

# The *Epistle* of St. Paul

March 2026

## *St. Paul*

United Methodist  
Church

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Marietta, Georgia  
30066  
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Rev. Shelia Preacher  
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678-925-0103

Children's Ministry  
Victoria Godfrey

Music Director  
Hope Field

Accompanist  
Dorothy McCracken

Administrative  
Assistant  
Louise Byrd

Financial Secretary  
Ed Jackson

Lead Nursery  
Morgan Field

Nursery Assistant  
Zahra Taylor

Sunday Schedule  
9:45 Sunday School  
11:00 Worship

## Turning Toward the Cross

*Rev. Shelia Preacher*

As we look ahead toward Easter, we often call this season of Lent a journey—and for good reason. Lent is not simply a date we observe on a calendar. It has a destination. And every journey has a direction. During these weeks, we are not wandering aimlessly. We are turning—slowly, intentionally—toward the cross.

As I began preparing my own heart for this journey, a verse from “The Old Rugged Cross” kept playing in my head: *“On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame.”* That hymn names something real. The cross was a place of unimaginable suffering. But it is also more than a historical object. It is a symbol layered with meaning.

The cross stands at the center of our faith. It crowns our steeples. It hangs on our walls. Some of us even wear it around our necks. Yet what does it truly mean—to you? If I am being honest, sometimes I prefer to admire it as a polished symbol rather than approach it as truth. It feels safer that way. But this year, my Lenten journey is inviting me closer. Not to admire the cross from a distance—but to face it. And whenever we choose to face something honestly, something in us shifts—especially when that something we face is the cross.



You see, like nothing else, the cross uniquely reveals the depth of our brokenness...the fractures that are readily visible as well as those that are buried deep within. The cross uncovers the fragility that lies beneath those

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Turning Toward the Cross** *(Continued from page 1)*

carefully pulled together facades that we present to the world every day. The cross exposes an ache, an emptiness that manifests itself in countless ways so often that it cannot be written off as some abstract theological idea, but it is a lived human condition.

But the cross does not stop there. At the very same moment it reveals our brokenness, it unveils the depth of God's love. For even when humanity is at its worst—even when I am at my worst—God does not withdraw. In Christ, God absorbs the worst the world can hand out... choosing to remain present, suffering at our hands, rather than just turning away and washing his hands of our mess.

The cross is not God's abandonment of the world; it is God's refusal to abandon it! So here at the cross, our brokenness and his love meet. And love does not flinch...it does not turn away...it refuses to leave until it accomplishes its purpose!

So, this Lent...as we turn toward the cross...do we dare to step into its truth? For this journey will not always be comfortable. Sometimes, it means facing what we would rather avoid. We will be led to name what needs healing—resentments we have rehearsed, fears that have quietly governed us, habits that no longer give life. Turning toward the cross means releasing things that cannot follow us into resurrection. What might God be calling us to release on our journey? New life cannot grow when we refuse to let go. This Lent, let us ALL turn—toward the cross. Not because we enjoy discomfort, but because we

# LENT

**Ways to give:**

- ◀ Scan the QR Code
- Place offering in basket
- [www.stpaulumc.com/donate](http://www.stpaulumc.com/donate);
- Text SPUMC244 + amount to 73256
- Download the App on our website.

## March Mission Focus

*Susan Short*

Spring is coming, and that means it's almost time for one of our favorite outreach traditions: the **Community Easter Egg Hunt on Palm Sunday, March 29th at 1:30 pm.**

As a church, we exist to share our experience of Christ with others. Every year, our church campus is filled with laughter, running feet, and brightly colored eggs just waiting to be discovered. But this event is more than just fun and candy. It's about sharing the hope and joy of Easter with our neighbors in a simple, welcoming way.'



*"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," (Psalm 118:24 ).*

### How YOU Can Help:

- ♣ **Bring individually wrapped (non-chocolate, nut-free) candy to the church.**
- ♣ **Bring small, new stuffed animals to share.**
- ♣ **Donate financially to purchase refreshments.**
- ♣ **Assemble Eggs—Join in and fill the eggs—it's a great time for fellowship and serving together.  
We have plenty of plastic eggs on hand.**
- ♣ **Hide Eggs—On hunt day, we'll need volunteers to greet folks, hide the eggs or serve refreshments. Now is your chance!**

For some families, this may be their first experience with St. Paul UMC. For others, it may be the only Easter activity they attend. A warm welcome, a safe space, and a sense of joy can plant seeds of faith in ways that we may never fully see.

