

News From The Pews

Newsletter of St. James United Church

*Be diligent in these matters
give yourself wholly to them*

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FAITH LEGACY

Vision of Tomorrow

*so that everyone
may see your progress*

1 Timothy 4:15



Welcome.

As we embrace the season of Lent and prepare for the joy of Easter, our church stands at the threshold of a remarkable renewal. This is a time of transformation, where we look forward to the changes ahead with hope and anticipation. Our strength lies in the dedication and spirit of our members, whose unwavering faith and commitment will guide us through this exciting journey.

Lent traditionally calls us to reflection, but it also offers a powerful opportunity for personal growth and renewal. Let us embrace this time not just as a period of sacrifice, but as a chance to strengthen our community bonds through simple acts of kindness and generosity. These small gestures pave the way for a deeper connection with one another and prepare our hearts for the resurrection joy of Easter.

Together, let us make this Lenten journey a path to collective and personal renewal, where each step forward is a testament to our shared strength and faith.

Sincerely,
Glen Warren, Editor

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Rev. James Ravenscroft



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st.JamesUC



StJamesUCNL

Worship with us!
Sunday, 11:00 AM



Ministry Message

JAMES RAVENSCROFT

Each year we are given an opportunity for deep reflection and prayer throughout Lent, a time to renew our commitments as followers of Christ. We do this in preparation for Easter, not just one Sunday but an eight-week commemoration of our shared resurrection in Him. It is appropriate then that we take the six weeks of Lent to ponder how we live that out both as individuals and as a spiritual community. This is especially appropriate for us this year as we engage as a congregation in collective self-reflection, listening to each other as we discern what God is calling us to be in our particular neighborhood and at this particular time in our history; that is how we can be a source of new life, of transformation for others. PROVERBS 3:27

Reflecting on Scripture is a way for us to do that, and the readings in the lectionary are particularly rich this year, the majority focused on questions of identity and relationship as Jesus engages in conversation with his followers and others and gives them a deeper sense of who He is and why He came. Consider, for example, the gospel passage on the Third Sunday of Lent. Jesus speaks with a Samaritan woman and reveals to her that He is the Messiah. He also speaks about being a source of living water to refresh the soul. How can He be that for us? And as we share with Him in the Spirit through baptism, how can we be a source of spiritual refreshment for each other and our neighbors?

The following week, we eavesdrop on a conversation between Jesus and a man who was blind from birth. People assume that his parents must have done something sinful for him to have been born with a disability. Jesus counters this with the assertion that his blindness is a means for God's works to be revealed. This bears some consideration. What in our lives may be viewed as a challenge by others, even by us, but is actually a means for our growth or the growth of others? What may that be in our shared life? What vision does God have for our congregation, especially utilizing what we presently may consider to be a challenge?

Ministry Message

JAMES RAVENSCROFT

On the fifth week, we hear Jesus give a direct statement about his identity as he professes to be the resurrection and the life. He doesn't just say this but acts upon it as he goes to the tomb of his recently deceased friend Lazarus and raises him from the dead. Where do we feel like something has died? What new life may Jesus bring about if we are open to it, not a return to what was but new life that emerges out of what was? A powerful moment is when Jesus instructs the people present to unbind Lazarus and let him go free. What then may bind us, holding us back from the new life God has in store for us? How can others help to release us? What do we need to do to release each other?

These are just some of the readings that we are reflecting on this Lent. And then there are all of the readings throughout Easter, all a rich source of wisdom for us moving forward. Each in its own way has a message for us, not considered just for what it says at a literal level but spiritually, metaphorically as we apply the reading to our own lives, both personally and communally. Perhaps over these next fourteen weeks, we can each take time to read our Bibles, especially the Gospel readings that we will be reflecting on each Sunday (see the list of readings in the inset). As you ask the Holy Spirit to be with you as you read, helping you to see what particular message the text holds for you, ask the Holy Spirit to be with us as a spiritual community. Each year, we are given an opportunity in these holy days to consider where God is leading us. May these days be a source of inspiration for us all.



