

# COMBINED NEWSLETTER

First and Woodmar United Methodist Churches

Issue 010

December 2024



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

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

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



## Christmas Eve Worship at First United Methodist Church 3:00 pm & 7:00 pm

Pastor Jim will lead two services on December 24 at First Church: a family service at 3:00 pm and a candlelight service at 7:00 pm. Light refreshments will be served in the parlor following the service. Ushers, greeters, and refreshment servers will be needed. Please contact the church office at (219) 932-5915 or [admin@hammondfumc.org](mailto:admin@hammondfumc.org) to volunteer.



## Christmas Cantata at Ridge United Methodist Church Sunday, December 15, at 3:00 pm

A combined choir from local area United Methodist churches will present a Christmas cantata, “A New Birth, A New Beginning” by John Purifoy. It will be at 3:00 pm on Sunday, December 15, at Ridge United Methodist Church, 8607 Columbia Ave. in Munster. The cantata is under the direction of Jill Newsome, former Ridge UMC choir director. Refreshments at a holiday reception will follow the cantata.



## Giving Thanks

*“This is how we know love: Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 But if someone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but refuses to help—how can the love of God dwell in a person like that?” 1 John 3:16-17 (CEB)*

Thanksgiving has passed, and I hope and pray that your celebrations were filled with love, fellowship, and lots of good food. In the midst of all of the uncertainty and turmoil in the world, nation, and church, we affirm that God is good and that we are blessed. At Thanksgiving, we pause to remind ourselves and each other of all that God has given us.

Being thankful is about more than just gratitude; it is also about trust. A thankful heart trusts that God’s blessings are without limit, although we don’t get to decide what those blessings will be. We may not have all that we want, and we know that many do not have all that they need, but that is the result of the inequality and injustice of humanity. We hold onto what is “ours” for fear that we may not have enough tomorrow. While it is prudent to save, a thankful (and wise) heart will also grow in generosity because it trusts in God’s provision. We possess many things, and a thankful and trusting heart protects us from being possessed by our possessions! We are possessed by our desires, our fears, and our doubts. A thankful heart and a trusting spirit enable us to be free to fully enjoy God’s gifts to us.

Our churches have experienced decline in attendance and in stewardship over the years, and the continued viability of our churches is threatened. Understandably, that may make us want to hold on tight and conserve what we still have. We don’t want our cherished churches to close like so many others have. But, often, we don’t want them to change either. Yet, if things don’t change, then we will continue down the road of decline and loss. I suggest that the way forward lies in thankful generosity, trusting that God will not fail to provide if we but trust God.

God has given us two great churches and the opportunity to build on what has come before to create something even better that will endure well into the future. Let us trust God with all that we have, giving to each other generously with thankful, trusting hearts. Do not worry about keeping things fair, but outdo one another in generosity, in grace, in love, and in faith. God is “all in” for us; let us be “all in” for what God is doing for us and with us. I trust that we will be quite grateful for the blessings that we will receive, and even more, I trust that the wider community around us will be grateful for how we will be a blessing to them.

May your Advent season be blessed, may your heart be warmed, and may your joy be made complete.

Jim



## **Merger Exploration Team Update and Reflection**

Marriage, the courtship and proposal. The vision that our team has cast for the merger has been a marriage of two congregations. Our vision has been guided by Isaiah 43:19, “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.”

Our “new thing” began with a vision for the marriage of First and Woodmar. Together, we will make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by strengthening our spiritual vitality in worship, our discipleship in opportunities to seek and grow in faith, our relational vitality by serving and celebrating our unique traditions, and our stewardship so that we can maintain a physical space as we impact our community.

Metaphorically speaking, courtships have peaks and valleys as they move along. This courtship has taken longer than expected as the data and details continue to be finalized. Amid the data and details, the courtship has been strengthened and the community has been impacted. Worshipping together on Sunday mornings has been hopeful as we combine our voices and receive inspiration from a message that reminds us that we are being held by our loving God who challenges us to reflect. Bible studies and Sunday school opportunities are growing as leaders step up as they feel called. Messy Church began in August with a dedicated team that brings joy and encouragement to families connected through our preschool, our church members, and through Brianna’s Hope. Relational vitality is evident through shared meals and events such as United Women of Faith and mission opportunities. The combined monthly newsletter seeks to keep us connected through a shared vision and our opportunities.

So, how does our courtship move toward a proposal? As the task forces of Finance, Property and Staffing finalize details, the Merger Team will write a draft of a proposal. Steps will include recommendations from respective church councils, direction from our District Superintendent and retaining an attorney that specializes in non-profit mergers. The congregations will have opportunities to hear the proposal and gain clarification before a final vote is taken.

