

COMBINED NEWSLETTER

First and Woodmar United Methodist Churches

Issue 009

November 2024



Worship with Us – Sundays at 10:15!

November - At Woodmar United Methodist Church, 7320 Northcote, Hammond
December - At First United Methodist Church, 6635 Hohman, Hammond



Annual Thanksgiving Dinner at Woodmar

**Sunday, November 24,
After the church service**

Everyone is invited! This tradition is so special, you won't want to miss it! The church will provide turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, corn, green beans, rolls, milk, lemonade, water, and coffee. Please RSVP by November 15 on the sign-up sheet in Woodmar's narthex, or you may contact either church office. Please contact either church office if you are home bound and would like a meal delivered.

We are encouraging members of both congregation to lend a hand! There are a variety of things you can sign up to do: help set up or clean up, cook a turkey, help decorate, help serve, and more! These sign-up sheets are also in Woodmar's narthex. If you are able to deliver meals to the homebound, please call Nancy Craig at 219-688-2705.

Please bring a dish to share, as follows: If your last name begins with:
A-G - Salad
H-P - Vegetable
Q-Z - Dessert

Veterans Day Remembrance

During Sunday worship on November 10, the day before Veterans Day, Woodmar and First Church will honor our members and friends who have served, or are currently serving, in the U.S. Armed Services. (Information was due to the office in mid-October.) The names of veterans and active military personnel will be read, those present will be recognized, and a prayer of gratitude for their service will be offered for all.



Praise Bells Are Ringing Once Again!

Are you a ringer, or interested in learning how to ring handbells? We are delighted that the Praise Bells Choir (originally launched at First Church) is resuming, and now is the time to join! "All are welcome, whether you're a beginner or an experienced ringer," says Bell Director Lora Ward. "Join us for a joyful experience as we make music together!" The Praise Bells Choir rehearses at 7:00 pm every Wednesday in the First Church choir room.



Stress!

Stress can be so stressful, right? We can feel anxiety, fear, anger; our hearts pound; we might break out in a cold sweat. Stress can make us feel depressed, isolated, and alone, and can even harm our physical health. Stress can cause us to respond to people in ways that damage our relationships. I am no stranger to finding myself snapping at people when I am stressed. If I have snapped at you, I am heartily sorry. Imagine that your heart is pounding; you feel like you can't catch your breath; you might begin to sweat. These are signs of stress. But now imagine that you are exercising and feeling the same way. In fact, stress and exercise have the exact same biological response. Yet one is perceived as bad for you and the other is good for you. What makes the difference?

Stress can be experienced in two different ways, called distress and eustress. "Dis" means "bad" and "eus" means "good." So, being chased by a vicious dog is distressing and going out for a jog is eustressing. You are running in both scenarios, but one feels bad and the other feels good.

I have been quite stressed of late (mostly of the distress type), and I have observed signs of stress in our congregations as well. I have seen hurt feelings and tears, angry voices, and people talking about others behind their backs (a sign of relational stress). This is all understandable as we continue to live with the uncertainty of what will happen regarding the merger we are exploring and the ongoing financial struggles in our churches. These truly are stressful times.

Yet, whether something is experienced as distress or eustress is largely determined by our attitude and even more by our faith. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:32-34 NRSV)

Change is stressful, as is uncertainty. When everything is on the line, even the smallest thing looms large. Nothing is larger than God's love, and nothing can threaten us with Christ by our side. This does not mean that there will be no hardship, nor does it mean that things will be easy, and it certainly doesn't mean that we will agree on everything. But it does mean that Christ is with us, and God's purpose for us can only be thwarted by our own fear.

We can choose to let stress control us, or we can use stress to build stronger relationships and to become more resilient. We may bemoan this time of great change and deep compromise, or we can embrace the challenge and be grateful for the gift of building something new. Our theme at Charge Conference this year was "This is our time!" Truly, this is our time: Our time to be reborn, our time to be renewed, our time to live into a beautiful new reality, our time to build one another up, and our time to glorify God.

