

COMBINED NEWSLETTER

First and Woodmar United Methodist Churches

Issue 011

January 2025



Worship with Us – Sundays at 10:15!

January - At Woodmar United Methodist Church, 7320 Northcote, Hammond

February - At First United Methodist Church, 6635 Hohman, Hammond

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Wow! Another year has come and gone, but it was a year full of change and promise. Let's take a look at a few of the highlights of 2024. (I apologize for any ministries or events that I may have failed to include in these lists.)

- Woodmar and First began worshipping jointly in January, alternating worship locations monthly.
- Together, we averaged 86 people in worship each week.
- We combined the newsletters of our two congregations into a single, monthly publication.
- We baptized Hailey, Marcos, and Ameya and confirmed Ansley, Van, and Bella.
- In addition to our confirmands, we brought Marcos, Maureen, Amanda, Nicole, and Rudy into full professing membership.
- Pastor Pete re-entered retirement and Pastor Jim was appointed to serve both of our churches beginning March 1.
- We started a new worshipping community, launching Messy Church in August.
- Children's Sunday School resumed for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Our bell choir, the Praise Bells, has resumed.
- Our missions of The Vine Food Pantry and Brianna's Hope continued to bring the love of Jesus Christ to our community; we collected 10 Cleaning Kits (flood buckets) for UMCOR; and we helped Hammond schools by contributing school supplies, purchasing and stuffing backpacks, and assisting with student registration.
- We opened ourselves up to our community with an August picnic, Thanksgiving dinner, two Trunk or Treats at Halloween, and a Christmas Pageant.
- We joined with other churches in worshipping on Good Friday and Thanksgiving Eve, as well as participating in the National Day of Prayer Breakfast sponsored by Hammond's mayor and the Hammond Faith Based Community and by gathering at Hammond's school administration building to pray for our schools.

I believe that the momentum has shifted from decline toward vibrancy and that 2025 promises to see further positive change.

- While it seems slow, the progress toward the complex task of preparing a proposal to consolidate our two churches is making good progress, and I believe the end of this process is in sight.
- We will continue to support one another in Christian community.
- We will reach more people for Jesus Christ and make a deeper impact in our community.
- Jesus Christ will be with us every step of the way.

Thank you for your faithfulness, your prayers, and your love.

Jim



First Church Leadership for 2025

The First Church Council will convene for its first meeting of the new year on Tuesday, January 21, at 6:30pm in Room A. The following officers and other leaders for 2025 were officially confirmed at the church's charge conference in October after the Council's election in September of the slate proposed by Pastor Jim on behalf of the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development:

Pastor	James Denton
Lay Leader & Lay Rep. to Annual Conference	Pat Mosley
Church Council Chair	Jane Harper-Alport
Recording Secretary	Kathy Smith
Treasurer	Larry Alport (staff, part-time)
Financial Secretary	Pam Longhi
Finance Committee Chair	Pete Ward
Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair	Niki Avina
Trustees Chair	Robin Kosarko
UWIF Representative	Georgia Brown
Children's Ministries Director	Mike Kizman
Missions Committee Co-chairs	Richard Miller
	Katy Province-Garza
Worship Coordinator	Sarah Ward
Church Secretary	Brenda Petty

In addition to the above elected leadership reported at our charge conference, Jenna Province continues as chair of the Memorials Committee, and Pauline Luthi continues to represent Congregational Care ministry on the Church Council.

Changes and additions to church ministry teams for 2025 include the following:

- Ralph Smith, who served as Finance Committee chair in 2024, is joining the Board of Trustees.
- Carrie Ward is joining the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
- Sarah Ward is joining the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development.
- Van Mulcahy is now a member of the Sound System support group.

If you would like a list of all members of First Church ministry areas for 2025, contact Pastor Jim or Jane Harper-Alport

Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Discipleship
and Spiritual
Vitality



Woodmar Sponsoring Easter Cantata

Woodmar UMC will be sponsoring an Easter Cantata, “Saviour, A Modern Oratorio,” on Sunday, April 13 at 3 pm. All Woodmar, First and other region church members and choir members are invited to sing, as well as family, friends and members of the community. Soloists and instrumentalists are needed as well. The oratorio tells the story of God’s love and passion for us. Please contact Dave Bieschke at 773-791-8277 or davebieschke@me.com with any questions or to be part of the cantata. Best regards, Dave Bieschke



Wednesday Bible Study Resumes

Following a hiatus during the holidays, weekly Wednesday Bible Study gatherings will resume on January 8. The class will begin a study of *New Testament Stories from the Back Side—Bible Stories with a Twist* by J. Ellsworth Kalas. If you are interested and have not already received a copy of the book, contact Pauline Luthi. New members are always welcome to join the class! Contact Donna Beifuss for more information.

Epiphany Service January 6 at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church

Our congregations are invited to participate in a joint Epiphany Service hosted by St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 1101 Park Drive in Munster, on January 6 at 7:00 pm. A light meal will be provided at 6:00 pm, preceding the service. Reservations are not required for the service, but if you are interested in attending the meal, please contact the church office and plan to bring a side dish to share.



Messy Church Returns to Fourth Tuesday

Bring your kids, grandkids, neighbors and friends! Everyone is invited to be part of Messy Church as the mid-week fellowship and worship experience, conducted jointly by Woodmar and First Church, returns to the fourth Tuesday of each month. Messy Church is a family-friendly upbeat gathering to learn more about and grow closer to Jesus Christ. In the midst of winter, Messy Church offers a great opportunity to be warmed by the cheery fellowship, crafts, music, and food—and have a lot of fun! Mark your calendar for January 28, 6:00 -7:30 pm at Woodmar’s Community Center, Door B on Northcote Avenue.

Reaching Out to Our Community



LOCAL MISSIONS

Love, Inc is Designated Mission

Both First Church and Woodmar are designating Love, Inc., as the recipient of money collected for Second Mile Giving in January and February. Love, Inc stands for Love in the Name of Christ. Located at 1400 North Broad St. in Griffith, it is an organization with nine gap ministries that helps mobilize churches to change lives. For more information, visit their website at www.loveincgrham.org. If you are unable to donate financially, please pray for the volunteers and those who are receiving assistance from Love, Inc. and their gap ministries.

Please note that brown bag Sunday is the first Sunday of every month. Pick up an empty brown bag the last Sunday of the month and return the bag filled with non-perishable food items the following Sunday. During the months when we worship at Woodmar, Richard Miller will deliver the bags to First Church on the first Monday of the month.

First Church and Woodmar would like to thank everyone who donated in December to the Bishop's Christmas Offering for Children.

Woodmar's Crochet and Knit is Making Lap Blankets and Hats

Crochet and Knit for Phil's Friends meets each Monday at 10:00 am in the lounge at Woodmar. We are making lap blankets and hats to be included in the Phil's Friends care packages to be delivered to those affected by cancer. Our members will help anyone interested in learning to crochet or knit. We can also suggest and provide patterns for those who are ready to begin a project. Please join us!

Woodmar UWF Planning for 2025

Woodmar's United Women in Faith is continuing to meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:00 am in the library and on Zoom. In January we will discuss our programs and events for the new year. Our organization is open to all women of faith from any church or no church.

We are continuing to collect items for Phil's Friends in a box in the narthex. This worthwhile organization sends helpful items and hope to cancer patients.



Food Pantry

THE VINE FOOD PANTRY AT-A-GLANCE

December 2024

New Clients.....	26
Returning Clients.....	402
Total Clients Served.....	428

New Households.....	13
Returning Households.....	201
Total Households Served.....	214

Total Pounds Distributed in December:	7,196
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Year-To-Date 2024

New Clients.....	498
Returning Clients.....	5,185
Total Clients Served.....	5,683

New Households.....	222
Returning Households.....	2,592
Total Households Served.....	2,814

Total Pounds Distributed in 2024:	91,797
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Building Relationships



First Church Knit & Crochet Returns after Winter Break

The Knit & Crochet group that meets at 1:00pm on Thursdays in the First Church parlor has been on winter break. Gatherings will begin again on January 16. Contact Sonia Vincent if you are interested in participating.



Begin the New Year with a New Read!

Woodmar's Book Club has chosen *James* by Percival Everett for a Zoom discussion in January. Goodreads describes this book as "A brilliant reimaging of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn told from the enslaved Jim's point of view. Brimming with the electrifying humor and lacerating observations that have made Everett a literary icon, this brilliant and tender novel radically illuminates Jim's agency, intelligence, and compassion as never before. *James* is destined to be a major publishing event and a cornerstone of twenty-first-century American literature." To join us for an informal and relaxed discussion on January 20 at 1:00 pm, please call the church office for a Zoom invitation.



North District Leadership University

Mark your calendar for the North District Leadership University 2025 workshops that will be offered on Zoom on Saturday, January 25, 9am-12pm CST, and Saturday, February 1, 8am-11am CST. The free training events are open to all laity and clergy, and every church leader should participate in at least one workshop. Registration is required. Consult with Pastor Jim or First Church Council Chair Jane Harper-Alport if you desire guidance in choosing a workshop that best fits your role and the church's needs. Register online at inumc.swoogo.com/leadership2025.

Workshops to be conducted by Conference and District leaders include: Staff-Parish, Finance and Trustees, Church Council/Single Board, Growing Young, Lay Leadership, Fresh Expressions, Digital Church, Outreach: Food Pantries and Beyond, Planned Giving and Endowments, Beyond Sunday Morning: Innovative Worship & Study, Leading Worship without Musicians, Chat with the Chancellor: Legal Tips for Every Church. Every church leader should plan to participate in one or more of these trainings.

Children's Ministries

Birthdays
Children
Miscellaneous



Woodmar UMC

- 1/2 Prudi Leslie
- 1/6 Nancy Craig
- 1/6 Sarah Austin
- 1/6 Erik Benson
- 1/7 Taylor Krivanek
- 1/9 Kristin Slaboski
- 1/11 Emily Morgan
- 1/13 Mark Kruse
- 1/19 Alejandra Keefe
- 1/23 Steve Meeker

First UMC

- 1/1 Lorraine Renfroe
- 1/2 Jerry Vestal
- 1/5 Judy Williams
- 1/7 Kathy Smith
- 1/10 John Hawkins
- 1/11 Armando Castro
- 1/13 Asher Lewis
- 1/14 Lauren Wicklund
- 1/16 Maggie Gutierrez
- 1/17 Jacob Hornak
- 1/17 Sonia Vincent
- 1/20 Jennifer Garza
- 1/20 James Rummel
- 1/26 Claude Baker
- 1/28 Sarah Ashcraft
- 1/29 Katy Province-Garza



Learn About Our Preschool/Childcare

Did you know that Community Preschool and Childcare is Paths to Quality Level 4 and NAEYC Accredited? What does that mean you ask? CP&CC provides high-quality education and care to each child enrolled in our program. Our program is also a liaison for families to crucial resources such as developmental milestone education, parent education, family engagement opportunities, spiritual resources, and much more!

CP&CC also partners with Purdue and Ivy Tech to foster learning opportunities for higher education students in social work and early childhood education. Our program's top priority is to be a safe and nurturing environment where you can leave your most precious assets.

Our staff provides faith-based learning and childcare for families of essential community members such as city workers, teachers, childcare workers, food service, and many more! They say it takes a village to raise a child, and we are in that village, waiting to help each family that steps foot into our wing!

This year, 99.7% of our childcare kiddos receive government funding to pay for childcare. This makes our childcare essential to low-income families. For business-minded individuals, our non-profit business model may not make financial sense. However, we have had seasonal fluctuations in our fiscal year since childcare was established in 2017. We lose money from August to December but make up for it during the rest of the year. This is due to an unavoidable decline in enrollment when our pre-k children move on to kindergarten. Our expenses are also not aligned with the state's fiscal year, so they never accurately represent our profit/loss for the month.

We are working on closing the gap in our end-to-start year losses. For the upcoming year, we are exploring opening a younger-aged classroom, staying open later, and advertising that we will help potty train! These measures are being explored to align with our program's mission of providing preschool and childcare for working families in a Christian environment.

Finance and Administrative

Must Be a Church Member to Vote

When the time comes for us to vote on our merger, only actual members of First and Woodmar United Methodist Churches will be able to vote and it must be in person. It is possible for a person to attend church regularly for years, but still not be a member. Becoming a member usually involves attending a class or classes with the pastor and standing in front of the congregation and making your membership vows. **If you are not sure** if you are member, please contact the office of the church you have been attending. **If you would like to become a member**, Pastor Jim is having a New Membership Class (for both First and Woodmar) after worship at Woodmar on January 12.

FUMC Finance News

As of November 30, First Church's giving total for the year to date was \$139,522, which is \$44,466 behind contributions for the first 11 months of 2023. The church is grateful to the First Church Foundation for the contribution in November of \$58,000 of a \$72,000 request to help offset the church's decline in giving projected through year's end. Without this financial assistance from the Foundation, the church's operating expense balance as of November 30 would have reflected a deficit of \$49,113.

The last date for which tithes and offerings can be attributed to 2024 is January 7. If you make a donation between January 1 and January 7 and want it to be counted for last year, be sure to clearly mark 2024 on your envelope. First Church thanks all contributors for your financial support, as well as your significant gifts of service in ministry.

Jane Harper-Alport, Finance Committee member, 219-718-8328, jharperalport@gmail.com

Woodmar UMC Finance News

November ended with expenses over income of \$4,617 with \$21,038 cash in bank. We had offerings of \$9,220. Nothing unusual with the expenses for the month. Year to Date bottom line is a negative \$17,464. Community Preschool had expenses over income of \$8174, with \$82,428 cash in bank. They are working on ideas of cutting costs if we do not get the extra children we need to break even. Hopefully the beginning of the new year will bring in extra children.

First United Methodist Church

6635 Hohman Ave, Hammond, IN 46324
Phone (219) 932-5915
www.hammondfumc.org
email – admin@hammondfumc.org

Office Hours

Brenda: Tuesday & Thursday, 8:30-2:30
Jim: Tuesday & Thursday, 10:00-3:00

Woodmar United Methodist Church

7320 Northcote Ave, Hammond, IN 46324
Phone (219) 844-3030
www.woodmarumc.org
email – office@woodmarumc.org

Office Hours

Brenda: Monday & Wednesday, 10:00-1:00
Jim: Monday, 10:00-3:00 & Wed., 1:00-4:00

Please keep in mind that pastoral care needs may mean that Pastor Jim will be in and out of the office during these times. It is always advisable to call to schedule a time to meet with him. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Pastor Jim or Brenda.