

The Peoria Christian

July 2026
Vol 115 ~ Issue 11



We begin the second half of the year as we welcome July's heat and getaways and sporting events and picnics in the park and even a few rounds of golf!! The summer is steeped with a sense of freedom and respite from a life that never seems to rest for too long.

In our worship and fellowship time together this month, our theme focus is:
Pursuing a Liberating Love

Liberation is the foundation of God's covenant with humanity. We come to know God from scripture's foundational stories of the Garden of Eden, Moses leaving Egypt, Levitical laws of debt forgiveness and land restoration, the prophets centering justice, kindness, and humility, and Jesus himself claiming he had come to "bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, [and] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Our culture is trying to redefine what it means to be a follower of Jesus. False-prophets and con-artists have waded into the waters of faith hoping to extract from our traditions its power and influence. They try to hijack our symbols and language, our prayers and our scripture to paint a picture of Christ which is nationalistic and a complete perversion of the faith of our foremothers and forefathers. They try to convince us that God is partisan and predictable.

We know better. We know that God is a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. We know God is a liberator of the oppressed, the ultimate breaker of chains. We know that God's love for humanity knows no distinctions or boundaries, certainly not the ones we have made for ourselves.

This month, we explore God's liberating love - and ask ourselves how we might pursue it. I hope you will plan to come along, and we find our truest freedom in Christ.

Blessings,
Pastor Adam



Food Pantry

In July, items donated will be going to Friendship House. Any non-perishable items are much needed.

Thank you!



June Giving

DMF	\$1258.33
Pentecost Offering	\$1075
Pathway Ministries	\$250



Stewardship

Not, how much of my money will I give to God, but how much of God's money will I keep for myself.

- John Wesley



Creation Care

Our care for creation is rooted in our calling to love God and others. It's rooted in a vision that what we do to care for the earth is actually worship

- Ken Shigematsu

Loving Our Neighbors



2026 Worship Theme

- 01 **JANUARY**
What Is Love?
- 02 **FEBRUARY**
Learning to Love Yourself
- 03 **MARCH**
Lent:
Learning to Love the Dust
- 04 **APRIL**
Who Is Our Neighbor?
- 05 **MAY**
When Neighbors Feel
Like Enemies
- 06 **JUNE**
Love Wins
- 07 **JULY**
Pursuing a
Liberating Love
- 08 **AUGUST**
God's Unbreakable Love
- 09 **SEPTEMBER**
Stewardship Campaign:
When Love Is Enough
- 10 **OCTOBER**
A Just Love
- 11 **NOVEMBER**
Responding to Love
- 12 **DECEMBER**
Advent:
Love Embodied





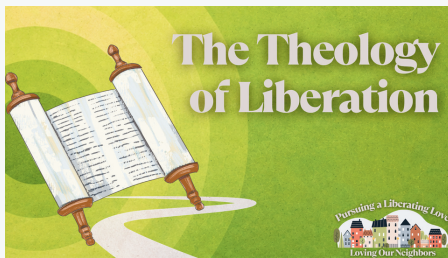
July 5, 2026

Scripture: Luke 4:16-19

Saxophone Quartet: *Just a Closer Walk with Thee* - arr. Ken Abeling

Rev. Adam Bradley, preaching

Jesus tells us exactly what he was sent to earth to do. Luke captures it word for word, and this Sunday in worship we are going to learn more about it. Actually, it is one of the clearest and most straightforward proclamations that Jesus makes. And the reason he claims God has sent him, is the broad liberation of humanity. So much of what Christianity is about today simply does not align with what Jesus himself claims about faith - and as disciples, we have an obligation to follow Jesus - no matter the risks or consequences. The truth will set us free.



