



THE STEEPLE

Happy New Year! Where's My Flying Car?

For anyone who spent much of their life before the year 2000, it seems almost surreal that we are living in the year 2025. I can remember watching movies and TV shows that were set in years like 2025. In fact, the "future" that was visited in the movie Back to the Future Part 2 was 2015! We are already 10 years beyond that! The original Blade Runner movie was set in 2017. And what did all of these movies have? Flying cars. Where's my flying car?

I know that they have invented flying cars. I also know many of the technical, social, and economic reasons why they are not common, but it doesn't keep me from wishing I had mine. I also know that once we all get flying cars we will start whining about not having teleporters, food replicators, or time machines. We yearn for newness. Each year we notice what we don't have. Each year we notice what was not so great about last year. We are a tough group to keep satisfied.

This year I am hearing more and more dread about the future as well. People are starting to get frightened about what 2025 will bring. Last year and in the coming year, we have times to weep and times to laugh, times to mourn and times to dance, times to keep silent and times to speak, times to love and times to hate. These times are not all good times, but they are the reality of what life includes. As Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us, "I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. God has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, God has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it."

Take comfort in knowing that God is in charge. Times of goodness and brokenness may flow around you and through you in life. Remember that God is there throughout all of history and all of your life supplying what is needed for us to meet the times we are in. God intends for us to be happy and enjoy ourselves as we serve and love each other. I would gladly give up my flying car if I could live in a world where we serve and love each other well. Let's meet the challenges and joys of 2025 with the intention to be God's people in ways that really matter.

in Christ, Pastor Rob

2025 Budget Update

In December 2024 Session prayerfully designed a budget for 2025 that is faithful, strategic, and hopeful. The new year's budget includes cost-of-living salary increases for the staff, updated Terms of Call for the pastoral staff, and a new position to support Wednesday Night youth ministries. In addition, Trustees are planning the replacement of one of the HVAC systems in the upcoming year. As most of us have seen in our household budgets, the church has seen insurance premiums increase by 16%. With all these new projected expenses, the total operating budget has only increased by 4% from 2024 expense budget. The leadership of the church is finding ways to responsibly maximize the impact of the offerings that you give.

The continued generous offerings of the congregation will allow the church to meet and exceed all ministry needs. Looking forward to the exciting opportunities 2025 will bring.

Bless you,
Budget Committee and Pastor Rob

Announcements

FUPC electronic correspondence

- eWeekly is sent every Friday at 7:15 A.M. central time
- the Steeple is sent at 8:00 A.M. central time on the last day of the month and is also posted to the FUPC webpage under News
- eAnnouncements are sent to inform the congregation of births, deaths, church-related correspondence, etc.

If you would like to make changes to how you receive these, please call (618) 233-0295 or email, office@firstunitedpres.org.

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.

These Days

These Days daily devotional books for January-March 2025 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.

Per Capita

2024 Per Capita	2025 Per Capita
\$36.00	\$40.00

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

from the Deacons

November Deacon's Meeting:
Deacons Present - 20. Total contacts - 322 (37 calls, 237 cards, 38 visits, and 10 emails & texts).

Wednesday Night Meals

The kitchen crew for Wednesday youth meals have served oodles of delicious dinners to our kids and volunteers. We would like to thank those who have donated or prepared a meal in 2024.

Ann Breeden
Martha Dexheimer
Pat Dye
Joyce Dyer
Jerry & Sharon Gaskill
Pam Halel

Nancy Kreeb
Norma & Clint Mason
Suzy Rybicki
Abby Smith
Tina Thornberry
Bob Wells

We are still looking for volunteers in 2025. Contact Jess Mokriakow, (618) 910-3738, jmokrakow@gmail.com or Leah Lankford, (618) 696-6576, shawnandleah@yahoo.com for more information.

from the Trustees

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

- Solar: Security lights and cameras were installed to prevent vandalism. Ameren installed a light on an existing pole. Our plan for unlimited Cloud storage will allow video to be stored.
- Boiler: A new pump and valves will be added to the system.
- The reflective sign by IL Route 161 was repaired.
- With our insurance payment, a new roof with 50-year guarantee shingles will be installed on our new section. Leaky areas will be resolved.
- A new AC unit has been installed in the Music Room
- The nativity scene was set up.
- The office will be carpeted thanks to a donor.
- The workroom was organized and cleaned. Hazardous materials were securely stored or taken to an appropriate disposal site.

