SAINT JAMES'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

CALLED TO SERVE, IN NEW & LOVING WAYS

Annual Report for 2024

Submitted for the Annual Meeting
held January 19, 2025

The Rev. Lori Walton, Rector

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Clergy & Staff Reports

Rector's Report – The Rev. Lori A. Walton

Worship and Liturgy

Worship for 2024 followed its normal pattern and schedule. Other than slightly lower attendance, the Covid 19 virus no longer impacts our common prayer with restrictions. We continue to live-stream our 10:30 service along with funerals if requested. This allows those who are homebound, traveling, or located elsewhere to participate in our worship. We welcomed new lectors (Victor, Nadia, and a spot for a Youth reader), eucharistic ministers (Isaiah and Barbara), altar guild members (Maria, Lisa and Nadia), and new acolytes (Seraphina, Simran, Jacob, Logan).

Our preaching rotation included guest preachers Davey Gerhard (from the Diocese), Ingrid Jacobson (past intern), and Beth Foote and Beth Phillips, both of whom served as supply priests as well. Our Children & Youth Minister, Jan Scrutton, preached six times, including on the Feast of All Saints/baptisms. In October, vestry members Burtin Hart, John Amouroux, Charisma Pangilinan, Vivienne Paratore, and Matt Hurley offered a sermon on stewardship. Our seminarian Karla Koon preached an excellent Palm Sunday sermon, and newly-made postulant for Holy Orders, John Wagas, preached in Advent.

For the Advent season, we used Wil Gafney's "A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church, C" lectionary in place of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Our regular rhythm of worship stayed consistent. In January, we offered hand anointing on the Feast of the Epiphany. In February, we held two Ash Wednesday services and the Imposition of Ashes. We also held an Imposition of Ashes service for children and families the evening before Ash Wednesday. For Maundy Thursday we shared a meal, experienced foot washing, Holy Communion, and ritual altar stripping. Good Friday brought a traditional 12:00pm service followed by a slide show of the Stations of the Cross. For the evening of Good Friday, we held a service of Lessons, Hymns, and cross veneration. The Easter Vigil was held at an earlier time to accommodate families, and Easter Sunday was held with one service at 10:30. We celebrated Pentecost Sunday as is our normal practice, inviting parishioners to share their gift of language during the Eucharistic Prayer.

On the day of the presidential election, we hosted a prayer service that featured a sermon given by the Most Reverend Michael Curry, retired presiding bishop.

On the Feast of All Saints', we read the necrology of all who had died during the year and of those names submitted by parishioners. Our annual Thanksgiving Service was held as usual. For Christmas Eve, we offered a 4:00 Family Service with the children telling the Christmas story and a 7:00 Primary Service with a full choir. We had a 10:00 Christmas Day service, and on the 1st Sunday of Christmas, December 29, we had a Lessons & Carols service at both the 8:00 and 10:30 services (minus Holy Communion), officiated by Brian Cochran.

In 2024, we held 3 memorial/funeral services. We celebrated the lives of Betty McCoy, Pat Spalding, and Patricia Yokum (officiated by Beth Phillips). We had 4 baptisms (Brandon Thompson (ASL parishioner), Eliana Ortiz, Layla Dunn and Henry Dunn).

With the move of Elaine and Greg Miller, liturgical design has fallen to me, Jan Scrutton, Isaiah Zachariah and John Wagas.

On December 2, we held our annual candlelight vigil for those who died on the street. This service was held outdoors and included six spiritual leaders from the Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Unitarian, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jewish faiths.

Throughout the year, I was honored to officiate a vow renewal and the dedication to Clinton Hilliard of the large window in the Big Church.

Beginning in 2024, we have shared our Land Acknowledgment Statement on a monthly basis at the start of each service. The Statement was crafted by members of the Social Justice Task Force and reads:

> *It is our practice to periodically acknowledge that, ultimately, the land we stand on is not ours.*
>
> *We remember and honor the Indigenous people of the world, especially the Muwekma Ohlone tribes, whose ancestral land we now occupy. These lands were once their home but were taken from them by coercion and force through colonization. Peoples of the Ohlone tribes still live in the Bay Area but have no tribal land and no Federal recognition.*
>
> *We give thanks to them and their ancestors for their stewardship of this land. Their culture continues to bear witness to a life that is both honorable and grounded. May we always remember that the Earth does not belong to us; that we belong to the Earth, and that we are all relatives in this life. We ask God to help us to learn from our past mistakes and be resolute in speaking the truth that we may be instruments of justice and peace for all people in today's world, particularly the original Indigenous peoples of this shared land.*

Staff, Administration, and Finance

Generally, our staff remained the same as the prior year. We continued to employ Jan Scrutton (Children and Youth Minister), Jennifer Ravera (Music Director), and Ron Cook (Parish Administrator). We also continued contracting with Fernando's Cleaning and Landscaping Company to keep our buildings clean and our campus kept up. In March, our seminarian began a medical leave. In September, we welcomed a paid section leader to the choir, Kristine Berg. The vestry began and continues discussions about hiring a second clergy person.

Our children's program remains strong. Our youth group is also doing well. Both are led by Jan Scrutton, our Children & Youth Minister. Jan continues to be creative and proactive in offering gatherings and events to keep our children and youth engaged. Please see Jan's report for further details.

Our Music Director, Jennifer Ravera, continues to offer quality music. The choir rehearsal schedule shifted from Wednesday evenings to Sunday mornings, allowing more people to participate. Please see Jennifer's report for further details.

Our Parish Administrator, Ron Cook, is instrumental in keeping the office running smoothly and advising us on financial matters. His skill with finance and communication have greatly benefited the parish. Marilyn Rose continues to process our payables, Jan Brandt tracks our receivables, and Bruce Roberts serves as treasurer.

Welcoming and Integrating New People, Outreach & Fellowship

In 2024, we have been blessed to welcome several new people, most of who have joined the church. We looked at how many new people have joined us after coming out of the shelter-in-place, totaling over 55 people. In September, we held a New Member Welcome celebration to recognize new people. This took place alongside the Volunteer Appreciation celebration.

We continue to support schooling for Hope and Miriam, two young women in Kenya. This effort is through the organization Maisha Bora. The vestry voted to begin supporting a second international outreach, "Imara International" in 2025.

We continue to reach out to the community with our blessing bags (bags containing toiletries, food, socks) for those living on the street. We donated money towards the Corazon Build Program, assisting in the building of a house in Mexico, and had six parishioners helping with the physical build. We collected school supplies for underserved children and donated funds to the City of Fremont for summer camp scholarships.

We partnered with the City of Fremont and City Serve to host people living in their cars to use our parking lot for safe sleeping two months during 2024. This ministry will continue into 2025 and beyond.

I assisted in recruiting members to help out as coffee hour hosts.

We continued participating in the Vital + Thriving trainings and gatherings. St. James' hosted the gathering in October and the V+T team held a parish-wide discernment event in June. Under the leadership of Mike Scrutton, the team continues to compile data to discern potential new mission.

Wider Church Involvement

In May, I attended the consecration of our new bishop, Austin Rios. I also participated a couple of listening sessions hosted by Bishop Austin.

Children & Youth Minister's Report – Jan Scrutton

As I reflect on 2024 I am aware of the seasons of the year, of the church seasons and of the repeating patterns of life for which I am grateful. I also look back and see the changes to our community. New friends who have stayed for a season, new faces becoming friends and settling into our community. New events and those familiar touchstones of our year being repeated. Our children and youth also welcome new people to St. James', as one of their number and as adults working with them.

Our staff team at St. James' may be small but my work continues to be supported through regular staff meetings and check-ins with Lori. Working as a team allows us to plan and support events but also look at future ideas and develop ideas. I am also grateful to be part of a community in which so many people actively participate. So many of the events I work on would not be possible without those who get involved. I am fortunate to have people who will not just volunteer but will also talk and plan and dream with me.

This year I have helped prepare three students for baptism, something I enjoy doing very much. Through youth group we have begun to offer confirmation preparation for 2025. Sunday School numbers have swelled to a regular pool of 14 children and their regular attendance means a good class size each week. I am encouraged by seeing these children so regularly as it enables them to make connections with each other and with St. James'. It also enables me to build on the teaching each week.

I have preached six times this year, supporting Rev. Lori while we are without additional clergy on our team. In addition I have also continued to take a lead on our quarterly Senior Lunch (more details elsewhere in this report).

I am grateful to everyone who volunteers and works on programs and projects at St. James'. My particular thanks to those who support Sunday School and EYF (Esther, Jill, Antoine, Mike, Peter, Barbara) and other children's events. Also those who have helped me with meals and food for Senior Lunches, Maundy Thursday, Family night and the Advent Evening (including Jasmine, Lauren, Jan, Vivienne, Lauren, Gail, Katie, Ruth, Bob, Bob, Barbara) and who support me with practical projects (Samir, Dave, Charlie).

Sunday School & Sunday School Family Activities

Sunday School takes place weekly (during the school year) during the 10:30am service and we have children from 3 years old to 7th grade attending. At the end of 2024 we have a regular group of 14 students and during the year had others join us.

While we often use a lectionary based curriculum from Illustrated Ministry we also done a series of lessons on the Parables. I've been grateful to Esther and Peter Maina who teach regularly. Sunday School took a summer trip to the Waterpark (thanks to funding from donations and from free tickets due to a church outreach project) when 12 kids and their families got to play together. Some of them were surprised to find out Miss Jan could swim!

