



A publication of First-Faith United Methodist Church

THE MESSENGER

Peace to you and all praise to God! I can't believe that it is already December, where did the year go? It seems like only a few weeks ago that we were hosting ball games in the heat of the summer. The church has been a whirlwind of activity and I am so thankful for all the hard work that so many of you put in to the many ministries that make this church a vibrant place to be. I hope that this newsletter finds you and your families well during this special time of year. It is an exciting time of year, a time that we wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and glory and excitement of Christmas morning!

November 27th is the first Sunday of Advent and the start of our waiting for the birth of Jesus on Christmas. This advent we are also looking at not only how we wait for Jesus, but how we proclaim the work of Jesus in the world. Our worship series for Advent is called *Proclaim*. Each Sunday we will hear scriptures that share a message of what this messiah will do, and what the world will look like. If we open our ears and our hearts, we hear words of proclamation that will hopefully encourage us to spread the word that Jesus Christ has come into the world.

I hope you will join us each Sunday of Advent, that we may make ourselves ready for the coming of Jesus Christ and what that means for us. It is Jesus that continues to provide, care, and walk with us through the many changes in our lives. Jesus strengthens us and calls us to live a life of service and love. Our lives will never be the same when we understand that God is with us.

We have some special programs also happening this advent season that I hope you will attend. On Sunday, December 11th, we will be blessed by the children's Christmas program, and on Wednesday December 21st, we will have a Blue Christmas worship service at 7:00 pm. Our Christmas Eve service will be at 7:00 pm. All are welcome as we celebrate the birth of Jesus with singing, candlelight and communion.

This year we are blessed to also have Christmas Day on a Sunday. We will be worshipping at our normal time of 9:30 and will have a lessons and carols that morning. Come and join us (no need to dress up) and sing and celebrate Christmas Day!

I know that I am grateful to this congregation for your continued support of the ministries of the church. But, in this last year with rising costs and decline in giving, our church is facing a budget short-fall. We are behind almost \$30,000 this year. We understand that the same pinch that is affecting our operations are also affecting your bottom line at home. I pray that we as a congregation can work this final month of 2022 to bring this number down so that we do not have to dip into reserves.

If you are behind in giving, I encourage you to please give as you are able. For those who do have the means, I am asking that they give a 13th month to help us meet our financial goals. Much like the work in the church cannot be done without your hard work and presence, the church and its ministries cannot happen without your generous financial support.

If I have learned anything in this life of faith and ministry, I have learned to be a person of hope. We are often faced with so much uncertainty in this life, but I know that my hope and trust remain in Jesus Christ. That is the root of what Christmas means to me. It is a hope that God is always at work and that Jesus has come to show us how to be people of hope, and that our hope for a deep relationship with God is never far away. I continue to be humbled by your love and support of me and my family. I pray that you may have a merry Christmas and a happy and safe new year.

Pastor Ray



Every Sunday
Worship Service
at 9:30 a.m.
Join us in person or
online on our
Facebook page
(First-Faith United Methodist Church)!



A Perk & A Prayer
is available every
Wednesday morning in
December, weather per-
mitting, from 7 to 9 a.m.
Come and enjoy a free cup
of coffee and have
someone pray with you.

ANGEL ALERT!
The Night that Heaven Came Down

Our Children’s Program this year is “Angel Alert! “. The angels are prepared to take flight to sing the song Glory in the Highest, God’s Son is born! The angels will tell about God’s promises and sing about Jesus, the Promised One. Our program will be during church on Sunday, **December 11th starting at 9:30.** We hope you can join us!



Christmas program practices will be held during Bible Time for Kids on Sunday mornings and also on the next two Saturdays, December 3 and 10, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. This is for children ages 4 through 5th grade.

If any youth would like to come and help or play instruments, please let Randi Pennell know. If you have questions, please feel free to call Randi at 308-920-0462 or send a message on Facebook Messenger.

Be sure to stay after church for cookies and a visit with Santa!



