



Volume 27, Issue #1

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# The Connexion



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

**Knowing, Growing, Serving, Sharing**

Last week we celebrated both Epiphany and the Baptism of Christ. These kinds of "Ah-Ha!" moments help define our faith - but so do the "ordinary" days. As we are now well into the new year of 2023 and are resuming our routines of work and school and hopefully play and rest, the Christian calendar moves into a period of "ordinary time" which last until the next seasons of Lent and Easter. And yet, while there are not "holidays" - the Holy is still around us every day. We are called to be bearers of Christ in this time. We will begin worship Sunday, Jan. 15th with a beloved hymn: "Ask Ye What Great Thing I Know." It's a joyful proclamation of faith experienced and lived. Not mere intellectual assent, but a transformed life and it is a great way to begin our new sermon series: *Know, Grow, Serve, Share... Exemplify!* These key words, drawn from our mission statement, will guide us in these weeks of "ordinary time" to an extraordinary faith.

First UMC has had our current mission statement for about a decade – and it's a good one: "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." In the coming weeks, I'm going to repeatedly ask you to memorize that and think about how you are living it out – individually and as a congregation. This statement excites me as a pastor because it invites us continuously to take the next step in our faith. Last Sunday, I again shared a formative moment for me. Rev. Tom Albin, who then served as Dean of the Upper Room – the United Methodist Church's devotional publisher – challenged a men's retreat asking: "If we hold that Jesus is fully God – the Word become Flesh. And my task, as a Christian, is to follow Jesus – to become like Christ... then when am I done?" There is always more to learn and more to do as we become more Christlike!

### Pastor's Weather Policy

When school is in session, the office generally closes if USD 234 cancels. Groups can make their own call, but we encourage this as a standard.



Worship will rarely be canceled unless Pastor cannot make it safely from the parsonage. Ice, rather than snow, would likely drive

such decisions. As always, you are encouraged to use your own best judgment. Updates will be posted to Facebook and emailed to this address list (*Sundays and any cancellations that do NOT match USD 234 will also be called into KOMB 103.5*)

Now, for some of us, that can sound intimidating or exhausting. That's when we must remember that Jesus promises that his yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:30). While our Christian journey may seem challenging, it is less so than trying to do things ourselves and by the world's methods. My own journey affirms that over and over. And we must remember that part of doing things God's way includes rest and play. When we are really becoming Christlike, restorative and joyful sabbath taking and prayer are central to our lives. It's not about doing more – it's about being more. In the coming weeks, we will explore this important insight through the lens of our mission statement and the definition of Spiritual Formation found on the next page, considering what it means to know Christ, to grow in Christ, to serve Christ, and to share Christ – in Christlike ways!

## **A Useful Definition of Spiritual Formation:**

*Spiritual formation...is the process  
of being conformed to the image of Christ  
by the gracious working of God's spirit,  
for the transformation of the world.*

### **a process:**

- gradual, life-long movement, not single, momentous conversion
- goes against grain of "quick-fix, instant results, Five Easy Steps" culture
- draws us by God's magnetic attraction, awakening our desire for God

### **of being conformed to the image of Christ:**

Christ is the image of God made visible to us (Col.1:15)

- image of Christ is pattern of human wholeness—we share God's image (Gen.1:26)
- God's likeness feels strange since we are misshapen by images of worldly culture
- the Christ image heals, renews, restores us
- moves us from being centered in self to being centered in God

### **by the gracious working of God's spirit:**

- we want to make things happen in our self-reliant culture
- but cannot conform ourselves to Christ by own will power
- we can open ourselves to gracious working of God's spirit
- the Spirit enables us to choose way of Christ over self-interest
- grace helps us give reins of control to God and to cooperate with Spirit
- we resist Spirit's work because change in ideas/habits/ behaviors is scary
- spiritual disciplines (practices) are ways of opening ourselves to grace

### **for the transformation of the world:**

- being like Christ means living in self-giving love
- spiritual life not about "me" but about the world God loves
- as we are conformed to Christ we embody more of God's love for others
- fruits of spiritual formation are compassion, patience, truthfulness, reconciliation
- transformed persons are leaven for transforming the world

*This definition adapts and expands Robert Mulholland's work Invitation to a Journey (InterVarsity Press, 1993). Companions in Christ Training © 2004. All rights reserved.*

I invite you to read over this, and our mission statement, several times. What stands out to you? What makes you curious? Excited? Perhaps nervous or even frightened? What is energizing or intimidating? What parts do you think you've done well? What next step might be suggested? What memories, hopes, or people you know come to mind as you read over these statements?

