

Chimes

The Magazine of Gary United Methodist Church
September/October 2025



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Chimes VOLUME LXXIII, ISSUE V

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Sunday Worship

9 a.m.

In person

Livestream and recording
later in the day at garychurch.org

Nursery available

11:11 a.m.

In person

Nursery available

Church Office Hours

Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

630-668-3100

office@garychurch.org



At Gary Church, *our mission through Christ is to grow in joyful faith and serve all in love.*

On our cover

Hooray for Worship in the Park!

If you don't see yourself, go to page 5.

Submissions for the Nov./Dec. *Chimes* magazine are due by noon on Wednesday, Oct. 1. Announcements for the Sunday bulletin and weekly e-news are due each Monday at noon. Send all submissions to office@garychurch.org.

Gary Church uses photos and videos of adults taken at events, classes and worship for use in our printed and online publications and in social media unless an individual directs the church not to do so by completing a form available in the Church Office. We use photos or videos of minors only when their parents or guardians have given permission by signing the Gary Kids or Gary Youth registration forms, available at garychurch.org.

Love Courageously

1 Corinthians 16:14

**“Stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.
Let all that you do be done in love.”**



It seems appropriate that my final Chimes letter introducing this year's theme, "Love courageously," is based on the Apostle Paul's first letter, final message to the church in 1 Corinthians.

It is God's way of love, upon which I have wagered my life.

When I responded to God's call on my life as a teenager, I made a personal faith commitment rooted in an understanding of God's love for me. Not just God's love for the world, but for me—Chris. As I grew in faith, I became increasingly more aware of the much broader and inclusive understanding of God's love found in the Gospel of John, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). And, I became increasingly aware that to return that love to God is a lifelong commitment, not just a one-time decision.

When Jesus spoke of loving God, he said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-39).

Each time we think we have a grasp on "love," we find Christ's words, and the nudging of the Holy Spirit, beckoning us to expand our understanding of love, to expand our understanding of neighbor (Luke 10:29ff.). It oftentimes means loving people outside of our comfort zone, and even loving one's enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). This is what God's love looks like; it is love in action.

These texts, among others, have shaped how I have tried to live my life as a Christian, though I fail constantly. And they have formed my teaching and preaching throughout the years, though I have failed at that too.

To be clear, this is normative Christianity. It is central to the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is this love that led Jesus to his cross, that he might reconcile the world to God and us to one another. However, while this understanding of love is at the heart of our Christian faith, it is often rejected, even by the church. We find ways to create divisions, to draw circles smaller and tighter. When we do this, we choke off the very lifeblood of our faith.

It takes boldness, and courage to love God's way. God shows love to the evil and the good, the righteous and the unrighteous. Within God's love is also an understanding that God's love for us calls us to account. God's love is rooted in justice and is restorative. God's love is inseparable from God's mercy and grace. What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God (Micah 6:6-8).

Truth be told, I am not always courageous and strong. Everything I do, it's not done in love. I fail. We all do. Yet, I believe this is what God demands of us as Christians. It is increasingly difficult to "do everything in love," in our current culture of chaos and division that rewards partisanship, exclusion and individualism. Hate, it seems has a certain heft to it. While love, for too many, is seen as weak or ineffectual.

Yet, it is God's way of love, upon which I have wagered my life. While I have often failed, this understanding of love has never failed me. God has never failed me.

As I take my leave as senior pastor of Gary Church, I pray that you will be able to acknowledge my shortcomings and failures, as I do. I pray that you will strive to love courageously, even those who the world encourages us to hate. I pray that you will love with a holy boldness, a love that stretches you to grow more and more into that divine love of mercy and grace. I pray that you will not let our current climate of partisan politics divide you within the body of Christ. I pray that you will be gracious with one another. I pray that you will find a way to stand firm in the faith, yet with an attitude of theological humility. Let all that you do be done in love.

And now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

In Christ,

Christopher L. Pearson

Pastor Chris



SPRC update: *pastoral transition timeline & opportunities for input*

As we continue preparing for **Pastor Chris Pierson's** retirement, the Staff Parish Relations Committee wants to share updates about our transition timeline and how you can participate in shaping the future of pastoral leadership at Gary Church.

Pastor Chris's final Sunday

Pastor Chris's last Sunday in worship with us will be Sept. 14. We will have one service at 9 a.m. with a retirement celebration in honor of Pastor Chris at 10 a.m. If you would like to contribute to a love gift, go to garychurch.org or give through the Church Office.

Welcome Rev. Dr. Mary Zajac

The Rev. Dr. Mary Zajac will serve as a transitional senior pastor from Oct. 1 until July 2026. Be sure to introduce yourself to Pastor Mary, wear your nametag, and welcome her during this transition time. Watch the e-news for more details about her first days. The bishop and cabinet will appoint our next senior pastor to start on July 1, 2026.



Clarifying the appointment process

In alignment with long-standing practice in The United Methodist Church, associate pastors are not appointed as senior pastors within the same congregation. This tradition, rooted in the denomination's connectional system, is intended to support both the growth of pastors and the health of congregations.

Congregational input sessions

The SPRC will create a pastoral profile to help guide the bishop and cabinet in their discernment of our next senior pastor. The SPRC will host two congregational input sessions during the 10 a.m. hour on the following Sundays:

Sept. 28 & Oct. 5

The feedback you provide will help create the pastoral profile we will share with District Superintendent Rev. Wendy Hardin Hermann during the November Annual Conference meeting. While this profile will help inform and guide the bishop and cabinet, the final decision rests with them, not with the SPRC or the congregation.

