



St Luke's Vestry

Reset to the New Normal:
The Work Continues

Class of 2026

Yvonne Hall

Beverly Turner, Jr. Warden

Joni James

Errol Porter, Sr. Warden

Class of 2027

Angela Blalock

Robert Green

Joseph Ray

Rudolph Wise

Class of 2028

Edwina Fields

Cynthia Goines

Herman Hickman

Cynthia Parker Reed

Clerk of the Vestry

Patricia Ancrum

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From the Desk of the Rector

By the time you read this, I will have begun my sabbatical. Many of you have questioned why I need a sabbatical, and one parishioner put it best in a recent card to me: "Taking Care of Yourself is Taking Care of the Church." My Letter of Agreement/Contract guarantees a sabbatical after four years of service. Many people often forget that I arrived in Columbia alone, with only the things that I own, no family and no friends. Within five months, I officiated at five funerals, and then the pandemic was upon us. Leading the Church through the pandemic, over seeing two capital campaigns, managing the day-to-day life of daily parish, and enduring the obstacles and trauma of the past few years was not easy. I basically went to the bishop and told him that "I want my life back." That was the defining moment not only for me, but for him to take action to ensure that I would not leave St. Luke's and for me to take care of myself.

Being selfish is not always a bad thing. Pouring one hundred percent of yourself into a job is not an easy task; especially when you are a solo priest in a parish. Although the bishop assured me that everything would not fall on me if something bad happened to or at the Church, as a priest and a black male, I know better. Churches are not known by their names or the work they do. The first question is "Isn't that Fr./Rev/ _____ Church?"

Being paired with Fr. Lyon after the traumatic year of 2024/2025 was a life saver and a life giver. I have seen up close what it is like to be priest in the midst to a storm, to walk into your purpose, and to experience the love and acceptance from others that you need from your own. Fr. Lyon and Good Shepherd saved me in many ways. Sometimes it takes what appears to be something bad to happen or a storm to brew before the clouds clear and the sun is shining before you. At our Vestry retreat in 2025, the Rev. Walter Brownridge got the ball rolling by assuring me of my leadership skills. A leader has to be prepared for the good and the bad.

Father Raphiell+ is on Sabbatical June 1, 2026 through August 31, 2026.

Contact Errol Porter, Senior Warden (803) 888-0854

Interested in publishing information in the newsletter? Submit all articles and photos (jpeg or other photo format) to shaunahicks24@gmail.com by the 20th of the month for the following month's publication.

As I embark on this time of spiritual renewal, study, and rest, this will be an opportune time for all of us to do some deep soul searching. Is St. Luke's the place for me? Is St. Luke's ready for a priest who takes his ordination vows seriously, who is not a "yes" man? Is St. Luke's ready for someone who wants to grow the church, and be inclusive of all people, to be a visionary even when it causes others to have to face inevitable truths? These and other questions are ones that you will need to have an honest conversation(s) about with the Wardens in my absence.

Thanks to all of you who have shown your love, support, and understanding to me over these last six years. Although Sunday's service had an overtone of saying "good-bye", there was a feeling of the many possibilities that this church has yet to embrace, envision, or explore. Leadership is not for the faint-hearted. It takes a strong priest to take on the responsibility of a parish, to perform over twenty funerals in six years, and to continue to dream in the midst of opposition. Last Sunday's Sabbatical Luncheon was special to me. Thank you for all the love, sincere messages, cards, care packages and much more.

May we all do some inner soul searching over these next thirteen weeks. I plan to return rejuvenated, renewed, and ready to continue ministry in familiar and new ways. The liturgy will not be rushed or taken lightly, the music will continue to be top tier, and my dedication to the church will remain unwavering. The services will not be "dumbed-down." I can only speak for what has transpired during my tenure: St. Luke's is known for its beautiful liturgy, musical excellence in singing many genres of music while remaining true to its Anglican heritage professional choristers, a priest who is active in the community, and a priest who wants to be inclusive and not exclusive.

