



August 2011

themessengerbell

Summer Edition.2

www.firstunitedoakpark.com



## Leadership in the Wider Church

—Julie R. Harley

I am delighted to lead this congregation as we live God's vision at 848 Lake Street. In addition, I spend a few hours each week providing leadership to the wider church.

**Consecre Housing Network** – This year I will become the chairperson of the board for this UCC-related ministry, which provides affordable housing for physically challenged adults and seniors in Illinois, Missouri and Florida.

**Church and Ministry Committee** – I began a three-year term on this committee in the Chicago Metro Association of the United Church of Christ. We oversee seminary students who are in-care and pursuing ordination and receive new congregations into the denomination.

**Advising Doctor of Ministry Students in Hyde Park** – I am the advisor for two pastors who are pursuing Doctor of Ministry degrees in preaching through the ACTS program (including several seminaries). This is also a three-year commitment.

I continue to attend denominational meetings of the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ on a regular basis.

**Clergy Spiritual Deepening Program** – My continuing education program for the next 15 months will focus on spiritual life and leadership, as I participate in classes and retreats organized by the Shalem Institute in Washington, DC. This month I will spend a week at a retreat center in Bethesda, MD, to begin this program.

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## Transitions

**Compassion:** *Alice Miller*  
*Juan Diaz*  
*Mary Browne*  
*Ben Wilcox and his wife Kari*  
*Anna Sadowski*  
*Jim McClure*  
*Judy Schoenbaum-Wood*  
*Gene Stephens*

**Condolence:** *Father of Audrey Todd*

**Celebration:** *Mark and Laurie Jolicoeur, celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary*  
*All our church members who are 90 year old and older!*  
They are a grand blessing to our church.

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## News from Your Church Council

The Church Council held a special meeting last July 13, 2011 to discuss the vision priorities for this church year. What are our priorities for this coming year, where are we heading or what do we need to move forward as a congregation, were some of the questions raised that night. Like the early church, when questions like these arise that affects the life of the congregation, council went through the process of discernment. In knowing God's plan for First United, we turned to spiritual readings, to prayer, engaged ourselves in meaningful conversations, listened to ideas, experiences and personal stories; and asked for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In line of our Vision 2020, the theme discerned for this year is:

### **Building relationships that bless, challenge and transform**

*(in our connections with God, with each other and with the world)*

It is with hope that all our committee programs will be in line with this theme and enjoin everyone to participate. "No one will be a spectator. Everyone will be actively engaged in worship and ministry." (Vision 2020)

For council's spiritual nourishment and to build relationship with each other, we will be reading and meditating together, *Spiritual Leadership for Church Officers* by Joan S. Gray. Regular session resumes this month.

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## Walk In Ministry

Walk In Ministry is seeking volunteers who are interested in working directly with clients or helping behind the scenes with fundraising. WIM provides on the job training and resources for client facing volunteers so the only requirement is a commitment to compassionate, non-judgmental listening. Volunteers are needed for week day mornings, Wednesday afternoons/evenings and Saturday mornings. If you are interested in learning more about how you can help, please contact Catherine at 708-386-1946X904 or [crrison@comcast.net](mailto:crrison@comcast.net).

WIM is collecting used bikes and bike locks for clients needing transportation to work. If you have a functioning bike or lock to donate, please contact 708-386-1946x908.

Walk In Ministry is helping clients with online job searches and applications. Additionally, we receive job postings from several sources ranging from non-skilled entry level positions to the occasional executive level position. If you are looking for a job, you are welcome to use WIM resources. Please call 708-386-1946x908 for more information. Additionally, if you are an employer looking to hire, please call Catherine at 708-386-1946x904 or send your job opportunities to [crrison@comcast.net](mailto:crrison@comcast.net).

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## Summer PADS Transitional Housing Program

We welcome 12 people from PADS who will be staying at First United overnight from Aug. 8 to 21. They will receive counseling and mentoring from the PADS staff as they seek jobs and housing to be able to live independently.

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## Seminary Intern arriving in September

Pauline Coffman

We will welcome McCormick Seminary student Rick Steele as our seminary intern, beginning this fall. Rick lives in Olympia Fields with his wife, and he began seminary in 2009 after a career in the Air Force, telecommunications, and information technology. He is actively involved in mission and has served as a deacon and elder in Presbyterian churches. He is currently pursuing ordination in the United Church of Christ. Rick will serve at our church for 12-15 hours a week through May 2012, and he will be supervised by Pastor Harley and members of a lay support team. Welcome, Rick!

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Faith  
IN ACTION



## 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

All are invited.



