

UNEVEN ODDS

Sleeping At Last's Atlas: Volume 1 is one of my favorite musical collections, which I return to repeatedly. It compiles a series of EPs of songs exploring themes of Darkness, Light, the Solar System, Land, and Oceans. I've written many sermons and papers while listening to these beautiful songs.

One particular favorite song of mine is titled "[Uneven Odds](#)." It's a heartbreaking story of a child reckoning with a world in which they've lost their mother to illness and father to despair. It is sung from the child's guardian's perspective, who must "make sense of God's love in these fires of hell" that the child faces.

Here's the chorus:

Maybe your light is a seed,
And the darkness, the dirt.
In spite of the uneven odds
Beauty lifts from the earth.



It is Spring of 2021. We are moving into the season of Eastertide, the beautiful aftermath of the resurrection, and the hope of death undone. And, as we all know, this has been a year of "uneven odds." For so many, the world's odds seem to continue to unfair, unbalanced, uneven, never in our favor. The most recent series of mass shootings highlight just one instance of these injustices and the "unevenness of things." (I lament the words "series of mass shootings"...how can we have a series of such things!! Lord, have mercy.)

But, as the song says, there is hope. "In spite of the uneven odds, beauty lifts from the earth." We thank God for Spring, which reminds us of the power of that which can lift through the dark earth and emerge with new life. We step out of the longest winter and see the signs of life breaking through and bringing hope. There is a crackle of energy in the air around Bellingham. People are getting vaccines, stores and restaurants are slowly reopening, school buses can once again be seen filled with children on their way to learn and grow. (I have discovered a practice of offering a word of thanks to God when I get stuck behind a school bus with a red stop sign out or have to slow down to 20 mph because of the blinking light of a school zone! What joy!)

We know that these little things are mere signs of a greater hope we hold. As the people of God, we are a people of hope and imagination. We know that the odds are uneven, but in spite of them, we resist and discover hope for what is coming, what emerges from the ashes of lent and the rich earth of the grave: resurrection life.

I know that how we meet as a church and how we carry out our mission in the world has dramatically shifted this past year. And through it, I hope we can find a new way of celebrating God's goodness in our life together that will emerge from the fertile earth. There is such beauty to come — and we can be the ones who till the soil, lift the dirt, move ahead in the hope of the resurrection life we have found ourselves.

The song closes with these words, spoken to the grieving child:

You're much too young now
So I'll write these words down:
Darkness exists
To make light truly count.

May we discover the life which bursts through the ground in this season and hold fast to the hope of Christ that binds us together.

Grace and Peace,



Rev. Seth Thomas

**You can listen to the song here: [Sleeping At Last - Uneven Odds - YouTube](#)*

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE - March 2021

Entering the New Normal

By Lindsay Anderson, Finance Chair, lindsaynicole12@gmail.com

Due to continued, faithful giving and a return to a “new normal” St. James began March in the black! We are incredibly blessed to have been able to continue our ministry with healthy finances. Comparing 2020 and 2021 to years past, the trends in our expenses and income seem to be relatively consistent with what we see in non-pandemic times.

A few important things to note as St. James and our region begins to open up:

- Income was slightly less than expenses in February 2021, but overall we have an almost \$7,000 excess year-to-date.
- Utilizing our Facilities Endowment funds (including some extra leftover from the Sanctuary Refresh), we are continuing to make tech upgrades to help us with our hybrid worship, as well as we replaced our water heater.
- Tenant use continues to resume.
- We celebrate Luke Arnold shifting into the position of Music Director and Pianist!
- First-quarter of mission disbursements were sent.

For any questions related to giving - including pledges, general offering, endowment giving, memorials, or designated gifts you may contact Marina McLeod, stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com.

Following is an update on St. James' Year-End Date General Operating Budget:

Income/Expenses As of 1-31-21	FEBRUARY ACTUAL	FEBRUARY BUDGET	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET
Income	\$16,873	\$18,919	\$45,441	\$42,940
Expenses	\$17,397	\$20,018	\$38,274	\$43,169

While we are worshipping at home during this time 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 here: <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:** You can mail your pledges and gifts to the church. Please note that though the church office will be closed, mail will be checked regularly.