Children are welcome to take part in all events of the church at St. James' and in addition there are events set up to help them to acknowledge the circle of the church year and to engage with the community. The Ashes for Kids Service after the pancake supper, a Holy Week at Home

project, hunting for eggs on Easter Sunday, Halloween costumes in church, the Advent Sunday School afternoon and Family Evening – and new this year our summer Family Night.

Episcopal Youth Fremont (EYF)

Episcopal Youth Fremont (EYF) is a youth group, based at St. James', that welcomes young people (6th grade and up) and from St. James' and St. Anne's for monthly meetings and activities. Our team consists of Jan & Mike Scrutton, Jill Buono & Antoine Alcazar. Monthly attendance is usually 4-6 students, from a pool of 8.

We had hoped to join Grace Cathedral Youth for a Racial Justice Pilgrimage this year but their plans fell through so that remains a hope for the future.

We did attend the Youth Pilgrimage to Grace Cathedral in April, five young people plus myself, Mike and Antoine. As part of the afternoon, we met with Biship Austin. As a consequence of attending, I was asked to suggest a youth reader for the installation service and Bethany stepped up. She did an amazing job reading a lesson at Grace Cathedral on May 4th.

Summer Day Camp

We took a planned break from summer camp in 2024, discussions are underway to return in 2025 so look out for details soon.

Family Night

While Summer Day Camp took a break we did hold a family night in the summer where people of all ages gathered to play games, complete a group art project (resulting in a large St. James' and fishing net for display on campus and a new banner for the roadside covered in fish), dinner, s'mores and compline. Forty-four people joined in the fun and we hope to do this again in future years as it offered a new opportunity to spend time together.

Acolytes

In December 2024 our acolyte team has expanded to 11 members. Caiden, Bethany and Ian serve as acolytes and mentors, Layla, Eva, Gavin and Elvin continue to serve along with new members Simran, Serafina, Logan and Jordan.

Acolytes serve at the 10:30am Service and children can join the team from 2nd grade and up. The role includes processing with the cross and Gospel and assisting in the setting of the table.

During the summer we allowed younger children and those interested in serving to help informally and get a feel for what it might be like to serve regularly. A full acolyte training was held in August after which our newest acolytes joined the team.

Many thanks to all our acolytes, and to their families and our EMs who support them in their service.

Music Ministry – Jennifer Ravera, Music Director

I celebrated my 13th year of working at St. James' at the beginning of September! I am very happy working with the wonderful people of St. James'. Thank you for being so welcoming to me and my family!

Music is provided at the 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Sunday services.

At the 8:00 a.m. service, the congregation sings three or four hymns, a sequence, and the doxology each week.

We have an Adult Choir that sings at our 10:30am service, where we have a Choral Eucharist. From January through June, the Adult Choir rehearsed on Wednesdays from 7:00 to 8:00 pm. Starting in September, our rehearsals switched to Sunday morning at 9:30 to 10:15 am. This new rehearsal time has been a great switch for us, as we have gained new choir members because of not having weeknight rehearsals.

We sing at the 10:30 Eucharist on Sunday mornings. The choir is open to all parishioners. There are 9 current choir members. They are: Nancy Catania, Reena Davis, Barbara Milligan, Bruce Roberts, Don Rose, Ken Trant, Barbara Vacchieri, Bethany Vacchieri, and Isaiah Zechariah. We have also been blessed to welcome Kristine Berg to the choir as our staff singer.

The St. James' music program is an integral part of worship on Sundays and other services. All are welcome to be a part of it! Please see me or email me at music@saintj.com and we can figure out the best way for you to be involved!

Treasurer & Wardens' Reports

Treasurer's Report – Bruce Roberts

For 2024 St. James' Vestry passed a balanced operating budget and we, the Church, did a great job of sticking to that budget.

Thanks to all who have managed to complete their pledges and some who donated beyond their pledged amount!

The Church managed to hold expenditures to nearly 3% less than budgeted. Pledges came in at 100%. Plate, Unpledged and Use of Church income exceeded the budgeted amounts giving St. James' a slight overage of just over $19,000; the Vestry will decide its disposition.

At this writing it appears that St. James' will need to pass a slightly negative budget for 2025 as we have regularly in the past. Many parishioners have increased their pledge and others have started pledging, but expenses will also increase for 2025. We will need the help of all to keep up with our pledges throughout the year to keep St. James' afloat this coming year.

Big Thanks to the folks who are intimately involved with the money part of St. James': Jan Brandt and the counters, Marilyn Rose in accounts payable and Ron Cook, our Administrator who does the hard work of keeping our books.

Senior Warden's Report – Vivienne Paratore

The 2024 St. James' Vestry consisted of 12 members (in some years we have had a vestry with 10 or 11 members). The fact that we had a full vestry is an indication of the health of St. James'. I would like to thank these vestry members for their thoughtful contributions to vestry meetings and support of various parish wide events throughout the year: Charisma Pangilinan, Marcus Pun, Matt Hurley, Burtin Hart, John Amouroux, Kaethe Langs, Gregg Feeney, Nancy Castaneda, Peter Maina, Barbara Vacchieri, and Ann Saponara.

Clerk Elizabeth Hart and Treasurer Bruce Roberts deserve a huge thank you as well, not only for their attendance at vestry meetings but also for their excellent work. Elizabeth has been taking Vestry minutes for many years and there are rarely any corrections.

Vestry members wrote Window articles on one of the topics: Go Tell It on the Mountain, or, Who Are Our Neighbors? They prepared prayers and Compline at Vestry meetings and supported Volunteer Sunday, St. James' Day and several other events throughout the year as well as attended the Vestry Retreat last February. Thank you all for your service and participation in this vital ministry opportunity and welcome to new vestry members for the 2025 Vestry.

Throughout 2024, we only had one clergy person, our amazing Rev. Lori Walton. We were fortunate to host a seminarian, Karla Koonze and Lori and staff continued to minister to her and support her during her prolonged illness. While welcoming a new Bishop and having a member of our congregation on the Bishop Selection Committee, we continued to grow with only one ordained pastoral leader.

During 2024, St. James' added the Safe Parking program to the already extensive outreach opportunities; we hosted 15 people living in their vehicles for 2 months during the year and will be hosting January 2025 also. We have seen the addition of several families, couples and individuals to our congregation and have a balanced budget. We have said farewell to several parishioners who moved away or passed away. They were all honored and sent on with love.

The vestry has searched for alternative income streams in order to fund a second clergy person. We have rented out several parking spaces during a few weekdays to a commuter organization and are progressing through the Vital + Thriving program in order to discern God's preferred future for our healthy congregation. We continue to look into alternative sources of income while appreciating the huge commitment our parishioners make through their pledges.

While 2024 is not the first time I have been a senior warden, it has been a fulfilling and joyful experience for me. I am grateful to Rev. Lori for allowing me the privilege of serving in this capacity. Our monthly lead team meetings, with Charisma Pangilinan, Bruce Roberts, and Rev. Lori are informative and uplifting and Vestry meetings have been partly though Zoom and partly in-person. It has been a joy to work with fellow parishioners to help ensure the continued financial health and community spirit of St. James' Episcopal Church. Thank you all for this amazing honor and service opportunity.

Junior Warden's Report – Charisma Pangilinan

This year I had the honor of being elected the Jr. Warden for St. James' by this year's Vestry. The Jr. Warden serves as the "3rd person in charge" after the rector and Sr. Warden. Every week, prior to the Vestry meeting, I joined Rev. Lori, our Sr. Warden (Vivienne Paratore), and Treasurer (Bruce Roberts) in a lead team meeting to revise and finalize the Vestry meeting agenda. Additionally, we discuss issues or plans with St. James' or with the parishioners.

Being Jr. Warden during my 2nd year / first term on the Vestry was an eye-opening experience. It was enlightening to learn and be closely involved with church activities. Examples of typical, reoccurring duties of the Jr. Warden include:

- Submitting Vestry meeting highlights each month for the Window newsletter
- Signing requests for check reimbursements
- Signing and mailing checks for St. James' accounts payables

Over the course of the year, I was involved in the following additional ministries or events:

- Ushered at the 10:30am service
- Hospitality host for the fourth Sunday 10:30am coffee hour
- Helping to facilitate the Vestry retreat when Rev. Lori was called away on an emergency
- Led the coordination of the St. James' Day celebration
- Be the site coordinator of the Safe Parking Program
- Cooked two dinners at Abode Sunrise Village
- Hosted and participated in meals with my fiancée, Jasmine, as part of the Faith & Friendship Dinners
- Preaching at a 10:30am service during stewardship season
- Wrote a newsletter article for the September issue of the Window

It is my hope that other members of the congregation, especially those who have not served before, consider serving on the Vestry. It is a fantastic way to learn about the inner workings of the church and to help make decisions about its direction and vitality. I thank Rev. Lori for her continual patience, education, and trust. And I am grateful to have served this year with an intelligent and vocal set of individuals: Vivienne Paratore, Nancy Castaneda, Peter Maina, Marcus Pun, Vivienne Paratore, Barbara Vacchieri, Burtin Hart, Kaethe Langs, Gregg Feeney, John Amouroux, Matt Hurley, our clerk, Elizabeth Hart, and our Treasurer, Bruce Roberts.

