



The Messenger

St. John's Episcopal Church

Springfield, Missouri

March 2025, Issue 141, No. 3



Mark Your Calendars



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

March 4, 2025
5 - 6:30 p.m.



Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025
12 & 6:00 p.m.



St. John's beautiful
**Stations of
the Cross**
Fridays at noon
during Lent.



March 8th,
6:30 p.m.

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EASTER FLOWER OFFERING

Easter will be arriving on April 20th this year, when Lent ends with the glorious celebration of our Savior's resurrection. A wonderful symbol on this great occasion is the array of Easter lilies that fills our church. Making a donation to supply these flowers is a particularly good way to remember those dear to us who have departed this life to continue with the living Christ. There will be special Easter Flower Offering envelopes beside the bulletins at each Saturday and Sunday service for the rest of Lent. Please make your check payable to St. John's Episcopal Church and write "Easter flowers" on the memo line. Your envelope may be mailed to the church, turned in to the office, or placed in the offering plate. On the outside of the offering envelope, please print clearly:

Given by: _____

In memory of: _____
(and/or) _____

In thanksgiving for: _____

This information will be used to prepare the Easter Flowers Offering Booklet. Please submit your envelopes no later than **Monday, April 14.**

Thank you.
Karen Horny, Altar Flower Coordinator

St. John's Episcopal Church

Bishop Provisional

The Right Reverend Diane M. Jardine Bruce

Interim Rector

The Reverend Ronald Keel

Director of Music

Kevin Grice

Senior Warden

Victor Matthews

Junior Warden

Linda Robertson

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From the Interim Rector

The Sacred Journey of Lent

As we enter the holy season of Lent, the Church calls us to a time of deep reflection, repentance, and renewal. On Ash Wednesday, we hear the solemn invitation: *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 self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.* These words remind us that Lent is not merely a season of obligation but a sacred journey toward transformation, preparing our hearts to encounter the mystery of Christ's Passion and Resurrection.

In the Anglo-Catholic tradition, Lent is marked by profound shifts in our worship, drawing us into the penitential character of the season. The liturgy itself invites us into a spirit of humility and contrition. The joyful *Gloria in Excelsis* is set aside, as is the *Alleluia*, allowing us to feel their absence and anticipate their return at Easter. The color of our vestments changes to solemn violet, symbolizing repentance and the call to turn back to God with contrite hearts.

Our prayers take on a more penitential tone, particularly in the use of the *Decalogue* (the Ten Commandments) and the recitation of the *Penitential Order*. We are given more opportunities for confession, both corporately and individually, acknowledging our need for God's mercy. In many churches, the *Great Litany* is chanted on the first Sunday of Lent, its solemn petitions reminding us of our dependence on divine grace.

The music of Lent also reflects this season of reflection and restraint. Hymns take on a more contemplative and minor key, focusing on themes of repentance, the Passion of Christ, and our longing for redemption. Silence becomes more pronounced in our liturgies, allowing space for personal reflection and prayer. The absence of instrumental flourishes or elaborate choral arrangements reminds us of the stripped-down simplicity that Lent invites us to embrace.

Beyond our corporate worship, we are called to personal disciplines that deepen our spiritual lives. Fasting, whether from certain foods, habits, or distractions, is not merely an act of self-denial but a way of making space for God. The Church encourages acts of charity and almsgiving, reminding us that true penitence is not only inward but must also extend outward in love and service to others.

Most importantly, Lent is a time to immerse ourselves in Scripture and prayer. Whether through the Daily Office, personal devotions, or Lenten studies, we are called to meditate on God's Word, allowing it to shape and transform us. As we walk this 40-day journey together, let us embrace these practices not as burdens but as gifts—ways in which we draw nearer to Christ, who humbled Himself for our sake.

May this Lent be for each of us a time of holy renewal, leading us to the joy of Easter with hearts made new in the love and mercy of our Lord.

Blessings in Christ,

The Reverend Ron Keel
Interim Rector

Outreach Continues Important Projects

St. John's Outreach Group has continued to pursue an excellent variety of projects. As December came to an end, we proceeded with our regular "12 Days of Christmas" collection to provide wine for the rural parishes in Kenya served by Fr. Jesse Mwaniki, who attended St. John's while studying in Springfield some years ago. The generosity of our parish furnished \$1,328. Outreach was able to hold a Zoom meeting with Fr. Jesse on February 9 and hopes to have another Zoom session at coffee for our parish participation

With the arrival of Lent, we have again identified an important project of Episcopal Relief & Development's international efforts. It is "Nurture & Nourish the Earliest Learners." A donation of any size will be appreciated, and a contribution of \$15 will provide assistance for one child! The Outreach group plans to furnish treats for the March 9 coffee hour to encourage participation in the project. A drawing from donor names for 2 gift cards from Outreach is also planned.

Another important Easter project is supplying food and household supplies for the three families we continue to support on our most significant occasions. Sign-up sheets for foods you will furnish will be posted on the Outreach bulletin board!

Being a Committed Steward

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we become committed stewards, who use our time, talents, and resources to help and serve others, build God's Church, and expand God's kingdom. Even though you and I are undeserving, God honors us with the privilege of being his stewards.

