

December 2021 First Connection



Greetings First Family!

This is the month of December; the season of Advent and I am in a spirit of hope. Sometimes it is so easy to get discouraged by what is going on in the world. However, I am reminded of the book of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3; that reminds us all that **Everything Has Its Time!**

Ecclesiastes says that;

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.”

Now there are parts of this chapter I admittedly struggle to wrap my head around and embrace. However, what I appreciate about this passage of scripture, is that it lets us know that life is filled with ups and downs. Nevertheless, each season that we experience in our lives will pass. Each season of our lives can teach us valuable lessons that we must experience in order to grow. I suspect this is part of the life cycle.

Therefore, in this season of Advent that is filled with so much purpose; both rewarding and trying; I am learning to maintain a new level of hope; that informs us that with each season, new possibilities are being revealed; that will only make us wiser and stronger.

In this season of Advent, I am tapping more into the Imaginer phase of my communication condo (please read or check out my sermons to understand this reference if perhaps it does not resonate.)

I am approaching the scriptures of our liturgical season from a place

of hopeful inquiry and curiosity. For there was a powerful message that the world would hear back then. I am attempting to clear out whatever could be blocking me from being able to receive the message loud and clear in today's time.

This is a season where even though the pandemic is persisting, I am inviting our relationships with one another to persist and thrive as well. I believe that there is a lot that we can learn and glean from one another. I am cultivating a space both individually and collectively; so that we can really hear one another.

During this Advent season, I am sensing an energy within our church community that informs me that many of us are eager to reclaim our place in this journey together. We have all been through so much; that's an understatement! However, I trust and believe that this can be a season, that will be very meaningful for all. Perhaps this can even be our best season yet!

I am happy to do ministry and life with you all!

Peace and Love!

Kirstie J. Engel
Spiritual Leader



Hunger and Poverty Response Ministry

*"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. **Matthew 25:35***

During this time of Advent, as we quietly remember and anticipate Christ's birth, we make preparations to show our love for our family, friends and neighbors. Some of our neighbors live in impoverished countries far away, and the perfect way to love them is by purchasing an

Generosity

Thanks to Pastor Adam Hamilton

Our generosity to God and others not only touches God and other people, it also changes us. As human beings, we were created with the need to be generous. When we are not generous in giving of what we have, we have not only a financial problem but also a spiritual problem. To use a somewhat graphic yet extremely effective analogy, it is as if we have become financially and spiritually *constipated*. We keep taking in, but we are not always giving in. After a while, it becomes uncomfortable and causes us pain. Sometimes we may not even

animal, or a share of an animal through HEIFER Project International.

Through your gift of an animal, HEIFER Project Int'l brings sustainable agriculture and commerce to areas of the world with a long history of poverty. Animals provide families with both food and a reliable income when agricultural products such as milk, eggs and honey are traded or sold at market. Each animal gift given through HEIFER is passed to another family in the community upon the birth of a newborn calf, piglet, chick, or lamb. When many families in a village gain a sustainable income, it brings new opportunities for building schools, creating agricultural cooperatives, forming community savings and funding small businesses.

If you would like to help HEIFER Project empower families to turn hunger and poverty into hope and prosperity, we invite you to shop at the Market Table in the southwest corner of the sanctuary before or after worship anytime during Advent. With your purchase, you may receive honor cards to give to loved ones on your shopping list. Please remember that it is important to **write your check to First UMC with HEIFER in the memo**. Together, we are working to end hunger in our time.

Thank you, Church.
Peggy Hall

really know what is happening. We're taking in, but it is not always satisfying us because we are not made to take in and never give anything back. We were created for generosity. Over time we sometimes might become self-absorbed, money-consuming, joyless people.

"Each of us give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

(2 Corinthians 9:7)

As we choose to live for others and give generously of what God has given us. We both bless others and experience the abundant blessings that come from living for God.

I will be ending my term as Church Treasurer at the end of 2021. Your generosity has been very helpful as I process your gifts that allow your generosity to maintain our property, support our church staff, and monies to help people through the world.

Chuck Leypoldt



"The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before....So Stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder.....Something is on the horizon."

Jan Richardson. Night Visions

Thank you to all who ordered white poinsettias to grace the Chancel during Advent from December 5th through Christmas Eve. Please feel free to take your poinsettia home after the Christmas Eve Service that you attend. Plastic plant sleeves and paper grocery bags will be available in the Narthex to protect your plant for transport.

