



ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH

FOLLOWING JESUS, WE LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.

Annual Report 2020

JANUARY 31, 2021

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM LEI MELLON

When I agreed to serve as president of Council this past year I never could have imagined what 2020 had in store. Could any of us have foreseen a year where church services would, out of necessity, be moved to virtual? Certainly not me as I naively thought about my original dreams and plans for St. James in early 2020. Looking back, I know that living and working through a pandemic has forever changed me spiritually, personally and professionally. From the first phone call with Pastor Chris after the Governor’s shut down in March, I quickly realized we were in unknown waters, but knew that God would help to guide us.

After such an extraordinary year, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the staff of St. James, Council and congregants in helping to shepherd St. James through these trying times. Many of you answered my emails, texts and phone calls and provided wise counsel as unprecedented decisions needed to be made. Be assured that every decision regarding church activities has prioritized the health and safety of the congregation.

You have all been a blessing. Although 2020 brought many losses to each and every one of us, I remain convinced that 2020 also brought us unique opportunities to more fully share the love of Christ in all of our interactions. As we begin 2021, my hope is for St. James to emerge from the pandemic with an ever deepening commitment to be the light that illuminates God’s love for this imperfect world.

Be well,
Lei Mellon
St James Church Council President

Church Council

Lei Mellon, Council President
Sue Trimble, Vice President
Sheri Barberini, Treasurer
Gina Walters, Secretary
Tim Byerly
Doug Cook
John Hampton
Ruth Hanson
Billie Hoch
Rick Phillips
Dennis Miller
John Yackanicz

St James Church Leadership

The Rev. Christopher McKinstry, Pastor
Bobbie Hoffman, Director Discipling
Janet Hilsmier, Director Family Ministry
Eve Keane, Director Music
Sharalee Thumm, Sexton

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ONCE UPON A 2020

My what a year it has been. To say that 2020 didn't go as planned is a bit of an understatement. We wanted to experiment with new ministries, find new ways of helping you connect with God and each other, and address financial challenges to achieve a more balanced budget.

The year 2020 had barely begun before we were faced with the greatest and most unexpected challenge: the COVID-19 pandemic. Life as we all knew it took a sharp turn. As of the middle of March, merely the week after a wonderful Box City youth event, we were forced to suspend all in-person activities including weekly worship.

We lost opportunities to host programs and lessons that have been an essential part of the St James Experience for years. His Kids Christian Preschool closed until September. Our Kids Connect and Vacation Bible School programs were cancelled. Family events like the Easter Egg Hunt, Trunk or Treat and Advent Craft

Expo were all skipped. Youth and adult mission trips were cancelled. We abandoned fundraising events like the Apple Festival and outreach events like Operation Easter Breakfast and Operation Smart Start. Special worship events like Lenten Dinner Church were cancelled. Our Music Ministry stopped hosting Choir, Praise Band and Bell Choir rehearsals.

DURING A TIME THAT WAS FILLED WITH WORRIES OF LOSS AND DISCONNECTION WE, THE ST JAMES COMMUNITY OVERCAME MANY OBSTACLES.

We addressed financial challenges and created a more balanced budget. We found ways to worship and to stay connected. We continued to support Outreach Ministries and bless others less fortunate than ourselves and we created new ministry teams that help you stay connected with God.



There were plenty of jokes about 2020 being a "dumpster fire" year. Ironically, we experienced a true dumpster fire in November, 2020.

WORSHIP: DOING OLD THINGS IN NEW WAYS

THE STATEWIDE SHUT-DOWN OF SCHOOL AND WORSHIP IN MARCH OF 2020

BROUGHT ALL PROGRAMMING TO A HALT.

Every way we engaged with our members at St James had to change, most importantly: the Worship experience. You could not come into the church building, so we needed to find ways to help you support your faith journey -fast!

We had been posting audio sermons on the website for years. To serve you better, we expanded to recording videos of all elements of worship and posting them on our church website, YouTube and Facebook. Eve Keane, John Green and several musicians and singers worked together to record traditional and contemporary songs; volunteers read scripture; Bobbie Hoffman prayed - all in a carefully socially-distanced environment. Pastor Chris and Janet Hilsmier each wrote, recorded and edited their own sermons and liturgy. Communion was celebrated at the altar and encouraged to be celebrated at home. And, two of our students shared their First Holy Communion with us while they communed with family at home! We praised God and prayed together!

