



# Doing What Love Requires

## Annual Report 2020

*A Celebration of Mission and Ministry at St. James' 2020*



## St. James' Episcopal Church Parish Annual Meeting (Virtual) November 15, 2020

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*The St. James' mission is to bring people together to be transformed by and to proclaim Christ's love through worship, spiritual formation, and service.*

*The St. James' vision is to be a place where all are welcome, to feel God's love and share God's love.*

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# St. James' Parish Annual Meeting

## November 15, 2020

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### Clergy and Staff

Rector .....	The Rev. Meredith T. Heffner, rector@stjamespotomac.org
Assistant Rector.....	The Rev. James S. Isaacs, james@stjamespotomac.org
Director of Music Ministry and Parish Rentals	Newton Lewis, newton@stjamespotomac.org
Sunday School Dir.....	Marisol Castro, sundayschool@stjamespotomac.org
Youth Director.....	Rachele Donnelly, rachele@stjamespotomac.org
St. James' Children's School Director.....	Astrid Crookshank, preschool@stjamespotomac.org
Parish Administrator .....	Grace Lo, office@stjamespotomac.org
Communications Asst. ....	Kirsten Hall, kirsten@stjamespotomac.org
Sunday Sexton .....	Jerome Childress, office@stjamespotomac.org

### Wardens, Vestry, and Diocesan Delegates of 2020

Senior Warden.....	Barry Thompson
Junior Warden .....	Ken Van Valkenburgh
Vestry members .....	Anselm Hennis, Wendy Hicks, Andrew Huck, Dawn Iype, Lori Minasian, Holly Mulderig, Bill Murphy, Patrick O'Hare, Trish Powell, Lindsay Ragheb, Carolyn Ragland, Kara Smigel
Vestry Officers.....	Tracy Lively, Treasurer; Parke Brown, Asst. Treasurer, Cheri Cooper, Secretary; Scott Zimmerman, Registrar
Diocesan Delegates .....	Sarah Hnatov, Katherine Weaver
Alternate Delegates.....	Pat East, Mary Miers

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Rector's Reflection

*The Rev. Meredith T. Heffner*

*November 20, 2020*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It's hard to believe that a year ago at our last Annual Meeting I was reflecting on the success of our Mental Health Ministries, and announcing the plans for the next steps of our building initiative—to upgrade, add to, and enhance our facilities. There was a lot to celebrate, a lot being planned, and a lot to look forward to.

Then, only three months into the year, the pandemic struck and the Bishop directed that all public worship services and normal parish operations stop, in order to slow the spread of the virus and protect the vulnerable in our community.

Eight months later we continue to be physically apart. Although the county is allowing places of worship to have limited indoor gatherings, your leaders and I have determined we are not yet comfortable regathering, especially in light of the current uptick in COVID cases. My heart is heavy thinking about this, not knowing when this period of physical separation will end.

Financially it hasn't been easy. Income is down, primarily due to the loss of rental income. We've put a pause on our building initiative, and have reduced spending as much as possible, prioritizing our expenditures according to our Policy Regarding Financial Management. These include, in this order: employee salaries and benefits; the diocesan pledge; our mortgage, utilities and regular maintenance; supplies, discretionary program expenses, obligations to vendors; and other expenses that may be deferred.

Yet things are not all bad. Due to the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan our payroll was covered for a portion of the pandemic, and thanks to this and the generosity of our members, we have not had to dip into our reserves. The year may end more positively than expected.

And so, as we move gratefully into 2021, we will continue following this limited budget—which we will review in six months (and maybe sooner) as we find ourselves coming through the pandemic into full operations again.

We will review our pledge income at that time as well. Currently we have received pledges for 2021 in the amount of \$358,170 from 88 pledging units. We don't usually meet our stewardship goal until the first quarter of the new year—so these pledges are almost on par with what we might expect pre-COVID. This kind of support from the congregation confirms to me that you strongly value your relationship with St. James', whether we gather physically or virtually. Thank you to all who have pledged. If you have not yet done so and are financially able, I encourage you to make a pledge soon.