The Wardens, Parliamentarian, Organist, and Secretary all have their duties and roles during my time away. The Senior Warden is the head lay person during my absence. All correspondence, concerns, etc. should come through him. The Senior Warden will update you weekly on my time away.

It is expected for everyone to work in their assigned roles while I am away. There will be no changes in the liturgy, etc. unless approved by the Warden in consultation with me. We need to be bringing people in; not rushing them out. We need to fellowship after church, not leave out the side door to avoid the priest or leave after communion. The service is not over until the Dismissal. Let us be problem solvers and not problem avoiders. Let us do as Jesus commissioned and commanded us to do. We have accomplished much by working together. May we continue to be reminded of what blessings are just around the bend if we work together and love each other.

I look forward to seeing all of you on the Sunday of my return, September 6th.

Have a safe and joy-filled summer. And remember, your financial support of the parish is still important and expected during these summer months.

In Peace,

Fr. Raphiell+

June 1, 2026

The First Monday after Pentecost

May Church Highlights

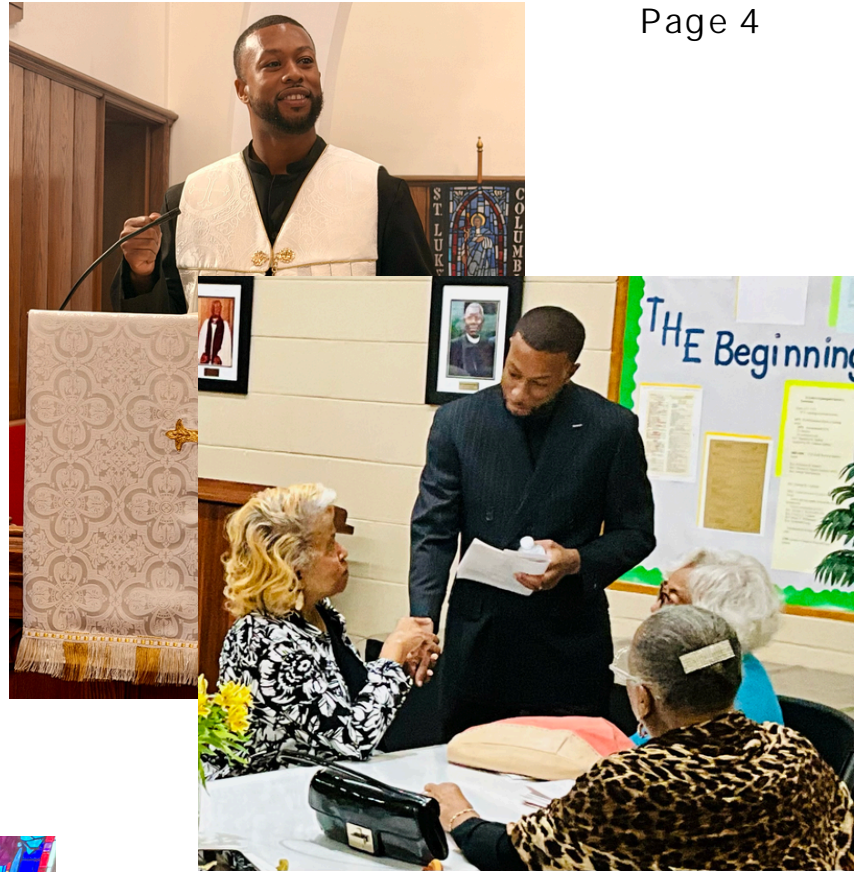
Rector's Sabbatical Luncheon



The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd held its Confirmation Class in the Chancel after the Rector's Sabbatical Luncheon.



Releasing of the dove on the Day of Pentecost.



The Reverend Taliaferro Robinson-Heyward was the guest speaker at the service for the Feast of the Ascension, He is the son of John Heyward and Ovetta Robinson-Heyward, and the grandson of parishioner Eunice Robinson.