Lent and Easter Readings

1st Sunday in Lent - February 22: John 1:43-51

2nd Sunday in Lent - March 1: John 3: 22-36

3rd Sunday in Lent - March 8: John 4:5-42

4th Sunday in Lent - March 15: John 9:1-41

5th Sunday in Lent - March 22: John 11:1-45

Palm Sunday - March 29: John 12:12-19

Easter Sunday - April 5: John 20:1-18

2nd Sunday of Easter - April 12: John 20:19-31

3rd Sunday of Easter - April 19: John 21:1-14

4th Sunday of Easter - April 26: John 14:1-14

5th Sunday of Easter - May 3: Hymn Sing

6th Sunday of Easter - May 10: John 14:15-21

7th Sunday of Easter - May 17: John 17:1-11

Pentecost Sunday - May 24: Acts 2:1-21

Looking to the Future

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

We find ourselves navigating a world of uncertainty and unrest. As external forces seem to propel us in unknown directions, we become anxious and overwhelmed. As we live in a world filled with uncertainty, closer to home, we face uncertainty as a congregation. The path forward seems unclear and veiled from our view. It is now that we must follow the example Jesus set for us. When his world became too “noisy” and “overwhelming,” Jesus retreated. The Bible cites several examples of Jesus seeking solitude. Prayer and inward reflection allowed him to clear the “noise” and regain his equilibrium and clarity. It allowed him to “be still and listen,” to focus on God’s purpose for him and prepare for what lay ahead.

Retreat can come in different forms. Some of us need solitude to regain our inner peace and composure. Some of us seek to regain our balance through connection and community.

Our Church family can sometimes feel loud and noisy, especially so in challenging times. It is more important than ever to remain grounded in the community and fellowship that St. James was founded on. As one cannot win a race by looking over one’s shoulder, neither can St. James propel itself into the future without firmly focusing on that future. The foundation of the past seems to be shifting underneath us, and we are challenged to build new foundations. External forces seem to be pulling at the threads that weave us together.



It is time for us as a community to retreat, to step away from the “noise.” We need to take the foundation of community and fellowship that St. James was built on and use it to lay the foundation of our future. Our core values that held us together and kept us strong must be the lens through which we look to the future. We have to be open to where the Spirit guides us. We have to trust that Spirit to lift us and carry us forward. We need to reflect on a new term, “right size ministry,” and prayerfully consider what this might look like and how it can sustain our future.

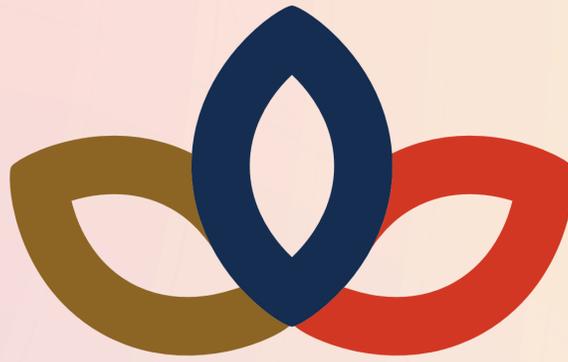
It is time to step back, pause, reflect, and then truly embrace and trust in Jeremiah 29:11. In doing so, we allow ourselves to look forward with excitement and anticipation. It is our time to be open to follow where the Spirit guides us, to be open to possibilities and opportunities. It is our time to work together as the community of faith we were founded on.

If we shift our perception of St. James to one of “community” rather than “a church,” everything will shift. The spirit and essence of St. James are not the four walls but the people who gather and call St. James their home.

In a world of chaos and commotion, we must work together to ensure St. James remains a beacon of calm retreat and community.

Michelle Skinner
Past Chair

James United Church



Deep • Bold • Daring Toward 2035

Hope, Growth and Renewal: Walking the Toward 2035 Journey Together

Toward 2035 is a Spirit-led journey across The United Church of Canada, inviting communities of faith to listen deeply, respond honestly, and imagine faithfully what God is calling into being. It is not a program or quick fix, but a shared direction rooted in prayer, courage, and trust that God is at work renewing and shaping the church for the sake of its neighbours. This vision emphasizes invitation, connection with communities, collaboration across congregations and organizations, and the courage to try new things. Renewal is seen in small steps—a conversation that sparks insight, a partnership that builds trust, or a gathering that feels more welcoming—all signs of resilience and hope taking root.