Committee Reports

Abode Dinners – Vivienne Paratore

2024 saw Lynn Locher's retirement from the program due to personal necessity. Jasmine Reynolds took over the leadership of this long-standing ministry. Our teams consist of Marlene Benedict, Jill Buono, Bruce Roberts, Byron Bader, Matt Hurley, William Feliciano, Missy and Victor Bontempo and Vivienne Paratore. Some of these members are new this year and others have been involved in this ministry for many years.

We cooked and served 6 meals for 40-60 people in teams of 4 in February, April, June, August, October, and December. We serve on the third Saturday of the month.

Residents expressed their gratitude for the good quality of the food and those involved in this ministry experience a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure in feeding others. The ministry involves planning one meal per year, assembling a team, buying, cooking and serving the food to the residents of Abode's Brown Road Shelter.

Abode Services Rapid Re-Housing Program – Gregg Feeney

Abode Services' goal is to provide housing to adults and children that have come through Abode's Sunrise Village shelter or through referrals from various agencies that support Abode.

St. James' as well as about 10 other local churches and organizations continue to pool our monies and donate new and gently used household items to re-house families and individuals. In 2024 we helped support several families and individuals with bedding, some furniture, kitchen and bathroom supplies to help get them started in new homes.

Abode is building affordable housing units throughout the SF Bay Area. St. James' will continue to support the program committing to support a minimum of two families per year and we appreciate your continued support. Our storage unit provides a good space to keep donated items for Abode's clients across the different agencies they support.

Advent Afternoon & Evening Celebration, December 8 – Jan Scrutton

For the second year we were able to offer a kids afternoon before our Advent Evening. This afternoon was for Sunday School kids and 13 attended. I was supported by Barbara Milligan and Ashley Karr. The children were able to make tree decorations and watch a movie together while the parents could have an afternoon to themselves.

Forty people gathered for the Advent Evening Service and dinner. We talked about the many names given to Jesus and worked together to produce a new backdrop for our nativity set, used under the altar at Christmas. People also created paper angels which were added to the backdrop and church decoration.

After singing some Christmas songs with Jennifer Ravera we moved to the Parish Hall where Jasmine Reynolds had set up food for everyone. This multi-generational event makes a great start to Advent and allows us to peek forward and prepare for Christmas.

Altar Guild – Katie Cunningham

The purpose of the Altar Guild is to prepare the sanctuaries of both churches for Sunday worship and other liturgical services. Altar Guild cleans up after the church services are over. This group cares for the altar, vestments, vessels and linens of the parish. They supervise the ordering and picking up of the fresh flowers each week.

The Altar Guild Ministry is under the direction of Rev. Lori Walton. Rev. Lori will communicate

any changes or special instructions concerning Altar Guild duties to the Altar Guild members. Currently the Altar Guild is made up of thirteen volunteers, who work in four teams. Each team serves one weekend a month. In addition, each team will serve one additional 5th Sunday a year.

The Altar Guild is responsible for keeping the Sanctus Candle replenished and lit 24/7. The Sanctus Candle is positioned over the Church Ambry, which houses the consecrated wine and wafers that is used for home visits.

Sanctus Candles and fresh Altar Flowers are gifted to the church through donations made by our church community. These donations are acknowledged during Sunday announcements by the clergy. The Altar Guild would like to thank the following Altar Guild members for their generous donations:

- Barbara Johnsen: Providing fresh flowers monthly for the Columbarium area in the Little Church.
- Vivienne Paratore: Baking fresh communion bread for the 10:30am service.
- Lauren Doherty: Donating wine for weekly communion.

Designated members of the Altar Guild are tasked with ordering communion supplies (Mary Casas), overseeing the purchase of seasonal flower orders, performing yearly inventory, maintaining communion wine inventory, blessed water, and other essential communion supplies, as well as maintaining church vessels and clean linens. Jan Scrutton helps with sewing, mending and alterations of aged frontals and accessories for the Altar Guild.

St. James' Altar Guild is always looking for new members to join our ministry. If you are interested in becoming part of the St. James' Altar Guild, please contact Rev. Lori Walton or any Altar Guild member for more information. We would love to have you join us.

Thank you to all of the parishioners who make up our Altar Guild Ministry. Week after week they lovingly prepare the Churches for Sunday services and clean up after each service has ended.

American Sign Language Service: St. James' ASL (Deaf Ministry) – Bev Mosier

This ministry falls under the St. James' umbrella but in most respects functions independently of the English-speaking parish. For the American Sign Language (ASL) services, participants join on Zoom from all over the country, e.g., Oregon, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Texas, Arizona, southern California, and soon Massachusetts. A typical Sunday service includes 12–15 adults. All worship is Deaf-centered. Prayers, scriptures, poetry, reflections and discussions are in ASL only, without spoken English. These services are uploaded to YouTube afterward.

In addition to weekly worship and semi-monthly governing committee meetings, St. James' ASL engaged in the following this year:

<u>Events and Activities</u>:

1. **Our First Baptism**: We began the year with a joyous event on January 21st. Brandon Thompson flew from Houston, TX to be baptized by Rev. Lori. We locals got to be

present for and participate in his big day (and the rest of his weekend). A few hearing parishioners joined us for the baptismal service as well.

2. **Committee Retreat**: Our governing committee (six people) meets every two months on Zoom. We also have a committee retreat in person at least once a year. This year our retreat was at St. James' the last weekend in March. We had very productive sessions, as well as some "playtime." For example, we went together to a woman's softball game at Stanford.
3. **"Jesus" in ASL**: On June 20th, for the first time in history, a movie entirely in ASL came out as a feature film in theaters. "Jesus," the movie, was produced by Deaf Missions. All of us recognized at least some of the actors, which added to the enjoyment. Most of us went to see it on opening night. A few saw it soon thereafter.

Connections With Other Ministries:

1. **Q Christian Fellowship Conference**: In January, six from St. James' ASL attended the national Q Christian Fellowship Conference in Albuquerque, NM. This is an ecumenical Christian ministry focused on serving lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer, and straight ally Christians. Many from St. James' ASL are members of a related organization specifically designed for *Deaf* members of the LGBTQ+ community, **Deaf Rainbow of Faith (DRF**), founded by our own Taniel Wood, now greatly expanded nationally.

2. **Claggett Statement on the Deaf Community and Liberation Theology**: Forty years ago, our Ella Lentz was one of ten original creators of the ecumenical Claggett Statement on Liberation Theology and the Deaf Community. This year, Ella was invited to serve as a respondent at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in San Diego where the statement was revisited. Panelists shared their research and reflections concerning the current Deaf community in relation to the Claggett Statement and ongoing needs and trends.
3. **Education for Ministry (EfM):** Five members of St. James' ASL continued their studies with EfM in 2024. Two are 4th year students. One is in her 3rd year. Two more are 2nd years. EfM is conducted on Zoom. It is a program for theological education through an Episcopal Seminary at University of the South in Sewanee, TN. Classes meet online weekly in assigned groups of 8-10 members, facilitated by mentors who have been certified already. This four-year program covers the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, the history of the Christian religion, and theology. There are currently two all-Deaf cohorts which interact in ASL only.
4. **Episcopal Conference of the Deaf (ECD):** Tuition for our Deaf contingent in EfM was covered until recently by St. James' ASL. But in 2023 and 2024, ECD picked up our tab. We are members of and remain loosely connected to ECD.
5. **Deaf International Community Church:** in Olathe, KS is a center that offers Deaf adult refugees education, advocacy, Zoom access from around the U.S. and Canada, local transportation, critical resources, pastoral counseling, fellowship, and so on. The program was founded and is now directed by Rev. Dr. Debbie J. Buchholz, who is herself Deaf. We are in the early stages of developing a potential partnership with DICC. Judy Gough and Ella Lentz visited them in-person and reported back to our committee. Then, Debbie joined us one Sunday in March to meet the rest of us and she preached in our service. Later, in both June and September, Julie Reis joined their Zoom Sunday services to meet and preach for them, as well. We also made a sizable donation from our Deaf Ministry fund to help support their work.

6. **Deaf Orphans in Ukraine**: New Horizons for Children has a safe haven (a big house in a remote location) for 33 Deaf orphans in Ukraine. This year we received a list of their first names and ages. We each chose 2 or 3 children to pray for daily throughout 2024. We have few details about their specific needs or activities, since confidentiality and safety are paramount. But the children know that Deaf adults in America care about them and are praying for them by name.

In Memoriam:
We lost two members this year. We cherish our memories of each.

1. Leslie Zinza (75) died unexpectedly on March 6th
2. Barbara Charles (96) died after a long illness on June 17th

Bishop's Search – Mike Scrutton

On May 4, 2024, the Rt. Rev. Austin Keith Rios was ordained and consecrated as the Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of California. He became our diocesan bishop and the Ninth Bishop of California following the retirement of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Marc Handley Andrus on July 31, 2024. Bishop Rios was installed at Grace Cathedral on August 11, 2024.

With Bishop Austin's consecration, the work of the Search and Transition Committee, including St. James' member Mike Scrutton, concluded. We look forward to serving with Bishop Austin in the years to come, and to welcoming him to St. James' in the future.

Blessing Bags – Mary Frances Leopold & Marcus Pun

In December 15, 2023, the Blessing Bag Ministry of St. James' was awarded a very generous grant from the Celtic Cross Society of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, in the amount of $4,374.00. The money comes from parking fees the Seminary charges during Cal football games. The fund has roughly $12,000 to distribute each year.

