



# The St. James' Pilgrim

News for the Journey . . . November 2019

St. James' Episcopal Church • 11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854-3340 • 301-762-8040 • [www.stjamespotomac.org](http://www.stjamespotomac.org)



## Reflection from our Assistant Rector, The Rev. James Isaacs

### **Time is Not Our Own**

When I first started tithing (giving at least ten percent of my income to the church), a switch happened for me in my relationship with money. At first, I thought of my money as

money that I was able to choose how to spend (besides for some unavoidable expenses). And I felt good about my decision to give some of it to the church.

Yet, there is something about the Biblical standard of giving a tithe that changed everything (and I've heard other people report the same thing). I found out that ten percent is significant enough that I couldn't do it without making some changes. And then, after embracing those changes in order to tithe, I started to feel like my money was not my own. Instead I gained a profound sense of my money being something that was given to me by God and for me to be a steward—someone who was tasked with choosing how to use God's money to serve God. I went from feeling like I didn't have enough money to wanting to figure out more ways that I could give more of it away or use it in service of God.

That journey with tithing feels like it happened a long time ago for me. Recently, though, I have had a similar experience in my relationship with time. For much of my adult life, I've felt like I haven't had enough time to do all of the things that I wanted to do. And then, I felt called to take on another responsibility that requires quite a significant amount of time in service to God. I said "yes" to the opportunity to serve God in a new way, and everything around time in my life is having to shift because of it.

And then there was an epiphany. My paradigm of thinking about the time I had changed from thinking

about it as my time, with some (albeit a significant amount) being devoted to serving God, to seeing all of my time as a gift from God that to be used to serve God and God's people. All of a sudden, my time was not my own, and it was liberating.

I'm still trying to figure out how best to manage the time that I have. I don't know that I'm doing a very good job at it yet. Yet now I see all of this time as something that is given to me by God to use in a way that glorifies and pleases God. And so I have gone from feeling resentful or exhausted because I haven't had enough time for myself to wanting to figure out how I might use more of the time that I have to better serve God in each moment. That doesn't mean that I need to be busy all of the time.

Of course God delights in the time that we spend reconnecting and grounding ourselves in God's abundant love. So now time is shared between time serving God and God's people and time spent just enjoying God's presence. And I am missing less and less the time that I used to crave to have "for myself."

I share this revelation that I have had, not because I think that it is unique—many of you may have already figured this out long ago. But I think that busy-ness and feeling concerned about time is a perpetual and pervasive problem for many people in our area. And to that spiritual dilemma, I now have something that works for me.

Just as the counter-intuitive solution for feeling like there is a lack of money is to give it away, maybe the spiritual solution for feeling like there isn't enough time is to give more of it to God, so that God can remind us that all of it can be seen as a gift.

In Christ,  
James



## Reflection from our Senior Warden, Barry Thompson

### **Thankfulness—and an Orange**

When I was a child, my brother, sister, and I always discovered in our stockings, on Christmas morning, an orange. This was a reminder from our parents that they, in the less fortunate circumstances of their childhoods, had also received an orange on Christmas: something special (in Ohio and Minnesota), out of season, and from far away—an unexpected blessing. At the same time, the orange was an expression of our family's good fortune in the 1950s: that, in addition to the other gifts to be found under the tree, we children could enjoy something, imbued with family history and special meaning, for which to be thankful.

At St. James' in this time of celebration of the secular (Thanksgiving) and the religious (Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) how can we not be similarly thankful that God has so richly blessed us individually and as a parish?

Our clergy are amazing, our music ministry outstanding, our Sunday School burgeoning, and the members of our Youth Group engaged and growing spiritually. Attendance is trending upward, and we are blessed with new families with young children. Financial support is increasing, and the persistent deficit of past years has been all but eliminated. Multiple, solid outreach programs benefit a variety of organizations and individuals.

The Mental Health/ Mental Wellness Initiative completed an introductory series for parishioners and moves forward under the guidance of a group of dedicated members who represent broadly the diversity at St. James'. We just have completed the first phase of the Facilities Visioning Initiative, are assessing parishioner input, and will be determining "next steps" in the near future. Just think of all of the blessings that we have!

It has been said that Americans in general have not experienced real deprivation in the last 60 years—not since World War II. Hunger and food insecurity exist, but not starvation. Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing persist; but most citizens have shelter, often in excess of their demonstrable needs. Medical care is expensive

and can be difficult to access, but care in emergencies is usually available.

Nonetheless, there are those who are far less fortunate than many of us are. There are obvious needs in our parish community and in the geographic area around us. The vestry has concurred with Reverend Meredith that a tithe of the funds from the significant bequest from Mary Shepard be targeted for "community good" and the programs that provide services and assistance to those in need in Montgomery County and elsewhere.

Still, there is much more to be done, and you can help to do it. Monetary donations are but a part of the solutions that we seek. Time and talent are effective also. Think about training to take the sacraments to ailing or incapacitated parishioners, volunteering at Shepherd's Table, helping with the Christmas project for the Bishop Walker School, participating in the warm coat drive, or defining a new opportunity for service for you and others at St. James'.

A lifestyle that is, appropriately or not, the envy of much of the world sometimes makes it difficult to appreciate all that we do have. Sometimes it distracts us from seeing the plight of others. Blessed we are. Thankful we should be. Committed to helping relieve, in any manner possible, the suffering of our fellow humans we must be.

