



December 22, 2024

“Hope Is Worth The Risk”

Matthew 1:18-25

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**WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE  
A TIME FOR GATHERING AND QUIET MEDITATION**

*Welcome. We are so glad you have joined us for worship today.*

*We would love to connect with you and support  
how God is moving in your life.*

*Please visit [www.saintjamespres.org/contact](http://www.saintjamespres.org/contact) to share  
how we can be of support!*

*\*Please stand in body or in spirit*

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**ORDER FOR WORSHIP**

**PRELUDE**

Leah Bruno

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Rev. Dr. Seth Thomas

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP & CANDLELIGHTING**

Louise Hardin

In a weary and worn world,  
how do we begin again?  
Where do we start?

**Let us begin with tenderness.**

**Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve.**

**Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.**

**Let us begin with love.**

Yes, let us start with love.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace,  
joy, and love.

**May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone.**

**May the truth in these lights help us begin again.**

May it be so! Amen.

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" - GTG 88

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God,

You paint pictures of what could be,

**but we declare those visions impossible.**

You speak of the lion lying down with the lamb,

**but we spout skepticism and uncertainty.**

You dream of a more just day,

**but we poke holes in the plan, unable to fathom that horizon.**

Forgive us for losing sight of hope.

**Forgive us for assuming that what we see is all there is.**

Open up our hearts to see the world as you see it.

**Open up our hearts to risk hope, to dream dreams,**

**and to not be afraid of either.**

**With gratitude we pray, amen.**

**ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE**

**\*THE PEACE**

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD**

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

**FIRST SCRIPTURE READING**

Luke 1:46-55 pg. 57

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**CHORAL ANTHEM**

"Prepare the Way of the Lord"  
W. A. Mozart, arr. Hal. H. Hopson  
St. James Chancel Choir

**SERMON READING**

Matthew 1:18-25 pg. 1

**SERMON**

**"Hope Is Worth The Risk"**

**Rev. Dr. Seth Thomas**

**\*HYMN OF RESPONSE**

**"Wait for the Lord" - GTG 90**

## **WE RESPOND TO GOD'S INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP**

**JOYS & CONCERNS**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY**

**\*DOXOLOGY**

**"For the Life That You Have Given" - GTG 717**

**For the life that you have given, for the love in Christ made known,  
With these fruits of time and labor, with these gifts that are your own;  
Here we offer, Lord, our praises; heart and mind and strength we bring;  
Give us grace to love and serve you, Living what we pray and sing.**

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**\*SINGING WELCOME AS CHILDREN RETURN TO SANCTUARY**

**Welcome, children, welcome, we are glad you're here.**

**Welcome, children, welcome. Advent time is here.**

**\*HYMN OF COMMITMENT**

**"People, Look East" - GTG 105**

## **WE GO INTO THE WORLD AS GOD'S AMBASSADORS**

**\*BLESSING & CHARGE**

**POSTLUDE**

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*As our worship concludes, our service begins.  
We invite you to join us for fellowship following worship. Please introduce  
yourself to those new to you and extend a welcome of peace and  
friendship to everyone.*

**Next Week, December 29, 2024  
“Don’t Forget to Laugh”  
Guest Worship Leader, Jessica Parks**

**Pastor Seth will be away on vacation from December 26 to January 4**

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## **GODLY PLAY:** Advent IV

This lesson, along with the rest of the Advent lessons, helps the children to anticipate the mystery of Christmas. In the Advent lessons we will move toward Bethlehem and arrive at the birth of Jesus and the lighting of the Christ Candle. This week's lessons focus on the Magi and the birth of Jesus.

The Godly Play room will open at 10:30am. Students will be brought upstairs for the final hymn.

## **LECTIONARY TEXTS**

For anyone wishing to study the lectionary or worship texts for this week:

Luke 1:46-55 (worship)

Matthew 1:18-25 (sermon)

Psalm 80:1-7

Micah 5:2-5a

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

## **HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSURE**

The church offices will be closed for regular business between December 23 and January 3. Staff will be available during this time via email, though response times will be slower due to vacations.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL BIBLE TIME**

Join us beginning January 12th at 10:15am in the lounge for a time to look at, learn, and discuss bible verses. Led by Kat DeVaney, this is a time for all ages to come together and examine scripture together.

