

The



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January 2026

"This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'"
Matthew 11:10 NRSV

First United Methodist Church—Newton, Iowa

A New Year's Resolve from Pastor Gary

As I reflect on past years, I realize that many times as one year drew to a close and another began I have tried to make "resolutions" for the coming year. Thinking back, I realize that in each of those "new" years, life was not what I anticipated it would be. The "resolutions" I made did not always relate to the deeper issues that emerged during the year.

Of course, in each of those years, including 2001, things occurred that we would not have expected, or in ways that we would not have anticipated. During the past year, there have been unexpected joys and unexpected times of sadness. In each, my faith has been both challenged and strengthened.

As we begin a new year, who of us knows what will happen during 2026? However, a fundamental conviction of the Christian faith is that we do not face the future alone, and therefore do not have to

enter the future unafraid.

Through Christ's presence in our lives, we have the capacity to discover a depth to our times of joy we would not have expected, and a comfort in our times of difficulty we could not have predicted.

As we begin a new year, I think not so much of New Year's resolutions, but of New Year's resolve. If our resolve can be to trust God, no matter what, then New Year's resolutions might become more manageable.

The conclusion to Matthew's Gospel seems especially appropriate as we move to a new year while prayerfully reflecting on the past year. The

Gospel concludes with Jesus' farewell words: "and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age" (*Matthew 28:20*). May we know the truth of that promise throughout the coming year.

Pastor Gary Armstrong





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Jean Ibbotson, *Organist*

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Sympathies

Our deepest sympathies to Chuck & Doris Jean Cabalka on the death of Doris' brother, Donald Reckler; the family and friends of Merna Rusk; Larry and David Bovenkamp and family on the death of Larry's wife and David's mother, Ann Bovenkamp; and to Brent & Deb Bagnall and Sandy Davis and family on the death of Deb's mother and Sandy's sister, Sheryl Ferguson.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you....Do not let your hearts be troubled." John 14:27

Hospitalizations

None

Home Mission Sunday

Home Mission Sunday will be **January 4th**. This month, the Salvation Army requests pancake mix and pancake syrup. Please put the items in the wicker baskets at the church entrances or bring to the church office during the week. Thank you for your ongoing generosity!



MUG Mob

MUG Mob will meet on **Monday, January 5th** at **10 AM** in the church dining room. All are welcome to join in this time of Christian fellowship!

Finance News

As a reminder, if you are unable to join us in worship, please send your offering to the church office. Your continued financial support is greatly appreciated.

If you have an IRA, Individual Retirement Account, and are required to take a yearly RMD, Required Minimum Distribution, due to age or other requirements, consider the following strategy. A charitable gift can be made to the First United Methodist Church, a qualified charitable organization, that is not subject to federal income tax. The institution holding the IRA would make a direct payment to the First United Methodist Church. This is an important tax strategy that can be used for those who are not able to itemize as the limits for itemized deductions rise. The institution holding the IRA and individual's accountant or tax advisor should be contacted for further advice on handling RMD distributions from an IRA.

For example: A distribution of \$1,000 from an approved IRA to a charitable organization would net the charitable organization \$1,000. A distribution of \$1,000 from an approved IRA to the individual would be \$1,000 less the federal tax amount paid on the distribution. If the federal tax amount is 20%, the distribution would be \$800 which the individual then gave to a charitable organization, the organization would net \$200 less.



Online Worship



If your schedule keeps you from attending worship, join our online worship services, devotions, and past services by visiting our website at newtonfirst.org. If you have any questions or concerns, please call the church office and we will be happy to help.

Wednesday Night Meals

Wednesday Night Meals are under way from **5:30 PM—6:30 PM** in the church dining room. We have averaged service to 60-75 people weekly! As volunteers and food donations are needed, sign-up sheets will be at the Welcome Center. St Luke UMC will be providing a meal and volunteers monthly. All meals are open to the public and everyone is welcome.



