

FIRST FOCUS

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORMAL, IL



PATHWAY SUNDAY IS SEPTEMBER 13TH! TWO SERVICES RESUME

Pathway Sunday is September 13, and we hope you are making plans to be part of this exciting day at First Pres!

Between services, from 9:45-10:45am there will be brunch, time to connect, and plenty of fun for our kids with games and inflatables outside! We'll gather the adults in the Great Hall to share the new Sunday morning opportunities for children, middle and high school students, and adults, beginning September 20. This will include a sneak peek at the new Coffee & Connection format, which will begin the next week, with coffee, tea, and baked goods available to enjoy while getting to know one another.

This is a great Sunday to invite someone to come with you. Think about a friend, neighbor, coworker, or family member who might be looking for a church community, searching for a place for their family, or simply open to an invitation. Pathway Sunday gives them a chance to experience worship at First Pres, meet people, and see the many ways they and their family can connect and grow. A simple invitation from you might be exactly what someone needs.

Pathway Sunday is about helping each of us discover our next step in following Jesus. Come worship, connect, and discover what's next, and bring someone with you!

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September Story Stroll "Plant A Pocket of Prairie"

Our fall Story Stroll is "Plant a Pocket of Prairie," by Phyllis Root. Experience our prairie while reading about how all of creation is connected. Expand your experience by clicking on the QR codes. Enjoy a rest on the boulders while engaging all your senses. The Stroll begins at the Elm Entrance of the prairie path (nearest the north parking lot) and ends at the Oaks (in the southwest corner). This story will be up the entire month of September!

THE "WHY" OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Being a member here at First Pres is about so much more than having your name on a list. It is about belonging, (and the decision to become a member is the personal choice every person is invited to consider.) Membership is primarily about three things: Celebration, Discipleship, and Partnership. When a person becomes a member at First Pres...



We all get to celebrate that a person or family has found a church home and a faith community where they feel welcomed, safe, and inspired to follow Jesus.



A very countercultural decision of commitment and discipleship is made. In a world where almost everything comes with a 7-day free trial, choosing to belong to a church is significant and meaningful.



Members are asked to share their convictions and opinions in important voting matters, and members are eligible to be asked to serve as elders and deacons - vital roles of leadership within the church.



Jim, Brandy, and Elizabeth Scott: We moved to Bloomington-Normal in May of 2024 from Fort Worth, TX where we were members of another PC(USA) congregation. We began attending First Pres shortly after the move and knew from the first visit that this was a welcoming and wonderful place! The warmth of so many in the congregation and the amazing children and family ministry is truly a gift. Jim and Brandy are both political science professors at ISU. Jim is originally from Lombard, IL, and Brandy is from Terre Haute, IN, so the chance to move back "home," be closer to family, and give Elizabeth (age 7) the chance to grow up in the Midwest was a true blessing. We are so happy and grateful to have found such a wonderful church family!



Jon and Sarah Trezise: We started attending in January of 2025. We chose the church after visiting several in the area because we enjoyed the services and the welcome we received. Jon works for Monical's corporate office as a Team Leader (VP) & Sarah is the Senior Program Coordinator for UIUC's Division of Parks and Natural Spaces, which includes the Illinois Arboretum in Urbana and Allerton Park in Monticello. We got married last August, and Pastor Matt officiated!



Gail, Brian, Charlotte (16), and Elliot Franklin (13): We began attending back in 2022 because we were looking for a church where women were at all levels of leadership, and we appreciated the warm welcome that we received. Charlotte and Gail recently became members. Gail enjoys teaching 4th/5th grade Sunday School, and is getting more involved with the Green Team. Brian has begun to play bass in the church band when a sub is needed. Charlotte counts the youth group's mission trips to Kentucky as a highlight of her summers. Charlotte was baptized by Pastor Matt in August 2025, and Elliott plans to be baptized this fall. The Franklin family enjoys board games, puzzles, hiking, watching soccer, and cooking and baking together.



