

## LEGO Blocks and Rebuilding What We Have

May greetings! Spring is upon us and life feels a bit more renewed as the sun shines and activity around town increases after the very long winter. This month, to illustrate the power of metaphor and the reality of the resurrection world we are walking into, I want to talk about LEGO blocks.

Over the past 4 years or so, I have become intimately reacquainted with all things LEGO. Being the father of a 6 year old, it is pretty common for me to spend my day off building a new set or (more often) collecting up the little (and big) piles of LEGO blocks strewn about our house. It's the joy of parenting a kid with the mind of a burgeoning engineer/city planner/movie director.



First, to get you up to speed: LEGO blocks these days often come in themed sets. We currently have sets floating around our house from Harry Potter, Marvel's Avengers, Minecraft, and Jurassic World, to name a few. Along with the core building components of standard pieces, many sets include specifically designed, unique pieces that add character and story. But for the most part, LEGO blocks are interchangeable, colored to fit themes, but responsive to new designs as the LEGO builder sees fit. (NOTE: Many a set gets destroyed and rebuilt into something else entirely. This is a reality that a parent must come to accept, holding loosely the hope of ever seeing the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' base rebuilt "correctly.")

When a LEGO builder is freed from following directions and thematic form, great wonders are apt to be built. A foundation block becomes a piece of a bridge; one character's head and another's body are recombined into an altogether new being with its own story and adventures to explore. What was meant for one thing will often find a further use, a renewed focus, a reconfiguration that brings it new meaning and life.

Here's the leap: As we all know, life has been in constant flux and change over the last year. We have seen models of our gathering together shift and evolve into hybrid worship. We have discovered the many benefits (and drawbacks) to ZOOM meetings and connections from a distance. Building blocks that comprised our shared life together have shifted and been strewn about the floor and are slowly being rebuilt into something new.

The reality that many of us have slowly begun to embrace is that we will not be able to go back to "the way things were." So much has been deconstructed and changed. What I see in LEGO building can translate as a metaphor for our community's resiliency and subsequent iteration of life. We have lost blocks along the journey. Some blocks have shifted and no longer work in what is being built...but all is not lost. The question then becomes: where will this block fit now?

Recently, upon vacuuming our living room, I found a few LEGO blocks buried in the carpet along the wall's edge. I picked them up and set them on a nearby table. And as I did, I wondered...what new creation will come from these blocks? A helicopter? An archway into a castle? The axle of a space rover? (So many possibilities!) And I smiled, knowing that what it would become was far beyond my imagination, but it gave me hope. Hope that something I could not necessarily comprehend was coming, something that, when it is built, will bring great joy and story and a future.

I wonder as we begin to reconvene some of our gatherings and slowly move back into in-person life together: How will the pieces of our lives be rebuilt into something fresh, full of life, and filled with possibility? How might the spiritual gifts of our community find themselves reconfigured to form a new expression of God's life in us?

No block is discarded or left out. Instead, each piece finds its place in rebuilding, coming back to the LEGO table with imagination and hope for what can become. Not what was, not necessarily themed the same way. But still important, still vital, still an expression of who we are...for such a time as this.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seth Thomas".

Rev. Seth Thomas

## FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE - April 2021

*Celebrating at the End of the First Quarter!*

By Lindsay Anderson, Finance Chair, [lindsaynicole12@gmail.com](mailto:lindsaynicole12@gmail.com)

At the end of the first quarter of 2021, the finance committee is glad to report that St. James' income has outpaced spending year-to-date. We are grateful for the continued faithfulness of our congregation AND for the wise stewardship of resources by staff and session. Building rentals are also on pace with our projections - it is hopeful to know that our building can (safely) continue to host important community services.

Due to our continued financial health, both in the current general operating budget as well as income generated from our endowment funds, we are able thankfully able to keep up with the needs of our congregation, our community, and our building:

- We replaced our water heater, under budget!
- There is money available from the sanctuary refresh project to put towards technology upgrades for our hybrid live/online services.
- The first quarter of Missions and Social Action disbursements have been made.

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](mailto:stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com).

