



# 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 2

February 2026

## From The Pastor's Desk: Do Not Be Afraid - Again

Dear Friends,

In August 2019, I wrote "Do Not Be Afraid" for the UCC Mental Health Network. I saw a world where human dignity felt disposable amid violence and fear. I hoped we might learn, change, and turn toward justice.

Though years have passed, little has changed—so we return to these questions anew.

Today, cruelty is defended as policy. Fear is used for power. Some communities are told their lives matter less. Immigrants are scapegoated. LGBTQ+ people are targeted. Communities of color still suffer under unaccountable systems. None of this happens by accident. These are the results of choices, structures, and silence.

Scripture does not call us to be comfortable with this.

*"Do not be afraid, for I am with you;  
do not be discouraged, for I am your God."  
(Isaiah 41:10)*

These words are not meant to soothe us into complacency but to strengthen us for resistance.

Faith refuses to normalize harm to God's people. It does not mistake peace for quiet or unity for avoidance. Hope does not pretend things are better than they are. Hope insists injustice cannot define our future.

To say "do not be afraid" now is not to deny fear. It is to refuse to let fear decide who we love, protect, or ignore.

As we enter February, may our faith ground us. Let us be a congregation that tells the truth, stands with the vulnerable, and actively pursues justice and love in our daily lives. Reach out to support those who are suffering, speak out for those who are targeted, and, together, participate in acts of solidarity within our community.

While fear may shape the world, we can choose a greater power—faith, hope, and love. Let us be the people who meet fear with courage and justice, refusing to be formed by the world's anxiety, and instead shaping the world with God's vision for mercy and restoration.

Peace,

Rev. Gilbert

Link to original article: <https://tinyurl.com/DoNotBeAfraid2019>

## Nourishment Through Scripture

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

**February 1:** Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12;

**February 8:** Isaiah 58:1-9a, (9b-12); Psalm 112:1-9, (10); 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16); Matthew 5:13-20;

**February 15:** Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2 or Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9;

**February 18:** Joel 2:12-14; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21;

**February 22:** Jeremiah 29:1-9; Matthew 4:1-11;



### 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

### Administrative Assistant's Hours:

**Tuesday - Friday:** 9 am - 3 pm

**STAFF MEETING:** Tuesdays 9:30 am - 11:00 am

***The office phone is not answered.***



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<https://bit.ly/CCUCCAPP>



### 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>February 1</b>	Jacob Guerra-Martinez	Judy Rosedale	Judy Rosedale

<b>February 8</b>	Jazmyn Vasquez	Bob Neil	Mandy O'Donnell
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<b>February 15</b>	Holly Schmidt	Mandy O'Donnell	Judy Rosedale
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<b>February 18</b>			Mandy O'Donnell
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**(Ash Wednesday)**

<b>February 22</b>	Laura Hallberg	Laura Hallberg	Judy Rosedale
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### Ushers

<b>February 1</b>	Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
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**February 8**

Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
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**February 15**

Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
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**February 18**

Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
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**(Ash Wednesday)**

Carolyn Amick
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**February 22**

Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
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**DECEMBER'S AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:**

35.8±



**988**  
SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE

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



## **Seed Sowing Event**

**Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**11:30 AM**

Join Trinity Lutheran as they plant seeds in jugs to germinate before Spring! Bring your own jug if you can!





## 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 February 18th, 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
- Mustard
- Mayonnaise
- Pasta sauce (plain)
- Flour
- Sugar
- Instant coffee
- Juice (large bottles or boxed)
- Breakfast cereal (chocolate if possible)
- New or like-new clean bed linens and towels
- Body wash
- Shampoo
- Dish soap
- Laundry detergent
- Paper towels
- Dog food (canned and dry)
- Cooking oil
- Men's, Women's, and children's all-sizes underwear
- Ensure, Boost, Glucerna (generic ok)
- Canned dinners (hash, chili)
- Canned fruit
- Peanut butter
- Jelly or jam



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

### **Men's Lunch:**

Next meeting is on Monday, **February 9th** at **11:45 AM**.

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



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

Next meeting is on Tuesday, **February 10<sup>th</sup>** at **9 AM**.

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



## 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.

# Happy Pastoral Anniversary, Rev. Gilbert!

Today we pause—with joy and gratitude—to celebrate five years of faithful ministry with you at Christ Church: four years as our settled pastor and one year as our designated-term pastor. In every season, you have led with intention, courage, and heart, helping us grow into who we are called to be (and sometimes gently nudging us when we needed it).

