

LOVE FIRST

United Methodist Church of the St Cloud Region
Putting LOVE FIRST in everyday life.

1107 Pine Cone Road South, Sartell, MN 56377 - (320) 251-0804

- ♥ New Members and Ministry of Dishwashing
- ♥ Advent & Christmas Eve services
- ♥ Winter Retreat registration available
- ♥ Celebrating Janet Gray!
- ♥ Community building opportunities
- ♥ AND a photo page of 2025 celebrations!



OFFICE CLOSED

December 25 and 26

&

January 1 and 2



December 2025 Newsletter

lovefirstumc.org

Grief and the Holidays: A Time for Sharing and Preparing

November 30, 5:00-6:00 pm
in the library

RSVP: grief@fumcscr.org

If you are grieving and find yourself feeling uneasy about the Christmas Season, please join us. We will have time for sharing our thoughts and expectations, and preparing our hearts for what can be a complicated time of year. Led by AnnElise Bergstrom and Judie Dunlop.

We have reserved the library for fellowship afterward, and there will be warm cider and cookies.



What do
you fear?

**INSISTING ON
HOPE
THIS ADVENT**

Christmas Eve Services

3:30pm

Carol Prelude

Music Ensembles & Candles

5:00pm

Choirs & Candles

BELOVED:



Be Loved!

LEANING IN TO THE LOVE OF GOD, SELF & OTHERS

FUMC WINTER RETREAT

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026

KORONIS MINISTRIES - PAYNESVILLE, MN

It is time to pull out your cozy socks, pack a journal and your favorite board game, and get ready for a wonderful weekend with other women. This year's retreat is called "**Beloved:** *Be Loved as we lean into the love of God, self & others.* This year we will be staying at **Koronis Ministries in Paynesville, MN from Feb. 20 - 22, 2026.**

Your registration includes dinner on Friday through breakfast on Sunday with two nights of accommodations and as always, delightful retreat content.

Use the QR code or go to
lovefirstumc.org/winter-retreat



Insisting on HOPE this Advent

Pastor Leah Rosso, Lead Pastor

lrosso@fumcscr.org

Fear and hope have been a conversation in my household recently. With all of the news, both local and national, along with the daily struggle of school and activities and work and family, the question of what there is to hope for and how to handle our fears is a regular conversation. I keep coming back to the fact that we are wired for connection at a local level, but we are inundated with the doom and gloom of the whole world. (What would it be like to share the joy of the whole world?!) When we get overwhelmed by everything around us, and even before that happens, God calls us together. Together we can do far more than we can separately, and we often find it easier to access joy and laughter and meaning because there are people traveling with us. A few years ago I wrote down the quote, “Hope is like a road in the country. At first it doesn’t exist, and then it comes into being because people travel on it.” I apologize that I don’t know who said it, but I do know it to be true! This Advent as we travel through the familiar stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth; Caesar and John; Mary and Joseph; may we learn the wisdom of those who have come before us. They struggled to find hope too - and so it is in their struggle and their dreams and their lived out hope that we can find a way through. Thanks be to God!

“Hope is like a road in the country. At first it doesn’t exist, and then it comes into being because people travel on it.”

Thank you to all who donated to the Holiday Meal drive!



Coming Up In Worship

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

What Do You Fear?

Insisting on Hope this Advent

November 30 - Advent 1

Luke 1:5-13; Lamentations 3:55-57

December 7 - Advent 2

Matthew 11:1-11; Isaiah 43:19-21

December 14 - Advent 3

Luke 1:26-39; Jeremiah 1:4-10

December 14 at 4pm

ADVENT GRIEF SERVICE

December 18 at 7pm

ADVENT SPIRAL

December 21 - Advent 4

Pop-up Pageant

Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 41:5-10

CHRISTMAS EVE Services

3:30pm Carol Prelude, Music Ensembles & Candles

5:00pm Choirs & Candles

December 28 - Sunday after Christmas

Service of Blessing - Matthew 2:1-20



What do
you fear?

