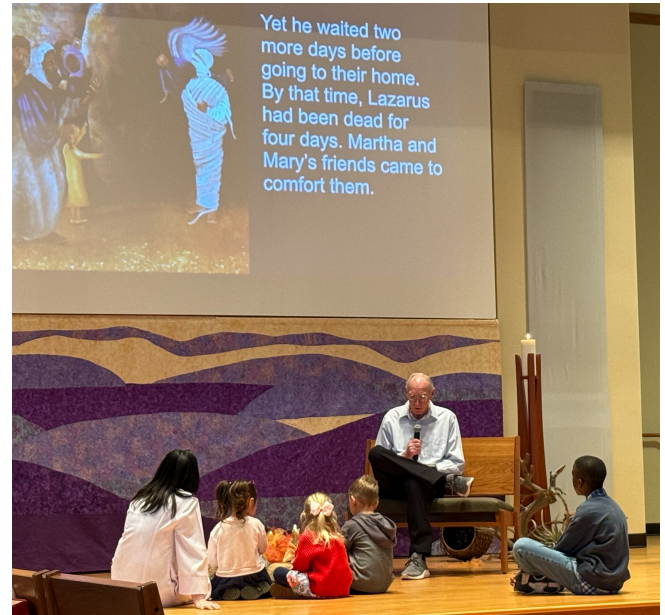


LOVE FIRST



Cover photos:
3rd Saturday Meal prep
3rd Gr. Bible milestone
Story for All Ages reading



Holy Week 2026

Palm Sunday Service, March 29 at 9:30am

Holy Wednesday Service & Meal, April 1 at 6pm

Good Friday Service, April 3 at 7pm

Easter Sunrise Hike, April 5 at 6:30am

- register at lovefirstumc.org/hike

Easter Sunday Worship, April 5 at 8:30 & 10:30am

- with Sacrament of Holy Communion

We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. ... We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. . . We must recover the sense of the majesty of the creation and the ability to be worshipful in its presence. For it is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it.

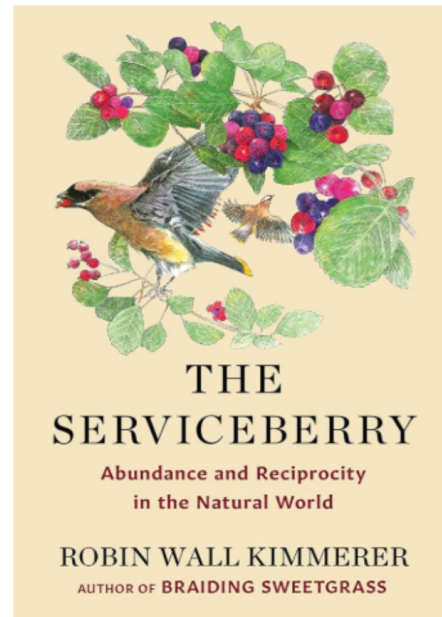
-Wendell Berry, *The Long-Legged House*

I have had this quote on my desktop for quite awhile now. At first read it may seem rather discouraging, which is what I often feel when I see us as a species digging our heels into the very practices of using up the earth that have gotten us in trouble to begin with. But then I see Berry's invitation – to recover a sense of majesty; to be worshipful in the presence of the earth; to live with the assumption that what is good for the earth is good for us too. That is a beautiful invitation, and one that is fully supported by Scripture, by Tradition, by Reason, and by Experience. This month we will be reading the book "The Serviceberry" by Robin Wall Kimmerer and have a worship series based on its blessing and based in our own scriptures which lift up the earth as our neighbor. We'll have a few copies of the book if you want to pick one up at church (a suggested donation of \$20 if you can afford it) or I encourage you to find your own copy. It is a short book; it is a profound book; it is a book with a beautiful invitation for us as people who follow Jesus to once again claim that all flourishing is mutual. Come participate, in this season of spring and Earth Day and the resurrection, as we explore how to retrain ourselves to fall in love with the flourishing of the earth as we worship our God.

Pastor Leah

lrosso@fumcscr.org

ALL CHURCH BOOK READ



Worship Series
after Easter
based on
"The Serviceberry"

All Church Book Read
conversation after worship
Sunday, April 26th

Hardcover books
available in the
gathering space
for \$20 per book.

**LOVE
FIRST**

SAVE THE DATE!

FOR LOVE FIRST'S

ECO CAMP

FOR EXPLORERS OF ALL AGES!