THE UPPER ROOM
DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Pick up your copy of the January/February 2023 issue in the narthex!

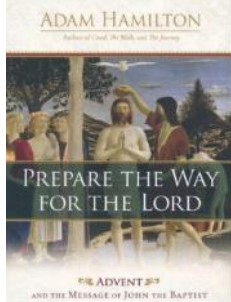
Suggested donation amounts:

Regular Print: \$1.50
Large Print: \$2.00

Our next Lunch Bunch Potluck will be on Wednesday, December 14th, at 12 noon.



It will be at the church and everyone is welcome!
Bring a dish to share and then join in the fun afterwards as we play RUMMIKUB!!!



NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS FOR ADULTS WITH LARRY COATES - Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

In each of the Gospels, the story of Jesus is intertwined with that of his cousin John, the one whom the prophets foretold would come to “prepare the way of the Lord.” When we hear the message of John the Baptist, it makes us and our world ready to receive Christ. Here are the three classes in December:

- December 4th: God Is Gracious
- December 11th: The Fruit of Repentance
- December 18th: Witnesses Testifying to the Light

KEVIN & HEIDI CHENG . . .

...will be coming to minister to us on Sunday, January 8th, at 9:30 am.

Gifted, engaging, and energetic are just a few of the descriptors that have been used in connection with this classically trained piano-violin duo! The dynamic couple play a wide range of styles including traditional sacred music. Kevin is a native of Taiwan who has organized large-scale orchestral concerts to bring classical music to rural Nebraska. He has performed as guest pianist with Lincoln, Kearney, Sandhills and Cherokee symphonies. Heidi has served as second principal violinist in the Kearney Symphony Orchestra. Make plans to join us!





12-2 Stephen Hayes
 12-6 Tyrene Hisey
 12-8 Erick Schwartz
 12-10 Sandy Engel
 12-11 Meghan Pennell
 12-14 Matthew Bigger
 12-15 Penny Shultz
 12-16 David Reynolds
 12-19 Jan Wells

12-19 Julie Berggren
 12-20 Deb Trosper
 12-23 Colette Sorensen
 12-27 Merna Clayton
 Larry Lucas
 12-28 Heather Welsh
 Riverlynn Obermeier
 12-29 Dixie Codner
 12-31 Karleen Beckman

Floyd and Sharon Sorensen - 12-17-66
Warren and Randi Pennell - 12-18-93
Larry and Gloria Craven - 12-28-63
Dick and Leola Harlow - 12-31-56



Meetings and Circles

Tues, Dec 6 - Ruth Circle Dine Out
 at Napoli's, 3333 Ramada Rd.
Tues, Dec 13 - UMM Christmas
 Get-Together at 6:30 pm



39 BOXES FOR OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD!!!
 New Steps Youth and the congregation at First-Faith UMC did a terrific job making a difference in children's lives this Christmas. Thirty-nine boxes, for boys and girls ranging in age from 2-14 years, will be delivered along with a story about Jesus Christ. Each box was sent with a \$10 donation to cover the costs of shipping and handling. Thank you to all who helped make this mission a great success!
 We CAN do big things at FFUMC!!



WOMEN'S EXERCISE CLASSES

Strong Women: Every Monday and Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.
Chair Yoga: Every Tuesday and Thursday at 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. We will not be meeting on December 27 or 29.
Step Aerobics: Every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at 5:15 p.m.
 There will be no aerobics on December 26th.
Wear comfortable clothes & come and join us!



A big thank you to Jim and Judy Bliss, Leola Harlow, Diane Rangel, John Helms, Larry and Gloria Craven, Doyle's sisters, Jayne Wilkinson and Diane Henke, our grandson, Hunter Brewer and his friends, Chris Flores and Austyn Stevens for helping make horseradish that we sold at the Craft Fair.

Doyle and Cheryl Henke

**Ladies' Sewing Group
December 13th
at 9:30 a.m.**

We meet at the church and all are welcome!



