

JANUARY 2024

ST JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH EPISTLE

A CONGREGATION
OF THE
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF AMERICA

IN THIS ISSUE:

A Poem from Pastor
Call for Synod Volunteers
Congregational Meeting
\Ladies' Group High Tea
Apple a Day
YAFM Events
Winter Outreach Days
Guatemala Mission Trip
Stewardship Pledge Cards
And more...



ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

111 Peter Road, Southbury CT 06488

www.stjamesct.org

@stjamesctlutheran

203.264.6446

stjamesctlutheran@gmail.com

Rev. Abigail Lilja Johnson, Pastor

(she/her)

pastor@stjamesct.org

203-450-6454 (call or text)

Mission

We affirm and spread the Word of God in all areas of life. We focus on nurturing, serving and uplifting our members and local community by practicing love in action as exemplified by Jesus Christ through our preschool and other outreach services.



Vision

We believe we are saved by God's grace through faith alone, proclaiming our faith in the Holy Trinity. As church, we manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ, by joining in prayer and action. We worship together as a community through reading of the Word, celebration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness and service. We see our shared Christian faith as an integral part of our daily lives and use the gifts of the Spirit for our lives together and for our callings in the world.

CHURCH STAFF

Genie Bisch

*Parish
Administrator*

Abigail Manville

*Digital
Coordinator*

John Dressel

*Music
Director*

Leslie Broch

*Director of
St. James Preschool*

*Please contact the office **before** dropping by should you require assistance.
Building is locked at all times for security. Thank you!*

A POEM FROM PASTOR



Dear Beloved Community

In the line up of folktale protagonists, Goldilocks is not the first I'd select as a role model. An entitled intruder with no regard for boundaries or guest etiquette does not garnish much admiration. But the complaint that made her famous - "not too much, not too little, just right" - may carry with it some wisdom we could salvage from this fable.

After all, this is the time of year for grand expectations; resolutions that will change our lives, right the ship and finally, get us to that ideal place we aim to be. *Gym everyday, hike the Appalachian Trail, go vegan, read 25 books, finally master the world/life balance!* Resolutions, like beginnings are exciting, as they are not yet tainted by disappointment or stress. They bring us hope so we tend to be overly optimistic about them. But dreaming big can also lead to big letdowns and harsh self-criticism. Once they've cracked, we think of them as broken and toss them out entirely.

So what's the antidote? This is where Goldilocks is onto something. In the business world, they might call it "1 degree shifts." In Sweden, they call it *lagom*, which literally means "not too much, not too little." It is a philosophy of balance at every area and juncture of life. *Lagom* describes a lifestyle of both social and self awareness, moderation, and sustainability. Could this approach offer us something that actually serves and refreshes? That keeps hope in tact, makes change progressive, and offers more grace each day, even an "off" day? You *could* read 25 books or you could just read 10 minutes each evening and see what happens. You *could* go to the gym every day or you could pick 3 days this week. You *could* resolve to be your best self or you could be kind to yourself.

In our sacred scriptures, the validity of "just enough" is affirmed over and over again. Five loaves and two fish, two copper coins, a tiny mustard seed, a few drops of oil, a splash of the Jordan River - God doesn't require much to make immeasurably profound things happen. Jesus says "come as you are." You don't have to be more, and you don't have to be less. A few healthy practices - spiritual, mental, physical - sprinkled each day may serve bigger change than we calculated at the beginning.

A very wise Swedish speaker of our own congregation recently summed it up best: "Each day, our best is to be kind, be humble, be thankful. Then, we live well." Amen to that.

Peace, Pastor Abby

CHRISTMAS

Dec 25th - Jan 5th

Peace & Presence

In these twelve days of Christmas, we celebrate God's peace and presence entering the world, embodied in Jesus; holding this peace in our life, and sharing it with others.



Special Observances:
12/25 Jesus' Birth

EPIPHANY

Jan. 6th - Feb. 13th

Discover & Connect

Epiphany is the season of introductions and "ah ha" moments. As the Wise Men travel to see and know the Messiah, we treasure that God sees and knows us deeply. In this time, we seek to create new connections and deepen relationships; with our faith family, our neighbors, and with God.

