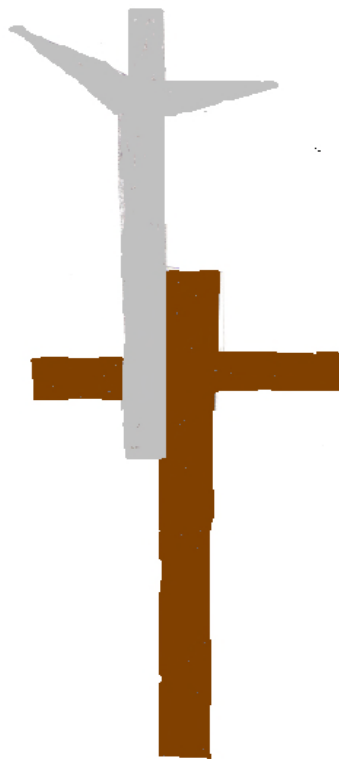


# United in Faith

The Journey Continues: Years 16 - 20  
2013 - 2018

## TRANSITION



**United in Faith Lutheran Church**

A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America · Metropolitan Chicago Synod  
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So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!  
2 Corinthians 5:17

The period of years 16 through 20 was one of transition. Our pastor of 12 years left for another call at the end of our 15th year. Those 12 years were part of our formative years and the pastor's leadership was a key component in implementing the reasons the congregation came into being with the consolidation. United in Faith entered into an **Intentional Transition** period as it prepared to call a new pastor. A Transition Team was appointed to take the congregation through the following steps:

- > Coming to terms with our history
- > Discovering a new identity
- > Enabling needed leadership change
- > Renewing denominational linkages
- > Committing to a new direction in ministry

This transition period allowed the congregation to consider new structures and new worship traditions.

A **Call Committee** was formed in 2014 and a call was given and accepted in 2015.

## STAFFING

Pastor Greg Moser served our congregation from November 2000 until resigning in February 2013 to accept another call. Pastor Lester White was then hired as our Intentional Interim Pastor. With his departure in 2014 the Reverend Dr. Eric Bodestab stepped in as Interim Pastor, serving until 2015 when Pastor Carla Thompson Powell accepted a call.

With great sadness the congregation learned of the death of Pastor Greg on Christmas day 2016. He will always be remembered for his work in the formation of United in Faith and his leadership in our faith journeys. In honor of Pastor Greg,

donations were made to ELIM for the creation of military kits.

In fall 2017 the congregation was assigned 3 Ministry in Context students from the seminary for a 1 year term: Elizabeth Koerner, Ruby Lee, and Aaron Silco; providing new ideas and energy within our community.

Worship music direction for our traditional service was led by an organist who also served as choir director. The Praise service was led by a band consisting of volunteer and paid musicians and song directors.

The Administrative Assistant position was turned over three times.

## THE CONGREGATION

Official membership statistics indicate that the number of confirmed and baptized members at the end of 2017 was 165 and 175 respectively (losses of 21% and 28% over 5 years). As a congregation that stresses discipleship over membership, several in the congregation are not included in the official counts.

## Purpose and Guiding Principles

Throughout this transitional period, our Purpose and Guiding Principles remained the same and continued to direct our ministries.

### Our Purpose

We are to be God's hands, feet and voice in the world.

### Our Guiding Principles

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

## STRUCTURED FOR OUR PURPOSE

<p><b>Governance and Committees</b> Church Council Executive Committee</p> <p>Audit Call (<i>inactive</i>) Education Endowment and Scholarship Finance Intern (<i>inactive</i>) Mission in Context Lay (<i>new</i>) Mission Endowment Fund Mutual Ministry Nominating Property Management</p> <p>(Communication - moved to Ministries as various Public Relations ministries) Computer Administrators Future Building Use (<i>inactive</i>) Landscape (Renewal Team - moved to Ministries as Church Health Team) Thrivent Coordinators (Website - moved to Ministries)</p>
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To supplement the overseeing of the operation of the congregation, several policies were adopted by the **council** including those regarding animals, firearms, and purchasing supplies.

