



ST. JAMES  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# THE MESSENGER

2021 VOLUME 1



205 N. FOURTH STREET • BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70801  
225-387-5141 • CHURCH@STJAMESBR.ORG • STJAMESBR.ORG





# CLERGY

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**The Rev. Chris Duncan**  
Rector

**The Rev. Drew Harmon**  
Senior Associate Rector

**The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Witcher**  
Bishop-in-Residence

**The Rev. Pat R. Lyle**  
Deacon

**Dwight Nichols**  
Sexton

**Bara Bird**  
Sexton

# VESTRY

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## **Third Year Term**

Amy Kurtz  
Bahin Leonard  
Amy Rabalais  
Trey Roberts  
John Sykes  
Stewart Tharp

## **Second Year Term**

Bob Bowsher  
Ashley Frey  
Robert Heroman  
Bettsie Miller  
Chrissie Olsson  
Martha Richard

## **First Year Term**

Anita Byrne  
Michael Fontenot  
Lolly Martin  
"B" Phillips  
Robyn Richards  
John Soule

# STAFF

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**Cheryl Olinde**  
Director of Finance

**Mary Hunt Boutwell**  
Parish Life Coordinator

**Jacques Pourciau**  
Business Manager

**Haley Schroeck**  
Family Ministry Coordinator

**Shannon Gallier**  
Director of Music

**Sylvia Rabalais**  
Membership Coordinator

**Monica Dugas**  
Office Administrator

**Chelsea Borruano**  
Director of Communications

**Bridget Henderson**  
Head of School

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

3

**A NEW NORMAL  
IN CHRIST**  
The Rev. Chris Duncan

5

**HISTORIC CHURCH  
RESTORATION  
PHOTO TOUR**

7

**FIGHTING FOOD  
INSECURITY  
DURING COVID TIDE**  
The Rev. Drew Harmon

10

**WHERE TWO OR  
MORE GATHER**  
Mary Hunt Boutwell

11

**WORTH THE WAIT:  
ORGAN UPDATE**  
Shannon Gallier

13

**A HOLLY JOLLY  
VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS**  
Haley Schroeck

15

**A WORD FROM  
THE VESTRY**  
Denise Allen



# A NEW NORMAL IN CHRIST

**THE REV. CHRIS DUNCAN**  
ST. JAMES RECTOR

**Never have I counted down the minutes** to a new year like I did December 31, 2020. Before the new year began, I put a lot of hope into the possibilities of 2021, yet at the same time I realized that not much would change when the clock struck midnight. So, I found myself drawn to the comfort of the same old resolutions as from years past - lose weight, read more, spend more time outdoors. Yet, something deep inside my soul is pushing me to do and be more. The Holy Spirit is calling us to reorient ourselves to Christ, to reach out to one another in love and peace, and to act in the holy work of bringing God's kingdom to earth. Perhaps 2021 is a year in which we imagine God's possibilities for our lives, the Church, this city, our nation, and the world while taking steps to live into more fully being the body of Christ. 2020 was a challenging year, yet in the midst of it we found moments of grace for self-reflection, both personally and societally. Many people, myself included, talked of "returning to normal" while also asking "what is normal?" In this time of reflection, we wonder "was that old normal the best we could be?" "Do we want to go back?" The year 2020 was a time to take stock of what is most important and holy in our lives.

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WONDER **"WAS THAT  
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WANT TO GO BACK?"**



Sometimes we were overjoyed by what we discovered. Other times, we wept upon seeing the shortcomings. We found that there is room to do and be better. We found there is a spirit that brings people together in new and creative ways to support one another and those in need. We found God working in the midst of the hardship, calling us to his peace. All of this is what has led me to dream of the possibilities that await in 2021 and beyond. However, that hope cannot be placed in a calendar year, a vaccine, or in anything of human origin. Rather, that hope is rooted in God's possibilities made feasible by the love and grace of Jesus Christ. The temptation is to go back to the same old "normal" that we knew, but we are called to something more. This time is a liminal moment that is leading us as individuals, as a church, and as a society to be and do more. Often God uses seasons of disorientation to lead into glorious new seasons that give us an even clearer picture of the kingdom of God as we do our part to make that realized more fully in the here and now.

What do you imagine life will look like after the vaccine? What can you do to help further realize the kingdom of God in this new season that is to come? How can we go back to the old definition of "normal" when there is something so much better ahead? In the coming weeks, I invite you to sit and contemplate these questions as we discern together how best to realize God's possibilities for our future as individuals and as members of the body of Christ, the Church.



**WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP  
FURTHER REALIZE THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD IN THIS  
NEW SEASON THAT IS TO  
COME? HOW CAN WE GO  
BACK TO THE OLD  
DEFINITION OF "NORMAL"  
WHEN THERE IS SOMETHING  
SO MUCH BETTER AHEAD?**



# HISTORIC CHURCH RESTORATION PHOTO TOUR

St. James hired Tipton and Associates at the start of 2019 in order to create a full set of plans that covered top to bottom and east to west (altar to narthex) restoration and renovation of the church building. The priority throughout the planning process was the preservation and restoration of the historic beauty of the church.

- Repair and painting of plaster throughout the church
- Restoration and repair of original wooden floors with carpet runners up the aisles in the nave
- Update to electrical system
- Upgrade to lighting throughout the church
- Replacement and upgrade of HVAC system
- Purchase of a new organ (coming Spring 2021)
- Improvement of the exterior landscaping and drainage around the church
- Installation of a fire suppression system to protect the building
- Restoration of wooden pews and wainscoting
- Improvement to the sacristy lighting, sink, and countertop
- Repair of needle work and restoration of brass







PHOTOS BY JEANNIE FREY RHODES





# FIGHTING FOOD INSECURITY DURING COVID TIDE

THE REV. DREW HARMON SR. ASSOCIATE RECTOR

With growing health concerns affecting our parish and larger community, St. James has been challenged with how to continue long standing ministry programs and events. No more have we witnessed this than with our outreach ministries that support our downtown neighbors experiencing food insecurity. St. James' food pantry ministry dates to the mid-1980's with the founding of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank (GBRFB) itself. Since 1984, St. James has been active as a collection point and distribution hub for the 70802 zip code. While the avenues of gathering and providing food have changed over the past three decades, St. James' partnership with GBRFB and desire to assist those in need has remained constant. Prior to the pandemic, food pantry distribution occurred bi-monthly on Wednesday mornings with walk-up service. With this arrangement, roughly ten volunteers filled and dispersed (on average) 75 grocery bags of food per month. The last distribution prior to the pandemic was February 19, 2020. While the pandemic forced initial suspension of food pantry activity, it also afforded the opportunity to reimagine what this ministry could become.

After much thought and prayer (and a nine month hiatus), the St. James food pantry reopened on Saturday, November 21, 2020 under the guidance of Doug LeBleu and Allen Paterson.



By utilizing campus parking lots, a drive-in, contactless process took shape. Some two dozen volunteers served 100 households with grocery bags, packed primarily by our fourth and fifth grade Day School students!

A December event yielded similar results, with 21 volunteers of all ages distributing just over 100 grocery bags in a few short hours.

"The time that we spent," parishioner-volunteer Catherine van Hook commented, "though a small sacrifice of time for us, was significant for those we helped." Charlie Frey, who served alongside his children, echoed the sentiment: "Participation in the food distribution ministry gives our family the opportunity to make a tangible, positive difference in the lives of others, reminds us of the many blessings we take for granted, and helps cultivate relationships with our larger, St. James family. All it takes is getting up a little earlier and wasting a little less time than usual on a Saturday."

**"THE TIME THAT WE SPENT,"  
PARISHIONER-VOLUNTEER  
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Moving distribution to Saturdays has freed up youth group members who have also been able to participate. It has been "particularly gratifying," Doug LeBleu reflected, "to observe parents and children of the same families volunteering together." The Spirit has surely been at work in this ministry program, evolving in the face of so many challenges! We look forward to upcoming events in 2021, with distributions occurring on the third Saturday of each month.

St. James' We Care Bag ministry, originally begun by Boots and Warren Green, has been an outreach staple for over 15 years, offering simple snack bags from our ministries center offices to our downtown neighbors in need. But because of the increased risk of virus contact, creative amendments have been made over these past few months. We have developed a partnership with the Christian Outreach Center, delivering roughly 125 filled bags per week to them for safe distribution. COC supports individuals facing homelessness and reentering the workforce.



