

St. James' E-pistle

October 3, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

One of the things we know about the Church is that it is an unsettled place. Always. This is largely because we have people in it, and people rarely have a unified vision of how things should be. Despite Saint Paul's admonition that, it's rare that we are all "in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose." (1 Corinthians 1:10)

We know this to be true at the parish level even though we generally find a way to muddle through. We know this to be true at the national and international level, too. This past week, it became painfully true at the level of seminary.

That is to say, at the General Theological Seminary - my alma mater and the only seminary under the control of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (i.e., the only national seminary), there was a complete breakdown of functioning. Eight of the ten fulltime professors at General sent a letter to its board of trustees saying that they could no longer work under the present dean. The next day, the board of trustees declared that the professors' letter qualified as a letter of resignation and officially accepted their resignations.

The particulars of their complaints against the dean are still somewhat murky, and I follow the situation with interest and sadness. Some of these professors were there when I studied at GTS, and they are among the best in their fields. How the seminary intends to pull off a semester of teaching with only 20% of its teaching staff, I do not know.

Since I don't know all the details, you might wonder why I bring this up at all.

There are a couple of reasons. One, I am venting, plain and simple. I am frustrated that the board chose to immediately fire the professors who, admittedly, wrote a rather fiery and perhaps poorly worded letter. The professors have written several letters since then stating specifically that they did not resign. In other words, the Board of Trustees went to a "nuclear option" straight away. In doing so, they ignored the source of these professors' drastic actions.

I believe the Board reacted the way they did largely because they felt backed into a corner by the professors. Nobody likes to be cornered like that. However, there are ways to de-escalate a situation, and I would have very much appreciated such de-escalation in this situation.

But venting is only a small part of why I write. This situation is a small example of what human beings do all the time. We feel pushed around until we react. Sometimes we react

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appropriately, patiently, wisely. Sometimes we react hastily, angrily and perhaps with poorly chosen words.

I've presided over some pretty bone-headed mistakes here at St. James'. Over the course of my life, I've said some pretty rash things in anger. It is my great fortune that most of the time, those to whom I directed my ire looked beyond the words themselves and to the source of the anger. They were able to resist reacted to my poorly chosen words and instead respond to my legitimate grievances. Too often, we take the words someone has said in haste and use them as a weapon against them. That is not, as I read the Gospels, the will of Christ.

Perhaps, then, we can learn something from this debacle. Primarily, we could remind ourselves that when someone has a complaint against us - or when we have a complaint against another - it is healthiest and holiest to bring up that complaint immediately, but also to take any complaint against us seriously. Defensiveness does not edify or bring us closer to the Kingdom of God. Usually, when we open such communication at the early stages with a good will, escalation can be avoided. When resolution and reconciliation are achieved, God rejoices.

The fact that there is barely any teaching going on at the seminary now, and that the students are confused and wondering what kind of lesson they are learning for future ministry, does not bode well for General. As the Episcopal Church's oldest and possibly premier seminary, it does not bode well for any of us. And that leads to my third point in bringing this crisis to your attention.

Pray.

Please pray for the faculty - those who have been fired and those who are left. They are good, faithful, and dedicated teachers. Pray for the Board of Trustees which, I believe, is trying to do its best despite their own rash decision. Pray for the dean who may be the cause of much of this drama but is also a child of God who I must presume is doing the best he can. Pray for the entire church which is harmed when such conflict is dealt with on a reactionary level rather than from the loving ability to walk it back and take a broader view.

I have no interest in tut-tutting or raising the battle cry. I simply ask that you pray, and that we remind ourselves of the messiness of being human. We will always have similar conflicts. However, if we commit ourselves to speak lovingly and listen openly, perhaps we can be the model of life as God would have us live it. At least in our little corner of the church.

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If you happen to be down in New York City in the coming weeks, the students at General are asking people from around the diocese to come and pray with and for them during their regular chapel times. You can join them at:

**The Chapel of Good Shepherd at General Theological Seminary,
440 W 21st Street**

Morning Prayer – 10:10am Monday-Wednesday, Friday

Evening Prayer – 5:30pm Monday, Wednesday-Friday

Holy Eucharist – 5:30pm Tuesday and 10:10am Thursday

Compline – 9:45pm Monday

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.diocesenyn.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

October

- 5 The Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan
- 6 Christ Church, Riverdale, The Bronx
- 7 The Spirituality Committee of the Diocese
- 8 Christ Church, New Brighton, Staten Island
- 9 The Church of St. Barnabas, Ardsley
- 10 Christ Church, Patterson
- 11 Grace Church, Hastings-on-Hudson

STILL PRAYING:

Most of the Nigerian girls kidnapped by the terrorist group Boko Haram are still in bondage. Please consider this prayer in your daily devotions.

