

February 2010

themessengerbell

www.firstunitedoakpark.com

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Welcome to  
the First United  
e-newsletter.  
This is a work in  
progress. Please  
be patient  
with us.  
—Thank you.

## Lenten Stillness

I was in New York City over Christmas. Don't even try to hit the museums during that holiday week. Every family in the tri-state area saw fit to break up the in-laws' visit with a trip into the city. Idyllic Monets, Dutch landscapes, quiet Rothkos – all take a new poignancy when you're shoulder-to-shoulder (-to-shoulder-to-shoulder) with a mass of fellow tourists. Yet, in the midst of the teeming city, a city where you can find anything, I found something wholly unexpected. On a walk in Central Park, I found...stillness.

Now, this is hardly the silence and all-encompassing, enveloping stillness of a National Parks documentary. I could still hear traffic, still peek at apartments through the bare winter trees. But in a quiet area by the reservoir, I found a breath-catching, soul-filling, in-spiring dose of stillness.

Hymns lead us to think of the first Christmas as a time of stillness. "Still, still, still" and "Silent Night" notwithstanding, I find that hard to believe. You bring a flock of sheep to visit a baby and tell me how silent a night it ends up being. We do the same with Lent. This is our season of reflection, of spiritual fasting, of stilling ourselves before God. Yet this is also our time of walking with Jesus, a walk that involves massive crowds, world-changing sermons, miraculous healings, inspiring feedings. It's a walk that's a backdrop to action and conviction, hardly a setting for reflection.

I think Lent (and Christmas, since we're coming off the one and toward the other), is like the moment in the city park. We find our stillness in unexpected pauses. We find holy silence in deep breaths at our desks, in the carpool line waiting to pick up the kids, sitting down after putting away the dishes. We find that stillness in the everyday of our lives. We find those sacred little nibbles where we least expect it, as in a stable, as in a crowd following a preacher from Nazareth. In Lent, we focus ourselves, prepare ourselves for sacredness, leaving space within our busyness. Lenten silence reminds us to take our soul with us wherever we go.

*Catch me in my mindless scurrying, Lord,  
and hold me in this Lenten season. Amen.*

Jeff Foels

## Transitions

**Birth:** *Graham Kiddrick Norton, son of Ashle and Jeff Norton, great-grandson of Dave Norton*

**Baptisms:** *Livia Maria Nitsche and Sophia Carlota Nitsche, daughters of Edward Nitsche and Maria Lombardo Nitsche*

*Micah Zander Butler-Del Rio, son of Mario Butler-Del Rio and Beth Butler-Del Rio*

**Compassion:** *Alice Miller  
Rebecca Pearce  
Bob Zobel, brother of Herb Zobel  
Mother of Marsha Hubbuch  
Jeb Metric  
Beth Drews  
Mia Foster-Simbulan  
Natalie Nemeth*

**Condolence:** *Eva Evans, First United Nursery School Teacher  
Vince Hassel, step brother-in-law of Sara Faust  
Monna Richert, aunt of Sara Faust  
William Browne, member for 56 years, husband of Mary  
Barbara Downs, member for 43 years, wife of Robert, mother of Chris and Kelli*

finding  
sacred  
nibbles



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## Worship in February – Epiphany Season Ends and Lent Begins

### February 7 – Communion Sunday

*Isaiah 6:1-10 and Luke 5:1-11*

“Hearing the Call”

Jeff Foels, McCormick Seminary Intern, preaching

### February 14 – Transfiguration Sunday and Last Sunday of Epiphany

*Exodus 34:29-35 and 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2*

“Lifting the Veil: Living and Loving without Labels”

### Lent Begins on Wednesday, February 17

The Lenten season (when the days “lengthen”) begins on Ash Wednesday with a service of repentance and confession and lasts until Easter Sunday, on April 4 this year. During these 40 days (excluding Sundays) we remember that Jesus spent 40 days in the desert without food or water, facing temptation. This period of fasting and prayer strengthened him to begin his public ministry. In the same way, Lenten fasting and prayer prepare us for deeper spiritual service in our homes and in the world.

Our Lenten theme this year is “Guide Our Feet in Global Mission,” and each week we will pray and reflect on one of these nations: Colombia, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Africa and China. We will celebrate communion with breads from around the world and recite creeds from various nations. For your Lenten prayers, we invite you to visit the World Council of Churches website and pray with the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle at: ([www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle.html)).

In worship, we will sing “Lord, Our God, Have Mercy on Us” each week before scripture and then observe two minutes of silence after the scripture readings. We hope this will provide for some holy moments of sacred reflection, allowing the Word to be heard.

