



FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK

Sunday, August 16, 2026

www.firstunitedoakpark.com

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Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Blessing of the Animals

10:00 A.M. Worship

Bold text indicates congregation participation – *Indication to stand in body or spirit

Prelude

Bobby Nguyen

Shall We Gather at the River by Robert Lowry, arr. Gregg Sewell

Welcome

Rev. Michael Jones

*Call To Worship

Chip Readling

Let all who celebrate God's great creation come and find each other.

Our awe at God's creativity in nature will lead us to sing!

In the days of caring for one another and the animals, there is holy transformation,

and the world breathes anew.

"But ask the animals, and they will teach you,

the birds of the air, and they will tell you;

ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you,

and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

In God's hand is the life of every living thing."

*Passing the Peace

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

*Opening Hymn - *God of Great and God of Small*

See Insert

Prayer for Wholeness

Creator God, You have made a beautiful world filled with wonder and surprises! You have gifted us with the blessing of animals, those in the wild, those on farms, those in our own homes. You brought into being that which we could not

imagine for ourselves, life we cannot see without the aid of microscopes, animals we can only see in pictures from remote regions of this planet earth.

We thank you for abundant life; for the birds we hear in the morning, for the drone of the bees when we are outside, for the vast tapestry of life which is interwoven, and for the gift of our own animal companions.

For the joy they bring us, for the unconditional love and forgiveness, and for the benefits they are to our health and to our spirit, we give you thanks. And yet, we know that we have not always been faithful caretakers of our animals.

Forgive us when we have dirtied their environment, erased places of shelter, polluted the waters, killed off their food supplies or neglected to feed or tend animals in our own communities.

Forgive us when we have not considered the wider picture; when we have neglected the animals in the wild or in the name of food production.

Forgive us when we neglect to see all animals as part of your creation, that your love beats in all hearts, and that you give breath to all creation. Amen.

Assurance of Love

Through Christ our sins are forgiven. Take hold of this forgiveness, and live your life, knowing that you are forgiven and deeply loved. Know that the Holy Spirit will enable you to live fully, richly, and deeply. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Response *Enter, Rejoice and Come In*

Enter, rejoice, and come in. Enter, rejoice, and come in.

Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.

Open yourself to the song. Open yourself to the song.

Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.

Invitation to the Children

Gathering Response #524 v.1 (Black hymnal)

This Little Light of Mine

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,

let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Time for Sharing

Blessing of the Animals

All are welcome to bring forward pets, pictures and/or names of a pet not present, and pictures and/or names of pets that have died for a blessing. If you need the blessing to come to you, please raise your hand.

*Hymn of Illumination - *All Things Bright and Beautiful*

See Insert

Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Reading

Chip Readling

Psalm 133

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

Gospel Reading Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' tables." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that moment.

The word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

'Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God, and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spent enough

time with the tiniest creature even a caterpillar would never have to prepare a sermon so full of God is every creature'
(Meister Eckhart, a 13th century Christian mystic)

***Sermon Response - God Calls You Good**

See insert

Invitation to the Offering

During the offering all are welcome to bring offerings to the offering plates and/or pink prayer cards to the offering plates. Prayer requests will be lifted up during the Prayers of the People. If you are unable to move to an offering plate, please ask a neighbor take it or lift a hand, and we will make sure there is someone to bring it forward for you.

Offertory

The Cerniglia Trio

All Things Bright and Beautiful by John Rutter

***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 (and Pets)

Gracious God, you created the earth and all that is in it and proclaimed it good. We give you thanks for the life and witness of the prophets who remind us of your true purpose and for those special people who minister with tenderness to all living beings. We thank you for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, for creatures of the sea and creeping crawlers of the earth.

We praise you, O God, for the gift of everything wild.

O God, we thank you for pets, for the animals in our homes, for dogs and cats, for hamsters and turtles, for birds, lizards, and fish, and all the animals we love.

We praise you, O God, for the gift of creature companions.

Thank you for helpers, for the animals who aid us, for service and therapy animals, for search-and-rescue dogs and police K-9 units.

We praise you, O God, for the faithful care of our fellow beings.

