



# ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH

FOLLOWING JESUS, WE LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# Leadership

## Church Council

Rick Phillips, President

Jane Reedy

Kathy Hunsberger

Everett Arndt, Vice President

Laurie Green

Kris Brown

Sue Trimble, Secretary

Laura Oliverson

John Yackanicz

Sheri Barberini, Treasurer

Tim Byerly

## St James Church Staff



Chris McKinstry  
**Pastor**



Bobbie Hoffman  
**Discipling**



Janet Hilsmier  
**Family Ministry**



Eve Keane  
**Worship Music**



Nicole Lewis  
**HKCP**

The St James staff is blessed to be supported by all who serve in our ministries including the Music Ministry, Pastoral Care, Hospitality, Property, Stewardship, Worship support, Kids Connect, His Kids and more. We are forever grateful for your support.

# Council Letter

*"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Phil. 2:13*

I want to begin by stating that it has been a great privilege for me to serve as St. James' council president in 2023. I also want to express thankfulness for all the support of this congregation for the many ministries aimed at carrying out our mission as God's church.

Our Annual Report reflects the faithful response of time, talent, and treasures in so many ways. It's our community that makes ministry happen. It is through faithful worship, faithful prayer, teaching scripture, and our passion for gathering that demonstrates the ways God is actively and continuously at work here at St James.

Our Stewardship campaign for 2023 is about being alert to, and eager to share how we see God at work in our lives. "Share God sightings." "Where do you see God at Work?" The call here is to put voice and actions to these statements, and in doing so, enriching our discipleship, and producing evidence that God is fulfilling His transformative work in and through us. I

pray we will carry this through and beyond 2024.

Change is a constant. We know that God hasn't stopped His work at the creation story. We cannot begin to comprehend all God wants to do in and through St. James but let us be alert and ready to proclaim how God is working here as we embark on a new year. We are blessed to respond with confidence and not fear.

I want to thank the staff of St. James, my colleagues serving on the Council, and the ministry leaders for their dedication and service. Also, I thank you all for your patience and guidance extended to me throughout this year.

In His service,

*Rick Phillips*

# His Kids Christian Preschool

The His Kids Christian Preschool is a private non-for-profit preschool located and operated as a ministry of St James.



Celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> year in operation, His Kids Christian Preschool's vision is to become a local leader in faith based education that provides emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive development to every child. We will do this by creating a safe, nurturing environment in which children cultivate lifelong relationships between families, communities and God.

The school hosts 8 classes, 5 classrooms in 2-, 3- and 5-day programs for preschool, pre-kindergarten and transitional kindergarten students.

## HKCP Board

Janet Hilsmier

Michael Johnson

Stephanie Sundermeier

Bobbie Hoffman

Kate McKinstry

Jeff Williams

Kathy Hunsberger

Sara Quinn





# HKCP Staff



**Director:**  
Nicole Lewis



**Assistant Director:**  
Marianne Williams



## Teachers:



Nora  
Capron



Terri  
McGrath



Lisa  
Stauffer



Marianne  
Williams



Carissa  
Wowak

## Assistant Teachers:



Elizabeth  
Battistini



Sue  
Capaldi



Liz  
Hassett



Jamie  
Nderitu



Jennifer  
Turney



Jennifer  
Valente



# *In the beginning*

Every Christian worship service follows the same pattern. The service includes some combination of the same parts often called: Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending. These four sections include within them all that we do during a worship service.

The *Gathering* contains opening prayer, music, and confession.

The *Word* contains scripture, teaching or sermon, music, and prayers.

The *Meal* consists of gathering around the Lord's table and sharing communion together.

The *Sending* contains a time of turning our attention out to the world, the announcements of what is to come, and a celebration of God's grace in a benediction and closing song that sends us forth with God's grace to be God's grace to the world around us.

This pattern is largely consistent across the church whether you are worshiping at a Lutheran congregation, or at a Methodist, Catholic, Baptist or another Christian denomination. However, this pattern isn't just found in our worship services, it can also be found throughout all of the ministries and activities of this congregation at St James.

