



St. John's Monthly Chimes E-Newsletter September 2026



Pastor's Notes

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers." Romans 12:9-13

Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to September! As the summer heat begins to fade and the rhythm of fall takes shape, our church community is buzzing with transition and renewal. The change of seasons invites us to reflect, gather, and look forward to where God is leading us next.

Labor Day Weekend - This weekend, we acknowledge Labor Day. It is a time to honor the dedication, skill, and hard work of all laborers. As Lutheran Christians, we view daily work not just as a job, but as a holy vocation—a way to love and serve our neighbors. Whether your daily labor takes place in an office, a classroom, a hospital, a construction site, or at home caring for loved ones, your work matters to God. This holiday, we also remember and pray for those who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking meaningful work.

Capital Projects Update - Thank you to all who attended our recent congregational meeting on August 26. Because of your incredible generosity and shared vision, we are moving forward with our *IMAGINE* Capital projects. These improvements will ensure our St John's Sanctuary and Biggerstaff remain safe, welcoming, and accessible space for worship and community ministry for generations to come. The congregation also voted to move forward with the sale of the Ballenger House and Short Street properties. We will share specific construction timelines and milestones as they are finalized.

Prayers for Nepal and the Grand Canyon - Our hearts are heavy following the devastating impact of extreme weather events both globally and close to home. In the last week, catastrophic flash flooding struck communities along the Nepal-China border, while a severe monsoonal flash flood simultaneously tore through Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. As a community of faith, we are called to bind up the brokenhearted, lift our voices in prayer, and extend a helping hand to those who have lost everything. Look for links below to organizations where you can give and support those in greatest need.

Rally Day: Sunday, September 13 - Mark your calendars! Our fall ministries officially kick off on Rally Day, Sunday, September 13. We invite all ages to join us as we celebrate the return of our education and music programs. Come ready to connect with friends, share in a Sunday School class, and bless our students and leaders for the coming year.

Tuesday Bible Study on EZRA, beginning September 8 at 11am in Sanctuary - Come share in a discovery of the Book of Ezra, which tells a story of rebuilding and renewal for God's people. This powerful Old Testament text speaks directly to what it means to rebuild community, restore faith, and navigate major life transitions after a period of exile and disruption. Whether you are a lifelong Bible reader or picking up the Scriptures for the very first time, your voice and perspective are welcome at the table.

God's Blessings and Love,

Pastor Rachel L Connelly

Jocassee Taylor Barlow was baptized on August 2, 2026.
Her parents are: Donovan Barlow and Jana Snelgrove
Grandparents: Keith and Risse Snelgrove; Lavinna Valentine



Family Life Ministries



Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" - Matthew 22:37-39

August was a busy month as families and students returned to school. Our congregation's students and teachers of all academic levels were blessed during worship, reminded of God's loving presence as they head into a new school year.

In September there are new and exciting opportunities for all ages.

On **Sunday, September 13**, we are having Rally Day at 10:00am. Rally Day is a day to kick off church faith formation classes, including Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and Confirmation. Come celebrate a new year of formation!

Also on **Sunday, September 13**, following 11am worship we will have All-Ages BINGO in the Fellowship Hall. Prizes for all ages (children, teens, and adults) will be available to win, and lunch will be provided by members of Gloria Shealy Circle.

Parents' Coffee Hour will resume on **Sunday, September 20** at 10:15am and on every third Sunday of the month.

Also on September 20, St. John's is participating in a supply drive for the Oconee Humane Society. A list of supplies will be posted. Deadline for donations will be Sunday, October 4.

On **Sunday, September 27**, we are hosting our first "Jesus by the Lake" at Biggerstaff from 4-6pm. This is a new, "holy experiment," collaborating with the youth and families from University Lutheran, to be every fourth Sunday of the month.

