



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 8 **September 2026**

From The Pastor's Desk: What We Leave Behind

Dear Church Family,

As I sit down with a computer at hand, I find myself wondering what this fall will bring. Autumn always has a way of nudging us to notice the changes around us. The days slip away a little sooner, the air grows crisp, and before long, the trees will release what they've been holding onto all summer long. It feels like creation itself is whispering, inviting us to pause and ask: how are we spending the time God has placed in our hands?

Sometimes I find myself daydreaming about what our world could look like if those with the most power, wealth, and privilege cared more about leaving things better than they found them. What if having more didn't mean building higher fences or gathering more for ourselves, but awakened a holy longing to give more away? What if we measured success not by what we could stack up, but by how many people could stand a little taller, breathe a little easier, because we were here and tried to walk in the way of Jesus?

Like many people, I have had a celebrity or two whom I have admired over the years. One of mine was Dolly Parton. She gave us beautiful music that generations will continue listening to. She gave us memorable films, an unmistakable personality, a wonderful sense of humor, and a remarkable career. But what I admired most about Dolly was not simply what she accomplished for herself. It was what she chose to do for others once she had the ability to help.

Dolly grew up as one of twelve children in a very poor family, but she often spoke of the abundance of love she experienced at home. She never seemed to forget where she came from. In 1995, inspired in part by her father, who had never learned to read and write, she created the Imagination Library. What began as an effort to give children in her Tennessee community books of their own eventually grew into an international program that has now placed more than 300 million books into the hands of children from birth to age five.

And she did not stop there. When COVID-19 frightened and disrupted the world, Dolly donated \$1 million to medical research at Vanderbilt. When Hurricane Helene devastated communities in Appalachia, she personally donated another \$1 million to recovery efforts, while her businesses and foundation contributed even more.

Years earlier, after devastating wildfires struck her home region of East Tennessee, she helped establish a fund that put money directly into the hands of families who had lost their homes. Her foundation supported education and scholarships. Again and again, when people were hurting, Dolly seemed to ask a simple question: What can I do with what I have to help?

She was also remarkably consistent in her support of the LGBTQ+ community, even when some religious voices criticized her for it. And through all of this, Dolly never hid her Christian faith. In fact, she spoke about it openly throughout her life.

Maybe that's what I cherished most about her. She did not use Christianity as a weapon against people. She did not seem interested in using faith to determine who deserved dignity, compassion, or a sense of belonging. Instead, her faith appeared in generosity, kindness, acceptance, and a willingness to lift others up. She had wealth, influence, fame, and power, but she understood that those things could become tools for doing good.



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NOURISHMENT THROUGH SCRIPTURE

- **September 6:** Exodus 12:1-14, Matthew 18:15-20
- **September 13:** Exodus 14:19-31, Matthew 18:21-35
- **September 20:** Exodus 16:2-15, Matthew 20: 1-16
- **September 27:** Exodus 17:1-7, Matthew 21:23-32

SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

LITURGIST-L; COUNCIL GREET-C

September 6: Holly Schmidt (L), Bob Neil (C)
September 13: Megan Shipp (L), Mandy O'Donnell (C)
September 20: Putz-Cheng Family (L), Cindy Georgoulis (C)
September 27: Jessica Busse (L), Laura Hallberg (C)

USHERS

September 6: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
September 13: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
September 20: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
September 27: 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

August Average Sunday Attendance: 47±

INCOME REPORT

Funds Overview for August 2026

General Fund: \$15,548	Plate: \$169
Mission: \$3008	Memorials: \$435
Pastor's Discretionary: \$600	Facilities Use Income: \$150
Total: \$19,910	

REFUGEE FAMILY WELCOME KIT

Collection: September 13, 2026 – October 11, 2026

EXODUS

world service

Following the great success of our collection for the Exodus World Service Baby Welcome Packs, the Immigrant Welcoming Committee and Missions Committee have decided to sponsor the collection of a Family Welcome Pack for a refugee family new to the USA. **We will kick off the collection on Rally Day (9/13).** There will be a display in the narthex where you can sign up for one or more household items that you are willing to contribute to this effort. The items to be collected include:



- Kitchen (Dishes, Silverware, Glasses, Pots and Pans, trash can, trash bags, paper towels, dish soap, etc.)
- Cleaning supplies (Cleaning products, toilet brush, laundry soap, broom and dust pan, mop and bucket)
- Bedrooms (Comforters, sheets, pillows, alarm clock, hangers)
- Bath and personal care items (towels, shower curtain, hand soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, kleenex, etc.)
- Miscellaneous (pad of paper, envelopes, pens, fan, small tool kit, umbrella, scissors, light bulbs)

All items must be new, as required by the U.S. Government Office of Refugee Settlement. Thank you in advance for helping to make this collection a success!

