



ST. CHRISTOPHER BY THE RIVER

APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER

Dear People of St. Christopher's,

Throughout the Lenten season, many of us met on Sunday mornings for a Lenten forum that centered on our getting to know each other and dreaming about where God might be calling us as a faith community. I was so pleased with the broad participation from the parish, for it helped me to more deeply get to know St. Christopher's by getting to know more of the wonderful people that make up our congregation. For everyone's sake, I wanted to take this opportunity to recap what we discussed. The conversations we had were inspiring, thought-provoking, and faith-filled.



At our first meeting, we talked about both the origins of the Church (*ecclesia* in the Greek) and our own origins of faith. It was interesting to learn that, of the 20 or so folks at the first forum, at least 12 different faith traditions were represented (Christian and otherwise!). We talked about how those faith traditions of our childhood shaped us and shaped our faith.

At our second gathering, we talked about the origins of our involvement with St. Christopher's, specifically. Many of you remarked that you felt immediately welcomed when you found the parish, one person even describing an experience of radical welcome. Some said it was a place where they could get involved and a place where they experienced unconditional love. Undergirding all of this was the reality that St. Christopher's is a place where Jesus can meet the needs of all who enter our doors.



In the third week, we discussed how the Church might be defined, what makes it up, and how it has changed over time. Central to this conversation was that Church for many of us is a place of intentional community, a place to be grounded, a place to offer gratitude for life's many gifts, and a place to settle into some quiet in the midst of a busy, loud world. Some described Church as a feeling of home, and one person remarked that Church feels like a place where, as described in the theme song for the sitcom *Cheers*, "everybody knows your name." Some folks remarked that Church is a place to find answers to life's questions and to even wrestle with the questions.

At our final forum, I asked the group to dream about this faith community that we love so much. Folks expressed a desire for a deeper engagement with the local village and wider community, and others articulated a hope for a diverse community that was a lighthouse to those on life's journey. Others expressed a desire for ministry geared toward children and youth, younger acolyte participation in our liturgies, offerings of contemplative prayer, and intentional environmental awareness.

I came away from these conversations feeling so glad and honored to journey alongside you all. I sense a deep commitment at St. Christopher's to our parish that runs alongside a desire for us to grow in our ways of being the Church in the world. I am thrilled to continue to discern with you, and I look at these forums as just the beginning of our listening to the Holy Spirit in our midst. Be in prayer, as I will, too, for where God is desiring to take us together. Many thanks to all who participated in the forums!

Yours in Christ,
Gabriel+

The Vestry Meeting and Financial Review covered several key points. The draft vestry minutes from November 16, 2025, and the special meeting minutes from November 23, 2025, were approved. The treasurer reported a year-to-date net cash flow \$83,080 above expectations, with pledges at \$180,687.00. For 2026, expenses are projected at \$430,000, and revenue at \$6,000 from the plate and \$185,000 from pledges. The capital fund is depleted, and a \$20,000 foundation grant is expected. The vestry discussed allocating funds, including a \$500 gift for outgoing priest Richard Israel. Plans for the 12th Night party and Father Gabriel's arrival were also reviewed.

Action Items

- Prepare announcements over the next Sundays and organize a farewell on January 11 (include an enlarged coffee hour) and arrange a \$500 check to present to Richard Israel
- Take the lead on social media (Facebook/Instagram/TikTok), coordinate strategy and execution, and discuss plans with the priest in charge
- Investigate Safe Church training requirements, identify diocesan contact and renewal timeline, and report back (aim to complete before February 1)
- Collect parishioners' digital photos and forward them (and any other directory submissions) to the person uploading to ServantKeeper so the parish directory/biobook can be assembled
- Print the treasurer's financial report and distribute copies to all vestry members this afternoon (except Rick)
- Make the transfer of the foundation grant allocation, placing the agreed portion into the St. Christopher fund and the remainder into the operating account
- Execute the pension catch-up transfers from the checking account to affected employees' Fidelity accounts per Church Pension Group guidance
- Update UBS account signatories to add the senior warden and the treasurer and implement dual-signature requirement for transfers
- Organize setup crew for the 12th Night event (setup Friday the 9th at 4:00 PM) and coordinate volunteers for the pancake breakfast

