

SPRING 2025
APRIL - JUNE

ST JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH EPISTLE

A STORYTELLING
MAGAZINE SHARING
THE FAITH, HEART,
AND LIFE OF CHURCH

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- Pastor Theo Camara
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And more...



Explore Faith - Embrace Community - Engage Justice

ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Rev. Abigail Johnson, Pastor (she/her)

pastor@stjamesct.org

203-450-6454

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.

No matter what life puts on your path, come home to a place where folks know your face, greet you warmly, and support you at each step of the journey, as we love and serve God together!

CHURCH STAFF

Genie Bisch

*Parish
Administrator*

John Dressel

*Music
Director*

Abigail Manville

*Digital Coordinator,
volunteer*

Katherine Belonis

*Legal Consultation,
pro-bono*

PRESCHOOL STAFF

Danielle Christina

Teacher

Leslie Broch

Director & Head Teacher

Stephanie Kasmin

Teacher

A WORD FROM PASTOR



Dear Beloved Community,

There has been a lot of construction on my apartment lately; roofers, siders, plumbers, all coming to do their job. While they don't do the same tasks, they are all collaborating on a common project - making the building safer, stronger, and better - to ensure a good quality of life living there. The painter doesn't question why the tiler is there, nor does the electrician accuse the contractor of stealing their job. Still, they all often have to coordinate with one another, to see that the job is done well and serves me who calls it home.

"Church has gotten so political." This phrase comes up more and more these days. It is one that immediately makes people uncomfortable, skeptical, and ducking out of the conversation. This reaction is so understandable; as dramatic political changes that negatively affect the lives of all Americans are happening all around us daily. We are anxious standing on unstable ground, and want to protect whatever respite we have in the world; separate out our sanctuaries of peace, so they never touch what makes us uncomfortable.

However, it's important not to conflate one thing with another. Just like the operations on my home, religion and government hold different jobs. What they have in common is a shared project: ethics. Ethics - the moral principles that dictate action in the world - this is the house we all live in, the space where our lives happen. Due to the fact they both work on the topics of ethics, certainly there will be times when the work of religion and government comes up closely to one another, perhaps even in the same room. As Christians, we speak out on things like justice for the oppressed, feeding of the hungry, healing for the sick, welcome of the refugee, love and affirmation of God in every person... because that's what Jesus spoke. That is the center of the Gospel. Naming these tenants does not make us political; it makes us followers of Christ. Religious leaders like Bishop Pihlo of our New England Synod, Bishop Eaton of ELCA Churchwide, alongside numerous Christians denominations and their leaders, are faithfully using their voices to proclaim the Gospel, empowering us to go and do likewise.

These topics are deeply embedded into the project of ethics. As co-collaborators on the same project, we trust our government to be part of the larger team; productive and contributing to our shared ethical goal: the safety, strength and betterment of life for all. When the carpenters start tearing out the doors and building up walls instead, its not out of line for the rest of the construction crew to alert those living within, and work together to find a better way, before they are trapped inside.

Peace, Pastor Abby

Whether in celebration, grief, doubt, or curiosity of faith, Pastor is happy to arrange a meeting with you for care, counsel, and prayer. Home or hospital visits by your invitation and consent. Call cell directly with care emergencies. Observes Sabbath on Fri & Sat.

UPDATE ON DMIN

My 2nd semester in the Doctorate of Ministry program, specializing in Interfaith Studies, at United Lutheran Seminary, PA. The DMin program (24 credits with specialized project & dissertation, about 4 years) is an advanced professional degree designed to enhance the practice of ministry.

This past semester I studied **Interfaith Dialogue of Abrahamic Faiths** with Muslim, Jewish and Christian students for a week intensive in Philly and **Romans**, in an online course discussing biblical context, rhetoric, exegesis, interpretation, and its purpose in our faith and lives today.



CHURCH COUNCIL

The elected leaders of governance and administration

REPORTS & NEWS

Thank you to Lucia for her March 9, 2025, sermon on Stewardship, following are some sermon highlights:

- *“Reflecting on our role as caretakers of God's blessings. Stewardship is not merely a duty but a sacred calling—a call to care for all God has entrusted us with love, wisdom, and faithfulness. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus reveals the profound connection between our service to others and our service to Him, reminding us of the eternal significance of our stewardship.”*
- *“As part of our new Stewardship mission at St. James, we would like to take different times of the year to lift up, spotlight, and celebrate the various acts of stewardship that already occur within our faith community, providing a structure that will help us reflect about our purpose and our place in being stewards.*
- *“May we strive to be faithful stewards in every area of our lives, joining our hands in unity, and reflecting the love and grace of our Heavenly Father to a world in need of His transformative power. Amen”*
- *Thank you again to Rich and Bob for all their hours of hard work on behalf of St. James! “Never a cross word passed between them.”*

*SAVE THE DATE: Sunday June 1, 11:30 am
Congregational Meeting: Ministries Report
For all active voting members*