**Constitutional amendments** were approved in 2018.

**Ministries** were reorganized into 3 **Areas of Commitment**, each with 2 **Areas of Focus**. Each Area of Focus has a Ministry Coordinator while each ministry maintains a Ministry Director. New ministries were added while some committees and ministries were dropped or split into multiple ministries.

**Shepherd's Staff** was added to assist with administrative operations and includes staying in touch with members, guests and visitors.

**Volunteer Coordination** deals with the assignment of volunteers to the many positions available.

**Service Projects** are those that do not fall within a specific ministry, but are rather congregation-wide.

## The Ministries of United in Faith

### Christian Formation

#### **Christian Education**

Confirmation (*inactive*)  
Sunday School  
Vacation Bible School  
Youth (*inactive*)

#### **Spiritual Growth**

Bible Study  
Faith Development (*inactive*)  
Prayer  
Men in Mission (*inactive*)  
WELCA (*inactive*)  
Worship & Music

### Outreach

#### **Public Relations**

Marketing (*new*)  
Social Media (*new*)  
Website

#### **Community**

Gay & Straight Together  
Justice (*reactivated*)  
(Outside Groups)\*  
(St Cyprian's Food Pantry)\*  
Service Projects (*new*)

### InReach

#### **Member Care**

Volunteer Coordination (*new*)  
Communion Visitation  
Shepherds Staff (*new*)  
Stewardship

#### **Congregational Care**

Altar Guild  
Church Health Team

\* outside organizations hosted and supported by United in Faith

## Funding

The Education Endowment and Scholarship Fund continued to provide annual scholarships and tuition to students. Luther High School North closed in 2017.

The Family Crisis Fund, administered by the Pastor and Executive Committee, is supported by the congregation and provides funds to meet critical financial needs.

Special appeals were made for the new HVAC system in the West building. Committees and ministries held various fundraising events. Almost all of the cost was covered through donations and fundraisers as we recognized the importance of the West building for neighborhood group activities.

The new organ was also almost completely paid for by donations.

Cash income continued to be less than cash expenditures with investment income and occasional bequests offsetting the cash deficits. The Pastor position was decreased from full time to 3/4 time to assist in addressing the deficit as we go forward.

AmazonSmile was promoted as a way to provide additional funding. An auction of donated items was held in 2016 as another way to raise funds.

A grant from the Synod Fund for Mission was applied for and received (\$2500). It is used for marketing purposes - outside banners, invitation cards, flyers, local newspaper advertising for holiday services.

## Communication

A professionally produced pictorial directory was distributed in 2014. An internally produced pictorial directory was distributed in 2017 and updated early in 2018.

Congregational forums continued to be held on the fifth Sundays of a month, sponsored by council, to open the lines of communication and update the congregation on current and upcoming activities.

An educational event was held to introduce people to the usage of Facebook, Twitter and our website.

Facebook, our website and neighborhood social media (e.g. Nextdoor) were used to establish a presence and publicize events. People were also encouraged to use Twitter for these purposes, even live Tweeting during services.

Outdoor banners (2' x 6') were utilized more intentionally to publicize events that could be of interest to the community. An easily changeable banner stand/holder was installed in the front of the building and a set of grommets to hang a banner was installed on the brick wall by the back parking lot.

## Property

Major projects included: a new HVAC system in the West building (2017), a new roof on the East building (2013), a new organ (2016), LED lighting fixtures (2017), renovation of the Sunday School room (2017).

The folding chairs in Fellowship Hall were replaced by an anonymous donor (2017).

'Stained glass' panels were installed on the glass above the folding doors separating the sanctuary from fellowship hall (2016).