Outline

Approval of Draft Vestry Minutes and Special Meeting Minutes

- Dr. Irwin calls the meeting to order and notes the quorum present at 11:35 AM.
- Motion to approve the November 16, 2025, draft vestry minutes is made and seconded. Unanimous vote to approve.
- Suggestion to differentiate the parish directory from other directories is discussed and accepted.
- Motion to approve the minutes of the special meeting held on November 23, 2025, is made and seconded. Unanimous vote to approve.

Treasurer's Report on Financial Performance

- Treasurer reports that the year-to-date net cash flow is \$83,080 above expectations.
- Income is \$55,000 over budget, with pledges at \$180,687,000.
- \$50,000 more drawn from investments for rectory enhancements than budgeted.
- Total operating expenses are \$28,000 under budget, primarily due to reduced contract labor costs.

Discussion on Foundation Grant and Fund Allocation

- Foundation grant of \$20,000 is expected to be included in December numbers.
- Discussion on allocating the grant between the operating account and the St. Christopher's fund.
- Suggestion to allocate a larger portion to the capital fund is considered.
- Explanation of the St. Christopher's fund and its role in the church's financial planning.

Budget Planning for 2026

- Total expenses for 2026 are anticipated to be \$430,000 to \$437,000, slightly higher than 2023.
- Plate income is expected to remain around \$6,000 for the year.
- Current pledge is \$185,000, with a slight increase in investment income from UBS.
- Non-pledged community support needs to increase to \$65,000 to cover expenses.

Pension Plan and Contribution Rules

- Clarification on the pension plan requirements, including the \$1,000 threshold for eligibility.
- Discussion on the impact of the 2013 pension rule changes and their retroactive application.

- Explanation of the matching contribution requirements and their impact on the budget.
- Suggestion to update the signers on the UBS account to include the treasurer and another investor.

Rectory Improvements and Maintenance

- Detailed report on rectory improvements, including painting and repairs.
- Mention of icicles forming on the rectory and the need for gutter guards.
- Discussion on the need for window treatments in the rectory and the priest's willingness to contribute.
- Plans for the 12th Night party and the need for a crew to set up the fellowship room.

Priest in Charge Compensation and Discretionary Fund

- Discussion on the priest in charge's compensation for January, including sabbatical time.
- Decision to continue the first Sunday cash offerings for St. Luke's and add a third Sunday for the priest in charge.
- Plan to celebrate Father Richard Israel's departure with a special coffee hour and a \$500 gift.
- Suggestion to make announcements over the next few Sundays to inform the congregation.

Parish Directory and Social Media

- Update on the parish directory, with 26 submissions and 6 photos received.
- Discussion on the need for a social media strategy, including Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram.
- Suggestion to involve Father Gabriel in the social media efforts to engage the community.
- Plan to finalize the nominating committee's proposed nominees for the annual meeting.

Final Remarks and Future Agenda Items

- Reminder to finalize the safe church curriculum and renew diocesan licenses.
- Discussion on the installation of Mother Anne's plaque and its location in the church.
- Plan to bring finger foods for the coffee hour celebrating Father Gabriel's arrival.
- Closing prayer and adjournment of the meeting at 12:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted, *John R. Irwin, M.D.*
 John R Irwin, M.D., Sr. Warden and Clerk.



JUNIOR WARDEN REPORT

Hopefully, we all survived this crazy winter! However, the rectory did not. Massive icicles pulled down the gutters on the west side of the directory. Park Hill Roofing has now replaced them.



This past few weeks, Gilmore Security came to make sure everything is functioning properly. Along with this visit, Michael Feig from the fire department did our annual fire inspection. I'm happy to say we are all safe and secure.!