If you're unable to attend either session or prefer to share your thoughts privately, please email us at GaryUMC2@gmail.com. We welcome your insight at any time throughout the process.

SPRC members

Dan Kehn (Chairperson), **Karen Binkerd**, **Kathy Novy**, **John Olson**, **Brooke Oswald**, **Lisa Rozwat**, **Cindy Plate**, **Katie Thomas**, **Andy Tobias**, **Elaine McCluskey** (Lay Leader)

We ask for your prayers, your trust and your participation during this time of transition. We move forward in faith, confident that God is already preparing both our hearts and our next pastoral leader for the future of Gary Church.

With gratitude and hope,

Dan Kehn

Chairperson, Staff Parish Relations Committee

Thank you, Kevin Lange!

Sunday, Aug. 31, 10 a.m., Commons

We've enjoyed **Kevin Lange's** organ and piano playing for seven years. Let's thank him for his music ministry with cake and fellowship in the Commons. If you'd like to contribute to a love gift, go to garychurch.org or give through the Church Office.



Special Sundays

Kickoff Sunday

Sept. 7

Worship at 9 a.m. and 11:11 a.m., plus Sunday School for all ages between services. Third graders and confirmands will receive Bibles at 9 a.m.



World Communion Sunday: Looking for Languages

Oct. 5, 9 a.m. and 11:11 a.m.

World Communion Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate the universal church that Christ opens to people of all ages, nations and races. To celebrate this day, we will read a short Scripture passage in a variety of world languages. If you are comfortable reading aloud in a language other than English, please let **Pastor Daniel Cochran** know at dochran@garychurch.org. All languages welcome!



Pet Blessing Sunday

Oct. 5, 3–4 p.m., Courtyard

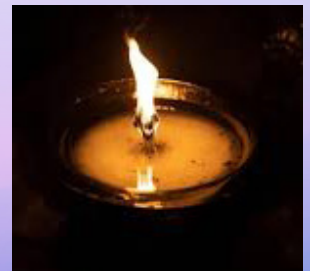
All people and their pets of all kinds (stuffed animals, too!) are invited to our annual “Blessing of the Animals” worship service.

The event will begin at 3 p.m. with prayer, Scripture and a brief reflection on our role as stewards in God’s good creation. After worship, **Pastor Daniel Cochran** will offer individual blessings for each pet until 4 p.m. (weather permitting).

All Saints’ Day Worship

Sunday, Nov. 2, 9 a.m. and 11:11 a.m.

All Saints’ Day is an annual worship tradition when we remember and celebrate the saints of the church who have called us to faith and helped us experience the love of God. Each service will feature a special liturgy providing an opportunity to name aloud and pray over your beloved saints, light candles in their honor and then partake in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, which we share with the “great cloud of witnesses.” If you will be unable to attend either service and have a name you would like to have read aloud, please email **Pastor Daniel Cochran**, dcochran@garychurch.org.



GARY CHURCH *makes a difference*

September is ESSE Support Month



Ecumenical Support Services for the Elderly (ESSE) provides adult day care options that promote the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of older adults and their families.

Gary Church members can help support ESSE during the month of September by volunteering for activities such as:

- Playing music (ESSE has a piano on site)
- Assisting staff with games, arts and craft projects
- Reading to guests
- Bringing your pet
- Showing slides/videos of your vacation trips
- Bringing younger children for a visit
- Providing 20 homemade treats

Sign up at the table in the Commons on Sunday, Aug. 31 or call the ESSE Wheaton/St. Paul Lutheran Church office at 630-260-3773 to schedule your activity. Contact **Jeff Mousseau** through the Church Office if you have questions.

Consider tutoring this school year

Tuesdays, 6-7 p.m., starting in late September

The tutoring ministry provides free one-on-one help with homework and basic English and math to elementary students. World Relief helps us to identify students in need. Please consider offering an hour of your week to help refugee children from our community. There is no tutoring experience required. The typical student in our program is relatively new to the country and dealing with social, academic and cultural challenges. Most need an adult in their life who is compassionate, patient, happy to see them and invested in their making a successful transition to life in their new country. We provide training, and we have some experienced educators to provide support as needed. Contact **Jeff Bray** through the Church Office if you are willing to help.



Underwear/socks/diapers drive a success

Our thanks to so many of the Gary Church family who supported our drive for DuPage Pads and the People's Resource Center. Because of your generosity, we were able to deliver 2.5 carloads of diapers and baby supplies to PRC for families in need. We also took a carload (five plus large boxes) of new underwear and socks for Pads clients.



Recycle Styrofoam

Sunday, Oct. 12, 8:45-10:30 a.m., South Driveway

Can you help with collection or driving duties? If so, please contact **Elaine McCluskey** through the Church Office. If you miss the date, feel free to drop off Styrofoam at Dart Container Corporation, 310 Evergreen Dr., North Aurora.



GARY CHURCH *makes a difference*

Inspiring the next generation

by Evan Jansen

Native American women face immense, interconnected challenges in education. Cultural, political and systemic barriers limit their representation in higher education to less than 1% of college enrollments. This reality makes success stories like Educate a Girl scholarship recipient Aaliyah Begay's worth celebrating.