EVENINGS of Aug 17, 18 & 19

REGISTER TODAY!



Coming up in worship...



Sunday Worship at 9:30am and
livestream at www.lovefirstumc.org

April 5 - Easter

6:30am Sunrise Hike - rsvp lovefirstumc.org/hike

8:30 & 10:30 Worship

Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12

All Flourishing is Mutual

April 12 - Gift Economy

Genesis 2:4-8, 15-17, 19

April 19 - Reciprocity

Luke 12:13-21

April 26 - Interdependence

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The series continues in May!

May 10 - Hope for Creation

Isaiah 55:10-13

Sunday, April, 12 - Solar Presentation

A presentation by the Trustees on a proposed **Solar Energy Project** will be held in the Sanctuary following Worship Service. Please join us to find out exciting new details and plans for our solar energy project. A representative from All Energy Solar will be here to present the project and answer questions.

All are encouraged to attend.



We will be starting a new curriculum on April 12th called: Our Hearts were Strangely Lukewarm, Understanding and Confronting Racism in the American Methodist Church. The General Commission on Religion and Race presents a six-session small group study for "Our Hearts Were Strangely Lukewarm: The American Methodist Church and the Struggle with White Supremacy."

"This study invites Christians—especially white Christians—to engage in deep reflection and open dialogue about the impact of racism, with a focus on anti-Black racism, within both the church and society. Drawing directly from the insightful 2023 book by Rev. Dr. John Elford, a retired United Methodist clergy member, the study examines the history of the United Methodist Church in the United States. It explores how systemic racism has affected the church's mission, credibility, and overall witness. By reflecting on these historical and ongoing issues, participants are challenged to see how these struggles extend beyond the church and mirror broader societal patterns in the American Christian context."



Care for Caregivers

Healing from Secondary Trauma

Friday, April 10th

9AM-4PM

A free, one-day in-person seminar with presenter Dr. Terry Wardle via Zoom, founder of Healing Care Ministries, a global ministry to professional and lay counselors, pastors, social workers, and caregivers

Lectures include:

- Understanding secondary trauma,
- A spiritual perspective on healing,
- The neurobiology of trauma, and
- Practical ways to address secondary trauma.

Small group process time will follow each lecture.

Lunch included, with a free will offering to assist with expenses.

Register Here



Hosted By

Grace UMC

2617 Clearwater Rd
St Cloud MN

Minnesota Reconciling Congregations Spring Gathering

April 18, 2026 from 11:30-2:30

Welcoming the Whole Person: The Journey Toward LGBTQIA+ Clergy Leadership



Holy Trinity UMC
16150 Arcadia Ave SE
Prior Lake, MN

You are invited to bring food to help stock the Hope Cafe and Food Pantry. Baking items like oil, flour, sugar, eggs, and milk are especially needed, but all food and supplies are welcome.

MN Reconciling Congregations will hear from clergy, laity, and a conference superintendent about how our churches can go beyond our vote and on to welcoming the whole person leading our congregations.

Bring a dish to pass and plan for a great day of conversation. Hope to see you there!



If you enjoy appetizers, auctions (silent & live), a good meal, fellowship with people who like to help people and getting to know how United Women in Faith and other organizations support Emma Norton Services, you will want to come to the Opening Doors Gala on Thursday, April 23, for 5-8 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at: secure.qgiv.com/event/odg26

**Thursday • April 23
2026 | 5–8 P.M.**

Intercontinental Riverfront • Saint Paul

*Tickets are \$100 and may be purchased at
secure.qgiv.com/event/odg26*

**Opening
DoorsGala**
Emma Norton Annual Event & Silent Auction

**You can also donate Gift Cards of \$25 or more
to send with Kathy Hulsebus to the Gala.**

Jr High Youth Group Lent

This past month our Junior High Youth Group has been exploring the season of Lent and unpacking some of our rituals of the seasons. We have talked at length about what it means to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' time, students who followed a rabbi were usually the best of the best, the top learners chosen because of their knowledge and ability. But Jesus did something different and beautiful. Instead of choosing only the "cream of the crop," He chose ordinary people like us! Teenagers really! Beautifully imperfect, still learning, and capable of incredible things.

We talked about what Maunday Thursday (or our Holy Wednesday): would look like if we had an opportunity to say goodbye or spend time with friends before a big change. Our adult volunteers delight when our youth show up with honesty and courage as they explore what it means to be disciples of Jesus.



