

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: January 6, 2019

The Epiphany

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I was so moved by the performance of the Epiphany Pageant last Saturday, and so grateful for such a talented and giving cast! Even more, I was grateful for the giving and fellowship-minded congregation who brought food, drink, and their good cheer. It was, all told, a fun, spirit-filled, holy evening. Here are a few pictures, in case you missed it:



Of course, it is wonderful to tell the old, old story of God's love for all humanity in new and entertaining ways, but the point can never be lost. God put us here to love each other and to never let human-made barriers separate us.

It is my fervent hope and prayer that St. James' is a haven of the open, welcoming, inviting love embodied by Christ. It is my hope that we, too, are the embodiment of that love. Just as Christ gave himself to and for us, so we want to give ourselves to God through our worship and work here.

At Inquirer's class the other night, we were discussing other religions and what they seek. Perhaps the most important lesson of that class was the very point of Epiphany: Every culture, every language, every people seek to relate with the divine.

I have never been of the belief that those "primitive" peoples of long ago were so childish as to invent religions in order to manipulate the weather and hunting conditions. Yes, many even today

4526 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park NY 12538 T 845-229-2820 F 845-229-5293

W www.stjameshydepark.org E stjamesoffice@stjameshydepark.org

f at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/22692330307>

think of the divine as a vending machine in the sky where you put in your order and get what you want. But deeper reflection sees the futility of such an approach. Even in humanity's earliest days, they were practical and observant. They knew what made crops grow, best hunting practices, and other skills to survive a harsh environment. They didn't need religion to do that.

Yet in every culture, there was that urge to relate to the "something more." In every culture, there is that prodding from something just out of reach which says, "come deeper with me." It doesn't make life easier, that's for sure! But then, neither does being a best friend, falling in love, or having kids! What relating with God does — regardless of the culture's understanding of God — is envelop us in a fuller relationship with creation and creator. That's it — relationship.

It doesn't make life less messy. It doesn't give simple rules to obey. It doesn't promise wealth or health or lack of heart break. Just love. But it is precisely that love that makes life, and makes it worthwhile.

THAT is the Epiphany. Where Christ opens up to all of us what we thought only we understood. It is a little like when you have a secret thought or fear you are almost ashamed to admit to until you realize it's the same thought or fear that everyone else has, too. We are all in this together. That's Epiphany.

So let us be all in this together. When it's fun, and when it's frustrating, our joy, strength, and comfort is that we're one body. That's worth celebrating.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

NOTICE: Worship Continues in the Parish Hall.

If You Have anything to add to the Epistle, please contact either Fr. Chuck, Dyan in the Office, or Brian Rance. Thanks!

Announcements

Mark Your Calendars: "I Want My Church to Grow"

Saturday, April 6 at 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

St. Paul's Church, 161 Mansion Street, Poughkeepsie

This special training event is for:

- Laypeople and clergy who want to grow a vital church
- Those who want to join God in doing a new thing
- Leadership teams working on evangelism, church growth, spiritual development

Includes Workshops on:

- Evangelism 101: Using Community Organizing Tools for Church Growth
- We Need More Money: Best Practices for Your Stewardship Campaign

Next Vestry Meeting:

Tuesday, January 15 at 7:00 PM

Men's Breakfast:

The Men's Group eats breakfast this month on **January 19 at 8:00 AM** at Cranberry's. See you there!

Inquirers Class

resumes on **January 22** (we skip the third Tuesday for Vestry). As always, it follows Evening Prayer at 6:30 — open to all! — at the Chapel. Our next session will be CHURCH HISTORY!

ANNUAL MEETING REMINDER:

The Annual Meeting of St. James' will take place **Sunday, January 27, at 9:00 AM**. Please mark the date.

Become a Reading Adventures Volunteer:

Have you thought about Reading Adventures but never gotten around to volunteering? Do it now! We have completed the first semester of Reading Adventures this year, but we are always looking for more volunteers! In fact, every week, one or two volunteers has to back out for the day due to work, doctor's appointments, vacation, and so on. We always need more, and we would love to have you. Let Fr. Chuck know if you are able and willing to help a child fall in love with reading.

