



Happenings

WELCOME BACK TO Open Heart Happenings as we share a thankful reflection and prayerful vision of what 2024 may hold for us. These are the stories behind the numbers of our 2024 Budget.

KIDS: TOTSZONE

Beginning in January, we are excited to host during the school year a low-cost, 9 a.m.-noon, Wednesday, childcare program for kids nine months to five years. **TotsZone** will be a self-funding ministry extending a helping hand to young families in our area. Parents may run errands, have coffee, or take a nap while their little one is safely occupied and learning



with friends! We plan eventually for up to 30 children / four teachers guiding in safe, fun activities and social growth. Cost per child is \$15 to register, and a flat fee of \$45 per month, January-May. The program will pick up again in September.

Connected with this, we dream about the possibility of bringing back **Waffle Church** (a pre-pandemic ministry), either as breakfast or lunch on Wednesdays. We would have waffles for a meal and a Jesus story to discuss, and simple kid-friendly bible songs. Please pray about this potential opportunity to share the love of Jesus in this way. We will begin by build-



ing relationship through TotsZone and see where God leads!

As we look into 2024, we expect our annual **Ice Cream Extraganza & Bike Rodeo**—tentatively Sunday, August 25th—to be an

even bigger outreach event as we connect with parents and kids. There is talk from TotsZone organizers of a Trunk-or-Treat

event, too. Pastor Michele dreams about a simple, 2024 children's Christmas program and ways to support parents in the difficulties of child-rearing. Will you pray for our connections with families and their seeking growth in relationship with Jesus Christ?

YOUTH OUTREACH

SMS "Club Hub"

South Middle School's after-school and summer learning program will need a temporary home as the old school building comes down and the new structure goes into its final construction phase this spring. Open Heart UMC has been approached by the Club Hub's director about possibly hosting the group from April 29 throughout the summer. The program covers the materials and staff, they simply need space.

Nearly 200 kids are currently enrolled in the program, but that

time of year attendance will likely be down to about 20-25 students. Open Heart is ready to provide a safe place for these neighborhood youth to do supervised activities, Monday-Friday from 3-6 p.m. during the school year and from 8am-noon during the summer. **Program location to be confirmed in January.**

The Circle

We are excited for the potential opportunity to connect with youth struggling with housing insecurity, that we



might help them embrace their belovedness by God, and feel support and encouragement from people of faith. Similar to how Jesus liked to pull a diverse group together, if the Youth Action Board approves us, we hope to start with food and asking questions. We'll work to establish a culture of kindness related to spiritual searching, learn what faith questions youth have, and support them in searching. [The Circle, Youth and Young Adult Drop-In and Transitional Housing Center](#) is located just off LaCrosse St. We'd like to meet with youth twice a month. **Hoping for a possible confirmation this week.**

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS:

Although Circle of Friends (COF) has isolated their budget for expenses and income, this ministry to AND with people who have physical, cognitive, or developmental challenges is an enormous part of Open Heart! COF also seeks to inspire this type of care in other churches. Led by Gene Mason and Carey McBride (CLUMC), they have great support from Robin Madsen, Donna Perez, Deneice Diro, Mike Barrett, LaRee Adkins and Sheila Paulus. The following ministry that took place in 2023, we expect to continue into 2024!

We are in our third year of **Muffin Monday**. Members of COF come together Monday mornings to bake 180-220 muffins from scratch, with favorite flavors of double-chocolate, lemon crunch, blueberry, and pumpkin. Then a team comes together to hand them out to **SMS** students and families at the end of the day. We pray that Circle of Friends' friendly smiles and fresh muffins can help teach inclusivity and show our neighborhood youth both the unconditional love God has for all of us, and that we are a church that cares!

Gathering Tuesday each week brings around 35 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 traditional worship service, 15 or so gather to learn about the love of Jesus in **Circle of Friends Sunday School**.

Summer, nearly 40 members of COF enjoyed soaking up God's love through creation during three days of **Day Camp** at Storm Mountain, and in the fall, more than 20 attended **Overnight Camp**.

Connectional ministry with **Pastor Q** from **Rapid Valley UMC** has led to fun events around May the 4th and Halloween. Better chaplaincy support has been made possible through her extensive experience. Big thanks goes to **Canyon Lake UMC** for hosting while our elevator was on the fritz last year!

