

Annual Report 2025



St. James the Apostle Episcopal Church

Conroe, Texas

Staff

The Rev. Dr. Jerald W. Hyche, Rector

Jane Bates, Parish Administrator

Greg Nunn, Organist

Lacy Young, Director of St. James School

Juanita Siller, Sexton

2025 Vestry

2023-2025

Janet Anderson

Becky Page

Henry Lesesne

Alison Zabik

2024-2026

Jim Cheatham

Heather Manly

Rick Tate

Travis Wernecke

2025-2027

Kin Barker

Gary Clark

Paul Foulger

Martha Low

Vestry Members-elect 2026-2028

Susan Caffery

Sarah Olsen

Chris Tassos

Kevin Tucker

Cover photo: front entrance flower beds

*Back photo: entrance to the campus from
Highland Hollow*

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Rector's Report

The Rev. Dr. Jerald W. Hyche

Pounding. Scraping. Thumping. Rumbling. Crashing. These are just a few of the sounds that fill the air around me as I write this, my 16th annual Rector's report. My deadline for this report is today, which just happens to be the day my house is getting a new roof. Yes, I could leave the house and find a quieter place to sit and think and write. I could, but I'm not. Sounds strange, I know, but all the clatter seems a fitting background for reflecting on the life of our parish, at least our life in the year of our Lord 2025.

For one thing, we did get a new roof, so the noise takes me right back to that full week when we carried on despite the clamor and the clutter. For another thing, it all makes for a pretty good metaphor, one that I believe aptly describes so much about our life together over the past 12 months. About our mission as a church. About our ministry to each other and the community. About our hope for what God calls us to be and do in the years to come.

Off with the old – on with the new, as they say. Not that we changed everything. No, of course not. We held on to our beloved traditions. With a few of our usual, annual exceptions – Jazz Mass, Bluegrass Mass, Celtic Celebration – we continued



Caution tape blocked the way for a week, warning of workers teetering atop the church to replace the roof.



Fr. Jerald presents newly baptized Rowan Charles Hinkle Schalm, grandson of long-time parishioner Connie Culver.



The RenewalWorks Team at work.

to worship in the same liturgical rhythm we have for decades, walking through the spiritual seasons, sharing in the sacraments, gathering in the way the church has done for generations. Ushers still ushered. Greeters still greeted. Lectors still “lectored.” Eucharistic Ministers still served “the Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.” Greeters – and by that I mean everyone! – still warmly, genuinely welcomed newcomers looking for a church home. Meanwhile, parish life continued to flourish after the closing hymn on Sunday mornings. Parishioners still scoured scripture together, devoured novels together, stirred the Word of God into a brewskie together, molded our young ones in the Proverbial “way they should go” together.

On the face of it – as you can see in the pages that follow – 2025 looked and sounded a lot like the year before. But if you looked and listened a little closer to our life together, you could see and hear some rumbling. Maybe not something quite as noisy and messy as getting a new roof. But something not unlike it. I’m talking about the RenewalWorks Project, of course, which began as most spiritual movements do, with prayer. In early 2025, despite how our various ministries were humming along (or perhaps because they were!), I kept hearing a repeated response to my prayers for a clue about what might be next, what might be missing, what might be the best response to what God wants us to be and do in this unsettling age we’re living in. Again and again, in answer to my prayers, I heard the response – “spiritual renewal.” But how? After reviewing a the several church-revitalization and assessment programs that are out there, RenewalWorks seemed to fit the bill. Not only did it provide a time-tested structure for evaluating all aspects of church life – the life of an Episcopal parish, in particular – but it also made clear that spiritual renewal would be the penultimate goal.

So, we did it. For three months, a team of parishioners climbed up on the metaphorical roof of the church to get a better perspective on St. James. Equipped with a survey of the congregation, the team scraped away at old assumptions about who we are, why we call St. James home, and what we’re doing as a faith community. Over the course of four two-hour (or longer!) gatherings led by Mission Team leader Becky Page, the RenewalWorks crew rummaged through the clutter to see what was worth keeping, what needed to be thrown away, what new materials might be needed. Then they hammered out a plan – short-term goals for the coming year of our Lord 2026, long-term goals for years to come.

The full results of the team’s work will be revealed at the same time you find this 2025 Annual Report in your hands, at our 2026 Annual Parish Meeting. Too much to repeat here, but simply put, the plan is not so much a sweeping, fix-it-all, approach to church programming as it is what I hoped it would be – a plan to revitalize our spiritual life together. In short, we will be more spiritually intentional, integrating prayer, scripture and theological reflection over every aspect of our life together. Without naming names as I usually do in this space, I offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in the RenewalWorks Project. And I offer my deep gratitude to everyone who were faithful still in St. James’ mission and ministry over the past year, just as in so many years past. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Though I have no idea what we might hear or see from Spirit of God in the time to come, I have the utmost faith we will hear, and we will see, something. Something good. Something right. Something that will assure us of the only thing we really want to know. That God is with us. That Christ is for us. That the Holy Spirit is moving among us. Sometimes in noisy, messy ways, sure. But always renewing us, shrouding us with her love and mercy and grace.

So, yes, something like getting a new roof. Only it’s the kind that never wears out.



Senior Warden

Rick Tate

It was a true honor to serve as Senior Warden in 2025. St. James has been blessed with an exceptionally capable, devoted, and hard-working Vestry, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside such faithful leaders.

2025 was a productive and successful year for St. James, marked by meaningful improvements to our campus and important progress toward long-term planning and direction. Under the leadership of our Junior Warden, Jim Cheatham, major repairs and infrastructure upgrades were completed, including roof repairs and HVAC replacements and repairs. The Beautification Committee also made substantial improvements to the overall appearance of our campus, enhancing our landscaping and grounds.

