

January 2024

Another year has passed us by and the new year is here! Every year millions of people watch the ball drop in Times Square with excitement and anticipation. The new year can be an opportunity for new beginnings or maybe even renewal. Another tradition of turning to a new year is that we often hear everyone we know talking about their resolutions for the new year. I like so many start the new year with exciting goals in mind, but truthfully very few of my goals make it to the end of January. So, what does it take to really do something new? Something unexpected? Something spectacular and awesome? I believe if we want to really see true newness and change in our lives this year, it takes starting with the only one who can make something out of absolutely nothing. The one who is making all things new. And that is Jesus Christ. Finding our path forward through scripture gives our life true purpose and understanding of whom we belong to.

1. Live in Christ – 2 Corinthians 5: 17. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” I absolutely love this piece of scripture. So often life weighs us down and we forget that we are no longer enslaved to the world. The old is gone the new is here!

2. Praise God – 1 Peter 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” This new year as we embark on true life change, we should get ourselves into a truly humble position and start off the year with a spirit of praise. Too often we are so quick to try to throw out the past and move onto the new year with the hope that this year will be better. The problem with this mindset is we often focus too much on the failures and not enough on the victories. It is important that we start the new year by praising God for all the amazing victories he has delivered us.

3. Be New – Ephesians 4:22-24. “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The first scripture we looked at encouraged us to realize that we truly are a new creation. This one encourages us to not only realize that we are new but to keep ourselves from slipping back into the old. This scripture tells us that it's not enough to just say we are done with our old lives but we need to put them off and put on the new life. Life is about action, not words. It's not enough to tell yourself you're done with the old but you have to take action and be done with it.

**Sunday Worship:
In Sanctuary at 11:00am
&
Sumner Center UMC Facebook
Page**

Visit our Church Website at:
<http://www.sumnercenter.com>

**Donations may be sent to our mailing
address:**

**25378 151st Ave
Spring Valley, Mn 55975**

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Grace and Peace in the name of Jesus Christ:

If you have items you would like to be published in the newsletter, please contact Pastor Bridget, by the 3rd Thursday of the preceding month by emailing your information

to(bridget@countrywidecarriers.com) Or by bringing your information to Worship on Sunday mornings)

Calendar of Events

(Subject to change and/or be added to as the need arises)

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 	2	3	4 Food Shelf 6-8 pm	5	6 
7 11 am Worship   Epiphany Sunday	8	9	10	11 Confirmation 6:30 pm (date change due to scheduling)	12	13
14 11 am Worship  With Kathy Hawkins At 10:30 am	15  MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. Day	16	17 PLP Charge Conference 6:30pm @ Grand Meadow United Church	18	19	20
21 11 am Worship	22	23	24 Confirmation 6:30 pm	25	26	27
28 11 am Worship	29	30	31 PLP SPRC Meeting 6:30pm @ Grand Meadow United Church			

January Worship Schedule

January 7, 2024

Pastor Jon Leading



Epiphany Service of Lessons and Carols

We will praise His name through a beautiful array of scriptural lessons, carols of the season and coming to the table for Holy Communion.

Come enjoy this wonderful day of celebration!

January 14, 2024

Pastor Abigail Leading



Human Relations Sunday

On this Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day, let our gathering today be filled with the awareness that as the United Methodist Church we too, honor our brothers and sister in Christ of all nationalities as we observe Human Relations Day, today is an opportunity for us to join together across the connection to raise our hands in solidarity for social justice initiatives and outreach to at-risk youth. Human Relations Day offers us opportunities to listen to God's call to create beloved community together.

3rd Sunday after Epiphany

January 21, 2024

Pastor Abigail Leading



Fishing for people. What images come to mind with this phrase?

The fishing idea needs to expand beyond the numbers, wide enough to include acceptance and hospitality. Jesus is inviting his followers to a life of engagement. Here again, we can celebrate the moments of fellowship within the life of the community, particularly the ones that open arms wide to include those who are not yet a part of the church.

