



CHRIST LUTHERAN'S BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Christ Connections



january/february 2026

WEDNESDAYS ABLAZE

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

8:45 a.m. Traditional Worship
10:00 a.m. The Bridge Service
11:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship
10-10:45 a.m. Sunday School



CHRISTLUTHERAN
providence | online

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, January 25 • 12:15 p.m.

in the Sanctuary -or- Christ Online (Youtube)



CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA





PASTOR RYAN RITZMANN

Ringing in the New Year

Right after Christmas there's this time, just before the new year, where almost nothing happens. In our frenetic American culture, it's truly a unique thing to experience. And at the church, it's nice to have. We've been going at a fever pitch until we reach Christmas and so there's a nice lull waiting on the other side. Almost nothing happens; but of course, there is still Ministry happening.

On Christmas Day, Thursday, December 25th, we had our Room in the Inn Ministry. Maybe you're saying how could a ministry happen on that day? But of course, that is the most beautiful ministry to happen on that day. Room in the Inn, named after Mary and Joseph's inability to find a place to stay on December 25th, is the most appropriate ministry to happen on that day and in our church. Homelessness doesn't take a rest just because it's a holiday. A dozen or so ministers will see that those who are unhoused find a place to stay in our church. They are literally doing God's work.

This is who we are. We give up our lives because our Lord gave His life. Just because that ministry or that day is inconvenient doesn't mean it shouldn't happen. In fact, that's kind of the point of ministry — it molds us. If it were easy, could it really form us? In the same way that a bodybuilder must lift heavier weights or a student must learn more difficult mathematical equations, we take on more as Christians. The more we learn about who our God is the more we realize what He has done for us, and that appreciation encourages us to deepen our relationship. Our lives are to look like our Lord's. He avoided nothing in order to give us everything.

So, where is God leading you? What does the new year look like for you and your spiritual journey? How will your faith grow this year? There are an untold number of ways in which we can engage with our Lord and what He is doing for His kingdom and our church. The most important thing you can do is to pay attention to what you're doing. Are you taking steps out of your comfort zone? Are you developing habits of devotion that create the foundation for Spiritual growth? Are you surrounding yourself with other Christians so that you can transform and be transformed together by the Holy Spirit?

If you don't know where to start, I would encourage you to experience God with the new Wednesday Bible study class called Experiencing God. I'll tell you this is the real deal. The class will be intense and meaningful — not just a Bible study to go through the motions, but in fact a way to learn how to grow in our faith.

Now, maybe you can't make it on a Sunday to a Bible study or to Wednesdays Ablaze. I get it. My whole life seems more chaotic by the day. More and more I wonder if I've married a wife or an Uber driver for a very select clientele. But my wife and I agree that it is in the inconvenience that our children see the importance of what we do. And our Lord agrees that it is by the inconvenience that we are transformed. This work of the Spirit, that we call sanctification, happens in the struggle, outside of our comfort zone, and it is what we focus on. From my perspective the most important thing we can do is start the new year on the right foot and seek our Lord.

Let me encourage you to make time. Find a Sunday School class, a Wednesdays Ablaze class or a small group to be a part of and grow with our Lord and His people.

Blessings in 2026!
Pastor Ryan



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providence |online

ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
Sunday, January 25 • 12:15 p.m.
in the Sanctuary -or- Christ Online

FOR LIVESTREAM LINK:
christelca.org/online



located between
the Ministry Center
& Lower Commons

SUN | TU | W | TH
9:30a.m. - 12:30p.m.

NET PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE
OUTREACH MINISTRIES OF
CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH.

SALE!!
January 4-13

on a variety of
Fall & Christmas items

Note:
We will be closed
Jan. 14-15 for our
annual inventory.



NEW MEMBER CLASS

Sunday, February 8 & 15

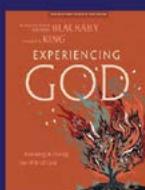
12:15 - 2:30 p.m. in the Forum

Join us for our upcoming New Member class! This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with our pastors & staff while delving into the Lutheran faith & the history of CLC. Lunch will be provided.



Scan/Click to Register

MORE INFO: khofmann@christelca.org
mparker@christelca.org



PASTOR SCOTT'S CLASS:
Experiencing God STARTS JAN. 7
Wednesdays • 6-7:30 p.m.
Forum A&B -or- Online

How do you know the will of God for your life? This 13-wk course will walk through the seven steps to consider as you submit your will to God's. Purchase your book at Amazon.com. Led by Pastor Scott & Leigh Ann Harris.

VIRTUAL LINK: christelca.org/online

**WEDNESDAYS
ABLAZE**

Dinner 5:00-6:00 p.m.

in Fellowship Hall (\$8 adults/\$6 child/\$30 family max)
To speed up your check-in, prepay for dinner in Realm

Activities & Classes 6:00-7:30 p.m.

STARTS JANUARY 7!!

LEARN MORE & RSVP FOR DINNERS:
christelca.org/wednesdays-ablaze

EPIPHANY SERMON SERIES: Against the Grain: Following Jesus

Overview: Many times throughout our lives we hear "Go with the flow." We learn that a "good Christian" follows the rules, obeys authorities, and goes along to get along. These can be very helpful and faithful pathways to help us navigate the many responsibilities we juggle. But in history, Scripture, and in our own experiences, we discover that our God is One who surprises us. In the very birth of God in Jesus Christ, we see that God has a different way of encountering his people. In this sermon series after Christmas, we continue to see, through Jesus Christ, the ways that God defies the expectations of his people and "goes against the grain." As followers of Jesus, we are also called, and supported, to grow into a life of faith that is full of challenge, surprise and transformation.

