



# the MESSENGERbell

## August 2023

### MEET THE INTERIM PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM

Since early July, the members of the Interim Pastoral Search team have been diligently meeting to get moving on the process of finding an interim lead pastor. They met with our Committee on Ministry Transitional Liaison from the Presbytery, as well as with the Associate Conference Minister for Pastoral Transitions from the Illinois Conference of the UCC.

Next, the team will revise the church profiles that we used in 2018 in preparation for posting them to the electronic search systems for each denomination. The Presbytery has just redone their search system as of this June, and we will be one of the first churches to go through the new system. The UCC shared with us that the process for being matched to an intentional interim minister is nowhere as involved as that for a settled permanent lead pastor. Both denominations are aware of our desire to get the right interim pastor for our church in as timely a manner as is possible.

As advised by the UCC, the search team members have entered into a covenant relationship with each other around their work, including "confidentiality about personal and professional matters." This means that they will maintain confidentiality and cannot give you detailed information about their meetings or search progress other than the regular reports to the congregation. They won't even share details with Council outside of those necessary to move the process along by the approval of profiles and contracts.

Please remember that the team members have volunteered to serve God and our congregation by joining this committee, and please help them to honor the confidentiality commitments they have made to the process. The members of the Interim Pastoral Search team are:

- Susan Swords Steffen, Vice Moderator and team chair
- Chris Damon, Council member
- Marsha Hubbuch, Personnel Team representative
- Laurie Jolicoeur, Worship, Music, and Arts Team representative
- Sam Premo-Hopkins, Council member
- Melinda Robinson, Council member
- Sara Stevenson, Nominating Team representative

Yours in Faith,  
Marteki Reed, Moderator



*moving from*

WORDS TO WITNESS IN OUR  
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

*moving from*

INDIVIDUALISM TO INTIMATE  
FELLOWSHIP IN OUR RELATIONSHIP  
WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE  
CHURCH COMMUNITY.

*moving from*

CHARITY TO CHANGING  
STRUCTURES IN OUR RELATIONSHIP  
WITH THE WORLD.

A few highlights from this month's Messenger Bell: bless all the things, page 2; a summer slow-down, page 3; education offerings restarting soon, page 3; ways to help local asylum seekers, page 4; the Fall Fellowship Fair returns, page 5.



FIRST  
UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK

## Preaching in August

August 6	John Edgerton
August 13	John Edgerton
August 20	Lydia Mulkey
Outdoor Worship	
August 27	Alicia Reese
September 3	Lydia Mulkey
No Communion/Labor Day	

All services are at 11 a.m. on Sundays unless otherwise noted. Worship is also livestreamed and the videos remain on the YouTube channel so that you may view them at a later time even if you can't be with us on Sunday.

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN ON YOUTUBE](#)

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## Ways to Serve in Worship

Looking for a way to expand your worship experience? There are so many ways to serve in worship! Adults and youth can serve as ushers/greeters, volunteer liturgists, and members of our Sanctuary Choir, while our children are welcome to serve as acolytes.

- NEW: Sign up to provide a floral arrangement [here](#).
- Sign up to serve as a volunteer liturgist [here](#).
- Sign up to serve as an acolyte [here](#).
- For more information about ushers, contact John ([jedgerton@firstunited.com](mailto:jedgerton@firstunited.com))
- For more information about singing with the Sanctuary Choir starting in September, contact Bill ([bill@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:bill@firstunitedoakpark.com)).

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## Welcome Bobby Nguyen!

On Sunday, August 6, Bobby Nguyen, our permanent organist will worship with us for the first time. Even as we write this, Bobby is making his way to Chicago from New York City where he recently completed his Masters Degree in organ. Bobby is not new to Chicago having previously studied at North Park University. Please join us in welcoming Bobby on Sunday and stay after worship for some sweet treats in his honor!



## Special Congregational Meeting and Final Worship Service with Lead Pastor John Edgerton



On August 13, we will worship one final time with Lead Pastor John Edgerton. Pastor John tendered his resignation as he moves on from First United to take a call as Lead Pastor at Old South Church in Boston, MA. We are grateful for Pastor John's ministry in his four years at First United.