## Worship and Music

Our worship schedule remained the same. During the year, this included a Traditional service and a Praise and Worship service each Sunday morning except when there was a fifth Sunday in a month. Then one service was held followed by the congregational forum. During the summer months, one service was held. The one service Sundays used a blended format combining elements from both the Traditional and Praise services.

Sunday school was held during the year except during the summer months.

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The music and liturgy continued to be highly regarded - varied, spirit-filled, and celebratory. The choir sings occasionally at the traditional service. Our Praise band, The Voice of the Turtle, continues to lead music at the Praise and Worship service. The bell choir performs occasionally.

Multi-week themed preaching series were used periodically on Sundays and during Lent and Advent to explore topics in depth. God Sightings returned for Lent 2016. An Advent Blessing bucket was utilized in 2015. Pentecost 2017 brought a fire dancer and various languages to the service. The Reformation 500 service featured a variety of special music from many different global Lutheran traditions.

Metropolitan Chicago Synod Bishop Wayne Miller preached at our 20th anniversary celebration service on Easter, April 2018.

Average Sunday worship attendance in 2017 was 63, down 62% from 5 years ago.

### LIVING OUR PURPOSE

#### Continuing Traditions

Some of our traditions, created over our 20 years continued, while some fell away as needs and passions changed and new events were held to supplement traditions.

- \* Blessing of the Animals in October
- \* Seasonal, holiday and special event Fellowship and Outreach dinners and pot lucks
- \* Annual Spring Cleaning
- \* Men's Monthly breakfast meetings
- \* Easter and Mother's Day breakfasts
- \* Stewardship Temple Talks
- \* Confirmation retreats
- \* Fall Rally Day for the congregation, neighbors, and friends with worship, food, music, games, service events and fellowship
- \* Explore Belonging classes for people interested in learning more about United in Faith
- \* Thanksgiving Eve worship services and pie sharing
- \* Cookie Baking and Walk in December

- \* Collection of Back to School Supplies for St. Cyprian's Food Pantry
- \* Special St. Cyprian's Food Pantry collections of food and funds for Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas as well as quarterly Brown Bag Sundays
- \* Donations for the children of St. Cyprian's Food Pantry of Christmas gifts and Easter baskets
- \* New chrismos for the Christmas tree
- \* Hosting the LOMC Swing Choir
- \* Devotions written by members published in the monthly newsletter
- \* Children burying an 'Alleluia' banner for Lent
- \* Children assisting in collecting the offering at services
- \* Recognizing birthdays and anniversaries the first Sunday of each month

#### Serving

Outreach events by the Gay and Straight Together ministry included marching in the Gay Pride parade, promoting marriage equality, workshops on bullying, self esteem and being transgender, and celebrating Reconciling in Christ Sundays.

Justice ministry hosted: a Fair Trade product sale; an offering of letters regarding Illinois state budget issues and Bread for the World; a 'Food for a Week' simulation event about food insecurity; an opportunity to decorate cards for Phil's Friends (cancer patients); a study of the draft ELCA document Faith, Sexism and Justice followed by a viewing of *Miss Representation*, a documentary exploring how mainstream media and culture contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America.

As we approached our 20th anniversary we also celebrated the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation by the nailing of the 95 theses on the church door by Martin Luther. To mark this occasion a door representing the Wittenburg Castle Church door was installed in the fellowship hall. Members of our community were asked to perform **500 Acts of Kindness** and to post them on the door.

In celebration and thanksgiving for our 20th anniversary, our vision is to offer 20 service

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projects to the community, turning our celebration outward, as our gift and a new way of engaging in the community, enabling us to be good stewards of the money and energy God has given us over the years. **Twenty For Twenty** is to bless local organizations and to be a visible sign of God's grace to those around us. These activities take place over the year from fall 2017 to fall 2018, to bridge from our 20th year into our 21st year. A final anniversary celebration in fall 2018 will highlight these projects as well as the organizations and people we have partnered with. Events have included: a blood drive, a Reformation 500 book fair with book donations to a senior care facility, a Veterans Salute, supporting a housing center fundraiser. An indoor winter farmers market is scheduled for February 2018.

