



Volume 26, Issue #6
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The Connexion



On the Christian Journey...
With Pastor Christopher

Jesus Praying
at Gethsemane
(Luke 22:42)
Unknow artist



I'm tired.

A lot of us are tired.

The last few years have been hard. The news continues to be full of despair. We are polarized on many topics. It has been and continues to be a difficult time. I was tired when I got the call that I was being appointed to Fort Scott. I'd been about to head out on a vacation. Instead, Robin and I interrupted those plans and visited for the introductory and then quickly started packing. Soon, I moved to this wonderful town and congregation. What I found was a congregation that needed an input of energy and hope. As our lay leader, Ron Wood, has put it, we needed "to be awakened from slumber." I hear from a few of you that, over this past year, that has begun to happen and I rejoice. It's not all my doing, not by a long shot, but I am sincerely happy and grateful to be a part of what Christ's Holy Spirit is doing here at First UMC Fort Scott.

I've spent a lot of time thinking and praying about how to "energize" a congregation when... I'm tired. A most helpful insight came to me one day while reading about the prophets of the Old Testament. Many of them lived "performative" lives. That is to say that their marriages, their children's names, their actions – all in response to God's calling - lived out the message they were given. It dawned on me that my own task here, finding ways to work (and play) through the exhaustion – to find sources of renewal and rejuvenation even in the midst of the work – was exactly what this congregation collectively needed to do. I was called to depend on God, not just myself. I was being called (and equipped) to live prophetically. To proclaim hope and new life – to experience and share God's energy and renewal. Can these bones live? Yes – because God is God of the living! Because Christ is Risen, indeed! Because God still calls us to unbind one another and serve one another. Because Christ is living water, true vine, bread of life, gate and good shepherd. Because God's power is made perfect in weakness!

So, yes, we're tired. Many of us are "re-tired" – having served in leadership for years and ready to hand it off, but finding no one to take it on. We have challenges that no change of pastor and no single year of ministry will undo or solve – but we are seeing signs of an awakening and renewal. The Holy Spirit is moving. God's love and grace are being proclaimed. We do need to rest – and to play – and to work. Because God can do more than we ask or imagine, and because we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. This means sometimes we need to change roles, sometimes we need to let go of ways we've "always" done things, and it means we need to find new ways of serving at every stage of our lives. We need to yield control and power and try new ways of organizing. Most of all we need to be Christlike. Sometimes that's speaking boldly and prophetically, intervening to disrupt unjust systems. Sometimes that's drawing in the dirt. Sometimes it's taking a nap! Definitely it's finding regular times (like 3:01pm) of prayer and then acting on where God leads us through those prayers. I'm blessed to be figuring this out with you. Article continued in "Travelling Man" on page 2.



Jesus Sleeping
in the Storm
(Mark 4:35-41)
By John Henson

TRAVELLING MAN (Pastor Christopher's lead article, continued).



Over the next few weeks, I will be away quite a bit. I will be at Annual Conference June 8-11, then on our ASP Mission trip June 11-18, then gathering with family in South Dakota June 21-24 to celebrate my eldest son Ian's wedding to Jordan, a wonderful young woman. After all that, Robin and I will take a much needed vacation. We plan to "wander" our way back from the wedding by visiting several cities (and ballparks – her idea!) from June 24th to early July. We'll go to Minneapolis and see my favorite MLB team, the Colorado Rockies, play (*and probaby lose to*) the Twins, we'll spend a couple days in Milwaukee (where I was born) and Chicago (where my mom's family is from) at ballparks and museums and resting/playing, as well as some yet to be planned side trips and hopefully taking in a couple of games of the Des Moines Peak Prospects – a collegiate summer league team our youngest will be an assistant coach with.

All of this – the work and the play and the rest – will mean I will be out of the pulpit on June 12th, 26th and July 3rd and I will only be in the office a few days between these events. For much of the time I will be in contact by phone and email – but the last part of June and early July I'll limit even that to enable some real vacation, rest, and time with Robin. During my travels, a patchwork of folks will help by being available for any emergencies that may arise here. Rev. Carl Ellis, our Network Leader and the pastor at Uniontown / Hiattville and retired Rev. Don Flanner, a member at West Liberty UMC, will be on call, along with a couple of others as backup, who will respond to hospital calls or other emergencies in my stead. Zandra and our lay leaders will have their contact information in case it is needed. My hope is all will be calm, but if you need pastoral care while I'm gone, we'll have a plan in place.