What will the proposal include? The name of our “new” church once it is determined. Location of our church and outreach ministries. The leadership structure will be included. Staff positions will be noted. Financial matters will be included. A timeline and determination of who can vote will be defined. How the vote will be determined will also be clarified.

To God be the glory as we move toward a proposal and hopefully marriage of our beloved churches.

# Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Discipleship  
and Spiritual  
Vitality

## North District Leadership University 2025

Mark your calendar for the North District Leadership University 2025 workshops, They will be offered on Zoom on Saturday, January 25, 9 am -noon CST, and Saturday, February 1, 2025, 8 am-11 am CST. These 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](https://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. Leaders should sign up to participate in one or more of these events.



## Agape Ringers Holiday Handbell Concert

A 20-year tradition continues: For music lovers across Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana, the annual Sounds of the Season handbell concert performed by the world-renowned Agape Ringers (of which our own Sarah Ward has been a member for many years) has become a cherished tradition. On December 14 at 4:00 pm, the concert will be held at Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church, 149 W. Brush Hill Road, Elmhurst, Illinois. Whether you're a long-time patron or experiencing the Agape Ringers for the first time, their festive tunes will kindle your holiday spirit. Bring your friends and family and make it a part of your holiday tradition! For details and to order tickets, contact Sarah or Lora Ward. We look forward to greeting you there!



## Messy Church Will Celebrate Birth of Jesus

Join us on December 17 for "The Incredible Jesus Journey." Bring your kids and grandkids to a soul-stirring journey that celebrates the spirit of Advent through the incredible story of Jesus' birth. Be ready for challenges that are fun and thought-provoking. The journey begins at 6:00 pm in Woodmar's community center with a meal and welcoming activities.

# Reaching Out to Our Community

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## Giving Tree Reminder

Thank you to everyone who took a tag from our Giving Tree! Remember to bring your unwrapped gift, with the tag attached, to either church no later than December 8. (this Sunday)

**We are looking for a volunteer to deliver the gifts to the Salvation Army** (8225 Columbia Ave. in Munster) on the morning of Monday, December 9. There will be gifts at both First and Woodmar. If interested, please contact the church office or Nancy Craig at [ncraig1660@yahoo.com](mailto:ncraig1660@yahoo.com).

## Mission News

Both First Church and Woodmar are designating The Bishop's Christmas Offering for Children as the recipient of money collected for Second Mile Giving in December. Funds contributed will go toward camping ministries, three Indiana United Methodist-related children and youth homes, national and global Advance projects, and Indiana outreach projects. If you are unable to donate financially, please pray for all involved and pray for the children.

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 also would like to thank everyone who donated to UMCOR during the month of November.

## THE VINE FOOD PANTRY AT-A-GLANCE

October 2024

New Clients.....	47
Return Clients.....	489
Total Clients served.....	536
New Households.....	22
Return Households.....	244
Total Households Served.....	266

Total Pounds Distributed: 9,008



## Crochet and Knit

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, which are 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!

# Building Relationships

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## All Are Invited to UWF Christmas

United Women in Faith finalized plans for the Christmas get-together which will be held at 11:00 am on December 14 in the Woodmar narthex. Everyone is invited to attend. The program will be given by Lora Ward, and holiday games and music will be played. We ask that everyone bring a plate of cookies to share. Wassail, coffee, and tea will be available. We also will collect gloves, mittens, scarves and hats to give to those who need them.

At our November meeting, members reported on the program on Human Trafficking, sponsored by Church Women United, which some of them attended.

We will not have a regular meeting in December. Meetings will resume in January on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:00am on Zoom and in the Woodmar library (if weather permits). All women and friends of any religion who are interested in being part of our faith journey are invited to attend.

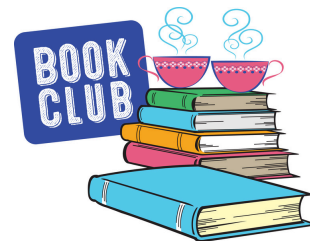
## Paws for Peace Visiting Hartsfield

Paws For Peace will visit Hartsfield on Thursday, December 12 at 2:00 pm. We will meet at the Assistive Living building front door. Anyone who wishes to share time with the residents with their pet is welcome to join us. If you have any questions, please contact Suzanne Wasmund at 219-865-6453.

## Prosperity Indiana: Strengthening Our Communities

Join Prosperity Indiana members and partners from the Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition, Indiana Assets & Opportunity Network, and Hoosiers for Responsible Lending for a 'Policy & Pizza' community conversation with policymakers from our region. It will be at the Crown Point Library on December 12 from 11:30am to 1:30pm. Topics will include the debut of 2025 policy priorities, what to expect in the next legislative session, and how individuals and organizations can get involved to help advocate for strengthening housing attainability and economic opportunity for all Hoosiers and their communities.

