

St. James' E-pistle

May 29, 2015

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

I admit, I kind of like to mock Facebook. We all do. It's a time waster, a vehicle for mindless games, an obstacle to human contact. But it also contains a wealth of resources.

"Episcopalians on Facebook," for example, is a place where I can take part in a wide array of conversations about any number of topics that affect us. Does your church use incense? What do you think of same-sex marriage? How should I deal with a disruptive Vestry member? It's open to anyone, and I recommend it.

Beyond that, however, there are countless scholarly articles and blogs, and even Episcopal humor.

One such place of information is a blog by Canadian pastor, Carey Nieuwhof. What makes him interesting is his focus and research on the changing dynamics of the church (not specific to the Episcopal Church but generally). He discusses the shrinking percentage of society that believes in God, the changing role of the Church in furthering the Kingdom of God, and what makes people burn out.

His most recent article (at least that I've read) is called "10 Reasons Even Committed Church Attenders Are Attending Church Less Often." Yes, I know it's a cumbersome title, but the article makes some very good observations, and I think they are worth considering. We've seen lots of article about why people have given up on the church, but not too many on why committed members of churches just don't as often as they used to. So what are those reasons?

1. **People have more money and are spending it on a wide variety of goodies.** Despite the mediocre economy we've experienced over the past seven years, people actually do have more money than the average Joe thirty years ago. And for some reason, this translates to less frequent attendance. Nieuwhof conjectures that folks just have more options than they used to. What do you do with your options?
2. **Parents focus more on kids activities.** Boy can I relate to that one! Sports, Music, Scouts, Clubs... you name it (though sports does seem to be the biggest time sink). It just is the way things are, and these activities increasingly spill into Sundays. It does not good to yell at the parents because the pressure from all sides is immense. When was the last time you missed on a Sunday due to kids activities?

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3. **People travel a lot more.** I noticed this last Sunday. Another three-day weekend translated to countless people going away for the weekend. It's my contention that the invention of the three-day weekend has hurt church attendance dramatically. But even on regular weekends, people get up and go. When was your last weekend get-away?
4. **When families are complicated, attendance is, too.** If you're divorced and share custody, or don't get every weekend, you don't get to dictate that your kids go to church with you. Do you have complicated family and church attendance?
5. **People go to church online.** I don't really relate to this one, but apparently, a lot of folks get their spirituality online. Yes, I do a lot with religious engagement online (like this blog) but I never saw it as a substitute for church. TV, on the other hand, has long lured people away from physical church. Has this ever attracted you?
6. **People don't feel guilty anymore.** They just don't carry the burden of guilt like in the good old days. If you don't feel like going to church today, why is that anyone's business? Of course, he makes a good point, that if we were getting people to go to church through guilt, we were doing something wrong. Feel guilty lately?
7. **People are do-it-yourselfers.** Okay, maybe not in fixing their cars anymore, but when it comes to buying a car or diagnosing a disease, or getting the news, we get online and do it all ourselves. Who needs experts?
8. **People don't see as much benefit in it.** By this we can mean a couple of things. First, church used to be essential to just being involved in the community. You couldn't make it in business or socially without church. That benefit is pretty much gone these days. Spiritually, while the benefit of a faith community is great, it's like the gym - the less you go, the less you remember the benefit. What is your benefit in coming?
9. **Churches have focused too much on attendance and less on engagement.** By that, I gather he means that we spend too much time getting people into the pews and too little time helping them engage with Christ on a real, personal level. He is probably right to a large extent. Nobody wants to just be a number in a pew. Do you?
10. **The whole culture is shifting to something we don't understand yet.** Roman Catholic Ireland just became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage for goodness sake. We are not the same people our great-grandparents were - for better or worse. What does the culture look like to you?

I find this fascinating and hope you do too. I don't think all of these points apply to church members, but enough do. Which ones apply to you? And what other pressures do you face that keep you away from church on occasion (or most of the time?).

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Perhaps by looking at it a bit, we can explore together what our role in the world is as the Body of Christ, what the world needs from us and what we can give. Let me know your thoughts.

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."

May

31 On The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we pray that we might share the good news of the Gospel with those around us.

June

- 1 Diocesan deputies and representatives who attend the meetings and councils of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion
- 2 The Church of Our Savior, Manhattan
- 3 Holyrood Church, Manhattan
- 4 The Church of St. Edward the Martyr, Manhattan
- 5 St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, Manhattan
- 6 St. Andrew's Church, The Bronx

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.

