

Senior Warden 2020 Annual Report

St. James Episcopal Church

St. James started the year with the annual meeting and the welcoming of 4 new members to the Vestry – Evelyn Garrett, Elizabeth Erwin, Shannon Pesnell, and Jeanie Smith. Roger Guilian was elected as the Junior Warden; Anderson McKean was re-elected as the Clerk of the Vestry, and Katie Smith was elected as Treasurer. An annual budget of \$1.44 million was approved. On January 15th, we welcomed Fr. Forbes Sirmon and his family to St James.

Our St. James School began its third year of operation, continued to grow and expanded to add a first-grade class. To date the school has been remarkably successful. It has outperformed the expectations of the school board and the vestry both with growth, and by continuing to remain financially solvent, while remaining out front with the education they are providing. The school has also done well in the area of evangelism by recruiting several families into the parish community. Being surrounded with positivity, further school expansion seems to be a logical decision for the future of St. James.

In 2020, St. James also faced a number of challenges. In March, the Covid-19 pandemic caused us to cancel in-person worship for a time, with the clergy and staff working feverishly to switch to online services, and then re-opening us for in-person services in June. In September, we said farewell to Mother Mary Jayne Ledgerwood, as she accepted a call to become the Rector of Trinity Church in Mobile. We also had Hurricane Sally hit our area pretty hard, displacing many parishioners, and thankfully only doing minimal damage to our parish buildings. Unfortunately, several of our trees (54) were pushed over or damaged to the point that they had to be removed. Although this was an expensive undertaking, the cost can more dramatically be seen on the perimeter of our grounds. We lost a good portion of our privacy from the neighborhoods, and our stations-of-the-cross walk is still in need of major repairs.

Although we haven't made it out of the woods yet with the pandemic, there is still a TON going on at St. James. It's been a difficult year for us all, but the staff has really done a tremendous job behind the scenes, working long hours, and keeping our church going. I am grateful for their hard work and dedication and I hope you will join me in thanking them.

It is a privilege to serve as Senior Warden, as we seek God together, share His love, and serve others.

God's Peace,

Pel Henry
Senior Warden