



the MESSENGERbell

October 2021

INDOOR WORSHIP UPDATE

What is the plan for when First United will resume indoor worship?

The plan is to resume indoor worship when community transmission of COVID is at a level more typical of June and July of this year. The pastoral staff, in consultation with Council leadership, are actively monitoring appropriate COVID metrics. It is our hope that we will be able to move to indoor worship before it is too cold to worship outdoors. This is, of course, dependent on the public health situation.

What is the current public health status regarding COVID-19?

Conditions are improving. However, the Illinois Department of Public Health still considers Cook County as high risk for COVID-19. Transmission is more than double where it should be for a “stable” level of infection. Based on the rate of new cases, the IDPH is specifically calling upon people in Cook County to reconsider large indoor gatherings.

Are there public health guidelines specific to churches we are following?

The most recent IDPH guidelines for houses of worship were published on April 8, 2021. Those guidelines are detailed and specific to houses of worship, and they formed the basis for the protocols approved for the several indoor worship services held during the summer. Those guidelines, however, are more than five months old and they pre-date the Delta variant. It is unlikely that the IDPH will release further church specific COVID guidelines, because the IDPH is focused on getting people vaccinated and, more recently, a booster campaign.

What about other churches that are worshiping indoors? Aren't we behind?

What churches are doing varies a great deal. Some churches began worshiping indoors in July of 2020. Other churches have not yet resumed any in-person worship services, whether indoors or outdoors. We have done something somewhere between these, having hosted over a dozen outdoor services and several indoor services. There is not a clear consensus



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.

Continued on page 2.

A few highlights from this month's Messenger Bell: October Adult Education offerings, page 2; submit names for All Saints Sunday, page 3; Women's Retreat update, page 5; a planned giving testimonial, page 5; October Peace Vigil, page 6; Pastor Appreciation Month, page 9.



FIRST
UNITED
CHURCH OF
OAK PARK

Worshipping Sundays at 11 a.m.

[CLICK TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)

October 10	Lydia Mulkey
Outdoor Worship 9 a.m.	
YouTube Worship at 11 a.m.	
October 17	John Edgerton
Outdoor Worship 9 a.m.	
YouTube Worship 11 a.m.	
October 24	John Edgerton
Fourth Sunday Offering	
Outdoor Worship 9 a.m.	
YouTube Worship 11 a.m.	
October 31	Alicia Reese
Outdoor Worship 9 a.m.	
YouTube Worship 11 a.m.	

Congregational Meeting on October 10

There will be a congregational meeting following the 11:00 worship service on October 10, 2021. The meeting will be held on Zoom and is called to approve the operating budget for FY 2022 and to approve amendments to the Purpose and Covenant language in our Constitution. If you have not received the proposed budget and the Constitutional amendments, please contact the church office. **Please attend the meeting so we have the required quorum for voting!!**

Indoor Worship FAQ continued from page 1.

among faith communities about what constitutes responsible gatherings at this time.

How will the church make these decisions and how will it be communicated?

At the September Council meeting, Council voted that the pastoral staff and Council Leadership should make those decisions. When the decision is made to hold indoor worship, we will shout it from the rooftops! The Messenger Bell, our E-blast, and our worship announcements will prominently feature that news.

October Adult Education

Evangelical Christianity and Politics
Evangelical Christianity's alignment with right-wing politics: how does this impact mainline Protestantism and what are the implications, if any? Presented by Dr. Rhys Williams, a professor of sociology at Loyola University-Chicago whose research has focused on the intersection of politics, religion, and social movements in American culture. He has also studied the involvement of religious groups in urban politics, as well as the ways in which urban settings affect religion and its public roles. We'll meet in an on-site session, on Sunday, October 10, from 9:45-10:45 a.m. pending our speaker's availability, in Centennial Hall. Attendees must wear masks and sit socially-distanced.

