

St. James' E-pistle

May 1, 2015

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

There were two huge events in the news this week that deserve a word.

First, the earthquake in Nepal that devastated that country last Saturday. The aftershocks have continued unabated, many of them bad enough to be serious earthquakes in their own right. The death toll in that desperately poor country is over 6,000.

Adding insult to injury, many of their centuries' old heritage sites were destroyed.

It is just one more of the horrendous tragedies to hit some of the poorest people on earth, and it's hard to stay too wrapped up in it for very long. Media outlets in our country were criticized for focusing on the five Americans who were killed (mostly on Mount Everest) as a result of the earthquake, but the media responded with a sad truth (not to mention one of journalism's cardinal rules): People don't really care about far away strangers. You have to localize the news.

These are, of course, not merely far away strangers. They are brothers and sisters. Given the scope of the disaster and the difficult terrain under the best of circumstances, recovery will be slow and arduous. The need for supplies and aid will be ongoing, long after the news crews have moved on. If you would like to donate to the Nepal recovery effort, you can do so through Episcopal Relief and Development at <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/NepalRelief>.

Episcopal Relief and Development in this crisis is partnering with the much larger ACT Alliance, a coalition of more than 140 churches and religious organizations working around the world.

The second big item in the news is the rioting in Baltimore.

But first, a little digression. At our bible study this week, we were reading the Book of Judith (from the Apocrypha). In it, the Assyrians have been taking over country after country, destroying the temples of every land they conquered. The Israelites, however, decide to stand up and fight the Assyrians even though it means certain and total destruction of their country (the invading Nebuchadnezzar is a vengeful and violent king). It makes no sense to fight, especially when the countries that submitted were largely spared the sword.

The attacking general asks why the Israelites would do such a suicidal thing. The answer? Because they had just returned from decades of exile and slavery. They had just gotten their

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sacred vessels back in place. They were sick and tired of being beaten down, and they weren't going to allow it again, even if it meant self-destruction.

As we discussed the general's baffled question, we noted that it is not all that different from a question being asked lately: Why are the rioters doing this, destroying their own neighborhoods? Perhaps for the same reason Israel did. One of my former youth group members (from Peekskill days) shared an article about the anger and frustration of living every day feeling like a suspect rather than a citizen.

She is a highly successful businesswoman now but said she feels worn down by it all, too. Being stopped in her own neighborhood, being followed in stores, and so on. Her plea was to simply listen to the voices of those who feel like strangers in their own land.

This does not condone violence of any sort. Ever. But we do well to listen with an open heart.

By the way, my cousin, who is an Episcopal priest in Baltimore, said that the rioters we saw in the news represented only a tiny fraction of people marching in the streets. But then, the other rule of media has always been, "If it bleeds, it leads." and "Give them coups and quakes."

My cousin told me that the churches in Baltimore were not merely out in the streets in peaceful protest (and the vast majority of the protest was peaceful), but they were banding together to hold prayer vigils in their churches, calling people to come off the streets and into the churches to pray.

Not only were they intervening to stop the violence on the street, but they were facilitating discussions between community organizers and city officials. Their prayers called for reconciliation - better relations between police and community, peaceful resolution, new approaches to civic interaction that don't escalate tensions. Their actions continue to work to make those prayers reality.

It times of crisis, the church is at its best when it works to relieve suffering and to achieve reconciliation. Disciples of Christ follow Christ's footsteps. We heal where we can, we feed where there's need, we call upon would-be executioners to drop their stones, we walk the extra mile with those who harm us, and we embrace our brothers and sisters who find themselves in conflict.

I pray that you and I will follow Christ in these crises and the endless parade of crises that are sure to follow just as the morning follows the night. Because when we follow with Christ's light, the darkness has no power.

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."

- 3 Christ & St. Stephen's Church, Manhattan
- 4 Holy Trinity, Inwood, Manhattan
- 5 St. Clement's Church, Manhattan
- 6 St. Philip's Church, Manhattan
- 7 San Juan Bautista Mission, The Bronx
- 8 St. Simeon's Church, The Bronx
- 9 The Church Periodical Club

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

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.

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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

Episcopal Charities Sunday - Sunday, May 10th

Were you aware that 10.2% of your neighbors in Dutchess County are facing food insecurity and that 16.6% of Dutchess County children struggle with hunger issues?

Do you hear their voices? “It wasn’t my turn” was the response of a young student who had fallen asleep at school when asked if he had eaten breakfast that morning. “Lack of work worries me. My children are hungry and I told them the rice was cooking until they fell asleep from hunger” was the response from a mother.

