



The St. James' Pilgrim

News for the Journey . . . January, 2017

St. James' Episcopal Church 11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854-3340 www.stjamespotomac.org



Message from the Rev. Meredith T. Heffner

Here we go!

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you, my St. James' family.

When you called me to be your rector, you asked for three things:

- An increased sense of joy and warmth
- A sense of identity as God's children, along with a sense of God's call to our community
- An opportunity for deepening spirituality

During our first year together, with these goals in mind, I spent my time getting to know you—who you are, what you do, and how you relate to God. As I became part of your family, achieving your first goal came pretty naturally: it's easy to share joy and warmth with a community that delights in sharing God's love.

Living into the other dreams will take more time, but they are at the heart of everything we've planned. As James and I prepared for 2018, for example, and dove into our first stewardship campaign together, these goals helped shape our strategy as we asked ourselves "What are we raising money FOR? What is it that God is calling us to do?" Some folks began calling this "our new shiny thing."

This echoed the congregation's deep desire to discern God's call to St. James'. Yet it was too early in our time together for God to reveal our "new shiny thing" to us. So we decided to enter a period of intentional discernment to hear what God might say about a "new shiny thing."

We know that so often churches enter into "discernment processes," but then nothing changes. We did not want this to happen at St. James'. So we asked ourselves what we could do differently in order to have a fruitful period of discernment.

Our planning has been deliberate, intentional and sometimes a little tough—because discernment is a funny thing. When you enter a period of discernment you never really know how God is going to answer. I'd love to be able to promise that God is going to give us a really great "new shiny thing" to work on and gather around. Yet we know our ways are not always God's ways... for example, God may take who we are and what we're already doing and ask us to stretch our imaginations to continue our work in these areas in different, exciting—and even scary—new ways. Or God may ask us to wait a little—to take more time to journey deeper in faith. Or God may set us on an entirely new path, headed in an entirely new direction.

I know this doesn't sound like much of a guarantee for a "new shiny thing," and you may be wondering why we should bother. The reason we make time to deliberately discern is this because through discernment a few things naturally happen that have the potential to change our lives in powerful and meaningful ways:

- We will get better at listening to God.
- We will gain a new sense of how God is working at St. James', as well as in our community and in the world beyond.

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- We will recognize that we are each being called into what God is doing, wherever that might be in our lives.
- And we will be stretched to respond to God, beyond anything we have ever been called to in the past.

And although I can't guarantee God's timeline, there is one thing I can promise: that if we each participate and join in on this journey, God will deepen us spiritually as never before. That's what happens when we commit to spend time listening to God. And that's enough of a reason for me

because I will do whatever it takes to grow closer to God. I hope you will join me.

There are numerous opportunities to be part of this process as outlined in our discernment timeline in this edition of *The Pilgrim*. I encourage you to participate—to explore where God is calling you in your life, and where God is leading St. James'.

May God bless us and keep us—and show us the way

—*Rev. Meredith*

Discernment Leaders

Beginning in January we will explore various aspects of discernment through the presentations by four guest preachers. Our goal in these presentations is to learn more about discernment so we as a community can hear God in new and deeper ways.

- ***On January 14, the Rev. Carole Crumley*** will join us as our guest preacher. Carole has served as a Senior Program Director at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, and she will kick off our discernment series by teaching us about discerning in community. A founder of the Cathedral's Center for Prayer and Pilgrimage, she has also served as a Wesley Seminary Distinguished Faculty in the Theology and Practice of Ministry. Through her gifts, experience and insight we hope to be pointed in the right direction.
- ***On February 11, we will be joined by Julie Simonton***, the Director of Congregational Development and Stewardship for the Diocese of Virginia. Julie provides hands-on guidance and resources to congregations in all areas of congregational life, and is particularly passionate about how people engage with God to do God's work. We have invited Julie to specifically talk about how to identify what God is up to at St. James', and how we might hear God through our experience here.
- ***March 11 brings us the Rev. Dr. Patricia Lyons***, Missioner for Evangelism and Community Engagement for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. Tricia works with churches who wish to move beyond their walls into the public square and form deeper relationships with their neighbors. Tricia will speak to us about recognizing what God is up to in the community around St. James', focusing on how God uses what we are and where we are to call us to new things.
- ***Our series of guest preachers closes on April 22*** with a visit from the Rev. Robert Phillips, Interim Associate for Leadership Development for the Diocese of Washington. Robert will speak to us about expanding our imaginations beyond what we think God usually calls churches to do and help us explore what we might be willing to risk in order to do what God asks.

