



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOMERVILLE, NEW JERSEY

The Newsletter

158 West High Street, Somerville, NJ 08876 • 908.722.1250 • stjohsomerville.org

FEBRUARY 2026

From the Rector

A Reflection on the significance of Black History Month

February 1 marks the start of Black History Month in the United States and Canada – a time for acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of Black artists, activists, faith leaders, and so many more throughout history.

At St. John's, the celebration of Black History is not limited to just one month – it is woven through the fabric of our community of faith and joyfully recognized.

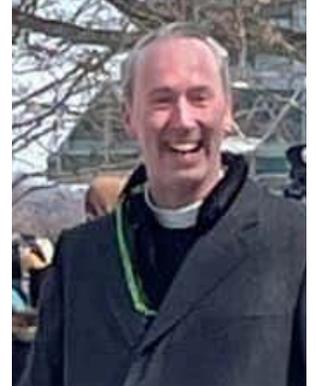
According to History.com, "Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. History. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black History."

We celebrate Black History Month to recognize the sacrifices, contributions, and achievements of African Americans to the United States and the world. Each one of us could probably create a somewhat lengthy list of people who made contributions to our country and to our lives. But the truth is, there are far too many people who have been overlooked, ignored, oppressed, or simply not considered. Social justice has to do with getting to know our neighbor by name, not just "that man or woman over there wearing a hat." When we intentionally reach out and truly get to know our neighbor, that makes God's heart glad. Further, we gain a new brother or sister that we didn't have before.

Here are just a few examples of people who we may have been overlooked and yet who made a profound difference in the lives of countless people through their own trials and tribulations, and specifically through the art of music.

Did you know:

- "This Little Light of Mine" is a gospel children's song written by Harry Dixon Loes (1895-1965) in about 1920. Under the influence of Zilphia Horton, Fannie Lou Hunter and others it eventually became a Civil Rights anthem in the 1950s and 1960s.
- "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore" (or Michael, Row Your Boat Ashore") is an African-American spiritual. It was first noted during the American Civil War at St. Helena Island, one of the Sea Islands of South Carolina. It was sung by former slaves whose owners had abandoned the island before the Union navy would arrive to enforce a blockade. Charles Pickard Ware, an abolitionist and Harvard graduate who had come to supervise the



plantations on St. Helena Island from 1862 to 1865, wrote the song down in music notation as he heard the freedmen sing it. Ware's cousin, William Francis Allen reported in 1863 that while he rode in a boat across Station Creek, the former slaves sang the song as they rowed.

- "We Shall Overcome." It began as a folk work song, became a hymn, and then was used politically for the first time on the picket lines of the tobacco workers' strike in South Carolina in 1945. In the early 1960's, it became an inspirational force in the civil rights struggle.

And yetBlack History is so much more.

Black History Month provides the nation and the world with an opportunity to hear the voices and experiences of people who have historically been oppressed, ignored, marginalized and overlooked in our country. Too few of us know about the work of Fannie Lou Hamer to secure Voting Rights for African Americans, or about Ida B. Wells' leadership in the Women's Suffrage Movement. Too few of us have learned about the efforts of labor leader Asa Philip Randolph who worked alongside Bayard Rustin to organize the March on Washington. Too few of us have ever read the novels of Octavia Butler, the essays of James Baldwin, the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks, or the plays of August Wilson. Too few of us know of the mathematical genius of Marjorie Lee Browne and Katherine Johnson or the scientific contributions of Joseph Graves and George Carruthers. Instead, the narratives most of us have about Black Americans has led to inaccurate stereotypes, biases and prejudices. Black History Month is an excellent opportunity to reflect on where we are as a nation, as a church, as a community and as followers of Jesus Christ. Black History Month can be a great catalyst for more accurately acknowledging the contributions of African Americans to the United States and the world throughout the year.

Black History Month is not just a time to celebrate Black Americans who have paved the way for all of us to thrive, it is also a time to consider how we can create more justice in our daily lives, our communities, our places of work, our schools, our Church, and so much more. How can we help St. John's Church continue to strive to be a place where all people thrive? How can we make sure that all families, especially those from African American backgrounds, feel welcome in our pews, in our mutual ministries, in leadership positions, and in our hearts?

