



St. James' Episcopal Church

Mount Vernon, Virginia

PROFILE

July 2011



Even so FAITH, if it has not works, is dead, being alone. Yet, a man may say, "You have FAITH and I have WORKS. Show me your FAITH without your WORKS, and I will show you my FAITH by my WORKS." James 2: 17-18

In June 1958, a group of 25 families from the Mt. Vernon area met in an elementary school cafeteria for the first worship service of a new Mission. The name and mission of the new congregation were chosen—influenced by the words from the New Testament (above). These folks established this new mission with the support and encouragement of St. Luke's and the Diocese of Virginia. Ground was broken for its' own facilities in 1960.

Over these 53 years St. James' Parish has endeavored to uphold the promise of showing our FAITH, our love of God, to our neighbors and the community. We, as loving Christians, have become a "family" which is mission directed. At this time, we are mostly well-educated, professionals and "grandparents". We use our God given talents to perform the work of our FAITH!

We have had only six clergy leaders in our 53 years. The Rev. John M. Geene and The Rev. Herbert A. Willke served in the 1960s. The Rev. Richard L. Stinson was called from a Chaplaincy at nearby Ft. Belvoir in the early 1970s, and served as Rector for more than 21 years. In 1993 The Rev. Geoffrey R. Imperator accepted our "Call" as Rector. The Bishop of Virginia removed him from St. James in 1994 due to charges of alleged pastoral boundary violations. The Rev. Ruth Walsh, as Interim Rector, was instrumental in the healing process of our parishioners.

The Rev. Huey Sevier accepted the "Call" as Rector in 1996. Father Huey offered his resignation in November of 2006. He stated that his decision was based in large part on the division caused by the vote of the 2003 General Convention to approve the consecration of The Rev. V. Gene Robinson as Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire. His priorities and vision for St. James' ministry in the last three years of his rectorship became very different from those held by most of the Congregation. The parishioners of St. James did not intend to separate from the Diocese. Again, our friend, The Rev. Ruth Walsh, as Supply Clergy, assisted our family in healing during the interim period.

Ground was broken as a part of our "Campaign of Faith" for "Our Bridge to the Future" in September of 2004 with the intent to grow the parish through enlarged and updated facilities. Construction on a major building addition and modernization began in October of 2005. September of 2006 found us worshipping and working in our beautiful new facility.

During the ensuing Search period, the Vestry decided to call a Priest-in-Charge. The Rev. B. Kris Kramer arrived in that position in 2007. With the termination of his three-year contract drawing near and the opportunity for his spouse, The Rev. Caroline Kramer, to accept employment in her home country becoming available, the Kramer's moved back to England in early 2010. Our friend, The Rev. Ruth Walsh, has come out of retirement to serve as our current Interim Rector. Again, her expertise in Pastoral Care and Spirituality and her love for the St. James' family have brought us through a difficult time.

The history of St. James' Parish is summed up in our Mission Statement:

"Empowered by the Holy Spirit to be faithful disciples of Jesus, St. James serves as a beacon of God's love and as a caring Christian family for the community, the nation and the world by seeking to restore all to unity with God and one another and by proclaiming the Good News through worship, witness, education, fellowship and service."

Parish Size and Location

St. James' Parish is situated on land originally part of George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. The church property is located between Mount Vernon and Woodlawn, the home Washington built for his nephew and Martha Washington's granddaughter. St. James is minutes east from U. S. Route One, the historic north-south highway along the east coast and in view of U.S. Army Post, Fort Belvoir.

