

ST. JAMES 2024 STATE OF THE PARISH PRESENTATION

ST. JAMES, SMALL ENOUGH TO KNOW YOUR NAME, BIG ENOUGH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The **State of the Parish** was presented at Mass by Martha Belker and Bill Cordaro on October 27th, 2024. They also each shared a brief explanation of why they are part of the St. James community.

Martha Belker

I started coming to Mass here three years ago because I made some wonderful friends when I volunteered at Holy Family Catholic Worker House and wanted another way to keep in touch with them after the House closed. After attending one Mass, I knew that I found a parish that aligned with my values. Social justice, compassion, a welcoming community, and I made some new friends. I love the hugs and smiles that I get at any St James Mass. And I always hear a homily that reflects Catholic Social Teachings. We are a faith family that I want to support, and I hope you do too.

Bill Cordaro

I have been a member at St. James for about 5 years. What keeps me connected is the type of people who call St. James their spiritual home. I am worshipping with people who I have known for many years and who are pillars in the justice and peace community in KC. They challenge me to do more and to never use the excuse, I'm too old or too tired or don't have the time to make a difference in our community."

The bottom line is, St. James is worth investing my time, talent and treasure in.

I hope you feel the same.

The State of the Parish

Martha: What Bill Cordaro and I want to do this morning is present the state of our parish. We received input from parish leadership and parishioners to compile the information.

*(Below in **italics** is a summary of the **SWOT** process that the parish participated in.)*

In the Spring of 2024, the Leadership Team agreed that a survey of parishioners would be helpful to them in determining the perceived strengths and weaknesses of, opportunities for and threats to our St. James community. During

July and August, we distributed large and small questionnaires to Mass attendees and to the larger parish committees for their feedback on those four areas. Many of the issues we are addressing now were noted by St. James members during the survey period. A quick summary of the findings will give you an overview.

*We believe the **STRENGTHS** category is very uplifting and common statements about a welcoming and genuine caring attitude for one another a St James were noted time and again. Of course, the music, the liturgy, and our social justice efforts were high on the list as well as our wonderful presiders of the Eucharist! Some statement highlights include "lay leadership," "commitment," and "witness in the inner city."*

*Our most critical **weaknesses** were primarily about our buildings, our grounds and communication with one another and with the parish at large. With a dwindling membership over the past four years, we know the toll that COVID-19 has had on our community. This, of course, has led to a financial challenge and questions about our sustainability.*

*Nevertheless, we have an abundance of **opportunities** before us. Some of those include encouraging involvement in special projects, utilizing the Parish house for more gatherings (social and business), endorsing the small faith/social groups that are forming, creatively providing a colonnade ministry to our guests that frequent our courtyard, and widening the circle of parish responsibility. As one parishioner stated, "We always should be on the lookout for ways to let others lead to get them involved in the parish." As a lay-led parish, we are transitioning to increasing our time and talents to strengthen our viability and*

sustainability through volunteerism and partnerships with other organizations and churches throughout KC and suburbs.

*Lastly, the **threats** to St. James are known to most of us. Our threats include: our finances, lack of full-time priest, aging parishioners, lack of staff, youth not engaged in organized religion, small donor base, our aging buildings need a lot of work, and the diocesan lack of support.*

*We want to focus on the reality that our **weaknesses** can become our **opportunities** and that our **strengths** can be the keys to lifting up our vision and can provide inspiration to all at St James and all that we touch in Midtown and beyond.*

The parishioners of St. James have been known for helping people in mid-town who cannot provide for themselves. In the 1960s, the parish started serving meals and providing groceries from a pantry in Marian Hall. As the need grew, St James Parish offered the parish gymnasium to Bishop Sullivan Center (BSC) to provide these services. BSC renovated the gym that was three doors down from the church on Troost, and it became a social services center that now was managed by BSC.

For a small parish, we are very active in and outside of our parish, sharing our time, talent and treasure. In 2024, St James (STJ) parishioners were involved in:

(St. James conducted a Ministry Fair after Mass in May, inviting parishioners to share their time and talents with the different ministries that St. James provide. Below are the opportunities that St. James provides for parishioners to get involved in our mission to build the Reign of God.)

