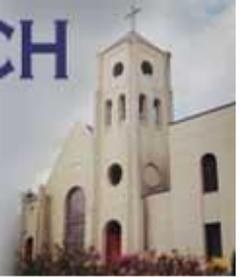


CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

111 SOUTH CHURCH STREET
SMITHFIELD, VA 23430
OFFICE: 757-357-2826 OR 357-2810
FAX: 757-357-2810



THE WORD – MARCH 2026

HOLY WEEK SERVICES



Palm Sunday - March 29
10:30am

Maundy Thursday - April 2
7:00pm



Good Friday - April 3
12:00pm



Easter Vigil - April 4
7:00pm
Easter Sunday - April 5
10:30am



HEAR YE, HEAR YE, PLEASE READ THE ANNOUNCEMENTS BELOW!

Shrove Tuesday Celebration

Thanks to all the men of CEC who prepared food for the Pancake Supper. Also thanks to those who decorated, set tables, and helped clean up. Your stewardship is greatly appreciated.



Easter



Easter Sunday is April 5th this year. Please remember to bring flowers to decorate the cross.

Choir for Easter

We are looking for any able-bodied people to sing in the choir for Easter Sunday. We will practice Easter Sunday morning at 9:40. If you can sing, you will need to let Annamaria know to be fitted for a choir robe and obtain the song list and practice recordings.



Fundraisers

If you have any ideas about ways to raise money for the church, please let a vestry member know.

Building and Grounds

Let There be Light!

After many months and perhaps years, please say thank you to Chris Crocker who has fixed the exterior lighting at the door and the lights in the narthex. See photos in "February Memories".

Improvements

Please reach out to a vestry member if you have any questions or concerns about the building or grounds.

Hospitality



Please sign up to bring something for hospitality. When you participate now, you need to bring only one item. You may sign up at the kitchen door for any category, any Sunday.

Pop-Up-Choir



We are trying to put some people together to sing once a month with our pianist on the 4th Sunday of each month. If you would like to join us in this effort, please let Annamaria know. We have practice on Saturday morning at 10:15 before the Sunday when we sing. I will also send the songs to your email so you can hear them in advance.

Volunteers Needed

As you know, we are a small church with many needs. If you can read the lessons, acolyte, count money, work on the Altar Guild, or work on the Flower Guild, please let us know. We are very short handed these days. We are down to 2-3 acolytes, and the Altar and Flower Guilds are also down to a skeleton crew. Please step up and volunteer if you can.



LOST NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICAN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH RECORDS ARE FOUND

Christ Church, City Point (1889–1898), and a Rediscovered Chapter of Episcopal History in Southern Virginia

While researching the history of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Hopewell (historic City Point), I opened a cloth-bound register that at first glance looked like nothing more than an old ledger—one of many record books that survive in parish archives. But as I turned the pages, I realized I was holding something far more remarkable: the parish records of a forgotten African American Episcopal Church that once stood in City Point in the years following the Civil War.

What I had stumbled upon was evidence of a short-lived but deeply significant mission congregation—Christ Church, City Point, Virginia—founded in the final decade of the nineteenth century and built by its members’ hands, faith, and hope.

A Church Built by a Newly Free People

Christ Church served the African American community of City Point from 1889 until its destruction in 1898. In those nine years, it became more than a small wooden building. It was a spiritual home, a place of formation, and a witness to the determination of formerly enslaved people as well as free Black residents who were building institutions of faith, education, and dignity in a Southern town still struggling with Reconstruction’s collapse and the rise of segregation.

Christ Church was established as a mission of St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, City Point, in Prince George County, Virginia. The church was built on a parcel of land—100 feet by 50 feet, donated by Dr. Richard Eppes of Appomattox Manor. The gift was encouraged by his daughter, Agnes Horner Eppes, who worked closely with the African American community through St. John's Sunday School.

Though the land came from a prominent white family, the story of Christ Church is not primarily the story of donors—it is the story of a Black congregation that organized, built, worshiped, taught children, and sustained itself through the daily work of faith.

A Training Ground for Black Episcopal Leadership

Christ Church was also part of a much larger movement in the Episcopal Church after emancipation: the training and formation of African American men for ordained ministry. From its first year until its end, the congregation was served by students from the Bishop John Payne Divinity and Industrial School in Petersburg, Virginia.

That school, and the mission work connected to it, grew out of earlier efforts to educate and prepare Black leaders in the Episcopal tradition. The roots go back to St. Stephen's Normal and Industrial School, founded by the Rev. Giles B. Cooke, Rector of St. Stephen's Church, Petersburg, for the training of Black teachers. The Rev. Thomas Spencer of St. John's Church in Petersburg (not the same St. John's as City Point) also shared a deep concern for the spiritual and educational needs of newly emancipated Black youth.

