

Greetings,

Today is June 8, 2022. I typically try to write my Pulse article for the church newsletter by the 28th of the month, giving us a couple of days to put the whole thing together, edit, and get out the door. Most months, I have something of substance to say, encourage, and help frame what we are doing together as a congregation. I enjoy it.

And yet, I sit here today acknowledging that I have not had words to share yet. I'm honestly at a loss of what to say about our nation and children and parents have found themselves crying out about these past few weeks: **Gun violence**.

As long as I've served in church ministry, I've wondered about our role as ministers and leaders to speak up about the most challenging aspects of our public life together. Even with years of formal training, experience, and mentoring, I have never been formally directed or given permission to speak up about things like war, sexual assault, gun violence, racism, homophobia, etc. (it's a long list). There seems to be an unwritten expectation that pastors don't "rock the boat" and instead offer comfort through the afflictions, assurance of grace in the face of sin, and hope for things that are yet to come.

*But where is the church's witness when our children are staring down the barrel of an automatic weapon?*

You see, it's become clear to me that the problem isn't about whether or not we should say anything about horrific violent acts that destroy human lives. Of course, we should! Of course, as people of God who value the sacredness of human lives, we should speak up and stand up for the innocents who are at risk. Of course, we should.

But often, we don't. And that is what bothers me most deeply. When we face a world fraught with wicked problems, it is more common for our communities to look on and struggle to do or say anything. I am coming to believe that my silence wholly undermines the church's witness to the good news of Jesus.

Jesus' message of good news of great joy to all people changes our hearts to heal from and prevent these wicked acts. Jesus' message is liberation, setting captives free (captive children, captive systems, captive minds). And Jesus' message is shown and witnessed when we do not turn away but rather turn towards these problems to seek better solutions, where we seek out how to do the work of restoration and seek wholeness.

It might seem like a no-brainer, but here's what I think Christians should be saying when it comes to the atrocities we are witnessing daily across our nation: Gun violence is horrific. Human beings slaughtering masses of other human beings is an abomination, a distortion of the image we all bear, a denial of all we share in common. And we need to work collectively to address this, for the life of the world.

Indeed, the solutions to such wicked problems are complex. Solving our mass shootings epidemic in America requires many layers of intervention, healing, and change. It is not quick work. But isn't it work that the people of the way of Jesus belong doing? Don't we value each other and the health of our communities that much? If we do, then we must speak up. Not just into the echo chamber that is our affinity groups. But boldly, publicly, and as Jesus would. There are money changers in the temple and we must overturn their tables.

Again, as I said above, even as a pastor with degrees and experience, I have never been formally trained or authorized to speak up about injustice. It's subtly implied to keep things neutral, palatable, and safe. And yet, if we look at the Scriptures and see how God's disciples and prophets spoke into the world, we do not see neutrality or palatability — we see witness! And that is what we, heirs to this tradition and the kingdom it proclaims, that is what we are to do as well.

Perhaps I have to give myself permission. Maybe we all have to do that, find our voices and then learn how to sing together to make the song of justice ring out. Or not. Or we could stay how we are. Or we can keep watching this wicked denial of humanity play out in silence and fear.

Grace and peace,



Pastor Seth

## GRIEVING OUR LOST CHILDREN

Another brutality,  
another school killing,  
another grief beyond telling...  
and loss...

in Colorado,  
in Wisconsin, among the Amish  
in Virginia.  
Where next? *Uvalde*.\*

We are reduced to weeping silence,  
even as we breed a violent culture,  
even as we kill the sons and daughters of  
our "enemies",  
even as we fail to live and cherish and respect  
the forgotten of our common life.

There is no joy among us as we empty  
our schoolhouses;  
there is no health among us as we move in fear  
and bottomless anxiety;  
there is little hope among us as we fall helpless  
before the gunshot and the shriek  
and the blood and the panic;  
we pray to you only because we do not know  
what else to do.

So we pray, move powerfully in our body politic,  
move us toward peaceableness  
that does not want to hurt or to kill,  
move us toward justice  
that the troubled and the  
forgotten may know mercy,  
move us toward forgiveness that we  
may escape the trap of revenge.

Empower us to turn our weapons to acts of mercy,  
to turn our missiles  
to gestures of friendship,  
to turn our bombs  
to policies of reconciliation  
and while we are turning,  
hear our sadness,  
our loss,  
our bitterness.

