

What the Side Door Knows

Some doors of the church stick a little this time of year. Humidity does something to the frame, and by September you have to lean into it, putting a force to it first, before it gives. It's something you get use to. When it happens, it reminds me we are a church and not a museum.

I like doors like this probably more than I should. You know they have been opened and closed by a lot of hands over a lot of years — hands with keys or now key fobs, small hands reaching up because the handle sits a little high for a six-year-old, hands too full of a casserole dish to manage, and at least once, according to church lore, a few unsightly words when somebody forgot their key, in the pastor's office, altogether. None of those hands ever needed permission. That's just how the door works.

The metaphor's a little intentional. Almost nobody arrives at faith through the tidy front entrance — the version where somebody wakes up one morning and simply decides to try church. Most people come in sideways or *sattweis*.

A friend who wouldn't quit inviting them.
A funeral that left them needing somewhere to sit with it.
A rough year with nowhere else to land.

The side door is where the actual traffic has always been, whatever the church LED sign out front might suggest.

September has a way of pulling people back toward each other. Choir starts rehearsing again. Somewhere in the office there's a photograph shows up from a confirmation class decades back, and I'd guess at least two faces in it are still sitting in roughly the same pews. A congregation carries that kind of memory in its bones, whether or not anyone bothers to write it down.

I knew a man, many years ago, whose name was Alllison. Everyone called him Al. He was the guy who used to arrive before sunrise to get the sanctuary ready — heat on, candles trimmed — long before anyone else showed up for the day. I loved that man. I didn't know him in his prime but he was a lovely, unassuming man, who simply did the

“gremlin-like” things for the church and, for those little things, he was consider a saint of that congregation until the day he died. Stories like these have a way of outlasting the people in them and about them, maybe you know people like this, maybe you are a person like this to someone else – and something of that kind of faithfulness is apparently still doing work in people.

A family, if the word means anything beyond the people you happen to share a last name with, gets built out of exactly that kind of unglamorous persistence. Showing up on the ordinary Sundays. Bringing snacks, filling candles, wiping fingerprints off the glass doors, having the bushes trimmed and not telling anyone, and, more than that, an unfamiliar face in the pew ahead of you, watching how you and your family show up, week after week, and quietly deciding whether it's safe to come back. It would be simpler, in a purely logistical sense, to lock up and keep aal the good stuff for the people already inside.

We don't do that here. We haven't for a very long time.

There's a particular kind of calm that comes from being part of something older than your own week — something that was here before your worries showed up and will likely still be here after they've worked themselves out, one way or another.

I personally feel it most on the Sundays with nothing special going on. No choir, no special thing after church, watching people; thinking about how many have gathered and are gathering around the same table their grandparents gathered around, saying more or less the same words.

So as the season turns and the routines settle back in, take a minute to notice what's actually underneath all of it — choir practice, committee meetings, coffee hour, whole ordinary machinery of church life. Ask what's really holding it up.

My guess: it has less to do with any single program than with a center that's held steady since long before any of us arrived, and enough people who simply never stopped showing up around it. Keep your Sundays open. The door is open and there is a place for y’all at the table.



UPCOMING DATES

- September 10 - Choir begins
- September 13 - Introduction to Confirmation 2026-2027
- September 13 - Calendar of Concern - Connections Work
- September 20 - First Day of Sunday School
- October 4 - Table Talk

WORSHIP IN SEPTEMBER

All Services at 9:00 AM ✠ Sunday School follows Children's Sermon

CAN'T MAKE IT SUNDAY MORNING IN PERSON?

Worship with us LIVE or later — Sunday through Saturday — on YouTube! **https://www.youtube.com/@christmertz/streams**

Sept 6 - Service of Holy Communion

15th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Ezekiel 33.7-11; Psalm 119.33-40
Romans 13.8-14; Matthew 18.15-20

Serving:

Reader: Sherry Rogers
Usher: Bonny Mensch
Altar Guild: Mike and Joan Richards
Communion: Faye Strachan, Sue Smith
Greeter: Grace Bohn, Deb Adam
Council: Craig Kemp, LuAnn Umberger

Sept 13 - Service of the Word

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Genesis 50.15-21; Psalm 103.1-13
Romans 14.1-12; Matthew 18.21-35

Serving:

Reader: Lori Stoudt
Usher: Kathy Greiss
Greeter: Denise Williams, Lauren Mills
Council: Craig Kemp, LuAnn Umberger

Sept 20 - Service of Holy Communion

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Jonah 3.10--4.11; Psalm 145.1-8
Philippians 1.21-30; Matthew 20.1-16

Serving:

Reader: Margie Miller
Usher: Linda Hilbert
Altar Guild: Tom and Ann Heinly
Communion: Bill Koch, Art Kayhart
Greeter: Tara Basta, Grace Bohn
Council: Craig Kemp, LuAnn Umberger

