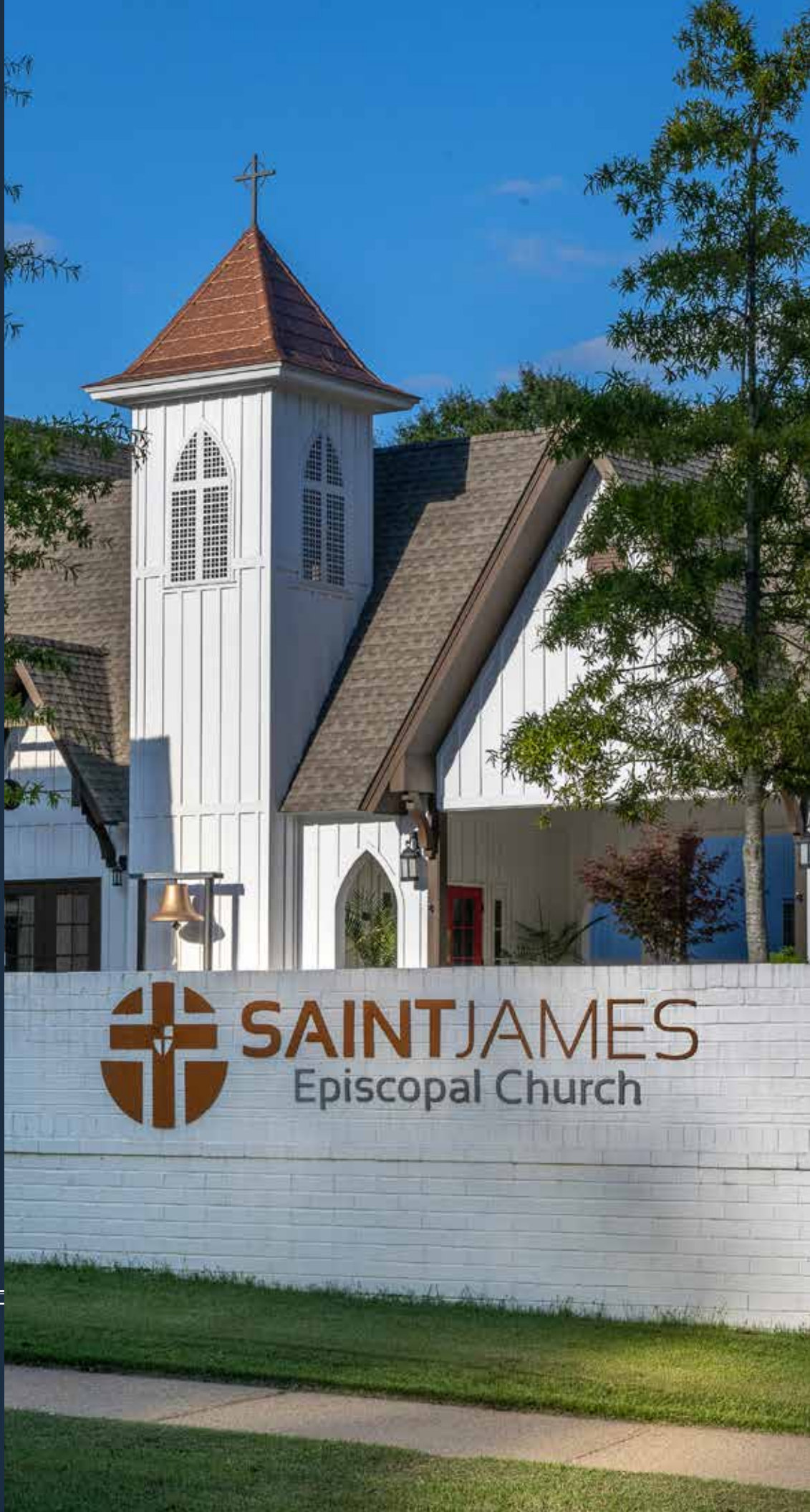
EST. 1946

SAINTJAMES

Episcopal Church

Alexander City, AL

PARISH PROFILE



Welcome

our doors are open

Saint James Episcopal Church is a vibrant community of faith in the heart of Alexander City, Alabama, just minutes from the shores of beautiful Lake Martin.

For nearly 80 years, generations have gathered here to worship God, grow in faith, love and care for one another, and serve our neighbors. We are deeply rooted in the Episcopal tradition and united by relationships that extend well beyond Sunday morning.

There is a genuine sense of family here. We celebrate together, walk alongside one another through life's joys and sorrows, and believe that everyone brings gifts that can enrich the life and ministry of the church.

We invite you to discover Saint James—a community in which to worship, belong, serve, and grow in the love of Christ.





History

rooted in faith. growing in love.

The story of Saint James began in 1946 with a chance conversation between two women, Florrie Mitchell and Mary Thompson, who discovered they shared something important: both were Episcopalians living in Alexander City, a community without an Episcopal church. What began as a conversation over dinner soon became a vision. They gathered others who shared their faith, and before long, twelve founding members came together to establish Saint James.

The first Holy Communion was celebrated on October 10, 1946, with the Reverend Randolph Blackford of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Talladega officiating. Early services were held in borrowed spaces, and in January 1947, Saint James was formally received as a mission of the Diocese of Alabama.

Those early parishioners brought determination, generosity, and a remarkable willingness to work together. They organized bazaars to raise funds for their growing church, beginning a tradition of fellowship and shared purpose that continues through our annual Saint James Bazaar today. Their efforts eventually led to the construction of the congregation's first church building on the grounds where Saint James continues to worship.