Sr High Youth Group EXODUS SERIES

Over the course of April, Sr High you will wrestle with some of the Bible's most vivid and challenging moments - Moses' unlikely calling at the burning bush, the plagues and the complicated question at Pharaoh's hardened hearts, the terrifying and awe-inspiring crossing of the sea, and the long, difficult work of learning to trust God in the wilderness. Spoiler: the wilderness is hard. The Israelites complain a lot. Our students will probably relate.

But the deeper question Exodus keeps asking is 'Who are we,' and 'who does God call us to be the the road is uncertain?' This is exactly the question teenagers are living. We hope this month of study will give our youth language for their own moments of oppression, calling, and courage.

Wed. April 8 - Wed. April 29



Youth Group April Schedule

- Wed, April 1 - **COMBINED, go to**
- Holy Wednesday Meal & Service 6pm
- Wed, April 8 - Youth Group
(Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)
- Wed, April 15 - Youth Group
(Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)
- Wed, April 22 - Youth Group
(Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)
- Wed, April 29 - Youth Group
(Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)

COMING SOON!

CONFIRMATION SERVICE PROJECT

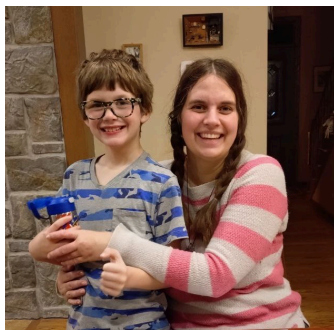


Our Confirmation students, joined by other High School Youth, are taking on a service project for our youngest members. They'll build 3 play house structures in the Fellowship Hall — then design them to be genuinely fun spaces where kids can discover faith through imaginative play.

Big thanks to Brady Hickcox
for making this possible!

Why I Give - Karen Toepfer

I give to First UMC because it always accepts me as I am. There's always space and a joyful welcome for my son and for myself, and someone is always glad we made it there. I leave feeling refreshed, and reassured that I'm part of a community that cares. I give because I know First UMC is spreading joy and love, and what I get back from the community is worth everything I put in into it.



April Communion Offering & Easter Offering will be received by Promise Neighborhood.

Promise Neighborhood of Central Minnesota (PN) is located on the southeast side of Saint Cloud, between Talahi and Lincoln Elementary schools. PN provides year round academic programs for youth and resources and trainings for adults. PN creates leadership and economic opportunities for the communities that we serve.

Family and Community Focus: Through our extensive trainings, workshops and leadership development, our community will be empowered to act and speak on their own behalf.

Our Mission: Promise Neighborhood of Central MN (PN) engages families and helps them achieve their educational, economic, and community aspirations.

Communion Offering QR:
Use the drop-down menu to select
"Communion"



FEBRUARY FINANCIALS

	Actual as of 2/28/26	2026 Budget	% of Budget
Revenue	\$87,287.13	\$718,859.00	12.14%
Expense	\$113,405.01	\$726,531.55	15.61%
Difference	(\$26,117.88)	(\$7,678.81)	

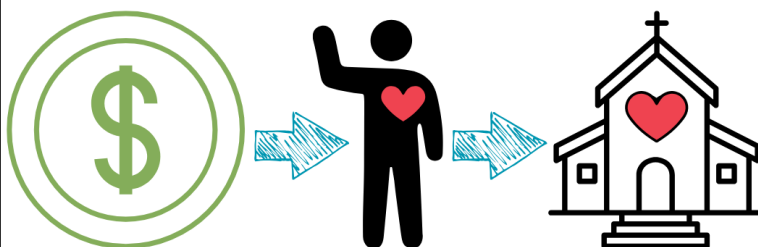
MARCH COMMUNION OFFERING

MN Foodshare
will receive our gifts of \$1,087

Did You Know?

If you are older than 70 ½ years you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your taxable IRA. QCD's allow you to donate directly to a charity instead of taking the required minimum distributions. This can help **from** being pushed into high income tax brackets and prevent phaseouts of other tax deductions. Please consult with a financial advisor to learn more.

TAXABLE - if you accept a deduction and then donated the money, it increases you tax liability.



NON-TAXABLE - if you make a distribution directly to charity, you satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution without adding to your taxes.



*Consult with your financial advisor to learn more.



Something is shifting in our Children's Ministry – and we think it's something worth celebrating together.



This year we are moving toward a more **intergenerational model** of faith formation: shorter, focused series that flow with the rhythm of the church calendar and, honestly, the reality of busy family life. We believe faith is not just something children learn in a classroom while adults worship elsewhere. It is something families grow *together*; at the dinner table, in the car, in the messy and ordinary moments of the week.

