

- **♥** Lean into Love Stewardship Ministry
- **♥** Celebrating Pride Week
- ♥ Pancake Supper tickets on sale for October 14
- **♥** Contemplative Community registration is live!
- **♥** New Adult Ed What kind of Christians are we?
- ◆ AND returning groups and serving opportunities



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

October 2025 Newsletter

lovefirstumc.org

Through our Visioning process, it has come up several times that people in the congregation (you!) want to hear more of a connection between what we are facing in this modern era, and our Methodist heritage. I hope that our series, "How is it with your soul?" is helping you reflect on our DNA as people who follow Jesus in a specifically Methodist/Wesleyan way, and that it is also giving you ways to articulate and practice your faith everyday. In 1742, John Wesley published a short pamphlet titled "The Character of a Methodist" in which he described several characteristics. He began the pamphlet by saying the following, and I wonder if you resonate with these things as being true of us as Methodists today:

- 1) Methodists are "happy in God", rejoicing that we find assurance in being children of God (Romans 8:16)
- 2) In everything Methodists give thanks (1Peter 5:7)
- 3) Methodists pray without ceasing, continually walking with God even when not in church or in private prayer (1Thessalonians 5:17)
- 4) Methodists love their neighbors, offering love even when it is rejected (1John 4:21)
- 5) Methodists are "pure in heart," being without envy, malice, or wrath (Matthew 5:8)
- 6) Methodists are focused on God's will (John 6:38)
- 7) Methodists avoid evil, refraining from words and acts which might hurt others
- 8) Methodists do good to all neighbors, strangers, friends, and enemies

Whew! That's a high bar! But you know where the Wesleys got the bar from? None other than Jesus. Which is good news, because that means that we can practice living this way while also leaning on God's grace and knowing that whenever we get it wrong, we can name it; ask for forgiveness; and try again, strengthened by God's love.

Our Stewardship theme this year goes hand in hand with our roots as Methodists, because it is *Lean* into Love. Whenever we "lean in," whether literally or metaphorically, we get more engaged; we connect with what is being said or done; we shift our weight towards that which is important to us. I think that's a perfect description of what Methodists, at our best, have always done—Leaning into *Love* is shifting our weight, our resources, our time, our investments, and our energy towards love; towards God; towards all that we want this world to be. It's hard to know how to respond to this world that is hurting so deeply. So let's start here—locally—with what is right in front of us and lean into love so that we can make an impact of love in the greater St. Cloud community, in Minnesota, and in the world.

Let's Lean into Love.

Lean into Love!

Dear Friends,

With the arrival of autumn, our church community begins preparing for the year ahead. This October is our stewardship month—a time to reflect on how how God is calling each of us to be generous with all that we have in support of the ministry of the church for 2026.

Theme: "Lean into Love"

Our stewardship program this year centers on the theme, "Lean into Love." Inspired by the parable of The Good Samaritan, we are reminded of Jesus' call to love our neighbors as ourselves. Throughout October we will explore stories of faith that will guide us as we consider our gifts for the new year, culminating in the reading of the Good Samaritan story on Consecration Sunday.

The church community has also been hard at work on a visioning plan that began last January and has included an all church visioning day; conversations with leaders and staff; and three different listening sessions this summer. Hopefully you have been involved and contributed to this effort. The work has yet to be finalized, but we'll share what we have heard so far and the possibilities it offers for the future of our church community.

Here is what to expect

- On October 5th, 12th, and 19th, our Sunday worship service will include members of our community sharing their personal stories of how they have given to God through the ministry of the church and why they are inspired to "Lean into Love".
- In mid-October you will be mailed and emailed an RSVP for our Consecration Sunday event. Please make it a priority to RSVP and to pray about how God is calling you to give in 2026.
- Sunday, October 26 will be Consecration Sunday. We will consider together the deeper meaning of Jesus' teachings on love, the parable of the Good Samaritan, and wisdom for us as we prepare for our future. Come celebrate in community as we all offer what God is calling us to give and then celebrate God's generosity as we enjoy the Consecration Celebration Event after worship.



