

Who Do We Choose To Be?

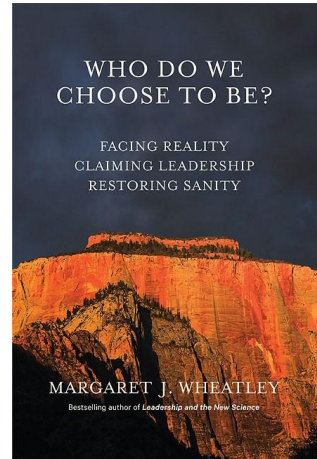
As Bellingham comes back to life amidst the rising beauty of summer, who do we choose to be?

As we see continued growth and shifts in our congregational life, who do we choose to be?

When the world is stacked with wicked problems and seemingly unsolvable issues, who do we choose to be?

And as followers of Jesus, who seek the good life of grace, forgiveness, creativity, and service, who do we choose to be?

This summer, I'm rereading one of the most impactful books from the last few years, Margaret Wheatley's *Who Do We Choose To Be?* The book's subtitle is: *Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity*. When we review the questions above, we realize we have the opportunity and the responsibility to ask ourselves — who do we choose to be? Not who are we, not how will we protect what's ours, not even how do we navigate difficult times. Framed through Christ's teachings for the church, the response may be: We will choose to live from the image of God that we each bear, even as the world around us seems to crumble and shift irreparably.



Facing Reality

Wheatley's book begins with a harsh reality check: what we are witnessing around us in the world today matches all the historical examples of civilization heading towards collapse. Environmental disasters, the consolidation of riches and power among a small group of individuals, and the erosion of trust in the institutions we believed would protect us — are all markers of the cyclical decline of people groups through history. Big bummer, right?

Yes, but also, it's a reality check. We mustn't turn our gaze away from these problems, obviously, but as people of Jesus, we need to find honesty with how we perceive the world and then, STILL, look for opportunities to love and serve our neighbors. Even if things get more complex, the people of God are steady and committed to the love of God and neighbor. So, who do we choose to be?

Claiming Leadership

Once we acknowledge the deep struggles our world faces, we must then step up and lead. We should ask ourselves, "if not us, who will?"

You may not find yourself too keen on "claiming leadership." Perhaps you have always been more of a follower or contributor. "Leadership is for someone else; I don't want that responsibility." Well, who do we choose to be, then? We may need to rethink this stance and find small ways to lead with humility and grace. We may have others in our life who we trust to lead, so our work is to follow and support and collaborate with them (good leaders bring people of all different skills and gifts to the table to work together, not alone).

God's people claim leadership when they step up for those in need and sacrifice their well-being for the good of others and when we invite the world to experience abundance and love instead of hatred and division.

Restoring Sanity

Finally, when we have chosen to get real and claim our part in making things better, we establish what Wheatley calls "islands of sanity." Don't worry; you can look around the world and see all kinds of crazy — unhinged, unkind, unproductive, unloving ways we fight each other and make matters worse. But instead of joining this mess, we can choose to create spaces in our lives where sanity and direction guide us.

What is an island of sanity? Well, each time we open our doors and welcome folks into a safe community, where they are loved and accepted, we're marking out an island of sanity, set apart from the fray of daily life. When we greet each other in peace and reconciliation, we claim sane ways of belonging. When we create spaces where we listen, reflect, comfort, and support — these are all islands of sanity. It's what we are called to be as Christ's body, the church.

This Summer, who do we choose to be? At St. James in Bellingham, as we witness immense challenges, who do we choose to be?

I'm humbled and grateful to keep choosing this more excellent way of Jesus' love with each of you.

Pastor Seth 

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE - JUNE 2022

Trusting in God to Sustain Us

Submitted by Lindsay Anderson, Finance chair

Growing up, a scripture that brought me comfort during times of uncertainty was Proverbs 3:5-6 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” After the past five months, navigating our church finances has invited us further into trusting God and trusting one another. Each week, I am both surprised and not surprised by how income and expenses are just plugging along as normal, even if things do not feel normal right now.

Together with Pastor Seth and our incredible Church Administrative Assistant, Sharon, the Finance Committee and Session continue to monitor the state of affairs. What we are learning is leading us to have important conversations about next steps related to the tools we have at our disposal to more efficiently manage our accounting records in the long term. Thank you for the patience, trust, and understanding you all have extended towards us this year.

