

The Parish Paper

OF

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

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The Conversion of St. Paul (Epiphany 3)

January 25, 2026

AN EPIPHANY OF GRACE

In the season of Epiphany the Church celebrates the manifestations of God's glory in Christ—manifestations not confined to Israel, but extended to the Gentile world. It is fitting that within this season we commemorate the Conversion of Saint Paul. Paul's conversion is itself one of the great epiphanies of Christ: the glorified Lord making himself known to a persecutor, and appointing him as the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is a turning point not only in Paul's own story, but in the history of the Church—and yet, for all its uniqueness, it also reveals the essential pattern of every true conversion. What is manifested to Paul on the road to Damascus is meant, in its own measure, to be manifested in us also.

The New Testament introduces Paul—still known as Saul—at one of the darkest moments in the Church's early life. At the end of Acts 7, Saul appears as an accomplice to the lynching of Stephen, the first martyr, and Stephen's final prayer—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—is apparently unanswered. Far from relenting, Saul intensifies his campaign. Acts tells us that he "made havoc of the church," entering homes, dragging off men and women to prison. His zeal does not remain local. At his own initiative, he carries the persecution beyond Judea, determined to root out what he regards as a dangerous heresy.

What drives this violence is not mere cruelty, but a desperate and misguided righteousness. Saul is zealous for the honor of God and the Law, yet his zeal is inseparable from anxiety about his own standing before God. He persecutes Christians not with judicial detachment, but with the compulsive energy of a man seeking to secure his own righteousness. In attempting to destroy what he believes to be blasphemy, Saul is seeking to establish himself as righteous before God. His very goodness—his zeal, his devotion, his moral seriousness—has become the instrument of his deepest sin.

It is this false righteousness that Christ shatters on the road to Damascus. As Saul journeys to extend his persecution, a dazzling light from heaven throws him helpless to the ground. From the light comes a voice of reproach: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When Saul asks who is speaking, the answer annihilates every assumption he has lived by: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The one Saul believed to be a condemned impostor is revealed as the one whom God has vindicated and glorified. In persecuting the Church, Saul has been attacking God's Christ himself.

The encounter leaves no room for negotiation. Saul's response is immediate and absolute: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" His former righteousness lies in ruins. He rises from the ground blind, led by the hand into Damascus, and for three days he neither eats nor drinks. The man who once boasted of his knowledge of the truth is now literally blind. The light he thought he possessed has been exposed as darkness. In seeking to establish his own righteousness, he has only brought condemnation upon himself. In those three days of blindness Saul learns that true sight can only be received as sheer gift. He waits, emptied of everything but need.

Thus Saul's restoration is not effected by the Damascus epiphany alone. Christ truly and immediately reveals himself to Saul, justifies him by faith, and claims him as his own apart from any human mediation. Saul's surrender—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—is already an act of faith, a total yielding to the risen Christ. Justification is immediate, personal, and the free gift of grace. And yet Christ does not will that this immediate relation should remain solitary or abstract. He does not heal Saul in isolation, nor does he allow him to bypass the community he has persecuted.

Continued on back page

Church Office: 1 West Macon St, 31401(912) 232-1251

Bishop of GA.....The Rt. Rev. Frank Logue
Rector The Rev. Gavin G. Dunbar
Associate Rector The Rev. Jonathan Jameson
The Rt. Rev. Paul E. Lambert [Retired].....(931) 327-5489
Hon. Assisting Priest Rev. J. Patrick Hunt
Hon. Assisting PriestRev. David Thurlow
Organist and Choirmaster..... Mr. William Douglas
Verger Mr. B. Ray Summerell
VergerMr. James E. Morris
Acolyte Director/Master of Ceremonies....Mr. Carter C. Hubbard

Sr. Warden: Mrs. James F. Holtzclaw (Sherry); Jr. Warden:
Mr. Douglas P. McManamy; Treasurer: Mr. Floyd Whitting-
ton, Jr; Assistant Treasurer: Mrs. Stuart C. Clifford (Susan);
Clerk of Vestry: Mrs. Elizabeth H. Schubert; Chancellor: Dolly
Chisholm