### February 17 - Ash Wednesday Service – 7:00 pm

Communion and Imposition of Ashes

*Psalms 51, Isaiah 58:1-12 and Matthew 6:1-6*

“The Gift”

### February 21 – First Sunday of Lent – Global Focus on Afghanistan

Worship will include anointing for healing.

*Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13*

“Guide Our Feet”

### February 28 – Second Sunday of Lent – Global Focus on China

*Jeremiah 18:1-11 and Luke 13:31-35*

“At the Potter’s Wheel”

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### Deacons:

Carl Nauert

Franklyn (Bud) Hayes

Chris Davis

Gary Cerniglia

Karla Hayter

Karin Pietrini

Neal McNish

Connie Ronnow

Grant Jones

Lee Anderson

Priscilla Sibley

Sarah Shkutov

Irene Worley

Sally Sutherland

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### Pastoral Care Needs

Please contact a member of the pastoral staff if you need a home visit, hospital visit, nursing home visit or personal counseling. If there is a pastoral emergency after office hours, Lead Pastor Julie R. Harley can be reached on her cell phone at (630) 561-4255.

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### Advent/Christmas Offering

**The Goal: \$13,000**

The Mission: Supplemental Support for the Ministries of First United Church of Oak Park  
And The Walk-in Ministries

The Time: Advent/Christmas 2009

Julie O’Shea reports that First United Church of Oak Park generously supported our  
Advent/Christmas appeal with

**\$12,509!**

Thank you for your gracious goodness in aiding our ministries through your gifts in these tough economic times!

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### Mission Trip to New Orleans for Hurricane Katrina Recovery Work—Julie R. Harley

First United is organizing a mission trip to New Orleans June 19-27, 2010, with other UCC churches in the Chicago metropolitan area. Mark your calendars now, and call me for more information. This is a great opportunity to transform our religious convictions into God-pleasing actions. It is open to adults and teenagers.

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## Faith IN ACTION

### One Great Hour of Sharing Offering – February 28

February's monthly mission offering has been designated for our annual support of the ecumenical One Great Hour of Sharing in which both Presbyterian and United Church of Christ denominations take an active role. One Great Hour of Sharing, is the special mission offering that carries God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries. Our denominations, in partnership with seven others, work with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, small business microcredit, emergency relief, and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

In the United Church of Christ, for example, more than 60 percent of this offering supports international development initiatives, including annual support for approximately ten missionaries working in health care, education, and agricultural development. Gifts are also used for disaster preparedness and response, refugee and immigration advocacy and assistance and related volunteer initiatives.

On average, annual OGHS special offering receipts total just over \$3 million. Of every dollar given to One Great Hour of Sharing, 88 cents is used directly for mission programming; 6 cents for interpretation materials and 6 cents for administrative costs.

First United Church will receive this special offering on Sunday, February 28. Please give generously to "Feed My Sheep."



### A Joyful Alternative Christmas Store

—Laurie Jolicoeur, Brian & Jamie Shamhart, Beth Mrkvicka

Once again, First United stepped up and continued its strong support of our Alternative Christmas Store (ACS). This annual holiday tradition offers a meaningful connection to family and friends, as well as to our mission partners. This year we provided some new "shopping" opportunities that tied in with our mission focus on hunger and Colombia. There were ways to support our Food Pantry, the Presbyterian Hunger Program as well as Mamie & Richard's efforts in Colombia. Old favorites like Erie House pecans, the bean soup mix from SERRV and the beautiful textiles and beaded products from Colores del Pueblo were also available. On behalf of FUSH, we collected money for work camp donations, handmade cards and cookie orders. Gratefully, we are able to announce that this year's ACS raised \$14,600. Through your generosity, the following organizations are receiving proceeds from our sale:

Church World Service— \$3654, includes 44 school kits, 6 water buffalo and 900 chicks

Erie House Pecans — \$1728, 216 pounds of pecans – a record!

Colores del Pueblo — \$1300

Oak Park Women's Guild — \$505

Presbyterian Hunger Program — \$635

Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry — \$550

PADS — \$750

Palestinian Fair Trade Olive Oil — \$500

First United Nursery School — \$285

Mamie & Richard ministry in Colombia — \$725

SERRV — \$1850

FUSH — \$1042

Equal Exchange Coffee & Chocolate — \$1122

We are already looking for ways to expand the vision of our church and its missions through the Alternative Christmas Store and anticipate a full table of gifts and giving opportunities during Advent 2010.

### West Suburban PADS

— Ted Despotes

The annual West Suburban PADS "Have a Heart" dinner and auction is February 27. Please save the date! Make reservations by using the link found on the West Suburban PADS —

WEB site at <http://www.westsuburbanpads.org/dnn/>.

