

October 2011

themessengerbell

www.firstunitedoakpark.com



When I am
grateful,
I know God.

When I know, I am grateful

When I know my neighbors, I am grateful. In the course of my week, I cross paths with hundreds of people I am not forced to get acquainted with: parents and children at my sons' school and soccer games, clients in line at the OPRF Food Pantry, the mail-carrier on my street, and the workers in the stores where I buy goods, and so on. When I am only focused on my individual concerns, stressors and to-do lists, as if the world revolves around me and my personal issues, I tend to view these people as scenery on the stage of my life, or worse, obstacles I have to navigate around. But when I take the time to greet and talk with people, to learn as much as I can about their lives in whatever amount of time we share, even if that's just a snapshot of a tiny corner of their lives, I begin to realize the glorious panorama of humanity I'm part of. I am inspired by the rich tapestry of the lives all around me, and I have occasion to understand more fully my uniquely ordinary place in a broad and blessed community. When I know my neighbors, I am grateful.

When I know the nations of the world, I am grateful. Because of the technology of travel and communication, many of us have access to people, lands and cultures across the globe, and yet the staggering amount of choice we have as to the information and entertainment we consume means that we can easily fall into patterns of selection that are profoundly insulating and isolating. When I resist these self-centered patterns, and learn about the stories, cultures and struggles of communities far from me, the distance between us seems to decrease. I can keep my personal struggles and crises in a healthy perspective when I comprehend the struggles of the poor and disenfranchised around the world. I am encouraged in my desire for freedom for all as I learn of justice workers in countries across the oceans. And my Christian faith grows as I hear of truths discovered by Muslims and Hindus or learn how the teachings of Christ are applied in settings that are foreign to me. When I know the nations of the world, I am grateful.

When I know my bible, I am grateful. I can recite the pleasant things I've heard and repeated about God and Jesus all my life without actually reading the scriptures very often, and since most of the people I might talk to about these things don't read the scriptures either, I won't often be called to account for my lack of devotion to bible study. Still though, I have found that every time I do open the bible and give the text some of my time and focus, God has something important to show me. I find powerful lessons on simple truths I'd been neglecting, and I'm regularly inspired. I do sometimes read something that is confusing or offensive to my sensibilities, but I almost always feel on stronger footing when I spend time in the Word. I've discovered that knowing the bible is just like knowing a person. It's not an understanding that's ever completed or settled. It's a familiarity that is recreated season after season by an intentional relationship. And when I know the bible, I am grateful.

When I know the earth, I am grateful. The other day I made a pasta sauce with tomatoes, basil, zucchini and bell peppers grown in our backyard garden. It was crazy delicious, as in, seriously people, exquisite, but its taste and heartiness were only half of why I appreciated it. This food came about because of a partnership my family chose to enter with the earth. We have tilled, planted, fertilized and weeded for months, sharpening along the way our acute awareness of the earth's life processes and our relationship to those processes. I rarely think about the organic brilliance of nature or my responsibility to honor the environment when I grab a jar of Prego off a grocery store shelf. But when I choose to care for soil and plants in anticipation of the fruit they will bear, I know the earth. And when I know the earth, I am grateful.

When I know my neighbors, the nations, the bible, the earth, I am grateful. And here's the thing:
When I am grateful, I know God.

—Rob Leveridge

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Transitions

- Baptisms:** *Syier Abrian Torres*, son of Nadi and Sandra Torres, on August 14
Jackson Joseph Ciontea, son of Jeff and Alexia Ciontea
Jackson Alexander Berry, son of Shawna Stachnik and Ron Berry
- Weddings:** *Tim Bode and Danielle McLernon*
Elizabeth Bunkers and Chase Gentile
- Condolences:** *Bette Kinzie Ignatowski*, twin sister of Louise Kinzie Wornom

