



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 68 Number 2

February 2024

**Sunday School at 9:30 A.M.** (when school is in session)  
**Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M.**      **700 Poyntz Avenue**  
**Second Helping Dinner at 6:00 P.M.**      **Manhattan, Kansas 66502**  
**Thursday Evening Prayers at 7:00 P.M.**      **telephone 785-537-7006**  
[www.uccmanhattan.org](http://www.uccmanhattan.org)

## Wandering Hearts this Lent

Lent is a Christian season of self-examination lasting the 6 weeks leading up to Easter. The season moves on the calendar from year to year based on the spring equinox, celebrating the increasingly longer days of the year. As a reminder for Christians to look to God rather than physical things for their wholeness, some take on the practice of giving something up for Lent. Whenever they desire this thing that they have given up, they are reminded to pray for God to sustain them. In recent years, it has also become popular to add a spiritual practice during Lent, rather than giving something up. Some people decide to make a point of coming to worship more regularly, read a daily devotional, find a prayer partner, or make time for daily prayer or meditation.

However you choose to observe the season, we look forward to worshiping with you as we prepare for Easter. This year we'll be using thematic materials from A Sanctified Art to guide our journey. Here is some information from the team about this year's theme: *(continued pg 2)*



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This Lent, we are focusing on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most famous disciples. In Peter, we see a person who is both steadfast and unsteady, a dear friend and a betrayer, a follower and a wanderer. In Peter, we often see ourselves. By following Peter's journey, we watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a very normal human trying to figure it all out—just like us.

As we were studying Peter's faith journey, the lyrics of "Come Thou Fount" came to mind. It's as if Peter himself wrote this song. And so, for each step in Peter's journey, we have selected a phrase from this hymn. As we follow Peter's story, we will sing our way through Lent, binding our wandering hearts to God.

In this series, we want to affirm that faith is a constant journey of steadfast pursuit, one that ebbs and flows. We want to affirm that wandering is exploration, not necessarily distance from God. We want to affirm the ways Peter keeps going: he drops his nets, he walks on water, he runs to the empty tomb, he swims to the shore to meet the risen Christ. He keeps searching and yearning and loving, even after missteps or mistakes. Ultimately, in Peter's story, we are reminded that God loves imperfect people—in fact, time and again, that's precisely who God claims and calls.

This Lent, we will look for ourselves in the stepping stones of Peter's story. We will reflect on the stages of our own faith journeys as well as who and what has shaped us along the way. As we wander, let us tune our hearts to sing God's grace. May we rest in streams of mercy, never ceasing.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14th. Please see page 5 for more information about Ash Wednesday, options for Lenten devotionals, and music to guide your journey.

Grateful to be wandering together,

*Pastor Caela*

***E-MAIL PRAYER CHAIN*** – If you wish to be added to the First Congregational e-mail prayer chain, please contact the church office. It is a quick and easy way to stay up to date with your church family.



## Sharing and Caring

### *Prayer Requests*

For more information, please contact the church office.

### *Helping*

- **Need a ride to church?** Contact one of our transportation volunteers: Jim/Carolyn Hodgson, Bill Pallett, or Jeff Keller.
- **Home Communion Visits** If you would like to receive Communion at home, please reach out to Pastor Caela or a Deacon to make arrangements.

### **Grant-Writing Expertise Needed**

Do you have any experience with grant-writing? Or are you generally skilled in technical writing and/or proofreading? We are applying for several grants this spring (two local and one federal) to support our facilities need. Pastor Caela is taking the lead on preparing the grants, but we need others with experience to help edit, proofread, and improve her initial drafts. If you're interested, please reach out to [pastor@uccmanhattan.org](mailto:pastor@uccmanhattan.org).

### **Automated Giving Updates**

Do you use automated giving? Did you change your financial pledge for 2024? If so, please make sure to change your pledge with your financial institution or the church office.