In March, we got a beautiful glimpse of what that can look like. Families gathered to explore the Bible together after our 3-year-olds and 3rd graders received their Bibles in worship: a milestone that belongs to the whole family, not just the child.

Palm Sunday and Easter brought all ages together in the Fellowship Hall for activities that connected the whole congregation to the story of Holy Week. The energy was wonderful.

We are learning as we go, and we genuinely want your feedback. **What is working well? What could still be improved?** Please share your thoughts with Amanda (ahodge@fumcscr.org). Your honest input shapes what this ministry becomes.

And mark your calendars: **Sunday, April 19th**, the entire congregation is invited to join us after worship for a fun, hands-on **Earth Day celebration** in the Fellowship Hall. Caring for creation is a faith practice, and this is one for all ages. Come ready to learn, make something, and enjoy each other.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SCHEDULE



April 5 & April 12

- Educational activities will be available for all ages on Palm Sunday and Easter in the Fellowship Hall
- Easter egg hunt in between services on Easter



Intergen Earth Day Celebration April 19

- Everyone is invited to participate in an intergenerational Earth Day Celebration honoring creation and our connection to the Sacred



Children & Youth Sunday Prep

- April 26, May 3, May 10
- Participants will gather and practice the various roles for the upcoming service where Children & Youth will lead the congregation in worship



May 17 - Children & Youth Sunday

- Children & Youth lead the worship service!
- Afterwards we will celebrate the service and end of year programming

April greetings!

We had an exciting 3rd Saturday Meal in March. We ran out of meatloaf about 12:20 with 25 minutes left. Luckily, Paula ran out and picked up chicken nuggets and instant mashed potatoes. We served another 15 meals. We served 150+ meals including 60 take-out meals. We've been serving more meals in the last 3 months. Most of our guests are in their 70s, some on limited income. Our take-outs go to families and some people take both. We do have younger people too. Many people live in the area. We have some people from St. Cloud. This ministry is growing as the needs for community engagement continue to grow. Many people are experiencing increasing isolation so opportunities to gather for free are really valuable. I anticipate serving more people in the coming months as gas prices and food prices increase.

Thank you to all the volunteers: Eileen, Matt, Cormac, Adelaide & Maeve McElrath, Paula Tompkins, Diana Klisch, Dede & Tom Leather, Karel & Mike Helgeson, Angie Ausban & Kevin Smith, Bill Meier and Mary Smith coordinating.

Please consider signing up to help with future 3rd Saturday meals or make a donation so we can continue to meet these growing needs. QR codes available for both sign up and donation above.

3rd Sunday Fellowship (Coffee Hour) also needs your help with bringing treats or volunteering time! Scan the QR code to sign up.

Blessings always, Mary Smith, the kitchen fairy



Help with 3rd Saturday Meal

Treat Donation - Helps provide 3 dozen treats *can be dropped off in advance.*

Prep shift 9:30-11am - Sets up tables and preps food.

Serving shift from 11am-12:45pm - Plates food, restocks any food stations.

Take-Out Prep 11am -12:45pm - Station devoted to prepping take-out meals.

Clean up shift from noon-1:00pm - Washing dishes, wiping tables, cleaning kitchen, sweeping and packing up leftovers.

Questions? kitchen@fumcscr.org



Signup QR



Donation QR



The 3rd Saturday each month FUMC serves a free meal to anyone who stops by. **FUMC serves next on April 18th.**

Other Community Meal locations and times:

- Place of Hope (511 9th Ave N) serves 12:30pm and 5:30pm each day. Breakfast everyday 7:30 - 8:15am.
- Salvation Army (400 Hwy 10 S) serves Monday-Friday from 11:30am-12:45pm
- Newman Center (396 1st Ave S) serves the 2nd Saturday each month from 11:30am-12:45pm
- Bethlehem Lutheran (4310 CR 137) serves the 4th & 5th Saturday each month from 11:30am-12:45pm
- St. Augustine's (443 2nd St SE) serves the 3rd Sunday each month from noon-1pm.
- St. Mary's Cathedral (823 1st S S) serves the last Sunday each month 4:30-5:30pm



Help with Coffee Hour 9-11:30am

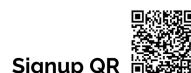
12 dozen donations of cookies to be dropped off before church.