Professor Williams' current research examines these themes in three different projects. One is a study of the involvement of religious groups, *Religion and Progressive Activism: New Stories about Faith and Politics*. Another project focuses on race and religion in the United States. In this regard he recently published (with Jessica M. Barron) *The Urban Church Imagined: Religion, Race, and Authenticity in the City* (both published by New York University Press, 2017). Finally, he is involved in research that analyzes public attitudes and political language about immigration in contemporary American politics, and how non-Christian immigrant groups respond.

Our Calling

The prophets were called to serve the Lord. Pastors and other church leaders are also called: how do they react to this, how does it feel? Ally Vertigan, First United member and Staff Chaplain at Rush Oak Park Hospital, will lead a discussion on this topic at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, October 17. The following Sunday, October 24, First United member Len Palombi will lead a second session, in which we everyday people will be encouraged to reflect on our personal sense of calling. Both sessions will take place in in Centennial Hall; attendees must be masked and sit socially-distanced.



From the Council Moderator

Greetings from your Church Council! Here are the highlights of a special meeting of the Council on August 31 and its regular monthly meeting on September 21.

The Council had two agenda items for its August 31 special meeting:

- The Council discussed and provided feedback on a draft of the FY 2022 budget, with the goal to present a proposed budget to the congregation in October for its approval.
- The Council approved a recommendation from the Finance Team to move the bulk of the Church's insurance program to the UCC Insurance Board, a nonprofit that specializes in serving the insurance needs of churches within the UCC and Presbyterian Church (USA), among other denominations. This recommendation was based on a comprehensive analysis of available alternatives by the Insurance Task Force, headed by Ken Wylie, which was prompted in part by an appraisal of the Church building and personal property conducted this past spring. The task force, whose members also included Finance Team Chair Susan Macaulay and Financial Administrator Shirley Kyle, concluded that as a church-focused enterprise, the UCC Insurance Board is better suited to meeting the specific and unique needs of our Church for property and casualty insurance as well as insurance protecting our clergy, staff and volunteers. Thanks go to Ken, Susan, and Shirley for their work, as well as to Heather Vanderberg, Church Office Administrator, for her invaluable administrative support.

At the September 21 meeting, Council considered and decided on the following matters:

Capital Campaign Planning Task Force: The Council heard from members of the Leo Latz team who are advising the planning task force on the Church's readiness and preparations for a possible capital campaign. Next steps are for Council to deliberate on a specific proposal from the Latz team for moving forward on analyses and preparation activities.

FY 2022 Budget Approval: The Council approved an updated draft of the FY 2022 budget, subject to further refinement if needed to finalize total projected reve-

nue.

Revised Overture to General Assembly: As reported to the congregation, in May the Council approved an overture to the Chicago Presbytery, developed by Pauline Coffman and supported by the Faith in Action Team, designed primarily to protecting and advancing the rights of Palestinians in Israel. Pauline subsequently received suggestions from advocates in other presbyteries to revise the overture. She presented a revised overture incorporating those suggestions, which Council approved. [Click here](#) to read the revised overture.

Church Reopening: The Council discussed the current COVID situation and its impact on reopening the Church building to indoor worship. John discussed the considerations that have informed, and continue to inform, decision-making, which the Council agreed is properly vested in the Lead Pastor and Council leadership. The lead article in this Messenger Bell addresses this topic and incorporates the considerations discussed at the Council meeting.

October 10 Congregational Meeting: The Council called a congregational meeting for October 10, following worship, for two purposes: (1) to approve a budget for FY 2022; and (2) to approve amendments to the Constitution to incorporate the refreshed Purpose Statement and Covenant. A quorum of 100 members is required for amending the Constitution. **Please attend!**

Recognition of Live-Stream Team: Last, but not least, the Council recognized Pete Todd, Nina Roher, Carl Nauert, and members of the Worship Music & the Arts Team for their dedication, research, and implementation of a plan to enable the Church to live-stream worship services. Well done!

Sallie Smylie, Moderator

All Saints

We commemorate All Saints Sunday on November 7 this year.