January 4 • The Messiah is a... Baby?

Isaiah 9:2-7 (NLT); Matthew 2:2-12 (NLT)

For centuries, the people of Israel waited for their Messiah to come. They did not expect their king to come as a vulnerable baby born in humble circumstances. No one expected their Messiah to be born in a stable. Jesus' arrival was different. People did not come from all over to pay him homage, except for some magi from the East. In their encounter, they discovered not a great mighty ruler, but a little baby, who was the very Son of God.

January 11 • It's Not Right This Way!

Matthew 3:13-17; Isaiah 53:1-3

Not much ruffled the feathers of John the Baptist. He lived in the desert. He ate locusts and wild honey and wore animal skins. He was paving the way for the Lord, proclaiming that all should turn and repent. People flocked to hear him, but when Jesus arrives and asks to be baptized by him, John, a man steeped in scripture, refuses saying that Jesus is the one who should baptize him. Even with his influential cousin, Jesus is going Against the Grain of how his ministry should begin. This reversal shows us that the Kingdom of God is going to be different.

January 18 • Radical Inclusion

Luke 4:14-30; Isaiah 61:1-3

God forged a nation, his people Israel, through the faith and family of their father Abraham. Salvation would come through the Jews. The widespread belief took on the additional meaning that salvation would come only to the Jews. Indeed, Jesus, born a Jew, brought salvation to his people, but when he speaks a message that salvation is for the Gentile too, his listeners react in an uproar. As followers of Jesus, we too are called to speak a message of inclusion of the grace of God to all.

January 25 • Just Say the Word

Matthew 8:5-13; Isaiah 49:5-6

February 1 • Are You the One?

Matthew 11:1-6; Isaiah 35:3-6

February 8 • It Doesn't Add Up

Matthew 20:1-16; Exodus 33:17-33

February 15 • Can't We Just Stay on the Mountaintop?

Matthew 17:1-13; Deuteronomy 18:15-19

READ MORE: christelca.org/sermon-series

Re-membering

by PASTOR RYAN

For those who have joined Christ Lutheran in the last 18 months, plan to come to an event with others who have just joined. On Sunday, February 1st after the Contemporary service, we will join together in Forum A&B to have lunch and hear about your experience and how things are going at your new church home.

Being a member of Christ Lutheran is not just about having our name on the roll. It is about furthering our relationship with Jesus Christ. To that end, I want to make sure that you are doing well. That you are connecting and plugging in. That what you thought you were getting into is what you have experienced. And, maybe you have ideas about what we as a congregation can do.

In a big church like ours, sometimes people can feel lost or overwhelmed with all the things going on. At this Re-Membering Event, you can learn about what others have tried, talk with a pastor, or share what you have learned. Your experience helps your church continue to stay connected with new members and help those who come after get connected even easier. And, we know that getting connected is vital for spiritual growth.

To help us plan for lunch, please let us know you're coming by registering in REALM. Scan the QR Code in the ad to the right, or for more information contact Mary Parker (mparker@christelca.org) or myself at rritzmann@christelca.org. Let's further our spiritual journey together!

What is NAMI?

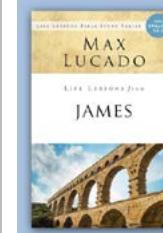
The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Charlotte is a passionate, peer led grassroots organization committed to educating, supporting and advocating for anyone affected by mental illness. A mental illness is a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Mental illness can affect persons of any age and occur in any family. They are not caused by bad parenting and not evidence of weakness of character. The families and members of NAMI Charlotte are here to help! They offer understanding to anyone concerned about mental illnesses and the treatment of mental illness.

The NAMI Navigator CLT program empowers individuals and families to navigate the complexities of mental health care with compassion, expertise and hope. By providing trustworthy and confidential guidance, access to resources, and practical tools, we connect individuals to the support systems they need to thrive. Our program bridges gaps in the mental health system by offering comprehensive referrals, educational materials and self-help strategies, ensuring that everyone can access the care they deserve. Together, we build a community where no one faces mental health challenges alone.

NAMI Navigator CLT is a free, easy to use online directory, featuring information on Mecklenburg County mental health resources and services for people of all ages and all types of needs. You can search online at naminavigatorcharlotte.org or call a NAMI Navigator who will connect you with someone who can offer support and information about mental health services. Their call line, 704-705-7004 is open Monday–Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Here are a few other resources as well:

- Mecklenburg County Mobile Crisis Line: 704-566-3410
- 24/7 Alliance Health Crisis Line: 800-510-9132
- In a crisis, call 9-1-1 and ask for a "CIT-Trained Officer"
- Call or text 9-8-8 or chat online at 988lifeline.org
- Text "NAMI" to 741741 for 24/7, confidential, free crisis counseling



FAITH FELLOWSHIP NEW SERIES:
Life Lessons from James

Sundays • 10:10:45 a.m.
Forum A&B -or- Online (Zoom)

Pastor & author Max Lucado asks, "Do your Monday actions reflect your Sunday worship?" and leads us to the book of James for answers and practical wisdom.

ZOOM LINK: christelca.org/online

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Thursday Morning Women's Bible Study

meets weekly from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in the Forum A&B



Starting January 8th, join Margaret Feinberg in a joy-filled study of James, the book of the Bible that sounds more like Jesus than any other letter in the New Testament. Book can be purchased from Amazon.com.

MORE INFO: julia.edelson@gmail.com

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ROOM IN THE INN

Christ Providence is now hosting our neighbors in need each Thursday evening - **overnight hosts, transportation/drivers, & one additional coordinator are needed!**



<< Info & Signup:
signupgenius.com
lane.goode@gmail.com

260326

NEW EPISODE EACH WEEK!