WORSHIP WHILE PASTOR TRAVELS

On Sundays, the following s will lead us in worship:

June 12th, Rev. Micki McCorkle, our District Superintendant, will share the message.

Pastor Christopher will be here to celebrate the ASP Mission trip on June 19th.

Sunday, June 26th we'll hear from Rev. Yolanda Byers, who has been on staff at Church of the Resurrection for several years and will soon serve as pastor at Bristol Hill and Roeland Park UMCs in Kansas City.

Then on July 3rd, retired Rev. Don Flanner will be here to celebrate with us. Rev. Flanner served a number of churches in both the Kansas East and West Conferences over his 30+ years in ministry and has deep family roots at his home church of West Liberty near Fort Scott.

RECONNECT TO FAITH – FALL PLANS DEVELOPING

Then when I return in July, I plan to hit the ground running again with a labyrinth project, helping with VBS at 1st Pres, and sermon series on what it means to be a member in the United Methodist Church (prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness) leading towards a fall "revival" with special outreach events and a theme of "Reconnect to Faith." We will again have yard signs that will start in the church yard then you'll be invited to spread across the city to your homes. We again got these signs at no cost to the church, using a periodic grant provided by a partnership between UMC Communications and the marketing firm Outreach.com.



Saint Paul School of Theology is advertising our hoped for Church and Community Engagement Coordinator position to their incoming students. Please continue to pray that the right person for this new role is identified. We don't have a strict timeline to hire and will continue looking until the right person is found.



SATURDAY, JULY 9TH LABYRINTH BUILD

Weather permitting, join Pastor Christopher on the old grocery store vacant lot between the parsonage and 1st Presbyterian at 10am to help lay out a temporary walking labyrinth in the Chartres style. We'll likely work 3-4 hours or so staking out the ground and then painting the lines, then walking the space together. Our hope is to have this in place for folks to check out before and after the VBS events happening that next week!



HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS GRANT UPDATE

Our Healthy Congregations team (largely the HOCROC committee) will be using the \$1000 grant we received from the conference to launch a Shepherd's Center/Adventures in Learning program here. This is a lifelong learning model aimed primarily at retired seniors, but open to anyone interested. We'll start with a single event this fall, most likely a Friday in September, featuring a few classes/

speakers. In addition to qualifying us to renew the grant again, that will then expand to quarterly events in 2023 and hopefully it's own board and an ongoing series of events in the years beyond that. We think this will help us address a number of identified needs in our congregation and community and use the blessings God has given us, including this building, fruitfully. Watch for more details in July/August. If you would like to help develop this program, let Zandra know in the church office and we'll invite you to the planning meeting HOCROC will hold in July.



Appalachia

SERVICE PROJECT®

Be in prayer for the safe travels and fruitful work of our mission team serving in Knott County, KY from June 11-18. Sunday June 19, the day after your Mission team returns, will be a celebration day for the Mission Trip with a report from the field, pictures and comments from the team members about what was done, what was experienced and how the week progressed.

The members of your ASP Mission Team are the following:
From Fort Scott First UMC: Keith Tucker, Delci Tucker, Delaney Tucker, Don Tucker, Lee Davis, Aubree Altic, Doug Atlic, Christopher Eshelman, Robin Eshelman and Tom Braker.

From the Oswego UMC Steve Cole and Marissa Holland.

From the Thayer UMC Revel Stiles and Rayce Stiles

UMC / GMC?

You may be hearing news about a new denomination that launched called the Global Methodist Church. This is related to the ongoing debate within the UMC over human sexuality. I have thoughts, feelings, and opinions about this – in fact, my understanding and study of Scripture on these issues is deeply tied to my experience of a call to ministry and my journey to becoming a pastor. Yet, despite that, I haven't spoken much about it here – largely because in my first year here, I haven't sensed that it's a major issue for people at First UMC Fort Scott. There are certainly folks with a variety of opinions, but not the kind of energy, concern or divisiveness I've found at previous appointments and I am grateful for that. There is nothing we, as a congregation, are required to do. From what I can tell, less than 3% of churches in the Great Plains Annual Conference will move to the new denomination (with a required 2/3 vote of members and considerable financial commitments), most of them quite small, and it really won't affect us much at all here. In short – not every issue or topic needs to be addressed every place – and our focus at First UMC Fort Scott is and should be on being in Christlike ministry in our community and revitalizing our congregation, not attending to whatever arguments others might be having. I am happy to make an appointment to discuss the various debates and differences as objectively as I can, should you be interested.

