

# FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK

February 8, 2026



Living God's All-Inclusive Love

# Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

11:00 A.M. Worship

**Bold text indicates congregation participation**

\*Indication to stand in body or spirit

Prelude

Bobby Nguyen

*Träumerei* by Robert Schumann

Welcome

Michael Jones

Introit

Preschool Church School

*Again, I Say Rejoice* by Mark Burrows

**\*Call To Worship**

Chris Damon

Called to be light,

**we carry God's hope into the shadows of the world.**

Called to be salt,

**we enhance the lives of those around us, with joy.**

Called to live in God's reality,

**we welcome everyone as carriers of God's light.**

In the Mystery, the Wisdom, the Glory of God:

**Let us worship!**

**\*Passing the Peace**

**\*Opening Hymn**

*Praise to the Living God* (Black hymnal no. 8)

*Online worshippers: the words to hymns listed in the hymnal are now available as a supplement at the end of this bulletin.*

Prayer for Wholeness

Michael Jones

**You give us light and cause us to shine like a city on a hill, O God. You ask us to be the flavor of your hope and peace in our conversations, families, and communities. Forgive us for the times we hide our light and cause division, Healing God. Help us to recognize hope that we can bring into the**

**world, even as we long for a day when all will find warmth in the light and will taste your hope. Help us to dream your dream for all. Amen.**

*Time for silent prayer.*

**Musical Assurance of Love** K-5 Church School & Youth

*You Are Loving, You Are Loved* by Mark Burrows

When the world keeps spinning round you, when you fear you'll lose control,  
hold on, for there are loving hearts reaching out to make you whole.

*Refrain:* As sure as the ground beneath your feet, as sure as the stars above,  
remember you are loving, child. Remember, you are loved.

When the hurt builds up inside you, when you think you're all alone, hold on, for  
there are caring hands reaching out to guide you home. R/

And when the joy builds up inside you, when it makes you want to sing, sing on!  
For there are yearning hearts who will need the joy you bring. R/

**Invitation to the Children**

Lydia Mulkey

**Musical Response**

*This Little Light of Mine* (Black hymnal no. 524 v.1)

**Time for Sharing**

Lydia Mulkey

**\*Hymn of Illumination**

*You Are Salt for the Earth, O People* (Black hymnal no. 181)

**Hebrew Scripture Reading**

Chris Damon

**Isaiah 56:6-12**

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it and hold fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel:

I will gather others to them besides those already gathered. All you wild animals, all you wild animals in the forest, come to devour! Israel's sentinels are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs that cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. The shepherds also have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, to their own gain, one and all. "Come," they say, "let us get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink. And tomorrow will be like today, great beyond measure."

## New Testament Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:13-20

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Sermon -- Salt and Light

Michael Jones

### \*Sermon Response

*Come Let Us Dream* (TUNE: O WALLY WALLY, Black hymnal no. 362)

**Come, let us dream God's dream again.  
Come, one and all, let us ascend  
the mountain top where those of old  
saw God's new day on earth unfold.**

**The lame shall walk, the blind shall see,  
the doors swing wide, all prisoners free,  
the lowly raised, the proud brought low.  
This is God's dream: let justice flow.**

**When hatred ends and war shall cease,  
so all may dwell in deepest peace,  
then be assured the time is near  
when perfect love casts out all fear.**

**Stewardship Testimony**

Susan Buchanan

**Invitation to the Offering**

Lydia Mulkey

**Offertory**

*You Shall Have a Song* by Harriet Ziegenhals

You shall have a song and gladness of heart,  
For music can joyfully love to all impart.  
Lift every voice, play the flute and violin,  
And you shall have a song to sing, Alleluia!

Sanctuary Choir,

Marilee Castañeda, flute  
K-5th Grade Church School

Make a joyful noise to God all ye lands,  
Come serve God with gladness of heart and mind and hands  
We are God's children, God made us everyone  
And we shall have a song to sing, Alleluia!

