

HOPE UMC NEWSLETTER

Issue 018

September 2025



Worship with Us – Sundays at 10:15

Hope United Methodist Church, 7320 Northcote Avenue, Hammond, IN 46324



District Rally
This Saturday, Sept. 6
See page 8 for details.



Children's
Sunday School Starts
September 14.
See page 9.



Church Picnic
Sunday, September 14. See
flyer on page 4.

Transition Team Update

Hello, Hope UMC!

We want to provide an update on the transition to Hope UMC. In late July, we identified eight teams—Art & Décor, Technology, Property, Office, Kitchen, Historical, Finance, and what we're calling "Heart"—to begin working on different aspects of our merger to consolidate as Hope United Methodist Church. Some of these teams are already underway, while others are just getting started. There is still much work ahead, but we are excited to walk this journey together.

We know there will be many questions and concerns along the way. To help ease the load on Pastor Jim, Sarah Ward and Cyndi Slaboski were asked to serve as points of contact for transition items. They may not always have the answers, but they can help connect you with the right people and facilitate conversations.

A few priorities right now include moving equipment from the Hohman Avenue building to Hope UMC. The grand piano was scheduled to be moved the week of September 2, and there are additional items—art, furniture, dishes, files, music, and more—that need to be coordinated. Our dedicated Trustees are also exploring storage solutions because both former churches have a great deal of history and resources to be consolidated, housed, archived, donated, and/or disposed of.

We've also received questions about meeting rooms and scheduling. **The Wednesday Bible Study and Quilters will continue to meet at First UMC** through the month of September, giving us a bit more time to get spaces at Hope ready. Please continue to coordinate with Brenda so we can make sure all ministries have the space they need to flourish.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has already put in so much work to prepare for our launch as Hope UMC. We are excited about this new beginning, but it will take all of us working together to succeed. If you have time and are able to help, please reach out to Sarah or Cyndi—they will connect you with the right team.

With gratitude,
Sarah Ward, Transition Team Co-Leader

Thoughts from Pastor Jim



New Life

Well, now we've gone and done it! Woodmar and First UMC's have been kicking the idea of a merger around for several years and now, after more than two and a half years of intense study and work, it is a reality. As hard as it has been to get here, we now have the even more challenging work of figuring out who we are, how do we live in this new reality, and what we do next.

New life is a common theme throughout scripture and today, I encourage you to read, study, and pray on Ephesians chapter 4. It begins with: "Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all." (CEB)

Change is hard, but as Methodists, we know that change is really the grace of God working in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we affirm that we cannot change ourselves apart from God's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. Our task is not to change ourselves and definitely not to change each other, but to respond to God's invitation to open our hearts and minds to allow the Spirit to mold us.

This is solid Wesleyan theology, but how do we do that in the real world, in our daily lives? First, we use the means of grace which are the methods (where Methodism gets its name!) that God has given us to cooperate with what God is doing in us. These are: regular attendance in worship, prayer in groups and alone, Bible study in groups and alone, receiving Communion as frequently as possible, practicing generosity, Christian Conferencing (talking with one another about what God is doing), and service to the church and the world. These are the ways that we let God in to do the work of transformation.

Second, is we die to self, crucified with Christ we are born anew in the waters of Baptism. In Ephesians 4:22-24 Paul says "Change the former way of life that was part of the person you once were, corrupted by deceitful desires. Indeed, renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit and clothe yourself with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness."

Our attachment to our former churches is holy and good. They formed us and nurtured us, but they were no longer serving us or God well. The deceitful desire Paul refers to isn't that the past was bad, but that our hope will be found there in the familiar old ways and in holding on to what we have always known. Our hope is in Jesus Christ, the one crucified who rose again. May we honor the past we love by letting it go, dying to self and our desire for the comfort of continuity and allowing God to make us into something new, to re-create us as we are clothed "with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness." Let us let God work in us, let us respond to God's call, let us build together, with God, a new Hope!

Be blessed and be a blessing, Jim

Pastor Pete's Ponderings

I am attaching an article that I recently received, and I believe we all need to seriously consider its message as we begin this new adventure at Hope UMC. I am concerned that we are still trying to preserve what we are comfortable with rather than being open to the changes that need to take place if we are to be successful as Hope UMC. We don't want to make changes just for the sake of it, but the truth is that what we have been doing has not been effective, and we need to admit that and then work together to build a church with a commitment to making a difference in this community and the world.

The Dirty Secret Killing Church and Organizational Growth

The Quiet Cultural Habit That Keeps Us from Moving Forward

By Rosario Picardo

Aug 26, 2025

Over the years, I've had the privilege of working with everything from scrappy church startups to large, well-oiled congregations, as well as experience in higher education and even some denominational leadership. Across all of them, I've noticed a quiet truth no one likes to say out loud: Not everyone wants the organization to grow. The truth that no one says out loud!

