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 **November 2026**

From The Pastor's Desk: The Humanity We Choose to See

Dear Siblings in Christ,

In the third week of October, I traveled to Princeton Theological Seminary's Farminary, where soil and Spirit meet. This pilgrimage was part of Flagler College's The Playground: Sabbath, Creation, and Communion Cohort, which I began in February. Next, I'll lead several class sessions to share what I've learned.

I confess I wasn't enthusiastic about traveling. Our packing list included "good cheer." Half-jokingly, I asked Jacob, "What the hell is this cheer they are asking us to bring?" Before long, the journey gave me another reason to struggle with that assignment. At O'Hare, I realized I'd left my phone in the rideshare. After nearly thirty years of carrying one, I had finally lost it. Panic followed. How would I reach Jacob and Ace, communicate with staff, or access my tickets and directions?

Then kindness began showing up. An airline agent lent me her phone. A program leader reached me through my iPad and encouraged me to take a taxi instead of waiting for the scheduled van. A colleague welcomed me with a much-needed hug. A woman in Omaha helped me find a replacement phone, and the program leader drove me to pick it up. Later, a Farminary student took me to buy a case and screen protector. What stayed with me was how these people responded. Nobody asked what I believed, where I came from, or whether I deserved help. They saw someone in need and offered compassion, the kind of love that reminds me of Jesus.

Another assignment invited us to make a friend. Not a human friend. Not an animal friend. A tree friend.

Yes, a tree. We were asked to spend time with one and see it as more than background scenery.

One colleague struggled to humanize the tree. Their observation made me think about how easily we do the opposite with people. We dehumanize others, making it easier to dismiss their suffering or justify their oppression.

We see that in the Holocaust, in the suffering inflicted upon Palestinians, and in the violence and displacement experienced by Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. When we stop recognizing another's humanity, cruelty becomes easier to excuse.

And that brings me to Thanksgiving.

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For many, Thanksgiving means family, food, laughter, and gratitude. There is nothing wrong with gathering to give thanks. But our gratitude should make room for truth, including the Indigenous suffering often missing from the familiar holiday story. For many Indigenous people, Thanksgiving is also a time of mourning and remembrance.

Our church stands on land whose history began long before our congregation. The Potawatomi, Odawa, and Ojibwe, the Council of Three Fires, have ancestral ties to this region. This land was never empty or simply waiting to be claimed.

Nor is dehumanization confined to history. How often do we reduce people to their immigration status, religion, nationality, race, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or economic circumstances? How often do we treat people as problems to solve rather than neighbors to love?

We cannot proclaim that everyone bears God's image while deciding some deserve less dignity, compassion, or protection.

My tree friend helped me reflect on that. She stood tall, supporting a string of lights. Sitting beside her, I noticed old scars along her trunk. What had caused them? What had she endured?

Of course, I couldn't know her story, and trees don't experience wounds as people do. But I didn't need every answer to recognize that she was part of God's creation, worthy of care. Likewise, I don't need to understand someone's entire story before offering compassion.

I listened to the wind in her branches, the nearby water, and the geese, who had plenty to say. No tidy theological answer. Just presence.

This November, pause and notice the people and creation around you. Remember that there are stories and scars you may never know.

When you gather at your Thanksgiving table, give thanks. Also remember those whose stories have been silenced and whose humanity has been ignored. Let gratitude become a commitment to making room for others, just as Christ welcomes us.

I began my pilgrimage questioning the packing list's "good cheer." I lost my phone, experienced plenty of anxiety, and sat beside a tree listening to talkative geese. Along the way, I encountered kindness and compassion, and remembered what we can discover when we slow down and notice.

May we be a church that sees every person's humanity, remembers the scars of our history, and offers strangers the compassion Jesus has shown us.

