

Amens & Alleluias – December 2025

St. John's Episcopal Church, Congaree

1151 Elm Savannah Road, Hopkins, SC 29061

Sundays, 10:30 am - Holy Eucharist Rite II; **Wednesdays**, 12:00 pm - Holy Eucharist Rite II and healing prayers

Phone: 803.776.9292 - Website: www.stjohnscongarree.net – Office email: stjohnscongarree@gmail.com

MISSION STATEMENT

We, as members of St. John's Episcopal Church, Congaree, are an open, caring, nurturing community, committed to living the Word of God by witnessing through Christ and growing in grace through prayer, fellowship, education and service.

From the Rector's Desk – December 2025

Dear Friends,

Blessings during this Advent and Christmas season!

Each year, it seems that retailers start their Christmas marketing earlier and earlier. Because Thanksgiving is so late this year, I have felt as though we have gone straight from Halloween decorations to Christmas lights. This newsletter will be published after Thanksgiving, but I do hope you were able to slow down and enjoy a savory meal with loved ones, giving thanks for all of God's blessings.

Advent is a liturgical season of hope, expectation, and repentance. To signify what Advent means, our church has changed the color of the altar hangings and priest's vestments to a lovely deep blue. Blue has been used during Advent worship in the Anglican traditions for hundreds of years. However, you may notice that some churches use purple instead, the same as Lent, as was the case in the earlier rites of the Church.

Q: So, what is it, blue or purple?

A: Sources tell us that "violet" was the preferred choice for Advent worship in the pre-Reformation Church, though because of how the vestments were dyed, "violet" actually *looked* blue instead of purple (snails that made the purple dye were rare and expensive). What began as a misunderstanding of color definition has become a widespread practice in today's Anglican churches. (Technically, the proper color is purple. But blue is acceptable and appropriate.)

Our blue altar hangings and vestments are simply beautiful and they represent a few things. First, they represent our inheritance of the Anglican Christian tradition. Second, blue is often said to represent a variety of things from our Christmas story including the color of Mary, the color of the night sky, and the color of repentance and expectation.

Advent is a penitential season, which is why we do not have flowers on the altar, and I will not use "Alleluia" during the liturgy. But mostly, it is a season of penitence that is tinged with expectation and hope. We will read the story of John the Baptist, hear the tune of *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, and envision together what "God with us" will look like in our lives. Themes of judgment ought not to frighten us, but rather to give us hope in Jesus's redemptive power.

Join me this season in celebrating Advent!

In Christ,

Katie+

FROM YOUR STEWARDSHIP CHAIR

Thank you for your continued support of God's ministries at St. John's through your faithful giving. If you would like to donate online, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/stjohnspledge2026> or scan this QR code:



In Christ,
Julie Claytor, Stewardship Chair

ST. JOHN'S DECEMBER CALENDAR AT A GLIMPSE

Wednesday, Dec 3	- Noon Eucharist
Sunday, Dec 7	- Worship at 10:30am - Adopt Families Christmas gifts due
Wednesday, Dec 10	- Noon Eucharist
Sunday, Dec 14	- Worship at 10:30am - Children's Sermon - Children/Youth lunch & Sunday School, 12:00-1:30pm
Wednesday, Dec 17	- Noon Eucharist
Sunday, Dec 21	- Worship at 10:30am
Wednesday, Dec 24	- NO Noon Eucharist - Christmas Eve Service at 5:30pm
Sunday, Dec 28	- Morning Prayer (Katie away) - Covered Dish Luncheon
Wednesday, Dec 31	- NO Noon Eucharist