We are positive that our guests will inspire us and challenge us to think in new ways, and we encourage all of you to be engaged in this process to the greatest extent possible. That is the truest and best way for us to spiritually move ahead together.

Please note the many opportunities to participate in the schedule on the following page.

Discernment! I want a part of that!

We are offering many ways to connect with our discernment process. Details are forthcoming, but here are some highlights.

First, we will offer discernment activities through what we already do:

- ***Sunday Morning Worship, 8:00 and 10:30***
Join us for worship where we will have monthly guest preachers teaching us about discernment.
- ***Sunday Morning Faith Talks, 9:15***
Make the time and study how to hear God speak through scripture using the book *Call Waiting*, by Robert Hudnut.
- ***Sunday School***
Sunday School families will be encouraged to use the book *Sleeping with Bread*, by D. Linn, at home, to talk about listening to God for daily direction.
- ***Book recommendations***
There are many, but we suggest we begin by reading *All Saints*, by M. Spurlock and J. Windle, the story of an Episcopal Church that experiences rebirth through a group of refugees from Burma.
- ***On-line Lenten Reflections***
Use our traditional parishioner reflections to share how God is speaking to us in this season, and how that connects to the discernment process of the wider St. James' community.

We will also discern in new ways:

- Through the rebirth of our ***Thursday morning Bible study***, held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. beginning on January 25. Join us to study our lectionary readings for the coming Sunday and share how God speaks through scripture.
- Through ***Listening Groups***:
 - + Gather for two hours a couple times each month to share, listen to God, and wonder as a group about what God is up to at St. James'.
 - + Notice what people are experiencing, sharing, seeing and hearing through this process.
 - + Pray into where God might be leading.

Pulling it together!

During this discernment period there will be many ways to check in. We will keep our eye on our vision by meeting as a parish quarterly for coffee hour—reviewing together where we are and where we might be going.

We might be called to a hundred little things, or to one big new direction. Our call might be one of mission, or something spiritual. We may be asked to do something within our walls, or we may be called to go beyond. At this point, only God knows.

What we do know is that through this process, we will grow closer to God and our spirituality will deepen—because that's what happens when we spend time with God. And how exciting is that?!

Gilding the Church for Epiphany (and then cleaning up)

Gilding: Out with the red, in with silver, white, and gold! We'll meet at **10:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 6**, pull out red and replace with new accents in Epiphany colors and transform the sanctuary once more for our celebration of Epiphany.

Cleanup: We'll be thankful to see some helpers show up Sunday, January 7, after services to take down the decorations, sort to keep or toss, and sweep up boatloads of pine needles—good for taking home to your flower beds if you can snag some. Contact Mary Miers.





Reflection from our Senior Warden, Barry Thompson

Hope, Expectation, Realization, and Faith

Hope: the feeling that what is desired is also possible, or that events may turn out for the best;

Expectation: something expected; a thing looked forward to, or a prospect of future good;

Realization: the being made real of something imagined or planned;

Faith: confidence or trust; belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion; the trust in God and in His promises made through Christ and the Scriptures by which man is justified or saved.

Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary

As we transition now from the past year to the new year, reflection upon the years 2017 and 2018, seems most appropriate. I suggest that the four words—**hope, expectation, realization, and faith**—may characterize our journey.

Following a rigorous and successful search for a new rector for St. James', we began 2017 with **hope** and **expectation**. Hope had characterized the years of the interim rectorship and the activities of the "Search Committee for a New Rector". The new year brought to our congregation expectation—things looked forward to and the palpable prospect of a future good. We had sought a clergy leader who embodied "effective leadership, (support of) family ministries, engaging preaching, and joyful warmth"; and we certainly were blessed with one! Looked forward to with the new clergy team

were the revitalization of the parish and renewed enthusiasm and participation on the part of parishioners.

During the first eleven months of Reverend Meredith's tenure, we've come, have we not, to the **realization** that good things indeed are occurring at St. James'? Leadership and preaching have been given new emphasis. Attendance has increased steadily. Former parishioners are returning, and attendees at services include new individuals and new families. Monetary support has grown. Our vibrant Sunday School has expanded, and Christian education has been given more structure. St. James' Children's School almost has reached capacity. St. James' has been selected as one of the five parishes to participate in a diocesan pilot program, the "Strategic Financial Resources Commission" (intended to assist parishes to identify and prioritize infrastructural and operational needs and to develop the means to address them).

