

FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK

December 10, 2023



An open community united in love and justice

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

ADVENT II: FIND JOY IN CONNECTION

PRELUDE

Bobby Nguyen

WELCOME

6th – 8th Grade

POINSETTIA PROCESSION

POEM

Sara Stevenson

Lessons in Connection by Rev. Sarah Speed

It's been a long day,
long enough to complain,
long enough to wine and dine my
disappointment,
to give weariness
keys to the house.

But then you get the giggles
dancing with the dog in the kitchen.
Paws-sliding, tail-wagging,
side-cramping giggles.
I can hear it from across the house.

Your joy burrows its way
through the cracks in my armor
and then we are both laughing,
gulping for joyous, electric air.
And that's when I know—
if you grab my hand,
if you ask me to dance,
if our weary human souls can
make room for connection,
then we will survive.
Joy will take root.

Love will keep
her keys to the house.

Listen as the sound of the singing bowl fades.

ADVENT WREATH

The Enyia Family

How does a weary world practice peace?
By listening before we speak and saying sorry when we need to.
By advocating for justice and caring for our neighbor.
By practicing Sabbath and forgiving seventy times seven.
By choosing grace over hate and opening the door for each other.
There are a million ways to practice peace.
So today we light the candle of peace as a reminder and a charge.
With God's help, may we bring peace into a weary world. Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE RESPONSE

Congregation

Light Dawns on a Weary World (v. 1)

1. Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty.

Refrain

Light dawns on a wea - ry world: the pro - mised day of jus - tice comes. The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs; the hills and moun - tains shall break forth with sing - ing! We shall go out in joy — and be led forth in peace, as all the world in won - der ech - oes sha - lom.

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*PASSING THE PEACE

Susan Macaulay

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

I Can Celebrate You

CRANHAM ("In the Bleak Midwinter")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Gustav Holst (1906)



I can cel - e - brate you, I can hold your joy
I can re - cog - nize good fruit that you will bear
We can hold each oth - er in our joy and fear



When the load is crush - ing and you've lost your voice
When your own self - doubt hides gifts you have to share
Know - ing that the Spir - it moves when we are near



I can cel - e - brate the pro - mise your life holds
I can re - cog - nize your Christ-light deep with - in
We can hold each oth - er, lift each oth - er up



When the wear - i - ness bears hea - vy on your soul
Ev - ery gift that God has sown wait - ing to be - gin
Fill - ing one a - noth - er from the Spir - it's cup

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Strickland | A

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PRAYER FOR WHOLENESS

Susan Macaulay

God of laughter, God of open front doors and family reunions, we confess that we often doubt good news.

We move through this world waiting for the other shoe to drop, waiting for life to fall apart, waiting for our humanity to get the best of us.

Instead of leaning into joy, we lean into scarcity.

We lean into fear. We lean into isolation.

Forgive us for forgetting that joy is amplified when shared.

Heal the wounds we have from past hurts, and teach us how to throw open our doors like Elizabeth. Show us how to find joy in connection. Amen.

Time for Silent Prayer

ASSURANCE OF LOVE

Faith family, I imagine that when we come before God with the truth of our lives, God meets us like Elizabeth meets Mary in our scripture today. The door is thrown open. There is laughter. There is joy. There is embracing—and it is holy. So trust this; believe this:

You are claimed. You are loved. You are forgiven. And you are sent to serve. Find joy in that. Amen

MUSICAL RESPONSE

Congregation

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Black hymnal no. 116, v. 2)

**O come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

SPECIAL MUSIC

Church School

Advent Carol by Beth Kenreich

Hope, hope! Hear the good news:
Jesus our Savior brings hope to you.
Hope, hope! Hear the good news:
Jesus our Savior brings hope to you.

Peace, peace! . . .

Joy, joy! . . .

Love, love! . . .

Yes, Jesus our Savior brings hope, peace, joy, and love to you.

SCRIPTURE READING – LUKE 1:24-45

SERMON

6th – 8th Grade Church School

Wait for the Lord

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord; be strong; take heart.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

CALL TO THE OFFERING

Preschool & Kindergarten

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Church School

Look to the Light by Joseph M. Martin

Marilee Castañeda,

Look to the light, the candle of love

Children's Music Director

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming.