Over the next few weeks, we'll be taking a word from the mission statement and a phrase from this definition, and we'll be working with Scripture, our Wesleyan traditions, our experience, and our God given gift of Reason to explore where we are at individually and as a congregation, on our journey of faith and in our process of spiritual formation. I'm excited to see where the Holy Spirit is leading us as we enter into this new year! We have challenges and we have opportunities. Perhaps it is for just such a time as this that we have been gathered together? (*Esther 4:14*).





**A New Valentine's Day Tradition** – last year, at the last minute, Pastor Christopher "borrowed" the idea of making valentines for our homebound / assisted living members and friends - HOCROC and the Congregation ran with the idea and we blessed over a dozen friends. The old joke about churches says that "if we do it twice it becomes a tradition" - and so it is!

HOCROC invites you to submit names (and then make a bag or box, just like our old school parties) to collect their Valentines. We'll again set up tables in the back of the sanctuary in the weeks leading up to Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup> for you to bring (or make) a card for our friends - then HOCROC and volunteers will deliver them by Valentine's Day on February 14<sup>th</sup>! Use the sheet in the back of the sanctuary or email the office

at [secretary@firstumcfsks.org](mailto:secretary@firstumcfsks.org) to list a name. We ask that those submitting names also create a bag for their cards - but if you'd like help with that, let us know! Thanks.

Prayers of Comfort to Peggy Stark and family in the death of her mother Maxine Rimbey and to Ron Wood and family in the



death of Barbara Wood. We mourn with you, and we proclaim the hope and assurance of resurrection in Christ as these two saints join our great cloud of witnesses.

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

you can leave them in the glass jars by each entrance each week.



Thank you!

Contact Jackie Warren with questions.

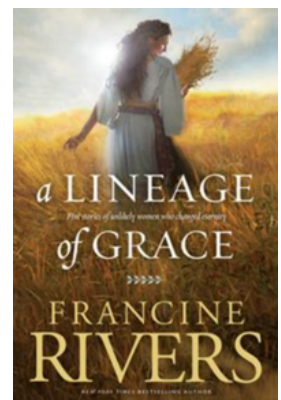
**January Birthdays:** January Birthdays: 2-Ethan Tatro, 6-Logan Fancher, Sylvia Stapleton, 8-Bonnie Milburn, 9-Eleanor Harry, Joey Beerbower, 11-Gayla Croan, Maurine Dunshee, 12-Jacki Allen, 14-Brent Smith, Aaron Swaim, 17-Doug Barlet, 19- Pat Harry, Karen Rienbolt, 21- Ryker Felt, 23- Emma Davis, 24- Margaret Friend, 27-Dave Wood, Kelly Tucker, 29- Tim Culbertson, 30-Larry Swaim, Iona Pryor.

**January Anniversaries:** 28-Mike & Susan Carnes, 30-Randy & Kelley Sprague



**February Birthdays:** 1-Betty Galan, Virginia Myers, 3- Connie McKee, 4- SPC Jasmine (Davis) Bradley, Susan Willard, 5- Tyler Slinkard, Jim Covey, 7-James Lipscomb, Wyatt Tourtillott, 8-Alex Ward, Seth Norris, Noah Allshouse, 9- Austin Ward, Trina Arndt, 11-Nolene Whiteside, 12-Stephanie Jonson, 13-Lauren Ammons, Janice Patterson, 16-Suziee Barlet, 19-Debbie Sailors, 24-Kiptyn Hunziker, 26-Joce Renfro, Cindy Hiatt, 27- John Blosser, 28-Peggy Blosser.