Warm regards, Charlene Currutt, Junior Warden

Fruits & Veggies

Food Pantry



- Canned fruits,
- Apple sauce
- Canned vegetables
- Canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, crushed tomatoes, etc.
- Sauerkraut

- 1 Sally Conley
- Pauline Marting
- Connor McMillon
- Hayley Kosmatka
- 5 Larry Murray
- 6 Kathi Mitchell
- 7 Brian Wright
- 8 Kathy Vilas
- 9 Alex Berchek
- 11 Laura Stith

APRIL Birthdays

- 14 Lou Boswell
- 19 Madeline Figgie
- 22 PJ Hoeflinger
- 26 Neal Repko
- 29 Dan Collister
- 30 Beth Miller

Present: Ms. Charlene Currutt, Ms. Judy Holmes, Dr. Hayley Kosmatka, Mr. Ron Lee, Ms. Linda Saylor, Ms. Kitty Thomas, Mr. Brian Wright; Treasurer: Mr. Rick Hamilton Member Guest: Mr. Eric Saylor Acting Clerk: Linda Saylor

Opening. With a quorum present at 11:40 a.m., Char opened the meeting with a prayer, “Guidance”.

Approval of Minutes, December 21, 2025. A motion was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

Financials, Richard Hamilton

Points and Discussion

- There were many accounting changes this year. More funds were brought in than were spent.
- The budget for 2026 is about 95% finished. The three revenue sources are pledges, other community support — and parishioners and investment income. Expenses are expected to increase this year, largely due to inflation.
- Pledges at approximately \$185,000 have remained the same the past five years. Non-pledge community support has ranged from \$60,000 — \$70,000 between 2022 and 2024, and looks to be around \$35,000 in for 2025. For 2026, the non-pledge community support will need to increase to around \$60,000 and higher if staff hours are increased.
- Medical coverage for Fr. Gabriel will be lower. His salary, however is higher than for our previous rector.
- We may want to consider a capital campaign to cover any investments needed for the property. Rick will bring the proposed budget and financial information to the February meeting.

Pension Contributions

- Yuri and others are owed back pension payments consistent with Diocese standards. Under the Diocesan plan, there is a 5% base; the parish would match up to 9%, assuming the employee contributes 4%. However, St. Christopher’s plan has offered a more generous 8% base, but lacked the 1% match. Starting in January 2026, the parish needs to provide a 1% matching contribution option for Yuri beginning this year. For prior years, we will assume that Yuri would have made a 1% matching contribution, and pay her for the match from 1/1/2013 through 12/31/2025.
- There are four other former employees impacted by this change. They, too will be compensated under the assumption that they would have made the match. The back-pension expense is estimated to be about \$15,000.

Discussion

- For existing employees, Vestry approved the addition of the 1% matching contribution. This will impact only Yuri at this time, but may affect others employees should they become eligible in 2026.
- The Vestry has the option to revise the plan to a 5% base/4% match, consistent with Diocesan recommendations. They can also chose a more generous combination of base and match that equals at least 9% total. Any changes to the plan would apply only to new employees.
- Employees currently in the plan will receive the 8% base and 1% match option. This is more generous than the Diocesan minimum, and supportive of those who may lack the resources to save additional amounts. The Treasurer recommended this option.
- Brian asked for more information regarding the budget, and time to consider how the church would fund any of these plans. Rick will send a summary covering all of this. Then, after reviewing all of the information, Vestry will vote.
- Char wondered if after examining the options and costs, we should apply the same pension plan for all employees.

Additional Information

- John is responsible for approving Lucy’s hours.
- After Fr. Gabriel begins with us, Vestry must revisit job descriptions for all staff.
- We must make sure that they are compensated for their efforts, and add clarity about their work roles. Fr. Gabriel and Mary will work together in support of this.

