

St. John's Journal

February 2026



Fr. Doug's Iconic Column

As I have expressed recently, I am concerned about how we can be sustained through difficult times in our lives. We may be especially aware of that need in this time of political and social upheaval. But there are also the challenges we face in our personal lives, where relationships are broken or our physical condition is compromised. We face things in common with others and we face our own personal struggles. How can we be sustained through it all?

As we gather on Sunday mornings, we can find some things that help us. Our time of worship can help us center our lives in God, to hear God speak to us through scripture and sermon. We may find expressions of our struggles and our faith in God in the prayers and hymns. We may find comfort in knowing that we are not facing this alone, as we gather together for worship and then the fellowship of coffee hour.

We have ongoing opportunities for reflection in the life of our congregation. The Conversation Class gathers on Thursday mornings at 10:30 to share our thoughts on the psalm for the following Sunday. It is not only a time to study what the psalm says, but also a time to help each other reflect on how it may speak to us in our own lives.

Private times of reflection and prayer can be very helpful to us. We may already have a way that we do that in our own homes, a special place, a special time, a lighting of a candle to step back from the edge of our struggles and focus our attention on God. I would also suggest that it might be helpful to step away from our day-to-day lives and

come to the church and sit or kneel (or both) in our sanctuary. Tuesday and Thursdays, I and others are at the church so the building is open, and you can walk right in and have silence in the sanctuary, or you can step into the office and have a little bit of fellowship.

We are also entering a time in the church year that might be especially helpful. The Season of Lent begins on February 18th. But right before Lent begins, we will be having a Mardi Gras style Shrove Tuesday dinner on the 17th at 4pm. This is meant to be celebrative and maybe a little indulgent. We are hoping the food will be really yummy. Come and be a part of the fellowship and indulgence. It could be good for the soul.

The next day, February 19th is Ash Wednesday. We will be having a service at 4pm that invites us into an important 40 days of self-reflection and prayer. We may want to make a special intention to have important times to focus upon God's call in our lives during this time. I will again make available the Stations of the Cross booklet that can be used at home throughout Lent if desired, or more specifically during Holy Week, March 29th through April 4th.

There are a lot of different ways to take stock of our lives and renew our focus upon God as we face the challenges ahead. It is my prayer that God will be with us and walk with us along the way. It is also my hope that we will find that others are traveling the same road. It is good for the soul to not be alone on the road we are traveling.

Fr. Doug

February Birthdays

2/1 Leland Pestana

2/6 Maggie Lowery

2/19 Ivy Wagner

2/20 Ann Sandstrom

2/22 Braydon Wagner

2/26 Denise Skillman

Anniversaries

2/13 Helen & Eddie Miller

2/15 Lara & Dave Mickle

So, Noted!

Finance Report –

Sweet Fund-is reconciled through November 30, 2025. Ending balance is \$39,560.51.

Vicar's Discretionary Fund-is reconciled through December 2025. All other accounts are pending.

Preparations for several annual reports have brought to light numerous posting errors. This may account for some of the inaccuracies in the Operating Fund. These will need to be reallocated to their proper places. Denise will meet with Kay Marino to discuss any that she has found while Denise was out.

Insurance Coverage-has been expanded to cover "Active

Assailant Insurance". The agency has requested an overall policy review to make any necessary updates. Kathy Webb has taken that assignment.

Action Items-1. Line up a backup person within the congregation trained to cover the treasurer when the primary is incapacitated. 2. Consider hiring a bookkeeper to help manage and reconcile accounts. This would require a budget adjustment and possibly draw from Savings for 2026. 3. Investigate the possibility of growing and endowment by adding donations to the Sweet Fund which is managed by the Diocese.

Senior Warden Report -

Laurea will produce a menu signup for the BAC to host the Annual Meeting on the 25th. This has been emailed out to members. Annual Meeting booklet is currently 70% completed. Still wearing liaison hat with The Little Fee Pantry by helping with updating the "pathway" to the pantry structure. Fingers crossed that this holds up to the traffic.

Junior Warden Report -

Our engineer for the parking lot is finally back from a month's long vacation and hopefully will get the questions asked by the City Engineer so we can get the permit. Reese Electric will be coming in the do some electrical work for us again. Adding better lighting to the area used by the choir.

Vicar Report -

The weekly "Conversations" group will start back up on the 22nd.

