

# First Connection

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

## PALM SUNDAY WEEKEND

March 24 & 25  
9:30 service Palm Processional  
w/children  
11:00 Cantata, *Eyes of Faith:  
Seeing and Believing the Messiah*

## MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

March 29, 12pm, Chapel  
7pm, Lounge  
Celebrate Holy Communion

## GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

March 30, 7pm, Sanctuary

## EASTER SERVICES

March 31, 5pm, Sanctuary  
April 1, 9:30 & 11am, Sanctuary

## Holy Week



### EASTER OFFERING

A special Easter offering is taken every year at our church which supports our missions. This year we will be collecting for the Community Health Clinic and our 2 missionaries, Connie Wieck (Luzhou, China) and Helen Roberts-Evans (Monrovia, Liberia). Your Easter gifts do make a difference in the lives of many. Thank you.

### BRING FLOWERS TO EASTER WORSHIP!

Please bring some flowers to help us transform the ugly, barren cross into a beautiful symbol of Resurrection. You can bring real flowers (from home or flower shop), silk or plastic. The cross will again be outside in the front yard.



## Mission Fundraiser at Pizza Ranch

Thursday, April 12

ALL sales between 5:00 - 8:00 pm the church will receive 10% of all sales including eating-in, delivery and takeout.



Persons do not have to identify themselves as members of our church. Encourage family and friends to dine.

Proceeds will go to Baby Fold.

## Spring Musical/Art Auction



Join us for the Children's Spring Musical, *In the Image*.

When: Saturday, April 21, 5:00 and Sunday, April 22, 9:30

In conjunction with the spring musical, visit and bid on a masterpiece created by our kids and youth. Proceeds of the Kid and Youth Silent Art Auction go to Our Conference, Our Kids



**THOUGHTS FROM THE PASTOR**

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Romans 8:38-39

Not too many days ago, I was out walking in my back yard. It looked like death. The sky was gray. The trees were barren. The little garden patch suggested no promise of tomatoes. The bushes and flowers that had been cut back in the Fall offered no hope that they would ever again produce color. And then, as I looked down carefully at the edge of the lawn, I saw something. Little green sprouts of grass. Tiny and fragile looking, but they were there. A sign of hope. A sign, after a long and cold winter, that Spring was already at work. Out of death, comes life.

In Christianity, what many people are looking for is a magic shield against death and destruction. If we pray the right prayer, our children will be saved from tragedy. If we pledge our allegiance to God in the right ways, we will be spared from cancer and car wrecks and the worst suffering we see around us.

Christianity does work that way at times. I hear powerful stories of miracles. Someone was held up and just missed the plane that went down in fiery flames. A police car just happens to roll by as a prayer is said to be protected from a shadowy figure that looks menacing. I believe these things do happen.

This kind of supernatural bending of the laws of nature is not what I experience most of the time, however. In my experience, the real power of Christianity does not come in death-defying acts. The real and more

common experience of Christianity come in Resurrection. Like non-Christians, we have to walk real power of Christianity does not come in death-defying acts. The real and more common

through the valley of the shadow of death. In Easter we experience that no matter how bleak it looks, we are not walking alone. In Easter we experience that no matter how hopeless it feels, there is another side. We keep walking until we find that there is something beyond the cancer. We keep walking until we realize that there is a land of love beyond our grief. We keep walking until we find that the betrayal and loss do not define us or control us. There is more. Much more. We keep following until we discover that Grace is real and the truest love never dies and that on the other side of that valley of death with all of its dry bones, there is a land of Spring colors and sunshine warming our souls.

I don't deny the reality of death. The more I walk in faith, however, the more I see Resurrection. I see it everywhere. All around me. Why did I not notice it before? Out of death, or beyond it, there is new life. It seems to be the most powerful force in the universe. Resurrection.

Easter people, this changes everything about how we die and how we live.

*Pastor Kent*

**WORSHIP THEMES IN APRIL**

**"WHO ARE WE?"**

April 7 & 8	Followers of Jesus Christ
April 14 & 15	Inclusive Community
April 21 & 22	Caretakers
April 28 & 29	Conduits of Grace

# 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 9:15 am in Room 53.

## SSO

Second Sunday Out will be on April 8th at 5:30 pm. Meet at Panera's in Normal. All are welcome to join for this Dutch-treat, order-off-the-menu fellowship time.

