

## Seeking this Lent — March 2023

For the Christian Church, the 40 days before Easter are a time of focusing and evaluating our lives before God and taking an honest account of our spiritual condition. We have moved through the hurried/harried beginning of the year and now settle into a meditative posture that allows us to consider: What is God calling me to now? Our Lenten theme, “Seeking,” from A Sanctified Art, opens up space for such examination, leaning into the deep questions of our faith. The Lenten texts tell of people who questioned Jesus and encountered his radical love in response.



Each week, as we listen to these stories, we will interact with questions that draw us deeper into our own stories, seeing how our deep yearnings align with the struggles and joys of the saints of the Church. For instance, Nicodemus comes to Jesus with deep theological questions: What does it mean to be born again? How can one be born of water and spirit? Are we meant to climb back into our mothers' wombs and experience the traumatic and beautiful entry into the world for a second time? While the question might sound outlandish, it hits at a deep longing and uncertainty — can we begin again?

As a church, we need to be able to examine these kinds of questions with honesty and openness. So often, we are fed quick answers that leave us feeling unfulfilled, empty, and discouraged. The Good News of Jesus has to come into contact with our complex, real questions for us to see that God involves themselves in the realities we face. Who should we listen to in a world of noise and bluster? Who can we turn to for help, be it a simple drink of water or financial support in a time of great need? Why do some people suffer while others experience an easy road?

Our faith must wrestle with these kinds of questions. There is a degree of healthy skepticism and critique that we are invited to embody, especially in the season of Lent. We wonder at Christ's journey to the cross — was it all worth it? We wonder how we are to sacrifice and give of ourselves when there is no tangible reward most of the time — are we wasting our time and energy? We listen to the story of hope that is the Resurrection — is this news too good to be true? And if it is true, what implications does Christ's resurrection have for our hopes of restoration and new life? Can it be?

As you move through this time of self-examination and evaluation, know that you walk alongside generations of saints and sinners who have asked these kinds of questions. Questions aren't always comfortable or well-received. Certainty is lauded and reinforced. But when we can enter into proper examination and questioning, when we can lay bare all that we wonder and hope for and doubt and expect from God...perhaps we begin to touch some of the richness of this life of faith.

Faith in Christ deserves to be questioned, wrestled with, and rediscovered time and again. We hear that in Christ, we are a new creation. The old is gone, and the new is established. This newness comes through questioning how things are and discovering that God has so much more for us to see and do and be through those questions.

May we journey through Lent and all it causes us to question, consider, examine, and seek. In Christ, together.

Grace and peace,



Pastor Seth

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

*submitted by Faye Hill, Clerk of Session*

Here are the highlights of the meeting of the Session on 2/12/2023:

- Eight members of the session, a representative from the Board of Deacons, and the Pastor were present for this meeting in the Church Lounge at noon.
- The Session welcomed new ruling elders Ryan Knight and Jimmy Parks.
- The Session also welcomed Rick Seater, representative from the Board of Deacons. He brought greetings from the deacons. The deacons are in a time of transition as they welcome new deacon, Claudia Allan, and express their appreciation to those who have completed their terms, Alice Beaty and Jean and Rick Seater.
- As the representative from the Board of Deacons, Rick brought a suggested list of persons to be considered as the Session performs their annual review of the membership rolls this year. Members on the list have not attended St. James in many months and are not responding to outreach from the deacons. The Session will begin this review process soon.
- The Personnel Committee will meet soon to begin the search process for a new church treasurer.
- Clerk Faye Hill was re-elected to another one year term from 2/1/23 to 1/31/24.
- The Session voted to offer communion during worship on all first Sundays of the months in 2023.
- Pastor Seth announced that Shannon Parks-Beck will begin the Commissioned Lay Pastor program by working with the PeaceHealth Spiritual Care department. She will be under care of St. James.
- Pastor Seth announced the 2023 Committee Chair Assignments:

*Christian Faith Formation – Jimmy Parks  
Building and Grounds – Aaron Caruso  
Finance – Andrew McLaurin  
Loving Welcome – Teresa Bowers  
Mission and Social Action – Maureen Kosa*

*Nominating – Nebiyu Tesfa  
Personnel – Faye Hill  
Sabbatical Planning – Sarah Condreay  
Worship – Ryan Knight*



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### BOOK CLUB

St. James book club is currently reading *Nomadland: Surviving America In the Twenty-First Century* by Jessica Bruder. We will meet the third Monday in March, March 20th at 7:00pm via zoom. Contact Tracy for the zoom link.