Please send in the names of the saints in your life that you would like to be included in our worship service to Heather Vanderberg (hvanderberg@firstunitedoakpark.com) by Sunday, October 31.

FUSH and FUJI Update

We are thrilled to announce that we have enough advisors that the youth groups are able to meet at the same time on Sunday evenings! From 5:00-6:30 p.m. on Sundays, our junior high and high school youth will be gathering on the church grounds to engage in fellowship, exploration, and self-care. And so far, the reunion in-person has been wonderful.

Walter Miller, Dirk Labuschagne, and Spencer Harpe returned as FUSH advisors this year, and we welcomed Jane Kuntz, a former FUSHie/FUJI herself.

Kregg Raducha returned as a FUJI advisor this year and got two new teammates: Don Kuntz and Karina Donayre (both are former FUJIs/FUSHies!)

We are overjoyed to have this group of dedicated advisors leading and caring for our youth! We are looking forward to this year and will be looking to make the best and most of it. Keep our kiddos in your prayers as they continue to navigate, arguably, the most difficult phase of life in the midst of a pandemic.



Top: 2021 FUJI
Bottom: 2021 FUSH



Quest is Back in Action!

After a year of deferring Quest due to the pandemic, we are back with a class of 14 Quest students in both ninth and tenth grades!

The most recent Quest class was the first to experience a new structure and curriculum format. We have made some minor adjustments based on lessons learned and to meet the needs of those participating. That is what this structure is all about — allowing each student to have a say in their confirmation experience. We hope this will help meet the individual learning styles, personal interests, and crazy schedules of our youth, and give them first-hand experience in taking ownership of and responsibility for their own faith journey. We will also provide the kids with all kinds of support and resources. We are a community, after all.

We will also be making the chapel our Quest home this year, as our large class does not fit in Room 13 when taking social distancing into account. The journey has begun and it will be quite the adventure. We appreciate your prayers as our youth begin this discernment process and throughout the program year!



CHURCH SCHOOL HALLOWEEN!

WEAR YOUR COSTUME
TO CHURCH ON OCTOBER 31!



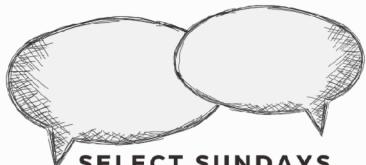
WE WILL HAVE TRICK-OR-TREATING
AND A HALLOWEEN PHOTO BOOTH
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING WORSHIP.

JOIN US FOR SOME HALLOWEEN FUN!



First United Church of Oak Park

Parenting Conversations



SELECT SUNDAYS
9:50-10:40
IN THE SANCTUARY

September 19

**Looking Back:
What Will Matter?**

with Rev. Beth Dickerson
Pastor, Parent,
Grandparent

October 17

**Raising Faithful LGBTQ+
Kids and Allies**

with Rev. Will Tanner
Family Life Pastor
Plymouth Church
Framingham, MA

November 21

**A Faithful and Anti-Racist
Thanksgiving**

with Rev. Samantha
Houser
Assoc. Conference
Minister UCC
South Dakota

October 3

**Praying with Kids When
You're Not Sure How to
Pray Yourself**

with Rev. Lydia Mulkey
Assoc. Pastor of Education

November 7

**Raising Holy
Troublemakers**

with Rev. Lydia Mulkey
Assoc. Pastor of
Education

December 5

**Santa, Shopping,
and Baby Jesus:
Making Christmas
Mean Something**

with Rev. Lydia Mulkey
Assoc. Pastor of
Education

to all those who identify as female, transfeminine, or non-binary, and are 18 and older.

Stay tuned for updates about how the team decides to move forward and what event or events they will be offering!