SENIOR WARDEN'S THOUGHTS

November was a very busy month for our Church. The November 1st chicken bog by Drew Robb was delicious as was the November 2nd Homecoming BBQ by John Davis and the pit crew. Both events were well attended and enjoyed by all. We doubled the amount of BBQ we sold so that was a bright spot! We had a good crowd for Church service and Rev. Katie provided services at the pit and in the Church. The Annual Diocesan Convention was held November 14th and 15th and hosted by Church of the Advent, Spartanburg. We were represented by Rev. Katie, Fran, Lisa, Mary Ann and Myself. Advent did a great job-the food was delicious and the facilities were exceptional. Much business was conducted (See more details on the convention in my annual report). On November 23rd, we concluded our study of the Nicene Creed. This was an in-depth review and I learned a tremendous amount about our Church and what we believe. I wish more people had taken the time to participate-this was a very beneficial study. Call me if I may be of assistance. See you in Church. Jim Hiott (803) 783-4214

JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

Everything seems to be working and running smoothly on the church property and the rectory. If you are aware of any issues or concerns around the property, please let me know. Rusty Davis, 803-422-2882

- Approximately 90 people were served lunch on All Saints Sunday/Homecoming, and so many worked to make it a successful day. The rector was pleased with the weekend and the services held. It was pointed out that formerly many people visited the BBQ pit, but not so much this year. The pit crew would like to see more visitors on Sunday morning.
- The senior warden complimented Drew Robb for the chicken bog on Saturday evening of the Homecoming weekend. This has become an important part of the celebration.
- The junior warden will meet with the roofing company who previously worked on the church to get an estimate to replace the rotten wood over the sacristy door as well as the cover.
- The HVAC system was repaired a few days before Homecoming.
- The Stewardship Drive has resulted in 20 cards turned in for a pledged total of \$59,600. The rector and treasurer agree that a few more pledges will come in.
- Jim Hiott has agreed to head up the second annual oyster roast to be held on March 7, 2026 in cooperation with the Eastover Ruritan.
- The rector announced that she will lead the Women Need Women Retreat at the Gravatt Conference Center on the weekend of January 25, 2026. All Diocesan women are invited to attend.
- The next vestry meeting will be Thursday, December 4 at 5:30pm.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE



"December is a month of invitation to forget ourselves in the service of others."

Robert Louis Stevenson

Well, here we are at the close of 2025—how did it go by so fast?

Hospitality had a full and meaningful year serving the people of St. John's. From a joyful wedding pounding, a visit with the bishop, confirmation celebration, welcoming guests to our church, and—sadly—saying farewell to lifelong members. We've shared many moments together. As we look ahead to another year of doing what we do best, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who volunteers on the Hospitality Committee. Your dedication makes all the difference.

There are no scheduled events for December. If any needs arise, please do not hesitate to reach out – email at rdandz@gmail.com, call/text 803-622-2929, or call the church office.

Wishing you all Happy Holidays and blessings for the year ahead!

Debbie

ALTAR GUILD

Thank you to the Altar Guild members who served in November. It was a very busy month beginning with All Saints' and ending with the First Sunday of Advent. The volunteer work you undertake each week, including the Wednesday noon service, to prepare for worship and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is appreciated and does not go unnoticed. During the Advent season, greenery is used on the altar. On December 23 or 24 and time TBD, we will decorate the church with poinsettias. Watch for the order form coming soon! Your help will be needed!

December Volunteer Schedule: Dec 7 – Corrie Blasi; Dec 14 – Louise Barker; Dec 21 – Julie & Frank Claytor; Dec 23/24 – Altar Guild/Lisa Clarkson; Dec 28 - Rita McCaskill & Betsy Cate.

Please prayerfully consider joining this important ministry and call Lisa at 803.237.2892 to volunteer. Training will be available. Lisa Clarkson, Director

THE GOOD NEWS GRAPEVINE

If you have news about yourself or your family you wish to share for the January newsletter, please send it to the church office no later than December 20th at: stjohnscongarree@gmail.com.