**Ash Wednesday**  
February 22nd, 7:30pm  
St. James Presbyterian

**Maundy Thursday**  
April 6th, 7:30pm  
Cordata Presbyterian

**Tenebrae**  
April 7th, 7:30pm  
First Presbyterian

Lenten  
Pilgrimage  
2023



## 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!

It's hard to believe we are already into March! We have had such a great start to our 2023 year!

In our Godly Play classroom we finished out our parable series and are beginning a combined *Faces of Easter* and the *Greatest Parable series* as we work our way through Lent toward Easter. Similar to what we did during Advent, the students will be given banks to collect change during Lent for *One Great Hour of Sharing*. Banks will be collected on Easter Sunday.

We are still looking for volunteers for our Nursery and our Godly Play classrooms. If you are interested in helping in either room please let Tracy know.

Our youth group had a great time at our February meeting! We shared a meal and good discussion and had a blast playing a few games. Our next meeting will be Sunday March 26th from 5:30-7:30. If parents or anyone want to contribute a few dollars for dinner it would really help stretch our youth budget.

For adult education during this season of Lent, we invite you to join us in a journey through *A Sanctified Art devotional: seeking: honest questions for deeper faith*. This devotional contains a series of art, reflections, and poetry for the season of Lent. Devotionals can be found in the narthex and we invite you to take a copy. Digital versions are also available, contact Tracy for the link.

We again are participating in our annual Lenten Pilgrimage with First Presbyterian, Cordata Presbyterian, and Spring Church. St. James hosted an Ash Wednesday service. We will continue our Lenten Pilgrimage with a Maundy Thursday service at Cordata Presbyterian on April 6 at 7:30pm and a Good Friday service at First Presbyterian Church on April 7 at 7:30pm. Childcare will be provided for each service.

We are looking forward to bringing back our Bingo night in March! We hope you will join us on March 17th from 6-8 pm for a potluck and BINGO! Bring your favorite dish to share, have some fun, and play some BINGO!

Looking ahead to the end of March and into April, we will again be asking for donations of nut free-individually wrapped candies to stuff our Easter Eggs for our annual egg hunt on Sunday April 8th following our Easter worship service. We also invite you to bring some pastries, muffins, cookies, etc to the Horizon Room by 9:30 on Easter Sunday to gather together for an Easter potluck brunch!

We are looking forward to the end of winter and an exciting spring around St. James! As always, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

### Godly Play for March:

**March 5<sup>th</sup> Faces of Easter I, II, III**

**March 19<sup>th</sup> The Greatest Parable 3**

**March 12<sup>th</sup> Faces of Easter IV, V**

**March 26<sup>th</sup> The Greatest Parable 4**

## 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: Ta Wei Tsai, [music@saintjamespres.org](mailto:music@saintjamespres.org)

Treasurer: [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

Tess Bowers  
 Aaron Caruso  
 Sarah Condreay  
 Faye Hill (Clerk of Session)  
 Ryan Knight  
 Maureen Kosa  
 Andrew McLaurin  
 Jimmy Parks  
 Nebiyu Tesfa

## DEACONS

Deacons Parish 1 Merry Thomas\*, Alice Bailey  
 Deacons Parish 2 Pam Gibson  
 Deacons Parish 3 Julie Keyes, Carla Shafer  
 Deacons Parish 4 Valerie McBeth, Claudia Allan  
 Deacons Parish 5 Pam Gibson, Adam Beaty  
 Deacons Parish 6 Kirsten Oliver, Amy Morriss\*  
 \*Deacon Co-Moderators

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

3/1	Gus Gustafson	🎂
3/3	Jody DeWilde	🎂
3/8	Martha Speer	🎂
3/11	Stacy Thomas	🎂
3/15	Shannon Parks-Beck	🎂
3/17	Liam DeWilde	🎂
3/18	Madeleine Smith	🎂
3/21	Marion Dobbie	🎂
3/21	Pam Gibson	🎂
3/24	Zach Melrose	🎂
3/25	Peter & Mary Van der Veen	💕
3/26	Jeff & Sharon King	💕
3/27	Cindy Bauleke	🎂
3/27	Donna Lane	🎂
3/28	Mike Smith	🎂
3/28	Margaret Humble	🎂
3/30	Jim Kosa	🎂

### 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

**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