



our life together is rich and full.

**You Invited to Gathering Day on September 11.**

The public schools have begun. And now it's time for our church programs to begin again. At First United, we call it Gathering Day, a time to re-gather after vacations and rest and travels.

**Gathering Day is a busy day and a grand day.**

**Our church school classes begin for children and youth at 9:30am.** All the children from 3-years-old to 8th Grade have age-graded classes. (Our Toddler Class is for children who have turned three by September 1.) We gather on September 11 in the sanctuary for a welcome and information time. Classes are marked so you will know where to go. Look also for invitations in the mail for each of your children.

Returning families will notice some changes as we move to communicate better with you and streamline some activities.

If you are new to the church and want information about the church school, please contact Marylen Marty-Gentile (marylen@firstunitedoakpark.com, 708-386-5215).

**Information for parents and adults comes next.** After children go to their classes, stay for information on the upcoming Adult Education programs and for information about the spiritual formation of children and youth. Feel free to bring your coffee, too.

**Worship follows at 11am.** With the end of summer, our worship time returns to 11 am. During Gathering Day worship, Rob Leveridge will preach and the community will bless and commission all educators and advisors.

**Later in the day, our youth fellowship programs begin.** FUJI (First United Junior High) and FUSH (First United Senior High) kick-off at 6 pm. Parents and youth look for more information on these fellowship programs later in the Messenger Bell. If you need more information about youth fellowship, please contact Leah Fowler (lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com, 708-386-5215).

I love to say that our life together is rich and full. It's holy and fantastical and God is in, it every moment breathing holy spirit into it. But if you are new to the community, some of these activities and names may feel odd. You may have questions or wonders. Please, ask. Please call. Please ask. Please email.

**Join us on Gathering Day beginning at 9:30 am.**

—Marylen Marty-Gentile

---

## Transitions

**Births:** Jackson Joseph, born to Jeff and Lexi Ciontea  
Amado, born to Alison and Eric Valderrama

**Marriages:** Tim Bode and Danielle McLernon on Sept. 10  
Liz Bunkers and Chase Gentile on Sept. 24

**Compassion:** Marion Davis  
Michelle Lowery  
Ruth Peaslee  
Katherine Robinson  
Jean Ludington  
Judy Schoenbaum-Wood

---

**In this issue:**

**Farewell from Cathryn page 2**

**September Worship page 8**

---

**Celebration—** Leah Fowler and Chris Cajilan, expecting a child.  
Brad Babcock, on his new position in Egypt.  
Judy Vojta, on her new position in Abu Dhabi.

---

### **Farewell to Dear Friends and Musicians at First United,**

As you will know by the time you read this, I concluded my employment as your organist at the end of August. Over the past seven years of practicing and playing for worship on a weekly basis, I have been overwhelmed with the incredible opportunity I had to work at First United. The many creative people among you, including the pastoral and support staff, but particularly Bill Chin and your dedicated choir members, make a wonderful team. Your support and obvious delight in hearing First United's magnificent organ have inspired me, encouraged me, and made my work here a great joy. Some of you have sent me notes about organs and organists from places you have visited, many of you have told me you liked a certain piece of music, some of you have come into the sanctuary and sat quietly while I practiced, some of you have bought music for me or made a request for a favorite piece.

Your Casavant pipe organ is a treasure that many congregations could never even dream of owning. I am so grateful for the vision and the generosity that enabled a group of people to purchase such an instrument in 1982. I never imagined as a young organist years ago that God would some day allow me the privilege to play what most organists only dream of, and work hard at getting the most out of it. I feel that I have barely scratched the surface of the musical opportunities open to God's people at First United. I wish you for you many more years of beautiful organ music, and I look on my time here as the highlight of my career. My deep thanks to you all! Keep singing, and may we meet many times again.

*Sincerely Yours,*  
Cathryn Wilkinson, *organist*

---

### **Spirituality for the Second Half of Life** — Julie R. Harley

I read Richard Rohr's book *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* over the summer, and it changed my life! Join me at 11:15 am on Sunday, Sept. 4, in the chapel to learn ways to re-envision your spiritual practices in midlife and beyond.

