



# The Ambassador

March 2025

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## From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

I have a notebook that sits on the lower left-hand corner of my desk at home. It is a 5-year journal and it has a page for each day of the year. Each day's page is divided into five sections so that it can capture a year per section. I started it when Maya began the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I knew these years would fly by quickly and I wanted a way to capture this fleeting experience. When I complete this journal will be starting college.

*January 1*

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I know that I can't make time slow down – but I also know that I can savor it! So my plan was to write down a sentence or two each day to record the moments as they slip by. Confession: I haven't written in it since the beginning of December. We got busy with ballet performances & piano recitals, the holidays, visits with family, a round of the flu, and everyday life – none of which is captured in the journal.

But I want it to be. And just being mindful of that intention has caused me to pause this letter and write a sentence about today.

Lent begins this month and Lent provides us with this gift – a space to be mindful about our intentions toward God and toward living out our faith. From its first day, Ash Wednesday (article on page 5), we are reminded that life does not last forever: "From dust you have come and to dust you shall return" and are invited to reflect on our discipleship. Through fasting, prayer, and practicing generosity we make an intentional space for God to transform us and lead us in the way of faithfulness.

If you are reading this at the beginning of the month, you have a few days before Lent begins to think about your intentions. What spiritual disciplines do you have a desire to practice? What support do you need to carry this out? The church offers lots of resources for you

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Senior Pastor Kim Armentrout  
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## Worship With Us

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

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during this season. We have a new worship series that begins (see below), we will be studying I Thesalonians during Lenten lunches (page 5), I am offering a workshop on connecting with the Bible (page 5), and you are invited to participate in our Lenten and Easter offering (page 3). If these resources do not match up to how God is tugging your heart, please let me know. I would love to hear how the Spirit is moving in your life and will support you in whatever way I can.

You will be in my prayers this Lenten season. May our practices align with our intentions!

Peace,  
Pastor Kim  
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## REST

### Lenten Series 2025

"I'm so busy!" How many times have you said it? How many times have you heard it? We live in a world that values people's achievement and we spend a great amount of time doing, producing, and acquiring. Yet God offers us a different way of living.

We are overwhelmed and God gives to us sabbath – a time to rest. You are invited to join us in this worship series that explores God's command and our need for rest. This need is present in music where rests are built into songs to provide structure, balance, and expression. As in music, so in life. There's need for rest, providing us with a margin – a space - to provide structure and balance. Ultimately Sabbath is an expression of God's grace. This Lent let us explore the divine invitation to REST!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Message</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
3.9.2025	32 <sup>nd</sup> Rest – Take a Moment	Exodus 20:1-11
3.16.2025	16 <sup>th</sup> Rest – Take a Second	Genesis 1:1-2:3
3.23.2025	8 <sup>th</sup> Rest – Take a Breath	Amos 8:4-8 & Matthew 6:24-34
3.30.2025	Quarter Rest – Take a Minute	Matthew 11:28 – 12:8

## Observing the Rests, Mary Ellen Clinard, Worship Director

One of my favorite musical jobs is to play for junior high and high school students for the Ohio Music Educator Association's Solo and Ensemble Contest every year. This is a voluntary effort by the student who chooses to "go the extra mile" and learn a solo piece to play in front of a judge on a specific day in January. With the guidance of the teacher, the student selects a piece and works on it independently or during private lessons. Once the notes are learned by the student, they bring in the accompanist (me) to complete the performance. In most of these pieces, the piano is playing an orchestral "reduction", which means the piano part is playing all the orchestra parts and the student's solo instrument has the starring role.

One of the hardest things for the student to learn is "resting". In their practice they have learned one section and then go on to the next section, etc., without any thought as to what is happening when there are rests in their measures and not notes. When I come in to accompany them, they often barrel through the music and I have to jump ahead to catch up. What I try to teach them in this beginning time of collaboration, is that those rests are there for a reason. Sometimes it's so the soloist and the orchestra (or piano) can create a dialogue of music. First one speaks, then another. But another less obvious reason is so that the soloist can "take a breather". Playing any kind of woodwind, reed, or brass instrument can make your lips go weak and numb. With those measures of rest, the soloist has a chance to rest their body before they go on to the next phrase. The listener also gets a break from it all sounding the same. It creates interest, dialogue, and physical renewal.

