

St. James Lutheran Church Staff

Senior Pastor: Pastor David Lechelt
Director of Family Ministry: Shayna Skalicky
Financial Coordinator: Lana Teigen
Director of Communications: Amanda Burns
Youth Leader: Ryan Walesch
Choir Director: Stephen Mollick
Ringing Praise Bell Choir Director: Mary Brown
New Song Leader: Gary Heil
Organist: Tom Bartsch
Custodian: Mike Harasyn
Nursery Supervisor: Lauren Skalicky
Sunday Morning Custodian: Chris Knight

Gathering in the name of Christ to share the Gospel with the Community.

St. James Lutheran Church

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ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH



2008 Annual Report

A Word from Pastor David Lechelt

I still do have some unpacked boxes in my office. Are you surprised? I hit the floor running with you on August 1, 2008.....so much to learn and to learn about each other and your first new senior pastor in 20 years. But the solidness of this match and the warmth and laughter of the Spirit in our “yes” to each other is unfolding with growing confidence and anticipation. You are balm to my soul and I am so pleased and energized to be your pastor.

To be sure, we have many challenges ahead of us, but they are good challenges and we greet them with many gifts, great love, and God’s leading. We can’t recreate the past but we can embrace this present moment and let our light shine in Jesus Christ! I’ve been listening very carefully to you through our cottage meetings, ministry meetings, and many opportunities for one-on-one conversation. It is time for us to together cast a vision and a strategic plan of support for that vision. We will begin that work on February 7, 2009 with an all day retreat of 2008 and 2009 Council members and St. James staff. We will prayerfully reflect upon what I’ve heard from you. We will establish clarity around our strengths and our opportunities for God’s mission and outreach to the community we have been given to serve. And we will invite all of the St. James community to a strategic planning day this spring. Green shoots will be springing forth at St. James. You can count on it!

Thank you to all who hosted our cottage meetings. It was a great way to get to know many of you, to hear your stories, and to hear your hopes for our community. What did I hear? Well, I did hear the word “more” many times...more growth, more youth, more people, more music, more choir members, more fun, and even more cottage meetings! We want to grow. We believe we have something very special to share. And we want to pass it along and open our doors even wider to this community. Throughout these conversations, we recognized that spiritual growth comes before numerical growth. As one of you has said, “it’s about vibrancy of relationship.” I totally agree. And I totally believe that such vibrancy in God’s Holy Spirit will naturally compel our neighbors to come and see Jesus here.

We will be about the invitation to vibrancy of relationship making in Jesus Christ. I look forward to gathering our resources and coming together with the strength and passion we have for a very persistent focus on showing Jesus in our youth and family ministries, outreach, and engagement of God’s Living Word. There will be many more opportunities at St. James to meet Jesus in the Scriptures. More and more people will be opening the Book of Faith together, across the generations, members and non-members alike. And we will be extending ourselves in new outreach, with the invitation to new partners, and a growing involvement in what God has already initiated in our hearts. The yearning is there and I will gather this yearning with you and we will see God’s yearning before us.

Youth and Family Ministry has been a mark of this community since 1955. Much has changed in our approach to youth ministry over the years, but the need for vibrant relationship making in Jesus Christ is the profound yearning of every generation. The promise of our Associate Pastor and a full



A Word from Lois Selle, Council President

Dear Friends,

It has once again been a year of great change here at St. James. We have said goodbye to both Interim Pastor Karri and Pastor Phil. Although both were here for only a short period of time, they touched our lives and helped us grow in different ways. A few short months later we wished Pastor Michelene farewell. Her dedication and service to our congregation and community were very much appreciated. We have fond memories of all our pastors which we can hold near and dear to our hearts. As we reminisce, it is important to remember that it is the people who make and define the congregation of St. James. We are here to support each other through meaningful worship, which is open and welcoming to all people in the various stages of their faith journey.

At the same time we have been so fortunate to welcome Pastor David into our church to lead and guide our congregation. There has been much laughter and excitement as we have gotten to know both Pastor David and Mary. Our call committee did an excellent job, and I am confident that we will grow and prosper under his leadership.

