

# Connect

July 2024



**Morita Truman, Pastor**

As we approach the start date for our new Minister of Education, I asked Liz to share some thoughts with us. It continues on p. 2

## **Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors: The Process of Learning**

By Liz Emis, Incoming Minister of Education

There exists in my memory an indelible image of the person my children remember as their "first" President, the person they remember coming first in their memory at least. That

person was Barack Obama, and the indelible image to which I refer is the now famous photograph of President Obama bending down so a young, Black child could touch his hair. That child stretched their arm up as high as they could, just as much as Obama bent low to reach the child. They both extended past themselves to meet in that curiosity-filled space between them, and connected over their hair in the Oval Office. That young child gasped with wonder and could not believe what he was feeling. The President of the United States of America looked like him, felt like him, and identified *with* him. When my children see that photograph, they grin and chuckle at how happy the child seems. I smile because that image is a perfect example of a mirror, and my children are luckier than they realize to have been alive to keep that in their own memories.

Mirrors are a wonderful tool used in education - they are opportunities for humans to see those who are similar to them and learn their stories. For marginalized populations, mirrors are critical as they allow people to see themselves in others, others rising in agency and power, and those under explicit oppression. Seeing their stories told, the stories of liberation and those of suffering, helps oppressed peoples remember they are part of a community. There is great solidarity in such communal understanding, and such accompaniment promotes identity rooted in togetherness. Mirrors can project the inherent value of those who see themselves reflected back. Mirrors teach. They offer meaning-making. They offer knownness. And in this way, they offer the Divine.

For those who don't see themselves reflected back (in the case of the Obama photograph, those would be my white children Jackson and William), these images are not mirrors but windows, allowing people to see into the lives of those from whom we are dissimilar. The Obama photograph allows my children to peer into the lives of Black children, children for whom having a Black president made such achievement seem

*Continued on page 2*



## **Worship Schedule**

### **Sundays**

8:30 & 10:50 am In-Person  
(10:50 am service streamed)

[www.fumcomaha.org/live](http://www.fumcomaha.org/live)  
[www.facebook.com/fumcomaha](https://www.facebook.com/fumcomaha)

### **Taizé Prayer**

Saturday, July 6, 5:00 pm  
Mead Chapel

### **Pastor**

Rev. Morita Truman

### **Receive "Connect"**

E-mail Lorraine in the church office,  
[Lorraine.Dalziel@fumcomaha.org](mailto:Lorraine.Dalziel@fumcomaha.org) with  
your address and you will begin receiving  
the newsletter by e-mail or snail mail.  
If you know of someone who would like  
to receive our newsletter, let us know.

### **Church Office Hours**

8:30 am - 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday  
Closed Friday - Sunday  
Building Closed Thursday, July 4

*"We are a United Methodist  
congregation of all sexual  
orientations and gender identities  
making disciples of Jesus Christ for  
the transformation of the world. We  
stand in solidarity with all who work  
against injustice and discrimination  
through peace and justice."*



# Welcoming

*Continued from page 1*

possible. So possible, in fact, one Black child could literally touch it.

Mirrors offer the opportunity to create identity. Windows offer the chance to unearth awakening, empathy, and humility. Together, these tools build social solidarity, what some call the chance at opening a sliding glass door into the lives of those around us and them into ours. As these doors slide open into one another's worlds, we are much more likely to expand our understanding of the *Imago Dei*, and expand our willingness to co-create social systems that allow for greater liberation for all. No one should never have a chance to see themselves in a mirror, and no one should ever be exempt from peering out a window.

It was a child in the Oval Office who taught my children something about the world by looking out a window. They glimpsed another world that lives alongside theirs, and they now must choose whether they will interact with it, live with it, live for its liberation. That's what stories do - they give glimpses, and as part of my new role, I'm asking the entire FUMC Omaha congregation to peer into new worlds by helping me build a Liberative Education Library. Scan this QR code below or visit [amzn.to/4eEv96E](https://amzn.to/4eEv96E) to be taken to a new Amazon Wish List of books for children and adults that offer mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors into worlds your children already live within and need spaces to discuss. By purchasing books off this list, you demonstrate that the secular is Sacred, that all stories are important to tell, and that books discussing the lives and families in marginalized populations are key to creating a just, restored kin-dom. You'll find a wide range of characters, storylines, themes, and literary styles bringing to life the stories of our neighbors in various populations, including the Black, Hispanic, LGBTQIA+, neurodiverse, economically underserved, and Indigenous communities. You'll also find adult books on liberative theologies, organizing, intergenerational spiritual formation, and more.

I hope to hold intergenerational book readings this fall using children's books. I hope all ages attend, as there is nothing like seeing the Sacred through the eyes of a child. A children's book might just be the window that inspires you to walk through the next sliding glass door you find.