Aaliyah, of Navajo/Santo Domingo Pueblo descent, is studying advertising at Columbia College Chicago. She is an outstanding scholar and an award-winning Indigenous dancer. The Begay Family Dance Company performed at Gary Church last October.

"To pursue this goal [a college education] is very empowering; it shows the world that the indigenous community is still here and we will become educated and we will do whatever it takes to educate the world."

– Aaliyah Begay

very empowering; it shows the world that the Indigenous community is still here, and we will become educated and do whatever it takes to educate the world," Aaliyah shared.

Being an Indigenous woman in college has come with unexpected pride and inspiration. Aaliyah explained, "People were so interested in me. I've actually become **more** passionate about my culture. I feel seen."

Driven by a mission "to empower girls and young women through scholarships, prayers and love", Gary Church has awarded scholarships to 22 girls and young women over the past five years — donating \$14,000 to support the program this year alone. To get involved in Educate a Girl, please contact mission co-chairs, **Judy Selby** or **Cathy Mousseau**. To donate to the scholarship fund, visit garychurch.org/give or send a check to the church.



Aaliyah recently attended South By Southwest (SXSW) with her college, a dream for any advertising student, which introduced her to a world of opportunity and inspiration. SXSW supports creative people through conferences and festivals that celebrate the convergence of tech, film, music, education and culture.

It's impossible to understate Aaliyah's passion for family and heritage. From her career in advertising to her promotion of cultural dance, music and art, Aaliyah's purpose is clear: to ensure Native Americans are educated, heard and seen.

"I'm not just doing it [college] for me, I'm doing it for my parents because that was their dream. Indigenous people don't have the same opportunities. To pursue this goal is



Gary Green Team launches

Although the Gary Green Team has just gotten started, several activities are already underway. At the Church Council meeting on Monday, Sept. 8, we will provide our evaluation of our first attempt at a zero-waste all-church picnic. We're working on a church energy audit to baseline our usage and target areas for potential improvements, and hope to have first results by the end of 2025. The team is investigating ways to connect with other United Methodist and like-minded groups for more ideas and synergy. This fall, we hope to help with a worship service highlighting care for all creation. Look for more updates in the *Chimes* and e-news.



Join a music ensemble

You are warmly invited to join in participating in worship through music this year – regardless of your skill level, past experience, age, identity or preference for different styles of music, there is room for you! If you have an idea for a solo or small group musical offering, please contact **Joshua Velez**, jvelez@garychurch.org. Anyone is welcome to join our musical ensembles, which rehearse at the times listed below:

Glory Ringers (handbells, 7th-12th grade): *Sundays, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.*

4:12 Youth Band (7th-12th grade): *Tuesdays, 6-6:45 p.m.*
(subject to change based on availability)

Good News Ringers (handbells, 3rd-6th grade): *Wednesdays, 5:30-6:15 p.m.*

Children's Choir (age 3-grade 5):

- Ages 3-kindergarten: *Wednesdays, 6-6:30 p.m.*
- Grades 1-5: *Wednesdays, 6:15-7 p.m.*

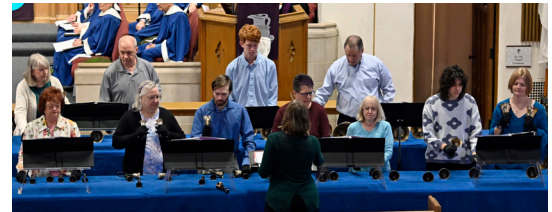
Altar Bells (handbells, high school-adult): *Wednesdays, 6:30-7:45 p.m.*

Collective Joy (praise band, high school-adult):
Thursdays, 6-7:20 p.m.

Chancel Choir (all voices, high school-adult): *Thursdays, 7:30-9 p.m.*

Men's Chorus (tenors and basses, high school-adult): *Saturdays, 9-10 a.m. (twice a month)*

Festival Choir (all voices, high school-adult): *Spring 2026, times and dates TBA*



For more information or to register, contact **Joshua Velez**, Director of Music, jvelez@garychurch.org. Registration for children's groups is available at garychurch.org/ministries/music.

FAMILY MUSIC adventure NIGHT

Wednesday, Sept. 10, 5:30 p.m., meet in Upper Level Lobby

Kids will explore different music stations – bells, instruments, singing and more – while parents learn about the theological and developmental importance of music for young people. All children age 3 through 6th grade and their families are welcome, and please bring your friends! Regular children's music programming begins *Wednesday, Sept. 17*. Contact **Joshua Velez**, jvelez@garychurch.org with any questions.

In Review: *Annual Conference*

Seven representatives from Gary Church joined **Pastor Daniel Cochran** at the 186th session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference (NIC) this summer, which revolved around the theme, “Grace is Sufficient.” The following report offers the compiled reflections of our representatives:

Our group was impressed by the diversity of our Conference and of the support in active ministry.