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/Royals game conflict).

Our upcoming dates are June 5, 19; July 3, 17, and 31; August 14 and 28; September 11 and 25; October 9 and 23, November 6 and 20, December 4 and 18.

Tell a Friend!

**FAITH BUILDER'S IN
JUNE AND JULY:**

It's "Summer at the Movies" for the Faith Builders in June and July. We will be viewing film clips from a number of Biblical DVD's. These films are produced by several Christian organizations, and include various stories in both the Old and New Testaments. After viewing the clips, we will share our thoughts and feelings. Please join us in fellowship as we do Bible study from a different perspective. Come and walk with us.

~Ron Wood



MATTHEW STUDY

The "new Sunday School Class," which meets in the Library in the Educational wing will be looking at parables and stories in the 6th and 7th chapters of Matthew during June and July. There are chairs available for anyone who would like to join us and take a bit of a deeper dive into these passages.

~Tom Braker

June Birthdays: 1-Charity Davis, Keith Tucker, 3-Bryan Foxx, Beverly McBride, 4-Linda Hessong, 9-Steve Harry, 11-Allen Davis, 13-Shirley Culbertson, 14-Ainslee Magee, 15-Estalee Simpson, 16-Koyle Link, Mille Lipscomb, Megan Vincent, 17-Dee Ann Davis, 18-Ron Rains, Robert Wilson, 19-Debra Franklin, 20-Elisa Denning, Aubree Altic, 21- Monte Hall, 22-Joan Cox, 25-Delbert Barr, 28-Evan Heiser, 30-Gabbi Majors.

June Anniversaries: 2-Gary & Pam Brown, 4- Randy & Karen Nichols, Dean & Carolyn West, 5-Megan & Cameron Vincent, 6-Patricia & Richard McGee, Jim & Debbie Stevens, 9-Ron & Kathy Snyder, 11-Morgan Croan & Carson Felt, 14-Pat & Steve Harry, 18-Mike & Linda Leachner, Clayton & Melissa Tatro, 20-Becky & Joe Tourtillott, 22-Dacia & Travis Clark, Curtis & Gloria Shankel, 23-Zack & Leslie Reynolds, 28-Carlyle & Maurine Dunshee, 29-Eric & Danette Popp

July Birthdays: 1-Barbara Gibson, 2-Tayton Majors, 3-Betty Ruddick, 7-William Bishop, Jackie Warren, 8-Jerry Elliott, Norma Fitzsimmons, Ken Reinbolt, 9-Ken Engle, Rachael Large, Nancy Swansick, 10-Nic Engle, Melissa Tatro, 11-Nick McGee, 12-Rose Evans, Nathan McGee, Becky Tourtillott, 14-Paige Denton, Melvin Foster, 15-Ken Anderson, Maxine Rimbey, 16-Jessica Majors, 17-Tracy Altic, Dylan Hazelbaker, 20-Gary Cullor, Liam Denning, 21-Jan Hedges, John McFall, Susan Regan, 22-Eli Wolf, 23-Charlene Sipe, 26-Kori Page Greaves, 27-Donna Hughes, 28-Morgan Croan, Taliya Wolf, 29-Gladene Reavis, 31-Norma Sellers.

July Anniversaries: 12-Bryan & Cindy Foxx, 16-Jane & Ron Williams, 17-Robert & Jamie Christuski, 20-Larry & Charlotte Swaim, 21-Travis & Jessica Majors, Jennifer & Kelly Slinkard, 26-Reed & Pat Hartford, 27-Pat & Betty Galan, 30-Allen & Dee Ann Davis, Hilary Berry Grant & Shaun Grant.



Deepest Sympathy to family and friends of Allen Warren, who passed in May. June 2nd would have been his birthday and July 18 he and Jackie's wedding anniversary. As we pray for all who mourn in these days, Allen's memory is a blessing.

We are reminded that grief is not a fixed path. Many in our community have lost loved ones in the past year. Each person grows into a new normal and marks birthdays, anniversaries and other celebrations differently. Don't be afraid to mention the names of loved ones and let folks know you remember them too.



VBS VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Adventure Island, this year's Vacation Bible School, will be at 1st Presbyterian July 11th through 15th in the evening from 5:30 to 7:30pm. There are opportunities for First UMC folks to help with the kids and with food. Please contact Alesha Martin at (620)719-6478 or email her at blinginbug@yahoo.com for more information about what is needed (their team is still working out details as of this writing).