That month we assembled 24 Blessing Bags for the end of the 2023 calendar year while exploring different sources for affordable blankets for the homeless in the winter. We ended up choosing the "Standard Relief Blanket" from Northeast Fleece for the pricing, the discount offered to non-profit entities, and the size of the blankets. The dimensions, 80 inches by 60 inches, provide a lot of coverage that is useful because it helps keep the head covered and can be folded along the top for more head coverage. While not waterproof or windproof it has a tight weave and holds heat. We can order in quantities of 30, which is how they ship the blankets. They normally cost $9.00 each but with our discount we can purchase them for $6.75 per unit with free shipping, which takes about 4-6 days. Due to the limited hours of operation at the church, we are shipping the blankets to Mary Frances's home in Hayward. It's a big box.

Upon receipt of the first shipment, I (Marcus) tested out the blankets in cold weather for standing and sitting. They definitely help. Later on, I got positive feedback from one homeless person. We placed two more orders in 2024 for a total of 90 blankets.

By February 2024 we completed Build #1 by assembling 24 blessings bags to fill out our normal complement of 48 per build. The reason for 48 is the quantity that we can get products in cases.

For example, the canned spaghetti comes in flats of 12, the other items usually a multiple of 12 or 6 or 18. For a long time the Horizon milks came in flats of 24.

April: Build #2 of 48 units came with some slight modifications to contents. We went to the Cottonelle biodegradeable wipes. The packages are easy to split in two and we get exactly 28 wipes to put in each separate plastic bag when we prebuild the contents. We began adding the Fremont Family Resource Center handout with homeless and other helpful organizations, and their phone numbers. We added a few snacks and made slight adjustments with other supplies.

June: Build #3 We did an initial build of 24 bags. Part of our issue was time, Mary Frances with work and my care for my mother. We added lip balm with sunscreen. It is a necessity and prevents skin cracking and opportunistic infections around the mouth.

On July 1st we put out some sanitary and personal hygiene supplies, along with snacks for SAFE program participants. We assembled another 24 bags to complete Build #3 later in the month.

September: Build #4 By this time in 2023, we had finished 96 Blessings Bags This year's build doubled that amount to 192. We finally got more toothpaste and added a second small tube of toothpaste back into the package that was omitted the previous one or two builds.

November: Build #5 We enlisted a bunch of volunteers from the parish. Everyone had a great time putting the bags together and all was assembled in only a few hours. We added Halloween candy, of which there was plenty, doubled the number of N95 masks from 2 to 4, and added hand lotion, very useful in winter weather. I took advantage of a sale on Hershey Chocolate bars at Food Maxx, and those were added to each bag. Costco has dumped its chocolate milk so we went with the sterilized whole milk for now. The chocolate milk is a favorite among many of the homeless so we will be looking at other vendors and possible contributions.

For 2024, the Blessings Bags Ministry assembled 240 Blessings bags and purchased 90 blankets. About 15 of each was left to distribute at the end of the calendar year. We will be looking at snacks to determine what we can spare for the SAFE program participants this January 2025. We will know more as our funding future becomes clearer.

Cost offsets: An eye for discounts and timely purchases stretched out our budget. For instance, in 2022 we purchased 5 cases of tuna, 48-pop top cans, at 69 cents each from Grocery outlet. Our usual pricing is over $1.00 each. In 2023 I purchased multiple cases of sanitary wipes at significant discount from Costco which should last us through most of 2025, including handouts for our SAFE clients. Boxes have 560 wipes which are divided into 10 packages. We divide each package in half for 28 wipes. Given the packaging this is very easy to do and we put them in separate plastic bags. The quantities I purchased should last most of the year if we maintain current pace of builds at 5 per year.

We also have had donations from ThermoFisher of standard hygiene kits that included socks, toothbrush, soap, toothpaste, shampoo, and hand sanitizer, along with an encouraging note written by Thermo employees. Smaller donations have come in for various items such as socks and travel size lotions. Jasmine and Charisma donated some deodorant samples they had received from vendors that we were able to add to one full build.

Future cost increases, inflation, tariffs: In a report earlier this year we estimated the per bag cost at under $20 per blessings bag. Currently stated policies like tariffs, up to 20%, will affect the quantities of purchase for most of the goods we purchase. Most of the toiletries, socks and washcloths are produced outside of the country.

Future funding: One of our parishioners transferred money from one donation category to blessings bags. This allowed Mary Frances to release most of her receipts for past purchases in 2024 including the cost of the actual bags, 250 pieces at $436.36 that were delivered in late August. We should have enough bags for 3 full builds in the coming year before we make another purchase.

We did miss out on applying for the Celtic Cross Society grant. However, we will put together a "thank you" package of documentation and pictures, similar to this annual report, so that they know that the grant was well spent. I suggest we make sure that we apply for the grant the next calendar year. The grant application closes in early December 2025.

When I suggested that maybe some parish funds can be used, Vivienne recommended that we apply for the Episcopal Impact Fund of the diocese. These grants are by invitation only. Vivienne has offered to look into it. I would like us to increase the budget to get at least the same number of builds as 2024, 240, and enough to add one or two more 48 bag builds along with blankets. We would like additional resources that we can offer to our SAFE clients.

We also would like to try some of the local vendors for funding. Both Costco and Food Maxx have programs that we will investigate in consultation with Rev. Lori. Mary Frances is looking for a source for dental floss.

2024 has been a most successful year and most satisfying year for our homeless ministry. While this is not a major impactful effort due to the extent of Bay Area homelessness, it nevertheless supplies needed relief to those we give these bags to. The last three people I handed out both blankets and blessings bags to were demonstratively grateful. One just literally hugged the bag as he lay down. This is a worthwhile effort that should be continued, and at funding levels at least equal with that of 2024.

Chair Exercise / Tai Chi Class – Sylvia Ma

Chair Exercise/Tai Chi classes, a ministry of St. James' are being held on Zoom every Tuesday from 10:00-11:00am. All are welcome to join and there is no fee for the class.

We gather to do stretching and warm-up exercises, to learn the relaxing breathing/meditation exercises of QiGong, to learn some Tai Chi movements, and to do self-massage. The exercises are not strenuous, and we do them sitting down. No prior experience is necessary. In 2024, we had 46 classes with an average of 7 participants per class. Participants include St. James' parishioners and non-parishioners.

In 2025, we will continue to have the Tuesday morning Chair Exercise/Tai Chi classes on Zoom. If you or your family members or friends are interested, please join us. Contact Sylvia Ma by phone 510-552-6549 or by email hsiehtinghsueh@yahoo.com. A class reminder with Zoom link is sent out every Monday. The Zoom link could also be found on the St. James' website www.saintj.com on the Parish Events Calendar page for Tuesdays.

Communications – Mike Scrutton

There are multiple ways you can stay in touch with St. James'.

1. We send two **weekly email newsletters** via our provider MailChimp. These emails let everyone know about upcoming services, events and parish-wide notices. The Thursday email is comprehensive and covers all activities at St. James' while the Saturday evening email focuses on what you need to know about worship on Sunday morning. Do check for the weekly emails – they enable you to keep in touch with goings on at St. James' whether you're in church on Sunday or not, and they help keep announcements short! If you don't receive the weekly emails, complete the form at https://saintj.com/wp/weekly-e-mail-archive/weekly-updates/ or contact our Office Administrator at admin@saintj.com.
2. parish@saintj.com is an **email list** for general information and prayer requests. Anyone can send an email to the list, simply by sending your email to parish@saintj.com. The list is moderated, which means each post is checked so that we don't get spam messages. To be added to this list, please contact admin@saintj.com or mikescrutton@saintj.com.
3. Our **website** saintj.com is the primary online destination for all information about St. James', whether you're a newcomer or long-time member. We also maintain a presence across the internet, including Facebook & Instagram (our social media channels), YouTube (for service live-streams and recordings), and our weekly sermons can be found wherever Podcasts are found, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify and TuneIn or ask your smart-speaker to "Play Sermons St. James' Episcopal Church".
4. Our **monthly newsletter**, The Window, is posted on our website saintj.com. A print copy is available by contacting the church office.

Our **parish calendar** is updated on our website, saintj.com. A summary can be seen on our homepage, and a detailed version of all events can be found by clicking the "View Full Calendar" link. The online calendar is also where you can find links to events hosted on Zoom.

Counters Report – Jan Brandt

The Counters assist the Parish and Treasurer by counting and documenting pledge, non-pledged offerings and funds from users of the parish. The counters are conscientious and faithful behind-the-scenes workers, many of whom serve on several parish committees.

Four of the eight counters have served since the inception of the group in 2002. The members are committed to accurately recording and keeping the confidentiality of your donations. Gail Blalock and Jan Brandt have been counting since that time. Counting includes documenting donations in the Church Windows Software, preparation quarterly/annual giving statements. Counters also frequently volunteer as cashiers and counters for special events such as the Pancake Supper.

Please be kind to your Counters by including your pledge number on your check or bank Bill Pay (if not in pledge envelopes).

Deanery Report, Southern Alameda County Deanery – Jim McConnell

The Southern Alameda County Deanery met three time in 2024, plus thee additional meeting to cover convention Budget, Resolutions and to attend the installation of Bishop Austin Rios.