MEMBERS

Officers

- Kathy Haddy, *President*
- *Vice President [vacant]*
- Bill Dreska, *Secretary*
- Neil Johnson, *Treasurer*
- Ellen Hubina,
Assistant Treasurer
- Curt Haedke,
Financial Secretary

Liaisons

- Rev. Abby Johnson,
Worship
- Jan Carnaroli,
Outreach
- Lucia Dressel,
*Stewardship &
Fellowship*
- Barbara Manville,
Preschool
- Liz Skinski,
Faith-Formation
- Lynn Morrison,
Care & Hospitality
- Tony Salvatore,
Properties



RENT OUR SPACE

1. Call the Main Office to request date
2. Fill out a rental request form
3. Return 10 days out from event, to be reviewed
4. Pay fee, deposit, and acquire insurance

MEMBERSHIP

To learn about formally joining our church during this spring cycle, see Pastor Abby.
Next cycle opens in the fall

SPRING LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Sun. April 13
Palm Sunday

A pageant-style service as we welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, beginning Holy Week.



EASTER
April 20 - June 1
"Restored & Fulfilled"

Sun. June 8
Feast of Pentecost

In celebration of the Holy Spirit entering into the world and all people! Youth led worship with Confirmation graduation and the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism.



Thur. April 17
Maundy Thursday 7:00 PM Worship

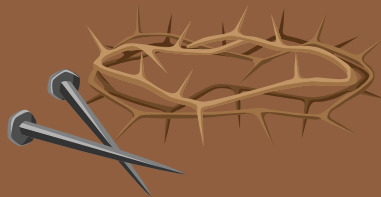
Jesus models inclusive communion & humble service



Fri. April 18
Good Friday

7:00 PM Tenebrae

Come for this ancient meditative service, where gradually extinguishing candles symbolize the coming darkness of Jesus' death.



Sun. June 15
Holy Trinity

We wonder at the mysterious, diverse, relational nature of God as three in one.



Sun. June 22
Worship in the Park

Worship and fellowship outside at Ballantine Park, Southbury, welcoming in summer.



Sun. April 20
Resurrection Sunday

7:30 AM Outside service
10:15 AM Sanctuary

Christ is risen! Alleluia!
Love has triumphed over death!

ORDINARY TIME in SUMMER
June 29 - August 31
"Rest & Reflect"

Sunday worship changes to 9:30am

WORSHIP & MUSIC



STEWARDS of WORSHIP

Join the Worship Team

Help plan the details of our worship services and ministries of praise.

Music

Sing in choir, cantor the hymns, share special music. See *John Dressel, Music Dir.*

Altar Guild

Prepare the worship space and elements. See *Paulette Calderone*

Ushers

Welcome and monitor the building. See *Jacque Matthews*

Lector

Read scripture. See *Sam Haddy*

Assistant Minister

Help lead worship and communion. See *Liz Skinski*

Acolytes

Lighting the candles. See *Lynn Morrison*

Youth Engagement in Worship

Accessible & interactive elements for kids. See *Pastor & Sam Haddy*

All-In Nativity Pageant: In late December, all ages joined in the fun of acting out the story of Jesus' birth in worship.



Guest Preacher:

In January, Deacon David Hope-Tringali, Executive Director of Tree 4 Hope joined us for worship and preached a word of God's calling being, right, timely, good, and challenging, however surprising.

Baptisms:

In February, Miles Richard Zuris, of Nikki & Sean. In March, Elora Lee Sutherland, of Kyle & Meghan. ... & kids get a front row seat! Welcome to the family of faith, beloved children of God!



"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and praises!" - Psalm 98:4

Coming Together, Even When Apart

BY KEVIN PETERSON, ST. J MEMBER

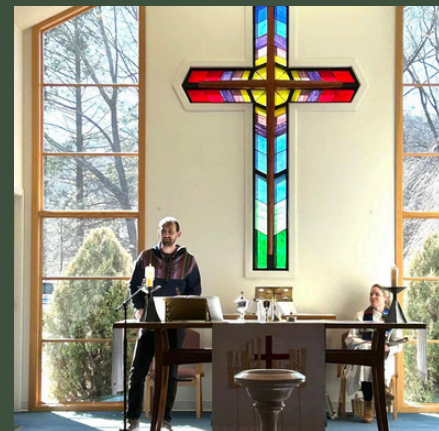
The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges, but it also created unexpected opportunities. With social distancing suddenly necessary, nearly every church across the country had to shift to remote services. This change made traditional worship difficult, but it also allowed for new ways to connect that might not have been possible otherwise.

At the time, my family was spread across the country—one brother in Pensacola, a sister in New Orleans, and another brother in Fairbanks, Alaska. Despite the distance, we were able to attend virtual services from each of their local churches, as well as the church my mom grew up in back in Illinois. We even reconnected with pastors who had once served at our home church. What had once been limited by geography was now accessible from anywhere, giving us the chance to share in worship as a family, even while living thousands of miles apart.