So, let's keep doing good ~ Let's keep loving our neighbors ~ Let's keep shining Christ's love from this Lighthouse church!

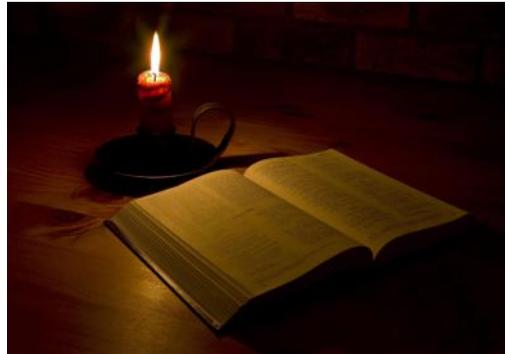
Help by donating financially, bringing in stuffed toys, assembling, or hiding eggs. Let's make a memorable Easter celebration for all ~ in His most holy and precious name.

To God be the *Glory!*

## Lent the Wesleyan Way: More Than a Season

*Mike McMillin*

When we think of Lent, many of us picture forty days of “giving something up,” attending Ash Wednesday worship, or taking on a new devotional practice. But how did John Wesley—the founder of the Methodist movement—observe Lent?



Interestingly, Wesley did not emphasize Lent as a separate season as many churches do today.

In fact, when he prepared the Sunday Service for American Methodists in 1784, he removed Ash

Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and even renamed the Sundays in Lent as “Sundays after Christmas.” He once wrote that many holy days were omitted because they were “at present answering no valuable end.”

### Why would he do that?

Because early Methodists were already practicing what Lent was meant to encourage year-round.

Wesley fasted every Wednesday and Friday, not just for forty days, but every week of the year. He believed that fasting helped prayer, and he taught that money saved by people skipping meals should be given to the poor. Methodists met weekly in class meetings and bands, where they confessed their sins, prayed for one another, and held one another accountable. They gathered for love feasts, covenant renewal services, and watch nights focused on self-examination and renewed commitment to Christ.

In other words, for Wesley, Lent wasn't unnecessary—it was meant to be daily life.

He also warned against trivial sacrifices. Giving up sweets but neglecting prayer, mercy, and generosity missed the point. Wesley encouraged moderation, sincerity, and practices that genuinely shaped the heart.

### So, what does this mean for us as modern Methodists?

At present, our context is different. Many of the weekly accountability structures of early Methodism no longer shape our lives. Perhaps that is why Lent has regained importance

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**Lent the Wesleyan Way** *(Continued from page 4)*

for us. It provides a focused season to recover what Wesley valued: serious self-examination, deeper prayer, intentional fasting, generosity toward the poor, and renewed commitment to holy living.

Wesley would likely encourage us not simply to “observe Lent,” but to let Lent reshape us. He would ask, “Are we pursuing scriptural holiness?” Are we serious about growing in grace? Are we practicing mercy as intentionally as we practice worship?

Lent, then, is not about religious performance. It is about forming a life that belongs fully to Christ—not just for forty days, but for every day. That is the life I am working toward. How about you?



**Step into Holy Week**  
**Palm Sunday, March 29**  
**at 11:00 a.m. at St. Paul UMC**

Make your Palm Sunday worship unforgettable.

Our Easter Cantata, *Glorious Cross: Salvation's Story, Easter's Song*, is more than a musical presentation—it is a powerful journey through the heart of our faith. Through moving narration, stirring choral anthems, and beautiful orchestration, we will walk together from the triumphal entry to the transforming hope of the cross and the promise of resurrection morning.

Invite a friend. Bring your family. Come ready to be moved.

Palm Sunday at 11:00 a.m.—the story that changed the world, told in glorious song.

**Community Egg Hunt –**  
**Palm Sunday Invitation**

On Palm Sunday, March 29 at 1:30 p.m., the playground of St. Paul UMC will become holy ground in a different kind of way. Children will run. Parents will linger. Laughter will rise. And in the midst of it all—we will be offering Christ.

