



FIRST
UNITED
CHURCH
of Oak Park

848 Lake Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60301
708-386-5215

www.firstunitedoakpark.com

blessed
challenged
transformed

Sharing the
sheer joy
of our faith,
of being alive!

*an open community
united in love & justice*

blessed challenged transformed



Stewardship

"Above all things have charity among yourselves, like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." (1 Peter 4:8-10)

We are called to be stewards of God's creation. Together we are a part of the church, a part of the Body of Christ. We are called to share our whole lives, our talents and skills, as well as our money and resources.

blessed challenged transformed

We are Blessed

"Every day we stand in the shade of trees we did not plant. We live in houses we did not build. We eat food we did not produce.

We ponder ideas that are not original to us. So, too, we live in a body and with a mind and a spirit that we did not choose or create."

— Donald W. Hinze,
"To Give and Give Anew."

The apostle Paul taught that sowing sparingly reaps sparingly, sowing bountifully reaps bountifully. Giving should be according to the purpose of one's heart. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you—to provide sufficiency in all things, to multiply our gifts." (II Cor. 9:6-10)

We are Challenged

Paul asks, (I Cor. 4:7), "What makes you different from another? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul encourages us to present our bodies, holy and acceptable to God, our reasonable service, and that we be transformed by renewing our minds so that we may know the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

Jesus asked for complete commitment of our lives. In the story of the widow's mites, Jesus saw the poor widow put her two mites in the treasury and said she gave more than all the others because she gave all the living she had. (Luke 21:1-4) When the rich young ruler asked Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He was told to sell all he had, give it to the poor, and, "Follow me." (Luke 18:18-27)

We are Transformed

Jesus promised a real transformation, "Any who follow shall receive manifold more in the present time and in the world to come, life everlasting." (Luke 18:28-30)

When we truly trust God to provide for us we are transformed. In a mysterious way, a transformation of one's heart comes about with the simple joy of sharing our lives, our talents and our resources, benefiting others and trying to make the world a better place.





Vision at First United Church of Oak Park

“As the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works also is dead.” (James 2:26). We share the joy of being alive, knowing that we did not gain life or earn its abundance. It is given by God, a breath of fresh air, a love that is stronger than death.

Our vision for the future has three core themes.

1. Moving from words to God-pleasing actions in our relationship with God.
2. Moving from individualism to intimacy in our relationship with others.
3. Moving from providing charity to changing structures of injustice in our relationship to the world.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. Let us live in the Spirit and walk with the Spirit.”

(Gal 5:22-26)



How Much Shall I Give?

This is the big question. The widow gave her two mites. The Pharisees gave a tenth. Zacchaeus gave half of his goods to the poor. Jesus asked the rich man to give all he had. The early church shared everything they had in common. Barnabas sold his field and laid it at the disciples’ feet. The disciples left their boats and nets and followed Jesus.

The Bible does not say we should give 10% of our resources. It does not define whether tithing should be based on percentage of one’s assets, net income or gross income. It does not resolve the question of where our gifts should go, whether to our local congregation, our mission boards or to other not-for-profit charities.

Some of the Bible’s stories may justify the expectation of 10% of one’s income as a principle of tithing. Abraham gave 10% of the spoils he took in battle. Jacob promised to give God a tenth of all the material blessings he received.

Paul told the Corinthians that the giver should decide these matters, saying the gift should be voluntary, and “if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has.” (II Cor. 8:12.)

Each of us must decide these matters for ourselves. Giving should be, “according to the purpose of our hearts”, (II Cor. 9:7) knowing we are blessed with the abundance that God offers.

We encourage everyone to consider giving 10%. This is a goal that may be difficult, but it is spiritual practice that will reap unexpected rewards. Calculate the percentage you are already giving and if it is below the level you would like it to be, consider increasing it at least 10% a year until you reach the percentage you feel is appropriate for you and your family.

Whatever you decide, give knowing that “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt.6:21)

Your heart is sure to follow your gift.