## NEW SSO

Second Saturday Out will meet April 14 following the 5 pm worship service at Denny's in Normal. If you have questions, please contact Jane Whitman (whitman1707@gmail.com, 454-8770 )

## The Prayer Shawl Ministry

Members will gather in the Youth Lounge April, 10th and 24th at 1:30 p.m. We will continue working on items they have started and attach labels and tags to finished items. New members are always welcome. If you know someone who would benefit from a prayer shawl, lap robe, or baby afghan contact Judy Poultney (452-7665) or Lois Young (963-5517).

## ALL CHURCH FIRST FEST

Sunday, June 3, 4 - 6:30 pm at Underwood Park in Normal for our annual all church picnic, fun, games, and food! Watch the Welcome Center for sign up.

## BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

Saturday, Apr. 7, 4:30pm  
and Sunday, Apr. 8, 9 & 10:30am:  
Library



## NEXT NOISY OFFERING

**April 28 & 29**

We are very excited about our Noisy Offering theme. We are supporting Habitat for Humanity. Our current total to date is \$3,482.00.

## WONDERFUL WEDNESDAY

**April 4, 5:15-6:45pm**

Dinner & Program  
Wesley Foundation Spring Break Trip speaking on Habitat for Humanity Build

## APRIL POTLUCK

**April 15, 12pm, Lounge**

Join us as you can. Take some time to meet someone new. Bring a dish if you can. All are welcome.

Dear Pastors & Congregation,

Thank you for your courage and wisdom to initiate and participate in crucial conversations to understand the damaging effects of domestic violence, as well as the hope and restoration that is possible.

From these conversations, we have heard great testimonies of faith and strength, helped people understand more fully and deeply the dynamics of domestic violence, and welcomed people who freely gave their resources and expertise.

Thank you for joining us to strive for equality and respect in all relationships, and to speak up against power and control. We look forward to future awareness activities with our church youth, women, and men.

In Partnership for Peace,  
Deborah White & Senna Adjabeng

MCCA Countering Domestic Violence Program  
24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline 309-827-7070  
24-Hour Neville House Business Line 309-828-8913

## **Condolences to the families of:**

**Jean Beck**

February 12, 1927-February 22, 2018

**Laura Kant**

June 7, 1928-February 23, 2018

**George Walker**

November 7, 1934-February 27, 2018

**Judy Smithson Boehle**

April 13, 1940-March 2, 2018



# Music Ministries—Together We Can CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

Come join in the musical fun! April 21, 5pm & April 22, 9:30am.

**Cherub & Wesley children's choirs** have prepared a very special worship experience for you. The musical, *In the Image*, reminds us that being created in the image of God isn't about physical appearance. It's about creativity, faithfulness, responsibility, community, and the ability to find the good in things. How do we take care of God's creation? Including ourselves?!



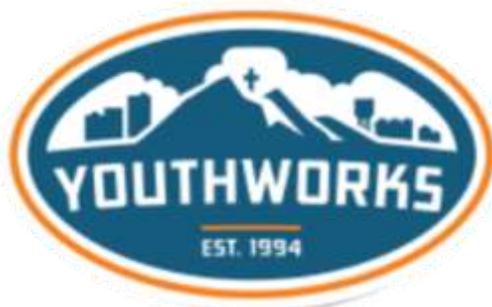
**Instrumentalists needed** – guitarists, drummers, woodwinds players, brass players, string players. Please contact Janna Peterson ([jpeterson@normalfirst.org](mailto:jpeterson@normalfirst.org)).

## YOUTH AT NORMAL FIRST



Please pray for the youth and advisors as we begin to prepare and fundraise for our Youth Mission Trips 2018! We appreciate your support!

This June, senior high youth will have the opportunity to work with Mountain T.O.P. in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. This interdenominational, non-profit Christian mission, which is affiliated with the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church, seeks to meet the physical, emotional, spiritual & social needs of people through the love of Christ.



In July, the junior high youth will travel to the Quad Cities to see how God is working there. While we don't know specifics yet, we know we may be serving in a food pantry, soup kitchen, or working with a local children's program, or even engaging adults with developmental differences. We are excited to learn how God will use us!