With peace, Liz Emis (A reminder from Morita: after you check the QR code, you're encouraged to shop Urban Abbey or a local independent bookstore to make purchases)

## MOVIE GROUP

**Tuesday, July 9, 6 pm**

in-person at FUMC Ada Mead Hall & Zoom

### TREASURE

*Optional dinner after  
meeting at local restaurant,  
email for info.*

Contact

**Bonnie Wallace**

[bonniewallace59@gmail.com](mailto:bonniewallace59@gmail.com)

for more info and to  
receive ZOOM link!



## Taizé Prayer

**1st Saturday of the month**

**5:00 - 5:40 pm**

**Mead Chapel**

In-Person (enter door 11)



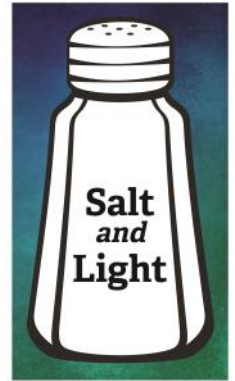
**Next Date July 6**

This is an opportunity to open our hearts  
and minds, to listen and to rest in Divine  
Presence. It is a spiritual practice.

**YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN!**

## What is your definition of a patriot?

Well, it can be a recreational vehicle, a sports team, lighting, software, and the list goes on. As our nation celebrates July 4th, the true meaning of *patriot* calls for a deeper conversation. Members of the FUMC Salt and Light Team were asked to share some of their thoughts:



Who is the best patriot? *The best patriot is one who wants her country to be the best it can possibly be. I yearn for a country where people support and love one another and work together for a better quality of life for all.* **Lynne Elwood**

What is a patriotic act you have done? *I collected petition signatures at the RCMC recently. This was WAY outside my comfort zone but I did it anyhow, and got about a dozen signatures. And everyone who signed thanked me!* **Kate Fiandt**

I commit to carefully vetting all candidates for political office and voting in every election. **Liz Boyer**

What is the difference between patriotism and nationalism: *For me, the difference is: Patriotism is the love for one's country, all its citizens, and its flaws. Nationalism is allegiance to your nation without consideration for its citizens or other countries. Nationalists feel their country is superior to all other nations. White nationalism is an offshoot.* **Laura Seyl**



My vision of America the Beautiful includes a beautiful tapestry of all human colors, shapes, abilities and languages AND a deep respect and care for the land itself.

**Carol Windrum**

My spiritual path guides me to link patriotism with core Christian values specifically John Wesley's quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. When are we misinterpreting the Scriptures? When do reason and experience tell us that we need to change course? **Carol LaCroix**

The link of patriotism and core Christian values is "faithfully loving and caring for each other" **Kevin Wycoff**

As we gather for picnics, fireworks and parades around July 4th, may each of us take to heart all these thoughts and perhaps include the following in our conversations with family and friends. True patriotism springs from a belief in the dignity of the individual, freedom and equality not only for Americans but for all people on earth... **Eleanor Roosevelt**

## FUMC MARCHING IN BENSON DAYS PARADE

community  
**BENSON**  
July 27+28  
**DAYS**  
reimagined

Join our FUMC family as we march in the Benson Days parade on Saturday, July 27th. The parade starts at 10:00am, but we will get there earlier to line up. If you would like to march with us sign-ups are in the Gathering Place.

We will be wearing our "Fiercely Inclusive" shirts!

## MEMORIAL SERVICE

COYNER SMITH

FRIDAY, JULY 12 - 1 PM

Reception to follow service in the Commons



# Acting

## Please remember in prayer these members of our Church Family:

Joan Clark, Juanita Edwards, Clif Ellis, Dave England, Nev Fredrickson, Claudia Hesselgesser, Jodie Johns, Tim Ivins, Marvin & Suzanne Morgan, Marj Phillips, Millie Plumb, Deborah Mabry-Strong, Barb Winfield, Terry Joseph White

**Sympathies** to the family of Coyner Smith, husband of Donna Smith; Diane Simpson, daughter-in-law of Nancy Simpson; Marilyn Seiker, grandmother of Fran Sillau, who transitioned to new life. Our prayers are with these families.

**Congratulations** on the births of Nolyn Kay Wojahn on June 10, daughter of Kathryn and Jeremy Wojahn, granddaughter of Mary Meade, and great granddaughter of Walter and Nancy Coziahr; and Valan Rhea Phy on February 15, daughter of Michael & Megan Phy, granddaughter of Chris Smith, great-granddaughter of Coyner and Donna Smith.

**Submit your prayer requests to:** Lynne Elwood at [lelwood2@gmail.com](mailto:lelwood2@gmail.com) or call the church office at 402-556-6262.