The Cost of Growth

Growth means more. More resources. More people. More work. It also means losing a certain level of control. Many secretly prefer "us four and no more," because it's comfortable. We know everyone's name. We know what's going on. We feel in control. But growth also demands that leaders step out of silos, break old patterns, and collaborate. And that's messy.

Choosing Egypt Over the Promised Land

A mentor once told me, "If you put vision up for a vote, people will choose to go back to Egypt every time." Even if Egypt means decline—or death—because Egypt is familiar. The unknown, even when it's better, feels scary.

A Sign We've Lost the Mission

The truth is, constant risk aversion is one of the clearest signs an organization has become self-centered. It's a sign we're more concerned with preserving what we have than pursuing the people we're here for.

As the writer of Hebrews reminds us: "We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." (Hebrews 10:39) Jesus calls us forward. To step out of the boat. Comfort calls us back. Only one of those leads to life.

Mystery, Love Story, Crime Thriller

This month, the book club has chosen *All the Colors of the Dark* by Chris Whitaker. From Goodreads: "1975 is a time of change in America.

The Vietnam War is ending. Muhammad Ali is fighting Joe Frazier. And in the small town of Mont Clare, Missouri, girls are disappearing. When the daughter of a wealthy family is targeted, the most unlikely hero emerges—Patch, a local boy, who saves the girl, and, in doing so, leaves heartache in his wake. Patch and those who love him soon discover that the line between triumph and tragedy has never been finer. And that their search for answers will lead them to truths that could mean losing one another. A missing person mystery, a serial killer thriller, a love story, a unique twist on each, Chris Whitaker has written a novel about what lurks in the shadows of obsession and the blinding light of hope."

Please join us on September 15 at 1:00 pm via Zoom. You may call the church office for a link to the Zoom meeting. Our discussions are informal, and we look forward to new participants.





PICNIC



AT THE CHURCH

**RELAX AND ENJOY
THE OUTDOORS!**

- 
- Hot dogs
 - Games and Activities
 - Music and more

14 Sept | 12 p.m.

**Hope United Methodist Church
7320 Northcote Ave,
Hammond, IN 46324**



Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Discipleship
and Spiritual
Vitality

Worship Committee: Moving Forward in Hope!

First, a heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make the celebrations at Woodmar (August 24) and First Church (August 31) such beautiful times of worship, fellowship, and reminiscing. What a gift it was to gather, remember, and give thanks together.

Now, the exciting work of building Hope UMC truly begins! The Worship Committee is eager to move forward, and we will be meeting on September 21 to begin shaping what worship life will look like in this new chapter. There is much to plan and consider—from name tags, Tech/AV updates, and sanctuary enhancements, to how we create meaningful worship experiences together.

At our last meeting on August 10, we identified three priorities to work on right away:

- Finalizing the new outdoor sign
- Rotating the choir loft and piano locations
- Updating and upgrading the screen locations

One exciting update: the grand piano from First UMC was moved to Hope UMC on September 2. The Property and Music Teams are working on the best locations for the two pianos currently at Hope. The Trustees are exploring plans to rotate the choir loft to face the congregation and are gathering quotes for the new church sign. Over the coming weeks and months, you'll notice changes taking shape—and we hope you'll be as excited as we are about what's ahead!

Please mark your calendars for two upcoming events:

- Community Picnic – September 14
- Grand Inaugural Celebration – October 26

More details about these events will be coming soon; watch for news in the worship bulletin and by email.

Finally, if you haven't already, please like and follow our Facebook page and take a look at our new website: <https://fwum.org/>. Please note: the site is still in draft format while we wait for final paperwork to complete some of the finer details (such as Hope emails and the final URL).

Thank you for your continued prayers, energy, and support as we step into this next season together!

Sarah Ward, Worship Committee leader



Choir Starting Back Up Come Join Them!

The regular choir season will start on Sunday, September 7. We will meet in the Hope UMC choir room at 9:00 am for rehearsal and sing at that Sunday's service. (The choir room is the last door on the right in the community center.)

All who enjoy music are welcome to join us in singing! We will sing something easy for the 7th and 14th.

Looking forward to a great choir/church year ahead! Thank you all!

Best regards, Dave



Hope UMC United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith gathered on Monday, August 25 at Woodmar for our annual potluck. Our president, Yvonne Jackson, conducted a short business meeting, and Donna Benierschke led the opening prayer. We were delighted to have women from both First Church and Woodmar in attendance.

Lora Ward, district president of UWFaith, gave an update on state projects. Our chapter continues to support Phil's Friends for cancer patients, Lucille Raines addiction recovery house, and Brianna's Hope here at the church. Anyone in the congregation who wants to volunteer to cook a meal or supply food for Brianna's Hope, should contact Yvonne Jackson.

