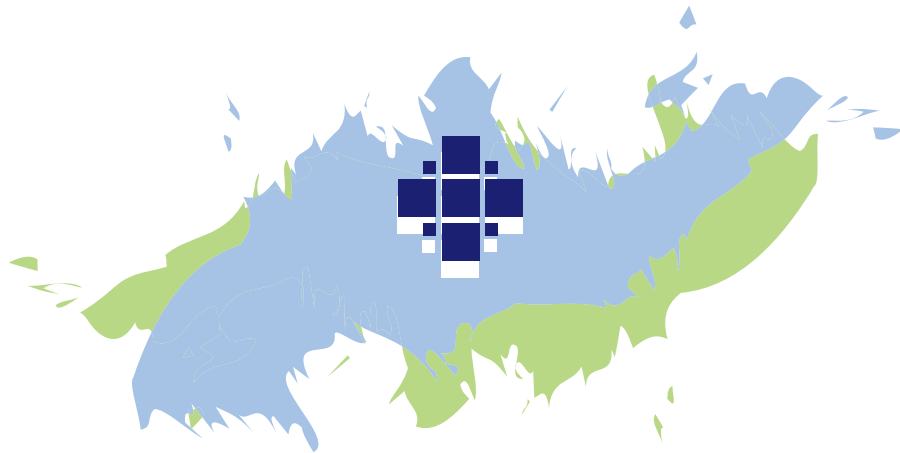

Making Your Sacred Pledge
for 2010



First United Church of Oak Park
www.firstunitedoakpark.com

Sacred (adj.): *reverently
dedicated to some
person, purpose:
consecrated, holy.*



Our stewardship theme for 2010 is “Giving as a Sacred Act.” As a committee, we consulted a dictionary to define the meaning of the word sacred.

When we give money to the church, we dedicate it to be used for God’s purposes rather than our own. I learned this lesson the hard way, when I was a child.

My family always went to church. It was like eating three meals a day or brushing your teeth at night. You did it without question. And when I was in second grade, we got little bitty offering envelopes to bring to Sunday School. Every week, I got a quarter from my parents to put in my offering envelope and take to the collection plate at church.

But one day I realized that if I kept the quarter for myself and put it in my piggy bank, it would greatly increase my weekly allowance. In fact, I could double my income by keeping the offering money. Even my childhood conscience knew there was something unethical about this, so I came up with a plan to hide the evidence. I took the offering envelope each week (they were dated) and ripped it in half, depositing the pieces behind the spinet piano in my bedroom. No one would find it there, I was sure.

Little did I know that my mother occasionally vacuumed behind the piano. She discovered the evidence of my crime and I was soon on the receiving end of a major spanking. I had rarely seen my parents so angry. Not only was I stealing and trying to cover it up, I was stealing from God.

I am now a generous giver to the church. And I still cringe a little when I see a pre-printed offering envelope.

The message is simple. *Giving is a sacred act.* The money belongs to God, not to us. Keeping it all for ourselves is like cheating God, who gave it to us in the first place. When we don’t give it away, we cheat ourselves out of a sacred act. Making a financial pledge is an act of worship. It feels good to know that we honor God with every gift.

How many times in the course of a week do we get to do something sacred? Here’s your chance. After all, “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

In Christian love,

Julie R. Harley, *Lead Pastor*

*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?
— I Corinthians 4:7*

What are the gifts we receive through First United Church of Oak Park?

Giving As a Sacred Act of Worship.

We celebrate our wonderful staff, Julie Harley, lead pastor, Marylen Marty-Gentile, director of children & family ministries and our new associate pastor Leah Fowler, interim associate pastor Mark Buck and McCormick Seminary intern Jeff Foels.

We give thanks for worship that feeds our spirits and sustains us in our daily lives.

We give thanks for 54 new members in the last year. Our baptismal font overflows with water to baptize children, teens and adults. We eat and drink the Lord's Supper at a table open to all. We welcome newly confirmed members and install gifted lay leaders.

Sustaining a culture of caring and spiritual support

We care for one another through the prayer shawl ministry, PAL notes, E-votionals, home, hospital and nursing home visits, home-delivered meals, delivering flowers, keeping up with our friends through Facebook and Carepages, the church website and MemberLink.

One of our high school youth said, "I'm not really 'best friends' with people in FUSH (our high school youth group). My best friends mostly don't go to FUSH. But when something difficult happens in my life, my 'best friends' are awkward and do not know how or if to respond. But FUSH has been there for me at the drop of a hat, outpouring in its love and support."

*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not
reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance,
so that you may share abundantly in every good work.
—2 Corinthians 9:7-8*

Giving As a Sacred Act of Stewardship.

In 2009, our church members made 265 pledges totaling \$630,000 in sacred giving.

In 2010, the Stewardship Committee has set a goal of receiving fifty-five NEW pledges, for a total of 320 pledges and \$753,000 in sacred giving.

At First United, we develop our church budget by asking each of the committees to plan and pray about what they will need in the year ahead to support our ministries. The Finance Committee and Council examine those requests and then submit them to the congregation as a requested budget (see pages 8 and 9 for more information).

