

An Interview with Parishioner Lee Thompson



1. Why don't you start by telling me a little bit about yourself? How did you first hear about/come to Saint James'? How many years have you been a parishioner?

Every summer my sister and I visited our grandparents who had a farm in Warrenton where the Hampton Inn, Piedmont Family Practice, and townhouses are now. Blackwell at that time was a one-lane dirt road, there was no eastern by-pass, and Alexandria Pike went all the way to Highway 29. Granddaddy would bring us to services at Saint James', and we got to know many people.

In 1991, I returned to live here but attended another Episcopal church. After many years, I wanted a closer, more convenient church. Saint James' was not only a natural selection but also many good things were being said about the minister, the growing school, and the diverse and vibrant congregation. I have been attending regularly since 2013.

2. What set Saint James' apart? What are its biggest strengths? Tell me about a particular program that has stood out for you.

Saint James' was very fortunate to bring Father Ben and his family to Warrenton. He is young, enthusiastic, and supportive of the various outreach programs. The members are a diverse group each with their special talents and eagerness to give of their time and energy to the multiple projects. Café is a big hit because it brings people from both services together.

I began attending the Women's Study Group on Tuesday morning, which at that time was led by the Reverend Lyn Youll-Marshall, another marvelous asset, and which has continued with the help of Ninie Laing and Linda Davidson. The studies have increased my knowledge of the Bible, put the Bible into historical context, and given the attendees a chance to express their opinions openly.

3. Until you had an opportunity to visit the school, had you had much interaction with SJES? How would you describe the atmosphere in SJES? What are the schools biggest successes and biggest challenges?

Just recently, I had the good fortune to be one of the docents when a kindergarten and first grade class along with teachers and parents came to Weston Farmstead in Casanova for a tour. I was impressed by their politeness, inquisitiveness and respect for property. I later saw some of the students in the parish hall. They remembered me and answered a few questions about what they had learned.

SJES has successfully grown in size year by year through the skill of Stacey Irvin, Head of School, and its teachers and most likely parents and volunteers. The interaction the children have with Father Ben is an important asset. This success has not been without its challenges.

What stood out to me were the logistical arrangements needed to schedule the various classes on various days using some rooms for two different classes on the same day.

4. What do you think about the CONNECTED Capital Campaign? Why did you decide to give? What do you hope your gift will accomplish?

I believe it is important for the school and church to stay together and interact on a daily basis. Obviously the school needs more classrooms. Also obvious is the parishioners' need for more useable space for the flower and altar guilds, vesting and choir rooms, larger and more modern bathrooms, and handicap accessibility. Having everything on the wish list would be far too expensive at this point, but I see how cramped it can be and wanted to be involved and make a difference, however small, to the future of this parish.

5. Where does your philanthropic spirit come from?

We do not live in our own little worlds but interact with others on a daily basis. Stewardship using our time and talents is not only beneficial to others, but gives us a feeling of being valued, worthwhile, and a sense of accomplishment.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The only other thing I have to add is a financial tip that some may find useful when they consider donating to the CONNECTED Capital Campaign. When considering my donation, I knew that appreciated stock could be donated directly to a non-profit without the donor paying capital gains. I wanted to find out whether this same method could be used with an IRA donation. After investigation, I learned a direct donation from an IRA is only possible when you reach 70 ½ and begin the required minimum distributions. The maximum amount of the RMD that can be donated is \$100,000.00. Any amount up to that will not be counted as income, will not be taxed, and will not put you in a higher tax bracket. Of course, if you itemize deductions, you cannot also claim the gift. This method will be helpful to me and might be good news for others.

**THANK YOU, LEE, FOR TELLING US ABOUT YOURSELF AND
FOR KEEPING US CONNECTED!**