Walking alongside this journey are Growth Animators, who support communities in strengthening invitation practices, connecting with neighbours, encouraging collaboration, and experimenting with new ways of being church. Renewal is shared work, growing through deepened relationships and faithful presence. If your community is curious about exploring renewal in your own context, Growth Animator Sharon Ballantyne (she/her) would be glad to accompany you. Contact Sharon at sballantyne@united-church.ca

Kitchen Conversations

Join us this Lent for Kitchen Conversations with the Moderator, a six-part video series exploring faith, food, and the power of invitation, hosted by The Right Rev. Dr. Kimberly Heath.

Drawing inspiration and recipes from the United Church's Lenten devotional, Bless Break Share: Recipes for Faithful Living, we're getting in the kitchen with guests from across the church, including book contributors, United Church youth, and the Moderator's own family.

Starting February 17, Shrove Tuesday, we'll be breaking bread at a church each week throughout Lent, reflecting on how food can nourish both body and soul, and how in joining around the table, we connect to something deeper than ourselves.

Start the conversation: <https://tinyurl.com/s2j69js8>





Holy Week

Services

**APRIL 2, 7:00 PM
MAUNDY THURSDAY
COWAN HEIGHTS UNITED**

**APRIL 3, 12:00 PM
GOOD FRIDAY
WESLEY UNITED**

**APRIL 3, 7:00 PM
GOOD FRIDAY VIGIL
ST. JAMES UNITED**

**APRIL 4, 8:00 PM
HOLY SATURDAY
ST. JAMES UNITED**

A Legacy of Faith, A Vision for Tomorrow

Our Foundation: A Heritage of Commitment

For decades, St. James United Church has been a cornerstone of faith in St. John's. This is thanks to the incredible dedication of our founders and the generations of members who followed. Through their volunteerism and unwavering spirit, they built a community that has served as a sanctuary for many. We stand today on the shoulders of giants—people who gave of their time and resources to ensure the United Church had a vibrant presence in our lives.

Our Current Landscape

As we enter the "Listening Stage" of our Strategic Planning initiative, it is important to reflect on our current reality. We are blessed with a significant facility that serves as a hub for worship and community, though its maintenance remains a primary financial focus. While our congregation is rich in wisdom and experience, we are also navigating the challenges of rising costs and a changing demographic. However, through recent initiatives like our Bridge Proposal and community concerts, we have proven that St. James is resilient, creative, and ready to engage.

The Path Ahead: Vision, Growth, and Renewal

The theme for this February is Vision, Growth, and Renewal. Just as Easter promises new life, our planning process asks: How do we, the current congregation, honor the legacy of our past while charting a sustainable, vibrant path for the future?

Share Your Vision

We are inviting every member of our congregation to share their thoughts. We particularly want to hear your perspective on the relationship between our mission and our physical space.

As you reflect, please consider: Is your vision for the future of St. James fundamentally linked to our current physical property and building? Or do you see our "Growth and Renewal" taking a different shape as we adapt to the needs of the 21st century? There are no wrong answers—only honest reflections.

How to Submit:

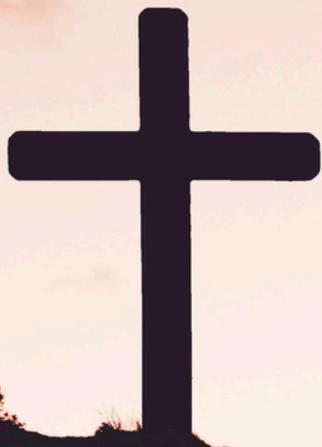
Drop off: Leave written thoughts at the Church Office.

Email: Send your reflections to info@stjamesuc.org with the subject line: My Vision.

Sharing Our Collective Voice:

To inspire one another, received "My Vision" documents will be shared publicly with the congregation through postings in the church, inclusion in weekly bulletins, and future newsletters.