During Black History Month, and indeed all year-long, let us reflect on the gifts that God continues to bestow upon our congregation and on one another so that, together, we may experience the true joy that can be only found in what Dr. King called the Beloved Community!

Let us dream of a world where every family, language, people and nation is gathered in the commonwealth of God. Let us renew our commitment to strengthen and build up each other, teach and work for justice, that we might continually become the Beloved Community in all of its rich variety.

May we become children of light, here and now. May we strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being. May we make no peace with any form of oppression. May we dream dreams and hope hopes and overcome our fears, by the intoxicating power of the Holy Spirit. May we change the world, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

See you in Church or on-line.

God bless,

Fr. Ron

NEW and NOTABLE BOOKS
From Morehouse Publishing:

- The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning: Meditations For Racial Healing, by Catherine Meeks. Comes with a discussion guide.
- Living into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America. Edited by Catherine Meeks. Forward by Jim Wallis.
- Passionate for Justice: Ida B. Wells as Prophet For Our Time. Catherine Meeks and Nibs Stroupe.

More books...

- Pauli Murray: Shouting for the Right of All People. Deborah Nelson Linck
- Absalom Jones: America's First Black Priest. Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones.
- Hallelujah Anyway! A Memoir. Barbara C. Harris
- This Band of Sisterhood: Black Women Bishops on Race, Faith, and The Church. Ed. Westina Matthews
- Black and Episcopalian: The Struggle for Inclusion. Gayle Fisher-Stewart
- Soul Food: Nourishing Essays on Contemplative Living and Leadership. Ed. Westina Matthews, Margaret Benefiel, and Jackson Droney

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN 2026

'Come and See'

We currently have 55 pledges totaling \$151,744.00 of the required \$225,000.00.

Why Pledge?

By letting us know your expected contribution, we are better able to set budgets and plan for the following year. Your financial contribution also helps with the operation and maintenance of the church, as well as providing funding to the ministries that are vital to our church and the community. Please consider making a pledge to help us serve our church, our diocese, and our world.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is February 18. The Annual St. John's Lenten Bags will be available soon. Brimming with prayers, Lenten aids, announcements and other precious items, be sure to pick up your Lenten Bag. See Fr. Ron or Deacon Keith with questions.

LENT MATERIALS AVAILABLE SOON

Our Annual Lenten Brochure and Lent For Families booklets will be available soon.

Lent Bags to Go will contain a variety of items: palm cross, a cross pin, a cross necklace, prayer cards, a rubber wrist band, Scripture, and more.

"Lent-Holy Week Bag To Go" will be available by the end of February.

LENTEN BOOK RESOURCES

- Wild Bright Hope: The Big Church Read Lent Book. SPCK Publishing.
- A Path to Wholeness: A Lenten Companion. Russell J. Levenson, Jr. Church Publishing.

- Why Church? Christianity as It Was Meant to Be. Scott Cowdell. Church Publishing.
- The Crisis of Christian Nationalism. Allen K. Shinn, Larry R. Benfield. Church Publishing.
- Getting to Know Jesus (Again): Meditations for Lent. Peter M. Wallace. Church Publishing.
- Walking with God: The 40-Day Fitness Program and Biblical Journey. Anna Fitch Courie. Morehouse Publishing.
- The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning: Meditations for Racial Healing. Catherine Meeks. Morehouse Publishing.
- The Fractured Kingdom: Uniting Modern Christianity through the Historical Jesus. Jean-Pierre Isbouts. Morehouse Publishing.

Easter Flowers and Music

Flowers and music regularly adorn our worship, especially at Easter, the holiest day of the Christian Year. They remind us visually and aurally that we are here for a celebration of the wonder and glory of God—*we're here for a feast!*

If you wish to write a check, please mark “Flowers” or “Music” in the memo line. Please let the Parish Office know if you are giving your gift in thanksgiving or in memory of loved ones, and clearly print or type each name or intention. The names may be sent to the Parish Office at 158 West High Street, Somerville, 08876 or email to admin@stjohnsomerville.org. Please make sure to deliver your gift and names no later than **Monday, March 30**.

