

THE STEEPLE



Exchanging Gifts

Have you ever regifted something? That is the process of giving someone else a gift that you have received previously. Often this is a gift that you did not want or simply have no use for. Or maybe you end up returning gifts like that. Life hands us so many "gifts" that we really don't want. Life hands us difficult experiences that weigh us down: despair, anxiety, regret, darkness, and feelings of meaninglessness. In the midst of all this, God holds out precious and life-giving gifts – hope, peace, joy, love, light, and purpose. Imagine if you could hand over your despair, anxiety, regret, darkness, and feelings of meaninglessness. Regift them to God. Return those heavy gifts for something lighter and better. God will take them and transform them into moments for renewal in our lives. And God will give us gifts as well if we open our hearts this Advent and Christmas season.

This Advent and Christmas season, as we prepare for gift exchanges with friends and family, we will reflect on the gifts given to us by the greatest giver of all and how can we receive and embrace those gifts even in the most difficult of times. Let's exchange gifts with our presence, our intentions, our time, and our loving care for one another. See you around the church as we help each other find the joy of this season.

In Christ, Pastor Rob

from the Deacons an interview with...Sammylane Wirth



Each month the FUPC Deacons will provide a glimpse into the life of a member included on their Thinking of You List. It will allow readers to become acquainted or reacquainted with former leaders of the FUPC Family.

What is the secret to your longevity and good health?

Taking good care of my body and treating others as I wish to be treated.

What would be your advice to your younger self?

Start each day with prayer and thanksgiving.

What was one of your moments closest to Christ?

When I focus on Jesus, I feel his presence, physically, as a light pressure on my forehead and at the bridge of my nose. All of the moments I spend with Jesus in prayer are special to me

What is your favorite church hymn?

"America the Beautiful." I especially like these two lines: 1. "O, beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain." 2. "America, America, God shed his grace on thee." It reminds me of the goodness of God. It makes me think of God's abundant blessings.

What is your favorite Bible verse?

John 21:25: But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

How has church and your love of God shaped your life?

Regular church attendance afforded me many opportunities to have fellowship with other Christians which continually renewed my faith.

Of all God's blessings in your life, what are the three closest to your heart?

Memories, good health, and growing up in a Christ-centered family.

Announcements

Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting is **Sunday, December 8** after the 10:30 am worship service. We will approve the Terms of Call for our Pastors and elect Church Officers for 2025.

Annual Reports Due

Annual Reports for 2024 from all Session Committees, Deacons, Trustees, Life Groups, and Stephen Ministry are due **electronically** by Sunday, January 5 to Jami Olsen, office@firstunitedpres.org.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation is **Sunday, January 26** after the 10:30 am worship service. The Annual Report for 2024 and the Budget for 2025 will be presented.



Winner of the Beautiful Quilt!

Dee McCarty's granddaughter, Vayda was the lucky winner of the beautiful quilt made by the FUPC Quilters. Vayda is pictured here with Betty Scherrer. A big thank you to all who supported the raffle by buying tickets. Over \$800 was raised to benefit the Professional Church Vocations Fund Scholarship!!!

Elder Lorenzo Clayton passed on the moderator stole at presbytery on November 2, finishing his year of serving as Moderator of the Presbytery. The presbytery was blessed by his leadership!



2024 Per Capita
\$36.00

2025 Per Capita
\$40.00

This is used to support the work of the larger PCUSA Church through its presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly.

These Days

These Days daily devotional books for October-December 2024 are available at the Chapel entrance and at the reception desk in Eversull Hall.

United Bells Ringing our Praise!



