



the MESSENGERbell

June 2021

GETTING TOGETHER

I've now been fully vaccinated for several weeks. This has given me the chance to have a handful of gatherings that would not have been possible even two months ago. An old friend from college. A spur-of-the-moment lunch with my brother. A play-date with my daughter and her cousins. I've also been able to spend some time in-person with members of the church—planning events, offering a listening ear, and just catching up. This feels like a wholesome and helpful return to “normal,” in a year when my work life and home life have both been completely upended. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been vaccinated and, if you have not already been vaccinated, I would encourage you to book that appointment.

The work of the church continues apace in the midst of all this change. The largest single part of my time is taken up working on how to begin holding in-person events at church. Right now, that involves planning for indoor, in-person worship services that will also be live-streamed to YouTube. There are technological questions, volunteer requirements, additional staffing requirements, aesthetic considerations and—of course—health considerations. As I reported to Church Council this past week, the plan currently is to hold three indoor, in-person services over the summer. We hope to have the first of these services in early to mid-July. We will also offer at least one more outdoor service as well. Stay tuned to the Messenger Bell, announcements in worship, and your e-blasts for more specific information as we get closer to it.

After many long months, it continues to be so sweet and wonderful to get together. Over the summer and into the fall, there will be more and more opportunities for us to get together as a church. It will be good to see you again.

Rev. John Edgerton, Lead Pastor



moving from

WORDS TO WITNESS IN OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

moving from

INDIVIDUALISM TO INTIMATE
FELLOWSHIP IN OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
CHURCH COMMUNITY.

moving from

CHARITY TO CHANGING
STRUCTURES IN OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE WORLD.

A few highlights from this month's Messenger Bell: “Dinner and a Movie” returns in person!!, page 2; protect your digital legacy, page 3; learn about a new overture in this month's Peace Corner, page 3; FUSH senior bios, page 5; and updates on our community of care, page 7.



FIRST
UNITED
CHURCH OF
OAK PARK

Worshipping Virtually Sundays at 11 a.m.

[CLICK TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)

June 6 Communion Sunday	John Edgerton
June 13 9 a.m. Outdoor Worship 11 a.m. Virtual Worship	John Edgerton
June 20	Alicia Reese
June 27	Lydia Mulkey
July 4 Communion Sunday	John Edgerton

Outdoor Worship—June 13

On June 13 at 9 a.m., weather permitting, we will gather for worship on the lawn for a socially distanced, outdoor service with prayer, word, message, and song.

In order to stay within capacity limits, we ask that you reserve "tickets" through Eventbrite by [clicking here](#). Please reserve a ticket for each person in your group. More information on health and safety protocols is also available on the Eventbrite site.

UCC 2021 General Synod — July 11-18

Register today to join General Synod 33—a fully virtual event. If you haven't been to a General Synod, this is a great way to see what it's all about at a low cost (\$100 per guest). Synod includes worship, optional events, business events, over 50 different workshops, keynote speakers and a virtual exhibit hall.

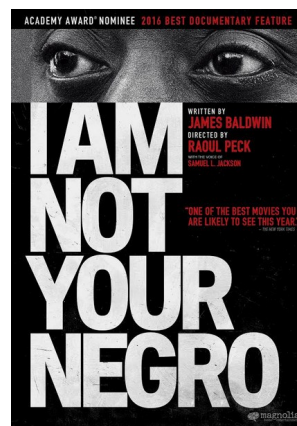


[Click here](#) to learn more about General Synod and to register. If you would like to attend, but cost is a concern, please reach out to Lead Pastor John Edgerton (jedgerton@firstunitedoakpark.com).



Dinner* and a Movie – Live and In-Person

This month, we return to First United for our first in-person Dinner* and a Movie since before the COVID shutdown. Join us on June 11 in the Sanctuary at 7 p.m. for a showing of "I am Not Your Negro." When author James Baldwin died in 1987, he left behind an unfinished book about the lives and assassinations of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. This documentary uses that unfinished text to create a visual essay on race in America.



*About that asterisk: As we continue to cautiously reopen our church building to in-person activities, certain protocols remain in place. We are limited to 20 people for this event and we need you to help us out by RSVPing in advance. [Click here to register](#). When you arrive, you will be asked to sign the visitor log on the desk in the lounge. We will meet in the sanctuary for this month's showing to ensure plenty of space to spread out. Please note that masks will be required. Lastly, please plan to have your dinner prior to arriving at First United for our film. It's awfully hard to eat through a mask! If you have any questions about the COVID protocols, please contact the church office; if you have questions about the movie, please contact Ron Haas (haas.inchicago@comcast.net).

