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Christmas Eve Service

This Christmas Eve, we're excited to gather as one big family for a heartwarming service at 5:00 PM. It's a time for reflection, gratitude, and celebrating the true meaning of the season in the presence of our loved ones.

☀️ Date: December 24th

🕒 Time: 5:00 PM

📍 Location: Church of the Cross, 1600 Rush St., Salina, KS

Please note that there will be no Sunday morning service on Christmas Eve.

Instead, we invite you to join us in the evening for this special celebration, where your presence will make it even more special.

Come and experience the joy of Christmas with us! Bring your loved ones and spread the warmth of this festive season together. Let's create beautiful memories and share the love and hope that Christmas

Meal Club Date December

Join us for a delightful gathering at Perkins on December 7 at 6:00pm. We invite you to be a part of our Meal club, where friends and church members come together for an evening of engaging conversation and fellowship. All are welcome to join us! Please note that each individual will be responsible for their own meal expenses. We look forward to sharing a memorable evening with you!



Christmas Open House

Friends,

I enjoy visiting with you all so much and appreciate you and your relationship with the church. I invite you to come to a Christmas Open House
December 16, 2023
From 1-4 PM



Come by whenever it works for you and sit awhile. If your schedule is hectic and you just can't stop by I understand and I will see you at church.

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love this Advent and Christmas Season!
Pastor Libby

How can we pray for you?

Send your prayer requests the following ways:

- Call or text Pastor Libby at 785-564-1977
- Email Pastor Libby at pastorlibbyoberdorf@gmail.com
- Email the church office at mollie.purcell@coc-salina.org
- Call the church office at 785-825-5170

The next issue of The Message will be out in January. Please have all articles to the church office by December 23.

Would you like to receive The Message by email? Email Mollie at mollie.purcell@coc-salina.org

PRAYER LIST

Joys and Concerns

MEMBERS:

Sylvia Rice, Roberta Blakeley, Family of Steve Cooksey, Bobbie Brockway, Chris Davis, Family of Larry Merriman, Family of Claudine Ashcraft, Sylvia Rice and Family

FAMILY:

FRIENDS:

Lucas Nutter
Sharon (Judy Beck's mom)

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.

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,

Today is the first day of December and I'm writing from my hotel room in Dallas, Texas. Though the hotel is decorated for Christmas there is no sign of Christmas in my room, so I have a Hallmark Christmas movie on in the background. I am thinking today of all the ways we prepare for Christmas and the celebration of Christ's birth and realize that I know very little about how people prepare for so many other holidays that happen this time of year. Some might think, what does it matter? I think it matters because in places where Christianity is not the primary religion or where celebrations are different, we hope our brothers and sisters with other beliefs will honor Christian celebrations as we honor theirs. Let's start with Jesus.



Jesus was Jewish so it is important for us to remember the celebrations of our Jewish friends who celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights. In Hebrew, Hanukkah means "dedication," and the holiday marks the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the 2nd century BC, after a small group of Jewish fighters liberated it from occupying foreign forces. This year Hanukkah begins on December 7 and ends on December 15.

Las Posadas, celebrated yearly from December 16-24, is a religious festival traditionally held in Mexico and parts of Latin America. On these nights friends are led by someone dressed as an angel, usually a small child, friends go from home to home remembering Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay. They celebrate joyously with prayers, piñatas, food, and fireworks.

The Feast of Saint Nicholas is celebrated on December 6 in northern Europe. Small gifts are left in shoes this night. This was the precursor to Santa Claus at Christmas.

Bodhi Day, December 8, is when Buddhists honor the day of enlightenment of Buddha with prayers and meditation.

Kwanza is a cultural holiday for African Americans celebrated December 26 through January 1. This celebration began in 1966 as a way to unite the African-American community following the Watts Rebellion in a predominantly Black Los Angeles neighborhood. It was an uprising against systemic racism which resulted in 34 deaths and over 1,000 injuries.

Boxing Day is celebrated on December 26 in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and other Commonwealth Countries. It was traditionally a day when servants were given the day off and a gift. Now it is probably more like New Years with a day of sports and other activities.

January 1 is Kalpataru Divas, when the faithful celebrate the life of Ramakrishna, one of the most influential Hindu holy men of the 19th century.

Jesus our hope, Prince of Peace, one whose joy is complete in us, and Son of God (Love) calls us to be the same, to see the human dignity of our neighbors even when they believe differently. This season let us share our Merry Christmas, and remember, when we hear "Happy Holidays" it doesn't take anything away from Christmas. It doesn't take away what Jesus has done for us; it invites us to celebrate God's creation drawing us together in our diversity and humanity.

God Bless and Merry Christmas! Pastor Libby

Thank You

A big thank you to Pat Mills who orchestrated leaf cleanup. She enlisted the help of a few men from the Rescue Mission to rake and bag the leaves on the South end of the property as well as at Pastor Libby's house. When all was said and done they bagged around 200 bags of leaves!