Deadline is February 19. Additional information is also be available in the Church lounge.

# YOUTH NEWS

— Leah Fowler

As part of a Lenten practice, a group of FUSH youth will do a Lenten Art Study. Each week until Holy Week, they will try a different medium of art—ceramics, printmaking, charcoal drawing and more—and interpret the scripture passages for the coming worship service through that art medium. We will be making the Lenten worship bulletin covers with their artwork!

Many thanks to Pennie Ebsen and Emory Mead, who will be teaching the series.  
First class: February 22 at 6:55 pm, OPRF High School—meet at the Erie Street Entrance.  
We will be working at the Potter Wheel!  
Following Classes: Monday nights 7-8:30 pm, through March 22.

### FUSH Regular Schedule:

2/7: No FUSH but stay tuned for an off-site SuperBowl Party!  
2/14: No FUSH (holiday weekend)  
2/21: Broomball at Franklin Park!  
2/28: Goofy Games with balloons and panty hose

From a FUSHee:

“On Dec. 21, the FUSHees banded bravely together to babysit 40 kids aged 0-12. For the debut Babysit-In, wrapping paper was made, mac & cheese eaten, and parachute games played. The four-hour event encountered some bumps on the road, most notably picky eaters and short attention spans (totally foreign to high school youth). Overall, it was a wonderful experience for FUSHees and, I think, children alike. Look out for our next Babysit-In!”

### FUJI

FUJI is continuing an exploration of and commitment to our OPRF Food Pantry. In December, they shopped at Target for critical items needed at the Food Pantry. In January, they heard from Kristi Braun, Volunteer Coordinator of the Food Pantry, who also gave them a behind-the-scenes tour of the pantry. This Super Bowl Sunday, February 7, FUJI's will be standing outside the sanctuary doors following worship to support the Souper Bowl of Caring—a nationwide interfaith movement that religious youth groups collect money from their congregations to alleviate local hunger.

Donate \$1 to the FUJI's holding soup pots—or, consider how much money you spend on food for a Superbowl party, and consider giving a proportional amount for hungry people in our community.

### FUJI February Schedule

2/7- Souper Bowl Collection right after worship (no evening FUJI)  
2/14- Support the love lives of your advisors (no FUJI)  
2/19-20: FUJI Lock-In- meet at 7 p.m.; bring \$5 for pizza. Pickup is Saturday at 9 a.m.  
2/21 No FUJI  
2/28 Finally! FUJI gets back to the normal time! We're designing our own FUJI T-Shirts.



## Music and Spirituality with John Bell

Thursday, February 11, 2010

First United Church of Oak Park - Chapel

John Bell is based in Glasgow and works with his colleagues in the areas of music, worship and spirituality. He does not have a mobile phone, driving license, camera, iPod or wife. He has never traced his family origins, played a guitar, or eaten a Big Mac.

After spells of voluntary work in London and Amsterdam, and engagements in student politics, John Bell was ordained by the Church of Scotland. For ten years he worked in youth ministry with his colleague, Graham Maule, before transferring to concentrate on music and worship. He lectures, preaches and conducts seminars across the denominations in Europe, North America, Australasia, and more recently, in Southern Africa. He is a hymn writer, author and occasional broadcaster on national radio and television, but retains a primary passion for congregational song. He and the work he shares with his colleagues has been honoured by the Royal School of Church Music, the Hymn Society in the US & Canada, and the University of Glasgow, the first and second of which bestowed on him the status of Fellowship, the third a Doctorate.

### February 11 Workshops

MAKING FRIENDS WITH GOD- 1:30-4:30 pm ... a series of reflections on personal spirituality, prayer and the way we read scripture. Through conversation as well as input, we will be encouraged to see faith as something which is essentially relational rather than intellectual, particularly in the light of the invisible God deciding to become tangible in Jesus.

SINGING WITH THE WORLD CHURCH: 7-9:30 pm....  
John Bell leads 'Big Sings' all over the world. This time the world will come to Oak Park in the shape of songs which are accessible to English speakers and conventional hymn-singers but which allow us to share the music and the spiritual insights of other cultures as we, in the past, shared ours. This is not for specialists, but for everyone who has a voice.

Cost is a requested donation of \$25 for both workshops, or \$15 for one. Please mark your preference and submit check to Leah Fowler, payable to "First United Church."

photograph: Andrew Spurr



Adult  
Education

finding  
sacred  
nibbles

more...

Adult  
Education

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## February Book Series

**Feb. 1 and 15 (Mondays):** *Three Cups of Tea* Book Group meets at 7 pm. Our initial discussion with Karin Ronnow was such a hit, many have committed to read the book together in depth. The book is available at a discount at the Book Table Bookstore on Lake Street.