Later in the pandemic, when Kristen and I began attending St. James, we experienced another unique form of worship—sitting in our car in the church parking lot, tuning into the service on 88.5 MHz. It wasn't what we were used to, but it still allowed us to gather safely, experiencing the service together even if separated by car doors and windshields. Seeing others parked alongside us, worshipping in the same way, reinforced the idea that church was never just about the building—it was about the people coming together in faith, no matter the circumstances.

The pandemic gave me a new perspective on worship. It forced us to think outside the box, stripping away the nonessential and focusing on what mattered most. Worship wasn't confined to a specific location; it was about the act of coming together in whatever way we could. While we couldn't hug or shake hands, we could still pray, sing, and reflect alongside others, even from a distance.

If anything, the experience deepened my understanding of what it means to be part of a faith community. Worship isn't about where we are physically—it's about being present spiritually, making the effort to connect with others, and finding ways to share in faith. The pandemic may have changed how we worshiped, but it proved that no matter the circumstances, we can always find a way to come together.



Praise: Christmas Eve surprise guest of lobsters for children. Kevin Peterson preaching on Hope in Guatemala during the Storytelling Sunday in March. Gratitude for Bob Morrison and Rich Larson for their gift of the stained-glass cross on Stewardship Sunday in March.

FAITH FORMATION

BIBLE/BOOK STUDY

The Book of Ruth

4 Mondays, 11:00 AM

April 28 - May 19



The incredibly rich story told in the book of Ruth captures the fears, challenges, and hope of those who find themselves pulled away from home and of those who are there when they return. In this book we are invited into the deep emotions and conversations of the three central characters of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, while exploring the themes of loss, loyalty, risk, and hope.

INTERFAITH TEXT STUDY

Sins of the Golden Calf

Thursday, April 3, 7:00 PM

@ B'nai Israel Southbury (444 Main St)

One scripture, many interpretations - across denominations and religions! Come be in dialogue about a story we all share but embrace differently. Wrestle with questions of sin, idolatry, covenant, grace and consequence. Encouraged to read Exodus 32 prior to attending. Led by Rev. Brian Bodt of Woodbury Methodist, Rabbi Eric Polokoff of B'Nai Israel, and Rev. Abby Johnson.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Epic Australian Adventure:

An Unforgettable Journey with Jesus

Campers spend summer mornings with other preschoolers through Grade 5 in fun and faith. Grade 6-12 are welcome as CITs and volunteers are encouraged! A partnership program with UCC Southbury; this year held on their campus. Registration opens May 11 for VBS Aug. 4-8.



CONFIRMATION



Spring Graduation, June 8

Confirmation is a 4-unit course which dives deep into Lutheran history, teachings, and biblical study. Students grade 6-12 explore traditions, faith in the world today, and their own personal spirituality. In addition to a great learning opportunity, this course uniquely prepares youth for "The Rite of Affirmation of Baptism." In this Rite, believers *confirm* their faith and take up for themselves the baptismal promises made on their behalf as an infant, now equipped with knowledge and personal discernment.

On graduation day, all those completing the course will be celebrated for their dedication, hard-work, and educational achievement - regardless of whether or not they decide to confirm their faith at this particular time or later. The Rite of Affirmation of Baptism will be held later in the service, for any who wish to confirm their faith, student or otherwise!

STEWARDS of LEARNING

Join the Faith-Formation Team to plan education programs for all ages!

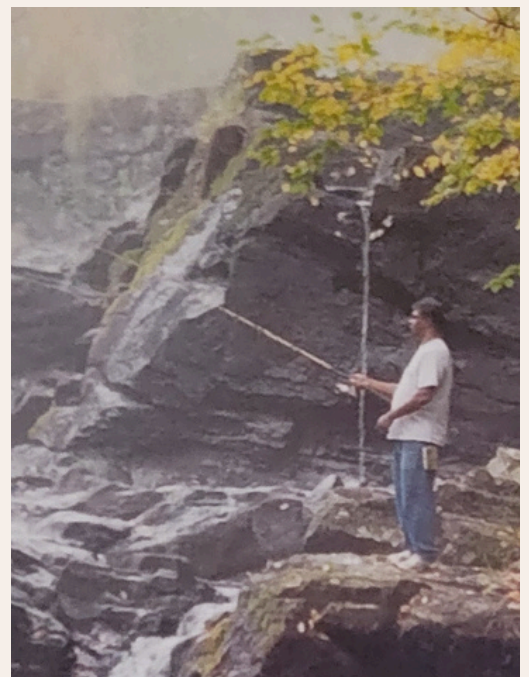
"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." - Matthew 7:7-8

