

Accompaniment

Early reflections on my Salvadoran pilgrimage

The accompanist lingers in the background among a musical ensemble, supporting soloists and other instruments in their melodic expressions. But there are moments when the accompanist emerges, unifying the ensemble and leading with a strong voice. This unifying presence draws on leadership, empathy, and experience.

This past week, I spent time on a pilgrimage in El Salvador, remembering the 45th anniversary of St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero's martyrdom. With a group of about a dozen other clergy and lay people, we visited sacred sites in the city of San Salvador, sat in the homes of the people who carry on Romero's legacy, and worshiped with our whole selves as we prayed and marched and remembered Christ's call to serve the poor.



El Salvador is an interesting place these days. Their massive prison has been in the U.S. news, where a large group of deportees are reported to have been sent. The Salvadoran president, Nayib Bukele, has entered his second term of office outside of the regular succession of power, and according to many of the people we met, his "state of exception" order has brought the country to a state of martial law. Yet the Salvadoran people persist in taking care of one another, supporting the needs of the poor, and advocating for justice for those who have been detained and disappeared.

What is the role of the church in such settings? How can we extend Christ's love to those in need when it threatens our sense of stability or safety? Romero and his followers teach us that the church's role in such times is to be close with, love, and serve the poor. The poor give us a pulse for how the world is. The poor teach us how to adapt and thrive under pressure. The poor show us a mirror, revealing our own needs and hunger.

The word that speaks this into reality, for me and for Romero, is "accompaniment." The impulse to get close to the poor may make us anxious as if we have to just DO something to help. Instead, the wisdom we must learn is that it is only through accompaniment (friendship, partnership, listening, spending time together, leading through support) that we can understand and rightfully support one another, especially the poor.

I am grateful that we have an inkling of this at St. James. We're not perfect at it, but many of us understand the good news of being with those of us who are poor. And so we serve, we give, we advocate. I hope that in the years to come, we can continue to deepen our interaction and care for the poor among us. We all have poverty of some kind...let's be honest about it and seek to come close to one another for healing and hope.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Seth



CHRISTIAN FAITH FORMATION

Submitted by Tracy Caruso, Children & Family Ministry Director

Greetings from the Director of Children and Family Ministries

With the end of March, we are ushering in one of the busiest times of the year! We said goodbye to winter with a busy month of March. Together with Cordata and First Presbyterian churches, we held our annual Ash Wednesday service here. We will continue the tradition of the Lenten pilgrimage for Maundy Thursday at Cordata and Good Friday at First Presbyterian. We also had an excellent turnout for our yearly BINGO and potluck night, and had a good viewing and discussion of the film “Romero” for a movie night.

The youth group met for our monthly dinner for great discussion and fun games. A big shout-out to two of our returning college students, Rory and Sam, for helping to lead a great youth group scavenger hunt! We are hoping to plan a bowling event for the end of April or beginning of May, more info to come.

We will hold our annual Easter Egg Hunt after our worship service on Easter Sunday. We are asking for donations of nut-free, individually wrapped candy. Candy can be left with Tracy or in the church office by Thursday, April 17th.

St. James Festival of the Arts is back! On Saturday, May 31st, from 3-5 pm, we will again hold an afternoon of St. James performances and a silent auction of items donated by St. James artists, benefiting our St. James retreat fund. Artists of all kinds are needed! We are looking for anyone who would like to donate a piece of artwork or a performance. Artwork can include any kind of physical art, drawing, photographs, paintings, sculptures, woodwork, jewelry, textiles, etc. and performances can be a piece of music, poetry, reading, etc. You can email Tracy cfm@saintjamespres.org with the type and approximate length of what you would like to contribute or any questions. Submissions for performances are due by May 11th, and auction pieces by May 18th!

Pub Theology will be taking April off but will return the 2nd and 4th Mondays in May at Trackside from 6 - 7:30pm. Because Trackside is such a family-friendly location, we will not be offering childcare at church. We hope you will join us for this time led by Jimmy and Jessica Parks, where we'll explore themes of Christian Ethics – ideas about good, evil, and the in-between, and how we live them out in everyday life. This is not a lecture or Bible study, but an opportunity for open discussion in a relaxed, welcoming setting. Jimmy and Jessica will facilitate the discussion and provide resources for deeper engagement, if desired. Outside readings are not required for participation, but will allow for a richer conversation. Please reach out to jimmyjamesjimbo@gmail.com if you would like the resources used for discussion or if you have any questions.