Led by Christ Lutheran pastors, Deeper Dive will tackle your big questions about religion & life.

Check it out now>
christelca.org/podcast



Christ Choir

Wednesdays • 7:15 p.m. in the Music Room

Singers aged high school and up are invited to join our Traditional choir.
- Rehearsals begin January 7 -

MORE INFO: pbiedenbender@christelca.org

Brothers in Faith Book Study

Thursdays at 7:00 a.m.
at the South Land

(315 Reid Dairy Rd. in Waxhaw)

Adult men are invited to join this new, weekly book study as we delve into *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. We look forward to seeing you there!

MORE INFORMATION:
David Diertert (dierert0103@gmail.com)

Centering Prayer

Are you searching for a few moments to be still & meet God in silent prayer?

Join us 2nd & 4th Mondays
at noon in the Worship Parlor

MORE INFO:
Laura Tang (Lttang@earthlink.net)



Trying Something New

by MARK JOHANSON

In sixth grade, my school began a new music curriculum where all students were required to enroll in either band or choir. Only because my cousin had given me a hand-me-down instrument at one point was I assigned to play trumpet, essentially by default. I learned the notes, played the scales, and went along with it, but I wouldn't say I was ever any good at it.

Less than a year passed before a family at my church caught wind of my subpar trumpeting—in a manner of speaking—and they encouraged me to pick up the French Horn instead. They were a very musical family, all of them playing in our ad-hoc church orchestra and singing in the choir. I had their support and help as I adjusted to the new instrument, and it was because of their encouragement that I was nudged towards taking music as an elective in middle and high school, playing in honor bands and going on tours along the way. But every Sunday, I was found playing French Horn in church, until I went to college and pursued other musical interests.

It's one thing to feel the nudge to try something new, but entirely another to act on it. Going solo on renewing interest in a musical instrument is tough, which is why a community of supporters is helpful. The Christ Lutheran orchestra ministry is just that community of supporters. Novices and professionals alike are encouraged to participate. If you're rusty on your instrument and are understandably uncomfortable playing in a "performance" setting, just practicing with the group while you get your chops back is welcomed! If this note nudged you to try something new, please reach out to me and let's talk. You can email me at mjohanson@christelca.org or come talk to me on Sunday morning. Thanks for considering it!

Adult Sunday School Classes START JANUARY 4TH!!

CLC Book Club 10:00-10:45 a.m.

in Lackey Parlor

The CLC Book Club is open to anyone. We read and discuss books of all kinds, but primarily books on faith, our relationship with God, human nature, scripture, or biographies of faith leaders. Our discussions can be lively and frank. We do not shy away from controversial topics. We thrive on competing opinions, but we expect civility and respect for one another. Even if you have not read the assigned chapter, we encourage everyone to attend. We'll catch you up and let you talk anyway! Sometimes there are donuts (when we meet in person). All are welcome.

—Led by Dan Hansen and Carl Edgren

Faith Fellowship: The Bible & Beyond

10:00-10:45 a.m. *in Forum A&B*
-or- *Christ Online (Zoom)*

(Jan. 4-Feb. 8) *Life Lessons from James: Practical Wisdom* by Max Lucado. James, Jesus' half-brother, knew that a life of faith was all about actions that revealed a difference in a person's life. As do Christians today, he believed that "works" did not save the Christian, but that they marked the Christian. His message encourages, challenges and confronts, offering constructive words and admonitions to live out our faith. Pastor and author Max Lucado's 6-session series brings the Bible to life with intriguing questions, inspirational stories and poignant reflections to take us deeper into God's Word. Each session includes an opening reflection, background information, an excerpt of the Biblical text, exploration questions, inspirational thoughts from Pastor Lucado, and a closing takeaway for further reflection.

(Feb. 15-March 29) *The Seven Greatest Words of Love* by Rick Warren. In the final hours of Jesus' life on earth, He made 7 statements as He was dying on the Cross. Through His final words, we learn God is holy, sin is ugly and salvation costly. Yet, out of love, Jesus paid the price for our sins. Pastor Warren has chosen a single word defining each of the statements to express its profound meaning to participants — forgiveness, assurance, love, substitution, humanity, victory and trust.

(April 12-May 17) *Nurturing You Faith Series: Prayer*. Pastor Max Lucado will open our 6-session study of prayer with a compelling sermon titled "We Do Not Know How to Pray." Following will be a 4-session video series produced by Lutheran Hour Ministries and narrated by Rev. Don Everts exploring 4 different types of prayer in the believer's life. Prayers of Intercession, Gratitude, Confession and Praise are considered in various scriptural settings by highlighting a particular prayer's context, who offered it, why, and how God worked through it on behalf of His people. He speaks of how the primacy of prayer in the life of God's people is central in Scripture beginning in Genesis around the time of Adam and Eve's son, Seth, and ending in Revelation with the apostle John's petition to Jesus: "Amen. Come Lord

Jesus." Complimentary to our study is Dr. Charles Stanley's book *Deepening Your Prayer Life*. He emphasizes how we should communicate with God, freely and conversationally, first by speaking and then listening to what He has to say in return. He reveals that our prayers go beyond mere human interaction in that it gives us access into the very throne room of God because of our position in Christ, a privilege of our salvation. Therefore, we can be bold in believing God will accomplish what He promised He would do in our lives.