Bishop Dan Schwerin offered strong, calm and compassionate leadership – he was “the epitome of grace” (**Steve Novy**). We appreciated the efficiency and civility with which this year’s legislation was discussed. One piece of legislation which required more discussion from the Conference floor was the new formula for calculating apportionments. After some debate, a new simplified formula was adopted that will ask larger churches to pay more than smaller churches. Here are some of the other highlights of the conference:



- Bishop Oliveto, the first openly gay bishop in The UMC, delivered a reflection during the ordination service, challenging us to “offer our hands” in service.
- Bishop Schwerin’s Episcopal Address encouraged “experimentation in ministry,” willing to risk new initiatives as we walk in faith: he said, “Faith is the courage to let grace do its work.”
- Lay Leader Eugene Williams (retired Chicago police officer) offered the Lay Leader address, saying, “We as United Methodist know who we are and whose we are.”
- The Bible Study led by Dr. Reginald Blount focused on the theme, “Grace is not Plan B for when things go wrong. Grace IS the Plan!”
- Retiring Pastor Kyunghae Anna Shin advised the church to “love more; fear less.”

The overall feeling of this conference was that a burden had been lifted after years of divisiveness. We talked about our Methodist “connectionalism” with other churches and how we might enhance this relationship. One way is through serving on conference committees: there are openings for nominations to serve at the conference level on the new Creation Care committee as well as the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (see **Pastor Daniel Cochran** for more details.)

We hope that this report is a start to helping our church members know about the work being done throughout the Northern Illinois Conference. For more detailed information please see the 2025 Annual Conference homepage (<https://www.umcnic.org/ac2-25>).



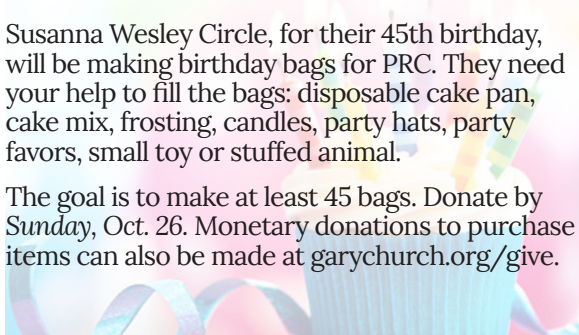
Report prepared by Karen Binkerd and Pastor Daniel Cochran
(photo of Gary Church’s representatives enjoying lunch)

Help make birthday celebrations happen

Imagine being a child and hearing about all the fun birthday celebrations your schoolmates have, only to realize that won’t be happening for you because your family can’t afford “extras.” At the People’s Resource Center, “birthday bags” make birthday parties happen. Imagine the look of joy on a child’s face when they see a cake made just for them.

Susanna Wesley Circle, for their 45th birthday, will be making birthday bags for PRC. They need your help to fill the bags: disposable cake pan, cake mix, frosting, candles, party hats, party favors, small toy or stuffed animal.

The goal is to make at least 45 bags. Donate by **Sunday, Oct. 26**. Monetary donations to purchase items can also be made at garychurch.org/give.



Donate/sign up for college care gifts

If you know of a college student who would love a pick-me-up from Gary Church this semester, please share their name and address on the registration page at garychurch.org by **Friday, Oct. 10**. And, if you’d like to donate money toward the cost of goodies and postage, please go to garychurch.org/give or contact the Church Office.



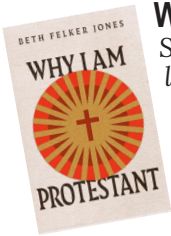
ADULT Christian Education and Discipleship

Sunday adult education

Adult Christian Education Ministry Fair

Sunday, Sept. 7, 10 a.m., Anderson Room

See the new adult Christian education space and learn about the many ministries for adults offered this fall.



Why I Am Protestant

Sundays, Sept. 21, 28, and Oct. 5, 10:10 a.m., Anderson Room

led by Dr. Beth Felker Jones

In her new book, *Why I Am Protestant*, author and theologian Dr. Beth Felker Jones asks, “What does it mean to be Protestant? How can its strengths shape faith in the modern world, and how should its challenges be addressed?” Plus, participants won’t want to miss Beth’s book launch and signing on Sept. 28.



On Christian Nationalism: A Contemporary Movement Running Through Churches, Government and Society

Sundays, Oct. 12 - Nov. 2, 10:10 a.m., Anderson Room, led by Dr. Gene Green and Dr. Michael Graves

Christian Nationalism has been defined as “a political ideology that seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America’s constitutional democracy.” This study will explore the contours of Christian Nationalism in the light of Scripture, theology, Christian history and current events.



Save-the-Date for Christian Nationalism Today: Dangerous Ideas, Dangerous Leaders and Dangerous Agendas

Wed. Nov. 5, 7 p.m.,

Hear from Christian scholar and best-selling author Matthew D. Taylor. Taylor is a leading expert on Christian Nationalism and author of *The Violent Take It By Force: The Christian Movement That Is Threatening Our Democracy*.

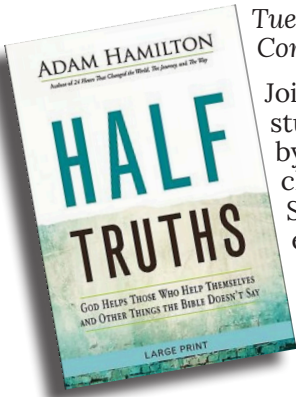


ADULT

Christian Education and Discipleship

Weekday ministries

Devotional Study Group *Half Truths*



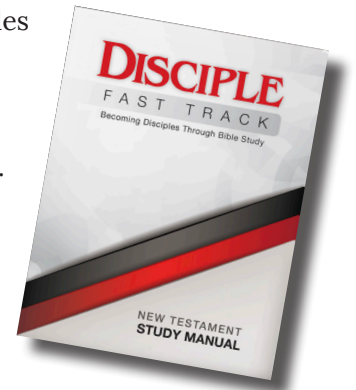
Tuesdays, 10 a.m., starting Sept. 9
Commons A, led by Allen Reed

Join Adam Hamilton in this Bible study to search for the whole truth by comparing common Christian clichés with the wisdom found in Scripture. The clichés include: Everything happens for a reason. God helps those who help themselves. God won't give you more than you can handle. God said it, I believe it, that settles it. Love the sinner, hate the sin. Contact **Allen Reed** through the Church Office for more information.

