

Congregational Comments



Vol. 31 No. 7, July 2026

Important Contacts in the Church

Pastor: Rev. Ryan Travis, 217-413-4272
 Email: pastorryan@firstchurchdecaturn.org
Prayer Chain: Bette Lynn Fankhauser, 217-877-6723
 Email: blfankhauser@comcast.net
Preschool: Director: Stephanie Nihiser, 217-877-2216
Newsletter Editor: Bill Huebner, 217-876-1446
 Email: wshuebner.editor@gmail.com

Church Contact Information:

3465 N. MacArthur Rd.
 Decatur, IL 62526
 Telephone: 217-877-2216
 Email: office@firstchurchdecaturn.org
 Website: www.firstchurchdecaturn.org
 Office Hours: Mon. –Thursday, 8:00-2:00

Worship Times

Sunday
 9:00 am - Traditional Worship Service
 9:15-10:15 am Sunday School
 10:00 am Fellowship Hour
 10:45 am Bible Study
 11:05 am Coffeehouse Church

Mission Statement

First Congregational United Church of Christ is a family of faith who seeks to support one another and our neighbors, grow in spiritual maturity and knowledge, and teach others about Jesus Christ so that all people might know god's love, forgiveness and promise of new life.

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A Note from Pastor Ryan

Pastor's Column



I wasn't raised in the church.

Oh, I was baptized as an infant. But not because my parents were people of deep faith who felt compelled to present their child before God and congregation. My mother was shamed into it by her own mother, a devoutly Roman Catholic woman who apparently was not going to allow a grandchild to go unbaptized into an uncertain world. So the sacrament happened, the water was poured, and then — as far as my upbringing was concerned — that was more or less that. Sunday mornings in our house meant sleeping in.

My own story started on a Saturday night, a few weeks before I turned sixteen.

In a small town, that kind of evening just happens. My friend and I had been swimming all day, the afternoon stretched into evening, somebody suggested movies, and before long his parents were saying sure, Ryan can spend the night. It was last minute, unplanned, the way things worked in our friend group — we were in and out of each other's houses all the time. The only thing they mentioned, almost in passing, was that they wouldn't be able to get me back home before church in the morning, so I'd have to come along with them — as long as I didn't mind. I said I didn't mind at all.

The next morning I walked through the doors of Lynnville United Methodist Church — and immediately recognized nearly everyone in the building. Kids from my classes. People I knew from the community. It felt less like walking into a sanctuary and more like walking into a room where everyone already knew my name.

When the congregation stood to sing the hymns, I sang along. I knew them somehow, the way you absorb things from the surrounding culture without ever being formally taught. And apparently I sang loud enough that people nearby noticed, because before the service was over several of them had asked me to join the choir.

I said yes on the spot.

The following Sunday I was back, wearing a choir robe.

And the Sunday after that. And the one after that. My parents slept in. I got myself up and walked the few blocks to church — I lived close enough that a driver's license wasn't even necessary. For the rest of my high school years, through my sophomore, junior, and senior year, that congregation was my community. Nobody recruited me. Nobody knocked on my door with a brochure. I came because I was invited — not even formally invited, just included in the life of a family that assumed church was simply part of a weekend. I stayed because I discovered something I loved to do, something I was actually good at: singing. And I stayed because my peers were there, people my own age with whom I could belong.

Notes Continued

I have thought about that accidental Sunday many times in my years of ordained ministry, and I keep arriving at the same conclusion: there is nothing mysterious about how churches grow. The formula is hiding in plain sight.

People need an invitation — even an informal one, even an accidental one. They need a connection to something they are gifted at, something that gives them a reason to come back next week. And they need a community of peers, people alongside whom they can belong.

That is how I became a churchgoer. That is how most of us did, if we are honest about it. And it is how the next generation will, too — if we remember that the most powerful evangelism rarely looks like evangelism at all. It looks like a family saying, you're welcome to stay, but we're going to church in the morning.

Pastor Ryan



Church Information

FFDO

FFDO will meet at Coney McKanes on July 3 at 6:00. Hope to see you there.

Sandy Harmison

Thank You

Thanks to all who helped make cards for Pastoral Care Ministry on the Card Making Day on Saturday, May 23: Bette Fankhauser, Shelly Smith, Judi Carpenter, Sheila Witts-Mannweiler, Ellen Starace, Alice Huebner, and Jodi Baldwin. Birthday, anniversary, get well, thinking of you, sympathy, and fathers' day cards were made. Mary Beck and Sue Bunselmeyer weren't in attendance but contributed cards.



All God's Children Preschool

So far, we are having an amazing summer at All God's Children! We have completed our first two weeks of summer preschool, covering the topics of beach and under the sea. The students enjoyed making sandcastles and playing with water toys for these weeks. We have more students who will be joining us for weeks 3, 4, and 5. Every Thursday we get outside for Water day with the pool, splash pad, water table, water balloons and more. We still have a few spots available if anyone would like to join us!



GROWING HOPE GLOBALLY



GROWING PROJECT UPDATE!

Our growing project corn crop was planted a little later than we wanted because of spring rains. It did not come up as fast as we wanted because it was cold. Then it got hot and dry. Now we have received rains and the crop is looking much better, **but we don't need any more wind!**

If you would like to contribute to the expenses for the planting of this 5-acre corn crop—seed, fertilizer, diesel fuel, crop hail insurance -- please mark your envelope or the memo line of your check for “Growing Hope Globally” or use the designated envelopes in the pews and your donation will get into the correct account.

