



ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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JANUARY 2025 // SUBMITTED BY THE ST. JAMES SESSION

*Sanctify a fast,  
call a solemn assembly.  
Gather the elders  
and all the inhabitants of the land  
to the house of the LORD your God,  
and cry out to the LORD.*  
Joel 1:14

*"The congregation shall hold an annual meeting...for any or all of  
the purposes appropriate for congregational consideration."*

PC(USA) Book of Order,  
G-1.05.02 - Annual and Special Meetings

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## MINISTERS

THE CONGREGATION

## STAFF

PASTOR, The Rev. Dr. Seth J. Thomas  
pastor@saintjamespres.org

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILY  
MINISTRIES, Tracy Caruso  
cfm@saintjamespres.org

TREASURER, Stefany Ness  
treasurer@saintjamespres.org

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR  
Sharon King  
office@saintjamespres.org

WORSHIP DIRECTOR, Leah Bruno  
music@saintjamespres.org

CUSTODIAN, Jerry Arreola  
jerryarreola468@gmail.com

## SESSION ELDERS

Moderator, The Rev. Dr. Seth J. Thomas

### CLASS OF 2024

Sarah Condreay (Sabbatical)  
Andrew McLaurin (Finance & Stewardship)  
Maureen Kosa (Mission & Social Action)  
Carla Shafer (Clerk Pro Tem, 1 yr. term)

### CLASS OF 2025

Aaron Caruso\* (Building & Grounds)  
Jimmy Parks (Christian Faith Formation)  
Nebiyu Tesfa (Nominating)

### CLASS OF 2026

Ralph Buchan\* (Personnel)  
Teresa Bowers\* (Loving Welcome) \*Church Trustee

## BOARD OF DEACONS

Co-Moderators, Holly Hagshenas & Merry Thomas

### CLASS OF 2024

Amy Morriss  
Carla Shafer  
Pam Gibson  
Julie Keyes

### CLASS OF 2025

Claudia Allan  
Valerie McBeth  
Judy Buchan

### CLASS OF 2026

Alice Bailey  
Gena Gustafson  
Behzad "Buzz" Hagshenas  
Holly Hagshenas  
Kirsten Oliver  
Merry Thomas



# ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

*January 26, 2025 - Agenda*

1. Call to Order / Opening Prayer / Quorum
2. Welcome
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (already approved by Session)
4. Review of the Annual Report
5. Report by Personnel Committee
6. Terms of Call Summary and Vote
7. 2024 Financial Report
8. 2025 Session Adopted Budget Presentation
9. Report by the Trustees
10. Outgoing Elder Report
11. Adjourn with Prayer & Doxology

# PASTOR'S REPORT

*Submitted by The Rev. Dr. Seth J. Thomas*

## Looking ahead

Most years, I feel that this report's work is to look back upon what we've accomplished. What programs did we support? What events did we attend? It's great to review and appreciate God's faithfulness in the past.

However, this year, so many things in our world feel pressing and seem to call our attention more urgently. Some have called our time the Age of Acceleration. Conflict, crisis, advancement, growth—these all seem to be increasing in their speed and frequency. So now, I find myself asking more focused questions: *"Who will we, the Church, be in these times?"*

Rather than looking back on what has happened, I want to look ahead to what we are called to in the coming year.

## Tending our Gardens

Firstly, the times call us to tend to what is ours carefully. As exiles in captivity, the Hebrew people were instructed to plant roots, build homes, and invest in the good of their place. Now is a time for us to do much the same.

We need greater support for administrative and organizational work. As we continue to modernize our processes to work efficiently in a post-pandemic time, we need to review our procedures and policies. We need safety plans that protect the most vulnerable of us in times of crisis. We also need administrative support in maintaining our church records, membership, and finances.

Tending our gardens also means taking care of our physical property and grounds. We have an old building that requires intentional maintenance and upgrades, and we have garden beds that need planting. We have a faithful history of stewarding this church's assets. As we continue to do so, we make our neighborhood more welcoming.

## Doing the good work that is ours to do

Speaking of our neighborhood, I'm reminded that context and proximity are crucial to discerning our particular calling as a church. There are many ways the world hungers for hope, love, and joy—so many ways the church can bear witness to God's justice and peace. As we look ahead, I want to ask: What is our good work to do?