Note: All submissions will have the author's name redacted to ensure privacy, unless you explicitly state in your submission that you wish for your name to be included.



**ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
Meeting
MARCH 22
NOON**

FEB. 18

**ASH WEDNESDAY
PRAYER SERVICE**

6:30 PM



New Arrival!

Drumroll, please! We're over the moon to introduce the newest, shiniest member of the St. James family: the Square Machine! This snazzy gadget was generously gifted by a super thoughtful family from our community. With our fabulous Square, you can easily make donations, snag tickets, and shop 'til you drop at sales—all without a single coin in your pocket! Credit or debit card? No problem! Need a tax receipt? We've got you covered. Our new gadget will be ready for action on Sunday mornings—just ask an usher—plus, it's available throughout the week at the office and at any church bash. Got questions? Give the church office a ring! Welcome aboard, Square Machine!



Mark your calendars!

DATE	TIME	SUNDAY/STYLE	LEADERS	MUSIC	SPECIAL INFO	FELLOWSHIP
Feb 18	6:30 pm	Ash Wednesday	James			
Feb 22	11:00 am	1 st Sunday of Lent	James	Guitar Group	Communion	Coffee/tea
Feb 25	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Mar 1	11:00 am	2 nd Sunday of Lent	James	Senior Choir		Coffee/tea
Mar 1	7:30 pm	InsideOUT LGBTQ Prayer				
Mar 4	5:45/6:30	Meditation/ Taizé Prayer				
Mar 8	11:00 am	3 rd Sunday of Lent	James	TBA		Coffee/Tea
Mar 11	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Mar 14	5:30 pm	Tapestry Potluck/Worship	Young Adults			
Mar 15	11:00 am	4 th Sunday of Lent	James	Senior Choir		Soup Lunch
Mar 15	7:30 pm	InsideOUT LGBTQ Prayer				
Mar 18	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Mar 21	3:00 pm	Wild Light Spiritual Oasis			Spring Equinox	
Mar 22	11:00 am	5 th Sunday of Lent	James	TBA		Coffee/Tea
Mar 25	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Mar 29	11:00 am	Palm Sunday	James	Senior Choir		Coffee/Tea
Apr 1	5:45/6:30	Meditation/ Taizé Prayer				
Apr 2	7:30 pm	All UCC Maundy Thursday	TBA		Cowan Heights UC	
Apr 3	12:00 pm	All UCC Good Friday	TBA		Wesley United Ch.	
Apr 3	7:00 pm	Good Friday	James		Followed by Vigil	
Apr 4	8:00 pm	All UCC Easter Vigil	James et al		Communion	
Apr 5	11:00 am	Easter Sunday	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Breakfast prior
Apr 8	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Apr 11	5:30 pm	Tapestry Potluck/Worship	Young Adults			
Apr 12	11:00 am	2 nd Sunday of Easter	James	TBA		Coffee/Tea
Apr 15	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Apr 19	11:00 am	3 rd Sunday of Easter	James	Senior Choir		Soup Lunch
Apr 19	7:30 pm	InsideOUT LGBTQ Circle				
Apr 22	5:45 pm	Meditation				
Apr 26	11:00 am	4 th Sunday of Easter	James	Guitar Group	Memorial Hymn Sing	Coffee/tea
Apr 29	5:45 pm	Meditation				
May 3	11:00 am	5 th Sunday of Easter	James	Senior Choir	Communion	Coffee/tea
May 3	7:30 pm	InsideOUT LGBTQ Circle				
May 6	5:45/6:30	Meditation/ Taizé Prayer				
May 9	5:30 pm	Tapestry Potluck/Worship	Young Adults			
May 10	11:00 am	6 th Sun. of Easter	James	Senior Choir	Mother's Day	Coffee/Tea
May 13	5:45 pm	Meditation				
May 17	11:00 am	7 th Sun of Easter/Ascension	James	TBA	May Long Weekend	Coffee/Tea
May 17	7:30 pm	InsideOUT LGBTQ Circle				
May 20	5:45 pm	Meditation				
May 24	11:00 am	Pentecost Sunday		Senior Choir	Communion	