Other ministries continued their dedicated work:

- \* Sunday Church School
- \* Weekly Bible/book studies including online Bible studies
- \* Vacation Bible School and an incorporated service project (with participation growing each year)
- \* Monthly communion visitation to those unable to attend church
- \* Intercessory prayers as requested, a monthly community prayer session and maintenance of the prayer weaving where prayers petitions are posted in the sanctuary
- \* The Family Crisis Fund collection and disbursement
- \* Building and landscape maintenance and upkeep including computer infrastructure
- \* *The Lutheran* magazine subscriptions to all families
- \* Daily devotional booklets available to all
- \* Preparation of the altar for each service and maintenance of the paraments, vestments, and linens; seasonal decorations
- \* Gift Assessment seminars
- \* Greeters for Sunday worship services and 'coffee and' supplied for Sunday morning fellowship, plus special desserts for celebrations
- \* Preparation of youth for confirmation
- \* Raising up stewardship topics
- \* Operation Christmas Child - shoe boxes for children

- \* Installing a Little Free Library box on site (constructed by Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts)
- \* Volunteering at the Chicago Greater Food Depository and at Feed My Starving Children
- \* Various craft projects (e.g. quilts, fidget pillows) donated to those in need

United in Faith continued to host these organizations:

- Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts
- Girl Scouts and Brownies
- Golden Diners (*closed in 2017*)
- Golden Rebels (*started in 2018*)
- St. Cyprian's Food Pantry
- New Life for Old Bags (*8th anniversary February 2018*)
- Senior Club (*now meets at Bakers Square*)
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Al Anon
- Survivors of Incest Anonymous

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Since the start of **Renewal** efforts in 2008, the Renewal team (now the Church Health Team) used the Natural Church Development methodology. Included were periodic assessments of our ministry to identify our strongest and weakest areas with subsequent activities to address deficiencies, and Gifts Assessment seminars. Starting in 2018 the team switched over to REVEAL methodology which measures and addresses the spiritual growth of our church. Every member was invited to take a survey to know if we are growing in our relationship with Christ and our love of God and others. The survey results serve as a baseline for a journey of spiritual transformation as we enter our 21st year as United in Faith. Periodic Gift Assessments seminars will continue to be held as needed.

In the summer of 2017 the council began a process of **mission planning** around three circles of endeavors - Proclamation, Service and Justice. The first step was an inventory of the important work United in Faith is doing. We expect the work with the REVEAL tool will impact mission

planning of what we hope for in these 3 circles and what is necessary to support our hopes.

With the completion of the **Twenty for Twenty** projects in fall 2018 we will conclude our anniversary celebration looking back on the blessings we provided and the community partnerships formed. An addendum to this document will be issued at that time.

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrod, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

LBW Evening Prayer

United in Faith openly **welcomes** and values every person who walks through our doors, regardless of race, nationality and ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, marital status, social and economic situation, ability, cultural reality and need. Further, United in Faith supports efforts to share with all: God's gifts of love, acceptance and grace; invites all people, uniquely created by God, to experience the word of God, communion and promise of the risen Christ; and, encourages all people to participate fully in the ministries of this congregation, which are based on its core values.

**20For20 (completed between Sept 2017 and Oct 2018)**

*In honor of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, United in Faith embarked on a challenge to partner with neighborhood organizations and bless the community around us during the year surrounding our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We built new relationships and partnerships, learned more about our community, reached out with the love of God, and found new resources within our immediate neighborhood.*

**(1) LifeSource blood drive**

In September 2017, we hosted a LifeSource blood drive in our building. LifeSource was thrilled by the opportunity to use our great fellowship space. Approximately 18 pints of blood were donated that day. Several United in Faith members donated snack items to keep the donors nourished, and many stayed around for moral support for those who donated blood.