### **Lunch Bunch: Feb. 7 @ Old Chicago**

We join together in an opportunity to get to know one another, Wednesday, February 7 at (Old Chicago (2001 Clock Tower Place). Everyone is welcome to join us for lunch at 11:30 a.m.



# 2024 Pastoral Sabbatical

Your church leadership continues to prepare for Pastor Caela's sabbatical. Caela will be on sabbatical from May 1 through August 17th, 2024. The focus of her pastoral sabbatical is rest, rejuvenation, and rejoicing. Caela's plans are still forming, but she anticipates her sabbatical will include space for spiritual retreats, travel with colleagues and family, and plenty of unprogrammed time for sabbath rest.

The sabbatical committee (Jennifer Edwards, Janet George, Tracey Weston) have been working with Caela, our boards and committees, and staff to ensure that everything will be covered in Caela's absence. It is their goal to communicate with the full congregation sometime in April about how various pastoral tasks will be handled while Caela is taking Sabbath.

If you have any questions about plans for the sabbatical, please don't hesitate to be in touch with Caela, Paul Hunt (moderator), or anyone from the sabbatical committee.

## Connection Points

**Sundays:** Sunday School at 9:30 a.m. for adults (hybrid) and children (in-person only) | visit [uccmanhattan.org/online](https://uccmanhattan.org/online) for the Zoom link. (*When school is in session.*)

Worship at 10:45 a.m. in our Sanctuary or via Zoom | visit [uccmanhattan.org/online](https://uccmanhattan.org/online) for the Zoom link.

Fellowship Hour immediately following worship in-person or via Zoom | visit [uccmanhattan.org/online](https://uccmanhattan.org/online) for the Zoom link

**Tuesdays:** Tuesday Book Group from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. via Zoom | visit [uccmanhattan.org/online](https://uccmanhattan.org/online) for the Zoom link

**Third Thursdays:** Taizé at 7:00 p.m. in-person

For more information about kids and youth activities, contact [Brandy@uccmanhattan.org](mailto:Brandy@uccmanhattan.org) (age 3 through 5th grade) or [Pastor@uccmanhattan.org](mailto:Pastor@uccmanhattan.org) (6th-12th grades).

# Ash Wednesday is February 14

Join us for Ash Wednesday worship (in-person or via Zoom - [uccmanhattan.org/online](https://uccmanhattan.org/online)) at 5:30 p.m. on February 14. If you are joining us online, we encourage you to pick up your packet of ashes ahead of time in the plastic box hanging just outside the office entry.

Pastor Caela will also be imposing ashes on campus from noon-1pm on Wednesday. Look for her near the roundabout located between Memorial Stadium and the Union. You are welcome to drive through or walk up.

Ash Wednesday is a Christian tradition that prepares us for the Lenten season before Easter. The reasons Christians receive ashes on the forehead are twofold: 1. As a call to grieve and repent from the ways they have become separated from God and Neighbor and 2. As a humble reminder of the dust from which we came and the dust to which we'll return.

## Save the Dates: Lent and Easter 2024

Lent is the 40 days preceding Easter and is a time when Christians traditionally cultivate their faith in more intensive ways. For some this may include giving something up or adding in a new spiritual practice. As a gathered community, we always include additional focused opportunities for worship and communal prayer. Because Easter is a movable feast (meaning, the date changes each year based on moon cycles), the dates for Lent change each year.

In 2024, the following dates will guide our journey through Lent and Eastertide:

- Feb. 14: Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent
- Feb. 18: First Sunday of Lent
- Mar. 24: Palm Sunday
- Mar. 28: Maundy Thursday
- Mar. 29: Good Friday
- Mar. 30: Holy Saturday
- Mar. 31: Easter Sunday
- May 19: Pentecost Sunday, which ends Eastertide



## Music for Lent

As our faith journey takes us down wandering paths, the words we grew up singing and the old, familiar melodies have a way of tethering our hearts to the God who wanders with us. Our friends at A Sanctified Art have curated a Spotify playlist that goes along with our Wandering Heart Lent series, which follows Simon Peter's wandering journey as he follows Jesus from the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the empty tomb and back again. We hope you can use this playlist in your car, on your walks, or during your individual prayer or meditation time during Lent. Visit our website [uccmanhattan.org/lent](https://uccmanhattan.org/lent) to access the Spotify playlist.

