

Connect

February 2025



Morita Truman, Pastor

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

I have been staring at this page for a week. I had several opening sentences but none seemed right. Does that ever happen to you? I feel like I am supposed to have wise thoughts to share, but my head is swirling.

The month of the year with the least number of days holds so many marker events. It is Black History Month and as DEI programs are disappearing from workplaces and universities

it feels more important than ever to know and share our history, including the messy parts. I'm at home feeling the cold of a -23 wind chill, letting water drip from my kitchen faucet that is on a north wall, and while I don't believe a rodent can predict the weather, on groundhog day I'm hoping to hear "early spring." I am also aware of the climate crisis that is before us. Last week I bought my valentines for Love Sunday, because I am so aware that we all need a little love right now. And there is President's Day when we remember two men who were imperfect but who served the nation to the best of their ability. Washington, who chose to step down as a show of how the presidency would look different from a monarchy, and Lincoln, who reminded us it was always a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

There has to be a message in all of that. I turned to Mr. Lincoln, and found these words, "Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm." I think the old hymn writer said it this way, "on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand..." Yes I am turning to some basics. I don't have a choice. So, where are your feet planted? Stand firm. Are you planted in the ideals of justice and equity? Are you planted in love? Are you planted where there is nurture and care for the least of these, the "untouchables" in our world? Are your feet planted on the path of compassion, inclusion, care, openness? Are you planted in the teachings and ideals of our faith as taught by Jesus? Are your feet planted in the right place? Is your heart? Is your mind? Are your intentions? I'm asking myself those questions too. As we approach this 'shortest' month may we cast a long shadow of standing firm.

On the journey, standing firm with you ~

Worship Schedule

Sundays

8:30 & 10:50 am In-Person

(10:50 am service streamed)

www.fumcomaha.org/live

www.facebook.com/fumcomaha

Taizé Prayer

Saturday, February 1

5:00 pm Mead Chapel

Pastor

Rev. Morita Truman

Receive "Connect"

E-mail Lorraine in the church office, 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

"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."

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Welcoming

A Loving Faith is a “Wet” Faith: A Call to Action



Liz Emis, Minister of Education

We recently discussed water in the context of baptism in worship. Since seeking ordination, my views on baptism have shifted dramatically. I don't focus on the person being baptized. I watch the crowd. I watch their eyes as they scroll through the Hymnal. I listen to their words as they repeat their baptismal vows. Are they speaking in a monotone? Are they speaking with gravitas? I wonder over their focus: are they preparing to hold another (likely) young person accountable? Or, are they embracing that now, that person is responsible for holding them accountable?

One of my favorite theologians is Claudio Carvalhaes who has written extensively on baptism and its interconnectedness with the material world. It's receiving the knowledge that you are a child of God's family and you have responsibilities. Without embracing the here and now and our role in co-creating shalom "our theological sense of baptism will be weak, partial, lacking, and vulnerable to the idols of our age," Carvalhaes says.

In other words, we become dry Christians, stale, stiff, brittle, so desperate for hydration that mirages seem so very attractive, even when they pull our focus from our baptism vows.

Carvalhaes says baptism calls us to two practices: *memory and revolt*. Both are rooted in love. We must remember that Jesus' ministry was his very life, a life of disruption and subversion, a life in which he demanded John baptize him and fill him "with an expanded mission towards transformation and love and care for all human-kind(s)!" By remembering our model's faithful acts as both vulnerable and with the vulnerable, we re-member our responsibility to dismantle systems that do not contribute to the fullness of life for all and build ones that interconnect all life with ours, because our thriving is impossible without the thriving of all.

Whether we are sprinkled, poured, or immersed in water during our baptism, we are to be awash with a compulsion for solidarity. Engaging up close and *in* the margins, alongside the unseen. Mutual uplift prevents us from drying out. It helps us re-member ourselves and remember our baptism. Allowing our selfhood to be contingent on the wellness creation's all-hood keeps us soaking wet with compassion and love.

And now, my call to action.