Thank you to everyone who helps maintain and care for our building and grounds!

Thanks to our Salvation Army Bell Ringers!

Thanks to the 40 bell ringers from our congregation who welcomed shoppers at St. Clair Square on December 7! Much cheer was spread as the kettles filled with donations for the Salvation Army. It was a great day to help others.



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

Sunday Veteran Celebration

On Sunday we honored four Veterans who served during Operation Enduring Freedom by displaying their names on our Digital Honor Roll monitor. They were: Jacob Bock, Marvin Brinkley, Amy Brummitt, and Walter O'Brien. We also awarded a Quilt of Honor, had uniforms on display, and tables displaying quilts, memorabilia, and Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's). Service flags were also on display and patriotic music played in the background. Here are some pictures of the event:

Volunteers for Sunday Veteran's Day Celebration were:
Coffee Hour: Janice Hunter, Sue Perez, Mike & Laura Rumer

For the Celebration Event:

Digital Honor Monitor: Amy Brummitt;
Quilts of Honor Table: Mary Stange;
MRE Table: Chuck Moore;
Memorabilia Table: Herb Breeden & Chuck Moore;
Reveille on Trumpet: Bill Sprenger;
Room Layout, Video, and Music: Dale Overstreet;
Patriotic Quilts: Susy Rybicki.

Thanks to others who may have also filled in.

We presented a Quilt of Honor to JoAn Fomboh and husband Keith. JoAn is an active duty Air Force Nurse stationed at Scott AFB. Congratulations JoAn!



Veterans Day cake cut and ready and uniforms and some display tables.



Once again our MRE table was a popular stop. This new food sure beat military rations of the old days!



Our military flags hanging high while we wait for the event to start.



Fellowship & Caring Ministries

JANUARY 3

Sand Dollars

The Sand Dollars will meet Friday, January 3 at 6:00 P.M. in Eversull Hall for pizza and a meeting. If you are a family (children included), couple, or single adult and would like to share a meal in a very relaxed atmosphere with Christian fellowship, please join us. Anyone interested, please contact our Skippers, Brenda & Joe Fedak, (618) 558-7086, or Jan Nevois, (618) 402-7170. Our officers for 2025 will remain the same as last year:

Co-Skippers

Jan Nevois and
Brenda & Joe Fedak

Pursers

Nancy & Bob Lonsdale

Log Keepers

Jeff & Kay Schanuel

JANUARY 9

Book Club

In January, the Book Club will discuss *Folly* by Laurie King.

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 February is *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* by Lisa See.

The Sand Dollars decorated the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary with crismons made by church members years ago

JANUARY 22

Prayer Shawl

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 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.

Merry Mates

Merry Mates will not be meeting in January or February.

JANUARY 28

Potlucks with a Purpose

Potlucks with a Purpose will be meeting in Eversull Hall on Tuesday, January 28 at 6:30 pm. 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!

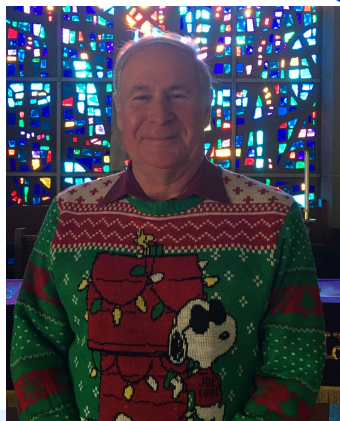
Potlucks with a Purpose met on October 22. We were a small group but we were mightily impressed with our speaker, Pastor Brian Mack from the Market Avenue Church of God in East St. Louis. He spoke about an ambitious goal he has to bring improved services and quality of life to the people in the area 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.

W
E
L
C
O
M
E

N
E
W

M
E
M
B
E
R
S



On Sunday, December 8, we welcomed Dale Cripe and Dave & Sandy Shannahan to our FUPC family.



Our Deepest Sympathy — FAMILY NEWS

For Aurora McKenzie and family & friends of Charles Brightman, Aurora's father, who passed away November 5 in Gaylord, MI.

For the family & friends of Marilyn Wiltsie who passed away November 14 in Swansea, IL.

For the family & friends of Louis Stark who passed away December 4 in St. Louis, MO.

For Dr. Duk & Seon Choo Kim and family & friends of Seon Choo's brother, Chung Byung-ho, who passed away December 8 in South Korea.