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.

LOVE TO Sing? — JOIN THE CHOIR! —

YOUR VOICE MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

LEAD WORSHIP
Use your voice to lead joyful praise.

BUILD COMMUNITY
Make friendships and be part of something bigger.

NO AUDITION REQUIRED!
All who love to sing are welcome.

Interested? → We'd love to hear from you!

CONTACT OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR, *Karen W.*

Together, we make music that lifts hearts and glorifies God.

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

June 10, 2026

Church Council met on June 10 to receive ministry and committee reports, conduct the congregation's business, and prepare for upcoming ministries and events. **No financial or officer reports were presented this month.** The following are highlights from the meeting.

PASTOR'S MINISTRY REPORT

During the reporting period (May 11–June 2), the Pastor reported:

- 3 worship services, including Children's Day/Scholarship Sunday and Mental Health Sunday
- 1 hospital visit with Communion and approximately 82 pastoral care contacts, including calls, texts, emails, hospital and in-person visits, greeting cards, and other pastoral support
- \$800 in Pastor's Discretionary assistance, which was reimbursed through the Mutual Aid Fund managed by Camino Rising after authorization from the UMC pastor responsible for those funds
- Eight staff meetings, continued co-management of the church's social media and website, and ongoing work with the Church Training Center, including a meeting with CTC staff
- Continued work toward securing a new church credit card provider
- Tours of two additional properties with the Vision Task Force as the congregation continues discerning its future home
- Completion and distribution of the new Church Policy and Personnel Handbook, previously approved by the Finance-Trust Committee, Personnel Committee, and Church Council
- Significant work improving the church's audio and livestreaming systems, including replacing microphones, running new cables, and installing speakers in the narthex. The Administrative Assistant also devoted considerable time to improving the livestreaming process.
- Completion of the Custodian's annual review
- Participation in wider church and community ministry, including presenting on Governance & Structure at the Chicago Metropolitan Association Spring Meeting as Convener of the ANCHOR Task Force. The task force finalized the current governance structure of the Illinois Conference UCC, where the Pastor currently serves as Board Secretary.
- Attendance at the Des Plaines Clergy Alliance meeting

MINISTRY UPDATES

Council received reports from several ministry teams highlighting ongoing ministry within the congregation and community.

- **ONA-WISE** sponsored the Mental Health Sunday coffee hour and is sponsoring the Pride Sunday coffee hour. The ministry also approved a \$1,100 grant to Speak Des Plaines for its annual Pride celebration and approximately \$110 for books to be included in the event's raffle. Planning continues for both Pride Sunday and the community Pride celebration, including efforts to secure a speaker for Pride Sunday.
- **Faith Forward Commission** awarded two \$800 Rev. Dr. George Goebel Scholarships to Jazmyn and Alexandra Vasquez, as well as six confidential HUG Camp scholarships. Nathaniel, Cody, and Hunter participated in the Children's Sunday liturgy, and a make-up Easter Egg Hunt was held May 31. The commission reported \$148 raised through the April scholarship collection and \$285 through the May plant sale. Summer activities include Movie Day on June 14 and bowling at River Rand Bowl on July 19.
- **Immigrant-Welcoming Committee** continued preparations for World Refugee Sunday on June 14. A guest speaker has been arranged, and the congregation's collection of Baby Welcome Kits for Exodus World Service will be blessed during worship.
- **Outreach Committee** held its first-ever Cake Walk on May 30. Approximately 15 cakes were donated as prizes, including a special raffle cake. Proceeds from the event will support Christ Church's scholarship fund.

Continued on next page.