As you read through this document, you will see this pattern of Gathering - Word - Meal - Sending carried through the many different parts of our life together and the many different ways in which we experience God's grace in our community. Truthfully there are so many ways that God has blessed us over the past year that not all of them can fit inside this document, but hopefully those that are captured here help to showcase just some of the ways that God continues to gather us, teach us, nourish us, and send us out into the world to be Christ's hands and feet.

# Gather

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them"  
(Matthew 18:20)*

Every worship service begins with a portion of the service called gathering. It's in this section that we are drawn into the worship service itself, setting aside this moment in time so that we might encounter God more fully.

This section of the service normally begins with music and prayer to set the tone for the rest of the service.

When we gather we bring our whole selves, our joys and our concerns, our roles and our responsibilities, our passions and our fears, and we come together as a community so that we might be sustained by the grace and love of God which is revealed most often in our relationships with others.

Throughout the year we gathered not just for worship, but also in a variety of other ways in which we also experienced God's presence in our community.





# Gather



At the beginning of the year we gathered on two Saturdays in January for a new members class, getting to know the people that God had most recently brought to our community who desired to join us in the mission that God has called us to. This was a wonderful experience filled with conversation, laughter, learning, and food. We officially received those new members at the worship service prior to our 2023 Annual Meeting, and we are grateful for the way that their presence has blessed our congregation.



Also in January, members of our community gathered for our Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in which we learned about how God was at work through the life and ministry of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Children were asked to add leaves to our "Peace Tree" identifying ways in which they can show kindness. Participants also made PB&J sandwiches and cookies for guests at God's Kitchen Soup Kitchen in Pottstown and Valentines for the residents of a nearby assisted living facility.





# Gather

While much of their time at the His Kids Preschool is spent on St James campus, enrolled families are invited to join the kids for holiday celebrations including Thanksgiving, Christmas and an Easter Egg Hunt. Families enjoyed a hayride at Olszanowski Farm and a “signs of Spring” tour at Green Lane Park. They even welcomed the traveling “Family Stages” theater group to perform “Puss in Boots”.



In March, our middle- and high school students gathered along with youth from 6 other congregations in our area for Box City where they learned more about the challenges of homelessness in our area and how God is calling us to serve those in need. Students assembled an indoor encampment made of large cartons, participated in small group lessons that helped them identify and understand the challenges one faces when they are underserved.



Guest speakers included a safety resource officer from Spring-Ford Area School District and Tom Niarhos, Director of Beacon of Hope, an organization in Pottstown that supports displaced and unhoused neighbors. We raised close to \$2,000 for Pottstown Beacon of Hope and created a work of art for them to hang in their future, still-to-be-built overnight warming center.



# Gather

This past Fall we hosted our annual Apple Festival community event. While the weather was cold and rainy, we didn't let that dampen our spirits. We came together for fun, fellowship, food, and raised \$5,065 for the ministries here at St. James so that we might continue doing the work that God is calling us to do. Of the money raised, we gave 10% to Lutheran Disaster Relief, to help victims of disasters around the world.

Each year we host Trunk or Treat to provide church and community children a safe and fun Halloween. Once again, the weather was cold and rainy and so we took shelter indoors for our hot dog dinner. The atmosphere inside was warm, lively and fun and the cars and costumes were spectacular!

Finally to finish off our year, our preschool ministry held a wonderful Christmas gathering for all of the students and their families. The students did an incredible job singing and dancing for their families, adding even more joy to the holiday season.

Gathering as a community is sacred practice whether it is for worship, or fun, or fellowship, being together as a community is a blessing and scripture reminds us that wherever two or three are gathered, God is there among us.





# Word

*"For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)*

After we gather as a community for worship we settle into a period of growth, learning, and contemplation where our faith is formed through "the word": scripture, preaching, proclamation of the creed, music, and prayer.



