

LOVE FIRST

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER



The Visioning Retreat in February



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

- ◆ Palm Sunday, March 29 at 9:30am
- ◆ April 1, Holy Wednesday Service & Meal at 6pm
- ◆ April 3, Good Friday Service at 7pm
- ◆ April 5, Easter Sunrise Hike at 6:30am
- ◆ April 5, Easter Sunday Services at 8:30 & 10:30
with Sacrament of Holy Communion

From Howard Thurman:

"There is something in every one of you that waits, listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself – and if you cannot hear it, you will never find whatever it is for which you are searching and if you hear it and then do not follow it, it was better that you had never been born.. and if you cannot hear the sound of the genuine in you, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls."

Your story matters. Do you know that? The sound of the genuine in you is worth listening to! I hear these words and they are both heavy and light. They remind me of Jesus' words from Matthew 11: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." To hear the sound of the genuine, to take up our call as people of faith to follow Jesus: this is both the hardest thing we'll ever do and the easiest - because it means coming back to ourselves; living for one another; finding within us the strength and grace and love that will change the world.

This is why we're sharing stories this Lent - our stories; Jesus' stories; other stories that need to be told. Because within them all we will discover the diversity and beauty and messiness of our sacred lives. May we listen well.

Pastor Leah
lrosso@fumcscr.org



The Peace of Wild Things
First United Methodist Church
March 1, 2026 3 PM
Songs of nature and the love of wild spaces
Including a multidisciplinary look at Minnesota's natural environment and a brief presentation by local beekeepers



MINNESOTA CENTER CHORALE
Established 1973 Jody Martinson, Music Director and Conductor



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA
Chamber Singers
DAVID HOLDHUSEN, CONDUCTOR

A Special Invitation...



You are invited to a concert featuring:

The University of South Dakota
Chamber Singers
and their conductor
Dr. David Holdhusen

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

First United Methodist Church
1107 Pine Cone Road South
Sartell, MN
7:00 p.m.

Coming up in worship...



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

STORIES THAT MATTER

March 1st - 2nd Sunday in Lent

John 3:1-21 from The Peace Table Bible

March 8th - 3rd Sunday in Lent

John 4:4-42 from The Peace Table Bible

March 15th - 4th Sunday in Lent

John 11:1-44 from The Peace Table Bible

March 22nd - 5th Sunday in Lent

John 12:1-8 from The Peace Table Bible

March 29th - Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-40
from *The Peace Table Bible*

WEEKLY PRAYER & LAMENT
IN THE LIBRARY DURING

LENT

Wednesdays from 6-6:30pm
led by Pastor Leah

*Come light candles, pray, and join with others as we lament,
grieve and turn towards God.*

The Winter Retreat in February



Prayer Station Available

The sanctuary is available during office hours during the week for prayer time (Monday - Thursday 8:30am - 2pm and Friday 8:30am - noon). Occasionally, you will share space with musicians! We have a votive table on the northeast side of the Sanctuary for people to light a candle of prayer. It can be to honor someone, a prayer for healing, forgiveness, or a prayer for our world & our church.



CARD SALE

Sunday,
March 22nd

Before and after worship service.

Help spread some sunshine and good spirit by sending someone a card. Most cards are \$2.00. Buy any five and get a sixth, \$2.00 card, free.

All proceeds go to FUMC projects.

Think Spring!

We are looking forward to our next **Card Sale on Sunday, March 22**, and hope you are, too. Be sure to stop by and get in the mood for spring. Just think, before and after the service you can peruse the cards we love to create, chat with us (we like that part best!), and get a bargain, too. **Remember:** Buy any five items and get any \$2.00 card free. (Most cards are \$2.00). All proceeds go to supporting church projects. Easter falls two weeks after that. Think Spring!

FUMC STAFFING UPDATE:

Pastor Susie has officially started as a Full Time Pastor, increasing her time from .9 to 1.0 Full Time status. We are so thankful for the approval from Finance and congregation approval at the Charge Conference in January.

