

# St. James' E-pistle

## September 13, 2013

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

On Sunday, Archdeacon Bill Parnell will be our guest preacher. He will probably bring in themes of mission as he speaks since he is the Archdeacon for Mission.

An archdeacon is an assistant to the bishop often with a specific focus of service and frequently acting as a representative of the bishop. In ancient times, archdeacons were normally deacons, but today they are predominantly priests.

Mission in the church is seen as our looking outside of our own interests and to the needs of others. This can mean serving the poor or combating injustice but is much broader.

Archdeacon Parnell will preach at both services and will then be available after each service to chat with parishioners. It's my hope that he'll be swamped with people asking such questions as, "What are other churches in the area doing?" "How can we improve our mission?" "How do we clarify our mission?" Or, maybe it's as simple as, "What do you really do?"

Another thing I hope you'll want to do is share with him some of the things we do here at St. James'. After all, he wants to know how the Body of Christ is working throughout the diocese, and there is much going on here that rightfully holds the title of Mission.

Sharing our mission, by the way, is what the diocesan Indaba is all about. I've been talking about it since my return (and before), and I'm starting to get nibbles in the formation of a team, but I still need another solid commitment. Archdeacon Parnell is THE person to ask questions about Indaba since he's the lead person on it.

So come to church this Sunday. Not only will you hear tremendous preaching - he's entertaining as well as profound - but you'll get to share and hear the good news about mission that we are all involved in together for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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### **The News of the Diocese**

**The Election of a Bishop Suffragan:** On Saturday, December 7th, our Diocese will elect its next Bishop Suffragan.

Please keep all who are involved in the process in your prayers:

“Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of all who shall choose a Bishop Suffragan for our Diocese, and all who offer themselves as candidates, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

**2013 Training for Eucharistic Visitors & Eucharistic Ministers:** Two training sessions have been scheduled for lay people chosen to serve as Eucharistic Visitors and Eucharistic Ministers. Both one day sessions will be given on a Saturday from 9:45 am to 2:30 pm, with lunch included. The fee for each participant is \$15.00, and scholarships will be available.

Training will be hosted on September 21, 2013 at Zion, Wappinger's Falls and at Christ Church of Ramapo, Suffern on October 5, 2013. If you wish to register, or have any questions about the training, please contact Arlene Bullard at [abullard@dioceseny.org](mailto:abullard@dioceseny.org).

### **The News of the Church**

**Graveyard Tours.** Tickets for this great event are available on the website at <http://stjameshistoricgraveyardtours.com>. If you're on Facebook, check out our new Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/StJamesHistoricGraveyardTours>.

The 2013 season of the Graveyard Tours will start very soon and we are still in need of Tour Guides! Being a guide is a fun and easy way to help with this major fundraiser. Please sign-up in the narthex.

**Sunday School:** Thanks to all who made “Hay Day” such a great success last Sunday. The first formal day of Sunday School classes is this Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup>.

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**2013 Fall Concert Series.** Join us for our 2013 Fall Concert Series, select Sundays this Fall at 3:00 p.m. at the Chapel. Our 2nd concert, on October 6, will feature three friends, but individual musicians, who will bring their Greenwich Village open mic repertoire to Hyde Park. The headliner of this trio is Randy Burns, who has been part of the New York City music scene since the 1960s and has opened for the likes of Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs and many others. On October 20 we welcome "The Cupcakes", a trio of folk musicians from the Hudson Valley. Finally, we will wrap up the series on November 17 with the folksy sounds of local favorites, "Betty and the Baby Boomers".

Tickets sold at the door: \$12 ADULTS, \$10 SENIORS, FREE children 12 & under. SEASON TICKETS: \$2 discount each ticket for all four concerts -- call for info. Complimentary Refreshments. Call the Parish Office at 845-229-2820.

**Annual Harvest Dinner.** At long last....another one of our very popular roast pork dinner will be held on Friday, November 1st at the Parish House at St. James' Episcopal Church, Hyde Park.

This dinner will be a fundraiser for the Hyde Park Community Garden. The Community Garden, now in its second full season, is on the grounds of St. James' Church. We have grown and donated thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables for the Hyde Park Food Pantry and Hillcrest House in Poughkeepsie.

In addition, the garden has expanded this year and leased out plots to 21 local residents for their own personal use and many have donated their bounty to the Pantry as well.

There still are a number of things we still need for the garden, so please mark it on your calendars to come by and have a delicious roast pork meal with potatoes and other vegetables bought from our local farmers, assorted fruit cobblers for dessert, salad, rolls and beverages all served family style.

Call the church office at (845) 229-2820 for reservations. Hope to see you there!

**P.S.** We are finished with the corn for the season in the garden, and invite anyone to cut down the stalks for their own personal decorations or for the Graveyard Tours.

An Invitation... from Bobbie Wells

Thanks to the modern miracle of the Nook, I have stumbled across an incredible read. Published in the 1980s it begins:

"I am doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice – not because of his voice, or because he was the smallest person I ever knew, or even because he was the

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instrument of my mother's death, but because he is the reason I believe in God; I am a Christian because of Owen Meany."

Some of you may recognize this as the iconic opening sentence from John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. This novel, rooted in the Episcopal/Anglican tradition, is a coming of age tale encompassing the years from WW II through Vietnam and, in its telling, addresses religious/political issues as relevant today as they were then.

