

# St. James' E-pistle

## January 23, 2015

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

This Sunday is our Annual Meeting. How appropriate that it should be this week after hearing the State of the Union and the State of the State addresses.

All of the Congress members and the state legislators are required to be at these meetings. It's their job, and I assure you, if someone skips out, they will hear about it quickly.

You are not required by law or by public demand to attend the annual meeting, but I hope you'll be there. In a community of faith like ours, it is the members who make it work. It is you who give this place its life-blood. Ours is a relational faith, and it is only when we are together that we can fully be in relationship.

Besides, we have a good time together.

Seriously, the important work we do at each annual meeting can't be underestimated. We present the budget and answer questions about it (the budget committee worked hard to do it right, but you still should look at it).

We elect Vestry members - a task I fear we have not taken seriously enough in the past, but which is crucial. Without our Vestry, we can do little ministry. I've often said we should pray and then draw lots for Vestry members, leaving the decision up to the Holy Spirit, but short of that, I ask you to seriously pray and consider whether God is calling you to serve. As of today, we have three candidates for four positions (one of which is Junior Warden). I dream of the day when we have twice as many candidates as positions.

At the annual meeting, we open up the floor for any concerns the congregation may have. This is important and an opportunity that many have made use of in the past - to positive effect. Here is a place for you to have a voice in a new way.

At the annual meeting, we remember those who have died, celebrate those who have joined us, and bid farewell to those who are leaving for new adventures.

And of course, we celebrate various ministries at our parish, acknowledging some with the St. James' Medal for their ongoing involvement in those ministries. The medal, by the way, does not bestow special status. It is merely a way to say "Thank You" and to encourage the rest of us by their example in our work here.

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The Annual Meeting is so important that we attach it to our worship. On this day, they are inextricably joined - we worship our way into the work, and our work is part of our worship. That's why there is no dismissal until the very end of the meeting.

To emphasize this - and because our heating system is still being worked on - we will worship in the Parish Hall as we did a couple of weeks ago.

Please remember that the worship portion begins at 9:00 a.m.

I look forward with joy and anticipation to seeing you this Sunday. It has been a good year, and it is a gift to be able to share it with you!

In Christ,

Chuck+

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### 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."

- 25 On The Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle we pray that may we too may be open to the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 26 The Church of Christ the King, Stone Ridge
- 27 Ascension & Holy Trinity Church, West Park
- 28 St. Gregory's Church, Woodstock
- 29 The Bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of New York
- 30 On the feast day for Charles I of England and Scotland, we pray that may we be bold and courageous in our faith.
- 31 The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory

### **ALSO STILL PRAYING FOR ISRAEL AND GAZA:**

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

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.

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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*

**Donate to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem:** There is an ongoing appeal for donations to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and its Al Ahib Hospital in Gaza. Even after a month, even after the ceasefires, the situation in Gaza is desperate, and the hospital continues to see more patients than it can handle. The hospital is still very low on supplies and fuel to keep the lights on (and medical devices running).

If you would like to support the good and holy work of the Diocese of Jerusalem and its hospital, please send donations to:

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem  
25 Old King's Highway No., Suite 13  
Darien, CT 06820

Or online at [www.afedj.org](http://www.afedj.org)

Also, Episcopal Relief and Development is gathering funds for the hospital. Donate online at: [www.episcopalrelief.org](http://www.episcopalrelief.org) or mail to Episcopal Relief and Development, PO Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058 (memo line: Middle East Fund)

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### The News of the Church

**Men's Breakfast:** We had our first Men's Breakfast on Saturday, January 17, and it was a great start! Among other things, we've decided to meet for breakfast again - third Saturday of the month. So our next meeting will be February 21 at 8:00 a.m. All men 18 and over are invited!

**Announcement of Annual Meeting:** The Annual Meeting of St. James' Church will be held Sunday, January 25, 2015. The meeting will begin with a joint Eucharist at 9:00 AM. Voting will start at the beginning of the service and continue through to the start of the business portion of the meeting. According to New York state law and church canon, you must be at least 18 and a contributing member of record in order to be eligible to vote. At this meeting, we will elect new Vestry member and bestow the St. James' Medal.