In the fall of 1878, at the urging of Bishop Francis M. Whittle, the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria asked the Rev. Mr. Spencer to open a branch of the Seminary at the Normal School to train Black men for the ordained ministry. The school's name was changed to St. Stephen's Normal and Theological School. Its first student was James Solomon Russell—one of the great names in the history of African American Episcopalians in Virginia. Russell was ordained to the order of deacons on March 9, 1882, and later ordained a priest on February 7, 1887. He would eventually become Archdeacon in the Diocese of Virginia until 1892 and then retained that title in the newly formed Diocese of Southern Virginia. Over the next decade, more students were added. More than twenty-two men enrolled and studied—an extraordinary fact in an era when educational access and institutional support for African Americans was limited and often actively resisted.

Eight Student Leaders, One Faithful Congregation

During its relatively brief history, Christ Church was served by eight Bishop Payne students who led worship and cared for the congregation:

- Mr. John Wesley Johnson (1889–1890), ordained deacon by Bishop Whittle on June 20, 1890, and ordained priest on June 19, 1891

- Mr. James Kelley (1890–1891)
- Mr. Leonard Avaunt (1891, for six months)
- Mr. Charles Simmons (1891–1892, for eighteen months), ordained deacon by Bishop Randolph in 1892, and later ordained priest on July 23, 1914
- Samuel Decator Phillips (1894), ordained deacon by Bishop Randolph on October 8, 1894, and ordained priest in 1897
- Mr. Herbert Woodfolk (1896, for four months)
- Mr. William Perry (1897, for four months)
- Mr. William Avaunt (1898, for about five months)

These names matter. They represent more than a list of clergy-in-training. They are a roll call of Black Episcopal leadership being formed during a critical and fragile moment in Southern history—when African American communities were fighting for stability, education, and spiritual authority amid widening racial injustice.

A Growing Church, a Teaching Church

Despite limited resources, the records show a congregation that was steadily building and improving its worship space. During Mr. Simmons’s term, the Sunday School raised enough money to paint the church. In 1892, the congregation purchased a bell—so it could be rung to “call them [students] in.” By 1893, the church was fully enclosed, and a vestry room was added.

These details are deeply human and quietly powerful. They show pride, organization, and persistence. This was not a passive congregation receiving charity. It was a community investing in itself.

Bishops, Confirmations, and Sacramental Life

The church’s sacramental life is also recorded through episcopal visits. On the afternoon of January 12, 1890, Bishop Francis M. Whittle visited Christ Church and confirmed eight persons. Just over a year later, on May 3, 1891, Bishop Whittle returned and confirmed three more.

In 1892, the Diocese of Virginia split, forming the Diocese of Southern Virginia. Christ Church suddenly found itself under a new bishop, the Rt. Rev. Alfred M. Randolph. Bishop Randolph visited Christ Church on April 7, 1895, confirming five persons.

During a long stretch when Christ Church had no student or minister in charge, several lay readers were licensed. It was also during this time that Archdeacon James Solomon Russell visited the congregation several times to celebrate the Holy Communion.

Even in seasons of instability, the records show that Christ Church continued—worshiping, teaching, and receiving the sacraments. The faith endured.

A Sudden End—and a Vanishing from Memory

In 1898, the register records a storm of remarkable violence: a strong gale—perhaps even a tornado—came through City Point, destroying a home and trees. On a Sunday evening around 5:00 p.m., the wind blew down the small church and carried it into the James River.

Christ Church was never rebuilt as an Episcopal congregation. It is believed that the church once stood on a hill not far from the James River, near where City Point Baptist Church stands today.

And with that, Christ Church slipped into silence—its physical presence erased, its story largely forgotten, its people unnamed in most public histories.

A Black History Month Discovery—and a Sacred Responsibility

That is what makes the discovery of these records so significant.

Black History Month is not only about famous names and major events. It is also about recovering the lives, faith, and work of communities that history too often overlooks—especially communities whose institutions were vulnerable to loss through poverty, segregation, and the fragility of paper records.

The Vestry of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Hopewell voted to have the register and any other relevant documents of Christ Church, City Point transferred to the African American Episcopal Historical Collection, curated in the Bishop John Payne Library at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia.

The decision was more than administrative. It was an act of honoring. It ensured that the story of Christ Church would not be lost again—that the names, sacraments, confirmations, and quiet triumphs of a nineteenth-century Black Episcopal congregation would remain part of the Church’s memory.

In the end, what these records reveal is simple and profound: African American Episcopalians in City Point built a church, raised leaders, nurtured children, received the sacraments, and lived the Gospel in a difficult time. Their building may have fallen into the river—but their witness did not.