Dave Mills and Marvin Cossaart loaded up the bags in Marvin's truck and took them to the dump.



Laity Summit is in the works, so mark your calendars for March 10, 2024, from 1:30-5 p.m. CT and 12:30-4 p.m. MT.

Laity Summit is designed for laity from all churches large and small, rural and urban communities and established and emerging leaders. It is a time to share ideas, learn from others around our conference and beyond, and take away nuggets of knowledge to assist in growing our footprint of God's love in our respective mission fields.

Laity Summit 2024 is being planned to provide an opportunity for laity to gather in small groups and in community. Congregations are invited and encouraged to plan a watch party at your church. Together, you will be able to listen to the content of the messages from people in our Conference. Participants are encouraged to consider and discuss a couple questions within your group. How does what was said mean to us? Is there anything that we can put into action?

If you have ideas or questions, please email them to Jeanie Leeper at jleeper@greatplainsumc.org.

Blue Christmas Service

December 21st at 6:00pm you are invited to the Blue Christmas Service. Blue Christmas creates space for the many people who experience the holiday season as a bittersweet time. For those who have lost a job, are estranged from family, struggling with addiction, or grief, etc. it is an opportunity to step away from all the hustle and bustle and sit with God. We open our hearts to God, to share our grief, sadness, anxiety, melancholy, etc. God walks with us in the darkness until the light is revealed once again.



January/February Worship Series -Drawn In

We spend too much time being "driven" rather than "drawn in." We focus on what we "should" do rather than what we feel excited and compelled to do in our lives, in this world. During this series, we will connect with our inherent creativity and nurture this foundational aspect of being human, giving us renewed energy for passionate work, delightful play, and creative problem solving to make this world a better place for all.

January 7	Luke 4:13-21
January 14	Luke 4:1-13
January 21	Matthew 25:24-30
January 28	Acts 16:6-15
February 4	1 Corinthians 12:12-19
February 11	Exodus 20:8-11

Update your VANCO Information



VANCO makes giving to COC easier than ever!

Visit www.coc-salina.org and click on "Give your offering to Church of the Cross by clicking here." This will allow you to either give through a recurring payment or a one-time payment.

If you are currently signed up for a recurring payment you are able to edit your information by going to that same link and clicking login in the upper right corner. Then click on Payment Methods on the left side. You are also able to see the history of payments you have made to Church of the Cross through the VANCO system.

Stop by the church office between 9:30am and 1pm Monday-Friday to find out more information or ask any questions you may have.

If you have questions or need help, call the church (785-825-5170) and talk to either Mollie or Pat.

Blessing Box

The blessing box located in the shelter house south of the church is very frequently used. In the back of the narthex is a white cabinet for donations for the blessing box. When out shopping if each family picked up one or two items to go into the box it would help make sure people in our community do not go hungry. Donations can be left on the welcome center or put in the cabinet.



Suggestions of items for the blessing box are:

- Canned or bag tuna
- Vienna sausages
- Canned fruit
- Peanut butter
- Canned vegetables
- Crackers
- Grab and go snacks
- Macaroni and cheese.

Shopping at Dillons?

We recently received a generous check of \$235 from Dillons! If you shop at Dillons you can contribute simply by doing your grocery shopping. By participating in Dillons' Community Rewards program, you can help us make a difference in our community. To get started, visit www.dillons.com and navigate to the community rewards section. Our organization number is X1722, it is the key to ensuring your purchases benefit COC. As you prepare for your holiday grocery shopping, we kindly encourage you to set up Dillons giving and support our organization. Your support will greatly contribute to our efforts. If you need any help with this please talk to Mollie in the church office.



Church of the Cross Inclusivity Statement

As we grow in our understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God, we invite you to come be who you are. This means welcoming and affirming people of every gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, family structure; economic, immigration, marital and social status and so much more. This welcome includes those who struggle with our commitment to offering full participation to all those who have been hurt when we've failed and calls each of us to graciously live together in the community of Christ regardless of our differences. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice while standing in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed.

**Leadership Team approved on
September 13, 2023.**

DECEMBER AT COC

Friday, December 1

5:30 PM Gym, Kitchen & Webster Reserved

Saturday, December 2

8:00 AM Gym, Kitchen & Webster Reserved

Sunday, December 3

9:00 AM In-Person and Online Worship
10:00 AM Adult Sunday School – Webster East Classroom
6:00 PM Gym Reserved

Monday, December 4

1:00 PM Prayer Shawl – Courtyard Room
3:00 PM Bell Choir Practice – Webster Room
7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Tuesday, December 5

6:30 PM Scouts

Wednesday, December 6

7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Thursday, December 7

10:00 AM TLC – Webster Room

Friday, December 8

5:30 PM Kitchen Reserved

Saturday, December 9

Webster Room Reserved All Day

Sunday, December 10

9:00 AM In-Person and Online Worship
10:00 AM Adult Sunday School – Webster East Classroom
6:00 PM Gym Reserved

