From the Rector

THE REV. JOSH HOOVER
josh@stjamesbirmingham.org

My front page this month is an edited excerpt from my sermon on January 28th. – Fr. Josh

…Maybe, God isn’t calling us to solve it all. Maybe we need to think about the difference we can make, in the lives of one another and in the lives of the people who live in our community. Maybe it is time for us to think smaller.

How might we be called to make a difference to the people of Birmingham and our surrounding areas? Because they don’t hear the music we are so proud of, or the preaching or what it means for our children to grow up in this place. They only see what you, the members of St. James show them.

Are we showing them God’s love? Are we showing them what it means to be members of this parish community? What do those outside of our walls think about us? Or do they think about us at all? If they don’t – what do we wish they knew about us?

This is what I want. I want the people in our area to see St. James as a place where people go to feed others and be fed. Because that is what I see in us. We feed in so many literal ways – from coffee hour and fellowship together to Outreach programs like Rise Against Hunger and PBJ sandwich ministry to Pastoral Care opportunities like providing hospitality to the Hayes family and their guests last Friday after Bob’s funeral.

And we feed people in a metaphorical sense: an invitation to eat at God’s table that excludes no one – beautiful meaningful musical moments – sharing our educational resources with Bound Together and other churches. We are also fed, of course – at the altar and in meals, through education and discussion, moments when we are reminded how loved we are, and the ongoing support of this amazing community.

We are a people who feed and are fed. What does this mean for us? How might we bring who we are to the people of Birmingham? One example of what we already do: We continue to feed our community through an amazing Preschool. But what other ways that we can find to feed them?

Another example of something that might happen: With our support, Amanda Reister is applying for a Diocesan grant to create a support group for new moms. Too often, we ignore the needs of new parents and especially moms who are dealing with all kinds of changes to their lives. They are told that they should be happy, but they often face frustration, anxiety, and depression. Amanda sees a need, and if she can make a difference by feeding emotionally, helping people who are struggling, or simply letting them know they aren’t alone – well, wouldn’t you like St. James to be known for this?

During the Annual Meeting, we were told we have a revenue issue. We’ve made significant cuts, in the last year especially, to make our expenses match the size of our congregation and our building… now we need to find ways to grow. But we won’t do that by being more welcoming – while we can improve, we already are that. And we won’t do it by offering better programs, or perfecting our building. We will do it by showing the communities around us who we are. That we are a place that feeds and is fed. And that by being a part of our mission, their lives can be changed.

Continued on page 2
If we do compelling ministry in the world, if our regular members share who and what we are, we will find that others want to be a part of what we do. This is our mission – this is our calling – and this is what I ask you to do with me in 2024.

Faithfully, Fr. Josh

---

**Adult Forum**

*January 7, 14, 21 at 9:05 a.m. in the Lounge*

**THE REV. JOSH HOOVER**

Feb. 4—We will continue the conversation from the annual meeting. What concerns or questions do you have? What ideas for next steps as St. James continues to take another faithful step into the future? How are we feeding people and being fed because of St. James? Feel free to come with all your questions and thoughts as we have a town hall conversation that digs further into who we are and where we are going.

Feb. 11—Lenten Study: The Baptismal Promises

Our Baptismal Covenant features five questions that all start with the words, ‘Will You’. Beginning on February 11 and lasting through the season of Lent, we will discuss these five questions. We begin on February 11 with, “Will you continue in the Apostle’s teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?”

These discussions offer an excellent opportunity during Lent to ask ourselves how we are living out our Baptismal promises. We look forward to seeing you in the Lounge.

---

**Blessing of candles on Candlemas and help taking down the garland**

*Sunday, February 4 at both services*

**THE REV. JOSH HOOVER**

The Feast of the Presentation occurs every year on February 2nd. This feast day, dating back to at least the 4th century marks the time when Jesus was first brought to the temple 40 days after his birth. This was the earliest that Mary could make sacrifices and be named ritually clean after childbirth. It was also a time when thanks offerings for the birth of Jesus would have been given. In the Gospel of Luke, we read that on arrival at the temple, Mary and Joseph met Anna and Simeon. These two prophets began to tell the people gathered there that Jesus was the Messiah. Because we see the light that was to enlighten the world presented to the public for the first time, the Feast of the Presentation became a time to bless and dedicate candles both for liturgical and home use. This is why the day is often called, Candlemas, and it brings to an end the celebration of the Christmas/Epiphany season.

