
Advent — Let Us Be Light

Advent greetings,

In these first days of December, we begin the season of Advent. This is a time of waiting, anticipation, and hope. Even as the dark draws nearer and the days continue to shorten, we hope that the Light of Christ will dawn again, this time in us, as we live out Christ's loving way here and now.

As I prepare for the season, I've been thinking about this concept, incarnation. Christ's birth marks the point of God becoming human, being "with" us, as Emmanuel. Our Prince of Peace, born so many years ago in a humble stable to poor migrants, is born in us as we continue to live out his story and proclaim the Good News of his life. The Creator is one with us, the creation.



Creation

But before the Gospel narratives of Jesus' birth, we go back into the first words of the Hebrew Scriptures to see where this began. God speaks existence into being, an incredible cosmic explosion of light. On the first day of the creation story, God says, "Let there be light." And the light separates from the dark, and we see day and night, followed by moon and stars and sun, all pointing us to how God, in creation, shines out.

Incarnation

And then, with Christ, this shining light, which illuminates out from the center of this cosmic explosion, joins us in body, flesh, and lived reality. To incarnate is to fill and become a part of human lives. It was an actual birth, with all its pain, mess, anticipation, and resolution. Incarnation happens in the Christmas story, and now we live out the season of Advent and Christmas as a reminder that the Light is with us.

How do we see the Light now? Is this just an old story to remember, a season celebration to honor? Or could it be that incarnation continues? We believe that the light that exploded from the cosmic creation now carries and indwells us, God's people. So when we desire to see the light and look around us hoping to see Good News, the words I hear for God's people become, "Let us be light."

We continue Jesus' incarnating work by becoming the Light ourselves. "Let us be light" is a prayer that as Christ now lives in us, we shine out the hope, meaning, and joy that he brings. You, me, we are now the light(s). We are the ones in whom God chooses to dwell. We must be the light!

It can be challenging to "be the light" sometimes. I know I don't feel very "incarnated" a lot of the time. I feel dimly lit but not bursting with the Light that I know Christ is. Do you feel that way, too?

This is why we need this season of waiting. Waiting involves contemplation, listening, hoping, and noticing the signs around us. That is what we do as we practice Advent — we watch, wait, and hope for the light.

But this year, rather than only watching the night sky for a little glimmer of hope or a bright star — what if we also learned to look outward into one another's faces to see the light? "Let us be light" reminds us that we are those lights that shine. We hope this is true; we encourage one another to shine and give away our light so that others might light up as well. (Think about our Christmas Eve services, when we pass the candlelight, one to another, on that silent night.)

Mission

“Let us be light” is, of course, a call to action and mission. To be light is to show up in dark places and offer help. To be light is to speak truthfully and kindly to one another, helping one another along as we seek the light. To be light is to serve others, hoping that we might all reclaim and rediscover God’s beautiful light in each of us, the Light of the World now dwelling in human flesh.

This season, we will examine what it means to “be light.” We’ll hear the stories of prophets and shepherds, pregnant women and frightened men. And we’ll remember that we are to be that light now, carrying on and living out God’s mission of bringing light...the good news...of great joy...to all people!

We hope to see you this Advent season—services at 10:30 am on Sundays and a Christmas Eve service on December 24 at 7 pm.

In the light,

Pastor Seth

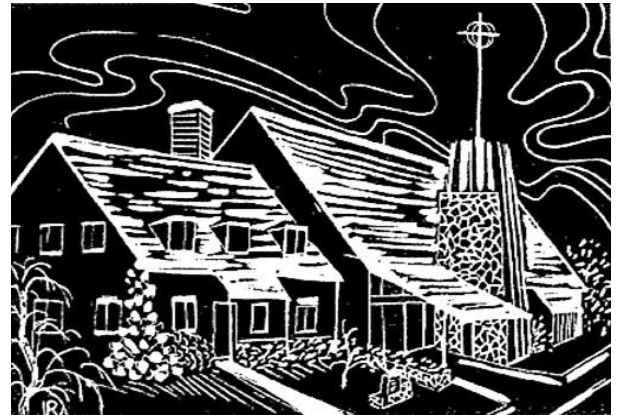
SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

submitted by Faye Hill, Clerk of Session

Highlights of the Session meeting on November 12, 2023:

- The Board of Deacons thanked the Session for their help with the parish lunch on October 22nd. Approximately 90 people attended. In the future, the parish lunch will be called the Autumn Lunch so that all members and friends will know that they are welcome, not just those in parishes.
- Church Treasurer Katie Dunne presented the financial budget figures for the month of October:

