



Community Cornerstone

New Year Newsletter 2026

New Year-Lent

OVERFLOW WITH GRACE PRESENT JESUS MAKE NEW DISCIPLES

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 Sunday Worship 10:30am Facebook: Community Methodist Church Riverside Website: communitymcriderside.com

BE COMMUNITY IN 2026!

What beautiful celebrations! The Community gatherings and services just before Christmas were so festive and energetic. So many of you engaged and enjoyed one another -- including those newer to you.

"If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that."
 Matthew 5:47 NLT

As we enter into 2026, keep an open space in your heart for those newer and different than you. Each Sunday, notice and engage at least one of these people. Perhaps invite them to sit with you during the service, or in the fellowship hall afterward.

"When you put on a luncheon or a banquet...invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind." Luke 14: 12a, 13 NLT

Throughout 2026, make it a habit to have the "Jesus Chair" and the "Empty Chair" ready in your heart. Also, keep the eyes of your heart seeking those newer and perhaps challenged. For, Jesus Himself said:

"I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!" Matthew 25:40 NLT

We are a rather diverse bunch from various backgrounds and challenges who are all together in Christ. Therefore, in 2026,

Be Community!

God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 1 Corinthians 12:24b-25. NIV



YOUR CHURCH BOARD 2026

Wow! A year has gone by already. It seems like we were in summer a couple of weeks ago.

We have some changes on the One Board. We've lost two wonderful members and gained one wonderful member. Sharon Kirby and Bill Barrett ended their terms December 31 and are on to new directions in their lives. We thank them for their time, ideas, and knowledge. We pray that their new journey is blessed and fruitful.

The Board welcomes Rhonda Miller. She has a big heart for feeding and serves in the kitchen. We are looking forward to working with her. After taking a year off, Robb is back as Chair. The Board is happy to have him back and leading it again.

The One Board is definitely a collection of Jesus people. We all come from different backgrounds, but have the same love for Jesus.

Projects this year include replacing the air conditioner in the office. It made it through summer and gave up. This will keep Ellen, the office and the library cool. We are also looking at replacing the doors going out to the playground; the wood is breaking apart. If you have any suggestions for someone to bid the job or want to know more, please ask us. (see *list of members, positions and term endings below*)

We are looking forward to 2026 and continuing to make God's house a great and welcoming place.

Church Board Members, Titles, End of Terms

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Chair: | Robb French (12/31/2028) |
| Trustees: | Bruce Boggs (12/31/2026) (Lead) |
| | Todd Miller (12/31/2027) |
| Finance: | Rachel Huffman (12/31/2026) (Lead) |
| SPRC: | Donna Willis (12/31/2026) (Lead) |
| Lay Leader: | Steve Hoke 12/31/2026) |
| At Large: | Amanda Wing (12/31/2027) |
| | Rhonda Miller (12/31/2028) |

Blessings,
 Robb French

We Are on a Mission!

When Dale and I arrived at Zoar United Methodist Church during the summer of 2024, we soon discovered there was not much community involvement. Folks were connected and caring for one another and taking care of needs within the congregation, but beyond financial support there was no outreach into the greater community.

Early on, I began to talk to them about mission. They created their own definition of what that means. We discussed many avenues, but none moved them forward. Then one day, a member spoke about the Greene County Juvenile Detention Center (GCJDC). She had a son who served time there many years ago and who later served time in prison.

The next day, I happened to be at a grocery store near the facility and the Holy Spirit urged me to stop in. When I spoke to the director of the Detention Center, he explained that they did have a religious

group who provided programming on Friday nights but that the Miami Valley Juvenile Rehabilitation Center (MVJRC) next door was without such a program. He gave me contact information not only for the director at the Rehabilitation Center but also for the pastor who provided the program at the Detention Center. Before the end of the day, I contacted both. The director at the Rehabilitation Center welcomed my offer to provide a religious program which they were required to do but had

been without for some time. When we met with the pastor who provides the program at the Detention Center, he was eager to tell us that they had been praying for God to fulfill the lack of programming at the Rehabilitation Center. We were all in!

While waiting for our background checks to clear, we attended the Friday night program at the Detention Center and learned a great deal from the pastor who leads that group. We waited patiently while a new director took on the role at the Rehabilitation Center. Staffing arrangements, timing, and training had to fall into place. During the same period, the Zoar United Methodist Church formally left the United Methodist denomination and now has a new name, Zoar Extension Ministries, which meets in our home.



