

St. James Parish

WITH ST. MARK'S MINISTRIES

Epistle



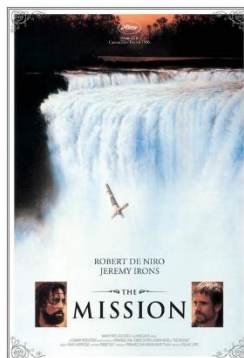
MARCH 2025

Rector's Message

A leper came to Him begging Him, and kneeling he said to Him, "If you choose, You can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched Him, and said to Him, "I do choose. Be made clean! ... immediately, he was made clean. [Mark 1: 40–42, NRSV]

We are fast approaching the season of Lent, which will be upon us in about a week. We nearly always become swept up with what we are going to give up for Lent, what we are going to add as prayer disciplines, and ask, "How am I going to honor the solemnity of the season?" All the afore mentioned are helpful ways to explore the Lenten mysteries but they may not take us into the heart of Lent. What is Lent about? Is it primarily about repentance or could we think about what we are actually seeking: the mercy of God, the love of God – beyond all understanding – that is not caused by our prayers but streams from the heart of God's goodness in Christ. Healing, perhaps, is what Lent is about, a new comprehension of what stands at the end of the Lenten season: Easter. Easter is fundamentally grounded in the promise that in Christ's sufferings we are healed; through the wounds of Jesus and the power of His Resurrection we are made whole, new, and are no longer sick in our hearts and spirits. Lent represents an awareness that we need Jesus's healing touch, we long for closer relationship with the One who has the balm that soothes our troubled minds, hearts, and, yes, even our bodies.

There is a wonderful film, troubling and yet powerful, called *The Mission* from the 1980's. Robert DeNiro stars as Rodrigo, a Portuguese slaver in 17th century Brazil,



who kills his brother in a duel over a woman. Rodrigo is wracked with guilt and hides in a monastery, refusing to eat, deciding the only fate he deserves is starvation, death, and damnation. A committed Jesuit priest, played by the wonderful Jeremy Irons, is asked by his superior to try to get through to Rodrigo. The slaver is resistant, but he agrees to try an act of repentance. He follows Fr. Gabriel and a group of Jesuits to a mission they have established, high above a waterfall, with the Guarani people, a group of indigenous folks who know Rodrigo: for years he has enslaved and killed them.

Rodrigo follows the priests and their Guarani guide through the jungle, dragging a bag filled with his weapons: helmet, shield, swords, guns, etc. The bag is incredibly heavy, and the other priests try to take the bag from Rodrigo, but Fr. Gabriel tells them to leave him alone; only he can decide when his penance has been paid. Finally, they reach the top with the Guarani, and Rodrigo falls down in exhaustion. He is muddy, filthy, and still carrying his bag. One of the Guarani, recognizing Rodrigo, springs forward and puts a knife to the slaver's throat. Acting on orders from Fr. Gabriel, the chief commands the man to cut away the bag of armor, and they all watch as he pushes it into the river below. Rodrigo pauses and then begins to sob, softly at first, but then uncontrollably, huge, heaving cries. The Guarani begin to laugh, but it is not in an attempt to humiliate Rodrigo but to let him know he is forgiven. They come up and gently grab his face in their hands, as the former slaver continues to sob. Mercy is given by the

[continued on next page]

[Rector's Message continued]

people who could justifiably kill Rodrigo, and we sense, in the world of this film, God's mercy has been given, too.

Jesus heals the leper in Mark's Gospel because that is the nature of our Savior. We come, asking for mercy, seeking healing, and the One who was wounded and died for us – arms opened in the wide embrace of the Cross – is waiting, always waiting, to reach out His hand and touch us. He heals because He chooses to, He shows mercy because that is the God we follow. May we take our Lenten practices seriously, and pray intently, understanding that we pray to One who will – not may –forgive our penitent hearts because that is His nature.