In February, I'm going to begin working with our Deacons and Elders to train them in deep listening. As the year goes on, they will be sent out to hear your stories, your hopes, and your sense of God's calling for our church. What is our good work to do? We want to listen and discern that so we can most effectively direct our ministries here at St. James. We can't do everything, but we are equipped to serve as God calls us.

We will continue to equip one another. In Lent, we hope to host another New Members class, where you can learn more about being a Presbyterian and belonging here. Tracy Caruso and the Christian Faith Formation committee will survey our congregation about our learning needs and desires. We also hope to host another Youth Confirmation Class during Lent.

## Forming deeper social bonds

Learning about our faith is important, as is living it out in community with one another.

We need to do deliberate work this year to strengthen our social bonds with one another. We need each other. Everything seems to be designed to separate and divide us these days, so the church's witness must be to offer an alternative, a solution of hope and collaboration.

*Continued on next page...*

# PASTOR'S REPORT, CONT.

*Submitted by Rev. Dr. Seth J. Thomas*

Here are a few ways we want to invite you to deepen your social connections at St. James:

- **Dinners for Eight:** Sign up with Teresa Bowers this Winter and Spring to participate in this low-key dinner activity.
- **Contribute your words:** We connect through sharing our gifts. Do you have a poem, a song, or an art piece you would like to share with our community? Talk to Pastor Seth.
- **Online Community:** We're expanding some of our digital offerings, including online groups, directories, and community space. Download the "Church Center" app and connect with St. James to check it out. (See Church Center "ad" in this report.)

We have all heard it said that we live amidst a loneliness epidemic. The Church is an antidote to this. We can't solve the whole problem, but we can help. We want the people who come through these doors to know they are safe here and can find a community of support. And we can improve on how we do this welcoming. We need more folks to commit to greeting on Sundays. We need some helpers who would make connections with new visitors. We have lots of great ideas — we need active helpers. Talk with Pastor Seth to jump in.

## **Steeling ourselves**

None of us know what the next day holds. "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Jesus' instructions from the Sermon on the Mount weave to remind us again of the need to do the work that is here and now. What is ours to do? Jesus teaches us not to worry because there is work to do today.

To do the work of the day, we must be strong. We must steel or gird ourselves for today's calling. As I consider how we tend our gardens, deepen our bonds, and focus, I am drawn to this idea of "steeling" ourselves. We need to lean on one another, hold each other's hands, sing, and cry together. In these

moments of embrace and connection, we grow strong in Christ's love. Come what may, whether it be a country deep in conflict, a climate crisis unfolding, or the turmoil of our own ups and downs — come what may, I believe we must hold fast together.

Practically, we are in a time of transition. Many of our long-standing leaders and contributors to our congregation are aging or passing on to God's glory. This year, we said goodbye to members through departures and death. This has led to a shortfall in what we had expected for Annual Revenue. We have plans for how to address this within our current financial holdings. But it is also a time to get creative about generating revenue as a community. We have physical space that we would like to see used more. We can continue to make our church a hub for the South Hill, Happy Valley, and Fairhaven neighborhoods. The future for the Church is to expand our partnerships and build our communities. How might we do this and support our ministries as well?

We also welcomed many new visitors and attendees in worship. Our community is growing, and we welcome all who have joined us. We hope you will find a way to get involved now as we look ahead. Our call, here and now, is to embrace the twists and turns of the road. We bless what has come before us and offer God our thanksgiving. And we welcome possibility and new perspectives, helping us step into the next chapter of God's ministry here at St. James.

May we journey together through it all. I pray that you find the included reports helpful in seeing where we are as a church and where we need to strengthen. We celebrate, thank God, and steel ourselves for the work ahead.

Grace and peace,



Pastor Seth Thomas

# BOARD OF DEACONS

*Holly Hagshenas and Merry Thomas (Deacon Co-Moderators)*

- Parish 1 – Alice Bailey and Merry Thomas
- Parish 2 – Judy Buchan and Gena Gustafson
- Parish 3 – Carla Shafer and Buzz and Holly Hagshenas
- Parish 4 – Claudia Allan and Valerie McBeth
- Parish 5 – Pam Gibson and Julie Keyes
- Parish 6 – Kirsten Oliver and Amy Morriss

In 2024, the deacons of St. James continued their dedicated service to the parish, providing consistent care, support, and fellowship to all members.

The deacons made a concerted effort to celebrate important milestones in the lives of parishioners by sending thoughtful cards and emails and making personal phone calls. Special attention was given to those unable to attend in-person services, mainly the homebound and those who prefer to worship online. In addition to maintaining these connections, the deacons brightened the holidays by delivering flowers, treats, and poinsettias at Christmas, ensuring all felt remembered and valued.