Corine Whittington-Kimpson's daughter and granddaughter visit on Mother's Day



New family from Costa Rica visits the Parish on Trinity Sunday.



Men's Club sponsoring Parish fellowship.



Congratulations to Luther J. Battiste, III, a partner and shareholder at Johnson, Toal and Battistee, P.A., for his selection as a South Carolina Super Lawyer for 2026. This was Luther's 18th time being selected. Luther's practice involves complex personal injury cases, worker's compensation and administrative law. Luther served as the National President of the American Board of Trial Advocates in 2020, an invitation only organization of skilled Plaintiff's and Defense Lawyers. Johnson, Toal and Battistee, P.A. appreciates his more than fifty years of practice with the law firm and the difference he has made as a lawyer and a person involved in making the community a better place.



Cynthia Parker Reed has been appointed by the Rector to serve as Vestry Parliamentarian during his sabbatical.



Jaylen Caldwell (center), acolyte and grandson of Cassandra Sims, is in training to be on staff this summer at Camp Gravatt. He will serve in various roles to include Camp Counselor and Activities Facilitator.



Gwen Parker with her brother Cleveland Sellers, Civil Rights icon and former President of Voorhees College (University) at granddaughter Peyton Parker-Smith's graduation celebration



Three generations of St. Luke's members - Peyton Parker-Smith, Gwen Parker, and Paulette Parker-Smith



Solomon Spann IV, grandson of Gwen Spann won 1st place in Education Reporting at the Society of Professional Journalists, Detroit Chapter Awards for his work published in Perspectives Magazine 2025

In his article titled, High School Students Face Exhaustion, Burnout, Solomon wrote about how the rigors to excel in academics and extracurriculars creates mental and physical fatigue.

His article touches on mental health, social influences that impact studying, academic overload and the cost of chasing academic success. A must read for students, parents and grandparents.

The article in its entirety can be found at <https://www.detroitwritingroom.com/2025-journalism-camp-stories/high-school-students-face-exhaustion-burnout>



Happy Birthday wishes to

- 2 - Barbara Simmons
- 5 - Valarian Couch, Jr.
- 7 - Patricia Cokley
- 10 - Milton Parker
- 12 - Susan Moffitt (SupplyOrganist)
- 15 - Rudolph L. Wise
- 16 - Byron Eaddy
- 18 - Paulette Parker-Smith
- 21 - Ja'Veil Bynoe
- 26 - Beverly Ray

Happy Anniversary

May 16 - Drs. David & Angela Blalock

June

- 5 - Darnell & Maxim a Holmees
- 20 - Ronald & Beverly Turner
- 28 - Levi "Vari" & Venesia Johnson, Jr.
- Robert & Valerie Riley

Confirmation Rehearsal



Bishop Daniel Richards with St. Luke's Confirmands



Confirmands Nadia Muhammad and Kennedy Johnson



Joy

Donna Ashworth

Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE)

The Mission of the UBE is: To unify the diverse cultures, concerns, and gifts of Black Episcopalians by offering preparation and encouragement for living the Baptismal Covenant and actively participating in the mission and governance of The Episcopal Church.

Vision

- To raise awareness among young men and women of African descent about the vocation to the clergy.
- To promote strong lay leadership among communities of African Descent within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.
- To incorporate fiscal responsibility into the life, work and ministry of UBE.
- To develop a systematic approach to ensure that Black Congregations and other Communities of African Descent remain sustainable and viable within their environment.
- To be a community committed to vigilance and action on issues of injustice, especially the impact of racism in the Church and society.

Lavonnie Perry Claybon, PhD, is the Southeast Regional Director.

For more information about the UBE visit www.ube.org.