—Led by Barbara Burton, Milt Marin, Miriam Morrison, and Barbara Anderson

The Crew 10:00-10:45 a.m.

in Room W150 -or- Christ Online (Zoom)

We'll be taking a slow and steady walk through Scripture in Colossians — continuing from Colossians 2:11 on Jan. 4, 2026. The pace will be unhurried, giving space to chew on the content, ask questions, and let God's Word sink deeply. Each week we'll also spend intentional time praying within the group, supporting one another, and seeking the Spirit's leading together.

—Led by David Deeds

Emerge: Digging Deeper 10:00-10:45 a.m.

in the Music Room

All are welcome in Emerge Sunday School as we dive into The Word and discuss how it relates to our busy lives.

—Led by Rob and Kristen Stark

Faith in Action Women's Bible Study

10:00-10:45 a.m. *in Forum C*

The Faith in Action women's class seeks to enrich our faith through scripture study and readings for living in today's world. We are currently reading Chad Bird's *Limping with God: Jacob and the Old Testament Guide to Messy Discipleship*. We use this book to examine not just Jacob's story but our own story. As children of God we are chosen as His own no matter our flaws and weaknesses. As Chad Bird says in *Limping with God*, "Following Jesus, we discover, ironically, that the longer we follow him, the weaker we become and the more we lean on our Lord. Finally, at our most mature, our eyes are opened to realize that we've never run or walked or even limped a single day of our lives. We've been on Christ's shoulders the entire time." We invite you to join us on Sunday mornings!

—Led by Joyce Brigman and Linda Murdock

Studies of Scripture

10:00-10:45 a.m. *in the Adult Library*

This is a Bible study involving 4 different scriptures each week. We look for the common thread between a Psalm, Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel lesson. We study each scripture with Biblical history and how it reflects in our lives today.

—Led by John Sensenbrenner and B Crigler

For hybrid classes, find Zoom links on
Christ Online's Virtual Schedule:
christelca.org/online

WEDNESDAYS ABLAZE

Dinner 5:00-6:00 p.m.

in Fellowship Hall (\$8 adults/\$6 child/\$30 family max)
To speed up your check-in, prepay for dinner in Realm

Activities & Classes 6:00-7:30 p.m.

STARTS JANUARY 7!!

LEARN MORE & RSVP FOR DINNERS:
christelca.org/wednesdays-ablaze

ADULT CLASSES

Pastor Scott's Class: Experiencing God

6:00-7:30 p.m. in Forum A&B -or- Christ Online (Zoom)

How do you know the will of God for your life? This 13-week course will walk participants through the seven steps to consider as you submit your will to God's. Please order your workbook on Amazon.com.

—Led by Pastor Scott Suskovic and Leigh Ann Harris

Life in Christ

6:00-7:30 p.m. in Cornerstone Cafe area

Welcome to Life in Christ! Our focus here is on living the way Jesus intended for us. Together, we will explore how to build a strong relationship with Jesus and nurture our faith to share with others. Discovering God's plan for us, fostering relationships, and spreading love to our loved ones are all part of Life in Christ. Let's embark on this journey together!

—Led by Pastor Ryan and Ashley Ritzmann

Gospel Fit Class (starts Jan. 14th)

6:30-7:30 p.m. in Center Six

Come on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. to praise God through dance and movement! Gospel Fit is a unique fitness program paired with cardio hip hop music. It combines explosive dance moves with toning exercises. It's designed to be fun and accessible, with repetitive, easy-to-follow moves set to popular music. With instructor Tracy Reynolds, we will be dancing and exercising to praise and Gospel music and will conclude with prayer. Class will be every Wednesday except the first Wednesday of the month. Cost \$5 per class.

—Led by Tracy Reynolds

GriefShare (starts Jan. 14th)

6:00-7:30 p.m. in Church Office Great Room

GriefShare is a 13-week long, Christ-centered grief support group open to members and nonmembers. GriefShare uses three components — a DVD lesson, small group discussion and a workbook to help those who have lost loved ones find healing and hope. Books are available for purchase for \$20.

—Led by Chris and Kimberly Mengel

CHILDREN & YOUTH

WEDNESDAY MUSIC & ACTIVITIES

INFANTS-36 MONTHS

Nursery Care Available

6:00-7:30 p.m. in Rm. M230-231

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ELEMENTARY

PreK-1st Grade

Devotion, Music & Activities

6:00-6:45 p.m. in Rm. M237-238

2nd-5th Grade

Devotion, Music & Activities

6:00-6:45 p.m. in Rm. M239-240

Elementary students who need to wait for parents or older siblings to finish Wednesdays Ablaze activities are welcome to enjoy supervised Open Gym from 6:45-7:30 in Spirit Hall.

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MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

6th-8th Grade

Open Gym, Worship, Music & Activities

6:00-7:30 p.m. starting in Spirit Hall

9th-12th Grade

Fellowship, Worship, Music & Activities

6:00-7:30 p.m. starting in the Pit

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DANCE ELECTIVE

Middle & High School

6:00-6:30 p.m. in Rm. C301

Elementary

6:30-7:00 p.m. in Rm. C301

Locations/times/classes are subject to change.
See christelca.org/wednesdays-ablaze for latest schedule.

