



1630 W. Republic Road * Springfield, MO 65807
www.gosouthland.org

The Southland Vine

For DECEMBER 2025

Who we are: A church family where *together* we are equipped to **LIVE OUT** faith in Christ as we **ENCOUNTER** God, **CONNECT** with others, **GROW DEEP** and **BUILD UP** one another.



What's Inside:

- 2-4 **Southland FAMILY News**
- 4-6 **Other Info. + What's Happening at SCC (includes calendar)**
- 7 **What MATters to Me**
- 8-9 **Southland KIDS**
- 9-11 **LES' LATEST WITH GROUP HUDDLE AND MS/HS NEWS**
- 12-13 **Southland Women**
- 14 **ENCOUNTER**
- 15 **CONNECT**
- 15 **GROW DEEP**
- 16-17 **BUILD UP (serving schedule)**
- 17-18 **LIVE OUT**

December at Southland:

"A Church Family Christmas"



See pages 2-3 for all the details about this special season when we celebrate Jesus' birth as a church family. As with earthly families, we too have certain "traditions" here at Southland throughout the month. We hope you're able to join us as we rejoice in the Good News of what God has done for us!

We plan to publish the next edition of *The Vine* in early January.

Southland "FAMILY" News

A brief look back to the month of November:

We didn't have a church-wide event in November (besides a "First Sunday CONNECTION" early in the month), but there was still a lot that happened during the month. We particularly want to thank everyone who participated in our annual THANKSGIVING Baskets - it's always a great collective effort, and, one that's particularly needed in the midst of this season. We are grateful for Rick's work in organizing this project, to those who have helped us connect with families in need of such a blessing and, of course, to all of you who made it a priority to donate items!

What's coming up in the month of December at Southland:



"A Church FAMILY Christmas"

We use this overall "FAMILY" focus during the month of December for our celebration of the Christmas season here at Southland. Just as earthly families have traditions for celebrating the season, so do we as a church family. In the midst of whatever your earthly family does, we hope you'll make it a priority to join us as well as we honor the birth of Jesus, God's gift to us and the world.

In addition to being together each Sunday morning for our weekly time of ENCOUNTER at 10:30am, there are several other traditions we have for this time of year. Below are the basic details of what's happening throughout December:

December 7 **Normal 9:15am programming** ... nursery, Sunday School classes for kids/youth and Connect Groups

ENCOUNTER at 10:30am ... with normal kids' programming

A church FAMILY "Thanks-Mas Dinner" (5pm) ... this is a time of year for sharing a meal with loved ones, and so will we as a church FAMILY – a time of food, fun and fellowship together. This event combines these two special days - Thanksgiving and Christmas - into one gathering/meal.



Southland is providing the main dish (Rick has recruited some people to smoke the pork; we'll also have pulled chicken available) as well as rolls and main side dishes. *Here's what we need you to bring:*

Last names A-K: a dessert

Last names L-Z: a side dish

NOTE: *There is no Group Huddle for this week; our youth are invited to join in our church family-wide "Thanks-Mas" event.*

December 11 **Women's Christmas party - 6-8:30pm** ... a fun, relaxed time together for ladies of all ages - see page 13 for more details.
(Thursday)

December 14 **Instead of normal 9:15am programming, a fellowship time with breakfast served from 9:30-10:10am** ... a time to connect with others in the church family.

12/14 (cont.)

ENCOUNTER at 10:30am ... a special Sunday with our C.O.P. performance ("Angel Alert") as part of our morning worship. Each year on this Sunday, the kids help remind us of the story at the heart of Christmas. *We are offering normal nursery and "Wee Kid Encounter" for this day; kids age 4 through grade school students NOT participating in C.O.P. are to remain with their families during the service.*

Parents with kids in C.O.P. ... check out page 9 for details about this day.

No Group Huddle for this Sunday - but, there is a worship team Christmas party hosted at Southland on this evening (Kendall will communicate the details)

December 17
(Wednesday)

Christmas CAROLING - two opportunities to join us: (1) 5pm at Mission Ridge (just down the street from the church building on Kansas Avenue) and (2) 6pm at The Gardens (the independent living facility located at 2730 S. Nettleton - at the corner of Nettleton and Sunset) ... we hope you join us as we gather in the main lobbies of these facilities to sing about Jesus' birth and spread some Christmas joy.

December 21

No 9:15am ministry programming

ENCOUNTER at 10:30am ... with normal kids' programming

No Group Huddle

December 24
(Wednesday)

Christmas Eve Service at 6pm ... if you're around, we encourage you to be here for this briefer service (~45 minutes long). We will celebrate Jesus' birth through music, Scripture, the Lord's Supper and, as always, a candle lighting. **No nursery or kids' programming during this service.**



December 28

No 9:15am ministry programming

ENCOUNTER at 10:30am ... with normal kids' programming

No Group Huddle

Our goal in all this is to enjoy this special time together; we hope you come and join your Southland FAMILY in celebrating Jesus' birth during this 2025 Christmas season!

