

First Connection

First United Methodist Church of Normal
Connecting All People With Jesus Christ

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

December 3 at 9:30am

T'was the Night before Christmas!

This important worship service has been prepared by our children. Come hear the good news of Christ's birth through the pageant. We look forward to worshipping with you!



DECEMBER WORSHIP

Dec. 3 (9:30)	Children's Christmas Pageant
Dec. 16 (5pm)	Christmas Cantata
Dec. 17 (9:30am)	Christmas Cantata
Dec. 24 (10am)	Worship service (1 service-no Sunday School)
Christmas Eve	4 & 7pm Worship services
Dec. 30 (5pm)	Worship service
Dec. 31 (10am)	Worship service (1 service-no Sunday School)

YOUTH CHOIR & CHANCEL CHOIR CANTATA

Almost There, by Michael W. Smith

Sat., Dec. 16, 5pm and Sun., Dec. 17, 9:30am.



Sometimes amid the joyful Christmas festivities, we forget the challenges Mary and Joseph faced all those centuries ago. Experience perhaps a new way of considering the Christmas journey.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

4pm Family Worship service

7pm Holy Communion and Worship

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Dec. 16 & 17

We will be supporting these two ministries:

ISU Wesley Foundation
Habitat for Humanity UM Build 2018.

THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

December 21, 12pm-Chapel

December 21, 6pm-Sanctuary

A reflective and peaceful service experiencing the love of Christ during the holiday season.

As the days shorten and the nights grow longer, the holidays may not be merry and bright for those who are experiencing loss, depression, illness, worry, and struggle.

The Longest Night Service is for all who find the holidays difficult, all who search for healing, and all who pray for wholeness.

Please join us for a time of acknowledging our hurting places with God and preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ.

CANDLELIGHT CAROLS

December 10th at 3:30pm, the UMW will be hosting Candlelight Carols in the Sanctuary. This will be a special time, as we sing some beloved Christmas Carols as a Church family and prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth. Everyone is welcome, friends, families, neighbors....it's an event that will certainly give you a song of joy in your heart. Please plan to attend.



The Church office will be closed from December 25, to January 2.

THOUGHTS FROM THE PASTOR

Looking back over the years, what Christmas presents have been your favorite ones? What memorable gifts have you given?

When I was in 6th grade, my best friend Bruce came over to my house on Christmas Eve to show off the new 10-speed bike he had just received. It was all shiny. 10 gears – wow! The bikes my brother and I got were old one speed hand me downs. I knew I would never get a fancy new bike like the one my proud friend was showing off. Then on Christmas morning, guess what I found by the tree? A brand new 10-speed bike with my name on it.

That bike is not the most expensive present I have ever received. If I had gotten something that expensive every year, it would not have meant that much. What made that gift so special is that I knew my parents had sacrificed – for me. It was the gift of love that made it the present I still remember so fondly today.

At Christmas, God does not give us fancy toys or the objects of our childhood fantasies. At Christmas, God gives us the

gift of love. Many times, when this gift comes to us, it first appears as an unrecognized and unwanted interruption into our lives. It is only when we are open to make space in our lives, to turn aside and see “this thing that has come to pass,” that we experience the gift of Christ, who can save us from ourselves.

This Christmas, we will again be encouraged to spend a lot of money on things. We will be invited to spend a lot of time stressing about everything that must be done. We can get so wrapped up in all the trappings that we miss the joy of Christmas completely.

This Christmas, let us focus on giving gifts that really matter. Let us spend energy on learning how to give gifts of love to those around us. Let us build memories that will be special years from now. Let us choose the activities that will really matter.

This Christmas, let us be interruptible, allowing space for God to be born in our hearts. Let us receive the best and most surprising gift of all: God’s love.

Pastor Kent

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

We are excited to share that Normal First will join local churches to participate in a United Methodist Build for Habitat for Humanity of McLean County in 2018! You will hear more about what this means in the next couple of months, but for right now, I’d like to share why we’re so excited by this project.