Perhaps we should consider an orange for Christmas?

### **Gathering Gifts to Celebrate Newton Lewis and the Rev. Todd Thomas**

On December 8 we'll honor Newton Lewis on his twentieth anniversary as our Music Director. On December 15, our deacon Todd Thomas will be ordained to the priesthood at a 4:00 p.m. service at St. James'. (You're invited!)

We're collecting a "purse" for Newton and contributions to purchase a stole for Todd. Please make checks to St. James' with "Newton's 20th" and "Todd's Stole" in the memo.

## Vestry Highlights: Meeting of October 15, 2019

By Barry Thompson, Sr. Warden

The vestry met on October 15 with the rector presiding. Lindsay Ragheb opened with her reflection on a serious accident several months ago, involving a family member. Todd Thomas provided pastoral care, bringing great peace and calm to the family, reminding them that God is ever greater than our challenges. With prayer and God's love, the individual is rapidly returning to health.

The treasurer reported that expenses exceeded income for the reporting period. In addition, expenses for the parish hall ramp, the resealing and re-striping of the parking lots, and for repainting the exterior of the parish hall will necessitate disbursing funds from reserve and restricted funds. The vestry discussed options. The Finance Commission will provide recommendations and a timeline for restoration of diverted funds. The recent Community Sale netted some \$3900, with one or two items still to be sold.

Stewardship figures for 2020 were reviewed. The goal for the year is \$450,000.

### Clergy Reports

Reverend Meredith reminded vestry members that the Bishop will meet with them after the service on November 3. Reviewed were the results of the Building Visioning Initiative, as presented to the congregation by our consultant from Generis, Jeff Hensley. The rector and wardens will map out next steps. Engagement with the congregation will continue.

James Isaacs reported on the successful Mental Health First Aid Training on October 5 with parishioners (and others) attending. He also announced a special service to be held at St. James' on January 19, 2020.

### Wardens' Reports

The senior warden reminded vestry members that October was "Pastor Appreciation Month,"

and all joined in applause for our outstanding clergy. Security measures, now focusing on fire safety and adverse weather responses, continue, he said.

Sarah Hnatov thanked all participants for their support of the community sale. She mentioned the upcoming Halloween Fun Fest and encouraged attendance. Sarah asked all groups/activities to clean up their areas for Bishop Mariann's visit on November 3.

### Commission reports

The chair of the **Finance Commission** reminded everyone of the upcoming deadline for budget submissions for 2020.

The **Worship Commission** announced that hand bells will have a greater role in the service during Bishop Mariann's visit. The commission also reported the decision to use the Book of Common Prayer during the summer next year.

**Facilities** noted the "big ticket" items mentioned above, the commencement of decluttering efforts in church and parish hall, and plans for additional grounds maintenance.

On behalf of the **Nominating Committee, Administration** presented vestry candidates Andrew Huck, Bill Murphy, Trish Powell, and Kara Smigel; delegate Sarah Hnatov and alternates Pat East and Mary Miers; and Ken VanValkenburgh who will stand for election as Junior Warden.

### Dates to Remember

The Annual Parish Meeting is November 17, 9:00 a.m.

The vestry will next meet November 19. Reports will be received from Administration, Communications, Worship, and Fellowship Commissions.

## Annual Parish Meeting Sunday, November 17 9:00 a.m. in the parish hall

Come hear about the state of the parish and elect vestry and diocesan delegates. Check in at 9:00 a.m. in the parish hall for the 9:15 a.m. annual meeting. Absentee ballots are available from the parish office and must be submitted by Friday, November 15.

**Breakfast will be served by St. James' Youth,** with a freewill offering to support the youth summer mission trip.



**Christmas Ornaments and Decorations Sale:** In the parish hall you'll find ornaments ranging from exquisite one-of-a-kind glass pieces, to ornament sets, to inexpensive, unbreakable (good for young children and pets) at low prices. Most are from an obviously long-term collector. Don't miss it!



## Proposed 2020 Vestry and Diocesan Delegate Slate

*The Vestry Nominating Committee respectfully presented to the 2019 Vestry this proposed slate for the 2020 Vestry and Diocesan Delegates and the vestry voted to accept the slate.*

### Vestry 2020

Barry Thompson, Senior Warden – through end of 2020  
 Ken Van Valkenburgh, Junior Warden – new two-year term  
 Holly Mulderig – continue through end of 2020  
 Dr. Anselm Hennis – continue through end of 2020  
 Lindsey Ragheb – continue through end of 2020  
 Wendy Hicks – continue through end of 2020  
 Dawn Iype – running for two more years  
 Lori Minasian – running for two more years  
 Patrick O'Hare – continue through end of 2020

### Recommended Vestry Additions

Bill Murphy	Andrew Huck
Trish Powell	Kara Smigel

### Diocesan Delegates

Katherine Weaver – continue through end of 2020  
 Sarah Hnatov – through end of 2021

### Alternate Delegates

Pat East – through end of 2020  
 Mary Miers – through end of 2020

### Retiring

Sarah Hnatov, Junior Warden  
 Joyce Nohowel  
 Sandy Soundararajan  
 Carolyn Dick  
 Dan Zimmerman, delegate



## Thursday Morning Bible Study

As begun on Thursday October 31, we are studying the story of David and Goliath using John Ohmer's book, *Slaying Your Goliaths: How God Can Help.*

Join us on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. November 7, 14, and 21 to learn how to prevail through obstacles, with spiritual guidance and the assurance that God is with us always, even and especially when we face and slay our giants.