The Handbell Choir will practice on Wednesday, December 7th only this month at 6:00 p.m. Come and join us! New ringers welcome!

CALLING ALL SINGERS FOR CHOIR!!



We would love to have you come and join us. We will be practicing on December 7th only this month. If you can sing the hymns in church, you can sing with us!! We hope to see you there!

MEN'S COFFEE TIME

Come and join us every Tuesday at 9 a.m. for some coffee and great fellowship at the church!



Our Refresh "Grandmas" would love to give you a break. We provide FREE quality childcare for ages 6 and under. If you need a few hours to get things done, bring your little ones by the church and our ladies will take great care of them! They will have fun during play time, reading, snack and a craft.

In December, we will only be open on Wednesday, the 14th, from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Men's Fellowship and Cornhole

Men: Even if you've never played before, come on out and join us for some fun! We'll be playing on Thursday nights, December 1, 8, 15 and 29, at 7:30 pm in the church sanctuary. Please enter through the kitchen door.



**Saturday, December 10th
Napoli's and The Hallelujah Girls**

Let's meet for dinner at Napoli's at 5:30 p.m. The address is 3333 Ramada Rd. in Grand Island.

Then, we'll head over to the Grand Island Little Theatre to see *The Hallelujah Girls* at 7:30 p.m. The address is 3180 W US Highway 34 in Grand Island. Tickets are \$15.00 each.

Everyone is responsible for their own meal and ticket to the show. In order to get seats together, please RSVP to Emily in the church office by Monday, December 5th, at 3 p.m.

The Hallelujah Girls: After the sudden death of a dear friend, a feisty group of women decide that life is indeed short, and they vow to change their lives and achieve their dreams. Sugar Lee Thompkins decides to reach for her elusive star by converting an abandoned church into a day spa. "The Hallelujah Girls" is a silly, rollicking show that reminds us of the importance of good friends, and of not taking life so seriously that we forget to laugh and love.



Wednesday, December 14th

The Choir, and anyone else who would like to join us, will be going Christmas caroling to four places. Meet at the church at 6 p.m. and we will done by 8 p.m.



The greatest gift we can give to others is our prayers.

The Prayer Wheel is a longtime church ministry. Praying for our church family, our community, and others - whether locally or globally - is both a privilege and a responsibility. Many have shared that they have felt the prayers that were offered on their behalf.

Our Prayer Wheel is sent out via email and currently goes out to approximately 65 people. Would you like to be part of this important ministry? If you are interested in receiving the prayer requests via email, please let Melanie Sheen know and she can add you to the contact list.

Also, if you want the Prayer Wheel started for a concern, you can contact Mel via text (308) 379-0799 or send directly to the Church Prayer Wheel address at prayerwheelffumc@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering to be part of this important and vital ministry.

"And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the Lord's people."
Ephesians 6:18 NIV



On All Saints Day, November 6th, we **publicly remembered and honored those who have passed away** this year. This is a way of honoring the impact their lives have had on us.

<i>William (Bill) Stoppkotte</i>	<i>January 21, 2022</i>	<i>Pearl Jensen</i>	<i>February 7, 2022</i>
<i>Shirley Marie Stelk</i>	<i>February 10, 2022</i>	<i>Joyce Dee Webb</i>	<i>March 8, 2022</i>
<i>Janet Boltz</i>	<i>April 22, 2022</i>	<i>Jean (Jeannie) Jensen</i>	<i>May 29, 2022</i>
<i>Elizabeth (Beth) Obermiller</i>	<i>June 16, 2022</i>	<i>Michael (Mike) Gray</i>	<i>September 9, 2022</i>
<i>Jerome (Jerry) Brand</i>	<i>November 3, 2022</i>		



We extend our sincere sympathies to the family and friends of:

Jerome (Jerry) Brand
November 3, 2022
Member since 11-13-77

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION WITH ENGLEMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Be a part of our partnership with Engleman Elementary School with bi-monthly workdays scheduled throughout the school year. Our next workday is on December 8th at 8:30 a.m.

