



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH  
*of Oak Park*

*an open community  
united in love  
& justice*

“God’s love swarms around  
creation looking for a place  
to settle—to do God’s  
will, in God’s place”

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## ***Annual Report 2007***



Christmas Eve Pageant 2007  
—Don Sibley

## Church Council: *creating and maintaining a framework...*

### *Major Emphases/Accomplishments*

- ◆ Welcomed Jim Brasel, as our new Interim Lead Pastor and worked with the staff, lay leadership and the congregation as a whole to facilitate a smooth and effective transition.
- ◆ Adopted our “Wildly Important Goal” (WIG): “Creating and maintaining a framework that nourishes the spiritual welfare of the congregation” as a guide for our work together. This theme emerged from our organizational analysis, which began in 2006 with Leighton Clark, continued through several congregational breakfast meetings, and culminated in the 2007 Annual Meeting held last February.
- ◆ Nominated a Pastor Nominating Committee and developed the charge to the Committee regarding the qualities, skills, and areas of focus needed in a new lead pastor.
- ◆ Initiated a leadership training process for Council members and committee leaders that began with a half-day retreat/orientation meeting for all Council members.
- ◆ Restructured the agenda for Council meetings to allow a focus on what we believe to be the single most pressing major opportunity at the time (charge to PNC, adoption of WIG, etc.).
- ◆ Celebrated the 11-year ministry of Diane Wendorf as she left First United.
- ◆ Supported efforts to further develop several areas of our life together including our worship experience, the decision-making and organizational process, membership and participation, financial planning, and stewardship.

### *Major Goals for 2008*

- ◆ Further develop the process for leadership training and orientation for committee chairs and other lay leaders. Specifically, to further enhance the Committee’s ability to work collaboratively with staff in managing their program area in harmony with the major goals and core values of our congregation.
- ◆ Work to formalize the process for Council to direct its efforts toward major opportunities and challenges, in part by continuing to help guide, endorse and support the important work done by committees and staff.
- ◆ Welcome, orient, and support the new lead pastor while preparing for succession in Council and committee membership, facilitating a successful transition in leadership.
- ◆ Work with new lead pastor, staff and the congregation to determine the next priorities for the Council and our church.

### First United Church Council

Mark Loafman, <i>Moderator</i>	Megan Lewis
George Ashman	Sara Stevenson
Ann Armstrong	Carlos Pareja
Pennie Ebsen	Al Pickard
Laurie Jolicoeur	Linda Sandman
Katy Dammers	Sher Spooner
Beth Drews	Dan Pietrini
Sam Linder	

## Board of Deacons: *creating a culture of caring*

The Board of Deacons oversees and coordinates concrete services to members of the congregation. These include personal notes to members on the occasion of special needs and significant events, visitation with those unable to attend church events, greeting and ushering, hosting receptions after memorial and funeral services, flower and meal delivery to parishioners in special circumstances and the making and giving of prayer shawls. We are always glad to know of others who wish to join in any of our efforts as we seek to foster a “culture of caring.”

### *Major Accomplishments in 2007*

- 1) Council approval for a defibrillator and the beginning of CPR training.
- 2) Publication of a Devotional Guide to encourage congregational support of the Pastor Nominating Committee in its search for a lead pastor.
- 3) Letters sent by deacons to each member to let them know they are being held in prayer.

### *Goals for 2008*

- 1) Completion of CPR training.
- 2) Deepening of the spiritual life of the congregation through prayer, requests for prayer and other devotional activities.
- 3) Enriching the connections between members so that in caring for one another we may recognize God’s call to care for every sheep in his flock.

Bud Hayes, <i>Chair</i>	Claire Jolicoeur	Rosemary Irmis	Chris Davis
Matt Kemper	Betsy Samore	Porter Luckett	Janet Haisman
Sam Dammers	Harriet Udelson	Sam Mrkvicka	Melinda Haag
Lee Anderson			

## God is calling...

A brief report from your former Director of Children and Family Ministry and your current Pastoral Intern—First United is an amazing place where the Holy Spirit breaks through in surprising ways. I have seen this over the past year in the old and new areas.