In Christ,
Fr. George+

Shrove Tuesday Chili Cookoff

On Tuesday, March 4th, we'll hold our Chili Cookoff to say farewell to the season before Lent. Beginning at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, we'll offer a variety of chilis for the enjoyment of our parishioners and guests. If you would like to make chili OR bring cornbread to complement the chili, OR if you're willing to bring sour cream, cheddar cheese, Fritos chips, or a dessert OR you just want to come eat and enjoy all this great food, please signup online at <https://bit.ly/StJamesChili25> or contact the office at 860-677-1564. Our special "judges" will make the rounds of the chili offerings and pick a winner in a variety of categories, all in good fun. Around 6:30 pm, we'll hold a brief service called *Farewell to Alleluias*, which is great for all, but especially our children, to usher in the season of Lent. Also, we will burn last year's palms to create ashes for Ash Wednesday, so please bring your leftover palms, if you indeed saved them. The event is free, but we hope to raise money for our Dominican Republic Mission, so a freewill offering is appreciated!!



Warden's Corner

On a beautiful late fall weekend in November, the women of St James Parish gathered at Camp Washington for a wonderful retreat. If you have ever been to Camp Washington, you know what a great facility it is. During that retreat, we shared lots of good food, plenty of laughs, and a few short "hikes". The most important thing though, is that we talked, shared stories about our lives and struggles, and really got to know each other better. At the end of our short time together, it was obvious to many that we have something special here, something we don't want to let slip through our hands.

How do you translate a great weekend with a group of wonderful women into a permanent part of our church and our lives? I believe that a Women's Ministry could harness the momentum that was started at the retreat. This idea is not a new one as there have been various iterations of Women's Ministries in the past at St James. I am not sure why these efforts did not last, but I do know that there are many reasons to keep trying. The most obvious reason is that we are all members of the same faith. We would have the opportunity to build meaningful connections with women who share similar beliefs. Hopefully, this community would support and encourage each other through the many challenges of life. This support system for women would help to make all women feel accepted and important to our church and to each other.

This plan to start a Women's Ministry at St James could not come at a better time. Our church has been blessed with many new people over the past several months and we need to get to know each other. Women with *Women's Ministry* all kinds of talents, experiences and knowledge are coming to our church, and this infusion of new energy and ideas is exciting!

We are planning a meeting in March, (exact date TBA) , to start talking about what a women's ministry at St James will look like, and how we can make it successful. I hope every woman in the Church will consider attending and help to make this ministry a success.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Bullard, Co-Warden

Church School update

Thank you to all the St. James families who continuously bring your children to Church School, and to those who have joined us for the first time without hesitation. We have had great participation on several Sundays – even 15 children one day! It feels so wonderful to have a room full of children and youth helping each other while participating in lessons and meaningful conversations. February has been a tricky month with 2 weather cancellations, but those are behind us.

On Candlemas (February 2nd), we discussed the meaning of the day and the importance of Jesus being presented at the temple 40 days after his birth. We also learned that it happens to fall right in the middle of Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. During these still, cold, and short days, we all need some light in our lives. Sometimes we forget it's there, and so we must seek it out. We also need to find ways to reflect that light on others. As Candlemas celebrates Jesus being the light of the world, every child rolled their own miniature beeswax candle and tied it together with a prayer which we then brought into church to be blessed by Fr. George. It was a lovely way to celebrate His love and light.

Looking forward, we will continue our lessons and learning about Lent, reflecting on Jesus's life and death, and preparing for Easter. The children are really enjoying getting to know one another and new faces are always welcomed with smiles and encouragement! A gentle reminder that we are again in need of Church School Teachers through Spring so, if you have not signed up to help, please do so via :

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0E48ADA82EA7FF2-50798626-church> And, as always, if you have questions, please feel free to contact Brigitte Cadigan

Celebrating March birthdays!

Mitch Guglielmo

Lila Manton

Drew Alligood

Jerry Hess

Paul Ingram

Ev Lyons

David Paye

Nick Baldwin

Bruce Baldwin

Marisol Pereira

Anna Lapointe

Ella Ososki

Elizabeth McBride



Faith & Fries!