This portion of the service is designed to help us grow in faith and understanding, connecting with God in the words that are heard and spoken. God continues to form our faith in so many other ways as well and many of the ministries here at St. James are focused on helping people of all ages to grow in faith.

For the youngest members of our community, faith formation takes place through our His Kids Preschool and Kids Connect Christian education ministries.



Throughout the week, our preschool ministry helps children to learn and grow in an encouraging and joyful environment. Children experience Worship every other week. Each worship lesson is interactive using puppets, acting out the story with our bodies, or even looking at Pastor Chris' cool *Brick Bible*. We sing a new song with each Bible story and then end with our favorite song, "Jesus Loves Me". Our

children look forward to Worship weeks led by Pr. Chris, Miss Bobbie and Mrs. Hilsmier.



# Word



On Sunday mornings, our children experience growth and formation as they participate in our Kid's Connect Christian education ministry where they learn about the story God has been telling since the beginning of creation, and how they are a part of that amazing story. While this weekend ministry is geared towards children, the lessons are shared in our large-group worship space so that all who come to worship may learn the value and meaning of virtues in both biblical and real-life context.



The summer presents an opportunity each year for our community to gather for a special time of learning and fun at our Vacation Bible School. This year we partnered with 3 area congregations in sharing the props and sets to set the scene for this wonderful event, and also in the execution of the event as members from St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Zieglerville joined us for the week. Together we were able to create a wonderful event that blessed the nearly 75 participants. Kids and adults alike were encouraged to "shine Jesus' light" in every situation, to all people.



# Word

As our youth grow older, we invite them to participate in a faith milestone known as Confirmation: where our youth are invited to affirm the promises made at their baptism. Through this ministry, our confirmands encounter the grace and love of God through the stories of scripture, as well as through their peers and their own life experiences.



In the Fall of 2023, we began a combined-confirmation ministry with 5 local Lutheran congregations, providing students a large group experience with a rotating location hosted by each participating congregation. God is blessing students and leaders while strengthening relationships between these congregations.



High school students were encouraged to participate in Worship services, played an integral part in our Vacation Bible School, help with fundraisers, and support our Christian education program by helping out in Nursery and Kids Connect. They met regularly to devote time to learning more about their role in God's kingdom.





# Word

Finally, one of the greatest ways to learn and grow is to participate in the formation of others and that's exactly what 6 of our youth did this past Christmas Eve as they came together to lead worship during our Youth-Led Christmas Eve service which included acting out several skits of the Christmas story interspersed between song and scripture.



For the adults in our community, one of the primary ways that we experience faith formation is through hearing the story of scripture and applying those stories to our lives in our Adult Bible studies. This year our three Bible studies have covered the books of Romans, 1 Timothy, Jonah and Hebrews.

*"One of the things I love about our Bible study is that not only do we discuss what the Bible says, we also talk about how it applies to our lives. I look forward to every Thursday!"*

– Marilyn, participant, Willow Run Bible Study



Growing in faith is a life-long experience and through these ministries for children, youth, and adults, God continues to shape us, form us, and sustain us as beloved children of God.



# Meal

*"I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God." (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13)*



Holy Communion, the Meal, is another major component in Christian worship service. We celebrate Holy Communion as a reminder of Christ's sacrifice. As we gather around the table we are nourished by the bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ and linked together as a community with the whole church on earth and in heaven.



Meals are powerful times to come together as a community and one of the purposes of gathering for communion isn't just to celebrate this sacred meal, but to be reminded that all meals are sacred, that any time we gather at the table whether it be at church, or with our families at home, this is sacred space.



Each year we proudly welcome newcomers to the table as they receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. On the eve of their First Communion, our 5th grade students make the communion bread that will be blessed and shared the next day.

# Meal

Throughout this year we shared fellowship at the table in a variety of ways, gathering for many nourishing meals as a community.



The Lenten season this year saw the return of our dinner church gatherings, the first time such gatherings had happened since before COVID. These gatherings provided us an opportunity to experience first hand the power of gathering around the table together in a unique and relaxed worship experience.

