

FIRST
UNITED
CHURCH
of Oak Park

Annual Report 2010

Living God's Vision



an open community united in love & justice

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,
William Chin, Director of Music Ministry
Cathryn Wilkinson, Organist,
Judith Loevy, Operations Manager,
Julie O'Shea, Financial Administrator
Joan White, Nursery School Director

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Living God's Vision

1

Church Council

Stuart Gillette, Moderator
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Church Council began the year adopting the Vision 2020 and setting into motion the work of viewing the needs of First United and its members through this statement, so we can move from:

- ❖ Words to witness (our relationship with God)
- ❖ Individualism to intimacy (our relationship with the church community)
- ❖ Charity to changing structures (our relationship with the world)

No one said it would be easy or would be completed within a few months. There were many questions, but “living the Vision” began to bear fruit this fall with a new budgeting process. All committees submitted their requests by demonstrating how their needs met the Vision. In addition to Vision 2020, highlights for the year included: welcoming new members and our new associate pastor Rob Leveridge to the staff, working with committees to create institutional memory so new members can hit the ground running, approving revised pastoral staff job descriptions, continuing to make improvements to the Committee Orientation morning held in May, and working closely with Finance to present a Vision based balanced budget to the congregation. Church Council encourages you to stay tuned and stay involved. God's work is visible at First United and as members it is important to keep the Vision always in the forefront. On a personal note, I am constantly inspired by the ideas and personal words of encouragement from current and past Elders. They are appreciated more than you know and I am humbled to be the current Moderator of your Church Council.

Deacons

Carl Nauert, *Chair*
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Deacons are missioned with fostering a culture of care in First United by providing a variety of ministries for members to support each other. In support of Vision 2020, our goal is to ensure that these ministries encourage more intimate fellowship in our relationships with members in the church community. Thanks be to God, as we now have Pastor Rob Leveridge helping us accomplish this mission.

This past summer the Deacons volunteered to assist the Communications Committee in creating an updated church directory. We have also provided name tags for every member, hoping these projects will lead to all of us building new, more intimate fellowship in our relationships.

We continue to evolve the Deacon Care Group Ministry, as each Deacon increases relationships with their care group. The Deacons hold their group in their prayers, communicate periodically with them, and use church resources/teams to help them in their time of need. To further this ministry, Pastor Rob has been leading us through a UCC lay visitation educational program (Called to Care), designed to improve our visitation skills.

The church continues to provide congregational care through ministries/teams under the auspices of the Deacons: the Visitation Team, PAL notes, flower delivery, home meal delivery, memorial service receptions, ushers, greeters, Prime-Time, prayer shawls, and the over-90 birthday party. Feel free to contact any Deacon if you would like to get involved with any of these ministries.

Small Group Ministry

Our small groups provide fellowship, growth and advocacy. In 2010, our groups included: Prayer Partners; Spiritual Guidance Groups; Women's Retreat; Softball Team; Prayer Shawl Ministry; Midpoint (for 30s-40s); Prime Time (for 60+); Peace with Justice; UP! (for LGBTQ); Dinner and a Movie; Friday Night Peace Vigil, Environmental Stewardship, and Evening Division. Small groups went on mission trips to Colombia, South America, New Orleans and Ohio. Advocacy teams went to Springfield, IL and Washington, DC. Several of our members represented First United at meetings of the Presbytery of Chicago and the Chicago Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ.

Children's Ministry

Andrea Alter

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Barbara Metric

barbarametric@cocast.net

The Children's Ministry Committee works to create and maintain a safe intellectual, emotional and spiritual environment that nurtures our children as members of this faith community and as disciples in the world by 1) supporting the church school and its leaders, 2) creating opportunities for our children to be full worship participants and 3) providing quality nursery facilities.

The Children's Ministry Committee meets the first Tuesday of each month. Children's Ministry is responsible for a number of tasks, events, and details throughout each church school year, including (but not limited to) Gathering Day, Hanging of the Greens, the Christmas Eve pageant, Leader Breakfasts, cleaning the nursery thrice yearly, "Three Nice Things" for church school leaders, and Meet and Greets. Each member of Children's Ministry is assigned to one of the church school classes for the school year. The liaisons help class leaders in various ways throughout the year.

In 2010, Children's Ministry began a new outreach: hosting Meet and Greets with church school children's parents at the beginning of the year. The sole purpose of the Meet and Greet was for parents to connect with each other, and for the liaison to introduce him or herself to the parents during the church school hour, over coffee. Liaisons also used this opportunity to pass out class lists to parents. Liaisons and parents alike responded positively, and Meet and Greets will be repeated in the coming year.

Resident Missions Oversight Committee

Rick Ashton

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Sunday morning is not First United Church's only busy time. Throughout the week, our five Resident Mission Partners serve a wide variety of community needs within a broad vision of Christian service.

First United Nursery School, Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry, West Suburban PADS, Cluster Tutoring, and the Walk-In Ministry, supported by the physical space, financial contributions, and volunteer effort of First United, provide food, shelter, education, and other assistance to people at many levels. They are not mere tenants, but active collaborators in the achievement of God's vision for the church.

In 2010 the Church Council created the Resident Missions Oversight Committee to strengthen and clarify the church's relationship with these vital organizations. As we coordinate and integrate our efforts, ranging from the logistical to the strategic, we will make the best use of our time, talent, and treasure for the glory of God and the betterment of humanity.

Lay Ministry Support Team

Pauline Coffman

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We enjoyed meeting regularly with Jeff Foels, McCormick Seminary student who was doing a year of Internship with First United Church. Jeff also met regularly with the Rev. Julie Harley. Jeff and Julie worked out series of goals that he would attempt to reach during the year. We listened, helped interpret the church to Jeff, and generally offered support to him. We felt that Jeff served First United very well and that our committee might have been instrumental in encouraging him to seek ordination. Jeff clearly has gifts for teaching and almost certainly will seek an advanced degree at some point. We hope he will serve as a parish minister prior to seeking that academic immersion as it will help inform his ministry practice and theological understandings.

Committee members were: Ann Armstrong, Janet Leong, Hortense Lindsey, and Robert Marseille. Ann, Julie Harley, and I attended Jeff's graduation from McCormick in early May, 2010. He is currently in Minnesota, engaged in Clinical Pastoral Education, a requirement for those seeking ordination.

Living God's Vision

3

Youth Committee

Stan Faust
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In 2010, the youth Committee focused on two tasks. The first was to continue its role as a sounding board and advisory body to Reverend Fowler in her efforts to service our youth. This manifested in such disparate ways as advising when and where to go for Work Camp to providing manpower to set-up/cook/clean for various youth events. Our second focus was new and especially exciting. The Youth Committee organized or assisted in organizing three events that have the potential to change the way parents in our community talk to their kids, talk to each other and, in general, address the issue of drugs and alcohol abuse with their children.

The Youth Committee organized a First United Parent Forum, a FUSH/FUJI Parent Café, and a Community Café in 2010. These Forums and Cafes were focused on creating an environment conducive to teen drug/alc. prevention. The 2010 Youth Survey finds our local high school at almost double the national average for teen drug/alc. use. Our youth groups have 90% of our members attending the local high school. FUSH has unfortunately watched a number of its members enter rehab over the last 2-3 years. Given the clear need, we combined our efforts with the Oak Park-River Forest Parent Action Committee to address these challenges our youth community faces. Over the last several months Township Youth Services has reported a marked increase in the volume of parents seeking information and assistance in addressing teen abuse.

Bergstraesser Library

Cindy Palombi, Chair
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The Committee met monthly in addition to small groups that met periodically for work days. Our main task has been entering the data for each book into the library's computer cataloguing system and then labeling each for a new shelf location. More than 60 new books were added to the library this year. The Committee agreed on either accepting anonymously donated books, or offering them on the give-away cart. Several new books from the Wish List Notebook were purchased. Book reviews were submitted for the Messenger Bell highlighting the library's resources relating to main themes during the church year. We have shared the housekeeping duties of keeping the library straightened and making phone calls regarding overdue books.

Finance Committee

Rick Pollock
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The Finance Committee's primary objective is to manage the financial resources of First United Church of Oak Park in a responsible manner that is consistent with the demands of the gospel and faithful to First United's commitments to "Living God's Vision." In pursuit of that goal in 2010 our committee has done the following:

- ❖ Monitored the revenues and expenditures throughout the year to make sure we are on track against our budget, correcting budgets as necessary.
- ❖ Created a better linkage to Council, ensuring they understand the church's financial position through additional reports and regular updates at Council meetings.
- ❖ Established rules for additional funding requests to both ensure consistency in the process as well as streamline the process in emergency cases.
- ❖ General oversight of the Planned Giving, Stewardship, Endowment sub-committees.
- ❖ Managed additional funding requests based on the overall financial position of the church.
- ❖ Collected 2011 budget request, established baseline 2011 budgets, and reconciled the budget, in cooperation with Council, for the congregational vote.
- ❖ Count the weekly offering plate contributions

Endowment Committee

Gene Armstrong, *Chair*
geneann1113@yahoo.com

The Endowment Committee is a subcommittee of the Finance Committee.

In 2010, the Committee met quarterly with the investment advisor/manager (US Bank) to review the status of the endowment investment account. 2010 year-end data is not yet available. The following information is obtained from reports of the investment advisor/manager and from the church's Financial Manager.

Balance of Invested Endowment Funds at 12/31/2009:	\$ 2,709,016
Balance of Invested Endowment Funds at 10/01/2010:	\$ 2,565,268*
Unrealized investment gains at 10/01/2010:	\$ 256,168**
Estimated Annual Income at 10/01/2010:	\$ 60,734

* *Rising stock markets in 4Qtr2010 suggest that this balance may be greater at 12/31/2010.*
** *Rising stock markets in 4Qtr2010 suggest that this amount may be greater at 12/31/2010.*

In 2010, the following draws were made from Invested Endowment funds:

From the General Endowment:	\$ 60,673
From the Special Mission Endowment Fund:	\$ 102,719

Planned Giving Committee

Co-Chairs
Gene & Ann Armstrong,
geneann1113@yahoo.com

The Planned Giving Committee was formed in 2009 as a subcommittee of Finance. Its mission is to help insure the church's financial future – and thus its vision of ministry and mission – by securing gifts from people through their wills and other vehicles in their estate plans. In 2010, the Committee 1) built awareness of planned giving as an option through the writing and dissemination of an updated planned giving brochure, regular articles in the Messenger Bell, and testimony during worship; 2) educating people about various planned giving vehicles through an all-church luncheon event held in April featuring Stephen Keizer from the Presbyterian Foundation; 3) met individually with prospective planned giving donors to encourage them to make such gifts and identified 11 new gifts, bringing the total of known planned gifts to 31; 4) began building a sense of camaraderie and affinity among those who have taken the step of including First United in their estate plans by holding the first Planned Giving Donor Recognition and Thank You event in October; and 5) continued building the planned giving program, this year developing a database, writing committee and coordinator job descriptions, and beginning to write a gift policy for the church.

Communications Committee

Co-Chairs:
Bonnie Beck
blb710@sbcglobal.net
Ted Despotes
tdespotes@gmail.com

The Communications Committee oversees communication vehicles both within the church (eg. Messenger Bell newsletter, church bulletin boards, church website), as well as external communications as diverse as church signage and social media. 2010 saw the refinement of some ongoing communications responsibilities as well as the initiation of some new projects. With regard to on-going projects, the Committee has re-oriented the primary delivery of the Messenger Bell from US Mail to email, and has shortened the length limit on Messenger Bell articles. We also have established a system for managing the use of church bulletin boards so that all church and affiliated groups have an opportunity to utilize them throughout the year. On-going refinements and additions have also been made to the church website to maintain its ease-of-use and relevancy. New projects have been focused on electronic media with the addition this year of a First United Facebook page, a pastoral blog by Julie Harley, a YouTube 'welcome' segment and the addition of a video monitor at the lounge entrance which provides a scrolling list of daily church activities with corresponding locations. Year end committee activities have been focused on publishing a new church picture directory, scheduled to be issued in the spring of 2011.

Living God's Vision

5

Building & Grounds Committee

Russell Brown

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Justin Lewis

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The Building and Grounds Committee is entrusted with coordination of facility resource uses and the inspection, monitoring and upkeep of building and grounds. The facilities and grounds provide a meeting place for congregation and community activities. Additionally, the facility and grounds provide a visual awareness to our community of the compassion, dedication and commitment we, as a micro community, hold to a larger community in fulfilling God's work.

The Committee's vision for 2010 and forward includes:

- ❖ To be more communicative with other committees on project priorities and offer suggestions for staging projects,
- ❖ To create a master facility management plan identifying activities and functions that will benefit and the sequence in which work should proceed,
- ❖ To inventory other programs in the community to identify needs that may not be being met.

Mostly, 2010 seemed to be focused on taking additional security measures and dealing with water leaks. External access to the building had to be put in greater control and internal security measures had to be beefed up. A list of our 27 major accomplishments is available by contacting Russell, or Justin.

Visitation Team

Rosemary Irmis

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The Visitation Team embodies the theme of "Living God's Vision" by assisting in the pastoral care of First United members who are homebound or living in care facilities with very limited chances for church attendance. The team is made up of volunteer visitors and a coordinator paired with homebound members. The pastoral staff alerts the team of any additional members who should be added to visitation.

The team keeps homebound members connected with First United through monthly visits and telephone calls. Long term relationships are developed. Any concerns or desires expressed by the folks are forwarded to the pastoral staff. Each homebound member has a pastor assigned who also visits during the year.

In 2010 the team had 18 volunteers visiting 30 members. Besides homes, care facilities visited included Presbyterian Homes (Evanston), Plymouth Place (LaGrange), Beacon Hill (Lombard) and Belmont Village (Oak Park and Carol Stream). The team delivered Christmas poinsettias and Easter flowers. They also assisted by contacting their member(s) regarding photographs for the upcoming church photo directory and making arrangements for those who wished to have a photograph taken.