Other UPCOMING EVENTS in the Southland family:

Our next "First Sunday CONNECTION" - Sunday, 1/4/2026

When the calendar permits, we host these times for the Southland FAMILY simply to make connections with others - to bolster existing relationships and/or perhaps to establish new ones. We offer simple breakfast items and coffee, but otherwise, there's nothing else we do besides providing the basic context. We have regular 9:15am Connect Groups for adults/\$.S. classes for kids and youth on these days, just dismissed earlier than normal. If you're not typically here with us in that time, we encourage you to join us on these days at 10am anyway for this time of CONNECTING. *Kids up through 5th grade have their own time in Rooms 1 and 2 (nursery-age kids will remain there during this time).*



Some Technology Tools for the Southland Family



CHURCH CENTER by Planning Center ... This tool provides an online directory that those who have signed-up can access through a secure log-in and password (<https://people.planningcenteronline.com/>). This is also an app - "Church Center." It's a great tool for us to maintain connections with others in the Southland family. It also allows each individual person with access to manage their own contact information as that needs to be updated. We also use the e-mail platform within the "PEOPLE" portion - for sharing both general information and prayer requests. Let us know if you're not receiving these.

FACEBOOK, including "The Southland Scoop" ... We have a general Facebook page that is public/visible for sharing some basic information about us more broadly (e.g. this is what we use for putting out our weekly live stream as well - see page 14 for more on that). *We also have a page called "The Southland Scoop."* We use this more "internal" page to share church family-related information: pictures from recent events, reminders, announcements, updates, etc. If you're on Facebook and not a part of "The Scoop" already, we encourage you to find it and get connected with us in this way.



From time-to-time, we want to bring attention to RightNow Media, an exciting ministry tool that we have available here at Southland.

Through our church account, *anyone connected to Southland* can have **FREE** access to the materials available. If you're not already set-up, click this link to do so: <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/gosouthland>.

The well-known BIBLE app (a.k.a. "YouVersion") is a great app for accessing God's Word electronically. There's also a feature within the app that we use during our ENCOUNTER time. It is simply called "EVENTS." It's a great way to follow along with the sermon and even take electronic notes. Please ask if you need help finding and/or using the app.



YouVersion

OTHER GENERAL REMINDERS & INFO



TITHE.LY

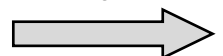
We use an online platform called "Tithe.ly" as a giving option. It can be accessed at <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1302996> or through the app. Either way, you can find a page designed for Southland where you can give. In addition to regular giving, this can be used for other purposes like payment of fees. Especially when using this platform to make such a payment, we do ask that you cover any charges. *There is certainly no requirement to use this tool, but we are grateful to have it available for those who choose to use it.*

FINANCIAL UPDATE - For November 2025

We provide this basic info to keep you updated about what's happening with giving at Southland. In each edition of "The Vine," we share a monthly snapshot with a ministry year total as well.

INCOME: November monthly tithe = \$39,180⁰⁰ (5 Sundays) Average weekly tithe = \$7,836⁰⁰

Three months into this fiscal/ministry year-to-date (September 2025 onward), our tithe is \$107,100 for an average of a little over \$8,235 ... at this point, this projects to around \$436,600 annually.



In this ministry year-to-date, we're currently ahead of last year's pace by around \$8,000 - so, obviously off to a good start. (As a reminder, we ended up above \$477,000 for September 2024 through August 2025 ... *again, thank you for your ongoing faithful giving to Southland!*) We did start the year in a good spot overall, including some layers of reserve. At the same time, our budgeted tithe need did increase a bit for this ministry year so that we need to be in the \$480,000 range once again. We continue to encourage you to keep pressing on in your financial participation with our ministry - as **2 Corinthians 8** puts it, "to excel in this grace of giving."

Amidst it all, leadership works to manage where we are overall with wise stewardship - balancing our responsibility to be realistic while still prioritizing effective ministry and necessary expenses that arise along the way ... of course, with appropriate faith in His provision factored-in as well!

IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER ...

We are getting into that time of year when wintry weather can become a possibility. Unfortunately, there are times when we have to cancel or adjust our regular schedule as a result. These changes will be made as soon as reasonably possible (*we try to have a decision made at least two hours prior to start time*) and communicated in these main ways:

- ⇒ Through our "Southland Scoop" Facebook page.
- ⇒ Via e-mail through the "Planning Center: PEOPLE" lists we regularly use for sharing information.
- ⇒ We also make an attempt to call those who may not have such "electronic access." *Please do let the office know if you wish to be contacted in this way when weather requires a schedule change.*

We encourage you to check in these places for an official word from SCC if you're wondering about our plans on a particular day. *Of course, if you are in doubt at all about conditions or if circumstances make your travel unsafe, we certainly encourage you to use appropriate discretion regardless of our decision.*

NOTE: Even if conditions are not good because of weather, there is always the LIVE STREAM option for our ENCOUNTER time; see page 14 for a reminder of how and where to access that.

Weekly ministry happenings - Southland FAMILY-wide:

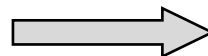
Sunday mornings at 9:15am ... ministry programming for all ages including regular CONNECT Groups for adults - Sunday School classes for all kids and youth as well. See page 15 for more specifics. *We have a different schedule for this month as we're NOT meeting as normal after Sunday, December 7; we'll resume on January 4, 2026.*



Sunday mornings at 10:30am ... our ENCOUNTER service - the time when we gather as a church FAMILY to meet with God; you can join us "in person" or online via the live stream. See page 14 for more information.