The Rev. William B. Taylor, Jr.+
Historiographer, Diocese of Southern Virginia
Rector, St. John’s Episcopal Church, Hopewell, VA

CREATION CARE



Recently Father Todd preached a sermon focused on God’s creation of the earth and His creation of us to care for it. This made me curious to find out, what does the Bible say about nature? Turns out, 37 of the Psalms talk about nature and the environment. Paul tells us in Romans 1:19-20 God can be found in the things he has made (Creation). And of course, Genesis describes how God made heaven, the earth and all that is on it, and the seas and all that is in them. I found a quote from a sermon by Billy Graham on creation care that I love:

“When we fail to see the world as God’s creation, we will end up abusing it. Selfishness and greed take over, and we end up not caring about the environment or the problems we have created for future generations.”

I am very grateful that our Church practices Creation Care!

Alison





Tuesday March 17th
2026

Open Mic Nite
Friday 7 PM
Musicians, Comics,
Poets, Stories

DONATIONS GO TO OUTREACH

be inspired
CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Friday, March 20, 2026

DEADLINE
JUST AHEAD

**Deadline for
March 2026 WORD
Wednesday March 18, 2026
by 5:00 p.m.**

Sundays at Four

presents

The Tidewater Cello Ensemble

Susan & Erin Hines, Directors

March 15, 2026 at 4:00 PM



Christ Episcopal Church, 111 S. Church St., Smithfield VA
Free-Will Contribution Appreciated

Supported By



Sundays at Four

March 15, 2026 – 4:00 pm
The Tidewater Cello Ensemble
Susan & Erin Hines, Directors
These young cellists will perform in Spain following our concert.

April 12, 2026 – 4:00 pm
2025-2026 Soundscapes
Performance Ensemble
Seven students from the *Peninsula Youth Orchestra* who serve as artistic ambassadors for *Soundscapes*.

Monday, May 4, 2026 - 7:00 pm
US Air Force Langley Winds

June 7, 2026 – 4:00 pm
Solo Youth Recital
Lydia Li, Piano

August 2, 2026 – 4:00 pm
Terrific Teen Talent Recital
Six Hampton Roads Teens selected by audition to present individual mini recitals on this Teen Concert.

Christ Episcopal Church
111 S. Church St., Smithfield VA

Ticketed Performances:
Adults \$25 Students \$10
Under 15 – Free



The ***Sundays at Four*** concert season runs from September through August each year and it provides a minimum of three professional concerts, and three opportunities for young musicians (Recital for 6 auditioned teens on the August Terrific Teen Recital, a Solo Youth Recital, and a Master Class, or in School Workshop). Applications are now available on the SAF FB page for the August 2 Terrific Teen Talent Recital.

We are pleased to have the **US Air Force Langley Woodwind Quintet** as guest during this 250th Anniversary Year. All concerts are held at Christ Episcopal Church, 111 S. Church St., Smithfield.