If you are unable to attend a Christmas Eve service, you may come to the church during office hours after Christmas. Call before you come to ensure that the church is open - 402-466-1906.

We are including the quote from Jan Richardson and the poem from Betty Pingle. Both of these writers share wise thoughts for all of us to carry through the Season of Advent.

The Art of Waiting by Betty Pingle

***If we fill our lives with things, and yet more things,
If we feel we must fill every moment we have with activity,
When will we have the time to make the long, slow journey
Across the burning desert, as did***



Dear First Church Family and Friends,

On November 14, 2021, Nancy Tomlinson, the Blue River District Superintendent, convened the Charge Conference for eight congregations. These congregations represent one of a number of networks in the Blue River District. While this format was different, it accomplished the task at hand; although, there is much more work to be done as we approach 2022. **Please join us for the Church Council meeting on Tuesday, December 14, 2021, at 7:00 in Fellowship Hall as we tend to the leadership and business of OUR Church.**

We gather in this Advent Season at a critical juncture in the life of OUR congregation and the greater church. The reality of aging demographics, dwindling membership in mainline denominations, a larger institution that values itself more than the people it was created to serve, and OUR own financial challenges are daunting. It seems so

*the Wise Men?
Or sit and watch the stars, as did
the shepherds?
Or brood over the coming of the
Child, as did Mary?
For each of us, there is a desert to
travel,
A star to discover and follow,
And a being within ourselves to
bring to life.*

*Simple. Joyful. Grateful.
Grace.*

Flower Ministry

Stewardship and Finance Committee

As we continue the Stewardship Campaign for 2022, we thank all of you for prayerfully considering your financial intentions for supporting the ministries of First United Church in the coming year. Thank you if you have already made your pledge, and if not, we encourage you to think about what the church means to you and to your community, and why the church needs your support. Every gift to the church, no matter how small, is what helps to keep the church alive and vibrant and able to reach out with God's love to its members and to the community. Making a pledge provides the church with confidence in developing a budget with programs that are sustainable. This year we find it especially challenging to help recover from the effects of the pandemic and from historic shortfalls as we restructure and reorganize our financial administration and policies. In direct mailings you will or already have received a draft of the revised draft budget for 2022 and a pledge card. Attached is a copy of the 2022 Pledge Card which you can detach,

much bigger than any one of us, YET it must start with each one of us.

How are we engaging in the life of OUR Church? I invite you to prayerfully discern questions in your own life and how you might be led to participate with OUR Church community. What are your hopes for OUR Church community? How has OUR Church gifted you in deepening your relationships with the divine, yourself, and with others? How might you gift others in OUR Church in their own journey? How might we re-connect with one another? How might we build on the strong legacy of generations before us as we move forward in new ways?

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.
—Romans 12:4–5 (NRSV)

In peace and love in the light of Christ,

Terri Storer
Church Council Chair /
Lay Leader

complete, and return to the office.
Thank you for your generous
consideration.

**Glenn Johnson, Aaron Raymond,
CO-Chairs, Stewardship and
Finance Committee.**

[Click Here for 2022 Pledge Card](#)



December Birthdays

1 Matthew Schwindt
Melysa Johnson
2 Connie Geist
Hunter Payne
3 Laaree Turner
4 Aderha Leypoldt
Gail Anderson
Lori Markowski
5 Angela Pfeiffer
6 Anthony Berger
Margaret Eisenbarth
Rhonda Schoenmaker
7 Lois Wilson
8 Deitrick Frye
Ilesha Clanton
Sarah Hetrick
9 Scott Linke
11 Carol Ann Clark
12 Ricky White
Alan Markowski
13 Joyce White
Kale Bryan Martin
14 Ruby Scherer
Scott Seitz
Sharon Doll
15 Shelly Lanxon
Murphy Baum
Pam Hoefs



Tidings of Comfort and Joy:
Christmas with NWU

Saturday, December 4, 4:30
and 7:30 p.m.

First United Methodist
Church, Lincoln

*FREE – no reservation
required*

Nebraska Wesleyan
University's choirs sing the
good news of the holiday
season in a concert sharing
the hope and peace of the
Christmas story. All in
attendance are invited to sing
beloved carols as we join the
angels in bringing one
another tidings of comfort and
joy.

Grace and peace, and
THANKS!