ADULT MUSIC

Luther Ringers

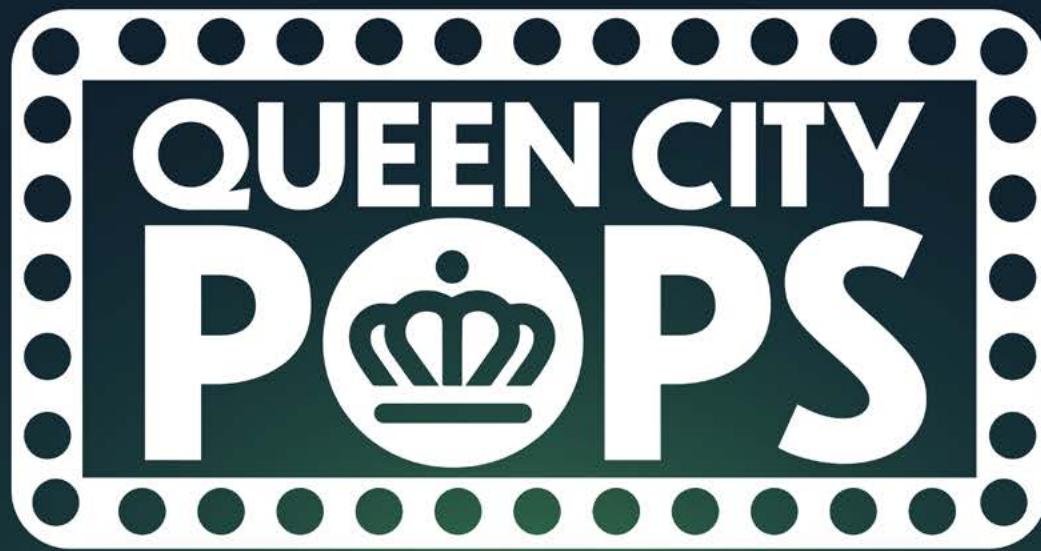
6:00-7:15 p.m. in Rm. M245

Christ Choir

7:15-8:45 p.m. in Rm. M248

high schoolers & adults welcome





Friday, March 20
7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Defying Gravity

BLOCKBUSTER BROADWAY

DIRECT FROM BROADWAY - STARRING!



Scott Coulter



Jessica Hendy



Kelli Rabke



John Boswell

\$30 GENERAL ADMISSION | \$15 STUDENT | \$40 VIP
Scan Qr Code for More Info and RSVP





PUT A BOW ON IT

Fall Family Night is a Wrap!

While Family Night this fall was shorter than typical semesters, it was full of fun! Over the course of eight weeks, students and families were able to receive a warm meal, mingle with school leaders and other families, build community and learn something new!

Clubs and classes were fun and engaging with dedicated leaders. There were several new leaders, new meals team members, and new clubs. Students enjoyed art, computer building, sports (basketball and volleyball — with a NEW leader), woodworking, hiking, crafts, Ten80 racing, culinary with a heavier emphasis on baking, and Girl Scouts, and they also received mentorship opportunities. Center Stage Drama was a brand new club this fall and students presented Alice in Wonderland on the final night. Younger siblings were well loved by volunteers where they had the best crafts, puzzles, snacks and games. Something new for our 3rd-5th graders was robotics and coding! Through a partnership with You Can Tech, those young students really built a strong foundation in tech and had their robots moving on command! Parents came in strong and had multiple classes to choose from including Getting Ahead, Women's Journey and ESL.

This has been a great semester of programming at McClintock. While we are taking a break over Christmas and New Year, we are excited for an equally exciting

Spring Semester! Come see what all the hype's about! Students are eager to have new options and concepts to learn about!

Spring Family Night Needs

Spring Family Night Needs New Year... New Resolutions... New Volunteers? It's that time of year where resolutions are made and habits change. If you are looking to get involved with McClintock Partners in Education (McPIE), please contact Angela Davis at adavis@christelca.org.

There are MANY ways in which you can support McClintock students, teachers and families. Opportunities are as easy as serving dinner all the way to leading a fun club for students. Start the New Year with purpose and make a difference in a student and family's life!

Have a passion through work or play? Share that with middle school students. We are always looking for new clubs to offer. Are you a medical professional? We would LOVE to have another medical related club. Do you have robotics experience? McClintock has a Robotics team and we would love to offer a club to get these students prepared to maybe join that team next year! Do you play chess? Do you sew or into fashion design? Is community service your thing? Create a club where students have a weekly project! Are there other STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) related ideas that you have? The possibilities are endless. No idea is a bad idea, so please share! Reach out to Angela Davis (adavis@christelca.org) if you have any questions, ideas, or would like to volunteer!



Christmas Sponsorship Thank You!!

The spirit of giving was felt by all at our annual Christmas Shopping Family Sponsorship Event from December 12–15! With families in need of some Christmas magic, we sponsored 20 McClintock families plus additional church and community families! Being able to give back and help our McClintock community was wonderful! Many families have been hit hard this year with dwindling benefits, rising prices and extra burdens.

Multiple comments of “*Amazing, great, and most helpful.*” “*Excelente*” and “*this means so much to our family*” were heard throughout the weekend by grateful moms, dads and grandparents. One specific family said “*It was GREAT. It was nice people and conversations. I felt seen and heard. The volunteers were warm and inviting.*” Another, “*The best part is that the gifts were so thoughtful. It was impressive that church really is doing outreach that is truly engaging.*” Volunteers shopped for wish list items. It was great to have so many Christ Lutheran middle and high school youth also shop for items for their peers. This youth perspective is valuable when deciding what students and siblings prefer!

When families came to wrap their special gifts at Christ Lutheran, we had all their wish list gifts set up in a dedicated space for them with wrapping paper, bags

and ribbon. Families were able to wrap gifts for their children while volunteers built important relationships with family members, helping add the perfect bow to their gifts. *“I’m grateful my company provides community service hours making it possible to give back during the holiday. Each year, I save those hours for the Christmas Shopping, Family Sponsorship event because it allows me to spend meaningful time with other volunteers and see firsthand the impact we make. At a time when many families are struggling, helping put smiles on faces and easing the burden for caregivers is truly rewarding.”* Volunteers are just as blessed as the families receiving gifts!