Sunday evenings (normally 6-8pm) ... Group Huddle for middle school and high school youth. *It's a different kind of schedule for this month as Group Huddle is not meeting at all; it resumes with a kick-off event on January 11, 2026 - see pages 10-11.*

Wednesday evening CULTIVATE, a "GROW DEEP" ministry ... 5:30 for dinner, 6:30 for ministry programming. *This semester ended on Wednesday, November 20; we'll resume on Wednesday, January 7, 2026.*



Thursday mornings (10am start time) ... WSA - Ladies' Bible Study. The Fall session wrapped-up on November 20. *The plan is to resume the same week as CULTIVATE, so Thursday, January 8, 2026 - again, using this as another D-Group option for ladies.*

Specific Events to Highlight (listed by date):

We try to consolidate into one list the dates you need to be aware of for the weeks ahead.

Wednesdays, December 3 and December 10 ... Children of Praise practice is still happening even though CULTIVATE is not meeting more broadly (see p. 9).

Sunday, December 7 ... our annual "Thanks-Mas Church FAMILY Dinner" at 5pm (see p. 2).

Thursday, December 11 at 6pm ... Southland Women's annual Christmas Party; see page 13 for more details.

Saturday, December 13 from 9-11am ... Children of Praise dress rehearsal (again, see p. 9).

Sunday, December 14 ... a special morning highlighted by our 2025 Children of Praise production of "Angel Alert" (see pp. 2-3 for our plans for this special day, including breakfast served from 9:30-10:10am).

Sunday, December 14 ... worship team Christmas Party (at Southland - details t.b.a.).

Wednesday, December 17 ... Christmas caroling (5pm at Mission Ridge - located south of the church building on Kansas Avenue - and 6pm at The Gardens - 2730 S. Nettleton Ave. at the corner of Nettleton and Sunset - *you can join us at either location or, if possible, both*).

Sunday, December 21 ... "Open Hearts, Open Homes" lunch after service.

Wednesday, December 24 at 6pm ... our annual Christmas Eve service - with singing, a devotion, the Lord's Supper and candle-lighting.

Thursday, December 25 ... "MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

Thursday, January 1, 2026 ... "Happy new year!"

RE-LAUNCH dates as we move into 2026:

2026

January 4 for normal 9:15am programming on Sunday mornings - a *"First Sunday CONNECTION"* at 10am this morning as well

January 7 for Wednesday evening CULTIVATE, programming for all ages

January 8 for WSA (Ladies' Bible Study)

January 11 for the 2026 Group Huddle kick-off (1/18 for regular meetings) - see pages 10-11)

Sunday, January 18 ... a meeting for anyone interested in participating in our 2026 mission trip to Anapra, Mexico with *Casas por Cristo*; see page 18 for more.

Friday, January 30 and Saturday, January 31 in Tulsa, OK ... "Super-Start" for kids in 4th through 6th grades (see p. 9).

What MATTERS to me ...

Back in the early 2000's, one of the major TV networks aired a show called "Joan of Arcadia." I don't remember many details, but the basic premise revolved around a teenager - named Joan - who lived in the town of Arcadia Maryland; she would periodically receives divine visits in which she was commissioned to carry-out various tasks. While nothing else particularly sticks in my mind, I do remember lyrics to the show's theme song: "What if God Was One of Us?" (yes, "were" is actually the grammatically correct way to say that). Here's how the chorus goes in reflecting on a supposedly hypothetical situation - God becoming relatable as a human, just one of us:

*What if God was one of us? Just a slob like one of us?
Just a stranger on the bus tryna make His way home?*

We're not going to use this song in our "STRANGER SONGS of Christmas" sermon series, but it certainly fits. In fact, while the song packages the question as a hypothetical, it's the reality that we celebrate in this season. We don't have to wonder "what if," because Jesus' incarnation announces the mystery that, in fact at Christmas, He did just that! It's what John captures through the opening of his Gospel (John 1:1-18). He makes no mention of Bethlehem, angles and shepherds on a hillside, a star or even Mary; yet, in these opening verses, he reflects on the marvelous truth that "the Word (Jesus!) became flesh and made His dwelling among us." Indeed, God *did* become one of us - not in a way that we might expect for a divine appearance, yet nonetheless as the Creator becoming part of the creation. The Designer of life contained as a developing Baby in the womb of a teenage peasant from Nazareth.

There are many captivating aspects that we might dwell on when it comes to Jesus' incarnation (the word literally means "in-fleshed"). How did all of that happen - a virgin conception? While He "emptied" Himself, how did Jesus maintain His divine nature while assuming our full humanity? When did Jesus fully realize who He was? Yet, the way that God's Word deals with the story, such theological musings aren't really the focus. Instead, the emphasis regularly lands on what it all means for who He is and our response to Him. Because of who He is, it means that this Jesus uniquely deserves our worship ... our trust and confidence ... our surrender. It also means that, because of His great love for us, He has strangely-yet-wonderfully chosen to identify with us - becoming *one* of us in order to save us.

