



the MESSENGERbell

August 2021

A SEASON OF RECUPERATION

Ah, the dog days of summer . . . here we are in the midst of the slower pace of life that takes over in July and August.

I normally like to keep a very brisk pace in my work. When left to my own devices I will build a day when I am racing from one thing to the next from the moment I wake up to when I go to bed. Well, to be honest, there's an hour or two in there at the end of the day for watching reruns of "This Old House" or "Gardener's World," but even so, I like to be busy, busy, busy!

But in the summer, that hectic pace runs headlong into the realities of a world that is taking a breather. Emails I send to follow up on action items get hit with vacation auto replies, and I have to cool my jets. My own travel plans make me take a hard look at my workload for an upcoming month and say, "Well, maybe let's leave this one 'til September."

After a year and a half in which I and so many others have been racing from one place to the next simply to keep up with the pace of a changing world, the heat of summer has a much needed word, "Slow down. Take a breather. Take a nap. It's too hot to go finish the weeding anyway."

I would encourage anyone reading this to take a lesson from summer. Take a breath. Take a rest. Lean into the summer; it only comes once a year.

Rev. 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: Meet this Sunday's guest preacher, page 2; a Confirmation Class (Quest) update, page 3; register for FUSH and FUJI, page 4; meet two of our new deacons, page 5; an update on our on-going technology transition, page 6.



FIRST
UNITED
CHURCH OF
OAK PARK

Worshipping Sundays at 11 a.m.

[CLICK TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)

August 8
Virtual Worship

Dirk Labuschagne

August 15
Indoor Worship with Livestream

John Edgerton

August 22

John Edgerton

August 29
Indoor Worship with Livestream

Lydia Mulkey

Guest Preacher— Dirk Labuschagne

On August 8, we welcome Dirk Labuschagne as a guest preacher. Dirk is originally from Pretoria, South Africa. He completed a Bachelor of Theology before moving to the US in 2010. He graduated in 2014 from McCormick Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity and was ordained into the PCUSA in April of 2017 here at First United! He is currently serving as a chaplain at Rush and is one of our high school youth advisors.



Upcoming Indoor Worship

We have two more indoor summer worship opportunities on August 15 and August 29. For an overview of what our indoor worship services will look like, please [click here](#). Please note that we continue to require everyone coming into our Church building to wear masks regardless of vaccination status. With public health guidance once again in flux, we will announce any changes to this overview or to our indoor worship schedule in the upcoming August e-blasts. In the meantime, though, indoor worship will go forward as scheduled. Visit our [Eventbrite page](#) to register for worship. For those of you who are not yet comfortable returning to indoor worship or who are joining us from out of town, we will livestream the service at 11:00 a.m.



Fourth Sunday Offering— Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)

Since the historic 2016 peace accord in Colombia, over 400 human rights defenders have been killed—the highest number of any country in Latin America, according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN) has worked for more than 25 years to create timely action alerts so advocates can raise their voices to protect human rights defenders.

The contribution from First United of Oak Park will support a project beginning this fall to work with our faith partners in Colombia to create advocacy resources for use by congregations to learn, pray and act to support Colombia's peacemakers. Resources will include video interviews with human rights defenders, fact sheets, backgrounders, liturgical resources (prayers, litanies, songs), and advocacy training. These tools will help congregations be faithful and effective advocates for peacemakers in Colombia.



From the Council Moderator

After worship, on July 18, we held the Church's Annual Meeting on Zoom. The congregation approved the priorities of a Ministry Outline for FY 2022, which can be found [here](#). The congregation also received an update on financial matters from Susan Macaulay, the new Chair of the Finance Team, and Justin Lewis, our new Treasurer. We recognized and extended thanks to Elders, Deacons, and team chairs whose terms ended, with special recognition of Carl Nauert's faithful two-year service as the Council Clerk. And we extended our gratitude to all members of the Church staff who engaged in and supported our ministries in a year of unprecedented challenges.

