



First United Methodist Church

January 2026



FIRSTCHURCH
4 Second Ave SE, Watertown, SD 57201

A Word from our Pastor:

January 6th is the feast of Epiphany, the last day of Christmas and the day we in the church typically welcome the Magi – the wise one's from the east to celebrate and worship the child – Christ. It's a day of celebration and excitement of finally finding the child they seek, of a years-long journey and the deception of kings.

The journeys we take in life are often similar, an exploration of finding what we are looking for, searching in the wrong places, believing those who'd like to deceive us and finally – sometimes years later, making our way to Christ.

I pray that as we look into this new year, that we may continue to journey together as followers of Christ.

One way that journey continues is in the struggles our church has with accessibility. With thirteen levels throughout the church, and a small lift to get us from the entrance to the sanctuary or fellowship hall, we have looked into the process of getting better access to parts of the building. With that in mind, the Accessibility Team gathered information and worked together with the team at YHR Architects to bring forward ideas for how to help solve some, if not all, of our accessibility problems.

Those who were at Charge Conference this fall got a sneak peak at two plans that the team will be bringing forward. After worship on January 17th and 18th, the Accessibility Team will be presenting the two plans and hoping to receive feedback and a direction to go forward. Please add these meetings to your January schedule so that we can do our work to make our beautiful building that much more accessible to all who come and join us.

Thank you to the Accessibility Team and to you all for your continued faith and dedication to Christ.

Happy New Year

Pastor Sara McManus

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Advent Alternative Gift Giving Update—Thanks to your generous support we were able to provide the following funds...

\$620 to Heifer International, \$345 to Feeding SD, \$310 to Glacial Lakes Humane Society, \$4,235 to the Carillon Bell Fund

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Wednesday Night Schedule 4:15—5:10 pm Children's Bell Choir Rehearsal 5:15 pm Community Meal—All are Welcome 5:30 pm Adult Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:00—6:30 pm Opening Worship—Fellowship Hall 6:30—7:30 pm Children & Youth (K-12) Activities 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal			1 New Year's Day Holiday Office Closed	2 Office Closed	3 7 am Back Room Boys Church Lounge 9 am Late Risers Stone's Restaurant 3:00 pm Band Rehearsal 5:00 pm Worship Communion Family Worship Weekend
4 8:15 am Adult Bible Study—Lounge 9:30 am Worship Communion Family Worship Weekend	5 10:30 am Staff Mtg 1:15-3:15 pm Coffee, Cookies & Conversation—Church Lounge 5:30 pm Women of Grace—Church Lounge	6	7 9:15 am Embracing God Bible Study—Lounge **Regular Wednesday Night Activities	8 10 am Women's Bible Study	9 Office Closed	10 7 am Back Room Boys Church Lounge 9 am Late Risers Stone's Restaurant 3:00 pm Band Rehearsal 5:00 pm Worship
11 8:15 am Adult Bible Study—Lounge 9:30 am Worship	12 10:30 am Staff Mtg 1:15-3:15 pm Coffee, Cookies & Conversation—Church Lounge	13	14 9:15 am Embracing God Bible Study—Lounge **Regular Wednesday Night Activities	15 10 am Women's Bible Study	16 Office Closed	17 7 am Back Room Boys Church Lounge 9 am Late Risers Stone's Restaurant 3:00 pm Band Rehearsal 5:00 pm Worship 6 pm Town Hall Meeting Accessibility Etc.
18 8:15 am Adult Bible Study—Lounge 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am Town Hall Meeting Accessibility Etc.	19 10:30 am Staff Mtg 1:15-3:15 pm Coffee, Cookies & Conversation—Church Lounge Memory Care Services 1:30 pm Edgewood 2:30 pm Cedar View	20 11:30 am Lunch a Bunch at Pizza Ranch 4:30 pm Missions Mtg 5:30 pm Leadership Team Mtg	21 9:15 am Embracing God Bible Study—Lounge **Regular Wednesday Night Activities	22 10 am Women's Bible Study 4:00 pm Staff Meeting	23 Office Closed	24 7 am Back Room Boys Church Lounge 9 am Late Risers Stone's Restaurant 3:00 pm Band Rehearsal 5:00 pm Worship
25 8:15 am Adult Bible Study—Lounge 9:30 am Worship	26 10:30 am Staff Mtg 1:15-3:15 pm Coffee, Cookies & Conversation—Church Lounge	27	28 9:15 am Embracing God Bible Study—Lounge **Regular Wednesday Night Activities	29 10 am Women's Bible Study	30 Office Closed	31 7 am Back Room Boys Church Lounge 9 am Late Risers Stone's Restaurant 3:00 pm Band Rehearsal 5:00 pm Worship Communion Family Worship Weekend Winter Connection in Sioux Falls, SD For 8th—12th Grade