- John Wagas reported on Young Adult Task Force requesting funds for a retreat; $1,500 approved
- Corazon project's next build was June 2024; $5,000 support was approved from Deanery account. An additional $1,000 was approved as a deposit for 2025. Rev. Ron Culmer will be seeking participation and financial support from Bishop Austin for 2025 builds.
- Disaster Preparedness team needs a new representative.
- We need 2 Executive Council representatives: 1 to fill a 2-year term and the other for the full 3-year term.
- EJ presented the Resolutions Committee representatives and resolution submission process.
- Our new President is Rev. Justin Cannon, our new Vice President is Shawn Anderson.

Our Deanery Representatives: Mary Frances Leopold, John Wagas, Mike Scrutton, Ken Trant. Alternate: Jim McConnell

Endowment Fund Report – Meg Amouroux

The St. James' Endowment Fund was established in 2004 when parishioners indicated they had included St. James' in their estate planning. In 2006, the Memorial Garden Endowment was established, followed by the Little Church Endowment in 2007. In addition to estate planning, gifts are given to the funds as celebrations, memorials, or to honor friends and those who serve at St. James'.

The funds are presently invested with the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) and are overseen by the Endowment Board. The Endowment Board currently includes John Butterfield (Chair), Tom Blalock, Patty Lacy, Giri Singh, Meg Amouroux (Secretary) and St. James' Treasurer Bruce Roberts, who is an *ex officio* member of the Board.

While protecting the principal, distributions can be made annually and reflect the growth of the fund. As of this writing, we have not yet received year-end numbers but can share numbers from the end of the 3rd Quarter of 2024: the Principal Value at the end of September 2024 was $252,609.70 and the Market Value was $338,321.82. This reflects a market value increase of $35,265 for the year (at the end of Q3) which is approximately 11.6%.

The Board has made two distributions this year: $7,000 from the General Fund at the direction of the Vestry, and $1600 at the direction of the Memorial Garden committee, two of the three recipients of endowment distributions. The Little Church committee elected not to receive a distribution this year.

In June, we welcomed Canon Davey Gerhard for a coffee-hour presentation about planned giving. Davey is the Canon for Stewardship and Director of Development for the Diocese of California.

Executive Council Report – Mary Frances Leopold

With heartfelt thanks to The Very Rev. Kirsten Snow Spalding, chair of the Executive Council to allowing me to use her summary notes to construct this review.

The Executive Council is a body of volunteers comprised of two elected Representatives from each Deanery as well as some members appointed by the Bishop. The Executive Council serves with the Bishop as the "Vestry" of the Diocese and is primarily responsible for overseeing the finances properties of the Diocese. A major part of the duties of the EC revolve around approving budget items and expenditures.

The Executive Council retreat in January 2024 celebrated seventeen years of Bishop Marc Andrus' ministry and welcomed Bishop Austin K. Rios as he began his transition as our ninth bishop. The EC authorized funds to upgrade the Bishop's residence in San Francisco and to provide moving and travel funds for both Bishop Marc and Bishop Austin. Working with the Standing Committee, the EC oversaw the budget for the Installation of and welcome festivities for Bishop Austin. The EC negotiated and approved Bishop Austin's letter of agreement with the Diocese. Bishop Rios hired a new Canon to the Ordinary for the Diocese of California, the Reverend Canon J. Sierra Reyes. In coordination with Bishop Austin and Diocesan staff, the EC has begun a Strategic Visioning Process that will engage the entire Diocese. The outcomes of this process will be presented to Convention in 2025.

The Diocese also hired a Canon for Racial, Social and Environmental Justice in February 2024. This position was approved by the Executive Council in 2023 as the request of Bishop Marc. The Very Rev. Eric Metoyer (now Canon Metoyer) began his full-time work in this ministry in September 2024.

The EC established a sub-committee and thoughtfully deliberated a policy for how to decide what to do with Diocesan property when it is no longer being used for parish or other diocesan ministry. The EC followed a pilot policy and decided to sell the Diocesan property that was formerly Holy Innocents in Corte Madera. A final policy on Disposition of Property has been adopted and as well as companion policy to determine the use of proceeds from a sale or lease of Diocesan property. Land adjacent to St. Dorothy's Rest that had been purchased years ago as investment property and to protect the boundaries of the retreat, over many years, has been sold. While retaining the use of the land for camping, the sale will remove the cost of its maintenance and provide funds to retire debt, repair facilities and invest in growth.

The EC approved Assessment Relief requests in November 2024 to several churches and has also worked with St. John's in Oakland to extend line of credit to allow capital improvements. The EC is working on rolling out a Congregational Audit service and supporting the ongoing Vital and Thriving program.

The EC established a Program and Budget Committee to work with the Finance Committee and the Chief Financial Officer on the Diocesan Budget for 2025 and approved a draft budget to be presented to Convention 2024. The EC established a Communications Committee to improve communications between the EC and parish members. The Nominations Committee included an EC representative. The EC regularly receives updates from the Clergy Housing Task Force on their work between conventions and Bishop Rios has begun the process of fund raising to set aside a fund that new clergy in the Diocese could borrow from to cover down payments for housing.

The EC has re-established a Congregational Development Committee to work with Bishop Austin to shape new priorities for the EC as a fruit of the Strategic Visioning Process. Canon Section 8.06 provides that the Executive Council shall organize and supervise a Congregational Development Committee ("CDC"), to be composed of the bishop or a person designated by the bishop, one cleric and one lay person designated by each Deanery, and up to seven members appointed by the Bishop, and that the Bishop shall appoint the Chair of the CDC. The purpose of the CDC is specified in the Canon to include matters involving mission congregations. No term limits have been specified for members of the CDC yet and the Canon to the Ordinary will chair the committee. The EC plans for it to be operational in the first part of 2025.

Facilities – Dave Nelsen

The purpose of the facilities team is to manage the maintenance of the buildings and grounds of St. James'. Similar to our homes, equipment and appliances grow old and break, trees grow too large for their space, issues with electrical and plumbing systems need to be addressed. The facilities team addresses needs for repairs and maintenance by organizing volunteer work parties or finding suitable contractors to do necessary repairs. These are some of this year's significant activities:

- We continued to contract out our janitorial and some landscaping work to Fernando Janitorial Service. Fernando cleans and vacuums our buildings and keeps up the grounds adjacent to the buildings.
- An area on the roof of the little church was damaged in strong winds. This was fixed in January by Sierra Roofing who replaced many shingles.
- J.T.S. Tree Service planted four trees along the sidewalk on Thornton Ave in March.
- Lights which illuminate our banner and St. James sign have been vandalized several times, requiring replacement of the fixtures as well as some wiring.
- The gay pride flay we often display next to the banner has been vandalized and stollen many times over the years. In November when it was stolen again we were able to track it due to Jan Scrutton sewing a tracking device into the seam. The thieves drove to San Jose and eventually dumped it in a trash can in a park. Jan and Mike recovered it the following day, relatively undamaged.
- The push type power mower gets a real workout on the uneven grounds and tough weeds around campus. It finally broke and was repaired in May.
- In April, Roadrunner Glass replaced a Sunday school window which had broken due to high winds blowing the adjacent door into it. Doorstops have been installed to prevent this from happening again.
- A leak was detected under the little church in June. This was fixed by Pete of Pete's Pipes which involved replacing six feet of old galvanized pipe with copper pipe.
- The sewer line in the parish hall backed up again in August. It was finally cleared by Pete. There is history with this. Roots continue to grow into the pipe and cause the backup. There are several options to fix this and we will be focusing on which to pursue in 2025.

- Yellowjackets built a nest close to the lawn in front of the churches. In August Alameda County Vector Control came out and neutralized the nest.
- Our smoke detectors have all aged out. Six new smoke detectors and three combination smoke/carbon monoxide detectors have been installed around the campus. These will expire in ten years and their batteries should last that long.
- A leak developed in the roof over the nursery in the big church in November. American Foam Experts fixed the initial problem but more repairs need to be completed. They installed this roof in 2020 and their work comes with a 15 year warranty.

Faith Formation – Rev. Lori Walton

For our Lenten Series, our seminarian Karla held sessions on looking at art and scripture. This was held on zoom. For Advent, Jan Scrutton and I hosted a zoom gathering to discuss the book "Advent in Plain Sight".

Two bible studies meet on a weekly basis. On Mondays, six committed parishioners meet for an hour to check-in, read scripture, and discuss. We continue a study on Genesis. On Wednesdays, another five parishioners meet to check-in and discuss scripture. For much of the year, we used the Bible Project's study on the Sermon on the Mount.

A few forums were held between the 8:00 and 10:30 services. These included a review of the Diocesan proposed resolutions, forums on the Safe Parking outreach program, a budget review meeting, and a discussion on planned giving chaired by Davey Gerhardt.

One baptism class was held for two families preparing to baptize their children.

I continued supporting a Lay Discernment Committee, a small group meant to work with John Wagas. This group's role is to listen for God's call in John's life and affirm whether or not they perceive God's call to be towards ordained ministry. In November, John was made a postulant for Holy Orders and anticipates beginning seminary in the fall of 2025.

Faith & Fellowship Dinners – Rev. Lori Walton

In 2023, we restarted our Faith and Fellowship Dinners with 26 adults and 4 children participating. The meals continued into 2024 with groups of 8-10 parishioners take turns hosting a meal over the course of a year. These dinners allow people to get to know each other in a more intimate and personal manner.

Finance Committee – Jan Brandt

The Finance Committee met (on Zoom) one time in 2024. The discussion and recommendations again involved transferring funds to Charles Schwab's group of CD's to earn more interest and to ensure the Special Interest funds were fully covered by FDIC insurance.

