



The St. James' Pilgrim

News for the Journey . . . February 2020

St. James' Episcopal Church • 11815 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, MD 20854-3340 • 301-762-8040 • www.stjamespotomac.org



Reflection from Our Assistant Rector, The Rev. James S. Isaacs

Hearing that God Loves You

I preached a sermon on January 19 at the 10:30 service in which I shared how important it was for me to hear from a young age that God loves me. I think that people who

heard that sermon heard that message. Yet I want to add something to that sermon that I don't think I emphasized as much as I would have liked to.

It was indeed important for me to hear early on that God loves me. Yet, if I had only heard that message from other people, I think I would have stopped believing it when the world started telling me that I wasn't loveable. Thankfully, there was something else that I had been gifted with when I was young: someone told me that God not only wants to hear from me, God has things to say to me. And the way to access that communication was through prayer.

In my prayer life, I have heard God say that God loves me. It wasn't just my parents and priests and Sunday School teachers who told me. God has told me. (I don't think that God's love for me is unique; I believe that God has that love for everyone, and perhaps for all of creation.) So when the world challenged that message of love, even though the world can be pretty convincing, I was able to recognize that temptation away from God for what it was.

I also heard the stories of Jesus and got to know him better. I knew the one who loved me. And many of the times I returned to prayer with scripture, I got to know him and his love better.

I want everyone who hears me preach or talk about God to hear that God loves them. I want them to know that God loves them. What I have realized in my life is that hearing someone say it can be a good reminder. Yet, when things get hard and the world

tries to obscure the message of God's love, another person's telling you might not be enough.

The good news is that it isn't just something that some people are saying. God is saying it. God is saying, "I love you." God wants you to hear that message directly. God can say it to you through prayer and through scripture. And God is all the time showing it to you.

God loves you. And don't just take my word for it. Ask God. God will tell and show you directly. Quiet the world's temptations and listen. There's a message waiting for you to hear that can save your life. And it makes a difference to keep coming back to that message. In the Gospel according to John, Jesus encourages us to "abide in my love." Hearing it is a good start.

In Christ,

James



Call for Lenten Reflections

**Submissions
Due February 16**

After a time of temptation in the wilderness, God ministered to Jesus by sending his angels. This year for our Lenten reflection series, you are invited to share a personal story of a specific time when God ministered to you. **Reflections should be no more than 250 words and should be submitted to Rev. Meredith at rector@stjamespotomac.org by Sunday, February 16.** Please contact her if you have any questions. And thank you.

Mental Health Ministries Update

By the Rev. James S. Isaacs

On January 19, St. James' had a Mental Health Ministries Sunday. It began at 9:15 a.m. with the FaithTalk discussion led by Lisa Goodkind about supporting loved ones with mental health issues. It was a powerful experience where we were able to hear from each other's stories as well as hear about available resources.

The whole theme of the 10:30 service that Sunday was about mental health, with a sermon by James, the Prayers of the People written by Ann Venton, Rev. Meredith and Sampson Annan praying for people at the prayer rail during communion, and scripture passages about God always being with us. The service integrated the work we have been doing around Mental Health Ministries with our corporate worship.

After the 10:30 service, the parish gathered for a catered lunch and a presentation from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) about the new program we are supporting called "NAMI in the Lobby." Alex Trouteaud presented the Affinity Groups projects and shared a survey to further their work.

Upcoming Mental Health Events for St. James'

Soon the Mental Health Ministries Leaders Group will be sharing the results from the **Affinity Groups surveys** completed on the 19th. The result will be opportunities to get together with others from St. James' to build or deepen friendships, do an engaging activity together, and further develop St. James' as a safe supportive community for everyone (including those with mental health conditions). Watch for more information about that soon.

NAMI in the Lobby is still looking for volunteers to be trained. Lisa Goodkind from St. James' is already registered for the training. If you are interested, there is still time to talk to NAMI about being trained, but not much time. Stephanie Del Cid from NAMI writes that NAMI in the Lobby "is a free mental health access program that provides caregivers and their loved ones living with mental illness with support and mental

health resources at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. We will be hosting a **training on February 15 and 16.**" In order to participate you must first be screened by a NAMI MC staff member. If you are interested in volunteering and learning more about this program, please email Stephanie at stephaniedelcid@namimc.org.

Speaking of NAMI, St. James' will participate again in the **NAMI Walk on Saturday, May 9.** This is a fun fundraising opportunity that you can walk or donate to support. Last year, a lot of people from St. James' turned out, and we had a great time together while we supported a good cause.

During Lent, the Prayers of the People used in the January 26 Mental Health worship service will be repeated through the season of Lent to lift up our ministry around mental health and the people touched by those issues.

We will also continue our tradition of emailing **reflections during Lent**, with the theme, "**Connecting with God.**" Last year's theme was "Experiences of God in the Wilderness." It was taken from the passage of scripture where Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. We offered the opportunity to use "wilderness" as a metaphor for mental health experiences. At the end of that passage, we are told that after the temptations, angels came and ministered to Jesus. This year, the prompt is for people to share stories of when God ministered to them.

Lent Madness is Coming!

Download the bracket or purchase the book of competing saints from www.lentmadness.org. Vote for your favorite saints, both admirable and astonishing, as they compete for the Golden Halo. Sign up online for more excitement!





Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

February 25, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Bring your family for pancakes, sausages, and fellowship in the parish hall!

Hosted by the St. James' Youth Group and Men's Breakfast Prayer Group.
A freewill offering supports the Youth work camp mission trip.



ASH WEDNESDAY

February 26

Ashes to Go	(Drive-through Imposition) Begins at 8:30 a.m. in St. James' front parking lot
12:00 p.m.	Service with Imposition of ashes
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Quiet reflection time in the church
7:30 p.m.	Holy Eucharist with imposition of ashes and music

Spiritual Offerings, Lent 2020

Thursday Morning Bible Study

During Lent this year our Thursday bible study group will be reading Peter Enns' book, *How the Bible Actually Works*. In this book Enns argues that the Bible is not static. It does not hold easy answers to the perplexing questions and issues of today. Rather, the Bible is a dynamic instrument for study that offers not only an abundance of insights but provokes us to find our own answers to spiritual questions, cultivating God's wisdom within us. The book is available through Amazon.com or at your local bookstore.

Join us on Thursday mornings from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. when we will discuss Enns' work from the Episcopal perspective. All are welcome!

FaithTalk, Sundays at 9:15 a.m.

During our FaithTalks this season we will be using a study guide, *The Sabbath Poetry of Lent*, focusing on the poems of Wendell Berry.

In this Lenten devotional, biblical texts walk hand-in-hand with Wendell Berry's Sabbath vision of the natural world, and together they suggest simple, accessible practices you can try yourself, with your family, or friends.

Using the Bible, Wendell Berry's *This Day: Collected and New Sabbath Poems* (free on Kindle), and the study guide, we'll walk together towards Easter morning, keeping Sabbath as we go. The study guide is available through the church office.

Lent Calendar and Programs

- **FaithTalk, 9:15 a.m. Sundays in Lent: “The Sabbath Poetry of Lent”**
This season we will be using a study guide based on the poems of Wendell Berry.
- **Stations of the Cross**
Fourteen Stations of the Cross will be hung along the walls of the church during Lent. Each station offers a place for meditation and reflection. Come visit the stations during office hours, 9:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- **Lenten Reflections by Email: “Connecting with God”**
Reflections from parishioners will be emailed to the parish on weekdays during Lent. Please send reflections to rector@stjamespotomac.org by February 16.
- **Seven Locks Ecumenical Dinner, Study and Worship**
“1, 2, 3... Not It! Conversation, Call and Action!”
Wednesdays March 4 to April 1
Enjoy this annual event with our neighboring congregations of Seven Locks Road. Gather at 6:30 p.m. for a brief devotional and dinner. Program from 7:00 to 8:15 p.m.

Hosting Churches and Schedule

March 4	Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 7720 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda
March 11	St. James' Episcopal Church, 11815 Seven Locks Rd., Potomac
March 18	Seven Locks Baptist Church, 11845 Seven Locks Rd., Potomac
April 25	Geneva Presbyterian Church, 11931 Seven Locks Rd., Potomac
April 1	Scotland AME Zion Church, location TBD

Holy Week and Easter Services

- ✦ **Palm Sunday, April 5**
Holy Eucharist at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m., followed by brunch at noon
Bells, procession with palms, and a dramatic reading of the Passion of Christ. Brunch at noon hosted by St. James' Youth Group.
- ✦ **Maundy Thursday, April 9**
7:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist and foot washing in the church
- ✦ **Good Friday, April 10**
Vigil 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Good Friday Liturgy Service at 7:30 p.m.
- ✦ **Easter Sunday, April 12**
8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist; 10:30 a.m. Festival Holy Eucharist; Easter Egg Hunt
A glorious celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord! Brass music and choir at 10:30 a.m., followed by a Children's Easter egg hunt on the church back lawn.



Youth Director's Report

By Rachele Donnelly

I have always enjoyed the news. It doesn't matter if I'm reading a local or nationwide news publication, or listening to WTOG, being aware of and able to engage in a discussion on current events, matters to me. Our cellphones give us on-demand access to the most up-to date information, which for me, often means scanning the day's headlines long after I should have been asleep.

Despite my fondness for it, I recognize the challenges that reading, watching and listening to news, present to the positive, joyful spirit I wish to exude. Between climate change, global conflicts, divisive politics and crime, good news is not exactly abundant these days. For my own well-being, I've recognized two options to counter the negativity. The first, and perhaps easiest method, would be to stick my head in the sand and work to stay blissfully naïve to what is going on in the world. The second option would mean taking action to be part of some change the world could really use.

Truthfully, naïvety never has been, nor ever will be, an option. As a youth director, however, I have enjoyed ample opportunities to lead, and take part in some really positive experiences. From our annual work-camp mission trip, to our weekly gatherings, great news is out there, and can be found in your local youth group.

Since September, our youth have gathered regularly with the teens of St. Francis and Christ Church in Rockville. The collection of these teens, and the resources that the leaders have been able to share, have meant for some amazing memories of joyful fellowship and service. We've assembled care packages for local first responders, visited the Bible museum, placed wreaths on the graves of soldiers at a national cemetery and crafted fleece blankets which (through the Linus Project of Montgomery County) will be donated to children in hospitals, shelters and other emergency-type situations.

