



The St. James' Pilgrim

News for the Journey . . .

March 2018

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



Message from the Rev. Meredith T. Heffner

As I write this, we are nearing the midpoint of the planned portion of our discernment process at St. James'. Many members of the congregation have spent an incredible amount of time making the space to hear God's voice, and specifically to hear God's call to us.

However, two recent events threatened to sidetrack us with fear. So I thought I'd use this platform to share my thoughts on how fear can get in the way of God—and how we might respond.

The first event that drew our attention from discernment was the arrival of an unfamiliar individual just before worship one recent Sunday. His expression of anger at Church and God, along with his demeanor, caused some to perceive him as a threat. And although at no point did he actually threaten anyone, his presence caused anxiety and fear. (More on that later in this issue.)

The second event was the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida—and especially the report that a student from an Episcopal Church there was one of those killed, the day after preparing pancakes with her youth group at their Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. After watching our youth help at our Shrove Tuesday dinner, this story brought things very close to home.

Some of you know that a big part of my personal "call story" was the fear I felt after the 9/11 attacks, watching the smoke billow up from the Pentagon after the plane flew into the building. I had been an actively involved lay leader at my church, and was shocked after the attack to be

paralyzed with fear. I couldn't find it in myself to plan one lesson plan, let alone find a way to pray. I could neither lift my petitions, nor make the space in my head and my heart to hear God's voice. I didn't think I'd be able to pray or feel close to God ever again.

And yet, in my fear and my realization that I could control very little in this world, I knew I needed God more than ever. So I intentionally made an even bigger effort to connect with God than I ever had before. I can't say it was easy. And it seemed to take forever. But with the help of my priests and my family and friends, I drew nearer to God once again—so near, that I heard God call me to ordained ministry.

All of this is to say that we cannot let our fear get in the way of God. There are many who never come out of the paralysis caused by their fear—not even for the grace and comfort that God offers. Many others begin to focus only on things they can control, forgetting that the only sure thing in this world is our dependence on God.

This is not to say we should ignore our fear—putting our security plans in place is certainly the right thing to do—however, we cannot let that fear overcome us to the point that our relationship with God is only about being sheltered under the shadow of his wing, and not about the life-giving mission God has for us. It is often in our vulnerability that God's voice is heard most clearly.

In closing, I'll quote the psalmist, the prophets, Moses, the angels, and Jesus himself: "Fear not!" Although we cannot control what goes on in the world around us, we are called to keep the faith. God is here—ready to speak words of love, and call us to something new.

Rev. Meredith

Scenes from our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, February 13



Lent Calendar and Programs



Stations of the Cross

Fourteen Stations of the Cross may be viewed along the walls of the church. Each station offers a place for meditation and reflection. Visit during office hours, 9:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and between services on Sundays.

Seven Locks Ecumenical Dinner and Study, Wednesdays through March 21

Come enjoy this annual event with our neighboring congregations of Seven Locks Road. The theme is "Social Justice and Faith: the Intersection." Three more dinners will be served this season.

Schedule of Hosting Churches:

March 7 St. James' Episcopal, 11815 Seven Locks Rd.  We're hosting! Help us serve our neighbors a warm and welcoming meal. See page 7 for information. Dinner at 6:30 p.m., study at 7:30 p.m. *We will NOT have worship or a guest preacher as previously announced.*

March 14 Scotland AME Zion, 10902 Seven Locks Rd., Potomac; dinner 6:30 p.m., study 7:30 p.m.

March 21 Emmanuel Lutheran, 7720 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda; dinner 6:30 p.m., study 7:30 p.m. *This program will include a worship service with guest preacher Bishop W. Darin Moore, Chair of the National Council of Churches.*

Holy Week and Easter

- ❖ **Palm Sunday, March 25:** Services 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.; Procession with palms and a dramatic reading of the Passion of Christ. Brunch at noon hosted by St. James' Youth Group.
- ❖ **Maundy Thursday, March 29:** 7:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist and foot washing in the church
- ❖ **Good Friday, March 30:** Noon to 3:00 p.m. Vigil with Meditations; 7:30 p.m. Good Friday Liturgy
- ❖ **Easter Sunday, April 1:** Services 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. Brass, bells, and a glorious celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord! Children's Easter egg hunt on back lawn after the 10:30 service.

