



St. James' Episcopal Church 11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854-3340 [www.stjamespotomac.org](http://www.stjamespotomac.org)



## Thoughts from our Assistant Rector, the Rev. James S. Isaacs

### *Preaching to Our Children*

At the beginning of the sermon at the Children's Sabbath service on October 28, I invited the children to come up around me so they could see and listen to the sermon more easily. They sat surrounding me, but all of them faced the congregation instead of me. I jokingly remarked that I guess the people in the congregation were going to be the ones preaching the sermon. I had a sermon prepared on God loving them and them always being welcome in the church, even when there are things that make them different from other people, so I went ahead and preached that sermon.

After the service, I reflected on what I said at the beginning of the sermon, and realized that elaborating on that could have been an important message as well. St. Francis of Assisi is credited with saying, "Preach the Gospel always; use words if necessary." Children watch and learn from us. What message are we preaching, both with our words and without words, for them?

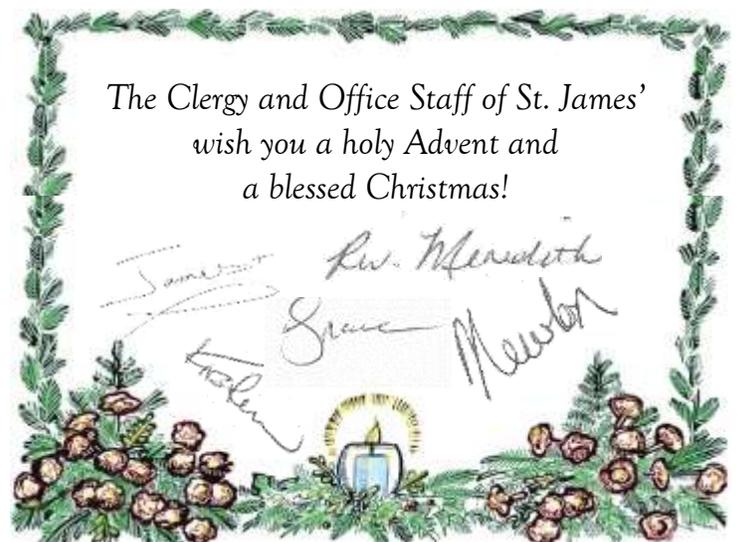
Someone asked me once what my vision or understanding of the Gospel is. I was able to reply quickly (having thought about this often) that, for me, the unifying and consistent message of the Gospel is God's abundant love for all of humanity. Yet, my question above prompts me to wonder if that is the Gospel that I am preaching to my children and other children who see me. Parenting seems to bring out both my best and not my best sides. It demands constant loving action even when I am exhausted, stressed, hurt, and rushed.

And yet, what could be more important than embodied preaching of the good news of God's love for the next generation that will inherit such unimaginable challenges?

We are entering the season of Advent, when we are called to prayerfully prepare ourselves to welcome and watch for God's presence in the world and our lives. It has the potential to be a reflective grace-filled time. But it also tends to be a season that is frantic, rushed, and stressed in our society. If you are like me, "frantic, rushed, and stressed" make it harder to preach the Gospel well. So, if you need another reason to pause and slow down this Advent season, remember: children are watching and learning from us about what the Good News of God's love is.

Prepare your sermon well.

*James*



## Annual Meeting Review: Rev. Meredith's Report from the Parish Annual Meeting

Thanks to everyone who attended our annual meeting and heard (or read) my report on November 18. If you were unable to attend, below is an overview of my report. I share this again because it's important for everyone to be informed and engaged.



A year ago at my first Annual Meeting with you I reflected upon the things you were seeking when you called me to be your rector. They included:

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

One year later it's time to ask: how are we doing?

First, at this year's annual meeting I reported that in the broader community we are becoming known for our joyful warmth. Even the bishop has heard it, and this makes me rejoice. But I am also aware that in a world that seems more intent on communicating hatred and fostering division, our joy and warmth are our strength and power. Because this is joy found when a community comes together around God's love—and that is our identity—a warm and joyful community, gathered around God's table, sharing God's love with the world.

This would make many parishes happy—but I remind you what the bishop said when I was installed: She reminded us to ask why we are doing what we are doing—and if it has nothing to do with God, we are to revisit what we do. Saying "St. James' is a place that celebrates its joyful warmth" is not enough. With the bishop's wisdom in mind, we need to continue the sentence by

saying, "St. James' is a place that celebrates its joyful warmth so that...." (fill in the blank).

I would finish the sentence with something like this: "St. James' is a place that celebrates its joyful warmth so that we can share this joy and warmth with the world." How do we do that? Well, that's what we have spent this year discerning: God's call to us.

