



MEET ST JAMES THE LESS



The Episcopal Church of St. James the Less, Northfield, Illinois





Parish Vision Statement

At St. James the Less,
we experience the presence of God through our
compassionate community and vibrant worship.

Compelled by our baptism to
follow Jesus, we believe God has formed our church
to be a source of hope, love and acceptance.

United in our belief, we seek to be a church that is
responsive,
connected and dedicated to serve our larger
communities and neighbors.

Meet St James the Less

St. James the Less (SJTL) has been an active parish for 65 years. It is located in Northfield, Illinois, a residential suburb, 19 miles north of Chicago. Most of our worshipping members reside within nine miles of the church.

Currently, the church has 191 communicants in good standing. Weekly service attendance averages 52 plus five concurrent views on YouTube at our Sunday 10:00 a.m. Rite II Eucharist, as compared to 89, pre-Covid, when attendance also included a Rite I service at 8:00 a.m.

Each Sunday service is a contemporary centered liturgy including a variety of music styles. Children join their parents for part of the service, then attend church school for spiritually based play and learning, while adults continue with a sermon and liturgy. Children then return to the nave for the Eucharist.



From the recently completed parish survey (CAT) and Small Group Discussions we learned we are blessed with high member satisfaction and energy, consistent attendance and low conflict.

Popular descriptors of this parish are the welcoming, friendly nature of the members, flexibility, maturity, and intimacy promoted by our manageable size.

We enjoy working together and are willing to “roll up our sleeves” to be involved. One member quotes, "We have a vibrant parish. Each time I am in the physical building, I feel the energy and power of Christ."



Examples of favorite outreach projects include:

- Caring for the community by feeding the hungry. Parishioners and neighborhood volunteers work together to grow produce in our community garden. This food is donated to the Northfield Township Food Pantry.
- Financing a weekly meal for an Evanston soup kitchen. Pre-Covid, church members prepared and served dinner there for around 100 people once each month. We look forward to returning, in-person, when appropriate.
- Outreach to our sister congregation in Madagascar with teaching, physical help, and financial aid. (see details of Outreach Programs on the SJTL Website www.stjamestheless.org.)
- Shopping and packaging Christmas gifts for ReVive, a Chicago based Episcopal charity which supports impoverished individuals and families.

SJTL is eager to embrace the dynamics of the mid-21st century while continuing as a secure parish, contributing as a member of the Diocese of Chicago, and a vibrant part of the community.







Understanding Our Assets

SJtL is a financially secure and a well-educated congregation. We provide energetic ministries for our youth and children, as well as for our adult community. Membership numbers are stable, as documented by the many parish members who have attended for over 20 years.

An important strength of SJtL is the vibrancy and adaptability of the congregation, as demonstrated throughout the pandemic these past two years. Meaningful Eucharist and worship have been consistent via spread-out, masked, participation in the nave, as well as live-streamed technology for those preferring remote services each Sunday. Summer outdoor services have been well attended and also live-streamed. Prior services are available on the SJtL website for viewing anytime.

All services are creative and greatly enhanced by the energy and diversity of our well-designed music program. The services showcase traditional hymns and liturgy but are regularly refreshed with new musical pieces that may be contemporary or unfamiliar. The organ, piano, and choir are constants with the occasional accompaniment of other instruments.



The SJTL campus is a uniquely developed property including the church building, newly renovated Rectory, Memorial Garden, and recent development project, known as “The Commons”. The Commons area includes a prolific vegetable garden supporting the local food pantry, a brick labyrinth path inviting personal reflection, a new walk-in garden shed and valuable open space!

SJTL is financially and physically equipped to comfortably move into its next chapter.



Challenges & Opportunities

Looking ahead, a significant challenge will be to develop strategies to attract and retain new members, with a focus on younger members. It will be important to create a strong program to integrate all new members into the worshipping community at SJtL while sustaining our vital intergenerational membership.

Another consideration is the time demand families and individuals may be experiencing. Many parents are balancing full-time careers while raising children. An additional reality includes the significant time a high number of members devote to weekend sports activities. Some parishioners have responsibility for caring for elderly family members. All these circumstances compete with attendance at worship services and commitment to volunteering.

A geographical limitation is the land-locked position of the community. There is little underdeveloped land for housing development or population growth around us. Another fact is that this community currently exhibits limited diversity.



The current SJTL membership is very interested in increasing the number of in-person gatherings, both socially and spiritually based, such as Bible Study, meditation and formation.

It will be important to identify individual members' gifts and how to structure them into the fiber of the church while anticipating the needs of the congregation and community for the next ten years and more!

Financial Statements

Please see our website, www.stjamestheless.org/annual-reports.html to view our financial statements for the past three years.





Skills & Qualities We Seek

The results of the CAT and Small Group Discussions indicate the most important asset our next rector needs is the ability to educate, inspire, and to connect us with God through preaching. We favor explanation of the hidden meaning of words in the scripture and stories that explore faith in an individual's life. This includes the ability to be sensitive to social issues without a political partisan slant. We can be described as a "purple" church with conservative, liberal, and independent parishioners, wishing to focus on our spiritual similarities rather than political differences. History shows we are theologically adaptable and willing to accept some liturgical change going forward.

It is important that our next rector have strong leadership skills. This includes the ability to work in tandem with the congregation and staff to identify and pursue visions and dreams for the future of the parish.

We require access to empathetic pastoral care for anyone in time of need, should it involve illness, death, mental health or personal issues.

We will work with our next rector to sustain the active and stable current membership level, while attracting and retaining new families, children and individuals, prioritizing younger age brackets.





Here's Our Community

St. James the Less is located in the Village of Northfield, Illinois, (population 5,400), just 19 miles north of Chicago, and nestled between the larger suburbs of Glenview, Northbrook, and Winnetka. The greater city, Chicago, is easily accessible by I-94 and public transportation.

Families with children appreciate Northfield elementary and middle schools, as well as New Trier High School, which includes five other surrounding school districts. Both districts enjoy consistent national ranking for educational excellence.

The Village of Northfield exhibits its own natural beauty and small town feeling while enjoying the 3-mile proximity to Lake Michigan and dynamic offerings of the Chicago Metropolitan community.

About the Diocese of Chicago

The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago is geographically and culturally expansive. The diocese spans about half the area of Illinois, stretching from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River, from the Wisconsin border nearly to St. Louis. Our 122 congregations are found in the city of Chicago, in the suburbs of Chicagoland, other Illinois cities like Peoria, Aurora, and Rockford, and many rural settings across the state.

The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago encompasses congregational vitality initiatives such as The College for Congregational Development, established Episcopal college ministries throughout the state, and a strong commitment to social witness, as expressed through the work of Episcopal Charities and Community Services, the social outreach arm of the diocese.

Our Bishop is the Rt. Rev. Paula E. Clark. Her historic election makes her the first woman and person of color to serve as the diocesan bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago.

Interested candidates are asked to complete the diocese's Clergy Information Form for Transitions. Questions about the application process should be directed to The Reverend Andrea Mysen, Director for Ministries. Andrea can be reached at amysen@episcopalchicago.org



The Rt. Rev. Paula E. Clark, Bishop of Chicago

