

# the MESSENGERbell

## November 2022

### A POSTURE OF GRATITUDE

Paul's letter to the churches in Thessaloniki ends with an extended and beautiful blessing. This includes one of my favorite challenges: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances." What I love about this passage is that it flips gratitude on its head. It is natural for me to give thanks when times are good, when things are going my way. In my natural mode of thought, gratitude flows from good things. Paul's admonition to give thanks in all circumstances turns this around—good things can flow from gratitude. A posture of gratitude can be the fertile soil from which the good fruits of a spiritual life can grow. This is not a natural posture and this is why Paul's words matter so much.

I need to be reminded to be grateful in all circumstances. I need to be reminded that the life of faith is one of creating the ground for good things to grow. I need to be reminded that the life of faith is about believing in a future more full of hope that the evidence of my eyes would suggest. And this practice, of giving thanks, it is best practiced together, with people of good faith gathering to pray together. This year, as in years past, the Community of Congregations will gather on the Sunday before Thanksgiving to practice the radical art of giving thanks in all circumstances. We have gathered during times of great tumult and war, during seasons of want and worry. This year, we will host the service in our own Sanctuary, at First United Church. More detail on that will follow in our e-blasts, but save the date for that service!

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: Advent activities and highlights, page 3; Moderator's Report, page 4; Children's Ministry and Youth events, page 5; Peace Corner, page 6; Thinking About Mortality, page 7.



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK

## Preaching in November

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| November 6         | John Edgerton |
| All Saints Worship |               |
| November 13        | John Edgerton |
| Communion Sunday   |               |
| November 20        | TBD           |
| November 27        | Alicia Reese  |
| Advent 1           |               |
| December 4         | John Edgerton |
| Advent 2           |               |

All services are at 11 a.m. on Sundays unless otherwise noted. Worship is also livestreamed and the videos remain on the YouTube channel so that you may view them at a later time even if you can't be with us on Sunday.

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)



## Ways to Serve in Worship

Looking for a way to expand your worship experience? There are so many ways to serve in worship! Adults and youth can serve as ushers/greeters, volunteer liturgists, and members of our Sanctuary Choir, while our children are welcome to serve as acolytes.

- Sign up to serve as a volunteer liturgist [here](#).
- Sign up to serve as an acolyte [here](#).
- For more information about ushers, contact John ([jedgerton@firstunited.com](mailto:jedgerton@firstunited.com))
- For more information about singing with the Sanctuary Choir, contact Bill ([bill@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:bill@firstunitedoakpark.com)).



## Notice of Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting will take place on **November 13 in the Sanctuary following worship (approximately 12 p.m.)**. We will begin as soon as we have a quorum.

During our meeting we will review and vote on our Fiscal Year 2023 budget and our 2023 Ministry Outline which sets the priorities for the church year ahead. Watch your email the week before the meeting for a special notice with budget materials, the annual report, and ministry outline information for you to review ahead of the meeting.



# First United Cookie Bake Fundraiser for FUSH (our high school youth group)

Support our youth as they raise money for service projects and scholarships for youth to attend our retreat and summer mission trip.

## Cookie selections this year:

1 order costs \$8 & contains 8-12 pieces

Holiday Sugar Cookies

Gingerbread Biscotti

Oatmeal Cinnamon Craisin

Assorted Platter

To place an order, email the following information to Alicia Reese by:

**Sunday, November 27th**

1. Your name & phone number
2. The number of orders of each kind of cookie you would like
3. How you plan to pay and when (online, by check, or cash...in advance or at pickup)

## Save the Date: Blue Christmas

The holiday season is often referred to as the most joyful time of the year, but for many, this is a particularly difficult season because it can serve as a reminder of all the things and people we may have lost. Together we engage in lighting Advent candles in a new, symbolic way. All are invited. Come as you are.



**Holiday Food and Gift Basket  
Returns for 2022!**

- Pick up your gift tag starting November 6.
- Go shopping!
- Return all gifts to church by December 4.

Look for Sher Watts Spooner by the small Christmas tree. Questions? Contact Sher (708-214-8234; [sandaspooner@comcast.net](mailto:sandaspooner@comcast.net))

Are you able to help us deliver gifts? Looking for drivers available on December 5. Call Sher to volunteer.

