



Volume 26, Issue #8  
**September, 2022**



# The Connexion

*Good things are happening!  
Mark your Calendar!*

**Ice Cream Social – 6pm Sunday, Sept 18<sup>th</sup>** Hosted by our United Methodist Women. There will be a mixture of homemade and purchased ice cream – you are asked to bring along your favorite to share and / or make a freewill donation to help replenish the UMW treasury after 2 years of no fundraisers due to COVID. Please join us for an evening of fellowship!

### **Shepherd’s Center / Adventures in Learning starts**



**shepherd's center**  
OF FORT SCOTT

**Friday, October 14,  
11:30am to 3pm.**

Our keynote speaker will be Patty LaRoche with small group sessions led by Larry

Shead, Cathy Werling, and Ronda Hassig in the afternoon. More details are to come soon – but you won't want to miss this kickoff event! Using funds from our Healthy Congregations grants, First UMC is partnering with the national network of Shepherd's Centers to provide educational and social opportunities that bring older adults together.

“Our signature Adventures in Learning program supports personal growth and discovery with courses, cultural enrichment workshops, hobby and recreational opportunities. Subjects cover a wide range of topics: computer and technology, finance, literature, music and art appreciation, world religion, “how-to,” politics, current events, historical events and figures, foreign languages, hobbies, and so much more. Most class instructors are retired older adults, with a number of special interests presented by community experts. ***Shepherd’s Centers counteract the negative effects of loneliness and isolation by connecting older adults to empowering programs*** that foster friendships.” In 2023 we plan on having several more with the goal of forming a steering committee and making it a regular and recurring event hosted here at First UMC to help foster lifelong learning and reduce social isolation among retired adults.

**Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>** will be a “Revival Sunday” and the kickoff of our stewardship campaign!

We are encouraging our friends and neighbors to reconnect to faith and will restart a beloved tradition here at First UMC by **hosting a Fish Fry at 6pm that day**. As members of the United Methodist Church we pledge our prayers, presence, gifts, witness and service. Be in prayer about who God is calling you to share your faith and invitation with!



Psalm 50:14 will be our focus verse for the stewardship campaign  
**“Sacrifice thank offerings to God,  
fulfill your vows to the Most High.”**

And we'll have yard signs with this art and our web site for several folks to check out and display in their yards around town. These will go up at the church in Mid-September, stay here for a couple Sundays and then move out around Fort Scott to help spread the word!

## FAITH BUILDERS IN SEPTEMBER:

We will begin the new quarter in September with a study of "God Calls Abraham's Family." These four lessons are: "The Call of Abraham," "God Chooses the Younger Twin," "Jacob Called Israel," and "The Scepter Given to Judah." We use multimedia in our studies, which, in September, are all in the Book of Genesis.

Set among the nomadic life of the ancient Near East, God demonstrated his choice by calling a descendant of Noah to experience blessing and a new land. God's choices are not reserved for the notable or the powerful. His choices are not based on any criteria other than his desire and freedom to choose.

We would appreciate some new voices and some new perspectives. Please come join us in fellowship and discussion.

~Ron Wood



### MATTHEW STUDY

The "new Sunday School Class," which meets in the Library in the Educational wing continues to work through the Gospel of Matthew each week. There are chairs available for anyone who would like to join us!

~Tom Braker

## More Items of Note for Your Calendars!

**Trunk or Treat** – Plan to Decorate your car, van or truck and hand out treats with us on Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. If you're not up to that, you are also welcome to donate candy for those who do to give out – last year we had about 250 kids come by.



**Parent's Day Out Volunteers needed!** At our Trunk or Treat event we are going to invite those who attend to visit us again by hosting a "Parents Day Out" event on Saturday, Nov 12<sup>th</sup>. This act of service will help busy parents and let us get to know a few families better. We need a count of volunteers to let us know how many kids we can let sign up and if we will have morning, afternoon or both. We will form small groups of not more than 4-6 kids per adult and we must have at least 2 Safe Gatherings certified volunteer staff overseeing activities at all times. Please indicate your interest with the signup on the back table. Thanks!