Through small groups, prayer, guest preachers and questionnaires, we opened our hearts and minds to what God might be calling us to do. This fall James and I spent a day on retreat, reviewing the responses many of you shared about where God might be calling. A few things bubbled to the top, and the theme that was most pronounced was the theme of Mental Well-Being.

Soon thereafter we began testing this idea with a small group of people from the congregation. After meeting a number of times, we agreed that yes, God may be calling us in this direction, and we came up with some basic ideas—things we can do—to test this call within the broader context of St. James'. Stay tuned for more information as we continue to test this call in our broader community.

What's our "so that?" So that God's joy and warmth, God's presence and love, can be offered through us to those who are suffering and need to know there is hope, they are loved, and they belong.

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### Annual Meeting Review, continued

And as far as deepening spirituality, we've seen that happening all year—as we sought God's call—and we will continue to go deeper as we continue on this journey.

Things continue to go well at St. James':

- We've had quarterly state-of-the-parish meetings, keeping everyone informed
- We have been reviewing our long-term facilities' needs, and are developing plans to raise the funds to meet those needs through a future capital campaign.
- Financially we are in a better place than we had anticipated.
- Sunday School is filled with life!
- St. James' Children's School celebrated its 25th anniversary.
- We have received a generous bequest from Mary Shepard.
- We have been blessed to have Todd Thomas join us as an intern as he reads for holy orders in the Episcopal Church.

But we need to hear from you... how do you think things are going? How is St. James' doing as a parish? You have the opportunity to respond to this question through a parish-wide Mutual Ministry review. Our Administrative Commission, with diocesan assistance, has drafted this questionnaire and will compile the results so that the vestry can consider your responses at our February retreat. We will make their findings known, and share other news and updates at our next quarterly state of the parish meeting in March. Our hope is that your responses will help us make St. James' even better, as God continues to lead us to great and inspiring things.

Please consider new ways to get involved and connect with one another. Thanks to all of you, particularly the staff, wardens and vestry, for your hard work, your commitment and your support. May God continue to bless and guide St James'.

Faithfully,

*Rev. Meredith*

## Advent, Christmas & Epiphany Services and Events at St. James'

**Living Nativity, Sunday, December 16**

6:00 to 7:30 p.m., church front steps

**Greening of the Church December 22-24**

Saturday at 10:00 a.m.; Sunday after Services; and Monday morning

**Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24**

5:00 p.m. Children's Pageant

7:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with candlelight and brass music

10:15 p.m. Special music and carols

10:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with candlelight and brass music

**Christmas 1, Sunday, December 30**

Service of Lessons and Carols

**Feast of The Epiphany, January 6**

12:00 noon Epiphany Brunch

## A Living NATIVITY

Sunday, December 16

6:00 - 7:30 p.m. at St. James'

LIVE ANIMALS ♦ PETTING ZOO  
MUSIC ♦ COOKIES ♦ APPLE CIDER

For one magical night, Bethlehem comes alive in Potomac. Join the youth of St. James' Episcopal Church as we transform the church grounds into the Living Nativity. Bring neighbors, friends and family of all ages. Freewill donations gratefully accepted.



## Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

### **No Ordinary Night – Potomac Area Interfaith Communities Annual Thanksgiving Service and Community Service Project: Giving Thanks for Our Neighbors**

By Krista Stammeyer

It is no ordinary night. On November 20, 2018, at Saint Francis Episcopal Church in Potomac, Maryland, we gather together to, well, certainly to ask the Lord's blessing, as that familiar hymn of thanksgiving extols. But there is more in store than anyone could have expected from a gathering of neighbors, worshippers, children, clergy, and ever-so-helpful Boy Scouts. There is extraordinary opportunity for sharing, fun, learning, love and grace.

All that. One night. Indeed. But the organizing, preparation and lasting effects of the event—that's another story, perhaps for another time. For now, just join me for that evening of what might be called a faith filled, spiritual potluck.

You might have attended a potluck meal here with your St. James' family or perhaps in a friend's home, or even at your workplace. You never know just what will appear in the pot or whether you'll be lucky enough to enjoy or even identify it. You go on faith.

Several months ago, the Potomac Area Interfaith Communities organizing committee chose the theme of "thanksgiving for our neighbors" for the annual Thanksgiving service and community service project. Nine faith communities participated this year, and each was asked to contribute to the service based on that theme. Would there be eight prayers and one scripture reading? Seven musical selections and two very similar meditations? They went on faith. It was extraordinary.