**APRIL MISSION FOCUS  
CENTER FOR HOPE FOOD PANTRY**

Have you ever had this predicament -- no toilet tissue, paper towels or tissue for that runny nose? Center for Hope clients face this many times as they cannot purchase personal items with food stamps. AND if you look far back in your closet--there just might be a toothbrush from your dentist!! Shampoo, deodorant, cleaning supplies, toothbrushes/paste, bar or laundry soap are other items our clients desperately need. Canned food is always welcomed. Center for Hope Food Pantry knows you will once again be generous with your support. Empty grocery bags will be distributed after church services on April 7 and 8. You may return your filled bags to the west entrance anytime and there are extra bags there if needed. God Bless Us Everyone.

Dear Normal First UMC,  
Thank you for the generous monetary gift! Your donation will help support our Spring small groups and 24/7 Prayer Week.  
Thank you also for the new refrigerator given as part of the Faith in Place grant. Thanks for supporting our students and ministry!  
ISU Wesley

**DID YOU KNOW???**

As important as worship is, we understand that for a variety of reasons there are times when you cannot be present at church for worship. Did you know that we have three easy options for you to continue to support the church financially even when you cannot be here?

1. You can have your banking institution directly mail the church a check on an ongoing basis.
2. You can donate online. Just go to our church website ([www.normalfirst.org](http://www.normalfirst.org)) and click on give.
3. You can also complete a form to have your contribution debited from your bank account on an ongoing monthly basis.

These electronic giving opportunities work well for our members who cannot attend weekly or who prefer a different option to giving. They also work well for the church because you can support the important ministries of the church even when you have to be away. If you have any questions about any of these opportunities, please call Leta Buhrmann, Finance Manager, at 452-2096 or email [business@normalfirst.org](mailto:business@normalfirst.org).

**CELEBRATING OUR  
CAMPING MINISTRIES**

**April 7 & 8**

We'll have representatives from East Bay Camp to share about summer camping offered. Summer camps provide a time to get away, enjoy the beauty of nature and opportunities to grow deeper in our faith. And they will bring to us one of the best parts of camping—S'mores!  
Discounts if registered by April 15th and remember the Church helps with payment.

**FROM THE GREEN TEAM**

Small changes can have a big impact. In the United States, we use about 100 billion plastic bags a year. If tied together, these bags could circle the equator 773 times! Recycling may seem like the answer, but only 91% of all discarded plastic will end up getting recycled. Try out these ideas to make a positive change:

- use refillable water bottles, washable utensils and containers in a reusable lunch bag;
- use a durable tote bag for shopping at the grocery store and the mall;
- pass on using a plastic straw in your drink;
- keep metal or bamboo utensils handy;
- avoid purchasing items packaged in plastic

Financial Report

General Fund		
February	Monthly	YTD
Income	\$57,286.22	\$136,379.35
Expenses	\$67,984.27	\$131,371.25

Attendance

Date	Attendance
Feb. 2 & 3	247
Feb. 10 & 11	276
Feb. 17 & 18	242
Feb. 24 & 25	305

# CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

Deadline for early bird camp registration is April 15<sup>th</sup>! Remember we have scholarships to help offset the fees.

Pick up a Camping Guide 2018 to see all the different camps made available! Kids can explore creation, encounter Christ, and adventure on! For more questions, email Jill at [jmcniff@normalfirst.org](mailto:jmcniff@normalfirst.org)

## Save the Date! Vacation Bible School

June 10-13, 6-8pm

Rolling River Rampage: Experience the Ride of a Lifetime with God

Ages Preschool to 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Volunteers needed! Talk to Jill for details.

More details to come!



## JSU WESLEY FOUNDATION Ashes To Go!

Last month, we entered a time of Lent. As we prepare for the season of Lent, we celebrate Ash Wednesday. This day is a time of reflection and recognition of our own mortality. This year, the students and staff spent part of the day on Ash Wednesday on campus passing out ashes to students. Last year, we discovered that there were

many students who currently weren't going to church, but wanted to receive ashes. We saw how many students appreciated that they were able to get ashes on the go, so we decided to do it again. We had many students come to us to receive ashes, and many others who had no idea what we were doing who were interested. Overall, it was exciting to see all the students who either wanted to seek their faith, or who were curious about what we were doing.

