



The Ambassador

February 2025

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From the Pastor

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy,
and walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8*

Dear Friends,

We have a little ongoing joke in my house that surfaces every once in awhile over the weekend. My husband will ask, "What are you going to preach about on Sunday?" And I will respond, "God." He will then ask, "What are you going to say about God?" And I will say, "God is good." Sometimes the joke stops there and sometimes it has a second section which continues with him asking, "Are you going to preach about anything else?" I reply, "Sin." And he asks, "What about sin?" I say, "Sin is bad." And it ends with Darryl saying, "You always preach about the same thing."

While I do preach about different things, our family joke does address the truth that there are several essential beliefs that are repeated in the Bible. Our passage above from Micah 6:8 echoes the law to love God we find in Deuteronomy 6 (and elsewhere in the Old Testament) and the law to love others we find in Leviticus 19 (again, and elsewhere in the Old Testament). Jesus says that love is the greatest commandment - loving God with your entire being and loving your neighbor as yourself. Paul and others repeat the importance of love throughout the New Testament letters. Love was part of the Methodist movement when John Wesley taught that our faith is expressed in works of piety (loving God) and works of mercy (loving neighbor). And this call to love is implicit in our own mission statement at First UMC, Christ our Life (loving God) and Service our Lifestyle (loving neighbor).

Since Valentine's day is this month, it seems like a good time to remind ourselves that love, in the Biblical understanding, is not

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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

Inside

News 2-3,5
Pastor Daniel 4
Mission Moment 6
Calendar & Birthdays 7

 **first
church**
M I D D L E T O W N
a united methodist community

merely a sentiment but a call to action. Love is expressed in acts of devotion to God and acts of kindness to one another. Love does the hard work of showing up, holding a hand when someone is scared, intervening when there is injustice, and being faithful even in the face of despair.

It may seem like a long time ago when you filled out your commitment to ministry and pledge card in the fall but this is the first time I have written in the newsletter since you did. When you turned those cards in as an act of worship, you were making a commitment to love in action. For some of these commitments, you may have already been contacted by someone or invited to an upcoming training event (see page 5) But for some of these commitments the follow up will consist of you showing up with one another to the faithful expressions of Christian life: attending worship, studying the Bible, praying and doing daily devotions, practicing intentional acts of kindness to our neighbors, and reaching out in love.

Reaching out in love – that is what God does for us in Jesus Christ, over and over again. Thanks be to God.
May we, in turn, do the same.

Peace,
Pastor Kim
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Resilient

Worship schedule for February

Our Resilient worship series continues throughout the month of February. Join us in person or online as we continue to learn how to stay rooted in our identity as God's beloved and to continue growing in faithfulness no matter what life throws our way.



<u>Date</u>	<u>Message</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
2 February	Keep Moving	Luke 4:21-30
9 February	Be Effective	Luke 5:1-11
16 February	Life's Blessing and Woes	Luke 6:17-26
23 February	Doing Hard Things	Luke 6:27-38

Church Finances: How are we doing?

On Sunday, February 23rd Pastor Kim will offer an overview of our finances, the work of our financial committees, as well as answer any questions you may have. If you cannot be at the meeting but are interested in receiving Pastor Kim's handouts, please let the church office know.

2025 First Friday Concert Series is complete!

Creating the First Friday Concert Series each year is always a complicated dance—after following several trails of leads and thinking of past performers as well, the emails and phone calls begin in October/November. Everything then comes to a halt as we experience the Christmas season. After this, work resumes with last minutes changes and adjustments, the schedule finally comes to completion. The difficulty lies in the daytime performance. Unless they are professional musicians, leaving their “day jobs” and playing First Friday is a complicated effort. Most of our performers in the summertime are also music teachers who have the summer off! We have several new performers this year and also some who have been here before. Jimmy Rogers and the Harps of Grace (January and December, respectively) always “bookend” our year with their outstanding concerts! Here is the line-up for 2025:

February 7	Leach/Wallace Duo (Trumpet and Organ)
March 7	Richard Goering/Blythe Walker (Guitar and Vocalist)
April 4	Jeff Jena (Comedian)
May 2	Berachah Valley (Bluegrass Gospel)
June 6	My Brother's Keeper (Progressive Bluegrass)
July 11 th (date change)	Dayton String Trio
August 1	Bacchanal (Steel Drums)
September 5	En Fuego (Latin Jazz)
October 3	Queen City Cabaret (Piano and Vocalist)
November 7	The Flying Klezmerians (Klezmer and Jazz)
December 5	Harps of Grace (Harp Ensemble)

SHALOM Volunteer Experience is Deeply Moving.

Our church is hosting SHALOM the week of March 2-8th. While our church is the site for “intake” each day of SHALOM during the winter months., when we host, our church will be responsible for feeding and caring for the guests during this week. Due to the large number of guests we will be housing them at Tytus Ave. Church of God. This is the last week of SHALOM and it is often a stressful time for both the guests (whom may not have successfully found housing for the Spring and beyond) and the core volunteers whom have spent weeks and countless hours on paperwork, van driving, logistics, and are experiencing physical/mental/emotional fatigue.