With gratitude and blessings,
Rev. Gilbert

NOURISHMENT THROUGH SCRIPTURE

- **November 1:** 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23:1-12
- **November 8:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Matthew 25:1-3
- **November 15:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 25:-14-30
- **November 22:** Ephesians 1:15-23, Matthew 25:31-46
- **November 29**: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Mark 13:24-37

SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

LITURGIST-L; COUNCIL GREET-C

November 1: Laura Hallberg(L), Cindy Georgoulis (C)
November 8: Putz-Cheng Family (L), Laura Hallberg (C)
November 15: Jessica Busse (L), Megan Shipp (C)
November 22: Megan Shipp (L), Judy Rosedale (C)
November 29: Laura Benitez (L), Bob Neil (C)

USHERS

November 1: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
November 8: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
November 15: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
November 22: Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
November 29: Donna Boyko, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick

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 more—all at your fingertips. Don't miss out on this convenient way to stay in the loop! Download it today!
https://bit.ly/CCUCCAPP

ATTENDANCE

October Average Sunday Attendance: 42

INCOME REPORT

Funds Overview for October 2026

General Fund: $17,685 Plate: $24
Mission: $7 Memorials: $75
Pastor's Discretionary: $20 Facilities Use Income: $3122
Total: $20,933

EVENTS

NOTABLES

The Notables will meet again to prepare for the busy season ahead. As always, they will meet in Wobbe Hall from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. Please 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, we stamp only pre-approved books.

DECORATING FOR ADVENT

Saturday, November 28 at 10:00 am

Sign up in the office; Pizza lunch. Please join us; let us know you will be here

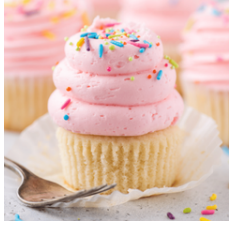
GET IT BACK TOGETHER

Maggie and Julie are infusing new energy into the “Get it Together” group that was started by Alice Barnhart. We are now “Alice’s Get it Together” group in honor and memory of Alice. We met in October and would love to have more people join us. If you don’t crochet or knit, bring any craft you may be working on and join us for the camaraderie! The next meeting is November 17.

ADVENT BOOK STUDY: GOD’S SURPRISES FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

What happens when life does not go according to plan? Join us for a four-week Advent study exploring how the disruptions experienced by Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi opened the way for unexpected blessings, joy, and hope. Together, we will consider how God may also meet us within our own changed and broken plans. Mondays at 7:00 PM. November 23 and 30, and December 7 and 14. The book is available in paperback or Kindle format: https://a.co/d/Ogxn0YVe

If you would like Pastor Gilbert to order your copy or if you need a complimentary copy, please contact him directly. We do not want the cost of the book to prevent anyone from participating. Sign up and journey with us through this meaningful and encouraging Advent study! Sign-up form: https://bit.ly/adventstudy2026



SAN LUCAS CUPCAKES

Thanksgiving is almost here, and that means we will be baking cupcakes for our sister church, San Lucas. San Lucas will be feeding needy families in the Humboldt Park area. Please bring dessert to their dinner table. Please make 2 dozen cupcakes and bring them to the Church kitchen on Sunday, November 22. Please sign up in the Church office. The cupcakes will be delivered to San Lucas on Monday, November 23.

Rita B. Barth, Chair; Holly Schmidt, Donna Boyko, Laura Hallberg

Community Thanksgiving

Worship Service

& Pie Fellowship to Follow

An Ecumenical Gathering of the
Des Plaines Clergy Alliance

Sunday, November 22, 2026

6:00 PM

Christ Church UCC
1492 Henry Avenue
Des Plaines, IL
christchurchuccdesplaines.org

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

- **Christ Church UCC**
- **First Church Des Plaines (United Methodist)**
- **Trinity Lutheran Church**

THIS MONTH AT CHRIST CHURCH

Sunday, November 1
Daylight Saving Time ends
9:30 am - Worship Service

Tuesday, November 3
Election Day

Sunday, November 8
9:30 am - Worship Service

Monday, November 9
11:45 am Men's Lunch
📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

Tuesday, November 10
9:00 am – Women's Breakfast
📍 Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines

Wednesday, November 11
Veterans Day
6:00 pm - Potluck Dinner
7:00 pm-8:30 pm - Council Meeting

Sunday, November 15
9:30 am - Worship Service
11:00 am - Annual Meeting

Tuesday, November 17
10:00 am - 12:00 pm - Alice's Get It Together

Sunday, November 22
9:30 am – Worship Service
6:00 pm - Community Thanksgiving Service at Christ Church

