



# The Vital Spark

A NEWSLETTER OF COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ~ NOVEMBER, 2024

MESSAGE FROM OUR SENIOR MINISTER, REV. JACOB THORNE

Dear Community,

For as long as I have served as your pastor I have never openly taken a political stance in the pulpit and supported one candidate over another. And, hold your breath here, I'm not about to now. But I do want to address in this article the ways that kingdom and kingship in the Bible are addressed.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus warns his followers against the desire to be on the top of hierarchies. If you want to be truly great, he says, become a servant—wash people's feet, don't overestimate your own goodness, and seek first the kingdom of God. Jesus is never very vocal about being the kingdom's king. As a Jew, Jesus would have likely followed the notion of God's kingship—as proclaimed in the psalms. Overall, Jesus is more concerned with the ethics of the people as opposed to the kingdom's leadership structure.

But, there are passages that directly address kingship in the gospels and not in ways we might expect. For example, every year during the season of lent we study the passage in which Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus, from a political perspective, is an unkingly king. And what does it mean to be an unkingly king in today's world?

One answer might be found from the fifth-century African doctor, Augustine of Hippo.

Late in his life Augustine counseled Boniface, a Roman general governing the precinct of Africa. In a letter from 418, Augustine addresses Boniface's frustrations with uprisings from those who despise the Christian faith. Boniface thinks he knows what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like and wants to impose it, but Augustine cautions him to do so, saying, "We ought not want to live ahead of time with only the saints and righteous." In other words, we can't impose our will on others. Politics demands patience and the art of forging a life together, now, in the present moment.

This, I think, is the heart of what Jesus' teaching is all about. We shouldn't be shocked about deep disagreements among citizens—this has always been and always will be the case. Rather, as Jesus suggests, now is the time to work for the kingdom of God, together, serving with one another.

Here, at Community, this is what we do. We may not all agree politically, in fact I'm sure we don't, but we have found a way to make Jesus, and not politics, our guiding principle and light. For this, I am thankful and grateful.

Blessings,

Jacob



## Book Discussion Group

The CCC Book Discussion Group will be meeting on Monday, November 18th in the Narthex for a conversation about the book, *The Hidden One* by Linda Castillo.

Please contact Brenda Richardson for additional information about the group.

### ELDER BOOK DISCUSSION

The Elders gathered for fellowship on Tuesday, November 12th to discuss *Breakthrough* by Reverend Dawn Weaks, a book that traces the faith journey of a Disciple of Christ church in Odessa, Texas. The focus of the discussion was on the role of Elders at Community Christian Church and the ways that they can better serve and engage our congregation. The members of the Elder team were energized by the time spent together, and by the reflections and ideas that were drawn from the book discussion. We look forward to welcoming new elders to the team in 2025 and to working hard to contribute to the worship and fellowship experience at CCC.



### December Blood Drive

Blood donations tend to decline in the winter months due to holidays, family gatherings, illnesses and more, yet the need for blood is a constant. If you are able, please sign up for the next blood drive here at CCC will be in the Narthex on **Tuesday, December 3rd from 2-7 p.m.** Go to [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and enter sponsor code CommChristainCh to sign up for one of the 9 remaining donation appointments.

### Thanksgiving Feast News

**Sunday, November 24, 5:00-7:30 p.m.** in the Wunderlich Family Life Center, will be a time to join together with your church family and members of your own family for a joyful and thankful evening of fellowship. Hope you will join us!

Tickets are available to purchase before and after church this Sunday, with an adults price of \$14, child price of \$7 and children 4 and under are free.

# MISSION





Special thanks to the Mission Team for coordinating donations to support Isaiah 58 Ministries Thanksgiving Food Baskets, Christmas toys for families in need and organizing a successful church cleaning workday.

The last Sunday for toy donations is December 1st.



**THANKSGIVING  
SPECIAL OFFERING**



**SUPPORTING  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

*Impacting the Church and World by Bringing  
Students and Resources Together*

The graphic features a dark blue background with a white QR code on the left. In the center, there is a globe with a graduation cap (mortarboard) on top, resting on an open book. On the right, there is a circular logo for 'Higher Educational Leadership Ministries' with a red chalice symbol. Below the logo, the text 'SUPPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION' is written in white. At the bottom, the tagline 'Impacting the Church and World by Bringing Students and Resources Together' is written in a white, italicized font.