One founding member recalled that when something needed to be done, everyone simply did their part. That spirit of shared responsibility and faithful service has carried Saint James through generations of growth and change.

Over the decades, the parish has expanded its facilities and ministries to serve a growing congregation and community. Recent improvements, completed in 2021, added a welcoming entrance and gathering spaces, along with a renovated rectory. Today, Saint James continues to enhance its garden and columbarium.

Yet the true history of Saint James is written in more than buildings and milestones. It lives in generations of worship, prayer, fellowship, and service; in the people who have cared for one another through joy and sorrow; and in the countless ways parishioners have shared their gifts with the wider community.

The faithfulness of our founders remains part of who we are today. We seek to be a church grounded in Scripture, steadfast in faith, generous in love, and attentive to the needs of others. As we look toward thefuture, we pray that Saint James will continue to be shaped not simply by growth or accomplishments, but by our devotion to Christ and our willingness to follow where He leads.









Who We Are

deep roots. open hearts.

Saint James is a lively, active church family where people enjoy being together. Some families have worshiped here for generations, and children and descendants of our founding members remain active in parish life today, bringing years of experience and deep knowledge of Saint James. Others have arrived more recently and have been drawn into parish life by the warm and welcoming nature of this church family.

What binds us together is deeper than history. It is our love of God, lived out in countless ways—worshiping together, sharing meals and laughter, caring for those who are ill or grieving, serving our neighbors, welcoming newcomers, and being there when needed.

Our parishioners bring a wealth of experience, talents, and energy to Saint James, and strong lay participation is one of our greatest gifts.

We are a church with deep roots, joyful hearts, and an open door.

Worship

grounded in the episcopal tradition

Worship is at the heart of life at Saint James. We treasure the beauty, reverence, and rhythm of Episcopal liturgy and the way our common worship draws us together around Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Eucharist.

Traditional hymns accompanied by our organ and choir are an important part of worship in the sanctuary. During the summer, Lake Martin services at Church in the Pines offer a relaxed open-air setting, with music often provided by the Saint James Gang from the Alleluia III songbook. These services are offered in addition to our traditional sanctuary worship.

Whether gathered in our sanctuary or beside the lake, we come to worship Christ, hear His Word, share His table, and be strengthened to live our faith throughout the week.



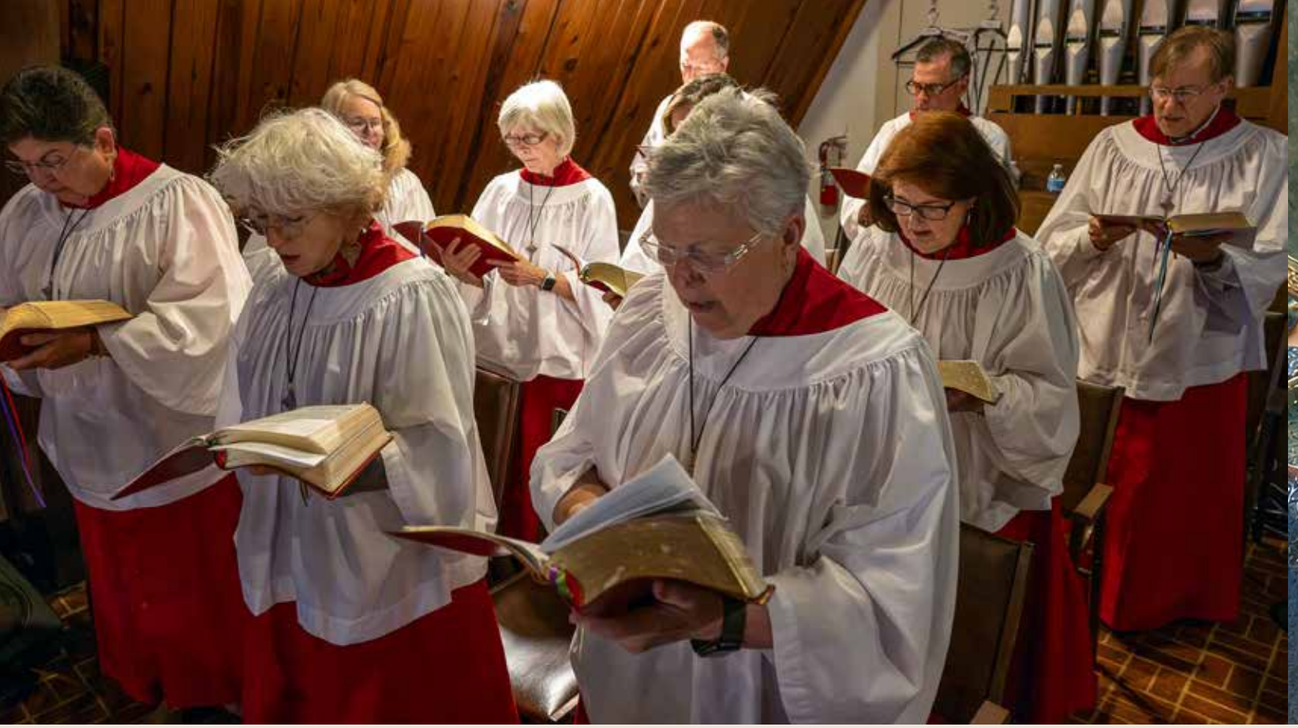


























Ministries

sharing our gifts. caring for one another.