Weekly at First Church**Mondays**

1:15—3:15pm Coffee, Cookies & Conversation—Church Lounge

Wednesday Night Schedule

4:15—5:10 pm Children's Bell Choir Rehearsal

5:15 pm Community Meal—All are Welcome

5:30 pm Adult Bell Choir Rehearsal

6:00—6:30 pm Opening Worship—Fellowship Hall

6:30—7:30 pm Children & Youth (K-12) Activities

6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Thursday Bible Study

10:00 am Women's Bible Study

Friday—Office Closed**Saturday**

7:00 am Back Room Boys—Church Library

9:00 am Late Risers—Stones Restaurant

3:00 pm Praise Band Rehearsal—Sanctuary

5:00 pm—Contemporary Worship**Sunday—Worship Schedule**

8:30 am Adult Sunday School—Lounge

9:30 am Blended Worship**Monthly at First Church****1st Monday of the Month—Home Communion****1st Monday of the Month**

5:30 pm Women of Grace Bible Study

2nd Tuesday of the Month

5:30 pm Leadership Team Meeting

3rd Tuesday of the Month

11:30 am Lunch-A-Bunch at Pizza Ranch

1st, 3rd, & 4th Wednesday of the Month

9:15 am Embracing God Study Group

2nd Wednesday of the Month

10 am Morning Glories Women's Fellowship/Mission Group

Please note that anyone is welcome at any time to drop in to any of the above noted groups.

Mission of the Month for January
Haiti Alive—A LaGonave Ministry

Donations to Haiti Alive can be made by:

-Make checks out to First UMC and note Haiti Alive in the memo

-Cash donations welcome

-Visit www.watertownfirst.church/giving—select

Mission of the Month—Note Haiti Alive in the comments

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

We invite you to join us January 10 through February 15 as we dive deep into Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount". As crowds gathered, Jesus took the opportunity to teach. His few words have lasting impact on how we are called to be in relation with our neighbors - known and unknown. This 'instruction manual' he provides tells us how to embrace an internal transformation rather than merely external rules, shift into a view of radical hospitality that goes against common culture, and explores our call to always be beacons of light into the world.

Save the Date—Feb. Curious Creations Event!!**Intergenerational Dance Evolution & Snack-A-Thon****Saturday—February 21—following worship 6pm-8pm**

We will explore dance as it has changed over the last century! Bring an appetizer to share and your dancing moves - we will have music ready to go, along with popular dances that graced us in various times of history, including: Polka, Macarena, Cupid Shuffle, Church Clap & Forrest Frank favorites. Do you know 2 step and willing to teach us? Or maybe the Waltz? We will also traverse scripture in search of joy! How about the younger generation. Are there any dance moves you'd like to teach the older generation? We'd sure like to try and learn. Young and old are all invited to come and dance or come and cheer on the dancers.