October Worship

- Oct. 2 Stewardship Kick-off and World Communion Sunday-** 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Psalm 19 — with guest musician and worship leader Bryan Sirchio
Sermon: “Blessed”
- Oct. 9 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time**
Exodus 32:1-14
Sermon: “Challenged”
- Oct. 16 Pledge Dedication Sunday** - 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Exodus 33:12-23 and Psalm 99
Sermon: “Transformed”
- Oct. 23 New Members Join** – 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 and 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8
Sermon: “Connecting Like Jesus”
- Oct. 30 All Saints Sunday**
Choir Cantata and Time of Remembrance for those who died in the last year
Revelation 7:9-17

Faith in Action – Local and Global

—Julie R. Harley

Immigrant Welcoming Priority: Both of our denominations are organizing to assist immigrants, who need our hospitality and support. If you would like to join these efforts, please see Pastor Fowler, Bob Haisman from Council or me to get involved.

Seraj Library Project: I will be speaking at a fundraiser Oct. 1 at Presbyterian Homes in Evanston, to support children’s libraries in rural Palestinian villages. The Seraj mission is to assist in the education of young people of all faiths, based on the belief that civic education is the best route to democracy, human rights and peace.

Summer Tutoring Explored: Our Education Action Team is exploring a summer tutoring program in partnership with Iglesia Unida in Berwyn and the Niebuhr Center at Elmhurst College.

Team Issues First Microloan: Our Economic Sustainability Team worked with the Walk-In Ministry to extend our first microloan to Eric Caine, to allow him to find an apartment in Oak Park. Mr. Caine was released from prison after 25 years of serving time for a crime he did not commit.

Fourth Sunday Offering – Near East School of Theology

This month’s loose offering on October 23 will support the mission of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Muslim West Beirut, Lebanon. The United Church of Christ has had a mission presence in Armenia and Iran since the mid-19th century, and the Presbyterians have sent missionaries to Syria and Egypt since that time. NEST was created as an ecumenical seminary following the Turkish massacre that killed 1.2 million Armenians. It is a place for Arab Muslim-Christian dialogue, and it needs significant financial support. Many First United members, including Bob and Irene Worley and Rob and Pauline Coffman, have been significantly involved and our church is a longtime supporter of NEST’s educational mission.

Faith
IN ACTION

When I am
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peace prayers

Prayers
for Peace
On the front
steps of the
church every
Friday evening
at 7pm

InnerPeace
WorldPeace
Saturday at
8:30 am, in the
Conference
Room

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Sweet Honey in the Rock Concert and Fundraiser for Chicago Theological Seminary

Enjoy the world-renowned, female a capella group "Sweet Honey in the Rock" in a concert at 8:00 pm on Thursday, Oct. 20, at Rockefeller Chapel in Hyde Park. This benefit will raise scholarship funds for students at CTS, which is dedicating a new, state-of-the-art building that weekend. Tickets are \$40 per person or \$100 for special seating, and you may purchase them online by emailing sweethoney@ctschicago.edu.

Contemplative Prayer Project

—Julie R. Harley

Would you like to learn more about contemplative prayer as a daily spiritual discipline? Visit my blog at <http://heartmindstrength.blogspot.com/> where I will post a weekly column. You can also link to my blog on the homepage of our church website. I began meeting with members of my spiritual listening group last month, to share ways the Spirit is alive in us and in the life of our congregation. Those on this journey with me are: Bud Hayes, Sandy Jefferson, Laurie Jolicoeur, Terry McIntyre, Emory Mead, Robin Rada, and Connie Ronnow. Together, we are building relationships with God and one another that bless, challenge and transform us.

Pedal for Peace

— Leah Fowler

First United Youth will be participating in *Pedal for Peace*, which raises money for justice projects in Latin America. We are particularly interested in the projects that will support the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, our partners with whom Revs. Mamie Broadhurst and Richard Williams serve. The youth will bike 12 miles along the lake shore on Saturday, Oct. 1. Would you be interested in sponsoring them? Contact Leah at lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com and she will connect you with a teenage biker you can support!