Bishop Sullivan Center - STJ volunteers worked about 75 hours a month in the pantry and served lunch or dinner at One City Cafe. The Wednesday sandwich group makes about 600

sandwiches each month. We support the BSC pantry with our donations on Pantry Sunday. Our donations support the Emergency Snack Bags for unhoused people as well as put food on the pantry shelves for BSC clients. During the last 2 months, 250-275 bags have been distributed. To volunteer, go to bishopsullivan.org and click on volunteer. Their phone number is 816-561-8515.

Troost39 Thrift Store - STJ volunteers unbox donations that are priced by the store staff. Volunteers then put them on the store shelves for purchase. Troost39 has anything that you can think of in its store. It is a place of many treasures. As a companion ministry to St. James, Troost39 Thrift Store is committed to supporting the community of midtown Kansas City and the Troost Corridor. If you would like to volunteer, send an email to urwelcome@troost39.org or call the store at 816-531-5485 and ask for Toni Wurth.

Kansas City Welcome Alliance – This organization was started by two STJ parishioners, wanting to welcome and provide hospitality to people who were fleeing their home country because of the danger that it posed to them. We all know that crossing our southern US border can be dangerous, but did you know that some families will walk thousands of miles to our border from Central and South America to escape danger. KC Welcome Alliance is a volunteer organization that offers hospitality to immigrant and asylum seekers who have been vetted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the FBI and then sent to KC. These guests to our city arrive with official papers stating that the holders are free to move about the U.S. until they take the next steps in their legal immigration process. Upon their arrival in Kansas City, KC Welcome Alliance, through the help of dozens of volunteers, welcomes our guests with open arms. We conduct medical screening and provide them with meals, clothing, and overnight accommodations. We also help them make travel arrangements to their final destination - their sponsor's home - generally

located within the U.S. In December 2022, KCWA welcomed 56 people (adults and children) who arrived by bus from El Paso and had them on their way to their final destination within 36 hours. They arrived frightened and clinging to each other and left with smiles and new found trust that people do care. Because of current government policies, additional people have not arrived in Kansas City since then. We wait for changes and know that we can do this again. KCWA currently is working with other nonprofits to provide assistance to asylum seeking families who arrive in KC and encouraging faith communities to host a family. Please visit KCWelcomeAlliance.org for more information or call Bill Cordaro at 816-797-1114.

African Self-Determination Foundation – This organization began at STJ as a project called Togo, the name of the country from which several STJ parishioners immigrated. All education in Togo, beginning with elementary school, is limited to people who can pay for it. STJ parishioners started making financial donations to support the education of children from elementary through university. To widen the donor base, the project became a separate non-profit organization known as the African Self-Determination Foundation. It has Missouri and Federal 501(c)3 status, making all donations tax-deductible at the federal and Missouri state level. In the 2023-24 school year, we sponsored 79 children. We have shortfall of almost \$6000 for the 2024-25 school year and hope we reach more donors. If you would like to donate, please contact Marcus Liddell at africanselfdeterminationkc@gmail.com.

Harvesters – STJ volunteers go to Harvesters once a month on Tuesday evenings to sort food or other commodities. An average of 6-8 people go each month, sometimes as many as 12. Harvesters is our local food bank that is under the umbrella of Feeding America. It serves 27 counties in northwest Missouri and northeast

Kansas. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Barbara Schepers at 816-810-8809.

St James Community Garden – The garden team of STJ volunteers has several growing areas. Most are in the south lawn of the church, and a smaller area is just west of our parking lot. The team takes produce every week to Bishop Sullivan Center during the growing season. This year to-date, 180 lbs of produce was donated. The garden team gets together for a monthly coffee and a harvest potluck. If you would like to help in the garden, please contact Sarah Hirsch at archathomekc@gmail.com.

The **Liturgy Committee** of eight members plans beautiful Masses for our Sunday liturgies. With **the choir** of 15-20 members, they practice weekly to provide a worship experience that sends us out into the world to make it a better place to live. Robert Basolo, our music director, has asked singers periodically from the Nigerian and Micronesian communities to sing the offertory songs in their native languages. To visually enhance our liturgies, six people hang the Advent wreath and Crown of Thorns and put up the Pentecost flame banners. A couple people put together the fall decorations. About 20 people help decorate for Christmas and then take them down. About 25 people decorate for Easter and put up the baptismal font. We have four people carry incense for the procession of the Book of the Dead during November. Ten people carry in the Advent candles during the four Sundays of Advent. We are grateful to people who volunteer for this decorative work. Please contact Bob Anderson at banderson49@yahoo.com if you would like to help or be part of the committee or Robert Basolo at rbasolo@shb.com if you would like to join the choir.