Guest Voices:
Temple Talks by
participants in the
Guatemala Service Trip

Special Observances:
01/06 Epiphany
01/07 Jesus' Baptism

January 2024

Regular calendar updates on our website
<https://stjamesct.org/calendar/>

S M T W T F S

		1 3pm Worship @ Watermark	2 7pm Worship & Music	3	4	5	6
7 11:30am Council Meeting 4:30pm Youth Group	8 11am Bible Study (1/5)	9 1pm Women's Group	10 7pm Preschool Board	11 10:30am Worship @TLH 6pm Pub Theology	12	13 9:30am Men's Group 11:30am Rice Restock	
14 4:30pm Teen Worship Band 5pm Guate Team 7pm Gift Swap	15 11am Bible Study (2/5) <i>Epistle Submissions</i>	16	17 7pm Finance Team	18 9:30am Southbury Clergy Association	19	20 9am-12pm Preschool Open House	
21 11:30am Guate. Supply Kits 4:30pm Youth Group	22 11am Bible Study (3/5)	23 1:00pm Evangelism	24 7pm Council	25 7pm VBS Team	26	27	
28 9:00am Communion Education 11:30am Budget Meeting	29 11am Bible Study (4/5)	30	31 7pm Worship & Music	<div style="background-color: #8B4513; color: white; padding: 10px; border-radius: 20px; text-align: center;"> <h2>Save the Date!</h2> <p>Jan. 28 Budget Meeting Members needed for vote!</p> </div>			

WEEKLY EVENTS

S M T W T F S

9:00am Confirm. 10:15am Worship, with S. School	8:00pm AA	9:00am- 12:00pm Parish Admin. 12:30pm Meditation Call	1:30-3:30pm Community Fika @ Starbucks 8:00pm AA	9:00am- 12:00pm Parish Admin.	<i>Pastor Sabbath</i> 2:30- 5:00pm Parish Admin.	<i>Pastor Sabbath</i>
--	--------------	---	--	--	---	--

ELCA LEADERSHIP

FIKA
with PASTOR

**Wednesdays
1:30 - 3:30 PM
at Starbucks
in Southbury**

All are welcome to
this daily Swedish
tradition of a coffee
break with friends



PASTOR ABBY

Whether in celebration, grief, doubt, or curiosity of faith, she is happy to meet with you at a time and place that suits you well. Reach out to connect:

(203) 450-6454
pastor@stjamesct.org

*While observing Sabbath on Fridays & Saturdays,
Pastor does not receive texts or emails.
With pastoral emergencies, please call.*

NEW ENGLAND SYNOD

For more info, visit nelutherans.org

Retreats at Camp Calumet

Bell Choir Retreat, Jan. 26-28
Scrapbooking, Feb. 2-4
Roster Ministers Retreat, Feb. 5-8
Confirmation Retreats, March 1-3
& April 12-14

New England Synod Assembly
June 6-8, 2024
Worcester, MA

*Calling for volunteers!
Along with Pastor, we must send
2 members of St. James to be
representatives at the Assembly,
to vote in election of our next
Synod Bishop. Please see
Council Exec. Officers or Pastor
by Wed. January 24*

ELCA CHURCHWIDE

For more info, visit elca.org

Bishop on Leave

The Church Council of the ELCA appointed Michael Burk as presiding bishop pro tempore after its Executive Committee approved Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's request for a 4-6 month leave of absence.

North American church leaders call for peace in Holy Land

The leaders of the ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church have released the Churches Beyond Borders 2023 Advent Cycle of Prayer, which calls for justice and peace in the Holy Land

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL



Meets 4th Wednesday, 7-8:30pm

The role of Council includes leading in mission, goals and priority; overseeing administration; involving members in all areas of church; responsible for financial and property matters of the church, including staffing, and general oversight of governance.

REPORTS & NEWS

We had a truly wonderful and eventful Christmas season at St. James! We enjoyed our choir returning under the direction of Music Director, John Dressel, caroling at the Lutheran Home, the Guatemala service trip Advent Fair, and acolytes lighting the way! What a beautiful tapestry of blessings to celebrate!