**INSISTING ON
HOPE
THIS ADVENT**

Advent Grief Service

Sunday, December 14th at 4:00pm

Advent Spiral

Thursday, December 18th at 7:00pm

Christmas Eve Services

3:30pm & 5:00pm

Grief and the Holidays

A Time for Sharing and Preparing

led by AnnElise Bergstrom & Judie Dunlop

Sunday, November 30th

5:00pm in the library

RSVP at: grief@fumcscr.org



Gathered in Love:

An Interfaith Service of Trans Solidarity

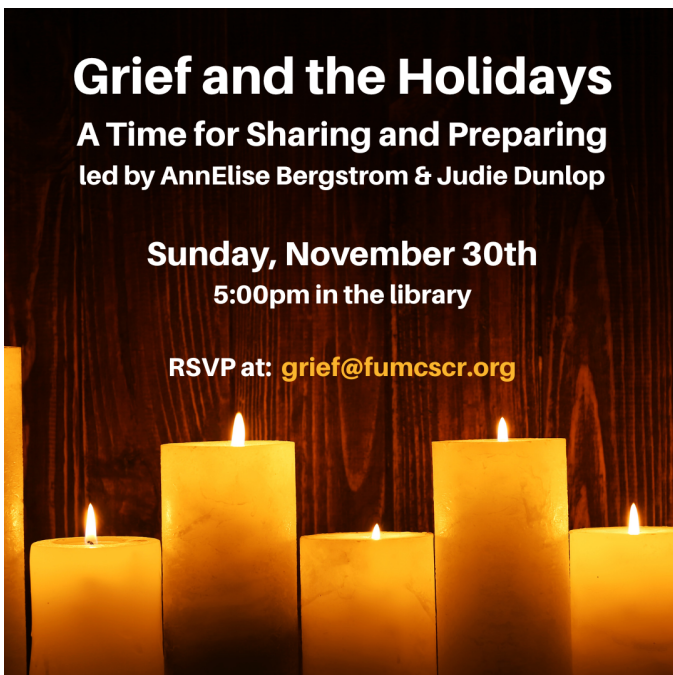
Tuesday, December 9 at 7:00pm

Creekside UCC, 106 E Diamond Lake Rd, Minneapolis

Join us for the Trans Solidarity Service, a multi-faith gathering affirming the sacredness of trans and nonbinary lives. On December 9, people of faith and allies from across Minnesota will come together to proclaim a message of love, courage, and belonging. This service will include music, poetry, and reflections from trans and BIPOC faith leaders, clergy, and community members across traditions.

More information is available at:

<https://www.outfront.org/events>



New Members & Ministry of Dishwashing



In November we welcomed five new members!

Stephen Wilke, Gail Ahern,
Helen & Jon Stafsholt and Chuck Kelly.
You all know Chuck already! Now get to
know our new members too.

Membership vows:

*Today I covenant with this community,
First United Methodist Church
of the St. Cloud Region,
and with the worldwide United
Methodist Church, to give of myself
through my prayers, presence, gifts,
service, and witness,
because I want to walk in the way of
Christ and bless God
with how I live my life.*



Thank you!!



In a quiet ceremony after church, there was a Passing of the Torch... of sorts. Ed Lalor was the first to be given the title as our Senior Minister of Dishwashing. Youth signed an apron with thanks for his generous help on Wednesday nights. Jimmy was recently appointed the current Senior Minister of Dishwashing, with gratitude for his dedication on Sunday mornings. Thank you, Jimmy!

DECEMBER Communion Offering: United Methodist Committee on Relief

Global Ministries and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) strengthen United Methodist response to humanitarian crises around the world through disaster relief and recovery, migrant and refugee support, environmental sustainability, agriculture, and food security.

In 2024 UMCOR had impact on 137 worldwide humanitarian crises addressed in responding to 32 floods, 26 hurricanes and tropical storms, 11 fires, 16 tornadoes, 25 migration events, 1 landslide, 7 public health emergencies, 2 earthquakes and 16 other types of disasters. 454,163 lives directly touched through aid .

November's Communion Offering

Emma Norton Services
will receive our gifts of
\$795

October Financials

	<u>Actual as of</u> <u>10/31/25</u>	<u>2025 Budget</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Budget</u>
Revenue	\$533,047.68	\$685,726.00	77.73%
Expense	\$530,471.94	\$693,404.81	76.50%
Difference	\$2,575.74	(\$7,678.81)	

Gifts for 2025

Your generosity throughout the year is a blessing to our ministry and those we serve. As we prepare our hearts and our community for the year ahead, we kindly remind everyone to please bring **all 2025 donations to the church office by Monday, December 29, 2025**. Timely drop-offs help us correctly post your gifts to your 2025 giving statement.

Estimate of Giving Card

If you haven't turned in your estimate of giving card for 2026, we graciously ask that you do so by **Monday, December 15th, 2025**. Doing so helps us plan our programs for the 2026 year. You can submit your estimate of giving by filling out a card available at the church, online at lovefirstumc.org, or by following the QR code.



If you need assistance please let us know. There is no gift too small and every little bit helps make a big impact.

Leading Campaign Summary.