At St. James this year, we will celebrate Candlemas by blessing both candles for use in the church and any you may choose to bring from home during both services. Since this is the end of our Christmas celebration, we will also be taking the garland down following the 10:00 a.m. service. If you can stay for 20 minutes after the service, it would be greatly appreciated.
Liturgical Thank You and Refresher Training
Friday, February 9

THE REV. JOSH HOOVER

EM’s, Lectors, Acolytes, Ushers, and Tech Team – Friday evening, February 9 is an evening to say thank you. Thank you for your service, thank you for your faithfulness, and thank you for helping our services run so smoothly. We will gather for appetizers and beverages at 5:30 p.m., and then have a brief training for those who are new and refresher for the rest of us. Dessert will follow the training.

Bring a memory of a time when you served, we look forward to hearing meaningful and humorous stories. If you have questions about serving in one of these roles, now is a great time to learn all about it. Please contact Fr. Josh with any questions.

If you can’t make Friday night, there will also be a training on Sunday, February 11 directly after the 10:00 a.m. service. We promise we will be done long before the Super Bowl.

Souper Bowl of Caring
Sunday, February 11

THE REV. JOSH HOOVER

Coming Super Bowl Sunday, February 11, St. James will again participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring. The national goal this year is to raise $5,000,000 to tackle hunger across the country. Money raised at St. James will go to benefit the Breakfast program at All Saints in Pontiac (where our PB sandwiches also go) and the Matchan Soup Kitchen.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Burning of Palms
Tuesday, February 13 from 5:00—6:30 p.m.

THE REV. JOSH HOOVER

It’s a great Episcopal tradition. We come together to eat pancakes in celebration before we begin our Lenten Journey. Bring your palms from last year as well, so we can burn them and turn them into this year’s ashes.

You can sign up to help cook or serve on the sign up genius at https://stjames.rocks/pancakehelp24 or on the sheet in Centennial Hall.

You can let us know you are coming at https://stjames.rocks/pancakes24

Because it is also Valentine’s Eve, look for some chocolate to be included in our regular meal of pancakes and sausage.

February 2024
Ash Wednesday
THE REV. JOSH HOOVER
Wednesday, February 14 is Ash Wednesday. It kicks off the Lenten season with a call to repentance and a reminder of the work we need to do to renew our relationship with God. The Holy Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes will take place at Noon and 7:00 p.m. Ashes on the Go will also be available from 8:15-9:00 a.m. in the Chester Street parking lot. This sacred day is a way to mark time, to slow down and acknowledge where we have fallen short, and to consider how to live a more faithful life.

Lenten Soup Suppers
*Thursdays beginning February 22 – Dinner at 5:30 p.m. Study form 6:15-7:00 p.m.*
THE REV. JOSH HOOVER
In their book, The Last Week, Biblical scholars John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg share the events and meanings of Jesus’ last week, according to the gospel of Mark.
“[…] Borg and Crossan show one of the most careful and insightful readings of the Bible I’ve ever come across.” (Brian McLaren, author of A New Kind of Christian)
“It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this volume[...]” (Barbara Brown Taylor, author of Leaving Church and Preaching Life)
As we make our own journey through Lent, we will follow Borg and Crossan through these final events in the life of Jesus. Each Thursday in Lent we will discuss another day, and what the events of that day might mean for us as followers. And preaching during Holy Week services this year will be based on what we learn from the book. Join us for fellowship and good food at 5:30 p.m. or simply join the study at 6:15 p.m.
While you do not need to read the book to participate, it is very helpful. Books are available from Fr. Josh for $10. To sign up to bring soup or help set-up for the suppers, go to https://stjames.rocks/soupsupper24

Joan of Arcadia Discussion Group
*Starting February 24 at 4:30 p.m.*
AMANDA REISTER
If God appeared to you one day—in human form—and asked you to do something like get a part-time job at a bookstore, what would you think? What would you do? Did it even happen? These are some of the themes and questions that are central to the early-aught’s show Joan of Arcadia.
Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures God not only speaks to individuals but appears to them in a variety of forms, many times human. Sometimes these forms are called angels (see Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28:10-22), but many Biblical scholars believe people in ancient Israel considered angels to be human representations of God. Jacob wrestles with a figure (Genesis 32:22-32) that tells him he has “struggled with God.” Moses gets to see the “backside” of God (Exodus 33:20-22).
So, hearing voices or conversing with God is nothing new. Yet in our day we are likely (with good reason) to be skeptical of people who boldly claim God told them to do something. We have seen religious visions turn violent and ungodly. All of this is what makes the premise of Joan of Arcadia so fascinating. It gives us an opportunity to discern—by watching, evaluating and discussing—what we believe is and is not realistic in these portrayals of God.