## Lenten Devotional Options

This year we have TWO options for free devotionals to help guide your Lenten journey.

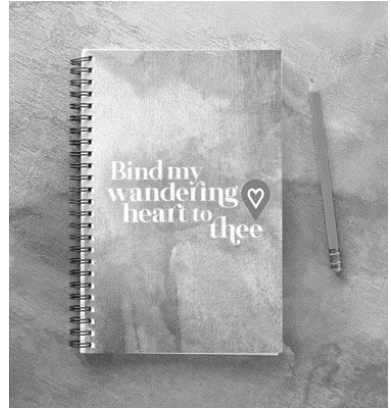
**1. Our Lenten Devotional Booklets from A Sanctified Art are available for pick-up beginning Feb. 11.** You can pick up in the church lobby or in the plastic box outside the office doors. If you prefer a web-based version or would like a hard copy placed in the U.S. mail, please contact the church office.

About the devotional: "Beginning with the First Sunday in Lent, this weekly devotional follows the scriptures of our *Wandering Heart* series through the Second Sunday of Easter. Each week offers commentary, poetry, visual art, hymns, and reflection prompts. We encourage you to walk through these weekly readings at your own pace throughout the season, following the rhythm that works best for you. The devotional features biblical commentary by our guest writers, Dr. Terence Lester and Dr. Karoline M. Lewis, and art and reflections by our guest artists, Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda and Rev. T. Denise Anderson." (from [sanctifiedart.com](https://sanctifiedart.com))

**2. For those who prefer a daily devotional, we are pleased to offer Daily Devotional cards via email.** Receive a daily invitation to a Centering Practice, Reflection Question, and Prayer. These cards were also created by A Sanctified Art and follow our *Wandering Heart* theme. If you'd like to receive one each day in your inbox, please email [devos@uccmanhattan.org](mailto:devos@uccmanhattan.org) and we'll get you added to the list.

# Calling All Journalers and Doodlers

If you're a person who enjoys writing, drawing, or journaling as a spiritual practice, you may be interested in having a special journal for the season of Lent. We are able to take orders for this custom notebook inspired by this year's Wandering Heart theme from A Sanctified Art. The cover includes the phrase, "Bind my wandering heart to thee" (the lyric from "Come Thou Fount" which inspired the theme title) and the heart icon set on one of the background paintings for the series. Inside are 140 dot grid pages perfect for journaling, sketching, sermon notes, and more.



You can order the journal yourself directly from A Sanctified Art on their website ([sanctifiedart.org](https://sanctifiedart.org)). If you're local and willing to pick up at the church, you can also join our group order and save a bit on shipping costs. To join the group order click here (<https://givebutter.com/NyuJLz>). Click "donate" and then indicate the number of journals you'd like to purchase. The deadline for the group order is Sunday, Feb. 4.

## Come and Find the Quiet Center

Lent is the perfect season to carve out time for uninterrupted prayer or contemplation. You're welcome to come use the sanctuary for quiet meditation whenever the building is open. If you're coming from a distance, you might want to call ahead to make sure no one else is using the space or to ask for the temperature to be adjusted. Pastor Caela has put together a basket of Prayer Resources that you can use while you're in the sanctuary. There are books featuring the writings of Howard Thurman, Marian Wright Edleman, Henri Nouwen, Rumi, Sarah Bessey, Ross Gay and more. You can also share your written prayers in our spiral bound prayer notebook for others to read, as well. Just grab the basket from the bookshelves in the corner of the main lobby and return it when you're finished.

