

THE VITAL SPARK



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A Message from our Senior Pastor

Dear CCC Family and Friends,

I love the way that novelist Philip Roth describes the process of writing: *Exhilaration and groaning. Frustration and freedom. Inspiration and uncertainty. Abundance and emptiness. Blazing forth and muddling through. The day-by-day repertoire of oscillating dualities that any talent withstands — and tremendous solitude, too. And the silence: 50 years in a room silent as the bottom of a pool, eking out, when all went well, my minimum daily allowance of usable prose.*

The same words could be used to describe ministry.

2018 has started off as a busy year at Community, full of exhilaration. We have remodeling projects taking place in the nursery, library, and men's restroom. We have a worship service with talented musicians and participants, worshipping in a packed sanctuary. We will meet all day this coming Saturday, with Agile church and our dream team leaders, to gather and assimilate the information from our dream team sessions. And we are planning for the future.

I have shared with the Church Leadership Team, goals for 2018—both as a congregation and as a pastor. These goals include a renewed focus on worship, clarifying our vision and mission, attracting/retaining first time visitors, working with Agile church, and integrating our new vision and mission statements with the core ministries of the church. All that takes place in the life of our church is indeed inspiring and abundant. The ministry of each of you never fails to amaze me.

And yet, just as Roth notes the feeling of uncertainty in the process of writing, the same can be said for ministry. It would so be much easier if we knew how everything would unfold all of the time. I want to say to each of you, this will happen in the life of our church, then this, and then this. But if we had such certainty and knowledge, what would be the point of faith? Even with uncertainty, I know we will continue to blaze through all of the unknowns set before us. We are a strong faith community, growing with new visitors and members, and committed to being faithful disciples. Not always knowing what the future holds, but trusting it will unfold with God's guidance, is one of the central tenets of our faith.

Thank you for this journey.

Many blessings to each of you in this New Year,

Jacob

Thank You Notes

Many of you donated a special gift this past Christmas for our Circle of Concern Christmas Tree. Here are parts of two thank you notes we received.

Thank you from all my heart for adapting our family and providing us with lovely, thoughtful and wonderful gifts this Christmas. You even got my 11 year old daughter a real sewing machine (it was very expensive!) The kids was absolutely amazed to see so many gifts under the tree. They loved it all! Thank you again for your generosity. I hope one day we will be able to repay for your kindness.

H F

Thank you so very, very much for my lovely holiday gifts... They all were just beautiful and all fit me perfectly. Again, thank you and may God bless whoever adopted me and all of you.

Sent with Love,
L B

Blankets for Project Linus

Last Saturday the ladies of Rebecca and Priscilla hosted a blanket making event. In total, 32 blankets will be donated to Project Linus. Thank you to all who contributed to this annual event.



New Church Dedication in February

Lynneville Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) located near Jacksonville, IL, will have a celebration and dedication service for its new house of worship on Sunday, February 18 at 2:00 p.m. Information about car pooling will be available in the Narthex later this month.

Elder's Chili Cook-Off



The weather this past week has been plenty "chili", just in time for the annual Chili Cook-Off and Pie Auction to be held on January 28th at 5:30 p.m. We need 3 more people who would like to enter their chili in the competition (2 gallons needed) and pie bakers to donate pies for the auction. If you would be willing to do either, please sign up on the back of your attendance tab this Sunday or contact Cindy Herman. This Sunday will be the last day to purchase your tickets. Funds raised from the pie auction will be split between The BackStoppers and the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

The CCC Youth will be selling soda/lemonade as a fundraiser for a future youth event at the chili dinner. If you'd like to donate cans of soda or lemonade for this project, please bring them to church this Sunday.

Helpers in Nursery during Worship

We have a good problem in our nursery during Sunday worship (10 or more children each week). We could use some adult help watching them on a weekly basis. If you'd like to volunteer to help on an occasional Sunday, please sign up on the back of Sunday's bulletin tab, on the clipboard by the nursery door or contact the church office.

