



The BEACON

The Official Newsletter of Christ Church United Church of Christ, Des Plaines, Illinois
An Open & Affirming WISE for mental health congregation

Volume II, Issue XI.

December 2025

From The Pastor's Desk: A Letter of Hope Amidst the Heaviness

Dear Friends,

As we enter this season of Advent, we are reminded that hope is not simply a wish, but a steadfast light in the darkness. These days, it can feel almost impossible to find that light. We see the rising cost of food, skyrocketing mortgage and rental rates, and wages that often fail to keep up with the basic necessities of life. We witness our government making cuts to programs meant to protect children, women, and elders. We hear the ongoing cries of immigrants—both documented and undocumented—whose lives are too often marked by trauma, fear, and uncertainty.

It is in this heaviness, in the midst of these challenges, that Advent calls us to pause and remember the promise of hope. The hope that God's presence is not absent in our struggles, but walking with us in solidarity, offering a vision of justice, compassion, and renewal.

Scripture reminds us:

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined." (Isaiah 9:2)

This verse invites us to trust that even in the darkest moments, light breaks through. Advent is our season to anticipate that light, to prepare our hearts, and to participate in bringing hope to those around us—through acts of kindness, advocacy, and care for the most vulnerable.

As we navigate these difficult times, may we hold tightly to this hope. May it inspire us to support one another, to stand with those who are marginalized, and to believe in a future where justice and peace flourish.

With hope and blessings for this Advent season,

Rev. Gilbert



Nourishment Through Scripture

For those who are following the Scripture lessons used during the Sunday Worship Services, here are the Common Lectionary readings:

December 7: Matthew 3:1-12 & Malachi 3:1-6

December 14: Luke 1:39-55 & Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

December 21: Luke 1:57-80 & Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

December 24: Luke 2:1-20 & Isaiah 9:2-7

December 28: Luke 2:22-40 & Psalm 148



Pastor's Office Hours:

Sundays: By Appt after worship.

Mondays: Phone, Video, or Appt.

Tuesdays & Wednesdays: 10 am - 3 pm*

Thursdays: By Appt.

Sabbath: Fridays and Saturdays

**Can schedule later appointments on a case-by-case basis.
For emergencies, call the pastor on his cell: 224-250-9898*

Finance Coordinator's Office Hours:

Tuesday - Friday: 9 am - 11:30 am

Administrative Assistant's Hours:

Tuesday - Friday: 9 am - 3 pm

STAFF MEETING: Tuesdays 9:30 am - 11:30 am

The office phone is not answered.

COMMUNITY BACKPACK PROJECT

Suggested items - please, no peanut based snacks and no glass jars!

- Single-serve breakfast cereal
- Instant oatmeal packets
- Pancake mix (add water variety)
- Canned red beans
- One-pound bags of rice
- Pasta and pasta sauce (in cans or plastic jars)



- Canned tuna, beef or chicken
- Peanut butter and jelly (in plastic jars)
- Fruit cups, pudding cups, fruit snacks
- Individually wrapped snacks and chips
- Canned pasta (ravioli, beef-a-Roni, stew, or chili)
- Canned soup

Giving

Did you know our church offers online giving and text-to-give? They're easy to use and secure! You can give a gift of support online at <https://bit.ly/ChristChurchUCCGive> or give via text message by texting the amount you would like to give to 847-750-3007.



Kindness is free.
Let's sprinkle that stuff everywhere!



SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

	<u>Liturgist/Lector</u>	<u>Council Greeter</u>	<u>Streaming Coordinator</u>
December 7	Maggie LaMarche	Bob Neil	Judy Rosedale
December 14	Megan Shipp	Holly Schmidt	Mandy O'Donnell
December 21	Jazmyn Vasquez	Mandy O'Donnell	Judy Rosedale
December 24	Jacob Guerra-Martinez		Mandy O'Donnell
December 28	Holly Schmidt	Laura Hallberg	Judy Rosedale



Ushers

December 7	Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
December 14	Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, George Bielat, Ruben Oviedo
December 21	Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
December 28	Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, George Bielat, Ruben Oviedo



**NOVEMBER'S AVERAGE
ATTENDANCE:
54±**



**988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE**

**988
LÍNEA DE
PREVENCIÓN
DEL SUICIDIO
Y CRISIS**

FINANCIAL REPORT

Oct 2025 = 4 Sundays = \$1168/Sunday average



Lets Get Involved!