Habitat for Humanity is organized around the following principles: demonstrating the love of Jesus, focusing on shelter, advocating for affordable housing, promoting dignity and hope, and supporting sustainable and transformational development. These principles all fit with our United Methodist beliefs of loving our neighbors as ourselves! What a beautiful, concrete way to share we care about those who live in the Bloomington-Normal community! Normal First will support this project both financially and practically as we will commit to serving the first Saturday morning of each month during the build (probably May through November). We will plan an orientation session in early 2018 where you can learn more about volunteering for the build. Stay tuned to learn more about this exciting project!

For more information, please contact Mike Stanton (mls@mlstanton.com or 808-0102) or Rev. Kim Burke (kburke@normalfirst.org or 452-2096, ext. 306).

CONGREGATIONAL CARE NEWS

FIT Wed @ 9am

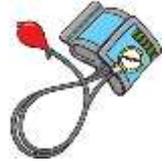
The sum total of our FIT class is good friends, good exercise, and good food. Join the group on Wednesdays from 9 -10 am in Room 53.

SSO

The next Second Sunday Out will be on Dec. 10th at 5:30 pm at Panera's 208 Greenbriar Dr., Normal. All are welcome to join for this Dutch-treat, order-off-the-menu fellowship time.

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING BY PROFESSIONALS

Saturday,
Dec. 2, 4:30pm
and Sunday,
Dec. 3,
9 & 10:30am:
Library



Have you looked at the new Prayer Garden? The names of the plants are quite interesting: Tiny Tuff Stuff Hydrangea, Annabelle Hydrangea, Dwarf Oakleaf Hydrangea, Boxwood Hedge, Pennsylvania Sedge, Blue Angel Hosta, Earth Angel Hosta, Blue Mouse Ears Hosta and Lime Coral Bells. Greenview Nursery selected low maintenance plants that thrive in shadier spots such as ours. Some of the plants will flower and some will change colors with the seasons. The garden will be completed in phases as funds allow.

The Memorial Committee is working with Ben Morgan, a Boy Scout and member of our Church. Ben is researching and developing plans for a bench with arms for the Prayer Garden. Once plans have been determined Ben will then build the bench in order to fulfill his Eagle Scout project requirements.

The Memorial and Special Gifts Committee recently purchased new pew Bibles for the Sanctuary and Chapel utilizing the memorial funds donated in memory of John and Dorothy Claus. We want to thank their daughters, Carol and Janet for designating that their parents' memorial funds be used for these lovely new pew Bibles.

NOISY OFFERING

Thank you!! We have reached and exceeded our goal! Our 2017 offering raised \$7,506.30 for the Baby Fold. Thanks to all for your donations. And special thanks to our children for leading the way.

TRUNK OR TREAT/CHILI COOK-OFF

Thank you to all who attended, helped with the meal, and hosted trunks for trick or treaters at this fourth annual event! It was great to see so many from our congregation as well as visitors. Congratulations to Chili Cook-Off winners: First, Andy Rummel; Second, Brian Morse; and Third, Craig Thompson.



BABY RECOGNITION

On Sunday, November 12 during the 9:30 am worship service we welcomed the youngest member of our church family! Bella Schaffer with parents, Chuck and Leslie, joined by big brothers, Bentley and Corbin.

Dear Normal First,

Thank you for your continued support of our students and ministry and the generous gift of \$150! Your donation will help support our weekly worship, 24/7 Prayer Week and Student Program.

Thanks again, ISU Wesley

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The Prayer Shawl ministry co-chairs would like to thank all of those who contributed to the ministry in several different ways during the past 6 mos.

Many newly knitted and crocheted items were blessed at the services on Nov. 18th and 19th.

We will meet again on Tues. Feb 27th at 1:30 p.m. We hope you can join us.

Please let us know if there is someone that would like to receive a shawl, lap afghan, or baby afghan.

