

Northern Illinois Conference 2023 One Matters Award

First United Methodist Church

Downers Grove, IL – Lake South



The Downers Grove First United Methodist Church is both humbled and joyful as we share our story today. Everybody here, as well as every local church and district in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, and every other United Methodist congregation and annual conference, and regional conference all over the world are working to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and through baptism and profession of Faith, each has added to the souls who are better connected to God through the love of Jesus Christ. This is only one of those stories.

We have been blessed to have younger and a little older baptismal families and baptismal candidates. As of Friday, we had a newer family attending who had the blessed arrival of their third child, a boy, and they have already scheduled the baptism of all three of their children in July. God is Good!



We go through baptismal conference with each family and find out how each one understands Holy Baptism. We listen to each set of parents, their religious backgrounds, and attempt to answer any

questions they may have about baptism what it means and how they can raise their young children or older children to be as informed as possible to be lifelong godly learners, along with engaging in as many activities, programs, and times to help them make their own decision about their belief in God, also walking with them as they lift up any questions that deal with issues that may be problematic for them regarding being a person who believes in God. The congregation seeks to help the parents support their child throughout their early childhood, confirmation, youth, young adult, and mature adult years.

We never stop asking questions and needing support as people of God of all ages. Our associate Pastor Andi Voinovich leads our confirmation and youth ministries. They have submitted this information as part of our story regarding baptism, confirmation, and profession of faith.

This year DGFUMC had thirty youth in confirmation: twenty-two 7th graders and eight 8th graders. 7th grade confirmation met on Sundays and Wednesdays. And we had a Confirmation Retreat Lock-In in October.

We are very happy that we currently have twenty-four adult members who agreed to be confirmation mentors this year! All of them have completed the safe gatherings training and background checks so that we can keep our youth as safe as possible and be in line with our insurance company's requirements.

This year we confirmed eight 8th graders and welcomed twenty-one 7th graders into the program. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! We began a confirmation mentorship program that connects each youth with an adult who is active in our congregation. It gives the youth an opportunity to connect with another safe adult and to learn about the church through their perspective.

One of the highlights of the year for the 7th grade class was "speed friending" with our mentors to learn more about each other and what being part of the church means to each one.

At the end of each 8th grade lesson, our confirmands worked together to create a quilt square that reflected that lesson. Those quilt squares were put together to create a confirmation quilt displayed during the Confirmation Service in April.

Over the past two years, our confirmands studied Scripture and learned about Methodist theology and history.

Written by Rev. Andi Voinovich