GET IT TOGETHER: Tiny Toes & Big Hearts! Our Get It Together group crafted blankets, hats & booties for Project Baby Blanket! They'll bring a little love to NICU babies. Can you crochet or knit? Consider joining our group! The group meets on the third Wednesday of each month in the lounge. *The next meeting will be on December 17th, from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm.*

NOTABLES: The Notables will meet again to prepare for the coming busy season. As always, in Wobbe Hall from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. Contact Kyle Speer for more details.



MISSION COMMITTEE: On the first Sunday of every month, we collect food for the Self-Help Closet and Pantry of Des Plaines. The Red Barrels will be in the narthex.

Please, no expired food; here are a few suggestions:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| • Ketchup | • Body wash | • Men's, Women's, and children's all-sizes underwear |
| • Mustard | • Shampoo | • Ensure, Boost, Glucerna (generic ok) |
| • Mayonnaise | • Dish soap | • Canned dinners (hash, chili) |
| • Pasta sauce (plain) | • Laundry detergent | • Canned fruit |
| • Flour | • Paper towels | • Peanut butter |
| • Sugar | • Dog food (canned and dry) | • Jelly or jam |
| • Instant coffee | • Cooking oil | |
| • Juice (large bottles or boxed) | | |
| • Breakfast cereal (chocolate if possible) | | |
| • New or like-new clean bed linens and towels | | |



Please bring clean, dry plastic grocery bags. Thank you everyone for all your help.

Men's Lunch:

Next meeting is on Monday, **December 8th at 11:45am.**

Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60018



Women's Breakfast:

Next meeting is on Tuesday, **December 9th at 9am.**

Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60018

LIBRARY



NEW BOOKS IN THE LITTLE LIBRARY!

Looking for a good read? Thanks to our dedicated Faith Forward Commission, our Little Library is stocked with various books for all ages. Each book has been carefully selected and stamped with our library stamp.

Want to contribute? Please hand your book donations to a Commission member. Remember, only pre-approved books will be stamped.

Christ Church Council Meeting October 2025

Call to Order: 7pm

Roll Call: Judy Rosedale, Bob Neil, Mandy O'Donnell, Holly Schmidt, Laura Hallberg, George Bielat (on the phone), Pastor Gilbert

Prayer: Holly

Review of September 10, 2025 Council Minutes:

Motion and second to approve the minutes of September 10, 2025, as sent out.

The motion passed to accept the minutes.

Review of the August 31, 2025, Financial Report

Motion to approve the August 31, 2025, Financial report as presented.

Pastor's Report**Worship & Arts:**

- Regular Worship services – Four (1 with communion)

Faith Forward Commission | Christian Education

- Led book discussion “No One Cries When You Die”
- Faith Forward is back for the 2025 – 2026 Sunday School Year

Pastoral Care:

- Pastoral contact (pastoral care-related calls/texts, emails, in-person visits, greeting cards) = 32+
- Used the Discretionary Fund to buy \$200 in food gift cards. \$100 has been handed out so far.
- On behalf of the congregation a \$100 gift card was given to Jezzle.

Administrative/Personnel:

- Staff Meeting – Seven (7).
- Continue to co-manage all social media. Updated website.
- Three (3) committee meeting(s).
- The Vision Committee continues to meet and explore options for our next chapter of our church's ministry.
- Continue to help with tasks issued by the Vision Task Force, building tours, etc.
- Our former administrative assistant, Jezzle, has accepted a full-time position with benefits.
- Gifted Jezzle several gift cards on behalf of the congregation.
- Celebrated her with a lunch with some members and staff.
- Within a week, I was able to advertise the job opening for an admin assistant, perform preliminary interviews, and hold in-person interviews: we selected Katherine (Kat) Chwalisz as our new administrative assistant. She shadowed Jezzle for 2 days before being on her own.
- Reduced Tommie's hours and days from 3 days (15 hours) to 2 days (10 hours)

1 of 2

<https://bit.ly/CCUCCAPP>**Download Our New Church App!**

Stay connected with our church family anytime, anywhere. Access sermons, events, updates, and so much more—all right at your fingertips. Don't miss out on this convenient way to stay in the loop! Download it today!

