



FOCUS

NEWSLETTER

-ADVENT EDITION-



FIRST UNITED
METHODIST
BROOKINGS



AT THE CORNER OF
CHURCH & COMMUNITY



Heaven
and
Earth

Join Us Christmas Eve!

Sunday Morning Worship

10:00am, Sanctuary

Family Candlelight Service

5:30pm, Community Life Center

Evening Candlelight Service

7:30pm, Sanctuary

Heaven Comes to Earth

Our world seems overtaken with violence, chaos, and disrespect for human life. It is not within our own power to make a fresh start. If we're to have a future different from our current messiness, it must come as a gift, something not of our devising. What we need is a God who refuses to be trapped in eternity, a God who not only cares about us but is willing to show up among us and do something with us, here and now. This is exactly what happened at Christmas. On a seemingly ordinary day, in a manger in overcrowded Bethlehem, God slipped into the world as a tiny baby. Thousands had longed for his coming, few witnessed his entrance, but millions have been changed by the life of Jesus – “Emmanuel” – God with us.



God brought Heaven to Earth and offered the possibility to change everything. Jesus taught us to pray that God's Kingdom come, and God's will be done on earth today as it is in Heaven. Just like King Herod failed in silencing the plans of God, so Christmas 2023 offers us an opportunity to renew our faith in a God who confuses the cruel plans of powerful and influential despots who would rule the world for their own benefit. Just like God chose those simple shepherds, and God chose Joseph and Mary, a rural couple from Nazareth, so God continues to partner with ordinary people like us in renewing our world.

May the Blessing of God be with you this Christmas. May the Grace of God hold your heart and may your love be renewed.

Pastor Pete

Thank You!

Thank you to all who donated corn for the Feeding South Dakota Thanksgiving Food Drive! We had a goal of collecting 250 cans and collected over 350! Your generosity is much appreciated by the people of Brookings.



Illness Prevention

As we enter the Fall season, it is time to obtain an influenza (flu) vaccine. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone over 6 months of age and is especially important for those at high risk. High risk is defined as people over 65 years of age, people with asthma, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and during pregnancy.

Influenza vaccines are available through your primary care providers office and at local pharmacies.

Frequent hand washing is highly recommended and handshaking is discouraged.

Joanie Holm, RN

Thank you!

Thank you everyone who gave underwear for my birthday in October. Your generous gifts will go to kids and adults who can use them. 30 packages of 173 pairs have been delivered to Foster Closet in Brookings. This project gives an opportunity for foster families to obtain needed items, even in the middle of the night, when kids are placed unexpectedly.

32 packages of 186 packages are being delivered to Native American Heritage Association in Black Hawk near Rapid City. These will be distributed to 4 or 5 reservations in SD and WY.

My half, 40 packages of 400 more pairs, are being sent to Tree of Life in Mission, SD on the Rosebud Reservation through Walmart mail order. They will all be very much appreciated by many. Thank you for your overwhelming generosity.

A quote from 'Linda at the Tree' when I told her we were sending underwear, "You have no idea what joy this will bring to many of the young people here on the Rosebud. More than one child goes to school without proper underclothing, so not only are you helping with hygiene, but also with their sense of pride and security."

Avis Norton



Congregational Care Ministry

Stress and Loneliness during the Holidays

Thanksgiving and Christmas are usually joyful Holidays. For people who are ill, grieving or going through a stressful time, the Holidays can be difficult.

If you find yourself in one of these categories, mental health experts suggest the following:

- Be good to yourself (read a good book, pamper yourself with a dinner out or a movie)
- Understand that you are not alone
- Rethink your expectations (do I need to get all the decorations out??)
- Cultivate gratitude
- Give to others (take cookies to a neighbor, bring diapers for Harvest Table)



And if you are not in this category, remember someone who is with the gift of caring.

Your church family cares and are here to help. Call the church office and they can put you in contact with me or Pastor Pete at 605-692-4345.

Joanie Holm, RN, Congregational Care Coordinator

Staff Parish Relations

SPR has been working on our Budget for 2024. With some last minute adjustments we will be prepared for the Finance Committee's request for our Budget Request. We have also been considering other items related to this very special time of the year. This will be my final report as Mark Stratton will be Chairing this talented group during 2024. I look forward to continuing working with SPR next year. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the work and results of their efforts.

