

# the MESSENGERbell

## June 2022

### SUMMERTIME & THE LIVIN' IS EASY

Beloved of First United,

After what has seemed like an interminably cloudy spring, summertime has finally arrived. And in honor of that, I want to highlight some wonderful things that will be going on this summer at church. And all outdoors! First, it must be mentioned that our beautiful grounds are in full bloom, which leaves the entire church looking transformed and restored. From passers-by admiring our irises, to GreenOnes recognizing our rain garden as award winning, our plantings help our church put our best foot forward.

Second, the parking lot work has also begun in earnest, so that one of our most used resources will be in good repair again. From Sunday morning worshippers, to Nursery School parents dropping off their kids, to Food pantry guests receiving their daily bread, to Cluster Tutoring students brushing up on their three R's, our parking lot is a well-used community resource. We're grateful to Beyond Hunger for securing a grant to completely pay for this critical work. Our shared mission with them, of course, is about a mutual commitment to feeding the hungry. But far be it from me to turn down a free parking lot! Thank you also to the Building and Grounds Team and member Gary Cerniglia for his expert guidance and oversight of this work.

Third, we will be holding one worship service per month on the church's labyrinth. These outdoor services were such a highlight of the summer in years past, and we're glad to be bringing them back. If you are an online worshipper, fear not, we will have an online worship service uninterrupted. The first of these outdoor services will be on June 19, and will be the third Sunday of the month in July and August. We will be very literally going beyond the walls of the church this summer—and you're invited!

Lead Pastor John Edgerton



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: summer worship highlights, page 2; the Moderator's Report, page 3; building upgrade updates, page 4; new member introductions, page 5; summer youth activities, page 7; prayer concerns, page 8.



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK

## Preaching Schedule for June

June 5	Alicia Reese
Confirmation Sunday	
Pentecost—WEAR RED!	
June 12	John Edgerton
June 19	Lydia Mulkey
Outdoor Worship	
June 26	John Edgerton
July 3	Alicia Reese

All services are at 11 a.m. on Sundays unless otherwise noted. Worship will also be streamed on YouTube. The worship recordings also remain on the YouTube channel so that you may view them at a later time.

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)

## Confirmation Celebration This Sunday!

Join the Quest Class of 2022 as they lead worship and make their confirmations. Then help them celebrate and welcome them as full members of the church with a cake reception in the lounge.

## Lenten Debrief: What Did We Learn?

After you congratulate our Confirmands and enjoy a piece of cake, we invite you to Centennial Hall for an opportunity to unpack what we learned during our Fast from Whiteness. In a guided discussion led by Council Leadership, we will answer three questions:

- What did we learn about ourselves?
- What did we learn about our church?
- What did we learn about our wider community and our world?

We will begin after worship—allowing time for you to stop by the confirmation celebration and run no later than 2 p.m.



## Summer Outdoor Worship

June 19

July 17

August 21

11 a.m. on the Labyrinth

weather permitting

# From the Council Moderator

Greetings on behalf of your Council, with a brief recap of May meetings.

## Lenten Theme Reflections

On May 11, members of the Church Council, pastoral staff, and Deacons participated in a conversation to share reflections on the Lenten Theme/Holy Week experience. The Rev. John Thomas, former General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, facilitated a discussion on what we were learning about ourselves and our congregation from the experience, what we have still to learn about racism and its effects, and how our experience can inform our work to combat racism going forward. An opportunity for the congregation at large to engage in a similar discussion is planned for June 5, following worship.

## Council Meeting

At our regular monthly meeting on May 17, the Council's agenda and discussions included the following:

**Devotions:** Sue Saliny offered two daily readings from the UCC 2022 Eastertide Devotional "Hallelujah is Forever." One, "Rabble," was written by Quinn Caldwell based on Numbers 11:4, and the other, "So Much More," was written by Vince Amlin based on Leviticus 19:16. Quinn and Vince are both friends and colleagues of John Edgerton.

**Guns to Gardens:** Lois Love and Sandy Jefferson presented information on the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Guns to Garden program, in which churches can sponsor events for gun owners to bring their unwanted guns to be dismantled and transformed into objects for peace, such as garden tools, jewelry, and art. The Waging Peace sub-team of the Faith in Action team was authorized to explore membership in the network and the requirements for hosting an event, with a view toward preparing a proposal for Council's consideration at a later time.

