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April 2025



The **Connexion**

On the Christian Journey... with Pastor Christopher

It may well be an older saying, but in her book *The Happiness Project*, author Gretchen Rubin writes: “*The days are long, but the years are short.*” I’ve been feeling that as we are speeding through the Lenten season and my fourth year here as your pastor moves quickly along towards what I hope will be year 5 and beyond. Some of how that is determined for those of us who serve as Elders in the United Methodist Church is a consultative project between the churches, pastors, Bishop and Cabinet looking at fruitfulness. How is the pastor growing in their call? What gifts do they have that are (or are not) being well utilized in the present setting? How is the congregation growing as disciples? What opportunities and challenges are there and how does the current (or other possible) pastors intersect with those? How is the lay leadership of the church growing? We are all connected – Christ is the vine, we are the branches. Sometimes changes are needed – fruitfulness is not in evidence – maybe it’s time to cut off dead branches – or maybe, as we heard recently, it’s time to till the soil, fertilize and give it 1 more year. Sometimes things are going very well – but there could be even more fruitfulness with some gentle, intentional pruning. I trust our process. For most of my life prior to ministry I was very much a control freak. The idea that where I work and live is ultimately no longer my call - and that I am totally fine with that - is, for me, evidence of the call to ministry. In many ways, I think I continue to be a good match here – I am also aware of some weaknesses and some patterns that mean opportunities for good ministry are being missed. One of the things I have been working hard on this year is seeking to equip and enable others to do more and make this church less dependent on the pastor or any other single leader to make decisions. And, through my continuing education with the Center for Pastoral Effectiveness, I’ve been doing that by focusing on the only person I can truly change – myself. I am also aware that I am not the best of inspiring fundraisers with an eye towards not only our annual budget but also potential endowment and capital campaign needs. Some folks have a gift for that, something else for I and the congregation to pray about and consider. Maybe this is the right fit and it’s a growing edge for me – maybe those are signs that a change will come at some point. What are your thoughts?

On April 22nd, our Staff Parish Relations Committee has an annual Leadership Evaluation form due. The form focuses on both me as a Pastor and our lay leadership and systems. Later in this newsletter you’ll find some of the questions the form asks and a list of the SPRC members if you’d like to give your feedback.

I hope you are enjoying the current sermon series “Purveyors of Awe” – I’m finding it helpful in navigating a way through these turbulent times and keeping my focus on God and the long term as a disciple of Christ, while also encouraging me to act on our baptismal vows here and now. On the next page you’ll find information about Holy Week and our next series: “Resurrection Stories: Unlock Yours!”

Glad to be on this journey with you! ~ Pastor Christopher



What’s Inside This Edition?

Page 2 • Holy Week Services

- Easter Lilly Dedications
- Wednesday Reading Group

Page 3 • United Women in Faith

- Meals on Wheels

Page 4 • Sunday School Group Info

- Aging Forward Speaker Ideas?

Page 5 • Representative Contact Info

- Church Vitality Assessment

Page 6 • Birthdays / ASP / Radio

HOLY WEEK- MAUNDY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY – Thursday, April 17th and Friday, April 18th we



will have special interactive services to remember Jesus' Last Supper, prayer and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and his Crucifixion. These special times of reflection at different prayer stations and activities will help us appreciate the celebration of Easter more fully. Plan to join in and invite friends.

Then on Sunday, April 20th we will celebrate that Christ is Risen! *Christ is Risen, indeed!* As we begin our next sermon series entitled "Resurrection Stories: Unlock Yours."



Marcia McFee writes: Easter is not just a Sunday, it is a "week of weeks;" in other words, there are seven more Easter Season Sundays that end on Pentecost Sunday. Over the course of these next several weeks, we will be telling what we call "Resurrection Stories" about real people who faced death-dealing circumstances and found new life. When we end that series on Pentecost, the scripture that day will tell us that Jesus said, "I give you the keys to the kin-dom of heaven." Just as we work to bring heaven on earth, we can also expect that resurrection is possible within our own lifetimes. We can be resurrected from despair over many things. It is not easy, for sure. But we are not alone, and we already have in our possession the key to new life... anytime! I am hopeful you will share this series with friends and neighbors – anyone who could use an encouraging message about unlocking a resurrection in their own lives and bring them!