The theme of the day will be "Who is my Neighbor?" and the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is an exciting opportunity for the entire family (children, teens, AND adults) to come together, see old and new faces, and make new friendships in a new way of doing faith formation. Games, music, small group discussions, and food are all included. Contact Adriana to learn more about this exciting new event.

Peace,
Ms. Adriana

Faith Formation

Monday Evening Bible Study Led by Adriana

Monday Evening Bible study is at 6pm. We are studying the book of Proverbs. Contact Adriana with any questions.

Please note: There will be no Bible Study on Monday, September 7.



Tuesday Morning Bible Study Led by Pastor Rachel

Tuesday Bible Study on EZRA, beginning September 8 at 11am in the Sanctuary - Come share in a discovery of the Book of Ezra, which tells a story of rebuilding and renewal for God's people. This powerful Old Testament text speaks directly to what it means to rebuild community, restore faith, and navigate major life transitions after a period of exile and disruption. Whether you are a lifelong Bible reader or picking up the Scriptures for the very first time, your voice and perspective are welcome at the table.



Music Notes

Handbell Choir

St. John's Praise Ringers are currently practicing Tuesday's at 5:30pm. Anyone interested in joining, please contact Deb Blackmore.



Chancel Choir

St. John's Chancel Choir is currently practicing Wednesday's at 6pm. Anyone interested in joining, please contact John Fallon.



Praise Band

We are thankful and blessed to have member-volunteers leading our 9am worship. Special thanks to Ray Burroughs, Dave Devoe, and Tom Ward who continue to share their musical talents!

Note: The 9am worship is now at Biggerstaff until October 18.

Thank you from Sadie

Sadie Thatcher sent a card to St. John's thanking us for the opportunity to sing with the Praise Band. She said that she was treated with so much kindness, care and love and she'll be back in the future.



Ministry Updates



Biggerstaff Happenings

The St John's Biggerstaff season will come to an end on October 31st. A couple of St. John's fellowship events are on the calendar to enjoy together before the season ends.

There is still some weekend availability for event rental if you know of someone looking for a beautiful location. The link to Biggerstaff's calendar and rental information can be found on St John's website.

Upcoming Events

Church Office Closed

The Church Office will be closed on **Monday, September 7** for Labor Day. It will reopen on Tuesday.



Mission Endowment Fund

The St. John's Mission Endowment Fund was created in 2004 on a gift from John and Betty Ansel. It has continued to grow over the years and funds are distributed annually for the objective "to provide for and enhance mission outreach beyond the operational budget of St. John's." Over the years, many groups from our local community to Lutheran World Hunger have received funds.

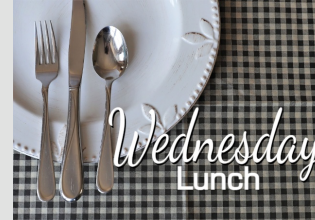
Applications are due by **Monday, September 14**, for the Endowment committee to deliberate. Click on the button below for an application or contact the church office.



[Click for application](#)

Wednesday Lunch

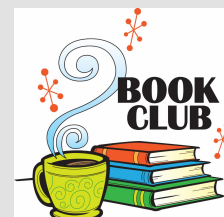
This month Wednesday Lunch will be on **September 9 and September 23**. We know that means DELICIOUS! All are welcome to join us at 11:30am on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month for tasty food, fun and fellowship. We ask for a \$5 donation towards the meal (you can't eat anywhere for \$5 anymore). Sign-up on Information Alley so we can estimate attendance.



This year we will be looking for "Guest Chefs" to prepare our meals. Please let me know if you would like to volunteer to cook lunch for approx. 20 people on a Wednesday. We will work around your schedule. I know that many of you are excellent chefs- this is a chance for you to show off your gifts! Contact Joan Lewis with questions or if you would like to help.

St. John's Book Club News

It's Time to Plan the 2026-27 Reading Year!
Join Us For St. John's Book Club



Our Group will meet on **Tuesday, September 15** to plan the coming year of reading and discussion. Plan to join us and bring your suggestion for a book that we might like to dive into this year. In the past we have had some lively discussions.

