



The Circuit Rider

Princeton First United Methodist Church
316 S. Church Street ♦ Princeton, IL 61356
princetonfirstumc.org

Pastor Michael Ray Hickok

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♦ FEBRUARY 2026 ♦

A Word from Pastor Mike

Lent is a season of forty days, not including Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which points to the lengthening of the days as spring approaches. The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism for new converts to Christianity. Later it became a time of reflection and self-examination for all Christians.

At the heart of our Christian faith is our participation in the life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and promised return of Jesus Christ as Lord. These events are true whether or not I prepare for Easter. However, without my heart and life being ready, I may not experience the richness, depth and power of these realities. Lent is an intentional, yearly reminder of the need for the renewal of our Christian faith. Living in such a busy age, requires a time to refocus our thoughts and practices. Surrounded by a group of Christians who love and encourage us, helps us to honestly examine our motives and actions.

The First UMC of Princeton family walks together on this journey each year. We will begin this holy season with our Ash Wednesday Worship on February 18, at 7:00 pm. We will gather to pray, sing, and receive ashes on our foreheads as a sign of our need for repentance.

As we journey together during this season of Lent, we invite you to worship with our church family each week on Sundays at 9:00 am and on the first and third Saturdays at 5:30 pm. This year, our *Lenten Study will be held on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 – 6:30 in Cushing Hall. This study will begin on February 25* and continue through April 1.

*May God in Christ bless you richly,
Pastor Michael Ray Hickok*

February Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship

Sundays 9:00

Saturday Evening Service

February 7th 5:30*

February 21st 5:30

Holy Communion

February 1st 9:00

February 7th 5:30

Ash Wednesday

February 18th 7:00pm

From the Office

Please coordinate with the office on any events or repairs going on at the church, so we don't have two things happening in one room. Thank you!

February at a Glance

February 1 - 6:00 Youth Group Meets
February 10 - 1:30 Care Team Meeting
4:00 Staff Parish Meeting
7:00 Church Council Meeting
February 11 - 10:00 Witness Team
February 15 - 6:00 Youth Group Meets
February 18 - 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service
February 19 - 11:30-5:30 Red Cross Blood Drive
6:30 Finance Meeting
February 23 - 6:30 Trustees Meeting
February 25 - 5:30 Lenten Study

Holy Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion will be served on the first Sunday and first Saturday of February - **Sunday the 1st** and **Saturday the 7th**. If you prefer to take communion at home with the live broadcast, you are welcome to pick up a communion pack from the office during the week before.



Our Table

Our Table will meet twice in February to provide a meal and fellowship to anyone who would like to attend. Everyone is invited to come on Mondays, **February 9 and 23 from 5:00 – 6:00 pm.**



February Change the World

February's Change the World will be donated to **Loads of Love**. This ministry provides quarters for people in need to wash and dry their clothes. Thanks for donating your change into the jar outside the Sanctuary, as we "change the world" with each and every coin!

Change the World January Report

In January, we raised \$857.46 for Freedom House.. This ministry protects and houses domestic abuse victims and offers them help and hope. Thank you so much for your generosity!

Red Cross Blood Drive

The Red Cross will sponsor their next blood drive on **Thursday, February 19 from 11:30 - 5:30 pm in Cushing Hall**. Did you know that every donation can save up to three lives when given to someone in need? Consider signing up online: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive> to reserve your time and help make sure enough blood is on hand when the need is great.

PFUMC APP

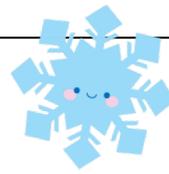
Scan the QR Code below to download new PFUMC Church App. More information on page 7.



A Few Notes To Remember

- **Calendars:** 2026 Calendars are here. They are on the table outside the office. A big thank you to Fioocchi-Jensen Funeral Home for giving us the calendars every year.
- **Offering Envelopes:** New offering envelopes for the year 2026 are located on the table in front of the church office.
- **Parking Announcement:** We have a number of people who have difficulty walking in our congregation. *We encourage those of you with no limitations on your mobility to park on the north and west sides of the building.* This will free up spaces on the east side for those who need to park closer. Thank you for your kindness.
- **Updates and Events:** Be sure to visit our updated website and to download our new PFUMC Church App from the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play store (Android).

