



God calls us to follow Christ,
make disciples, and live the gospel.



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONGREGATION

JUNE 1, 2025



ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH
LAKE FOREST, ILLINOIS

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONGREGATION

Annual Governance Meeting Notice

Schedule for June 1, 2025

- 10:00 am Service
- 11:15 am Annual Meeting
- 12:15 pm Lunch

Items to be discussed:

A formal agenda will be distributed at the meeting.

A Quorum of voting members is necessary.

- Our Mission
- Senior Pastor's Report
- President's Report
- Reflections on the past year – Multimedia presentation
- Opportunities to get involved
- Question & Answer session
- Nominations & Elections
- Recognitions
- Prayer

Lunch will be served immediately following the meeting in the Fellowship Hall.

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Old Business

Minutes of the Annual Financial Meeting

January 26, 2025

Meeting start: 11:20 am - Meeting end: 12:20 pm

- **Opening Prayer** - Pastor Amy
- **Call to Order** - Shelly Holmstrom
 - A motion to call to order- Madeline Jorgenson, second - Jim Davoux. Verbal vote was taken and was unanimously approved.
- **Report of the Tellers/Confirmation of a Quorum** - 47 present - a quorum has been met
 - A motion was made to confirm a quorum—Jim Davoux, seconded by Lisa Kollmorgen. A vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved.
- **Adoption of the Agenda** - Shelly Holmstrom
 - A motion was made to adopt the agenda - Doug Dusthimer, seconded by boPaul Moss. A vote was taken and was unanimously approved.
- **Approval of the Minutes from June 2, 2024** - Shelly Holmstrom
 - Shelly asked if there were any changes to the June 2, 2024, minutes, and there were none. Motion to approve the June 2, 2024 minutes - Liz Behring, second- Kathy Lowell. A vote was taken and was unanimously approved.

Final 2024 Review, Mark Wanda

Shelly thanked Mark for all his hard work.

Mark reported a \$31,000 surplus for 2024. A lot was driven through personnel. No one is currently in the role of Sunday school coordinator, and Doug Dusthimer retired as youth coordinator mid-year. The bookkeeper resigned in February, with Mark willing to volunteer part-time until the new bookkeeper was hired in November. We had budgeted \$36,000 for a full year of a paid position, which was not fully used. There were significant unbudgeted expenses in 2024: the parking lot repaving was \$190,000, paid for out of the major maintenance fund. An unexpected, non-functional drainage system was uncovered during the parking lot project. A new \$26,000 security system was installed, made possible by an individual donor. Unexpected organ repair occurred in 2024, paid for out of a fund for organ repair. Fortunately, we were able to pay for everything without taking out loans, and St. James does not have any debt. An unbudgeted tree removal was paid out of the budget, and we are looking at ways to avoid tapping into the general budget when these unique needs arise.

Mark thanked Dave Moore for the Stewardship Campaign which rose over 5% this past year. Our unpledged giving went up as well to \$95,000 while the number of families that pledged stayed flat. New families that have joined the church have pledged. We have seen growth in the Endowment Fund. Those numbers are not yet available from Wintrust and will be shared when they are available. The Land Endowment Fund takes out 4% every year and it is still growing. Our cash positions at the end of 2024 are strong. Paul Moss asked pledging stayed flat if all new families had pledged. Shelly clarified that there were a few families that did not pledge who had in prior years but they continued in unpledged giving.

The proposed 2025 budget has a deficit of \$9,000. This is a reflection of what we are hoping to achieve in 2025. We have items in the budget related to LEAD strategic planning and have staffing needs. These anticipated costs are included even though we do not know specific numbers. We budgeted a salary increase for all employees. We continue to tithe to the ELCA and that number increases as our budget does. Mark would like pledged giving to remain strong as that helps us plan. We remain dependent on a small number of families for a high percentage of our budget. The single largest increase in the budget is going to be personnel.

Notable accomplishments - we hired a new bookkeeper, Linda Cifuentes. We hired a nursery coordinator, Ibironke "Ronke" Daramola. We developed a gift policy which is helpful as we continue to be good financial stewards. We have decreased the number of credit cards from 6 to 3 to have more control. Mark feels that we have made significant progress in structure and consistency so that we could handle a future audit perhaps for 2025. Linda is continuing the work that Mark had started to streamline our financial procedures

We continue to use the financial oversight committee which has been a significant value to the church. Teri Miller, Jim Davoux and Dave Moore have been crucial to financial discussions. The COOL matching program last summer was a tremendous success and is a testament to the generosity of SJLC. The annual budget process begins in Sept. with a meeting of the committee chairs who are asked to budget, based on what they feel their needs will be. What is pledged drives what we can spend. All budget requests were received in December.

Pastor Amy discussed that LEAD is on a brief break and look forward to developing specific recommendations during the new year. St. James retained a Communications Consultant in December (Stacy Eppel) who has already been very beneficial.

Presentation of the 2025 General Fund Budget, Mark Wanda

\$611,000 was pledged for 2025, and the total operational budget is \$730,000. We are starting in a very strong position. Insurance costs went up significantly in 2024. Snow removal is expensive and unknown. Our staff expenses are over 55% of our budget and are a big part of who we are. The budget is also driven by programs such as Christian

Education, Worship and music, Evangelism, Stewardship, and Benevolence to the ELCA and local organizations.

Melodi Peters brought up that a relatively significant portion of the budget seems to be directed to guest musicians and questioned that number. Paul Moss commented that dollars directed to 2025 guest musicians increased by over 100%. Mark reported that this was one of our most significant increases in the budget and commented that many of the brass musicians are no longer St. James members, and some are hired. The brass ensemble performs all year round, and Ryan needs to encourage them to attend rehearsals and find a way to maintain that continuity. Laurie Whisler added that there are limited musicians in the area, and it is challenging for Ryan to rehearse and provide a consistent sound. Alane Wanda mentioned that there is flexibility regarding spending the land fund's annual proceeds. Paul brought up the music at SJ with brass and Damascus Road. He asked how we equate the value of our various music groups and how the directors are compensated. Pastor Amy commented that we will be looking at the Worship & Music numbers to determine how to right-size the music program. Alane brought up that benevolence is tied to our music program and referenced the giving generated by the brass concert. There is a contrast between spending on youth and music. Mark stressed that this is partly why we have a deficit with this budget, as we are planning for a youth coordinator during the second half of the year and are still waiting for the LEAD initiatives. We have volunteers currently handling tasks that should evolve into staff positions.

Mark suggested that we should perhaps discuss our budget and finances more with the congregation throughout the year.

Dee Buckowich asked about benevolence and the 70:30 split we currently have (ELCA: local organizations). We have flexibility in the future year, depending on what the LEAD plan recommends, and these questions are areas to investigate. Pete Clemens mentioned that the new sanctuary is 34 years old and the old sanctuary is 63 years old, and we should strive to protect the Major Maintenance Fund. Mark clarified that we will continue to build the Major Maintenance fund up. Mark reported that we will do a needs assessment of the building. The roof is under consideration at some point, and the HVAC and the parking lot are done. They should be suitable for a while.

Discussion and Adoption of the 2025 General Fund Budget, Shelly Holmstrom

The motion to adopt the 2025 General Fund Budget was made by Jim Davoux and seconded by Pete Clemens. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Shelly thanked Mark, and Mark thanked Linda and encouraged us to support her in that role. He felt the Financial Oversight Committee was crucial to the health of the church. Mark thanked everyone for the discussion.

