

Connect

March 2025



Morita Truman, Pastor

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

As we begin the month of March we look to the season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5. To guide us through this season I have turned to Gregory Boyle and the book *Cherished Belonging, The Healing Power of Love in Divided Times*. It was a Christmas gift and when I started reading I knew it would guide us well.

When you read that title you might think I chose it because of the word **divided**, but in truth it was the word **belonging** that drew my attention. The introduction to the book calls upon Boyle's belief that the answer to every question is, indeed, compassion and we belong to each other (no exceptions), that kindness, when shared, is a constant and radical act of defiance.

We are living in a time of division. We see it in the daily news, regardless of one's preferred outlet. We need to acknowledge that it is happening. We see it in families who wonder what they'll talk about at the dinner table. We have people working on behalf of immigrants and refugees, others who agree with deportation. Our friends in the LGBTQ community worry about their right to marry and live their lives peaceably. Trans kids and their families are worried about health care, their right to exist. Will Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act be ruled unconstitutional, affecting our friends and loved ones who live with disabilities? The erasure of diversity, equality, and inclusion initiative (DEI) is changing the face of the country.

In the midst of that we come to the season of Lent, the 40 days leading to Easter, a time of contemplation, of recognizing we journey through wilderness areas. It is a time for us to remember that in its beginnings followers of Jesus were known not by the title Christian, but as *followers of The Way*, and it was a way of life, a subversive spiritual movement. What if we were still known for that - as followers of the way working for equality, emancipation, and peace? Can we impact the division around us? I believe we here at First in our ongoing journey, do so and strive to invite others to that pathway. Our Lent will be a season of intentionality toward that end.

Preparing for the journey 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, March 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."



First
United
Methodist
Church

Welcoming

Lent: A Call to Bear Witness



Liz Emis, Minister of Education

Last month, for our first winter snow, I stayed up until 12:30am. I couldn't sleep. So much is swirling right now. Overwhelming. Tiring. Shocking our systems to numbness. I could have tried forcing a REM cycle: tucked under blankets, eyes shut in the dark. But forced sleep isn't restful. I knew my body would just keep cycling about work, school, family, church, and the world, no matter the meditation, prayer, or *divina* practice I used.

Sometimes, we have those times.

Lately, though, it's not sometimes. It's every day. All day. And, into the night.

It's important to acknowledge that. In this time and place, there is a struggle underway for our attention, our intention, our humanity. And the tool being employed is deluge. Deluge of imagery, sounds, words, video, and yes, emotion. Emotions like fear, which gives way to sadness, then anger, then overwhelm. The powers and principalities are counting on this overwhelm to so

exhaust us that we choose to look away, or worse, to go numb.

During this Lenten season, let me remind you: We are called to focus, to look. We are called to witness. Bearing witness is a testimony to the world that we stand for and *with* the oppressed. That amid all our uniquenesses, the Sacred longs to live in us all, and not merely gasp for breath in some. That makes all of us born of the same Beloved.

And we get to decide whether we look. One of the great joys of existence is our ability to choose. Our sanctification, our receipt of grace upon grace, happens as we choose to be open to it, to desire it, to look for it with open eyes.

When we keep our eyes on the injustices done against women, Black communities, Indigenous nations, U.S. residents, children, our LGBTQIA+ friends, low income families, and on, and on, we participate in the Divine act of sanctification. We allow these injustices to penetrate us, to afflict us, and we discover that none of us is free when any one of us is persecuted.

Lent is a time set aside to recognize where we've missed the mark, seeking something else more than our relationship with God. It's a season of reflection and intention. Lent demands our humility, a willingness to risk being vulnerable to the Spirit and to one another. We must be willing to *feel* through Lent – even and especially if it brings sorrow, regret, or despair. It is from such low depths that we breathe in Divine grace and exhale God's peace. But we can't experience resurrection before recognition.

Yes, we are living in fatigue, and we don't know when it will end. We *do* know we can't build abundant life without seeing those crying out for care. When we choose to look, we honor them with our presence and we remind ourselves we've got work to do.

Do not allow overwhelm to feed your self-protection. The cost of looking away is too high. Do not allow overwhelm to numb you to your call to bear witness. Allow God to make you *feel* in this Lenten season. It might provoke you, convict you, inspire you. Let your witness be your testimony that God's grace is experienced through seeing God's people. This Lent, let us bear witness.

Peace, Salam, and Shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E. Z. S.' with a flourish at the end.

Salt and Light In these times...

The *Salt and Light* team invites you to pray daily, inform yourself (but not get overwhelmed) and be a voice for the least of these in our nation and world. Being guided by the values that First UMC espouses: inclusion, human dignity, protecting the vulnerable, affirming difference, and caring for creation, the Ripples of Hope website is a wealth of inspiration, information and specific acts you can take to be God's hands, feet and voice in our state and nation.



bit.ly/RipplesofHope2024

Powers and principalities want us to feel divided and defeated. Don't lose faith! You have the image of God within you...and that is POWER! Please join others in our faith community and be salt and light in our world!

