



# the MESSENGERbell

## December 2021

### TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY!

This year, First United's Advent plans are going to be extremely Christmas-y. Each week, we will be preaching on one of the classic Christmas Eve texts. Think the wolf and the lamb lying down together, wonderful counselor, Prince of Peace, for there was no room for them at the inn, that sort of thing. When I first began talking about this at home, I was greeted with a look of incredulity bordering on outright disbelief. Why would that be?

Well, I'll let you all in on a little secret. I have a reputation in my family as a bit of a Christmas grinch. I'm not really sure what it's all about. Christmas is a very busy season for ministers, that's true. But it is hardly the only busy season and Ash Wednesday doesn't turn me into a grump. I am quite sure that my shoes are not too tight, though I freely admit that my head is not screwed on quite right. Whatever the reason—my head or my shoes—my wife will usually look at me during the Christmas season and tell me that I need to fix what she calls my “resting Christmas face” (let the reader understand).

But this year, it's different. I am really, REALLY looking forward to Christmas, the whole Christmas season. I find myself humming Christmas carols as I wash dishes, I turn up the radio when “All I Want for Christmas is You” comes on, and I can't wait to hear the old familiar stories of the birth of the Son of God. Perhaps it's just me, but I am ravenous for Christmas traditions this year. Each Sunday, we will revel in the songs and stories of Christmas so that by Christmas Eve the stories and songs will have sunk into our bones such that the refrains of Silent Night are all the sweeter. You won't want to miss a week!

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 and Christmas worship information, page 2; an introduction to our seminary intern, page 3; Christmas concerts, parties, and special events, page 4; 90+ Birthday Celebration, page 5; community prayers, page 6.



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK



## Sunday Worship at 11 a.m.

For those who prefer to worship virtually, we will livestream the service on the First United YouTube channel.

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)

December 5 Advent II Hanging of the Greens	This Sunday's message is presented by Church School Grades 6-8
December 12 Advent III: Joy	Lydia Mulkey
December 19 Advent IV: Love	Alicia Reese
December 26	A simple service of prayer and fellowship

## Advent and Christmas Worship



Hanging  
of the Greens  
December 5

Service led by the children of First United.



Advent at First United



**Blue Christmas**  
December 15  
7:30 p.m.  
First United Chapel



*Cidings*  
of Comfort & Joy

Advent at First United

Blue Christmas is a short worship service that honors the sadness, loneliness, and pain that many experience during the holiday season. Join in poetry, prayer, scripture, silence, song, and reflection. Find comfort together. All are invited. Come as you are.



**Christmas Eve**  
December 24

5 p.m. Family Service with Pageant  
8 p.m. Lessons & Carols



*Cidings*  
of Comfort & Joy

# Moderator's Report

Greetings from your Church Council!

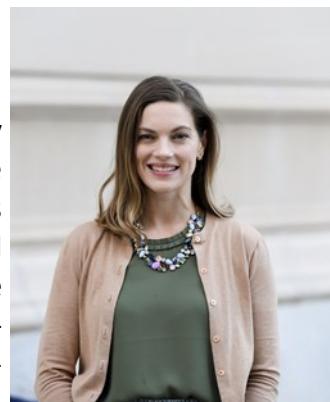
At its November meeting, the Council approved a proposal from Latz & Co. to work with Rev. Edgerton, the Council, and other leaders to develop and implement a plan for consideration of a capital campaign. This work follows on the Latz team's campaign readiness analysis and discussions that occurred over the Summer and Fall. Development of a plan will begin in earnest in January 2022 and will include discussions with various groups and members of the Church to identify goals and priorities. In anticipation of this planning, the Council devoted the lion's share of its meeting to begin to identify objectives or activities that could be pursued to increase the Church's impact in the wider community and to strengthen its finances. We did this by envisioning the headlines and contents of a *Wednesday Journal* edition three years in the future, providing details of what our Church has been doing, what it has accomplished, and what difference it has made. (One such headline that emerged was "First United Thrives: How This Community Church Made a Difference.") Our visioning discussions continue next month.