Welcoming the Stranger

Earlier this month while the vestry and I were away for our annual retreat, an unfamiliar individual entered our sanctuary just before the 10:30 service. The visitor stood in the doorway, and using some vulgarity, expressed anger about Church, God and Christians before leaving of his own accord. He did not make any threats. However, his demeanor and some rumors about his presence caused a lot of fear and anxiety. Worship continued, but in order to ease this anxiety and enhance security, doors were locked and police were notified.

I am grateful to everyone here—those who encountered the gentleman and those leading worship—who handled the situation with wisdom, compassion and grace.

The situation, however, has called us to pay attention to our safety. A committee has been formed to review our security and outline steps for

future response and the establishment of safety protocols.

This unfortunate incident reminds us of the times in which we live—and I believe we are being smart by visiting the issue of security. However, we cannot forget who we are. We are Christians—followers of Jesus. Jesus welcomed the stranger and commanded us to love our neighbor. This is who we are, and this is what we are about—even in these challenging times.

We are in the midst of exciting times here at St. James' as we discern God's call. And since God is all about love, we can assume that anything God calls us to do will be about love. Therefore, even as we establish safety protocols, we remember not to let fear get in the way of our discernment and God's love.

Rev. Meredith

Reflection from our Music Director, Newton Lewis

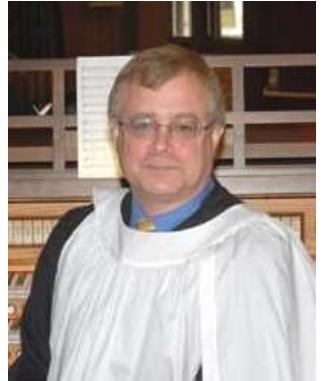
When I was about four years into recovery I was living in Burlington, Vermont. I was selling real estate and planned on transitioning to investing and developing. I was laying the groundwork with a contractor friend for a forty-unit development. I had bought a house and rented out rooms. What happened was that it ended up being a "recovery" house since everyone who lived there was in a 12-step program.

I decided to take up the organ again. Being self-employed offered me the opportunity to take some time during my day when I could to practice. Then one day, a friend-of-a-friend new tenant arrived. He was a blues guitarist. We spent many nights burning the midnight oil talking about music and making music and finding a lot of common ground between vastly different styles of music-making.

For me, I've found that discernment comes to me best through dialogue. After a few months, he asked me why I wasn't just doing music, and what was I doing with my life? Once upon a time there

had been a plan to make music for God's worship that had fallen by the wayside. In the course of our conversations it became abundantly clear to me that following the call of church music was what I needed to be doing with my life. The proverbial writing had been on the wall my whole life, I just didn't see it.

I decided to apply to a music school that I had wanted to go to when I was 18. Shortly after that, my blues guitarist friend moved on, out of the area and out of my life. I've never seen him again. I think that often angels are real people that God puts in the crossroads of our lives and when the change God has desired for us has been effected, their purpose done, they leave. Rather than feeling sad, I find that the brief presence of such people in my life is nothing short of miraculous.



Newton

Vestry Highlights

Following its overnight retreat, the vestry met on February 4 at the Claggett Retreat Center, Adamstown, MD.

Rev. Meredith asked three questions about the retreat:

- What did we hear?
- What did we learn from our time together?
- What do we want to take to St. James' from this experience?

Vestry members were enthusiastic about the shared experience. An emphasis on relationships will be most helpful as the Vestry begins another year. Most informative were discussions concerning the Mission Statement, "to bring people together to be transformed by and to proclaim Christ's love through worship, spiritual formation, and service." Rev. Meredith reflected on the opportunity that the congregation has to engage in the process of discernment and the importance of participation and practicing listening for God's call.

The State of the Parish report included an update on pledging. There are 103 pledging units (out of a possible 160) with donations totaling \$452,994. There are 28 first-time pledges, and 56 pledgers increased their pledges.

Rev. Meredith called attention to the "fun things" that are upcoming. Watch for announcements in the bulletin, *Pilgrim*, News and Notes emails, and on the parish website.

The Senior Warden explained that St. James' is considering the use of an outside consulting firm to help to develop a plan to address current facility requirements and to anticipate future needs.

The Junior Warden reported on the "Kindness Campaign" at Sunday School.

Fundraising continues for the Haiti visit by Ann and Harley Venton. Père Wildaine will conduct visits to Bon Samaritain Parish L'Acul and other sites for which he serves as the priest. A report of the visit will allow the Missions and Outreach Commission and parish leaders to focus

better on needs in Haiti and the optimal use of our resources in meeting some of those needs.

