

St. James Parish

WITH ST. MARK'S MINISTRIES

Epistle



December 2024

Rector's Message

*Turn back, O man,
Forswear thy foolish ways
Old now is earth
And none may count her days ...
Yet thou, her child
Whose head is crowned with flames
Still wilt not hear Thine inner God proclaim ...
Turn back, oh man ... **

English playwright and composer Clifford Bax wrote these poetic words more than 50 years before modern composer Stephen Swartz put them into the mouth of a character in the musical *Godspell*. They are words that John the Baptist declares in the Gospel of Mark. John casts a very long shadow over the beginning of the Gospels and the most holy season of Advent, too. Hymn #76 proclaims, "On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh ..." John comes into the Judean wilderness, an untamed wild thing himself, and announces the need for repentance from sin for God's people. John says, "Turn back, O humanity, and forswear the ways that do not lead to life nor bring you into union with Almighty God." John has a lot of rough edges (maybe it's the camel's hair shirt he's wearing?) and makes no apologies for his strident cries for the people to get it together and understand that God's way is the only way to renewal of life. John has come to announce the coming of the One who will make "the rough places plain, and the high places into valleys."

Advent is a season that invites us into new relationship with God. The hymns of Advent are beautiful, with titles like *Rejoice! rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear! Comfort, comfort ye my people. Creators of the stars of night. Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Yet so many of our hymns

are loud and urgent calls to wakefulness like *Lo! He comes with clouds descending. There is a voice in the wilderness crying! Sleepers awake! Hark! the glad sounds! the Savior comes* and so many, many more. Advent explosively declares, with startling anticipation, the coming of Jesus, both 2,000 years ago and His coming again "in power and great glory," as our Prayer Book says. Jesus has done the merciful work of salvation. The world, alas, has not come 'round to that reality yet. So, John calls to us again, as he did in the desert 2,000 years ago, in our sleepy sense of God's divine blessing, and tells us to wake up. We are to wake up to the world's need for Jesus Christ, a profound need to hear the good news of Christ's sacrificial love and the unifying power of His resurrection. John calls for us to come down to the river of Christ's baptismal life and be watered again with the saving love that we find in Jesus. We anticipate the coming of Jesus, who has already come in hope, love, humanity, sacrifice, and wisdom. Now, we wait for Christ to come again but, we need to make ready for the Messiah to deliver us all over again, even as we wait. Advent is also a time of listening to the cries of John from the banks of the Jordan as he calls us to come again to the waters of life and be baptized or, at least, to remember our baptism. Advent is a herald of the approach of Christmas understanding that, in the coming of Christ, our salvation is born. Let us rejoice even as we repent, because in turning back to God, we turn back to life, born in a manger, hung on a cross, and raised to glory by God.

In Christ, Fr. George+

**Turn back, O Man* (Clifford Bax, written in 1916, first published in Motherland Song Book, 1919)

Warden's Corner

Many people don't like change, and so the fact that so few things HAVE changed for the people of the old St. James is, I hope, comforting. The Lord knows that we from St. Mark's have experienced a tremendous amount of change over the course of the last seven or so years. We had a succession of three priests and then none. We are now in our third location and there are a host of things we have endured that I won't even mention. We are battle tested, but also battle weary, and do not have much stomach for stirring the St. James pot.

However, I think we make a big mistake if we let this merger happen without seizing this opportunity. During the travails of Vatican II in the Catholic Church, now over 60 years ago, I remember vividly thinking how I hated change for the sake of change, but that I loved improvement. We have an opportunity for improvement. In what areas? Well, I've joined the choir! You can judge for yourself. Seriously, that is for each of us to decide. Great and new ideas are wonderful, with a caveat.

When I was Executive Director of the Greater New Britain Arts Alliance, a month did not go by without someone coming into my office with some great idea for the arts in New Britain. I always listened patiently and sometimes with enthusiasm. At the end I always asked the same two questions: *Who is going to lead this initiative*, and *Who is going to pay for it?* It is easy to suggest new approaches or programs. It is far more challenging to make them happen, and suggestions need to be accompanied by a willingness to help. Priests are especially accustomed to being told what they should do. My standard response back in the day was to excitedly respond: "And you're offering to pay or volunteer to make this happen?!" Most of the time that was not the case. So, let's put our thinking and praying caps on, and consider how we might take advantage of the new energy in the new parish to make new things happen or old things better. At the same time, let's give renewed thought to how we might be part of whatever improvements we'd like to see occur.