Easter lilies, the flowering of the cross, and other beautiful plants are cherished traditions at St. John’s and remind us of the new life and promise of the resurrection.



THE WORK OF MINISTRY

Clothes Closet

Our February sales are too good to pass up! We are celebrating you and all the love you provide every day! Please stop by on Saturday, February 7 and 21. We are open from 9:00am until noon.

Look for a red heart on any item and receive 50% off that item. Our process can't be beat! Sales! Sales! Sales on so many of our pieces! Our \$1 and \$2 racks are packed with jeans, exercise wear, and so much more for the entire family!

We offer a large selection of women's, men's, children's clothing, shoes, and accessories. Check out our great selection of winter coats, scarfs, hats, and gloves for everyone in your family. Our cozy sweaters, fleece jackets, and boots are just the right fit for chilly weather to keep you nice and warm.

Our women's plus rack has a lot of new items. Don't pass it by. Lots of reduces prices. Our Winter Boutique rack is going fast! Brand new, never worn, tags on, at prices you cannot pass up. Most items are only \$3.

NEWS FLASH: we have a special rack of boutique women's plus items for only \$1. Brand new, never worn, beautiful varieties. Don't pass up our jewelry display. So many eye-catching treasures at great prices for your special Valentine!

We are currently accepting winter items only. Hope to see you soon.

We are starting to accept donations of spring items for the Clothes Closet. We are always in need of shoes, handbags, and jewelry. For more information www.StJohnSomerville.org, Facebook: www.facebook.com/StJohnsSomerville

Laundry Love News

Third Thursday of the month—Somerset Laundry, Division Street in Somerville. We can always use more quarter rolls and/or monetary support for the quarter rolls. Quarter rolls can be left in the alms basin on weekends, along with any cash/check donations—please just indicate Laundry Love donation in the memo line. If you have any questions about the ministry, would like to donate or to get involved in some way, just ask Ed Edwards or Paul Grzella in church, call 908-507-8020, or pgrzella@verizon.net.

Meals to Go

Meals to Go is offered the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month, 9-10am. If you know someone (including yourself) who would enjoy a meal, stop by the St. John's Parish Hall, use the ramp entrance and bring a bag.

Thank you to Janet Hahn and Linda Willard for shopping and packaging meals. At this time, the Saturday volunteer signup is full.

For more information or to be added to the volunteer list, please contact Christine Bean, cbean727@gmail.com. We are grateful for your financial donations to support the ministry during this interim period. Any amount is very much appreciated—a few dollars, combined with that of others, will go a long way to serving our customers. If you wish to donate online, go to Meals-to-Go on the dropdown menu.

Episcopal Church Women News

Our next ECW meeting is Monday, February 2. Please join us at 7:00 P.M. in the Parish Hall. Our guest, Chef Kir Rodriguez, will be joining us with a special presentation you won't want to miss! He will discuss everything you wanted to know about hosting a tea party!! Refreshments will be provided. Please see the sign-up sheet on the ECW bulletin board.

Please consider purchasing a gift card for our Safe and Sound Holiday Tree which is located on our ECW table in the Parish Hall. Safe + Sound Somerset supports survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence. We are accepting the Gift Cards through mid-February.

We continue to accept Winter Hats, Gloves and Scarfs as well as Socks to distribute to those in need in the community. We are also accepting Diapers for Newborns, Babies and Adults as well as Women's Hygiene Products. The donation boxes are located on the stage in the Parish Hall.

Everyone is welcome to join us. Hope to see you then.

Linda Willard President (347-276-6491, nolaandboogie@aol.com)

Paula Windus Vice President (908-526-7150, paulawindus@verizon.net).

Annual Parish Lenten Breakfast

The Annual Parish Lenten Breakfast, sponsored by the ECW, will be held in the Parish Hall on Saturday, March 29 at 10 following a Eucharist at 9am. Our presenter for the day will be Mother Joyce Scheyer. All parishioners and their guests are welcome. There is no cost but we ask that you sign the luncheon sheet to ensure we have sufficient food. Come and join with our brothers and sisters as we prepare ourselves for Lent and the Glorious Season of Easter.

