

When the Music Begins Be Silent

Have you noticed lately there is so much noise?

Everyone seems to want to spread

all kinds of woes and joys.

Just sit and listen for the sound
of Jesus' voice amongst the din.

Maybe then the peace of God
will come to you within.

Pray for peace and unity
among all evil factions.

God will hear and answer you,
keep going with prayerful action.

By sitting still and praying,
the music starts to flow.

It is then that you will know
God is speaking to you.

Be Silent

Kathy Hulsebus

November 30.2025

LOVE FIRST

JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



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



Most of us know what it's like to feel stretched thin, wondering if what we offer really makes a difference. In a world that often celebrates individual effort and personal achievement, it's easy to forget that some of the most meaningful work is never meant to be done alone. The church reminds us of a different truth: transformation happens when people come together.

What if the strength of our church isn't found in a single voice, plan, or leader, but in the collective gifts of the people who gather here? What if the way we show up for one another is exactly how transformation takes root in our community?

Each unique personality, gift and calling aid in living out our values of nurturing joy, reaching the community, being inclusive and connected. All put together to create inclusive programming and welcome to all people.

This life of faith was never intended to be a solitary journey. From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus called people to gather, to follow him in ways that challenged injustice, broke down barriers, and lifted those pushed to the margins. He fostered community and lived out a ministry rooted in justice, equality, and mutual care. Through so much of his life, Jesus reminds us that our collective call was never meant to be carried out in isolation.

This month we will explore what it means to desire transformative action in our relationships, communities and world. Join us in being reflective about:

Who are we?

Who is around us?

Why do we do what we do?

How do we as followers of Christ and a love first community best lead transformation?

As we reflect, we will lean into the example of Jesus while embracing the richness of the gifts each of us brings to the collective. Our uniqueness, when shared, becomes a catalyst for transformation into the wider community.

May we be reminded through scripture and one another what it means to create meaningful opportunities for Spiritual development...that when we show up together, each contributing what we can, the Spirit moves among us and lives are transformed.

Pastor Susie
sputzke@fumcscr.org

Coming up in worship...



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

Sunday School

Sunday, Jan 4
No Sunday School

Sunday, Jan 11

Sunday, Jan 18

Sunday, Jan 25

Worship in 2026

January 4th - Epiphany with Star Words

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Matthew 2: 1-12,16- 18

Our Collective Call begins...

January 11th - Who are you?

Matthew 3: 13-17; Acts 10:34-33

January 18th - Who is around you?

1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

January 25th - Why do I do what I do?

Matthew 5:1-12; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31



Vision Priorities for the New Year

As we prepare for our strategic planning retreat in early February, we want to share a summary of Love First's vision priorities, gathered from the April visioning session and Summer listening sessions. The Vision Team with Staff synthesized all of the information into themes you'll see below:

WHO WE ARE:

- Led by the Holy Spirit
- Adopting Love First as official identity
- Grounded in beliefs, values, United Methodist foundation, justice, creation
- Trauma Responsive Church
- Creative and musical arts
- Intergenerational

EMBRACING COMMUNITY:

- Loving our neighbors
- Nurturing joy
- Radical welcome of all
- Being brave advocates for immigrants & migrants, the Queer community, and those with diverse abilities
- Celebrating diversity
- Caring for others with our land



FRAMEWORKS:

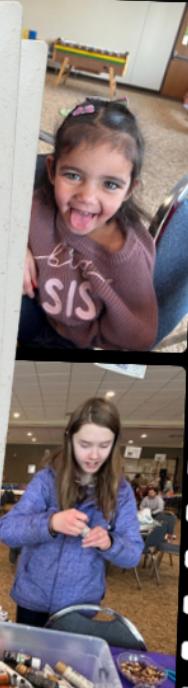
- Consistent Communication
- Building and supporting safer spaces
- Systems of support and care
- Volunteer coordination
- Spiritual growth
- Points of connection

SUSTAINING IMPACT:

- Collective ownership
- Church health
- Leadership Development
- Financial stewardship
- Land and building longevity
- Long term plan for our land
- Caring for the building and property
- Environmental Sustainability

These priorities reflect what we feel called to pursue over the next 3-5 years. At the February retreat we will refine them into clear objectives, goals, strategies, and measures. Beginning in the Spring, we as a church will begin championing these goals, forming actions teams, and coordinating check-ins to guide progress in the coming years.