Financial Update

The financial health of our church remains stable. While we have faced some unexpected expenses with regards to the building this year, we are on course to meet our budgeted targets. A highlight of this year has been our ability to pay off our mortgage and install LED lighting throughout the building (the Sanctuary lighting plan was not done because it's part of the ongoing Capital Campaign.) Both of these things mark steps forward towards sustainability when it comes to our commitment to the earth and to our financial resources. The consistent faithfulness and generosity of this church community has truly been a blessing over the years.

There are many reasons for us to be grateful! May we all prayerfully consider our gifts for 2026, experience the joy of generosity, and lean into love for God and our neighbors.

With gratitude, Rick Ellis, Finance Chair Pastor Leah Rosso

Coming Up In Worship

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

How is it with your soul? Methodist Core Values

October 5 - World Communion Sunday We Are All Connect with Rev. Susie Putzke Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Lean into Love series begins
October 12 - Sacrament of Baptism
Money, Money, Money with Rev. Leah Rosso
1 Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31

October 19 - Sacrament of Baptism Generosity with Rev. Leah Rosso Luke 19:1-10

October 26 - Consecration Sunday Lean into Love with guest speaker Rick Ellis Psalm 66:1-12; Luke 10:25-37

Wesleyan Covenant Groups

Five Covenant Groups have launched this fall so far...but there's still room for you! Inspired by John Wesley's model of intentional spiritual community, Covenant Groups are a space to check in, grow deeper in faith, and ask the central question: "How is it with your soul?"

It's simple to start. Grab a few friends, meet over coffee or a meal, and pick up a Covenant Group packet (available by the name tags in the entry). Or ask someone on staff to help facilitate a connection so others who might be interested in making connections as well. Start on your own timeline and see where the Spirit leads.

CELEBRATING ST CLOUD PRIDE WEEK!



This prayer was shared in worship on September 21 and requested by many of you:





creator of everything broken and beautiful,

Thank you for giving us the courage to defy what culture calls us to be. Thank you for this space designed for hearing the unheard-queer people, young people, neurodivergent people, people of color, people of all kinds. Because you call us all beloved.

God of all things bleak and blessed,

I carry the pain of justifying my existence, my whole self is authentic, good, and human.

My queerness does not change that. Yes, I am queer, but I am also human and it is our shared humanity that connects us all, no matter our chosen labels or the labels thrust upon us.

We have been pushed around and shoved down, but we will not be silenced. Community is one of the great gifts we have. Our diversity is our strength. Our uniqueness is our joy.

God of all that is barren and bountiful,

give us courage to push forward. Help us know when to fight injustices and when to rest in your grace, when to shove back, and when to surrender to peace. Grant your reassuring presence to every person struggling. Be near the queer teen that has not come out yet. Remind every queer person their life is sacred.

For those who have no safe place to be themselves, shine your light in their darkness.

And as we gather here today, help us remember that we are not just surviving, we are thriving.

We are not enduring, we are celebrating.

We are not just existing, we are living fully as the beloved children you created us to be.

In the name of the one who calls us all enough, who loves us all completely, and celebrates our authentic selves, let it be so, Amen.

Prayer by Jaxx

Thank you to all who walked at Pride & Peace, worked the booth at Pride in the Park, organized volunteers, and came to the Borealis concert!







A Celebration of United Methodist Clergy who worked for the Reconciling Movement

In 1972, the United Methodist Church placed language that was discriminatory to LGBTQ+ persons in the Social Principles. Shortly thereafter, people in the church began working to remove that language. That finally happened in 2024! Here are a few of Minnesota's "Reconciling Saints" for whose work we are especially grateful.

Rev. Marylee Fithian 1936-2025

Marylee felt a special calling to serve churches that had active peace and social justice ministries. She spent her life committed to service, social justice and activism.

Rev. Dr. Richard "Rick" Huskey 1950-2025

In 1977, while in process to become an elder, the MN Conference discontinued his orders after he disclosed he was gay. When the church closed its doors to Rick, he became a physician specializing in geriatric medicine. Following the 2024

General Conference, Rick requested to re-enter and complete the ordination process. He was ordained the day before he died.

Rev. Robert "Bob" John Lowe 1940-2022

Bob was one of the first clergy to come out as gay on the Annual Conference floor. His courage was noted and deeply appreciated by gay clergy who served but were not out.