More than anything, we heard your worries and concerns, celebrated your blessings and prayed some more with you via virtual Fellowship and small groups. The unseen blessing: this was a great and uninvited opportunity to learn new skills, strengthen others and be creative in supporting you and those you love. You

blessed us by sharing your concerns and leaning toward Jesus Christ our Savior.

Creating pre-recorded worship pieces and assembling them into a service was a good step to cover an immediate need to help you worship at home. However, we wanted to ensure that we could also provide both in-PERSON worship and continue to post online as our ability to leave our homes was restored. We missed the interactive, high-touch experience of Worship with you. With help from John Green and John Hampton, the church was outfitted with new technologies for running a livestream worship service. By September we welcomed you back to in-person worship (with limited, spaced seating) and we livestreamed over the internet to you who stayed home.

As the holidays approached, preserving community health resumed priority and we halted in-person worship, but live-streamed services continued. You've told us that worshipping at home on your own schedule allows you to carve out the perfect time for your spiritual journey. We are committed to continuing livestream/recorded worship experiences for our home audiences even after we welcome you back into our Sanctuary.

This is our way of being able to meet you where you are in your faith journey - at home, at work, socially-distanced and always available.

(Continued on page 5)



Pastor's Sermon Setup Spring 2020



Janet's Children's Messages at home



New livestreaming setup Fall '20



NEW TECHNOLOGIES

IN THE MIDST OF VIDEO RECORDINGS AND WORSHIP PREPARATION, WE IMPLEMENTED ADDITIONAL TECHNOLOGIES TO BENEFIT AND SUPPORT YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

Online Giving through Tithe.ly

We've made giving easier than before and accessible to more members in more ways. We've switched our giving service provider to provide more flexibility and choices in how you give. You can give through our website, on the Tithe.ly app, or through our new church app.

New Smartphone Church App

Did you hear we have an app? St. James Lutheran now offers a church app for mobile phones. The app allows you to access worship videos, tap into spiritual enrichment

for all ages, discover outreach opportunities and give generously in one place! This app is available for download on iOS and Android smartphones from our website. (See the image below for more!)

Future Connections

We're listening to you and we love your ideas! Behind the curtain, we're building new systems to engage with you which include upgrading church management systems, and reworking our communication methods through web, email, texts and more.



The new St James Church App!

Worship Videos
Church Calendar
Online Giving
News Feed
Kids Connect News
Prayer Wall

Also:
Service Opportunities • Daily Devotions
His Kids Christian Preschool • The Bible

<https://tithe.ly.app.link/st-james-lutheran-limerick>



OUTREACH: CARING FOR THE (VIRTUAL) CONGREGATION

THE STATEWIDE SHUT-DOWN SWIFTLY ISOLATED INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITIES, STATE AND COUNTRY.

To address this isolation, we created a new team of **Care Callers**. They are commissioned with the task of calling and emailing our congregation to check in, to update, to listen and to pray for you, our church family.

Social Distancing

Gathering together is one of the greatest blessings of small group involvement in a church community. Being quarantined hindered our ability to be together. To that end, we use Zoom conference calling to meet for fellowship, small groups, Church Council meetings and ministry planning.

In addition, our **Bible Study** groups meet via Zoom and provide opportunities for seeing God at work in scripture and in our daily lives. Our Bible Study participants tell us that reading the Bible and talking about faith and Jesus Christ is even more relevant now!

"Since the pandemic, I feel like this is not only a Bible study, but it is also worshiping God and having fellowship with friends. I'm so glad that this is available." – Barbara Byrum

Spiritual Enrichment

While member-written devotions are not new to St James, a new opportunity emerged this year. Our devotion writers felt inspired to offer you, our readers, a way to spend a few moments focused on God's grace, presence and love during very difficult times. Promoted as an opt-in email subscription, we began sending daily **God's Encouraging Word Devotions** on April 6, 2020.

The writing team consisted of Bobbie Hoffman, Rick Phillips, Lew Motter, Alan and Kathy Pitt, Mo Haner, and Janet Hilsmier. Over the past year, we've welcomed Jenn Rapp and Patti Tichonoff to the team. We're receiving many emails expressing appreciation for the ways they have been a blessing.

