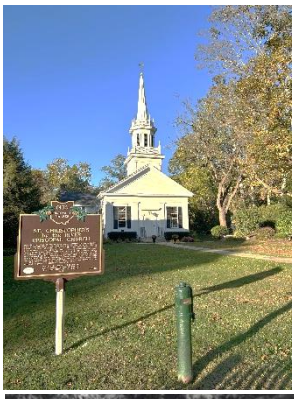
ST. CHRISTOPHER BY THE RIVER

MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

Beloved,

Happy Easter!

In this season of new life, I have been reflecting a lot on our collective life in Christ as a community. As the Body of Christ, we believe that our very community is an expression of God and God's presence made known to us. As with all life, our community journeys through cycles: ups and downs, things we affect, responses to external stimuli, even death and resurrection. I have been especially mindful of the cycles of life as we prepare to celebrate one hundred years of being an Episcopal congregation in this beautiful village.



Throughout the decades, God has been with us through it all: dramatic growth in the mid-twentieth century, floods, changing local demographics, decline, and resurrection. As we prepare to celebrate 100 years as an Episcopal congregation, my mind turns toward the next one hundred years. We can't possibly predict what will be contained within those years, but we can celebrate what has been even as we look forward to what God will do with us and through us in the decades to come.

I invite us, more than anything, to use the centennial year as a year of discernment. We might ask questions like these: *Who are we? Who do we want to be? Who is God calling us to be?* At the heart of all these questions is discernment of identity and purpose. Above all, our identity is grounded in God and God made known to us in the person of Jesus Christ. During this time of stability for our congregation, it is an ideal time for us to approach these questions with curiosity and a listening ear for God's voice. During this time, I also invite us to celebrate, be joyful, and relish in all of God's abundant gifts to us. This celebrating, joy, and abundance should be intentional! To that end, if you are interested in being a part of a planning committee for centennial events in 2027, do let me know. Our congregation is full of passionate people with many skills, and I look forward to seeing how our centennial year comes together!

I continue to be grateful for each and every one of you. It is an honor and a joyful thing to journey alongside you. I especially look forward to formally celebrating our pastoral relationship on September 8 with our Bishop at the service of Celebration of New Ministry. More information to come on that service of celebration. There is, indeed, so much celebrating to do in these next months and years, for God has been with us and will con.tinue to be with us. Thanks be to God for new life, all of life's ups and downs, and for the gift of community. Alleluia, alleluia! *Yours in the love of Christ, Gabriel+*

Vestry Meeting Minutes, 02/22/26 St. Christopher by-the-River

Attendance. ***Present:*** Father Gabriel Lawrence, Charlene Currutt, Judy Holmes, Hayley Kosmatka, Aud.D., Ron Lee, Dr. Bruce Long, Linda Sylor; Rick Hamilton, Treasurer ***Absent:*** Dr. John Irwin, Kitty Thomas, Brian Wright

Openings

Prayer. At 11:45 a.m., with a quorum present, Fr. Gabriel recited a *Collect for Good Friday and Ordinations*.

Minutes, January 18, 2026. ***Moved: Approve the minutes with one correction, Bruce; Second, Judy > Carried.***

Clerk. Linda Sylor will take the minutes, including the financial reporting summarized by Rick Hamilton.

Reports, Fr. Gabriel, Gratitude, and Growth

Gratitude, Transition Leadership. He thanked vestry members and especially John and Char for their leadership.

Ash Wednesday Attendance. 55 people attended the two services, compared with 34 last year.

Baptism, Pancake Breakfast. The Repko baptismal family made a nice donation. The well-attended breakfast netted $20. [Fr. Gabriel wondered lightheartedly if a baptism could pair with our pancake breakfast day again next year.]

Ideas and Potential Plans for 2026 and Beyond

Rectory Showing. After his installation service, we should plan to show our members the completed rectory work.

Bread for the World. This Christian ministry fights food insecurity. There may be ways to collaborate through a forum, this since the baptized baby's grandfather Dave Repko is an activist and donor.

Community Connections and Outreach, Gates Mills. He envisions collaboration with village leaders and other residents. [Noted: Potential incoming Vestry member James Gallagher resides in Gates Mills.]