Beginning Balance	\$86,169.55
Income	\$86,449.59
Expenses	\$37,043.29
Ending Balance:	\$135,575.85
- The Clerk reported that membership letters were mailed recently to members who have not been involved for several months.
- The Session approved \$16,000 from the Endowment Fund for the Horizon Room window project.
- The Finance Committee reported that 116 stewardship packets were mailed or picked up. The responses are beginning to be received.
- The Loving Welcome committee will organize the small group dinners. Forty seven people signed up to participate.
- Pastor Seth thanked the elders for their work on the Presbytery meeting that was held at St. James on October 26th. He received appreciation and positive feedback from the Presbytery.
- The Session voted approval to move the Black Lives Matter Flag to a better location where it is not blocking the window or hiding other flags.
- The Session agreed to the creation of a “St. James Health Committee” subcommittee under the leadership of the Mission Committee. The Fitness Class will be included within the Health Committee.
- The next Session meeting will be held on December 10th.



FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE - NOVEMBER 2023

By Sharon King

Our Annual 2024 Stewardship campaign is winding down. To everyone who has turned in their Annual Pledge and Time & Talent form, the St. James Finance team and St. James' staff would like to say a huge thank you! With these gifts we can continue to be a light for God in this community. As a reminder, there is still time to turn in your 2024 Pledge. Please see Sharon in the office if you need a copy of this form. Again, thank you!

as of 11/29/23	NOV Actual	Nov Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Income	\$23,558.87	\$21,604.17	\$275,168.22	\$247,645.87
Expenses	\$24,636.73	\$24,855.15	\$287,150.97	\$273,406.65

Aside from utilizing contact-free offering on Sunday morning, you can give in TWO primary ways:

1. **Online Giving:** You can give a one-time gift or create a recurring monthly pledge. Please visit this webpage to set up or update your online giving: <https://saintjamespres.churchcenter.com/giving>
If you are new to online giving we've got a handy video to show you how, here: <https://www.loom.com/share/5aea350026204a9cb3c955029dafbdd3>
2. **Mail-In Donations or Pledges:** You can mail your pledges and gifts to the church.
Saint James Presbyterian Church
910 14th Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

Submitted by Tracy Caruso, Children & Family Ministry Director,

Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries!



It is hard to believe that November is over, and we are entering our last month of 2023 and the beginning of Advent! We had a good November and are looking forward to a busy and fun Advent and end to 2023.

We made our first delivery of snacks to Lowell Elementary School. We will continue to provide snacks for children who may need them during the school day. We are asking for donations of individually wrapped nut-free snacks. Items can be left in the tub in the narthex or outside Tracy's office. This will be an ongoing need until the school year ends in June. Lowell is also in need of mentors and volunteers to read with children at the school. Please let Tracy know if you have any questions or are interested in volunteering.



We finished our series of enrichment lessons of the People of God from the Old Testament and will be moving on to our annual Advent series. This year I will be telling the story each Sunday during Advent because, as our Godly Play story says: *We are all making the journey. We are all getting ready to enter the Mystery of Christmas, so let's go with the prophets, the Holy family, the shepherds, the angels, and the Magi and all the rest to make the journey that was not just back then. It is also now.*

November saw the finale of an amazing adult education class led by Jeff King. We hope you will join us for our next adult education class led by Kat DeVaney, Sunday mornings during Advent at 9:00am for a study of some of our favorite Advent Hymns. We will look at some of the history and stories behind the hymns and what the hymns are saying to us today. Devotionals are available for \$10. Childcare is available. Contact Tracy if you have any questions.



We will be holding our annual Advent festival with a soup and bread lunch on December 3rd. This is always a fun afternoon of fellowship, delicious soups, cookie decorating, and wreath making. You can sign up to bring soup, bread, or cookies at the following link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B054BAAAA2BA5F49-45736417-advent>

The youth group wrote and sent postcards for all our St. James family to color and send back. We will have them displayed in the Narthex and will continue to add any submissions received throughout Advent.

Our youth group is once again helping with the Holiday Joy program and set up the Angel Tree at our last meeting. The Angel Tree is set up in the Horizon room. This year we agreed to provide gifts for 16 children and families, so we need a lot of help! Please look at the gift tags and see if you can help by purchasing a gift for children and families

in our community who need a little joy this season. **Gifts will need to be brought to St. James by Tuesday, December 12th.**

This month our youth group meeting will be on December 17th from 6-8pm at First Presbyterian church for a joint movie night with both church youth groups.

We have such a busy month ahead and I hope we can all remember to slow down, breathe, and remember to appreciate this journey we are on, preparing for the mystery of Christmas.

Godly Play for December

December 3rd Advent I

These lessons help children prepare for the Mystery of Christmas. We move toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds and the Magi. We arrive at the birth of Jesus and the lighting of the Christ Candle. This week's lesson focuses on the Prophets.