Our dedicated Maintenance Team, Doug Sidelinger and Andy Williams (affectionately known as “Snake and Plunger”) completed numerous essential projects across the property, including repairs to the sprinkler system, plumbing, handrails, and other important facility needs. In addition, we implemented a new campus-wide communication system, including updated internet and phone service throughout St. James, including St. James School. Alarm communications were also upgraded to ensure continued compliance with municipal requirements. To improve safety, visibility, and long-term cost efficiency, new LED lighting was installed throughout the campus. This enhancement will reduce expenses while providing improved lighting for our buildings and parking areas.

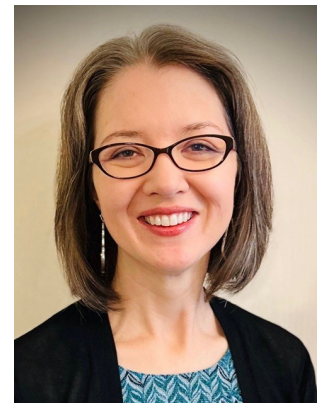
Finally, I would like to recognize Becky Page for her leadership of the RenewalWorks Project, which will help discern our direction as a church. I am grateful for the Lord’s continued blessings on St. James and for the many hands and hearts that make this parish strong. Thank you to Fr. Jerald, Vestry, staff, and all parishioners who serve so faithfully. It has been a great honor to serve as Senior Warden in 2025, and I remain committed to supporting St. James as we continue to grow in faith, fellowship, and service in the year ahead.

2025 Management Team

Rick Tate, Senior Warden
Jim Cheatham, Junior Warden
Bill Dougherty, Treasurer
John Rothwell, Vestry
Jane Bates, Parish Administrator



A crucial member of the Management Team, Parish Administrator Jane Bates works at the center of St. James’ daily operations throughout the week. Thanks, Jane!



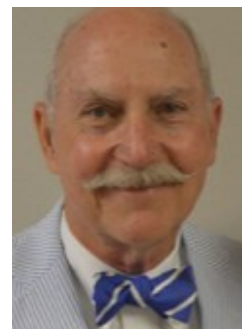
As she has for more than three years now, parishioner Julie Wernecke oversees all parish communications, formatting Sunday bulletins, the weekly e-newsletter, website and other special projects. Thanks, Julie!

St. James’ delegation to Diocesan Council in Ft. Worth in February included, from left, Martha Low, Chris Tassos, De’An Tate, and Fr. Jerald.



Junior Warden

Jim Cheatham



I have been busy all year overseeing multiple maintenance projects, as well as some capital improvement projects. Fortunately, I have had help from Doug Sidelinger, Andy Williams, and Rick Tate. They have all been generous with their time and money, resulting in a variety of improvements to our parish, including:

Installation of a new roof on the church, the Keeling Building, and the Greenwood Building; cost \$120,712.71, covered by insurance and a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Mold in the ceiling of the church



(caused by a roof leak) was cleaned and the cause eliminated. All lighting throughout the campus – inside and outside – were replaced with LED fixtures. Some of the expense of this project will be covered by a federal grant and an energy-saving incentive program from Entergy Corp. Meanwhile, multiple lighting issues in the church have been resolved by Andy and Doug. Rick oversaw the installation of a new and greatly improved fiber-optic system that has improved our internet on campus and livestreaming worship. As usual, maintenance of the air-conditioning system continues to be an ongoing necessity. One unit has been replaced, and another is on the list for being replaced soon. Railings in the choir area were provided and installed by Doug. The church's sound system has been improved and managed by Rick. Andy was responsible for an Eagle Scout improvement project in our flower beds in the parking lot.

Many thanks to Andy, Doug and Rick for their good work making our church campus safe, comfortable, and a beautiful place to gather on Sundays and other times of the week. And we all should be thankful for Parish Administrator Jane Bates, who informs me of issues that need to be addressed, manages the business office and keeps everything flowing smoothly.

Thank you for allowing me to serve.

Top, re-roofing the church and parish hall; above, Doug Sidelinger, left, and Andy Williams — aka "Snake" and "Plunger" — receive a blessing and thanks for their incredible work maintaining St. James' buildings and grounds.



Mike McNeill, whose deep-green thumb has cared for and beautified St. James' campus for decades was honored for his faithful service with a plaque installed on the grounds. The inscription — "God's gift, Mike's Labor" — is accompanied by an engraved bluebonnet. Mike spent years planting and nurturing the bluebonnets that blanket our campus each and every spring. Thanks again, Mike!





Mission

Becky Page

The St. James Mission Committee, joined by parishioners involved in specific outreach ministries, demonstrated Christ's love in 2025 by serving our community and embracing a servant's attitude through the generous giving of time and resources. We sought input from our various missions to better meet the needs of those we serve. Our ongoing goal is to make a meaningful difference in people's lives through the love of Jesus Christ.

Community Assistance Center, Melinda Zuber

The parish continued to collect and donate to CAC monthly items such as paper towels, grape jelly, etc. This year St. James' "Helping Hands" provided CAC families with generous donations of Christmas bags for Santa Cookies and Christmas morning breakfast. St. James participated in the annual Community Assistance Center Duck Race and raised our goal of \$100. Parishioner Martha Low came in third place! Martha donated her win back to CAC.

St. James Knitters Guild, Susan Bacon

The St. James Knitters Guild provides help to our community and others in need in the creation of Afghans, baby clothes and blankets, hats, shawls, throws, scarves and more. By auctioning items, the Guild provides financial assistance to a range of ministries, including Patterson Elementary School, St. James School, Seminary of the Southwest Scholarship Fund (in memory of one of our knitters), and funds to be used to send youth to summer camp at Camp Allen. Hats, throws and scarves are donated to the Veterans Administration in Conroe, and baby hats and blankets to the Lone Star Clinic. Honorary Guild members Doug Sidelinger and Lori Veazey built a display for our auction items. We gifted The Rev. Suzanne Hollifield a donation to celebrate her ordination to the priesthood in February. We also donated to our St. James Cub Scout Pack.

