

Amens & Alleluias – February 2026

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 – February 2026

Dear friends,

It has been a joyful 2026 so far for us at St. John's. We welcomed three new members into the household of God, we have enjoyed new faces in our pews, and some of you perhaps enjoyed church from your sofa with a cup of coffee because of weather (though I missed you!).

There are many exciting things coming up in the next two months as well. Lent begins on Wednesday February 18 for Ash Wednesday. We will hold services with the imposition of ashes on 2/18 at 12:00 noon (no music/livestream) and at 6:30pm (with music and livestream). It is a beautiful and solemn liturgy that sets the tone of God's invitation into a holy Lent.

On Sundays in Lent, you may notice some slight changes in our worship. In an effort to continue our formation on the breadth of the Prayer Book, we will celebrate Holy Eucharist using Prayer C. To my knowledge, Prayer C has not been used before at St. John's on a Sunday. This is not because it is bad or weird, but it probably is the most linguistically distinct prayer for those used to Rite I and the 1928 Prayer Book. But there is much to commend Prayer C! It's responsive between the celebrant and the congregation, gives an orderly account of the story of faith, and contains some lovely penitential language that I find especially appropriate for Lent. I will preach on these themes in Lent, but take some time to read through Prayer C at your leisure. I'm always happy to answer questions. When Lent is over, we will change to another prayer, to continue our journey through the BCP.

I know that many of us look for practices or habits to alter, eliminate, or take on for the forty days of Lent. I encourage you to pray about the ways in which your soul and your spiritual health could use a booster shot. This is usually a great way to figure out what you are called to do during this holy time. This year, I plan to be mindful of my spending and consumption habits and try to patron locally owned businesses or regional chains for my shopping as opposed to big box stores. (Open to suggestions!) Also, each year I spend Lent writing handwritten "just because" notes to friends and family to nourish relationships. That's just me! What are you thinking of? I'd love to know. I've included some ideas below if you are stuck. (see page 2)

We have lots of wonderful events coming up!

February 17, 6:00 – Pancake Supper

February 18, 12:00 & 6:30 – Ash Wednesday services

February 22, 9:00 – Adult Formation Begins; Youth Sunday School Begins

March 7, 3:00 – 7:00 – St. John's Oyster Roast with the Ruritan Club of Eastover

Thank you to so many people for their hard work this year! I am so very grateful for all of you.

In Christ, Katie+

Ideas for Lenten Practices

Guiding Questions

- “What does my soul need?”
“What is getting in the way of my Christian life?”
“In what way does my life currently feel misaligned with my Christian values?”
“What makes me happy?”
“How can I be more open and willing this Lent?”

Your Lent practice should:

- Be a real commitment
- Be rooted in honest reflection
 - Include prayer

Your Lent practice should not:

- Be half-hearted (I do not recommend the practice of “taking off” on Sundays)
 - Be rooted in self-criticism or shame
 - Endanger your physical or mental health
- Be conducted outside of your prayer life – conversation with God is essential

Ideas for Spiritual Growth and Health:

- Read a portion of Scripture slowly and intentionally each day. Copy it out, journal about it.
 - The Psalms are a lovely option for this.
- Read through Morning or Evening Prayer or Devotionals in the BCP each day, alone or with your family.
 - Or adopt another kind of daily prayer practice such as the Daily Examen, Lectio Divina, or Contemplative Prayer
- Recommit to observing Sunday Sabbath: worship, rest, family, and that’s it!
- Commit to calling or writing long-distance family members or friends each week.
- Commit to seeing a therapist or counselor.
- Take a step toward a physical health goal: exercise daily, fast from alcohol, meat, or fast/processed food.
- Fast from all social media platforms. Delete the apps from your phone. Only go on Facebook to watch church if you missed it in person.
- Vary your news sources, try to get new perspectives on contemporary issues.
- Ask about doing the Rite of Reconciliation (Confession) with Katie.
- Give money, food, clothing, or other goods to those in need.
- Adopt a practice of serving others in a new way:
 - Never worked at a soup kitchen before? Schedule a time with the Men’s Center of the Oliver Gospel Mission.
 - Want to help soften your heart for the poor? Volunteer with Cooperative Ministries of Columbia.
 - If someone stops you on the street for money or food, ask their name, listen to their request, help if you can.
- **Do something each day that feeds your soul.**