It's a reality that Matt Proctor, President of Ozark Christian College, once wrote about with these words:

My 5-year-old, Carl, and my 3-year-old, Conrad, love it when I dress like them. After they put on jeans and a blue T-shirt, they'll come ask me to wear jeans and a blue T-shirt. When I do, they have a saying. They will survey me, survey themselves, and say, "Look, Dad - same, same." For my birthday, Carl bought me a North Carolina blue mesh shirt ... because he has a North Carolina blue mesh shirt. We could be "same, same."

When I play living room football with my boys, Conrad will not let me play standing - so big and scary and towering above him. The theological term for this is "completely Other." Instead he insists I get on my knees. When I am down at eye-level, Conrad puts his hand on my shoulder and says, "There. See, Dad - same, same."

They like it when I enter their world ... This summer, I scraped my leg working on my house. When Conrad fell down and scraped his leg, he pointed at my scab, then showed me his and said, "Hey, Dad - same, same."

Here's the point: God Himself has felt what we feel. In the Incarnation, He chose not to stay "completely Other." He got down at eye-level, and in the Incarnation, God experienced what it's like to be tired and discouraged ... He knows what it's like to hurt and bleed. On the cross, Jesus Himself prayed a psalm of lament: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). In your pain, you may be tempted to say, "God, You have no idea what I'm going through. You have no idea how bad I'm hurting." But God can respond, "Yes, I do." He can point to your wounds and then to his own and say, "Look: same, same. Me too. I have entered your world, and I know how you feel. I have been there, I am with you now, I care, and I can help." That is what Christmas is all about.

This Christmas, may we marvel at this glorious mystery that God *did* become one of us in Jesus ... the ultimate proof of "God WITH us, Immanuel!" May that truth fill us with comfort, confidence and wonder as we celebrate the Good News of His loving - and saving - presence with us. Merry Christmas, indeed!

SOUTHLAND Kids

CHECK-IN Process for our Kids' Ministries



We use a check-in process on Sunday mornings for those who are participating in our ministries for kids (birth through 5th grade).

This is for those coming for the first time - it takes a little longer to provide some basic registration information - and for regulars.

REMINDER: We use this process for both time slots on Sundays so please check your kids in when you first arrive.

Sunday School Classes for kids (9:15am on Sundays)

We have kids' Sunday School classes as part of our regular weekly schedule. In addition to nursery for our youngest ones, we have classes for all ages of kids. Classes are meeting as normal through 12/7, but are then off 12/14, 12/21 and 12/28; we'll resume January 4).

CHILDREN'S
Sunday School

Kids' Programming during ENCOUNTER (10:30am on Sundays)

Here's what happens for kids 5th grade and younger during this time slot.

Nursery, "Wee Kid ENCOUNTER" (for 2-&-3 year-olds) and "Li'l Kid ENCOUNTER" (kids up through Kindergarten/1st grade - those in 1st grade have the option: here or in "Kid ENCOUNTER") are all available throughout our ENCOUNTER time. *Only nursery and "Wee Kid ENCOUNTER" are meeting on Sunday, December 14 - the morning of the C.O.P. program.*

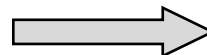
Kid ENCOUNTER (1st through 5th graders) meets during the sermon portion of service. Kids start with their families and then are dismissed at the appropriate time. *Kid ENCOUNTER is meeting as normal in December except for Sunday, December 14, the morning of the C.O.P. program. For this day, grade school-aged kids will either be participating in the program or staying with their parents in service (the same with kids age 4-K). During December, the K.E. lessons focus on prayer, hope and Jesus' birth.*

Children of Praise presents "Angel Alert"



This year's program is called "Angel Alert!" It's the story of God's messengers waiting to be told when they could go to earth to make the grand announcement re: the Savior's birth. Along the way, these angels review God's faithfulness as they anticipate His promises and prophecies coming true. It's all part of celebrating His love being shown through the coming of the Messiah.

Our kids and the C.O.P. leadership team have been working hard leading-up to their performance on **Sunday, December 14**. As has become our tradition, it's part of our 10:30am ENCOUNTER service that day. *See the next page for more details, including important dates and reminders as that day approaches.*



Important C.O.P. dates to keep in mind:

Wednesdays, December 3 and 10 (from 6:15-8pm) - C.O.P. practice. *Please note the time; also, as a reminder, there is no normal Cultivate supper being served on this evening since that has wrapped-up for the semester.*

Saturday, December 13 (from 9-11am) - dress rehearsal; *please make it a priority to have your kids here for this important practice.*

Sunday, December 14 - C.O.P. presents "Angel Alert" during our ENCOUNTER time at 10:30am. *Kids need to be at the church by 8am for breakfast and a final run-through.*

PARENTS: When you drop your kids off on this day, we are again giving you an opportunity to reserve seats (*it's the same way we've done it in past years*). There will be slips of paper on which you can write your name to put on the seats you need to save for yourselves and your guests. If this isn't done when you drop off your child, it will need to wait until the kids are done practicing around 10am.