We've played games, ice skated, bounced at Sky Zone, watched movies, had thoughtful discussions and eaten our weight in pizza. Consistently, we've observed teenagers smiling, laughing and being happy, surrounded by their friends, in a safe, loving, God-centered environment. Just thinking about the positive changes these teens are making, and undoubtedly will continue to bring to make, lifts my spirit and inspires me.

If like me, you sometimes find yourself wondering about the future, do yourself a favor. Turn off the television, put down the paper, turn off your phone, and go talk to one of our youth about the exciting things they are doing and their hopes for the future. I promise they won't bite, and I'm confident you will leave the conversation feeling far more optimistic than before.

Youth Group February Calendar

- 2/9 **DIY Prayer Beads!** At Christ Church, Rockville (see box at right).
- 2/16 No Youth Group. See you next week!
- 2/23 **Movie Night**, St. James' parish hall, 6:30-8:30 p.m.; bring \$3 for dinner.
- 2/25 **Fat Tuesday Pancakes!** Starting 5:30 p.m., St James' parish hall
- 3/1 No Youth Group. See you next week!
- 3/8 **Pretzel-Making!** St. James' parish hall, 6:30-8:30 p.m.; bring \$3 for dinner.

YOUTH GROUP

Prayer Beads & Dinner

Sunday, February 9

5:30 – 7:30pm

Murdock Room

Join us for Making Prayer Beads to be given out during Lent to the residents at Interfaith Women's Shelter!

Friends are Welcome & SSL Hours Earned





Reflection from Our Music Director, Newton Lewis

Morning Prayer

On the Sunday after Christmas, for the first time in my 20 years here, due to illness we were without a priest to perform the Eucharist. The opening part of the service was a Christmas Lessons and Carols. But in order to close out the service we had to call upon the service for Morning Prayer.

I was surprised to find that some people really didn't know what Morning Prayer was, let alone such a term as the Daily Office (no it doesn't mean that Grace and Kirsten are in that day). For those of you who are cradle Episcopalians and are old enough to remember, generally prior to 1979 the service of Morning Prayer was the norm for Sunday morning worship. Many churches alternated weeks of Holy Eucharist and Morning Prayer or just did Eucharist once a month like most mainline Protestant denominations.

Let's start with "What is the Daily Office?" Like Christian worship in general, the Office has its roots in the Temple in Jerusalem. There, services of prayer were observed seven times a day. This practice was taken up by Christians. The cycle of daily prayer and Scripture readings were required to be said by clergy. More notably these services were said or sung in monasteries seven to nine times a day, throughout the day and night. They are called offices because they were official prayers of the church known as the *officium divinum*, or "divine duty" or "divine service." The services became known as the "canonical hours" since they were done at set hours, and are called Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline.

When Henry VIII broke from the Church of Rome, the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, Thomas Cranmer, backed the claim of Royal Supremacy. Among the general population at the time, this was not at all a popular move. But there were those in high places who were sympathetic

to the Reformist ideas of John Calvin, Cranmer among them. He also knew that Henry was not. Henry really wanted a church in England that upheld the doctrines, dogmas, and liturgy of the Catholic Church but with him as the head. A Bible in English might still get you burned as a heretic.

Cranmer bided his time. When Henry was succeeded by the nine-year-old Edward VI, Cranmer and other Calvinist-leaning reformers made their move to go about influencing the new King and reforming the Church of England. Edward's reign only lasted six years. He was followed by his Catholic half-sister Mary who restored the church to Rome and had Cranmer burned at the stake for heresy. Following her five-year reign, Mary's half-sister Elizabeth restored the Church of England. She also saw to it that Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity of 1558 which made the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) the prayer book that was to be used by all churches in England.

Although Cranmer had died in Mary's reign, his legacy lives on because as editor in chief, he is given credit for the first Book of Common Prayer of 1549 and the first revision of 1552.

First, I will be bold enough to say that the language of Cranmer's prayer books was one of the crowning achievements of the English language. The reason we have Rite I versions in our present prayer book is because it was so difficult for many to give up the beautiful language of the earlier prayer books.

Second, every subsequent prayer book, including our own, follows the organizational pattern of the originals. They all contain orders of worship for various services as well as the Great Litany, the Psalter, and a Catechism. The 1552 revision gave us the names of Morning and Evening Prayer as well as the general order of these services.

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Morning Prayer, continued

Cranmer and his associates called upon the tradition of the canonical hours by combining Matins and the two following canonical hours to create Morning Prayer. Evening Prayer combined Vespers and Compline. The order of worship of these services has generally stayed intact ever since. The services consist of the recitation of the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, prayers, canticles, psalms, and Scripture readings.

In keeping with Calvinist thought, the emphasis of these services was the Word. As much as possible, the text of the services is derived from Scripture. If both services are said daily, the whole cycle of psalms can be read every seven weeks and the entire Bible in the two year lectionary cycle for the Daily Office as set out starting at page 934 of the present BCP.

