

# The Christian Visitor May 2024



*We are called to share our Christian Faith and Christ's Love with all people.*

## Our Life Together in May

### Stewardship Campaign April 28th-May 19th

This year's Stewardship Campaign, "Celebrate Stewardship", will run from April 28th-May 19th and will include a worship series entitled "Celebrate!" with a different emphasis each week:

Sunday, April 28th — Celebrate Planning  
Sunday, May 5th — Celebrate Our Church Culture  
Sunday, May 12th — Celebrate Giving  
Sunday, May 19th — Celebrate Our Legacy

Pledge cards have been mailed and should be returned by May 19th.

Celebration Sunday will mark the conclusion of the campaign on May 19th with the collection of pledges and a catered meal following worship.

### Mother's Day Sunday, May 12th

There will be cookies in the narthex following worship on Sunday, May 12th in recognition of Mother's Day.



### Graduation Sunday Sunday, May 19th



We will recognize this year's middle school, high school, and college graduates on Sunday, May 19th during worship.

## Pentecost Special Offering to Be Received

### "Restore and Rewind"

When it comes to church, we have a lot of negative tapes playing in our heads:

- Church is judgmental
- Church is hypocritical
- They think they're better than everyone else

It's time for restoration. Time to rewind the tape. New Church Ministry is dedicated to fostering faithful communities marked by deep Christian spirituality and a passion for God's love and justice.

Like our ancestors, we're going back to the beginning, when new Christian communities gathered together and shared all they had, organizing everything around the Spirit's dreams for their lives and their communities.

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, God is singing a new song: not a song of judgment, but of welcome and forgiveness; not a song of superiority, but of humility and grace; not a song of hoarding, but of sharing everything we have!

God's movement for wholeness is already underway. Our job is to listen, and learn and follow — supporting leaders and communities as the Spirit calls them into being, laying down a new song for a new generation.

Church as a place of generosity and justice. Church as a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

Your gifts to the **2024 Pentecost Special Offering**, received on **Sunday, May 12, and Sunday, May 19**, are divided equally between your regional ministry, which supports local new churches, and **New Church Ministry**, which trains, equips, and assists emerging leaders to be "movement initiators."

Please give generously to the Pentecost Offering.



# More in the Life and Witness of the First Christian Church

## A PASTOR'S PONDERING

Last week the congregation met to review the results of our planning retreat a year ago April. We wanted to check in with the goals we had set to see how we're doing, and to discern whether we still feel called to the trajectory we had set.

What was interesting to me, as I reviewed our notes from last week, was that the topics we discussed all revolve around *listening*. We still want to be a "safe space" for people to raise questions, doubts, and alternative points of view. That involves a willingness to listen to others. We discussed perhaps starting a Stephen Ministry here. Stephen Ministry is a lay-led listening ministry. We talked about addressing mental health issues (also involving listening). And we spent some time talking about how to become a deeper community. It seems to me that we are concerned with listening as a ministry — listening to God, listening to each other, and listening to the wider community.

Listening is an art. It takes intention and it takes practice. It takes effort on the part of the listener. You see, listening goes beyond simply hearing, because listening involves internalizing what we hear — pulling it in and making it part of who we are. Listening is arguably the most important aspect of *communication*.

It strikes me that communication and community share a common root: the Latin *communis*, meaning "to share in common." If we want to move toward forming deeper *community*, we have to share things in common. We have to communicate. We have to "pull each other in" and become part of each other. We have to share our own hearts *and* listen to the hearts of those with whom we share common life. And we have to listen to the heart of God, and share that heart with each other. That's why I always say, "Let us draw near to each other and listen" when I read the Gospel. Because that's what it takes to internalize the Gospel: it takes all of us drawing into community.

That's why my emphasis on prayer this year is so important. Prayer lies at the very heart of forming and nurturing true community, and it's the basis for Christian sharing. Prayer lies at the heart of *listening*. Perhaps as we move forward in our common calling and in our common ministry, we can endeavor to begin each step, each interaction, each encounter, each relationship with prayer, centering ourselves and those with whom we live in the compassion of God, and with that intention of listening and internalizing.

May it be so! May it be so for us!

## Church Board

The Church Board will meet on Sunday, May 12th following worship.

If you have any items to add to the agenda, please notify the church office.

## Welcome Table Wednesday May 15th

This month's Welcome Table Wednesday will be on May 15th with a meal beginning at 6:00pm in the fellowship hall, followed by a short lesson. All are welcome!



## Elders Breakfast

There will be an Elders Breakfast on Sunday, May 19th at 8:30am in the fellowship hall.

## Bible Study

A weekly bible study meets every Tuesday evening at 6:30pm.



## Offering Envelopes

Offering Envelopes for the new church year, beginning Sunday, July 7th, are available for pickup in the narthex. Please sign your name next to the number that matches the box you take.

## Worship Leaders

Please consider serving as worship leader in May. A sign up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

## **A Message from the Board Chair - Strategy Potluck: Future Directions**

Thank you to everyone who was in attendance at the Congregation Strategy Potluck on Sunday, April 28, 2024. Valuable discussions were had, recapping what our goals were as a result of the retreat that was held on April 1, 2023 with Alex Ruth from our Region, and also discussing where our hearts are calling us for future ministries as a congregation.

