

MINISTRY SITE PROFILE

St. James Lutheran Church

Verona, WI

Completed:



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Ministry Site Profile (MSP) is intended for use by congregations and church-related organizations that are seeking to call a rostered minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or a First Call candidate for rostered ministry. Congregations must complete the entire MSP. Church-related organizations may, with the concurrence of the synod bishop, complete only the required sections (Part I, III and IV). Once complete, this form is submitted electronically to your synod bishop for review and posting to the "Current Openings" listing on the ELCA website (www.ELCA.org/call).

Summary Description

St. James Church in Verona, Wisconsin, is located outside of Madison, Wisconsin. We are seeking a lead pastor to minister to our medium-sized congregation, whose active membership has as many young children as it does those over 65 years in age. You will find St. James a place of joyful faith where tradition is valued but with a mind-set that welcomes new and different ideas.

PART I: WHO WE ARE

Name and Location

CONGREGATION

CONGREGATION/MULTIPLE POINT PARISH/ ORGANIZATION

Verona, WI, 53593

CITY, STATE , ZIP

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

SYNOD

Suburb within 10 miles of a large city

SIZE OF COMMUNITY

St. James Lutheran Church

NAME

US

COUNTRY

Congregation - Organized

TYPE OF MINISTRY SITE

14824

CONG ID

1886

YEAR ORGANIZED

Contact Information

Ministry Site (preferred contact information)

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E-MAIL

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stjamesverona.org

WEB SITE

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CITY, STATE, ZIP

(608) 845-6922

PHONE

US

COUNTRY

FAX

Chairperson of Congregation or Head of the Organization

Karen Breitnauer

NAME

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Chairperson of Call or Search Committee
Roberta (Bobbie) Wang

NAME

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CELL PHONE

US

COUNTRY

FAX

Demographics

Language Spoken

In the congregation/ organization

English

PRIMARY LANGUAGE

SECOND LANGUAGE

THIRD LANGUAGE

In the surrounding community

English

Spanish

Polish

PRIMARY LANGUAGE

SECOND LANGUAGE

THIRD LANGUAGE

Race/Ethnicity (In the Congregation)

Caucasian (95%)

American Indian/Alaska
Native (5% or less)

Latino/Hispanic (5% or less)

African American/Black
(5% or less)

LARGEST

SECOND

THIRD

FOURTH

COMMENTS OR EXPLANATION

Race/Ethnicity (Surrounding Community)

Caucasian (90%)

Multi-racial (5% or less)

Latino/Hispanic (5% or less)

African American/Black
(5% or less)

LARGEST

SECOND

THIRD

FOURTH

COMMENTS OR EXPLANATION

The population served by the Verona Area School District is considerably more diverse than Verona proper. See "Characteristics" in Part II.

Gender comparison

46%

54%

MALE

FEMALE

Age distribution

25%

15%

20%

15%

25%

19 YEARS OR YOUNGER

20 - 34

35 - 49

50 - 65

OVER 65

Number of Paid Staff

2

0

5

1

0

5

Ministers of Word
and Sacrament
(PASTORS)

Ministers of
Word and
Service
(DEACONS)

OTHER LAY PROFESSIONALS

SECRETARIAL SUPPORT

CUSTODIAL SUPPORT

OTHER

Congregational Information



151 - 250

51 - 75

Single site

AVE WEEKLY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

AVE ATTENDANCE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

PARISH TYPE

Distance members live from church facilities:

5%

15%

30%

50%

1/2 MILE OR LESS

1/2 - 1 MILE

1 - 3 MILES

MORE THAN 3 MILES

Community Type

☒ Suburban

☐ College or University

☐ Farming

☐ Inner City

☐ Mining/logging

☐ Ranching

☐ Industrial

☐ Resort

☐ Retirement

Budget of the Congregation/ Organization

2023

\$754,874

TOTAL BUDGET FOR THE LAST FISCAL YEAR

\$8,500

MISSION SUPPORT TO THE ELCA/ SYNOD FOR THE LAST FISCAL YEAR

LAST FISCAL YEAR

\$1,724,680

TOTAL DEBT OF THE CONGREGATION/ ORGANIZATION AT THE END OF THE LAST FISCAL YEAR

\$679,233

TOTAL SAVINGS, RESERVES, ENDOWMENT AT THE END OF THE LAST FISCAL YEAR

PART II: OUR VISION FOR MISSION

Trends in the Community Context of the Congregation or Organization

Characteristics:

Write a description of your community in terms of socio-economic status, demographics, primary areas of employment and lifestyle. The Demographic ZIP Code report for your primary ZIP codes may be helpful.