"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Genesis 8:22

JANUARY

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 8:45 AM Worship 10:00 AM Park Centre Worship 10:00 AM Fellowship Time 10:15 AM Builders SS Class 11:00 AM Radio Broadcast (92.1 FM KRLS Radio)	29 1:00 PM Mat Making 1:30 PM NV Bible Study	30	31 OFFICE CLOSED	1 OFFICE CLOSED Happy New Year! 	2	3
4 COMMUNION 8:45 AM Worship 10:00 AM Park Centre Worship 10:00 AM Fellowship Time 10:15 AM Builders SS Class 11:00 AM Radio Broadcast (92.1 FM KRLS Radio)	5 10:00 AM MUG Mob 1:00 PM Mat Making 1:30 PM NV Bible Study 	6	7 9:00 AM Staff Mtg 9:30 AM Stephen Ministry Training 10:00 AM Worship Planning Team Mtg 5:30 PM Community Meal 6:00 PM Kids Club 6:00 PM Jubilee Bells Rehearsal 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	8 9:30 AM Park Centre Study	9	10
11 8:45 AM Worship 10:00 AM Park Centre Worship 10:00 AM Fellowship Time 10:15 AM Builders SS Class 11:00 AM Radio Broadcast (92.1 FM KRLS Radio)	12 1:00 PM Mat Making 1:30 PM NV Bible Study	13 1:00 PM Trustees Committee Mtg	14 9:00 AM Staff Mtg 9:30 AM Stephen Ministry Training 1:00 PM Miriam Circle 5:30 PM Community Meal 6:00 PM Kids Club 6:00 PM Jubilee Bells Rehearsal 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	15 9:30 AM Park Centre Study 6:30 PM Finance Committee Mtg (library)	16	17
18 HUMAN RELATIONS SUNDAY 8:45 AM Worship 10:00 AM Park Centre Worship 10:00 AM Fellowship Time 10:15 AM Builders SS Class 11:00 AM Radio Broadcast (92.1 FM KRLS Radio)	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY Office Closed 1:00 PM Mat Making 1:30 PM NV Bible Study 	20 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL REPORTS DUE 5:30 PM Technology Team Mtg	21 9:00 AM Staff Mtg 9:30 AM Stephen Ministry Training 5:30 PM Community Meal 6:00 PM Kids Club 6:00 PM Jubilee Bells Rehearsal 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	22 9:30 AM Park Centre Study	23	24
25 8:45 AM Worship 10:00 AM Park Centre Worship 10:00 AM Fellowship Time 10:15 AM Builders SS Class 11:00 AM Radio Broadcast (92.1 FM KRLS Radio)	26 1:00 PM Mat Making 1:30 PM NV Bible Study	27 7:00 PM Administrative Council Mtg	28 9:00 AM Staff Mtg 9:30 AM Stephen Ministry Training 5:30 PM Community Meal 6:00 PM Kids Club 6:00 PM Jubilee Bells Rehearsal 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	29 9:30 AM Park Centre Study	30	31





Farewell from the Eberharts

Dear Newton First UMC
friends,

What a blessing it has been to serve as your interim pastors for the past six months. Thank you for the many ways you welcomed us and cared for us in our time among you. We have grown so much by witnessing your ministry firsthand. We are so appreciative of the church staff who supported us on the way and answered the many questions we asked! Thank you!

Here are some lessons we learned from you all:

1. You can do hard things. Losing Pastor Doug was so difficult and has brought up so many related losses. Your faith has carried you through a tender time and you have comforted each other well.
2. No matter your age, you can make a difference. We have met more 90- and 100-year-olds in this church who give of their time and are active in serving. You all are amazing!
3. The wisdom you share makes a difference. Being a part of two Bible Studies, we have observed your dedication to study, to grow in faith, and to serve others.
4. Your commitment to care for others is inspiring. Ministries such as Mat Making, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Wednesday Night Meals, Kids Club, Thanksgiving Ingathering, and so many more show the community that you care. Keep up your faithful work.

We are leaving you in good hands as Pastor Gary Armstrong will be serving as the next interim pastor January 1-July 1. As our Annual Conference ethics guides, we will no longer be offering pastoral services at Newton First. Welcome Pastor Gary as warmly as you welcomed us.

