

ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH

# THE HERALD

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## New Year Plans for 2015

By: Arthur Murphy, Pastor and Mission Redeveloper

I am excited for what God has in store for us in 2015. The church leaders here at St. James/Santiago Apóstol are working on a plan to grow our mission and ministry here and connect with our neighbors, many of whom are building new homes and moving into the community around us. As I wrote last year, St. James is here in this community *to serve the people who are not yet here*. It's not about us. It's about them. Our mission is to "Go therefore and make disciples." Matt. 28:19.

The root of the word *religion* means literally "to connect again." *Re* = "again;" and *ligione* (ligament) = "to connect." We are here to reconnect with God and with our neighbors, many of whom are not yet here, but who yearn for a sense of connection.

The fastest growing demographic in our community is the group that has never experienced *being in community*. There are many people who live and work in America today, but who have no prior

experience with being in a community like St. James/Santiago Apóstol. They are unconnected with a community outside their families, and many feel disconnected even from their own families. Churches can help by providing a community for them, but few churches speak clearly, and in language easily understood, about the



benefits of **being in community**.

St. James has a story to tell about the benefits of being a part of this community of faith. We have a God and a people here at St. James who do a great deal of good and who take risks in the world. We need to tell others that St. James is a place—a community—where they too can join with God to do good and take risks in the world. I don't think people are really look-

ing for a "sugar daddy" God that overpromises peace and prosperity just for attending church. But people *are* looking for a place where they can be in community with others, do good in their community, and take risks—or step out in faith—for the good of the world.

Unfortunately, too many people in American neighborhoods say they are "unaffiliated" with any religious institution or describe their church home as "none." This fact means we no longer can expect people to come in to St. James to visit without giving them a good reason. We have to take church to the people. We have to find new ways of showing people the benefits of being in community here with us.

Essentially, St. James has to re-root itself in our community. To do that, we need to practice *three great listenings*: (1) listening to God; (2) listening to one another in the church; and (3) listening to our neighbors in the community. We do (1) and (2) fairly well. We listen to God and to one another in worship, Bible studies, prayer circles, and in formal and informal meetings. Number (3) is lacking, however. We need to listen to our community better.

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That's why I am asking all of us to be church leaders willing to pair up and visit out in the community. We need to go two-by-two to visit elected officials, police chiefs, school principals, and other community leaders to find out more about our community and how we can best be in community with them. In February, we will do a simple training and give you a simple, one-page handout on how to listen to our neighbors and write down what they say. We will listen to their hopes, aspirations, insights, and giftedness. Then we will be in a better posi-

tion to identify real issues in the community and the implications for our mission and ministries here at St. James.

This is the main part of a six-month plan to respond to the spiritual needs in our community for 2015. (The church staff will also be doing demographic research on our local neighborhoods to enhance and add to these interviews of community leaders.) Won't you help us do these "listening interviews" of community leaders? They will be simple, and fun, and a good experience for everyone involved. Call, email, or

come by the church office to let Vicar Aura and me know that we can count on you to support this essential work of St. James Lutheran Church/Santiago Apóstol.

I thank God for your faithfulness and willingness to stretch yourselves for the sake of those who are not yet here.

In Christ,

Pastor Arthur Murphy



### BEAUTIFUL CELEBRATION COMMEMORATING THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE By Vicar Aura Suárez

As believers in Jesus Christ we have been called in our baptism to be God's children, messengers of hope and the good news of the Gospel to everyone. The Virgin of Guadalupe represents hope for the poor



and oppressed in Mexico and all throughout Latin America. So in celebration of that message of hope, St. James Santiago Apóstol held a special worship service commemorating the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12. We had the participation of MARIACHI Monumental Tapatio, which played during the worship service and during the celebration after worship. One hun-

dred sixteen people came that night. It was a joyful celebration and a wonderful opportunity for mission.

The day before the service women from Santiago Apóstol prepared traditional Mexican food, with posole, tamales, and champurrado for the celebration. In addition, the children helped to prepare the luminarias which were placed in front of our church that night and on Christmas Eve to illuminate the sidewalk.

I would like to thank all the people involved in the preparation of the meal, in the

contributions for the Mariachi, and in the decoration of the church: Luzkenia Hernandez, Jasmine and Mia Ventura, Diana Garcia, Mia Martinez, Irene Charqueño, Ana and Erick Martinez, Blanquita Lem, Pedro Suárez, Rosa Salceda, Aide Santiago, Robert and Rose Rivera, Rosy Delgado, Margarito Garcia and Elizabeth Hernandez, Patty Mejia, Natieli Martinez, Linda Clark, Ivon and Irwin Garcia, Irene del Arco, Rita Tovar, Pastor Arthur Murphy, Herminia



Rivera, Elizabeth and Russell Baber, and other anonymous contributors. God bless you all!