I am grateful to have the chance to explore how God is calling this church to care for our older members and what that ministry could involve. Talking about this ministry with a variety of people has been informative and a blessing.

I have been energized by walking with our confirmands as they learn and question and consider whether to affirm their faith in new ways in this community, and value my partnership with Art Spooner in Quest, our confirmation program.

I continue to thank God for colleagues who bring a wealth and diversity of gifts to ministry at First United and for the people of this faith community. I learn from all of you the many ways God works in our lives each day.

Marylen Marty-Gentile, *Pastoral Intern*

## Pastor Nominating Committee

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) has met weekly since August, 2007, and has completed the first stage of our search. The Presbytery and the UCC approved our Church Information forms in November and the actual search has begun! In addition to receiving applicants through the usual channels, we are actively searching for the best candidate. Toward that goal, we sent letters to church leaders throughout the country asking for recommendations of potential candidates. We are following up on all candidate recommendations submitted by congregation members. Lastly, we have ads in three national church publications set to run in January and February of 2008 — the “United Church News”, “Presbyterian Outlook”, and “Christian Century”.

To date, we have received close to 100 applications! The PNC is reviewing them carefully, and will winnow them down to a smaller pool of promising candidates. Once we have accomplished that, we will begin conducting phone interviews. After those interviews, the pool will be narrowed further, and we will conduct preliminary visits to potential candidates. When we have gathered enough information, we will narrow the field to the final set of candidates, and will conduct interviews of those candidates. Following those interviews, we will decide which candidate best suits First United, and will present our choice to Council and seek approval of that candidate from the UCC, PCUSA, and the congregation members. Whew! As you can see if your eyes haven't already glazed over, we have quite a bit of work ahead of us, but we look ahead with confidence that our hard work will lead us to the right pastor for First United. Keep us in your prayers.

Jane Barker, *Chair*



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## Christian Education

This faith community is blessed with active families that are committed to the Christian Education of their children. Through regular church school participation and weekly worship, our children and youth are given opportunities to explore the stories of our faith in the Bible, participate in the sacraments of baptism and communion and explore the Holy in their everyday lives.

Some 45 adults and confirmed high school youth serve as Church School Leaders. They are “leaders” as opposed to “teachers” in that they nurture, guide and mentor children into discovering their faith. They lead children to their faith.

Children as young as infants begin to feel the joy of a life with God through singing and movement in a class called God’s Children Sing. Church School classes are offered for ages 3 – 8th grade. With 11 bustling rooms of learning and exploring every Sunday morning, September – early June, the Church School averages 100 children/youth each week.

Elaine Pierce leads a 15 minute time of singing and music with each of the classes on a weekly basis. Every class will sing God’s praises in worship at least twice during the year.

With the guidance of the Children’s Ministry Committee, learning benchmarks for each age are in place. Additionally, each class participates in learning enhancement activities, such as baking the communion bread, building wooden crosses, pouring the waters of baptism and serving as acolytes.

We encourage an active life in mission through the partnering of each class with a local First United mission group such as making lunches for PADS guests, birthday cards for Interfaith House, food collections for the Food Pantry and lunches for Walk-in Ministry.

Serving Christ with You and loving every minute of it!

Rev. Beth Freese Dammers, *Acting Director of Children & Family Ministries*

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## Youth Board

Youth Board meets once a month to plan weekly meetings and other events for FUSH. We discuss and evaluate past activities and propose new ones.

2007 had 2 retreats, a week of workcamp to *Seeds of Peace* in Maine, and lots of time for building community and serving each other and the church.

In 2008, we hope to continue to serve each other and the church and have fun doing it! We will continue to look for ways to do this in our immediate and distant community. We will enter into a video contest through the PCUSA that articulates Micah 6:8 — “He has shown you what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Rev. Kelly Brouwer, *Associate Pastor for Youth and Adult Education*

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## Full of Joy & Learning...

The last 4 months have been full of joy and learning for me. I feel blessed to call First United Church of Oak Park my home and count it a privilege to serve among you. Most especially,

- ◆ I am grateful for the chance to work and play with the many wonderful youth of this church. They have blessed me, taught me and exhausted me! What a joy it is to carry the joys and burdens with all of the youth.
- ◆ I am thrilled to be working with such an eager group of learners in the adult education program. I have enjoyed exploring new possibilities with the Committee and look forward with great anticipation toward this New Year.