I'm forming two collaboration and creativity-based groups necessary for FUMC Omaha to live a wet faith. One is a **Multi-Gen Council** composed of children, youth, and adults who want our educational and justice ministries to both stand the test of time and address Omaha's flourishing as our flourishing through mutual aid, civic engagement, camps, outreach, and special events and speakers.

The second is a **Buddy Team**, a group of adults and youth dedicated to educating the church about the beauties and immense learning opportunities for the neurotypical when we both address the needs of and embrace the lessons we learn from the neurodivergent. Buddies will be trained in neurodiverse rhetoric, theological paradigms, and how to foment bonds with neurodivergent FUMC members needing our support to thrive. Some will be paired with children needing Buddies. This team will be part of a larger conversation surrounding how FUMC must shift to a neurodiverse paradigm in its design, resources, programming, worship, and fellowship.

Email me to add your talents, faith, and baptismal vows to either or both efforts. They are critical for the future of our community and for Omaha. Our lives are intertwined. We must re-member ourselves and our vows and begin building in love. I urge you to dive in! **Peace, Salam, and Shalom,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Liz Emis'.

What Difference Does It Make?



It's tempting to think that our efforts to strengthen our democracy and to enact positive public policy are futile. Does that one letter, one phone call, or petition signing really make a difference?



Well, because FUMC members joined hundreds and thousands of others across our state, starting last month minimum wage workers are now getting \$13.50 an hour and will get \$15 an hour in 2026. That didn't just happen! Because FUMC members offered drive throughs for supporting our public schools, we helped defeat efforts that would have diverted needed funds to private

schools. Because FUMC members gathered signatures to support paid sick leave, thousands of working Nebraskans

can now stay home if they are sick or can care for a family member who is ill without a dock in pay!

Working for the common good can be tedious, slow and tiring! But we keep showing up for God's vision of everyone *sitting neath their vine and fig tree and no one making them afraid* (Micah 4:4)

So, we've done faithful work in the past and we will continue to move ahead in the future!

To that end, the *Salt and Light* team invites all our members to take heart and keep involved!

- Adult Forum, February 2, 9:35 a.m. in the Commons
- Learn what is going on in the Unicameral and at the federal level and how you can be a voice for the beloved community!
- 100 Days/100 Prayers: If you haven't already signed up but would like to receive daily prayers via email during the first 100 Days of the new Administration, contact ripplesofhope24@gmail.com
- Every Sunday evening at 7 p.m. for one hour, join a zoom with Rachel Gibson from the League of Women Voters. She will review what happened in the prior week and give an overview of what will be coming up the next week in the Unicameral. Register at: <https://bit.ly/LWVRachelGibsonZoom>
- Ecumenical Legislative Briefing Day is Saturday, February 8 in Lincoln. For more information and to register: <https://nelegisbrief.org/> Note: Maddi Baugous will be leading us in worship!!

Visit the *Ripples of Hope* website often for other information and ways to stay engaged!

bit.ly/RipplesofHope2024

FUMC helped make this happen!

Remember signing a letter in December in the Gathering Place? Well, because you added your support along with many others across the nation, the administration heard us and gave an extension to about 1,900 Sudanese, 103,700 Ukrainians, 232,000 Salvadorans and 600,000 Venezuelans. These vulnerable people with *Temporary Protected Status (TPS)* will now be able to stay in the U.S. for another 18 months!! Let's keep raising our voices for the least of these!!!



Acting

Please remember in prayer these members of our Church Family:

Juanita Edwards, Nev Fredrickson, Kym Kurth, Tim Ivins, Marvin & Suzanne Morgan, Laura Pierce, Terry Joseph White, Lucy Wood.

Sympathies - to the friends and families of those who have transitioned to new life.

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.

MOVIE GROUP

Tuesday, February 13, 6 pm
in-person at FUMC Ada Mead Hall & Zoom

CONCLAVE

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

Contact

Bonnie Wallace

bonniewallace59@gmail.com

for more info or to receive ZOOM link!



