



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



Pastor's Notes

Dear Friends in Christ,

This week, on the 4th of July, the United States marks its 250th birthday and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This is a massive milestone for our country. It is a time when we look back at our history. It is also a time when we look toward our future. We are also reminded of our connections through a common vision.

As Christians, we face a special challenge during patriotic holidays. How do we honor our earthly home without forgetting our true home in heaven? How do we hold our love for this country while keeping our ultimate love for God? How do we practice patriotism while also hearing the prophetic announcements of God's love and light given for all nations and the gospel message of our God "who so loved the world" that he gave his only Son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross—not just for one country or nation but for all?

As Lutheran Christians we are encouraged to hold both **gratitude** and **humility** during this anniversary. The Declaration of Independence, signed in 1776, proclaims a vision of equality for all people. Looking back at our complex American history, we can be grateful for the good things in our nation. We can celebrate freedoms, community, service, and the beautiful diversity of our neighbors. We give thanks to God for the democracy that we have even as we see the values of that democracy continually challenged.

We must also practice humility. We need to remember our nation's mistakes. We can look honestly at the parts of our history that caused pain and the ways in which that vision of equality for all people was and has not been lived out fully. Too often we have fallen short of those

declared values of our country. This history includes the ill-treatment of Native Americans, African Americans, and Japanese American families among others. By acknowledging these failings and sins, we can learn from them.

The prophet Micah tells us what the Lord requires of us. We are called to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

And in Philippians 3:20, Paul states the beautiful truth "*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*" It reminds us that our primary identity is rooted in Christ rather than the world, shaping how we live, love, and serve today.

Our ultimate citizenship is in heaven. Because of this, our primary mission here on earth is simple: to do justice, to love our neighbor, to walk humbly. We serve our country best when we show God's love, mercy, and grace to the people around us.

So let us come together in celebration this week– with gratitude and humility. Let us pray for our nation on our 250th this 4th of July. Let us pray for peace, wisdom, and unity. Let us work together to build communities where all people feel valued and welcomed in the name of Jesus!

In Christ's love and peace,

Pastor Rachel Connelly

Family Life Ministries



Happy Summer, everyone!

June was super active as we held a week of Lutheroad Day Camp out at Biggerstaff. The campers learned all about God through songs and Bible stories, and had a ton of fun swimming, making crafts, visiting the Oconee History Museum, and climbing up St. John's clock tower.

July has a few fun things of note: **On July 5th during our church picnic, we will have a cake walk! We need people to provide baked goods, so please let me know if you're providing some treats.**

On **Saturday July 11 at 11am**, our middle and high school youth are invited to gather at **Oasis Ranch** in Seneca for a day of mini golf and fellowship.



Lastly, on **Sunday July 26 from 4-6pm**, we will be having our **Back to School Bash** at Biggerstaff. We will have food, frozen treats, outdoor games, and a service project! Families and friends are invited.

Please contact me with any questions. **Note that I will be out of the office on vacation from Saturday, June 27 to Saturday, July 4.**

Have a safe and awesome summer!

Peace, Adriana



CHURCH PICNIC - SUNDAY JULY 5th ONE SERVICE AT BIGGERSTAFF AT 10:30am

Let's celebrate 250 years of independence! On **Sunday, July 5** we will have **ONE worship service at Biggerstaff beginning at 10:30am** followed by a congregation picnic. Bring a salad, side dish, or dessert to share. Hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks will be provided. Sign up on Information Alley or click the button below.



[Click to Sign Up](#)

Music Notes

Summer Break

St. John's Chancel Choir and The Praise Ringers will be taking a **Summer Break for the months of June and July.**





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!

This Summer we welcome Sadie Thatcher, as our summer music intern at Biggerstaff, and she will be singing with the Praise Band. Thank you, Sadie, for sharing your musical talents with us.

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

Ministry Updates

Oconee County Backpack Lunch Program

In appreciation for St. John's hosting the yearly Issaqueena Bike Ride, the Rotary Club presented us with a portion of the bike ride proceeds for us to donate to a ministry of our choice.

Kudos St. John's- the donation for 2026 was \$1354 and was given to the Oconee County Backpack Lunch program.