Meanwhile, we continue on as best we can in this pandemic, following Jesus' instructions to "pray and not lose heart." We continue to persevere as the Body of Christ called "St. James'," doing what love requires—despite everything that is going on around us, and everything that is keeping us apart. For example:

- We continue to worship weekly through our videotaped worship services which are viewed on average by over 170 families a week.
- We have connected through conference calls, rector's reflections, and virtual fellowship.
- We've continued our spiritual formation with our Sunday morning FaithTalks; our Thursday morning Bible studies; children's monthly Compassion Camp; and Youth Group activities, and monthly conference call prayer vigil.

- Our mental wellness ministry continues through our Thursday evening “Stronger Together” meetings. Our Racial Justice committee has been meeting for a few months, taking up our racial justice initiative. St. James’ Children’s School, our largest mission, continues to offer childcare and remote learning to children in our community, according to guidelines.
- We raised over \$5000 to help feed the students at the Bishop Walker School, and every week we collect a car-full of food, and deliver it to Manna Food Center, to help feed the hungry in the area. We’ve also lifted up various organizations for your support.
- Cub Scout Pack 1306 has added new members and continues outdoor activities at St. James’, in spite of having to forgo their usual elementary school connections.

This is what love requires. This is what we do.

But that’s not all. As you’d expect from a congregation that is joyful and warm, we’ve also had fun. Our Men’s Breakfast Group and Book Club continue to meet by phone. Our Zoom coffee hours are filled with stories and laughter. We gathered for a distanced celebration of our high school graduates, and we celebrated Halloween—with over 80 families driving through our decorated parking lot, where we handed out over 200 bags of candy.

Throughout all this, we’ve managed our parish operations. The Executive Committee (comprised of the wardens, rector, treasurers, chair and vestry liaison to the finance commission) meets twice a month to assess our financial situation. The Facilities Commission has worked to keep up buildings and grounds, and we have invested in what we need to be able to regather when it is safe—upgrading our filters and HVAC system to limit viral spread.

The fact that we continue to be Church in a pandemic reminds me that, just as God led God’s people through the wilderness in the past, God leads us still. They looked forward to the Promised Land. What do we look forward to? What does the Promised Land look like for us?

In the short term, we have special events planned for Thanksgiving and Christmas, including services of Lessons and Carols, a Virtual Christmas Pageant, and the celebration of Holy Eucharist on Christmas Eve—to name a few.

In January we’ll continue our discussion on racism with a facilitated series called, “Sacred Ground.” And of course we’ll gather for coffee hours, rector calls, and bible studies. Mission and Outreach will continue to lift up opportunities to help those in need. Stronger Together will meet weekly. Sunday School will meet monthly, and our Youth Group will gather.

And eventually we will regather together in our buildings for worship and fellowship. And then we can finally return to our mission—continuing to do what love requires, in person.

We may be surprised by how we have changed in this pandemic, and how these changes inform and perhaps reshape how we do what love requires. No matter what the future brings, however, this is good news—God will have brought us through this pandemic, we will hear God’s call anew, and rejoice in God’s faithfulness.

I thank you all—especially my staff and the Vestry—for your love and support. As I conclude my report, I ask you to continue to pray and persevere, following God and knowing that God is leading and will not fail us. We are God’s beloved—St. James’, called out of our joy and warmth to be God’s people at this time.

God bless you, my friends, and God bless St. James’.

*Rev. Meredith*

## A SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR

### Worship, Special Services, Events and Activities

**Sunday worship average attendance**  
150 pre-COVID; 175 during COVID

#### Special services pre-COVID

- . Interfaith PAIC Thanksgiving
- . Advent Quiet Day
- . Christmas Services and Pageant
- . Mental Health Praise Service
- . Celebration of 20 Years of Ministry  
for Newton Lewis, Music Director
- . Lenten services and events:  
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper  
Lenten Ecumenical Dinner and Study  
Lenten Reflection emails  
Ash Wednesday with Ashes to Go



#### Special services by video during COVID

- . Seasons of Creation Services
- . Holy Week and Easter:  
Palm Sunday  
Maundy Thursday  
Good Friday  
Easter Sunday
- . Pentecost
- . Feast of Saint James and virtual celebration of Holy  
Communion
- . All Saints Day



#### Sacramental Events

- 3 Baptisms
- 5 Confirmations  
and Receptions
- 1 Wedding
- 4 Funerals and  
Committals
- 1 Ordination



