

Revitalization in the Age of Coronavirus

All around, Hope is springing up from this old ground...

Out of chaos, life is being found, in You.

- "Beautiful Things", Gungor

As the adage tells us, "April showers bring May flowers." Well, March and April have most certainly been "showery" months around our world. There has been a deluge of life-altering news and a downpour of change. The waters of Spring are washing over us, yes, but we also experience this washing in the form of being forced to renew and refocus all our lives amidst the great shifts and disruption caused by facing a global pandemic. I don't know about you, but I'm sure hoping that some beautiful flowers are going to pop out of the ground following all of this rain.



This year, we've launched into a program with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called Vital Congregations. At the outset, I hoped that this process might invite us to reimagine some of how we do our life together as a church by evaluating our existing structure and tweaking and adjusting what we already do to make it more effective. I had no idea that what we would instead be invited to was a dramatic pause, a full stop in many ways, of all we do and a mandate to reorganize on the fly to accomplish our mission as a dispersed people, sheltering in our homes, meeting online, exploring fresh ways to be the church. Yet, the invitation to vitality has remained and with it, this question: what is awake, alive, vibrant, and vital about our life together?

I have been amazed at how we have pivoted in this season to "take the church beyond the doors." Each week, our worship space grows larger as we incorporate new families and old friends, gathered at their hearth or table to worship together. And I cannot help but wonder at what the deeper invitation is for us at this time? What is God calling us to re-envision as we look ahead? What ways will we be the church in the new era, the age of the coronavirus, when we cannot go back to the way things were?

The great hope is that God has always been about the work of renewal and revitalization. This movement of God's spirit is not new--from the void, God called forth life. From exile, God restored God's people. From the grave, God's resurrection life breaks out.

The invitation to more vitality and health as a congregation will be for us to pay attention to what is bursting forth from the fertile soil in this season. What is emerging from the chaos of this global crisis? What ways are we being invited to care more deeply for Bellingham, for our neighbors, for the Earth, for the vulnerable and poor around us, for the outcast, the widow, the orphan, the stranger? This is where life is found. This is where the hope of vitality meets reality: in the fleshy, earthy, emerging needs of humanity all around us.

In the age of coronavirus, I feel especially hopeful for how St. James Presbyterian Church can participate in this new life God is causing to burst up around us. We are a church ready for change, hopeful for what is on the horizon. We have tasted renewal and revitalization and we know the joy of being a part of the fresh movement of God's Spirit.

I wonder, do you feel this? Do you see this life beginning to break through the chaos? Do you have ways you've already witnessed a bit of renewal in this season of distance and the "scattered church"? We need to hear each other's stories, as this will help us map out the next movements we take. I look forward to finding ways for us to share our stories from this season of distance and find great hope in the flood of hope that will pour down as we hear from each other once more.

Until then, grace and peace



Rev. Seth Thomas

FINANCE UPDATE: SPRING DONATIONS ARE BLOOMING

By Marina McLeod, Finance Committee



Below is a look at our most recent month-end numbers for our General Fund, as of March 31, 2020.

If you prefer online (one-time or monthly) giving, please visit www.saintjamespres.churchcenter.com/giving.

Thank you for your gifts

As of 3-31-2020	March 2020	CURRENT BUDGET	YR TO DATE	YR TO DATE BUDGET
Income	\$18,534	\$20,382	\$74,850	\$70,555
Expenses	\$25,422	\$26,306	\$64,747	\$67,322

CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

By Tracy Caruso, Children & Family Ministry Director

Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries! I hope you are all surviving the adjustment to a new normal of staying home and staying safe and social distancing. I also hope that all families are giving each other just a little extra grace during this time! I know I need it and need to give it, every time I try to teach Hailey something in a different way than her teacher does.

I so appreciate everyone who has been responding to our Godly Play videos and email requests for participation! As we continue to worship from home I will use our normally scheduled “work days” to share the work that our students are doing from home. Please check your email for work ideas that I have sent home and send me back pictures, videos, or the actual work that your student is doing. I sent an email to families of St. James with some more resources, I am including them here as well. (click the link to access or copy and paste internet address into your web browser)

[Intentional Parenting to Ground our Kids in Faith Rather Than Fear \(Open Up for a FREE Download\)](#)

https://www.pcusastore.com/Content/Site119/Basics/10581GS04192020_00000139063.pdf?utm_source=Updates+from+the+PCUSA+Store&utm_campaign=b0a6ef59fb-PS%3A+Adult+Curriculum%3A+4%2F15%2F20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ad05f0504a-b0a6ef59fb-273866069

https://www.pcusastore.com/Content/Site119/Basics/10581ColoringPa_00000139459.pdf?utm_source=Updates+from+the+PCUSA+Store&utm_campaign=b0a6ef59fb-PS%3A+Adult+Curriculum%3A+4%2F15%2F20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ad05f0504a-b0a6ef59fb-273866069