FUCOP Team Members & Helpers:

Debra Bade, Jane Barker, Marilee Castañeda, Beth Dickerson, Karla Hayter, Joy Marshall, Martina Reese, Priscilla Sibley, Katharine Thurman
Council Liaison: Sue Saliny

LPPC Team Members:

Rebecca Devlin, Claudia Gladstone, Barb Guibord, Gerri Mead, Gail Russell

Planned Giving: Taking the Next Step

~Bob and Marilyn Giles

We would like to share the reasons we included our Church in our estate plans. First United Church has been our church home and the foundation of our spiritual life for many years. Bob has been a member since childhood and grew up as a regular participant in church life. His fondest memories of his youth include the excellent sermons given by outstanding ministers; singing in the church choir, as a high school student, college student and later the adult choir, and the youth activities, including senior high school fellowship, a month-long work camp at the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, and participating in NCCJ meetings. Our four children also participated in Sunday School and youth group activities.

Marilyn joined the Church after we were married in 1965 and soon became involved in church activities. We were regular attendees at the NEXUS Coffee House that met weekly at First Congregational Church, now First United, for spirited discussions on current topics, many of them controversial. Marilyn attended the Women's Guild meetings at First Presbyterian Church and taught at First United Nursery School.

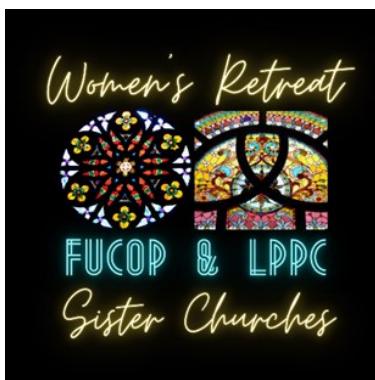
Both of us have served on numerous committees and boards and have grown in spiritual strength through our association with many diverse and yet

Continued on page 7.

The Women's Retreat

For over 30 years, First United has partnered with Lincoln Park Presbyterian church to plan and host an annual women's retreat. Due to the pandemic, the retreat did not happen last year for the first time since it all began three decades ago. But now the team is back together, with several new members, and is discerning what the future of this beloved event will look like!

We hope you were able to participate in the survey this past month. If you weren't able to participate and have some thoughts to share, please reach out to one of the team members here at First United. The team is seeking to make this an opportunity for fellowship, self-care, and spiritual renewal available and accessible



PEACE CORNER: THE IMPACT OF 9/11

The 20-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the US by al-Qaeda has prompted much reflection on the impact of this attack and our nation's response. Truly, these events have had an impact on First United Church of Oak Park.

After the horrific 9/11 terror strike, our government responded with massive military force beginning with a bombing campaign on Sunday October 7, 2001. Eventually, America helped by its NATO allies, invaded Afghanistan, joining a list of western powers to invade that country throughout history.

When it was clear that America chose to immediately use military force to respond to the terror attack, a small group of First United members sought and obtained approval from First United's Church Council to hold a weekly peace vigil on the front steps of our church. That group wished to make the point that as Christians, we believed violence should not be our first response to all acts of violence. We sought to demonstrate that not all Americans were supportive of the bombing and the invasion of Afghanistan.

By the following Friday, a First United Vigil for Peace began that lasted 13 years. Members of First United testified for peace on our Church steps, sang hymns and songs against war, read pieces of poetry, read from the Bible, and stood in silence. As the words of the old hymn went, we wanted America to "make war no more." We took a stand for peace in the face of more war.

In reaction to our country resorting to war, a Saturday morning study group sprang into existence. "Inner Peace -- World Peace" began to meet in the Church to share reflections on the meaning of peace, what it meant to wage peace as a way of life, and how we could live more peaceful lives. The Saturday group studied personal practices of peace and ways of peaceful thinking and acting, within their relationships, and as members of our congregation, society and as citizens of a nation actively at war. They shared their reflections in a monthly journal, "Journal of Inner Peace and World Peace." Many of those reflections were shared at the weekly peace vigil.

These events created change; if not in US policy, they created change in the participants. Relationships

were formed and deepened, priorities for working on peace action heightened, ongoing activism fostered. First United re-committed itself to being a peace church. And the story of war, taking a stand against violence and promoting peace, continues.

