

Last Words

**LIFE GROUPS
WINTER 2024**

Introduction: The Last Words From the Cross

There are seven phrases spoken by Jesus on the cross as recorded in the four gospels. Over the centuries, these final words have found their way into the worship and devotional practices of Christians around the world. They have been depicted in art and set to music countless times.

Why are these words so compelling?

Jesus' last words highlight the significance of his sacrificial death on the cross. They point to the life-altering truth that we have been "reconciled to [God] through the death of his Son." (Romans 5:10) Each word gives a glimpse into the mystery of how Jesus' tragic death is ultimately a triumph of God's extravagant love. (Colossians 3:15)

They also reveal something about Jesus' *life*. Each saying is an echo of his teaching and healing work. They point to the beauty of the kingdom he came to announce and embody. Jesus' words from the cross reveal his heart and the life he makes available to us through his death and resurrection.

Winter Session Focus

In this session, we will walk through the season of Lent with Jesus' last words in view. We are invited to consider what they reveal about his sacrificial love and what it means to embrace the way of the cross for ourselves.

Each week will begin by exploring one of the sayings of Jesus. A second reading is included in the discussion to help expand on the week's theme. Art by Scott Erickson and music by various artists is also provided to help deepen our reflection. Finally, when appropriate, a suggested prayer or practice has been provided to help us dig deeper into the truth we are hearing.

May our journey toward the cross lead us to the joy of resurrection!



Access a digital copy of this guide,
video for Week 1,
and Sunday sermons at
christchurchkc.org/lifegroup.

Session Schedule

This session includes 6 weeks of group gatherings plus special worship services on Ash Wednesday (February 14) and Holy Week (the week of March 24). Participants may access a digital copy of this guide and listen to corresponding Sunday sermons at christchurchkc.org/lifegroup. While we will only cover 5 of the “Last Words” during our group times, the final pages of this booklet provide self-guided reflections on the final two phrases that can be used on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, or any time during Holy Week.

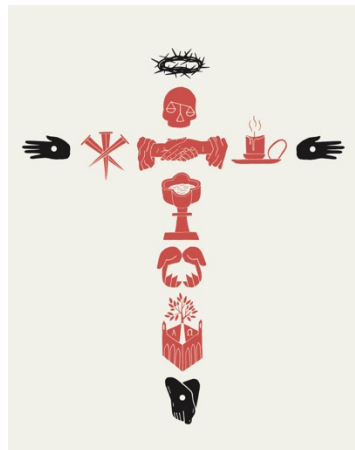
WEEK	DATE	THEMES
1	Week of Feb. 4	An Invitation to a Holy Lent
2	Week of Feb. 11	NO GROUPS: ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES
3	Week of Feb. 18	Today You Will Be With Me: <i>A Word of Salvation</i>
4	Week of Feb. 25	Here Is Your Son... Here Is Your Mother: <i>A Word of Care</i>
5	Week of March 3	Why Have You Forsaken Me?: <i>A Word of Anguish</i>
6	Week of March 10	I am Thirsty: <i>A Word of Desperation</i>
7	Week of March 17	Into Your Hands I Commit my Spirit: <i>A Word of Surrender</i>
Week of March 24		NO GROUPS: HOLY WEEK SERVICES Holy Week Self-Guided Reflections Provided Father, Forgive Them: <i>A Word of Forgiveness</i> It is Finished: <i>A Word of Victory</i>

WEEK 1

An Invitation to a Holy Lent

The Season of Lent

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the 40-day season of Lent. Lent began in the early days of the Church as a time of preparation for those seeking to be baptized. The forty of Lent days refer to the forty days Jesus fasted in the wilderness and the forty years Israel wandered in the desert.



Lent invites us to hear and answer our Savior’s call to repent and reorient our lives by God’s grace. It is a season of penitence, fasting, and prayer in preparation for the great feast of the resurrection. The practices of Lent help us deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. (Matthew 16:24) The spirit and intent of Lent is captured in the words from the liturgy on Ash Wednesday:

“I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and alms-giving; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.”¹

Notes (teaching available to stream at christchurchkc.org/lifegroup)

¹ Book of Common Prayer 2019

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

1 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **17** But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, **18** so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

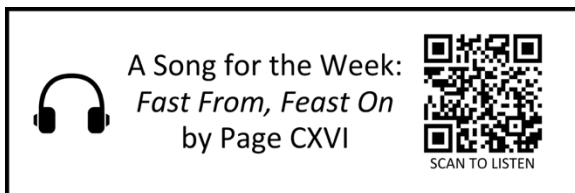
Group Discussion

1. Spend some time getting to know one another and making introductions with anyone who is new in the group. Icebreaker: Invite each participant to share their name, how long they’ve been at Christ Church, and their favorite winter activity.
2. What is your experience with Lent? If Lent is new to you, what are some of your first impressions? For those more familiar, has any practice or discipline been especially meaningful to you?

