

# The Connexion



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

We have a lot of wonderful things coming up!



Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup> will be this year's "Commitment Sunday" where we ask our members, and others who are willing, to fill out a pledge card to help us construct a responsible, realistic, and missional budget for 2024. This is also the day we will announce which section – the floor

or the balcony – wins the Mr. Potato Head trophy for their (average per person) support of Feeding Families. As I write we haven't even reached the deadline and Bonnie and I are already blown away by your support. Thank you! After the service on the 12<sup>th</sup>, we'll join in a Celebration Potluck Bring your favorite entre, side, or desert and enjoy fellowship after our Commitment Sunday service,

Then Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup> we celebrate Thanksgiving Sunday together before we move into the season of Advent on Sunday, November 26<sup>th</sup>. That day, after the service we will have our annual hanging of the greens where volunteers stay after and put up all our favorite decorations for the season. Then Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> is the Christmas Parade and Dec. 1&2 is Christmas on the Bricks and our Nativity Showcase!

### **Real Candles on Christmas Eve Will Bring Comfort**



**and Joy!** I am so looking forward to singing Silent Night as we pass the light with real candles again this Christmas and I thank the Trustees for working to make that once a year exception arrangement with our insurance company to enable us to do so.

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> falls on a Sunday this year and we will have both our normal Sunday morning worship with a concluding Advent theme at 10:30am and then our traditional Candlelight and Communion Christmas Eve service that night at 7pm.



### **Hosting Kiwanis Chili Feed TUESDAY, Nov, 7<sup>th</sup>**



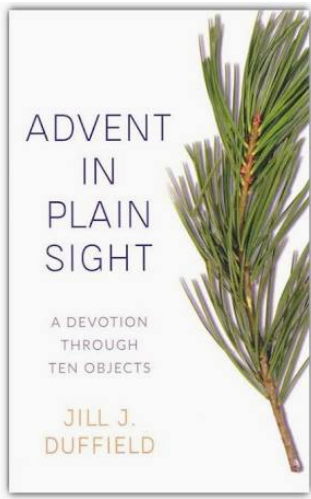
The Pioneer Kiwanis 35<sup>th</sup> annual Chili Feed will be on Tuesday, November 7 as a drive through under the portico. A meal of the Pioneers' signature chili with crackers and a homemade cinnamon roll will be served from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. for a free will donation (suggested minimum \$8.00 donation per meal) to be collected at the door. Deliveries will be available for orders of ten or more by calling 620-224-0563 during serving hours.

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**Join us at the Christmas Parade!  
6pm Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, to kick  
off "Christmas on the Bricks"**

**We need people to ride and wave and  
walk along to hand out candy and  
pinwheels in this annual tradition!**



As we move towards the Comfort and Joy of Christmas, our Advent themes will be drawn from the book “Advent in Plain Sight” by Jill J. Duffield. God came into our ordinary world in the form of a child, and still today, God is at work through the ordinary stuff of life, if we train our eyes to see. We will follow the book in focusing on several ordinary objects – such as gates, trees, cloth, light, and water – objects that appear in the biblical narratives of messianic prophesy and incarnation—and that we encounter in our own daily lives, reminding Christians that God still dwells among us, even in the most ordinary places.

***Be a part of our  
1<sup>st</sup> Annual  
NATIVITY  
SHOWCASE  
December 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>***



**Yes! I would like to enter a nativity set for the showcase!**

*Disclaimer: By registering, I indicate that I understand First United Methodist Church will have volunteers present and that the doors will be locked when the showcase is closed, but that they cannot be liable for loss or damages that may occur.*

**Please return your registration to 301 S. National  
or email [pastor@firstumcfortscott.org](mailto:pastor@firstumcfortscott.org) with all of the information below.  
Registration Deadline is 2pm, Wednesday, November 15th, 2023**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share a brief description of your nativity set, (materials, source, etc.) including the approximate size of your set needed for display purposes.

Is there a particular story about the nativity or reason it is meaningful to you that you would like to share with others? Feel free to add an additional sheet as needed.

