

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

This has been quite a week. On Wednesday alone, the news from all corners was extraordinary. The governor announced that hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, would not be allowed in New York. The president began the process to normalize relations with Cuba for the first time in more than 50 years. And in the Church of England, after a cumbersome legal process, it was finally announced that a woman would become a bishop for the first time in its 500 year history.

That's all in one day! That doesn't include already big news around the world: Police/Community relations, the Torture report, casino gambling...

So, in the midst of our preparations of ourselves for the annual celebration of Christ's incarnation, let's take a moment to look at the world around us.

I've been pondering how to make sense of these big events. How do we as Christians approach them? Probably not by asking what Jesus would do. But.... we could and should ask - in all things - What Would Jesus Approve? What Would Jesus Love? What Would Make Jesus Happy? A second helpful question to ask might be, "Is there another way to achieve this goal?"

Putting these three issues under the filter of those two questions, what might it look like?

Well, the the decision on fracking has garnered praise and condemnation from predictable corners. Fossil energy companies and landowners who would have gained financially by fracking are outraged. Environmental organizations are delighted. For us, though, let us ask if not allowing fracking is pleasing to Jesus? We may not have enough information. Jesus certainly cares for people and wants us to be employed so we can care for our families. On the other hand, this wonderful earth God has given into our care is our responsibility, and I cannot imagine our Lord being pleased with environmental destruction for the sake of profit.

So perhaps we can go to the second question: Is there another way to get energy and jobs? I'm certainly not qualified to answer this, but recent reports suggest that the once-prohibitively-expensive solar and wind technologies have become much more affordable and now compete well with fossil fuels. Perhaps that could be a growth industry which would provide jobs and be less disruptive to our environment. Have fun discussing this one at home!

Next, what about the decision to normalize relations with Cuba. Does it make Jesus happy? Is it something Jesus would approve of? Well, Jesus came to this world for the purpose of

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

reconciliation, so there is a strong bias toward any reconciling action. The fact that Pope Francis facilitated this rapprochement speaks to the divine desire for healing relational breaches. There are those, of course, who believe reconciling is a bad idea because the Castro regime is communist and has been oppressive. Many, of course, have suffered under that regime. Of course, the same can be said of many governments with whom we maintain diplomatic relations.

The question of whether it could be done another way in part depends on what we want done. Could we normalize relations another way? Yes, perhaps, but I don't know what way short of waiting till the Castro brothers are dead or invading. Neither of those is particularly beneficial to anyone, nor has the current policy brought democracy or stability.

Finally, there's the Church of England's landmark decision to finally ordain female bishops. Does this make Jesus happy? Does Jesus approve? Many in the church would say "No!" But I believe the evidence both in the gospels and in experience suggests otherwise. After all, it was Jesus who asked Martha to join Mary and the disciples rather than do housework, who met with the Samaritan woman at the well, who appeared first to women and told them to tell the good news of the resurrection.

And is there another way to do it? That is, could we have advanced ministry another way? Well, of course the church could have continued its male-only system. But what good did that do? Long before women became priests, the church had been shrinking - the introduction of female priests, and now bishops has broadened the appeal, so perhaps it might slow the decline or even halt it. Even if it changes nothing in terms of attendance numbers, it probably was the only way to ensure that all of God's people are represented and given the fullness of ministry God intends.

For my part, and using these questions as a guide, I am pleased with all three decisions and believe them to be a positive step in making this world a bit closer to the ideal of the Kingdom of God. Others in the congregation will undoubtedly disagree.

That's fine. We will likely never get everyone to agree on these issues or any of the big concerns that face us.

But whether we agree or not, we should - certainly as Christians - always be aware of them, always struggle with them. These two questions can help that struggle even if we answer them differently. The important thing - as Advent constantly reminds us - is to keep awake, and to ask.

In Christ,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

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."

December

- 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
- 24 The Seamen's Church Institute
- 25 On The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ we give thanks for the Word made Flesh.
- 26 On the feast day for Saint Stephen we pray for all who work on behalf of the poor and the outcast.
- 27 On the feast day for Saint John we pray for the vision of the Diocese.

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:

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

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

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)

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

The News of the Church

Get Your Star Gifts In! NOW is the time to turn in your star gifts! If you took a star (or many), please turn in your gifts as soon as possible. Bring it unwrapped but with the star to the parish hall by no later than Friday, December 19 at 12:00 noon. If you can't make that deadline, please call the church ASAP. Thanks!