Scan to download
the app



OR



Wider UCC & DP Community Meetings/Presentations/Events:

- Clergy Aliance Meeting
- Attended First Church UMC's Unity Talent show at the Des Plaines Theater.
- Attended installation for Rev. Abigail Lutz as associate minister to Glenview Community Church.

Other

- Selected candidate from the council to serve on the Camino Rising board. A motion was made to accept Mandy as the representative. The motion passed.
- A motion was made and seconded and passed to accept the Pastors report.

Committee ReportsMissions:

- Met to develop and finalize the benevolence budget for 2026.

Unfinished Business

- Music Director position - have a potential candidate that we will have discussions with

New Business:

- Motion to officially affirm the new Personnel hire for the admin assistant. The motion passed.
- Discussion of the 2026 budget as provided by the Finance committee.
- Final Christmas at 1492 Henry Ave – will provide ideas at the next meeting

Motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm passed.

2 of 2



The Community Backpack Project (CBP) is kicking off its annual Hat, Scarf, and Glove Drive for District 62 students (Pre-K–8th grade). Our goal is to outfit 250 students for the cold weather **ahead!**

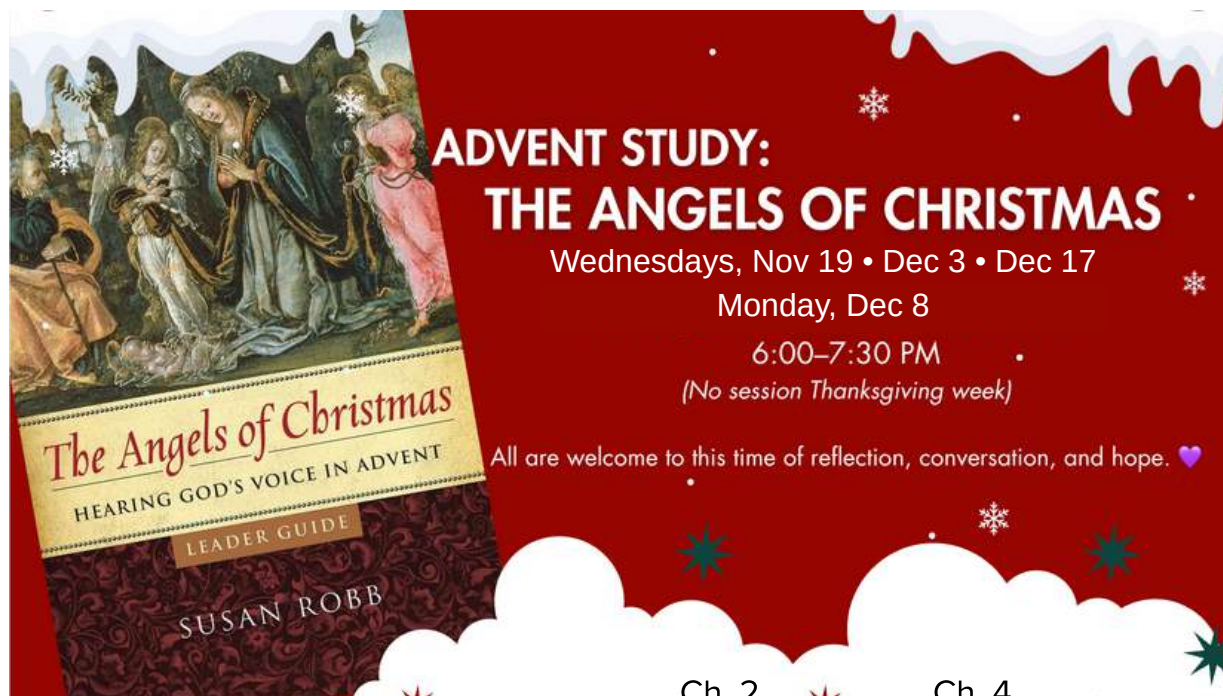
You can help by:

- Donating \$5 — enough to provide a hat, scarf, and gloves for one student (*items can be found at Dollar Tree*).
- Donations may be dropped off in the blue bins for delivery to the CBP.