### Reading / Discussion Group Resumes

The ladies reading / discussion group will begin meeting Wednesday, Sept 14<sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm in the church library. We meet for approximately one hour and would welcome new participants! Our first book this fall is Deacon King Kong by James McBride. Participants should order their own books.

Dorothy Kivett organizes the group and is open to suggestions for books to read. She writes of this first book: "I questioned whether to use the book, but I thought it had enough depth to bring out some good discussion so I decided to use it. McBride uses the themes of friendship, love, entrapment, and redemption to explore the reasons why a nineteen-year-old drug dealer is shot and wounded by his former mentor. Yes, there is some foul language. Also, McBride spends a lot of time at the beginning to introduce his characters (and they are "characters"!!) McBride also addresses some socio-economic issues that frequently occur in the black culture."

The following books are next in line: Blessings by Anna Quindlen, (226 pp., 2 wks) and The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams, (359 pp., 4 wks) This one is about the beginning of the The Oxford English Dictionary and the part women played in its inception.

### September Committee Meetings

Wed. Sept 7 – HOCROC – 7pm Parlor

Tues. Sept 13 – Trustees – 7pm Parlor

Wed. Sept 14 – Memorials and Gifts – 6pm - Parlor

Tues. Sept 20<sup>th</sup> – Finance and SPRC meet together – 7pm in Fellowship Hall

Wed. Sept 21<sup>st</sup> – Administrative Board – 7pm Parlor

Sun. Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> – Charge Conference

**Deepest Sympathy** to family and friends of: Norma Jean Fitzsimmons, who passed in August.

### On behalf of First UMC Pastor

Christopher extended an invitation to the Priest and congregation at Mary Queen of Angels Catholic Church to use our facilities for Mass or meetings as they recover from the recent fire. No definite plans have been made yet.



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



I am extremely fond of the photo of our building with the rainbow that is the header of the newsletter. I took the photo (after Robin spotted the rainbow) during a walk last year. It is a beautiful symbol of hope and promise - and our congregation's role in sharing God's grace and mercy with Fort Scott and the world. And yet, our building (perhaps like each of us from time to time) is not always as welcoming as it could be. The doors facing National in this photo look almost like barricades. No way to see the life of people gathering and vital worship services happening behind them. And

inside, the small narthex was dark even with the decorative lights on. Let there be light!

Sometimes small things make a big difference. When I arrived at First UMC, I was aware that one only has "new eyes" for a place for so long. So I spent a lot of time walking the halls, poking around spaces and thinking about how our facilities appeared to a new visitor. I made several pages of notes, then thought and prayed about them - prioritizing what things might have the most positive, fruitful impact. Gradually, I shared what I'd noticed with the Trustees and from that we have made a number of upgrades over the last several months. New signage to make it easier to find the nursery and other rooms. New tile and paint in the bathrooms near the office. Replacing broken exterior panels that marred our entrance and the beautiful stained glass United Methodist Cross and Flame. But perhaps the thing that has made the biggest instant difference in how welcoming our building appears was finding a way to make the sanctuary doors facing National transparent. Trustees had looked at several options and we had rejected them as too expensive - then one day we noticed the middle panels were screwed in. Ron Sharp and several folks from our Wednesday Work Crew checked it out and, behold, they were replaceable! Instead of thousands for new doors, we added sturdy Lexan acrylic panels for under \$200 per door and what a difference it makes! The entryway is bright and cheerful. You can see activity in the sanctuary area from outside. No longer is there a danger of the door opening onto someone coming up the steps. This small change, to me, makes the whole building brighter and more welcoming. Let's keep looking for small things that might make all the difference. Jesus is the light of the world - we are called to share it. Thanks be to God.



What a difference! The new clear inserts make the doors up the steps inviting. Small change, big difference! Now if we could just get another rainbow....

### WHAT IS PASTOR CHRISTOPHER UP TO?

**Some upcoming travel...**On Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> he'll be in Lindsborg to preside at his youngest brother Noel's wedding.