Other items of business included updating of descriptions of the Communications and Stewardship Teams, a description of what is now the Technology Task Force, and adoption of an IT Acceptable Use Policy and IT Standards. We also approved tuition rates for the First United Nursery School's 2022-2023 school year, for which registration opens in December for Church members and returning families.

Sallie Smylie, Moderator  
Church Council

## Introducing Seminary Intern Meghan Premo-Hopkins

Meghan comes to us from Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) in Hyde Park on the south side of Chicago. She is about halfway through and will be spending the entire program year with us learning, exploring, and experiencing



ing a life in ministry in a congregational setting.

Meghan lives in Oak Park with her husband and three kids. She volunteers with New Moms, Oak Park Women's Guild, and the Alcuin Montessori School. After moving back and forth from Chicago to Texas and Colorado, Oak Park is the place she and her family have lived the longest, and they look forward to staying put for a long while.

Meghan grew up in Missouri, New Mexico, and Alabama, attending Nazarene, Baptist, and Wesleyan churches. She has enjoyed serving in the church from a young age, from teaching Sunday School and writing curriculum, to developing and hosting workshops on spiritual family activities, small group leadership, spiritual gifts, and the basics of the Hebrew Bible.

Meghan felt called to seminary in high school, but the timing didn't align until 2017, when she enrolled at Chicago Theological Seminary. Meghan is mostly interested in Spiritual Education and church school education, but she enjoys learning all aspects of parish ministry.

## Congratulations Hunger Walkathon West!

HWW 2021 raised over \$130,000. Of that, 25% (\$32,500.00) was distributed to ten local partners including Beyond Hunger, Housing Forward, Cluster Tutoring and Pine Ave Food Pantry. The other 75% was used by Church World Service to fund relief and development programs around the world.

For more information go to the website: [hwwcrop.org](http://hwwcrop.org). Of the total amount raised by the Walk, First United raised \$19,413.97 - a new record. Thank you to the walkers and their sponsors for making HWW such a great success.

Joanne & Ted Despotes  
2021 HWW Coordinator and Treasurer





Visit [oriana.org](http://oriana.org) for complete details and to purchase your tickets today!

## It's Almost Here!

December 11 @ 7:30 p.m.  
December 12 @ 4 p.m.



## Christmas Eve Pageant

Rehearsal will be December 19th immediately following worship.  
Plan to stay 40 minutes.

Sign up for the Pageant online no later than December 12.



Sign up for the Christmas Eve Pageant at  
<https://tinyurl.com/yc2nkadz>!

## MIDPOINT

### Christmas Party & White Elephant Exchange

December 11 @ 7:30 pm

7426 Iowa Street, River Forest



Bring a treat to share, your favorite beer or wine & a silly white elephant gift

COVID vaccination required.

Questions? Contact Barbara Metric ([barbarametric@comcast.net](mailto:barbarametric@comcast.net))

### Parenting Conversation

Santa, Shopping & Baby Jesus:  
Making Christmas Mean  
Something

With Lydia Mulkey,  
Assoc. Pastor of Christian Education

December 12 @ 9:50 in the conference room

The Children's Ministry of  
First United Church of Oak Park  
Invites you to...

## The Advent Event

December 4th from 9:00-11:00AM  
Enter through the main Sanctuary doors to begin  
your Advent journey!

Journey through our craft and activity stations.  
Make an Advent wreath, Christmas ornaments, a peg  
people nativity set, and take fun holiday pictures in  
the photo booth!

Free to the whole community!

## Upcoming Quest Sessions

9:30-9:45 am

Dec. 5 - Emmanuel

Dec. 19 - Holy Spirit

Jan. 9 - Pnuema

Jan. 23 - Prayer

## 90 + Birthday Celebration

In the month of December, we will be celebrating our members who are 90+ years old by dropping off or sending them a gift to let them know their church family loves them and celebrates them!

If you would like to send your own Happy Birthday messages, here are the folks we will be celebrating and their birthdays!

