



The Disciple

December 2025

Abilene First United Methodist Church 601 N. Cedar, Abilene, KS 67410 (785) 263-2623

In this Issue...

Message from Pastor Libby...	2
Prayer Requests	2
Youth News	3
Musically Speaking.....	4
Little Free Pantry.....	5
From the Archives.....	6
Calendar	7



The next issue of

The Disciple will be out in January. Please have all articles to the church office by **December 22**.

Would you like to receive The Disciple by email?

Email Chris at office@abilenefirstumc.org

Highlighted Members of the Month: Steve and Karen Crump



Steve & Karen Crump 1975

A love story that started as a first date to the Sadie Hawkins dance in 1975 is turning 50 years old on December 22. Karen's best friend since the 4th grade, Linda, who happened to be Steve's cousin introduced Steve and Karen. The rest, as they say, is history. Steve says he let her talk as much as she wanted to, he did not have a chance, it was love. He proposed after graduation that year. Steve joined the National Guard, his basic training was in Ft. Leonard Wood that summer and they eloped when he came home for Christmas from Aberdeen, MD, where he was stationed for Advance Individual Training (AIT). Judge Hope made it official at the Topeka courthouse on December 22, 1975.

Their married life has taken them from Topeka, to Junction City, to Abilene, back to Topeka, to Enterprise and finally, back to Abilene for the last 22 years. Steve served 6 years with the National Guard, 635th Armored Division in Abilene. He worked at Vacublast until they closed, Forbes Field in Topeka, and as a welder with Great Plains Manufacturing. Karen was a homemaker, worked in the school food industry for 16 years and raised their three children: Stacy, David, and Lisa. She also had the opportunity to provide day care for her 5 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren over the years. Karen's favorite bible verse is Psalm 25:20 *O guard my life, and deliver me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.*

In 2015, Steve was medically retired after suffering from two separate strokes. His diagnosis was not good, but he has beat the odds. He had to learn to walk, talk, and eat again. He also taught himself how to write left-handed. His favorite bible verse is Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* He spoke about how he cannot read a newspaper or book very long without his vertigo stopping him, but he is able to read his Bible as long as he wants without any problems. I was moved when he told me about how he read the bible to his father, who accepted Jesus Christ as his savior before he passed.

They first attended FUMC with their daughter Stacy's family. They said that everyone was so welcoming that they kept coming back and became members in 2016. They listen every Sunday on the radio or on Facebook.



Join us for our Advent/Christmas Worship Series

November 30 – Psalm 80: 1-2; 1 Corinthians 1: 4-7; Mark 13: 24-37
December 7 - Isaiah 40: 1-11; 2 Peter 3: 8-15a; Mark 1: 1-8
December 14 - Isaiah 61: 1-4; 10; Psalm 126: 1-3; Luke 1: 41-55
December 21 – Samuel 7:8-9a, Psalm 89:1-4, Luke 1:26-31
December 24 – Isaiah 9:2; Luke 2:1-20
December 28 – Isaiah 62:1-3, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

PRAYER LIST

MEMBERS:

Sue Murry
Ed & Velda Becker

FRIENDS:

The Family of Don Soeken
JR Soeken
Bob Dishman
Leah Blanchard
Scot Budden
Delores Schmidt

COMMUNITY:

Rachel Prichard
Tom Litke
Kathy Ducker
Mike Jantz
Jacque Havice
Macie Heller

ARMED FORCES:

We pray for those who are serving in the armed forces and for their families.

LOCAL COMMUNITY:

We pray for those who are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control. Interracial understanding. We pray for students, teachers, staff and family.

OUR WORLD COMMUNITY:

We pray for those who are incarcerated and their families, for peace of God to rule in the hearts of our local and national leaders.

**Names are included on the prayer list for one month. If the prayer request needs to be on the list for multiple months, please contact the church office. To submit a prayer request please fill out a form in the pew at church or call the church office.*

A Word From Pastor Libby



Friends,

When you receive this, we will be entering into the most Wonderful time of the year, as the song goes. We begin Advent and our wait for Christmas on Sunday, November 30.