Members of the committee: Jan Brandt (Chair), Rev. Lori, Mike Scrutton (Pledge Chair), Bruce Roberts (Treasurer) and most recently adding Giri Singh.

We appreciate and celebrate the input and advice from the late Craig Gentner over the past three years, he will be sorely missed.

Flatlanders – Ladies' Weekend – Laura Winter

Purpose: to offer a relaxing weekend at the shore away from daily responsibilities to the women of St. James' and their female friends.

The women of St. James' spent another fun weekend at Pajaro Dunes on Monterey Bay in September. The unit we rent each year is spacious and offers a view of the sand and water from inside and on the balcony. A boardwalk and steps provide very close access to the beach, encouraging lots of walks along the shore. We breathe the fresh air and get exercise in a beautiful setting. Along the way we often find treasures such as shells and sand dollars. Once again, we spent most of our time that wasn't on the beach sharing stories, playing games, eating delicious food. The Sunday morning service was special as always, worshipping together with the ocean providing background accompaniment throughout.

All women are welcome to join us the weekend of September 18-21, 2025. New members are always welcome. The usual group is between 10-14 ladies each year and the cost runs between $200-$300 depending on how many participate. We have heard more interest for the 2025 relaxing in the company of a group of fine women, please consider participating this year.

Feel free to speak with Mary Casas, Nancy Castaneda or Laura Winter for more information.

Greeters – Dave Nelsen

The purpose of the Greeters ministry is to welcome visitors and guests to St. James'. This may involve directing them to the nursery or Sunday school rooms and introducing them to people currently staffing these areas. The greeter, standing with the rector, is often one of the first members of St. James' a visitor encounters. The greeter represents St. James' and serves the rector by being a host to visitors at a time the rector is often too busy to give a visitor the time or attention they may need. Thank you Gregg Feeney, Craig Gentner*, Scott Whitaker, Alice Johnson and Dave Nelsen for your welcoming presence. (*Craig passed away in late 2024, we're saddened to lose his presence in this ministry.)

Hospitality / Coffee Hour Hosts – Mary Frances Leopold & Marcus Pun

Mary Frances and I have had two goals in mind since we assumed leadership of hospitality; to provide not only a welcoming attractive atmosphere after Sunday services but also build a place where people can relax, snack, and linger in conversation with fellow parishioners. Our hope has been to strengthen personal connections, that allows our congregation to discover each other in a relaxed space. We know that St. James' isn't about coffee and cake, but we hope that Coffee Hour provides an incentive to sit and stay awhile.

We have noticed that in 2024, the percentage of parishioners from the 8am service who stay has increased. Most people who stay will hang out for at least half an hour and most Sundays there

are a few people around until the start of the 10:30 service. Attendance after the 10:30 service varies but post-service attendance at coffee hour is up and it can be quite active through 12:30 PM or even later, 12:45 PM.

Aside from maintaining a quality level of hospitality after each service we also help out with special events when called upon. That includes special purchases like sheet cakes for volunteer day or supporting other activity days.

Last November, we started a day-after-Thanksgiving potluck. While attendance was small it was a lot of fun and people had a good time. We hope to repeat this in 2025.

In keeping with ongoing health and safety concerns, we recently replaced the filters on one of the Corsi-Rosenthal boxes, making it fully functional, so that we now are back to running two air filters when the parish hall is occupied. While the older filter looks darker it still has plenty of airflow. Aside from filtering out viruses, the boxes filter the air in general, which eliminates a lot of dust particles, a current health concern since we are within a half mile from the freeway and Thornton Ave is quite busy.

We had some issues with our older coffee pots and John Amouroux recently repaired one of the older coffee makers. We are in need of a new pot to heat water as the current one leaks, and we should think of replacement of the older pots as time goes on. We have no idea how old they are. The use is weekly only, but after a lot of years they will and have, developed issues.

2025 goals: There has been some confusion as to what the hospitality hosts should purchase and how much of that falls on the shoulders of staff. We hope to straighten that out. We have had a few lapses with supplies. For the most part everything is good but we have situations like the wrong size biodegradable garbage bags and we occasionally run out of the white paper towels. Over time people have been getting used to sorting their garbage and recyclables. We hope for better sorting in the future, especially the groups using the parish hall outside of coffee hours.

Hunger and Homelessness Vigil with Abode Services & Tri City Interfaith Council – Jan Scrutton

Approximately 60 people attended this years Homelessness Vigil on Monday December 2nd. 110 individuals were named out loud and had candles displayed in their memory.

Rev. Lori hosted the event and gathered together other faith leaders to take part. Opening and closing messages were given by Reshma Inamdar, President of the Tri-City Interfaith Council and board member of Abode Services and Abode Property Management and by Viven Wan, CEO of Abode Services.

Prayers were offered from the Unitarian, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu & Buddhist faiths. Jennifer Ravera offered a song while the candles were lit and the commendation of souls was offered by Rev. Lori Walton.

IT Report – Mike Scrutton

St. James' Information Technology (IT) provides the necessary on-campus infrastructure to enable staff to conduct the electronic work of the parish. This year we upgraded our VOIP phone system and replaced the Office Administrator's PC. A wireless network was installed for the Choir to enable the updating of their music tablets.

Lay Eucharistic Visitors – Rev. Lori Walton

Our Lay Eucharistic Visitor program has become an important expression of pastoral care for the parish. Homebound and hospitalized members of the church are brought communion and the prayers of the congregation. Our visitors are Marilyn Rose, Elaine Miller, Missy Bontempo, George Siegmann, Vivienne Paratore, Bev Mosier and Meg Amouroux (with Elaine Miller and Lynn Locher retiring).

Lectors and Lay Eucharistic Ministers – George Siegmann

Lectors and Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs) are dedicated parishioners who read the scripture lessons and assist in the liturgy and at the altar. They work hard to make each church service a worshipful experience for everyone, and have been very flexible as schedules change.

Lectors serving at the 8:00 a.m. Communion Service during 2024 were Bob Doherty, Brian Cochran, Patty Lacy, Mary Frances Leopold, John Amouroux, Marcus Pun, Tom Blalock and Laura Winter. Vivienne Paratore and Meg Amouroux serve as Lectors when needed.

Lectors serving at the 10:30 a.m. Communion Service were Amy Davis, Keith Westra, Bruce Roberts, Peter Maina, Jim McConnell, Jasmine Reynolds, Samir Kalitta. Ken Trant, Will Feliciano, Emily Dunn, Nadia Singh and Mike Scrutton. Emily Dunn and Nadia Singh were welcome additions to the Lector Ministry this year. Bethany Vacchieri and Helen Matausch also read during 2024. Victor Bontempo will be a Lector in 2025. We will also be having someone from the Youth Group reading every other month.

At the 8:00 a.m. Communion Service, LEMs lead the procession to the altar by carrying the Cross, lighting the candles, reading the Prayers of the People and assisting the Celebrant. LEMs serving at the 8:00 a.m. service during 2024 were Vivienne Paratore, Meg Amouroux, Brian Cochran and Laura Winter.

When there are no Acolytes at the 10:30 a.m. Communion Service, the LEMs performed the same duties as those at the 8:00 a.m. service. When there are Acolytes at the service, the LEMs lit the candles and read the Prayers of the People.

LEMs serving at the 10:30 a.m. service were John Wagas, Matt Hurley, Will Feliciano, Marilyn Rose, Isaiah Zacharia, Barbara Milligan and George Siegmann. Isaiah Zacharia and Barbara MIligan joined the LEM ministry in 2024.

Our seminarian, Karla Koon, served as LEM at both Communion Services until she became ill.

I am so appreciative of the service that the Lectors and LEMs perform and for their willingness to volunteer when staff is needed for additional services.

Little Church Renovation Committee – Sylvia Ma

The Little Church Renovation Committee was commissioned by the Vestry in 2012 to study and recommend repairs/maintenance/renovation of the Little Church. We have been meeting and submitting written reports to the Vestry on a regular basis. The Vestry reviews each repair/maintenance /renovation proposal and approves each funding. The Committee consists of The Rev. Lori Walton, Sylvia Ma (chair), Scott Kennedy (emeritus), Chris Perry (emeritus), Jim Cunningham (emeritus), Patty Lacy, Jim McConnell, Mary Casas, Tom Blalock, Jan Brandt, Bobbie Tomkinson, Laura Winter, Bruce Roberts, Dave Nelsen, Mary Frances Leopold, and Marcus Pun.

No renovations occurred in 2024.

Live Streaming / Online Presence Worship – Mike Scrutton

The purpose of our live-streaming ministry is to enable those not physically present to see and join in with our worship. We share video from our Big Church sanctuary for those who are unable to be with us in-person due to health or physical distance and enable those seeking a church home to experience worship from St. James', with the ability to discover our style of worship, music and preaching.

Mike Scrutton creates the templates for the PowerPoints for the season to match the bulletin, our office administrator Ron Cook adds the weekly Hymns and Psalm, and Elizabeth Hart advances the slides during the service. We also provide Closed Captions so that online worshipers can follow the sermon (simply press the CC button on the screen to turn them on or off).

For Palm Sunday we use an additional camera to enable us to include outdoor worship in our service livestream. We also used an extra camera to extend our coverage of the choir and musicians for the Christmas Eve service.

