

# St. James' E-pistle

## September 25, 2015

### Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

A classmate of mine from seminary, Dan Edwards, who is now the Bishop of Nevada wrote an interesting post - maybe a rant - on Facebook yesterday.

He wrote: "The average pledge in my congregation in Georgia ranged from \$1,100 to \$1,500. In terms of personal wealth, my congregation was middle class, the number 3 Episcopal church in town on that score. The average pledge in Nevada this year is \$409. That's why we are going to Project Resource and why we send people to TENS. \$409 is not a funding problem. It's a spiritual problem!"

Project Resource is a stewardship conference - which he was on his way to as he wrote. TENS is The Episcopal Network for Stewardship.

You may be asking yourself, WHY is \$409 a year a spiritual problem? Isn't that giving for the ministry of the church? Is he saying that I have to give more money in order for God to love me? Is he saying that I have to buy salvation?

Trust me, that's not what this guy is saying.

But he IS saying that lack of giving is a symptom of spiritual illness. Shrunken stewardship of resources can quite often be shown to be directly connected to a shrunken and perverted connection not only to God but to others. A spiritually sick view of resources is that they are there for our security and pleasure. We have it for ourselves. And we need more of it. Always.

Did you know that the average billionaire doesn't spend much money? Well, not relative to their fortune. They buy their yachts, sure, and some nice toys for their nice vacations, but as a percentage of their wealth, they spend practically nothing. Average joes like you and me, on the other hand, spend 80% and more of our earnings to do the things we need and want.

So what are billionaires doing with all that money? Nothing. Or to be precise, they hoard it (You've seen that show "Hoarders"? It's the same thing, only it's with money in banks and stocks). What for? To make more. What for? To have more. What for? To make more. And so on in an endless loop.

In other words, they keep accumulating money but do nothing with it. As a percentage of their wealth, they spend it neither on themselves nor on others. Why? Because they are

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afraid. Afraid of not having enough (just in case). Afraid of losing it in bad deals. Afraid of looking bad compared to other billionaires. Afraid of losing status. Afraid of insecurity.

All that wealth eases their fear, but it will never be enough, and they will always want more even if it's impossible for them to ever spend it. Their souls are collapsed on themselves, and even if they give out a little to charity, they are only doing as much as socially necessary to let them get on with business.

Now, I know a few parishioners who would be willing to risk this kind of fear as long as they could do it in that kind of luxury. But that doesn't change the spiritual deformation indicated by this kind of hoarding. Jesus very often began sentences with, "Fear not." Don't be afraid.

That may be why Sister Jean Chittister of the Benedictine Sisters, an author and leader in Benedictine spirituality, wrote: "Clearly, the purpose of wealth is not security. The purpose of wealth is reckless generosity, the kind that sings of the lavish love of God, the kind that rekindles hope on dark days, the kind that reminds us that God is with us always."

I've said it before and will say it again that stewardship is not just about giving money to the church, as much as we require money to do much of our mission. I've also said (and will say again) that giving ought to be more than just to the church. There are so many things out there that are good and righteous but beyond the scope of the church's particular mission.

There are so many spiritual aspects to giving that it's hard to know where to turn. You learn to hold onto the things of this world lightly. You learn how everything is a gift. You learn humility because you didn't earn it. You connect with your brothers and sisters with whom you are sharing your bounty. You are participating in the grand experiment that is this life.

So my friend Dan is right. Shrunken giving indicates a spiritual problem. Always has, always will. Joyful giving indicates health - and generally speaking increasing joy.

I would love to say, "Increase your joy by giving more to St. James'!" But it won't bring you joy unless you see the gospel, see Jesus as worth letting go of a bit of your fear for.

My job isn't to coax you into giving the church more money. But it is to help you along your path toward God in Christ. It's sort of like a personal trainer standing next to you on the treadmill, urging, prodding, encouraging and sometimes helping you pick up the pieces when you've given up.

