

St. James Parish

WITH ST. MARK'S MINISTRIES

Epistle



FEBRUARY 2026

Rector's Message

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal.

But the word of God is not chained.

1 Timothy 2:8-9

I have come back to Paul's second letter to Timothy a lot in recent years. Paul's letters to "his dear son" Timothy are often thought to be Paul's final written words, his swan song, a final cache of wisdom for his young disciple before the elder man's death. Even as Paul faced death and the early Church in Rome was being persecuted, Paul lived and died as one who understood that God had conquered death in Christ. Paul lived, therefore, as one who was grounded in the truth of Christ's death and the reality of how our Lord's resurrection redeemed all things, even death. Paul had written, in Romans 8:34, "Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

We live in challenging times. They are not the most challenging times in the history of the world (let's look at the Great Stock Market Crash/Depression/Dust Bowl, the Holocaust, The Civil War, the Jim Crow era for black Americans, The Black Death of the Middle Ages, just to scratch the surface) but we are in a period of change and angst. The shooting of Renee Good has torn open – taken to a new level – the battle around immigration policy, how the police and military are used, and a whole host of other areas of concern. We can call these sad times,

times of darkness, fearful times, or times of change or uncertainty.

I refer us back to Paul who, facing death, reminds us that "the word of God is not chained," and that Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for us." Jesus Himself often said to His challenged disciples, "Do not be afraid..." Jesus said to His frightened and grieving followers, at the Last Supper, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Christ calls us to be engaged in the world, to work for the good of the least of these His children and, clearly, calls us to temper our fear with hope. Paul writes, in Romans 8: 15, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The times may be challenging, and peace, justice, and equality may seem far from us. Yet God, in Christ, calls us to not only be bold but to not fall back into fear, cynicism, sadness, handwringing, or anxiety about the present or the future. No one is saying that trusting, leaning into God, is easy but it is the way of discipleship, a marker of those who believe in Jesus and His power to be the change the world needs, nay requires, if it is to survive. How do we follow Jesus in difficult times? We must begin by asking ourselves what we actually believe about who Jesus is and what is His Gospel capable of doing in our lives and in the world.

In Christ,
Fr. George+

Warden's Corner

Dear Friends,

The recent death of my husband, Mark Giulietti, has been a time of overwhelming blessings. While I can't know everything the future holds, I do know for certain that the love of God and His people will be there to help endure whatever may come. That is a blessing I do not take for granted.

I have had many knowing conversations with those who have also lost a spouse who was deeply loved over the course of many years. Everyone grieves in their own way, but, I believe, Christian marriage colors the experience of death based on its realities. When Mark and I were married publicly/legally in 2009 (privately in 1997), I deliberately chose the passage from Genesis where God creates Eve for Adam. This passage was/is often used to disparage same-sex marriage. "God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve" is the popular trope in some circles. That God, actually, did create Adam and Steve is one point, but not the most significant. To focus on gender is to completely miss what most concerns God in this passage and it ain't sex and procreation! Procreation appears almost as an afterthought (oh, and by the way, be fruitful and multiply). Eve was created so that Adam would not be lonely, and would have someone to help him through life. Everyone in a good Christian marriage knows why they are together, and marriages end precisely because they are no longer life giving.

What happens in a good Christian marriage is, as St. Paul says, the two become one flesh. This becomes literally true in a marriage that lasts a long time. The death of a long-time spouse is a cleaving but it, oddly, is not as painful as one might expect. After Mark's death I did not so much miss him as feel as if he was in me. Perhaps even more thrilling was the realization that he had taken me with him into the presence of God. I am very definitely NOT living the rest of my life without him, but with him. He is in me. I am in him, and so it will be forever. Love never dies.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Hard, retiring Co-Warden

First Sunday Breakfast

Find delicious food and fellowship at *First Sunday Breakfasts* cooked by a great crew of men of the parish: pancakes, sausage, bacon, eggs, juice and coffee as good as Mom made. A gluten-free option will also be available. And, of course, much good conversation!