Sincerely in Jesus the Lord,
Stephen Hard, Co-Warden

First Sunday Breakfast

First Sunday Breakfast once again hops to a different Sunday due to Thanksgiving weekend schedules— join us on December 8th Find delicious food and fellowship at the *First Sunday Breakfasts* cooked by a great crew of men of the parish, led by John McBride:



pancakes, 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,

December 8th, from 9am–9:45 am for a wonderful time of food and fellowship!

Church School request

We are always in need of church school teachers and assistants, so please check the SignupGenius link for open dates or contact Brigitte Cadigan with interest. link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0E48ADA82EA7FF2-50798626-church> .

Also, you are welcome to sit in on any given Sunday to experience what it's like if you're not sure.



Sunday morning Bible Study

On Sunday, December 1st, the First Sunday of Advent, we will begin a four-week Bible Study using The Reverend Adam Hamilton's book *Prepare the Way for the Lord*. Books have been ordered and supply may be limited so please, if you have not already, let Fr. George know if you want a book (they are \$17). *Prepare the Way for the Lord* explores the message of John the Baptist as the harbinger of the Messiah's coming. All are welcome to join via Zoom on Sundays at 12:30 pm through Advent 4 (December 22nd): Meeting ID: 815 4332 7235; Passcode: 982548.. We hope you will join us!

Faith & Fries!

We usually come together on the 4th Tuesday of every month at **Puente American-Latino Pub at 81 South Main Street in Unionville.** We will not meet on Christmas Eve, however, opting instead to gather on Tuesday, December 17th, from 7–8:30 pm. You can come for dinner, have a drink or snack, whatever is comfortable for you. We will be invited to share Christmas memories. 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 or more information on *Faith & Fries!*



Join us on a Discipleship journey

On Saturday, December 7th, from 9–11 a.m., you are invited to join your Discipleship Team in gently and openly exploring what discipleship means. We are inviting the whole parish to go on this journey with us, where we will turn over in our hearts the idea of what the word *disciple* means to us, how are we disciples, and how can our renewed/new awareness bring us into closer relationship with Jesus. Come as you are; there will be refreshments (bagels, pastries, coffee) to begin our time together.

Epiphany Project

This December you will see the Stations of the Cross project come down and a project for the season of Epiphany replace it. The show will be on view by December 20th. Our artists and writers



have been busy exploring the season of Epiphany over the last several months and will have their journey's work for us all to see and ponder upon. More news will

follow. For those who are participants, finished pieces should be brought to church on December 8th before or after the 10:15 am service. For questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Blessings, *Linda Mason*

Join us for Greening of the Church

On Sunday, December 22nd following 10:15 a.m. worship, we'll begin our Greening of the Church for Christmas! We are looking for volunteers to come help hang greens, wreaths and decorate the windows, all while enjoying fellowship and creating a glorious welcome for the Christmas season. If you are going to join us, please bring some clippers for trimming greens.



We are also in need of fresh greens for the windowsills. If you are willing to donate them, there will be a box to drop them in on the sidewalk to the right of the front entrance of the church. We are doing both indoor and outdoor Greening. Blessings and we look forward to seeing you on the 22nd!



New Year's Day Open House

Dianne Antos invites our church family to her home for a New Year's Day Open House.

Stop by anytime Wednesday, January 1st between 9:30 am and 3 pm. Enjoy a Bagel Brunch with church family and friends, "old" and "new." We are asked only to bring non-perishable food items for the St. Mark's Ministries Food Pantry.

RSVP appreciated but not necessary:
860-677-1766

Address – 36 Burnt Hill Road, Farmington

Advent Lessons & Carols

A Service of Advent Lessons and Carols comes to us from the Anglican tradition but has seeped into the wider Christian traditions. Advent encompasses the four Sundays that fall before the Feast of the Nativity and a natural time of anticipation and urgency. *Advent Lessons and Carols* help us to focus on the quickening and longing of Advent, discouraging us from rushing



to a Christmas season that has its own special place and focus.