Pledges to Capital Campaign	\$432,329	<u>Capital Goals:</u>	
Leading Campaign Balance after finishing Goal #1	\$97,139	✓ #1	Mortgage Paid \$267,369
		#2	LED Sanctuary Lighting \$212,407
Leading Pledges Received	\$332,864	#3	LED Wall \$114,509
Leading Non-Pledges Received	\$42,661		\$594,285
Total Gifts to Leading:	\$375,525	 All numbers quoted are bids from 2023. Once we have enough for the next goal we will get an updated bid.	

This fall our Jr. and Sr. High youth have been doing the kind of brave, honest work that leads us toward hope.

Our Jr. High group has leaned in with remarkable openness, exploring the tender places of grief and the many images we hold of God. These are not easy conversations, and yet they keep showing up, choosing curiosity over fear. Our Sr. High youth have been diving deep—way deep—into the foundational stories of our faith, searching for understanding that can hold them through the challenges of their teenage years.

One night we brought both groups together for an escape-room-style journey through the story of Cain and Abel. There may have been a moment of real fear when the youth were asked to reach into two “mystery boxes” to feel the symbols of each brother’s offering—one of which was decidedly slimy! But they pushed past hesitation, trusted one another, and kept going. In the end, each group solved the mystery, celebrated their teamwork, and discovered that courage often looks like taking one small step forward even when you’re unsure.

We also shared a rare treat on a recent Wednesday evening—standing together under the Northern Lights. Phones came out, laughter bubbled up, and everyone paused to soak in the unexpected beauty. It was a reminder that even in seasons when life feels confusing or heavy there are still moments when unexpected beauty breaks in.



Youth Group Holiday Schedule

- *Wed, Nov 26 – No Youth Group, Thanksgiving Break*
- Wed, Dec 3 – Youth Group (Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)
- Wed, Dec 10 – Youth Group Mystery Dinner!
- *Wed, Dec 17 – Wed, Dec 31 – No Youth Group, Winter Break*
- Wed, Jan 7 – Youth Group resumes (Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)



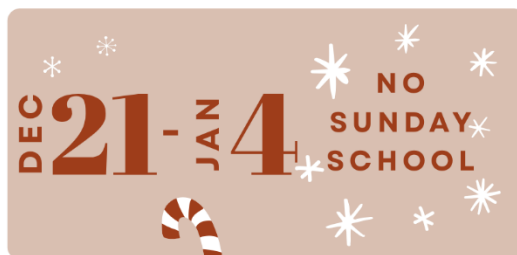
Our Sunday School kids have been joyfully **exploring** a new Bible story or character each week, discovering how God shows up in surprising ways. Through games and activities, they're building **connections**—with the stories, with their faith, and with one another. And of course, the weekly trip to the Fellowship Hall for **snacks** remains a beloved highlight. In the midst of simple moments like these—learning, laughing, and sharing treats together—our youngest learners remind us how **hope** grows naturally when we feel connected and cared for.

Advent Workshop – December 7th After Worship

Come kick off the Advent season with a joyful, **all-ages workshop** full of creativity, connection, and Christmas cheer! Drop in, try a little bit of everything, and enjoy making memories together.

We'll have a **variety of hands-on crafts for all ages**—from making playful fridge magnets and colorful handprint keepsakes to experimenting with a mix-and-match “Make Your Own Magic” table filled with ornaments, paint, pinecones, and more. Our popular kids' craft area will also be back with coloring pages, foam projects, and simple activities perfect for younger children. There's **something for everyone**, whether you love following a sample or dreaming up a creation all your own. **Come join the fun and start Advent with creativity and community!**

SUNDAY SCHOOL CALENDAR



Coming up at FUMC & the community

LAST CARD SALE OF 2025!

Do you know that a very thoughtful and inexpensive gift can be a packet of all-occasion greeting cards? It can be a gift that keeps on giving for all seasons and all reasons.

The Greeting Card group will hold the final sale of 2025 on Sunday, December 7, before and after the service.

The usual assortment will be available as well as many that may be used for the holidays. Our prices remain the same: Most are \$2.00 apiece, but no matter what, if you buy any five, you get a sixth, \$2.00-card, free. All proceeds are used for the church.

Please remember to come and stock up. The next sale won't happen again until February 1st.



Please help us celebrate Janet's 90th Birthday!
When: Saturday, December 27th 1-4 pm

Where: The Oak Room at Country Manor
520 1st St. NE, Sartell, MN
Light snacks & refreshments will be served

Please RSVP to dgray.215@gmail.com
or leave a message at 614-668-1824

Birthday greetings can be sent to Mom at:
520 1st St NE, Apt 268
Sartell, MN 56377
(520) 259-0979 – land line with machine (no texting...)

*** weather permitting ***
No party if temp is more than 10 below...
Stay home, stay warm, send a card and remember good times.