Our regular livestream duties are shared by Mike Scrutton, John Amouroux and Samir Kalitta, with Jan Scrutton and Meg Amouroux assisting on occasion.

In addition to our regular services, we provided live streams for one memorial service and one baptism during 2024. We also streamed the Annual Meeting.
Our YouTube channel has 165 (up 14 from last year) subscribers on December 31st 2024. In 2024, Sunday Worship streams were watched live an average of 9 (same as 2023) times. Sunday services were streamed on average 16 times (up 1) on the first day (including those watching live), and 32 times (up 5) in the first week. Our Easter Sunday service was streamed 59 times (up 20) in the first week. Our Christmas Eve Family service was streamed 15 times (down 1), and our traditional Christmas Eve Holy Communion was streamed 25 times (down 9). Overall, these numbers suggest a slight uptick in online viewing from last year's numbers.

Our website and YouTube channel features an introductory "Welcome to St. James'" video, which was watched 76 times in 2024 (same as in 2023).

Thanks to a generous donation from a parishioner, our equipment was expanded in time for the Advent season to include an additional camera and an upgraded video switcher. This gives us more flexibility on available camera angles and improves the quality of our live stream.

Local Discernment Committee – Bev Mosier

A Local Discernment Committee (LDC) is a group of three to five members who meet regularly with an individual seeking to explore a life decision, e.g., a call to holy orders. DioCal Guidelines require that anyone seeking ordination work with, and then be endorsed by, an LDC at each of several steps in the process. During 2024, we walked along side two seekers, our intern Karla Koon and our newest postulant, John Wagas.

John's committee includes Brian Cochran, Sylvia Ma, Jim McConnell and Bev Mosier. We met together with John monthly for two years utilizing a DioCal curriculum that facilitates the kinds of discussions leading to self-analysis, reflection, and the occasional "lightbulb" discovery. We finished those guided exercises in the spring, followed by John's nomination and acceptance to postulancy. Now we are meeting with John roughly every other month to continue supporting him through the next phase of his journey.

Sylvia Ma, Jim McConnell and Bev Mosier also make up Karla's LDC. We met with Karla monthly when she first came to St. James' and fully expected to see her through her diaconal ordination this year. To everyone's great sadness, Karla became quite ill, so her process was put on hold. Now we are joined together with the whole parish in supporting Karla with our prayers.

McCutcheon Concert Fundraiser – Sylvia Ma

The 2024 John McCutcheon Concert was held on January 15. We sold a total of 190 adult tickets and 3 child tickets. These tickets include 112 tickets sold online through Eventbrite, and 9 will call tickets. About 65% of tickets were sold to non-parishioners.

- Total concert ticket income was $5745. Prize drawing income was $1244. Snack bar brought in $177. So grand total income was $7166.
- Our reimbursed expenses totaled $4630.63. We netted $2535.37.
- A team of more than 50 volunteers helped to make this concert a success.
- We received twenty-one donated prizes for our prize drawings.

The McCutcheon Concert Team had requested and received approval from the Vestry to donate:

- $1000 to ABODE Services and
- $1000 to S.A.V.E. and
- $1000 to the Covenant House to help youth experiencing homelessness
- These local charities were recommended to us from the Vestry.

The 2024 McCutcheon Concert was our last McCutcheon concert, per our conversation with the Lead Team last year.

Thank you for all your support these twenty years of our fundraising/outreach project: the McCutcheon Concert.

Faithfully submitted, Sylvia Ma and the McCutcheon Team

Men's Trip – Gregg Feeney

For the last 16+ years, a group of men from St. James' head east to Arnold or Twain Hart areas on the 3rd Thursday in August. We rent 1 or 2 homes and stay from Thursday evening to Sunday morning. The group carpools as we try to reduce our carbon footprint as we travel east to the mountains. Our group hikes, golf, wine & beer taste, short trips to areas of interest. This year our trip cost $235 per person which includes food, housing, and non-alcoholic beverages

This year we had a smaller group due to changes on the date and we headed to Groveland – Pine Mountain Lake area. It turned that our area we chose was too far removed from town and there was not a whole lot to do due to the size of the town. Some spent the day traveling to Yosemite and captured some great photos which was shared on the newsletter. A small group played golf and enjoyed the course. It was a good course but a little farther driver than we anticipated.

Next year we will be headed back to the Arnold or Twain Hart since it has more to offer for all attendees. We still need to grow our group and bring in younger folks. The group shares stories, participate in great ideas on making St. James' even better and allow us to get to know attendees on a more personal level. A note will go out in February for a Save the Date so our group can attract more and do more planning.

Memorial Garden and Columbarium – Bob Doherty

The St. James' Columbarium and Memorial Garden are managed by a joint committee composed of St. James' parishioners.

Financial Status:

1. Ending account balance as of December 31, 2024 is $19,779.80*

Memorial Garden Interments and Headstone Purchases

1. Five Plots were purchased for the following individuals in the Memorial Garden:
   a. John Maloney
   b. Brandon and Dawn Hoffman
   c. Jill Buono
   d. Ivy Sankar (*$1,000 paid on 12/31/24 not posted in 2024 financial report)
2. Ashes interred in the Memorial Garden in 2024:
   a. Betty McCoy – 7/27/24
3. No "In Memory Of" headstones were purchased in 2024.

Memorial Garden Activity

1. While there were activities that occurred during 2024, due to the Covid pandemic, the Columbarium/Memorial Garden Committee did not resume regular in-person meetings in the Vestry Room until September 1, 2024. At this meeting the Committee approved the transition of the Committee Chair position from Ruth Poole to Bob Doherty effective September 1, 2024. The committee thanked Ruth for serving 20 years as Committee Chair, for what was initially a one-year commitment.
2. The Garden was maintained on an "as needed basis" by committee members, parishioners and family members for much of 2024.

3. Andy Nuguen Landscaping did a major cleanup of the Memorial Garden in May 2024, and in October 2024 the Vestry approved $400 for quarterly cleanups by Andy Nuguen Landscaping.
4. We did not have a Memorial Day Coffee Hour event in 2024.
5. When appropriate the USA Flags were displayed throughout the garden and St. James' campus (July 4th, Memorial Day, Veteran's Day).

Committee Memorial Garden Goals for 2025

1. Increase Committee membership and volunteer list for garden maintenance.
2. Work with Mattos Monuments to clean and repaint information on headstones worn by time and weather.
3. Place "RESERVED" markers at sites for all plots reserved but not yet interred.
4. Explore the option of expanding the Memorial Garden along the South fence (across from the playground).
5. Evaluate the need for expanding the current sprinkler irrigation system in 2025.
6. Issue a letter to the parish regarding garden by-laws for grave sites.
7. Complete an assessment of potential price increases for plots starting in 2025.

Columbarium Activity 2024

1. Ashes interred in the Columbarium in 2024:
   a. Patricia Yokum - 6/14/24
   b. Pat Spalding - 8/17/24
2. 20 urns and covers for ashes were purchased in 2024 for future interments in Columbarium niches, and they are currently stored in the ladder closet.

Committee Columbarium Goals for 2025

1. Two Columbarium niches are still available for purchase.
2. On September 23, 2024, a special meeting with the Columbarium/Memorial Garden Committee in the Vestry Room was chaired by Rev. Lori to discuss potential expansion of the Columbarium.

   a. Of the 64 niches in the Columbarium, only 2 unreserved niches are available for purchase, 43 are occupied and 19 are purchased but not yet unoccupied.

   b. There was discussion about replicating the existing Columbarium on the other side at the back of the Little Church. But what cost ~ $10,000 in 1990 would cost at least 3 times that today. So, modular expansion options will be explored in 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,
Robert Doherty: Columbarium/Memorial Garden Committee Chairperson

Newsletter – The Window – Laura Winter

Purpose: to provide church news to the parish community and a glimpse for possible members seeking to discover who St. James' church is.

The Window continued to be published monthly in 2024. The goal is to provide information about the goings-on at St. James', sharing information about upcoming events and recaps of recent occasions. It provides a spot to find birthdays, anniversaries, and those needing our prayers. Parish members are invited to offer essays, photographs, book reviews, and other spiritual offerings.

The newsletter team is small but mighty. John Wagas and Laura Winter trade off assembly of each issue, with Gregg Feeney inserting the prayer list, milestones, and the financial summary each month. Brian Cochran proofreads each issue before it is published. We all strive to present a high quality representation of St. James' to all who read The Window. The team thanks Ron Cook and Mike Scrutton for printing and posting each issue.

The newsletter is only as good as the articles submitted. We appreciate and thank all those who contribute to the content, especially the vestry for the front page article each month. It is wonderful to hear from so many voices. We also thank Rev. Lori, Jan Scrutton and Brian Cochran for their offerings this year. Brian wrote a series of articles about the different parts of our regular Sunday service, providing thought-provoking insight into what we pray each week. If you have something to include, send it to newsletter@saintj.com.

Outreach – Jan Scrutton

St. James' continued its practice of gathering **school supplies** for both Abode Services and Union City Family Center. We confirmed with each organization what their greatest needs were so the financial donations were used to purchase those most needed items for each group. Approx $1500 worth of supplies were delivered in all.

In addition to school supplies we supported Abode with **food donations** collected in the run up to the Homelessness Vigil.

Until this year our main contacts at Abode have been Carol Arata and Jean Morgan. For decades they have been contacts for so much of our outreach – for the dinner program, food collections, the Journey Home breakfasts and the Homelessness Vigil. This year they both retired and St. James' was represented at their retirement party when they were honored by city leadership and their colleagues for their work in this important fields since the early days of Abode Services.