December 10th: Advent II

This lesson focuses on the Holy Family

December 17th: Advent III

This lesson focuses on the shepherds

December 24th: Advent IV

This lesson focuses on the wise men and the celebration of Christmas.

December 31st: Work Day

BOOK CLUB

ST. JAMES BOOK CLUB will not be meeting in December.

We look forward to seeing you all for our next meeting on January 15, 2024.

The next book will be *These Precious Days* by Ann Patchett.

ST. JAMES SHOUT-OUTS!

Congratulations to Greta Smith, granddaughter of Jim and Sally Rothwell. Greta placed 17th at the Regionals Junior Olympics Cross-Country event. With a 3k time of 11 minutes 44 seconds. She qualified for Nationals and will be headed to Louisville, KY on December 8th. Good job Greta, our prayers go with you on this amazing journey!

ST. JAMES CHRISTMAS CAROLING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

Time and location to be determined



BAYSIDE CO OP PRESCHOOL WINTER FUNDRAISER



MISSION & SOCIAL ACTION

Submitted by Maureen Kosa, Mission and Social Action chair

Once again St. James would like to sponsor Christmas stockings for the residents at Gardenview Tiny Homes. If anyone is interested in helping with the shopping for stocking items or with assembling the stockings, please let me or anyone on the Mission and Social Action Team know. (mkosa@hotmail.com) Thank you!

Also, road2home is looking for volunteers to help with the Winter Weather Shelter. Please see the attached flier for details.

WINTER WEATHER SHELTER 2023-24: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

*Help keep vulnerable community members safe,
warm, and protected from nature's elements.*

Shelter opened:

Dec. 1, 2023- Feb. 29, 2024.

7 p.m. - 8 a.m.

- Shifts to accommodate your schedule.
- Comprehensive training.
- Professional on-site staff.
- Relationship building opportunities.

Volunteer Commitment:

- 1-2 shifts per week
- Shifts
 - 6:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
 - 6 p.m - 10 p.m.

www.road2home.com



Apply at: www.jotform.com/211485377281157

ST. JAMES STAFF IS AT YOUR SERVICE

Pastor: The Rev. Seth J. Thomas, pastor@saintjamespres.org

Children & Family Ministry Director: Tracy Caruso, tracy@saintjamespres.org

Music Director: Ta Wei Tsai, music@saintjamespres.org

Treasurer: Katie Dunne, stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com

Administrative Ministry Assistant: Sharon King, office@saintjamespres.org

SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Tess Bowers
 Aaron Caruso
 Sarah Condrey
 Faye Hill (Clerk of Session)
 Maureen Kosa
 Andrew McLaurin
 Jimmy Parks
 Nebiyu Tesfa

DEACONS

Deacons Parish 1 – Merry Thomas*, Alice Bailey
 Deacons Parish 2 – Pam Gibson, Judy Buchan
 Deacons Parish 3 – Julie Keyes, Carla Shafer
 Deacons Parish 4 – Valerie McBeth, Claudia Allan
 Deacons Parish 5 – Pam Gibson, Adam Beaty
 Deacons Parish 6 – Kirsten Oliver, Amy Morriss*

* Deacon Co-Moderators

Worship Schedule - Online and In-Person, Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

Live streaming at:

<https://saintjamespres.org/live>

<https://www.facebook.com/saintjamespres/>

Church Office Hours:

9:00am - 2:00pm, Monday - Thursday



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

12/3	Pastor Seth Thomas	
12/4	Cameron Aita	
12/5	Ta Wei Tsai	
12/5	Wayne and Linda Landis	
12/9	Spencer Bravener	
12/13	Dick Carr	
12/15	Alia Lynnae Bowers	
12/16	Jill Steel Dobson	
12/19	Jennie McLaurin	
12/21	Maureen Kosa	
12/31	Katy Read	

PROGRAMS SHARING OUR FACILITY

AA Fairhaven Group
 AA Grateful Hearts Women's Group
 AA Men's Book Study Group
 AA SOS Men's Group
 Bayside Co-op Preschool
 Bellingham Community Chorus
 Bellingham Ukulele Group
 Boy Scouts Troop 7
 Happy Hour Al-Anon
 Liberation Yoga
 Linda's Tai Chi
 Little Sapling Music
 Overeaters Anonymous
 St. James Fitness
 The Table Church
 Whatcom Weavers Guild

Add your request to the St. James Prayer Chain
Contact your Deacon or St. James at:
360-733-1325 | office@saintjamespres.org

Deadlines for church publications

Weekly bulletin: Wednesday, 2:00pm

Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00pm

Monthly "the Pulse": the 25th, 2:00pm



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