



God is calling...
...will we answer?



Who is My Neighbor?

This is a snapshot of the 310,000 people who live within a three-mile radius of First United Church.

- ▼ **Race**—We are diverse: 44 percent African American; 27 percent Anglo; 25 percent Latino and 4 percent Asian.
- ▼ **Age**—We are young: 29 percent are between 9 and 28 years old, 30 percent between 29 and 49 years old; and our senior population is 20 percent smaller than the national average.
- ▼ **Education**—Many are well-educated. In Oak Park itself, two-thirds of the population has at least a college education. In the larger, three-mile radius, only 24 percent of the people have a college degree.
- ▼ **Marital status**—More of us are single and less are married than the national average. There are 56 percent more single mothers with children in our community than the national average.
- ▼ **Income**—This varies greatly. In Oak Park itself, the average household income is over \$90,000. In the larger radius, the average income is \$68,000.
- ▼ **Faith**—We are believers: 83 percent believe in God. One-third are strongly involved in a church; one-third are somewhat involved; and one-third are not involved in a faith community. The largest group is Catholic (29 percent); followed by Lutheran (13 percent); Methodist (10 percent); Presbyterian or UCC (5 percent) and Jewish (2 percent).
- ▼ **Major social issues of concern**—gangs, affordable housing, racial prejudice, crime and safety, social injustice, employment dissatisfaction (including unemployment).

Our church staff, leaders and Faith in Action Committee have been studying these demographics over the summer. What can we discern about where God is calling us to lead, to serve and to seek justice, based on the needs in our own neighborhood? The FIA Committee determined in July that its primary mission is to be advocates for struggling, low-income people in our local community. Within three miles of our front doors, the largest “lifestyle” group is struggling black households, which represent 18 percent of all households.

It’s a question we all ask: How are we being called to love our neighbors? When we plan our church activities, we often wonder, “What are our needs?” Instead, let’s start asking, “What needs to be changed to make this a just society? How can this community be helped to conform to the will of God?” And let’s look at systems, policies, advocacy and programs, rather than simply serving individuals in need.

Check the website for information about justice training to be offered here from 1 to 5 pm on Sunday, October 3 by the Community Renewal Society in Chicago. It’s all about living God’s vision: moving from charity to changing structures of injustice.

In Christian love,
Julie R. Harley

Transitions

Births:

Clark William Donoghue, son of Laura and Dave, brother of Ruth and Charles

Brooklyn Eleanor Smith, daughter of Alicia and James

Benjamin Thomas Boyd, son of Andrew and Lauren, brother of Emily and Joshua

Marriages:

Terrence Nichols and Fabio Brienza

Fabiana Cardozo and Maria Chavez

Jennifer Mizen and Joseph Malpass

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Transitions continued

Compassion: *Lee Anderson*
Leah Beckwith
Lawrence Coppage
Henry Hulseberg
Nancy Masterson

Condolence: *Ruth Repogle*— member since 1946
Glenn Toppen, husband of Diane, father of Hilary and Haldis
Jeanne McGown, former member

Worship in September

Summer Worship Time @ 10:00 am continues through September 5.
Worship @ 11:00 am begins September 12, which is Gathering Day.

Sept. 5 – Group Labyrinth Walk from 9:30 to 9:55 am today. Meet outside.
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 and Luke 14:25-33
“Another Day Older and Deeper in Debt”

Sept. 12 – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 11:00 am worship time begins
Guest Preacher: Dr. Roger Nishioka, Professor of Christian Formation, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA
Luke 2:41-52
“Treasure in our Hearts”
Stay for fellowship after worship – root beer floats on the patio!

We will also host a resident mission fair after worship. Learn more about PADS, the Walk-in Ministry, Cluster Tutoring, and the Food Pantry and volunteer to be part of these justice-seeking ministries.

Sept. 19 – 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Timothy 2:1-7 and Luke 15:1-13
“Which Bible Do You Read?”
Presenting Bibles to Third Graders and Questors
Mission focus: Bread for the World Offering of Letters Sunday

Sept. 26 – 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Rob preaching
Fourth Sunday Mission offering: Colombia Accompaniment Program


New Member Class: Sundays at 9am, Oct. 3-24 —Rob Leveridge

We are looking forward to welcoming a large and enthusiastic group in our New Member Class this fall! Together, we will learn about the faith traditions of our wider Church families, the Presbyterian Churches USA and the United Church of Christ, as well as the story of First United Church as a congregation. We'll also be telling our own stories of life and faith, forming relationships of trust and encouragement.

