

COMBINED NEWSLETTER

First and Woodmar United Methodist Churches

Issue 012

February 2025



Worship with Us – Sundays at 10:15!

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

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



Chili Tasting with a Mardi Gras Twist! Sunday, March 2, after church

Calling all chili makers and bakers! Woodmar's Congregational Care Corp (CCC) is planning a free Chili Tasting with a Mardi Gras Twist, along with a bake sale fundraiser. There will also be a pinata and kids table with fun activities. Everyone is invited! It will be on March 2, following the service, in the Community Center. (Ash Wednesday is March 5.) We need volunteers to make their best chili recipes in a crock pot and bakers to bring goodies for the sale. Funds from the bake sale will go to CCC projects and events.

Find a King, win a Queen!!! As part of the bake sale, we will provide two King Cakes sliced to sell. Anyone who finds the baby Jesus in their slice will get a Dairy Queen gift certificate.

Please contact the church office or Nancy Craig (ncraig1660@yahoo.com) to let us know if you will be bringing a pot of chili.



Three Possibilities for New Church Name

Thank you to everyone who submitted ideas for a name for the new church that will be formed if we (hopefully) merge. The Merger Committee has narrowed the list down to three names:

Hope United Methodist Church

(hope, faith for the future)

Pathways United Methodist Church

(pathway to Jesus, God, faith)

The Foundry United Methodist Church

(the name of the very first Methodist Church, associated with the words found and foundation)

On February 2, the children of the church spent Sunday School time working on ideas and logos to inspire us. In a few weeks, everyone will have a chance to vote on what name they think will best represent our new church.

A Vision

The proposed vision for the proposed new church is: “Church New” is a sacred community rooted in faith, hope, and love where people experience God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we learn, love, go, and act to unite people, bring peace and justice, and share God’s love with our community and the world.

I continue to reflect on the practical ways we can live into this vision. Recently I have been reading the work of Rev. Michael Adam Beck, a United Methodist pastor in the Florida Annual Conference and the director of Fresh Expressions for the United Methodist Church. Rev. Beck notes that modern people, especially those with no particular faith, are not concerned with eternal salvation and they see with their own eyes that religion does not necessarily lead to moral and ethical living.

Yet, Beck observes, modern people do have many deep questions. “Why am I so lonely?” “How do I stop doing this thing that I know is hurting me?” “Am I unlovable?” “Is there more to life than just making money and getting likes on social media?” “Does my life even matter to anyone—do I matter to anyone?” “Would the world be better without me in it?” These and similar questions are not the exception, but the rule. We know from our lived experience that Jesus not only has answers to these questions, but that Jesus is the answer.

Beck says “The essence of the church is not to huddle together in the safety of our sanctuaries. Instead, it is to move out into the world with acts of love that offer the Good News of Jesus to a lonely, hurting society. This is a call to become the church in the world, not just the church in a building. And it’s not just a call for pastors and church leaders, but for every Christian to be a part of this movement.”

As we begin to live into a new vision, whether we consolidate or not, we must rethink what it means to be the church, how we “do” church, and where to be the church. (Hint: it is mainly and primarily outside of the church building.) As the Body of Christ, we are the incarnation of Christ in the world. The answer to questions about loneliness and meaning are to befriend our neighbors, build community, and live as if people truly matter enough to us and to God that we put aside our cares and wants for the sake of who God cares about and wants. I can hardly wait to see what will happen!



News from the Church Office

The price of our altar flowers has gone up from \$12 to \$15. Its still a bargain!

Items are piling up in Woodmar’s Lost & Found! Are you missing an umbrella, reading glasses, scarf, children's jacket, bag with makeup, little wallet with a Letter K, or a pen? Check out the bin located in the Woodmar church office. If you lose something while worshipping at First UMC, check with the reception area.

Opportunities to Grow Our Faith

Discipleship
and Spiritual
Vitality



Woodmar Sponsoring Easter Cantata

Woodmar UMC will be sponsoring an Easter Cantata, "Saviour, A Modern Oratorio," on Sunday, April 13, 2025 at 4 pm. All Woodmar, First and other region church and choir members are invited to sing, as well as family, friends and members of the community. Soloists and instrumentalists are needed as well. The oratorio tells the story of God's love and passion for us. Please contact Dave Bieschke at 773-791-8277 or davebieschke@me.com with any questions or to be part of the cantata.