I am excited about this year of celebrating Christ's birth with you, seeing the beauty of the sanctuary prepared for our celebrations, and being present with you. I am excited for our worship series "The Gift of Being Present," as we focus on being present with one another more than on the presents we will receive. It offers us the chance to not worry about the perfect gift or even whether we can gift everyone we want, but to focus on being present with one another as God is present with us throughout the seasons of our lives.

On the same theme, The Gift of Being Present, I would love you to be present with me on Saturday, December 13, for an Open House at the parsonage at 1601 N. Campbell Street, from 2-4 pm. This is a come-and-go kind of day with some holiday goodies and time together this season. If you can gift me with your presence, I will consider it a blessing. Please note that there are stairs up to the front door. Another gift for this season to go with this series is a wonderful, guided journal, which we will make available to you to follow along each week and journal about your experience. I think the journal will allow us to be more aware of God's presence among us. I will offer my thoughts each week on our Facebook page as I use the journal on this journey through Advent and to the celebration of a Savior born in a manger.

I am thankful that our leadership and worship design team were so thoughtful this year in how we might best meet the needs of our congregation and community as we plan for Christmas Eve services. We are planning three services: two will follow the "The Gift of Being Present" script, one at 3 pm and one at 11 pm. We will also have a service of Lessons and Carols around the theme at 6 pm. We are fortunate to have special music at each service, and we will celebrate Holy Communion and then end with Silent Night and our candlelight tradition as we focus on "Being Present with Light" – The Light, who is Jesus Christ. "The people walking in darkness are seeing a brilliant light — upon those who dwell in a land of deep shadows light is shining!" — Isaiah 9:2.

Let your light shine like Clark Griswald's house this year so that all may see the light of Christ in you and in our church as we extend the light to all the world.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Libby

Merry Christmas, Everybody!

Bad Weather Policy

In case of bad weather, check KABI 1560 AM or 95.9 FM, our Facebook page, local TV stations or call Pastor Libby (785-564-1977) to see if services have been canceled. The sidewalks on the west will not be cleaned immediately of ice or snow. Please use the main parking lot.

Volunteers are needed for communion element setup on Communion Sundays for both services. Please contact Pastor Libby if you would consider being on the list of volunteers.





Wendy Robinson, Director of Children and Youth Ministries

The Power and Light kids have been having fun! They get to eat yummy snacks made by Jonielle. Thank you so much. We have learned about Samuel and Joseph. Discussed the many Blessings God has provided for us. Recorded parts for the Christmas pageant and talked about using good manners.

The youth have been very busy with recording the Christmas pageant, making cookies and assembled care packages for the College kids finals. They also have moved all the Christmas decorations up to the main floor from the basement. They youth continue to invite their friends to youth group. We had 23 youth throughout the month of November. The youth continue to grow their relationship with God and some volunteer to provide the ending prayer on Wednesday evenings.

Thank you everyone who donated items for the care packages! The college kids will appreciate them!

Happy Thanksgiving!

December Activities

December 3rd: Youth Christmas party with white elephant gift

December 7th: Christmas Pageant video 8:15 & 10:30

December 17th- January 6th Christmas Break

December 20th: Youth free movie event of David
(see Wendy for more information)



Operation Christmas Child Results

Because of your generosity, we were able to fill and ship 35 shoeboxes this year.