Verona is a city in Dane County, Wisconsin with just over 16,000 residents, which is more than double the population in 2000. It is located 10 miles southwest of downtown Madison and is part of the Madison Metropolitan area. Madison is the state capital of Wisconsin and also home to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Verona is known as "Hometown U.S.A." and is a growing, vibrant community with many recreational and cultural opportunities. Epic Systems, Verona's largest employer, has a sprawling 1,100 acre campus just west of downtown Verona and employs nearly 13,000 people. The median age of Verona is 36.9 and the median household income is \$110,530. The Verona Area School District has an excellent reputation with 10 schools and 5800 students. The student population is 62% white, 21% Latino, 7% African American, 4% Asian and 7% multi-racial. 56 different languages or dialects are spoken within the district.

Many people who attend St. James live outside of Verona proper. The broader community includes the 53593 zip code (over 31,000 population), the 53572 zip code (over 10,000 population) and the 53508 zip code (population 6000).

Trends:

List three changes or trends within the congregation or organization which have occurred in the last three to five years.

-COVID-19 Impact

-Younger families joining the congregation

-Retirement of two long-term co-pastors

Context:

List three ways the community in which you are located has been challenged by change and transition in the last three to five years.

-COVID-19



- Growth--some people, including church members, are moving to smaller, outlying towns because of Verona's growth and lack of affordable housing
- Becoming more of a bedroom community

Programs:

Describe your congregation's or organization's current programs for mission and ministry.

The congregation engages in a broad scope of intergenerational programs and activities, with staff support and partnership. These include three worship services each weekend, with both vocal and handbell choirs for adults and youth. Faith formation encompasses Sunday School, VBS, First Communion, Confirmation and youth groups. St. James Preschool serves many area families and includes a pre-K program in partnership with the Verona Area School District. A parish nurse teams with pastors in visitation and health ministry, including an annual Hope and Healing Dinner and worship at a nearby retirement center. A highly regarded meal ministry augments the comfort offered through funerals and memorial services.

Food is a big part of how St. James serves and builds community. A monthly Community Meal has existed for over 20 years. Food is regularly collected for the local Badger Prairie Needs Network, a place that also receives volunteer and financial support from the congregation. Sunday morning coffee hour and annual events like the Chili Fun-raiser also bring many people together. Men's groups and a range of women's ministries round out a wide range of opportunities for mission and ministry.

Goals:

What are the primary goals of your ministry site (please refer to any Strategic Plan that has been adopted).

While St. James does not currently have an official Strategic Plan, our progression through the Appreciative Inquiry process made some of our primary goals salient. St. James is blessed with a growing population of families, many with young children. We also have a history of vibrant youth ministry. Expanding our youth ministries and fostering multigenerational engagement with our children and families is a primary goal for our congregation. Practically, we believe that additional staff, rostered or otherwise, will be necessary within a year or two of establishing our new lead pastor in order to realize this goal.

Like so many churches transitioning back after COVID-19, a return to normalcy has been a slow process. Coupled with the retirement of long-time co-pastors, St. James finds itself ready to expand its ministry & learning opportunities both within the church and in the greater community. To realize this goal, we look forward to the final step of the Appreciative Inquiry process: Experimentation, where we will use the eight proposals identified by our Transition Team to inform our work. (These eight proposals can be found in the Commentary section of this document.)

Energy:

What is your congregation or organization really excited about right now?

While the process has been slow, the congregation is excited about how ministries are re-emerging after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes, like the development of on-line worship opportunities, are now valued parts of the congregation. The refocusing efforts at St James are coming during transitions in both pastoral and administrative staff, with thanksgiving for those who served so long and well and excitement about the new people who are joining the shared mission of St. James.

Positive energy has resulted from the work of the Transition Team and the anticipation of calling a new Lead Pastor. The transition process used a broad listening process to identify past and present strengths of the congregation. Building on those God-given strengths, the Transition Team also discerned future directions that hold significant promise for the congregation, creating high levels of engagement and energy. The coming months will provide an opportunity to bring in new pastoral innovation and work to focus this energy. The energy in the St James' congregation is there, willing and ready to move into the future.

Partnership:

How does this congregation or organization see itself as a member and active participant in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the synod?