Calling all gardeners! Now is the time to start planning your garden. If you have perennials to divide, the FUMC rain garden might be a good home for your extra plants... perennials that love sun and resist drought. Pollinator-friendly natives would be best, but others might work too. Contact Teri Drymalski, 605-366-0110 if you're considering a donation. **Thanks, and Think spring!**



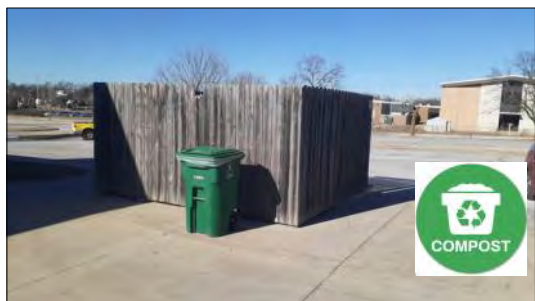
CONFIRMATION CLASS BEGINS

All teens ages 7th grade and older are invited to be a part of this year's confirmation class. We are working on a schedule that provides as much opportunity for participation as possible - not easy with busy schedules. Email the pastor if your teen is interested.

ECO Team

Making the microbes happy!! Expanded list of things you can bring for composting!

The list of what you can bring to church for our compost collection has gotten much larger. We are composting with Hillside Solutions, which does big pile composting so the microbes breaking down the food generate lots of heat to further break down the food, paper, bone, eggshells, napkins, bread, fats, juice, – just about anything that once was living. Coffee grounds and coffee filters are great in compost along with potato peelings, moldy cheese, and old fruit cake from Christmas. You can purchase compostable bags or use a gallon ice cream tub to dump into the large green compost cart at the north east side of the building, by the dumpster fence. The EPA estimates 58 percent of methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills are from landfilled food waste. Thanks for putting less carbon into the atmosphere and making the microbes happy.



Eco Lenten Calendar

The Eco Team will once again will provide an Eco Lenten Calendar, which will feature a range of practical steps, contemplative practices, and creative activities to participate in over the 40 days of Lent. It will be accessible digitally on our website and in print at the church starting March 2 .

Acting

Please remember in prayer these members of our Church Family:

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

Sympathies - to the family of Amy Gerber, Peggy Holloway's mother, who 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, March 11, 6 pm

in-person at FUMC Ada Mead Hall & Zoom

NICKEL BOYS

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

Contact

Bonnie Wallace

bonniewallace59@gmail.com

for more info or to receive ZOOM link!



Call to Prayer and Self-Denial

The United Women in Faith Call to Prayer and Self-Denial is more than 125 years old. The purpose of Call to Prayer and Self-Denial is to prayerfully study and give sacrificially to better the lives of others. The Call to Prayer and Self-Denial observance focuses on a different theme every year. Projects are funded through donations that relate to the theme.

The 2025 theme is **Bold Women Transforming Communities**. Our gifts will support international projects that uplift and empower families and communities. One example is from Peru. In 1906, Elsie Wood, daughter of a Methodist Episcopal missionary, started a school system for girls in Peru. Girls were taught all subjects through high school and into college. Her work continues today. Besides formal education, women and girls learn and teach handicraft skills, financial literacy and small business skills. This offers women the ability to improve the lives of their families and communities.

General Meeting: On Thursday, March 6th, at 10:00 am in room 112, UWF will gather to have a service for Call to Prayer and Self-Denial. We will contribute the donations to UWF to support our international missions.

If you would like to contribute but can't make the meeting, contact

Lynne Elwood at
402-980-9043 or at
lwood2@gmail.com



United
Women
in Faith



FOODBANK
FOR THE HEARTLAND

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)

March 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!



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.



Sunday

March 9

2:00 am

Welcome the Stranger

On Epiphany Sunday, Pastor Morita shared a plea from Bishop Tracy Malone, president of the UM Council of Bishops, urging us "to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into our congregations, providing concrete support to them, including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies..."

Taking to heart those words, FUMC's Salt and Light team and the Immigration Refugee Action Team (IRAT), have reached out to community partners to determine what kind of "concrete support" undocumented immigrants in Omaha need. The Center for Immigration and Refugee Advancement (CIRA) and Heartland Workers Center provide guidance and expertise to help immigrants navigate the system. But without money to pay for application fees, many undocumented workers cannot afford to file for green cards, work visas, asylum, and citizenship. Those fees range from \$400 - \$3000. As our neighbors complete family safety plans, there are additional costs for guardianship papers and powers of attorney.

Offering Financial resources is the most concrete way we can support the myriad and changing needs facing immigrants.