We usually come together on the 4th Tuesday of each month at **Puente American-Latino Pub at 81 South Main Street in Unionville.**

We will gather on Tuesday, March 25th, from 7–8:30 pm.

Come for dinner, have a drink or snack, whatever is comfortable for you. We invite all to come as they are able and please, feel free to invite a friend, neighbor, or co-worker! Call the church with questions.



Lenten Series: Jesus though the eyes of Mark

We will share a five-part series again this Lenten season, beginning Wednesday, March 12th at 5:30 pm. Each Wednesday of Lent (Holy Week excepted), we will begin at 5:30 with fellowship and a light supper of soup and salad (maybe some bread 😊) that folks will take turns providing, as we have done for a number of years. A program will begin at 6 pm and conclude by 7:15 pm (so that choir folk, if they choose, can participate).

This year, we will explore the entirety of Mark's Gospel in what is hoped to be a refreshing approach. Over the course of the program, folks will be encouraged to read the Gospel of Mark (16 chapters in total, so an average of 4 chapters per week). We are going to be looking at Jesus through the lens of the other characters in Mark, people like Peter, Matthew, and James, but also various lepers, demon-possessed persons who are healed by Jesus, the Syro-Phoenician woman, and so much more. How is our view of Jesus changed, stimulated, enhanced, etc. by our reading and conversations together? Join us for one night or for the whole series. No sign-up is needed to join. We will meet in the parish hall.

Ash Wednesday, March 5th

It is important to say that ashes are not the focus of the Ash Wednesday service, which dates back to the early days of the church, though some of the things we do on the Wednesday before the first Sunday of Lent were once done on the Sunday itself. Wednesday became the beginning of Lent later on, so that Lent (not including Sundays) could be exactly 40 days. Ashes have figured into Christian practice since well before the 4th century; in fact, ashes go back to the times of pagan religions (Egypt and Greece), before the time of Christ, when ashes sprinkled on the head signified mourning. In most Catholic countries outside the United States and Africa, in fact, ashes are still sprinkled on the head on Ash Wednesday, instead of the priest making the sign of the cross on a person's forehead. Ancient Christians, as a practice, might be separated from his/her congregations because of "notorious sins." If the congregant wanted to come back into Christian community, he or she went through a process. They would, on more than one occasion, confess their sins publicly, and would lay prostrate on the floor, as a priest sprinkled ashes upon their head.

We tend to focus too much on ashes on the Wednesday that begins Lent. Actually, ashes are a sign of repentance, as we understand that we have fallen away from the desires and design of God for our lives and wish to turn back to God. The priest says, as ashes are sprinkled on the head (or traced in the sign of the cross, more typical for us American Christians), "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Those words remind us that we bring nothing into the world and will take nothing from it but, whether we live or die, we belong to Almighty God.



We will have two Ash Wednesday services on March 5th: one at noon and one at 7 pm, both with Holy Eucharist. The 7 o'clock service will be livestreamed. If you cannot attending in-person worship, but would like to have ashes, you need only stop by the church 9 am–11 am or 2 pm–4 pm. If you wish to have ashes and cannot make it to church, call Fr. George to schedule a very short visit for the imposition of ashes.

Stations of the Cross for Lent

The Stations of the Cross has a history dating back to at least the early Middle Ages and was an attempt to emulate the Via Dolorosa or the Way of Sorrows, the Via Crucis (Way of the Cross). The original idea was for anyone who could make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and walk the way that Jesus walked in His Passion, beginning with His condemnation by Pilate and ending when he is placed in the tomb. The inability for most to journey to the Holy Land gave rise to churches being built with "stations" of the Cross, containing fourteen places that attempt to mirror Christ's travels to Golgotha. The practice became popular, over time, as a Lenten devotion on Fridays, a Lenten day of holy obligation where everyone was asked to fast, pray in penitence, and say the stations of the Cross in church. For many years the Stations of the Cross varied in number but ultimately was set at fourteen. Eight of the fourteen stations represent moments in Christ's Passion attested to by Scripture and the other six (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 13) are based on "inferences from the Gospel account or pious legend" (The Book of Occasional Services, 2003, p. 56). The Stabat Mater was often sung between the stations. The prayer devotions for our Stations come from the St. Augustine Prayer Book, first assembled by the Order of the Holy Cross (an Episcopal monastic order) in 1947 and revised and reprinted many times over the years. Forward Movement revised and began to publish the Prayer Book in 2014, which is the edition from which our stations are drawn.