Our Youth, 5th grade-12th graders, have been meeting each week via zoom to check in, have some discussion and play some games. I am so enjoying the time with the youth and seeing their faces each week. They are also discussing the building and design of the St. James Bed for the annual Family Promise Bed Race, if there is anyone interested in helping build a racing bed please let Tracy know.

Due to a recommendation by county health officials, we will be postponing this summer's VBS. Anchored: Deepening Faith in God Vacation Bible School, originally scheduled for June 28th through July 3rd 2020, will be moved to the summer of 2021. Refunds have already been processed. Thank you all for your support and understanding, we hope to see you next year!

Look for registration forms for our All Church Retreat scheduled for August 28th thru 30th coming mid-May. We are looking forward to a great weekend of Christian education, fellowship, and relaxation! If you have any questions, please contact Tracy.

Please let me know if you have any questions, concerns, needs, prayers, or just want to chat during this crazy and difficult time! I miss you all so much and can't wait to see all of our St. James kids again soon!

Godly Play for May

May 3rd

The Good Shepherd and World Communion: This lesson sets the story of the Good Shepherd next to Holy Communion to deepen each other's interpretation.

May 10th

Crosses- Exploring a Sacred Symbol: This lesson looks at different crosses and their story.

May 17th

The Synagogue and the Upper Room: This lesson the synagogue and the upper room are joined together to form a model of Christian worship, the joining of the Old and New Testaments, and much more.

May 24th

Work Day: A work day is a Sunday when the students don't hear a story. During our typical Sunday morning time there is often not enough time for some of our art responses or to explore all they want to in the classroom so we have work days where the children are able to more fully engage in the "Play" part of Godly Play. (During distance worship we will look at different work students have sent.)

May 31st: The Mystery of Pentecost

This lesson pairs the story of the Tower of Babel with the story of Pentecost and completes the cycle of the three great times in the Circle of the Church Year (along with the Mystery of Christmas and the Mystery of Easter).



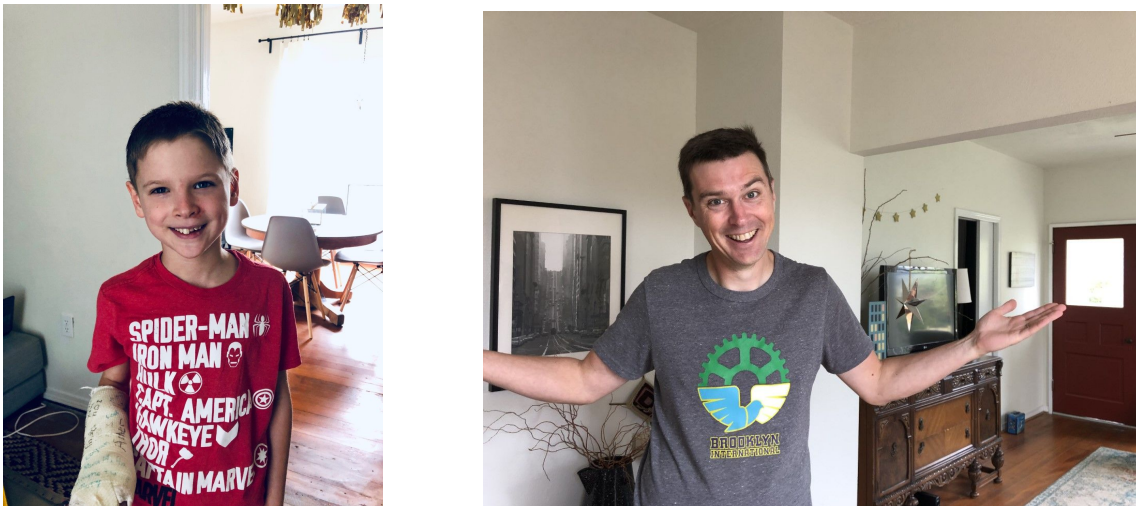
ST. JAMES SHOUT OUTS

Shout out to the Covid-19 Buzz Cut Club! Without being able to hit the barber shop, these fine gentlemen have taken hair care into their own hands!