The Vestry: Mrs. Carter C. Hubbard, Sr. (Barbara), Mrs. L.
Allan Reynolds, Jr. (Beverly), Mr. Charles B. Compton, Jr.
(Chip), Mrs. Jonathan D. Sprague (Mary), Mr. Patrick Worsham,
Dr. Janet S. Morris, Mr. R. Scott Howard, Mr. Wiley A. Wasden
III, Mr. Charles J. Ezelle, Mr. Graham P. Sadler, and Mrs.
Duncan Pindar (Terry); Chancellor Emeritus & Vestryman
Emeritus: M. Tyus Butler, Jr., Esq.; Vestry Emeriti: Mr. George
Fawcett, Mr. Edwin H. Culver, Mr. J. Earl Gilbreath, Jr.

President, Women of St. John's: Mrs. Clarkson C. Logan (Meta),
Chancel Society: Mrs. Jeanne H. McMillan and Mrs. Linda H.
Pounds; President, Men of St. John's: Mr. Benjamin W. Baxter

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE ADDITIONAL UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Feb. 12-13:** Prayer Book Society/Anglican Way Conference at St. John's Church. More details at AnglicanWay.org/2026-conference
- **Feb. 18:** Ash Wednesday: Imposition of Ashes & Holy Communion at 7 a.m. in the Chapel and Noon and 5:30 p.m. in the Church

STEPHEN MINISTRY NEEDS YOU! *New training class starts this spring*

Consider being part of Stephen Ministry. After 50 hours of training, you will be prepared to care for someone in need. Walk alongside them, pray with them, care for them during their crisis. In order to begin a new class this Spring we need 10 students to enroll. The class time and date is to be determined depending upon our enrollment. For additional information, please email info@stjohnssav.org or call the Church office at 912-232-1251.

UPCOMING WORSHIP WEEK OF EPIPHANY 3

Monday to Friday:

8:15 a.m. *Online Morning Prayer*

Monday, January 26

No in-person services

Tuesday, January 27

Noon *Holy Communion*, Chapel

5 p.m. *Evening Prayer*, Chapel

Wednesday, January 28

Noon *Holy Communion*, Church

5 p.m. *Evening Prayer*, Chapel

9 p.m. *Sung Compline*, Church

Thursday, January 29

Noon *Holy Communion*, Chapel

5 p.m. *Evening Prayer*

with Holy Communion, Chapel

Friday, January 30

Noon *Holy Communion*, Chapel

Sunday, February 1: Septuagesima

8 a.m. *Holy Communion*, Church

8:45 a.m. *Nursery*, Cranmer Hall
open until 12:15 p.m.

9 a.m. *Family Morning Prayer*, Church

10 a.m. *All Ages Sunday School*,
Cranmer Hall & Chapel

11 a.m. *Sung Eucharist*, Church/Online

5 p.m. *Candlemas Evensong: A Service of Music*
by Candlelight, Church/Online

A reception follows in the Green-Meldrim House.

Monday, February 2:

Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

Noon *Holy Communion*, Chapel

Volunteer as a Church Tour Docent

Visitors to Savannah enjoy learning about our historic church, but we can't keep these tours open without volunteer docents. Consider offering a few hours each month to share the beauty, the history, and the holiness of St. John's. Tours are Tuesdays and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call the church office at 912-232-1251 if interested.

FAITH

& Fiction



Led by novelist and parishioner Heather Cross, Faith & Fiction engages the ethical and theological themes of good literature, seeking to enable deep conversation about what it means to be human in God's world.

- 4 FEB** WISE BLOOD
Elizabeth G. Connor

- 4 MAR** LYING AWAKE
Mark Salzman

- 8 APRIL** FOUR QUARTETS
T. S. Elliot

- 6 MAY** A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ
Walter Miller, Jr.

- 3 JUNE** THE LAST BATTLE
C. S. Lewis



Candlemas Evensong

A Service of Music by Candlelight

SUNDAY, FEB 1 AT 5 PM

Sung by the
Choirs of St. John's Church



ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
SAVANNAH

325 Bull Street • StJohnsSav.org

MUSIC ON MADISON SQUARE

Presents

The St. James Compline Choir

The Infant upheld the Ancient

*performing works by Thomas Tallis, Caroline Shaw,
Sarah Rimekus, and others!*



Sunday, February 15th at 5PM!