The Immigration and Refugee Action Team (IRAT) is sponsoring a winter coat drive to support the Refugee Navigation team at Creighton University Clinic at 24th and Cuming. Many of the refugees, both adults, kids and babies are coming into the clinic unprepared for the winter weather. Many are wearing only sweaters, long sleeved shirts, or traditional clothing to appointments and most likely to all other places outside the home, which is not safe for the cold Nebraska winters! We are asking the congregation to assist by donating **any new or gently used coats from kid's sizes through adult** to assist our neighbors in keeping warm and safe through the next 2-3 months. **The coat drive will run through February 2, 2025.**

The drop off location will be in the Gathering Place. There will be boxes for the coats by size (kids, teens, adults). **Bill Howard** is spearheading the effort for the IRAT team and he can be reached at wjhoward3.wjh@gmail.com.

If you would like to donate to this cause instead, please contact Bill Howard.

Thank you for your consideration!



Volunteer Dates:

Tuesday, March 11 1:00 - 3:30 pm

Saturday, June 7 9:00 - 11:30 am

Tuesday, September 9 1:00 - 3:30 pm

Tuesday, December 9 1:00 - 3:30 pm

foodbankheartland.org or contact

Bruce Deines

brucedeines@gmail.com or

Mike Rosenthal

mike.rosenthal577@icloud.com

Inspiring

Taizé Prayer

1st Saturday of the month
5:00 - 5:40 pm
Mead Chapel
In Person (enter door 11)



February 1

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!

Ecumenical Legislative Briefing Day

...is coming fast. It's scheduled for Saturday February 8 at Christ UMC in Lincoln. This is the 50th Anniversary year and there will be memorabilia. First Church has always led the way in terms of attendance. Register today on the website nelegisbrief.org/ or secure a brochure from Robert Meyers. Workshops and areas of concern will include: Education, housing, immigration, taxes, and more. Ride sharing is possible.



Contact Tim Fickenscher, tafickenscher@gmail.com or Ron Roemmich, roemmichrb@cox.net

Soup-er Bowl Sunday Tailgate Lunch

Benefitting our WONDER-Kids (Children's Ministry) (K-6th)

February 9, 12:00pm
the Commons



Everyone's waiting for Sunday night, but SOUP-er Bowl Sunday Lunch supports our growing WONDER-Kids children's ministry! Sign up & bring a soup/stew, side, dessert, or drinks on Feb. 9th to The Commons after the 10:50am service. As we eat & tailgate, you'll use scorecards to vote for the best soup. The top 3 chefs win gift cards to Omaha shops & eateries! *Donations to children's ministry given at lunch pay for materials, educational training & summer programs.* Contact Minister of Education Liz Emis at liz.emis@fumcomaha.org for more info!

Visitation Team

Our visitation team has been meeting for almost a year. Members of the team have been busy visiting and connecting with those who need some one-on-one time with caring visitors. If you are interested in joining our team, or you know of someone who would benefit from visits, please call our church office.



FUMC Care Collective:

Where Art, Therapy,
and Community
Come Together



We're thrilled to invite you to the first Care Collective meeting on February 28th from 7-9p in The Commons! This monthly gathering brings together people of all generations to explore the healing power of art and creativity in a supportive community space.

Our opening session will feature Pour Painting, where you can let go of perfection and embrace the beauty of spontaneous art. Whether you're an experienced artist or just starting out, this activity is all about expression, relaxation, and letting creativity flow.

Make sure to register now to reserve your spot and join us for a night of creativity, connection, and fun! We can't wait to create with you!

Register here:

<https://bit.ly/CareCollectiveRegistration>

Supporting



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

or call 402.556.6262 x1002

You can also email Lynne Elwood

lalwood2@gmail.com to be added to our prayer chain.

We are here for you!

Clair Cares Food Pantry

Volunteers Needed!

Next Opportunity for Volunteering

February 13th & 14th

Clair Memorial UMC | 5544 Ames Ave.

Contact Judy Prenzler

Prenzler@cox.net for info



ECO Team

Eco Improvements to Celebrate!!!

The FUMC Eco team had a great 2025 planning retreat, Saturday, January 11! We reviewed some of our past accomplishments and brainstormed next steps. We took a break and had a tour around the building to see the new windows that have been installed! Thanks to our Trustees and the Foundation, new windows will lower our energy consumption!