"The first thing I do in the morning is read the devotional to set my focus on God, for His strength." – Billie Hoch

The team is planning to write devotions with a Lenten focus from Ash Wednesday through Easter. These devotions are available as both a daily email subscription and on the new church app!



When I started writing devotions, I had a singular goal in mind: to bring an encouraging word to God's people. Throughout this last year, I discovered these devotions have deepened my faith walk. I love writing about the simple, yet very deep things of God. Writing has been a blessing in my life that I never expected. Sometimes He shows up in most unusual ways doesn't He? – Mo Haner



Safe Gatherings

With the holidays approaching and another state-promoted pause in activities, high school seniors Carly Hampton, Isabella Yackanicz, Becky Valente and Noah Kurian stepped forward with an idea to host **A Drive-thru Christmas**. They, like many of us, craved our familiar ways of gathering and celebrating together. Enlisting staff support and reaching out to their peers, they planned a way to host an event that would remain mindful of the safety protocols of social distancing, wearing face masks, and limited exposure. Promoted as a drive-thru visiting event, they handed out cookies, hot cocoa, craft kits for kids and candles to be used on Christmas Eve to 50 carloads of visitors. It was a wonderful opportunity to say hello and share a little Christmas cheer and it demonstrated yet another creative way to stay connected and share God’s love.

Watching the Youth planning team get so excited as they were planning was magical! There was so much positive energy in this Christmas event.

They said they feel like they are coming home when they come to church – especially in the Youth Room. They wanted everyone to feel that feeling: “at home at church” especially at Christmas. – Laurie Green

Support from a Distance

While our hardworking **Women of St James** were unable to meet in person, they too found ways to promote and sustain many ongoing ministries like **Operation Shining Star** and **Youth Confirmation** through the Boscov’s Friends Helping Friends non-profit campaign and Reppert’s candy sales. Like so many of us, they look forward to hosting and participating in many St James events in person in the future.

OUTREACH: CARING FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

QUARANTINE ASIDE, WE NEEDED TO FIND ALTERNATE WAYS TO SUPPORT MEANINGFUL CAUSES.

Outreach is the activity of providing services to any population that might not otherwise have access to those services.

Homelessness is a persistent problem in our area and this plight has been a focus for our teens for over a decade. The **Annual Box City Youth Event**, held in March, hosted youth and adult mentors from 6 churches from the SEPA Synod. This community event, which has been organized by St James Youth for the past 11 years raises awareness to youth and community about the challenges our displaced brothers and sisters experience. We hosted 72 teens and adult mentors who participated in workshops, games, worship and simulated the homeless experience by sleeping outdoors in cardboard boxes. They raised \$3550 for **Ministries at Main Street Homeless Shelter** in Pottstown, PA.

Food poverty is also a prevalent problem in our area. Food poverty is commonly defined as 'the inability to acquire or consume an adequate or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so'.

The **God's Kitchen Monday Soup Kitchen** is a weekly soup kitchen serving the Pottstown community. Through the encouragement of Sue Trimble and Lei Mellon, several families and our Youth Group have prepared and served meals and donated clothing to the program. In 2020, we collected supplies for hygiene kits for the people served by the soup kitchen. Kits were assembled as service projects on the MLK Jr Day of Service and at a Youth Group meeting in the Fall. This multi-generational program inspires us to continually share God's love to those in need.