Our **Community Egg Hunt** is more than an event. It is an open door. It is a first impression. It is a way of saying to our neighbors, “You are loved here.”

Honestly, this is not just about eggs. It is about resurrection joy. It is about radical welcome. It is about being the church—not only inside our walls, but out on the playground. Let's show our community who we are. Let's offer Christ.

## Lenten Journey

*Bob Trengove*

As we proceed through March, let us think about our Lenten Journey to the foot of the cross. During Lent, we experience many things. It is time to pray. We go on a journey of prayer that will bring us closer to Christ and leave us changed as we encounter him.

Lent invites us to fast and make meaningful changes as we begin the season on Ash Wednesday. In addition to giving something up, we may also add practices that draw us closer to God—such as spending more time in prayer or taking part in church events. One such opportunity is our March 14th workday, where we will join together to beautify the church grounds in preparation for Easter.

If you have already picked something based on Ash Wednesday, consider adding our workday to your journey. Our Building and Grounds team is always looking for help on the three scheduled workdays. If you decide to join us on this workday, as you enter the grounds, pause a moment and look at the three crosses on the hill, then look at the cross in front of the sanctuary. Remember what Jesus experienced as he took his journey to the cross. This workday will make changes that will pull you in as the church takes on a fresh look. You will be glad you chose to join us.

As part of our Lenten journey, we will experience our cantata entitled *Glorious Cross*. As stated in this year's Easter cantata, God's plan from the beginning was to break the chains of sin, set us free, so that we could be restored to him alive in Christ forevermore. God is good always.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for this Lenten journey to the cross as we realize your sacrifice for us. Thank you for being with us on this journey as we realize that you will rise again on Easter Sunday. Hallelujah, He Is Alive. In Jesus' name we pray AMEN.*

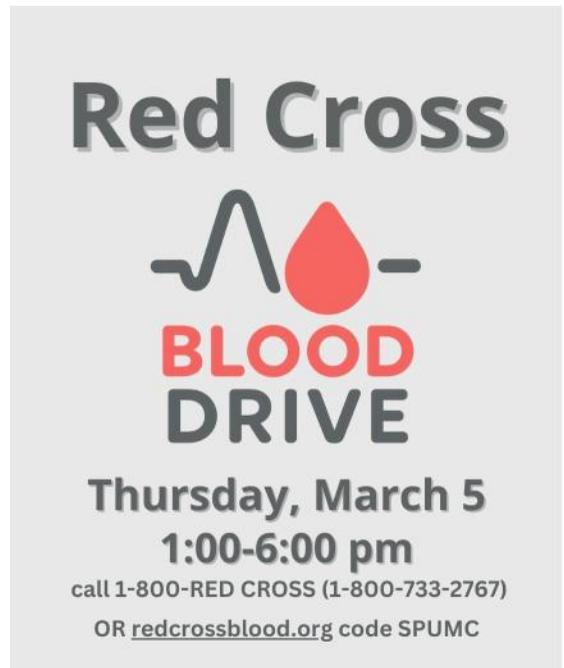
Many activities are still being performed at St Paul by the Building and Grounds Team. The following are a few of the tasks completed or in progress.



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- ♣ **Computers:** Mike has replaced the computers in both the sound booth and the video booth. Everything is up and running. Thank you, Mike.
- ♣ **Ivy removal:** We need to remove the ivy growing up the remaining trees along the property line on the lower lot soon.
- ♣ **Annex AC units:** We plan to remove the AC window units in the annex building, as they have not been used for more than 10 years. This may be completed during the upcoming workday.
- ♣ **Speed bumps:** After recent falls, we reviewed options to improve the speed bumps in our parking lot. While our current design aligns with Cobb County's recommended standards, we will add additional markings.