Messy Church is Tuesday, Feb. 25

"Who Is Jesus? It's all about love." Messy Church begins with welcoming activities and a meal. At mealtime, we will grapple with these questions: "So...what does it mean to love one another, even our enemies? What would the world look like if we did this?" We will continue to explore the command that Jesus gave us through art activities, music and a time of celebration or informal worship.

Hey church, please come and support Messy Church! Your presence and embrace of our Messy Church community is such an encouragement. We look forward to seeing you at 6:00 pm on Tuesday, February 25 in Woodmar's Community Center. Please use Door B on Northcote Ave.

Staff-Parish Relations Committees Work Collaboratively

The First Church and Woodmar UMC Staff-Parish Relations Committees continue to have combined meetings with members from both churches working to support our combined and respective staff members as we plan for the future. Recommendations for an updated vision of staffing were presented at the recent January 19 merger team presentation, and those recommendations will continue to be under discussion as the committee moves forward. Administrative Assistant Brenda Petty is back in the office full time, but she will continue to take necessary time off to support her husband, Tim, with health care issues, as needed. Staff-Parish thanks and truly appreciates the service of all volunteers who have helped out in the church offices in any way as Pastor Jim and Brenda move back and forth on weekdays between our two houses of worship! (They work at Woodmar on Mondays and Wednesdays and at First Church on Tuesdays and Thursdays.)

Moving forward, Children's Ministry will be a collaborative effort, including Pat Mosley, Maureen Tedesco, Cyndi Slaboski, and Carrie Ward. If you have any questions or would like to be a part of the collaboration supporting Children's Ministry, please reach out to Carrie Ward.

The next meeting of the combined Staff-Parish Relations Committee will be on February 6 at 5:30pm at First Church.

Carrie Ward, FUMC Staff-Parish Relations Committee member



Spring 2025 Lay Servant Academy

Mark your calendar and register for the North District Spring '25 Lay Servant Academy, which will be conducted at Hebron United Methodist Church, 202 W. Church St., Hebron, Ind. 46341, on four Sunday afternoons, February 23, March 2, 9, and 16, from 2:00pm to 5:00pm CT.

This opportunity to learn, strengthen your discipleship, and develop relationships with fellow United Methodists across the North District is open to all interested laity for only \$10 per participant, plus the cost of the text for the course you choose. ALL participants MUST register online by February 23 at <https://inumc.swoogo.com/NDLsaHebron2025>. If you have questions, please contact Registrar Karen Williams at 219-869-2324 or mrs.karen.wms@gmail.com. Each of the five course offerings and the accompanying text for each course are described below.

Lay Servant Academy In-Person Courses

Introductions to Lay Ministry—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 [but this requirement may be waived if you desire to enroll in an advance course; contact Pastor Jim]. Course Text: Lay Servant Ministries Participant's Book: Basic Course by Sandy Zeigler Jackson and Brian Jackson. Participant's Book: ISBN DR626 * 978-0-88177-626-3 (\$12).

Transforming Evangelism—Led by Pastor Tom Clark

Learn from John Wesley how to practice relational evangelism. Discover that evangelism involves not only sharing our faith with others but also welcoming people into a community where they can grow in faith. Course Text: Transforming Evangelism by Henry H. Knight III and F. Douglas Powe Jr. Participant's Book: ISBN DR485 * 978-0-88177-485-6 (\$14).

Dancing with Words—Led by Pastor Wayne Williams

Learn what constitutes a good story, discover storytelling styles, learn the techniques of effective storytelling, and practice creating stories from your experiences. Course Text: Dancing with Words by Ray Buckey. Participant's Book: ISBN DR407 * 978-0-88177-407-8 (\$14).

Leading Worship—Led by Pastor Jim Denton

Focus on the ministry of the lay servant who either regularly or occasionally leads a group or congregation in worship. Course Text: Worshipping with United Methodists (Revised) by Hoyt Hickman. Participant's Book: ISBN AB526 * 978-0-687-33526-8 (\$12).

Opening Ourselves to Grace—Led by Pastor Cathy Allison

This video-based course helps lay servant leaders embrace and communicate a Wesleyan understanding of basic Christian practices as a means of grace. Course Text: Opening Ourselves to Grace: Basic Christian Practices. This is a pdf that will be provided to you!