Disciple Fast Track: *Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*

Tuesdays, 7 p.m. starting Sept. 23, Heritage Room
led by the Rev. Dr. Jamie Hanna Williams

Disciple Fast Track provides a great way for busy people to get to know much of the Bible and grow in faith together with conversation and community. The group will meet for two 12-week, 90-minute sessions. Each Disciple Fast Track session will be based on weekly reading, engaging videos and thoughtful discussion. We will end before Holy Week with a fellowship meal and Holy Communion. Register at garychurch.org.



Men's Bible Study

Parables: Putting Jesus's Stories in Their Place

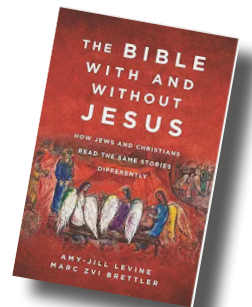
Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., Sept. 9–Oct. 14
Anderson Room led by Steve Novy

This book, by Josh Scott, explores six parables that give us a window into Jesus's message and movement, and, once they are heard in their own context, ask what they might mean for us today. Contact **Steve Novy** through the Church Office to learn more.

The Bible with and Without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently

Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., Oct. 21–Nov. 25
Anderson Room, led by Steve Novy

Esteemed Bible scholars and teachers Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Z. Brettler take readers on a guided tour of the most popular Hebrew Bible passages quoted in the New Testament to show what the texts meant in their original contexts and then how Jews and Christians, over time, understood those same texts. Contact **Steve Novy** through the Church Office to learn more.



Women's Bible Study: Understanding the Old Testament

Wednesdays, 2 p.m., starting Sept. 10, led by Holly Trueblood

Take a fresh and eye-opening look at one of Western civilization's most fundamental texts, and learn to decipher and interpret the meanings of this world-shaping collection of books of the Bible in the Old Testament. Featuring scholarly lectures and insights, this Great Courses series is sure to help even the most studied Bible student understand the Old Testament better. Contact **Holly Trueblood** through the Church Office to learn more.



United Women in Faith Circles



United
Women
in Faith

- **Joy Circle**, starting Tuesday, Sept. 16, 6:30 p.m., Commons
- **Mary Martha Circle**, starting Saturday, Sept. 13, 9:30 a.m., Commons
- **Susanna Wesley Circle**, starting Tuesday, Sept. 23, 6:30 p.m., Carol's Garden Restaurant, RSVP to the Church Office, office@garychurch.org
- **Knitters & Stitchers**, second and fourth Thursdays, 2 p.m., Commons

To learn more about women's circles, contact the Church Office, office@garychurch.org.

creative arts ministry

Creative Arts: Plein Air Watercolor Painting

Saturday, Sept. 13, 10-11:30 a.m., Adams Park
led by Pam Keller

All are welcome to join us for a session of plein air ("open air") watercolor painting. Watercolor paints, canvas, brushes and containers will be provided. Please bring a camping chair. In inclement weather, please bring an image of a favorite landscape to paint inside. Register at garychurch.org.



Creative Arts: Pottery

Saturday, Nov. 1, 10 a.m., led by Lisa Grigsby

Let's make pottery!

Register at garychurch.org.

Save the dates for future Creative Arts classes:
Saturdays, Dec. 6, Feb. 7 and May 2

Young Adult Pastor's Lunch

Sundays, Sept. 21 & Oct. 26, 12:10 p.m.
meet at Door 5

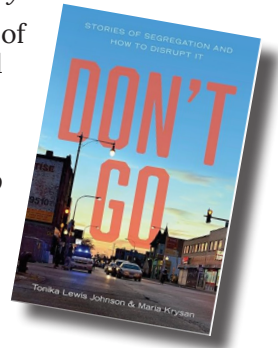
Each month, our "post-High School/ college/ early on in adulthood/ probably in your 20s or 30s" adults are invited to join **Pastor Dan Lee** for lunch in downtown Wheaton on the last Sunday of the month. Our treat! We will meet at Door 5 and go out for lunch and fellowship. RSVP to **Pastor Dan** at dlee@garychurch.org or just come!

Anti-Racist Book Club

Don't Go: Stories of Segregation and How to Disrupt It

by Tonika Lewis Johnson and Maria Krysan
Wednesdays, Sept. 24 & Oct. 22, 7 p.m.
Commons, led by Elaine McCluskey

By inviting readers into the lives of regular people who have ignored the warning to stay away from 'don't go' neighborhoods or who live in those very same neighborhoods, the stories in *Don't Go* illuminate the consequences of racial segregation and disinvestment as well as the rewards of coming together. Purchase the book on your own and join the conversation by registering at garychurch.org.