*Please follow these guidelines when submitting a request for the Prayer Chain:*

- For yourself: Give a brief statement of the need - illness, grief, crisis.
- For others: Use names without describing the need. Give the first or full name and relationship - friend, brother/sister, spouse/partner, parent, child, etc.
- Get permission from the person to be listed before contacting Lynne or the church.

## Clair Cares Food Pantry

### Volunteers Needed!

Next Opportunity  
for Volunteering  
July 18 & 19

Clair Memorial UMC | 5544 Ames Ave.



## PASTORAL CARE

*In these times, if you are in need of additional support, pastoral care, or there is an emergency, please reach out to:*

**Morita Truman**

[Morita.Truman@fumcomaha.org](mailto:Morita.Truman@fumcomaha.org)  
or call 402.556.6262 x1002

You can also email **Lynne Elwood**  
[lelwood2@gmail.com](mailto:lelwood2@gmail.com) to be added to our prayer chain.

**We are here for you!**

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER!

Kate Beck, who joined by profession of faith on June 23

**Become our  
Newest Member!**

We continue to invite new friends to join First United Methodist by profession of faith, transfer of membership from a UM or other denomination/congregation.

Please call Morita or email her at  
[morita.truman@fumcomaha.org](mailto:morita.truman@fumcomaha.org)  
if you'd like to talk about membership.



A big heartfelt thank you to all my church family for the many cards and phone calls I received for my 93rd birthday. They were very much appreciated.

*Blessings, Juanita Edwards*

# Inspiring

## ECO TEAM

Nothing virtual here!! It's hands on for our kids during Sunday School!!

What happens when you have a big hole in the ground, a bunch of plants and inquisitive kids? It was a great morning during the Sunday School hour, June 16th, when members of the Eco team, with leader Deb Ratzlaff, took a walking tour of the soon-to-be rain garden on



the southwest part of the church property. The children participated in demonstrations of how plants can slow water runoff, which is the purpose of a rain garden. Plants in some of the raised beds near the gazebo were identified as being destined for the rain garden. AND THEN, hands got in the soil and the kids helped dig a hole in one of the raised beds, planted sedge, scooped dirt around it and gave it a big dose of water! The children learned that sedge is native to Nebraska and just the perfect plant for our rain garden. It thrives in heat and cold, drought and rain. When you are at church next, take your own tour of the rain garden "plant nursery!"

Update for our rain garden team: the site has been excavated! The surface soil in that area is more compacted than expected and is not absorbing water well so volunteers are digging into the soil to penetrate this layer to reach the more absorbent soil underneath and adding compost and mulch. As mentioned above, some plants are already thriving in our raised beds and others will be planted in the rain garden later this summer and mostly in the fall.

Our Eco Team is looking forward to two more Sundays this summer when we will engage the children in more earth friendly activities! Come join us, July 21 and August 18. You're never too old to learn something new about God's creation!

*Carol Windrum*



We have just completed the first month of "Camp Rainbow," our summertime program in which kids participate in one-week learning experiences. Most of our time is spent in the outdoor nature center, unless it is raining. The kids love the sandbox, the water activities, watching the birds at the feeders, and in all those activities they are learning about being in community, sharing, and the joy of using our imaginations. Camp Rainbow is led by members of the Rainbow Factory teaching team, while other members are taking a break or working at other summer jobs.

The room that had flooding in January continues to be under renovation. Sanding and painting are ready to commence, new baseboards have been ordered, a new lowered ceiling is ready to be installed, and we hope to have the room set up and ready for inspection for state licensing soon. In the fall that new larger room will house the all day classroom.

Ways you can help with the preschool include: volunteer to help paint in room 102, help spread new mulch in the nature center and place logs for play, or watch for the Amazon wish list for fall created by the preschool staff.

There have been personnel changes. Shamika Bennett resigned recently from teaching, and Rachel Brader, stepped down from her position as co-director. Barb Ruigh will be the new director beginning July 8. We thank all of our preschool staff who have labored in difficult conditions this year. The Rainbow Factory Board is working to fill the openings. Questions? Church members on the preschool board are Alan Dappen, Bob Meyers, Marie Meyers, and Carol Beaty.



# Supporting

## UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

All Church Potluck and Speaker - Thursday, July 11 - the Commons  
Potluck dinner at 6 pm. Bring your favorite dish to share and your own place settings and cloth napkins if possible.



### *How'd Our Elections Get This Way?*

After dinner, guest speaker Barry Anderson, a retired journalism professor and radio and television producer addresses how the U.S. was the first country in history founded not by military conquest or religious fervor, but by a small group of men who convinced the majority of people it should exist. The founding fathers understood the rules of effective public relations campaigns, and journalists were always integral to the process. But politics changed in the 1930s when Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter, a couple in California, met by chance, formed a PR firm, and invented the modern negative media campaign. Anderson tells a fascinating story of the birth of the tactics evident today in every American election.

