



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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♦ SEPTEMBER 2026 ♦

Notes and Thoughts from Pastor Kevin

I wish to thank each and every one of the members, friends, neighbors of PFUMC, It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this God's church for the past couple of months. I look forward to being allowed to return for a Sunday when asked.

I am reminded of this poem.

The Anchor and the Dove

The wind may rage, the waters rise,
Yet peace remains within the soul.
A steady hand, a fixed gaze on the skies,
The quiet faith that keeps us whole.
For strength is not in human might,
But in the grace that flows unseen.
A steady anchor in the night,
A silent prayer where hope has been.

May God watch over each and every one on the journey ahead. Please remember it's hard to walk forward in a straight line looking behind, where you've just been.

*God Bless,
Pastor Kevin*

September at a Glance

September 3 - 1:00 Witness Team
September 7 - Church Office Closed
September 8 - 10:00 Book Discussion Group
1:30 Care Team
September 16- 1:30 UWF Meeting
September 17- 6:30 Finance Committee
September 28 - 6:30 Trustees Meeting



Holy Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion will be served on the first Sunday of the month, **September 6th**. 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 September to provide a meal and fellowship to anyone who would like to attend. Everyone is invited to come on Mondays, **September 14th and 28th from 5:00 – 6:00 pm.**



September Change the World

Change the World for September will be donated to **C.A.M.P. (Central American Mission Projects)**. CAMP organizes mission work trips to Central America with the goal of not only construction of health service buildings and housing, but also for school supplies, backpacks, children's shoes, coordination of health services and social needs. Mission trips are scheduled several times per year. 100% of all designated project funds go directly to the projects-none is used for administrative purposes. Please consider donating your change into the jar outside the Sanctuary, as we "change the world" with each and every coin!

Change the World August Report

As of August 23, we raised \$621.86 for Buddy Bags, which is an organization that works with the local schools to provide lunches and snacks for those kids who may not have enough food at home through the weekends and school holidays. Your donations make it possible for them to have these items to begin their school year. Thank you so much for your generosity!

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.
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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

Junior and Senior High Youth group will start up again on **September 20th**. This group is for youth going into 6th-12th grades. We will meet on the first and third Sundays of the month from 6-7 p.m. in the youth room which is upstairs behind the sanctuary. Join us for food, a devotion, and games. Hope to see you there! Please contact Shelley Orwig with any questions.

ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Women's Ecumenical Bible Study is starting a new study titled "Women of the Bible". 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 will be getting together on **Wednesday, September 16** at 1:30 in Cushing Hall. Alayna Blake, representing "The Believe Foundation" will be here to talk about what this local non-profit organization is about and the free services that it provides to help those who are battling cancer. All women of the church are invited to attend and learn more about this worthy organization.

ALL CHURCH WORK DAY

There will be an all-church workday **Saturday, September 26th from 9-12** with a lunch to follow. We are looking for about 20 volunteers; some do the scheduled projects, & others to prepare & serve the lunch afterwards.

Also, an update on the re-plantings in the former treeline bordering the main parking lot:

Looks like there's more work to be done in regards to removal of the remaining roots. Equipment will be rented to perform this task. Cliff Cartwright has offered to donate his time to accomplish this task. Top soil will then be applied. It will need to settle until Spring. We will then complete the plantings, apply commercial grade fabric, soaker hoses, & rock atop. A big THANK YOU to Teresa Stanley for all her time coming up with a 'plan' for planting. This has been a team effort (that will eventually look pleasing to all).

Thirdly- we are waiting for a replacement handle for our kitchen door so it can once again be operational & secure.

If you notice anything that needs attention around the church or grounds, please make a trustee (Judy Harris, Barb Slean, Jon McCutchan, Jim Dewalt or Sherri Parker) aware.



*Thank you!
Good!
Luck!*



A special thank you to John Busard as he heads off to Illinois State University. John has been an incredible asset to the A/V team, helping with the church Livestream and PowerPoint over the years. We wish him and his family a great deal of success. His last day was July 26.



FROM THE GREEN TEAM



BEYOND THE PEWS: FINDING FAITH ON LOCAL TRAILS

Taking walks in natural areas not only helps us get some exercise, reduce stress, and see beautiful scenery, but they also help many of us feel closer to God. What better way to feel His presence than to explore His Creation? Illinois might not boast the same breathtaking scenery as other areas, but there is much beauty waiting to be discovered, enjoyed, and appreciated. Sometimes we just need to take a closer look to see the beauty that surrounds us.