Our FUMC foundation has provided IRAT an initial grant for \$25,000, with a commitment to match an additional \$25,000 raised from the congregation. That \$75,000 can have a meaningful impact in the lives of so many!

Through CIRA, we have also learned about 73 refugees who recently resettled in the U.S. legally, but since the Trump administration has canceled resettlement programs, the refugees are now left without the 90 days of support they would normally receive. Many of them are jobless, unable to speak English, and facing eviction. They need help paying their rent, finding jobs, and learning to speak English.

Every day more immigrants become vulnerable due to the lightning speed of expanded deportation targets, and the changing status of families.

As you see the need is great, and the need is urgent! We ask each of you to answer the call to Welcome the Stranger and contribute to this campaign. Checks can be made out to FUMC , memo line: Welcome the Stranger.



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

March 13th & 14th

Clair Memorial UMC | 5544 Ames Ave.

Contact Judy Prenzler

Prenzler@cox.net for info



OPEN

ENROLLMENT

CONTINUES



The Rainbow Factory Preschool is currently enrolling students ages 2-5 for fall classes. Class times and days are flexible with options for after care for working parents.

There are also openings for Camp Rainbow, the one week sessions that take place throughout the summer months.

For more information or to request a tour, please contact the director, Barb Ruigh at the church 402-556-6262 or email her at rainbowfactoryruigh@gmail.com



Scan me

Wild Worship

Kick-off Service

March 20th, 2025 from 5:30-7:00p

Standing Bear Lake

6404 N 132nd St



Join Cass Opal and our Wild Worship Team for a powerful evening of connection, reflection, and worship at Standing Bear Lake on March 20th, 2025. Experience the peace of nature and the strength of community as we come together to praise, pray, and grow. Don't miss out on this special occasion to step out of the building and into a space of wild, authentic worship!

For more details, scan the QR code above or visit the event here:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/168k67nZR/>

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

A call was issued—coats of all sizes needed for refugee families who are connected to the community. Distribution taking place through the Creighton Clinic. The response was amazing! Many stores in town were completely bought out of their stock and in the end over 300 coats were collected and distributed. Considering that recently the temps hovered around zero, imagine the impact of that generosity.

An invitation was issued—come to a Souper Bowl lunch, eat great food, vote for your favorites, and make donations for children’s ministry. We had a large crowd stay and share in food and fellowship. When the donations were counted, over \$1800 was raised for programs for children. We see our children every week, and we can imagine the impact of that generosity.

Those are just two examples of how generosity based on gratitude is at the heart of who we are at First!

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, all the needs that are coming in the future. The Trustees have priced what it would cost for new window installation throughout the building, and a team is working on the question of replacing the HVAC system and how we deliver heating and cooling to all of our spaces. Next steps are being planned; watch for details in the coming months.

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 giving.

Donate Here

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



bit.ly/FUMCOmahaGiving

FUMC Finance Report

Kate Fiandt, Finance Chair 2025

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

The Budget approved by the Church Council for 2025 included \$973,370 in income and \$973,161 in expenses. The budget for pledges is \$735,000, an increase of \$35,000 over 2024. Thanks to all of our generous pledgers.

Average monthly pledges needed to meet our budget of \$735,000 in pledge income = \$61,250

January 2025 pledges received - \$175,859 (some members paid entire year) - 24% of annual budgeted pledges.

As of January 31, 2025, our total income is 20.49% of what we budgeted. Our expenses are 8.09% of what we budgeted. We would expect income and expenses to be at 8.33% at this time of the year.

A copy of the church budget approved by the Church Council in January is available upon request. Please notify 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



ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

Ash Wednesday, observed on March 5 this year, marks the beginning of the season of Lent, a 40 day period leading to the celebration of Easter.

Throughout this season we will focus on the book *Cherished Belonging, The Healing Power of Love in Divided Times* written by Gregory Boyle.

When we participate in an Ash Wednesday service, we receive a mark of ashes on the brow, or on the hand, for a short time. It is a sign of belonging to something bigger than ourselves. That mark washes away very quickly and quietly as soon as we choose.

Once that is gone, what are the marks of belonging that are visible from our lives? How will the world know us as followers of the Way of Jesus? How do we show the healing power of love in every day life?

Two services will be offered that day, the first at noon in Mead Chapel, the second at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

You are invited to be present for the one that best suits your needs. If you are unable to be present we invite you to pause during one of those times, to pray for the 40 day journey of Lent that lies ahead, and to remember you are cherished and you belong.

Tickets on Sale Now

Celebrating Community!

OTOC's 16th Annual
Spring Fundraiser

March 30, 2025

4 - 7 pm

Omaha Firefighters Hall
6005 Grover St., Omaha, NE

Virtual Auction March 22-30

Tickets: \$30 (\$35 at the door)

Scan here to buy tickets!



<https://one.bidpal.net/otocauktion2025>