For Karen Koeneman and family & friends of Mike Koeneman, Karen's husband, who passed away December 9 in Swansea, IL.

Adult Discipleship

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

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!

Comfort Those Who Mourn

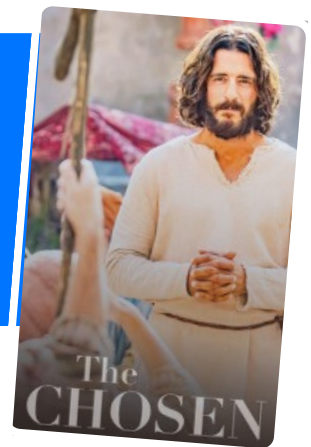
From December 29 through January 19 we will be doing a four-week series from the *Follow Me* curriculum called *Comfort Those Who Mourn*. When we think about comforting those who mourn, we typically think about those who have lost someone in death. However, the action of mourning can indicate any number of losses—the loss of a job or the dissolution of a relationship. We also mourn as communities, especially following community and worldwide events such as war, natural disasters, and mass shootings. In the Bible, we find texts of loss and grief, as well as words of comfort, healing, and presence. In this unit, participants will learn that as we nurture our own ability to comfort others, it is equally important to be in touch with how we grieve ourselves. We all mourn at times and need others to console us and accompany us as we recover. 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.

Pray

On January 26 we will begin a four-week series from the *Follow Me* curriculum called *Pray*. Prayer is both a central spiritual practice for followers of Jesus, and, for many, one of the most difficult to grasp. It seems like prayer should be simple, just talking to God. But we worry about how we are praying, if we are saying the right words or doing the right things, and we wonder if anyone is really listening. The practice, *Pray*, shows us how when we believe that prayer is important enough to worry about messing up, that someone is listening, and that the listener is concerned, we are engaging in supreme acts of trust. Prayer relies on our belief that God cares for us and hears us. On January 26 the session is “Pray Honestly” based on Matthew 6:9-13. 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.

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): 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.



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.

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.

Serving

GIVE a MEAL a MONTH

GAMAM for January will be a collection of snacks for Cosgrove's Kitchen. Cosgrove's Kitchen provides meals for the homeless and with St. Vincent DePaul runs an overnight shelter. The shelter guests leave in the morning with a bag of snacks such as granola bars, Pop-Tarts, individual bags of cookies or cereal, chips or crackers, or fruit or pudding cups. Snacks will be collected on January 12 and delivered to Cosgrove's that week. Thank you in advance for your part in reaching out to the unhoused. Contact Laurie Brown, (618) 620-8112, or Judy Stratton (618) 978-5485 with questions.

Mobile Market: January 16

Our next Mobile Market will happen be Thursday January 16. Volunteers arrive at 8:00 A.M. We wait for a truck from St Louis Food Bank to arrive and once the truck is unloaded, we sort the food and put it into waiting cars. The families who line up to wait for food are from School District 118 which co-sponsors the program. This all happens under the portico by the main doors to the church. It can get pretty cold in January so bundle up! Join us for a time of fellowship and service! Questions can be directed to Judy Stratton, (618) 978-5485 or Laurie Brown, (618) 520-8112.

from Stewardship

With each new year comes new opportunities to spend more time with God (Matthew 14:13) as well as the chance to gain God's vision and set your goals for the new year. Stewardship of our time requires we open our hearts, prioritize our time, and commit to the Lord (Proverbs 16:13; Romans 12:2).

In the secular world one might call these efforts resolutions. However, in our faith based world what we resolve to do is greater than a simple resolution, it is a promise, a commitment, and a sacred covenant with God.

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. God also provides us some simple instructions by which to guide our spiritual lives:

- Read the Bible, both alone and with others.
- Pray more, pray for wisdom; learn to listen to your heart and to align with your values (Proverbs 16:19) and be a prayerful Christian.
- Be content, thankful, and grateful for all the blessings received from God; live with an attitude of gratitude.
- Give generously (1 Corinthians 9:11); volunteer in the community (1 Peter 4:10).
- Forgive. Remember forgiveness is about you and God, not you and them (Corinthians 2:10-11). Start the year by forgiving grudges (Colossians 3:13). We do not forgive for what they did, but rather forgive for what He did. If you need more help, read Matthew 18:21-35. Do not seek revenge (Roman 12:19), and remember, do not forget to forgive yourself. God has.