DEDICATE EASTER LILLIES: *As we celebrate the Resurrection it is a great time to remember our great cloud of witnesses and honor our loved ones. If you'd like to dedicate one of our silk Easter Lillies, please fill out one of the forms that will be available beginning April 6th or call the church office to be added to the list.*

Donations are not required, but any received towards lily dedication will again be split between our HVAC fund to repair and upgrade our heating and air units and our Good Sam Fund to be a blessing to those in need in the community.

WEDNESDAY READING GROUP – 1:30pm in the Library – the next to last book the group will discuss



before taking the summer off is *James: A Novel* by Percival Everett "When the enslaved Jim overhears that he is about to be sold to a man in New Orleans, separated from his wife and daughter forever, he decides to hide on nearby Jackson Island until he can formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Huck Finn has faked his own death to escape his violent father, recently returned to town. As all readers of American literature know, thus begins the dangerous and transcendent journey by raft down the Mississippi River toward the elusive and too-often-unreliable promise of the Free States and beyond.

While many narrative set pieces of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* remain in place (floods and storms, stumbling across both unexpected death and unexpected treasure in the myriad stopping points along the river's banks, encountering the scam artists posing as the Duke and Dauphin...), Jim's agency, intelligence and compassion are shown in a radically new light.

Brimming with the electrifying humor and lacerating observations that have made Everett a "literary icon" (*Oprah Daily*), and one of the most decorated writers of our lifetime, *James* is destined to be a cornerstone of twenty-first century American literature." ~ Dorothy Kivett



United
Women
in Faith

UW Faith UPDATES

Saturday, March 29th, we hosted the Southeast Kansas District meeting for United Women in Faith. Registration began at 9 with worship at 9:30 in the Sanctuary. The theme of the meeting was New Beginnings. Donna Beene, SEK District Treasurer oversaw the registration of 35 women from the area.

Kathy Probis helped the women find where the meetings were being held and where the displays of cards and knitted projects were displayed. Linda Lechner, served muffins, red and green grapes, strawberries and drink to the women as they gathered in Fellowship Hall. Pat Hartford decorated the tables with copies of our logo with an airplane plant and pinwheels that had the colors of our new logo centered on the tables. The woman with a birthday nearest Easter, (4/20/25) was to take the plant as a door prize.

Following the refreshments the women gathered in the sanctuary for a short worship service. Nancy Rockers, SEK District Spiritual Growth, led a devotional using the well know hymn Great is Thy Faithfulness. She told of the words being written by William M Bunyan who lived in Baldwin and whose children attended Baker University. The song was not well known until George Beverly Shea made it one of the songs sung in Billy Graham Crusades. There is a scholarship still at Baker called The William M. Runyon scholarship.

A business meeting followed with Donna Grigsby, District President presiding. Roll Call was answered by 10 different churches of the SEK District. An offering was taken and \$335 was collected to be sent to Della Lamb Community Services. A short refreshment break followed with the women given a chance to purchase greeting cards and knitted items made by the women of the women's prison. Carol Majors oversaw the displays and sales. Books, games and toys were gathered by the women attending and will be given to the children of the women prisoners.

Officers of the local UW Faith groups attended training sessions with the coordinating district officer.

Following the training sessions the women gathered in the Sanctuary where Pastor Christopher offered a short blessing and presided at and served Holy Communion, assisted by Carol Majors, Debra Wood, Susan Carnes and Kathy Probis. The district officers were served a light luncheon by Linda Lechner following the adjournment. ~ Jean Tucker



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

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



Southeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging 60+ Nutrition (Formerly “Meals-On-Wheels”)

Is looking for volunteer drivers to deliver meals.

