



Advent

Keeping in Touch

We are a creative Christian community,
Caring for one another
inviting others to experience the power of God's love,
that God might use us to transform ourselves, our community,
the Church and the world.

first united
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Established 1886
December 2, 2011

www.fulc.com

This Sunday:

Confirmation of Stephanie Elizabeth Barrow

Come show your love and support for Stephanie, who has grown up in and with the First United community, and for the Barrow family.

QUOTATION OF THE WEEK

Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace.—Edward Hays, A Pilgrim's Almanac



PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Pastor Susan Strouse

It is always an exciting and momentous occasion when a young person moves through a rite of passage into adulthood. Confirmation is one such rite of passage. *An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism* states: "**Confirmation** is a public rite of the Church preceded by a period of instruction designed to help baptized Christians identify with the life and mission of the Christian community." Confirmation provides an opportunity for the individual Christian, remembering God's promise given in **Baptism**, to make a personal public profession of faith.

While Lutherans do not consider Confirmation to be a sacrament, as in the Roman Catholic church, we take it very seriously—seeing it as the sealing of the covenant made in Baptism.

It is a privilege for us as a congregation to participate in this rite along with our confirmand, Stephanie Elizabeth Barrow. As Stephanie makes promises to continue in her journey of faith, so we promise to be with her along the way.

Advent blessings,
Pastor Susan

This Week on PS (Pastor Susan's Blog)—
Honoring World AIDS Day in an Interfaith Way
<https://progressivechurch.wordpress.com>

First United is a "Reconciling in Christ" (RIC) congregation that has declared that all persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities are equally welcome to join fully in the worship and life of this Christ-centered community.

**First United Lutheran Church is committed to accessibility to the extent that it is within our control.
Please let us know if we can be of assistance in accommodating your accessibility needs.**

Prayers for the Second Sunday of Advent

*God of hope,
you call us from our places of exile with the good news of restoration;
you build a highway through the wilderness;
you come to us and bring us home.
Comfort us with the expectation of your saving power,
made known to us in Jesus the Christ. Amen*



<http://www.ucc.org/feed-your-spirit/weekly-seeds/>

- ✦ for the Peace of God to be made manifest in our world:
 - ☞ for all people suffering with HIV/AIDS, especially the people of sub-Saharan Africa
 - ☞ for the children who have lost their parents to AIDS
 - ☞ for research efforts, educational programs, and access to care and treatment for all
 - ☞ for the leaders of all nations to make peacemaking a priority

- ✦ for the Wisdom of Christ to be made manifest in our communities:
 - ☞ for our local medical centers and agencies who care for those with HIV/AIDS
 - ☞ for the Winter Shelter and all shelters, and for the people who come for food and a safe place to sleep
 - ☞ for those who are homeless, especially families with children
 - ☞ for Project Homeless Connect's "Hoodies for the Homeless" project

- ✦ for the Power of the Spirit to be made manifest in our congregation and beyond:
 - ☞ for Roger Creet and Alan Pearson
 - ☞ for Barbara Vignola, Daryl Hackbart, Bishop Mark Holmerud and all in need of healing
 - ☞ for Stephanie Barrow, on her Confirmation Day
 - ☞ for an Advent season of centeredness and holy reflection

† If you would like to add someone or something to the prayer list, please contact Orion or Pastor Susan. †

PRAYERS IN ACTION

We are collecting cards, notes, pictures, etc. for our homebound members. There will be an envelope for each at every service. You can put your items into the envelopes, which will be sent or delivered at the end of each month. This is an ongoing project of love and support for those who are unable to physically be part of our community, but are members of it nevertheless.



Questions/Comments About Our Worship?

Many elements go into the worship experience each week at First United to make it unique. The Worship Team would love to hear from you! Whether it's something you really liked, or something that may have concerned or puzzled you—please contact a member of the worship team:

Pastor Susan (pastorsusan@fulc.com)
Steve Johnson (treasurer@fulc.com)
Orion (orion@fulc.com)

OUR COMMUNITY

Updates—Life at First United and beyond.

“Sounds of the Season” now available on the website!