For the next several centuries, the Anglican Church tended to be Calvinist-leaning with its emphasis on the Word. Christ Church Alexandria, a typically eighteenth century worship space, expresses this visually. The pulpit is front and center and is raised up high, towering over the altar. In fact, in the late 1600s, communion was only done twice a year at Christmas and Easter. During the nineteenth century liturgical movements started the trend back to a better

balance of Word AND Sacrament, which culminated in our present prayer book and weekly celebration of the Eucharist becoming the norm. Ironically, weekly Eucharist was just what John Calvin himself wanted.

Since these "office" services were the norm for over 400 years, it should be no surprise that there are countless settings of the canticles and prayers by composers from Elizabethan times through the twentieth century. Anglican chant was created for the recitation of the psalms during these services.

The present BCP also reintroduced an office service for noon and a service of compline (end of the day). You can experience any of these services of the daily office because they provide a great outline for devotions for people to follow at home. You can watch a service of Sunday Evensong (sung Evening Prayer) online from our own cathedral or attend a service of Evensong in person at the cathedral or one of the churches in the area that provide it. A few weeks ago, Bishop Rice (bishop for the Armed Forces) officiated the Evensong service at National Cathedral. In his welcome, he reminded us all that the office of Evensong is "one of the treasures of Anglican worship." Indeed!



St. James' Youth Group and volunteers participating in Wreaths Across America on December 14, at US Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery in Washington, DC.

Come to Sunday School “Adventure In Kindness!”

Join St. James’ as we go on several *Adventures in Kindness* this year with parishioners Sophia (fourth grade) and Carrie Fox (mom) who will soon release a children’s book of the same name.

Many of our activities are inter-generational; some are held at 10:30 a.m. and some are held after the 10:30 service. Here are some of the upcoming activities we have planned:

- **Sunday March 22:**

Building Inter-generational Friendships

For all ages after the 10:30 service, parish hall

Inter-generational relationships build stronger community and provide a perfect opportunity for young and old to learn from one another. Join us in the parish hall after the 10:30 service for this special cross-generational coffee and hot cocoa hour where we’ll get to know one another better, and encourage our youngest parishioners with their conversation skills.

- **Sunday, April 26: Celebrating Springtime**

For all ages after the 10:30 service, outside

Native plants and flowers provide important nectar, pollen, and seeds that serve as food for native butterflies, insects, birds and animals. As part of our Seasons of Creation series, bring your garden gloves, trowels, and the entire family for this special native planting day at St. James’.

- **Sunday, May 3: For the Love of Reading**

At Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.

There’s nothing better than getting lost in a great book, except maybe sharing that book with a friend. During this Sunday School lesson, we’ll share the love of reading with one another by organizing a kids’ book swap. Children should bring 1-5 books in new or gently used condition if they wish to participate.

For more details or to get involved in any of these activities, contact Carrie Fox at carrie@mission.partners.

Lay Eucharistic Minister Meeting Sunday, February 9

Please join Rev. Meredith in the church after the 10:30 service for a meeting of all Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs). We will review the LEM ministry, answer any questions, review procedures for finding replacements, and ask for help with our re-emerging Lay Eucharistic Visitor ministry. For more information, contact Rev. Meredith, rector@stjamespotomac.org.

Women’s Membership Events Meeting, Sunday, February 23

Would you like more opportunities to gather in fellowship at St. James’? The women of the parish are invited to dream about the kind of fellowship gatherings we want for the coming year.

Bring your ideas to the parish hall meeting room after the 10:30 service for fun, sharing, and planning together! A similar planning meeting for men’s activities will be scheduled in the near future. For information, contact Dawn Iype or the parish office, office@stjamespotomac.org.

Newcomer’s Lunch Sunday, March 8

Hello St. James’ Newcomers!



If you are new to St. James’ in the past twelve months and have not yet attended a Newcomers’ event, we’d love to get to know you a little better!

Please join us at noon in the parish hall meeting room at noon for a light lunch. Rev. Meredith and a few parish leaders will share some information about our church community, and welcome your thoughts, ideas, and questions.

RSVP by February 29 to office@stjamespotomac.org or 301-762-8040. If we already have your email address on file, you will also receive an evite where you can RSVP.

Let us know of any dietary needs. Children are welcome, and we’ll be sure to have kid-friendly foods on hand.

Vestry Highlights: Meeting of January 21, 2020

By Barry Thompson, Sr. Warden

Lori Minasian reflected on the difference between happiness and joy, and spoke of the anticipation and exhilaration of joy (Luke 2:10).

We next celebrated our joy on the three-year anniversary of Reverend Meredith's becoming Rector, St. James', Potomac.

Good news from the treasurer: preliminary figures indicate that St. James' finished 2019 "in the black", instead of with the projected \$22,000 deficit. One hundred percent of the amount pledged for 2019 was met. In many instances, expenses were less than budgeted, due to careful management by those parishioners responsible.

Commission Reports

Facilities: Ken Van Valkenburgh reviewed the status of projects outstanding or to be initiated and announced the commission will hold monthly conference calls to improve communication and coordination.

Stewardship: We are close to our pledge goal of \$425,000 for 2020. The senior warden will be contacting those who pledged in 2019 but have not pledged this year.

Worship: 206 individuals were present at the 5:30 p.m. service Christmas Eve, and 126 at the 9:00 p.m. service. A survey found that 70 percent of parishioners surveyed preferred the two-service format, rather than three. New acolytes were congratulated on their willingness to serve and on their diligence in doing so.