Enter now God's gates with thanksgiving and praise  
For the Lord is our strength let us serve God all our days.  
God's steadfast love will endure to the end,  
And we shall have a song to sing, Alleluia!

**\*Doxology**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Christ all people here below;  
Praise Holy Spirit evermore:  
Praise Triune God, whom we adore.**

# Prayers of the People & the Lord's Prayer Michael Jones

**Our Creator, Our Mother, and 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.**

## \*Closing Hymn

### *A Little Bit of Salt*

**A little bit of salt will quickly show its worth;**

**A little bit of faithfulness will change the earth.**

**God, make us worth our salt — a church that's glad to be  
The change that you desire in each community.**

**A lamp that's in a house gives safety, warmth and light;  
It's set upon a table where it shines so bright.**

**God, make your church a light that bravely takes a stand  
To bring your love and justice into all the land.**

**A garden is a place where so much beauty grows,  
Where flowers bloom and food is raised and water flows.  
When worship leads us out to care for the oppressed,  
O God, you say we're like a garden at its best.**

**When worship leads us out to love and serve the poor,  
To welcome in the immigrant at our own door,  
O God, then we'll be called "repairers of the breach,"  
And we your church will be "restorers of the streets."**

**It's tempting to remain well-hidden, quiet, bland —  
Yet, God, you make us salt and light to change this land.  
You send us out to love, to build and to repair,  
Till peace and justice flourish here and everywhere.**

\*Invitation to Join the Circle

Lydia Mulkey

Benediction

Michael Jones

Response

Go now in peace, go now in peace.  
May the love of God surround you.  
Everywhere, everywhere you may go.

Postlude

Bobby Nguyen

*Jesus Loves Me* arr. by Jason D. Payne

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#### Closing Hymn

Tune: Traditional Hebrew melody ("The God of Abraham Praise")

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# 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](http://firstunitedoakpark.com/calendar). Follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/firstunitedoakpark](https://facebook.com/firstunitedoakpark)) for our weekly newsletter and lots more.*

## **Let's Gather Again: Small Group Sign Up Now Open**

Small Groups are returning for a six-week journey of faith and fellowship. Groups will meet once a week, beginning the week of February 15 running through the week of March 22. Sign up in the lounge.

## **Alternative Christmas Store Valentine's Sale TODAY**

Need a last-minute gift for your sweetie? Stop by the ACS Valentine's Sale in the lounge after worship to shop a variety of local and fair trade goods. Proceeds benefit First United Mission Partners.

## **Consecration Sunday and Potluck Next Week!**

This year's Stewardship Season will wrap up with a celebratory worship service followed by a potluck lunch in Centennial Hall on February 15. Use the QR code to let us know what you will bring.



## **Adult Ed Speaker Series Next Week**

Rabbi Max Weiss from Oak Park Temple will discuss "What Jews Wish Their Neighbors Knew About Them." At a time of turmoil in the Middle East and at home, mutual understanding is the beginning of communication. LOCATION CHANGE: Meet in the chapel at 9:45 a.m.

## **Dinner & a Movie, February 13**

Dinner and a Movie returns to the lounge on February 13 for a showing of "The Quiet Girl." Dinner at 6:00 (\$5 donation); movie at 6:30 (free). Sign up using the link in the eblast or email Ron Haas ([haas.inchicago@comcast.net](mailto:haas.inchicago@comcast.net)).

## **Building Closed for Presidents' Day, February 16**

First United will be closed on February 16 in observance of Presidents' Day. Staff will not be available on February 16.

## **Ash Wednesday, February 18**

Lent comes early this year. Gather in the Sanctuary at 6:30 p.m. on February 18 for a family-friendly worship service for Ash Wednesday.

## Save the Date: Michael Jones' Installation on February 22

Michael will be officially installed as the Lead Pastor of First United on February 22 at 3 p.m. in a special worship service in the Sanctuary with representatives from our denominations. A reception will follow in the lounge.