In a new project the Vestry agreed to donating funds to Fremont City for use in supporting **children attending summer camps, after school programs and swimming lessons**. This meant us being identified as a silver level sponsor and having our logo appear on a board outside Aqua Adventure and on the Aqua Adventure website. The free passes to the water park we received helped cover the Sunday school trip in the summer.

Receptions – Nancy Casteneda

At St. James' we have a built a solid reputation for welcoming gatherings for a variety of events.

Our Receptions committee organizes food and decorations for on-campus church events such as weddings, memorial services, Bishop's visits, and special farewells. All are welcome to help prepare and/or set-up food as needed, set up the gathering spaces, assist with the flow of visitors, and pitch in to clean up.

Help is generally sought via an email or announcement to the parish.

Road Crew – Bruce Roberts

The era of the "Road Crew" has come to an end. Over the years, we have assisted our Music Director Jennifer Ravera and our Tech Leader Mike Scrutton with setting up and moving equipment used for St. James' service and activities. In addition, the Road Crew set up for the January 15 John McCutcheon Concert.

For future services and events, volunteers will be called to help on a more informal basis as needed. We thank all who have helped in the past, and all who will lend a hand in the future.

Senior Lunches – Jan Scrutton

Senior Lunches took place in March, June, September and December. These lunches are open to everyone although focused on retirees who are free for lunch midweek. They are funded from $5 donations and food donations. Each lunch has a different menu with choices available.

Thank you so much to those who have taken part this year in bringing food, helping set up or clear away or bringing food along. Each of this year's lunches drew 30-46 people and provided an opportunity to gather with old friends as well as to meet new people.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper – Dave Nelsen

Shrove Tuesday follows the season of Epiphany and is the last day before the fasting period of Lent. It is a day when people would traditionally use up "luxurious" foods like lard and sugar to ensure they wouldn't be wasted during Lent.

Following a long St. James' tradition we once again joined together to share a meal of pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage and ice cream. The men of the parish coordinated the operation, setting up, cooking, making plates, serving drinks and food and cleaning up afterward. People of the youth group and scouts helped with serving, bussing tables and flipping cakes. A second griddle was available again this year thanks to Kimo Awana. Dealing with all the tickets and guest coordinating were several women lead by Jan Brandt. This was a no cost event again this year thanks to the generosity of a parishioner. This is a wonderful occasion to serve, to be served and to reflect on the upcoming Lenten season. Thanks to everyone who helped and participated.

Social Media Presence – John Wagas, Jan Scrutton, Mike Scrutton

The purpose of St. James' social media presence and activity is to increase our exposure by informing people within and outside our parish community of the events and offerings at our

parish. This encompasses posts relating to upcoming and past events/services, parish resources including weekly emails, service livestreams, our newsletter The Window, and occasional posts concerning general Christian and Episcopal theology. Currently we have three administrators: John Wagas managing the day-to-day content with Mike and Jan Scrutton serving as editors and backup.

St. James' is present on Facebook and Instagram with regular posts/flyers appearing on Facebook & Instagram created by John Wagas and service live streams & recordings of past services available on Facebook created by Mike Scrutton. Links to the weekly newsletter are posted automatically to Facebook by our administrator Ron Cook.

At December 31st 2024, our Facebook page has 625 followers with a "Facebook Page reach" of 10,873 (the number of times any content from or about our page was seen). We posted to Facebook 156 times, including links to service livestreams and weekly emails. Our Instagram feed has 290 followers.

St. James' Cares – Nancy Casteneda

St. James' has long been a loving community that cares for one another. We know that there are times in everyone's lives when we could use some help. St. James' Cares is a confidential resource for help – for our parishioners, supported by our parishioners.

Everyone can participate in some way. Perhaps you can volunteer to make phone calls, visit home-bound parishioners, prepare meals, provide transportation or run simple local errands. Alternatively, you may be in need of one these services.

If you have a need or would like to volunteer, please contact the St. James' Cares team in one of these ways:

- Fill out a form (found in the pews and in other places around campus) and place it in the collection plate
- Call the church office
- Email the team at care@saintj.com
- Fill out the form on the website (click here for link)

Stewardship – The Rev. Lori Walton

The vestry continues to be responsible for the stewardship campaign for the parish with support from Jan Brandt, Mike Scrutton, and Bruce Roberts. Like last year, the campaign consisted of a vestry sermon and encouragement for all members to pledge through a direct mailing and verbal announcements. For the first time in recent memory, we were able to pass a budget in the black, and at the end of the calendar year, we ended up with a $19,000 surplus. For 2025, we received 7 new pledges, and 47% of returning pledgers increased their donations from the previous year. When comparing our 2025 statistics to 2023, we see that the increase from returning pledgers when added to new pledges is $84,000.

Vital & Thriving – Mike Scrutton

Vital and Thriving is a Diocesan initiative which uses Church Innovations materials and system for discerning God's vision for individual churches. St. James' elected to participate in this three-year process. We started by forming a steering committee and then a listening team in the fall of 2022.

Your Vital and Thriving Steering Committee, which comprises Jim McConnell, John Amouroux, Mike Scrutton, Brian Cochran, Vivienne Paratore and Rev. Lori Walton, attended several all-day training and networking sessions run by the Diocesan Vital and Thriving Leadership group on February 24, April 20, and October 19 (the October 19 meeting was hosted at St. James'. There were also evening meetings on Zoom on February 12 and March 18. Your Steering Team also met as a St. James' group on January 17, February 18, March 3, March 14, April 25, May 19, June 5, June 10, July 14, August 18, August 28, September 22, November 3, and December 16 where we discussed the next steps and how to accomplish the activities.

In February 2024, we received the last of 3 reports from Church Innovations which contained information distilled from public sources about the city of Fremont and a survey conducted of St. James' parishioners in December 2022. The Steering Committee concluded that we needed to supplement this information with data from the Tri-City area, given our location relative to Fremont, Newark and Union City and the wide distribution of our members. Mike Scrutton set about gathering information which was discussed by our committee and culminated in a report of our findings and areas of opportunity.

On June 15 2024, we held a "Corporate Spiritual Discernment Event" at St. James' where our report was presented, and 45 members of St. James' had an opportunity to give feedback and share suggestions of how we might react to the information. The slides and a video of the presentation can be found on the Reports page of saintj.com.

The Steering Committee spent time analyzing what we heard at the Corporate Spiritual Discernment event and a shortlist of five Missional and six Technical Challenges were presented to the Vestry on October 17 2024. Missional Challenges are defined as being areas where we know the problems are there, but we are not even sure what they are and that they are outside current repertoire of skills – these require further discernment to identify how we would implement them. Technical Challenges are defined as being areas where we know what the problem is and that the solution is already within our repertoire – these are areas within our skill set where Leadership and Vestry can determine next steps without much further analysis.

From the shortlist, the Vestry selected the Missional Challenges:

- **Welcoming Diverse Groups:** St. James' could actively reach out to and invite young adults, young families, the LGBTQ+ community, ex-evangelicals, ex-Catholics, and other disenfranchised groups, ensuring an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- **Utilizing Church Resources for Community Benefit:** St. James' could use our campus and unused land for community activities, such as food pantries, produce gardens, and community events like markets and festivals.

And the Technical Challenge:

- **Worship and Spiritual Growth:** St. James' could expand worship opportunities and invite guest preachers for diverse perspectives.

The Steering Committee have been working to determine our next steps for the Welcoming Diverse Groups challenge, and we expect to conduct further interviews in early 2025 to help us discern our direction.

Website – Mike Scrutton

The purpose of the website, saintj.com, is to act as the portal to the online ministry of St. James'. Its target audience is seekers, newcomers, and established members of the parish. We are deliberate in keeping the information it serves up-to-date, relevant, and fresh as it's a sign of the vibrancy of our church. It's the one-stop-shop to learn anything about St. James' and our ministry. We work to drive all online traffic to the website, whether visitors enter via social media, emails, YouTube or online searches since it's most effective to have a single location for events, Zoom links etc – avoiding the risk of contradiction or omission.

There were 8,834 website 'sessions' this year and 35,614 'page views'.

Wednesday Ante-Communion Service – Rev. Lori Walton

I continue to lead the Wednesday Ante-Communion service. This service continues to be held on zoom and is a place where the prayers and concerns of the parish are gathered. We also spend time discussing the upcoming Sunday lessons. The group numbers between 8-9 each week. In my absence, Sylvia Ma officiates the service.

Work Parties – Dave Nelsen

Directly tied to the Facilities Team, the purpose of the Work Parties is to offer opportunities to parishioners to be involved in the maintenance of the church buildings and grounds. It is also a time to socialize with folks, while working together and over a lunch we share following our work together.

Several organized work parties were held over the year when roofs and gutters were cleared, weeds brought under control, trees and shrubs were trimmed and many yards of wood chips were dispersed over the park to control weed growth and retain moisture. We've cleaned and serviced our five furnaces, replaced light bulbs and batteries and adjusted light timers, thermostats and clocks as needed. Windows were washed, plumbing issues were dealt with and miscellaneous things were repaired or replaced as they broke or wore out. There are many people to thank who participate in the maintenance of our campus and their time and talent is appreciated very much.

Our plan in 2025 is to meet each month on a specific Saturday, alternating between a social breakfast together and working on the campus.