Then October 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> he has been invited by the Great Plains

Conference to represent the Board of Ordained Ministry in a special training opportunity called "Be the Bridge," helping the conference work towards "racial healing, equity and reconciliation." Pastor is excited about all of these opportunities and looks forward to sharing what he experiences and learns with you.

### And Continuing Education online:

#### CLERGY COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP COHORT

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of September through May, Pastor Christopher will be among a small group of pastors from several denominations participating in a training seminar and clergy covenant and counseling group led by Mark Tisdale of Pinnacle Leadership Associates. The training and covenant group will meet by Zoom to help each member of the group find ways to grow personally and professionally while leading vital church revivals in these challenging times.

## Who Are We? – United Methodist Women (UMW)

By Jan Hedges, current UMW president



In 1869, eight women answered a plea from Clementia Butler and Lois Parker (wives of missionaries in India). Those eight women reached out to other women and the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) was organized. The group raised funds and sent educators Isabella Thoburn and Clara Swain to India.

Ms. Thoburn began a school with just six young girls that went on to become Isabella Thoburn College, Asia's first women's college. Dr. Swain's medical work resulted in the first women's hospital in Asia. Over 150 years later, both institutions continue to serve the people of India.

From this humble beginning, the name has changed many times: Women's Missionary Association of the United Brethren church, Woman's Home Missionary Societies, Woman's Missionary Society in the Evangelical Association, Ladies' Aid societies to name a few. These faith-based groups became powerful, independent women's organizations sending hundreds of women missionary doctors, nurses and educators all over the world. They continue to support countless U.S. and international projects advocating for justice, children, women and disenfranchised communities.

In 1972, United Methodist Women became the first women's mission organization as part of The United Methodist Church's Board of Global Ministries. In 2012, The United Methodist Church General Conference voted to make United Methodist Women's national policymaking body autonomous.

After seven years of surveying local church units and facing the reality of declining and aging membership the national organization has launched a new era as **United Women in Faith**. The move is part of a "refreshing of the organization" that includes a new name, a new log and an array of new and improved programs. The intent is to welcome all woman of faith to join together to put *their love in action* on behalf of women, children and youth.



Locally, our unit will continue to be known as United Methodist Women (UMW) through December 2022. Like many units across the country, we struggle with declining membership, challenges in recruiting leadership and other roles. We had a heartfelt discussion of our current status at our August 11, 2022 unit meeting and will be voting on our next steps at the September 8, 2022 meeting at 1:30 p.m. We encourage all women of the church to join us and share how our group can better meet your needs as a *woman in faith*.

Please feel free to contact one of the local UMW officers to share your input: Debra Wood, Carol Majors, Jackie Warren and Jan Hedges. How can we provide a program more meaningful for you? What can we do to make it more attractive for you to attend and be involved in the over 150-year mission of reaching out to women and children.



**September Birthdays:** 2-Reggie Fancher, Jana Hazelbaker, 3-Jennifer Slinkard, 4-Barbara Wood, Mia Perry, Chris Harry, 5- Kristian Engle, 8-Cadence Hunziker, 11-Landia Antonetti, 12-Zach Culbertson, Michael Harry, 14-Mike Leachner, 17- Mark Ward, 18-Lakin Albright, Carol Majors, 19-Miranda Arndt, Dacia Clark, 20-Patricia Hartford, 22-Randy Sprague, 23-Barbara Stuart, 25-Trenton Jahay, Tim Engle, 26-Marlene Braker, 29-Winston Bishop. 30-Peggy Stark

**September Anniversaries:** 3- Don and Jean Tucker, 4-Mark and Lisa Ward, 15-Ryan and Amber Hunziker, 16-Troy and Ty Post, 17-Roger and Charlene Sipe, 21-Jessica and Jamie Ballou, 28-Trina and Jason Arndt

## Thank You for Your Generosity!



This month, our congregation has given 43 items worth \$220. Once again, thank you to everyone for the baby items for DCF!