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

<i>Income &amp; Expenses as of 3/31/21</i>	<b>March Actual</b>	<b>MARCH BUDGET</b>	<b>YTD Actual</b>	<b>YTD BUDGET</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$18,534.10</b>	<b>\$20,382.00</b>	<b>\$74,849.71</b>	<b>\$70,555.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$25,421.58</b>	<b>\$26,305.74</b>	<b>\$64,747.00</b>	<b>\$67,321.68</b>

**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.

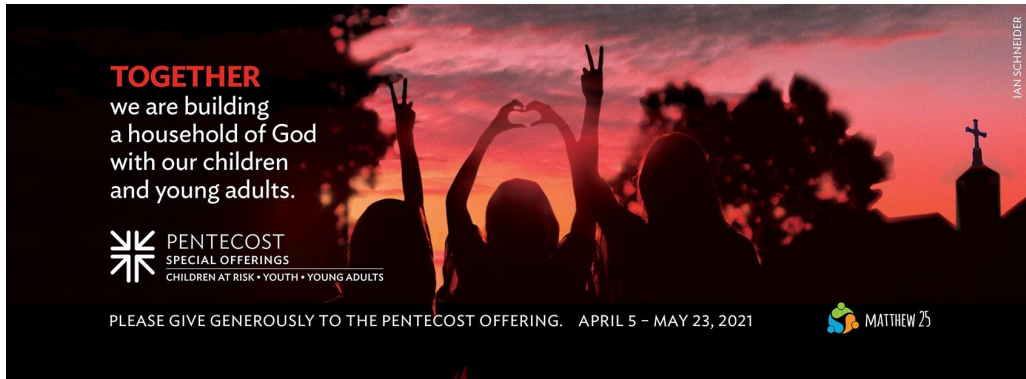
St. James Presbyterian Church  
910 14th Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

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

Contact Marina McLeod, [stjamestreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:stjamestreasurer@gmail.com)

## 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.



## Luke Arnold's Senior Recital

Mark your calendars! Our own Luke Arnold will be presenting his senior recital on May 28th at 7:30pm. Due to Covid restrictions this will be a virtual event, but you won't want to miss it. Navigate through this link for what's sure to be an amazing performance!

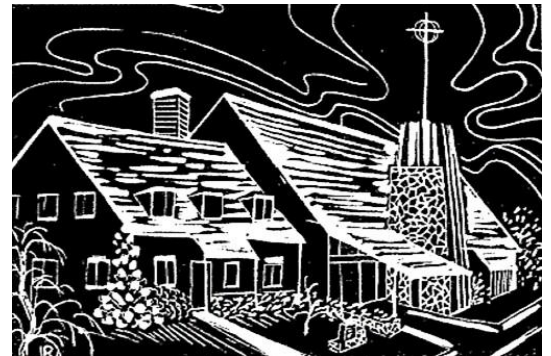


<https://cfpa.www.edu/event/luke-arnold-piano-senior-bmus-performance-recital>

## Block Print Has Deep Roots: Jane Raney

A special feature by Betsy Freeman, [betsy906@outlook.com](mailto:betsy906@outlook.com)

Have you ever wondered about the St. James black & white block print that accompanies the monthly Pulse Session minutes? The artist: Jane Raney. Jane was an active member of St. James in the 70s. Being an artist was only her first passion. In addition to being a member at St. James, she mentored many of our young families, gave terrific children's messages, and was actively involved in outreach activities. In 1973 she published a black & white block print calendar of favorite Whatcom County places. I have six framed on a wall, including Joe's Gardens and the Fairhaven Library. Her legacy art continues to live on in our Pulse each month.



## CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

By Tracy Caruso, Children & Family Ministry Director, [tracy@saintjamespres.org](mailto:tracy@saintjamespres.org)

Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries!



Spring has definitely sprung and we are rejoicing! April was a great month at St. James. It has been good to see more and more St. James friends during our in-person worship, and we look forward to seeing everyone when it is safe to do so! For those watching on Zoom, you will continue to see a video of the Godly Play story told from the classroom. For those who are in the sanctuary you will see my silent reenactment. I've been told I'm looking less and less like a flight attendant each week... Look for Godly Play parent pages in your email that accompany our weekly lessons.



Many of our children and families helped celebrate Easter by participating in a socially-distanced "scavenger hunt," where they found and deciphered puzzles in order to win some Easter treats. It was a joy to see so many of our kids in person!



### Looking forward to May -

The Youth group will be participating in a work day on May 15<sup>th</sup> to help the City of Bellingham and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association pull invasive blackberry bushes from Happy Valley Park. If you are interested in joining us, please let Tracy know.

A new book discussion begins on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. We will be looking at Justin McRobert's 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. Let Seth or Tracy know if you would like a copy of the book.

Stay tuned for updates on reopening guidelines and when we will be offering in person Godly Play and nursery options. As always please let me know if you need anything or have any questions!