Larry Hult, Staff Parish Relations Chair

United Women of Faith

On Thursday December 7th The United Women of Faith will be hosting a noon luncheon with a memorial service to remember those special women we have lost during this last year .Please join us for delicious soup at 12 noon. All women of the church and guests are welcome. We will have the new 2024 pledge cards available then, too. We will also serve the Harvest Table on Dec 18, if anyone would like to help with that. If you would like to be a part of decision making on missions and projects, please let us know, we also need 2 officer positions to be filled.



Judi DeZeeuw, United Women of Faith, President



Meals on Wheels

The last two weeks of Meals on Wheels for this year was completed by Ron & Linda Thaden, Perry & Barb Johnson, Pastor Pete & Jenny Grassow, Bob & Lynette Smith, Brenda & Rick Hieb, Sam & Kay Becker, Larry & Barb Hult, and Wayne & Colene Reiser. A special thanks to Gary & Avis Norton who volunteered both weeks. Brookings Meals on Wheels provides support for seniors that enables them to remain living in their own homes. This program is typically a nutritious meal, a short friendly visit, and a quick safety check. FUMC has committed to 8 weeks of deliveries for 2024. We are the only area church that has that level of commitment to the program. The next delivery scheduled will be January 2-5 (4 days only) and January 7-12. If you are interested in helping with Meals on Wheels deliveries this coming January, please contact me at perbar3@mac.com. As well as showing God's love in our community, it can have its sweet rewards.

Perry Johnson, FUMC Meals on Wheel Coordinator

Finance

Sunday, November 19th wrapped up the 2023 Gratitude Campaign. After the service, a Gratitude Brunch was held. Thank you to all who attended. We hope you had a wonderful time at the Brunch and completing your Gratitude Journals each day. It is a nice way to head into the Holiday Season.

If you have turned in your pledge card for 2024, thank you. If you have not had a chance to do so, don't worry. It is not too late. Pledge cards have been sent by mail and can also be found online at: <https://www.brookingsmethodist.org/pledge.html>. Additionally, feel free to contact the Church if you'd like a pledge card sent to you. Once you have it filled out, please send it back to the Church or drop it off in the main office.

Tom Fishback, Finance Committee Chair

Missions

Christmas Eve Offering

This **Christmas Eve** offering will go to the Pastor's Emergency Fund – which enables Vonda Kirkham to meet needs as they arise when people come to the church for assistance. It can be help with food, gas for travel, a night's stay in a local motel, heating fuel assistance, etc... This is coordinated with the Ministerial group in Brookings.

December #onething

The mission Committee has designated the December #onething for **UMCOR Disaster Response**. Disasters can be the result of man-made catastrophes (like war) or intense natural disruptions like flooding, earthquakes, drought, fires, etc. UMCOR has been valiantly partnering with agencies in areas around the globe and in the USA to ease the suffering of God's children as they are affected. Please give generously this Christmas Eve as the needs are great. Thank you!

Areas where you are responding through UMCOR include, Ukraine, Gaza, Afghanistan (Read more about these and other responses here: umcmmission.org/umcor-international-latest-responses/), wildfires in Hawaii, tornadoes in Oklahoma, Florida (Read more about these USA and other responses here: umcmmission.org/umcor-us-latest-responses/)

UMCOR maintains updates on their facebook page (facebook.com/UMCOR) Please visit it often to see how your church is meeting the critical needs of our neighbors.

Teresa Telkamp, Missions Committee



Music Notes

It is a rule in my heart that I won't play Christmas music until Dec 1 and that date is quickly approaching! Please let me know if you have any interest in putting a group together to go caroling around the area. I will be glad provide music booklets to take caroling!

The Worship Team is looking for a drummer! Is that you?! If you know a totally rad drummer, or even kind of ok drummer, please share this information with them. Drummers must have some previous experience before helping.

It is not too late to join several of our musical groups before Advent begins! The choir has several Advent pieces they will be sharing in December as well as Jubilee Bells and Chiming Children, will be providing music at upcoming worship services. Please let me know if you have any questions about our musical offerings!