Todd Rosso has been approved to be a Love First Staff employee, moving from a contracted Tech Coordinator employee. Due to an increase in duties of Tech and IT needs of the church, Todd's positions have been approved to be 2 separate roles for Tech Coordinator and IT Coordinator. We are very thankful for Todd's expertise and vision for the church's media and network needs.

Krista Santillana, SPRC Chairperson

THANK YOU CARING CHURCH!

The United Methodist Women in Faith thank you for the donations of paper goods to Emma Norton Services for the months of January and February. There were over 50 packages of goods collected. It is with your help that the residents of Restoring Waters and Emma's Place are able to be supplied with items they can't always provide for themselves.



Crafting on February 22nd



ASKABLE ADULT WHAT COMES NEXT?

Bekkah is back and looking to bring education to the youth in the congregation on topics of relationships, consent, and healthy engagement with sexuality. She would love your input as a parent or caregiver! Join her on Wednesday, March 18th to talk together about what a class for our middle and high schoolers could look like—topics you'd like them to learn about, boundaries within the class, and any other input you may have.

Join Bekkah, a community health educator with Planned Parenthood for a planning session.

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

March 18 - 5:45- 6:45 pm

with optional dinner provided after



Over the last few months, our community has faced significant challenges. From local headlines to personal hurdles, the world has felt heavy. We often try to shield our young people from "adult situations," but the reality is that children and youth are

YOUTH MINISTRY

never immune to the world around them. They feel the impact of trauma in their hallways at school, in their social feeds, and even in their bodies. To process this current context, we've been focusing on storytelling as a bridge to healing. By naming our experiences, we reclaim our power over them.



Recently, we were honored to host **Heidi Jeub of Heijeu Arts**, who led our Jr. and Sr. High groups through a dedicated night of reflection. Using art as a medium for healing, Heidi guided the youth in translating their internal "noise" into visual expression.

The results were, quite literally, beautiful. More importantly, the conversations were rich. The room wasn't just filled with paint and paper; it was filled with honesty. Our youth were able to get their emotions out of their heads and onto the page, proving that sometimes, when words fail, a brushstroke speaks volumes.



In addition to looking inward, our youth felt a call to pour outward. Throughout February, the youth created the **Love Notes Wall** in the church hallway. The goal was simple: spread joy and beauty to the entire congregation. Participants were encouraged to "take what you need and leave what you can," exchanging notes of encouragement, scripture, and kindness.



Even the act of building the wall served as a sanctuary for our students—a space to dwell in connection and care during a season that can often feel isolating.



Youth Group March Schedule

- Wed, March 4 - **No Youth Group St Cloud Spring Break**
- Wed, March 11 - Youth Group (Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)
- Wed, March 18 - Youth Group (Middle 5:45pm & High 7:15pm)
- Wed, March 25 - **No Youth Group Sartell Spring Break**

March Communion Offering will be received by MN Food Share.

1 in 9 people in Minnesota have limited or uncertain access to adequate food. You can make a difference during the Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign!

Our community is facing a hunger crisis. Rising food costs and inflation are drastically affecting families, friends, co-workers, and neighbors who have never needed to access charity food before. These are people who may have gotten by paycheck to paycheck and are now struggling to get the food they need to feed their families. More people than ever are turning to food shelves for support, and the truth is, food banks are strained to keep up with the increased need.

- Channel One saw a nearly 41% increase in Food Shelf visits in 2024 compared to 2023.
- In 2024, a total of 9 million visits were recorded at Minnesota food shelves, compared to 7.5 million in 2023, 5.5 million in 2022, and 3.5 million in 2021, according to [Hunger Solutions / The Food Group](#).
- One in five Minnesota households can't afford the food they need, according to [Second Harvest Heartland](#).
- One in seven people, including one in five children, in the U.S. live in food insecure households, according to a [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)'s Economic Research Service 2023 report](#).

This is an increase of 36% and 47% respectively from just two years ago, making it the highest rate of food insecurity since 2014.