The deacons also offered practical assistance, such as providing transportation, meals, and deliveries, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to supporting the well-being of their parish members.

A key aspect of the deacons' ministry involves hosting memorial receptions for long-time members. These gatherings allow families and friends to come together in a supportive and compassionate environment to remember and honor their loved ones.

This Summer, the deacons organized a well-attended picnic on the lawn at St. James, offering a much-needed occasion for parishioners to gather in fellowship. We also held a lunch in October to celebrate Pastor Seth and his family's return from their sabbatical. To foster inclusivity, the deacons also renamed our November luncheon the "Autumn Lunch," inviting all parishioners, regardless of their parish assignment, to participate. These group events were excellent ways to connect as a church community.

In July, our Deacons said goodbye to Amy Morriss, who had served valiantly as our Moderator. We thank her for her devoted service in her time at St. James. As the new year begins, we say a fond farewell and "thank you" to our outgoing deacons: Pam Gibson, Julie Keyes, and Carla Shafer. Thank you each for your steadfast work as Deacons at St. James. We also celebrate the welcoming of Diana Philbeck, Jean Seater, Jenny Sue LeSchander, Gretchen Pfueller, and Alice Beaty to our incoming class of Deacons.

The deacons remain wholeheartedly committed to serving the St. James congregation as a team and individually in 2025 and beyond.

# CLERK OF SESSION REPORT

*Carla Shafer (Clerk Pro Tem)*

“Administration is ministry.”

The Clerk of Session's job is to ensure we keep an accurate record of our church's actions. What we decide and do are important—they are markers of how we live out our faith in Jesus.

This year, we were fortunate to have 2 Clerks of Session active. At the beginning of his term on Session, Casey Morriss generously volunteered to serve as our new Clerk of Session. However, a job transition called Casey and Amy away from St. James at the start of the Summer. In his brief months as Clerk, Casey offered excellent support.

With gratitude, the Session welcomed the willing Carla Shafer to complete the 2024 year as Clerk of Session. Carla, who has previously served our congregation in this role, jumped right in and supported the Session through Pastor Seth's sabbatical and the completion of the year. Carla has brought vital collaboration between the Deacons and Elders in this Pro Tem Clerk role, as well as much appreciated St. James knowledge from her previous terms of service.

This year, Ruling Elders who served on the Session were Teresa Bowers (chair of the Loving Welcome Committee), Ralph Buchan (Personnel) Aaron Caruso (Building and Grounds), Sarah Condrey (Sabbatical), Maureen Kosa (Missions), Andrew McLaurin (Finance), Jimmy Parks (Christian Faith Formation), and Nebiyu Tesfa (Nominating). The St. James Session thanks Janice Smith, Kyle Anderson, and Randy Pries for their support during Pastor Seth's sabbatical.

As with each year, there are transitions and departures. In February, we welcomed 5 new members into the St. James congregation: Sharon Freeburg, Skip Gibson, Diana Philbeck, Katie-Gray Landham, and Heather Williams. Here you will see our membership changes for the year. As well, we remember Bob Smith, Marlene Amman, and Dale French, who were welcomed into God's glory in June of this year.

Additionally, the role of the Clerk of Session is to connect St. James with the larger body of the Church. This involves reporting our gain or loss of members. It means communicating changes with our Presbytery, including the increase this year of our Annual membership per capita, which is now \$58.34 per member. We are a part of God's movement through the whole Church, together with our siblings around the world bearing witness to God's love.

We have a **pressing need: A new Clerk of Session.** Carla Shafer will be completing her interim as Clerk at the end of January. We currently do not have anyone committed to this role and would ideally like to find someone willing to do a 3-year term. The role is important...and manageable. Here's what it looks like:

- Monthly Session meeting, 2nd Sunday after church
- Keep minutes for Session meetings and Congregational Meetings (2-3/year)
- Work with Pastor Seth to complete Annual Congregational Reporting (in Jan/Feb)
- Organize the digital and print Church records

Please connect with Carla Shafer or Pastor Seth to support this vital need. Thank you!

