Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In Ninety-Nine Stories of God, Joy Williams tells about a traveler who meets three men pushing wheelbarrows. He asks them what they are doing. Each gives him a different answer.

The first said: “I toil from sunrise to sunset, and all I receive for my labor is a few francs a day.”

The second said: “I'm happy enough to wheel this wheelbarrow, for I have not had work for many months, and I have a family to feed.”

The third said: “I'm building Chartres Cathedral.”

The three workers have different perspectives about the work they are doing. The first understands the work to be toil for not very much reward. The second is grateful for the work so that he can feed his family. The third sees a greater vision than just pushing a wheelbarrow. He is building Chartres Cathedral something extraordinary for God and for people.

If someone asked you about the wheelbarrow you are pushing, what would you say? Especially in the church, it is easy to be overwhelmed by a task, not appreciated, or see little return for our effort. Other times, we easily see the greater task God has called us to and we rejoice in it.

So my question is: what are you doing with the wheelbarrow you are pushing?

Christ’s Servant,

Rev. Joseph A. Johnson
At the end of February, the global United Methodist Church will meet in a Special Session of General Conference called by the Council of Bishops after the impasse over human sexuality at the 2016 General Conference. Since that time, The Commission on The Way Forward (The Commission) met to discuss and create a plan for consideration at the 2019 special session.

Last summer, The Commission submitted three plans to the Council of Bishops (COB). From these three, the Council of Bishops is recommending the One Church Plan. This plan will remove all of the discriminatory language regarding LGBTQ members of The United Methodist Church. However, the plan has seventeen petitions.

It is NOT an “all or nothing” proposition. For instance, the special session could decide to remove the ban on LGBTQ marriages but leave the ban on LGBTQ clergy.

In addition to the three plans put forward by The Commission on The Way Forward, additional petitions have been sent. A total of 78 petitions have been approved by the committee on reference for the special session.

For more information on the COB recommended plan go to: [https://onechurchplan.org/](https://onechurchplan.org/)

Creating a Crèche for Christmas Eve

Many thanks to all who participated in the Family Service for Christmas Eve this year. It was fun to introduce vintage nativity figures (found hidden in the reredos) and intersperse them into the telling of the Christmas Story.

We heard Jennifer Grisolia as the Innkeeper, Emma Rogers as the Angel, Jack Schroeder with Tyler Janes as the Shepherds, and Pastor Joe as Herod. Joining Sharon Phillips as Storytellers were Ruth Zervas, Doug Peters, & Cece Grisolia. The Acolyte Angel was Hadley Cross with Allison Janes, Mallory Janes, and Jillian Janes. Claire Vincent danced as the Star while Amy Vincent played the Star Bells. Henry Toledo & Michah Toledo were sheep. Musicians included Maggie Schroeder (violin), Claire Vincent (cello), Bella Bjerkan (clarinet), Lisa Rogers (bass clarinet & trumpet), and of course Dick Stultz on piano & organ. Special music included an awesome rendition of Gesu Bambino by our own Doug Peters, a trio arrangement of O Holy Night for Jim Rogers, Becca Rogers, and Emma Rogers, and Baby Jesus, We Love You by the Children’s Choir.
Youth Group being BOLD with Music & Worship

Youth Group is busy preparing for the annual Youth Worship Service on **Sunday, March 3 at 10:30am**. They will be sharing with you what it means to them to **Be B.O.L.D.** in our world today. You won't want to miss this music-filled, energetic, inspiring service created by our own First Church youth.

**Please Note:** Due to the restoration being done on the church building, there will be NO Youth Breakfast Ministry on February 16.

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**Are you an Out-of-the-Box Thinker?**

**ENDOWMENT GRANTS NOW AVAILABLE**

Do you have ideas for a project or activities that will deepen our spirituality and engage our church in new ways? Then, it's time for you to **APPLY** for an **ENDOWMENT FUND GRANT**.

Once again funds are available for grants that will further the mission of our church through projects that provide opportunities to worship, learn, connect, and serve in ways that put Jesus’ life and teachings in action.

If interested in applying, please contact Chris Ladd, chrladd@gmail.com or Sharon Phillips admin@umcelmhurst.org.

Ask for a copy of the Grant Applications Policy and for a copy of the Endowment Fund Application Form.

**Grant requests must be submitted by March 1**

to one of the above email addresses or to the church office.