Please join us on Sunday,

December 15th, at 5 pm for an inspiring service of Advent Lesson and Carols at St. James Parish. We will have special instrumental music, choral singing, and Advent hymns to join in with as a congregation. The Lessons will be read by members of St. James. All are invited to join us, following the service, for a reception in the parish hall.

Christmas Decoration Fund

When we celebrate together during holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, we are poignantly aware of those who are no longer with us. If you would like to make a donation for Christmas decorations in memory of loved ones, please complete the form below and return it to the parish office. Offerings may also be made in thanksgiving for our many blessings. **The deadline for donations is noon on Wednesday, December 18th.** Make checks payable to *St. James Parish* marked "Christmas Decorations." Thank you.



Please print as you wish the donation listed in the Christmas Bulletins.

In memory of

OR In thanksgiving for

Given by

Angel Tree for Friendship Service Center & Farmington Community Services

The mission of the Friendship Service Center is to provide friendship and direct service to the poor and needy of Central Connecticut, including the ownership and operation of housing for the poor. Farmington Community Services provides support to residents experiencing financial, physical and psychosocial hardships. The St. James Outreach Committee asks you to help provide Christmas gifts to approximately 20 individuals from the Friendship Service Center and 10 children from Farmington Community Services.

The Christmas ornaments representing each individual are hanging on a Christmas tree displayed in the narthex (church entryway). We ask that you select one or more ornaments, sign your name on the corresponding sign-out chart, purchase an appropriate Christmas gift(s) for your chosen recipient, and return the gift



unwrapped to the Parish Hall with the ornament attached serving as a gift tag. Each recipient was asked to list several items that they are hoping for. It is *not* expected that all items on the tag will be donated. You can choose to fulfill all items (alone or partnered with friends at church) or just one or two items. This is a wonderful opportunity for St James to share joy with those in need in our community. **The deadline for gifts is Wednesday, December 11th.** If you have any questions, please see Dona Waugh or Linda Larkin. Thank you very much!

Coffee Hour Ministry

Many thanks to who have hosted our time of fellowship following the 10:15 worship service. The 2025 signup is now on the parish hall ramp bulletin board, offering you the opportunity to host a Coffee Hour in the New Year! On your day, you will make regular & decaffeinated coffee and then clean up after Coffee Hour. You may signup for as many Sundays as you'd like – or just one! Signup to work alone or with a friend or two! Providing simple snacks (cookies, cupcakes, maybe a small gluten-free option) is nice, but not necessary to volunteer for this ministry.

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. As we approach Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas, we offer this prayer. Pray it as an offering to the Lord as a parish, a family, or an individual. May our God continue to bless us all abundantly!

Generous and loving God,

We (I) come to you in thanksgiving, knowing that all we are and all that we have is a gift from you. In faith and love, help us to do your will. We are listening. Speak your words into the depths of our souls, that we may hear you clearly.

We offer to you this day all the facets of our lives, whether it be at home, at work, or at school. We seek to be patient, to be merciful, to be generous, to be holy. Give us the wisdom and insight to understand your will for us, and the fervor to carry out our good intentions.

We offer our gifts of time, talent, and possessions to you as a true act of faith...to reflect our love for you and our neighbors. Help us to reach out to others as you have reached out to us. Amen.

*Prayers for Stewardship
Episcopal Diocese of Washington*

**St. James Prayer Team ...
Praying together for you**
Always available, always confidential

Pat Clark
Carol Kirkwood
Donna Paye

Celebrating December birthdays!

William Rice
Blair Connolly
Kim Faubert
Elijah Howe
Anna Whilby



Jim Clifford
Gloria Flis
Kevin Ives
Jennifer Rosenthal
Kaitlin Bittner

Christmas Worship Celebrations

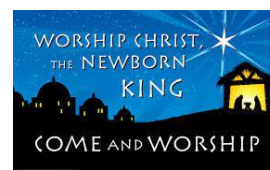
The church, as always, will be splendid in greens, poinsettias, and candles, alight with the brilliance of Christmas. We gather to celebrate the birth of our Lord, the blessing of our Savior breaking into the world as a helpless babe, born to poor parents and into a dark world. Celebrate with us, at one (or more!) of our services, as we gaze at the eternal light that shines on us still, two thousand years on.

**In the afternoon of the 24th,
Christmas Eve, at 3:30 pm,**

we will hold a family service with the Nativity play and lots of engagement with our young people. We ask folks participating in the Nativity to arrive by 3 pm to get into costume and do a short run-through.