The congregation has a positive regard for being part of the ELCA. Its relationship with the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin has been less smooth. In the early 2000s a new mission start was planted in north Verona, and how that process transpired resulted in some distancing between St. James and the Synod.

St. James gives Mission Support and is committed to increasing the amount each year. Also, the congregation is grateful for Synod support during the current transition.



Ministry Site Characteristics

AS A COMMUNITY

	A LOT LIKE US	A LITTLE LIKE US	A LITTLE LIKE US	A LOT LIKE US	
We tend to be formal and programmatic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We tend to be informal and spontaneous.
We have clearly defined goals and plans for our future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We have no stated goals or plans.
We are racially and economically diverse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We are demographically homogeneous.

OUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

We welcome ideas that are provoking and challenging.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We prefer ideas that are tried and true.
We rely on our leaders for direction.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We rely on group decision-making.
We have learned how to use conflict constructively.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We tend to perceive conflict as something destructive.

OUR PROGRAMMING

Our facilities are often used by community groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Our facilities are only used for our activities.
We train people to minister outside our walls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We train people to minister inside our walls.
We focus on ideas and beliefs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We focus on skills and action.

OUR THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

We are obviously Lutheran in identify and practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We are less obvious about our Lutheran heritage.
We participate in synod and ELCA activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We are not very active in the synod and ELCA.
We focus on Biblical studies and doctrine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We focus on contemporary issues and topics.



Purpose, Giftedness and Mission

Purpose

How does this congregation or organization understand its reason for being in the light of God's call to mission and service? Who are you? Why are you here?

Receive, grow, give. This is the mission statement of St. James. Three words, but not three words in isolation from each other. Three essential components of a process, each word itself in a dynamic relationship with the other two. We believe "receive" is the best word to proclaim that our life of faith begins as a gift. We receive the kingdom, we receive the spirit and we receive God's love and gift of new life. When we receive God's gifts, we grow. God's intention is not only that we receive love, but in receiving that we grow in love for one another, even our enemies. Growing is not an end in itself. As we grow in Christ, the love given to us flows out to others. God's love is shared. Growing in Christ is connected to sharing the love of Christ thereby the receiver also becomes the giver. And as we give, we also grow; as we give, we need to receive. Every part is connected to and dependent upon the other two. "Receive - Grow - Give" is not only a way we are to understand our lives in Christ, but also a way to structure our ministries at St. James and these words help us keep things in balance and flowing. These words are not what we do, but what God does in us and through us. Receiving is a gift, growing is a gift, and giving is a gift and they are each together God's mission for St. James.

Giftedness

What are your gifts and resources for fulfilling this purpose? What are the congregation's or organization's top three assets and how are they being used? Are there obstacles that must be overcome to be able to use these gifts and accomplish the mission?

St. James's dedicated staff and lay leaders are a vital resource. Staff turnover at St. James is low with tenure that regularly lasts for double-digit years. The quality of their work is unimpeachable. They provide stability and consistency which means we have an enduring church culture that the congregation benefits from. There are also many lay leaders whose gifts of time and expertise attest to the deep passion of our community. COVID followed by the work of calling a new pastor, has meant many among the staff have been committed to their roles at an intensity above and beyond what is expected of them. We anticipate new pastoral leadership, in their supervisory capacity, will help the staff realign their work duties and will provide support for this treasured resource.

Although Verona and the congregation of St. James are socio-economically and racially uniform, St. James is a unique place where people with diverse perspectives come together to be one body as Christ calls us to be. As such, the people of St. James are effective listeners and level-headed problem solvers, with a healthy dose of humor.

One of our greatest assets is our physical space. Our building with its more than hundred-year-old sanctuary, adjacent fellowship hall, and updated facilities including our preschool, is one of our greatest resources for fulfilling God's mission.

Mission

In light of the way you have described your ministry context in this Ministry Site Profile, what are the top three mission priorities which, if accomplished, hold the most promise for the continued development of this ministry?

The Appreciative Inquiry process helped us to hone our mission priorities as a church. Here are three that have been predominant throughout this document:

*Expand Youth and Family Ministries: By prioritizing our children, youth and families we will be building on our history of valuing youth & family ministries to support the growing number of families with children at St. James.

*Reestablish opportunities for connectedness within the church: The changes at St. James in recent years have left us ready to reinvest in fellowship, education and service opportunities that will invite greater connection within the congregation.