Ministry at Saint James belongs to all of us. Our parishioners bring their gifts to worship, prayer, music, fellowship, hospitality, and the care of our church family.

Our active ministries include the Altar Guild, Flower Guild, Choir, Saint James Gang, Daughters of the King, Quilting Guild, Care Teams, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, and Reunion Groups, along with Tuesday morning prayer and meditation.

Saint James also has a strong Cursillo presence, with parishioners actively participating in this ministry of spiritual renewal, fellowship, and Christian leadership.

Some ministries serve quietly behind the scenes. Others gather us together. Still others make certain that parishioners who are sick, homebound, hospitalized, or grieving remain connected to the church family.

Different gifts. Different ministries. One parish serving together in love.

Outreach

faith lived beyond our walls

Love of neighbor has always been part of the character of Saint James. Our outreach combines generous financial support with parishioners who are willing to give their time, creativity, and hands-on service.

Each Tuesday, Soup to Go teams prepare and distribute approximately 120 soup-and-sandwich meals. Our Pottery Guild creates beautiful pieces throughout the year for the annual Saint James Bazaar, whose proceeds are devoted entirely to supporting nonprofit organizations serving our community.

Saint James also opens its doors to organizations and activities that enrich the wider community, including Respite Care, Boy Scouts, a Bridge Group, and community yoga. Parishioners share their time and talents in support of these ministries and gatherings.

Through these ministries and others, we seek to be attentive to the needs around us and generous with what God has entrusted to us.

For Saint James, loving our neighbors is part of living our faith.













Saint James Community

faith. fellowship. family.

There is a joyful spirit at Saint James. We are an active, vibrant church family that loves gathering together, sharing laughter, celebrating traditions, and caring for one another.

Our fellowship extends well beyond Sunday worship. Coffee hour following the 10 a.m. service is a cherished weekly gathering, while our annual parish retreat at Camp McDowell, Shrove Tuesday fish fry, Easter crawfish boil, and other parish celebrations bring generations together in friendship and fellowship.

These gatherings are more than social occasions. They strengthen the relationships that sustain our parish through life's celebrations and challenges. We rejoice together, pray together, and care for one another with genuine affection.

That same spirit extends into Alexander City and the surrounding community. Saint James has long been known for its active presence in community life, and our parishioners generously share their gifts through service, outreach, civic involvement, and relationships throughout the area.

At Saint James, faith and fellowship go hand in hand. We love God, we love our neighbors, and we genuinely enjoy sharing life together.

Looking to the Future

faithful to our calling. open to what comes next.

Saint James looks toward the future with gratitude for all that has been entrusted to us and with a willingness to listen for where God may be leading.

We see opportunities to welcome and integrate newcomers, strengthen pastoral care and Christian education, deepen relationships within the parish, and expand our presence and service in the community.

We also recognize that growth has more than one definition. As Alexander City and Lake Martin continue to change, we want to understand the people God is bringing into our community and welcome them into the worship, fellowship, ministry, and leadership of Saint James.

Our hope is not simply to become a larger church, but an increasingly faithful one—grounded in truth, growing in love, steadfast in service, and centered always in Christ.

Alexander City and Lake Martin Area

small town charm. beautiful lake living.

Located in east-central Alabama, Alexander City offers the warmth of a close-knit community alongside the beauty and recreation of Lake Martin.

Once closely identified with the textile industry, the area has evolved into a destination for visitors, second-home owners, and new residents drawn to lake living and an exceptional quality of life.

The community offers modern healthcare with connections to UAB Medicine, a new high school, K–12 educational opportunities, a respected community college, and an active arts and community theater presence. Nearby Auburn, Montgomery, and Birmingham provide additional educational, cultural, and metropolitan amenities.

For Saint James, the area's continued evolution offers exciting opportunities to welcome newcomers, build relationships, and serve the community we love.

















Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

united in faith. called to serve.

Saint James is a proud and active member of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, a community of churches united in worship, faith, and service. Under the leadership of the Right Reverend Richard T. Lawson III, the Diocese supports parishes through clergy leadership, Christian education, outreach, and shared ministries that strengthen the life of the Church.

Our parishioners deeply value their relationship with the Diocese and the wider Episcopal Church. Over the years, Saint James members have served on numerous diocesan committees and participated in programs, ministries, and gatherings across the Diocese. We embrace opportunities to contribute our time, talents, and leadership, and remain committed to being active partners in the life and mission of the Diocese.



What We Offer

a parish alive with faith and fellowship

Saint James is blessed with a loving congregation, committed lay leadership, beautiful spaces for worship and fellowship, and people generous with their time, talents, experience, and resources.

There is energy here. Our parishioners worship, serve, create, cook, study, sing, pray, gather, care for one another, and enjoy being together. Ministry is not something that belongs to one person or a handful of leaders—it is part of the shared life of this church family.

Beyond our doors is the remarkable setting of Alexander City and Lake Martin, and within them are countless opportunities to form relationships and serve others.

Saint James offers a community to call home, gifts to share, people to love, and a life of faith to live together.

We Invite You

come be a part of Saint James

Nearly eighty years ago, a small group of Episcopalians came together with faith and determination to establish a church in Alexander City.

Generations later, Saint James remains a community centered in Christ and shaped by worship, fellowship, service, and love.

We honor the faithfulness of those who came before us. We rejoice in the life we share today. And we look toward the future with hope, trusting God to continue shaping Saint James for His purposes.

You are welcome here.



