



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 4

April 2026

From The Pastor's Desk: Rising Together: Easter Covenant and Compassion

Dear Beloved Community,

Easter morning arrives quietly, the kind of light that slips in under the door and finds you even when you're not looking for it. Grief lingers, but hope has a way of threading itself through the cracks. Mercy grows up from the hardest ground. The story of Christ, his suffering, and his rising reminds me just how deep human brokenness can go, and how much deeper God's grace can reach.

Jesus showed this grace when he said of those who sought his death out of misguided hatred: *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34). Even destructive faith begins somewhere sincere. Sincerity does not excuse harm, but it does invite us to meet others with understanding, even when their words or actions wound us.

These days, it's easy to judge quickly, maybe with a sharp word or a careless comment online. We're still faced with the same old challenge: can we answer with courage, with honesty, with a heart that leans toward kindness?

As your pastor and teacher, I try to walk gently, hoping to do as little harm as I can. I ask for grace because I am as human as anyone. I stumble. I miss the mark. Still, I keep trying and learning how to be a dad, a spouse, an uncle, a brother, a friend, a pastor, a teacher, and most of all, just a child of God, still growing.

I carry the stories you entrust to me. I carry grief and joy. And in the quiet moments, when I feel the weight, your care reminds me that ministry is never a solitary journey.

Still, there are days when we forget the promise we make to each other here. Our prayers, our encouragement, our kindness, they're not just nice gestures, but the threads that hold us together. Sometimes we forget that those who serve need lifting up, too. But when we remember our covenant, even for a moment, to notice the weight someone else is carrying, something shifts. The community grows stronger. Hearts find new strength. The love of Christ feels close, alive, shining right here among us.

This Easter, I hope we can step into the promise of resurrection together. I hope we remember that love outlasts fear, that mercy shines brighter than judgment, and that life is stronger than anything that tries to hold it down. Let's offer compassion not just to ourselves, but to each other, even when we don't see eye to eye. That's how we practice the courage and kindness Jesus showed us. That's how we help each other find new life.

And so, a blessing:

May the joy of the risen Christ renew your heart.

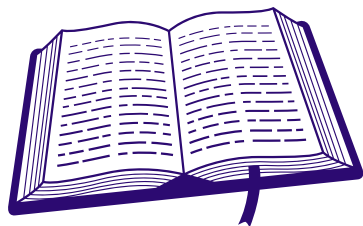
May the light of Easter guide your steps.

And may the Spirit grant us all the courage to uphold one another in love, in grace, in covenant. Amen.

With gratitude, hope, and Easter joy, *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:



- April 2 (Maundy Thursday):** Luke 22:14–20
- April 3 (Good Friday):** Luke 23:39–43; John 19:25–27
- April 5 (Easter):** Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18
- April 12:** Acts 2:14a, 22-32; 1 Peter 1:17-23; John 20:19-31;
- April 19:** Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Luke 24:13-35;
- April 26:** Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10;

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:** T - F 9 am - 3 pm
- Finance Coordinator's Hours:** T - TH 9 am - 12 pm
- Staff Meeting:** Tuesdays 9:30 am - 10:30 am

The office phone is not answered.

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COMMUNITY BACKPACK PROJECT

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

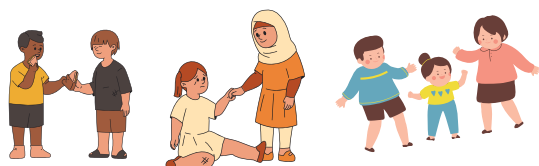
- Single-serve breakfast cereal
- Instant oatmeal packets
- Pancake mix (add water variety)
- Canned red beans
- One-pound bags of rice
- Pasta and pasta sauce (in cans or plastic jars)



- 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!



Potluck: Come and bring a dish for the potluck dinner. The dinner will be at 6:00 pm on **Wednesday, April 8th**. Join us for fellowship and great food!

SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

	<u>LITURGIST/LECTOR</u>	<u>COUNCIL GREETER</u>	<u>STREAMING COORDINATOR</u>
April 2 (Maundy Thursday)			Judy Rosedale
April 3 (Good Friday)			Mandy O'Donnell
April 5 (Easter)	Laura Benitez	Judy Rosedale	Judy Rosedale
April 12	Holly Schmidt	Bob Neil	Mandy O'Donnell
April 19	Laura Hallberg	Mandy O'Donnell	Judy Rosedale
April 26	Putz-Cheng Family	Laura Hallberg	Mandy O'Donnell



USHERS

- Easter** Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
- March 15** Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
- March 22** Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
- March 29** Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

**MARCH AVERAGE
SUNDAY ATTENDANCE:**
48.2±



INCOME REPORT:

Funds Overview for March 2026

- Palm Sunday - \$196.50
- Pastor's Discretionary - \$128.30

- Goebel Fund - \$25.00
- General Memorials - \$25.00
- Rental - \$3,769.00
- Comstock Camp - \$20.00
- Hug Camp - \$103.30
- Contributions - \$26,528.47
- Mission - \$62.50



I ask for your patience as we navigate transitions within our fiscal system. -GM



HELP THE FAITH FORWARD COMMISSION!

On the 19th, we'll be taking a special second collection that goes toward the Faith Forward Commission Scholarships!

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 April 15th, from 10 am - 12 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
- Breakfast cereal (chocolate if possible)
- New or like-new clean bed linens and towels
- 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



- Body wash
- Shampoo
- Dish soap
- Laundry detergent
- Paper towels
- Dog food (canned and dry)
- Cooking oil
- Instant coffee
- Juice (large bottles or boxed)

Please bring clean, dry plastic grocery bags.

If you would like to contribute monetarily, we also do a special second collection every first Sunday of the month. Thank you so much for your contribution.



MEN'S LUNCH:

Next meeting is on Monday, **April 13th** at **11:45 AM.**

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

WOMEN'S BREAKFAST:

Next meeting is on Tuesday, **April 14th** 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.



GOOD NEWS!



EASTER FLOWER CROSS

Our Easter Cross tradition continues as we rejoice in celebrating that Christ has risen. Everyone is invited to bring a “live” flower on Easter morning to place on the wooden cross.

EASTER EGG HUNT

Kids of all ages are welcome to join us after Easter worship and fill up a basket of colorful Easter eggs! Please bring your own basket.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

2 - Thomas March
 6 - Michael Skibbe
 8 - Dorothy Zemke
 15 - Lori Bruhn

15 - Brandon Brynwood
 15 - Mandy O'Donnell
 15 - John Skibbe
 15 - Henry Speer

24 - Rita S. Barth
 25 - Robin Shore
 28 - Timothy Barnhart
 30 - Joe Busse

CHRIST CHURCH COUNCIL FEBRUARY 11, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order: 7:00 pm

Roll Call: Judy Rosedale, Bob Neil, Mandy O'Donnell, Pastor Gilbert

Prayer

Review of January 14, 2026 Council Minutes: Motioned, seconded, motion passed.

Review of Financial Report: Not available.

Officer Reports – none

PASTOR'S REPORT: JANUARY 12 - FEBRUARY 10

Worship & Arts:

- Advent decorations were taken down.
- Regular Worship services – 3
 - One (1) w/ Communion

Faith Forward Commission | Christian Education:

- Starting Lent Book Study: The Last Supper on Thursdays at 6 PM

Pastoral Care:

- Pastoral contact (pastoral care-related calls/texts, emails, in-person visits, greeting cards) = 32+
 - Including one hospital visit

Administrative/Personal:

- Staff Meeting – Five (5)
- Continue to co-manage all social media and updating website.
- The transition to our outsourced bookkeeper is ongoing.
- The staff had an outing to welcome new staffers: Karen & Helayne.