Centennial Planning. Bishop Ann will join us on St. Christopher's Day, 7/25/2027. The one-year festivities can include an event with the mayor and community leaders, a music/history evening with Yuri and the Gates Mills Historical Society, exhibits, a float for the July 4th parade and ideas from the 150th celebration at the Church of the Ascension. Our parishioner Eric Sylor co-authored the St. James bicentennial book *To the Glory of God: 200 Years of History,* selling on Amazon, and also donated to our library by Lucy Lytle. Eric has begun researching our parish history. If you know of others who might contribute, please touch base with Fr. Gabriel.

Annual Parochial Report, March 1. He and Rick Hamilton are preparing this with help from Patti Paczos and Mary.

Annual Meeting. To meet Diocesan and financial reporting deadlines, pending a Vestry bylaws amendment, the meeting will be held in January 2027 with the date to be determined.

"Church Re-Imagined". This program accelerates the rector–vestry relationship and mutual ministry review. There will be a four-hour facilitated Vestry session and a separate staff session within 3–4 months. Annual mutual ministry reviews will be expected. Fr. Gabriel will propose dates.

Diocesan Roles and External Engagements. These may also offer us parish outreach or other opportunities.

Initiative	*Effort*	*Est. Time*
Bellwether Chaplaincy	He will provide continuing youth education at camp this summer.	One week
Commission on Ministry	Supports those discerning ministry	2-3 hr./mo.
Diocesan Liturgical Commission	Experimentation and creation of alternative texts to offer to the wider church. [The first meeting was held in February.]	1-2 hr./mo.
Discernment Day	Equips participants with tools to determine how and where God may be calling them	One day
United Protestant Campus Ministries [UPCaM]	*Dinner Church*, a program for area Christian college students draws about 40. We may sponsor an event. Amanda Powell, Campus Minister can facilitate a forum.	1-2 hr./mo.

Vestry Member Meetings. Those who haven't met with Fr. Gabriel should plan to do so in the next few months.

The Holy Thursday Agape Meal. Attendance should be higher this year. Mary asked Nancy Irwin to coordinate signup and the symbolic foods to bring. Readings will include a portion from the *Book of Occasional Services*.

Maundy Thursday. Stripping of the Altar will be done this year in conjunction with the Holy Thursday service.

Vestry Schedule and Retreat Planning. Vestry will meet on Sunday, March 15. John Irwin will propose Vestry retreat dates by email for a potential 4 to 6-hour session this spring, likely held at his home.

Report, Jr. Warden [Rectory]

Areas

Kitchen. The original, non-standard wooden door needs replacement; possibly the frame needs work. Some cold water pipes froze during the extreme cold; none burst. There was minor water intrusion without active flooding. To address a leak under the kitchen sink/dishwasher, a towel is being replaced daily.

Back Stairwell. There is discoloration near the baseboards. With dry carpet, this is likely gutter-related. The heating cables suggest prior problems.

Attic. Chimney condensation suggests a lack of insulation. A squirrel intrusion through the attic was resolved.

Insulation, Gutters and Screens

Insulation is a major need due to roof heat loss. It should be handled with the door work, planned for spring. The west side gutters separated from the fascia boards due to significant icicle weight. Parkhill Roofing has our new ones. Plans for heating cables and gutter guards also need to be explored. When the gutters fell, there was no leaf debris. The drains have been cleaned. Some older screens need replacement.

Next Steps

Contractors. Amish workers have been used; a door specialist who bid $5,000 for 7 rectory doors should also be contacted to quote potential projects.

Funding. Vestry confirmed that coverage exists from the capital fund and our investments. Rectory upgrades should be treated as a single capital project wherever possible.

Timing. The goal is to present estimates and vote on these projects in April in support of work in the spring.

Reports, Treasurer

Finance and Budget

Approximately $20,000 remains in the 2024 capital fund. Endowment and investment funds can support operations or capital given vestry approval. Funding options include internal and potential external sources; vestry oversight is required for large expenditures. For procurement, our bylaws require three estimates and a vestry vote.

Surplus, 2025. The amount is higher than expected [$154K vs. $86K budgeted], mainly due to lower expenses.