Continued on page 5
continued from page 4

Join Amanda Reister in the lounge on Saturdays during Lent to watch an episode of *Joan of Arcadia*, share a meal, and discuss this "show about questions" to explore our faith, deepen our understanding, and better connect to each other. Even though it's a show about a teenage girl and her family, this is intended as a casual and multigenerational gathering that we hope appeals to all ages. We will watch the Pilot episode on February 24th starting at 4:30 pm and meet weekly through Lent.

For meal planning purposes, please let us know you plan to participate by signing up at [https://stjames.rocks/JoanOfArcadia](https://stjames.rocks/JoanOfArcadia)

Pizza, snacks, and light refreshments are provided, but please feel free to bring anything else you'd like to enjoy while watching.

---

**Deacon Patti Surgery**

**THE REV. JOSH HOOVER**

Deacon Patti is scheduled to have her knee replaced on February 29th. Please keep her in your prayers on that day and during her recovery the weeks following. She will not be able to perform all of her regular duties the Sundays following her surgery, but she hopes to fully participate again by Easter. We are jokingly accusing her of giving up being a Deacon for Lent. But never fear, once a Deacon, always a Deacon and we expect her to continue to challenge and encourage us to carry God’s love into the world, even if she needs to do it sitting down.

---

**Music Notes**

**RICHARD NEWMAN**

[Music Notes](mailto:music@stjamesbirmingham.org)

**Hymn History: Hymn 135 “Songs of Thankfulness and Praise”**

Sung on the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, this hymn looks back at many of the subjects of our scripture lessons throughout Epiphany. It was originally written by Christopher Wordsworth for use on the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany according to the British *Book of Common Prayer*. The author described it as: “(A) recapitulation of the successive manifestations of Christ which have already been presented in the services of the former weeks throughout the season of Epiphany; and (an) anticipation of that future great and glorious Epiphany at which Christ will be manifested to all when he will appear again to judge the world.” Stanza 4 was newly-written for *The Hymnal 1982* by F. Bland Tucker to specifically include the Transfiguration which makes it even more relevant to the Gospel lesson for last Epiphany. The tune *Salzburg*, which was first given that name in *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, is in our hymnal as harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach.

**Music during Lent**

Our Lenten journey begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. The choir will sing for the chapel service that night at 7:00 p.m. Lent is a time for contemplation and a switch to a more solemn Sunday liturgy. This is reflected in the music by somewhat quieter organ, no organ improvisations after the Gospel, a return to the plainsong setting of the psalms, and an embrace of silence. The reasoning behind all of these changes is that music serves as a handmaid to the liturgy, so as our Lenten liturgies see some slight alterations, the music follows suit in order to paint a musical picture of this season of penitence.

**Looking ahead: Lenten Choral Evensong in March**

Please mark your calendar to attend Choral Evensong on March 10 at 5:00 p.m. This is a short choral service that is one of the treasures of our Anglican tradition.
What a gloomy January we had! It started out gray and rainy, and then turned to cold, cold snow. We talked about all things winter, but there were not many snowflakes to be found until the middle of the month!

February is National Dental Health Month, so we will begin introducing our students to health and nutrition. Valentine’s Day is also this month. The children will celebrate with books about love, projects with lots of hearts and a special Valentine’s snack.

Last month, we had our first family outing of 2024! We planned to go sledding at Beverly Park, but the weather did not cooperate. So we enjoyed fun with friends at Jungle Java instead. It was such a fun time!

A couple of staff members and I represented St. James Preschool for Preschool Night at the Royal Oak Farmers Market last month. Prospective families come to learn about all of the preschools in the area and gather information for where they might want to enroll their children. It’s a wonderful event that is free to both the parents and preschools. Royal Oak hosts it annually.

The preschool will be closed on February 19 and 20 for a short mid-winter break. Classes will resume on Wednesday, February 21.