All things considered, we have actually had a good year. Our outreach team has led the way in maintaining our focus and support of our formal outreach partners through the investment of much time and effort. St. James should honestly be both excited and proud of the impact that we are having on our local community as well as the world. So many people are looking for ways to make a positive difference in the world and through our outreach programs, we have been able to facilitate this. Think of all the people we impact: the sick and injured through Global Health, the homeless and hungry through Loaves and Fishes, those who have fallen on hard times right here in our community of Crystal through the NEAR Food Shelf, school children involved in the Power of One, delivering nutritious meals through our support of Dinner at Your Door, the support and comfort provided to families through the Funeral Lunches, quilts made by the quilting group and given to those in need locally and in other countries, as well as other support we give to programs such as the blood drive which we host every few months. Together, we are having a definite positive impact on the world around us.

There is much change ahead of us, but together we are strong. Be heartened by the positive impact we are having and know that what we are doing is important. I know I speak for the entire council when I tell you that it is an honor to serve on the council and to be able to be a part of this positive force.

God’s Peace, Strength and Enthusiasm to You,

Lois Selle
Council President



staff for leadership also means a full staff for follow-up and support of you and your yearning. Full staffing means more time, more dedication, more availability to gathering and growing and giving ourselves away to each other and the world in Jesus Christ. And did I say, “more fun?”

Yes, there are great challenges ahead but we follow Jesus Christ and we are God’s church. To our yearning for more, there is “way more” ahead, and “more” in ways that we have not yet imagined. Jesus did say, “I came that you may have life and have it abundantly!” (John 10:10).

I may not get to those unpacked boxes in my office soon but to the invitation to unpack God’s promise for 2009 with you....I can’t wait!

With great anticipation!

Pr. David C. Lechelt



We "Caught the Spirit" in 2008

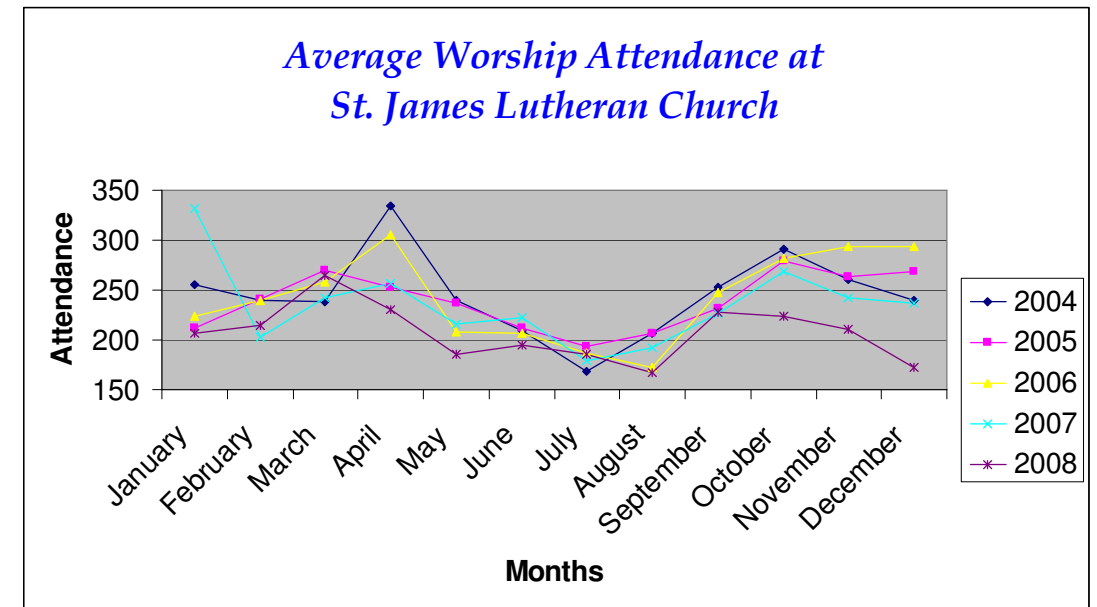


2008 Membership Statistics

Baptisms 23 Confirmed 6
 Weddings 9 Funerals 12

Membership numbers

Year	Baptized Members	Confirmed Members
2008	1428	1015
2007	1418	1024
2006	1422	1031
2005	1452	1043
2004	1445	1043





Reaching out into the Community

Blood Drive

- St. James held three Memorial Blood Center blood drives in 2008.

