

Days of Preparation

The earliest instructions for Sabbath-keeping include a subtle note: *some preparation is required!* God cared for the Hebrew people wandering the Sinai wilderness by sending them manna to eat daily (Ex. 16). They were instructed to gather manna according to their family's needs (more than this would spoil, an instruction to take only what was necessary). The subtle piece is this: On the day before the Sabbath, the people were instructed to gather a double portion of manna and promised that it would sustain them through the Sabbath day.



Reflecting on our family's journey of practicing the Sabbath over the years, I have come to appreciate the importance of this seemingly small instruction: to truly dedicate time to rest, we must prepare. We must gather what is needed, plan, and make arrangements so that the time of rest will not be disturbed by such things.

One of the challenges we often face in our modern culture regarding Sabbath-keeping is the persistent feeling that "not everything is done." How can we truly rest if we're constantly playing catch-up? If everything feels urgent, how do we prioritize what's truly important? This is where the wisdom of God's instruction to prepare becomes particularly relevant.

This vital practice of preparing to keep the Sabbath even finds its way into the post-resurrection narrative we read at Easter. As I worked on my Easter Sunday sermon this year, I noticed this with fresh eyes: The friends of Jesus get to work on the Day of Preparation, hours after Jesus has died, on Good Friday, to gather what they need for the Sabbath. And then, in the evening following the sabbath (which ends Saturday at sundown in most practicing contexts), they return to it. Preparing ahead of time aids us in getting both the rest we need and getting ready for what happens next.

In her book *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest: From Sabbath to Sabbatical and Back Again*, Ruth Haley Barton calls us to attend to a day of preparation before the sabbath as a day to take care of the "work of being human." The preparation occurs outside and in addition to our daily work or vocation. Sounds like more, right? Where do we get the time for that? In these questions and tension, I think we see God's gift of the sabbath taking on life: We do the work to prepare so we can rest.

We've found that we need to utilize time on Fridays to accomplish that "work of being human." I take Fridays off from the church, but they're not an off day. They typically involve laundry, trips to the bank or doctor, and a toilet brush—the mundane, quotidian, messy, beautiful work of being human.

I used to think I couldn't take a Sabbath day. It seemed unreasonable. A whole day to rest and delight? I wished. The key (or at least one of them), though, is learning how to prepare. Clean up the spaces, wash what's dirty,

take care of accounts, and prepare. Doing that “work of being human” then allows that part of ourselves to let go, at least for a bit.

I want to encourage you this month to reflect upon taking a day of rest, the Sabbath. This is one of the central commandments of our faith, yet it can be challenging to practice regularly. So...

- What day would be most feasible for you to rest, delight, and be?
- What would it take to prepare, block out, and clean up to practice this rest?
- Do you have enough manna for today? (Sometimes, remembering that “yes, I do” propels us into our best practices.)

Grace and peace,

Pastor Seth

UPCOMING SABBATICAL PLANS

This summer, Pastor Seth will be taking his first sabbatical after completing 7 years of ministry at St. James. Thanks to our congregation’s consistent support and a grant from the Lilly Endowment for Clergy Renewal, Pastor Seth will be able to take July 1 to October 1 away for time of rest and renewal.

During the Sabbatical, our congregation will be under excellent care. Janice Smith will be working with our elders, deacons, and staff, to support ongoing ministries and activities around the church. Jan brings years of pastoral experience, an exuberant and insightful heart, and a smile to all she does. In addition, Randy Pries will be available for pastoral care, individual meetings, and visitations. Randy brings decades of pastoral experience to our congregation; many of us have already experienced his kind presence with our congregation over the last two years. Lastly, we have a team of skilled preachers and worship leaders supporting our weekly worship gatherings. Including our annual 3-church pulpit swap, the St. James congregation will have the opportunity to hear from a number of different preachers through the summer.

Pastor Seth and his family plan to spend a good portion of the sabbatical in Europe, visiting Great Britain, France, and Italy. Seth focused his grant proposal on “tuning my heart to sing thy grace” and will work to “tune in” through long walks, trail running and hiking, and lots of exploring!

Join us for a send-off service on June 30 as we commission the Thomas family for this time of rest and restoration.

