



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 10

October 2026

From The Pastor's Desk: Beyond the Anniversary — Living Into Who We Are

Dear Partners in Ministry,

October is a month filled with milestones and celebrations for our church community. We observe World Communion Sunday, celebrate Pastor Appreciation Month and Sunday, recognize the anniversary of my ordination, and commemorate Christ Church UCC's 134th anniversary. These moments invite us to pause, look back with wonder at the saints who have gone before us, and thank God for the ministry we share; woven together by the Spirit across generations.

But as I sit with all these celebrations, I find myself wondering: maybe it's a strange thing for a pastor to ask, do these anniversaries really matter in the way Jesus calls us to?

What good is another church anniversary, another year marked on the calendar, if we aren't living out the faith we claim in Christ? What does it mean to say we've been here 134 years if we aren't opening our arms to all of God's children and all of creation? How can we honor our story if we aren't caring for the ministry, the resources, and the sacred trust God has placed in our hands?

I do believe these celebrations matter, but only if they call us back to who Jesus is shaping us to be. Our history is a gift, but it can't carry us on its own. Our theology is worth sharing, but it's just words on a page if it doesn't show up in our lives. Ministry is worth every bit of our support, but it takes more than good intentions to keep the Gospel alive among us.

And when I look at our life together, I see so many reasons to thank God for the ways you welcome and include others.

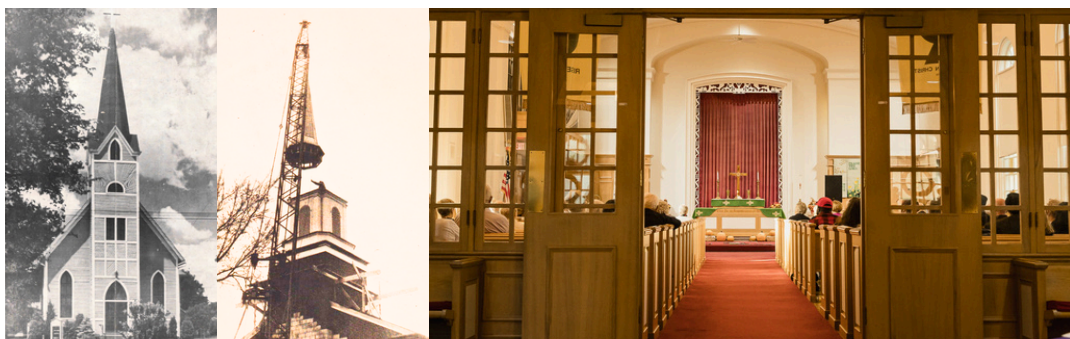
Just in the past month, I've heard from visitors, folks who came for worship or to grieve with loved ones, how deeply welcomed they felt here. And I want to be clear: the building didn't make the difference. It was you. It was the people of Christ Church UCC, showing Christ's love in real, tangible ways.

When Eppie Fahigal Encabo, the National Moderator of PAAM, visited, she reminded us that people make the church. She told me how welcomed she felt among us. I told her the truth: I am blessed with a congregation that really tries to live what we say we believe. Being Open and Affirming, WISE for Mental Health, and Immigrant-Welcoming isn't a slogan for us. It's how we try to show God's wide, generous love in the world.

Another visitor, who came to stand with a grieving family, told the family and me she couldn't remember the last time she felt so welcomed in a church. Just imagine that. In her sorrow, she found a community whose warmth and hospitality stayed with her long after she left.

These things may seem small, but they are holy. Every greeting, every time we make space for a stranger, every act of care for someone hurting these are ways we let God's love spill out beyond our usual circles.

We...continued on page 2.



INSIDE:

Scripture Readings – 3
Sunday Church Ministries – 3
Income Report – 3
Notables – 4
Council Meeting – 7-9
Choir – 4
Birthdays/Anniversaries – 6
Calendar – 6

continued from page 1... may never see the full ripple of a simple welcome or a quiet conversation over coffee, but those moments can be the difference between someone feeling lost and someone finding a home in Christ.

So I want to say thank you, truly, to each of you, my partners in this ministry God has given us. I know I've asked a lot of us. I've nudged us to think in new ways, step out of what feels safe, look honestly at how we do ministry, and wrestle with what it means to be Christ's church right now. Change is never easy, and neither is the holy work of building a community where everyone truly belongs.

But look at what God has done among us! We've welcomed nearly 34 new members and about six children into our church family. These aren't just numbers; they are people, each with a story, each finding something sacred here. They are new friendships, fresh faith, and new chances for us to grow together in Christ.