For those living in Princeton, you don't have to travel far to experience Illinois' natural beauty. A walk at City County Park, stepping off the trail and into the woods, during spring woodland wildflower season is a way to see a wide variety of native wildflowers in a compact area. The oak and hickory tress that line the park are amazing year-round. Cross Route 26 and head over to Warneke Woods to hike the woodland trails. Once out of the woods, take a few minutes to enjoy the prairie grasses and wildflowers—and the critters that enjoy them.

We are fortunate to have several state parks within about a half hour's drive of Princeton. Be sure to check out Hennepin Canal State Park, with much of it in Bureau County, Johnson Sauk Trail in Henry County, and Starved Rock and Matthiesen State Parks in LaSalle County.

If you want to leave the crowds behind and focus more on nature, we are blessed with several more rustic areas that contain a bounty of nature. Did you know there is a beautiful and historic prairie remnant near LaMoille at Hetzler Cemetery? This small prairie contains a large assortment of species, many not found in restorations, such as Prairie Gentian, a gorgeous fall bloomer. Head west to see a totally different type of prairie at McCune Sand Prairie, north of Mineral. Who would guess Prickly Pear Cactus could be found in our neck of the woods? Be sure to visit this interesting site in the late summer to see Rough Blazing Star in bloom as well as the butterflies that are attracted to it.

Travel south to Dixon Waterfowl Refuge near Hennepin to view migrating and local birds and other animals and the habitats that attract them. This vast acreage contains hundreds of marsh and wetland acres, plus prairie, savanna, and woodland areas.

If you like marsh areas, you'll want to check out Amboy and Gremel Marshes, both Illinois Audubon Nature Sanctuaries. Download and print a copy of site maps and follow a trail to see the animals and plants that live in these moist areas.

Last but not least, is another favorite to the north, Nachusa Grasslands. With over four thousand acres of remnant and beautifully restored prairie, savanna, wetland, and other natural areas, it also includes a healthy herd of bison, allowed to graze on beautiful and pristine prairie pastures. There are interesting rock outcroppings, too. When visiting Nachusa, you can step back in time and envision what our area looked like before it was heavily settled.

There are many other natural areas, big and small, and near and far, to visit, but sometimes it's even more rewarding to visit our local natural areas. Checking out areas close to home helps us understand our local surroundings better and how God plays an important part in our daily lives. Appreciating Illinois' more subtle beauty can help us find peace and relax, finding joy in God's Creation and allows us to have a chance to talk to Him one-on-one, without modern distractions.

FINANCE REPORT FOR JULY 2026

	July	Year to Date	Percent of Budget	Percent of Year
Income	\$23,840	\$185,436	58	58%
Expenses	\$29,128	\$206,390	53	58%
Net income	(\$5,288)	(\$20,954)		



BELLS AND CHOIR RESUMES

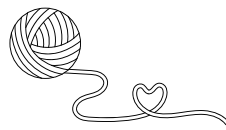


Bells and Choir will be starting in September. Watch for information coming soon!



Book Discussion Group

Please join the church book club on **September 8** to discuss "Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century" by Jessica Bruder. There are plenty of copies at the public library and on used book websites. We will meet at 10:00 am in the Conference Room.



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.

REIMAGINING CHURCH: HOW WIDE IS YOUR WELCOME?

AUTHOR: REV. CHRISTIAN COON, DIRECTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

First impressions matter, especially when someone is looking for a new church family. The following article posted on the Northern Illinois Conference website in August provides some easy, practical ways you can help our visitors feel noticed, valued, and welcome.

<https://www.umcnic.org/news/reimagining-church-how-wide-is-your-welcome>

I've been attending worship at churches all over our conference for two years now. It's been a fascinating and eye-opening experience to be a visitor again, so, for what it's worth, here are a few things I encourage all of our churches to stay on top of:

Make it easy for visitors to find out what time you worship, where you're located and where one can park. I'm a bit surprised at how hard it is on some web sites to find out what time the worship service is and where the church's is located. Make sure these things are the first things that a person can find when they're on your website or social media page. Pay special attention to how it comes across on a mobile device.

I stand at the door and knock . . . and I mean I have done this literally. Many of our church buildings have multiple doors. Help guide visitors with signs or banners or, better yet, real humans so they know where to go. It hasn't been unusual for me to try a door and it's locked, which isn't a great feeling.