KEYHOLE BIBLE STUDY LEADER AND BOARD MEMBER SOUGHT

Keyhole is an after school and summer program for area youth held at 1002 S. Main. Summer hours are 10am – 3pm and during the school year they are open 3-8pm. *Their mission is to provide to the youth of our area, Christian-oriented, recreational, social, and educational opportunities.* They are in the process of establishing a recurring Bible Study night for the youth that attend with a once per month commitment from local church volunteers. They are also interested in adding another board member and would love to have First UMC represented. Might you be being called to get involved in this way? Contact Director Josh Kobernat at 509-724-6059 or email board member Emily Diebolt at ediebolt@outlook.com for more information.



EXPLORING MEMBERSHIP

Another thing Pastor Christopher will be doing this summer and fall is encouraging groups of recent visitors, regular attendees who haven't joined and some longtime members to gather to explore membership at First UMC Fort Scott. Several years ago, the UMC made a change in how our apportionments were figured - from being based on reported membership to being based on a tithe of giving to the church. This has had a number of benefits, but has had the effect of causing our focus on membership to lapse in many churches. You certainly do not have to be a member to attend and even be active here at First, yet making that public commitment was a huge turning point in Pastor Christopher's life. Consider the following adapted from UMC.org:



The meaning of membership is deeply rooted in our Methodist heritage. John Wesley was clear that Christianity is a social religion, and that our growth in holiness of heart and life is deeply dependent on being in face-to-face community with others who are watching over us (and we over them) in love. It is through these face-to-face relationships that we experience what it means to be the body of Christ in the world.

For United Methodists, membership reflects our active participation in a local congregation. When we become members, we profess our faith in God, our desire to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, and commit to join with our church community to keep the vows made at baptism. The vows we make include promises to faithfully participate in the life and ministries of our local congregation through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Throughout our life, as we pray, study the scriptures, worship and share in fellowship with other Christians, we deepen our knowledge of and love for God. As we respond with compassion to human need and work for justice in our communities, we strengthen our capacity to love our neighbors. We confess and repent of our sins, ways in which we fall short of God's way. In this way, our inner thoughts and motives, as well as our outer actions and behavior, are aligned with God's will and testify to our union with God.

Rev. Mark W. Stamm explains, "What are the benefits of such a commitment? The primary benefit is the presence of the living Christ. Indeed, he promises that we will greet him in the midst of the faithful – '... where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (Matthew 18:20). The church continues to insist that our hearts are warmed as we hear the Scriptures read and proclaimed (Luke 24: 32), that the Risen Christ is known in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24: 35). Indeed, the mystery of the Risen Christ is present in the midst of my sisters and brothers. They hear my confession and proclaim God's forgiveness. They embrace me, they laugh and cry with me, and God heals me in and through all of that. My brothers and sisters know my shortcomings, and so they keep me honest, but they also know my potential, and so they call forth my gifts. They share their heritage and their wisdom and give me people to teach. I need their commitment to me, and they need me as well."

Are you ready to take the next step on your faith journey and become a member? We look forward to visiting with you about it!

What's Your Shirt Size? BRAINSTORMING / Survey – not a final decision.

A few of us are thinking about getting shirts made – so that when several of us do things like ride on a parade float or volunteer for the library we could represent First UMC. Locally, a solid color t-shirt from Shirt Shack with our logo and/or a few words in white front and back would be about \$11 each to print. Online seems similar. The pictures are a quick mock up Pastor Christopher did on an online site – NOT a finalized design.



Sample: possible front and back designs

If we ordered some this summer or fall – would you want one? If so, what's your shirt size? How many might you order? How much might you be willing (if anything) to pay or donate if we made them a fundraiser for something? Please return this form to the office – this is NOT an official order or commitment – but information gathering for our planning. Thanks.



Name: _____

Number of Shirts you'd be interested in: _____ Amount you might be willing to pay/donate: _____

Size(s). Adult Small _____ Medium _____ Large _____ X-Large _____ 2XL _____ 3XL _____

Comments: Note if you'd like youth sizes, have suggestions for the design, etc.

Again this is not a final order, just information gathering at this point. Please return form to the office or email the above information to Zandra at secretary@firstumcfsks.org for her to compile. Thanks.

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Return Service Requested

*Here is your June and July
2022 Newsletter from:*



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