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### **Bread for the World National Gathering 2011**

While many of you were writing or signing letters to legislators during our Offering of Letters on Sunday 12 June, I had the opportunity to attend Bread for the World's national gathering in Washington DC. People of faith from all over the world participated in 3 inspiring days of worship, learning, and exchanging ideas for living God's word in working to end hunger and poverty. The gathering concluded on day 4 with lobby day; several hundred "hunger activists" visited legislators' offices to emphasize the importance of sustained support for individuals and families needing assistance with basic needs like food.

The theme for the gathering was "Changing the Politics of Hunger." And hunger and poverty are important political issues in our current economic climate. The goal of the gathering as well as the emphasis of lobby day was learning to speak on behalf of those who often have no voice in budget decisions. The primary message we brought to our legislators was the need for them to create a circle of protection around programs serving hungry and poor people in our communities and around the world. The talking points included the fact that safety net programs for the poor consume only 14% of our gross domestic product; cutting or reducing these funds will have no appreciable effect on the deficit. Also, financial support provided by many of the safety net programs is good economics when recipients have money they can use to purchase goods.

On that weekend you and I did something significant when we made our opinions as voters known to our legislators. Our church generated 32 letters. Many more of you may have sent letters from home later on. Thirty-two letters may not seem like much. But, one of the things I learned that weekend is that as few as 8 letters from constituents can impact a legislator's vote on a given issue. We should take pride in knowing our leaders in Washington heard from us on this issue. And, I hope this will motivate us to keep writing and calling our legislators on this and other issues important to our vision as a faith community. We have seen and heard how difficult decisions surrounding the federal budget are and will continue to be so. Our federal budget has moral implications as well as the political and financial ones. Our voices as Christians are important in assuring our leaders make moral decisions that protect the life and dignity of poor and vulnerable people during these difficult times.

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### **Latest News from Palestine and Israel – Will Palestine Become a State?**

—Julie R. Harley

Five members of First United who traveled to Palestine and Israel in June will give a report and show slides from their trip at 7:00 pm on Monday, Aug. 22, in the Chapel. We met with religious and community leaders from a variety of perspectives, and want to share what we learned about Palestine's proposal to gain statehood at the United Nations in September. Pauline and Rob Coffman, Carole Ferguson, Rachel Harley and I will lead the dialogue.

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### **Earth, Wind and Fire Stewardship Event for Illinois Conference UCC Here Aug. 27**

We welcome a statewide stewardship education event to our church on Saturday, Aug. 27, from 9 am to 1 pm. Our own associate pastor Rob Leveridge will be one of the speakers. Get more information about registration from any of the pastors.

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### **Foster Care Information Session Here on Aug. 28**

Jewish Child and Family Services is seeking qualified and committed foster parents to aid in the mission of caring for and stabilizing children who are wards of the state. These children, most ranging in age from 8 to 18 years old, have been victims of neglect and sometimes physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

First United is hosting an information meeting from 11:15 am to noon on Sunday, Aug. 28, in the Chapel. Children may be placed in same-sex or opposite-sex couples' homes. Marc Bermann, MSHR, JCFS Foster Parents Recruiter and Trainer, will present:

1. Reasons that children must be placed in substitute care
2. Legal issues associated with permanent placement vs. return home goals
3. Behavioral issues associated with substitute care
4. Clinical and support services necessary for stabilization in the home
5. Licensing requirements

If you are unable to attend, but would like to learn more, please contact Marc at 312-673-2755.

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### **Gathering Day is Sunday, Sept. 11**

Worship remains at 10:00 am each Sunday until Sept. 11, when the Choir, Church School and Adult Education all resume, and worship time returns to 11:00 am.

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### **Moving Into Intentional Community**

—Julie R. Harley

I will be moving to Oak Park on April 15, 2012. I hope to find partners who would like to live in intentional community with me. My dream is to buy a small apartment building within 10 minutes of the church. Each of us would have our own living space, but we would share in a community meal once a week and support one another as needs arise. If you are interested in pursuing this possibility, give me a call at 708-386-5215 ext. 22 or send an email to [jrh@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:jrh@firstunitedoakpark.com).

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### **Join Us this Summer at Family Camp!**

Time to sign up for First United Family Camp! Whether you are a single in a pup tent or a family of 6 in an RV, come to Tower Hill Camp, Sawyer, Michigan, August 11 through 15, 2011. Come Thursday through Monday or just for an overnight. You can enjoy beach time, berry picking, bike riding, antique-ing, campfires, hikes, fellowship, food, or just vegging out with a good book. Bring your own food & shelter. The only planned event is a potluck on Saturday night.

Cost is \$7 per person per night plus a nominal fee per visit for the Tower Hill endowment fund and fire wood. Sign up sheet is on the Elder desk in the lounge. For questions call Don & Priscilla Sibley at 708/848-2840 or 708/280-7590.

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### **Prime Time Trip**

Prime Timers will be making a trip to the Chicago Botanic Garden on Tuesday, August 16 (August 23 rain date). We will meet at the church at 9:30 AM and hope to be back by 2:30 pm. E-mail or call Janet Haisman to sign up, and do let us know if you can drive! (708-383-2035 or [jhais@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhais@sbcglobal.net)). We will share the cost of gas and parking (\$7 per car for seniors on Tuesdays), admission is free, and lunch or tours will be your choice and cost. Come and join us for a beautiful day at a gorgeous location!

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### **“She Left the Church a Post Office?”**

That was likely the Moderator’s reaction when told of a legacy gift from Angie Gebhardt. In her will she left the church real estate located in southern Illinois. The property was improved with a building that was used as a local post office. What’s the church to do with a post office? Well, the lease to the US Postal Service made it easy to sell the property. So the church’s “post office” was sold and the proceeds were set aside as the Gebhardt Fund. Since then, amounts drawn from the Gebhardt Fund (nee, the church’s post office) have enabled pastoral staff and members of the congregation to travel on mission trips. Just last month money from the Gebhardt Fund helped defray expenses for members of our church who traveled to the Middle East to meet with Christians, Palestinians and Israelis who work for peace and reconciliation in that region.

If you have a “post office” (i.e., real or personal property) and don’t know quite what to do with it, perhaps a gift to our church is a good answer. We’d welcome the chance to talk with you about such a gift. Sure, gifts of property can be a bit complicated, but the long-term good may be well worth it. For information about a possible planned gift to the church, contact our lead pastor, Julie Harley or the Chair of the Planned Giving Committee, Gene Armstrong.

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### **Organists in the World’s Largest Village**

By Cathryn Wilkinson

I am researching organists who worked in the churches around Lake Street/Oak Park Avenue from about 1920-1940. Although my work is not complete yet, here are some glimpses into church life of this era. The 6 churches I have reviewed had memberships from 1500 to more than 2000, at a time when the village population was 64,000. The equally popular Warrington Opera House seated 1500 patrons. In the time between the wars, Oak Park was known as a prominent organ center. Linda Holdrege Kettlestrings, from the family of Oak Park’s first registered landowner, played the organ at Grace Episcopal Church and also at the LaMar (Lake-Marion) Theater. The longest-tenured organist was Miss Etta Margaret Code, who served 46 years at St. Edmund’s.

The organist at First Presbyterian, Dr. Edgar A. Nelson, was renowned for directing choral festivals of more than 100 singers at Soldier Field. More stories from the past will be forthcoming!  
...BLOOM where you are planted...



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### **Meeting the Dalai Lama**

—Emory Mead

I was a member of the group of artists at First United that created the Menorah icon that was part of the Dalai Lama’s visit to Chicago. Our Menorah was one of 12 icons that were placed on the stage at the UIC Pavilion where the Dalai Lama sat. Each icon represented a different faith community; together the icons represented the various faith communities of the world. I was chosen to represent First United at this event.

I met 12 other artists on Sunday July 17. We were given the task of moving the 12 icons on the stage and providing a background for his talk. After we had completed our job, we left the stage, as we waited to go and take our seats, in walks the Dalai Lama, this happened backstage, so there was a little chaos, especially with all the security, both city and State Department. He walked right up to us and we were introduced to him, one by one. He then stood with us for photos. I am hoping to get some copies of those photos to complete an exciting memory.

All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives.

—Dalai Lama

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# August Summer Worship

## 10 am Worship

Each Sunday in August, we invite you to come to church at 9 am for a group Labyrinth Walk led by one of our pastors. We will meet on the Labyrinth on the church lawn; all ages welcome.

### Aug. 7 Contemporary Worship and Communion

*Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33*

Sermon: "Stepping Out of the Boat"

*Join Julie and Rob for a Worship/Sermon Talk-Back at 11:15 in the Chapel, when we will hear your reactions to this contemporary worship format, led by our band.*

### Aug. 14 Worship Service

*Scripture: Gen. 45:1-15 and Matt. 15:10-20*

Sermon: "Forgiveness from the Heart"

### Aug. 21 Animal Blessing Service

*Scripture: Psalm 148*

Sermon: "Even These"

### Aug. 28 Worship with Anointing for Healing

*Scripture: Exodus 31:1-15 and Romans 12:9-21*

Sermon: "Twenty-Five Ways to Overcome Evil"



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Bill Chin, Director of Music Ministry

Cathryn Wilkinson, Organist

### The September Messenger Bell deadline is August 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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