

JANUARY
2023

United in Faith News



JANUARY

*Why are we
Here?
We are to be
God's
hands,
feet and
voice
in the
world.*



From the desk of . . .

Pastor Carla

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." – John 1:14

Pastor Bill Whitt wrote an article (in a Center for Church Renewal email blast) entitled "Incarnational Ministry in 2023." During the season of Christmas, we remember and celebrate the incarnation – how God became human. "The Word became flesh and dwelled among us" (John 1:14). God did not just reach down from the sky to touch humanity but became one of us. In church renewal and outreach, Pastor Whitt reminds us that we can be incarnational in our ministry to the community around as well. By this, he means that we can learn how to see the world as those who we are trying to reach, that we can find relevant and contextual ways to reach out. He suggests five ways to pursue incarnational ministry:

1. Incarnational Outreach. When a church closes its doors, I hear one explanation far more often than any other: "The community around us changed, but the church didn't." A commitment to incarnational outreach can prevent that from happening!

What does your community look like demographically? What type of jobs do people have? What are their families like? What is happening in the school system? What does the community need? What are people's hopes and dreams?

Great outreach ministry connects with people where they are. That starts with a commitment to know and to love people who may be very different than you. It also requires the bravery to create totally new ministries to reach them and to let outdated ministries go.

2. Incarnational Worship. For whom is your ministry contextualized? You would hopefully not go on a mission to Nigeria and force the people there to dress like you, play your musical instruments, speak in your idioms, or sing in your preferred style. Incarnational ministry demands that you bring the gospel to their culture in their context.

Why is it, then, that when we bring the gospel to our neighbors, we cannot bring ourselves to do the same thing? What radio station do they listen to? What musical style is their "heart language."

Can we contextualize ministry for their culture rather than forcing them to endure our own?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

At
United in Faith,
The Guiding
Principles are:

+

Jesus is
Lord and
Savior

+

Reflect
God's **Love**

+

Pray and
listen for God's
guidance

+

Continue to
strengthen
faith

+

Include **All**
in God's
work

+

Meet people
where they
are

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

3. Incarnational Preaching. Preaching is an art and a science. The "science" is properly interpreting the Scriptures by understanding what the original author intended to communicate. The "art" is conveying that truth to people today in a way that they can understand, remember, and apply.

I grew up in a little country church where it seemed like every sermon illustration was about fertilizer or a tractor. When I went to college, I began attending a church where the sermon illustrations were about technology and pop culture. Both were perfectly contextualized to their neighborhoods.

There truly is a church for everyone! The problem arises when you have been called to disciple a community of farmers but refuse to talk about anything other than cryptocurrency or semiconductors. How can you share God's timeless truth in a way that your community will understand? Look no further than the book of Acts for a masterclass in preaching to different cultures well.

4. Incarnational Discipleship. In some churches, discipleship is a synonym for education. However, it is so much more!

One approach to "discipleship" is to crack my head open, download all the bits of knowledge, and then upload the data into someone else's brain. While passing on information has value, biblical discipleship is far richer and deeper.

The best discipleship takes its cues from Jesus' ministry. He was "up close and personal" with his disciples. He was part of their lives. He cared about his followers deeply and was there for them when they had a need. They knew he cared about them deeply. They knew they were not just a project to him. They knew they were loved. This is incarnational ministry!

5. Incarnational Leadership. Finally, all aspects of our role as church leaders can benefit from an infusion of incarnational ministry's values.

In Philippians 2, Paul asks us to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. What is that mindset? Humility. Rather than exercise his power for his own benefit, Jesus made himself nothing. He put others first, taking on the very nature of a servant. We are called to the same attitude.

I am convinced that humility is the superpower 21st century church leaders need more than anything else. It unlocks everything we've talked about in this newsletter. How else will you make the time and space in your life to get up close and personal with your disciples? How else will you have the bravery to leave behind outdated discipleship models and explore new ways of doing ministry? How else will you be able to reach people who are not like you at all?

