

# COMBINED NEWSLETTER

## First and Woodmar United Methodist Churches

Issue 017

August 2025



### Worship with Us – Sundays at 10:15

All services at Woodmar United Methodist, 7320 Northcote Avenue, Hammond  
Except on August 31, when we will be at First UMC for their special celebration service

## Hope is Coming!

### Celebration of the Ministry of Woodmar United Methodist

**Sunday, August 24, 10:15 am  
at Woodmar UMC**

Both the Woodmar and First congregations are encouraged to attend this special service, which will be the last time Woodmar UMC worships in the sanctuary. The next time we worship in the building, we will all be Hope UMC. Several former pastors will be in attendance and special music is planned. If you know former members who might be interested, please let them know about this event. Following the service we will gather for a brunch of Woodmar's traditional egg/sausage casserole.

**Volunteers are needed** to prepare a casserole, set up, and clean up. Please sign up in the Narthex.

### Celebration of the Ministry of First United Methodist Church

**Sunday, August 31, 10:15 am  
at First UMC**

Both the Woodmar and First congregations are encouraged to attend this special service, which will be the last service at First UMC. The following week, we will be worshipping together as Hope UMC in the Woodmar building. Several former pastors will be in attendance and special music is planned. If you know former members who might be interested, please let them know about this event. Following the service we will gather for a potluck meal.

**We are seeking volunteers** to assist with the celebration, and a sign-up list is available in the Woodmar Narthex.



### Chancel Choir and Bells Will Participate in Special Services

As Woodmar UMC and First Church celebrate the final services under their original church names (before the congregations combine to launch as Hope UMC) the choir will sing at both the August 24 and August 31 worship services. Former choir members are encouraged to join the choir to sing for these special services.

Former bell ringers are encouraged to join the Praise Bells for the August 31 service at First Church. Please contact Dave Bieschke or Sarah Ward if you would like to join either the Chancel Choir or Praise Bells to help celebrate the sacred ministry of our two beloved churches.

### Transition Teams Forming

As we journey together into Hope UMC, Transition Teams have been formed. Each team will meet to identify its goals, outline any key action steps, and provide an estimated timeline. Each team will select a point of contact who can serve as the liaison for updates and coordination. Sarah Ward and Cyndi Slaboski will work with Pastor Jim to help with team management. Transition Teams include the following areas: Art and Décor, Technology, Property Equipment Storage, Office, Kitchen, Historical, Finance, and Heart. This structure may evolve as we seek to create a smooth and collaborative transition.

# Thoughts from Pastor Jim



## **The Apocalypse**

I have long been a fan of post-apocalyptic science fiction: Books and movies about survivors of the end of the world. This genre references the biblical word apocalypse, although these works are rarely what one could call religious.

In popular culture, the apocalypse is understood to be the final destruction of the world, the end of days ushering in the Second Coming of Christ. When things feel dire, we refer to them as apocalyptic. Indeed, when we face circumstances beyond our control we feel like everything that we hold dear is falling apart and our world, or at least our part of it, is coming to an end.

This is an unfortunate misunderstanding of a truly beautiful word. Apocalypse is a Greek word that literally means “to pull back the curtain” or to “reveal something that has been hidden.” In fact, the Latin word for apocalypse is “revelation.” An apocalypse is God’s presence and activity being revealed.

The Book of Revelation is about God’s good and perfect will being revealed in difficult and threatening circumstances. John wrote Revelation to seven churches in Asia Minor, each facing some difficulty. Most of these difficulties were the churches’ own internal struggles. Some were under pressure to compromise their faith, reject Christ, and live like those nonbelievers around them. Others were wrapped up in agendas other than living as the Body of Christ in the world. John’s writing pulls back the curtain on God’s will in challenging times amidst our own imperfect humanity and reveals to us that nothing can separate us from the love of God as shown to us by the Lamb of God who was slain but reigns forever.

The message of Revelation is one of hope and not destruction. Yes, there is a lot of destruction in Revelation, but God is revealed to be the re-creator who overcomes the destruction. When this world falls apart, God re-creates. What is revealed is that God is always making our world and our lives new. Whether it is our mess up or just that the world and our fortunes in it have changed, God makes something new and beautiful out of it. When our world seems to be falling apart, the Apocalypse reveals the truth behind Paul’s statement that all things work together for good for those who love (and trust) Him.