RSVP for men's breakfast

Saturday, Sept. 13, 7:30 a.m.
Egg'lectic Cafe
145 N. Hale Street, Wheaton

All Gary Church men are invited to join. RSVP to **Steve Novy** through the Church Office, office@garychurch.org.

Sign up for men's pickleball

Mondays, 7 p.m., starting Sept. 8
Activity Center

Let's get together for some fellowship, laughs and a little bit of exercise. We'll set up two courts in the gym and rotate through positions. No experience necessary. Bring your own pickleball racquet and ball. Sign up at garychurch.org. Contact **Mark Mathis** through the Church Office for more information.





2026 Stewardship campaign

Stewardship is a belief that we are responsible for using our gifts and resources we have been given in a way that honors God. At Gary Church, this comes in many forms: tithing regularly, teaching a class, serving as an usher, making care cards, singing in a choir, ringing a bell, baking for Special Blend, supporting a mission,... and with the breadth and depth of varied gifts we each have, the list goes on.

This October, we will highlight stewardship and how we can use our gifts to love courageously. For an early look, go to the registrations page of garychurch.org and click on the following links:

- “Get Connected” – highlights ways you can share your spiritual gifts and physical talents. If you see an area of interest, be sure to complete the form so we can help you grow in joyful faith and serve all in love.
- “Stewardship Campaign: Love Courageously” – provides an opportunity to pledge your resources to support the mission and ministry of Gary Church for the 2026 fiscal year in an online manner. There will also be an opportunity to submit a paper form.

Giving update

If at any time you would like to look at your current giving for the year, you have several options:

From your computer (allows for printing statements):

At garychurch.org, click on “Resources” and then “Membership Portal.” This will take you to the login for ShelbyNext, our membership database. Enter your login information (if you do not have this, please request it from the Church Office). From the menu, click on “My Giving.” This page provides your full history. If you would like to view or print your statement, simply click “Statement” at the top of the page and select the desired parameters (i.e. year to date or last quarter), and it will download.

From the church app:

You can view your giving using the app: Church by MinistryOne. Download the app. Log in under the “Profile” feature. Once logged in, click “Giving” and then “History” to view your gifts to date.

If you have questions, contact the Church Office.

Reminder to update your forms

We have updated forms to be completed for the 2025-2026 ministry year:

- Safe sanctuaries covenant – to be completed by all volunteers who interact with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Gary Kids & Gary Youth Participation Form 2025-2026 – to be completed by all families participating in kids or youth activities.

You can find both of these forms at garychurch.org.



Gary Youth

Weekly Gathering

We play games and engage the Bible using theme-based discussions.

Middle School

Wednesdays, 7-8:30 p.m., starting Sept. 3

No meetings: Wednesdays, Sept. 24 & Oct. 29

High School

Sundays, 6-7:30 p.m., starting Sept. 7

No meetings: Sundays, Sept. 28 & Oct. 26

Sunday School

10-11 a.m., Middle School and High School Rooms

No Sunday School classes on Sept. 14 (Celebrating Pastor Chris) and Sept. 28 (Fall Retreat).

Save the dates

Visit the youth page of garychurch.org to learn about special events throughout the year.



Stay connected

Visit garychurch.org and navigate to our youth page, receive weekly Gary Youth emails, plus follow us on Instagram ([gary_youth](https://www.instagram.com/gary_youth)) and Facebook (Gary Youth).

What are we learning in September?

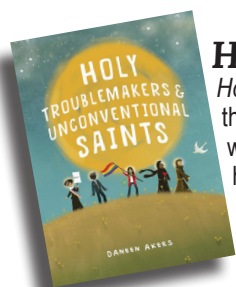


We will explore how to build strong, godly friendships by showing up for each other, working through conflict, encouraging one another and sticking together through every season.

What are we learning in October?



We'll explore how God meets us in our pain and brings light to guide us through.



Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints by Daneen Akers

Holy Troublemakers and Unconventional Saints is a book filled with stories of imperfect people whose faith inspired them to work for love, compassion and justice in their part of the world and time. It took courage to use their faith to work for the good of all people. During the 2025-2026 program year, Gary Youth will be learning about one of these holy troublemakers each month during our *Wednesday* and *Sunday* night youth group.

Gary Youth Participation Form 2025-2026

Each year, parents and guardians are required to complete a form for their children to participate in Gary Youth activities. Scan the QR code (on pg. 15) or go to garychurch.org to fill out the form.

Special events

Soft Serve Soft Start

Wednesday, Sept. 3, 6-7:30 p.m.



All Gary Youth, middle and high school, are invited to meet at Dairy Queen in downtown Wheaton for a delicious treat! Parents are welcome to stay to meet other parents and adult leaders.

Mission Trip 2026 Informational Meeting

Sunday, Sept. 14, 6-7:30 p.m., Youth Rooms

Learn all about next summer's mission trip. Youth and adults are invited to attend the 2026 mission trip presentation. Youth must have completed 8th grade before the summer of the mission trip.

Fall Retreat 2025: In Rhythm

Friday, Sept. 26, 5 p.m. - Sunday, Sept. 28, 1 p.m.

Registration closes Sept. 1

Come to the fall retreat as we learn and experience what it means to live in rhythm with Jesus. At Lutherdale Conference and Retreat Center, we will be playing and worshipping with other youth groups from the Northern Illinois Conference. Scan the QR code or go to garychurch.org to see our slide show from 2024 and register! (Gary Church is in the Prairie Central District.)