STEW on Stewardship Sunday: An Invitation

Sunday, Oct. 16 First United Senior High (FUSH) would like to invite you to their 2011 Stockholder's Luncheon. This meal will be held on Stewardship Sunday—what better time to have STEW and be together as a church? You will enjoy yourself with handmade soups and baked goods, and FUSH will share their experience from their 2011 Work Camp to Seeds of Peace in Maine through storytelling, a slide show and music. Lunch is free, but you are invited to make a donation that will go towards the 2012 Work Camp to COAP (Christian Outreach to Appalachian People) in Harlan, KY. There FUSH will construct new homes and repair old ones for people living in rural poverty. Throughout this year we will be learning about justice issues facing that region, such as mountaintop removal and its impact on Harlan's environment, economy and culture.

Membership Class at First United

—Rob Leveridge

If you've been attending First United Church and feel a resonance with this community of faith, we invite you to participate in the membership class this October. The class is an opportunity for people to get to know the church and our ministries very well, and to connect with other people around personal stories of life and faith. At the end of the class, participants will have the opportunity to formally become members of First United Church, though it's not assumed that everyone who participates in the class will choose to become a member.

The class is a time for people to discern how they are connected with and take personally the ministries of the congregation. The class has four sessions on Sunday mornings, Oct. 1 - 22 at 9 am. The first two sessions will also be available online Wednesday evenings, for people who cannot attend either of the first two Sundays in person.

Contact Pastor Rob if you have any questions. — rlleveridge@firstunitedoakpark.com

Adult Education

A Study on the Minor Prophets kicks into high gear 10/2 and 10/9, with guest lecturer Professor Ted Heibert, biblical scholar from McCormick Theological Seminary. Ted is always a favorite teacher for our adult ed and this class is not to be missed! The class on the Minor Prophets continues through October and November, and will be taught by leaders within the church after Professor Heibert's introduction.

Our Family Life Series continues this month! Check out our classes:

10/16: Modern Family— What defines a family today? What challenges, issues, and recipes for success can we share as a church community? Come listen to this diverse panel, moderated by Michele Wolford!

10/23 and 10/30: Love Languages—This workshop will help couples better communicate ways to give and receive the love they need. Whether you are a new couple, or have just celebrated 60 years, you can always learn ways to nourish your partnership.

Wednesday Morning Book Study continues through October at 11 am. We are reading *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* by Rob Bell. Newcomers are welcome. You may pick up at book at The Book Table on Lake St.

Youth Ministry

First FUSH

—Richie Wheelock

*The air hung in heavy boughs of anticipation
Over the sea of chatting heads.
Fifty laced-up sneakers standing, walking, running
Over the church lawn.
The culmination of a whole summer
Of waiting and waiting
And now,
Like the breaking of a great wave
FUSH and FUJI meet for the year.*

*For some,
Like my brother,
This will be the first FUSH night of their lives.
The beginning of a tradition
That will burrow deep into their hearts
By twelfth grade.
This night will spark the impetus
To gather in the youth room,
Six every Sunday
And be with a community
Of love,
Growth,
And fellowship.
An undying relationship
Unique to FUSH.*

*We finish the night, hands "squozen" in the age-old circle,
Smiles so wide
And hearts so light
You can almost see the glow in navy twilight.*



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Youth Ministry Calendar

FUSH Calendar:

10/2 : Art Project and/or Surprise!

10/9: Art Project and/or Surprise!

10/11: Youth Board for 10-12th grades 7 pm

10/16: Stockholder's Luncheon (please arrive by 10:45 am) and 6pm FUSH Movie and Game Night

10/21-23: FALL RETREAT at Pilgrim Park

10/30: Halloween Party

FUJI Calendar

10/2: Apple Picking at Kuiper's Farm- Depart church 1 pm, return 5 pm

10/9: No FUJI (Columbus Day Weekend)

10/16: Community Building Night

10/23: Taking Care of the Earth

10/30: Costume Party and Pumpkin Carving

BLESSED, CHALLENGED & TRANSFORMED

The 2012 Estimate of Giving/Pledge Campaign kicks off on Sunday October 2nd. Packets will be distributed after Church to those who can pick them up and will be mailed to everyone else the next day. You can also review the packet on the Church website.

Please read the booklet we have prepared and prayerfully consider your giving plan for next year.