Thank you November Community Fellowship Meal Team!

A wonderful crew of volunteers prepared and served the November community meal. Many thanks to Gene Danneman, Sue Mischler, Dianna Fink, Jennifer Galovich, Emily, Nick, Wes, Sam and Max Haverhals, Carol Lewis, Mary Smith, and Tom Sibley. They served 94 guests a holiday meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, and green beans.

The 3rd Saturday each month FUMC serves a free meal to anyone who stops by. **FUMC serves next on December 20th.**

Other Community Meal locations and times:

- ☪ Place of Hope (511 9th Ave N) serves 12:30pm and 5:30pm each day. Breakfast 7 days a week from 7:30am - 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 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

Building Community at FUMC

Weekly & Monthly Groups

More details at

lovefirstumc.org/groups

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

UM Men's Group

*2nd Tuesdays at 6pm
in fellowship hall*

Board Game Night!

Join us December 13 at 5pm for a potluck and board games in Fellowship Hall. Bring a dish to share and your favorite game. All ages are welcome! Sign up poster outside the Sanctuary.

SAVE THE DATE!

When: January 25th at 5:30pm

What: Kick off for Dinner Groups, with
potluck meal

*Watch for more information
in January newsletter.*

Big Questions, No Answers

*2nd Monday at 10am - December 15th
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: ***What practices are needed to sustain your spirituality?***

Come with your thoughts, questions, doubts, and insights. All are welcome in this environment of mutual trust and respect.

Young at Heart (YAH!)

*2nd Friday each month
at 10am in fellowship hall*

YAH meets December 12, at 11:30,

PLEASE NOTE TIME CHANGE for a Christmas party and potluck. There will be music, laughter, Bingo and sharing good food. Everyone is asked to bring a WRAPPED GIFT for the bingo prize. If you have never joined us, please do for this Funtime. All are welcome!



Delicious Debate and Discussion

Join us after worship on December 14, 21, 28 and January 11, 18, and 25 for a series on differing theologies as we explore more about Progressive Christian values, politics, and how Methodism and other Protestant denominations express themselves in the mix both historically and currently. Sign up on the poster outside the Sanctuary or just show up! Questions to Mark Jaede at adult.ed@fumcscr.org



United
Women
in Faith

United Women in Faith

Acting boldly, showing up and making a difference!

At our heart and in our soul, we are a faith-driven organization. Our beliefs bring us together. And our spirituality pushes us to do more. We boldly live our faith as we connect to something bigger. We believe love in action can change the world!

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. Call Kathy Hulsebus at 918-407-0253 for reservations.

UWF Calendar of Events

December 1 – Executive Team Meeting, 1:00pm in Library

December 7 – Sarah Circle serves coffee hour

December 9 – Christmas Gathering, 11:30am, Fellowship Hall

December 14 – UWF Christmas Cookie & Treat Sale, before & after service

December 17 – Fellowship at Drakes, 11:30am at Drakes Café, Sartell

*No Sarah or Susanna Wesley Circle this month.

United Women in Faith Christmas Gathering

The UWF will hold its' Christmas Gathering on Tuesday, December 9th, at 11:30am in the fellowship hall. A chili, soup and salad luncheon will be provided and everyone is asked to bring XMAS treats to share. The event will include officer installation, a memorial service for members we have lost, carols and Christmas bingo. Be sure to bring several "white elephant" items for prizes. Spouses and friends are invited to join us!

Calling All Christmas Cookie & Treat Makers!

Love to bake Christmas cookies and treats? Have some to share with your church family? Want to support our local food shelf? Susanna Wesley Circle is sponsoring a Christmas Cookie Treat Sale on Sunday, December 14, before and after the church service.



Please drop off your Christmas cookies and treats before the church service. Place eight to a dozen cookies or a mix of cookies and treats on a plate. Each plate will sell for \$5.00 giving the congregation the opportunity to buy one or multiple plates. Recommend using inexpensive zip lock bags and paper plates.

The funds raised will support Catholic Charities Emergency Services Food Shelf that provides nutritious food and essential personal care items to our neighbors in need. Please join United Women in Faith in supporting our local food shelf with your baking and buying of sweet treats for Christmas on Sunday morning, December 14th.

There is still time for you to give toward Emma Norton Gift Cards of \$25. Please bring them to Kathy soon. They will be used for Christmas gifts or food, whichever EN wants to use them.

Fun Moments from 2025!





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of the St. Cloud Region
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Sartell, MN 56377
lovefirstumc.org

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First United Methodist Church
of St. Cloud Region



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lovefirstumc.org

The church office is open Monday thru Thursday: 8:30am - 2pm & Friday: 8:30am - noon

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