

SUMMER 2026

# The Disciple

Life at Christ Church Charlotte

A photograph of a man and a young girl playing in a large, circular stone fountain. The man, wearing glasses and a dark blue blazer over a light blue shirt, is smiling and holding the girl. The girl, with blonde hair and a large pink bow, is also smiling and pointing at the water. The fountain is made of light-colored stone and has a central spout with water spraying upwards. The background is a red brick building with a white-framed window and a black metal railing. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a church courtyard.

*Generosity flourishes here.*



# Generosity is flourishing

... at Christ Church. It is thriving in the lives of people of every age, creating ripples of hope that extend far beyond our walls. In these pages, we share stories of that generosity in action, offering a glimpse of the abundant life that grows from hearts rooted in Christ.

**We are so very grateful for you!**

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*... that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.*

- EPHESIANS 3:16-17

## contents

- 3 **Food for our Neighbors**  
A tangible expression of love
- 5 **"I Love Them in Advance"**  
One Habitat homeowner's story
- 7 **"You Did My Wedding"**  
Have you met Sis Cranz?
- 8 **Big Returns on Investment**  
How Joyce and Craig Cmiel found home
- 11 **Just Say Yes**  
Ryan Lupka & Thomas Walker put themselves out there
- 14 **Making Music & Connections**  
A family affair for the Kains
- 20 **Buy Coffee. Feed the World**  
The Commons Café has a mission
- 22 **Creativity & Craftsmanship**  
Shelby Amon sees the possibilities



# Food for our Neighbors

Christmas offering becomes a tangible expression of love.

As we gathered by candlelight and sang carols celebrating the birth of Jesus, another act of worship was unfolding: gifts were being gathered through our annual Christmas offering.

In 2025, the Christmas offering reached an extraordinary \$51,691.74. Moved by the decision to support feeding ministries during a season of uncertainty – when SNAP benefits were being paused and restarted and local food ministries were experiencing a dramatic increase in need – one donor offered a \$20,000 challenge gift. Together, the generosity of the congregation and that challenge gift resulted in the largest Christmas offering in our parish's history.

The offering was shared between Feeding Charlotte and Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte. It has become something tangible: food for our neighbors.

At Galilee Ministries, our Christmas offering helped launch Our Daily Bread and Soup ministry, providing homemade meals to neighbors experiencing food insecurity. Every



Monday and Tuesday, volunteers gather to simmer soup and roll dough. Unlike many assistance programs, no registration is needed. The soup and bread are offered freely as a gift, often filling the gap between food pantry distributions and community meal programs.

At Feeding Charlotte, a portion of the gift funded the purchase of a much-needed electric pallet jack to support their large food rescues and meal packaging events. Director Rich Armenia shared, "Our team was so excited! That pallet jack has probably moved over 300,000 pounds of food already!"

The remaining funds continue to support Feeding Charlotte's food rescue efforts and are projected to help deliver approximately 93,000 meals while keeping more than 115,000 pounds of food out of local landfills.

The Christmas story begins with a gift given for the sake of the world. Through your generosity, that story continues, one bowl of soup, one loaf of bread, one rescued meal, and one neighbor at a time.





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# "I love them in advance."

Habitat for Humanity builds community for homeowners and volunteers alike.

Lisa Skinner thought she would forever be caught in the loop of apartments and renting. Home ownership seemed so out of reach. But today, she is preparing to move into her own home built by Christ Church volunteers through Habitat for Humanity.

"This house means stability for my family. It is generational care. My kids are going to know, whatever happens in their life, they can always come home," Lisa shared.

The first time Lisa applied to Habitat she was denied. Looking back, she can see God's hand. "I wasn't ready or prepared for what it would mean for me to own a home. This time, I was ready." Lisa even joked that despite liking to get her nails done regularly, she opted for a clear coat on her nails so she could go all in. "I never pictured myself with a hammer, and I was lifting wall panels!"

Lisa and her family are preparing to move in before her kids start their next school year. The kids are excited about their rooms. Lisa and her husband are already planning cookouts in the backyard.

For Lisa, this has been about much more than construction. Reflecting on her experience with our Habitat team, shared, "They brought me in as family. This wasn't transactional. I haven't met everyone at Christ Church yet, but I love them in advance."

## Working Together

For 35+ years, Habitat for Humanity has been one of Christ Church's most visible expressions of service in the



community. Each year, parishioners roll up their sleeves, learn new skills, and work alongside neighbors to help build safe, affordable housing for local families.

Among those dedicated volunteers is Vic Grainger, who has been faithful to this ministry for many years. We asked Vic what keeps him coming back year after year.