Upcoming Congregational Meeting

As we begin this New Year, we are inviting everyone to the annual Congregational Meeting on January 28th, 2024, following the worship service. This is an opportunity to learn more about what's going on with our budget, ask questions, and contribute your valuable insights.

To help you prepare, meeting packets will be available in the gathering area beginning January 14th, 2024. Electronic packets will also be available on request. We encourage everyone to review the materials beforehand so you can come ready to participate in this important discussion.

We're excited about the future of our church, and we believe that with your continued involvement, we can achieve even greater things. Please join us on January 28th as we build a brighter future together. May the blessings of Christmas continue to fill your life throughout the New Year!

MEMBERS

Officers

- Kathy Haddy,
President
- Donna Peterson,
Vice President
- Bill Dreska,
Secretary
- Neil Johnson,
**Treasurer*
- Ellen Hubina,
**Assistant Treasurer*
- Curt Haedke,
**Financial Secretary*

Liaisons

- Jan Carnaroli,
Worship
- Lucia Dressel,
Fellowship
- Barbara Manville,
Preschool
- Liz Skinski,
Preschool
- Lynn Morrison,
Evangelism & Outreach
- Tony Salvatore,
Properties
- Rev. Abigail Johnson,
ex-officio

**non-voting*

SERVING IN WORSHIP

LITURGY MEANS "THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE" IN GREEK



January 7th - 3 Kings Day

Altar Guild: Judy Katzmark

Ushers: Judy Katzmark & Tony Salvatore

Lector: Diane Mladjen

Asst. Minister: Jan Salvatore

Counters: Diane Mladjen & ?

Sunday School: Lauren Lyons & Janice Salvatore

January 14th

Altar Guild: Janice Salvatore

Ushers: Jacque Matthew & Judy Lee

Lector: Liz Skinski

Asst. Minister: Lynn Morrison

Counters: Donna Peterson & Gary Kline

Sunday School: Meghan Colasanto & Kathy Haddy

January 21st

Altar Guild: Lynn Morrison

Ushers: Gary Kline & Jeff Nadasen

Lector: Mary Ewert

Asst. Minister: Mary Ewert

Counters: Catherine & Steven Ulc

Sunday School: Mike Lyons & Jan Carnaroli

January 28th

Altar Guild: Judy Lee

Ushers: Bob Morrison & Judy Katzmark

Lector: Kathy Haddy

Asst. Minister: Liz Skinski

Counters: Kathy Haddy & Jan Carnaroli

Sunday School: Ellen Hubina & Mary Ewert

CONTACT:

Cantors: John Dressel

Assistant Ministers: Liz Skinski

Sunday School: Lauren Lyons

Ushers: Jacque Matthew

Altar Guild: Paulette Calderone

Lectors: Judy Katzmark

Counters: Curt Haedke

An Apple A Day:

Reducing Your Arthritis Risk

from our Parish Nurse, Diane Mladjen



Pain, stiff and swollen joints are common in adults over age fifty. Arthritis is a term for more than 100 kinds of inflammatory joint conditions. Osteoarthritis is more likely to occur with aging (>age 50), especially in previously injured joints with meniscus or ligament tears. It is also more common in people who have family history of arthritis or chronic conditions of diabetes, obesity or heart disease. Staying physically active can improve physical function and quality of life. Low impact exercise, walking and stationary bicycle. Strengthening quadriceps and hamstrings help support joints. Not every option works for each person so explore which one keeps you active.

Over the counter medication of ibuprofen, Tylenol or steroid injections into a problem joint can relieve pain to varying degrees. Dietary supplements such as glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate or Boswellia relieve symptoms for some people. There is not specific evidence in studies to support their benefit but for most people these supplements are not harmful. There have been many clinical trials but no conclusive information.

Find a way to stay active and healthy lifestyle. It's the best way to prevent arthritis in later years.

Fellowship

Unwanted Christmas Gift Swap!

