

BE ENCOURAGED. February 2024

2023 Next Gen Christmas Program...WOW!

by LuAnn Berkhof, Children's Ministry Director

I realize that we are already entering the second month of 2024, but I would be remiss if I did not report to you about the Next Gen Christmas Program.

God is always with us but sometimes the evidence of His presence is so palatable, and that was true the weeks leading up to the program and especially the night of the program. There were times during the evening that my heart just leaped with joy!

The Youth@First generously offered their talents and time. Together they took care of sound, ushering, leading us in prayer, and generally leading the program. Their newly formed praise team sang carols, both traditional and contemporary. It was incredible to see how Eric rallied his troupes, and they "slayed it"! (I overheard one friend say that to another later that evening.) I would say, "they were really stoked" about the whole event!

It was also breathtaking to watch over 60 children ages 4 yrs-5th grade take the stage, each one garbed in costume and each one eager to sing their hearts out! With the sanctuary beautifully lit up, thanks to Dan and Tovia, it truly was a sight and sound to behold.

Many families brought loved ones as guests. The energy of almost 90 performers, the message given through pictures and words, the opportunity to take photos with someone special and the huge assortment of goodies after the program, all helped us welcome them into First United Methodist Church! I pray and believe they left feeling the excitement of celebrating our savior's birth!

A huge thank you goes out to our Next Gen Team, Mary Jane and her bakers, the Kids Connect and Youth leaders, the Rebecca Circle, Stacy, Eric, Pastor Jordan, Jeff, Rachel and every one of the church staff. Each one played a significant role in our mission to share the message of Emmanuel with our church and community.

"...Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us." ~ Isaiah 7:14



Be Encouraged with Pastor Sara Nelson

"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (Philippians 2:1-2)

What has encouraged you recently? Or how have you encouraged someone else recently?

Perhaps, it was a song that you heard on the radio that touched your heart or an uplifting conversation with a friend. Maybe it was the kindness of a neighbor helping you shovel your sidewalk or seeing a smile on your child's face.

The Bible has many examples of encouragement. One of my favorites is from Matthew's gospel when Jesus was teaching in Capernaum. Many people had gathered to hear Jesus speak the word. Four men heard about Jesus performing miracles. They were determined to bring their paralyzed friend to him, hoping that Jesus would heal him.

But the crowd was getting in the way, so they climbed onto the roof of the house that Jesus was in, tore off part of the roof, and lowered their friend down to meet Jesus. These

men went to

great lengths to bring their friend to Jesus.

In Matthew 9:2, we read: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man who

was paralyzed, 'Be encouraged, my child, your sins are forgiven.'"

Pastor Sara Nelson



Jesus forgave his sins and healed his body. The man's life was transformed through the faith and encouragement of his friends.

Encouragement has a way of filling our hearts and inspires us to do the same for others.

This year our congregational theme is to: "Be Encouraged". We will be focusing on how God encourages us in our faith and how God can work through us to be an encouragement to others. May we "Be Encouraged" as we continue to live into our vision of "being a sanctuary of Christian hope, love, and encouragement in the heart of Sioux Falls!"

In Ministry Together,

Pastor Sara M. Nelson

Pastor Sara

February 14 – Ash Wednesday

- 5 p.m. MPR
Broasted Chicken Dinner
- 5:45 p.m.
Kids Programming
- 6 p.m. Sanctuary
Traditional Service
In Person or Online

Chancel Choir Presents

Flapjack Follies

Tuesday, February 13, 4-6 p.m.

\$5 Adults/\$3 Children

Pancakes, Music, and Dessert Auction!

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Youth@First

by Eric Fjerestad, Youth/Young Adults Director

A Fun Year Ahead!

It's crazy to think 2024 is already here! Along with a new year comes an exciting list of adventures for our Youth@First. We are so excited to introduce you to some of the exciting stuff we have in store for our students this spring and summer.

Shrove Tuesday Flapjack Follies!

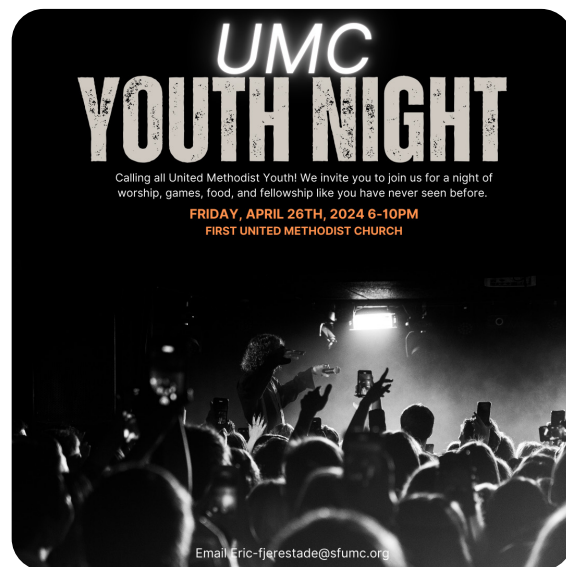
- **Tuesday, February 13, 4-6 p.m., MPR**
Continuing an old favorite, we will be teaming up with the choir to help out with Shrove Tuesday, along with serving some delicious treats at our dessert auction.

Skyzone Hangout Night

- **Skyzone, Wednesday, March 6, 6 p.m.**
Hangout nights are one of our students favorite nights of the year! Join us for a night of jumping and games!

UMC Youth Night

- **Friday, April 26, 6-10 p.m.**
We are excited for our first annual UMC Youth Night, we are getting together all United Methodist Churches from across Sioux Falls for a night of worship, games, food, and fellowship.