Valentine's Cards for Columbia Elementary

On January 28th and February 4th there will be a table in the Narthex for children, youth and adults to stop by and make a Valentine's Day card or sign a card for the students at Columbia Elementary School. We hope everyone will stop by the table to join in this fun project hosted by our Mission First Team.

2017 Highlights from Mission First Team

It was a busy Christmas season and year for the Mission First Team. Here are some of the highlights of what the congregation helped us accomplish:

The Christmas party that was held for the students at Columbia Elementary school was a huge success! Over 200 gifts were wrapped and distributed, 34 \$10 gift cards were donated for families in transition, 150 books were donated to the school for classroom use, 34 volunteers wrapped all of the gifts, and 16 volunteers helped with the party.

Thanks to all members of Community Christian Church who helped in any way with donations of gifts, wrapping paper, etc., wrapped gifts and came to the school to distribute the gifts. In addition to the party CCC has a number of volunteers that visit the school weekly to tutor the students in reading and math.

Thank you to the volunteers that rang the bell for the Salvation Army! During the seven day that CCC members “manned the kettle” we put in a total of 116 hours which, according to the way the Salvation Army calculates its’ costs, saved them \$2,088!

By supporting the Circle of Concern Giving Tree seven families had a brighter Christmas as 81 gifts were purchased for 25 people.

Volunteers from CCC provided a Christmas lunch and fun crafts and gifts for the girls in the Knobel dorm at Epworth Children’s Home. The volunteers will continue to visit the girls monthly in the coming year.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our ongoing partnership with Hanna Woods Elementary school to provide backpacks filled with healthy foods to help keep students fed over the weekend. We will provide backpacks for the months of February and April.

Thank you Liz Dupuis for her continued work in planning our church blood drives. A total of 74 pints of blood was collected at these drives in 2017 which helped up to 222 people in need! The next blood drive at CCC will be March 4, 2018.

Diane Hall organized donations of cleaning buckets and supplies for Church World Services after the historic flooding in Texas and other areas. Enough donations were made to assemble more than 25 buckets.

Many CCC members participated in our two All Church Mission days last year. We were able to help with a variety of local and global mission projects.

We are ready to start planning for 2018 but we need more people with an interest in mission to join the Mission First Team. We also need someone that will lead the team and help with communication between the team and the Core Leadership Team. The more people we have the more wonderful things we can do! Email Tracey Hammack with any questions at t.hammack@sbcglobal.net .

Hanna Woods Giving Project

We are continuing our support of several families every other month from the Hanna Woods Elementary School that are in need of food assistance over the weekends. If you would like to make a food donation, for the month of February, please use the SignUpGenius link below to see specific dates and items needed. If you prefer someone else do the shopping, you may make an online donation via the Contributions tab on our church website or place cash/check in the offering tray designated with “Hanna Woods” in the memo line. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090448a8ad2da7fe3-summer>

Women's Fellowship

Priscilla Ladies Group - will meet on February 13th at 7:00 p.m. in the CCC library for study and fellowship. Questions may be directed to Mitzie Bryant.

Rebecca Ladies Group - will meet on February 20th in the CCC Library at 9:30 a.m. for study and fellowship. Contact Linda Newton with questions.

Both groups will collect a special offering to be used for purchasing gift cards for college students of CCC members and friends.

Youth Group Lock-in

All youth are invited to attend a lock-in planned for February 9th. The evening will begin with roller skating and will continue with games, snacks and more in the WFLC. If you have questions please contact Rev. Hall or the church office.



Congregational Meeting

There will be a brief congregational meeting on February 4th to formally approve the Core Leadership Team members for 2018. Those nominated for approval are: Laura McDurmont, chairperson, Les Swaney, Susan McGehee, Beth Eckelkamp, Ron Hollon, Matt Mohr, Doug Hoover and Betty Quicksall.

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