We begin 2018 cognizant of significant gains made this past year and confident that progress will continue to be made. We have **faith** that the goals outlined in our Parish Profile (2016) — "to discern where we should go and grow, to develop a cohesive vision for our mission activities, to refresh the congregation, and to nurture everyone in God's love" —are to be attained. With faith in God and with His blessing, we embark on the discernment process that will result in a clear vision for our refreshed and nurtured parish and its people.



"I'm In! Are You?"

Have You Turned in Your 2018 Pledge?

A huge thank you all families and individuals who have sent in their 2018 pledges. If you haven't completed yours, it's not too late!

Pledge forms are in the narthex and on our website.

Junk, Grits and Gusto! Lunch & Learn, January 9 and February 5

January 9 will be the next Lunch & Learn gathering in the undercroft. What will be the “Learn” that day? **“123 JUNK.”** To paraphrase from their website: “Our three-step process is at the heart of the business. 1-Donate whenever/wherever possible, 2-Recycle, and 3-Dispose. These steps minimize landfill mass and maximize the recycling potential for undated items.” Highly recommended and arranged for us by parishioner Karen Eaton, this program will be entertaining, encouraging, and useful.



To take care of the \$10 “Lunch” portion of the day, make a reservation with Sarah Padgett, arrive at 11:30-ish for social time, enjoy lunch at noon; the program presentation will begin about 12:30. This group, usually numbering about 25, is happy to see “old” faces, new ones, occasional attendees, or whomever. One may come for just the program, which is 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. There’s a rumor that the menu that day may continue the soup/stew tradition for January. Soup or stew, salad, bread, and dessert sounds perfect for a winter lunch, doesn’t it?

February 5 will bring us Judith Welles as a return speaker, whose topic will be **“Grits and Gusto: Farmerettes and Suffragettes on the Homefront in WWI.”** How did women in Maryland rally into involvement and activism during 1917-1918? Men left for the war. America became the main food source for both this country and the soldiers abroad, and for the near starvation situation in which many Europeans found themselves. Maryland’s women made a difference during this war, and WWI led to passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote. Make your lunch reservation with Sarah Padgett (as above). See you there!

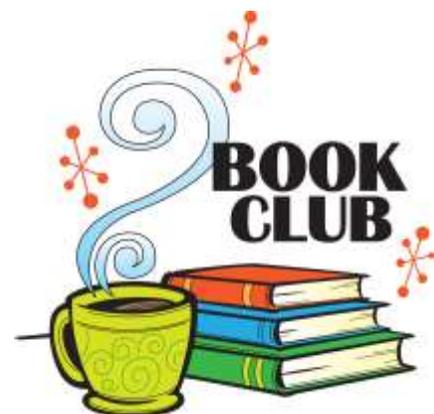
St. James’ Book Club January 28 and February 25

The next Book Club discussion be at 6:45 p.m. **January 28** in the parish hall library to discuss *The Sun Also Rises*, by Ernest Hemingway. If you read it as required reading in high school or college, what will the re-reading of it say to you now? This novel, written in 1926, has been described in far-ranging Goodreads reviews as: “outstanding... one of my all-time favorite books... vapid... tremendous... boring and depressing.” Goodreads also has some “interesting” parodies. If nothing else, the book and its progression through Spain’s bullfighting and hard-living lifestyle of elite Lost Generation ex-pat Americans will get high-spirited discussion going on January 28! All are welcome—no matter when you read the book, or even if you have never finished it.

On **February 25**, same time, same location, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Remains of the Day* will be the work for discussion. In the summer of 1956, Stevens, a long-serving butler at Darlington Hall, decides to take a motoring trip through the West Country. The six-day excursion becomes a journey into the past of Stevens and England, a past that takes in fascism, two world wars, and the complicated relationship between the butler and his housekeeper. With much introspection from Stevens, this work from Nobel and Booker Prize-winning Ishiguro provides rich material for discussion.

Future Book Club selections:

March 25 - *A Wrinkle in Time* - Madeleine L’Engle
April 22 - *Lincoln in the Bardo* - George Saunders
May 27 - *The Ninth Hour* - Alice McDermott



Vestry Highlights

Meeting on December 19, for the last time this year, the Vestry addressed the following items:

Annual Budget for 2018

Desirous of attaining a balanced budget but recognizing that such can be achieved reasonably only over a period of years, the Vestry approved a budget of \$837,649, with a projected deficit of \$48,649 as recommended by the Finance Committee. Targeted for 2019 is a reduction of the projected deficit to \$30,000. A balanced budget should be the result for 2020.