Details will come soon about a Lenten Green calendar which will begin March 5 and offer the spiritual practice of taking daily actions to care for our precious earth home!

And something to think about for Valentine's Day: *Compared with other perishables, flowers are perhaps the most damaging to the climate. Nearly all imported cut flowers go through the same emission-intensive journey -- climate controlled greenhouses, refrigerated trucks and a long, chilled flight. Fresh flowers are a \$34 billion global industry with a massive carbon footprint.* (Source: Washington Post, 2/12,2024). Google Green ideas for Valentine's Day for lots of thoughtful alternatives!



Become a NEW MEMBER!

If you'd like to talk about membership or ways to connect and become involved with our many ministries,

please call Morita or email her at morita.truman@fumcomaha.org

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Please use
our recycling
bins located
throughout
the building.
Thank you!



Challenging

Building a Culture of Generosity

As you'll read in the Finance report below, we have approved a budget for the 2025 calendar year that totals \$973,161. Based on your pledges, estimates of other sources of income, and past experiences with plate giving and generosity, we anticipate income of \$973,370. What an amazing show of faith through stewardship! We ended 2024 in the black and are looking forward to this new year of mission and ministry together.

Generosity is demonstrated in many ways at First UMC. Right now there are boxes in the Gathering Place for a coat drive to assist refugee families through the Creighton Clinic. Our volunteer counting team is in the office making record of our Sunday giving. A volunteer is answering the phone at the front desk and opening doors for visitors and members. Our greeters and ushers on Sunday mornings create an inviting and hospitable space. Volunteers make sure prayer candles are supplied and ready. Generosity based on gratitude is at the heart of who we are at First!

Remember when you make an offering or donation you can give through the offering plate, request a direct deposit from your account, or use the online giving via this QR code or on the church's website. The drop down menu will have a list of options for your gift.

Your generous gifts to both the church and to the First UMC Foundation make it possible for us to consider all the needs that are before us. New windows are installed, with more to come. Next steps are being planned, watch for details in the coming months.

Donate Here

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



bit.ly/FUMCOMahaGiving

FUMC Finance Report

Carol Beaty, FUMC Finance Chair emeritus
Kate Fiandt, Finance Chair 2025

Here is the FUMC monthly report to the congregation written on Jan 15, 2025.

Although we have not yet closed the books on 2024, we made great progress in December 2024. We had income of just under \$80,000. Some was for pledges for 2024 and other member donations for 2024. Some was for special projects including the Alternative Mall, music program, youth, immigration, memorials and our Christmas collection. We are grateful for every one of you who contributed to the church in all of 2024. We had expected a deficit budget but stronger than expected giving erased that worry and we ended the year in a very positive way.

The Church Council approved the budget for 2025 at the meeting on January 6. We were able to give church staff an increase. The budget approved is a balanced budget which means that it includes similar expenses and income. The 2025 budget is available upon request. Please notify Carol Beaty, Kate Fiandt, or the church office if you would like a copy.

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

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Return Service Requested

7020 Cass Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68132-2601

CHURCH OF THE WILD BOOK CLUB



Tuesdays in February from 6:00-7:00p
Zoom and In-Person, Room 111
February 4th, 11th, 18th & 25th



Are you passionate about the intersection of spirituality and nature? Do you feel called to help create meaningful, outdoor worship experiences? Join us for a one-month book club discussion of Church of the Wild, and learn how to integrate the sacredness of nature into our worship practices. This book will serve as a guide as we prepare to launch Wild Worship Omaha's monthly outdoor services beginning March 20th, 2025.

As part of this book club, you'll have the opportunity to dive into the principles behind Church of the Wild and discover how we can collectively build a worship service that honors both the earth and our expansive faith journey's. If you're interested in becoming part of the planning committee for Wild Worship Omaha, this is your chance to join in!

Whether you're eager to join the planning committee or simply curious about the vision of Wild Worship Omaha, we welcome you to read the book and join us in this exciting new journey!

For more information or to participate in the book club please reach out to
Cass Opal at Cass.opal@fumcomaha.org