

# A SEASON OF GROWTH

## BUILDING WHAT MATTERS

*spring 2026 prevue*

### **Building a Stronger Digital Home for First Church: April 2026 Update**

In February 2026, First United Methodist Church of West Lafayette (First Church) shared the exciting news that we are creating a new website to better serve our congregation and community. Made possible through a Resource Grant from the Center for Congregations, this project reflects a shared commitment to strengthening how we connect, communicate, and welcome others into the life of First Church.

Since that announcement, meaningful progress is underway. We have officially begun the audience research phase of the project in partnership with SmallBox and Evergreen Strategic Communications. Through a congregational survey, we are gathering insights into how people currently use the website, what information they value most, and where there may be opportunities to improve. Your feedback will help guide the design, content, and structure of the new website, ensuring it meets the needs of everyone who visits.



**Please take a few minutes to complete the survey by Monday, April 27. Visit [www.research.net/r/FUMC\\_web](http://www.research.net/r/FUMC_web) or scan the QR code.**

We are deeply grateful for your support as we embark on this project. This new website is an important step in connecting with our community, sharing our story, and welcoming all who come to First Church. We look forward to sharing updates with you along the way.



# Behind the Scenes: Pastor Kory on Technology and Ministry at First Church

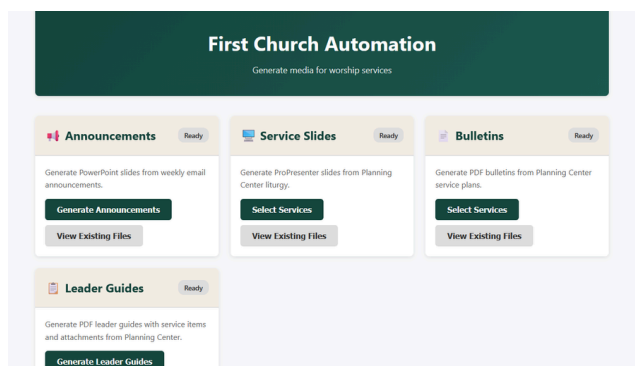
In recent months, First Church has been strengthening the technology that supports our worship, communication, and day-to-day ministry. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but its impact is already being felt across the life of the church. Associate Pastor Kory Pritchett has been leading these efforts, focusing on improving how our technology systems work together.

“My main focus has been on streamlining and unifying our A/V, network, and organizational systems by taking a holistic look at the technology we installed as part of the building remodel and diving deep into our existing technologies to see what capabilities we were not fully utilizing,” Pastor Kory shares.



## This work includes a range of improvements, including:

- Migrating our master calendar to Planning Center so that information is centralized and easier to access
- Writing a new calendar plugin for the church website so that events are easier to view and sort ([www.fumcwl.org/calendar](http://www.fumcwl.org/calendar))
- Building a custom application that automatically generates weekly announcements, worship slides, bulletins, and leader guides
- Connecting our presentation and camera systems so that worship service livestreams run more seamlessly
- Reprogramming the Allen digital organ with updated audio software and aligning it with our upgraded sound system (Our new organ sound has been sampled from the organ of St. Bartholomäus church in Friesach, Austria!)
- Enhancing the sanctuary sound system to support multilingual translation through the hearing loop



“My hope is that by more fully leveraging the technical capabilities that the church has invested in, we will improve communication on our digital platforms, reduce the overall ‘tech friction’ to lower the barrier to entry for volunteers, and strengthen the worship experience for our congregation,” Pastor Kory says.

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By simplifying systems and reducing manual work, staff and volunteers are able to spend more time focused on ministry.

“The biggest wins are the ones people never see,” Pastor Kory says. “[The improvements] save staff hours during the week and lower the stress level for our weekend volunteers. They also help us better collaborate with our community partners and broaden the scope of the events that are hosted at the church.”

Pastor Kory is especially excited about how these updates are opening the door for greater participation in the technical side of worship.

“What really drives me is the volunteer aspect,” Pastor Kory says. “We’re making it possible for anyone to join the tech team, regardless of experience. Seeing volunteers confidently run a service because the tools are working for them is incredibly rewarding.”

These updates are also improving the quality of First Church’s livestream, helping us better welcome those tuning in online.

“For modern church seekers, websites and online services are the ‘front door’ of the church,” Pastor Kory explains. “By making our threshold more appealing, we are actively inviting more engagement with our community.”

This work builds on a strong foundation and reflects the collaboration of many within First Church.

“A huge thank you to Don and David Caddy, who laid the groundwork for our technical infrastructure; to Pastor Duane Carlisle, Charis Vander Plaats, and Ronda Kroeschen, who have partnered with me in building and adopting these systems; and to our volunteers, who faithfully serve each week and remain flexible as things continue to evolve,” Pastor Kory says.

Pastor Duane Carlisle also reflects on the impact of this work and the gifts Kory brings to the church.