May God's abundant love renew and transform your efforts to glorify God in all that you do.

-The Stewardship Committee

from Hospitality

First United takes advantage of Sunday Coffee Hour to celebrate happenings in our church life. We started the year off with a new set of coffee urns donated to the church by Mary Teague. In 2024, we celebrated three baptisms and 15 new members as well as just being a loving and nurturing church family. How does this happen? Well, every church group and many individuals sign up to sponsor a Sunday. For example, the Veterans, the Quilters, the Sand Dollars, Member Connections, the Fletcher Group, the Deacons, Evangelism, the Choir, and PWAP all provided tasty treats for between and after services. The Donaldson's, Rumer's, Jensen's, Humphreys', Martha and Jane, Shirley Kowalk, Jean McCann, and Julie Brueggeman teamed up as well.

Shawn Langford and Martha Tambala celebrated their shared birthday by hosting a Coffee Hour together and the June Cox family celebrated her birthday by hosting Coffee Hour. Coffee Hour hosts also provided special treats honoring the solar eclipse, our new solar panels, and most recently, the new boiler (thank you Chris Brown).

The members of our Hospitality Ministry who coordinate and prepare this free gathering are Martha Tambala, Sue Perez, Mary Teague, Lennie Singano, and the Rumer's. The core group is ever expanding. If I did not mention someone, it is because the January through June sign-up sheet was missing.

In addition to Coffee Hour, the Hospitality Ministry helped the Racial Harmony Gathering, 50-Year Member recognition, and the Veteran's Pancake Breakfast.

We are truly grateful for all Coffee Hour participants and invite everyone to sign up for 2025. The sign-up sheet is on the podium by the coffee pots.

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

January 1: There is NO Wednesday Night Ministry this week! Happy New Year!

January 8, 15, & 22: We are continuing our series called "Parables Jesus Told." On the January 8 we will learn about "Something Big from Something Small" based on Matthew 13:31-33. On January 15 we will learn about the parable of "The Pearl" based on Matthew 13:45-46. On January 22 we will learn about the parable of "The Generous Landowner" based on Matthew 20:1-16.

January 29: We are beginning a new five-week series called "Jesus Beginnings." On January 29 we will learn about "Anna and Simeon" based on Luke 2:25-38.

Wednesdays for Grades 6th-12th

January 1: There is NO Wednesday Night Ministry this week! Happy New Year!

January 8: This is the last week of a four-week series called "Grateful" a series from the Gospels on Christmas. Our big idea for this week is to be thankful even when it is not easy.

January 15, 22, & 29: We will beginning a new series called "Most Likely To..." a four-week series from the Old and New Testament on leadership. In this series, we will look at the example of Jesus, plus ordinary people like Moses, Solomon, and the apostle Paul, who were all given opportunities to lead and make a difference in others' lives. Through their examples (both good and bad), we will see how great leaders are the people most likely to follow through, choose to love, choose integrity, and follow God's lead.

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.



WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Great leaders FOLLOW THROUGH.	Great leaders choose to LOVE.	Great leaders choose INTEGRITY.	Great leaders FOLLOW God's lead.

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."

1 Timothy 4:12



First United Presbyterian Church

from the Deacons an interview with... Barb Duncan



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?

God has been very good to me. He deserves the credit, not I.

What would be your advice to your younger self?

Listen to your elders. They are not trying to interfere! They are just trying to save you from making bad choices.

What was one of your moments closest to Christ?

The sudden death of my daughter at the age of 54.

What is your favorite church hymn?

On Angels Wings

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

My loving husband, my family, and wonderful friends and the Deacons at FUPC. God bless them.

What is your favorite Bible verse?

Isiah 41:10

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

It has taught me to have faith in God. There were times I thought He doesn't hear me. I learned so much by being a Stephen Minister. It taught me by helping others, I was also helping myself. When God solves your problem, you have faith in His abilities. When He doesn't solve the problem, He has faith in our abilities.

January Sundays

January Sundays

January Sundays



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

the Steeple

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

theSteeple@firstunitedpres.org

FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
FIRSTUNITEDPRES.ORG 

www.firstunitedpres.org

1303 Royal Heights Rd.
Belleville, IL 62223

618-233-0295

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

Wednesdays

5:45 pm Children & Youth

5:45 pm United Bells