The New Member Committee wants to encourage everyone at First United Church to think of yourself as a host and minister to newcomers in this community! Introduce yourself to visitors on Sunday, and then introduce them to a friend of yours. If you've gotten to know a newcomer, please encourage them to consider our New Member class in October, and direct them to Pastor Rob if they have questions you can't answer: rleveridge@firstunitedoakpark.com. Let your light shine!

Check out our NEW Blog and Facebook Page

Parachute into First United Church for a few minutes and what will you see? You'll get a glimpse of our ministries at our NEW “Heart Mind Strength” blog updated twice a week. Click on the link at our website homepage. We have more than 168 fans of our First United Church of Oak Park Facebook page, and our goal is to reach 300. If you're on FB, please add us to your “like” list!



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Deacons

—Rob Leveridge

Do you know your deacon?

I ask because... You've got one! Our congregation has 14 deacons, and everyone in our church is in one of our 14 Deacon Care Groups. You have a deacon that cares about you, is praying for you, wants to celebrate your joys, and is ready to be supportive if you are going through a difficult time.

Do you know your deacon? Because you've got one!

This summer our deacons have been visiting members at home or at the cafe, organizing care teams for members in the hospital, sending cards and e-mails of support and encouragement, and praying for our community as we live with many blessings and struggles. If you need support from your church, you can call a pastor any time. You can also call your deacon! They're here for you! If you don't know your deacon, e-mail the chair of deacons, Carl Nauert at chnauer@sbcglobal.net or Pastor Rob at —
rlveridge@firstunitedoakpark.com, or ask the Deacon of the Month, who is at the desk in the fellowship hall before and after worship any Sunday. Your deacon will also be in contact with you directly in one way or another at least three times during the year.

Do you know your deacon? Because you've got one!

Annual All-Church Spiritual Retreat

When: 10 am Saturday, Sept. 26 – 2 pm Sunday, Sept. 27

Where: Pilgrim Park in Princeton, IL (about 90 minutes west of Oak Park)

Who: 25 people, led by Leah Fowler, Julie Harley and Marylen Marty-Gentile

What: We will have time for group discussions, worship, solo time, rest, prayer, walks, naps, feasting and small group sharing. Our weekend will be inspired by the book "Leading a Life with God" by Daniel Wolpert.

How Much? Cost is \$65 per person. Carpooling will be arranged.

Register by Sept. 15. Contact Julie at 708-386-5215 ext. 22 or jrh@firstunitedoakpark.com.

First United Nursery School Resumes

As the Nursery School year begins, our church staff and FUNS staff will get together to celebrate 52 years of partnership in ministry to children and families.

Youth Ministry

—Leah Fowler

FUSH and FUJI begin Sunday, September 12 with a kickoff barbeque! Youth grades 7-12 should come from 6-8. FUSH (9-12th grades) and FUJI (7-8th grades) meet Sundays from 6-8 pm unless otherwise noted.

Please add to your calendar:

9/12: FUJI Parents are invited to come from 5-6 to meet with Leah Fowler and the youth advisors to hear about the program.

9/19: FUSH Parents are invited to come from 5-6 to meet with Leah Fowler and the youth advisors to hear about the program. 6-8 pm: FUSH Photo Scavenger Hunt and FUJI audio Scavenger Hunt

9/26: FUSH meets at 4:45 to volunteer at Interfaith House. FUJI is from 6-8 pm

9/28: Youth Board meets for 10th-12th graders and FUSH advisors, 7 pm

We welcome our new FUJI Advisors:

—Jessica Daly, who grew up and attended youth group at First United and has returned in the last year. She and her husband Chris have a daughter, Cole, who is almost 1 year old.

—David Gilmer is a recent college graduate from Tulane, where he majored in Creative Writing. David was once a FUSH co-moderator. He has 2 brothers—Matt and Jonathan. Jonathan is a FUSHee.