July 12, 2026

Scripture: Exodus 3:7-10

Jonathan Enderle & Adam Woods, duet

Rev. Adam Bradley, preaching

The exodus story is the foundational understanding of God as a liberating force in the world. God tells Moses that he has heard the suffering of his people, and has set about to free them from their enslavement. It would feel more satisfactory, more viscerally appealing, if God was indeed focused on punishing the wicked rather than primarily freeing the oppressed - but we don't get to choose what matters to God. And God's attention is centered squarely on those relegated to the sidelines of life. God will set us free, because that is the nature of God we have come to know through Christ.



July 19, 2026

Scripture: Leviticus 25 (selected verses)

Special Music: Natalie Woods, horn: *Awesome God* - arr. Wilhelm Ramirez

Rev. Mason Fitch, preaching

Justice isn't something we have to slice thinner when more people show up at the table. "Justice... It Ain't Pie!" reminds us that God's vision of liberation grows as we grow; it expands with every life it touches. When we treat justice like a scarce resource, fear takes over and we start guarding our piece instead of widening the circle. But liberating love rejects the myth of scarcity and insists that freedom shared is freedom multiplied. In God's economy, justice isn't diminished when others receive it. It's fulfilled.



July 26, 2026

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:2b-13

Praise Team

Rev. Adam Bradley, preaching

The ongoing pursuit of liberation is the mission of the church. We fashion our own flavors of liberation which allow us to lean into our own gifts - but the overarching vision is cast from heaven above. A true mission of Christ will break the chains of supremacy and racism, will defend the gospel of love and the image of Christ as one for all people, will require its disciples to walk humbly, will require us to speak the truth, and it will need us to call out hypocrisy and idolatry where it tries to burrow its way into the heart of culture. So many today are desperate for a holy liberation - and so few are willing to carry that particular flavor of freedom in Christ. Will it be us who might bear witness to God's liberating love?





Sunday Morning Study We Call Ourselves Disciples led by Frank Wheeler

This summer, our Adult Sunday School class will explore We Call Ourselves Disciples, a collection of voices from across the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) reflecting on what it means to live out our faith today. Each week, a different leader - Frank, Randy, Adam, or Mason - will guide the conversation around a chapter and its central theme, creating space to engage the real questions shaping our identity as Disciples. This isn't about having all the answers, but about growing together through honest conversation, shared experience, and a deeper understanding of what it means to live our faith in the world.



Responders Class led by Becky Sisk

In the Responders adult Sunday School class, we use Wired Word lessons each Sunday, 9-10 am. We examine current events from the point of view of the Bible and our faith. Come join us!



Weekly Bible Study

They are studying the 1st and 2nd books of Samuel, and you are welcome to join in! They meet Wednesdays at 10:30am.



Cake Reception

Debbie and Steve West are providing a cake for after worship Fellowship time celebrating the Fourth of July. All are welcome to partake and enjoy thanks to Debbie and Steve West.

Can You Help?

Penguin Project's summer production of Beetlejuice Jr. is in need of:



- electric mobile for a crib
- flat bed sheets of any size
- white socks (not ankle socks)

If you have one you are willing to donate (you will not be getting these back), please reach out to Kathleen Wheeler. Thank you!

Foster Village Peoria

Again this year First Christian Church, via the Missions & Service Committee, will be sponsoring a donations drive for Foster



Village Peoria; a local, volunteer-run non-profit which provides support to families in the foster care system. Throughout July FCC will be collecting NEW items for which Foster Village has significant needs. There is a large bin on the Information Desk. The outside of the bin has flyers that outline the items needed. The flyers also contain a QR code which takes you directly to Foster Village Peoria's wish list on Amazon. The outside of the bin has receipt donation slips for tax purposes.