“I am so thankful for all the gifts of ministry that Pastor Kory brings to our work at First Church. He uses his gifts of preaching, music, and relationship-building to strengthen our First Church ministry in so many ways,” Pastor Duane shares. “In these past several months, I’ve been especially amazed by the technical expertise he has brought to integrating our newly installed worship technology—programming and automating our video, sound, and lighting systems, and helping all these pieces work together in ways that will make our worship life more seamless and sustainable into the future. I am deeply grateful for Pastor Kory and his ministry among us.”

# The Weight of The Way

By Diana Hoke, First Church congregant & a leader of Adult Education

For most Americans there were too many paths to travel this past year, particularly the ones handing us burdens created by the implosion of our nation. For me, I had an additional rugged and immeasurably painful path to travel, pushing myself forward through the illness and death of my husband Max. Stumbling among so many paths, carrying the weight of so many burdens, I felt at times too near the edge of the cliff, only one more doom scroll away from going on over. The Way was weighing too much.



While planning lessons for our adult Lenten class based on The Way, I happened upon this scripture: “Our steps are made firm by the Lord when God delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand” (Psalms 37:23-24).

I couldn't help but notice the wording in this passage. God will hold our hands when we “delight” him. Here, it seems, is one of the covenants we agree to enter into with God. Doing as Jesus taught us to do honors God. We still might stumble, but God's hand will help us from falling too hard.

As I thought about this, I realized how many such people are all around us. They are close by, not difficult to find. They exist as nearly five thousand Greater Lafayette marchers who peacefully protested against offenses that defy Jesus's commandment. They are the hands of hundreds and hundreds of volunteers in our area meeting the needs of the victims of these injustices. They are kind, loving people of our church who support one another in times of need, who send cards and emails of blessings and encouragement when one of us is hurting. They are our pastors who seem to know exactly what is troubling us and target our worries and pain with powerful Sunday morning messages that might raise eyebrows in other churches but not here, messages that redirect us toward The Way. They are found leading prayers and music that stir the soul:

“We're on a journey, children of the light, searching for the truth and what is right.” (Craig Colson. We're On a Journey, performed by choir, Palm Sunday 2026).

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And they deliver children's messages for all ages as happened on the week before Palm Sunday. I was overcome when a little girl placed a small black stone in my hand, a reminder of heavy burdens we carry on sometimes treacherous paths, held back by God's hands each time we are about to fall. The spiritual strength of that realization washed over me in silent tears. The stone in my hand held the weight of burdens I had carried with unsure steps for a long, long year. It was time to lay them down.

When worship service concluded, I clutched the tiny stone, rose from my seat, and walked out of the church towards the woods behind. Ahead lay a walkway, a path of sorts, graced by lovely daffodils framing the way to three white crosses rising above the resting place of Max and other beloved church family, a sacred space in the presence of nature to lay down one's burdens. After some quiet moments, I looked up toward the center cross. Below its base where the beautiful stone frame of the columbarium stretches, I noticed lying atop it several other tiny stones, very much like the one in my hand, each bearing the weight of untold burdens that other pilgrims among us had chosen to lay down.



"Come to me," said Jesus, "all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

It was time. I opened my hand holding the little shiny black stone, touched it to my heart, reached up, and laid it atop the stone wall with the others and prayed.

"Dear Heavenly Father, I surrender to you the stress, worries, grief, and pain that have completely exhausted me. I humbly ask you for healing rest so that I may continue following you on The Way."

I stepped back and looked up a few moments more at the white cross against a background of spring green pines and a pale blue sky. I touched Max's plaque once more, turned, and walked back down the path lined with daffodils, and I did not stumble. Not once.

Amen.

## Charge Your Faith. Charge Your Car.

At First Church, we embrace and celebrate the complexities of our faith, our world, and each other.

When it comes to our world, we strive to make it a better place through service and social action. Our faith is put into action by caring for others.

We are excited to share news that reflects both our care for creation and our commitment to community.

First Church is exploring the installation of up to three electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in our church parking lot for public use.

To continue reading, visit our website or scan the QR code.



## First United Methodist Church West Lafayette Extends Legacy with Transformational Gift to Wesley Foundation



*Wesley Foundation and First Church host the Annual International Student Dinner in August 2025. This annual event offers new international Purdue students the chance to connect with each other, meet members of the community, and learn about the resources and support available to them on campus, at First Church, and beyond.*

Wesley Foundation at Purdue University announced a transformational gift from First United Methodist Church West Lafayette to expand ministry work across Purdue's campus and create an intentional community space for students in the new Wesley Foundation Student Center. The gift is a part of A Legacy of Welcome: The Campaign for Wesley Foundation.

Located just outside of the Purdue campus, First Church has been a long-time supporter of the Wesley Foundation.

To continue reading, visit our website or scan the QR code.



## Klondike Kids Club 2025-2026 Update

Klondike Kids Club (KKC) is a safe and nurturing after-school homework club. This collaboration between First Church, Klondike Elementary School, and the Point West Mobile Home Community provides tutoring in reading, language arts, and math to 30 students, many of whom are English language learners.