So, join us this **Sunday, February 1st** from 9 am–9:45 am, bring your family and neighbors, and share in the great food from our Men's Group.

Men's Breakfast

On Saturday, February 14th at 7:30 am, all men of the parish are invited to join us for a time of conversation and good food at the Crazy Pancake, 17 Whiting Street, in Plainville. Come as you are. Everyone is responsible for his own breakfast but let Fr. George know if that is a challenge, as there is assistance available. Join in fellowship with Fr. George and a great breakfast!



Faith & Fries!

On Tuesday, February 24th, you are invited to join us for *Faith and Fries* at Puente American-Latino Pub at 81 Main Street in Unionville. Come for dinner, have a drink or snack, whatever is comfortable for you. We will talk about thriving in challenged times. 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.



Bible study

In February we will conclude our study for Epiphany using Fleming Rutledge's little book *Epiphany: Season of Glory*. The book is \$20, but please let Fr. George know if this is a challenge for you; there will be no issue 😊. Our next Bible Study is still to be determined

Prayer Team

From time to time, the Prayer Team shares something of what they have found helpful, in the hope that you may find it helpful, too.

Lent and the Wilderness

Luke 4:1- " Jesus, full of the Holy spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the spirit into the wilderness..."

Luke's account, and those in Matthew and Mark, describe Satan's testing of Jesus, and the power of God in Christ to overcome! Whether we've had times of barrenness in the wilderness, or we're weathering the storm with a loved one or friend, let us never forget our God walks before us and with us.

Dear Lord,

All of us experience times in the wilderness, either personally or alongside our friends and family. Help us to seek you in these challenging times and to remain alert for your presence. Remind us that you are on this journey with us and that we are never alone. Provide strength and comfort as only you can. Help us to know that we are your children and we are loved.

In Your Glorious Name, Amen.

Ali Beeson
Prayers for the Wilderness

Church School news

As the new year is settling, perhaps some are feeling a calling, a desire to be more involved in the life of our church family spiritual development of our children. **Be Not Afraid!**

Volunteer. Lessons, which last

about 30 minutes, are completely planned for you through our curriculum,

"Weaving God's Promises", an

assistant is with you, guidance and support are available, and the kids are great. Please contact Fr. George if you can help with this very important ministry or sign up at:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/174CEHyRktX5DXIt9_tMgqOspi4OSApb9jgK3Bg7XcBQ/edit?usp=sharing



Thank you to our teachers and assistants for the month of January: Joyce Bettencourt, Evan Lapointe, Maggie Ososki, Kathy Roach, and Cindy Rosenthal.

Pre-Lenten time of reflection & preparation

On Saturday, February 14th, at 9:30 am (until noon), we will host time of gentle reflection as we prepare for the season of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, the 18th. We will have some time for silence, prayer, and Kelvin Young will be back to lead us in a time of sound healing. Please join us and feel free to invite a friend or neighbor. A time to connect with Christ's peace as we enter into the season of Lent.

Lenten Series: the Parables in St. Matthew

We will share a five-part series again this Lenten season, beginning Wednesday, February 25th 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).

Women's Ministry

Monday, February 9th, *Prudence Crandall Valentine Care Project* - our fellow female parishioner Christina DeFranco has asked for our help filling 100 beautiful bags for women at Prudence Crandall for Valentines. She has done this project for seven years, this year we can help in the project. We will meet in the Parish Hall and work to fill the bags and make them lovely. There will be a chance to donate items in the month of February - stay tuned for future news.

Save the Date: **Sunday, March 8th, 5:30 pm**; a Potluck Lenten Dinner with Compline

Our group events are open to any woman in our St James Parish, Farmington, CT. If you have any questions or have any ideas for our ministry, please feel free to talk to any of us: Kathy Bullard, Deb Butler, Gabriela Henry, Linda Mason, Tracey Roberts, Molly Sherman, Nancy Thompson, Anna Whilby.

Shrove Tuesday Chili Cookoff!!