*Participating clergy and organizers of the 2018 Potomac Area Interfaith Communities Thanksgiving Service and Community Service Project*

Join us now for a few highlights...

The evening turns cold and blustery, so Gene and I welcome the warmth of Saint Francis and the cordiality of its members who greeted us. Cue the organ, begin the procession that included clergy and service participants, and enjoy the first surprise: the Interfaith Children's Choir.

Children from all participating faith organizations were invited to sing. There was one brief practice session just before the service, but "Let All Things Now Living" rings through the church with such enthusiasm and delight, we are now truly prepared for worship.

What follows is a feast of a worship experience:

- + A warm welcome and invocation from the rector of our host church, St. Francis Episcopal, Potomac: The Rev. Fr. Mark Michael.
- + A reading of the Bahá'í Writings on generosity and thankfulness from the Baha'i Faith Community.
- + Sharing of ways to be a better neighbor, from the Hare Krishna Temple of the Washington DC Area.

- + The Youth Choir of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sings a beautiful anthem, “Because I Have Been Given Much.”
- + Offerings on optimism, in the service of peace, and inspiration from the Islamic Community Center of Potomac, and from Saint Raphael Catholic Church, Rockville.
- + A moving and spirited anthem by the Children’s Choir, Saint Francis International School, Silver Spring—the prayer of St. Francis that includes “make me an instrument of thy peace” will remind us of them always.
- + Touching and inspiring words on tragedy, loss, healing and joy from Rabbi Adam Raskin, Congregation Har Shalom, Potomac.
- + The parable of the Good Samaritan and prayer offered by Potomac Presbyterian Church, and my own updated version of that story, in the “Not-So-Good Pedestrian.”
- + Reflection on the importance of loving our neighbor and communicating with each other from Reverend Meredith, representing us here at St. James’.
- + Meditation on the Spirit of the Harvest, from Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockville.
- + Chai Dynamics, an adult Jewish a cappella group from several area synagogues, brings light and life.
- + Closing remarks and introduction of the service project is offered by Mary Beaudoin, St. Raphael Catholic Church, Rockville
- + The service—our wonderfully filling spiritual potluck—is blessed by the Right Reverend Mariann Budde, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, and we are sent forth in peace and with thanksgiving.

Following worship, we make our way to the parish hall, where dessert is served by our host church, and the community service project is underway. Hundreds of items donated by participating faith organizations and useful to residents and recipients at the Interfaith Works Women’s Center and the Dorothy Day Program, both in Rockville, Maryland, are organized and packaged to send along to our neighbors there. I’m reminded of words from Anne Lamott: “Gratitude begins in our hearts and then dovetails into behavior. It almost always makes you willing to be of service, which is where the joy resides.”

It is no ordinary night. It is where grace meets gratitude. And where the joy resides.

*Krista Stammeyer*

*Following the worship service, willing volunteers sorted, assembled and packaged hundreds of donated cosmetics, health aids, snacks and other items for delivery to the Interfaith Works Women’s Center and the Dorothy Day Program, both in Rockville, Maryland.*



## Vestry Highlights

### Meeting of November 13, 2018

The Vestry met with Reverend Meredith presiding and a quorum present.

Sandy Soundararajan gave the reflection, thanking God for those around us who have “nothing in common” with us, but with whom our interaction demonstrates the intrinsic worth of every being.

The vestry ratified its prior approval (by teleconference on November 1) of health insurance for staff.

The treasurer reported that St. James’ is currently “minimally in the red,” but that there has not yet been the customary transfer from the Eifler Fund and several pledges for the year have not been met. Already some pledges for 2019 have been prepaid.

Reverend Meredith announced the assignment to St. James’ of a Candidacy Intern, Todd Thomas. Todd, his wife, and his family will be introduced at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Addressing Bishop Budde’s online Pre-Convention Address and the 2019 Budget Narrative (available for review at [www.edow.org/about/diocesan-governance/pre-convention-forum](http://www.edow.org/about/diocesan-governance/pre-convention-forum)), Reverend Meredith commented that the Diocese conducts “amazing activities” with a relatively modest annual operating budget of about four million dollars, 60% of which is represented by donations from parishioners. The target contribution to the Diocese is the tithe (10%), and few parishes are currently at that level of support. St. James’ contributes 8.3% at the present time, having gradually increased our support for the past several years.

Reverend James stated that a report on the discernment process and results will be made at the Annual Meeting. The Mutual Ministry Review for parishioner completion will be distributed then also.

The stewardship campaign (2019) has received thus far 84 pledges, totaling \$422,542. Approximately 25 additional pledges are

anticipated to come in. The final figures for 2018 were 105 pledges and roughly \$450,000.