Communion Offering QR:

Use the drop-down menu to select "Communion"



JANUARY FINANCIALS

	Actual as of 1/31/26	2026 Budget	% of Budget
Revenue	\$38,725.68	\$718,859.00	5.39%
Expense	\$47,577.17	\$726,531.55	6.55%
Difference	(\$8,851.49)	(\$7,678.81)	

FEBRUARY COMMUNION OFFERING

Africa University
will receive our gifts of \$890

Do you have questions about giving at Love First UMC? Our Financial Administrator, Korynn Ruch can help you! Call the church office or mail her at kruch@fumcsr.org



Local food shelves and pantries are serving more of our neighbors, and supplies are dwindling. The Justice & Mercy team invites you to participate in a donation drive for the month of

March, when we'll be collecting food and funds.

We are looking for items that community partners have told us are the greatest needs:

- Nido formula and dried milk (all age varieties are welcome)
- Canned beans (pinto, red, black)
- Cooking oil
- Coffee

There will be donation bins designated for the items with goals for each. As we reach those goals, there will be special surprises!

Questions? Contact Dory Dahlberg, Justice & Mercy Chair: justice.mercy@fumcsr.org Thank you for helping us show love to our neighbors.

Justice & Mercy Donation QR:





Here are some **important updates** we will be trying from March through May in Children's Ministry.

We have known for a long time the traditional Sunday School model does not fully cover the needs of families. So, we are **trying something different!** Instead, we are moving towards a model that looks more like a **variety of short term offerings that ebb and flow with the church calendar.** Instead of offering Sunday School as we have been, we will offer **series of content** (example: Get To Know Your Bible). We will have a focus on offering **Intergeneration Events** throughout as well.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEW SCHEDULE



Get to know Your Bible Series

- March 8 - Part 1: Intergen Class with Leah & Susie
- March 15 Intergen Bible Games in Fellowship Hall
- March 22 - Part 2: Intergen Class with Leah & Susie



March 29, April 5, & April 12

- No formal gathering
- Palm Sunday and Easter content (games, crafts, etc.) will be offered for everyone to enjoy in the Fellowship Hall



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 programing

GET TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Even though it's probably the most common book around, the Bible can be complicated to use and understand.

Kids and their grownups are invited to come learn how to navigate this amazing book, discover what all it contains, and play some fun games so that it becomes a familiar resource in your life.

AFTER WORSHIP
SUNDAY MARCH 8 & SUNDAY MARCH 22



LOVE FIRST UMC

As always, we continue to look to families to **provide constructive feedback and volunteering** to enhance our ministry! Please email Amanda (ahodge@fumcscr.org) if you have any questions or ideas!



Nursery kids made paper flowers for Lynn to celebrate her award.

March greetings from the Kitchen Fairy, Mary Smith!

First, I would like to thank Tom Sibley and Jennifer Galovich for their years of leadership and coordination of Third Saturday Meal and Fellowship Hour. I have big shoes to fill.

Jill Haak and I have been busy reorganizing the kitchen storage, the mechanical room storage, and the Room of Requirement storage. We are creating a “where to find it” book. Currently it is a work in progress. Thank you everyone, who acquired things from our garage sale on Valentine’s weekend. We’ve gotten rid of many things we weren’t using.

In February, we started expanding opportunities to participate in the church’s hospitality. The third Sunday is now for internal fundraising. We need 12 dozen treats. Slots are available to participate with: 1-3 dozen treats, help set up, serve, or clean up. These opportunities are short time frames of 30-45 minutes. No long-term commitments. In February we collected \$44 for our Jr. High Mission Experience.

In March donations will go to our Sr. High Mission Experience.

I am also encouraging people to volunteer for Third Saturday Meals. It is fun and it doesn’t take long. There are sign up sheets on the ConneXion Point or on our website.

In March, the 3rd Saturday Meal is hosted by Sojourners small group. They will be serving: meatloaf, boiled potatoes, salad and treats. Please consider volunteering.

