



A publication of First-Faith United Methodist

MESSENGER

Happy new year First-Faith family! As we come to the end of the Christmas season, I hope that you were able to celebrate with family and friends. The end of the year, and the dawning of a new year, brings a moment of reflection for me. I am so happy and proud of this congregation and your continued devotion to serving and loving in our community.

We are all incredibly blessed to have such a wonderful crew of volunteers and a dedicated and talented staff here at First-Faith. The magic of Advent and Christmas does not just occur out of thin air, it takes time, effort and dedication from all involved to make it happen. I want to thank our staff and our many volunteers who helped to make Advent and Christmas a wonderful season of celebration and joy.

I am also incredibly proud of the history and legacy of faithfulness that we celebrated this year for the ten-year anniversary. I am so thankful to be a part of your history and to be able to celebrate these milestones with you. I look forward in 2024 to continuing this congregations' mission of growing together in faith, knowledge and love of God, and being a light of hope to our neighbors.

During Advent and Christmas, it may seem easier to stay focused on the vision of Jesus coming into the world. After the hectic business of the holidays, it seems like life goes back to normal, but the Christian life is anything but normal. To live as a disciple of Jesus is an extraordinary journey of faith.

Our growth as the people of God does not end at Christmas and Easter. Much like any relationship, it takes work. It takes time and a commitment to help the relationship flourish and to help guide and renew us.

January and the first half of February mark a transitional time between Christmas and Lent that is called Epiphany. Even in this transition there is not a reason to give up on the work of becoming the people of God. I would argue that it is probably even more important at those times of transition to recommit ourselves to our faith and the work of growing in the peace and grace of God.

Our Epiphany worship series is called ***Becoming the People of God***. We will be exploring the gospels in this season as we look at the examples of Christ and his disciples for the building of new relationships and trust in God. I hope you will join us in this season of Epiphany as we are becoming the people of God.

Once again, I am so blessed and privileged to be your pastor. 2023 was a wonderful reminder of how much you all have meant to me and my family. I am so grateful to this church for helping me grow and deepen my faith each day. I am also so thankful for all the gifts and cards this holiday season. You have truly helped to make this a special season. I am looking forward to a new and prosperous year of growth and transformation. I hope that you have a blessed new year. May God's grace and mercy keep you until we meet again.

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)!



Handbell Choir Practice
On Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m.
Choir Practice on Wednesdays
at 7:00 p.m.
Come and join us!

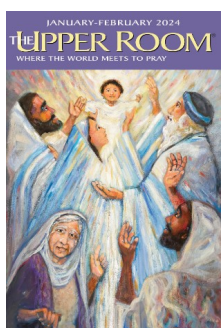
Meetings and Circles

- Tues, Jan 2** - Ruth Circle meets at 1:30 pm at Deb Trosper's, **Trustees Meeting at 7:00 pm**
- Mon, Jan 8** - Finance Committee Mtg at 5:30 pm Church Council Mtg at 6:30 pm
- Tues, Jan 9** - UWF Exec. Board Mtg. at 1:30 pm UMM Meeting at 6:30 pm
- Thurs, Jan 18** - SPRC Meeting at 1:00 pm
- Mon, Jan 22** - Susanna Circle meets at 6:30 pm



2024 Stewardship Update

We have received 50 commitments for giving next year totaling \$151,380. Each year our goal is to increase the number of commitments that we receive. Last year we had 40 pledges and so we are so excited to see so many step up to pledged giving this year. While we understand not everyone can make a pledge on their giving, it is a helpful tool for us in planning the finances and ministries of the church. If you are still interested in making a pledge or would like to talk about other options for giving, please do not hesitate to contact Pastor Ray.



The Upper Room is a daily devotional magazine. Feel free to pick up a copy of the January-February 2024 issue which is available in the narthex.. The daily meditations are written by readers of the magazine and others interested in sharing their faith experiences through writing.

Suggested donation amounts:
Regular Print: \$1.50
Large Print: \$2.00



Let's celebrate the New Year Together!
Saturday, January 13th
Meet at the church at 12 noon

Come and have some delicious pizza (it's free!) and then we'll play board games. If you would like to bring a side dish, that would be great but it's definitely optional.

