

News from the Pews

January 2026



St. James United Church
400 Burnhamthorpe Road, M9B 2A8
416 622 4113
www.stjamesunitedchurch.com

Candlelight Carol Service. December 14, 2025

St. James Choir with soloist Ushika



The Band - Adrian Marchuk, Music Director, Piano
Jacqueline Sadler, Organ, Piano, Recorder
Brad Kilpatrick, Drums. Jake Yoo, Guitar



Photo Credits - Carol Jones



St. James Church needs YOU!

At the beginning of this new year, what time can you give to the ministry of our church?

Very little time - Outreach / Mission and service team. Maybe 1 formal meeting per year! Decide which charity will receive our Communion Outreach offerings. Choose a Mission story to read each month (maybe 3 per person. Provided by the UCC Mission and Service Team)
Contact Karen Munday - 416 233 3619

On your own time schedule - Membership Care Team. Connecting with others in the church (Contact Mhairi "Varry" Godley 416 912 4764)

Monthly Meetings -

Property and Finance Team

Worship, Music and Christian Development

Social and Eco Justice Team -

Leader and others needed. Monthly?

Seasonal -

Decorating Team

Fundraising

4-6 times a year -

Hospitality (Sunday mornings)

Hospitality - Special Occasions

Ushering

Occasional painting, maintenance

Twice yearly -

Spring and fall cleaning mornings

Where could YOU use your talents?

Maybe you could start or restart a group?

Community Tray Favours?

Community Knitting circle?

Community Coffee morning once a week?

PLEASE consider how you could help to make St. James a thriving community hub through any of these direct or indirect ministries.

Contact Marie Truelove, Karen Forgrave, Rod Lord, or Mhairi Godley and let us know how you are willing to help. Thank you.

Rev. Richard Choe - Sabbatical (January 1 – March 31, 2026)

The main reason I decided earlier last year to take my sabbatical from January to March 2026 was to help alleviate the financial pressure we were projecting – approximately \$100,000 per year. By taking my sabbatical during this period, rather than after completing my IIM work with St. James, I can help reduce that projected deficit by about 30%, since the national church will cover my salary for those three months.

Another reason for taking the sabbatical at the two-year mark is to create space for discernment. This includes reflecting on the transitions that have already been initiated or completed, and reviewing what major issues St. James will still need to engage with for the remainder of the IIM period. It also allows time to discern what transitions the St. James community has the capacity to undertake. Initiating work that cannot realistically be completed before I conclude my ministry – whether due to time constraints, willingness, or capacity – would not be helpful for St. James or for the new minister who will begin in July 2027.

I am also hopeful that the Transition Team, Coordinating Committee, and the congregation will be able to reflect on the past two years of the IIM and identify the key issues we need to address during the remainder of the IIM period while I am on sabbatical.

Sabbatical time for Intentional Interim Ministers includes three components:

1. **Rest and rejuvenation** — engaging in rest and fun activities to renew energy. I will be posting photos and short reflections on my website throughout the sabbatical.
2. **Reviewing past work** — for me, this includes reflecting on the past five years of ministry with four congregations (two as an IIM and two as a consultant supporting transitions).
3. **Planning and working on transition issues with St. James United Church** — including research on transitions and change management, as well as visiting local congregations to experience their worship and community life. *Submitted by Rev. Richard*

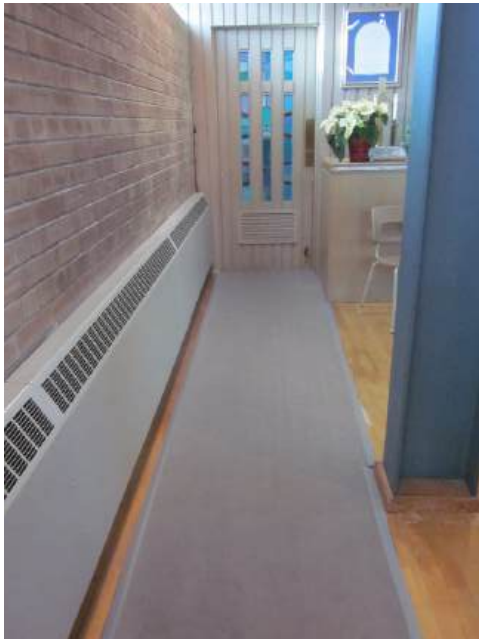
NEW SANCTUARY FLOORS

In December, all carpeting was removed from the Chancel area to reveal the beautiful birch floors underneath, and these were refinished. This change makes the sound of the music better.