Our traditional late service will begin with our choir offering special music at 10 pm. The



liturgy for Christmas Eve will begin at 10:30 pm, with our choir and Holy Eucharist. Our late service is one of warmth and beauty.

On Christmas Day, Wednesday, at 10:30 am, we will hold one service as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Christ our Lord. Holy Eucharist will be celebrated, and Christmas hymns will be sung. Come as you are as casual is the order of the morning.

Save the date: the Feast of the Epiphany will be celebrated on Sunday morning, January 5th with the coming of the Three and a special coffee hour.



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.

Minutes of the Combined Vestries Meeting of October 17, 2024

St James - Present: Fr. George Roberts, EJ Ososki, Carol Kirkwood, Kathy Bullard, Bob Sudell, Bonnie Sudell, Jim Wilke, Kim Pereira, Deb Butler, and Chris Butler.

St James - Absent: Kathy Bullard, Skip Mason, and Mary Lansing

St Mark's - Present: Stephen Hard, Bob Kissel, Molly Sherman, and Betty Barden

St Mark's - Absent: Barbara Campbell, Allison Penick, David Tompkins, Sue Holland, Lenny Nelson, and Mark Giulietti

Meeting Called to Order: 7:06pm

Greetings and Welcome – Fr. George Roberts
Fr. George welcomed all. Prayers continuing for Susan Holland and family. Prayers also go out to Allison Penick. Vestry members of St Mark's were invited to attend tonight's meeting as we are so close to an official merger.

Motion – Bob S made a motion to give St Mark's voice in tonight's meeting with a second by Jim. Discussion – None. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

Bob S moved to accept the minutes of September 17, 2024, as submitted. Seconded by EJ. Discussion – None. Motion carried unanimously.

Ministry Reports

Finance/Treasurer's Report – September 2024
Summary of Report by EJ Ososki

- Overall, we are in good shape. Our total income is ahead of plan by \$22K, primarily due to pledges being \$13K ahead of plan and invested funds being \$6K ahead.
- On the expense side, we are over budget on facility supplies, snow removal, and audit fees. No surprises.
- Overall, we are about \$17K favorable to our budget. We will have some rather large bills around the corner for capital improvements. Since they are planned capital items, they will not affect the budget. Instead, you will see these affecting assets on the balance sheet.

Bob S moved to accept the September financial report as submitted, seconded by Chris. Discussion – None. Motion carries unanimously.

Building and Grounds Projects

Bob S gave an update on building and grounds projects.

- Changing station being installed in former "men's" restroom which is now family restroom. Old changing station to go to nursery or upstairs woman's bathroom.
- The honey locust tree near memorial garden was removed 9/15/2024. The patio area will now be "chalked off" for drainage pipe locations. CBYD has already made marks. Installation of pipes should be done within a week.
- Once pipes are completed, paving will be done by Morin paving the areas near mailbox door / church door / sacristy door.
- SignPro will send a quote soon to add St Mark's ministries to front sign.
- A new quote was received from Andersen which includes mullions on windows and SDL (simulated divided light).
- Windows replacement would be 5 parish hall windows 3 Kitchen windows and 1 closet storage window cost of \$36,612 which includes a 25% discount. The rest of the building has 41 additional windows (up/downstairs) with a cost of \$105,490.
- Bob S is checking with Sanford and Hawley for a quote on trim sill work.
- Doors – Farmington Historical Commission approved the doors (approval only needed for the 2 doors that face the street. Getting a re-quote for SDL panes on doors. There is a 16-week lead time once ordered.
- Bob will talk with the Town regarding a crosswalk across Mountain Rd from Noah Wallace parking lot to the church.

Website Committee

Will consist of Stephen Hard and Kim Faubert and others who are interested. When changes are made to the website Kathy B, Molly S, and Mark G have volunteered to be testers for user friendliness and general feedback.

Storage areas St Mark's rents (South Church Food pantry)

Committee to be formed to look at current rentals and downsizing, if possible – Food Pantry run by St Mark's ministries is at South Church but is not the most ideal space as there are stairs to get to the basement and environment is damp. Stephen is aware of space available and

looking into alternatives. One alternative is at the former St Mark's on W Main St which has no stairs and adequate space at 280sq.ft. Stephen also expressed if right place found that it would be nice to have the weekly Mingle return (which was a weekly breakfast for approx. 75 people run 1x/week 6–9am)

Old Business

Stewardship / Annual Appeal 2025

Stephen asked about the timeline of stewardship and creating 2025 budget.