**Indaba next week:** Our guests for the diocesan Inaba will be at St. James' January 31-February 1. Please make them feel welcome, especially as they worship with us Sunday. And please pray for the Indaba process, and our part in it in particular.

**Directory:** We are preparing to publish a new directory. Please give us your help by filling out the form attached. Once you save it, you can send it directly to the parish office

**Pledge Envelopes Have Arrived:** Pledge envelopes have arrived! Numbers are now being assigned (or reassigned), so they should be ready for distribution at the Annual Meeting. Yay!

**Fireside Chat:** Our next Fireside Chat will be on February 5, 7:00 at the Chapel. The theme of the lecture is: "FDR, the New Deal, and the Supreme Court."

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

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim and Sharyn Burke, Ashley Coyne, Kathleen Craft, Michael Day, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, John Golden, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Liz Handman, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Dalton K., Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Doris Mack, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Pat Rooney, John Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, Tracy, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Bobbie Wells, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

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## January 23, 2015

### **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):	Scarlett O'Leary, Joan Oetjen, Craig Slegel, Annalise Mungo, Isabela Quines and Bill Holland
Birthdays (next week):	Diane Parent, Beth Matranga, Daniel Matranga and Deirdre Mae Micker
Acolytes:	January 25: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Amelia McNamara February 1: Jasime Thatcher, Jaylen Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead
Altar Guild:	January 25: Team Number II February 1: Team Number III
8 a.m. Readers:	January 25: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris February 1: Angela Henry and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	January 25: Donna Beyer and Justin Bohlmann February 1: Patty Caswell and Deirdre Mae Micker
Ushers:	January 25: Andrew and Tonya Hall February 1: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	January 25: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell February 1: Deb and Doug Belding
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 25: Ruth Hitchcock, Pat Holland and Austen and Audrey Horne February 1: Pat Keefe, Jack, Suzann, Brian and Faith Kinne and Laura and Morgan Klnne
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 25: Annual Meeting and Continental Breakfast February 1: Boy Scout Troop

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### This Week's Lectionary

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Psalm 62:6-14

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

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  
Second Sunday after the Epiphany  
(January 18, 2015)

"Word Power"

Remember that old phrase, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"? That phrase appeared for the first time in print in 1862 in an African Methodist Episcopal Church journal and was meant to bolster the community against the onslaught of hate language being thrown at the church from all sides during the Civil War.

Over time, however, we have discovered what they probably knew even then - words can hurt you.

Words have power.

Remember last week's reading from Genesis? God spoke, and the world was. God spoke, and there was light. We were spoken into existence. The apostle John says that Christ is the Word. That's power. Why do you think we still have that phrase, "The pen is mightier than the sword?" Words have power - for good and for ill.

We saw this again over the past few weeks with the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in France, and the confusing, tumultuous aftermath. In case you missed it, a French publication called *Charlie Hebdo* - which regularly published inflammatory cartoons and articles that would probably bring lawsuits in this country - was attacked by al Qaida terrorists who killed several of the artists, and writers as well as police officers. The stated reason for the attack was the paper's repeated publication of images of Muhammad (and indeed really insulting ones by any standard).

In the ensuing weeks, all of France and many around the world took up a "Je suis Charlie" campaign - "I am Charlie," as a sign of solidarity for free speech. The paper then published its next issue with a large picture of a weeping Muhammad on the cover. It sold more than 5 million copies.

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You probably know all this. Heck, I mentioned it in last week's sermon.

What you may not know is that there has been a growing number of voices - including the pope - who have said, "Of course, there is no excuse whatsoever for violence in the face of insults, BUT, there is also responsibility with how we use our words."

When the pope said this, critics complained he was blaming the victim.

But I wonder.

Given that nobody should ever have to fear for their freedom, their families or their lives based on the words they say, do we nevertheless have a responsibility for what we say?

I think of the apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians today. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything."

We need to understand Paul a little bit. In our weekly bible study, we were discussing his letter to the Romans, and we noticed that one of Paul's big concerns in his letters is that believers be good citizens who do not rock the boat. Christianity was fragile, suspect and on the verge of collapse for decades. He felt that if a freedom brought unnecessary conflict, the Christian should rein in that freedom for the sake of the Gospel.