Clergy Reports

Requests for submission of concepts for the building initiative were sent to four architectural firms.

Clergy will continue to conduct Children's Chapel services at Sunday School. Plans have been made for the Vestry retreat.

Building on Mental Health Sunday, the leadership committee was considering how St. James' can make an impact on our

communities, distinct from that of mental health professionals. Rev. James spoke of "affinity groups," addressing stigma and safe spaces, plans for Lenten reflections, and parishioner training and participation in the local "NAMI in the Lobby" program.

Other Reports

Senior Warden: Parish hall ramp repair was \$45,000, as contracted. Better lighting on drive to the rear of church is planned.

New/Old Business: Maturation of the U.S. Treasury note for the larger portion of the Mary Shepard funds will occur in April 2020. The proposal (Parke Brown) that interest accrued be added to the Money Market Account containing the lesser portion of Mary's bequest and a six-month Treasury note repurchased was approved. The monies donated by Mary and Josephine now will be designated "The Shepard Fund."

Dates to remember

February 16 - short business meeting of the vestry after the 10:30 service; no commission reports

February 25 - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

February 26 - Ash Wednesday

March 17 - Next vestry meeting

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Building Plan Update

After the busy holiday season the Building Plan Committee has requested concept proposals from four architects in our region who have experience working with church property.

The request outlined our needs, as presented in October 2019 after our Building Visioning Initiative, to update and possibly add to our existing structures so that we might best be able to do God's work. We hope to have more to share next month.

Jo Shepard Bequest: a Second Planned Gift Blessing

Jo Shepard, like her twin sister Mary who died eleven months before her, was a beloved member of our church for her many friends. Her smile was infectious, her caring and thoughtfulness for others a way of life. During the twenty years of her St. James' membership, Jo loved her spiritual home and its people, worshiped regularly (usually at 8:00), and worked hard to promote its ministry...in partnership with Mary.

As her fight to live with her transplanted kidney neared its end last summer, Jo confirmed a generous planned gift to her cherished church. Their matching bequests were decided years ago by the sisters, inspired by a planned giving workshop at our church. It is a testimony to their strong faith and their devotion to St. James'. Matching Mary's gift last year, Jo's undesignated gift to St. James' of one million dollars has been included in The Shepard Fund, and invested as our clergy and vestry develop careful plans for its permanent use.

Born in Minnesota and adopted from Chicago, Jo 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. Jo graduated from Holton-Arms School (then located near their home in the city), then from St. Mary's (Episcopal) College in Raleigh, North Carolina, before completing her education

at George Washington University here near her home. She worked in her father's law office before helping to care for her mother in a final illness.

At St. James', always together with her sister, Jo stepped forward to help wherever she saw a need: working in craft workshops for Williamsburg Night, helping in our parish hall kitchen with receptions and in the office to prepare mailings; organizing, repairing, pricing and selling jewelry at rummage sales; and knitting prayer shawls before arthritis made it too hard. Jo deepened her faith as a regular member of the Women's Bible Study group meeting weekly for many years. She was also a long-time faithful member of a small fellowship group at St. James', attending and hosting its gatherings. She also had a personal program of philanthropy, through the purchase of Giant gift cards which she used to help a friend, or even a stranger, in real need. When our new Memorial Garden and Columbarium were built, Jo and Mary planned for interment together in a niche there, each to be with her sister and near her God and her friends.

Upon receipt of the funds, the vestry formally accepted this very generous gift with gratitude. The clergy, vestry and congregation express sincere thanksgiving to Jo 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.

St. James' Youth Group at Work and Play

St. James' Youth Group making quilts for Project Linus and ice skating at Rockville Town Square. More on pages 5 and 7.



Strategic Planning and Diocesan Convention

By Katherine Weaver, Delegate

“Like yeast for bread or light for the world: now is our time.” The New Diocesan Strategic Plan

At the Diocesan Convention, Bishop Mariann outlined the new Diocesan Strategic Plan. She mentioned that during Jesus’ time there was a whirlwind of human need. He realized that his time on this earth was limited and he set his face towards Jerusalem. Today is our time and we need to set our faces towards Jerusalem. Over the past year, the Diocese held discovery sessions with 500 groups to have honest conversations about what is working and what needs to change within the church. Through these discussions, the following strategic plan was developed.

Vision 2025: To be a Diocese that draws on the gifts of all of God’s people to serve Christ together and live Jesus’ Way of Love.

Our Mission: To draw people to Jesus and embody his love for the world by equipping faith communities, promoting spiritual growth, and striving for justice.

Three main priorities were identified.

Revitalize our churches to grow the Jesus Movement

- We will implement a church revitalization strategy that leads to healthy, thriving congregations throughout the diocese, reversing the trends of decline
- Our leadership and congregations will reflect the demographics of our surrounding communities
- We will develop a stewardship strategy for our facilities and finances so that parishes are not constrained by building concerns
- We will launch or relaunch three worshipping communities focused on rising generations so that we become a spiritual home for our children and grandchildren

As part of the revitalization efforts, Todd Thomas and Paula Clarke will lead the group to decide how to assess the health of our churches.

