

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

### **Pulpit Notes**

Brothers and Sisters:

On Saturday, January 23, the churches of Hyde Park will hold a Service of Prayer for Christian Unity. It is an important act of worship for the ecumenical community.

Sadly, there is no such unity even within the Anglican Communion. Just hours ago, it was announced that The Episcopal Church was suspended for a period of three years. To be precise, this does not mean that we are suspended from the Anglican Communion. It means is that the primates of the communion have voted to no longer allow the Episcopal Church to represent the communion in interfaith and ecumenical bodies, and that our church will no longer have a vote in intra-communion decisions.

Or, as I prefer to put it, we have been exiled.

Legally speaking, the primates do not have authority to do this. Each of them is only an authority within their own autonomous church. The Anglican Consultative Counsel is the organization with that authority. However, their voices will be heard, and their condemnation will cast a pall over our participation in the Communion. We are, if not legally then certainly emotionally, exiled.

The catalyst for this exile is, naturally, the issue of homosexuality. Our church's decision to allow same-sex marriage was the last straw. The primates of the Anglican Communion were gathered in England for a semi-annual primates meeting, but global south bishops were loathe to share space with us. The Archbishop of Uganda Stanley Ntagali even walked out on the meeting.

In the end, they chose to suspend our church until we should "repent". They have threatened to suspend the Anglican Church of Canada as well, though they have chosen to wait awhile first.

So, what does this mean to us? Not much.

Don't get me wrong - it is terribly sad to be shunned. But scripture is replete with instances of people heeding the call of God only to be exiled or worse for their actions. Just think of the Prophet Elijah.

And to make sure I am being clear, I believe that the Episcopal Church's is the godly stance.

I believe these primates, who claim we have unilaterally changed doctrine, have lost sight of what makes a Christian. To claim that changing one's understanding of who is allowed to

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

marry is the same as changing church doctrine is odd to say the least and certainly out of focus. Our faith is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God - not on broadening access to a sacrament. You will find nothing about it in the Nicene Creed. Or in Jesus' words.

This "suspension" will have very little impact on us, as I say, for several reasons. First, each member of the Anglican Communion is an autonomous church. Not even Nigeria was suspended in the days when it allowed polygamy or when its bishop argued that prison and perhaps execution was the right remedy for gays.

This somewhat reminds me of my recent Fireside Chat on slavery in New York, and the Church's role in it. Our church, back in those days, was so bent on "unity" above all else, that we could not stand up for slaves for fear of upsetting those who supported and profited from slavery. We gave up our prophetic role of standing up for the disenfranchised and powerless in favor of not rocking the boat. It took us a very long time to learn the lesson that to stand up against prejudice and injustice will inevitably lead to a backlash, but to not stand up is to turn our back on Christ's own.

Today, it is different. We have made decisions for our church only, not for anyone else's. We have agreed as a denomination that the Gospel calls us to fully welcome all God's children, and that this includes same sex couples who seek to live in God-focused love. I pray we will not forget the lessons of the past, will not grasp for an empty unity, but will keep following the one who leads us - all of us - to toward God's all-embracing love.

We may have been rejected by a portion of our communion (two African churches tried to have us ejected from the communion altogether), but our church itself is stronger than it has been in years. Our souls face toward the risen Christ who leads us fearlessly, without anger or resentment, in the direction of the Kingdom of God.

It is my belief that other churches will follow - and sooner rather than later. I suspect the Anglican Church of Canada, which is set to address same sex marriage at its next general synod, will act bravely. The Scottish Episcopal Church has already undertaken canonical changes that could allow same sex marriage as early as 2017. I suspect the Anglican Church of New Zealand will lead the way in that part of the world. And I would not be terribly surprised if the Church of England itself - a conservative church to be sure - took a rather hesitant step toward marriage equality before very long.

In the end, maybe in another fifty years or so if we're lucky, it will seem strange that the church - all the church - ever rejected gays and lesbians.

There is no way to say that this suspension means nothing. It won't affect our day-to-day operations. It won't affect our finances (except inasmuch as we may pay less toward our

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

international assessment). It won't affect our mission to preach and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world as we meet it.

But it does affect our standing in the world and our ability to have those whom we evangelize take us seriously. People may look at us and think, "What a mess. They don't even get along." And it does affect is our internal relations. While some here may say, "Who needs the rest of the communion?" I feel that we are better when we reach beyond our own little worlds, beyond our comfort zones, and live with each other as we find each other. All are God's children including those with whom we vehemently disagree.

So, how can you and I - just average Episcopalians - address this? First, we can praise God who gives us life and a desire to love. Second, we can work for unity in our own way. We can start NEXT SATURDAY, by attending the Service for Christian Unity. That's **Saturday, January 23, at 5:00 PM at St. James' Chapel**. Enjoy the love of God and understand that another person's (or group's) rejection of us does not equal God's rejection. We walk hand in hand with Christ today, tomorrow, and forever.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

### **The News of the Church**

**Men's Breakfast:** The January breakfast is on **January 23 at 8:00 AM** and will be at the parish hall kitchen for a clean-up day. Note: this is not our normal third Saturday of the month. We'll return to that schedule in February.