**Sunday Feb. 14:** *Suburban Promised Land: Black Empowerment in Oak Park - Then and Now* Based on their book, *Suburban Promised Land*, Stan West and other authors will lead us in discussion about the history of African Americans in Oak Park from 1880 to 1980. First Congregational Church, one of the two churches that merged to form First United, played a significant role in supporting African Americans who wanted to live and purchase homes in Oak Park during that time period and it is discussed in the book. The book is written by Stan West, Peggy Tuck Sinko, Frank Lipo and Yves Hughes, Jr.

**Sunday Feb. 21:** *Suburban Promised Land: Black Empowerment in Oak Park - Then and Now*, Having looked at the history of African Americans in Oak Park in last week's discussion about Oak Park as a Suburban Promised Land for African Americans, this week's discussion with Stan West listens to the voices of the people who were heard in the book, hearing their story and looking at how they understand things to have changed over the years.

## Wednesday Weekday Bible Study

First Light: Jesus and the of God is at 11 am Wednesdays, and you are still welcome to participate.

## Sunday 9:30 am Offerings:

*Bible Study: Conference Room:* Dr. Bob Worley continues teaching the Bible study series on Joshua.

**Feb. 7:** *Making End of Life Decisions:* Documenting your healthcare choices ensures your wishes are followed and your family doesn't have to guess; learn about Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, Do-Not-Resuscitate Orders and Illinois Living Wills, and how these are beneficial at any age, and especially as we age. Our teacher is Rev. William Tweedley, who is a chaplain at Good Samaritan Hospital and chair of Adult Education Committee.

**Feb. 14:** *Stewardship of Life and Talking About Death* – In the debate over health care reform, we have heard people talk about “pulling the plug on grandma” and rationing health care. Most Americans today die a managed death, meaning that we die in a health care setting with many options and decisions to make about our treatment. Lead Pastor Julie Harley will facilitate a conversation about life and death: What makes life abundant? How can we discern when it is ethical to end life-sustaining treatment? What are the theological, pastoral and economic issues involved in being good stewards of life and good stewards of limited health care resources? How can we talk with parents or other relatives about end of life decisions without sounding morbid?

**Feb. 21:** *Making End of Life Decisions: Medical Perspectives* – Hear testimonies from our church members who work in health care. What are their views on health care reform? What are the problems? What are the possibilities? How should health care be rationed? What is the best answer for millions of uninsured Americans? Dr. John Lurain and Dr. Mark Loafman will lead our discussion.

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—Marylen Marty-Gentile

## Lent Begins

The stars are down and packed away. John has baptized Jesus. And now, Lent, the oldest of the church seasons, begins. Lent is the forty days (not counting Sundays) beginning with Ash Wednesday (February 17) and ending on Holy Saturday (April 3). The stories in Lent show us how Jesus came to understand who he was and what he was called to do and be. For us as Christians, it is a time to consider who we are and what it means to follow Jesus on this journey.

It is a time when we strip everything away and look into our hearts and souls. It is a time to strip everything away, at church and in our lives, and recommit ourselves to our faith life. The three disciplines of praying, fasting and giving are ways to do that. In the next few weeks, parents will receive through e-mail some simple ways to practice these disciplines at home.

One thing to consider now is creating a Lent area on your kitchen table or counter. You can include — a jar to collect coins. Many classes are collecting Coins for Colombia to support the ministry of our former pastor Mamie Broadhurst and her husband Richard Williams. If your child's class is not, collect the coins for the mission partner of your child's class; — an empty bowl to suggest solidarity with those who hunger; — a small plate with sand, stones, and a candle to remind us that Lent is a journey through the wilderness.

Consider bringing your whole family to **Ash Wednesday worship on February 17**. We will receive the imposition of ashes and share communion as a way to begin our journey to the cross together. These symbolic actions speak to children as clearly as they do to adults.

Of course, celebrate Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday events but also follow those with the weeks when we limit distractions and journey with Jesus from the wilderness to the meal with his friends, to the betrayal, to the cross, to the tomb and beyond to the central event of our faith — the resurrection.

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## All Church Retreat

— Julie R. Harley

Reserve a weekend for our fall spiritual retreat, to be held September 25-26, 2010, at Pilgrim Park Conference Center in Princeton, IL. We will have space for 30 people....men and women, couples and singles. Our pastoral staff will be the leaders. This is a chance to move toward deeper fellowship and shared spiritual intimacy in our faith community.