SUNDAY SCHOOL



CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children's Sunday School was so much fun this month! Our faith focus was "God's community grows and changes" and we read stories about Solomon building a temple, the Israelites rebuilding the temple, and Jesus visiting the temple. The children played games that required teamwork, colored hot cocoa mugs, and talked about being resilient in our everyday lives and in our relationship with God.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Youth Sunday School is for children grades 6-12 meets at 10:00 following Sunday Worship each week.

YOUTH GROUP

February Youth Group will meet on Sunday February 1st and February 15th. All youth grades 6-12 are welcome, friends are welcome as well!

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The **Righteous Renegades** Sunday School welcome anyone who would like to **join in Cushing Hall at 10:00**. The group started a new study on "Christianity's Family Tree". Everyone is welcome!

The Middles Sunday School meets Sundays in **the library at 10:00**.

ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Every Monday Morning, the Ecumenical Women's Bible Study meets at 10:00 am in the Conference Room at the Church. This is the room next to the Choir Room. During the month of February, we will continue the DVD series "Embraced by God" with Babbie Mason. *Starting March 2*, we will start a Lenten Study called "Experiencing Easter". All women are invited to attend regardless of Church affiliation. This is a "drop-in" group which means that you come when you can. You are not required to be there each week. For more information you can contact Janet Becker at beckerjnj71@gmail.com.



United
Women
in Faith

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The United Women in Faith will begin the new year of 2026 with a meeting on **Wednesday, February 18th at 1:30 pm** in Cushing Hall. All women of the church are invited to join this group. There is no particular program scheduled for this meeting. We will discuss options for the upcoming year. Tentatively, the schedule for this years meetings will be, April 15, June (tbd), September 16, November 18 and the annual Christmas luncheon @ The Underground Inn on December 2. In addition, a Culver's Share Night is scheduled for June 16 and a bake sale for Lunch in the Park is scheduled for July 10.

If you are interested in joining our group, please feel free to attend any of the meetings. If you have any questions, you can contact Ruth Denault at 815-878-8122. Hostesses for the February meeting are Val Horras and Judy Harris.



YOUNG AT HEART

The Young at Heart group will be taking a break in February and is planning a pizza party in March.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The 2025 annual financial statements were emailed out on January 22 to everyone who has an email address, so please check your "Inbox" or "Trash". For those who don't have an email address, your statements are in a basket on the table outside of the office. Any questions, please talk to Shelly Grabill, Financial Secretary or email office@princetonfirstumc.org.



UPCOMING WINTER/SPRING LAITY EVENTS

Lay Leadership Training for the Prairie South District will be held **Saturday March 7** at Oregon UMC from 9:00 until noon. Specific session topics will be announced in February.

The **2026 Northern Illinois Conference Laity Convocation** will be held Saturday morning **March 21**. The in person event will be in Glen Ellyn. It will also be live-streamed to several satellite church sites, including Princeton FUMC. This is a great chance to hear Bishop Dan Schwerin and one of the Conference Lay Leaders both speak.



GREEN TEAM



Our Living World, Part 3: Water by Ask the UMC

Please visit UMNews.org for the complete article. The following is a short summary of direct quotes.

For Christians, water has significant meaning in our faith. In the creation narratives recorded in Genesis, water was present from the beginning of creation. (Genesis 1:1-2; 2:6.)

The richness of its meaning for Christians is shared in our baptismal liturgy. In the Thanksgiving over the Water, we pray remembering “the waters of creation and the flood, the liberation of God’s people by passage through the sea, the gift water in the wilderness, and the passage through the Jordan River to the promised land. We are baptized, cleansed of sin, and reborn through water as a symbol of God’s covenant.

Social Principles (www.umc.org/en/content/social-principles-the-natural-world#water-air).

Methodists support awareness of the need to clean up polluted water and we support policies to do so. We also have deep concerns about the privatization of water as a basic resource which should be available to all. Water must not be privatized and monopolized. It is to be shared like air, light and earth. It is God’s elemental provision for the survival of all God’s children on this planet.