Monday, November 23
5:15 pm - 6:30 pm - Faith Forward Commission Meeting
7:00 pm - Advent Book Study I

Thursday, November 26
Thanksgiving - Office Closed

Saturday, November 28
10:00 am - Advent Decorating

Sunday, November 29
9:30 am - Worship Service

Monday, November 30
7:00 pm - Advent Book Study II

11/5 - Katie and Michael Skibbe (21)
11/15 - Jessica and Joe Busse (12)

11/2 - Irving Hallberg
11/8 - Kevin O'Donnell
11/12 - Max Kelso
11/13 - Alan Bruhn
11/14 - Frank Hothouse
11/16 - Gail Fisher
11/16 - Judy Taylor
11/18 - Phillip Rosedale
11/19 - Janis Zidek
11/21 - Violet Norman
11/30 - Rev. Joseph Liang

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

September 9, 2026 | 7:10–8:13 p.m.

Call to Order: 7:10 p.m.
Present: Judy Rosedale, Mandy O'Donnell, Bob Neil, Megan Shipp, Cindy Georgoulis, Rev. Gilbert Martinez.
Opening Prayer: Bob Neil.
Approval of Minutes and Financial Reports
August 12, 2026 Minutes: *Motion made, seconded, and passed to approve as distributed.*
Financial Reports: *Motion made, seconded, and passed to approve as distributed.*

Reports
Officer Reports: None.
Pastor's Report (August 10–September 7, 2026): Four worship services, including one Communion service; Blessing of the Backpacks; one home visit with Anointing; approximately 57 pastoral care contacts; and eight staff meetings. The Finance & Administrative Support Coordinator continues adjusting to combined responsibilities, while Pastor Gilbert maintains social media, website updates, and other administrative duties. Communication with the Church Training Center continues. The Coordinator now manages credit card sign-outs. Continuing education included August's Sabbath, Communion, and Creation Zoom class. The required Playground pilgrimage to Princeton's Farminary is scheduled for October 20–23, followed by Pastor Gilbert's final Sunday off.
Outreach Committee: Collaborated with Faith Forward on Rally Day; planning for the annual sing-along is underway.
Immigrant Welcoming Committee: Revised September–October plans. Exodus World Services no longer accepts Refugee Welcome Kits because refugee admissions have dropped sharply. An Exodus representative will speak on Rally Day. The final Baby Pack will be delivered to a baby girl this week.
Building Committee: Building rekeyed through donor generosity. Heating repair bids remain pending. All three AC units need attention: the Fellowship Hall and sanctuary units operate at half capacity; the kitchen unit tripped a breaker while compensating for Fellowship Hall and needs replacement. We received two Premistar estimates for AC repair and warranty; approval is tabled pending a second opinion. Bob Neil approved Albright All Weather Services' snowplowing proposal; Pastor Gilbert will sign the contract.
Faith Forward Commission: Rally Day and weekly Faith Forward Adventures begin September 13. Christmas pageant preparations underway.

Unfinished Business
3rd Annual Community Thanksgiving Service: Christ Church will host Sunday, November 22, at 6:00 p.m.
2027 Budget and Stewardship Planning: *Motion passed to accept the 2027 budget.*

New Business
Vision Task Force: Realtor contract signed to market church space for rental to another congregation.
Contract Authorization: *Motion passed authorizing the Finance & Administrative Support Coordinator to sign contracts.*
Illinois Conference UCC Annual Celebration: Discussed.

Adjournment
Adjourned: 8:13 p.m., followed by a closing prayer.

Important Dates
September: 12, Hoover Memorial; 13, Rally Day; 19, Barnhart Memorial; 20, PAAM Moderator Visit; 22, Camino Rising Vaccine Fair; 27, Mutual Aid Fundraiser at First UMC.
October: 3, Rev. Gilbert's 5th Ordinaversary and Christ Church's 134th Birthday; 4, World Communion Sunday; 20–23, Princeton Farminary.