Owning the book is recommended but not necessary. This bible study meets in the parish hall meeting room every Thursday.



Guess who? More Halloween FunFest (October 28) photos on page 10.



## Reflection from our Youth Director, Rachele Donnelly

### **Lessons in Baseball and Life**

Despite a great love of the game, it should be noted that I have absolutely zero experience playing baseball. None. Nada. Not even a little. As a youngster,

I never played T-ball. In my teen years, I never once picked up a softball.

Unfortunately for me, this meant that at no point during my early twenties did a major league baseball team try to recruit me, with the offer of a multi-million-dollar contract. I swam, played soccer, was in martial arts, and more.

My older brother, Wesley, swam as well, played basketball and participated in countless clubs. He was always more athletically-inclined, focused and fast. He swam for the coveted A-team! He had countless trophies and ribbons. You could find me on the opposite end of the spectrum. A solid B-team swimmer, I earned a lot of participation trophies. Truthfully, I was more of the social ("Hey! Look! The snack bar has nachos!") kind of athlete.

And so it came to be, that while Wes was off at basketball practice, I was tasked as Dad's helper for all of the home repair projects. Some of my earliest memories consist of pointing a flashlight toward whatever he was working on. Dad taught me all about the various tools and materials. Whether I was performing the work, or just sitting there keeping him company, I learned a lot.

Of all the things Dad taught me, the most profound was a saying that he repeated every time we encountered an unexpected issue; "There is always a workaround!" In home repair projects, as in the game of baseball, curveballs happen. The key to success lies within our ability to readjust our approach, be open to whatever is coming at us, and finally, to just keep going.

In June 2019, the Nats outfielder, Gerardo Parra, found himself in an atrocious 0-for-23 slump. As a professional baseball player, Parra had arrived at his position following years of planning and practice. Despite his efforts, he was in a bad place. Being struck out repeatedly was not part of the plan. The outfielder knew something had to change. Giving up was not an option. Parra needed to find his workaround.

On June 19, following failed trials sampling merengue, reggaeton, and hip hop as his walk-up music, Parra approached the plate to the tune of "Baby Shark." What began as an homage to his two-year daughter and an effort to end a slump became a rally cry for a player, his team, and the city.

This past weekend, a city known for divisiveness came together to celebrate our very own World Series Champions. It's safe to say that these unlikely winners have taught us all quite a few lessons in life:

**Work hard.** Whether in school, sports, or your career; always give 100 percent. Anything less is a disservice to yourself and to those cheering you on!

**Never give up!** There will be times when you find yourself stressed and overwhelmed. Maybe you've been disappointed before and are afraid to suffer the repetition. Remember that remarkable achievements rarely occur without preceding failures.

When times get tough, **lean on your teammates.** Family, friends from school, your youth group, clergy, counselors...they may not wear cleats and jerseys, but they have your back, nonetheless.

Finally, most importantly, always, always **believe.** God has a plan for you. Trust that even when times are tough, He is in control.

## Member Profile: Say Hi to Opeyemi “Yemi” Agboola

By Holly Mulderig

It began with a random internet search in 2016. Opeyemi “Yemi” Agboola was looking for a church home shortly after moving to the area.

And fortunately for us, he happened upon St. James’, Potomac—especially interesting because his grandparents were members of St. James’ Anglican Cathedral Church, in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Growing up in Nigeria, Yemi’s favorite memories included the “joy of just playing outside.”

Yemi attended university in Nigeria. After studying veterinary medicine, Yemi moved to London, where he made a career switch into project management, and then moved back to Nigeria. There, he met and married his wife Teresa. Today, Yemi is a Project Manager with the International Baccalaureate Program in Bethesda.

Yemi adores hanging out with his family. As for sports: soccer is a number one favorite. The eldest Agboola children, Tobias and David (ages 12 and 8, respectively), attend St. Elizabeth’s School in

Rockville. Noah, age 2, enjoys spending time with his maternal grandmother.

We all have favorite vacation/travel spots: Yemi’s are London (thanks to its lively social scene), Dubai and the Bahamas.

So after a few years of membership (I asked “why St. James’?) Yemi emphasized that St. James’ is a friendly, warm and welcoming congregation. “Reverends Meredith and James are very good spiritual leaders. And I always feel so uplifted when I hear “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

Yemi serves on our Membership Commission. And you’ll see him ushering the third Sunday of the month at the 10:30 service.

Yemi, we’re so very happy you found us!



## Scenes from St. James’ Annual Hayride and Bonfire, 2019!



# Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Please join us.  
All are welcome!

**Wednesday, November 20  
7:30 p.m.**

**Potomac Area Interfaith  
Communities (PAIC)  
At Saint Raphael Catholic Church  
1513 Dunster Road, Rockville MD**

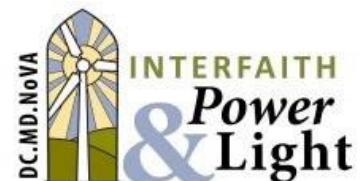
Join us in “Thanksgiving for Creation” through worship, followed by fellowship and “Action for Creation” through art, along with opportunities for service and contributions for Manna ([www.mannafood.org](http://www.mannafood.org)).



All are asked to bring donations for Manna Food Center (see below for a list of foods needed). Boy Scouts will meet you as you enter the church to take your donation for sorting and packing.