Godly Play for April

April 6th The Greatest Parable 4

April 13th Jesus is King

April 20th Faces of Easter V-VII

April 27th Easter Eggs

FINANCE UPDATE

Submitted by Andrew McLaurin, Chair of Finance

It's hard to believe it's already Spring. Yet here we are!

The finances of the church are tracking closely to our budget. Actual pledge receipts exceed budget amounts; however, that is due to several annual pledges being paid in full during the first two months of the year. When annualized our pledges are approximately \$2,800 below budget expectations. Pledges are paid in various ways. Some pay annually, some pay quarterly and some pay monthly. We will continue to monitor pledge receipts closely but are not concerned at this time. Collections from general offerings are slightly ahead of budget. Our expenses are right on budget. An overall healthy financial report.

The finance committee meets monthly to review our finances. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

St. James Presbyterian Church					
Actual Cash Flow vs. Budgeted Cash Flow					
February 2025					
	Actual Cash Flow, February 2025	Budgeted Cash Flow, February 2025	Actual Cash Flow Year-to-date As of: February 28, 2025	Budgeted Cash Flow Year-to-date As of: February 28, 2025	
Annual Pledges Income	24,761.46	16,125.00	64,460.94	32,250.00	
General Offerings Income	4,958.55	3,868.13	8,378.39	7,736.26	
TOTAL OFFERINGS	\$ 29,720.01	\$ 19,993.13	\$ 72,839.33	\$ 39,986.26	

GIVING TO ST. JAMES

If you have any questions regarding the finances of Saint James Presbyterian Church, please feel free to contact Stefany Ness at treasurer@saintjamespres.org

Aside from utilizing contact-free offering on Sunday morning, you can give in TWO primary ways:

1. **Online Giving:** You can give a one-time gift or create a recurring monthly pledge. Please visit this webpage to set up or update your online giving: <https://saintjamespres.churchcenter.com/giving>
2. **Mail-In Donations or Pledges:** You can mail your pledges and gifts to the church.

Saint James Presbyterian Church
910 14th Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL REGISTRATION OPENS APRIL 1ST!

This year, we are partnering with First Presbyterian and St. Paul's Episcopal church for our Into the Deep VBS. We will hold VBS from June 23rd to 26th from 9 am to 12 pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. We need more volunteers this year as this will be double the size of the programs we have been putting on at St. James the past three years. Register your camper or to volunteer here:

<https://fpcbellingham.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2856984>



WHAT IS THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER?

Some of my favorite church memories are from experiences of the Easter Vigil because of its rich symbolism, ritual, and sensory input. I'm thrilled... and a little nervous!... to be facilitating the event this year. The people of St. James are giving me a generous gift by allowing me to bring to life some of these memories. Thank you!

The Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA) describes the Great Vigil of Easter as, "the brightest jewel of Christian liturgy traced to early Christian times. It proclaims the universal significance of God's saving acts in history through four related services held on the same occasion..." (BCW, page 294).

A triduum is any singular observance which takes place over the course of three days, and the Easter Vigil is the climax of the Paschal Triduum. That means sunset on Maundy Thursday through sunset on Easter Sunday is a unified posture of worship. The days and their events represented by their various rituals are all intimately connected. This means that as our Easter Vigil begins with the Service of Light, we pick up where we left off on Good Friday, with Jesus in the grave. The Easter Vigil begins the season of Easter!

The Service of Light is truly a spectacle of auditory and visual beauty, as everyone finds their seats by natural light alone. We ignite a new fire, light a paschal candle from it, share the light with those around us, and listen to an ancient chant about what we are experiencing. The paschal candle represents Jesus himself, the light of the world. It is traditionally made of pure beeswax---a product of virgin bees as Jesus was born to the virgin Mary---and adorned with painted symbols. The painting of this candle has been for me a creative act of worship as well as a gesture of gratitude to my church community, and I hope you'll see both as I describe it further. As a cost-saving measure, however, the candle I chose is made of standard candle wax.