RISE AGAINST HUNGER UPDATE

Great News from Donna Pankritz, Walhalla Presbyterian Rise Against Hunger organizer! Rise Against Hunger staff reports a school feeding program in Bicol, Philippines received the nearly 40,000 meals our volunteer group packaged in February! There is such a strong need in Bicol. Rise shared approximately 7 out of 10 households in the Bicol region are considered food insecure and 40% of the children are stunted or shorter for their age due to lack of food. It is also home to four active volcanoes and prone to typhoons and earthquakes. The feeding program maximizes the benefits of the meals through a holistic approach that includes school gardens where students assist with growing fresh vegetables to add to the school lunch menu and utilizes Mother



Volunteers where the moms of the students actively volunteer to cook meals at the school.

Thank you again for all of your efforts to make the 2026 Rise Against Hunger meal packaging event such a success . . . 38,664 meals packaged by more than 170 volunteers in just two hours!

School Supplies Collection

The Gloria Shealy Circle will be collecting school supplies for Oconee County students **during the month of July**. There will be collection boxes at Biggerstaff and at the church.

Any new school supplies will be accepted: notebooks, notebook paper, pens, pencils, crayons, glue sticks, rulers, index cards, composition books, spiral bound notebooks, calculators, notebook index tabs, report folders, etc.

We'd like to thank the congregation for supporting this project. **The last day for donations will be Sunday, August 2.**



Biggerstaff Happenings

Another successful year of Lutheroad Day Camp. There were twenty energetic children whose laughter filled the gazebo with joy. Volunteers, Lutheridge counselors, and children enjoyed five days of bible stories, singing, crafting, and swimming. Thank you to ALL who volunteered their time and talents to make this week such a memorable experience for everyone. It wouldn't be able to happen without you.

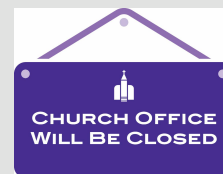
Faith, fellowship, food, and fun! On July 5th there will be one joint church service to be held at Biggerstaff at 10:30am--followed by a picnic with games for kids both young and old! Don't forget your side dish. All are welcome - friends and family will just add to the fun!

If you, or someone you know, are planning a gathering, large or small, Biggerstaff just may be that perfect location. Call the church office for availability, details, or to arrange a site visit.

Upcoming Events

Church Office Closed

The Church Office will be closed on **Monday, July 6** and will reopen on Tuesday, July 7.



St. John's Meetup and Connect Every Wednesday in July at Biggerstaff - 5pm-7pm

MIDWEEK DIP AND DIVE - We are opening up Biggerstaff Retreat to the community every Wednesday in July from 5-7 pm. BYO chairs, blanket, food and non-alcoholic drink, floats, etc.

Because there is no lifeguard on duty, an adult 18+ must be present to swim. Life jackets are available. Event will be cancelled during inclement weather.

Email meetupandconnect@gmail.com for further information

St. John's Meetup and Connect Kayak/Canoe MEETUP at Biggerstaff Retreat

Thursday, July 9, 2026 9:00 am

Please join us for a Kayak/Canoe experience on Lake Keowee.

We recommend you wear appropriate clothes/shoes/sun and bug protection, and bring plenty of water! Other gear to bring include Kayak/canoe, whistle, and lifejacket.

Per policy, each vessel must have a person 21 or older, so children will need to be in a tandem vessel with an adult. Life jackets/whistles are also required. Biggerstaff has limited Kayak/Canoes with lifejackets/whistles so it is imperative that you sign-up in advance of event so that we know how many need to borrow a vessel and if we are able to accommodate. Max is limited to 12.

For more information and weather updates, check the [Meetup and Connect website](#) calendar, email meetupandconnect@gmail.com, or call/text Allen Harding 864-723-5922.



[Click to sign up](#)

Wednesday Lunch

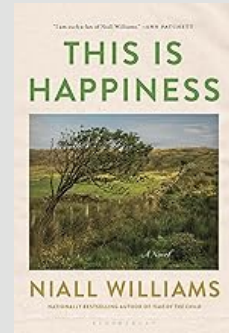
Wednesday lunch will be taking a Summer Break during June and July.



St. John's Book Club News

After a spirited discussion of James McBride's layered and vibrant novel, *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* in May, **our group will take a furlough for the months of June and July.**

We will reconvene on **Tuesday, August 18** to discuss the novel *This is Happiness*, by Niall Williams. Niall Williams was born in Dublin in 1958. His critically acclaimed and bestselling fiction has been shortlisted for the *Irish Times* Literature Prize and longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the IMPAC Award.



His novel takes place in the village of Faha that is on the very brink of the coming of electricity. It is about the joy of reminiscing and the joy of first love.