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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

Rural and Migrant Ministry - Annual Walk-a-thon: On **Saturday, June 6th** beginning at 10am here at St. James' Church, Rural and Migrant Ministry will host its Annual Walk-a-thon to support its 26th season of Summer Overnight Leadership Camp. Please consider joining us as we walk the Vanderbilt loop followed by a barbecue luncheon served by the Christian Fellowship of the Culinary Institute of America. Or, if you are unable to walk, please consider sponsoring a walker or making a donation to the Rural and Migrant Ministry Overnight Summer Camp.

Rural and Migrant Ministry “works for the creation of a just, rural New York State through: nurturing leadership, standing with the disenfranchised, especially farmworkers and rural workers and changing unjust systems and structures.”

The two program areas that RMM has developed to implement its mission is ACCOMPANIMENT and YOUTH EMPOWERMENT.

The Youth Empowerment Program creates opportunities for rural youth to develop leadership skills. The Summer Overnight Leadership Camp is part of the Youth Empowerment Program.

The Summer Overnight Leadership Camp began in 1989 to provide a camping experience for rural and migrant children. The camp is funded entirely through donations, like donations received from the Walk-a-thon and from foundations. This year the camp is being held from

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August 23rd through August 29th at the Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center in Holmes, NY. Many of the staff are former campers.

This Overnight Camp focuses on skill-building and leadership development activities for campers, ages 8-17. The camp welcomes over 100 campers with diverse backgrounds - 40% Latino, 40% African-Americans and 20% European-Americans.

What a difference a camping experience can make in the life of a child!

Peace, Deacon Gail

The News of the Church

Take Some Business Cards: We have created some Business Cards for St. James' Church, and we want you to take them. These cards have our service times and contact information for the church office, but no personal names. Carry them around with you because you never know when you might have a conversation that leads you to talk about Christ and your church. If you have a card with you, you can simply give it to them and let them know it has all the information they might want to get started exploring St. James'. When we run out, we can always get more, so please take a handful this Sunday!

Important Note For Committee Chairs: Effective **July 1**, all Committee and Organization leaders will need to formally seek permission from the Vestry before scheduling any fundraiser or public event. This can be done by filling out a simple form available at the parish office. The Vestry will go over each request at its monthly meeting (third Tuesday of every month. But note, there is NO meeting in August, so you would need to make sure you have your September event request in for the July meeting). Events that are already on the calendar as of May 21 will be "grandfathered" in. This permission methods was seen as necessary to make sure Vestry members know what is going on at the church and to help avoid scheduling confusion.

Youth Group Cook Out: We had to reschedule our May 29 cookout and are in the process of setting the new date. Stay tuned!

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A Prayer for Our Pilgrims: Please keep the Pilgrims in your prayers as they prepare for this weekend's pilgrimage. Here is a prayer to offer:

All-powerful God, you always show mercy toward those who you love and you are never far away for those who seek you. Remain with your servants on this holy pilgrimage and guide their way in accord with your will. Shelter them with your protection by day, give them the light of your grace by night, and, as their companion on their journey, bring them to their destination in safety.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Food Truck Festival Music! Come to the Food Truck Festival on **Sunday, June 7** to hear music provided by Doug Belding and members of the Bethlehem Boys Band - now called the Plan Bee's.

Nursery School News: On **Friday, June 12**, the Nursery School will end its school year with a moving up ceremony for the departing children. Keep them in your prayers.

Wellness Fair: A Wellness Fair fundraiser for the Hyde Park Community Garden will be held on **Saturday, June 13** from 10-4 on the grounds of St. James Church

Please come out and support the vendors that will be there that day to offer various services and products promoting healthy living!

Food will be offered for sale from students at the Culinary Institute of America.

Music provided by the Plan Bee's and other guests!

Free admission.

For further information about vendor space, call Deb Belding at (845)240-3194.

Recognition Sunday: Please be sure to come to church on **Sunday, June 14** for RECOGNITION SUNDAY and Ice Cream Social. Not only do we recognize our students and acolytes, but we say thank you to our hardworking and dedicated Sunday School teachers. And we give our graduating seniors a blessing and a joyful send-off into the world!

If you have a graduating High School or College student (Associates, Bachelors, Masters or Doctoral), please let me (Fr. Chuck) know so we can properly acknowledge them.

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Invitation to a Parish Celebration: Brian Rance and Melinda Harris cordially invite you to attend a second annual parish celebration of faith and friendship at their home at 9 Marshall Road (corner of Netherwood) from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. on **Saturday, June 20th**. Dinner and refreshments will be served. Parents should feel free to bring children. If you plan on attending, please RSVP to brian.rance@freshfields.com or by phone to 212-360-1854. Please indicate the number attending. Please don't feel obliged to bring any food or gifts. There should be plenty for everyone.