St. John's Church, Savannah • 325 Bull Street • 31401

Purchase your tickets here:



Men of St. John's Annual Oyster Roast & BBQ

SATURDAY, FEB. 7 • 11AM – 3PM

Oysters served at 11:30AM
Camp Villa Marie, Savannah



Adults: \$40; Guests: \$30
Youth: \$10; 5 & Under: Free
All prices \$5 higher after Feb. 1



POTABLE GOLD: MADEIRA WINE

**Fridays & Saturdays in
February, at 5:30 p.m.**

Experience this unique and flavorful fortified wine and how it intertwines with the history of Savannah. For this after-hours, exclusive program, see areas of the house not normally accessible. Space is limited. Admission is \$36.50 per person (21 years+) and purchased online only. For more information, visit GreenMeldrimHouse.org

THIS SUNDAY AT ST. JOHN'S

*The nursery (infants to four-year-olds)
is available from 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
on the 2nd floor of Cranmer Hall.*

8 A.M. HOLY COMMUNION, Church
*Breakfast is available in Cranmer Hall following
the 8 & 9 a.m. services this Sunday.*

Introit: Psalm 67, BCP pp. 418–419
The Collects, BCP pp. 229, 112
The Epistle and Gospel, BCP pp. 229–231

9 A.M. FAMILY HOLY COMMUNION, Church

10 A.M. ALL AGES SUNDAY SCHOOL,
Cranmer Hall & St. Mary's Chapel

11 A.M. MORNING PRAYER, Church & Online

12:30 P.M. COFFEE HOUR, Green-Meldrim House

ASSISTING IN WORSHIP

VESTRY OFFERING CHAIR

8 a.m. Mr. Arthur D. Weed
11 a.m. Mr. R. Scott Howard

USHERS

Mr. Robert L. Sparks
Mr. Frank Somoskey

CHOIR

Schola Choir

COFFEE HOUR

Mrs. B. Ray Summerell (Melanie)

CHANCEL SOCIETY

Mrs. Timothy E. Coy (Dorothea)
Mrs. Jayne G. Holland
Mrs. Carter C. Hubbard, Sr. (Barbara)
Mrs. John G. Bradshaw (Sally)
Mrs. B. Ray Summerell (Melanie)
Mrs. David A. Young (Pam)
Mrs. Charles B. Compton, Jr. (Alva)
Mrs. S. Kelley Compton (Kat)
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McCay (Mick & Connie)

Instead, Christ deliberately incorporates Saul into his Body, the Church, and does so through visible, sacramental means. God therefore sends Ananias, a faithful Christian of Damascus, to be the human instrument of Saul's healing and reception into the Church.

The significance of this is profound. Ananias is commanded to go to his enemy and bring him not condemnation but mercy. In obeying, Ananias embodies the love Christ commands; and in receiving, Saul submits in humility to the Church he once sought to destroy. When Ananias lays his hands upon him and calls him "Brother Saul," the gospel is enacted before our eyes. Christ wills that Saul's reconciliation should take an ecclesial form, and that his incorporation into Christ should be sacramental as well as spiritual.

Here the narrative itself teaches a theology that classical Anglicanism has always insisted upon: a both/and, not an either/or. Through his direct encounter with the risen Christ, Saul is justified by faith alone; but that same Christ unites him to himself through the Church and her sacraments. The immediate and the mediated belong together. Christ who meets Saul on the road is the same Christ who receives him in baptism. So also it must be for us: not just the inward relation to Christ, but also the outward sign and community, in which that faith is exercised and sustained.

— GGD

FLOWERS FOR SUNDAY

The flowers in church this Sunday are given to the glory of God, and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse L. Fulenwider, Jr. by their family.

And in loving memory of Leonard Trosten on his birthday by Mrs. Ali Trosten and son, Jay Overstreet.

And in loving memory of Besty and John Sayler on the occasion of their January Birthday's by Betty, Charles and Shelby Youles.

To offer flowers for the altar, please call the Church office. After Sunday, the flowers are delivered to the sick, sorrowing, and shut-ins.