



News from The Abbey | Fall 2026



Director's Note Chris Gromis

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Chris Gromis, and I have the privilege of serving as the Director of The Abbey of the Hills. My wife, Karen, and I live in Watertown with our three kids. When I am not at The Abbey, you will usually find me spending time with my family, at the hockey rink, on a soccer field, or enjoying the outdoors.

Faith, family, and finding peace are all incredibly important to me. We fill nearly every moment with phones, music, news, TV, and conversation. With our time so filled with noise, it is no wonder our stress and anxiety tend to rise. Sometimes, even silence feels uncomfortable because our lives have become so noisy.

At The Abbey, we strive to help people "Rediscover Peace," and this is the perfect setting to do it. With trees, lakes, quiet, and stillness, it does not take long to slow down and breathe. But what happens when getting away is not an option? Are we doomed to live without peace? Not at all.

I encourage you to find a moment to turn everything off and take a deep breath. Go to a park and let the sun hit your face. Find a quiet space in your home and simply be still. Use those moments to clear your head, pray, or just breathe. Sometimes, peace is not something we have to travel to find. Sometimes, we simply have to make room for it.

Abbey Events

Renee Marzahn & Beth Motschenbacher



It has been a busy and joy-filled summer at The Abbey! Along with retreats and spiritual gatherings, we've welcomed many families enjoying time away, celebrating special occasions, and simply being together. It's always a joy to see The Abbey filled with laughter, conversation, and connection.

This summer brought many special gatherings. The Abbey hosted the Diocese of Sioux Falls' Boys and Girls Vocation Camps, welcoming a combined total of approximately 130 young people for prayer, fellowship, and fun. The future of the Church looks bright!

At our annual summer picnic in July, we were delighted to welcome back two former Blue Cloud Abbey Abbots, Fr. Denis and Fr. Tom. A record crowd enjoyed visiting with them, sharing memories, and hearing stories from their time at Blue Cloud.

Looking ahead, The Abbey is excited to host Native American Cultural Day on September 29. Guests will have the opportunity to learn about Native American culture, traditions, and history, including the raising of a traditional tipi on the Abbey grounds. Join us for the full day or simply come for dinner from 5-7 p.m. (reservations required). Visit The Abbey's website for details.

The Abbey will also welcome a Soil Health School for a week of learning this fall. Gatherings like these are a wonderful reminder of the many ways The Abbey can serve organizations, schools, businesses, and other groups looking for a comfortable and peaceful place to gather.

Planning a meeting, workshop, staff gathering, Christmas party, or family celebration? Consider The Abbey for your next event. It's never too early to start planning, and we'd be happy to help make your gathering a memorable one!

Family— The First Church



When the Magedanz family gathered for their reunion, they quickly discovered that The Abbey was a pretty special place to make memories. From time together around the campfire, to enjoying the lake, good food, and even a talent show; there was plenty of room to relax, reconnect, laugh, and simply enjoy being together. By the end of their stay, their verdict was simple: "We don't know how we're going to beat it!" We're pretty sure that's the best kind of family reunion—and we look forward to having them back to try!



Upcoming Events

DAY OF RECOLLECTION

2nd Tuesday of each month
10am-3pm

Please call or register online.

A free will offering is graciously accepted to continue to pay the gift of peace forward.

October 13

Divine Mercy: The End of Times
Presenter: Wade VanDover

November 10

Living God's Word
Presenter: Fr. Tyler Mattson

December 8

I Didn't Go Looking for Rome
Presenter: Chris Gromis

January 12

Can We Trust the Bible?
Discovering Salvation History
Presenter: Jacob Brooks

SPIRITUAL RETREATS

Please call or register online.

September 25-27

Marriage Retreat

Covenant Love: Free, Faithful, Fruitful & Forever

Presenters: Darin & Missy Baumberger

October 20

From Age to Age: A Day of Spiritual Reflection for Seniors

Presenter: Fr. Greg Tschakert

October 23-25

Women's Weekend of Silence

November 13-15

Women's Fall Retreat

Oh Come Let Us Adore Him

December 11-13

Advent Retreat

Welcoming Jesus—Becoming Disciples

Presenter: Fr. Greg Tschakert

12-STEP RETREATS

November 6-8 (Men's)

December 11-13 (Mixed)

SPECIAL EVENTS

Native American Cultural Day
September 29

Annual Abbey Youth Hunt
October 3

Annual Fall Banquet
October 28

Christmas Cantata
December 5 & 6

For more information and to register for upcoming events:

AbbeyOfTheHills.org

605-398-9200

events@abbeyofthehills.org



Follow Us



Development Office
by Margaret Artz, Chief Development Officer



Your Support is Making a Difference

The generosity of Abbey supporters continues to make a difference—preserving these sacred grounds, improving its facilities, and strengthening The Abbey’s future.