Isaiah reminds us: “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?” or in Matthew’s Gospel: “For I was hungry and you gave me food.”

Incorporated in December, 1996, Episcopal Charities, the mission arm of our Diocese, currently partners with fifty parish-based, non-sectarian feeding programs in our Diocese. In addition to the actual grant, Episcopal Charities provides strategic training, operational support and four required sustainability workshops to the program leaders.

As we move around the Mid-Hudson Region, we discover that Christ’s love is shining here in Dutchess County through the mission of Rhinebeck Food Pantry, sponsored by Church of the Messiah - Rhinebeck; Food Pantries located and sponsored by St. Paul’s Church - Poughkeepsie, Zion Church - Wappingers Falls and St. Andrew’s Church and St. Luke’s Church - Beacon; in addition to the Food for Life/Comida de Vida Pantry sponsored by St. Thomas Church - Amenia Union.

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Other Mid-Hudson programs that are shining Christ's love are located in Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties: Saturday Morning Breakfast program sponsored by Christ Church - Warwick; Shepherd's Kitchen sponsored by Church of the Good Shepherd - Newburgh; Guild of St. Margaret's Soup Kitchen sponsored by Grace Church - Middletown; Fed by Grace Food Pantry sponsored by Grace Church - Port Jervis; Food Pantry sponsored by St. George's Church - Newburgh, Angel Food East sponsored by St. John's Church - Kingston and Caring Hands Food Pantry sponsored by St. John's Church - Monticello.

Episcopal Charities' grant program enables us, through our donations, to extend Christ's love to grass-roots, parish-based programs that reflect the needs of that parish-based program's local area. Please note that because the Diocese provides for the overhead expenses, 100% of your donation is designated specifically for programming.

As faithful followers of Christ, please prayerfully consider making a donation to Episcopal Charities. There will be envelopes available in the pews for you to make your donation. If you are writing a check, please make it payable to Episcopal Charities.

On behalf of all our neighbors throughout our Diocese who struggle with food insecurity and who will benefit from your donation - **THANK YOU!!**

Peace, Deacon Gail

The News of the Church

Sunday, May 10th is Episcopal Charities Sunday: Please prayerfully consider making a donation to Episcopal Charities, the mission arm of the Diocese. Envelopes can be found in the pews. If you are writing a check please make it payable to Episcopal Charities. On behalf of all our neighbors who will benefit from your donation - THANK YOU! In addition, please see the longer article about this subject under "The News of Diocese" above.

HABITAT FAITH BUILD - 125 Garden Street, Poughkeepsie: The Outreach Committee gives all who participated in our Lenten Calendar Project in 2014 and again this year a huge THANK YOU!!! We raised over \$1200 enabling our parish family to fulfill our pledge.

Please join the Celebration and Blessing of the Habitat Faith Build House: Thursday, May 7 at 5:30 pm at 125 Garden Street in Poughkeepsie.

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim And Sharyn Burke, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, Gloria Golden, 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, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, 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):	Hope Jennings, Barbara Wells and Jeet Shahani
Birthdays (next week):	Diane Webb
Acolytes:	May 3: Jasmine Thatcher, Jaylen Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead May 10: Nancy Montero, Kirstin Horn and Deirdre Mae Micker
Altar Guild:	May 3: Team Number II May 10: Team Number III
8 a.m. Readers:	May 3: Debbie Belding and Lynne Koch May 10: Angela Henry and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	May 3: Russell Urban-Mead/Andy Hall May 10: Wilma Tully/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	May 3: Andrew and Tonya Hall

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	May 10: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	May 3: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown
	May 10: Deb and Doug Belding
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	May 3: Susan Schryver, John and Laura Seagren and Richard Secor
	May 10: Bob, Ann, Drew and Michael Seils, Saira, Rohit, Sanjana and Jeet Shahani and Barbara, Craig and Dalton Slegel
Coffee Hour Hosts:	May 3: Audrey Horne, Judy Douglas and Wilma Tully
	May 10: Jodi Triola, Ross & Connie Eames and Pat Rooney

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 8:26-40

Psalm 22:24-30

1 John 4:7-21

John 15:1-8

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

Sermon Preached on
Fourth Sunday of Easter
(April 26, 2015)

"Lives of the Shepherds"

"THE LIVES OF THE SHEPHERDS, brought to you by Powder Milk Matzos.... "

Oh wait, that was a couple of weeks ago, wasn't it? If you have no idea what I'm talking about, we had a special Eucharist a couple of weeks ago where we turned it into a radio show called "A Desert Home Companion" with skits and a band.

