



# Happenings

**WELCOME BACK TO Open Heart Happenings** as we update our opportunities to be in ministry together!

## HOSTING SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL

Soon, we'll be hosting some of South Middle School's programs as the old school comes down, and the new school is finished.

The after-school and summer learning program, **Club Hub**, (inset photo: Christmas window painting activity) will be meeting at Open Heart beginning Monday, April 29th from 3-6 p.m. weekdays, until school is out. The director of the program is Malachi Nelson.

With summer, programming shifts to 8 a.m. -noon beginning June 3.

Approximately 20-25 students are expected to participate.

The **Summer Feeding Program** will also be at Open Heart from June 3-July 19th (off July 4-5). Breakfast will be served to students and families from 7:45-9 a.m. and lunch from 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Both Club Hub and Summer Feeding are programs of **Black Hills Special Services** (see [bhssc.org](http://bhssc.org) for more information)

We also get to encourage the arts! **South Middle School's orchestra** instructor, Elizabeth Knowles, has asked for practice space at Open Heart during the month of May as they prepare for their final concert. We have asked if

they would please perform a **recital**, at the church where we would provide refreshments to students and their families, showing our support. We hope that many from the church and neighborhood will attend and connect. A calendar is in the works.



NOTE: Pastor Michele is looking for volunteers from the church who would enjoy greeting youth and their

parents as they arrive or depart the building May-July. **Can you help?** You could also be washing windows, pulling weeds or doing other odd jobs at the same time. Even if it is just for an hour or two a week, **it would be great to have ambassadors available to connect with folks!**

## KIDS: TOTSZONE

Our low-cost, childcare program continues for kids, nine months to five years. **TotsZone** is intended to be a self-funding ministry extending a helping hand to young families. Parents have three hours, 9-noon Wednesday mornings, to run errands, have coffee, or take a nap while their little one is safely occupied and learning with friends.

We began in January and are thankful for the grant that is buying us time to grow to at least 23 students, our break-even point with



paying two teachers and the program's director, plus insurance and other expenses.

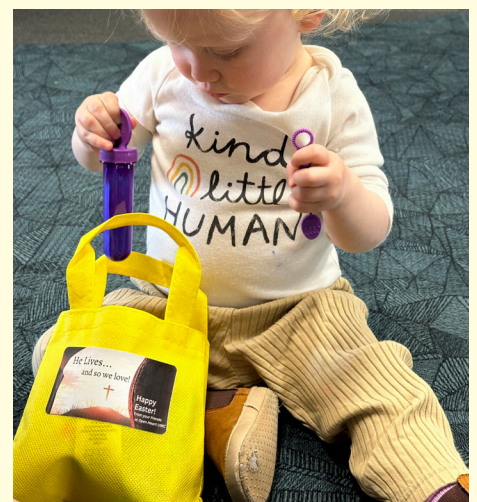
Cost per child is \$15 to register, and a flat fee of \$45 per month.

We are doing surveys to explore offering Fridays also and doubling the fee, to see if that will encourage more families to sign up.

An additional **volunteer** or two to serve in rotation would be helpful when a teacher is sick. A background check would be needed to clear you for service. Ask **Lonna Loffelmacher** to learn more. She is already serving in this capacity (our thanks to Lonna!). The program will

take a break for summer, beginning May 23rd.

Below: Cute bags we used for egg hunt prizes. Thank you Linda P!



## CIRCLE OF FRIENDS:

Circle of Friends (COF) is a ministry to AND with people from the surrounding community who have physical, cognitive, or developmental challenges. It is an enormous part of Open Heart! COF also seeks to inspire this type of care in other churches. Led by our own Gene Mason and Carey McBride (CLUMC), they always encourage new people to participate. Here are some options for new volunteers, below:

**Muffin Monday**, members of COF come together in the morning to bake 180-220 muffins from scratch,



with favorite flavors of double-chocolate (see photo below), lemon crunch, blueberry, and pumpkin. Then teams come together at the end of the school

day to distribute muffins to students and families. We pray that friendly smiles and fresh muffins can help teach inclusivity, show neighborhood youth the unconditional love God has for all of us, and exhibit we are a church that cares!

**Gathering Tuesday** each week brings around 45 individuals together from 10 a.m. - noon to play games, make music, do crafts, plus enjoy worship and prayer during "circle time."

Each Sunday, after Open Heart's 10 a.m. worship service, 15 or so gather to learn about the love of Jesus in **Circle of Friends Sunday School**.

Summer, these usual activities take a break, as many members of COF have jobs in the tourism industry... BUT they will also be getting the opportunity to soak up God's love during three days of **Day Camp** at Storm Mountain Center, and in the fall, more than 20 folks are likely to attend **Overnight Camp**.

Please inquire with Gene or the church office if you'd like to volunteer with Circle of Friends!

## SOP MOVING METAL

Retired Pastor Doug Diehl serves as the onsite Reflector Workshop Manager for Solar Oven Partners, and trains and leads groups providing the **people-power** to make the reflectors. There are dedicated crews working most Monday and Tuesday mornings, and visiting missions groups from various places other times of the year. Executive Director, Christopher Sylvah (MN), works with partner agencies in the Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, and the Navajo Nation to create distribution channels and plans and makes production requests to guide us. Contact Doug or the office to learn how to help!



## FUNDRAISING & SERVICE

We're signed up to serve in the concessions stand at **The Monument** multiple times through May, with the potential of signing up again in the fall.

A team of six to eight Open Heart UMC folks arrive in our purple T-shirts to serve up popcorn, sodas and other goodies with a smile. We receive a portion of the proceeds and our friendliness under pressure speaks volumes about the goodness of Jesus Christ and the love within the community we serve. If you can stand for 5-8 hours at a time and enjoy short and lively exchanges with people, you may find this is right up your alley.