We encourage every member and friend of Love First UMC to begin reflecting on where your gifts, passion, and interests align with these priorities. Together, we will build the teams and energy needed to bring this vision to life through our ministry.



ADVENT
2025
workshop

January Communion Offering will be received by our ministry of 3rd Saturday Community Meal.

Love First has provided a monthly free meal to the community in coordination with Place of Hope, Salvation Army, Newman Center, Bethlehem Lutheran, St. Augustine's and St. Mary's Cathedral. Our rotation of coordinators plans, shops and directs our teams in serving a filling meal on the third Saturday of each month. We offer fellowship with eating around a table at Love First and we also offer meals to-go for those who are not able to come to the church.

Our gifts this month will provide support for this on-going ministry of food and fellowship for those who find themselves in need of a meal or community - all are welcome!

NOVEMBER FINANCIALS

	Actual as of 11/20/25	2025 Budget	% of Budget
Revenue	\$589,430.77	\$685,726.00	85.96%
Expense	\$576,954.43	\$693,404.81	83.21%
Difference	\$12,476.34	(\$7,678.81)	

DECEMBER COMMUNION OFFERING

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) will receive our gifts of \$995 with additional Christmas offering of \$1,485

The QR code is available if you would like to donate to the on-going budget or communion offering.



Thank you December Community Fellowship Meal Team!

Members of the Choir, Bellissimo and "honorary choir members" caroled for and prepared and served the December third Saturday community meal of ham, creamy hash browns, green beans and LOTS of Christmas cookies. They served 97 meals. Many thanks to Charlie Curtis, Dory and Jenna Dahlberg, Jennifer Galovich, Michelle Hedgren, Bill Jones, Chuck Kelly, Carol Lewis, Julie Lindquist, Dale and Carol Miller, Sue Mischler, Cathy and Mariah Plemel, Barb Rosene, Janet Ruth, Nancy Schempp, and Tom Sibley. During the meal, the Justice and Mercy team handed out holiday meal kits and gift cards that were donated this fall. Guests were very appreciative. Thank you to everyone for your generous contributions.

The 3rd Saturday each month FUMC serves a free meal to anyone who stops by. **FUMC serves next on January 17th.** To help financially or through serving, use the QR code or see our website: lovefirstumc.org/3rd-saturday-community-fellowship-meal



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 & 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



On December 10th, the youth gathered for a Christmas party unlike any other at the Donkey Diner—a place where the mystery wasn't who did it, but what on earth you were about to eat. While this wasn't a traditional solve-a-mystery dinner, every order came with a surprise and plenty of laughs.

Adults stepped into the role of waitstaff, many proudly sporting donkey hats as they served the youth with serious professionalism... and not-so-serious utensils. Some diners bravely tackled ice cream with a toothpick, others attempted to sip soup from a fork, and a few discovered the challenge of eating pasta with a spoon. Success was questionable, but entertainment was guaranteed.

The room buzzed with laughter, confused reactions, and dramatic guesses about what might arrive at each table next. The combination of silly service, unexpected food challenges, and cheerful chaos made the Donkey Diner an unforgettable dining experience.

By the end of the night, bellies were mostly full and Christmas spirit was everywhere. The Donkey Diner proved that sometimes the best holiday memories come from a little mystery, a lot of laughter, and adults in donkey hats.

HOW TO BE AN
ASKABLE ADULT

A new opportunity for parents and caregivers is forming this month. The class is all about how to be an Askable Adult, someone that the kids in your life feel comfortable coming to with their hard questions, and tips and skills to navigate those questions when they come. The three week series will provide strategies for healthy communication between kids and teens and their trusted adults.

Join Bekkah, a community health educator with Planned Parenthood for a three part series.

R.S.V.P with your plan to participate to fumc@fumcsr.org

January 14, 21, & 28
5:45-6:15
with optional dinner provided

The Funeral Luncheon Teams are a vital part of the ministry of Love First UMC. Our four wonderful teams help to serve meals to our grieving families and their friends. The team rotate throughout the year to provide this service. **Many of our team members are older and are aging out of this ministry. We need to increase the number of members on the teams and particularly to add younger members. Another goal of the Ad Council would be to increase the number of teams to six.**

WHAT'S INVOLVED?