Audit

- An audit was not conducted last year, so we must call for a committee audit with parishioner participation in 2026. We would do one in January or February — and then another in June. We only have to conduct two over three years. The Treasurer requested that volunteers who can assist with the committed audits be found.

- The process is not overly complicated. Rick, Mary and Patti, our bookkeeper will collaborate, meeting once a week. [Patti, a former CPA, was recommended by Bruce Long]. Rick thinks highly of her work.

Junior Warden's Report, Charlene Currutt

Gutter and Insulation Issues. The warmth of the rectory structure is causing ice to melt, resulting in falling gutters. Park Hill Roofing measured the damaged gutters and ordered the materials to be installed when the weather permits. The rectory is warm, with no drafts. Installing new windows and more insulation when the upstairs bathroom was remodeled have helped. To prevent further gutter issues, heating cables could be installed in the fall. It's not expensive work, but an electrical source is needed. This issue is being tabled for now given a possible capital campaign.

Gift. Vestry thanks Barbara Blossom and Laura Cotton for their donation of new wreaths for two parish doors.

Event Planning, Ron Lee

- **Twelfth Night Party.** Ron provided vestry with a brief summary of the event. There was enough volunteer help.
- **Pancake Breakfast, 2/15.** We'll begin after the 10:15 service. The grocery list is stable. Men are needed to cook.
- **Maundy Thursday, 4/02.** Historically, we've had a Lenten meal. Char suggested discussing this at the February Vestry meeting, after Father Gabriel has joined us.

Parish Directory and Bio Book, Linda Saylor

- **Directory.** Work to provide parishioners with limited access to fellow parishioners' information should resume in the spring.
- **Bio Book.** As of January 18, we've received information from 41 individuals/families — and photos from 12.

Community Advertising, Eric Saylor

- Eric suggested that we create a press release about the arrival of Father Gabriel for The Pink Sheet, The Chagrin Valley Times and The News Herald. [It was noted that there was an article about the new Rector at St. Martin.]
- Coordination will be handled with Mary, likely in February. Char suggested considering advertising our Lenten service and Agape meal.
- Judy noted that given the monthly deadlines for the Pink Sheet, she'll coordinate with Mary to draft the content, include a photo of the church — and add the service times.

Social Media, Brian Wright

- Brian's firm provides advocacy and political services through in-house tools that boost media exposure. For us, possibilities are Facebook, Instagram and TikTok postings. Our Christmas post with greater content depth brought greater interaction.
- With media exposure, the Catholic and mega churches have higher church attendance, possibly since all of life's complexities compel people to attend. [Episcopal churches seem to have less turnout.] If we're closer to what religion should be and are facilitating people's connection with God, less formal messages should reflect this. "The Holy Spirit is the light that connects us with God" could be one, implying gaining self-help through participation.
- He is building an online asset library with photos and content to mix with what we already have. Quarterly posts should be made to provide constant content for Facebook, then Instagram, then TikTok. Once set up, periodic assessments and adjustments can be made. We could also select a sound bite from a sermon and elaborate on it.
- Char suggested that we take a photo of Father Gabriel preaching, and also during the service. Other suggestions included posting videos and focusing messaging per the age ranges of each social media platform. [Facebook, 35 and older; TikTok, a younger audience that's also cross-platform.]

Future Agenda Items

- Vote, pension proposal
- Pancake breakfast, 2/15. [This is the same day as our Vestry meeting. Char proposed that we hold the February Vestry meeting on February 8. She will check on this with John Irwin and Fr. Gabriel.]
- Potential Event, Maunday Thursday

Closing Prayer. Eric shared a prayer with us.

Next Meeting. Tentatively, Sunday, February 8, 2026.

Adjournment. The meeting concluded at approximately 1:00 p.m.