Election of the Synod Assembly Voting Members, Shelly Holmstrom

We need representatives to accompany Pastor Amy to the Synod Assembly on May 30 and 31. Laurie Whisler and Greg MacAyeal were nominated.

Alane Wanda moved to elect the aforementioned members as assembly voting members, seconded by Pete Clemens. A vote was taken, and both were unanimously approved.

Shelly thanked Pastor Amy for her leadership and shepherding of our congregation. She reminded us that June 1st will be the Annual Governance Meeting, and we are very focused on our various ministries.

- **Closing Prayer** - Pastor Amy
- **Adjournment** - Shelly Holmstrom
 - Motion to adjourn by Paul Moss, seconded by Dee Buckowich, a vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Minutes respectfully taken by Laurie Whisler

New Business

Report of the President

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Pastor Amy frequently reminds me in conversations and from the pulpit that at St. James, we have the privilege of “setting the table.” To me, that sounds like collectively, we’re “anticipating, preparing, creating, hoping.” As disciples of a Living God, our hearts are open to evolving, growing, and inviting others to join us.

What an amazing time to be in community together as we await definition and direction of the LEAD strategic plan. We are beginning to envision how the addition of a staff member in children, youth, and family ministry might impact and grow faith in our young people, a commitment we make to them at baptism. The MaTch program is deepening relationships and care between members of our St. James community. Our daily journey together supports this!

Council members studied the book, “The Invitational Christian”, by Dave Daubert, over this past year. A reminder that on any given Sunday, or at any church event, we are designed by God to invite, welcome, and walk alongside those new to our community. If you are a first-time visitor, returning after a time away, worship irregularly due to conflicts, or have been part of our family for years, we love having you worship with us! Each Sunday, I see evidence of kind and generous hearts, reaching out with smiles and conversation to whomever is in our midst. Discipleship in action!

As we are open to growth and change, open to where the Holy Spirit leads, we explore the benefits of technology. Our new IT Team of volunteers, supported by staff, assists in maintaining a stable and high-quality live stream, internet security, website updating, text messaging options, and an updated database. Stacy Eppel, our Communication Consultant, is designing processes, assisting Pastor Amy with seasonal worship enhancement, establishing the project calendar, and getting the word out on social media. Check out the multi-media presentation at the upcoming Annual Meeting Celebration, June 1!

Our caring and committed staff are such a blessing. Special thanks to Joan Krikau, Pete Clemens and our talented music staff for all the ways they support the lay leadership and ministries of the church. We rely on the generosity of time and talent in committee, program leaders, and participants. Each member of our St. James family works to weave a rich tapestry as together, we do God's Work. Our Hands.

Thank you for the trust you awarded me while serving on Council and this past year as President. Special appreciation to Executive Committee members Scott Larson, Mark Wanda, Laurie Whisler, and Pastor Amy, and all Council members, who were a joy to work alongside. Much appreciation to outgoing Council members Bob Kenehan, Annie Moss, and Bob Narlock.

As we continue to “set the table”, I am reminded and grateful for the tremendous pastoral leadership of Pastor Amy - for her graciousness, warmth, liturgical and sacramental guidance, creativity, shepherding, rich sermons and daily examples of deep love and faith in Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God!

Shelly Holmstrom

President, St. James Council

Report of Senior Pastor, Amy Gillespie

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4,6-7

With Gratitude

When I think of the church community of St. James and the past year we've spent together, I am overjoyed and filled with thanksgiving. Every step of the way this year, it has been a gift and delight to walk alongside all of you. We have had a wonderful, lively and rich year together.

I am filled with gratitude for all the amazing servant-hearted people of St. James. Thank you for the many ways each of you steps in to support the mission and vision of this church. Thank you to the Church Council, especially the leadership of the Executive Council: Shelly Holmstrom, Laurie Whisler, Scott Larson and Mark Wanda. Thank you to the office staff, Joan Krikau and Pete Clemens, who have anchored the day-to-day operations of the church and its property in love and hospitality. Thank you for your ability to adjust to changes and make room for new staff members at the table.

In early December, 2024 Linda Cifuentes came onboard as our Bookkeeper and Stacy Eppel started as our Communications Consultant on a contract basis. Linda has made exceptional strides streamlining our finances, advocating for best practices and her warm demeanor makes everyone feel comfortable. Stacy is a light and a ball of energy and excitement. We are blessed to have her keen eye and stamp on all our communications. Her talent and spirit of collaboration has taken us far in the time she has been with the church.

I am nearing three years as the Senior Pastor of St. James (November 2025) and celebrated my 9th year of ministry as an ordained Pastor in the ELCA in April 2025. It is truly a privilege and an honor. I still thank God for the exceptional call committee who brought me and my family to St. James, and for all your prayers and support along the way.

Even so, I am regularly awestruck and humbled that this congregation puts their trust in me to be your Pastor. In January 2024, this congregation voted to approve and embark on a prayerful process to discern God's call in our lives as a congregation, for the next 2-3 years. There is a more detailed description of what that process has looked like and where we are now in the LEAD Team report.

I am once again beyond grateful to the LEAD Team members for saying yes to a year long process of discernment, of intentional prayer, and delving into scripture to listen to what God is calling St. James to be and to do in the world today. Thank you to each of you for all your time, energy and trust in this process. I am thankful as well, to our leader and

consultant, Peggy Hahn, who despite having a family tragedy this year enthusiastically stuck with St. James amidst her shifting responsibilities.

Some highlights of the year:

- St. James hosted the Ecumenical Thanksgiving worship service on Thanksgiving Day 2024.
- St. James also hosted the local Lake Bluff/Lake Forest Ministerium and the North Conference of ELCA Pastors in early 2025. We are deepening our relationships with the local churches and organizations in the neighborhood and benefiting from shared ministry to the glory of God.
- This year so far we have baptized three children of God and welcomed four new families into this body of Christ through affirmation of baptism.
- We had the absolute joy and privilege of celebrating our beloved sister in Christ, Bobbie Hildebrand, who turned 100 in January 2025!

Where is the Spirit moving today?

In collaboration with the Church Council and with ongoing input from the congregation, the LEAD team discerned the core values for St. James and is in the process of finalizing the goals and purpose statement for St. James. We know there will be an emphasis on equipping families and youth through faith formation, fellowship and support. This will manifest partly in a dedicated search for a Children, Youth and Families coordinator who would grow our ministries with families and youth.

This work will be a priority for the incoming Church Council. In lieu of robust capacity for youth ministry at this time, we have been partnering with Grace Lutheran in Libertyville and we prayerfully sent one of our youth, Estevan Arazan with Pastor Matthew from Grace to the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans the summer of 2024. We continue to partner with Grace United Methodist in Lake Bluff for our Faith in Action Camp, a shared vacation bible school camp in August, and we will partner again this year.

We have seen a wonderful increase in visitors coming to check out St. James in recent months. It is a thrill to see multiple young families regularly attending worship on Sunday mornings. We also had a beautiful Lenten season gathering together for shared suppers, a time of devotional learning, and worship.

It was a season that fed both our bodies and souls and strengthened the bonds of fellowship among the church. We have heard interest in holding something like this once a month to accommodate those for whom Sunday mornings do not work for various reasons. We will prayerfully discern what this could look like in the near future.

I smile when I think of the future of St. James and all the Spirit will accomplish in and through each of us. I know we are on the cusp of exciting adventures in ministry together, and I thank God for the jubilation of the journey. When I pray with people, most often the theme of God's presence comes up over and over again.

As I write this, we have just celebrated Good Shepherd Sunday and heard how Jesus brings all of us into the fold of his flock. In this way, I take comfort knowing Jesus, our good shepherd, is guiding us all the days of our lives. We are never alone.

Thank you for your trust in me and, first and foremost, your trust in our God whose peace surpasses all understanding. May that peace guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

God's peace and blessings,

-P. Amy Gillespie

Faith Milestones and Life Passages

These persons were welcomed into the body of Christ through Holy Baptism:

- Lucia Rose LaVitola 6/30/2024
- Dylan Scott Lowell 8/4/2024
- Griffin Michael Ebert 8/11/2024

On April 6, 2025, these persons were welcomed to the Lord's table to share in Holy Communion:

- Osten Bien
- Jocelyn Duncombe

On September 29, 2024, these persons Affirmed their Baptism and were Confirmed in worship:

- Estevan J Arazon
- Charles Thomas Sommers

New Members welcomed into this body of Christ through Affirmation of Baptism in 2024:

- 7/5/2024
 - Bill Runft
- 10/20/2024
 - Kathryn, Stephen & Ensley Kull
 - Kerry & Elise Nowicki
 - Kevin Voeks

Funerals, Memorials & Interments for 2024-2025

These persons have gone on to glory to be with their Lord and Savior and claim their baptismal promises:

- Daniel Heiman 6/29/2024
- David Ralph Quade 8/21/2024
- Richard Falusy 8/27/2024
- Mary Gram 3/15/2025

Reports of the Committees & Ministries

Christian Education Committee

Committee members: Linda Berner (acting chair), Sue Ebert (Youth Board), Kathy Lowell, Wendy Wieggers (Youth Choir Director), Pastor Amy Gillespie.

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" Matthew 19:1

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of age." Matthew 28:19-20

There have been some changes since last year's report. Doug Dusthimer retired as the Youth Director in summer 2024 and was recognized following the outdoor service on August 18. Meetings were held over the summer that resulted in some changes to scheduling as well as programming. These are reflected in the areas below.

Faith-In-Action week 2024

The camp was held at Grace United Methodist Church in Lake Bluff on August 5 - 9. We had many participants return from the previous summer as well as some new families who had seen information at the Lake Bluff farmers' market. The in-town location provided us with some walkable opportunities. The 2025 camp will return to St. James on August 12-15. Planning is underway for the experience which will include some new ideas. Watch for opportunities to volunteer.

Sunday School

Sunday School classes began on September 15, 2024. The morning's schedule has been Children's Choir at 8:50, Elementary Sunday School class at 9:20, Pre-School Sunday School class at 9:30. The preschool class continues to use the Holy Moly curriculum and the accompanying videos. It is taught by Jack Gerber. The elementary class is using materials from the Spark Lectionary series which follows the readings used in the worship service each Sunday. Much of the curriculum is digital, permitting us to choose from a number of activities and levels on a weekly basis. Linda Berner taught the elementary class with assistance from Wendy Wieggers.

First Communion

Two students received their First Communion on April 6, 2025. In addition to completing the curriculum explaining the meaning of communion, they made bread for the worship service and decorated pottery chalices.

Youth Education

The Rite of Confirmation was held on September 29, 2024. Two students were confirmed. Both read their essays on being a Christian in place of the day's sermon.

Confirmation Class

The Confirmation classes began on September 18, 2024. They were held on Wednesday evenings, a change decided by a consensus of the families involved. Classes were taught by Pastor Amy Gillespie with Linda Berner assisting. Students were presented with Lutheran Study Bibles at the first class. They also received notebooks with the curriculum and the schedule. In addition to serving as acolytes and completing worship outlines, students participated in some of the Advent and Lenten vesper services as part of their learning requirements. The class included three seventh graders and six eighth graders.

4-6 Grade Youth Activity

A committee of Council member parents, Scott Larson, Fred Arazan and Kelly Duncombe, organized a service opportunity for children in fourth through sixth grade on November 16.

Youth Service

The Youth service will be held in June this year to avoid conflicts with proms and graduations. During this service graduating High School seniors will be recognized and presented with a devotional book.

Adult Education

The Sunday morning Adult Faith Forum began in October. Pastor Amy Gillespie led this class through discussions of the designated scriptures for each Sunday. Wednesday evening studies, led by Pastor Amy, followed dinner during Lent. A lay-led study group meets at the church on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Nursery:

Ibironke Daramola continues to supervise the nursery.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Berner

Communications

So that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints. – Ephesians 1:18

Serving St. James this year in a communications support role has been a joy. Our contract began in December, during the Advent season. It was a quick learning curve to learn all the communication channels St. James has access to and to use them to promote December activities. With so many great photos coming in (thanks, photographers!), our social media pages became very active, and we saw an incredible increase in engagement and followers. We used Facebook advertising to get the word out about the Holiday Brass Celebration, and several visitors attended the concert as a result.

In January, we began making improvements based on the LEAD Team's "St. James Congregational Listening Report," which included feedback about communication opportunities:

- Help church members feel connected to each other and motivated to participate through improved communication in a variety of formats.
- Create a welcoming and accepting environment, especially for younger people.
- Reach a broader audience by enhancing our online presence via social media, a revamped website and digital advertising.

Implementing improvements continued with guidance and collaboration with Pastor Amy, the Church Council, Staff, LEAD Team, and other leaders. We met in person and on Zoom for many collaboration sessions. Special attention has been paid to creating and applying uniform policies and procedures and designing and using language that is welcoming to members and visitors alike.

We created Event, Communications, and Project request forms to facilitate ongoing collaboration with committee and program chairs. This has been extremely helpful in managing the process of creating many needed communications, so nothing falls through the cracks!

Projects have included:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Marketing Operations Audit | • Flatscreen Slides |
| • Communications Review | • Livestreaming Software Management |
| • Brand Standards Development | • Electronic Sign-Up Forms |
| • Communications Strategy & Process | • Quarterly Flyers & Postcards |
| • Brand Template Updates | • Monday.com Project Management |
| • Website Updates | • Video Promotions |
| • Weekly Social Media Posts | • Internal Communications Requests |
| • Connections Newsletter | • Service Planning Support |
| • Bulletin Insert - NEW | |

We have accomplished a lot this year, and I sincerely hope you have noticed an improvement in communications. The goal is to help you connect to the life and community of St. James, and the “riches” present in our community.

If you have any questions or suggestions, don't hesitate to get in touch with me at communications@stjameslutheran.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Eppel

Communications Contractor

Endowment Fund Board

Members: Jim Davoux, Mary Hamming, Dave Van Singel, Diane Nieman, Paul Moss

The Endowment fund began 2024 with a balance of \$376,131 and ended 2024 with a balance of \$385,203. This includes the “Benevolence/Memorial” funds and the “Organ Maintenance” funds that are currently co-invested with the other endowment funds. In September of 2024, there was a significant disbursement of \$13,400 from the Organ Maintenance fund to cover needed repairs to the organ. This reduced the Organ Maintenance fund to approximately \$1,500. In September of 2024, a disbursement of \$10,000 was made from the Benevolence fund as matching funds for the Cool Food Pantry fundraising efforts.

The Land Fund began 2024 with a balance of \$1,181,625 and ended 2024 with a balance of \$1,245,757. The full 4% disbursement of \$47,112 was made from the Land Fund in July of 2024.

Those funds were made available to the church council for major maintenance and benevolence. The investment performance of the Land Fund was healthy in 2024, but there has been significant volatility in the market in early Q2 of 2025. We will need to continue to monitor the markets, but we are still on track to be able to take the full 4% disbursement in July of 2025. The board will continue to monitor the markets with the assistance of Wintrust as our investment advisors.

The congregation is always welcome and encouraged to submit ideas to the board for potential disbursements from the Endowment Fund. Contact any member of the board to discuss your thoughts.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Davoux

Evangelism Committee

Members: Mara Lala, Patrick Lala, Carmen Montalbano, Dave Moore, Melinda Voelcker (Chair).

Evangelism had a great year of events and activities and is looking forward to some fun outreach plans later this year as well. We continue to search for a variety of opportunities for members to engage with each other, build awareness in the surrounding communities about St. James activities and welcome others to grow in their faith at St. James. Over the last year, some of the outreach included:

- Distributed seasonal event cards for Summer, Fall , late Fall, Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter
- Continued membership with the Lake Forest/ Lake Bluff Chamber of Commerce and distributed over 750 info and event packets in their Welcome Kits for 2024 and early 2025.
- Reserved an info table at the Lake Bluff Farmer's Market to invite the community to Bless Your Pet event. We received a great response!
- Hosted a Bless Your Pet outdoor service (10/5) - 18 people attended, 16 pets blessed
- Continued coordination of Sunday snacks after services to foster connections between members and visitors to St. James
- Hosted free Holiday Brass Celebration - 12/22/24 @ 7:00 PM - 177 attended + 30-40 performers
- Coordinated efforts with the office to join local Facebook groups to promote St. James events
- Updating member board photos – thank you, Detlef Koska!

Our focus continues to be on hospitality and creating opportunities to welcome others with a variety of activities planned for 2025 including:

- Continuing Sunday snacks and periodic Ministry Tables featuring specific ministry opportunities
- Holiday craft workshops to create items to sell at LB/LF Chamber's Holiday Pop-Up Shop.
- Hosting an info table at Lake Bluff Farmer's Market on 7/25, 8/8, 9/5, 9/19 – Looking for volunteers to help (there may be shopping, too!)
- Bless Your Pet outdoor service – 10/4 @ 10 AM
- Holiday Brass Concert open to the Community – Tentative dependent on musicians' schedules.

A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers and committee/ministry chairs who offered their time, talent and energy to make these events go so smoothly this past year. Special thanks go to Pastor Amy and Shelly Holmstrom for contributing and guiding our outreach. If you enjoy welcoming others, have ideas of how St. James can invite and welcome those in the community and nurture stronger connections within our church, or have some time to volunteer helping with special events or projects, please reach out to Melinda Voelcker (Text #847-275-7519 / email Mel.Voelcker@gmail.com) or any member of this ministry. We would love to hear from you!

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Voelcker

Fellowship Committee

Gratefully, this group develops and coordinates social opportunities for our St. James community to get together, and it grew over the past year! Thank you to: Nancy Clemens, Sue Ebert, Madeleine Jorgensen, Marilyn Koepke, Gail Morgan, Annie Moss, Susie Narlock, Susan Olsen, Melodi Peters, Joan Stevenson, and Melinda Voelcker. We also work jointly with Kathy Lowell on the event calendar for the Women of St. James. Additional help and attendance at gatherings during the year created an avenue for deepening relationships with each other. Consider joining us!

Fellowship Events that were sponsored by the Committee included:

- June 16 Pancake Breakfast - celebrated father figures present and in our hearts by eating a delicious breakfast before worship with pancake flipping by several of our youth. A fun event for all members and guests!
- Opportunities to attend a Lake Forest Civic Orchestra and Waukegan Band concert together.
- September 8 - coordinated the luncheon held on “Gods Work Our Hands” kick-off Sunday
- November 9 - Bocce Ball play and dinner at the Highwood Bocce Court – thanks to Werner Stein for sponsoring the group and Steve Thornberry for providing bocce instruction.
- December 7 - Christmas Caroling - after being chauffeured to member family homes to spread holiday cheer, the group returned to St. James for a gourmet sandwich and chili dinner provided by Marty and Gail Morgan. (Marty was the Chili Award Grand Champ at an event held in 2023!)
- February 22 - Potluck/Game night was a wonderful cross generational event with rousing games and a delicious dinner. Attendees also made 50 lunches for PADS
- March 12 - April 9 - five Wednesday evening suppers as a prelude to weekly Lenten Vespers services were coordinated by volunteers. A brief discussion was led by Pastor Amy that tied to our Lenten devotions. Thank you to the hands that prepared and served the dinners.
- April 10 - An informative and delicious Seder Dinner was put on by Paul and Annie Moss, supported by volunteer help.

Mark your calendars for:

- June 1 – Celebrate St. James – a Congregational luncheon following the Annual Meeting
- July 16 – a women's tea will be held at the home of Annie Moss, watch for sign-up!
- July 22 - Waukegan Band Concert, 7:30pm, Stiner Pavilion, Waukegan (Mark Taylor conducts and several St. James members play instruments). We are inviting friends from Sagrado Corazón to join us!

Additional exciting events on the horizon are a Progressive Dinner September 27, Advent Dinner November 30 (in lieu of Christmas Caroling this year) and a curling event next winter (in place of bocce ball). **Please contact us at Fellowship@stjameslutheran.org to share YOUR ideas and offer to help.** Visitors are encouraged at Fellowship events – it's often a great way to introduce the community to St. James! New leadership is sought for the Committee, please express your interest in helping.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelly Holmstrom

On behalf of the Committee and volunteers

Finance Committee

The mission of the Financial Oversight Committee is to improve coordination and communication across the various committees and roles with financial responsibilities at St. James. With this goal, we bring together Stewardship, Endowment, Financial Reporting, our Treasurer and Council representation in a forum to collaborate on budgeting, longer-term financial planning and financial communications to the Congregation. We are also looking at specific processes for bookkeeping, collection counting and expense management to assess where we can improve and strengthen these important activities.

A key milestone this year was the preparation and presentation of the 2024 financial results and 2025 budget to the congregation in Jan 2025. The budget was approved as presented, and we celebrate the giving of our Congregation that provides us the capacity to realize our goals and reach to do more. We took away from that discussion an opportunity to enhance communications around the financial planning and reporting process through more frequent updates throughout the year. Also this year we have benefited from the valuable work of Linda Cifuentes as our bookkeeper. She is leading ongoing efforts to streamline and bring efficiencies to the accounting process including improved use of Quickbooks (our accounting application), automation of payroll, tax filing and reporting, minimizing the use of physical checks and improving visibility of spending vs. budget. These steps connect to another important goal of the Financial Oversight Committee, which is a more formal process for projecting and planning for capital expenses. We are also anticipating the outcomes of the LEAD project and the resulting insights and direction that will inform our financial priorities.

We'd like to recognize Mark Wanda for his significant contributions as interim bookkeeper and his leadership as Treasurer. We are grateful for his generous sharing of time and talents. We would also like to thank our Counters who perform the important work of counting and recording the offering every week.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa Miller

Health and Safety Committee

The committee's primary focus is to ensure that we keep our congregation healthy and safe. If an emergency situation occurs, such as a health emergency, fire, natural hazard or extreme event, we are as prepared as possible to deal with the crisis to achieve the best outcome.

Our committee remains focused on the following health and safety areas:

1. Health
2. Fire
3. Extreme Events (Hazardous Material Leak, Intruder)
4. Natural Hazard Events (Severe Storm, Tornado, Winter Storm)
5. Adult and Youth Safety
6. Staff, Member and Building Security

Our committee's 2024 completed initiatives were follows:

- Held two Vaccine Sunday's during the month of October in partnership with the Lake Bluff Walgreens. We offered Covid-19, Flu and High-dose Flu Vaccines. A total of 90 vaccines were administered and increase of 36% over the prior year.
- The Designated Emergency Leader (D.E.L.) position was added to the Worship Service Schedule. There is always at least one Designated Emergency Leader at every service. To help identify the attending D.E.L., we have created a modified name tag with a red cross (shown below) on it.

D.E.L. Name Tag example:

- Security Cameras were installed on the exterior of each side of the church. They act as a deterrent to crime and well as capturing video of any events that occur on the church property.
- Upgraded the West Entry Doorbell Camera.

Many thanks to our dedicated and energetic Health & Safety committee members:

Pete Clemens, Lisa Kollmorgen, Annie Moss, Paul Moss and Bob Narlock.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Montalbano

LEAD Team

LEAD Team: Pastor Amy, Emily Bohac, Tom Bohac, Jim Davoux, Tom Ebert, Doug Gerber, Marilyn Koepke, Lisa Kollmorgen, Dave Moore, Susan Olsen, and Steve Thornberry

The LEAD Team had a busy and enlightening year working through the strategic planning process that was initiated by the Church Council and approved by the congregation in January 2024. The planning is being done in partnership with the LEAD (Living Everyday As Disciples) Organization whose processes are built on proven practices of adaptive discipleship. These adaptive discipleship practices are made known through the acts of the apostles, the work of the early church, and leading social science research. Utilizing the LEAD playbook (and LEAD's ongoing support) the team has worked to involve the whole congregation in this process while also freeing up the Council to focus on the month-to-month work of the church.

The team met throughout the year both with our LEAD consultant, Deacon Peggy Hahn, and separately as prescribed by the LEAD Playbook. These meetings and action items included:

- Several meetings as a team to discern God's call for St. James and to reflect on the shared commitment and expectations to each other and the congregation. This good work brought us closer to God and built a deeper trusting relationship with each other.
- Conducted a Communications Survey that generated 80 responses
- Conducted a Congregation wide survey focused on strengths, concerns, passions, and ideas for St. James and received responses from 72 members
- Hosted 10 focus group meetings with congregation members
- Conducted 14 structured interviews with organizations and individuals in our local and surrounding communities.
- Careful analysis of all that was learned through the Listening Sessions and surveys

Sprinter Goals were identified and initiated as a result of the meetings and surveys, most notably:

- Leadership contracted with Stacy Eppel as Communications Consultant to address the needs identified in the Communications Audit. Stacy has been updating many of the communication channels including Connections, social media, website, and branding.
- A new ministry called MaTch (which stands for Ministry at Church) was launched to equip volunteers to visit our homebound members and give communion to those wishing to receive it. The ministry includes 13 volunteers who participated in training sessions to prepare for communion visits, in particular.
- The LEAD Team is currently working on finalizing recommendations to be presented to Church Council and then the congregation.

- The Core Values and Purpose Statement of St. James
- Goals and tactical steps for the next 3-5 years

Following approval of the recommendations, the LEAD Team will turn over the process to the Church Council who will prepare plans for achieving the goals.

Thank you for your prayers and dedication to this process. The LEAD Team looks forward to the culmination of this journey and where the Spirit is leading us as a church.

Respectfully submitted,

The LEAD Team

Memorial Garden Board

Burials - We interred the ashes of three persons within the last 12 months.

Engravings in Memorial Plaque and interment site plaques

There is still plenty of space to engrave more names on the Memorial Plaque. Please contact any of the trustees with your questions.

Sale of Burial Sites

Two double sites were sold during the year. A number of sites are still available, especially on the “outside” (north side) of the Garden. The “outside” is very attractive because one can enjoy a clear view of the Church as a background. On the “inside” (south side) two full and one half sites are still available.

Financials

The checkbook balance amounts to \$5,356. Outstanding loan amounts owed to the Endowment Fund remains at \$4,000 and to the General Fund \$1,000.

Current Rate Structure remains unchanged as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| • Full site for six urn interments | \$2,200 |
| • Quad site for four urn interments | \$1,500 |
| • Half site for 3 urn interments | \$1,100 |
| • Double site for 2 urn interments | \$ 750 |
| • Memorial Wall engraving/ name | \$ 650 |
| • Interment Service | \$ 750 |

Memorial Garden Board Members

The current composition of the Board is as follows:

- Liz Behring (June 2027)
- Bud Lowell (June 2026)
- Two new members TBD by June 2025
- Pastor Amy Gillespie—ex-officio member
- Tom Meyer – Legal Counsel
- Mary Summers resigned from the Board in early 2025.
- Detlef Koska will resign effectively in June 2025 after 25 years of serving as Chairperson.

Respectfully submitted,

Detlef K. Koska, Chairman

Prayer Team

The St. James Prayer Team welcomes new members. We meet monthly on the second Saturday at 9:00 am in the St. James Library. Ann Anderson chairs our group. The focus of our group is to keep our members, extended family, friends, and all who are in need in our prayer. Individuals can be added to the list for whom we pray by contacting the Church office, members of our group, or by filling out a form on the website or card found in the Narthex just before entering the Sanctuary. If requested, names can be kept private, unlike the printed list found in our Sunday Bulletin. At times, we coordinate care with the Soup Ministry by inquiring if soup could be helpful at this time in their lives.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Bergsrud

Property Committee

Property Committee: Peter Clemens, John Tanner, Doug Gerber, Doug Dustimer, Ronald Koepke, Robert Narlock (council Liaison).

See property concerns/projects addressed below:

- Over the past year the church continued with planned and some unplanned capital improvement projects. Many projects were budgeted from the Major Maintenance account, while a few required accessing reserves. Other improvements were covered by departmental budgets and/or generous member donations.
- The parking lot was repaved to include adding an extensive network of 8" interconnected perforated pipes to drain water that collects in the limestone base. The front parking lot is located at the lowest part of the church property, so historically in winter the base freezes, heaving up the asphalt from below.
- The 1990 stadium style speakers in the ceiling and fillers in the rafters of the sanctuary have been replaced with two new Meyer's Sound speakers located directly behind the altar to improve sound quality and clarity.
- After 34 years of use the Altar and Damascus Road/Bells platforms were sent out during the summer to be cleaned and refinished by a cabinet restorer.
- Also, after 34 years of faithful service, the leather bellows in the organ were replaced and several stops required repairs to be put back in service.

- The older halogen parking lot lights have been replaced by new solid state LED bulbs that have increased the lumen output by 50%. The output in the back parking lot has increased 75%, with consideration to add two more light poles.
- The church recently purchased a new 85" flatscreen TV for use in the sanctuary and fellowship hall for larger gatherings and annual congregational meetings.
- Several roof top HVAC units required repairs to assure consistent heating and cooling to the narthex.
- Six outside security cameras were installed around the building with monitors in the business and facilities offices. The video is recorded and saved on a server for 90 days. All cameras can be viewed real-time remotely via facility's iPhone.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pete Clemens

Sewing Group

This has been a fun but busy year for the sewing group. We get together on the first Thursday of the month, enjoy visiting, while working on our projects. We average about 10 ladies but welcome more.

This year we decided to donate locally. We gave bears and quilts to the Family Care Closet and COOL hoping to reach out to refugees. We continue to donate bears to LSSI and enjoy the meeting when Terri Gens comes to pick up and share. A Bear is presented to a child as they come into foster care. At Christmas we brought bears to COOL hoping they will bring love to children. Recently we donated bears to Sagrado Corazón sending our support and love from St James.

We helped celebrate Bobbie's 100th birthday. Several others in the group are in their 90's. They are an inspiration to us that no matter how old we can still be helping others.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Anderson

Social Ministry Outreach Committee

Report of the Social Ministry Outreach Committee

Committee Members: Dee Buckowich, Shelly Holmstrom, Ron Koepke, Alane Wanda, and Pastor Amy Gillespie

The purpose of the committee is to promote and support activities of various agencies and programs serving the needs of the local community and the ELCA.

Budgeted Financial Support & Volunteer Support

- St. James MaTch Ministry (formerly Care & Concern Ministry)
- COOL Ministries
- Habitat for Humanity
- Help Within the Family
- Lake County United (LCU)
- North Chicago Community Partners (NCCP)
- Providing Advocacy, Dignity & Shelter (PADS)
- Waukegan to College

Budgeted Financial Support

- ELCA Benevolence
- Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI)
- Sagrado Corazón
- Samara Care Counseling (Grief Group)

Financial and/or Volunteer Support (as needs present)

- Fill-A-Heart for Kids (via Faith in Action)
- Lutheran Disaster Response & Lutheran World Relief
- Migrant Support (via St. Paul's)
- Northern Illinois Food Bank
- RefugeeOne

Planting the seed of service and volunteerism is the overarching goal of Social Ministry Outreach. We continually assess our efforts to find ways to make them more meaningful and open to more members. We see so many hearts for service at St. James! This year saw the intentional creation of the Match Ministry, which is designed to focus on IN-REACH to our own members. It is a natural fit with our Prayer Team, Soup Ministry, and phone callers who keep in touch with members who need support. The initial focus has been on bringing communion to members in their homes. Keeping our St. James family connected and strong is vital to our future. If this ministry speaks to you, we would welcome your leadership as we look for more ways to care and serve one another.

Another exciting new chapter began in September when we officially celebrated God's Work. Our Hands Sunday. You must admit the yellow tee shirts really help us stand out whether we are working in our building or in the community. Be ready to wear yours on September 7 (don't worry, we have more if you don't have one yet)!

Harnessing the enthusiasm for service from God's Work. Our Hands Sunday, we began to offer participation in our own building. "God's Work Our Hands Thursdays" have been a success! The time spent on the second Thursday each month at 10 am provides social interaction, lively discussion of current and potential outreach opportunities, features agency guest speakers and hands-on service projects. Soon we are going to pilot an "evening edition" to be more inclusive of those who cannot come in the morning. FYI this is a great opportunity for teens and tweens to get their volunteer hours (and Mom and Dad, some one-on-one time!).

We are blessed to continue our vital outreach programs, including many that we share with other congregations in our community. The Waukegan to College shower for first generation college bound students, which we co-host with St. Paul's in Waukegan (we will assemble college supplies at God's Work Our Hands on June 12 & shower is June 28 at St Paul's); we have also begun participating in collecting and donating clothing and coats for St. Paul's "Clothes to You" program; the hygiene products we collect monthly for the Family Care Closet (NCCP) which we share with Grace United Methodist in Lake Bluff; the Faith in Action (summer service camp), which we co-sponsor with Grace as well; our PADS food collections are part of a larger network of area churches, but especially First Presbyterian in Libertyville; The Northern Illinois Food Bank also encourages our participation with other churches and individuals in the Lake Forest area. These synergistic relationships offer support and shared vision for our goal of supporting organizations that make a difference in Lake County.

Re-establishing our participation in the Family Care Closet that is run by North Chicago Community Partners (NCCP) at North Chicago High School has been a blessing to our congregation! We are not only regularly collecting the most-needed items, but we spend two hours each month re-stocking the shelves for the afternoon clients. Each Thursday the pantry serves 50-80 families. Do you have two hours a month? – I encourage you to try it out. It is a very blessed and humbling experience, and with more interest, we could expand to two shifts/month.

We continue our faithful service to PADS, by supplying ready-to-eat food for clients being housed in hotels until the fixed shelter site opens (hopefully by year-end 2025). We anticipate once again bringing dinners and interacting with the families once the shelter is established.

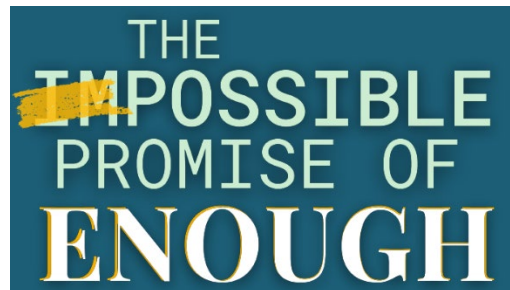
Thank you to the congregation and Council for emphasizing outreach and service as a key focus of our ministry together and the Committee for their commitment and leadership. It is a blessing to assist with the direction of Council and alongside members to live out this important aspect of our mission. The support and input provided by Pastor Amy Gillespie is vital and greatly appreciated. We are grateful to Mark Wanda for being our representative on the COOL Board of Directors, and most importantly this past year, spearheading the matching campaign that raised close to \$65k to replace the deficit created when Foodstock was cancelled.

We appreciate every member who contributes time and or resources to support St. James's outreach efforts. This is who we are! Please contact a committee member with questions and to explore how to engage in service. Better yet, bring a friend and enjoy God's Work Our Hands, Faith in Action (send kids and grandkids!), and The Family Care Closet! Service is an essential activity that gives us purpose and keeps us connected! It is a joy to give and serve as a congregation family. God is Good...All the Time!

Respectfully submitted,

Alane Wanda

Stewardship Committee



The 2025 theme for the Stewardship Celebration, introduced in October of 2024, is THE IMPOSSIBLE PROMISE OF ENOUGH. We chose the theme because it can often feel like we're not doing enough, we don't have enough. In response, it can be easy to hold on tighter and tighter to what we have, rather than give it away freely. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus reminds us how much God loves every one of us, and when we stake our hope and trust in this constant love of God, we do not need to worry.