Christ Church
United Church of Christ

1492 Henry Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60016

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

Facebook & Instagram:
@christchurchuccdesplaines

Rev. Gilbert Martinez..... Pastor

Helayne Levin..... Finance and Administrative Support Coordinator

Karen Wilberg..... Music Director

Tommie Jordan..... Custodian

Emanuel Alvarez..... Maintenance Technician

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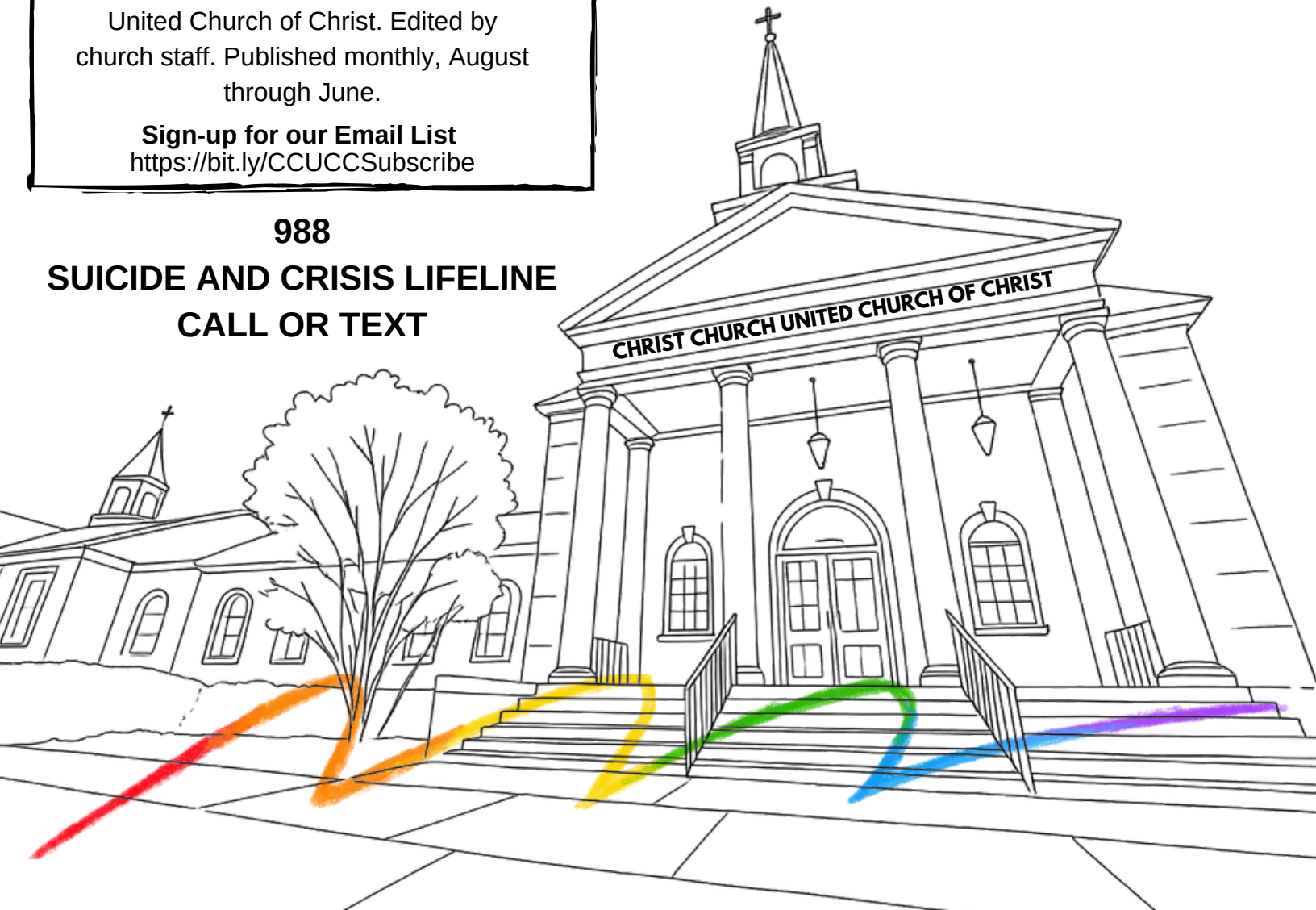
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