

**St. James Episcopal Church, Fairhope**

**Annual Parish Gathering**

**Sunday, January 11, 2026**

**Call to Order**

Rector De Freeman called the meeting to order at 11:45 am and asked Rev. Amanda Doshier if she would open us in prayer.

**Opening Prayer & Recitation of Mission Statement**

Amanda opened us in prayer at 11:46 am.

The congregation then recited together the Mission Statement: *We are a community anchored in Christ, seeking God, sharing his love, and serving others.*

**Nomination & Election of Clerk: Mary Mullins Redditt**

The nomination and election of Mary Mullins Redditt to continue serving as clerk for the coming year was approved by the congregation.

**Recognition of service by outgoing Vestry Members: Tracy Corte, Jim Daniell, Dee Gambill, Misty Whitehead**

De then recognized all the outgoing vestry members for their service over the past three years.

**Approval of slate for Vestry Election: Gary Garner, Lisa Hansen, Rhett O'Keefe, Austin Young**

***A motion was made to accept the slate of nominations for Vestry, there was a second, and all approved.*** De thanked those for agreeing to serve.

**Election of School Board members: Bradley Byrne, Jill Bryars, Susan Coddling, Shirley Newman, Frances Patton, Mary Rooney, Katherine Young**

- Head of School Shelley Miller thanked the current school board for all their efforts. They are volunteer positions and all have been willing to take on the responsibility for improving the school and the futures of these children.
- The outgoing members include: President Misty Campbell, Vice President Jane Edge, Secretary Molly O'Keefe, Sara Majors, and Bill Goetter.
- ***There was a motion to approve the incoming slate, a second, and all approved.***

#### **Nomination & Election of Treasurer:** Amanda Montz

***There was a motion to accept the nomination of Amanda Montz to continue on as the Treasurer, a second, and all approved.***

#### **Financial Review:** Jim Ketchum

- Jim thanked Amanda Montz for her great support over the last year, as well as the members of the Finance Committee, who include: Margaret Cadden, Amanda Doshier, Dee Gambill, Gary Garner, Pel Henry, Earl Jackson, Terry Moore, Jay Pace, John Sibal, and Jeanie Smith.
- Jim noted that last year was a nice year, financially. He then reviewed the financial report (attached) that had been passed out.
- The school has done its part to balance the negative cashflow from the church.
- December was an outstanding month. Historically, it has been about a “double” month. Last year, we did not double our income, but it was still a strong month financially.
- Pledges are down from 2025 to 2026 (from 220 to 208). We are still short on pledging units but are about \$100 K above the total amount pledged from last year.

#### **Capital Campaign**

- The new building is obviously going up.
- Have received \$3.3 of the \$5 million pledged.

- Other sources of income have included grants from foundations and trusts, school fundraisers, Pave the Way project, and parking rental income.
- The total project for the building cost is \$6.8 million. We are a bit under budget. Our current cash balance is \$1.3 million but this will quickly evaporate as construction continues. We haven't borrowed anything yet, but will likely have to in February or March.
- De then recognized Chuck Coddling for heading up the Building Committee. He is out on site virtually daily to oversee the construction and has done a tremendous job.
- The staff then played a video that Chuck had provided which showed a progression of the construction work from groundbreaking to present.
- Completion is expected summer 2026 (projected July 2).
- De was particularly thankful that the new handicapped accessible entrance was ready by Christmas Eve as the contractor was working on it that day.
- He expects our next annual meeting will be in the new building, which will hold about 400 people.

### **2025 Recap & 2026 Planning for tomorrow**

- All ministry reports are available at [stjamesfairhope.com](http://stjamesfairhope.com).
- De pointed out that last year was the first time that we have had a decline in Sunday attendance. Membership grew, but attendance was down.
- 2025 was a good year for the school. Shelley's report is available on the website. The school is really touching the lives of the students AND their families. A number of them have joined the church as a result of their relationship with the school.
- De wants to commend the school board on all their hard work concerning the development of the bylaws and getting the school going in the right direction.
- De also thanked the vestry for their leadership and support this past year. Bruce Stone is Junior Warden and has been terrific, working around a lot of obstacles. Margaret Cadden has been a wonderful Senior Warden. He hopes both will continue to lead in the next year.
- Mary Katherine and the choir should soon be able to move into their new larger space.

- There are also a couple of extra classes and some new administrative spaces downstairs.
- Meghan Kasuba, Jim Ketchum, Terry Moore, and De all join Chuck Coddington on the Building Committee. He thanked them all for their leadership.

De asked the congregation if there are things we need to work on?

- Will the covered walkway come at the end of the process? De responded that the goal is for it to be completed the Sunday before Easter. We have to be cautious in announcing finish dates because there can be delays with construction.
- The congregation thanked the Holy Rollers (the entire golf cart shuttle crew) for their great work!
- The congregation thanked the Flower Guild, headed up by Elizabeth Redditt, for their tremendous work in adding beauty to our parish and worship.
- The congregation thanked De and Amanda for covering the duties that were once done by three. De responded that they likely can't continue in this manner and are actively looking for some help. Believe they have identified some good candidates.
- The congregation encouraged all to fill the Blessing Box. Hunger is real in our community. Every time it is filled up, it is emptied. If everyone could bring at least one item to donate each week, it would help the community greatly. All non-perishable items and personal care items are greatly encouraged, as is non-perishable milk.
- The new space will be available for the community. There will be a basketball court as well as two pickle ball courts, and one volleyball court. We may need to put someone there to do scheduling and maintenance, cleaning.
- Currently the office is bringing in a cleaning service 3 x a week, in addition to the cleaning that Rose does. It is a lot to keep up with.
- Jeanie Smith encouraged all members of the congregation to pledge in the new year.
- Need to make sure that we all welcome and speak with those new to the church. It is important to make visitors feel welcome here. Look for those who don't have a nametag. Amanda Doshier offered to just go up to someone and say "I don't believe I've met you yet," as a good ice breaker, since some of us don't know every member either.

- Shelley says we are in the process for re-enrollment and enrollment for the upcoming school year. An open house is scheduled next Friday from 9-11 am. She encourages all to please help us grow our school.
- The school is working to grow incrementally by adding one class each year, with a goal of 250 students. Currently, enrollment is 86.
- De thanks the incredible staff we have. He encourages all members of the congregation to reach out and thank them for all the extraordinary work they do.
- The budget will be coming up, once we see all pledges comes in. Will likely be in February or March. Will operate on a month-to-month budget until then.
- De encourages all to come to see “Sallie’s Ashes,” a film that features the good work of the late Sallie Smith and Savan Wilson from our congregation, as well as Diane Thomas. Diane and Savan will be in attendance in connection with the film screening this Wednesday, beginning 5:30 pm, to answer questions.
- Bruce Stone is concerned about the food waste we are seeing for events. Encourages all to RSVP to these events so the volunteers can prepare accordingly.

### **Closing Prayer & Adjournment**

De then offered a closing prayer and adjourned the meeting at 12:32 pm.