First United Church of Oak Park has blessed me over the last 4 months and I look forward to the joys and challenges of the coming year with all of you.

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## Adult Education Committee

The Adult Education Committee organizes and facilitates adult education programs and selects books for church book groups. The Committee will also offer support to the Lectionary Bible Study and Midweek Bible Study groups as needed.

### Major Accomplishments from 2007:

- ◆ The Committee led a seven-week book discussion group on *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children* by Wendy Mogel, Ph.D, which included topics such as “The Blessing of Acceptance: Discovering Your Unique and Ordinary Child” and “The Blessing of Longing: Teaching Your Child an Attitude of Gratitude.”
- ◆ The Committee led a seven-week “Denomination Celebration” class which explored the roots of the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church.
- ◆ Mamie and Jim led the “Soul Feast” class, which focused on and introduced a variety of spiritual practices to class participants.

### Major Goals for 2008:

- ◆ The Committee will lead the “Disagree Without Being Disagreeable” class, the goals of which are to help people of faith think about what their responsibilities are in conflict and to begin developing the skills they need to live faithfully in all their roles.
- ◆ The Committee will lead a 4 week series entitled, “The Great Sages of Peace” discussing 4 individuals that have worked for peace and how that relates to our faith.
- ◆ The Committee will present a six-week Lenten program discussing, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by Marcus J. Borg and N.T. Wright in which the leading liberal and conservative Jesus scholars present the heart of the historical Jesus debate.
- ◆ The Committee plans to conduct a book study of Brian McLaren’s book, *Everything Must Change*, which will coincide with Mr. McLaren’s conference at First United in April.

Rev. Kelly Brouwer, *Associate Pastor for Youth and Adult Education*

## Faith In Action

Faith in Action oversees all the mission projects and partners for First United Church of Oak Park. This includes the appropriation and distribution of funds, initiating and participating in mission programs with our mission partners as well as presenting mission opportunities to the congregation in response to our faith. The Committee is divided into three sub-committees that are responsible for Global Mission and Advocacy, Local Mission Partners and First United Residence Missions.

During 2007, Faith in Action brought mission into the sanctuary with our mission doves art installation displaying the diverse range of mission supported by First United. The display was to bring mission into the hearts and minds of the congregation as a response to their faith. Faith in Action also supported a trip to the Middle East to meet and engage our mission partners in that part of the world.

2008 will bring the challenge of creating sustained mission programs over a 12-24 month period that will attempt to strengthen our ties with our partners and create mission opportunities for our congregation. Plans are being made to prepare mission programs regarding Colombia, South America, Cluster Tutoring and Sister House. There are also plans for another mission trip to the Gulf Coast.

Bob Hahn, *Chair*



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## God is good...all the time!

As we continue in a time of transition, I look back and am grateful for the service of Diane Wendorf to our congregation and for the Feast of Gratitude with which we bade her good-bye. Having the chance to meet and know more of our new members as I have joined that committee has been a joy and a blessing. With an abundance of weddings, a belly-full of laughs, and the hard work of putting my feet in the path of Christ, I am grateful for the year 2007.

Looking to 2008, I am excited about building stronger connections between members and with God through worship, another mission trip to the Gulf Coast, a national conference with Brian McLaren, mutual learning and conversation, and more new colleague arrangements. God is good....all the time!

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## New Members Committee

The New Members Committee works with the staff in the membership process welcoming new members to First United. During 2007, we had 4-5 New Member classes, totaling over 30 new members. In addition to the New Member classes, we hosted a breakfast in 2007 as a way to provide fellowship for our newest members and also to get feedback from them. As we transition to 2008, this committee is diligently working to design a new format for New Members Classes and hopes to have a new process in place for the February 2008 class.

Rev. Mamie Broadhurst, *Associate Pastor*

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## Personnel Committee

### Major Emphases/Accomplishments

- ◆ Developed and implemented a staffing plan for mid-2007 through mid-2009 that bridges the final months of the interim time and the first months of the new lead pastor's ministry.
- ◆ Began process of reviewing and updating church personnel policies and practices.
- ◆ Created a church staff review system consisting of at least three meetings with each staff person per year with goals for each meeting.