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Box City, March 7, 2020



Group Art Project



7 Churches set up camp in our lot.

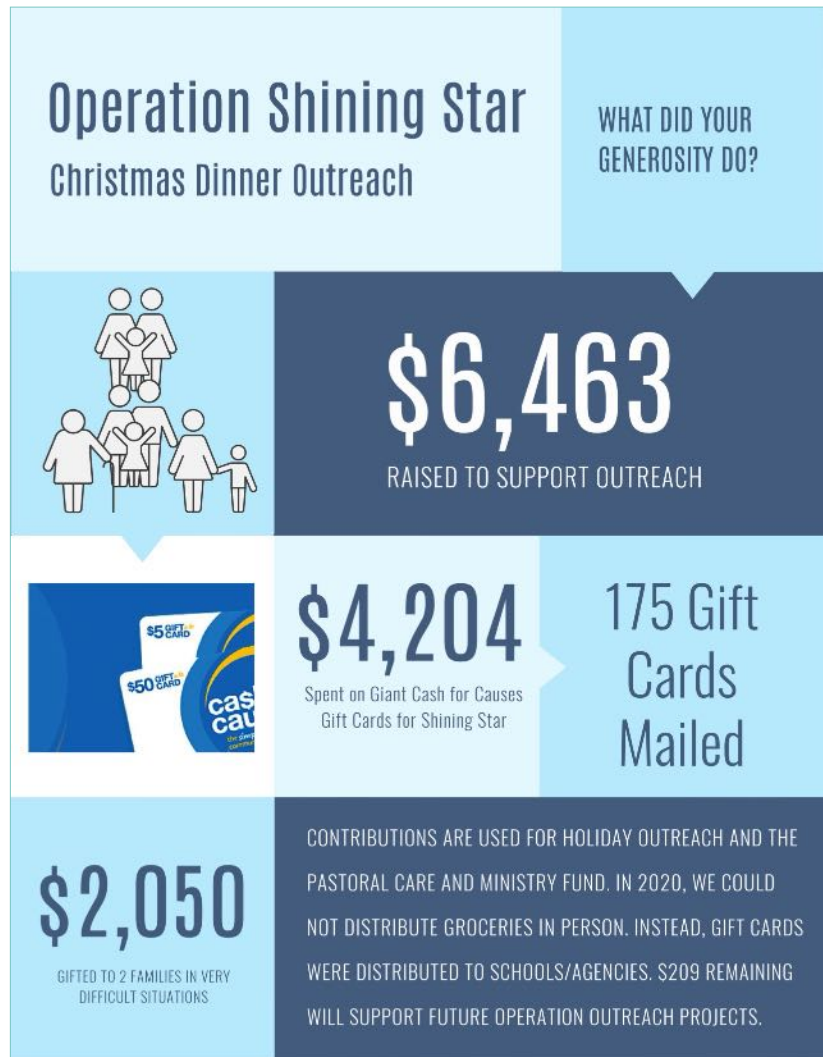
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Our church families have been contributing to the **Project Outreach Food Bank** in Royersford for years. Nonperishable foods are collected year-round to support the local food bank and delivered by volunteers including Anita Petrich and her daughter Jen Valente. Since in-person worship services were suspended, the food pantry bins are relocated to the exterior of the building and so the ministry of supporting the food-impooverished continues.

*"Every single item of food that is donated is vitally important to people every week in helping to meet their families' food needs."
- Anita Petrich, Project Outreach Coordinator*

Operation Shining Star is a St James ministry which distributes Christmas dinners to families in need, but it had to be creatively restructured to respect the health of volunteers and recipients. The affects of the shutdown impacted jobs and, as a result, household incomes. And while our giving may have not surpassed prior years, we were still able to support many other affected families in the surrounding communities! With funds raised, we fed 175 families and provided financial gifts to two families in dire need.

*One local school counselor wrote:
"Our families in need are so thankful for the generosity of your church! When they heard they were receiving a Giant Food gift card [for Christmas dinner], there were many tears of gratitude."*



PRESCHOOL: A NEW “ESSENTIAL SERVICE”



THE WORLD SHUT DOWN, BUT CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN. PARENTS NEED TO WORK. PRESCHOOLS AND DAYCARES BECAME ESSENTIAL SERVICES.

The year was more challenging than anyone anticipated, and the His Kids Christian Preschool continued to bless the students and families of our community with their ministry.

In February 2020, our Preschool Director Diane Romanello made the difficult choice to leave His Kids for another job. Niki Lewis, the Assistant Director at the time, was able to step in as Interim Director, effective March 1. As a long-time teacher with His Kids, Mrs. Lewis was well-equipped to handle the biggest challenge ahead. Just 9 days after her role as Interim began, she had to close the school.