An Upcoming Event for kids 4th through 6th grades:

C.I.Y. "Super Start" in Tulsa, OK - January 30-31, 2026



This event is earlier in 2026 (typically, it's in March). **As a result, we've already had to submit registrations - for both kids and parents who are interested in going as sponsors.** *If you've missed that deadline in late October, please talk to Jessica ASAP.*

A few reminders: Meals are covered through the \$85 payment already made.

We'll stay overnight at a church in Owasso, OK; you need to pack a sleeping bag, pillow, etc. in addition to clothes and bathroom supplies.

We leave at 2pm on Friday, and we plan to return at 8pm on Saturday.

Our Wednesday programming resumes January 7, 2026.

CULTIVATE KIDS

LES' LATEST

HOME  ALONE

If you tune into the Hallmark Channel during the month of December, you may catch a popular 90's favorite movie called "Home Alone." Here's a synopsis of this classic Christmas tale: because mischievous 8-year-old Kevin McCallister acts out the night before a family trip to Paris, his mother makes him sleep in the attic. The next morning, though, the McCallisters mistakenly leave for the airport ... leaving Kevin behind. He awakens to an empty house and assumes his wish to have no family has come true.



The movie is hilarious (most of it because of the bungling burglars that Kevin outwits), but deep down, the storyline reveals an all-too-familiar friction that exists within our families. Family life is challenging, worrisome and creates times of anxiety. Just the other day, I was thinking about the routine of Christmas tasks: the shopping, continuous sorting and relentless wrapping. Those thoughts led me to think about my extended family, including cousins, nephews and nieces. During this Christmas season, my prayer is for all of them to come to know Christ and live lives that honor Him. But, my prayers seem to concentrate especially on those with hardened hearts. I pray that they may see the emptiness and even destructiveness of their choices. I pray that they will find the only true hope and incredible joy that is expressed in a relationship with their Savior.

A couple thoughts have helped me through this season, I hope they might encourage others that are praying for prodigals in their lives:

- First of all, God knows the yearnings of your heart. He knows exactly what you want for your family. And He wants you to ask, to be honest and to cry out. So, don't be afraid to tell Him how your heart aches, about your fears for your loved ones, even about how overwhelmed you feel at this time meant for celebration.
- At the same time, remember His answers are sometimes revealed in a different manner, or happen in a distant timeline. We cannot fully understand what He is doing - His ways are above ours. Yet, Scripture tells us repeatedly that He knows and understands our concerns. He is filled with compassion for what troubles us.

Here are some words that should resonate in our minds as we offer these prayers:

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

So, for this Christmas, I join you in asking God for the miracles in the lives of your loved ones. I pray that you seek Him first, as He enables you to experience His peace and deep rest in Him.

GROUP HUDDLE NEWS

"GROUP HUDDLE" is a weekly time (6-8pm on Sundays) for middle school and high school students who strive to love Christ and demonstrate His love to others. It offers a place for students to connect and dive into God's Word as they participate in meaningful small groups and fellowship.

Group Huddle has wrapped-up for this semester; we've shared a bit below about plans as we move toward a new year and resume.

Sunday, January 11, 2026 Winter Kick-off from 4-8pm



"Let the good times roll with the winter youth kick-off." Roll on over and show us your skills. No matter if it's a gutter ball, a strike or a spare, we hope to see you there!

Cost for bowling is \$10/student, but you'll also need money for fast-food supper.



Sunday, January 18, 2026 Normal Group Huddle resumes

Our Theme for this next semester: *We are all on a journey. Some wander without direction. Some run towards success, comfort or control. Others don't even realize they're moving. But, every path leads somewhere, and every heart longs for the same things: truth, purpose and life that lasts. From the very beginning, there has only been one true Way: Jesus Christ. He doesn't just point to the Way - He is the Way. The life He offers isn't about empty religion or performance; it's about relationship. It's not a path we trek on our own, but one He's already walked for us and now walks with us.*

Join us Sunday nights at Group Huddle for this new Bible Study called "The Way."

GROUP HUDDLE and CHILDREN'S MISSIONS:

Even into the new year, we're continuing to support **Andy & Lisa (Husted) Nunn** as our mission partners. They are in London - Andy's home country - as part of a broader ministry called **"Discipleship Global."** They are currently assisting with a church-plant, conducting Bible studies and doing some one-on-one discipleship. They also have the opportunity to share the Gospel in intermediate schools within London. Each Sunday that we meet, our students have the opportunity to pray for our mission partners and give during both "Kid ENCOUNTER" and Group Huddle Bible Study. ***By the end of the first semester, we have raised over \$550 for them - well done, and keep up the good work!***



FOR MS/HS STUDENTS

SUNDAY SCHOOL (starts at 9:15am on Sunday mornings): We have separate Sunday School classes for our MS and HS youth. *Both have moved to the Gathering Room (off of the Great Room; that room has a middle divider for when the classes meet separately).*

After Sunday, December 7, there is no 9:15am ministry programming for the rest of the month (though there is a breakfast on Sunday, December 14); we'll resume as normal on Sunday, January 4, 2026.

Wednesday Evening CULTIVATE - for 7th graders through high schoolers (meets from 6:30-7:45pm) - our Fall semester is over; we'll resume January 7; be watching for more details about the content for the Winter-Spring semester.