**(2) Augsburg Fortress book fair**

In October 2017, United in Faith members staffed an Augsburg Fortress book fair with Reformation themed books, for two weeks at United in Faith and for one afternoon at Bethesda Senior Care, located at 2833 N Nordica Ave, Chicago, IL 60634. After our book fair was complete at UIF, we donated a large stack of books to Bethesda Senior Care.

**(3) Veterans Salute event**

In early November 2017, we hosted a Veterans Salute event in partnership with Billy Caldwell American Legion post, Chicago Public Library, and Portage Park Chamber of Commerce. Our Veterans Salute Event expressed our gratitude to those current and past military members. Refreshments were provided by the Portage Park Chamber of Commerce. A

display of military memorabilia and a flag ceremony was provided by the Billy Caldwell American Legion post. The Austin-Irving branch of the Chicago Public Library hosted the event and provided neighborhood publicity. United in Faith participated by paying for a face painter and a musician who played patriotic music after the flag and honor ceremony.

**(4) Northwest Side Housing Center Jimmy John's fundraiser**

Toward the end of November 2017, we benefited two organizations in one 20For20 event with our participation in the Northwest Side Housing Center Jimmy John's fundraiser. NWSHC had a fundraiser during their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. We bought food through this fundraiser (part one) and then, we donated these lunches to St. Cyprian's Food Pantry volunteers (part two).

**(5) Indoor Winter Farmers Market**

In February 2018, we hosted our first Indoor Winter Farmers Market, in partnership with Faith In Place. Even with a dramatic snow event that morning, we had a pretty good turnout at United in Faith. The Faith in Place Market had vendors selling soups, jams, baked goods, salsas, meats, honey, fair trade coffee and tea, winter-available produce, and more. Plenty of free samples, including fair trade coffee sponsored by the UIF Justice Ministry. This event required a large crew of volunteers, and we had a great turnout of United in Faith members and friends. Next year's Indoor Winter Farmers Market is already scheduled for March 23, 2019.

**(6) National Veterans Art Museum fundraiser**

In April 2018, a couple United in Faith members attended an ice breaker and



fundraiser of the National Veterans Art Museum. We donated funds toward the entry cost, allowing several community veterans to attend for free as well.

National Veterans Art Museum is the only art museum in North American dedicated to show veteran art. It is located near Six Corners, and admission to the museum is free. The NVAM collection “was built to inspire an understanding of the impact of combat on the individuals who served, as well as our society at large.” We were inspired by the many artists who shared their heart through art.

### **(7) Olive’s Neighborhood Garden for the Hungry**

That same month (April 2018), we made a donation to Olive’s Neighborhood Garden for the Hungry, which is dedicated to funding their new bee garden when it is established. Olive’s Neighborhood Garden is located at Laramie & Ainslie, Chicago and the future bee garden is at Laramie and Gunnison, Chicago. Olive’s Neighborhood Garden for the Hungry is an award-winning garden in the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Chicago providing handpicked produce for local residents in need. Hives are being insulated for the winter, and NeighborSpace (a nonprofit urban land trust) plans to purchase the land from IDOT to be used for the bee garden.

### **(8) Stress Relief Study Break Table during Wright College’s finals week**

In May 2018, a crew of volunteers staffed a Stress Relief Study Break Table during Wright College’s finals week. We offered snacks and stress relief toys – silly putty, bubbles, stress balls, DIY airplanes. We enjoyed talking to students, staff, faculty, and whoever we could to encourage them to keep working hard and hang in there through finals week.

### **(9) Thank You luncheon for the staff at Youth Outreach Services**

A few weeks later, another volunteer crew staffed a Thank You luncheon for the staff at Youth Outreach Services. YOS has been in the neighborhood longer than UIF has, though their main office is downtown. United in Faith members brought lunch and shared a meal with the staff on a staff in-service day. We thanked them for all they do for youth and young adults who are struggling on the Northwest side (and throughout the city and suburbs). The staff were incredibly grateful and sent a thank you card the following week.