Their presence is living proof of your faith in action, and the ways you let that faith shine for others to see. But welcoming is just one piece of our calling. If we want this ministry to last, we have to take stewardship just as seriously. Our new members notice your dedication. They see the hours you give, the work of your hands, the care you offer, and the gifts you share to keep our ministry going. They're joining a community built by generations who knew that being the church takes both faith and commitment.

And that kind of commitment catches on! We see it as our newer members step up, offer their time, share their gifts, and give generously to the life of our church. They're not just joining; they're becoming partners in ministry, helping us carry forward the work God has given us. That's what faithful stewardship looks like: a community where everyone brings something, and everyone helps shape what comes next.

As we step into another season of stewardship, let's remember: our giving isn't just about keeping the lights on or paying bills. Those things matter, but they're not the heart of it. Our stewardship lets us worship together, care for each other, serve our neighbors, support our staff, and open our doors wide for those who haven't yet found their way in.

Being good stewards means being wise and careful with what God has given us. Sometimes it means making hard choices, planning ahead, and remembering that our ministry and our finances are tied together. We can't keep widening our welcome if we don't also tend to the work that makes that welcome real.

Stewardship isn't just for a handful of generous folks or a committee. It belongs to all of us. Each one of us has something to give: our money, our time, our gifts, or simply our willingness to help shape what God is doing here.

As we celebrate 134 years, I think of those who came before us. They couldn't have pictured every challenge we'd face, just like we can't see what's ahead for the next generation. Still, they handed this church to us, trusting that Jesus' ministry was worth carrying forward.

Now it's our turn to carry that trust. If Christ Church UCC is going to keep shining for another 134 years, we have to stay rooted in three things: reaching beyond our walls to serve, practicing faithful stewardship, and offering a real, unconditional welcome to every child of God.

These aren't extras; they're at the heart of who we are and who God is calling us to become. And none of us can do this alone. We need each other. We carry the future of Christ's church together. This October, let's celebrate! Let's thank God for 134 years of Christ Church UCC, for the ministry we share, for all the people who have walked with us, and for the new faces and families who are now part of our story.

But let's also remember: the best way to honor our past isn't just to count the years. It's to keep our faith alive in the ways we welcome, serve, give, and care for each other in Jesus' name.

May we be remembered not just as a church that lasted 134 years, but as a church that made God's love real and visible in the world.

With gratitude and love,
Rev. Gilbert
Your Partner in Ministry



NOURISHMENT THROUGH SCRIPTURE

- **October 4:** Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, Matthew 21: 33-46
- **October 11:** Exodus 32: 1-14, Matthew 22: 1-14
- **October 18:** Exodus 33: 12-23, Matthew 22: 15-22
- **October 25:** Deuteronomy 34: 1-12, Matthew 22: 34-46

SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

LITURGIST-L; COUNCIL GREET-C

October 4: Megan Shipp (L), Megan Shipp (C)

October 11: Laura Benitez (L), Judy Rosedale (C)

October 18: Jacob Guerra-Martinez (L), Bob Neil (C)

October 25: Holly Schmidt (L), Mandy O'Donnell (C)

USHERS

October 4: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

October 11: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo

October 28: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

October 25: 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

September Average Sunday Attendance: 43

INCOME REPORT

Funds Overview for September 2026

General Fund: \$15,655

Plate: \$169

Mission: \$3012

Memorials: \$495

Pastor's Discretionary: \$600

Facilities Use Income: \$300

Total: \$20,231

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.

Get it Back Together

Maggie and Julie are infusing new energy into the “Get it Together” group that was started by Alice Barnhart. The plan is to now call it “Alice’s Get it Together” group in honor and memory of Alice. The plan is the third Tuesday of each month in the lounge at 10 am. Watch for further information and be sure to let them know that you are interested in being a part of this.



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.

FAITH FORWARD AND PAAM VISIT





Rally Day

2026

THIS MONTH AT CHRIST CHURCH

Saturday, October 3

Christ Church 134th Anniversary

Pastor Gilbert's 5th Ordination Anniversary

Sunday, October 4

9:30 am – Worship Service

12:00 pm - 2:00 pm - Pet Blessings

Sunday, October 11

9:30 am - Worship Service

Monday, October 12

11:45 am – Men's Lunch

📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

Tuesday, October 13

9:00 am – Women's Breakfast

📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

Wednesday, October 14

6 pm – Potluck (all are welcome)

7 pm – Council Meeting

Sunday, October 18

9:30 am - Worship

Tuesday, October 20

10:00 am - "Alice's Get it Together"

(watch for further information)

Sunday, October 25

9:30 am – Worship Service

Monday, October 26

5:15 pm - 6:30 pm - Faith Forward Commission Meeting



10/3 - Mindy and Bill Frost (55)

10/5 - Ruth and Irving Hallberg (68)

10/12 - Caryn and Brandon Brynwood (12)

10/17 - Mandy and Kevin O'Donnell (17)



10/11 - Lois Malone

10/13 - Cathy Wiesner

10/13 - Elaine Angsten

10/29 - Tammy Fredrickson

10/30 - Nicholas Harkovich

10/30 - Morrigan Kelso

10/31 - Ruth Hallberg

10/31 - Cindy Georgoulis

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

This summary highlights the Church Council's reports, discussions, motions, and actions. It is not intended to replace the official approved minutes.