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Children's  
Ministry

finding  
sacred  
nibbles

# WIG

The Wildly Important Goal of First United Church is “creating and maintaining a framework that nourishes the spiritual welfare of the congregation”

## Clerk's Corner

—Beth Mrkvicka

Our December Council meeting covered various personnel-related topics including the draft staffing and job descriptions, as well as motions involving re-charging of the Pastoral Search Committee to search for a part-time associate pastor of membership and congregational care, a recommendation to allow a job-sharing organist position, and approval of compensation and professional development increases for the staff. Time was spent discussing the collaborative process used to draft the revised job descriptions and the impact these changes will have on the professional staff. Once the Personnel Committee has finalized the new staffing plan and job descriptions, Council will vote on it at an upcoming meeting.

Mark Buck and Pauline Coffman shared their expertise and insight into our two denominations (UCC and PCUSA respectively). Both of our denominations provide us with an historical anchor and connectional relationships to other churches locally, nationally and globally. We can do more in partnership than we can alone and both denominations offer us a corporate conscience.

## It's New Members' Time

—Mark Buck

When it first appeared in the 1980's, my son, Andrew was so taken by the Disney Movie “Cool Runnings” that it found its way into his Christmas Stocking. One of the striking themes of that film is that in order to accomplish something to the best of your ability you have to do it in your own way, your own style, not try to fit into someone else's mold. The point is driven home when the Jamacian Bobsled Team, competing for the first time in a winter sport, tries to adopt the style, technique, and even the German Language of the Swiss, then considered the best in the world. They even begin their push count in German: eins, zwei, drei! But the rest of the team determines that this is the wrong approach. “We're Jamacian,” they say, “we gotta run Jamacian, we gotta ride Jamacian, we gotta push Jamacian, we gotta bobsled Jamacian.” So they developed the following chant:

*Feel the rhythm, feel the rhyme,  
Get on board, it's bobsled time!  
Cool Runnings!*

February, serendipitously coinciding with the Winter Olympics, is First United's series of New Member Classes. The four sessions of these classes (February 7, 14, 21, & 28) are designed to acquaint persons who may be interested in choosing First United as the venue for their Christian “bobsled experience.” In other words, this is how First United Church “does the Christian Faith.”

Our classes will meet on Sunday mornings from 9 – 10:30 a.m., and discuss various topics as the History of First United Church of Oak Park, our two denominational affiliations, how we function together as a congregation, our personal faith journeys, and a welcoming breakfast hosted by the Church Council (beginning at 8:30 a.m. on February 28).

Please pre-register for these sessions, signing up at the Elder's Desk on Sunday Morning, by e-mailing me at [mbuck@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:mbuck@firstunitedoakpark.com), or by calling me at the church (708-386-5215).

*Feel the rhythm, feel the rhyme,  
Get on board, it's membership time!  
New Members!*

## GREEN SPACE

### Getting on the Fast Track for Lent

— Laurie Bunkers

The Environmental Stewardship Team invites our First United Family to join us on the fast track. No, we're not talking about a super highway to Heaven, but a different version of the traditional fast observed by many Christians during Lent. Instead of giving up food or drink, we're embarking on a carbon “fast.” What does that mean? A carbon fast means purposefully refraining from activities or things that contribute negatively to the environment in terms of pollution, waste or excess. Most of us have made changes to be more environmentally friendly. Maybe you already carry reusable grocery bags and participate in community recycling at home or at the office. This is a time to try something new.

Here are a few ideas to get you started (and websites for more information):

1. TRAVEL: Go car-free one day per week. Carpool with a co-worker or classmate, walk, or try public transportation. ([www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) or [www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com)).
2. MEALS: Eat a vegetarian meal one evening per week. ([www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org), [www.navs-online.org](http://www.navs-online.org), or [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org) and type in “meat consumption” for information on how our meat heavy diets contribute to environmental problems).
3. UTILITIES: Turn down your thermostat 1-2 degrees from your normal setting and add another sweater. Already as cold as you can stand it? Try doing all your laundry in cold water, and check out the results. Turn off, power down or unplug lights, appliances and technology not in use.
4. WATER: Set a 5-minute timer when you shower. If you haven't tried this before, you'll be surprised how short 5 minutes is on a cold winter morning! ([www.wateruseitwisely.com](http://www.wateruseitwisely.com))
5. SOLID WASTE: Carry a reusable thermal cup and pass up the paper coffee cup when you visit your favorite coffee house. Use cloth napkins instead of paper. Take a lunch from home instead of buying one fast-food lunch per week. ([www.greenamerica.org](http://www.greenamerica.org)).