St. James Membership	2022	2023	2024
Year start active members	127	128	105
New members	7	2	5
Members transferred	(1)	(1)	0
Members deceased	(4)	(1)	(2)
Members removed	(1)	(23)	(0)
Year-end active members	128	105	108

# LOVING WELCOME

*Submitted by Teresa Bowers (Elder)*

Loving Welcome committee has been involved in many events over the last year. Game nights, movie nights, Bingo and luncheon including our annual Advent Festival and soup luncheon have brought joy and encouraged conversation and closer relationships at St James.

Our website is an essential tool for outreach and communication, so we decided it should fall to our committee to help with it. Pastor Seth and Sharon do a great job of keeping it going; early in the year, we worked together to update content and improve consistency across different devices.

One special highlight of the year was the Sunshine Through the Rain Event on Mother's Day weekend in May. We had such a joyous time, celebrating the artistic talents of many of our Saint James family. Songs, piano and poetry rang out in the sanctuary, while below in the Fellowship Hall treats were enjoyed during a silent art auction displaying more talents including painting, jewelry, wood working and even children's artwork. We all agreed that we should hold this event each year. It filled our souls with joy and also successfully raised funds for our Church Retreat.

The church retreat in September, held during Pastor Seth's sabbatical, was at the Warm Beach Retreat Center for two nights or available to those who just came down for the day on Saturday. Our fundraising efforts made it possible for anyone to attend. It was a heartwarming event with deep conversations and special memories. I will always remember the kids at campfire staying late to show us their silly improv skits even after songs and marshmallow roasting.

Special Thanks to all the many St James helpers throughout this year. For me personally health issues have caused me to go blind as of March 2024, so I have truly been blessed by so much help and support from so many at St James. If you see me in church, be sure to say Hello and tell me your name, perhaps bring me into a conversation. I love to greet new people and get to know them, but it's challenging when I can't see faces.

For 2025 I'm looking forward to continuing these activities and open to new ideas, so feel free to reach out and ask me if you want to be more involved.



# FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP

*Submitted by Andrew McLaurin (Elder)*

The Finance and Stewardship committee has worked hard to faithfully track the finances of the church. The committee has met monthly throughout the year. Our former treasurer, Katie Dunne, resigned in the fall. After a careful search, we welcomed Stefany Ness as our new treasurer. She has quickly learned our processes and is helping us refine some of our reporting. If you have the opportunity, please welcome her to St. James.

During FY 2024 we noted periodic shortfalls in giving. We anticipated that giving would resume to expected levels following the summer. That did not occur. We did not receive approximately \$7,000 of our pledges. Our general offerings were down by more than \$23,000 compared to budget and 2023 giving. This left us with a deficit of over \$30,000. We had expected a deficit and had budgeted the use of endowment earnings to help cover a shortfall; however, the decline in tithing was not expected.

Despite the shortfall we were able to meet all of our obligations. We remain committed to tithing 10% of our pledges to the Missions and Social Actions Committee. Additionally, we are committed to supporting our staff and providing adequate wages. We are fortunate to benefit from the rental of our extra space. We are looking to expand this opportunity in 2025. As expected, our Trustees, staff, elders and deacons continue to find ways to reduce costs as much as possible.

We are blessed to have several endowment funds to which past and present members have donated. These funds are summarized in the back of this report. The earnings from these funds are not used on a regular basis but can assist the church in multiple ways beyond budgetary shortfalls. This year earnings were used to replace the ovens in the kitchen, replace the windows in the Horizon room and repair the damage found in the south wall (see report from Building and Grounds).

Looking ahead to 2025, we recognize that we are facing some uncertainties in our finances. Our recent pledge campaign yielded pledges comparable to the amount received in 2024 but well under the pledged amounts in 2023. We are budgeting our general offerings at actual 2024 levels. We trust these pledges will be honored and that general offerings will be consistent. We are fortunate that we have endowment funds to help offset deficits; however, we don't want to rely on these indefinitely.

I so appreciate the members of the Finance and Stewardship committee. After many years of service, Lindsay Anderson and Ray Dellecker stepped down from the committee. Judy Buchan joined the committee mid-year. Buzz Hagshenas is coming onboard in February. The other members are Pam Gibson, Sharon King, Stefany Ness and Rev. Dr. Seth Thomas.

We are thankful for the support of our congregation. While we hope for tithing to be strong, we pray for our congregation to continue growing and for people to find St James to be a place of worship and comfort.

# BUILDING & GROUNDS

*Submitted by Aaron Caruso (Elder)*

The St. James Building and Grounds team once again spent most of our energy this year on building maintenance. What started as a window replacement was a whole remodel of the Horizon room. The final result has given us 14 new windows with new window coverings and brand new wall to replace the rotted one. In addition, the church heating system required a motor replacement that left the sanctuary without heat for a few weeks. Lastly, there was a roof leak caused by one of our recent windstorms that was easily fixed by our roofing company.