Enrollment is now open for current St. James families for the 2024-2025 school year. Enrollment will open to the public on February 5. If you know of anyone looking for a quality preschool in the area, we always appreciate your referrals. Word of mouth is the best advertising we can get! They can visit our website at stjames-preschool.org or call Melissa at (248) 644-4071 for more information or to schedule a tour.

Thank you for your continued support. We couldn’t do it without you!
Outreach Opportunities

THE NEW YEAR AT BOUND TOGETHER

2024 has brought us FIVE snow days so far - but we continue to persevere! Here's a note from one of our student's teachers in Pontiac:

Good morning, I just wanted to share with you what a great start to 2024 we've had in the classroom. Her reading comprehension is exploding! She has moved up two grade levels from the beginning of the school year and her fluency is also improving. This has built her self-confidence so much and she is one of my biggest participants during class discussions.

Math does continue to be a struggle, but she rocked our most recent unit on decimals. She earned an 85% on the unit test. I almost cried while grading it. I know our next unit on fractions will be a lot trickier, but I'm so glad she is experiencing so much growth this year.

Thank you to you and your amazing staff [volunteers, each and every one - MJW] for all the love and energy they are pouring into her. I am seeing amazing results! I will also share with you her latest i-ready results to help you continue to best support her. Wait till you see the growth!

Best,
Ms. Colleen
International Language Academy

Love, and energy -- Ms. Colleen has absolutely put her finger on it. We are so lucky to be able to connect our kids with adults who truly care about them, and who cheerlead, cajole, encourage, laugh, and demonstrate all sorts of skills every tutoring day. It's a journey (!), and it's not a straight line, but we know that we're making a difference and that we're helping to bridge the gaps made even wider by the pandemic years.

Thank you to everyone at St. James, whose support makes all of this possible. Check out the pictures of our FunDay Monday coding and robotics, and the goal-setting workshop for our parents as well -- because, snow days or no: we're building that caring community!

Michele J. Wogaman
Executive Director, Bound Together
Intercessions
IMMEDIATE PRAYER LIST
Penny; Ronald; Anne; Calvin; Tom; Michael; Quenten; Bev; Jane Barnes; Margaret; Michael Curry; William; Megan; Anita; Mary; Trish; Rich; Daniel; Cynthia; Sue M.; Linda Baldwin.

SUSTAINING PRAYER LIST
Michelle; Richard; Noah; Maryanna; Natalie; Chuck & Mickie; Claire; Corinne; Evi; Pete; Mary; Marty; Sally; Don; Bill; Rachel; Dave; Sue; Mary Jo; Jean; Dave; Rob; Jacob; Bob.

IN MEMORIAM
Donald Gault, Evie Wheat, Nancy Frye, Bob Hayes, Anthony Fontana.

St. James Vestry
2022-2025
Michelle Boice
Pam Grier, Senior Warden
Nancy Schutte
Michele Wogaman

2023-2026
Fred Austin
Jane Barnes
Andrea Everett
Amanda Reister

2024-2027
Sophie Gable
Angie Righter, Junior Warden
Kathy Stange
Shar Wickens

Outreach Opportunities
PEANUT BUTTER FOR PONTIAC
THE REV. JOSH HOOVER
Every Thursday one of our great volunteers or a family comes into church to make peanut butter sandwiches. We donate these sandwiches to the Community Breakfast at All Saint’s in Pontiac. You can help by taking the time to make sandwiches (it takes an individual about 45 minutes). To sign up, go to this link: https://stjames.rocks/pbj
You can also help by donating peanut butter or jelly. Simply drop off any donations in Centennial Hall on Sunday.

Sign Up to Host Coffee Hour!
Coffee Hour after both of our services is that chance to connect with our fellow parishioners and guests. We are in need of volunteers to sign up to host coffee hour in February & March!
A few notes: Coffee and tea are provided by the church; you will only need to provide the treats, you should plan for 20 following the service after the 8:00 a.m. service, and approximately 45-50 at the 10:00 a.m. service.
Please sign up on the sheet in Centennial Hall at https://stjames.rocks/coffee23

New Forward Day by Days
Day by Day’s for February/March/April are available in the Narthex. If you would like a copy mailed to you please contact Michelle in the Church office at 248-644-0820.

Many thanks to the Gable family who used their snow day to drop off all your generous food donations to Lighthouse.