Summer Youth Conference: I strongly encourage any young people (rising 6th graders to rising college Freshmen) to attend the Summer Youth Conference at Incarnation Camp Center this summer. The dates are **August 16-22**. More information is on a flier below. I have financial aid for anyone interested. Again, I strongly urge this!

Calendar of Events

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday, June 7 | Food Truck Festival |
| Friday, June 12 | Nursery School Celebration for Departing Children |
| Saturday, June 13, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. | Wellness Fair |
| Sunday, June 14 | Recognition Sunday |
| Saturday, June 20, 5 to 10 p.m. | Parish Celebration at the home of Brian Rance and Melinda Harris |

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 Konyon, 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, Diane Webb, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

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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 (this past week): | Alan Mueser, Daniel McGlynn, Marge Gibson-O'Mara, Alexandra Burkhardt, Barabara Slegel and Thomas Gabel |
| Birthdays (next week): | Thomas Ruder, Christina Wardell, Lynne Koch, Jackie Schroeder and Stephen Weaver |
| Acolytes: | May 31: Jasmine Thatcher, Jaylen Thatcher and Charlie Urban-Mead June 7: Nancy Montero, Kirstin Horn and Deirdre Mae Micker |
| Altar Guild: | May 31: Team Number I June 7: Team Number II |
| 8 a.m. Readers: | May 31: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden June 7: Angela Henry and Lynne Koch |
| 10 a.m. Readers: | May 31: Regina Ardini/Maggie McNamara June 7: Russell Urban-Mead/Paul O'Halloran |
| Ushers: | May 31: Bill and Regina Ardini June 7: Saira Shahani and Pat Keefe |
| Pledge Clerks: | May 31: Paul Littlefield June 7: Deb and Doug Belding |
| Parish Cycle of Prayer: | May 31: Anna Mae Swenson, Masud and Janice Syedullah and Bev Tas June 7: Cathi, Aric and Andrea Tegtmeier, Jeff, Charlessa, Jasmine and Jaylen Thatcher and Kristen Thompson |
| Coffee Hour Hosts: | May 31: Barbara Slegel and the Choir June 7: Audrey Horne, The Halls and The Gaulins |

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This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 6:1-8

Psalm 29

Romans 8:12-17

John 3:1-17

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

Sermon Preached on
Day of Pentecost (Whitsunday)
(May 24, 2015)

"Water, Oil, and Fire"

I don't know if you looked at the sermon title on the sign board when you came in, but I did, and I noticed the title wasn't exactly the way it appears in your bulletin. Instead of "Water, Oil, and Fire," it said "Water, Wind, and Fire." My first thought on that is that our sexton was flashing back to the sixties and that awesome group, "Earth, Wind, and Fire."

On the other hand, perhaps it was the Holy Spirit who inspired him to put it there. After all, the spirit did come to the disciples today like a great rushing wind. But more on the wind later.

For now, it's enough to recognize that today, as you can tell by all the red, is Pentecost. This is the day the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. As the collect says, it's a day when God "opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation." That makes it one of the most important Christian holy days and possibly the only major feast day that is not accompanied by a shopping frenzy. You just don't see that many Pentecost sales.

As one of the Church's major holy days, Pentecost is one of the four days set aside as appropriate for baptism. Pentecost and baptism both open the way of eternal life.

Today, we will baptize three new members of the Body of Christ. Madeline, Emily and Aldona.

With each one of them, we will do three things.

FIRST, we will baptize with water. We'll pour water right on their heads - it's the most recognizable and essential part of baptism. SECOND, we will seal them with oil on the forehead, mark the sign of the cross on their foreheads with oil. THIRD, we will give each one of them a lighted candle lit from the Paschal candle. Okay, so maybe we'll give it to their parents. Still,

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each action tells us a little bit about how the Holy Spirit acts in their lives and in our life - the lives of us who have been living as baptized people for a long time.

So, Water. Why do we pour water on their heads - or in some places totally immerse them in water? Why do we do that? Because the water is a sign. It's a sign of dying and rising to new life. It is a sign of dying to a life that does not know God's love and rising to a new life in which God's love for us is simply a part of our DNA - where we walk through life simply knowing that God loves us no matter what. We are God's children, and there isn't anything anyone can do that change it. God loves you - period. Baptism is a sign that you know how beloved you are. That you are God's own child. That's a whole new way of being, not walking on eggshells or wondering where you fit in.

So part of water is dying and rising again, but it's also becoming part of the Body of Christ. It is welcoming into the Family of God where there is always room at the table. It is a very big family - and we are all brothers and sisters, all here for each other. That's water.