Thank you to all the Building and Grounds team for the hard work and making these projects run smoothly. Next year, we look forward to some technology improvements around the church. Stay tuned for what is happening next.



# CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

*Submitted by Tracy Caruso (Children & Family Ministries Director) with Jimmy Parks (Elder)*

2024 was a great year for St. James as a whole and especially for our Children and Family Ministries. We are seeing an increase in the number of families with children attending and are looking forward to keeping that growth coming during 2025.

In addition to all the traditional events and offerings St. James has such as fellowship events, Milestone Sunday, VBS, and many others, we are looking at adding or continuing some other events in 2025.

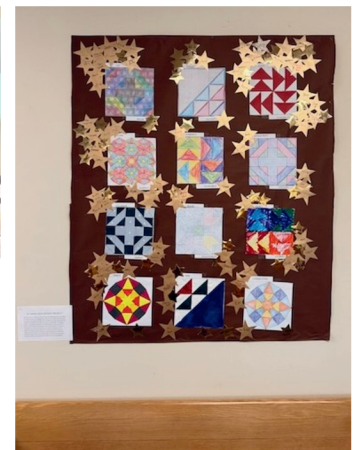
We are looking forward to another great year with our youth group and expanding on the growth from 2024. We will offer a high school confirmation class during lent and will be planning an overnight mini mission trip to camp Lutherwood this summer.

As our Godly Play class continues to grow, we will be looking for more volunteers to help build our program by becoming trained in Godly Play storytelling and door keeping. We will be holding a training for anyone interested in becoming a volunteer or just learning more about our Godly Play program. I will be attending the North American Godly Play conference in Vancouver, BC this summer and hope to bring back some fresh ideas for our Godly Play classroom.

We are looking forward to holding another St. James afternoon of art and showcasing all the many different artistic offerings our congregation has. Last year's event was a huge success and we are excited to see what our congregation has in store for us this year.

We encourage everyone to fill out the CFF adult education survey so we can continue to bring relevant adult education opportunities. We will be continuing with Pub Theology on the second and fourth Mondays through March. We have some amazing classes led by members of our congregation and we look forward to more contributions.

All of these events do require a good deal of planning and preparation so if you are interested in getting involved in any or all of these activities or have any questions about any of them, please don't hesitate to contact Tracy at [cfm@saintjamespres.org](mailto:cfm@saintjamespres.org).





# MISSION & SOCIAL ACTION

*Submitted by Maureen Kosa (Elder)*

*Committee Members: Carol Dellecker, Ray Dellecker, Gena Gustafson, Patricia Harris, Maureen Kosa (elder/chairperson), Amy Morriss, Gretchen Pfueller, Carla Schafer*

The Mission and Social Action committee meets monthly to share news, to discern where and how to best serve/support our community, and to choose volunteer activities in the community. Our yearly budget, approximately \$19,500 in 2024, represents 10% of SJP's anticipated income. One of the committee's main functions is to select recipients of our mission funds. About two-thirds of our funds support local mission work, with the remaining third going to our PC(USA) denomination for national and international work.

A few of our local opportunities to serve included helping The Table serve the Southside Community dinner last March. This event was sponsored by Our Savior's Lutheran Church in South Hill. We continue to support Road2Home's Gardenview Tiny Home Village with a donation and through our annual stocking project. This year we delivered 40 Christmas stockings to make the holidays a little brighter for the residents. We also received a generous \$500 donation from the St. James Fitness Club to help fill those stockings. We continued the Climate Action Newsletter and hope to jumpstart this again in 2025. We attended and supported the Urban Edition of the Sacred Earth Fair sponsored by the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice which was held at First Congregational Church here in Bellingham. We helped with a cleaning project for the opening of the new Lighthouse Mission building, and we participated in the Interfaith Coat Drive.

Our hope is to continue to propose actions for local and world organizations that further restoration of right relationships with each other, with our neighbors, and with our earth. We seek to continue work that impacts the well-being of ALL communities, and we warmly welcome anyone who would like to join our committee.