BARGAN BOX SALE

APRIL 24, 9-4

Early Entrance
@ 8:00 for \$10



Welcome
 our new vestry members,
 elected at the annual meeting
 held on March 1, 2026

We have all embarked on an exciting new journey- transitioning into a new era with Father Gabriel! Please keep our vestry and staff in your prayers over the coming weeks. The Vestry will have a retreat in May and they, along with the staff, will participate in 'Church Reimagined' on April 26. This is a workshop designed to bring the staff, the vestry and the Priest in Charge together for a "...supportive and informative experience that propels everyone forward on the healthiest possible journey." We are quite excited for what the future holds!



James (Gallagher) has been a member of the Saint Christopher's community for the past three years, serving as a Eucharistic Minister, participating on the search committee, and now joining the vestry. By training, he is a designer and creator of home interior products and brands within the home retail industry. Most recently, he co-founded Rituil, a sustainable living and wellness brand, and consults with companies launching their own products and brands. James is grateful to be part of a church community rooted in Christ's love and compassion and looks forward to serving the parish and supporting its continued growth and mission.



An adoptee who reunited with her birth mother and four siblings, Linda (Sylor), a grandmother of four and a former teacher has worked in IT support, writing, editing and training roles. Raised Jewish, she was baptized at St. Christopher in April, 2016 after which, as a new NEMAC representative, she met Eric Sylor, representing St. James in Painesville. They were married there on Earth Day in April, 2023. Wishing to return to her baptismal parish, Linda rejoined St. Christopher in late 2024, followed soon by Eric. Now a new Vestry member, she and Eric also sing in choir, are on Altar Guild — and serve as Lectors. **PS...** If by some chance you hear a parishioner refer to me as Linda *Webb*, that was my last name when I was baptized.



Brian is a father of two, Kylie and Tyler, and a strategic public relations consultant. After visiting many parishes in 2003, Brian and his then wife to be, Elizabeth Steck, decided that the welcoming and close community at St. Christopher's made it the most ideal church for their wedding and family to come. Although the couple is no longer together, our church continues to be the family's spiritual home. Brian has served several past terms on the vestry and one term as Junior Warden. Brian has also served as usher for most of his years with us

and has expanded his service to include helping as a lector and eucharistic minister.

FLOWER DEDICATIONS

MARCH 2026

In loving memory of:

- Sarah Christy Dickenson and Jeffrey Rockwell Cudlip by Frances & David Dickenson
- Fran & Herb Cooper, Alice & Bruce Bennet by Larry & Elise Bennett
- Rev. Rodney C. Shoemaker, Ph.D. by Annette Lowe
- My husband, Roger Rankin by Alison Rankin

VESTRY

Class of 2026

Charlene Currutt (Junior Warden)
 John Irwin (Senior Warden/Clerk)
 Ron Lee

Class of 2027

Hayley Kosmatka
 Bruce Long
 Kitty Thomas

Class of 2028

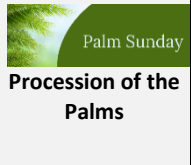

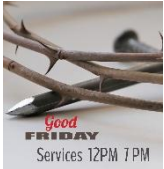
James Gallagher
 Linda Sylor
 Brian Wright

Treasurer

Rick Hamilton


NEMAC Representative


Laura Cotton
 Linda Sylor

SUNDAY MARCH 29		MONDAY - 30	TUESDAY - 31	WEDNESDAY-1	THURSDAY-2	FRIDAY- 3	SATURDAY-4	
8 am Holy Eucharist	10:15 am Holy Eucharist		1-3 HS Group	9:00 Staff	9:00 PRESORT			9:00 Decorate Church
EM: Charley Marston	Hayley Kosmatka				10:00 Finance			8:00 AA
LECTOR: Kitty Thomas	C. Everett Sr. & Brian Wright				1-3 HS Group		Easter Vigil at Trinity Cathedral	
ALTAR: Sue Marston	Linda & Eric Saylor							
USHERS NA	Brian Wright & Gabe Brachna							
HOSTESSES	Nancy Irwin							

