



FOCUS

NEWSLETTER

January 2024

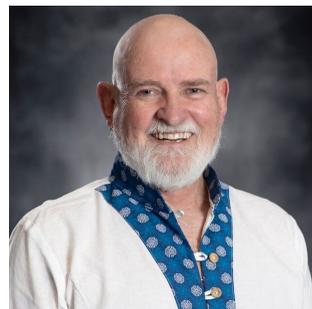
FROM THE PASTOR

Thinking of the Future

In this issue of Focus we invite you to both share in our church festival of Christmas, and to give some thought to 2024. I know that you might say “let me get over Christmas before facing the New Year”, and you would be right. But the fact is that next year is only two weeks away! The various activities in our church in January are intended to provide a solid foundation as we adventure into the future.

Over the past four years I have experienced amazing welcome and support from the members of our church. I look forward to sharing next year together with you. I promise to offer my best to you, but at the same time I am aware of my own failings and weirdness. Let us learn to be kind to one another, as we seek to provide a church that welcomes all people – especially the weird ones! This Christmas let us commit ourselves to pray and work for peace on earth: and especially let us continue to be horrified by the wars in places like the Ukraine and Gaza, and to weep alongside the families who have lost loved ones. This time of year offers an opportunity to be with family and friends. May we celebrate the bonds of love and companionship that nurture us and carry us through life.

My wife Jenny joins me in wishing you a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year.



Pastor Pete



FIRST UNITED
METHODIST
BROOKINGS

AT THE
CORNER OF
**CHURCH &
COMMUNITY**

625 Fifth Street, Brookings
605-692-4345

www.brookingsmethodist.org

Christmas Eve Service Times

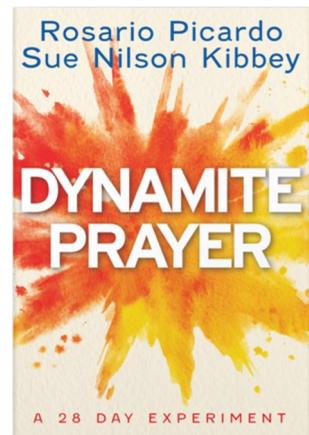
We invite you to join us on Christmas Eve!

- 9:30am Radio Broadcast (AM 1430 KBRK)
- 10:00am Sunday Morning Worship (Sanctuary)
- 5:30pm Family Candlelight Service (Community Life Center)
- 7:30pm* Evening Candlelight Service (Sanctuary)

**Please note the correction from the early December FOCUS*

Book for the New Year

What might happen if we all prayed together daily asking to be shown God's next ideas rather than just our own? Our church will join other Methodists in the Dakotas in a four week invitation to prayer. This Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area initiative begins on January 14 and ends February 10, 2024. We will be using the book *Dynamite Prayer* as a daily prayer guide for the month. *Dynamis* is the New Testament's original Greek word for the resurrection power of God's Spirit. Our English word 'dynamite' gains its origin from this Greek word. When we pray, it's an opportunity to ask God's Spirit to break through and transform our lives and our world. This 28-day adventure will take you from feeling stuck, overwhelmed, and uninspired to curious and expectant as you surrender your own preferences and ideas and courageously undertake a prayer-filled encounter with God.



Each day contains:

- A brief meditation on a verse from Scripture that will help you see how the Spirit's dynamic power has been at work throughout history and in your life today
- Reflection questions for the day
- A short prayer for the day
- A prayer word or phrase for the day

Books are available from Gretchen Knutson.

More information can be found on the Dakotas Conference website: *Dynamite Prayer* starts Jan. 14: Here's what to expect - Dakotas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (dakotasumc.org) .

Conversations with Pastor Pete

The Jesus you never knew

There are many different versions of Jesus in our culture. Some see Jesus as a universally beloved wise man; others see him as a kindly figure from Sunday School stories; and there are even some who believe that Jesus embodies everything that is great about American culture. This is an invitation to listen to the Apostle John tell us about Jesus. This is an invitation to six conversations about the Jesus we meet in the Bible. Sunday Afternoon 4:30 – 5:30. In the Sanctuary. The class will also be available as a podcast on all major

January	Chapter	
16	Seven	He is leading the people astray
23	Eight	Sex, Lies and Fatherhood
30	Nine & Ten	You're not the only sheep in the field
February		
6	Eleven & Twelve	Jesus buddies: Mary, Martha and Lazarus
13	Twelve	Donkeys, Greeks and Unbelief
20	Thirteen	Smelly feet

Harvest Table

We are accepting monetary donations, non-perishable food items, personal care items (shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, lotion, feminine products, etc) and household items (laundry detergent, dish detergent, facial tissue, toilet paper, paper towels, etc) and baby diapers and wipes. Thank you for your continued support of Harvest Table.

Please note: The Harvest Table will not be serving meals on December 25th, Christmas Day and January 1st, New Years Day.

Vonda Kirkham, Harvest Table Director



From the Finance Committee

Thank you for your generous support of the church throughout 2023. As you may remember from previous FOCUS messages, pledges received exceeded what was budgeted this year. This could not have been accomplished without your generous support. We greatly appreciate everything the congregation has done to support the church.



The finance committee is currently in the midst of a pledge campaign for 2024 called the "Count Your Blessings" campaign. Pastor Pete wrote in his introductory letter, "[This campaign] is an opportunity for us to reflect on the many blessings our church and church family have brought into our lives and consider how we can respond with thankfulness as we pledge our support for the year ahead." We hope you continue your generous support that was shown in 2023 into the new year. By turning your pledge cards in, the finance committee can work with the church's other committees to ensure the church's many functions remain supported and grow. Your generous support has always been the cornerstone in our success. Every contribution, big or small, plays a crucial role in fostering a thriving church.