Circle of Friends is funded through private donations, free will offerings for bakery items, pasties and jellies, t-shirts and more, plus multiple events working at **Pizza Ranch** that allow members of COF to also engage with and educate the larger community about inclusivity with those who are differently-abled.

Circle of Friends is generous in service to and through the church. They purchase many of the cleaning supplies and paper products, and donate to support the General Fund at Open Heart UMC in thankfulness for this faith community we all share.



FUNDRAISING & SERVICE

We've signed up to serve in the concessions stand at **The Monument** roughly once a month through May, with the potential of signing up again in the fall too. A team of 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.

We also hosted a **Rummage Sale** this fall and a **Christmas Decor Giveaway**, and will likely do so again next year. We found it was a great way to meet members of the community. We were able to tell people about TotsZone, our monthly meal, invite them to weekend worship, as well as raise some funds!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: SPECIAL EVENTS

In 2023, we offered an **Easter Egg Hunt** the Saturday before Palm Sunday, a brief worship and blessing of animals outside the church on **Earth Day**, volunteered at the **Main Street Square Kids' Carnival** in June. Additionally, we sponsored a booth at **Pride in the Park** in July, Pastor Michele was a **Youth Pride** volunteer and ran in the **Rainbow 5k**. We are considering our calendar for the next year, and may do these events again besides our on-site **Ice Cream Extravaganza & Bike Rodeo**, and may possibly add Main Street Square's **Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival** in September.



BIBLE & BOOK STUDIES

Linda Pottorff, Pastor Doug Diehl (retired), or Pastor Michele have continued to facilitate Adult Sunday School after worship each week for usually 6-10 participants.

Over the summer, Pastor Michele led the leadership team through Adam Hamilton's study, **"Creed"** and a women's group through Holly Gerth's **"You're Already Amazing,"** plus wrote and led, **"Colossians & Connection,"** linking the epistle to more positive mental health.

Currently, Pastor Doug leads us through **Revelation**, based on compiling research. During advent, Pastor Michele also will offer the book, **"Honest Advent"** by Scott Erickson during various small group times and will preach connected to its themes.

Besides our Sunday School hour, in 2024 we plan to offer **"Following Jesus"** for new members, and at some point **"Saving Grace"** focused on managing our finances.

Also in 2023, we began offering **Scripture Circles**, with Julie Stoll, from Faulkton, SD. Pastor Michele had invited Julie to come and share her rabbinic-style of teaching through a session at Open Heart UMC, and another at a friend's home. The hope was to reach especially those who may have been hurt by or given up on the church but still felt called by God to dig into scripture. Approximately 30 individuals have attended these events so far, and we are working toward offering Scripture Circles quarterly in 2024, with the first one the weekend of January 13, 2024. A free-will offering is taken to offset Julie's cost of travel.



SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS SHINING BRIGHTLY

In 2023, 1200 ovens-worth, or **4800 reflectors**, were crafted and shipped out to partner agencies in the Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, and the Navajo Nation. People logged in to work in the Reflector Workshop housed at Open Heart UMC, 252 times from January-October. This was with minimal summer activity as we were temporarily out of metal during those months.

Groups providing the **people-power** include a dedicated crew working most Monday mornings coming from multiple UMCs across Rapid City and members of Circle of Friends; a Lions Club group on Tuesdays; occasional groups from other local area churches, and visiting missions groups from outside the state.

We're now working on reflectors to be shipped in 2024 and intend to craft 2000 ovens-worth, or **8000 reflectors**. Solar Oven Partners provides the materials for the reflectors and pays a monthly fee for building usage, while we provide space and electricity, help train, coordinate and oversee the volunteers, etc. Workshop lead: Doug Diehl; RC Trainers: Galen Jones, Diana and Donald Auwerter, Carey McBride, Dawn Diehl.

BLOOD DRIVE

We have re-instituted a blood drive! Vitalant collected 15 pints of blood in June and another 10 pints in October 2023. It also provided a chance to connect with people from the neighborhood we might not otherwise meet. We hope to build momentum with this in 2024 and provide the opportunity to our TotsZone parents as well.