Under your leadership, Christ Church became WISE for Mental Health, deepening our commitment to compassion, understanding, and care for one another. You strengthened our life as an Open and Affirming congregation, making sure that welcome isn't just printed on a sign, but practiced in real and meaningful ways. Through your work with the Des Plaines Clergy Alliance, you built strong partnerships and represented Christ Church with integrity, generosity, and collaboration in our wider community.

You've invited us to think deeply through engaging book studies, carried our values beyond our walls through community presentations, and brought new life and intention to our children's Sunday school—because faith formation matters at every age (including the wiggly ones). You've supported membership growth, encouraged transparency, and helped set us on a thoughtful path toward a sustainable and hope-filled future.

Through fiery preaching, wise and loving pastoral care, and steady leadership, you have guided us through change while always keeping people at the center of ministry. You've also generously shared your gifts with the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, reminding us that our church is part of something much bigger.

There are many more moments and milestones than can fit on this page, but this much is certain: Christ Church has been deeply blessed by your ministry. On this fifth anniversary, we celebrate your dedication, vision, humor, and heart—and we look forward with hope and excitement to all that we will continue to build together.

And because this is Christ Church—and gratitude is always better with frosting—there will be cake!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Rosedale". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "J" at the beginning.

Judy Rosedale, Council President



# Welcome!

*Karen Wilberg*

New Music Director  
& Church Organist

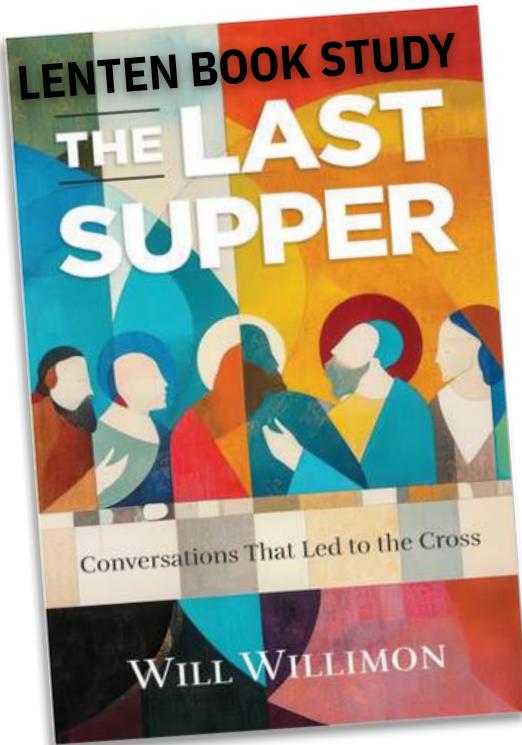
## Sing With All of Your Heart!

We're looking for singers to join a new church choir started by our music director, Karen Wilberg!

Please see Karen after worship for more information.



## GOD IS STILL SPEAKING—JOIN US THIS LENT AT THE TABLE TO HEAR NEW INSIGHTS ON THE LAST SUPPER.



**Thursdays | February 12 – March 19 | 6:00–7:30 pm**

Join us for a six-week Lenten study of The Last Supper: Conversations That Led to the Cross by William H. Willimon. Together we will explore the stories Jesus told at tables and how they prepare us for Holy Week.

Physical and digital books available. If the cost of the book is a concern, a copy will gladly be provided. Affordability will not be a barrier to participation.

**REGISTER HERE:**



<https://tinyurl.com/CCUCLent2026>



### **HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW PASTOR GILBERT?**

#### **The Biblical Seven Challenge**

*Choose the correct answer for each question.*

**1. When did Pastor Gilbert begin serving as Designated-term Pastor?**

2/1/2019  2/1/2020  2/1/2021  2/1/2022

**2. When did he become Settled Pastor?**

2/1/2020  2/1/2021  2/1/2022  2/1/2023

**3. How many total years has Pastor Gilbert served?**

3 years  4 years  5 years  6 years  7 years

**4. How many years has he served as Settled Pastor?**

2 years  3 years  4 years  5 years  6 years

**5. Which Texas city is Pastor Gilbert's hometown?**

San Antonio  Austin  McAllen  Corpus Christi  Harlingen  Laredo

**6. What is Pastor Gilbert's favorite color?**

Blue  Green  Purple  Red  Orange

**7. Pastor Gilbert is most likely to be found:**

Rushing past people  Listening carefully  Checking the clock

IN SCRIPTURE, SEVEN REPRESENTS COMPLETENESS. WE GIVE THANKS FOR THE MANY WAYS PASTOR GILBERT'S MINISTRY CONTINUES TO BE SHAPED BY CARE, PRESENCE, AND FAITHFULNESS.