Church Council Highlights *continued from page 4.*

COUNCIL BUSINESS

- The Vision Task Force reported that a potential property under consideration had fallen through. The task force will continue its search and is scheduled to meet again on June 11.
- Work continues toward approval for new church credit cards through Elan Credit Card Services.
- Council approved a salary increase for the Music Director.
- The church's organizational name has been corrected with both the State of Illinois and the IRS so that the records now match.
- Following completion of the Custodian's annual review, Council approved a salary increase for the Custodian.
- Council reviewed the draft church calendar and affirmed the date of the Annual Meeting.
- Council approved the addition of a new member to Church Council.
- The May 13 Church Council meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

There will be no Church Council meeting in July.

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

Pastor's Letter continued from page 1.

Maybe that's the gentle lesson the Holy Spirit is whispering to us as we step into this new season.

Most of us won't have Dolly Parton's fortune. We won't sell millions of records or build an empire, and we may never have millions to give away. But generosity has never depended on the size of a bank account. Each of us has something to offer. We have time. We have compassion. We have voices, skills, and resources. We can notice the one who is struggling and, by the grace of God, choose to stop and see them rather than just walk past.

Scripture reminds us, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required."

— Luke 12:48

Maybe the real question isn't whether we've been given much, but whether we have eyes to see what God has already placed right in our hands.

Our world doesn't need more people scrambling to get ahead. It needs people who are willing to reach back and pull someone else up. It needs people who know that privilege comes with responsibility, that success can be transformed into generosity, and that faith in Christ is most beautiful when it becomes love you can see, love you can touch.

Dolly Parton will live on through the music she created, the stories she told, and the people who loved her. But she will also live on in millions of children who opened a mailbox and discovered a book with their name on it; in families who received help when disaster had taken nearly everything from them; in students who received opportunities they might not otherwise have had; and in people who heard someone of deep Christian faith tell them that they were worthy of love and acceptance.

Maybe that's one of the greatest legacies any of us can leave behind.

Not simply that people remember our names, but that because we were here, someone else's journey became a little easier, a little lighter.

As the leaves turn and a new season comes, may we pause and ask what we're doing with what God has entrusted to us. May our faith in Jesus never become something we use to push people down, but something that moves us to lift others up. And when our own journey is finished, may the world be a little kinder, a little more generous, a little more loving, because we tried, in our own way, to follow Christ while we were here.

Blessings.
Rev. Gilbert

A NEW LOOK, ROOTED IN WHO WE ARE



CHRIST CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
DES PLAINES, ILLINOIS

Our new logo is a fresh expression of who Christ Church has long sought to be. The **heart** reflects the love at the center of our faith, while the **cross** reminds us that our life together is rooted in Jesus Christ. The many **colors** represent the beauty of our diversity and our commitment to being a church where people of every background, identity, and life story are welcomed and valued.

At the bottom of the heart, the design suggests a **path leading toward the cross**. For us, that path represents the journey of faith we willingly take together, continually striving to keep Jesus at the center of how we treat one another, care for our neighbors, and care for God's creation.

The logo may be new, but what it represents is not. It gives us a simple, recognizable symbol for the love, welcome, faith, justice, and care we hope people experience at Christ Church.

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS



thank you

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has given their time and energy to cleaning out the lower floor of our building. Together, you have tackled room after room, clearing out items that had been stored for decades and removing things that were old, damaged, or no longer usable.

A very special thank you to Judy, our Council President, and Holly, Vision Task Force Chair for taking the lead on this enormous project and helping guide the effort to clean every single room in the building. This has been a tremendous undertaking, and we are deeply grateful to Judy, Holly, and to every volunteer who has helped make our building cleaner, safer, and more welcoming.

THIS MONTH AT CHRIST CHURCH

Sunday, September 6

9:30 am – Worship Service

Tuesday, September 8

9:00 am – **Women's Breakfast**

📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

Wednesday, September 9

6 pm – Potluck (all are welcome)

7 pm – Council Meeting

Saturday, September 12

10:30 am - Hoover Memorial

Sunday, September 13

9:30 am - Worship Service / Rally Day

Monday, September 14

11:45 am – **Men's Lunch**

📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

Saturday, September 19

11:00 am - Barnhart Memorial

Sunday, September 20

9:30 am – Worship Service

Tuesday, September 22

3:00 pm - 7:00 pm Community Vaccine Fair

by appointment, at the following link or call the office.

