

July 2026

The Guide

*We embrace all
as we journey
the way of Jesus*



CHRIST
CHURCH UCC

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Office Hours:

Monday–Thursday
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
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Worship Schedule:

Check calendar on back for
worship, study groups, and
Children's Ministry

Christ Church Staff:

Rev. Diane Vego
Interim Pastor

Max Gise
Worship Coordinator

Talia Zoll
Worship Coordinator

Danny Manning
Choir Director

Barb Walkenhorst Derby
Bookkeeper

Michele Wright,
Communications Director

Jeff Searcy
Custodian



Photo by Michele Wright

Honoring Our Ancestors *The Importance of Religious Liberty*

Greetings, I hope this newsletter finds you well — enjoying summertime fun and all that life has to offer. Do you and your families have some adventures planned? I hope so. It is always fun to plan a summertime adventure or two; this is what summer is for, but do remember when you are out and about to wear your sunscreen and to remain hydrated; these are essential.

Friends, I am painfully aware that many of you aren't as strong as you used to be, but please do not lose heart. Summertime is a season we can **all** enjoy even if we cannot move as fast anymore and even if we feel weaker than we did last year. We can **all** enjoy the holiday by making a

few changes in our celebrations and asking friends and family to be understanding and gracious. We are **all** on a journey from birth, through life, to death and on that journey, there will be great joys, deep sorrows and everything in between. So, take smaller steps this year if you need to do so, but do have fun!

I am writing on the eve of our Nation's Fourth of July Holiday. I so enjoy the Fourth of July with a good parade, a burger on the grill, and time with family and friends. This year, the holiday is really speaking to me. It truly is. I wonder who we are **now** as a nation, and what our future holds.
Continued on next page

When I look back at our founding fathers and mothers and their decision to risk everything for this new land, I pause. What kind of courage and conviction does it take to leave everything for a vast unknown? Let's face it, leaving home is no small task.

I am also contemplating a new book for my library and for a book discussion here at Christ Church. I stumbled upon this book recently. John Fea a professor, historian and author has a third addition out of his book "Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?" I saw an interview with the author recently and was drawn in by the information he had to offer. According to Fea, this nation was not founded on Christianity. Washington rarely spoke about Jesus Christ; Adams was a Unitarian who rejected the notion of the trinity, and Jefferson was a skeptic who created his own Bible that removed all references to miracles in the New Testament. All of the founding leaders had personal convictions, but they thought it **very** important to separate church and state and to develop this Nation — our Nation — on religious liberty. In the interview, Fea talks about how "ground-breaking" this decision was.

I am a devotee of World Religions. I began this devotion in college when I was a religious studies' major who wanted to explore Christianity more deeply and religion in general. My years at The College of St. Francis were so life-giving because I began to realize that there were many ways to the center or many ways to God.

As I look out at our nation, I worry that early principles upon which we were founded are gradually disappearing, and instead

a Christian Nationalism is taking root. And when I explore Christian Nationalism, I feel that our ancestors would be disturbed. Our founding fathers and mothers were so concerned that everyone would find a place in this nation. As a result, they founded this nation while keeping in mind **all** the religious persecution that many colonists had experienced back in Europe.

"Jesus' message and The Gospel stories are "Good News." They are good news that require we give up small-minded thinking in favor of Jesus' thinking. Jesus preached The Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is what matters most!"

As I look back on our nation's history, I am so proud. I am proud of our ancestors and the deep concerns they had for religious liberty. I share their deep concerns, and throughout my life, I have been educated and deeply moved by those whose religious tradition is very different from my own.

I have also discovered that when resources are few and we are threatened within and without, we can all cling to the beliefs that provide us with comfort and calm. This is common, but it is also disturbing if we use those beliefs in difficult and challenging times as a tool of oppression. This can be dangerous.

I am grateful that our founding ancestors had such great wisdom — wisdom to embrace **all** people. That wisdom created a new vision for this nation and for our world. How historic! Furthermore, when I look at the New Testament, specifically the

Gospels, I find that Jesus had this vision as well. He broke all kinds of rules, ate with sinners and tax collectors, and included women among the 12. Jesus also called God "Abba," healed on the Sabbath, and spoke about love and compassion when many members of the Jewish leadership did not feel that everyone was deserving of love and compassion.