We continue to hold Marina, as well as her incredible family and her doctors, in our prayers while she undergoes cancer treatments.

Updates, Celebrations, and Next Steps:

- Regular deposits, accounts payable, and payroll continue as they have in the past!
- We are consistently monitoring activity in our General Fund, Endowments, Mutual Funds, and Designated Funds. Everything continues to be generally as projected.
- Sharon is working on updating the last few months of transactions into our bookkeeping tool, Power Church. Once that is complete we'll be able to share updated financials.
- The Finance Committee will meet in early July to discuss action steps for the second half of 2022 to update and streamline our bookkeeping protocols.
- In the coming months, the Finance Committee and Session will begin to evaluate the 2023 Operating Budget.

We appreciate your prayers, support, and generosity. If you have any questions about a current or past contribution, please email stjamestreasurer@gmail.com or call Sharon King in the office, 360-733-1325.

With Grace,
Lindsay Anderson, Finance Chair

How to Give to St. James:

Online Giving: <https://saintjamespres.churchcenter.com/giving>

Mail-In: St. James Presbyterian Church, 910 14th St. Bellingham, WA 98225

In-Person: Drop your gifts in the contact-free giving box in the sanctuary

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

submitted by Faye Hill, Clerk of Session

Highlights of the Session Meeting on June 12, 2022

- All members of the Session were present. Kirsten Oliver served as representative from the Board of Deacons. The meeting took place in the church Lounge at noon.
- Kirsten Oliver reported that the church picnic will be on July 24th at Lake Padden Park. Everyone is asked to bring their own lunch and the deacons will provide dessert and beverages.
- Pastor Seth announced that a new worshipping community, Spring Church, plans to charter as a Presbyterian Church (USA) in Bellingham on June 18th, 2022. This will be the fourth Presbyterian Church in Bellingham.
- The Session voted approval for the vacation and study leave dates for Pastor Seth for the rest of 2022.
- The Session voted to add Juneteenth to the paid holidays for St. James staff.
- The Session voted to increase the amount of the annual Music Director salary by \$2,408, effective September 1, 2022.
- The next meeting of the Session will be on July 10th.



SAVE THE DATE FOR ST. JAMES ALL CHURCH RETREAT AUGUST 28TH-30TH AT WARM BEACH CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER

St. James has booked the Cascadian Lodge at Warm Beach for the weekend of Friday August 26th thru Sunday the 28th 2022. We would love to have everyone join us. Warm Beach event center is a beautiful facility in Stanwood with tons of activities, beautiful views, and numerous hiking trails. Rooms in the lodge have a queen bed and a bunk bed to sleep up to 4. Our reservations include lodging for Friday and Saturday nights, breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday and breakfast on Sunday. Plan on arriving Friday evening after dinner to check in and enjoy a time of fellowship, games, and snacks with our St. James family. Saturday will include breakfast, a morning of Christian Education, lunch, and an afternoon of relaxing and fun activities. Activities at Warm Beach include a ropes course, sports fields, disc golf, swimming, canoeing, mini golf, hiking, horseshoe pits, fire pits, and time for fellowship and relaxing. Saturday will conclude with dinner and an organized fellowship time. Sunday we will enjoy breakfast followed by a worship service and then packing up and heading home. Plan for a weekend of fun, fellowship, food, relaxation, and Christian education. Registration information to come. If you are interested in helping organize, or implement this fun event please let Tracy know.



CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

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



Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries!

What an amazing June we have had! I am feeling so much energy and excitement with all our kids at St. James!

We finished up our annual Godly Play calendar in June and will take a few weeks break until July 10th when we start a new series, "The Greatest Parable". The four lesson series "present Jesus' public ministry and the relation of his presence to the whole Christian language system... The goal of this presentation is to allow the inexhaustible meaning and linguistic complexity of Jesus to shine through with a kind of deep simplicity that it is open to people of all ages and stages of faith development."

Our youth and many St. James members began June attending the Whatcom Youth Pride parade and event. A great time was had supporting an amazing event!

The Sunday after Bellingham schools let out for the summer we were able to celebrate all of our students, along with our childcare staff and Godly Play volunteers during our milestone celebration. It was amazing to see how much each student has grown over not just this past year but in the Covid years as this was the first time we have been able to celebrate them this way since 2019.