### Major Goals for 2008

- ◆ Develop a Personnel Policies and Practices Handbook for church staff, and a guidebook of committee responsibilities/practices for future committee members.
- ◆ Update all church staff job descriptions.
- ◆ Develop a system for creation and retention of personnel records.

Melinda Robinson, *Chair*

## Faith In Worship

The Faith in Worship Committee can point to two major accomplishments this year:

1. We instituted Wednesday evening prayer services in the summer and during Advent to offer the congregation a different avenue for a mid-week reflection.
2. At each monthly meeting, the Committee has begun discussion of different aspects of worship, such as music, the presence of children, the role of ritual and tradition, the meaning of communion, etc.

**The Committee goals for next year:**

1. Continue to seek ways to enhance the worship experience, with one particular focus being the sanctuary space.
2. Evaluate, in conjunction with the Children's Ministry Committee, how some scheduling changes on Christmas Eve might better serve the congregation's needs.
3. Provide a staff-created memorial brochure to help church members plan for final services for loved ones or themselves.

Sara Stevenson, *Chair*



## Sounds of Music

In 2007, worship and other musical activities were enriched through the use of our beautiful instruments: the Casavant organ, which is among the Chicago area's largest and most beautiful pipe organs, marked its 25th birthday. A cleaning project began in summer by Erickson, Christian & Associates and was completed with a full tuning in the fall. A portion of the organ is normally cleaned every five years. I inaugurated a Saturday Keyboard Concert series to mesh with the choral programs that have been sponsored by Music at First. This series of five programs featured local organists, and pianists performing on the Steinway concert grand.

The church was fortunate to receive the donation of two pianos in excellent condition, generously provided by church members. The church maintains two Yamaha upright pianos for rehearsal and worship in the choir room and chapel, and two quite old pianos for other Sunday School rooms, which will remain somewhat serviceable for a few more years. Our small Reuter organ in the chapel is quite reliable for simpler music in that space. Finally, our five-octave set of handbells, which sits silently in a closet, needs more use!

Cathryn Wilkinson, *Organist*

# Building & Grounds

## Major Accomplishments 2007

*Follow-up projects related to the recent major capital construction project—*

1. New boiler up and functioning
2. Chairlift to the Chapel level operational
3. Furnished the new library and established a Library Committee to organize books.

## New projects

1. Completion of the Labyrinth/Memorial Garden project.
2. PADS washrooms updated, new flooring in Walk-in Ministry area.
3. Major organ cleaning completed.
4. Replaced lighting in the main tunnel.
5. Sound system update completed — new sanctuary speakers/choir microphones.
6. Total refurbishing of Room 13.
7. Completed major clean out of tunnels.
8. Revised rules and fees for use of church facilities by outside groups.
9. Installed weather-stripping on all exterior doors.

## Goals for 2008

1. Prepare a 3 to 5 year plan for ongoing building maintenance, projecting timing and cost for new and existing maintenance issues.
2. Prepare an Operations Manual for all the mechanical systems in the church – elevators, heating, air conditioning, etc.
3. Design and install a memorial plaque for the labyrinth.
4. Complete major clean out of boiler room and adjacent rooms.
5. Complete a major clean out of Maintenance Office.
6. Complete the refurbishing of Choir Room and adjacent bathroom.
7. Complete new signage program for church interior.