For your personal, personalized First United listening pleasure, *Sounds of the Season* is again on the Music & Sermons page of the FULC website. These are all recordings made by First United musicians: Daniel Eickmann, Nicole Bohn, Steve Johnson, Sophia McDonald, John Olson, and Gioia DeCari. And, they were made possible through Daniel Eickmann’s remarkable sound engineering skills (and his studio, as well). So, for an alternative to those cheesy Holiday recordings you were suckered into purchasing at Starbucks along with your non-fat triple-spiced latte, go to:

<http://www.fulc.com/VirtualWorship.htm>

And for you Conspiracy Theorists out there—The Advent Conspiracy!

Are you already weary of the frenzied, commercial, “Christmas” hype that pervades this season? There IS an alternative: it’s The Advent Conspiracy! And they have a great little promo video, which you can access here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVqqj1v-ZBU&feature=player_embedded

Who doesn’t love the warmth and comfort of a nice, cuddly hoodie?

Probably no one, and that includes the less fortunate among us. So, Project Homeless Connect provides an opportunity for the fortunate to help the unfortunate:



You can learn all about it here:

<http://phchoodydrive.blogspot.com/>





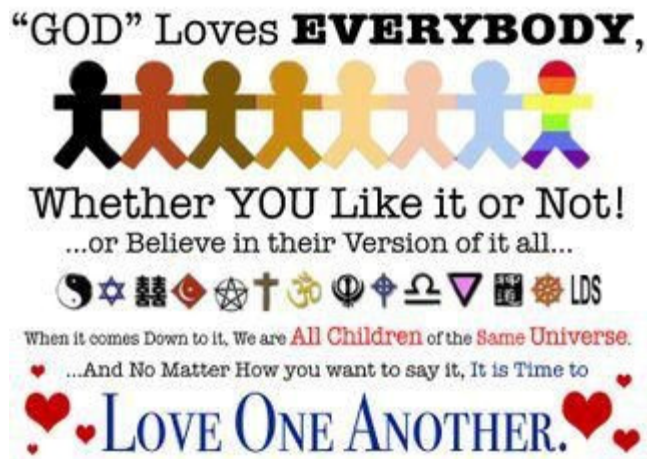
Help First United Improve Accessibility for All!

Donate through www.causes.com/

Our project is http://www.causes.com/campaigns/180976?cause_id=637870

This Just In! We have received a \$500 challenge grant for the purchase of text-reading software for Roger Creet's computer. Let's get it done by Christmas!

(A hearty and gracious THANKS to Terri Bogaards, who has worked diligently to create and put in working order this Causes website!)



FIRST UNITED'S SCHEDULE FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas is coming (just go shopping—you'll be reminded *ad nauseum*). In order for you to plan ahead, the worship team announces First United's Christmas schedule, which is especially tricky this year since Christmas Day falls on Sunday:

Saturday, December 24—Christmas Eve Worship Service, 7:00 pm at Ebenezer/herchurch Lutheran.

Sunday, December 25—Christmas Day; no First United community worship service. A family/home worship service that you may choose to observe with your family and friends will be provided online on the FULC website, www.fulc.com.



Why Aren't We Singing Christmas Carols??

OR

Why Are We Singing Christmas Carols??

and

What Happened To Our Commitment To Inclusive Language??

OR

Stop Messing Around With MY Christmas Carols!!



A Message from your Music Director

Every year at this time I'm confronted with two particular issues regarding our worship. We discuss them every year in worship team meetings, and every year we are left with no definitive answer other than to seek a balanced compromise. So this year, I'm sharing these dilemmas with you, the First United community, so that you will be fully aware and know that there is a lot of thought and care that goes into the decisions made, and that, unless the entire universe undergoes a major paradigm shift, we will never, ever, satisfy everyone, even in our tiny community.

First, Christmas in Advent

We, as Lutherans, are liturgical in our worship. That means, among other things, that we follow a particular calendar that has evolved over centuries, is observed (at least in theory) by most liturgical denominations (Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, et al.), and was codified most recently in 1994 as the "Revised Common Lectionary". (Look at the front of your bulletin.) One aspect of that lectionary that dates back centuries is that Advent is observed the four Sundays preceding Christmas. The Christmas celebration, in the church, BEGINS on the evening of December 24th (and extends for the 12 days—through the celebration of the Epiphany on January 6). In churches that strictly observe the lectionary, you do not sing Christmas carols, decorate with trees or holly or all those other pagan observances, until December 24.