**The Wednesday Book Group** (reading/discussion) for ladies will finish The Dictionary of Lost Words on January 25. On February 1, we will begin A Lineage of Grace by Francine Rivers. Rivers has taken the stories of five women of the bible and embellished them. If any lady would care to join us, she needs to order her own copy and meet with us in the church library at 1:30 p.m. on February 1. We will discuss the first story which is about Tamar. ~Dorothy Kivett



**SOME UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Tuesday, Jan 17<sup>th</sup> –7pm **Trustees** - Parlor (rescheduled from last week)

Wednesday, Jan 18<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm **Memorial & Gifts** - Parlor

7:00 pm **Administrative Board** – Parlor

Friday, Jan 20<sup>th</sup> - **Soup Lunch to Benefit ASP Missions**

Sunday, Jan.:29<sup>th</sup> - **Chili Feed after church to benefit ASP Missions**

Thursday, Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> – 1:30pm **United Women in Faith Meeting** - Parlor



## 2023 UMC CONNECTIONAL SPECIAL OFFERINGS for First UMC Fort Scott

*The Special Sundays of The United Methodist Church, celebrated annually, illustrate the nature and calling of the Church. These special Sundays approved by General Conference are the only Sundays of churchwide emphasis. Funds are collected by local congregations and sent on to our Annual Conference for distribution to conference and denominational entities. Note the Special Offering on the Memo Line. Dates are set by General Conference but can be adjusted by local congregations should conflicts arise. In 2023, Pastor Christopher is adjusting two of the dates as he finds conflicts with other themes and events in the life of First UMC and wants to give each of these special offerings the attention and focus they deserve. You are invited to learn about each of the six and see where you might be called to share your generosity with the larger church for the transformation of the world.*



### Human Relations Day – January 15, 2023

Human Relations Day is the Sunday before the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday and supports outreach to underserved communities, ministries that respond to non-violent youth offenders, community advocacy, and faith-based volunteer programs for community developers, and other programs that work with at-risk teens. It also supports at-risk youth through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program administered by the General Board of Church and Society. The offering also supports community developers and community advocacy through the United Methodist Voluntary Service administered through the General Board of Global Ministries. One hundred percent of the offering goes to the General Council on Finance and Administration.

### UMCOR Sunday – March 19, 2023

UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) is the fourth Sunday of Lent. This offering supports disaster and emergency relief administered by the United Methodist Committee on Relief. It enables emergency grants and supplies immediately after a disaster, provides for sustainable sources of food, water, and shelter, and allows UMCOR workers and volunteers to be among the earliest to arrive and the last to leave when people are in need. This offering helps strengthen communities through both disaster preparedness and long-term recovery. The special Sunday offering underwrites UMCOR's costs of doing business, allowing UMCOR to keep the promise that 100% of any gift to a specific UMCOR project will go toward that project (through Advances), rather than administrative costs. The offering is also used to create grants for partners around the world under UMCOR's different programmatic areas.



### 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.

### United Methodist Student Day – ~~Nov 19, 2023~~, Moving to May 7<sup>th</sup>, 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.



*Continued next page...*



## Peace with Justice Sunday – June 4, 2023

Peace with Justice Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost. The General Board of Church and Society has a vision to promote justice, by advocating public policies that protect the rights of all people. This offering supports the fostering of a better world by educating leaders and change-makers to become grassroots activists and global advocates who challenge systems of inequality. It also supports the connection of networks with ecumenical communities to advance peace and justice. Fifty percent provides grants to local churches, districts, conferences, and other affiliated organizations that advocate for peace with justice while the other 50% remains in your annual conference to develop local peace with justice ministries and support a peace with justice coordinator.

## World Communion Sunday – October 1st, 2023

The offering supports a diverse mix of national and international ethnic young adults to make a global impact for Christ. The offering supports the Ethnic Scholarship Program and the Ethnic In-Service Training Program through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry which provides ethnic scholarships for graduate students from the U.S. and other countries. It also supports the World Communion Scholarship Leadership Development Program administered by the General Board of Global Ministries. This offering provides ethnic scholarships for U.S. and international undergraduate students studying in the U.S. and funds In-Service Training Programs for racial and ethnic persons.