Even if you've never fasted before, we hope you'll consider this invitation. Talk with members of your household, then pick one thing, pick them all, or come up with your own ideas. Then every time you walk instead of drive, set that shower timer, or do whatever you've chosen to do, take time to reflect on that action and your role as a steward of God's Earth. (For more information/suggestions see *Eco Faith* by Charlene Hosenfeld, copyright 2009, published by The Pilgrim Press.)



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.

SOME  
SPECIAL  
THINGS  
TO DO!

finding  
sacred  
nibbles

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## Stealthy Fish/Fishy Music — February 27th

—Marylen Marty-Gentile

You never know where the fish will show up. Even in the midst of classical music. Following this article you'll discover that Music at First is presenting Handels' Messiah on Saturday February 27 at 7:30.

But before the concert, come to the Sixth Annual First Foolish Fish Fry and eat fish, prepared by our very own expert breader and fryer, Alberta Coppage. This woman knows catfish. There are lots of reasons to come. If you've never tried catfish, here's your chance. Sit and visit with friends. (How often do you get to do that?) Since all proceeds go to the One Great Hour of Sharing, it's a way to support disaster relief around the world, including for Haiti. And it's a One Stop Night: come and eat and then walk upstairs to the concert.

Here are the details. The 6-4F will happen from 5:30-7:30 on Saturday February 27. Come for the whole time or eat and run. The cost is \$8 for adults and \$5 for kids, with a maximum of \$30 per family. If your kids hate fish, we can negotiate price. Contact Marylen Marty-Gentile (Marylen@firstunitedoakpark.com or 708.386-5215) with questions or if you want to lend a hand.

Let's be clear: there's nothing fishy about either the concert or the event.

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## Handel's Glorious Masterpiece Messiah — February 27th — Elaine Pierce

Experience Handel's oratorio Messiah - written in the summer of 1741 in just 24 days, when Handel was at the peak of his musical prowess - performed with professional soloists, chamber orchestra, and City Voices, Chicago's newest chamber chorus. The three parts of Messiah address specific events in the life of Christ. Part One is primarily concerned with the Advent and Christmas stories and is frequently heard in December as either a concert or sing-along.

But the lesser known second and third parts, telling of Christ's passion and resurrection, are equally beautiful. In fact, the soprano aria "I know that my Redeemer liveth," from Part Two, was so well-loved that the monument above Handel's grave in Westminster Abbey includes a statue of Handel holding the music for it in his hands.

Conducted by William Chin, Artistic Director of Music At First, this performance will be a gift of peace and hope to all who come. Saturday, February 27, 7:30 pm. Adults \$20, seniors/students/ \$15, families \$50.



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## Check ✓ This Out!

—Carole Bergstraesser

February to most, means Valentine's Day, but think! It's named for Saint Valentine from early church history. You can find out more about him and other early witnesses to the Christian faith in Saint Watching by Phyllis McGinley in the Bergstraesser Library. Mary Craig tells the stories of more contemporary witnesses in Six Modern Martyrs. Included is Martin Luther King, Jr. but you'll find his own words in Where Do We Go From Here? and A Testament of Hope. Closer to home, learn about people witnessing to faith and justice in Suburban Promised Land which chronicles the local history of the African-American experience. You'll discover the role that First United's predecessor congregations played in shaping our village now. A Must Read!

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## Chase the Blues Away with Song —Carole Ferguson

The FFUN Committee is hosting an evening called "Chasing the Blues Away" on Saturday, Feb. 13 at First United Church (7-9 pm). Just for FUN, save the date. We'll sing Show Tunes around the piano...with the very able assistance of Pauline Coffman playing the piano, and refreshments provided. We'll meet in the lounge. If the February weather gets you down, come along and help Chase the Blues Away.

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## Midpoint Group Winter Game Night —Susan Buchanan

It's cold. It's snowy. You need to go out and play! All 30-50-something First United members/friends are invited to a Game Night at 7:30 pm on Friday, February 19 at my home (1033 Clarence Ave.). Please BYODOC (bring your own drink of choice); appetizers, desserts, and games will be provided. RSVP to Amber Stitzel Pareja (aspareja@gmail.com; 708-383-0293) or me at (sbucha3@uic.edu; 708-848-6558).

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## Dinner & a Movie presents "Groundhog Day" —Ted Despotes

On Wednesday, February 24, dinner at 6:00 pm, movie at 6:30 pm with discussion following. A light dinner of subs, chips and soda is provided. Donations to offset the cost of food are accepted. Any surplus, should there be one, will be added to the month's fourth Sunday mission offering. Feel free to bring additional items to share. Please sign up on the sheet on the reception desk in the Church lounge.

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## Sanctuary Cleanup Day Sat., February 20th

Worship committee invites one and all to a two-hour dusting, vacuuming and polishing spree in the sanctuary, from 9 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 20. Wear your grubbies, bring a few rags, and we'll have the donuts and coffee to spur you on!

