

Oscar Romero and “Liberating Lent”

In the Spring of 2005, I completed my History 499 capstone paper, the writing proficiency portion of my undergraduate degree at Western Washington University. I focused on Latin American History during this program and, gratefully, was introduced to Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador and Liberation Theology through this process.

Fast forward 20 years, and St. Romero’s legacy still looms over my sense of calling as a pastor. Liberation Theology and leaders like Romero focus on this powerful truth found in the Scriptures: *God is always preferential to the needs of the poor and the oppressed.*

Leaders like Romero spoke out in times of government suppression. In 1970s El Salvador, subsistence farmers were removed from their lands and imprisoned or murdered for speaking out against the government’s takeover. Many clergy members bowed to the pressure of appeasing the rich and powerful. Romero, reluctantly at first, became one of the strongest voices for these voiceless masses — his country’s poor, disenfranchised people. Latin American movements for people’s liberation are deeply influenced by non-violent movements like the Black struggle for freedom, following in the footsteps of leaders like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I am fortunate to continue my lifelong journey with Oscar Romero this March. From March 19 to 27, I will travel to El Salvador with a group of fellow clergy and parishioners through an organization called Cristosal (<http://www.cristosal.org>). We will walk the streets of San Salvador, worship together, and learn and pray about how God’s justice propels us all to acts of loving liberation in our contexts.

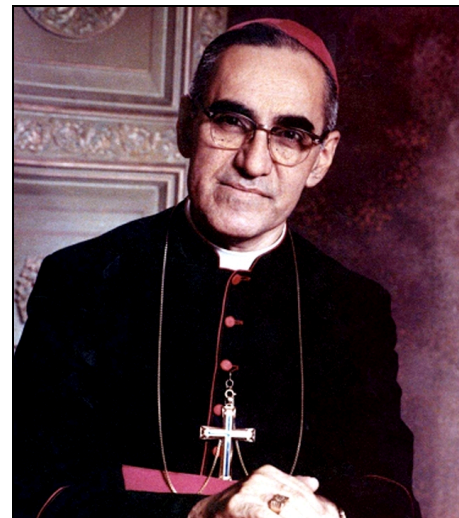
This Lent, I will examine the Sunday lectionary texts through the lens of “*How is this good news to the poor and the oppressed?*” Additionally, on March 16 at 4 pm, we’ll host a viewing of “Romero,” the 1989 biopic that captures the pivotal moments of St. Romero’s ministry, including his martyrdom when he was shot while presiding at the Lord’s Table on March 24, 1980.

I covet your prayers and questions about this part of my journey, and I hope to share my love of St. Romero (canonized by the Catholic Church in 2018) with our congregation. His ministry and martyrdom for the poor can inspire us to prayerful action.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Seth

“Let us be today’s Christians. Let us not take fright at the boldness of today’s church. With Christ’s light, let us illuminate even the most hideous caverns of the human person: torture, jail, plunder, want, chronic illness. The oppressed must be saved, not with a revolutionary salvation, in mere human fashion, but with the holy revolution of the Son of Man, who dies on the cross to cleanse God’s image, which is soiled in today’s humanity, a humanity so enslaved, so selfish, so sinful.” — Oscar A. Romero, The Violence of Love



CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

Submitted by Tracy Caruso, Children & Family
Ministry Director



Greetings from the Director of
Children and Family Ministries

February flew by in a flash, and we
are looking forward to a busy March
around St. James.

Our Godly Play class finished our Parable stories in February, and we are moving into our Lent series with several stories following Jesus' life. I led a Godly Play training and am excited to be growing our program. Please let me know if anyone is interested in learning more about Godly Play or volunteering. cfm@saintjamespres.org.

Our youth group met for its regular meeting in February. We played lots of games and everyone had a lot of fun. It is fun to see the kids bonding and forming friendships. They may have also left some surprises around the church. We will meet again in March for our monthly meeting on March 23rd from 530 to 730.

We are looking forward to some fun events in March. Our annual Bingo night will be held on Friday, March 7th, from 6 to 8 p.m. It will be a potluck, so bring a dish to share and come play some Bingo!

Randy Pries will lead a Lenten class titled Joy in the Journey. Is it possible to experience joy no matter the circumstances? This four-week class, focused on the book of Philippians, helps us know the source of true joy, establishes a foundation for our faith, and teaches us how to love and serve others. The class starts Sunday, March 9, at 9:00 a.m. We hope you will all join us.

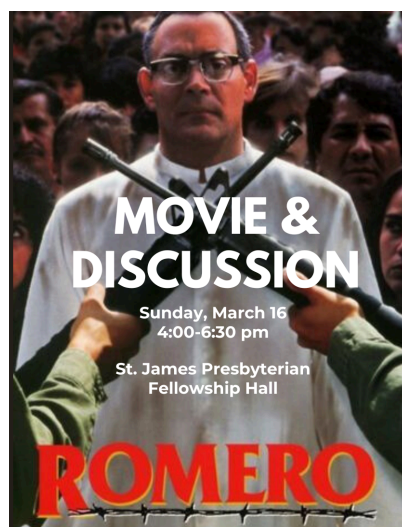
Seth will host a Movie Night on Sunday, March 16th, from 4 to 6:30 p.m., to watch the 1989 film **Romero**. We will watch the movie and then have a short discussion afterward. We will have popcorn, but feel free to bring your favorite movie snack to share!