No doubt, these are stressful times, but this does not have to be distressing. These are exciting times, full of exhilarating possibilities as God is doing something in us and with us. We are blessed to be entrusted with this call to live into the practice of ministry in a new way. These challenges could tear us apart, but if we trust God and follow Jesus, I know that we will grow in faith, in love, in community, and become a truly new creation. This is our time!

I highly recommend a TED talk (on YouTube) about stress: "How to Make Stress Your Friend" by Kelly McGonigal at <https://youtu.be/RcGyVTAoXEU?si=q7Mvn8lzAYJD8U9e>

Blessings,
Jim

Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Discipleship
and Spiritual
Vitality



Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Community Service at Ridge UMC

The Northwest Indiana Interfaith Coalition invites everyone to the Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Community Service at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, November 26. It will be hosted this year by **Ridge United Methodist Church**, 8607 Columbia Ave. in Munster, 219/838-4770. More than a dozen Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clergy will lead the service, which is open to the entire Region and which many from our congregations have attended in past years. For questions, please contact Jane Harper-Alport or Larry Alport.

Community Thanksgiving Eve Worship Service at First UMC

On Wednesday, November 27, at 7:00 pm, our congregations will host a community worship service at **First Church**. Pastors from each of the following United Methodist congregations will join Pastor Jim in leading the service: Gary Christ, Gary Fifth Avenue, Griffith, Hyde Park, Ridge, and Whiting, as well as First Evangelical Lutheran Church and Christ Lutheran Church of Hammond, and Griffith Lutheran Church. This service offers a special opportunity for us to join with neighbors from across our region in celebration of our ecumenical national holiday.

Disciple Groups are Growing

We currently have two adult study groups and Sunday School for children that are meeting and thriving. Praise God! In January, there will be another adult study available so stay tuned!

Messy Church Celebrates a Special “Ghost Story”

The Spirit was present for the October 22 Messy Church that gathered in the Woodmar Community Center. This included a spiritual “Ghost Story” and special Halloween-themed activities in which those young and young-at-heart enthusiastically participated. Thank you to everyone who led, served, and attended, and also those who supported this missional ministry with your donations and prayers. Next month’s Messy Church will be held on Tuesday, November 19, at 6:00 pm (a week earlier than usual, to avoid Thanksgiving week). We hope you will join us!



Christmas Eve Worship

Our combined congregations will gather for worship at First Church on Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24 (time TBD). Mark your calendar and watch your email, Sunday bulletins, and December newsletter for more information.

Reaching Out to Our Community



Community Preschool and Childcare

The 24-25 school year has begun and enrollment is growing. Our pre-k rooms are almost full; we have eight spots in pre-k and 18 spots left in our younger classes. We accept CCDF and OMWPK vouchers, which provide families below 150% of the poverty level with high-quality education and care. If you know of families who need preschool or childcare, please send them our way.

Fall festivities have been underway in CP&CC. Our classes visited Scheeringa Farm and have been conducting science experiments with pumpkins! We recently had visitors from the Hammond Police & Fire Department; the kids enjoyed the hats and workbooks! Our Halloween Parade was a hit. The kids surprised the parents with the “5 Little Pumpkins” song!

Thank you to all who donated to the Trunk or Treat event! Your donations helped make the event memorable. The LaBraid fundraiser has ended; we earned \$630 in profit! In November, we look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving with the congregation and in our classrooms!

THE VINE FOOD PANTRY AT-A-GLANCE

September 2024

New Clients.....	25
Return Clients.....	222
Total Clients served.....	247
New Households.....	50
Return Households.....	444
Total Households Served.....	494

Total Pounds Distributed: 8,111

Mission News

Both First Church and Woodmar are designating UMCOR disaster relief for their November mission emphasis. This follows the recent devastation from Florida to North Carolina wrought by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. If you are unable to donate financially to UMCOR, you can always pray for the victims affected by the hurricanes and for the responders who participate in recovery efforts and assistance for communities and individual victims of the storms. Prayer is very powerful and can make a significant difference for people in need of comfort and caring at a time of great loss.