Holy Presence, we thank you for creatures who teach and inspire, for classroom pets and the residents of zoos, and even the animals which we are not as fond of, but still have a part in this great web of life.

We praise you, O God, for the awe and mystery of your world.

Creator, we thank you for the animals of agriculture, for the lives that sustain our own, for cows and chickens, for pigs and fish.

We praise you, O God, for the web of life that sustains your world.

Divine Spirit, we thank you for humans who work for the ethical treatment of animals, for veterinarians and biologists, for shelter staff and pet owners.

We praise you, O God, for our calling to be stewards of your creation.

We pray also today for animals who are mistreated in any way, for those who are tortured, deserted, abused, exploited and used for unnecessary experimentation, and for any whose lives are spent in extreme confinement.

Help us to stop abuse in any form.

Open our mouths to the defense of the defenseless, and above all, open our lives to your ways.

The Lord's Prayer

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 - O God, Your Creatures Fill the Earth*

See insert

**Invitation to the Circle*

**Blessing*

**Blessing Response*

Go Now in Peace (Sleeth)

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

Walking the Dog by George Gershwin

Today's Liturgist: Chip Reading's family has made First United their church since 2010, and he has served on multiple church committees. He is an Eagle Scout, cubmaster of pack 16 for many years, and full-time renewable energy advocate for over 20 years.

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-Call to Worship adapted from www.enfleshed.com & The Book of Job, Chapter 12.

-Prayer for Wholeness and Assurance of Love adapted from a 2010 Blessing of Animals Liturgy written by Rev. Barbara Allen, Chaplain, Lort Smith Animal Hospital.

-Sermon Response "God Calls You Good" ©2017 Paul Vasile www.paulvasile.com.

-Prayers of the People liturgy adapted from 2014 A Service of Worship for Blessing of Animals at the Duke University Chapel and A Litany for the Blessing of the Animals by Lindy Vogado.

-Closing Hymn Text: Copyright © 2011 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

Save the Dates

Please mark your calendar with these dates and watch the eblast for more information. We are ramping up to a busy time of year as we draw near to the start of the program year, so please watch upcoming eblasts and bulletins for volunteer opportunities and other information.

Backpack Blessing – August 23 at 10 a.m. in worship

Prime Time Breakfast - August 27 at 9 a.m. at Al's Grill in Oak Park
RSVP before August 24 to jhaisman59@gmail.com

Church School Carnival - August 30 after worship on the Church lawn

Labor Day Holiday; Church Closed – Monday, September 7

First Day of Church School – September 13 at 9:45 a.m.
Register using the link in the eblast.

Gathering Day – September 13

Worship returns to 11 a.m.; root beer float celebration after worship

First Day of Adult Education – September 20 at 9:45 a.m. in Centennial Hall

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. Visit our website to read our land acknowledgment and open and affirming statement.

Interested in learning more about First United Church? Look for members wearing gold buttons, talk to one of the pastors, or watch for the next Newcomers class.

Assistive Listening System If you are in need of assistance in hearing during the worship service, please speak with one of the greeters.

Adult Education Adult Education takes a variety of forms. 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! Enjoy the Pray-ground throughout worship or take an activity bag to the pews. Childcare is available for children five and under in our nursery. Ask a greeter for directions.

Church School Church School is for children ages birth through 8th grade. We tell stories of the Bible using a lens of love and justice with singing, praying, and creating. Church School meets Sundays at 9:45 a.m., September through May.

Music Ministries Interested in singing or ringing with our choirs? We rehearse on Wednesdays September through May. Contact Music Director Sally Sloane for more information.

Youth Programs The junior and senior high youth groups meet on Sunday evenings from 5 – 7 p.m. here at the church, September through mid-May.

Transportation Assistance In need of a ride to church? Call or email: 708-334-2512 / FUCOP848@gmail.com.



FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF OAK PARK

Living God's All-Inclusive Love

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Lead Pastor:	Michael Jones – mjones@firstunitedoakpark.com
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Church Administrator:	Heather Vanderberg – hvanderberg@firstunitedoakpark.com
Financial Administrator:	Patricia Morales – pmorales@firstunitedoakpark.com
Music Director:	Sally Sloane – ssloane@firstunitedoakpark.com
Organist:	Bobby Nguyen – bnguyen@firstunitedoakpark.com



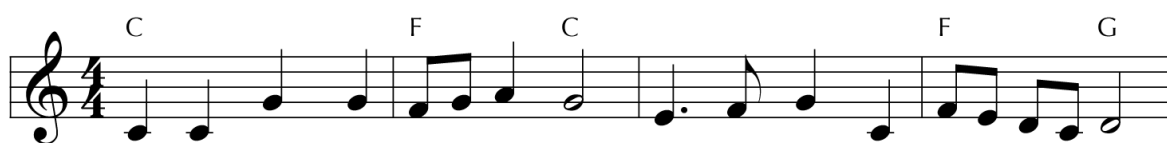
FIRST
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Worship Hymn Supplement

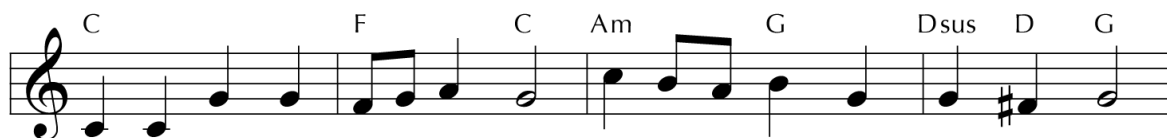
*Indication to stand in body or spirit

*Opening Hymn

God of Great and God of Small 19



1 God of great and God of small, God of one and God of all,
2 God of land and sky and sea, God of life and des - ti - ny,
3 God of si - lence, God of sound, God by whom the lost are found,
4 God of heaven and God of earth, God of death and God of birth,



God of weak and God of strong, God to whom all things be - long,
God of nev - er - end - ing power, yet be - side me ev - ery hour,
God of day and dark - est night, God whose love turns wrong to right,
God of now and days be - fore, God who reigns for - ev - er - more,

Refrain



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, praise be to your name.

Although it uses remarkably simple language, this text affirms a great mystery: beyond all our powers of explanation, God holds together all the opposites that seem to pull us in one direction or another. Yet God is present to them all and also to us; for that we give praise.

TEXT: Natalie Sleeth, 1973

MUSIC: Natalie Sleeth, 1973; arr. Beverly A. Howard, 2012

Text and Music © 1973 Carl Fischer, Inc.

