



321 E. Church Street  
Martinsville, VA 24112  
276-632-2896  
www.christchurchmvl.org



*We are a community of faith striving to love God fully and our neighbors as ourselves.*

Dear members and friends of Christ Church,

November is often recognized as a season of gratitude because of the Thanksgiving holiday. This year I am especially grateful for something that we do not often think about but from which we benefit constantly: the monetary generosity and fiscal wisdom of our forebears at Christ Church. In addition to our lovely buildings and grounds, we hold in trust endowments totaling more than \$850,000 at present (the income of which helps maintain our buildings and goes out to the community to support those in need under the auspices of our Mission Committee), not to mention a bank account that has weathered the inconsistencies of church income and expenses without risking a bounced check. These resources are a gift to us from those who have come before us, and we are thankful.

When those earlier members chose to give money to Christ Church for investment rather than immediate use on regular operations and voted to save rather than spend, an oft-repeated rationale was the idea of a “rainy day,” that at some point in the future conditions would become unfavorable such that the church would need to use the reserve. The question of what constitutes a rainy day is becoming increasingly important in the Episcopal Church: while there are those who have argued that it has been raining on Episcopalians for most of my lifetime, it is apparent that, since the Covid shutdown, we are in a real downpour. Worship attendance is declining precipitously ([down 43% from 2012](#)), and more and more parishes are, if not closing, cutting programs and staff hours in order to pay the bills, although the Episcopal Church as a whole remains resource-rich (monetary giving has increased 6% over the same time frame).

Consequently, even as many continue with business as usual, some Dioceses and parishes are opening the umbrellas left to them by prior generations. Several Dioceses are [selling their headquarters](#) to fund ongoing ministry, while others have embarked on multi-year journeys to [merge Dioceses](#) to free up more resources for use at the congregational level. Parishes are finding creative ways to [use](#) or [let go](#) of their property to love their neighbors, as others invent new ways to [share clergy and buildings](#) that allow them to stretch their dwindling financial resources.

Although Christ Church is not yet experiencing deluge conditions, our declining attendance and income suggest that the rains have begun to fall upon us as well. This presents us with an opportunity to pray and listen to God, one another, and our neighbors so that as the rains get heavier, we will have already considered possible responses. Beginning with our Annual Meeting on November 12, I hope to initiate a yearlong, two-fold conversation with the parish as a whole and the Vestry, particularly about this rainy day we find ourselves in. On one level, we will discuss big and scary but practically necessary questions about the future: Having already “trimmed the fat” from the budget, are there larger sacrifices we can or should make to reduce expenses? How and when might we deploy our financial reserves as an umbrella? At another level, we will wait for God to act in our lives and community, and share stories of God’s action, practicing the truth that God, not us mortals, can save the gift that is Christ Church for future generations.

- Fr. John



Set your clocks **BACK** one hour before you go to bed on **Saturday, November 4.**

### Stewardship

Hopefully, you have already received in the mail a letter from Stewardship Chair Jay Dickens along with a pledge card for 2024. If you need a pledge card, they are available from the Office or in the Narthex. As always, a pledge is your **estimate of giving** to Christ Church; as we draft the 2024 budget in December, your pledges allow us to make a more reasonable guess of our income for the upcoming year and thus plan our expenses more precisely. Should your financial circumstances change at any time such that you need to increase or reduce your pledge, please let us know and we will adjust our expectations accordingly. As was the case last year, we will gladly receive your pledge cards whenever you are ready to submit them, but during the offertory on **November 12** we will offer a special prayer of thanksgiving for the pledges, and during the Annual Meeting afterward, we will provide a first update of where our 2024 pledging stands.

### AED in the Narthex

At the authorization of the Vestry, Christ Church has purchased an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to keep in the Narthex. This is a portable device to help someone experiencing sudden cardiac arrest, designed for easy use by the general public; in the unlikely but possible event that someone has a heart attack during worship, it could help save their life. After the 10:30 a.m. service on **November 5**, Maile Armstrong of Armstrong Unlimited (First Aid/CPR/AED) will offer a brief orientation to the device; we encourage you to stick around so that as many folks as possible will have a passing familiarity with the device and be able to help should it be needed.