## Why Vic Volunteers

"It's been an opportunity to gain some new skills. I'm a better handyman now than I was previously.



I have formed new friendships with church members I might not have otherwise gotten to know, given the size of our congregation. I have a close bond with several folks I met as a Habitat volunteer. In fact, my wife Jennifer and I got to know each other a few decades ago when

we both showed up as painters one day on a Christ Church Habitat build. Who knows - if you volunteer you might meet your future mate!

"It fulfills an obligation we have as Christians and as relatively privileged people to help others in our community. And by community, I don't mean just Myers Park. We need to get out of our own zip codes.

"But the top reason might be to witness the amazing joy when the homeowner receives the keys to their finished house. Most have never had a place they could truly call "home." They have been tenants and may have moved multiple times from rental to rental - not the most stable situation.

"This year Lisa will have her own bedroom, closet, and bathroom, and her children will have their own space. And now she has an opportunity to build a little net worth slowly as her monthly payments reduce her mortgage."

Vic's story highlights what makes the Christ Church Habitat partnership so meaningful. Volunteers may arrive expecting to help build a house, but they often leave with new friendships, new perspectives, and a deeper connection to the wider community. Most importantly, they help create the foundation for a family to thrive for generations to come.





# *“You did my wedding.”*

Sis Crazz’ legacy of beautiful memories for countless couples.

For more than 40 years, Sis Crazz has been a steady, joyful presence behind the scenes at Christ Church weddings. Even after helping orchestrate hundreds of big days, the excitement has never worn off.

“I just get so tickled when people bump into me and say, ‘You did my wedding!’,” she says with a smile.

Sis has, in fact, done a lot of weddings. Tucked away in a box at home is a keepsake collection of programs from every wedding she has directed, from the very first to the most recent. Each one is a reminder of the many couples and families she has guided through one of life’s most joyful and important moments.

“It is the most fun job,” Sis says. “There is not one wedding that is the same. You get to know brides and their families on the happiest of occasions.”

As a wedding director, Sis is involved in every detail, from preparing the altar to lining up the bridal party and making sure mothers and grandmothers are seated at just the right moment. She helps create a sense of calm amid the flurry of nerves, flowers, and final touches.

Her favorite moment? “When they’ve walked down the aisle.”

By then, Sis knows that all the planning, rehearsing, and careful coordination has come together. The couple is in place, surrounded by loved ones, ready to make their vows.

Sis enjoyed directing weddings so much she couldn’t help but invite others to join. One of those people was Betsy Westerberg. At first Sis simply invited Betsy to “try it” as an assistant.

Betsy was a young mother, and she can still remember Sis calling her. “We talked for about an hour. I was so happy to be connected to this wonderful person.” Since that call nearly 30 years ago, Betsy too has directed many weddings. “Sis trained me for all of it.”

Betsy and Sis didn’t just serve together as wedding directors. Soon after that phone call, they became a form of family for each other. They have made memories through shared holidays, hosting baby showers, and celebrating life’s ups and downs.

“Sis brings such a positive attitude. She brings enthusiasm to all she does. She is true gold to me,” Betsy says.

And Sis Crazz is also gold to the 200+ couples she has helped make it down the aisle to exchange rings of that same precious material.



**Betsy Westerberg (left) with Sis Crazz. Sis enjoyed directing weddings so much she couldn’t help but invite others to join.**



# "We have gotten so much more back."

When people find a place to belong, they begin to feel at home and true wellbeing begins to flourish.

**F**rom Washington, D.C. to San Francisco, San Diego, and eventually Charlotte, Joyce and Craig Cmiel have carried one conviction with them. "Wherever we found ourselves, in the church we found home," says Joyce.

"Our family has gotten involved in all of the Episcopal churches along the way, and we have been part of many programs, pilgrimages, social groups, and so much more. This has taught us to 'lean in' and invest wherever we are." This gift of belonging for Craig and Joyce has made them passionate about cultivating spaces for people to be themselves around breakfast tables, on yoga mats, on retreat, and more.

## Moving Toward Deeper Connections

"Craig has a spiritual gift of not meeting a stranger," Joyce says with a smile. That gift is on full display as he invites men to join him for the Big Breakfast, a monthly men's gathering that returned after a pause during the pandemic. For Craig, breakfast is more than a meal. It is a simple first step toward deeper connection. His hope is that men will continue building relationships through retreats, hikes, and honest conversations about life and faith. "We want to normalize men being active in church," Craig says. "It means something to have a comfortable space to talk about the meaning of life," he says.

"During our early days at Christ Church, we enrolled in 'The Living Compass' program, which examines one's whole life and helps us answer how is God calling me to be generous right now?"