For example, in some Christian communities, they understood God's equality in all people including women, and women were given positions of authority. This got the surrounding community upset and opposed to Christianity - so Paul told the women to stand down. In another letter, he talks about eating food offered to idols. He says, it's okay unless it hurts people. No need to offend unnecessarily. In today's letter, he's addressing another type of freedom the Christian community believes it has gained through Christ - sexual freedom. Paul says, "Yes, you have the right to this, but it's not very helpful."

How much more true is this when it comes to intentionally harming another person with our words (or other forms of expression)?

Going back to the *Charlie Hebdo* incident for a moment, the New York Times was criticized for not publishing a picture of Muhammad (whatever he looks like). People said they were caving in to the terrorists, simply being afraid to stand up for freedom. But the Times shot back that it had always been against their policies to knowingly publish insulting materials. They would not be badgered into going against their principles.

Maybe at another level, this is what Paul was getting at. Why would we want to insult or unnecessarily offend? Why would we willingly choose to be rude, or to belittle someone, or to abuse them verbally? How does that advance the Kingdom of God? Sure, we have the freedom, the right to do so, but just because we can - does that mean we should?

The question for Christians is not whether the other person is too sensitive. The question for us is, "What's our intention?" Do we intend to harm the other person? To make them squirm, to make them feel miserable?

God won't kick us out of the family for doing so, but is that beneficial to the Kingdom of God? Will that bring someone - anyone - closer to God's love?



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Paul's general approach to being a Christian involves a certain willingness to give up some of the very freedoms which Christ grants. We have the freedom to eat anything we want - but does it do harm to others? We have the freedom to carouse if we want - but does it harm others? We have the freedom to say whatever we want - but do our words drive others away from God's love? As the psalmist writes: "there is not a word on my lips, but you O Lord, know it altogether." It seems like a double standard, doesn't it? Others can say whatever they want about us and face no repercussions, but Paul is asking us to hold our tongues. Well, not entirely.

Look at today's gospel for a moment. Jesus doesn't exactly hold his tongue. When Nathanael offers up an insult that may not sound that bad to our ears but was a pretty big smack down to Nazareth and anyone who comes from it - Jesus did respond. He said, "Behold, a person in whom there is no deceit." The modern equivalent might be, "Here's someone who tells it like it is."

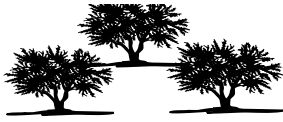
He is not defensive - his words are even approving. But more importantly, Jesus in that little phrase, tells Nathanael, "I know you better than you know yourself."

In other words, Jesus goes beyond the insult, looking at the person - seeing Nathanael for who he was - seeing the person God sees. And then he invites Nathanael to join him.

That's the trick for us Christians. Understand the power of our words, choose them carefully so that they bring others closer to Christ's love. Counter words of hatred or anger directed at us with words of understanding and invitation.

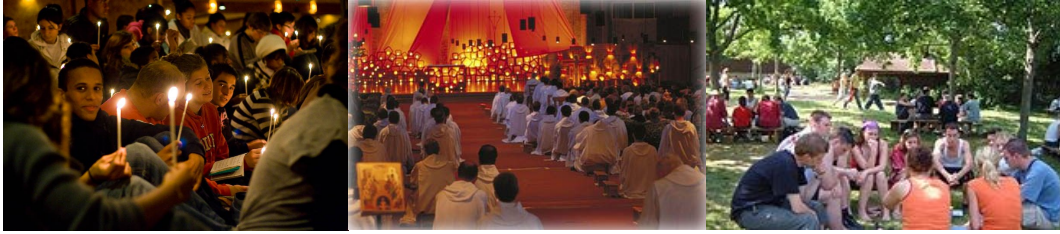
Yes, yes, I know - that's all naive and Pollyannaish in a harsh world filled with terrorists. But it is the way of Christ.

All things are lawful for me but not all things are beneficial. Words have power. We are called to use that power for the love of God. Amen.



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\*The primary focus of ministry of the Taizé Community is towards youth and young adults; therefore, only a limited number of participants over twenty-nine years of age can be accepted