We meet every Wednesday at 5:30 pm. Experienced ringers and anyone interested in learning to ring are welcome. Please consider joining this committed group who work, laugh, and pray together, all to the glory of God! For more information, please call or email Julia Weeks, (618) 531-5002, juliaaweeks@gmail.com.

from the Trustees

In addition to routine maintenance, these are the Trustee highlights for the month:

- Solar: This month our panels produced 12,438 kWh and we used 13,719 kWh. Our electricity bill was reduced by 88% even though our system was non-operational for five days. The excess they produced in October covered the 1,281 kWh we needed.
- Security lights and cameras were added to protect our solar array from vandalism. A new Ameren light will be installed on the utility pole by the shed/solar area. Five pounds of Dutch White clover were planted under the panels to provide care-free ground cover.
- Bendler Boiler installed the new, high-efficient boiler which is now operational.
- New basketball hoops and backboards were installed on November 12.
- The reflective sign by IL Route 161 will be repaired.
- Bids will be sought to replace the office heating/cooling system.
- Hail damage will require replacing the asphalt roof on the new section.
- Our gardeners continue to tidy up our landscaping and gardens - Thanks!

Veterans Life Group Celebrates Veteran's Day Weekend November 9 & 10

Saturday Community Breakfast

Once again our Annual Community Breakfast was a big success. We originally planned for 100 people and ended up serving 130 meals. Of that number approximately 30 were community visitors. Our church family demonstrated their love and caring to the visiting community families. Shawn and I also want to thank each of our church members who attended and donated to this breakfast. Your kind offerings helped cover all the food expenses.



Hungry visitors started showing up at 8:00 am.

We served pancakes, biscuits, sausage gravy (that you Rich Heil), sausage patties, bacon, 15 dozen eggs!, coffee, milk, juice, and water.



Volunteers for Saturday breakfast were:

Greeting Ambassador: Laurie Brown

Kitchen Crew: Shawn Lankford, Sue Perez, Mary Teague, & KC Clayton

Food & Beverage Serving: Monica Kimbrell, Mary Stange, Mike & Laura Rumer, Janice Hunter

Door Greeters: Tony Held, Herb & Ann Breeden, Larry & Evelyn Schomaker

Clean up: Kitchen Crew and Sam Brummitt

Thanks to others who may have also filled in.

from the Deacons

October Deacon's Meeting:
Deacons Present - 18. Total
contacts - 288 (61 calls, 162 cards,
49 visits, and 16 emails & texts).



Salvation Army Bell Ringing **Saturday, December 7 11:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Our church will help collect needed funds for our local Salvation Army by ringing the bells at St. Clair Square. Our day to serve is Saturday, December 7 from 11:00 am-5:00 pm. We will be a presence at three major entrances to the mall. This is a great family mission project where all ages can actively engage for this great cause! We encourage you to sign up for a one-hour shift. There is a sign-up sheet at the reception desk in Cornell Commons or email Nancy Kreeb, kreebnja@hotmail.com.

* Bell Ringing
for the *
Salvation Army *
Saturday, December 7

1-hr shifts between
11am - 5pm
St. Clair Square

Email Nancy Kreeb,
kreebnja@hotmail.com,
to sign-up!



Fellowship & Caring Ministries

DECEMBER 12 Book Club

In December, the Book Club will discuss *The First Conspiracy, The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington* by Brad Meltzer. We will begin at 6:30 pm via Zoom. Please contact Joyce Dyer, joycejdyer@att.net for the Zoom ID and passcode. The book selection for January is *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* by Laurie King.

DECEMBER 13 Merry Mates

NO MEETINGS JAN. OR FEB.

Merry Mates will meet on Friday, December 13 for our annual Christmas party. We will gather at 6:00 pm in Eversull Hall (come to the Royal Heights entrance) and plan to eat at 6:30 pm. Please bring an appetizer to share. Drinks and desserts will be provided. We will have a white elephant gift exchange. Bring a wrapped gift that you have been wanting to re-gift or a joke. Price is not a consideration. Please contact Joyce Dyer, (618) 614-3288 by November 30 if you plan to attend.

