craig Sharp

April Anniversary: 26-Tom and Marlene Braker.



United Women in Faith

A big thank you to all who helped with and participated in the Potato Bar and Pie fundraiser for United Women in Faith. We especially want to thank Dorothy Kivett for organizing the event and baking all the potatoes. We had a good turn out and great fellowship. Funds raised will be used to finance local UWF projects.

At our February meeting, Carol Majors led the program titled, “Drawing your Circle Wider.” This theme has been reiterated in the past few weeks by Pastor Christopher during Sunday morning services. How wide is your circle, will you draw your circle wider? Being a part of UWF encourages us to continue to learn, embrace and draw our circle wider.

United Women in Faith, a global organization, offers a wide variety of resources. Check out www.uwfaith.com and sign up to receive regular updates on the focus projects of UWF. The following is a quote from one of the resources, Thrive: “*Thrive is your resource for inspiring ideas to nurture your mind, body, and spirit. Spring is a perfect time to look for new growth and find fresh connections all around.*”



“Gifts of the Spirit: Equipped for Every Good Work” Our Next Sermon Series.

Through Lent, we have been talking about “leaning towards the light” that is Christ and “soaking in the presence” of God. Drawing from resources from UM Discipleship Ministries, between Easter and Pentecost, we are going to take a look at ourselves – as individuals and as a congregation, to discern how we have been equipped and where the Spirit is leading us now. In John 14, Jesus promises his Disciples that the “Advocate” and the “Spirit of Truth” will be with them. In making that promise, he says “*Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in will do greater works than these.*” This is true because of who Jesus is. Jesus’ ministry is not over – it is ongoing, and we are called to participate in it – to exemplify Christ in all we do, individually and together. The Gospels are not merely stories of things that happened long ago, but a guide to how we live now. The Book of Acts records the work of the early church in experiencing, receiving, learning from, and sharing this Spirit. The Epistles help us wrestle with who we are and how we are to live as followers of Christ, in Christ, as the body of Christ, the church. We, too, live in uncertain times when the way forward is not clear. We have different opinions and understandings, gifts, and vocations – and yet we are called together to be First United Methodist Church in Fort Scott, Kansas in 2023. We are called to a vital, active faith, lived for the common good in these days.

I preach often on the “Fruit of the Spirit” – “Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control.” That list, from Galatians 5, is core to my journey. A guide. A measuring rod. Equally important are the gifts we are given to be and become the body of Christ. There are a variety of gifts and different ways of listing them, but we will focus on this group: *Wisdom, Knowledge, Administration, Apostleship, Shepherding, Faith, Miracles, Prophecy, Leadership, Giving, Compassion, Healing, Discernment, Teaching, Helping/Assistance, Evangelism, Servanthood, Exhortation, Tongues, and Interpretation of Tongues.* Look that list over. Barbara Miller, one of the authors of “Equipped for Every Good Work” writes: “They are not talents, abilities, roles, or functions, but expressions of the power of the Holy Spirit, given by God, and the authority to use that power in building up of the body of Christ—fulfilling our mission—doing God’s will in the way that is best suited to who we are as unique and beloved individuals joined in community.” Where in this list do you see yourself? Which ones seem challenging to you? Have you been told you have one or more of these gifts? How do you see these gifts working together to form the church? As we move from Easter towards Pentecost, we’ll explore these gifts and how they are working together among us, as the Spirit leads. I look forward to sharing this series with you as we take the next steps of our faith journey together!

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:

- Apr. 9th & 23rd
- May 7th & 21st
- June 4th & 18th
- July 2nd, 16th & 30th
- August 23rd & 27th
- September 10th & 24th
- October 8th & 22nd

**If you change phone numbers, addresses or email
- please notify the Church Office!**

It's amazing how quickly our contact information
becomes outdated! 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 and ask to be added to
our distribution list. **Thank you!**



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

Return Service Requested

Here is your April 2023
Newsletter from:



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