Opening Prayer: Mandy

REVIEW OF JUNE 10, 2026 MINUTES

- Motion and second to approve the June 10, 2026 minutes as sent out.
- **Motion passed.**

FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Motion and second to approve the financial reports as sent out.
- **Motion passed.**

REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

- None.

PASTOR'S REPORT

June 3, 2026 through August 9, 2026

WORSHIP & ARTS

- Eight worship services.
 - Two with Communion.
- One hospital visit with Communion and Anointing.
- Three home visits with Communion.
- Special Worship Services:
 - Pride Sunday.
 - Annual Worship and Potluck.

PASTORAL CARE

- Approximately 85 pastoral care contacts, including:
 - Calls and texts.
 - Emails.
 - In-person visits.
 - Hospital visits.
 - Greeting cards.

PERSONNEL

- Administrative Assistant abruptly resigned after finding a full-time job.
- Finance Coordinator is taking on a dual role, assuming some Administrative Assistant responsibilities while the pastor takes on others.
- Finance Coordinator's delayed 90-day review was conducted in July.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Ten staff meetings.
- Continued management of church social media and website.

- Continued communication with the Church Training Center.
- Credit cards will soon be available to sign out and in with the Finance Coordinator/Administrative Assistant.
- June 14 incident:
 - A visitor became belligerent and made threats using biblical references, including one personally directed at the pastor.
 - The visitor was asked to leave the premises.
 - Des Plaines Police Department was contacted.
 - A police report was filed.
 - Pastor later met with Chief Anderson.
 - Calling law enforcement was not taken lightly, but was considered necessary for the safety and well-being of those present.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

- "The Playground" will resume soon.
- Required trip to Princeton's Farminary, October 20 through October 23.

WIDER UCC & DES PLAINES COMMUNITY

- Attended the Illinois Conference of the UCC Board of Directors meeting.
- Pastor serves as secretary.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MISSIONS

- Missions will return to the One Sunday a Month themed donations.
- Proposal made to identify local charities and make one-time donations using part of the daycare check.
- Purpose:
 - Say thank you to the community.
 - Support local organizations.
 - Help get Christ Church's name out into the community.
- "Pay It Forward" amount: \$5,000 from the daycare check.
- **Motion passed.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Church calendar.

NEW BUSINESS

VISION TASK FORCE

BUILDING CLEANUP

- Continuing to clear out church spaces.
- Goal is to make additional spaces available for possible rental.
- Motion to move forward with talking to the realtor about:
 - Engaging potential renters.
 - Entering into a contract with the realtor.

- **Motion passed.**

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

- Discussed a possible capital campaign to raise money to help save the church.

BUILDING FEE SCHEDULE

- Motion to approve the Building Fee Schedule.
- **Motion passed.**

SUPPORT GROUP

- Motion to host a monthly support group free of charge.
- **Motion passed.**

2027 BUDGET

- 2027 budget discussed.

STEWARDSHIP 2026

- Stewardship 2026 discussed.

PRINCETON FARMINARY

- Princeton Farminary discussed.

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF THE UCC ANNUAL CELEBRATION

- Annual Celebration discussed.

3RD ANNUAL COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

- Held the Sunday before Thanksgiving.
- Christ Church will host this year.

BILLBOARD OF BILLS

- Motion to remove the Billboard of Bills.
- **Motion passed.**

FINANCE COORDINATOR SALARY

- Motion to give the Finance Coordinator a \$1 per hour raise.
- **Motion passed.**

ADJOURNMENT

- Adjourned at 8:47 p.m.
- Closing Prayer.



CHRIST CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Celebrate with us!

ALL ARE
Welcome!

134
YEARS

CHURCH
ANNIVERSARY
1892 – 2026

WORLD
COMMUNION
SUNDAY



REV. GILBERT'S
ORDINATION
ANNIVERSARY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4
9:30 AM



Celebrating faith, welcome & community!

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

is the official newsletter of Christ Church
United Church of Christ. Edited by
church staff. Published monthly, August
through June.

Sign-up for our Email List
<https://bit.ly/CCUCCSubscribe>

988

**SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE
CALL OR TEXT**