This is a great opportunity to enhance the life of our congregation and reach out to others.

**ALL IDEAS ARE WELCOME!**
A Very Merry Grace Café

A heartfelt thank you to all who helped with our 2018 holiday dinner for Grace Café on December 17. Over 90 guests were served! Sincere appreciation to the dozens of people who
- provided ingredients
- offered monetary donations
- baked desserts
- helped set up
- cooked
- greeted
- served
- cleaned up
- and entertained. (Including our own Bob Lee as Santa!)

There were:
- 60 lbs of baked ham
- 30 lbs of potatoes
- 2 gallons of gravy
- 28 lbs of glazed carrots
- 4 gallons of applesauce
- 100+ dinner rolls,
- 4 gallons of apple cider,
- 3 gallons of coffee
- 7 gallons of peppermint ice cream
- 18 dozen homemade cookies and brownies
- and NO partridge in a pear tree!

Now in its 12th year in the Elmhurst Community, Grace Café was started in 2007 as an ecumenical mission project to provide a free hot meal to anyone in the community and is currently supported by fifteen Elmhurst churches whose members provide two dinner gatherings per month for their guests. This year offers 16 opportunities for fellowship and sharing a meal — from September through May, 2019.

There is no doubt that the Grace Café Ministry is an important one in our community.

Thank you to all those who make it possible for First Church to participate.
First Church Library  

Treasures on the Lower Level

BOOK DISCUSSION on FEBRUARY 3 at 3:30pm
Come to Aldersgate for a timely discussion of If You Can Keep It: The Forgotten Promise of American Liberty by Eric Metaxas.

COMING UP: DISCUSSION on SUNDAY, APRIL 7 at 3:30pm
Doug Hotchkis will lead a discussion on The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X and Alex Haley. Originally published in 1964, Malcolm X tells the extraordinary story of his life and the growth of the Black Muslim movement. His fascinating perspective on the lies and limitations of the American Dream, and the inherent racism in a society that denies its nonwhite citizens the opportunity to dream, gives extraordinary insight into the most urgent issues we are still facing today.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X stands as the definitive statement of a movement and a man whose work was never completed but whose message is timeless. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand America.

No need to buy the book. The Elmhurst library has a copy and there are many copies available from our partner libraries through LINKin. However, if you are like Doug, you might want a copy for your own library so you can read it frequently!

I've had enough of someone else's propaganda . . .

I'm for truth,
no matter who tells it.
I'm for justice,
no matter who it is for or against.
I'm a human being first and foremost,
and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole.

Can you help?

Did you know that household paper products — the ones we use without giving them much thought — are some of the most valued items to food pantry clients?

TOILET PAPER is one such commodity. One single roll per family is often all that is available to be given out. Since it is not a food product, it cannot be purchased using SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), so toilet paper is hard for families in need to buy.

Right now the Elmhurst Walk-In Ministry's Emergency Food Pantry is in dire need of toilet paper to offer to the folks who come to them for help. The next time you are picking some up for your own home, please consider adding an extra package and bringing it to church. Label it for the Walk in Ministry Pantry and drop it off in the basket in Wesley Hall. Something so simple will mean quite a lot to those who need it most. Thank you!
Who are we? Where are we Going?
What is the Good that we think God wants us to Accomplish?

Sunday, February 24
One Year In: The First Church Strengthen & Grow Initiative
with Dr. Heather Lear

A Time to Share & Reflect on the Last 12 Months
A Time to Envision our Next Steps

All First Church Members are encouraged to stay after Worship on Sunday, February 24 to share a light lunch and regroup to evaluate and explore our use of time and resources.

- How are we helping to transform Elmhurst?
- How might we expand current ministries to reach more people?
- How might we provide deeper connections?