3. Read Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. What do you find encouraging about Jesus' teaching? What do you personally find challenging?
4. What do you think is the value of adopting specific practices or disciplines during a season like Lent? What are some dangers to avoid?
5. How do you desire to see your relationship with God and/or others change this Lenten season? Is there a specific practice you feel drawn to?

Prayer Time

Spend time sharing thanksgivings/burdens and pray together as a group. If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups of 3-4.



A Practice for the Week: My Plan for Observing a Holy Lent

Consider setting a plan for this Lent. **Fasting** involves an intentional decision to release things that may have a grip on our hearts. This may be food or drink, social media, entertainment, or an attitude like jealousy, anger, etc. **Feasting** involves taking on something that will fill the heart and align it with God's purposes. This may be the practice of weekly worship, daily Scripture reading and prayer, acts of kindness, etc.

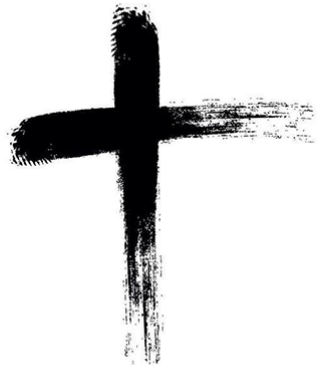
What do I need to let go of this Lent? (Fasting)

What do I need to take on this Lent? (Feasting)

WEEK 2

Ash Wednesday

Groups will not meet this week. You are encouraged to attend an Ash Wednesday service with your group on Wednesday, February 14.



Christ Church Overland Park

12:00 pm and 7:00 pm

Christ Church Mission

12:00 pm and 6:30 pm

Childcare will be available at all services for kids ages 5 and younger. Each service includes Communion and the Imposition of Ashes.



A Song for the Week:
Dust We Are and Shall Return
by The Brilliance



SCAN TO LISTEN

A Prayer for the Week: The Collect for Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

WEEK 3

Today You Will Be With Me: *A Word of Salvation*

Scripture: Luke 23:32, 35-43

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar **37** and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

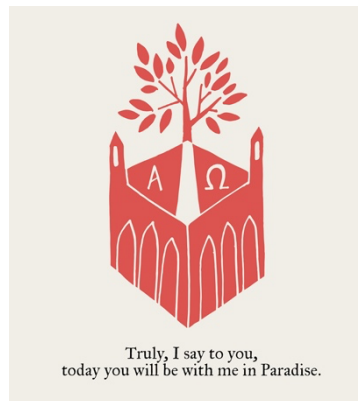
38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? **41** We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”




Notes

Group Discussion


1. Icebreaker: Is there a book, film, or TV show featuring trials, criminals, or outlaws that has made a strong impression on you? What do you remember about it?
2. Read Luke 23:32, 35-43. How would you characterize each criminal on the cross? Why do you think they had such different responses to Jesus?
3. Luke depicts Jesus associating with “sinners” in his last moments on the cross. What does this interaction with the thief tell us about Jesus’ mission? What does it tell us about the salvation Jesus offers?
4. Read Luke 19:1-10 with special attention to vv. 9-10. What did salvation look like for Zacchaeus? How does this story influence or expand your understanding of what it means to be *saved*?
5. When you think of your relationship with God, does it feel like a gift to be received or a status to be earned? Why?
6. In what ways do you need to experience God’s salvation personally during this Lenten season?

Prayer Time

Spend time sharing thanksgivings/burdens and pray together as a group. If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups of 3-4.



A Song for the Week:
Lord, Remember Me
by Andrew Peterson


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WEEK 4

Here Is Your Son... Here Is Your Mother: *A Word of Care*

Scripture: John 19:23-27

23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

24 “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

“They divided my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.”

So this is what the soldiers did.

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” **27** and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Notes



Group Discussion

1. Icebreaker: Think of a time in your life when someone unexpectedly treated you “like family” – in a good way. What did you feel before, during, and after that moment?
2. Read John 19:23-27. Notice the two communities in the passage: the community of soldiers and the community of disciples, including Jesus’ mother Mary. What similarities and differences do you see?
3. What do you imagine this moment was like for Jesus? For Mary? For John?
4. Read Matthew 12:46-50. What does this passage tell us about Jesus’ vision of community for his disciples?
5. What is our responsibility as members of the church regarding taking care of one another? What are some common barriers that keep us from either accepting or extending care?
6. List some qualities of good family care. Which of these qualities are you craving? Which of these do you want to grow in this Lenten season?