—Gabrielle Worley just spent a year studying abroad in Lebanon. She grew up in the church and has stayed active through college, teaching Quest and singing in worship. Gabrielle is a senior at Roosevelt College.

—We are also delighted to have our returning youth advisors, Alex "Cobra" Nied, Kathrine Nichols, and Alyssa Parchem.

YOUTH
NEWS

God is
calling...
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answer?

Rejoice with Me! Gathering Day is September 12 -Marylen Marty-Gentile

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There's lots of gathering on Gathering Day. One big group that will gather at 9:30 am on that morning is the church school. All children from age three through eighth grade are invited to participate in church school. Children younger than three and their adults are invited to God's Children Sing, a music and movement experience each Sunday. Everyone begins together on September 12 in the sanctuary.

Through e-mail, families will receive information about church school and our registration forms. If you are new to the community or if the church office does not have your e-mail address, please contact Marylen Marty-Gentile, director of Children and Family Ministries (marylen@firstunitedoakpark.com).

Our first lesson for the year comes from Luke 15, the parables of the lost coin and the lost sheep. In each parable, someone searches and searches tirelessly until the lost coin or the lost sheep is found. At that point, there is a celebration. Of course. God celebrates whenever someone lost is found. God declares, "Rejoice with me!" When we gather again in September after vacations and rest and time away, God declares, "Rejoice with me." September 12 is a celebration. Rejoice!

The Quest Begins— First United's confirmation program is called Quest. Quest is a year-long exploration of our Christian faith. Quest is for ninth graders and any youth who have not participated in the experience previously. Quest is the chance for youth to examine aspects of faith; at the end of the year, youth decide whether or not to affirm the promises made for them at their baptism and become adult members of the church. Confirmation is a quest. Confirmation is full of questions and some answers. Confirmation offers an opening for God to enter the lives of youth in new ways. Quest will begin on Sunday, September 19 with a blessing of the youth in worship and a parent/Questor meeting after church. Initial information has already gone out. If you are a potential Questor or the parent of one and have not received the information OR if you have questions about Quest, please contact Marylen Marty-Gentile (marylen@firstunitedoakpark.com).

— Leah Fowler

Adult Education, along with the Peace With Justice Forum, will be hosting a year-long Encounter with Islam. We will start by hosting a 3-session series beginning Sept. 19 on Islam, hosted by Azam Nizamuddin, who is an adjunct professor at Elmhurst College. We will continue our exploration in partnership with the mosque in Villa Park. We plan to share meals together in each others' homes. Over shared hospitality, we will compare joys and challenges of being people of faith in America. Look for an upcoming brochure that will outline the year, available on Gathering Day.

Check out this month's Adult Education offerings.

All classes begin September 19:

September 19-December: A 12-week Bible Study called *The Bible and Hunger*. This class will meet in the Conference Room at 9:30 and will be led by Bob Worley and Rob Coffman. September 19, 26 and October 3: Mr. Azam Nizamuddin will give us an introduction to Islam. 1st Sunday: The 5 Pillars of Islam; 2nd and 3rd Sundays: Cultural Manifestations of Islam (9:30, Centennial Hall 1st 2 Sundays; Library 3rd Sunday). Encounter with Islam Kickoff Luncheon: Sunday, September 19 in Centennial Hall

This month we remember the 5-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Last June, a team of First United adults traveled to New Orleans where they did repairs on homes through the United Church of Christ ongoing recovery efforts in the area. Today we still pray for the Gulf region, as their lives are and will continue to be affected by the oil spill. To keep this region in our thoughts and prayers, our church is invited and encouraged to read *Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers. It is a true story that reads like a novel, and it tells of a Syrian immigrant in New Orleans who has built up his business and raised a family. When Katrina strikes, Zeitoun also faces a flood of fear and xenophobia that changes his and his family's lives. Buy your copy of *Zeitoun*; it is available at a 20% discount at The Book Table.

WIG

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

Adult Education

**God is calling...
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PADS IS coming!!!

— Ted Despotes

The West Suburban PADS overnight shelter program starts in mid-September. The First United Church site will open September 20th. Want to volunteer? Want to donate supplies? See Ted Despotes or Bill Lovell or e-mail PADSatfirst@gmail.com for more information.