St. James Presbyterian Church
910 14th Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Need assistance or would you like to schedule a contact-free donation pick-up?

Contact Marina McLeod, stjamestreasurer@gmail.com

Session Meeting Highlights - March 14, 2021

By Faye Hill, Clerk of Session, fayeannhill@gmail.com

- All session members were present for this virtual meeting.
- Deacon Representative, Jean Seater, reported that the deacons keep in close contact with the members. Several folks have already been vaccinated. The deacons will provide information and assistance as we begin to have conversations about reopening the building for the Sunday morning worship service.
- Treasurer Marina McLeod presented a review of the budget for February:

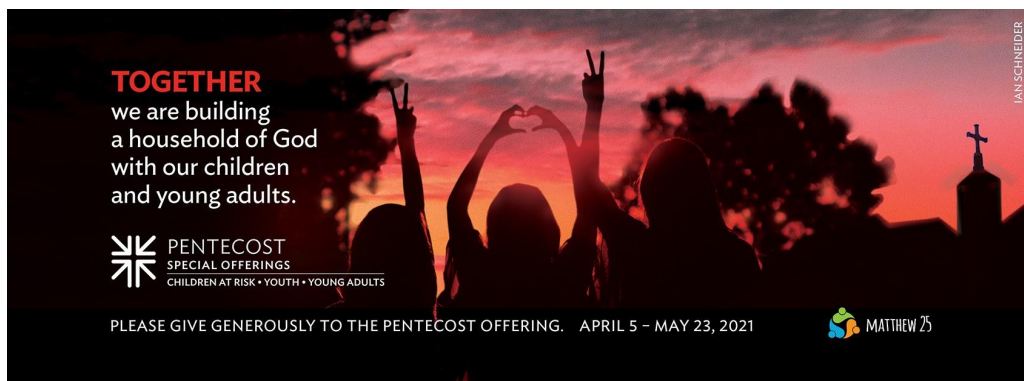
Beginning balance, 2/1/21	\$ 7,510.64
Income	\$16,873.92
Expenses	\$17,397.72
Ending balance, 2/28/21	\$ 6,986.84

- Elder Susan Diemont-Conwell is the lead elder for the logistics of re-opening the building for worship in the weeks ahead. She will continue to follow the reopening guidelines with a consistent, unifying approach.
- The Mission and Social Action committee reported that distributions have been made for the first quarter giving, with homelessness as a major concern.
- Christian Faith Formation committee is planning a children's scavenger hunt for Easter Morning.
- Pastor Seth is working with the pastoral teams of Cordata Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church to plan the services for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.
- The session voted not to have a session meeting in April. The next meeting of the session will be on May 2nd.



Pentecost Special Offering

The Pentecost Special Offering takes place April 5th - May 23rd. The Pentecost Offering unites us in a church-wide effort to support young people and inspire them to share their faith, ideas, and unique gifts with the church and the world. 25% supports Young Adult volunteers, 25% supports Ministries with Youth, 10% is devoted to children at-risk and 40% stays with this congregation to develop and support programs for young people in our own church and community. Visit <https://saintjamespres.org/> click "GIVING" to give online. Thank you.



CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

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

Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries!



Spring is here! With the increase in the sun and daylight hours, we are also hopefully seeing the light at the end of the tunnel of this past year of dealing with covid 19. It has been good to see a few more people during our in-person worship and we look forward to when it is safe for us all to be able to be together again. For those watching on Zoom, you will continue to see the Godly Play story video told from the classroom. For those who are in the sanctuary, you will see my silent reenactment. Both should be equally entertaining ;). We finished up our study of Resmaa Menaken's book *My Grandmother's Hands*. It was a wonderful melding of discussion and meditation practices led by Glory Johnson. We will be continuing our work on racism and social justice, look for more information to follow.

April 4th is Easter! We are planning a socially distanced Easter "scavenger hunt" for the kids this year. This will be for families to participate in together, not just for the kids. We will be starting at the church and you can come at any time between 12 and 1 to start, it should take less than half an hour to complete. The "hunt" can be walked or driven and will need adult assistance. I will prepare enough prizes for all of our St. James families but I would love to know if you know you won't be able to make it or know you will absolutely be there! We are also looking for donations of individually wrapped nut-free candy that can be dropped off at the church by Thursday, April 1st. Let me know if you have any questions.