Pastor Whitt asks important and relevant questions. As we seek to continue in growth, renewal, and outreach at United in Faith, I encourage you to reflect on these questions about incarnational ministry as we live out our call to be "God's hands, feet, and voice in the world."

Pastor Carla

EPIPHANY AT UNITED IN FAITH

During our service at United in Faith on Epiphany Sunday, January 8, 2022, we will participate in the tradition of choosing Star Words.

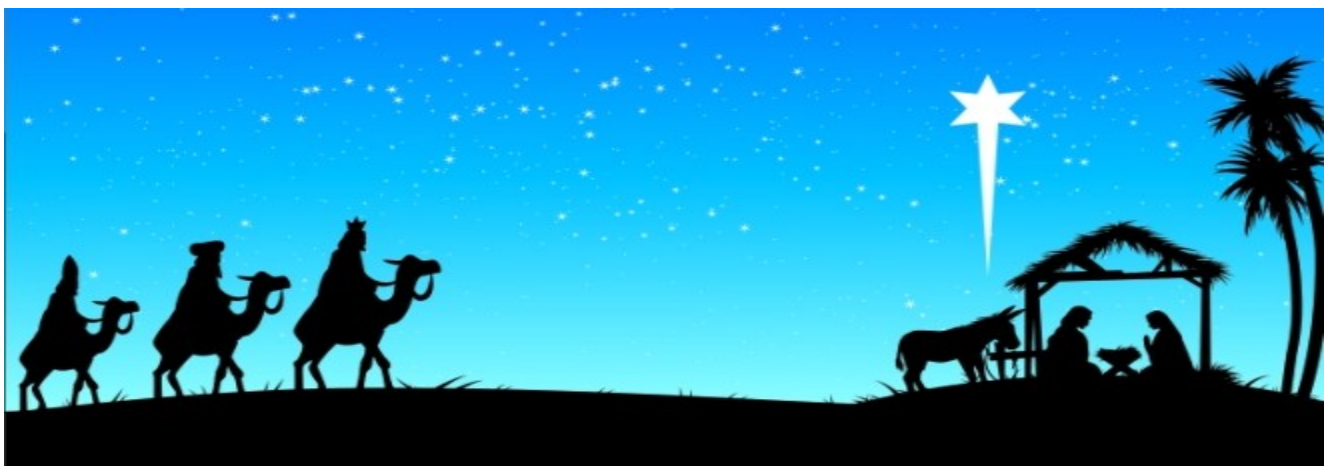
What are Star Words?

The use of star words, also called “star gifts,” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. The idea is that a list of intention words, or guiding words, are written or printed on paper stars. These paper stars are then arranged on a table (usually face down). At some point during the service, individuals are invited to draw a word from the basket or off the Table, and to use that word as a guiding word throughout the year. Typically, participants are encouraged to trust the word they have drawn, and not to replace the word. However, there is not a strong need to be the “star police” if an individual wants to trade.

Individuals are often encouraged to place their star word somewhere they will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God has moved through, around, or in connection to that word.

There Are Several Theological Statements Being Made in this Tradition

1. The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus.
2. We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
3. We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.
4. We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.
5. By not looking or sorting through the star words at their selection, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.



† **UPCOMING ANNUAL MEETING** †

UNITED IN FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

ANNUAL MEETING



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2023
11:00 A.M.

All members of United in Faith are invited
to the **ANNUAL MEETING**
This is an important meeting of our membership
to review past activities,
look to the future and to elect new Council members,
Synod Voting Members and a Nominating Committee.
Please plan to attend!



January 6
January 14
January 24
January 31

James Haas
Stephanie Chobot
Judi Schira
Leah Escalante

COVID/FLU/RSV UPDATE

With the rise in COVID/FLU/RSV numbers and the spread of the Omicron variant, UIF's church council wants to remind you to stay vigilant and COVID cautious. Our congregation members have been very diligent about staying home when they feel ill and wearing masks when we are together. Some of our careful social distancing has diminished over the months (as COVID fatigue has become more real for us). Please keep up your care and concern for your neighbors present at United in Faith as we move through (and hopefully past) our current "COVID/FLU/RSV surge." We will not ask for proof of vaccination, but we do highly recommend that everyone who is able to be vaccinated does as soon as they can.