Dinner At Your Door

- In 2008, St. James was asked to put an additional route on the Dinner at Your Door schedule. We now furnish nine drivers per month, each with their own route at two Dinner At Your Door sites, which are Crystal Community Center and North Memorial Hospital. In a nutshell, we furnish 27 drivers who spend 174 hours delivering 864 hot meals per year.
- This year, we had drivers who were willing to be regular drivers, which means they drive the same route every month all year long. Thanks to all who participate in this challenge and are willing to give of their time to help those in need. Our service hours at DAYD are greatly appreciated by the recipients.

Global Health Ministries

- A crew from St. James volunteered every Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. (with stops for coffee and lunch of course) at Global Health Ministries. They sorted, packaged and took inventory of the medical supplies.
- In 2008, Global Health Ministries donated 40 surplus pallets of medical supplies to Medical Teams International, 22 pallets to Operation Blessing International and 12 pallets to Globe Aid Network.
- Ten of their big shipments of 40 and 20 foot sea containers have gone to Cameroon, Tanzania, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, India and Madagascar.

Loaves & Fishes

- St. James in partnership with House of Hope Lutheran, has served at River of Life Lutheran Church (22nd & Fremont Ave N) since 1984. The clientele enjoys a hot meal served with respectful and caring hands.
- From January to November 2008, St. James made and served 1,847 individual meals. The total cost was \$1,830.61, at 99 cents per meal.
- There are nine other Loaves & Fishes sites. The number of individuals has risen 15% at all the serving sites in 2008.

Car Care Saturday

- We continue to serve our neighbors by providing oil changes and maintenance checks for their vehicles. In both April and October, we serviced the vehicles of more than 30 families in need. Some return every six months and have become friends, while others find themselves newly on hard times. The people whom we help are so grateful; it makes Car Care a wonderful ministry.



Power of One

- Seventeen volunteers have partnered with teachers at Forest Elementary, to help children with reading, math, library duties or anything else the teachers need during the week. Principal Connie Grumdahl, Gail Svor and the staff at Forest continue to be impressed by and deeply grateful for our partnership with their school.

Lutefisk Dinner

- A whopping 470 people enjoyed the Annual Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner in November. The volunteers are amazing as they started preparations in October. Jerry Sultvedt was once again hard pressed to turn any “Lutefisk Lover” away. Everyone had a great time!

Street Dance

- What fun for everyone at the second Annual Street dance in September! It was a beautiful night and well attended by many visitors as well as St. James’ members.
- Ron and Carol Olson coordinated the food, which was a major hit. Laughter filled the air at the bingo table. Volunteers donated their time, talents, prizes and baskets.
- Plans call for a Street Dance in 2009 – tentatively on September 11, so mark your calendars. Invite your friends and neighbors and plan to be there!

Ebenezer Auxiliary

- Fund raising is a major goal for the Ebenezer Auxiliary. During the past year, the Auxiliary has been a sponsor for a Salad Luncheon, Ice Cream Social, Gifts of Love at Christmas, Operation Love for Valentine’s Day and a Waffle Breakfast. Hands and Hearts Estate Sales and the Ebenezer Hall Gift Shop are also sources of funding.
- There is always a need for volunteers. The support of St. James’ members is appreciated.
- The mission of the Ebenezer Society is to support older adults and to help make their lives more independent, meaningful and secure.

NEAR

- NEAR stands for Northwest Suburban Emergency Assistance Response. In 2008, NEAR served an average of 253 families a month. From January through October 2008, a total of 9,099 individual meals were distributed. There have been an average of 10 new clients a week during 2008.
- NEAR distributes food to families once a month. Extra boxes of food are given for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Easter baskets are given to children. School supplies were supplied to 388 students in August. Deliveries were also made to handicapped clients.