Judy Poultney (309-452-7665) or
Lois Young (loisyoung@frontiernet.net)

Music Ministries—Together We Can...Share God's Love

HYMN INSIGHT: COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS

United Methodist Hymnal, # 196
Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788;
Tune: Rowland H. Prichard, 1811-1887

"I will shake all the nations, and the desire of all nations shall come..." (Haggai 2:7)

Anticipation is a necessary and important part of every believer's life. In Old Testament times, the people anxiously awaited a Messianic Kingdom. Today we should be waiting with the same urgent expectancy as did the Israelites of old. But our anticipation is the Lord's second advent – the piercing of the clouds and the sound of the trumpet...

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" is another of the more than 6,500 hymns written by Charles Wesley. It was first published in 1744 in a small collection of 18 poems titled *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord*. The vibrant HYFRYDOL tune was composed by a 20-year-old Welshman, Rowland H. Prichard, in about 1830. The tune means "good cheer."...

Just as Christ's birth 2,000 years ago dramatically changed the course of human history, so will the return of our Lord as the King of kings. With the saints of the ages we pray, "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus."

Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions, by Kenneth W. Osbeck, pg.362

Contact Janna Peterson (jpeterston@normalfirst.org) for further information about Music Ministries.

"GREENING" IS AN ACT OF LOVE, FAITHFULNESS AND PRAISE OF GOD'S CREATION.

Did you know: The McLean County Landfill is nearly full, and is expected to be closed sometime in 2018. Taxpayers in Bloomington-Normal pay \$50 per ton to dispose of solid waste, totaling well over \$1.2 million each year.

The FUMC Green Team is washing dishes after Wonderful Wednesday meals. We have reduced the waste from this weekly event significantly – now we have one bag of waste after serving 80 diners as opposed to 2 ½ bags when disposable dishes were used.

Thank you to all Wonderful Wednesday Workers for preparing, serving, and washing dishes after our fellowship meals!

SMART ENERGY WORKSHOP

Dec. 12, 10am, Lounge
Faith in Place is presenting ideas on saving money on your energy bills. Come learn how we impact our environment. All are welcome.

FRIENDSHIP TREE

Brrrr, the children at Fairview School, Boys and Girls Club and Home Sweet Home are needing NEW gloves, mittens, stocking caps and scarves. How can we help? By placing these articles on the Friendship Tree in our Welcome Center beginning the week after Thanksgiving.

Thanks to you -- their bodies and your hearts will be warmed all winter.



MIDWEST MISSION DISTRIBUTION CENTER WORKDAY

Did you ever spread out 11 huge garbage bags onto an even larger one, roll all 12 tightly together, put a rubber band around them and place them in a bin with thousands of others? That is one of the things volunteers from 1st Church did at Midwest Mission Distribution Center. Why? Because these were going into flood buckets to be sent to Puerto Rico for their massive clean up after the hurricane. Other people from our church "bin-dived" to pull out cleaning supplies, while some counted the correct number of dust masks for each bucket. What a fun day with volunteers who are doing God's work for those experiencing devastation. Keep the day in mind when we go back to MMDC next year, Monday, Oct. 29. Each trip finds us doing something interesting, creative and rewarding.

MISSION NEWS

The two missionaries Normal First United Methodist sponsors are Connie Wieck and Helen Roberts-Evans.

Connie Wieck, who visited our church this summer, is currently serving in Luzhou (loo-Jo), China. She has been with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries for 21 years. She works with the Amity Foundation which works in all areas of development for the Chinese people and Chinese Christians. Connie teaches in a Chinese teacher's college to improve the language and teaching methodology of students soon to enter the teaching field. Connie sent word that she has joined her church's choir to prepare for their very special Christmas service.

Helen Roberts-Evans, who also visited our church this summer was commissioned as a United Methodist missionary to work with the Liberian UMC education department. After the civil war in Liberia, her major task was to get the schools up and running. Now she is working to further educate the teachers.

Stay tuned to learn more of our missionaries.