**ANNUAL REPORTS
ARE PAST DUE
PLEASE SUBMIT TODAY!!**



Girl Scouts at United in Faith



Hello everyone! The UIF Girl Scouts ended 2022 with our Christmas pizza parties. We will be making toiletry bags up sometime in January for the Night Ministry, so if you have any travel size toiletries, we will be happy to put them to use! We can also use new white socks, small kleenex packets and toothpaste. We usually get around 200 packets made up every time we do this. Cookie sales have begun! Delivery is early February and after that you will see girls out and selling. There are a couple of UIF girls in Brownies, or we have two UIF girls in different troops (I'm sure you all know who they are!) Cookies help support our Girl Scout troops, and camps and other programs and they're just DELICIOUS! We have a new cookie this year, the Raspberry Rally. Those will only be available through the online order platform; but if folks are interested I will see about making an order for them.

OTHER NEWS...

We were sorry to say Farewell to Annette last month. She was an amazing person and loved her Girl Scouts! We were honored to hold a short Girl Scout Final Scout's Own for her before the funeral. There were so many of her Girl Scout friends and former girls present. It was wonderful to see so many come out. Annette was pinned with the Green Angel and the 75 years of Service to Girl Scouts award. We will miss her so much!

Janeen

Church office is closed Monday, January 2, 2023

BOOK DISCUSSION

You are invited: Saturday, January 28th at 3pm, UIF our next Book Discussion will be on Austin Channing Brown's book I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness. From a powerful voice on racial justice, an eye-opening account of growing up Black, Christian, and female in middle-class white America. Austin Channing Brown's first encounter with a racialized America came at age 7, when she discovered her parents named her Austin to deceive future employers into thinking she was a white man. Growing up in majority-white schools, organizations, and churches, Austin writes, "I had to learn what it means to love blackness," a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America's racial divide as a writer, speaker and expert who helps organizations practice genuine inclusion. In a time when nearly all institutions (schools, churches, universities, businesses) claim to value "diversity" in their mission statements, I'm Still Here is a powerful account of how and why our actions so often fall short of our words.

CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY SEASONS: On Sunday, January 1st at 10am, we'll have a Lessons & Carols service. Our service on Sunday, January 8th will recall Epiphany (Three Kings Day). On that day, you will be able to select a "star word" during the service which you may choose to use as a reflective guide through the year of 2023 (details at that service).

POINSETTIAS/DONATIONS! Because wild poinsettias (often associated with Christmas) occur naturally from Mexico to southern Guatemala, UIF's Justice Ministry encourages United in Faith members to donate to a Latine charity this Christmas season (Christmas does not end until January 6th). Two great Chicago-based Latine charities we'd recommend are Casa Central and Latinos Progresando. If you prefer to donate to United in Faith's group donation, please label your donation envelope "Latine charities" and we'll split those group donations between the organizations. You can also donate directly.

Brrrr feel that cold wind creeping up!

That means that winter is upon us....and it is only going to get colder over the next few months *due to climate change*. And I do not know about you, but for months now media outlets have been warning us that our utility bills are going to go way up this winter.

In the envelopes that our utility bills come in there are usually some offers from the utilities. One of them that comes from both ComEd and Peoples Gas is an offer for a free home inspection to let you know some things you might do to your home to conserve energy. A few years ago I called for the free home inspection, and the gas company sent out a polite young man to inspect my home. He went through all three floors of my house (basement, main floor, finished attic) and made an appointment to come back in a few days to perform the work. They showed up bright and early and spent most of the day with me. They insulated all the hot water pipes in the basement (I have hot water heat with a boiler), installed new door sweeps to prevent drafts on all exterior doors, added additional insulation around all windows, replaced all faucet aerators, and replaced all shower heads. They also blew in foam insulation in all the exterior attic walls and the floors on attic closets. Whew. This work did not cost me a penny. This year I called for a new home inspection to see if there were any new innovations. Sure enough, another polite young man came and again replaced all the bathroom shower heads with newer versions, and replaced every single light bulb on all three floors with new LED bulbs....and left a few extra in case he had missed any. He also left with me three super duper power strips, again at no charge.

