



# the MESSENGERbell

July 2022

## OUR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Beloved of First United,

First United Church is a part of two denominations—the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). Being part of the wider church in this way is an indispensable part of our ministry. The most straightforward way that our denominational identities appear is through our clergy. Our clergy are ordained in one of our denominations, a years-long and intensive process. There are educational requirements, ethical oversight, psychological support and assessment, and rigorous theological evaluation. This careful and deliberative process ensures that there are professional standards for clergy in our denominations, as well as oversight processes in case of ethical breach.

This is just the beginning of it, however. We have access to wonderful worship resources such as our hymnals that are informed by robust theology. During Lent, a number of people noted that our hymnals are a rich resource filled with songs from many varied traditions. The process of writing a hymnal is—quite literally—a decades-long process. No single church is capable of such an endeavor and so we rely on our denominational partners for such efforts.

Our mission efforts are also bolstered by national and international programs that are run by the denominations. Finding and supporting properly vetted efforts on the national and international level is quite difficult, particularly because creating relationships across such great distances is burdensome. Our denominational partners have longstanding relationships in the national and international mission spheres. When we support our denominations financially, we are contributing to those efforts. All of these structures are critical to our ministry here at the church. They operate largely behind the scenes, but without them our ministries would be greatly reduced.

Lead Pastor John Edgerton



*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: worship volunteer opportunities, page 2; the Moderator's Report, page 3; recap on the Lenten debriefs, page 4; FUSH car wash, page 5; prayer concerns, page 6.



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK

# Preaching Schedule for June

July 10	Lydia Mulkey
July 17 Outdoor Worship	John Edgerton
July 24	John Edgerton
July 31	Alicia Reese

All services are at 11 a.m. on Sundays unless otherwise noted. Worship will also be streamed on YouTube. 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](#)

## Seeking Volunteer Liturgists

In our visioning process with Latz & Co. we identified our purpose:

*We are an open and inclusive Christian community, members of the worldwide body of Christ, gathered to do the work of disciples:*

- *worshipping God, as we celebrate our faith through scripture, sermon, prayer, song, and sacrament*
- *sharing the Good News of the Gospel, as we join with others to lead the way to a just and peaceful world*
- *nurturing the faith of children, youth, and adults as we shape Christian character and conduct*
- *loving our neighbors near and far, as we generously use our hands, voices, and abundant gifts to serve those in need*

And as a part of our Pillar 1: The Church Experience Visioning, we hope “there is broad pastoral and congregant participation in planning and leading worship.”

Serving as a volunteer liturgist is an opportunity to live

into our vision of the worship experience here at First United. You may be asked to lead the Call to Worship or the Prayer for Wholeness or to read scripture or other liturgical pieces. We will reach out to you the Wednesday before worship with more details about your readings. Sign up to serve as a volunteer liturgist by [clicking here](#).

We also hope that by including more faces and voices in our worship, we are able to share an authentic reflection of the church family we are.

## Get On the Bus to Fight for Change

**What can we do** that might be effective on so many of the seemingly intractable issues facing all in Chicago, in Illinois, and throughout the country? **Turn over this page for one immediate, specific, and winnable action we can take.**

**Together, we are reclaiming communities.**

Want to act on injustice and fight for systemic change in **housing priorities, economic inequity? mental health, criminal justice, gun violence?** Be a part of **First United Church of Oak Park** organized people power by grabbing your face mask and getting “on the bus” to the **United Power for Action and Justice** on Sunday, July 17.

Experience real democracy in action. **Join over 2500 people from 100 member organizations** from across the six-county Chicagoland area as we meet with top officials from industry: local, state, and federal government, and religious leaders to get at the root causes of these and other issues.

Let’s travel together, **leaving promptly at 2 p.m. on Sunday, July 17, for the 4 p.m. meeting at the House of Hope, 752 E 114th Street, Chicago.** Or meet us there (plenty of parking).

Please reach out to Sandy Jefferson at [sandeleo135@gmail.com](mailto:sandeleo135@gmail.com) to learn more or to sign up or sign up before or after worship. Do it NOW! **Let’s get 30-40 of our members to “Do Something” together on July 17.**



# From the Council Moderator

Greetings on behalf of your Council, with a brief recap of our June meetings.

## Devotion

We heard a devotion from Sallie Smylie on the hymn “Be Thou My Vision” -- its history and its meaning for us today as we continue to discern a collective vision of our church in the future.

## Prayers

We lifted up John Borrero’s aunt and Vicky Curtiss and other family and friends of Kent Organ in prayer.

## Vision Update

Derek McPhatter of Latz & Co. gave an update on activities to curate recommendations from groups that have provided input on the vision framework pillars to date as well as the timeline and processes under consideration for obtaining additional congregation engagement. Work on case development for a potential capital campaign will continue through the summer.