Altar Guild Invitations for you to consider

Sunday Flowers



Do you wish to honor or recognize a loved one? A lovely way is to sponsor the Sunday Altar Flowers. Prominently placed next to the altar for both Sunday services, names are listed in the weekly worship bulletin and Good News, and included in the Prayers of the People. Many Sundays are available—contact Dana Keefer (dzkeefe@yahoo.com) to reserve a Sunday or for more information. Weekly flowers are only \$75. Checks need to have flowers indicated on the memo line.

Altar Guild

Looking for a New Year's Resolution that is do-able and rewarding and doesn't take a lot of time? How about considering Altar Guild? Altar Guild is a quiet ministry of the church, but this quiet ministry offers a big contribution.

Consider this:

- Membership in Altar Guild offers flexibility in the time
- Membership in Altar Guild can be done as a couple
- Membership in Altar Guild is an avenue to introduce young people to stewardship at St. John's
- Membership in Altar Guild can be your introduction to church ministry.
- Everyone is welcome to join Altar Guild.



If you are interested, please contact Diane Sireci, *Directress*, (908-256-5467 or dianesireci61@icloud.com) or the Parish Office.

Looking Ahead

- Sun, Feb 1:** Loose change Sunday, 12noon Annual Meeting
Mon, Feb 2: ECW meeting 7pm
Thur, Feb 5: 7:30pm Choir
Sat, Feb 7: 9am Clothes Closet and Meals-To-Go
Wed, Feb 11: 7pm Vestry meeting
Thur, Feb 12: 7:30pm Choir
Sat, Feb 14: 10am Vendor Fair
Tue, Feb 17: 5pm to 7pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
Wed, Feb 18: 7am, 12noon, 7pm. Ash Wednesday Liturgy with Imposition of Ashes; 6am Ashes -To-Go will also be available at the Somerville Train Station
Thur, Feb 19: 5pm Laundry Love, 7:30 Choir
Sat, Feb 21: 9am Clothes Closet and Meals-To-Go
Sun, Feb 22: First Sunday in Lent
Thur, Feb 26: 7:30pm Choir

WE CELEBRATE, WE REMEMBER: FEBRUARY 2026

BIRTHDAYS

1. Susan Bender
2. Emily Newton, Candi Mullen
3. Zoe McCabe, Barbara Christel, Mickey Abbatiello
4. Kyle Kurzawa, Daniel Venet
5. Dylan Mathews
6. Father Ron Pollock
7. Bill Wickham, Mindy Wolfmayer, Ruth Altamura-Roll
9. Kyle Powell, Harold Willard, Emil Fried
10. Ryan Wickham
11. James Knowles, Gretchen Troup, Samantha Venet
12. Sarah Strano
14. Peter Miller
15. Hunter Troup, Tracy Andricsak,
16. Ian Latanision
17. Neva Rae Fox, Henry Szumigala, Leigh Meaders-Robinson, Zoë Latanision
18. Erik Fried
21. Kim Post
22. Robert Massey, Gabriella Barkin
23. David Soden, Sinead Normant
24. Jill Brodsky

25. Kylie Barna, Rory Normant, Joe Poklikuha
26. Scott Bender
27. Emily Hewett, Andrea Dalrymple, Jake August Agins, Tamara Billy, Catherine O'Shea
28. Danielle Liberatoscioli, Parker Mehring, Preston Polonyi

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

1. Roopal & Vera Tonk
4. James & Connie Van Arsdale
17. Charles & Kay Halsted

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

3. Irene Sidell
4. Eleanor Bonham, Allan R. Streeter
7. T. Robert Vaucher
9. Bob Vitullo
11. Jean L. Mathews, Ray Bomberger
13. Steven H. Spolarich
14. Bob Brady
16. Noel Haywood
17. Davis Edwards
18. Shirley Saunders
25. Jane H. Goldsack
27. Ethel D. Barry, Walter Edwards
28. W. Raymond Jones, Arthur Flinn