In March our Stations of the Cross project from last year will be on display for all to enjoy again. **If you considered finishing (or starting) something for the project and can get it to us by March 3rd, that would be wonderful.** The Stations project meant so much to so many and it will be joyous to have it up again this year with possibly new pieces as well! Submissions should be done in the medium of your choosing and of a size considerate of ability to move the piece in the building. Your emphasis should be true to the Station reflecting the Episcopalian experience, though in a style of you choosing, traditional, contemporary, abstract, etc.-Please-confer with Fr. George or Linda Mason with questions regarding this project.

First Sunday Breakfast

Find delicious food and fellowship at the *First Sunday Breakfasts* cooked by a great crew of men of the parish, led by John McBride: French toast, sausage, bacon, eggs, juice and coffee as good as Mom made. Gluten-free pancakes or muffins will also be available. **Join us on Sunday morning, March 2nd, from 9 am–9:45 am for a wonderful time of food and fellowship!**



Prayer Team

From time to time, the Prayer Team shares some of what they find helpful, in the hope that you might find it helpful too ...

Be still and know that I am God. [Psalm 46:10]

This month, we share a little about the Centering Prayer Workshop which took place on Saturday, February 15th with Celeste Calibotta. Celeste is a spiritual director and teacher of Centering Prayer. On that day, sixteen parish members were introduced to this way of praying.

In the 1970's, three Trappist monks—William Meninger, Basil Pennington, and Thomas Keating – developed a simple method of silent prayer. This method came to be known as Centering Prayer, because it is centered entirely on the presence of God. It is simply sitting in silence, open to God's love for you and your love for God. It is beyond our thoughts, emotions, or sensations. Like being with a very close friend, where words are not required, Centering Prayer brings your relationship with God to a level deeper than conversation. [From Fr. Richard Rohr's daily meditation of 1/2/2016] It is not to say that it replaces our prayerful petitions and praises using words; not at all. But it is a way to go beyond ourselves, and to rest in God.

Next month, we'll share a little about the 4–step method of Centering Prayer. And be on the lookout for more sessions on Centering Prayer to be held in the Spring.

In Christ,
The Prayer Team:
Pat Clark, Carol Kirkwood, Donna Paye

Parish Photo Directory coming!

Any members wishing to be in a St James Parish 2025 Photo Directory, please email Linda Mason a photo and your demographics [mailing address, phone number (optional), and email (optional) you would share in the directory. Photos should be one per family. For those who don't have a photo, we can make arrangements to take a picture; please let us know. If you don't want to email the information, please send it to St James with a note: *Photo Directory*. **Please have photos and info to Linda by March 24th.**

Thank you! We hope we will have a great response as a new Directory will be a



tremendous help for us all to get to know each other better. Once the book is completed, copies will be available to parish members.

Women's History Month /Lent offering

On Sundays, March 9th, 16th, and 30th between the services there will be a presentation and discussion about some women named in the Bible along with women who were important religious figures in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Between the named and the nameless, there are over three hundred to be found in the Bible. Along with the well-known Biblical women, some of the lesser known will be discussed. One Sunday will be devoted the Medieval mystics – their gifts and contributions. We hope you can join us.

An Important Opportunity

On Sunday: March 23rd at 9 a.m. in the Parish Hall Outreach invites you to hear Barbara Damon, President & CEO, speak about the work at Prudence Crandall Center in New Britain. Throughout the efforts of St. James Parish, and now St. Mark's Ministries of New Britain, our support helps provide hope and help to those affected by domestic violence. For questions, speak to Dianne Antos. Mark your calendar to join in this important opportunity.