Thank you for your continued support of this project and Growing Hope Globally as we at First Church in Decatur help to teach many in the developing world to feed themselves and their families and to never go hungry again



Bench Notes

Bench Notes



Happy birthday, America! Wow 250 years old! Many of us can remember the celebration in 1976. I was living in Massachusetts at the time, teaching public school music and the energy and excitement of the Bicentennial was epidemic. One vivid memory is the Tall Ships coming into Boston harbor. Totally awesome!

Celebrations are great! We remember birthday, holidays, happy moments and good memories that bless our lives. But I wonder if we really celebrate all that the Lord has done for us. I'll confess

it's easy to take things for granted – a hot shower, a car that works, walking down the street unaided. Things we do every day by the grace and blessing of God. Scriptures reminds us “In everything give thanks.” A thankful heart and spirit is pleasing to the Lord and He pours out abundance upon those whose spirit is filled with gratitude for all He has done.

Perhaps our growing edge this summer is to increase our attitude of gratitude. Maybe we thank the Lord when we wake up that we actually did wake up to another day. Giving thanks for the people around our table and the food that is on it, the blessings of work, friendship, comfort and His Spirit isn't the experience of many people around the world. I've always thought that best words next to “I love you” are “Thank you! I appreciate what you did!” This summer let's increase our thankfulness and recognize God's Presence in all of it!

On other notes:

Gospel Choir sings July 26 and August 30. We will meet in the Sanctuary at 8:15 a.m. and put our music together for that day. Everyone is invited – including children and youth. I'll have music ready for everyone. No robes. No week night rehearsals. Just come and sing!

Music Ministry this summer will feature some of our own talented musicians and some special guests. On August 9, the Second Wind Flute Choir will be with us at the 9:00 a.m. service. You'll want to be there that day and hear their wonderful music.

We are truly blessed, Heavenly Father, and we thank You for Your goodness and grace to us each day. In this season let us remember all that You do for us daily – and may our hearts be full of praise and gratitude for Your Presence with us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Rev. Michael Waltenberger
Minister of Music

Happenings

FFDO

**July 3
Coney
McKanes
6:00 pm**

God's Busy Hands

Tuesdays

1:00—3:00 pm



God's Busy Hands

Admin Meeting

**Monday,
July 13
6:00 pm**

Council of Ministry Teams

**Monday
July 13
6:30 pm**

Choir

**Rehearsal
Starting Again
in Fall**



Sing With Us

All God's Children Preschool

**Director Stephanie
Nihiser**

Register for Fall 2026



Exploring Christian Faith Study Group

**10:45 am
Studying the Book
of Genesis**

People Working Sunday Services



LITURGISTS

July 5	Alexis Fankhauser
July 12	Mindy Bunselmeyer
July 19	Julie Keck
July 26	Don Carter

July 5	Peggy Ruff
July 12	Bette Lynn Fankhauser
July 19	Marsha Mower
July 26	Shelly Smith



Coffee

July 5	Kristin Hargrove
July 12	Kristin Hargrove
July 19	Kristin Hargrove
July 26	Kristin Hargrove

Acclaim Images.com

July 5	Mary Beck
July 12	TBD
July 19	Steve & Norma Morrison
July 26	Ellen starace



Refreshments

USHERS



July 5	Chuck Zweck, Susan Daley, Jodi Baldwin, Gary Weiss
July 12	Julie Keck, Roberta Shull, Abby Fletcher
July 19	Darby Mitchell, Don Carter, Jodi Baldwin
July 26	Ellen Starace, Jodi Baldwin, TBD

Thank you all

Celebrate!

July Birthdays

1. Toni Longstreet
5. Joe Seitz
6. Shirley Kuhn
Nancy Leoucis
7. Robert Blackwell
Darla Weltmer
Cole Mitchell
9. Aidan Miller
15. Charles Zweck
19. Lindsay Malone
22. Connor Butts
Gavin Butts
23. Zoey Clark
26. Hayley Daniels
Alexis Fankhauser
27. Sharon Butler
31. Jonathan Brownsfield

July Anniversaries

9. Christopher & Amy Leman
- 16 Clifford & Norma Lingenfelter
19. Mark & Melinda Bunselmeyer
24. Nicholas & Sally Lauer
25. Robert & Carol Blackwell
Richard & Sheila Witts-Mannweiler
27. Kelly & Christen Cantrell

Finance Plus

MAY 2026 FINANCIAL REPORT

	<u>May 26</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget Income	\$15,833.26	\$ 94,167.08
Budget Expense	\$21,272.50	\$106,362.50
Income	\$28,461.10	\$108,308.40
Expenses	\$18,370.68	\$115,682.74



July Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 8:00 PM AA	4 9:00 AM AA
5 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellow ship Hour 10:40 Bible Study 11:05 Coffee House	6	7 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	8	9	10 8:00 PM AA	11 9:00 AM AA
12 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Congrega- tional Meeting 11:05 Coffee House	13 6:00 Admin 6:00 Property Meeting 6:30 Church Council	14 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	15	16	17 8:00 PM AA	18 9:00 AM AA
19 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellow ship Hour 10:40 Bible Study 11:05 Coffee House	20 ///////////////// ///////////////// VBS	21 VBS 1:00 God's Busy Hands 7:00 Al-Anon 8:00 AA	22 VBS	23 VBS	24 8:00 PM AA	25 9:00 AM AA
26 9:00 Traditional 10:00 Fellow ship Hour 10:40 Bible Study 11:05 Coffee House	27	28	29	30	31 8:00 PM AA	



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