*Everyone is welcome! See you at the Potluck!!*

### Midwest Mission Trip - Thursday, August 8

Midwest Mission Distribution Center is affiliated with the UMC Illinois Great Rivers Conference. There are two centers, one is in Jefferson, Iowa which is a couple of hours from Omaha. FUMC-UWF has signed up to bring a team to the Jefferson center on August 8. For more information on the types of projects the center does, check <https://www.midwestmission.org/iowa>

The plan is to drive to Jefferson in the morning and spend a few hours in the afternoon volunteering. We will return to Omaha that evening. We welcome any church members to travel to Jefferson with us. Miriam Chapman is the contact person for volunteering., contact her at 402-981-5986 ( leave a call back number) or [madamebovine@outlook.com](mailto:madamebovine@outlook.com)). Miriam needs to provide the center with a list of the volunteers in July.

*On Thursday, August 8 we will meet at the church at 8 am to carpool to Jefferson. Our shift is from 12:30 to 4 pm. We plan on stopping for lunch prior to the shift. There is a \$6 per person fee for each volunteer which goes to the distribution center.*



Our next volunteer opportunities  
at the Food Bank in 2024 are:

Tuesday, September 10th  
1-3:30 pm

Tuesday, December 10th  
1-3:30 pm

[foodbankheartland.org](http://foodbankheartland.org) or contact

Bruce Deines

[brucedeines@gmail.com](mailto:brucedeines@gmail.com) or

Mike Rosenthal

[mike.rosenthal577@icloud.com](mailto:mike.rosenthal577@icloud.com)



Pictured here is our team with  
youth from Ames, IA who stayed  
in our church building



# Challenging

## Building a Culture of Generosity

*"People who practice extravagant generosity change lives.*

*Their giving knows no bounds. They are rich toward God."*

*~ Bishop Robert Schnase*

We have already started to think about and plan for the fall stewardship campaign. Over the last three years generosity has been at the center of our stewardship campaigns. We began with the phrase "Building a Culture of Generosity." Last year, considering the above quote, we focused on the connection between Gratitude and Generosity. We leaned into learning what gratitude can do in every life, and in everyday life.

Beginning now, before a phone call has been made, before a time and talent card has been mailed, before the stewardship team has met, you are invited to spend time in prayer considering what gifts you possess, what has been entrusted to you, and to pray about how you will be rich toward God. That could be teaching children's Sunday School, singing in the choir, painting a classroom, volunteering in the library or office, or joining a study group, in addition to making a financial pledge. All your gifts keep our church on the front lines of ministry in Omaha and beyond.

**Donate Here**

Scan the QR code for  
one-time or recurring  
donation options



*"Gratitude and attitude are not challenges; they are choices."*

*- Robert Braathe*

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## FUMC Finance Report

Carol Beaty, FUMC Finance Chair

Here is the FUMC monthly report to the congregation written on June 15, 2024.

The Budget approved by the Church Council for 2024 included \$905,310 in income and \$930,919 in expenses. As you can see, if we have all the expenses that were budgeted, we will have to use church reserves to make up the difference. The budget for pledges is \$700,000, an increase of \$50,000 over 2023. Thanks to all our generous pledgers.

Average monthly pledges needed to meet our budget of \$700,000 in pledge income = \$43,024

Jan 2024 pledges - \$223,757 (some members paid entire year) 32.0% of annual budgeted pledges received.  
Feb 2024 pledges - \$34,467 (some members paid entire year) 36.89% of annual budgeted pledges received.  
March 2024 pledges - \$52,812 (some members paid entire year) 44.43% of annual budgeted pledges received.  
April 2024 pledges - \$48,084 (some members paid entire year) 51.30% of annual budgeted pledges received.  
May 2024 pledges - \$39,713 (some members paid entire year) 56.98% of annual budgeted pledges received.

As of May 31, 2024, our total income is 55.47% of what we budgeted. Our expenses are 40.35% of what we budgeted. We would expect income and expenses to be at 41.67% at this time of the year. Our income is higher because of prepaid pledges. Our expenses are close to expectations.

A copy of the church budget approved by the Church Council in January is available upon request. Please notify Carol Beaty or the church office if you would like a copy.

We give thanks for the generosity of our members and friends.

First  
United  
Methodist  
Church



Return Service Requested

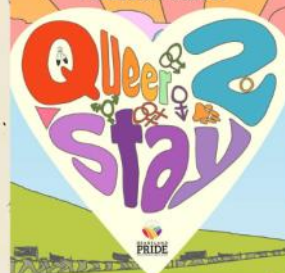
7020 Cass Street  
Omaha, Nebraska 68132-2601

# Join us for PRIDE!



Join us in the gathering  
place to sign up to  
volunteer.

2024 Heartland Pride  
Parade & Festival



## Youth Pride Festival ~ July 12th, 2024 Parade and Festival ~ July 13th, 2024