Sunday, January 14 @ 7 pm

Starting the new year off right - with a grand fellowship event! Join us for an evening of fun, laughs and good times at St. James first-ever "Unwanted Christmas Gift Swap!" Sunday, January 14 @ 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall! Bring your most unusual, unwanted, hard-to-imagine gift, wrapped up in a pretty paper and bow. We'll take a number and see who winds up with what! We plan on serving wine, beer and tasty snacks - bring any that you think would be enjoyed. Questions, contact Lynn or Bob Morrison, 203-426-7749 edgelake@aol.com, and help pass those winter doldrums, that cabin fever, with good friends and fun!

'The Hive' Youth Group

Sundays 4:30 - 6:30 PM @ UCC Southbury

1st Sunday: Grades 6-8 3rd Sunday: Grades 9-12

2nd Sunday: Teen Worship Band for Grades 7-12 - *bring an instrument!*

Young Adults (20s/30s) Group

1st Thursday 6:00 PM @ Black Hog Brewery, Oxford; see Pastor

Ladies' Fellowship

2nd Tuesday 1:00pm
see Judy Katzmark

On Tuesday, December 12th, the ladies of the congregation gathered for our annual tea at the 1850 House to celebrate the Christmas season together.



Men's Fellowship

2nd Saturday 9:30 AM; see Bill Siegle or Jacque Matthews

Seeking friends for an outing? Event you'd like to host? Yay! See Pastor



Faith Formation

MEDITATION CALL

TUESDAYS
12:30PM

*Original, brief
guided meditations
recorded by Pastor Abby;
subscribe on our website
homepage to receive recorded
call or listen on the podcast.*



PUB THEOLOGY

THURSDAY, JAN. 11
6-7PM

*@ BLACK HOG BREWERY CO.
Especially for Young Adults
(20/30s), a casual meet up to
explore ideas and questions on
religion and faith, in the world
today and this season of life.
Trivia Night follows, if desired.*



BIBLE STUDY

MONDAYS, JAN 8 - FEB. 5
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM, at church

Epiphany Series

Who is my Neighbor? Interfaith Education and Relationships:
Join us for this 5-week series of interfaith discovery, as we explore world religions Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and other Christian denominations, to witness God widely revealed and diversely worshipped. See Pastor Abby.



Podcast: A Steadfast Branch

A weekly podcast for all ages, listen for free on our website or on Spotify. Faith-formation offerings such as sermons, devotionals, blessings, meditations, and interviews with the wider church community. Tune in!



FAITH FORMATION...

FOR KIDS!

Sunday School

Sundays midworship
Grades PreK-5

Dismissed mid-worship for a brief lesson and activity in art, music, storytelling, games, and more. Lead by rotating teachers.

Confirmation

Sundays
9:00-9:45 am
Grades 6+

A deeper study in Lutheran tradition and Christian faith in affirmation of baptism, with Pastor Abby, Lynn Morrison, and Neil Johnson.

Milestone Ministries

Year-long integrated programming for children & families

Each year, kids learn & explore a new faith tenant, in their church life supported by the congregation and in their home life with their families. See Pastor to join.

Planning for VBS 2024

Come join us as we plan for VBS 2024. We will meet at the church in person but you may join us by google meet as well. January 25th at 7pm.

UPCOMING FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

Feb 13th @ 6pm

—
Pancake Dinner
at St James

March 9th @ 11-
12:30pm

—
Eagle viewing at
Shepaug Dam

ALL are welcome to join!!!! If you have interest in helping with any of the YAFM activities please contact Lauren Lyons yafm@stjames.org



Kevin Peterson & Kristin Mueller-Peterson

2024 Guatemala Mission Trip:
Tree4Hope, Guatemala
Hope Academy Girl's School
Miguel Magone Orphanage

What hopes do you have for yourself as a trip participant?

Kevin: I hope to better understand the challenges facing the students in Guatemala. When I return, I hope I can communicate what I have learned to the congregation, my coworkers, friends, and family and how they can support this effort.

Kristin: As a participant in St. James' 2024 service trip to Hope Academy, I am hoping to enhance intercultural connections between myself, the people within my community and our world community. As a second-grade dual language classroom teacher in which I support ENL learners ("English as a New Language") in becoming bilingual, biliterate and bicultural learners in both English and Spanish, I am very interested and fully support other schools that set out to teach students to be bilingual (or multilingual) learners. Many of my second-grade students have immigrated to the US from a small town in Guatemala and I'm hoping to learn more about Guatemalan culture and foster connections.

