

What direction are you going? If your life was charted out on a map, could you discern which direction is your true north? Or are we lost along the path, floating along?

Could we learn to journey deeper into faith, hope, and love? Could we “get better” at loving God and loving our neighbors?

These are the kinds of questions **Spiritual Formation** asks. *How do we mature in faith after we find ourselves in Christ?*

We may think we are complete once we have entered the life of faith. We have assurance through the grace of Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection seal for God’s beloved a place in God’s family. God loves us; we follow God’s way, and all is well.

Right? Right. That is one of the central teachings of the Reformed tradition (Presbyterians included) — it is not through our works of righteousness or our acts of service that God loves us more. God’s grace and grace alone bring us into wholeness with God. AND...then what?

We believe in Christ’s love and experience belonging in the Christian community. And as we do, we learn to adapt our behaviors and attitudes into a more wholly aligned way of living in the world that makes this believing and belonging hit the ground in real life.

Spiritual formation is a **sacred journey** of checking in and retooling along the road of faith to stay strong (and grow). The life of faith does not stop with belief. It opens from there. As modern Christians, we wrestle with this. Our ancient Christian family did as well. For generations, Christians have crafted community rules regarding prayer rhythms, service, breaking bread, and worship to continue their growth.

During the 2023-24 academic year, our community will look at how to take intentional steps forward along this sacred journey. Starting in October, we’ll spend time learning and conversing about how to set a “**Rule of Life**,” an ancient method that can help busy, modern people like you and me enjoy God and grow deeper in faith. In the Winter, we’ll move into a time of designing our “**Rhythm of Life**” — once we set a rule, we have to order our lives around that rule. Finally, during the Spring/Summer of 2024, we will tune into the practice of “**Resting in Life**” (sabbath-keeping), which God intends us to use throughout our weeks (and lives) to rest, reflect, and set intentions for what lies ahead.

We are on a sacred journey together. And we want to, as our recent teaching from Hebrews 10 reminded us of, “provoke one another on to love and good deeds.” We can spur and push one another by encouraging intentional commitments to spiritual practices that strengthen us for the sacred journey.

Please participate in these offerings through the coming year and share with your St. James family the joys of growing deeper in faith for the journey. Stay tuned for details about classes, books, and offerings to help us all along the road.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Seth



CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

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



Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries!

It is hard to believe that we are already into September. The summer of '23 has flown by with some amazing events! We kicked off summer with a full milestone celebration Sunday honoring our over 30 kids, youth, and young adults. June ended with an amazing Camp Creation, full of fun, songs, games, crafts, Godly Play, and even the 'Dilla from Manila and our own St. James Trail Mixers took a hike to Fragrance Lake.

July saw St. James at Bellingham Pride festival, a Bellingham Bells game, a youth group bowling trip, our annual all church picnic, and another great Trail Mixers event.

August slowed down a little, but we welcomed Rev's Greg Ellis and Doug Bunnell for our annual pulpit swap, the youth group participated in a work party pulling ivy with the Whatcom Million Trees project and had a poetry writing meeting, the Trail Mixers had a great final outing to Fort Casey, and we wrapped up the summer with a great Blessing of the Backpacks service.

With such a busy and fun summer, it's easy to feel a little blue with the changing of the season, but fall is looking to be just as busy and fun!



We hope you will join us Sunday, September 3rd during the service to view a short movie capturing our amazing summer. September 17th is Kickoff Sunday. We will celebrate the new Godly Play school year with an ice cream sundae bar after service. The Godly Play classroom will also be open for exploration and information for all ages. We will also be starting a 9:00am class led by Jeff King on the correlations between modern psychology and the scriptures.

We will be starting a new women's bible study for the year titled *Sacred Encounters* on the last Tuesday morning of each month beginning the 26th of September. Please let Tracy know if you would be interested in having childcare provided for the event.

As always, we are in need of volunteers for Godly Play. If you have ever considered being a storyteller or just want to learn more about Godly Play we will be holding a training on September 30th.

We are also hoping to bring back our Toddler Time and schedule a family game night. Keep checking for more information on those events.

If you have any questions about any of these events please don't hesitate to contact me!