## Action for Creation

Mother Earth Project: Commit to sustainable actions and help create a parachute for the planet



Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions:  
Save energy, go solar, and buy clean power

“Big Foot” (Carbon Footprint Project): learn how to reduce your electricity, gas, and water usage



Trees for the Future: Help eliminate hunger, extreme poverty, deforestation and lessen humanity’s contributions to climate change

## Manna Food Center Most Needed Foods

### Grains

- Instant oatmeal packets, original flavor
- Brown rice (16 oz)
- Whole grain pasta (16 oz)

### Protein

- Tuna, salmon, or chicken in water
- Dry or canned beans (low sodium)
- Natural nut butters

### Fruits and Vegetables

- Canned vegetables (low sodium)
- Canned fruit (in juice)
- Fruit cups

### Other Healthy Items

- Shelf-stable individual milk boxes
- Cooking oils and spices
- Infant formula and baby foods



## Giving Thanks, Giving Food: Donations for Samaritan Ministry

Time is moving quickly and before you know it, the Holiday Season will be upon us. Once again St. James' is seeking donations for Samaritan Ministry's Thanksgiving Food Drive. Express your gratitude this year and make Thanksgiving special by providing a meal for a family in need.

A pressing need is gift cards from familiar grocery stores such as Giant, Safeway, Walmart and Target for \$25 so participants can purchase a turkey. Your gift will offer food to hungry people, support and comfort to families in crisis, and hope to the dispirited. Bring an item to donate, fill a bag for a family, or provide gift cards for turkeys and other fresh food. Will you share your blessings with someone in need?

**St. James' is collecting donations through November 19.** Any amount you give will provide food and Thanksgiving warmth to someone who really needs it. **PLEASE bring items to church by November 19.**

### More About Samaritan Ministry

Samaritan Ministry goes beyond providing emergency assistance to people in need. Every year, they help improve the lives of more than 1,000 people who are homeless or otherwise in need through an innovative Next Step program.

Participants are welcomed into a safe, supportive environment that allows them the freedom to choose their own goals and pursue them! They are given the resources and support they need—housing and employment search guidance, coaching, referrals to partner service providers and more—to fulfill those goals.

Your gift will support hurting individuals and families hope for tomorrow and to make positive changes in their lives. Thank you, God bless you, and Happy Thanksgiving!

**For additional information contact Joyce Graf or Holly Mulderig at St. James', or Sy Jones, Volunteer Manager, Samaritan Ministry:**  
[sjones@samaritanministry.org](mailto:sjones@samaritanministry.org) or 202-722-2280 x314.



The following gift card and food donations will help provide Samaritan Ministry participants with Thanksgiving food baskets:

- \$25 gift cards to Giant, Harris Teeter, Safeway, or Walmart to purchase turkeys
- Mixes for stuffing, gravy, corn bread, mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, bread, rolls, etc.
- Cranberry sauce
- Canned fruits
- Canned yams or other vegetables
- Canned or Dry Beans (Kidney Beans, etc.)
- Rice, regular or instant  
Other holiday type food

**Gift cards for \$25 at Giant grocery stores are available from the church office, and will support both St. James' and Samaritan Ministry at the same time!**

### “Feed My Sheep”

**St. James' at Shepherd's Table in October**  
*By Mary Miers*

A small but hardy group of St. James' volunteers came out on a rainy evening to help carry out this command of Jesus. We discovered, a little late, that a change in my email had not penetrated as far as it should have. Luckily the built-in redundancy of the recruitment process brought us additional online sign-ups.

We fed a steady stream of men, women, and a few children. Pat East, her friend Henrietta Jenkins, Joyce Graf, Mary Miers, and Charlie Padgett were joined by volunteer prep staff, servers, and clean-up crew, with the able and flexible guidance of Shepherd's Table staff. It was good to meet and work with the new volunteer coordinator, Chante Leverette.

**Stay tuned for information on our next gig on January 29!** Information on how to sign up to serve may be found on the table in the church narthex, or on our website, [www.stjamespotomac.org](http://www.stjamespotomac.org), under Missions and Outreach.



**SAMARITAN  
MINISTRY**  
*of Greater Washington*

# THANKSGIVING 2019

Samaritan Ministry is gathering donations for its

## Annual Thanksgiving Drive

We would like to provide our PARTICIPANTS and their families baskets filled with the following:

### Gifts Cards - \$25 each

For turkey and other fresh foods from grocery stores:  
Giant, Safeway, Walmart, Target, Harris Teeter & Trader Joe's.

**Please deliver or send gift cards by Wednesday, November 20**  
to 1516 Hamilton St. NW, Washington DC 20011,  
Attn: Sy Jones, Volunteer Manager.