Patterson Elementary School, Becky Page

In 2025, we continued our partnership with Patterson Elementary in Conroe ISD, where 74 percent of students are economically disadvantaged and 70 percent represent minority populations. Through this partnership, we donated 77 clothing items and provided Christmas gifts to 50 students, along with staff luncheons, a welcome-back event, and staff Christmas treats. With support from the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, additional clothing also was provided to students in need. This mission has been a joy and privilege, made possible by the generosity of our parishioners and the strong relationship we share with the school.

Salvation Army Soup Kitchen, Bill Dougherty

St. James parishioners have been cooking and serving hot lunches at the Salvation Army in Conroe twice a month for more than 30 years. In 2025, we continued to

2025 Mission Team

Becky Page
Henry Lesesne
Heather Manly



Nora Olsen, above, enjoys an international meal at Art Camp VBS. Below, parishioners deliver Christmas gifts to Patterson Elementary.



prepare at least 80 meals each session, with any leftovers re-heated by Salvation Army staff and served to shelter residents for their evening meal. In 2025, there were: 1,152 hot lunches served; 22 serving days (no Thanksgiving; no Christmas Day); 18 volunteers (7-10 per session); Total cost: \$4,700 (cost per meal – about \$2.70)

Art Camp VBS, Chet Zabik and Jessi Swearingen

This year's Art Camp VBS once again was a week to remember — and without hesitation, the best yet. Rooted in the theme, “Around the World: We Are the

Body of Christ,” our campers explored unity, inclusion, acceptance, and love through the lens of faith, creativity, and global community.

We highlighted five nations — Egypt, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Armenia, and India — each day celebrating a different culture while reinforcing the truth that, though we are many, we are one body in Christ. Every story, activity, and lesson pointed back to Jesus and His call to love one another.

Campers rotated through five incredible studios, spending a jam-packed 30 minutes in each. These studios were led by gifted and passionate studio leaders who once again shared their talents in powerful and meaningful ways:

- Music Studio introduced original songs written especially for Art Camp, filling the halls with joy and praise.
- Theater Studio performed “We Are the World” using sign language, a beautiful and moving expression of unity and inclusion.
- Crafts Studio celebrated the Feast of St. Thomas by decorating elephants and constructing traditional Filipino Parols — star-shaped lanterns symbolizing hope, light, and the Star of Bethlehem that guided the Three Kings.
- And words truly fall short when describing the creativity, imagination, and wonder that exists within our iWonder Studios — it is something that must be seen to be fully understood.
- Cooking Studio introduced the campers to food from around the world, such as naan from India, wat from Ethiopia, Koshari from Egypt and of course our traditional monkey bread and snow cones.

This ministry was made possible by an extraordinary community effort. We were blessed with 45 volunteers, including family members who traveled from out of state to serve, and nearly 25 youth volunteers — young members of our parish joined by friends from other churches and even friends who do not attend church at all. Together, they helped create a space where children could learn about Jesus, experience love, have fun, and feel safe, welcomed, and valued.

Art Camp VBS continues to be more than a weeklong program — it is a living expression of our parish mission. It is evangelism through creativity, hospitality, and relationship. It is discipleship in action. As Scripture calls us: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19) If you have never experienced Art Camp VBS, I urge you — come and see. It is a world unlike any other, and one which we are incredibly grateful to offer our parish and community.





Membership

Martha Low

We have had numerous visitors to our church in 2025. In hopes of encouraging them to join our congregation, we have had four events especially for them.

In prior years, we have had two Saturday luncheons and two evening dinners for newcomers to provide an opportunity to meet members of St. James, as well as to learn about the Episcopal Church. This year we replaced the second



Saturday Newcomers lunch with a luncheon after our service on Sunday, December 7. The intent was to honor those who had joined the church in the past year as well as those still considering a move. With the help of the vestry, a luncheon for all was provided. Fr. Jerald asked all who were new to the church for a year or less to stand. Each told about themselves and their current relationship with St. James. This

immediately provided topics of conversation. The luncheon was well attended (approximately 65). There was much visiting and laughter among all.

At each event, newcomers were provided with a pamphlet providing our church ministries. My personal goal for 2026 is to encourage each newcomer to find a ministry in which to participate, if they haven't already done so. This will provide an opportunity to become connected with the congregation as well as to further God's mission.



Newcomer Socials throughout the year provided opportunities for fellowship among new and longtime members. At top, newcomer Adrian Brettle with John Rothwell, Jim and Diane Cheatham. Above, Kristine Rothwell, Linda and John Baumgartner dine with newcomers Kelli, Larkyn and Javier Gonzalez at the December Luncheon.

Membership Team

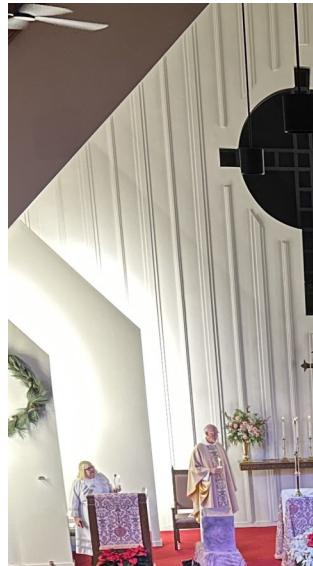
Martha Low
Janet Anderson
Alison Zabik

New active members

Alvin and Lana Barber
Adrian Brettle
Helen Crosby
Robert and Phyllis Doyle
Javier and Kelly Gonzalez
(Larkyn, Trey Alfred)
Sarah Jeschke
Margaret Kearney
Craig Rogers
Gail McKenzie
Greg Nunn
Sandy Phillips
Charles Pool
Renee and Robert Powell
(Kayelynn, Olivia)
Thomas Rightmer
Scott and Mary Ann Terry

Transfers Out

Laura Driscoll
William and Carolyn Worsham



Clockwise this page from top: St. James students, young and old, receive their backpack blessings and blessing tags; St. James Supper Club members enjoy food and fellowship; parishioners tie red strips of repentance to the cross during the interactive Stations of the Cross on the Zabik farm on Good Friday; Kacie LeGaye receives the rite of Confirmation; Fr. Jerald and Sadie, with her human, Chis Tassos, at the Blessing of the Animals.