My Faith Story

BY JEFF NADASEN, ST. J MEMBER

This is how I would summarize my life in order to sift out any meaning. I was born in Durban South Africa during apartheid. My family was very poor. I grew up in a single family home that housed four families. We were a close-knit community, and not just in the home. I spent most of my time with my uncles, aunts and cousins. My father, who was a teacher for 10 years, received a scholarship to go to Indiana University. So, in 1972, we moved to Bloomington Indiana. My mother, father, myself and two younger sisters traveled 8,000 miles away from everything and everyone we knew. When we left, I felt a loneliness I couldn't understand. At nine years old, it seemed a devastating change. It was not long before I made some friends, and for some reason things seemed to go my way. I remember winning a football at the elementary school bingo, the top prize at that time. I ran track, and represented my school, taking second in the State for chess. Looking back, I realize my life was actually easy. I had everything I needed, was adventurous, had good friends and was treated kindly by everyone I can remember. It was as if God were watching over me. Five years later, we moved to Takoma Park, Maryland, just outside Washington, DC...another drastic change. After adjusting emotionally, life once again became easy. When I say "easy", I mean that I barely noticed the many kinds of difficulties and injustices, because it felt like God was watching over me. There, I met two brothers, Tim and Stuart Newman, whom I became close friends with. One Sunday morning, their mother asked me if I wanted to go to church. Without a thought or even an inkling of God or religion, I said yes. Thus began my journey with God. I don't remember the specifics. I just remember being very welcomed and loved. Though I had other friends with whom I did many things, like fishing and going to events, I always went to church, as if I were drawn to it. I could feel God working in me, though I would say, patiently. Again, we moved. This time to Canton, Michigan. This is where I would say I fell away. After a few years, I was invited to a home church. Once again, I felt comfortable and became part of that community. Life was not easy anymore. I fell away once again, this time for a long time. I can now see I was not content with where I was, and I knew I needed something in my life. I don't know why I had forgotten God was always there. There was, then, selfishness, a desire for self-satisfaction, and the arrogant belief that I controlled my life.

Moving forward many years, I married Carol, a partner in life I have known now for over 40 years. It was no mistake. Carol insisted we go to church every week. I did go to church, but I lost that magic I had with God when I was a kid, when things were easy. It would take a tumultuous amount of pain, struggle, and processing for God to get inside of me again. I prayed whenever I was in trouble. My commitment was not complete. Fast forward almost two decades to now. I can see the wisdom in God being patient in my life. I now know more what a commitment to God means to me: to love, to give, to pray, to take care of the poor, and all those other things into which Christ led the way. I can't say I have accomplished anything. I'm nowhere near what Paul said, to "count it all joy" or what Christ says, to "love your neighbor as yourself". I still get upset/angry when the events of this world are not to my liking. I can also say I truly do not understand God. If I did.... well, you would know the result. I can say I am closer to God now than when I was that kid, even though I don't have the same magic. My prayer is that I will continue down this path that God has patiently provided, and one day I feel like I can count it all joy.



FELLOWSHIP



Lent on the Road: The 3rd annual fellowship and worship event with neighboring congregations.

To the Church of Southbury

In the New Testament, half of our biblical books begin in this way. Mostly written by Paul, they addressed not just a singular group or house of Believers, but rather the entire community of Christ-followers in a region. Although we don't often think of it as such, we are one community of Believers in Southbury, even if we worship at various churches. Occasionally, it is important to join together and celebrate this unity.

In 1 Thess. 5, Paul tells the community of Thessalonica that they should "encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact [they were] doing."

I'd like to think that if Paul wrote to Southbury, this is what he would say. Between Lent on the Road, VBS, and countless other events and meetings in town, Southbury does a mighty fine job at community. We cross the borders of denominational divides, and we help to build one another up. Our houses of worship work to grow in faith, and we work together to "do faith" together as a community!

The way in which our faith communities cooperate in this town has been one of my favorite aspects of living and working in Southbury. It has been a joy and privilege worshipping alongside many of you at Lent on the Road, and I have been thrilled to see the kids of each house of worship coming together as well! Just as we see at VBS each year, it is amazing to notice how quickly bonds of friendship can form when children across different churches spend time together. In these ways, Paul wrote, let's continue to encourage one another, just as in fact we are already doing.

PEACE, PASTOR THEO CAMARA
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILIES, UCC SOUTHBURY



“For where two or three gather in my name,
there am I with them.” - Matthew 18: 20



SPRING EVENTS



1

Easter Breakfast

Sunday, April 20 - See Lynn Morrison
Between the outdoor sunrise service and worship in the sanctuary, join together in the Fellowship Hall.

2

55th Anniversary Party

Sunday, May 18 - See Judy Katzmark
Celebrate the history of St. James Lutheran Church over a nice meal at the Heritage Hotel, Southbury.

3

Church Picnic

Sunday, June 22 - See Judy Katzmark
Gather around the picnic tables at Ballantine Park to connect in God's creation. Bring a dish to share!



Connect: High coffee hour for 1st Communion kids.
Interfaith Iftar Dinner in March, hosted by the Albanian American Muslim Community. 25+ St. James folk at the UCONN Women's basketball game in late December.

STEWARDS of FELLOWSHIP

All events are organized by **willing volunteers** who feel so led to jump in and coordinate one.