On a Mission (cont'd)

We have been praying, preparing, learning, and training for this exciting new opportunity to serve the youth. These are youth (male and female, ages 13-21) who have been arrested for felonious crimes and were chosen to go through a 6–9-month rehabilitation program instead of serving time at the Department of Youth Services.

On the afternoon of Sunday, December 7, we met the 18 youth at the Rehabilitation Center and started our first session. We approached the youth by asking them, "What do you want to know about God?" and goodness gracious did we get the questions. Talk about *asking, seeking, and knocking*...oh my! We feared we may have trouble engaging them, but their interest is almost overwhelming. Here are a few of their many questions:

"How many times does God forgive?"

"Why do bad things happen to good people?"

"How do I learn to read the Bible?"

"How does Jesus always live with us?"

"How do I build a relationship with God?"

"How do I know that God is real?"

"What does the Bible say about temptation?"

"After someone has received Jesus, why does it seem like life circumstances don't or won't get better?"

These questions challenge us to provide scripturally based answers and personal life experiences that will help the youth. 1 Peter 3:15-16 admonishes us to be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks why we have the hope that is in us. As we follow Jesus, he brings others across our paths who are lost and seeking him. Perhaps there is someone in your life who has similar questions; how would you answer them?

Your Sister and Brother in Christ,

Sharon and Dale Kirby





January

1/07 Rebecca Hodge
1/07 Rachel Huffman
1/10 Bev French
1/13 Claire Merkes
1/13 Anna Renfro Boggs
1/13 Ken Ebright
1/18 Brian Rankin
1/19 Raegan French
1/19 Sandy Yearick
1/20 Richard Ulisky
1/22 Dorothy Bellitt
1/24 Carol Hancock
1/26 Sara Lommatzsch
1/26 Kris Spencer
1/29 Vivian Havenga
1/30 Bill Hiatt

February

2/03 Norma Jean Luneke
2/04 Sharon Kirby
2/09 Pat Boyle
2/13 Joseph Buckner
2/14 Connie Cole
2/17 Millie Camden
2/17 David McPherson
2/20 Sophia Frame
2/21 Caillen French
2/26 Dan Renfro

March

3/03 Cole Snodgrass
3/09 Weigie
Pomianowski



2/14 Fred & Phyllis Burgess

Hope Restored-A Sunday Night Event for EVERYONE!

Every other Sunday evening at 6:30, we "create space" to fellowship and meet new people. As different churches gather together, it is a great opportunity to invite visitors, and to hear about what God is doing in each local congregation.

Next Sessions: January 4: (Tommy is teaching!); Jan 18; Feb 1 and Feb 15.

A "hope filled" topic or message is presented. It is a "safe" place to share your God-given gifts and talents. Some sing or play an instrument, some share what the Lord is laying on their heart, others bring food, or share their individual talents, with the group.

It is a great place to "be" together. Give it a try!



UNPLUGGED

Unplugged Getting Into the Spirit of Service!

Happy New Year Community!

2025 was a great year of growth for Unplugged as we welcomed in some new kids from Whiz Kids and have also welcomed others.

In 2025 we really focused on teamwork and community. During the holiday season we worked on some of these skills by doing a service project making cookies for Christmas Eve service here at Community Church. This turnout was great! The kids and adult volunteers worked well together to bake 200 cookies!

We are looking for more opportunities to continue to serve the community in different ways so we can put our Jesus teamwork principles to work on the field. As always, we will have our monthly Friday night events. The next three will be January 23rd, February 20th, and March 20th. We are excited to see what the New Year brings and continue to walk with Christ on this journey.

Please pray for the adult leaders (Tuesdays: Bill, Brenda, Anna & Cortni; Fridays: Bill, Cortni, Logan, & Sherri) that we continue to seek God in everything that we do as a youth ministry and that the kids continue to grow their relationships with Christ.

Thank you! Blessings,
Bill





EMMAUS RETREATS

Hit pause and plunge into three days of God's presence and love. Experience God. Realize and settle into who you are in Christ. Deeply connect with others. Nothing is forced.

▪ Men's Emmaus: 1/22-25.

Attending: Bob Dinsmore, Mike Waters, Ramon Figuera, and Mike Phipps.

On Team: Mario Y., Steve N., Mike R.