---

### **Membership Class at First United**

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 9am. 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. — [rleveridge@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:rleveridge@firstunitedoakpark.com)

---



our life  
together is  
rich and full.

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.

---

## We are on the move!

Did you miss the chance to see our missionaries to Colombia, South America, Rev. Richard Williams and Rev. Mamie Broadhurst, along with their baby daughter, Nora? Well, here is the latest on their work, fresh from balmy Barranquilla! Mamie writes:

We are on the move! Our offices on the grounds of the Reformed University are moving because the University is moving! Since the Colegio Americano (The American School - PreK through 11th, their 12th) only uses their classrooms in the day time, the University is going to save some money and use space more wisely and head over there to offer their classes which are only at night. Since only a couple of us would be left over here...we are all moving! We will have to get you all a new address so that if you get a wild hair and decide that you must send us physical postal mail then we will actually get them. When we know that address, we will get it to you. Prayers for patience in transition are always welcome. ;)

Otherwise we are getting back into the swing of things after our time in the United States. It was such a pleasure to be at First United on July 3rd, and even more fun to get to introduce folks to Nora (even though she was a bit more than fashionably late...). We spoke with 7 churches in our 9 days in the Chicagoland area before heading to New York and New Jersey to speak to a few others. Nora was a total trooper, and we hope to have made stronger connections with folks that will be all the more interested in what is happening here in Colombia now. We had the chance to talk about why the church here feels the Free Trade Agreement will harm many people, and we are keeping up with the efforts in the US to advocate on our partners' behalf - more of which you all can join and follow through the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship website at — <http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/colombia/FTA>.

If you have an internet connection, you can also follow Mamie and Richard on their blog, — <http://calledtocolombia.org/>.  
—Ruth McBeth

---

## Children and Youth Education

**Quest Begins on September 18** — Quest is what First United calls our confirmation program. Quest is a time of searching, asking, wondering, learning and sharing about our Christian faith prior to deciding whether or not to join the church as an adult member. Generally, ninth graders participate in Quest, though youth who have not been confirmed are invited and welcome to participate in Quest.

Quest meets every Sunday at 9:30 during our education time EXCEPT for our first meeting which will be September 18 after worship. During our first meeting parents and Questors will meet in the chapel, share lunch and learn how the program will unfold.

Quest leaders are Jonathan Gilmer, Art Spooner and Marylen Marty-Gentile with assistance from Leah Fowler, Julie Harley, Rob Leveridge and other members of the community.

Look for more information on Quest, but if you are new to First United and have some questions, please contact Marylen ([marylen@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:marylen@firstunitedoakpark.com)).

### Save the Dates

September 18	Third and Fourth Grades Parent Meet and Greet Quest Begins (noon)
September 25	Third Grade Breakfast and Bible Sunday Kinder, First and Second Grades Parent Meet and Greet
October 2	Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades Parent Meet and Greet
October 16	Toddler (3-year-old) and Preschool (4-year-old) Classes Parent Meet and Greet



our life  
together is  
rich and full.

---

## UP Picnic! Saturday, Sept. 17, noon-3 pm. All ages welcome!

You are invited to a Family Picnic for UP, which stands for “United and Proud” and is our church’s group for LGBT folks and allies. Robin Rada and Lisa Capozzi are our gracious hosts, and live at 907 Thatcher Ave in River Forest. Please plan to bring a side or dessert and a drink of your choice. Children are welcome. We will also discuss activities for UP over the coming program year. RSVP to Lisa at lisacapozzi@sbcglobal.net, or call 708-771-4384.

---

### Dear Friends,

On August 7, I led a team of musicians in playing my favorite kind of worship music, rock oriented praise and worship music. Well actually, it’s one of my favorite types, tied with high-energy gospel music, but I don’t really know how to play gospel music.