I know that God is revealing grace, mercy, love, and hope to us right now. I pray that we will be so deeply rooted in faith and the love of Christ that we can see what is being revealed, believe it, and live it. Even better, let us be revealers of God’s love and grace to each other, to our community and to our world. Now that is an apocalypse that I pray is NOT fiction!

Blessings,  
Jim

# Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

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Discipleship  
and Spiritual  
Vitality



## Messy Church is August 26

The next Messy Church event is on Tuesday, August 26, from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at Woodmar UMC Community Center. Please pray for the families of Community Preschool and Childcare, Brianna's Hope, and The Vine Food Pantry to experience the joy of Messy Church.

## Staff Parish News: Support for Pastor Jim in Candidacy Process

Pastor Jim has been approved to begin the process toward becoming commissioned in 2027 as a Provisional Elder in the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church. This step in his pastoral ministry will involve a lot of work over the next few years! To better support Pastor Jim's growth and professional development, the Staff Parish Relations Committee has established that Monday mornings will be set aside as a dedicated professional development time for him to focus on this important work. During this period, members are asked to avoid contacting him, except in the case of an emergency.

The Staff-Parish Committee believes this dedicated time to prepare for commissioning will allow Pastor Jim to enhance his skills and better serve our congregation. The committee appreciates your cooperation and invites you to reflect on additional ways in which you can support Pastor Jim and our church family during this time of transition. Whether through prayer, a kind word, or volunteering, every act of support strengthens our community and helps us move forward together.

Carrie Ward, Staff-Parish Relations  
Committee member



Are you interested in using your musical gifts and talents to serve in worship? If so, we have a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. If you have any questions about how you can serve, please feel free to reach out to Keith Benson or contact the church office.



## Help Needed

First Church and Woodmar continue to experience severe financial distress that prevents us from having paid staff to do some of the various tasks needed. Woodmar has been without a maintenance person and a custodian for many months.

Until the financial situation improves, we continue to seek volunteers willing to assist at both buildings. Please call either church office (Woodmar (219) 844-3030; First Church (219) 932-5915) to add your name to a "call-sheet" of volunteers to help with tasks such as clearing walks of leaves, simple repairs, restocking paper towel dispensers, or office projects. We deeply appreciate your help.

Pastor Jim Denton

# Reaching Out to Our Community

Evangelism  
and Outreach

Community  
Impact and  
Missions

## Mission News

The Mission focus for August for both First Church and Woodmar UMC is Brianna's Hope, a non-profit organization providing help for individuals recovering from drug addiction. If you are unable to donate financially, please pray for the volunteers supporting it and those who are recovering from addiction. Thanks to all those who donated in July to support this recovery ministry.

Brown bag Sunday is the first Sunday of every month. Pick up an empty brown bag and return it filled with non-perishable food items the following Sunday. Richard Miller will deliver the bags to The Vine Food Pantry at First Church on the first Monday of the month. As First Church and Woodmar UMC move toward our official merger, The Vine (which will continue as a congregational ministry of Hope United Methodist Church when the new church is launched), will continue to be located at First Church until a new location is established.

Richard Miller, FUMC Missions Team co-chair



## Enjoy Community Garden

Have you seen the beautiful sunflowers in Woodmar's garden? Feel free to pick some vegetables and enjoy the pollinators around the sunflowers and milkweed. Thank you to Thomas Blejski for his love and care for the garden.

## Social Justice Support for African American Girls

UWFaith District President Lora Ward has secured the rights to the documentary film "Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools," which is a United Women in Faith emphasis for 2022-2026. Lora is seeking people to help her organize a screening of the movie sometime this fall. Please contact her at 708-650-6417.

"I am hoping we can get some of the Hammond administration and teachers involved also," Lora says. "If you are a Hammond teacher, please let me know of your contacts in the schools. I would love to have you on the committee."

Below is a short description of the movie.

"PUSHOUT: THE CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK GIRLS IN SCHOOLS" is a feature length documentary that takes a close look at the educational, judicial and societal disparities facing African American girls. The documentary is based on Dr. Monique W. Morris' groundbreaking book of the same name and confronts the ways in which the misunderstanding of Black girlhood has led to excessive punitive discipline which in turn disrupts one of the most important factors in their lives: education.