Cluster Tutoring

— Kathy McCabe

Cluster Tutoring needs volunteer tutors at both its Oak Park and Austin locations. Tutors can volunteer on Tuesdays at the Pine Avenue Church (5460 W. Augusta, Chicago) or on Thursdays at the First United Church of Oak Park (848 Lake Street). Tutoring is from 6:30 to 8:00 pm on both evenings. Tutoring starts on Sept. 28 and Sept. 30, but we accept new volunteers throughout the school year.

For more information, call (773) 378-5530 or send e-mail to clustertp@hotmail.com.

Don't Delay – Join the Choir Today!

—Bill Chin

The music is rich and varied. The people are fun. The director makes you sound good. The organist is fantastic. The time commitment is manageable and flexible. The view from the choir risers is incomparable. The robes...mean you can wear anything to church!

Take your participation in worship up a notch and join the Sanctuary Choir. We start this year with a special Saturday morning session on Sept. 11 that includes a light breakfast and a look ahead at music for the year. We want to expand our numbers a lot, so why not give it a try? The choir includes people with a lot of different backgrounds in music and levels of capability, but we make it work. Let Bill Chin, or anyone in the choir, know that you might be interested.

**Report from the American Guild of Organists
National Convention, Part II**

—Cathryn Wilkinson

In addition to experiencing wonderful music at the summer convention of organists and church musicians in Washington, D.C., I also heard some very thoughtful words on the role of the church musician and the importance of music in modern society from the chaplain of the American Guild of Organists, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Troeger. Troeger is J. Edward and Ruth Cox Lantz Professor of Christian Communication at Yale Divinity School. An unassuming speaker, he confessed that as a child, he had a picture of Bach on his music stand and wistfully hoped that he could aspire in some small way to follow in his steps. As a poet, author, and lecturer, Dr. Troeger is not a reincarnated Bach, but he has touched people all over the world with his vision for church music. He shared a recent hymn with us: "Learn from All the Songs of Earth," in which he has connected the sounds of God's creation with the ultimate role each person plays in fulfilling God's plan:

*"When we harmonize with earth and its elemental song,
we recall who gave us birth and to whom we all belong,
we more deeply understand what the living Christ displays:
We are fashioned by God's hand for a life that sings God's praise."*

(© 2007 Oxford University Press)

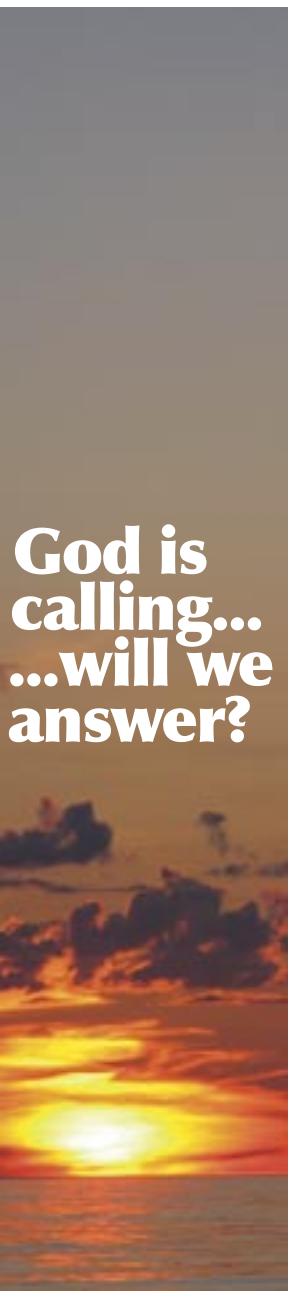
Troeger warns that American society gives less and less attention to beauty and resists taking the time to wonder at creativity and art. In the 21st century, we are witnessing "the tragedy of a starved imagination."

I'll continue next month with more thoughts on feeding the imagination with music.

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Faith
IN ACTION

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The church has installed a new security system. It allows staff from their computers to:

1. See who's at the double doors near the parking lot
2. Speak to that person
3. Unlock the door remotely

The system allows access to the church in a secure manner.

The church alarm system has been updated. We can now alarm the building by zone. When groups like PADS are in the building we can alarm those areas of the church that PADS is not using.

Many thanks to all who helped plan and install our new security system. When you come to church, you will find the entrance doors are locked, except for Sunday mornings. Just ring the doorbell and a staff member will "buzz" you in during office hours.