Charlie(13), Paul, Grandma Sue, Karen, Tori (9), and Louis Jones (15):

You can find us singing or accompanying the choir at band shows, concerts, piano recitals, swim meets, dance recitals, orchestra concerts, and plays. We first found FPC because Phil took a chance on a 7-year-old Louie and agreed to teach him how to play the organ. We kept coming back because of the welcome and the feeling of belonging without judgment, and because this church actually does what it preaches.

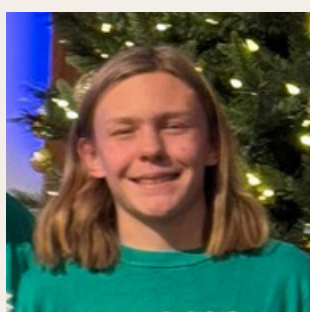
Meet our most recent group of graduated confirmands!



Taylor Beal



Charlotte Franklin



Louis Jones



Brandon Ott



Liam Walles



Charity Woodford

When students graduate from Confirmation, they are formally invited into church membership by attending a Session meeting and confirming their faith in Christ.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Cody	Hancock	1-Sep	Joseph	Painter	9-Sep	Becca	Rice	23-Sep
Sue	O'Neal	3-Sep	Glenn	Wilson	10-Sep	Allie	Plumb	23-Sep
Greg	Huss	3-Sep	Gabi	Casada	10-Sep	Phil	Enge	24-Sep
Becky	Ehredt	4-Sep	Nancy	Lott	10-Sep	Mike	Echeverria	24-Sep
Aubrey	Whitfield	4-Sep	Jennifer	Florence	11-Sep	Jerry	Ringer	24-Sep
Kala	Echeverria	5-Sep	Elizabeth	Cobert	11-Sep	Blake	Meyer	25-Sep
Amy	Ellington	5-Sep	Vicki	Terrinoni	13-Sep	Ken	Doss	25-Sep
Mason	Pauley	6-Sep	Stephanie	Shangraw	13-Sep	Kirk	Rule	27-Sep
Carol	Brewer	6-Sep	Marie	Nebel-Schwalm	15-Sep	Debra	Risberg	27-Sep
Matt	Wilcox	6-Sep	Joe	Benscoter	16-Sep	Rachel	Wilson	30-Sep
Michele	Cheeseman	7-Sep	Mary Beth	Russell	17-Sep	Jason	Cryer	30-Sep
Carol	Schrantz	7-Sep	Darla	Beerup	19-Sep	Michael	Pauley	30-Sep
Sandra	Lienhop	7-Sep	Kiley	Swearingen	20-Sep			
Evan	Hancock	9-Sep	David	Brent	22-Sep			

“FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD.”

During the month of September, you will have two impactful and simple opportunities to feed your neighbors.



In Matthew 25, we hear Jesus declare that when we offer food to the hungry, we are offering food to our Savior. When we serve and love the least of these, we serve and love Christ. We invite you to participate in both of these meaningful actions in the month of September. If you have any questions, please reach out to Pastor Matt.

Join us in partnering with Home Sweet Home Ministries, Midwest Food Bank, and Thrivent as we work with several other faith communities and local organizations to collect items for Thanksgiving meal boxes. Our donations will go directly toward assembling more than 1,500 boxes for families in our community. You can bring your donations to the church throughout September and place them on the table in the sanctuary, in front of the organ.

- ☐ 1 Box of stuffing mix
- ☐ 2 Cans of corn
- ☐ 2 Cans of green beans
- ☐ 2 Cans of cream of mushroom
- ☐ 1 Box of mashed potatoes
- ☐ 1 Envelope of gravy (no jars)
- ☐ 1 Pouch of french fried onions
- ☐ 1 Can of cranberry sauce
- ☐ 1 Box of pie crust mix
- ☐ 1 Can of pumpkin pie
- ☐ 1 Can of evaporated milk
- ☐ 1 \$25 Gift Card for a frozen turkey

BIG GIVE THANKSGIVING DONATION DRIVE





MILLION MEAL PACK EVENT

1 in 8 people and 1 in 6 children in Illinois face hunger. This Million Meal Pack event will provide packed meals to food pantries across McLean County and Illinois to help those individuals and families. This event is simple, fun, and doable for the whole family – even kids as young as 5 years old. Each person is placed in an assembly line around a table and works together to pack the meal kits.