September Godly Play Schedule

September 3rd Bishop Barbara Harris

September 10th Work Day

September 17th Creation/Falling Apart

September 24th The Ark and the Flood

Sacred Encounters

The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts

On Tuesday, September 26th, a new and very exciting Women's Bible Study will begin and will continue on the last Tuesdays of each month through June, 2024. The study is titled "Sacred Encounters" and sub-titled "The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts". Luke is the gospel writer of both Luke and Acts and together they present a continuing story.



Track of Faith, Yongzang Klen

Each of the nine lessons is centered around a different Bible story which demonstrates the unfolding of God's redemptive purpose in human history. Each lesson tells of a sacred encounter and teaches about the transformational love of Jesus Christ. Luke presents an inclusive and hope-filled message to his community and highlights the universal scope of Jesus' message.

You will not want to miss this Bible Study and the interesting discussions that will take place as we share our understandings and questions. The study books are \$10 each and may be purchased from Faye Hill or the Church office. The study sessions take place on the last Tuesdays of each month (except December) at 10:30am in the Church Lounge. Please email or call Faye if you have questions.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

submitted by Faye Hill, Clerk of Session

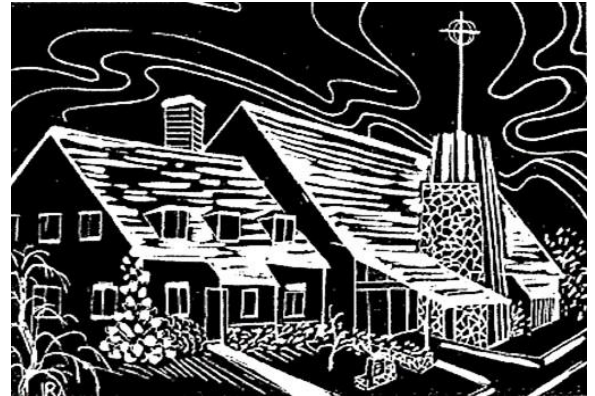
Highlights of the Session Meeting on August 13, 2023

- The Session gathered in the Church Lounge at noon on Sunday, August 13th.
- New Treasurer Katie Dunne, visited the Session for the first time and presented financial reports. She answered questions and helped the Session understand the new reports produced by QuickBooks.

Here are the balances for the month of July:

Beginning balance	\$92,771.63
Expenses	29,911.44
Income	18,499.77
Ending balance	\$81,359.96

- Kirsten Oliver was the representative from the Board of Deacons. She reported that the recent congregational picnic at Squalicum Park was fun for all ages. Deacons are still getting to know the people in their parishes. The parish lists are posted on the bulletin board outside the Lounge. She requested that the Nominating Committee begin soon to find church officers.
- The Building and Grounds Committee reported that they will be purchasing folding chairs for the building. They are also exploring possibilities for new windows and window coverings for the Horizon Room.
- The Christian Faith Formation Committee will soon hire new Godly Play teachers to replace those who have left.
- The Loving Welcome Committee will be exploring ideas for a family retreat in 2024.
- The Mission and Social Action Committee disbursed the funds for the third quarter as follows: \$1,000 to the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation, \$1,000 to Skookum Kids, \$600 each to DVSAS, Community to Community, Whatcom Peace and Justice, Multifaith Network for Climate Action, and Familias Unidas por la Justicia.
- The Personnel Committee met recently to read and discuss the Annual Job Reviews for Christian Faith Director, Ministry Assistant and Music Director. They concluded that we have a dedicated and talented staff at St. James.
- The Nominating Committee will meet this month to begin the search for deacons and elders for the 2024-27 term.
- Pastor Seth is working to develop the following educational programs for the months ahead: Rule of Life Course, Presbyterian Basics/Membership, and an Advent Carols study.



FAMILY PROMISE THANK YOU

Thank you to those who provided meal kits and delivered them to families living in Interfaith Coalition housing at Cottage Place in Ferndale, in August. The meal kits are always appreciated by the families as well as the extras often included like the school supplies delivered this visit.

PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS SPECIAL OFFERING

Please join us in the Peace & Global Witness special offering. Gifts to the Peace & Global Witness Offering helps more people experience freedom and dignity. 25% of this offering stays with our congregation to support peacemaking and reconciliation in our community. 25% of this offering goes to mid council to support peacemaking and 50% supports the work for peace and reconciliation being done by Presbyterians across the globe. You can donate through our website using the drop down menu tab or through the envelopes that will be distributed on World Communion Sunday (October 1).