From the Council Moderator

Greetings from your Church Council! Here are highlights of our May meeting:

Devotion: Tim Dull shared a thought-provoking reading called “Care for Creation” from A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals. The reading urges us to “hav[e] the creativity to embody our theology imaginatively -- flushing toilets with dirty sink water, riding a bike to work as an act of prophetic dissent, or helping an institution become carbon neutral. At its core, creation care is about loving our global neighbor, because the poor suffer the most from the degradation of the earth and the struggle for clean water. . . . Christianity is not just about going up to heaven when we die; it’s about bringing God’s kingdom down, all the way to the dirt in our gardens.” Amen.

Stewardship Report: We received a report on the activities of the Stewardship Team and an update on current pledging in the Growing Our Generosity 2021 pledge campaign. Did you know that the Team and 19 “Porch Droppers” made personal deliveries of Stewardship care packages to 292 households? Thanks to the Team and Droppers for this extraordinary effort! Now, please get in your pledges!

Bernstein Margin Loan: We have begun discussions to develop a plan to pay down the loan obtained in 2019 to replace the building roof. The Finance Team has been working diligently to evaluate options. Further evaluation will occur over the coming months as the Capital Campaign Planning Task Force continues its study and development of a strategic vision for a potential capital campaign.

Refreshed Purpose and Covenant: We reviewed the plan for engaging with the congregation on the refreshed Purpose Statement and Covenant, which were announced in the May Messenger Bell. Council members along with the pastoral staff will participate in two discussion sessions following worship, and Council also will solicit feedback from members who are unable to participate in those sessions.

Planning for Indoor Worship: John Edgerton provided an update on the planning underway for returning to indoor worship. This planning also includes preparations for live-streaming of our services. We walked through a mock-up of a bulletin with John explaining the liturgical elements in light of current public health

guidelines. Several indoor and live-streamed worship services are being planned and will be announced for this summer.

Governance Policies and Procedures: As contemplated by this year’s Ministry Outline, the Council adopted a set of governance policies and procedures. This is the first chapter in what is underway for a comprehensive set of policies and procedures covering all aspects of the church’s operations.

Overture to the General Assembly: We approved a motion brought by the Faith in Action Team and developed by Pauline Coffman to approve the initiation by the Chicago Presbytery of an overture to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The overture, called “Confronting our Complicity in Colonialism, White Supremacy, and Racism.” [Click here](#) to read the full overture. For more on this overture, as well as the larger context of the current situation in Israel and Palestine, please read Pauline Coffman’s article in the Peace Corner.

—Sallie Smylie, Moderator

Is There a Place in Heaven for the Digital Me?

Probably not, sorry. But, good that you asked because so much of who we are is now retained in digital form. Our photos, correspondence, music, health records and financial information are likely stashed somewhere in some digital “cloud.” Experts call this information our “digital assets.” One can’t help but wonder: Who owns or has access to my digital assets? What happens to my digital assets if I become disabled? What happens when I die?

You can bet, and certainly hope, that when you die all your emails, photos, music, health records and financial records won’t just disappear into the “cloud.” You will still have an on-line presence after you are gone, even though it’s pretty certain you will no longer be able to “tweet” your friends. In short, your digital assets will survive you just like your house and your car. But, you have physical possession of those assets. You have a title to your car and a deed to your house. Your executor will know how to transfer such physical assets to the next owner you chose. But what about those pesky digital assets?

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The answers are in that 20-page “User Agreement” you probably didn’t read before you clicked the “I agree” button. Each service provider, *i.e.* Facebook, Google, Yahoo, iTunes (...the list goes on and on) has its own policy of what happens to your content on its site if you die or are disabled. And, you consented to that policy when you clicked that “I agree” button.

Unfortunately, preparing for your digital afterlife is not simple because the technology, your digital content, the user agreements and the law keep changing and evolving. But here are a few steps you can take:

- (1) Consider whether to share user names and passwords with a family member or trusted friend and make sure to keep them current as you make changes;
- (2) Update your will and financial power of attorney to grant your executor and your agent access to your digital assets;
- (3) Research each service provider to determine and choose whether your account should be memorialized (allowing friends and family to post after your death), deleted, or frozen; and
- (4) Provide a way for your executor or agent to securely gain access to your user names and passwords. (Again, keep the necessary information current).