Our group meets the **THIRD TUESDAY** of each month in the Educational building in one of the Sunday School classrooms. We enjoy a light snack and drink while we discuss the book assigned for the month. We also try to keep our meetings to one hour.

How is our book group different from other book clubs? First of all, our group members participate in choosing the books we read and we anticipate reading a variety of genres. Our group keeps in mind that, as Christians, we always understand and discuss all literature through the eyes of our belief in God.

For more information contact:
Cindy Honeycutt cindychoney@gmail.com
Martha Murtiashaw murtiashawm@bellsouth.net
Cathy Plowden ceplowden59@gmail.com

We'd love to have you!

FREE Fall Concert

On **Sunday, September 27** at 3pm The Oconee Winds Symphonic Band will be having their Fall concert. It will be at Walhalla High School and it is free. The theme for this years' concert is "Autumn Leaves".



If you want to get into the mood for fall, come out to their concert. They'll be playing fall and Halloween music. Both Grace Lichtenwald and John Fallon are involved in this concert.

ST. LUKE FOOD PANTRY- Volunteers needed!

Come join your friends at St. John's and St. Luke Methodist on the 4th Wednesday of each month as we help distribute grocery boxes to over 200 people in need in the community.

St. Luke Food Pantry has been distributing meals to those in need in our community since 2011. Since COVID, meals have been distributed outside in the driveway. Clients drive up and volunteers load a box(es) into their vehicle. It is fast and efficient- a well-oiled machine! Distribution takes place from 4:30-5:30, volunteers are asked to be at the St. Luke lower-level parking area by 3:30pm. They will begin distribution earlier if there are cars in line.

This ministry is open to all ages- our younger youth will need a parent with them. **Sign-ups through October** are on Information Alley or click the button below.



[Click to Sign Up](#)

God's work. Our hands.



GOD'S WORK~OUR HANDS DAY

The fall God's Work ~ Our Hands Day will take place on **Saturday, October 10** (note date change from September 26 in August chimes). This year St. John's will be working at Hope Village (formerly Tamassee DAR School) with the Early Childhood Center and with the Starlight families.

The Early Childhood Center provides a safe and nurturing environment to infants through preschool, including after school care and summer programs. The Starlight program is a residential recovery community for mothers and children.

We will meet at the church at **8:30am** for a prayer send-off and then travel to Hope Village (1925 Bumgardner Drive, Tamassee). St. John's will have a team of volunteers cleaning out the basement at the Early Childhood Center (dumpster and guidance on site), and another team doing classroom cleaning. We will also be preparing and serving lunch to the Starlight families, including some activities for the young children. A list of items needed at both locations will be coming soon.

Please sign-up to help by clicking the button below or on information alley at church.

[Click to Sign Up](#)

From our Ministry Groups



WELCA News

All women are invited to attend our next quarterly joint women's meeting on **Saturday September 26, 2026** at St. John's. The meeting will begin at 10am. The Lucy Klaren Circle will be hosting a lite breakfast. Come for the food, fellowship, Bible study and to catch up on all the happenings in our women's ministry.



WELCA Meetings for 2026

Saturday, December 5 at 11am location to be determined
(Christmas party with lunch and gift exchange)



Lucy Klaren Circle

Hi, Everyone!

Please join us at Martha Murtiashaw's house (101 West Wesley St, Walhalla) for the September meeting of LKC on **Thursday, September 17** at 6:30.



Save the date:

14th Annual LKC Jubilee and Silent Auction

Scheduled: February 27, 2027

Location: Walhalla Depot

211 S College St, Walhalla, SC 29691

We continue to collect feminine hygiene products and children's books. A box is available at the church and at Biggerstaff.



Gloria Shealy Circle

The Gloria Shealy Circle will meet on **Tuesday, September 15** for BREAKFAST and regular meeting at Dimas Brothers Cafe, located at 400 S Fairplay St., Seneca.