One of those skits had two crusty old shepherds named Dusty and Lefty. And wouldn't today's scriptures be great for Dusty and Lefty? Couldn't you just imagine some kid coming up to them and saying, "Gee, are you real shepherds?"

Dusty would say, "Yup."

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And the boy might say, "I always wanted to be a shepherd. You never have to go to school, you get to be outside all the time, and it doesn't even look that hard. Most of the time you just standing around. Can I run away with you and be a shepherd?"

And you can just hear Dusty say, "Nope."

But Lefty - he's the more sensitive type - he would say to the boy, "Welllll, I don't know as that's such a good idea young feller. Ya see, the life of a shepherd is lonely and hard. It's filled with suffering and misery."

Of course, this isn't "A Desert Home Companion," and we don't have to paint the lives of shepherds as all that miserable. True, shepherds were on the lower rung of the social ladder, and their life was hard, but it wasn't irredeemably bad. After all, King David was a shepherd, and he did okay for himself.

So what was a shepherd's life like? And why did Jesus call himself the good shepherd (especially when to the best of our knowledge, he had never actually tended sheep)?

To get a hint, we might do well to look at King David's greatest hit, the 23rd Psalm.

The first thing he says about a shepherd? "He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters." That is, the shepherd provides food and drink. Not just any food but "green pastures" - good food and plentiful. And "still waters" - the shepherd provides a safe source of water.

Next, "He guides me along right pathways." Sheep are notoriously bad decision makers and will mindlessly follow the leader even toward danger. The shepherd has to not only know the safe and proper path but lead the sheep. And if it is in a dangerous area - say "the valley of the shadow of death," the shepherd has to defend the sheep.

But in order to lead and protect the sheep, they have to trust the shepherd. There has to be a relationship. They know his voice - because the shepherd talks to his sheep. He walks among them. Touches them. Calls them by name. They trust him.

That rod and staff that comforts? Not only is it used for hooking sheep who have fallen into unreachable spots - which happens - but it's used to hook sheep that are wander in the wrong direction, to guide the sheep, and to protect them from predators. The sheep know that the guy with the stick is the one looking out for them. They know that the shepherd will do whatever it takes to take care of them.

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It's hard to know for sure, but the sheep may even sense that the shepherd will indeed lay down his life for them. No wonder Jesus uses the shepherd metaphor to describe God's relationship with people. King David used it, and it fit Jesus, too.

Did you notice how many times he used the phrase "lay down" when it came to his life - as in, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" or "And I lay down my life for the sheep..."? Jesus mentions laying down his life five times in this passage.

You could sort imagine Dusty and Lefty looking at that enthusiastic boy - that shepherd wannabe - and saying, "You really wanna be a shepherd? Well, what would you do if you saw a lion ready to pounce on your sheep?"

The boy, wide-eyed, would say, "I'd run away! No sheep's worth my life."

That's when Lefty would say, "Well, young feller, I think you ought to just go on home. The life of a shepherd is no life for you."

Now, we know Jesus isn't talking about real sheep and real shepherds. He's talking about the Son of God. This is the relationship God already has with us. This is how God is: providing, caring, comforting, protecting, loving. It may not always feel like it in a hard world, but Jesus says, "Listen for my voice and follow. In the end, even through the valley of the shadow of death, I'll get you home."

This is not our work. We are not the shepherd. Yes, the apostle John who wrote today's epistle would like us all to lay down our lives as Jesus did, and yes, we are called to care for our brothers and sisters near and far. But this passage reminds us that in the end, it is God and God alone who brings us home. All we have to do is follow.

To which I'm guessing Dusty would say, "Yup."

Amen.

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Join the

Rail Trail Pilgrimage

May 30-31

This is St. James' Church's
THIRD Pilgrimage!

Everyone Welcome!

Registration Deadline is May 15

NOTE: There is a \$50 registration fee
with a \$15 nonrefundable deposit



The **Rail Trail Pilgrimage** is a two-day spiritual walk from the Hopewell Junction Trailhead of the Dutchess Rail Trail to Tony Williams Park in the Town of Lloyd. We spend the night at a local church. The pilgrimage follows nearly 20 miles of rail trail including the Walkway Over the Hudson. We make periodic stops for scripture and prayer.



For more information/brochure, call
St. James' Episcopal Church, Hyde Park
229-2820 or go to www.stjameshydepark.org