"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

1 Corinthians 13:13

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Saint James Episcopal Church. 331 South Central Avenue. Alexander City, AL 35010. 256.234.4752







The Rector We Seek

a priest to walk with us

Above all, we seek a rector with a warm, approachable pastoral presence—a spiritually mature priest who will know and love our people and make pastoral care a priority through illness, grief, crisis, and the everyday seasons of life.

We seek a gifted preacher who is rooted in Scripture and can connect the Gospel to everyday life; a collaborative leader who listens well, empowers lay leadership, builds community, and can thoughtfully guide growth and change while honoring our Episcopal traditions.

Our next rector should be engaged beyond Sunday worship—strengthening Christian education, supporting outreach, participating in the wider Diocese and community, and bringing sound administrative and stewardship skills to parish life. We value a leader who can work effectively with the Vestry, manage resources wisely, and provide leadership for annual giving and future capital needs.

Most of all, we seek a priest who will love God, love people, and embrace life and ministry with the Saint James family and the Alexander City/Lake Martin community.

SAINTJAMES
Episcopal Church

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RECTOR SEARCH

A Prayer for Our Rector Search

Almighty God, guide us by your Holy Spirit as we seek the priest you are calling to walk with us. Grant us wisdom, patience, and discerning hearts, that together we may grow in faith, serve with love, and faithfully follow your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Saint James Episcopal Church

Alexander City, Alabama
Vocation Hub - Complete Narrative

MINISTRY CONTEXT AND DESIRED SKILLS

What are your community's hopes for this position, and what qualities in applicants will help you live into them?

Saint James enters this search with gratitude for a strong foundation and genuine hope for the future. We are a loving, active Episcopal congregation with deep roots in Alexander City, a beautiful church home, committed lay leadership, significant ministry in our community, and parishioners who generously share their time, talents, experience and resources.

Our first hope is for a priest who will love God and love people. Relationships matter deeply at Saint James. We seek a warm, approachable and spiritually mature rector who wants to know the people of the parish and be known by them. Pastoral care is our clearest priority. Our next rector should be genuinely present through illness, hospitalization, grief, aging, family transitions and the ordinary joys and sorrows of life.

We also seek a gifted preacher whose sermons are grounded in Scripture and the Gospel and connected to everyday life. Our congregation wants preaching that helps us understand our faith more deeply, encourages us, challenges us when necessary, and equips us to live as Christians beyond Sunday morning.

Saint James has strong lay leadership, and we want a rector who sees that as an asset. We value collaborative leadership: a priest who can provide clear direction while listening well, working effectively with the Vestry, recognizing the gifts of others, developing new leaders and empowering parishioners for ministry rather than trying to do everything personally.

Our community is also changing. Alexander City's identity was once closely tied to a major textile industry. Today, Lake Martin increasingly shapes the area's economy and character, drawing retirees, second-home owners and new residents. This creates a significant opportunity for Saint James. We want to become increasingly intentional about welcoming the people who are making Alexander City and Lake Martin home and helping them move from visitor to friend, from friend to parishioner, and from parishioner to active participant in the worship, ministry and leadership of the church.

We are therefore looking for a rector who can honor what is strong at Saint James while helping us see new possibilities. We do not expect one person to arrive with all the answers or to make Saint James successful for us. We seek a priest who will pray, listen, lead and work alongside us as together we discern how Saint James can become more faithful to Christ and His mission in this community.

RECOMMENDED LEADERSHIP SKILLS - SELECT 5

- Collaborative Leadership
- Congregational Development
- Adaptive Leadership
- Servant Leadership
- Administration

These selections reflect the strongest themes in the parish survey, listening sessions and committee work: shared leadership, intentional congregational development, adaptability, servant leadership and sound administration.

RECOMMENDED MINISTRY SKILLS - SELECT 10

- Pastoral Care
- Preaching/Sermons
- Grief/Loss
- Worship/Liturgy
- Church Growth
- Outreach
- Adult Education / Christian Formation
- Prayer/Spirituality
- Community Building
- Teaching

These choices follow the congregation's stated priorities, with pastoral care clearly first and sermons, grief ministry, worship, growth, outreach and formation also strongly represented.

MINISTRY CONTEXT NARRATIVES

1. Describe your core mission and ministry priorities.

Saint James understands its mission simply: to love God, love one another, and carry the love of Christ into the community around us.

Worship is at the center of our common life. We are formed by Scripture, prayer, the Holy Eucharist and the Episcopal tradition, and we believe what happens at the altar should shape the way we live when we leave it.

Relationships are equally important to our identity. Saint James is a church where people know one another, enjoy one another and care for one another. Our ministry priorities include strengthening pastoral care, deepening Christian formation, supporting strong lay ministry, welcoming newcomers, and continuing an active commitment to outreach.

We also want to grow, but we are learning to think carefully about what Christian growth means. Numerical growth matters because people matter, but size alone is not our measure of faithfulness. We want to grow in discipleship, love, service, generosity, participation and our ability to recognize and welcome the people God is bringing into our community.

At the heart of our priorities is a desire to be increasingly faithful to Christ with the people, opportunities and resources God has entrusted to Saint James.

2. Share about the setting and community you serve.

Saint James serves Alexander City and the Lake Martin community in east-central Alabama.

Alexander City has experienced significant economic and demographic change. For generations, Russell Corporation was central to the identity and economy of the area. As that era ended, Lake Martin became increasingly important in shaping the community's future.