It CANNOT be overstated that volunteers are desperately needed. Volunteers to make meals are usually the first to fill up. What is harder to find are people who are willing and are physically able to spend the night. There are also opportunities to be a “host” during the hours between dinner and bedtime, where you can interact with the guests, play cards, games, or just be a listening ear. These last 2 volunteer options, while the most difficult, offer the strongest opportunities for gratitude and humbleness for what God has given us. It's also a wonderful opportunity to share this experience of compassion with a young person in your life. Please talk to Steve Swank if you have any questions. Step out of your comfort zone and be a part of this essential ministry to and with our brothers and sisters as this SHALOM season comes to an end.

"Shining in the darkness"
Matthew 5:15-16



In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus taught about the Christian path and described a Christian attitude towards others. He also told the people around him about their responsibility to their community when they become disciples of Him.

As disciples, they must love God, and their neighbors as themselves. They must love their enemies, pray for their prosecutors, and bless those who curse them. Also, they must be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

The Christian disciples are the salt of the earth because they keep everything in good shape, giving taste to the culture, morality, and justice. The Christian disciples are the light of this world because they light the world with their shining lights of love, justice, and peace, showing others their good works so everybody praise God.

As Christ's disciples, we are called to shine in the dark. We are not called to hide our light nor put it beneath a table, we are called to let it shine to help others to find the way to God.

How can we shine in this dark time? By loving our neighbor, no matter how different they are, no matter what the politicians say against them. Jesus' calling is to shine in the darkness, even when my neighbor does not look like me or think like me.

I appreciate doing ministry within a church. As a United Methodist Church, we are shining by bringing some light on despair, injustice, and fear. We are people who never hide their light but let that light shine brighter.

These past months, at the Legal Clinic hosted here in our church we have been planning and working on a conference that provides some resources about legal assistance for immigrants. We know things are going to get rough for every person who is looking for a better future for their families and loved ones. The whole team, therefore, prepared some strategies to help all folks that need some assistance, guidelines, and advice in this unclear path. By doing this, we want to let our community know that we are here ready to help, and ready to provide all the assistance as best as we can.

As Christ's disciples, we are letting our light shine in the darkness.

"No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" Matthew 5:15-16

Con cariño y afecto.
Rev. Daniel Cardenas.

Commitment/Volunteer Training Sessions

The following sessions will be held on the indicated Sunday following morning worship:

Sun. Feb 2—Usher

Sun. Feb 9—Greeter

Sun. Feb. 16—Preparing the sanctuary for worship

If you are interested in being a communion server or liturgist/scripture reader but were unable to attend the training session(s), please talk with Mary Ellen Clinard.

Lenten Lunches

Beginning Wednesday, March 12th

Next month we begin our Lenten lunch series. You are invited to join with other Christians in our community for a time of prayer and reflection. A few of the churches in Middletown are coming together on Wednesdays at noon, beginning March 12th. The hosting churches are:

March 12 th	First Baptist Church with Rev. Kim Armentrout sharing
March 19 th	First UMC with Rev. Rich Luh sharing
March 26 th	First Christian Church with Rev. Scotty Robertson sharing
April 2 nd	St Paul's UCC with Rev. Jeff Wilder sharing
April 9 th	First Baptist Church with Rev. Daniel Cardenas sharing

Simply come to the hosting church at noon for a simple meal of soup and sandwiches, and a time of fellowship, reflection, and prayer based on a chapter of I Thessalonians each week. Please call the church office or see Pastor Kim if you have any questions.

Spiritual Formation Workshop

Making the Bible your Bible

Saturday March 15th 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Have you ever looked at your Bible and wished you were better connected to it? If so – you are not the only one. The Bible is a big book - where does one begin – at the beginning in Genesis or somewhere else? It is also hard to understand at times – ever read a passage and ended up more confused than before? And have you ever felt like everyone else knows more about the Bible than you?



If any of these questions describe you, you may want to attend First UMC's spiritual formation workshop this Lenten season. You do not need to be familiar with your Bible to attend, Pastor Kim will lead us in an introduction to your Bible lesson as we begin the workshop. Then we will jump into sessions geared to helping you understand scripture (what the Bible says) and connect with scripture (what the Bible says to you). All experience levels are welcome!

MISSION MOMENT

An update from Dr. Les and Debbie Dornon, missionaries to Nepal working in the Tansen Hospital

We have been enjoying a string of beautiful days here in Tansen – every morning the colors in the sky are spectacular, and the Himalayan mountains are clear and amazing. We sit in the sun to eat our lunch and enjoy looking at the snow-covered peaks. Unfortunately, some of those peaks have much less snow than usual – we ask for prayers for rain and snow to offset the dry season that will be coming soon.