His Kids 2020 At A Glance	
Teaching Staff	9
Summer Camp '20	16
Current Enrollment	56

In light of the quarantine, the teachers quickly moved to remote, electronic teaching. Mrs. Lewis hosted daily circle time for the entire school. Preschool teachers personally delivered work packets to their students. The more advanced Pre- and Transitional Kindergarten students began virtual learning with their teachers via Zoom.

By June, the Board approved her promotion to Preschool Director and she has graciously and enthusiastically fulfilled that role since.

Virtual learning is difficult for children at every developmental step, and providing virtual preschool was not good enough. In September, the Preschool reopened to in-person learning for students with a plan in place for the health and safety for everyone involved.

Mrs. Lewis and the His Kids staff have been tireless in their efforts to keep the Preschool a safe, clean, and sanitized space for students. Families and staff have been up front and honest about travel and visits and have quarantined when necessary. As a result, no COVID-19 cases have been spread in His Kids. Regardless of all the extra work of cleaning and the restrictions of wearing masks and social distancing, the His Kids staff has found creative solutions to teaching very tactile age groups, and continues to give them the best education possible.



In a stressful year, it's been SO nice for [our son] to go to preschool in person and have that normal experience of childhood! Thank you for making all of this possible!!"
– Danielle Ko, parent



Find more information, go to hiskidspreschoollimerick.org or on the new St James church app



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COVID-19 has prevented His Kids from directly engaging with families in the community, but Mrs. Lewis, the Board, and His Kids staff have found creative ways to utilize social media to advertise and keep families connected. They even recorded the annual Christmas Program and shared a private YouTube link to allow families to see the performances that the students and staff worked so hard to create.

Although His Kids students have had to restrict their education and socialization to the building this year, students are taught to see themselves as members of God’s family in the world. Spiritual development along with intellectual, physical, and social/emotional development provides a safe and loving environment for the continual growth of our students. The continued partnership between St. James and His Kids will carry on this wonderful faith-based, unique and well-rounded educational program to our community for years to come.



THE HIS KIDS CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL IS A MINISTRY OF ST JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH.

Our compassionate and dedicated team of teachers and aides helps provide a high quality outreach ministry to preschool students, their families, and the community at large on behalf of the St. James congregation.

Preschool Board of Directors

Kate McKinstry, President
Janet Hilsmier, Vice President
Jeff Williams, Treasurer
Alyssa VanAlstine, Secretary
Bobbie Hoffman
Lynne Frantz
Sue Trimble
Jaime Troutman

Preschool Staff

His Kids is also very blessed to have a wonderful team of creative teachers and assistants:

Teachers

Jenn Brown
Nora Capron
Mo Haner
Carisa Wowak
Marianne Williams

Aides

Christine Lark
Terri McGrath
Lisa Stauffer
Jen Valente

THE CHURCH IS NOT A BUILDING

ONE OF THE GREATEST LESSONS THAT THIS PANDEMIC HAS TAUGHT US IS THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY DURING CHALLENGING TIMES.

Did we experience a little discomfort in the early weeks? Of course. The mere idea of working and gathering remotely, through digital technologies was strange and new. We were concerned about beginning the year knowing that our future expenses could exceed projected giving. We promised to find ways to balance the budget. The COVID-19 pandemic and statewide shutdown provided an opportunity for us to reassess how we meet the needs of our members.

We recognized that staff salaries represent a large part of our expenses. The good news: we were able to take advantage of the federal Paycheck Protection Program. Receiving funds from the federal government allowed us to pay salaries for both the church and His Kids staff for almost three months. The PPP loan bought us time to make decisions.

The bad news: the only way to make a long-term impact to our finances was to reduce staff. Identifying how to do that was difficult on a personal level, but the pandemic and quarantine provided us with insight to which ministries and job functions would be idle. Our office administrator Christine Wunder was blessed to find a new position outside of St James which benefited her and her family and we chose not to fill this position. However, we made the difficult choice to eliminate the position held by Andrew Kuhn, Youth Ministry Coordinator. We appreciate Andrew's service and the youth will miss him as their mentor.

More good news: Thanks to your continued spiritual and financial support, we ended 2020 well positioned for 2021.

We are grateful for the connections we've made this year, we are also mindful of the dis-connections that still exist. We still have a lot of work to do. We look forward returning to in-person worship and celebrating sacraments together – and we'll keep you informed as things change. We're eager to resume the old and create more faith-boosting social events. With these changes, we need your support and active participation.