THANK YOU to all the volunteers who shopped for gifts, donated gifts, donated funds, helped set up and assisted families wrapping. The spirit of Christmas was alive and well this holiday season! The shopping event epitomizes the Christmas spirit and the McPIE mission. Volunteers and sponsors generously donate time, talents and money to ensure that families enjoy Christmas. The wish lists are simple — often just household basics like sheets, towels and cookware, coats and clothing for the kids and a toy or two. In receiving these gifts, the families are lifted and reminded that they are a part of the McPIE and Christ Lutheran community. What a way to share the Christmas spirit with neighbors and bring a smile to McClintock families during this season!



American Red Cross

NEXT BLOOD DRIVE:

Sunday, January 18

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

in Spirit Hall

SIGN UP TO DONATE at redcrossblood.org

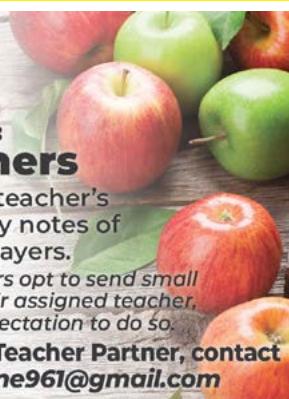


DAYTIME OPPORTUNITY: Teacher Partners

Brighten a McClintock teacher's day by sending monthly notes of encouragement and prayers.

While some Teacher Partners opt to send small gifts or spend time with their assigned teacher, there is no obligation or expectation to do so.

If you would like to be a Teacher Partner, contact Jeanne Hunt: [hutnjeanne961@gmail.com](mailto:huntjeanne961@gmail.com)



DAYTIME OPPORTUNITY: McClintock Tutors



Volunteers needed to help tutor students needing extra help at McClintock Middle School, especially 6th grade math.

Contact Emma LeSaint if interested in volunteering:
emma.n.lesaint@gmail.com



DAYTIME OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FALL: Teacher Luncheons

Support teachers and staff at McClintock Middle School with lunches on early release days. Volunteers needed to prepare dishes as well as help serve.

If you are interested in joining this team, contact Melinda Dale at melinda28226@hotmail.com



Clothing Donations for Crisis Assistance

Bring new or gently used clothing (cleaned & in bags please) to donate to our neighbors in need!

Drop off **CLOTHING ONLY** at the Outreach Office Mon-Fri. On Sunday, the blue bins will be outside the Outreach Office doors.

PLEASE, NO TOYS OR HOUSEHOLD ITEMS
Questions? nealmann@bellsouth.net

SERVING & OUTREACH

Room in the Inn Update

Room in the Inn (RITI) is off to a great start. Thank you to all that have signed up. Here are some spots we can still use some help:

Van Driver: Thursdays 4:30–6:00 p.m.; Fridays 6:00–7:00 a.m. No CDL needed!

Overnight Hosts: Arrive Thursday 7:00 p.m.; depart Friday 7:00 a.m. For men or couples. Quiet evening at CLC B&B. Great fellowship.

Coordinator: Anyone interested in joining our RITI as a coordinator? One Thursday per month, December–March. Great way to serve.

For signups, go to CLC RITI 2025-26 via SignUpGenius.com. Direct any questions to lane.goode@gmail.com or (704) 516-1645.

AGM Recap and Thank You

AGM was a hit this year! Within the first day, donations and purchases were already above \$10,000! That is impressive! As of mid-December, \$11,528 has been contributed among the designated causes. The list of non-profits and programs to select from were wide and there was something for everyone to choose from that was close to their heart. From McPIE to honeybees, refugees to Bibles, human trafficking to life-giving water and more, your donations and support will truly make an impact around the world! Thank you to all who contributed!



Mental Wellness Talks Continue

by PASTOR ADRIENNE

On January 14th, we will resume our talks about mental wellness. Parents of children of all ages will benefit from hearing about how we can support our children and families in navigating a complex world. Topics include technology, anxiety, AI and so many other relevant topics. Trent Morrow from L & B Counseling will share these presentations and facilitate conversations every second Wednesday of the month in Forum C.

About the Speaker

Trent Morrow is a licensed clinical mental health counselor and a speaker with over a decade of experience working with children, teens and families. As a therapist at L & B Counseling, Trent is known for his relatable, engaging style and his ability to make complex mental health topics easy to understand and apply. His passion lies in helping people of all ages navigate challenges with clarity, confidence, and compassion.

About L & B Counseling

L & B Counseling offers outpatient therapy and personalized mental wellness services, specializing in treating anxiety, ADHD, depression, grief, trauma, substance and behavioral addictions, life transitions, and relationship challenges through family and couples therapy. Every service is designed to meet clients where they are and help them build healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Email: hello@landbcounseling.net

Phone: 704-247-7353



Anniversary of Baptism

by PASTOR ADRIENNE

Each year we take a sacred moment in worship to honor everyone in our congregation who was baptized over the past twelve months. It is one of the most joyful traditions we share — something we call the Anniversary of Baptism. Those who were baptized, as well as their parents, come forward for a special blessing and receive a candle holder to mark the occasion and to remember the light of Christ that now shines in their lives.

This celebration is part of our Stepping Stone ministry, and is a reminder of the transforming grace God has poured out on our congregation. We are reminded: let our light so shine!

On Sunday, January 11th we will invite all those who were baptized to come forward during either the Traditional or Contemporary Service to receive a special blessing and candle holder. For parents of young children, we are also holding a baptismal brunch at 10 a.m. during the Sunday School hour to continue the celebration with tasty pastries and helpful resources.

For more information, please contact Pastor Adrienne at aladd@christelca.org.