Your donation to support this special Thanksgiving offering can be placed in the offering tray on Sunday or made online via the Vanco Mobile App.

# THANK YOU !

Our congregation has been a long time financial supporter of Bethany Fellows, a mentoring and support organization for those new to being a church pastor. Below is a note we received about how important this ministry is to one of its members.

*Rev. Jacob and the congregation at Community Christian Church,*

*I'm Brent Bailey, a pastor at LaSalle Street Church in Chicago, and I'm just concluding my first retreat with Bethany Fellows. I wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your support of this organization and how incredibly encouraging, edifying, and formative this week has been for me. Long story short, my ministry setting can be isolating at times, and connecting with other pastors at a similar stage of life made me feel significantly less alone in this calling. I feel extraordinarily fortunate to have found this new network of friends and co-laborers in the work of the gospel. I'm sorry if this sounds like a form letter—it's all sincere, and I feel soo grateful for this fellowship, as well as for you support.*

*Thank you dearly,  
Brent B.*



Bethany Fellows Group, September, 2024

Jacob and Community Christian Church,

Thank you for sheltering me and including me in your church service. I greatly enjoyed the mix of songs and message of the sermon.

Thank you,

Don Harter

St. Louis Crop Walk Participant

**A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will be refreshed.**

**Proverbs 11:25**

## Stewardship Campaign

### LAST CALL FOR PLEDGE CARDS

We have received pledge cards from a little under half of our giving units. If you have not turned in a pledge card, you can still do so. Please drop it off at the office or email it to Beth at [beth@disciplesforchrist.org](mailto:beth@disciplesforchrist.org). As previously mentioned, CCC has lost several long-term members and has indications that various operating and building expenditures will be increasing in 2025. Our current estimate of 2025 giving shows it will be down, so if you could turn in a pledge card or increase your pledge that would help CCC. Thank you for your generous support of Community Christian Church and its ministries.

The Finance team's plan is to have a preliminary budget for 2025 ready to present to the Core Leadership Team in December and then present it to the congregation in January, 2025.

A statement of your 2024 donations to CCC is available at any time by contacting Beth in the church office.



Family ministry, with the help of the CCC Elder's, had a wonderful Fall Festival last month. Everyone enjoyed the lunch, s'mores and pumpkin carving. Thankyou to all who helped make this event a success.

## CCC Operating Results

### Period Ended October 31, 2024

	<b>10/31/24 YTD Actual</b>	<b>10/31/24 YTD Budget</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Offering	\$265,256	\$276,350	Timing of donations
WFLC Rental and Other Income	45,740	52,045	Some basketball rent un- paid.
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$310,996</b>	<b>\$328,395</b>	
Family and Adult Ministries	2,023	2,875	
Worship/Fellowship Ministries	9,615	10,470	
Outreach/Mission	19,896	20,867	
Property	100,964	101,233	
Office/Administration	11,353	15,199	Copy overages lower due to new copy machine.
Wages/Expenses/Benefits	188,661	193,354	Slight variation in wages and pastor expenses from expect- tation.
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$332,512</b>	<b>\$343,998</b>	
<b>(Deficit)</b>	<b>(\$21,516)</b>	<b>(\$15,603)</b>	

As reflected in the above table, our church operations through October 31<sup>st</sup> ended with a deficit. Gym rental payments are now up to date which brings the actual deficit to an amount comparable to budget. We continue to monitor expenses as best we can to stay close to our budget.

Mission donations since June have been made to Caring Solutions, Circle of Concern, Alliance Q, Bethany Fellowship, Disciples Mission Fund, Mid-America Region for Disciples of Christ, National Benevolent Association, Isaiah 58 Ministries, Global Ministries, Cool Down St. Louis, St. Louis CROP Walk, Centennial CC Food Pantry, and Festival of Sharing.

We are thankful for your special donations made from time to time to support for Hanna Woods Elementary School, Circle of Concern, UrbanReachSTL, Isaiah 58 Ministries and our special offerings.