Position. We are in a strong, but investment-dependent financial position. [St. Chris Fund + UBS accounts)

2026 Budget. Vestry approved the budget with costs for a full-time rector, higher personnel outlay — and for ongoing expenses through pledge, non-pledge giving and endowment draws, this rather than depleting principal.

Moved, Approve the 2026 Budget, Bruce; Second, Haley > Carried

Giving Distinctions. We clarified the difference between pledged and variable non-pledged giving, and the importance of outreach and stewardship.

Personnel Decisions

Pension. Vestry approved a uniform plan; an 8% base contribution payment, with the ability of these employees to receive a match on contributions up to 1% of their base pay.

Staff Hours. Work agreements for Mary and Lucy are being reviewed to ensure that they properly reflect the work expected of them. Given the number of hours needed from them both, they will be able to participate in the pension program in 2026 once their new work agreements are signed.

Raises. All eligible staff are receiving a 3.5% cost-of-living increase.

Pension. A uniform plan was approved; an 8% base contribution plus up to a 1% match for all staff in the plan.

Operational and Administrative Actions

Costco. An Executive, 2% cash-back business membership was approved; Mary is designated the main cardholder.

Payments. A new debit card for Lucy (low limit, no cash withdrawals) was approved, only for church purchases.

Banking. A new savings account will be opened. Most of the approximately $77K in checking will be moved to savings to reduce fraud risk — and to earn some interest.

Event Planning, Ron Lee

Ron thanked Lucy, Luis and Mary for their help, noting that Laura Cotton can also help. Next is a Pentecost picnic. He created a spreadsheet to track food and supplies costs, and hopes for someone to assume this role.

Closings

Thank You. Fr. Gabriel and Vestry expressed appreciation to Judy Holmes for her Vestry service.

Closing Prayer/Adjournment. He led our closing prayer. ***Moved: Adjourn, Haley; second, Linda > Carried, 1:30 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted, Linda Sylor

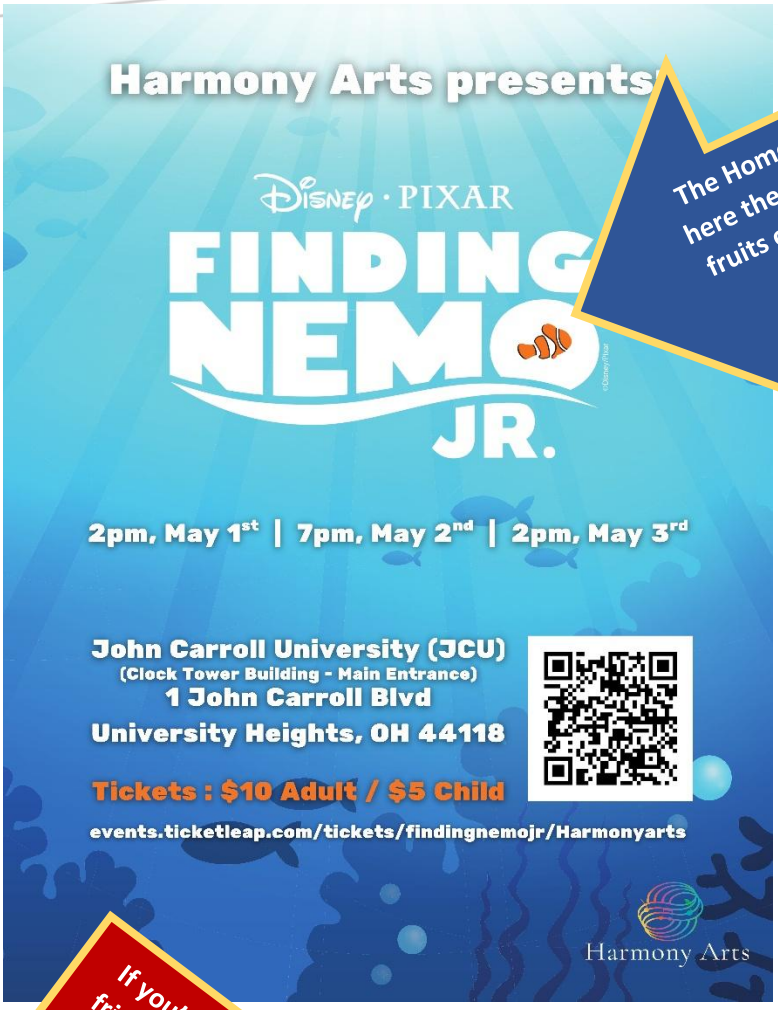
VESTRY

Class of 2026
Charlene Currutt (**Junior Warden**)
John Irwin (**Senior Warden**)
Ron Lee

Class of 2027
Hayley Kosmatka
Rick Hamilton (**Treasurer**)
Kitty Thomas

Class of 2028
James Gallagher
Linda Sylor (**Clerk**)
Brian Wright

NEMAC Representative
Laura Cotton
Linda Sylor



The Home School Theater group that was rehearsing here the last two months, invites you to come see the fruits of their labors! They thank you abundantly for use of the space.

If you'd like to go, grab a friend and get your check into the office by May 19.

MAY Birthdays

1 Finley McMillion
4 Larry Smith
5 Bridget Manning
Jean Ramsey
Denise Weber
6 Whit Champ
8 Charlene Currutt
Lena DeBaz
Dan McMullen
Fr. Gabriel Lawrence
9 Jennifer Blossom
11 Nancy Clark
13 Renee Kolecki
14 Whitney Cole
Gladys Loth
15 Teri Ianni
16 Russ Lincoln
17 Brandon Gray
19 Ryan Zitkowski
20 Stella Schmidt

Take Me Out to the Ball Game¶

NEMAC Baseball Outing¶

June 12th, 7pm¶

Lake Erie Captains vs West Michigan Whitecaps¶

Classic Auto Group Park, 35300 Vine St., Eastlake¶

Tickets are $15¶

FLOWER DEDICATIONS APRIL 2026

In loving memory of:

- Joan, Arthur, John and Garrett Helman by the Hellman Family
- Madeleine Mitchell and Jean Doeer by Kathi & Jim Mitchell
- Mark & Paula Ianni by Teri Ianni
- Ron Miscko by His Loving Family

Our annual Pentecost Picnic is coming up soon! Marston Park is reserved for Sunday, May 31st after the 10:15 service. There will be only one service on this Sunday, so everyone can join us at the park!

We plan to have our traditional fried chicken as the menu centerpiece and ask that you bring a complementing item to share. Lemonade, iced tea, and fruit juice will be provided. If you care to bring beer or wine, please do. If you have any dietary restrictions, please let us know.

We will have a more formal sign-up procedure, not only to determine how much chicken to order, but also to get a better cross section of appropriate food to accompany the chicken. We ask that, when you sign up, please review what others have committed to bring when deciding what you will contribute so we can have a good balance of sides, salads, and desserts.

We're counting on beautiful northeast Ohio weather to enjoy the park – the beautiful grounds, tennis, pickleball, and bocce courts, playground, and walking paths. And particularly to visit with St. Christopher friends.

If you haven't checked out our website, here is Fr. Gabriel's bio:

The Rev. Gabriel Michael Lawrence (he/him) joined St. Christopher by the River as priest in charge in 2026. Central to his ministry is building strong community grounded in the abundant love of God, fostering an ever-expanding openness and awareness to God's work the world, and creatively living into the reality of God making all things new

Originally from Nashville, Tennessee, Gabriel was raised in the Baptist and Pentecostal traditions. He was confirmed an Episcopalian in early adulthood and spent his first career as a musician. As an organist, pianist, composer, and singer, he has directed parish music ministry, operated a private piano studio, composed for various musical settings, and founded Savannah Beer and Hymns.

While living and working in the Diocese of Georgia, Gabriel discerned a call to the priesthood and earned a Master of Divinity from The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. He was ordained a priest in 2024 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. In addition to his parochial work, Gabriel serves on the Diocese of Ohio's Commission on Ministry, Diocesan Liturgical Commission, the board of United Protestant Campus Ministries (UPCaM), and is a graduate of the College for Congregational Development.