Bunny Christie, Music Coordinator

“Where words fail, music speaks.”
Hans Christianson Anderson

Susan's Saga

The Incarnation. An amazing concept that infinite, eternal God enters time and space as the divine Infant. Jesus is fully human and fully God. It is logically impossible for our limited human understanding to completely wrap our minds around this profound truth.

In human terms, a new birth is cause for rejoicing, and thus we can readily identify with the joy brought by the Incarnation. During this season of celebrating the Divine birth, we can heartily join in the festivities surrounding the commemoration of Jesus' nativity.

However, even in the midst of the celebration, there is the somber foreshadowing of the reason for the Incarnation: God was born in human form so that there could be the Crucifixion. It is not logically possible for someone to die without having been born. Birth is the necessary prequel for death. Jesus had to be physically born in order to physically die. And He had to physically die in order to be physically

resurrected. There is a sequential chain: birth—death—resurrection. Put another way, resurrection opens the way for freedom from death. There can be no death without there having been prior birth.

But why is death necessary with all of its pain and grief? Death is the direct result of sin: disobedience to God. Resistance and rebellion to God's good and perfect plans and purposes for life for humankind has the consequence of death. The penalty for opposing God is both individual and corporate. No one is exempt, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." The only solution for freedom and release from the morass of cumulative sinfulness in which humanity finds itself mired is the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ in His death.

"Christ died for our sins, just at the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead...." "For sin is the sting that results in death.....But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through

This remarkable gift of the complete provision of redemption, beginning with the birth and culminating in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, needs to be made known in every language through Bible translation.

Susan Huggins

Scripture quotation is taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

Susan Huggins is a daughter of this church serving in full-time ministry as a Bible translator among the Mixtec people of Oaxaca, Mexico. Susan's sending agency, Wycliffe Bible Translators, is a non-denominational organization; she raises her own funds to support this ministry.

Check Out Our Podcasts!

Don't forget—Pastor Pete's Sunday sermons are available as a Podcast! You can listen to 'Messages from First United Methodist Brookings' on all major Podcasting platforms (Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, Google Podcasts) or online at brookingsmethodist.org/podcasts. Also, watch for a new podcast from us launching in the coming months!



Children's Christmas Program

I would like to invite you all to the Children's Christmas program on December 10 in the sanctuary. Children in the 3-year-old class – 5th grades will be involved in presenting the program. Please join us at 5:00 as the children bring the Nativity story to us this Christmas season.

Candy Needed for Treat Bags

Individually wrapped Christmas candy is needed to fill the treat bags which are given to children following the Christmas program. If you would be willing to donate candy, please bring it to the church or education offices by Dec. 7. Thank you!

Christmas Shoppe

Christmas Shoppe – An Advent experience for kids is being offered on December 3 from 3-5 p.m. Christmas Shoppe is an event where children aged 3-year-old – 4th grade will create Christmas symbols. There will be four symbol departments that tell the part of the Christmas story that goes with their symbol.

Children will want to visit all of the departments to get the full experience and obtain all the symbols. This event is open to all in the community – so invite your friends!



Trustees Committee

All work on the CLC and Atrium roofs has been completed. Belfry window work has begun. Church grounds cleanup has been completed and initial planning to place an escape door in the old library room has begun. Upcoming projects include church ground landscaping and playground improvements.

Rick Hieb, Trustees Committee Chair

Live Nativity

Be sure to take in the Live Nativity which will be presented by our senior high youth after the Children's Christmas program on December 10 on the south side of the church.

If you are willing or you know of anyone who would be willing to share their animals for the Live Nativity, please contact Gretchen.



Souper Bowl of Caring

Coming in February – Souper Bowl of Caring! Watch the FOCUS for further details.



Financial Peace University

Are you tired of living paycheck to paycheck? Is there too much month left at the end of your money? Then you'll want to take Financial Peace University! In this life-changing 9-week course you'll learn how to budget, get rid of debt and eventually build wealth. Join the first class on Thursday, January 11 and decide if this is for you! For more information, please contact Gretchen.

Get Your Calendar!