Social Justice committee - Using the Christmas giving tree, parishioners buy gifts for children identified by Bishop Sullivan Center; thru Manos Amigas parishioners provide financial support for the town of Anapra in Mexico; parishioners

attend death penalty vigils sponsored by MADP at 39th and Troost (three in 2024); the committee assists with voter registration; one of our committee members provides assistance for undocumented immigrants seeking legal status in the US either with green cards or citizenship.

From 1/1/24 -10/27/24, 16 undocumented immigrants were given legal help:

10 from Africa - 63%

5 from Central America - 31%

1 from Europe - 6%

Financial support was made available to 8 of 16 people - 50%

If you would like to join this committee or its activities, please contact Diane Etzel-Wise at dianeew72@gmail.com. If you have immigration or legal experience, please contact Connie Anderson at 913-515-3650 if you would like to help.

The **Parish Growth committee** looks for ways to get new people to come to Mass. The committee worked on several initiatives in 2024. Welcome banners were placed at the front doors of church, devotional cards related to the paintings of our new saints were printed, the recitation of the Parish Growth prayer near the end of Mass was resumed, ensuring all song books have the prayer by end of November was implemented, placing hand sanitizer in all pews, and completing a calling campaign to parishioners who we haven't seen since the pandemic (85 families were called or reviewed on the church roster; 52 responded; 32 asked to remain on our roster). We started putting the welcome postcard on the hat hooks in the pews. We added three members to the committee, increasing it to a total of ten. We continue to look for new ideas. Please contact Martha Belker at martha.belker@sbcglobal.net if you would like to join the committee or have suggestions.

Between the Cracks (BTC) Ministry - Last quarter seven families (five single parents and 11 children) were helped with utilities, medicine,

housing, transportation or bereavement. BTC is funded mostly by a grant from the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The remaining 5 percent comes from parish donations for emergency services. If you would like to donate to this ministry, please write your check to Between the Cracks and put it in the collection basket at Mass. If you would like more information about the ministry, please contact Mary Vincent at mpv3@swbell.net.

Bus Stop Ministry – This is a weekly visit to the Bus Stop at 39th and Troost. From Oct to May 1,002 winter items were given out. Drinks and snacks are distributed weekly – approximately 1300 people received a snack and something to drink last year. St. James adopted the bus stop on the southwest corner of 39th and Troost in 2023. Our logo is displayed at the bus stops. The bus stop ministers and two parishioner volunteers do a weekly cleaning of litter. A family trust donates to Bus Stop as well as grant money from the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. If you would like to help with this ministry, please contact Mary Vincent at mpv3@swbell.net.

Knitting and Crocheting group - interested people meet once a month to make items for the Bus Stop Ministry. Contact Mary Vincent for more information at mpv3@swbell.net.

St. James each year sponsors a **Good Friday Stations of the Cross**, highlighting the struggles of the world and the various ministries as we **walk along Troost**. The details are in the bulletin during Lent. It usually starts at noon on Good Friday.

Social Events

We have **parish-wide social events** throughout the year. Please watch the bulletin for details about these events and opportunities to volunteer.

- Fifth Sunday meal after Mass in Marian Hall, which is once every 3 months

- Chili Daze cook-off contest and play Jimbo, St James' version of bingo with great prizes donated by Troost39 and parishioners.
- Karaoke on the corner
- The annual anniversary picnic on the south lawn is in August
- The annual Goldenberg Duo concert usually is in October at church.
- We have receptions for Easter and Christmas.

We have **Hospitality Sunday** once a month. Parish volunteers (14) provide the food, serve, and clean up afterward for our parish gathering after Mass every second Sunday of the month. You might see us going into the north confessional a lot; it's where we keep our non-perishable and paper supplies. We would love to have more parishioners who might want to bake or provide snacks for this ministry. **Greeters** are part of hospitality every Sunday at St James. We currently have 21 parishioners who have volunteered for this ministry and would welcome many more. If you would like to participate in these two ministries, please contact Denise Simeone at denisesimeone@hotmail.com.