I love our nation. I consider this nation home to me, but I also know that there are many new citizens and permanent residents who call this nation home, too. They are very different from me, and I think this is a blessing.

As you celebrate the Fourth of July, please remember that we share this country with people of many other faith traditions, and remember that our ancestors were quite "Enlightened, too." We don't want to revert to primitive thinking and living — do we?

Jesus' message and The Gospel stories are "Good News." They are good news that require we give up small-minded thinking in favor of Jesus' thinking. Jesus preached The Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is what matters most!

The Fourth of July excites me because with this holiday, I remember our ancestors — ancestors who got more than a few things right. Religious liberty was certainly one of them.

Here's wishing you a very Happy Fourth of July! May you enjoy time with family and friends as you celebrate the birth of our Nation in wonderful and glorious ways!

With Grace and Gratitude,
Pastor Diane



Christian Education Update

*From Ellen Turner,
Church Council – Education*

We are excited about making a great Sunday-time for our youngsters! After we updated, cleaned, and organized the playroom and office, we donated items to Goodwill and organized all the closets with craft items, teaching tools, and resources for learning. Julie Mai and Annelise helped, and

even labeled every shelf, container, and areas in our storage closets! Thank you to them.

Carolyn Honchell, Debbie Paillette, and I are still looking for volunteers to help each Sunday to be with our “Kids for Christ.” As always, we appreciate your suggestions and prayers and, most importantly, volunteer time.

Thank You!

The Bathianys would like to thank Christ Church for their support of our family with the passing of Jeff. The sermon by Diane was spot on, the music by Max and Jacob was heartfelt, and the reception and condolences helped us to get closure. A special thanks to Linda Gracey, Audrey Bernhard, Karen Robinson, Judy Land, Patti Miller, Ruth Rowe, Debbie Paillette, Carolyn Honchell, and Jean Braun for the wonderful reception. This church family is so caring and responsive. Thank you again, Bert Bathiany



Mission Update

Our next date for serving a meal at Hosea House is July 12.

We hope you will consider volunteering to help. Those who have joined us in the past say it was enjoyable and rewarding to spend a couple of hours with fellow church members and provide a hot meal to our neighbors. Click [HERE](#) to sign up!

The Brighton Center is experienc-

ing difficulty meeting the needs of its clients, and its food pantry is running low. Your contributions each month are essential. Please keep bringing the items we collect (or any item you see on sale at the store!) and drop them off in the narthex or parlor. If you can add a few extra, that would be so appreciated. Please see our suggested goods below. Thanks for your generosity!

Donations for Brighton Center

July— Canned pastas with meat or cheese (such as cheese ravioli)
Aug.— Complete pancake mix (just add water)
Sept.— Toothbrushes, toothpaste

Oct.— Macaroni and cheese
Nov.— Canned yams and potatoes
Dec.— Canned beans (pork and beans, refried beans, Lima beans etc)

Prayer Requests

Covenant Cluster Prayer Partner:
Washington UCC, Cincinnati, OH

David Hosea, Makayla, Kelly Greenwalt, Karma Klingenberg, Katie Leftin, Jim Rechlin Jr., Maggie, Sallie Schmidt, Jeff McCall, Marcia Storm, Chris P., Mike Bizzarro, Mark Helminiak, Tim Kennedy, the family of Marcia Hosea, the family of Joyce Fehler, Laura, Jeff, Jack Emmerich, Melissa Brockman, Joe, Jed, Kelsey Morgan, Rich, Carolyn Honchell, the family of Barb Stinnett, Donna Hoffman, the family of Elsie Sent, Ellen C., Jim Jones, Jeff Krohmer, Barb Walkenhorst Derby, Joe Hall, Bob Daley, the family of Jeff Bathiany

(Underlining indicates anonymity)



Schedules for July

Liturgists

July 5	Carolyn Tyler
July 12	Scott Turner
July 19	Bert Bathiany
July 26	Jean Braun

Deacons

July 5	Jack Hurtt
July 12	Jean Braun
July 19	Greg Vogel
July 26	Marie Cunningham

Ushers

July 5	Jack Hurtt Ellen Turner Scott Turner Mike Evans
July 12	Jean Braun Gordon Braun Jay Wainscott Audrey Bernhard
July 19	Greg Vogel Carol Himes Marcia Storm Andy Borah
July 26	Marie Cunningham Patti Miller Nancy Pinguely Jeff Pinguely

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

— Isaiah 6:8 NIV

Don't Forget!