**Registration forms due by November 15, 2022.**

Registrants need to make arrangements to do setup and teardown of their sets at some point during the designated times, but do not need to be present during the showcase hours.

<i>Set-up</i>	<i>10:00-3:00</i>	<i>Friday, December 1</i>
<i>Showcase</i>	<i>5:00-8:00</i>	<i>Friday, December 1</i>
<i>Showcase</i>	<i>10:00-2:00</i>	<i>Saturday, December 2</i>
<i>Tear Down</i>	<i>2:00-4:00</i>	<i>Saturday, December 2</i>

## ***Step Up to Tithing – Some More Thoughts on Stewardship***

I sometimes find it a bit difficult to talk about money and giving. Some of that is that I personally struggled with it for a long time. Another part is that much of the church budget goes to pay the pastor – and so I'm basically fundraising my own pay. Awkward! But a few years ago, I read a pamphlet by one of my favorite theologians, Henri Nouwen. It was called "the Spirituality of Fundraising." He wrote that such campaigns are: "a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission." Our mission at First UMC is about exemplifying Christ – telling the story of his birth, life, suffering, death, and resurrection, not only with words, but with how we live out our lives. We are committed to following Christ and inviting others to know, grow, serve and share!



Recently we've been blessed to have several new members and even more new constituents become actively involved – people who have seen who we are and want to become a part of it! It's exciting!

I believe in our mission and our congregation, and I am passionate about inviting you and others to take the next step on your journey – and part of that is how to share your monetary gifts. When I was first getting serious about my faith as a United Methodist and beginning to respond to (rather than avoid) a call to ministry, my pastor, Rev. Gayla Rapp, shared a chart similar to the "Step Up to Tithing" chart I sent our members (a copy is on the next page).

I found it helpful. I found it challenging. I found it a bit convicting – but not in a way that led to guilt or dread, rather one that led to seeing possibilities and becoming proactive about planning to give rather than giving what was left over. It took me deeper. I want to emphasize that this is not about guilt or what you "should" do – this is about opportunity and response. What you give is between you and God, and every stage of life is different, with different obligations and opportunities. Perhaps I shouldn't admit this, but Robin and I have never (yet) tithed our income. We have tithed some windfalls, but not yet our annual income. It is still a goal of ours – but not a lived reality. And yes, I have engaged in great debates about whether tithing is pre-tax or post-tax, if it counts other giving, etc. etc. Here's the thing – I don't care! Seriously. I, as your pastor, Do. Not. Care. how you answer those questions. You do you. Just pay attention to how the energy is being used – are you seeking to grow in faithful response - or are you rationalizing and hedging. Robin and I are at about 6% of our income total, given here and elsewhere. A bit more if you include seminary student loan payments. I did for a while, but decided to stop – mainly because I felt like I was trying too hard to make a claim to impress others, instead of faithfully responding to God. My goal is still to hit and then exceed 10% and we will, one day, get there. Not out of obligation, but out of joy and thanks.

The average church member in the US gives about 2.5%. Think of all we and our sister churches do with that amount – how God takes our little and makes a lot happen! Then imagine what we might do if the average was 3.5% or 5% or 10% or beyond! Might we do things "Greater Than..." I think we just might! I think Jesus promises we will. I think God is eagerly awaiting that day. Using the chart, I encourage to look at where you are now by whatever criteria you think is right, and then explore what taking one step farther along the path towards a tithe might look like for you. What would you need to do to make that happen? Again – no guilt, no pressure – but what does joyful giving look like for you? What would be sacrificial? What would help you feel yourself prioritizing God in response to the grace you've experienced?

And then, do something similar with your time and your non-monetary talents too. When Pastor Gayla showed me this chart, I was absolutely stressed over money. I did make a small commitment – for the first time I turned in a pledge card and it was 1% of our income – but more than that, I started really tracking my time. It led me to get serious about prayer... and prayer changed things. I started seeing opportunities, going deeper, being more aware of others. I stopped being angry all the time... I took the next step. This next week, I encourage you to take stock and be intentional about your next steps. God can do amazing things with joyful givers.

**Tithe** – a biblical standard, one-tenth of one’s income, given as a contribution to support the ministry and mission of the church. A standard referred to often in the Hebrew scriptures (see: *Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:24; 2 Chronicles 31:5, Malachi 3:10*), the purpose of tithing is to teach us to put God first in our lives. In the New Testament, Jesus said, “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” (Matthew 6:21) Biblically, an offering is that which is given beyond this tithe and amounts below it are “giving.” That said: Every gift, of whatever size, is important and appreciated, and every stage of life is different. Your pledge and giving should be free, joyful, and, yes, sacrificial. It should not, however, cause guilt, debt, or desperation.

Jesus’ witness of the widow’s mite (Mark 12:41–44) is *not* a call to make oneself destitute, it’s a critique of a system that preys on the poor. On the other hand, Jesus’ challenge to the rich young man (Matthew 19:16–22) to sell his possessions and give to the poor is a call to see how wealth and possessions can control and distract us. All we have is, ultimately, from God. We are blessed to be a blessing to others.

Weekly Income	Offerings Beyond a Tithe		Tithe	Upper Range of Giving			Middle Range of Giving			Lower Range of Giving		
	15%	12%		9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%
<b>\$200</b>	\$30	\$24	<b>\$20</b>	\$18	\$16	\$14	\$12	\$10	\$8	\$6	\$4	\$2
<b>\$300</b>	\$45	\$36	<b>\$30</b>	\$27	\$24	\$21	\$18	\$15	\$12	\$9	\$6	\$3
<b>\$400</b>	\$60	\$48	<b>\$40</b>	\$36	\$32	\$28	\$24	\$20	\$16	\$12	\$8	\$4
<b>\$500</b>	\$75	\$60	<b>\$50</b>	\$45	\$40	\$35	\$30	\$25	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$5
<b>\$600</b>	\$90	\$72	<b>\$60</b>	\$54	\$48	\$42	\$36	\$30	\$24	\$18	\$12	\$6
<b>\$700</b>	\$105	\$84	<b>\$70</b>	\$63	\$56	\$49	\$42	\$35	\$28	\$21	\$14	\$7
<b>\$800</b>	\$120	\$96	<b>\$80</b>	\$72	\$64	\$56	\$48	\$40	\$32	\$24	\$16	\$8
<b>\$900</b>	\$135	\$108	<b>\$90</b>	\$81	\$72	\$63	\$54	\$45	\$36	\$27	\$18	\$9
<b>\$1,000</b>	\$150	\$120	<b>\$100</b>	\$90	\$80	\$70	\$60	\$50	\$40	\$30	\$20	\$10
<b>\$1,100</b>	\$165	\$132	<b>\$110</b>	\$99	\$88	\$77	\$66	\$55	\$44	\$33	\$22	\$11
<b>\$2,000</b>	\$300	\$240	<b>\$200</b>	\$180	\$160	\$140	\$120	\$100	\$80	\$60	\$40	\$20
<b>\$3,000</b>	\$450	\$360	<b>\$300</b>	\$270	\$240	\$210	\$180	\$150	\$120	\$90	\$60	\$30



**GREATER THAN –2023 Pledge Card**  
**Yes! I/We will make a commitment to the future**  
**of First United Methodist Church, Fort Scott!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I commit to give to First UMC’s 2024 general ministry fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

This commitment will be fulfilled (check one):  weekly or  monthly or  quarterly or  annually.

I would like to make a one-time gift of:  stock or  property with an estimated value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(The church will contact you to arrange details and designations for this gift)

I would like to talk with someone about including the church in my estate planning.

Beyond my main pledge, I would like to give additional designated gifts, totaling: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to:

(please indicate individual amounts below)

\_\_\_\_\_ Feeding Families in His Name \_\_\_\_\_ Shepherd’s Center  
 \_\_\_\_\_ First UMC HVAC Fund \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Thanks to everyone who came out for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual event. The weather was chilly but we had fun and some great visits with our neighbors!