- There is NO food preparation. The food for most funerals is catered or food is provided by the family.
- Funerals are usually on Saturday from 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM (with occasional Friday services)
- Three crews work shifts of 2-2 1/2 hours

SET UP CREW - start at 10:15 AM to set up tables with placemats, napkin etc.

SERVING CREW - start at 11:00 AM to make coffee and beverages and when the caterer comes around 11:15 the crew may assist the caterer if necessary. During the meal this crew serves coffee and other beverages from the counter. They also may need to help people with mobility issues to get seated.

CLEANUP CREW - start at 12:00 - 12:30 to start cleaning dishes and putting things away. Two person team to run the dishwasher is required. Other crew clear and sanitize tables.

At some point workers can eat. Work goes quickly!

Please join the Funeral Luncheon Team and be a blessing to grieving families!

Please contact Luncheon Leader Kathy Hulsebus (rsvp@fumcs.org) or team leaders: Cathy Danzl, Melinda Dumais, Barb Schindele & Gladys Stich for more information.



YOUTH GROUP 2026

JANUARY

WED 07 **JUNIOR HIGH 5:45-6:15**
GAP TIME | DINNER
SENIOR HIGH 7:15- 8:30
SELF CARE NIGHT * WEAR PJ'S
Dinner: Halverhals Family

WED 14 **JUNIOR HIGH 5:45-6:15**
GAP TIME | DINNER
SENIOR HIGH 7:15- 8:30
Dinner: Zitzow Family

WED 21 **JUNIOR HIGH 5:45-6:15**
GAP TIME | DINNER
SENIOR HIGH 7:15- 8:30
Dinner: Krista & Jerusha

WED 28 **JUNIOR HIGH 5:45-6:15**
GAP TIME | DINNER
SENIOR HIGH 7:15- 8:30
Dinner: Volunteers Needed: JAN 28 | FEB 4 | FEB 11

Small Groups at Love First

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**

Big Questions, No Answers

**2nd Monday 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: **Do bad things have to happen for us to evolve spiritually?**

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**

Young at Heart meets January 9 at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall for coffee and treats provided by Marcia Summers. The program; The Spiritual Meaning of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, will be presented by Gary Berg, author of East of Eden.

Come with jokes or readings to add to the festivities and we will go to eat after the meeting. Hope to see you all there.



**QSource Crafting Table
will be available
at coffee hour on
January 18, 2026**



Charge Conference January 11, 2026 11:00am Jr High Youth Room

Meeting to approve Pastor Susie moving to full-time employment.



Delicious Debate and Discussion

Join us after worship on **January 11, 18, & 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. Questions to Mark at adult.ed@fumcscr.org

Dinner Groups

Join us for fun, good food, fellowship and new friendships!!!

- Potluck, Dine In, Dine Out Groups
- Couples and Individuals Make-Up Groups (6-8 in each group)
- Flexible Schedules within in group

Kick-off potluck meal Sunday, January 25th
In the Fellowship Hall
Social - 5:00 to 5:30, Dinner - 5:30

Sign-up at church, or email Monica Peterson at dinner@fumcscr.org to be a part of a dinner group and to indicate if you'd attend the potluck meal.

I have enjoyed being a part of the dinner groups since I joined the church 20 years ago.