Rev. Dr. Jeanne Audrey Powers 1932-2017

People who knew Jeanne Audrey would tell you that she was "a force to be reckoned with". She was one of the first women ordained in the UMC. In 1972, she co-created the Committee on the Status and Role of Women. In 1995, she was also the highest-ranking UM church official to come out as gay. At the time, she served as Associate General Secretary of the UMC's General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.

Rev. Dr. Bruce Robbins 1950-2024

Prior to coming to Minnesota, Bruce served as clergy in New York and as General Secretary of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. In 2012, he and Bishop Melvin Talbert began "Altar for All", through which clergy, laity and congregations signed statements committing themselves to fulfill their vow to ministry to all by marrying or blessing couples regardless of their gender.

Rev. Tim Tennant-Jayne 1955-2014

Tim was an elder in the Iowa Conference before moving to MN and establishing Legends Street Ministry, which ministered to individuals experiencing homelessness. He was frequently engaged in ministry at gay bars.

Rev. Judy WestLee 1942-2025

Judy was a deeply caring pastor and activist, full of hope and determination as she led and worked with others for justice for lesbian and gay people from the 1980s onward, including in leadership roles in Affirmation and the Reconciling Church movement.



Building Community at FUMC

Caregivers Support Group 1st & 3rd Wednesdays each month at 7pm via Zoom

Join us for a twice-monthly virtual support group to reduce isolation, normalize hardships & affirm those of us who care for elderly, ill, or loved ones with extra needs. Our group is facilitated by experienced caregivers. New participants must pre-register at:

caregivers@fumcscr.org

Prayer Shawls

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

This group works on prayer, baptismal, and confirmation shawls as well as hats, scarves and mittens for local schools and charities.

The Well

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

This group meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month. They will begin reading *Everybody Always* by Bob Goff.

Conversations on Grief 2nd Sunday each month after worship in Ed Wing

This informal discussion group meets to share stories of grief in all its many forms.

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: *What does trust in God look and feel like?*

Come with your thoughts, questions, doubts, and insights. All are welcome in this environment of mutual trust and respect. This group meets from 10-11:15 in the church Library.









It's Time for Pancakes (and other good stuff)

On October 14th the FUMC Men's Club will once again sponsor the World-Famous Pancake Supper from 4:30-7:00 pm. Tickets are on sale now. They can be purchased from most male members of the church or from the church office. Cost per ticket is \$10 for adults. Tickets for youth ages 6-12 are \$5.00 and are purchased at the door. As always, kids under 5 are free.

We serve buttermilk, buckwheat and this year, gluten-free pancakes. We will also be serving breakfast sausages from Manea's Meats in Sauk Rapids, along with milk and decaf coffee.

We usually meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall. If you are interested in joining the Men's Club call the church office at 320-251-0804.

Young at Heart (YAH)

2nd Fridays at 10am in fellowship hall

This is a meeting for anyone who is young at heart, usually 55 plus. We meet at 10 for morning beverages and treats provided by members, a time of humor with jokes or readings, participate in a program with questions for the presenter and then go to lunch at the restaurant of choice, if you so desire. Your heart stays young through food, fellowship and fun!

October's topic: Therapy dogs by Rick Ellis



WORLD FAMOUS PANCAKE SUPPER! ALL-YOU-CAN EAT MEAL SPONSORED BY FIRST UMC'S UNITED METHODIST MEN

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025 - 4:30-7:00 PM
TICKETS: ADULTS \$10 CHILDREN 6-12 \$5 CHILDREN 0-5 FREE

BAKE SALE AND HAND-MADE CARDS FOR SALE



CARD SALE!

Sunday, October 12 9:00 and 10:30am

Come and see what's new. Then stock up on greeting cards that are wonderful not only for special days but also for expressing friendship, care, and love. We all like to know someone is thinking of us--or thought of us while looking at a certain card.

Most cards are still \$2.00. If you purchase any five, you get any \$2.00 card free.

and at the Men's Pancake Supper Tuesday, October 14 from 4:30-7pm.



Save the Date!! MedCity REFUGE - A Helping Hand in Rochester

Minnesota Reconciling Congregations is sponsoring a special event this fall to learn about the work of MedCity Refuge, which supports those coming to Rochester for gender-affirming care. The presenter is the Rev. Ana Wilson, founder of this non-profit.