A smile goes a long way. We've been told over and over the importance of a friendly greeter and it's still not unusual for me to go into a church and make it to my seat without having one person say hello to me. Even if you have a hard time finding volunteers, the pastor can also serve as a greeter. I did this most Sundays when I served at what was then Christ UMC in Deerfield and often got positive feedback for it.

Jettison the jargon. Or at least limit it. Bulletins can be great to let folks know about committee meetings, but see what you learn after you ask your newer folks go through your service and circle words they are familiar with. Familiar UMC shorthand like SPRC and UW in Faith or words like "narthex" or "benediction" can be mysterious for visitors.

Online worshipers are people, too. It's easy to forget the people who are watching online so please continue to welcome and acknowledge them throughout your in-person service. Jason Moore led two workshops for the conference a few weeks ago and gave a good tip: Take a small white board and place it in the front pew or wherever people might not be sitting, but make sure it's visible. On that white board, write down how many online worshipers you had last week. It can be a simple reminder to not forget about them.

Here I am, Lord. Whether through an attendance pad or a QR code, please make sure visitors have a chance to say, "I was here." More and more often it's that case that if someone comes to worship in person, they probably have already watched a service online so they're curious. And once a person signs in . . .

Favor the follow-up. Do you have a follow-up system in place for those who do sign in? When I was serving at Urban Village, we made sure a visitor got a hand-written thank you note and we made sure they started getting our e-newsletter. If a person came more than once, they got an invitation to have coffee with a pastor. What follow-up system makes sense in your context?

Some of these suggestions may seem basic, but they're worth reviewing in your own church. Now more than ever, we need to make sure our visitors are as welcome as possible!



Grief Share

A video seminar series and support group meets on Mondays through November 9 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...David Cross (Friend of the Eddy's – health issues), Lee Wahlgren (recovery from surgery), Betty Sutliff (health issues), Pam Cochran (Jeany Gewin's friend – health issues), Marcia Hudson (health issues), Bob Parker (health issues), 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.

SEPTEMBER

Celebrations

Birthdays

1	Sally Farrell Cheyanne Taylor	15	Carolyn Anderson Ron Denault	24	Jackson Chase
4	Ed Pakosz	16	Les Orwig	25	Jeff Lucas Riley Lucas
6	Nona Thomas	17	Lark Fisher	26	John Damon
8	Connie Lind	18	Matthew Denault Annabelle Schlender	27	Nolan Frank
9	Katherine Beavers	20	Bob Hudson Chris Rucinski	28	Mert McIntosh
12	Elizabeth Schlender	22	Pastor Mike Hickok	30	Donna Vigars
13	Heather Carroll Dorothy Denton	23	Sierrah Taylor		
14	Sheryl Noel Carole Pakosz				

Anniversaries

1	Mike and Linda Hickok	18	Larry and Deb Lawson
4	Rex and Ann Lasson	19	Kevin and June Krieger
14	Michael and Suzanne Denton	20	Brian and Amanda Petersen
16	Matthew and Leslie Lasson Scott and Jodee Zelenik	22	Ivan and Charon Freeberg
17	Ron and Ruth Denault Jay and Lara Schneider	25	Stuart and Lynette VandeVenter
		26	Lyle and Brenda Lund

September 2026 at First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Change the World will be donated to: <i>C.A.M.P</i> <i>Central American Mission Projects</i>		1 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	2	3 1:00 Witness Team	4 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Game Group	5
6 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream with Holy Communion</i> Righteous Renegades	7 Church Office Closed <i>Labor Day</i>	8 10:00 Book Discussion Group 1:30 Care Team 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	9	10	11 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Game Group	12
13 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Children's Sunday School Righteous Renegades	14 10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table Meal 	15 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	16 1:30 United Women in Faith	17	18 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Game Group	19
20 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Children's Sunday School Righteous Renegades	21 10:00 Women's Bible Study	22 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	23	24 6:30 Finance Committee	25 Church Office Closed 6:00 Princeton Board Game Group	26
27 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Children's Sunday School Righteous Renegades	28 10:00 Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table Meal  6:30 Trustees	29 2:30 Prayer Shawl Knitters Group	30		6:00 Princeton Board Game Group	



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

princetonfirstumc.org

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

**POSTMASTER:
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

September 

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