**Lenten Meditations:** The Sign-up sheet for Lenten Meditations is up! You can sign up for your meditation(s) as soon as you want - and in fact, the sooner the better. We have a very short window to write meditations this year because Lent starts on February 10! But if everyone takes just one or two brief meditations, it won't take long to write yours!

**St. Andrew's Deconsecration:** As you know, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Poughkeepsie has closed. **This Sunday, January 17** at 4:00 PM, Bishop Dietsche will celebrate the eucharist there one last time then deconsecrate the building so that it will no longer be a church. If you have ever had any relationship with the church, I encourage you to attend and support the people there who will now be looking for new parishes. I will be there.

**Trinity Institute:** The Annual Trinity Institute takes place this year from **January 21-23**. The Institute brings together some of Christianity's most powerful speakers. It is expensive and hard to get tickets, but this year, you can go via webcast at Christ the King Episcopal Church in Stone Ridge. You don't have to go to all days - you can attend any portion you want. However, you need to register by e-mailing your desire to attend, at [church@ctkstoneridge.org](mailto:church@ctkstoneridge.org). For more information, contact The Rev. Alison Quin, [alison@ctkstoneridge.org](mailto:alison@ctkstoneridge.org).

**Service of Prayer for Christian Unity:** Help us pray for unity within our faith. Join representatives from several different local churches as we pray together in an ecumenical service at St. James' Chapel. It's not a long service, but the impact can have a long, positive reach. The service is on **Saturday, January 23, at 5:00 PM**.

**Annual Meeting:** The Annual Meeting will be on **Sunday, January 24** this year, starting with voting and the Holy Eucharist at 9:00 AM. All members in good standing who are 18 or

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

over are eligible to vote. A member in good standing is a member who has been regular in worship and giving for the ministry of the church for the past year.

**Preparing for Death:** Back by popular demand, "Remember That You Are Dust." A few years ago, we held a class on preparing for death. It touched on the spirituality of it, legal ramifications, practical considerations at the funeral home, and how to plan your own (or anyone's) funeral. The classes are set to be Wednesday nights, **February 24, March 2, 9, and 16.** At the moment, the March 9 class's presenter is still TBD, but everything else is sewed up, and progress is being made for the 9th! A sign up sheet will be available at the Annual Meeting.

**PLEASE PLEDGE!** You received a pledge card back in November, and we thank you if you have filled out and returned your card already. However, many have not yet done so, and we need you! Whether you pledge a lot or a little, it is of vital importance that every household pledge. I would desperately love to see 100% of the parish pledging. Kids can pledge with a special children's pledge card - no amount is too small. The main thing is that each of us steps up and says, "I Want to Be Part of God's Life Here!"

**Youth Group to Special Olympics:** The Youth of St. James' will be volunteers on February 20 for the Special Olympics. Please cheer for them as they cheer on some very special athletes. If you have not signed up to be part of it but would like to, please contact Fr. Chuck as soon as possible.

Seed donation nominations: The Hyde Park Community Garden at St. James' received an email from the Hudson Valley Seed Library about this year's seed donation program. They were very kind and generous in donating seeds for the garden last year, which were planted with much success.

If you have time, please go to their website and nominate the Hyde Park Community Garden as a worthwhile place for them to donate seeds again. Just copy this long link and paste it into your browser:

[http://www.seedlibrary.org/donations?utm\\_source=Hudson+Valley+Seed+Library+E-Mail+List&utm\\_campaign=4c4def748f-2016+Membership+Announced&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bb3d09aa7e-4c4def748f-176656849](http://www.seedlibrary.org/donations?utm_source=Hudson+Valley+Seed+Library+E-Mail+List&utm_campaign=4c4def748f-2016+Membership+Announced&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bb3d09aa7e-4c4def748f-176656849)

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

Info you would need is:

Address: 4526 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538

My contact info: Deborah.belding@yahoo.com

Cell # (845) 240-3194.

Non profit

Our two missions are:

1. Providing an area where volunteers grow and donate 100% of the harvest to the Hyde Park Food Pantry and Hyde Park Meals on Wheels.
2. A place where local residents can lease out their own plots for a nominal charge to grow their own vegetables and flowers.

**Shrove Tuesday / Ash Wednesday:** Looking ahead, the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper is coming! It is Tuesday, February 9 at 7:00 pm. We will have pancake decorating, a pancake race, and for dinner..... Pancakes!

The next day is Ash Wednesday. Imposition of Ashes will be offered at 6:30 AM, 10:00 AM, and 7:00 PM.

### **The News of the Diocese**

**Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:** Please pray for these diocesan ministries this week. If you want to check out the entire year's calendar for intercession, it's simple to find - go to <http://www.diocesen.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

17 Grace Church, Monroe

18 The Chaplaincy at Vassar College

19 The Diocesan Clergy Critical Needs Committee

20 St. Luke's School, Manhattan

21 On the feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle we pray for persistence in times of doubt.

22 The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine

23 The Leadership Development Commission

### **Praying For Peace Everywhere:**

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

#### **1. Candle for Peace**

Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,  
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

### 2. **The Mothers Prayer:**

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other  
to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

For our children crying in the night,

For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.