Luke and Jim



Max and Kyle



Seth, Asher, and Aiden

WELCOME TO ST. JAMES!

Meet some of our new members joining the church! Take a chance to get to know these wonderful new folks. Stay tuned for more bio's next month.

Luke Arnold



There is no doubt you've heard Luke Arnold's beautiful playing during Sunday worship service. The talented pianist serves as St. James' accompanist. A student at Western Washington University, Luke studies piano performance and psychology, is active in student government and conducts research in psychology. When not studying and working, Luke loves to hike, swim and spend time with friends. Luke grew up in a Navy family and graduated from high school in Silverdale, Washington before relocating to Bellingham for college. He counts his parents, sister and dog, Coco, as his favorite people and says he is blessed with a close group of supportive friends who love to have fun together. Though a job first brought him to St. James, Luke has found a family here who genuinely care for him. He finds himself constantly inspired to grow in love and faith.

SPECIAL FEATURE: LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

This month St. James member Ray Dellecker shares with us his observations and what he is thankful for around town during the Stay Home, Stay Healthy mandate.

Our new abnormal presents us with yet more examples of inequality: the poor are hit harder, have no cushion to absorb the hit, and struggle with the digital divide. Some of us can cope better thanks to broadband internet and apps like Zoom. Not so for many in our community, so education equity comes under further stress. Our school districts are struggling to deal with food insecurity and learning loss simultaneously. These are huge tasks and they need our help. The school foundations (BPSF, for example) are good avenues for us to lend a hand.

An unexpected gift I appreciate is time. Though I'm retired, I realize my normal schedule is usually packed with meetings, appointments, and projects. I'm thankful to have time to enjoy a beautiful spring emerging before my eyes. The leaves and blossoms are actually brighter with each day. And the birds seem busier than I ever noticed before.

I'm thankful to have longer over-the-fence conversations with neighbors that go further than just the shallow how-are-you's? People seem to care more and linger longer. This would be a fine legacy of a difficult time in our lives.

Our nearby Firehouse Cafe (and many other places) continues to serve from the window on 14th Street. We liked this message they've posted out front



STILLPOINT ONLINE MAY OFFERINGS

Bellingham's own Stillpoint at Becksides is offering some great online events for the month of May. Visit Stillpoint's website to see a full list of online events <http://www.stillpointatbecksides.com/>

Inviting the Unknown in a Time of Uncertainty

Saturday, May 30th, via Zoom
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

At its essence, the current pandemic has opened us to a landscape familiar to the soul, one full of sorrow, vulnerability, love and compassion. How do we make an intentional descent into this holy ground? How do we invite the unknown and the unfamiliar into the heart of our practice?

Our May virtual offering will include a guided grounding meditation, a facilitated conversation, small group breakouts, and opportunities for participants to ask questions or share their experience.

Facilitators for our May Offering:

Bill Kirst, Elizabeth Johnson, Marguerite Johnson

[Click Here for More Information](#)

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



COMMUNITY CREATIVITY



The global community is being invited to live this devastating time of Coronavirus and the ecological crisis as an opportunity for "Love's Creativity".

During the month of May, you are invited to contribute your artwork, collages, haiku, poems and photographs to be added to the Stillpoint website as your way of honoring "Love's creativity".

Our hope is to come together at Stillpoint the first part of June to celebrate both the ever present outpouring of the Spirit in our midst and to honor the creative Energy in our community.

[Send your contributions in a jpeg format Click Here](#)

[To view the contributions Click Here.](#)

Centering Prayer with the Stillpoint Community

Centering Prayer is a receptive method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relation with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.

During this time of the Pandemic COVID19 virus our Centering Prayer weekly Meetings take place via Zoom. Every Tuesday - 1pm to 2pm: [Click for Zoom link.](#)

SPECIAL FEATURE: What now? and Preparing for Returning

On April 22, several NWCP pastors had a good conversation about "What now?" and preparing for returning by another way. The following is a list of PNW resources & reflection.

It's about time to begin thinking through how to navigate with our folks when the stay at home orders are lifted and remain vigilant against another outbreak while phasing our way step-by-step into a new way of being. Here are a few resources that were suggested and a couple Corey encountered since:



- Governor Jay Inslee's **"Washington's Recovery Plan"** (Doesn't yet provide specific guidelines for phasing in group engagement, but will give you an overall sense of direction.)
- **The Wisconsin Council of Churches** - are doing exceptional work in helping judicatory leaders, pastors and congregations navigate this immensely difficult time. They put together a document called *Returning to Church* which can be found <https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>. Thanks to Sarah Moore-Nokes of Winnebago Presbytery. Looks immensely helpful.
- **Questions to Consider Before Re-Opening** is a set of questions from another colleague of ours, PC(USA) co-moderator Rev. Cindy Kohlmann. She adapted **24 Questions your church should answer before people return** by Ken Braddy for Boston Presbytery congregations.
- And **7 Shifts your Church Needs to Make** is a reflection piece that goes deeper than church logistics for re-opening as you think about what you've learned in this season to carry with you to the renewed you through this experience.