GOD OF GREAT AND SMALL

7.7.7.7 with refrain

*Hymn of Illumination

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

20 All Things Bright and Beautiful

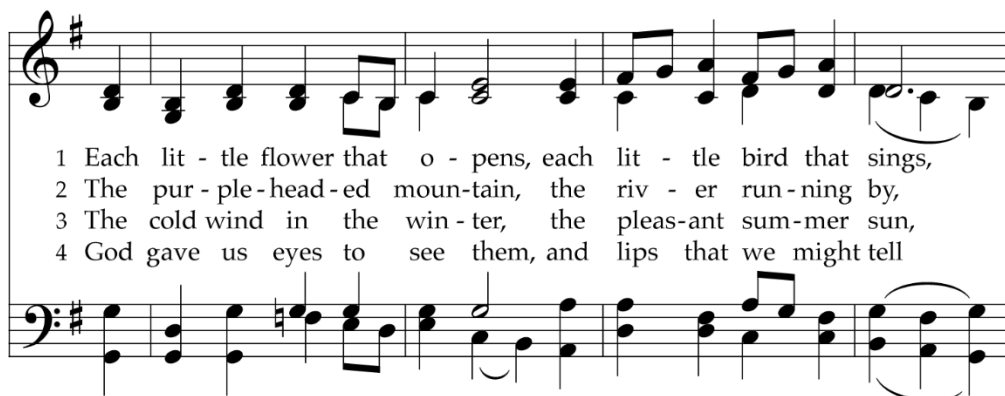
Refrain



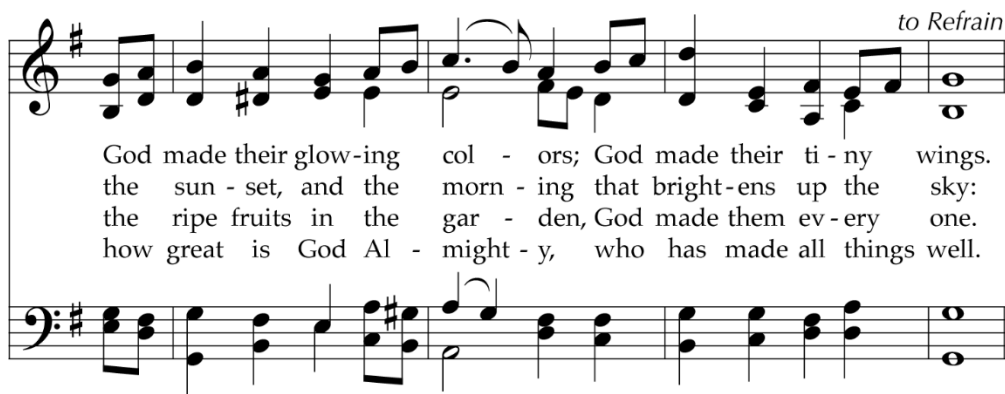
All things bright and beau-ti - ful, all crea-tures great and small,



all things wise and won-der - ful, the Lord God made them all. *Fine*



1 Each lit - tle flower that o - pens, each lit - tle bird that sings,
2 The pur - ple-head-ed moun-tain, the riv - er run-ning by,
3 The cold wind in the win - ter, the pleas-ant sum-mer sun,
4 God gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell



God made their glow-ing col - ors; God made their ti - ny wings.
the sun - set, and the morn - ing that bright-ens up the sky:
the ripe fruits in the gar - den, God made them ev - ery one.
how great is God Al - might - y, who has made all things well. *to Refrain*

One of a series of hymns the author wrote for children on the Apostles' Creed, this text (originally in seven stanzas) expands "Maker of heaven and earth." The first stanza became the refrain when the text was later set to a popular tune from the age of King Charles II.

TEXT: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848, alt.

MUSIC: English melody, 17th cent.; adapt. Martin Shaw, 1915; harm. *The Hymnbook*, 1955
Music Harm. © 1955, ren. 1983 John Ribble (admin. Westminster John Knox Press)

ROYAL OAK
7.6.7.6 with refrain

*Sermon Response

God Calls You Good

For Pastor Ben Colahan and the congregation of Faith Lutheran Church, Chico, CA

Paul M. Vasile

Tenderly, with confidence $\text{♩} = 56-60$

Piano

God calls you good, be - lov - ed child. You are a trea -
God calls me good, be - lov - ed child. I am a treas -

Bm7 Csus C Bm7 Em11 Am7

with pedal

7

- sure deep - ly prized. And you can say to ev - 'ry doubt - ing
- ure deep - ly prized. And I can say to ev - 'ry doubt - ing

Bm7 A2/C# F2

Pno.

12

voice: 'God calls you good, be - lov - ed child.'
voice: God calls me good, be - lov - ed child.'

Em11 Bm7 Csus C Bm7 A2

Pno.

17

'God calls you good, be - lov - ed child.'
God calls me good, be - lov - ed child.'

Bm7 Csus C Bm7 A2

*Closing Hymn

O God, Your Creatures Fill the Earth by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
(Sung to tune of “I Sing the Mighty Power of God”)

**O God, your creatures fill the earth with wonder and delight,
And every living thing has worth and beauty in your sight.
So playful dolphins dance and swim; Your sheep bow down and graze.
Your songbirds share a morning hymn To offer you their praise.**

**You made the pets we welcome in — They're wondrous blessings, too.
With paws and whiskers, wings and fins, They offer praise to you.
O Lord, you call us to embrace These creatures in our care.
May we show kindness, love and grace To all pets everywhere.**

**You made the creatures on each farm; You know the things they need.
May they grow healthy, safe from harm, And safe from human greed.
Just as a shepherd loves the sheep, You know their joy, their pain.
Lord, bless the animals we keep; May all farms be humane.**

**Your creatures live in every land; They fill the sky and sea.
O Lord, you give us your command To love them tenderly.
We're called to have dominion here — To care for them always.
By loving creatures you hold dear, We offer you our praise.**