June ended with an AMAZING week of Vacation Bible School Creation Camp! So much fun, learning, love, joy, and finding God was had by all our campers! A huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped before, during, and after to make this week so successful!

We are looking forward to the end of summer now and hoping to make the end as amazing as the beginning with our All Church Retreat August 26th-28th at Warm Beach Retreat Center. The next planning meeting will be held Monday July 11th at 5:30pm in the lounge. We welcome anyone interested in helping out with the retreat!

Again a huge Thank You to all the wonderful volunteers at St. James who help to make so many events and programs run, especially for our children and youth. Know that your work is so valuable and appreciated!

Godly Play for July:

July 3rd Work Day

July 10th The Greatest Parable: The presentation without words

July 17th The Greatest Parable: Part 1

July 24th The Greatest Parable: Part 2

July 31st The Greatest Parable: Part 3



AN EVENING FOR GRIEF AND LAMENT

Please join us for a gathering on Wednesday, July 6, at 7pm for an evening of prayer, reflection, and lamentation in the St. James sanctuary. Why lament? It is a natural response for us to cry out to God in times of great hardship and loss. Through mid-June 2022, there have already been over 20,000 deaths due to gun violence and over 275 mass shootings in the United States. God's people are called to lift up their voices in lament and seek peace in times of great violence.

If you would like to share an offering at this gathering, please reach out to Pastor Seth (pastor@saintjamespres.org) or Mission & Social Action Elder Maureen Kosa (mkosa@hotmail.com). Poems, short readings, prayers, and music will be offered.

MISSION & SOCIAL ACTION

Join us for the Sacred Earth Fair sponsored by the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice on July 31st from 1-5. St. James will have a table for storytelling around creation care and crafts for youth to create bookmarks! There will be booths and activities for all ages. Music will be provided by Swil Kanim, violinist and Lummi Tribal member.

Location: Center for Spiritual Living, 2224 Yew Street Rd. Bellingham

If anyone is interested in participating at our table, please contact Maureen Kosa at mkosa@hotmail.com.

<p>SACRED EARTH FAIR</p> <p>Sunday, July 31: 1pm - 5pm</p> <p>Joining Together for a Greener World</p> <p>Location: Center for Spiritual Living 2224 Yew Street Rd., Bellingham, WA</p> <p>For more information, email: sacredearthfair@gmail.com</p> <p> </p>	<p><i>With</i></p> <p>Swil Kanim <i>Violinist extraordinaire and Lummi Tribal member</i></p> <p>Tammy Cooper-Woodrich and Angela Letoi <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

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

Music Director: Luke Arnold, music@saintjamespres.org

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

Administrative Ministry Assistant: Sharon King, 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 for Summer:

10:00am - 1:00pm, Monday - Thursday



UPCOMING EVENTS

ST. JAMES BOOK CLUB is currently reading *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson. A novel told in verse, it discusses the author's childhood as an African American growing up in the 1960s in South Carolina and New York. We will meet the third Monday in July, July 18th at 7:00pm. Email tracy@saintjamespres.org for the Zoom link. Books are available in the church office.

ANNUAL PICNIC

The Annual All Church Picnic will be Sunday, July 24th, 12pm-2pm at Lake Padden Playground Shelter. Bring your own lunch and Deacons will provide dessert.

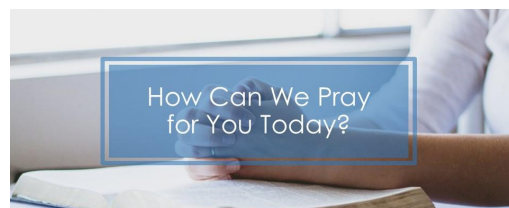
JULY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

7/5	Pat Nelson	🎂
7/10	Bill Butler	🎂
7/12	Merry Thomas	🎂
7/14	Max Anderson	🎂
7/16	Dave & Pat Nelson	💕
7/16	Karen Rogers	🎂
7/17	Ryan Knight	🎂
7/20	Nebiyu Tesfa	🎂
7/21	Gretchen Pfueller	🎂
7/24	Randy & Teresa Bowers	💕
7/25	Ed Simmers	🎂
7/25	Betsy Freeman	🎂
7/29	Rory Anderson	🎂
7/29	Stacy & Seth Thomas	💕
7/31	Ed DeVaney	🎂
7/31	Brian Seater	🎂

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)

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





Photos from Creation
Camp - Vacation Bible
School July 2022



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