Our goal is to distribute all items by the first week of November, before the winter chill sets in. Thank you for your ongoing support! Because of your generosity, we never have to say “no” to a student in need.

Thanks,

Jana Haas, Coordinator, Community Backpack Project



Wednesdays, ~~November 19~~ • December 3 • December 17

Monday, December 8

6:00–7:30 PM

(No session Thanksgiving week)

Ch. 2

Ch. 4

Ch. 3

This Advent season, join us for a four-week study of **“The Angels of Christmas: Hearing God’s Voice in Advent”** by Susan Robb. Together we’ll explore the four angelic visits surrounding the birth of Jesus — to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds — and discover what these heavenly messengers reveal about God’s presence in our world today.

Each week invites us to listen for God’s voice anew as we reflect on Scripture, explore the stories of Gabriel and other angels in the Bible, and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

Books are **\$15.50**, and financial assistance is available — if the cost is a barrier, please reach out to Rev. Gilbert for a copy.

All are welcome to this time of reflection, conversation, and hope during the Advent season.

<https://bit.ly/Advent2025CCUCC>

**Sign-up in the office
or use the QR code.**



Scan me



CHRIST CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

An open & affirming WISE for mental health congregation.

A Service of Lament & Hope

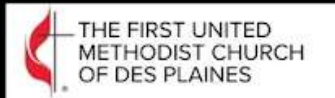
Join us for a quiet, reflective service of prayer, silence, and hope as we honor the struggles of immigrant families in our community and across the country.

This will be a gentle space for breathing, lament, and solidarity — open to all, regardless of background or belief.

ALL ARE WELCOME.

Friday, December 12th at 7 pm

**1492 Henry Avenue
Des Plaines**



Des Plaines Clergy Alliance
invites You to a

Community **Blue Christmas**

A Service of Healing & Hope



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19
7:00 PM

ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1095 E. THACKER ST.
847-824-2043

A Message from Rita:

I would like to thank everyone who brought cupcakes to church on Sunday, November 23rd. We were able to give San Lucas UCC 332 cupcakes for their Thanksgiving Dinner. When there are extras, they serve people several days a week, and they can truly use these treats.

On Sunday, November 30th, the Christmas tree will be in the narthex with the children's names from San Lucas. We at Christ Church will help them celebrate Three Kings Day with our gifts to their children, as they continue to allow us to live out our faith.

After years of financial hardship, let us remember to help the families of San Lucas rejoice in this holiday season. San Lucas will celebrate the Feast of the Three Kings on Sunday, January 4th, 2026.

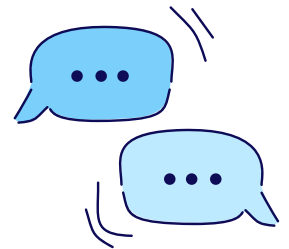
You can help bring Christmas cheer to the children of San Lucas UCC!



A BRIGHT
CHRISTMAS
FOR
SAN LUCAS'
CHILDREN

- Check out our San Lucas tree and choose a tag or two.
- Write your name on the nearby sign up sheet next to the child that you picked and specify their gender and age.
- Aim for a gift value of \$20 to \$25.
- Highly encouraged gifts include: toys, games, books, or Target and McDonald's gift cards.
- Do not wrap the gifts - please put them in a gift bag.
- Gifts due to the church by Sunday, Dec 21st.


Community Building Peace Circles



Experience deep connections and conversations with others in the community around topics impacting Des Plaines. Participants will receive a \$25 grocery card. Join First United Methodist Church Des Plaines and SPEAK Des Plaines for a series of Peace Circles—spaces to connect, share, and build community. Rooted in Indigenous traditions and guided by values of inclusion and democracy, circles help us strengthen relationships and practice restorative skills.