FOOD MINISTRIES

The Little Free Pantry 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. That said, it is impossible to know how much food has gone in and out of this little cabinet, but we know it is a lot. We have been donated large quantities of food twice in the last few years by the Church of LDS, with talk of a third one possibly happening yet this fall. We are grateful for their support for this neighborhood.

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.

The second Tuesday of every month, we host **Neighborhood Nosh** starting at 5 p.m. with table-top games, add dinner at 6 p.m. and sometimes include a Jesus Story to discuss. We invite people from around the neighborhood to come, eat and be filled, in multiple ways.

Inward-facing, we continue our second year of quarterly **Sunday Potlucks**, and will schedule those into 2024 when we do our final Events Plan for the year! We have found that people who are newer to the church love these opportunities as much as our church founders.



CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP ON THE WAY

Murmurings of a contemporary-style worship have surfaced from time-to-time over the past few years. More recently it seemed the Holy Spirit was pointing us in that direction.

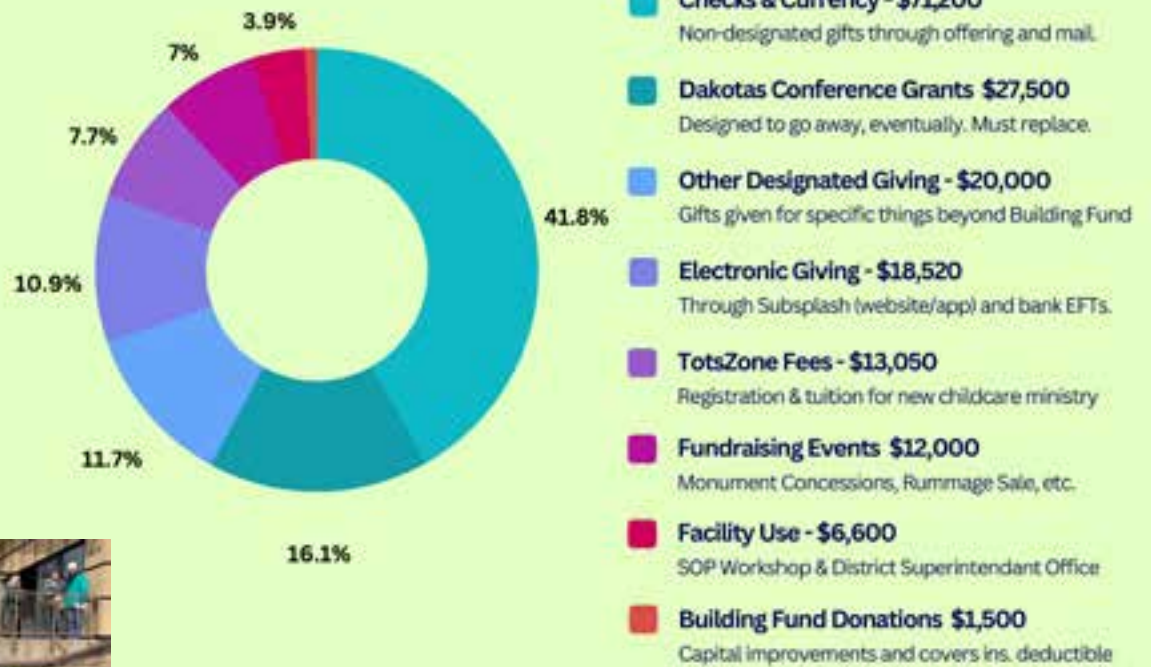
We are trying to follow! **Saturday, December 23rd, at 4:30 p.m.** we plan to offer worship with contemporary music and a soup supper, and see what the response tells us. Please be in prayer for this new undertaking, in hope we can reach new people. The team putting this together will determine when the next scheduled Contemporary Worship will take place.

NOTE: This will make for a busy Christmas 2023 weekend, as our Traditional Service (4th Sunday of Advent) will continue at 10 a.m. Sunday morning, and Christmas Eve Worship will be at 5 p.m., Sunday.





Open Heart UMC Projected 2024 Income



2024 BUDGET EXPENSES

OPEN HEART UMC