Youth and Family



What Calumet Means to Me

BY MEG CARNAROLI, ST. J MEMBER

When I say that I can't imagine what my life would be like without Calumet, I really mean it. At eleven years old, I took the bus from a church parking lot in Worcester and disembarked two hours later onto soft pine needles, not knowing that I was stepping foot into a place that would become my whole world. That first summer, after I threw my sleeping bag onto a top bunk in Girls Cabin 7, I was hooked. I returned every summer after that until I became a Counselor in Training (CIT) in the summer of 2001. I didn't even really discuss becoming a CIT with my family because by the time I was sixteen, it was just obvious and inevitable. And good thing! Because on the very first day of that CIT summer, I met a cute, kind boy who played guitar and made me laugh and I liked him so much I married him. We had our wedding right in the Outdoor Chapel at ...
(Continues on next page)



Church, A Place for Kids: Our kids made sandwiches for Dorothy Day House and bracelets for Tree4Hope with UCC Southbury youth group. In January, Kylie, Paul and Claire Hubina joined us all in exploring the gift & mystery of Holy Communion.



“Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” - Matt 19:14

(Continued from page 11)

Calumet, because of course we did. Mike and I have worked at Calumet forever. After our full summers working on the shores of Lake Ossipee, we became Co-Assistant Directors of Calumet's Resurrection Connection Day Camp in New Haven. During every single one of those summers I met swaths of incredible young people who pushed themselves to do the challenging work of being a Calumet counselor. These are some of the best people I know.

Today, our own kids, Natalie and Ray, look forward to their time at Calumet all year. We return every summer as a family to spend a few weeks camping in our pop-up camper at Family Camp while our kids attend Resident Camp by the lake with their cousins and friends. Last summer, Mike directed Music Camp during the last week of the summer, something that had been on pause since 2019.

I know every woman my age has **that** group chat and, to no one's surprise, mine is composed entirely of...my camp friends. The seven of us get together as a group at least once per year, and we text every day. And I mean Every. Single. Day. We share everything from every part of our lives: parenting, jobs, partners, passions, family, triumphs and defeats, serious and silly things...all of it. Everyone needs a group chat like this; that source of laughter and support is invaluable.

So I really do mean that I can't imagine what my life would be without Calumet; the relationships we build and the bonds we forge are strong and lasting. The camp itself is as picturesque as it gets: red cabins on the sparkly lake, with real purple mountains of majesty as a dreamy backdrop. But more than the location, Calumet is a feeling. The people who continue to work at and visit Calumet lead with that most Lutheran of Divine gifts: Grace. It's inescapable.

As an organization that is founded on religious principles, there is always the potential danger for doing what so many religious institutions can do and have done; being exclusionary and judgmental, controlling and intolerant, or emotionally and psychologically harmful. Calumet, as it leads with Grace, is just the very opposite of all of those things and works hard to combat that every day by actively seeking out ways to create a culture that is more inclusionary, safe, and fun. When you ask campers (kids and grownups!) what they love about Calumet, you almost always hear some version of, “At Calumet, you can be yourself!” This culture is what they are referring to; that Calumet strives to be inclusionary, safe, and (best of all) fun for everyone to “be themselves.” This powerful mission has paid off, because when we meet another person in “Calumet Nation” out in the wild, we feel that instant connection, an immediate comfort and familiarity, even if we've never met before. Because they're a camp person; they just get it. That's Calumet.



St. James Preschool

BY JENNY BEAUDEAN-WHITE & LESLIE BROCH

The St. James Preschool continues the year with a theme of growth and discovery. As the children experience their time at preschool, this is often their first entrée into a school environment. While play is an important part of the day, so is structured learning.

Over the course of the school year, the children have the opportunity to learn to write their name, which is a big part of the progression of learning and is especially exciting for many 3- and 4-year-olds. They work on other educational tasks as well – learning to count to 20, for example, and how to use scissors, and they feel the excitement and sense of accomplishment that comes from learning new skills.

Socially the time spent is important as well – the children are already learning now to notice social cues. Learning trust for teachers and classmates is key! Learning to share and take turns is important. Leslie Broch, their teacher and our preschool director, helps them think through how to share, so that the children are already learning to solve problems. For example, if a child wants to play with another child, can they just join in? Do they need to ask the other child? What should happen next?

As Leslie points out, “It is best when the children are a part of the solution in social exercises. We are teaching social skills that are important – for example, recognizing how to satisfy their needs while also learning to respect the needs of others.”



Enrollment open for Fall 2025
See stjamesct.org/preschool for details



OUTREACH



***Give Generously:** In January & February, donations were collected to support the youth of Guatemala through Tree 4 Hope, including over 150 pairs of children's shoes.*

Meals Ministry

BY LYNN MORRISON, ST. J MEMBER

If you have ever faced a difficult time, you know how comforting it feels to receive a meal from a friend! Being thought of in a kind and considerate way means a lot. A gift showing LOVE and care lifts our spirits!

I do know that, speak from experience. While my husband, Jack, was struggling through ALS many years ago, meals were prepared for us by the folks in our church family. It was a super help, and while Jack was still able to eat, a delight for him. How much that "gift of love" meant, and how the outpouring of caring hearts lifted his spirits. That thoughtfulness was a special "ingredient." The love from the hands that prepared those meals, was THE most important ingredient. I will always be grateful.

