

THE STEEPLE

Find Your Inner Chippy

I met Chippy when I was on my sabbatical in 2022 visiting various creative mission workers in Thailand. We traveled to a remote village for a day of soccer and faith sharing at a school in the mountains. This community doesn't get to hear a lot about the Christian faith without our mission workers reaching out to them, but what they really don't see much of is middle-aged white dudes from America. I sort of stuck out everywhere I went. It made me a target of attention which felt good and bad.

At the school there was a young man who also stuck out. His name was Chippy. He was a joyful soul who liked to dance and cheer. He wasn't very good at soccer but his clapping, laughing, yelling, and huge smile was a constant presence on the soccer field. He really didn't care how well he was doing but he was shining with a pulsating aura of joy as he ran, stumbled, fell, and then popped back up again and again. Sometimes it felt like the attention he was getting was also good and bad. My Thai language skills were not that good back then (still struggling) so I wasn't sure if the kids were making fun of Chippy or laughing with him.

After a full day together, it came time for us to give out awards of special jerseys and soccer balls to various kids for categories like "Hardest Worker," "Most Improved," and "Most Goals Scored." At the very end, Hmee (pronounced "Mee" but with a tone that goes down and then rises back up), one of our mission workers we support, went to the microphone for one last award. He said, "The last award goes to the player who was the most positive and best cheerleader for others." Before Hmee could say another word the entire assembly of kids started yelling "Chippy! Chippy!" They knew because they had felt it. I didn't know that Chippy's infectious smile could get any bigger, but it did as they all cheered when he received his award.

During March, I will be visiting our Thai mission workers. I probably won't get to see Chippy while I am there, but I will never forget him. I love that he is supported and loved. I love that he has a presence that lifts up others. I love that Chippy has the chance to learn about the grace of God which relies not on our skills but simply on the love that God has for us. I pray you get the chance to be a Chippy for the people in your life. And I pray that you also come to know the grace and love of God so that the Chippy inside of you can shine even brighter!

in Christ's Pastor Rob



Pictures include one of the whole group of students, teachers, and instructors from the Thai Soccer Mission Camp and then a picture of Chippy and Pastor Rob

Announcements

April 27: Calling All 50-Year Members

Have you been recognized as a 50-Year Member of First United Presbyterian Church? If you joined First Presbyterian of Belleville, First Presbyterian of East St. Louis, or Westminster Presbyterian in 1975, we want to celebrate this important milestone in your spiritual life. A special recognition is planned for Sunday, April 27 during the 10:30 am worship service. Help us make sure no one is missing. Please call the Church Office, (618) 233-0295, to check the list for your name.

from the
deacons

January Deacon's Meeting: Deacons Present - 16. Total contacts - 165 (23 calls, 114 cards, 17 visits, and 11 emails & texts).

Lion's Club Collections

As you may know there are two collection receptacles at our church. One is in the hall around the corner from the Stephen Ministry bulletin board in Cornell Commons and one is at the Royal Heights entrance to the Chapel. You may not realize that the Lion's Club collects more than used eyeglasses. They also collect used cell phones and ink cartridges (not toner). These are collected periodically and delivered to the Lion's Club.

Did you know? Dental & Eyeglass Grant Program

Did you know that FUPC has a Dental & Eyeglass Grant Program? This program helps school-aged children in the surrounding Belleville area who need dental and eyecare. You can support this program by contributions to FUPC and indicate in the check memo section "Dental & Eyeglass Grant."

These
Days

These Days daily devotional books for January-March 2025 are available at the Chapel entrance and at the reception desk in Cornell Commons.

WHAT IS THE WELCOMING ALL COMMITTEE???

As part of the Session Vision Tasks in the fall of 2023, a Welcoming All committee was created and began meeting in October 2023. The committee is focused on increasing our welcoming of three groups: neurodivergent people, new people/newcomers, and the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the tasks that we have completed include adding signs throughout the building to welcome newcomers, adding fidgets throughout the building, neurodiversity training for all youth and children volunteers, book studies and online training on how to be a more welcoming church for the LGBTQ+ community, conducting a congregational survey on welcoming, and an adult education class focusing on welcoming. In addition, we have more and more students who are neurodivergent (those with ADHD, Autism, etc.) attending on Wednesdays. Kayla Descher was hired because we want to invest in additionally trained staff to assist in meeting these students' needs. In December, FUPC's Session adopted the Welcoming Statement that this committee constructed. Currently, we are continuing to study and are working on the sensory room that is being funded through a Mental Health Grant through the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the PC(USA). We are excited to continue to welcome all at FUPC!