### THE VINE FOOD PANTRY AT-A-GLANCE July 2025

New Clients.....	46
Return Clients.....	418
Total Clients Served.....	464

New Households.....	20
Return Households.....	209
Total Households Served.....	229

Total Pounds Distributed: 6,969



# Building Relationships

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Relational  
Vitality



## United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith will gather on Monday, August 25, at 11:00 am at Woodmar UMC for a potluck. All women are invited to attend. Please bring a dish to share and join the fellowship.

We will meet on Wednesday, September 17, at noon, both on Zoom and in the lounge/library of Woodmar UMC. We will then select times and dates for future meetings that are convenient for the majority of members.



**Save the Date** for our church picnic on Sunday, September 14 after worship. Details will be forthcoming.

## Book Club Choses Mystery

Do you enjoy a good mystery? We will be reading *Pay Dirt* by Sara Paretsky as our August selection. *Pay Dirt* serves up a mystery where past and present collide in a Kansas community as legendary detective, V.I. Warshawski, unravels a missing person's case. Readers who care about race, climate change, or corporate and civic responsibility will care deeply about this monster case. We encourage you to join us for an informal discussion of this thriller via Zoom on August 18 at 1:00 pm. Please call the church office to receive the Zoom link.



## Save the Date: September 6 Northern Lakes District Rally with Bishop Malone

Bishop Tracy Malone will share a message during the worship experience of a Rally Day for the Northern Lakes District (formerly the North District). It will be at Crown Point First UMC, 325 S. Main St., Crown Point, beginning at 3:00 pm on Saturday, September 6. Bishop Malone is making her first tour of the five new districts of the Indiana Conference (effective July 1) to lead celebrations that engage our shared mission and vision, meet the District Superintendent and district leaders, connect with pastors and laity within the district, and meet conference support staff.

District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Marti Lundy encourages members across the district to take advantage of this "outstanding opportunity for us to UNITE with our Bishop who is very much ALL IN for us and the Church of Jesus Christ." Contact Pastor Jim, First Church Lay Leader Pat Mosley, or First Church Council Chair Jane Harper-Alport for assistance in obtaining transportation to the event.

Jane Harper-Alport, First Church Council chair

## Thank You from Cheryle Seljan

Cheryle Seljan sent the following message to share with our congregation:

*"I want to thank everyone for your prayers, love, and kindness throughout my mom's illness and her transition to heaven."*

# Children's Ministries

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Birthdays  
Children  
Miscellaneous



## Woodmar UMC

- 12 Judy Anderson
- 17 Richard Austin
- 18 Pamela Lewis
- 27 Miguel Rosario
- 29 Diane Drajeske

Diane's new address:  
c/o Mark and Mary Drajeske  
14936 Country Ridge Drive  
Chesterfield, MO 63017

## First UMC

- 3 Merle Churchill
- 3 Aaron Kozlowski
- 3 Ralph Smith
- 6 Jamie Brown
- 6 Joe Mejia
- 6 Gwen Sonner
- 7 Shirley Farmer
- 7 Bonnie Watson
- 10 Jacob Tapper
- 17 Dick Mackin
- 17 Tiffany Shelton
- 22 Karen Little
- 25 Pastor Jim Denton
- 26 Matthew Ghormely
- 27 John Wilson
- 27 Amanda Serna
- 30 Kevin Shelton Jr.



Our weekly Children's Message continues to be a special part of our Sunday worship services throughout the summer while Sunday School classes take a break for the summer months. We hope this gives families time to enjoy vacations, activities, and special moments together.

If you are in church and looking for children's activities, be sure to grab a bag before heading into the sanctuary. Each week, specially prepared activity sheets are available to help keep children engaged and happy during worship.

Sunday School will resume in September. When the summer draws to a close, we'll be anxious to welcome everyone back for a new year of learning, faith-building, and fun! Each of you are an important part of our church family. Our prayers are with you for a wonderful summer!

Carrie Ward, Children's Ministry Team member

## Community Preschool/Childcare Update

Our annual pre-K recognition takes place on August 7 at 1:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. All are welcome!

The 2025-2026 school year kicks off with Parent Orientation on August 5 at 5:30 p.m. Our first day of school will be on Monday, August 11. We are excited to welcome new families and previous families into our program.

Do you have any talents or hobbies that you would like to share with our students? Please connect with Karianne at (219) 743-5190.