ANNUAL OYSTER ROAST/SHRIMP BOIL FUND-RAISER

As this is written, we are 38 days out from our oyster roast and shrimp boil fund-raiser. Tickets are available, please see Bud to get what you need. I ask everyone to be involved and work hard at selling tickets. All our other work will be for naught if we don't sell enough tickets. We printed 280 tickets and hope to sell as many as possible. If you know someone who would donate a door prize, that would be helpful also. Ladies, it looks like we will need at least 250 desserts, maybe a few more. We need all the tents we had last year, and maybe a few more. If you have any questions, please call me.

Jim Hiott (803)783-4214

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 FEBRUARY CALENDAR AT A GLIMPSE

Sunday, Feb 1	- Worship at 10:30am, Holy Eucharist Rite II
Monday, Feb 2	- Vestry Meeting 6:30pm
Wednesday, Feb 4	- Noon Eucharist
Sunday, Feb 8	- Worship at 10:30am, Holy Eucharist Rite II
Wednesday, Feb 11	- Noon Eucharist
Sunday, Feb 15	- Worship at 10:30am, Holy Eucharist Rite II - ECW Meeting at 9:30am (Decorate for Pancake Supper)
Tuesday, Feb 17	- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at 6:00pm
Wednesday, Feb 18	- Ash Wednesday Eucharist & Imposition of Ashes – Noon & 6:30pm
Sunday, Feb 22	- Lent Adult Formation – 9:00am - Youth Sunday School begins at 9:00am (Theme "Children In the Bible") - Worship at 10:30am, Holy Eucharist Rite II - Covered Dish Luncheon
Wednesday, Feb 25	- Noon Eucharist

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE BAPTIZED?

If you are not baptized but would like to be, let Katie know! We will be offering baptisms during the Easter Season and on Sunday, May 24th.



ADULT LENTEN FORMATION SERIES

Join us on Sunday mornings in Lent to reflect on the Passion according to St. John. We will be using the devotional book "Love Set Free" by theologian Martin Smith. Books will be provided.

When: Sundays in Lent beginning Feb. 22 - March 22 at 9:00 in Zion Hall.

Note that youth/children's Sunday school will be held concurrently. See you then!

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL – CHILDREN IN THE BIBLE

Youth Sunday School will begin Sunday, February 22 and will continue on March 1, 8, 15, and 22. We will begin class at 9:00 am (the same time as the Adult Formation class). The theme for this session is Children/Youth in the Bible. Youth of all ages are invited to join us and learn about Joseph, Moses, Samuel, and David. Here's a question to get you started. How old was Joseph when he was sold into slavery by his brothers? See if you can find the answer to this question in Genesis 37:1-36. See you in Sunday School!

SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

January has been a month of surprises and joy at St. John's. I can't remember a time we have had to cancel Sunday services two weeks in a row due to snowy weather. Yet we were able to worship together through our Facebook streaming page. Many thanks to the hard work of those who have kept our webpage going allowing us to stay connected to each other. We were also able to welcome three new members to St. John's through baptism this month, a joyful celebration. Looking toward February, I want to remind everyone to mark your calendars for February 17th, the Pancake Supper, and February 18th, Ash Wednesday. Please join us for both.