The First United Council has called a Special Congregational Meeting to be held during worship on August 13 for the purpose of formally accepting John's resignation. After the meeting, we will continue to close our worship service by releasing John from his vows to First United. Please join us for one last celebration of John and his ministry after worship in the lounge. Refreshments will be served.



On August 20th, we will mark the start of a new year by blessing our teachers and our backpacks. We will also have our annual blessing of the animals. Please bring your backpack and your pets to this outdoor worship service!

This is a day for children and youth to lead worship! To sign up your child to be a reader, click [here](#)!

## Enjoy a Summer Slow Down

We invite you to explore mindfulness experiences with us. We will offer 25 minutes of slowing down into stillness, followed by communal silence that may include an individual mindful time. Our intention is to practice together and then practice individually. All curious people are welcome. Bring some paper or a notebook or something to write with, if you are able.

Sunday, August 27. 3:30-5 p.m. Either outdoors near the labyrinth or inside (a sign will be on the parking lot door). Questions? Text or call Meghan Premo-Hopkins (312-320-0609) or Laurie Jolicoeur (708-822-0265).

It's helpful to our planning to know that you are coming, but we also welcome "walk-ins" if you become available. Sponsored by the Worship, Music, & Arts Team



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## A Life Saving Opportunity

Our very own Harriet Hawkins has agreed to teach another CPR class at First United. For 41 years, Harriet has worked as a pediatric nurse at Lurie Children's Hospital, specializing in neonatal critical care and emergency care. Her passion for medical mission work has taken her all over the world where she has trained doctors, physician assistants, nurses, and midwives. She has also helped set up and provided clinical care to rural communities. How lucky for us that she is taking the time out of her crazy, busy schedule to train us!

The CPR classes are scheduled for Tuesday, August 15 and will include adult, child, and infant CPR and AED use as well as use of intranasal Narcan. The class will be approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

If you are interested, contact Bobbie Kmiec (708-837-8934; [robertakmiec@comcast.net](mailto:robertakmiec@comcast.net)). Please indicate whether you would prefer a morning or afternoon class. Once we see how many folks are interested, we will update you with more details. Please help us spread the word about this important, life-saving opportunity.



## Church School Registration

Super Heroes age birth through 8th grade should grab their capes and assemble with their Church School teams starting on September 10! Parents, register your kids for Church School by August 20 and your super heroes will get a special treat after worship! [Click here](#) to register.

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## Did the Apostles Have a Weekly Bible Study?

Of course, the apostles had no discussions of the Bible because there was no such book then. All of them were Jews, and the Torah was their holy book. Their leader, an unheralded Jewish carpenter, promised to fulfill, not subvert, the prophecies in the ancient scriptures. Isn't it possible that periodically one of the apostles may have been called on to lead the group in a review of select ancient scriptures?

Please consider joining the Bible group at First United on September 17 when we will reconvene our regular Sunday meetings at 9:45-10:45 a.m. in the conference room next to the lounge. Like the original apostles, many of us are the unschooled and unsaintly -- and all in need of spiritual direction. We share thoughts about the scriptures, speak from the heart, and listen to one another. It's not a class. It's a community.



# Our Purpose Guides Our Capital Campaign

First United Church's Capital Campaign is on the move. We are guided by our Statement of Purpose:

**We are an open and inclusive Christian Community, members of the worldwide Body of Christ, gathered to do the work of disciples: Worshiping God, Sharing the Good News of the Gospel, Nurturing the faith, Caring for each other, Loving our neighbors.**

Now, after two and one half years of purpose-driven planning, preparation, and leadership investment,

*Continued on Page 5.*

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## Peace Corner

John Edgerton

In the Summer of 2020, a lot of things got pushed to the side. And that's putting it mildly. Birthdays, weddings, funerals, and long-dreamed-of vacations were all put off indefinitely. The nation and the world were picked and turned over, shaken up and down. All kinds of things got . . . well . . . dropped. Amidst all of that, one bit of beautiful news may have slipped past your attention. In Summer of 2020, First United was honored with the Peaceseecker Award for the PC(USA). Being given this award is a big deal. And the reception where it was to be presented was going to include a lot of fanfare and celebration. It was all to be held amidst the thousands of delegates making up the PC(USA)'s denominational gathering.