We were unable to hold a vote at the Annual Meeting on the amendments to the Constitution to update our Purpose and Covenant, which the congregation had heard about for many weeks. A quorum of 100 members is required for foundational amendments to the Constitution such as these. Unfortunately, between the worship service, attended by more than 100 members, and the Annual Meeting that followed, we lost our quorum. The Constitutional amendments will be taken up at the next meeting of the congregation when the budget for FY 2022 will be presented for approval.

At its meeting on July 20, the Council had the pleasure of receiving three new members to our Church: David Kuipers, and Todd and Chris Temperly. Welcome to our community of faith! Sue Saliny shared her reflections on the shelter provided by our faith and our Church community as we continue to face health struggles and uncertainties arising from COVID-19 and the variants.

The meeting proceeded with the election of officers for FY 2022. I will continue to serve as Moderator and Marteki Reed will continue as Vice-Moderator, and we welcome Tim Dull as our new Clerk.

The Council heard an update from Susan Macaulay on the budget preparation process for FY 2022 and suggestions for how to bring the Church's budget back into balance over the next several years. The Capital Campaign Planning Task Force reported that the Latz team is expected to present its preliminary findings to the task force on a renewed strategic vision for the church based on conversations with involved members.

Lastly, Council heard from Lydia Mulkey on programming plans for the reopening of Church School and approved the proposed health and safety measures for Church School and Sunday morning nursery operations.

—Sallie Smylie, Moderator

Growing Our Generosity Stewardship Update

The future is promising for First United Church as we move into our 2021-22 church year. Our Stewardship campaign blossomed with the theme of "Growing Our Generosity." As of July 22, we have received pledge increases from 60 households that totaled \$98,678, and new pledges from 27 households that totaled \$41,816 for an outstanding total of \$140,494 new pledge income for the upcoming fiscal year.

With a small group of pledges needing clarification, the Stewardship Team has strong expectations that the congregation will meet or exceed the goal of \$595,000. At this time, Stewardship Team members are happily writing personal thank you notes to the 131 households that have generously supported this year's Stewardship effort.

While we are grateful for the generous response from members who have identified their pledge intention, we are reaching out to members who have not confirmed their decision concerning financial support for the upcoming church year. If you have questions or need information, please contact Marcia Ashton, Stewardship Chair (marciaashton@msn.com). Please know that your generous financial support for First United will help the church move into our next chapter where our vision and service will grow abundantly.

Right: Ruth McBeth's porch drop forget-me-nots share a pot with some green onions.



Quest

If you are an incoming freshman or sophomore, be on the lookout for an invitation to Quest! Hint: check your physical, literal mailbox.

Our confirmation program will be back in action this coming program year and we are so excited. We plan to meet every other week, approximately twice a month, mostly in person, with some Zoom opportunities.

We will ask questions, engage in discussions, watch videos, and do some reading about a myriad of topics.

Each Questor will be paired with a Friend in Faith, too! If you are interested in being a Friend in Faith – please reach out to Art Spooner or Alicia Reese.

Quest orientation will be Sunday, September 19, with Questors and their parents. Friends in Faith will have their orientation and boundary training at another time. Stay tuned.





FUJI and FUSH Registration

We are gearing up for the program year for our junior high and high school youth groups!

Following a pandemic year of youth ministry, it will be wonderful to be able to be back together in person and do some of the things we didn't get to do over the past year.

Parents, please mark your calendars for youth group orientations on Wednesday, September 8:

- FUJI at 7 p.m.
- FUSH at 8 p.m.

Location TBD (church or Zoom)

Follow [this link](#) to register your child(ren). You will need to register each child individually.

Volunteer Opportunity: FUJI and FUSH Advisors

We are looking for additional advisors for our youth groups. Advisors are crucial to these programs—their presence and leadership are what enable us to meet regularly and help our gatherings run smoothly. In turn, the relationships formed with the kids are invaluable. An adequate number of adult advisors is also necessary to host any overnight events like retreats or lock-ins.

If you have ever considered or are willing to consider being a youth advisor, contact Alicia Reese. It is a big commitment, but a fun one!