Prayer for the kidnapped Nigerian girls May 2014

O God, we cry out to you
for the lives and the freedom
of the 276 kidnapped girls in Nigeria.
In their time of danger and fear,
pour out your strong Spirit for them.
Make a way home for them in safety.
Make a way back for them
to the education that will lift them up.
Hold them in the knowledge
that they are not captive slaves,
they are not purchased brides,
but they are your beloved daughters ,
and precious in your sight.
Change the hearts and minds of their kidnapers
and of all who choose violence against women and girls.
Cast down the mighty from their seat,
and lift up the humble and meek,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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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.

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.

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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

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

The News of the Church



Wanted: New Acolytes: We want you! We are always looking for new acolytes, and Fall is the perfect time to join! You'll have fun and serve God and your church at the same time. Acolytes need to be at least nine years old and willing to be trained. It's not hard, but you do need to see Fr. Chuck first. So join now!

Habitat for Humanity Update: Our Church is committed to the Habitat for Humanity Faith Build at 125 Garden Street. Construction has started and needs volunteers. Construction occurs on Fridays and Saturdays 8:30 – 3:30. Please visit the website

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<http://www.habitatdutchess.com/> to sign up and volunteer. Select the Volunteer Opportunities box and follow the prompts. Also, follow Habitat for Humanity of Dutchess County on Facebook for pictures and schedules. In addition, churches are needed to sign up to provide lunches for the construction teams of 10 to 15 people. Lunch can be sandwiches, pizza or casseroles, fruit and or salads, dessert and some drinks. Please contact Judy Walters (845-297-1530) if you can get a group together to provide lunch on either a Friday or a Saturday.

The Build Captain, Alberto Sanchez, has stated that work on the site will take place each Friday and Saturday. The foundation is in and is now waiting for helping hands to continue building this house. Won't you please consider offering your hands?

Any questions, please contact Deb Belding or Deacon Gail.

Youth Group Overnight: We had our first monthly overnight on September 27, and it went quite well! Our next will be in the midst of the Graveyard Tours, so in October, it'll be a Friday to Saturday, October 24-25. We'll start a little later - 6:30 pm - since it's hard to get there on Fridays. Watch your e-mails for more information.

Tea Room Coming: The world famous St. James' Tea Room is coming in just a few weeks! The Tea Room is on Saturday, October 18 and will draw hungry folks from all over the area. As we do every year, we are looking for help with baking and serving. There is a set menu of proven goodies, so you don't have to wonder what to bake - just contact Deirdre Mae Micker or look for the Tea Room clip board and sign up. Servers are of all ages, so go ahead, sign up! If you can't bake or serve, you can always come and eat! Whichever way you choose, we look forward to seeing you there.

Indaba Team NEEDED: Please consider becoming part of St. James' Indaba team. We need three parishioners to join Fr. Chuck over three weekends to increase understanding and improve ministry across the diocese. The 2015 weekend dates will be January 24-25, May 2-3, and September 26-27. The website with more information is <http://indaba.episcopalny.org>. If you want to communicate directly with someone from the diocese about it, please contact Archdeacon William Parnell at wparnell@dioceseny.org.

If you are interested in being part of the team, please contact Fr. Chuck, too!

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Outreach Needs You: Outreach is asking for donations to help pay the cost of feeding up to 60 residents at Hillcrest House on Saturday, October 11. Any amount would be appreciated.

Please use the envelope in the pews marked "Outreach donation".

Thank you!

Blessing the Animals: In past years, we have either had a significant St. Francis Blessing of the Animals or at least a brief period in the afternoon when people can bring their animals to church for a private blessing. This year, as last year, I will be at church this Sunday, October 5 from about 1 PM to 2 PM to bless any animals you may bring by. I do not, however, lay hands on tarantulas, venomous snakes or piranhas. Porcupines are a little iffy, too.