Remember me.....

In 1981 a Memorial Garden was established on the west side of First United. Since that time the cremated remains of more than 165 members and friends of the church have found a final resting place in the shade of four giant trees. The names and birth and death dates of these persons are inscribed on four limestone tablets creating a permanent memorial to their lives. A fee of \$400 covers the costs incurred by the church for services related to the inscription of each name. A stone bench, a memorial to James H. Skiles, Jr., provides a welcoming place for quiet meditation and two small wooden benches in sheltered alcoves allow for contemplation in the privacy of a green garden of hosta, boxwood and colorful impatiens.

The Memorial Garden was upgraded in 2007 with the installation of pavers and a widened granite gravel pathway. Additional plantings improved the visual access to the memorial inscriptions on the wall. The adjoining labyrinth on the west lawn of the church was made possible by a generous memorial gift given by the friends and husband of Janet Hegwood in honor of the life of this long-time church member. A plaque at the labyrinth entrance greets visitors and invites all to walk its red gravel paths.

The Memorial Garden and labyrinth are unique features of this church community where its members may be remembered and Oak Park citizens of all faiths are invited to a moment of quiet contemplation. First United welcomes these gifts as well as planned gifts that help ensure the financial future of the church.

Great News from Stewardship Committee!

—Joanne Despotes

I just had the privilege of writing a note to thank Rob and Shannon Leveridge for becoming the 51st NEW pledgers for the 2010 Budget year. Only 4 to go to make our goal of 55 new pledgers for 2010! Just let Julie O'Shea know what you want to pledge to make it so. Also, Julie is projecting that pledge and non-pledge income will be higher than originally budgeted for 2010. THANK YOU to all who through the grace of God are maintaining their giving in this difficult economy.

The 2011 pledge campaign will be kicking off October 3rd. Between then and pledge Commitment Sunday on October 17th, we hope to get everyone's financial pledge for 2011. These estimates of giving will help the leadership of the Church make a responsible, balanced budget that seeks to reflect God's vision for First United.

This year we are asking everyone not only to pledge but to make a pledge that is a significant part of their personal budget. The Bible suggests 10% of our income be given to charity. That level of giving is usually something you notice. If you have \$100.00 and you give \$1.00 away, you might not really notice, but if you give \$10.00 away you are likely to "feel" it. And feeling it puts you in relationship with God. Daniel L. Hardt says, "When we make decisions about money, we can: (1) find new and fresh ways to discover God's calling in our life; (2) see our faith-life intersect with our physical life in very practical ways; and (3) test ourselves to see if our actions line up with what we claim to believe." Amen.

Check ✓ This Out! —Rob Coffman

One of the authors that President Obama has studied is Reinhold Niebuhr. When Adlai Stevenson was running for President, he said that if elected he would appoint Niebuhr as his Secretary of State. When the question is asked: Who is America's greatest theologian? Two are mentioned: Niebuhr and Jonathan Edwards.

Why not read some Niebuhr and expand your mind? Reinhold Niebuhr was the son of a German Reformed Church pastor. His brother, Richard, was a renowned teacher at Yale. His sister, Hulda, was a beloved teacher at McCormick. Reinhold, a graduate of Elmhurst College, taught at Union Seminary in New York City.

Our church library has several books by Niebuhr, and all of them make for good reading.

Did you know that Niebuhr wrote the Serenity Prayer, used by Alcoholics Anonymous and 12-step groups? This book is more than the story of that prayer and a wonderful view of this important American Christian thinker. Look at that special book case with the new arrivals for these Niebuhr books.

Join the Midpoint Group

We will meet at the home of Becky and Don Kuntz, for fellowship on Friday, September 10 at 7:30 pm. Midpoint Group welcomes First United members and friends in their 30's, 40's and a little beyond. We will meet throughout the year in homes and other sites for friendship, service and game nights. RSVP to Becky at bkuntz1@yahoo.com.