A *Fort Belvoir News* article of May 13, 2005, states:

"The Department of Defense announced May 13 its recommendation to increase operations and military activities at Fort Belvoir, VA, as part of the Congressionally-authorized 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. Based on May 13th's BRAC recommendations, Fort Belvoir has been advised to expect an increase of 3,677 military

personnel and 14,753 civilian employees and contract personnel, for a total net increase of 18,420 positions. Col. Thomas W. Williams, Fort Belvoir commander, made the following statement upon being notified this morning of Fort Belvoir's status: 'Today's Base Realignment and Closure recommendations make it clear that the Department of Defense considers Fort Belvoir as a vital piece of the national defense strategy.' 'While growth should have a positive impact on the community, we understand that it must be managed carefully so that the quality of life for our Soldiers and their families not only stays the same, but continues to improve.'"

The growth at Fort Belvoir also translates to the increase of housing and civilian population nearby. St. James' Parish is positioned in an ideal location to provide a church home for this growing population.

The Rector serves St. James with the following paid staff: Parish Administrative Assistant, Director of Christian Music, Sexton, and Nursery Attendant.

St. James is a pastoral size parish with 196 active baptized members. Out of 131 communicants, on average 103 adults attend Sunday services and four children attend Sunday school each week. According to the 2010 Parochial Report, this defined the attendance as taken from the four high Sundays of the year and not an average from the 52 Sundays.

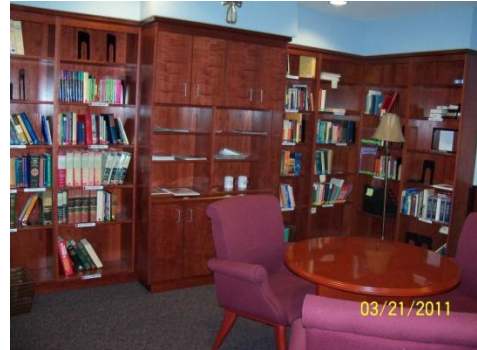
Approximately, 60 percent of the St. James' congregation is 60 years of age or older; and over 60 percent of them have bachelors or higher degrees, and either work or have worked for the Federal Government or have been in the Military or both.

Currently we have 56 pledging units. Committed giving for operations totaled \$225,000 in 2010 and is budgeted at \$215,000 in 2011.

St. James' Facilities



St. James is located in a residential neighborhood consisting of single-family homes. Newly constructed parish offices include those for the Rector, Parish Administrative Assistant, and Associate for Christian Education. Also included are the newly renovated Sacristy, library, nursery, conference room, gallery, parish hall, choir room, and classrooms for Sunday school.



The church grounds, naturally graced by many large trees, have been beautifully enhanced through the years by the energetic and generous efforts of St. James' parishioners. Nestled within the grounds are the Stations of the Cross, constructed and beautifully maintained by our chapter of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. A Memorial Garden, for interment of cremated remains, is located on the south side of the church.



The rectory is adjacent to the church. It is a brick rambler with four bedrooms and two and one-half baths. The interior has been renovated and is in excellent condition. It has a combination of hardwood floors and carpeting. There is a fireplace in the living room. The dining area leads out onto a raised deck through French doors. The rectory has central heat and air-conditioning, new double-pane windows, a breakfast nook and separate office, attic storage and storage shed. Access is off a circular drive, with a lighted walkway to the church.



Who We Are

Characteristics as a Parish

St. James is a traditional family parish of loving Christians. At this time, we are mostly well-educated professionals and retired individuals. Many of our younger families have moved because of military transfers. We have used our talents for our nation, our immediate families, and our St. James' family to bring ourselves and others into closer relationship with God. Our members attend because they have a loyalty to St. James' and their fellow parishioners as well as the opportunities for spiritual growth, outreach and parish activities.

Lay participation at St. James involves many of the parishioners who are engaged in our shared ministry. Our acolytes, chalcists, lay readers, lectors and ushers all play important roles in assisting the priest during our services. The Adult Education and Wednesday Bible study are led by members who assist the parish in expanding their knowledge of the Bible and how the scriptures impact our daily lives and answer questions in today's world.