Meet the Deacons

This month and next we will introduce you to our newest Deacons. We are grateful for the service and spiritual care.

We begin by introducing Andrea Alter and Georgia Parchem:

Andrea Alter

Andrea joined First United with her family in 2008. She has served in various capacities in the Church including serving on the Children and Family Ministries and Nominating Teams, Teaching fifth and sixth grade Church School, and baking bread.



A native of Colorado, Andrea has lived in Oak Park for 22 years. She is an editor with a professional services firm headquartered in Chicago. Her husband Peter is the Chief Historian and Director of the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History at the Chicago History Museum. Her son Ethan lives in Mesa, Arizona, after graduating college in 2019, and her daughter Lily is a junior in college, studying vocal jazz.

Andrea is always working on developing a deeper, more disciplined practice of prayer and meditation. She is looking forward to deepening her relationships with fellow travelers and supporting the culture of caring within the First United community by joining the Deacons team.

Georgia Parchem

Georgia, her husband Allen, and son Aaron joined First United when they first moved to Oak Park in 1980, and daughter Alyssa was that same year. Having raised her children, Georgia spends a lot of time as a “professional volunteer” serving on various boards throughout the local area.



Raised in a small town in North Dakota where helping others, including taking them in when needed, was the norm, Georgia continues to open her home to people in transition, welcoming them into her family as they find their next path.

With her sense of “deaconing” instilled at an early age, Georgia looks forward to returning to service as a First United Deacon, committing to being present to the needs and gifts and the joys and sorrows of all of those given into her ministry and care.



The Prayers of God's People

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

For those in our midst:

- Friends, family, and loved ones of Judy McCalla, who died suddenly
- Nell Lurain in palliative care
- The Ashman family as they mourn the death of Jane, George's sister
- Martha Sorensen recovering from hip fractures and surgery
- Hilda Fischer recovering from surgery
- Keith Liesse and family mourning the death of his mom
- Continued prayers for Evan Saliny. Thankful he will be at Mayo Clinic in September
- Janet Haisman and family mourning the death of Aunt Eunice

For the joys in our lives:

- Our first in-person, indoor worship service in over a year!
- Celebration of life for Sherlynn Reid
- New Members! The Temperly family and David Kuipers
- The baptism of Grace Temperly
- The choir getting to sing together again
- Ellie Potter recovering from heart transplant surgery
- Lois Merrill's brother-in-law Virgil is cancer free!
- For all of our amazing volunteers who have worked so hard to get livestreaming off the ground for us—especially Pete, Carl, Nina, and Charlie

Virtual Chapel Hiatus

We are taking a break from the chapel for the summer. Be sure to look for the deacons in the actual chapel, following worship, starting the Sunday after Gathering Day in September.

If you have a concern that you would like prayer for, please don't hesitate to contact your deacon or a member of the pastoral staff. If you do not know who your deacon is, please contact Alicia Reese.

Realm Update

This July has been a very busy time for the intrepid group known as the Realm Transition Team. Ever since the need to transition to a better, more modern church management system was identified three years ago, the team has worked diligently to assess the needs of the church and evaluate available programs. Carl Nauert and Pete Todd have provided invaluable leadership of the project during a challenging time of transition where not only did we face the inherent challenges of a global pandemic, but also a complete turnover of First United office staff. But the team persevered, and the new system is up and running!

As we continue to adjust things behind the scenes, there is also a team of member "early adopters" who are checking things out, identifying what works and what is confusing. Initial reports are positive and we are excited to release invites to the larger congregation within the next week or so. When we do, you will receive an introductory email from the church explaining what to look for and providing some training materials to help you get started. Shortly thereafter, you will also receive a system-generated email from Realm with your invitation to get started. We are excited to invite you all to our Realm community!

CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

July 6	'21 July America	Alicia Reese
July 13	Biblical Mixtape	John Edgerton
July 20	A Gathering Without Going	Lydia Mulkey
July 27	All Glory to God	John Edgerton



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