We will have our regular meeting on Wednesday, September 17 at noon, both on Zoom and in the church lounge. We will then select times and dates for future meetings that are convenient for most members, possibly both during the day and evening. All women are welcome, regardless of whether they are church members.

We often have short programs on topics that interest our members during our meetings. We invite you to volunteer to conduct a short program at our meetings. The topic could be a book you read, a collection you want to share, a craft to teach, a Bible story to examine, or a hobby you enjoy. Please call Mary Jo Shea to volunteer to give a program.

District United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith will meet on September 13 at Rolling Prairie UMC. **The deadline to register is September 7.** Please contact Lora Ward (708-650-6417) if you plan to attend. This will be a time of celebration as we say goodbye to the North District before transitioning to convene within the newly formed Northern Lakes District. LaDonna Weber, our UWFaith Conference President, will be our guest speaker. We will recognize members who passed away during the last year and will enjoy fellowship and a game. Please bring bags of flour or sugar—five pounds or less—to support the Thanksgiving food baskets that Rolling Prairie's Food Pantry will prepare for their community. Many thanks to Rolling Prairie UMC for hosting UWFaith this month.

The United Women in Faith Annual Celebration will be held October 4-5 at Christ UMC in Westfield, Indiana. Sandra Hartlieb will be our Friday night guest speaker. Dinner will be served. Saturday will be filled with many activities such as celebrations, elections, lunch, and fellowship. The day will also include new district breakout sessions, a silent auction, pledge service, an offering, celebration of Holy Communion, and the installation of conference and district officers. Attendees are asked to bring items to support HamCo Love and Student Impact. Needed items include individual snack-size items, gummy bears, cookies, etc., feminine hygiene pads and tampons, multi packs of underwear (all sizes), leggings or sweatpants (all sizes for girls and women). Registration ends September 17. See Lora Ward for a registration form.

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.

Reaching Out to Our Community

Evangelism
and Outreach

Community
Impact and
Missions



Community Preschool and Childcare

The fall program has begun! It is always a joy to welcome children and families to our childcare ministry. This year, we have a class for 2-year-olds! Enrollment opportunities are available for children ages 2-5. Children may attend full-time, 7:00 am–5:00 pm, or during preschool hours from 8:30 am–12:00 pm.

As we begin the school year and a new fiscal year, members of our church and childcare have met to examine our financials with an audit and to suggest marketing strategies. The Community Preschool and Childcare Board is looking forward to launching opportunities for congregants of Hope to help us bridge the gap between our congregation and this vital ministry for families. Stay tuned!

Mission News

The Mission focus for September is Indiana Coalition to End Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking. For information about this organization and its mission, please visit www.endsexualassault.com If you are unable to donate financially, please pray for the volunteers supporting the Coalition and those it serves.

Thanks to all those who donated in July and August to support Brianna's Hope. As we launch Hope UMC, our church continues to support this addiction recovery ministry by hosting a group supper and meeting at 6:00 pm each Wednesday evening in the narthex and library.

Brown bag Sunday is the first Sunday of every month. Pick up an empty brown bag at either church and return it filled with non-perishable food items the following Sunday. Richard Miller will deliver the bags to The Vine Food Pantry on the first Monday of the month. The Vine is a missional outreach ministry of Hope United Methodist Church and will continue to serve the community from the Hohman Avenue building until a new location is established.

Richard Miller, Missions Team member



THE VINE FOOD PANTRY
AT-A-GLANCE
August 2025

New Clients.....	43
Return Clients.....	366
Total Clients Served.....	409

New Households.....	14
Return Households.....	183
Total Households Served.....	197

Total Pounds Distributed: 6,969

Building Relationships

Relational
Vitality

Staff-Parish Relations Committee Update

The Staff Parish Relations Committee extends a warm welcome to Bob Brown, who is joining the committee as Roseanne Watson is stepping down. The committee is grateful to Roseanne for all the hard work she has put in during her years of service on the SPRC. Thanks, Roseanne!

As we move forward as a consolidated church, the SPRC is working to update all policies to align with our vision as Hope United Methodist Church.

Pastor Jim is continuing the journey toward becoming commissioned as a Provisional Elder. He has been approved to begin this important process, which will involve significant work and dedication over the next two years. To support Pastor Jim's ongoing growth and professional development, we have established Monday mornings as a dedicated time for him to focus on the work required as he prepares for commissioning. During this period, we kindly ask that you refrain from contacting him, except in the case of an emergency. The SPRC believes this dedicated time will help Pastor Jim deepen his ministry, enhance his leadership skills, and ultimately serve our congregation even more effectively. Thank you for your continued support and understanding as he journeys on this meaningful path.