Joy has been on my mind this past week. While having dinner with friends one asked us what our definition of "joy" was. We shared our thoughts and had an interesting conversation. A few days later I posed the question to my Education for Ministry class as I was still thinking about it. Some of the thoughts that were shared were: joy was an encounter that was playful and unexpected, joy is comforting and bright; joy was living in the moment; joy was exhilarating; joy was more than happiness. So, I pose the same question to you. Where do you find joy? Is it fleeting or is it a way of being? In *The Book of Joy* the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu share the challenges of living a joy filled life. As spiritual leaders their conversations over several days present joy as a way of life that involves perspective (looking outside of yourself), humility, humor, acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity. As we live in community at St. John's where can you find joy and share it?

I wish you Joy in the Lord...Lisa

JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

If you are aware of or see any issues or have any concerns regarding the property, please don't hesitate to bring it to my attention. Rusty 803-422-2882

VESTRY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

January 5, 2026

- A tree too close to the cemetery wall will be removed.
- Repair work will be done to the handicap entrance at the church and the sacristy door will be checked.
- The junior warden will try to ascertain where wasps and beetles are coming into the church as this is an on-going problem during the cold weather.
- The Oyster Roast is scheduled for March 7 with Jim Hiott heading the effort.
- The rector is working on a Lenten study and announced the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, two services on Ash Wednesday, one evening service on Maundy Thursday, and a noon service on Good Friday.
- Three members will be baptized on the first Sunday after the Epiphany. They are Julie Rose, Julian "Bubba" Rose, and Tegan Floyd.
- The next vestry meeting will be Monday, February 2, at 6:30 pm.

HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

“February, the month of love, is a time to cherish the bonds that warm our hearts”

...D.A. Blankinship

In January we had the opportunity to share our love with Julie, Julian, Tegan and their families as we welcomed them into our church family. Thank you to all those who helped make the baptism reception a success!



There are no scheduled events for February, but as you know, that can change at a moment's notice. If any needs arise that we can assist with, please don't hesitate to reach out—email me at rdandz@gmail.com, call or text **803-622-2929**, or contact the church office.

Have a blessed month ~ Debbie

ALTAR GUILD

Thank you to the Altar Guild members who served in January. We observed Sundays after Christmas, Epiphany, and Baptism of our Lord with three baptisms from our own church family. It was a glorious month for volunteers. This month, we look forward to Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. 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. Beginning in January, the cost to donate flowers for the altar is \$50. There is a sign-up sheet in Zion Hall. Currently, available dates are February 1st, 8th, and 15th. Lent begins on February 22nd and flowers won't be on the altar until Easter. Watch for the opportunity in March to donate an Easter Lily to help decorate the church.

February Volunteer Schedule: Feb 1 – Corrie Blasi; Feb 8 – Fran & Al Burnett; Feb 15 – Corrie Blasi; Feb 18 (Ash Wednesday) – Lisa Clarkson; Feb 22 – 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, Altar Guild Director

NEWS FROM YOUR ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

The ECW met on Sunday, January 18 at 9:30 am. Here are the highlights of our meeting:

- The 2026 budget was presented and approved by the ECW.
- Refreshments were planned for the Gadsden Elementary School teachers. These refreshments will be delivered to the school on Monday, March 2 to be served at their faculty meeting.
- The ECW will decorate for the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper after church on Sunday, February 15.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 15 at 9:30 am. Plan to attend and join the fun!

Peace and Love - Julie Claytor, Rita McCaskill, Fran Burnett, and Corrie Blasi

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.

GADSDEN MINISTRIES

Gadsden Backpack Ministry

The Gadsden Backpack program continues to operate smoothly thanks to support from all of you. We appreciate John Davis who picks up the bags on Thursdays to deliver them to Gadsden Elementary; we appreciate Van Lott IV and his parents Anne and Van Lott who make sure that the pantry is stocked; and Anne and Van who make sure the bags are ready to be delivered. Most especially we are thankful for those in our congregation and the community who provide the support we need to feed 20 children each week. Your donations are important and appreciated.

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

Gadsden Elementary Little Free Library

The Little Free Library at Gadsden Elementary has been stocked with new books for the children. The students are using the Little Free Library bins in their classroom and are enjoying the books. Our goal is to provide a variety of reading material that will spark the love of reading in the students. Thanks to contributions from the church and community we are in good shape with books. We will always accept donations of new or gently used books appropriate for children between the ages of 3 and 11. Thank you for your support!