# Christian Education

*Please contact Brandy McDonald (brandy@uccmanhattan.org) for more information about options for children and youth.*

Between break and bad weather, January has been a quiet month for children's ministry! We are so excited to get back into the swing of things in February!

**February 4, 11, and 18:** Traditional Sunday School

**February 25:** Service Sunday for Manhattan Area Resettlement Team

**A reminder of our Children's Ministry Offerings** (if you are unsure where any of these are located, please don't hesitate to ask the usher or Brandy!):

## **Sunday school is**

offered for kids ages 3 through 5th grade at 9:30 am in the Sunday School room. We generally do three Sundays of traditional Sunday School (scripture based lesson and activity) and one Sunday doing a service project for a local need. Grethen Lewis also comes many Sundays to lead the children in learning a song to share with the congregation.



**Nursery** is open during Sunday School and worship for ages birth through 3 years old. Our awesome paid nursery staff is all trained and first aid/CPR certified and have passed background checks.

**Kids Worship** is available after Word for Children for kids ages 3 through 1st grade. Miss Abbie is our teacher and she's fantastic! This programming is loosely modeled after our worship services to start getting our kids familiar with the worship service structure.



**Sacred Space** is available after Word for Children for kids grades 2-5 and takes place in the balcony with Brandy. This is a space that allows the kids to be part of the worship service in an environment more friendly to their developmental needs.

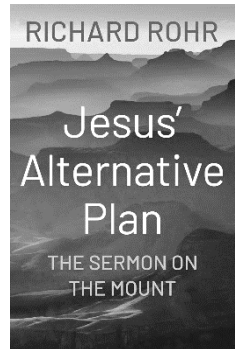
Our **Prayground** is a space in the back of the sanctuary for kids of any age who prefer to stay in worship with their families. It offers floor space for play as well as some quiet toys and activities. There are also Busy Bags available for families who prefer to have their children in their pews with them.

If you ever have any Children's Ministry programs or suggestions please don't hesitate to reach out!

## Tuesday Book Study: New Book

*Jesus' Alternative Plan* by Father Richard Rohr

The Tuesday Book Club has begun reading Father Richard Rohr's book on the Sermon on the Mount. Titled *Jesus' Alternative Plan*, Father Rohr argues that in this famous sermon, Jesus offered a blueprint for a new way of being in the world: a way that overturns conventional wisdom and challenges all the power structures that seek to control human life. The Way of Jesus is the way of justice and mercy, and, a profound transformation in what we humans think of as "the good life."



The Tuesday Book Club meets every Tuesday from 11:30 to 1:00 via Zoom. It's not too late to join as we discuss this book. Our weekly conversations are always marked by lively questions and deep contemplation of what we have all read. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Pastor Sue.



# CELEBRATING GENEROSITY

*An invitation from Gifts, Endowments, and Investments*

Dear First Congregational members and friends,

Those of us in attendance at the congregational meeting in November were witness to a passionate discussion about the physical needs of our building and the budget constraints that challenge our ability to fund needed maintenance and improvements. Since the meeting, several members have stepped up and made significant donations to this cause and the Church more broadly. These anonymous gifts include \$2,000 to the Facilities fund, \$30,000 to the General Support fund, \$50,000 to the Facilities fund and \$2,500 to the Church library. A heart-felt thanks to the donors who decided to support the Church with these gifts.

So, on behalf of the Gifts, Endowment and Investments Committee I would like to challenge you to consider making a gift of your own. You can join with those who have already made a gift and help ensure the long-term health of our church facility and programs. I would be happy to discuss the specifics of your gift and/or direct you to other leaders in the Church who can answer your questions.