▪ Women's Emmaus: 2/19-22

Attending: Emily K.

Women may still register to participate. If interested, let Ellen know at the office.

YOUR PLEDGES For 2026

Your pledge is the primary factor for developing the 2026 budget.

Pledged 2025: Operations \$139,724

Building & Grounds \$9,856

Pledged 2026: Operations \$126,592

Building & Grounds \$6,360

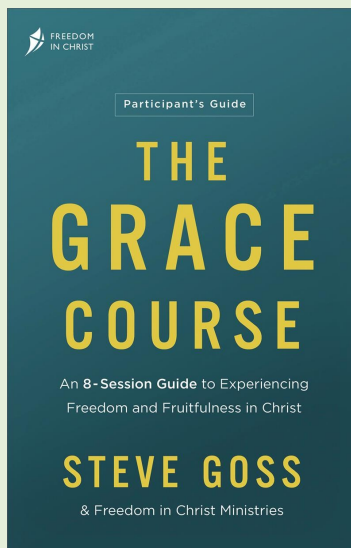
Difference 2026: \$13,132 LESS for Operations and \$3,496 LESS for Building & Grounds than in 2025!

"God is Faithful. Have Faith"

ALL IN!



GET...ALL IN!



- **An 8 session course focusing on understanding and living by God's grace**
- **A practical approach to removing the mind and identifying faulty thinking**
- **A way to move from performance-based Christianity to serving from love**

**WEDNESDAY EVENINGS STARTING
IN FEBRUARY**

WHAT'S HAPPENING DOWNSTAIRS AFTER CHURCH?

Toward the end of Sunday snack time, you may have noticed a bunch of guys going downstairs into the old fellowship hall. Several of our guys in recovery gather there to work the new Steps Of Freedom in Christ and pray for one another.

- Joe Lorenz facilitates rides for most of these guys, and works with them throughout the week.
- Steve Hoke or Mike Raines facilitate the sessions.

IF YOU are a guy and would like to join them, see Mike, Steve, or Pastor Fritz.





WHIZ KIDS BLESSING 2025 & MOVING FORWARD INTO 2026

Whiz Kids is in full swing again! We closed out 2025 with an amazing Christmas party with games led by

Rachel Huffman and a craft prepared by Diana Jordan. We have such an amazing team!

We start again on January 6th. We still have more mentors than kids, so if you know of a child who would benefit from Whiz Kids, let me know! And, we would really like to provide transportation from Virginia Stevenson Elementary, but we need a vehicle big enough for two adults and at least two children.

We are so blessed to be able to provide this program, now in our 10th year! If you have a story to tell about Whiz Kids, let me know. We are planning a 10 year celebration on May 5th and would love to share how God has moved in the kids and in the team.

Don't forget to pray for us!

In Jesus,
Claire



**10th Year
Celebration
May 5, 2026
5:00-7:00pm**



CELEBRATE RECOVERY FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR COMMUNITY

We as leaders are so grateful for Community Church and how you support us all. Thanks to volunteers Jim and Bill and the very nice church bus, we continue to bus in people in recovery from Woodhaven. Several people who have graduated from Woodhaven continue to come to our Celebrate Recovery.

We recently added Taunya and Tavia to our Lead team. Amy has stepped down from the lead team, but will continue to participate in the meetings. Thank you, Amy for your years of being on the Lead Team.

Also, thanks to Community's generosity, we did have turkey and sides for Thanksgiving and ham and sides for Christmas. We watched Charlie Brown's Thanksgiving on Thanksgiving and Charlie Brown's Christmas on Christmas. This was all on the big screen in the nice warm Fellowship Hall.

We will also be meeting on New Year's Day. We do want to thank all of the cooks and servers for the meals. If you are willing to help cook or provide a meal for someone to cook, please let us know. Or, if you want to come in any Thursday and help serve and clean up, you would be more than welcome.

Recovery people in our community continue to have success partly because of the support and love given from our leaders, drivers, cooks, and helpers.

Please continue to pray for our leaders and all of our participants. Lead Team: Taunya, Rhonda, Tavia, Mario, Steve N, Steve H.

Remember, you are always welcome to join us for a meal or bring someone to our Thursday night meal, meeting and celebration!