Step 1)
**Register to
volunteer**



**Step 2) RSVP to
Pastor Matt**

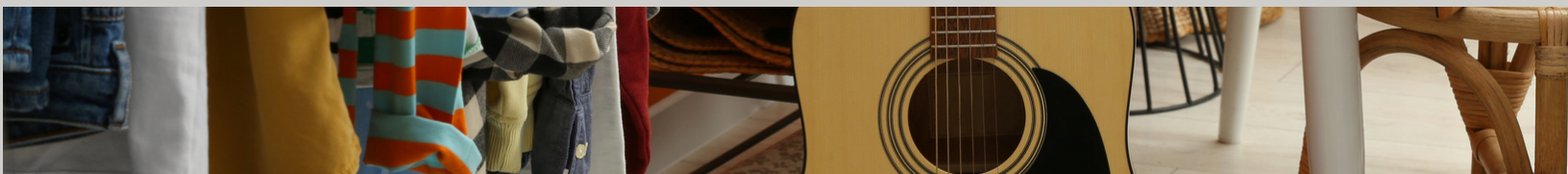
This event will take place at the ISU CEFCU Arena on Saturday, September 26th. We are excited to form a group from First Pres to come and participate during the 10:30am-12pm shift. To sign up, scan the QR code or register online on the church website. Please be sure to fill out BOTH the **Step 1** & **Step 2** Sign-Ups. Step 1 is the registration link, and Step 2 is the RSVP to let us know that you are coming. Thank you!

Rummage Sale Important Dates & Information

- Sun, Sept. 27–Thu, Oct. 1: Donation Drop-Off, 5:30–7:30pm
- Mon, Sept. 28–Thu, Oct. 1: Donation Drop-Off, 11am–1pm
- Fri, Oct. 2, 4–6pm: Pre-Sale (Day 1 - \$5 entry fee)
- Sat, Oct. 3, 8am–12pm : Rummage Sale (Day 2 - free entry)



Our Rummage Sale is coming soon! You can help in multiple ways: donate items (no adult clothing except coats, jackets, hats, shoes; no broken or dirty items, please). Consider donating your stuff and helping with cleanup! If you would like to volunteer, please see the sign-up link on our website. You can also sign up in person on 9/6, 9/13, & 9/20. Please take a yard sign to spread the word in your neighborhood. If you need help from our Youth Group to pick up your items, please get in touch with Kelli at kowens@firstpresnormal.org. Sale proceeds will go to our Youth Group and Mid Central Community Action. Our Youth Group will also be having a Bake Sale Fundraiser on Saturday, October 3rd, during the sale. If you have questions, please contact: dana.k.sutton@gmail.com or lrsabick@gmail.com.





Knit-Crochet Ministry Celebrates 20th Anniversary

20 years ago, 13 members began a ministry of knitting and crocheting prayer shawls under the loving direction of Cathy Rinehart, a past member. A few years later, the work expanded to include hats, afghans, and baby blankets. With items overflowing our trunk, Gifts & Memorials funded two cabinets and bins to store our items and donations of yarn. On September 20, we will celebrate our 20-year ministry of providing items of comfort, warmth, celebration, and condolence, each blessed in our prayer circle before being given away or sold in our annual Artisan Sale. Of those initial founding members, four have died, three have moved, and six still contribute to the ministry along with others who have joined us. In all, 44 people have been involved, and we're always open to new members (please email becky.mentzer@gmail.com).