RESOURCES FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Federal **CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)** with a summary of benefits to churches provided by PCUSA Legal Counsel Mike Kirk [here](#).
- Federal **Employee Retention Credit Program** is also available for many businesses financially impacted by COVID-19
- **The Board of Pensions offers dues relief** for churches with congregations of 300 or fewer members that have a single pastor enrolled in Pastor's Participation. These churches may be eligible for a dues waiver of up to three months. For other churches and employers, including presbyteries and affiliated organizations, BOP approved deferments of up to two months on payments for benefits. In both cases, there will be no reduction in benefits to ministers or employees.
- **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)** offers **pandemic grants to congregations** through NWC Presbytery. They also provide Building Resilience Webinars (one-hour, view online or download) for **Faith Leaders** and **General Audiences**.
- **Northwest Coast Presbytery** offers up to \$1000 for each congregations to acquire technology resources or subscriptions to services to enable distributed worship, fellowship, discipleship and governance! Just make the purchase and send us the receipts with an expense report downloadable [here](#). Contact Jenine Taylor with any questions (jenine@northwestcoast.org).

(Credit and full article please visit [COVID-19 Recommendations & Resources](#))

CHURCH SYMBOLISM

Ever wonder about the symbolism of the Presbyterian USA cross? Symbolism has been a part of the church for centuries. Hidden meanings and communications were great ways to save a group from arrest and persecution.

What was early Christianity like? The archaeology of the Roman catacombs in the second and third centuries AD, give us clues, especially with a number of symbols that reflect the earliest period of the Christian era.

This site contains some photos and drawings of early Christian symbology, with links to many others. Most of these represent Christian visual art prior to 313 A.D., when Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity. During this time, the cross is seldom seen, except disguised in some way as an anchor, a trident, or the mast of a ship. Instead, Christians identified their tombs in the catacombs by other symbols alongside of funerary inscriptions.



Christian symbols of two fish and what appears to be a trident, which was probably a disguise for the cross symbol, which might identify the person as a Christian and subject his family to persecution.

Christ was often depicted symbolically as the Good Shepherd. Paintings of Jesus didn't appear until about the Fifth Century. (Catacombs)



Local volunteers step up as Presbyterian Disaster Assistance goes virtual

by Darla Carter | Presbyterian News Service



LOUISVILLE — Disaster relief volunteers Richard and Susan Caldwell had been praying about their mission work and where God would lead them to when fate stepped in.

Tornadoes tore through their state the morning after Easter, sparing their South Carolina home but leaving extensive damage just blocks from their church, Seneca Presbyterian Church, and killing one person. The Caldwells quickly mobilized, seeking help with things like debris clearing and tree cutting for affected residents. The response was swift and strong.

“Last Friday, we had 30 people show up,” said Richard Caldwell, a parish associate at the Seneca, S.C., church. These are “a great bunch of people,” primarily church members and their families, and they’re “doing a lot of hard manual work,” he said.

The effort in Oconee County is taking place at a time when traditional deployments of PDA’s National Response Team are on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic. PDA’s approximately 40 volunteer host sites remain closed through at least June as the country works to slow the spread of the contagious virus. However, National Response Team member Rick Turner has been virtually deployed to help with coordination from his home, about 30 miles from the cleanup. Turner is working with Foothills Presbytery, which Seneca Presbyterian Church is part of, on obtaining PDA grants and collaborating with the Caldwells.

“Now more than ever we need Presbyterians who are local to stand up and get involved in ways that are safe and appropriate,” Kirk said. “In finding new ways to be the church, local volunteers have risen to the occasion and this is an opportunity for Presbyterians across the country to step forward and be the hands and feet of Christ.”

“Individuals and families are still recovering from the last three hurricane seasons, the terrible recent fire seasons in California and the flooding and severe storms that continue,” Kirk said. “Local volunteers who can drive to the site and work safely will make all the difference.”



Kirk goes on to share, “We’re just very impressed by how local congregations and the presbytery are being adaptive in their response to this very devastating event.”