**If bringing items to St. James', bring by Sunday, November 17.**

- Cranberry Sauce
- Canned Yams
- Cornbread Mix
- Gravy (can or box)
- Canned Fruits
- Mac & Cheese Mix
- Instant Mashed Potatoes

- Stuffing Mix (bag or box)
- 1-2 lb. Bag Dry Rice
- Instant Rice
- 1-2 lb. Bag Dry Beans
- Canned Beans
- Cake Mix & Frosting

**Other Items are Accepted**



**Please NO Glass Jars**



**For additional information contact:**

Joyce Graf or Holly Mulderig at St. James'  
Sy Jones, Volunteer Manager, Samaritan Ministry  
[sjones@samaritanministry.org](mailto:sjones@samaritanministry.org) or (202) 722-2280 x314



## Weird and Wonderful ... the St. James' Halloween FunFest!





# Girls Just Wanna Have Fun (at church)!

Women's Movie Night!  
Friday, November 22, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

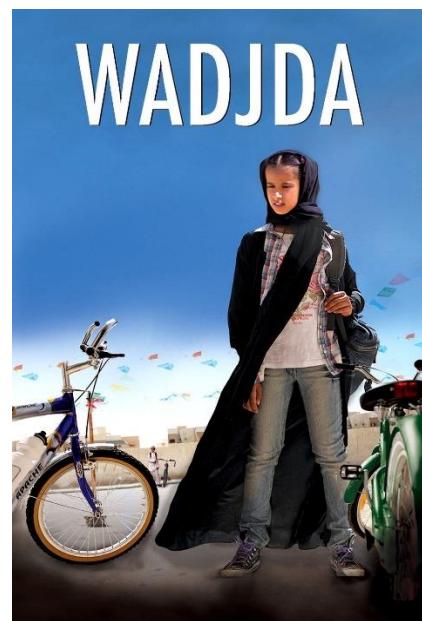
Ladies—Join us in the undercroft (church lower level) to watch a movie, eat, and discuss!

We'll be watching **WADJDA**: A movie about a young girl living in Saudi Arabia, determined to raise enough money to buy a bike in a society that sees bicycles as dangerous to a girl's virtue.

Come as you are—straight from work, in jeans, or in pajamas. Anything goes!

Please bring your favorite beverage and/or snack to share. You may also wish to bring a cushion or other sit-upon to augment our lovely church folding chairs while you watch the movie.

We hope to see you there!



## Are You Aware of the Essential Role of Soil?

By John Combs

*In addition to a life-long interest in plants and animals, John Combs has long been a member of the Maryland Ornithological Society. He is certified by the Audubon Naturalist Society as a macro invertebrate identifier and stream monitor, as well as a University of Maryland Agricultural Extension certified Master Naturalist. He served in his previous parish as the chair of the Creation Care Ministry for a number of years.*

Many people think that the ground is just dirt, but in fact the soil under forests, meadows and farms is a rich living ecosystem unto itself. Scientists tell us that a pint of rich topsoil has as many living organisms as there are people on this earth, the majority of which are microscopic organisms such as bacteria and fungi. Dirt is lifeless particles that collect on our clothing and under our fingernails.

Soil is where geology meets biology. Soil has many values including:

1. serving as a medium for all sorts of plants;
2. modifying the atmosphere by emitting or absorbing gases (carbon dioxide, methane, water vapor etc.);
3. providing habitat for animals that live in the soil and organisms such as bacteria, fungi and other microscopic organisms;
4. absorbing, holding, releasing, altering, and purifying most of the water in terrestrial systems;
5. processing recycled nutrients, including carbon so that living things can use them over and over again;
6. serving as media for construction of foundations, roadbeds, dams and buildings;
7. acting as a living filter to clean water before it moves into an acquirer.<sup>1</sup>

The most significant value for this essay is soil is vital to the survival of all life on earth and the richer the mix of organisms the better. A great deal of recent scientific research has been focused on soil and its functions. Many practices that have been in existence for thousands of years and were thought to be essential to successful agriculture are now being challenged. There is growing evidence that plowing may not be the best way to prepare for planting new crops even though plowing has been a first step in agriculture for several millennia. Plowing breaks the soil surface

and flips several inches of soil from below to the surface where it contacts the air.

Exposing the soil to air allows various gases such as carbon dioxide and methane to evaporate into the air and contribute to climate change. It also allows moisture, which is vital to the health of the many soil organisms to evaporate and stress those organisms. Exposed soil is more prone to wind and water erosion leaching away vital assets and creating problems with siltation in streams and rivers.

These problems can be mitigated by practicing no till (no plowing) agriculture that reduces soil disturbance and retains soil covering vegetation. No till practices reduce off gassing and preserve vital soil moisture. If cover crops are carefully matched to soil analysis and planned crop needs they can improve soil fertility and crop yields while reducing the need for artificial chemical fertilizers and perhaps reduce farm fuel use. Over time these no till and cover crop practices can improve the humus material in the soil allowing them to absorb more water and retain more moisture and therefore be more resilient to drought.

It seems amazing that a fundamental concept of agriculture such as plowing could be considered counter-productive but it is now being challenged widely. In a sense it is encouraging since it provides a method to improve the fertility of our soils, reduce climate change off gassing and improve the resilience of our food supply to lower moisture availability by making this one change. Agricultural research organizations have been testing these principles for several years now with encouraging results and many of our agricultural authorities are promoting greater use of these techniques, including our own Maryland Department of Agriculture.



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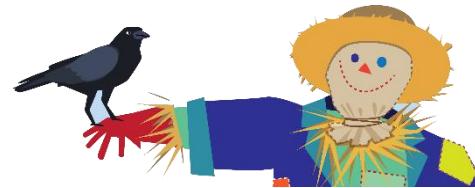
<sup>1</sup> Soils Overview, Soil Science Society of America

## St. James' Community Sale—We Did It!

By Tracy Lively

On September 28 a group of smiling St. James' parishioners welcomed a steady stream of visitors from the community into the parish hall, and most of those visitors then left smiling with their arms full of ... well, all sorts of things. They carried out bags full of toys, books, tools and pots and pans. We sold many pieces of Michael Podesta calligraphy that had been donated by someone just passing by the church who saw the sign announcing our sale.