Upcoming Events -

February 15-BAC meets

February 17-MARDI GRAS Dinner (potluck) **from 4-7pm**

February 18-Ash Wednesday Service **4pm**

March 29-Palm Sunday

April 2-Maunday Thursday Service at **4pm**

April 3-Good Friday Service at **4pm**

April 5-EASTER

April 30-May 3-Doug on Cursillo Weekend

May 3-Morning Prayer

Submitted gratefully by, Laurea Arnoldt, Bishops Warden

DIDJA KNOW??

February in the Christian tradition is a month focused on purification, the transition from Christmas to Lent, and the dedication to the Holy Family. It marks the end of the Christmas season and provides a time for spiritual preparation before the intensity of Lent.

Here are key February facts for the church:

Key Liturgical Days and Events

- **February 2: The Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas):** Celebrated 40 days after Christmas, this marks Mary's purification and the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. It is known as "Candlemas" because candles are blessed to symbolize Christ as the "Light of the World".
- **February 2: World Day for Consecrated Life:** Established by Pope John Paul II in 1997, this day of prayer for men and women in consecrated life is attached to the Feast of the Presentation.
- **February 3: Feast of St. Blaise:** Known for the "Blessing of the Throats," where candles are used to invoke protection against throat ailments.

- **February 11: Our Lady of Lourdes:** Commemorates the first of 18 apparitions of the Virgin Mary to St. Bernadette in 1858. It is also the World Day of the Sick.
- **February 17:** Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras
- **February 18:** Ash Wednesday
- **February 22: The Chair of Saint Peter:** A feast day honoring the role of the Pope as the successor of Saint Peter and the head of the Church.
- **February 24 (or 25 in Leap Years): St. Matthias:** The apostle chosen to replace Judas is honored on this day.

Monthly Themes and Traditions

- **Month of the Holy Family:** February is dedicated to the Holy Family, offering a time for families to reflect on the virtues of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as a model for the "domestic church".
- **Pre-Lenten Preparation:** February often brings the beginning of Lent, a season for intense spiritual purification, self-examination, and preparation for Easter.
- **St. Josephine Bakhita (Feb 8):** Known as the patron saint of victims of human trafficking.
- **Traditions:** In some traditions, Christmas decorations are kept up until Candlemas on February 2nd.

Historical and Cultural Context

- **Origins of "February":** The name comes from the Latin *februare* ("to make pure"), derived from Roman purification rituals that took place during this month.
- **Christianizing Pagan Rituals:** The church placed the Feast of the Presentation (Feb 2) in February to coincide with, and shift focus from, old traditions surrounding the changing of the seasons and the strengthening of the sun.
- **St. Valentine's Day (Feb 14):** While a saint's day, it was removed from the general Roman calendar in 1969 due to lack of reliable information, but it remains a day to honor the love of God, with some legends suggesting Valentine signed a letter "from your Valentine" to his jailer's daughter.

Offering Lenten Meditations by Sister Monica Clare

Episcopal Relief & Development Offers Lenten Meditations by Sister Monica Clare

Press Release

January 6, 2025

Beginning on Ash Wednesday and continuing throughout the 2026 season, Episcopal Relief & Development is offering daily Lenten Meditations in English and Spanish, inviting readers to reflect upon and deepen their spiritual practices.

This year, the organization has partnered with [Sister Monica Clare](#)—Episcopal nun, best-selling author and unlikely TikTok star to create meditations that explore the theme of “Holy Habits.” In her meditations, Sister Monica Clare reflects on the Scripture readings for Vespers (Evening Prayer) to encourage habits that support and strengthen a life of faith.

“To maintain clarity in a world of constant change, we need to attend to our spiritual lives each day,” said the Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe, presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church. “Most often, spiritual growth happens not in grand moments, but through modest and consistent practices of faith. This Lent, Episcopal Relief & Development’s meditations help us build ‘holy habits’ to deepen our relationship with the Risen Christ. By embracing these habits, we can become more equipped to slough off what no longer serves us and draw closer to God and our neighbors.”

Episcopal Relief & Development invites everyone from the Episcopal community and beyond to participate in “Holy Habits” by subscribing to daily emails, downloading resources for further study and including the meditations in community prayer, worship and gathering time. Go to: www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/lent/#subscribe.

“Episcopal Relief & Development’s Lenten Meditations are an invitation to join a movement of prayer and reflection,” said Sean McConnell, Senior Director, Faith and Community Engagement, Episcopal Relief & Development. “People join this community of spiritual pilgrims from around the world, and many share these meditations with their own networks, friends and family. Lenten Meditations are a gift to our friends and supporters who give us so much of their own prayerful support.”