Your ongoing financial support of CCC helps us maintain our campus, church operations and continued service to others throughout our city, region and world.

## Join us for Advent Festivities

December 1<sup>st</sup> marks the start of Advent.

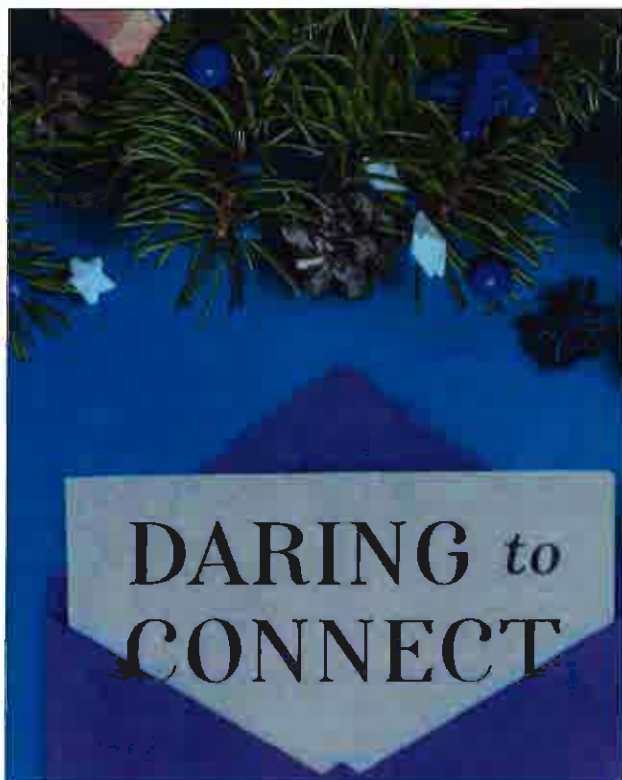
The season of Advent, and perhaps on a deeper level time itself, is both cyclical and broken. Traditions are repeated each year: the decorating of the Christmas tree, the stories of treasured ornaments, the special meal, trips made to relatives, scriptures proclaiming the birth of Christ, and candlelight services sending us forth into the night. These same comforting patterns are enacted, from one Christmas to the next.

Time is never completely cyclical, though. A family member is absent from the Christmas dinner table. A chair sits empty for the first time. New family members are seated in the high-chair next to the proud grandparents. Fresh rituals are created. And stories previously unheard are suddenly shared.

But within the circle of both brokenness and continuation there is one constant that always remains. The constant of the Christian faith, particularly during the season of Advent, which is this: God is always moving us forward, leading us from where we once were to where we are yet to be. God is calling us to the future, to a new beginning.

During this Advent we will be finishing up our study of the Old Testament and moving into The New. And as we do so, we will celebrate with music, festivities, candle lighting, and fellowship. Our Christmas Eve service will be held at 5:00 in the sanctuary.

Join us as we move into the New Year.



These Advent devotional booklets will be available in the Narthex on November 24th.

### Senior “Fun Bunch” Lunch

We hope you will join us for the next lunch set for Wednesday, December 4th at 11:30 a.m. in the Narthex.

We will have a short program on the “Sights and Sounds of Christmas” followed by lunch, conversation and Bingo.

We hope you will join us!



### List of Upcoming Events

November 24 - Decorate Sanctuary for Christmas

November 24 - Thanksgiving Feast

November 26 - Men's Breakfast at Uncle Bill's

December 8 - Elder's meeting

December 9 - Facilities and Finance meeting

December 10 - Men's Breakfast at Uncle Bill's

December 10 - Priscilla Women's Group

December 16 - Core Leadership Team meeting

December 24 - Christmas Eve Service

December 25 - Merry Christmas!

December 26 and 27 - Church office closed



CCC

623 Meramec Station Road

Manchester, MO 63021

Rev. Jacob Thorne, Senior Minister

Beth Bean, Ministry Associate

636.394.2772

[office@disciplesforchrist.org](mailto:office@disciplesforchrist.org)

[www.disciplesforchrist.org](http://www.disciplesforchrist.org)