We will be starting another book discussion on April 18th. We will be looking at Justin McRoberts and Scott Erickson's book *Prayer: Forty Days of Practice*. We hope you can all join us at 9:00 am using the Sunday morning worship Zoom link.

Our Youth group will be participating in a work party with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Program in late April or early May. If you are interested in participating, please let Tracy know! Our next Zoom meeting is scheduled for May 2nd at 12:30.

As we continue to open up I will keep you all posted on when our nursery and classrooms will be opening up and what our guidelines will be. For now, I hope to see you all on Easter! Remember to send pictures or videos of your kids participating in any of the Lent or Easter materials that were sent home.

Godly Play for April

- **April 4th: Easter Eggs.** The folk celebration of Easter Eggs brings delight this time of year. Our culture's Easter Eggs have little to do with Easter that is celebrated in churches, but the eggs of Eastern Europe do. In this lesson, children are introduced to those eggs in a way to reclaim a wonderful sign of new life in Easter.
- **April 11th: Work Day.**
- **April 18th: Jesus and the Twelve.** This lesson tells the stories of the disciples of Jesus, who we now call apostles.
- **April 25th: 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.

SJP Mission Partners: Lighthouse Mission

By Maureen Kosa (mkosa@hotmail.com) and Carla Schafer (chuckanutsandstone@gmail.com)

The Mission and Social Action Team met recently to decide how and when to disburse our 2021 quarterly donations to our local, national, and international mission partners. We decided our first quarter recipients would be those agencies assisting the homeless.

One of St. James' community partners serving the homeless is Lighthouse Mission. Lighthouse Mission has been operating here in Bellingham since 1923. As the Lighthouse Mission statement reads, our goal is "Healing homelessness with Christ's power and love." This organization provides shelter, medications, case management, recovery and support, and prayer and pastoral counseling.

Being homeless can take approximately thirty-six years of your life; life expectancy for the homeless is between forty-two and fifty-two years. On any given night, an average of 210 people are served by Lighthouse Mission. There are many programs in place through Lighthouse Mission, including Base Camp, the Ascent Program for men's recovery, Agape Home for women and women with children, The Good Neighbor Project, and outreach through the Street Connect program. Please visit thelighthousemission.org to view their comprehensive website and to watch a powerful testimonial video.



Here's a recent story from one of our MSA team members:

"Here's my "slice of life" story from yesterday: I stopped by Naan to pick up my lunch, a woman there was picking up 12 meals for street people who refused to stay in the shelter. Three men hung around outside waiting to help her distribute the food nearby. She knew their names and while not socially distanced, all wore masks. She's from Ontario. Lives in Blaine. Told me of her & her husband's life of helping people in the US for the last 15 years. Her 9 months pregnant adult daughter was with her, mostly waiting in the SUV. She seemed to be doing this on her own and she didn't ask me to help fund it."

We're also working with the Finance Committee and those with expertise in the behavioral health field to see if there are any discretionary funds available, and if so, where to distribute them to best assist with the behavioral health needs in our community.

Mark Your Calendars! An evening of storytelling to support Interfaith Coalition

A special message from Gretchen Pfueller, gmpfueller@gmail.com

On April 10th, 7 pm, come together virtually to share stories from Bellingham community members, including a former Family Promise guest, a Moth Story Slam winner, and a member of the Nooksack tribe, all on the theme of **Sanctuary: Calm in Chaos**. Laughter, tears, encouragement, surprise – the stories will inspire these and more. Tell all your friends and help us end family homelessness in Whatcom County. Registration is free – go to <https://www.interfaith-coalition.org/sanctuary-calm-in-chaos>. Can't make the event but want to help now? [Donate today!](#)



ST. JAMES STAFF IS AT YOUR SERVICE

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

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

Music Director: Luke Arnold, music@saintjamespres.org

Treasurer: Marina McLeod, stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant: Shannon Laws, office@saintjamespres.org

SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Lindsay Anderson

Tess Bowers

Aaron Caruso

Sarah Condreay

Carol Dellecker

Susan Diemont-Conwell

Faye Hill

Jenny Sue LeSchander

Nebiyu Tesfa



Happy Easter. He has risen!