- In Genesis 1:28, we learn that God gives us dominion over all creation.
- In Genesis 2:15, we are given the task of tending and caring for what God has created.
- In Psalms 8:6, we read that God has made us overseers and rulers over the works of his hands.

God's Word gives us our authority, responsibility, privilege, and duty to be stewards of God's creation. Our stewardship is to reflect the same love and concern that God has for all he has created.

As stewards, we are managers or caretakers, not owners, of all that God entrusts to us. God has created and still owns and sustains all things. Everything we have is God's. Faithful stewards remember that all we have and all we are is because of God. In Psalm 24:1 we read, "The earth is the LORD's...." We are God's stewards entrusted with the management of the world. On our own, we are incapable of becoming stewards, but we have been reconciled to God through Christ's life, death, and resurrection making us new creations. God becomes the source of our strength. We become God's hands, feet, and mouth, as he works through us in our stewardship. As faithful stewards, our acts of stewardship are efforts that always seek to praise God.

By God's grace, we become committed stewards who are faithful, prayerful, grateful, generous, and service-oriented. Being committed stewards implies that our stewardship is not a part-time position. It is our whole-life response to God's grace and love. It is much more than helping our neighbors occasionally or placing an offering in the collection plate. Living with the perspective of being stewards changes our lives. Being stewards is what we are, which determines what we do: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). We are called to be stewards in our homes, neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. God wants us to use our time, talents, and resources for his glory. Blessings on your stewardship journey!



The Three Gates of Speech: Considerations for a Lenten Discipline

For months I have heard the advice displayed in the graphic on KY3, and it has stayed on my mind. I have decided it is time to put it into practice as my own personal discipline for Lent, and I invite you to join me. Let us explore each component together.

Is it true? This first “gate” reminds me of Pilate asking Jesus, “What is truth?” Truth involves more than just getting my facts straight. Facts can be presented in misleading ways, so it is easy to bend the truth. I must ask myself, “Am I willing to tell the whole truth – providing enough context that my hearers are receiving all the information about what I’m

saying?” Am I being careful to convey only information that I know to be true, passing rather than speculating or passing on gossip.

Another way we can distort the truth is to relate only part of the story – the part that proves I am the victim or that I am the hero, or that I am the one who is in the know. Being truthful means relating the story without trying to manipulate the reactions of my hearer or misrepresenting the others involved in the story. Perhaps the overriding consideration about “Is it true” would be to consider is what I am about to say true to my understanding of who God is calling me to be?

Is it necessary? This is an important consideration. What is the purpose of my sharing this information? Does it protect somebody’s safety or security? Will it nurture my relationship with my hearer without damaging my relationship with others?

This does not mean avoiding positive, uplifting conversations that express love and respect. However, complaining, pessimism, and cynicism are unnecessary and should not pass through the gate. Likewise, retelling a story to someone who has already heard it—simply to hear myself talk—is also unnecessary.

Is it kind? Kindness applies not only to the person who listens but also to those who are not present. Sharing stories that are not mine to tell is unkind, even if I want to be the first to share the news. Everyone has the right to tell their own story in their way.

If I need to confront someone about a problem, I should consider the kindest way to do so. Correction or accountability can be delivered with compassion rather than criticism.

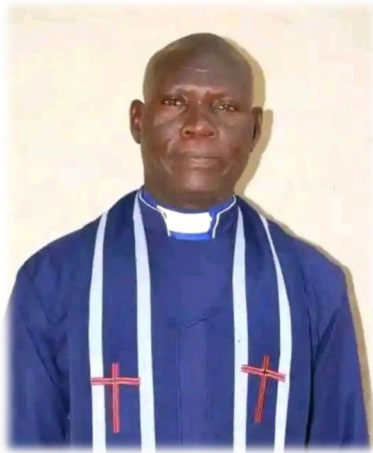
The challenge Taking on new disciplines is challenging. The first step is to decide to make that change. The second step is to set myself up to succeed. Letting my friends know that I am taking on this discipline will help keep me accountable. I will put a few notes around – on the bathroom mirror, on my alarm clock, and on my phone screen, to keep the decision in the front of my mind. Will you join me? Or will you cheer me on from the sidelines? Either way, I appreciate your support.

Cheryl Calvin Moon, RN, BSN Parish Nurse



The Green Team’s third annual native plant sale has begun and runs through April 1. Plant pick-up will be available April 5.

Praying for our Enemies



Evangelical Churches Winning All (ECWA) pastor Bala Galadima was shot in his bed on February 9th 2025.

My heart was left in Africa where I spent my childhood. In recent years there has been increasing stress in Nigeria where about 50% of the population claim to be either Muslim or Christian. With the fervor of faith, Fulani Militants attack Christian farming villages, burning churches and homes, kidnapping people who become enslaved, shooting randomly to increase fear.

Some killing is planned, such as that of ECWA pastor Bala Galadima who was shot as he lay in bed on February 9th. (The denomination Evangelical Church Winning All was organized by coworkers of my father as Nigeria emerged from the colonial period.)