Prominently displayed in the vertical center of the candle is the figure of a cross which is often pierced with five nails of fine incense, reflecting the five places Jesus was injured on the cross and the customary burial spices. This year's design includes the cross-like formation of the PC(USA) logo which we will not be piercing. Above and below the cross are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet---alpha and omega---recalling Jesus as the beginning and the end of all things. Since the paschal candle for each year is retired with the introduction of a new paschal candle at the following year's vigil, it is customary to include the year somewhere between the two

Greek letters. Out of ignorance during my design phase, I placed the year 2025 (in Arabic rather than Roman numerals) outside of this chronological range in a banner below the omega. I promise not to make that mistake again. On the side opposite all these elements, you'll find the ichthys (commonly called the "Christian fish") and the shell of St. James.

Once the paschal candle is lit from the new fire in the back of the church, it is processed forward and set into place, stopping three times along the journey as we engage in a call-and-response declaration, "The Light of Christ. // Thanks be to God." With the paschal candle in its place, the Exsultet chant is sung by a deacon. The ancient words of this chant call us to rejoice in the presence of the glowing representation of Jesus whose fire we have shared with each other. This year, I'm trying something special with the help of three deacons, a trio of women, who will sing in unison except for the words, "One God," which Merry Thomas, Holly Hagshenas, and Alice Bailey will split into three-part harmony as a nod to the triune nature of the one God. I'm telling you that I have goosebumps just thinking about it!

We move then into the Service of Readings. Here's one place where we're tightening up the schedule. There are nine potential Old Testament scripture readings! We will only have three, and my hope is to find a few youths who are willing to bravely speak in front of the congregation, making it a more cross-generational experience. After each reading is a song and a prayer, and Leah is hand selecting which songs we can master with a hymnal in one hand and a lit candle in the other!

And then comes the moment for which we've been waiting 40 days, the Easter Proclamation. "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" And the people shout back in response, "The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!" With that, Lent is over. The lights are turned on, meaning you can extinguish your candle, and everyone rings bells that they brought from home. Don't have a bell? Bring your keys to jingle in celebration of the resurrection. No matter how many vigils I've been to, I am always surprised at how long this "make a joyful noise" lasts. This is Easter!

After order is restored in the room, often by the musicians starting another song and everyone finally putting down their bells to pick up the hymnals, we hear the New Testament readings, both an epistle and a gospel reading. A sermon follows, and I'm going to be rather strict about an eight-minute limit. The glory of the night is found in the readings themselves more than commentary on them, and we want to be done in 90 minutes.

What follows are the Services of Baptism (or Baptismal Renewal if there are no candidates for baptism) and of the Eucharist. These are familiar elements of our common life of worship, so I'll not go further into detail about them here. The final call-and-response element is filled with rejoicing, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord! Alleluia! Alleluia! // Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER WITH ST. JAMES

April 13 – Palm Sunday,

10:30 am Worship Service

@ St. James Presbyterian Church
910 14th St.

April 17 – Maundy Thursday

6:00 pm Soup & Supper Service

@ Cordata Presbyterian Church
400 Meadowbrook Ct.

April 18 – Good Friday, Tenebrae

7:30 pm Service of Darkness

@ First Presbyterian Church
1031 N. Garden St.

April 19 – Easter Vigil

7:30 pm Worship Service

@ St. James Presbyterian Church
910 14th St.



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 folks 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 streaming 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 where you can sign up for 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, cfm@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
 Andrew McLaurin
 Jimmy Parks
 Rick Seater**
 Nebiyu Tesfa
 Pastor Seth Thomas, Moderator

*Church Trustees

**Clerk of Session

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 – Diana Philbeck, Jenny Sue LeSchander
 Deacons Parish 6 – Kirsten Oliver, Gretchen Pfueller

* Deacon Co-Moderators

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

Live streaming at:

<https://saintjamespres.org/live>

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

APRIL BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

4/12	Sally Crandall	
4/16	Erin Keyes	
4/17	Bruce Kraig	
4/23	Mark Beaty	
4/25	Valerie McBeth	
4/29	Cheryl McGregor	
4/30	Diana Philbeck	

Church Office Hours:

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

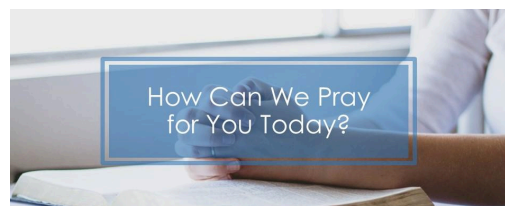
Weekly email: Thursday, 2:00pm

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

Add your request to the St. James Prayer Chain

Contact your Deacon or St. James at:

360-733-1325 | office@saintjamespres.org



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