St. James volunteers of all ages, from both the church and Day School community, are encouraged to pop in throughout the week to stuff the bags with shelf-stable food, while keeping social distance and maintaining health protocols. This is just the opportunity for which some, like Larry Mitchum, have searched during this season. “Having been active in several of the outreach programs at St. James, which have been impacted by COVID-19,” Mitchum notes, “I felt that I was missing something personally by the lack of participation in an existing outreach ministry. The We Care Bags offered that opportunity to become active once again. It is important to me to touch those in a positive way during these chaotic times.” New We Care ministry heads, Allyson and Tommy Cunningham, have been invaluable in stocking supplies and delivering completed bags, as St. James moves into a new chapter with this long standing program.

Amidst these strange times, St. James’ outreach programs continue to thrive. A little creativity and loads of faithful leadership has gone a long way, as we build out from our storied foundations to meet the needs of our neighbors, seeking and serving Christ in all persons.



**“I FELT THAT I WAS MISSING SOMETHING PERSONALLY BY THE LACK OF PARTICIPATION IN AN EXISTING OUTREACH MINISTRY. THE WE CARE BAGS OFFERED THAT OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ACTIVE ONCE AGAIN. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME TO TOUCH THOSE IN A POSITIVE WAY DURING THESE CHAOTIC TIMES.”**

# WHERE TWO OR MORE GATHER

**MARY HUNT BOUTWELL**  
PARISH LIFE COORDINATOR

## Cookies & Fellowship

The St. James Associate Vestry is a group of 24 slated members tasked with the mission of building and strengthening our Christian community through the ministry of hospitality. The AV realizes that the mission of hospitality is much more than planning parties. The real goal is to help our church family build relationships by providing opportunities to interact with each other. How can we do this during a time of required physical distancing? At the October meeting of the Associate Vestry, they decided to host Cookies & Fellowship Time following the 8:00 am and 10:30 am Sunday Services. To meet the necessary Covid protocols, this time of fellowship was held outdoors by the River Jordan. The cookies were individually wrapped and the AV provided individual bottles of water. It was a reminder of our famous “coffee hour” with church members visiting and children running and playing by the River Jordan. Cookies & Fellowship Time will return when the weather permits.



## St. Mary's

The St. Mary's group is an intergenerational group of women mostly in their 20s-50s who meet the second or third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm in member's homes. Guests enjoy a fun social evening with food, drink, and a presentation by a different member each month. St. Mary's went on hiatus in March through May 2020 during the COVID shut down. In June, the group gathered outside at a member's home and determined that outdoors was a fun way to continue meeting during this time of physical distancing. Admittedly, it was a bit hot outside in June! They've met outside each month since September. The group is reading *Churchy: The Real Life Adventures of a Wife, Mom, and Priest* by Sarah Condon. It's an easy, fun, read so anyone can join in at any time...the more the merrier. Contact Caroline Ross, [carolineross@cox.net](mailto:carolineross@cox.net) for more information.