Some of you have read that we had a wonderful celebration of Rachel and Scott's wedding in Las Vegas at the end of December. We were so thankful to be able to be there to share in their joy. If you are interested, here is a link to watch the service online. It is worth listening to Pastor Chuck's message! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Xh9YwW5QZk>

We arrived back in Tansen on Jan 3, and started into work on the 5th. It was a bit of a struggle working through the jetlag, but we made it! It doesn't seem to get easier as we age... Les is back to seeing patients and doing training sessions, and Debbie is working on helping to put together the Friends of Tansen magazine, welcoming and sorting new Medical students, and preparing housing for new volunteers coming into the project. We are thankful we have been healthy and are able to do what God puts before us each day.


We have been praying for the Los Angeles area and an end to the fires and drought there. We would also ask that you join us in prayer for a family who just suffered a major loss... Friends of ours who served in Nepal lost their son-in-law in a terrible accident. He and his wife were serving with MAF in Northern Australia. She is left with 3 children, ages 7, 5 and 2. We can't even imagine.

Finally, we are getting ready to do a "virtual itineration" on Thursday, Feb 6 at 8 pm Eastern time. We will do a short presentation of some of what is happening here in Tansen. If you are interested, you need to go online to register (no charge) and you need to put a check by our names (as there are several missionaries presenting in different "rooms"). Here is the link: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcuf-uorz0uGtKmBcbO9fATiGr1Y9FLuP99>
As always, thank you so much for your prayers and support! We could not do anything here without that. Stay warm! Blessings, Debbie & Les



February Calendar

February Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Dates to Remember in March:</p> <p>March 2-8: Host Shalom</p> <p>March 5: Ash Wednesday</p> <p>March 7: First Friday Concert</p> <p>March 12/19/26: Lenten Lunch</p> <p>March 15: Making the Bible Your Bible workshop</p>						
						
<p>2 COMMUNION</p> <p>9 am Sunday School</p> <p>10:30 Worship</p> <p>Ushers Training</p>	<p>3</p> <p>8 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>4</p> <p>10 am Staff meet</p> <p>2 pm Pantry</p>	<p>5</p> <p>3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrs'l</p> <p>6 pm Hispanic Bible Study</p>	<p>6</p> <p>6 pm ESL Classes</p>	<p>7</p> <p>NOON First Friday</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>9</p> <p>9 am Sunday School</p> <p>10:30 Worship</p> <p>Greeter Training</p>	<p>10</p> <p>8 am Breakfast Club</p> <p>Legal Clinic 6-8pm</p>	<p>11</p> <p>10 am Staff meet</p> <p>1 pm SPRC</p> <p>2 pm Pantry</p>	<p>12</p> <p>3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrs'l</p> <p>6 pm Hispanic Bible Study</p>	<p>13</p> <p>2 pm Elizabeth Circle @ Mt. Pleasant</p> <p>6 pm ESL Classes</p>	<p>14 VALENTINE'S DAY</p>	<p>15</p> <p>9 am Hope Circle @ Bob Evans</p>
<p>16</p> <p>9 am Sunday School</p> <p>10:30 Worship</p> <p>Preparing the Sanctuary for worship team training</p>	<p>17 PRESIDENT'S DAY</p> <p>OFFICE CLOSED</p> <p>8 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>18</p> <p>10 am Staff meet</p> <p>No Pantry</p> <p>5:30 pm Finance</p> <p>6:00 pm Admin. Council</p>	<p>19</p> <p>3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrs'l</p> <p>6 pm Hispanic Bible Study</p>	<p>20</p> <p>AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE</p> <p>6 pm ESL Classes</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>23</p> <p>9 am Sunday School</p> <p>10:30 am Worship</p> <p>Congregational meeting about church finances</p>	<p>24</p> <p>8 am Breakfast Club</p>	<p>25</p> <p>10 am Staff meet</p> <p>2 pm Pantry</p> <p>6:30 pm Trustees</p>	<p>26</p> <p>3 & 7 pm Choir Rhrs'l</p> <p>6 pm Hispanic Bible Study</p>	<p>27</p> <p>6 pm ESL Classes</p>	<p>28</p>	

1 Matt Dixon
 3 Kathy Lambert
 5 Mark Frazer
 8 Anita McLaughlin
 9 Mary Davis, Lynda Goecke,
 Kim Stephens
 15 Steve Swank
 16 Mary Ellen Clinard,
 Darryl Fairchild,
 Daphne Murphy
 17 Landry Ward
 19 Bill Alderton
 20 Marilyn Clark
 21 Johnny Schmitt
 26 Sylvie Gadness
 28 Donna Burley

Happy Birthday!



2025 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

**February 7, 2025
Leach -Wallace Duo**

**Enjoy a wide variety of musical
fare with trumpeter Jimmy Leach
and organist Abraham Wallace.
Classical music will prevail, but
you never know what they may
toss in for a surprise!**

**First UMC - Middletown
@noon
Free Admission**