We volunteer to be **Eucharistic ministers** (15), **chime ringers and petition book carriers** (11), **gift bearers and lectors, ushers**. These are the contact people if you would like to help:

- Rose McLarney for Eucharistic Ministry – rmclarney40@gmail.com
- Denise Simeone for chime ringers and petition book carriers – denisesimeone@hotmail.com
- Marcus Liddell for lectors – mliddell@alumn.nd.edu
- You might be tapped on the shoulder during Mass to be an usher or gift bearer.

Sacraments – To-date in 2024, St James provided baptisms (11), first communion (4), confirmation (17), first reconciliation (4), weddings (6), and funerals (4).

As we worked to make the world a better place this year, we also had some setbacks. Like many churches, Covid continues to impact the number of people who come to Mass and on tithing and finances. We had some glitches in our financial reporting to the diocese. The parish budget has more expenses than income.

We have a leaky roof. You might have seen the water damage on the south wall. We also have serious ceiling damage in the choir room, inside the main church doors, and the family room, and wall damage in the south sacristy. We had a clean-out day to get these areas ready for repairs. Hence the recent dumpster in the parking lot. We are working on scheduling the roof repair first at a cost of about \$3000.

The exterior limestone on the church needs to be repaired and sealed, as pieces of the limestone have been found along the outside walls of the church. This work is down the road because it will be very expensive, but we need to keep it on our radar.

St James currently has five staff members, each working part-time: Ben Babaran, our parish administrator (assigned 30 hours a week), Beaurina Olter, our bookkeeper and secretary (15 hours a week), Robert Basolo, our music director (8 hours a week), Bonnie Haghirian, our faith formation coordinator (9 ½ hours a week) and Fiona Schulte, our youth minister (10 hours a week). Fiona is leaving her position this month (October), and Ben and Beaurina leave at the end of this year. Ben is retiring, and Beaurina has a full-time job. We also have parishioners who volunteer their time to keep St. James going. We want to thank all who volunteer at St. James.

Between now and the beginning of 2025, St. James has a lot of work to do – repair our church and hire new people. We have one new person already, Donna Arnone (who will work up to 16

hours a week), doing our bookkeeping through June of 2026. Donna is the business manager for St Therese Little Flower parish and has been working with Ben for a couple weeks on our finances. She works remotely for STLFL and will do the same for us.

Obviously, we hope that additional staff is found soon. They will need to learn about and be responsible for writing and publishing the weekly bulletin, sending the Friday email, and running the livestream of Mass every Sunday, in addition to doing the daily work in the parish office. We have one volunteer for the livestream and need several more to ensure this ministry continues. Please contact the parish office at parish@stjkc.org if you would like to learn (or already know) how to livestream Mass and would like to help.

We are excited about our future. As we fill the open positions, new people will bring new ideas and energy. St. James is looking into a different way we organize ourselves and the type of leadership we need. We want to take advantage of our small size by opening the parish decision-making process to the entire parish. We will be talking more about this in the coming months.

Stewardship Appeal

Bill: The first thing that we need to do is get our finances under control. We will be doing a couple of things to better ensure our financial health.

1. We want to increase oversight of our budget by our finance committee and create better communication with our finances to the parish at large and the diocese.
2. We are considering hiring a full-time (40 hours a week) parish leader to handle the day-to-day management of the parish.

To this end, at our October 27th Mass, parishioners in attendance (present and streaming) voted 94 to 19 to conduct an **annual stewardship appeal** starting this fall.

A stewardship appeal is a process of **inviting parishioners to make an annual financial commitment** to St. James.

There are a couple of advantages to conducting an annual stewardship appeal.

1. It provides the finance committee with some certainty on how much money St. James has to fulfill our mission and literally to keep the lights on.
2. It provides us opportunity to reflect on how we are gifted by God and called to use our gifts to build the Reign of God. When we pool our individual gifts and make them available to the Holy Spirit, we can have a huge impact on God's Kingdom.

What does a Stewardship Appeal look like?

Many of you have participated in an appeal in the past when St. James use to conduct them or when you were in another parish. It includes providing opportunities for the parish to talk about what is important to you and what the needs of the parish are.

Then, on Sunday, November 24, parishioners will be asked to turn in a commitment card outlining what your 12-month financial commitment to the parish will be.

It is important that you know that you can change your level of commitment at any time and that no financial commitment is too small.