The music program is designed to complement the readings and topics for each Sunday service. Hymns, anthems and special music bring a special message to all who attend the services. The Senior Choir provides the Sunday anthem as well as leads the congregation in song for the hymns. The Bell Choir performs a variety of music to enhance those Sundays during special church seasons such as Christmas and Easter. When available, the Junior Choir has provided special music which generates many smiles. In addition to our voices and bells, other musical instruments are also a regular part of the Sunday worship service to raise a joyful sound.

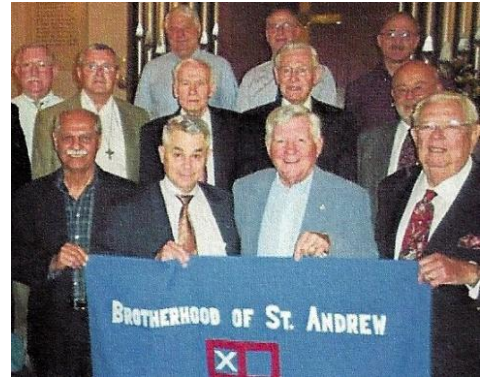
Organizations and Ministries

Opportunities to participate in various ministries abound for the membership of St. James as we strive to share God's love with those who attend and the community. A variety of organizations assist with the services and programs that make our congregation move forward in providing spiritual growth and understanding our relationship with God.

The Altar Guild is our "silent service" as the members work quietly to ensure that each service is prepared traditionally and properly. The team sets up and clears away the altar for every service, working closely with the Rector. A Brass Team cleans the brass and a Design Team creates a décor for special occasions.



The Brotherhood of St. Andrew is an international organization that helps men and boys grow and nurture our lives in Christ. The St. James' Chapter meets each month to share food, fellowship and service projects in the church and community. Maintaining the Stations of the Cross in our adjacent wooded area is one project. Assistance is provided to many of the social and fund raising functions as well as community service such as Meals-On-Wheels. The Brotherhood mission is to "help men grow in their faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God" and this mission is accomplished through the continuing activities of prayer, study and service.



The Order of the Daughters of the King is an Order of the Church for women who have taken a vow of prayer and service. The tenant of prayer is achieved through the "Prayer Chain" for St. James which provides a circle of individuals to address those who request prayer. The Daughters answer the call for service in a variety of means including providing receptions after funerals and meals for families at the request of the Rector.



Youth programs are the life blood of any parish and St. James actively supports our Sunday School youth acolyte, nursery and special services programs that include our youth in all that we do and provide a Christian platform upon which they can grow and flourish.



The Lay Pastoral Care Team is a group of loving, caring, faithful parishioners who visit and encourage those who are ill, home bound or simply in need of some companionship.

The Welcoming Team greets newcomers to the church in a warm and friendly manner to put them at ease and share our vision with them. They also follow up through mail, Meet and Greet gatherings, and telephone calls.



Since 2009 the Ghana Resurrection Methodist Church has entered into a contractual agreement to use St. James' Episcopal Church as a sister congregation. They hold worship services on Sunday afternoons and Bible study groups three days a week. Joint social gatherings have been held on special occasions between our two congregations.



A broad range of events and activities fill the St. James' calendar throughout the year.

- A trip to the theatre provides an evening of fellowship and fun as we visit the Little Theater of Alexandria for one of their many fine presentations.
- The Progressive Dinner gathers in different parishioner homes for various parts of the meal with everyone meeting at a central location for the grand finale, dessert.
- A summer day at the local minor league baseball stadium for a game provides fun for young and old alike.
- A weekend retreat to Shrine Mont is a highlight of the summer where our church family can relax, learn and move closer in our life with Christ and with each other.
- The fall education programs are started with Rally Day which includes a cookout and lunch in the adjacent grove of trees.
- The Blessing of the Animals service is always a casual and enjoyable gathering in the wooded grove where we recognize the various creatures that God has entrusted us with and who grace our homes and lives.
- Hearts Apart is a program for our neighboring military service families who have a loved-one deployed and get together to support each other. St. James supports this very important program by providing a meal for the group's monthly gathering.