In closing, we leave you with a couple of blessings written by Saint Paul:

"Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave, be strong. Do all your work in love." (1 Corinthians 15:13)

"May the Lord himself, who is our source of peace, give you peace at all times and in every way." (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

With gratitude,

Pastors Diane and Len Eberhart

Radio Broadcast Sign-up

The opportunity to sign up for the 2026 radio broadcast sponsorship is under way. If you would like to fund a radio broadcast, please make use of the bulletin insert and circle the Sunday you would like to sponsor, fill out your name at the bottom, include who it is in memory or honor of, and place in the offering plate. You may also bring the form to the church office or call the church office to add your sponsorship. If two families select the same date, you may be asked to select another Sunday. The cost of each KRSL radio broadcast is \$125. Please make checks payable to FUMC and mark "2026 Radio Broadcast" in your memo.



Bible Quiz

Fill in the blank to complete this verse from 2 Corinthians: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new _____. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

- A. Creation
- B. Beginning
- C. Season
- D. Covenant



Answer: A (See 2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)

Mel's Memo

Where did 2025 go? In 2025 our major project of the year was the dome repair. It took a long time to get it done but the results were worth the wait. It is a beautiful focal point in Newton.

The Thanksgiving supper was well attended with an exceptional menu for many to enjoy!

December was a very busy month in the church. There were three Wednesday Advent devotions with luncheons to that were well attended. Thank you, Dorcas Circle, for your contributions!

The Sunday morning services were very nice. December brought snowy Sunday mornings and frigid temperatures which made it difficult for people to get to church, but we still provided church services for those who braved the weather and it was broadcasted on the radio and live-streamed on the church website.

Wednesday night meals are going well. We have had some really great meals and the attendance has been great, getting a few more people each week. If you know of anyone who needs a hot meal, bring them and enjoy the fellowship that is provided.

We counted the Mitten Tree and the Reverse Advent items and they were delivered to Salvation Army. There were 112 pairs of socks, 24 pairs of gloves/mittens, 59 hats, 14 scarfs, 12 pairs of underwear, and 18 headbands. From the Reverse Advent collection, we had close to 16 full bags of groceries. Thank you to **Tom & Jane Hollander** for picking up the items and delivering them to the Salvation Army.

On December 28th at 12:00 noon, we will be having a farewell potluck for **Pastors Len & Diane** as that will be their last Sunday with us. They sure will be missed! Join us in the dining room, and bring a dish to share and your own table service.

I hope you will welcome our new interim pastor, Gary Armstrong, beginning Sunday, January 4th. He will be with us through the end of June.

Wishing you a happy new year!

Mel Wilson

Coordinator of Lay Ministries

"Gratitude is an offering precious in the site of God and is one that the poorest of us can make and not be poorer, but richer for having made it." ~ AW Tozer

Baby Congratulations!

Blessings to **Noah & Hannah Stephas**, new parents of their daughter, Everly Rose Stephas. Welcoming Everly to her family are grandparents, **Matt & Sandy Scotton**. Congratulations!



Scripture Keys to a Joyful New Year

Hold fast to your faith (*Hebrews 4:14*)

Assemble with the saints (*Hebrews 10:25*)

Pray earnestly every day (*1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18*)

Pray for great blessings (*Malachi 3:10*)

Yield not to temptation (*1 Thessalonians 5:22*)

Neglect not your talents and opportunities (*Galatians 6:10*)

Examine yourself daily (*2 Corinthians 13:5*)

Work diligently for the Lord (*1 Corinthians 15:58*)

Yield your members to righteousness (*Romans 6:11, 16*)

Exercise yourself in godliness (*1 Timothy 4:7*)

Aim at sinless perfection (*Hebrews 6:1*)

Redeem the time (*Ephesians 5:15, 16*)

~ Gus Nichols



I Spy with My Two Little Eyes...



...a beautiful church building and sanctuary from a great team of Christmas decorators! Thank you! (Photos from Tim Blount)

HOPE
PEACE
LOVE
JOY



GotSneakers?

Of course you do! As a service project involving the whole congregation, the United Women of Faith (UWF) will be collecting sneakers (tennis shoes) in any condition and any size to be sent for redistribution by the GotSneakers organization. GotSneakers is a non-profit organization that redistributes good condition sneakers to shelters and clothes distribution centers throughout the United States. In return we will be paid a set amount for each pair depending on their condition, ranging from \$2 - \$7. They will also recycle any sneaker deemed not useable. This project is under way now and will continue through the Spring.