John Zaruba, Chair

*Memorial Labyrinth  
under construction*



**First United Church of Oak Park**  
*Combined Operations*  
**Statement of Financial Position**

<b>Assets</b>	as of Dec. 31, 2006	as of Dec. 31, 2006
Cash	\$ 209,202	\$ 148,274
Investments at cost	3,228,664	3,002,043
Unrealized Investment Gains	494,134	561,367
RISA Loan	25,000	25,000
Chicago Community Trust Loan	40,000	40,000
Pastor Housing Equity Note	33,000	33,000
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 4,030,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,809,684</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Building Loan—Park National</b>	<b>\$ 75,000</b>	<b>\$ 685,000</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>		
Restricted Operating Funds	\$ 110,530	\$ 86,293
Capital Campaign Receipts	\$ 1,033,258	\$ 1,830,682
Capital Building & Campaign Costs	(978,535)	(2,469,462)
Net Capital Project Receipts	\$ 54,723	\$ (638,780)
<b>Endowment Funds at Market</b>		
General Endowment Fund	\$ 1,126,203	\$ 1,136,282
Special Mission Endowment Fund	1,853,910	1,794,196
Pastoral Housing Fund	416,338	411,622
Building Fund	29,210	23,933
Women of the Church Fund	33,297	35,390
Schauss & Gardner Memorial Gifts	93,824	—
Priebe—Nursery School Scholarship Fund	23,342	24,813
Gebhard—Mission Travel Fund	75,046	75,340
Flowers—Music Fund	60,807	62,571
Harrison—General Operations	27,523	29,253
Harrison—Perpetual Care Fund	33,173	35,271
Memorial Fund—Undesignated	17,074	18,151
Haines—Jr Hi Scholarship Fund	—	5,000
Haines—Sr Hi Scholarship Fund	—	5,000
	<b>\$ 3,789,747</b>	<b>\$ 3,656,822</b>
<b>Fund Principal &amp; Net Activity</b>	<b>\$ —</b>	<b>\$ 20,349</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 4,030,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,809,684</b>

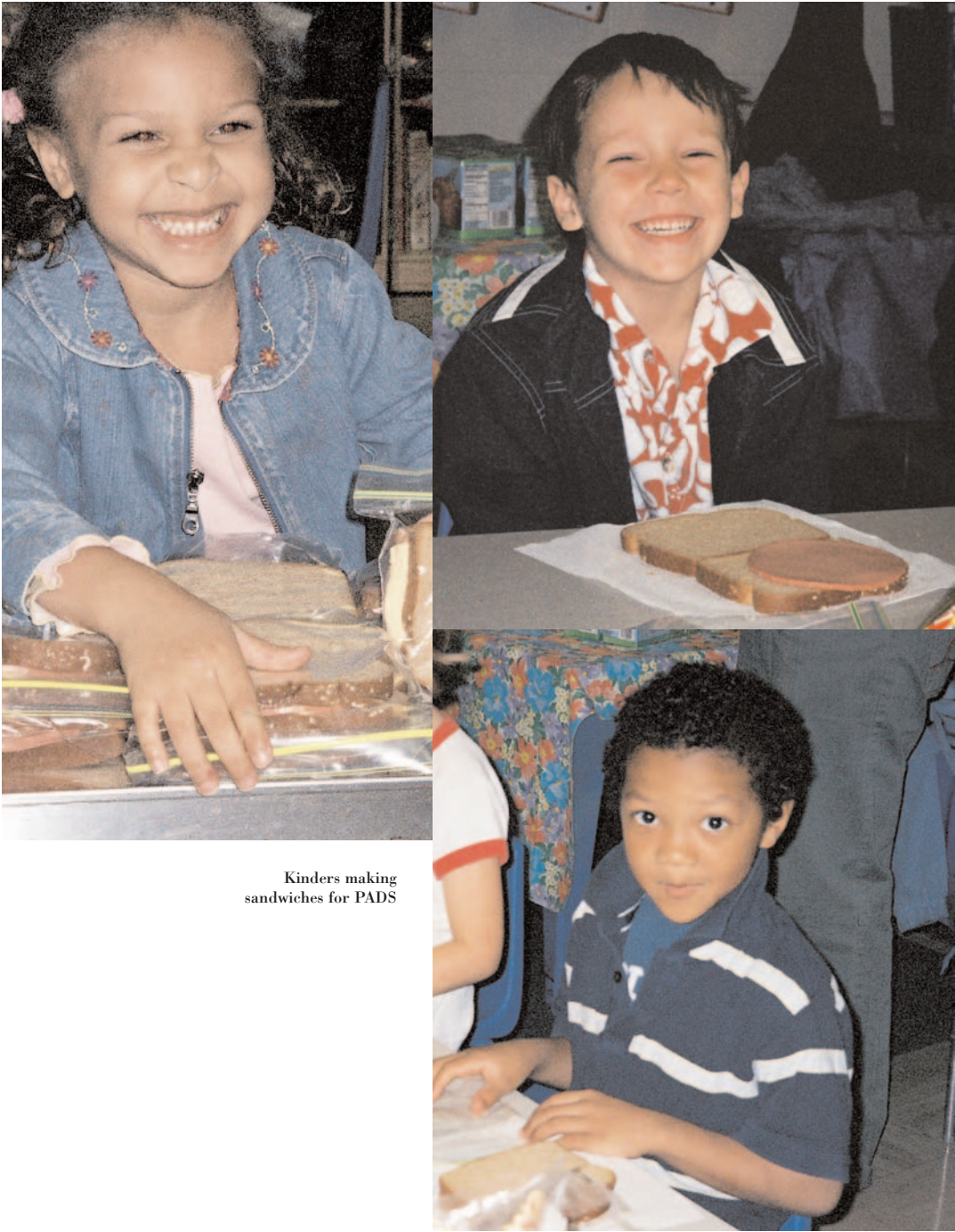
**First United Church of Oak Park**  
*Combined Operations*  
**Sources and Uses of Funds**