During the vestry meeting, the intrusion before the 10:30 service at St. James' was reported. Parish leaders in Potomac were instructed to call 911.

Rev. Meredith then celebrated the Holy Eucharist at the retreat and the vestry retreat closed.

Subsequent to the incident on February 4, immediate steps have been taken to provide increased vigilance on Sundays by ushers and greeters, an adult presence at back entrances to the church and the Sunday School, and electronic communication (walkie-talkies) between the church, the Sunday School, and the parish hall. Preliminary assessment of general security of our buildings has resulted in the locking of key exterior doors, planned installation of locksets/knobs for key interior doors, and development of action plans for the provision of maximum possible safety for parishioners (adults and children), should an active threat occur in the future. A representative of Montgomery County Police will conduct a safety review of all of our facilities on Thursday, February 22.

Barry Thompson, Senior Warden

Newcomers Welcome Lunch!



Sunday, March 4
12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
in the undercroft (church lower level)

We'll have kid-friendly-food and childcare will be available if needed. All are welcome, new or new-ish, whether you want to learn more about life at St. James' or meet our new members. Join us!

Children's Ministries: Sunday School

It is a blessing to be in a parish with a growing and thriving Children's Ministries program. I have loved getting to know you and your children, and look forward to continuing with them as they grow into their life in Christ!

It was one of our goals when we entered our period of parish discernment that everyone participate—even our children—as we learn who God is calling St. James' Episcopal Church to be, and what God is calling St. James' Episcopal Church to do.

With this in mind, we are encouraging our Sunday School families to read at home the

book *Sleeping with Bread*, by D. Linn, to teach our children about listening to God and asking God for direction every day. In this way even our youngest members become part of our listening to God.

I am pleased to let you know that the St. James' Children Ministries Program has purchased a copy of this book for each family in the parish with children in Grade 6 and younger. I hope that you will read the book and share its lessons with your children.

Rev. Meredith

First Quarterly "State of the Parish" Address, Sunday, March 18

I hope you'll join me after the 10:30 worship service on March 18 for our first "State of the Parish" address. Think of this as a mini-annual meeting: all the fun and only a little of the business!

We will hold these meetings every quarter as a way to be transparent about what is going on at St. James'. This month we will update everyone on our discernment progress. We will also share where we are in our budget—our income and expenses—so that everyone knows where our

money is going and can best help us be good stewards of what God has given us.

We will also be updated on our security plans, and receive a mini-report from the Ventons about their trip to Haiti.

Our goal is to make sure everyone knows as much as possible so that we may be engaged to the greatest extent in the work God is doing among us. I'll see you then.

Rev. Meredith

Earth Stewardship: Let There Be Light (Bulb Exchange)

On February 18, Larissa Johnson, a Residential Energy Program Manager with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, visited St. James' as part of the "Let there be light" bulb exchange program. The goal of the program is to make sure all residents are using the most energy efficient bulbs on the market. The Department of Environmental Protection partners with local congregations to provide members with LED lightbulbs.

Ms. Johnson set up an information table, and for each incandescent/CFL lightbulb that our members brought in, they received an LED bulb at no cost (up to three per person). Ms. Johnson also visited each room in the parish hall and changed

out all the incandescent bulbs she could find, as a gesture of gratitude for our sponsoring the exchange.

A significant bonus of the activity was the educational value of learning about energy savings, the need to pay attention to lumens to ensure adequate lighting and the importance of knowing the Kelvin number of a bulb to know whether the light is mellow yellow with a low number 2700 to 3000 or daylight with a high number 5600 to 6000.

Ms. Johnson encouraged us to tell other churches we are in contact with that she is available to do an exchange activity for them as well. Hopefully we can have her back again.

Good Friday Vigil Meditations

On Good Friday, March 30, 2018, St. James' will hold a liturgy and vigil service from noon to 3:00 p.m. You are invited to read your brief meditation during the vigil, following sections of the Passion narrative.

There are ten passages upon which to reflect. As you choose your passage we suggest you ask yourself where you see God in this part of the Good Friday story. How do the characters respond to God? Did they draw closer to God or pull farther away? Considering your selected passage, describe a time when you could relate to the character's response to God. How did God respond to you?