You can attend in person, at Christ United Methodist Church located at 400 5th Ave SW in Rochester, MN or join us for the live stream in our church library. In either case, please come to learn about the resources and support provided by MedCity Refuge and what we can do in our communities to either support this work or provide similar support to individuals coming to our communities.

Date: Saturday, November 1

Time: 1 p.m.

Coming up at FUMC & the community

New Sunday Morning Adult Education Program: What Kind of Christians are We?

Like Gerald Gurss, our speaker on September 21, many of us were raised with understandings of Jesus and Christianity that no longer fit us. Some were asked to believe things we no longer find credible. Some have seen conflict between what we were taught in church and our ideals of love, justice and compassion. Some of us have been injured by churches that condemned us or our loved ones. As a result, we may define our Christianity in terms of what we are not or are no longer. We may describe ourselves in terms like ex-Catholic or ex-Fundamentalist. They may be accurate, but they leave us without a vocabulary to articulate what kind of Christians we *are*.

We propose to start a series of gatherings after church where we can learn and talk about ways to understand God, Jesus, scripture, and Christianity. The goal is not to arrive at a single "correct" understanding, but to allow ourselves to "try on" different ways of thinking about religion, especially in today's political climate.

The first session will start with a brief introduction to **Progressive Christianity**. What is it? What ideas are shared among Progressive Christians? Is "progressive" a label that works for us? Depending on interest, future sessions may focus on **the search for the historical Jesus, Christian nationalism, the social gospel and other theologies, how we view other religions, and/or Wesleyan thought in the modern world.** We also welcome ideas for completely different adult education topics.

The first session will take place in the library at **10:45-11:30 on Sunday, October 19.** Conveners will be Mark Jaede and Kathy Bies-Jaede, the people who brought you Murder Mystery and Board Game Nights, so you know it can't be too heavy.

Questions? Email: adult.ed@fumcscr.org





Lean on Love:

A New Year for Youth Ministry

This fall, our Jr. High and Sr. High youth groups are launching into a brand-new year—with tie dye, energy, and a whole lot of love! Our ministry is growing and changing to meet the needs of our amazing youth.





Leadership & Spaces

Amanda will continue leading Sr. High, now meeting in their new space—the farthest classroom on the left in the Education Wing. Susie will be stepping into leadership for Jr. High, who will gather in the large main youth room. These shifts give each group room to grow, learn, and thrive.

New and Returning Volunteers

We are blessed to welcome several new volunteers to the team this year: Janet, Noah, Jennifer, AnnElise, and Rhoda! Their gifts and

enthusiasm will be a wonderful addition. Alongside them, we celebrate the return of dedicated Youth Companions Dave and Josh, who continue to walk faithfully with our teens.



Leaning on Love

Working with and loving youth is one of the greatest lessons in love that God gives us. Our youth are creative, loud, and active! They challenge us with thoughtful questions that stretch our faith and call us to reflect on how we share what we believe.

Thank You

We give deep thanks to the congregation and our *Love First* community. You make it possible for our youth to feel safe, seen, and valued. Your support invests in their faith and future, reminding them—and us—that love is always the foundation.



To keep up-to-date on Youth Ministry on a weekly basis – sign up to receive emails from Amanda ahodge@fumcscr.org

Junior High Youth Group Volunteers Needed!

Good news—our Junior High Youth Group is thriving, with an average of 15 amazing kids attending each Wednesday! With this exciting growth, we're in need of more adult volunteers to support our time together. Whether you're helping with programming or simply offering gentle supervision during group and/or meal times. This is a great opportunity to build meaningful relationships with our youth—and with other adults who are passionate about supporting them. Come be a part of this vibrant and rewarding ministry!

OCTOBER Communion Offering: World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday offers an opportunity to celebrate our connectional nature and call toward ecumenical relations as United Methodists. Here's one tangible way to demonstrate this: during Holy Communion, offer a variety of breads common across many cultures. Offer a reminder that as the sun has arisen from the East and continues its movement across multiple time zones, Christians across the globe have already received communion, many congregations are gathering for communion in the moment, and many more will begin worship soon.

Another idea is to teach how to say "peace" in many languages, while sharing that Christ's message of peace is intended for everyone around the world.

World Communion Sunday is also one of six special Sundays where United Methodists are urged to participate in a special offering. The offering on World Communion Sunday provides scholarships for U.S. racial- and ethnic-minority students and international students, on both undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as grants for global inclusion, diversity, equity, and access training.