Free pizza and beverage options will be provided while supplies last. Registration for the event is required. Register online at [prosperityindiana.org/event-5914939](https://prosperityindiana.org/event-5914939).



## Book Club Choses December Book

Our selection for December is *The Little Liar* by Mitch Albom. Goodreads states, "Beloved bestselling author Mitch Albom returns with a powerful novel that moves from a coastal Greek city during the Holocaust, to America, where the intertwined lives of three survivors are forever changed by the perils of deception and the grace of redemption." To join us for an informal and relaxed discussion (on Zoom) on December 18 at 1:00 pm, please call the church office for a Zoom invitation.

# Children's Ministries

Birthdays  
Children  
Miscellaneous



## Woodmar UMC BIRTHDAYS

12/16 Lisa Romero  
12/20 Jackie Lewis  
12/23 Cynthia Slaboski  
12/27 Barbara Iler

## First UMC BIRTHDAYS

12/1 Ken Wheeler  
12/2 Jacqueline Jerome  
12/3 Georgia Brown  
12/3 Allison DeBold  
12/3 Judy Keckich  
12/5 Kristin Kruse  
12/5 Kendi Young  
12/8 Joe Ramirez  
12/10 Hunter Malloy  
12/13 Sarah Ward  
12/17 Sue Mayberry  
12/18 Vera Vestal  
12/20 Mike Kizman  
12/21 Cheri Gozdecki  
12/21 Grace Kruse  
12/21 Sue Yerkes  
12/22 R.J. Heady  
12/24 Amanda Hernandez  
12/27 Sophie Dean  
12/28 Angelina Garivay  
12/28 Lauren Mosley  
12/28 Rosalie Harrington  
12/29 Fran Carpenter  
12/30 Keelin Kizman  
12/30 Charity Valdez  
12/31 Bob Brown  
12/31 Katy Isaacs  
12/31 Brian Smith

## Scrip Cards Make Great Gifts

The holidays are fast approaching and it's time to plan for holiday gift giving! Start your gift shopping with SCRIP cards for the person who has everything and is hard to shop for. We have plenty of cards, and if you would like to purchase a card from a merchant that you don't see on the Scrip table, let us know and we will special order it for you. The last day to place a special order in time for Christmas is December 15. Following Sunday worship, visit the SCRIP table at the east of the First Church narthex or text Kathy Smith at (708) 935-9807 or email Nancy Jarmula at [njarmula@sbcglobal.net](mailto:njarmula@sbcglobal.net).

## Community Preschool and Childcare

### CHRISTMAS *Pageant*

A FESTIVE PAGEANT DEDICATED TO THE  
GREATEST EVENT - THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

FREE ENTRY!

19 DECEMBER, 2024 AT 1:30PM

In the Sanctuary  
7320 Northcote Ave  
Hammond, IN 46324



FOR MORE INFO CALL  
(219) 844-3030 ext 305

# Finance and Administrative



## FUMC Finance News

As of October 31, First Church's giving total for the year to date was \$130,449, which is \$40,233 behind contributions for the first ten months of 2023. This is reflected in the church's current expense fund deficit of \$43,336. The church is grateful to the First Church Foundation for the recent contribution of \$58,000 of a \$72,000 request to help offset the church's decline in giving projected through year's end.

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 this year, be sure to clearly mark 2024 on your envelope. First Church is deeply grateful for your financial support, as well as your generous gifts of service in ministry.

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

## Woodmar UMC Finance News

October ended with income over expenses of \$4,143. This was due to a final payment from the Ferrini Trust of \$11,117. Our offering for the month was \$5,702 and there were no unusual expenses. At the end of October, we had \$26,630 cash in the bank. Our Special Funds account currently has \$147,894 but we received our final bill of \$128,845 from Budd Mechanical for the chillers. This will deplete our Capital Campaign account, Phyllis Ferrini Trust Gift, and will greatly reduce our Property Maintenance Fund.

Community Preschool has expenses over income of \$18,562, mainly due to 3 payroll periods in October. At the end of October, they had \$92,602 in cash in the bank.

## Woodmar Looking for New Custodians

Woodmar continues to seek a custodian and/or maintenance manager for the church building. These positions can be filled by one or two people. It is up to 30 hours a week, preferably during the daytime.

Woodmar also needs a special events manager, to set up the community center for people renting that room, usually most weekends. You would stay for the duration of the event, and then take down and clean up, 6-8 hours per event.

If you are interested, please contact the Woodmar church office, 219-844-3030.

### **First United Methodist Church**

6635 Hohman Ave, Hammond, IN 46324

Phone (219) 932-5915

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

email - [admin@hammondfumc.org](mailto: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](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

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.