6:00pm-Evening Meal

6:45pm-Celebrations

8:00pm-Small Groups

Blessings,
Steve H



**Communion the First
Thursday of Every
Month**

DENIAL
POWERLESS
HOPE
SANITY
TURN
ACTION
SPONSOR
MORAL
INVENTORY
SPIRITUAL INVENTORY PART 1
SPIRITUAL INVENTORY PART 2
CONFESS ADMIT
READY VICTORY
AMENDS
FORGIVENESS
GRACE
CROSSROADS
DAILY INVENTORY
RELAPSE
GRATITUDE
GIVE
YES
SEVEN
REASONS
WE GET
STUCK

SERVICES & MESSAGES

EARLY 2026

Communion is now on the 1st Sunday of each month.

1/4: RESTART WITH JESUS. "Community DNA"

▪ Communion

▪ Board & Certified Lay Ministers Blessed Into Service: Mike Raines & Steve Hoke

▪ January Mission Sunday Offering: Lyn Oiler Fund. Lyn had a heart to encourage challenged people. Her fund empowers those who want to serve challenged others to get the training they need.

1/11. WHICH JESUS? Matthew 16: 13-28. *"But what about you?" he (Jesus) asked. "Who do you say I am?" v.15 NIV*

▪ Prayer Report: Recovery

1/18. TUNE OUT THE "MY WAY." Matthew 17: 1-

27. *While he (Peter) was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" v.5 NIV*

▪ Prayer Report: Groups & Studies

1/25. OVERCOME CHILDISH PRIDE. Matthew 18: 1-14. *...whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. v.4*

SERVICES & MESSAGES

EARLY 2026

2/1. HEARTFULLY FORGIVE. Matthew 18: 15-35. *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." v.35*

▪ Communion

▪ Emmaus Testimonies

2/8. LOSING "MY RELIGION." Matthew Ch. 19.

"Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." v.25b-26 NIV

▪ **2nd Sunday Offering: Outreach.** *Remember the All Church Yard Sale in 2025? This was not a church fundraiser, but a church blessing for the neighborhood and area. Outreach helped fund this. Also, this fund supplements our outreaches to those who are hungry, homeless, and/or addicted,*

▪ Prayer Report: Recovery

2/15. ENTER REAL SUCCESS. Matthew Ch. 20.

...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man (Jesus)... vv, 26-28 NIV

▪ Prayer Report: Groups & Studies.

2/18. ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE. 6:30.

In Loving Memory

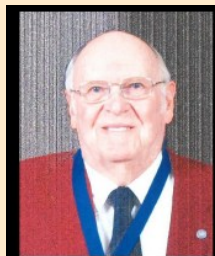


Donald Marlin "Don" Espy

Dec 31, 1932 — Nov 22, 2025

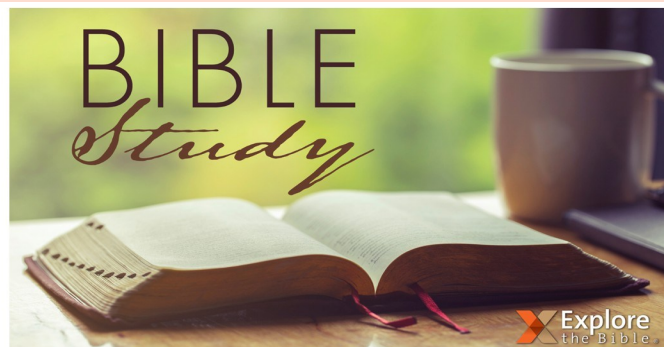
Paula Jo Cupp

Aug 29, 1968 — Nov 26, 2025



Thomas Norvel "Tom" Harris

Oct 12, 1929 — Dec 23, 2025



Come join us Thursday mornings at 10:00am as we study together the Book of Jude

Who? Everyone is invited. Come as often as you can and stay as long as you can

Where? Community Church Library
339 Meyer Ave Riverside, OH

When? Beginning January 8, 2026 at 10:00am



WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

"Christian To The Core"

8 core values necessary for Christian living. A Bible Study.

--> 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays in January (Church Library)

- 1/7: Stronghold Busters For 2026. Prayer & Fasting
- 1/14: Vision: God's Vision
- 1/21: Vision: Your Heart For God's Vision
- 1/28: God's Vision For Your Life

MIKE & STEVE, CANDIDATES FOR CERTIFIED LAY MINISTRY

Both Steve Hoke and Mike Raines are already experienced and respected recovery ministers in our area. Certified Lay Ministry will bring them even more into the life of the church. They will likely finish their training by the end of 2026.