Worship at St. James

Altar Guild

- In 2008, the Altar Guild ordered new albs for assisting ministers and communion assistants, bought new green paraments for the altar, lectern and pulpit, new “fair linen” tablecloth for the altar, had the altar painted to complement the new paraments, and researched and recommended to the Lillebo family the new Eternal Light they recently donated in memory of Rudy Lillebo.
- Pastor David has even given the Altar Guild credit for training him!

Worship Assistant

- On a consistent basis, there are more than 30 people who serve as communion assistants, more than 35 who serve as lecturers, 12 who serve as assisting ministers, three as sacristans and nine as regular greeters.
- A heart-felt thank you to everyone who is so willing to take an active part in the hospitality and worship of St. James.

Nursery

- Lauren Skalicky took over for Donalee Eggleston as Nursery Coordinator in June of 2008.
- With a generous donation, new storage bins were purchased to hold all the toys.



“O come, let us worship and
bow down, let us kneel before
the Lord, our Maker!”
Psalm 95:6

The Sound of Music at St. James

Ringin' Praise, St. James' Handbell Choir

- The dedicated ringers had a busy year in 2008. In addition to providing special music and/or accompanying the choir and hymns at the 8:30 a.m. worship service at least once a month, January–May and September–December, Ringin' Praise participated in the annual April Spring Ring concert at Elim Lutheran in Robbinsdale. (A CD was made of this year's entertaining concert- check out the copy in the library.)
- Also, the handbells were kept busy getting acquainted with more people: they were delighted to have many hands help ring all three octaves in the spring; the talented middle-schoolers gave bell ringing a try and performed for the Ash Wednesday service; and during the summer, a few adventurous folks checked out the many ways to ring a bell!



Choir

- The St. James choir had many wonderful contributions in 2008, sometimes even joining the bells to provide special music for worship. We thank them for their leadership.
- The choir grew in size this past year, but is always looking for more voices.



Goodbye to The Inversions Praise Band

- St. James said good-bye to *The Inversions* Praise Band in August 2008. The group will be missed.

Welcome Gary Heil, New Song Worship Leader

- Gary Heil is the new worship leader at the *New Song* worship service (11:00 a.m.). He came to St. James from a twelve piece group at St. Peters in Northfield. He does not consider himself a singer, but has grown into fellowship and joy since coming to St. James.
- Gary feels that St. James is “a warm and friendly place and I've gotten to meet and know some very special people. I'm still looking for musicians and singers, and it's a slow process, but I would encourage anyone who has music to share in praise to God, to contact me at heil_gary@yahoo.com.”



Faith Formation: Family Ministry

Little Lambs & Sunday School

- What a year! Currently, there are 12 children ages two and under enrolled in the Little Lambs class, which takes place in the nursery. Parents and children attend together, learning a story which corresponds with each letter of the alphabet.
- Downstairs in the Sunday School classrooms, children ages three through 4th grade are studying what it means to live in community. During the fall months, 5th graders learned some of the major stories and lessons of the Old Testament. Overall, 45 children are enrolled in Sunday School, and it is a blessing and honor to pass faith along to the children of St. James!

Cross + Generational Sunday School/Outreach

- This year, the name “Family Sunday School” was changed to “Cross+Generational” to be more inclusive and welcoming to those who don't have children in Sunday School any longer, or may not necessarily come to church with a family. These events were a huge success and helped the children understand more about St. James' Outreach Partners.

Day Camps

- Camp Creation was the theme of this year's day camps 34 children. They learned about a different part of the creation story each day, beginning with God creating light and dark. They heard the creation story, as well as other stories, learned songs, played games, made different kinds of snacks and crafts, and had a blast! St. James hosted two different weeks of day camp; a week in June for children ages four through 2nd grade, and a week in July for children in 3rd grade through 5th grade. Many thanks go to the teachers who made those two weeks possible in June and July.

Special Event: Faith 24-7, Taking Faith Outside the Walls of St. James

- Marilyn Sharpe, a speaker and leader with the Youth and Family Institute in Minneapolis was invited to St. James for an afternoon with all who are 'faith parents' to children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, parents and Godparents all joined to hear Marilyn share stories of how to pass faith along to the children in their lives. Many great ideas and conversations flowed through the afternoon. This event was sponsored by the Children's Endowment Fund.