Some years ago, I and another parishioner, started a Meals Ministry at our previous church. We had 30+ folks on our team! Each one's turn didn't come up more than once in 9 months or so - it was a true gift to our faith family.

Here at St. James, we also have a Meals Ministry (I prefer "ministry" vs. "train," since that is what Christ calls us to), sponsored through the James Ministry Team, with help from Women's and Men's Fellowship Groups. A casserole, salad, fruit bread, or dessert brought to a family in need of a little "TLC," upon the arrival of a baby, an illness, death in the family, recuperation from surgery, shut-in, etc. We always welcome those willing to prepare! Let me know if you would like to join our team! (edgelake@aol.com or 203-426-7749)

During my husband's illness with ALS, there were numerous times when God's blessings were obvious! Jack would say, "Wow, wasn't that a blessing!" or I'd say, "Can you believe what just happened!" During those 2 years that Jack had ALS there were events happening so often that lifted up our hearts as we saw God's hand so strongly present. We started making notes in "Our Blessings Book," which I carried with us. When a good Samaritan "just happened" to cross our paths, I'd jot that down in Our Book. And, as the days went on, we'd actually be LOOKING for God's obvious intervention. We were never disappointed - never a day passed without an entry!

Jesus gave examples of that greatest Commandment - "Love one another as I have loved you (Matthew 22:37-39, John 15:12). As I sit here writing, it is truly overwhelming, the gratitude I feel for God's presence in my life. I often teach the Confirmation Class to remember the letter "L" = from God's hand we are given His love, and through us, we send it outward to those around us! Thanks be to God!

“A new commandment I give you:
Love one another as I have loved you.” - John 13: 34

Winter Review

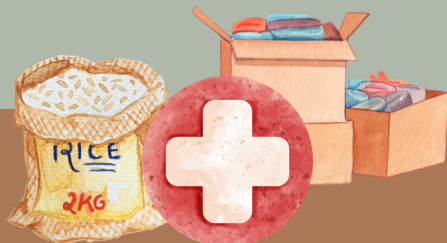


Dorothy Day House received hot meals in January and March, prepared by our Men's Fellowship Group, and sandwiches in February, prepared by many youth and families (above).

The Lutheran Home received many magazines, books, stationary, 2025 calendars, and Valentine's Day treats, prepared by the Women's Fellowship Group.

Lutheran World Relief received 25 health care kits, donated by members and friends, and assembled by Women's Fellowship Group, to be sent to those in need worldwide.

ELCA aid groups like **Lutheran Disaster Response, Ascentria Care Alliance, Global Refuge, and Lutheran Social Services** received prayers and donations to address needs such as wildfire aid, refugee and migrants' care and justice.



GIVE TO ONGOING DRIVES!

Rice - Medical Equipment - Clothing

Spring Service

1

Homefront Build Day

Saturday, May 4 - See *Mike or Lauren Lyons*
Join 16 local corporate, civic and faith-based groups in transforming unsafe, unhealthy homes for local residents.

2

Mission Endowment Fund

May - See *Linda Bedard, Chair*
Bring your ideas of causes or organizations to the committee to include in donation allocation.

3

Lutheran Home Letters

Anytime - See *Judy Katzmark, Ambassador*
Send a card to a resident, letting them know you with St. James are thinking of them, praying for them, and values having them in our community!

4

Earth Day Clean Up

Saturday, April 12 - See *Southbury website*
Join the Southbury town-wide litter pick-up "Team Up to Clean Up" to care for our earth.

STEWARDS of OUTREACH

All projects are organized by **willing volunteers**, who feel so led to jump in and coordinate one.

If there is a cause close to your heart, bring it to St. James so we can join you in support and service!

2025 Guatemala Service Trip for Tree 4 Hope

February 14-22, 2025



2025 AWAY TEAM

Keely Reese (T4H staff); Kevin & Kristen Peterson; Ruth Mueller; Cynthia Corona (coworker of Kristen); Pastor Abby Johnson; Martha & Don Johnson (pastor's parents)

Tree 4 Hope, our global mission partner, received 7 volunteers who traveled on behalf of the St. James community to strengthening our active personal relationship. This Away Team delivered the generous donations of the stateside Home Team:

- 75 bottles of children's vitamins
- 150 pairs of children's shoes
- 30 friendship bracelets
- 25 Spanish chapter books
- 100 lbs of school supplies
- 50 lbs of clothing

The impact of this service trip extends beyond the tangible donations. Trips to our partner organizations like Tree 4 Hope foster a spirit of unity and compassion, reminding everyone of the power Christ and the importance of giving. As the team returns home, they carry with them a renewed commitment to continue our efforts in spreading the love of God and supporting all of his children.

STEWARDSHIP

BY PASTOR & LUCIA DRESSEL,
STEWARDSHIP LIAISON TO COUNCIL

All good things in life are gifts from God - from the people we love, to the place we call home, the air we breathe, and the passions we possess. Giving thanks and taking care of all these gifts are acts of glorifying God! They are also bold statements of commitment to lean into our identity as followers of Jesus.