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 highlights for the month:

- The roof replacement above the Sanctuary was completed. Unfortunately, we encountered some water leakage during installation resulting in water damage to ceiling panels and carpet in the Children's Chapel. The roofing contractor took care of replacing the panel and cleaning the carpet.
- We are thankful for the new boiler during these cold winter months! As a bonus, we are expecting to receive a rebate from Ameren for installing a high efficiency boiler.
- Technology upgrades are progressing as we have upgraded to a commercial grade switch in the loft. We are taking steps to upgrade the cyber security on church computers and continue to work on extending WIFI to the bus garage. This will enable us to install additional surveillance cameras to monitor the garage and solar array.
- We continue to prepare for carpet replacement in the Church Office.
- Plans are underway for renovations to the new Sensory Room.

Fellowship & Fun

Leadership Summit 2025



Fellowship & Caring Ministries

MARCH 7 Sand Dollars

The Sand Dollars will meet Friday, March 7 at 6:00 P.M. in Eversull Hall for dinner 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.

MARCH 13 Book Club

In March, the Book Club will discuss *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman. 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 April is *The Life She Was Given* by Ellen Marie Wiseman.

MARCH 14 Merry Mates

Merry Mates will meet on Friday, March 15 at 6:00 pm in Eversull Hall. This will be a potluck dinner so bring your favorite dish or dessert to share. Beverages will be furnished. Please contact Jean Morgan, (618) 540-8517 if you plan to attend.

MARCH 26 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 March 26 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.

Our Deepest Sympathy FAMILY NEWS

For Logan McGarrity and family & friends upon the death of Logan's father, William McGarrity who passed away January 19 in Pittsburgh PA.


For Carl Karibian and family & friends upon the death of Carl's wife, Wonda Karibian who passed away February 1 in St. Louis MO.

FISH FRY FRIDAYS

MARCH 14 Holy Trinity Catholic Church

MARCH 21 the Quail Club

MARCH 28 Catholic War Veteran's Post 370

March 9
Daylight Saving
Time Begins 



from the Deacons an interview with... Dale Cripe

Each month the Deacons will provide a glimpse into the life of one of our newer members. It will allow readers to become better acquainted with the new faces at First United!



Please identify and describe the place you call your hometown.

I live in Caseyville, IL. It is located close to shopping, highway access, and family in Belleville and O'Fallon.

Why did you choose First United Presbyterian Church?

FUPC was recommended by my sister who is familiar with some of the members and the church activities. The church has a wide range of ages – youth to elderly. The church has good facilities and outreach programs.

What has been your moment closest to Christ?

My faith helped me through my divorce. It gave me a stable source to help me to move forward in life.

How are church and your love of God shaping your life?

It is a constant in my life. From childhood to adulthood, it shaped my thoughts on how to interact with the world.

What makes you smile?

Watching my grandniece grow up and support my sister's musical interests in singing and instrumental concerts.

What fills your days?

Taking part in family activities. Maintaining my lawn. Participate in local Purdue alumni game watches and club activities. Watching movies and sporting events on television.

What are your hobbies/interests that enhance the quality of your life?

I have enjoyed participating in community theatre for the past 15 years. I like to volunteer in community activities, make homemade ice cream, and restoring my grandfather's O-scale model railroad set.

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

Family, long-term friendships, and health. I am close to my sister and niece in the area. I enjoy engaging in 50-year traditions with friends back in my Indiana hometown. I am blessed with overall good health.



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!