Clockwise this page from left: Church campus bluebonnets glow under parking lot lights; Clyde and Karen Lang receive an anniversary blessing; Diocesan Council Delegates Chris Tassos and Martha Low with Fr. Jerald and Bishop Andrew C. Doyle; children perform the miracle of the annual Christmas Eve pageant; singing Silent Night by candlelight on Christmas Eve.



Sacramental Celebrations

2025 WORSHIP

Sunday Holy Eucharist – 52

Outside of Sunday – 15

Burials – 6

2025 ATTENDANCE

Total – 6,941

Average Sunday – 116

Lenten Wednesdays – 381

Easter Day – 244

Christmas Eve – 317



Confirmation January 12

Confirmation

Bernie Louis Hogue
Brenda Joyce Hogue
Gregory Charles Nunn
Scott Michael Ward

Reception

Laura Kathrine Belknap
Ronan Henry Belknap
Cecilia Hoffman
Marc William Hoffman
Kacie Sebek LeGaye



Above, the Rt. Rev. Hector Monterroso with the 2025 class of confirmands. At left, Renee, Kayelynn, Olivia and John Powell gather after worship to celebrate baptisms.

Baptism June 8

William Harrison Merton

November 2

John Robert Powell
Kayelynn Renee Powell
Olivia Mae Powell
Rowan Charles Hinkle Schalm

First Communion May 4

Griffin Chin
William Merton
Austin Ward
Deacon Ward
Stanley Zabik

In Memoriam

Margaret “Peggy” Johnson Apple
February 11, 1939 – March 9, 2025

Kindrick “Kin” Ray Barker
May 8, 1954 - July 17, 2025

Dena Lou Birdwell
February 20, 1929 – January 22, 2025

Lewis Arnold Brown
February 28, 1931 – April 19, 2025

Nancy Seeman Cox
May 2, 1938 – December 25, 2024

Robert Payton Harper
January 27, 1947 – June 1, 2025

Geraldine “Gerry” Mona Sarconi
April 7, 1942 – September 12, 2025

Sandra Elaine Tunnell
September 5, 1942 – August 14, 2025



Music

Greg Nunn

Music is an experience that touches our very beings. It stirs emotions. It can calm your soul or move you to action. Music describes our hopes, celebrates both our joys and sorrows, and reminds us of the stories we hold dear. I once shared in a ministry at a nursing home, leading the chapel in song. Several residents in attendance raised their voices to sing the familiar tunes and lyrics even though they had lost their spoken words.

When the congregation stands to sing, it grounds our roots. We are joined like the trees of the forest, and I feel a tremendous strength in our community. I know you feel it, too, because I hear it when you sing, even if your participation is limited to a so-called “lifting of the spirit.” Everyone is part of the music program at St. James.

In 2025, we carried on St. James’ tradition of special services featuring a range of musical experiences. In January, we snapped our fingers in time with the Trinity Jazz Ensemble. On Palm Sunday, we processed with palms to the blare of bagpipes and drums. In July, we clapped hands to the beat of the Lone Star Bluegrass Band. In the fall, we immersed ourselves in the ancient tunes of our Celtic Celebration.

And we were blessed by a range of musical talents. Heather Manly shared her harp, Alison Zabik showed up with a flute, and Angel Garcia has been our trumpet guy since I’ve been here. These musicians are excited for that call each year, they love being here too. Did you see familiar faces ‘appear’ during our advent season and parishioners move from the pew to the choir? The roots of St. James’ music program were established years ago, and there are seedlings all around.

This year has been a year of planning, filing, rehearsals, musicians, schedules, services of every kind and coffee fellowships. It’s church. But so much more. It has been a year of untold blessings. It has been a year of sharing in meaningful worship and greeting people wearing joy on their face. A year with a choir that teaches me how to share in grief, a team that nurtures our growth and musicians that want to minister. You would be amazed to know what choir rehearsal does for an imperfect day!

I’m looking at my Confirmation Certificate that was signed exactly one year ago today. I was struck by the long list of candidates to be confirmed this January. People are drawn to this special place so they can plant roots, serve God, use their gifts.

So, do you sing tenor or bass?



As has become a St. James tradition, our annual January Jazz Mass featured the Trinity Jazz Ensemble, top, and our annual St. James Day Bluegrass Mass featured the Lonestar Bluegrass Band.

Ministry

Travis Wernecke



2025 Ministry Team

Travis Wernecke
Gary Clark
Paul Foulger



Two forums focused on the issues surrounding immigration featured Elena Casillas-Hoffman, left, of the Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice and daughter of parishioners Marc and Cecelia Hoffman; and former parishioner Chelsea Graves, a scholar in international relations and advocate for refugees.

In 2025, the ministry life of St. James continued to reflect our calling to grow together in faith, fellowship, and service. Throughout the year, our ministries focused intentionally on creating spaces where parishioners could connect more deeply with one another and with God.