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**MORE  
SPECIAL  
THINGS  
TO DO!**

**First United  
Church of  
Oak Park**

848 Lake Street  
Oak Park, IL 60301

708.386.5215  
Fax: 708.386.7480

office@firstunitedoakpark.com

*Staff:*

Julie R. Harley, *Lead Pastor*

Leah Fowler,  
*Associate Minister of Youth  
and Adult Education*

Marylen Marty-Gentile,  
*Director of Children  
& Family Ministries*

Mark Buck,  
*Interim Associate Pastor for  
Membership and Mission*

Jeff Foels,  
*McCormick Seminary Intern*

Bill Chin,  
*Director of Music Ministry*

finding  
sacred  
nibbles

**PrimeTime to the Smart Museum**

On February 21 you are welcome to join this excursion to The Smart Museum on the Hyde Park Campus of the University of Chicago. With over 10,000 items in its permanent collections, the Smart Museum is one of the Midwest's most dynamic and innovative art museums. We will enjoy their current special exhibition, "Joseph Yoakum: Line and Landscape." Yoakum is a self-taught artist from the South Side who profoundly inspired Chicago Imagists whose comparative works will also be displayed.

Following the church service, museum-goers will gather in Centennial Hall for a brown bag lunch and introduction to exhibit by Carol Bergstraesser. Then the group will carpool to the Museum. No cost for the museum visit or parking. Event chairs are Nancy and Bill Waichler. RSVP by February 15 to rwaichler@sbcglobal.net or 708-386-3112. Let us know if you can be a driver.

**Evening Division Gets Funny**

—Marcia Ashton

Join us February 4 at 6:30 pm in Centennial Hall for dinner and a light-hearted program. Carol Bergstraesser will share insights into "Laughter Therapy" that will remind us that laughter really is the best medicine! Make your dinner reservation by January 31 with Grace Behrendes (708-386-2721). If you want to attend the program only, come at 7:15.

All are welcome!!

Evening Division Save the Date — "Vietnam Revisited" – Be sure to circle March 4 for an inspirational program by Harriet Udelson. She will share her experience volunteering on a public health team that assisted women and children in dire need of basic health and nutrition services.

**Camping Anyone? Save the Date!**

—Priscilla Sibley

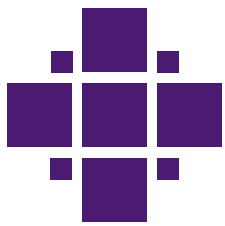
First United Family Camp will take place August 12-16, 2010 at Tower Hill Camp, Sawyer, Michigan. Come for the weekend or plan to stay from Thursday through Monday. Summer will be here before we know it, so mark your calendar. Questions? Call Don & Priscilla Sibley 848-2840.

**Save  
These  
Dates**

<b>Wednesday, Feb. 3</b>	6:00p	CPR Class
<b>Thursday, Feb. 4</b>	6:30p	Evening Division Dinner
<b>Friday, Feb. 5</b>		Women's Retreat at Siena Center
<b>Sunday, Feb. 7, 14, 21</b>	9:00a	New Member Class
<b>Thursday, Feb. 11</b>	1:30p	Music and Spirituality with John Bell
	7:00p	Music and Spirituality with John Bell
<b>Saturday, Feb. 13</b>	7:00p	FFUN Show Tune Sing-along
<b>Sunday, Feb. 14</b>	8:30a	Church School Leader Breakfast
	4:00p	OPRF Symphony Concert
<b>Wednesday, Feb. 17</b>	7:00p	Ash Wednesday Service Communion and Imposition of Ashes
<b>Sunday, Feb. 21</b>	12:00p	PrimeTime Bag Lunch/Smart Museum
<b>Wednesday, Feb. 24</b>	6:00p	Dinner and a Movie
<b>Saturday, Feb. 27</b>	5:30p	Fish Fry
	7:30p	Messiah Concert
<b>Sunday, Feb. 28</b>	8:30a	New Member Breakfast

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

**Deadline for the March issue 2010 is February 15th.**  
Please e-mail information or articles for the MB to:  
office@firstunitedoakpark.com



**First  
United  
Church of  
Oak Park**

# February 2010

Regularly Scheduled Weekly Meetings: Please check with convener if you have questions.