PLEASE PUT THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

Sunday Morning Adult Series continues through February 24
How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus

Coming in Lent ~ March 10 through April 14

FIVE MEANS OF GRACE
by Elaine Heath
Birthdays

Feb 1 Colleen Sherburne
Feb 2 Sharon Phillips
Feb 3 Sue Griswold
Feb 5 Shirley Hazelton
Feb 6 Mary Eleanor Wall
Feb 7 Julia Fetty
Feb 8 Juan Valdez
Feb 10 Elsie Phipps
Feb 13 John Rudakas
Feb 17 Gail Wernette
Feb 20 Jim Fetty
Mary Hallman
Feb 21 Carlos Garcia
Feb 24 Kirsten Klang
Feb 27 Rachel Sterner

Anniversaries

February 5
36th Anniversary
Gail & Jan Wernette

February 9
11th Anniversary
Damon & Kolleen Mooren

February 26
25th SILVER Anniversary
Peter & Deborah Meyer

Prayer List

IT IS TIME TO REFRESH OUR PRAYER PAGE. The current list will be RETIRED at the end of January.
PLEASE RE-SUBMIT your PRAYER REQUEST .

1. Via EMAIL to PASTOR JOE at joseph.johnson@umcelmhurst.org with a copy to the CHURCH OFFICE at admin@umcelmhurst.org
2. Via PHONE MESSAGE to the CHURCH OFFICE at 630-834-2440
3. Or WRITE a PRAYER REQUEST on your Sunday Morning Attendance Sheet.

Recent Concerns will be included on the Prayer List for one month.
If you wish to have Ongoing Prayers, please notify the office. Thank you.

Recent Concerns ~ Family & friends of Robert Maki (brother of David Maki, member of Chancel Choir); Cindy Engdahl Sekera; Family & friends of David Schulz (friends of Jason and Kristin Gross); Family & friends of Joyce Gross (aunt of Jason Gross); Katie G. (friend of Marlene Stratton); Laurie Provencal; Wayne Spohr (father of friend of Ann Gills); Marie (sister of Mike Capra); Isabel Shick; Al White (friend of Kelley Hook); Chris Ladd; Alex Hamilton; Ron Foster, Rick Stanley, Joan Cortesi, Sharon Gomez, Ray Lynn Ruth (friends of Jamie Falconer); Doug Peters, Sr. (Doug Peters’ father); Matt Johnson; Rachael (daughter of Kathy Hansen’s friend); Tony Sekera (Curlie Engdahl’s son-in-law).

Ongoing Prayers ~ Jim Morris (stepfather of Chris Squier); Shirley Hazelton; John Hazelton; Russell and Karen Whiles (Susan Boyd’s cousin and his wife); Terse Stamos (Richard Norgaard’s sister); Mary Gaier (Lola Hotchkis’ mother); Doree Kaforski (friend of June Muncy); Tom Mitchell (son of Diane Mitchell); Juanita Daniels (Steve Strauss’ mother); Marge Farrell (Ed Locke’s aunt); Pat Lind; Eric McMillian (son-in-law of Darlene Van Meir); Erv and Marge Blasius; Philip Williams; Janet H. (friend of Marlene Stratton); Margie Finley (Audrey Klang’s mother); Curlie Engdahl; the homebound; the military; those who are struggling with depression and anxiety; those who are homeless or in shelters; those in nursing homes; and caregivers.
RESTORATION UPDATE from the TRUSTEES as of January 28, 2019

- WESLEY HALL is doing triple duty during the restoration for Strauch Art Classes, GreenMan Theatre rehearsals, and CubScout road rallies. Deep appreciation to all for wearing their flexibility hats.
- WORK DAY was held on Saturday, January 26, to move furniture and supplies from the classrooms and to throw out materials no longer needed. Discarding materials is continuing.
- ELECTRICAL WORK in Lower Level has been completed.
- CEILING REPAIR in lower hallway, kitchen, and narthex has begun.
- CLOTHING CENTER will be open on Thursday, February 7 at its usual times from 9:00-11:00 am and from 7:00-9:00 pm. CLOTHING CENTER will NOT be open on Saturday, February 16 nor will YOUTH BREAKFAST MINISTRY be held.
- CLOTHING CENTER WILL BE ON HIATUS from February 8 through February 28. No donations will be accepted.
- ASBESTOS ABATEMENT is currently scheduled for February 11-13. There will be NO ACCESS to the lower level during this period.
- FLOORING TILE REPLACEMENT in classrooms and hallways will begin after the abatement.
- CARPETING will be replaced in the choir room
- SANCTUARY WINDOWS restoration project is ongoing.
All-Church Event

First Church will staff the Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) volunteer site in Aurora, IL on Saturday, February 23 during the 2:00-4:00 shift followed by a casual dinner get-together at Portillo’s (Rte 83/Elmhurst). If you haven’t already signed up, contact Dena Vincent TODAY. dvincent146@sbcglobal.net

2019 Fund Raising Event
Bewitched, Bothered, or Be Murdered!

GreenMan Theatre Troupe, the resident Theatre company here at First Church, extends an invitation to its annual fundraising event: The 2019 Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre production held at Angelo’s Ristorante.