## The Intersection of Two Passions

For Joyce the answer emerged at the intersection of two passions: her faith and her longtime love of teaching yoga. Joyce had spent years guiding others through yoga. She was beginning to wonder, "what if this practice could also become a way to serve others?" Yoga in the Spirit was born.

In the beginning, a small group gathered on Sunday afternoons. Every class became an act of generosity, with all proceeds supporting the church's outreach ministries.



Over time, the community found a new rhythm. Today, Yoga in the Spirit meets each Wednesday at 10 am, and every class directly supports outreach partner Dahlia Grove. This isn't your typical yoga class. As a teacher, Joyce notices who walks in and what they might be carrying. It's adapted for different abilities. Some join on Zoom and others in person. It's a space where everyone who participates is seen and honored.

Whether around a breakfast table or on a yoga mat, Joyce and Craig have created spaces where people can show up as they are, build meaningful relationships, and encounter God in community.

Reflecting on their investment of time, talent, and treasure, they both say the same thing, "We have gotten so much more back."

Through their hospitality and generosity, Joyce and Craig are helping others discover what they have known all along, that when people find a place to belong, they begin to feel at home and true wellbeing begins to flourish.



# Beauty in Service of Worship and Community

A sacred space you might not have seen gets an inspired makeover.

Sometimes the most meaningful renovations are not the ones that draw attention to themselves, but those that quietly deepen the life of a community.

Over the past few months, a vision shared by Beeland Voellinger, Kim Perras, Carl Showalter, and a dedicated group of Altar Guild members has come to life in the renovation of the church sacristy. Their hope was simple yet profound: to create a space that would support the holy work that happens in the sacristy each week while also offering beauty, inspiration, and a reminder of the communion of saints that surrounds us.

The sacristy is a place of preparation, where communion vessels are cared for, linens are folded, and worship is readied before the congregation gathers. It is also home to the Sunshine Guild flower ministry, whose members lovingly deliver altar flowers to parishioners throughout the week, extending Sunday's worship into homes, hospital rooms, and moments of pastoral care. The renewed space honors both of these sacred callings: preparing the church's worship and carrying its beauty into the wider community.

## An Angel Standing Watch

At the heart of the renovation is a painting by Anne Neilson. Her angel, rendered with movement, grace, and light, seems to stand watch over the room. Positioned so that those departing after receiving Communion may glimpse it as they pass, the artwork serves as a gentle reminder



that we are never alone in our journey of faith. We worship alongside the great cloud of witnesses, the saints who have gone before us and whose prayers and presence continue to surround the Church.

## A Sense of Wonder

Above, a dramatic starburst light fixture casts a warm glow throughout the room. Evoking both a radiant sun and a guiding star, it illuminates the space with a sense of wonder. Like the star that led seekers toward hope and revelation, it reminds us that worship is always drawing us toward the light of Christ.

Together, these elements create more than a functional workspace. They provide a place of reverence, beauty, and belonging that reflects the care with which Christ Church approaches worship and ministry.

We give thanks for the imagination, generosity, and leadership of Beeland, Kim, Carl, Wendy Mauney, Jason Scofield, and the many Altar Guild members whose vision made this renewal possible. Their work is a reminder that beauty is not an accessory to the life of faith; it is one of the ways we encounter God's presence, serve one another, and remember that we are part of something larger than ourselves.

In our renewed sacristy, preparation, prayer, service, and beauty meet in a way that will bless the parish for years to come.



# The power of a gentle nudge

From strangers to Stronger Together



Thomas Walker (left) and Ryan Lupka (right) found authentic connection at a men's retreat in 2025.



# *Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

- ROMANS 15:7

Sometimes a simple invitation can change everything. For Ryan Lupka, it was a gentle nudge from a friend to attend the 2025 Men's Retreat. For Thomas Walker, it was a chance to connect with other men who were seeking to grow in faith and navigate life together.

Neither knew that a weekend retreat would lead to a lasting friendship, much less a thriving small group.

When Ryan and Thomas arrived at the retreat, they were strangers. Ryan admits he was hesitant to attend.

"I probably wouldn't have signed up if it weren't for the personal invitation," he says. "I didn't really know anyone else on the retreat, and I felt a bit anxious about making new connections."

That changed quickly.

The two struck up a conversation on the first evening over a shared interest in wristwatches. As the weekend unfolded, they discovered even more common ground, including similar experiences that had led them to Christ Church.

## **An Unexpected Discovery**

Then came an unexpected discovery: they lived only minutes apart.

"We figured out that we are practically neighbors and live only a five-minute drive apart," Ryan recalls.