Giving Yourself To God

We asked for your input into how you give yourself to God. Here is the second installment. If you haven't filled out a card, it's not too late!

God's love draws out from me and gives me the strength to teach wellness by eating all the good foods that were created for us. I believe He asks me to give before getting and bring people together. — Joe Baldwin

January 2019						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
13	14 Office Closed	15 7 PM Vestry	16 10 AM Morning Prayer 2:00 PM. Hyde Park Assisted Living Eucharist	17 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	18 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	19 8 AM Men's Breakfast
20	21 Office Closed	22 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	23 10 AM Morning Prayer	24 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	25 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	26

27 9:00 AM ANNUAL MEETING	28 Office Closed	29 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	30 10 AM Morning Prayer	31 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	
<p>Sundays: Holy Eucharist Rite I is at 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist Rite II (with music) is at 10:00 AM. Sunday School and nursery are available at 10:00 AM. Between Service Classes on Sundays are from 9:15 to 9:45 in the Wilks Room.</p>						

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Please pray for these diocesan ministries this week. If you want to check out the entire year's calendar for intercession, it's simple to find - go to <https://www.diocesen.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

- 13 Church of the Holy Nativity, Bronx
- 14 Trinity Church of Morrisania, Bronx
- 15 Church of the Atonement, Bronx
- 16 Trinity School, Manhattan
- 17 St. Peter's Church (Chelsea), Manhattan
- 18 St. Peter's Church, Port Chester
- 19 Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ashley, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Brian Ganter (deployed to Afghanistan), Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), Gloria Golden, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyyn, Tedi Kramer, Hope Jennings, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Jim Lynn (Carol Bender's brother - facing surgery), Doris Mack, Margaret, Andrew Mendelson, Beth and Ginero Milano, Lillian Peralta, Mary Bowers Peters (stroke), Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John Ross, Hank Schroeder, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Carl Smith, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Georgia Verven, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Schedules

A Note about Schedules: The names you see below are those listed on their respective schedules. There are often times when, due to sickness or travel, substitutes are asked to fill in or trade positions. This will probably NOT be reflected in the lists below—so, if there is an inconsistency between what you see here and what you see on Sunday, that is all right.

Birthdays (this past week):	None
Birthdays (this coming week):	John Golden, Sanjana Shahani and Ryan Seagren
Acolytes:	January 6: Nancy Montero and Jaylen Thatcher January 13: Riley Hall and Amelia McNamara
Altar Guild:	January 6: Team I January 13: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 6: Lucille Ogden and Lynne Koch January 13: Debbie Belding and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	January 6: Patty Caswell and Patty Drake January 13: Eric Zavadil and Nancy Montero
Ushers:	January 6: Dean Caswell and Audrey Horne January 13: Nancy Montero and Anna-Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	January 6: Joanne Lown and Sue DeLorenzo January 13: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 6: John and Gloria Golden, Kathy Graff January 13: Liz Granados, Chuck Kramer, Nick and Chris Granados-Kramer and Tom Greene
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 6: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil January 13: Jodi Triola and Mike Fenwick

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7,10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 119 - As with Gladness Men of old
Sequence: 124 - What star is this
Offertory: Jesus is Born, Prince of Peace
Communion: Taizé 35 - Sing praise and bless the Lord
Recessional: 128 - We Three Kings

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on First Sunday after Christmas

"The Beginning"

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

We were joking around last night after the Epiphany Pageant — and here I have to stop and congratulate our amazing cast and musicians for the wonderful job they did (applause). But afterwards, I was joking around with a couple of the musicians and said, “Hey, maybe you should do the sermon today.”

That joke didn't go over so well. I believe — and I paraphrase — I was told that such a sermon would consist of something like, “God loves you, now let's move on to the creed.”