### Commission Reports

**Education:** Reverend Meredith and Ann Venton are collaborating in the development and presentation of the adult education program. Currently, the Sunday 9:15 a.m. FaithTalks involve a series on personal cybersecurity by Marshall Finch. Thursday morning’s Bible Study continues.

Marisol Castro and Andy Mason head up the Sunday School activities. More adult participation (parent and non-parent volunteers) is needed to sustain and strengthen this important program.

**Missions and Outreach:** Ken Van Valkenburgh reported that the M&O budget request for 2019 is \$36,157 (an increase of 0.5%, based on the 2017 Normal Operating Income). The current programs, such as the Winter Coat Drive, and the Christmas support to the boys at the Bishop Walker School, continue.

Harley Venton updated the vestry on the situation in Haiti (in which Père Wildaine has been suspended from his priestly duties by his bishop). Matters in Haiti now rest with the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. Reverend Meredith reminded members that donations from St. James’ (and partner parishes) are in support of the school at Bon Samaritain Parish, L’Acul and not the priest.

**Pastoral Care:** Reverend Meredith and James Isaacs continue to address these needs.

**The Junior Warden** spoke of the increased communication among members of St. James’ and the wonderful things happening here. She thanked everyone for their support of her family during the illness of her husband, Matt.

**The Senior Warden** announced a “clean up activity,” after the 10:30 service on Sunday, December 9. Emphasis will be placed on general sprucing up of the grounds and the removal of trash and unneeded items from storage areas of church buildings. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and veggie burgers will be shared to fuel the effort.

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## Meet Todd Thomas, our Candidacy Intern



Please join me in welcoming Todd Thomas and his family to St. James'. As Todd's bio describes below, Todd is currently a postulant in the diocese and comes to us at Bishop Budde's request. The bishop has asked that Todd serve our community as an intern while he prepares for his candidacy. Like any seminarian, Todd will take on leadership responsibilities that include preaching, teaching and worship leading. Unlike a seminarian, he will not require a lay committee or intense supervision. We will try to offer opportunities that teach him about the polity of the Episcopal Church, while taking advantage of the gifts he and his family bring to our community. We are excited to have him join our incredible team! –*Rev. Meredith*

### About Todd Thomas



Todd and Teresa married in Seminary in 1991 and both have Bachelor's Degrees in Biblical Studies and Missions, and Todd received a Master's in the same. They have served in overseas missions, and Todd has been both a Youth Pastor and a Senior Pastor before coming to the Episcopal Church. Their journey with the Episcopal Church began a few years ago when he became a Postulant for the Priesthood here the Diocese of

Washington, and their sponsoring parish is St John's Norwood. Todd is now in his final year of Candidacy and expects to be ordained a Priest late in 2019, God willing.

Todd and Teresa live in Rockville with their three sons, Isaac, Josiah and Hunter. Todd's transitional job from his last pastorate to his ordination has been working full-time as a trainer and leader with two local Apple stores, and Teresa works for Mitre Corporation in cyber security.



## Vestry Highlights, continued

### New Business

Harley Venton has found it impossible to attend to personal matters and devote the time he desires to vestry activities and announced his departure from the vestry, effective the end of the current year.

Reverend Meredith made the vestry aware of a most generous bequest from the estate of long-time parishioner, Mary Shepard. Details were to be provided at the Annual Parish Meeting. Plans for the utilization of the Shepard Bequest Fund will be considered by the Gifts Review Committee (Rector, Treasurer, Junior and Senior Wardens, and Chairperson, Finance Commission) as appropriate to honoring Mary and her extended and multifaceted participation in the life of

St. James'. Assistance from diocesan resources will be sought as necessary. The vestry unanimously voted to accept this unanticipated gift.

The benefits to St. James' from ordering items from Amazon by using the AmazonSmile Program (which donates 0.5% of purchase price to the church) were outlined by Joyce Nohowel. Barry Thompson reminded everyone that using the Giant gift cards for grocery purchases is as important this time of the year as it is in the remainder. Giant rebates 5% of purchases to the church, in the program that Isabelle Schuessler manages.

Sandy Soundararajan closed the meeting with prayer, and the vestry adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

*Barry Thompson, Senior Warden*

## Mary Shepard Bequest: A Planned Gift Blessing



Mary Shepard is a beloved memory for her many friends. Her smile was infectious, her caring and thoughtfulness for others a way of life. During twenty years of her St. James' membership, Mary loved her spiritual home and its people, worshipped

regularly (usually at 8:00), and worked hard to promote its ministry...in partnership often with her twin sister, Jo.