Digital assets are just one way you may leave a legacy; the important thing is planning so that you leave the legacy you want.

—The Planned Giving Committee

June Peace Corner

Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed.

—Jeremiah 22:3

First United Church’s Council passed an overture titled [“Confronting our Complicity in Colonialism, White Supremacy, and Racism”](#) this month; now it goes to Chicago Presbytery. If they approve it, the overture will go to General Assembly in June 2022.

Anyone watching the tragedy unfolding in Israel/Palestine right now has to see the power differences between the two groups. Israel has created a “Jewish state” that has separate laws for Jews that provide them with full democracy. Any non-Jew is governed by

separate laws. This was codified into law in 2018 and is called the “Nation-State” law.

So it is about “who has the power.” Liberation theology names the “oppressor” and the “oppressed.”

The current violence was triggered when Israeli soldiers cut the power line from Al Aqsa Mosque on the Dome of the Rock (Palestinian term for the Temple Mount) during a speech President Rivlin was giving nearby.

But that was only the trigger. It was followed by a reaction as Israeli troops tried to prevent Muslims from entering the mosque for prayer. In the final days of the month-long observance of Ramadan. What had been building was a seething resentment among Palestinians for the so-called “Kushner peace deal,” the moving of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem in opposition to international law, giving the Golan Heights to Israel (they grabbed it from Syria), but, most of all, the threatened evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, a zone of East Jerusalem on the north-east side.

The Sheikh Jarrah takeover has been building since 2009 when ultra-orthodox settlers began moving into Palestinian homes, refusing to leave. The Palestinians have stayed, sharing their homes. But now, Israel has threatened to evict the Palestinians, first by May 5, then May 10, and now postponed 30 days by Israeli court. So, the tension has not abated. The government has allowed the settlers to stay and now threatens eviction of the Palestinian families. Why? To reduce the population of Palestinians inside the so-called “Security Wall” and force Palestinians to leave.

Going back to a ceasefire is not enough. A truly democratic state ensures equal rights for all and provides security to all, freedom of movement with the right of return to all its citizens, not just Jews. Israel has created “colonies/settlements” in the West Bank on land belonging to the Palestinians to the point that it is virtually impossible to reverse. This is colonialism. It is time we recognized that religion is being used to justify the colonial takeover of all of the land of Israel/Palestine. The U.S. government gives Israel almost \$4 billion a year for military aid. We have leverage. It is time to use it. We are complicit in the deaths of innocent children and families until we do.

Pray for a just peace.

—Pauline Coffman



We ended our very strange pandemic program year on Sunday, May 23. We marked the occasion for each group with an outdoor, socially-distanced picnic of boxed meals from Panera, wrote affirmations to one another, FUJI played lawn games, and FUSH participated in their tradition of sending off the seniors with group goodbyes.

We hope to maintain connection over the summer and maybe offer an opportunity or two to gather for some fellowship and/or service.

I am continually awed by the resilience of our youth. I am grateful to them and all those who helped us continue these programs this year, especially our dedicated advisors and the youth ministry team members.

I pray everyone has a safe, truly wonderful summer and that the next program year will be filled with more and more opportunities to connect, engage, and explore together in-person!

Keep reading for a little more about our FUSH Seniors.

—Alicia Reese

FUSH Seniors



Dani Chapman-Rienstra

Dani has been active here at First United since she was

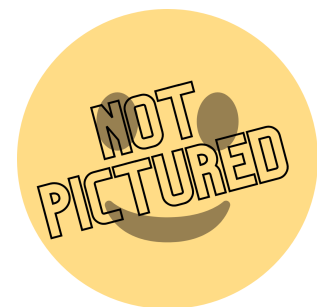
in the third grade. Some of her favorite memories include freshman year work camp in Seattle and the yearly cookie bake. Although Dani missed going to work camp the past two summers, she credits her family and friends for the comfort and support throughout the past year. In addition to her strong relationships with her friends, Dani is proud of her academic success and is excited to head to the University of Illinois to study bioengineering this fall. Good luck, Dani!



