

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

The other week, I inadvertently created some unnecessary confusion and would like to clear it up. Of course, in attempting to do so, I suspect I'll only muddy the waters, but at least we'll have something to talk about!

A simple question came up after church a couple of weeks ago: Don't we normally stand for hymns? Should we be standing during the Offertory? What are the rules?

To be honest, I'm usually busy during the Offertory and never noticed if people were sitting or standing, so frankly, I didn't have an answer. Even if I did, it would not be hard and fast.

If you look at the rubrics in the prayer book, (the small words in italics - our rules for how to act in worship), you'll notice that they sometimes tell us to stand (or kneel). We stand for the Gloria, during the Gospel, for the Nicene Creed, when the offerings are presented at the altar, and for the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer (after which we may either stand or kneel).

The prayer book doesn't say anything about singing. Instead, we turn to tradition.

You may be familiar with the old saw about Episcopal Calisthenics: we "Stand to Sing, Sit to Listen, Kneel to Pray." Basing my answer on that, I said, "Indeed, we do stand to sing."

However, in doing so, I sowed the seeds of confusion because, in fact, we do not always stand to sing, and it is not a written rule that it be done so everywhere. For example, most Episcopalians usually kneel after receiving Holy Communion even when they are singing.

Now, standing to sing does have solid reasoning behind it. For one, it gets you up and moving and makes you feel the music better. Moreover, standing actually makes you sing better because you can breathe more easily. Kneeling is almost like standing as far as the breath goes, so that's fine, too.

Nevertheless, in many places, as at St. James', people tend to sit during the Offertory hymn. Why? Because the offertory is when the collection is being taken, which means a lot of people are fussing with their wallets or checkbooks or searching for their envelopes which they know they had right here! I can't judge - I've done that far too many times to count.

Nevertheless, sitting during the Offertory does diminish the quality of the music which we are singing to the Glory of God.

Anyway, last Sunday, several parishioners - heeding my words that we stand for the Offertory - did just that. They stood. From my perch in the sanctuary, I'd say roughly half the

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

congregation stood while the other half sat as per usual. It looked kind of neat, but it also caused some frustration.

So, what do we do?

Well, I can see at least three options. One: We revert back to sitting. Two: We all stand. Three: Each person chooses to either stand or sit depending on their preference.

I don't have strong feelings about this - my personal preference is for standing, but it's hardly a big deal. If God cared that much, it would probably be one of the commandments. If the Church cared that much, it would be in the rubrics. More likely, God is simply pleased with our lifting up our voices and singing out of love - how we do it is secondary. That's pretty much how I feel, too.

I don't want to diminish concern over worship posture. How we behave, how we treat the liturgy, sets the tone for others as we come together in the name of Christ. Believe me, I know how confusing it can be even for an old veteran, let alone a newcomer. And not knowing what we're supposed to do can distract from the worship itself. So in general, we stand to sing (or all those other times I mentioned above), we sit to listen, and we kneel to pray. BUT, the Offertory is open for discussion - so whether you stand or sit, you can feel okay that decision.

What do you think? Should we all stand? Sit? Or do whatever works for us individually? Let me know. And if you want wider conversation about it, we can call a meeting for all who are interested. Until then, sing like the only one listening is God - and make it glorious!

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

The News of the Church

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 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: 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.

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

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

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>

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

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

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

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
- 11 Church of the Intercession, Manhattan
Also: we pray for our Muslim neighbors as they celebrate the Eid Al Adha.
- 12 Delaware Catskill Episcopal Ministry: St. James' Church, Callicoon
- 13 St. John's Church, Staten Island
- 14 Diocesan Disaster Response Team
- 15 Trinity Preschool, Manhattan
- 16 Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute
- 17 Youth Ministers of the Diocese

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

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

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.