One of the most significant developments this year was the expansion of Adult Formation. This long-standing offering of Christian formation was reintroduced and warmly received, providing a dedicated space for thoughtful discussion, shared learning, and spiritual growth among adults of all ages. Its return has strengthened our commitment to lifelong formation and has renewed a rhythm of learning that many parishioners had deeply missed.

Ministries across the parish continued to foster connection through shared worship, fellowship, and service. Coffee Hour remained an important gathering point for conversation and hospitality, while worship ministries saw steady participation from readers, acolytes, lay eucharistic ministers, and altar guild members. Each role — visible and behind the scenes — helped sustain the reverence and beauty of our common prayer.

We are grateful for the many individuals who give their time and energy to ensure that ministry at St. James remains welcoming, vibrant, and grounded in faith. Through these efforts, our parish continues to be a place where people are known, supported, and encouraged to grow into all that God intends.

As we look ahead, we remain thankful for the steady work of our ministry leaders and volunteers, and we look forward to building upon the renewed sense of connection and formation that took root this year.



On the 50th anniversary of the first ordinations of women in the Episcopal Church, parishioners viewed and discussed the film, "The Philadelphia Eleven." Fr. Jerald's Wholy Wednesday Lenten series focused on The Good Samaritan.



Family Ministries

Alison Zabik

In 2025, our family ministries continued to deepen and take root in the life of the parish. Ongoing offerings such as the He-brews Bible Study Fellowship and Lenten programming centered on the Good Samaritan provided steady formation across the year. At Christmas, our seasonal youth choir featured soloists in both voice and chimes, highlighting the emerging gifts and leadership of our young people. Parish wide events, including our annual spaghetti dinner and chili cookoff, further strengthened community life while supporting our youth's participation in Camp Allen.

We continue to see steady growth in regular Sunday participation, with Children's Chapel typically welcoming 10 to 15 children each week. This year, we established a consistent rhythm of contemplative prayer within Children's Chapel, ensuring that children and youth have dedicated space to bring their voices and prayers to God in community. Toward the end of the year, we also began expanding intentional Bible literacy by setting aside one Children's Chapel per month for participants to actively engage with scripture.

As our parish demographic continues to shift, with more children moving into middle and high school, we recognize that their spiritual needs differ from those of younger children. This moment invites thoughtful discernment about how best to support and accompany these youth as they grow in faith and belonging within our parish community. This discernment is well timed alongside the insights emerging from the RenewalWorks Project.



Top, the waitstaff of the annual Spaghetti Dinner supporting our kiddos to summer camp; above, First Communion recipients Deacon Austin, Stanley Zabik, William Merton and Griffin Chin (not pictured, Austin Ward)



Under the direction of Alison Zabik, the St. James Children's Choir adorned worship with song on Christmas Eve.



The Order of The Daughters of the King

Melinda Zuber



Top, Daughters make their vows to prayer and service; above, DOK members Linda Cunningham, Melinda Zuber, Beth Gammage, Joanna Walsh, Fran Rightmer, Joan Cobb and Julie Wernecke.

Members of The Order of the Daughters of the King undertake a Rule of Life, incorporating the Rule of Prayer and the Rule of Service. By reaffirmation of the promises made at Baptism and Confirmation, a Daughter pledges herself to a lifelong program of prayer, service, and evangelism, dedicated to the spread of Christ's kingdom and the strengthening of the spiritual life of her parish.

Membership in The Order is open to women at every stage of life. The diversity of ages strengthens and enriches our adult, or senior, chapters. Younger women benefit from the discipleship of experienced spiritual mentors, and older women are invigorated by the fresh faith and energy of youth. Many senior chapters help spread the Kingdom to the next generation by sponsoring and supporting a Junior Daughters chapter at their churches. In addition to a variety of activities at St. James in 2025, the Daughters hosted a rededication of two past member, Beth Gammage and Fran Rightmer, and celebrated 140 years of prayer, service, and evangelism internationally.

January 17-19, three of our youth (Lillie Sproat, Anastasia Zabik, and Lissy Wernecke) attended the Diocese of Texas Junior Daughters of the King annual retreat at Camp Allen. Daughter, Julie Wernecke, served as a dorm leader at the retreat as well. They enjoyed a weekend full of prayer, service, fellowship, and fun activities around the theme of F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely On God).



Women of St. James-ECW

Susan Caffery

The Women of St. James-ECW was formed in 2025 to foster meaningful opportunities for fellowship and service both within church and in the broader community, offering encouragement and support in participants' individual faith journeys along the way.

Fellowship and enrichment activities included visits to historic churches, including a tour of one of the painted churches and a visit to St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Houston, where members learned about its history and architecture. These outings were complemented by a Sip and Stroll through downtown Conroe, combining learning, reflection, and fellowship.

The Women of St. James also remained involved in parish and community service. Several members participated in Trunk or Treat for the students of St. James Episcopal School, and the group received overwhelming support for providing staff appreciation bags at Christmas. The women continued their longstanding support of students at Patterson Elementary School by contributing to Santa's Sleigh, ensuring that deserving children received Christmas presents.

Through service, fellowship, and faith-centered activities, the Women of St. James have reestablished a vibrant and impactful ministry that continues to enrich the life of the parish and the wider community.



School Director Lacy Young, second from left, receives Christmas appreciation bags for the staff from Becky Page, Susan Caffery and Kay Stevens; below, the group toured St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Houston.



The Brotherhood of St. Andrew

Travis Wernecke

The Brotherhood of St. Andrew at St. James experienced a year marked by both meaningful growth and deep loss.

As a fellowship rooted in prayer, service, and mutual support, the Brotherhood sought to strengthen the bonds among the men of the parish while serving the wider church community. The Brotherhood also mourned the passing of Bob Harper, who by his leadership, faith, and dedication was instrumental in shaping this ministry. Bob's vision and steady encouragement helped lay a strong foundation for the Brotherhood, and his presence continues to be felt in the relationships and sense of purpose he nurtured. We give thanks for his life and witness, and we honor his memory with gratitude.