Pastor Kim is planning a Lenten Series about "Rest" and is using some musical examples throughout the season. I am excited about planning and creating many rest-filled opportunities through the music for this upcoming few weeks!

## Lenten Offering

As has become our tradition, our Lenten and Easter offering this year will focus on the ministries of our church that focus on feeding our neighbors. We have a weekly **food pantry** that is open every Tuesday afternoon. We also offer pantry items in the form of **emergency food**, which is a grocery bag full of canned goods, peanut butter, crackers, etc. Last, but certainly not least, we host Monday morning **Breakfast Club** which provides a hot breakfast to anyone who comes.

This Lenten season you are invited to purchase pantry items that are the quickest to leave our pantry shelves. These items are:

Toilet tissue (4 pack)	White Rice (3 lb bag)
Laundry detergent	Shampoo (V05)
Dish soap	Apple Juice—Half Gallon
Vegetable/Canola Oil	Evaporated Milk
Flour	Paper Towels
Sugar	Ramen Noodles (Chicken/Beef)
Salt	Bar Soap Ivory/Zest
Vienna Sausages	

In addition to purchasing items for the pantry, prayerfully consider how you can be involved with these ministries year-round. Could you volunteer to serve during pantry hours or be a shopper for food pantry items that do not get donated? Or could you come to the church on Monday mornings to make a hot breakfast for our neighbors?

If you have any questions about our Lenten & Easter offering, or if you want to serve in one of these ministries, please contact the church office and we will help you get connected.

"I am only a foreigner"  
Ruth 2:10

Ruth couldn't expect kindness and caring from anyone in Israel because she was a foreign woman, but Boaz was such an amazing man. He allowed Ruth to work in his fields picking up some food for her and her mother-in-law. He let Ruth drink water from his well and invited her to sit with him and his workers at his table.

Boaz was so welcoming and kind to Ruth. He didn't look at Ruth differently just because she was a foreign woman, instead, he was caring and supportive of her.

In the same way, as Christians, we are called to be caring and welcoming of the immigrant and the foreigner. We are called to be such an example of kindness and love to those who are coming to get better chances to provide, to care, and to give to their families.

We are called to love our neighbor in all the possible ways we can.

Following our calling to love each other, the Immigration Legal Clinic, hosted by our church, provided a workshop for local leaders to give them tools to improve their ministries, offering the chance to know people's rights within these harmful and difficult times.

The lawyers who usually help every month in the Immigration Legal Clinic spoke to the attendees about how to respond to Immigration & Customs Enforcement and what rights the immigrants have. They also showed how to choose a power of attorney for finances, properties, and money. They talked about how to make a power of attorney for your children in case the worst happens.

A variety of leaders attended our February meeting: leaders from Hispanic communities around the area, pastors of churches with members who are immigrants, people interested in supporting our society, and the Chief of the Middletown Police Department. Everyone was so interested and proactive in this initiative to help our immigrant communities.

The next step is having another session with current clients who may need help with their power of attorney and paperwork.

Please continue praying and supporting this wonderful and amazing ministry toward our neighbors  
Rev. Daniel Cardenas.

## Church Finances

On Sunday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> Pastor Kim held an informational meeting about our church's current financial situation. While we received more pledges (72) and for a larger amount (\$280,918) we are still anticipating a deficit for 2025. It looks like our expenses for 2025 will be greater than our projected giving by the amount of \$114,645.