Joecel Orbon, flute

Look to the Light, God's gift from above.

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming.

Put away anger and open your heart.

Keep your light burning and let Christmas start.

Look to the light, the candle of love.

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming soon.

People arise! Prepare the way!

Let your music greet the day.

Let all the earth break forth with singing.

Let all the mountains and valleys start ringing.

People arise and share the news:

Christ the Light is coming soon.

Christ is coming soon.

Look to the light, the candle of love.

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming.

Look to the Light, God's gift from above.

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming.

Put away anger and open your heart.

Keep your light burning and let Christmas start.

Look to the light, the candle of love.

Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming soon.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

4th & 5th Grade

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.**

Amen.

GOING FORTH IN DEDICATION AND SERVICE

INVITATION TO JOIN THE CIRCLE

7th – 8th Grade

MUSIC TO JOIN THE CIRCLE

Go Tell It on the Mountain, arr. by Judy Nishimura

Marilee Castañeda
& Joecel Orbon, flutes

*CLOSING HYMN

Congregation

Comfort, Comfort You My People (Blue hymnal no. 3)

Comfort, comfort you my people, / Tell of peace, thus says our God;

Comfort those who sit in darkness / Bowed beneath oppression's load.

Speak you to Jerusalem / Of the peace that waits for them;

Tell them that their sins I cover, / And their warfare now is over.

For the herald's voice is calling / In the desert far and near,

Bidding us to make repentance / Since the kingdom now is here.

O that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;

Let the valleys rise in meeting / And the hills bow down in greeting.

Make you straight what long was crooked, / Make the rougher places plain;

Let your hearts be true and humble, / As befits God's holy reign.

For the glory of the Lord / Now o'er earth is shed abroad;

And all flesh shall see the token / that God's word is never broken.

*BLESSING

1st – 3rd Grade

Family of faith, as you leave this place, you go into a weary world. So speak tenderly. Do the good that is yours to do. Choose connection. Hold onto hope. And remember that Christ took on flesh for you. You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing. The world needs it. Amen.

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

Congregation

Weary World Rejoice, v. 1

(tune: *Silent Night*)

Weary World, God's own vine

Tears our only bread and wine

Crying out to be restored

Desperate for a break from war

Weary world, rejoice

Come and raise your voice

POSTLUDE

Bobby Nguyen

2023 CANDLELIGHT PEACE VIGIL TO END GUN VIOLENCE

**A time for remembrance of all
those impacted by gun violence.**

Purpose – An assembly of our broader community to honor all gun violence victims and survivors impacted by the violence, to lament the tragedy and pain, and to build community, creating hope, healing and change, supporting violence prevention in all of its forms.

**#HonorWithAction
#EndGunViolence**



**FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK
848 LAKE STREET, OAK PARK
7PM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12**

LOCAL SPONSORS:

- Moms Demand Action Oak Park-Austin Area • Waging Peace of First United Church of Oak Park
- Gun Violence Prevention Team of Unity Temple UU Congregation • Mothers OnA Mission28
- Ascension-St Edmund Peace & Justice Committee • Gun Responsibility Advocates
- Community of Congregations • Congregations Committed to Peace
- Live Free-Community Healing Resource Center • Congregations Networking for Social Justice

EVENTS AND UPDATES

Below is just a sampling of the news and events at First United. You can find our full calendar at firstunitedoakpark.com/calendar. Follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/firstunitedoakpark) for our weekly newsletter and lots more.

Today Is the Deadline to Sign Up for the Christmas Pageant

Sign up for the Christmas Pageant (presented at the 5 p.m. Christmas Eve Service) today! There are parts for kids from preschool through middle and high school narratives. Rehearsal will be next Sunday, December 17 immediately after worship. Use the QR code to get to the signup genius.



Sing We Joyous, TODAY!

The Oriana Singers, City Voices, and Pro Musica Youth Chorus will ring in the season with the holiday spectacular “Sing We Joyous” TODAY at 4 p.m. at First United. Visit oriana.org to purchase tickets and for more information. Tickets are also available at the door.

Adult Ed: Now with More Singing!