Outreach Corner

Save The Date: The Connecticut Foodshare Walk Against Hunger will be on Saturday, April 26th. This event starts at Dunkin Park with a walk through Bushnell Park and back to Dunkin Park. St James has for years had a team of walkers called *The St James Healers*. Everyone in the Parish is invited to be a part of this fun, family-oriented event. Information on how to join or support the team will be available soon.

Ongoing collection for Gifts of Love: The collection of peanut butter & jelly (in non-glass containers), as well as snack cups or pouches of fruit or applesauce, continues throughout the year. The collection basket is in the hallway outside the piano entrance to the Sanctuary, at the bottom of the bookcase. (Look for a new, more visible collection site coming soon!) Gifts of Love puts these food items into backpacks that go home from school with children who are food insecure. Often, this is the only source of food for these children on those weekends.



Minutes of the Transition Vestry Meeting of January 16, 2025

Present: Fr. George Roberts, EJ Ososki, Carol Kirkwood, Kathy Bullard, Bob Sudell, Bonnie Sudell, Jim Wilke, Deb Butler, Chris Butler, Kim Pereira, Stephen Hard, Mark Giulietti, David Tompkins, Susan Holland via Zoom, Bob Kissel, Barbara Campbell via Zoom.

Absent: Molly Sherman, Jim Wilke, and Leonard Nelson

Minutes of 12/19/2024 meeting

MOTION - Bob S moved to accept the minutes of December 19, 2024, as submitted. Seconded by Skip.

Discussion – none.

Motion accepted unanimously.

Ministry Reports

Finance/Treasurer's Report – December 2024

Summary of Report by EJ Ososki

- End of Dec 2024 Income budget was \$333,700 with Actual \$382,412 (+\$48,712).

Expense budget at \$390,260 with Actual \$392,899 (+\$2,639).

- Budgeted deficit was \$56,560; Actual deficit \$10,487. Deficit over the years has continued to decrease with less coming out of investments to cover.
- 2024 was quite successful budgetarily. Thanks to EJ for all his hard work and to Jerry for his oversight of investments.

MOTION – Bob S moved to accept the report as submitted with a second by David.

Discussion – none

Motion carried unanimously.

Building and Grounds Projects –Bob S.

- Doors were anticipated to be ordered on January 17th. There is a 4-month lead time for delivery.
- Both Sanford-& Hawley and Anderson came in with the same quote of \$150K for windows. Bob S will look for 1 more quote.
- Fire alarm system – Sonitrol quoted \$45K. Waiting for a quote from ADT, which was recently bought by another company.

South Church / Food Pantry Report – Update from Stephen & Mark

- Stephen reported that a lease for Food Pantry to be at South Church has been signed for 6-month term at \$500/month and then will go month to month – should any other areas be available and be an improvement to current site.
- Mark reported that he and those volunteering at the food pantry like the current site and the current revised set-up.
- Stephen reported that the Open House Dianne Antos held at her home on New Year's Day brought in 75 pounds of donated food.
- Reminder our Parish has the months of January and June each year to assist in providing food to Farmington Food Pantry. Food has gradually been coming in.

Stewardship update

- Reminder letters have gone out to those who previously pledged but have not sent in 2025 pledges and there has been a good response to the reminder.

Outreach update – Kathy B.

- Sue Rubin has stepped down as co-chair (THANKS Sue for your all your help in being

- a co-chair). Dianne Antos has offered to be the co-chair with Kathy Bullard
- Request to move the Gifts of Love peanut butter and jelly donation bin for more accessibility.
- Saturday February 22, 2025, St James participates in Church by the Pond, providing lunch to the homeless at Bushnell Park in Hartford. More information forthcoming.
- Foodshare's Walk Against Hunger will take place in late April/early May at Dunkin Park (Yard Goats' field). More information TBA. Looking for walkers and supporters/donors. If interested, speak with Kathy Bullard.
- Outreach Committee discussed looking for potential other agencies for volunteer opportunities. Eg., Zion Lutheran/ Brian's Angels.