On Easter Sunday morning joined as a community for an Easter breakfast which not only nourished our bodies, but fed our Spirits as well as we enjoyed one another's company and enhanced our Easter celebration.



Our Pub Theology group regularly gathered around the table, this time at a local restaurant to enjoy food and drink, as well as engaging in a thought-provoking conversation about that month's topic. Some of the topics that were discussed included: wisdom, creativity, freedom, prayer, fun, waiting, hope, and are we alone in the universe. These gatherings allowed all of the participants to be reminded of the tangible grace

and love of God that we experience when we share a meal together, experiencing joy, laughter, and connection with one another.

During the summer, we gathered together as a congregation and joined by members of the surrounding community for our second annual summer BBQ which not only supplied us with delicious food, but also served as a fundraiser which helps ministries at St. James continue to do the work that God has called us to do.

# Meal

Even our preschool kids learn the value of a shared community meal. The week leading up to Thanksgiving, His Kids students worked together to make a Thanksgiving “feast” for each other, their parents and teachers.

Finally, and most frequently, we gathered as a congregation each Sunday for our Hospitality hour after worship. This time of food and fellowship is an extension of the sacred meal that we experience in worship as we gather together as a community, share what is going on in our lives, offer encouraging words, and experience life together. The time that is shared, often with the sound of children playing in the background, serves to bond us together more strongly as a community and reminds us that God's grace is present with us no matter where we might be going next.



Gathering for meals is a sacred experience and thankfully God has blessed us with many opportunities to do just that.



# Sending

*"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

*(Matthew 5:16)*



As each worship service comes to a close we enter a time of sending. This portion of the service involves turning our attention to the world around us as we leave the worship space, filled with the grace of God. We are called to go and be Christ's hands and feet to the world, bearing witness to God's transformative love through our words and our actions. We do this in so many ways. God has placed each of us in unique settings in which we can authentically share the good news with the people that we encounter. Sometimes this takes place in our workplaces and our neighborhoods, other times it takes place in the places we feel called to go to in order to be of service to those in need.



Each and every one of us are invited to share the love of God in our community, even the youngest among us. This past year Arcadia at Limerick Pointe invited the students of His Kids to an inter-generational Birthday Party for Dr. Seuss in March 2023. The children listened to Dr. Seuss books and sang silly songs along with our new Arcadia friends. These outings to Arcadia are meaningful to both the kids and the residents.



# *Sending*

During the summer, God called us to serve our brothers and sisters in eastern Kentucky through the Appalachia Service Project. Through this ministry, 15 people from our congregation and a partner congregation, Grace Lutheran in Royersford, traveled down to Breathitt County, Kentucky to help serve families that were devastated by flooding the prior year.

Projects included replacing flood damaged interiors with new insulation and walls, flooring and kitchens. Those who served found that though the work was exhausting, their hearts were full from the love, kindness, and gratitude shared by those they were blessed to serve.



# Sending

God also moved us to serve our local community through the continuation of ministries such as Operation Smart Start and Shining Star. This past year Operation Smart Start provided 218 backpacks filled with school supplies to local area schools. Likewise Operation Shining Star continued to be a blessing by providing 157 \$50 gift cards to families in our area. We are grateful to God for the abundant blessings that we have received, and honored that we get to participate in God's blessings being poured out on our surrounding neighbors.

*"When I gave a single mom with four children a Giant gift card, she began to cry." She told me, "I didn't know where I would get the money to make my children a special Christmas dinner. I am overwhelmed that people who don't even know me care about me and my children."*

– Linda Gambone, Community Health in Pottstown, regarding Operation Shining Star.

Finally in addition to Shining Star this past Christmas we were able to join with one of our ministry partners, Spring-Ford Project Outreach, in "adopting" 5 families to bless with gifts for Christmas. The program focuses on gifts for children age 0-14, so while we may not know who else is in the households, we know that over 100 gifts were graciously given to those families. We pray helped them to have an even more joyous and Merry Christmas.