*Grow St. James's impact within the community: Historically opportunities to volunteer in the community, like working with Habitat for Humanity or for the local food pantry, have been meaningful mission work for the folks of St. James and we are excited to extend our work to benefit the world outside our doors.

References

Synod Bishop



Joy Mortensen-Wiebe	South-Central Synod of Wisconsin	joymw@scsw-elca.org
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		FAX

Inside Congregation or organization

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		FAX

Outside Congregation or organization

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		(608) 575-1519
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		FAX

An ELCA rostered minister

Kirsten Fryer	Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the Midway, Pastor	blcpastor@bethlehem-midway.org
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Anyone else who knows your setting well

Jerry Buss	Interim Pastor, St. James Lutheran Church	interim@stjamesverona.org
NAME	SYNOD	E-MAIL
(360) 969-4220		(360) 969-4220
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		FAX

PART III: LEADERSHIP NEEDS

The Leader we Seek

Roster Type:

- ☒ Minister of Word and Sacrament ☐ Minister of Word and Service ☐ In Candidacy/First Call

Senior Pastor / Head of Staff

POSITION TYPE:

Master's Degree (seminary or graduate school)

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIRED:

Full time call

FULL TIME/PART TIME:

Language Proficiencies



English/Fluent

PRIMARY LANGUAGE (PROFICIENCY)

Spanish/Conversational

SECOND LANGUAGE (PROFICIENCY)

THIRD LANGUAGE (PROFICIENCY)

Experience:

☐ 0-3 years ☒ 4-9 years ☒ 10 -15 years ☒ 16- 20 years ☐ 21 + years

Top Five Ministry Tasks

The five most critical tasks required in this position.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administration | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building a Sense of Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Campus / Young Adult Ministry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chaplaincy | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications/ Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Organizing | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling/ Social Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Ecumenical Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism/ Mission | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Service |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation / Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Interim Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Interpret Theology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-personal Climate | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry in Crisis | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry in Daily Life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry with Seniors | <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Music / Worship / Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor/ Camping Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Parish Nurse / Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Participant in the Larger Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Care and Visitation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preaching / Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Policy / Advocacy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruit and Equip Leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> Self Care / Family Life | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Group Ministry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Formation / Direction | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Mission Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Coordination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth and Family Ministry | | |

Gifts for Ministry

The five gifts essential in this position, and the five that are very helpful in this position.

Top Priority		Very Helpful
Yes	Help people develop their spiritual life.	
	Help people understand and act upon issues of social justice.	
	Provide care and nurture.	
	Be active in visitation of members and non-members.	Yes
	Be effective in working with children.	
Yes	Build a sense of community among the people with whom he/she works.	
Yes	Help others develop their leadership abilities and skills for ministry.	
	Be an effective administrator.	
Yes	Be an effective communicator.	
	Be an effective teacher.	Yes
	Encourage support of the Church's wider mission.	



	Work regularly in the development of stewardship growth.	
	Be active in ecumenical relationships.	
	Be effective in working with youth.	
	Organize people for community action.	
	Be skilled in planning and leading programs.	Yes
	Have a strong commitment and loyalty to the ELCA.	
	Understand and interpret the mission of the Church from a global perspective.	
	Deal effectively with conflict.	
	Bring joy and good humor to relationships.	Yes
Yes	Be able to share leadership and work in a team.	
	Be creative and innovative about his or her tasks.	
	Be able to use technology and media.	
	Appreciate cultural diversity in language and customs.	
	Have talents in the areas of music, arts and writing.	Yes

Mutual Expectations

Please list the five primary areas of activity or focus that you wish your newly-called rostered minister to give special attention to during the first year of his or her ministry at this congregation or organization:

- Uphold St. James as we conclude the Appreciative Inquiry process we began early in 2024 by undergoing the fifth and final step, Experimentation.**
- Establish supportive supervisorial relationships with St. James staff, with specific focus on the staff at St. James's preschool.**
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations between staff, lay leadership and the church council.**
- Evaluate the needs, spiritual and otherwise, of St. James to guide us to call and/or hire additional staff and/or a rostered leader to support those needs.**
- Shepherd the community of St. James through the growth that comes with pastoral change in a congregation whose pastoral leadership has been largely unchanged for two decades.**

Please list the five ways that this congregation / organization will support and encourage the rostered minister during the first year in order to help her or him accomplish these responsibilities:

- Work together along with our newly called pastor to complete the Experimentation step of the Appreciative Inquiry process.**
- Provide formal training in staff supervision, should whomever we call not already have such training or equivalent experience.**
- The Congregation Council and lay leadership will be open to exploring the clarification of roles in partnership with the new pastor.**
- Faithfully listen and communicate clearly about how best to grow our staff and/or rostered leadership in a way that will best meet St. James's needs and will best complement our newly called pastor.**
- Commit to provide the support necessary for a newly called pastor to succeed in a congregation which has had long-tenured pastors.**

Compensation

No Yes



PARSONAGE

SOCIAL SECURITY TAX OFFSET

Synod Guidelines

MAXIMUM AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR DEFINED COMPENSATION

Benefits

Yes

Yes

4 weeks

PENSION

MEDICAL

VACATION WEEKS

Yes

Yes

SABBATICAL POLICY

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Yes

ARE BACKGROUND CHECKS REQUIRED

Professional Expenses

Yes

Yes

AUTO / TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES ACCOUNT

No

Yes

FIRST CALL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Comments:

Please offer any comment or explanation regarding the compensation package, especially as it compares to synodical recommendations or guidelines.

\$2,000 for CE, \$500 for books, and \$1,000 for other professional expenses.

Note: Medical insurance will be addressed based on individual need.

Other Supporting Resources

Are you able to supply the following items, if requested?

Mission and Vision statement of the congregation or organization

Yes

Printed history of the congregation or organization

Yes

Strategic Plan: Goals and Objectives

No

Budget

Yes

Annual Report

Yes

Position description: Duties and Responsibilities

No

Communications Piece (publicity, newsletter, etc.)

Yes

PART IV: COMMENTARY

You are encouraged to offer information or commentary that will help the reader appreciate the vision, opportunities, challenges and nature of your ministry site. Use this opportunity to creatively promote and commend your ministry possibilities.

RESULTS OF THE 2024 ST. JAMES TRANSITION PROCESS:



THEMES and PROPOSALS

Part 1: Six Themes from the Past through the Present

Note: Listening has been the foundation of the transition process. The transition team regularly listened to God through “Dwelling in the Word”. Interviews with approximately 100 members and friends of the congregation was another way of deeply listening. This listening focused on hearing the historical and present strengths of St. James, and on hearing dreams about the future that God has in mind for the congregation.

Additional people joined the transition team to do another round of listening: this time listening to the 500 responses from the interviews. Trusting the guidance of the Spirit, they listened for themes that ran through the responses. Here are the six themes they discerned as strengths of St. James from the past through the present.

Theme 1: Location and Feel of Building

The building itself supports people in their spiritual lives and also helps draw new people to St. James. Specific features of the building like its white-steeple architecture and stained-glass windows are beautiful and well-maintained, and give off a positive, stable feeling. Entering the building in general and the sanctuary specifically communicates a feeling of God’s presence and closeness.

At one point in the past the congregation considered relocating to a large parcel of land on the outer edge of Verona. That St. James maintained its location gives it a mission identity both related to Verona and as a central gathering place for people from many outlying communities.

Theme 2: Working Together including Across Generations

The presence of all generations and ages of people is celebrated and provides a hopeful future for the congregation. Collaboration around youth activities and building projects has created beneficial focus and a shared mission, which resulted in worthwhile accomplishments and helped to reduce conflict.

Interviewees referenced the high importance of multi-generational efforts including VBS, Sunday School, youth drive-in dinners, Christmas pageant, Palm Sunday brunch, the Centennial celebration and more. Teamwork has also been important for youth mission trips, men’s group activities, new member dinners, the chili fun-raiser, community meal and church picnic. Many of these events draw in people not normally involved, creating a sense of comradery, community and service.

Building projects have also been a strong expression of teamwork. This is true both for those who have helped maintain the building and for people involved in the 1993 and 2016 building remodels, which were important for the sake of God’s mission through St. James. These efforts were not without challenges, but in the end the results were energizing and uniting.

Theme 3: Growth as Disciples

Over the years the people of St. James have grown through classes for all ages, ministry groups and service projects/mission trips. Growing through action has been just as important as growing through reflection.

There has been a strong history of adult education at St. James. Longer-time members recalled a significant Thursday night adult education program that lasted many years and filled the basement with participants. Others told of how much they valued the Sunday Morning Conversations and the Lenten Bible Studies on Wednesday evenings. Not only did people grow from these offerings, they also served as ways for people new to the congregation to get involved and meet people.