FINANCE CORNER

Please consider strengthening the ministries of our Church through your giving. The PATH Act of 2015 made tax-free distributions from IRA accounts – up to \$100,000 a year – to qualified charitable organizations permanent for eligible individuals. Here is a recap of the IRA charitable rollover rules. You can make a direct transfer if:

1. You are 70.5 or older on the day of the gift.
2. You transfer up to \$100,000 directly from your IRA to one or more qualified charities.
3. You pay no income tax on the gift. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your tax deductions.
4. The gift can satisfy all or part of the required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.
5. The gift is not used to fund a gift annuity, charitable remainder trust, donor advised fund, or private foundation.
6. You do not receive any goods or services in return for the rollover gift in order to qualify for tax-free treatment.

Check with your IRA administrator or tax advisor for more information.

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

We are grateful for the wonderful response to our Stewardship Campaign. Please accept a sincere thank you to all of those that have turned in an estimate of giving card for 2018. We are still accepting cards, so if you haven't turned one in yet we hope you are able to soon. They can be placed in the offering plate or brought to the church office. A returned estimate of giving card assists the church greatly in preparing a church budget for 2018. Your commitment helps First United Methodist Church continue to build the ministries of this church for future generations.

Thank you again for all your financial support.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions for 2017 will be accepted until January 5, 2018. After that date, all contributions will be applied to 2018. If you wish to make a 2017 donation between January 1st and January 5th, please clearly mark your check (in the memo line and date it accordingly) and if you use an offering envelope please mark it as well so that proper credit will be given. Since the church office will be closed from December 25 to January 1, please plan to mail year end contributions or bring them to the church office between January 2 and January 5.

Financial Report

General Fund

October	Monthly	YTD
Income	\$65,898.81	\$633,724.78
Expenses	\$69,094.94	\$624,856.69

Attendance

Date	Attendance
9/30 & 10/1	280
10/7 & 8	265
10/14 & 15	311
10/21 & 22	267
10/28 & 29	313

YOUTH AT NORMAL FIRST

Youth ministries at Normal First has had an active fall! We have found our way through the flashlight corn maze at Rader Farms, helped with Trunk-or-Treat & the Chili Cook-off, and raked leaves. Several of our young ladies learned more about personal safety as we participated in a self-defense class led by Bill Martin. We have also met weekly for Bible study and for youth group. As November comes to a close, we will be helping with the Festival of Trees, and we will serve a meal at Safe Harbor the day after Thanksgiving. As you can see from all that we've been doing this month, the youth of Normal First care about serving the community, serving the church, growing in faith, and having fun!



CHILDREN'S EDUCATION MINISTRIES

ADVENT WREATH MAKING

Dec 3rd, 11-1pm. Lounge

It's a make and take so families can come and go as they want during that time frame. What happens at church should never stay at church! When we look at how faith formation happens in the lives of our children and adults, what happens at home and with families is the most important indicator of the lifelong faith growth of our kids. To ensure that the season of Advent is not just an at-church experience, join us and create an Advent Wreath to take home. Families will also be given a Devotion Booklet that will help build anticipation through discussion questions. Use this resource to ensure that the coming of Christ is central to the season! Sign up at the Welcome Desk or email Jill at jmcniff@normalfirst.org.



ALL are welcome!

GIVING TREE

Beginning December 3rd, a Giving Tree will be located in the Narthex with tags of requested items for our Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. A few examples are: puzzles, playdough, balls, infant board books, art supplies, etc. Thank you in advance for any items you can donate.

LOOKING AHEAD

January 7th Parent Meeting 5 pm, Lounge

All parents of children and youth are invited to dinner and breakouts on what kids and youth are doing here at Normal First. This fall we started incorporating Orange Philosophy/Curriculum. Orange is a strategy for combining critical influences in life to fuel faith in the next generation. Orange is a path, a strategy that combines the strength of two—yellow (church) and red (family)—to create the brilliance of another, Orange. By combining the critical influences of the light of the church and the love of the family, the Orange strategy synchronizes efforts and shows a generation who God is, more effectively than either could alone.