FOR SENIOR HIGH STUDENTS



Registration for the 2026 MOVE Conference (graduating classes of '26-'30) has already happened to ensure spots. The dates for the conference - in Lincoln, Nebraska - are July 6-10, 2026. Let Les know ASAP if your answer needs to change.

NOTE: A second pre-registration (\$75 again) is due Sunday, January 28.

Update on a "MOVE" Fundraiser from November 16: A big "THANK YOU!" to the Southland family for your generosity during the cinnamon roll fundraiser ... and to **the Millers** as well for the donation of the rolls! ***Overall, this raised \$400 to help send our high school students to the 2026 conference!***



Southland Women

“The holidays” are upon us! I’m writing during the week of Thanksgiving, and when you read this, that holiday will be past, and we’ll be looking toward Christmas and New Year celebrations not long after. I don’t know how you feel about the holidays, but if you’re a woman, I have a guess.

The holiday season is a time of blessing. We have more time with our families with kids home from school, maybe college students back at home, or maybe family or friends coming to visit. Or maybe you travel and are out of your home and normal routine. We give gifts, eat seasonal foods, play games, watch movies, eat cookies, etc. and it’s a fantastic time. ... Sometimes.

Perhaps I’m more jaded as I get older, or maybe I’ve just lived long enough to experience more of life. But for each of those things I just listed, I can imagine the experience through “rose-colored glasses.” I can also imagine it through reality, and that can mean that occasionally stress, strife, harsh words, and hurt feelings can happen.

For women in particular, our culture seems to foster a sense of pressure for us to make the holidays PERFECT. But what does that even mean? If I polled 20 different people about their favorite holiday traditions or favorite foods or best gift, I imagine I would get 20 different answers. Let me assure you, there is no objective standard of PERFECT! In my opinion, the best we can strive for is to love our family and friends well, do the best we can with the time we have, and remember the lesson of Martha and Mary – don’t lose sight of spending time with Jesus in conquering your “to-do” list even at Christmas.

A couple of years ago, I came across a Christmas version of 1 Corinthians 13, what is known as “the love chapter.” I’ll share it here and maybe it will challenge you as it did me:

If I decorate my house perfectly with lovely plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny glass balls, but do not show love to my family, I’m just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I’m just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties, and sing in the choir’s cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband. Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn’t envy another home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn’t yell at the kids to get out of your way.

Love doesn’t give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can’t.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love never fails. Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust.

But giving the gift of love will endure.



Now I don't share that to give you yet another standard of PERFECT! The point is that our physical efforts in preparing for the holidays are not as important as our heart attitudes and loving our people well. If you run yourself ragged in cleaning and cooking and shopping and staying up late to wrap presents, are you able to bless anyone very well? Are you any closer to someone's standard of PERFECT?

Before you give up on there being anything truly perfect, let me show you where we can find PERFECT. Deuteronomy 32:4 tells us that God is perfect - "He is the Rock, His works are PERFECT, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He." Or another passage, from 2 Samuel 22:31 - "As for God, His way is PERFECT: The LORD's Word is flawless; He shields all who take refuge in Him." This verse is so important that it is repeated in Psalm 18:30.

God is the only objective standard of perfection, so in seeking Him, we come to know the only path that can offer anything close to perfection or completeness. And since we could never achieve perfection on our own, God made a way to offer it to us through Jesus. This hope of perfection has nothing to do with a clean house or beautiful decorations or carefully chosen gifts. It is possible only because of Jesus, through His death and resurrection. That PERFECT is about being right with God because of Jesus. Hebrews 10:14 tells us "For by one sacrifice He has made PERFECT forever those who are being made holy." That is where we can find perfection. It's a process that begins with Jesus and continues until we will be made perfect in Heaven.

So this holiday season, please join me in my quest to remember Jesus, the only One who is PERFECT. And I hope, in doing so, you feel some expectations fall away, and you are better equipped to love well, serve well, know your limits, and take care of yourself, too. This IS a blessed season, and one that is fully infused with God's goodness and Jesus' love. May you feel that and may you share it with your loved ones.

❤️ Kristie

A Women's Ministry Event: Our Annual Christmas Party

**Thursday, December 11
from 6-8:30pm**

Each year, this event provides an opportunity for ladies connected to Southland to slow down and enjoy being together - celebrating the season amidst the hustle and bustle.

Dinner is soup and fixings with gingerbread and sugar cookies.

We're asking everyone to bring a \$5-\$10 gift for a gift exchange.

Childcare is available (*contact Kristie beforehand if you need this*).



WSA has wrapped-up for this semester; it resumes Thursday, January 8. As was the case in the Fall, we'll continue using WSA as an addition D-Group opportunity (except for the 6-week stretch of electives in February/March).



WEEKLY ENCOUNTER

... a time to gather in God's presence together.