## Faith Formation and Discipleship

### Sunday School

- Weekly Sunday School and Children's Chapel, pre-COVID
- Monthly Compassion Camp Sunday School during COVID
- Sunday School outreach project, sandwiches for Shepherd's Table



Sunday School "Compassion Camp" by Zoom

### Adult Sunday Morning FaithTalk Series Topics

- Developing Good Listening Skills
- "The Wonder of Christmas: Once You Believe, Anything is Possible"
- *Receiving Jesus: The Way of Love*, book by Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde
- "The Sabbath Poetry of Lent," Wendell Berry poems
- Supporting Loved Ones with Mental Health Conditions
- Care of Creation
- Spiritual Resources in a Season of Social Distancing
- *Warmth of Other Suns*, book by Isabel Wilkerson
- Micah 6:8 discussion series: What Does Love Require
- Love Your Neighbor scripture discussion series

### Thursday Morning Bible Studies

- John Ohmer, *Slaying Your Goliaths: How God Can Help*
- Peter Enns, *How the Bible Actually Works*
- Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ*
- Cindy Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*



**Men's Prayer Breakfast:** 8-9 met weekly; by conference call during COVID

### Youth Group Activities

- . Dine-out fundraisers
- . Shrove Tuesday pancake supper
- . Wreaths Across America
- . Ice Skating
- . DIY Prayer Beads
- . Valentines Cards
- . Making Linus Blankets
- . Doughnut Delivery
- . Drive-Through Graduation
- . Zoom meetings, trivia contests, and virtual check-ins during COVID
- . Socially-distanced outdoor events with youth of St. Francis Episcopal, Potomac.



Youth at Drive-Through Graduation, Spring 2020

### Parish Ministries

#### Fellowship

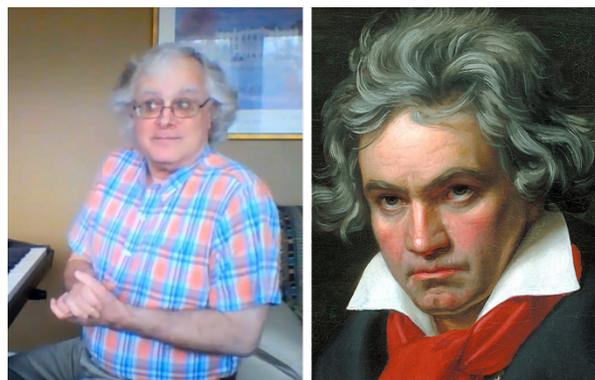
- . Coffee (Zoom during COVID)
- . Book Discussion; by conference call during COVID
- . Dolores Redondo, *All This I Will Give to You*
- . Lisa See, *The Island of Sea Women*
- . Lindsay Jane Ashford, *The Snow Gypsy*
- . Delia Owens, *Where the Crawdads Sing*
- . Lunch & Learn, through March 2019
- . Promoting Good Balance and Preventing Falls
- . Holiday Sing-Along
- . Soup Lunch
- . Montgomery County in the 1800s



Pre-COVID Coffee Hour

#### Staying Connected – Communication

- 5 Pilgrim Newsletters
- 195 Facebook posts
- 24 News and Notes emails
- 134 Rector's reflection emails
- 21 Musical Moment videos



A Musical Moment with Newton and Beethoven

## Membership

- . 35 Welcome bags given out by greeters pre-COVID
- . Women's Movie Night 11/22/19 - *Wadjda*
- . White Elephant Bingo 3/7/20
- . Newcomer's Lunch 3/8/20
- . Drive-Through Trunk or Treat:
  - 18 host trunks decorated
  - 84 drive-throughs
  - 204 bags of treats delivered

**Mental Health Ministry:** 31 Stronger Together discussions, supporting members of our parish

## Mission and Outreach

- . Raised \$5750 in Giant gift cards for Bishop Walker School back-to-school season
- . Collected and delivered 31 carloads of food for Manna Food Center
- . Highlighted needs and encouraged support of local organizations:
  - The DC Diaper Bank, Tree House (self-care kits for kids who have experienced abuse or neglect), Red Cross blood drive, and local hospitals
- . Sent over \$350 for Bibles to prisoners for our prison ministry
- . Hosted eight twelve-step groups
- . Sponsored Cub Scout Pack 1306