In addition to his work as a priest, Gabriel enjoys and finds God in running, cooking, gardening, hiking, musical theatre, and spending time with his dog- a cavalier king Charles spaniel also named Gabriel.

Food Pantry

Sandwiches and Spreads

- PB&J (preferably no glass)
- Honey
- Biscuit & Pancake Mixes
- Crackers
- Bread

You can drop off your donations in the basket in the narthex. All donations are taken to the Food Pantry at the Presbyterian Church in Chesterland.

SUNDAY MAY 3			MONDAY - 4	TUESDAY - 5	WEDNESDAY-6	THURSDAY-7	FRIDAY- 8	SATURDAY-9
	8 am Holy Eucharist	**10:15 am Holy Eucharist**		**OFFICE CLOSED**	10:00 Finance	10:00 DOK		**Vestry Retreat (Offsite)**
EM:	Kitty Thomas	John Irwin		9:00 Staff				
LECTOR:	Kathy Pender	Lucy Lytle & Courtney Schmidt						
ALTAR:	Sue Marston	Courtney Schmidt						
USHERS	NA	Brian Wright & Gabe Brachna						
HOSTESSES		Charlene Currutt				8:00 AA		

SUNDAY MAY 10			MONDAY - 11	TUESDAY - 12	WEDNESDAY-13	THURSDAY-14	FRIDAY- 15	SATURDAY-16
	8 am Holy Eucharist	**10:15 am Holy Eucharist**		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance			
EM:	Charley Marston	Hayley Kosmatka			10:00 Guild Board Meeting			
LECTOR:	Annette Lowe	Linda Sylor & Dixon Morgan						
ALTAR:	Sue Marston	Linda & Eric Sylor			11:30 Eucharist Visitors			
USHERS	NEEDED	Dixon Morgan & Alison Wolf				8:00 AA		
HOSTESSES		Lucy Lytle						

SUNDAY MAY 17			MONDAY - 18	TUESDAY - 19	WEDNESDAY-20	THURSDAY-21	FRIDAY- 22	SATURDAY-23
	8 am Holy Eucharist	**10:15 am Holy Eucharist**		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance			
EM:	**NEEDED**	James Gallagher		Father Gabriel at Clergy Conference				
LECTOR:	Teri Ianni	Chandler Everett & Judy Holmes						
ALTAR:	Teri Ianni	Renee Kolecki						
USHERS	NA	Leslie Marting & Judy Holmes				8:00 AA		
HOSTESSES		Kathy Pender						

SUNDAY MAY 24 - Pentecost			MONDAY - 25	TUESDAY - 26	WEDNESDAY-27	THURSDAY-28	FRIDAY- 29	SATURDAY-30
	8 am Holy Eucharist	**10:15 am Holy Eucharist**		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance			
EM:	Kitty Thomas	Brian Wright						
LECTOR:	Teri Ianni	Chandler Everett Sr.& Dixon Morgan						
ALTAR:	Patty Grebenc	Leslie Marting						
USHERS	NA	Ron Lee & Peter Thatcher				8:00 AA		
HOSTESSES		Neal Lee						

SUNDAY MAY 31 - Trinity			MONDAY - 1	TUESDAY - 2	WEDNESDAY-3	THURSDAY-4	FRIDAY- 5	SATURDAY-6
		10:15 am Holy Eucharist		9:00 Staff	10:00 Finance	**OFFICE CLOSED** Summer office hours start.		
EM:	ONE SERVICE	Hayley Kosmatka						
LECTOR:	ONE SERVICE	Fran Sarkisian & Ron Lee						
ALTAR:	Sally Conley	Neal Lee						
USHERS	NA	Ron & Neal Lee				8:00 AA		
HOSTESSES		PICNIC						

ST. CHRISTOPHER BY-THE-RIVER EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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The Rev. Gabriel Lawrence, Priest-in-Charge
440-745-3238
stchris.fathergabriel@gmail.com

Sunday Services
8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite I
10:15 AM Holy Eucharistic Rite II

Find our weekly worship on YouTube.

Parish Office
Mary Zup
Staffed T-W-TH 9:00-4:00
440-423-4451
stchrisbytheriver@gmail.com

MAY 2026 Newsletter

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