You are free to use or ignore this prompt, as the Spirit moves you. If it is helpful, feel free to call Rev. Meredith or James to brainstorm your response.

Sign up using the sign-up sheet in church, or through the sign-up link in News and Notes and on the St. James' website. Meditations should be no more than two or three double-spaced pages (five minutes spoken).

Please send your written reflection to the parish office, at office@stjamespotomac.org, by Thursday, March 22.

Prompt 1 **Mark 14:32-42,** Jesus prays in Gethsemane

Prompt 2 **Mark 14:43-52,** Jesus is betrayed and arrested

Prompt 3 **Mark 14:53-65,** Jesus before the Council

Prompt 4 **Mark 14:66-72,** Peter denies Jesus

Prompt 5 **Mark 15:1-5,** Jesus before Pilate

Prompt 6 **Mark 15:6-15,** Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified

Prompt 7 **Mark 15:16-20,** The Soldiers mock Jesus

Prompt 8 **Mark 15:21-32,** Jesus is crucified

Prompt 9 **Mark 15:33-41,** Jesus dies

Prompt 10 **Mark 15:42-47,** Jesus is buried

Listening Group Questions: Phase 2 of the Parish Discernment Process

During this phase of the Parish Discernment process, our Listening Groups are working on noticing what God is up to in our congregation, how the Spirit is moving, and what God seems to be doing. We need your help!

Please pray through the following questions, being open to new directions, and share the insights God gives you with a member of a listening group (see names below).

- How have you noticed things changing at St. James'? Could God be behind/up to something in that change?
- What signs of God's grace have you seen here lately?
- What are you passionate about?
- How are your gifts being under-utilized by the church or God? (This is not to "rope" people into doing, but rather to ascertain if there are gifts within the congregation that God might use for what God has prepared for us to do.)
- What is feeding you here at St. James'? Why do you take the time to come to church?

The members of the Listening Groups (in no particular order) are as follows. We look forward to hearing how God is speaking to you.

<i>Alice Morrison</i>	<i>Jerry Morrison</i>
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<i>Ann Nayback-Beebe</i>	<i>Ann Venton</i>
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<i>Harley Venton</i>	<i>Isabelle Schuessler</i>
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<i>Jennifer Nordin</i>	<i>Jo Ann Thompson</i>
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<i>John Combs</i>	<i>Jack Linehan</i>
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<i>Katherine Weaver</i>	<i>Mary Miers</i>
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<i>Trish Powell</i>	<i>Susan Olson</i>
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<i>Ann Wixon</i>	<i>Cheryl Stafford</i>
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<i>Lindsey Harris</i>	<i>Marylen Flood</i>
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<i>Natalie Rathvon</i>	<i>Sarah Hnatov</i>
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News from St. James' Children's School

Classroom Spotlight: The Toddler Room

By Ms. Kim Belcher

Hello! My name is Kim Belcher and I am the Lead Teacher of the Toddler Room.

Also on the Toddler teaching team are Ms. Carrie, Ms. Vera, Ms. Chelsea, Ms. Jen and Ms. Judith. The Toddler room students range in age from 15 to 30 months. When the children are under two years of age, the room may have up to nine children. When all of the children have had their second birthday, we can expand to 12 children.

By the time children arrive in the Toddler room, the children have transitioned to a structured and scheduled day. We use lesson plans that stem from a play-based curriculum. This includes language, cognitive, physical and social/emotional based activities. Also included in the curriculum are art and sensory activities. We have monthly themes and February's theme was Animals. This is highlighted in all of our activities throughout the month.



Our toddlers are very active, curious and eager to learn! They love Circle Time, which includes reading books, singing songs and doing finger plays. The children really love music. They explore music by playing instruments, dancing and moving to the music.

We truly enjoy helping our St. James' toddlers grow!

Dine Out Fundraiser for St. James' Children's School, Sunday, March 7

St. James' Children's School will be having a "Dine-Out" fundraising event on March 7 from 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. at California Tortilla in the Cabin John Shopping Center.

When you dine in or carry out, mention St. James' Children's School and 25% of your total dining costs will be donated to the school.

Funds raised will be used to help teachers attend the Maryland State Child Care Association "Conference By the Sea" in May.

Help Host our Potluck Supper! Wednesday, March 7

**Ecumenical Dinner Hosted by St. James'
Worship and study with churches of
Seven Locks Road (no worship service)**



Please help us serve our neighbors a warm and welcoming meal. We will need food as well as setup and cleanup help. (Table and chairs setup and take down will be taken care of).