## Election of New Treasurer

The Council elected Dave Marshall as the church’s new Treasurer and extended our thanks to Dave for serving in this capacity as he also continues to serve as a member of the Council.

## Financial Matters:

Susan Macaulay, chair of the Finance Team, reported that May financials showed an overall deficit of just over \$72,000 for the first 11 months of the fiscal year, consisting of a shortfall of more than \$105,000 in expected receipts and under-spending on the expense side of approximately \$33,000. In part, the deficit is due to a shortfall in pledged income, but other unrestricted receipts also have been less than anticipated. A final push to try to make up some of the shortfall is underway.

## Safe Church Policies and Procedures

The Council adopted Safe Church Policies and Procedures, which comprise Chapter V of a comprehensive set of policies and procedures updated and adopted during the past two years. (Other chapters are Governance, Finance, Personnel, and IT Use and Standards.) Chapter V addresses screening, training, reporting, and other requirements and guidance for em-

ployees and volunteers who interact with children and youth in church programming. Thanks to Lydia Mulkey, Alicia Reese, Katharine Thurman, Cathy Cerniglia, and Marteki Reed for their work updating and enhancing the church’s policies in this area.

## Organist Search

Sallie reported on actions of the organist search team (Bill Chin, Marilee Castaneda, Betty Gehring, Martha Sorensen, and Sallie Smylie) to search for a new organist in light of Michael Surratt’s announced retirement effective August 29. A job description has been prepared and posted on the job boards of the American Guild of Organists and several other associations for musicians, contacts have been made with organists and organ professors at nearby universities, and the church’s website and Facebook page show the posting and application requirements. We’re learning that the organist market is tight – so please help get the word out!

## Lenten Theme Experience

Marteki Reed reported on the post-worship debriefing with congregational members facilitated by John Edgerton and Marteki, and she noted that plans are underway for additional feedback sessions this summer.

## Alicia Reese Ordination

Materials are being prepared for the Council to consider, at its July meeting, terms of call to Alicia and her ordination. If approved by the Council, the terms of call will be presented to the congregation at a meeting to be scheduled in August.

## Outgoing Council Members

We extended thanks and appreciation to John Borrero, Megan Lewis, Dan Pietrini, and Jamie Shamhart for their dedicated service on the Council.

Finally, I want to express my deep appreciation to all Council members, the pastoral staff, the administrative staff, and teams for their dedication and support during my term as moderator. We all were called on to manage the church through unexpected twists and turns as well as to bring our best thought to lead in the development of a vision of the church’s future. Thanks be to God for all who share their time, talents, and devotion with this church!

Sallie Smylie, Moderator

# Family Camp 2022

Join us at Tower Hill for Family Camp August 11 through August 14 for a weekend of camping, swimming, and camaraderie. Lake Michigan is about a one-mile walk from camp. There is a lot to do in the area, biking, hiking, shopping etc. You will need to bring your own camping gear—tent, pop-up, etc.—and food for the weekend. A real bathroom with showers is available. We have no planned activities other than a potluck meal on Saturday evening.

Cost this year is based in once again based on participation. You can sign up at any time, even at the last minute.

Contact Cathy Cerniglia at [cgcernig@comcast.net](mailto:cgcernig@comcast.net) or 708-337-1990 with questions or for more information.



## Created to Create: 2022-23 Church School

Although things are quiet now, the program year will be upon us before you know it! Our Children's Ministries is a huge part of our program year and vital to our church life here at First United. This coming year, we hope to welcome the return of God's Children Sing for our youngest children (ages birth to 3) while continuing to support and nourish our Church School and older kids as well.

We are looking for volunteers to help with this vital First United programming. Associate Pastor of Education Lydia Mulkey explains all of the wonderful ways to get involved in [this short video](#). Please take a few moments to watch and then reach out to Lydia ([lmulkey@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:lmulkey@firstunitedoakpark.com)) to learn even more or to volunteer your time.



## Recap: Lenten Debrief

Sunday, June 5th, after the celebration of our new confirmands, some of us headed over to the chapel to have a guided conversation about Lent this year. One of our pastors and a member of our church council encouraged us to discuss what we had learned about ourselves, our community, and our society when we adopted a new Lenten practice this year, Fasting from Whiteness.

First, we broke up into small groups, and talked about what it had taught us about our individual selves. We regrouped and shared these insights with the entire group of 28. The leaders looked for common themes and encouraged more discussion. We talked and regrouped three times, and discovered common themes of Fear, surprise, gratitude, pride, and anticipation. We recognized the courage of our pastors, the generosity of our neighbors, and wondered how we will continue to address racial inequality going forward.

It was a revealing and reassuring time spent in conversation about our Church. If this topic interests you or if you're wondering how this Lenten practice came about, there will be more opportunities for a Lenten debrief over the summer.