\*\* Council did not meet during December \*\*

## **CHRIST CHURCH COUNCIL NOVEMBER 12, 2025 MEETING MINUTES**

**Call to Order:** 7:00 pm

**Roll Call:** Judy Rosedale, Bob Neil, Mandy O'Donnell, Holly Schmidt, Laura Hallberg, Pastor Gilbert

**Prayer**

### **Review of October 8, 2025 Council Minutes:**

Motion and second to approve the October 8, 2025 minutes as sent out.

The motion passed to accept the minutes.

**Review of Financial Report:** Not available due to transition.

**Officer Reports** – none

### **PASTOR'S REPORT –(OCTOBER 2- NOVEMBER 4)**

**Worship & Arts:** Regular Worship services – 4 (four); 1 with communion; All Saints Day service

### **Faith Forward Commission | Christian Education:**

- Led book discussion “Blood Brothers”
- Advent season 4-week book study of “Angels of Christmas”
- Wednesdays 11/19, 12/3, 12/17 and Monday 12/8

**Pastoral Care:** Pastoral contact (pastoral care-related calls/texts, emails, in-person visits, greeting cards) = 30+

### **Discretionary Fund**

- Check to the Backpack Project for \$400 for hoodies for high schoolers.
- Check for \$1400 to a vendor to assist with home repairs for an individual in need

### **Administrative:**

- Staff Meeting – Eight (8)
- Continue to co-manage all social media. Updated website
- Three (3) committee meeting(s).
- Bookkeeping services, included in the approved 2026 budget at \$8922, will now be handled externally.

### **Personnel:**

- Our Finance Manager had his annual review in October.
- As part of the ongoing transitions, the Finance Manager will assume a new title and the hours have been adjusted to help offset the cost of outsourcing the bookkeeping.
- The Personnel Committee approved allowing our maintenance technician to advertise that he is available for handyman work.
- The Finance Committee and Personnel Chair approved the hiring of a Music Director beginning in mid-January at a rate of \$900 / month for the first 90 days and \$1000 / month thereafter. The position is scheduled for an average of five hours per week. Needs Church Council approval.
- Following the advice of our bookkeeper, all part-time employees are compensated at an hourly rate. The final job description will be submitted to the Personnel and Finance committees and then forwarded to the Church Council for final approval.

**Wider UCC & DP Community Meetings/Presentations/Events:**

- Clergy Alliance Meetings – two (2): Lunch meeting with one Alliance member
- El Salvador Delegation Prep Meeting
- Illinois Conference of the UCC Meetings – three (3): Illinois Conference of the UCC Annual Celebration; Presented the new Conference Governance Structure; Elected Board of Directors Secretary for a two-year term
- A motion was made and seconded and passed to accept the Pastor's report.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Building Committee:** District 62 will utilize our parking lot during their construction.

**Mission Committee:** For Thanksgiving, we will be baking cupcakes for our sister church, San Lucas. They will be feeding the needy families in the Humboldt Park area. We ask our congregation to bring the dessert to their dinner table. Please make 2 dozen cupcakes and bring them to the Church kitchen on Sunday, Nov. 23 and they will be delivered on Monday, Nov. 24. In December we will have some children's names, from the area, and we will ask the congregation to pick a name or two, and purchase a gift or gift card for a child. More details will come later.

**ONA Wise Committee:** ONA has a meeting this month. We will look to refresh the committee and seek out additional members.

**Outreach Committee:**

- The Outreach Committee met on November 3rd to finalize plans for our upcoming November and December events.
- Welcoming the Stranger – On Sunday, November 9th, from 12:00–1:30 p.m., Exodus World Services will present "Welcoming the Stranger." This program, open to both the community and Christ Church members, explores ways to extend hospitality and support to newcomers and refugees.
- 4th Des Plaines Community Sing-Along – Join us on Friday, December 5th, at 7:00 p.m. for the annual Community Sing-Along. The Des Plaines Clergy Alliance and members of the wider community will come together to celebrate the holiday season with music, fellowship, and hospitality.
- Empty Bowls Event – On Saturday, December 6th, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., we will be highlighting the Empty Bowls event at Oakton College. This meaningful event raises funds to support local food banks and raise awareness about hunger in our community.
- The committee looks forward to an active and engaging season of outreach and community.