If you are single, we would love to have you join us!

Please RSVP to the church office by Wednesday, January 10th, so that we know how many to plan for.



Community Soup Supper

(this is a fundraiser for the church)

Tuesday, January 16, 2024 from 5 to 7 p.m.
Cost: \$8.00 each (Adults)
\$5.00 each (12 and under)

This includes your choice of Chili, Chicken Noodle or Cheeseburger soup and dessert.
Please pay at the door.

If you would like to help, we will need people to come and make the soups on January 16th, donate food items by January 15th (they can be placed in the kitchen) and bring desserts.
Sign-up sheets will be in the narthex.

If you have questions, see Sharon Sorensen or Mary Jo Mowinkel.

Any monetary donations, to help buy the food items, can be given to Mary Jo or Sharon. You are invited to bring a canned good to support the church Food Pantry.



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 - Cheryl Arrowsmith
Alta Crapson
Brian Ford
Shirley Richards | 14 - Terry Sheen
18 - Dorothy Ammerman
Melodie Bigger
Jama Morrison
Paula Rauert |
| 4 - Randi Pennell | 19 - Ruth Clough
Pat Igo |
| 6 - Michelle Carlson | 21 - Susan Albers |
| 7 - Connie Anderson | 24 - Pastor Ray Stone |
| 8 - Leola Harlow | 26 - Rob Leigh |
| 11 - Liz Seifert | 27 - Anna Sorensen |
| 12 - Matt Albers | |
| 14 - Evelyn Henderson | |



JANUARY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Doug and Margaret - January 5, 1974 - 50th Anniversary!
Devin and Leah Borer - January 17, 2015 - 9 years



Dear Members of First-Faith Methodist Church:

I want to thank you for all the birthday cards and wishes for my 80th birthday. My church family definitely made my birthday very special!

Along with my birthday celebration happiness came great sadness due to the death of my grandson, Joe. I want to thank you for the prayers, warm thoughts, hugs and cards that were sent to my family. They have been greatly appreciated.

Joyce Lind

HELPING ONE ANOTHER

We are in need of winter clothing for the WIC Bags as we are getting low. Size newborn to 6 months. One-piece footed pajamas are always nice. You can place any donations in the *Donations for WIC Bags* basket in the narthex. The WIC program has handed out all but 3 of the bags that we have donated and they very much appreciate us doing this for them. Thank you for your help!



Tri-City Storm Faith and Family Night
Saturday, March 16, 2024
At the Viaero Center in Kearney
Doors open at 5...Puck Drops at 6:05 pm
Tickets are \$10 each.

These ice hockey players play hard and they are fun to watch. If you are interested in going as a group, then we can buy tickets together and sit in the same section. Just give your \$10 per person (cash only) and name to Stacey Salpas or bring into the church office by March 1st so we can purchase the tickets and get them to you.



Let's have a fun night out watching ice hockey!

EXERCISE CLASSES

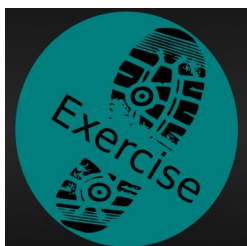
Strong Women
Every Monday and Wednesday at 3:00 p.m.

Chair Yoga
Every Tuesday and Thursday at 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Step Aerobics
Every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at 5:15 p.m.
There will be no class on January 16th.

There will be no classes on New Year's Day.

Wear comfortable clothes & come and join us!





SAVE THE DATE

Ash Wednesday Service

February 14 @ 7:00 pm

Everyone is welcome.

Ladies' Sewing Group

**January 9 and 23
at 9:30 a.m.**

We meet at the church
and all are welcome!



On November 28th, Leola Harlow and Judy Bliss took 57 homemade doll quilts to the Heartland United Way. The First-Faith sewing group made 30 of them and the Salvation Army sewing group made 27. Thank you , ladies, for all of your hard work. I'm sure that the little ones who receive them will be delighted!!