As her fight with pancreatic cancer neared its end in summer, Mary confirmed a generous planned gift to her cherished church. The bequest was decided years ago, inspired by a planned giving workshop at our church. It is a testimony to her strong faith and her devotion to St. James'. Her undesignated gift to St. James' of one million dollars has been temporarily set up as the Mary Shepard Bequest Fund, as our clergy and vestry develop careful plans for its permanent use.

Mary grew up as a cradle Episcopalian, walking to St. Margaret's Church near her home in Washington, D. C. Her parents, Emily and Donald Shepard, had a deep spiritual faith which they

instilled in their daughters. Mary attended St. Mary's (Episcopal) College in Raleigh, North Carolina, before completing her education at George Washington University here near her home. She worked in a Bethesda office before helping to care for her mother in a final illness.

At St. James', Mary stepped forward to help wherever she saw a need: helping in the kitchen with receptions and in the office to prepare mailings, organizing and selling jewelry at rummage sales, and knitting prayer shawls. Mary deepened her faith as a regular member of the weekly Women's Bible Study group. She was also a long-time member of a small fellowship group at St. James'. When our new Memorial Garden and Columbarium were built, Mary planned for interment in a niche there, "to be near her God, her sister and her friends."

Upon receipt of the funds, the vestry formally accepted this very generous gift with gratitude at its November meeting. The clergy, vestry and congregation express sincere thanksgiving to Mary for her many years of witness and generous support to the ministry and mission of St. James', and for this gift which will be her lasting testimony in the future.

### FaithTalk Advent Series Sundays, 9:15 a.m.

What do the Book of Common Prayer, the Saint Augustine Prayer Book, the rule of Saint Benedict, and one of today's most popular Franciscan authors have in common?

Join us in the parish hall meeting room as we explore parallels between the spiritual journey and the framework of twelve-step recovery. Facilitated by Ann Venton, our text will be *Breathing Underwater* by Richard Rohr. Topics:

December 9 *Self Examination and Reconciliation (Steps 4-6)*

December 16 *Navigating Forgiveness (Steps 7-9)*

December 23 *The "Maintenance Steps": Examen, Exaltation, Evangelism (Steps 10-12)*

### Greening of the Church!

**Saturday, December 22, 10:00 a.m.**

**Sunday, December 23, 12:00 noon**



The Flower Guild invites you to come to the church Saturday, December 22, to begin the greening. There will be ladder work if you're comfortable with it, and other prep work if you're not. As always, we will happily share some of our "divine secrets" of floral arranging. Happier checking candle batteries or decorating evergreen swags? All these things and more await!

We'll gather again on Sunday, December 23, after the 10:30 service, and again the morning of Christmas Eve, for the final details. Bring your gloves and join us! - *Mary Miers*

### Cold Weather Clothing Drive in January



**Bring donations on Sundays, January 6, 13 and 20**

We will collect donations of cold weather clothing for Interfaith Works of Montgomery County on January 6, 13, and 20, in the parish hall after services. Donations of new or gently used winter clothing are appreciated. Many of us have more coats, sweaters, hats, and gloves than we really need, while that others have little or none.

There are many sales of these items at this time of year. Please take advantage of the discounts! Men’s underwear is especially needed.

Questions? Contact Bill Wallace.

**P.S. – If you’re an online shopper,** don’t forget to use AmazonSmile so St. James’ benefits as well! Log in using this link to our AmazonSmile page:  
[smile.amazon.com/ch/52-0854201](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-0854201)

### St. James’ Teleconference (over-the-phone) Advent Prayer Services

During Advent, St. James’ is offering an afternoon prayer service on Sundays at 3:00 p.m. by conference call for those who are home-bound or unable to attend worship in person.

We begin with the Daily Office and then open up time to connect with one another, spending about 45 minutes in prayer and conversation.

Led by seminarian Mary Margaret, this is an opportunity to prepare for the birth of Jesus as a community and share with each other in this special season.

We had our first prayer service on December 2, and will continue to gather via conference call at 3:00 p.m. Sundays December 9, 16, and 23.

To participate, please contact the church office or seminarian Mary Margaret Winn ([mmwinn@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:mmwinn@stjamespotomac.org)).



## Christmas Flower and Music Donations

You’re invited to make a contribution to our music and flower funds to remember or honor a loved one this Christmas. Undesignated gifts will be divided between flowers and music, or you may designate your gift for either fund in the memo line of your check. Please print your message legibly on the envelope, use the form here, or send an email to [office@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:office@stjamespotomac.org).