Suggested menu categories follow, according to the first letter of your last name:

A-H: side dish or salad

I-Q: main dish

R-Z: dessert

To ensure we have enough food and help, please let the office know what you are bringing or how you are helping, at office@stjamespotomac.org or 301-762-8040.

A Wrinkle in Time, by Madeleine L'Engle: March 25 Book Club

Did you read this as a child, or have it read to you? This report writer did not; others did. Reading reviews brought forth a wonderful variety of reactions, proving once again that the reader brings him- or herself into the meaning and interpretation of any book. Time travel, a disappearance of a parent, evil beings, strange yet kind characters, the interaction of science and religion; what's not to like?

"It was a dark and stormy night" ...when Meg, her friend, and little brother Charles Wallace go down to the kitchen for a snack. How little they knew of what was coming!

Join this casual discussion (casual group, dress, and discussion) in the parish hall library 6:45 to 8:30 p.m. All are welcome as the group discusses the book, probably other books by this author, and the author herself. This book, written in 1962, is the first of L'Engle's "Time Quintet" following the Murray and O'Keefe families. It won the Newberry Medal, Sequoyah Award, and Lewis Carroll Shelf Award. A movie version is scheduled for release on March 9.

Future books for discussion: *Lincoln in the Bardo*, by George Saunders, on April 22; and *The Ninth Hour*, by Alice McDermott, on May 27.



Speaking of TIME...
Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 11. Set your clocks ahead or you'll be late for church!

Lunch and Learn March 6: What Would/Should I Do?

Have you ever wondered what to do if any of these occur: someone on the other end of the pew on Sunday morning appears to faint; at coffee hour or a meal in the parish hall, someone suddenly quits talking and looks stunned; another time you notice "something odd" about the way a person is appearing.

You've said to yourself, "I wouldn't know how begin to use an AED device." Others may ask, "What IS an AED?" What is important to find out? How soon should 911 be called? Do emergency services need to be summoned at all? These are some of the questions to be addressed in a short program (leaving plenty of time for visiting) at the Tuesday, March 6, Lunch & Learn program.

With the purpose of addressing some of the possible health crises at church, the L & L steering committee decided that these are some of the topics of interest. Jo Ann Thompson, retired nurse, will be the presenter. No matter the age, physical limitation, anxiety level, or lack of formal training, there are ALWAYS helpful, possibly life-saving ways that needs can be met by any person in the congregation.

Come and see what you think. We'll meet in the undercroft. Social time begins at 11:30, lunch at noon, program at 12:30 or a little later. To make a reservation for the lunch portion (\$10 per person), please contact Sarah Padgett. All are welcome.

Confirmation Classes Begin March 11

The confirmation service this year will be held on Saturday, May 12 at the National Cathedral. Youth who are interested in being confirmed are invited to attend our Confirmation class series.

We will meet for seven Sundays, beginning on March 11, after the 10:30 service. Pizza will be provided! Come planning to have fun and learn about what it means to make a mature commitment to Christ! See Rev. Meredith (rector@stjamespotomac.org) or James (james@stjamespotomac.org) for more details and the complete schedule.



St. James' Sunday School Sundays of Service: The Next Link in an Extraordinary Chain of Giving

In St. James' Sunday school, we have been learning about God's love for us and how we can share it—first through expressions of **gratitude** and then **generosity** expressed through gifts given to others. Now we are adding new links to our extraordinary chain of giving by launching a new project: **Sundays of Service**.