What began as a conversation at a retreat soon became a genuine friendship. Today, the two regularly take walks together, celebrate milestones, support one another through challenges, and even help care for each other's pets when one is away.

The friendship also sparked something larger.

Along with Jim Ausman, another retreat participant, Ryan and Thomas began talking about their desire for a men's small group where they could continue building the connections they had formed on retreat. Their shared vision led to the creation of a Stronger Together group, a men's Bible study and fellowship group that meets twice a month.

"We were looking for a way to continue the connection that we initially made at the Men's Retreat," says Thomas. "I was specifically looking for some other guys with whom I could grow in my faith and figure out life."

What started as three men meeting together has steadily grown into a larger community. "It has been really cool to see how the Wednesday evening group has grown from three guys to a larger group," Thomas says. "There is something relationally powerful when you have men who decide to show up for each other week after week."

The group combines Bible study, conversation, and mutual support. Members check in on one another, discuss the challenges and joys of everyday life, and reflect together on scripture and faith.

## **Authentic Connections**

For both Ryan and Thomas, one of the most meaningful aspects of the group is the opportunity for authentic connection.

"I particularly enjoy having a space where I can talk about matters of the heart and faith and deeper issues," Thomas says. "So many interactions during the week feel passing or shallow."

Ryan agrees. "I love that this group is a comfortable and safe space for guys of all ages and walks of life to gather and be open and real with each other," he says.

The impact extends beyond Wednesday evenings. Both men say the friendships formed through the group have deepened their connection to Christ Church and strengthened their faith.

"I feel more connected to church, more challenged to grow in my faith, and more invested in the lives of others," says Thomas.

Ryan adds, "I'm grateful for the fellowship and friendships that have formed out of this group. It means a lot to be able to connect with other men at church who can empathize with and encourage each other."

Looking back, both point to the same lesson: meaningful community often begins with simply saying yes.

"This group wouldn't exist if Ryan, Jim, and I, who were all first-timers on the Men's Retreat, didn't decide to put ourselves out there and go on the retreat in the first place," Thomas says.

Today, they encourage others to take that same step, whether it's joining a small group, attending a men's ministry event, or signing up for the next retreat. You never know where one invitation or conversation might lead.



# A Year of Adult Formation by the Numbers

Spiritual growth is happening every day at Christ Church. Here's a sampling of the impact:

|       |                                                                                                        |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1,100 | People attended Brene Brown events in September                                                        |
| 757   | People attended or viewed online <i>An Evening with Michael Curry</i> in October                       |
| 185   | People participated in the Friendship Feast in September                                               |
| 165   | Average Faith Forum attendance                                                                         |
| 150   | People engaged in Bible studies on any given week at Christ Church                                     |
| 58    | Years age gap between oldest (85) and youngest (27) participants in WEBS (Women's Evening Bible Study) |
| 35    | Participants (on average) in monthly Men's Big Breakfast                                               |
| 29    | Small group Bible study leaders                                                                        |
| 22    | Pilgrims on the England pilgrimage                                                                     |
| 17    | Small group Bible studies available                                                                    |
| 15    | People read the whole Bible, beginning to end, in 2025                                                 |
| 8     | Participants (on average) in monthly Poetry Circle                                                     |
| 5     | Men's "Stronger Together" small groups                                                                 |
| 3     | CCWBS (Christ Church Women's Bible Study) small groups                                                 |
| 1     | <b>Smallest number of people YOU could extend a personal invitation to and make a big difference!</b>  |



## More than a gift shop

A space to feel seen, heard, and cared for.

Here at the GoodNews Shop, we strive to be more than just a gift shop. We hope to be a place of connection, comfort, and community when people need it most.

One afternoon a lovely customer stopped in to purchase a few items for her grandchildren. As she came to the register, she shared that she and her husband used to love to shop together, but that he now suffers from dementia and remains at home. With both tenderness and honesty, she spoke of how grateful she was for the life they had built together and how much she cherished him.

As our conversation continued, she shared pieces of her journey, including the hardships of an abusive first marriage and the courage it took for her to leave and begin again. In that new chapter of life, she eventually met her current husband and, despite the challenges they now face, she spoke with such gratitude for the beautiful life they found together.

We felt truly honored that she trusted us enough to share her story. Moments like these remind us that sometimes a shop can become more than a place to purchase gifts. It can become a safe space where people feel seen, heard, and cared for.

- Lori Terrell, GoodNews Shop Manager

# "It's my weekly reset."

Seniors made time for one another and for their faith community.

This year's senior class has helped create a culture of connection, belonging, and faith in every aspect of youth ministry. Through their leadership, participation, and commitment to showing up for one another, they have strengthened both our youth program and the church as a whole, and modeled what it looks like to make faith an active part of daily life. At the same time, many of these seniors shared that the youth program has profoundly shaped them, giving them a place to grow spiritually, form lasting friendships, and find grounding during some of the busiest years of their lives.