Christian Symbol

SHIP — The Christian church has long been symbolized by a ship. While the Old Testament tells of Noah's ark preserving righteous people during the flood, the New Testament recounts Jesus calming the storm that battered the disciples' fishing boat. St. Ambrose described the church as a ship with the cross as its mast, and others have compared salvation to being drawn out of the sea of death into the safety of the church (ship). Indeed, many large churches are constructed to represent a big boat, with the main worship space called the nave — Latin for ship.



Notes of Thanks

My Dear Church family,
It doesn't seem enough to say thank you for all that you have done for our family the last 2½ years, especially the last 6 months. I'm so very grateful that God lead us to you. You are a gift. I hope we have been a gift to you.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year. ~The Cue Family



A special thanks to **Larry Hurto, Barry Hurto, and Janie & Tom Hollander** for providing the program for the 2025 Christmas Walk on December 14th. The Christmas Walk stopped at each of the seven downtown churches with a brief program at each church.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



Neighbors Helping Neighbors is collecting Newton Hy-Vee receipts (grocery, gas, or prescriptions). For every \$100,000 spent, the group will get a check for \$1,000. This is for the Newton store only. A box is in the Welcome Center.

Winter Church Policy

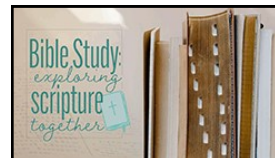
If there is a weather-related school closing or early dismissal, all church activities will be cancelled for that day/evening. Weather issues may also affect the time the church office opens and closes. Watch for cancellation signs posted on the church doors.



Bible Study Opportunities

Is one of your New Year's resolutions a desire to grow in faith?

There are three options for adult classes that are continuing in January:



Sunday mornings at 10:15 AM, the Builder's Class led by Jerry Yates meets in the lower level classroom.

Newton Village Bible Study meets at the NV Chapel at 1:30 PM on Monday afternoons, led by Bob Lane.

Park Centre Bible Study meets at 9:30 AM on Thursday mornings in the PC library.

These are outstanding opportunities to grow closer to God and to a group of friends. All are welcome to attend any of the studies.

What We Really Need

Twelve ministers were on a flight headed to a conference in Seattle when the plane hit a fierce storm. Trying to calm their nerves, they told the flight attendant, "Let the pilot know everything's fine — there are twelve ministers on board!"

A few minutes later, the flight attendant returned from the cockpit.

"Well?" one of the pastors asked with a grin. "What did the pilot say?"

She smiled and replied, "He said he was glad to have 12 ministers aboard, but he would rather have four good engines."



"You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter."

Psalm 74:17

January Birthdays

Birthdays blessings to those listed below!

Jan 1st – Marilyn Tish
Jan 2nd – Roger Gilbreath, Deb Lindstrom
Jan 3rd – Karter Prellwitz-Liebhart, Teresa Robson
Jan 4th – Darwin Graham
Jan 5th – Stan Heidemann, Anna Latcham, Joshua Pline
Jan 6th – Kathy (Ron) Carpenter, Tim Conn, Dave Drew, Tayler Iverson, Bonnie Logan
Jan 7th – Tonia Flora, Laura Hartgers, Rusty Lane
Jan 8th – Sean McDermott
Jan 9th – Silas Hanneman, Sandra Morgan
Jan 10th – Shane Griffin, Joe Klingensmith, Ken Lehrman
Jan 11th – Echo Hartgers, Bev Klingensmith
Jan 12th – DJ Mott
Jan 14th – Sally Hurt, Amy Joswiak, Beth Pline
Jan 15th – Natalie Squire, Dorothy Wood
Jan 16th – Linette Bowser, Jackson Hartzell, Ethan Illingworth, Kathy Milburn
Jan 17th – Amanda Crise, Rhonda Guy, Pat Martens, Larry Pauley
Jan 18th – Jerry Dawson, Betty Yates
Jan 20th – Mary Holwell, Clark Miller
Jan 21st – Nick Bunse, Jacob Hartgers, Bryar Hill
Jan 22nd – Nancy Andersen, Vern Bryan, Steve Herrin, Barb Richards
Jan 23rd – Doris Cabalka, Pam Yoakum
Jan 25th – Kenny Antle, Jeff Emmack, Tate Schnathorst, Jordyn Shipley, Kay Stewart
Jan 26th – Nicole Hoskins
Jan 27th – Rachel Swersie
Jan 28th – Mary Pretzer
Jan 30th – Laura Peterson, Chase Plumb, Arion Seiser
Jan 31st – Nykole Hernandez, Rick Squire



January Anniversaries

Anniversary blessings to the following couples!