What are best practices that could be replicated in other parishes? For example, how do we increase first time visitors? As a metric, keep track of first time visitors and the goal should be to have as many first time visitors as your average Sunday attendance. How attractive are our physical spaces? The Diocese is willing to contribute \$10,000 for painting and clutter removal to beautify our spaces.

Inspire every person to grown in faith and equip our leaders to lead well

- We will establish a school for Christian leadership for clergy and laity
- We will develop and implement a collaborative strategy for spiritual growth and discipleship
- We will strive for a 10% increase in baptisms, confirmations, and receptions across the diocese over the year

The Diocese will establish a School for Christian leadership with a flexible structure with both online and in person resources. The Diocese received a bequest specifically for this purpose and Don Crane and Dr. Robert Phillips will lead this effort.

Partner in ministries of service and justice for greater impact in our communities

- We will strengthen our collective witness in service and justice through partnerships and shared resources to meet the needs of our regions
- We will promote Creation Care practices in all our faith communities
- We will engage issues such as racial justice, gun violence prevention, LGBTQ equal rights, and immigration reform through ongoing trainings, workshops, pilgrimages, and public witness

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Diocesan Convention, continued

In the first 12 months, the following priorities will be achieved through these measurable results:

For church revitalization, we will provide church health assessments and revitalization strategies; introduce to ten representative congregations.

For spiritual formation, we will establish a school for Christian leadership

For justice, we will work with each region to identify a primary ministry of justice on which to collaborate for greater social impact

Bishop Mariann emphasized, that we have something the world needs like “yeast for bread or light for the world.” These strategies require active participation from parishioners and “just as your job is to hold me accountable, my job is to hold you accountable.”

To reach these goals, Diocesan leadership and individual congregations must actively participate. As attendance declines and people increasingly have competing needs and interests, we do not have all the time in the world. Now is our time.

The Membership Commission Needs You!

Do you like having fun and planning events? Join the Membership Team! This group works with the rector to coordinate parish programs that strengthen and build community. The commission welcomes newcomers, encourages membership at St. James’, and maintains a welcome table.

We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month in the rector’s office at 7:00 p.m. For more information, contact Dawn Iype or the parish office, office@stjamespotomac.org.

“More Jesus, More Love” Revival

By Jennifer Nordin

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry came to town and presided over a memorable Episcopal revival service on Sunday, January 26. More than a dozen St. James’ parishioners were able to attend the revival in southeast Washington, which combined inspiring preaching, music, and personal testimony.

Bishop Curry’s theme was “More Jesus, More Love.” “A new commandment I give you,” he read from John 13. “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Throughout the revival, Bishop Curry exhorted us to love God, love your neighbor, and love yourself. The Bishop’s delightful Spanish interpreter, Dinorah Padro, followed along with his every step and word.

The music, prayers, and speakers during the service reflected the multicultural tapestry of the Episcopal Church. African drums, guitar and pan flute, steel drums, and gospel choirs all lifted up their musical offerings. Several local lay persons, including two children, gave poignant testimonials. One speaker, Jennifer Amuzie, drew knowing laughter when she noted, “Church folks are kind of a mess. Nobody needs Jesus more than Christians.”

An offering was collected during the service to benefit four Episcopal organizations in southeast DC: Bishop John T. Walker School for Boys, Church of the Atonement’s feeding program, St. Philip’s Child Development Center and St. Timothy’s Child Development Center.

Each worshiper received a magnet from the Diocese that said “Love your neighbor. No exceptions.” It reinforced the Bishop’s central message: To truly love God means to love all that God has made. It is the love of God, filtered through Jesus, that can change us and change the world.

Cold Weather Clothing Drive - Sundays February 9 and 16

Despite Punxsutawney Phil’s prediction of an early winter, there are still plenty days of cold ahead of us! Please bring any new or gently used winter clothes to the parish hall on Sundays February 9 and 16 between 9:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., and we will donate the clothing to Interfaith Works. Winter coats, gloves, warm sweaters, warm socks are all appreciated.



Book Club, February 23: *The Island of Sea Women*

The Island of Sea Women, by Lisa See is the historical fiction selection for the February St. James' Book Club discussion.

The setting, for most of the book, is the small island of Jeju, off the southern coast of what is now South Korea. Beginning in the 1930s and '40s, the complicated history of Korea and its people unfolds: from Japanese colonialism, through the aftermath of WW II, through the Korean War, and into the age of cell phones and wet suits for these diving women. Today there remain some rapidly aging *haenyeo* women; women free-diving for sea life as a livelihood, passing on their skills to any female children.

Two women, from vastly different backgrounds, become "closer than sisters," and it is their story through the years that drives the book. For one who has only limited knowledge of this area and its history, this book is fascinating, full of "love, loss, betrayal, perhaps even forgiveness," according to one reviewer. One could also add "fortitude, courage, and hard-to-believe coping skills."

Sixty years after the two women have parted disastrously, Mija's American family and old Young-Sook stumble through an epiphany of re-connection. Ending with a quote from BookList: "A stupendous multigenerational family saga, See's [*The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane, 2017*] also provides an enthralling anthropology highlighting the soon-to-be-lost, matriarchal *haenyeo* phenomenon and an engrossing history of violently tumultuous twentieth-century Korea."