These seniors have been deeply involved in nearly every aspect of youth ministry, including Life Group, Youth Council, retreats, Bible study, service projects, and Youth Sunday. Several shared that while they attended church as children, their involvement became a personal choice during high school.

One of the greatest gifts this senior class has given to Christ Church is their consistent commitment to showing up. In a season of life filled with demanding schedules, athletics, academics, performances, jobs, and college applications, these students repeatedly chose to make time for one another and for their faith community. They have modeled for our whole community what it looks like to make life with God a priority, and their presence has not only enriched their own faith journeys, but strengthened our church community as a whole. By showing up week after week, they have fostered relationships, welcomed

newcomers, modeled engagement for younger students, and helped create a culture of authenticity and belonging.

Again and again, the seniors have pointed to relationships as the reason they kept coming back. They described Life Group as a "weekly reset," a place that grounds them, recenters them, and gives them something to look forward to during hectic weeks. They spoke about feeling known, cared for, and missed when they were absent. One senior shared that Life Group became so important that missing it would leave them feeling disappointed all week. Others reflected that they wished they had become involved earlier because of the friendships and spiritual growth they found through the program.





# *"Music, community, and a place to be."*

Ringin together becomes a ministry of connection as well as music.

**W**hat started as a six-week experiment has become an anchor in the Kain family's week.

This past fall, the music ministry began a new venture: an intergenerational handbell ensemble. Comprised of youth and adults, this group was originally slated to be short-term, ending before Christmas. Instead, the ringers leaned in and created a permanent ensemble with weekly rehearsals and worship leadership periodically throughout the year.

Madison Kain joined that handbell choir with her dad, Matt. Later in the year, they were joined by Madison's twin sister, Hannah. Now their Wednesday nights are spent coming to choir, having dinner, and ending with ringing handbells together.

"I had seen people ring handbells and always thought it was cool. Then my mom told me Christ Church was starting a handbell choir. It sounded super fun so I signed up," said 13-year-old Madison.

Madison plays the flute and sings in the choir. Hannah has played piano in the past, but this was the family's first time trying handbells. They quickly discovered that handbells required far more than simply ringing a bell at the right moment.

"Handbells take skill," Hannah says. "I find myself having to focus and be fully involved."

"There are so many techniques," Matt adds.

Yet the challenge has become part of the joy.

"When you get to the end of a song and you've played it together, there is such a sense of fulfillment," Madison says. "It feels so good to share it."

One surprising joy of handbells, beyond the music, has been the gift of relationship with people from across generations, creating connections that might never happen otherwise.





"You get to interact with adults that you don't normally talk with," Madison says. "Now we wave to each other and say 'hi' at church."

Hannah agrees, "It is interesting to talk with the adults and hear their experiences." As a dad, Matt is particularly grateful that his kids are "known, seen, and supported by other people in the church."

The girls are especially glad that their dad is one of those adults in the handbell choir. Although Matt played the piano as a kid, he has not been part of a music ensemble like this. "It was so nice when we started something new and didn't know anyone else that our dad was there with us and spending time with us," says Hannah. For Matt, the 'yes' to handbells has meant that he can do something together with his girls and he says, "It being here at church is particularly meaningful."

Madison, Hannah, and Matt all agree that being part of the handbell choir has been a gift to their family. They are enjoying the ringing and friendships. "It is so fun to make such a beautiful thing together," Madison says.

Hannah nods in agreement, "It takes work, but you get so much from it. You get music; you get a community; you get a place to be."

When they aren't playing handbells, these twin sisters are busy running cross-country, jumping hurdles, and singing in the choir. Hannah (left) is a year-round swimmer and Madison (right) plays the flute. Both girls are rising 8th-graders at Trinity Episcopal School.



This year's 12 members of the Handbell Ensemble ranged in age from 13 to 69. Hannah and Madison are the youngest.



# Raising a Generation of Givers

Our preschoolers learn how to serve the world.

For nearly a decade, Christ Church Preschool and Kindergarten (CCK) has participated in school-wide service projects that teach our students the importance of serving others and supporting our community. During the 2025–2026 school year, we continued this tradition with the enthusiastic support of our families.

Throughout the year, CCK partnered with Christ Church's Outreach and Mission team to identify meaningful opportunities where our contributions could make the greatest impact. In preparation for Christ Church's Intergenerational Day of Service on November 16, CCK families collected the ingredients needed to make Friendship Soup, including dried beans, cornbread mix, and canned diced tomatoes. These meals were distributed to individuals and families in Western North Carolina who continue to recover from the devastating effects of Hurricane Helene. Our families generously answered the call, not only donating supplies but also participating in the Day of Service held in All Saints' Hall.