Then, the carpeting was removed from the rest of the Sanctuary, from the narthex and from the small lower area behind the Narthex. That carpeting was replaced with commercial brown/grey carpeting. The sides of the carpet were protected with grey edging.

We hope you like the new look! Thank you to everyone who donated to our Double your Donation fund, which paid for these changes.

Submitted by Marie Truelove



January Events

Sundays

Jan. 4 - Hey Lin Yoon

Jan. 11- Wendy Cranston

Jan. 18 - Debbie Johnson Soup Lunch, Talk- Flying High

Jan. 25 - Debbie Johnson

Mondays

1p.m. and 3 p.m.- Reiki

Tuesdays

13th, 27th - Euchre

7:p.m. and 8 p.m. - Reiki

Wednesdays

Thursdays

7:25 p.m. Choir practice

Fridays

Saturdays

Gardening



I wish to acknowledge and thank Norm Da Costa, Worku Gebrekidan, Al Graham and Brian Isard for their expertise.

Again this year, Brian Isard did the lawn fertilization at suggested times. It has made a positive difference.

Our thanks to Norm Da Costa for the setup and

closure of the watering system.

Lorraine and Mark (our Neighbourhood Watch friends) continue to assist. Lorraine is frequently seen caring for the grass along the south driveway and she also pruned the yews on the south side of the church. Mark pruned the rose of Sharon bushes this fall.

As you know, there is frequently a west wind, and our parking lot is the recipient of the leaves from the adjacent park. We may have 20+ bags and all accessible open containers for Worku to take to the street several times in late fall.

A BIG thank you to the faithful Saturday morning crew: Joanne Atkins, Susan Taylor, Conrad Aristodema and Jim Cook.

We are happy to share plants with you.

Submitted by Lila Bowen. (Ed. Thank you too, Lila)

Reiki

Reiki is a Japanese energy healing practice that supports relaxation, stress reduction, and promotes natural healing by channelling “universal life force energy” **Rei** (universal wisdom) and **ki** (life force energy) into the recipient. It brings balance, supports well-being and helps your body heal itself. It is simple and safe, and complements western medicine practices.

Energy medicine Worksop the belief that an unseen life force energy flows through all living things. Low energy leads to stress/sickness and high energy promotes health.

Reiki is offered at St. James in our Well-being Room on Monday afternoons at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., and on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. A signup binder is available in the Well-being waiting room, or call the office to book an appointment. The cost is a free will offering that is donated to the church.

Come and try it out! You have nothing to lose and much to gain.

Submitted by Nancy Violo

Monthly Informal Meeting Question: Who is our neighbour?

Submitted by Jennifer Ling

The Transition Team hosted an informal discussion in November as a continuation of the questions asked during Pegi Ridout's seminar.

We used the below chart to see how the congregation felt. The answers from this discussion were very much in-line with those who attended the seminar, showing we are headed in the right direction. We also came to the conclusion that many of these relationships were weak and that there is work to be done.

External Relationships: With People Not Already Members of the Church	Name key people involved in building these relationships	Rate these Relationships: (None, weak, okay, strong)
Different Racial, Cultural & Ethnic Groups in the Neighbourhood	East African Church, Food Basket, Daycare	
Individuals & Groups with Resources	Food Basket	
Individuals and Groups in Need	Food Basket	
Civic and Community Leaders	Political leaders. They know SJUC but have not been involved.	
Civic & Community Organizations	Scouts	
Local businesses	Daycare, Cobbs, Loblaws, No Frills – for BBQ, auction	
Other United Churches	Islington, Royal York Rd. UC, Uganda martyrs, Runnymede UC choir	
Ecumenical/interfaith partners	Food Basket – Buddhist temple, Lutheran church, police and unions.	
Other (specify) you would name		

We brainstormed how we at St. James can help to build a stronger relationship with the above groups. For the Daycare – we could serve coffee and muffins during children drop-off times once the lease has been renewed.

For the Food Basket – this is difficult as many who use the Food Basket have a church they attend already.

We could advertise and do neighbourhood walk-about delivering flyers or perhaps Christmas carolling. This would create more visibility in the neighbourhood. The challenge is we don't have enough people to take on this task for now.

How do we involve the East African church? Some members are going to deliver cookies during the Christmas season to show that we are thinking of them.

We could bring back parenting programs. In the past, we have had leaders for Adult Education.

The group concluded we need to be more friendly and create this welcoming energy. Currently we are in a “renters” mentality and we need to shift this mindset.

We will continue to host these information gathering sessions once a month after service to engage the congregation. All are welcome

Your Transition Team,

Gord Burrell, Jennifer Ling, Ariadne Reid, Nancy Violo