 **668 Graceland**

 **Dec 13, 11 AM – 2 PM**

 **\$25 grocery gift card + refreshments provided**

Register here: <https://bit.ly/communitypeacecircles>

Open to all community members—leaders, youth, seniors, teachers, parents, first responders, business owners, and neighbors.

Space is limited; confirmations sent one week before each circle.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH



Winter TRIVIA NIGHT

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31
DOORS OPEN AT 4:00 PM

Please join us as we continue celebrating our 100th year with our first ever Trivia Night! Teams of 4-6 people will compete in rounds of Trivia to win the Grand Prize!

Admission is \$40 per person which includes trivia entry, appetizers, dessert, and soft drinks. Awards will be given for Best Team Spirit, Round Winners, and Overall Winner.



Trinity Lutheran Church
675 E Algonquin Road
Des Plaines, IL 60016
847-827-6656

SCAN ME



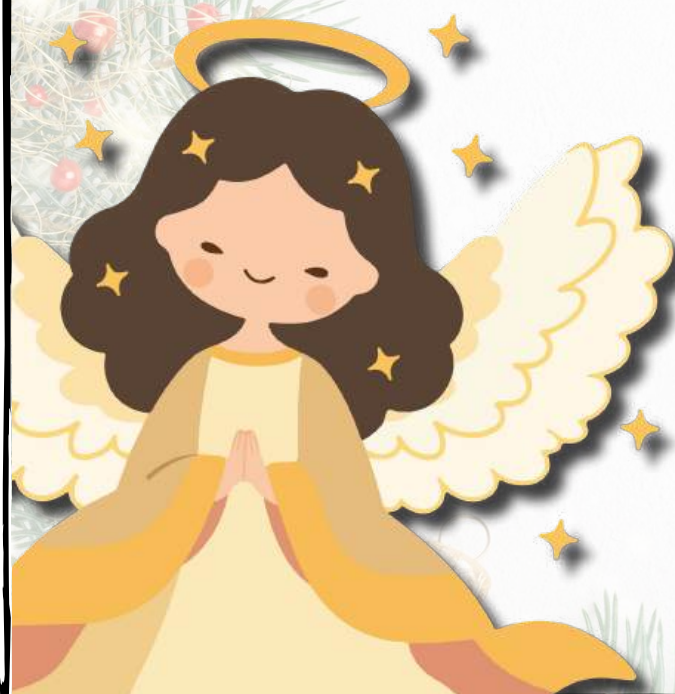
50/50 Raffle,
Picture Trivia,
Family Feud,
Raffle Items,
and more!

To register please visit
trinitydesplaines.org/trivia-night
or follow the QR Code.

Registration ends Friday, January 9th.



Inter-Generational Christmas Pageant Rehearsals



Rehearsals for this year's inter-generational Christmas Pageant, **A Manger Full of Stories**, will take place after worship on Sundays:

- **November 16**
- **November 30**
- **December 7**
- **Saturday, December 13** at 10:30 AM, with lunch provided that day.

The pageant will be presented during worship on **Sunday, December 14** — and all ages are invited to participate and celebrate together!



CHRIST CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

An open & affirming and WISE for mental health congregation.

presents

4th Annual Community Holiday Sing-Along

December 5, 2025 at 7pm

1492 Henry Ave, Des Plaines, IL

ADMISSION IS FREE.

***Admission ticket is a donated item from the list below for the Community Backpack Project — or simply bring yourself! Everyone is welcome.**

Pound of Pasta - Single Serve Cereal - Soup Can - Pudding Cups - Fruit Cups

ENJOY REFRESHMENTS AND TREATS AFTERWARD.

Guest Performers

Karen Wilberg, *St. Martin's Music Director & Organist*

Rev. Dr. William G. Grice III, *acoustic guitar - NoteAbles*



CO-SPONSORS:



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METHODIST CHURCH
OF DES PLAINES



ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL
CHURCH OF DES PLAINES



Memorials/Honors for November

In memory of our grandparents, Amy & Julio, by Jazmyn, Alexa, and Ace

In memory of my dear friend, Yoli, by Rev. Gilbert

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 - Melissa Neil | 29 - Virginia Hovinen |
| 2 - Holly Schmidt | 30 - Rev. Grice III |
| 6 - Colleen Mashek | 30 - Peggy Comstock |
| 26 - Lily Cheng | 31 - Julie Staggs |
| 27 - Pam Fack | |

Happy Anniversary

- 10 - Kyle and Cathy Speer (26)
 15 - Lori and Tim Fabian (40)
 26 - Julie and Gary Fritz (33)

✨ Faith Forward Adventures ✨ Advent Celebration for Kids!