Sept 27 - Service of the Word

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Ezekiel 18.1-4, 25-32; Psalm 25.1-9
Philippians 2.1-13; Matthew 21.23-32

Serving:

Reader: Regina Sanders
Acolyte: Lincoln Herman
Usher: Debbie Reitenauer
Greeter: Mike Richards, Tracey DeLong
Council: Bob Wolf, Kathy Greiss



Recent Worship Attendance

August 2026

Date	In-Person	Online
08/02/2026	90	48
08/09/2026	149	72
08/16/2026	134	86
08/23/2026	125	59
08/30/2026	90	

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sept 1	Jody Kemp
Sept 2	Delayna Grim
Sept 3	Sandy Frederick
Sept 4	Carla Flemming
Sept 5	Chase Franks
	Emma Deitrich
Sept 7	Joan Richards
Sept 8	Liz Kemner
	Elena Welsh
	Palmer Poticher
	Dylan Powers
Sept 10	Thomas Arthur
Sept 11	Diane Behm
	Matthew Reitenauer
Sept 13	Sherry Rogers
	Grace Potteiger
	Avery Potteiger
Sept 14	Norman Sunday
	Callie Rohde
Sept 15	Kevin Reinert
Sept 17	Josef Winkler, Sr
	Ian Greiss
	Ben Shreve
	Vivian Womack
Sept 18	Warren Rohde
	Erin Umberger
	Rowan Milne
Sept 19	Roy Adams
	Stephen Heffner
	Aubree Lutz
Sept 20	Sarah Hohl
	Sue Gabel
Sept 21	Barbara Scicchitano
	Charlotte Ronco
Sept 22	Jeanette Winkler
Sept 23	Van Frederick
	Dylan Ream
Sept 24	Chris Markey
	Heather Dietrich
Sept 27	Pastor Martin Milne

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Continued

Sept 28	Bonnie Lombardi
Sept 29	Kristin Poticher
	Nicholas Winkler
Sept 30	Tom Guldin
	Sandra Frederick
	Nicholas DeLong
	Cassandra Peck

GIVING *at a glance*

	May 2026	May 2025
Income	**$26,673**	**$25,565**
Expense	**$30,049**	**$27,791**
Difference	**($3,376)**	**($2,226)**

BECOME A *Member*

We welcome your participation in Christ Mertz's active and loving community of faith.

If you have questions about membership or joining church, contact Pastor Milne @ mamilne@gmail.com or 484.505.0987 (call or text) or christ@christmertz.org or call 610.682.7664.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

September 2026

Sept 5	Kathryn and Ray Deeter
Sept 6	Debra and David Hoch
Sept 10	Stacey and Brian Peifer
Sept 12	Rochelle and Timothy Miller
Sept 13	Katie and Stephen Zuber
Sept 16	Sue and Bill Koch
Sept 25	Jeanette and John Tomasi
Sept 27	Susan and Dwayne Scheidt
	Stephanie and Craig Ronco
	Marcus and Heather Wicke
Sept 28	Karen and Kevin Winegardner
Sept 30	Bonny and Scott Mensch
	Melissa and Keith Houptley







Opportunity House Volunteers Needed

We have been scheduled to serve again for the following dates: **September 22, October 20, November 17 and December 15**, and we are looking for 4–6 volunteers to help.

Responsibilities include shopping, preparing, and serving a simple meal (fruit, pancakes, and sausage) with a total cost under $100. Receipts can be submitted for reimbursement or counted toward your giving.

Good news—there's no cleanup required, as residents take care of that, and any leftover food will remain on site. You'll be finished by 9:00 AM.

If you're interested or would like more information, please see LuAnn Umberger at 610.780.2056





Connections Work

Beginning **Sunday, August 30th**, we will be collecting hygiene items to support Connections Work, an organization that assists individuals as they return to the community and work toward rebuilding their lives.

A collection box will be located in the church lobby. We are currently collecting

Shampoo	**Conditioner**	**Bar soap**	**Wet Wipes**
Toothbrush	**Combs**	**Washcloths**	**Deodorant**
Socks	**Razors**	**Shaving cream**	**Feminine products**

Even the simplest everyday necessities can make a meaningful difference for someone working toward a fresh start. Thank you for helping us support this important ministry in our community.

Lori Stoudt will speak during worship on **Sunday, September 13** to share more about Connections Work and the work they do.

If you have any questions, please see Lori Stoudt.



Join us for JONAH at Sight & Sound!

We're planning a group trip to Sight & Sound Theater to see Jonah on Saturday, April 24, with a 3:00PM showtime.

Tickets are $87 per person, and we have 40 tickets available. Tickets will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis, so be sure to sign up early!

Call the office 610.682.7664 or sign up on the bulletin board to reserve your tickets.






LEARN!
GROW!
SHINE!
BEGINS SEPTEMBER 20TH!
SUNDAY SCHOOL
FAITH, FRIENDS & FUN!


