

To everyone at St. James:

The first chapter of Philippians reads, "I thank my God every time I think of you." This verse is already very true to my experience of St. James. I am grateful to being called as Rector of St. James and look forward to getting to know all of you.

The Holy Spirit moves powerfully in our lives as Christians. I learned about St. James when I was on pilgrimage in Jerusalem earlier this year and the Rev. Canon Mary June Nestler told me about a faithful parish with a strong future. I want to share my gratitude to the Search Committee, Vestry, and the Diocese of Utah, for bringing our lives together.

I recently served a parish on the Mid-Coast of Maine and have also served as a hospital chaplain so I bring a strong commitment to pastoral care to parish life.

Liturgy and Christian education are important to support our relationships with God and one another and how we share faith in the world around us.

Social justice and welcoming people into the life of faith is another strong commitment, which was formed in part by the years that I worked for the Episcopal Caring Response to AIDS with the pediatric program in Washington, DC in the late 1980s.

I am single, moving to Utah with two cats, and have a deep commitment to parishioners of all ages and family backgrounds. This is informed by my family background as the oldest of seven, with 20 nieces and nephews, and 43 first cousins. I love being in a parish that welcomes all to the table. St. James has been doing this for years and I look forward to sharing in the spiritual path with you.

I am drawn to many aspects of St. James, including how the church was designed with low windows so the children could see the outside world, a commitment to Christian education for all ages, and parishioner support of the garden for the food bank.

It's exciting to consider how the ministry of Jesus will work through us together in the years ahead. It will be great to meet you very soon.

With peace and blessings,

Father Christopher Szarke