The Abbey’s recent Capital Campaign raised \$25,000 beyond its original goal, helping make possible the installation of air conditioning in the auditorium sooner than expected and completed just in time for the July Picnic. Thank you for making this improvement possible!

This summer also brought new life to the gazebo, a retreat room, and the lower-level Fireplace Room, formerly the recreation space of the monks. This room was adopted by the Sacred Heart Sisters of Yankton in honor of Fr. Denis and the monks of Blue Cloud Abbey. During their July visit, Fr. Denis, Fr. Tom, and the sisters gathered for a special blessing—a beautiful connection between The Abbey’s past and those helping preserve its future.

These improvements are examples of what is possible through the Adopt-a-Room program. Several rooms and special areas are still available for restoration or improvement. Individuals, families, organizations, and groups can help give these spaces new life while making a lasting investment in The Abbey. Contact the Development Office to learn more about available opportunities.



The Abbey is also strengthening its ability to share its story and connect with supporters. *Please join us in welcoming Jamie Henderson to The Abbey of the Hills’ team as our Marketing & Development Assistant!*

There Is Still Work to Be Done. While the Capital Campaign exceeded its original goal, higher-than-anticipated project bids mean that additional funding is still needed to complete all of the planned improvements. With the air conditioning installed, The Abbey plans to move forward with roof repairs and front entrance improvements this fall, while the stained-glass window caulking has been deferred until additional funds are secured.

As the year draws to a close, The Abbey will soon invite you to consider a year-end gift. Your continued generosity helps ensure that this sacred place remains a place of welcome, reflection, and peace for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of The Abbey’s story!

A New Set of Wheels. A Bigger Mission.

Thanks to the generosity of many Abbey supporters, we now have a new vehicle—and a new way to take The Abbey’s story beyond its grounds! This vehicle will help bring The Abbey to churches, civic groups, service clubs, and organizations throughout the region as we share our mission of fostering the rediscovery of peace. Know of a group that would like to learn more about The Abbey? We would be happy to visit and share our story.



Capital Campaign Raffle Winners

Sophie Wurst, age 10, of Wisconsin, came to the Abbey this summer for a family reunion. While here, her grandmother purchased the winning \$5,000 raffle ticket in her name. In an extraordinary gesture of generosity, Sophie chose to give \$4,000 of her winnings back to the Abbey to help upgrade the Activities Room. When asked what moved her to do that she said, “My Great Uncle, Fr. Mike (Kelly) is so important to me, and so is The Abbey. We love visiting there as a family.”

Sophie’s generosity is a beautiful reminder that The Abbey’s story continues through generations—and that every gift can make a difference, no matter the giver’s age.



Thank you to everyone for your support. Congratulations to the other prize winners!

Vacation Rental

Kim Remily

Viking Tickets

Deb Steffenson

Timberwolves Tickets

Fr. Greg Tschakert

\$300.00 Cash

Jordan Haas

FALL BANQUET
OCT 28 | 5:30 PM

Keynote Speaker:

CHAD GREENWAY
Faith after Football

Tickets at AbbeyOfTheHills.org



Gifts of Peace

HONORARIUMS

The Abbey Monks who served
St. Charles Church of Big Stone
Iverson Family
Fr. Mike Kelly
Fr. John Lansberger
Fr. Denis Quinkert
Wade & Cindy VanDover

MEMORIALS

Gary Delaney
Donna Mae Gausman
Betty Gibson
Mary V. Klampmeier
Dorothy Meyer
Claudette Moran
Judy Noil
Burt Pelkey

Guest Testimonials

I didn’t know what to expect. It was incredible. I had the most blessed time in the Chapel, the Holy Spirit was talking to me clearly. I am grateful for this weekend and more so, to know I am not alone. —Retreat Attendee

The Abbey of the Hills was the perfect place for our family to reconnect. Between the peaceful lake, beautiful grounds, campfires, and time together, we laughed, shared stories, and made wonderful memories. Many, especially the kids, didn’t want to leave when it was time to go!