Sometimes the personal training involves looking at all aspects of your life and putting them in balance. One aspect of that for me is urging each person to look at their relationship with money (and all it implies). Stewardship season is a good time to do that (like an annual checkup), but really, it is a year-round project.

So look at your giving, your saving, your clinging and your holding lightly. Look at your need for security versus your ability for reckless generosity.

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Oh, and if you're feeling particularly fit, why not join our Stewardship Committee where you can discover more and more of who we are in relation to the world, AND help the congregation do the wondrous things God has given us to do! Please see our Junior Warden, Meg Burkhardt, if you would like to be part of it!

In Christ,

Chuck+

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

**Episcopal Relief and Development** This **Sunday, September 27** is Episcopal Relief and Development Sunday as we celebrate their mission of bringing hope to our neighbors around the world. Please prayerfully consider making a donation in honor of their 75th Anniversary celebration. There will be special offering envelopes in the pews to place your cash or check donations. Checks are to be payable to St. James' Church - memo line: Episcopal Relief. Thank you.

**Pledge Clerk Desperately NEEDED!** We really need a Pledge Clerk to work with one of our experienced clerks. We'll show you the ropes. You would serve about once a month. Please consider stepping up to the pledge clerk plate!

**KEYS MISSING:** We need your help. There are two office keys missing that we need back. Sometime between Friday night and Saturday evening, the key to the filing cabinet and the key to the main office have gone missing. If you were using them and forgot to return them, it would be so very helpful if you would return them as soon as possible. Thanks!

**WELCOME** to two new Acolytes: Last Sunday, we trained two new acolytes: Bill Fenwick and Braeden Hall. Welcome! Bill will be serving for the first time this Sunday, so be sure to wish him luck! Braeden will serve the following Sunday. Thanks, boys!

**GRAVEYARD TOUR TICKETS ARE ON SALE:** Three tours have already sold out! Be sure to purchase your Graveyard Tour tickets by visiting our website: [www.stjameshydepark.org](http://www.stjameshydepark.org). Encourage your friends, colleagues and families to get their tickets, too! We hope that sending people directly to the church's website will make the purchasing process easier.

**Bible Study Reading-1 Kings:** We've had our second session in the book 1 Kings, so if you don't know anything about it, now's your chance! It meets every Thursday at 11:00 AM. Open to everyone.

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**Reading Program Gets Go-Ahead:** We recently received a request from the principal of North Park Elementary School to re-establish the Reading Adventures program we had operated for so long at Hyde Park Elementary. The School District has given its enthusiastic support, and we are now in the process of contacting volunteers to see if we have enough to make the program work. If you would like to be an after-school reader with a child, please let me know.

**Tables, Tables, Tables:** You'll notice this Sunday that there are no long tables in the parish hall. That's because the old tables were removed Wednesday to make room for the new tables on Thursday. Only problem is, the new tables ran into delivery problems and won't be here till next week! So, this Sunday, we will use card tables - and it will be wonderful. The following Sunday, we will celebrate our new tables.

About those old tables: If you would like to have one or more of our old tables, you can have them! We recommend a donation of \$10 per table, but if that's too much, give what you want and take what you want. There are 16 tables in all.

**WEEDERS WANTED:** Thank you to everyone who volunteered to take a garden or path assignment for weeding in an effort to "put our best foot forward." We still need 3 or 4 more volunteers. You will choose a garden or path to adopt and be responsible for its weeding and upkeep throughout the year. You will be able to work on it on your own schedule (There will be no designated work days, just whenever it fits in with you.) It probably should only need your attention three or four times a year (if that). Bring a friend. If you can help fill that schedule, please call Sue DeLorenzo at 266-3196 or Carol Vinehall at 849-1914. We'd really appreciate your help. Thanks again.

**Wellness Fair:** Being held on **Saturday, October 4th** from 12-6 p.m. at the Hyde Park Farmers' Market. Please see attached flier.