Jane Harper-Alport, FUMC Council Chair

Content adapted from North District News, January 9, 2025

Reaching Out to Our Community



Restock the SHELVES

Blessing Boxes Need Replenishing

Please help to fill the Blessing Boxes at Woodmar and First. Nonperishable foods are needed and are quickly retrieved from each Blessing Box. There is a real need in the community for this ministry.

Mission News

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

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

First Church and Woodmar would like to thank everyone who donated in January to Love, Inc.

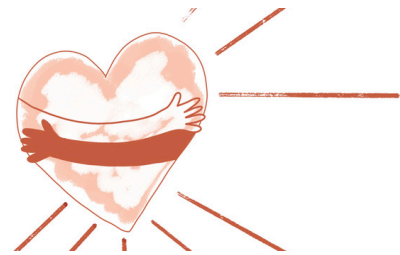
Richard Miller, FUMC Missions Team co-chair



Pictures from the Paws for Peace visit in December. The first picture is the Paws group and their pets. The second picture is one of the Hartsfield residents.

Paws For Peace

Paws For Peace will be taking our dogs to Hartsfield Village Assisted Living on February 12, at 2:00 pm to celebrate Valentine's Day. We had a wonderful visit at Christmas. If anyone with a pet would like to join us, contact Suzanne Wasmund for details at (219) 865-6453.



Crochet and Knit for Phil's Friends

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 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!

Know Your Rights: If ICE Visits Your Home

All people living in the United States, including undocumented immigrants, have certain U.S. Constitutional rights. If you are undocumented and immigration (ICE) agents knock on your door, know that you have the following rights:

You do not have to open the door. You do not have to open the door or let the officers into your home unless they have a valid search warrant signed by a judge.

- An ICE deportation warrant is not the same as a search warrant. If this is the only document they have, they cannot legally come inside unless you verbally agree to let them in.
- If the officers say they have a search warrant signed by a judge, ask them to slide it under the door or hold it up to a window so you can see it.
- If the warrant does not have your correct name and address on it and is not signed by a judge you do not have to open the door or let them inside.
- If at any point you decide to speak with the officers, you do not need to open the door to do so. You can speak to them through the door or step outside and close the door.

You have the right to remain silent. You do not need to speak to the immigration officers or answer any questions.

- If you are asked where you were born or how you entered the United States, you may refuse to answer or remain silent.
- If you choose to remain silent, say “I choose to remain silent.”
- You may show a know-your-rights card (English) (Spanish) to the officer that explains that you will remain silent and wish to speak to a lawyer.
- You may refuse to show identity documents that say what country you are from.
- Do not show any false documents and do not lie.

You have the right to speak to a lawyer. If you are detained or taken into custody, you have the right to seek an attorney and to receive a phone call from your attorney. Ask for a copy of the Detainee Handbook to understand the Detention Center's rules.

- Even if you do not have a lawyer, you may tell the immigration officers that you want to speak to one.
- If you have a lawyer, you have the right to talk to them. If you have a signed Form G-28, which shows you have a lawyer, give it to an officer.
- If you do not have a lawyer, ask an immigration officer for a list of pro bono lawyers.
- You also have the right to contact your consulate. The consulate may be able to assist you in locating a lawyer.
- You can refuse to sign any/all paperwork until you have had the opportunity to speak to a lawyer.
- If you choose to sign something without speaking to a lawyer, be sure you understand exactly what the document says and means before you sign it.
- You have the right to speak to request to make a phone call to family members or friends for free if you do not have enough money in your account after 10 days.

This flyer is intended for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. You should not act or rely on any information in this flyer without seeking the advice of a competent, licensed immigration attorney. For more information on how this might apply to your case, please contact your immigration attorney or find an immigration attorney at www.aialawyer.org.

Building Relationships



UWF Studying Water

At our January meeting, Yvonne Jackson, president of our local chapter, announced that the money we collected in a Christmas Jar was given in December to a person in need. We will soon start a new Christmas jar to save for next December. Mary Circle's chairperson, Donna Benirschke reported on our holiday get-together. Hats and gloves collected there were distributed to local children and to Phil's Friends.

In February, Jackie Lewis will give a program guided by the UWF study on water. Each month a different member will lead the program from this book. We also set up our schedule of members to provide a meal for Briana's Hope once a month.

We are continuing to meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. in the library and on Zoom. Our organization is open to all women of faith; no one must be a member of Woodmar UMC or of any Methodist church to join.