Walk Humbly

On March 2, 9, and 16 we will continue a four-week series from the Follow Me curriculum called Walk Humbly. The saints, servants, and sages of the church are frequently praised for their humility. They delight in simple things, avoid the spotlight, eschew material goods, downplay their accomplishments, and make their lives among the lowly. Yet, as will be seen in this practice, humility is hard to grasp. Indeed, the act of grasping at humility—striving for success at humbleness—seems to cause it to slip through our fingers. And perhaps that is the point. Through studying these sessions, participants will learn that humility is found in the knowledge that life is not a prize to be seized, but a gift to be received with gratitude. All our achievements, our powers and possessions, ultimately come from God and return to God—everything is grace. Session 2 is “Favor the Lowly,” Session 3 is “Avoid Judging Others,” and Session 4 is “Speak Less, Listen More.” This class is hybrid, meeting on Sundays at 9:15 am in-person in the Vista Room or via Zoom. 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.

Care for Creation

On March 23 and 30 we will begin a four-week series from Follow Me curriculum called Care for Creation. Caring for creation offers us a way of following Jesus—the one who taught us that God’s love is more powerful even than death—and we will receive a word of hope as we live out our calling as disciples. The four dimensions of this practice that are discussed include: appreciate God’s creation, till, share the planet, and restore creation. This class is hybrid, meeting on Sundays at 9:15 am in-person in the Vista Room or via Zoom. 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.

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 info.

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 March 18 at 1:00 pm, Amy Brummitt, (618) 235-4226.
- Lydia Circle will meet March 20 at 1:00 pm, Jan Jensen, (626) 894-6580.

CONNECTING CHRISTIAN HEARTS

The Deacons are excited to again roll out the Connecting Christian Hearts Program on February 23 and March 2. This year the Connecting Christian Hearts program is focusing on new members who joined First United in 2023 and 2024 – both individuals and families.

At both services on February 23 and March 2, a Valentine tree will be decorated with red hearts containing the names from our list who wish to participate in the Connecting Christian Hearts Program. *If you choose a heart from the tree, the expectations are that you will make one contact (card/note, phone call, text/email) per month with this FUPC new member through December. A cheery note, an engaging phone conversation, an email containing a hilarious joke, or even a funny card.* Along with the red paper heart, you will also be given an information sheet containing your selected heart’s contact information (mailing address, phone number, and email address). In turn you will be asked to record the name on the heart that was chosen, along with your contact information.

This is a wonderful way to spread God’s love within our own church family. Please plan to CONNECT by choosing a HEART.

GIVE a MEAL a MONTH

Give-A-Meal-A-Month for March will collect bags of dog and cat food to donate to Gateway Pet Guardians. Gateway is a shelter in East St Louis that rescues dogs and cats and provides adoptions as well as food for the pets of patrons who can demonstrate financial need. Bring pet food to church by March 9 and it will be delivered the next week. Contact Laurie Brown, (618) 620-8112, or Judy Stratton (618) 978-5485 with questions.

Mobile Market: March 20

Our next Mobile Market will happen be Thursday, March 20. Volunteers are asked to arrive at 8:00 A.M. and to dress for the weather! Once the truck arrives from the St. Louis Area Foodbank, we sort the food and then load it into waiting cars which line up outside the Commons area. Mobile Market is a great opportunity to serve the underserved in our community and it only takes a few hours once a month. Join us in this effort! Questions can be directed to Judy Stratton, (618) 978-5485 or Laurie Brown, (618) 520-8112.

KINDERCOTTAGE DONATIONS

The Lydia Circle will once again be collecting individually wrapped candy from March 23 through April 13. Containers will be set up in Cornell Commons and all collected candy will go to Kindercottage in East St. Louis for their Easter baskets. Contact Susy Rybicki, (618) 792-9458, with any questions.

One Great Hour of Sharing

The world often feels heavy with hardship. Disasters tear through communities, hunger gnaws at the bellies of millions, and dreams wither under the weight of poverty. Yet, amidst the darkness, glimmers of hope shine through, thanks to acts of compassion and solidarity. One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), the Special Offering of the Presbyterian Church (USA), embodies this spirit, offering a powerful way to answer Jesus' call in Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."