9:00am Help making coffee and set up

10:20am Serve and restock trays

11:00am Wash dishes and wipe tables

Questions? kitchen@fumcscr.org



Signup QR



2026-2027 College Scholarships for FUMC Members

Applications Open

College students who are or have been actively involved in First United Methodist Church are encouraged to apply for a scholarship to aid with college costs. Qualified students can apply for either or both the Stevenson or Cater scholarships online using the same application form. Previous recipients are eligible to reapply.

-- **The Stevenson Scholarship** will be awarded to an **undergraduate college student** who is a member of First United Methodist Church of the St. Cloud Region. **Students entering college in fall 2026 are eligible for this scholarship.** Expected awards: 2 scholarships of \$600.
Application deadline is May 15.

-- **Cater Scholarships** will be awarded to college students (**sophomore in fall 2026 through graduate study**) who are members of a United Methodist congregation in Minnesota. Expected awards: 2-4 scholarships of \$1,500 each.
Application deadline is May 15.

Your application will include writing about how you expect to serve God and your neighbor through the career path for which your college education will prepare you. The committee also requires a transcript of your latest year's work in high school or college plus two letters of recommendation. Details are on the application form.

Application forms may be obtained from the FUMC website at <https://lovefirstumc.org/scholarships>

-- **The Grannis Memorial Scholarships** will be awarded to students who are entering or currently attending a seminary with plans to work in a United Methodist ministry. Applicants must have a Minnesota connection through church, family, or a Minnesota institution or organization in which the applicants are or have been involved. Expected awards: 2 scholarships of \$1,500 each.
Application deadline is May 15.

Application forms for the Grannis Memorial Scholarship may be obtained from the Minnesota Annual Conference website at <https://mnumc-reg.brtapp.com/GMScholarshipApplication>

If you have questions, please contact Sandra Q. Williams, Scholarship Chair, at scholarships@fumcscr.org.



2026-2027 College Scholarships

Stevenson, Cater & Grannis Memorial Scholarships Applications Open

Application deadline: May 15th

Questions?
scholarships@fumcscr.org

Application form available:
lovefirstumc.org/scholarships

Small Groups at Love First

Weekly & Monthly Groups

More details at

lovefirstumc.org/adult-ministry

Caregivers Support Group

***1st & 3rd Wednesdays each month
at 7pm via Zoom***

New participants must pre-register at:

caregivers@fumcscr.org

Prayer Shawls

***1st & 3rd Wednesdays
each month at 5pm in church library***

The Well

***2nd and 4th Mondays
at 5:30pm church library***

Conversations on Grief

***2nd Sunday each month
after worship in Ed Wing***

Bible 365

Fridays at 10am via Zoom

The Book of God, W. Wangerin Jr.

Contact lagre@fumcscr.org for
reading schedule and Zoom link.

UM Men's Group

2nd Tuesdays at 6pm in fellowship hall

Play Date Meet Ups

2nd Saturdays at 10am

Fellowship Hall at Love First

Questions? Ask Caitlin

playdate@fumcscr.org

Dinner Groups

Contact Monica to join:

dinner@fumcscr.org

Movie Mavens & QSource not scheduled in April.

Fellowship Footsteps Walking Club

One of the most common desires in our lives is to start exercising and/or changing our diet to either lose weight, be more active, or just attempt to create a healthier lifestyle. What many people have trouble with is knowing where to start. So many people join a gym and think they need to train like an Olympian to get an effective workout, only to find out the next day that they had over-exerted themselves and were having trouble getting out of bed! (This has happened to me!) This turns people away from wanting to exercise more often. The good news is that we don't have to start at level 10; level 1 exists, and that level 1 is just walking!

For beginners, it's good to start walking 10-15 minutes (roughly 1 mile) every day or at the very least 3 days a week. This will also help start a habit of exercising if you aren't used to doing it. Whether you're along for the exercise, the company, the desire to be with others during the week, or as a way to get outside and enjoy connecting with nature, you are invited!

Starting May 2nd at 5pm, I'll walk every other Saturday, and I invite you to join me, Josh Pestana!

Multiple Distances: Beginners - 1 mile, Intermediate - 2.5 miles, Advanced - 5 miles

Clothing: Comfortable clothing to move around in and good shoes.