In the spirit of service that Bob so clearly embodied, the Brotherhood supported outreach beyond our parish walls. Among these efforts was a donation to Patterson Elementary School, continuing St. James' commitment to supporting children in need and educators in our community. This act of generosity reflected the Brotherhood's desire to put faith into action in tangible ways.

The Brotherhood remains committed to fellowship, prayer, and service as core expressions of our faith. As we move forward, we do so mindful of the legacy entrusted to us and hopeful for continued growth rooted in the values that have guided this ministry from its beginning.

With gratitude for all who participate and serve, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew continues its work, strengthened by shared faith and the enduring example of those who have gone before us.

The Brotherhood of St. Andrew, which focuses on nurturing the spiritual lives of men and youth, meets the first and third Saturdays of the month at 9 a.m., in The Summit. All men are invited to join.

Soul Sisters

Victoria Ruby

Soul Sisters is St. James' longtime book club for women. Through our love of reading, we have forged a special sisterhood based on love, support, understanding, and acceptance. In 2025, we met **Mondays at 10 a.m. (Zoom)**.

This year, we read nine books. We marveled at Allen Levi's simple yet inspiring story in his bestseller, *Theo of Golden*. We're eagerly awaiting the new sequel for *The Ladies Road to Utter Ruin* and *The Benevolent Society of Ill-Mannered Ladies* by Alison Goodman. We followed four women whose lives have taken unexpected turns in Rachel Cullen's *Second Chances*. We read Charles Frazier's somber story of a young artist going to Wyoming during the Depression to work on a New Deal mural project in *The Trackers*. We went along with a retired math teacher's trip to Ibiza in *The Life Impossible* by Matt Haig. We continued enjoying Kristen Hannah's writing by reading her book, *The Things We Do For Love*, which explored themes of motherhood, love, and difficult choices.

We begin 2026 with the bestseller, *The Correspondent*, by Virginia Evans. We hope you can join us! If you are interested in joining our group of readers, please contact Victoria Ruby.

Faith Seekers

Members of the Faith Seekers Bible Study want to increase their knowledge of God and their own faith paths. In 2025, the group studied the passages outlined in the weekly lectionary, then moved to learn more about the women of the Bible, all while supporting each other with joy and faith. Open to all women of the parish, Faith Seekers meets from 2 to 3 p.m. Tuesdays in The Summit.



Hollifield ordained to priesthood

Former St. James parishioner, the Rev. Suzanne Hollifield, was ordained a priest in February at her parish, All Saints', Crockett. Another former parishioner, the Rev. Karen Jaworski, left, served as the Deacon in the service; Fr. Jerald served as Master of Ceremonies.



Scouting

Danny LeGaye



The mission of Scouting America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. The Episcopal Church has long partnered with Scouting in chartering units and supporting the organization as an enrichment for the development of youth.

In 2025, Scouting has grown significantly at St. James. Cub Scout Pack 776, which serves boys and girls between kindergarten and fifth grade, has increased its membership to 41 youth and 19 registered adult leaders. Scout Troop 776, serving fifth through 12th grade, is now home to eight youth and 10 registered adult leaders. This has marked significant growth over the last several years as the units serve the greater Lake Conroe Area.

Service is one of the focal points of the Scouting program. In 2025, Cub Scout Pack 776 participated in five service projects benefiting the community, including: Scouting for Food, a food drive benefiting Montgomery County Food Bank; The Arrow of Light food collection benefiting Conroe food banks; a conservation project at Giesinger Elementary removing trash and litter around the campus; a renovation and maintenance project of the flowerbeds at St. James Day School; a holiday ornament and gift project for elderly patients at The Brightpointe, a recovery and rehabilitation facility in Conroe.



Boy Scout Troop 776 also served the community through various efforts and projects, including volunteering staff to man the safety boats at the Oilman Triathlon as well as conservation and beautification projects for St. James.

Patriotism and Duty to God are also cornerstones of the Scouting movement. In 2025, Cub Scout Pack 776 participated in two community parades to honor veterans and community volunteers including the Fourth of July Parade and the Conroe Christmas Parade. Five Cub Scouts also worked to strengthen their faith and relationship with God by earning their religious emblems, recognized by a purple and silver square knot worn upon their uniform.

Pack 776, Troop 776, and the newly formed Sea Scouting Ship 776 look forward to further growth and development of our young people in the year to come, serving the families and members of St. James Episcopal Church as well as the families and youth of the greater Lake Conroe and Willis area.



Treasurer's Report

Bill Dougherty



OPERATING FUND REVIEW

St James' financial picture at the end of 2025 continues the post-pandemic trend in which monetary support from pledges and routine contributions fails to cover our operating expenses. We started the year with a negative balance of \$41.5K in operating accounts, and the cash shortfall for 2025 was almost \$75K before considering financial help from the Diocese of Texas. (In January we received \$68K from the EDoT Disaster Recovery Fund, and in March we released to the General Operating account \$89.9K of unspent funds from the \$100K 2024 EDoT Grant that was provided to ensure the continuing operations of the St James Day School.)

Extraordinary and unbudgeted expenses in 2025 included \$104K for roof repairs and \$21K for HVAC repairs. Roof repairs were covered by insurance and a \$16K grant from EDoT. HVAC expenses were largely paid out of the Facilities Maintenance fund.

Again in 2025 our end-of-year cash situation benefited from a substantial (\$86.6K) pre-payment of 2026 pledges. This allows us to begin the year with cash in the bank; but, as can be seen in the 2026 Budget figures below, we need to raise an additional \$120K over and above the pledges already submitted.