Happy to be of service!
Your kitchen fairy, Mary Smith

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 



Thank you February Community Fellowship Meal Team!

The February team served the third Saturday community meal of chili, cornbread and brownies. They served 114 meals. Many thanks to Lynn & Dave, AvaMarie Tatro, Andie Fields, Sue Mischler, Danell Allenspach, Thabiso and Thandi Nayamande, and Mary Smith.

The 3rd Saturday each month FUMC serves a free meal to anyone who stops by. **FUMC serves next on March 21st.**

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 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 



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

Lenten Book Study:

Redeeming Conflict by Ann M. Garrido
facilitated by Pastor Steve Peterson
Sundays 6:30-8:00 in March: 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
RSVP here: lovefirstumc.org/bookstudy

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
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

Dinner Groups

Contact Monica to join:
dinner@fumcscr.org

Delicious Debate & Discussion, Movie Mavens,
and QSource - not scheduled in March.

Join our Play Date Meet Ups!

(Monthly meet ups for families, variety of locations and activities)

March 14th at 10am

Playtime and a craft for kids in
fellowship hall at Love First!

All ages welcome, current ages
of kids in group range from 0-6.



Contact Caitlin
for more info:
playdate@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: **What is humanity's role in completing creation - an end or a continuation?**

Young at Heart (YAH!)

2nd Fridays at 10am in fellowship hall

Chris LeDuc, Early Childhood Therapist at Ellison Center and FUMC member will share about Healing Intergenerational Trauma through Early Childhood Intervention. Chris will speak on how therapy is done with preschoolers and why it matters. She describes this as "going upstream" through the work with children and caregivers.

Guests interested in this topic are welcome to join YAH when they meet Friday, March 13 at 10am.



Our Purpose: To be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church. 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

March 1 - Susanna Wesley Circle Serves Fellowship

March 2 - Executive Team Meeting at 1:00pm in the Library

March 10 - Sarah Circle meets at 1:30pm in the Library

March 18 - Fellowship at Drakes meets at 11:30am at Drakes Café, 520 1st St. NE, Sartell.

Call Kathy Hulsebus at 918-407-0253 for reservations by February 13.

March 24 - Susanna Wesley Circle meets at 7:00pm in the Library

Special Mission Recognition Pins Awarded



Special Mission Recognition pins were awarded on UWF Sunday to the following people in recognition of their faithful service to God and our church over the years.

Lynn Tatro: Lynn has played a consistent and ongoing role within our church's children and youth ministry program for many years. Her involvement has included leading Quest, teaching Sunday School and providing support for Parents Night Out. After serving as a nursery volunteer for many years, she was recently hired to work in the nursery on Sundays and Wednesday evenings. She regularly cooks the Wednesday evening meal for the youth and volunteers with the 3rd Saturday Meal. Her

completion of the Spiritual First Aid training truly reflects her commitment to supporting the well-being of the youth in our congregation.

Dave Tatro: Dave has been a Youth Companion volunteer to the Youth Group since 2022 and has helped with Summer Mission Trips. He has a great rapport with the teens in our church and has a current focus on helping with the high schoolers. He served as a Youth Confirmation Companion to one of our confirmands this past year. His willingness to walk alongside his mentee during this significant time reflects his dedication to guiding and encouraging the younger members of our congregation. Dave has completed the Spiritual First Aid training and has helped with the Wednesday evening and 3rd Saturday meals.

Kathy Hulsebus: Kathy Hulsebus has a long history of involvement with United Women in Faith starting at the age of 18. During her many years of participation, she has served as a local, district and conference officer and has attended numerous district and conference events as well as National Assemblies. Currently, Kathy is the Emma Norton Representative for the Headwaters District and the Program Coordinator for our local unit. Her influence and impact is evident in her service to our church where she is a member of the Care Team, Love Links outreach, Funeral Coordinator, Mission Team, a frequent Usher, and a participating member of YAH.



First United Methodist Church
of the St. Cloud Region
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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 Fridays, March 6th & 13th

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