4th Sunday After Epiphany

January 28, 2024

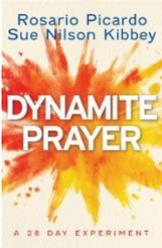
Pastor Bridget Leading



We are people on a journey of transformation, and it isn't always easy.

Today, we acknowledge the hard work of becoming disciples and of setting aside the weight that clings so closely, of handing over the reins of our lives so that we can be led into wholeness so we can proclaim wholeness to the broken world around us.

Dynamite Prayer Initiative to kick off 2024



You may purchase a book on Amazon

Ready to see what God can do when we come together in prayer and ask God's Spirit to unleash in us?

Begin 2024 by joining a breakthrough prayer movement across the Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area! Join us from Jan. 14-Feb. 10 for our area-wide Dynamite Prayer initiative. Throughout this period, Bishop Lanette Plambeck invites you to read "Dynamite Prayer," a 28-day devotional guidebook by Rev. Dr. Rosario Picardo and Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey. The book will help you incorporate a surrendered prayer practice into your daily life following Christ, and help you cultivate your capacity to discern, to notice, to respond to God's guidance, and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"All around us, we see and experience division, anger, violence, and polarization," said Rev. Dan Bader, superintendent for the Dakotas Conference's Southwest District. "If we are going to respond with the heart of Jesus, a heart of grace and love, in ways that address the needs, the hurt, the brokenness, then we need to lean deeply into the heart of God. That is done as we commit ourselves to prayer." Bader and Rev. Michelle Hargrave, superintendent for the Minnesota Conference's River Valley District, are organizing this initiative across the Dakotas-Minnesota Area, and they are excited for us to collectively experience God's Spirit moving in us and bear witness to God's transformative power. "This is an important moment for us in the Dakotas-Minnesota Area to do something that's grounded in our deeply shared connection and beliefs," said Hargrave. "Doing a prayer initiative together can connect us across theological differences, urban and rural settings—all the things that might still divide us."

Each day's entry in the guidebook is divided into five key parts:

- a personal scripture reading that emphasizes God's dynamic power
- a personal devotional insight about some unique aspect of the Holy Spirit
- prompts to assist you in cultivating your own honest and authentic reflection, journaling, or discussion with others
- a short breakthrough prayer to keep your mind and heart aligned and focused God-ward throughout the day (and space for you to craft your own breakthrough prayer)
- a prayer-hold—a short phrase or word from a scripture verse you can use throughout the day, every hour or whenever you become aware that you're feeling inadequate, uncertain, or tempted to slide off track spiritually

Both Bader and Hargrave have led breakthrough prayer initiatives in congregations they have served—and they have been powerful experiences. Hargrave said she appreciated the practical ways breakthrough prayer helped focus her church's prayer life. Bader, meanwhile, said he witnessed how it revitalized and birthed ministries and how it transformed an attitude of "no, not now, we don't have the resources" to doing, becoming, taking risks, and experiencing joy, promise, hope, and life. "God wants to do incredible things in and through our lives and the lives of our churches, and yet we often neglect seeking the unleashing of God's Spirit in leading us," he said. "God is not done with us! It is vital that we don't simply sit back and worry about surviving, but rather we should be asking, listening, preparing for God so that we might transform our thoughts and hearts to what it means to be thriving for God, for God's people." Ready to see what God can do when we come together in prayer and ask God's Spirit to unleash in us? Join us and let's find out! You may register on the conference webpage: minnesotauc.org. Books are available via amazon or other online stores.

January Announcements

Wednesday, January 17, 2024 – Annual Charge Conference

Where: Grand Meadow United Church

Time: 6:30pm

All Seven churches will gather as Prairieland Parish to confirm our 2023 Conference reports.

1. 2024 Clergy Compensation
2. 2023 Checklist for Protection of Church finances
3. Trustee's report
4. Mission Report
5. 2024 Church Budget
6. 2024 Officers list
7. Clergy Form 14

We encourage all Church leaders to attend this gathering.

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Wednesday, January 31, 2024 – Prairieland Parish SPRC Leadership Committee Meeting

Where: Grand Meadow United Church

Time: 6:30pm

The committee will gather to discussion:

Our Lenten Schedule

We have 7 churches and 7 Opportunities for worship during lent.