Stewardship 2018

A successful stewardship campaign has resulted from increased donations by current pledging "units" and from a significant number of new pledging "units". As of December 28, a total of 100 pledges have been received for 2018, totaling \$417,394. Some previous pledgers have not pledged yet for the coming year; and new pledges, of course, are most welcome.

Place your "red envelope" in the alms basin during the offertory, or submit it to the church office. The "I'm In" button indicates your support of St. James' with time, talent, and treasure.

Appointment of Joyce Nohowel to the Vestry

Due to an administrative oversight, Joyce's name was omitted from the ballot at the Annual Parish Meeting (November 19). She is eligible to serve a second two-year term and should have been listed as a candidate to continue on the Vestry. The Vestry approved her appointment; her election will be confirmed at the next meeting of the parish in the spring.

Vestry Retreat

The Vestry will hold an overnight retreat February 3-4 at the Claggett Center in Virginia.

Quarterly Parish Meetings

Reverend Meredith announced that informational parish meetings will be held on a quarterly basis to provide status reports/updates to the membership, promoting communication and

enhancing transparency regarding finances, programs, and activities.

Facility Infrastructure

Maintenance of the buildings and improvement projects are on-going at St. James' and a constant challenge. The ramp to the front entrance of the parish hall has been found to be in need of significant structural repair, to be performed as soon as possible. An initial estimate for the work is \$36,765. The Facilities Commission is seeking competitive bids. The Rector, Senior Warden, Treasurer, and members of the Finance Committee will be working with the pilot diocesan entity, the "Strategic Financial Resources Commission", to identify ways to meet the immediate requirement for the ramp and the funding of maintenance and programmed repair/replacement of other facility components, as well as annual and planned giving and capital campaigns.

Facility Improvements

The refinishing of the floors of the parish hall meeting room and the Choir Room, and the obtaining of new furniture the meeting room have provided a welcome "new look." Painting parts of the parish hall, replacement of the walk to the back door of the parish hall, and replanting of ground cover and bushes are in progress or planned.

The next meeting of the Vestry is scheduled for Tuesday, January 16, at 7:30 p.m. Generally, Vestry meetings are open to interested parishioners.

Barry Thompson, Senior Warden

Vestry Commissioning Sunday, January 7

At the 10:30 a.m. worship service we will welcome and commission our recently elected vestry and officers: Sarah Hnatov (Junior Warden), Dawn Iype, Lori Minasian, Sandy Soundararajan, Ken Van Valkenburgh, and Harley Venton; Dan Zimmerman, Mary Miers and Pat East are our 2018 Convention Delegate and Alternates.

We give thanks for the service of outgoing vestry members: John Eisold, Lindsey Harris, and Bill Wallace.

Stewardship Pledge Update

We are grateful to all who have made a financial commitment to St. James' for 2018. Thank you for supporting the work God is doing in this place, and the work God will call us to in the New Year. Clearly God's is up to something here!

A summary of pledges received as of January 3:

Pledges for 2018: \$417,394

Pledges for 2017: \$355,655

Number of pledging households in 2018: 100

Number of pledging households 2017: 82

Average pledge for 2018: \$4,174

Average pledge for 2017: \$4,337

Percent of households that pledged in 2018: 63%

Percent of households that pledged in 2017: 51%
(based on 160 households)

Points of note:

56 households increased their pledge for 2018

26 households pledged for the first time (or compared to last year)

2 households moved

If you have not turned in your pledge, it's never too late. Contact the church office and we will be glad to process it for you. Thanks to all of you, for the many gifts you bring to our parish, financial or otherwise. Together, God can use us to do great things.



Blood Drive with Beth Sholom Sunday, January 14

St. James' Volunteers needed to help with sign-ins

We're participating with Beth Sholom in a blood drive coordinated through Inova Blood Services. Inova supplies blood and blood services to 24 hospitals in the Washington Metro area, and works with national and international organizations to get blood wherever it is needed.

- **Advance registration is required to donate blood.** Register online with Inova Blood Donor Services, www.inovabloodsaves.org. You can select the date and location or **7354** as the code and then choose your donation time.
- **Volunteers from St. James' are needed from noon to 3:00 p.m.** for the afternoon sign-ins; contact office@stjamespotomac.org, if you'd like to volunteer to help receive donors. We have committed our help!

St. James' Calendar of Events

January 6, Saturday:

- Gilding of the church, 10:00 a.m.
- Epiphany Service and parish supper, 5:30 p.m.