# 2024 MISSION & SOCIAL ACTION DISBURSEMENTS REPORT

*Submitted by Maureen Kosa (Elder)*

Recipient	Amount
<b>Local Partners</b>	
Bellingham Food Bank	\$2,500
NW Youth Services	\$1,000
Interfaith Network	\$1,000
Habitat for Humanity	\$1,000
Lighthouse Mission	\$1,000
Opportunity Council	\$1,000
Gardenview Road2Home	\$500
Stocking project Gardenview	\$500
Unity Village (Homes Now)	\$500
Lummi Boys & Girls Club	\$1,000
Skookum Kids	\$1,000
Bellingham Public Schools Foundation	\$1,000
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services of Whatcom County	\$600
Community2Community	\$600
Whatcom Peace & Justice	\$600
Multifaith Network for Climate Justice	\$600
Familias Unidas Por La Justicia	\$600
RE Sources (YEP program)	\$500
<b>Regional &amp; International</b>	
PC(USA) General Assembly Missions	\$1,000
Northwest Coast Presbytery Missions	\$1,000
PC(USA) Disaster Relief	\$1,000
<b>Total Missions Giving (Includes \$1000 for Contingency)</b>	<b>\$19,500</b>

# NOMINATING

This year's nominating committee comprised Skip Gibson, Patricia Harris, Faye Hill, Kirsten Oliver, Diana Philbeck, Carla Shafer, Nebiyu Tesfa, and Pastor Thomas (ex officio). The group met throughout 2024 to gather nominations for upcoming church Deacons and Elders openings. Through prayer, discernment, and conversation, we proposed nominees for this year's incoming classes, listed below.

The following nominees were presented to and approved by the congregation at our January 5, 2025, Congregational Meeting:

**BOARD OF DEACONS, CLASS OF 2026:**

Diana Philbeck and Jean Seater (1st terms)

**BOARD OF DEACONS, CLASS OF 2027:**

Alice Beaty, Jenny Sue LeSchander, and Gretchen Pfueller (1st terms)

**Our incoming Board of Deacons will be:**

Class of 2025: Valerie McBeth, and Judy Buchan

Class of 2026: Alice Bailey, Gena Gustafsen, Holly Hagshenas, Buzz Hagshenas, Kirsten Oliver, Diana Philbeck, Jean Seater, and Merry Thomas,

Class of 2027: Alice Beaty, Jenny Sue LeSchander, and Gretchen Pfueller

**RULING ELDERS, CLASS OF 2027:**

Carol Dellecker (1st term), Faye Hill (1st term)\* and Andrew McLaurin (2nd term)

**Our incoming Session of Ruling Elders is:**

Class of 2025: Aaron Caruso, Jimmy Parks, and Nebiyu Tesfa

Class of 2026: Teresa Bowers, Ralph Buchan

Class of 2027: Carol Dellecker, Faye Hill, and Andrew McLaurin

The committee wishes to thank all of our deacons and elders for their faithful work and dedication to the congregation of St James. We look forward to working with our new deacons and elders in the coming years.

*\*To be nominated on January 26, 2025 and installed at later date.*



# PERSONNEL

*Ralph Buchan (Elder)*

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The Personnel Committee cares for our St. James Staff, the vital people who work to support the ongoing business of the congregation. A priority for 2024 was a thorough review and update of staff job descriptions, ensuring clarity of duties and responsibilities.

During Pastor Seth's sabbatical, St. James was fortunate to have staff support from Rev. Janice Smith, who worked directly with our church staff July through September. Janice was an excellent support during staffing transitions and offered much-needed perspective on how we can better care for the staff going forward.

This Summer, we said farewell to our beloved Music Director, Ta Wei Tsai, who departed St. James to take up a full-time position as a Music Teacher at Roosevelt Elementary School in Bellingham. We thank Ta Wei for their time on our staff!

In September, we welcomed Leah Bruno as our new Music Director. Leah has jumped in to lead music, convene the Chancel Choir, and develop this new chapter in our congregation's musical history. She brings experience in choral, dance, and percussion performance, and we are grateful to have her on our staff.

We also transitioned the role of Church Treasurer, with Katie Dunne departing in September and Stefany Ness hired in October. We thank Katie for helping us establish our QuickBooks online accounting software. Stefany has taken on this role with focus and a willingness to learn and grow with us.

Tracy Caruso and Sharon King continue to steward their roles as Children & Family Director and Church Administrator, respectively. Tracy will celebrate her 7th year on staff with St. James this year, and we look forward to celebrating as she reaches this ministry milestone.