Tentatively scheduled highlights for the conference in Raleigh, NC include:

Wednesday, July 29 - Golf Tournament, Meet and Greet, Registration, Forum

Thursday, July 30 - Morning Prayer, History of UBE, The Church & Black Folks: 1968 - 2026, Grant Writing, Eucharist at St. Augustine's, 60's & 70's Dinner Dance, Evening Prayer

Friday, July 31 - Morning Prayer, You & Church Governance, Future of the Black Church, Awards Luncheon; Policy & Procedure Review, Eucharist at St. Ambrose's, Gala with Keynote: Bishop Michael Curry

Saturday, August 1 - Morning Prayer, Conference Closing

June Liturgical Calendar & Servants for the Lord

Father Raphiell+ is on Sabbatical June 1, 2026 through August 31, 2026.
 Father William Marshall Brock, Celebrant will serve as Supply Priest during
 the month of June

June 7- 10:00 am - Nave - The Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5)- The Holy Eucharist: Rite II
 Supply Priest:

Old Testament Lesson: Beverly Ray
 Epistle: Joni James
 Prayers of the People: Cassandra Sims
 Chalice: Sheryl Belcher
 Oblation Bearers: Rachel Hall, Venesia Johnson
 Ushers: Venesia Johnson, Beverly Ray, Joseph Ray
 Acolytes: Herman Hickman, Cory James
 Supply Organist: Susan Moffitt

June 14 - 10:00 am - Nave - The Third Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 6) - The Holy Eucharist: Rite II
 Supply Priest:

Old Testament Lesson: Valencia Hammonds
 Epistle: Paulette Parker-Smith
 Prayers of the People: DeNell Hickman
 Chalice: Paulette Parker-Smith
 Oblation Bearers: Leroy Brown, Byron Eaddy
 Ushers: Judy Battiste, Brian Baldwin, Daryl Hammonds
 Acolytes: DeNell Hickman, Herman Hickman, Cory James
 Supply Organist: Ezra Blackwell

June 21- 10:00 am - Nave - The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 7) - Holy Eucharist: Rite II
 Supply Priest:

Father's Day
 Old Testament Lesson: Cynthia Parker Reed
 Epistle: Errol Porter
 Prayers of the People: Rachel Hall
 Chalice: Desmond Goines
 Oblation Bearers: Rudy Wise, Leon Green
 Ushers: Karen Castelli, Rachel Hall, Ronald Turneer
 Acolytes: Desmond Goines, Herman Hickman, Cory James
 Supply Organist: Ezra Blackwell

June 28 - 10:00 am - Nave - The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8) - The Holy Eucharist Rite II
 Supply Priest:

Old Testament Lesson: Joni James
 Epistle: Sheryl Belcher
 Prayers of the People: Peyton Parker-Smith
 Chalice: Corliss Wise
 Oblation Bearers: Joseph Evans, Chris Evans
 Ushers: Stephanie Baldwin, Gloria Eaddy, Rudolph Wise
 Acolytes: DeNell Hickman, Herman Hickman, Cory James
 Supply Organist: Ezra Blackwell

Monday

1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th - Parish Office Closed

1st through 30th - **Communion Drive - \$1 for each year confirmed**

Tuesday

9th - Archives Committee - 10:30 am - 1:00 pm - Archives Room

16th - Finance Committee - 4:00 pm - 5:15 pm - Griffin Hall

- Vestry Meeting - 6:00 pm - 7:30pm - Griffin Hall

23rd - Buildings and Grounds - 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm - Griffin Hall

30th - **Confirmation Drive Ends**

Wednesday

3rd - Adult Formation (Entire Group Bible Study - 10:30 am - 12:00 noon - Griffin Hall