As a result, there's always a disconnection between what we observe as Christmas in the church, versus what society observes (having its origins in the pagan Solstice festivals—as does the church's Christmas) by Christmas Frenzy for the weeks leading up to December 25, and then deciding it's all over on December 26th. (If you live in the Southeastern US, you'll find the curbs littered with trees everywhere on Dec. 26th—there's even a superstition that it's "bad luck" to leave your Christmas decorations up after New Year's Day. And this is the so-called "Bible Belt"????!!!).

Personally, I like—no, in fact, I LOVE—the church calendar. There's a poignance in the quiet, serene expectation and preparation of Advent. And then Christmas comes and it continues in full observant joy for 2 weeks following. For years, I attempted, in my own home observance, to await Christmas fully until Christmas—no tree, no decorations, etc. until at minimum a week before.

For me, it doesn't work. I am affected, unfortunately, by the fact that while my own observance is fresh and new, everyone else is returning to "normal", and believing that it's all over. I continue to "celebrate" on my own, but the fact is that it seems manufactured for me—it's like beating a dead horse after everyone else has left the stable (sorry for that particular allusion!!!!).

Now—after 35+ years in church music, I can attest to the observation that many—no matter their understanding of the church's observance—are disappointed and let down if the church does not in some way observe at least a bit of that Christmas spirit at some point as the Advent Season comes to an end. At First United, we have a particularly unique situation in that, while in perhaps most congregations, the Christmas Eve service is a large observance attended by hordes (including those who have not darkened the door since Easter), in our small urban community, many spend that time away or with their families elsewhere. Therefore, we now have our Lessons & Carols service on the 4th Sunday of Advent. While still maintaining a primary focus on the prophecy, preparation, and expectation, we also will have that opportunity to sing familiar

carols that we hope do not compromise the integrity of the Advent season.

Which Brings Us To Our Commitment To Inclusive Language

When I first came to First United in 1995, I was thrilled by the community's commitment to inclusive language (I still am!!)—it's a commitment to shaping our language in ways that have not been influenced by a patriarchal power structure, and to understanding God and the divine in ways that broaden our scope of perception. So—when it came to hymns, I embraced the opportunity to erase all of those exclusive gender-referenced images—even at Christmas time.

Well—I heard about it! “How dare you presume to change the words of carols that I've known since childhood!” (I, by the way, did not do the language alterations—these were printed in sources that have a commitment to non-exclusive language, and were made by teams of experts in both music and language). “Don't you know that these texts have deep emotional and spiritual connections that are meaningful? You don't mess around with those.” “Boy, was the poetry of that (insert a favorite) carol butchered!” Attempting to cloak their emotional response in the form of aesthetic knowledge, suddenly a number of congregants became self-appointed language experts.

I will say right up front—given my own preferences, I would never compromise on our commitment to using inclusive language—I personally have no problem with thoughtful, appropriate substitutions for the use of gender-exclusive images. Get rid of “him”, “king”, “God--He”, etc.? BRING IT ON! Can't get away from it quickly enough!

However, our very well-constructed statement on inclusive language from the website addresses the issue quite thoughtfully and reasonably (“thoughtful” and “reasonable” not being my particular strong points):

Toward a Statement on Inclusive Language

First United Lutheran Church is a community that values inclusion in many aspects, especially forms of worship. We interpret inclusion, however, in expansive terms that provide for the intention of inclusion, even when the chosen forms may appear to contradict the very principle we seek to uphold. Sometimes we will sing traditional hymns composed of language that comes from a different era and may seem exclusive.

We believe, however that these hymns hold their own power of inclusion because they connect us not only to our roots but also to many people across the wide expanse of God's family who have shared and continue to share these same hymns. Occasionally we will recite prayers in which God may be addressed as Lord or Lover, Father or Mother, Creator or Spirit, or even Goddess. We believe, however, that God is not limited even though our language is; the names change, the truth remains the same. Our words are products of time and history, the context in which we encounter God. But our God is timeless. We welcome your contribution to our many ways of calling forth the divine love that unites us all.