January Mission of the Month Haiti Alive:

A nonprofit organized to serve God and to bring hope, health, and happiness to the people on the island of LaGonave, Haiti. We convey the message of Christ through the areas of education, healthcare, and ministering to those in need, especially women, children, and the elderly.

Healthcare:

- There is a shortage of medical care across the island of LaGonave. The medicine and care provided through our clinics are truly life-giving and life-saving. Mobile clinics travel to small villages, to provide care for those who have no access to medical care or are unable to travel. You can provide medicine, salaries for staff, and transportation for mobile clinics through our healthcare programs

Education

- \$150 per year (\$12.50/month) provides a uniform, a meal every day, and an education to a Haitian child in need.
- \$100 per month will sponsor a teacher and ensure students have quality educators.

Women, Children, Elderly:

- Christmas Program—Provides a simple gift, meal program, and the love of Christ at Christmas for more than 1000 children.
- Feeding Programs—When available, food packets and/or meals are provided to the elderly and neighborhood children.

Thank you

Thank you to all of you here at First Church. You have spoiled us this Christmas Season! We had banana bread, and cookies, and toffee, and coffee and treats and cards and gifts! Thank you. Thank you for all the ways you care for us as your Pastors and Staff. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

- Pastor Sara McManus, Pastor Kim Hastings, Pastor Amy Atkins, Pearl Geffre, Beth Schutt, Lori Jurgens, Bobbie Jenner, Marilyn Spurrell, Blair Titze, Lesa Dahl, Dean Gorseth, LeaAnn and Dave Alwin.

Music & Worship

We believe music is a powerful way to connect with God and uplift the hearts of our church. That's why we invite you to join our **Praise Band!**

Whether you enjoy singing, playing an instrument, or would like to learn—we'd love for you to share your talents with us. Together, we'll create a worship experience that inspires and brings people closer to God.

Contact David at 605-868-4037 or Lea Ann 605-868-1066

First UMC Foundation Fact

Did you know the Foundation has been supporting First Church for many years?

1999—\$1,325 Lake Poinsett camp beach restoration

2006—\$200 Nursery needs (folding table etc)

2006—\$445 Custodian Equipment needs

2008—\$4,000 First UMC Trustees—Various Projects

2020—\$3,993 Light Fixtures for First UMC

2022—\$6,655.19 New Paraments and Banners

2023—\$2,751.10 Round Tables & White Board for Children's Ministry Area

2026—\$402.60 Bible for Children & Youth

Thank you to the Foundation for helping keep our church building & equipment maintained!

First Church Finances

FUMC General Budget Financials - 2025			
		Monthly Actual	YTD Cash Flow
Oct-25	Income	\$ 42,542	\$ (40,294)
	Expense	\$ 38,252	
	Difference	\$ 4,291	
Nov-25	Income	\$ 33,513	\$ (47,441)
	Expense	\$ 40,659	
	Difference	\$ (7,146)	

For a more detailed copy of the budget, please contact the church office.

There are several methods available for giving. You can mail your tithe and offerings to the church at:

*First United Methodist Church,
PO Box 1416, Watertown, SD 57201*

Or give online at:
watertownfirst.church/giving

Or use the QR Code to give online now!
Thank You for your support of First Church!



NOTE: To meet our 2025 budget in full each month, we will need a monthly income of \$33,417. The chart above reflects our giving, actual expenditures, and YTD cash flow. Thank you for your generosity and support of First Church!

Witnessing Christmas in Action at Spirit Lake

By: Meaghan Wharton, Dakotas Connector for Justice & Advocacy | December 22, 2025

On the morning of December 11th, I headed north to the Spirit Lake Reservation, stopping first in Warwick, North Dakota—a tiny town of just around 50 residents nestled within the reservation. There, I met Kim Paulson, one of the executive directors of the Spirit Lake Ministry Center, along with Eliza, Kim's daughter, and Hunter, a young adult volunteer. Today, I will be joining them in delivering the shoebox Christmas gifts throughout the Spirit Lake Nation.