Since August 7, I’ve gotten lots of feedback on the music we played, and I really appreciate it! Many people absolutely loved it, some people could barely stand to listen to it, and others had mixed feelings. Please believe me when I say I am glad to know of all the reactions people had. I really value praise music and a free-flowing order of service as a form of worship, and I’ve been curious to know what others would think of this style. Over sixty people responded to an online survey I circulated, and others shared their thoughts in conversations or by email. I’m happy to say my curiosity has been satisfied!

I do want to respond specifically to one element of the feedback people shared. In addition to comments I received about whether or not people enjoyed the music, there was one consistent message, which I anticipated, and which is quite compelling to me. Person after person mentioned to me that they associate a rock band in worship with very socially and theologically conservative churches, and they take a lot of pride in belonging to a progressive community of faith like First United Church, so the service didn’t feel like it really fit here.

I wish this association in people’s minds was not so well-founded, but it’s true! Most praise and worship bands are found in conservative-leaning churches, and in fact most praise and worship music has lyrics that are, if not conservative, mostly shallow and bland.

This is a fact of church life that I am interested in changing. I don’t think praise music should be lyrically lame, and I don’t think that progressive people should have to go to conservative churches if they want to hear rockin’ music in worship.

I’m happy to share with you that I am in the midst of writing the music for a worship album that I will record and release this year, because I feel called by God to create music that is fun and engaging to people who like praise and worship, but is crafted around themes of peace, justice, and the boundary-breaking truth of God’s love. I intend to offer songs to the church world that might be two things: 1) a resource for progressive churches that are seeking good praise music, and 2) a catchy articulation of the progressive Christian point-of-view for more conservative Christians and churches that relate to the style of music, but never could understand what churches like First United are all about (by the way, I’m not the first Christian songwriter to think of doing this, but there aren’t that many of us, yet.).

To give you a sense of what I’m talking about, I thought I’d reprint the lyrics of two of the songs our congregation sang on August 7, which I wrote. My purpose was to craft songs that are musically simple, catchy and energetic, but that capture the kind of Christian values we espouse here at First United. Over time, and through many more conversations, our congregation will discern what place this form of worship will have in our community. For now, thanks for being a part of the experiment on August 7, and no matter what your opinion is, come talk to me about worship music any time!

Pastor Rob

*(Song lyrics on next page)*

---



our life  
together is  
rich and full.

---

## Pastor Rob's Song Lyrics from August 7 Worship Service

### Thank You Jesus

Verse 1:

Today there is despair that need not be,  
Today the privileged refuse to see,  
Today the sick and hungry wait in need,  
And we pray that God hears and heeds.  
Tomorrow all who come will find a seat,  
And everyone will have enough to eat  
The table of the Lord will welcome all to the feast  
From west and from east

Refrain:

There's a light for the path of those who'd walk in  
love

Grace abounds, and it sounds like hearts are  
learning of

All the blindness and fear that's giving way to faith  
Thank you Jesus! You show us the way.

Someone names and proclaims his days of war  
are done

Generosity blooms where greed had thought it won  
There are brothers and sisters taking heart today  
Thank you Jesus! You show us the way.

Verse 2:

Today injustice means to rule the day  
The workers have their wealth stolen away  
Though powers brutalize the small, the meek  
Still we seek a vision of peace

Tomorrow captives will all be set free  
And the oppressed will rise in liberty  
The poor will know good news and all will see  
What can be, when Christ is the king

Refrain

Bridge

Somebody wants to live for humankind (that's me!)  
Multiply peace with all of heart and mind (that's  
me!)

Somebody wants to open up to God (that's me!)  
Somebody wants to speak in truth and love (that's  
me!)

### All God's People

Refrain:

All God's People (all God's people)  
All God's People (all God's people)  
Welcome home, gather 'round,  
The Holy is here!

Verse 1:

You can take your fear and lay it down,  
Leave your hatred outside on the ground,  
You can feel your spite start to melt away,  
You can trade the past for a new day.