FFUN Committee

Co-Chairs,

Carole Ferguson

prideandprejudicefudge@yahoo.com

Janet Kenealy

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The major purpose of the FFUN Committee is to promote fellowship and provide hospitality by planning and implementing social events in the life of First United Church.

In January, the FFUN Committee coordinated the breakfast portion of the Annual Meeting. The Committee is responsible for arranging the pot luck breakfast and the room set up for the meeting.

The biggest event on the Committee's calendar was the Church Picnic which was held in June. The Committee coordinates the pot luck lunch, volunteers, games, and entertainment.

On Gathering Day the FFUN Committee served root beer floats out on the front lawn immediately following the 11:00 am worship service.

Personnel Committee

Al Parchem

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The Personnel Committee has a unique responsibility to assure that the personnel practices of First United Church are professionally sound and represent the values of our church community. In doing so, the Committee helps to ensure that the church is able to attract and retain the best people to reach its goals.

The Committee reviewed and recommended compensation changes for the 2011 budget. As a matter of policy, the Committee recommended that pension contribution rates for the ministerial staff be a "blended" rate of the two denominations rather than the lower of the rates recommended by the denominations.

The Committee paid particular attention to the integration of Rob Leveridge into our church.

The Committee supported the development of a coverage plan during Marylen Marty-Gentile's three month leave of absence.

The Committee partnered with Julie Harley and Judith Loevy on custodial scheduling and staffing requirements to support the use of the building given custodial staff changes and absences that have occurred during the year.

Women's Retreat Committee

Jackie Eckholm

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The 26th Annual Women's Retreat was held at the Siena Center in Racine, Wisconsin on February 5-7, 2010. This retreat is held jointly with the women of Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church of Chicago. The theme this year was "Called to Be Family" and was lead by Reverend Alex Hendrickson from First United Presbyterian Church in Belleville, IL.

The 2010 retreat was attended by 44 women from First United and 18 women from Lincoln Park Presbyterian. Four scholarships were awarded to First United women. The 2010 Women's Retreat Offering totaled \$3,1677. This offering was divided equally between Hope for Humanity and UCAN.

Plans are underway for the 2011 Women's Retreat which will be lead by Reverend Garnett Foster. The theme is "Change: God in the Turbulent Places".

The current committee members are Jackie Eckholm, Connie Henderson-Damon, Jackie Kareb and Cindy Palombi. Our pastoral advisor is Rev. Leah Fowler. The current balance in the Women's Retreat Fund is \$3,241.51.

Associate Pastor Search Committee

Melinda Haag

mshaag@yahoo.com

Following a long search that examined dozens of candidates from the Presbyterian Church USA and United Church of Christ, the Rev. Rob Leveridge was called to a half-time position as our associate pastor for membership and caring ministries. Rob began his ministry with us on July 1, 2010 and will be installed on Jan. 30, 2011.

Living God's Vision

7

Membership Committee

Sue Saliny

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The Membership Committee began planning for 2011 last June with a twofold determination to improve the experience of visitors (potential new members) to our church as well as to improve the experience of our own committee members. We're transforming our business meetings into social gatherings where we discuss business while we support each others' spiritual growth. We're learning more about how we came to know First United Church and why we came back after our first time. We're looking for energy and encouraging new perspectives by inviting additional members to the Committee. We're visiting other congregations to see what they do well – or not so well – in welcoming visitors. We're getting feedback from "secret shoppers" who've visited us undercover so we can learn more about how visitors see us. Our intent is to implement changes that will make it easier for a visitor to say: "Here I am, God, back home again."

Our plans for 2011 include the following 4 goals:

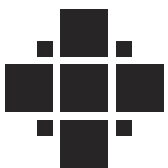
1. Implement three significant improvements to the building's physical environment to make first-time visitors feel more welcome and comfortable in our worship space. For example, one of the improvements suggested is more visible signage directing visitors to the coffee hour location, the rest rooms, and the nursery.
2. Design and implement a plan to ensure that each first-time visitor is recognized by a church member and given an appropriate level of attention, including a take-away that will provide a lasting reminder of First United Church.
3. 40% of first-time visitors will return for a second visit as a result of their initial welcome and follow-up of church staff and the Membership Committee. Studies show that if a visitor returns a second time, they are much more likely to become regular participants or members of the congregation.
4. New member classes in 2011 will include 60 participants, about twice as many as we had in 2010.

Membership Report 2010

Members January 1, 2010 —	700
New Members Added	24
Confirmands	12
Members Removed by Death	8
Other Members Removed	18

Total Members

December 31, 2010 710



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