*A Prayer for Owen Meany* made me laugh aloud and shed tears. It is book for savoring, not gulping, and the final pages leaves more questions than answers.

A book study must, Fr. Chuck has offered to facilitate if I organize. Anyone interested?

Please contact me in person, by phone: 229-5008, or e-mail: [bjwells@optonline.net](mailto:bjwells@optonline.net)

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

Janet Arms, Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Kurt Burkhardt, George Buso, Michael Day, Jane Gagliardoto, Jack Gordy, Harold Hall, Jolanda Heijenbrok, Brooke Helton, Rev. Don Hoger, Barbara Knakal, Rosemary Leuken, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Joan Oetjen, Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Deborah Porach, Don Renten, John Robinson, Marty Schroeder, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Debbie Stone, Gloria Veach, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way and Cliff Wells.

## **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:	Patty Caswell, Kristin Cotton, Christopher Dingee, Sara Dingee, Laura Kinne, Remo Valdatta and Pat Keeffe
Acolytes:	September 15: Team III 9/22/2013: Team IV
Altar Guild:	September 15: Team Number III 9/22/2013: Team Number I
8 a.m. Readers:	September 15: Debbie Belding and Lucille Ogden 9/22/2013: Angela Henry and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	September 15: Patty Caswell/Nancy Montero 9/22/2013: Regina Ardin/Sophie Ciferri

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Ushers: September 15: Dean Caswell and Austin Horn  
9/22/2013: Bill and Regina Ardini  
Pledge Clerks: September 15: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher  
9/22/2013: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell  
Coffee Hour Hosts: September 15: Deidre Micker and the Gausepohls  
9/22/2013: Pat Keeffe and Audrey Horne (coffee: Kathy Graff)

### **This Week's Lectionary**

Exodus 32:7-14

Psalm 51:1-11

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

Sermon Preached on  
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
(September 8)

### "Flipping a Coin"

Let's play a little game. (Flip a coin). Heads or Tails? Can you predict it? Now, imagine each flip of the coin is a decision you have to make. Imagine each flip of the coin is your relationship with God. Do you know how it'll end up? Do you know the results? It's a lot like life - so many of the decisions we make, they seem straight forward, but predicting their outcomes is about as reliable as flipping a coin. Life is uncertain.

I bring this up because our scriptures are, on the surface, simple, but look at them a little closer, and they're a tangled web of uncertainty. Moses sets a choice before the Hebrew people: follow God or go after other gods. Life or death. And, he says, if at any time their hearts stray, they will die.

And yet, the people of Israel did stray. Still, the nation of Israel lasted quite a long time. No shorter nor longer, really, than the average country of the day. Countries were regularly invaded, overthrown, or even completely destroyed. Israel seems to have fared no better or worse than anyone else, regardless of whether they were being faithful. Same's true with the kings. Many righteous kings were overthrown or killed in battle, while many unrighteous ones reigned a long time and died of old age. Turns out, being wicked - lying, cheating, abuse, in addition to idolatry - is rewarded on earth about as much as being righteous.

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You might say, "God will get them in the afterlife," but we don't know that. God's mercy might extend to everyone, even the worst among us. So, should I be good or wicked? [FLIP COIN] Or look at Onesimus. He was a runaway slave. He broke the law. Was he bad? Or was Philemon, the slave owner? Today, we'd say it's obvious, but not even Paul was arguing to get rid of slavery - just to treat this slave like a brother. Does that mean that slavery is really okay? Should we have slaves? [FLIP COIN]

And Jesus doesn't help matters with his demand that we essentially cut all our ties with the people we love and get rid of all our possessions. It's simple - clear cut, right? Hate your family in order to be totally dedicated to God. Give up all you have so that you'll have treasure in heaven. Raise your hand if you've done that. Throughout Christianity, how many people have? We make lots of scholarly justifications for keeping our stuff, and they sound convincing. But what did Christ really mean when he said we have to hate our mother, father, sisters, brothers, even life itself if we want to be a disciple? Are we doomed by not giving everything up? [FLIP COIN]

What are some of our decisions that leave us uncertain? On a national level, try these: Do we invade Syria? [FLIP COIN] Do we try to improve health care? What do we do about education? What about immigration reform?

As a church, do we get involved with politics if it directly impacts the gospel? [FLIP] Do we take social stands? Do we evangelize? From grand scales to the personal, every day, we flip our coins with no certainty that we are making the right decision.

How can we keep doing this without giving up in despair?

We can't. The decisions you and I make whether at home, out about town, or around the world - they're unpredictable. There will always be unintended consequences.

All we can ever do is make the best decision we know how at the time.

In faith, for example, experience tells me ours is a loving God - I choose to follow Christ, even imperfectly, NOT because I think it'll get me more stuff in this life - not because I think those who don't will get in trouble in the afterlife. I choose Christ simply because his love for me compels me.

It's that love that Christ says needs to be the basis for all our decisions. Love one another as I have loved you.

You're still flipping a coin when you make decisions, mind you, because you don't know the outcome. Do I give money to this homeless person? Do I go out of my way to help them find a job? Do I protest this injustice?

But Jesus doesn't ask us to worry about the outcome. He asks us to worry about what's behind our actions. And you don't have to flip a coin to know if you're acting out of love. Amen.