Children's Christmas Program

- “The Mouse's Tale” was the name of the program the children performed for family, friends and the congregation this past December. They told the story of Christ's birth through the animals that were in the stable that night (including a pair of rapping camels!). Many adults were involved in making this happen. Thanks go to many volunteers for all of the ideas and creativity that went into this program. We are still hearing comments about how fantastic this program was, and hope that the Christmas programs in the future will be just as wonderful!

Other Highlights of 2008

- Mid-winter Beach Bash at the Maple Grove Community Center in February.
- First communion received by eleven 5th graders in March.
- Outdoor movies on the lawn during the summer.
- Bibles presented to six 3rd graders in September.

Faith Formation: Middle School Youth

Confirmation

- Fall Confirmation 2008 kicked off with a really, really fun retreat at Luther Park in Danbury, Wisconsin. The theme of the retreat was “Who Am I?? The campfire along Lake 26, the games and sharing, cabin fun and conversation in the car were all very memorable!
- Baptism and Holy Communion were the fall focus with teaching times on Baptism & the Family of Faith, Jesus as the Passover Lamb, and “Word, Wine, and Bread” give God’s life to our life.
- On November 5, St. James confirmation youth gathered with 3,000 others from Minneapolis and St. Paul at the Minneapolis Convention Center around the invitation to recognize God’s call to reach out to homeless youth of the metro area.
- In December, Confirmation families met with Pastor David around questions of what is working well and what could work better for the confirmation journey. Out of that meeting, it was decided to have one servant event and one fun event each month for students and their families. The first event was Christmas caroling at local nursing homes and at homes of some of St James’ senior members. Even though the weather wasn’t good, the turnout was fantastic and it was a very uplifting evening for everyone.



Pizza, Pizza!

- The annual pizza sales in February were a huge hit again this year. It is such a treat for the congregation to get delicious hand-made pizzas and a great fundraiser for the youth (middle school and senior high).

Sunday School

- During the middle school retreat in early fall, the youth spoke up and asked for space to meet on Sunday mornings. The decision was made that the choir room would be their new home. Pastor Michelene donated the couch from her office to make the room more homey. The kids can now come together each Sunday, relax, visit, and share their ups and downs. Their first major activity was distributing flyers to the neighborhood in preparation for collecting food for the NEAR food drive which they completed the following week. They had a great time breaking into teams and walking the neighborhood. They also made cookies one Sunday morning which were shared with the congregation.
- Everything they do is being built around practical life lessons such as compassion, manners, cleanliness, respect, homework, reaching out to others in need, and how this relates to what Jesus taught. It is based on what Jesus would do, or what Jesus would say. Life is a gift from God and everyone is expected to enjoy life as well as share talents in order to have a positive impact on the world, and to take care of this gift of life. Plans are to discuss current events, various school situations, peer pressure, etc. All of the discussion will be in relation to what Jesus is asking us to do, while keeping in mind the Golden Rule.

Lois Selle & Becki Smith

Funeral Lunches

- Lunches were provided following fourteen funerals as a form of hospitality to families in time of need during 2008.

Meet & Eat

- Meet & Eat continued to be a huge success in 2008. Thanks to Ron & Carol Olson for preparing delicious meals each Wednesday evening.
- A special thanks goes to Marlene McGuire for helping set up Wold Hall each week.

Office Helpers

- A wonderful group of helpers gathered each Friday morning to assemble a total of 15,770 bulletins during 2008. This group also gladly stapled the NEAR flyers to the grocery bags, assembled the Annual Report and funeral bulletins, along with anything else that was asked of them.
- A total of 5,640 Herald newsletters were assembled and driven to the bulk mail center in Minneapolis during 2008.
- Nancy Lohmann proofread the bulletins and Pews News each week and the Herald once each month.
- Thanks to everyone who helped make St. James run smoothly in 2008. We couldn’t do it without you!



Holiday Craft Fair

- Over 40 local artists gathered at St. James in November to sell their hand-made items. The proceeds from the sale of vendor spaces and concessions goes to the Senior High Mission Trip Fund. Many of St. James’ members and others from the community found treasures to take home with them.
- This event will surely make another appearance in 2009.