The book chosen for March 22 is *The Snow Gypsy*, written by Lindsay Jane Ashford. WWII, Spain, southern France, a London still in ruins. Who are the central characters? How will their lives intersect? Although a new book (2019), the Montgomery County Public Library has enough copies with almost no waiting list which will accommodate the group's numbers.

In other words—all are welcome to each fourth Sunday evening gatherings from 6:45 to 8:15 p.m. in the parish hall for these very informal discussions.

Who's the Doctor? Lunch & Learn, March 3

A nineteenth century reminiscence with Mrs. Elizabeth Magruder of Brookeville and Dr. Edward Stonestreet of Rockville will be portrayed by Jan McKee and Clarence Hickey at the March 3 lunch and program in the undercroft, beginning at 11:30 a.m.

In period costume, the characters portrayed will give the group a good idea of what life was like in Montgomery County in the late 1800s. They knew each other through Elizabeth's husband, Dr. William Magruder of Brookeville, with whom young Edward served as a medical apprentice on the doctor's Oakley Farm.

Talking about Dr. Magruder, medical training of that era, and his wide ranging practice, it is learned that the Magruders opened their

home to traveling ministers, and Elizabeth expounds on home remedies of the time. Edward describes the Montgomery County he served from 1852 to 1903, the population, the poor state of the roads, the arrival of the B&O Railroad in the 1870s, making house calls during all seasons and at all hours, and serving as the County's first Public Health Officer.

To make a reservation for the \$10.00 everything-included lunch, please contact Sarah Padgett. All are welcome to this informal group which meets on the first Tuesday of each month. The program concludes about 1:30. If one wishes to come to the program only, plan to arrive at 12:30 p.m.



Elizabeth Magruder, portrayed by Jan McKee, of the Montgomery History Speakers Bureau



Are You Feeling Lucky?

White Elephant BINGO and Potluck Supper

Saturday, March 7, 5:30 p.m. Fun for All Ages!

Please join us for a fun night of BINGO in the parish hall. We'll enjoy a potluck dinner together. Please bring a dish to share, according to the first letter of your last name (see below). Drinks will be provided by the church.

A - I Salad or side dish

J - S Main dish

T - Z Dessert

If you can, please bring an unwrapped **white elephant gift** that can be used as a BINGO prize. What's a white elephant gift? Something new or like-new, perhaps an unused gift or household item that would be of better use in a new home. Funny or gag gifts are also welcome, of course!

If you have any questions, or want to help with this event or other social activities at St. James', please contact Dawn Iype or the parish office.



St. James' Celebrates the Seasons of Creation!

By The Rev. Meredith T. Heffner

For the last year our bishop has been encouraging congregations throughout the diocese to pray for and celebrate creation, and to commit to a ministry of healing the Earth. Beginning April 19, the Sunday after Easter, St. James' will embark on such a journey, celebrating the gift of God's creation and examining our relationship to it through a four-week series entitled Seasons of Creation.

Each week, for four weeks, the readings and message during worship will revolve around the theme of creation. Our FaithTalk series will offer an opportunity to discuss creation care. And during coffee hour each week we will have either a hands-on activity or a learning opportunity focused on the actions we can take to help care for all of God's creation.

There is no better time than the Easter season to encounter the challenges of climate change, as we recognize the gift of redemption and the promise of new life. Join us to explore what it

means to live through environmental changes as people who follow the God of hope.

If you would like to be involved in any part of this initiative, please contact the office at office@stjamespotomac.org, or speak to John Combs. We hope you'll invite others to join us as we explore this timely and important subject as Christians and followers of Jesus.

Shoes Wanted! Youth Group Collecting For Girl Scouts and Souls4Souls

We're supporting Girl Scout Ambassador Troop #6055, home to several current and former St. James' youths, to collect shoes for Soles4Souls, a global non-profit that creates sustainable jobs and provides relief through the distribution of shoes and clothing worldwide.

Please bring new or gently used shoes to the marked box in the parish hall by February 23.



Say Hello to Kara Smigel: She Came “Just To See..”

By Holly Mulderig

Kara was born and raised in Sharon, PA, a small town in very western Pennsylvania (“the next town over is in Ohio”). One of four sisters, Kara and her family attended St. Adalbert’s Roman Catholic Church, where she learned how to sing Polish Christmas carols. “My grandparents were married there after immigrating from different parts of Poland, my mother was baptized and married my father there, and I was baptized there as well. The love and community of that small church was important to my faith,” she says.

Kara graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, receiving a degree in Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition. Post-Pitt, Kara headed to Boston University, where she received a M.S. in Health Communications and “fell in love with writing about science.” As her graduating internship, she went to the US National Cancer Institute for a six-month program in July 1988; today, she’s the Communications Director for the Division of Cancer Prevention at NCI.

Kara’s journey to St. James’ “was not a direct one. I found the Book of Common Prayer first, with its thoughtful collects and prayers. I watched from a distance as the Episcopal Church lived into their statement that God Loves Everyone: No Exception, and I felt that was a truth I could live into as well.”

