



The BEACON

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

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August 2026

From The Pastor's Desk: Another Beginning

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" — Isaiah 43:18–19a*

Dear Church Family,

August slips in, and suddenly backpacks are stuffed, calendars fill up, and classrooms buzz with that old sense of possibility. Some of us feel a spark of excitement. Others feel the knot of uncertainty. A new school year means new faces, new routines, new hopes, and sometimes new worries. There are tests to study for, projects waiting on the kitchen table, friendships to figure out, and dreams that sometimes seem just a little too far away.

But every new school year hands us a quiet gift: the chance to start over.

Maybe your goal is to finish high school, get that college diploma, learn a new skill, or just become the person God keeps nudging you to be. Each year sets another stepping stone before us, another small step toward what we hope for. Progress hardly ever comes in a rush. Most of the time, it's one lesson, one hard day, one small act of not giving up.

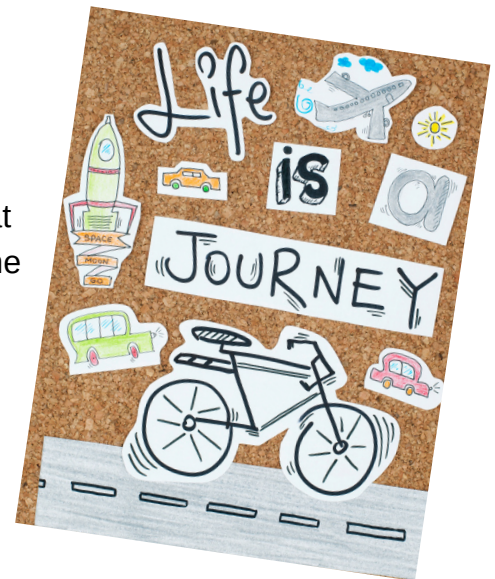
But in all the busy days, lists, and plans, I hope we don't forget something just as important as grades or goals.

Pause.

Sit for a moment.

Let the breeze touch your face. Let the sun settle on your shoulders, as if God is right there, holding you close and whispering, 'I am with you.' Even when the deadlines stack up, when worry tells you you're not enough, or when the road ahead looks foggy, God doesn't leave. Like a parent who sits quietly in the next room, God stays close through every win and every stumble.

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For those of us who have left our school days behind, this season stirs up old memories. We remember the teachers who saw us, the friends who stuck around, the awkward moments, the tough classes, and maybe even those lonely stretches when we wondered if we fit in at all.

As we look back, let's try not to compare our stories to theirs. The world our kids and young people are walking through isn't the same one we knew. How they learn, talk, and face what's hard has changed, but their need for kindness, understanding, and grace is still the same. Every generation walks its own road, and every road deserves to be honored for what it is, not measured by what came before.

Instead of comparing, may we choose compassion.

Let our memories remind us what it was like to feel unsure, overwhelmed, or scared of falling short. Maybe they can nudge us to be the steady presence we once needed. Sometimes all it takes is a listening ear, a kind word, a quiet prayer, or just letting someone know you believe in them. That can change everything for a young person.

As the school year starts up again, let's pray for students, but also for parents, grandparents, teachers, staff, professors, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, and everyone who helps shape young lives. May they find wisdom, patience, courage, and joy along the way.

And may each of us, whether we're stepping into a classroom or just into a new season, welcome this beginning with hope. God keeps inviting us to learn, grow, love deeper, and become the people we were made to be.

Let this season remind us: every new beginning is another chance to see how faithful God is, the One who never stops walking with us.

*Blessings,
Rev. Gilbert*

NOURISHMENT THROUGH SCRIPTURE

- **August 2:** Gen 32:22-31; Ps 17:1-7, 15; Rom 9:1-5; Matt 14:13-21;
- **August 9:** Gen 37:1-4, 12-28; Ps 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Rom 10:5-15; Matt 14:22-33;
- **August 16:** Gen 45:1-15; Ps 133; Rom 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matt 15:(10-20), 21-28;
- **August 23:** Exod 1:8-2:10; Ps 124; Rom 12:1-8; Matt 16:13-20;
- **August 30:** Exod 3:1-15; Ps 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Rom 12:9-21; Matt 16:21-28

SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

LITURGIST-L; COUNCIL GREET-C

August 2: Annual Picnic

August 9: Jacob Martinez(l), Cindy Georgoulis(c)

August 16: Putz-Cheng Family (l), Laura Hallberg(c)

August 23: Jessica Busse(l), Megan Shipp(c)

August 30: Megan Shipp(l), Judy Rosedale(c)

USHERS

August 2: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo

August 9: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

August 16: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo

August 23: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

August 30: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo

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.



DOWNLOAD OUR 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>



ATTENDANCE

June Average Sunday Attendance: 54±

INCOME REPORT

Funds Overview for June 2026

General Fund: \$5,055

Pastor's Discretionary: \$1,172

Music Fund: \$1,112

Mission: \$15

Neighbors in Need: \$10

Outreach: \$140

HUG Camp: \$505

Plate: \$48

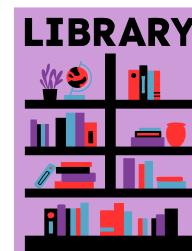
Memorials: \$5

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. Please feel free to contact Kyle S. for more details.

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.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

We joyfully welcomed **Alex and Kyle** into the membership of Christ Church United Church of Christ in June. We give thanks for the ways God continues to grow and strengthen our church family, and we pray for God's blessings as we journey together in faith. We are also delighted to welcome their children, **F and V**, as our newest honorary members. We are grateful to have your family as part of our community!



BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

Sunday, August 23 • During Worship

Bring your backpack, briefcase, laptop bag, lunch bag, or other work or school bag as we celebrate a new school year and season of work.



This special blessing is for students of all ages, teachers, school staff, childcare workers, and anyone beginning a new job or returning to work. Together, we'll pray for wisdom, courage, compassion, and God's presence wherever we learn, teach, and serve.



Welcoming Our Newest Neighbors

Thank you to the Immigrant-Welcoming Committee for collecting and delivering our first Baby Welcome Pack to a Syrian refugee family who recently settled in Skokie.

Those who participated shared that the experience was deeply meaningful and encouraged others in our congregation to consider volunteering for future deliveries. Sometimes the simplest acts of kindness become the most memorable.

Pictured are Judy and Maggie with a portion of the donated items collected for the Baby Welcome Pack.

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

May 13, 2026

Church Council met on May 13 to receive ministry reports, conduct the congregation's business, and plan for upcoming ministries. The following are highlights from the meeting.

Pastor's Ministry Report

During the reporting period (April 6–May 10), the Pastor reported:

- 4 worship services, including 1 Communion service
- 1 funeral service and 1 memorial service
- Approximately 35 pastoral care contacts, including hospital visits, home visits, phone calls, emails, greeting cards, and other pastoral support
- Reception of Marge Thomsen as a new member on April 26
- Pastor's Discretionary Fund assistance totaling \$2,480, including support for Teacher Appreciation Week, a medical need, and the Center of Concern Mini Golf Fundraiser
- Seven staff meetings, continued work on the church website and social media, financial systems updates, and completion of the new Unified Policy and Personnel Handbook with church leadership and staff
- Participation in wider church ministry through the Illinois Conference Board of Directors and community partnerships.

MINISTRY UPDATES

Council received reports from several ministry teams.

- **Faith Forward Commission** finalized Mother's Day flower sales and began planning Children's Sunday, Scholarship Sunday, and summer Faith Forward Adventures, including a movie day, bowling outing, and picnic.
- **Outreach Committee** continues to develop new community initiatives and has announced its first Cake Walk fundraiser on May 30.
- **Immigrant-Welcoming Committee** is preparing for Refugee Sunday on June 14 and coordinated a collection of baby items for refugee families through Exodus World Service.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

- Council continued discussion regarding:
- Vision Task Force's exploration of expanding the geographic search area for the congregation's future home;
- The ongoing transition to Village Bank & Trust (Wintrust), and
- A discussion regarding a potential salary adjustment for the Music Director based on a 90-day review.
- Council also approved the April meeting minutes and accepted the Pastor's report.

Official Church Council minutes are approved at the following month's meeting.

LOVE TO *Sing?*

— JOIN THE — **CHOIR!**

LEAD WORSHIP



Use your voice to help lead our congregation in joyful praise.

BUILD COMMUNITY



Make friendships, share encouragement, and be part of something bigger.



NO AUDITION REQUIRED!

We welcome all who love to sing and want to serve.

YOUR
VOICE
MAKES A
DIFFERENCE!



Interested? →

WE'D LOVE TO
HEAR FROM YOU!



CONTACT OUR
MUSIC DIRECTOR,

Karen W.

TOGETHER, WE
MAKE MUSIC THAT
LIFTS HEARTS AND
GLORIFIES GOD.

THIS MONTH AT CHRIST CHURCH

Sunday, August 2

10 am – **Annual Worsip, Picnic, & Potluck**

📍 Optimist Pavilion, Lake Opeka

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Sunday, August 9

9:30 am – Worship Service

Monday, August 10

11:45 am – **Men's Lunch**

📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

6 – Miguel Benitez

7 – Bruce Tschappat

13 – Peggy Wajda

13 – Josh Kelso

18 – Monica Kulaga

20 – Alan Ventrella

23 – Debbie Barnhart

23 – John La Marche

Tuesday, August 11

9:00 am – **Women's Breakfast**

📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

♡♡ **HAPPY Anniversary**

Wednesday, August 12

6 pm – Potluck (*all are welcome*)

7 pm – Council Meeting

14 – Don & Judy Rosedale (50)

29 – David & Peggy Wajda (39)

Sunday, August 16

9:30 am – Worship Service

Sunday, August 23

9:30 am – Worship Service | Blessing of the Backpacks

11 am – Finance-Trust Committee Meeting

Sunday, August 30

9:30 am – Worship Service

Free & Confidential Rapid HIV Testing

Greater Family Health, in partnership with Christ Church United Church of Christ and Camino Rising, offers free, confidential, risk-based rapid HIV testing on selected Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. at Christ Church UCC, 1492 Henry Avenue, Des Plaines. Services also include prevention education and free safer sex kits. For more information, visit Greater Family Health at www.greaterfamilyhealth.org.

- Did You Know? About 1 in 8 people living with HIV in the United States don't know they have it. That's why routine testing is an important part of preventive healthcare.
- Did You Know? Anyone can benefit from HIV testing—including older adults. In recent years, nearly one in five new HIV diagnoses in the U.S. have been among people age 55 and older. HIV is not limited to any one age group.

Christ Church United Church of Christ

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Des Plaines, IL 60016**

Tues-Thurs. 9 am - 1 pm
christchurchuccdesplaines.org

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

Rev. Gilbert Martinez.....Pastor

**Helayne Levin.....Finance & Administrative
Coordinator**

Karen Wilberg.....Music Director

Tommie Jordan.....Custodian

Emanuel Alvarez.....Maintenance Technician

The Beacon

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