## Racial Justice Committee

- . Over 90 people participated in our racial justice word cloud
- . Led FaithTalk series on Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*

## St. James' Children's School

- . Pre-COVID: 89 Students enrolled
- . During COVID, under limited enrolment guidelines: 21 Students enrolled in Essential Personnel Child Care
- . School Age Virtual Support classes for 68 Students in fall of 2020



Drive-Through Trunk or Treat, 2020



Classes at St. James' Children's School, pre-COVID

## Pastoral Care

### Pre-COVID pastoral care

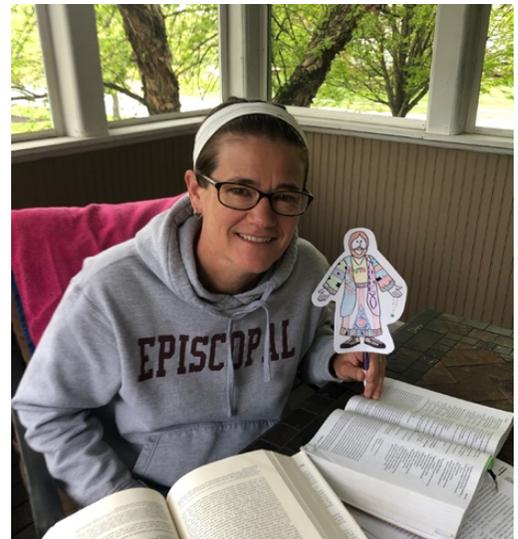
- 3 Nursing home visits
- 10 Meals delivered
- 4 Altar flower bouquets delivered
- 3 Pastoral care visits
- 12 Prayer shawls and baptismal blankets given

### Care during COVID

- 70+ Rector's open conference calls
- 400+ Pastoral phone calls and emails
- 230 Face masks made and donated by Kara Smigel
- Prayers, cards, and emails:
  - 112 Prayer Chain personal requests
  - 36 Grief ministry books sent to those who have lost a loved one
  - 12 sympathy notices
  - 15 well thank you cards
  - 3 new baby notices



Rev. Meredith T. Heffner, Rector  
and Rev. James S. Isaacs, Asst. Rector



Iva Staats, Seminarian,  
with Flat Jesus



Easter Message from St. James' Youth



## ST. JAMES' PARISH MINISTRY LEADERS AND GROUPS 2020

St. James' continues its mission and ministries thanks to the work of many parishioners. Thank you to all who give of time, talent, and treasure for St. James'. Though we tried to include everyone in the list below, we apologize for those whose names or ministries were accidentally omitted. Some ministries list only the chair or coordinator, but many other volunteers serve behind the scenes. To get involved, more information is available by contacting the parish office at [office@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:office@stjamespotomac.org) or 301-762-8040.

All ministry descriptions apply to pre-COVID life at St. James' unless otherwise noted.

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**Administration Commission and Nominating Committee:** This commission supports the work of the parish by overseeing compliance with parish policies, serving as a personnel committee, providing oversight to the Vestry nomination process, and promoting practical assistance in the church office. This commission assists the Communications Commission with generating and coordinating internal and external publicity about parish activities.

*Commission members:* Joyce Nohowel (chair); Trish Powell (vestry liaison); Grace Lo, Parish Administrator; Mary Miers; Jennifer Nordin

*Nominating Committee:* Brad McCullough (co-chair), Sean Stanfield (co-chair), Susan Olson, Holly Mulderig, Amy Metcalf

**Children's School:** The St. James' Children's School has the capacity to enroll almost 100 children from the ages of six weeks to six years. In addition to general readiness, Bible curricula, and enriching school activities, there is a weekly chapel service for older children, music classes (which culminate in a musical each spring), Spanish, dance, gymnastics, karate, piano, and soccer classes. *Director:* Astrid Crookshank

**Christian Education and Formation:** This commission includes Thursday Bible Study, Sunday FaithTalks, Ecumenical Lenten series, and Children's Education. Children's formation occurs through Sunday School, Children's Chapel, and other special events. Nursery care is also provided. Middle and high school students receive further fellowship and education through our Youth Group and participation in our annual mission trip.

