



The Vital Spark

A NEWSLETTER OF COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ~ JANUARY, 2021
MESSAGE FROM OUR SENIOR MINISTER, REV. JACOB THORNE

Dear Community,

Did you know that the best-selling Sesame Street book is “The Monster at the End of This Book?”

Just in case you need a refresher on the plot: The cute furry blue character Grover, having looked at the title of the book, is terrified about the monster that will undoubtedly appear in the end. Fearful of those final pages, Grover constructs a series of (metaphorical) obstacles in hopes of preventing the reader (along with himself) from reading further. He employs such tricks as tying pages together, nailing one page to the next one and building a large brick wall. In the end though, nothing works and Grover discovers that the monster he fears the most is no other than Grover himself. It’s a clever book with a fun twist. It’s also a book meant to remind all of us about who we are.

There has been a lot of talk these days around the phrase, “This isn’t us.” And in no way do I mean to suggest that any of us are monsters. But what we have discovered in this past year of political divisiveness and global pandemic is that sometimes what we fear the most is the reality of what is found in our own human nature. Beat poet Jack Kerouac said, “The book of pure truth is a bunch of mirrors bound together.” No matter where we go or where we are, we cannot escape the self.

But within the self is the beauty of the divine—the imago dei. As I think about the upcoming year, and the fears of what might unfold (Will the vaccine work? Will our nation regain a sense of unity? Will my friends, family, and parishioners remain healthy?) I become unsettled. But then I remember that it is only me who is causing the unsettling. And if I can confront the self, then I can pivot, with the help of God in me, to the person I want to become. And this, is why we need the church, the truth of the scriptures, and the presence of the saints who have gone before.

This New Year might be full of unpredictable changes or no major changes at all. But the Word of God, the community of fellow believers, and the trust of the Divine is what anchors me and keeps me turning the pages of the book—excited about what will come next.

As we journey into this New Year I think it’s okay to say, “This is us now...And this is who we want to be.” Together, as a community, we work to change the world. And we say this boldly, but humbly, because of our faith in God and God’s faith in us.

Blessings for the New Year,

Jacob

2020 OUTREACH SUMMARY

We are thankful for your generosity during the various special offerings collected in 2020. The donations received were: Week of Compassion - \$918; Reconciliation Ministry - \$170; Pentecost - \$455; Easter - \$350; Thanksgiving - \$405; Christmas - \$275 and Christmas Eve - \$675.

Outreach from the 2020 budget in the amount of \$30,093 supported Pastor's Discretionary Fund, Caring Solutions, Circle of Concern, UrbanReachSTL, Scott Welker Guatemala Trip, Alliance Q, Bethany Fellowship, Disciples Mission Fund, Christian Church of Mid America, National Benevolent Association, Isaiah 58 Ministries and Global Ministries.

Permanent outreach funds of \$240 per quarter were sent to Heat Up St. Louis, (\$480), Isaiah 58 Ministries (\$240) and Week of Compassion (\$240).

Other outreach receipts totaling over \$7,000 supported Alzheimer's Association, Circle of Concern Holiday Adoption, Hanna Woods Elementary School, Columbia Elementary School, Isaiah 58 Ministries, The Salvation Army, and UrbanReachSTL. In addition we received many gift cards, toy donations, food donations and more throughout the year to support some of these organizations.

Priscilla and Rebecca Circle donations of \$1,000 went to Isaiah 58 Ministries, Family Village Farm Sponsor Child, Pastor's Discretionary Fund, Circle of Concern, gift cards for CCC College Students, diapers for Circle of Concern, school supplies and fleece for Project Linus blankets.

Elder Fund donations of \$1,200 were sent to UrbanReachSTL and Feed My People.

Stable Ministry outreach of \$10,800 was sent to HELM, Caring Solutions, Isaiah 58 Ministries, Memorial Blvd. CC Food Pantry, High School Senior Scholarships, Global Ministries, Circle of Concern, UrbanReachSTL, Mid America Ministries, Special Education Foundation, Bremer Memorial Garden and Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

Disciples Men Ministry supported High School Senior Scholarships of \$250.

We also are grateful for financial and volunteer support for the Bremer Community Garden. With your help we were able to share a variety of fresh produce with Circle of Concern, Caring Solutions, families of Hanna Woods Elementary School, CCC neighbors and our CCC church family.

THANK YOU...

Norm and I would like to express our appreciation to everyone for so many kindnesses through this past 3-4 months with Norm's hospitalization and scary brush with Covid and my at-home recovery, and the subsequent quarantines and adjustments after he came home to the recent passing of our son on Thanksgiving morning. Thank you to everyone for the cards, phone calls, e-mails, meals, shopping, and prayers and thoughts. The Community Christian congregation is a kind, loving, and special group of people and we are grateful and blessed.

Blessings to all with prayers for a MUCH better year in 2021!

Delores Constable

YEAR END FINANCIAL RESULTS

	12/31/20 Actual	12/31/20 Budget	Comments
Offering	\$350,531	\$340,750	Unexpected last quarter giving
WFLC Rental, other income	29,501	37,590	Decreased rental income for gym and building due to Covid-19.
Total Income	\$380,032	\$378,340	
Children/Youth/Adult Ministries	1,387	7,295	Less spending than anticipated for all programs.
Worship/Core Ministries	12,361	17,905	Less spending than anticipated due to Covid-19.
Outreach/Mission	30,228	31,867	No Mission Day activities
Property	87,128	102,903	Fewer building repairs needed
Office/Administration	12,533	15,718	Less spending than anticipated due to Covid-19.
Wages/Expenses/ Benefits	205,077	202,652	Additional sound room assistance since September
Total Operating Expenses	\$348,714	\$378,340	
Surplus	\$31,318	\$0	

In this past year of a global pandemic, congregational support of CCC has been a source of strength, with giving for the year exceeding budget by almost \$10,000. With the gym back in use every day of the week and decreased expenses for ordinary operations due to COVID, overall we ended the year with a surplus.

Your faithful support helps us to provide ministry for our church family and many others throughout the St. Louis community and in the world.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

The CCC Book Discussion Group will be meeting on February 15th at 1:30 p.m. in the CCC Narthex for a conversation about the book *The Stranger in the Woods* by Michael Finkel. Please contact Brenda Richardson for additional information about the group. Social distancing and mask wearing will be in place for this meeting.

PRISCILLA LADIES GROUP MONTHLY MEETING

Priscilla Ladies Group will continue meeting using Zoom on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. All women are welcome for a time of study, prayer, service and fellowship. The February service project will be donations of \$15 gift cards for CCC college students.. Please contact Betty Quicksall by phone/text/email for more information. 636-484-0791 or bettyquic@sbcglobal.net. Hope you will join us.

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS

The residents of West County Care Center on Solley Drive in Ballwin received a Christmas tree decoration (pictured on the right) just before Christmas. What a great way to add some Christmas cheer during the holiday season. Thank you to all who helped assemble the craft kits.



CCC
623 Meramec Station Road
Manchester, MO 63021

Rev. Jacob Thorne, Senior Minister
Beth Bean, Office Manager
636.394.2772
office@disciplesforchrist.org
www.disciplesforchrist.org