JANUARY 28 Potlucks with a Purpose

Potlucks with a Purpose will be meeting in Eversull Hall on Tuesday, January 28 at 6:30 p.m. If driving at night is a problem for you, please contact Sheila Misselhorn or Sue Perez so we can locate a member who can give you a lift. We want you to attend!

Potlucks with a Purpose met on October 22. We were a small group but we were mightily impressed with our speaker, Pastor Brian Mack from the Market Avenue Church of God in East St. Louis. He spoke about an ambitious goal he has to bring improved services and quality of life to the people in the area adjacent to his church. A nearby, unused school building will be renovated and repurposed for this project.

Pastor Mack (originally from Chicago) envisions a "dynamic and inclusive hub that fosters a sense of community, empowerment, and encouragement." PWAP was very moved by his passion, his congregation, and his organization. He has numerous nonprofit groups, other church organizations, and planners with experience in such projects involved. PWAP will be donating to this project. For more information, go to www.marketavenue.church and use the pulldown menu for The Market Place. Here you will find details of what this "hub" will offer.

In other news, PWAP will be hosting Coffee Hour on December 22 and December 29. Emails will follow for assistance and food donations.

NO DECEMBER MEETING Prayer Shawl Ministry

If you like to crochet or knit or would like to learn, join the fellowship of this exceptional ministry next year! Plan to join us on January 22, 2025 at 9:30 am in Cornell Commons. Prayer shawls are continually added to the inventory. Be part of this outreach to those celebrating joy or needing comfort. Shawls are in the bookcase in the Narthex. For more information contact Mary Teague, (618) 920-7589.

NO DECEMBER MEETING Sand Dollars

Some Sand Dollar women got together at Sandy' Back Port on a Saturday in November to make their door wreaths for the holidays.

Our Deepest Sympathy **FAMILY NEWS**

For the family & friends of Carole Ritter who passed away April 25 in Bowling Green, KY.

For the family & friends of June Wilson who passed away October 14 in Glen Carbon, IL.

For the family & friends of Linda Woolard who passed away October 18 in St. Louis, MO.

For J.J. Johnson and family & friends of J.J.'s sister, Michelle Johnson.

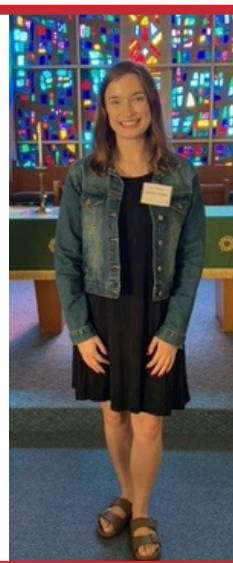
For Paul Kueker and Carl & Noah Laymen and family & friends of Marie Kueker who passed away October 26 in O'Fallon, IL.

For Nancy Schofield and family & friends of Ginny Schofield who passed away November 7 in Swansea, IL.



Welcome New Members

On Sunday, October 20, we welcomed Merle, Julie, and Carmen Wilder to our FUPC family.



Adult Discipleship

There are numerous learning, connecting, and fellowship opportunities available for adults throughout the month of December.

DURING THE WEEK

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Men's Bible Study Group meets hybrid every Wednesday morning at 8:30 am, both in-person in the Vista Room and via Zoom. Contact the Church Office for more information.

Connect & Gather

Looking for a casual way to reflect with others about life and faith? Join other adults in the Library from 9:15-10:00 am on Sunday mornings for a time of fellowship and discussion. Come see what questions await in the three mystery boxes!

WOMEN'S CIRCLES

FUPC two women's groups meet in-person and via Zoom. Gathering monthly from September through May, their purpose is to nurture women's faith through prayer and Bible study. If you would like more information, please contact a leader.

- **Lamplighters Circle** will meet November 19 at 1:00 pm, Amy Brummitt, (618) 235-4226.
- **Lydia Circle** will meet November 21 at 1:00 pm, Jan Jensen, (626) 894-6580.