caminorising.org/vaccinefair2026

Sunday, September 27

9:30 am – Worship Service



9/4 - Laura & Miguel Benitez (32)

9/14 - Jennifer & Alan Ventrella (12)

9/18 - Julie & Frank Staggs (31)

9/20 - Elaine & Bud Hudson (67)



9/8 - Laura Benitez

9/6 - Sally Sove

9/9 - Jessica Bussee

9/10 - Stephen Bay

9/10 - Robert Neil

9/11 - Miles Skibbe

9/12 - Rev. Carol Currier Frighetto

9/22 - Jacob Guerra-Martinez

9/28 - Meadow Putz

9/29 - Donald Rosedale

9/30 - Emily Rosedale

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

An Open & Affirming, WISE for Mental Health congregation.

BUILDING FEE SCHEDULE

BY ROOMS

up to 2 hours

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nonprofit</u>	<u>Non-Member</u>	<u>Addt'l Hour</u>
Wobbe Hall—full kitchen use	\$225	\$360	\$450	\$100
Wobbe Hall—limited kitchen use	\$175	\$300	\$375	\$85
Wobbe Hall—no kitchen	\$125	\$240	\$300	\$75
Music Room	\$100	\$160	\$200	\$50
Lounge—room only	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$40
Lounge—with television		\$125	\$150	—
Library Nursery Rooms 1-3	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$40
Sanctuary	\$225	\$300	\$400	\$100
Sound	\$175	\$200	\$225	\$50
Custodial service	\$175	\$175	\$200	—
Whole-building package	\$1,200.00	\$1,550.00	\$2,250	\$500
Refundable damage deposit	\$200	\$200-\$500	\$200-\$500	

Full Kitchen: use of stove, microwave, fridge, coffee machine, etc.

Limited Kitchen: use of microwave, fridge, and coffee machine.

No Kitchen: no usage privileges.

Refundable damage deposit is based on the room used.

Rental rates include up to 30 minutes before the reserved time for setup and up to 30 minutes afterward for cleanup. Setup and cleanup time may not be used to extend the scheduled event or activity.

BY SERVICE

Funeral or Memorial Service

MEMBER – NON-MEMBER

Sanctuary	\$225	\$400
Pastor	\$450	\$600
Musician	\$250	\$300
Soloist	\$200	\$250
Sound	\$175	\$200
Custodial service	\$175	\$200
Complete package	\$1,475	\$1,950

Wedding Service

MEMBER – NON-MEMBER

Sanctuary	\$400	\$650
Pastor *	\$600	\$800
Musician	\$300	\$400
Soloist	\$250	\$300
Sound	\$200	\$250
Custodial service	\$200	\$250
Complete package	\$1,950	\$2,650

**Includes counseling sessions, rehearsal, and wedding*

CHRIST CHURCH UCC CALENDAR SEPTEMBER 2026 TO AUGUST 2027

COMMITTEE MEETING TIMES

Council – 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, <i>except July.</i>	Immigrant Welcoming – 3rd Sunday of the month at 11:00 am.
Finance-Trust – 1st Sunday of the month at 11 am.	ONA-WISE – 2nd Sunday of the month, 10:45 am to 11:45 am.
Faith Forward Commission – 4th Monday of the month at 5:15 pm.	
Vision Task Force – every other Thursday at 1 pm beginning September 17th.	

Faith Forward Adventures (Sunday School) will meet every Sunday, starting September 13.