**Dedications are due by Monday, December 17.**

For:  Music  Flowers  Both

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone or Email: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship of person(s) to you: \_\_\_\_\_



## Book Club, January 27

At the last meeting, the group decided to move the schedule, resulting in NO discussion in December. Therefore, the next meeting, at 6:45 p.m. Sunday, January 27, in the parish hall library, will be to delve into *Two Steps Forward*, by Graeme Samson and Anne Buist. Two people, taking chances, one mourning the sudden loss of her husband, the other recovering from divorce, cross paths on the centuries-old Camino de Santiago, or the Chemin. Starting in France, on this months-long journey, who do they meet on their separate paths and what is the impact of these new acquaintances? What do these two discover, with some reluctance, about themselves?

For February 24, the group chose *The Music Shop* by Rachel Joyce. It is 1988 in a run-down suburb, and the music shop there has records of every kind. It attracts the lonely, the sleepless, and the adrift. Read this one and meet Frank and Ilse, described in one source as “quirky, wonderful characters.” All are welcome to attend this group-led discussion every fourth Sunday evening.

## Year-end Giving and Stock Donations

For 2018 tax credit, contributions to St. James' must be received by the parish office or postmarked no later than December 31.

To make a stock contribution, send a message to [office@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:office@stjamespotomac.org), so we can provide instructions for completing the transaction.

## Do We Have Your Pledge?



A huge thank you all families and individuals who have sent in their 2019 pledges. If you haven't completed yours, it's not too late! Every pledge counts, large or small. Pledge forms are in the narthex and on our website.

## Lunch & Learn, January 8

This is not the usual first Tuesday, yet this date change enables one to enjoy both New Year's Day AND Lunch and Learn! Program details are still being arranged with the Montgomery County Historical Society, so stay tuned for more details. What IS ready to go are the other bits of necessary information: meeting in the undercroft at 11:30, running until 1:30 or a little later, depending on the number of questions for the speaker. Reservations for the \$10.00 complete lunch can be made by contacting Sarah Padgett. These occasions are open to any who'd like to attend, and if transportation is an issue, contact the office; there are willing drivers available.

With about 25 in attendance most months, this first Tuesday event is casual, comfortable, and we are happy to see YOU there.



Montgomery County Community Services Officer, Dana Stroman, enjoys lunch prior to presenting her informative program on recognizing and avoiding scams aimed at seniors. This L & L, on November 6, also offered ways to improve security, physically and financially.

## The Christmas Pageant is Coming!

Children ages three and up are invited to participate in the Christmas pageant during our Christmas Eve service at 5:00 p.m. There are plenty of costumes for the sheep, donkeys, camels, angels, and shepherds. **We need Readers and someone to play Gabriel.** Please contact Lindsay Ragheb.



## Reflection from the Director of St. James' Children's School, Astrid Crookshank

### *St. James' Children's School Year End Events*

The Holiday season is always a busy one, regardless of your faith or holiday traditions. I think that families with young children, however, experience the holidays on a whole different level of "busyness" and also a different level of joy.

At St. James' Children's School we are blessed to work with young children and their parents every day. We see the children's big smiles and laughter, hear their wonderful questions, and also walk with them through their very normal frustrations. From the parents we hear stories of crazy Thanksgiving travels, huge family gatherings and sometimes, shared family illnesses. It is a blessing to be a part of these families' lives and we are grateful that they entrust their children into our care every day.

Our holidays at St. James' begin the Wednesday of Thanksgiving week with a family potluck lunch with parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles—all welcome. Imagine 15 three-year-olds, 25 parents, a few extra relatives and four teachers all in one class enjoying a Thanksgiving meal.

The teachers prepare their class just like we prepare our homes, moving furniture, adding a few extra chairs and setting out the decorations made by the children. The classroom transforms into a crazy dining room of sorts with room for 40-plus guests. The teachers double-check their potluck sign-ups, worry if there will be enough food, and end up having more dishes come than expected with plenty of leftovers to pack up and send home. And that's just in one of our four classrooms hosting the lunch. When we are all eating we could have nearly 150 people sharing food and breaking (corn) bread together. It's just like at home, but at that "extra" level that comes with lots of extra preschoolers, extra noise and extra love.