Saturday, Dec 20 2:00 pm

B&B Theatres

1016 W 6th Street

Junction City



All youth are invited to see the new movie *David* with the youth group, free of charge. Please RSVP to Wendy by Wednesday, December 3, 2025.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

12/2 Michelle Riffel
12/4 Ann Bailey
Steve Schwarting
Cayden Wyckoff
12/9 Cora Vinduska
12/13 Kevin Unruh
12/14 Dawn James
Marcia Williamson
12/23 Toni Schwarting
Dorothy Veach
Joan Wyatt
12/24 Mary Rickley
12/25 Bonnie Byers
12/27 Blair Adams
12/28 Darrol Dunham

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Jim & Diana Stout
12/18/1970

Chuck & Ann
Brussow
12/29/1973

Derek & Jennie
Lipson
12/29

MUSICALLY SPEAKING Clark Williamson, Director of Music Ministries

****Each Sunday during Advent: a Sing Along of Carols in our sanctuary led by Anna Gugler (10:15am)**

12-7 Bell Quartet plays Carols @ Heritage Center

12-14 Chancel Choir sings 2 anthems @ both services

12-16 Blue Christmas -- "I Wonder as I Wander" -- vocal solo

12-21 Piano Duet @ (8:15) Bell Choir Prelude (10:30)

12-24 Special Music for Christmas Eve services:

3pm Clark's solo

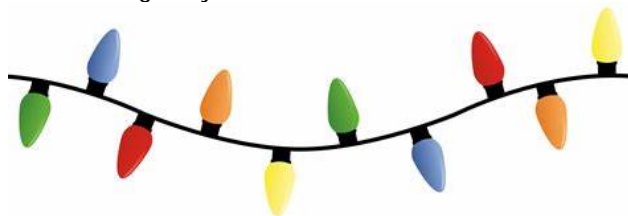
6pm Medley of Carols -- Carson Woodworth, vocal/guitar

11pm "Still, Still, Still" anthem by the Chancel Choir

Plus coming up soon in January: a **TRAINING SESSION** for all **TECH BALCONY VOLUNTEERS**, both current & new helpers. To Simplify and clarify showing Slides, working the Sound Board, and starting up the iPad that operates the Live Stream camera. Plus the proper steps for starting up/shutting down all the equipment and devices.

A Little Something from Clark

One of my favorite Christmas memories is during 1979-83, I was teaching K-12 Vocal Music in Grant City, Missouri (near Iowa state line). I was also the choir director at the local UMC. After our early Christmas Eve service one year, 4 of us drove 25 miles over to Conception Abbey to experience all the music, candles, and incense. Then I drove 3 hours home to my parents' house and enjoyed the sights of decorations and Christmas lights at houses clear down Missouri Highway 13.



GET TO KNOW....AMANDA CORMACK

How long have you played for FUMC? I am not sure! Maybe since 2020? It all happened so gradually...I think I may have preached before I ever played.

What other instruments do you play? I played percussion all through high school and college. My favorite instruments to play were the timpani and the marimba.

What is your favorite genre of music? I like all kinds of music (not so much country), but classical music lives closest to my heart—my late father's legacy to me.

What are your interests outside of church? I love reading, walking, working puzzles (any and all), and watching PBS, especially historical documentaries, period dramas, and nature programs. I also enjoy seeing live theatre with my family (and seeing my family in live theatre)!

What is something people would be surprised to know about you? When reading Harry Potter books to my kids, I always impersonate the actors' voices from the movies. Claire says my Professor McGonagall is particularly good (but do not ask me).



Throughout Advent, the congregation will have an opportunity to sing Christmas Carols for ten minutes before the services.

Anna Gugler will play piano and we will sing until the service begins. Join us at 8:05 or 10:20. Everyone loves Christmas songs!

October Giving

\$24,844.94

Expenses \$27,455.45

Year to Date Giving

\$216,361.63

Expenses \$ 253,829.29

For a list of ways to give, visit our website

www.abilenefirstumc.org

Click on the GIVING tab at the top.

CarePortal and Abilene First UMC

Friends, several months ago, our church joined the local CarePortal group. The CarePortal is a way to help families in need in real time. The way it works is that a child-serving professional receives a request for help. The child-serving professional vets the needs and then types them into the CarePortal. CarePortal alerts churches and community members to the needs. The churches and individuals partner to meet those needs. Requests are often for beds, furnishings, or household items. With our commitment to this work as one of five churches needed to set it up in our area, we will now have a designated offering for the CarePortal. If you would like to give to the CarePortal you can donate to the church and indicate it is for the CarePortal.