Prayer Time

Spend time sharing thanksgivings/burdens and pray together as a group. If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups of 3-4.



A Practice for the Week: Receive or Extend Care

- If you need care, consider making that need known this week either with your group or with someone else you trust. Invite prayer and support from others.
- Extend care to someone else within the church this week. Make a call or send a text or letter of encouragement, meet a tangible financial need, etc.

WEEK 5

Why Have You Forsaken Me?: A *Word of Anguish*

Scripture: Mark 15:29-36

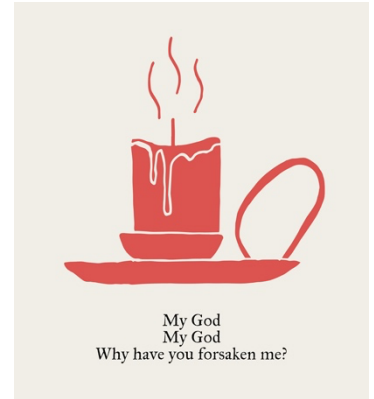
29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, **30** come down from the cross and save yourself!” **31** In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! **32** Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

33 At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. **34** And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

36 Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

Notes



Group Discussion

1. Icebreaker: Did you ever get lost or separated from a parent or group when you were a child? What do you remember feeling before you were found?
2. Read Mark 15:29-36. What do you notice about this passage? Is there something that stands out that you haven't thought of before? Where does it trouble you? Comfort you?
3. Read John 12:20-28. What does this passage reveal about the relationship between Jesus and the Father? What does it show us about Jesus' view of the suffering he would soon endure?
4. When you are struggling or suffering, do you tend to share that with others or keep it to yourself? Why or why not?
5. Have you ever felt "forsaken" by God? How did it affect your faith? Have you ever felt near to God in the midst of suffering?
6. Have you ever prayed a prayer of lament? If not, how do you feel about talking to God about your suffering?

Prayer Time

Spend time sharing thanksgivings/burdens and pray together as a group. If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups of 3-4.



A Song for the Week:
*Psalm 22 (My God, My God,
Why Have You Forsaken Me?)*
by Greg LaFollette



SCAN TO LISTEN

A Practice for the Week: Praying the Psalms

Consider praying the words of Psalm 22 this week and make it your own prayer of lament and faith. As you pray, set your own suffering and the suffering of the world before Christ, being especially mindful that he "suffers with" us.

WEEK 6

I Am Thirsty: *A Word of Desperation*

Scripture: John 19:28-29

28 Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” **29** A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.



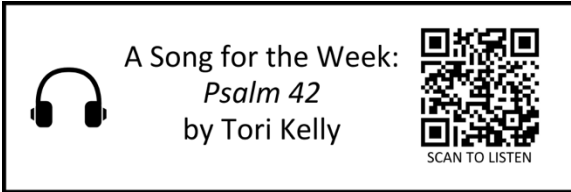
Notes

Group Discussion

1. Icebreaker: What is your go-to road trip drink and snack?
2. Read John 19:28-29. Describe the physical and emotional state Jesus was likely experiencing in this moment. What is the significance that Jesus, as God in the flesh, was physically thirsty as he suffered?
3. Can you recall other gospel stories or passages in the Bible that talk about thirst? What comes to mind? How might it deepen our understanding of this passage?
4. Read John 7:37-43. What is living water, according to this passage? What is Jesus offering to those who come to him?
5. In what ways do we try to quench the “thirst” of our hearts as a culture? Personally? What is the result?
6. How would you describe the thirst of your heart this Lenten season? In what way(s) do you desire for the Holy Spirit to quench that thirst?

Prayer Time

Spend time sharing thanksgivings/burdens and pray together as a group. If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups of 3-4.



A Prayer for the Week: A Prayer for Living Water

The well is so deep
And the water is so far away
From our parched hands
Our parched throats
Our parched souls....
Drawing
Consuming
Repeated drawing
Repeated thirsting
Drawing again!
God,
Only you can break this cycle
Of filling our souls
With things that can never
Fully satisfy.
Lead us to
Living Water
And quench the thirsting
Of our souls.
Amen.