On Tuesday, February 17th, Shrove Tuesday, at 6 pm, we'll hold our Annual Chili Cookoff as a fundraiser for our 2026 Dominican Republic Mission Trip in April. Folks are encouraged to share their favorite chili recipe. A sign up will be

up soon. To ensure variety and not too much repetition or too many chilis, there will be a space for your name and for you to say what type of chili you will be sharing. Folks will be able to sample the chilis first and then take full servings of their favorites! There is no charge to come and participate and taste the chilis, but this is a fundraiser!! Please bring \$1, \$5, \$10 bills as we will have some fun ways to pick the "best" chili and to raise funds for the DR mission trip. Freewill offerings will of course be accepted, too!! A short service, *Farewell to Alleluias*, will begin around 6:45 or 7 pm. Stay tuned for more information!



Candlemas, February 2nd at 10 am in the Chapel

The Feast of the Presentation of our Lord is always on February 2nd and is an important day in the life of the Church. It is often referred to as "Candlemas," because as early as the fifth century, the custom of celebrating this feast with lighted candles had already developed. The lit candles symbolized Simeon's prophecy that Jesus would be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles." For Luke's Gospel it is another level of revelation of Jesus, who is "revealed" as the promised Messiah to and by an old prophet Simeon, and an even older, devoted prophetess Anna. the Feast is celebrated in today's Church forty days after Christmas, marking the day that Mary and Joseph would have brought Jesus into the Temple and Mary would be ritually purified



after giving birth (traditionally, those same 40 days after). At the heart of the Feast of the Presentation is the encounter between Jesus, Simeon, and Mary at the Temple. Jesus is recognized as Messiah in Luke for the very first time, and by a prophet, no less. We will light the altar candles a little later in the service than usual, as a sign that we recognize the Light of the world has come. We will burn a small amount of incense (around the altar only) during the prelude, before the service begins, as a sign that it was at the Temple Jesus was revealed. You are encouraged to bring candles you might use in the coming year; they will be blessed during the service.

Celebrating February birthdays!

Foster White

Jeff Dugan

Donna Paye

Molly Greaves

Charlotte Sullivan

Jamie Baldwin

Marjorie Bingham

Daniel Roberts

Carol Whelan

Siggi Ingimarson

Connor Hillemeir

Joyce Bettencourt

Francesca Flynn

Chandler Howard

Celebrate FEBRUARY

BIRTHDAYS



Outreach Corner

Church by the Pond.

Our next *Church by the Pond* event will be held Saturday, February 7th. This program is sponsored by Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford. As you probably have noticed, we have had our signup for the items needed in the Narthex of the Church. Anyone who would like to help make lunches will gather at 11 am in the Church kitchen. Then, at 2 pm we go to Bushnell Park in Hartford where Fr. George Roberts will have a service, followed by distribution of the lunches to the people who gather there. We can carpool into Hartford. If you have any questions, call Kathy Bullard at 860-673-6444.

Walk Against Hunger 2026

Save the Date!!! The Foodshare *Walk Against Hunger* will take place in Hartford on Saturday, April 25th. This is a major fundraiser for CT Foodshare, and St James will have a team of walkers who will participate. Please consider being a part of this important event. More information will be coming soon!

Farmington Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone who has stepped up over the past few months to support our collection of food and other items for the Farmington Food Pantry. The result of our appeal for increased donations has been overwhelming. Traditionally, St James commits to increased and focused donations to this pantry in January and June of each year. Thank you for your significant response to this year's January "push" – the collection bin has been overflowing! The compassion and generosity of St James parishioners is remarkable. The collection bin will remain in the narthex throughout the year, and we will continue to bring any donations collected to the food pantry.

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.