September's Communion Offering

Anna Marie's will receive our gifts of \$1.075.00





Thank you September Community Fellowship Meal Team!

A hard working group prepared and served the September community meal. Many thanks to Dianna Fink, Sue Mischler, Melinda Dumais, Vicki Butner, Linda Caird, Vicky Clausen, Jennifer Galovich, Julie Ampe, Kathy Hulsebus and Jimmy Graupmann. They served 100 guests a delicious meal of chicken bacon ranch hot dish, green salad, rolls, dessert and fruit.

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

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.
- \P St. Mary's Cathedral (823 1st S S) serves the last Sunday each month 4:30-5:30pm



United Women in Faith Acting boldly, showing up and making a difference!

Our actions have always spoken as loud as our words. Acts of love. Acts of Faith. Acts of change. For more than 150 years, we have been showing up and getting things done. Together we're making the world a better place: locally, globally, fearlessly.

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. For reservations, call the church office at 320-251-0804.

UWF Calendar of Events

October 5 – Susanna Wesley Circle serves coffee hour

October 6 – Executive Team Meeting, 1:00pm in Library

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

October 14 – Fall Bake Sale & Men's Pancake Supper from 4:30-7:00pm

October 15 – Fellowship at Drakes, 11:30am, at Drakes Café in Sartell

October 23 - UWF Book Club meets at 9:30am at the home of Diane Bublitz

October 28 – Susanna Wesley Circle meets at 7:00pm in Library

Fall Bake Sale October 14

Our Fall Bake Sale will be held at the same time as the Men's Pancake Supper on Tuesday, October 14, from 4:30-7:00pm. We are asking everyone to help with this important fundraiser by donating baked goods, breads, candies, jams, jellies and kitchen crafts for the sale. Be sure to plate and mark your items ahead of time. Please bring your donations to the church during the day on October 14th. Volunteers are

needed to assist with the sale at the following times: Set-up 3-4:30, Sales 4:30-7:00 and Clean-up 7-8:00. Contact Linda Kotschevar if you can help (**uwf@fumcscr.org**). If you wish to make a cash donation to the sale rather than bake it can be dropped off at the sale or mailed to our Treasurer, Jackie Ankenman, at 2608 14th St. S., St. Cloud, MN 56301. Make checks payable to First UWF.

MN Conference Fall Gathering Saturday, October 11, Alexandria UMC "Native American Boarding Schools: The Generational Impact"



Alexandria UMC will be hosting the MN Conference Fall Gathering on Saturday, October 11, from 9am-2:30pm. Our guest speaker, Rev. Dawn Houser, is the pastor at Aiken UMC and chairs the Minnesota Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM). She will explore the 100-year history of Native American boarding schools in the US and Minnesota, their impact on today's issues and how we can influence changes within our communities through engagement in foster care settings, school board advocacy and trauma informed practices.

Register online at: https://forms.gle/bYotr9zpQetRbwaQA by 10/1. The morning program (from 9-12:00) will be livestreamed at: www.youtube.com/@AlexUMC/streams Rides will be provided from the church. Contact Linda Kotschevar (www.youtube.com/@AlexUMC/streams Rides will be sure to join us for a day of learning, fun and fellowship!



Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT NO. 337 ST. CLOUD, MN 56301

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

Linda Agre, Office Administrator 320.251.0804 ex. 102

320.251.0804 ex. 102 lagre@fumcscr.org

Rev. Susie Putzke, Connectional Pastor

320.251.0804 ex. 105 sputzke@fumcscr.org

Aaron Carpenter, Music Ministry

320.251.0804 ex. 111 acarpenter@fumcscr.org

Rev. Leah Rosso, Lead Pastor

320.251.0804 ex. 104 lrosso@fumcscr.org

Ken Fruth, Grounds & Maintenance

320.251.0804 ex. 110 custodian@fumcscr.org

Korynn Ruch, Financial Administrator

320.251.0804 ex. 103 kruch@fumcscr.org

Amanda Hodge, TRC & Youth Ministry 320.251.0804 ex. 107

320.251.0804 ex. 107 ahodge@fumcscr.org

Alan Srock, Handbell Director

asrock@fumcscr.org