ONE PARISH, ONE PRISONER - WELCOME HOME TREE FOR CLIFF

Our friend Cliff will be released from prison on Monday, May 13th. In an effort to make his homecoming comfortable and welcoming, we're doing a Welcome Home Tree - like the Angel Tree, there are numbered tags that each have a desired item listed. If you're so inclined, please take a tag or two, purchase the item(s), and return to the church no later than Sunday morning, 5/12. If you have any questions, please find a member of the OPOP team: *Wendy Crandall, Alice Beaty, Diana Philbeck, Jenny Sue, Mark Beaty, Ryan Knight, Pastor Seth.*

Thank you for your support and generosity!



CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

*Submitted by Tracy Caruso,
Children & Family Ministry Director*

Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries! We have an amazing month of May coming up!



Our Godly Play classroom underwent a reorganization and rearrangement in April thanks to Claude Hill and Tim Crandall, who built four beautiful new shelves. We now have the space to hold all of our current stories and add many more. In May, our students will hear a variety of stories that we bring out every couple of years or so.

Our youth group combined our April and May meetings into a bowling party planned for May 5th from 1-3. We are looking forward to a fun afternoon of bowling and friends. Because of this and the fact that our usual meeting would be held on Memorial Day weekend, we will not be holding our usual meeting on May 27th.

Carla Shafer and Marjolein van der Veen have been leading us in a 4-week study to become more knowledgeable about the Palestinian situation and the PC(USA) position “that Christian Zionism does not represent the majority of American Christians and the faith of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” And considering Ephesians 4:31-32 “Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven You.” We hope you can join us for the final class on May 5th at 9 am in the Lounge. Please email Carla for more information and to request a book. chuckanutsandstone@gmail.com

The Retreat Planning committee has been working hard planning our **Afternoon of St. James Art fundraiser** on May 11th. We have received some amazing contributions of both physical and performance art pieces. We hope you will join us from 3-5 pm for our fundraiser benefiting our All Church Retreat in September. We will have some amazing performances from St. James members, light snacks, and a silent art auction. Tickets are on sale here: <https://saintjamespres.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2271674> for a suggested donation of \$20/person or \$40/family. At door, tickets will be \$25/person or \$50/family. Please email Tracy if you have any questions (tracy@saintjamespres.org)

VBS is back at St. James! We will once again partner with First Presbyterian Church to offer a four-day Vacation Bible School from June 24th to 27th for children entering Kindergarten through 5th grade. Early Bird Registration ends on May 15th, and we hope you will join us as we Find God in the peaks and valleys at Alpine Ascent. Adult volunteers are also needed; please talk to Tracy if you can help. Register here: tinyurl.com/AlpineVBS2024.





We have a very busy spring at St. James! If you have any questions or are wondering how to get involved in any of these events, please email Tracy (tracy@saintjamespres.org).

May Godly Play:

- May 5th The Good Shepherd and World Communion
- May 19th Pentecost
- May 12th The Mother Mary
- May 26th Holy Trinity

A promotional poster for 'Sunshine Through the Rain' featuring a woman in a raincoat and a sun graphic. The poster has a grey background with a large yellow sun on the left and a woman in a yellow raincoat on the right. The text is in bold, black, sans-serif font.

SUNSHINE THROUGH THE RAIN
AN AFTERNOON OF ST. JAMES ART

SATURDAY, MAY 11TH
3-5PM

Fundraising performance of
St. James participants
and silent art auction

Questions? Email tracy@saintjamespres.org

St. James
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
910 14TH ST.
BELLINGHAM, WA 98225
360-733-1325

FINANCE UPDATE

submitted by Andrew McLaurin, Chair of Finance

We continue to be blessed with faithful tithing. The gifts from our congregation allow us to further our mission in the community.

You will note that our income for March appears to be under budget. With Easter falling on the 31st the offering from that date is not reflected in the total. This concerns bank closing dates and our desire to keep our reconciliations accurate. These funds will be reflected in our April financials.

Our YTD Actual income figures reflect the influx of annual pledges paid in full in January. We continue to monitor this information but feel confident that our financials will remain viable.

In a few weeks I'll be requesting congregational support to reinstate our weekly counting process that lasted during the early days of the pandemic. More details will be provided once a few more details are ironed out.

Thank you again for your faithfulness!

Andrew

Mar-24	March Actual	March Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Income	\$17,944	\$24,375	\$90,599	\$73,125
Expenses	\$18,279	\$27,647	\$81,448	\$82,941

If you have any questions regarding the finances of Saint James Presbyterian Church please feel free to contact me or Katie Dunne at stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com.