## The Alternative Christmas Store is Back!

The Alternative Christmas Store (ACS) is a First United tradition that invites us to live into Advent and our mission of "empowering people by changing structures." As we rebuild post pandemic we will have fewer items than previous years and will only offer items for three Sundays. Sale dates are December 4, 11, and 18.

ACS is an opportunity to purchase either locally made goods and fair trade products as an alternative to mass produced items. We will also offer a way to donate directly to some of our Faith in Action Mission Partners directly in someone's name. Proceeds from all sales also benefit our mission partners.

We are currently looking for a few enthusiastic people to help us with promoting the event, set up, and take down as well as general help on the days of the event. If anyone is particularly good at setting up spread sheets and inventory control – that would also be helpful. If you can help us with anyone of these tasks please contact Teri Omert at [tomert@comcast.net](mailto:tomert@comcast.net). This is a great way to be involved with a joyful and significant church activity.



# From the Council Moderator

Church Council had two meetings during the month of October in preparation for the Annual Congregational Meeting that is happening on November 13. Please attend (if you can) to hear our recommendations for how the Church should proceed during this fiscal year, as well as to vote on our proposed ministry direction and budget.

## Opening Devotions and Joys/Concerns

For our October 18 meeting, Dave Marshall led us in a servant leadership devotion inspired by a Martin Luther King sermon. Kathryn Heavey gave thanks for a Bryan Stevenson book. Tammy Meyer commended the Nursery School for completing its most recent National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation renewal application.

## Capital Campaign Update

Our consultants Latz and Company presented an overview of the Campaign Planning Report, which included an overview of the case development process, a summary of the needs for a capital campaign, and a summary of the proposed case priorities. Latz also summarized the results of the prospect research on the estimated potential campaign commitments from the top 50 prospective donors. Lastly, Latz offered additional steps to consider including council case narrative review and prioritization, additional prospect/donor research, facilitated campaign goal setting, additional focus groups, congregational survey, and campaign implementation.

A discussion ensued where nearly every Council member provided feedback on the summary provided by Latz and asked clarifying questions.

## Financial Report

Susan Macaulay presented the Long Form Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 for the Church as a first read of the budget to Council on October 18. The preliminary budget showed revenue and expenses of approximately \$1.077MM and \$1.088MM, respectively. The Finance Team worked with individual teams to review line items in this budget and adjusted expense numbers to present a final budget recommendation at the Special Council Meeting on October 24.

At the October 24 special Council meeting, the new budget showed expenses of \$1.097MM, resulting in a deficit of just over \$20,000. Council passed a motion unanimously to submit this final draft of the FY 2023 annual budget to the congregation for review and congregational approval at the annual meeting on November 13.

## Ministry Outline

At the October 24 Special Council meeting, Council Leadership (Tim Dull as Clerk, John Edgerton as Lead Pastor, and me) presented a draft of the FY 2023 Ministry Outline to

Council members. As a reminder, the Ministry Outline identifies the Church's most significant goals and priorities in the coming year. It is a set of broad priorities around which the various components of the Church (pastors, staff, teams, task forces, and other groups) will unite to create plans and prepare tasks. It should also inspire and encourage us, so it can be a place for aspirational goals and creative thinking about how to achieve those goals.

The draft for this fiscal year's Ministry Outline maintained the three overarching priorities from FY 2022:

- Engage Fully the Church's Whole Community to Strengthen Congregants' Relationships with God and with Each Other
- Cultivate Ways of Working Together to Further the Church's Ministries
- Enhance the Church's Financial Resources

The new document goes into more specifics than in previous years about how each priority should be achieved to provide a clearer understanding of the goals across the entire Church. Council passed a motion unanimously to submit this final draft of the FY 2023 Ministry Outline to the congregation for review and congregational approval at the annual meeting on November 13.

## Additional Reports

The October 18 meeting went very long, and we were unable to get to our reports from teams, staff, and the Moderator! I reminded Council members to contact Don Sibley to have their photos taken for posting on the bulletin board in the lounge. Many thanks to the several congregation members who have come up to me at the end of October remarking on the lack of posted photos; we are working on getting them up, so you have a visual reminder of who your Council members are!

Marteki Reed, Moderator





### Parent Conversation:

## Sexuality & Faith

with expert/author, Kate Ott!

**Sunday, November 6, 2022**

**4:00-5:30 pm**

for Parents of kids ages 0-18

Register Today!