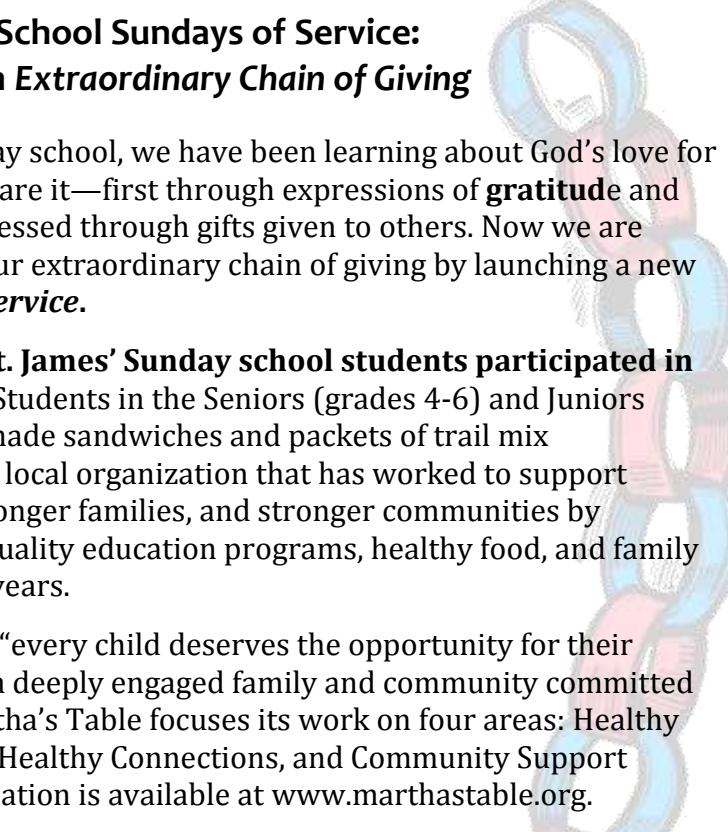
On February 25, **St. James' Sunday school students participated in a Sunday of Service**. Students in the Seniors (grades 4-6) and Juniors (grades 2-3) classes made sandwiches and packets of trail mix for **Martha's Table**, a local organization that has worked to support stronger children, stronger families, and stronger communities by increasing access to quality education programs, healthy food, and family supports for over 35 years.

With a belief that “every child deserves the opportunity for their brightest future, and a deeply engaged family and community committed to their success,” Martha’s Table focuses its work on four areas: Healthy Start, Healthy Eating, Healthy Connections, and Community Support Services. More information is available at www.marthastable.org.

Following Children’s Chapel, each class of younger students decorated lunch bags, wrote short notes, and drew pictures that will be added to the lunches as they are distributed. Thank you to Alex Mathai for bringing us this opportunity to serve with Martha’s Table, and to parents and teachers for their support.

This project was consistent with one of the foundations of the Children’s Ministries Program at St. James’ Episcopal Church—**sharing**—as we care for each other and work together to show a loving concern for others as God has loved us. This was the first “Sunday of Service” added to the spring and summer calendar.

Watch for more information on future dates and projects. What a great way to add more links to the *Extraordinary Chain of Giving* that we have been building this year.



Sunday school students working to make sandwiches for Martha's Table. More pictures at #SpreadSomeLove

St. James' Calendar of Events

- March 1, Thursday:** Bible study, 10:00 a.m.
- March 4, Sunday:** FaithTalk 9:15 a.m.; Newcomer's Welcome Lunch, 12:30 p.m.
- March 6, Tuesday:** Lunch & Learn, 11:30 a.m.
- March 7, Wednesday:** Ecumenical Lenten dinner and worship at St. James', 6:30 p.m. Potluck Supper
- March 11, Sunday:** FaithTalk 9:15 a.m.; Confirmation classes begin; Daylight Saving Time begins
- March 14, Wednesday:** Ecumenical Lenten dinner and study at AME Zion, 6:30 p.m.
- March 18, Sunday:** State of the Parish mtg., 11:45 a.m.
- March 21, Wednesday:** Ecumenical Lenten dinner and study at Emmanuel Lutheran, 6:30 p.m.
- March 22, Thursday:** Deadline to submit written Good Friday meditations to the parish office
- March 25, Palm Sunday:** Book Club, 6:45 p.m.
- March 29, Maundy Thursday:** Eucharist with foot washing, 7:30 p.m. in the church
- March 30, Good Friday:** Vigil with meditations, noon; Good Friday Liturgy, 7:30 p.m.
- April 1, Easter Sunday:** Worship at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.; Easter egg hunt noon
- April 27-28:** Rummage Sale at St. James'; bring donations April 21-23

ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH



WHEN?

Friday and Saturday
April 27-28, 2018
DOORS OPEN at 9:00 AM

Proceeds support St. James' missions,
community outreach & parish programs.

WHY?

What? Estate sale items, furniture, tools, kitchen & household items, collectibles, jewelry, books, children's toys & games, sporting goods, gently-used clothing, baby items ... AND MORE.
PLEASE HOLD YOUR DONATIONS until April 21-23.

Where? St. James' Parish Hall

11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 201854
- Between Tuckerman Lane & Montrose Road -