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

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

Pray for Angela Henry, for recovery from a broken arm.

Pray for the repose of the soul of Michael Mirchich, and for the Mirchich and Bouchey families.

Pray in thanksgiving for Chris Granados-Kramer achieving Eagle Scout rank.

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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 (week ending October 5):	John Bohlmann and Betsy Wardell
Birthdays (next week):	Dot Craft, Jasmine Thatcher and Bev Tas
Acolytes:	October 5: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Monica Rizzo October 12: TBA
Altar Guild:	October 5: Team I October 12: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	October 5: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch October 12: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	October 5: Russell Urban Mead/Sophie Ciferri October 12: Wilma Tully/Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	October 5: Andrew and Tonya Hall October 12: Bobbie and Cliff Wells
Pledge Clerks:	October 5: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown October 12: Deb and Doug Belding
Coffee Hour Hosts:	October 5: Audrey Horne and Saira Shahani October 12: Jodi Triola, The Eames and Pat Rooney

This Week's Lectionary

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Psalm 19

Philippians 3:4b-14

Matthew 21:33-46

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

Sermon Preached on Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost (September 28, 2014)

"Kids These Days"

You may have noticed that I am very tired this morning. That's because I spent the night with our youth group in what we hope is the first monthly Youth Group Overnight. They stayed up late, they were loud, they ate a LOT!

I know - kids these days, right? Maybe they got a little rambunctious, and maybe I had to remind them what the Vestry talked about at one of its meetings after a youth group overnight. The minutes note that the Vestry had a long discussion about how the youth broke lights in the parish hall and left the Wilks Room a mess. Of course, those were minutes from February, 1967. But I figured, why stop with vestry minutes? I always hear folks talk about kids these days: why not let the kids hear what folks really think about them.

For example:

"The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no respect for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint... As for the girls, they are forward, immodest and unladylike in speech, behavior and dress."

That was that famous child expert, Peter the Hermit in the year 1274.

Or how about this?

"When I was young, we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly disrespectful and impatient of restraint."

That was Hesiod the Greek poet, in 8th century B.C.E.

Then there is this:

"We live in a decaying age. Young people no longer respect their parents. They are rude and impatient. They frequently inhabit taverns and have no self control."

It was, of course found on a 6000 year old Egyptian tomb:

My personal favorite is the one my 8th grade science teacher shared with us way back when. He came in one day and began reading:

"The youth today love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of

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exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers."

He told us it was written by Socrates, but in reality it came from a play by one of his contemporaries, Aristophanes back about 411 BCE.

The point is, people have always had trouble with "kids these days." Frankly, I'm very happy with our kids who while they can definitely be goofy, are also kind and generous with their time and talents. And I suspect there always have been kind and generous youth. But as always, there's ALSO a big difference between simply being young and being childish. As our scriptures show us, being childish knows no age limit.

Look at today's Old Testament story of whining. It's like "Are we there yet?" Only here it's, "I'm thirsty! You never get me anything!" They are never satisfied and always want more, more, more.

Or the gospel. Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees who go after him like angry children. "Who said you could do that?" They cry. And you can almost hear them add, "We're telling!" Or "You're gonna be in so much trouble!" But they miss the entire point of being a child of God - so Jesus tells them a story.

He tells of two brothers, one who says, "No! I won't!" And the other who says, "Okay," but never does what he's told. Both of them act childish to a degree - but Jesus says that a child who sees his or her error is well on their way to maturity.

These stories tell us about ourselves, again, unbound by age. We are humans, and this is what God has to put up with throughout time - and more. It never changes.

Yet as people continue to exhibit childish behavior through the ages, so does God continue to be our father, sometimes losing patience, sometimes standing by helplessly watching as we have global tantrums or act self-destructively, sometimes just shaking his head and muttering "Kids these days."

But most importantly, always loving us both when we are kind and loving and when we are frankly spoiled brats. Our species has, as you know, the capacity to be both. In fact, we are rarely if ever just all good or all bad. God knows this, has always known this from time immemorial. And still God loves us - will always love us and has shown that he will sacrifice much more than a mere night's sleep to demonstrate that love. And that, my brothers and sisters, my fellow kids of God, is very good news indeed. Amen.