SING A NEW SONG

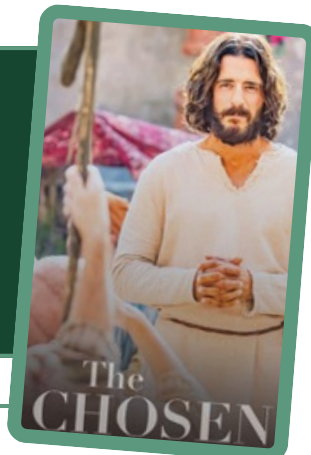
In December, we will be doing a four-week series from the *Follow Me* curriculum called *Sing a New Song*. This practice explores how God's people use song in moments of liberation, tribulation, and transformation to witness God's new creation being revealed in their midst. Music makes space for God's holy mystery. Even if singing is not one's chosen form of self-expression, there is a song for nearly every mood, circumstance, situation, and opportunity. Throughout our lives, singing not only entertains and comforts us, but serves as creative expression and connection without the need of any instruments, printed scores, devices, or particular equipment. The theme of singing a new song connects with the proclamation of God's saving work in Scripture. We sing new songs because God is doing new things in our lives and in the world. This class is hybrid, meeting in-person in the Vista Room or via Zoom at 9:15 am on Sundays. For details and to receive study materials, contact Rhonda Eugea at reugea@firstunitedpres.org. Login information for Zoom is included in the eWeekly every Friday.

In a world dominated by binary thinking – light vs. dark, good vs. evil – *Patterns of Divine Possibility* encourages us to look for the more, to recognize that God's patterns are nuanced, complex, and always beyond the limited constructs we impose. It challenges us to explore faith as trusting in the unseen patterns and embracing a fuller understanding of God's handiwork. This Advent Devotional published by the Presbyterian Outlook is currently available on the desk in Cornell Commons. If you would like a digital copy, email Rhonda Eugea at reugea@firstunitedpres.org.

Patterns of Divine Possibility
An Advent Search for God's Diverse Ordering
Written by Teri McDowell Ott

THE CHOSEN

Come join us to watch and discuss season 4 of *The Chosen*, the groundbreaking movie depiction of the life of Jesus and His disciples. We will meet on the following Wednesdays from 5:30-7:00 pm in the Blue Room (former preschool room downstairs): December 4, January 8, January 15, January 22, and January 29. Bottled water and popcorn will be provided. Feel free to bring supper-in-a-sack or snacks to share. For more information contact Roger Doll, (618) 402-1822 or Brenda Doll, (618) 444-9660.



Cap & Mitten Tree

The Lydia Circle will once again be collecting caps and mittens of all sizes from November 17 through December 8. Trees will be set up in Cornell Commons and outside the Chapel. All collected items will go to Kindercottage in East St. Louis. Contact Susy Rybicki with any questions.



Serving

GIVE a MEAL a MONTH

GAMAM will not have a regular collection in December. Please donate nonperishable items or money for the Community Interfaith Food Pantry on Gratitude Sunday, December 1. Thank you! Contact Laurie Brown, (618) 620-8112, or Judy Stratton (618) 978-5485 with questions,

MOBILE MARKET DEC. 19

Our next market takes place December 19. Volunteers should arrive at 8:00 am. It will likely be cold, so bring your hat and gloves! A truck from the St Louis Food Bank arrives between 7:30 and 9:00 am. We sort the food then put it into waiting cars. This joint-venture project with FUPC and District 118 has been a blessing to the community for a number of years. It assists families in need from Abraham Lincoln, West Junior High, and the surrounding area. Please join us and help make someone's holiday brighter! Questions can be directed to Judy Stratton, (618) 978-5485 or Laurie Brown, (618) 520-8112.

MEMBER CONNECTIONS MEMBER CONNECTIONS MEMBER CONNECTIONS

Celebrate the Season with FUPC!