February 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Epiphany 4 Annual Meeting Loose Change Sunday 8am, Eucharist 10:15, Eucharist	2 12:30-1:30pm, All Recovery Meeting 7pm ECW meeting 8pm, AA Meeting	3 7pm Eucharist	4	5 10am, Eucharist with healing and laying of the hands Mary & Martha Guild 7:30pm Choir	6 Fr. Ron's Day off	7 9am, Clothes Closet & Meals to Go
8 Epiphany 5 8am, Eucharist 10:15, Eucharist	9 12:30-1:30pm, All Recovery Meeting 8pm, AA Meeting	10 7pm Eucharist	11 7pm, Vestry	12 10am, Eucharist; Mary & Martha Guild 7:30pm Choir	13 Fr. Ron's Day off	14 10am Vendor Fair
15 The last Sunday after the Epiphany 8am, Eucharist 10:15, Eucharist 2pm, Wallace House presentation	16 12:30-1:30pm, All Recovery Meeting 8pm, AA Meeting	17 5-7pm Pancake Supper 7pm, Eucharist	18 Ash Wednesday 6am, Ashes to Go at the Somerville Train Station am, 12noon, 7pm Services	19 10am, Eucharist; M & M Guild 5pm, Laundry Love 7:30pm Choir	20 Fr. Ron's Day off	21 9am, Clothes Closet & Meals to Go
22 First Sunday in Lent 8am, Eucharist 10:15, Eucharist Cultural Ubuntu Pavillion	23 12:30-1:30pm, All Recovery Meeting 8pm, AA Meeting	24 7pm, Eucharist Saint Matthias The Apostle	25	26 10am, Eucharist; M & M Guild 7:30pm Choir	27 Fr. Ron's Day off Office Closed	28



St. John's in Somerville, Leadership

PARISH STAFF

The Rev. Canon Ronald N. Pollock, *Rector*, frronpollock1@verizon.net

The Rev. W. Keith McCoy, *Deacon Associate*, kmccoy1@optonline.net

Tiffany Campbell, *Ministry Intern*, skylw6@gmail.com

Karen Abbatiello, *Administrative Assistant*, admin@stjohnsomerville.org

Ministers: The People of St. John's

Altar Guild

Diane Sireci, *Directress*, dianesireci61@icloud.com

Tom Keefer, *Treasurer*, thomasekeefe@yahoo.com

Dana Keefer, *Flowers, Weddings, & Funerals*, dzkeefe@yahoo.com

Bread & Wine and Altar Candles, admin@stjohnsomerville.org

Music Program

Open

Canon Chancellor John W. Goldsack Church Library

Deacon Keith, kmccoy1@optonline.net

Church School

Michelle Hernandez, chellehernandez1@gmail.com

Tracey Jameson, tkayj@aol.com

Taffy Scherr, tafrika@aol.com

Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

Linda Willard, *President*, nolaandboogie@aol.com

Mary & Martha Guild

Fr. Ron, convener

Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) Adviser

Fr. Ron

Clothes Closet Council, clothescloset@stjohnsomerville.org

Linda Willard, Taffy Scherr, Paula Windus, Karen Whitmore, Barbara Christel

Laundry Love

Paul Grzella, pgrzella@verizon.net

Meals to Go

Christine Bean, cbean727@gmail.com, Nikki Hoffman, nikihoffman@hotmail.com

Red Door Ministries

Baby Blankets for newborns and those baptized: Pauline Boyer, 908.722.1832

Loose-Change for Discretionary Fund: position open

Happy Mealers: Fr. Ron

Finance Committee

Stewardship

Fr. Ron, *Adviser*; Terry McShane, *Chair*

Treasurer

Sam Galpin, *Parish Treasurer*, sam.galpin@outlook.com

Anne Tom, *Parish Co-Treasurer*, annetom@comcast.net

Vestry

Terry McShane, Sr. Warden Christine Anobile, Vestry

Steve Sireci, Jr. Warden Kyle Ferris, Vestry

Thomas Albee, Vestry Carolyn Groff, Vestry and Clerk

Donna Lazartic, Vestry Anthony Pinto, Vestry

Ken Miller, Vestry Tim Walsh, Vestry

Liz Eisinger, Vestry