Today, the lake attracts vacationers, second-home owners and people choosing the area for retirement or later-career life. Many bring professional experience, time, talents and a desire for community involvement. Alexander City retains the relationships and accessibility of a smaller town while Lake Martin offers an exceptional recreational lifestyle. Auburn, Montgomery and Birmingham are all within reach. The Lake Martin area serves an estimated 51,580 people, in addition to a substantial second-home community.

We believe this changing environment represents one of Saint James' most important ministry opportunities.

Like many congregations, we would gladly welcome more young adults and families with children. At the same time, we want our ministry strategy to be grounded in the community that actually surrounds us rather than in an imagined demographic.

Our question for the future is therefore larger than, 'How do we attract a particular age group?' It is: Who is God bringing to Alexander City and Lake Martin, and how can Saint James faithfully welcome and serve them?

3. Reflect on how your community approaches leadership - what styles and qualities you value in clergy, how leadership is shared between clergy and laity, and how you navigate change and challenges.

Saint James values leadership that is pastoral, collaborative and confident enough to lead without needing to control.

Our congregation has a strong tradition of lay participation. Parishioners serve in worship, outreach, pastoral ministries, music, fellowship, administration and the care of our buildings and grounds. Many bring substantial professional, civic and organizational experience to parish life.

We therefore seek a rector who recognizes lay leadership as a strength to cultivate. We want a priest who can identify gifts, invite people into ministry, provide direction and accountability, and then trust people to serve.

At the same time, collaboration does not mean the rector should be hesitant to lead. We look to our priest for spiritual leadership, sound judgment, effective administration, and the willingness to make difficult decisions when necessary.

Our congregation is open to thoughtful change but values the way change is approached. Listening matters. Relationships matter. Communication matters. New ideas are most likely to flourish when people understand their purpose and when what is already good is respected.

We hope for a rector who can help us distinguish between traditions that continue to give life and practices that may need to adapt - always asking not simply what we prefer, but what will help Saint James live more faithfully into its calling.

4. Share how worship is shaped in your community - what influences your liturgical life, how you balance tradition and innovation, and how liturgy reflects your theology and context.

Worship is central to Saint James. Our liturgical life is grounded in the Book of Common Prayer, Scripture, the sacraments and the traditions of the Episcopal Church.

We value reverent worship and the familiar rhythms of Episcopal liturgy. Holy Eucharist is especially important to our congregation. Traditional hymns, our organ and choir contribute significantly to worship in the sanctuary.

Our worship life also has room for variety. During the summer, Lake Martin services at Church in the Pines are offered in addition to our traditional services in the sanctuary. They provide a different setting and atmosphere, with music often led by the Saint James Gang using selections from Alleluia III. These services have become a distinctive expression of Saint James' life in the Lake Martin community.

We do not see tradition and thoughtful variety as opposites. What matters is that worship remains centered on Christ, grounded in the Episcopal tradition, and offered with reverence and authenticity.

Preaching is also a vital part of worship. We value sermons grounded in Scripture that speak clearly to real life - sermons that deepen faith, offer hope, provoke thought when needed, and help us carry the Gospel into the week ahead.

5. Reflect on how your community engages diverse cultural identities, fosters belonging, and responds to the needs of a diverse or evolving population.

Saint James understands hospitality first through relationship. We want people who enter our doors to be greeted warmly, but true belonging requires more than a welcome on Sunday morning. It happens when someone is remembered, invited into conversation, introduced to others, encouraged to use their gifts, and gradually becomes part of the life of the parish.

Our congregation includes people with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. We do not expect agreement on every matter. Our common identity is found in Christ and in the worship, prayer, service and relationships we share.

One of our challenges and opportunities is becoming more intentional about welcoming newcomers to the Alexander City and Lake Martin community. People arriving here may have left behind longtime churches, friendships, professional communities and familiar routines. Saint James can offer more than a Sunday service. We can offer Christian community and a place to belong and serve.

We also recognize that genuine hospitality asks us to remain attentive to people whose backgrounds and experiences differ from our own. Welcome is not something we want merely to claim about ourselves; it is something we want others actually to experience.

6. Use this space to share any additional details about the role or organization that would help candidates discern their fit - such as organizational culture, special projects, or unique opportunities and challenges.

Saint James is a parish where relationships matter enormously. We enjoy worshiping together, but we also genuinely enjoy one another. Meals, laughter, friendships, shared work, celebrations and the ways people care for each other are all part of parish life.

Many families have been part of Saint James for generations; descendants of founding members remain active today. At the same time, newcomers have found a home here, and we believe welcoming new people will be increasingly important to our future.

Our congregation also possesses significant resources for ministry: committed lay leaders, parishioners with professional experience, beautiful and well-maintained facilities, a rectory, financial generosity, and a tradition of outreach. Recent campus improvements were completed without leaving the parish in debt.

Our challenge is not a lack of gifts. It is discerning how best to use those gifts in the next season of Saint James' life.

We are not looking for a rector to arrive with a predetermined program for fixing us. Nor are we looking for someone simply to maintain what already exists. We seek a priest willing first to know and love Saint James, recognize what is life-giving here, ask good questions, and then lead alongside us.

A priest who values relationships, pastoral ministry, strong preaching, lay leadership, community engagement and the particular opportunities of life around Lake Martin will find much here on which to build.

NARRATIVE RESPONSES

1. Describe your congregation's theology or spiritual identity.

Saint James' spiritual identity is rooted in the Episcopal tradition and centered in Jesus Christ.