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION WITH ENGLEMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

We would love to have you join us in this ministry. This month, we will meet at Engleman on Thursday, January 11th and 25th, at 8:30 a.m. If you have questions, please contact Glenda Vetter at 308-383-1716.



Men's Fellowship and Cornhole



Even if you've never played before, come on out and join us for some fun. We'll be playing every Thursday night at 7:30 pm in the church sanctuary.

Please enter through the kitchen door.

MEN'S COFFEE TIME

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



WHAT IS LUNCH BUNCH?



It's a monthly gathering of old and new friends. We gather to share a potluck meal (bring a dish to share) and have lots of good conversation. Then, we play a game or cards.

Come and join us on **Wednesday, January 10th, at 12 noon**
Then, save the date on your calendar for the second Wednesday of every month.

It will be at the church and everyone is welcome!



The Church Office will be closed on Monday, January 1st.



Engleman Elementary School reached out to us and are in need of some pants for their students.

They are requesting sizes 6 to 10 for boys and girls. They need black sweatpants for boys and either black sweatpants or stretchy pants for girls. The students (for some reason) prefer not to wear jeans. Donations can be placed in the "Educational Partnership" basket on the top of the coat rack in the narthex. Thank you.

Human Relations Day Special Offering

Human Relations Day (January 14) is a denomination wide Special Sunday designed to celebrate and raise awareness to further the development of better human relations by involving congregations in community and youth outreach. A special offering will be taken the Sunday before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Gifts received for the offering build King's vision of "the beloved community" through programs such as Community Developers and United Methodist Voluntary Services and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs.





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, having a snack and making a craft.

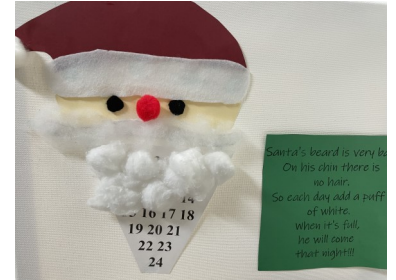
We will be open on Wednesday from 9 to 11:30 a.m. - January 10 and 24

Please feel free to invite friends and family to use this service.
Questions? Call Sharon Sorensen at 308-382-7543.



To end the year, on Wednesday, December 13th, the children had a big surprise...Santa Claus came to visit and he gave them a candy cane and green caramel popcorn ball!

The "Grandma's" gave each of the kids a coloring book and Goldfish crackers. They got to make a Santa craft to count down the days until Christmas (so cute). Each day they will add a cotton ball until Santa's beard is full!



The Refresh kids had a great time at their Christmas Party!



Santa Claus came by on Sunday, December 17th, to say "hi" to the kids and read them his favorite story about the birth of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Santa!



Merry Christmas!

Thank You for Your Generosity This Christmas

Thank you to everyone for the gifts and cards this Christmas for the First-Faith staff. We are grateful for your support and your generosity this holiday season. You are what make working and serving here outstanding. A special thanks to the Staff Parish Committee for organizing the collection.

Thank you,
First-Faith Ministers and Staff

Acolyte Training

An Acolyte is person who assists in the worship service. The acolyte serves by lighting and extinguishing the candles on the altar table, and the acolyte may also assist in other portions of the worship service. It is the custom in our church for the acolytes to be young persons, giving them an early opportunity to be participants in the service. If you have a young person (2nd grade or older) that would like to be trained for Acolyte work, we will have a training on January 28th after worship. Please let Pastor Ray know if your child will attend.



2024 PRAIRIE RIVERS DISTRICT FIRST- FAITH MISSION SHARES AMOUNT			Percentage of Mission Share	Mission Share Breakdown
	Mission Shares	Great Plains, incl jurisdictional funds	72.34%	\$13,891.00
		Episcopal Fund	4.21%	\$809.00
		Africa University	0.43%	\$82.00
		Black College	1.92%	\$368.00
		Ministerial Education	4.81%	\$923.00
		World Service	14.23%	\$2,732.00
		General Administration	1.69%	\$324.00
		Interdenominational Cooperation	0.37%	\$72.00
				\$19,201.00
Mission Agency Support			\$1,920.00	
District Mission Share			\$948.00	
			\$22,069.00	