For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at  
these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have  
mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one  
for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,

May this be your will

And let us say Amen.

*Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum*  
*English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie*

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

**Please keep the following people in your prayers:**

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Barbara Knakal, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

### **Schedules**

*A Note about Schedules: The names you see below are those listed on their respective schedules. There are often times when, due to sickness or travel, substitutes are asked to fill in or trade positions. This will probably NOT be reflected in the lists below—so, if there is an inconsistency between what you see here and what you see on Sunday, that is alright.*

Birthdays (this past week):	Jodi Triola; Brian O'Leary; Craig M. Slegel; Joan Oetjen; Isabela Handman Quines
Birthdays (next week):	Alix Ciferri; Diane Plass; Beth Matranga; Thomas McNamara; Daniel Matranga
Acolytes:	January 17: Bryanna, Amelia and Braeden January 24: Jasmine, Jaylen and Bill
Altar Guild:	January 17: Team Number II January 24: Team Number II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 17: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch January 24: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	January 17: Wilma Tully and Nancy Montero January 24: Patty Caswell and Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	January 17: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher January 24: Andrew and Tanya Hall
Pledge Clerks:	January 17: Doug Belding and Dean Caswell

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

Parish Cycle of Prayer: January 24: Paul Littlefield and Janet Bright  
January 17: Susan Heupler; Ruth Hitchcock  
January 24: Barbara Hobens; Pat Holland

Coffee Hour Hosts: January 17: Dierdre Mae Micker, The Urban-Meads  
January 24: Annual Meeting

### **This Week's Lectionary**

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

NOTE: Audio recordings of some sermons are now available on St. James' website, [www.stjameshydepark.org](http://www.stjameshydepark.org) Look under "Worship"

Sermon Preached on  
First Sunday after the Epiphany  
(January 10, 2016)

8 a.m.: Of (Fire and) Water and Fire  
10 a.m.: Pageant

If I were to give this sermon a proper title, instead of "Of Water and Fire" I would call it "Of Fire and Water and Fire." Because this Gospel, together with the Acts of the Apostles, include all three.

Let's start with the Gospel. John the Baptist is doing his Baptist thing. He's baptizing, but first he's prophesying. He describes the terror of the coming age. The one who is to come after him will bring his winnowing fork and separate the wheat from the chaff and burn the chaff in unquenchable fire.

The fire he's talking about is a fire of destruction. It is a fire of death and loss. Those who are unworthy will burn eternally. It truly is terrifying. It's the fire before grace. Before mercy. Before baptism.

But then, there's the baptism of Christ itself. Now, notice that in Luke's gospel, Jesus and John do not speak to each other before the baptism. Not a word. For all we know, Jesus just slips in with the rest of the crowd, and John has no idea that he is The One.

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 15, 2016

It's only after the baptism that God speaks, saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

So, after all the talk of fire, we get the water of baptism. Why fire? Why water? Simple, both are essential to life, and both are deadly. As dangerous and destructive as fire is, it was essential to living, then as now. And water? Well, they lived in an arid climate. Water was a prize beyond compare. But in desert environments, water was tricky. They were prone to sudden, unpredictable storms. Flash floods were lethal.

Fire and Water. Life and Death. Perfect for baptism because baptism is death. In it, we renounce the ways of this world. We die to our former selves - our self-centeredness, our security, our contempt of and indifference toward others, our greed, and most especially a life in which God is not master. When we go down into the water, we kiss it all goodbye. We die to it. Joyfully.

When we rise up again from the depths, it is to a new life. A life of freedom from the worldly pursuits and passions, and above all its fears. We know our home and we know God's peace, and that is enough. That is our life.

But there is more. Because after that water, there is another fire. Not of destruction but of Spirit. In Acts, Peter and John encounter a group who have been baptized but do not know the Holy Spirit. When the disciples lay hands on them and they receive the Holy Spirit, life changes again.

For the record, do you remember what it looked like when the apostles received the Holy Spirit? That's right. Fire. It came down like fire.

Only the fire of the Holy Spirit illuminates. It burns within. It gives strength and passion and power and courage. With it, we can love bravely, unabashedly. We open our eyes and see - truly see - God, our neighbors, and ourselves.

This is what drives us to go beyond merely coming to church on Sunday - as important to our spiritual health as that is. This is what drives us to reach out beyond ourselves, beyond our comfort.

So, fire can be destruction, burning our own spiritual chaff away. Or in another image, burning the dross from the precious metal. It destroys what is worldly in us. Water, it kills our entire life without Christ. And fire again - igniting our hearts and souls with the Holy Spirit which powers us in Christ's mission.

My prayer for all of us then, "Never forget that water which gave you birth in Christ. And live in the passion of the fire." Amen.