THE GOOD NEWS GRAPEVINE

The Lotts have been cruising again! In late October, Van IV sailed from Barcelona, Spain, visiting several new locations. His ship stopped in Tangier, Morocco; Walvis Bay, Namibia; and Cape Town, South Africa. After 18 nights at sea, he debarked in Cape Town and took a direct flight back to Atlanta.

Anne and Van also cruised the Caribbean during the two weeks of Thanksgiving. They visited the ABC islands located off the coast of Venezuela in the Southern Caribbean and enjoyed a safe and quiet trip.

Finally, John and Holly planned a Caribbean cruise for the second half of January and invited Anne and Van to join them. They visited St. Maarten, St. Thomas, and Nassau. The highlight of the trip was seeing the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford anchored off St. Thomas. This was Holly's second cruise, and she is already planning her next one with John.

If you have news about yourself or your family you wish to share for the March newsletter, please send it to the church office no later than February 23rd at: stjohnscongarree@gmail.com.

**FEBRUARY CELEBRATIONS****BIRTHDAYS IN FEBRUARY**

1	Ed Manning	16	Holly Davis
4	Jeff Anderson	18	Charlotte Tatum
8	Catherine Anderson	18	Vicky Moore
8	Perri Peraza	19	Scott Tatum
13	Todd Burnett	20	Robert Kendall
13	Walt Burnett	20	Van Lott, IV
13	Billy Cate		

ANNIVERSARIES IN FEBRUARY

7	Eva & Scott O'Brian
12	Tammy & Roy Brazzell
20	Judy & Butch Addison
26	Brenda & Danny McCracken

WORSHIP TEAM SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY

	<u>WORSHIP LEADER</u>	<u>LECTOR</u>	<u>VIDEOGRAPHER</u>	<u>GREETER</u>
February 1	Bud McCaskill	Rita McCaskill	John Davis	Louise Barker
February 8	Jim Hiott	Bev Watkins	Van Lott	John Davis
February 15	Van Lott	John Lott	Julie Rose	Debbie Davis
February 18 (Ash Wed)	Lisa Clarkson	Louise Barker	Selman Watson	Louise Barker
February 22	Fran Burnett	Ayden Floyd	Frank Claytor	Julie & Frank Claytor

FINANCIAL REPORT through December 31, 2025

Operating Fund Checking Account:

December income: \$21,100.88

December disbursements: \$14,057.50

Difference: \$7043.38

1/1/2025 through 12/31/2025:

Income: \$144,009.78

Disbursements: \$156,063.66

Difference: **-\$12,053.66**

Cemetery & Grounds Checking Acct:

December income: \$3150.13

December disbursements: \$670.00

Difference: \$2480.13

1/1/2025 through 12/31/2025:

Income: \$10,890.87

Disbursements: \$9099.99

Difference: \$1790.88

Building Fund Checking Account:

December income: \$0.07

December disbursements: \$6374.51

Difference: **-\$6374.44**

1/1/2025 through 12/31/2025:

Income: \$6775.83

Disbursements: \$28,434.99

Difference: **-\$21,659.16**

ST. JOHN'S PRAYER LIST

Please Pray For:	Requested by:
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 Tsahalis	Corrie Blasi
Joseph Brazitis	Holly Brazitis
Bill Spoonhoward	Lisa Clarkson
Betty Thompson	Parish
Nancy Vosbaugh	Sarah Murphy
Jimmy & Brandy Hughes	Rita McCaskill
The McGovern Family	Corrie Blasi
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
Clay Davis	Holly & Jason Davis
Terry Catoe	The Catoe Family
Bertha Fox	Nora & Tommy Claytor
John Grimball	Parish
Mike Kelly	Rusty Davis
Mitzee Teague	Katie Ayers
Bill Death	Van Lott

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.