We are planning to meet this deficit in three ways. One, we are transferring money from an investment in the amount of \$28,000. Two, Pastor Kim has applied for District and Conference grants but it is uncertain if we will receive these and what amount we will be rewarded. Lastly, the congregation will be asked to make a second mile gift – a gift in addition to what is already been pledged, to help us meet the shortfall. (See article on page 5.) If you would like to receive the handout that Pastor Kim shared, please call the church office. If you have any questions about our church finances, please ask Pastor Kim or John Hoffman, our Chair of the Finance Committee. And you are always welcome to request the current Treasurer's report which has our monthly giving, our expenses, and the balances of all of our checking accounts.

## **Ash Wednesday**

**March 5<sup>th</sup> 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.**

Begin your Lenten journey in worship at First UMC. We will observe this holy day with scripture, prayer, song, and the imposition of ashes. Realizing that there are a wide variety of schedules present in our church family, we will offer two identical services in the sanctuary, as well as offering a devotional Ash Wednesday recording that can be viewed at whatever time works best for you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the church office.

## **Lenten Lunches**

**Beginning Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at noon**

We begin our Lenten lunches this month, a time when a few of the churches in Middletown come together for fellowship and food. You are invited to join with other Christians in our community for this time of prayer and reflection. The hosting churches and teaching pastors are:

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

Come to the hosting church at noon for a simple meal of soup and sandwiches as well as a time of fellowship, reflection, and prayer based on a chapter of I Thessalonians each week. And if you are interested in helping First UMC host on March 19<sup>th</sup>, please call the church office and let us know!

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Mile Giving March 2025**

**We need your help to meet the financial gap.**

Our church is facing a deficit for 2025. In order to cover our operating expenses we will require an additional \$86,645. A letter will be coming to you in the beginning of March asking for you to prayerfully consider how you may help us by making a second mile gift, in addition to what you are currently giving and/or have pledged to give. Each week in March updates will be given on how we are progressing in this mini campaign. If you have any questions, you can always contact the church office or John Hoffman, the Chair of our Finance Committee.

## **Spiritual Formation Workshop**

**Making the Bible your Bible**

**Saturday March 15<sup>th</sup> 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.**

Our God is One who speaks. The first spoken words in the Bible are voiced by God, "Let there be light." Since God speaks, the attention turns toward us: How do we listen? One of the best ways to listen to God is through studying the Bible; but let's face it – the Bible can be a difficult book to study.

This is why our church is hosting a workshop focused on helping us understand and connect with our Bible. Pastor Kim will be our guide this day offering us an information session on the Bible itself and then will offer us some tools on how to learn not only what the Bible says but how God is speaking specifically to you through it.

No previous Bible experience or knowledge is needed. If you are interested in participating, please call the church office or sign up on the sheet in the north hallway. There is no cost to this workshop but we do need you to register to prepare resources and provide lunch. Please see Pastor Kim if you have any questions!

## MISSION MOMENT

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

"Two for One"

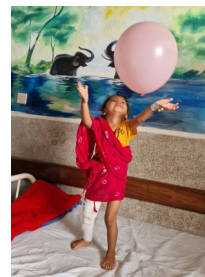
One day, a man came into the hospital emergency room with a bad fracture as he had fallen while walking home from a local shop. Unfortunately, two months previously, he had fallen and broken the same leg! He had had surgery in our hospital at that time, and was healing only to fall and cause a break in the same place again.

He has had a difficult life - his first wife left him, and he couldn't go to India to work and take care of his children, so he married again. He had been sending money to his family from India...until he fell and could no longer work. The family live in an old house belonging to an uncle, they have no land, and are dependent on the daily wages that the father used to bring in. They owe much money from a previous loan they had to take. So when he fell this second time, he didn't want to have to pay more money and just wanted a cast put on his leg. However, he was assured here at the hospital that we could help with the costs and the orthopedic surgeons could do a better repair with surgery.

While he was talking with the orthopedic doctor, he mentioned that his daughter had fallen and hurt her arm, and even in a cast, it was still very painful after several weeks. The surgeon asked for a picture of the x-ray, and it was sent to him on his phone! (Yes - technology continues to advance here!) He encouraged the dad to bring his daughter here as well - so he did! Both father and daughter were operated on, and because of their financial difficulties, the hospital was able to pay for that for them. This was due to the generous gifts from friends around the world funding the Medical Assistance Fund. We are so thankful that we never have to turn anyone away who cannot pay.