Women’s Circles including the annual retreat have had a very significant role in deepening faith, building community and



providing avenues for serving others. Other adult groups with similar impacts include the Habitat for Humanity group that existed at one time, men's ministry groups and the many ways St. James has supported Badger Prairie Needs Network.

The whole progression of opportunities for children and youth, from the St. James Preschool to the high school youth group, has touched countless lives both for learning and for loving one's neighbor. People who have taught Sunday School and Confirmation described how much they love helping children and youth make connections to the Bible and begin to work out who Jesus is in their lives. Planting the gardens and talking with kids about growing vegetables for people who don't have enough food has also been deeply meaningful. Youth who have been confirmed at St. James described how confirmation was taught in a way that connected to real things and was very discussion based. It was a safe place to talk about life, faith and more.

Youth mission trips have had a deep impact through hands-on learning. Frequently mentioned were the trips to NYC where world views were widened by serving at an inner city church. Other very positive memories for youth included their time with Pastor Mike Thomas and with Kelly.

Theme 4: Openness

The overall openness of the congregation is highly appreciated. This includes a spirit of acceptance and non-judgement that makes St. James a safe place. While tradition is valued, there is a mind-set that welcomes new and different ideas and opportunities. Also, political differences are respected. St. James treasures being a community but also allows for individuals to engage freely and without pressure as they find most helpful.

Interviewees noted the following:

- In a world that is so conflicted St. James makes space for people with varying beliefs.
- In my previous church my spouse and I could not take communion because of a divorce, but I was overwhelmed with happy feelings that everyone is welcome to receive communion at St. James.
- The adult group at the time took very seriously that we were not there to be a closed group—our purpose was to welcome people new to the congregation.
- People in my women's circle have differing points of view, and that leads to good discussion.
- A church is God's house, and at St. James I have never felt judged by the congregation or the pastors, so I felt closer to God and that I belonged.
- We are funny and it's a place where it's comfortable to just be funny. Not uptight.
- We are a congregation open to our youth, and open to women in leadership.
- We balance how everyone worships, with contemporary and traditional services.
- Pastors support new ideas and new ways of doing things.
- St. James is traditional in its music and that it doesn't use screens, but ideologically St. James is in tune with the times.
- St. James is eclectic: newcomers and long-timers, half Verona people and half who are not from Verona, conservative and liberal, young and old; there is space for everyone.
- A welcoming church more traditional in appearance but with an open-minded attitude.
- Being ELCA is an important characteristic, including that women are pastors.
- Friendly and welcoming to everyone, no matter who they are or where they are from.

Theme 5: Compassionate Connections

Many compassionate and genuine human connections take place at St. James, and they are often enhanced by food. These human connections occur both within the congregation and extend out into the community. Tender times, personal struggles and tragic life events have brought many people into one-to-one authentic interactions. The funeral ministry at St. James is very significant. The Hope and Healing dinner is a gathering where many find support. St. James is a place where people will listen to your struggles and help however possible.

Theme 6: Worship and Music



Worship and music are deeply life-giving to St. James; in many ways they are the foundation for everything. Worship and/or music was mentioned most often as being important to people's lives at St. James and most important for how St. James touches the lives of others.

This includes the regular things that happen every week, such as sermons and choir anthems. But also mentioned were how significant the festival seasons were, such as worship at Christmas and the Palm Sunday Cantata.

Weekly communion is important to many who were interviewed. People enjoy sharing the peace. Both traditional and contemporary worship/music are appreciated. The hand bells are enjoyed by many.

Part 2: Eight Proposals for the Future

Note: Each proposal builds on the strengths of St. James as described in the six themes. Following the approach of Appreciative Inquiry, each proposal is written in present tense as though it is already happening. This both helps us imagine it more easily, and eliminates the common practice of using "should" statements, which puts us back in problem-solving mode rather than focusing on strengths. The use of our imaginations is closely tied to our life with God, who made us in God's own image. We have been restored in Christ Jesus as people who can imagine once again our close relationship with God, and imagine our future as it unfolds with God.

Also, while each proposal is connected to one or more of the six strengths, the proposals are also meant to stretch St. James to build on those strengths. That means it is a GOOD INDICATOR that we are on the right track if we do not know how to do everything described in each proposal.

The final step, to be done after the new pastor arrives, is to design experiments related to each proposal (or a prioritized subset of the proposals). Those experiments will let us try the proposals on, AND, will help us learn to do what we do not currently know how to do.