Jan 6th – Frank & Mary Dawson, Rick & Carol Flanagan
Jan 13th – Randy & Judy Brisel
Jan 24th – Cody & Stacey Simbro
Jan 26th – Steve & Joan Hoelscher
Jan 27th – Roger & Nancee Etter
Jan 29th – Katie & Brent Warning



TRANSLATE GOD'S WORD

The Bible we use is translated into English from other languages.
 "Translate" the verse below using the code.

CODE	E=△	L=□	R=+
A=■	G=●	M=↗	S=■
B=X	H=◀	N=⏮	SH=☀
D=◀	I=▲	O=⊗	T=♪
	K=	P=□	TH=♥

Y

W F

W

W

U

Proverbs 3:13

Children's Sunday School

Sunday School for youngsters is available after the Children's Time in worship. Any children who want to attend can join Shawna Campese in the JMAX area for a lesson. Sunday School will be done when church is over and the children will be returned to the sanctuary area. If you've not yet done so, please take time to use the QR code to complete a child information form (one per child) if they are attending Sunday School.



Kids Club

Kids Club activities for children and teens ages PreK – 12th grade is under way from 6 PM – 7:30 PM. Families are welcome to attend the Wednesday night meal, however there will not be designated adults to host children who are dropped off. Children are able to go to the JMAX at 6 PM for snack, lesson, crafts, and worship service.



"Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."

Hosea 6:3

COLORING PAGE



When they saw the

STAR, they

rejoiced

exceedingly with

GREAT
JOY.

Matthew 2:10, ESV





2026 1st Quarter (January) FUMC Faithful Servants

Special thanks to all who have committed to serve the church during the month of January. Your service is greatly appreciated! If you are unable to fulfill your assigned obligation, please try to find someone to replace you and notify the church office so the correct information is reflected in the bulletin. If you are not able to find a replacement, please call the church office at 792-4648. As others come forward to volunteer, and in an effort to use as many people as possible, please watch the monthly Messenger for any scheduling changes.

January Church Door Opening/Closing

January 4: Greg & Rhonda Loder and
Jerry & Betty Yates
January 11: Jim Marshall & Terry Ingledue
January 18: Greg & Rhonda Loder and
Diane Plumb
January 25: Jim Marshall & Joy Stout

January Greeters

January 4: Deb Bagnall (N),
Pat Beckham/Jane Hiemstra (S),
Sandy Davis (W)
January 11: Dave & Pat Drew (N),
Terry & Pat Ingledue (S),
Margie Loupee (W)
January 18: Val & Phyllis Olson (N),
Jim & Gina Marshall (S),
Catherine Osborn (W)
January 25: Tori Reynolds (N),
Pat Riemenschneider (S), Ruth Ross
(W)

January Liturgists

January 4: Tim Blount; Kathy Zehr (PC)
January 11: Fred Chabot; Judith Dailey
(PC)
January 18: Koni Bunse; Kathy Zehr (PC)
January 25: Tori Reynolds; Judith Dailey
(PC)

January Technical Engineers

January 4: Koni Bunse (P), Marv Bunse
(S), Duane Daniels (V)
January 11: Duane Daniels (P), Tim Blount
(S), Koni Bunse (V)

January Technical Engineers (Continued)

January 18: Christine Dawson (P),
Jerry Dawson (S), Duane Daniels (V)
January 25: Koni Bunse (P), Marv Bunse
(S), Duane Daniels (V)

January Ushers

Shawn McFarling, Greg Loder

January Communion Stewards

Barb DeHaai, Pat Drew, Sandy Kaput,
Diane Plumb, Cathy Springer, Mel Wilson

January 235 Café & Coffee Host

January 4: Joy Stout
January 11: Mel Wilson
January 18: Cathy Springer
January 25: Catherine Osborn

January Coffee Treats

*Provide 3 dozen treats unless otherwise
indicated.*

January 4: Joy Stout/Dee Ely
January 11: Mel Wilson/Judy Chabot
January 18: Cathy Springer/Phyllis Olson
January 25: Catherine Osborn/
Kimbra Korte

thank
you