End of the Year Party

- **Wednesday, May 8 during our normal youth time**
As we end the year we'll be celebrating all that God is doing in the lives of our students. Join us as we celebrate in style.

For more information about these opportunities contact Eric @ (605) 336-3652 or fjerestad@sfumc.org

Families@First

First Steps

For All Toddlers 0-3 yrs & Their Caregivers. Sundays, 9:15-9:40 a.m. beginning February 4. Register with LuAnn outside the Nursery.

Yes, the new ministry you have been hearing about is ready to begin! We will have our first class on Sunday, February 4 in the Nursery at 9:15 a.m.

Families with children ages 0-3 are welcome! I will be joined by Stacy and Kathy. We have planned together to lead the group in singing, fingerplays, and reading stories from the Bible. A Children's Bible has been chosen specifically to be used by you and your child. The Bible is a gift to your young child from Kids@First and First Church.

Each week the group will also choose a topic specific to parenting. The Bible will be our textbook as we discuss, question, offer advice and pray about particular joys and concerns.

To make our time together as accessible as possible, we will also be offering a story time for your children ages 4 years – 5th grade. Stacy and I will trade off each week so one of us will be with Kathy in the Nursery, leading the First Steps class, and one of us will be in the library with your older children. We plan to be done by 9:40, just in time for worship!

Please contact me if you are interested in being a part of the First Steps class or if you know someone who you think may appreciate hearing more about the class. I will make it a point to talk to anyone as I can't wait to see families with young children come together in community.



We are ready to meet and grow with you and your toddler!

For more information about this opportunity contact LuAnn Berkhof @ (605) 336-3652 or berkhoff@sfumc.org

February "Gather, Grow, Go!"

GATHER with friends in fellowship:

- Every Sun. – **Worship** @ 8:30 & 9:45 & 11:01 a.m. All ages, nursery provided @ 9:45 & 11:01 a.m.
- Every Sun. – **Kids Connect** @ 9:45 & 11:01 a.m. Kids 4 years - 5th grade
- Every Wed. – **Family Meals** @ 5 p.m.
- Every Wed. – **Parent Walking Group** @ 7 p.m.
- 3rd Tue. – **Read @ First** @ 5:30 p.m.
- Sun. Feb 4 - **Camp & Scout Sunday** @ all three services
- Tue. Feb 13 - **Shrove Tuesday/Flapjack Follies** @ 4 p.m.

GROW in your faith:

- 2 & 4 Sun. – **Grateful Table Young Adult Ministry** @ 6 p.m. 20 & 30-something years
- Every Tue. – **Tuesday Refresh Book Study** @ Noon
- 1 & 3 Tue. – **Higgins Bible Study** @ 8 a.m. | All are invited
- 2 & 4 Tue. – **AMen's Book Study** @ Noon | All men invited
- Every Wed. – **Women's Bible Study** @ 9:30 a.m. All women invited
- Every Wed. – **Zoom Bible Study** @ 2:15 pm Call the church office for the Zoom link.
- Every Wed. – Pastor Jordan's **Adult Bible Study** @ 6 p.m.
- Every Wed. - **Jans Bible Study** Resuming Feb. 21 for Lenten Study @ 6 p.m. - | Various Book studies
- 2nd Wed. – **S.A.G.E.S.** @ 11:30 a.m. | Senior Adults
Our program presented by Judy Lehner entitled: Liberty and Justice For All. Enjoy a Tony's catered meal of baked chicken breast in sauce, mashed potatoes, glazed carrots, and dessert. All are welcome - you don't have to be old!! Call (605) 336-3652 to RSVP.
- Sun. Jan 28 - **Lunch-n-Learn** @ 12 p.m. | **"Do We Have to Talk About Racism?"** (pre-registration requested)
- Wed. Feb 14 - **Ash Wednesday Service** @ 6 p.m.



GO put your faith into action:

- Mon. Feb 5 – **Nightwatch** Serving hot meals at Hayward Elementary School @ 5 p.m.
- Wed. Feb 7 – **Feeding SD** Helping end food insecurities @ 5:15 p.m. Serving spots are limited; call the office to sign up.
- Sat. Feb 10 – **Habitat for Humanity** Building safe, affordable housing @ 8:30 a.m.
- Tue. Feb. 13 – **The Banquet West** Funding, cooking & serving dinner / Preparing @ 2 p.m. / Serving @ 5:15 p.m.
- Tue. Feb. 20 – **The Banquet Downtown** Funding, cooking & serving breakfast / Preparing @ 5:30 a.m. / Serving @ 6:30 p.m.



CTF
NAVIGATING A HEALTHY PATH FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING



FEBRUARY

Call to Freedom
Navigating a healthy path for victims of human trafficking.

CHURCH FAMILY

BAPTISM

- Noah Becker & Owen Becker (sons of John and Allison Becker)

DEATH

- Sue Anderson (sister of Barb Shepardson)
- Karen Bunker (aunt of Don Jones)
- Gary Wolbrink (husband of Connie Wolbrink)
- Clifford Rindels (father of Vicki Wilbur)
- Bev Kriens

PRAYER CARDS

- Father and family of Carrie Schilling
- Carli Steffes
- John Martens (father of Craig (Kathy) Martens)

ATTENDANCE

- Dec 10 In Person284
Online294
- Dec 17 In Person284
Online364
- Dec 24 In Person766
Online396
- Dec 31 In Person293
Online190