## **CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING**

Please prayerfully consider donating through the Christmas Joy Offering. This offering honors and celebrates leaders like retired pastors, and church workers and their families who have faithfully guided us and find themselves in financial need. Your gift will also honor and celebrate emerging leaders to help them pursue their education. You will find a pamphlet in today's bulletin and a pamphlet and an envelope in the December 22nd bulletin. You may use the envelope or the QR code or give through our website using the drop down Christmas Joy tab, families with children also received a tin to collect change that can be turned in to Tracy or the office. Please give generously to this Presbyterian tradition which began in the 1930s.

## **ST. JAMES WRITERS CIRCLE - January 2, 2025**

St. James Writers Circle is a gathering of members and friends who are writing (or would like to be) prose, poems, novels, short stories. We are open to all genres and topics, and encouraging of spiritual and other content that is an authentic reflection of your personal views and explorations of ideas. We will meet to support each other's writing and provide resources. Meetings at the church will be at 10 AM on the first Thursday of each month, (Nov. 7, Dec. 5, Jan. 2 and so on) and on Zoom on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7 PM (Nov 20, Dec. 18, Jan. 15 and so on).

Writing Circle facilitators are Maureen Kosa and Carla Shafer.

## **BELLINGHAM COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

We are once again joining with Lowell Elementary school to provide snacks for children who may need them during the school day. We are asking for donations of individually wrapped nut-free snacks. Items can be left in the tub in the narthex or outside Tracy's office. This will be an ongoing need until the school year ends next June. Our goal is 100 snacks/month.

Lowell is also in need of mentors and volunteers to read with children at the school. Please contact [cfm@saintjamespres.org](mailto:cfm@saintjamespres.org) if you have any questions or are interested in volunteering.

## **UPCOMING CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

We have two forthcoming Congregational Meetings in January 2025, following Sunday worship. All are welcome to attend, and active congregational members are welcome to vote.

- January 5 – Nomination of Incoming Elders & Deacons
- January 26 – Annual Congregational Meeting & Reports

## **PRAYERS, PRAISES, AND UPDATES**

If you have a prayer request or update you would like to share, please email [office@saintjamespres.org](mailto:office@saintjamespres.org).

## THIS WEEK AT ST. JAMES

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- Monday, 12/23      Church office closed through Friday, January 3  
4:00pm, St. James Fitness, open to all
- Wednesday, 12/25      No Toddler Time
- Thursday, 12/26      4:00pm, St. James Fitness, open to all  
7:00pm, Choir rehearsal
- Next Sunday, 12/29      10:30am In-person and streamed Sunday  
Worship Service  
<https://www.facebook.com/saintjamespres/>

## PROGRAMS SHARING OUR ST. JAMES FACILITY

- AA Fairhaven Group.....Mondays/ Thursdays  
AA Grateful Hearts.....Mondays  
AA Men's Book Study Group.....Mondays  
AA SOS Men's Group.....Wednesdays  
AA Meditation Group.....Fridays  
Bayside Co-op Preschool.....Monday-Friday during school year  
Bellingham Community Chorus.....Tuesdays September-April  
Bellingham Ukulele Group (BUG).....1st Saturday of each month  
Boy Scouts Troop 7.....Mondays  
Happy Hour Al-Anon.....Tuesdays  
Liberation Yoga.....TBD  
Linda's Tai Chi.....Mondays  
Little Sapling Music.....Wednesdays/ Thursdays quarterly  
Overeaters Anonymous.....Saturdays  
The Table Church.....Sundays  
Whatcom Weavers Guild.....TBD  
Wild Hearts group.....TBD  
World Peace Poets.....TBD

## ST. JAMES STAFF

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

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

Music Director: Leah Bruno, [music@saintjamespres.org](mailto:music@saintjamespres.org)

Treasurer: Stefany Ness, [treasurer@saintjamespres.org](mailto:treasurer@saintjamespres.org)

Admin: Sharon King, [office@saintjamespres.org](mailto:office@saintjamespres.org)

910 14th Street, Bellingham, WA 98225 360-733-1325 [www.saintjamespres.org](http://www.saintjamespres.org)

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Pastor Seth's Office Hours: Tuesday - Thursday 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

To schedule ahead of time: <http://www.calendly.com/pastorseththomas>  
or [pastor@saintjamespres.org](mailto:pastor@saintjamespres.org)

*In consideration of others, please refrain from wearing heavy perfumes and scents, and please silence your cell phones before the service.*

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**You can access online worship through  
our website at [www.saintjamespres.org/live](http://www.saintjamespres.org/live)**

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Give toward an  
existing pledge:



Give to  
St. James Online:

[Click Here](#)

Give to general  
offering:



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