Can you practice social distancing while clearing debris? “When you’re sawing trees and hauling off limbs, sometimes you get closer than six feet,” Richard Caldwell said. “We’re trying to remind people.”

(photo credits and full article here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/theyre-just-answering-gods-call/>)

ST. JAMES IS AT YOUR SERVICE

Pastor: The Rev. Seth J. Thomas

Children & Family Ministry Director: Tracy Caruso

Worship & Music Leader: Dylan Cisneros

Accompanist: Luke Arnold

Treasurer: Marina McLeod

Administrative Assistant: Shannon Laws

Nursery: Claire Alarid, Tova Breen, Fiona Dent,

Frankie Morrissey, Lucy Sieczka

Office Hours:

Tuesday, Wednesdays 9:00am-12:00pm

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



Day of Pentecost May 31st

SESSION

Moderator: The Rev. Seth J. Thomas

Clerk of Session: Mark Beaty

Building & Grounds: Aaron Caruso

Christian Faith Formation: Sarah Condreay

Finance & Stewardship: Lindsay Anderson

Membership & Congregation Life: Susan Diemont-Conwell

Mission & Social Action: Carol Dellecker

Nominating: Jenny Sue LeSchander & Sarah Condreay

Personnel: Faye Hill

Trustees: Sarah Condreay, Mark Beaty, Aaron Caruso

Worship & Music: Nebiyu Tesfa

DEACONS

Moderator: Alice Beaty

Marlene Amman, Alice Beaty, Adam Beaty, Pam Gibson

Julie Keyes, Valerie McBeth, Rick Seater, Jean Seater, Carla Shafer

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:30 a.m. Adult Bible Study

9:30 a.m. Youth Bible Study (Second Mondays)

10:30 a.m. Worship

10:45 a.m. Children's Time- Godly Play

UPCOMING EVENTS

ST. JAMES BOOK CLUB IN MAY

St. James Book Club is currently reading *Harper Lee's Go Set a Watchman*. We will be meeting Monday evening May 18th at 7:00pm via Zoom. If you are interested in joining us please email Tracy Caruso tracy@saintjamespres.org for the Zoom link.

ALL CHURCH ACTIVITY POSTPONED

Please note in your calendars that all regular monthly committee meetings are postponed until further notice due to the **Stay Home, Stay Healthy** mandate by the Governor. Please contact your group leader for details and information regarding possible online conferences. Thank you.

MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

5/2	Jenny Sue LeSchander	🎂
5/4	Aaron Caruso	🎂
5/6	Jim Hardin	🎂
5/13	Bruce and Marsha Lockhart	💕
5/14	Peter van der Veen	🎂
5/14	Sarah Condreay	🎂
5/16	Lindsay Anderson	🎂

WHERE IS IT?



Come on over! St. James's Facebook page is ACTIVE during this time of sheltering in place and social distancing. Watch Morning Prayer videos by Pastor Seth, and be a part of the Sunday

Service. Hint: you don't need a Facebook account to watch the videos. When the pop-up requests you to sign up click "not now".

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



Deadlines for church publications

Weekly bulletin: Wednesday, 2:00pm

Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00pm

Monthly "The Pulse": the 20th, 2:00pm

→ ST. JAMES CALENDAR

All in-person church gatherings have been postponed until further notice. Committees and groups will be gathering online. Please contact your Committee Chairperson or Group Coordinator to find out more about current offerings and times. Below is a list of our planned events, but the church is closed until further notice.

Join us for

Daily Prayer with Rev. Seth Thomas

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86178414095>

St. James Committees meeting online:

- **Session & Deacons**

Sunday, May 17, 11:45am

For May, both groups will meet together for a training and then afterward break out to separate groups.

→ PROGRAMS SHARING OUR FACILITY

AA Fairhaven Group- Fellowship Hall

AA Men's Book Study Group- Horizon Room

AA SOS Men's Group- Horizon Room

Bellingham Com. Chorus- Fellowship Hall

Bellingham Ukulele Group- Fellowship Hall

Boy Scouts Troop 7- Fellowship Hall

Happy Hour AI Anon- Horizon Room

Overeaters Anonymous- Lounge

St. James Fitness- Fellowship Hall

Tai Chi- Fellowship Hall

WA Gender Alliance

Weavers Guild- Fellowship Hall

Yoga- Horizon Room

You Are Not Alone (YANA)- Lounge

Bayside Co-op Preschool

Hawthorne Learning Solutions

Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County



910 14th Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
www.saintjamespres.org
office@saintjamespres.org
(360) 733-1325