The Church's Gifts, Endowment and Investments Committee is charged with accepting gifts, monitoring investments and, in general, being stewards of the long-term financial health of the church. The Church maintains four funds:

- the **General Support** fund is the largest pool of resources, and withdrawals from it cover around 9% of our annual budget.
- the **Facilities, Environment, and Resources** fund is dedicated to building and grounds. The recent gift of \$50,000 will be matched by General Support money to build up this fund in anticipation of several building repairs and updates (see below).
- Donations can also be made to the fund for **Christian Education and Formation**, which supports Sunday School curricula, youth events, conference attendance, etc., or the fund for **Ministry and Mission**, which supports music, worship, our Second Helping ministry, and other endeavors.

Money is spent from these funds through a request by a relevant board or committee and then approval by Cabinet. Gifts to these funds provide the Church leadership with important options when they make decisions about the budget and seek ways to cover unanticipated expenses.

Please consider a gift to one of these four areas to keep the momentum going of the wonderful recent donations. Together, we can help to preserve and improve our facility and ensure the future vitality of our programming and mission.

*Rick Doll*

on behalf of the Gifts, Endowments, and Investments Committee

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**Short-Term Facilities Needs (identified by the Board of Facilities)**

- Foundation work (cost not yet known)
- Continued water damage repairs (min. \$10,000)
- Roof maintenance and repairs (cost not yet known)
- Sanctuary sound system upgrades (min. \$5,000)
- Sanctuary accessibility improvements such as “pew cuts” to provide more welcoming spaces for those with wheelchairs or other mobility aids (cost not yet known)
- LED lighting throughout the building (\$11,000)
- Trees to replace those removed by the City (\$1,000)
- HVAC repair/replacement (each unit replacement is ~\$10,000)
- Irrigation system repairs (est. \$2500)
- Increased insurance costs (currently \$18,000/yr; cost has doubled since 2021)
- Creation of budget line items for Technology and Emergency Management

*If you would like more information about any of these items, please reach out to Deane Lehmann, Presiding Officer of the Board of Facilities.*

To make your gift to one of our four support funds (described above), please note the name of the fund in the memo of your check or online donation. If you have questions or would like to speak to someone about your gift, please contact Rick Doll.

# Options for Giving

We are grateful for your financial support as we continue to Love Unconditionally, Challenge Spiritually, and Minister Fervently together.

## Options for giving:

- 1) Place in the plate on Sunday morning or mail your contribution to 700 Poyntz Ave., Manhattan, KS 66502.
- 2) Donate online. Go to [uccmanhattan.org/giving](http://uccmanhattan.org/giving).
- 3) Set up a recurring online gift. It is a convenient way to provide consistent financial support to the church. Your bank may be able to do this for you OR you may contact the church office for a copy of our authorization form, and we can set it up for you.

Thank you for your continued support and please contact the office if you have questions.

## Mission Statement

The Mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ is

- To love and accept others unconditionally as God loves and accepts us, and by example, to encourage others to do the same.
- To challenge ourselves to grow spiritually through worship, education, nurture, reflection, discussion, fellowship, and outreach.
- To minister to others locally, nationally, and globally with the same fervor as we minister to ourselves, through the sharing of our talents, gifts, and resources.

We hold ourselves accountable before God for this mission.

# Second Helping Volunteers Needed

Our Second Helping ministry continues to be a wonderful way in which our church extends its mission to the community of Manhattan. We regularly serve 60-70 people each week. Many of you have helped with this mission in a variety of ways, and that is much appreciated!



Currently we are hoping to add some more volunteers to our list of "regulars." If you are interested in learning more about either of these positions, or volunteering in other ways, please contact: Les Kuhlman, Second Helping Volunteer Coordinator.