PrimeTime Goes Green

—Marcia Ashton

Mark your calendar for September 19 for an exceptional potluck dinner starting at 5:30 in the church lounge. Why are we turning Green? Every day our news is filled with environmental catastrophes that have both natural causes and lifestyle causes. What are some small but significant changes that we might make to help save our environment? After dinner, Jim Gill, a home energy expert, will give a short program offering insight into how we might improve energy use in our house or apartment. Then we will carpool to the home of Paul Aeschleman and Patricia Feeley (732 N. Kenilworth) for dessert, fellowship and a chance to see some practical things they have done to improve energy use. Co-chairs are Ann and Gene Armstrong. RSVP by September 12 to Anna Sadowski – annahsadowski@gmail.com or 708-386-7896.

Evening Division Luncheon

—Rosemary Irmis

It's time to kickoff the 2010-2011 Evening Division program year with the Annual Fall Luncheon on Saturday, September 11th at 12 noon in Centennial Hall. Cost is \$18.00 per person. Rev. Leah Fowler will talk about her recent trip to Colombia. Please RSVP by September 6th to Ruth Ashman at 708-366-3689 or e-mail ruthash3@yahoo.com. All women of the church are invited.

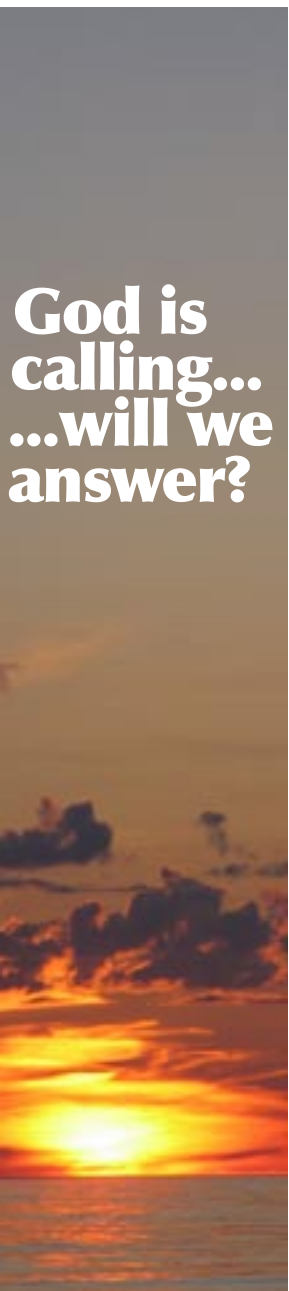
Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation Classes Sept. 15

Our member Harriet Udelson will offer CPR classes for interested members at 10 am and 6:30 pm on Wednesday, Sept. 15, in the library. You must register in advance by calling Judy in the church office.

Chicago Theological Seminary Advent Lectionary Workshop on Sept. 23

First United is honored to host the CTS Advent workshop for regional clergy on Thursday, Sept. 23, from 8 am to 3 pm. It will be led by Rev. John Thomas, former President of the United Church of Christ, who is now a faculty member at CTS in Hyde Park.

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New Photo Directory Planned

— Communications and Deacons

It's great to have a big church, but it's hard to keep track of everyone's name. Directories are available in the pew racks for you to use during worship. Photos for a new directory will be taken October 21-23, as well as November 15-17 and 26-27. We will begin booking photo appointments on Gathering Day.

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Note
These
Dates

Sunday, Sept. 5	9:30a	Labyrinth Walk before Worship
Friday, Sept. 10	7:30p	Midpoint Group at the home of Don and Becky Kuntz
Saturday, Sept. 11	9:00a	Music Festival
	12:00p	Evening Division Luncheon
Sunday, Sept. 12	11:00a	Worship-Gathering Day
	12:15p	Reception on the Lawn and Resident Mission Fair
Sunday, Sept. 19	9:30a	Bread for the World Letter Offering
	9:30a	Church School Parent Meeting-Grades 6, 7, 8
	5:30p	PrimeTime Goes Green
Saturday, Sept. 25	8:30a	All Church Retreat
Sunday, Sept. 26	5:00p	Middle East Task Force Meeting

To see additional First United Church events go to our website calendar
www.firstunitedoakpark.com.

FIRST UNITED CHURCH *of Oak Park*

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Marylen Marty-Gentile, Director of
Children & Family Ministries

Bill Chin,
Director of Music Ministry

Cathryn Wilkinson,
Organist



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Deadline for the October issue 2010 is September 15th.
Please e-mail information or articles for the MB to:

office@firstunitedoakpark.com

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