FOLLOWING JESUS, WE LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.

Our mission offers us a roadmap for who we are as Christians and how we ought to live. Quarantines and state-mandated policies do not change that mission. We continue to discover new ways to offer a message of God's love, words of hope and provide redirection towards your spiritual wellness. The Church is not a building. You are the Church. The Church is never closed.



FINANCIAL REVIEW OF 2020 BUDGETED & ACTUAL EXPENSES

We planned to spend

We paid these

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>2020 Budget</u>	<u>2020 Actual</u>
Administrative	\$ 32,279.00	\$ 34,697.00
Buildings/Property	\$ 53,578.00	\$ 36,354.00
Christian Education	\$ 4,690.00	\$ 3,326.00
Youth Ministry	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 773.00
Evangelism/Service	\$ -	\$ 23.00
Congregational Care	\$ 450.00	\$ 194.00
Worship	\$ 1,650.00	\$ 6,164.00
Music	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 992.00
Salaries	\$ 230,119.25	\$ 206,568.00
Other Staffing	\$ 60,952.00	\$ 58,784.00
Benevolence (5% of Projected Income)	\$ 21,067.00	\$ 18,523.00
Total Expenses	\$ 409,085.25	\$ 366,398.00

We spent less

<u>Income</u>	<u>2020 Projected</u>	<u>2020 Actual</u>
Giving	\$ 398,537.00	\$ 366,970.00
PPP		\$ 66,160.00
Total Giving	\$ 398,537.00	\$ 433,130.00

We received this

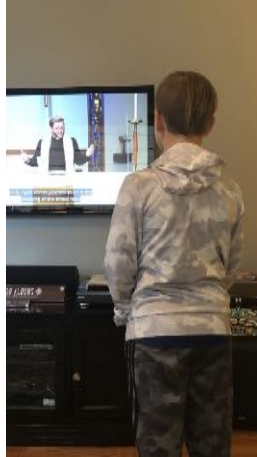
Income - Expense: Overage or (Shortage)	\$ (10,548.25)	\$ 66,732.00
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PPP gave us time.

How'd we do in 2020? Pretty good! We're in a good place for 2021. For a more detailed view of our finances and proposed budget, look for the link on the St James website or contact the office.

A YEAR OF FAITH AND CREATIVITY

Worship can happen anywhere! Thank you all for sharing yourselves with us this year.



THANKS

WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO MADE WORSHIP AND ALL OF THE MINISTRIES OF ST JAMES POSSIBLE IN 2020.

Music Ministry

Loren & Cheryl Collins
John Green
Bob & Billie Hoch
Jen Kurian
Katie McKinstry
Lora Sanderson
Bevin Seislove
Howard & Pat Stroop

Worship Support

John Green
John & Carly Hampton
Kevin & Tori Hilsmier
John & Nadia Yackanicz
All of our lay readers

Youth Ministry Adult Mentors

Will Bakay
Laurie Green
Pat Werkheiser

Kids Connect

Leaders & Mentors

Brigitte Diaz
Michele DiPasquale
Kim Heffner
Jean Hess
Jenna Hilsmier
Terri McGrath
Tammi Nagy
Barb Shoffner
Bevin Seislove
Christen Thompson

His Kids Christian Preschool

Niki Lewis
Teachers and Aides
Parents of preschoolers

Custodial Support

Lisa Stauffer
Sharalee Thumm

Outreach Ministries

Doug Cook
Tami Fry
Anita Petrich
Sue Swoyer
Sue Trimble
Jen Valente
Helene Zimmerman

Devotional Team

Mo Haner
Lew Motter
Rick Phillips
Kathy and Alan Pitt
Jenn Rapp
Patty Tichonoff

Property Care

Deb & Everett Arndt
Connie & Ron Goffice

Women of St James

Jean Hess
Barb Shoffner

Steve Sanderson, Finance
Sec'y


Church Council

President Lei Mellon
Executive Committee
Sue Trimble
Sheri Barberini
Gina Walters

Tim Byerly
Doug Cook
John Hampton
Ruth Hanson
Billie Hoch
Rick Phillips
Dennis Miller
John Yackanicz


WORSHIP SERVICES FOR YOUR SCHEDULE

**LIVESTREAMED
SUNDAY
10:00 AM**




YOUTUBE
Watch it on the app or
the web!