Join Adult Ed next Sunday (Dec. 17) for “Christmas Hymn Sing/Stories/Art/Potluck Breakfast.” Celebrate the Advent and Christmas hymns of our Christian heritage as we sing some of our best-loved hymns and carols (with orchestral accompaniment by congregation members); learn the stories behind them; and view Christmas art from across the centuries and around the world. Bring a dish to share for the potluck breakfast and enjoy a lovely morning with our church family. In Centennial Hall.

Blue Christmas: Liturgy for the Weary, December 20

For those who have experienced loss, the joy of the holiday season can often feel elusive and out of reach. Rev. Ally Vertigan will lead a service quietly acknowledging that even at Christmas time we can feel blue, through candle lighting, readings, and songs in the chapel. Following the service there will be a simple supper of soup and bread in the lounge. Childcare will also be available.

Advent IV Worship: Virtual Only

The Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve fall on the same day this year. On December 24, our 11 a.m. morning advent worship will be virtual only on the First United YouTube channel. Christmas Eve services will be at 5 and 8 p.m.

Christmas Eve Worship

On Christmas Eve, we make room! Our rejoicing happens when we find life together. So let's do just that. Christmas Eve worship will be a family service at 5 p.m. with the Christmas pageant and a traditional candlelight service of lessons and carols at 8 p.m. Invite your friends and neighbors – we make room for all!

Sticky Church Returns on December 31

Get ready for the return of a First United tradition: Sticky Church! On December 31, we will worship around the breakfast table with French toast casserole and plenty of syrup! We are looking for some volunteers to help with breakfast. Please check out the opportunities on the sign-up genius using the QR code or be in touch with Heather in the office (hvanderberg@firstunitedoakpark.com) and she can sign you up!



Christmas Break, Vacations and Communication Deadlines

First United will be closed December 25 through 29 as staff takes a break following this busy season. Additionally, there will be limited office hours the week of January 1 while Heather is out of the country. Check upcoming eblasts for more details on office hours during that week. Please note the following revised communication deadlines:

- Submissions for the January Messenger Bell are due on December 15. There will be no exceptions for late submissions this month.
- Submissions for the December 28 and January 4 eblast as well as the December 24 and December 31 bulletins are due December 20.

Recurring Links in the Eblast

Looking for a link? Check the bottom of the weekly eblast. We have recurring links there every week including:

- The worship server sign-up
- Pastor Lydia's calendar sign up (note: if you have trouble using calendly program, you can always call the office and we'll help you get an appointment.
- The church calendar
- The Fostering, Connection & Support Zoom link (meets virtually on Thursdays at 10 a.m.)
- Link to the Community of Congregations information hub for Oak Park's migrant response
- The church website

WELCOME TO FIRST UNITED!

We are a union church of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ. We seek to be an inclusive expression of Christ's body celebrating our diversity while finding our unity in Christ. We are a More Light/Open and Affirming congregation, committed to full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in membership & ministry.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT FIRST UNITED

Interested in learning more about First United Church? Look for members wearing gold buttons, talk to Pastor Lydia, or join us for a Newcomers class held three times per year. Next class to be held late winter or early spring.

ADULT EDUCATION

Faith formation doesn't end after Church School. Adult Education takes a variety of forms, from small, group Bible studies to Sunday morning Speaker Series. Weekly Bible study and Speaker Series meet during Sunday education hour at 9:45 a.m.

CHILDREN IN WORSHIP & OUR NURSERY

We love to have children in worship! Age-appropriate worship activities and books are available as you enter the sanctuary. We also offer safe, quality childcare and quiet play for children five and under in our nursery. Ask an usher for directions.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Church School is for children ages birth through 8th grade. Meeting Sundays at 9:45 a.m., September through mid-May, we tell stories of the Bible using a lens of love and justice with singing, praying, and creating. Contact Lydia Mulkey (lmulkey@firstunitedoakpark.com) to learn more.

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Are you interested in singing in worship with our Sanctuary Choir? Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., September through May. For more information contact Bill Chin (bill@firstunitedoakpark.com).

YOUTH PROGRAMS – FUJI (JR. HIGH) & FUSH (SR. HIGH)

The youth groups meet on Sunday evenings from 5 – 7 p.m. here at the church, September through mid-May. Contact the office (office@firstunitedoakpark.com) for more information.



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www.firstunitedoakpark.com | facebook.com/firstunitedoakpark

Pastor Lydia Mulkey – lmulkey@firstunitedoakpark.com