Monday, December 11

1:00 PM Prayer Shawl – Courtyard Room
3:00 PM Bell Choir Practice – Webster Room
7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Tuesday, December 12

1:30 PM UMW
6:30 PM Scouts

Wednesday, December 13

7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Thursday, December 14

10:00 AM TLC

Saturday, December 16

11:00 AM Webster Reserved
1:00 PM Christmas Open House, Parsonage 1pm – 4pm

Sunday, December 17

9:00 AM In-Person and Online Worship
10:00 AM Adult Sunday School – Courtyard Room
3:00 PM Webster Reserved
6:00 PM Gym Reserved

Monday, December 18

1:00 PM Prayer Shawl – Courtyard Room
3:00 PM Bell Choir Practice – Webster Room
7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Tuesday, December 19

6:30 PM Scouts

Wednesday, December 20

7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Thursday, December 21

10:00 AM TLC – Webster Room
6:00 PM Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, December 24

5:00 PM Christmas Eve Service

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day – Offices Closed

7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Tuesday, December 26

Offices Closed

Wednesday, December 27

7:00 PM AA Group 3 – Webster East Classroom

Thursday, December 28

10:00 AM TLC – Webster Room

Sunday, December 31

9:00 AM In-Person and Online Worship
10:00 AM Adult Sunday School – Webster East Classroom

December Birthdays

12/01 – Larry Beck

12/04 – Karen Cooksey

12/09 – Ben Purcell

12/21 – Robin Cates
Dave Musil

12/23 – Shirley Davis

12/26 – Janet Bellew

12/27 – Dee Harding

12/29 – Rhonda Garcia

UMC Bishops Statement on the Holy Land

"Give Peace A Chance"

Christ's true disciples must work for peace: build it and not just keep it; live it and not just aspire for it. If Christ is our peace, then peace must be imperative. (Resolution 6129: The United Methodist Church and Peace)

The United Methodist Church Council of Bishops, along with millions of people across the globe, are weeping and praying for the people of the Holy Land. We decry the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and the continuing loss of life of Israelis and Palestinians including thousands of children.

We cannot remain silent while a preventable humanitarian crisis in Gaza unfolds with no safe haven for the citizens in Gaza or the volunteers and agencies seeking to prevent starvation and to treat the wounded. We value all life. We encourage every effort toward a peaceful solution.

We call for the release of hostages and for the killing to stop. We also call for the immediate allowance of unrestricted humanitarian assistance. As Bishops of the Church, we denounce acts of and the proliferation of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and hate crimes that may begin with words and often turn to violence directed toward persons whose race, ethnicity or religion is disparaged.

We cannot stand by as though God is not weeping when the innocent, including children, are dying. We cannot abandon the way of Peace. May we find ways to listen to the stories of those most directly impacted by this centuries-old conflict. We commit to join all people in creating life-giving ways to journey toward peace with justice for all.

The Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church Meeting at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

Do you have a talent or passion you want to share with the community?

Email Tara Baxter at tara.baxter@coc-salina.org to get signed up to teach a class!

Stay up to date by visiting:
www.coc-salina.org/discover-u



The Five-Day Academy offered April 7-12

Mark your calendars for a spiritual retreat providing you with an opportunity to learn, worship, and connect — with God, yourself, and others.

It is a program of Upper Room Ministries providing an opportunity for participants to tune their hearts toward God through a daily rhythm of prayer, worship, learning and reflection. Each day includes teachings by gifted spiritual leaders for deeper discipleship, periods of silence, morning and evening prayer, Eucharist, and an opportunity to share with one another. It is open to anyone — laity or clergy — and is ecumenical.

The theme of the upcoming retreat is Loving Well: Community, Healing, and Resilience led by presenters Elaine A. Heath and Jeanine B. Heath-McGlinn. They are sisters whose vocations as theologian and therapist emerged from their own healing journeys. In this series they will explore what it means to foster spiritual communities that love well, that build resilience, offer healing, and hope in a broken world.

Registration for the 2024 Great Plains Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation are as follows:

In-person single room occupancy: \$625

In-person double room occupancy: \$590

Online Zoom participation: \$300

Some scholarships are available, \$200 for in-person or \$100 for online, especially for first-time laity participants. CEUs are available.

Learn more and register here:

<https://www.gpspiritualformation.org/registration-5day>.

Please let us know if you are interested, but don't think you want to be gone so long. We are looking at the online option to make this available at the church. I have read some of Elaine Heath's books and she is wonderful!

Pastor Libby

Where have you seen God?

Share your photos of where you have seen God. To submit your photos please email them to Mollie at Mollie.purcell@coc-salina.org. Photo credit to Roger Plankenhorn.





United Methodist
Church of the Cross
1600 Rush St.
Salina, KS 67401

Church office hours:
Monday – Friday 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Church of the Cross

In-Person and Online Sunday Worship – 9 AM

Church Staff

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tara.baxter@coc-salina.org 785-342-5968

Dave Musil, Custodian