Giving Trends: During the eight years prior to the COVID pandemic (2013-2020), we received an average of 145 pledges each year, totaling \$450-500K/yr. In 2022 we had 109 pledges totaling \$400K; in 2023 we had 96 pledges totaling \$406K; in 2024 we had 89 pledges totaling \$411K. In 2025 we had 91 pledges totaling \$470K. As of today, we have received 78 pledges totaling \$431K for 2026.

OPERATING CASH FLOW	2024 Totals	2025 Totals
Gen Fund Pledges Paid	\$393,514	\$382,323
Gen Fund Pledges Pre-paid	\$76,600	\$86,600
Contributions & other income	\$66,660	\$77,661
Diocesan Support	\$0	\$68,079
TOTAL CASH INCOME	\$536,774	\$614,663
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$579,086	\$614,354
AMEGY BANK BALANCES	31 Dec 24	31 Dec 25
Operating Accounts	(\$41,507)	\$44,962
Operating Reserve	\$0	\$0
Restricted Funds	\$155,305	\$39,018
BANK TOTAL	\$113,798	\$83,980
CONSTRUCTION LOAN BALANCE	\$656,145	\$641,567

ST JAMES OPERATING BUDGET SUMMARY

	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	2026 Budget
INCOME			
Number of Pledges	90	91	78
Pledged Amount	\$460,000	\$470,230	\$430,820
Pledges Paid	\$446,000	\$462,200	\$430,820
Unpledged Donations	\$54,000	\$73,633	\$58,860
Special Pledge Drive	\$0	\$0	\$120,000
Other Income	\$0	\$4,028	\$0
Diocese of Texas Grant	\$68,000	\$157,929	\$0
TOTAL OPERATING INCOME	\$568,000	\$697,790	\$609,680
EXPENSES			
Clergy & Staff	\$258,474	\$252,783	\$271,012
Contract Personnel	\$52,500	\$55,813	\$57,290
Facilities Maintenance & Repair	\$16,920	\$40,899	\$20,020
Utilities & Contract Services	\$29,900	\$46,990	\$29,787
Insurance	\$49,542	\$44,295	\$51,278
Office Expenses	\$36,500	\$42,738	\$37,800
PROGRAM Expenses			
Worship	\$3,700	\$2,985	\$3,820
Music	\$500	\$337	\$500
Education	\$850	\$816	\$850
Parish Life	\$4,220	\$4,708	\$4,220
OUTREACH Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0
DIOCESAN Expenses	\$46,877	\$48,307	\$51,565
DEBT Service*			
Principal	\$14,436	\$14,423	\$14,400
Interest	\$59,247	\$59,260	\$52,045
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$573,666	\$614,354	\$594,586
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(\$5,666)	\$83,436	\$25,094

N.B. Our construction loan from Amegy Bank comes due in April 2026. We expect to be able to renegotiate this loan on similar terms (20-yr amortization at Prime +1.0%).

RESTRICTED FUNDS

2025 Activity Summary

[Included in General Operating Bank Accounts]

FUND	Open Bal	Receipts	Disbursed	Close Bal
Altar Guild	\$3,047	\$1,675	\$659	\$4,064
Bishop's Discretionary	\$0	\$526	\$526	\$0
Daughters of the King	\$712	\$268	\$450	\$530
Bro. of St Andrew	\$923	\$1,541	\$0	\$2,465
Family Ministries	\$9,086	\$3,217	\$2,149	\$10,154
BSA Eagle Projects	\$887	\$0	\$0	\$887
Facilities Maintenance	\$1,805	\$85,118*	\$87,400*	(\$477)
Patterson Elem Sch	\$1,171	\$1,550	\$1,208	\$1,513
Memorials	\$1,150	\$3,925	\$928	\$4,147
Rector's Discretionary	\$2,468	\$2,252	\$4,534	\$186
Storm Insurance Proceeds	\$28,192	\$42,416*	\$70,608	\$0
Soup Kitchen	(\$136)	\$5,000	\$4,709	\$155
Garden Club	\$730	\$1,030	\$1,046	\$714
Tom Lewis Music	\$7,657	\$8,104	\$7,786	\$7,975
EDoT Grant (School)	\$89,850	\$0	\$89,850**	\$0
Parish Life Activities	\$0	\$1,318	\$606	\$712
VBS Art Camp	\$3,567	\$3,223	\$3,725	\$3,065
St James Knitters	\$4,044	\$55	\$1,170	\$2,930
Good Friday Special	\$150	\$363	\$513	\$0
TOTAL	\$155,305	\$204,397	\$320,683	\$39,018

* Total cost of roof replacement due to storm damage: \$104,000.

- Insurance covered \$87,952.
- EDoT Grant covered \$16,000.

Also included in expenditures from Facilities Maintenance fund is \$21,704 for HVAC repairs.

** \$89,850 in unspent money from 2024 EDoT Grant (School) was transferred to the General Operating account in 2025.



St. James Episcopal School

Lacy Young, Director

The year 2025 at St. James Episcopal School was defined by a beautiful transition from recovery to growth. Following the significant challenges brought by the previous year, this year saw our students return to their rightful spaces, the establishment of lasting traditions, and a new connection to the wider community. Through the grace of God and the unwavering dedication of our families, we have moved from a season of “mending” to a season of “flourishing.”

After five months of extensive remediation following the damage experienced during Hurricane Beryl in 2024, we officially moved back into the Arnold Building on January 18. This return was a milestone of resilience, allowing our students and teachers to settle back into their primary learning environment. The Music Building reopened in June. Our campus was enhanced in March when our Scout troop “adopted” our flower beds.

