

St. James' E-pistle

September 16, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

You may be aware of the many tragedies in schools and other public spaces that have topped the headlines over the past decade. Many schools in particular have adopted locked-door policies, requiring visitors to be "buzzed" in.

A couple of years ago, parents of St. James' nursery school began expressing concern about our unlocked doors during school hours. Leadership of the parish also became concerned for employees, especially our secretary Dyan and bookkeeper who are often alone in the building.

Thanks to a generous gift by Gordon and Virginia Mackenzie, we have been able to install a door system that allows Dyan to see guests before allowing them in. From now on, when someone who does not have a key wants to enter the building during office hours, they must ring the doorbell and wait to be let in.

There is another unit in my office for times when I am there alone or when Dyan is away and I am in the office.

I don't think this will be much of an inconvenience for most of us, but there are a few things to be aware of:

1. Please understand the priority of the church is to keep the children and employees in our care safe.
2. Please remember to ring the bell when you visit during office hours.
3. If you have a key, you can get in without ringing the bell.
4. The office is closed on Mondays, so unless you have a key, you can't get in. This is nothing new, but it bears repeating.
5. This will have no effect on Sundays. The door can still be operated as normal and can be locked in the open position for coffee hour.
6. **We will need your help:** Dyan is sometimes out of the office (vacation, sick days, personal days). On those days, it is more important than ever to have volunteers watch the office. We have always had a tradition of volunteers answering the phone, but operating the door (a simple function) adds to the importance of this job. So please! Call the office and let Dyan know you're willing to serve when called upon! We can then keep a list of willing volunteers.

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If you have questions about this new system, please don't hesitate to see me. It may be a sign of the times, that we need such a system, but it is also a sign of our concern for those who entrust themselves and their children to our care.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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The News of the Church

Men's Breakfast: The Men of the Parish - anyone 18 and over - will meet at Cranberry's on **Saturday, September 17** for breakfast, fellowship, and maybe some plotting! We hope you'll be part of it!

St. James Outreach will be meeting on Wed, September 21 at 6:30 PM in the Wilks Room. All are welcome to join and participant in our meeting

Harvest Roast Pork Dinner: A Fundraiser for the Community Garden. **September 23rd** from 5-7:30 p.m.. Adults are \$15, Children 10+ are \$10, Under 10 is Free. Call the Parish Office for reservations.

Our Outreach Committee has designated **Sunday, September 25** as **Episcopal Relief and Development Sunday**. As the mission arm of the Episcopal Church, we, as a parish community, will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider making a donation to support Episcopal Relief and Development's work. Special Offering envelopes will be provided. Cash or checks payable to St. James' Church/memo line: Episcopal Relief.

Graveyard Tour Fliers: Graveyard Tour Fliers: Have you taken fliers and business cards for the Graveyard Tours? Please do so today, tomorrow or whenever you can! There are plenty for everyone in the narthex of the church - just waiting to spread the news of our Tours.

And remember, these Graveyard Tours are not only our biggest parish fundraiser of the year, they are also evangelical outreach - because as they share the stories of past members, they also share their struggle with living out the Gospel. It's a winner all around.

Graveyard Tour Sponsors: In the past, we have invited sponsors to contribute toward the production of the Graveyard Tours. This year, we have begun to feature the sponsors on our Graveyard Tour web page. It helps us if parishioners and guests patronize our sponsors and let them know that they heard about them through the Graveyard Tours. The sponsor page will be up in a few days (NOT ready quite yet!). Check it out next week! And if you can think

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of anyone who might be a good sponsor, please let us know - or put the bug in their ear yourself!

Troop 80 BBQ Chicken Dinner: Boy Scout Troop 80, which St. James' sponsors, is holding a BBQ Chicken Dinner on **Saturday, October 22**. It is take-out only. Because its timing conflicts with the Graveyard Tours, customers will pick up their chicken at the United Methodist Church between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. All tickets must be purchased in advance. If you'd like a ticket, please see Bill Fenwick (or any other scout from Troop 80).

Acolyte Festival: Save the date - **Saturday, October 22** - for the Diocesan Youth Acolyte Festival! It's a full day of mostly meeting other youth, learning a few tricks of the trade, and in general having a great time. We're looking for all youth and a few adults to make the trip

Join the Churchyard Committee! Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at vinehall3@aol.com.

Episcopal Election Toolkit Available: It is the official position of the Episcopal Church to encourage all eligible members to vote in every election. We see it not only as part of our civic duty but as part of our collective life of faith. If we are not engaged in the community, then we are withdrawn - which is not the example our Lord showed.

To encourage enthusiastic and informed participation in the election process, the Episcopal Church has published an Election "Toolkit" with information such as what representatives are up for election, who your officials are, and what the issues of the day are. It includes the Episcopal Church's official position on several issues, which may be helpful in your deliberations.

The most important thing in the church's eyes, however, is that we all go out and vote! Here's a link to the "Toolkit":

<http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal/EpiscopaliansVote>

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Spiritual / educational websites to deepen your faith:

- Acts 8 Movement
- GrowChristians
- Episcopal Cafe (a favorite)
- The Slate Project (not affiliated with Slate magazine)
- Virtual Abbey
- Second Life Church (gives you a virtual church experience if you're into that sort of thing. Fun to look at maybe).
- Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)
- "Edge of Enclosure" (weekly lectionary-based blog post)
- The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook)
- Anne Lamott (via Facebook)

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

- 18 The Episcopal Church's House of Deputies
- 19 The Rev. Gay Jennings and Steve Smith, Strategic Plan Consultants
- 20 St. Edmund's Church, Bronx
- 21 The Strategic Plan Advisory Committee of the Diocese
- 22 Grace Church, Millbrook
- 23 St. John's Church & St. Paul's Chapel, South Salem
- 24 Diocesan Mission Partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti

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

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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.

Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dee, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson (brother of Mary Gabel), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, 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):	Laura Kinne, Pat Keeffe and Fred Champion
Birthdays (this coming week):	Edith Kline, Thomas I. Finnigan, Kathy Graff, Stephen Gaulin, Laurel Ardini and William Holland
Acolytes:	September 18: TBA September 25: TBA
Altar Guild:	September 18: Team Number I September 25: Team Number I
8 a.m. Readers:	September 18: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan September 25: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	September 18: Russell Urban-Mead and Nancy Montero September 25: Patty Caswell and Andy Hall
Ushers:	September 18: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher September 25: Andrew and Tanya Hall
Pledge Clerks:	September 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

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September 25: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell

Parish Cycle of Prayer: September 18: St. James' Nursery School, Kurt, Meg, Alexandra, Aaron and Bryanna Burkhardt

September 25: St. James' Church School, Caroline Canon

Coffee Hour Hosts: September 18: Dierdre Mae Micker, The Urban-Meads

September 25: Saira Shahani and Brian Rance

This Week's Lectionary

Amos 8:4-7

Psalm 113

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

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

Sermon Preached on
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
(September 11, 2016)

"The Quality of Mercy"

Ever have words pop into your head unbidden? You're in bed and suddenly, you're repeating a phrase and wondering, "Where did that come from?" One night this week, the phrase "The quality of mercy" came to me like that.

Well, our lessons today are indeed about the many qualities of mercy, so I thought, "Ooh, good sermon title."

And then I thought, "That sounds too perfect. These have to be someone else's words."

Turns out they're Shakespeare's, from his play, "The Merchant of Venice." I confess, I had never seen or read it before, so I'm not quite sure where they come from. But, of course, then I had to read it. Here's a little bit of the speech it comes from:

The quality of mercy is not strained.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

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Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

It's a story about a man who wants revenge - who literally wants his pound of flesh - and how he must be convinced to show mercy which, according to Shakespeare is truly the most godly thing a human can show.

But, this is also a story we have to be careful with because the supposed bad guy in the play - who is Jewish and who is portrayed as being bad because he is Jewish - is also a victim of the supposed good - Christian - guy's overt anti-semitism. It ends with, among other indignities, the forced baptism of the Jewish character.

So what do I do with that? Well, mercy is still the word of the day - only with caution. Mercy is, after all, essentially forgiveness or leniency shown to someone who has no right to expect it. It is considered one of the highest Christian virtues, one that Paul holds up in his letter to Timothy as being crucial especially to leaders. Paul mentions to Timothy - an up and coming church leader - that he himself received God's mercy and can do no less for others.

Certainly, we see God's mercy in the reading from Exodus - the people have built a golden calf which they've chosen to worship because God has not been responsive enough, and Moses has been gone up on the mountain too long. They have utterly rejected God, and God's solution is to wipe them out. Only because Moses begs for mercy on their behalf does God relent.

And when we get to Jesus, who is criticized for eating with sinners, we see God's mercy on full display. Not only is there forgiveness, we have the image of God going out to seek us when we have gone astray. And not only finding us but rejoicing and - going back to Jesus - breaking bread together.

Indeed, the quality of mercy is NOT strained. It CAN drop as the gentle rain from heaven and it CAN bless both the one who gives and the one who receives it. It can reconcile foes, it can reunite families, it can make friends out of strangers.

Or... it can remain just a word.

Today, as we all are painfully aware, is the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attacks that killed so many including our own Paul Tegtmeier. On a day like today, where we are justifiably so aggrieved, the question of mercy is particularly poignant. What does it mean to show mercy in the midst of pain? To whom would we show mercy?

Over the last fifteen years, we have seen a lot of opportunities for mercy - for forgiveness and compassion where it might not be expected. But we have also seen a lot of condemning of entire groups of people - especially Muslims within our country - for no other reason than because

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they are Muslims. Not unlike the Merchant of Venice. Is that the quality of mercy demanded by God?

The strange thing about God's mercy is that it doesn't always require repentance. It does not always require that one show the behavior we want. The Hebrews were still worshiping the golden calf even as Moses was pleading for their lives. Paul was still persecuting Christians when God called him. And the lost sheep was still lost when the shepherd went out in search of it.

Mercy does not start when someone else says, "Please forgive me." It starts the moment we are wronged. Because that is the mercy God has shown us.

And in our case, mercy can mean reaching out to neighbors who are stigmatized because of their religion.

Interestingly, Christian mercy, according to Paul, is also always flavored with our own repentance. He knew to show mercy because he had received it - and he reflected regularly on his own actions which required such mercy.

It is never, so God would teach us, a one-way thing. The evil that the Jewish Shylock would commit in the "Merchant of Venice" was based on a lifetime of evil visited upon him because he was Jewish.

So on this day when we are asked to remember the evil visited up us - and it was a great evil - let us recall the quality of God's mercy and seek to emulate it. Let us, like Paul, look at our own biases and seek God's forgiveness where appropriate, trusting in God's mercy which is extended even before we ask.

It is not easy to offer mercy. Nor is it easy to seek it. But the overriding quality of mercy is God's love - and with God's love all things are possible. Amen.