CCK also supported our local neighbors by collecting canned food items twice during the school year for Lydia's



Pantry at Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte. Lydia's Pantry serves as an emergency food resource for neighbors in need of food and basic household essentials.



In addition, CCK families volunteered to help prepare Christ Church's facilities for Room in the Inn overnight guests and prepared Matthew 25 Casseroles that support local organizations including Roof Above, the Men's Shelter of Charlotte, Charlotte Rescue Mission, and the Salvation Army Center of Hope.

Finally, for the fifth consecutive year, CCK hosted a Bake Sale benefiting Cookies for Kids' Cancer, raising more than \$14,000 for pediatric cancer research. CCK was also honored to receive the "Good Cookie Award" at the organization's annual Chef Event, in recognition of our efforts and for inspiring other schools to host similar fundraisers.

CCK is deeply grateful for the generosity and servant-hearted spirit of our families. Their willingness to answer Christ's call to serve has strengthened our partnerships, supported those in need, and made a meaningful difference throughout the Charlotte community.



# "I just love those kids."

Freedom School offers Gigi Harris the best of both worlds.

Gigi Harris has been raising money in the Charlotte community since 1989, but in 2011 she was introduced to Freedom Schools and her life has not been the same since.

"I just love those kids."

And you can see that love on display as she cheers and claps as part of Harambee, Freedom School's morning gathering. Part of Gigi's dream for Christ Church is that everyone would experience Harambee just once. "You usually start by just bopping along, but by the end you are clapping and joining in." The cheers, chants, and songs set the tone for the day and celebrate reading in ways that inspire learning.

On a basic level, Freedom School scholars are safe, fed, and cared for by engaged adults. And yet, with Freedom School, there is more. Scholars are learning something, they're reading, they're outside playing with new friends, or on a field trip. Scholars emerge after the six-week program more confident in their reading and in themselves.

"Freedom School has opened my eyes to the inequality in education in our city, state, and our nation." Gigi adds, "I'm more aware of education inequality and this knowledge has given me a strong heart and desire to help ANY child who needs an advocate for any basic need, including education."



Christ Church became a Freedom School host site over ten years ago. "When Christ Church started hosting our own Freedom School site, it was the best of both worlds. I got to serve my church and be part of this amazing program."

This commitment to outreach and making an impact in the community is why Gigi is here at Christ Church. "I wouldn't be here if outreach wasn't a priority. My dream is a fully-funded site with volunteers, setting an example for our neighbor churches and showing up for our neighbors."

## About Freedom School

Christ Church's partner site at Rama Road Elementary School hosts around 50 scholars. In addition to reading and mentorship by college interns, Freedom School scholars receive basic needs like transportation and meals throughout the six weeks. Freedom School Partners runs eleven sites with 600 children, with an average cost per scholar of \$3,000.





# *"I see you. I value you."*

Time Out Youth helps ensure every young person feels seen, valued, and loved.

**W**hat began as a single Easter offering has grown into a meaningful partnership rooted in gratitude, compassion, and a shared commitment to ensuring every young person knows they are seen, valued, and loved.

In the spring of 2024, as the Outreach Commission discerned the beneficiary of Christ Church's Easter offering, members looked closely at the realities facing some of Charlotte's most vulnerable people. They knew the statistics:

- 41% of LGBTQ+ young people in North Carolina considered suicide in the previous year.
- 66% experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression.
- 23% were physically threatened or harmed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The commission saw an opportunity to respond not only with concern but with tangible support as they selected Time Out Youth as one of two beneficiaries of the 2024 Easter offering, along with OurBridge for Kids.

The congregation responded with remarkable generosity, contributing almost \$18,000 in total, a reflection of how deeply these ministries resonated with the parish. Many, especially parents of LGBTQ children who grew up at Christ Church, felt a personal connection to the need.

## **A Powerful Message**

At its heart, Time Out Youth sends a powerful message to every young person it serves: I see you. I value you.

The Easter offering was one way that we joined in that vital work. But it didn't stop there. The offering led the Outreach Commission and other members of the parish to consider what a deeper partnership could look like beyond financial donations. Just two years later, supply drives, holiday meals, and volunteer opportunities have become part of the parish's regular rhythm, and Time Out Youth is supported through the Outreach Commission's ongoing budget.