Our first stop was Warwick Elementary, where 96 children would soon receive those special gifts. With laughter and gratitude, the staff thanked us again and again as we began unloading box after box from a trailer *bursting* with shoebox gifts.

From there, we drove deeper into the reservation to Four Winds High School in Fort Totten, where another round of hundreds of shoeboxes awaited. There, I got to help unload more boxes ready for kids and teens across the community. Each box was more than a bundle of items—it was a little beacon of care, thoughtfulness, and love.

Lunch at the Oyate Cafe offered a slower moment of connection. Over a warm meal and good conversation, Eliza shared how the shoebox ministry actually works. The Spirit Lake Ministry Center begins receiving gifts as early as October. Every box is carefully checked to make sure it includes the four essentials: a hat, gloves, toothpaste, and a toothbrush. Then, over weeks and months, Eliza and the team sort them by age and gender and carefully plan their delivery. This year, the ministry received somewhere between 4,000 and 6,000 shoeboxes for children across the reservation and beyond!

They don't just stop at Spirit Lake—they also send boxes to the Red Lake Tribe in Minnesota and the Turtle Mountain Reservation, spreading care across tribal communities.

One story Kim shared has stayed with me. He is an instructor at Cankdeska Cikana Community College and had his students help unload the trailer last year. As the boxes came off the truck, a student looked at Kim and said, *"Ohhh... this is where they all came from. I got them every year as a kid."* That moment struck me—it wasn't just the gifts themselves, but the lasting memory of kindness that had stayed with someone into adulthood.

After lunch, we made one last stop at Oberon Elementary School to drop off another load of boxes. This stop is the point in the journey where I peeled off and headed back toward Valley City, heart warmed by the day's conversations, laughter, and new friendships. The team still had more schools to reach, more boxes to deliver, and I left feeling grateful to have witnessed even a small part of it.

As I reflect on the day, what stands out most is how small, faithful actions add up to something literally unforgettable.

Every person who packed a box contributed to a massive outpouring of love—showing children across the reservation that Christ is with them.

These acts of generous love and faithfulness are the heart of the Christmas story we celebrate—that **in the birth of Jesus, God is with us.**

Thank you to the Morning Glories Missional Group for their efforts in collecting items and assembling the Shoe Boxes mentioned above. And thank you to all who have contributed to this mission. Many lives are impacted by your kindness and generosity.

FIRST KIDS

FIRST SQUAD

K-3 Grade
4-6 Grade

CHILDREN'S CHURCH SCHEDULE

- * January 7th: Welcome Back First Kids and Youth—We hope you had a great Christmas Break!
- * January 10th and 11th: We will kick off our new unit: “Fruits of the Spirit”.

Children's Christmas Program Photos



Children's Ministry

WEDNESDAYS

- ◇ Jan. 7—Kickoff Family Worship Service or Movie Night
- ◇ Jan. 14—Chosen One John 15:16
- ◇ Jan. 21—4th -6th Graders Jenkins
- ◇ Jan. 28—You Don't Have to Fit In Galatians 1:10

SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS

- ◇ Jan. 3-4—Family Worship Weekend—No Children's Church
- ◇ Jan. 10-11—Regular Children's Church
- ◇ Jan. 17-18—Regular Children's Church
- ◇ Jan. 24-25—Regular Children's Church
- ◇ Jan. 31-Feb. 1—Family Worship Weekend—No Children's Church

UPCOMING EVENTS—

- ◇ **Wed. Feb. 11**—No Regular Activities for K-6th Graders due to “A Night To Remember” fund raiser supper
- ◇ **Wed. Feb. 18**—Ash Wednesday—Family Worship Night

A Special Thank You to all the children & Youth—You did a Great Job! Thanks also to all the volunteers who helped out and to the parents for sharing your beautiful children with us!