Where: We will begin at the lake near the Sartell Community Center (meet in the parking lot). There are so many places to walk, we can decide as we go. I'm open to suggestions! Contact me with any questions!
walking@fumcscr.org

Big Questions, No Answers

2nd Mondays at 10am in church library

Do you find yourself grappling with deep questions about faith, theology, and the nature of God? You're not alone. Join a monthly gathering of seekers and thinkers as we explore where the Spirit is present, especially in the questioning. This month, we're asking: ***Can the practice of spirituality be exclusive?***

Young at Heart (YAH!) Field trip to Boys & Girls Club at 320 Raymond Ave NE in St Cloud. Meet in the parking lot at 10am on Friday, April 10 and join us as we learn about the organization. Lunch out will follow. Thanks to Cathy Bagaglio for arranging this tour!



United
Women
in Faith

United Women in Faith

Acting boldly, showing up and making a difference!

We seek to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities. Learn more at <https://uwfaith.org/>.

Connect with a Circle - become part of a sisterhood in faith!

- ❖ **Sarah Circle** - Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 1:30pm in the Library.
- ❖ **Susanna Wesley Circle** - Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm in the Library.
- ❖ **Fellowship at Drake's** - Meets the third Wednesday of the month at 11:30am at Drake's Café, 520 1st St NE, Sartell. RSVPs to Kathy Hulsebus at rsvp@fumcscr.org for reservations.

UWF Calendar of Events

April 5 - Easter - No Fellowship

April 6 - Executive Team Meeting at 1:00pm in the Library

April 14 - Sarah Circle meets at 1:30pm in the Library

April 15 - Fellowship at Drakes meets at 11:30am at Drakes Café, 520 1st St. NE, Sartell.

Call Kathy Hulsebus at rsvp@fumcscr.org for reservations.

April 18 - Headwaters Area Spring Gathering, Motley UMC

April 23 - Emma Norton Opening Doors Gala, St. Paul

April 28 - Susanna Wesley Circle meets at 7:00pm in the Library

Headwaters Area Spring Gathering

UWFaith members from throughout the Headwaters Area will gather at Motley UMC on Saturday, April 18, from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM for the annual Spring Gathering. This event promises a day filled with meaningful education, enjoyable activities, and the opportunity to connect with fellow UWFaith members.



The gathering will feature Brittany Radford, the Director of Equity and Diversity for the Minnesota Annual

Conference, as the guest speaker. Brittany will present on the timely topic, *"Disruptive Love: Gospel Response to Immigration Injustice."* Her presentation is designed to inspire thoughtful discussion and reflection on how faith communities can respond to immigration issues with compassion and justice.



In addition, longtime UWFaith member Gail Chalbi will share insights from her involvement with the *Palestine-Israel Justice Project*, as well as her work with the Minnesota Conference Church and Society Team. Gail's experiences will offer valuable perspectives on advocacy and social justice within the church community.

Registration for the Spring Gathering is available online at <https://forms.gle/mMD1NPLtXnSuRcFq8>. The registration fee is \$20.00. If you need information about transportation please reach out to Linda Kotschevar at uwf@fumcscr.org. For those who prefer not to travel, the morning session (9:00 AM-12:00 PM) will be live streamed. Contact Linda to receive the Zoom link and join virtually.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn, grow, and enjoy uplifting fellowship with others. All are welcome to attend and be part of this special day!



First United Methodist Church
of the St. Cloud Region
1107 Pine Cone Road South
Sartell, MN 56377
lovefirstumc.org

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First United Methodist Church
of St. Cloud Region



@lovefirstumc.sartell



lovefirstumc.org

The church office is open Monday thru Thursday: 8:30am - 2pm & Friday: 8:30am - noon
Office Closed Monday, April 6th

Linda Agre,
Office Administrator
320.251.0804 ex. 102
lagre@fumcscr.org

Aaron Carpenter,
Music Ministry
320.251.0804 ex. 111
acarpenter@fumcscr.org

Ken Fruth,
Grounds & Maintenance
320.251.0804 ex. 110
custodian@fumcscr.org

Amanda Hodge,
Family & Youth Ministry
320.251.0804 ex. 107
ahodge@fumcscr.org

Todd Rosso,
Tech & IT Coordinator
trosso@fumcscr.org

Rev. Susie Putzke,
Connectional Pastor
320.251.0804 ex. 105
sputzke@fumcscr.org

Rev. Leah Rosso,
Lead Pastor
320.251.0804 ex. 104
lrosso@fumcscr.org

Korynn Ruch,
Financial Administrator
320.251.0804 ex. 103
kruch@fumcscr.org

Alan Srock,
Handbell Director
asrock@fumcscr.org

First United Methodist Church of the St Cloud Region

April 2026 Newsletter