WEEK 7

Into Your Hands I Commit my Spirit: *A Word of Surrender*

Scripture: Luke 23:44-49

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, **45** for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. **46** Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” **48** When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. **49** But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Notes

Group Discussion

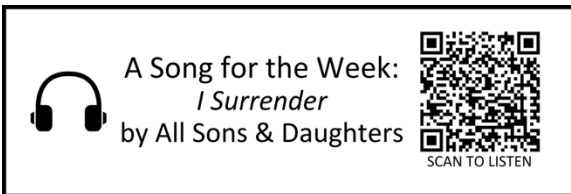
1. Icebreaker: Think of a time when you were a bystander witnessing a holy moment. What happened? What did you feel as you watched it unfold?
2. What stands out to you from this passage?
3. Jesus’ final words here are a prayer drawn from Psalm 31. What was Jesus communicating to the Father in this moment? What did he communicate to those watching?



4. Read Mark 8:34-38. What do you find challenging about Jesus' invitation to take up our own cross? What do you find comforting?
5. What do you think surrender to God looks like in daily life? What keeps us from committing our life fully into the hands of the Father? What about you personally?
6. As we enter Holy Week, what do you need to commit into the Father's hands so that he might raise it to new life?

Prayer Time

Spend time sharing thanksgivings/burdens and pray together as a group. If your group is large, consider splitting into smaller groups of 3-4.



A Prayer for the Week: The Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you, Praised for you or criticized for you. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and holy God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, you are mine, and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, Let it also be made in heaven.

Amen.

Holy Week

Father, Forgive Them: *A Word of Forgiveness*

Scripture: Luke 23:32-38

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. **33** When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. **34** Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar **37** and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

A Self-Guided Practice: Lectio Divina

1. Read the passage slowly and deliberately. As you read, listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. As that word or phrase stands out, come back to it. Savor and ponder it. You may circle it or jot down your word or phrase.

Observe 3-5 minutes of silence after reading.

2. Read the passage slowly and deliberately a second time. As you read, pay attention to what emotions your word or phrase evokes. You might notice hopes, memories, joy, or grief. How is the word affecting your life today?

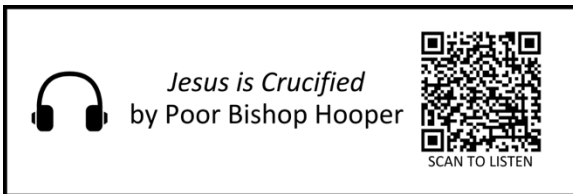
Observe 3-5 minutes of silence after the reading.



3. Read the passage slowly and deliberately a third time. As the passage is being read, consider what God is inviting you to through this word or phrase. Is there something he is calling you to do or be today through this passage? Is there someone he is calling you to forgive?

Observe 3-5 minutes of silence after the reading.

4. Listen and reflect:



5. Conclude by giving thanks to God for what he has shared with you and close with the Lord's Prayer:

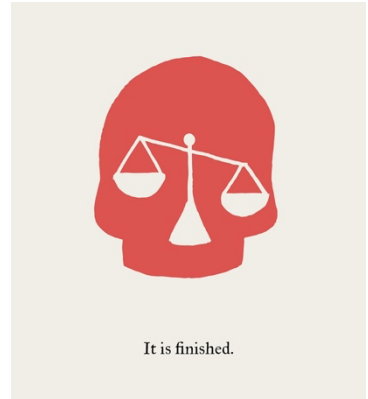
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Holy Week

It is Finished: *A Word of Victory*

Scripture: John 19:29-37

29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. **30** When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.



31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. **33** But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. **34** Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. **35** The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," **37** and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

A Self-Guided Prayer: Examen


Gratitude. Think about your life as it currently is. What are you grateful for? Take a few minutes to thank God for the great and small gifts in your life.

Sit quietly for a few minutes, settling into a still moment with God. Then, slowly read John 19:29-37 aloud. Ponder the cross and the immense love of God for you in this very moment.


Identify Consolations and Desolations. Where in your life do you feel far from God? Are you experiencing closeness to God in unexpected ways?

Seek Forgiveness. What do you need to seek forgiveness for? How can you seek reconciliation with those you’ve wronged?

Resolve to change. Where do you need to receive the life of Christ in order to change?



*When I Survey
The Wondrous Cross*
Performed by Kathryn Scott



SCAN TO LISTEN

Lenten Food Drive

Christ Church is collecting food donations to serve our local community during Lent. Bring donations to worship on Sunday, March 17th, or to your on-site Life Group meeting the following week. You may also drop donations off at Christ Church Overland Park during office hours the week of the 17th. If you have questions, contact Director of Outreach Ryder Mills at rydermills.cca@gmail.com.



**Christ Church Overland Park
donations will benefit CrossLines
Community Outreach.**



**Christ Church Mission
donations will benefit the
Mission Food Pantry.**

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