Send Michele a summer photo!

In the August, and September edition of *The Guide*, we would like to include a photo from your vacation or a highlight from your summer for everyone to enjoy.

Also, anytime you are at an event associated with the church or a special service, please consider taking photos and emailing them to Michele. Always appreciated!



Memorials

Memorial for Barb Stinnett

Patti Miller

Memorials for Jim Gracey

Carolyn & Ken Honchell
Krista & Joe Hack



Our Beautiful Gardens

From Michele Wright

Our gardens are thriving! Thanks to the help of **Jean Braun** and **Melissa Cox**, we were able to get the pollinator garden spruced up, put in annuals, and plant the tall blue pots in the prayer garden.

Did you know pollinators, such as butterflies and bees, are responsible for one out of every three bites of food we eat? We've recently attached a holder with brochures by the pollinator garden. It has detailed instructions on how you too can easily create a pollinator garden. It

also includes a list of plants that attract pollinators which are also deer resistant.

We're very proud of the fact that the National Wildlife Federation recognized Christ Church's pollinator garden and church grounds as a Certified Wildlife Habitat, and the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden certified us as a Certified Pollinator Habitat.





Church Council Meeting Notes

6/22/2026

In Attendance:

Greg Vogel, Gordon Braun, Melody Bizarro, Bert Bathiany, Josh Woodward, Marcia Storm, Ellen Turner, Linda Gracey, Karen Robinson, Diane Vego.

Guests: Jane Petracco, Nancy Pinguely

• *Gathering/Centering Prayer*

Pastor Diane

• *Approval of Minutes*

Diane made a motion to approve the minutes. Marcia seconded, **Minutes approved.**

• *Financial Report*

- Bert said we are "on-track" for income for this year. He is concerned about expenses for the salary of a new pastor however.
- We discussed future "rental income" may help
- Linda made a motion to approve the report. Marcia seconded. **Report approved.**

• *Pastor's Report*

- Diane feels good about her first year here. She highlighted nine points about her first year, including healing, bridge-building, pastoral visits, and the Search Committee
- The conflict about Open and Affirming needs to be considered. We are not ready to be considered ONA. This will be important to the Search Committee when looking for a new pastor.
- New Fall Project: Books created by collaborating between aging members and youth to tell life stories with the help of a computer generated program.

- A survey to hand out to young adults and families to request what would draw them back to church. Diane will work on the survey which is geared towards 25-40 year olds.
- Requested time away in August to attend her son's graduation ceremony. Council approved.
- *Rental Agreement Report*
Jane reported that individuals interested in renting will be handled by a three-person committee
- Jeff Searcy will let renters into the building. An increase in compensation was approved.
- The rental fee will remain unchanged for church members at this time. It will go up by \$100 for non-members
- Rental rates will be increased for the following outside groups; Bloom Homeschool, AA, and Mom's Club. It will stay the same for Overeaters Anonymous, and Survivors of Suicide
- Rental marketing will focus on wedding and baby showers, birthday parties, and graduation parties.
- A room divider is needed in the Parlor for wedding/bridal party for privacy from the elevator
- *Digital Sign Report*
The digital sign is in the progress of being installed. The sign will be two-sided and is predicted to fit right into the existing cement frame. Michele will be trained to operate the sign. Ben Petracco, and Laura Petracco will also be trained. (If they agree)
- *Meeting ended with prayer*

Help Needed

Christ Church needs another wedding coordinator and it pays \$200 per wedding.