**Security System:** The Council heard from Heather Vanderberg and Carl Nauert on an urgent need to upgrade and enhance the Church's security system. Council authorized the proposal to replace the security mechanisms that protect the main door to the parking lot, the entry door to the Beyond Hunger space, and the handicap entrance off the patio. The cost (approximately \$20,000) will be covered by the Gebhard Family Build-

ing Fund.

**Financial Report:** Susan Macaulay reported that the church is behind approximately \$130,000 from what we anticipated in revenue through April. Of this amount, \$63,000 represents a shortfall in pledged and regular non-pledged giving. Members will be reminded of the imminent fiscal year-end at the upcoming congregational meeting.

**Financial Policies and Procedures and Investment Policy:** The Council approved a compilation of the Church's financial policies and procedures as well as an updated Investment Policy developed in conjunction with Alliance Bernstein, the Church's investment advisor.

**Stewardship:** Marteki Reed reported that to date, the Church has received 137 pledges totaling \$572,146, against a stewardship campaign goal of \$628,653.

**Vision Update:** We received an update from Johnny Figel at Leo Latz & Co. regarding the two vision-to-action meetings that Latz team members had facilitated to date. The Council approved providing certain giving information to Latz to enable it to evaluate the feasibility of a capital campaign.

**Mulkey Sabbatical:** The Council approved Lydia's plan for a 3-month sabbatical to occur in the months of October, November, and January. Under her call agreement, Lydia earned the sabbatical last Fall when she completed five years of service, and we are grateful she decided to wait a year to pursue it.

**Treasurer Resignation:** The Council was advised of Justin Lewis's resignation as Treasurer effective June 17, 2022. The Council extends its thanks to Justin for his years of service.

Sallie Smylie, Moderator

## Fourth Sunday Offering for Cluster Tutoring

For the 2021-2022 program year, Cluster Tutoring was thrilled to return to in-person tutoring at First United! As many of you know, Cluster provides one-to-one tutoring to students in grades K through 12 who primarily come from the Austin neighborhood. We are so grateful to the church for opening its doors once again to the program. Tutoring in person was vital for our

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students this year as several of them entered the program having fallen behind academically due to the challenges associated with virtual learning.

This year we were able to serve 100 students across four locations—First United, Circle Urban Ministries, and new sites at Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church and St. Catherine-St. Lucy School. The size of each of these locations allowed us to implement COVID mitigation measures that included providing each pair with their own table. Our Thursday program held here has the highest number of attendees and gives us an opportunity to serve as many students as possible.

In addition, we are excited to share that we are in the process of changing the program's name to Learning Edge Tutoring. The Board of Directors completed a strategic-planning process last year wherein they decided they wanted a name that more accurately reflects the work that we do. It is our goal to provide a "learning edge" to our students through our service to them. We expect this change to be in effect by August 1, if not sooner, and you will be able to find us at [www.learningedgetutoring.org](http://www.learningedgetutoring.org).

We extend our sincere appreciation to the members of First United who provide not only financial support but also wonderful volunteers--many of whom return to the program from year to year. Thank you!

## Upcoming Building Upgrades

We have two major building projects this summer. The first, a new parking lot, is under way! Thanks to a grant from the state of Illinois to our mission partner Beyond Hunger, our parking lot is being reinforced and resurfaced. Work will include a complete stripping of the existing lot, reinforcement in the southern lane to better withstand truck traffic and deliveries, and resurfacing and striping. The work should be completed in 3-4 weeks.

Later this summer, we begin the first phase of a larger project to improve building access and security. We will install new electronic locks on the main parking lot doors, the alley door, and the patio doors that will replace the regular keys with programmable key cards.

The new door access systems that will once again allow church and nursery school staff to see and talk to anyone who rings the doorbells as well as to buzz in those visitors. We are also replacing our 30+ year old security system to ensure years of future functionality. Later phase(s) of the project will address other exterior doors as well as security cameras.



## Peace Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence

June 4 @ 4 p.m.  
First United Chapel

Celebrating the lives of gun violence victims and grieving with families who have lost loved ones to gun violence, we will hold a memorial for those named on our Memorial Scroll for deaths September 2016 – August 2017.

Join our prayers and songs for peace and a burial of the scroll, and continue our efforts to end the violence.

### Wear Orange for Gun Violence Awareness

Our parking lot is under construction and will not be available. Please plan accordingly.

After the Peace Vigil, conversations sharing ways to take action to reduce the violence are welcomed in the garden.

Visit Day in our Village, Oak Park, booths for good gun safety recommendations

- Gun Responsibility Advocates
- Moms Demand Action



# Meet Our Newest Members

## The Segbawu Family

Pictured here are Festus, Thelma, and two of their three daughters, Zoie and Iris. They were introduced to First United by member Lois Jean Konami-Thompson and her family.

Festus is a tax accountant and Thelma is an Occupational Therapist. Their eldest Rachel, 23, holds a bachelors in theater from Missouri Western University. Zoie, 14, is a freshman at OPRF and a Questor. Iris, 8, is a third grader at Irving School.

As a family, they enjoy traveling, playing games, cooking, bowling, and hanging out together.

We look forward to getting to know the Segbawu family. Please reach out when you see them. Their contact info is in Realm.



## Carol and Dale Porfilio

Carol and Dave recently moved to Oak Park from Virginia. They are excited to have found a church home at First United after not having one during the pandemic. They were attracted to First United by our inclusivity and social justice programs.

Carol is a nurse with experience in oncology and hospice and will be starting a new job at Northwestern Memorial in June as an Advocate for people wanting to donate a kidney or part of their liver for the transplant program. Carol received a master's degree in Divinity from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. She has just recently volunteered to chair the Adult Education Team.



Dale is an actuary whose job has taken him to Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, and Oak Park. He works with an insurance industry NGO which can have him testifying before various legislative bodies in the morning and answering consumer questions about their policies that afternoon. He will be serving on the Finance committee.

The Porfilios have three grown daughters and consider themselves to be a theater family who love music and the dramatic arts. Both Carol and Dale have become active members of First United's choir.

## Celebrate Juneteenth in Oak Park

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people at the end of the U.S. Civil War in 1865. Let's join the Village of Oak Park's Juneteenth celebration on Sunday, June 19th. There will be a parade that steps off at 11:30 a.m. followed by a community picnic at Taylor Park at 1 p.m. Find more information about this and other local Juneteenth events [here](#).



## Help the CROP Walkers Meet An Ambitious Goal

Earlier this month, our First United Crop Walk Team completed their virtual walk to raise funds to help hungry people in our area and around the world. They set an ambitious goal to raise \$20,000 and are 3/4 of the way there! You can still make a donation to support this team on [their donation page](#).



# Alert: More Free Stuff ....

... to do. The Nominating Team invites you to think about how you might join in the work, mission, and governance of our church. If you are interested in getting involved, there are immediate critical needs for volunteers. This month we are highlighting the following three:

1. **Faith in Action.** Faith in Action oversees the mission efforts of the congregation, including designation of action teams for specific focus projects, administering the mission giving of the congregation, and maintaining relationships with agencies outside First United. Our goal is to be faithful advocates for the poor, empowering people rather than providing charity alone, and to open the path to long-term well-being for all through employment, housing, and education
2. **Children's Ministry.** The Children's Ministry Team supports the church school and leaders and provides quality nursery facilities. The members of Children's Ministry serve as "room parents" for the different Sunday school classes. Sometimes this means calling parents to have children dress appropriately for a specific activity or to bring food to make lunches for the Housing Forward PADS overnight shelter program.
3. **Newcomers.** First United members have come from a variety of faith backgrounds or sometimes no church background at all. The goals of the Newcomers Team are to help orient people to the church, to help the congregation learn more about these potential new members and their passions, and to begin to create a small community within the larger church body from which people can branch out and make First United their own.

If any of these opportunities are of interest to you, please send your name and best contact information (phone number and/or email, plus time of day) to [office@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:office@firstunitedoakpark.com).

A member from the Nominating Team will contact you to discuss your interests and determine the next steps. Thank you and God bless from the Nominating Team.

# Loving with SO MANY Books!



Thank you, First United, for your amazing response to the Loving With Books: New Moms and New Babies project. We set a goal to raise enough money to fund 100 books to support New Moms book drive and, with your support, we raised almost enough to fund 200 books!

Our Church School kids had a wonderful time reading the inclusive, empowering books that were carefully selected by New Moms. The young families that New Moms support will also be able to enjoy the books for years to come when New Moms provides a new book with each supportive visit.

Thank you so much to our fearless project leaders Ann Armstrong, Laurie Jolicoeur, and Deb Stracco for their tireless efforts!



# Quest Class of 2020

On Sunday, April 24 we were finally able to communally recognize and celebrate our Quest Confirmation Class of 2020! Although they were voted into membership in June of 2020, the pandemic deprived us of the opportunity to gather as a church family and engage in our ritual tradition of the rite of Confirmation.

We were thankful to celebrate this joyous occasion together, for the beautiful worship leadership of our confirmands, and for all of the incredible gifts they share with our community.