Grateful Sunday – December 1

Christmas Connections – December 15

As we enter this season of gratitude and joy, Member Connections invites everyone at FUPC to join us for two wonderful events that bring our community closer together. On December 1, *Grateful Sunday* offers a chance to reflect on our blessings and share with others in need. On December 15, *Christmas Connections* will bring us together for a festive afternoon of fellowship, food, and fun.

Join us on December 1 for Grateful Sunday, a special time to give back and share our blessings with others. During Coffee Hour, we will have cards available to color and add custom messages for our homebound parishioners — helping spread holiday cheer to those unable to be with us in person.

We will also be collecting donations for our FUPC Food Pantry and the Give a Meal a Month program. As you shop for the holiday, consider doubling up on canned goods and staples to donate or bring in any extra items you may have on hand. Every item helps support members of our community in need!

Member Connections is excited to host Christmas Connections on December 15 in Eversull Hall immediately following the 10:30 am service. Bring the whole family for a festive celebration filled with holiday cheer and good company! There will be crafts for the kiddos, Member Connections bingo (adults and kids alike can join!), and delicious food for all. Enjoy a baked potato bar, fresh salads, tasty desserts, and warm drinks like hot cocoa and apple cider. Join us as we celebrate the Christmas season and build connections with fellow FUPC members. We look forward to seeing you there to share these special moments with you and celebrate this meaningful time of year as a church family.



from Stewardship

Our church has been exceptional in meeting needs as they arise. We have done so regarding the needs of our physical campus and the needs of our members and community partners through the “Needs Among Us” program. We thank you for your support and generosity.

This can happen when we allow ourselves to be controlled by and aligned with the Holy Spirit: “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce the kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.” Galatians 5: 22-23.

God of infinite possibilities, open our hearts and minds. Help us to expand our thoughts so that we may share your love with each other through our words and actions. Inspire us to open our church and share the love, joy, and hope that our fellowship of believers fortifies and sustains. Remind us that we are called upon to help each other and the community to experience the rest Christ offers and find peace for our soul as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Help us to be better stewards of your gifts to use and share those gifts in a manner worthy of your trust in us, and to show our appreciation to those who guide us in the understanding and manifestation of Christ's calling for us. Amen.

May our actions be a reflection of your love,
The Stewardship Committee

Children & Youth Discipleship

Wednesday Night Ministry for Children and Youth!!

Every Wednesday during the school year (except during holiday breaks), there is fun, food, and faith for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. Each night has games, dinner, and faith discussions for every age. If you would like to sign up a child or youth for Wednesday nights contact Rhonda Eugea at reugea@firstunitedpres.org or you can scan the QR code and fill out a digital form.



Wednesdays for Grades K-5

December 4th: Our story this week will be the birth of Jesus from Luke 2:1-20. During response time, we will be making nativity scenes.

December 11, 18, & 25: There is NO Wednesday Night Ministry these weeks! We will be back January 8, 2025!

Wednesdays for Grades 6th-12th

December 4th: During lesson time this week, we will watch and discuss the movie A Charlie Brown Christmas.

December 11, 18, & 25: There is NO Wednesday Night Ministry these weeks! We will be back January 8, 2025!

Drum Circles

Since September, Ed Langen has been leading drum circles once a month during response time for GFF and PYC. This is possible due to a generous donor who donated the funds for the drums. Below are a few pictures from the September and October drum circles.

Wednesday Night Meals

Wednesday night youth meals still needs volunteers to provide meals. 2024 is covered! Thanks so much! 2025 has many openings. Contact Jess Mokriakow, (618) 910-3738, jmokrakow@gmail.com or Leah Lankford, (618) 696-6576, shawnandleah@yahoo.com to see how you can help.



Sunday Discipleship for ALL Children and Youth

SUNDAYS
9:15-10:00 AM

There are opportunities for all ages to grow in their faith on Sunday morning. Safe, interactive childcare will be available in the Toddler Room for children 5 years old and under. Kids in grades Kindergarten through 5th have a time of **Faith & Fun!** This will help younger children build their basic beliefs and knowledge about God in fun and engaging ways. Sixth through 12th graders are invited to come eat some waffles and explore the Bible in meaningful ways during **Waffles & the Word**.