At the beginning of the day, one set of tables was heaped with a veritable mountain of linens, and one whole wall was filled with Christmas decorations. But by the end of the day so much had been sold that the truck from Vietnam Vets was only half-filled with the remainder. We sent a couple of boxes of the unsold Christmas ornaments to St. Peter's in Poolesville for their Christmas sale, and a very few more valuable collectibles will be offered for sale on Craigslist.



In the end we took in just over \$4000, about same as we did from the sale in May. Members of our youth made valuable contributions to the effort, and we were able to provide SSL credits. We showed that with the right organization and enough helping hands we can carry out the set-up and sale in two and half days. We'll convene a group early in 2020 to consider whether or not to plan another sale for the spring.

Many thanks are due to all the helping hands on the staff and from the parish—those who lent their vehicles and hauled things to and from the shed, those who did the setup and pricing, undaunted by those stacks of linens and that mountain of Christmas items, those who arranged for publicity and for the logistics, those who welcomed and assisted the customers, and those who came for the packing up.

We did it!

### **Essential Role of Soil, continued from previous page**

While few of St. James' parishioners are engaged in commercial farming, many of us have homes and yards where we grow grass, flowers, trees and bushes and many of us have kitchen gardens where we grow vegetables and herbs.

The same principles that apply to soil enhancement for commercial agriculture will work on a smaller scale. Knowing that healthy soil requires an environment where all these various organisms can thrive requires that we practice good soil management. We can enhance our soils by minimizing disturbances, and keeping the surface covered, preferably with native ground cover plants or natural ground covers such as hardwood mulch.

A good chemical soil test is a great way to begin an effort to improve your soil and a good test requires that you take soil samples from several different places in the yard, mix the resulting samples in a container and then select a combined sample for chemical analysis. This gives a better composite sample. Where you plan to have gardens for special purposes such as a

kitchen garden you may want a composite sample for that area alone. When you have results you will know what nutrients and other chemicals are present, absent or out of balance. This knowledge will provide the information you need to immediately improve your soil fertility. I recommend you consider an organic fertilizer if you can.

Organic fertilizers are more likely to contain the microorganisms we described above and provide the conditions for them to thrive. If there is wider use of organic fertilizer there will be a higher value on farm waste products and an economic incentive to farmers to preserve natural substances and market them. In the Chesapeake watershed, nutrient runoff from poorly managed farm wastes are a major problem in improving water quality.

Additional information on this subject can be found in these two books: *The Hidden Half of Nature* by David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikle, and *Life in the Soil* by James B. Nardi. ♦



## Considering Abraham

By Rev. Meredith

I was blessed to be invited to join a panel discussion in late October with my Jewish, Muslim and Baha'i brothers and sisters, to discuss the role of Abraham in our various religious traditions.

This was a special invitation, and in preparation I spent a lot of time exploring who Abraham is in our Protestant Christian Faith.

As Jesus is our central figure, we are not often called upon to reflect on Abraham. However, I find him to be one of the best examples for encouraging us to keep the faith. During my many years as a youth leader I took our youth group on a ski trip each winter to a little ski resort in the Blue Ridge. One of my favorite things to do was to wait until the teens were good and wound up—after dinner, bible study, and a few group games—and then command them to put on their coats and boots and pile in the vans for a ride. I wouldn't tell them where we were going—I'd just tell them this was important, and nudge them towards the cars.

I'd take them to the darkest overlook on the mountain, the one looking away from the slopes and the city—and tell them to look at the stars. And then, as they looked up at more stars in one sky than most of them had seen in their lives, I'd tell them the story of Abraham—and God's promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

My point in all this was to teach the youth that God makes promises, and God keeps promises—and I think that is one of my most favorite things about Abraham. It's a message of hope that we long for even today.

Of course there is so much more to Abraham from the Protestant Christian perspective: first, there's the story of the binding of Isaac—when God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son—a challenge to Abraham to show his faith and trust in God. For even as it appeared that Isaac was to be sacrificed, and the covenant broken, Abraham obeyed, willing to surrender to God's will, and Isaac was spared.

In this sacrifice, we Christians see another sacrifice—the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, as an offering for our sins. Which brings us to the central figure in our faith tradition, through whom we look at all scripture—Jesus.

We remember first, that being Jewish, Jesus knew Abraham as a founding father, blessed by God and exemplifying the faith that Jesus embodied. And this is emphasized in the many ways Abraham is referenced in the New Testament.

For example, we have the apostle Paul. In the 14 letters we have from Paul, Abraham is mentioned 19 times. This was for two primary reasons: first, considering the early Church was made up primarily of Jews, he wanted to define the faith in terms that Jews could understand, while distinguishing Christianity from the Jewish tradition. And second, he wanted to make the Church open to Gentiles, which meant he had to find a way to circumvent the Jewish requirement for circumcision.

Abraham was perfect for this. He had a unique relationship with God that was established before the law was given and before circumcision was required, which in Paul's mind meant circumcision was not central to faith—which meant the Gentiles were welcome—making Abraham the father of Jews AND Gentiles alike. His conclusion was that anyone who shows faith is a descendent of Abraham. As he said in Galatians, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:28-29)

Abraham is also mentioned in the Gospels, where each Gospel considers Abraham a little differently. In Matthew, for example, Jesus is rooted in Abraham's family tree, listing Abraham's descendants in an ancestry.com sort of way, from Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, all the way down the line to David, from whom Jesus descends. This established Jesus as belonging to God's chosen

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**Advent:** An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church ([www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary)) describes Advent as “a time of preparation and expectation for the coming celebration of our Lord’s nativity, and for the final coming of Christ ‘in power and glory.’”

