



The Circuit Rider

Princeton First United Methodist Church
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princetonfirstumc.org

Pastor Michael Ray Hickok

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♦ AUGUST 2026 ♦

Notes and Thoughts from Pastor Kevin

Shalom: First off I want to say what a privilege and honor it is to be asked to serve this one of God's Churches. My name is Kevin Mason I live in Ottawa with my wonderful wife Nancy and 2 very spoiled cats. We just put our last rescue dog down last week 14+ yrs old and it was time to send him to be with his previous furry friends. We have 2 adult sons, 1 in Ottawa and 1 in Fayetteville Tn, we have 6 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren as well as serving 97 foster children since 2011.

I can be reached at anytime by calling **815.993.6452**, this phone is answered anytime except when we're supposed to be in church. I'm Pulpit supply throughout the district and conference, trained in Congregational Care Ministry. It is expected I will be here until September 14th for all your spiritual, questions, frustrations and needs during these difficult times, the good news is that we will get through this if we remain in God's word, with grace, mercy and love.

Grace for the Journey Ahead

As the calendar turns to August, a familiar shift happens all around Northern Illinois. Our grocery stores fill with school supplies, families rush to finish summer road trips, and our educators spend long hours prepping empty classrooms. There is a beautiful, anxious anticipation in the air. For all our children, youth, and educators inside the classroom and out, a brand-new year is waiting to unfold.

As United Methodists, this season of preparation always reminds me of a core pillar of our faith: **prevenient grace**.

John Wesley described prevenient grace as the love of God that surrounds us before we are even aware of it. It is the grace that goes before us. It warms our hearts, prompts our first steps toward community, and prepares the way long before we arrive. God is already present in the hallways, classrooms, dorms, and offices and buses our students and teachers will enter this fall. You do not have to carry God into those places; Grace is already there waiting for you.

To celebrate this truth, we are hosting our annual **Blessing of the Backpacks during worship on Sunday, August 16th**. This is for anyone involved with education, including Christian education, from Pre-K to Graduate School, student, teacher, administrator, janitor, bus driver, kitchen staff, especially grandparents or others that watch school age children before or after school. Please bring backpacks, and/or ID badges to be blessed.

Together, we will surround them with prayer and hand out a special tag for their bags. These tags are a simple, daily reminder: as you walk into a new school year, you are surrounded by the prayers of this congregation and wrapped tightly in a grace that went before you.

I look forward to spending the next 8 weeks serving each of you. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time either by phone or in person. See you Sunday!

*Yours in Christ,
Pastor Kevin
God Bless*

August at a Glance

August 10- 11:45 Youth Group Lake Day

August 11 - 10:00 Book Discussion Group

7:00 Church Council Meeting

August 20- 11:30-5:30 Blood Drive

6:30 Finance Committee Meeting

August 24 - 6:30 Trustees Meeting

Holy Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion will be served on the first weekend of August- **Sunday August 2nd**. 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 August to provide a meal and fellowship to anyone who would like to attend. Everyone is invited to come on Mondays, **August 10th and 24th from 5:00 – 6:00 pm.**



August Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship
Sundays 9:00

Holy Communion

August 2nd 9:00

Backpack Blessing



We invite all elementary students, teachers, education support staff, and school employees to bring their backpacks (or ID badges) to Sunday worship on Sunday, **August 16th** to receive a special blessing from Pastor Kevin to kick off the 26-27 school year. We invite friends, grandchildren cousins, neighbors to receive a blessing during our Children's Moment. Good Luck to all our students returning to school!

August Change the World

August Change the World will be donated to **Buddy Bags**, which is an organization that works with local schools to provide lunches and snacks for kids who may not have enough food at home through the weekends and school holidays. Thanks for donating your change into the jar outside the Sanctuary, as we "change the world" with each and every coin!

Change the World July Report

In July, we raised \$664.78 for School Supplies to help students in the local area who can't afford to purchase necessary supplies for school. Your donations make it possible for them to have these items to begin their school year. Thank you so much for your generosity!

A Few Notes To Remember

- **Coffee Hour Treats:** If you enjoy the goodies after Sunday worship and would like to continue having coffee hour, *we need people to donate store bought or homemade cookies or bars*. Please sign up on the sheet outside the office.
- **Wear Your Nametags:** We encourage you to please wear your name tags on the stand by the sanctuary doors. Pastor Kevin would like to get to learn your names. It also helps others who are newer to this church become familiar with your names and faces.
- **Bells and Choir Resumes in September**
- **Donation Shopping Cart Reminder:** We are always accepting food items for Tri-County Food Pantry. Items most needed are: Hamburger Helper, peanut butter, canned fruit in syrup, canned chicken, white or brown rice, canned ravioli, and any kind of snacks.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Vacation Bible School's Snowball Mountain Challenge was a success! 33 kids from our church and the community participated in four nights of games, bible stories, music, and crafts! The theme's bible verse was *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."* Phillipians 4:13.

Snowball fights, skits with Ollie the arctic seal and Activities Director Jack, and the snowball bean bag toss competition were some of the highlights of the week! We also raised \$350 for the Magi Baby Chest located at St. Louis Church.

A big thank you to all of the volunteers that helped decorate, lead the groups and stations, and prayed for us!

Amanda Noord, VBS Director



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children's Sunday School will start back up on **September 13th!** Join us for a bible story, games, crafts, and lots of fun! Any child 5th grade and under is welcome to attend! Sunday School takes place during Sunday Worship and begins immediately following the children's moment.

YOUTH GROUP

Mark your calendars for **Monday, August 10th!** Our Junior/Senior High youth group will go to Paul and Carol Byrd's home at Lake Thunderbird for lunch and an afternoon of swimming and boating. We will carpool out and back, leaving around 11:45 a.m. and returning around 4:00 p.m. Please bring a beach towel, sunscreen, a water bottle if you wish, and a friend! Looking forward to a fun day on the water!

ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Women's Ecumenical Bible Study is doing a study titled "God of Creation". This Bible Study meets every Monday at 10:00 am in the Conference Room. It's a "drop-in" group which means attendance every week is not required. The Ecumenical Bible Study is open to women of all faiths or denominations.

If you have questions, contact Janet Becker at 815-866-1801 or beckerjnj71@gmail.com.



United
Women
in Faith

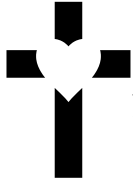
UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The United Women in Faith held a bake sale in conjunction with Lunch in the Park on Friday, July 10th. We received many donations of assorted baked goods from both, the members of UWF and members of the congregation. We collected a total of \$767.50.

Thank you to those who volunteered to be there to help, to those who donated baked goods or gave a cash donation, and to those who purchased items. All of this resulted in a successful day.

Ruth Denault, President UWF





OUR STORIES, HIS GLORY

Monthly Stories of God's Presence from our Congregation

I was raised and confirmed in the Lutheran Church. After we were married, we decided the Methodist Church was a better fit. We were faithful members and I felt that it was important for our children to see their Dad in church AND Sunday School. Regular church and Sunday School helped me grow in my faith. In 1996, I attended the Walk to Emmaus. That weekend I felt the impact of Christ's death on the cross...the realization that Christ died for ME! It was this Walk to Emmaus weekend that led me to become more involved in my church...on committees, doing wiring and repairs, going on mission trips, helping serve communion and being head of trustees for 10 years. God gave me talents to fix all sorts of things. I used those talents at church with electrical wiring, keeping the old boiler going, lighting and general repairs. And back when Jay Carr was here I even played in the church band. I found my niche at Our Table by running the dishwasher each week.

I have realized that God wants me to talk in front of people and take on more of a leadership role. This is something that used to be way out of my comfort zone. In recent years I have given many talks at Walk to Emmaus and taken on leadership roles there.

God is still working on me.

Jack Becker

Thank You

I and the family of Grace Swearingen would like to thank you for all your prayers, love and concern at for Grace's passing. We received many cards, calls, food and five members from our church attended her visitation.

My friends, our church is doing what God has taught us—to love one another, to know Christ and to make Christ known. We are a church of love, caring and kindness. You all are doing God's work by showing His love to others, and our family has been shown this.

I am so very proud of our church and all of our members who never stop doing His work, and others are blessed by it as we were.

Thank You to all of you,
Judy Harris and Grace's Family



FROM THE GREEN TEAM

How to Make your Fridge More Efficient?

By Corinne Iozzio

July 18 2026



The following has been edited for length. Condensed from one5c.com/food-waste-storing-tips-136944433

See full article for more valuable information.

Refrigeration is key for slowing food spoilage. But it also is one of the biggest drains in the home (about 7% of home energy consumption). There is conflicting advice to improve refrigeration efficiency. Here are some of the most useful tested practices.

1. *Set the right temperature.* The best temperature is 35-38 degrees F, but always under 40 degrees. The freezer temperature should be set to 0 degrees.
2. *Clean the coils!* Use a Swiffer style wand every few months to remove dust/pet hair/etc. from the condenser coils.
3. *Give it 'room to breathe.'* Leave at least 2-3" between the wall and the back of the fridge for air circulation.
4. *Check the seals.* You can use the 'dollar bill test.' Open the door and place a dollar bill between the door and the gasket. Then close the door. If you can move the Washington easily with the door shut, that could mean your seal's not tight enough. See full article for ways to correct and/or replace a bad gasket.
5. *Your mother is right-Keep the door closed!* Think before you open the door, make a quick selection, and close the door firmly. Warm air takes lots of energy to cool. Interesting fact: a full fridge allows less warm air to get in than one less full.
6. *Turn off the ice maker temporarily or permanently (and use ice cube trays).* An automatic ice maker uses between 12-20% of the fridge's energy consumption.



BELLS AND CHOIR RESUMES



Bells and Choir will be starting in September. Watch for information for practices starting sometime in the end of August. We welcome anyone who wishes to ring bells or sing with us.

FINANCE REPORT FOR JUNE 2026

	June	Year to Date	Percent of Budget	Percent of Year
Income	\$16,122	\$161,596	50	50%
Expenses	\$31,646	\$177,262	45	50%
Net income	(\$15,524)	(\$15,666)		

June was a difficult month for the finances of the Church with the shortfall in June running basically all of the shortfall for the entire year. Donations through the first 6 months are on pace with the budget (50% of budget and halfway through the year) however there are a few annual donations that are received in the first few months of the year. Expenses are running a little behind the budget at 45% of budget. This is usual as we normally budget a bit high on the expense side. The teams in control of expenses continue to manage to keep them as low as possible while doing all we have been asked to provide to the Church and its members.



BLOOD DRIVE

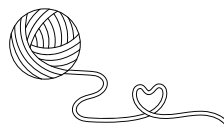


The Red Cross will sponsor their next blood drive on **Thursday, August 20 from 11:30 - 5:30 pm in Cushing Hall**. Did you know that every donation can save up to three lives when given to someone in need? Consider signing up online: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive> to reserve your time and help make sure enough blood is on hand when the need is great.



Book Discussion Group

Please join the church book club on **August 11** to discuss "Finding My Way" by Malala Yousafzai. 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 interested in learning more about modern board gaming and any player level is welcome to join this friendly group.



Grief Share

A new 13 week video seminar series and support group is starting on Monday, August 17 – November 9, except for Labor Day. This weekly group meets on Mondays from 1-3 pm in Fellowship Hall at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Princeton for those grieving the loss of a loved one. There is no fee for the course. There is an optional workbook for \$25. For more information call 815-875-2124.

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.



PRAYER CORNER

Remember in your prayers...Jerry Hall (Seth Eddy's father-in-law – broken hip), Betty Sutliff (health issues), Pam Cochran (Jeany Gewin's friend – health issues), Marcia Hudson (health issues), Mark (Pat James' son in law – cancer), Bob Parker (health issues), Pastor Mike, all of our congregation, 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.

****IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS IN THE HOSPITAL OR AT A NURSING HOME, PLEASE LET THE CHURCH KNOW WHERE THEY ARE AND THEIR STATUS. MOST HOSPITALS/NURSING HOMES DON'T LET THE CHURCH KNOW WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE IS ADMITTED.**



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 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.

AL ANON PRINCETON MEETING

Are you struggling with a loved one who has a drinking problem? Please try one of our meetings on Thursdays from **6:30-7:30pm**. Come to New Hope Church of the Nazarene (30 N 6th St.) and use the door to the left of the main glass doors. There is no membership or fees, just fellowship and support. Please call 815-343-6453 for more information.

REMEMBERING PFUMC IN YOUR WILL

We never like to think about the time when we won't be here, but it comes for all of us. Thankfully, we know the next phase of our life is a joyful one – being reunited with loved ones and with God. But we will all leave behind both the 'stuff' of this life and a legacy. What better way to combine both than by including your church in your will. Hopefully you have wonderful people to leave gifts to as well, but if you include PFUMC in your will, you'll be ensuring important ministry will continue long into the future because of your generosity. See a member of the Endowment Committee if you have questions.

AUGUST

Celebrations

Birthdays

2 Teresa Stanley
4 Brema Beams
6 Nora Schneider
7 Becky May
9 Emily Lund
11 Randy Farrell
12 Byram Vigars
14 Dennis Denton
15 Grace Busard

16 Bruce Shriver
17 David Caldwell
Pat Etheridge
Kim Park
21 Lara Schneider
22 Jean Gewin
Sara Hildebrand
23 John Gewin
Bob Parker

25 Judy Harris
28 AJ Anderson
29 Cara Kniss
June Krieger
30 Jon McCutchan
Jay Schneider
31 Ed Palmer
Lora Corban

Anniversaries

1 David and Lonnie Caldwell
5 Bill and Kristie Cass
Dave and Chris Rucinski
7 Brian and Julie Church
Tommy and Sue Fehlhafer
8 Ben and Cindy Atkinson
10 Paul and Pat Eddy

18 Paul and Nancy Kautz
John and Donna Prinz
25 Danial and Mary Thompson
26 Ed and Margaret Palmer
28 John and Jean Gewin

August 2026 at First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> <i>with Holy Communion</i>	3 10:00 Women's Bible Study	4	5	6	7 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Games Group	8
9 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i>	10 10:00 Women's Bible Study 11:45 Youth Group Lake Day 5 pm Our Table Meal 	11 10:00 Book Discussion Group 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group 7:00 Church Council	12	13	14 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Games Group	15
16 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Backpack Blessing	17 10:00 Women's Bible Study	18 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	19	20 11:30- 5:30 Red Cross Blood Drive 6:30 Finance Committee	21 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Games Group	22
23 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i>	24 10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table Meal  6:30 Trustees Meeting	25 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	26	27	28 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Games Group	29
30 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i>	31 10:00 Women's Bible Study				August Change the World Buddy Bags	



The First United Methodist Church of Princeton, Illinois

Sunday Worship

9:00 a.m.

Michael Ray Hickok

Pastor

Fallon Bush

Treasurer

Josh Bush

A/V Technology Director

Charles Gebeck

Organist

Shelly Grabill

Office Manager & Financial Secretary

Amanda Noord

Children's Sunday School Leader

Shelley Orwig

Youth Sunday School Leader

Tom Newby

Lay Leader

Elizabeth Schlender

Communications Director

Chris Rucinski

Nursery

Church Office

(815) 872-2821

Church General E-mail

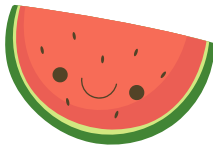
office@princetonfirstumc.org

Church Website

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**The First United Methodist Church of Princeton
316 South Church Street
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**POSTMASTER:
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

August 

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