St. John's Book Club meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00. Our September meeting is always an organizational meeting where we meet together to suggest books for the eight months to come. The facilitator roll changes as well so, if you've read a book you'd like to discuss or join our group for any of the books we are discussing, please join us.

For more information contact Cindy Honeycutt (cindychoney@gmail.com) Martha Murtiashaw (murtiashawm@bellsouth.net), or Cathy Plowden (ceplowden59@gmail.com) for more information about our group.
We'd love to have you!

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 August** are on Information Alley or click the button below.

[Click to Sign Up](#)

From our Ministry Groups



WELCA News

WELCA Meetings for 2026

Saturday, September 26 at 10am location to be determined

Saturday, December 5 at 11am location to be determined

(Christmas party with lunch and gift exchange)

2026 WELCA opportunities:

2026 WELCA Triennial held in Des Moines, Iowa July 16-19, 2026



Lucy Klaren Circle

LKC had a great time Saturday, June 22 relaxing at Whitewater Lake in Salem.



LKC summer break will be in July & August.

The Lucy Klaren Circle is still collecting feminine hygiene products for the St. Luke's share box. The collection bin is near the television in the gathering area. A collection box will also be at Biggerstaff for the 9am service.



Gloria Shealy Circle

The Gloria Shealy Circle held their June meeting at End of the Road Studio in Walhalla on June 9th. After a delicious bagged lunch and brief business session, the ladies painted ceramic flowers prepared by Stan DuBose, local artist. These flowers will be placed in the front yard of Lakeside Assisted Living later this summer.



We are on summer break now for July and August, but will let you know details of our September meeting in time for you to join us.



The Survivors Group

The Survivors group has two events scheduled for July.



On **Wednesday, July 15** we will be going to *Your Pie* in Clemson.

Then on **Tuesday, July 21** we will be going to Hendersonville North Carolina to A Day in the Country for a High Tea. All ladies are invited to join us for this outing. Further information will be coming in regards to the High Tea.

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



Knitters & Crocheters

The Knitters & Crocheters will be taking a Summer Break for June and July.



Council & Committee Updates



St. John's Congregational Council Meeting Minutes

Please click on the button below to read the Council Meeting Minutes from **June 15, 2026**.

[Click to read more](#)

Property Committee Update

Greetings and HAPPY 4th of JULY to you all!!

Looking forward to start of our Accessibility Project. The Fellowship Hall back closet area, the Archives room, and some rooms in Sunday school building have started to find new temporary spaces to stash their "stuff". We will all need to remember that these new spaces will be temporary and sometimes they will be shared with other groups.

As some have noticed, we have "bats in the belfrey" - no not really; but, we do have bats behind the clock faces. They are leaving evidence on the front steps and Ray has pressure washed them. We are getting several bids from companies to see how to remove these bats!!

Peace to you,

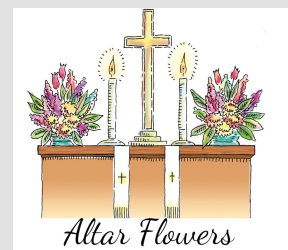
Patty Shepard
Property Chair



Volunteer Opportunities

Altar Flowers

Reminder that there is a sign-up chart for Sunday altar flowers at the side entrance of the sanctuary. 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.



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

Through many generous member donations, and the ceaseless efforts of our volunteers, St John's has been fortunate to continue to provide meals to 20 of our members who are elderly, live alone or need a few extra meals per month. St. John's volunteers prepare and deliver over 1000 meals per year - this has become an amazing outreach.



Many thanks to the 30 volunteer drivers who deliver each week- without them we could not do our work. On the 1st , 2nd and 3rd Thursdays our established Chefs ministry prepares and delivers meals .

On the 4th, and 5th Thursdays we have partnered with the culinary arts students at the Hamilton Career Center. The students, under the direction of Rodney Quick, have been preparing the meals. This is a win-win ministry- we are supporting the students and they are helping us. In the words of Mr. Quick “the teaching tool of learning to give back is priceless”.

I speak for myself, our volunteers, and our recipients when I say thank you to all involved for your continuing support of this ministry. As with all our ministries and outreach opportunities there is a turn-over of volunteers. We are always in need of men and ladies to prepare and/or deliver meals. We will work with your schedule and with your gifts. Please contact Joan Lewis at (864) 710-1756 or joanlewissc@aol.com if you can help in any way.



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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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