

Saint James Hackettstown Profile
April 2018

If you ask the parishioners at St. James' what our passion is, the short answer is our motto, "We Feed People." By that we mean, we literally feed people food. We have a monthly family breakfast that has become a great tradition, we host parish dinners for fellowship occasions, our Sunday school packs holiday grocery bags for families in need, and we have a well-organized summer Backpack Program that provides supplemental nutrition for food-insecure school aged children in Hackettstown. But beyond the literal meaning of feeding people, we seek to satisfy the spiritual needs of our parish family and beyond. We feed seniors with attention, respect and frequent services that we hold at two local area senior living centers. We seek to become a spiritual source of caring for seniors in our area. We feed a harried and overly busy population around us in other ways too, by offering a place of simple acceptance and refuge, of supplying precious hope and heartfelt prayer to all we meet.

St. James' Church was incorporated as a parish on December 19, 1858. Our history is recorded on our webpage: <http://www.stjameshackettstown.org/History/index.htm>. Please follow this link to read about how a storm destroyed our bell tower, how we became a theater for a period of time before being reconsecrated as a church in 1900 under the leadership of Father William Mitchum.

We are a congregation located in Hackettstown, NJ. Do you know Hackettstown? It is a small town in Northwest NJ, a bit more than hour long commute into NYC, but with many local businesses, shops, and home to Centenary University. Quoting a local realtor "It has a small town feel with local shops and restaurants on Main St. and some beautiful Victorian homes around the college area. There are two elementary schools and a Blue Ribbon Award middle school. The high school serves Hackettstown and three neighboring townships. It is also home for the Hackettstown Regional Medical Center. For commuters there is a Martz bus service to NYC and a train service either to Hoboken or Penn Station via Midtown Direct. By road, Hackettstown itself is located only a few miles off exit 19 of Interstate 80."

We face the general decline of church attendance in our country – in our world – with aplomb and optimism. We have moved past a general air of defeat and assimilated that we ARE Christ's hands on earth, whether we are 50 on a Sunday or 250 on a Sunday, every one of us counts. Our commitment to our motto of feeding people is made possible by opening our hearts and sharing the abundance of what we have and who we are.

We do have a dream. We hope and plan to become a spiritual source of caring for seniors in this area. Nearby we have the House of the Good Shepherd and Heath Village, two centers where we see a possible chaplaincy for our clergy in the 3-5 year time frame. We are keeping careful watch for an opening in either and both of these places for a chaplain, and both centers know that this is our plan!

That is part of what we have in our visioning. As we think about our new priest, we also see that we could convert our once-rectory-now-office-space back into a spacious rectory (by moving out of it). This rectory, adjacent to the church, is a beautiful living space, centrally located one block from the Main Street and yet with plenty of privacy and space. If we combine this rectory with the part-time chaplaincies at Good Shepherd and Heath Village, we see the reality of our dream taking shape.

To expand on this further, we understand that our new priest who is called to partner with us on this vision at St. James will likely need another source of income. That is because financially right now we are only able to offer part-time work / pay as our priest. We hasten to add, however, that we have a

100% balanced budget at this level of commitment; our pledges are paying for our expenses, and we have also paid down a mortgage from an ambitious, past expansion from \$800,000 to a reasonable \$130,000. We are proud of our ability to face our financial difficulties as well as we have, and we know we are on solid ground going forward.

That past expansion left us with a beautifully appointed parish complex, Snyder Hall. We have a meeting space that many organizations use, such as North Porch, Joseph Quinlan Bereavement Center and Literacy Volunteers and an additional congregation that meets two nights per week. There is a large space that is still waiting to be made into offices beneath the meeting space. We provide a columbarium in our Lady's Chapel as a final resting place for our congregation. Our church has a capacity of 100 and attendance on a Sunday is approximately 41.

We are eager for a priest who might share this dream in partnership with us, and particularly provide us the stability that we have known and enjoyed from our past Rectors. We would like that stability again! Our ideal priest would be able to concentrate on worship, spiritual growth, and our goal of a broad senior ministry.

Of course, like any parish in this modern era, we see a need for congregation growth and development of programs for youth. Realistically we understand that with part-time funding, we, the parishioners, need to fill the inevitable gaps in the day to day administration of our parish. We are already doing that with the help of a strong administrative staff. Also with the help of our last priest we have grown in ministry capability, and we are confident that with guidance we will continue to flourish.