Children and Worship at FUPC

All children are welcome in worship at FUPC! There are also two special places for children during the 10:30 am service.

Childcare During Worship for birth through age 3

Two caring volunteers are in the Toddler Room ready to welcome children ages 3 and younger. The volunteers are members of FUPC and have been trained and background checked.

Children's Chapel for age 3 through grade 3

After a special time with the pastors, children are invited to leave with a Worship Leader and Greeters to continue to worship in Children's Chapel. This is a special place where children will hear stories of God's people and respond.

First United Presbyterian Church

*Christmas Eve
at First United*

**GIFT
EXCHANGE**



*Make plans now and invite family, friends, neighbors,
and strangers to one of our Christmas Eve services.*

Tuesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve service times:

4:00 pm, childcare will be available

In-person only

7:00 pm, no childcare offered

In-person and via Zoom

December 29

**There will no 8:00 a.m. service on December 29.
Please plan to join us at 10:30 a.m. in-person or via Zoom.**

New Staff: Investing in All Kids on Wednesday Nights

Kayla Descher has been hired as our Wednesday Night Ministry Assistant. We have more and more students who are neurodivergent (those with ADHD, Autism, etc.) attending on Wednesdays and we want to invest in additional trained staff to assist in meeting these students' needs. Kayla has a Bachelor's Degree in psychology and real-world experience working with children, youth, and adults in psychological services. She currently works as a psychometrist for Amethyst Neuropsychology in Swansea. This is part of our church's dedication to Welcoming All as we share the Good News at FUPC. If you see Kayla on a Wednesday, make sure you welcome her and introduce yourself.



Staff Leaders

Rev. Rob Dyer, Senior Pastor / Head of Staff

rdyer@firstunitedpres.org

Rev. Alex Lysdahl, Associate Pastor

alysdahl@firstunitedpres.org

Rhonda Eugea,

Director of Christian Discipleship

reugea@firstunitedpres.org

Jami Olsen, Administrative Assistant

office@firstunitedpres.org

Dr. Andy Jensen, Director of Music

ajensen@firstunitedpres.org

Mat Conway, Worship Music Leader

Diana Umali, Pianist / Accompanist

Dale Overstreet, Director of Audio /

Visual Ministries + Custodian
videoministry@firstunitedpres.org

FIRST UNITED
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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the Steeple

To submit articles and suggestions each month, simply email the team!

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office hours
Monday-Friday
8:00 am-1:00 pm 

Sundays

8:00 am Chapel Worship

9:00 am Chancel Choir

9:15 am Sunday School

**10:30 am Sanctuary and
Zoom Worship**

5:45 pm Children & Youth

5:45 pm United Bells



Christmas at First United

1ST

Gratitude
Sunday

Donations (non-perishable items and money) will be collected for the Community Interfaith Food Pantry. There will also be an opportunity to write notes to our shut-ins (or even color a card for them).

8TH

Ugly
Sweater
Sunday



15TH

Christmas
Cantata

Join us at the 10:30 am service for a beautiful musical worship led by FUPC's choir. There will not be an 8:00 am service.



18TH

Bingo for
Christmas
Cookies



Come play bingo and see if you can win a dozen Christmas cookies! No planning ahead needed, just show up to Eversull Hall and bingo for cookies. All ages welcome! Starts at 6:00 pm.



22ND

Red &
Green
Sunday

Wear your red and green to worship.

24TH

Christmas
Eve

Worship with us on Christmas Eve at 4:00 pm or 7:00 pm. We will sing, light candles, and celebrate the birth of Jesus!



BONUS PICS!

Check out a few pictures of the fun KIX and TIM youth have on Wednesday nights during recreation.

