

# St. James' E-pistle

## September 2, 2016

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

Fall is the time of transitions. Summer vacations are ending, college students are leaving home, and of course, school is starting back up.

I am writing to inform you of a transition that St. James' is now undergoing.

Last week, we received the letter of resignation from our organist/choir director, Mary Grosskopf, effective August 31. We certainly wish her well in her future pursuits.

Nevertheless, her departure may leave you with questions about where music will be headed in the coming weeks and months. Fortunately, Denise Bassen, who played for us the last two Sundays, has agreed to play again this Sunday and potentially longer, depending on schedules. She has expressed a willingness to consider helping the choir start off its new season, and we will be in discussions this week.

For most people, when there is a time of transition, we feel a level of panic or crisis. Fortunately, we can also see such times as a moment of opportunity.

Consequently, I intend to work closely with the Vestry and the choir to outline the direction we would like music to take for the church. Of course, music in the church concerns everyone, so I would like to hear from any and all parishioners who feel invested in how we praise God through our music.

Rest assured that we will not only take all input seriously, but will examine every aspect of our music program.

What are your priorities for music at St. James'? Please let me know.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

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

**Inquirers re-start:** Our Inquirers Series picks back up on **Thursday, September 8**. All parishioners are welcome to be part of this series of classes, and I guarantee you'll always learn something. The first class starts at 7:00 PM. If you are interested in being confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church when Bishop Shin comes in December but missed the Spring session, come see me! We can easily work around what you missed.

**Regional Council:** Please keep our clergy and delegates in your prayers on **September 10** as they meet with the regional council.

**Quarterly Chapel Service:** On **Sunday, September 11**, we will have our Quarterly Chapel Service - 8:00 AM.

**Sunday School Registration Starting Soon!** **September 11!** Get ready for BACK TO SCHOOL! Sunday School, that is. Registration for Sunday School this year will be on Sunday, September 11. The first day of classes is **Sunday, September 18**. Remember, we welcome - we encourage - everyone to come. Bring your friends! We want them. Bring your siblings! Bring anyone you know who you think could use a bit of God's love.

**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!

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

**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.

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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.

**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

**Remember Your Pledge this Summer:** Each summer we send out a reminder to keep the church in your sights during those long hot days. This is true not only for attendance and prayers but for pledging. Thanks!

**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](mailto: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:**

I have encouraged you to look at the following sites for spiritual inspiration. I should have also encouraged you to SHARE your own resources. And so, I am delighted to share three NEW RESOURCES that were brought to my attention by a parishioner (I didn't ask permission to share their name - otherwise, I would). I am presenting them with this parishioner's notes on what makes them so great. Enjoy!

1. The Rev. Suzanne Guthrie's weekly lectionary-based posting called "Edge of Enclosure":  
<http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/>

I have subscribed to her blog so that her lectionary-based selections of fine art and quotations pulled from theological and literary sources are sent to my inbox every Monday.

Here is the one that came today: <http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/proper17c.html>

A favorite excerpt from her selections for Aug 22 include the following:

Since we ourselves are human beings, we must set before others the meal of kindness no matter why they need it – whether because they are widows, orphans, or exiles; or because they are brutalized by masters, crushed by rulers, dehumanized by tax-collectors, bloodied by robbers, or victimized by the insatiate greed of thieves, be it through confiscation of property or ship-wreck. All such people are equally deserving of mercy, and they look to us for their needs just as we look to God for ours. -Gregory of Nazianzus d.389

Oration14 On the Love of the Poor, quoted from J. Robert Wright, Readings for the Daily Office from the Early Church

2. The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook): a blend of inspirational memes, jaw-droppingly beautiful photos from the Celtic regions of the British Isles, and interesting links to smart and merciful posts from other sites.

3. Anne Lamott - also primarily via Facebook, though you can read many of her articles on Salon.com, and you can buy her books at any well-stocked book store. (Quoting from the wikipedia entry about her, Lamott's writings are "Marked by their self-deprecating humor and openness, [covering] such subjects as alcoholism, single-motherhood, depression, and Christianity.")

This was Anne's post on Aug 22:

'This is your conscience, artists and writers. You know that your conscience has tried in every possible subtle way to get you writing, drawing, singing, or dancing again, but you claim to be too busy, or too intent to begin as soon as....as soon as your child goes off to college, as soon as you retire, as soon as, as soon as. Both God and your conscience have given upon nuance and subtlety--therefore, this terrifying authoritarian figure has been summoned. He is pointing at YOU, you who wants to begin your memoir or novel, or join another choir or dance troupe. There is no such thing as "as soon as." As soon as means "never." "As soon as" means that

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someday you are going to DO regret having blown the invitation to create, to be an artist, to make marvelous music and messes and creations and gifts--gifts for you, and for us. It is part of our plan for world peace--"Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty." So get to it, okay? Today for one 30 minute pod, of scribbling, singing, gathering found objects from a stream or garden, for a collage. As this terrifying authoritarian figure frequently asks of me, "Deal?" '

So, add these resources to those listed below:

- 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)

### **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."

- 4 Christian Formation Commission of the Diocese
- 5 St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's School
- 6 Secondary School Chaplains of the Diocese
- 7 St. Paul's Church, Chester
- 8 St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville, Manhattan
- 9 National Association of Episcopal Schools
- 10 Mid-Hudson Executive Committee

### **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

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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.