Here are a few of our photos (Thanks to Robin Eshelman)

# Trunk or Treat



### 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: 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!**

## Next Scheduled Church Meetings

*Library unless noted:*

**Trustees:** Tue, Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> – 6pm

**HOCROC:** Mon. Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> – 6pm

**Memorials:** Tue, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> – 3pm – *Parlor*

**Admin Board:** Wed. Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> – 7pm

**SPRC:** Mon. Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> – 6pm *Appointive Rec.*

**Finance:** *to be determined*

## 2024 Lay Leadership Report

Focusing on positions required by our Discipline, here are some highlights from the 2024 Lay Leadership report that was voted on by Administrative Board and affirmed at our Charge Conference on October 15. We are thankful for each person who has agreed to help lead and do the work needed to sustain and guide our congregation. If you have questions or input about various aspects of our congregational life together, here are some folks you can share your input with.

*Lay Leader and Lay Member to Annual Conference:* Jan Hedges.

*Administrative Board Chair:* Mike Carnes.

*Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair:* Randy Nichols. *SPRC Members:* Gayla Croan, Ken Anderson, Becky Tourtillott, Susan Carnes.

*Finance Chair:* Carol Majors, *Finance Members:* Landia Antonettie, Carol Lydic, Mille Sharp, "Audit" Team: Lisa Ward, Mike Carnes, & Steve Harry. *Treasurer:* Kristin Bishop, *Counters:* Charlene Sipe, Debra Wood

*Memorials Treasurer* Linda Hessong, *Memorials Members:* Karen Nichols, Leslie Reynolds, Patty Smilie, Sheryl Bloomfield, Barbara Gibson, Charlene Sipe. *Endowments:* Zach Reynolds.

*Trustees:* Robert Wilson, Ron Sharp, Jim Covey, Mike Leachner, Carol Lydic, Janet Braun, Bonnie Milburn and Mathew Morris.

*Nominations:* Leslie Reynolds, Virginia Myers and Tom Braker.

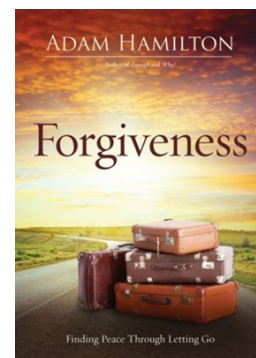
*HOCROC:* Debra Wood, Susan Carnes, Don tucker, Linda Leachner, Pat Hartford, Bonnie Milburn, Suzie Bartlett, Joyce Allen, and Peagy Stark

**November Birthdays:** 1- Dale Smilie, 2-Cricket Jenkinson, Pam Brown, 3-Sheryl Bloomfield, 4-Joan Hembree, Billy Webster, 5-Dean West, Debbie Stevens, 6-Travis Majors, Trevor Majors, 7-Kalee Ballou, 8-Jane Williams, 9-Cindy Foxx,

10-Susan Carnes, Chris Comstock, 11-Danette Popp, 12-Hilary Berry Grant, Patricia Magee, 13-Donnie Stapleton, 14-Karley Stark, 15-Debra Wood, 20-Chrisopher Brown, De Covey, 21- Joe Tourtillott, Ty Post, 22-Hayden Blair, Bryan Davis, 24-Lindsay Majors, Gary Brown, 25-Richard Magee, Hannah Hughes, Jennifer Carnes, 28-Scott Stoughton, 30-Kelley Sprague.

## Faith Builders in November

In November, we will be discussing "Forgiveness," a multi-media study by Adam Hamilton. The four subjects we will be discussing are: "The Divine Answer," "For Better, for Worse," "Seventy Times Seven," and "The Dreamcoat." Adam equates our need to forgive and be forgiven with carrying a backpack full of rocks. Over time the tiny pebbles and the large boulders break more than our spirit. He shows how to receive the freedom that comes with forgiving—even if the person needing to be forgiven is ourselves. We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Please come join us in fellowship and discussion.



*Here is your November 2023 Newsletter from:*



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