What about oil? When we mark the sign of the cross in oil on the forehead, we say, "you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." But why? Why do we use the oil? Think back to all the bible stories you know where there's oil. In most of the cases, oil is a sign of new ministry. A new mission. Kings are anointed to take on monarch. Prophets are anointed when they are chosen. When you're anointed, you are God's envoy, and you have a calling to fulfill.

That's also true of Baptism. When you are baptized, you are in the first order of ministers of the church. There are four orders listed in the Catechism. The first is the order of the baptized. Next come Bishops. Then priests. Then deacons. The Oil of baptism marks you as not only sealed by the Spirit but of the Spirit working through you, of being chosen by God's Spirit for special work - like Kings & prophets. We are marked as Christ's own by the Holy Spirit.

And don't worry if you don't know exactly what the work is that God is calling you to - you've got a lifetime to figure it out. We all have our lifetimes - no matter how long that may be - to figure out our callings. It may take awhile, but it's there.

Oh - there's something else about oil in scripture. It is a sign of healing. Did you notice how Paul wrote in today's epistle to the Romans that the Spirit is there to help you in your weakness. Jesus says he will send an Advocate, a comforter who will guide you and heal your soul.

The final thing is fire. We give each of the baptized a candle lighted from the Paschal Candle - the quintessential sign of the presence of the Spirit. It reminds us of that day when the Spirit swept down upon the disciples and alit upon their heads - like tongues of flame. Why fire? Because fire is power, it's passion, it's heat and zeal. Fire is unpredictable - it goes where it wants and is dangerous but also essential to life. You are filled with fire in baptism. You are filled with power. You are In-spired.

What did the disciples do when they received the Holy Spirit? They did what they would have been very uncomfortable doing just moments before. They went out and spoke to the vast

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throng who were visiting from all over the known world - and they spoke to them in their own languages even though they could not possibly know all those languages.

Even when people thought they were drunk because of those languages - which must have sounded like so much caterwauling, the disciples continue preaching - and the people understand. Then they expand on that, going out into the known world even as far as India. The disciples gain the ability and courage to preach the good news of Jesus Christ - to go out on their own, knowing God is with them in all things.

Today, these girls become members of the Body of Christ. They are chosen for ministry. They will have passion and courage. And they will have the Holy Spirit, inspiring, cheering, sighing, advocating in all ways...

But there's one more thing. Not in the sermon title but important nonetheless. Maybe the Holy Spirit slipped it in. That's the WIND. Because the Holy Spirit came in like a powerful wind - like a freight train, if you will. I say that because I grew up in the midwest where we have lots of tornadoes - and a tornado coming sounds a lot like a freight train, only you can NOT predict where it's going to go. So think in those terms.

The Holy Spirit comes in like powerful wind that will blow you this way and that way, and you don't know which way you will go. That's okay. You don't have to know where it'll take you. Remember a couple of weeks ago when Phillip was blown by the Spirit till he encountered the Ethiopian eunuch? Just blown to where he was supposed to be - and the eunuch claimed Christ, and was baptized.

So we have water of death and life, of membership into a large family. We have oil of mission and guidance and healing and comfort. We have fire - fire in the belly - of passion and courage and ability. And we have wind - that unpredictable spirit blowing you wherever you are supposed to be - if you let it.

It doesn't matter if you're being baptized today or have been one of the baptized for many decades - those four things are yours. New life, belonging, power. They are yours. Claim them today and forever. Amen.

Hyde Park Wellness Fair

to support

The Hyde Park Community Garden

St. James' Episcopal Church

Saturday, June 13, 2015

10 am - 4 pm

Outdoor Event

Rain or Shine

6'x6' vendor space \$20

(vendor brings own tent, table, and chairs)

To register call 229-2820

AROMATHERAPY



FENG SHUI



YOGA

NUTRITION



GARDENING



MASSAGE



Join us for the 2014

SUMMER YOUTH CONFERENCE



Open to youth entering grades six through first year of college. For more information, email us at: NYYouthConference@yahoo.com

Summer Youth Conference is a spiritual retreat for teens in a summer camp setting. We come together for a week to worship, play, and sing. Our days consist of a theme-related morning program with discussion groups, daily services, swimming, boating, and sports.

Our evenings are full of activities like a dance, talent show, and campfire. At the end, we return home a little different than when we arrived; stronger for the love and friendship we've added to our lives. Please join us for the week, and make friendships that can last a lifetime!



at **INCARNATION CENTER**
Ivoryton, CT

Incarnation Center provides over 700 acres of wooded trails and a mile-long private lake for over 15,000 visitors per year. Founded by Church of the Incarnation, Manhattan, and assisted by churches in the Diocese of New York and Connecticut, Incarnation hosts over 200 church groups and thousands of campers every year.

To find out more, visit:

www.incarnationcenter.org