Property Committee Accomplishments

- The Lee Warmbo Memorial Rose Garden got a face lift.
- New windows were put in the Montessorri classroom.
- New air conditioners were purchased for the offices.
- An electric eternal candle was installed in the worship center.
- New handrails were installed in the stairway downstairs and up to the choir loft.

Celebrating St. James

Marketing Team

- The marketing team was formed in April 2008. Their focus will be to help groups market their events, as well as marketing for St. James as a whole.
- St. James took the opportunity to connect with members in another way by creating a group page on the social networking website Facebook. The group now has 36 members, made up of prospective, current and former members of St. James. This group now shares photos and event information. You'd be surprised at the age span of the members of the St. James Lutheran Church -Crystal, MN group.
- Their major projects in 2008 included: the Street Dance, looking at options for a new outdoor sign, ads in local papers, "Catch the Spirit" campaign in the fall which included sweatshirt sales, and preparing for the Whiz Bang & Crystal Frolic parades.

Archives

- This fall the committee had an original painting titled "Madagascar" framed. It was given to the Missionary committee and members of St. James as a thank you from Patricia Bentsen for sponsoring her while she served as a missionary nurse in Madagascar.
- The Archives room was dusted and scrubbed on Work Day and is now open to anyone with a legitimate purpose.

Library

- The St. James library began 2008 with an extensive display of Laura Ingalls Wilder artifacts, followed throughout the spring and fall with collections of: salt & pepper shakers, rocks, bells, birds and bird houses, Les Lamb's paintings and woodworking projects, Lefton Birthday Angels, cultural heritage items, elephants, old tools, old books, campaign buttons, Halloween figurines, baseball memorabilia, handmade and antique quilts, Armed Forces veterans' souvenirs and memories.
- The library also collected and distributed free books to the parents and children of the participants of Car Care twice in 2008.
- Board members attended Twin City area library workshops for new ideas for library promotion.
- The Summer Reading Club theme was "Hit a Home Run for Reading." Nine children successfully completed the program and earned gift cards to Half Price Books.
- Sunday School classes came for story time and to check out books. Middle school students were a great addition this fall as volunteer readers.
- The library staff continued to add new books to the collection, especially for men. The DVD collection was also enlarged.

Faith Formation: Senior High

2008 was a great year for the youth at St. James. We had many wonderful events, a couple of milestones and of course an excellent summer adventure.

Along with the normal youth events like Game Works, Grand Slam, Youth Picnic and Confirmation Banquet, we had a few more memorable moments. ValleyScare this year had the largest turnout I have ever had at St. James with 54 people going that frightful Friday night.

We had a box-a-thon early in 2008, where the youth took pledges on how long they could stay inside their boxes. The youth were very creative in decorating and creating tunnels between each person's "box home."

There was also the opportunity to help raise funds for the mission trip by working at the Crystal VFW's spaghetti dinners. Many youth took advantage and earned money for their trip.

The Easter Brunch was also a fundraiser for the Youth Mission Trip. The youth helped prepare, serve and clean up Easter morning. It was a great opportunity for the congregation to celebrate Easter with a meal together, and for the youth to help pay for their trip to Colorado.

We celebrated with our 9th Grade Confirmands (Mitchell Dexter, Nicole Enger, Jacob Hansen, Rachel Stoltzmann, and Sebastian Wilson) as they affirmed their baptism and received God's confirming blessing of faith on Reformation Sunday.

Another milestone this year was the return of the Lock-In. 11 youth and 2 adults locked themselves in for a fun filled night of games and junk food. Fun was had by all and we didn't even break anything.

The youth are also very excited about the opportunity to have a "Youth Room" and have been meticulously planning the décor. We hope to be getting some paint on the walls soon.

Over the course of 2008 the youth have also participated in several meals; whether it be a fundraiser, appreciation brunch, Easter breakfast or Lutefisk dinner, they always enjoy the opportunity to interact with all the generations at St. James.