# Amen

In his book "When Church Stops Working" author Andrew Root writes:

"Too often we believe there is something else we should be doing than being together, eating, storytelling, praying, and remembering, rehearsing again and again the story of Jesus Christ's life and its meaning. Yet, it's only out of this being together, this waiting, that we encounter the living God. In encountering this living God we are called out into the world to follow this God who loves the world."

This is who we are, a people who are called to gather together in community, share the story of God's grace in the world, encounter God's grace in meals shared at the altar and at the table, and go out to serve our wider community and the world.

This predictable yet comforting pattern is a part of the fabric of all that we do as people of God, and it is all made possible by the love and grace of our God who journeys with us every step of the way.

*As we look to the coming year ahead,  
may God continue to speak to us and guide us forward,  
may we seek and find God in the midst of everything that we do,  
and may we trust that at the center of it all is our God  
who has claimed us as God's own, and will never let us go.  
May the Grace and Peace of Christ be with you all. Amen.*



# Financial Report 2023

(1/1/2023 - 12/31/2023)

We planned to spend

We paid

| Expenses                                    | 2023 Budget        | 2023 Actual        | 2024 Budget        |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Administrative                              | \$ 32,135          | \$ 30,005          | \$ 31,393          |
| Buildings/Property                          | \$ 65,212          | \$ 61,560          | \$ 62,700          |
| Christian Education                         | \$ 5,000           | \$ 4,333           | \$ 5,750           |
| Youth Expenses                              | \$ 1,500           | \$ 174             | \$ 1,100           |
| Evangelism/Service                          | \$ 200             | \$ -               | \$ 1,200           |
| Congregational Fellowship                   | \$ 1,500           | \$ 947             | \$ 1,500           |
| Worship                                     | \$ 2,150           | \$ 1,756           | \$ 1,925           |
| Music                                       | \$ 1,200           | \$ 544             | \$ 750             |
| Salaries                                    | \$ 198,284         | \$ 200,210         | \$ 196,351         |
| Other Staffing                              | \$ 63,664          | \$ 63,458          | \$ 61,996          |
| Benevolence (5% of Projected Income)        | \$ 10,050          | \$ 9,492           | \$ 9,276           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                       | <b>\$ 380,895</b>  | <b>\$ 372,479</b>  | <b>\$ 373,941</b>  |
|   |                    | We spent           |                    |
| Income                                      | '22 Projected      | '22 Actual         | '23 Projected      |
| <b>Giving</b>                               | <b>\$ 361,501</b>  | <b>\$ 347,586</b>  | <b>\$ 358,016</b>  |
|   |                    | We received        |                    |
| <b>Income-Expense Overage or (Shortage)</b> | <b>\$ (19,394)</b> | <b>\$ (24,893)</b> | <b>\$ (15,925)</b> |

3% for 2023



# HKCP Financial Report

2022-2023 School Year (7/1/2022 - 6/30/2023)

HIS KIDS CHRISTIAN  
PRESCHOOL 2022-23

**Enrollment**

72

**Summer Camp '23 (3 wks)**

38

**Scholarships**

Partial: 1 child/1 family

Full: 2 children/2 families

| Expenses                                    | 2023 Actual        |
|---|--------------------|
| Salaries                                    | \$ 165,617         |
| Utility Share to St James                   | \$ 20,750          |
| Supplies & Equipment                        | \$ 10,122          |
| All Other Expenses                          | \$ 6,764           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                       | <b>\$ 191,707</b>  |
|   |                    |
| Income                                      | 2023 Actual        |
| Tuition                                     | \$ 151,586         |
| Summer Fun Program Tuition                  | \$ 5,101           |
| School Registration                         | \$ 4,050           |
| Fundraiser                                  | \$ 435             |
| Miscellaneous                               | \$ 2,950           |
| <b>Total Income</b>                         | <b>\$ 164,122</b>  |
|   |                    |
| <b>Income-Expense Overage or (Shortage)</b> | <b>\$ (39,131)</b> |



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**ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
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