We dare to pray our needfulness to you  
because you have been there on that  
gray Friday,  
and watched your own Son be murdered  
for "reasons of state".

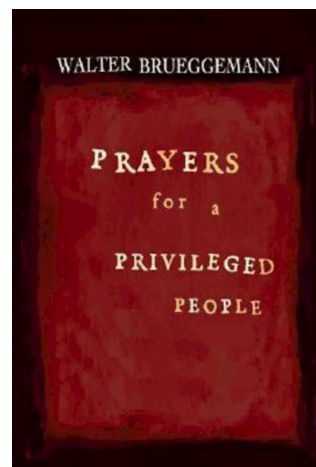
Good God, do Easter!  
Here and among these families,  
here and in all our places of brutality.

Move our Easter grief now...  
without too much innocence-  
to you Sunday joy.

We pray in the one crucified and risen  
who is our Lord and Savior.

Amen.

Taken from Walter Brueggemann's  
*Prayers for a Privileged People*



\* Added June 8, 2022 by Rev. Seth J. Thomas

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

*submitted by Faye Hill, Clerk of Session*

### Highlights of the Session Meeting on May 8, 2022



- The Session and the Board of Deacons held their annual joint meeting before the Session meeting for the purpose of conferring on issues of joint concern.
  - The deacons reported that coffee and fellowship time following worship has restarted.
  - Interim Treasurer, Sharon King, is in the process of catching up on financial records. The process will take some time, but we are caught up on bill-paying and income records. Everything is looking good financially.
  - The Clerk reported that Amy Morris was elected to the position of Deacon.
  - The Session voted to allow our church school director, Tracy Caruso, to allocate funds from the budget to extend the hours of nursery staff to supervise children during coffee hour.
  - The Mission and Social Action Committee will have a table at the Sacred Earth Care event.
  - The Pandemic Response Committee reported that we are now on low transmission status.
  - The Personnel Committee is conducting interviews for the position of Music Director. Luke Arnold will be leaving that position in July.
  - The Pastor reported that Interfaith Coalition will be moving out of the upstairs facilities they have rented for the past few years. They need a unified location in which all their staff could be together.
  - The next meeting of the Session will be on June 12, 2022
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## CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

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



Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries!

We have had a busy spring and are looking forward to a very busy summer at St. James! There are many events and opportunities to get involved this summer!

Our Youth Group will be attending the Whatcom Youth Pride parade and event at Bellingham High School on June 4<sup>th</sup> from 10:30am - 2pm. Please let Tracy or Seth know if you are planning on attending or have any questions.

We will be celebrating all our St. James kids on Sunday June 19<sup>th</sup>. During the service we will be celebrating all our kids, teachers, and volunteers! Each child will receive a little something so I hope to see them all there!

Vacation Bible School is back! Join us June 27<sup>th</sup> thru the 30<sup>th</sup> for Creation Camp. Camp will run Monday thru Thursday 9am - 11:30am for children entering K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. We are in need of volunteers and snack donations. Please let Tracy know if you are able to help!

Godly Play will take a short break until after July and then will begin a new 6-week series on Jesus as the Greatest Parable. Child care will still be available downstairs as usual.

The Youth Group will also be hosting a table for kids at the Climate Fair on July 31<sup>st</sup>. More details on how you can help with that will be coming!

Mark your calendars for the All Church Retreat August 26<sup>th</sup> thru the 28<sup>th</sup>. We will be gathering for a weekend at Warm Beach Retreat and Conference center in Stanwood. If you would like to help in the planning of this event, please let Tracy know.

I am looking forward to such a busy summer and hope that you all will join us in all or some of these great opportunities with St. James! As usual if you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out to me!

### Godly Play schedule for June:

#### June 5<sup>th</sup> Knowing Jesus in a New Way part 7

The season of Eastertide extends Easter for six weeks and helps prepare for Pentecost. This period is a time of transition between Jesus' early ministry and the oncoming of the Holy Spirit. It is a time when the disciples, and others, began to know Jesus in a new way.

#### June 12<sup>th</sup> The Holy Trinity

This lesson combines three narratives, transforming them into the concept of the Holy Trinity.