# Messy Church

February 7





# Discipleship Opportunities

## Beginning March 15

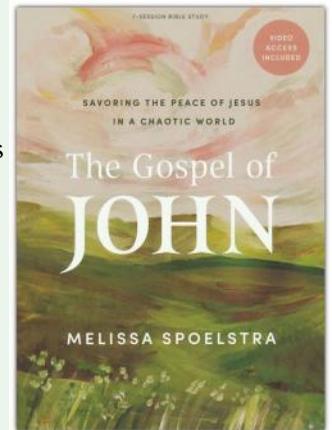
### Open Door Class

*The Gospel of John: Savoring the Peace of Jesus in a Chaotic World*

**A seven-Session Bible Study by Melissa Spoelstra**

Slow down and savor the peace of Jesus in a chaotic world. In this seven-session study through the Gospel of John, Melissa Spoelstra encourages you to linger with the Living Word. John's Gospel will challenge participants to take the posture of peace—a stillness of the soul, no matter one's circumstances. Grow in intimacy with Christ and learn to embrace His peace amid a hectic life.

Join us each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. in Room 206 for lively discussion and fellowship.



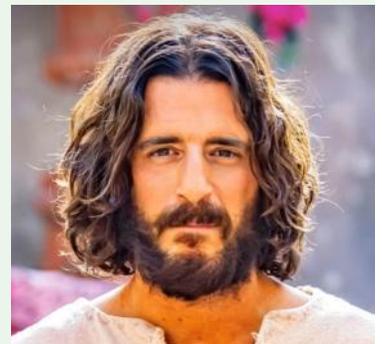
### ChristWalk

*The Chosen Season 5*

*ChristWalk* small group continues to explore Season 5 of *The Chosen*, entering the final days of Jesus' ministry—marked by tension, courage, and deep love. As the disciples face the cost of following Him, we're invited to reflect on our own faith and transformation.

*ChristWalk* meets Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. in person and at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

All are welcome. See Shelia for details.



## Lent Gives Shape to New Life

*Chris Heldreth*

Lent is often thought of as a season of giving things up, but at its heart, it is a season of becoming. These forty days invite us not simply to deny ourselves, but to be shaped into people who live more fully in God's grace. Lent gives shape to new life by helping us pay attention—attention to God, to others, and to what truly matters.

Fasting plays an important role in this shaping. While fasting may involve food, it reaches far beyond the table. When we intentionally set something aside, we begin to notice what has been filling our time, our thoughts, and our hearts. Fasting helps us recognize our deeper hungers—for peace, for meaning, for connection with God. It creates space where God can speak and where new habits of faith can begin to grow.

During Lent, fasting is closely connected to love. This season invites us to practice restraint not only in what we consume, but in how we speak and act. Choosing to fast from harsh words, quick judgments, or unkind assumptions can be as meaningful as any dietary fast. In doing so, we make room for patience, gentleness, and understanding. Love grows when we slow down, listen more carefully, and respond with grace rather than reaction.

Lent also calls us to remember others. When fasting awakens us to our own dependence, it can deepen our compassion for those who live with daily hunger, loneliness, or fear. What we give up can become an opportunity to give back—through generosity, service, and prayer. In this way, fasting becomes an act of love directed outward, not inward.

Ultimately, Lent prepares us to live renewed lives, not only to celebrate Easter. The practices of this season shape us into people who reflect Christ more clearly—people whose lives are marked by humility, mercy, and hope. As we walk through Lent, may we allow God to shape us gently, so that new life may take root and love may flourish long after the season ends!

*Blessings!*



## Membership Spotlight:

**Dynamic and upbeat—Janice Salter**

*Kathy Lim Sang*

At St. Paul, our strength lies in the vibrant stories and dedicated hearts of our members. This month, we are delighted to shine the spotlight on Janice Salter, a

familiar and friendly face who has been an integral part of our church family for nearly three decades.



*St. Paul*  
Member Spotlight



**Janice Salter**

Janice's spiritual journey began in the Baptist tradition, where she remained until 1967. Her path eventually led her to St. Paul 27 years ago, sparked by a simple but meaningful invitation from a friend. Since that day, she has made this congregation her home, contributing to the warmth and community we all cherish. (You notice a trend here, folks: when your spirit is awakened, you become Methodist. Just saying. And we will take them ALL!)

When you talk to Janice, it doesn't take long to realize where her greatest passions lie. She has been married to her husband, Daryl, for 53 years this coming April—a beautiful testament to commitment and love. Together, they have raised two children: their son, Sean, who will be 50 in May, and their daughter, Jennifer, who is 47.

