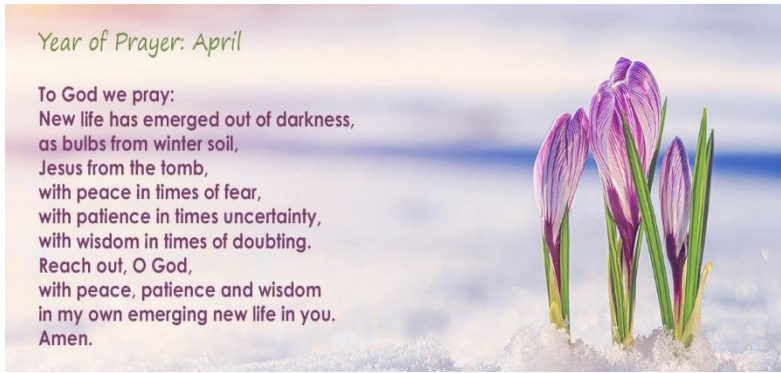


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April 2026

We are a community of faith striving to love God fully and our neighbors as ourselves.

Dear members and friends of Christ Church,

I'd like to offer a big "Thank You" to all those who attended one or more of my Canon Fodder Lenten Programs, and especially to the members of the Vestry for the many delicious soups (and breads) that comprised our dinners. I know that delving into the often speculative history of and sometimes complex debates about the books that comprise our Holy Scripture is not easy, and that reading and reflecting on texts excluded from the canon of the Bible can seem unnecessarily challenging to our faith (based as it is on the books that did make the cut). I appreciate everyone who was willing to dip their toes into such difficult waters (and indulge this nerd who enjoys talking about such things).

As we enter April, there are a couple of reasons that at least a passing familiarity with non-canonical scriptures may be valuable. First, during Holy Week and Easter, mainstream secular media (like *Time* magazine or the nightly network news) often includes eye-catching stories about Jesus, Biblical Israel, or early Christianity, sometimes incorporating research from non-canonical texts. Back in 2006, National Geographic published the first English translation of the Gospel of Judas (which had been discovered in the 1970s), resulting in a great deal of media coverage about Jesus having commissioned Judas to betray him to the authorities (as described in the book), but the splashy headlines neglected to mention that the Gospel of Judas has a thoroughly Gnostic perspective (the heresy that asserts that the God of the Jews and the God of Jesus are different, among other things) and was written around a century after Jesus' crucifixion at the earliest. Even slight awareness of non-canonical scriptures can equip us to engage with such stories critically rather than taking them at face value.

The other reason is that, on the Sunday after Easter (April 12 this year), Thomas takes center stage, and three of the best-known non-canonical scriptures (a gospel of Jesus' sayings, a gospel about Jesus' childhood, and the Acts of Thomas) bear his name. The last of these, while excluded from the canon because of its late date of composition and some theologically dubious details (Thomas is Jesus' literal twin brother, which obviously doesn't accord with Matthew and Luke's accounts of Jesus' birth), contains at least one significant grain of truth (that Thomas went to India and founded what is now the Mar Thomas Church of southwestern India). It centers the still-compelling story that Thomas, a carpenter, was hired by an Indian King to build a palace, but instead of doing so he distributed the money to the poor and sick. When discovered and arrested, Thomas claimed that he had built a palace for the King not on earth but in heaven, which was verified when the King had a dream in which his deceased brother wanted to buy his currently unoccupied afterlife palace. While implausible and arguably silly, the story dovetails nicely with Jesus' canonical teachings about giving away earthly wealth and storing up treasure in heaven, and as such is worth having in mind when we find ourselves criticizing "Doubting Thomas."

- Fr. John

History of the Early Church

Church History is meeting on **Wednesday, April 1, at 10:30 am in the Undercroft**. We're going to circle back to the Dark Ages and consider the whys and whats of the different flavors of British Christianity (Celtic and Roman) in the early medieval period.