I cannot tell you a dollar amount on how much I have saved, but since all the insulation was done, my gas bill remains the same through the years in spite of several rate increases. I also note that my electric bill has gone down slightly every week since the light bulbs were changed (and they are supposed to last at least 20 years). Every little bit helps! So take a look at those inserts in your bills, sometimes it is worth while to read through and take advantage of the offers.



January 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:00am Coffee Hour 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed	2 9:00am Food Pantry 1:00pm Ladies Discussion Group 7:00pm Worship Planning	3 10:00am Rebels Bingo 6:00pm Brownies/Daisy 7:00pm Girl Scouts	4	5 9:00am Food Pantry 10:00am Rebels Bingo	6 6:30pm AA 7:00pm Girl Scout Leaders	7 9:30am Al-Anon 1:00 pm Knitting Group 4:00pm Survivors of Incest
8 9:00am Coffee Hour 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed Epiphany - Star Words	9 9:00am Food Pantry 1:00pm Ladies Discussion Group 7:00pm Worship Planning	10 10:00am Rebels Bingo 6:00pm Brownies/Daisy 7:00pm Girl Scouts	11	12 9:00am Food Pantry 10:00am Rebels Bingo	13 6:30pm AA	14 9:30am Al-Anon 1:00 pm Knitting Group 4:00pm Survivors of Incest
15 9:00am Coffee Hour 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed	16 9:00am Food Pantry 1:00pm Ladies Discussion Group	17 10:00am Rebels Bingo 6:00pm Brownies/Daisy 7:00pm Church Council 7:00pm Girl Scouts	18	19 9:00am Food Pantry 10:00am Rebels Bingo	20 6:30pm AA	21 9:30am Al-Anon 1:00 pm Knitting Group 4:00pm Survivors of Incest
22 9:00am Coffee Hour 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed	23 9:00am Food Pantry	24 10:00am Rebels Bingo 6:00pm Brownies/Daisy 7:00pm Girl Scouts	25	26 9:00am Food Pantry 10:00am Rebels Bingo	27 6:30pm AA	28 9:30am Al-Anon 1:00 pm Knitting Group 3:00 pm Book Discussion 4:00pm Survivors of Incest
29 9:00am Coffee Hour 10:00am Worship in person and livestreamed 11:00 am Council Forum	30 9:00am Food Pantry 1:00pm Ladies Discussion Group	31 10:00am Rebels Bingo 6:00pm Brownies/Daisy 7:00pm Girl Scouts				

*Christmas
blessings and
the gift of hope
to you from your
friends at
United in Faith*



Worship Schedule

January 1 Lessons and Carols	9:00 AM Fellowship & Conversation 10:00 AM Worship in person & livestreamed
January 8 EPIPHANY Star Words	9:00 AM Fellowship & Conversation 10:00 AM Worship in person & livestreamed
January 15 Baptism of Our Lord	9:00 AM Fellowship & Conversation 10:00 AM Worship in person & livestreamed
January 22 EPIPHANY 3	9:00 AM Fellowship & Conversation 10:00 AM Worship in person & livestreamed
January 29 EPIPHANY 4	9:00 AM Fellowship & Conversation 10:00 AM Worship in person & livestreamed

UNITED IN FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
6525 West Irving Park Road
Chicago, IL 60634



Rev. Carla Thompson Powell

Pastor

Email: revctp@unitedinfaith.org

Phone: **773.283.2326**

Email: UIFAdmin@unitedinfaith.org

On the Web at: www.unitedinfaith.org

Twitter: UIFLC | **Facebook:** UIFLC | **Instagram:** UIFLC