If you prefer to make a monetary donation versus personal shopping, please write your checks to First Christian Church with Foster Village Peoria on the Memo line and place them in the offering basket or mail them to the church. You may also donate via the Church Center app on your phone. Foster Village Peoria is included among the funds listed. Last year FCC purchased \$350 worth of requested items from the Amazon wish list (in addition to items left in the Information Desk bin). Hopefully we can exceed that amount this year. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

FELLOWSHIP

July Birthdays

Linda Rex	7/7
Lily Wronkiewicz	7/9
Connie Julien	7/14
Chere Peters	7/15
Laura Cohen	7/16
Mary Jane West	7/19
Alice Jury	7/20
Adam Woods	7/25
Ilene Tegg	7/27
Dave Sinn	7/28
Jim Smittkamp	7/29
Kelsey Reynolds	7/29



July Anniversaries

Ralph & Ilene Tegg	7/8
Steve & Debbie West	7/8
Tom & Carmen Nicoll	7/11
Jim & Beth Smittkamp	7/18
Brian & Heather Woods	7/19



Tasting Peoria Mariachi Mexican Restaurant July 9th @ 6pm



Their menu is packed with classic dishes they create from scratch. Daily specials incorporate seasonal, local ingredients. From delicious appetizers to tasty salads, inspired entrees to decadent desserts, your meal will be one of a kind.
1818 W War Memorial Dr, Peoria

Book Club *Impossible Escape* July 16th @ 6pm



Impossible Escape tells the true story of two Jewish teenagers during the Holocaust: Rudi Vrba, who escapes Auschwitz to reveal the mass extermination to the world, and his schoolmate Gerta Sidonová, hiding with her family in Hungary as Nazis close in. The plot follows Rudi's harrowing survival in Auschwitz, his ingenious escape with fellow prisoner Alfred Wetzler, and their crucial mission to deliver the first detailed report.

Movie Night *Independence Day* July 23rd @ 6pm



In the epic adventure film "Independence Day," strange phenomena surface around the globe. The skies ignite. Terror races through the world's major cities. As these extraordinary events unfold, it becomes increasingly clear that a force of incredible magnitude has arrived; its mission: total annihilation over the Fourth of July weekend.

July Potluck - 7/26

Please sign up if you can help with prep and/or cleanup. Bring your own tableware to help reduce waste.



SERVING SCHEDULES

Date	Elders	Deacons	Lay Reader	Acolyte	Greeters	Counters
7/5/26	Beth Smittkamp Linda Rex	Chris Carrico Alice Jury Dana Powers Larry Weber	Sandy Surface	Natalie Woods	Monica Hinrichs Judy Leeper	Steve West Ralph Tegg
7/12/26	Connie Sinn Dave Sinn	Chris Carrico Alice Jury Dana Powers Larry Weber	Larry Weber	Natalie Woods	Owen & Alice Jury	Mike & Laura Buckley
7/19/26	Beth Cox Kevin Wolfe	Chris Carrico Alice Jury Dana Powers Larry Weber	Liz White	Natalie Woods	Owen & Alice Jury	John & Lisa Best
7/26/26	Kevin Cheatham Steve West	Chris Carrico Alice Jury Dana Powers Larry Weber	Connie Sinn	Natalie Woods	Owen & Alice Jury	Monica & Steve Hinrichs

Date	Friends with Jesus	Growing Disciples	The Open Table
7/5/26	Jenny Tripses	Frank Wheeler	Mason Fitch
7/12/26	Chere Peters	Frank Wheeler	Frank Wheeler
7/19/26	Jenny Tripses	Frank Wheeler	Mason Fitch
7/26/26	Linda Rex	Frank Wheeler	Randy Williams

WE CALL OURSELVES *Disciples*

A Summer Sunday morning study about the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination led by Frank Wheeler, Randy Williams, Adam Bradley, and Mason Fitch.

- June 7** **Doing Theology**
- June 14** **Disciples and the Bible**
- June 21** **A Brief Overview of Disciples Polity**
- June 28** **The Baptized Life**
- July 5** **Communion**
- July 12** **Social Justice as Embodied in Micah 6:8**
- July 19** **Diversity and Inclusion**
- July 28** **Turning Points in Disciples History**
- August 2** **Liturgy and Worship**
- August 9** **Global Missions**
- August 16** **Congregations and Their Pastor**
- August 23** **Christian Unity: Our Polar Star**