### Godly Play for May

- **May 2<sup>nd</sup>: The Synagogue and the Upper Room.** In 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 9<sup>th</sup>: Mary, the Mother of Jesus.** This lesson follows the story of Mary through the life of Jesus.
- **May 16<sup>th</sup>: The Circle of the Holy Eucharist.** This is another lesson in the series, developing themes in the Holy Eucharist. It helps students pull together the sequence of liturgical actions and images from the Godly Play presentations they have seen and from their church's Sunday celebration.
- **May 23<sup>rd</sup>: 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.)
- **May 30<sup>th</sup>: Work day**



## Unity Village, Fairhaven

By Ray Dellecker, [rdellecker@gmail.com](mailto:rdellecker@gmail.com)



**HomesNow** is doing impactful work in our neighborhood with one of its two villages off Harris St. near the Amtrak station. Pastor Seth and I visited Unity Village on March 9 for a conversation with **HomesNow** Board Chairman Doug Gustafson and a tour of the village. The structure of the organization and their trust in residents' ability to govern themselves are fascinating.

Unity Village consists of 20 very low-cost tiny homes (8' x 10'), each heated and with electricity, and each with a single occupant.

There is a common kitchen, a shower facility, outdoor picnic tables, and Porta-Potties for the use of residents. While overseen closely by the Board, including Doug Gustafson, day-to-day management is the responsibility of the residents via a three-person leadership team. Perhaps amazingly, it works. On occasion, assistance by Doug or another board member is needed, but for the most part, the place runs well.

There are no paid staff members at **HomesNow**; all positions are voluntary. And costs are very low. The village's entire utility bill is \$1,500 per month with some additional expenses for supplies.

**HomesNow** relies entirely on fund-raising for all financial needs. Doug was emphatic in declaring that while **HomesNow** will accept building supplies from the City, they are completely free of any government funding.

At a cost of approximately \$4,500 per unit plus a couple of weeks of volunteer labor to construct a tiny home, Unity Village is a highly-efficient approach to tackling a portion of our community's homelessness. As a congregation, once the Covid restrictions are lifted, this is a potential opportunity for St. James to fund and build a tiny house—two more units are planned to be built soon at Unity Village.

And, according to Doug, their model is scalable: with its low costs and resident management, many more such villages could be constructed. All that's needed is land with access to public transportation.

The Unity Village model won't solve all of our community's homeless problems, of course. Residents must be drug- and alcohol-free and be able to live congenially with neighbors. Residents live rent-free at Unity Village and are encouraged to stabilize their lives and become self-sufficient. About one-third of the residents have jobs. Most of the other folks are on disability, drawing about \$700 per month in SSID benefits.

Seth and I were impressed with the **HomesNow** approach and Doug's willingness to cooperate with the City in finding a "middle wave," straddling the gap between government and private organizations.

Visitors are welcome most afternoons at Unity Village. And please check out the HomesNow website <https://homesnow.org> or follow them on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/HomesNowNotLater/>.

## ST. JAMES STAFF IS AT YOUR SERVICE

Pastor: The Rev. Seth J. Thomas, [pastor@saintjamespres.org](mailto:pastor@saintjamespres.org)

Children & Family Director: Tracy Caruso, [tracy@saintjamespres.org](mailto:tracy@saintjamespres.org)

Music Director: Luke Arnold, [music@saintjamespres.org](mailto:music@saintjamespres.org)

Treasurer: Marina McLeod, [stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com](mailto:stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com)

## SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Lindsay Anderson

Tess Bowers

Aaron Caruso

Sarah Condreay

Carol Dellecker

Susan Diemont-Conwell

Faye Hill (Clerk of Session)

Jenny Sue LeSchander

Nebiyu Tesfa

## 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, Alice Beaty
Deacons Parish 5	Pam Gibson, Adam Beaty
Deacons Parish 6	Kirsten Oliver, Milt Schayes



<https://mlp.org/>

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### 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 is closed on 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 *Washington Black* by Esi Edugyan. The story follows the early life of George Washington "Wash" Black, chronicling his escape from slavery and his subsequent adventures.

We will be meeting Monday evening May 17th @ 7:00 pm.

Email [tracy@saintjamespres.org](mailto:tracy@saintjamespres.org) for the Zoom link.

### MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

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

### Deadlines for church publications

Weekly bulletin: Wednesday, 2:00pm

Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00pm

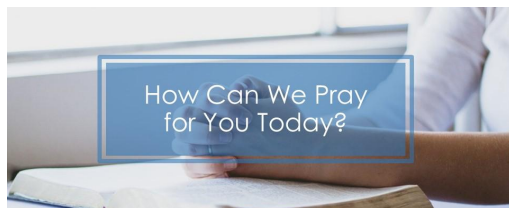
Monthly "the Pulse": the 25th, 2:00pm



**Add your request to the St. James Prayer Chain**

**Contact your Deacon or St. James at:**

**360-733-1325 | [office@saintjamespres.org](mailto:office@saintjamespres.org)**



## WHATCOM COUNTY - Phase 3

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)



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*Photo by Maureen Kosa*