- November - Stewardship / Annual Appeal
- December - most pledges in and at December Vestry we have draft budget.
- January - Vestry meeting solidifies budget for vote at Annual Meeting late January.

Current Stewardship is in decent shape. Starts Oct 27th and ends Nov 24th with a celebratory potluck brunch.

- Kim Faubert has created postcards that go out each week.
- Once a person / family has pledged their last name will go in the bulletin.
- Testimonials are set for 4 Sundays during Stewardship and those giving testimonies will do so at both services.
- Bonnie, Carol K, Stephen, Molly will help with the brunch.

Smith Fund / Food Pantry

- St Mark's committee for Community Ministries will be re-established and known as St Mark's Ministries Committee. This committee will oversee the food pantry and the Smith fund usage. The Outreach Committee in place at St James will remain as is.
- We discussed and reviewed the St Mark's Ministries Manager job description for Cheryl R (Cheryl was included in the planning).

Blake potential raise (requested)

Will be discussing as we go into budget preparation over the next few months.

Good Shepherd – Bristol

- Vestry of St James and Good Shepherd will meet with Bishop Laura on November 3rd to discuss the process of exploration to merger.
- On Saturday November 9th Fr George will offer his support and guidance when Good

Shepherd will be adding “ceremonial earth” (not Ashes) from their Memorial Garden to our Memorial Garden at St James. The property at Good Shepherd is being sold.

Jim made a motion to adjourn. Bob S seconded. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Adjourned at 9:19pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Carol Kirkwood, Clerk

Yearend notes from the Parish Office

IRS reminder: as the end of 2024 rapidly approaches, many of us choose to make charitable gifts. **In order for you to receive credit for a tax-deductible donation on your 2024 tax return, the donation must be received by St. James or postmarked on or before December 31, 2024.** Donations made or mailed after that date, even if the check is dated 2024, cannot be included in your 2024 Contribution Statement issued in January 2025. Please contact the parish office if you have any questions about the status of your 2024 pledge.

If you pledged for 2025 and requested envelopes, **the boxed envelope sets will be labeled and ready in the narthex for you to pick-up on December 8th.** Please contact the parish office if you would like your envelopes dropped off at your home.

The 2025 Altar Flower Chart is now in the narthex. Please sign-up for a Sunday when you would like to donate and dedicate the flowers for the day's services. Note that there will be no altar flowers during the Lenten season.



Your picture in a brochure or on our website?

St. James Parish uses candid photos of various church activities on our website and in publications (like this *Epistle*). If you prefer that your photo NOT be displayed, please contact the parish office; we maintain a list of members whose likeness is not to be shared.

St. James Parish

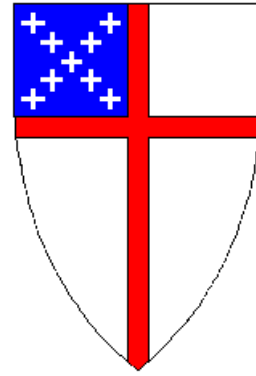
3 Mountain Road
Farmington, Connecticut 06032

Phone: 860-677-1564

Fax: 860-677-8219

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*
Blake Hansen *Director of Music*
Brigitte Cadigan
 Children & Family Ministries
Susan Deming *Parish Administrator*
Cheryl Rusczyk
 Admin., St. Mark's Ministries
Ray Smith *Sexton*
Kim McLaurin *Nursery Supervisor*

OFFICERS

Stephen Hard & Kim Pereira, *Wardens*
EJ Ososki, *Treasurer*
Jerry Hess, *Asst. Treasurer*
Carol Kirkwood, *Parish Clerk*

VESTRY

Kathy Bullard	Mark Giulietti	Skip Mason	Bob Sudell
Chris Butler	Stephen Hard	Lenny Nelson	Bonnie Sudell
Deb Butler	Susan Holland	Kim Pereira	Dave Tompkins
Barbara Campbell	Bob Kissel	Molly Sherman	Jim Wilkie

St. James Parish

3 MOUNTAIN ROAD
FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06032

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