Walter Ziegenhals – December 30

Hortense Lindsey – January 5

Herta Lisic – March 18

Betty Gehring – April 20

Marilyn Heinrichs – May 23

Marjorie Fallon – June 3

Elizabeth Rielly – June 18

Marion Davis – July 17

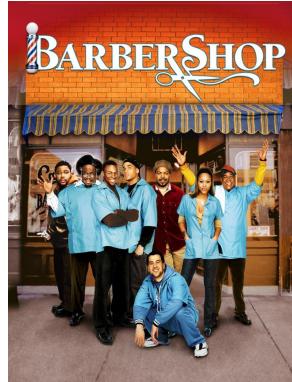
Barbara Ballinger – July 21

Anna Sadowski – August 4



## Dinner & A Movie

Friday, December 3, in the Lounge: "Barbershop." Welcome to Calvin's Barbershop. Come in and get lined up. They'll cut what's on your head while you say what's on your mind. Grab a chair, wait your turn, hang out, hear a story, talk some gossip, read a magazine, and be ready to share your opinions. But don't get mad when they laugh at what comes out of your mouth. Everybody's equal, at least until they walk out the door. You come in for a haircut. You leave with a lot more. No dinner. Movie (free) at 7:00. Call Liz Swan: 708-567-3490 to RSVP.



## Prayer Shawl Ministry

Due to vacation time and the holidays, please see below for an updated/altered version of our schedule for the next two months:

- December 13
- January 10
- January 24

All meetings are at 10 a.m. The January dates are the return to our regular second and fourth Monday schedule.

Follow this link to join us:

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

## PEACE CORNER: THE FALL PEACE VIGIL

*"The people prayed for peace, had peace on their minds, took the time to pray for peace!"*

*I'm so glad they prayed, I'm so glad they prayed, I'm so glad they prayed for peace!"*

The November Peace Vigil was a time for creating community, creating a context of a "Peace Village" of listening and caring. In small groups of four we shared how we've been shaped by violence through:

- murders of our children by gun violence and how the reality remains present in our daily life;
- murder in generations past, still impacting family life today;
- gun violence harming a family member and disrupting the direction of the victim's life, disrupting education, career and family formation;
- suicide and the harm done to so many;
- using trauma to create the opportunity to strengthen family and community relationships.

In our sharing, listening and caring, for the lives lost, the impact on our lives and relationships, we are comforted by one another, by God's spirit with us, and renewed for working for peace.

As an act of healing, participants received a snake plant, Sansevieria Moonshine, to care for and receive its healing properties, providing a sense of calm.

We closed, singing, *"Deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall live in peace some day!"*

# The Prayers of God's People

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

#### For the wider world:

- Peace, justice, equity, and reparations
- All those for whom the holiday season is not the most joyful time of the year
- Anyone spending Thanksgiving or Christmas with an empty seat at their table for the first time
- Those who do not have a family to celebrate with or a place to go for the holidays
- Those who are experiencing homelessness as the weather gets colder

#### For those in our midst:

- For Bob Berry who was hospitalized for a couple of weeks, is now in a rehab facility, and is hoping he will be able to go home to recover soon
- Milica Logan who fell and suffered multiple fractures to her leg, underwent surgery, but is home and recovering
- For Caitlin Joycesmith's Aunt B, who is in hospice care
- For Shirley Kyle and her family as they mourn the sudden death of her cousin
- For the Ashman family as they mourn the death of their brother-in-law Chauncey
- Michael Surrat mourning his beloved cat

#### With gratitude:

- For a wonderful Halloween Sunday
- Holiday celebrations
- For a lovely peace vigil hosted by Faith in Action
- To be doing more indoors at the church
- Advent and preparing for Christmas, the birth of Emmanuel
- For adult children getting new jobs



## CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

November 2	Stuckness	Alicia Reese
November 9	I Need It To Be True	John Edgerton
November 23	In All Circumstances	John Edgerton
November 30	An Intentional Advent	Alicia Reese



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