And, none of that happened.

Don't get me wrong, the award happened. It was mailed to us in a nondescript cardboard box and it sits now in my office. When I take down my paintings and photos and collection of crosses, I'll hang that award up on the wall. Because that award is well deserved, First United. You have for many years served as a faithful voice for the value of peace. From peace vigils and marches to gun violence banners and charitable gifts to peace-making organizations. The work of building a world of peace began the day Abel struck down Cain. And it continues to this day. Faithfulness, long faithfulness in walking paths of peace, is what the realm of God is built upon.

# SAVE THE DATE!



housingFORWARD presents

COMPETE TO DEFEAT HOMELESSNESS



Thursday, August 24 at 7pm  
Fitzgerald's in Berwyn

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## Help Local Asylum Seekers

Several folks from First United have asked how to help "nuestros vecinos," the many Venezuelan families who are seeking legal asylum and temporarily living at the 15th District Police Station in nearby Austin. These families are sleeping in police stations while they wait for shelter space to become available. Presently in the 15th District, there are 30 adults and 17 children under 13 years old, and they have lived there for more than a month.

These station residents' survival needs, including daily food, water, clothing, and bedding, are being met completely by a volunteer team, the Police Station Response Team for District 15 (WhatsApp group). Please consider giving to the following GoFundMe fund, where 100 % of donations are used by these volunteers in direct service (food, medicine, toiletries, SIM cards, bedding, etc.). <https://gofund.me/95078394>



**We lift up the prayers that have been shared in worship.**

**For the wider world:**

- An end to gun violence and mass shootings
- Young adults trying to find their way in the world
- Safety for LGBTQIA+ people who are living with fear
- Those in a time of uncertainty or transition
- For those in a difficult marriage

**For those in our midst:**

- Alicia Reese as she continues to recover from COVID after returning to the U.S. from vacation
- Gene Armstrong underwent a cardiac procedure
- Mary Nelson on the death of her beloved dog
- Jim Morrison and family mourning the passing of Rosy
- Marilee Castaneda who mother has post-Covid pneumonia
- Renee Davis struggling with her father's serious health concerns

**For the joys in our lives:**

- A wonderful message from Ally Vertigan on Sunday
- Jim Menninga and his willingness to jump into the FUSH work trip at the last minute
- Dale and Carol Porfilio for beautiful music in worship

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## RECENT EVOTIONALS

[Click here](#) to read our most recent evotionals online.

Anybody Need a Pie?	John Edgerton
Bittersweet	Alicia Reese
You Can't Solve Today	Lydia Mulkey
Grace	Alicia Reese

*Capital Campaign, continued from page 4.*

the Capital Campaign has come to a joyous time of transition. Soon the entire congregation will be asked to make personal financial commitments to the campaign. This special effort will improve the accessibility and efficiency of our building, enhance our care for each other, invest in our service to our community and world, and help stabilize our finances. Going forward together, we will strengthen our ability to fulfill our Purpose and continue to become the church God wants us to be.

Stay tuned for further information as Gathering Day, September 10, approaches.

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**SAVE THE DATE!**  
*Fall Fellowship Fair*  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH**  
**12 - 3 PM**  
**An interactive,  
family-friendly event,  
open to all!**

- Learn all about First United Church and what we have to offer!
- Participate in a variety of games and activities!
- Engage in fellowship with our, and the wider, community!
- Walk our labyrinth and learn more about it!
- Listen to music on our lawn and enjoy the weather!
- Kids! Collect stickers in Bulletin BINGO for a prize.

**All this and more!**  
*We hope to see you there!*



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OF OAK PARK**

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