We concluded the 2024-25 school year in May with 48 students, and while summer registration initially looked lean, our presence at local festivals and consistent community engagement paid off. Summer enrollment increased to 41, up from 30 in 2024. Though we began the school year in August with 40 students, enrollment continued to grow (52 students by December) thanks to the strength of our reputation as a quality institution of learning.

We continue to anchor our school in regional excellence. In August, the school rejoined the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools. This partnership provides our staff with a network of support and ensures our curriculum remains at the forefront of early childhood education.

In the spring, longtime SJES family member Kay Stevens announced “The Leslie Heemann Fund” in honor of Mrs. Heemann’s legacy as a beloved teacher. This fund ensures that all our teachers love of teaching and learning will continue to impact students for years to come. In September, our Parent Association launched a vibrant new tradition with our First Annual Trike-a-thon. This spirit of community peaked at our annual Christmas pageant, which drew a packed house.

Going forward, our focus is on sustainable growth. We are no longer just recovering from the storm; we are building a foundation that is stronger than ever. The increasing enrollment and the success of new traditions prove that SJES is a vital, sought-after home for early childhood education in the Conroe area. We are deeply grateful for the prayers of the church, the hard work of our School Board and Parents Association, and the trust of our families.

Our hearts remain full as we look forward to continued blessings in 2026 and beyond.

2025 ST. JAMES SCHOOL BOARD

The Rev. Dr. Jerald Hyche,
Chair

January 2025-December 2027

Leslie Konesheck (Parish)
Joanna Walsh (Parish)

January 2024-December 2026

Linda Baumgartner (Parish)
Kristen Cartwright (Parent)

January 2023-December 2025

Erica Olsen (Parent)
Cara Taber (Parent)

January 2022-December 2024

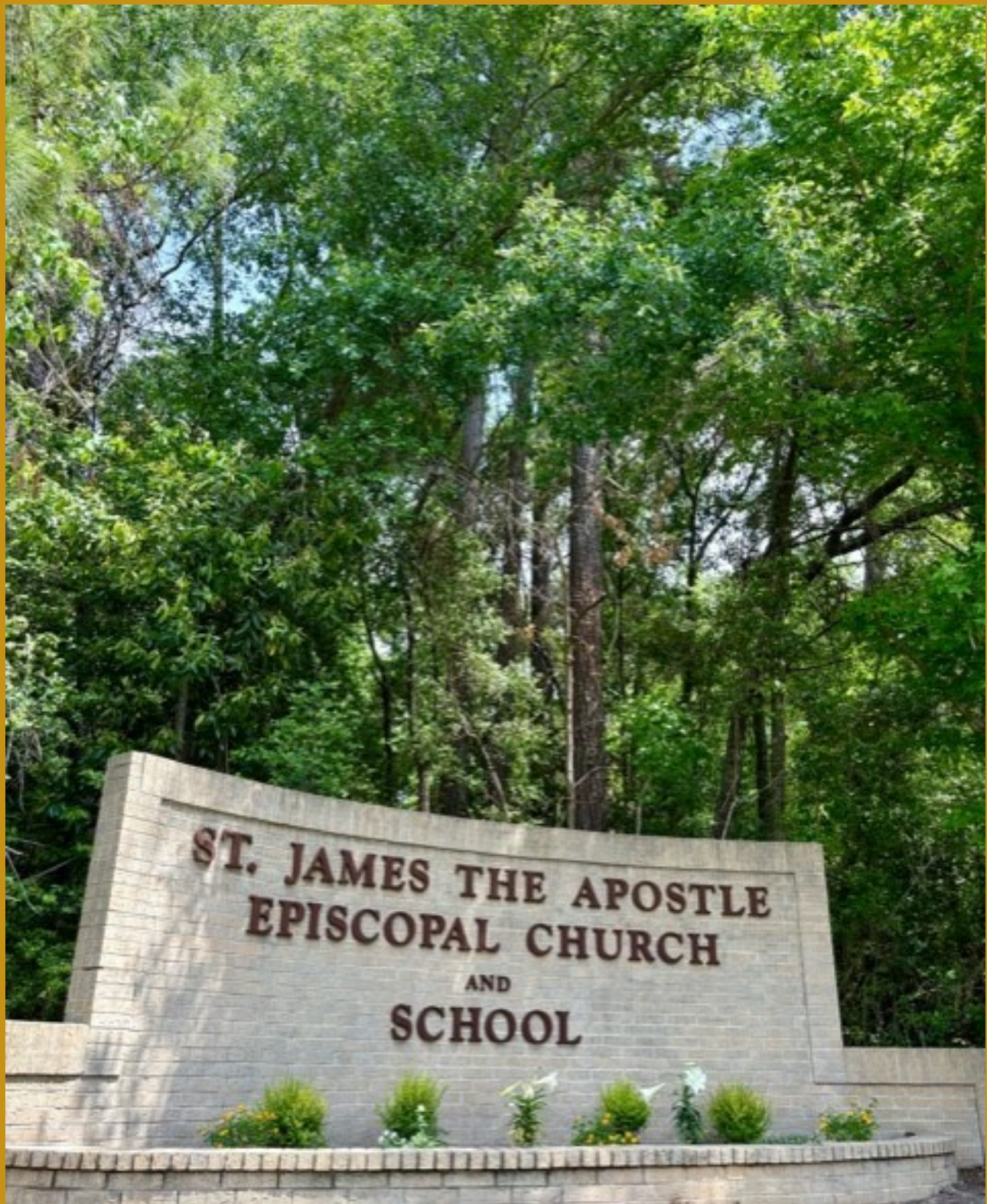
Erica Olsen (Parent)
Cliff Vlasin (Parish)

2025 Vestry Representative

Becky Page



The Leslie Heemann Fund was created in honor of longtime teacher Leslie Heemann, above, to supplement classroom funding.



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