With spring approaching, it is time to start planning for summer! Vacation Bible School will look a little different this year as we move back to partnering with St. Paul's Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian. We will hold our Into the Deep VBS at St. Paul's from June 23rd to June 26th from 9 to 12. Registration will open on April 1st. We will need lots of volunteers to help make this a successful week. Let Tracy know if you can help!



March Godly Play Schedule

- March 2nd – Parable of the Deep Well
- March 9th – Faces of Easter I & II
- March 16th – Greatest Parable I
- March 23rd – Faces of Easter III & IV
- March 30th – Greatest Parable II



ST. JAMES WRITERS CIRCLE

St. James Writers Circle is a gathering of members and friends who are writing (or would like to be) prose, poems, novels, and 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.

SPRING CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES, MAY 2 & 3, 2025

Hosted at Calvin Presbyterian Church, Shoreline, WA

Christ & Cascadia Conference

May 2nd: Focused on Connecting

Through rich conversations and discussion-based BREAKOUTS, we will be exploring together how to engage scripture for meaning-making in the PNW. What kinds of conversational structures, formats, practices, or texts are people using to make meaning? What can we learn from each other?



Reimagining Preaching Conference

May 3: Focused on Equipping

This conference will equip experienced, lay, and new preachers to bring the Word to life by diving into preaching inspiration, tools, skills, and practices. We offer a Keynote presentation plus skills-based workshops where you can learn from experienced preachers 'how' to do this work.



Pastor Seth will present a session at each conference gathering. If you want to participate in one or both, you can register now at <https://transformingengagement.org/preaching-conference-registration/>. Please let Pastor Seth know if you plan to join us.

SUNDAY TECH AND WEBSITE HELP NEEDED

In 2025, we would like to expand our offerings through the St. James church website. We are looking for a team to help review our current website content and tools and help develop the next version, hopefully launching in Summer 2025. Talk with Pastor Seth to get involved.

Additionally, we are looking for more people to help run cameras and sound for our online service streaming each Sunday. You can do it...and we can train you! This involves arriving at the church by 10:00 to set up and live stream during the regular worship service. Email pastor@saintjamespres.org if you can help!



SIGN UP HERE FOR USHERS, COMMUNION, LECTORS & OFFERING COUNTERS

We *need* ushers, lectors, offering counters, and communion servers! The following links will take you to an online signup. You can select Sundays that work with your schedule and receive an automatic reminder a few days before your service. If you have questions, please contact Sharon at office@saintjamespres.org.

- Usher: <https://tinyurl.com/UshersStJames>
- Lector: <https://tinyurl.com/LectorStJames>
- Offering Counters: <https://tinyurl.com/OfferingCountersStJames>
- Communion Servers: <https://tinyurl.com/CommunionServerStJames>

ST. JAMES STAFF IS AT YOUR SERVICE

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

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

Music Director: Leah Bruno, music@saintjamespres.org

Treasurer: Stefany Ness, treasurer@saintjamespres.org

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

SESSION OF ST. JAMES

Tess Bowers*
 Ralph Buchan*
 Aaron Caruso*
 Carol Dellecker
 Faye Hill (pending installation)
 Andrew McLaurin
 Jimmy Parks
 Rick Seater (pending installation)**
 Nebiyu Tesfa
 Pastor Seth Thomas, Moderator

*Church Trustees **Clerk of Session

Worship Schedule - Online and In-Person, Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

Live streaming at:

<https://saintjamespres.org/live>

<https://www.facebook.com/saintjamespres/>

MARCH BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

3/1	Darrel "Gus" Gustafson	🎂
3/1	Christopher Wagner	🎂
3/8	Martha Speer	🎂
3/11	Stacy Thomas	🎂
3/12	June Pries	🎂
3/15	Shannon Parks-Beck	🎂
3/18	Madeleine Smith	🎂
3/21	Marion Dobbie	🎂
3/21	Pam Gibson	🎂
3/24	Zach Melrose	🎂
3/25	Peter and Mary van der Veen	💕
3/27	Cindy Bauleke	🎂
3/27	Donna Lane	🎂
3/28	Mike Smith	🎂
3/28	Margaret Humble	🎂
3/30	Jim Kosa	🎂

DEACONS

Deacons Parish 1 – Merry Thomas*, Alice Bailey
 Deacons Parish 2 – Judy Buchan, Gena Gustafson
 Deacons Parish 3 – Buzz & Holly* Hagshenas, Jean Seater
 Deacons Parish 4 – Valerie McBeth, Alice Beaty
 Deacons Parish 5 – Jenny Sue LeSchander, Diana Philbeck
 Deacons Parish 6 – Kirsten Oliver, Gretchen Pfueller

* Deacon Co-Moderators

Church Office Hours:

9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Monday - Thursday

PROGRAMS SHARING OUR FACILITY

- AA Fairhaven Group
- AA Grateful Hearts Women's Group
- AA Men's Book Study Group
- AA SOS Men's Group
- AA Meditation 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

Deadlines for church publications

Weekly bulletin: Wednesday, 2:00 pm

Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00 pm

Monthly "the Pulse": the 25th, 2:00 pm

Add your request to the St. James Prayer Chain

Contact your Deacon or St. James at:

360-733-1325 | office@saintjamespres.org

