



The Vital Spark

A NEWSLETTER OF COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ~ MARCH, 2025

MESSAGE FROM OUR SENIOR MINISTER, REV. JACOB THORNE

Dear Community,

As we enter this season of Lent, I want to take a moment to share some updates about our church and reflect on the meaning of this sacred time.

First, I want to express my deep gratitude to our elders for their dedication over the past year and for the plans they have put in place for the year ahead. A special thanks to Lori Hoover for her outstanding leadership. Under her guidance, the elders held a retreat to reflect, plan, and set a vision for the future.

One exciting new initiative is the introduction of weekly prayer cards. When we receive a prayer request, the elders now send a brief note—either to the person being prayed for or to the one who submitted the request—letting them know they are being held in prayer. This simple yet meaningful act of care reminds our church family that they are surrounded by love and lifted up in faith.

Second, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is just over a week away. On March 5th at 7:00 p.m., we will gather in the sanctuary for a brief, 30-minute service to mark the start of this sacred season. The service will include the imposition of ashes, a powerful symbol of repentance and renewal—reminding us to turn from our own ways and refocus our hearts on God. I invite you to come, reflect, and enter this season with a spirit of renewal.

Third, if you're looking for a book to read during Lent, I invite you to join me in reading "How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy." I haven't read it yet, so recommending it comes with some risk—but I plan to read it as part of my Lenten journey. In the coming days, we will send out a link to the book along with an invitation to a one-time discussion (date and time to be determined).

In addition, I encourage you to follow along with our Lenten devotional, "Rest and Resilience: Following the Way of Jesus through Lent." This devotional, written by The Bethany Fellows—a ministry supporting young clergy in their first five years—offers meaningful reflections on the Lenten journey. Our church has long supported this ministry, and I look forward to sharing in this devotional practice together.

Finally, I just want to say how grateful I am to continue this spiritual journey with each of you. Together, we seek to serve Christ and one another.

Blessings,

Jacob

MAUNDY THURSDAY PRAYER VIGIL

For a number of years, Community Christian Church has taken part in a solemn Lenten Prayer Vigil during what is thought to be the time between the Last Supper and the death of Christ on the cross.

The Elders would like to invite the members of the congregation to take part in this time of prayer and reflection again this year. The Prayer Vigil begins immediately after the Maundy Thursday service on the evening of April 17th and extends through 3:00pm on Good Friday on April 18th.

Member of the congregation will be invited to share prayer requests and concerns that will be compiled into a list for those taking part in the Vigil. A compilation of meditations and prayers relevant to this period leading up to Easter will be available as a resource as well.

The Prayer Vigil is a wonderful opportunity for our church community to come together to contribute to an uninterrupted time of prayer and reflection, one that not only benefits those for whom we pray, but also deeply impacts those who take part in this time-honored practice. The Elders would like to extend a warm welcome to those who will take part in the vigil for the first time and express their gratitude to those who will return to take part again this year. Additional details about the vigil will be published in mid March.

And the Chili Cook-off Champion is...

Thank-you from the Elders!

The Elders would like to send a heartfelt thank-you to all who took part in the Elders Chili Cook-off on Sunday, February 2. From the chili entries, the home-made soups, the baked goods and other auction items, to the generous bidding and purchase of 50/50 tickets, our congregation and guests helped make the night a huge success.

We are so pleased to have raised enough money to send a gift of \$250 to the Parkway Central Chamber Club, whose student volunteers assisted with serving chili and providing beautiful music, and to make a \$1,000 contribution to the work of UrbanReachSTL. The funds raised will also help the Elders provide Lent and Advent reflection booklets for the congregation. It was truly a pleasure to spend the evening with all of you!

Congratulations to Ricki Williams, our first place winner in the Chili Cook-off, and to Betty Rega and her grandson Mason, our runners up!



WEEK OF COMPASSION

Dear Jacob,

On behalf of the Week of Compassion Board of Stewards, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in being a top contributing congregation in 2024. Your continued partnership is critical to our shared mission and we are most grateful for your generous gifts.

Warmly,

John Caldwell

In 2024, our church showed incredible generosity through Week of Compassion, contributing a total of \$6,363 to make a real difference in the world! Through our Annual Special Offering, we gave \$1,241, providing vital support where it was needed most. When natural disasters struck, we stepped up with \$2,147 in donations to bring relief and hope to those affected. Our commitment to global peace and healing was evident in the \$575 we gave to support Ukraine. And through the incredible work of the Stable Ministry, we contributed a remarkable \$2,400 to help transform lives. Every dollar given was a testament to our faith in action—thank you for being part of this amazing outpouring of love and compassion!