If you have any question about our Children's Ministry Program, please contact Lori Jurgens lori@watertownfirst.church or Bobbie Jenner bobbie@watertownfirst.church

Registration forms for children & youth can be found on the office door. Please take one, update your information and return to the church office or give to Lori or Bobbie.



SAVE THE DATE

WINTER CONNECTION

JANUARY 30th—31st
8th-12th Grade

CONFIRMATION CAMP

Lake Poinsett
FEBRUARY 27th—28th

FIRSTYOUTH

Winter Connection

Sioux Falls First UMC

January 30-31, 2026
\$40 per participant

Youth in grades 8-12 and youth leaders are invited to a weekend of worship, fun, mission, and learning with churches from across the region!



For more information and registration scan the QR code or go to:
<https://www.dakotasumc.org/dakyouth/happenings/winter-connection>

Youth Updates:

We are excited to announce that our own April Geffre-Noem is joining our youth staff team. What a joy it is to celebrate the work she is already doing with our High School Youth and invite her to dig deeper into this youth journey. Thank you to April for stepping into this new role alongside Pastor Amy and our other volunteers.

Pastor Sara McManus and the SPRC Team

Spreading Christmas Cheer

Christmas carols were sung by preschool thru high school and the adult volunteers. They visited Jenkins, Maple Place, Townview and some of the assisted living centers. Then they went back to the church for hot cocoa and snacks. What a fun and festive time it was! Thanks to all who shared their voices!



FIRST FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Our deepest sympathy is extended to:

Friends and family of Walter Pies of Blaine MN who passed away on December 8, 2025.

Walter is Genny DeLong's brother (and only sibling).

Carol Pollard-Leiner and other family and friends of Wayne Leiner who passed away on December 10, 2025. Wayne is Carol's husband.

Pam & Jim Weger on the passing of Pam's sister, Barb Quade on December 18, 2025.

Shelly Lenards and other family & friends of Gerald "Jerry" Ness who passed away on November 26, 2025. Gerald is Shelly's father.

MEMORY CARE SERVICES: Once a month we gather with residents at two of our memory care units in town for a time of worship. There is singing, the sharing of scripture, prayer and Holy Communion.

Memory Care Services will be held on the third Monday of each month;

Jan. 19 - 1:30 pm at Edgewood Memory Care - 420 9th St SE

Jan. 19 - 2:30 pm at Cedar View - 225 14th Ave NE

We invite and encourage everyone to join us for these worship services.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN ASSISTED LIVING OR NURSING HOMES

Edgewood Memory Care 420 9th St SE—Watertown, SD 57201	Dorothy Irwin • Paul McElhany Kent Hegstrom
Edgewood Senior Living 901 14th Ave NE—Watertown, SD 57201	Audrey Rhodes #412 • Wes Larson #413 Bonnie Lien #105 • Karen Ostrander #424 Arlene Berger #311 • Margaret Newl #208 Eleanor Prouty #315 • Lou Ann Kosier #109
Edgewood Cedar View 225 14th Ave NE—Watertown, SD 57201	Tom Baxter
Jenkins Living Center 215 S. Maple—Watertown, SD 57201	Adelia Thorn #225 • Victor Yexley #301 Alice Johnson #419
Stoney Brook Assisted Living 500 16th Ave NE—Watertown, SD 57201	Margie Gertsen #33 • Betty Mohror #34 Jean Bevers #26 • Janice Pavli #49
Avantara Watertown 415 4th Ave NE—Watertown, SD 57201	Marilyn Vogt #504
Avantara Clark 201 8th Ave NW—Clark, SD 57225	Mike Steffen

Watertown Memory Care Support Group (formerly the Alzheimer's Support Group)

January 7, 2026

"Safe Hands, Calm Hands" (Teepa Snow) by Christina Rumli, State Ombudsman for State of SD.

January 7, 2026

"Safe Hands, Calm Hands" (Teepa Snow) by Christina Rumli, State Ombudsman for State of SD.