In most of the United States there is easy access to clean, safe water. But now, especially in the Western states, climate change and heavy use is threatening the availability of water. Furthermore, populations with little wealth or political power (Native Americans in particular) have been systematically robbed of water rights.

The need for water access and purity is growing worldwide. Experts estimate that in fewer than 10 years, humanity’s demand for water could outstrip sustainability by as much as 40% due to rising energy needs and continued population growth. Water shortage from drought, climate change and energy production as well as industrial pollution, increase costs to find and maintain clean water, negatively impacting poorer communities.

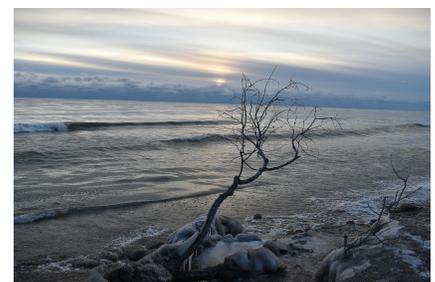
What can we do?

Individually we can:

1. Be mindful of personal water usage. Use less water for laundry and bathing, fix water leaks, limit watering of lawns.
2. Reusable bottles are better than one-time-use plastic bottles.
3. Minimize use of toxic and hazardous substances that may enter the water system.

Collectively we can:

1. Support investment in public infrastructure for clean water to all.
2. Advocate for policies that protect the health and sustainability of watersheds, rivers, lakes and oceans.
3. Ensure that water for human consumption is prioritized over industrial, energy or industrial agriculture demands.
4. Support policies that hold corporations and companies that pollute water responsible for cleanup and restoration of water health and safety, and demand effective enforcement against illegal pollution





Book Discussion Group

Please join the church book club on **February 10** to discuss "The Girl of Hummingbird Lane" by Lisa See. We will meet at **10:00 am** in the library.



Knitter's Group

Calling All Knitters and Crocheters! All skill levels are invited to come knit, crochet, loom or just chat on **Tuesdays at 2:30 pm** in the conference room.



Princeton Board Games Group

This group meets on Fridays at 6:00 pm in Cushing Hall. Everyone who's interested in learning more about modern board gaming and any player level is welcome to join this friendly group.



FUNERAL LUNCHEON DESSERTS



In the past the United Women in Faith have provided desserts for all funeral luncheons held here in Cushing Hall. Due to a very low number of members in UWF, they are asking that others in the church provide desserts and help at the luncheons also. Please let us know if you would be willing to serve in this way by signing up on the sheet outside the office.



READ THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

The Conference is leading a program that guides users through reading the Bible in one year in chronological order. Anyone interested in the daily calendar, a resource guide, and information about the online discussion group that meets on the second Wednesday of the month, please contact the office.



PFUMC MOBILE APP

We are excited to now offer a PFUMC app on your iPhone or Android device. The PFUMC app offers quick access to our Sunday Worship LiveStream, events page, prayer wall, and mobile Bible for on the go reading. It includes all the useful information found on the website in a convenient layout for quick reference on your phone or tablet. **No account setup, sign in, username or password is required!** Simply download the app from the App Store (iPhone users) or Google Play Store (Android) users. Or scan the QR code on page 2 of the newsletter.

WITNESS TEAM

In December of 2025, the Church Council approved the formation of a Witness Team. My understanding is that this is similar to what we used to call the “Committee on Evangelism”. Our first order of business was to determine the purpose of the team and to identify what a “Witness Ministry” might look like in our church. I think we can all agree that it is important to share the Good News about Jesus Christ with others. This will be the emphasis of this new Witness Team...how to share the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection with others and then trusting God for the outcome.

Our first project will be to provide Lenten Devotional Books to everyone so watch for those to become available soon. Watch for more updates. We have lots of other things in the planning stages.

LOVE

Valentine's Day is the Day when we celebrate love. I love my family with my whole being...my immediate family but also my extended family. Many years ago, someone said to me, “Remember, God loves your family even more than you do.” And she was right. God does love my family even more than I do, if you can believe that.