Co-directors Carolyn Johnson and Maria Ansari share updates from the 2025–2026 school year.



### K-3rd Grade Program | Monday/Wednesday group Update from Carolyn Johnson, KKC Co-Director and Lead K-3 Supervisor

#### Current Statistics:

- Currently we have 11 students enrolled in K-3rd grade. Two additional students are enrolled, but have not yet started.
- We have 6 staff tutors and 1 sub: This includes 1 paid director/supervisor, 1 paid aide, 2 staff on Purdue Federal Work Study, and 3 Purdue volunteers. We currently have 3 or more Purdue students just this week, who are interested in applying as tutors for the KKC.

#### Areas of Improvement:

- One of the biggest areas we see improvement in is in behavioral and interpersonal relationships. It is hard to quantify this aspect but it is very noticeable to our staff throughout the course of the school year.

#### Parent Input on Success of the Program:

- One 1st grader came to us completely unfocused and unmotivated. She was incredibly bright, with very advanced verbal skills, but could not stay on task for more than 1-2 minutes. As we worked with her, including her mother and older sister (a successful graduate of our program), we have seen amazing progress in her ability to stay on task, follow directions and work well with her tutor as well work independently when needed.

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- One 3rd grader that was becoming increasingly difficult to work with. He had difficulty interacting with other children, was highly unfocused and unmotivated, and becoming unmanageable. Working with his family, as well as the Tue/Thur group, we were able to make some changes to accommodate him and this is the result based on his parent's input: "[child] is reading a great deal more now and reading well on his own, his standardized test scores have improved, and he has made great improvements in his interpersonal relationships with children at school and in his community." We as well have also noticed these same improvements as we work with him each week after school.
- We have also continued Denny Franks's practice of keeping a KKC reading log for each child. This encourages them to want to read more, thus fulfilling a block of reading time each month, with end of the year special recognition.
- In conclusion it is our desire to continue this great legacy of Denny Frank's in helping the children succeed who need it the most. In order to do this, your help with funding is so needed and appreciated.

## 4th-5th Grade Program | Tuesday/Thursday group

### Update from Maria Ansari, KKC Co-Director and Lead 4th-5th Supervisor

#### Current Statistics:

- 9 registered students are currently enrolled in the 4th-5th grade group

#### Academic and Personal Growth Highlights:

- We've received proof from 3 parents showing improvement in their child's math and reading scores.
- We welcomed a 3rd grader to the older group at the beginning of the school year and were able to make a seamless and successful transition where he is now thriving in his academics and social areas.
- A different student exclaimed her excitement at moving up in math groups at school and receiving a 100% on a test we studied for.
- Another student's teacher told us that her confidence level and participation in class has increased.

#### End-of-Year Celebration:

- We are going to close the year with an awards ceremony recognizing each student with a "On A Roll" (honor roll) certificate highlighting a personal achievement.

We miss Pastor Denny, but hope that we have done right by her legacy, and the prayers & financial support from FUMC parishioners.

To learn more about Klondike Kids Club, visit our website or scan the QR code.



# Freedom School Spring 2026 Update

First Church proudly serves as the host site for the Purdue CDF Freedom School program, a transformative six-week, literacy-based summer initiative serving students in grades K-5. Rooted in our commitment to supporting educational opportunities within our community and extending a warm welcome to people from all walks of life, First Church is grateful to host and support this program each year.



Jorge Perez de Jesus, Bridge Builder for Family and Community Ministries at First Church, shares an update on this summer's program:

"We are ramping up for the fourth summer of Purdue CDF Freedom School at First United Methodist Church. This year begins on Monday, June 15 and ends on Friday, July 24. Like last year, we are expecting 60 scholars in grades K-8. We have hired our Servant Leader Interns and have begun the training. New this summer, we also have a Parent Advisory Board. They have been working since last summer and have organized several community events and fundraisers.

Parents and scholars can expect another year of reading, exploring, and fun afternoon activities. The first week will have a Juneteenth Celebration on Friday, June 20 at First Church that is open to the community. We hope to see you there to meet our staff and scholars."

To learn more about Freedom School at First Church, visit our website or scan the QR code.



## Welcoming Statement

We, the people of First United Methodist Church West Lafayette, welcome everyone, through all life's stages, with arms that are open, respectful, and loving. And by everyone, we mean regardless of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, race, ability, bank balance, or background. As a Reconciling Congregation, we welcome you into our church family, for it is by joining hands that we support one another and share our faith journey together. Whoever you are, and wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here.



## Mission, Vision & Core Values

**MISSION:** To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**VISION:**

1. Adopt & Embrace the Families of the Klondike School District in partnership with Klondike Elementary School & Teachers
2. Embrace the Purdue Community in partnership with Wesley Foundation;
3. Ensure our First United Methodist Church Community is connected & growing in their walk with Christ.

**CORE VALUES:** We are a loving & joyful church committed to celebrating God's love in all that we do. Welcome, Acceptance, & Support; Christ-centered Worship; Spiritual Growth Towards Discipleship; Active Christian Service.