## **God's Wide Welcome**

The wide welcome of God and our congregation to the LGBTQ+ community continues to expand. In 2025, Christ Church hosted a booth at Charlotte Pride for the first time. Parishioners gathered under the Christ Church banner to offer hospitality, build connections, and stand alongside LGBTQ+ neighbors. They came for many reasons, each carrying their own story.

One volunteer shared:

"When my daughter came out, I didn't handle it well. But I'm learning. I'm here. I hope she would be proud of me now."

Another reflected:

"I have young kids. I don't know yet who they will be, but I want them to know that whoever they become, they are loved by me and by God. It's one of the reasons we came to Christ Church. This can be their spiritual home, whoever they grow up to be."

Looking back, it is easy to see how much grew from a single offering. What began as a gift became a relationship. What began as a one-time act of generosity became an ongoing witness to God's expansive love.

For the ministry of Time Out Youth, for the generosity of this parish, and for every young person who hears the words "You are seen, valued, and loved," we give thanks.



**Time Out Youth Center offers support, advocacy, and opportunities for personal development and social interaction to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth ages 13-24.**

# Transformation Continues to Shape Our Future

The completion of The Commons marks a major milestone in the Transforming Hearts campaign, but the work of transformation continues. Thanks to the generosity and vision of our parish, campaign funds are helping us strengthen ministries, enhance our campus, expand outreach, and create new opportunities for faith, connection, and wellbeing for all.

Since the campaign began, funds have supported the following initiatives:

## Outreach & Community Impact

- King's on Lamar / Roof Above
- Shamrock Gardens Community Health Worker Program
- Freedom School
- Hurricane Helene Relief
- Habitat for Humanity
- BraveWorks
- Crisis Assistance Ministry Challenge Grant
- SNAP Benefits Relief
- YWCA Accessibility Project
- Charlotte Bilingual Preschool

## Faith Community Partnerships

- St. Michael and All Angels Church
- Receptions and conferences, including the Presiding Bishop's reception, Episcopal Parish Network Conference, and ordinations



## Programs & Ministry Support

- Staffing
- Faith Forum and spiritual growth initiatives
- Music ministries
- Engagement and generosity programs
- Staff learning and development

## Campus & Facilities

- Construction of The Commons
- Renovation of spaces for Christ Church Kindergarten (CCK)
- Worship space and lighting enhancements
- Campus beautification projects
- New building expenses
- The Center for Wellbeing & Care
- Establishment and development of the Center
- Programs and resources that support mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing



transforming  
HEARTS  
CHANGING LIVES

## Looking Ahead

We remain deeply grateful for your generosity which has made this work possible. The fulfillment of pledges ensures that the vision of Transforming Hearts continues to bear fruit for years to come, helping Christ Church live more fully into its mission to love God, care for each other, and serve the world.





# Buy Coffee. Feed the World.

With each cup, we can make a difference.

**H**ave you visited the Café in The Commons yet? Not only is it a great place to fuel up for your day and get together with friends – it's also a way to support an important cause.

Javesca Coffee Roasters, led by Steven Bollinger, operates our café, offering great coffee drinks, teas, smoothies, pastries, sandwiches, salads, and more. For every bag of coffee sold, Javesca donates four meals to a front-line feeding organization. Their goal is to provide the best coffee and to work together to end world hunger.

The concept for Javesca was born from years of mission trips providing food for poverty-stricken people in Guatemala. While there, Steven's parents, Craig and Marilyn Bollinger, were served the best coffee they had ever tasted. They were struck by the idea that sharing amazing coffees from around the world could be the catalyst for feeding many people.

From those trips and one amazing coffee, Javesca was born with the mission to help those who do not have meals, nutrition, or food necessary for daily survival. They do this by providing something many people already use

every day; a great cup of coffee. With every bag of coffee you buy, cup you drink, and donation you make, you become a part of the Javesca mission and movement to make a difference.

Javesca's Sister Organization, Javesca Feeds, is a Christian non-profit that helps end hunger and malnutrition in the United States and around the world.

They develop local partnerships with organizations on the ground to buy food locally and provide it to children and families in the communities served. Buying food from local farms and businesses benefits the farm workers and the local economy. The impact on the community is multiplied when the local farms and businesses are able to continue to provide jobs and resources.

Javesca Feeds also keeps a close eye on the urgent needs of impoverished areas and food deserts where they serve. Periodically, Javesca Feeds teams serve on mission in these communities and participate with their partners in high-impact feedings there.

Please stop in and welcome Steven and his team to Christ Church, and buy something delicious for a great cause!



# "Right there with me."

A note of gratitude from The Reverend Maggie Paul.