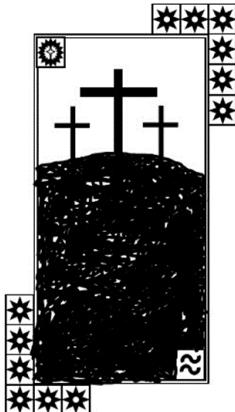
We will have two Ash Wednesday services on February 18th: one at noon and one at 7 pm, both with Holy Eucharist. The 7 o'clock service will be livestreamed. If you cannot attend in-person worship, but would like to have ashes, you need only stop by the church 9 am–11 am or 2 pm–4 pm. If you wish to have ashes and cannot make it to church, call Fr. George to schedule a very short visit for the imposition of ashes.

Emergency Closing Info

In the event of an emergency, most often weather-related, parish closing information will be available on WTIC-AM 1080 radio and on WFSB-3 and WVIT-30 television stations. Whenever possible, a notice (e-flash) will be sent and the website updated as well.

Lenten series on Wednesdays of Lent Matthew's Gospel: Healing, parables, and storytelling

Matthew's Gospel has a deep desire to show us that Jesus healed through exorcising demons, touching and blessing the sick and needy. Jesus' teaching through parable is a form of healing, too. Jesus ministers to us and grows us as His disciples by deepening our understanding of who He is and how He saves us. Beginning on Wednesday, February 25th, and going through the four succeeding Wednesdays (March 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th), all are invited to explore a portion of Jesus' witness in the Gospel of Matthew. With our intern, Lee Febos, Fr. George will lead any curious about Christ's power to heal and teach, beginning with an overview of Chapter 8 in the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus heals, teaches, and exorcizes demons. We will begin each night with soup and salad at 5:30 pm, and then continue until around 7 pm for conversation, questions, and perhaps a new perspective on Matthew.



Stations of the Cross.

Join us on Fridays of Lent, beginning on Friday, February 20th, at 5:30 pm, for an exploration of the ancient form of prayer and worship known as The Stations of the Cross. The Stations were said in the medieval world when a pilgrim could not journey to Jerusalem to walk the way of Jesus, the Stations of the Cross. We will gather each Friday in Lent to pray a beautiful set of prayers combining "The Stations of the Cross" found in the St. Augustine Prayer Book and a beautiful poem written for our Stations by Dianne Antos. We use, as our focus of prayer, 14+ beautiful stations done in various art mediums by members of our own parish. If you have never experienced this time of beauty, repentance, prayer, and grace – or if you have come each of the last two years we have held this time as sacred – join us and be blessed.

Summary Minutes of Vestry Meeting of December 18, 2025

Present: Fr. George Roberts, Kathy Bullard, Linda Mason, Skip Mason, Doug McDowell, EJ Ososki, Ed Preneta, Molly Sherman, Bonnie Sudell and Bob Sudell.

Meeting called to Order: 7:00 pm.

Minutes of 11/20/2025 Meeting

Ed made a motion to accept the minutes. Bob seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Ministry Reports

Finance/Treasurer's Report - November 2025

Summary of EJ's Report

- Income is higher than planned by about \$32,000. Specifically pledge income is \$20,000 ahead and investment income is \$6,000 higher
- Expenses are \$30,000 lower than expected due to a variety of items but mostly (\$20,000) due to the Diocesan contribution error reported earlier

Bob made a motion to accept the report and Ed seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Capital Committee – Bob and Fr. George

- Bob presented a spreadsheet of expenses to date.
- The door openers are working properly now, although closing too rapidly. Bob will contact the vendor for a solution.
- Cones will be placed by the patio door to discourage its use during the winter months.
- Bob is in the process of obtaining quotes to remove the damaged insulation and the bat guano and feces in the attic.
- Bob made a motion to accept the proposal obtained by Stephen Hard from Richter & Cegan, Inc., Landscape Architects for \$11,900 to prepare a master plan for the exterior of the property in advance of a capital campaign. Ed seconded it. After discussion, the motion passed unanimously.'
- Bob made a motion to accept the proposal obtained by David Hrdlicka from Ray Lighting & Design Studios, LLC for \$5,900 to evaluate the existing sanctuary lighting and design a lighting solution. Ed

seconded it. After discussion of the actual lighting issues, the motion passed unanimously.