17th - Quilters & Crafters - 10:30 am - 1:00 pm - Griffin Hall

24th - Quilters & Crafters - 10:30 am - 1:00 pm - Griffin Hall

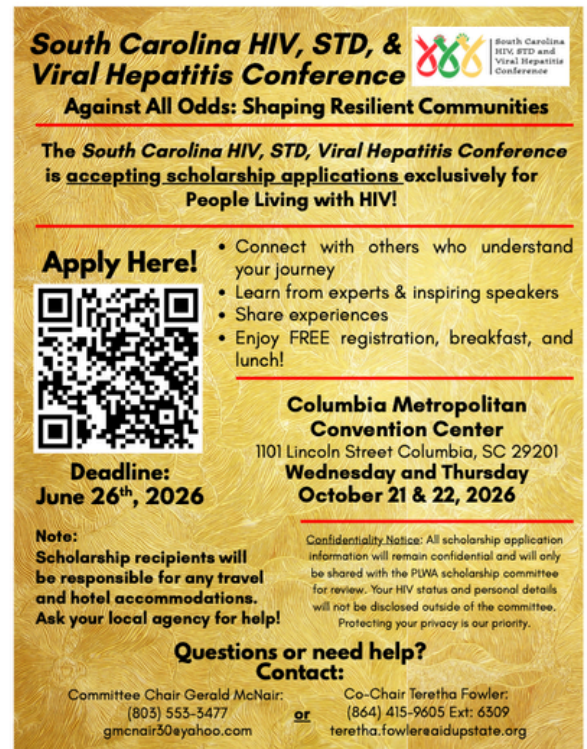
Thursday

4th, 11th, 18th, 25th - Fresh Start Ministry - 9:00 am - 12:00 noon - Griffin Hall

Friday

5th, 12th, 19th, 26th - Parish Office Closed


26th - **Deadline** to register for the SC HIV, STD and Viral Hepatitis Conference



South Carolina HIV, STD, & Viral Hepatitis Conference
Against All Odds: Shaping Resilient Communities

The South Carolina HIV, STD, Viral Hepatitis Conference is **accepting scholarship applications exclusively for People Living with HIV!**

Apply Here!



- Connect with others who understand your journey
- Learn from experts & inspiring speakers
- Share experiences
- Enjoy FREE registration, breakfast, and lunch!

Deadline: June 26th, 2026

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center
1101 Lincoln Street Columbia, SC 29201
Wednesday and Thursday
October 21 & 22, 2026

Note:
Scholarship recipients will be responsible for any travel and hotel accommodations. Ask your local agency for help!

Confidentiality Notice: All scholarship application information will remain confidential and will only be shared with the PIWA scholarship committee for review. Your HIV status and personal details will not be disclosed outside of the committee. Protecting your privacy is our priority.

Questions or need help? Contact:

Committee Chair Gerald McNair: (803) 553-3477 or gmcnair30@yahoo.com
Co-Chair Teretha Fowler: (864) 415-9605 Ext: 6309 or teretha.fowleraidupstate.org

Saturday

6th, 13th, 20th, 27th - Parish Office Closed

13th - 2nd Saturday Feeding - 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm - Griffin Hall Entrance Doorway

20th - Daughters of the King (DOK) - 3:00 pm - Griffin Hall

27th - 4th Saturday Feeding - 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm - Griffin Hall Entrance Doorway

Sunday

See Liturgical Calendar

7th, 14th, 21st, 28th - Choir Rehearsal - 8:30 am - 9:30 am - Chancel

Just a reminder to keep up your financial obligations (pledges, etc.) to the church up-to-date over the summer months, Thank you,

St. Luke's Episcopal Church 1300 Pine Street/Columbia,
South Carolina 29204 (803) 254-2327

The Reverend C. Raphael Ashford, Rector

Sheryl D. Belcher, Parish Secretary

~

Karen Castelli, Website Administrator

Shauna Hicks, Newsletter Editor

Valerie Riley, Executive Director—Fresh Start Ministry

~

Patricia Cokley, Parish Treasurer

Darnell Holmes, William Smith, Jr., Asst. Parish
Treasurers

Sheryl D. Belcher, Assoc. Parish Treasurer

stlukesolumbia@gmail.com (Email) <http://www.stlukescolasc.org> (Website)

www.facebook.com/stlukesolumbia YouTube: @Fr.Raphael6290

"The Episcopal Church is a secret too well kept. Many are starved for what we experience daily and too easily take for granted. Invite others to come to your parish to experience this joy."

Louie Crew, author of 101 Reasons to be Episcopalian