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## Current Second Helping needs:

- **shelf-stable food:** oatmeal packets, peanut butter snack crackers, cereal bars, canned vegetables (and we LOVE big cans) and slaw, ranch and Italian salad dressings.
- **cash donations:** for food items needed for meals and lunches and for To-Go supplies
- **Dessert Makers:** need homemade desserts for 60 every week. To sign up go to [www.uccmanhattan.org/sign-ups](http://www.uccmanhattan.org/sign-ups).
- **Head Cooks or cooking teams:** cooking teams in the kitchen are usually family members. Contact Jean or Linda for info.
- **Sunday evening volunteers:** 2 or 3 volunteers on Sunday evenings. Contact Jean
- **Lunch volunteers:** Making the sack lunches during any time before Sunday. Contact Shari. She also welcomes homemade goodies to put in the lunches.

### KIFA Advocacy Days

Rather than having ONE set day to gather in Topeka during the 2024 legislative session, Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA) is joining forces with several other organizations for a series of Advocacy Days. This allows you to choose what issues and dates might work best for you.

**Here are the current dates:**

**January 31:** Equality Kansas (LGBTQ+ support)

**February 5:** WEALTH Day (climate action)

**February 14:** Medicaid Expansion

Check the KIFA website for more details and updates.

<https://kansasinterfaithaction.org/updates/2024-advocacy>

### Upcoming ECM Events

#### **Feb 2, 6pm: Vegan Baked Goods to Celebrate 5-Years of the ECM Sustainability Retreat**

The ECM Sustainability Retreat will celebrate 5-years this spring! Come celebrate with ECM in the only way we know how--vegan goodies!

#### **Feb. 3, 12-5pm: Native Garden DIY Workshop (with free food!)**

A beloved permaculture expert, England Porter, will lead a workshop on the 12 Principles of Permaculture, and participants can plan their own gardens just in time for the Manhattan Seed Exchange on February 18. Free lunch from Baan Thai and snacks throughout the day! (KSU students are free to participate; local plant lovers have a suggested donation of \$10.)

#### **Feb. 4, 1pm: Zoom Call About Making a Positive Impact on the Environment**

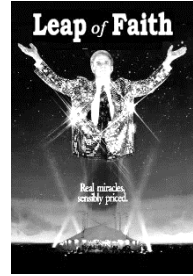
Doug Tallamy is a TA Baker Professor of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Delaware. His latest book, Nature's Best Hope, outlines a vision for humanity's relationship to our own lawn's in an effort to create a "homegrown national park".

Email [ecmksu@gmail.com](mailto:ecmksu@gmail.com) for more information about any of these events.

# Cinematic Sunday at UUFM

## Film: Leap of Faith

### Feb. 4, 4-6pm



After Pastor Melissa's Sunday reflection at UUFM, many folks expressed intrigue about the film she mentioned: Leap of Faith.

UUFM invites you, your friends, and neighbors to Cinematic Sunday on February 4 from 4:00-6:00 pm. We'll screen Leap of Faith. This is a free event.

Afterwards you are invited to stay for a potluck and discussion of the film. RSVP appreciated but not required.

## Free Tax Preparation

**Manhattan Public Library**

**Now through April 15**

**with extended hours through February 17**

Preparation of simple IRS 1040 tax returns and state returns. For low to moderate household income of \$79,000 or less.

To set up an appointment please call 785-565-6426 or email: [vitataxes@gmail.com](mailto:vitataxes@gmail.com). To book an appointment online go to [www.riley.ksu.edu](http://www.riley.ksu.edu).

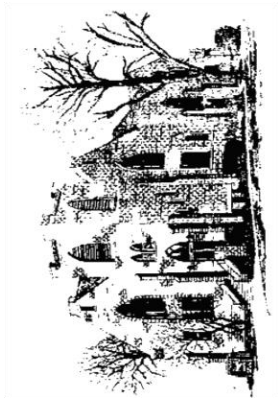
## Fiber Fellowship

Come enjoy a new fellowship opportunity to chat and create with other fiber workers. Bring whatever you're working on and sit a spell. All are welcome, whether you're feeling crafty or not!

We meet in Pioneer/Blachly on the third Tuesday of the month from 7pm-8 or 8:30pm.

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
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