NEWS FROM YOUR ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

The ECW met on Sunday, November 16 at 11:45 am. Here are the highlights of the meeting:

- Desserts will be delivered to the Women's Shelter on Tuesday, November 25 to be used at their Thanksgiving meal.
- The ECW will sponsor a table in memory of Miriam Claytor at The Souper, a fundraiser for the Women's Shelter, held at Eastminster Presbyterian Church on Thursday, November 20 from 5-7pm.
- Christmas outreach projects involving Gadsden Elementary School, The Women's Shelter, and Senior Resources were discussed and planned.
- The ECW officers for 2026 were approved:
President – Julie Claytor; Vice President – Rita McCaskill; Secretary – Fran Burnett; Treasurer – Corrie Blasi
Mary Ann Hiott will be stepping away from her role as treasurer after many years of faithful service. Thank you, Mary Ann! Corrie Blasi will be filling Mary Ann's shoes. Thank you, Corrie, for your willingness to take on the treasurer's position.

The ECW will not meet in December. Our next meeting will be on Sunday, January 18 at 9:30 am. Please join us to plan for 2026!

Peace and Love - Julie Claytor, Rita McCaskill, Fran Burnett and Mary Ann Hiott

GADSDEN ELEMENTARY CHRISTMAS ADOPT-A-FAMILY

The ECW is sponsoring the adoption of a family from Gadsden Elementary this Christmas. The sign-up sheet is posted in the parish hall. Please take a moment to look at the "wish list" and sign beside the gift(s) you would like to purchase. Each child is assigned a number. After you purchase your gift, please wrap it and label it with the child's assigned number; using a sticky note if possible. If you are purchasing a Walmart gift card place it in an envelope labeled with "Walmart gift card." All gifts should be delivered to the church by Sunday, December 7. Thank you for your support of this very worthwhile and fun outreach.

FOOD COLLECTION FOR SENIOR RESOURCES

The ECW continues to collect non-perishable food items to help stock the pantry at Senior Resources. This food will be shared with people who are on a waiting list to begin Meals-on-Wheels. The food you donate should be single serving and easy to open or pop-top items. Senior Resources is also accepting donations of pet food for cats and dogs. Please bring your donations to our monthly covered dish lunches. There will be a basket in the parish hall for the food collection. Thank you for your help with this project! P.S. Senior Resources also desperately needs drivers to deliver Meals-on-Wheels! If you are willing and able to help, please call 803.252.7734.

PARISH DIRECTORY UPDATES

Brittany Claytor Mullins, 117 Cardinal Cove, Irmo, SC 29063
The Rev. and Mrs. Charles M. Davis, 9 Wiltown Ct., Columbia, SC 29212
Al Burnett, email address: Alburnett64@gmail.com

GADSDEN MINISTRIES

Gadsden Backpack Ministry

All of us at St. John's support the program with our yearly pledges through the "Mission and Outreach" budget item. A big thank you to those who support this program additionally by bringing items for the bags or by donating monetarily. Items that are not donated are purchased to complete the bags. We would not be able to provide as much as we do if we relied solely on the Mission and Outreach budget. Your donations are important and appreciated. It is also helpful if you

would check to see if assistance is needed to pack the bags on Sundays. Thank you all for your enthusiasm in supporting this project, and especially to Van and Anne Lott who purchase items and often pack the bags, and to John Davis who consistently delivers to Gadsden Elementary.

Suggestions can be found on our website at <https://www.stjohnscongarree.net/volunteer-opportunities>. Your support is important and greatly appreciated. There is also a hard copy list of suggestions on the Narthex table for your convenience.

Gadsden Elementary Little Free Library

The Gadsden Little Free Library is back in operation. Deliveries of books for each classroom are made once a month and the students really seem to be enjoying the reading material. There is now a student in attendance who is legally blind and learning to read Braille. I have been able to add some books in Braille to the Little Free Library that this student will be able to enjoy. We have a good supply of books for now, but we will always accept donations of new or gently used books appropriate for children between the ages of 3 and 11. Please let me know if you would like to know more about this project. Thank you for all of your support!