<b>General Operations</b>		<b>Actual</b>		<b>Actual</b>		<b>Budget</b>		<b>Approved</b>
<i>Sources of Funds</i>		<b>2006</b>		<b>2007</b>		<b>2007</b>		<b>Budget 2008</b>
Pledge Income	\$	545,061	\$	560,871	\$	567,090	\$	601,000
Mission Endowment Draws		282,328		234,688		234,688		176,877
Other Endowment Draws		86,167		88,005		88,005		100,074
Other Income		145,028		188,525		187,800		138,500
<b>Total Sources of Funds</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,058,584</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,072,089</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,077,583</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,016,451</b>
<b>Uses of Funds</b>								
Pastoral & Administrative Staff	\$	538,736	\$	557,672	\$	564,512	\$	554,029
Other Personnel Costs		31,118		13,948		20,150		18,000
Admin & Building		190,704		211,551		210,100		207,555
Faith in Learning		23,931		34,383		48,970		28,790
Faith in Worship		20,736		29,832		23,400		18,600
Faith in Community		9,072		7,376		14,500		12,600
Faith in Action		244,287		196,978		197,200		176,877
<b>Total Uses of Funds</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,058,584</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,051,740</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,078,832</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,016,451</b>
<b>Net Fund Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>20,349</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(1,249)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>—</b>

<b>Endowment</b>		<b>Actual</b>		<b>Actual</b>
<i>Sources of Funds</i>		<b>2006</b>		<b>2007</b>
Investment Income	\$	440,436	\$	227,724
Endowment Funds Received		—		10,000
Investment Expenses		(10,425)		(10,537)
<b>Total Sources of Funds</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>430,011</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>227,187</b>
<b>Uses of Funds</b>				
Draws from Endowment Funds	\$	369,595	\$	360,113
Net activity added to (subtracted from) Funds		60,416		(132,926)
<b>Total Uses of Funds</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>430,011</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>227,187</b>

**Memorial Gifts that were received for the following in 2007**

Dick Glennie	Capital Campaign Fund
Bess Haines	Jr and Sr Hi Retreat Scholarship Funds
Pat Lane	Memorial Fund
Helen Loughlin	Memorial Fund
Dierdre Rich	Memorial Fund



Kinders making sandwiches for PADS

**Jim Brasel**  
*Lead Pastor (Interim)*

**Mamie Broadhurst**  
*Associate Pastor*

**Beth Freese Dammers**  
*Acting Director of Children's/Family Ministries*

**Kelly Brouwer**  
*Associate Pastor for Youth and Adult Education*

**Marylen Marty-Gentile**  
*Pastoral Intern*

**Bill Chin**  
*Director of Music Ministries*

**Judith Loevy,**  
*Operations Manager*

**Praying.  
Speaking.  
Listening.  
Waiting.  
Believing.  
Wondering.  
Living.**



Christmas Eve Pageant 2007  
—Don Sibley





First United Church  
of Oak Park

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Oak Park, Illinois 60301  
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[www.firstunitedoakpark.com](http://www.firstunitedoakpark.com)