## MISSION & SOCIAL ACTION

Save the date for the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice's Sacred Earth Fair on July 31, 2022 from 1-5 pm. There will be booths and activities for all ages, including music by Swil Kanin, a violinist and Lummi Tribe member, storytelling, nature walks, yoga, and more! Let's join together in hope for a greener world.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the fair, please contact MNCJ at [sacredearthfair@gmail.com](mailto:sacredearthfair@gmail.com).

 <p><b>Sunday, July 31: 1pm - 5pm</b></p> <p><b>Joining Together for a Greener World</b></p> <p>Location: Center for Spiritual Living 2224 Yew Street Rd., Bellingham, WA</p> <p>For more information, email: <a href="mailto:sacredearthfair@gmail.com">sacredearthfair@gmail.com</a></p>  	<p><i>With</i></p> <p><b>Swil Kanin</b> <i>Violinist extraordinaire and Lummi Tribal member</i></p> <p><b>Tammy Cooper-Woodrich</b> and <b>Angela Letoi</b> <i>Nooksack Elder and Storyteller, with her daughter and understudy</i></p> <p>plus</p> <p>Community booths*, Zen Nature walks, Yoga, Children's Activities, Listening circles featuring area youth, and more*!</p> <p><i>* Watch for upcoming announcements!</i></p>
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## ST. JAMES STAFF IS AT YOUR SERVICE

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

Children & Family Ministry 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)

Administrative Ministry Assistant: Sharon King, [office@saintjamespres.org](mailto:office@saintjamespres.org)

## SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Lindsay Anderson

Tess Bowers

Aaron Caruso

Sarah Condreay

Susan Diemont-Conwell

Faye Hill (Clerk of Session)

Maureen Kosa

Andrew McLaurin

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, Amy Morriss



<https://mlp.org/>

## 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





## UPCOMING EVENTS

**ST. JAMES BOOK CLUB** is currently reading *Life, Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes, and Autism*. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ron Suskind tells the story of how his autistic son was able to regain the ability to speak through the medium of Disney animated films. We will meet the third Monday in June, June 20th at 7:00pm. Email [tracy@saintjamespres.org](mailto:tracy@saintjamespres.org) for the Zoom link. Books will be available in the church office.

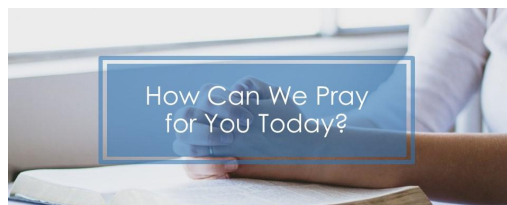
## PROGRAMS SHARING OUR FACILITY

**AA Fairhaven Group** (in building, Sundays/ Thursdays)  
**AA Grateful Hearts Women's Group** (in building)  
**AA Men's Book Study Group** (in building, Mondays)  
**AA SOS Men's Group** (in building, Wednesdays)  
**AA WITS Women's Group** (in building, Tuesdays)  
**Bellingham Com. Chorus**  
**Bellingham Ukulele Group**  
**Boy Scouts Troop 7** (in building, Mondays)  
**Happy Hour Al-Anon** (in building, Tuesdays)  
**Overeaters Anonymous** (in building, Saturdays)  
**St. James Fitness** (in building, Mondays/ Thursdays)  
**St. James Yoga**  
**Linda's Tai Chi** (in building, Mondays)  
**WA Gender Alliance**  
**Weavers Guild**  
**You Are Not Alone (YANA)**  
**Bayside Co-op Preschool** (in building)  
**Hawthorne Learning Solutions** (in building)

## JUNE BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

6/1	Alice Beaty	🎂
6/3	Tracy Caruso	🎂
6/4	Craig and Julie Keyes	💕
6/7	Eden Engels	🎂
6/9	Jane Botsford	🎂
6/9	Fred Daugert	🎂
6/10	Terri Inge	🎂
6/12	Bob and Madeleine Smith	💕
6/15	Sue Smith	🎂
6/17	Mark and Alice Beaty	💕
6/20	Amber Wainscott	🎂
6/23	Bob Smith	🎂
6/24	Susan Diemont-Conwell	🎂
6/27	Corinna Bowers	🎂
6/28	Sharon King	🎂
6/30	Claude and Faye Hill	💕

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)



### Deadlines for church publications

Weekly bulletin: Wednesday, 2:00pm

Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00pm

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





Rory and Sam finish their Confirmation Course on May 15!  
We love our kids!



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