So, what's the answer? I try to do a little of both—if it's a well-known carol, I'll sometimes leave it as it has traditionally been sung. And then, on occasion as well, we'll do some of them with changes. There's no easy answer, and there's no pleasing everyone. There is, however, the opportunity for all to come to some acceptance and understanding that we're not all alike, and not always in complete agreement. But we are, without question or debate, together in the one Divine Spirit, and that's what we celebrate.

--Orion; and may you continue to have a meaningful Advent

This Sunday's Readings—Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11

With words of incredible power the unknown prophet of Israel's exile in Babylon proclaims the good news God's people have been waiting long to hear. Deliverance is at hand. God's people are to be brought home to Jerusalem. It is God who is doing this, as a shepherd leads his flock homeward at the end of the day. Anyone who has sung or listened to Handel's "The Messiah" will recognize that he took the opening recitatives for his majestic oratorio from this passage. The words of this Hebrew poetry are music in themselves.

It is written . . .

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and tell her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from YHWH's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way for YHWH,
make a straight road through the desert for our God.
Let every valley be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill made low;
let every cliff become a plain,
and the ridges become a valley.
Then the glory of YHWH will be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of YHWH has spoken."

A voice commands, "Cry out!"
And I answer, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass,
and its beauty is like the wildflowers:
The grass withers, and the flowers wilt,
when the breath of YHWH blows on them.
How the people are like grass!
Grass withers, and flowers wilt;
but the promise of our God will stand for ever.

Go up on a high mountain,
you who bring good news to Zion!
Shout with a loud voice,
you who bring good news to Jerusalem!
Shout without fear;
and say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

YHWH, O Sovereign One,
you come with power,
and rule with a strong arm!
You bring your reward with you,
and your reparation comes before you.
Like a shepherd you feed your flock,
gathering the lambs and holding them close,
and leading mother ewes with gentleness.

Mark 1:1-8

Mark's Gospel begins not with Jesus, but with John the Baptist, who immediately quotes from Isaiah 40, transferring this reference to Israel's return from exile in Babylon in 639 BC to the coming of the Messiah. The early church searched the Hebrew Scriptures for every possible prophecy about the coming of Israel's Messiah, no matter whether they were relevant or not. They understood the coming of Jesus as the fulfillment of those prophecies. Now that God's love and purpose for Israel were being fulfilled, John called everyone to prepare by repenting and being baptized.

It is written . . .

Here begins the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Child of God:
as it was written in the prophet Isaiah:
"I am sending my messenger before you,
to prepare your way,
a herald's voice in the desert, crying:
'Prepare the way of our God.
Clear a straight path.'"

And so John the Baptizer appeared in the desert, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to John and were baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and he ate nothing but grasshoppers and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he proclaimed, "One more powerful than I is to come after me. I am not fit to stoop and untie his sandal straps. I have baptized you in water; but the One to come will baptize you in the Holy Spirit."



November 29, 2011

World AIDS Day is December 1, 2011. This annual commemoration is an opportunity for us to remember the 30 million lives that have been lost to the deadly pandemic over the past three decades, to rededicate our energies in support of those 34 million living with HIV and AIDS today and to work toward building a future without AIDS.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for each of us to reflect on God's call to lift up the dignity and value of each person. We are called to confront this pandemic -- whose scale has no precedent in human history -- through prayer, by speaking out to eliminate stigma and discrimination against those living with HIV and AIDS, by caring for those afflicted by the virus in our own communities, by advocating for strong government support of lifesaving programs, and by supporting the global effort to alleviate the global systems of poverty within which HIV and AIDS is so endemic.

We write together this year because the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have embarked upon a new age of full communion by sharing staff for international issues in our Washington, D.C., advocacy offices, acknowledging the common needs of our global church bodies.

Both of our churches have been living with AIDS for more than 30 years. Together we are part of a global family of 150 million Anglicans and Lutherans, most living in developing countries, for whom the virus is an ever-present daily reality. The struggle against HIV and AIDS is our own struggle as churches and, as the pandemic continues into its fourth decade, the urgency in our work is born out of the intimacy with which we know it.

Consider what 30 years have meant to our global family in Christ:

Thirty million people—parents, children, spouses, partners, siblings—have died early and unnecessary deaths.

An entire generation of children in sub-Saharan Africa has been orphaned because of the virus; many of these children have themselves been infected by mother-to-child transmission, a transmission which is preventable with basic medical attention.

In an unjust world with more wealth than ever before, global poverty has contributed to more people dying each day because they are too poor to survive and receive basic assistance from the symptoms of global poverty: gender-based violence, discrimination, hunger and lack of access to medical treatment.

Our churches continue to address the virus and the systems of poverty it permeates. ELCA programs in Tanzania teach students marketable skills alongside HIV and AIDS awareness education. Episcopal-supported programs in Uganda care for AIDS patients while paying school fees for AIDS-orphaned children.

(continued on next page)

Episcopalians and Lutherans are invested in prevention, treatment, care and support, and alleviating stigma for all living with HIV and AIDS.

The [National Episcopal AIDS Coalition](#) provides innovative resources and news updates to congregations ministering to those affected by HIV and AIDS.

The comprehensive [ELCA Strategy on HIV and AIDS](#) highlights a commitment to prevention, treatment, alleviating stigma, and providing care and support for all. It guides and supports congregational responses to our domestic communities and our global companions in need.

Our global community has made significant advancements in tackling this pandemic. Investments in medicine and prevention education have halted transmission in communities around the world. Infection rates continue to decline. The number of people receiving antiretroviral treatment is increasing -- by a factor of 13, just from 2004 to 2009 -- allowing tens of millions of HIV-positive people to lead healthy lives. Hundreds of thousands of babies are prevented from being born with HIV and a comparable number orphaned from the virus receive food, education and assistance from churches and aid workers.

ELCA members and Episcopalians are key leaders in helping to stop the shunning and shaming of those living with HIV, engaging in public acts of repentance for past discrimination, distributing medicines and prevention techniques affordably to all parts of the world, and providing care and support to those living with HIV and AIDS in our own communities.

Today, we must increase these efforts. We stand at the threshold of reaching the goal of achieving an "AIDS-free generation" recently set by Secretary of State Clinton. But whether we are able to reach this milestone will depend on nothing less, and nothing more, than whether our nations and communities are willing to commit the resources and energies to make the next 30 years different from the past 30.

Unfortunately, today we face the danger that our dream of an AIDS-free generation will remain just that -- a dream. U.S. funding for these lifesaving global health programs continues to be targeted for disproportionate cuts. Even fractional cuts to these accounts -- which already represent far less than 1 percent of our federal budget -- would reverse these efforts. Global infection rates would increase and AIDS would claim millions more lives than it does even today.

Through our shared witness in Washington, our churches are working to ensure that our government allocates the highest funding levels possible to address HIV and AIDS, including full funding for the president's Global Health Initiative. The voice of every Episcopalian and every ELCA member is vital to this work, so we urge you to join our churches' advocacy efforts by becoming members of the [Episcopal Public Policy Network](#) or the [ELCA e-Advocacy Network](#).

As Christians, we have just embarked upon the season of Advent, in which we prepare our hearts and minds to receive the One who comes that we "may have life, and have it abundantly." In this season, on this World AIDS Day, may the healing offered by our Incarnate, Crucified, and Resurrected Lord inspire us to cross from 30 years of death and loss to a future of abundant life for all.

In God's grace and healing,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

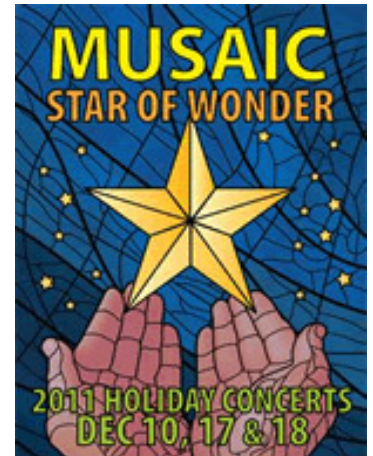


Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.—14th Dalai Lama

HOLIDAY CONCERT AT THE PRESIDIO CHAPEL

Join *Musaic* on Saturday, December 17th at 8:00 pm as we discover the wonder of the season, enlightened through melodies and harmonies from around the world. From reverent classical anthems to joyful jazz carols, let our spirited men's voices lift you into Christmas. \$15 general admission. Students with ID free.

Musaic's mission is to share beautiful men's a cappella singing with our Bay Area community. Our music is rooted in classical choral traditions, through a repertoire that includes a variety of genres and languages. The members of Musaic are passionate about men's ensemble singing, and enjoy the artistic balance and musical fellowship it brings to our lives. For more info and to order tickets, visit www.musaicsf.org.



Presidio Interfaith Chapel, 130 Fisher Loop, Presidio, San Francisco

MULTIFAITH RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL OBSERVANCES

December

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 5 | Ashura * ** - Islam |
| 6 | Saint Nicholas Day - Christian |
| 8 | Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) ** - Buddhism |
| | Immaculate Conception - Catholic Christian |
| 12 | Feast day - Our Lady of Guadalupe - Catholic Christian |
| 16 | Posadas Navidenas through Dec. 25 - Christian |
| 21-28 | Hanukkah * - Jewish |
| 22 | solstice |
| | Yule - Christian |
| | Yule * - Wicca/Pagan northern hemisphere |
| | Litha * - Wicca/Pagan southern hemisphere |
| 24 | Christmas Eve - Christian |
| 25 | Christmas * - Christian |
| | Feast of the Nativity - Orthodox Christian |
| 26 | Zarathosht Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra) ** - Zoroastrian |
| | Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr - Christian |
| 28 | Holy Innocents - Christian |
| 30 | Feast of the Holy Family - Catholic Christian |
| 31 | Watch Night - Christian |



Note: 1. * Holy days usually begin at sundown the day before this date.
2. ** Local or regional customs may use a variation of this date.
Bold titles are primary holy days of a tradition.



Coming Events:



☞ CONFIRMATION OF STEPHANIE BARROW SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Sunday, December 4
Worship at 5:00 pm in the Chapel*

☞ CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

*Tuesday, December 6, 7:30 pm
Medical Office at 450 Sutter*

☞ DISCOVERY GROUP

*Sunday, December 11
What is Stewardship? Presentation by
Kirk Pessner
3:00 pm in the Kinkaid Room*

☞ THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Sunday, December 11
Worship at 5:00 pm in the Chapel*



Sunday Worship

5:00 p.m. at
First Unitarian Universalist Chapel
1187 Franklin St.

Office Hours & Mailing Address
1537 Franklin St., Suite 201
San Francisco, CA 94109
M- F 7:30-11:30 a.m.
(415) 359-1025 (V)
(415) 359-1267 (F)

For information visit our website:
www.fulc.com
email: info@fulc.com

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Orion Pitts

Music Director & Office Administrator
orion@fulc.com

2010-2011 Council:

Jacob Johnson	President@fulc.com
Steve Johnson	Treasurer@fulc.com
Terri Bogaards	Secretary@fulc.com
Tamara Alliston	Dana McDonald
	Pamela Hargraves

NOTE:

Deadline for submission
of all information or items in
Keeping in Touch is

Wednesday at 12 noon

of the week of publication. Items sub-
mitted after this time may not be in-
cluded in that week's edition.



*For details on all First United
events, go to www.fulc.com
& click on "Calendar".*

Policy for Charitable Donations

First United's policy is to help people
by finding services when possible.
All requests for help must go to Pas-
tor Susan. Please do not ask mem-
bers for money, rides, phone use, or
food—ask only Pastor Susan.



Dec. 2:
Marci Rohrer

Dec. 19:
Daniel Eickmann

Dec. 23:
Heather Hargraves

Dec. 26:
Andreas Mueller
Kirk Pessner

THIS WEEK'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Pr. Susan Strouse	Pr. Susan Strouse
Jacob Johnson	Jacob Johnson
Jay Beatty	Jay Beatty
Jacob & Tamara	Jacob & Tamara
Jacob & Tamara	Jacob & Tamara

WORSHIP LEADERS FOR DECEMBER 11

Pr. Susan Strouse	Pr. Susan Strouse
Dana McDonald	Dana McDonald
Daniel Eickmann	Daniel Eickmann
Terri Bogaards	Terri Bogaards
Terri Bogaards	Terri Bogaards

To sign up as a Greeter or other worship assis-
tant, send an email to info@fulc.com.