STJAMES
stjameslimerick.org or
our new church app!

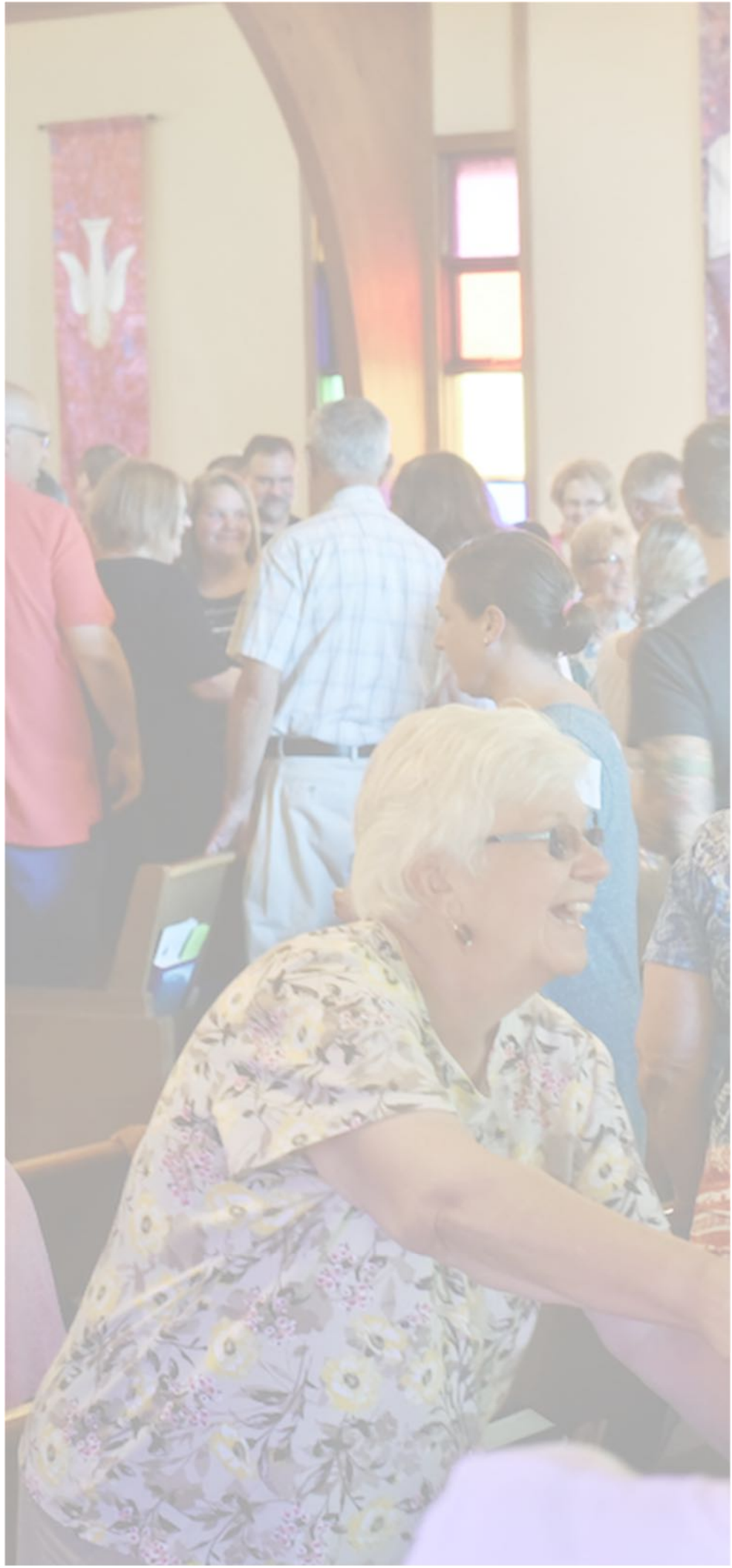


**ANY TIME -
ANYWHERE**

**FRIDAY
SATURDAY**



EMAIL
Links to our upcoming
service delivered weekly.



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 St James Limerick

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