Outreach – Kathy Bullard

Kathy summarized the results of the December 14th meeting. The following Outreach efforts will continue:

- Farmington Food Pantry collection bin will remain in the narthex all year with increased promotion and focus in January and June
- Gifts of Love peanut butter and jelly collection will continue
- Foodshare Walk Against Hunger will take place in April or May
- Church by the Pond will continue twice a year
- Thanksgiving Food Baskets will continue
- Angel Giving Tree will continue
- Meals for Neighbors-Bristol will continue with meatloaf collection and volunteer help every other month

The \$8,755.21 in Outreach funds available for disbursement will be allocated as follows:

- Farmington Food Pantry \$1,100
- Gifts of Love \$1,100
- Malta House of Care \$1,100
- Community Services of Farmington (fuel bank and relief) \$1,100
- H.O.P.E. Partners of Farmington \$1,100
- Episcopal Relief and Development \$1,100
- Meals for Neighbors-Bristol \$1,100
- American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem \$1,055.21

Historically, 2% of pledges are allocated to Outreach. This year's dollar amount was approximately \$7,000. Vestry decided several years ago that they would decide where Craft Fair proceeds would be allocated. This year's promotional materials stated that proceeds would benefit Outreach.

In keeping with the flyers, Bonnie made a motion to allocate the 2025 Craft Fair proceeds to Outreach. Bob seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. It was noted that the 2026 Craft Fair flyers should be reviewed prior to publication

and that the Vestry should discuss, in the future, what encompasses Outreach.

Old Business

Stewardship Update – Fr. George

Approximately \$338,000 of our \$358,000 goal has been pledged.

Capital Campaign conversation – Fr George

Vestry will meet with Jerry Hess Saturday morning, January 3rd to discuss the merits of a capital campaign, how much we think we can reasonably raise, how our expenditures affect our bottom line and which of the three consultants we have proposals from is the better fit for us.

Supporting Our Kids – hiring a new staff member – Fr. George

Fr. George presented a tentative job description for a "Coordinator for Religious Education and Evangelism" and asked Vestry members to read and make suggestions. He envisions hiring a part time person for a commitment of two to three years to help us invest in the future of our congregation. If we want to proceed, we also need to determine where we would get the approximately \$20,000 per year – perhaps the Smith Fund.

New Business

2026 Budget Review – First Pass

There was robust discussion. To be finalized in January 2026

"Food Pantry" at St James building here in Farmington

For St James members with food insecurities.

Vestry Retreat

Retreat will be February 20th–21st, with dinner out or potluck Friday night and teambuilding on Saturday

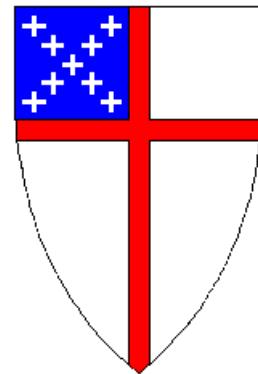
Skip motioned to adjourn. Linda seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie F. Sudell, Clerk

St. James Parish

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Farmington, Connecticut 06032

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Email: st.james.church@sbcglobal.net
Website: www.stjamesfarmington.org



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

The Rev. George C. Roberts	Rector
Lee Febos	Clergy Intern
Blake Hansen	Director of Music
Susan Deming	Parish Administrator
Cheryl Rusczyk	Admin., St. Mark's Ministries
Ray Smith	Sexton
Kim McLaurin	Nursery Supervisor

OFFICERS

Kathy Bullard & David Tompkins**, Wardens
EJ Ososki**, Treasurer
Jerry Hess**, Asst. Treasurer
Bonnie Sudell**, Parish Clerk

VESTRY

2027

Kathy Bullard
Doug McDowell
Molly Sherman

2028

Linda Mason
Ed Preneta
David Tompkins

2029

David Hrdlicka**
Carol Kirkwood**
Michael Slusarz**

** to be voted on / determined on 1/25/2026 (snow date of 2/1/2026)

St. James Parish

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