YOU'RE INVITED TO
Confirmation
PARENT MEETING
Sunday, September 13
— AFTER WORSHIP —
FIRST DAY OF
Confirmation
Sunday, September 20


TABLE TALK
Cook together. Eat together.
Grow together.
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4
5:00PM - 7:00PM


TWO FUN EVENTS. ONE AMAZING WEEKEND!
GLOW UP PARTY
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17
GLOW WITH US!
TRUNK OR TREAT
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18
CANDY, COSTUMES & COMMUNITY FUN!





NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDRAISERS

Panda Express Fundraiser Support Christ Church Children's Center!



Wednesday, September 16

10:30 AM – 10:30 PM

Panda Express in Muhlenberg
(4240 North 5th Street Highway)

★ Use the flyer included in the Newsletter

DONATIONS NEEDED

Help Us Start September Off Right!

As we begin a new school year, we're asking for your help to stock our classrooms with the supplies our children and teachers need to learn, grow, and succeed.

Thank you to our families and community for your continued generosity and support of CCCC! Here are a few supplies we need this September.



How Can You Help?

Donations can be put in the CCCC Box at the Coat Racks or email mikearndt@aol.com.

CCCC ONLINE SILENT AUCTION

SILENT AUCTION BEGINS SEPTEMBER 17

Watch CCCC's Social Media Account for Daily Basket Reveals

Get ready to bid and support a great cause! Your participation helps Christ Church Children's Center provide a nurturing environment where children learn, grow, and thrive.

September 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3 10:00AM Bible Study 7:00PM Bible Study	4	5
6 Holy Communion 15th Sunday after Pentecost 9:00AM Worship Service 2PM SOCIAL HALL USE	7  LABOR DAY OFFICE CLOSED	8	9	10 10:00AM Bible Study 6:30PM Choir 7:00PM Bible Study	11	12
13 Service of the Word CALENDAR OF CONCERN 16th Sunday after Pentecost 9:00AM Worship Service 10:15AM Intro to Confirmation	14 5:30PM Finance	15	16	17 10:00AM Bible Study 12:00PM Lunch Bunch 6:30PM Choir 7:00PM Bible Study	18	19 9:30AM Oley Fair
20 Holy Communion 17th Sunday after Pentecost 9:00AM Worship Service 9:15AM (1ST DAY) Sunday School 10:15AM Confirmation	21 7:00AM Council	22 5:30AM CCCC CPR classes	23	24 10:00AM Bible Study 6:30PM Choir 7:00PM Bible Study	25	26
27 Service of the Word 18th Sunday after Pentecost 9:00AM Worship Service 9:15AM Sunday School 10:15AM Confirmation	28	29	30	**Christ Mertz Lutheran Church** 16 Fleetwood Road ✠ Fleetwood PA ✠ 19522 office: 610.682.7664 ✠ email: christ@christmertz.org **The Rev. Martin A. Milne**		

CCCC



Fundraiser for

Christ Church Childrens Center

20% of event sales will be donated

We are a non-profit Child Care Center serving Infants through children in 5th grade.

When
Wednesday, September 16, 2026
Time: 10:30 AM to 10:30 PM

Where
Panda Express located at:
4240 N. 5th Street Highway Temple
PA 19560
(610) 680 - 2077

How to Order



Online

PandaExpress.com or the App.
Enter 3862647 in the fundraiser code box

or



In-Person

Bring paper flyer or show it on your smartphone

Order ahead or on the event day Wednesday, September 16, 2026

Participating fundraiser guests are required to present a valid fundraiser flyer (paper copy or digital image) with each order to receive credit towards the fundraiser. Flyers may not be distributed inside or within the vicinity of the restaurant including, without limitation to, the restaurant parking lot before or during the fundraiser. Panda Restaurant Group, Inc. ("PRG") reserves the right to cancel any and all fundraiser events, if the Neighborhood Fundraiser Terms and Conditions are not followed. If the organization is not in good standing with the IRS, Franchise Tax Board, or the State of California (for California organizations only), then donations may not be made to the organization. You must present your unique code or a copy of this flyer (digital copies are accepted) at the designated date, time, and your Panda Express location at check-out. PRG will donate 20% of all pre-tax purchases made, provided that the organization raises a minimum of $100 in total event sales pre-tax. PRG does not charge the organization fees related to the event. Purchase(s) of gift cards do not count towards the fundraiser, but purchases made with gift cards will count. No portion of purchase is tax deductible. The donation from PRG to the organization is tax deductible. The organization receiving the donation must be a tax exempt organization. PRG will issue the donation check and provide an accounting statement to the organization within 45 days of the completion of the event. Participants in the fundraiser may request the total dollar amount donated to the organization by emailing communityprograms@pandarg.com or by submitting the question at https://community.pandaexpress.com/faq

Great Place To Work. Certified MAR 2024-MAR 2025 USA

Find a local hiring event or apply online at **PandaCareers.com**

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