Olivia Cordes

Olivia first joined the FUSH crew at the Halloween party her freshman year of high school. Since then, she has enjoyed broomball, night crossing, and the formal Christmas party. She enjoyed performing “Take on Me” in front of the whole church—even if it felt a little embarrassing at the time!

Olivia works at Good Earth and loves gardening and plants. She is going to pursue her passion this fall at the University of Illinois, where she will study sustainable agriculture business. Good luck, Olivia!



Evan Huber

We are glad that Evan, an avid runner, slowed down enough to join us at FUJI and FUSH, where he has been active since seventh grade. When Evan isn’t hanging around First United, he enjoys cross country, track, diving, and club water polo. He also makes time for his studies—Evan is a straight-A student this year and is headed to Northern Illinois University this fall. Good luck, Evan!



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Jack Lewis

Jack is a fifth-generation member of First United! Jack remembers racing up the sanctuary aisles with his friends for “time for sharing” and, when he was older, really enjoyed FUSH work camp. Jack considers First United to be part of his family and is grateful for the love and support his whole family received from the church upon the passing of his uncle. Jack is up for any challenge, earning two “Honor Tripper” awards during his camp experiences, and is ready to take on a new challenge when he heads to Miami University in Ohio to study mechanical engineering. Good luck, Jack!



talented swimmer who has committed to swim in Division I at Miami University in Ohio. Look out Miami, Jack and Diego are coming for you! Good luck, Diego!

Adam Raducha

Adam spends his time at First United not only in FUSH, but also making beautiful music in our Handbell Choir with his whole family. Adam is a dedicated Boy Scout working on his Eagle Scout project while also balancing time with his job at Panera and refereeing soccer games. Adam is headed west this fall to attend The University of Colorado—Boulder. Good luck, Adam!



Kelsey O'Shea

Bagel-lover Kelsey O'Shea has been a part of First United for her entire life. She always enjoys coming to First United and is grateful for the friendships she has made here. Some highlights for Kelsey include FUSH, Kids Kloset, and Sunday School. Although she has missed in-person activities this year, she is proud of her ability to always see the positive side of things and has managed to have fun this year amidst the pandemic. Kelsey is heading to the University of Kansas this fall to study business. Good luck, Kelsey!



There are a few other FUSH members who did not submit bios, but whom we hold very dear. Best wishes in all your post-high school endeavors to Ben Issel, Hannah Metric, and Rowan Zdziarski-West.

Youth Activist Is Back!

You may recall that Cat Nickles turned her eighth grade capstone one-day restaurant project into a quarantine cookbook that has raised over \$20,000 that benefitting Beyond Hunger. Well, she's at it again!

Cat has turned two of her art pieces into cards that you can buy! She will be splitting the proceeds with Beyond Hunger.

One for \$2
Three for \$5
Five for \$7

Contact Julia Huff (huffjulia@aol.com) to order and purchase cards.



COMMUNITY OF CARE

The Prayer Shawl Ministry

We continue to meet the second and fourth Mondays of each month. Follow [this link](#) to join us. Reach out to Alicia Reese if you have any questions or if you know someone who would benefit from the loving care of receiving a prayer shawl.



cons, are extremely grateful for her presence, leadership, and all of her gifts for ministry and pastoral care. This shift in role will enable her to even more fully care for our church family. Thank you, Beth!

With the church changing our database to Realm, and all of the transitions on deacons, our care groups are bound to undergo some changes as well. We will be sure to communicate with the congregation and each of the care groups prior to the start of the next program year so that you will know who your deacon is.

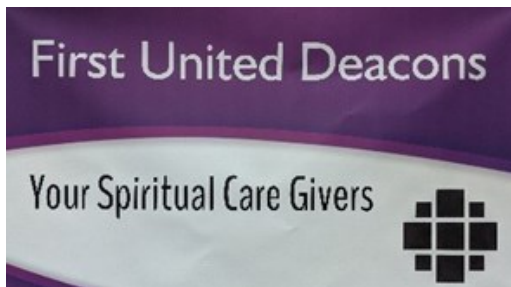
Keeping Connected: Monthly Mailing

We continue to send this mailing out each month to maintain connection with those of our church family who do not use electronic communication. If there is someone in our congregation who you believe would benefit from receiving this mailing, please contact Alicia Reese.