**Unfinished Business**

Music Director position - drafting a job description for final approval- will include practice and directing the choir. Will pay an hourly rate. Position to begin in mid-January. The motion passed.

**New Business:**

**Motion to elect** Judy Rosedale as Council President, Laura Hallberg as Vice President and Mandy O'Donnell as secretary. The motion passed. Installation will be December 7.

**Bookkeeping Update:** During the Annual Meeting, the congregation approved a modest budget to outsource the bookkeeping portion of our finances. The company taking on this work is Church Training Center, which previously conducted an audit of our finances and structure. This change is intended to strengthen our financial tracking and introduce additional checks and balances beyond our previous system.

**Finance Role Update:** With the shift to outsourced bookkeeping, the Finance Manager's title has been updated to reflect his new responsibilities within the revised structure. Moving forward, the position will be known as Finance Coordinator. As such, hours will also be adjusted to reflect the change in assigned tasks.

# Memorials/Honors for January

In memory of George Bielat, from Laura Hallberg; Rev. Dr. William & Ann Grice

Happy heavenly birthday (1/15), Dad -Gilbert

Happy heavenly birthday (1/15), Grandpa -Jazmyn, Alexandra, and Nathaniel

Happy birthday (1/19), Jazmyn -Tios Jake & Gilbert, Alexandra, and Nathaniel

In memory of Phyliss Heinrich, Bud's sister, from Bud and Elaine Hudson

In memory of Rich Hagedorn, from Barbara Dopp



1 - Alyssa Ventrella	19 - Penny Collins
2 - Ace Martinez	24 - Kathie Groll
7 - Nate Cheng	25 - John Hangey
7 - Pastor Ady DeLaGarza	27 - Rita Barth
15 - Ariana Kelso	
15 - Helen Smith	



2 - Ed & Andrea Cheng (6)
16 - Rev. Gilbert & Jacob Martinez (22)



## WITH GRATITUDE

After ten years as Finance Manager for Christ Church, Kyle has concluded his role. As a longtime member, he brought care and commitment and remains a valued part of our community.

Kyle stewarded our finances with integrity and steadiness, even during change. His quiet leadership and professionalism strengthened our ministry and mission. In my five years as pastor, I found Kyle to be always present and trusted. His insight, reliability, and support greatly benefited this congregation and me.

Kyle's last day was January 30. We thank him for ten years and wish him and his family well.

**COMING UP IN FEBRUARY**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Time</u>
<b>1</b>	Rev. Gilbert's Pastoral Anniversary		
<b>1</b>	Finance Committee Meeting	Lounge	11 AM
<b>4</b>	Outreach Meeting	Lounge	5:15 PM
<b>8</b>	Winter Seed Sowing Event	Trinity Lutheran	11:30 AM
<b>9</b>	Men's Lunch	Sunrise Grill	11:45 AM
<b>10</b>	Women's Lunch	Sunrise Grill	9 AM
<b>11</b>	Potluck	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
<b>11</b>	Council Meeting	Lounge	7 PM
<b>12</b>	Lenten Book Study: The Last Supper Ch. 1	TBD	6 PM
<b>18</b>	Ash Wednesday Service	Sanctuary	7 PM
<b>19</b>	Lenten Book Study: The Last Supper Ch. 2	TBD	6 PM
<b>23</b>	Faith Forward Commission Meeting	Lounge	5:15 PM
<b>26</b>	Lenten Book Study: The Last Supper Ch. 3	TBD	6 PM

**INCOME REPORT:**

- December - \$12,130.37
- January - \$4,316.38
- 2025 Total: \$173,176.41 *including tenant donations and other income.*



**Potluck:** Come and bring a dish for the potluck dinner. The dinner will be at 6:00 pm on **Wednesday, February 11th, 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	Cathy Wiesner
Dawn Mashek	Dorothy Zemke*	Our Country
Linda Steckel*	Kelly Roberts	Ukraine, Lebanon, Palestinian, and Israeli citizens
Jack Storm	Helen Harney	Documented & Undocumented Immigrants
Sue Prunty	Hope & Bruce Tschappat*	
Marilyn Hoover*	Caid Carter	
John Prellberg	Cathy Epperly	
Ariana Subera	Charles Eppely	
Eppely Family	Grace Pastor	
Bielat Family	Alice Barnhart	

**Homebound\***

**Christ Church  
United Church of Christ**

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Des Plaines, IL 60016  
847-297-4230

[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)

**Karen Wilberg, Music Director**

[karen@christchurchuccdesplaines.org](mailto:karen@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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