I grew up in the Methodist Church in Buda. Every Sunday morning the church was filled with families of multiple generations. Often you would see kids sitting with grandparents, or aunts and uncles or other members who nabbed a kid on the way into church. The church family was definitely family. If you look around our own church on Sunday morning you will see this...Children who grew up in the church and are now bringing their own families. Grandparents bringing grandchildren. Multi-generation families of Grandparents, Parents and Grandchildren all sitting together. People who have “adopted” a child on Sunday to bring them to church. But I also see many who do not have extended family with them. Kids get jobs, move away and have their own lives. At that point each one of them must decide if they will continue to attend church where they are.

The one thing I want more than anything is for my family to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. All of my children were baptized in the church, attended church and Sunday School regularly, confirmed in the church, married in a church and have since moved. We gave them the foundation but that’s only a beginning. I have really thought about how to continue to witness to my family. I believe the best approach is a long-term, gentle approach focused on living out my faith through Christ-like actions, consistently keeping them in my prayers, and fostering loving relationships. It means being a living example, sharing my personal testimony lovingly, respecting differences, and trusting God with the outcome, understanding it’s a process of modeling, sharing, and patiently waiting for God to work.

I can be a living example by showing unconditional love, kindness, patience and tell them how a relationship with Jesus Christ has sustained me through life. I can share with them why reading the Bible and understanding God's promises is so important to me. I can invite them to worship with me when possible.

I pray consistently for God to give me wisdom and to soften the hearts of my family to be receptive to His calling. Reality is that only God can change a heart but I can pray that those hearts will be receptive. We have to trust God’s timing.

In Matthew 28:19, Christ commissions his disciples by saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” I need to start with my own family...the ones I love the most but sometimes are the hardest to witness to.

Janet Becker
Witness Team



PRAYER CORNER

Remember in your prayers...Family of Kevin Kramer (Josh Bush's friend), Family of Janet Reimer (NIC Deaconess Amy Reimer's mother), Family of Norm Boone (Susannah Tournear's cousin), Mark (Pat James' son in law – cancer), Rich Mair (health issues), Jim Metz (Sue Ray's father – health issues), Jodee Zelenik (foot injury), Russ Frye (Jeany Gewin's cousin – hospice), Judd Lusher (Gewin's friend – health issues), John Sayers (cancer treatments), Bob Parker (health issues), Jim Bradshaw (Carol Byrd's dad - health issues), Rosie Baumgartner (fell and hurt arm) storm victims in our nation, those with cancer, or illness in our congregation, those awaiting tests/results, those recovering from surgery & treatments, the lonely, the homeless, refugees, immigrants, military personnel, health care workers, law enforcement, fire and emergency personnel.



Altar Flowers

If you're interested in providing flowers for the altar, let the church office know. Flowers are a beautiful part of God's creation, and people love seeing them in the Chancel area. You can order them from a florist, or pick them from your garden. Share the beauty with others as we worship God!



Treats for Social Hour

Volunteers are needed! The church provides the coffee, lemonade and water, but we rely on your baking skills/donations for the treats. Please consider signing up on the sheet outside the office, if you can provide treats of your choice. Thank you!



Donation Cart

If you have items to donate to Tri-County Food Pantry, please feel free to bring them in and drop them in the shopping cart located in Cushing Hall. The need is great, and all gifts are appreciated.

Worship Videos Online

The Sunday worship videos are always available on PFUMC's youtube.com channel. Open the YouTube app on your device, or type www.youtube.com into your internet browser. Then search for 'Princeton IL First United Methodist Church'. When you see one of our videos show up on your screen, click on it. If that's not the one you want to view, simply click on where it says 'First United Methodist Church' under the video that's playing. Then you'll be able to see the whole selection of videos you can choose.

Worship Videos are live Sundays on the church's Facebook page.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FINANCIAL PERSEVERANCE

On behalf of the PFUMC Finance Committee, we would like to say a big 'thank you' to all the people who have continued to contribute financially to the ministries of our church. Below are some of the ways in which you can give to the church.

