

Northern Illinois Conference 2025 One Matters Award

First United Methodist Church

Hinckley, IL – Prairie South



One of the first impressions I received after being appointed to Hinckley First came from a conversation with the chair of our Staff-Parish

Relations Committee—a 65-year member of the church. She told me that the congregation had been praying fervently and faithfully for the next generation of the church. That deep commitment to discipleship and spiritual legacy was evident from the beginning. It showed up in our meetings, where



nearly every gathering ended with what's affectionately known as the "801 Prayer." That prayer asks, in part, that God would "boldly use each of us, without limits, to reach new people and heal a broken world." It showed up in the strategic visioning and goal-setting process we undertook in the second year of my appointment. And it has

shown up, again and again, in the life and fruit of this congregation.

Over the past three years, I have witnessed those faithful prayers bear real, visible fruit. Our average worship attendance has grown by over 30%. We've welcomed 22 new members into the life of the church, including a class of six confirmands this spring. We've celebrated 13 baptisms—about half infants, and half children in elementary school. And we've placed 23 Bibles into the hands of our third graders, blessing them with the Word as they grow in faith.



Another powerful answer to those prayers has not simply been seen in Sunday School classrooms filled with children and youth. It's in the growing number of young families who are choosing to put down roots in the life of this church—and in the ways they are stepping into leadership.



At our most recent church conference, 24 people under the age of 45 or new to the congregation within the last three years took on new roles in ministry leadership.

Together—with long-standing members who continue to serve with wisdom and joy—we

are praying in faith and working in love, trusting that our best days are still ahead. We are asking God to unleash a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led movement—one that extends Christ's radical hospitality, serves our neighbors with compassion, and grows ever more fully into the body of Christ.

- Shared by Pastor Derek Rogers

