



The Vital Spark

A NEWSLETTER OF COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ~ JANUARY, 2025

MESSAGE FROM OUR SENIOR MINISTER, REV. JACOB THORNE

Dear Community:

As we step into a New Year, it's natural to reflect on the past and consider the road ahead. This season of the church year offers us a chance to recalibrate our hearts and minds, focusing on the themes of faith and hope that Epiphany brings to light.

In reflecting on the New Year, I'm reminded of the classic song "Crazy," made famous by Patsy Cline and written by a then-little-known Willie Nelson. At its core, "Crazy" is a song about unrequited love and the pain of loss—feelings we can all identify with at some point in our lives. But beyond that, it's also a song about the burdens of worry. Consider these lyrics: "Worry/Why do I let myself worry?/Wondering/What in the world did I do?"

How often do we find ourselves trapped in a cycle of worry, especially at the start of a new year? We worry about our personal lives, our relationships, our jobs, and even the state of the world. As we watch current events unfold, many of us might ask, "What did I, what did we, do?" No matter where we stand politically or personally, worry has a way of finding us.

But worry doesn't have to define our year ahead. The season of Epiphany reminds us of God's revelation in Christ and invites us to consider how God is still revealing Himself to us in new and unexpected ways. Just as the wise men followed the star to find Jesus, we are called to seek the light of God's guidance amid uncertainty.

Jesus' words in Matthew 6:34 encourage us: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." This isn't a call to ignore our responsibilities, but rather an invitation to trust in God's provision and grace for each day.

As we enter this New Year, let's make a conscious effort to let go of the "what ifs" and "what did I dos" that weigh us down. Instead, let's resolve to seek God's presence in our daily lives, trusting that His light will guide us through whatever challenges we face.

May this season of Epiphany fill you with renewed faith, hope, and a sense of God's abiding love. Let us walk together into 2025, confident that God is with us, leading us forward in grace and peace.

I look forward to seeing you Sunday.

Blessings,

Jacob

ELDER EMERITUS DESIGNATION

During the December 16th worship service, the Elders were delighted to honor Molly Duncan with the title of Elder Emeritus. Over her 50+ years of membership at CCC, Molly has faithfully served as an elder, deacon, board chair, Children's Moment leader, stable volunteer, and more. We are profoundly grateful for her steadfast faith, dedication to the church, and commitment to serving others.



Who will become the new Elders Chili Cook-Off Champion?

In just over a week, we will have a new chili cook-off champion for 2025. This is always a fun event sponsored by the CCC Elders. There is an urgent need for 3-5 more individuals to enter their prized chili in the competition. Donations of an item or baked good for the silent auction are also being accepted. You can sign up for either on the back of the Connection Card in the bulletin, on the sign-up sheet in the Narthex, or by calling Beth Eckelkamp.

The cook-off will take place on Sunday, February 2nd at 5:30pm in the Wunderlich Family Life Center.

Tickets for the cook-off are \$5 for an individual or \$10 for a family and can be purchased in the Narthex before and after church up through the day of the event.

This year our Elder team is excited to have designated UrbanReachSTL as the recipient of a portion of the funds raised at this event. To learn more about the amazing work that UrbanReachSTL does please visit <https://urstl.org/>



2024 Champions, Joyce Doup and Laura McDurmont

WEEK OF COMPASSION

HEARD
AND
SEEN

SPECIAL
OFFERING
2025



Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.
• PHILIPPIANS 4:9

Week of
Compassion
weekofcompassion.org

Our annual Week of Compassion Special Offering will be collected on February 16 and 23.

Relief efforts for the ongoing California fires are being supported by your Week of compassion offering. Donations that will be 100% used for fire relief can be made by placing a check or cash contribution in the offering tray on Sunday morning, mailing a check to CCC at P.O. Box 969, Manchester 63011, and indicate "Fires" in the check memo line or by selecting the Week of Compassion Disaster Relief option on the Vanco Mobile app.



Book Discussion Group

The CCC Book Discussion Group will be meeting on Monday, February 17th in the Narthex for a conversation about the book, *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt.

Please contact Brenda Richardson for additional information about the group.

Senior "Fun Bunch" Lunch

It's time to mark your calendar for the next lunch set for Wednesday, February 5th at 11:30 a.m. in the Narthex.

Come learn (and taste) why February is known as the "Great American Pie" month. A sign up for food donations is in the Narthex.

Please join us!



Congregational Meeting Highlights

Elders for 2025

Beth Eckelkamp, Chair
 Linda Helm
 Tanya Pereira
 Ted Herman
 Connie Watkins
 Norman Pereira
 Judy McLain
 Doug Hoover
 Jeff Clifton
 Laurie Clifton
 Glenna Allen
 Jess Newton

Core Leadership Team

Cherie Ledbetter, Chair
 Laura McDurmont, Personnel
 Jeff Clifton, Mission
 Susan McGehee, Family Ministry
 Nicole Barkley, Secretary
 Cathy Schlueter, Finance
 Jill Chaney-Lipe, At Large
 Randy McLain, Worship
 Marty Eckelkamp, Facilities
 Karl Doup, Treasurer

Deacons for 2025

Pennie Anderson	Randy McLain
Laura McDurmont	Kevin Ledbetter
Beckie Jacobsmeyer	Cherie Ledbetter
Diane Malloy	Substitute Deacons:
Ed Bean	Don Miller
Bob Branstetter	Loyalty Miller
Laura Seymour	Eric Barkley
Susan McGehee	David Hosler
Brian Degitz-Fries	Nick Rega
Ruth Leavy	Betty Rega
Marty Eckelkamp	Cheryl Kinney, Chair
Victor Alm	

We recognized our outgoing CLT members, Bob Branstetter, Brian Degitz-Fries and Michael Richardson for their CLT service.