And thanks to NCI colleague (and fellow St. James’ parishioner and vestryperson) Lori Minasian’s suggesting she visit St. James, “just to see,” in August of 2018, Kara stepped through the door and was greeted by Dan Zimmerman, who was the first of many to make her feel welcome.

Kara continues, “St. James’ quickly became my home. Newton Lewis agreed to give me a try in the bell choir, and I fell in love with music again. I hadn’t played with a group since playing flute in the band in high school, and I get great joy from being a ringer. At the newcomer’s lunch I said I was willing to be a Lay Eucharistic Minister so I

could lector at the 8:00 a.m. service.” (As a young parishioner at St. Adalbert’s, Kara had often wished about serving as an “altar girl.”)

“Last January, Rev. Meredith suggested I sit in the adult confirmation classes “just to see” because I had a lot of questions about the church. Those classes were a gift, with Meredith, James, Mary Margaret, Todd, Teresa, and Sean. In May 2019, I was received into The Episcopal Church by The Rt. Rev Gene Robinson.”

Kara has three adored children: Abbie, an assistant manager at the Melting Pot Restaurant; Jacob, a junior engineering student at the University of Maryland; and Josie, a sophomore at Wootton High School. “I was married to their dad in 1993, and divorced in 2018. At the moment, I have two cats, Bootsy Collins and Jenny Linsky, but hope to earn the love of a dog again one day.”

Fun things: Kara is “a bit of a nerd at heart, I enjoy Star Wars, Star Trek, Marvel, Doctor Who, and Pixar. My reading varies by my moods, from true crime, crime fiction, family sagas, and science fiction to Young Adult books. I met Michael Chabon, my favorite author (and a Pulitzer prize winner), two years ago, and he wrote the Picard TV series, so somehow my varied tastes seem to make sense. (Kara also spotted Fred Rogers, another famous Pittsburghian, as a Pitt undergrad.) “My hobbies tend to making things: baking, cross stitch, painting rocks, sewing sock monkeys and such.” Also yoga, walking 10,000 steps a day (usually listening to audiobooks or podcasts).

Like her childhood church, “St. James’ has the love and community that makes it feel like home. “Barely here 18 months, I was honored to be voted into the vestry and hope to serve my fellow parishioners well.

“Now a part of the membership committee, I expect to be seeing all of you more often,” Kara says.

Thanks, Kara, we’re so glad you came “just to see.”

WomanKind 2020: March 20-21, Richmond, Virginia

Two years ago a group of women from St. James' attended the WomanKind conference in Richmond, Virginia. This biennial event will occur again on March 20-21, and we are invited to attend.

The theme this year is "Fearless." The sponsors have organized the events of the retreat around this theme, citing the prevalence of fear in our culture today: fear of the other; fear of violence; fear of the future; fear of financial difficulties. They note that despite our fear, Christians have historically been fearless because of our faith in Christ.

The keynote speaker will be Lisa Sharon Harper, whose work draws on God's original

vision of a world that is "very good"—or shalom. Harper declares that shalom is the Gospel's vision for us now—shalom between us and God, shalom within our broken families, and shalom between races and nations.

Through presentations, workshops and worship, opportunity will be offered to examine fearlessness, looking to scripture and our own personal stories, and asking the Holy Spirit for courage, peace and perseverance.

For more information, see womankindrichmond.com. Please contact Rev. Meredith at rector@stjamespotomac.org if you are interested in registering for this event.

News from St. James' Children's School

Classroom Spotlight: Spanish

By Vanessa Davila



Feliz Año Nuevo!
That means Happy
New Year!

We are so excited
for what this new
year has in store.
Our Spanish
program introduces

our Twos through Pre-Kindergarten students to the Spanish language through hands-on activities, games, books and songs. Children learn numbers, colors, greetings, phrases and vocabulary related to the seasons, foods, days of the week and more.

Since expanding Spanish classes to three days per week, the children are loving the extra time we get to sing, dance, and read our bilingual books. Everyone especially loves our "Charlie" time. Charlie is our puppet that joins us during Spanish. She is also a "student." She models good behavior and conversational language. At the end of each class Charlie gives every student a High-Five! They all look forward to this special time.

Adios y Feliz Año Nuevo from Señora Vanessa and Charlie!

Calendar of Events

- Wednesdays 6:30 a.m.:** Men's Prayer Breakfast
- Thursdays 10:00 a.m.** Bible Study
- Clothing Drive February 9 and 16**
- Shoe Collection through February 23**
- Ecumenical Suppers Wednesdays, Lent**
- NAMI Training February 16** (see pg. 2)
- Feb. 9, Su: Lay Eucharistic Ministers Meeting
- Feb. 12, W: Visit to Potomac Valley Nursing Home
- Feb. 16, Su: Lenten Reflections submissions due
- Feb. 23, Su: Women's Membership Events Meeting; Book Club Discussion; Youth Group Movie Night
- Feb. 25, Tu: Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper; Newsletter deadline
- Feb. 26, W: Ash Wednesday
- Mar. 3, Tu: Lunch & Learn
- Mar. 4, W: Lenten Ecumenical Supper at Emmanuel Lutheran; Visit to Manor Care Nursing Home
- Mar. 7, Sa: BINGO and Potluck Supper
- Mar. 8, Su: Newcomers' Welcome Lunch