Personnel:

- Our new administrative assistant had their 90-day review.
- Our Finance Manager retired effectively on Friday, January 30th.
- We hired a new Finance Coordinator who started on Tuesday, February 3, 2026.
- Pastor's upcoming time-off:
 - Monday, February 16th.
 - Friday, March 20 - Saturday, March 28. (*Vacation week 1 of 4*)
 - Sunday 1 of 3 off, Sunday, April 12.

Continuing Education:

- Attended kick-off for "**The Playground**" at Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL, a year-long renewal program for ministry leaders. It blends virtual and in-person learning, theological study of practices like Sabbath and holy play, immersive pilgrimages, practical tools for community renewal, and cohort support. My instructor is a Princeton Theological Seminary professor.

Wider UCC & DP Community Meetings/Presentations/Events:

- We received several items from St. Martin's Episcopal Church, including their outdoor Nativity set.
- Illinois Conference of the UCC Board of Directors related meetings - Four (4)
- Meeting with a team from Lutheran General for community connection.
- Camino Rising is preparing to start up a bi-monthly pantry distribution.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach: Committee met on February 4th to discuss new initiatives and ones they would like to continue. The next meeting will be held on March 2nd at 5:15 pm

Building Committee: A water leak in the basement has been addressed.

Faith Forward Commission: Began planning for Easter Egg Hunt. Met with Mairin from St. Martin's to learn about her inclusive free little library project. We agreed to look into purchasing new costumes for future Christmas pageants. Discussed new scholarship fundraising ideas and discussed plans for Children's Day (June 7) and scholarship deadlines.

COMING UP IN APRIL

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Time</u>
2	Maundy Thursday Service	Wobbe Hall	7 PM
3	Good Friday Service	Sanctuary	7 PM
5	Sunrise Easter Service	Lake Opeka	5:30 AM
5	Easter Service	Sanctuary	9:30 AM
5	Easter Egg Hunt	Wobbe Hall	10:45 AM
6	Outreach Meeting	Lounge	5:15 PM
8	OFFICE OPENS LATE		2 PM
8	Potluck	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
8	Council Meeting	Lounge	7 PM
12	ONA Meeting	Lounge	11 AM
13	Holocaust Remembrance Day		
14	Greater Family Health Event	Wobbe Hall	9 AM - 1 PM
16	Exodus World Service: Celebration of Hope	Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace	5 PM
19	Immigrant Welcome Committee Meeting	Lounge	10:45 AM
22	Earth Day		
23	One Earth Film Festival	Trinity Lutheran Church	6:30 PM
27	Faith Forward Commission Meeting	Lounge	5:15 PM

Memorials/Honors for March

In memory of Shirley Bednar, longtime friend of Bud & Elaine Hudson

In honor of Phil's Birthday on 3/9 from Nancy Seils

Happy birthday to my sister, Aimee, from Rev. Gilbert

"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 | Alice Barnhart |
| Dawn Mashek | Dorothy Zemke* | Bielat Family |
| Linda Steckel* | Kelly Roberts | Cathy Wiesner |
| Jack Storm | Helen Harney | Julie Radman |
| Sue Prunty | Hope & Bruce Tschappat* | Our Country |
| Marilyn Hoover* | Caid Carter | Ukraine, Lebanon, Palestinian, |
| John Prellberg | Cathy Eppely | and Israeli citizens |
| Ariana Subera | Charles Eppely | Documented & Undocumented |
| Eppely Family | Grace Pastor | Immigrants |

Homebound*



**Christ Church
United Church of Christ**

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Rev. Gilbert Martinez.....Pastor
Kat Chwalisz.....Administrative Assistant
Helayne Levin.....Finance Coordinator
Karen Wilberg.....Music Director
Tommie Jordan.....Custodian
Emanuel Alvarez.....Maintenance
Technician

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