### **(10) gift cards to the residents of St. Mary of Providence apartments**

In June, a couple United in Faith members presented gift cards to the residents of St. Mary of Providence apartments so that they could go on an “outing”. St. Mary of Providence helps women with developmental disabilities meet life’s challenges and reach their highest potential in growth, while promoting their dignity as human beings. We followed this up by another donation, when the Vacation Bible School kids decorated pencil cups for the residents.

### **(11) Lydia Home’s annual community festival: Hope Fest**

Also in June, a crew of United in Faith members volunteered as helpers at Lydia Home’s annual community festival: Hope Fest. We followed up this 20For20 project by donating bags of trail mix to their clients and staff that were made by the kids at United in Faith’s Vacation Bible School.

**(12) Kaya family from the Democratic Republic of Congo**

In June 2018, we had our first contact with the Kaya family from the Democratic Republic of Congo. A Lutheran Social Services of Illinois case manager brought their need to our attention, and throughout the months since, we have gathered donations of clothing, household items, furniture, and more. Mom, Dad, and two daughters now live in a 2-bedroom apartment.

**(13) St. Cyprian's Food Pantry Diaper Drive Baby Shower**

Also in June 2018, St. Cyprian's Food Pantry hosted a Diaper Drive Baby Shower to show people how the food pantry works and highlight a much needed commodity for those facing food insecurity and poverty. Food stamps cannot pay for diapers or wipes and most food pantries do not have the extra funding to offer these items all the time. United in Faith members donated approximately 8 packages of diapers plus 8 packages of diaper wipes, along with approximately \$500 in financial gifts.

**(14) free ice cream at Portage Park for National Ice Cream Day**

A very intergenerational crew of United in Faith members and friends handed out free ice cream at Portage Park for National Ice Cream Day on July 15, 2018.

**(15) refreshments for a monthly resident birthday party for seniors at Central Baptist Village**

On September 16, we provided refreshments for a monthly resident birthday party for seniors at Central Baptist Village. We brought and served cupcakes and ice cream to share with the residents.

**(16) refreshments for a community end of summer social at Portage Park Senior Center**

On September 17, we provided refreshments for a quarterly community end of summer social at Portage Park Senior Center. We brought and served root beer floats, fruit salad, cookies, cupcakes, cheese, and crackers. By the end, we even tried our hand at joining the seniors on the dance floor!

**(17) bake sale funds for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center in Oregon, IL**

On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, a bake sale was held at United in Faith to raise funds for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center in Oregon, IL. LOMC has been raising funds to renovate the Timbers and Meadows bunkhouses. We sent a total of \$415 raised to LOMC toward the campaign.

**(18) snacks for Our Saviour Lutheran School annual Walk-a-thon**

In October 2018, several United in Faith volunteers assisted at Our Saviour Lutheran School, by bringing snacks and smiles to the students after their annual Walk-a-thon. The walk was scheduled to be in Shabbona Park, but was moved indoors to the school gym due to weather.

**(19) Portage Park Farmers Market**

Also in October 2018, a number United in Faith members assisted with the Portage Park Farmers Market. We brought volunteers to help vendors (and others) set up tables/booths at the beginning of the day. The day was cold and rainy, but we brought as much sunshine spirit as we could to the festivities. We also had volunteers that helped vendors (and others) tear down, fold up canopies, and carry items to their vehicles. We gave away free swag and snacks at a United in

Faith table, while we greeted market goers  
with a smile.

**(20) toys for Ronald McDonald House**

Our last 20For20 is still in process. Later this month, we will donate a wide variety of toys, games, books, crafts, trucks, stuffed animals, and more to the Ronald McDonald House near Loyola Hospital in Maywood. These items will go into the Ronald McDonald House Toy Closet, which is used by patients and family members under age 21. Any child (whether patient or sibling) who stays at Ronald McDonald House gets to pick their own toy (or gift card) from the toy closet.

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