In 2024 there were almost 4,500 Christians, world wide, murdered for their faith. More than 3,000 of these were in Nigeria. Fr. Keel acknowledged, "We remember and celebrate martyrs from days, years, centuries ago ... and, yet, seem relatively unaware that persecutions including murder, are with us today."

Our scriptures from the 7th Sunday after Epiphany provide the example of Joseph forgiving his brothers. Then in Luke 6, Jesus gives a whole discourse on "Love your enemies." There are more than 10,000 Christian women made widows by Islamic attacks. As a part of recovery for these women, they are reminded of scriptures on forgiving, of the suffering of Jesus, of just how much they are loved by God. Ruth says, "I never thought I would forgive Boko Haram, but I did. I have forgiven them, and I love them." Regina said, "Even when you forgive, it is not easy to forget. God is still working on my heart."

Mariam, whose church elder husband Emmanuel was killed, said, "We didn't know that there were people far, far, far away praying for us. And when we found out, it encouraged us. It strengthens our faith in God."

As we enter Lent in 2025, I challenge the St. John's family to be aware that people are still suffering for their faith in Jesus this year. Pray for these new saints. Pray for the bereaved families. And beyond that, I will check on those whom I need to forgive as advised by Cheryl Moon in her sermon February 23rd. More actions are available in the Arise Africa campaign by Open Doors. You can access this on line at LeavesOfHealing.org.

Joyce Schmidt

Pray

MORE SPECIFICALLY FOR
OUR PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Lydia was selling tomatoes along the road when militant Fulani Muslims raided her village. Hearing gun shots she fled into the bush, leaving behind her youngest child in the confusion. A pastor later found Lydia's son and returned him safely to his mother. But when Lydia returned to her village the next day, she her husband's mutilated, lifeless body and the rubble of her burned home. Lydia has five children, ranging in age from 3 to 15. ~ VOM.org



From The Parish Health Ministry Team

SCAM ALERT

Watch out! Scammers target everyone.



Recognize scammers. They may:

- **PRETEND** to be from an agency or organization you know.
- Say there's a **PROBLEM** or promise a prize.
- **PRESSURE** you to act immediately.
- Tell you to **PAY** in a specific way.



Do not give scammers money or personal information – Ignore them!

How to avoid a scam:

- **Remain calm.** Talk to someone you trust.
- **Hang up or ignore** the message. **DO NOT** click on links or attachments.
- **Protect your money.** Criminals will insist that you pay in a hard-to-trace manner, such as with a gift card, prepaid debit card, cryptocurrency, wire transfer, money transfer, or by mailing cash.
- **Protect your personal information.** Be skeptical of a contact you didn't initiate.
- **Spread the word.** Share your knowledge of Social Security-related scams. Post on social media using the hashtag #SlamtheScam to share your experience and warn others. Visit ssa.gov/scam for more information. Please also share with your friends and family.

St. John's Episcopal Church
515 E. Division St.
Springfield, MO 65803

Return Service Requested

The Messenger

**a Newsletter of
St. John's Church**

Remembering Special Dates & People

Birthdays

Mar. 5 Shannon Wilkinson
Mar. 6 Kim Westervelt
Mar. 7 Nikki Jones
Mar. 8 Jacque Gray
Mar. 9 Jillian Merrill
Mar. 10 Amy Smith
Mar. 12 Philip Mothersead
Mar. 14 Mason & Rush Matthews
Mar. 17 Patti Goforth
Mar. 18 Jean Baker
Mar. 19 Sharon Riestis
Mar. 20 Shawn Askinosie
Jim Price
Mar. 21 Kristopher Chaffin
Debby Williams
Mar. 22 Jay Hancock
Mar. 23 Kevin Grice
Marshall Price
Mar. 25 Rob Temple
Mar. 30 Christopher Larsen
Mar. 31 Angela Schmidt

Anniversaries

Mar. 28 Rex & Linda Porterfield

Faithful Departed

Mar. 1 John Ellsworth Lines
Ruth Parham
Margaret Pelcher
Noi Mae Pierce
Betty White
Mar. 3 Joseph E. Cox, Sr.
Robert Cunningham
Maud R. James
Paul Simpson
Mar. 4 John S. Bostwick, Deacon
David D. James
Guy Richardson
Mar. 5 Minnie McCoy
Mar. 6 Dorothy Bostwick
Bob Richards
Mar. 8 John Hurt
Mar. 9 U.S. Tegarden
Demaris Wright
Mar. 10 Lawrence E. Braig
Mar. 11 Patrick Eugene Brown
Virginia Weigel
Mar. 12 Donald Jacobson
Sabine Williams
Mar. 16 Evelyn Crankshaw
Ethel E. Jacobson

Mar. 17 Joseph M. Patterson
Caroline Tirgrath
Mar. 18 Harriet Mears
Raymond E. Patterson
Mar. 20 Joan Harvates
Mar. 24 Sally Mae Achord
Helen Braig
Juanita Drussa Harmon
Mar. 26 Jesse Thompson
Mar. 27 Rosa Benskin
Mar. 31 Joan Iott

Daylight Saving Time



MARCH 9

**Spring
Forward!**

Set your clocks ahead