SUNDAY APRIL 5 EASTER!		MONDAY - 6	TUESDAY - 7	WEDNESDAY-8	THURSDAY-9	FRIDAY- 10	SATURDAY-11
9 am Holy Eucharist	11 am Holy Eucharist			9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance 10:00 DOK		
EM: Kitty Thomas	John Irwin		1-3 HS Group		1-3 HS Group	8:00 AA	1-3 HS Group
LECTOR: Kathy Pender	Lucy Lytle & Courtney Schmidt						
ALTAR: Sue Marston	Neal Lee						
USHERS NEEDED	Brian Wright & Alison Wolf						
HOSTESSES	Charlene Currutt						

SUNDAY APRIL 12		MONDAY - 13	TUESDAY - 14	WEDNESDAY-15	THURSDAY-16	FRIDAY- 17	SATURDAY-18
8 am Holy Eucharist	10:15 am Holy Eucharist		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance			
EM: Kitty Thomas	John Irwin				8:00 AA		
LECTOR: Annette Lowe	C. Everett Sr. & C. Everett						
ALTAR: Sally Conley	Courtney Schmidt						
USHERS NA	Charlene Currutt & Laura Cotton						
HOSTESSES	Sue Marston						

SUNDAY APRIL 19		MONDAY - 20	TUESDAY - 21	WEDNESDAY-22	THURSDAY-23	FRIDAY- 24	SATURDAY-25
8 am	10:15 am		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance		8 AM-4 PM	
EM: Charley Marston	Brian Wright				8:00 AA		
LECTOR: Teri Ianni	Becky Everett & Judy Holmes	11:15 Vestry Mtg					
ALTAR: Teri Ianni	Ginny & Chandler Everett						
USHERS NA	Leslie Marting & Judy Holmes						
HOSTESSES	Elise Bennett						

SUNDAY APRIL 26		MONDAY - 27	TUESDAY - 28	WEDNESDAY-29	THURSDAY-30	FRIDAY- 1	SATURDAY-2
8 am Holy Eucharist	10:15 am Holy Eucharist		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance			
EM: Charley Marston	James Gallagher				8:00 AA		
LECTOR: Annette Lowe	Cally Hoyt & Neal Lee						
ALTAR: Sue Marston	Ginny & Chandler Everett						
USHERS NA	Ron Lee & Peter Thatcher						
HOSTESSES	Becky Everett						

**ST. CHRISTOPHER BY-THE-RIVER
EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

www.stchrisbytheriver.org

7601 Old Mill Rd.
PO Box 519
Gates Mills OH 44040

The Rev. Gabriel Lawrence, Priest-in-Charge
stchris.fathergabriel@gmail.com

Sunday Services

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:15 AM Holy Eucharistic Rite II

Childcare available at the 10:15 service.

Find our weekly worship on [YouTube](#).

Parish Office

Mary Zup

Staffed T-W-TH 9:00-4:00

440-423-4451

stchrisbytheriver@gmail.com

APRIL 2026 Newsletter

St. Christopher by the River



"A new command
I give you:
Love one another.
As I have loved you,
so you must love
one another."
JOHN 13:34, NIV

*Agape
Supper*

Thursday, April 2

5:30 Set Up
6:00 Meal
7:00 Clean Up
7:30 Stripping Altar
& Prayers



JOIN US
for
GOOD
Friday

12:00 PM
7:00 PM
April 3

It is
finished.

12:00

EM: Charley Marston
Lector: Ron & Neal Lee
Ushers: Ron & Neal Lee
Altar: Teri Ianni

7:00

EM: Brian Wright
Lectors: Eric & Linda Saylor
Ushers: Becky & Chandler
Everett
Altar: Lucy Lytle



9AM & 11AM

JOIN US FOR
EASTER
Sunday
April 5

Christ is Risen!

*Please note there is no
childcare available on Easter
Sunday.*

*There will be a light 'coffee hour' on Easter during
the egg hunt outside (weather permitting). The
egg hunt will be moved inside in case of inclement
weather.*



**Easter
Egg Hunt**

Between services at 10:20 AM