## **Fall '25 Lay Servant Academy via Zoom**

### **Living Our United Methodist Beliefs**

Led by (former First Church Senior Pastor) Mary van Wijk

**Zoom Class through Hebron UMC**

**Saturdays, September 6, 13, 20, 27**

**9:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)**

Are you looking for an online Zoom option to learn more about the United Methodist Church and its founder, John Wesley? Are you looking for a course to complete the “heritage class” requirement to become a Certified Lay Speaker? You are invited to participate in this Lay Servant Ministries class to begin or continue training for living out the call to make disciples for the transformation of our churches, communities, and world. You must attend all four sessions to receive credit.

**Cost:** \$10.00 + cost of text

**All participants MUST register online by September 1 at this link:** <https://inumc.swoogo.com/NDLsaFall25>

Payment Information: Visa and MasterCard accepted. Please print a copy of your confirmation as your receipt.

**Check payments** must be mailed within 7 days of registration. Please include a copy of your invoice with your check. Make checks payable to INUMC Mail to:

INUMC, Attn: Susan Burris, 301 Pennsylvania Parkway #300, Carmel, IN 46280.

**Cancellation policy:** Cancellations must be received via email to [susan.burris@inumc.org](mailto:susan.burris@inumc.org) by 11:59 pm (CT) on September 1 to be eligible for a refund less processing fee. No refunds after this date.

**Class: Living Our United Methodist Beliefs** led by Pastor Mary van Wijk - This course will explore the special gifts of theology, witness, and organization that the UMC brings to the church universal, how we got where we are today, and how our distinctive emphases are still needed in the 21st century church. This class is required for Certified Lay Speakers. The required course text is *Living Our Beliefs: The United Methodist Way* by Kenneth L. Carder. ISBN \*DR571\*978-0-88177-571-6. The text is available on [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

For additional information, contact Registrar Karen Williams, 219/869-2324 or [mrs.karen.wms@gmail.com](mailto:mrs.karen.wms@gmail.com)



# North District In-Person Fall 2025 Lay Servant Academy

Sundays, September 7, 14, 21, 28

2:00 pm - 5:00 pm (CT)

Hebron United Methodist Church, 202 West Church Street, Hebron, Indiana

All United Methodists in our (newly named and expanded) Northern Lakes District are invited to participate in the Lay Servant Ministries Academy, which is designed to come alongside participants in a step-by-step approach to grow confident, informed disciples of Jesus Christ who can become active in their mission field/community in ways that transform the world.

**Cost:** \$10.00

**Payment Information:** Visa and MasterCard accepted. Please print a copy of your confirmation as your receipt.

**Check payments** must be mailed within 7 days of registration. Please include a copy of your invoice with your check. Make checks payable to INUMC Mail to: INUMC, Attn: Susan Burris, 301 Pennsylvania Parkway #300, Carmel, IN 46280.

**Registration deadline:** September 7, 2025 2:30 pm (CT)

**Cancellation policy:** cancellations must be received via email to [susan.burris@inumc.org](mailto:susan.burris@inumc.org) by 11:59 pm (CT) on August 31 to be eligible for a refund less processing fee. No refunds after this date.

## **Fall 2025 Lay Servant Academy Classes**

**Introduction to Lay Ministry (for adults)** - led by Pastor Sheri LoCascio. Discover and employ your personal spiritual gifts, learn the worth of servant leadership, and be rooted in good spiritual practices. This basic course is required for first-time attendees. Course Text: Lay Servant Ministries Participant Book - Basic Course by Sandy Zeigler Jackson and Brian Jackson. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

**Introduction to Lay Ministry (for YOUTH grades 8-12)** - led by Karen Williams. Discover and employ your personal spiritual gifts, learn the worth of servant leadership, and be rooted in good spiritual practices. This basic course is required for first-time attendees. Course Text: Lay Servant Ministries Participant Book - Basic Course by Sandy Zeigler Jackson and Brian Jackson. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

**Exploring a Culture of Care for a Caring Congregation** - Led by Pastor Tom Clark. Become equipped with tools for deep listening and grow your capacity to care in difficult situations of loss—all within healthy boundaries and a thoughtful awareness of the varying cultural contexts of caring ministry. Course Text: The Caring Congregation Ministry: Implementation Guide by Karen Lampe and Melissa Gepford. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