A Certified Lay Minister is trained and empowered to serve in various ministry roles such as preaching, teaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and church administration.



January Mission Sunday Offering:

Lyn Oiler Fund. Lyn had a heart to encourage challenged people. Her fund empowers those who want to serve challenged others to get the training they need.

Some recent recipients of Lyn's Scholarship fund are Amanda working on her ministry degree, Emily with a Peer Support Certification and Mike and Steve becoming Lay Ministers.

During the month of January (not just the 2nd Sunday) you can contribute to the Lyn Oiler Fund. Contribute on any Sunday or with our Online QR Code.

THANKING GOD!

We thank God for Sally Borba and her family.

For years, they have cooked, served, and paid for the meals that so blessed you on the first Sundays of each month.

In 2026, they will bless us on Palm Sunday, Mother's Day, Rally Sunday, and Consecration Sunday.

Please thank God for them and their ongoing gift. Then, when you see them, bless them.

A "thank you" is culturally polite. A blessing warms the heart and brings out God's best in others.



COMMUNITY DNA 2026:

We are a people and place in which each of us:

- Approach God as God and Jesus as Lord and Savior--a place where the Cross is up front and center.
- Know who we are and Whose we are in Christ.
- Develop habitual humility before God and one another.
- Learn to deeply listen so as to hear God and others.
- Honor and grace others. With favor, we honor people as they are -- God loved people.
- Build deep relationships; not come together to pose and perform.
- Become more real, and less fake.
- Seek to bring out God's best in one another.
- Learn how to speak the truth in love, and to hear the truth in love without taking offense. Become "Unoffendable."
- Overcome old hurts habits, and hang-ups; settle and heal.
- Serve as a "safe person" making for a "safe-place."
- Go to and serve challenged people "where they are at," and invite them into our lives and church. To present Jesus as the active Lord and Savior through our words and actions.



Your WELCOME CLASS:

A class for potential new members to understand and get more involved with the Lord, life, and mission of Community Church.

Membership is a way of publicly stating your commitment to the Lord, mission, and team of Community Methodist Church Riverside.

8 Sessions + 1 Special Starting in February

- Six Mondays: 6-8 p.m. 2/2, 2/16, 2/23, and 3/2, 3/16, 3/23
- Two Sundays: 1-3 p.m. 2/8 and 3/8
- Special Session: (late March, on a Saturday or Sunday TBD) (cont'd next column)

Your WELCOME CLASS: (cont'd)

1. Jesus: A Clear Picture. Who He is & What He Did

Goals: ▪ You take to heart the clear Biblical picture of Jesus as He is. ▪ You are able to share this with others.

2. Into Right Relationship w/God: A Clear Means

Goals. ▪ You know the clear means to enter into a saving relationship with God through the Lord Jesus. ▪ You have understood and taken to heart the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ▪ You can explain the Gospel to others.

3. Grow In Relationship w. God: A Clear Path

Goals: ▪ You know and take to heart the clear way to grow into the clear picture & look more like Christ. ▪ You develop a rhythm for your life that is attune to the Holy Spirit.

4. The Jesus Mission in History:

Goals: ▪ You know how the early church faithfully took forth this clear picture of Jesus & shared the Gospel in a hostile world. ▪ You realize & take to heart what it takes to go & make disciples of all nations.

5. When The Church Makes The Clear Picture Blurry. Making Disciples

Goals: ▪ You realize from church history how people blurred Jesus and distorted the Gospel. ▪ You recognize the boundaries and standards for a clear picture of Jesus and Gospel.

6. The Local Team that Carries Out the Clear Picture: The Body of Christ.

Goals: ▪ You realize it takes a church family that operates like a team to faithfully make disciples in our time. ▪ You are committed to be a regular part of the church.

7. "Team Play:" Loving One Another as Jesus Loves Us

Goals: ▪ You take to heart how a loving church family operates as a loving team and flows in love to others. ▪ You want to be a team player.

8. The Team Player

Goals: ▪ You have a sense of your place on the team. ▪ You are equipped to share a clear picture of Jesus and the Gospel. ▪ You know the difference Jesus has made in your life and are prepared to share it. ▪ You are aware and are working with God to overcome your own hurts, habits, and hang ups. ▪ You are ready to commit to the family team called Community.