<i>Wednesdays</i>	2nd 3rd & 4th and 1st	3:30p 7:00p 7:00p	Food Pantry Open Food Pantry Open Adult Choir	Kathy Russell/Michele Zurakowski - 386-1324 Bill Chin - 386-5215
<i>Thursdays</i>		6:30p	Cluster Tutoring Classes	Kathy McCabe - 773-378-5530
<i>Fridays</i>		7:00a 7:00p	Men's Breakfast Group Peace Prayer Vigil	Ted Despotes - 386-4809 Bud Hayes
<i>Saturdays</i>		8:30a 9:00a	Inner Peace/World Peace Food Pantry	Jeff Olson - 383-3154 Kathy Russell/Michele Zurakowski - 386-1324 Susan Zaruba-386-1946
<b>Walk-in-Ministry</b>	Monday—Saturday 10 to 11am			

## Week of February 1

Monday 1	7:00p	Fellowship of Reconciliation OPRF Symphony Board Meeting	
Tuesday 2	7:00p	<i>Three Cups of Tea</i> Book Group Faith in Worship Committee Adult Education Committee Library Committee Stewardship Committee Children's Ministry Committee	Leah Fowler Scott Haldeman Melinda Haag Cindy Palombi Joanne Despotes Andrea Alter/Barb Metric
Wednesday 3	11:00a 6:00p	Weekday Bible Study CPR Class	Leah Fowler Harriet Udelson
Thursday 4	6:30p	Evening Division Dinner	Carole Ferguson
Friday 5-7		Women's Retreat at Siena Center	Jackie Eckholm
Saturday 6	1:00p	Dances of Universal Peace	Cindy Palombi

## Week of February 7

Sunday 7	9:00a 9:30a 9:30a 11:00a 12:15p	New Member Class Christian Education for All Quest Worship-Communion Children's Choir	Mark Buck Art Spooner/Marylen Marty-Gentile Bill Chin
Tuesday 9	7:00p	Finance Committee Youth Board Shawl Ministry Deacons	Claudette Zobel Leah Fowler Elan Long Carl Nauert
Wednesday 10	8:00p	Communications Committee	Martha Reese
Thursday 11	11:00a 1:30p 7:00p	Weekday Bible Study Music and Spirituality with John Bell Music and Spirituality with John Bell	Leah Fowler Leah Fowler
Saturday 13	7:00p	FFUN Show Tune Sing-Along	Janet Kenealy

## Week of February 14

Sunday 14	8:30a 9:00a 9:30a 9:30a 11:00a 4:00p	Church School Leader Breakfast New Member Class Christian Education for All Quest Worship OPRF Symphony Concert	Marylen Marty-Gentile Mark Buck Art Spooner/Marylen Marty-Gentile
Monday 15	7:00p	<i>Three Cups of Tea</i> Book Group	Leah Fowler
Tuesday 16	7:30p	Church Council	Laurie Jolicoeur
Wednesday 17	11:00a 7:00p	Weekday Bible Study Ash Wednesday Service-Communion/ Ashes	Leah Fowler
Thursday 18	7:00p	Spiritual Guidance Groups	Julie R. Harley
Friday 19	7:00p 7:00p	Fourth Presbyterian Youth "PADS Experience" FUJI Youth Group Lock-in	Bill Johnson Leah Fowler
Saturday 20	9:00a 9:00a 12:30p	Directions Sanctuary Clean-up Peace Committee of Forest Park	

## Week of February 21

Sunday 21	9:00a 9:30a 9:30a 11:00a 12:00p 1:00p 6:00p	New Member Class Christian Education for All Quest Worship-Lent 1-Baptism PrimeTime Bag Lunch PrimeTime Smart Museum FUSH Youth Group Broomball at Franklin Park	Mark Buck Art Spooner/Marylen Marty-Gentile Marcia Ashton Carole Bergstraesser Leah Fowler
Tuesday 23	11:00a 7:00p	Evening Division Board Building & Grounds Committee Personnel Committee Faith in Action Committee New Member Committee Youth Committee	Carole Ferguson John Zaruba Al Parchem Bob Hahn Susan Saliny Judy Bradeen
Wednesday 24	11:00a 6:00p	Weekday Bible Study Dinner and a Movie	Leah Fowler Ted Despotes
Thursday 27	7:00p	Shawl Ministry	Elan Long
Saturday 27	5:30p 7:30p	Fish Fry Messiah Concert	Marylen Marty-Gentile Bill Chin

## Week of February 28

Sunday 28	8:30a 9:30a 9:30a 11:00a 3:00p 6:00p	New Member Breakfast Christian Education for All Quest Worship-Lent 2 OGHs Offering Received-New Member Introduction PFLAG FUSH/FUJI Youth Groups	Mark Buck Art Spooner/Marylen Marty-Gentile Kate Kroker Leah Fowler
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“Perhaps  
there is only  
one person’s  
voice lacking...  
for peace to  
come about  
in the world.”

finding  
sacred  
nibbles