Explore our [2026 Lenten offering](#), available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).



Shrove Tuesday Traditions



This year at St. John, we will celebrate Shrove Tuesday with a New Orleans-style Mardi Gras-themed supper on February 17th.

The first American Mardi Gras reportedly occurred in 1699, when French explorers landed near present-day New Orleans. In the following decades, New Orleans and other French settlements celebrated with street parties, masked balls, and lavish dinners. These festivities were banned under Spanish rule and remained so until Louisiana gained statehood in 1812.

Shrove Tuesday is known by several names. In English-speaking countries, it is also known as Pancake Day, since it is the last chance to use up rich, tasty foods such as butter, eggs, sugar, and fat. In Germany, it's called 'Fastnacht' (meaning 'Eve of the Fast') and in Iceland it's called "Sprengidagur" (meaning 'Bursting Day'). In French-speaking parts of the world, the festival is called "Mardi Gras", from the French phrase meaning "Fat Tuesday". Similarly, it is called Martedì Grosso in Italy.

Mardi Gras is preceded by "Carnevale," a festival with roots before Christianity, where people feasted on rich foods like meat, dairy, and fats to avoid spoilage before Lent. The name comes from the Latin *carne levare*, meaning "to remove meat," marking the last big celebration before fasting. The subsequent fast reflected both religious practice and the reality of dwindling winter food supplies until new crops grew.

Venice's Carnevale began in 1162 and became a major event for Europe's aristocracy by the 16th century. It was banned in 1797 for excessive behavior but revived in the 1970s. I attended in 1980, soon after its return.

During the week leading up to Shrove Tuesday, my housemates and I were invited to several parties at the homes of friends in Venice. At one masquerade party, a tantalizing buffet of meaty lasagnas, raviolis and rich desserts was laid out for us. During the day, street vendors sat before large vats where they deep-fried confections like "fritelle" (dough balls studded with raisins, candied fruit, and pine nuts, some filled with luxurious creams) coated with sugar.

On Martedì Grosso we went to Piazza San Marco, where floodlights made the piazza brighter than on a sunny day. It was so packed with people in elaborate Baroque costumes and masks that as we danced, those of us in the middle of the crowd were lifted off our feet.



FEBRUARY 2026

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4 Epiphany						
Dances of Universal Peace 2-4pm	7:30 pm AA	7:30 pm AA	7:30 pm AA	Conversations 10:30-12 pm Choir 6:30 pm		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
5 Epiphany						
BAC	7:30 pm AA	7:30 pm AA	7:30 pm AA	Conversations 10:30-12 pm Choir 6:30 pm		
15 Last Epiphany	16 Presidents Day	17 Shrove Tuesday Dinner 4-7pm	18 Ash Wednesday Service 4 pm	19	20	21
				Conversations 10:30-12 pm Choir 6:30 pm		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1 Lent						
	7:30 pm AA	7:30 pm AA	7:30 pm AA	Conversations 10:30-12 pm Choir 6:30 pm		

WHO WE ARE

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**A Believe Out Loud
Congregation**

St. John Episcopal Church is a community where God leads us in healing, teaching, reaching out, and stewardship.

We are a community that sees Christ in all people and judges none. We believe in inclusion for all people regardless of race, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. We aim to break down barriers that separate us from one another and to provide a home for anyone on their spiritual journey. Our work brings together people of faith who believe in the inherent dignity and worth of all people on their journey.

BISHOP'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BAC)

Bishop's Warden: Laurea Arnoldt

Junior Warden: Kathy Webb

Treasurer: Denise Skillman

Clerk: Jennifer Mello

Members at large: Patti Wood, Lorilyn Colton, & Maggie Lowery

Convention Delegates: Laurea Arnoldt & Kay Marino

Alternates: Mary Garrett

CHURCH STAFF

Vicar: The Rev. Doug Hale

Music Director: Cynthia M0horko

Office: Denise Skillman, Laurea Arnoldt, & Maggie Lowery

Our Vicar, Fr. Doug, is generally in his church office Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until about 4:00 p.m.

FEED MY SHEEP

So, Jesus asked us to do. We can respond by our donations to the Ecumenical Food Pantry, which assists those who are hungry and in need.

A basket in the narthex is there for your donations. In addition to food, things like tooth paste, toothbrushes, shampoo, deodorant, and shaving needs are welcome.

“Love God, love our neighbor, and serve one another.”