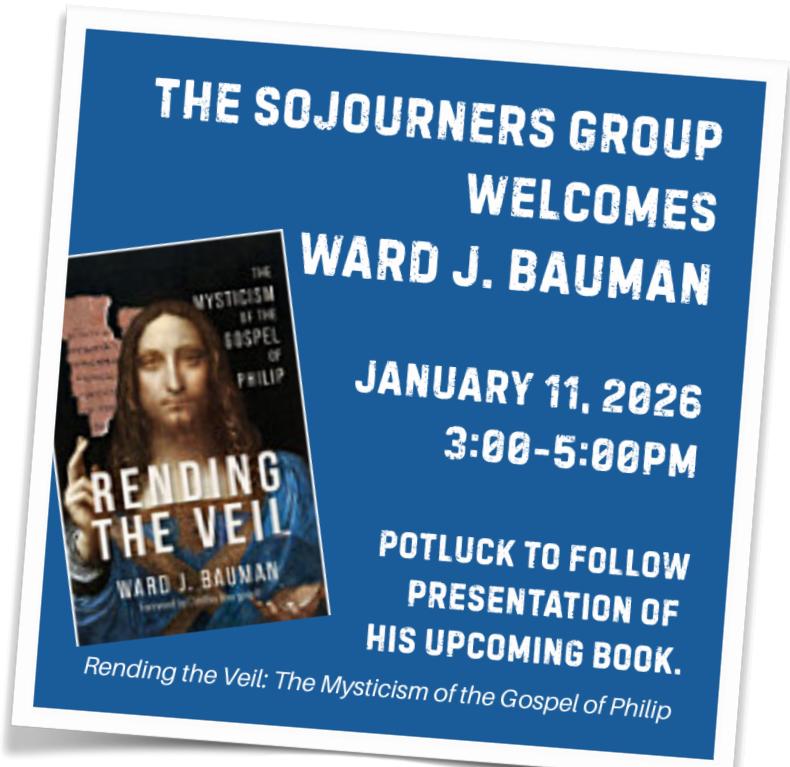
I have gotten to meet people and/or make new friendships and further relationships in casual, comfortable settings. I hope you can have this same experience.

- Monica

Overflow Compassion Sheltering

has begun for the winter months. Place of Hope has partnered with Salvation Army to assure everyone in need of shelter in this area, has shelter. When their beds are filled, they provide shelter on mats or cots to assure no one will freeze to death this winter.

Want to volunteer to help with any part of the overflow sheltering at Place of Hope or Salvation Army? Go to our website and click on [Overflow Compassion Shelter](#) to start an application. You can **Be the Hope** through your time and care.





Our Mission: 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.

Our Vision: Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world. Learn more at <https://uわfaith.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. Contact Kathy Hulsebus for reservations.

UWF Calendar of Events

January 4 - Susanna Wesley Circle Serves Fellowship

January 5 – Executive Team Meeting at 1:00pm in the Library

January 13 - Sarah Circle meets at 1:30pm in the Library

January 21 - Fellowship at Drakes meets at 11:30am at Drakes Café, 520 1st St. NE, Sartell. Contact Kathy Hulsebus for reservations.

January 27 - Susanna Wesley Circle meets at 7:00pm in the Library

Special Mission Recognition Pins Awarded

Special Mission Recognition Pins were awarded for the past year to two UWF members at our Christmas Gathering. Diane Bublitz and Vicki Clausen received recognition for their outstanding service and commitment to United Women in Faith to our church. A gift for ministries with women, children and youth has been forwarded to the United Women in Faith national office in the their honor.

The UWF Thanks You!

A huge “thank you” to the bakers/makers and buyers of the baked goods sold at our Christmas Cookies & Treats Sale in mid-December. The cookies and treats covered four 6-foot tables and over \$1000 worth of Christmas goodies were sold. The proceeds were donated to Catholic Charities Emergency Services Food Shelf which provides nutritious food and essential personal care items to our neighbors in need. The proceeds were donated to Catholic Charities Emergency Services Food Shelf. This organization plays a vital role in our community by providing nutritious food and essential personal care items to neighbors in need.

January is Pledge to Mission Month

Every January United Women in Faith around the world prayerfully make financial pledges to their local units. Making a pledge to our unit's Pledge to Mission is a way of supporting the organization and expressing your commitment to mission. Your pledge journeys from our local unit to the Headwaters District UWF and then to the Minnesota Conference UWF. From there the pledged amount from all the UWF units in Minnesota is sent to the national office and budgeted for ministries with women, children and youth worldwide. The Pledge to Mission Service 2026 will be the January program at the circle meetings.



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

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Annual Celebration of Leadership (formerly the Annual Meeting)
will be on February 15th after worship.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amanda Hodge,
TRC & Youth Ministry
320.251.0804 ex. 107
ahodge@fumcsr.org

Alan Srock,
Handbell Director
asrock@fumcsr.org