As a recap of our "targets" for this past year, we decided during the retreat in 2023 to evaluate three primary areas:

1. Establish a safe space for questions (question sheets, sermon series, radio spot, social media posts);
2. Determine the needs of single parents in our area (what do they need/want, how to provide safe space for children, life skills); and
3. Address the mental health needs of our communities (helping parents and addressing safe space questions, 5th Sundays, Stephen Ministry, Befrienders).

As we reviewed these, we noted our successes with both the safe spaces for questions and the mental health focus, as we implemented the question cards, periodic sermon series, a weekly radio program on Sunday mornings broadcast on WGCY, and social media posts since the retreat, in addition to guest speakers to speak to mental health on the 5th Sundays. As a congregation, we did not make significant progress on the single parent support or the life skills classes, but will keep this as something in our mind for possible future ministry.

After reviewing the targets set at last year's retreat and the outcomes, those in attendance shared where their hearts are directing them at this time as part of our Christian journey. There were a few key takeaways/actions to move forward with:

1. We need to be **INTENTIONAL** about nurturing our people. As one of the "to-do's", the church will compile a list before the May 2024 board meeting of those non-active members/visitors/former regular attendees and start to work on reconnecting with those individuals/families.
2. We need to "Meet people where they are" and "Be the church". The church is **NOT** solely the building we worship in. The "Church" is our incredible community who share the fire for Christ as our Savior. We all have different life experiences, and we should extend that hand of fellowship to ensure people know that they are **ALWAYS** welcome at this table, even if we don't personally grasp the road they have travelled.
3. We need to work towards building a stronger internal community amongst the congregation. Everyone has a role in this, young and old. Reflect on how you can engage with each other, and then, "Just Do It" (switch up where you sit, ask someone to join you for dinner, help people with their needs, etc.).
4. We need to be aware of the risk of burnout. We have a small (but mighty) congregation with great ideas, and need to recognize our resourcing limitations. It was mentioned in the strategy discussion about the need to see what resources are available from the region, evaluate establishing membership with the Chamber of Commerce, see if Gibson City is still distributing "welcome packets" to new residents, find ways to have additional people become comfortable serving as worship leaders, evaluate the number of elders and deacons needed for each weekly service, and doing a stronger job of marketing the church (social media, church t-shirts, use the banners that have been ordered when out in the community). This will take many hands to accomplish - if these are all things we are passionate about, we need to work together to make it happen.
5. **PRAY**. Pray for our congregation and our future directions. Again, everyone has a role in this.

We are the church together!

In Christ,  
Janet Iverson

**Office Hours:**  
 Tue—Fri: 9:00 am—1:00 pm  
 Church Phone: 217-784-5460  
 gcfecdcc@yahoo.com

# May 2024

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3	4 1:00 PM Youth Rock Painting
5 10:15 AM Worship	6	7 6:30 PM Bible Study	8	9	10	11	
12 10:15 AM Worship 11:30 AM Church Board	13	14 6:30 PM Bible Study	15 6:00 PM Welcome Table Wednesday	16	17	18	
<b>Pentecost Offering</b>							
19 8:30 AM Elders Breakfast 10:15 AM Worship 11:30 AM Celebration Meal	20	21 6:30 PM Bible Study	22	23	24	25	
<b>Pentecost Offering</b>							
26 10:15 AM Worship	27 <b>Memorial Day Office Closed</b>	28 6:30 PM Bible Study	29	30	31		

**LOCAL  
BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES  
May 2024**

- 1 Bryan Medler
- 2 Heidi VanWinkle
- 3 Jean Donovan
- 4 Lori Eberly
- 5 Leah McClure
- 7 Joe Mouser, Jr.  
Rodney Mott
- 9 Jeff Elder
- 14 Gary Reiners  
Anna Lynn Warren
- 17 Andrew Iverson
- 19 Landon Elder
- 21 Harold Medler  
Erin Tabor
- 25 Lori Rinehart
- 26 Mona Summers
- 30 Raymond Goin



**Sister Congregations  
in Our Prayers**



The Christian Church in Illinois - Wisconsin  
*Together Making Disciples of Christ*

- May 5 Colfax CC, IL; Arrowsmith CC, IL;  
New Covenant CC, Bloomington, IL;  
FCC Muir, MI
- May 12 Barneys Prairie CC, IL; FCC Mt Carmel, IL;  
FCC Henry, IL; Lomax CC, IL;  
Cowden Lake CC, Coral MI
- May 19 Pentecost for New Church Ministry;  
Gilead Chicago, IL; Root and Branch CC;  
New Beginnings Fellowship; ANEW Church
- May 26 Union Avenue CC, Litchfield, IL;  
Flanagan CC, IL; FCC Creve Coeur;  
Gerlaw CC, IL; FCC Lansing, MI

**Pastor** - David Massey-Brown  
**Administrative Assistant** - Jennifer Hagan  
**Choir Director** - Tim Ricks  
**Church Pianist** - Joan Ricks  
**Custodians** - Jeff and Cheryl Elder

10:15 a.m. Worship Service  
 Church Phone 784-5460  
 Email address: gfcddoc@yahoo.com  
 Website: fccdocg.com

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
 P.O. Box 10  
 Gibson City, IL 60936-0010  
 217-784-5460  
 RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED