



Advent-Christmas 2023/2024

The Visitor

Newsletter of St. James United Church

May
the *Word*
of hope
fill you all with
joy and
peace
in believing

Romans 15:13

This issue:

Ministry Message

Page 03

Message from the Chair

Page 04

Christmas Memories

Page 06

Gift of Hope

Page 07

Gift of Home

Page 10

Family Fun

Page 11

Mark Your Calendar

Page 13



Merry Christmas everyone.

It's that time of year when there's a chill in the air, but you feel the warm glow of the holidays.

There's lots going on for the Christmas season at St. James, so check the calendar inside so you can plan your weeks ahead.

Advent and Christmas is always a busy time and there are many opportunities for the giving of gifts. In this edition, we are offering some other types of gifts that you can find at St. James.

We hope you have a joyous Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Sincerely,
Glen Warren, Editor

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Minister:
Rev. James Ravenscroft



@StJamesUnited



st.JamesUC



StJamesUCNL

*Worship with us!
Sunday, 11:00 AM*



Ministry Message

James Ravenscroft

As we once again head towards Christmas, many of us are preparing for the holidays with an anxious cloud over us. There is much going on in the world to make us pause. The conflict between Israel and Hamas, like the war in Ukraine, is concerning given the catastrophic impact on civilians in the land where Jesus was born. The cost of living crisis doesn't seem to be ending any time soon, leading many to a scaled back holiday. And the pronounced polarization on social and political issues that is felt in many of our families, leaves many of us feeling stressed with pending festive gatherings. So much for holiday joy.

And yet whose birth do we celebrate, but one known as the Prince of Peace and Saviour of the World. Jesus was proclaimed as such not because he was born in a time of harmony, when all was right with the world, but because he brought a message of peace and loving justice in a time when soldiers occupied his homeland, when many people were hurting economically, in a society that was even more polarized than our own. His message resonated with people, and he gained a large following that cost him his life. But raised by God, he lives on in all of us, his message of peace, justice, and love embodied in our lives.

This way of being may be taken up powerfully at this time of year as people make sharing with others and living more peacefully a big part of their holiday sensibility, but it is up to us to keep that feeling going well beyond December. We need it to as we face the very things that overshadow our Christmas. I am thankful that we have a motivation to model just that come January 1 as we embark on a partnership with Cochrane. It will be an opportunity to share resources, get to know others, and work cooperatively as we reach out to our respective neighbourhoods, all ways we can live out Jesus' teachings concretely.

In the meantime, may we model his way of love in store queues and around holiday tables, in gestures of love shared with a neighbour and a hand of forgiveness stretched out to an estranged friend. Doing things like these are the way that Jesus made present God's grace in the world, and we are to do likewise.

Blessings of love this Advent and Christmas, and of peace into the new year.

Rev. James



Message from the Chair

On behalf of the St. James Council, I would like to wish everyone a happy and content advent season.

It is my wish that we take a breath and be still with the Babe in the Manger. The Christmas season can be overwhelming for so many of us as we rush around. We sometimes get so caught up in our own little worlds, that we fail to reflect on the quiet peace that is Christmas.

Some of us this past year have lost loved ones, dealt with financial hardship, and many of us have faced loneliness. Some question what place Church might have in their lives. Our Church family, in the past, has been a place of sanctuary and comfort. It was the centre of our social lives, and many lifelong friendships were formed within those social groups. Our worlds have become so fast-paced that church rarely comes to mind. The Sunday morning service for me, in the midst of the busyness, is an hour to sit and be still; but often, other things get in the way!

St. James is facing challenges with both finances and human resources.

I would ask everyone this Christmas season to reflect on what St. James means to you. We recognize that financial support may be difficult. Many fundraising efforts are planned for the new year. For these to be successful, we need people! We are hoping to compile a volunteer list of people who may not be able to commit to ongoing projects or committees, or even attend Sunday services, but might have a few hours to spare here and there. Participating together in events builds relationships between us and there is wonderful comradery and fellowship. If helping in this way is something that appeals to you, please reach out to Stephanie at the office, 722-1881.

As I look forward to the new year, I look forward to strengthening old relationships and forging new ones.

Wishing you the peace and joy that is Christmas,
Michelle Skinner
Chair, St. James Council



Stewardship



Singing in the choir. Folding bulletins before a service. Playing guitar, Painting steps. Baking cookies for the bake sale. Phoning a friend who needs to hear a supportive voice. Organizing donations for the book sale or the auction. Joining in a Hallowe'en Trunk'n'Treat. Decorating the Auditorium. Cooking pancakes or serving a fish supper. Reading during a service. Tending the Family Space. Writing a report. Coffee and cake after a service. Keeping in touch with one of our groups. Planting flowers. Joining a committee. Supporting an event. Join a group. And so much more!

Did you know all these things are forms of Stewardship? Stewardship encompasses the giving of our time, our talents, and even our resources, to support the pillars of faith in our Congregation and our community. We are looking for volunteers to help with many activities and events. Join us as we become stewards of the time that we can offer in support of our church, the talents that we possess that can nurture our faith community, and the resources we can gather and manage in support of the good works through St. James.

There is an old saying that many hands make light work.... If everyone does just a little bit here or there, it doesn't even seem like work. Every member of the congregation has something to give. People are busy but may have the time to jump in for an activity here or there. Whether it is just a few minutes, a single event, or joining a group, no effort is too great or too small. We would love to hear from you!

With the increased need for volunteers, we are also launching a Volunteer Development Team. If you are interested in helping the members of St. James share their gifts and interests with their community of faith, and creating a Volunteer Map, then this small 2-3 member team is for you! Contact the church office for details.

Christmas Memories



It's time to get going on the annual Christmas message again from United Church Women, but before I begin, I'm going to reminisce a little.

November month and Halloween is just over, but we see Christmas lights on trees glowing in some houses as we ride by, and stores filled with Christmas things.

From my earliest years, I remember a week before Christmas, my dad would harness up the dogs to go into the woods. At the end of the day when he came home, on top of the load of wood for our wood stove would be our Christmas tree. Dad would then bring the tree into our porch. Some of you will know what I mean by "porch." A room where we kept the wood box and our water barrel. My dad would be very careful as the branches would be very brittle from the cold and frost. When the tree was dried out, he would put it in our living room, nail the stump on a crisscrossed board, tie a piece of string about 3/4 up the tree and tie that to a nail in the corner of the room so that it wouldn't fall over.

Mom and I would decorate it then. Our decorations were sparse, probably some I made from paper, no lights as we didn't have electricity, but it was an exciting time. Our tree would glisten from tinsel hanging from the branches. So, whether the tree was perfect, our family Christmas tree became the centre of our merry gathering of fun and love. With my mom and dad, everything would be perfect. Quotation mark or to be like a child quotation mark no one can feel the joy of Christmas like a child can.

These times are all past now, and now we have different things to deal with. We have a family, grandchildren, who are a joy to have around; the things they say and do make us laugh and be happy. We have our friends. Furthermore, we have our church family, the family of God. We have UCW, and I would like to thank the members of UCW and the congregation for another great fall sale and morning coffee. We would like to have more members come out and join us, so think about it for the new year.

I wish you all a beautiful Christmas and a great new year, especially our minister reverend James. The Christmas heart is a beautiful heart, for it is full of love and thoughtfulness for others. What a happy new year would be for all if we could carry that same Christmas heart into every day during the coming year and make it a permanent thing in our lives.

God bless everyone.

Betty Pilgrim, President UCW



The Gift of **Co-operation**

In 2023, coming out of the extreme adjustments of the COVID era, St. James United Church found itself confronted with some difficult decisions and some wonderful opportunities. Triggered by the challenges on the horizon, a process outlined by the FDEE Region was set in motion that necessitated an assessment of our profile and resources within the church and within the community. There is no doubt that this was a lengthy process in which much research was conducted, and many voices were consulted. We would like to thank you for your participation, your input, and your voice.

A myriad of hopes, dreams, and fears surfaced during this process. The congregation, however, showed overwhelming unity in its fervour for fellowship, music, pastoral care, and youth programming. In promising the Congregation that its voice would be heard, this feedback formed the foundation for the plan to articulate the mission of St. James.

This plan, known as The MAP, was distributed to the Congregation and presented for discussion during a Congregational meeting in July 2023. The Congregation voted to accept the MAP with an overwhelming majority. In October 2023, the FDEE Region completed its review and unanimously approved the St. James United Church Mission Articulation Plan. Now the work of implementing the plan begins. The various groups and committees representing the pillars of faith in our Congregation and community will work to implement the recommendations outlined in the MAP. 2024 promises to be a busy year indeed.

The Mission Articulation Plan Committee would like to express its heartfelt appreciation for the support and patience of the Congregation in the MAP process.

Pamela Norman (Chair)
Julie Hollett
Jennifer Whitfield
Christopher Penney
Rev. James Ravenscroft
Rev. Kathy Brett (Regional Representative)



The Gift of **Hope**

St. James United Church is in partnership with Bridge To Hope food bank. Help a family by reaching out this holiday season.

In times of uncertainty, a fundamental truth gives us hope – that together, we can do extraordinary things. Whether that's through donations to community organizations or assisting neighbours with everyday tasks, generosity has been making a positive impact on the world.

As you know, our organization is committed to reducing the effects of poverty on individuals and families through access to essential food and other programs that help empower our clients.

But we can't do this without you!

Not only do we need your support, we need your help to spread the word. Please tell your friends and family why you believe in our work and encourage them to support us, too!

Here's how you can be a part of the generosity movement:

1. **Make a Financial Contribution:** Visit the [Bridges to Hope donation page](#) and directly donate. Your financial support provides immediate resources to purchase and distribute food to those in need. Remember, no amount is too small, and every dollar makes a difference.
2. **Join the Sustainers Circle:** Commit to ongoing support by joining our monthly giving program, the [Sustainers Circle](#). Your recurring donation ensures that we can continue our work throughout the year, providing stability and consistent aid to the community.
3. **Spread the Word:** Use your voice on social media to amplify our mission. Share our stories, posts, and the impact of our work with your network. Use the hashtag #BridgesToHope to increase visibility and encourage others to join the cause.

65th Anniversary Celebrations



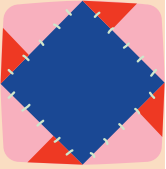
Memory Christmas Tree

At this time of year, thoughts of our loved ones are never far from our minds. For a donation, a coloured bulb will be changed to white, remembering those who have passed. We also may have happy memories which we want to acknowledge.

The money raised through your gift helps fund the many projects which make St. James the vibrant faith we love. Please send your request and donation by Friday, December 15, for inclusion in the Christmas Eve bulletin insert. Multiple requests are accepted. Contact the office for donation forms.



The Gift of Home



It starts with a safe place to live: Without a home, staying well and finding work is a real challenge. Safe, affordable, and stable housing is essential to well being.

Stella's Circle helps address the need for safe, affordable housing for people who face barriers. Our Housing Services team works to help people achieve greater self-determination by improving the conditions which promote housing stability. We also support community capacity building and research that assists in the identification and development of supportive living services necessary to prevent and address homelessness. Stella's Circle is the largest provider of affordable housing in Newfoundland and Labrador's community sector, with 85 housing units throughout St. John's.

Stella's Circle offers a range of residential, community, and correctional-based counselling services to support people through life's challenges. We believe in person-centered services, delivered with a holistic and trauma-informed approach. Our services help people to achieve higher levels of personal independence and self-reliance. We help participants discover the skills to navigate personal challenges and change their lives for the better.

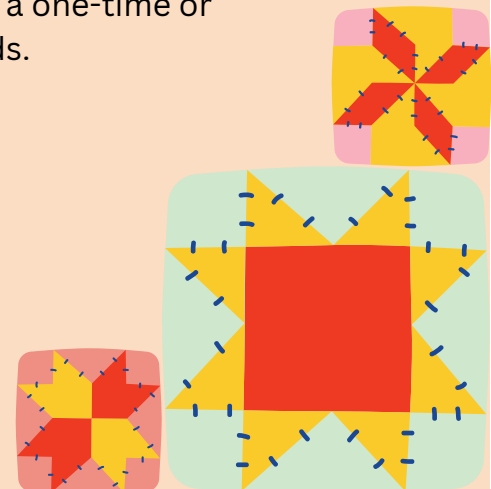
Stable and meaningful employment is an important contributor to physical health, mental health, and quality of life. We believe that everyone has the capacity to work and can benefit from it. Work that is valued by the employee, employer, and society helps people build skills, confidence and financial independence while adding value to the community.

You can help Stella's Circle in our mission to transform lives through Real Homes, Real Help, and Real Work. Donations can be made on a one-time or monthly basis, or on a customized schedule to suit your needs.

Donate this White Gift Sunday or
online at StellasCircle.ca

Stella's Circle

Hope Lives Here





craft with kids

Icy Sun Catcher

You'll need:

old shoelace

9-inch disposable aluminum
pie plate

natural materials such as
pinecones, pine needles,
and twigs

Step 1

Fold the shoelace in half and place
the two ends across the center of
the pie tin.

Step 2

Make an arrangement of natural
materials in the tin.

Step 3

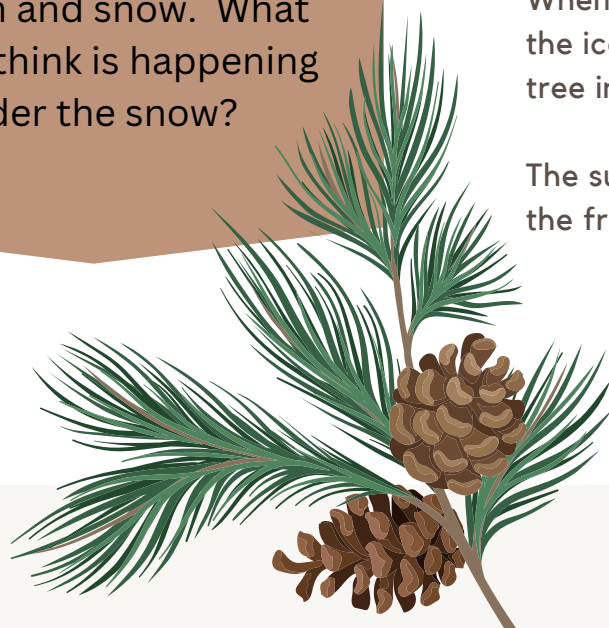
Fill the tin with water and leave
outside to freeze. Or you can place
your pie tin carefully flat in the
freezer.

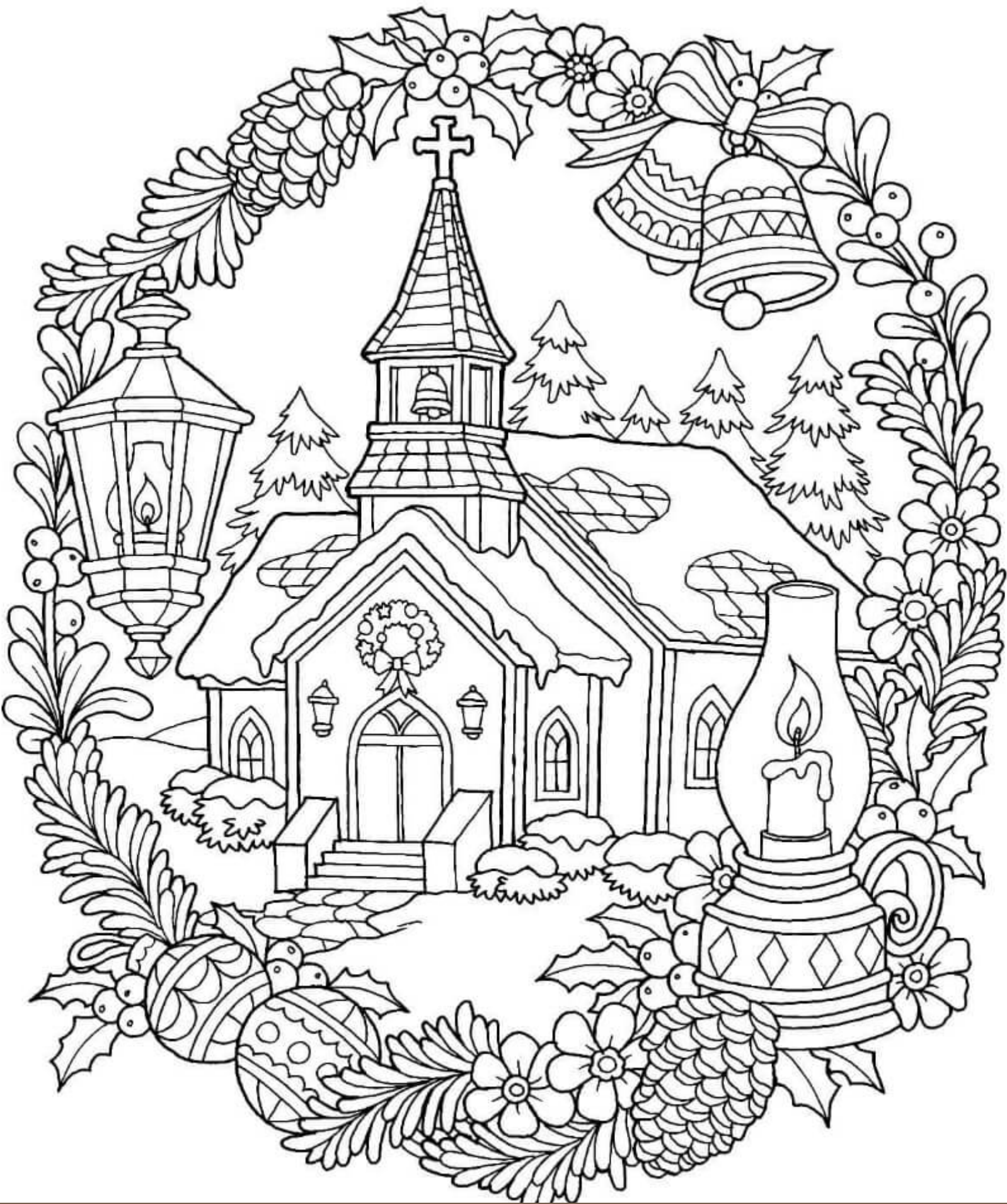
Step 4

When the water has frozen, remove
the ice from the tin. Hang from a
tree in a sunny location.

The sun catcher will last as long as
the freezing weather does.

Read Isaiah 55:10-12 which
explains what happens to
the rain and snow. What
do you think is happening
under the snow?





Mark your calendar!

DATE	TIME	LITURGICAL DAY	LEADERSHIP	MUSIC	SPECIAL INFO	FELLOWSHIP
Dec 3	11:00 am	Advent 1	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Coffee/tea
Dec 3	7:00 pm	Advent 1	James	Amy	EventTide - Taizé	
Dec 10	11:00 am	Advent 2	James	Soloist		Luncheon?
Dec 10	7:00 pm	Advent 2	Young Adults		EventTide – Tapestry	
Dec 17	11:00 am	Advent 3	James	Senior Choir		Coffee/tea
Dec 17	7:00 pm	Advent 3	James		EventTide - Celtic Vespers	
Dec 24	11:00 am	Advent 4	James	Senior Choir		Coffee/tea
Dec 24	4:30 pm	Christmas Eve	James	Soloists	Family Service	
Dec 24	7:00 pm	Christmas Eve	James	Soloist	Candlelight Service	
Dec 31	11:00 am	Christmas 1	James	Soloist		
Jan 7	11:00 am	Epiphany	TBA	Guitar Group	James at CSUC	Coffee/tea
Jan 7	7:00 pm	Baptism of Jesus	James		EventTide - Taizé	
Jan 14	11:00 am	Epiphany 2	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Coffee/tea
Jan 14	7:00 pm	Epiphany 2	James and Gloria		EventTide – Reflections	
Jan 21	11:00 am	Epiphany 3	James and CSUC	CSU Choir		Luncheon
Jan 21	7:00 pm	Epiphany 3	James		EventTide – Celtic Vespers	
Jan 28	11:00 am	Epiphany 4	James	Senior Choir		Coffee/tea
Jan 28	7:00 pm	TBA	Young adults		EventTide - Tapestry	
Feb 4	11:00 am	Epiphany 5	TBA		James at CSUC	Coffee/tea
Feb 4	7:00 pm	Epiphany 5	James		EventTide - Taizé	
Feb 11	11:00 am	Transfiguration	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Coffee/tea
Feb 11	7:00 pm	Transfiguration	James and Gloria		EventTide - Reflections	