DEACONS

Deacons Parish 1	Merry Thomas, Alice Bailey
Deacons Parish 2	Jean & Rick Seater
Deacons Parish 3	Julie Keyes, Carla Shafer
Deacons Parish 4	Valerie McBeth, Adam Beaty
Deacons Parish 5	Pam Gibson, Adam Beaty
Deacons Parish 6	Kirsten Oliver, Milt Schayes



<https://mlp.org/>

Worship Schedule- Join us for a streaming service

10:30 a.m. Worship is a LIVE service stream and in-building with a reservation from our websites:

<https://saintjamespres.org/>

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

NEW! Office Hours:

Mon., Tues., Thurs., & Fri: 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Church office closed Wednesdays



Enter via the office door on 14th Street.

A mask is required to enter the building, sign in at the temperature station.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW BOOK FOR ST. JAMES BOOK CLUB

St. James Book Club is currently reading *Less by* Andrew Sean Greer. A struggling novelist travels the world to avoid an awkward wedding in this hilarious Pulitzer Prize-winning novel full of "arresting lyricism and beauty." We will be meeting Monday evening April 19th @ 7:00. Email tracy@saintjamespres.org for the Zoom link.

FAMILY PROMISE SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES

are available April 26-May 2, as St. James partners with our neighbors, Sacred Heart Catholic Church and Our Savior's Lutheran Church to assist homeless families. The families are currently living in Interfaith Coalition housing during this time of Covid-19 and knowing specific needs in advance is difficult. However, if you are willing to provide dinner for one of the families please contact Gretchen Pfueller at gmpfueller@gmail.com for more information. She will have a list of needs soon.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

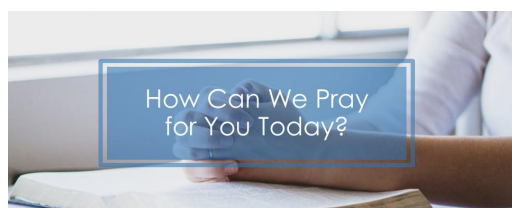
4/12	Sally Crandall	🎂
4/16	Erin Keyes	🎂
4/17	Bruce Kraig	🎂
4/18	Zach Mullen	🎂
4/20	Sally Albers	🎂
4/23	Mark Beaty	🎂
4/25	Valerie McBeth	🎂
4/29	Cheryl McGregor	🎂
4/30	Annah Baker	🎂

Deadlines for church publications

Weekly bulletin: Wednesday, 2:00pm
Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00pm
Monthly "The Pulse": the 20th, 2:00pm



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



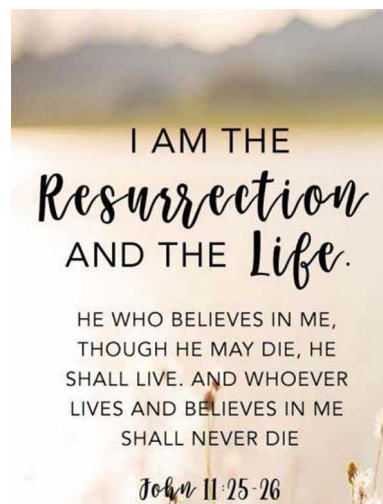
ST. JAMES CALENDAR

Until there is a vaccine that is widely available and widely used, the Reopening Task Force will remain in place throughout all phases of reopening. The church guidelines and procedures will be updated as the state, local and presbytery recommendations and guidance evolve.

PROGRAMS SHARING OUR FACILITY

AA Fairhaven Group
AA Men's Book Study Group
AA SOS Men's Group (in building, Wednesdays only)
Bellingham Com. Chorus
Bellingham Ukulele Group
Boy Scouts Troop 7 (in building, Mondays)
Happy Hour Al-Anon
Overeaters Anonymous
St. James Fitness
St. James Yoga
Linda's Tai Chi
WA Gender Alliance
Weavers Guild
You Are Not Alone (YANA)

Bayside Co-op Preschool (in building)
Hawthorne Learning Solutions (in building)
Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County (in office part-time)



Easter is April 4th

APRIL DAYS TO NOTE

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2021
Good Friday, April 2, 2021
Easter, April 4, 2021
Holocaust Remembrance Day, April 7, 2021
Earth Day, April 22, 2021



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