~Debra Wood

Thank you to everyone that donated buns for the August 31st, Feeding Families. It was truly amazing how many people have stepped up to help. Just

know that I am feeling blessed with the way you came to the needs of this vital program for our community. Thank you, ~Bonnie Milburn



*This article ran in the Fort Scott Tribune as a message preview for a recent Sunday at 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian. We are reprinting it here with the author's permission as it reflects on work with Feeding Families in His Name.*

### "Spirit of Generosity" By Diana Morriss

I've always said that God instructs me through the 2-by-4 treatment. He clearly smacks me right between the eyes to get my attention and recently did that through Jane Campbell and her message. As you know, some of us work with the Feeding Families program and are glad to do our part but, and here is a confession, at least for myself, I don't always do it without grumbling and questioning the motives of the recipients of our meals. Jan stated that she didn't believe that people were "taking advantage" of us but instead had great need. WHAM-smack #1. While feeling generous with my time (and maybe just a little bit smug), I am not always generous with my giving spirit.

As if that didn't hit home quite hard enough, along comes help from my son-in-law, the Reverend Landon Whitsitt. I pleaded with him to share a sermon with me that he thought I would be able to deliver. I really wanted to bring a meaningful message to you, but strongly felt not up to the task. Well, low and behold, you'll never guess the message of the scripture and sermon he sent to me! WHAM-smack #2. Yes, you are way ahead of me – generosity, it is. Let's take a look at the "wealthy Shunammite woman" and be instructed by her giving Spirit.

*(The text for the day was 2 Kings 4:8-37).*

### Pastor Christopher offers a comment

It has come up several times recently from various sources and Diana Morriss reflections also touch on it. One of the defining marks of *Feeding Families in His Name* is that the meal has \*always\* been free of charge to anyone who wants to come. There are multiple good reasons for this, not least of which is saves us tons of paperwork and volunteer time - yet all of us (myself included) tend to fall into a mindset of thinking about who "deserves" the meal or "really needs" the meal and wonder if some are "taking advantage." Yet it is intentionally a free gift for *anyone*. Beyond time and paperwork, there is a crucially important reason why we not only do not mind some folks who are better off financially coming for the meal but actively encourage it – because it's not *just* about food. Yes, the primary goal is to serve food to people who are food insecure, or hungry due to a lack of resources or other factors. Yet right alongside that, has always been a goal of building community and friendship – human connections. Loneliness, social isolation and feeling like nobody cares are just as soul withering as an empty stomach – maybe more so. Feeding Families addresses both. Further – as we see in the comments about who "really needs" a meal – there is stigma to lining up for food – having even just a couple nicer cars in the line invites those who need a meal but fear the stigma. I have been talking recently with one regular recipient. There are major health issues in the family, this person never learned to cook and often receives food from a neighbor. This person started picking up meals on Wednesday night for their family and then one week knew the neighbor was ill. On a whim, the person asked for an extra meal and took it to the neighbor – she felt valued and said over and over how nice it was not to have to cook! Our generosity inspired their generosity, we helped them help others, and there are actually deeper connections being made

(and even more meals distributed) in that neighborhood because of it. Stomachs *and* hearts filled – in His Name. Reminds me a bit of Christ's communion table... or the gift of grace. That is what it is about!



UMCOR remains one of the best ways to address natural and human disasters near and far. Note UMCOR on the memo line of your check or envelop and together, our little can accomplish a lot! Use Advance #982450 to target International efforts and #901670 for US efforts.

NEXT SERMON SERIES: Sundays in September we will draw on a sermon series developed by the Healthy



Congregations staff that focuses on our individual bodies and our joined community as the Temple of God.

We will look further at Paul's letters the Corinthians and think about themes like belonging, dwelling, community and loving – and we'll think about the spiritual, physical, social and emotional (including mental) health as

individuals and communities. Pastor Christopher is excited to share some of these insights and resources with you and thankful for our growing relationship with the conferences Healthy Congregations initiative.

**The Beacon Challenge is Back!**

We have again been challenged by the folks at First Presbyterian to see which congregation can donate the most food to the Beacon between Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup> and the final day of counting, Monday, October 10<sup>th</sup>. We will then hold a celebration dinner at First Presbyterian after worship on Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. Let's keep the trophy for a fourth consecutive time!



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