New Digital Church Sign

The new church sign has now been installed! You may have noticed some construction out front of the church the last few weeks. For the last several months we have been awaiting the installation of a new digital sign from Mayhew Signs. The new sign has been installed on the North side of the property out in front of the building. The idea of a new sign has been in discussion for many years, but the dream was not realized until this year. This new sign was made possible by a donation from a church member and designated funds that had been set aside for a new sign. We are so excited to get it up and running and learning about all the things it can do. We hope you will take some time to go look at it the next time you are at church.



Mayhew Sign company digging footings for the new sign and pouring concrete to secure the steel posts.





Becoming the People of God Worship Series

Worship Series for the New Year

We begin the new calendar year in the season of Epiphany, a time when we focus on the revelation that Jesus is fully God and fully human, God Incarnate among us. This year, we are using the season between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday to explore becoming

the people of God. Notice that we do not say “become” or “became” or “will become.” Rather, we are on a constant journey of becoming as we travel a path that we share with faithful followers of Jesus Christ throughout the ages. We are guided by the divine Light of Christ who forms us individually and communally into the people of God. We hope you will join us each week in this journey of Becoming the People of God.

January 7—Mark 1:4-11—Washed Clean—Baptismal Remembrance & Holy Communion

January 14—John 1:43-51—Building a Team—Human Relations Day (Special Offering)

January 21—Mark 1:14-20—Career Change—Holy Communion

January 28—Mark 1:21-28—Making a Name

Better Together Giving

In September we celebrated the 10 years of ministry as First-Faith UMC. For 10 years, we have worshiped and served together, showing the strength that is found in this church and in the unity of two congregations. Through the faithfulness of brothers and sisters in Christ, we stand on the firm foundation the many saints that have helped provide for us.

In honor of their faithfulness, we believe that it is the call of all our church members to build for our future. In honor of our anniversary, **we are asking that each member contribute \$10 to our First Faith Savings Fund.** Our desire is that on the first Sunday of the year, each member will give to this fund the years of service of First - Faith UMC. With these gifts we hope to build up savings so that we can guarantee that First-Faith UMC will be in ministry for generations to come.

We will be collecting this special offering on Sunday, January 7, 2024. I hope that you will join to show our gratitude and our faithfulness in building a firm foundation for our future.



The United Methodist Men
are hosting their
Annual Valentine's Banquet
on
Sunday, February 18th,
at 6:00 p.m.

The tickets are \$20.00 each.

Each ticket includes ham and roast beef,
au gratin potatoes, green beans, salad and homemade
desserts.

The entertainment will be delightful!
Get your tickets from any of the UMM Men.
Everyone is welcome to come!



First-Faith United Methodist Church
 4190 W Capital Ave
 Grand Island, NE 68803
 Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Permit #22
 Grand Island, NE

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://firstfaithumc.org

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

Pastor: Rev. Wm. Ray Stone



New Steps Youth Group

January can be a long, cold month! Make plans to attend youth group as we gather and learn more about our God and the Bible. Each Wednesday includes snacks, games and a Bible lesson. Often youth are involved in the service project of writing notes to members of our congregation. Weather permitting, we will also clean and change the signs in the Prayer Path.



**Our youth will meet on the following Wednesdays in January:
 January 3rd, 10th, 17th (Game Night!), 24th and 31st**



We will begin a new study titled ***The Bible, Where It Came From and How To Read It***. Youth have been reading from the book of Genesis and are ready to get a broader sense and knowledge of how the Bible functions to make it easier to read and study. There is a timeline posted in our youth room that really helps us keep the "order" of events in place.

Be watching at the beginning of February as the Youth will again offer sub sandwiches as a fund raiser for Super Bowl Sunday on February 11th.

The Annual Silly Sock Exchange at the Christmas Party on December 13th was a big hit! And a BIG THANK YOU to Gena Hess for providing us with yummy sugar cookies for the kids to decorate!!



Article Deadline for February Newsletter: January 22, 2023