FAITH FORWARD ADVENTURES



growing in
faith together

Christ Church invites all children to join us for Faith Forward Adventures, a special Advent celebration just for kids!

Each Sunday during Advent — **November 30 through December 21** — we'll gather during regular worship for fun activities, stories, and conversation about the hope, peace, joy, and love that lead us to Christmas.

🎄 **When:** Sundays, November 30 – December 21
 🎁 **Time:** During regular service

Come celebrate the season, make new friends, and discover together what makes Advent so special!

We can't wait to see you at Faith Forward Adventures!

COMING UP IN DECEMBER

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Time</u>
3	Advent Study: The Angels of Christmas Ch. 2	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
5	Holiday Sing-Along	Sanctuary	7 PM
6	Empty Bowls at Oakton College	Oakton College	10:30 AM
6	Notes of Rest	First Church UMC	1 PM
7	Faith Forward Adventures	Sanctuary	9:30 AM
7	Lux Cantorum: When Love Lights Justice	Fourth Presbyterian Church	4 PM
8	Men's Lunch	Sunrise Grill	11:45 AM
8	Advent Study: The Angels of Christmas Ch. 3	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
9	Women's Breakfast	Sunrise Grill	9 AM
10	Potluck	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
10	Council Meeting	Lounge	7 PM
12	A Service of Lament and Hope	Sanctuary	7 PM
13	Lux Cantorum: When Love Lights Justice	Pilgrim Congregational Church	7:30 PM
14	"A Manger Full of Stories" Christmas Pageant	Sanctuary	9:30 AM
14	Advent Workshop and Santa Claus Brunch	Trinity Lutheran	11:30 AM
16	Camino Rising's Food Pantry Distribution	Wobbe Hall	3 PM
17	Get It Together	Lounge	10 AM
17	Advent Study: The Angels of Christmas Ch. 3	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
19	Blue Christmas Ecumenical Service	St. Martin's Episcopal Church	7 PM
21	A Visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus	Wobbe Hall	10:35 AM
24	Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion Service	Sanctuary	4 PM



Potluck: Come and bring a dish for the potluck dinner. The dinner will be at 6:00 pm on **Wednesday, December 10th, 2025**. Join us for fellowship and great food!

"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul." - 3 John 1:2

Please keep the church office informed when you hear of someone needing prayers. During the previous month, our thoughts and prayers were with:

Marion Meseth*	Marilyn McCown
Dawn Mashek	Dorothy Zemke*
Linda Steckel*	Kelly Roberts
Jack Storm	Helen Harney
Sue Prunty	Hope & Bruce Tschappat*
Marilyn Hoover*	George Bielat
John Prellberg	Caid Carter
Ariana Subera	Cathy Epperly
Brynwood Family	Grace Pastor

Our Country
Ukraine, Lebanon, Palestinian,
and Israeli citizens
Documented & Undocumented
Immigrants

Homebound*



**Christ Church
United Church of Christ**

1492 Henry Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60016
847-297-4230

christchurchuccdesplaines.org

Facebook & Instagram:
[@christchurchuccdesplaines](https://www.facebook.com/christchurchuccdesplaines)

Rev. Gilbert Martinez, Pastor
gilbert@christchurchuccdesplaines.org

Kat Chwalisz, Administrative Assistant
kat@christchurchuccdesplaines.org

Kyle Speer, Finance Manager & Music Coordinator
kyle@christchurchuccdesplaines.org

Tommie Jordan, Custodian
Emanuel Alvarez, Maintenance Technician

The Beacon is the official newsletter of Christ Church United Church of Christ. Edited by church staff. Published monthly, August through June.

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Suicide and Crisis
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