



# the MESSENGERbell

## April 2022

### BUSINESS AS USUAL?

The last week and a half have been anything but “business as usual” here at First United. The pastors and staff are most grateful for the messages of love and support from our members and our friends as we have moved through an unprecedented week of national attention. We hope that the frequent updates have been informative and helpful each time that they have landed in your email inbox.

In case you have missed them, here are those recent updates from First United and Lead Pastor John Edgerton:

[April 6—Harassment at First United in Response to Lenten Theme](#)

[April 8—Palm Sunday Worship All Online this Sunday](#)

[April 11—Holy Week Update and More](#)

[April 12—Holy Week Schedule and a Shameless Plea](#)

With all of these emails landing in your inbox in rapid-fire fashion, we have held off on some of our more traditional communications as our programs and schedules were shifting rapidly. Thank you for your grace and understanding as we have worked to alter plans where necessary. We are looking forward to wonderful Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday services followed closely by the long-delayed Confirmation Celebration for our Quest Class of 2020.

With love and gratitude,

John Edgerton

Lydia Mulkey

Alicia Reese

Meghan Premo-Hopkins

Bill Chin

Mike Surratt

Heather Vanderberg

Shirley Kyle

Keith Liesse

Melissa Lurio



*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: upcoming worship services, page 2; the Moderator's Report, page 3; Tell Me the Truth About Racism update, page 4; Children's Ministry and Youth news, page 5.



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK

## Preaching Schedule for April

April 14	Worship led by the Quest Class of 2021
Maundy Thursday	
Thursday at 6 p.m.	
No Livestream Available	
April 17	John Edgerton
Easter Sunday	
April 24	Quest Class of 2020
Confirmation Celebration	

We have returned fully to in-person worship and programs in Lent. All services are at 11 a.m. on Sundays unless otherwise noted. Worship will also be streamed on YouTube except for the Maundy Thursday service. 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](#)



## Maundy Thursday Worship

We have a unique and wonderful opportunity to worship in-person for Maundy Thursday at Oak Park Temple (1235 N. Harlem Ave). We will gather for our table service starting at 6 p.m. followed by Tenebrae at 7:30.

To learn more, please read Lead Pastor John Edgerton's email available [here](#).



# From the Council Moderator

Greetings on behalf of your Council, with a brief recap of our March meeting.

Devotion: John Borrero shared remembrances of his grandmother, who raised him and for whom John cared in the final years of her life. John encouraged us to reflect on how we hope to be remembered by our loved ones.

Financial Updates: Susan Macaulay, Chair of the Finance Team, reported that the Church's total projected budget deficit was reduced from \$77,776 in January to \$68,600 as of the end of February. This positive trend is principally the result of an improvement in the shortfall in revenues from \$101,183 in January to \$75,704 in February. Expenses also are under budget. This month's analysis of revenues and expenses shows that pledged giving is \$56,829 below budget, while non-pledged regular giving is almost \$16,000 ahead of budget.

Annual Stewardship Campaign: Marcia Ashton, Chair of the Stewardship Team, gave an interim report on the results of the Overflowing Blessings Stewardship Campaign. As of March 15, the church has received pledges totaling \$469K from 101 households. The team will be following up with the approximate 70 households who previously pledged but have not yet made a pledge this year, as well as with households who have not previously pledged. The goal is to obtain pledges representing a 5% increase in dollars pledged from last year.

Vision for the Future: Council members discussed initial feedback from teams to the preliminary vision framework developed around 4 pillars of Church life: the worship experience, the community of care, the Church's engagement and impact in the wider community, and sustainability in the Church's finances. The vision pillars will help to identify goals and set priorities for ministry outlines and also could lead to initiatives or projects for which a capital campaign is needed. Representatives of Latz & Company, the Church's campaign consultants, are attending team meetings in preparation for facilitated discussions with ministry groups and congregants in the coming months.

Parking Lot Improvements: Beyond Hunger recently learned that the State has awarded the grant for which

Beyond Hunger applied to repave and improve the Church parking lot. The project timeline has not been set, although the current projection is that the work will begin soon after Memorial Day and take approximately three weeks.

Presbytery Commissioners: The Council elected Pauline Coffman, Dan Pietrini, and Bob Giles as First United's commissioners to the Presbytery. Commissioners represent First United at denominational meetings and report on happenings of the Presbyterian Church (USA), with which First United is affiliated. Thank you Pauline, Dan, and Bob for your continued service!

Sallie Smylie, Moderator

## Stewardship Update

It may come as a surprise that we are in the final phase of First United's stewardship season. With appreciation for your generous response, we are on our way to building a strong church community in the upcoming year. Currently we are at 75% of our goal for 2022-2023.

"Overflowing Blessings" are experienced in so many ways. The gifts that you give to the church turn into abundant blessings experienced both inside the church and in our community. Here is a snapshot of the wonderful things that your gift can do:

- 480 lunches packed by volunteers for the Interim Housing Program at Housing Forward
- \$5,000 from the Christmas offering donated to the Alsaad Family, our asylum seeking family receiving our support in a medical crisis
- 266,300 individuals receiving vital food distribution through Beyond Hunger, headquartered in our building
- 14 high-school youth participating in Quest, First United's confirmation program
- 105 online worship services nurturing our faith and supporting our endurance during the height of the pandemic

Generosity will look different for each household. Every gift counts. Your generosity will assure First United's vitality mail using [this card](#) or online via Realm. Thank you!