Virtual Chapel

On Sundays, about 10 minutes after worship has ended, two deacons will be available for 30 minutes in Zoom for a more private time of prayer for those in need. They can pray with or for you, offer you a virtual blessing, and be a listening ear. Follow this [link](#) to join them.



At our June meeting, we engaged in our ritual celebration of our deacons who have completed their term of service: Bob Berry, Ken Honderich, and Gregg Raducha. We also welcomed our new deacons: Andrea Alter, Georga Parchem, Linda Sandman, and Patti Warren! We hope you will express your gratitude to each of these deacons whenever you have the opportunity.

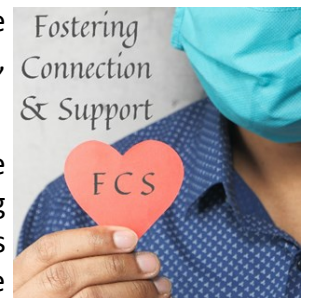
Additionally, our Community Minister, Beth Dickerson, will continue serving with the deacons, but will be shifting to a supporting role of the entire board of deacons and all the care groups. We, as the staff and the dea-

FCS: Fostering Connection & Support!

This ministry quickly became beloved and well-attended, which we are thrilled about!

We will take a break for the summer and plan to bring back FCS in the fall. Perhaps on a new day or at a new time and maybe in a hybrid form for those who enjoyed the convenience of joining via Zoom, so stay tuned!

Please know that your church family continues to be here to support you, and reach out to a member of the pastoral staff, our community minister Beth Dickerson, or your deacon if needed.



Family Camp 2021

Family Camp is happening! August 12 beginning at 4 p.m. through August 15 at 3 p.m. at Tower Hill in Sawyer, MI. Contact Teri Omert or Cathy Cerniglia with questions or to sign up. Contact the office if you need contact information for Teri or Cathy. Cost this year is based on participation but should be about \$15.00 per person per night. You can sign up at any time, even at the last minute, although we would prefer to know that you are coming.



Come join First United families for a weekend of camping, swimming, and camaraderie. Lake Michigan is about a one-mile walk from camp. There is a lot to do in the area, biking, hiking, shopping etc. You will need to bring your own camping gear—tent, pop-up, etc.—and food for the weekend. A real bathroom with showers is available. We have no pre-planned activities except that we share a potluck meal on Saturday evening. It is fun way to relax and get to know your fellow First United families.

PS: Teri is retiring from coordinating this event. We are looking for someone to take it up and continue this awesome tradition.



We lift up the prayers that have been shared in worship.

For the wider world:

- The people of India
- The people of Israel/Palestine
- For peace in the Middle East
- The people of Brazil
- All hospital staff who continue to be burdened by COVID illnesses and death
- The people in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem
- All who are hurting or suffering in silence and/or suffering from anxiety and depression
- Needed gun violence intervention

For those in our midst:

- The Pareja Family mourning the death of Carlos's father
- The Castañeda family mourning the death of Kaye Wagner
- Lois Love's cousin Sue
- The Guevara family mourning the death of cousin Elmer and

- concerned for Joji who suffered a stroke.
- Barb Kopka recovering from knee surgery as well as mourning the untimely death of Tracy
- For Evan Saliny and the entire Saliny family
- George Ashman's sister, Jane, in hospice
- Ally Vertigan's family mourning her grandma and for her grandfather undergoing chemo
- Sandy Jefferson and family mourning the sudden death of Cousin Annette
- Michael Surratt mourning the death of Jannelle Bunn
- The Raducha Family concerned for Aunt JoAnn
- The Armstrongs mourning the death of Mary Ellen Matthias

For the joys in our lives:

- Stewardship testimonies from congregants: Bob Haisman, Linda Sandman, Tony Kult-Banout
- The baptism of Adam Jakupovic
- The baptism of George Woodward
- Don Sibley graduated with his doctorate of education
- The CROP walk!
- Bob & Ellie Bell celebrating almost 40 years of marriage
- Carl & Julie Nauert celebrating 40 years of marriage

CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

May 4	May the Force Be With You . . . And With Your Spirit	Alicia Reese
May 11	Our Purpose	John Edgerton
May 18	Purpose	Lydia Mulkey
May 25	Better Than a DeLorean	John Edgerton

submissions

to www.firstunitedoakpark.com/eventbuilder by the 15th



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