Rather than viewing stewardship strictly as a fundraising event, a call for volunteers, or confined to one ministry team, let us expand our understanding of stewardship to embrace the care we already exhibit in all areas of ministry - just look at that long list of types of stewardship!

How do we take care of the gifts God has given us? How does the stewardship we practice reflect our mission and support our community's growth and well-being? How can our church celebrate and grow in our call to be stewards of *all* that God loves?

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”

- Mark 10:45

noun

the careful and responsible management of all things entrusted into our care by God

FINANCIAL

Care of money to achieve goals and maintain long-term financial health

RELATIONAL

Care and cultivation relationships with one another and community

MISSION

Care and attention to our unique call & vision

PROPERTY

Care of our building, facilities, and belongings

GENERATIONAL

Care of knowledge and resources for the benefit of future generations

INCLUSIVITY

Care of an environment that is welcoming, affirming, and supportive of diversity

SPIRITUAL

Care of faithful exploration, connection to God, and each other

TIME & TALENTS

Care of schedules, energy, and volunteer needs

ENVIRONMENTAL

Care and celebration of the earth

SEASONAL SPOTLIGHT GENERATIONAL

Mortgage Reduction
Campaign

Youth-Leadership
Sunday

St. James 55th
Anniversary Party

Creation of The
Gratitude Wall

BODY OF CHRST



St. James Mission Partners

Tree 4 Hope - The Lutheran Home - Camp Calumet - Dorothy Day House



SEASONAL SPOTLIGHT: The Lutheran Home

BY JUDY KATZMARK, ST. JAMES AMBASSADOR

Founded in 1917, the Lutheran Home was originally begun as a result of the Spanish Flu epidemic which left many elderly individuals without the family connections to survive in this farm-based community. Lutheran pastors and their wives recognized the problem and combined their congregation's outreach by purchasing the Peter Parley homestead for those affected. Those first residents, by combining their talents, supported each other through their collective planting and harvesting of fruit and vegetables, household tasks, raising chickens, milking the cow, and all the other chores associated with day to day living.

Page forward 50 years plus, the Lutheran Home has grown into a premier elder care facility and Southbury finally will have a Lutheran congregation begin it's existence here. St. James, under the leadership of Rev. Gustafson, opened in the 1970s – first at Rochambeau School and then across the street on Peter Road. Of course, with the existence of the Lutheran Home nearby an immediate connection was made.

Members of the congregation both worked for and contributed to the life at the Lutheran Home by volunteering, supporting the Guild begun by those original pastors wives, pastoral visits and services, donations and monetary gifts. These evolved, especially through the Guild, into two major events held annually. The first was the June Fair in which the entire facility was used from entry hall to garden. Tents were erected, food was cooked, books and plants and new and used items were up for resale. A silent auction and drawing for themed baskets raised thousands of dollars annually to support projects such as a walk-in bath, raised gardening boxes, individual music devices for Alzheimer's patients, etc. The second was the Christmas Store where new items were donated by church members to be resold at reduced pricing so that the residents and staff could have gifts to share with their family and friends.

Which brings us to the current day where we find ourselves still intimately involved with and engaged to support the Lutheran Home through monetary gifts, donated items, individual visits, spiritual support, and pastoral care. Thanks be to God!

“You are the body of Christ.
Each one of you is a part of it.” - 1 Cor. 12:27

ELCA CHURCHWIDE

For more info, visit elca.org

May 30 - 31, 2025

Synod Assembly

Worcester, MA

NEW ENGLAND SYNOD

For more info, visit nelutherans.org



From the February “Bishop’s Bulletin” Newsletter

“With a flurry of Executive Orders in his first week in office, the President of the United States has made his choice clear. He is choosing meanness and cruelty and demanding conformity. In the love of Jesus Christ, as a bishop in Christ’s church, and speaking on behalf of all those targeted by these Executive Orders, I speak against the mean and divisive actions of the President of the United States. While I respect that elections have

consequences and winners can enact policies that reflect the will of the majority, the massive amount of swift Executive Orders, on all aspects of American life, reflect a vision for division that do not reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ nor do I believe, ultimately, reflect the will of a majority of Americans...

... We can choose the President’s path in our silence and inaction, by yielding to despair, and by throwing up our hands in frustration if we believe the lie that there is nothing we can do. Or, we can retain our power and authority as baptized children of God and choose the path of Jesus Christ in our daily interactions, in our community service, and in our public advocacy. The path of Jesus is mercy, compassion, and freedom ... it calls us to see the image of God in all our neighbors and celebrates a diversity of lived experiences ... it invites us to understand that Christ-like sacrificial service for our neighbors is the key to life. The path of Jesus leads us into trouble for eating with the outcasts, sinners, and others society reviles ... it calls us to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, care for the sick, and visit the prisoner regardless of citizenship status ... it calls us into relationships with our transgender siblings and all who are bullied and targeted by the President’s actions. The path of Jesus Christ celebrates and welcomes the Holy Spirit guiding, leading, and sustaining us in community with one another... it finds its strength and power in the Holy Spirit filling us with boldness to love, serve, build, create, and enact relationships and communities announcing the dignity and worth of all people. The choice is ours. In my words and deeds as the Bishop of the New England Synod I choose the path of Jesus Christ. I choose the path of mercy, compassion, and service that leads to the life, healing, and salvation of the world. I invite you to join me on the path of Jesus. As you do so, be encouraged and emboldened by the faith of the psalmist who sang: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.” Psalm 46:1-4. May our actions and service for our neighbors in Christ’s name be the glory we give to God!”