If interested, or if you have questions, please call Glenda Vetter at 308-383-1716.



Thank you so much to everyone who took the time to make the amazing decorations and crafts for the Craft Fair and for baking



delicious treats for the Bake Sale on Saturday, November 19th. We had a great turn out and raised \$3,614.50 for the church and \$1,111.00 for United Women in Faith!



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSE 112

Martha and Juan Rodriguez, along with their three children, were blessed with a new quilt and matching pillow from the First Faith quilters on Sunday, November 6th. Board members from Habitat and their mentor, Max, presented the couple with the special gift. This wonderful family has waited almost two years, completing 500 hours of sweat equity, to achieve their dream of owning their own home. Special thanks to the amazing quilters who have blessed this deserving couple with a warm quilt that perfectly matches their new home."

Alyssa Heagy, Executive Director



New Great Plains Bishop Announced

The South-Central Jurisdictional Conference was held in Houston, Texas, November 2-5. The Jurisdictional Conference was tasked with electing three new bishops and assign all bishops in the South-Central Jurisdiction.

Rev. Dr. David Wilson was elected bishop at the conference and has been assigned to be the new episcopal leader of the Great Plains Annual Conference. He will start on January 1, 2023.

- Bishop Wilson has been the assistant to the Bishop for the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference since 2021.
- He was the conference superintendent for the OIMC for 19 years.
- Bishop Wilson was the lead coordinator for the North Oklahoma City Native American Ministry for eight years
- He was the pastor of a church in Norman, Oklahoma for eight years.
- Bishop Wilson served seven years as Director of Promotions/Interpretations for the OIMC,
- He was the pastor of a church in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and campus minister for the Native American Campus Ministry program at Northeastern State University.
- He earned an undergraduate degree in mass communications from Oklahoma City University, a master's degree in divinity from Phillips Theological Seminary and an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Bacone College.
- As a member of the Choctaw Nation, the bishop is the first Native American bishop in the history of The United Methodist Church.
- He is looking forward to educating the Great Plains about Native American culture, history and issues.



Bishop Saenz has been assigned as the new bishop to the North and Central Texas Annual Conferences.



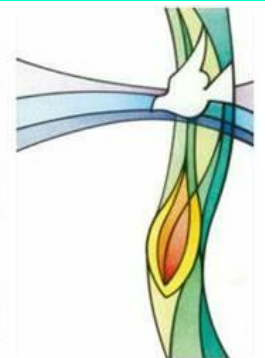
Blue? Yes, blue as in the blues. As in "I am feeling blue." Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays.

Dealing with the death of a loved one,

facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with health issues that puts a question mark over the future, and several other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our congregations and communities.

We hope that you will join us for our Blue Christmas Service on Wednesday, December 21st, at 7:00 p.m. as we come together and make space for those who are struggling during the holidays.

Confirmation Information Meeting



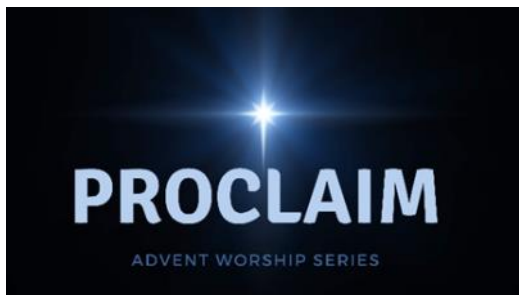
Confirmation 2023 Informational Meeting

for both parents and students
Sunday, December 11th, @ 3:00 p.m.

Youth Room

5th grade to 12-years-old

Learn about the confirmation process at First-Faith and how important confirmation is to the faith development of our youth. All classes are led by Pastor Ray with the help of Confirmation Mentors. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Ray.



Advent Worship Series

Advent is a season that we often focus on the wait for the coming of Jesus. But, throughout scripture, we see prophets and angels tell us how we and the world will be changed by the coming of Emanuel, God with us. We are called to prepare, and to proclaim that we are ready for the Messiah to come. Join us the four Sundays of advent for Proclaim.