- Twice annually, the Meet and Greet gatherings provide an opportunity for newcomers to meet with the members of St. James during a social gathering which is held at one of the parishioner's homes.
- In conjunction with other local churches, St. James assists with the local Ventures in Community Hypothermia Outreach Program. We provide meals and personnel to assist with this important community program which shelters and feeds the homeless during cold winter nights.
- Locally we support United Community Ministries with food, clothing, and items for their resale shop and fund raising.
- We recently have established a ministry of collecting books for prison libraries.

Hopes and Concerns for the Future

St. James' Parish has always been known for its warm and welcoming atmosphere and feeling of family. While we have a solid core of active members, due to a series of events in our parish, our membership has declined. The reasons for this decline are three-fold: (1) several of our members left St. James in 2006 following the Rev. Sevier to his new "Anglican" ministry which was located in our immediate area; (2) St. James is located in an active military environment that is greatly influenced by transitions of families due to military orders; (3) the Rev. Kramer's abrupt departure also influenced some parishioners to leave. We are ready to rebuild trust, hope, and enthusiasm at St. James with a new rector and a fresh start. As a parish, our main hope is to grow our church family and increase our ability to be a loving and giving spiritual presence in the community.

Challenges We Face to Continue Our Mission

Growth

Our goal is to revitalize St. James by attracting a diversity of members, especially young families. With Fort Belvoir as our neighbor, we are in a prime location to reach out to military families, as well as to the many inactive Christians and unchurched in our local community. We have several welcoming programs in place as we try to increase our membership. We have begun contact with the Ft. Belvoir community. Our Interim Rector is working with the hospital Chaplain to establish a working relationship with the "Wounded Warriors" program. We have held Parents/Kids Night Outs which is an opportunity for the Ft. Belvoir community and neighborhood to have free evenings every now and then. A neighborhood group meets at St. James every Friday which is called "Under Fives Alive" and is an opportunity for mothers and small children to gather for play and visitation with each other. We have a Cub Scout Pack in residence. Surrounding neighbor Civic Associations use our building and picnic area. There is a weekly Book Club gathering here. AA has found a home at St. James for many years. With increased membership, we hope to create new programs and opportunities for all.

Building Youth Programs

Although our youth programs, including Sunday school, youth groups, and acolytes, have strong histories, recently these programs have suffered due to fewer children in our parish. By attracting new members, especially young families, we hope to enlarge and enrich our Christian Education programs.

Finances

With decreased membership, our finances have also become a concern. However, we were able to meet our budget demands through careful planning and the generous support of our members. We hope that with parish growth increased revenues will follow, allowing us to meet increasing budget needs and to expand our outreach to the community. Even with the above concerns, we, through careful stewardship, continue to support international, national and local community mission needs.

Desired Qualities of a Rector

Communication is the essential aspect of every trait for our rector. We need a person who can guide us closer to God. Knowledge of scripture and theology should be foundational in his or her moral strength and integrity when preaching and teaching. It is also important to create sermons that present the Gospel message in ways that relate to our parishioners.

Other valuable traits would be the ability to comfortably and compassionately connect with church members while allowing them to get to know him or her. A sense of humor, enthusiasm, flexibility and adaptability certainly add to the strengthening of rector/parishioner bonds. All of this leads to greater trust and respect. A little creativity would round out the mix nicely. That's when leadership and team building through shared ministry can begin to develop.

These traits will act as a beacon to attract and joyfully entice people in seeking the Lord at St. James.

It is our prayer that this profile will create a spark of interest and enthusiasm in prospective candidates for our Rector's position at St. James. We truly believe that the Holy Spirit is with us on this journey and will continue to guide and care for us as we search for His choice for our new Spiritual leader.

Yours in Christ,

The Search Committee, April 2011

Bob Blair, Chair

Michele Thomas

Anne Smith

Peg Iber

Jane Fitz

Dean Sherick

Ben Wosoogh