Halloween Party

Wednesday, Oct. 22, 7-8:30 p.m.

Middle School Gary Youth are invited to a whimsical Halloween-themed pizza party! Come wearing your costumes and bring your favorite bag of candy to add to our candy salad. Let us know you are coming using the QR code.



Mystery Dinner

Sunday, Oct. 19, 6-7:30 p.m., meet in Youth Rooms

High School Gary Youth are invited to wear their Halloween costumes and come hungry as

we open a cold unsolved murder mystery file. Dinner will be provided by the **Castino** family! Let us know you are coming using the QR code.

Looking back

Let's take a look at some of the fun we've had over the summer!

Jump! BLAST Camp

At Jump! BLAST Camp, we learned to jump into loving our neighbors, jump at every opportunity to use our gifts, jump at every occasion to spend time with others and jump at the chance to invite others to the party. Thank you to all the adults, youth crew leaders and partnering organizations for making this year's BLAST camp a safe and hospitable place for all of our campers!



Summer Mission Trip

Our Gary Youth mission team traveled to Perry County, Kentucky to make homes safer, warmer and drier for neighbors in need through the Appalachia Service Project (ASP). We repaired floors, walls, a ceiling and a roof of a home damaged by flooding. We are so grateful for the opportunity to laugh, learn and serve together in mission. Gary Church, thank you for your prayers and support that made this trip possible.



Word & Table needs you

Once a month, high school Gary Youth meet at someone's home for dinner, games and discussion. All we need is space and dinner. Can we come to your house? Let **Pastor Dan Lee** know at dlee@garychurch.org. Addresses will be shared through text closer to the gathering date.

Let us know

We want to celebrate your gifts! If you have a concert, game, exhibit, ceremony, party, etc. visit the Gary Youth page at garychurch.org and let us know. We will do our best to attend to cheer you on!



Gary Youth QR codes



Participation Form



Fall Retreat



Halloween



Mystery dinner

Hey Parents!

A new season is upon us. As you gear up for back-to-school events and fall activities, we pray you'll take a moment to give thanks for the gifts summer gave you and your family before welcoming autumn's blessing. (This is best done with a pumpkin spice latte in hand.) Blessings and see you Sunday!

what we're teaching

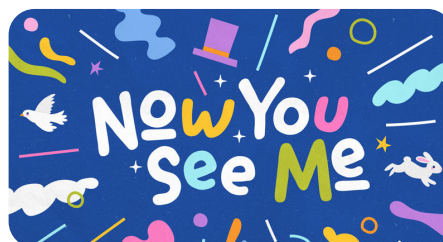
September Series: **IN SEASON**

Each season — fall, winter, spring and summer brings something unique and wonderful. From leaves changing colors to flowers blooming or animals hibernating, the changing seasons remind us that no matter what, God is with us through it all. In September, kids will discover how we can respond to God in every season of life. They'll learn that **God's words are always in season, God leads us in every season, God hears us no matter the season and we can thank God for every season.**



October Series: **NOW YOU SEE ME**

Magic tricks and illusions have a way of sparking wonder and curiosity. But long before today's magicians, Daniel and his friends stood out during the Babylonian exile. They were wiser than the magicians and astrologers of their time because they looked to God for wisdom. Through their brave actions and wise choices, they showed God's power to everyone around them — no tricks needed! In October, kids will learn that **God helps us choose wisely, God is ready to rescue us, God's words show us what to do, and our courage can help others see God.**



what's happening

Kickoff Sunday

Sunday, Sept. 7

Calling all Gary Kids, preschool 3s through fifth grade: We are opening classes and returning to 10 a.m. Sunday School! Be sure to complete a Gary Kids registration form at garychurch.org and join us each week to grow in faith.

Family Music Adventure Night

Wednesday, Sept. 10, 5:30 p.m.

Kids will explore different music stations — bells, instruments, singing and more — while parents learn about the theological and developmental importance of music for young people. See page 8 for more details

Wednesday night children's music

Wednesdays, starting Sept. 17

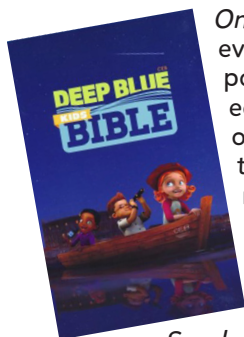
All Gary Kids are invited to grow in faith and serve in love through the music ministry!

- Good News Ringers (grades 3–6) 5:30–6:15 p.m.
- Friendship Singers (ages preschool 3s through fifth grade): 6–7 p.m.
 - o Preschool through first grade, 6–6:30 p.m.
 - o Second through fifth grade, 6:15–7 p.m., see page 8.



Third Grade Bible

Sundays, Sept. 7–Nov. 16, 10 a.m. during Sunday School, Gamon Hall



On Sunday, Sept. 7, Gary Church will give every third grader a Bible. This is an important event in a child's Christian education journey, as well as the life of our church. With the presentation of these Bibles, we pray children come to realize more fully the importance of the Bible as an integral part of their life. To help students become more familiar with their new Bible, a third grade Bible class will be taught during the 10 a.m.

Sunday school hour with a special group presentation at 9 a.m. worship on Nov. 16.