**Get Your Coffee Hour On!** Would you like to clear out your cupboard of cookies? Feel like baking a cake or a sheet of brownies? Find a good 'buy one, get one free' deal on baked goods at stop n shop? If you can donate some goodies and place them on the table in the parish hall before church, you too can be a coffee hour volunteer-- that's all it takes! So please, fill up all those empty slots thru December on the clipboard in the narthex & we'll handle the rest. P.S. Of course, if you feel called to get more involved, just ask Saira or any other coffee team member how you can help!

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**Bless Your Pets - October 4:** This year, the Feast of St. Francis - **October 4** - falls on a Sunday. We don't want to interfere with regular worship, but we also don't want to ignore the patron saint of animals and the environment, so at 3:00 PM that day, we will hold a simple service to thank God for our pets and all the animals of the world. Bring your pets, bring your friends, bring yourselves!

**Looking Ahead to Thanksgiving Dinner:** Even though we still have much to do in October, plans are being made for Thanksgiving. The Community of Hyde Park - including churches, chamber of commerce, schools and other organizations are teaming up to host a community-wide Thanksgiving Dinner at the New York State Park Headquarters in Staatsburg. The dinner will be on Sunday, **November 22 at 5:30 PM**. There will be a ticket price, though there will also be many tickets available for those who cannot afford it.

St. James' has been asked to bake between 20 and 30 apple pies for the dinner. I'm still waiting to hear how the supplies will be provided, but our main concern right now is getting a few bakers who are willing to bake - we can do it either at homes or all together at the church. Let Fr. Chuck know!

**Thanksgiving Service:** Notice is also given that on **Tuesday, November 24**, the community churches will hold their annual Community Thanksgiving Service. This year, it will be at St. James' Chapel, which hosts three other churches along with our own occasional services. If you would like to participate in the service, please let Fr. Chuck know.

**Take Some Business Cards:** Share your church with your friends and neighbors with a St. James' Business Card. You never know when you have the opportunity to help someone find their way to God.

### **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."

September

27 Westchester Medical Center Chaplaincy, Valhalla

28 Church musicians

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29 On the feast day for Saint Michael and All Angels we pray for protection from temptation and evil.

30 St. David's Church, Highland Mills

October

1 The Bishop of New York

2 French Church of Saint Esprit, Manhattan

3 The Church of the Resurrection, Manhattan

### **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.

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.

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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*

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

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Sharyn Burke, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, 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, 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): Joe Cotton, John Beyer, Austin Horne, Bryanna Burkhardt, Daniel Ogden, Aaron Burkhardt, Justin Bohlmann and Ann Dingee

Birthdays  
(next week): Jada Jennings, John Bohlmann, Betsy Wardell and Dot Craft

Acolytes:  
September 27: Amelia McNamara and Bill Fenwick  
October 4: Jasmine Thatcher, Jaylen Thatcher and Braeden Hall

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Altar Guild:	September 27: Team Number I October 4: Team Number I
8 a.m. Readers:	September 27: Angela Henry and Lucille Ogden October 4: Deb Belding and Paul Littlefield
10 a.m. Readers:	September 27: Patty Caswell and Andy Hall October 4: Russell Urban-Mead and Maggie McNamara
Ushers:	September 27: Andrew and Tonya Hall October 4: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	September 27: Doug Belding and Dean Caswell October 4: Janet Bright and Joanne Lown
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	September 27: Judy and Chandler Burke, Clarence, Joann, Anna and Christine Clark and Rich, Leighann, Alix, Sophie and Eden Ciferri October 4: Donna Coffman- Tracy, Gwen Cookingham and Kristin Cotton
Coffee Hour Hosts:	September 27: Saira Shahani October 4: Audrey Horne and Brian Rance

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

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

Psalm 124

James 5:13-20

Mark 9:38-50

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 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost  
(September 20, 2015)

Preached by Deacon Gail Ganter-Toback