Congratulations Quest Class of 2020! We are proud of you and thrilled to have you as members of First United Church!

Photo, Front-left to back-right: Gwendolyn Keys, Ava Issel, Caroline Raducha, Lillie Porter, Henry Metric, Joe Guevara, Sam Chapman-Rienstra, Lucas Kult-Banout.

Not Pictured: Sebastian Alonso, Maddie Carter, Paloma Pareja, Mitch Readling, Thomas Readling.



## Sign Up to Be an Acolyte

In our worship services, children are invited to assist in worship by lighting the candles each week. Children will meet a member of the Children's Ministry Team at the back of the sanctuary who will give them a stole (a piece of fabric to wear over their shoulders) and a lighting wand. Younger children can walk down the aisle with an adult's help. [Click here](#) to sign up to serve as an acolyte.



## Summer 2022 Youth Group Activities

### June

- 18 – Carwash Fundraiser: 2 – 5 pm
- 25 – Carwash (if 18th canceled)
- 29 – Galloping Ghost Arcade, 11 am – ?

### July

- 14 – Lincoln Park Zoo, 11 am – ?
  - (Rain Plan: Garfield Park Conservatory)
- 18 – Community Cleanup: 10 am – 12 pm
  - (Location TBD)
- 20 – Beyond Hunger Distrib: 2:30 – 5:45 pm
- 22 – Habitat ReStore shift. 2 – 5 pm
  - 24 Hr. Lock-In: 8 pm

### August

- 05 – Games & Bonfire: 7 – 9 pm
  - At Church
- 08 – Six Flags: 11 am – ?
  - (Rain Plan: Circle Lanes Bowling)
- 17 – Ice Cream! After School
  - (Location TBD)





# The Prayers of God's People

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

**For the wider world:**

- The victims of the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, TX and their loved ones
- The victims of the Buffalo, NY shooting and their families.
- The victims of the church shooting in Laguna Woods, CA, their families, and the whole congregation
- The people of Ukraine suffering with grief, fear, and hunger. We pray for resolution, justice, peace, and hope.
- An end to racial hate and violence
- Our country as we continue to work to dismantle systemic racism
- Serenity, courage, and wisdom for all world leaders
- The impact overturning Roe v. Wade will have

**For those in our midst:**

- Kregg Raducha, surgery on his foot after sustaining a fracture playing soccer
- Mary Ellen Withers, hip replacement surgery
- Chip Readling, two recent surgeries
- Joy and gratitude for KT Bill (our former lead nursery worker). We wish her all the best in her next chapter!
- All those in our congregation who have recently been recovering from COVID

**For the joys in our lives:**

- Sher Watts Spooner completed her sixth round of chemotherapy! She and Art are also expecting their first grandchild soon!
- Getting to celebrate the program year with root beer floats!
- All of our newly elected Council Members, Deacons, and Nominating Team members
- Our high school Seniors getting to celebrate their achievements and graduation
- Joy for Spring flowers and noisy birds and God's abundance
- Gratitude for grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins
- Gratitude for good healthcare and recovery from COVID

## Dinner & A Movie

Join us on June 10 at 6:00 in the lounge for dinner and a showing of "Judas and the Black Messiah." FBI informant William O'Neal infiltrates the Illinois Black Panther Party and is tasked with keeping tabs on their charismatic leader, Chairman Fred Hampton. O'Neal revels in the danger of manipulating both his comrades and his handler, Special Agent Roy Mitchell. Hampton's political prowess grows just as he's falling in love with fellow revolutionary Deborah Johnson. Meanwhile, a battle wages for O'Neal's soul. Dinner at 6:00 (\$5 donation); Movie at 6:30 (free). Reservations: Liz Swan, 708-567-3490 or [easwan@gmail.com](mailto:easwan@gmail.com).

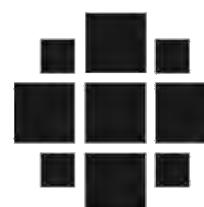
## FCS: Summer Break

Fostering Connection & Support will be on hiatus for the summer following our Thursday, May 26 Zoom. Keep an eye out for when we plan to start back up and we hope you will pop in!

## CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

May 3	On Roe v. Wade	Alicia Reese
May 10	There Are No Good Words	John Edgerton
May 17	Water is Thicker Than Blood	John Edgerton
May 24	Be Still and Know	Alicia Reese
May 31	The Big Windburn	Lydia Mulkey



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