Community Christian Church	Budget for 2025
Offering	\$322,300
Investment earnings	20,000
WFLC Rental and Other	69,577
Total Income	\$411,877
Family and Adult Minis-	2,520
Worship/Fellowship Minis-	16,930
Outreach/Mission	25,934
Property	143,090
Office/Administration	15,466
Wages/Expenses/Benefits	237,511
Total Operating Expenses	441,451
(Deficit)	(\$29,574)

CCC 2025 Initiatives

- Hiring new office assistant
- 4% salary increase for staff
- Upper Packwood restroom remodeling
- Continue to emphasize online presence
- Bremer Garden
- Promote use of our facilities for use by outside groups
- Upgrade audio devices available for use during worship
- Flat roof replacement

CCC Operating Results
Period Ended December 31, 2024

	12/31/24 YTD Actual	12/31/24 YTD Budget	Comments
Offering	\$340,796	\$327,500	Timing of donations
Investment earnings	18,971		
WFLC Rental and Other Income	57,609	61,642	Timing for payment of December basketball rent.
Total Income	\$417,376	\$389,142	
Family and Adult Ministries	2,129	3,035	
Worship/Fellowship Ministries	16,145	14,940	
Outreach/Mission	27,417	26,620	
Property	121,005	121,748	
Office/Administration	16,515	17,749	
Wages/Expenses/Benefits	227,097	232,050	Slight variation in wages due to staffing changes.
Total Operating Expenses	410,308	\$416,142	
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$7,068	(\$27,000)	

As reflected in the above table, our church operations through December 31st ended with a surplus, thanks in large part to earnings from the investment of excess cash that started in February, 2024.

Mission donations in the final quarter of 2024 were sent to Caring Solutions, Circle of Concern, Alliance Q, Global Ministries, Loaves and Fishes, Gateway ONA, 100 Neediest Cases and Het Up St. Louis.

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 the various 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.

Scott Degitz-Fries is approved as the
CCC Director of Music Ministry

The Core Leadership Team held its first meeting of the New Year this past Monday. During the meeting, a motion was made and unanimously passed, to officially appoint Scott Degitz-Fries as the permanent Director of Music Ministry at Community Christian Church.

Since taking on the direction of the choir last fall, along with continuing to direct the Voices4Hymn praise team, Scott has worked tirelessly to bring inspiring and high-quality music to our congregation. His leadership, enthusiasm, and unwavering dedication to our church community are truly a blessing.

If you see Scott on Sunday morning, please offer him your thanks and congratulations for all he has done and will continue to do in this role.



Voices4Hymn Praise Team



Jerry Hoover, DeeDee Emry,
Doug Hoover and Todd Painter

Many Thanks

The Chancel Choir, Voices4Hymn Praise Team, and many other musicians provided wonderful music during our Advent worship services. Their extra practice time and special music selections truly enhanced our worship services.



Chancel Choir

UPPER PACKWOOD BATHROOM REMODELING

Over the past few weeks, Don Miller and Marty Eckelkamp have been hard at work removing fixtures and flooring in the men's restroom to make way for new flooring, new wall tile and new partitions. Karl Doup and Marlan Graham also provided a touch of fresh paint where needed. We are looking forward to having the restroom in use again with these fresh updates.

When this is complete, work will begin on updating the women's restroom.



ARE YOU READY FOR SPRING?

We are already thinking about what's ahead for the Bremer Garden in 2025. So far, we have seedlings of several varieties of onions, along with pansies and snapdragons growing in the garden room.

Feel free to take a look during your next trip to church. If you'd like to help with future seed starting, please contact Beth in the church office.



ARE CHURCH FRIEND ADDRESSES AVAILABLE RIGHT FROM YOUR PHONE?

Several people have asked if there is a way to access church friend names, address, phone and email information from their phone.

Next month, we are planning to update our records for this access to become available through a phone app. If you prefer to keep your information private, please contact Beth in the church office.

HANNA WOODS FOOD BAGS

This school year CCC has been supporting six families with food insecurity from Hanna Woods Elementary School with a grocery bag of food on a weekly basis. We have placed baskets in the Narthex if you would like to assist with donations by adding one or two items to your weekly shopping list.

We are currently in need of healthy cereal options, packages of applesauce in individual cups, canned pasta meals, and canned fruit and vegetables as well as small boxes of crackers.

Monetary donations by cash, check or online via the app are also welcome and we will do the shopping for needed items.

Thank you for your continued support of this program!

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CCC BLOOD DRIVE

February 25th



Sign up information will be available soon.