*Adult Ministries:* The Rev. Meredith Heffner, Ann Venton

*Children's Ministries:* Lindsay Ragheb (vestry liaison); The Rev. Meredith Heffner; Marisol Castro (Sunday School Director)

*Youth Director:* Rachele Donnelly

**Communications Commission:** This commission promotes timely transmission of information through a variety of media. The commission works to make more sophisticated use of digital communication, social networking, and other advances especially during COVID. This group also manages our website. *Commission members:* Holly Winzler (vestry liaison); Dawn Iype; Kirsten Hall; Mary Miers.

**Earth Stewardship:** This group of interested parishioners explores ways to be better stewards of the Earth, “our island home.” They sponsor volunteer activities, maintain the church’s rain garden, and work to identify ways to make our church more “green.” *Group members:* John Combs (chair), Doug Holy, Donna Judkins, Barry Thompson, Marta Vogel.

**Facilities Commission:** This commission oversees maintenance and work on the parish hall, the church building and grounds, and the Memorial Garden. Occasional work days are held for painting, cleaning, and garden care. Anyone may adopt a garden for ongoing care or volunteer for other one-time or ongoing property maintenance responsibilities. *Commission members:* Ken Van Valkenburgh (Jr. Warden and chair); John Combs, Ed Ellis, Andrew Huck; Grace Lo (Parish Administrator); Isabelle Schuessler; Harley Venton; Len Whistler; Jeanne Lehning (Memorial Garden care).

**Fellowship Commission:** This commission helps coordinate parish activities, including lunches and dinners, which promote fellowship among our members. Some ongoing fellowship groups are the Men’s Prayer Breakfast, Book Club, and Lunch and Learn. Fellowship Commission also helps coordinate and oversee the Sunday morning coffee hours and plans special receptions.

*Commission members:* Cheryl Stafford (chair), and many others including but not limited to Jo Ann Thompson, Lois Van Nevel, Sarah Padgett, Mary Miers.

*Book Club:* Jo Ann Thompson

*Lunch and Learn:* Sarah Padgett, Deb Talley, Jo Ann Thompson, Lois Van Nevel, and Len Whistler

*Men’s Prayer Breakfast:* Sampson Annan

**Finance Commission:** Our financial annual report may be requested through the parish office, [office@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:office@stjamespotomac.org). This commission is responsible for assisting with the overall financial management of the parish. The commission, working closely with the treasurer of St. James’, reviews revenue and expenses of the church and oversees banking, audit, record keeping, bonding, insurance, and other financial requirements in accordance diocesan requirements. The commission is responsible for managing our annual stewardship campaign, as well as the operating budget process along with the vestry and other commission chairs. This commission also manages fundraising activities such as the Food Certificate Ministry. The tellers, as part of this commission, count all financial contributions and other monies coming into St. James’.

*Commission members:* Bill Murphy (vestry liaison), Sandy Soundararajan (chair), Margaret Blaine, Parke Brown (assistant treasurer), Ed Ellis, Ken Van Valkenburgh (Jr. Warden), and Dan Zimmerman; Tracy Lively (treasurer), The Rev. Meredith Heffner, Barry Thompson (Sr. Warden)

*Rentals:* Newton Lewis

*Tellers:* Jane Lorenz (chair), Beverly Bartolomeo, Elaine Buschor, George Dick, Pat East, Alice Morrison, Maureen Schiavone, Lois Van Nevel.

**Furniture Sales:** For nearly ten years, a crew of people have been picking up donations of furniture from members of our parish, and those in the wider community who are reducing or disposing of households for various reasons. Sometimes the donations also include boxes of household items for the rummage sales. Most pickups are scheduled on weekdays, usually in the morning, and are sold on *craigslist*, with all proceeds going to a designated fund at church.

Funds raised go into the St. James' Facilities Improvement and Depreciation fund. *Contact:* Isabelle Schuessler.

**Membership Commission:** The Membership Commission works with the rector to coordinate parish programs that strengthen and build the membership of this church and the commitment of its members in supporting its ministry and mission. The commission welcomes newcomers, encourages membership at St. James', and maintains a welcome table. *Commission members:* Dawn Iype (chair), Kara Smigel (vestry liaison), Yemi Agboola, Carolyn Dick, Joyce Graf, Sarah Hnatov, Holly Mulderig, Katherine Weaver, The Rev. Meredith T. Heffner.