Return your Giving Estimate/Pledge form by Sunday, October 16th.

What if I don't get my form in by the 16th?

We will be calling those who have not responded during the last two weeks of October hoping that we can get the final numbers by October 31st.

What's the hurry?

These numbers will be used by the Church leadership to create a balanced budget for 2012. If we don't have the information we may need to cut programs or personnel. If we do have the information we may be able to add programs or personnel!

How much shall I/we give?

The packet gives you many ways to think about this so please read it. We ask that you give a percentage of your projected income "off the top." Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 that your heart will follow your treasure. We want your heart with us and we know it will surely follow your treasure.


What if I don't know what my income will be?

Make a realistic, good faith estimate and go with it. You can always let us know later if the estimate was too high (or too low). Take the leap. Trust God to provide and remember that all that you have already belongs to God and you are called to be God's good steward.

PADS Coffee Challenge

—Julie R. Harley

Our friends in West Suburban PADS got a 40 percent reduction in their funding this year, and they need our help to provide coffee and reusable dishware for the 60 clients who will be arriving every Monday night, beginning Oct. 3. Are you up to the Coffee Challenge? Bring ground DECAF COFFEE to the church office – any brand or size is fine. We'll need this till next May, so pick up an extra pound or two next time you're shopping.



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We are on a Quest

Eighteen high school youth are on a Quest. Our confirmation program began with a parent and youth gathering on September 18. We shared some of our faith backgrounds and looked to the year ahead. In the coming year, we will explore the Trinity, the Bible, church history, discipleship, worship and prayer, sin, grace and doubt as well as serve Interfaith House and the Greater Chicago Food Depository. We'll visit the Oriental Institute to explore artifacts from the Ancient Near East, including some that were around at the time of Moses. We had a lock-in on September 30 to bond and begin to wonder together where our Quest begins, what our relationship to faith and God are, and where we are headed. Confirmation is a journey, not a destination.

This year's Quest leaders are Art Spooner, Jonathan Gilmer (a 2010 Quest alumnus) and Marylen Marty-Gentile. Rob, Leah and Julie and members of the congregation will also share leadership in this program.

So many questions. So many wonders. Please pray for our Questors.

Church School and Spiritual Formation

Church school has begun, but the spiritual formation of your children and youth happens every day. They watch you and see how you relate to God and live out your faith every day of the week. From you they learn whether faith is important in life. From you they learn whether a church community matters: they see it in how you relate to this church community. From you they learn whether worshiping God matters and how worship shapes you to be a follower of Jesus.

From them you may learn how to regain some of your lost child-likeness in the face of eating bread, being washed and staying open to mystery and awe.

Pastoral Intern

Help us welcome a new face to 1st United! Rick Steele, entering his third year in the Masters of Divinity (M-Div) program at McCormick Theological Seminary, will be assisting the Pastoral Staff through May of 2012. Tuesdays will be when Rick is primarily on premise, but he will be around as scheduling permits. After many years of quiet and persistent cajoling, Rick finally answered God's call to Ministry in the UCC tradition. Over the past years, Rick has been active with local churches, missions, and serves as Vice President at the Harold Colbert Jones Memorial Community Center in Chicago Heights, IL. Rick and his wife, Ruth, are longtime residents of the south suburbs, and presently reside in Olympia Fields. They will frequently be joining us in worship, fellowship, and adult education. Please introduce yourselves to Ruth and Rick.

Check It Out!

As we begin the Fall Program, take a look in the Bergstraesser Library. We have made great progress in getting it together.

We have accepted a large budget cut for the coming year for new books for adults, young adults, and children. You can help out.

1. We have in the library a "Wish Book." You can add to it—suggest a book the church library should have. Please include your name and contact information.
2. You can also donate one of the books listed. Some bestsellers are in the Wish Book, perhaps have one to donate and share.
3. Simply give a monetary donation because you love books! It could be a gift in honor of an anniversary, birthday, or any celebration.
4. We hope to have at least one copy of books used in Adult Education classes. If a teacher or student in the class would donate their own copy that would be great.