Thanks for your prayers and support! Much love, Debbie & Les

"A happy patient"- not related to the story, but cared for by our orthopedic surgeons.



## 2025 Easter Flower Order Form

**Order Deadline: Sunday, April 14th**

Lilies: \$16.50 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Mums: \$16.50 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Tulips: \$16.50 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Hyacinths: \$16.50 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Daffodils: \$16.50 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL DUE: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

All flowers will come in assorted colors, a foil-wrapped pot, and have a bow. **Payment must accompany order.** If you are mailing your order, please make sure it will be received before the deadline above. When picking up flowers please be sure to take the pot with your name tag on it in order to ensure that everyone receives their exact order. **Please pick up your flowers after services on Easter Sunday or by noon on the following Wednesday.** (NOTE: the office is closed on the Monday after Easter). Call the church office with any questions (513-423-4629).

***Please print neatly and be sure to complete your name and phone number.***

☐ In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

**PLACED BY** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE (\_\_\_\_\_)** \_\_\_\_\_



March 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Dates to remember in April</p> <p>April 2—Lenten Lunch St. Paul CC</p> <p>April 4—First Friday Concert</p> <p>April 9—Lenten Lunch First Baptist</p> <p>April 14—Palm Sunday</p> <p>April 17—Maundy Thursday</p>						
2 COMMUNION SUNDAY	3 8:00 am Breakfast Club	4 NO Pantry	5 <b>Ash Wednesday</b> 2 & 7 pm Services NO Hisp. Bible Study 3 & 6 pm Choir	6 6 pm ESL Classes	7 10 am UWV Brd. Mtg. Noon First Friday Concert	8
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship	Hosting Shalom	Hosting Shalom	Hosting Shalom	Hosting Shalom	Hosting Shalom	Hosting Shalom
9	10 8:00 am Breakfast Club	11 1 pm SPRC meeting 2 pm Pantry	12 Noon Lenten Lunch—First Baptist 6 pm Hisp. Bible Study	13 2 pm Elizabeth Circle Mt. Pleasant	14	15
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship	6pm Legal Clinic		3 & 7 pm Choir	6 pm ESL Classes		9 am Hope Circle - Bob Evans 10 am Making The Bible Your Bible
Daylight Savings Time begins						
16	17 8:00 am Breakfast Club	18 2 pm Pantry	19 Noon Lenten Lunch FUMC	20	21	22
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship	Club	5:30 pm Finance Mtg 6:00 pm Admin Council	Hosting lunch 6 pm Hisp. Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir		AMBASSADOR articles due	
Sanctuary Prep Team meeting				6 pm ESL Classes		
23	24 8:00 am Breakfast Club	25 2 pm Pantry	26 Noon Lenten Lunch—First Christian 6 pm Hisp. Bible Study 3 & 7 pm Choir	27	28	29
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship	Club			6 pm ESL Classes		
30	31 8:00 am Breakfast Club	6:30 pm Trustees Mtg				
9 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship						

Angela Murphy 2

Barbara Dillion 4

Keeghan Wills 4

Karen Adams 8

Dave McGraw 8

Neal Walke 8

Phil Yapple 8

Marilyn Housh 12

Mary Maurer 13

Judy Smith 13

Patry McGraw 14

Scott Tucker 16

Jennie Webb 16

Greg Cooper 18

Luanne Fugate 19

Alma Taulbee 19

Tom Atkinson 23

Grant Edgren 27

Barb Orth 27

Happy Birthday!



# **2025 First Friday Concert & Artist Series**

**March 7, 2025  
Richard Goering and  
Blythe Walker**

**With guitarist Richard Goering and  
vocalist Blythe Walker, expect to  
enjoy the music of Leonard  
Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, and  
Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida**

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