Proposal 1: Expanded System for Volunteers

A wide-range of support is in place for volunteers both inside the congregation and in the community. For volunteers within the congregation, people are matched with positions based on their gifts, not based on the slot to be filled. There is excitement across the membership because contributing time and skills to support one's congregation creates a great deal of positive connection, and the overall number of volunteers has grown significantly. The congregation also maintains a database of volunteer opportunities outside the congregation, including opportunities for whole families to serve together, and matches members with those positions also. St. James t-shirts are worn, greatly increasing the congregation's reputation as a people who serve.

Proposal 2: Strong Multigenerational Community of Faith

St. James offers voice and support to all generations represented in the church, which has led to an even stronger multi-generational character of the congregation. Fellowship, service and education opportunities arise organically as all ages are encouraged to come together for God's purpose in authentic and fulfilling ways that support their lives both in and out of the church.

Proposal 3: Creative Support for Younger Families

Families with children from newborn through high school regularly express how grateful they are for support from their congregation. Parents with younger children and youth have a network of other parents at St. James who they know by name and have connected with positively. Families are supported through parenting groups, nights out for parents and get togethers for shared meal preparation. A nursery with paid staff is functioning well and there is a location within the



sanctuary for quiet play during worship.

Proposal 4: Youth Involvement

Youth involvement at St. James is robust and meaningful. Youth of all ages are empowered to support and engage with each other regularly for service, worship and stewardship activities that are sometimes in-line with and sometimes independent from the rest of church life and weekend worship. Youth voices are included in Churchwide decision making and leadership discussions. Strong and personalized relationships with non-parent adult mentors within the congregation provide connection and guidance for children and youth as they progress from baptism, through Sunday School & confirmation, and out of high school. The children and youth of St. James prove to be some of the best ambassadors for our church in the community.

Proposal 5: Congregation Culture Emphasizing Shared Leadership and Abundance

Shared leadership has blossomed within the congregation and is especially evident in a renewed understanding of how leadership is shared between pastors and people. There is an intentional, cooperative balance between what is done by paid staff and what is done by ministry teams. The primary function of the congregation council is overall, higher level leadership for the sake of empowering teams and individuals for ministry. The culture of the congregation is known for its spirit of abundance and generosity.

Proposal 6: Amplified Openness

St James has expanded on its value for openness and its history of meeting people where they are with processes for welcoming newcomers to the church. Newcomers are intentionally oriented to the opportunities and support systems of the church. Both new and established members engage with these processes to communicate their needs for their faith life and their desires to contribute to the church. St. James regularly expands its ministries to include the populations of Verona and the surrounding communities that aren't represented at weekly worship. St. James's amplified openness provides connection and enrichment that extends beyond the doors of the church.

Proposal 7: New Chapter for Adult Learning

Several additional opportunities for adult learning exist and have pastoral involvement. These include mid-week and weekend offerings, both at the church building and in homes. Interactive, discussion based learning is highlighted and a mix of auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning styles are incorporated.

Proposal 8: Expanded Worship Opportunities

St. James offers worship that balances the traditions of its worship practices and expanded forms of different worship practices. The worship space is one where many voices are motivated to engage and participate in the work of worship. The deep and beloved tradition of worship through music has expanded to include different genres of music and music-making opportunities with a wide variety of offerings and a growing team of musical leaders.

PART V: COMPLETION OF PROFILE

Discernment Process and Adoption

Please describe the process used to gather information, formulate responses, and officially adopt this Ministry Site Profile. (Approximately 100 words maximum).



A Transition Team of eight church members, representative of the church population, along with our Interim Pastor, Jerry Buss, led St. James through the Appreciative Inquiry process. This work culminated in the **RESULTS OF THE 2024 ST. JAMES TRANSITION PROCESS: THEMES and PROPOSALS** (provided in the Commentary section of this document) which the Transition Team utilized to populate the MSP. Once populated, the Congregation Council reviewed and officially adopted the MSP in its current state.

Enter the date on which this Ministry Site Profile was adopted by vote of the Congregation Council or organization's board: **9/23/2024**

CALL PROCESS ADMINISTRATOR

The name of the person on the synod staff that the bishop has designated as the Call Process Administrator for this call process.

Marie Leafblad

NAME

Assistant to the Bishop

TITLE

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Reference's Recommendation

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