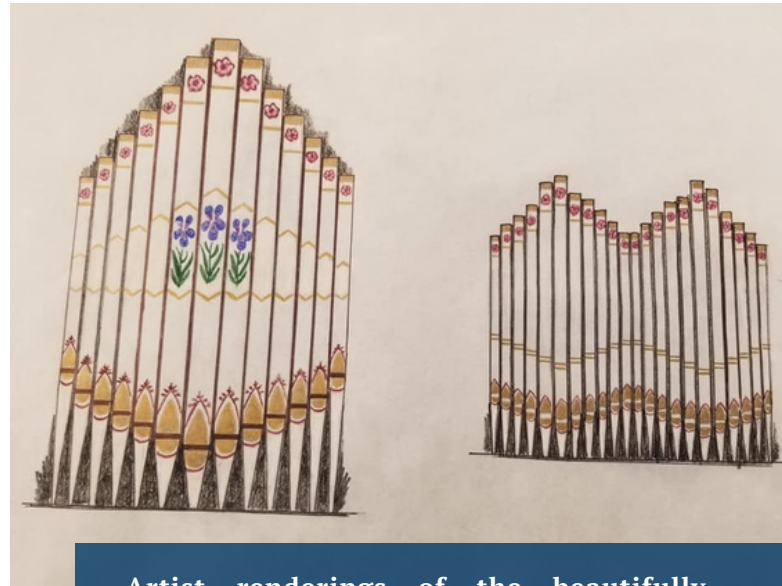


# WORTH THE WAIT ORGAN UPDATE

**SHANNON GALLIER** DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

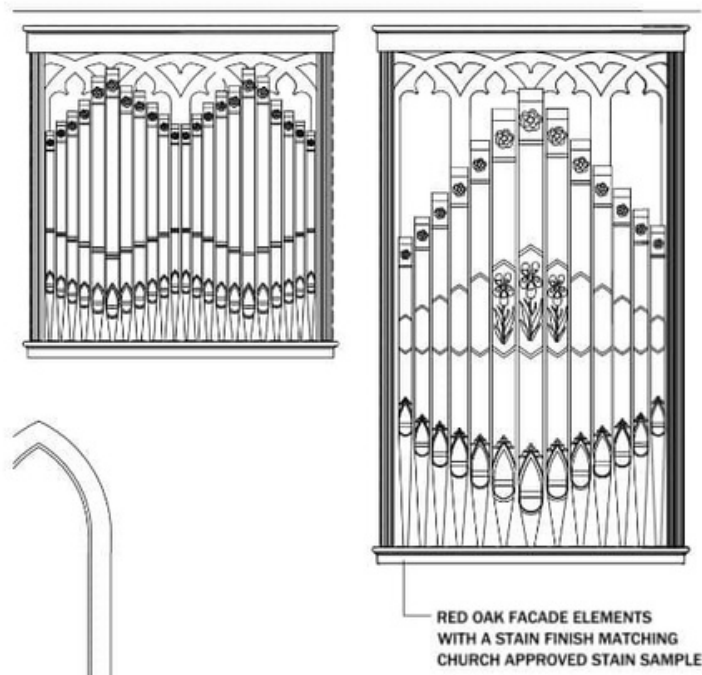
As we have all come to know, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a kink in even the best-laid plans. It is with great joy and expectation that we await the arrival of our new pipe organ, but patience, I'm told, is a virtue.

I am happy to report that construction of the instrument is well underway. Most of the pipework is at Goulding & Wood's shop in Indianapolis, where it is being voiced, meaning tiny adjustments are made to each pipe to ensure it creates a beautiful sound and a magnificent work of musical and technical art. The façade pipes are in the process of being painted by an artist in northern Indiana, who will create a beautiful work of visual art to complement our space. And the instrument is being assembled in the configuration it will be in when installed in our beautifully restored church.



Artist renderings of the beautifully crafted organ.

## FACADE OPENING - SOUTH WALL



RED OAK FACADE ELEMENTS  
WITH A STAIN FINISH MATCHING  
CHURCH APPROVED STAIN SAMPLE

A stenciled façade will be mirrored on each side of the chancel.



Some of the smallest pipes in the organ being voiced to produce a beautiful tone.

This is done to avoid any last-minute problems with installation. At some point in the next couple of months, the organ will be fully playable in the shop, when I hope to visit and hear its voice for the first time.

The folks at Goulding & Wood are just as eager as we are to begin installing the organ, but the pandemic has, unsurprisingly, delayed many of their suppliers. Goulding & Wood is doing everything they can to ensure a quick installation when the time comes, hopefully mid-spring of this year. However, they are dedicated to quality, to not cutting corners, and want to ensure that when the organ finally is installed, that it will be of the highest quality, reliability, and artistic beauty. It will be worth the wait.



The Choir Expression Box which will be filled with hundreds of pipes, flanked by the 16' pedal principal pipes.



The keyboards (or 'manuals') awaiting installation into the new console.



# A HOLLY JOLLY VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS

**HALEY SCHROECK**

FAMILY MINISTRY COORDINATOR

In a year of “unprecedented times” there was one thing that we were absolutely sure of, we had to have a Christmas Pageant. Would it be a traditional pageant? Not even a little bit, but we knew that we wanted to instill a little normalcy into our children’s lives, especially during the holiday season. So, it was decided we would do a virtual Christmas pageant. Great...now what does that mean?