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

FROM MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION:

By Maureen Kosa, Mission and Social Action chair

In May, we will be collecting for the Pentecost Offering. The Pentecost Offering helps our young people begin life with a strong foundation of faith. The Offering supports Presbytery partners like Educate a Child and Transform the World Initiative; it also helps support the Presbyterian Youth Triennium. The Youth Presbyterian Youth Triennium is held every three years and focuses on worship, disciple making, Christian compassion, and biblical/theological education. Forty percent of funds raised will remain here in our congregation to support our youth ministry as they discern where to use these funds to help children right here in our community. Envelopes can be found in the Narthex and will also be in the bulletin on Pentecost Sunday (May 19th). You may also give through the St. James website or by using the QR codes in the Pentecost inserts in the May 12 & May 19th bulletins. Since the Pentecost Offering started in 1998, Presbyterians have raised nearly \$18 million for ministries that benefit our younger members. Prayerfully consider the Pentecost Offering.

MISSION HIGHLIGHT: MULTIFAITH NETWORK CLIMATE JUSTICE

By Maureen Kosa, Mission and Social Action chair

On Sunday, April 20, the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice sponsored an Urban Edition Sacred Earth Fair at the First Congregational Church of Bellingham. The event began with a moving ceremony where many local faith organizations carried gifts to the altar, including a cedar bough from the St. James Presbyterian Congregation. Local organizations, including Whatcom Million Trees, Urban Composting, RE Sources, Backyard Pollinators, and many others shared information and resources for our community. A simple, fun family project could be to start a worm compost in your backyard. For more information about worm and home composting, workshops, and waste reduction tips you can contact WSU Master Composters/Recyclers at mcr.whatcom@wsu.edu.

A highlight of the Fair included a panel discussion facilitated by Alex Harris of RE Sources. The panel included State Senator Sharon Shewmake, Seth Vidana (the City of Bellingham Climate Energy Manager), Michael Feerer from Whatcom Million Trees, Mark Schofield from Community Energy Challenge, and Jonna Gilham, student activist.

Multifaith Network for Climate Justice (MNCJ) is one of the recipients of our mission donations. MNCJ is an affiliate of The Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light Organization. MNCJ shares a vision of “a just and compassionate world with a healthy Web of Life.” These organizations work together towards the goal of a more “just and sustainable future.” If you are interested in volunteering for this organization, visit earthministry.org. You can also join the MNCJ Group on Facebook.

SIGN UP HERE FOR USHERS, COMMUNION, LECTORS & OFFERING COUNTERS

We need ushers, lectors, offering counters, and communion servers! The following links will take you to an online signup where you can sign up for Sundays that work with your schedule and receive an automatic reminder a few days before your service. If you have questions, please contact Sharon at office@saintjamespres.org.

- Usher: <https://tinyurl.com/UshersStJames>
- Lector: <https://tinyurl.com/LectorStJames>
- Offering Counters: <https://tinyurl.com/OfferingCountersStJames>
- Communion Servers: <https://tinyurl.com/CommunionServerStJames>

ST. JAMES STAFF IS AT YOUR SERVICE

Pastor: The Rev Dr. 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, stamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com

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

SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Tess Bowers*

Ralph Buchan*

Aaron Caruso*

Sarah Condreay

Maureen Kosa

Andrew McLaurin

Casey Morriss**

Jimmy Parks

Nebiyu Tesfa

Pastor Seth Thomas, Moderator

*Church Trustees

**Clerk of Session

DEACONS

Deacons Parish 1 – Merry Thomas*, Alice Bailey

Deacons Parish 2 – Judy Buchan, Gena Gustafson

Deacons Parish 3 – Buzz & Holly Hagshenas,
Carla Shafer

Deacons Parish 4 – Valerie McBeth, Claudia Allan

Deacons Parish 5 – Pam Gibson, Julie Keyes

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

MARCH BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

5/2	Jenny Sue LeSchander	
5/4	Aaron Caruso	
5/13	Bruce and Marsha Lockhart	
5/14	Peter van der Veen	
5/14	Sarah Condreay	
5/16	Lindsay Anderson	
5/22	Alex & Ben Gilbert	
5/29	Leslie Farris	

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 AI-Anon

Liberation Yoga

Linda's Tai Chi

Little Sapling Music

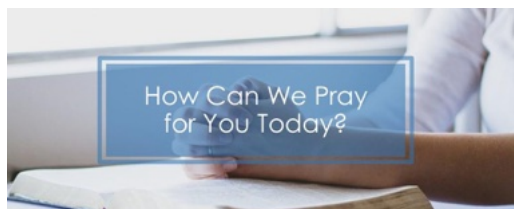
Overeaters Anonymous

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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