**EATING SMART AND SAVING MONEY**

**JOIN US!**

- Where:** First United Methodist Church, 301 S. National, Fort Scott, KS. Use Main Entrance.
- When:** Wednesday, Jan. 25th at 4:00; Wednesday, Feb. 1st at 4:00; Wednesday, Feb. 8th at 4:00; Wednesday, Feb. 15th at 4:00.
- Contact:** Scan to register.

**K-STATE** Research and Extension  
This is a voluntary and unpaid opportunity to provide.

## FIRST UMC HOSTING HEALTHY BOURBON COUNTY ACTION TEAM CLASSES

Publicity is beginning and this is to let you know we will be hosting an event with K-State Extension and the local Health Action team to help about 20 local residents from 4-5pm on Wednesdays, . Jan 25<sup>th</sup> through February. Participants will learn about "Eating Smart and Saving Money" with demonstrations on cooking, budgeting, and more.

Because of Feeding Families those nights under the portico, they will be parking in the bank lot, entering what we will label "Door A" in the back of the church, and exclusively using the large upstairs classroom we are now calling the "Connection Room" We are excited to be partners in hosting this event for our community and these great organizations and we look forward to more in the future.

## PASTOR TRAVELLING JAN 26TH - FEB 3RD

One of Pastor Christopher's roles with the Great Plains Annual Conference is serving on our Board of Ordained Ministry interviewing candidates for ministry.

Our spring interview week is the end of January so he will be out of the office and meeting in Topeka, KS from the evening of Sunday, Jan 29<sup>th</sup> until late on Friday, February 3rd. This will not affect worship on either Sunday.

He will be available by email or phone/text, but likely in a delayed fashion in between interviews. We have a higher-than-normal number of candidates working towards Ordination, which is testimony to how God is working in our denomination and will make for a very busy week!



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:

Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>  
Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>  
Mar. 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>  
Apr. 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>  
May 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>  
June 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>  
July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>

Tell a Friend!

**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 missing lots of cell phone numbers, for example.



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, including Pastor's written sermon summaries 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!**

**Mark Your Calendar!** Our next Shepherd's Center / *Adventures in Learning* event will be **Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup>.**



We are finalizing details now and registration will open soon! This is a great way for local seniors to engage in lifelong learning and build friendships!

**LENTEN READING CHALLENGE - NT IN 40 DAYS**

We often "give something up" for Lent and that is a wonderful practice. This year, however, I'm challenging you to "take something on" – and that something is **to read all of the New Testament**. Sound daunting? The guide I've developed averages out to roughly 6 pew Bible pages per day! The exact word count varies, but based on the longest single assignment, an average adult reader can do this in about 30-40 minutes each day, with many day's readings being shorter. So yes, you can do this!

**A Chronological Reading!** Further, the guide will walk you through the texts in a chronological order, that is, in the order that the vast majority of NT scholars believe the texts were written in. Thus, we'll start not with the Gospels, but with 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians, almost certainly the oldest letter of the Apostle Paul that we have. Reading the New Testament in this order helps us see how core ideas and understandings took shape and developed over time in the early church.

Drawing from the late Marcus Borg's book *Evolution of the Word* and the wisdom of several traditional daily reading plans, I have developed a 40-day outline that will easily walk you through all the NT texts, starting with a short Ash Wednesday entry and finishing during Holy Week (with Sundays off). The printed outline will be available to pick up in a couple of weeks. Several of the shorter "books" will be read in one setting, with longer texts broken up over a few days. Your job as a reader will be to come away with an overview of the key points of each book or letter and a few major insights or questions.

I am excited about sharing this challenge with you. I think it is a great "next step" for many of us – whether you've read the Bible deeply many times or if you've always meant to. I first developed this study in seminary and since then have shared it with several churches and friends across the country. I encourage you to be in prayer about responding to the challenge this year - thinking about when and where you might do your reading, and what Bible or Bibles you might use. In the coming weeks I'll share more information to help you prepare. Near Ash Wednesday, when the challenge starts, I'll begin sharing a daily reflection on the assigned reading for history, context, and application. I will also be scheduling some gatherings for in person discussion our reading journey. ~Pastor Christopher