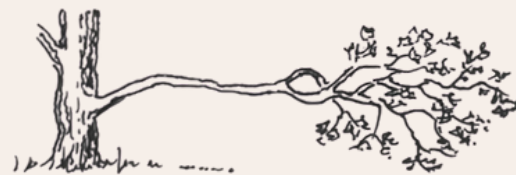
- Bishop Nathan Piphon.

(Subscribe to the Bishop’s Bulletin on the NE Synod website, nelutherans.org)

Our Outreach Tree

POEM BY JACK LAUF

REFLECTIONS BY JACQUE MATTHEW



*When I first stepped on St. James' ground
I paused, and as I looked around,
There in all it's majesty
Stood tall and strong, "THE OUTREACH TREE"*

*A sturdy trunk grew firm and high.
A mighty branch though, caught my eye.
How can that limb have so much strength
That it won't snap at such a length?*

*When winter snows bend low the bough
Will laden limb just tumble now?
And when Spring rains and winds abound
Will outreach arm lay on the ground?*

*For many years I've watched it hold
Through snow and ice and bitter cold,
With wetted leaves, through storm and gale
Still reaching out in sleet and hail.*

*Take the time, go there and ponder
The message of that tree out yonder.
I gaze in wonder year to year,
Was it God who dropped that acorn here?*

*Surely there will come a day
When outreach tree will rot away.
But if her message takes root here
We'll drop acorns, far and near*

According to Pastor Fred McGee, our former pastor of 30 years, it all began about 35 years ago when longtime members, Jack and Karen Lauf, first drove into our church property on Peter Road. Jack was immediately struck by the sight of a towering, stately oak tree at the top of the driveway—and especially by one extraordinary branch that extended nearly 75 feet from the trunk, hovering just eight feet above the ground. It was as if God had sent His angels to provide support!

Jack was a man of many talents—a successful banker, real estate broker, musician, author, artist, and poet, to name just a few. I was fortunate to be among his many friends, visiting him often in the Village and later at Pomperaug Woods.

Two of Jack's greatest works are on display in our gathering area: his poem, *Our Outreach Tree*, and his painting of the Outreach Tree. I encourage you to take a moment during coffee hour to witness his work.

In 1997, Jack painted this stunning portrait of the tree with its remarkable branch. Eight years later, in 2005, he wrote the beautiful, eloquent poem about that very branch and what it symbolizes. Jack passed away in January 2019 at the age of 93. At his celebration of life service, I honored him by displaying his painting and reading his poem.

So, Jack, I hope you're listening and smiling down on us, because I have some good news to share! I recently gave those angels a little help—by installing a 10,000-pound basement jack under your beloved branch.

My hope and prayers are that 45 years from now, when we celebrate our 100th anniversary, one of our children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren will share the joyful news that our Outreach Tree—and all that it stands for—is still alive and well.



CHURCH LIFE AT A GLANCE

WEEKLY

SUNDAY	09:00 AM	CONFIRMATION
SUNDAY	10:15 AM	WORSHIP
SUNDAY	10:30 AM	SUNDAY SCHOOL
MON - FRI	9AM-12PM	BUILDING STAFFED
MONDAY	11:00 AM	BIBLE/BOOK STUDY
TUESDAY	12:00 PM	MEDITATION
WEDNESDAY	12:00 PM	FIKA @ AM COFFEE

MONTHLY

1ST WED.	07:00 PM	WORSHIP TEAM OR FAITH-FORMATION TEAM
2ND TUES.	01:00 PM	WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP JAMES MINISTRY CARE TEAM
2ND WED.	06:30 PM	EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
2ND SAT.	09:30 AM	MEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP
3RD TUES.	01:00 PM	EVANGELISM TEAM
3RD WED.	07:00 PM	FINANCE TEAM
3RD THURS.	07:00 PM	PRESCHOOL BOARD
4TH TUES.	11:00 AM	DDH HOT MEAL PREP
4TH WED.	07:00 PM	COUNCIL

QUARTERLY

MISSION PARTNER SPOTLIGHT	EPISTLE ISSUE
STEWARDSHIP SPOTLIGHT	DDH SANDWICH MAKING

ANNUALLY

JANUARY	CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: BUDGET
MARCH	GUSTAFSON SCHOLARSHIP
MAY & NOV.	MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND GIVING
MAY	N.E. SYNOD ASSEMBLY
JUNE	CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: MINISTRY
JULY	VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL, WITH UCC

See church calendar on our website for updates and specifics