1. Via mail – 316 S. Church Street, Princeton.
2. In the locked white mailbox by the main glass doors of the building.
3. Via your bank's on-line bill pay program. A physical check is then mailed to the church.
4. An automatic withdrawal (EFT/ACH) taken from your checking, savings or investment account. This can be done through your bank, or at our bank. **Contact Shelly Grabill for the bank information (i.e. routing number and acct. number).**
5. Through PayPal. Just visit our website (princetonfirstumc.org) and click on the 'giving' button. Then follow the instructions. You can set it up for a one-time use, or on-going. See Shelly if you have difficulties.

We continue to do ministry because of God's grace and your support.



FEBRUARY

Celebrations

Birthdays

1	Janet Becker	12	Paul Eddy	19	Janel Goodale
3	Amanda Petersen	13	Keeley McCarter	20	James Zawacki Samantha Krieger
4	Cindy Atkinson Andrew Birkey Kani Bopes	15	Erah Goodale	22	Brian Church Maddie Hildebrand Rex Lasson
5	Nancy Huber Nathan Warren	16	Alex Kniss Colin Kniss	27	Tami Zawacki
8	Frank Dunlap Marion Teschke	17	Denise Davis	28	Ruth Hayward Amanda Noord

Anniversaries

4	Eric and Anne Nelsen	14	Jack and Janet Becker
8	Joe and Beth Mulcahy		Richard and Ruth Philippe
10	Dennis and Dorothy Denton	23	Bill and Julie Kuhne

February 2026 at First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9 am Worship <i>with Holy Communion</i> <i>in-person or live-stream</i> 9:15 Children's Sunday School 10 Youth Sunday School 10 Middles Sunday School 10 Righteous Renegades 6:00 Youth Group	2 10:00 Women's Bible Study	3 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group 6:00 Handbells Practice	4 6:30 Choir practice	5 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	6 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	7  5:30 Saturday Evening Worship <i>with Holy Communion</i>
8 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Choir Sing 9:15 Children's Sunday School 10 Youth Sunday School 10 Middles Sunday School 10 Righteous Renegades	9 10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table 	10 10:00 Book Discussion Group 1:30 Care Team Meeting 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group 4:00 Staff Parish Meeting 6:00 Handbells Practice 7:00 Church Council Mtg	11 6:30 Choir practice 12 10:00 Witness Team	13 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	14 	
15 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Handbells Perform 9:15 Children's Sunday School 10 Youth Sunday School 10 Middles Sunday School 10 Righteous Renegades 6:00 Youth Group	16 10:00 Women's Bible Study	17 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group	18 6:30 Choir practice 1:30 United Women in Faith Meeting 7:00pm Worship	19 Red Cross Blood Drive 11:30 am - 5:30 pm	20 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	21  5:30 Saturday Evening Worship
22 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Choir Performs 9:15 Children's Sunday School 10 Youth Sunday School 10 Middles Sunday School 10 Righteous Renegades	23 10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table 	24 6:00 Handbells Practice 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group	25 ASH WEDNESDAY 5:30 Lenten Study 6:30 Choir practice	26 6:30 Finance Meeting	27 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	28 February Change the World: Loads of Love



The First United Methodist Church of Princeton, Illinois

Worship Service 9:00 a.m.
Saturday Service (1st & 3rd Saturdays) 5:30 p.m.

Michael Ray Hickok	Pastor
Fallon Bush	Treasurer
Josh Bush	A/V Technology Director
Charles Gebeck	Organist
Pat James	Chancel Choir Accompanist
Shelly Grabill	Office Manager & Financial Secretary
Amanda Noord	Children's Sunday School Leader
Shelley Orwig	Youth Sunday School Leader
Karen Newby	Handbell Choir Director/Chancel Choir Director
Tom Newby	Lay Leader
Elizabeth Schlender	Communications Director
Chris Rucinski	Nursery

Church Office	(815) 872-2821
Church General E-mail	office@princetonfirstumc.org
Church Website	princetonfirstumc.org

**The First United Methodist Church of Princeton
316 South Church Street
Princeton, IL 61356**

**POSTMASTER:
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



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