Be sure to get your 2024 calendar from the youth! The youth are selling beautiful 2024 calendars as a fundraiser for youth events for \$10. They are at the welcome centers in both the Community Life Center and Atrium on Sunday's and Wednesday's and at the education office during the week. Thank you for supporting the youth!



Advent Teaching: Heaven and Earth

You are invited to join the Advent study *Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation*, by Will Willimon. We will discover the God who brings heaven to earth and changing everything. Books are available from Gretchen Knutsen at the church office. The schedule is:

Advent 1 Chapter 1: Meanwhile (Mark 12:24-37), pages 1-36.

Advent 2 Chapter 2: Surprised (Mark 1:1-8), pages 37-70.

Advent 3 Chapter 3: Light (John 1:6-8, 19-28), pages 71-94.

Advent 4 Chapter 4: Rejoice (Luke 1:26-55), pages 95-140.

Our Advent study will take place in two different ways:

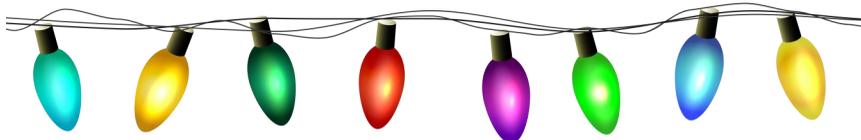
Pastor Pete will preach on this schedule on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings for Advent.

Bishop Lanette Plambeck will lead this study on Zoom, Tuesday evenings at 7-18:15 p.m., beginning November 28. [Register now](https://www.dakotasumc.org/resources/forms/3039) at: <https://www.dakotasumc.org/resources/forms/3039> (look at the Dakotas Conference website under “Forms – Advent Study”).

Christmas Gifts

Would you like to give a Christmas blessing to someone who has very little joy in this season? This Advent Season you might consider adding something from this list to your shopping basket and dropping it off with Vonda Kirkham at the church. This will be added to blessings we are able to give people for Christmas. (This list of items that are requested by Harvest Table guests cannot be bought with Food Stamps.)

- Toilet paper
- Facial Tissue
- Laundry detergent
- Dish detergent
- Shampoo (adult and children)
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste (adult and children)
- Bar soap, Hand soap
- Feminine hygiene products



Poinsettias

We would love to add the beauty of poinsettias to the church decorations during this Advent/Christmas season. The Worship Committee is inviting anyone “who loves the adventure of finding the perfect plant” to drop off a **red** or **white** poinsettia at church. (Rest assured that you are not responsible for watering or caring for plants through the season. We have volunteers to take care of them.)

Your poinsettia may be given in memory or in honor of a loved one. Please call, stop by the church office, or email: office@brookingsmethodist.org to have your loved one’s name acknowledged in the December 17th worship bulletin.



No Sunday School

There will be no Sunday school on December 24 and 31. Sunday school will resume on January 7. Merry Christmas!



Thanks to our Church Leadership!

I have appreciated the leadership of our church for 2023. I offer an irreverent word of thanks to some of them:

Lay Leader: LaRon DeBoer:

In South Africa a Boer is Afrikaans for a farmer. LaRon has been the faithful farmer who worked alongside of me in the Lord's fields, helping to bring in the harvest. He attended meetings, assessed the state of the church family, and encouraged me.

Council Chair: Nancy Bohlen

Nancy was our team leader. Like that local company that manufactures electronic signage, she helped us remember the big picture with Conference information, and keeping our focus on what matters for our church.

Trustees: Rick Hieb

Rick was the team doctor. He healed the roof of the Narthex, placed a new bandage on the parking lot, and did an enema on the sump pump of the CLC

Finance: Tom Fishback

Tom was the team banker. He kept the money in the till, made sure that we didn't get overdrawn, and helped us understand our financial statements.

Staff/Parish Relations: Larry Hult

Larry was the guardian of our human resources. He kept an eye on the pastor, helped hire the new music people, and kept our office staff happy.

Missions: Teresa Telkamp

Teresa was our sower of seeds. She helped sow seeds in mission fields like Solar Ovens and mission partners outside of the country, and facilitated the slush booth and turkey dinner fundraisers to do so.

Worship: Dan Merchant

Dan kept the worship of our church focused on God. Like a finely tuned guitar he held the rhythm of both music, church decorations, and all the people who assist our worship.