As we enter this season of anticipation and holy waiting, there are many ways to experience Advent here at St. James’.

### **Advent FaithTalk: Anything is Possible**

On Sunday mornings at 9:15, during our Faith Talk, we will anticipate Jesus’ birth using the series, “The Wonder of Christmas: Once you Believe, Anything is Possible.”

Participants will explore four elements of the Christmas story: a star, a name, a manger and a promise, and through this exploration rediscover the true wonder of Christmas, found in the love of Christ, and made real when that love is shared with others.

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### **Considering Abraham, continued from previous page**

people, in the line of David, which was important to the Jews to whom this Gospel was addressed.

Another example is John’s Gospel, which takes Jesus’ relationship with Abraham to a more spiritual level. John is intent on identifying Jesus as both human and divine—and therefore makes the claim that Jesus existed in the spiritual realm way before Abraham. This unfortunately opened the door for the early church fathers to argue that Abraham was Christian, eventually helping to shape the belief that Christianity is a superior religion, encouraging Christian persecution of the Jews.

Which is why I’m glad I was invited to join my Interfaith brothers and sisters to talk about

### **Advent Thursday Morning Bible Study**

Our Thursday Morning Bible Study will dive deeper into the biblical texts surrounding the story of Jesus’ birth by exploring how the Gospel narratives connect to the Old Testament, especially first-century Jewish culture.

We will be using *Light of the World: A Beginner’s Guide to Advent*, by Vanderbilt scholar Amy-Jill Levine. This group meets on Thursdays from 10:00 – 11:30.

### **Advent Quiet Time, Saturday, December 7**

This is an opportunity to step out of the rush of the secular world, to focus on the meaning of Christmas. We begin at 9:30 a.m., and will spend the morning connecting to the season of waiting in ways that are both spiritual and interactive.

Participants will have the opportunity to experience Advent through six different stations, each encouraging us to go deeper into the season and prepare ourselves for Jesus’ birth in our lives.

Abraham. Because in my view, and the view of most modern day theologians, it was never meant for there to be a divide between the children of Abraham and Gentile Christians. We all **share** the faith of Abraham. It’s not biological descent that defines God’s people, but responding together to God in faith.

Which makes Abraham a vehicle, not for division, but for relationship building, a divine connection to God, and a reminder that God makes promises and God keeps promises—and all we have to do to remember that is to look up at those stars in the sky.





# 2020 Teen Mission Trip: Imperial, PA

**Saturday, June 20 to Saturday June 27**  
**Registration Due Sunday, November 17, 2019**

- **No experience needed.** Ideal candidates will possess a positive attitude and a desire to serve God, along with the good people of Imperial, Pennsylvania (Greater Pittsburgh Metropolitan area).
- **Duties include:** painting and weatherizing homes for low-income, mostly-elderly homeowners. In some cases, we may even partake in light-construction projects, such as building wheelchair-accessible ramps.
- **Generous compensation package includes:** God's never-ending love, overwhelming joy, new friendships, lots of smiles, a special appreciation for one's own bed and much, much more!
- **For students who will be in grades 9-12 during the 2019-2020 school year** (currently in 8th grade-rising 2020 freshman). Interested students and parents should contact Ms. Rachele.
- **\*SSL Approved Activity\***

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## 2020 Work Camp Information

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Located in the quiet suburbs of Pittsburgh is the sleepy town of Imperial. With the decline of the mining industry, area residents have witnessed their city transform from a once-thriving community into one of great hardship. Struggling physically and financially, many elderly residents are no longer able to perform the necessary home repairs needed for their aging homes.

Teaming up with teens from around the country, our group will demonstrate Jesus' love and compassion in tangible ways, serving real people in need, while working on projects like:

- Building wheelchair ramps and handrails for handicapped residents
- Weatherizing homes and trailers
- Reconstructing sagging porches and steps
- Painting projects
- Other home repair projects that the homeowner cannot otherwise complete

We will depart for our journey on Saturday, June 20, returning home the following Saturday. Our first day will be spent strengthening our group's bond at a fun outing (TBD—past examples have included visiting theme parks and more). Over the next week we will be challenged as we make new friends, learn new skills and understand more about how amazing God's love is.

**No experience needed. Open to all high school students (and rising freshmen). Space is limited so sign up soon to guarantee your spot. For more information or to sign up, please contact Rachele Donnelly or the parish office, [office@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:office@stjamespotomac.org). Registration due November 17.**

## Book Club: *Where the Crawdads Sing*, November 24

Kya is seven years old, living in a backwater area of North Carolina's coastal edge, out close to "where [you can hear] the crawdads sing." The book, Delia Owen's fourth book and first novel, tells of Kya's life as it changes, first from an intact nuclear family to Kya's being alone as a child in the marsh. The book, vividly describing and explaining the natural world around Kya, also chronicles relationships: Kya to her habitat, to the townspeople, to other semi-isolated people, to a few particular people in her life.