Finally, we invite you to continue to reflect on how you can support Pastor Jim and our church family as Hope UMC is officially launched. Whether it's through prayer, volunteering, or simply offering a kind word, every act of support strengthens our community and helps us move forward together as Hope United Methodist Church. Thank you for being an integral part of our church family.

The next SPRC meeting is scheduled for September 4 at 5:30 pm at Hope UMC.

Carrie Ward, Staff-Parish Relations Committee member



All In! September 6 Northern Lakes District Rally with Bishop Malone

Mark your calendar for this Saturday! Bishop Tracy Malone will share a message during the worship experience of a Rally Day for the Northern Lakes District (formerly the North District) at Crown Point First UMC, 325 S. Main St., Crown Point, beginning at 3:00 pm on 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." If you need transportation to the event or would like to carpool, contact Pastor Jim or Lay Leader Pat Mosley.

Jane Harper-Alport, Guiding Council chair

Children's Ministries

Birthdays
Children
Miscellaneous



Hope UMC

- 1 Lisa Mendoza
- 1 Debbie Pirtle
- 2 Chandra Ware
- 3 Jay Garrett
- 4 Bob Heady
- 5 Nancy Kolanowski
- 6 Brian Goodrich
- 6 Berto Valdez IV
- 9 Ronald Baker
- 10 Larry Alport
- 10 Georgia Heady
- 10 Janet Voorheis
- 11 David Mendoza
- 13 Carrie Ward
- 16 Ellena Maini
- 16 Pamela Wendell
- 17 Angela Hawkins
- 17 David Tapper
- 20 Cheryl Echlin
- 20 Star Vestal
- 20 Kate Malloy
- 22 Jane Harper-Alport
- 22 Ken Vincent
- 23 David Dean
- 25 Richard Miller
- 26 Don Nelson, Jr.
- 28 John Bach
- 28 Wanda Stevenson



Children's Ministry Update

We're excited to let you know our Sunday School classes will be starting back up on September 14! We can't wait to welcome children of all ages back. We will have a brand new room to decorate and make our own.

Remember: Sunday School will not meet on the first Sunday of the month. **If you are in church on the first Sunday of the month and looking for children's activities, be sure to grab a bag before heading into the sanctuary.** Each week, we'll have special activity sheets prepared to help keep children engaged and happy during worship.

Starting this month, we will lead a special mission project together—just for kids! So kids, this message is for you: Each Sunday, before the Children's Message, you will have a chance to collect quarters from the congregation and drop them into special containers in the front of the sanctuary.

Now, here's the cool part: We're going to collect quarters every week, and once we've gathered a good amount, **YOU** will get to help decide where the money goes! We'll talk together and choose a way to help others—maybe we'll buy food for hungry families, help kids go to school, or support a mission far away. It will be our project, and your giving will make a real difference.

So remember: come ready to be part of something special. Let's see how God can use our small gifts to do something **BIG!**

Carrie Ward, Children's Ministry Team member



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 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

Jane Harper-Alport, FUMC Church Council chair
Adapted from North District News and inumc.org.

Finance and Administrative



First Church Finance News

While the actual numbers are not yet complete, First Church is on target to have a positive cash flow of approximately \$915 for the month ending August 31. Our year to date net loss is just under \$54,000. Our profit for the month of August is the result of receiving higher-than-average offerings for the month and making only necessary repairs as needed.

We have established an initial account with Heartland Methodist Foundation of \$200,000, a portion of funds from the sale of the Fran-Lin parsonage that were moved to that financial investment organization from the First Church checking account. As we close out the accounts at Vanguard for the First United Methodist Church Foundation, we will move those assets to Heartland Foundation as previously proposed and approved.

As soon as Hope United Methodist Church is assigned an Employer Identification Number (EIN) by the IRS, we will open a new checking account for Hope UMC operating funds. Until then, the existing Woodmar UMC and First United Methodist bank accounts will be used to pay salaries and Hope UMC operating costs as they occur.

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 and I will be glad to discuss the finances of Hammond First or Woodmar UMC and the plans to consolidate our funds as Hope UMC.

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

Woodmar UMC Finance Report

Woodmar ended August with \$5,848 in our account. We had an operating loss of \$9,021 for the month and \$20,050 for the year. Our quarterly insurance (\$4,217) was due this month and church utilities (mostly NIPSCO) were \$3,702. The main issue is that we are not receiving enough contributions to cover our expenses.

Our Community Preschool and Childcare had \$89,484 in their account at the end of August. They had an operating loss of \$3,247 for the month. Many of their students moved on to kindergarten and they are beginning to build back up with new enrollments. July is the end of their fiscal year and they had a loss for the period of August 2024 to July 2025 of \$19,354. In that same time period the preschool/childcare donated \$21,840 to Woodmar UMC. Their profit would have been \$2,486 if they had not made these donations.

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