## The Peace Corner: Justice

Show me the suffering of the most miserable  
So I will know my people's plight.  
Free me to pray for others  
For you are present in every person.  
Help me to take responsibility for my own life  
So that I can be free at last.  
Grant me the courage to serve others  
For in service there is there is true life.  
Give me honesty and patience  
So that I can work with other workers.  
Bring forth song and celebration  
So that the spirit will be alive among us.  
Let the spirit flourish and grow  
So that we will never tire of the struggle.  
Let us remember those who have died for justice  
For they have given us life.  
Help us love even those who hate us,  
So that can change the world. Amen.

The New Century Hymnal #863

Join our Fostering Connection and Support groups whenever you would like for support and conversation. Use this Zoom link to drop in <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83006056785>



## TMTTR Update

We have almost completed "Tell Me the Truth About Racism," our 6-week educational series that we are doing in partnership with St. Christopher's Episcopal Church. The sessions are all well attended. Our stories and discussions are providing a new way to hear the story of racism in our world, our country, even our own church, and then wonder about it together. The soup supper that kicks off each evening is lovely (we have some very talented soup makers and bread bakers in our church!) and creates a great space for fellowship. **Our final session has been rescheduled to April 24 from 5-6:45 p.m.** We still have more to learn and experience and there is no telling what may be revealed to us or in what ways we may be transformed if we are open to the Spirit moving, working, in, between, and through us.



Prayer Shawl Ministry is a mix of knitters and crocheters who make items that we gift to those in our church community as a reminder of our love. We meet on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 10-11 a.m. Contact Alicia Reese for the Zoom link to join our meeting or if you know someone who could use a prayer shawl.



## Hunger Walk Planned May 1, 2022

First United raised over \$19,000 and Hunger Walkathon West raised over \$130,000 to help hungry people around the world in 2021. Over \$32,000 was dispersed locally to 10 agencies including Beyond Hunger, Housing Forward and Cluster Tutoring. We are recruiting walker/fundraisers for the 2022 Walk now. When you think of "a good measure - tamped down and spilling over" this Stewardship season, please remember this annual fundraiser that was started by the Hunger Group and previously led by Frank and Shirley Peterson and later by Gy and Sylvia Menninga. We continue the tradition of giving locally, nationally, and internationally through Church World Service Global. Our goal for 2022 is \$20,000. Follow [the link](#) to the First United Team and either sign up to be a fundraiser or donate to the team or its members.



## Sign Up to 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.



If you haven't already, please register for our summer retreat/work camp!  
Youth grades 9-12.

Scan this QR code OR click this [LINK](#)



## April 2022 Youth Group Activities

- Thu. 4/14: Maundy Thursday
  - 6:00 pm - Soup Supper
  - 7:30 pm - Tenebrae Service
- Sun. 4/17: Easter  
(No evening gatherings)
- Tue. 4/19 from 3:30-5 pm  
After-school, church hangout
- Sun. 4/24
  - Quest 2020 Confirmation
  - 5-6:45 pm Final Session of Tell Me the Truth About Racism





# The Prayers of God's People

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

**For the wider world:**

- The people of Ukraine and all those affected by the invasion
- Those suffering from COVID or caring for loved ones with COVID
- Those working amidst staff shortages, getting burned out, and risking their health and well-being
- Victims of gun violence and their loved ones
- An end to racism, injustice, and violence
- Children and youth continuing to struggle in school, with social situations, and their mental health
- Those who are again feeling isolated, lonely, sad

**For those in our midst:**

- Julie Nauert, for broken ankle surgery
- Sher Spooner continuing with chemotherapy treatment
- Joan and Don Lennie

**For the joys in our lives:**

- Welcoming new members Dale and Carol Porfilio
- Herta Lisic who turned 100 years old on Friday, March 17
- Being back in person for many things and the opportunity to connect with people without masks a little at a time.
- All those who make online worship possible
- Getting to hear our church choir sing each week in worship
- Godspeed and best wishes to Steve and Kathy Pedersen and to Melinda Haag and Jane Barker as they move to their respective new homes.

## Anti-Racism Workshops with CARE

The Chicago Presbytery's [Commission on Anti-Racism and Equity \(CARE\)](#) wants your support in intentionally and continuously assisting the Presbytery to root out and dismantle the evils of racism and white supremacy in our structures.

Our own Alicia Reese is one of the co-facilitators of CARE's Introduction to Systemic Racism workshops. The workshops emphasize the biblical and theological foundations for anti-racism and equity and provide a common language and understanding of systemic racism and white supremacy.

There is one more upcoming opportunity:

- May 21, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

For more information and registration details, contact [Alicia Reese](mailto:areese@firstunitedoakpark.com) ([areese@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:areese@firstunitedoakpark.com)).

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## CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

March 1	I Confess	Alicia Reese
March 9	What Not to Say	John Edgerton
March 15	Reading Together	Lydia Mulkey
March 23	Tulip Selfies	John Edgerton
March 29	Kindness and Privilege	Bruce Reyes-Chow

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