Curl Up and Read

The Book Club's February selection is *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt. The novel is, "an exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope, tracing a widow's unlikely connection with a giant Pacific octopus." It is a Goodreads Choice Award for Fiction and for Debut Novel (2022). Please consider joining us for an informal discussion on February 17, at 1:00 pm via Zoom. You may call the church office for a Zoom invitation.



Woodmar UMC Finance News

The month of December ended with a positive balance of \$676. We had \$18,930 in offerings for the month. The end of December's cash in the bank is \$26,831. The Phyllis Ferrini gift of \$40,000 in Current Expense allowed us to get through 2024 with cash in the bank. For the 2024 calendar year we ended with expenses over income of \$16,788. Community Preschool ended December with income over expenses of \$1,803 and \$83,280 cash in bank. Let's get 2025 off to a good start!



First UMC Congregational Care

The First UMC Congregational Care Committee sends cards, texts, and makes phone calls to those who need prayers, loving support, and favors. We usually alert other prayer warriors to participate, too.

So if you would like prayer, someone to listen or be present with you, please contact the office, Pastor Jim, Donna Beifuss, or Pauline Luthi. Pauline Luthi, FUMC Congregational Committee Co-Chair

Children's Ministries

Birthdays
Children
Miscellaneous



Woodmar UMC

- 2/1 Sheila Kayes
- 2/3 Betty Barnhart
- 2/10 Krister Baker
- 2/11 Toni Poropat
- 2/16 Ervin Zaikis
- 2/21 Pam Salyers

First UMC

- 2/3 Xavier Valdez
- 2/5 David Copeland
- 2/5 Maya Strong
- 2/7 Kecia Bell
- 2/9 Terry Watson
- 2/10 Bradley Kowalczyk
- 2/14 Aubrey Chelich
- 2/18 Susan Camacho
- 2/19 Charlene Copeland
- 2/23 Kristine Heady
- 2/25 Alice Foley
- 2/26 Sue Robertson
- 2/27 Brenda Petty
- 2/28 Adele Gawrys



Community Preschool and Childcare

With the cold weather here to stay, our classrooms are exploring arctic animals, snow, and even ice skating! Enrollment has increased by 4 children in the last week; January/February is when we typically see an increase in enrollment.

Since Community Preschool and Childcare (CP&CC) is a mentoring school, we welcome 3 Purdue interns, 3 Ivy-tech interns, and 1 Hammond ACC student this semester!

Congratulations to the staff for maintaining Paths to Quality Level 4 Rating! Our NAEYC site visit will take place between March and September. If you are unfamiliar with PTQ and NAEYC, they are accrediting bodies that monitor our program closely to support us in maintaining high-quality education and care for each of the families we serve! Being accredited also allows for higher reimbursement rates and grant opportunities.

Child Assessments are underway and Parent-Teacher conferences will be on February 17. Ms. Maria will be going on maternity leave in mid-February and possibly returning in the summer as a sub. Congratulations Ms. Maira on your baby girl!

First & Woodmar United Methodist Churches Merger Statement

The following statement was shared on January 19, 2025 to the combined congregation of First & Woodmar. At the end of the statement, there was a question & answer period (see next page), and then a non-binding straw poll was conducted to assist the merger team with their work moving forward. The First UMC congregation voted 26 for the proposal, 6 against. The Woodmar congregation voted 31 for, 0 against.

The initial work of the merger team focused on determining compatibility between the two churches, and through this work, the team discovered that the two congregations have so much in common. The congregations have similar worship styles and are committed to worship services that include music, the inclusion of a diverse group of all ages and backgrounds, and a commitment to United Methodist theology, social principles, and traditions. Both congregations are also committed to opportunities for spiritual growth and vitality such as Bible studies and prayer groups. Each congregation is deeply rooted in its commitment to serving others through their many community ministries. With an understanding of the compatibility of the two churches, the group moved forward to focus on how the two can complement one another as a merged church. This work focused around our vision of who we are and how we want to continue worshipping and serving in fruitful ministry together.

Proposed Vision: “Church New” is a sacred community rooted in faith, hope, and love where people experience God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we learn, love, go, and act to unite people, bring peace and justice, and share God’s love with our community and the world.