**Mental Health Ministries:** This commission plans programs to support and educate parishioners about mental health in order to reduce stigma, provide resources, and better understand how to care for one another in times of mental illness and stress. *Ministry members:* Anselm Hennis (vestry liaison), James Isaacs (chair), Jeanne Lehning, Sampson Annan, Lisa Goodkind, Alice Morrison, Holly Mulderig, Sandy Soundararajan, Cheryl Stafford, Deb Talley, Alex Trouteaud ("Stronger Together"), Ann Venton, Harley Venton.

**Mission and Outreach Commission:** The Mission and Outreach (M&O) Commission comprises leaders of various outreach activities and others who help coordinate parish programs for volunteer service. This commission organizes various parish activities throughout the year and oversees the distribution of St. James' funds to benevolences outside the parish. It also supports our Mental Health Ministries, Good News Jail and Prison Ministry, Shepherd's Table, Samaritan Ministries, and the Bishop Walker School. During COVID, M&O raises funds for the needy through various community organizations. In addition, the Mission and Outreach Commission manages funds for Sustainable Development Goal outreach. *Commission members:* The Rev. James Isaacs (chair), Wendy Hicks (vestry liaison), Anselm Hennis, Grace Huff, Jack Linehan, Alice Morrison, Harley Venton, Bill Wallace.

**Music Ministries:** *St. James' Singers* (choir) provides choral anthems and leads the responses in the liturgy. The choir sings music from a variety of traditions. *St. James' Ringers* (bell choir) meets weekly on Thursday evenings at 6:15 to 7:15 p.m. The Ringers play two or three times a quarter as a group and additionally in small groups to augment music at some services. *Director of Music ministries:* Newton Lewis.

**Pastoral Care Commission:** St. James' is blessed with a loving and caring community that provides care to its members during times of need or crisis. Pastoral counseling and spiritual care have always been the responsibility of the parish clergy. Over the years and under the guidance of the rector, several lay ministries, which complement the pastoral care provided by the clergy, have evolved. These include Lay Eucharistic Visitors, the Card Ministry, Prayer and Healing Ministry, the Nursing Home Ministry, the Prayer Chain, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Food Ministry.

*Vestry liaison:* Carolyn Ragland

*Greeting Cards and Grief Support:* Ann Pararas and Jean Da Costa

*Nursing Home Ministry:* Marge Combs, Jeanne Lehning, Deb Talley

*Prayer Shawls:* Kirsten Hall (coordinator); prolific stitchers: Carol Barrick, Beverly Bartolomeo, Deborah Talley, and others.

**Racial Justice Committee:** This group, in response to a call for a racial justice initiative, is working to develop the vision and response of the St. James' community, to create a fair and just society, and to heal divisions, so that we may live in justice and peace. *Commission members:* Katherine Weaver (chair), The Rev. Meredith Heffner, James Isaacs, Beda Jean-Francois, Doug Holy, Heather Hennis, Maria Isabel Roldos, Tracy Lively, Sampson Annan, Suson Olson, Wendy Hicks.

**Worship Commission:** This commission plans and prepares for all worship services and coordinates those who support and assist in worship. This includes musicians, ushers, flower guild, altar guild, lectors, intercessors, acolytes, our Sunday Morning Prayer Team, and Lay Eucharistic Ministers.

*Commission members:* The Rev. Meredith T. Heffner (rector), John Eisold (chair), Lori Minasian (vestry liaison), Sampson Annan, Wendy Hicks, Jeanne Lehning, Newton Lewis (Music Director), Amy Metcalf, Mary Miers, Sarah Padgett, and Kris Smithberger

*Acolytes:* Lori Minasian, Wrangler in 2020 (open for 2021); Marshall Finch, Trainer

*Altar Guild:* Sam and Jane Ireland

*Flower Guild:* Mary Miers and Sarah Padgett

*Lectors and Intercessors:* Kirsten Hall and Bob Quackenbush

*Lay Eucharistic Ministers:* Rector

*Music Ministries:* Newton Lewis (see Music Ministries, above)

*Prayer Team:* Sampson Annan

*Special Liturgies:* Jeanne Lehning

*Ushers:* Amy Metcalf

*Video Recording and Design:* Dawn Iype



## **St. James' Episcopal Church**

11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854

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