First and foremost, it would mean time. We had 22 children, from three years old to 5th grade, participate in the pageant. Filming them all individually meant that the entire month of November would be devoted to filming, which also meant a corner of the nursery would have to be donned in Christmas apparel before it was even Halloween! We worked with local designer, Storey Wilson, to create a cozy Christmas corner filling our Pageant with an appropriate amount of Christmas cheer.

Every Sunday in November, four hours were set aside to film for the pageant. Even with that time, we still met after school and after the “final” filming date, just to make sure we could fit in any and every student that wanted to participate. Our nursery staff was, once again, instrumental in assisting. From helping students remember lines, to picking out costumes, to remembering to have fun, these ladies consistently made the filming days go more smoothly.



We knew we wanted to add music to our pageant. That was something Shannon Gallier and I had decided on December 26, 2019. We felt the joy of music lacking in previous performances, and knew that our exceptional Treble Choir was the perfect group to solve this problem. Shannon perfectly selected the music, and where it would be dispersed within the script. The choir of 10 students filmed on two separate nights and added the perfect amount of joyful noise to our pageant.

With roughly 165 clips to try to piece together, Lluvia Peveto had a monstrous journey ahead of her. This project was much larger than either of us had ever embarked on. I was confident in her ability to tackle the giant, and with only three weeks of editing time and a new full-time job, she succeeded and far exceeded expectations.

While this was definitely a different take on a pageant, we received exceptionally positive feedback. We had rave reviews from 5th grade families who were worried their children were going to miss their final year in the pageant; to parishioners who had been coming to St. James for Christmas Eve for years but were never able to attend the Pageant service; and families who have members out of state who were finally able to watch their loved ones perform. No, our Christmas Pageant was anything but traditional, then again, this year was anything but traditional. So, unprecedented times called for an unprecedented pageant to bring unprecedented joy to St. James families this holiday season.





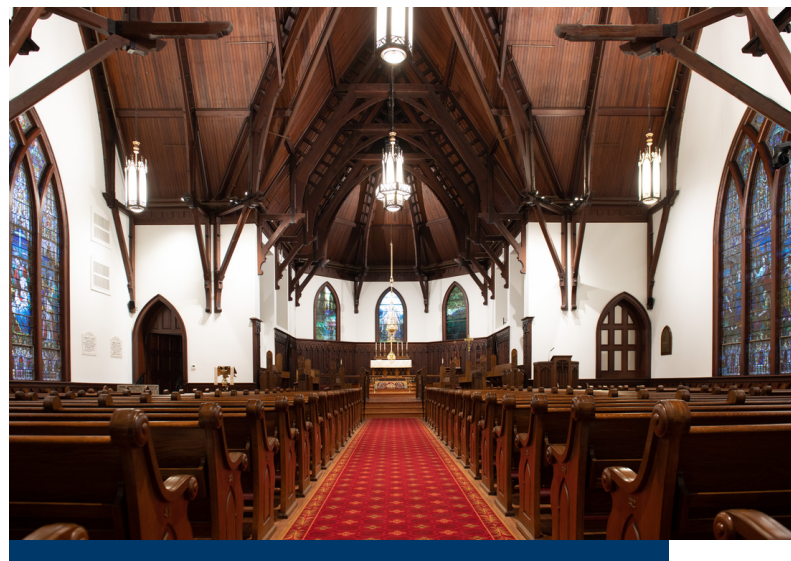
# FROM THE VESTRY

## DIANE ALLEN OUTGOING SR. WARDEN

**Our last Vestry update** for the Messenger began with the words: ‘The last several months have been challenging for all of us in ways we could not have imagined.’ This message begins much the same way. While we find ourselves operating in a world impacted by the pandemic, as humans we continue to adapt and adjust so life goes on. At St. James, we are fortunate to have strong leadership in our clergy, a talented and resourceful staff, along with dedicated volunteers who work every day to keep us connected and moving forward. The Vestry has continued to meet via ZOOM and use email voting for special issues.

The overarching focus of the Vestry has been the construction project. While the interior work has been the main topic, there’s been much attention and work on the landscaping. Upon review and recommendation from the Property Committee along with the recommendation of the School Board, the decision was made to remove and replace five pine trees in the small playground. Also, after years of discussion and negotiations with the city and our landscape architect, the landscaping project expanded to include the removal and replacement of the trees covered with ball moss. New pavers are being placed at the corner around the church and the concrete sidewalks will be repaired by the city. Extensive drainage work under the church and in the courtyard have also been done.