UMW
Circles

Sonrise Circle

1st & 3rd
Wednesday
6:30 am

Denny's Restaurant
1615 N. Main St.

Normal

Ruth Circle

Quarterly

7 pm Church lounge

Vesper Circle

3rd Tuesday of month

1:30 pm Church lounge

Mercy Circle

3rd Wednesday of month

9:30 am Church lounge

New Hope Circle

4th Monday of month

7 pm Church lounge



United Methodist Women

VESPER CIRCLE

Tuesday, Dec. 19, 12:30pm

Lunch at Avanti's, Normal

RSVP to Patsy Sherrard, 452-3711

MERCY CIRCLE

Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 9:30am

Christmas Brunch at the home
of Mary Caisley

401 W. Summit St., Normal

Prayer: Rose Pascal

Hostesses: Joan Beattie, Jan

Crowley, Rose Pascal

RUTH CIRCLE

We will not be meeting on
Mon., Dec. 18th. Instead, Ruth
Circle will host its annual brunch
on Sunday, Dec, 10th. Please
note, beginning in January, Ruth
Circle will move to quarterly
meetings. For more information,
please contact Janet
(jclammey@gmail) or Nicole
(rummelnicole@yahoo.com).

NEW BOOKS IN YOUR CHURCH LIBRARY FOR DECEMBER 2017

Christmas is a joyful, beautiful and busy time. Make some time in your schedule to slow down and READ a Christmas book. Come in, browse, and look for the Stars in your Church Library. Christmas items are marked with a star. You will find materials celebrating the birth of Jesus. There are Christmas poems, Christmas art, Christmas legends, Christmas crafts, Christmas carols, Christmas around the world and Christmas stories

New Children's Titles:

I Am Small by Emma Dodd **E DOD**

Do you still love me? by Charlotte Middleton **E MID**

Anywhere Farm by Phyllis Root **E ROO**

Together Always by Edwina Wyatt **E WAY**

My book for kids with cancer by Jason Gaes **j 616.9 GAE**

Who Counts? 100 Sheep, 10 Coins, & 2 Sons by Amy-Jill Levine & Sandy E. Sasso **j 226.8 LEV**

Courage by Bernard Waber **j 179 WAB**

New Adult Title:

Nine Essential things I've Learned About Life by Harold S. Kushner **248.86 KUS**

ISU WESLEY FOUNDATION

This semester has been all over the place. We've had quite a few transitions in a short amount of time. With Mallory Moore accepting new employment serving a campus ministry in Madison, Wisconsin, and Roxy Twaddle and Luke DeLong stepping in as interim Co-Campus Ministers, it has been a crazy time. However, we have finally found a time to be at peace and spend the whole week praying. The theme of this Prayer Room is "Be The Change". The students have

been able to more or less create their own prayer room. At the start of the week, they were give a totally white room, a blank canvas, and were able to do with it whatever they wanted. The beautiful thing about this is seeing all the color and creation come to life as the week has progressed. In this prayer room, students are able to connect with God in whatever way seems easiest for them. This prayer week, every year, seems to bring so many people closer to God. We were excited to see some of the transformations as the week closed .

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All submissions subject to editing.

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Publication Date: 3rd Sunday of each month.

Worship Times

Saturdays:

5:00 pm Worship-casual

Sundays:

9:30 am Worship-traditional

9:30 am Sunday School for all ages

11:00 am Worship-blended

11:00 am Sunday School for adults

First United Methodist Church of Normal Staff & Information

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1-4 pm
Monday-Friday

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Wi-Fi Network: FUMC-Guest
Password: normal1st



We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

(Social Principles of The United Methodist Church)

First United Methodist Church in Normal has committed itself to provide a Christian community and ministry without reference to any boundaries including age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, economic condition, physical or mental ability. We strive to be an open and accepting community in line with our understanding