We are formed by Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer, Holy Eucharist, preaching, prayer and music. Our faith is sacramental, but it is also practical. We believe worship should shape how we love, serve, forgive, give, welcome and care for one another.

Love is central to our understanding of Christian community - love of God, love within the parish and love of neighbor. But we understand Christian love as more than warmth or friendliness. It calls us toward faithfulness, truth, holiness, endurance, repentance and service.

We believe a healthy church is not measured primarily by its size, reputation, age, demographics or resources. Those things can matter, but they are not the center. Our deeper question is whether we are faithful to Christ with what He has entrusted to us.

That conviction is becoming increasingly important as Saint James looks toward its future. We want to cherish what is good without allowing comfort or familiarity to become our mission. We want to remain rooted in Christ and attentive to where He may be calling us next.

2. Describe a recent ministry experiment or innovation in your congregation/diocese.

One of Saint James' most distinctive expressions of ministry beyond the traditional sanctuary is our summer worship at Church in the Pines on Lake Martin.

These services meet people in a setting that is central to the life of our community. The atmosphere is relaxed while remaining distinctly Christian and Episcopal, and music from the Saint James Gang and Alleluia III brings another expression to our worship life.

The Lake services remind us that the Church does not have to wait for people to enter our building. Ministry can move toward the places where people already gather.

That lesson is particularly important as Lake Martin increasingly shapes our community. We see potential for Saint James to continue exploring ways of being present, visible and welcoming to those who may encounter us first through the lake community rather than through our South Central Avenue campus.

3. What is a ministry risk your congregation has taken, and what came of it?

Saint James' history contains repeated examples of the congregation investing in ministry before knowing exactly what the future would bring.

The parish expanded its facilities several times as ministry needs changed. More recently, Saint James purchased two neighboring homes in 2019. One was removed to allow expanded parking and construction of a new narthex, covered entrance, bell tower, and Altar and Flower Guild spaces. The other was extensively renovated as a parish rectory.

The project represented a significant commitment to the future of Saint James and was completed in 2021 fully funded, leaving the parish debt-free.

The result is more than improved property. The project demonstrates something important about this congregation: when Saint James believes something will strengthen the parish's ministry and future, its people are capable of

committing resources and working together to accomplish it.

The question before us now is how that same generosity and willingness can be directed toward the next chapter of ministry.

4. How does your congregation discern and adapt to the changing needs of your community?

Saint James is learning that discernment begins with listening - to God, to one another, and to the community around us.

Our rector search has provided an important opportunity to do that. The parish survey and listening sessions asked members not simply what they wanted in a priest, but what they cherish about Saint James, where they see opportunities for growth, whom God may be placing in our community, and what faithfulness may require in the years ahead.

Those conversations revealed both aspiration and reality. Many parishioners naturally hope to see more young adults and families. At the same time, our community is increasingly shaped by retirees and people moving to Lake Martin in later career and retirement years.

Rather than seeing that reality primarily as a limitation, we increasingly see an opportunity. These newcomers bring experience, energy, time, leadership ability and resources. Many are also looking for friendship, community and a church home.

Discernment for Saint James means paying attention to the people God is actually sending us, rather than measuring our future against a picture of what we think a successful church is supposed to look like.

5. How does your congregation sustain its spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

Our common life is sustained first through worship and prayer. Holy Eucharist, Scripture, preaching, music, seasonal worship and personal prayer give rhythm and grounding to our life together.

But much of the well-being of Saint James also happens through relationships.

People notice when someone is absent. They make calls, visit, bring food, pray, sit with families in grief, celebrate good news, and remain connected through the ordinary friendships of parish life. Our Care Teams, Daughters of the King, Lay Eucharistic Ministers and other ministries strengthen this culture of care.

Fellowship matters as well. Shared meals, ministry groups, parish gatherings, working together on the Bazaar, Soup to Go and other activities create relationships that often become sources of support long before a crisis occurs. Our coffee hour following the 10 a.m. Sunday service is a particularly cherished opportunity to enjoy conversation and deepen friendships.

We believe spiritual health and human relationship belong together. People flourish when they are known, loved, prayed for, given opportunities to serve and reminded that they are part of the Body of Christ.

6. In what ways is your congregation engaged in the wider Church or local community?

Saint James has a strong tradition of looking beyond itself.

Soup to Go prepares and distributes meals each week. Our annual Bazaar draws together parishioners from across the congregation, with proceeds supporting nonprofit organizations serving the wider community. Respite Care uses Saint James facilities, and parishioners volunteer in that ministry. Members also serve throughout Alexander City and Lake Martin in civic, charitable and community organizations.

Our engagement is not limited to financial giving. Parishioners repeatedly express a desire for hands-on service and for Saint James to remain visible and useful in the community.

We also value our relationship with the Diocese of Alabama and the wider Episcopal Church. Participation in diocesan life, Cursillo and other connections reminds us that Saint James is part of something larger than itself.

Our aspiration is not simply for Alexander City to know that Saint James exists. We want our neighbors to experience Saint James as a congregation that loves and serves this community.

7. How does your congregation approach pastoral care?

Pastoral care is one of the clearest priorities at Saint James.

Our congregation wants a rector who knows the people personally and is present during illness, hospitalization, crisis, grief and major life transitions. Members particularly value home and hospital visitation, accessibility and a priest who understands that sometimes ministry means simply being present.