The interior work has progressed per the schedule. The plaster repair, new lighting, new mechanical systems, new electrical wiring, refinished flooring, refinished woodwork and pews, new carpet runners, and the fire suppression system are done.



To make everything ‘just right’, the Vestry approved funds to plate and polish all the brass fixtures (Sanctuary lamp, candlesticks, etc.), clean all the vestments, and repair some needlepoint cushions

Both the church and school applied for and were granted PPP loans. The church was notified in late November that Chase Bank had authorized the Church’s request for PPP loan forgiveness and we are awaiting the bank’s invitation to submit an application for forgiveness of the school PPP loan.

The stewardship efforts this year were great, considering the overall effects of the pandemic. As of mid-December, there were 318 pledging households, of those, 109 were ‘increased’ or ‘new’ pledges.

The Finance Committee prepared, and the Vestry approved, the new balanced budget for 2021.

Time goes on and new Vestry members were elected. We welcome the six new members: Anita Byrne, Mike Fontenot, Lolly Martin, B. Phillips, Robyn Richards, and John Soule. In December, Trey Roberts was elected the Senior Warden for 2021. Trey’s term officially began after the Annual Meeting on January 24, 2021.

A new and comprehensive Employee Handbook will be presented at the January Vestry meeting. Creating a new handbook has been an ongoing, much-needed project, as the last one was done in the mid-1990s.

We are thankful for this faithful community and eager for what's to come in this new year.





# UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

## ADULT & FAMILY MINISTRIES

### ADULT FORUM

Virtual

*Home by Another Road: Sermons in the Light of Christ* Led by Fr. Drew  
Sundays | Jan 10-Feb 14

*Here's the Church. Here's the Steeple*  
Led by Fr. Chris  
Sundays | Feb 28-March 24

### CHILDREN'S FORMATION

Virtual & In-Person

Sundays | Jan 10-May 16

### CHILDREN'S CHAPEL

In-Person

Sunday Morning services

### YOUTH GROUP

In-Person

Third Sunday of each month | 11:45am

### EASTER EGG HUNT

April 3

### ADULT CONFIRMATION

Begins Feb 28

dharmon@stjamesbr.org

### YOUTH CONFIRMATION

In-Person

**Retreat:** Feb 26-27

(Friday 5:30-8pm & Saturday 9am-1pm)

**Classes:** March 7 & 14

(Sundays noon to 1:30pm)

**Outreach Project:** April 17 | 7:30am

**Bishop Visit:** May 2 | 10:30am

hschroeck@stjamesbr.org

## OUTREACH

### ST. JAMES FOOD PANTRY & DRIVE-THROUGH DISTRIBUTION

Third Saturday of each month |

9am-noon

dlebleutr@gmail.com

### WE CARE BAGS

Distributed weekly

allysoncunningham46@gmail.com

## FELLOWSHIP

### BAD GIRLS BOOK CLUB

Virtual

Every 3rd Monday | 6:30pm

joan.vmoore@yahoo.com

*The Yellow House* by Sarah M Broom

Feb 15 | 6:30pm

*The Only Woman in the Room* by

Marie Benedict

March 15 | 6:30pm

### ST. MARY'S BIBLE STUDY

In-Person

Every 2nd Tuesday | 6:30pm

carolineross@cox.net

### WINE, CHEESE, AND A QUESTION WITH FR. DON WHITE

Virtual

Wednesdays | 5pm

mboutwell@stjamesbr.org

### ST. JAMES YOUNG ADULT GROUP WITH LAURA SOREY

Virtual

Every 3rd Tuesday | 7pm

lc.sorey@gmail.com



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## **WORSHIP WITH US**

### **ASH WEDNESDAY**

Feb 17 | noon (Virtual & In-Person)  
& 5:30pm (In-Person)

### **LENTEN QUIET DAY**

March 27

### **PALM SUNDAY**

March 28

### **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

April 1 | 5:30pm

### **GOOD FRIDAY**

April 2

### **EASTER VIGIL**

April 3

### **EASTER SUNDAY**

April 4