October Peace Vigil

Please join our peace vigil on October 24 at 4 p.m. on the First United Church labyrinth. We will lament the violence in our community, remember and honor the victims, and listen to survivors' stories, honoring their strength and expressing care for one another, re-committing to our efforts to work for peace.



October Fourth Sunday Offering: Housing Forward

When the COVID-19 crisis began to directly affect our communities in March of 2020, Housing Forward took bold steps to transform their services in order to ensure the health and safety of its clients, volunteers, and staff. Among these changes was the launch of Diversion Services, services that are designed to immediately address the needs of individuals and families who are imminently homeless and seeking shelter.

The goal is to immediately get the client into a safe housing alternative which can take several different forms: a negotiated return to their previous housing, short-term, non-shelter accommodation, apartments or homes (including shared housing), or returning to stay with family or friends. Diversion specialists work with clients to problem-solve, allowing them to rely on their strengths and support network.

The program sometimes needs financial resources to provide a safe alternative to shelter. Financial resources may be used to:

- Cover a small portion of household expenses to offset the cost of staying with family and friends;
- Assist with transportation to family and friends where a client can stay (e.g. an uber ride or bus or train ticket);
- Fix a vehicle so a household can maintain employment and avert a crisis; or
- Cover expenses that allow a household to remain in their own apartment when those expenses cannot be covered by another program.

The donations collected in the Fourth Sunday offering will help to fund these activities which will avert homelessness for individuals and families experiencing housing crisis.

Housing Forward is humbled by and deeply grateful for the continuing support and partnership of the congregation of First United Church of Oak Park.



TIME'S RUNNING OUT — HOUSE TO HOME KITS

Our grateful thanks to those of you who have answered the call and shipped or delivered requested new household items to the church to help us meet the challenge of providing basic household items and supplies for five families moving from living on the street or in The Write Inn to having their very own apartment.

But never fear, we are extending our sign-up deadline to October 10 and our delivery deadline to October 17. And there are still items that need volunteers to purchase and ship or deliver to the church.

Here's how you can help:

- Go to [Sign Up Genius](#) to see if your item is still needed and sign up for the item(s) you wish to donate.
- Indicate in the comments line whether you will have

the item(s) shipped or delivered by you to the church.

To ship items directly, ship to: House to Home Project, First United Church, 848 Lake St., Oak Park IL 60301, for delivery by October 17.

We will also gladly receive cash donations. Go to the First United website, click on "Give" in upper right corner, and follow the directions, being sure to indicate that you want your contribution to go to House to Home. To donate directly using your phone, text `housetohome` (all one word) and the amount you wish to donate to 73256 and follow the prompts. You can also write and mail a check, indicating House to Home on the memo line or give it to a Housing Justice team member on Sunday, October 10.

Or, if this is all too much, just call or e-mail Ann Tanner (847-977-5932 or awtanner@gmail.com) who will sign you up for whatever you would like to donate. We will be happy to come and pick your item(s) up if you are unable to drop them off or have them delivered.

Thanks be to God for making it possible for us to help our neighbors in need and to this wonderful congregation for answering the call!

Planned Giving: Taking the Next Steps continued from page 5.

focused opinions. We feel the strength of being One in the Spirit. While we have gained strength through our long association with the Church, First United offers this strength and caring to all who want to be part of the community regardless of length of time. We would like to be part of assuring that this community of faith continues and that others have the same opportunities we have had. For this reason, we have included a gift to First United Church of Oak Park in our estate plans. This is a meaningful way we can continue to support the Church and its activities, even after we are gone.

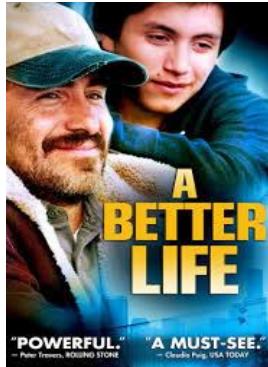


*Leave a
Legacy*

Planned Giving at First United

Dinner & a Movie

Join us in the lounge at 7 p.m. on October 8 for a showing of "A Better Life." This candid social drama tracks the relationship and conflicts between Mexican immigrant gardener Carlos and his teenage son Luis, whom he's trying to interest in earning an honest living rather than drifting into the East L.A. gang scene. Please RSPV by [clicking here](#). Masks and social distancing will be required for the duration of the movie.