Our lay leaders have recommended increases in four major budget categories for 2010:

- ◆ **Pastoral and church staff** — the requested budget includes an allocation of \$17,000 for increases in salaries and professional expenses and an additional \$3,000 for pastoral search expenses.
- ◆ **Building and administration** — the budget includes an increase of \$20,000 for repair and restoration of our historic building and an additional \$10,000 because, beginning in 2010, we are including the interest for the remaining building renovation loan in our operating budget.
- ◆ **Mission Giving** — Faith in Action requests an additional \$20,000 for mission support because of a 22% decrease in mission endowment returns over the last two year.
- ◆ **Ministry programs** — the budget includes \$5,000 for enhancement of our programs, including additional requests for music in worship.

You will find a graph on pages 4 and 5 that demonstrates how we can achieve this Sacred Giving Challenge goal together.

Current Pledge Amounts

Sacred Giving Challenge

Goal Pledge Increase 2010

Current Number of Pledges	2009 Annual Pledge		2010 Pledge Challenge	Goal Number of Pledges	Additional Dollars Pledged
0	\$ 0	→	If you do not pledge, Please consider a commitment of \$600 per year or more	55	\$ 33,000
47	Less than \$ 500	→	If you are at this level, we challenge you to increase your pledge to \$600 per year or more	47	\$ 18,000
90	\$ 500 — \$ 1,499	→	If you are at this level, we challenge you to increase your pledge to \$1,500 per year or more	90	\$ 53,000
128	\$ 1,500 and up	→	If you are at this level, we challenge you to increase your pledge by 10%	128	\$ 56,000
265				320	\$ 160,000

*“Earn all you can,
save all you can, give all
you can.”*

—John Wesley



Giving As a Sacred Act of Justice.

Our mission priorities this year are for those who are hungry—beginning with our own neighbors—and witnessing on behalf of the people of Colombia, South America. Our Faith in Action committee sustains relationships with 18 local mission partners and 12 national and international mission partners.

For example, each month the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry serves over 850 families from our own and several surrounding communities in Cook County. In August 2009, that number topped over 1,000 families served. Over 300 volunteers help staff the pantry, with part-time paid staff.

We provide gifts for the work of our national denominations (Presbyterian Church USA and United Church of Christ), PADS (public action to deliver shelter for the homeless), the walk-in ministry (providing assistance and referral), cluster tutoring, and the Alternative Christmas Store.

In the last year, we sponsored mission trips to protest the Army School of Americas in Ft. Benning, GA, to rebuild homes after the floods in Cedar Rapids, IA, to accompany the people of Colombia, and to explore issues in the Middle East.

Our children and youth are learning to be disciples. Each class has a mission partner they serve throughout the year. They collect an offering that is given to their mission partner. They learn that serving God happens with their work and with their money.

Giving As a Sacred Act of Love in 2010

More wonderful music, from our sanctuary choir, guest musicians from drummers to Dixieland, the Mother-Child Choir, the intergenerational orchestra, the Church School children, Music at First, handbells, the Rutter “Requiem,” organ recitals, and Handel’s “Messiah.”

We will nurture spiritual growth for 28 toddlers and parents in God’s Children Sing, up to 25 children in our nursery, and our Church School classes include 100 students who are led by 20 adults and 20 youth. First United Nursey School offers education for more than 125 families during the week.

Quest confirmation class stimulates spiritual growth for 17 students with six mentors. Our FUJI (junior high) youth group includes 36 students and six advisors. Our FUSH (senior high) youth group is a spiritual home for 69 students and six advisors.

The Vision Team will continue to lead us in discerning a vision for the next ten years of our life together.

John Bell from the Iona Community in Scotland will be a featured speaker here during the winter.

An adult mission trip to New Orleans in the spring to continue re-building after Hurricane Katrina and another mission trip to Colombia.

Our Pastoral Search Committee is working diligently to call a new Associate Pastor for Mission and Membership.

An international focus in worship, as we pray for nations around the world.

God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good!

8 **First United Church of Oak Park**
General Operations

Sources and Uses of Funds

Sources of Funds	Requested Budget 2010	% of Total
Pledge Income	\$ 716,000*	67%
Endowment & Trust Support	231,000	22%
Offerings, Bequests and Building Use	114,000	11%
Total Sources of Funds	\$ 1,061,000	

Uses of Funds

Pastoral & Church Staff	\$ 565,000	53%
Building and Administration	256,000	24%
Mission Giving	176,000	17%
Ministry Programs	64,000	6%
Total Uses of Funds	\$ 1,061,000	

**We anticipate 5% attrition from \$753,000 in total pledges*

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Your Sacred Act of Giving

How to make your pledge:

- October 4** Review detailed budget reports available in the lounge
- October 11** 8:00am Participate in the Budget Presentation Breakfast
- October 12 —
October 24** Prayerfully consider your 2010 pledge, contribute online at www.firstunitedoakpark.com or mail or bring your pledge to church
- October 25** 11:00am Participate in the Pledge Dedication Sunday during worship
- October 27 —
November 5** Pledge follow-up calls
- November 8** 12:15pm Participate in the Budget Discernment Conversation in Centennial Hall
- November 22** 12:00pm Attend Congregational Meeting to adopt Budget in the Sanctuary