Knit-Crochet Ministry by the Numbers (approximate):

- 649 shawls, lap robes, blankets for adults and babies
- 61+ other baby items, like bibs, sweaters, and booties
- ??? Hats, all types and sizes - "Guess the Number to Win" at our table on 9/20.
- Hundreds of prayer squares
- More kitchen items and Christmas decor than we could count
- Assisted 39 community organizations with donations of items
- Held 9 Artisan Sales, taking in \$13,693 donated to community organizations (Thank you for supporting this endeavor. This year will be our 10th sale!)

Events:

- 5 Knit-Crochet Clinics
- 2 Knit-Crochet Lessons at Women's Retreats
- 1 UFO Social (UnFinished Objects)
- 2 Appetizers & Opportunities
- Deacon Meeting Field Trip to Chapel to see and hear about our ministry
- Yarn Bombing the church for 10th Anniversary
- Pridefest with rainbow prayer squares
- Habitat for Humanity Blessings with afghans for homeowners
- First Steps, College Students, Backpack Blessing prayer squares

Why do I knit or crochet in worship? Did you know repetitive, rhythmic motion increases the brain's feel-good hormone dopamine, enhancing the overall experience of worship?

"I knit so I can attend more closely to the sermon; by moving my hands in such a patterned manner, I am better able to hold the word of God closer to my heart." -Beth

"Crocheting engages my brain and hands simultaneously, increasing my focus so I pay better attention without my mind wandering." -Elissa



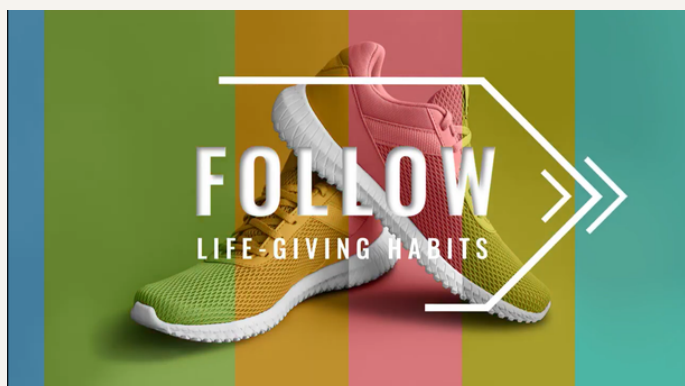
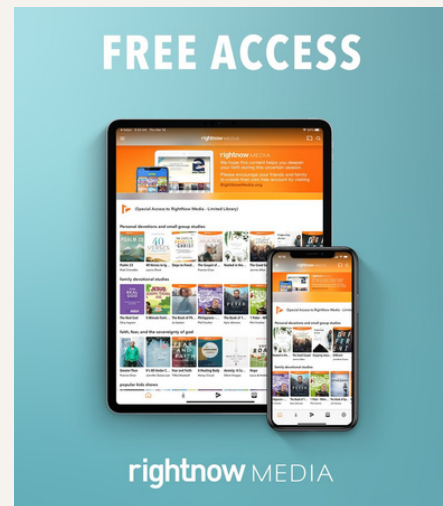
RIGHTNOW MEDIA

Sept. Featured Video Studies

Church family: here are some faith-based video studies we'd like to share with you this month!

To find these and thousands of other video studies for individuals, kids, families, and groups:

- Scan the QR code
- Text FPCNORM to 49775, or visit
- app.rightnowmedia.org/join/firstpresnormal
- Contact Pastor Karol if you have questions



Follow: Life-Giving Habits

In the person of Jesus, God calls all people not to simply know about Him, but to follow Him with all that we are. Following Jesus daily is more like a habit than it is a moment. Habits are things we do often and regularly, without consciously thinking we have to do them. This 6-part series will explore life-giving habits to establish us in the new life that Jesus gives.



Navigating the Storms of Life

In a broken world, tough times are inevitable: the winds and waves will rock your boat. So if you've suffered – or you're suffering now – watch this four-part series on navigating the storms of life. God hasn't left you to steer your ship alone through treacherous waters. Instead of being swept out to sea, we'll practice being guided by truth, wisdom, and faith.