This vision served as our guide as we began to analyze the details of a potential merger. Recommendations were built based on how each facet of “Church New” (name to be determined) could support each congregant to learn, love, go, and act to be and share the grace and peace of God. To that end, I’d like to outline some broad points of the team’s recommendations for merger.

The merger team recommends that First & Woodmar United Methodist Churches consolidate into one church. Two buildings with two staffs places a significant financial burden on each church, which ultimately impedes both churches’ abilities to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Worship Recommendation: A combined church offers the opportunity to make worship an energizing experience for all. Traditions of each church will be honored, while also allowing the Holy Spirit to flow through our combined congregation inspiring new traditions that highlight the faith we share. As we have seen in our worship services the past year, a combined church offers us the opportunity to participate in a vibrant and richer faith-filled experience.

Leadership Recommendation: The current church leadership structure is not functioning optimally at either individual church. The team recommends moving to a more streamlined leadership structure. This new structure for committees and councils can be a better fit for the size of our congregation as well as its commitment to a broad portfolio of community ministries. It is recommended that this new guiding council be composed of a similar number of both First and Woodmar UMC members.

Ministry Recommendation: Close to the heart of both of our congregations are the ministries that we serve at each church. These ministries include The Vine Food Pantry, Brianna’s Hope, Messy Church, and Community Pre-school and Childcare. They also include the many community groups and Bible studies that meet in both buildings. Although it may not look exactly the same, we will continue to support all current missions and ministries of both congregations.

Staffing Recommendation: In a combined building, the initial staffing recommendation is as noted on this chart. While many of these positions are similar to what the churches have now, you’ll notice the recommendation of an Outreach Minister. This is a temporary position, which we recommend establishing for a three-year period to assist with merging the existing ministries of each church. This will allow Pastor Jim to focus on worship, discipleship, and supporting our congregation, while the outreach minister helps our congregation be servant leaders to our community and to ourselves. This recommendation also includes continuation of the entire pre-school staff.

Foundation Recommendation: We have learned through our work that the two foundations have significant differences in not only their legal charters and by-laws, but also their respective purposes and guidelines for operation. The merger team has engaged legal counsel and guidance from the Conference to guide the Foundation boards in how to move each foundation forward.

Building Recommendation: The condition and estimated fair market values of both buildings were analyzed by a team of commercial realtors. This recommendation was reviewed and aligned with our team’s vision of a merged congregation. This analysis included alignment with mission and ministry opportunities that each location could offer Church New. The financial realities of managing each church were also considered. It is recommended that the new church meet at the current site of Woodmar UMC at 7320 Northcote in Hammond, and that the current First UMC building at 6635 Hohman Avenue in Hammond be sold.

Q & A Following the Merger Statement on the previous page

1. **Will the slides for the presentation be available.** a. Yes, they will be made available in the email that will be sent to the congregation summarizing today's presentation.
2. **I have heard that are different opinions on the team about what still needs to be done before we can have a final vote. What are those and how can we resolve them so we can move forward.** a. We are all uncertain of exactly what details are required to be in the final proposal. We are awaiting guidance from the Indiana Conference and our legal counsel on what these are.
3. **With the hiring of an outreach pastor, will there be a review of the finances?** a. Neither church can financially support the recommendation for an outreach pastor. The funding for that position would have to come from the Foundations.
4. **When will the official ballot be?** a. As soon as we know what must be included and have put those pieces into the proposal a Church Conference will be scheduled with the Conference Superintendent. The Book of Discipline requires a minimum of 2 weeks prior notice by at least 2 methods of communication. Given the significance of this vote, we feel that we should give a 30-day notice prior to the vote.
5. **How long will it take before we finish?** a. If approved, the process of creating a new church out of our 2 existing churches will take time, months at least. However, following the final vote, should it pass, we will immediately begin worshipping at the Woodmar location.
6. **The Foundation By-laws at First Church do not allow for an email vote on the disposition of or changes to that Foundation. Will enough time be given for that vote to be communicated to all voting members of the Foundation so they can have their say?** a. Yes.
7. **When First Church is sold, what happens to the money?** a. The proceeds of the sale of the property will belong to the new church. There are restrictions in the Book of Discipline and Conference guidelines limiting how those funds can be used. The funds can be used for capital improvements.
8. **Will the Food Pantry move, and will that decision need to be made prior to a vote?** a. The Property Task Group of the Consolidation Team is continuing to explore possibilities for the location of the Food Pantry. The Food Pantry can remain in its current location until the sale on the Hohman Avenue property closes.
9. **What kind of majority will be required for the vote to pass?** a. The Indiana Conference requires that it be a simple majority vote.
10. **What will happen if the vote does not pass?** a. The 2 churches will continue to operate separately with the likelihood that will eventually have to close for financial insolvency.
b. First Church would need to immediately put the Hohman Avenue property on the market in order to fund the purchase of a smaller, more affordable location.
11. **If the merger were approved, are there items from First Church that would be brought to the Northcote location and incorporated into the new church?** a. Yes, it is important that the history of each church be represented even while we work to make the new church "all of ours." A committee will be formed to address this concern.