As Pastor Amy wrote in her letter to the congregation: *We're given the perspective that all we have and all that we are is a gift from God to pass along, to share, to witness to the world. Now, more than ever, no matter how long we have called St. James home, we are all needed to realize the mission and vision God has planted in our hearts: to Follow Christ, Make Disciples and Live the Gospel. As we continue living this mission, there are three facets we want to focus on at this time:*

- *To continue offering quality worship services, pastoral care and educational opportunities for all ages.*
- *To be more connected through increased and improved communication*
- *To develop our children and youth ministries to better serve our members and communities.*

As we look toward the years to come, we will "strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness" by praying for the Lord to prepare our hearts and minds to receive God's gifts. As followers of Christ, it is our gift and calling to give back what God has first given us.

The Stewardship Committee communicated and reinforced THE IMPOSSIBLE PROMISE OF ENOUGH message through mailings, posters in the narthex, banner in Sanctuary, brochure mailer, the Stewardship page on the website, and Connections. There were temple talks given by Mark Wanda who shared his faith journey; and by Mindy Lindholm, Executive Director of COOL Ministries, who spoke about the impact of their work and the importance of the support they receive from St. James.

The St. James congregation, once again, has responded with generosity in making pledges that exceeds all previous years. We are blessed to have a congregation who continues to practice stewardship in ways that glorifies God. The financial pledges enable us to support the faithful work of our ministries, compensate our staff, and maintain our facilities.

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1)

Many thanks for the work of the Stewardship Committee: Tom Bohac, Shelly Holmstrom, Marty Morgan, Joe Voelcker, Melinda Voelcker, and Mark Wanda – along with support from Joan Krikau.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Moore

Women of St. James

The Women of St. James had an active schedule throughout the year. We sponsored the Friendship Dinner in April, Bluffinia in the summer, and the Annual Cookie Exchange in December.

Friendship Dinner

The Friendship Dinner was held on April 14th. Twenty women, including Pastor Amy and her daughter, Maya, attended. We had a tremendous display of entrees, salads, and desserts. Sue Ebert ended the evening with an entertaining reading.

Bluffinia

Women of St. James sponsored a Sunday evening at Bluffinia on August 4th. We had a terrific turnout, with 18 people attending and listening to great music. Everyone brought an appetizer or dessert to share...never a lack of food when it comes to members of St. James. We are planning on Bluffinia again in the summer of 2025.

Annual Cookie Exchange

St. James women gathered on Saturday, December 7th for the annual cookie exchange. There was a great turnout for brunch, and we had two large tables of cookies for the exchange. Typical of St. James women, many donated cookies without even attending the event. On Sunday, December 8th, following the 10:00 AM service, the St. James congregation actively supported the cookie bake sale by contributing \$1,012. The contributions were donated to Waukegan to College. Women of St James delivered cookies to St James members not able to attend the Cookie Exchange. Women also delivered soup to St James members as part of the Soup Ministry.

An Invitation

All women are invited to attend these programs throughout the year and guests are welcome. Meetings provide opportunities for sharing laughter and building friendships. Rides will gladly be arranged, and childcare is available upon request. We learn from each other and enjoy the blessings of abundant life that God has promised us when we gather in His name.

In Closing... A very special thank you to Joan Krikau for all of her tremendous assistance throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Lowell

On behalf of the Women of St. James

Worship and Music Committee

The Worship and Music Committee supports and coordinates the many ministries that enhance worship at St. James through music, liturgy, and sacred space. We are grateful for the participation and dedication of musicians, volunteers, and leaders who contribute their time and talents throughout the year. Here are some highlights of the contributions from this group over the last year.

The Children's Choir, in coordination with Sunday School, continued to bring energy and spirit to worship services throughout the year. Meeting weekly before Sunday School, the choir maintained a small but enthusiastic group of young singers. They performed during Lessons and Carols with accompaniment by Estevan Arazan, who also frequently contributed to the Offertory. A special highlight came on January 5, when alumni Peter and Jack Gerber returned alongside Estevan for an Epiphany play exploring the meaning of the Kings' gifts. During this service, the choir, in collaboration with Damascus Road and Sunday School, portrayed the Holy Family in a meaningful Children's Message. Additional performances included two songs with Damascus Road in April and a musical offering on Mother's Day.

Damascus Road remained a vital part of worship, playing in 13 services, including each first Sunday and Lessons and Carols. They also joined the Children's Choir in November and supported three outdoor summer services with audio. The group recorded a CD featuring ten songs—eight newly recorded and two previously released—distributing 50 copies to interested congregants. In an effort to expand their repertoire, the band added Thursday rehearsals and extended an open invitation to vocalists and instrumentalists interested in joining.

The St. James Brass continued their monthly contributions with a rotating cast of guest musicians. Their standout moment came in December with a free holiday concert alongside the Chicago Brass Band, performing seasonal classics for a packed audience.

The Voices choir faithfully provided music for third Sunday services and played an essential role in Lessons and Carols. As the new year began, they also led music for Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter where they again partnered with the St. James Brass to lead worship music.

The Handbell Choir celebrated the addition of a new member, Sophia Voelcker, marking a promising step as youth take on greater roles in worship music.

The Altar Guild continued its essential service of preparing the altar for weekly communion and major liturgical celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. Working closely with Pastor Amy and the Worship & Music Committee, the team introduced a trial communion option after Easter that includes a non-alcoholic alternative and enhanced sanitation practices. New members Jen Knudten and Judy Mosner joined this dedicated team, which also reorganized the Sacristy and is updating the altar guild manual. The guild is currently seeking a new leader or co-leaders to help guide this important ministry.

We give thanks for all who serve in these ministries. Their efforts help create worship that is reverent, welcoming, and rich in spirit and song.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Gerber

Chair, Worship and Music Committee

Elected Positions & Nominations

Current Congregation Council

Term Expiring June 2025	Term Expiring June 2026	Term Expiring June 2027
Shelly Holmstrom	Dee Buckowich	Fred Arazan
Bob Kenehan	Open Position	Nancy Clemens
Annie Moss	Martin Morgan	Kelly Duncombe
Bob Narlock	Laurie Whisler	Scott Larson

Report from the Nominating Committee

The following church members have expressed their willingness to serve in the positions to be voted on during the Annual Governance Meeting on June 1, 2025. ***Other Congregation members who wish to be considered for election to any open positions may be nominated during the meeting.***

Council Nominations for Three-Year Terms (Expiring June 2028):

Jim Davoux

Jim and his family have been members at St James for 23 years. Jim has served on the St James Council two previous times, and he has served as Council President. He has taught Sunday School, been involved with youth activity planning, and property planning. Jim currently leads up the Endowment Board, sings in the choir, and sits in with Damascus Road from time to time. Jim also serves as the President of the University of Iowa Chemical Engineering Department external advisory board. Jim and his wife Barb have two daughters. Olivia is a student at the University of Iowa and Julia is entering her senior year at Libertyville High School.

Tom Ebert

I am thrilled to be asked to serve on Church Council! My wife Sue and I joined St. James over 35 years ago. Our three children Nik, Max and Gretta were all baptized and confirmed at St. James. Last summer, our first grandson Griffin was also baptized at St. James. I have participated on a variety of committees including Church Council, Evangelism, Mutual Ministry, Nominating, and Personnel. I am currently a member of the LEAD strategic planning team and look forward to the exciting possibilities ahead of us. We are truly blessed to be part of such an amazing church family! Thank you for the opportunity to serve our congregation. God's Peace!