Sept. 6, 2026	Communion Sunday Mission Collection
Sept. 9, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
Sept. 13, 2026	Faith Forward Adventures 2026 Kick-Off Rally Day
Sept. 22, 2026	Camino Rising's Community Vaccine Fair 3 pm – 7 pm <i>(open to all Des Plaines Community)</i>
Oct. 3, 2026	Rev. Gilbert's 5th Ordination Anniversary (ordiversary)
Oct. 4, 2026	World Communion Sunday Pet Blessings at 12 noon on the side lawn. Mission Collection Stewardship Drive starts
Oct. 14, 2026	Potluck 6 pm
Oct. 18, 2026	Children's Sunday
Oct. 25, 2026	Stewardship Drive concludes
Nov. 1, 2026	All Saints Day Communion Sunday Mission Collection Daylight Saving Time ends
Nov. 5-7, 2026	Illinois Conference of the UCC Annual Celebration
Nov. 8, 2026	Veterans Day Sunday
Nov. 11, 2026	Potluck 6 pm
Nov. 15, 2026	Annual Congregational Meeting , after worship service
Nov. 19, 2026	Advent Book Study Session I
Nov. 22, 2026 (CCUCC hosts)	Thanksgiving Sunday 3rd Annual Community Thanksgiving Service , 6 pm
Nov. 26-27, 2026	Thanksgiving Day Office Closed
Nov. 28, 2026	Advent Decorating at 10 am
Nov. 29, 2026	First Sunday of Advent
Dec. 3, 2026	Advent Book Study Session II
Dec. 4, 2026	5th Annual Community Holiday Sing-Along
Dec. 6, 2026	Intergenerational Pageant Communion Sunday Mission Collection
Dec. 9, 2026	Potluck 6 pm
Dec. 10, 2026	Advent Book Study Session III
Dec. 17, 2026	Advent Book Study Session IV

CHRIST CHURCH UCC CALENDAR SEPTEMBER 2026 TO AUGUST 2027

Dec. 20, 2026	Christmas Fund Offering
Dec. 21, 2026	Office Open Blue Christmas Service, 7 pm
Dec. 24, 2026	Christmas Eve Service, 5 pm <i>w/carols to start.</i>
Dec. 25, 2026	Office Closed
Dec. 27, 2026	Join us as we continue singing Christmas Carols!
Dec. 28, 2026	Office Open
Jan. 1, 2027	New Year's Day Office Closed
Jan. 3, 2027	Epiphany Sunday Mission Collection
Jan. 13, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
Jan. 18, 2027	MLK Jr. Day
Feb. 7, 2027	Communion Sunday Mission Collection
Feb. 10, 2027	Ash Wednesday, 7 pm
Feb. 17, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
Mar. 7, 2027	Communion Sunday Mission Collection
Mar. 10, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
Mar. 21, 2027	Palm Sunday
Mar. 25, 2027	Maundy Thursday, 7 pm
Mar. 26, 2027	Good Friday, 7 pm
Mar. 28, 2027	Easter Easter Egghunt, following worship
April 4, 2027	Communion Sunday Mission Collection
April 14, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
May 2, 2027	Communion Sunday Mission Collection
May 9, 2027	Mothering Sunday Mother's Day
May 12, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
May 16, 2027	Pentecost
May 23, 2027	Mental Health Sunday
May 30, 2027	Children's Scholarship Sunday
June 6, 2027	Communion Sunday Mission Collection Pastor's Sabbatical Kick-Off
June 9, 2027	Potluck 6 pm
June 13, 2027	World Refugee Sunday
June 20, 2027	Father's Day
June 27, 2027	Pride Sunday
Aug. 1, 2027	Annual Worship Picnic Potluck, Optimist Pavilion, 10 am

September Community Backpack Project Collection: Breakfast Items

The **Missions Committee** is kicking off our monthly themed collections for the Community Backpack Project in September!

On Sunday, September 13, we are collecting breakfast items, including single-serve cereals, instant oatmeal packets, pancake mix, and boxes of cereal. Donations may be brought to Sunday worship. While breakfast items are our September focus, all food donations are appreciated and welcome.

with love from your Mission Committee: Rita, Donna, Laura, and Holly





Pathways to Wellness

COMMUNITY VACCINE FAIR

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Vaccines Available:

- COVID
- Flu
- RSV
- Pneumococcal
- Shingles
- Hepatitis



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026



Where: Christ Church UCC,
1492 Henry Ave., Des Plaines



TIME: 3:00 PM–7:00 PM

Bring photo ID + insurance card

**Open to all Des Plaines Community Members
and church members.**

Appointment Required

Register: caminorising.org/vaccinefair2026

Questions? intake@caminorising.org

Camino Rising is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.



Christ Church United Church of Christ

**1492 Henry Avenue
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 and Administrative
Support Coordinator**

Karen Wilberg.....Music Director

Tommie Jordan.....Custodian

Emanuel Alvarez.....Maintenance Technician

The Beacon

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**SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE
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