Wednesday Eucharist

On Wednesdays, we celebrate Holy Eucharist at Noon in the Chapel (enter via the glass Undercroft door at the back of the church building). These brief (thirty minutes) spoken services commemorate the saint of the day from the Episcopal calendar of Lesser Feasts and Fasts and are perfect for those who want to attend a service but are unable to come Sunday mornings or who want an additional gathering for corporate prayer to help them through the week. **In April there will be Wednesday Eucharists on April 15, 22 and 29, but NO Wednesday Eucharist on April 1 or 8.**

Kings Grant Eucharist

Fr. John celebrates Eucharist in the chapel at Kings Grant each month. The next services will be an ecumenical service on **April 2 (at 2:00 pm)** and the regular Episcopal service on April 30 at 1:30 pm.

Easter Breakfast Hosted by the Women's Group

The Women's Group is hosting Easter Breakfast on Sunday, April 5. Food will be available from 9:00 am until 9:45 (or it runs out); please join us for some or all of this fellowship time before the 10:30 service. If you are planning to attend, please sign up (<https://www.christchurchmvl.org/volunteering.cfm?ID=363>), but if you find yourself able to attend and have not signed up, come anyway!

We would also appreciate your help in preparing the food; items may be dropped off in the Undercroft kitchen on Saturday (April 4) between 2:00 and 4:00 pm or on Sunday after 8:00 am. A sign-up is available (<https://www.christchurchmvl.org/volunteering.cfm?ID=362>), but please feel free to bring any of your breakfast favorites.

Holy Week Schedule

Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 pm – Tenebrae

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 2:00 pm – Ecumenical Holy Eucharist @ Kings Grant

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 7:00 pm - Holy Eucharist with Footwashing and Stripping of the Altar (**followed by overnight Vigil in the Chapel**)

Good Friday, April 3, Noon - Stations of the Cross

Good Friday, April 3, 7:00 pm - Good Friday Liturgy

Easter Sunday, April 5, 10:30 am - Holy Eucharist (Easter Breakfast beginning at 9:00 in the Undercroft)

Maundy Thursday Vigil

In obedience to Jesus, who wondered that his disciples were unable to keep watch with him for one hour in Gethsemane, some find it deeply meaningful to stay awake and pray for a portion of the night on **Maundy Thursday (April 2 this year)**. **Kyle Trent is organizing a vigil in the Chapel between the end of the Maundy Thursday liturgy and Friday morning; if you are interested in taking an hour, please sign up in the narthex or contact him at kyletrent@kyletrent.com.**

Easter Flowering Cross

As is tradition, on **Easter morning (April 5)**, parishioners, young and old, are invited to bring a few flowers (with stems wrapped in foil or otherwise held together) to place in the wire-covered cross in the narthex, thereby adding even more colorful joy to our celebration of Jesus' resurrection.



The Church office is closed Monday, April 6, for Easter Monday.

Public Theology

Public Theology meets on **April 8** at the Ground Floor (1 E Church St); food and drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) will be available from the usual menu. We begin gathering at 6:00 pm, with the program going from 7:00 to 8:00.

Monday Night Bible Study

In April, the Monday night Bible Study will meet on **April 13, 20, and 27 from 7:00 to 8:00 pm in the Parish House**. On the first of those, we will read Paul's shortest epistle (Philemon) and discuss our plans for spring and summer. All are welcome at any time and no reading in advance is required.

Women's Club Meeting

You are invited to join us in the Parish House on **Tuesday, April 14, at 5:30** for the monthly Women's Club meeting. Beverages and paper products will be provided. Please sign up at the following link [Christ Episcopal Church - Martinsville, Virginia](#) if you plan to attend. **We are looking forward to our evening of fellowship!**

Loaves & Fishes

Loaves & Fishes (our monthly free dinner, open to all) is on **April 29**, with dinner being served **from 5:00 to 6:00**. Even if you are not helping with cooking, serving, cleaning, or donating fruit or dessert, church members are encouraged to come and sit down for a meal with our neighbors in the community. Sign up at [Christ Episcopal Church - Martinsville, Virginia](#) to volunteer or to bring something.