## Sign up for Dinners for Eight or Nine

Dinners for Eight or Nine returns on Saturday, March 7. Get more details and sign up in the lounge before or after worship.

# VIGIL FOR SOLIDARITY

In solidarity with the people of Minneapolis, we will honor the lives of all those who have died at the hands of ICE as we sing and pray for peace and justice.

*People of all faiths and no faith are welcome.*

**Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup> at 1pm**

**Gather around the peace pole at  
First United Church of Oak Park -  
848 Lake St.**

*In the event of inclement weather,  
we will gather in the sanctuary.*



**FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK**  
Living God's All-Inclusive Love





## February Is Black History Month

Western society has used two great tools to oppress Black people. One, the Bible, spewing oppressive theology to justify first the acts of enslavement, and still to safeguard harmful laws and practices that disproportionately impact Black people. Two, the erasure of Black stories, Black history and the stripping of Black culture. I will not spend the next 600 words declaring what I hope you already know; that we serve a JUST GOD.

So, instead, I will challenge us to take heed to these Scriptures, breathe them, live them, allow them to guide you whenever you have doubt. Consider this piece my attempt to model one small way we can combat systemic racism this Black History Month through telling, celebrating, and honoring Black stories, Black history and Black culture.

My Nana painted the walls of her two-bedroom townhome on the South Side of Pittsburgh the color of Pepto Bismol. She covered every inch with images of Black people from all over the world and called it beautiful. It was. Black people, 140 million in the diaspora, 1.2 billion on the continent, connected by water, land, history and culture. I see them, I feel them. And while we were taught that they should bring us shame, it brings me immense pleasure ... so let us honor it.

**Honor our dance.** It is both our rebellion and our freedom, connecting us across the diaspora to the souls of our ancestors. Connected by Bomba of Puerto Rico, as our bare feet repel from the land and our bodies move with the vibrations of the drums. Connected by Second Line of Louisiana, as the sound of brass instruments pairs with our footwork and we parade down the streets of our homes. Let us honor it.

**Honor our hair.** Hair, like our melanin, both envied and adored. Our coils, locs and kinks that rise with the sun, act as a reminder of who our people are. We are the people of the Zulu tribe in South Africa rocking our Bantu Knots, the Mbalantu women of Namibia with our box braids and we are every Black girl across the diaspora today. Let us honor it.

**Honor our food.** The very nourishment of Black people, sustaining us in the darkest of hours and aiding in our joy in the daylight. Recipes, many never written, but inherently known, ingredients derived from the land our ancestors freely farmed. Let us honor it.

**Honor our creativity.** The holder of culture, embodying the authentic, diverse and unapologetic expression of our people. The hands, the voices, the words, the music,

the eye, the rhythm, the style — Augusta Savage. Nina Simone. Raoul Peck. Josephine Baker. Creativity is the pathway to our liberation. Let us honor it.

**Honor our spirituality.** It connects us to what has passed, what is and what is yet to come, reminding us of our innate power, reminding us of our divinity. It links us in practice through the pouring out of libations in memory of our ancestors from the ocean shores of Ghana to the street corners of Chicago. It grounds us in collective care and community as the Black churches create safe havens from Selma, through Louisville, to Delaware. It is our knowing that we will win. Let us honor it.

My Nana painted the walls of her two-bedroom townhome on the South Side of Pittsburgh the color of Pepto Bismol. She covered every inch with images of Black people from all over the world and called it beautiful. It was.

Let us honor it today, tomorrow, and all of our tomorrows by telling, celebrating and honoring our stories, Black stories, Black history, Black culture. AND you don't have to stop there.

- **Proclaim** your commitment to inclusion clearly and often.
- **Concede** nothing at the expense of inclusion, at the expense of the safety for the “other.”
- **Challenge** oppressive interpretations of the Word.
- **Speak out** against injustices. Ask how you can stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed. How can you be an ally?
- **Intentionally seek** opportunities for yourself and others to learn and unlearn.
- **Acknowledge** impact. Take/hold each other accountable.