Newcomers Reception FRIDAY: If you are relatively new to St. James' - that is, if you've been here for about a year or less - you are invited to our December 19 Newcomers Reception. It is at 7:00 pm. Come and meet your fellow parishioners, learn more about what is going on at St. James' and how you can get involved if you want to.

INDABA Guests Need Beds: We have three beds covered for the Indaba. Thank you! Now we only need five more. So consider whether or not you can put up a fellow Episcopalian for a night as we help them understand who we are and what our ministry at St. James' is all about.

Pledge Reminder: Please remember to make your pledge if you have not already. If you lost your pledge card or never got one, FEAR NOT! You can get one from the parish office or by asking Fr. Chuck or one of the Vestry members.

Acolyte Training Session: This Sunday, December 21, after church, there will be an acolyte training session. All are welcome - whether you're already an acolyte or want to learn! Be aware that we will start training AFTER the St. James' Orchestra has rehearsed its Christmas Eve music, but that probably won't take too long. And acolyte training is pretty fast, too. Once you're trained, you can serve as early as this Christmas Eve if you want.

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, 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, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Erin O'Neill Rollins, 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.

Please pray for the souls of the children killed in Pakistan, their families, and all who might contemplate such acts of horror, that their hearts may be converted away from hate and toward God's love.

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

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):	Randy Soden and Chris McGlynn
Birthdays (next week):	Rebecca Mungo
Acolytes:	December 21: Nancy Montero and Chris Santos December 28: Chris Granados-Kramer and Bryanna Burkhardt
Altar Guild:	December 21: TBA December 28: TBA
8 a.m. Readers:	December 21: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden December 28: Angela Henry and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	December 21: Donna Beyer/Nancy Montero December 28: TBA
Ushers:	December 21: Donna and John Beyer December 28: Dean Caswell and Austin Horne
Pledge Clerks:	December 21: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher December 28: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	December 21: Kathy Graff, Liz Granados, Chuck Kramer and Nick and Chris Granados-Kramer December 28: Tom Greene, Mary Grosskopf and Andy, Tanya, Breaden and Riley Hall
Coffee Hour Hosts:	December 21: Deirdre Mae Micker, Leslie Quick and Susan Gausepohl December 28: The Beyers

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

This Week's Lectionary

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Canticle 15

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

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

Sermon Preached on Second Sunday of Advent (December 7, 2014)

[Because there was no E-pistle last week, and because Bishop Dietsche preached this week, leaving behind no copy of his sermon, the below sermon is from the previous week.]

"I am John"

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

That is the most abrupt beginning to the shortest gospel in the bible. Perhaps this can be the most abrupt beginning to my shortest sermon.

I am John. So are you.

John was sent to prepare the way of The Lord, to makes his paths straight.

What does that mean, to prepare the way?

It means he was sent to proclaim. He proclaimed repentance and forgiveness, and he proclaimed the coming of one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

John was sent for one reason. To proclaim.

I am John because proclamation is one of my reasons for being here. And it is one of yours.

John proclaimed what the ancients proclaimed.

The prophet Isaiah wrote:

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?" ...and the answer came: "Here is your God!"

The psalmist proclaimed, "[God has] forgiven the iniquity of [His] people and blotted out all their sins.... for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him."

I am John because my calling is also to proclaim this ancient yet ever so current message of hope. And so is yours.

St. James' E-pistle

December 19, 2014

Don't believe me. Hear this from the catechism: Question: "What is the ministry of the laity?" Answer: The ministry of the laity is "to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever [you] may be; and, according to the gifts given [you], to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world."

I am John because when I was baptized, I took on this ministry of proclamation, and so did you. It is Advent, the season of proclamation. You and I are Christians, sent to proclaim reconciliation through Christ to a broken world. We are not meant to shirk this duty but to embrace it with wonder, joy, courage and determination.

You've seen the news. You know the racial tensions happening in our own diocese and across the country. You know the fear and the mistrust of a whole generation, the result of centuries of injustice, discrimination and abuse.

On the world-wide scale, think of today, the anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor as a reminder that we humans still reach for weapons far too quickly in our disputes. Can you think of a better time for Christ to be proclaimed?

You and I, like John, are here to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ whose coming into our hearts brings peace and a desire for that reconciliation. As the world needed John two thousand years ago, so the world needs us today.

I am John. And so are you. But only if we choose. Amen.

St. James' E-pistle
December 19, 2014

All
Welcome!

Free
Admission!

A

Desert



Home



Companion

An Epiphany Pageant
Radio Variety Show

January 2, 2015 - 7:00 PM

St. James' Episcopal Church

4525 Albany Post Rd
Hyde Park, NY