Actually, what I *was* going to say was, if you saw the pageant, you've pretty much heard the sermon, so if you were there last night, you can move on to the creed. Everyone else, however, will want to hear this.

The first thing is — the pageant got it wrong. The pageant always gets it wrong. So does our little nativity scene where we place the wise men.

That's because the Magi (and scripture never says Kings or Wise *men* — just Magi) did not go to the manger. Re-read what it says in today's gospel — “on entering the house, they saw the child and Mary ...”. In fact, there's no manger at all in Matthew's gospel. No census from Caesar or trip the Bethlehem... That's all Luke's gospel.

We just tend to take the dramatic parts of the various gospels and smoosh them together. I mean, let's face it, Kings going to a barn has much better optics than some astrologers visiting someone's house.

But if we get caught up in all those little details, we miss the big point which is universal to all four gospels — to the entire New Testament — and indeed to all of our relationship with God going

back to Abraham. And that point, that message that Matthew brings to us in the form of Magi bearing Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh is that God's love knows no boundaries.

God's love and the loving relationships between us that flow out of God's love — that's not something limited to any one group of people. It always was meant to spread out from us to everyone else. "Arise, shine, for your light has come ... and Nations shall come to your light."

Christ himself was an Epiphany — a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of God's love — to the Gentiles. Christ was a light shining in the darkness. Christ was the opening up of the deep meaning of the law to those who were beyond the embrace of the law and the prophets.

That's what the magi were all about — the rest of the world recognizing Jesus as the embodiment of God's love for the rest of us. There is no longer a chosen people because all people are chosen by God as heirs to the Kingdom.

The rest, as they say, is details.

And yet...

Darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the peoples...

Even in a world where we've been told time and time again through millions of Christmas and Epiphany pageants around the world in countless language — we still live in a world of darkness, and it's still our job to shine light. It's our job to BE the light of Christ. To draw people toward us and therefore toward Christ and toward God's love — like lighthouses in the sea. Like ... like a STAR in hanging over a house in Bethlehem of Judea.

So, if you missed the pageant — well, you missed a good show — but you did NOT miss the main event because the main even is Christ shining God's love not just to a certain people but all of us. And, as Jesus teaches us throughout the gospels, the light of God's love shines through us — through you and me.

We are the light now. So go out there (after the Creed and communion, of course) and shine, for your light has come indeed.

Amen.

A WORD ABOUT RECORDED SERMONS:

Most weeks, I upload a recorded copy of the sermon onto my Facebook page as well as St. James' YouTube channel. I have not yet figured out how to upload them to the St. James' Facebook page but am working on it.

You can also listen to sermons by going to YouTube (www.youtube.com) and searching for "St. James Episcopal Church, Hyde Park, NY". There, you will not only find sermons, but also videos of the Fireside Chats and other videos of interest. You can subscribe to that page, and then when new content is uploaded, you will receive a notification.

SERMON VALUATION FORM

It is not necessary to take notes during the sermon. Rather, you can take some time afterwards to recollect the sermon and its effect on you. Give yourself a few minutes for each of the questions. If you choose to share this with the preacher, it can be a powerful aid to better preaching - but this is not a form to be handed to the preacher and forgotten. It is an aid for you, so you can speak directly with the preacher and answer follow-up questions.

1. WHAT ARE YOU STILL HEARING?

That is, without evaluating it, what are the words or phrases from the sermon that are still echoing in your ears? Are there any "ear worms"?

2. WHERE MIGHT THIS BE LEADING?

As a listener, where does this sermon lead you? What does it invite you to? What are the next steps in your faith that might arise from this sermon?

3. HOW DOES THIS SERMON "PLAY"?

That is, how is it organized or ordered? What steps has the preacher taken you through? What structure did you notice in this sermon? What has it asked you to do?

4. HOW MIGHT THIS SERMON "GROW"?

That is, what suggestions would you have to hone the message of this sermon, to make it more engaging, inspiring, logical, fleshed out... No sermon is ever entirely done; its themes will be revisited over time. What would help the next time be more compelling?