



# The BEACON

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

Volume III, Issue I

January 2026

## From The Pastor's Desk: Beginning Again, Rooted in Welcome

Dear Friends,

As we begin a new year, January invites us to pause—not to judge ourselves too harshly for what we did or did not do last year. Instead, take a deep breath, dust yourselves off, and begin again. Turning the calendar does not erase our challenges, nor does it make us better overnight. Yet, in this simple act, grace appears: we are given another chance to try, to grow, and to live into whom God calls us to be—individually and together.

Recently, Rev. Linda Thurston shared a passage from historic church records she has been reading as part of Trinity Lutheran ELCA's preparations for its upcoming 100th anniversary. The notice is significant because it mentions Christ Evangelical and Reformed Church, the earlier name for what is now Christ Church United Church of Christ. The notice reads:

*"A Christmas party will be held for the Spanish-speaking Americans this Sunday, December 5, from 3 to 5:15 p.m. at the Christ Evangelical and Reformed Church, Cora and Henry Streets. Those attending are asked to bring wrapped gifts for the children and indicate whether the gift is for a boy or girl and their age. Everyone is welcome." (1965)*

Those words matter. They mattered then, and they matter now. That brief announcement reminds us: welcome is not a modern trend or just a convenient slogan. It forms part of our spiritual DNA. Decades before diversity statements and mission tags, members of this community made space for newcomers. Doors opened, food was shared, gifts exchanged, and all tried—imperfectly but faithfully—to reflect the expansive love of God.

This past October, we celebrated 133 years of ministry—years marked by change, growth, learning, and recommitment. Our name has changed. Our language has evolved. Our understanding has deepened. Yet, the heart of who we are remains rooted in that same call to open doors wide.

Today, we often give voice to that calling with the words: "No matter who you are or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here." This is not new theology for us. It is an echo—clearer and more explicit—of a welcome that has been practiced here for generations.

Hope, then, is not about getting everything right. To have hope is to choose to begin again; it is to trust that God is still at work among us—shaping, stretching, forgiving, and renewing. When we fall short, grace invites us to stand up once more.

As we step into 2026, may we do so with humility and courage. May we strive to improve and remain a community where welcome is lived, not just spoken.

Grace and peace in the new year.

Rev. Gilbert

*"Because of the Holy One's great love we are not consumed, for God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*

— Lamentations 3:22–23

## Nourishment Through Scripture

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

**January 4:** Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12; Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18

**January 11:** Isaiah 42:1-9 Psalm 29 Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 3:13-17

**January 18:** Isaiah 49:1-7 Psalm 40:1-11 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1:29-42

**January 25:** Isaiah 9:1-4 Psalm 27:1, 4-9 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23



### 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>
<b>January 4</b>	Laura Hallberg / Holly Schmidt	Judy Rosedale	Judy Rosedale
<b>January 11</b>	Kyle Speer	Bob Neil	Mandy O'Donnell
<b>January 18</b>	Jessica Busse	Mandy O'Donnell	Judy Rosedale
<b>January 25</b>	Megan Shipp	Laura Hallberg	Mandy O'Donnell



### Ushers

**January 4**

Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo

**January 6**

Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

**January 11**

Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo

**January 18**

Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

**January 25**

Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo



**DECEMBER'S AVERAGE  
ATTENDANCE:  
35.8±**



**988  
SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE**

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

### FINANCIAL REPORT

Nov 2026: average offering = \$2704/Sunday





### 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 January 21st, 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, **January 12th** at **11:45 AM.**

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



#### **Women's Breakfast:**

Next meeting is on Tuesday, **January 13<sup>th</sup>** at **9 AM.**

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.



# INTERGENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT



# Memorials/Honors for December

In loving memory of my husband Don from Charlene Dohse

In loving memory of Rich Hagedorn from Linda Segal; Bud and Elaine Hudson

In loving memory of Gordy Hess, my cousin, from Bud Hudson

In loving memory of my dear friend Bonnie Bernholdt, from Judy Rosedale

In loving memory of our son, Mike, our parents and grandparents from Bud and Elaine Hudson

In loving memory of George Bielat, from Larry and Dorothy Zemke; Kyle Speer; Barbara Dopp; Kathie Groll; Barbara Nix; Laura Hallberg; Judy and Don Rosedale;



8 - Ann Grice	18 - Julie Radman
10 - Linda Steckel	19 - Janice Storm
14 - Larry Zemke	19 - Jazmyn Vasquez
14 - Ruben Oviedo	19 - Debra Lynn
15 - Barbara Bay	Spetich Van Antwerp
15 - Megan Shipp	24 - Dawn Mashek



1 - Gary & Helen Smith (29)



## 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!

<https://bit.ly/CCUCCAPP>

Scan to download  
the app



OR





**COMING UP IN JANUARY**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Where</u></b>	<b><u>Time</u></b>
1	New Year's Day		
1	Office Closed		
2	Office Closed		
4	Advent Decoration Takedown After Worship		10:45 AM
4	St. Martin's Episcopal Last Service	St. Martin's Episcopal	4 PM
6	Epiphany		
11	Finance Committee Meeting	Lounge	11 AM
12	Men's Lunch	Sunrise Grill	11:45 AM
13	Women's Breakfast	Sunrise Grill	9 AM
14	Potluck	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
14	Council Meeting	Lounge	7 PM
15	Vision Task Force	Lounge	1:30 PM
19	Martin Luther King Jr. Day		
21	Get It Together	Lounge	10 AM
26	Faith Forward Commission Meeting	Zoom	5:15 PM



**Potluck:** Come and bring a dish for the potluck dinner. The dinner will be at 6:00 pm on **Wednesday, January 14th, 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\*  
Dawn Mashek  
Linda Steckel\*  
Jack Storm  
Sue Prunty  
Marilyn Hoover\*  
John Prellberg  
Ariana Subera  
Eppely Family  
Bielat Family

Marilyn McCown  
Dorothy Zemke\*  
Kelly Roberts  
Helen Harney  
Hope & Bruce Tschappat\*  
Caid Carter  
Cathy Epperly  
Charles Eppely  
Grace Pastor

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

**Homebound\***

**Christ Church  
United Church of Christ**

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[christchurchuccdesplaines.org](http://christchurchuccdesplaines.org)

**Facebook & Instagram:**

@christchurchuccdesplaines

**Rev. Gilbert Martinez, Pastor**

[gilbert@christchurchuccdesplaines.org](mailto:gilbert@christchurchuccdesplaines.org)

**Kat Chwalisz, Administrative Assistant**

[kat@christchurchuccdesplaines.org](mailto:kat@christchurchuccdesplaines.org)

**Kyle Speer, Finance Manager & Music Coordinator**

[kyle@christchurchuccdesplaines.org](mailto: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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**988  
Suicide and Crisis  
Lifeline**  
Call or Text