Lisa Hilgenberg

A native Minnesotan, Lisa grew up as a member of Normandale Lutheran Church in Edina where her mother, Garnet was the Director of Normandale Nursery School and her father Layne Haugen, a graduate of Luther College and Luther Seminary, St. Paul.

A 29-year resident of Lake Forest, Lisa and her daughter, Mara, became members of St. James Lutheran Church, attending services and confirmation. Lisa taught Sunday School and worked on the Social Ministry Committee supporting A Safe Place and PADS. After a career in residential real estate, Lisa has enjoyed a second career in horticulture at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Today, her family has expanded to include Mara's husband Patrick Lala and their children, Bodie (5), Zoe (3) and Oliver (9 mos.)

Marilyn Koepke

After growing up in Wisconsin, Marilyn attended Valparaiso University. She worked at Thrivent, the Lutheran fraternal benefit society, before marrying her husband, Ron. Marilyn and Ron lived in Louisiana for thirty-five years where they raised two daughters and a son. During that time, Marilyn was an organist at Trinity Lutheran Church in Monroe, a math teacher and manager of Ron's medical office.

Marilyn and Ron moved to Lake Forest in 2018 when they retired to be closer to their three children and eight grandchildren. Their oldest daughter, Katherine Hamming, husband, Dave and four of their grandchildren live in Lake Forest. Their daughter, Laura and family live in Omaha, and son, Paul and family live in St. Louis.

Council Nominations for One-Year Term (Expiring June 2026)

Bob Kenehan

Bob is currently serving on the Church Council and is willing to extend his term by one year to fill the open position.

Other Elected Offices

TREASURER Mark Wanda (term expires June 2026)

ST. JAMES MEMORIAL GARDEN BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Current Members:

Detlef Koska (June 2025)

Bud Lowell (June 2026)

Liz Behring (June 2027)

Mary Summers (June 2028)

Nominee for 3 year term expires 2028: **Don Bergsrud**

Nominee for 4 year term expires 2029: **Bill Shinn**

ST. JAMES ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Current Members:

Dave Van Singel (June 2025)

Mary Hamming (June 2026)

Diane Nieman (June 2026)

Jim Davoux (June 2027)

Paul Moss (June 2027)

Nominees for a 3-year term expiring June 2028: **Kari Lee**

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Current Members:

Steve Thornberry (June 2025)

Craig Linn (June 2026)

Teresa Miller (June 2027)

Nominee for 3 year term expiring June 2028: **Kirk Wolter**

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Current Members:

Don Bergsrud (June 2025)

Mary Jane Wolter (June 2025)

Debbie Daniel (June 2027)

Michael Montalbano (June 2027)

Nominees for a 1-year term expiring June 2026:

Shelly Holmstrom and Annie Moss (Outgoing Council)

Nominees for a 2-year term expiring June 2027:

Tom Bohac and Chris Meyer

Sincere thanks to the candidates who have agreed to serve in these positions and to the members of the Nominating Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Koepke

Affirmations

WE, THE MEMBERS OF ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH, DO HEREBY AFFIRM THAT:

We thank God for the Gift of the Holy Spirit, alive and active in this congregation, and we pray that the power of the Spirit will bring about increased spiritual growth and commitment among our members, that Christ's work may truly be our own.

We express our thanks to Senior Pastor Amy Gillespie, all our paid staff and our many volunteers -- committee chairpersons and members, organizational leaders, choir members and musicians, ushers, worship assistants, volunteer nursery attendants, altar guild, sewing group and all the dedicated individuals who have given service in 2024-2025.

We express our gratitude to all who serve on the Church Council, especially Bob Kenehan, Annie Moss, Bob Narlock, and Shelly Holmstrom, who have completed their terms of office. In addition, we acknowledge with great appreciation our 2024-2025 officers: Shelly Holmstrom, President; Laurie Whisler, Vice President; Scott Larson, Secretary; Joe Voelcker, Financial Secretary; and Mark Wanda, Treasurer.

We remember in our thoughts and prayers all who mourn the loss of loved ones through death; those who have been hospitalized or seriously ill at home due to the loss of good health; those who have known the fear and frustration of job loss; those who in any way have experienced the pain of great sacrifice. We pray that all may find comfort and help in the promises of our loving and merciful Lord, Jesus Christ, the Risen Savior.

We give thanks for all the blessings bestowed upon us individually and upon our congregation. We are particularly mindful of the material blessings that are ours to share with others and we are grateful for the ever-increasing evidence of faithful stewardship of our resources.

We thank God for guiding and preserving us through the challenges and joys of natural transition and adding to our staff. We express our gratitude to all those who contribute their time, effort, and talents in many ways, enabling us to continue functioning as a vibrant church. We look forward to the future with excitement.

WE GIVE THANKS ALWAYS TO GOD THE CREATOR STILL CREATING, TO GOD'S OWN SON JESUS CHRIST WHO LIVES TO SAVE, AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT EVER GUIDING AND PROTECTING

In Gratitude

Thank you to everyone who has served this year!

CHURCH COUNCIL

Fred Arazan
Dee Buckowich
Nancy Clemens
Kelly Duncombe
Shelly Holmstrom
Bob Kenehan
Scott Larson
Marty Morgan
Annie Moss
Bob Narlock
Laurie Whisler
Pastor Amy Gillespie

CHURCH STAFF

Senior Pastor
Amy Gillespie

Office Coordinator
Joan Krikau

Bookkeeper
Linda Cifuentes

Interim Sunday School Director
Linda Berner

Children, Youth & Family Director*

Facilities Manager
Pete Clemens

Communications Support
Stacy Eppel

Director of Music
Rae-Myra Hilliard

Organist
Wendy Unrath

Damascus Road Directors
Greg MacAyeal
Melinda Voelcker

Children's Music Director
Wendy Wieggers

Brass Ensemble Director
Ryan Ringnalda

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Shelly Holmstrom, **President**

Laurie Whisler, **Vice President**

Scott Larson, **Secretary**

Mark Wanda, **Treasurer**

Pastor Amy Gillespie

LEAD TEAM

Emily Bohac
Tom Bohac
Jim Davoux
Tom Ebert
Doug Gerber
Pastor Amy Gillespie
Marilyn Koepke
Lisa Kollmorgen
Dave Moore
Susan Olsen
Steve Thornberry

OTHER ELECTED POSITIONS

Endowment Board of Trustees
Jim Davoux, Chair

Financial Secretary
Joe Voelker

Memorial Garden Board of Trustees
Detlef Koska, Chair

Nominating Committee
Ron Koepke, Chair

STANDING COMMITTEE & MINISTRY CHAIRS

Altar Guild
Shelly Holmstrom

Christian Education
Acting Chair Linda Berner

Evangelism
Melinda Voelcker

Fellowship
Shelly Holmstrom

Finance
Teresa Miller

Financial Oversight
Mark Wanda

Health & Safety
Michael Montalbano

Prayer Team
Ann Anderson

Property **

Sewing Group
Ann Anderson

Social Ministry Outreach
Alane Wanda

Stewardship
Dave Moore

Women of St. James
Kathy Lowell

Worship & Music
Suzanne Gerber

* Staff Position - vacant

** Committee Chair - vacant

St. James is a member of:



ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH
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