## St. James' Children's School Christmas Show! Thursday, December 20, 4:30 p.m.

*The show begins in the church sanctuary. Reception follows in the parish hall, including a visit with Santa for children of all ages.*



Our next step in our Holiday journey is a sharing of our gifts with others in need. The school participates in both a Toys for Tots collection and the Bishop Walker School collection. Our families are very interested in helping other children, as I think we all appreciate the many gifts we have living in our area. It is not unusual for us to get a phone call from a parent, asking for any item that still needs to be claimed, as they are at the store and can pick up anything still needed. Almost every parent that signs up asks if they could possibly give more, as surely the children would want more than one toy. I believe our families appreciate being part of a faith community that reaches out and thinks of how we can help others throughout the year.

Our Grand Finale to our pre-Christmas Season is of course the school's Christmas Show. Our children in the twos class and older participate in this wonderful pageant celebrating the true meaning of Christmas. The children are already rehearsing here so we are fully in the spirit of the season. There's nothing quite as joyful as children singing Christmas carols, so much better than the radio!

We invite everyone to come and enjoy the show on Thursday, December 20 at 4:30 p.m. in the church sanctuary. Around 5:00 we will have a reception in the parish hall to include a visit with Santa for children of all ages. Hope to see many of you there!

Merry Christmas from all of us at St. James' Children's School!

*Astrid*

## News from St. James' Children's School



### Morning Greetings in the Twos Room

By Dana Stafford

One of the best parts of our day in the Twos room is morning drop off. The children arrive, wash their hands and get ready for their fun day in the Twos. We love to greet the children each morning and welcome them into the room.

Sometimes it is hard to leave mom or dad at the door, but we set the room up to be visually welcoming. We also make sure each child/family is spoken to specifically and greeted appropriately each morning. We are ready to give hugs and cuddles, if needed or read a book, play with playdough, create with Legos, or build with blocks.

We have three round tables that you see as you first enter our room. We set these up with activities. For example, puzzles, small blocks and the art activity or playdough. As the children enter the room they may see something they are excited to play with and will quickly say goodbye to their parents. And if cuddles are needed, we are ready to help.

The children look forward to coming to school when the room and the teachers are ready for them. And they know they are in for a fun, social and educational day in the Twos Room!



## Calendar of Events

### Sundays at 9:15 a.m.:

FaithTalk - adult spiritual formation with childcare

### Sundays at 10:30 a.m.:

Sunday School with childcare

### December 9, Sunday:

- Sunday School Bake Sale and Silent Auction
- Prayer service by conference call, 3:00 p.m.

### December 16, Sunday:

- Return Bishop Walker Gifts
- Living Nativity, 6:00 p.m.
- Prayer by phone, 3:00 p.m..

### December 19, Wednesday:

Visit Potomac Valley, 10:30 a.m.

### December 20, Thursday:

Children's School Christmas Show, 4:30 p.m.

### December 22, Saturday:

Church Greening, 10:00 a.m.

### December 23, Sunday:

Church Greening, noon  
Prayer by phone, 3:00 p.m.

### December 24, Christmas Eve Services

5:00 p.m. Pageant Eucharist  
7:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist, music  
10:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist, music

### January 2, Wednesday:

Visit to Manor Care, 10:30 a.m.

### January 6, Sunday, Epiphany:

- Holy Eucharist 8:00, 10:30 a.m.
- Epiphany Brunch 12:00 noon
- Cold weather clothing drive

### January 8, Tuesday: Lunch & Learn

## Bake Sale / Silent Auction, Sunday, December 9

The St. James' Sunday School is once again supporting Heifer International to provide animals, food, and income to families in need. The students are hoping to raise \$500 through their various efforts including the bake sale and silent auction of gift cards to shops in Cabin John mall. Come buy some treats!

## Native Plants

This is the first of several short essays on topics dealing with Creation Care with an emphasis on subjects that are appropriate for individual action.

Native plants should be the backbone of any landscape that wants to be welcoming to the creatures that occur naturally in our area. Native plants are defined as the plants that evolved, without man's interference, in the local environment. For purposes of this essay I am going to focus on native birds since they are perhaps the most widespread and easily observed creatures on a consistent basis in our area. If native birds can flourish in your yard you can be sure that native pollinators and a host of other animals are present as well.

Impacts of human actions have caused a rapid decline in most species around the world including in our area. The rapid decline of birds represents at least a 70% decline in song birds since the 1950's. The number one cause of the decline of most species including birds is loss of habitat. Montgomery County in 1950 was primarily undeveloped farmland or forest. As the residential boom spread rapidly through Montgomery County large tracks of land were quickly converted to housing, shopping centers, schools, churches etc. and native plants were replaced with whatever the developers decided to plant, often non-native species. Loss of habitat continues today and remains a principal factor in species decline.