## KIDS ENJOY ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

By Rose Rivera

On Saturday, December 13, we held our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Christmas Festival, which followed the journey of Joseph and Mary as they searched for a place to stay when they arrived in Bethlehem. This year's lesson objectives were: (1) To learn about the birth of baby Jesus; (2) To remember that Jesus is the Light of the world; and (3) To learn how could each of us can reflect the light of Jesus today and be a good influence for others.

We were blessed to have 24 children come to learn the real story of



Christmas. A lesson booklet of scripture and pictures told the story. (1) In Luke 1:5-15, 26-37 an angel tells about the birth of Jesus and

the birth of John the Baptist. Different names of Jesus are given in Isaiah 9: 6-7. (2) Luke 2:1-20 tells about the birth of baby Jesus and how there was no room for his family at the inn. (3) In Matthew 2:1-12 we learn how the wise men are guided by Jesus' light. (4) John the Baptist preaches about the coming savior in John 1:6-8, 19-28.

Once again, the children participated in various classroom activities, including decorating cookies, creating a wreath with the various names of Jesus, creating a craft of the Christmas story, and rehearsing for Sunday's worship service.

On Sunday, December 14, we continued the celebration, with 13 children returning with their families and friends. The children dressed in costume as



Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds, and wise men, and glowed as they shared their voices in the singing of Ya Viene La Natividad (It's Christmas Coming Again).

The celebration concluded in the fellowship hall, where each child was presented with a participation award and a Christmas bag of goodies. A light reception of cake and punch followed the presentations.

A special thanks to all who made this annual event such a success!

## FAMILY LIFE CENTER UPDATES

Monica Perez will join our internship team at St. James Family Life Center in late January. Monica speaks Spanish and will be able to expand our hours of operation to include evening hours at the Family Life Center. Monica has experience working in faith-based settings and will be a great addition to our team. Aisha

Lockett will continue her internship through May 2015. All of our interns are provided through our partnership with the University of Houston School of Social Work.

Ana Rodriguez has taken a temporary assignment in the State Legislature through May 2015. She will be a policy analyst for one of the state representatives. Mirla Lopez will

replace Ana during her absence. Mirla will continue our efforts in the Pasadena school project.

The Frank Black Middle School tutoring program ramps up again on January 7. If you are interested in being a volunteer, please contact Robert Rivera.



## CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

All 2014 contribution statement envelopes will be available by January 31, 2015.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, January 11 – Adult Bible Study resumes classes at the 11:00 a.m. Learning Hour.

Thursday, January 15 – The Steering Committee meets at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 1 – Consecration Sunday – On this Sunday we pledge our time, talents, and treasures towards the ministries of St. James and the 2015 budget.

Sunday, February 8 – A bilingual worship service will be held at 11:00 a.m.. It will be followed by the Annual Congregational Meeting.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



January 2 Pastor Arthur Murphy  
 January 3 Aura M. Suarez  
 January 9 Gloria Franco  
 January 18 William Gould  
 January 21 Julio Cesar Galicia-Reyes



## WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

| DATE                  | USHER          | ASSISTING<br>MINISTER | ALTAR CARE      | TELLER                           |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Jan. 4<br>10:00 a.m.  | Terry White    | Orie Clark III        | Vicki Faulkner  | Elizabeth Baber                  |
| Jan. 11<br>10:00 a.m. | Robert Rivera  | Orie Clark III        | Vicki Faulkner  | Steve Grimsley<br>or Rose Rivera |
| Jan. 18<br>10:00 a.m. | Steve Grimsley | Orie Clark III        | Elizabeth Baber | Elizabeth Baber                  |
| Jan. 25<br>10:00 a.m. | Rose Rivera    | Orie Clark III        | Vicki Faulkner  | Elizabeth Baber                  |

**Sunday Worship** (English) at 10 A.M.

**Misa en Domingo** (Español) a las 12 del mediodía

**Christian Education | Catecismo:** Sunday | Domingo @ 11 A.M.

**Prayer Circle/Bible Study | Circulo de Oración/Estudios Bíblicos:**

Wednesday | Miercoles @ 7 P.M.

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