An ENCOUNTER-Related Reminder re: Sunday, December 14

Our service at 10:30am on **Sunday, December 14** is a different (and special!) one. For several years now, we have had our Children of Praise Christmas production as part of our morning worship service. In essence, our kids help us reflect on the Good News of Jesus' birth as part of our regular ENCOUNTER time. It's a great tradition we have here: celebrating the Christmas season as a church family with our kids telling the story, basically serving as a sermon substitute. (After all, this seems like something families might do this time of year, right?!) In 2025, that is happening through the C.O.P. performance of **"Angel Alert."** We do intend to live stream this as well; see below for details.



All of the normal elements of our ENCOUNTER time - except a full sermon - will be included. We'll sing together toward the beginning of service. Then, following the C.O.P. performance, we will still be sharing in the Lord's Supper together to remember what God has done for us through the Baby born in Bethlehem. While it's a different kind of morning, it's still about coming together to celebrate the Good news of Jesus!

Check out pages 2-3 for more details about all that's happening on this particular Sunday morning.

Our Upcoming ENCOUNTER Calendar (especially re: our preaching)

Here's the rest of our December preaching schedule:



For the Sundays from November 30 onward (except for 12/14 as mentioned above), we're in a sermon series called **"STRANGER SONGS of Christmas."** Each year, we come to focus on this story of Jesus' coming as part of His broader God-given mission. We naturally connect some classic songs to this holiday season - whether it's more general ones (e.g. "White Christmas" or "Jingle Bells") or ones specifically focus on Jesus (e.g. "Joy to the World," "Away in a Manger" or "Silent Night"). Yet, in this series, such classics take a back seat as we turn our attention to some of the songs that are less commonly connected with Christmas. Some weeks, it may simply be a song title; other weeks, the focus will perhaps be on fuller lyrics from a song. Either way, these **"STRANGER SONGS"** - while unique - capture what the season and the story are truly all about! We hope it's a good way to celebrate what God has done through Jesus - mercifully bringing us salvation through His Son: the divine in human flesh.

December 28 ... Les Londeen is preaching.

We continue to offer a LIVE STREAM of our worship service through Facebook LIVE. *You can access it directly from our website itself:* <http://gosouthland.org/watch-online> *or through our general/public Southland Facebook page.* Even though this format is not as ideal as "in-person" participation - the much better way of joining us for our weekly ENCOUNTER - we do value this online option as an alternative. Whatever the reason you are not able to be present with us in-person, you can still stay connected to your church family in this way.



Facebook is no longer archiving past videos as it used to. So, if you're looking for past services, you can now access them on YouTube - find us there through a search for "Southland Christian Church" (clarify Springfield, MO) or at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/@southlandcc/streams>. If you missed a week and want to catch-up, they are accessible at this location.

CONNECT GROUPS

... a place to discover Christian community.



One of our priorities here at Southland is to provide a context where relational *family-like connections* can develop. Because it's a prominent theme in the New Testament, we emphasize it within our process statement as a key way we can grow and be equipped in faith. That's a big part of what our CONNECT Groups are about - a small group **relational** setting for **reflecting on God's Word** and **praying together**.

At this point, our "regular" Connect Groups are meeting at 9:15am on Sundays (note: we also have Sunday School classes for all ages of kids/youth during this time). There's a half-sheet flyer at the Welcome Center listing our current groups. *Please don't hesitate to ask if you need help deciding which group is best for you; we'd love to help you find a place to get connected with others!*

Connect Groups are meeting as normal through Sunday, December 7. However, due to our broader Christmas season plans (see pages _ and _ for more specifics), we will not have normal 9:15am programming from December 14 through the end of the month.

NOTE: Don't forget the breakfast served from 9:30 to 10:10am on December 14 (before the C.O.P. program). It's another opportunity in this season to gather with others in the Southland family!

After our mini-break through the end of December, we will resume our regular 9:15am ministry programming (*i.e.* Connect Groups for college-age and older + Sunday School classes for kids/youth) on Sunday, January 4, 2026. *On that morning, we'll also be hosting another "First Sunday CONNECTION" at 10am.*

GROW DEEP MINISTRIES

... an opportunity to plant deep roots in Jesus and God's Word.



**Wednesday evening
CULTIVATE - resumes
January 7, 2026**

As is our custom, we wrapped-up our Fall 2025 Cultivate session in mid-November. After our break during this current season, **the plan is to resume on Wednesday January 7**. As we move toward that point, we'll communicate more specific plans for the Winter/Spring semester, including details re: programming for kids/youth. For adults, we'll have a D-Group session *to start* (for the 4 Wednesdays in January), followed by another round of electives - as in February/March 2024, then another session of D-Groups to wrap-up the semester after Spring Break. Even if you haven't been able to join us in the Fall, that re-launch will be a great opportunity to get involved on Wednesday evenings. *Again, be watching for more information in the January edition of the Vine.*



OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD UP

... a way to serve others and even help ourselves grow.

This section of the Vine provides a central place for you to be informed about how to become active in service at Southland. One of our major priorities is to be a place where God's people BUILD UP one another. In fact, according to Ephesians 4:16, the overall health of the church (the Body) depends upon each part doing its "own special work." Through our acts of service, God uses us to help others grow. At the same time, here's what is beautiful about God's design: what we do for the benefit of others even has benefits for our own growth as followers of Jesus.