THE LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Lisa Divel

I have learned so much from working with the little pantry the last 5 years; experiencing the needs of others, experiencing the abundance of generosity in our congregation and community, and experiencing the true meaning behind the story "Stone Soup". Sunday, I filled the pantry at the beginning of church and needed to fill it again before I left. We are looking at filling it twice a day- mornings and late afternoon...stuff for kids coming and going to school and then later for parents looking for dinner.

We have started our complete meals in a bag. It is recipes that are complete- in that we have the recipe, spices, veggies, meat, noodles etc... in a baggie. Very easy to make and it is a meal. It has been well received. Jonielle Frazier and neighbor teenager, Allison Forbach have been tremendous help and we are so thankful for them.

Last but not least, a big shout out to Liam Brown who is the grandson of Joann Hettenbach. He is the son of Stacia and Tyler Brown and always comes to church when he is visiting....AND always contributes to TLFP. This last visit he did not disappoint, as he saved up part of his allowance to contribute to the little pantry. Made me think, if a nine-year-old can contribute. What can we do? People always ask me-what can I do to help? What can I contribute? And I direct them to go down the hallway and look in the shelves and see what's empty. Let us also remember that- what you use, we can use, so there is no right or wrong answer. There is only no answer.

I am always reminded of my motto -when you do a little, a lot gets done. And I truly believe that everyone can do something... something anything, and it will be welcome and we are so very thankful for you.

2025 Shepherd's Run

Nancy Perkins will be heading up the Shepherd's Run again this year. Baked goods will be delivered to area workers at hotels, the Police station, the Fire station, Convenience Stores, the hospital, and other places around town on Christmas Eve.

Donations of cookies or other baked goods need To be brought to the church December 21-24, During office hours, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

There will be a sign up sheet for delivery drivers.

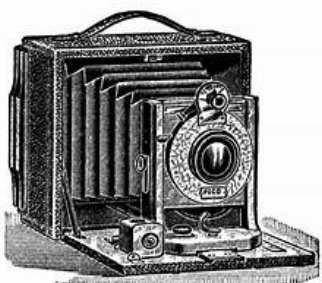


Mission & Outreach donated pies to Core.



New Directory Photos

Pictures will be taken December 14 & 21 before and after both services. This is a great time to be sure that all your information is up to date in the office computer. Even if you do not want to be included in the directory be sure to check your information. We need 2-3 volunteers to help Chris on those Sunday mornings with paperwork.



From the Archives

Thank you to Kevin Bailey and David & Pam Haight for the article and for locating all the pictures and information the office asks for throughout the year. You are truly a blessing to us all.

Christmas hymns, seasonal sermons and the Christmas Eve candlelight service are all part of how our church celebrates the season but there are other ways as well. This month's newsletter features an assortment of photographs from past Christmas observances found in church records. The last twenty-five years of records are the most complete with only scattered examples surviving from earlier years. The following comes from December Sunday bulletins and a few specific copies of Christmas event programs that still exist.

A highlight every season is the children's program. In years past, it was performed live but during COVID a switch was made to a video format which according to Wendy puts the child actors more at ease and eliminates stage fright in front of live audiences.

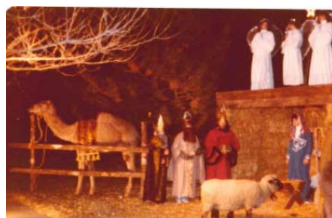
Speaking of live performances, church history has seen such productions as the "Journey to Bethlehem" in at least the late 1990s to early 2000s. A cast of at least 55 parishioners took part in a live reenactment of the Christmas Story and spectators moved from scene to scene throughout the church. One such production resulted in an \$800 carpet-cleaning bill for a goat that piddled on the floor.

The congregation participates in decorating the sanctuary by hanging the greens, decorating the tree and providing poinsettias on the altar in honor and memory of loved ones.