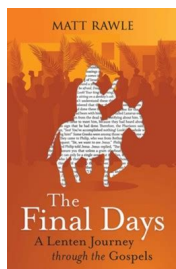
Drivers will pick up prepared meals Buck Run Community Center and deliver to individuals on a designated route within Fort Scott City limits.

Please Contact Roz Scarborough for more information:

phone: 620-251-7313

All Volunteers must complete the background check application and return ASAP before being assigned a route. You can pick up an application at the K-STATE Research and Extension Office at 210 S. National, Fort Scott, KS.

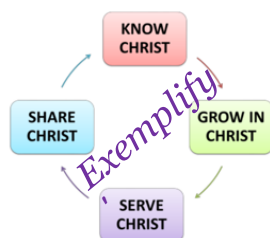
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL OPTIONS



Faith Builders in April

In April, we finish our study of “The Final Days: A Lenten Journey through the Gospels,” by Matt Rawle. In this study we examine Jesus’s last week in Jerusalem as told in each of the four Gospels. The four New Testament Gospels aren’t

quite the same story, but they offer the same Resurrection hope. Each Gospel offers a different lens through which we understand Jesus’s Passion. Join us as we ponder the themes of justice, poverty, freedom, and love. Come start your Sunday worship with us. ~Ron Wood



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.

April Plans for MUGG (Multi-Generational Group)

Don Tucker is using the book of Romans to teach the Multigenerational Class about the concept of Salvation through faith and grace as opposed to works which was the practice of the early believers. The class is learning about the foundations of the early church. ~Jean Tucker



Note: Faith Builders has a room near the Sanctuary in the older building and MUGG meets in the Library on the 1st floor of the education wing – Let visitors know they’re invited to join in!

What kind of Adult Small Group would you like to be a part of? – either Sunday morning or another time during the week. There are numerous short-term studies, Disciple classes that look at particular books like Psalms or Romans – and longer term Disciple Bible Studies that would run a year or more. How are you knowing and growing? Let’s work to create opportunities for ourselves and others to take the next step!

Sunday School for Kids and Youth

SUNDAY MORNING EXPLORERS – our group for Elementary School age kids is led by Cindy Foxx and Charlene Sipe and our **MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP** is led by Tom Braker each Sunday morning at 9:30am on the 2nd floor of the education wing. Our **NURSERY** is staffed each week by Sara Schnichels and Dana Tucker and is found across from the offices on the 1st floor. Let visitors know!



AGING FORWARD returns on the 4th Friday of each month April through September. We meet beginning at 1pm and light refreshments are served during the event. We are currently planning to skip the June date since that is the All-School Reunion weekend.

On April we’ll hear from the staff of Riggs Chiropractic and another speaker still being confirmed. Future events will feature presentations from Kate and Trent Freeman of the Artificers, Kirk Sharp of the Gordon Parks Museum and our own Don and Jean Tucker sharing some of their adventures over the years. We have invitations out to a number of other local leaders doing interesting things in Fort Scott!

If you have an idea for a local speaker for our Aging Forward series fostering fellowship and lifelong learning for retired adults (and anyone else interested), please contact Kristin in the office to pass it along. Our speakers generally have 45 minutes to an hour to share. Mark your Calendar for April 25th, May 23, July 25th, August, 22nd, and September 26th and invite a friend. Thank you!

After a recent sermon, Jean Tucker suggested it might be helpful to our members to have contact information for our various government representatives. As United Methodists we are encouraged to share our convictions with those responsible for crafting and upholding the laws of our society and protecting the rights of all. She has provided the following list.