*In August 2023, I picked up my entire life in Charlotte, leaving a church home, friends, and city I loved to follow God's call in my life. I moved to Alexandria, VA where I began seminary at Virginia Theological Seminary. I was beginning three years of learning, worshipping, wrestling with theology, and continuing to pray and discern where God was working in my life. I knew every step, every late night writing and reading, Christ Church was right there with me.*

*While my tuition, room, and board were covered by a scholarship, there were still many other life expenses, specifically health insurance, that I had to find a way to cover. The Christ Church Foundation Scholarship helped me to feel more comfortable affording those life expenses.*

*I am so incredibly grateful for all the ways that Christ Church has supported me, not just during seminary but throughout my discernment process and, on the Sunday after my ordination, welcoming me home to serve in worship as a Deacon for the first time.*

## Did You Know?

The Christ Church Foundation offers scholarships to Christ Church members and staff and their families for college and seminary studies. Awards are based on a combination of financial need, student character, and extracurricular activities. Find details at [christchurchcharlotte.org/give/#CCF](http://christchurchcharlotte.org/give/#CCF).



Maggie served as our Director of Youth & Family Ministry from 2019 to 2023, when she began her seminary journey. In June 2026 she was ordained as a Deacon.



# "Who, me? Why ...?"

What could be better than summer camp and Jesus?

Shelby Amon has been volunteering with Vacation Bible School (VBS) since her son was in kindergarten. Now, he's old enough to be a teen helper. What began as a parent helping volunteer has turned into so much more.

"Last year I got a call from Sarah and LaQuita asking if I would lead the VBS games. They said that my name came up as someone who has gifts to help lead in that way." Shelby admits that her first reaction was, "Who, me?" But soon she was dreaming and the VBS game station transformed into a laboratory complete with homemade

robots, Mentos and Diet Coke rockets, and exploding monsters.

This summer, Shelby took on an even bigger challenge: making the VBS decorations. She poured her creativity and craftsmanship into building a world where children can explore the question, "What would Jesus do?"



"I hope the decorations helped kids be immersed in the experience. That once they walked through the entrance (which she transformed into a cave) they were transported to a Galilean hillside, and they could imagine walking right alongside Jesus."

Not everyone looks at a pile of cardboard and paper and sees possibility. Shelby does. "It is my gift. I can look at cardboard and make something out of it." Shelby shared that her life prayer is that when she stands before the Lord, she can say that she used all her gifts. "I didn't say 'yes' to volunteering, I said 'yes' to my gifts being used by God."

Shelby admits that this may not be the pinnacle of fun for everyone, but for her, "It's summer camp and Jesus. What could be better than that?"

## Did You Know?

- Over 150 kids participated in VBS this summer.
- We write our own VBS curriculum – including some of the songs!
- Our older kids visited one of our community partners, OurBridge for Kids, as a part of their VBS experience.



# We've got more stories...

If you've enjoyed the stories in this issue, we hope you'll look for more in these places.

## Generosity Newsletter

Want stories like these in your inbox? Sign up to receive the quarterly newsletter at [christchurchcharlotte.org/generosity-stories](http://christchurchcharlotte.org/generosity-stories).



## With Generous Hearts Podcast

A second season of our popular podcast series is coming in September. Find Season 1 on the Christ Church Charlotte app, Spotify, Apple, and YouTube, and subscribe now to be notified about new episodes.

Follow us on Instagram @christchurchCLT and Facebook!

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# Want to get involved?



To get involved in the ministries featured in this issue or in any other way, visit our website for details or contact Katherine Vest, Director of Engagement, at [vestk@christchurchcharlotte.org](mailto:vestk@christchurchcharlotte.org) or 704-714-6947 for help finding ways to use your God-given gifts.



The Disciple (USPS#679-610)  
Published by Christ Episcopal Church

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
Christ Episcopal Church  
1412 Providence Road  
Charlotte, NC 28207-2543



**Christ Church Charlotte**  
CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Monday - Friday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm  
704-333-0378

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Periodical Class Postage  
P A I D  
at Charlotte NC  
USPS No. 679-610

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## Have You Been to The Commons Yet?

Relax, grab a snack, visit with friends, connect to WiFi, read a book, or [fill in your favorite thing here]. Stop in for Javesca coffee, tea, smoothies, pastries, sandwiches, and more, and enjoy our beautiful new space designed for connection.

### Building & Courtyard Hours:

|                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Sundays - Thursdays | 6:30 am - 9 pm |
| Fridays             | 6:30 am - 4 pm |
| Saturdays           | Closed         |

### Café Hours:

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Sundays           | 8 am - 1 pm |
| Mondays - Fridays | 7 am - 2 pm |
| Saturdays         | Closed      |

*Watch for expanded hours coming this fall!*

Use this QR code to  
order ahead online!