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News from Evening Division

Join First United Evening Division on Thursday, October 6th and hear Carole Ferguson, and Pastor Julie Harley speak of their experiences in Israel and the West Bank. Dinner at 6:00 pm in Centennial Hall is \$15.00. Call Ruth Ashman at 708-366-3689 by October 4th for reservations or sign up at the Elder Desk. Program begins at 7pm with no reservations needed.

Organist Search Commences

The search has begun for a new organist! A committee that includes Phil Gehring (chair), Marilee Castañeda, Pauline Coffman, Mark Hodges, Susan Zaruba, and Bill Chin was formed and has drafted an announcement of the job opening. The job posting has been sent to the web site of American Guild of Organists (AGO) and to local colleges and universities. You can read it here; it is also posted on the church web site. If you know of a possible candidate, you can pass the information on to them, and please tell a committee member about the prospective applicant as well. We hope to review applications by October 14, hold auditions and interviews in early November, and have a new organist in place by around the beginning of Advent (November 27). You can contact Bill Chin or any of the committee members if you have questions or suggestions.

Interested in an international volunteer travel experience?

Did you know that The Presbyterian Church, USA, sponsors a program in Colombia, South America?

It began when the Presbyterian Church of Colombia asked us to accompany members of their churches in their ministry with displaced persons and help in defense of human rights. As part of this program, lay people from the U.S. train and travel to Colombia for short-term volunteer projects, meet with Colombians refugees and travel with them to work for peace.

The program is called the Colombian Accompaniment Program. It's organized through the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.

First United's very own missionaries in Colombia, The Rev. Mamie Broadhurst and The Rev. Richard Williams, work closely with the accompaniers! They live in Barranquilla, a beautiful big Colombian city near the Caribbean coast. Mamie and Richard's work, and the work of the accompaniers, provide witness to the benefits to making peace in Colombia.

Want to learn more about the Colombian Accompaniment Program?
Click on our Missionary Blog on the Church

Or, find them on Facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/#!/ColombiaAccompaniment?sk=wall>

PrimeTime Trip to LUMA

Tuesday, October 11 – We will be traveling to the Loyola University Museum of Art in Chicago to see some very interesting exhibits! One features 20 works by Janet McKenzie, including the painting Jesus of the People which won a national competition in 1999 focused on new images of Jesus. Another features newly created illuminated pages of the Bible, and yet another shows individuals who are moving from homelessness to stable housing. We will leave the church parking lot at 10:30 am and will carpool to the museum. (Some of us may even take the el!) After viewing the exhibits, we will plan to have lunch together. Expenses will be the price of an el ticket or a shared expense for your carpool driver AND parking, plus any lunch expenses. (The museum is free on Tuesdays.) This excursion is limited to 15 people. Call or email Janet Haisman at jhais@sbcglobal.net or (708)383-2035 no later than Sunday, October 9. DO COME AND JOIN US!

Dinner and a Movie Oct. 14 – “Another Year”

—Julie R. Harley

Jim Broadbent and Ruth Sheen star in this emotionally honest portrait of ordinary people trying to make sense of their lives. “Another Year” was directed by Mike Leigh and features a couple drifting past middle age in a stable and happy marriage. They are at the center of this comedy-drama, rated PG-13. Join us for dinner at 6:00 pm for \$6.00 in the lounge. After the movie, I will lead a discussion.



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Huddled Beneath the Sky

The sadness I have caused any face
by letting a stray word
strike it,

any pain
I have caused you,
what can I do to make us even?
Demand a hundred fold of me - I'll pay it.

During the day I hold my feet accountable
to watch out for wondrous insects and their friends.

Why would I want to bring horror
into their extraordinary
world?

Magnetic fields draw us to Light; they move our limbs and thoughts.
But it is still dark; if our hearts do not hold a lantern,
we will stumble over each other,

huddled beneath the sky
as we are.

—Rumi

*(Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West
by Daniel Ladinsky)*

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The November Messenger Bell deadline is October 15

Please limit all articles
to 250 words or less.
Thank you.

Please e-mail information
or articles for the MB to:

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