January 7, Sunday:

- Vestry Commissioning at 10:30 worship service
- Epiphany church cleanup after 10:30 service

January 9, Tuesday: Lunch & Learn, 11:30 a.m.

January 14, Sunday:

- FaithTalk: Discernment with Rev. Carol Crumley
- Blood Drive with Beth Sholom—volunteers needed noon-3:00 p.m.

January 16, Tuesday: Vestry meeting, 7:30 p.m.

January 21, Sunday: FaithTalk at 9:15 a.m. (book discussion, *Call Waiting*)

January 23, Tuesday: Deadline for submissions to February 2 issue of *The Pilgrim*

January 25, Thursday: Bible study, 10:00 a.m.

January 26-27: Diocesan Convention

January 28, Sunday:

- FaithTalk at 9:15 a.m. (discussing *Call Waiting*)
- Book Club discussion, 6:45 p.m.

February 1, Thursday: Bible study, 10:00 a.m.

February 3-4: Vestry Retreat, Claggett Center, VA

February 5, Tuesday: Lunch & Learn, 11:30 a.m.

February 23-24: WomanKind Retreat, Richmond, VA

News from St. James' Children's School

As part of the St. James' community, we would like for you to get to know us better! Each month, we will highlight one classroom to introduce our teachers and share the ongoing activities in that room. Feel free to stop by and take a tour!

Classroom Spotlight: The Infant Room

By Ms. Marisol Castro

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a great Christmas. As lead teacher, I would like to welcome you to the Infant room at St. James'! Our class is composed of four teachers with six children, ranging from 6 weeks old to about 1 ½ years old. Currently, we have three full-time students and six part-time students. Our team consists of Ms. Rochelle and myself in the morning and Ms. Kriscia and Ms. Jenny in the afternoons. In total, we have 42 years of experience at St. James' Children's School!

The Infant room staff works closely with the parents to provide individualized scheduling to meet the needs of every child. Each child has a personalized nap and feeding schedule. As



children change and grow, their schedules are adjusted. We have playtime and tummy time every day, too!

In the Infant room, we've started the new year by making 2018 artwork. The artwork we do is based on the month we are in. With our little ones, we do handprints, footprints, and bagged art. Our bagged art consist of paint and paper in a gallon bag that the infants press, step and crawl on. When they are done we either cut it into a shape depending on the month or we just leave it as the beautiful art as they made. Each piece is unique and special, just like the child that created it!

Thank You for Your Heifer International Donations!

The Seniors Sunday school class (grades four and five) gathered and gave donations to Heifer International in honor of the members of St. James' Episcopal Church. A letter from Heifer International to the members of St. James' reads:

This gift to Heifer International given in your honor will provide the resources a struggling family needs to achieve self-reliance. That means they will be able to eat nutritious meals every day, send their children to school and actively create a better future for themselves and their community.

Thank you for inspiring this life-changing gift and being part of our mission to end hunger and poverty around the world.



A family in need will receive:

- GIFT OF HONEYBEES
- GIFT OF FISH FINGERLINGS
- GIFT OF A LLAMA

Sincerely,

The Sunday School Seniors Class

Living Nativity: Many Thanks!

The youth extend their sincerest thanks to all who came out, braving the cold weather, to witness our first ever living nativity. Despite the cooler temps, the youth put on an amazing show.

The December 10 show featured a donkey, two sheep, two goats and a subsequent petting zoo. The roughly 100+ audience members were greeted with warm apple cider and cookies. Christmas carols added a special element to the evening.



Pictures and an article were featured in two of the December issues of the Potomac Almanac. The youth wish to thank Rev. Meredith and the church for all their support, Mr. Harley Venton and Mr. Newton Lewis for their help with sound and guidance and Ms. Jeanne Lehning for her beautiful piano playing. We look forward to making this a recurring event that is cherished not just by the St. James community, but also the greater Potomac area, as a whole.



Womankind 2018 Retreat, February 23-24: Register Now!

Participants need to register individually; several St. James' members are registered and waiting for you to join them. This year's theme is, **"Lift Up Your Hearts! The Transformative Power of Word and Table."** There are many interesting workshops to choose from!

Registration is \$85, excluding lodging:
<https://www.womankindrichmond.com/>

If you need lodging Friday night, arrangements must be made through St. James' office ASAP. The approximate additional cost for a room plus dinner is \$85 double and \$55 single occupancy.

More information is on the St. James Richmond, VA website:
<https://www.doers.org/womankind-2018/>

Scenes from the St. James' Christmas Eve Pageant Service

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

