

St. James, Batavia

What are some significant moments in the history of your church that have shaped its identity today?

The St. James community, which has been in existence for over 200 years, is about more than just the bricks and mortar of our beautiful cathedral-style church. We have taken the Lord's command "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" seriously.

We have met and continue to meet the needs of the community through various ministries such as the Blessing Box, the Respite program, and our support of orphans in Uganda, to name just a few.

We have built upon a successful capital campaign in 2015 to maintain our facility and expand its capabilities to include a chancel-level handicapped-friendly restroom. Despite our aging congregation, St. James continues to learn from past challenges and has developed a number of strengths to sustain itself. The core of the congregation remains engaged and active, readily sharing their diverse talents to create a warm and vibrant atmosphere for worship and fellowship.



What makes your church unique in the region and the diocese?

There are so many ways to be involved in this community of faith, and our mission statement, "Feed and be fed in the love and works of Jesus Christ", speaks volumes about the people of St. James. We are an energetic, caring group of people who contribute to several community outreach efforts and provide a venue for community cultural events, particularly being the home of the Genesee Chorale. Our vibrant choir director and organist has enabled us to sustain an active choir when many area parishes do not. Through our outdoor summer services, we are visibly worshiping in our community and are attracting several visitors who have attended our welcoming service.

What are the most vibrant ministries or strengths of your parish today?

We are very proud of our community outreach that includes a once-a-month Respite program, affiliated with the Alzheimer's Association. This program offers a few hours of respite for caregivers while their loved ones engage in a specially-designed program of activities, games, and lunch. We have hosted community dinners, made sandwiches for the homeless in Buffalo, collected backpacks with school supplies for our neighboring middle school students, along with participating in ecumenical efforts, particularly the Blessing Box which provides non-perishable food, housed in front of St. James. We provide pastoral care visitations to our parishioners who are unable to get out. We also have a very active Thrift Store, serving many in the area by providing affordable clothing and household goods. When a local family is in need, we have

provided goods at no cost. Within the past few years, the women of St. James have provided dresses (in conjunction with the Dress-A-Girl program) and t-shirts to needy children in Uganda. The George Rupprecht Fund is held in trust by the St. James Episcopal Church. The purpose of this fund is to provide support for young females, residing in Genesee County, who are deprived of one or both natural parents or are placed in the custody of Genesee County Department of Social Services, and are in financial need.

Describe a moment in your community's life when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit moving among you. What made that moment possible?

We have a couple of new families in our church. One family, in particular, had a feeling of belonging right away, especially when one of their children was baptized. They appreciate how we keep traditions, and have felt welcomed and loved from the beginning of worshiping with us.

How does your church engage with the local neighborhood, the civic life of your community, or diocesan and/or Episcopal Church-wide initiatives?

We have community partnerships with the First Presbyterian Church (Grilled Cheese Give Away, Pride Celebration, Free Community Harvest Dinner, prayer services); the local Zonta service club (Adopt-a-Girl, Personal care products for the Blessing Box); Crossroads Legacy House; and we are a space resource for UConnect Care, which provides drug, alcohol, and behavioral health services. We are also quite active in the Genesee Regional Initiative (GRI), with several St. James members attending meetings regularly. We have hosted and participated in GRI and diocesan meetings,



services, and other events involving area Episcopal churches. Our organist regularly provides music at a GRI church on the 5th Sunday of the month. Our community presence, as mentioned previously, helps us to be centered around helping others. We regularly support United Thank Offering and Episcopal Relief and Development and try to respond to needs as they arise locally and nationally.

What are the hopes and dreams of your congregation for its next chapter?

St. James searches for a new leader who is enthusiastic, loving, transparent, inclusive, and will strive to bring new families through our doors, hopefully with younger children. An energetic leader with strong people skills who has a primary aspiration to lead, challenge, and develop a congregation is needed to help re-focus the interests, gifts, and abilities of the congregation, trusting that they will ultimately fulfill God's purpose. The ability to engage children and inspire youth is of paramount importance. Above all, the vestry and congregation are seeking a leader to infuse a powerful and contagious energy that will allow St. James to achieve its full potential.