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

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

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 Seagren, Annabeth Gausepohl and Patricia Caswell

Birthdays
(this coming week): Laura Kinne, Pat Keeffe and Fred Champion

Acolytes: September 11: TBA

September 18: TBA

Altar Guild: September 11: Team Number III

September 18: Team Number I

8 a.m. Readers: September 11: Lucille Ogden and Jim Smyth

September 18: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan

10 a.m. Readers: September 11: Wilma Tully and Bobbie Wells

September 18: Russell Urban-Mead and Nancy Montero

Ushers: September 11: Patty Drake and Pat Keeffe

September 18: Nancy Montero and Anna Marie Pitcher

Pledge Clerks: September 11: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

September 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

Parish Cycle of Prayer: September 11: Robin Bohlmann, Justin, Danielle and Emerson Bohlmann, Janet Bright

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

Coffee Hour Hosts: September 11: The Eames, Jodi Triola, Pat Rooney

September 18: Dierdre Mae Micker, The Urban-Meads

This Week's Lectionary

Exodus 32:7-14

Psalm 51:1-11

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

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

Sermon Preached on
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
(September 4, 2016)

"Intentionality"

When the boys were little, there was a movie we used to watch a lot called The Iron Giant. It's about this super advanced giant robot that mysteriously lands on earth (Rockwell Maine) in the 1950s and befriends a boy named Hogarth Hughes. The robot is able to learn and even seems to have a soul of sorts. One of the most important moments in the movie is when Hogarth and the iron giant are discussing life when Hogarth says, You are what you choose to be.

It's important because people have decided that the giant is a dangerous super weapon sent by the Russians - and the robot chooses not to be a weapon. It says to Hogarth "I am not a gun." And then goes and saves the day by sacrificing itself.

The thing I love about this movie is how it focuses on how we choose who we will be. This is so central to our faith. Ours is not a faith of accidental membership. Yes, we baptize infants, so you're part of things without much say - BUT that's childhood. Your parents choose how to raise you in all things until you reach maturity. When you reach an age where you can speak for

St. James' E-pistle

September 9, 2016

yourself, the church gives that opportunity not only in confirmation but in reception into the church and in reaffirmation of your faith before the bishop.

The point is that we have opportunities throughout our life to stand up and say, "I believe God's love for me, and I am recommitting myself to it." There is no need to simply follow along.

Why is it important to choose to follow Christ?

Because a faith that is not intentional is at best unexamined and shallow. It will have nearly no impact on you or your world.

A faith that is intentional has roots, strength, and life - not just for you but for all around you.

The idea of intentionality is nothing new. In our reading from Deuteronomy today, Moses is preparing to die. The people are on the verge of entering the promised land. Now, remember, according to the story, the people Moses is talking to were all born AFTER the Exodus. They only remember living in the wilderness as nomads. They are about to change their very way of life so it is important to recommit to the guiding principle that binds them together as a people - God's love for them.

The same is true in our Gospel. Jesus has already set his face like flint for Jerusalem - where he knows the cross awaits. He knows that what lies ahead - even though there's still a long journey before they get there - will not be easy. He knows there will be condemnation, rejection, beatings, prison and death for many of his followers. And so he wants them to choose: Do you love God more than even family. Choose now because this is not the easy path.

Following Christ has never been the easy path - choosing to stand over against the world is a constant swimming against the cultural stream. Next Saturday, I'm giving a brief presentation to the Regional Council on slavery in the Mid-Hudson Valley (based on last January's Fireside Chat). Our region depended heavily on slaves - Dutchess and Ulster Counties had a higher concentration of slaves than pretty much anywhere north of South Carolina right up till it was finally illegal in 1827. Most people here hated Abolitionists. Episcopalians remained resolutely silent. But Quakers were not only vocal critics of slavery as an evil, they also formed the backbone of the Underground Railroad - at considerable personal expense and risk.

They had to choose to follow Christ or to just get by.

Intentionality is important for us, too, because we live in a world where mercy and kindness and care for the weak is given at most lip service. We live in a world where self-examination, where reflection, where looking deep within yourself has no value.

This isn't a complaint about today's generation - because Moses understood the need for intentionality. It is something that needs renewed over and over. We look at God, we look within, and we say, "Yes, I will follow again."

Intentionality doesn't require a major ceremony, by the way. You can choose every day to rest in and to share God's love. When you pray in the morning or at night - that is a choice. When you kneel to receive communion, that is a choice. When you pass the Peace, that is a choice.

The lesson today is: You are what you choose to be. I choose to be a child of God. Amen.