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):	Liz Van Wagner, Sharan Alessandra, Charles L. Pardee, Jr. and Michael Glancey
Birthdays (this coming week):	Laura Kinne, Pat Keeffe and Fred Champion
Acolytes:	September 4: Nancy Montero September 11: TBA
Altar Guild:	September 4: Team Number III September 11: Team Number III
8 a.m. Readers:	September 4: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo September 11: Lucille Ogden and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	September 4: Regina Ardini and Deirdre Mae Micker September 11: Wilma Tully and Bobbie Wells
Ushers:	September 4: Bill and Regina Ardini September 11: Patty Drake and Pat Keeffe
Pledge Clerks:	September 4: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright

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September 11: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass

Parish Cycle of Prayer: September 4: Doug and Deb Belding; Carol and David Bender, John and Donna Beyer

September 11: Robin Bohlmann, Justin, Danielle and Emerson Bohlmann, Janet Bright

Coffee Hour Hosts: September 4: Audrey Horne

September 11: The Eames, Jodi Triola, Pat Rooney

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

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 1

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33

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

Sermon Preached on  
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
(August 28, 2016)

"So, I Can't Be Proud?"

Probably one of the biggest rookie mistakes for a preacher is to pull out a dictionary and say, "According to Merriam Webster, the word X means...." That is SO contrived!

That's why I'm not going to pull out a dictionary: I wrote it down. According to Merriam Webster, the word PRIDE means three things.

: a feeling that you respect yourself and deserve to be respected by other people

: a feeling of happiness that you get when you or someone you know does something good.

: a feeling that you are more important or better than other people.

Seriously, when a word gets in the way of understanding the gospel, sometimes you just have to unpack it, and PRIDE is one of those loaded words and concepts which we encounter in today's

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readings. Now, for centuries we have been saying that pride is a sin. Just look at the reading from Sirach:

"The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord; the heart has withdrawn from its Maker.

For the beginning of pride is sin,

and the one who clings to it pours out abominations."

That's great until we feel proud about something. Then we start thinking: this whole "Pride is a Sin" thing is outdated and pointless. I want to feel proud!

So, maybe we can feel better by realizing that not ALL pride is a sin, just one type. You get to keep two out of three, and that ain't bad. But which type is sinful - and why?

Maybe we can figure it out if we look at some examples of pride:

The first definition was: A feeling that you respect yourself and deserve respect from others.

One group that has taken that definition to heart in standing up for itself is the LGBTQ community. Every year, they have Gay Pride parades in order to emphasize that they are a valid part of society. These parades started in response to centuries of abuse, prison, and murder for being gay. They just said, "We're not going to be beaten down anymore." Remember the gay nightclub shootings in Orlando? A surprising number of Christian pastors openly praised these murders - so if I were gay, I'd say there is still some work to be done before mutual respect is achieved. But their pride keeps them going.

The second definition was: a feeling of happiness you get when you or someone you know does something good.

I am, for example, proud of the Episcopal Church's stance on an issue you may not have even heard of. They - we - are supporting the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in its protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The protest, which started with just a few dozen tribal elders a few weeks ago has now grown to thousands who are trying to prevent an oil pipeline running through sacred tribal burial grounds and - even more importantly - across and under a lake which is partly on reservation land (this lake incidentally was created in 1944 in violation of treaties between the tribe and the government, and displaced thousands of native families). Anyway, the lake connects to the Missouri River, and a single oil spill could destroy water access not only for the entire reservation but for regional farmers and ranchers who also support the protest.

For the record, the reservation doesn't argue that the pipeline shouldn't necessarily be built, only that A) it can be done without violating sacred lands or threatening the water of thousands and that B) the plans were made without consulting or even informing the tribe even though it

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concerns their land. The Episcopal Church has had a strong presence on the reservation for nearly 150 years, which is one reason we were early on the scene. Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry has said they protest is the intersection of justice and environmental stewardship, and calls on the church to stand with the native people despite the inevitable harsh criticism. I am proud of this action - doing right in the face of backlash.

That leaves us with the third kind of pride: a feeling that you are more important or better than other people. Another word for this is hubris. It is the dark side of pride. It is self-serving and arrogant. It is what we see in the gospel today when people were vying for top spot at the table - because "I deserve the best." Such pride IS a sin.

That's why I have always been careful about language such as "We're number 1" or "We're the greatest." Aside from being a little delusional - there will always be someone or group that'll knock us down eventually - it is destructive. God never asks us, certainly never commands us to be better or above, but to love mutually.

This kind of pride gets in the way of love because you cannot be looking out for others when you are looking out for number one. If you're too busy getting on top of the other, you will not be able to see them as your equal - as your fellow child of God. If it's all about you, how can you exhibit mutual love as the letter to the Hebrews commends to us?

This sort of pride which Jesus condemns in the Gospel, is quite literally anti-Christian.

So, can't I be proud? Sure, if by proud you mean that you respect yourself and know that you deserve respect from others.

Sure, if by proud you mean that you are happy when you or someone you know or associate with does something good.

But if it means thinking you or "your people" are more important or better than others, then no, that will not be pleasing in the eyes of the Lord.

So two of the three definitions of pride work for us as Christians - and really, two out of three ain't bad. Amen.