Through OGHS, our gifts are channeled into three vital ministries:

- **Rebuilding Hope after Disaster:** 32% goes to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). PDA rushes to the aid of communities struck by natural disasters, offering immediate relief and long-term rebuilding support. From providing emergency shelter and food to rebuilding homes and schools, PDA helps communities not just survive, but thrive in the aftermath of unimaginable hardship.
- **Growing Food Security:** 36% goes to the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP). PHP tackles the root causes of hunger, empowering communities to grow their own food and access nutritious meals. Through agricultural training, sustainable farming practices, and advocacy for food justice, PHP works to ensure that no one goes hungry and every child has the chance to flourish.
- **Partnering in Progress:** 32% goes to the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP). The Presbyterian Committee on Self-Development of People (SDOP) empowers individuals and communities to break the cycle of poverty. By providing microloans, vocational training, and leadership development opportunities, SDOP helps people build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

Remember, OGHS can have a lifetime impact. Together, let us turn hope into action, rebuild lives, and create a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Contributions can be made online or by using the special envelopes in the pew racks. Thank you for considering these worthwhile projects.

from Stewardship

Stewardship was one of the most dominant themes in the 36 parables of the New Testament. It must have been pretty important to our Lord and Savior, for God entrusts us with the responsibility of being good stewards of all the gifts he has given us.

It goes beyond time, talent, and treasures. It is intertwined with discipleship. Not only are we called to worship in the spirit and in truth, but we are also called to live in the truth. We are to deal with the awkward and uncomfortable, to be instruments of peace, and stand up for grace, truth, mercy, and justice. Silence is not an alternative. We are called to witness joy that is just "too precious" not to share. We must not leave it hidden within our hearts, for to do so is the first step to its withering. We all know the ultimate consequence of withering.

When harm and injustice are overlooked and become routine or commonplace, we must step in if we wish to retain dignity for ourselves, for our community, and to remain true to our faith.

May we not only sing our hymns, but live them:

"They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love;"

"Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I will hold your people in my heart;"

"I'm gonna live (work, pray, sing) so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime"

May we be the seeds of peace and truth in all we do.

-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

March 5 Ash Wednesday: We will have dinner, recreation, and then all will attend the 7:00 pm worship service in the Sanctuary. Families are welcome to join us for the worship service.

March 12, 19, & 26: We will begin a five-week series called "Surprises." On March 12 we will be discussing "Women at the Tomb" based on Luke 24:1-12. On March 19 we will be discussing "Memory and Surprise" based on Luke 24:13-35 and having a drum circle during response time. On March 26 we will be discussing "Mary Finds Her Friends" based on John 20:11-18.

March 23: GFF and PYC Drum Circle will be a part of the 10:30 am worship service. Please plan to join us for worship!

PYC Mystery Day 2025: PYC Mystery Day will be Saturday April 5. This is a free event for our PYC students in 3rd through 5th grades. We will be meeting at the church at 9:30 am and parent/guardian will pick up at 6:00 pm. RSVP along with t-shirt size is required by March 19 to Rhonda Eugea at reugea@firstunitedpres.org.

Wednesdays for Grades 6th-12th



March 5 Ash Wednesday: We will have recreation, dinner, and then all will attend the 7:00 pm worship service in the Sanctuary. Families are welcome to join us for the worship service.

March 12: We will be finishing our 4-week series on righting wrongs. The big idea is what if God wants you to make wrong things right?

March 19 and 26: We will begin a new six-week series on the Resurrection called "Invited." There is nothing like throwing a party to celebrate the people you love. In this six-week series, we will see what it is like when we celebrate all that God has done through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

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**.

Contact Rhonda Eugea if you have any questions at reugea@firstunitedpres.org.

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

sacrament of baptism



On Sunday, February 2, Leeam and Kenza-Eliz received the Sacrament of Baptism. They are pictured with their parents, Keith and JoAn, Godparents, family, and friends.



Thank you from the children and youth of FUPC for helping tackle hunger in our community! This year you donated 497 pounds of food and other items plus over \$1,000 in cash donations for the Community Interfaith Food Pantry.



Staff Leaders

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the Steeple

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

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FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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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

Wednesdays

5:45 pm Children & Youth
5:45 pm United Bells