Book Discussion Group

The CCC Book Discussion Group will be meeting on Monday, March 17th in the Narthex for a conversation about the book, *The River We Remember* by William Kent Krueger.

Please contact Brenda Richardson for additional information about the group.

Senior “Fun Bunch” Lunch - Save the Date

Our next lunch will be on Wednesday, April 9th at 11:30 a.m.
Hope you will join us.

Financial Donation Spotlight: The Benefits of Donating to Community Christian Church Through Your IRA

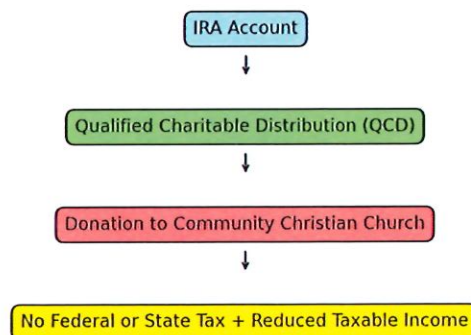
Did you know that you can make a **donation to Community Christian Church directly from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA)**? This method offers significant advantages, especially for those over 70½ years old. The IRS allows individuals to transfer up to **\$100,000 per year** from their IRAs to **charitable organizations** such as Community Christian Church without counting it as taxable income. This donation method is called a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)**. QCDs allow you to **lower your taxable income** and help you meet your **Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** while supporting a charitable cause you care about.

With the increased **standard deduction** in recent years, many taxpayers no longer itemize their deductions. This means that charitable contributions made via post-tax money **often cannot be deducted** from their taxable income. By donating through a **QCD**, you bypass this limitation. Not only do you reduce your taxable income, but you could also reduce your **Social Security benefits subject to tax** and potentially lower your **IRMAA (Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount)** surcharge for Medicare premiums.

Additionally, **IRA charitable donations** are simple to execute and ensure that your charitable gifts make a lasting impact. Since the donation isn't taxable for **federal or state** taxes, you can **avoid the income tax** you would typically pay on withdrawals, potentially saving you money in the long run.

For those looking for an easy way to contribute while minimizing tax burdens, donating from an IRA can be an **excellent choice** that maximizes your charitable impact. **However, before making any decisions, consult with your tax advisor and/or financial advisor** to determine how a QCD may impact your specific financial and tax situation.

Step-by-Step IRA Donation Process



We hope to have a question and answer session on this topic for members of the congregation at a future date this spring. Please let Beth in the church office know if you'd like to attend this session.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY at RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

The Mission team invites you to help prepare and serve breakfast to the families staying at the Ballas Road Ronald McDonald House on March 22nd. We will begin food preparation at 7:30 a.m. and serve the guests at 9:00 a.m. Please sign up in the Narthex or email the church office.



And don't forget to save your aluminum can tabs and drop them off in the designated container in the Narthex. The proceeds from recycling these tabs are donated back to Ronald McDonald House.

CCC BLOOD DRIVE

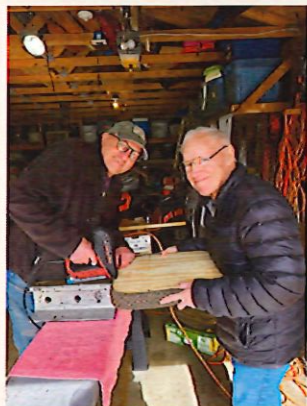
We'd like to thank all of those who helped make our blood drive this past Tuesday a great success. It takes quite a team to get the Narthex reconfigured and transformed for these quarterly donation events.

There were a total of 21 units of blood donated on Tuesday.

The next drive here at CCC will be on June 3rd.

SPECIAL THANKS TO CHAIR REPAIR CREW

We are so lucky to have many talented volunteers at CCC. This week Marlan, Karl, Marty and Jim spent 2 days repairing some of our broken folding chairs. Of course it was also nice of Wanda to provide lunch and cocoa for one of their work sessions.



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

This year's devotional will be available for pick up in the Narthex starting on Sunday, March 2nd.

PRISCILLA WOMEN'S GROUP

Priscilla Women's Group will meet on Tuesday, March 11 at 6:30 p.m. in the library. Our study will be Numbers 27:1-7 on pages 51-53 in *Just Women*; the story of women who risked speaking out and changed their own lives and the lives of women in future generations.

Our service project this month will be donations to Sweet Babies. This local non-profit provides baby necessities to low-income families. Their mission is to reduce infant mortality and give babies a better start.

Join us for study, prayer, fellowship and service.

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