Delving into prejudice, isolation, loneliness, love, and animal/nature behavior, what will you think as the book comes to an "interesting" close? This girl's life journey into adulthood—how possible or probable is it? What is the significance of the stories about the fireflies? Some Book Club members who've read the book have agreed that Owen's descriptive writings have made possible feeling the humidity, smelling the smells of the swamp, and seeing the changes in the sky. How will the last part of the book impress you?

Everyone is welcome to attend in the parish hall, usually the meeting room, from 6:45 to about 8:15 p.m. The group-led discussions are always full of varying viewpoints, and there is plenty of room for **you**. Because of December's usual meeting time being so close to Christmas, there will be no meeting that month. January's selection will be announced soon.

## Congratulations to Alex Trouteaud

Sunday morning, October 27... the rain, the rain... of biblical proportions! That was a morning for an ark.

But some folks were out running; most notably, **Alex Trouteaud who cruised to a 14th place finish** in the 44th annual Marine Corps Marathon, men's division, battling the deluge. (No ark necessary.)

The MCM is one of the largest races in the U.S. This year's race attracted over 25,000 runners. Congratulations again, Alex!

## Party Time with Lunch & Learn! Holiday Sing-Along, December 3

Haven't been to the Lunch & Learn's December party? Now's your chance! Tuesday, December 3, the party starts in the undercroft at 11:30 a.m. and continues until about 1:30 p.m. Those in attendance will share the delicious chicken, mashed potatoes and other sides, along with holiday desserts.

We'll then proceed upstairs where Newton Lewis and Cheryl Stafford will lead us in the annual sing-along of seasonal songs, both religious and secular. Songbooks are furnished, there are absolutely NO talent requirements, and enthusiasm is greatly encouraged. Transportation is available for non-stair-climbers. If you only have time to sing, arrive at 12:30 p.m. in the church nave. No age requirement or limitation.

This is one time you do NOT call or email Sarah Padgett with your reservation. Instead, call or email Jo Ann Thompson or the church office. Still only \$10.00 per person, this feast from Chicken Out is always a plenteous and tasty special meal. Your reservation is needed to ensure adequate food.

Do you have a friend you'd like to invite? A neighbor? You yourself have never quite gotten to one of these first Tuesday events? Please join us and be one of the twenty or so folks ready to enter the first week of Advent singing our way into what we're observing. See you there!

## Thanksgiving Day Dinner – Open Invitation

Alone on Thanksgiving?  
Our deacon The Rev. Todd Thomas and his family invite you to share dinner in their home in Olney at 1:00 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day, November 28.



RSVP and receive driving directions by emailing [todd@stjamespotomac.org](mailto:todd@stjamespotomac.org) or call the parish office, 301-762-8040.

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

### Classroom Spotlight: The Threes Room

By Rita Harrell

We are so blessed and thankful to greet up to fourteen lively, spunky and excited children as they enter the Threes class. Ready to absorb learning throughout various avenues, students quickly begin the morning routine.



Before Circle Time learning begins, children are given independence and freedom to engage with friends of their choice as well as deciding which toys and/or activities they would most enjoy. Their morning time favorites are trains, cars, puzzles, easel painting and coloring! From these activities, fine motor skills, hand eye coordination, color mixing, and math skills are being formed and/or strengthened. And, of course, social emotional growth and problem solving formation.

Throughout November, our Threes class is studying the Creative Curriculum Topic about BOXES! Children are learning about the different types of boxes, what we find inside of boxes, type of materials/paper boxes are made of, the size, height, shapes, colors and more. After collecting a variety of boxes, children have been enjoying building whatever they could imagine. Then, the best part of all.....the demolition...knocking them down!! Finally, a collection of assorted food boxes will produce The Threes Grocery Store and Mini Mart for a fun and favorite Dramatic Play area.

Look out, because BOX STUDY learning takes on a heated dimension during the afternoon program!! With lots of red paint, brushes and teamwork, The Threes transformed a once big, old brown box into a fiery red fire truck with actual firefighters in gear! To add more excitement, teachers played the song, "Hurry! Hurry! Drive That Fire Truck!" The fun learning is never-ending and an unforgettable experience in the Threes Classroom. We are enjoying every moment watching our children not only have fun, but grow into independent thinkers and problem solvers.

The Threes class and staff wish everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving!

**Don't miss the SJCS Scholastic Book Fair, November 12-15!**

## Calendar of Events

**Sundays 9:15 a.m.:** FaithTalk adult spiritual formation, childcare

**Sundays 10:30 a.m.:** Sunday School, childcare

**Wednesdays 6:30 a.m.:** Men's Prayer Breakfast

**Thursdays 10:00 am.** Rector's Bible Study

Nov. 12-15: Scholastic Book Fair, St. James' Children's School lobby

Nov. 17, SU: Annual Parish Meeting and Breakfast; Youth Work Camp registrations due

Nov. 19, TU: Samaritan Ministry donations due

Nov. 20, W: Visit to Potomac Valley Nursing Home; Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship and Service Projects at St. Raphael Catholic Church

Nov. 22, F: Women's Movie Night

Nov. 24: SU: Book Club discussion

Nov. 26, TU: Newsletter submission deadline for December 5 issue of *The Pilgrim*

Dec. 1, SU: Advent 1; new FaithTalk series begins

Dec. 3, TU: Lunch & Learn Holiday Sing-Along

Dec. 4, W: Visit to Manor Care Nursing Home

Dec. 7, SA: Advent Quiet Time