Opportunities to Serve & "BUILD UP" the Body

Just like any FAMILY, we function as we do *because of the willing-hearted volunteers* who choose to embrace opportunities to BUILD UP others through serving. Especially as we move toward January and the new year of 2026, maybe it's a great time for you to find a way to either get involved in serving your church family or even stretch yourself with a new role.

At the Welcome Center, there are blue flyers identifying various areas in which we need volunteers. There are also blue "BUILD UP" cards that you can fill out and leave in one of the offering boxes (or give to a staff member) to let us know you want to get plugged-in to serving; we'll get in touch with you from there.

Now that we have wrapped-up our Fall 2025 session of CULTIVATE, it's appropriate to extend a "Thank you!" to so many who helped along the way on Wednesdays:



On the meal front ...

First and foremost, even though it's part of her staff role, **Kristie Martin** deserves our gratitude for a great job in coordinating and preparing meals each week (with some occasional grilling assists from **Terry Ochs, Rick Randleman** and **Dylan Young**).

We also want to extend gratitude toward those who helped regularly with meal-prep along the way: **Kaytlin Deckard** and **Kaitlyn Graves** who served as *weekly* helpers; a "thank you" also to **Kendall Miles** who stepped-in for Kristie back on a Wednesday in early November when she had to be gone.

Beyond those, we certainly also appreciate D-Groups each taking turns in helping with clean-up throughout the semester. It's a great way to share this part of the load!

This weekly meal time is so valuable to our Wednesday evenings as a church family. We are grateful to those who helped make it happen!

A "THANK YOU!" to all of our **D-Group facilitators** and to **those who worked with our students** during this session (we'll specifically acknowledge our C.O.P. team in the next edition of "The Vine"). We also are grateful for many different volunteers who took turns **in the nursery** with our youngest ones throughout the semester.

A **"THANK YOU!"** to the **Voyage (young adult) Connect Group** for hosting and providing the food for our "First Sunday CONNECTION" time back on Sunday, November 2. We appreciate your work to make this happen for the Southland family!

A special **"THANK YOU!"** to all of those who helped with the **"Thanksgiving Baskets" effort (led by Rick Randleman from a staff role)**. From those who donated supplies/funds to those who helped distribute the baskets, so many hearts and hands were involved this in lovingly reaching out to those in need within our community!

SERVING SCHEDULE for December 2025

	Foyer Hosts (10:15 on, through whole service)	Greeters (at the doors from 10:15-10:40)	Serving Team Leader
12/7	Doug & Susan Graves	Room #6 Connect Group	Les Londeen
12/14	Bob & Liz Wood	<i>Beyond 12/7, we're not having normal coverage of "greeters" since we're not having normal 9:15am ministry programming</i>	Doug Graves
12/21	Les & Kristin Londeen		Deckard Family
12/28	Matt & Kristie Martin		T.B.D.

	Nursery workers (all morning)	Wee Kid ENCOUNTER & Li'l Kid ENCOUNTER	Kid ENCOUNTER (1 st - 5 th grades)
12/7	Harnstrom Family	Harmony M. & Olivia S. Anna M.	Jessica Y. & Cary S.
12/14	Wilcox Family	Ezri S. (No Li'l Kid ENCOUNTER)	N/A - C.O.P. Program
12/21	Lillard Family	Sonya S. Debbie H.	Halls
12/28	Baadsgaard Family	Ashley W. Harmony M. & Aiden S.	Youngs

LIVE OUT MINISTRIES



... a path for putting
faith into action.


www.maranatha
biblecamp.org

christian
campus
house
a community of students pursuing Jesus
www.cchonthe.net


www.ccozarks.
org/crosslines

PCC PREGNANCY
CARE CENTER
www.417pcc.org

www.show-mehome.com


www.occ.edu





We've wrapped-up another year of our Thanksgiving Baskets project; thank you for your generosity!

To keep you informed about Southland's foreign missions partners, we strive to provide updates when available (now in the hallway across from the nursery entrance). This is really the only way one of our partners can communicate with us. Their location makes any online presence too risky from a security standpoint. We do regularly make their newsletters available as they come in.



CENTRAL INDIA CHRISTIAN MISSION

There is a website for the "Central India Christian Mission" (www.indiamission.org); check it out for more information about their work. You can also find their Facebook page for ongoing updates.

A NOTE: As a reminder, you can also use this link to get access to the e-mail updates from CICM: <https://www.indiamission.org/aboutcicm>.

Check out the website for "Life of Hope Ministries" at www.lifeofhope.org. Through our connection with this organization, we are privileged to partner with various ministries on the ground in Guatemala.



A REMINDER: Life of Hope does offer a child sponsorship program; for \$35/month, you can support a child through their work. For more details and/or to sign-up, check out their website (click on the "Child Sponsorship" tab).



A Future Mission Trip Opportunity: We are already preparing for a return trip to Anapra, Mexico with *Casas por Cristo* in the Summer of 2026 (the dates are July 18-25). On this trip, we will be building another house to bless a family. See *Rick's article for more on this*.

Rick is hosting an informational meeting in January (on Sunday, 1/18) when he will be sharing more details about the trip as a whole. It's a great way to learn more about this opportunity and ask any questions you might have. *If you are at all interested, we encourage you to attend.*