The First Church and Woodmar Mission teams would like to thank everyone who donated to UMCOR and Brianna’s Hope in October. Richard Miller, First Church Mission Team co-chair



The Giving Tree (also known as an angel tree) will soon be up in Woodmar’s narthex. The Salvation Army provides us with tags that give the gender, age, and gift ideas for a child that might otherwise not receive any gifts. If interested, you can take a tag off the tree and purchase one of the gift ideas. Please bring the unwrapped gift, with the tag attached, to either church by December 8.

Note that the tag will say to return by Dec. 6. The Salvation Army has said it is fine if we wait until December 9 to deliver the gifts to them at 8225 Columbia Ave. in Munster. If you would like to have the joy of delivering lots of children’s gifts to the Salvation Army, please contact the church office or Nancy Craig at ncraig1660@yahoo.com.

Building Relationships



Hanging of the Greens is December 1

Get into the holiday spirit by joining us for the Hanging of the Greens on Sunday, December 1, right after worship! We'll come together to decorate First Church and prepare it for the Advent season. A chili lunch will be provided to keep everyone warm and energized. And don't worry, there's no Chicago Bears game that day, so you won't miss a thing! It's always a wonderful time of fellowship and fun, so bring your family and join us as we deck the halls! For questions, contact Sarah Ward.

What Will Be Our New Church Name?

You tell us! If our two churches merge, we will need a new church name. The Merger Team is working on the details and will soon be asking for your input. Everyone will be given the opportunity to submit their idea for a new name.

Book Club via Zoom

The selection for November is *The Exchange* by John Grisham. This New York Times bestselling author delivers high-flying international suspense in a stunning new legal thriller that marks the return of Mitch McDeere, the brilliant hero of *The Firm*.

To join us for an informal and relaxed discussion on November 18 at 1:00 pm, please call the church office for a Zoom invitation.

United Women in Faith News

United Women in Faith continues to meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:00 am in the library and on Zoom. On November 20, Ramah McCabe will discuss the book *The Christmas Jars* by Jason F Wright. This novel is about a newspaper reporter who uncovers the remarkable secret behind glass jars filled with coins and bills that are anonymously left for people in need. Ramah asks that all attending bring some loose change for our own Christmas jar.

UWF members are making plans for our annual Christmas Get Together. Also, we continue to collect items for Phil's Friends in a box in the narthex. This worthwhile organization sends helpful items and hope to cancer patients.



Poinsettia Orders Due November 24

It's time to order your poinsettias for the holiday season! Each plant is \$12, and orders must be placed by November 24. These beautiful poinsettias are a perfect way to honor or memorialize special people in your life and add festive cheer to our church. See the bulletin for the order form, visit either the First Church or Woodmar website for an online form, or call either church's office to place an order. If you have questions, please contact Lora Ward. Don't miss out—order your poinsettias today!

Musical
opportunities

Community
Musical
Events

Music Ministry



Christmas Cantata

Mark your calendars for December 15 (time TBD), when a combined choir from local area United Methodist Churches will present a Christmas Cantata at Ridge United Methodist Church (no charge). Everyone is welcome, and all interested singers are invited to sing! Rehearsals began on October 22 under the direction of Jill Newsome, former choir director at Ridge. For more information, contact the Ridge UMC office, 219/838-4770.

Sounds of the Season Handbell Concert

For 20 years, a dedicated group of music lovers has made the annual Sounds of the Season handbell concert a cherished tradition. Each year, they gather to enjoy the beautiful, resonant melodies that fill the air, bringing warmth and joy to the holiday season. On December 14 at 4:00 pm, the concert will be held at Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church, 149 W. Brush Hill Road, Elmhurst, Illinois. The Agape Ringers handbell ensemble (of which our own Sarah Ward has been a member for many years) will once again perform a selection of festive tunes, perfect for getting into the holiday spirit.

Whether you've been attending for years or are new to the experience, this milestone concert is a perfect way to celebrate the season. Bring your friends and family and make it a part of your holiday tradition! For more details, contact Sarah or Lora Ward. We look forward to seeing you there!