Pastor Pete Ward shared some additional details on the financial realities that were considered in the proposal as outlined.

- Neither church's income covers the monthly expenses.
Combined in one building we would cover the expenses with a little available for ministry.
- The Northcote location has no immediate maintenance needs.
- The Hohman Avenue location has \$300,000-\$500,000 in maintenance that needs to be addressed soon.
- Moving the preschool to the Hohman Avenue location would require a complete recertification of the school. This is a lengthy process that would require significant investment in the building to meet the requirements.
- Moving the Food Pantry is an easier and cheaper option. The Food Pantry can continue operating at Hohman Avenue until the sale of the building closes or until a viable alternative is found either at Northcote or another location.
 - o The president of the First UMC Foundation noted that the Foundation provides significant funds annually to support the maintenance of the Hohman Avenue Property.
 - o There is a mortgage on the Northcote Avenue property and there is no long-term debt on the Hohman Avenue property.
- § The mortgage would become the responsibility of the new church whichever building were selected.

Team member Jane Harper-Alport emphasized that the vote is a straw poll intended to gauge the congregation's feelings on the current state of the proposal.

Pastor Pete shared his personal story of times when he moved churches and how we still worship the same God noting that it shouldn't matter where we are.

Pastor Jim discussed his moves and that he understands the connection one has to a place but that it is the people who make the place meaningful, and it is God's presence that makes it sacred.

God bless, Consolidation (merger) Exploration Team

Finance and Administrative



First UMC Finance News

The First Church Finance Committee held their first meeting of the new year on January 16. Those present included Bob Brown, Jane Harper-Alport, Robin Kosarko, Judy Viehweg, Pam Longhi, Larry Alport, and Pete Ward as incoming Finance chair.

According to the year-end report for 2024, First Church received approximately \$172,620 in offerings and gifts during the year, bringing the year-end balance to \$386,132.22, which includes net income of \$264,722.25 from the sale of the Fran-Lin parsonage (after reimbursing \$58,750 to the First Church Foundation for funds used to repair and renovate the property for sale) and \$72,000 received from the Foundation at the church's request. The UMC Book of Discipline prohibits the use of parsonage sale proceeds from being used to fund a church's operating expense budget. After providing for current and future housing needs of the pastor, parsonage sale income is restricted for the following, when approved by the conference superintendent: (1) capital improvements beyond the church's budget and (2) congregational redevelopment efforts, including program and staff.

The year-end balance noted above reflects the fact that First Church began 2024 with a balance of slightly over \$82,000. The 2024 year-end balance also includes designated funds that total \$67,970. These funds are held in accounts for specific ministries such as The Vine food pantry, memorials, music, Brianna's Hope, Messy Church, etc. Best accounting practices recommend placing restricted funds in accounts separate from the financial institution account holding the church's operating funds. However, because the church will need more funds available to pay operational costs than are projected to be given in offerings, the Finance Committee decided not to move any restricted funds to separate bank accounts at this time.

At the present time, First Church's fixed costs (costs generally paid monthly) exceed our monthly giving by approximately \$3,000 each month. The Finance Committee is working with the Church Council and the Foundation to establish an operating budget for 2025 that will allow us to meet our financial obligations. The Foundation has determined that the current funds available for church use at this time are: \$26,951.92 for Trustees' use for building expenses, \$9,284.22 for the pastor's discretionary fund, and \$20,000 in the Gottschall fund (the Foundation's only restricted fund).

I am meeting weekly with our Treasurer, Larry Alport, and Pastor Denton to monitor our finances and will keep the congregation informed as how we are addressing our financial shortfall.

Pastor Pete Ward, FUMC Finance chair

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.