MONTHLY PARENT CLASS

Mental Wellness in a Modern World

meets on 2nd Wednesday of each month
6:00 - 7:30 p.m. in Forum C

January 14

The Fight for Your Attention

February 11

Are Your Kids Living in a Haunted House?

March 11

How the Internet & AI Are Raising Your Children

April 15

Technology

May 13

Wrapping It All Up



Led by a mental health professional, Trent Morrow, LCSW, of L&B Counseling. Parents of children of all ages welcome!



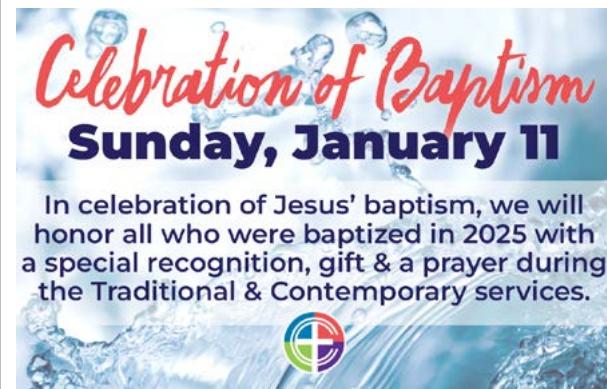
CONFIRMATION CAMP

for current 6th–8th graders

July 5–10
at Lutheridge



Click/Scan for More Info & RSVP>>
DEADLINE TO REGISTER: JULY 5



For info, email Caroline at cdiffley@christelca.org

VIRTUAL LINK:
christelca.org/online

VBS
Register Now!
Vacation Bible School
for ages 4 through rising 5th grade
June 15-19
Scan/Click QR Code to Register>>
TO VOLUNTEER: krank@christelca.org

SPOTLIGHT SUMMER CAMP **August 3-7**

A Year With Frog and Toad
Rising 2nd-5th graders are welcome to register for this all-day summer camp featuring singing, drama & choreography, led by CJ Michael & Jessica Luedeman.
Performance: Fri., Aug. 7th • 6pm (Fellowship Hall)
\$300 • Click/Scan QR Code for More Info & RSVP

CENTERSTAGE SUMMER CAMP **August 3-7**

Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka Jr.
Rising 6th - 12th graders are welcome to register for this all-day summer camp featuring singing, drama & choreography, led by Aj Calpo & Lamar Davis.
Performance: Fri., Aug. 7th • 7pm (The Pit)
\$300 • Click/Scan QR Code for More Info & RSVP

CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING
Sunday, January 11 • 12:15 p.m.
in Forum A&B

In addition to a background check every three years, we ask all of our volunteers working with children to attend one in-person training for child protection each year. We hold two a year in September & January. If you attended in September, you do not need to attend the winter training.

Scan/Click to Register
MORE INFO: aladd@christelca.org

Stepping Stones
FIRST COMMUNION

PREPARATION CLASSES • SAVE THE DATES
Feb. 22 • Meaning of the Meal • 1-3 p.m.
March 14 • Story Day • 8:45 a.m.-12 p.m.
March 29 • Livin' Forgivin' 1-3 p.m.

First Communion will take place during Maundy Thursday's service on April 9th (after the completion of the Seder Meal). Prep classes are for 2nd graders & their parents to attend together.

MORE INFO: krank@christelca.org



VBS 2026 - Registration is Open!

by KRISTEN RANK

Join us June 15-19 from 8:45 a.m. to noon as we dive into Rainforest Falls, where we will be exploring the nature of God and His creation!

This is a fun and faith-filled week with music, Bible lessons, recreation time, crafts and so much more! Many of our kids' favorite memories of church come from attending VBS, and we are looking forward to widely scattering the seeds of faith with our young ones.

Have a teenager? We love having our youth volunteer as counselors!

Campers must be 4 years old (by May 1st) through rising 5th grade and registration is in REALM. Scan the QR Code to the left to get started.

Questions? Contact Kristen Rank at krank@christelca.org.

Child Protection Training

by PASTOR ADRIENNE

The Family Ministry Team is updating our Safe Haven Child Protection Policy and Training. One of our top priorities is to create a safe and healthy environment for children, youth and volunteers to live out their faith as beloved children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ. Learning healthy boundaries is one way we do this.

In addition to a background check every three years, we ask all of our volunteers to attend one in-person training for child protection each year. We hold two a year. We held one in September and there will be another this January. If you attended the one in September, you do not need to attend the winter training.

If you would like to volunteer and take the training, our next training date is Sunday, January 11th after the Contemporary Service. We will provide lunch. Please scan the QR Code located in the ad to the left to register. If you have any questions, please reach out to Pastor Adrienne (aladd@christelca.org).

The Youth Corner

by TYLER WELLER

What a wonderful fall season it's been; our youth have been busy! From Limo Scavenger Hunt, Crowder Concert and Messy Games Night to Trunk or Treat, Corn Maze and Christmas Shopping, we are beyond excited about even more things to come in 2026.

I just want to highlight a snippet of what we have planned! We will begin the year continuing our Peer Ministry training on January 4th and January 25th immediately following Contemporary worship. We will learn valuable skills that the students can use as they go through life with their peers when inevitably issues arise. We will learn how to listen to others following the example of Jesus.

On January 11th we will be headed to Lucky Strike in Matthews for some fun at the bowling alley. This time of friendly competition is a great opportunity for students to disconnect and engage with one another.