**Called to Preach (Preaching 1)** - Led by Pastor Wayne Williams. Designed for those who have not completed formal preaching training or for those who are called upon to preach in a pastor's absence. This class is the required preaching course to become a certified lay speaker. Course Text: From Pew to Pulpit: A Beginner's Guide to Preaching by Clifton F. Guthrie. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

**Leading Public Prayer** - Led by Pastor Jim Denton. Prayer is something we learn; it is something that can be taught. For many, however, the only teaching about prayer they ever receive is modeled in Sunday worship. This class will present you with an opportunity to gain experience in the discipline of leading public prayer. This class is required for individuals who desire to become a certified lay speaker. Course Text: Shaping the Prayers of the People: The Art of Intercession by Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

**Soul Reset** - Led by Pastor Cathy Allison. Discover the power of rest through practices that create spiritual wholeness. Beyond toxic culture and "idols" of busyness, distraction, and consumption at the root of so much of our anxiety and dis-ease, participants are invited to find their rest in the healing nearness of Jesus Christ. Course Text: Soul Reset: Breakdown, Breakthrough, and the Journey of Wholeness by Junius B. Dotson. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#).

All participants **MUST** register online by September 7 at this link: <https://inumc.swoogo.com/NDFall2025>

**Questions? Contact Registrar Karen Williams**, 219/869-2324 or [mrs.karen.wms@gmail.com](mailto:mrs.karen.wms@gmail.com)

Jane Harper-Alport, FUMC Church Council chair  
Adapted from North District News and [inumc.org](http://inumc.org).



# Finance and Administrative

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## First Church Finance News

While the actual numbers are not yet complete, preliminary figures indicate the First Church operating fund balance as of July 31 will show a deficit of approximately \$9,000.

As previously reported, First Church was carrying more money in our checking account than the maximum amount FDIC insurance will cover. That amount consists of proceeds from the sale of the parsonage and donations for restricted accounts such as The Vine food pantry, memorials, second mile giving, etc. The Finance Committee previously voted to move \$200,000 from the checking account to a new account with Heartland Methodist Foundation, which was completed in July.

We will continue to keep a balance in First Church checking account that will allow us to pay our monthly operating expenses, including salaries, benefits, and insurance. All of these payments continue to be made with restricted account funds, and we will have to account for how every dollar is spent. As of the end of July, the current balance in our checking account was approximately \$150,000 (reflecting the withdrawal of \$200,000 to open a new account with Heartland, as noted above).

The Finance Committee will be working with Pastor Jim and the various subcommittees that have been established to begin the process of identifying First Church property that will be moved to the Northcote building for Hope UMC. That will include determining how those items will be moved and at what cost.

If you have any financial questions, please do not hesitate to contact me either by phone, 708-269-3877 or email at [pete.ward@inumc.org](mailto:pete.ward@inumc.org), and I will be glad to discuss the finances of Hammond First or Woodmar UMC.

Blessings, Pastor Pete Ward (ret.), First Church Finance Committee chair

## Woodmar UMC Finance News

June ended on a negative note of \$2,603. Beginning in June, our NIPSCO Budget Plan amount increased by \$890 to the new amount of \$2,963/month! Signs were made for Hope United Methodist Church, which were \$399. There was also window and gutter cleaning at the parsonage for \$444. At the end of June, we had \$18,872 in cash in the bank. Our year-to-date bottom line is a negative \$7,890.

Community Preschool ended June with a positive balance of \$9,238. Their year-to-date balance is a negative \$26,506, with cash in the bank of \$87,514. The preschool's biggest financial change has been in payroll. They have eliminated the Assistant Director position, along with a couple of teachers, to maximize the classrooms. They will be opening a 2-year-old class this fall. Plans are in place to make the next fiscal year a great one!

### First United Methodist Church

6635 Hohman Ave, Hammond, IN 46324

Phone (219) 932-5915

[www.hammondumc.org](http://www.hammondumc.org)

email – [admin@hammondumc.org](mailto:admin@hammondumc.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](http://www.woodmarumc.org)

email – [office@woodmarumc.org](mailto:office@woodmarumc.org)

#### Office Hours

Brenda: Monday & Wednesday, 10:00-1:00

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

**Monday mornings** have been designated as Pastor Jim's professional development time. During this period, we ask that you avoid contacting him, except in an emergency. Pastoral care needs may keep Pastor Jim out of the office during office hours. 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.