Outreach in the form of the Shepherd's Run delivery of cookies and treats to people working on Christmas Eve began in the late 1990s and continues. Congregational caroling is yet another long standing tradition.

Most recently, we have held a Blue Christmas service for the past two years for the benefit of those who are experiencing grief, sadness and a sense of loss at this time of the year. Christmas is supposed to be a joyous time but it is not always for some.

Over the years, the congregation has participated in and enjoyed a variety of Christmas season activities and observances, and will continue to do so in years to come.



DECEMBER AT ABILENE FUMC

Monday, Dec. 1	10:00	Card Ministry Group
	5:30	Core Meeting
Tuesday, Dec. 2	10:00	Parkinson Exercise Group
	11:00	Retired Teachers Luncheon
Wednesday, Dec. 3	3:30	Power & Light
	5:00	Missions & Outreach
	5:15	Bell Choir Practice
	6:00	Youth Group
	6:15	Chancel Choir Practice
Thursday, Dec. 4		
Friday, Dec. 5		Office Closed
Saturday, Dec. 6	10:30	United Women in Faith Christmas Party
	1:00	Cora V. Birthday Party
Sunday, Dec. 7	8:15	Worship Service
	9:20	Small Group Study
	10:30	Worship Service
	11:45	Disciple Fast Track Study
Monday, Dec. 8	9:30	Card Ministry Group
	5:30	Core Meeting
Tuesday, Dec. 9	10:00	Parkinson Exercise Group
Wednesday, Dec. 10	9:30	Cancer Support Group
	3:30	Power & Light
	5:15	Bell Choir Practice
	6:00	Youth Group
	6:15	Chancel Choir Practice
Thursday, Dec. 11	5:30	Blockheads Quilters
Friday, Dec. 12		Office Closed
Saturday, Dec. 13	2:00	Parsonage Open House 1600 N. Campbell
Sunday, Dec. 14	8:15	Worship Service
	9:20	Small Group Study
	9:30-12:30	Directory Photos
	10:30	Worship Service
	11:45	Disciple Fast Track Study
Monday, Dec. 15	10:00	Card Ministry Group
	5:30	Core Meeting
	6:00	Women's AA/NA Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 16	10:00	Parkinson Exercise Group
	7:00	Blue Christmas Service
Wednesday, Dec. 17	10:00	Staff Meeting
	5:15	Bell Choir Practice
	6:15	Chancel Choir Practice
Thursday, Dec. 18		
Friday, Dec. 19		Office Closed
Saturday, Dec. 20		
Sunday, Dec. 21	8:15	Worship Service
	9:20	Small Group Study
	9:30-12:30	Directory Photos
	10:30	Worship Service
	11:45	Disciple Fast Track Study
Monday, Dec. 22	9:30	Card Ministry Group
	5:30	Core Meeting
	6:00	Women's AA/NA Meeting
Tuesday, Dec. 23	10:00	Parkinson Exercise Group
Wednesday, Dec. 24	3:00	Christmas Eve Service
	6:00	Christmas Eve Service
	11:00	Christmas Eve Service
Thursday, Dec. 25		CHRISTMAS Office Closed
Friday, Dec. 26		Office Closed
Saturday, Dec. 27		
Sunday, Dec. 28	8:15	Worship Service
	9:20	Small Group Study
	10:30	Worship Service
	11:45	Disciple Fast Track Study
Monday, Dec. 29		Office Closed
Tuesday, Dec. 30	10:00	Parkinson Exercise Group
Wednesday, Dec 31		NEW YEARS EVE





Abilene First United Methodist Church
601 N. Cedar
Abilene, KS 67410

Church office hours:

Monday – Thursday 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

First UMC

In-Person Sunday Worship 8:15 a.m.

In-Person, Radio, Facebook Worship 10:30 a.m.

KABI 1560AM or 95.9FM

Church Staff

The Rev. Libby Themis, Pastor

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Chris Seets, Administrative Assistant

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