While Janice is a self-described “people person,” her heart truly belongs to her grandchildren. They are her passion, her favorite topic of conversation, and her greatest joy. Whether she is spending time with her family or relaxing with card games on her phone, Janice finds joy in the simple, meaningful moments of life.

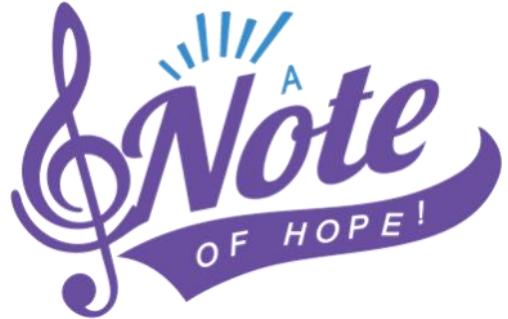
Now retired after spending 15 years working with a landscape company, Janice enjoys a well-deserved change of pace. While she isn't seeking out new formal roles at the moment, her spirit of service remains active. For years, Janice has been a devoted partner in ministry alongside Daryl. Whenever Daryl is involved in a church project, you can almost guarantee that Janice is right by his side or close by, offering her support and her signature “people person” energy to the task at hand.

We are so blessed to have Janice as part of our community. Please join us in thanking her for her 27 years of fellowship and for the kindness she brings to our St. Paul family.

## Practice Letting Go During Lent

*Hope Field*

Lent is like a long, honest pause before something new begins. It slows us down enough to notice what's actually going on inside us and around us. Instead of rushing straight to the joy of Easter, Lent makes us walk through the real stuff first, the clutter, the wounds, the habits and fears we usually avoid or numb. It reminds us that new life doesn't just appear out of nowhere; it grows out of truth, repentance, and trust.



During Lent, we practice letting go—of distractions, old grudges, unhealthy patterns, and the illusion that we can save ourselves. That letting go can feel uncomfortable, even a little like loss, but it creates space. And space is necessary for anything new to take root. You can't be filled with resurrection life if your hands are already full.

Lent also reconnects us with our dependence on God. Through prayer, reflection, and acts of compassion, we're reminded that life, real, abundant life, is a gift, not something we earn. We learn again how to listen, how to turn back when we've wandered, and how to walk with humility instead of control.

As we move toward Easter, Lent shapes us into people who are ready for resurrection. By facing death, our limits, our brokenness, even our failures, we become open to transformation. Easter then isn't just a celebration of what happened long ago, it becomes personal. Lent prepares us to receive new life not as an idea, but as a lived reality, with changed hearts, renewed hope, and the courage to live differently because love has already won.



## Waving Palms, Walking Together

*Victoria Godfrey*

As we move into the days leading up to Palm Sunday, I'm always struck by how this season feels through the eyes of children: excitement, curiosity, movement, and questions are bubbling just under the surface. Palm Sunday isn't a quiet beginning to Holy Week; it's a parade! It's people waving branches, shouting praise, and welcoming Jesus with open arms and hopeful hearts.

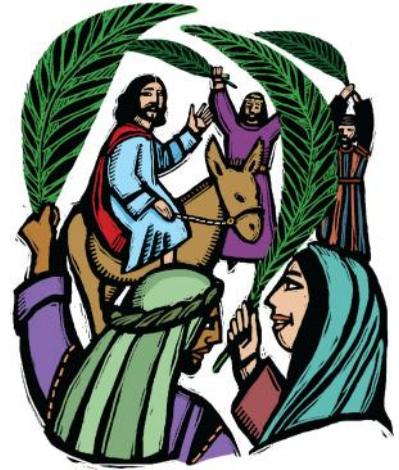
In Children's Ministry, we talk a lot about how Jesus entered Jerusalem not with power or force, but with humility and love. Kids understand this more naturally than we sometimes expect. They know what it means to cheer for someone they love. They know what it feels like to celebrate loudly. And they also know how quickly emotions can change. Palm Sunday gives us space to hold both joy and confusion together as we begin the journey toward Easter.

This season is also a reminder that faith is something we practice together. Children learn what matters by watching the adults around them. When they see parents, grandparents, volunteers, and church friends showing up, celebrating, serving, and worshipping together, they begin to understand that church is not just a place, it's a community.