The following weekend, January 17-19, we will be heading to the Teens Encounter Christ Retreat. Our students will have the opportunity to listen to other high schoolers and young adults share their faith stories as they explore the Easter story over three days. This faith-first retreat is a wonderful opportunity for parents to engage their high schoolers in their faith walk, setting the example of what living out your faith looks like. It surely is one of the highlights of my life!

On February 1st, we will have a fundraiser in support of the Xperience Tour. We will have a Tex-Mex themed dinner served by the students of the Xperience. All are welcome and we would love your support.

We will have another retreat up to Lutherock from February 6-8. Over this retreat our students will serve with Foscoe Home Team, an organization we had the pleasure of working with on our mission trip. We will spend most of the day Saturday serving there and then we will go snow tubing in the evening. Over the weekend we will stay at the Crow's Nest, where students will have an opportunity to sit and relax around a stone fireplace, play games and relax in a serene environment.

We will have plenty more exciting things to come but this is just what we have so far! There's plenty more cooking in oven! Stay tuned for more announcements.

High School Graduates 2026

Here at Christ Lutheran, we celebrate the High School Graduation Stepping Stone with a Quillow Blessing and Sending (a quillow is a quilt that folds into a pillow). On Quillow Sunday, June 7th, the graduates are blessed by their parents and sent out with this visible reminder that they are covered in love. All graduates will be presented at the end of Traditional and beginning of Contemporary worship. There will be a reception between the services.

In preparation for this special milestone, we are planning a Quillow Workshop where families and/or friends can work together on their graduate's quillow along with quilters from our church. We also are collecting pictures of the graduates to be included in the newsletter as well as in a slide show on Quillow Sunday. Families can email us two pictures of the graduate by March 15th — one of them as a child and one current. If you have a high school graduate, please email us to make sure you are included in all the information being sent to our high school seniors.

Also, if you are a quilter or have experience with sewing and interested in helping with this Stepping Stone, please email Caroline (cdiffley@christelca.org) or Natalya (nlegvold@christelca.org).



Peer
ministry leadership

Sunday, January 4 & 25
12:00 - 2:00 p.m. *in the Pit*

All high school students are invited to come learn some important life skills that can be used to help their peers get through tough life problems.

Scan/Click to Register>>



Hand-in-Hand TEC Retreat

Take part in a faith-building experience where others share their faith stories & how being in Christian Community has affected their life. **Open to 9th graders through adults.**

January 17-19, 2026

at Tekoa Foothills in Casar, NC

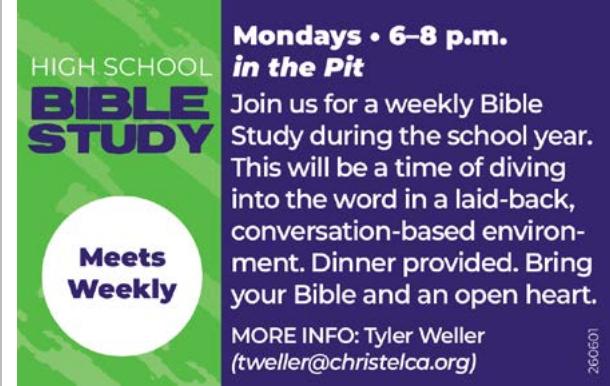
\$50 • Click/Scan to Register>>
MORE INFO: tweller@christelca.org




MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH
BOWLING
Sunday, January 11
3-5 p.m. at Lucky Strike (Matthews)

Let's go to Lucky Strike for an action-packed day of fun! It's going to be a day full of laughter, competition & memories!

Scan/Click to Register
MORE INFO: tweller@christelca.org

HIGH SCHOOL
BIBLE
STUDY

Meets Weekly

Mondays • 6-8 p.m.
in the Pit

Join us for a weekly Bible Study during the school year. This will be a time of diving into the word in a laid-back, conversation-based environment. Dinner provided. Bring your Bible and an open heart.

MORE INFO: Tyler Weller (tweller@christelca.org)

260501



High School
graduates
Class of 2026

ATTENTION If you have a HS senior, email Caroline (cdiffley@christelca.org) or Natalya (nlegvold@christelca.org) to receive graduate information.

IMPORTANT DATES

March 15: Childhood & current pic of grad due
June 7: Quillow Sunday for grads & parents



THE YOUTH CORNER - PHOTOS

(clockwise starting above) Middle & high school youth at Messy Game Night at CLC; Country Days Corn Maze in Indian Trail; and attending the Crowder Concert at Bojangles Coliseum Coliseum.

XPERIENCE
SUMMER TOUR FUNDRAISER
Sunday, February 1
5:00 p.m. in the Pit

The Xperience will host a fundraiser dinner to support their summer tour to Texas. Chef Mike & Alicia will provide a Tex-Mex style dinner (dine in or to go). Proceeds will support our fundraising goal of \$10,000.

Scan/Click to Register





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CHRIST LUTHERAN'S BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Christ Connections



january/february 2026

Scott Suskovic • Senior Pastor

Ryan Ritzmann • Pastor, Evangelism & Faith Formation

Adrienne Ladd • Pastor, Family Ministry

Alexis Williams • Minister, Christ Online

Angela Davis • Director of Outreach

Mark Johanson • Minister of Music

Tony Hyde • Director of Property and Finance

JOIN THE NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST

In your REALM profile, you can set newsletter mailing preferences to USPS mail or online delivery. Hard copies are available for pickup at each campus. You can also view the online, interactive version at christelca.org/latest-news/newsletter

CONTENT DEADLINES FOR 2026 EDITIONS

Jan/Feb - December 10 Mar/April - February 15 May/June - April 15

July/Aug - June 15 Sept/Oct - August 10 Nov/Dec - October 15

*Submit stories or other news items at christelca.org/jotform