Our annual **Rummage & Food Sale** will be October 5th, and is followed by a **Christmas Decor Giveaway** scheduled for November 9th. We've found these two events to be a good way to connect with other members of the community.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

In 2024, we hope to volunteer at the **Main Street Square Kids' Carnival** on June 22nd from 11 am - 3 pm. It was a lot of fun last summer, and a way to show young families we



care. Additionally, we will have a booth at **Pride in the Park** on June 29th to share about our inclusive worship community. Pastor Michele also plans to volunteer at **Youth Pride** the night before, and possibly participate in the **Rainbow 5k**, depending on what day it's scheduled (TBD). We also tentatively plan to again host our end-of-summer **Ice Cream Extravaganza & Bike Rodeo**, (maybe with basketball, too). And, if we can make the volunteer list at the Main Street Square **Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival** in September, we'll do it. Let us know if you'd like to participate in ANY of these things!



## BIBLE & BOOK STUDIES

Linda Pottorff will continue to facilitate Adult Sunday School after worship each week (with Pastor Michele filling in as needed), usually for 6-12 participants. After Easter, we will finish **"Christianity's Family Tree,"** by Adam Hamilton, which looks at the different mainline denominations and what makes them unique from one another. Our school-age students are looking at different lessons from the **"Deep Blue Life"** series offered through Cokesbury (UMC publishing house).

Although Sunday School classes directly after worship will take a break during the summer, other options will be available for those wanting to connect.

You're invited to participate in a **Scripture Circle** on Saturday, April 27 at 6 p.m. in a private home, or Sunday, April 28 at 2 p.m. at Open Heart. Teacher, Julie Stoll, from Faulkton, SD, shares her **rabbinic-style of teaching**, asking questions to help the Holy Spirit lead us through scripture. This will be our fourth session as we work to establish a quarterly rhythm. These circles are for those who may have been hurt by, or given up on the church, but still feel called by God to dig into scripture, as well as those who love to be in worship. A free-will offering is taken to offset Julie's travel.

Also, Pastor Michele has been leading a faith-based book group, meeting off and on outside the church, and expects to offer a summer book. This has been geared toward folks who who weren't connecting in Sunday School, and may not even attend worship. Pastor Michele leaning toward Kate Bowler's, **"No Cure for Being Human,"**

as a 5 or 10-week group, depending on if folks want to commit to reading and discussing one or two chapters per week.

Pastor Michele would like to offer **"Following Jesus"** for people who are seeking, or looking for a refresher on their faith. This is also a great class for people coming from a different tradition who are curious as to what the UMC is all about. There is a strong overview connecting scripture with faith and understanding of personal practice over 10-12 weeks.

Another option is a newer, 6-week financial stewardship course, written with a Wesleyan mindset.

If you are struggling with finances and feel you could maybe do a little better managing your money, **"Saving Grace"** may be a tool to help you focus and improve.

If any of these sound interesting to you, PLEASE let Pastor Michele or the church office know. Email, facebook messenger, a note on her door, or text are all helpful because things written down are easier to track. :-)

## FOOD MINISTRIES

**The Little Free Pantry** in front of Open Heart UMC is a wonderful way to contribute food, hygiene items, diapers, socks, etc., to people in need, any day, any time. All are welcome to drop off a donation in the pantry when it is convenient for them. It empties as quickly as it is filled, and sometimes we have seen it filled and emptied multiple times in one day.

The first Wednesday of every

month, **Feeding South Dakota** sets up in our parking lot at 2 pm, and by 2:30, cars start moving through, picking up food for families who are hungry. Roughly 14 volunteers help guide as many as 200 cars, load food into cars, and watch for kids going home from school at the driveways to make sure everyone can participate safely. You may sign up on Feeding SD's website, or let Pastor Michele know.

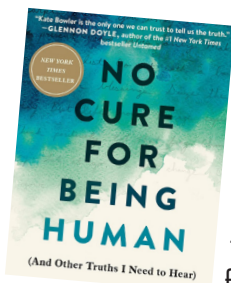
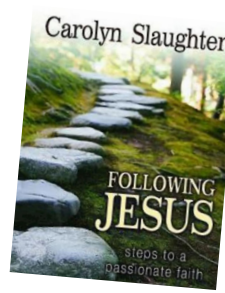
The second Tuesday of the month, we host **Neighborhood Nosh** starting at 5 p.m. with tabletop games, add dinner at 6 p.m. and sometimes include a Jesus Story to discuss. New hands to help are welcome as we invite people from around the neighborhood to come, connect, be filled.

Inward-facing, we've scheduled two Sunday **Potlucks: June 30 and September 29.** We have found that people who are newer to the church love these opportunities to connect after worship just as much as our church founders.

## FINANCIAL NOTES

At the end of last year, we heard from a number of people committing to give more, or giving for the first time when we shared the news that our income was substantially below our expenses, and our financial cushion was disappearing. Then we received a wonderful and unexpected gift in January when RCS Construction asked to use our land. We know the Rush fundraisers will be helpful. **We are thankful for God's provision through God's people.**

For the first quarter of the year, our income has been on-target (BUT includes that surprise gift), and our expenses are below budget. We will continue to do our best to keep expenses down. **Thank you for your continued faithfulness in helping us maintain our vital ministries!**



*Join us for a new worship series at Open Heart United Methodist Church:*



# **JESUS & MR. ROGERS IN A TIKTOK AGE**

*April 7-May 26, 2024*



*Seeking to be true neighbors while it seems the world is scrolling*