1st Sunday of Advent—Isaiah 2:1-5—Proclaim God’s Promised Day

Isaiah tells about a day when wars end, swords are beaten in to plowshares. Isaiah proclaims the world like we’ve never seen it. We are called to keep holding on to hope as we proclaim Jesus in our lives and in our world. How does this hope change us and the world?

2nd Sunday of Advent—Isaiah: 11:1-10—Proclaim Repentance

Lions and lambs laying together, a new world is coming. But to be a part of that we need to repent. The shoot from the stump of Jesse is coming to bring a new type of world, a world that is grounded in God’s love and righteousness. Isaiah proclaims that he is also coming to justly judge. Only through honest confession and reconciliation can we truly proclaim with our whole lives that the Kingdom of God is drawing near.

3rd Sunday of Advent—Isaiah 35:1-10—Proclaim Delight


This is a Sunday we celebrate joy. Isaiah has proclaimed that the messiah’s coming will bring delight to all creation. The whole creation sings for joy! What does it look like to delight in God’s goodness. How do we proclaim God’s goodness in a broken world?

4th Sunday of Advent—Matthew 1:18-25—Proclaim Courage

As we draw close to Christmas we spend time remembering the courage of both Joseph and Mary. Joseph wishes to avoid an awkward situation with a pregnant fiancé but an Angel proclaims whom Mary is carrying and Joseph chooses to trust. What are ways we can be courageous and proclaim God’s peace and love? Can we be courageous enough to proclaim Christ when we it would be easier to stay quiet?

Christmas Eve—Luke 2:1-20—Proclaim Jesus

A proclamation drives this story to bring Mary and Joseph to a barn in a backwoods town where the messiah is born. What may seem like a moment where there would be no fanfare or excitement becomes something different. Angels proclaim the news— They draw in shepherds to share in the proclamation. The news of Christmas calls us to proclaim Jesus. To share what we saw and tell the stories. Christmas is a reminder that we are all called to proclaim that God came to us—to be with us and like us—and love us. We should not be afraid to proclaim it to the world.



*Christmas Eve
Worship
7:00pm*

This traditional Candlelight Communion service celebrates Emmanuel, God-with-us. We’ll share the world-altering narrative of the inbreaking, indwelling, incarnation of the Holy among us.



FIRST-FAITH UMC

Holiday Worship Schedule

<u>CHRISTMAS DAY</u> LESSONS & CAROLS 9:30AM	<u>NEW YEARS DAY</u> TRADITIONAL WORSHIP 9:30AM
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First-Faith United Methodist Church
 4190 W Capital Ave
 Grand Island, NE 68803

Return Service Requested

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Worship Schedule

Sunday

9:30am - Morning Service
 10:30 am - Sunday School
 and Fellowship Time

Office Phone:

(308) 384-5620

Office Email:

firstfaithumc@gmail.com

Website:

http://firstfaithumcgi.org

Office Hours:

Mon-Fri 8:00-4:30
 (Closed 12-1 pm - Lunch Hour)

Pastor: Rev. Wm. Ray Stone



New Steps Youth Group

We will meet for Youth Group on the following Wednesdays in December from 7:00 to 8:15 pm.

December 7th: The youth will be writing notes of encouragement to our college freshmen as they prepare for finals week.

December 14th: This will be our Christmas party! Bring a pair of wrapped silly socks for our silly sock exchange. We will be playing games and having pizza so be sure to come! Bring a friend to join in the fun!

December 21st and 28th: The youth will not be meeting due to the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

January 4th, 2023: Our first meeting in January.



Have a fabulous Christmas vacation and we will meet in the New Year!

Pictured from left to right: Greyson Underwood, Cole Salpas, Cody Pennell and Macey Salpas. Pumpkin carving on October 26th!



Article Deadline for January Newsletter: December 21, 2022