Pastor Seth returned rejuvenated from his Summer sabbatical in Europe and brings a vision for the coming year and our ongoing ministry. In October, we celebrated the Thomas family's return with a luncheon after church.

In the year to come, the Personnel Committee will continue to develop our policies and job descriptions to ensure our positions best suit the needs of our congregation at this particular time. Monthly meetings and Annual reviews are excellent opportunities to share feedback with the Personnel Committee. Please get in touch with Ralph Buchan if you would like to offer any input into the work of our staff.

We are grateful for the significant work of our staff and hope to sustain them as they support our ministries in the coming year.

## WORSHIP & MUSIC

*Jessica Parks (Chair) and Leah Bruno (Music Director)*

This was a special year for the Worship Committee. We reconvened this group for its first official meeting in early spring, following a stint of dormancy. Casey Morriss gladly offered to chair the committee, and we began by discussing music selections, decorations, and ways to support our Music Director.

During the summer, we experienced great preaching from our Sabbatical Team, which included Kyle Anderson, Fred Hartsook, Jeff King, Jennie McLaurin, Jessica Parks, Janice Smith, and Laura Terasaki. It was a joy to hear from these diverse voices while Pastor Seth was away, and we are grateful for each of these folks who offered to share their gifts.

This year, departures and fresh starts were also themes. We said goodbye to our beloved Music Director, Ta Wei Tsai, in July. We also wished Casey Morriss a fond farewell and welcomed Jessica Parks as chair of the committee. Jessica picked up where Casey had left off and supported our work with fresh ideas and questions about how to develop our worshipping life.

This fall, we have welcomed a brand-new Music Director, Leah Bruno, to our community. Leah cultivated a new iteration of our Chancel Choir, supporting our longtime members with her fresh perspectives. We have great potential to collaborate in musical offerings at St. James, and we look forward to this in the coming year. We hope to host our Spring Talent and Art show again, so please bring your ideas for musical, theatrical, poetic, or other offerings you would like to share with this community!

We have needs in Worship. We need volunteers to help with our weekly Live Stream offering and regular lectors and ushers to sign up to welcome people into worship. Please use the online sign-up forms on the church website to connect with these vital volunteer opportunities.



**Christmas Caroling at Rosewood Villa**



**Faye Hill teaches about Liturgical colors**

# PASTOR'S TERMS OF CALL

*The Rev. Dr. Seth J. Thomas*

*Reviewed by St. James' Session on January 12, 2025*

*Effective February 1, 2025, pending congregational vote on January 26, 2025*

EFFECTIVE SALARY FOR 2025	
Cash Salary	\$47,579
Housing Allowance	\$40,000
SECA Supplement*	\$7,048
Total Effective Salary	\$94,627

Minus SECA: \$87,579 \*

Includes 4% COLA + \$2500 increase

## REIMBURSABLE BUSINESS EXPENSES

Professional expense funds of \$4,000/year.

## OTHER BENEFITS

### Board of Pensions Benefits

Full medical with dental, vision, pension, disability, and death benefits for pastor and family.

### Continuing Education/Study Leave

14 days annually, accruing at 1.2 days per month of service until a maximum of 42 days. Includes a maximum of 2 Sundays.

### Vacation

35 days annually, accruing at 3 days per month of service until a maximum of 35 days; unused vacation compensated at the annual salary rate upon termination.

Study leave and vacation are subject to Session approval; use in advance of accruals or accumulations exceeding the limits are at the Session's discretion.

### Sabbatical Leave

3 months every 7th year.

### Family Medical / Sick Leave

10 working days, including a maximum of 2 Sundays, no accrual or carryover, forfeited at the time of termination.

# 2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

Compiled by Stefany Ness (Church Treasurer) and Pastor Thomas

2024 Income Overview		Budgeted	Actual
OFFERINGS	Annual Pledges	200,000.00	190,939.98
	General Offering	70,000.00	49,699.47
	Loose Offerings	500.00	-
	Use Balance Forward	36,864.96	-
OTHER INCOME	Building Use	22,000	22,650.31
	Interest/savings	600.00	
TOTAL INCOME		\$329,965.96	\$263,289.76

2024 Expense Overview	Budgeted	Actual
BUILDING & GROUNDS	42,176.00	54,168.22
CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION	3,600.00	7,199.70
ACCOUNTING & TREASURER FEES	6,200.00	7,861.52
LOVING WELCOME	2000.00	925.76
MISSION	19,850.00	18,621.71
DEACONS	300.00	464.01
OPERATIONS	30,750.92	23,823.52
STAFF	216,937.51	211,982.66
WORSHIP	5,600.00	2,340.39