Our parish is in a life stage in which pastoral care is especially significant. Many members are older adults, and our next rector will accompany people through aging, health changes, caregiving, loss and death. That ministry requires compassion, maturity, emotional intelligence and comfort with the pastoral and sacramental responsibilities surrounding the end of life.

At the same time, pastoral care cannot belong to the rector alone. Saint James has lay people with deep gifts for caring ministry. Care Teams, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Daughters of the King, friendships, meals, calls, visits and prayer all contribute to a parish culture of care.

We seek a rector who will personally provide strong pastoral ministry while also strengthening and equipping the congregation to care for one another.

8. How is your congregation preparing for the Church of the future?

For Saint James, preparing for the future begins by refusing to assume that faithfulness must look exactly as it did in the past.

We cherish our Episcopal identity, worship, relationships, history and traditions. We do not want to abandon them. But neither do we believe our calling is simply to preserve them.

Our community is changing, particularly because of Lake Martin. That means the people Saint James may be called to reach in the coming decades may differ from the people who built the parish in earlier generations.

We want to become better at welcoming newcomers, strengthening Christian formation, cultivating lay leaders, supporting excellent pastoral care, maintaining strong worship, and connecting parish ministry with the lives of people moving into our community.

We are also trying to broaden our understanding of growth. Children and young families would be joyfully welcomed, but the future of Saint James cannot depend upon reproducing the demographics of another era. We want to recognize the ministry possibilities before us now.

The Church of the future will still need what people have always needed: Christ, sacrament, truth, love, friendship, purpose, service, prayer and a community in which to belong.

Our task is to remain faithful in offering those gifts to the people God sends us.

9. What does stewardship mean to your congregation, and how do you practice it?

Stewardship at Saint James is the faithful use of everything God has entrusted to us - our financial resources, time, talents, relationships, property, experience and opportunities for ministry.

The generosity of the congregation is visible throughout parish life. Members give financially, but they also cook, sing, serve at the altar, visit, organize, create pottery and quilts, maintain traditions, lead ministries, serve on the Vestry, support outreach and care for the physical life of the church.

Our campus is another expression of stewardship. Generations of parishioners have invested in buildings and spaces that support worship, fellowship, formation, outreach and pastoral ministry. The most recent major expansion and rectory project was fully funded, and Saint James carries no debt, reflecting both generosity and responsible financial stewardship.

Looking forward, we want stewardship to remain connected to mission. Resources are not an end in themselves. They are gifts entrusted to Saint James for worship, ministry and service.

10. How has your congregation experienced and addressed conflict?

Saint James is a close-knit congregation, and close relationships do not mean everyone always agrees.

Like any church family, we include different personalities, preferences, experiences and perspectives. Worship, music, change, parish traditions and leadership decisions can all generate strong feelings precisely because people care deeply about Saint James.

We value leadership that does not inflame differences or ignore them. We want disagreements addressed with honesty, respect, good communication and a willingness to listen.

Relationships are one of our greatest strengths and can also be one of our greatest resources when navigating conflict. When people remember that they belong to one another in Christ, disagreement does not have to become division.

Our aspiration is not a parish without conflict. It is a parish capable of moving through differences faithfully - speaking truth, listening carefully, extending grace and returning again to the mission that holds us together.

11. What has been your congregation's experience leading or navigating change?

Change is woven throughout Saint James' history.

Twelve people established an Episcopal mission in Alexander City in 1946. As the congregation grew, Saint James built, enlarged and adapted its facilities repeatedly. Worship and ministries have evolved. The community surrounding the parish has undergone profound economic and demographic change.

Our recent campus expansion is another example of the parish embracing change when it sees a clear purpose. Saint James was willing to make a significant investment in its future while managing that investment responsibly.

Our congregation today generally values continuity accompanied by thoughtful change. People want the character and traditions of Saint James honored, but they also recognize that the parish must remain responsive to new circumstances and opportunities.

We have learned that change is most productive when its purpose is clear, people are heard, communication is strong, and leaders distinguish between preserving our identity and merely preserving familiar habits.

We do not seek change for its own sake. We seek the willingness to change when doing so helps Saint James serve Christ more faithfully.

12. What are your current strategic priorities or plans for the future?

Our priorities for the coming season have become increasingly clear. The Vestry will work with the next rector to establish a shared vision and strategic plan for Saint James.

We want to strengthen pastoral care, welcome and integrate newcomers, deepen Christian formation, support and develop lay leadership, sustain strong worship, expand our community engagement and thoughtfully pursue congregational growth.

A particularly important priority is understanding the opportunity presented by Alexander City and Lake Martin. We want to become more intentional about reaching people who are moving here, especially those entering retirement or later-career life who may be seeking both a church home and a new community of relationships.

This does not mean Saint James is becoming a church only for retirees. We want people of every generation. It means we intend to respond intelligently and faithfully to the community God has actually given us.

We also want to help newcomers move beyond attendance into genuine belonging and ministry. A healthy Saint James will not simply have more people in the pews. It will have people forming relationships, growing spiritually, discovering gifts, assuming leadership and serving others.

Our strategic question is therefore not merely, 'How can Saint James become bigger?' It is, 'How can Saint James become increasingly faithful, vibrant and engaged in the community where God has planted us?'

13. How does your congregation incorporate accessibility and inclusion in your shared life?

Saint James seeks to be a congregation where people are received warmly and invited into the full life of the parish.

Our understanding of accessibility begins with hospitality. Episcopal worship can be unfamiliar to newcomers, and belonging to an established congregation can sometimes feel difficult from the outside. We want to make both easier to navigate.