Finally I would like to talk about the trip to Hillside, Colorado. Out of all my travels, trips, conventions and outings I have had over the past 17 years with youth, this was the most rewarding trip I have ever taken. The personal growth that all 19 of us had was like none I have ever seen. The challenges we overcame made every single one of us stronger, more compassionate, more independent, more a team player, more observant, more self-reliant and of course more aware of God and his world.

Again 2008 was a memorable year for the youth of St. James and we look forward to 2009 being equally rewarding.

Ryan Walesch



Faith Formation: Adults

Mary Circle

- This year the Mary Circle gave back to the community by their monthly giving to the NEAR food-shelf and other local services. They also contributed to Operation Bootstrap Africa to further the high school education of girls in Tanzania.
- On Dec. 6, they hosted the St. James Women's Christmas Brunch, which was a success as always.
- They were fortunate to have Pastor Phil and later in the year Pastor David lead them in Bible study.
- The mission of Mary Circle is the commitment to Bible study and service to the community. The members meet each month for Bible study and fellowship. They invite anyone who is interested to join Mary Circle.

Rebecca Circle

- Pastors led a Bible study each month with an overview of the books of the Bible with an emphasis on how history and context apply to life today.
- The Rebecca Circle hosted a Ladies' Spring Salad Luncheon, with the theme "Bloom Where You Are Planted" in April. Guest speaker, Mary Malone, shared her gardening knowledge with all in attendance.

Adult Education

- Adult Education Sundays at St. James is an ongoing invitation to dig into God's Word, ask the tough questions of faith and our world today, and engage the voices of the church and our present culture.
- Bible Study in 2008 included an in-depth reflection upon the biblical foundations of our stewardship of all God has given for our life together and the life of the world. We also delved into the "deep, deep blue of Advent" and we previewed the ELCA Book of Faith initiative.
- We welcomed wonderful guest speakers who inspired and engaged us. They included Rev. Susan Tjornehoj, deployed ELCA staff for New Mission Development, Terri Endres, Director of Making a World of Difference, Mpls. Area Synod, and Rev. Grady St. Denis, Office of Church Relations, Gustavus Adolphus College. The conversation that was started with Terri Endres was so invigorating that we have invited her back to St. James on March 1.
- Study of new books that have a clear spiritual impact are also surveyed and discussed. The Oprah sponsored Eckhart Tolle book *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* engendered a closer look at the world's spiritual hunger, the teachings of Jesus, and the role of the church today.

Fellowship, Prayer & Support

Over 55

- St. James congregational members who are 55 years "young" meet the fourth Monday of each month unless the program needs a different day. The members gather for the fellowship, programs, entertainment, trips, potlucks, picnics, or plays.
- Individual members help plan the monthly programs. The annual dues are \$5 per person. The entire group votes on how to use the money, which is then donated to a worthy cause within the church or out in the community. New members are always welcome.

Book Club

- The Page Turners Book Club read 12 amazing books in 2008. Imagine... traveling back in time for new insight into the story of Jacob and his wives and daughter Dinah ("The Red Tent"); reliving the horror of the holocaust through the friendship of two nine-year-old boys ("The Boy in the Striped Pajamas"); spending time with an inner city teacher and her "unteachable" students as they learn tolerance and journey on a life-changing odyssey ("The Freedom Writers Diary"); laugh with the delightful Agatha as she travels to Ireland to meet a pen pal love interest ("A Green Journey"); discuss challenges to traditional Christian ideas ("Jesus for the Nonreligious"); spend time with a traveling circus train and its star elephant during the Great Depression ("Water for Elephants"); and travel to Russia with a Finnish family who get caught up in the Socialist fervor of the 1930s ("The Darkest Evening")... just to mention a few.
- They meet the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the books.

Quilting

- **Twice a month, the quilters gathered to make quilts for overseas and local charities. More than 200 large quilts and baby quilts were made, in addition to many lap robes for hospice and nursing homes.**
- **Quilts are for sale at any time by contacting the church office. Proceeds go toward buying supplies for more quilts.**
- Fabric is available for volunteers to use to sew and donate tops, which the quilters will complete and distribute. Donations of fabric, yarn, sheets (new and used), blankets and antique satin drapes are welcome.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

- Three prayer shawls were distributed during 2008 to members who were in need of prayers.