It would involve coming in two hours before the wedding and leaving an hour afterwards. For more information, please contact Michele in the office.



Lunch and Learn

Tuesday, July 28, at 11:30 a.m.

In keeping with the celebration of our Nations 250th anniversary, our July Lunch and Learn will feature a presentation about **John Dunlap**, best known as the printer of the first copies of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Our guest presenter will be **Gary Walton**, owner and Director of the **Cincinnati Print and Type Museum of Cincinnati**. He will be teaching us about the life and work of John Dunlap and the different printed versions of the Declaration of Independence.

Reservations are Required for Lunch. Please join us!

Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m. followed by the presentation at noon. **For lunch reservations contact Nancy Hunter.**

Summer Highlights from Our Members



Gordon and Jean Braun

Their four-day cruise with their kids and grandkids to the Bahamas was everything they hoped for and more! The perfect way to celebrate 50 years of marriage — a tropical paradise.



Larry and Donna Stinson

The Stinsons and their family went to Glacier Bay, Alaska where they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Such a wondrous place!



Ken and Carolyn Honchell

What a beautiful place to celebrate your 60th wedding anniversary! The Honchells went to Myrtle Beach, S.C. They were redoing a trip they took 16 years ago with their family.

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.."

— Isaiah 40:8 (NIV)



Photo by Michele Wright

June Attendance

	In Person	Online
6/7/26	62	N/A
6/14/26	64	N/A
6/21/26	68	N/A
6/28/26	106	N/A

Congratulations

Congratulations to **Kelsey Thomas** who graduated from Highlands High School! Kelsey is the daughter of Shannon and Hunter Thomas, and the granddaughter of Patti Miller.

She is also the sister of Lauren who was mentioned last month instead of Kelsey. Lauren graduated three years ago.

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

— Jeremiah 29:11

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Kelly Kuhnhein
Virginia Hall
Cynthia Blau
Michael Cook
Debbie Paillette
Jeff Searcy
Sandra Hurtt
Kristyn Lukjan
Gordon Braun
Cherie Draper
Barb Korpik
Mike Randall
Bernie Barre
Janet Fischer

Jeff Draper
Emily Karrick
Andrew Bach
Diane Vego
Benjamin Kuhnhein

Kelly & Scott Kuhnhein
Betsy & Rob Beimesche
Max & Anna Gise
Janet & William Fischer
David & Sarah Huelsman
Guy & Jeanne Karrick
Donna & William Wilson

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 3 pm –Small Group Zoom Link is: bit.ly/ccwednesday 7 pm – AA Group	2 12 pm – Study Group	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY
5 8:30 am –Fellowship 10:30 am –Children's Christian Education 10:30 am –Worship	6	7 1:30 pm – Art Group 7 pm – Overeaters Anonymous	8 3 pm –Small Group Zoom Link is: bit.ly/ccwednesday 7 pm – AA Group	9 12 pm – Study Group 7 pm – Doll Group	10	11
12 8:30 am –Fellowship 10:30 am –Children's Christian Education 10:30 am –Worship	13 7 pm – Finance Meeting 7 pm – Survivors of Suicide	14 1:30 pm – Art Group 7 pm – Overeaters Anonymous	15 3 pm –Small Group Zoom Link is: bit.ly/ccwednesday 7 pm – AA Group	16 12 pm – Study Group	17	18
19 8:30 am –Fellowship 10:30 am –Children's Christian Education 10:30 am –Worship 11:30 am –Mission Team	20 10 am – Bloom Open House	21 11:30 pm – Lunch and Learn 1:30 pm – Art Group 7 pm – Overeaters Anonymous	22 3 pm –Small Group Zoom Link is: bit.ly/ccwednesday 7 pm – AA Group	23 12 pm – Study Group	24	25
26 8:30 am –Fellowship 10:30 am –Children's Christian Education 10:30 am –Worship	27 6 pm –Church Council	28 1:30 pm – Art Group 7 pm – Overeaters Anonymous	29 3 pm –Small Group Zoom Link is: bit.ly/ccwednesday 7 pm – AA Group	30 12 pm – Study Group	31	