Refrain

Verse 2:

You can find communion in this place  
See your neighbor in the stranger's face  
You can find the strength to heed the call  
That's tugging on your heart like it's drawing us all

Refrain

---

## News From Evening Division

Join Evening Division at our fall luncheon on Saturday, September 17th, 12 noon at Holley Court Terrace. Join your friends and learn about 2011 -2012 programs and activities. Check Elder Desk for additional information.

---

## Nursery School News

The Nursery School is buzzing with activity in preparation for the beginning of a new school year. Teachers have completed home visits to each child and both parents and children are a bit less nervous after meeting the teacher. There are seven morning classes, one Lunch Bunch class and five afternoon classes this school year.

Sunday afternoon, September 25th, we will be celebrating the new school year with a festive event in the parking lot, playground and Centennial Hall. The F. U. N. S. SCHOOL YARD KICK-OFF CARNIVAL will take place 2:00 - 5:00 pm and promises to be a fun time with games, food and even a photo booth. Children will have a chance to win a goldfish, participate in the cupcake walk, visit the pocket lady and much more. This will be a grand beginning to the school year.



our life  
together is  
rich and full.

---

## Adult Education

Our Adult Education will kick off in September! Look out for the Adult Education Brochure, which will be a bulletin insert in worship on Sept. 4 and 11, and is now on our church website. Here is what you can look forward to in September:

**Sept. 4: Pastor Julie Harley leads a class called “Spirituality for the Second Half of Life,”** inspired by the book *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* by Richard Rohr. Julie will present ways to re-envision your spiritual practices in midlife and beyond.

### Sept. 11: Gathering Day (no Adult Ed)

**Sept. 18: “Maybe Baby?!”** This panel will share from personal experience their decision whether or not to have children. Those who did have children (or are in the process of making or adopting them) will share their experience of deciding when to have children and how to have children. We will take into account current issues around starting a family, such as gay and lesbian parents, infertility, reproductive technology, and adoption. We will also explore unplanned pregnancies. Pastor Leah Fowler will moderate and share with her wife Chris Gajilan their journey towards creating their family. (Chapel)

**Bible Study: The Minor Prophets:** Explore the prophets who challenged us with phrases like “Let justice roll down like waters!” and “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”. This class will have a special guest professor, Dr. Ted Hiebert, Old Testament Professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, teach on October 2 and 9. (Conference Room)

**Sept. 25: “What to Do With That Bible In Your Hand?”** Dr. Alice Hunt, who is the President of Chicago School of Theology and who will be our guest preacher that day, will teach this class for anyone who has the desire for more understanding of the central book to the Christian faith. (Chapel)

**Also, a Book Study Group begins Wednesday, Sept. 7** and will meet for 8 Wednesdays from 11:00-12:30. They will read *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell and the Fate of Every Person who Ever Lived* by Rob Bell. Books will be available for purchase at The Book Table on Lake St. Anyone is welcome to join this warm and inviting group!

Want to be part of a study group but can't come on Wednesday mornings? Let Leah Fowler know! If we have enough interested people, we may start an evening or weekend study group.— [lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com)

---

## Youth Ministry

FUSH and FUJI Youth Groups get started again on Sunday, Sept. 11, with a HUGE BBQ Kick-off! Meet your youth advisors and your peers for a night of food, games and get-to-know you activities. FUSH and FUJI meet from 6-8 pm on Sunday nights unless otherwise noted. We are excited to welcome old advisors back, and to get to know our new advisors! Also, meet your FUSH Co-Moderators, Mahala Miller and Rebecca Robinson! FUSH is for 9-12th grades, and FUJI is for 7-8th grades. If you are not yet on our email list, contact Pastor Leah Fowler at [lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com). You can also find us on Facebook!

### Sept. 11: FUJI Parent Orientation (5-6 pm)

FUSH/FUJI Barbeque (6-8 pm)

### Sept. 18: FUSH Parent Orientation (5-6pm)

FUSH Photo Scavenger Hunt and FUJI Sound Scavenger Hunt (6-8 pm)

### Sept. 25: FUSH Care Group Night and FUJI Interfaith House Service Project (FUJI arrives at 4:30 and returns at 7:15)



---

## Offerings are a Sacred Act of Worship

Giving back a portion of what we have received from God is symbolized by the passing of the offering plate during worship. But many of us give electronically or write checks monthly and we know that God is already aware of our gratitude and joy in giving. However, visitors and children may not understand. Therefore, we ask everyone to put something into the plate each Sunday. One way to do this is to use the green giving cards available in the pew racks. With these, everyone can participate in the offering - either by celebrating having already given for the current period or by making a credit or debit card donation. Please use these cards when you are not bringing an offering of cash or check — or in addition if appropriate.

---

## Dinner and a Movie – 6:00 pm Friday, Sept. 9 – “Of Gods and Men” — Julie R. Harley

This French drama and Cannes Film Festival winner tells the story of a group of Trappist monks in Algeria. They live harmoniously with predominantly Muslim neighbors until a crisis occurs and they must decide how to respond. As we approach the tenth anniversary of 9/11, this movie opens a dialogue about how we can live with reconciliation in a world marked by conflict.

---

## Personnel Update

We welcome **Fred Henders** to the church staff as our new part-time operations manager. Fred holds a bachelor's degree from Lewis University and an MBA from University of Alabama. His work experience includes 15 years at Amoco in the IT department, 10 years as a business owner of Hobbytown USA in Oak Park, and four years as a project manager for the Sagem Company. He and his wife Anne live in Forest Park, and he owns a book publishing company.

**Tasha Brown** is a temporary administrative assistant in the church office through Sept. 30.

**Juan Diaz** has recovered from knee surgery and returned to his role as lead custodian.

Church Council appointed an organist search committee on Aug. 23, which will be staffed by Bill Chin. Substitute organists will play our Casavant for the next few months, and the search committee hopes to find a new organist by the end of November.

---

## PrimeTime – Fresh Food Potluck

FRESH FOOD!! Everybody loves home-grown and local farmer-grown produce that abounds at this time. On Saturday September 24th at 5:30 pm PrimeTimers will gather at Rick and Marcia Ashton's home, 222 N. Marion St. #3F, OP. Please make a dish with at least one ingredient from the Farmer's Market, a home garden, or other local food source. Our potluck includes everything... main dishes, sides, salads and desserts. Bring your choice of wine or maybe home brewed beer! Co-chairs are Diane Stephenson and Henry Kranz. RSVP by September 18 to [marciaashton@msn.com](mailto:marciaashton@msn.com) or 708-524-5126. Let us know if you need a ride.



our life  
together is  
rich and full.

---

# September Worship

**10:00 am worship – Communion Sunday, Sept. 4**

*Scripture: Romans 13:9-14 and Matthew 18:15-20*

*“The Dance of Reconciliation (Without Stepping On Toes)”*

**11:00 am Worship Resumes**

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

*Scripture: Matt 18:21-35*

Sermon: “Forgive for Good”

**Sunday, Sept. 18, Bible Presentation Sunday**

*Scripture: Exodus 16:2-15 and Psalm 105:1-6, 27-45*

Sermon: “It’s Raining Bread”

**Sunday, Sept. 25**

Guest preacher: The Rev. Dr. Alice Hunt, President,  
Chicago Theological Seminary

[www.firstunitedoakpark.com](http://www.firstunitedoakpark.com)



our life  
together is  
rich and full.



## FIRST UNITED CHURCH of Oak Park

848 Lake Street  
Oak Park, IL 60301

708.386.5215  
Fax: 708.386.7480

[office@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:office@firstunitedoakpark.com)

**Staff:**

Julie R. Harley, Lead Pastor

Leah Fowler, Associate Minister of  
Youth and Adult Education

Rob Leveridge, Associate Minister of  
Membership and Congregational Care

Marylen Marty-Gentile, Director of  
Children & Family Ministries

Bill Chin, Director of Music Ministry

**The October Messenger Bell  
deadline is September 15**

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

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

[office@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:office@firstunitedoakpark.com)