Ash Wednesday

5 Wednesday evening fellowship gathering of soup and a brief lent inspired discussion.

Good Friday

Parsonage Cost share

What financial obligations is the Parish accountable for, such as:

Monthly bills

Maintenance of property

The First Epiphany

The word "epiphany" means "to manifest" or "to have a significant realization." After Jesus was born in Bethlehem Magi from the East came to worship Him. Their experience teaches us many important things about God and about ourselves.

Matthew 2.1-12 – *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’ ” Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.” When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.”*

1. Who are the Magi and how many made this journey? We don't know how many there were. Because of the three gifts, many assume there were three. The Magi are mentioned in Daniel 2.12. They were probably from Persia or Arabia.

2. Who was Herod and why was "all Jerusalem" troubled? 3. What was Herod's true plan? Answers for 2-3. Julius Caesar made Herod, an Arabian of noble descent, the King of Judea in B.C. 47. Herod was known for his extravagant building programs and also for murdering anyone, even family members, who threatened his rule. It is no surprise that Herod sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to murder all the boys two years old and younger in his bloody attempt to preserve his authority.

4. What was this star? Some think the Star of Bethlehem was a unique conjoining of certain celestial bodies. Others think that it was simply a miraculous star created by God for the purpose of leading the Magi to Jerusalem. Most likely the star wasn't unusually bright because no one else seems to have noticed it. However, astronomers like the Magi apparently detected its movement.

5. Where were Mary and Joseph staying by this time? Matthew tells us that they were living in a "house" by the time the Magi arrived.

6. What was the significance of the gifts? The gifts were the "hard currency" of the times. They were very valuable and portable. The gifts would have been very helpful to the Holy Family for their upcoming escape to Egypt. The song, "We Three Kings" suggests that the gifts pointed to Jesus as King, God, and Sacrifice.

7. What gifts can we bring to Jesus today? The most important gift that we bring to God is our faith. But from that faith grows love for others. Like the Magi, we bring our gifts of "hard currency" as well as our time and talents in the service of God's mission of the Gospel and mercy to the world.

8. Does God still give divine guidance through dreams? Sometimes people think they need a miracle like a star or a special voice from the Lord in order to believe. Miracles are real, but they are rare. That's why we call them miracles. Most people who lived during the Bible times never saw a miracle. The generation of Moses saw many miracles. There were miracles in the time of Elijah and Elisha. The disciples of Jesus saw many miracles. But most of the people who lived before, between and after those amazing times never saw a miracle. We, however, do have an amazing miracle that we often take for granted. This is a miracle that neither Moses, nor the Magi, nor even the disciples had - This is the miracle of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit has given this to us. Peter said that this is something even "angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1.12). The New Testament and the Old Testament bring you the "epiphany" you need to realize who Jesus is, the Son of God and your savior. I urge you to learn as much as you can about Him, and above all believe in Him. He is the one who taught us to pray and who promises to "deliver us from evil."

Epiphany

Z L I Y Z N R T W W Y M Z C I R Q
Q S V V B E T H L E H E M A T D M
V T V Z F G M A G I C F A M P N J
N A G I F T S F B H T H R E E F T
H R Y G A S P A R N D C X L J T N
H J E P I P H A N Y R N S S V K B
O F R B A L T H A S A R Y G K I J
M E T W E L F T H L I G H T I N C
A A M A N G E R Q E H N A N K G L
G S T G M U R U G H B H M I I K W
E T O F F E R I N G U Y J G N Y W
Y W C P G K K G O L D E E H G X I
E O X R A M Y R R H V I S T H M S
F R A N K I N C E N S E U S E M E
K N K O D C H I L D D I S F R A M
Z Z E J Z O M E L C H I O R O R E
K I T R E A S U R E B Q Z O D Y N

Balthasar
Feast
Homage
Magi
Night
Twelfth

Bethlehem
Frankincense
Jesus
Manger
Offering
Wisemen

Camels
Gaspar
King
Mary
Star

Child
Gifts
KingHerod
Melchior
Three

Epiphany
Gold
Light
Myrrh
Treasure