## Quest Confirmation 2023

If you are, or your child is, an incoming freshman, and are interested in participating in our confirmation program starting in September, please let us know!

Our confirmation program is all about EXPLORATION and EXPERIENCE. Together we *explore* topics, questions, and our doubts related to matters of faith, religion, and being a Christian in the world today. Quest is also about *experiencing* what it means to live a Christian life, out in the world and within the context of a church.

We hope you will join us! Contact Alicia Reese ([areese@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:areese@firstunitedoakpark.com)) to sign up or for more information.

# Quest Class of 2022

On Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup> we joyfully celebrated our Quest Confirmation Class of 2022! We were thankful for this occasion to honor and celebrate this rite of passage, for the worship leadership of our confirmands, and for all of the incredible gifts they share with our community. Congratulations Quest Class of 2022! We are proud of you and thrilled to have you as members of First United Church!

We are also thankful to all those who served as a Friend in Faith (mentor) to our confirmands this year: Sara Stevenson, Caitlin Zinsser, Laurie Jolicoeur, Kregg Raducha, Lois Love, Priscilla Sibley, Sue Saliny, Mark Breen, Andrew Reed, and Don Sibley

Photo (Left to Right):

Front Row: Leah Pollock, Katherine Hollister-Mennenga, Lorenza Foster-Simbulan, Mia Foster-Simbulan, Jackson Hickok-Fletcher, Simon Bade

Back Row: Zoie Segbawu, Phoebe Shorney, Cat Nickles, Patric Desir, Michael Readling

Not Pictured: Sam Premo-Hopkins



**Youth Group Activities**

## Summer 2022

**JUNE**

- **18** - Service: Outdoor Community Cleanup
  - 10 am - 12 pm, (Location TBD)
- **29** - Fellowship: Galloping Ghost Arcade
  - 11 am - 4 pm/TBD

**JULY**

- **14** - Exploration: Lincoln Park Zoo.
  - 11 am - 4 pm/TBD
  - Rain Plan: Garfield Park Conservatory
- **17** - Carwash Fundraiser:
  - 12:30-3:30 pm @ church
- **20** - Service: Beyond Hunger Distribution
  - 2:30 - 5:45 pm @ church
- **22** - Service: Habitat ReStore Shift
  - 2:00 - 5:00 pm
  - 8 24 Hr. Lock-In: 8 pm

**AUGUST**

- **05** - Fellowship: Yard Games & Bonfire
  - 7:00 - 9:00 pm, @ church
- **08** - Fellowship: Six Flags Great America
  - 11 am - 4 pm/TBD
  - Rain Plan: Circle Lanes Bowling
- **17** - Fellowship: Ice Cream!
  - 3:30-5:00 pm @ Oberweis



## Sign Up to Be an 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.



# The Prayers of God's People

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

## For the wider world:

- An end to gun violence. There have been far too many shootings and innocent lives stolen.
- The people of, and situation in, Ukraine suffering with grief, fear, and hunger. We pray for resolution, justice, peace, and hope.
- An end to racial hate and violence
- Our country as we continue to battle systemic racism
- Serenity, courage, and wisdom for all world leaders
- The impact of overturning Roe v. Wade

## For those in our midst:

- Gretchen Ziegenhals and family as they mourn the death of Walter Ziegenhals
- Jerry Sebesta
- Sher and Art Spooner
- Vicky Curtiss, wife of Kent Organ, and all those mourning the death of Kent
- Carl Nauert, recovering from a knee injury and mourning the death of Aunt Ferrell
- Joan and Don Lennie
- Kregg Raducha, surgery on his foot
- Mary Ellen Withers recently had hip replacement surgery
- Chip Readling, two recent surgeries.
- All those in our congregation who have recently been recovering from COVID

## For the joys in our lives:

- Congratulations to Ally Vertigan and her partner, Erin, on their engagement
- The marriage and wedding celebration of Mahala Miller and Marla Devault
- Big thanks to all those rolling off of teams for your service and commitment to our church family
- All of our newly ordained and installed Council Members, Deacons, and Nominating Team members

## Prayer Shawl Ministry

We continue to meet over the summer on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays from 10-11 am.



As we get closer to the program year, we will reassess our meeting day and time. Please join us if you are able and if the day and time do not work for you, let me know!

Our recurring Zoom link:

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

## FCS: Summer Break

Fostering Connection & Support will be on hiatus for the summer. Keep an eye out for when we plan to start back up and we hope you will pop in!

## CHECK OUT OUR RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here to read online](#)

June 7	Bedside Table Identity	Alicia Reese
June 14	Part of a Balanced Breakfast	John Edgerton
June 21	Pray Without Ceasing	Lydia Mulkey
June 28	A Pastoral Message on Roe v. Wade	John Edgerton



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