FOREST BATHING/ NATURE THERAPY

Sep 23, 9:00am – 12:00pm

This event is part of the City's ALL IN for Climate Action Week. [Find a full list of events.](#)

Please join [Stillpoint at Becksides](#) for a guided Forest Bathing/Nature Therapy experience on Saturday, Sept. 23, 9am -12pm on Stillpoint's five acres of sacred earth with beautiful trees.

Forest Bathing, also referred to as Nature Therapy, is a practice of soaking up sights, sounds, and the feel of our natural environment. This event offers an opportunity to experience a nourishing form of embodied self-care. There are studies showing that, for some people, ongoing experiences of Forest Bathing can be especially beneficial for those who are called to help heal the broken relationships between humans and the more-than-human world.

In a climate changed world, healing of all life happens TOGETHER, or not at all. The medicine that brings healing is in experiencing our interconnection. Forest bathing is a valued component of growing our awareness of oneness.

Join us for this outdoor, contemplative experience of entanglement with nature and each other. This event is hosted by Stillpoint at Becksides in partnership with Unity Spiritual Center and St. James Presbyterian Church.



OPOP - One Parish One Prisoner Report

St James has a group of seven people who are gathering monthly and independently writing letters to form a relationship with Clifford. Clifford is a 55 year old man who has been incarcerated in the Monroe prison system for thirty years.

Most of us have written and received our first reply letters. We are guided by a series of steps developed by the OPOP program which has been used throughout Washington and other states. This program includes videos and study modules to understand what prison life is through the stories of actual prisoners who have successfully emerged from prison back into today's society.

One of our current challenges is finding common interests with Clifford to build a bond of friendship by sharing our everyday lives. We have already found some shared hobbies!

Clifford is scheduled to be released in May of 2024. Our group will have less than the normal two year period to apply OPOP program results to help Clifford re-enter life in Bellingham as a metalworker.

We would welcome your prayers and look forward to introducing ourselves to the congregation at a commissioning service in September.

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: Ta Wei Tsai, music@saintjamespres.org

Treasurer: Katie Dunne, stjamestreasurer.bham@gmail.com

Administrative Ministry Assistant: Sharon King, office@saintjamespres.org

SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Tess Bowers

Aaron Caruso

Sarah Condreay

Faye Hill (Clerk of Session)

Maureen Kosa

Andrew McLaurin

Jimmy Parks

Nebiyu Tesfa

DEACONS

Deacons Parish 1	Merry Thomas*, Alice Bailey
Deacons Parish 2	Pam Gibson, Judy Buchan
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



<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

BOOK CLUB

St. James book club is currently reading *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver, 'With a scientist's attention to detail and a writer's compassion for a diverse array of people, *Flight Behavior* tracks a young woman whose life morphs and takes flight just as she learns about the very real problems of the world in which she's spread her new wings.' Copies of the book are available in the office. We will meet the third Monday in September, Monday September 18th, at 7:00pm via zoom. Contact Tracy for the zoom link.

PROGRAMS SHARING OUR FACILITY

AA Fairhaven Group
 AA Grateful Hearts Women's Group
 AA Men's Book Study Group
 AA SOS Men's Group
 Bayside Co-op Preschool
 Bellingham Community Chorus
 Bellingham Ukulele Group
 Boy Scouts Troop 7
 Happy Hour Al-Anon
 Liberation Yoga
 Linda's Tai Chi
 Little Sapling Music
 Overeaters Anonymous
 St. James Fitness
 The Table Church
 Whatcom Weavers Guild

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

9/6	Margaret McVie	🎂
9/6	John Sibold	🎂
9/8	John Harris	🎂
9/11	Bill & Katy Read	💕
9/12	Gracelyn Dobson	🎂
9/13	Amy Morriss	🎂
9/13	Aaron & Tracy Caruso	💕
9/14	Robb & Cheryl McGregor	💕
9/14	Door Parks	🎂
9/17	Dave Nelson	🎂
9/17	Brian Johnson	🎂
9/18	Ann Lary	🎂
9/19	David Anderson	🎂
9/21	Asher Thomas	🎂
9/23	Faye Hill	🎂
9/26	Marcus Baker	🎂
9/30	Phyllis Jones	🎂

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