2024 Income/Expenses	2024 Budgeted	2024 Actual
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$327,414.43	\$327,387.49
TOTAL INCOME	\$329,964.96	\$263,289.76
TOTAL BUDGET - NET	\$2,550.53	(64,097.73)

# 2025 SESSION ADOPTED BUDGET

*Adopted by the St. James Session on January 12, 2025*

2025 Income Overview		2024 Actual	2025 Budgeted
OFFERINGS	Annual Pledges	190,939.98	193,500.00
	General Offering	49,699.47	50,917.57
	Use Balance Forward	36,864.96	TBD
OTHER INCOME	Building Use	22,650.31	23,163.75
	Interest/savings		
TOTAL INCOME		\$263,289.76	267,581.32

2025 Expense Overview	2024 Actual	2025 Budgeted
BUILDING & GROUNDS	54,168.22	59,839.07
CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION	7,199.70	9,245.00
ACCOUNTING & TREASURER FEES	7,861.52	600.00
LOVING WELCOME	925.76	931.68
MISSION	18,621.71	19,350.00
DEACONS	464.01	475.00
OPERATIONS	23,823.52	22,625.00
STAFF	211,982.66	217,589.84
WORSHIP	2,340.39	2850.00

2025 Income/Expenses	2024 Actual	2025 Budgeted
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$327,387.49	\$333,505.59
TOTAL INCOME	\$263,289.76	\$267,581.32
TOTAL BUDGET - NET	(64,097.73)	(59,806.17)

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As of December 31, 2024

Bank Accounts	
NCF Bal Growth - General Account	\$170,983.51
People's Bank Checking Account	\$46,499.50
People's Bank Money Market Account	\$39,318.48
<b>Total Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$256,801.49</b>

Along with funds to support day-to-day operations, St. James is fortunate to have a number of endowment funds that support our ministries and the upkeep of our facilities. These endowment funds support capital projects and special youth, children, and worship initiatives. You are welcome to contribute to these funds by noting on a financial gift and directing it to one of these accounts.

NEW COVENANT FUNDS ENDOWMENTS	1/1/2024	12/31/2024	<i>Principal</i>	Available
CFF/Youth NCF Bal Growth	\$53,696.72	\$61,182.87	\$21,279.00	\$39,903.87
Facilities NCF Bal Growth	\$1,099,229.88	\$1,181,101.01	\$590,318.00	\$590,783.01
Music NCF Bal Growth	\$21,139.79	\$24,087.03	\$7,998.00	\$16,099.03
Pastor Transition NCF Bal Growth	\$20,330.28	\$23,164.66	-	\$23,164.66
<b>Total New Covenant Funds Endowments</b>	<b>\$1,344,459.23</b>	<b>\$1,460,519.08</b>		<b>\$669,950.57</b>



# OFFICE HOURS & GROUPS

## 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)

## Groups at St. James:

Women's Bible Study - 10:30 am, last Tues of month (Lounge)

Book Club - 3rd Mondays, 7:00 pm (Zoom)

St. James Fitness - M/Th, 4:00 pm (Fellowship Hall)

Pub Theology - 2nd & 4th Mon, 6:30pm (Archer's Alehouse)

Chancel Choir - Thurs, 7:00 pm (Sanctuary)

Bell Choir - Thurs, 6:00 pm, email Jenny Sue LeSchander

Dinners for Eight - Times vary, email Teresa Bowers

Toddler Time - Weds, 8:30-10:30 am (Fellowship Hall)

Youth Group - Last Sundays, 5:30-7:30 pm (Horizon Room)

Writer's Group - Email Carla or Maureen for times/location

Grief Support - 2nd & 4th Weds, 10:00 am (Lounge)

# CHURCH CENTER

*Online community and connections for St. James Presbyterian Church*

Check out the Church Center App and join your St. James church community online. Easily access online events, groups, giving, and more. Church Center easily connects to our Planning Center software, which powers our church database, giving tools, and service planning.

Download the "Church Center" app, search for "St. James Presbyterian" and look for our logo to join.

Give, sign up for  
events, connect  
with a community,  
check your family  
in, and more!



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the app today.



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910 14th Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

[www.saintjamespres.org](http://www.saintjamespres.org)

[office@saintjamespres.org](mailto:office@saintjamespres.org)

(360) 733-1325