South Holland Master Chorale Holiday Concert

The annual free Holiday Joy and Fanfare concert performed by the South Holland Master Chorale will be presented as follows, under the direction of Music Director Philip Bauman:

December 1, 2024, 4:00 pm
St. John Neumann
17951 Dixie Highway
Homewood, IL 50430

December 8, 2024, 4:00 pm
Christ Our Savior Parish, South Holland
880 E. 154th St.
South Holland, IL 60473

For more information, contact Ken Wheeler or visit SouthHollandMasterChorale.org

Children's Ministries

Birthdays
Children
Miscellaneous



Woodmar UMC BIRTHDAYS

- 11/6 Thomas Slaboski
- 11/7 Joseph Lovasko
- 11/11 Otie Anderson
- 11/3 Francis McCabe
- 11/15 Fran Vukovich
- 11/17 Danielle Romero
- 11/24 Jason Lewis
- 11/26 Donna Benirschke

First UMC BIRTHDAYS

- 11/04 Melinda Hawkins
- 11/07 Mary Jo Peters
- 11/07 Elizabeth Roman-Merced
- 11/09 Joe LaBresh
- 11/09 Jason Tapper
- 11/09 Jenna Tapper
- 11/12 Benjamin Baker
- 11/16 Phil Keckich
- 11/17 Sandra Smith
- 11/18 Rocelia Lewis
- 11/21 Cheryle Seljan
- 11/22 Maggie Lerner
- 11/23 Emory Avina
- 11/25 Niki Avina
- 11/26 Anthony Bell Jr.
- 11/29 Julian Valdez

Children's Ministry

Although Mike Kizman, director of Children's Ministries, is away for a few months, Sunday School is continuing on the second through fifth Sundays of each month, as well as the Children's Message during worship every Sunday. If you might be willing to deliver the Children's Message on even one of the Sundays during Mike's absence, please contact Pastor Jim (who encourages volunteers that the Sermons4Kids resource is available for those who would like to use it). Pastor Jim and Lay Leader Pat Mosley will attest that this opportunity to interact with our enthusiastic kids is a two-way blessing!

Pastor Jim would like to reassemble a Children's Ministry committee to help guide, coordinate, and plan ministry for our children. If you have served in this capacity, or would like to, please contact Pastor Jim or Administrative Assistant Brenda Petty.



Woodmar Looking for New Custodians

Woodmar is seeking a custodian and/or maintenance manager for the church building. These positions can be filled by one person or two people. Total weekly hours are up to 30 hours, preferably during daytime hours.

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

If you are interested, or know someone who is, please contact the Woodmar church office, 219-844-3030.

Finance and Administrative



FUMC Finance News

As of September 30, First Church's giving total for the year to date was \$118,063, which is \$31,984 behind contributions for the first nine months of 2023. This is reflected in the church's current expense fund deficit of \$38,370. The Finance Committee has requested \$72,000 from the First Church Foundation to offset the church's decline in giving, as projected through year's end, which was approved at the Foundation board's meeting on October 13. Transfer of the requested funds to the church is pending. (Reminder: as reported in previous newsletters, \$264,722 in net proceeds from the sale of the Fran-Lin parsonage are restricted and cannot be used to fund the church's operating budget.)

If you are running behind in fulfilling your annual pledge or planned giving to the church, it will be much appreciated if you can bring your giving up to date this month. 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

September ended with expenses over income of \$532. Offering for the month was \$11,587 and cash in bank was \$23,032. No unusual expenses for the month. Year to Date bottom line is expenses over income of \$16,989. Community Preschool had expenses over income of \$3,230. It is early in their fiscal year and enrollment will have adjustments during the first few months.

Be Sure Pastor Jim Is Informed

As we move through a continuing period of transition, let's pledge to give Pastor Jim an extra measure of support during the temporary absence of Administrative Assistant Brenda Petty and Children's Ministry Director Mike Kizman. One important way to help is to keep Pastor Jim informed about the plans/work/meeting dates of every ministry area/church event. Please remember to clear your desired activity/date/event location with him before finalizing your plans, and also ensure it is recorded on our respective church's calendars so as not to conflict with other scheduled activities—or with other obligations on Pastor Jim's busy schedule!

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.