Parent's Night Out

Fridays, Sept. 12 & Oct. 10, 6:30–8:30 p.m. Lower Level

Drop off your kiddos at Gary Church and enjoy some well-deserved time away. Each month features a movie, craft and free play for kids ages preschool 3s through fifth grade.

In *September*, we'll watch *Big Hero 6*, a not-so-subtle story about a sacrificial love that saves, and in *October* we'll enjoy *Wreck It Ralph* which focuses on self-worth, acceptance and the importance of friendship.

Suggested cash donation of \$5 per child. Register at garychurch.org.

Wednesday night child care

Wednesdays, 5:30–7 p.m., starting Sept. 17 Lower Level

Wednesday night child care is offered for children preschool 3s through fifth grade. This supervised playtime is available for families with children in choir and/or parents seeking childcare during class meetings or small group studies.

Kickoff Party

Friday, Sept. 19, 6:30–8:30 p.m. meet at Door 5

Fourth and fifth graders are invited to kick-off a new year with a scavenger hunt through downtown Wheaton and ice cream at Kimmer's!

Abbey Farms Pumpkin Daze

Saturday, Oct. 11, 10 a.m.–12 p.m., meet at Abbey Farms, 2855 Hart Rd., Aurora, IL

Let's step away from modern life and make new memories with church friends! Packed with activities on a 40-acre farm, Pumpkin Daze has everything needed for a day of adventure.

RSVP to **Pastor Carey Williams Bebar** at cbebar@garychurch.org.



Helping Hands | Red Bird Mission

Sunday, Sept. 28, during 9 a.m. worship, Lower Level

Founded in 1921 in the southeastern corner of Kentucky, Red Bird School provides education to children in one of the most economically-challenged places in the nation. Kids will learn about this important mission, supported by the Northern Illinois Conference, and make crafts that will be sold for a fundraiser.



"Gather at the Table"

A Messy Church Special Event on Holy Communion

Sunday, Oct. 5, 10 a.m., Lower Level

Messy Church is a new ministry for Gary Kids families! Enjoyed quarterly, Messy Church Special Events invites kids and parents alike to join in experiencing fun and faith-formative activities. Founded by a United Methodist pastor and used throughout the globe, this engaging curriculum is based on the values of all-ages together, celebration, creativity, hospitality and centering ourselves in Christ Jesus.

Offered on World Communion Sunday, "Gather at the Table" will help participants learn about Holy Communion with activities that explore the mystery of Christ's mighty works of salvation and celebrate the love of Jesus poured out for us all.



Trunk or Treat

Saturday, Oct. 25, 10-12 p.m., Parking Lot

Trunk or Treat offers radical hospitality to our community neighbors and creates lasting memories for all involved. Last year we saw over 1,000 people, which means we need many hands to make this event spook-tacular. Join in the fun by decorating a trunk, being a general volunteer or donating candy. And be sure to invite your kids, grandkids and neighbors to this fun community outreach event! Register to volunteer at garychurch.org.



Family Camp was so much fun!

This summer, 12 families traveled to Pine Lake United Methodist Camp in Wisconsin for a special weekend of fellowship, faith and fun.



September birthdays*

Happy (90+) birthday to:

Charlotte Murphy

October birthdays*

Happy (90+) birthday to:

Jim Carsten

Sally Hill

Joan Zarembski

September anniversaries*

Happy (50+) anniversary to:

Bob & Carol Barnes

Bob & Diane Martin

John & Donna Hamilton

October anniversaries*

Happy (50+) anniversary to:

Reg & Barbara Heeley

George & Rose King

Congratulations

Dan and Suzy Wible on the birth of their granddaughter, Charlotte, on July 11.

Deb Connor on the birth of her grandson, Louis William Connor on July 25.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who signed the lovely card I got yesterday. July has been a tough month for some reason, and I am glad to see it ending. My mail is usually 6 to 10 solicitations for donations, or bills, so when I opened the card from my Gary Church family it was a welcome change! I am so blessed to be a part of that family. You all stay well and as happy as possible.

Love,

Lorrie Brand

Dear Gary Church,

Thanks be to Gary, for thinking of me...

Thanks be to people, who so agree...

That what we receive...

is from...

A heavenly THEE!!

Gratefully,

Sally Hill

Our sympathy

The family of Anna Patch. Anna passed away on June 22.

Mike, Brooke, Luke and Drew Oswald on the death of Mike's mother, Judy Oswald, on June 23.

Virginia Blackwell and the Keske family on the death of Virginia's brother, Stan Doctor, on June 29.

Jeff, Kim, Connor and Hannah Shrigley on the death of Kim's father, Robert Wilson, on July 10.

Steve and Nancy Conger on the death of Steve's aunt, Doris.

Kelsey, Evan, Abel and Oda Jansen and John Tharnstrom on the death of John's wife and Kelsey's mother, Sarah Tharnstrom on Aug. 2.

The Keske Family on the death of Marty's aunt, Clare Stadler, on Aug. 9.

Baptism

Kobe and Kaleb Kifer, sons of Stacey Kifer, on July 8.

Ava Andrisevic, daughter of James and Kathryn Andrisevic, on Aug. 3.

New Opportunities

Steve & Carla Lovett on their move to Costa Rica.

*If we've missed your special day, please contact the Church Office. We'd love to include the date in our records.



See page 18 for details