Prayer with the Deacons – The Virtual Chapel is open on Sundays!

Here is what you can expect with the Virtual Chapel on a Sunday following the 11 am service...

You will [click the link](#) and enter into the meeting's waiting room. You will be let into the meeting and then put in a private breakout room with one deacon. You will then have the time and space to talk to that deacon and pray with them. Once you are done you just click the button to leave the meeting.

That's it! Easy and anonymous. The only folks who will know you came to the chapel are the two deacons in the chapel and a member of the pastoral staff facilitating the breakout rooms.

The chapel will open about ten minutes after the 11 a.m. service has ended, and the deacons will keep the chapel open for 30 minutes. We will use the same link each week.

Know that our church family and our community are always in the deacons' prayers and you can always reach out to your deacon should you be in need of prayer or wish to inform the church of something happening in your life.

There will be no virtual chapel on October 10 due to the annual Congregational meeting.

FCS: Fostering Connection and Support Returns on Thursdays

Fostering Connection and Support (FCS) is an opportunity to meet and engage with First United in a new way. This is not a team or committee; there is no "business" or decisions that need to be made. This small group meets on a weekly basis via Zoom, and is an informal group that allows you to drop in whenever you can and stay for as long as you want.

All are welcome! We meet on Thursdays from 10-11 a.m. via Zoom. [Click here](#) for the Zoom link. We talk about what's going on in our lives: the good, the bad, the troubling. We pray with and for each other and offer one another support, affirmation, and solidarity. This time together is whatever we want it to be, and we hope you will come to see what it's all about—even if you just pop in for five or ten minutes your first time to check us out and say hello!





The Prayers of God's People

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

For the wider world:

- The people and country of Afghanistan
- All those suffering due to COVID 19
- All the health care workers
- Those killed by and those who've lost loved ones to gun violence
- Those still picking up their lives in the aftermath of tropical storms

For those in our midst:

- Bill Chin and family as they mourn the loss of his mother
- John Lurain and family as they mourn the death of Nell and celebrate her life
- Robert Auch and family mourning his grandmother
- Mark Jolicoeur and family mourning the death of his father
- Bobbie Kmiec and family grappling with the sudden and unexpected death of a nephew

For the joys in our lives:

- Outdoor worship
- The start of the program year with church school, youth groups, and Quest happening for our children and youth
- Martha Sorensen is recovering at home
- Ted and Joanne Despotes celebrated 52 years of marriage
- Evan Saliny is home after a stay at the Mayo Clinic
- Bobbie Kmiec welcomed Jamie, her first grandbaby, to the world
- Welcome to Meghan Premo-Hopkins, our seminary intern from CTS
- Lois Merrill will be moving to Montana to live with family
- Our choir being back together and singing for worship
- Successful shoulder surgery for Sam Chapman-Rienstra
- Nina Roher's new job
- Marteki Reed's successful medical procedures

October is Pastor Appreciation Month!

During the Congregational Meeting on October 10, 2021 we will recognize and thank our wonderful pastors.

Zoom instructions will be provided in Thursday's e-blast and in an email reminder the morning of **October 10**.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

All those who knit or crochet, no matter your level of experience, are welcome to join us on the second and fourth Monday of each month by Zoom. Our time together is one of fellowship and caring, and we just happen to knit or crochet at the same time.

The shawls we make are distributed to those in need of extra care and comfort.

Follow this link to join us:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85035296628>

Please 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!

CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

September 8	Project Plans	Alicia Reese
September 14	It's Not Just a Good Idea, It's the Law	John Edgerton
September 21	Love Yourself	Lydia Mulkey
September 28	Should I Say Something?	John Edgerton



FIRST UNITED CHURCH
OF OAK PARK

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