Camera Operators Needed

Since the Covid shutdown, Christ Church has continued to livestream our Sunday services to Facebook, allowing members who live at Kings Grant, who are on vacation, or who are otherwise unable to attend in-person to remain connected with the worship of our community. We are hoping to add a few more people to the rotation in order to continue providing these videos; if you are willing to help with this ministry (it's not particularly hard once you've done it a couple times), please let Rives or Fr. John know.

Campaign Work Update

Thank you again to all those who contributed to our 2025 campaign! At present, we have received more than \$192,000 and have another \$35,000 in outstanding pledges. The first two projects (rebuilding the cash reserve and repairs to the church building) were essentially completed last year (although some little projects, like tightening the handrails for the front stairs, were done more recently). The third is underway, with new plants having been planted around the Parish House in the week of March 23. Outside of the ongoing landscaping work, the projects that remain are designing and installing some additional signs, replacing one last aging air handler, and saving whatever funds remain toward future needs.



Dishes Left in the Parish House

If you have a dish(es) left from a previous reception, please pick it/them up at your earliest convenience. We have several glass serving dishes/plates and glass vases.

Let Deborah or Fr. John know if anyone needs to be added or removed from the list.

Comfort and heal *Sue, Julia, Jennifer, Mallory, Ashley, Michael, Ian, Ann*, and all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Lord, in your mercy.

April Server Schedule

10:30AM	April 5 The Sunday of the Resurrection: EASTER SUNDAY	April 12 The Second Sunday of Easter	April 19 The Third Sunday of Easter	April 26 The Fourth Sunday of Easter
Lector Prayers	Jay Dickens	Susan Critz	Will Zimmer	Kelly Cain
Chalists	Bob Bushnell Steve Keyser	Rives Coleman Hank Long	Jay Dickens John Swezey	Natalie Coleman Tom Webster
Acolyte	Elizabeth Maxwell Emma Jane Morrison Quinn Gravely			
Ushers	Gus Barber Hank Long	Dan Cahill John Swezey	Rives Coleman Ben Lewis	Trippi Penn Jay Dickens
Camera Operator	Rives Coleman	Natalie Coleman	Linda O'Dell	Hank Long
Counters	Michael Hodges LaRue Powers	Michael Hodges LaRue Powers	Michael Hodges LaRue Powers	Michael Hodges LaRue Powers
Nursery Attendants	Caroline Davis	Caroline Davis	Caroline Davis	Caroline Davis

Holy Week Servers

April 1 – Wednesday in Holy Week – Tenebrae – 7:00 pm – Bob Bushnell and Susan Critz, readers

April 2 – Maundy Thursday – 7:00 pm – Hank Long, reader; Dawn Stone, chalice

April 3 – Good Friday – Stations of the Cross – 12 Noon

April 3 – Good Friday – 7:00 pm – Jay Dickens, reader

Altar Guild Team #3 – Page Beeler, Karen Jones, Nancy Spilman, Ellen Maxwell, Ben Beeler

Special Flower Committee - Beth Cahill, Becky Farrar, Frankie Smith, Karen Jones, Debbie Lewis, Susan Smith, Page Beeler, Rita Hodges, Stuart Webster, Natalie Coleman, Pat Russell, Dawn Stone, Ashley Ullstein, Susan Critz, Valerie Payne, LaRue Powers

Grace Network

Our Grace Network Assignments for **April - June: Applesauce (24-32 oz) OR six packs of individuals**. For **April: toilet paper, feminine products, deodorant, and hygiene items**. As a Church family, we have committed to helping Grace Network by stocking their food pantry for those in need. Please remember to pick up our assigned item the next time you visit the grocery store. **You can bring your items to the Church office OR put them in the little red wagon in the Narthex.**

From Grace Network

As we approach warmer temperatures, we also are aware of economic struggles for many of our community families. Your participation in our mission to help is priceless, and we thank you so much for your dedication.

Getting your precious donations allows us to stay in stock each day for the families that we serve. In our last fiscal year, we served over 1,200 households with food totaling over \$165,000! So, your donations are essential in order for us to do this amount of good for those we serve and we are grateful for you!

Tracy L Hincheliff, Executive Director