Education: Karen Alfson

Karen is a front desk champion. She kept the various volunteer educators of our church together as a team, and was an invaluable partner to Gretchen Knutson – without being a Karen!

UMC Foundation: Russ Daly

Russ was our church veterinarian. He chaired the committee that gave special injections of finance to keep us healthy. He assisted this committee in delivering baby projects that would blossom into blessings for the church.

United Women in Faith: Judi DeZeeuw

Like a mother hen, Judi faithfully gathered the women, organized the, and sent her team out to care for people. I am humbled by her commitment to make this church a kinder place.

Methodist Men: Steve Eliason

Steve fanned the men into flame. He hauled out those who stubbornly remained stuck in the ground, cheered in those who needed new air, and was the constant smile in our team.

Memorials: Brenda Buus

Brenda was the physical therapist who patiently waited for us to get our backbone aligned. We had a dislocated communication chain, and she helped remind me that she was waiting to deliver thank you cards. I hope that her committee will soon be able to straighten out the joint.

I was privileged to work with this team – and am grateful that they helped us all to serve Jesus with love and compassion.

Pastor Pete

THANK YOU!

Church Staff

Pastoral Staff

Pete Grassow.....pastorpete@brookingsmethodist.org

Education Director

Gretchen Knutson..... education@brookingsmethodist.org

Community Life Center Director

Vonda Kirkham.....communitylife@brookingsmethodist.org

Office Manager

Lynelle Hagedorn.....office@brookingsmethodist.org

Financial Coordinator

Linda Kay Haifinance@brookingsmethodist.org

Worship Tech/Media Director and Facility Manager

Sam Becker.....media@brookingsmethodist.org

Tech Coordinator

Paul Schmidt.....tech@brookingsmethodist.org

Wednesday Activities Coordinator

Sammi Carney.....wedactivities@brookingsmethodist.org

Music Coordinator

Bunny Christie.....music@brookingsmethodist.org

Choir Director, Organist, Worship Team Accompanist

Shawn Stemsrud.....music@brookingsmethodist.org

Campus Ministry Coordinator

Becca Hermann.....campus@brookingsmethodist.org

Congregation Caring Coordinator

Joanie Holm.....jholm229@gmail.com

Organists:

Joan Riessen
MK Huggihins

Manna Cook: Katie Knutson

Choir Accompanist: Thomas Tvedt

Connect with us!

Church Office Hours:

Mon-Fri: 8:30am-12:00 pm

Need prayer? Email
prayer@brookingsmethodist.org
and Pastor Pete will pray with
you!



/FUMCBrookings



@brookingsfumc



First United
Methodist Brookings



brookingsmethodist.org

Give Online to Brookings First United Methodist Church!

Without your gifts, none of our community ministries would be possible. We have easy ways to give online or scan the QR code for more information:

- 1) VANCO MOBILE APP:** Download the Vanco Mobile app from the App Store or Google Play. Once installed, search “Brookings”, select FUMC, and follow directions.
- 2) TEXT:** Send a text message to [605-250-0807](tel:605-250-0807) with the dollar amount of the gift and follow directions.



Radio Broadcast Sponsorships

Now is the time to sign up for a radio broadcast sponsorship in 2024. If you would like to sponsor a broadcast at \$60 in memory, honor, or celebration of a loved one or anniversary, you may:



- Visit brookingsmethodist.org and click on **RADIO BROADCAST SPONSORS**
- Contact the office at 605-692-4345
- Email office@brookingsmethodist.org

Or on SignUp Genius: <https://bit.ly/3ZObUkh>

Winter Weekly Worship Schedule

Sundays:	9:00am	Sunday School (Pre-K to Adult)	
	9:30am	Radio Broadcast (on KBRK 1430AM)	
	10:00am	Sunday Morning Worship (in-person and online)	
Wednesdays:	5:00pm	Cost-Free Manna in the Middle Meal	
	6:00pm	Manna in the Middle Worship Service	
	7:00pm	Confirmation, Bible Studies, First on Campus, Wednesday School	

Watch Online at Any Time!

YouTube Live



Facebook Live



**First United Methodist Church
625 Fifth Street
Brookings, SD 57006**

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