PLEASE NOTE: The Watertown Memory Care Support Group continues to meet at the Watertown Event Center for their meetings. Please enter through the Event Center doors. Thank you! We meet the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm.

For more information contact Connie Lake at cl.memory.group@gmail.com.



Birthday	Happy Birthday To:
2-Jan	Heidi Hartford
2-Jan	Joanne Singrey-Johnson
3-Jan	Jerry Miller
3-Jan	Bradley Hanson
4-Jan	Marissa Willett
7-Jan	Nancy Titze
7-Jan	Jett Jellis
8-Jan	Brandy Fenenga
8-Jan	Tom LaFramboise
8-Jan	Reese Vanderlinden
8-Jan	Kaleb Boughton
9-Jan	Doug Waldner
9-Jan	Clara Wight
9-Jan	Joshua Barr
10-Jan	Connie Lake
10-Jan	Nicole Gilbertson
11-Jan	Kara Heagel
11-Jan	Wayne Becking
13-Jan	Brenda Jongbloed
14-Jan	Harper Koistinen
15-Jan	Jeremiah Leadabrand
15-Jan	Katie Leadabrand
15-Jan	Beth Luckhurst
15-Jan	Jackson Kahre
16-Jan	Marianne DeLong
17-Jan	Avery Anderson
17-Jan	Beau Anderson
17-Jan	Jamie DeBoer
17-Jan	Izzibella-Marie Willett
18-Jan	Davina Lenards
19-Jan	Brady Fonder
20-Jan	Sandee Prouty-Cole
20-Jan	Catherine Leadabrand
21-Jan	Lillian Fox
21-Jan	Grace Jurgens
22-Jan	Roberta LaFramboise
23-Jan	Sarah Caron
23-Jan	Wayne Wegner
23-Jan	Katherine Mielitz
23-Jan	William Hoffman
23-Jan	Jonathan LaFramboise Boettcher

Birthday	Happy Birthday To:
24-Jan	Tieson Jenner
24-Jan	Dorothy Peterson
25-Jan	Jacque Johnson
25-Jan	Kris Edwards
26-Jan	Donald Riley
27-Jan	Buddy LaFramboise
27-Jan	Ernest Wight
27-Jan	Weston Mayer
28-Jan	Ronald Aker
28-Jan	Andreas Schnoor
28-Jan	Dorothy Schurrer
28-Jan	Lydia Buckley
28-Jan	Carla Willett
29-Jan	Briana McElhany
29-Jan	Rylee Robinson
29-Jan	Anna Gilbertson
30-Jan	Clark Hanson
31-Jan	Cadence Weidner
31-Jan	Harley Stavick
31-Jan	Daxxyn Larson

Anniversary	Happy Anniversary To:
25-Jan	Fred & Carolyn Wilkens
2-Jan	Chad & Kim Miller
27-Jan	Chad & Brooke Hanson

RETURNED SERVICE REQUESTED

January 2026

FIRST NEWS

MEET THE STAFF

Senior Pastor

Rev. Sara McManus

Associate Pastor

Rev. Kim Hastings

Associate of Youth Ministries

Rev. Amy Atkins

Office Manager

Pearl Geffre

On-Call Pastor

Rev. Elmer Brinkman

Children's Minister

Lori Jurgens

Weekend Children's Leader

Bobbie Jenner

Media and Graphic Design

Dean Gorseth

Organists

Blair Titze

Lesa Dahl

Bell Choir Director

Marilyn Spurrell

Music & Chancel Choir Director

Blair Titze

Contemporary Worship Coordinator

Lea Ann Alwin

Band Leader

Dave Alwin

Custodian

Beth Schutt

Wedding Coordinator

Kathy Mielitz

Regular Worship Times

Saturdays, 5:00 pm—Contemporary
Sundays, 9:30 am—Blended



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 605-886-4427

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