Sex+Faith

Talking  
with Your Child  
from  
Birth to  
Adolescence



## Tournament of Church Champions



Young Adult Edition

- Round 1:** Saturday, November 5, 2022  
KICKBALL (plan B = Bowling)
- Round 2:** Friday, December 2, 2022  
TRIVIA NIGHT
- Round 3:** Saturday January 7, 2023  
PICKLEBALL
- Round 4:** Friday, February 3, 2023  
BOWLING (alternate = Game Night)
- Round 5:** Saturday, March 4, 2023  
COOKING CHALLENGE
- Round 6:** Saturday, April 1, 2023 (No Joke!)  
YARD GAMES (plan B = BINGO)
- Final Round!** Saturday, May 6, 2023  
SOFTBALL



May the "best" church win!

*It's all made up, the points don't matter,  
and having a good time makes you a winner!  
But a trophy and bragging rights will be involved.*

The details for our kickball event are set! Meet at Brooks Middle School field at 10 a.m. on November 5 for our kick-off event! (See what we did there?)

## November Peace Corner

November initiates the winter holidays with Thanksgiving. We have a mental image of Thanksgiving meals being idyllic, happy family times. Hopefully, this is usually the case for you and your family, but whether it's the upcoming election or something else entirely, there is always a chance of conflict and tension within the family.

[Braver Angels](#), an organization that promotes conversation bridging the partisan divide, has recommended approaches for talking with others with whom one differs. The 4 techniques can be found in a story in [Time](#) magazine and are instructive with examples of ways to use each: <sup>1</sup> Clarify (or paraphrase); Agree (or Praise); Pivot; and Offer Perspective – Probe.

The webpage [Verywellfamily](#) suggests a way to exit a difficult conversation:<sup>2</sup>

### Know How to Exit

It's common for people to end a heated discussion with a comment like, "We'll just have to agree to disagree." While this may seem fairly innocuous, it tends to discount the other person's viewpoint and leave them feeling unheard.

It's better to say, "You've given me something to think about. Let's talk about something else and come back to this at another time."

These differences are important, and so is maintaining family relationships. A tool useful for me is to remember Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

"if there is **anything** worthy of praise" – it might be the smallest thing I can think of that is positive about that person – focusing on that positive trait is helpful to me in calming my spirit and working to have peace in that relationship.

<sup>1</sup>Fighting With a Family Member Over Politics? Try These 4 Steps. [Time](#), [BELINDA LUSCOMBE](#), FEBRUARY 19, 2021 5:14 PM EST. <HTTPS://TIME.COM/5937398/HOW-TO-TALK-TO-FAMILY-MEMBERS-ABOUT-POLITICS/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.verywellfamily.com/when-families-disagree-about-politics-4112342>

## Fourth Sunday Offering: Beyond Hunger

The Covid pandemic has affected us all. Beyond Hunger, a First United Mission Partner, was buffeted with challenges that required solutions if Beyond Hunger was going to provide much-needed food to often-marginalized folk. Over the course of the pandemic, Beyond Hunger has continued to feed the hungry, work that we value as Christians:. Meeting that need hasn't been simple. The need for food assistance spiraled upward during the pandemic. Beyond Hunger had to significantly change its operations, creating four unique ways to serve people safely: a popular drive-thru pantry, a scaled-down socially distant pantry inside the church, an off-site pop-up "Despensa" serving vulnerable immigrant families, and Home Delivery for older adults and people with disabilities.

Beyond Hunger lives out its core values by serving with dignity, focusing on the care of our neighbors – those who are being served, those who are volunteering, and those who support the organization. First United members are part of each of those groups. Your generosity in the fourth Sunday's offering will sustain Beyond Hunger so that they can support our neighbors and our friends now and well into the future.



## Consider a Planned Gift

First United welcomes your legacy gift through your will or by listing the church as a beneficiary of your IRA, life insurance, or pension plan. When you make such a gift, please let the church know. We want to thank you and add you to our list of Kindred Spirits (those who have told us they have made a legacy gift).

The church is deeply grateful for these important gifts - in any amount. They help build our endowments and fund our ministry and mission now and for the future. Questions? Contact Gene or Ann Armstrong ([geneann1113@yahoo.com](mailto:geneann1113@yahoo.com) or 708-657-4484) or any of the pastors at 708-386-5215.