## OUR CONFERENCE, OUR KIDS

United Methodists care about all of our children. Through our five children's agencies in the Conference, we are the hands and feet of Jesus helping the children. Our Conference, Our Kids is a conference wide campaign to raise a \$2.5 M endowment that will pay the salaries of the spiritual director at each of our five children's agencies. Our church is encouraged to raise \$25,000 for this endowment in 3 years – and we can do it!

If you missed the Trivia night on March 7, and missed signing a pledge card in church, you have numerous ways to help. At any time, you may add a check to the offering, but be sure the memo says OCOK. There are yellow pledge cards in the church or you may use this one. The church office will take contributions anytime.

## OUR CONFERENCE, OUR KIDS PLEDGE

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is:

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1 time gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ OR

I pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (month) or (year)  
to be completed by (2018) (2019) or (2020)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR CHOICE**

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_



## 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

April 17, 1:15pm, meet at Church then  
Tour Holly Brook Villas  
Light Refreshments  
Hostesses: Bonnie Moser, Janet Auer,  
Jean Macesich  
Devotions: Patsy Sherrard

### MERCY CIRCLE

April 18, 9:30am, Lounge  
Program: "Be Just, Be Green"- Kathy Gossard  
Hostesses: Marlene Dietz and Becky Goeckner  
Devotions: Jayne Fitschen

### COME AND APPRECIATE THE BIRDS OF SPRINGTIME IN ILLINOIS



Deanna Frautschi will present "Spring Is On The Wing" on Wednesday, April 11 at 6:00 PM in the Church Lounge. Deanna will show us some of the most beautiful pictures of winged creatures of nature that anyone could hope to see. Everyone is welcome to come to this great program.

In Deanna's words, "Spring brings with it the anticipation of winged beauties returning to our Central Illinois backyard. These photos represent songbirds, butterflies and bees who fly in to enjoy our nature habitat ... some for a brief respite on their migration north and some to stay for the summer and raise their young in our backyard.

This presentation by Deanna Frautschi is sponsored by the UMW.

### 2018 UMW ATTIC SALE Friday, July 20, 2018



Donations will be accepted  
**beginning 2 pm** on Sunday, July 8th.

For questions or to volunteer your time,  
please call Carol Morgan 452-3127,  
Mary Foster 452-2479, or Linda Park  
452-7052.

### RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Thank you to Mr. Kevin Jones and Mrs. Suzanne Montoya for teaching us about Restorative Practices in recent worship services. Restorative Practices have the potential to be a game changer in our communities. If you would like to learn more and consider how you might play a small part in this movement yourself, contact Pastor Kent at [pastor-kent@normalfirst.org](mailto:pastor-kent@normalfirst.org). If there is enough interest, Mr. Jones has offered to lead a training event at our

church. Another option would be to go on the Regional Office of Education's website at [www.roe17.org](http://www.roe17.org) and check out the training events listed there under professional development. If you are more interested in the juvenile justice system, you can contact either Pastor Kent or Mrs. Montoya at [suzanne.montoya@mcleancountyil.gov](mailto:suzanne.montoya@mcleancountyil.gov) or (309) 888-5370. Mrs. Montoya and Mr. Jones are also available to do presentations for groups in the church or community.

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Editor: [secretary@normalfirst.org](mailto:secretary@normalfirst.org).

All submissions subject to editing.

**Submission Deadline:** 2nd Sunday of each month.

**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

11:00 am Worship-blended

11:00 am Sunday School for adults

## First United Methodist Church of Normal Staff & Information

### Co-Pastor

Rev. Kent King-Nobles  
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### Co-Pastor

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### Finance Manager

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### Administrative Assistant

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### Director of Music

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### Dir. of Children & Family Ministries

Jill McNiff  
[children@normalfirst.org](mailto:children@normalfirst.org)

### Dir. Buildings/Grounds

Mike Sweeney

### Congregational Care Coordinator

Barb Todd  
[btodd@normalfirst.org](mailto:btodd@normalfirst.org)

### Organist

Dr. Dennis Gotkowski

### Contact Information

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Normal, IL. 61761  
Phone: 309-452-2096  
Fax: 309-452-1327

Office Hours

8-12 pm

1-4 pm

Monday-Friday

Website: <http://normalfumc.org/>

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 of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ expects of us.