Inclusion also means recognizing that people participate in different ways and bring different abilities, experiences and gifts. Home Communion and pastoral visitation help maintain connection for those unable to attend worship regularly, while our ministries provide many different avenues for participation and service.

We know that saying 'everyone is welcome' is easier than ensuring that every person experiences welcome. We want to continue learning how to move from friendliness to genuine belonging - where newcomers are known, invited, included and given opportunities to contribute.

14. In what ways has your congregation grown in cultural competency?

Saint James has found that some of our most meaningful opportunities for growth come through worship and relationships with Christians beyond our own congregation and tradition.

Each Holy Week, we host community services and Lenten lunches, inviting guest preachers from churches throughout the Lake Martin area. These gatherings have become a valued tradition and bring together people from different denominations and worship traditions. Parishioners have also participated in Sacred Ground, Courageous Conversations, and Seeing the Face of God in Each Other; a Lenten study of Catherine Meeks' The Night Is Long but Light Comes in the Morning; and Education for Ministry (EfM), whose participants have continued meeting beyond the four-year course to deepen their understanding of Scripture and Christian life.

One particularly meaningful experience grew from the Diocese of Alabama's emphasis on racial healing. Rather than limiting the conversation to formation within our own parish, Saint James chose to step outside our walls. On one

Sunday, we did not hold our regular service. Instead, our congregation worshiped with a predominantly Black Baptist congregation in our community whose pastor has been a beloved participant in our Holy Week services. After worship, they welcomed us for lunch and fellowship.

The experience reminded us that understanding grows through more than conversation. Sometimes we learn best by entering another person's sacred space, worshiping alongside them, listening, building relationships, and receiving their hospitality.

We know cultural competency is an ongoing process rather than something a congregation completes. We hope to continue creating opportunities to encounter our neighbors more fully, learn from one another, and strengthen relationships across the wider Christian community.

15. How does your congregation use technology in ministry?

Saint James has embraced technology as an important tool for communication, worship, connection, and welcome. We are fortunate to have parishioners with strong professional and technical gifts who generously share their expertise with the church, along with professional support for the design and maintenance of our communications.

Our website serves as a central resource for parish life and works closely with our interactive Friday newsletter, The Good News, allowing members and visitors to move easily between current news, ministry information, stories, and other online resources. Social media extends that communication into the wider community, where we share both the life of Saint James and ministries and events taking place around us.

During the COVID pandemic, Saint James recognized the need to make worship accessible beyond the church building and invested in online worship. What began as a response to necessity has become an important continuing ministry. Sunday services are professionally produced and livestreamed through Facebook and our website and remain available on demand. Our sound system is integrated with the video production system, providing high-quality sound throughout the nave and for those worshiping remotely.

For Saint James, technology is not a substitute for personal connection. It is another way of extending it - helping people remain connected to worship, keeping parishioners engaged in the life of the church, and allowing newcomers to encounter Saint James before they ever walk through our doors.

16. What theological convictions shape your congregational ministry?

Saint James is shaped by the conviction that Jesus Christ is the center of the Church and that the Church exists to worship Him, grow in His love and participate in His mission.

We believe Scripture, prayer, Holy Eucharist and the traditions of the Episcopal Church form us for Christian life. We believe God gives gifts to both clergy and laity and calls the whole congregation into ministry.

We believe love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor. Worship should lead to service. Faith should shape relationships. Grace received should become grace extended.

We also believe faithfulness is a deeper measure of church health than size, reputation, comfort or resources. A congregation may possess many blessings, but those gifts matter most when they are offered back to God in worship, generosity, truth, holiness, service and love.

These convictions call us both to gratitude and self-examination. We want to recognize what Christ would affirm in Saint James while remaining willing to hear where He may be calling us to deeper faithfulness.

Our hope for the future is not simply that Saint James will prosper institutionally. It is that Christ will be known more fully in us and through us.

REQUIRED THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Reflect on key moments or experiences that have shaped or challenged your congregation's theological understanding or self-identity.

Saint James' identity has been shaped by nearly eighty years of people believing that an Episcopal community of faith had something important to offer Alexander City.

Beginning with a small mission in 1946, successive generations built not only buildings but a parish culture marked by worship, relationship, generosity and service. Children and descendants of founding members remain active today, giving Saint James an unusual sense of continuity.

At the same time, the world around Saint James has changed significantly. Alexander City's economic identity shifted as the textile era receded and Lake Martin became increasingly influential. Our congregation has aged. New residents are arriving for different reasons and at different stages of life. The church itself exists within a broader cultural environment in which institutional affiliation can no longer be assumed.

Our current rector transition has given us an opportunity to look at ourselves with both affection and honesty.

Through the parish survey and Listening Sessions, we heard again how deeply people love Saint James - its worship, friendships, traditions, service and sense of family. We also heard concerns about pastoral care, growth, Christian formation, newcomer integration and the future.

Those conversations have challenged us to ask a deeper question about church health.

We are learning that faithfulness cannot be reduced to whether the congregation becomes younger, larger, busier or more visible. The letters to the churches in Revelation remind us that Christ looks more deeply: at love, faithfulness, truth, endurance, holiness, repentance and allegiance to Him.

That perspective does not make growth unimportant. It puts growth in its proper place.

Our calling is to receive gratefully what previous generations have entrusted to us, look honestly at the community God has given us today, and use our considerable gifts in faithful service to Christ and our neighbors.

We believe Saint James has a strong foundation.

We also believe God is not finished with us.