It is scary, sad, but true: We are all going to die someday.

Please join us as we explore planning for and taking care of ourselves through the sometimes painful transition from life on this earth to the everlasting. The topics we will explore include:

- Peaceful vs. Difficult Death
- Care Options
- Conversations with Family and Loved Ones
- Spiritual Thoughts about Death and Dying
- Conquering our Fears and Anxieties
- Medical Aid in Dying

Saturday, December 3 from 9:30 – 2:00 in the Chapel. Lunch is included. Sponsored by the Deacons. Fee: \$10.00.

Use this link to register to participate through Realm or call or text Deacon Chair, Anne Koerber (708-280-9914).

## Zoom Links for Recurring Virtual Groups

### Fostering Connection and Support

FCS meets weekly on Zoom for a time of informal connection and support. This is a drop-in group. Come when you'd like, stay as long as you can. Here's the link to join whenever you are able: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88937766305>

### Prayer Shawl Ministry

Prayer Shawl Ministry meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month from 10-11 a.m. Please join us if you are able. If the day and time do not work for you, please reach out to Alicia Reese ([areese@firstunitedoakpark](mailto:areese@firstunitedoakpark)). Use this link to join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85035296628>

## It's Not Too Late to Join!

Are you interested in membership at First United? Learn more in our Newcomers Class! We will meet on three consecutive Sundays beginning on October 30 from 9:45-10:45 a.m. Light breakfast will be provided. For those who choose to continue to membership at First United, there will be a breakfast celebration with council and a formal welcome and membership vows during worship on November 20. Here is the full schedule:

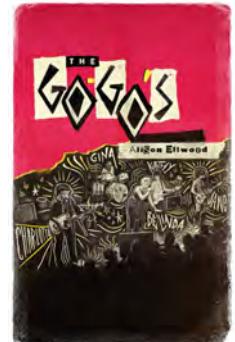
- November 6 — Our Spiritual Journey - The story of you. This is time for us to get to know each other better.
- November 13 — The story of two denominations (UCC and Presbyterian Church USA), AKA the history of how First United Church came to be.
- November 20 — Joining Sunday with a BIG Breakfast.

Even if you weren't with us for our first session on October 30, we'd love to have you join the classes and we'll catch you up! Contact Teri Omert ([tomert@comcast.net](mailto:tomert@comcast.net)) for more information.



## Dinner and a Movie, November 11

The Go-Go's: Inspired by the punk movement and determined to define their musical destiny, the Go-Go's became the first all-girl band to play their own instruments, write their own songs, and score a No. 1 album, as recounted in this engaging documentary. Dinner at 6:00 (\$5 donation); movie at 6:30 (free). Call Liz Swan (708-567-3490) to RSVP.





# The Prayers of God's People

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

## For the wider world:

- Peace & justice
- All those impacted by hurricane Ian
- All those struggling with finding safe and secure housing, especially as the weather turns colder
- All those living with uncertainty
- All our leaders, bless them with patience, courage, and wisdom. May their actions and decisions lead to reduced violence and division.
- Those who are lonely and/or suffering with depression
- All who struggle with mental health concerns
- War-torn places, may there be peace
- Silence of guns so that justice can speak
- All those who are grieving

## For those in our midst:

- The family of Scott and Milica Logan, mourning the death of Scott's mother, Veronica
- Baby Will, recovering with a broken arm.
- For the loved ones of Tom Hencinski, mourning his death
- Jerry Sebesta's recovery process continues at Park Place in Elmhurst
- Barbara Ballinger continues to be in the care of the British Home Rehabilitation Services in Brookfield, IL
- Several folks undergoing medical tests
- Loved ones battling cancer or addiction
- Kate, David, and Kathy
- 

## For the joys in our lives:

- Successful heart procedure for Carl Nauert
- Gratitude for visiting friends
- The marriage of Jordan Dull to Zoe Hansen
- Guest Preacher Lindsey Braun's worship leadership and message
- Adult Ed speaker Ken Sawyer



## CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

|         |                                     |               |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Oct. 12 | Halloween Is For Grownups           | John Edgerton |
| Oct. 19 | Yeah, I'm Already Aware             | John Edgerton |
| Oct. 25 | Good Things Travel by Word of Mouth | John Edgerton |
| Nov. 1  | Gratiam                             | Alicia Reese  |



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