Our donation will be a monetary gift to support Tamassee Hope Village. Barbara Bowman and Linda Williams will be our hosts. Circle members are asked to wear your new GSC tee shirt. Visitors are welcome as we come together again after our summer break. Contact Linda or Barb if you plan to attend.



The Survivors Group

The Survivors group has three events planned for September. On **Monday September 14**, we will travel to Sapphire NC to have lunch at Mica's Kitchen.



Then on **Tuesday, September 22** we will travel to Landrum for lunch.

On **Sunday, September 27** we will host a lunch and learn. The lunch will be after the 11:00 worship service. We will have a speaker talking about Hope Village (the former DAR). The congregation is invited to this lunch and learn. There will be a sign up sheet posted.

For information on any event, contact Shonda Mahler or Jan Long.



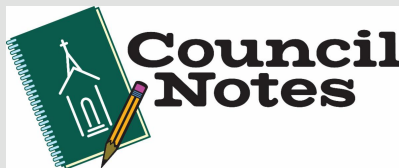
Knitters & Crocheters

During the spring our ladies made dishcloths for Our Daily Bread, a soup kitchen in Seneca. In the picture are the volunteers who were making the soup for the day. They said that the cloths brightened their day as they worked.



If you would like to learn how to knit or crochet or just strengthen your skills, come meet with us on **September 9 and 23** at 10 am. We enjoy devotions and helping each other with patterns or projects. Questions? text Barbara at 864-723-3376.

Council & Committee Updates



St. John's Congregational Council Meeting Minutes

Please click on the button below to read the Council Meeting Minutes from **August 16, 2026**.

[Click to read more](#)

Volunteer Opportunities

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOVEMBER 30, 2026

St. John's will be Red Kettle ringing once again at both entrances of Ingles in West Union. Further information and sign-up requests to come in the fall.



Altar Flowers

Reminder that there is a sign-up chart for Sunday altar flowers in the Gathering area outside the Sanctuary doors. Flower arrangements for the altar are \$40 for both arrangements and can be designated as you choose. Flowers are arranged by a member of our altar flower team and placed on the altar Sunday morning. You can take your arrangements home on Sunday after 11am worship or choose to give them to a shut-in. Sign-up today.



We are looking for 2 volunteers to be in charge of the ordering and placement of approx. 15-20 Christmas poinsettias.

For more information, please contact Joan Lewis.

Worship Assistants Needed

We are in need of Ushers and Lay Assistants at both Biggerstaff and Sanctuary service. These volunteers are needed:



Ushers to greet and to collect offering and to direct people to the communion rail (11am only).

Lay Assistants to help with Communion, the Creed and Prayers.

If interested, please contact Joan Lewis. **Training will be provided.** Worship assistants are an essential part of the worship experience. Please help!

Thursday Meal Delivery Volunteers Needed

St. John's continues its ministry of Thursday Meal Delivery to those in our congregation who are shut-in, undergoing medical treatment and those who just need a weekly visitor.



We are currently in need of people to prepare and/or deliver meals. Delivery routes have 1-2 stops. Delivery is on Thursday morning- leaving from the church at approximately 11am. Each of the 3 groups is responsible for 1 Thursday a month (1st, 2nd or 3rd Thursday). Most of our meal recipients love a short visit.

If you have considered becoming part of this ministry **NOW IS THE TIME!** Those involved in this ministry find gratification in knowing they have reached out in such a meaningful way. We need additional volunteers.

Please contact Joan Lewis at (864) 710-1756 or joanlewissc@aol.com if you can help in any way.



St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA
301 West Main St.
Walhalla, SC 29691
864-638-6363
stjohnsluther@gmail.com

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am - 1pm



Our tithes and offerings are an important part of our faith journey. St. John's encourages its members and friends to be "Generous Givers" in providing consistent ongoing support of St. John's mission and ministry.

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