Tom Trenney

18 Alex Goss
Don Dougherty
Jameson Bangert
19 Scott Lawson
20 Ashley Harris
Heather Hall
21 Don Wendt
22 David Taladay
23 Alicia Opoku
Eleanor Seng
24 Lynn Ayers
Mary Reifschneider
Susan Cook
27 Lillian Edwards
29 David Nickol
Keera Garnes
Mike Hansen
Rick Cutshall
30 Amy Holland
Kaitlyn Halvorsen
Remy Sass
31 Carol Houborg
Joel Schroeder
Kerrigan Healey
Ryan Caldwell
Tom James



United Methodist Women

Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

Greetings UMW, First Church Family and Friends,

It is widely known that our United Methodist Women's Mission Christmas event is an important fundraiser with all proceeds going to missions. Our Mission Christmas event, the Nut Sale and personal pledges given by UMW members, both in circles and at-large, help us to meet our \$7000 Pledge to Mission.

This festive fundraiser that opens each year on the first Saturday of December between 9:00 and 3:00 holds another important element beyond fundraising. As we work together towards our common goal, we are given the gift of relationship and friendship with one another within our church family and through outreach to our greater community. We are given the beautiful gift of time to center ourselves and quietly anticipate Christ's birth, as we bake cookies or pies at home with Christmas



Prayer Requests:

*Jan Hartig, St Elizabeth's
For the family of Al Campbell who passed Nov. 8
Lauree Turner, St E's ICU, no visitors
For the family of Wallace Gant
For the family of Katy (Kirkland)
Pesek in the passing of her husband
Jeremy
For the family of Audrey Bartolome
Christy Rolfsmeyer, Bryan East
Leo Woundedarrows, Omaha*

hospital

Mike Sterns, home

Larry Helter, Gateway Vista

Jeremy Hickenbottom, home

Sandy Conrad, Firth

Jim Neumann, home

Ron Gaddis, home

Dixie Gannon, home

Cindy Newsham, home

Lester Shaw, Kiley Taylor's dad

Roscoe Shields, Van Dorn Legacy

*Emajane Crossley, Lancaster Manor
Rehab*

Jim Leyboldt, home

music playing softly in the background. While others make handmade items, donate books or stir up delicious soups for our lunch, everyone's efforts are given with love and commitment to serving others through the ministry of Christ Jesus.

Our gratitude to all the people who work in any way to make Mission Christmas a success each year. Our love and thankfulness for all who simply make time to come to our event during such a busy month. Your gifts of time and presence are both greatly appreciated and essential for the success of our event. Thank you.

Blessings,
Peggy Hall

Holy Renovation

Sermon Series Purpose: We as a people have been challenged in so many ways. What do we need to be renovated in our church, community, families and more so that we can refuel for the work that lies ahead?

December 5, 2021

8:30- Scriptural Lesson-
Malachi 3: 1-4

10:45- First lesson: Malachi
3: 1-4; Luke 3:1-6

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

December 12, 2021

8:30- Scriptural Lesson-
Isaiah 12:2-6

10:45- First lesson: Isaiah
12:2-6; Luke 3:7-18



**Worship online or in person with
FIRST UMC LINCOLN Sundays at
8:30am and 10:45 am! Please wear
a mask. We thank you in advance!**

**Sending a BIG Thank You for your
Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service
and Witness**

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

December 19, 2021

8:30- Scriptural Lesson-

Micah 5:2-5a

10:45- First lesson: Micah

5:2-5a, Luke 1:46-55

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

Book Study

John and Terri are pausing classes for everyone to attend Kirstie's advent class, entitled "Renovate". It is being held in Fellowship Hall at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 1, 8, and 15. We will resume after the holidays. More details will follow.

Resuming in January 2022

Sign-up is now through December for the First Church Golf League! We play nine holes at Crooked Creek on Mondays at 4:30 p.m. Sign-up by calling Berdet at 402-429-2215. There are several teams signed up, but have room for more!

E-GIVING MATCH PROGRAM

We are excited to announce that e-Giving is having a Donor Match program for this upcoming season of generosity. For each first gift from a new recurring donor that is added between November 1 and December 31, 2021, e-Giving will match that first gift, up to \$50, with a maximum match of \$1,000 for the church. To be eligible the gift must be recurring with more than one installment (e.g. \$x per week or per month) and the first payment must be transacted before December 31. So if you aren't using e-Giving here is a chance to start and get a match for the church, or if you are using e-Giving on an occasional basis, changing to a recurring basis could award the match.

If you are interested in being baptized or becoming a new member of First United Methodist Church, then please contact the Church office. We are excited to be in Community with YOU!

Calendar of Events



COMMUNITY CENTERED...

**COMMUNITY FOCUSED...
COMMUNITY MINDED!**