### Public Theology

Public Theology meets on **Wednesday, November 8**, at Mountain Valley Brewing (4220 Mountain Valley Rd, Axton). Food will be available from a vendor beginning at 6:00 p.m., and the discussion goes from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

### Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Christ Church will be **after the 10:30 a.m. service on November 12**. In addition to electing new members of the Vestry, we will reflect on the past year and discuss our hopes for the future. A light lunch will be provided. **Please submit all written reports to Deborah ([office@christchurchmvl.org](mailto:office@christchurchmvl.org)) on November 6.**

## **Thanksgiving Holiday**

There will be no Wednesday Eucharist on November 22. The Office will be closed on Thursday and Friday (November 23 and 24).

## **Men's Club**

The Men's Club is taking November off; we will meet again on **December 6**.

## **Christmas**

On Sunday, December 24, will be celebrating the Fourth Sunday of Advent at our usual 10:30 am service, with our festive Christmas Eucharist (including singing Silent Night by candlelight) at 5:30 pm. If you have children who would be interested in participating in a Christmas Pageant at that service or are an adult willing to help organize the Pageant, please let Fr. John know ([johndavidadams85@gmail.com](mailto:johndavidadams85@gmail.com) or 571-232-1294) by December 7. Note that, in addition to the Christmas Eve service, we would expect to do a rehearsal (either before the service that same day or some other time in the week before, depending on folks' availability).

## **Archives**

Christ Church has a long history dating back to 1841. Over the years, members of Christ Church have volunteered as archivists so that our collective memory is preserved. Susan Critz and Melinda Penn are seeking help from long-tenured members to identify people in pictures and sort through papers we have received recently. If you are willing to help, please contact Susan at [susancritz@gmail.com](mailto:susancritz@gmail.com) or 276-732-3491.

## **Sidewalk Pantry Update**

Ahead of the October Vestry meeting, the donor who offered to give Christ Church a Sidewalk Pantry withdrew the offer. Fr. John and Beverly Lyle are engaging in conversation with the Hope Box project (supported by a Harvest Foundation grant) to discern if there might be an opportunity to engage in such a ministry even without erecting our own pantry on church property.

## **Angel Tree**

This Advent, members of Christ Church will be invited to purchase Christmas presents that we will distribute to local families in need through the Boys & Girls Club. Specifics about the gifts to be purchased will be posted before the end of November, with a due date for receiving them in mid-December.

## **Grace Network**

Our Grace Network Assignments for **November through December: flour or pancake mix**. For the month of **November: bath soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, toothbrush (individually wrapped), and hygiene items**. *Grace has been experiencing a large increase in clients needing food, household, and hygiene items*. As a Church family, we have committed to helping Grace Network with stocking their food pantry for those in need. Please remember to pick up our assigned item the next time you visit the grocery store. You can bring your items to the Church office OR put them in the little red wagon in the Narthex.

## **Sacred Ground**

Sacred Ground (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/>) is an 11-part series built around a powerful online curriculum of documentary films and readings that focus on Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European American histories. It is focused on the challenges that swirl around issues of race and racism, as well as the difficult but respectful and transformative dialogue we need to have with each other about them. The Roanoke Convocation is offering Sacred Ground small groups over Zoom and in-person beginning January 7; if you are interested in participating, or if you have questions, please contact Virginia Sweet ([virginiasweet2010@gmail.com](mailto:virginiasweet2010@gmail.com)).

## Server Schedule for November

Altar Guild Team #4 – Becky Farrar, Susan Smith, Natalie Coleman, Ashley Ullstein, Dawn Stone, Kyle Trent

**November 5** – Will Zimmer, reader; John Swezey, chalice; Kyle Trent, Trippi Penn, Andy Quirk, ushers; Andy Williams, camera operator; Pat Walmsley, Hank Long, counters; Emily Williams, **1 volunteer needed, nursery**

**November 12** – Susan Critz, reader; Jay Dickens chalice; Bob Weatherall, Bruce Mazurek, Michael Hodges, ushers; Andy Williams, camera operator; Pat Walmsley, Hank Long, counters; Emily Williams, **1 volunteer needed, nursery**

**November 19** – Hank Long, reader; Bob Bushnell, chalice; Ben Lewis, John Swezey, Jay Dickens, ushers; Elizabeth Maxwell, acolyte; Andy Williams, camera operator; Pat Walmsley, Hank Long, counters; Emily Williams, **1 volunteer needed, nursery**

**November 26** – Kelly Cain, reader; Natalie Coleman, chalice; Pete Scouras, Gus Barber, Rebin Titus, ushers; Tyler Johnson, acolyte; Andy Williams, camera operator; Pat Walmsley, Hank Long, counters; Emily Williams, **1 volunteer needed, nursery**