When all else fails, lead with love. Do no harm.

~Samantha Davis, Associate for Gender & Racial Justice, Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

### **Let us pray:**

To the Most High, Creator of this Universe, Olodumare, Olorun, Mawu, Nzambi Mpungu, Unkulu Unkulu, Chukwu and the many other names by which African peoples have acknowledged you across the stage of human history, we humbly ask that you continue to be with us. Empower us, as you always have, even when we may have been ignorant of your presence. Remind us to honor our spirituality, creativity, food, hair and bodies as the Divine gifts that they are. Be with us this month and every month, from now until the end of time. Ase' and Ase'-O

# Welcome to First United!

We are a union church of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ, dedicated to sharing Christ's radically inclusive love. We welcome all, regardless of who you love, where you've come from, what religious background you have, or where you are on your faith journey. As a More Light/Open and Affirming congregation, we are committed to the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in membership and ministry.

**Learning More About First United** Interested in learning more about First United Church? Look for members wearing gold buttons, talk to one of the pastors, or join us for a Newcomers class held three times per year.

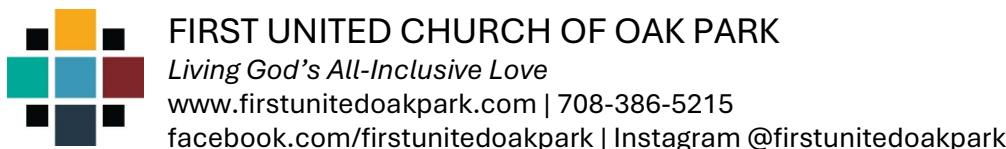
**Adult Education** Faith formation doesn't end after Church School. Adult Education takes a variety of forms, from small, group Bible studies to Sunday morning Speaker Series. Weekly Bible Study and Speaker Series meet at 9:45 a.m. September through May.

**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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Music Ministries** Our Sanctuary Choir leads worship most Sundays and rehearses on Wednesday from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. during the season and is welcoming new members! You don't have to commit to sing every week. Our Handbell Choir rings a few times per year and rehearses on Wednesday from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

**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.



Lead Pastor: Michael Jones – [mjones@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:mjones@firstunitedoakpark.com)

Associate Pastor: Lydia Mulkey – [lmulkey@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:lmulkey@firstunitedoakpark.com)

Church Administrator: Heather Vanderberg – [hvanderberg@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:hvanderberg@firstunitedoakpark.com)

Financial Administrator: Patricia Morales – [pmorales@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:pmorales@firstunitedoakpark.com)

Choir Director: Sally Sloane – [ssloane@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:ssloane@firstunitedoakpark.com)

Organist: Bobby Nguyen – [bnguyen@firstunitedoakpark.com](mailto:bnguyen@firstunitedoakpark.com)

## *Hymn Supplement for February 8, 2026*

### **Opening Hymn**

*Praise to the Living God* (black hymnal no. 8)

**Praise to the living God, the God of love and light,  
Whose word brought forth the myriad suns and set the world in flight;  
Whose infinite design, which we but dimly see,  
Pervades all nature, making all a cosmic unity.**

**Praise to the living God, from whom all things derive,  
Whose Spirit formed upon this sphere the first faint seeds of life;  
Who caused them to evolve, unwitting, toward God's goal,  
Till humankind stood on the earth, as living, thinking souls.**

**Praise to the living God, who knows our joy and pain,  
Who shares with us our common life, the sacred and profane.  
God toils where'er we toil, in home and mart and mill;  
And deep within the human heart God leads us forward still.**

**Praise to the living God, around, within, above,  
Beyond the grasp of human mind, but whom we know as love.  
In these tumultuous days, so full of hope and strife,  
May we bear witness to the Way, O Source and Goal of life.**