What hopes do you have for St James as a congregation?

Kevin: By connecting with both the leaders and the students of the school, I hope that this growing relationship between Hope Academy and the congregation at St James can provide a human connection to the news stories we hear about from around the globe. I hope that by visiting and spending a week at the school that we can create life-long relationships that extend even to those in the congregation that were not able to make this trip.

Kristin: I have many hopes for St James as a congregation with this amazing partnership with Tree 4 Hope. A huge part of St. James is service. Seeing the impact that St. James has in our local community is inspiring and through this partnership with Tree 4 Hope it's wonderful to see this pillar of service extend well beyond the borders of Southbury and to all of God's people. It's my (and our) hope that this service trip will be continued for many years and accessible to anyone at St. James who is called to participate.

Support the Mission Trip:

The Guatemala Service Trip Team is getting excited for our trip February 17-24! In each of the next few Epistles you will get to learn a little about each team member traveling. Here are some ways you can support from

-Please continue to pray for all the children and staff of Hope Academy and Miguel Magone Orphanage

-Please continue to pray for political stability in Guatemala

-Please continue to pray for the health and safety of those traveling to Guatemala in February

-Help us write simple notes of encouragement for each student to include in the school kits.

-Donate towards books for the school library online or via a green envelope with the note: Hope Academy Books in Guatemala

-JOIN US to help pack the school kits with supplies and love! January 21st after worship.

-Help us defray the cost of traveling to Guatemala. You may make a donation through the offering plate using the green envelopes with the memo or note: Guatemala Service Trip

We are so blessed! Thank you for all your support!


What hopes do you have for St James in this ministry partnership?

Kevin: As someone who works in the engineering field, I can say firsthand that the diversity of the industry is severely lacking. I am hoping that by fostering learning in this bilingual STEAM school for girls that St James can execute God's will in helping bring strong educational foundations to these deserving young girls, promoting prosperous futures for the students and their families, the city, Guatemala, and the rest of the world.


Kristin: I hope that this ministry partnership will expand St. James' ministry of service best said by the words often accompanied right by the St James Lutheran name: "God's work, our hands." Thank you for your continued prayers and support for Hope Academy and the Miguel Magone orphanage.




Outreach



Jan 21, after service – Help us pack school kits for Guatemala



Feb 10 – Dorothy Day House
Sandwich Making and Snow Play Day



March 17, after worship – Help us pack college care boxes

BLANKETS AND COATS DO NOT MEAN AN AWFUL LOT UNLESS IT IS COLD AND YOU DO NOT HAVE ONE!

Many thanks for the generous outpouring of gently used coats, blankets, hats and mittens for all ages that were distributed to the less fortunate in greater Danbury. 6 very full bags were collected!



THE SOUTHBURY NEEDY FUND TREE

Your amazing generosity supplied gifts for 8 different children from 4 different families in need! Thanks to all who participated in the amazing outpouring of love for those in need in the community and around the world. Small lights shine brightly in the darkness....

Don't forget the rice shelf!

Thank you for your donations of (BOXED ONLY) rice! We are looking for helpers to get the rice to the food bank in the coming months.

Many thanks for signing up to help with getting our rice donations to the Southbury Food Bank (88 Main Street South, in the same complex as the Rathskeller Restaurant)

January – Salvatore
February – Men's Group
March – Lyons
April –
May –

Food Bank Stocking Hours:
2nd Saturday of @ month from 11:15-12:30 pm and 4th Sunday of the month from 9-10am
Call (203)721-0377 to make other arrangements.

Finance Team

Meets 3rd Thursday @ 7PM

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that our blessings are gifts from God, and we want to show our gratitude for these gifts by using them in ways that accomplish His purposes and extend His kingdom. Therefore, we are eager to share God's grace by serving others: joining committees, activities and groups in church; witnessing and giving. Being transformed by the renewing of our minds, we become more selective with the ways we spend our time, talents, and money. As we grow in our understanding of Biblical stewardship, we become more intentional and focused on using our lives and resources in ways that help us live as God pleasing stewards.