Pledge cards are available at the welcome centers, church office, or you can pledge online at brookingsmethodist.org/pledge or scan the QR code below.

Thank you for what you do to make our church special.

Happy Holidays!

Tom Fishback, Finance Committee



Israel and Palestine

I watch the injury and deaths of Israelis and Palestinians with horror and anguish. The terror inflicted on innocent people is dreadful. I know that many people think that they understand what is taking place, and readily offer their opinions on social media and in conversation. Let us be clear this is a very complicated conflict with no easy explanations, so do not be taken in by simplistic explanations. I also hasten to add that this is not a Holy War where one side is evil and the opposing side is acting on behalf of the wrath of God. Our God is Love: a love that is kind, and does not dishonor others, and always hopes for better – and never sends us to take revenge (Romans 12:19 & 1 Corinthians 13).

I am asking for prayer and compassion for the Middle East.

We who follow Jesus agonize at the refugees who have been dislocated from their homes and communities: we remember that the family of Jesus fled as refugees to Egypt.

We who follow Jesus weep at the loss of life: this is what Jesus did at the tomb of Lazarus.

We who follow Jesus urge enemies to lay down their weapons and seek peace: because this is the teaching of Jesus.

Pete

Tree of Life Ministry

On December 2, a shipment headed for Tree of Life, the Methodist mission on the Rosebud reservation, and the Native American Heritage Association which distributes to all of the reservations in South Dakota and Wyoming. The shipment included 12 quilts, 20 blankets, 60 knit caps, and underwear, winter coats, and numerous other items. We wish to thank the Tie Quilters and Piecemakers for the quilts and the many individuals who contributed.

Gary & Avis Norton



Praying with Purpose

John Wesley said of the Methodist people that prayer is “the breath of our spiritual life”. If we do not pray, we are like a person who is dying for lack of breath. Our spiritual life is nourished by our prayer life.

But prayer must not become a substitute for other forms of action. Sadly, for some people, offering “thoughts and prayers” for victims of things like gun violence have become a substitute for taking action to address the problem. For this reason, many people have suggested that the process prayer becomes a way of doing nothing. Our Methodist tradition would disagree: John Wesley was certainly an activist working to alleviate human suffering, but he was also a person of prayer. Wesley believed that prayer “is the Praying with Purpose

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I am inviting us to a January encounter with God. Let us commit to praying each day – not for the things we desire, but rather as a way of allowing our Creator to shape our lives. I am offering a tool to assist us: try using the book *Dynamite Prayer* as a daily prayer guide for the month. I will be using this book and reflecting on it at each Sunday and Wednesday service for the month.

(NT Notes, I Thes. 5:16)- Letter to Miss March, 3-29-1760

Pete

Meals on Wheels

With the busy holiday time of Christmas and New Years coming up soon, you might appreciate an early notice about the next FUMC volunteering opportunity for MOW. Brookings **Meals on Wheels** serves nutritious meals to area home bound Seniors. It enables them to remain living in their own homes, where they want to be. The program uses volunteers to deliver a nutritious meal, a caring voice, and a quick safety check. That was done over 600 times last year by FUMC volunteers.



According to Julie Scubelek, 60s Plus Dining coordinator, FUMC is presently the most actively involved church in the Brookings program. The next round of deliveries will be January 2nd - 12th, 2024. If you would like to learn how you can be involved please contact Perry Johnson, 218-341-9706 voice/text, 605-692-1340, or perbar3mac.com. Thank you!

Future 2024 MOW dates:

- April 8th—19th
- July 15th—26th
- October 21st—November 1st

Perry Johnson

Hy-Vee Receipts

We would like to express our gratitude to this congregation for their consistent efforts in submitting those Hy-Vee receipts throughout the previous year. Additionally, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to Peg Page for diligently organizing the receipts, considering the increased time and effort required due to Hy-Vee's revised receipt submission process.



Wednesday Evening Adult Manna Class

The Adult Manna class is excited to announce that they will be embarking on a study focused on prayer. This study will align with the theme chosen by Pastor Pete for his upcoming sermon series. The class will kick off this study on Wednesday, January 3.

Financial Peace University

Are you exhausted from constantly running out of money before the month ends? Are you feeling anxious about the impending credit card bill that will arrive in your mailbox after Christmas? If so, we have a solution for you! Join us for Financial Peace University, where you will gain valuable knowledge on budgeting, creating an emergency fund, paying off debts, and ultimately achieving financial prosperity.



Our Financial Peace University sessions will commence on Thursday, January 11 at 6:00. Still unsure if you want to participate? No worries! Attend the first class absolutely free of charge! For further details, please contact Gretchen.

No Sunday School

There will be no Sunday school for children, youth and adults on December 25 and 31. Sunday school will resume on January 7.

Pastor Pete Away

Please note that Pastor Pete will be away from December 25th through December 30th. During this time, you can communicate pastoral care requests with Joanie Holm at jholm229@gmail.com.

Church Office Closed

Please note that the church office will be closed from December 25th through January 1st.

Souper Bowl of Caring

The youth are excited to participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring once again this year! This program was started by youth who recognized the amount of food consumed during the Super Bowl and wanted to make a positive impact on their local community. Stay tuned in the upcoming weeks as we share more details about this wonderful opportunity to support our community.



Prayer Chain

A prayer chain can provide comfort, support, and encouragement to someone in need. We pray to thank Him, rejoice with Him, bring our pain, needs and sorrows to Him. He cares about each one of us and so we join together in prayer. If you have a request, please contact Betty Ruth Mennis at 605-693-3070 or 605-690-5338 to activate the prayer chain.



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.

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

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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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