Julie Claytor



DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS IN DECEMBER

2	Lisa Clarkson	16	Tammy Brazzell	31
2	Julie Rose	17	Nikki Thilges Phillip	
8	Buddy McCaskill	19	Elise Wilson	
11	Fran Burnett	20	John Crane	
12	Dinks Schaeffer	21	Ed Kendall	
13	John Davis	23	Asher Tatum	
14	Julia Robb			

ANNIVERSARIES IN DECEMBER

Stephanie & Michael Thompson

WORSHIP TEAM SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

	<u>WORSHIP LEADER</u>	<u>LECTOR</u>	<u>VIDEOGRAPHER</u>	<u>GREETER</u>
December 7	Louise Barker	Ayden Floyd	Selman Watson	John Davis
December 14	Bud McCaskill	Rita McCaskill	Jose Peraza	Debbie Davis
December 21	Fran Burnett	John Lott	Frank Claytor	Frank & Julie Claytor
December 24	Van Lott	Julie Claytor	John Davis	Mary Ann Hiott
December 28	Jim Hiott	Anne Lott	Van Lott	Louise Barker

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Gifts received from October 26 through November 19, 2025

In memory of Rexford H. Hunt, MD

Given by Pancye Hunt

In honor of William Duffie Verner, Jr.

Given by Dallas McGuire

FINANCIAL REPORT through October 31, 2025

Operating Fund Checking Account:

October income: \$7058.21

October disbursements: \$13,124.32

Difference: **-\$6066.11**

1/1/2025 through 10/31/2025:

Income: \$103,375.03

Disbursements: \$131,359.78

Difference: **-\$27,984.75**

Cemetery & Grounds Checking Acct:

October income: \$0.12

October disbursements: \$670.00

Difference: **-\$669.88**

1/1/2025 through 10/31/2025:

Income: \$6633.95

Disbursements: \$7759.99

Difference: **-\$1126.04**

Building Fund Checking Account:

October income: \$25.02

October disbursements: \$0

Difference: \$25.02

1/1/2025 through 10/31/2025:

Income: \$775.73

Disbursements: \$21,880.48

Difference: **-\$21,104.75**

ST. JOHN'S PRAYER LIST

<u>Please Pray For:</u>	<u>Requested by:</u>
Brenda Manning	Ed Manning
Chris McVey	Debbie Morris
Mary Clarkson	Parish
Debby Watson	Parish

Judy Addison	Parish
Stan Ingram	Debbie Morris
Michelle	Jane Rye
Holly Davis	Parish
Chris	Lloyd & Sara Ash
Maria Brady	Debbie Davis
John Train	Selman Watson
Don Burton	Selman Watson
Susan Azukas	Corrie Blasi
Tom Moore	Carol Fowles
Austin Mintz	John & Lynn Davis
Lesley Antley Marshall	Annie Antley
Roy Brazzell	Tammy Brazzell
Heather Tsahalís	Corrie Blasi
Joseph Brazitis	Holly Brazitis
Bill Spoonhoward	Lisa Clarkson
Betty Thompson	Parish
Nellie Taylor	Parish
Nancy Vosbaugh	Sarah Murphy
Jimmy & Brandy Hughes	Rita McCaskill
The McGovern Family	Corrie Blasi
Julie Peterson	Sandy Yuille
Don Critchfield	Bev Watkins
Kaynel Boykin	Rita & Bud McCaskill
Penny Teague	Debbie Davis
Jewell Sams	The Floyd Family
Annie Antley	Parish
Karen Niehaus	Debbie Davis
Laura Timmons	Lisa Clarkson
Jay Philips	John Lott
Charlie & Phyllis King	Julie Claytor
Jacob & Angela Pendleton	Lisa Clarkson
The Owens Family	Bev Watkins

Please let us know if you have someone to add to the Prayer List, and if there are folks who have recovered, please let us know that important news as well.