The Abbey Team

Director:

Chris Gromis

Development & Marketing:

Margaret Artz
Jamie Henderson

Events & Retreats:

Renee Marzahn
Beth Motschenbacher

Office Manager/Finance/HR Assistant:

Shelley Knippling

Grounds & Facilities:

Bryan Anderson

Dining Services:

Amanda Aadland
Matthew Allen

Guest Services:

Yara Figueroa
Sean Melendez-Ortiz

Evening & Weekend Hospitality:

Dennis Justison
Yara Figueroa

The Abbey of the Hills
Inn & Retreat Center
46561 147th St, PO Box 38
Marvin, SD 57251
605-398-9200

The Abbey of the Hills is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization sustained by the generosity of those who support its mission of fostering the rediscovery of peace.



Friday, September 18, 2026

Greetings Friend of The Abbey,

One Gift. A Lasting Impact.

A legacy begins with a decision about what matters to you.

Every life leaves something behind. Sometimes it is a family tradition, a treasured memory, or a gift that continues to make a difference long after we are gone. For Don Stolpman, The Abbey of the Hills was a place he continued to care about, even as his connection to The Abbey became less frequent in the years before his death.

When The Abbey was still known as Blue Cloud, Don would occasionally visit. He also remained connected with several Abbey of the Hills board members and was always interested in how The Abbey was doing. He asked questions about the retreats being offered, the groups coming to The Abbey, and the people being served here.

Don was equally interested in the care and physical integrity of The Abbey itself. He wanted to know about the roof, the LP tank, the boiler, and especially the condition of the stained-glass windows and their caulking. His questions reflected something important: he understood that caring for this place was part of caring for the people who come here.

With the permission of Don's loved ones, The Abbey is honored to share his story and recognize the lasting impact of his generosity. Don was a faithful and generous man, a successful farmer, and someone deeply interested in helping the people of this region. Through his estate, he continued that generosity by leaving a significant amount of land to The Abbey of the Hills.

As the anniversary of Don's passing approaches in November, The Abbey remembers him with gratitude—not only for the land he gave, but also for the care and interest he showed in The Abbey and the people who found their way here. His gift will become part of The Abbey's long-term future, helping provide a foundation for The Abbey to continue its mission of fostering the rediscovery of peace for generations to come.

Don's legacy is a reminder that thoughtful estate planning can make a lasting difference. It can help preserve something we value, strengthen a mission we believe in, and extend our generosity far beyond our own lifetime.

Thank you, Don, for your generosity and care for The Abbey—and thank you to all those who have remembered The Abbey in their estate plans.

Don Stolpman

November 19, 1933 - November 11, 2024

*Remembered with gratitude for his
generosity and care for The Abbey.*





LEGACY THAT LIVES ON
Planning Today,
Providing for Tomorrow.
National Estate Planning Awareness Week
October 19-25, 2026

What will your legacy be?

Estate planning is an opportunity to make thoughtful decisions about the future—providing for those you love while supporting the people, places, and causes that matter to you. You don't have to be wealthy to leave a legacy.

A legacy begins with deciding what matters to you and making your wishes known.

A Legacy Gift Can Take Many Forms:

- A gift through your will or trust
- Naming The Abbey as a beneficiary of a retirement account or life insurance policy
- A gift of real estate or other assets
- Other planned gifts that fit your financial and charitable goals

Remembering The Abbey

If you have already included The Abbey of the Hills in your estate plans, thank you. Your generosity is a meaningful investment in the future of this sacred place.

If you are considering including The Abbey in your plans—or would simply like to learn more—we would be honored to visit with you confidentially. We can provide information and help you begin a conversation. Please consult your attorney, financial advisor, or tax professional regarding your individual circumstances.

Questions? Please contact the Development Office at The Abbey of the Hills at 605-398-9200 ext. 113, or email development@abbeyofthehills.com.

With gratitude,

Development Officer

PO Box 38 | 46561 147th Street | Marvin, SD 57251
605-398-9200 | AbbeyOfTheHills.org

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