Under the direction of Carolyn Thomas-Davidoff, this season’s mystery, Bewitched, Bothered, or Be Murdered!, features an all-new story with outrageous characters, nefarious deeds, hilarious comedy, and entertaining songs. The action takes place at Tabby’s college graduation party, where witches and mortals mingle for . . . interesting results! In the midst of all this, Barry and Duren are threatened with a hostile takeover of their Ad Agency! Sam, Endura, Uncle Art, Aunt Clarita, Tabby and her college friends assist in untangling the scheme…and the murder!

The audience sometimes gets into the action by dressing up in the style of the show, or the time period, which in this case is the 1960’s. Additionally, patrons have an opportunity to solve the mystery and win prizes if they guess correctly.

Performances Dates & Times: February 22 & 23, March 1 & 2 at 7:00 pm
Sunday, March 3 at 6:00 pm.

Dinner-Theatre Event Tickets: $55

Doors open 1 hour before show time for cash bar and a chance to mingle with characters from the show.

TICKETS: Box Office Voice Mail: (630) 464-2646
Email: tickets@greenmantheatre.org
Online: https://ticketpeak.com/res/GMTT
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<td>9:00 Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>9:15 Church School for Adults, Children &amp; Youth</td>
<td>10:30 Worship</td>
<td>11:30 Handbells</td>
<td>Fellowship in Wesley Hall follows Worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Breakfast Out</td>
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<td>Clothing Center OPEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men of Spirito! sing in Worship</td>
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<td>9-11am, 7-9pm</td>
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<td>CLOTHING CENTER ON HIATUS THROUGH FEBRUARY 28. No donations accepted until March 1.</td>
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<td>Communion Sunday</td>
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<td>Souper Bowl Sale: pick up soups</td>
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<td>ShopwithScrip signup</td>
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<td>Library Book Discussion 3:30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Group: Intro to Mindfulness Training 9:15</td>
<td>Asbestos Abatement in Lower Level</td>
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<td>VALENTINE’S DAY</td>
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<td>NO CLOTHING CENTER NO YOUTH BREAKFAST MINISTRY</td>
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<td>Youth Group 4-6:00pm HS Devo 6-7:00pm</td>
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<td>Staff Meeting 10:30</td>
<td>Film Group</td>
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<td>Scout Pack 23 Blue &amp; Gold Dinner</td>
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<td>Church Council 7:00</td>
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<td>HS Sunday School 9:15</td>
<td>PRESIDENTS DAY Church Office Closed</td>
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<td>FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN 2:40pm</td>
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<td>Bible Mentor Dinner 4:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd-5th Graders Receive Bibles in Worship</td>
<td>Staff Meeting 10:30</td>
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<td>Naomi Circle 7:30</td>
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<td>PADS Weekend</td>
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<td>11:30 Lunch + Presentation: Strengthen &amp; Grow Initiative with Dr. Lear</td>
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<td>Elmhurst Choral Union Concert Medley of Melodies 7:00 pm</td>
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The Clothing Center at First Church is open to guests three times a month on the 1st Thursday of the month (February 7) from 9-11am and from 7-9pm, and usually on the 3rd Saturday of the month from 9-11am. The Clothing Center will NOT be open on February 16 due to building restoration in the lower level.

NO DONATIONS ACCEPTED FROM FEBRUARY 8—FEBRUARY 28. Beginning March 1, clothing, shoes, bedding, books, toys and other household goods may be dropped off from 9-5pm Monday-Friday at the Church Business Office entry on the north side of the building. Tax receipts are available at the drop-off area. Volunteers are always welcome.

The Youth Breakfast Ministry, coordinated by our middle school and high school youth, provides a free breakfast to our Clothing Center Guests on the 3rd Saturday of every month from Oct–Jan. There will NO Breakfast in February. The Youth Ministry will resume in March and April.

Beginning in MARCH, The Visitor Newsletter will be published quarterly. Submissions are due to the church office by the 15th of February for March-April-May edition Email: admin@umcelmhurst.org.