We certainly do not propose or expect that this development will be reduced or that future development will be stopped. However, several visionaries have proposed workable ways to mitigate some of the damage to the local ecosystems that will allow a much greater number of native birds and other species to survive. The key to this mitigation is to plant more native plants around our homes, shops, parks, churches and office complexes.



Dr. Douglas Tallamy, a Professor of entomology at the University of Delaware has documented the dependence of most of our native birds on insects and especially insects that have caterpillars. It makes sense that when a Bluebird is trying to feed three to five very hungry hatchlings, being able to deliver a series of caterpillars is much more efficient than trying to present as many calories with small insects such as ants. Most small song birds are dependent on caterpillars and other large pupa to successfully reproduce.

Butterflies and Moths which have caterpillars are highly dependent on Native Plants. Each species of Butterfly and Moth have one to several species of plants where they consistently lay their eggs. Female Butterflies and Moths have special cells on their feet that allow them to taste the plant leaf and determine whether it is one they prefer so they can lay their eggs on the proper plant. The eggs hatch as tiny caterpillars that immediately begin to eat the leaves and grow providing just what Native birds need.

If we want our colorful native song birds to persist we need to plant a variety of Native plants which will support the significant numbers of caterpillars required. The obvious question is what to plant if we want to keep a variety of native song birds. There are several computer tools to help in the selection process such as: [www.audubon.org/native-plants](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants) or [hwww.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder](http://hwww.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder) or Dr. Tallamy's [www.bringingnaturehome.net](http://www.bringingnaturehome.net).

Dr. Tallamy also has two very helpful books including *Bringing Nature Home* and *Landscaping with Native Plants*.

An excellent source of information on this topic is the Maryland Native Plant Society which

*continued on next page*

**Native Plants, continued**

has a very well done full color handbook titled "Landscaping with Native Plants" which is available on line at [www.mdflora.org](http://www.mdflora.org). Many of our local garden centers carry native plants and there are a number of local organizations that have special native plant sales in the Spring. Lists of sources are available from the Maryland Native Plant Society web page [www.mdflora.org](http://www.mdflora.org) under Native Gardens and a cooperative effort of the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a publication titled "Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping" which can be downloaded from: [www.fws.gov/Chesapeakebay/pdf/NativePlantsforWildlifeHabitatandConservationLandscaping.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/Chesapeakebay/pdf/NativePlantsforWildlifeHabitatandConservationLandscaping.pdf)

*John Combs*

**Help Needed with Live Nativity!**

**Sunday, December 16, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.  
(rain or shine!)**

Do you like to sing Christmas carols? Are you handy with a circular saw? Does plugging in extension cords sound like a fun time? Can you bake (or buy) cookies? WE NEED YOU to help set up the Live Nativity on Sunday December 16. Help is needed with running cords, plugging in speakers/lights and more, serving cookies and warm apple cider, and singing your heart out to classic Christmas carols.

Contact Rachele Donnelly. Volunteers will be "paid" in cookies and ample time petting adorable lambs, goats and one stubborn but lovable donkey.



***Sharing our Joy and Warmth  
with the Bishop Walker School***

**All your generosity and joy is shining bright!**



Thanks to all the generous parishioners and preschool families who selected a paper ornament from the boys at Bishop Walker School. Your Christmas spirit truly does shine bright! Please wrap the gifts you purchase, put them in a bag or tie them together with ribbon, and affix the paper ornament to the package. Having everything tagged and packaged together for each student simplifies the transportation and distribution.

**Please return the wrapped and packaged gifts to the parish hall by Sunday, December 16.**

**If you missed the BWS ornaments last Sunday**, please consider giving to the school directly through their Giving program: [www.bishopwalkerschool.org/giving](http://www.bishopwalkerschool.org/giving) or selecting something on the school's wish list that includes items like books and school or administrative supplies: [www.bishopwalkerschool.org/giving/support our wish list](http://www.bishopwalkerschool.org/giving/support_our_wish_list).

**Delivering the gifts to the school on December 20:** If you would like to have the incredible experience of meeting these truly special boys, please consider helping to deliver the gifts to the school. If interested in helping with delivery, please let the office ([office@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:office@stjamespotomac.org)) or Wendy Hicks know.

The school now has a new location with room for all the students, and they are excited to show it off. Their new director started planning the festivities, hoping for a big crowd from St. James! We will deliver the gifts to BWS on Thursday, December 20, arriving at the school a little before 1:00 and departing around 3:00 p.m. The school has asked for a count of people who plan on coming—they would love to give a tour of their new location to those who attend from St. James'.

May the joy and love of the Christmas spirit overwhelm your heart. Merry Christmas and God bless.