St. Mark's Ministries report – David Tompkins

- David presented budget that St Mark's Ministry committee reworked.

MOTION – Bob S moved to accept the budget as presented with a second by Skip.

Discussion

- Clarification of the following
 - The \$65–\$70K that comes into the Smith Fund yearly is dependent on the market.
 - \$35K is Food Pantry
 - \$5K for Fr George discretionary
 - Remainder is given to agencies in New Britain. A revised process to apply is being worked on by SMM Committee.
- Still waiting for \$50K from a bequest.

Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

Budget 2025

- Pledges received \$334,000 – budget goal \$350,000. A few more pledges are anticipated to come in.
- Have invested funds with Investment Committee oversight and Donations & Bequests funds held through the Diocese. The total invested, donations and bequests is approximately \$2,500,000.
- For 2025 budget, separate out medical dental expense from salary for Rector
- \$25K more in line for yearly needs (i.e., ceiling tiles need replacement)

- In 2024 spent monies on restocking supplies needed for general facility upkeep and housekeeping. Will need fewer supplies for 2025.
- Less expense for copier needs due to new contract with a new company.
- Want to hire a tenor section leader to balance out the choir.
- Organ & Piano repair and tuning expenses can come from the Winchell Fund, if needed. We have 3 pianos and 1 organ.
- Need to pay for 2 audits (St James / St Mark's) this year only. In 2026, audit will decrease with just 1 needed.
- 2025 Budget total expenses \$435,191. Total income \$430,439 giving \$5,000 deficit

*MOTION – Stephen moved to accept the 2025 budget as presented. Kathy seconded. Motion unanimously carries as presented.

*After initial budget vote, an error noted in FICA expenses budget items line on spreadsheet which would have the deficit at \$7,966
MOTION made by Stephen to accept amendment to the budget as presented with a second by Bob K.

Discussion – none

Motion carried unanimously.

New Vestry

- Next year establish a nominating committee to work on contacting potential Vestry members to run.
- Wardens to be elected by the new Vestry immediately following the Annual Meeting

New Business

Order of St Mark's and St James (new Order of the Fisherman Award needed?)

- Next year look at changing the name and logo of the Order of the Fisherman to represent our new parish.

Rector's and Wardens' Thoughts

- Fr George expressed a very heartfelt Thanks for all the hard work that the transition vestry put into the merger and for all the many blessings given throughout.
- **Saturday March 8th Vestry Retreat Day**

MOTION – Mark moved to adjourn. David seconded. Unanimous vote to adjourn. Adjourned at 8:56pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Carol Kirkwood, Clerk

St. James Parish

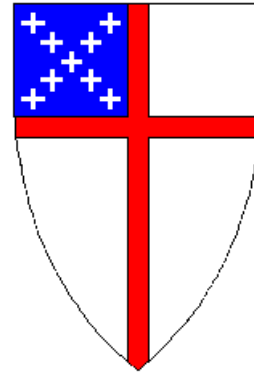
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MISSION STATEMENT:

*We welcome all to worship and nurture spiritual growth through faith, grace and reason.
We reach out to those in need as a caring community
and live Christ's teaching to love one another.*

STAFF		OFFICERS		
The Rev. George C. Roberts	<i>Rector</i>	Kathy Bullard & Stephen Hard, <i>Wardens</i>		
Blake Hansen	<i>Director of Music</i>	EJ Ososki, <i>Treasurer</i>		
Brigitte Cadigan	<i>Children & Family Ministries</i>	Jerry Hess, <i>Asst. Treasurer</i>		
Susan Deming	<i>Parish Administrator</i>	Bonnie Sudell, <i>Parish Clerk</i>		
Cheryl Rusczyk	<i>Admin., St. Mark's Ministries</i>	2026	2027	2028
Ray Smith	<i>Sexton</i>	Stephen Hard	Kathy Bullard	Linda Mason
Kim McLaurin	<i>Nursery Supervisor</i>	Skip Mason	Doug McDowell	Ed Preneta
		Robert Sudell	Molly Sherman	David Tompkins

St. James Parish

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