That's why we're so excited to invite you to one of our favorite traditions of the year: our annual **Palm Sunday Easter Egg Hunt!** We invite the whole church to help make this event possible by donating supplies and helping stuff eggs ahead of time. Candy, along with small stuffed animals, is very appreciated. There will be opportunities in the coming weeks to join in stuffing eggs as a simple, hands-on way to serve.

The egg hunt itself, **Sunday, March 29th at 1:30 p.m.**, is a wonderful chance to enjoy laughter, build connections, and create memories as a church family. It is also a great opportunity to invite friends, neighbors, or extended family to join us.

As we wave palms and walk toward the cross, my prayer is that we do so with hearts ready to notice God's presence, in the big celebrations and the small moments alike. I can't wait to celebrate this season with you and your families.



**"Blessed is the king who comes  
in the name of the Lord!"**

Luke 19:38, NIV



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Staff 5:30p KSU Wesley Bible Study/Hangout	<b>2</b> 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga	<b>3</b> 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	<b>4</b> 8p KSU Worship	<b>5</b> 1p Red Cross Blood Drive	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 9:45a SS 11a Worship 5:30p KSU Wesley	<b>9</b> 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga 6:30p Building & Grounds	<b>10</b> 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	<b>11</b> 8p KSU Worship	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 8a Church- wide Work Day
<b>15</b> 9:45a SS 11a Worship 2p UPfield 3p Leadership 5:30p KSU Wesley	<b>16</b> 12:15p Chair Yoga	<b>17</b> 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 10:30a Monday Servants 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	<b>18</b> 8p KSU Worship	<b>19</b> 6:30p Stephen Ministry	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:45a SS 11a Worship Noon Messy Church Meeting 2p UPfield 5:30p KSU Wesley	<b>23</b> 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga	<b>24</b> 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 4p Hope House 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	<b>25</b> 8p KSU Worship	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 9:45a SS 11a Worship— <i>Cantata</i> 1:30p Egg Hunt 2p UPfield 5:30p KSU	<b>30</b> 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga	<b>31</b> NO ChristWalk				

# Serving This Month

## March Servants

**Worship Leader**—Bob Trengove

**Open/Close Facilities**—Bob Trengove

**Monday Servants:**

- 03/02 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
- 03/09 Tom Short & Darrell Morgan
- 03/16 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
- 03/23 Tom Short & Marj Rhodes
- 03/30 Tom Short & Marj Rhodes

**Media Team**—Mike McMillin

**Easy Worship**—Terry Palmer, Tom Preacher

**Audio/Video**—Robbie Littlefield, Jyo Vanapalli

**Could it be YOU? Join Us!**

### Our Faithfulness

*"I will be loyal to St. Paul United Methodist Church and support her with my prayers, my presence, my gifts, my service and my witness."*

#### JANUARY 2026

##### Our Presence

- Average weekly Sunday School attendance ..... 16
- Average weekly 11:00 worship attendance ..... 33
- Average weekly online attendance..... 41

##### Our Gifts—General Fund

#### JANUARY 2026 INCOME

Contributions .....	\$ 11,011.00
Processing Gifts.....	\$ 63.10
Total Contributions.....	\$ 11,074.10
Rental Property.....	\$ 1,695.00
Soccer Rental.....	N/A
<b>Total Revenue .....</b>	<b>\$ 12,769.10</b>
YTD Income.....	\$ 12,769.10
Total Expenses for January .....	\$ 18,649.56
Net Total .....	(\$ 5,880.46)
YTD Expenses.....	\$ 18,649.56



3 Hannah Ogene	2 Judy Campbell
4 Edward H Jackson	9 Betty Meeks
9 Carrie Whiten	9 Susan Short
12 Dean Agresta	12 Susan McMillin
15 Louise Pomeroy	16 Ayon Lim Sang
19 Bob Trengove	28 Shelia Preacher
19 Cyrus Moshglani	
25 Mary Mahoney	



### Altar Flowers

**Cost: \$55.00**

- 03/01 Available
- 03/08 Available
- 03/15 Available
- 03/22 Available
- 03/29 Available

**Sign up on Bulletin Board**



**March 18**

**Suggested word count: 350-400**