If you have concerns or ideas you wish to express to your government officials, here are some phone numbers / emails to do so:

National:

Senator Jerry Moran-202-224-6521
Senator Roger Marshall-202-224-4774
Representative Derek Schmidt-202-225-6601

State:

Caryn Tyson- 785-206-6838 (senator)
Rick James-785-296-7616 (representative)Fort
Scott City

Bourbon County Commissioners:

Brandan Whisenhunt, Disrriect 1
620-223-3800 ext. 110

David Beerbower, District 2
620-223-3800, ext. 111

Open Seat, District 3, *recently resigned*
620-223-3800, ext.112

Fort Scott City Commission

Timothy Van Honecker, Mayor
tvanhoecke@fscity.org

Kathryn Salisbury, President / City Commissioner
ksalsbury@fscity.org

Dillon Olson, City Commissioner
dolson@fscity.org

Tracy Dancer, City Commissioner
tdancer@fscity.org

Matthew Wells, City Commissioner
awells@fscity.org

2025 CHURCH VITALITY & PASTORAL/MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT



As mentioned in the lead article, our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will soon meet to respond to an annual Leadership Assessment. Here is some of the information and questions they'll be responding to. If you have input, you can chat with *Randy Nichols* (Chairperson) or SPRC Members *Gayla Croan*, *Susan Carnes*, *Becky Tourtillott*, *Kathy Probis*, *Don Tucker* (Lay Leader) as well as Pastor Christopher.

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The heart of this work happens in local congregations in their communities. This assessment form is part of an ongoing process of consultation between the local churches and the bishop and cabinet and an important part of our mission strategy in every community we have congregations

- What is the lay leadership of the congregation doing to help your to be intentional about helping people love God, neighbor, self, or to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?
- What do you celebrate about your ministry in the previous year and who was involved in making that happen (lay leaders, pastor, teams)? Where are there areas of needed improvement in the congregation's ministry?
- What do you lift as gifts your pastor brings to your shared ministry? What do you lift as growing edges or needs for improvement in the pastor's leadership for this congregation and mission field? (*i.e. preaching, teaching, visitation, worship leadership, staff/volunteer supervision, community involvement, administration*)
- How is lay leadership helping success in these areas? How does the congregation need to grow in raising up lay leadership to assist in these areas? (*filling the pulpit, teaching, visitation, worship leadership, volunteer supervision, community involvement, administration*).
- What training could the conference provide to help the congregation be successful?

**You are invited to share your responses –
you can also call or email the office to have Kristin pass information along.**



April Birthdays:

Lynn Chaney- 02, Alyssa Popp- 3, Douglas Barlet-4, Rose Stoughton- 6, Kristin Bishop-9, Darren Tucker-19, Leslie Reynolds-19, Janice Fewins-19, Kyle Altic-23, Linden Bishop-25

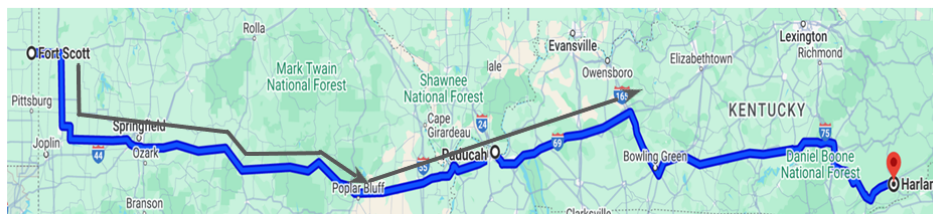
April Anniversaries:

Tom & Marlene Braker - 26

ASP Theme 2025 - Be The Light

ASP 2025 Fund Drive

Fort Scott to Appalachia and Home



Goal = \$3750

Remaining To Be Raised \$2,450

We are At 35% of the Goal

Please submit articles about your church or community group events for the May Newsletter by April 21st - and be planning ahead for June and beyond – thank you!

Upcoming KOMB 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:

April 6th & 20th

May 11th & 25th

June 8th & 22nd

July 6th & 20th

August 3rd, 17th & 31st

September 14th & 28th

October 12th & 26th

November 9th & 23rd

December 7th & 21st

Tell a Friend!

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

Return Service Requested

Here is your APRIL 2025
Newsletter from:



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