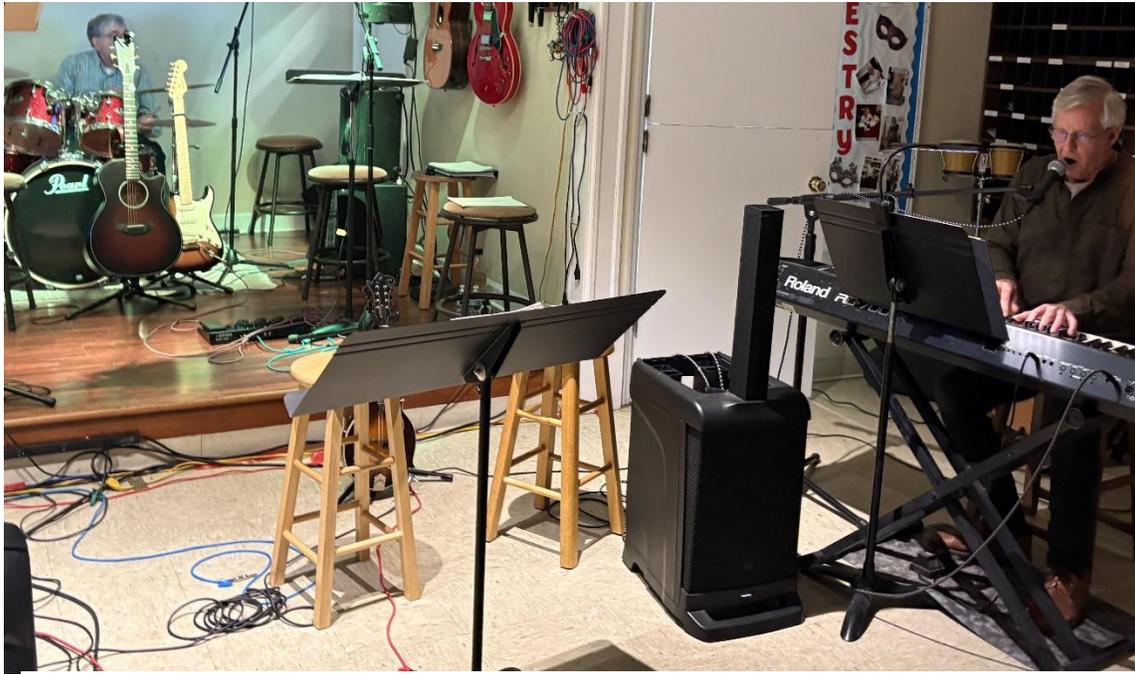
February

Sweet Memories



OPEN MIC NITE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026



It was good to have Carlton Bakkum with us, singing and playing the keyboard. John Petrone is on the drums. Close-ups below: John (left) and Carlton (right).





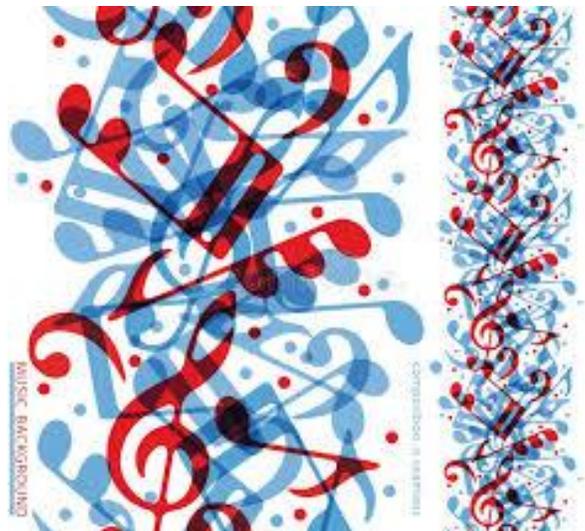
Tim Jones gave us a poetry reading.



"Loudon Brooks & Mark D'Echevery played and sang "Puff the Magic Dragon."



Jim Abicht sang "Turn, Turn, Turn"





CEC FIXIT MASTER AT WORK

Thank you to
Chris Crocker
for getting us light
outside and in the
Narthex!

**LET THERE BE
LIGHT!!
AND SO NOW
THERE IS ❤️!**



COP FOOD PANTRY SHELVES

This program was born here at CEC and was started by Gene Lowery and Fred Glanville. We deliver food to the Isle of Wight County facility on an on-going basis. On the fourth Sunday of each month, our donations are placed at the altar to be blessed by the priest. Our food is then delivered to COP after donations are given by our congregation at Christ Church. Christian Outreach ALWAYS needs volunteers (2-4 hours per month) to help distribute and take in food, diapers, etc. If you can volunteer to work for the COP please call for details of hours of operation or check out their website at: <https://iowcop.net>. Thank you.



Christ Church participates in collecting non-perishable food items on Sundays for the Food pantry at COP (Christian Outreach hungry. Anything you can drop off at church in the "outreach" basket will be greatly appreciated. The basket is located under the mailboxes.

Thank you KINDLY and GOD BLESS!

COP Shopping List

- Canned Fruit
- Canned Soups
- Canned vegetables
- Pasta
- Peanut Butter
- Cereal
- Baby Food
- Granola Bars
- Diapers – size 5 or 6



2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Second Sunday in Lent 1 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite I	2	3	4	5	6	7
Third Sunday in Lent 8 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite I	9	10	11	12	13	14
Fourth Sunday in Lent 15 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite I 4 pm Sundays at Four – The Tidewater Cello Ensemble	16	17 	18	19	20 7pm Open Mic Nite	21
Fifth Sunday in Lent 22 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite I	23	24 6pm Vestry	25	26	27	28
PALM SUNDAY 29 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite I	30	31				



2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 	2  7pm Holy Eucharist, Rite I	3  12 noon Good Friday Service	4  7pm Holy Eucharist, Rite II
5  10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite II		7	8	9	10	11
12 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite II	13	14	15	16	17 7pm Open Mic Nite	18
19 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite II	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 10:30am Holy Eucharist, Rite II	27	28	29	30		



- 9 Bill Wyrick
- 12 Fred Stanton
- 17 Angie Garrett
- 20 Cory Webb
- 22 Tim Jones
- Martha Underwood

- 24 Judy Cutler
- Betty Dubinsky
- Bob McGreevy
- 25 Ricky Goodwyn, Jr.
- 26 Martin Mikulas
- 27 Bobbi Grimsley
- 31 Amanda Worcester

- 4 Bob Amato
- Diane Greenhalgh
- 6 Jedidiah Worcester
- 14 John Bates
- 26 Jennifer Worcester
- 28 Anna Goodwyn
- 29 April Jones