Lynn Morrison- *Stewardship Team*

	Operating Income			Mortgage Income		
Month	Budget	Actual	Diff	Budget	Actual	Diff
Jan	16,500.00	10,427.00	(6,073.00)	2,266.25	1,825.00	(441.25)
Feb	16,500.00	24,804.00	8,304.00	2,266.25	1,065.00	(1,201.25)
Mar	16,500.00	11,727.00	(4,773.00)	2,266.25	2,480.00	213.75
Apr	16,500.00	13,004.00	(3,496.00)	2,266.25	1,680.00	(586.25)
May	16,500.00	50,191.80	33,691.80	2,266.25	6,335.00	4,068.75
June	16,500.00	7,451.00	(9,049.00)	2,266.25	1,930.00	(336.25)
July	16,500.00	9,463.55	(7,036.45)	2,266.25	3,945.00	1,678.75
Aug	16,500.00	10,223.67	(6,276.33)	2,266.25	5,510.00	3,243.75
Sept	16,500.00	10,008.00	(6,492.00)	2,266.25	4,015.00	1,748.75
Oct	16,500.00	17,553.00	1,053.00	2,266.25	6,125.00	3,858.75
Nov	16,500.00	21,089.00	4,589.00	2,266.25	1,245.00	(1,021.25)
Total YTD	181,500	185,942.02	4,442.02	24,928.75	31,300.00	6,371.25
Last year to Nov 15th	161,712.47			23,963.20		

Have you submitted your 2024 pledge/estimate yet and/or set up recurring donations on <https://onrealm.org/StJamsLutheranSouthbury/> ?

Each January, your Council and financial teams carefully prepare a budget for your consideration at their Annual meeting of the congregation --- January 28th this year. The budget you approve will guide our spending decisions for the year. But this budget is only as good as the inputs we have to work with. Ideally, everyone submits a 2024 Pledge (which can always be adjusted if circumstances change). Without that input, we have to guess what our income will be.

If you haven't already submitted a pledge, you can use the form found here or a facsimile, attention Curt Haedke, Financial Secretary. Help us out so we don't have to guess, and so we can go forward in confidence as we set this years programs and commitments...

Bill Siegle- Stewardship Team

Gratitude

I am/We are truly committed to the Lord and to the ministries of St James Lutheran Church. As a sign of this commitment and stewardship, I/we offer the following pledge.

Please complete below:

In gratitude for the blessings of life and to sustain and advance God's work, I/we will provide an offering of

\$ _____ per _____ in 2024.

Optional: I/we wish to divide the above offering as follows:

\$ _____ for Current Operating Expenses

\$ _____ for Mortgage Expenses \$ _____ for Other Fund # _____

Signature _____

Date _____

(Please print name here) _____

See other side for funds list

Our operating year begins January 1, 2024

If you have a question, call the church office, 264-6446.

Your Pledge may be changed at any time.

In Our Prayers

Janet Benzell
Caroline Kaiger
Tim Peterson
Paul Hubina
Dorian Malloy
Fae Guerin
Chris

Heidi Varanko
Diana Larson
Cassie
Joyce Lyons
Bishop Eaton
Dick Dunseith
Adran

Mary McDonald
Inge Treser
Meghan Smalley
Priscilla Terhune
Paul Meberg
Tiffany Randall
Domonic Prisco

Please also keep Tim Peterson, Thomas Chappa, and all those who serve in the military, in your prayers.

We also give thanks for all the saints, especially Brian Mons, Nathan Giacomini, and Vivian DeVito.

Prayer List Updates:

The prayer list is edited by request and the full list is reset twice a year. To add to the prayer list or request a name remain on the list, please see Pastor Abby or Liz Skinski.

Prayer alerts are sent via email by Pastor Abby; subscribe on our website. If you wish to receive alerts by phone call or text, please see Karen Lampiasi to be added to the list.

*Please join us for Worship on Sunday mornings at 10:15 am for worship at
111 Peter Road, Southbury, CT.*

