

# St. James' E-pistle

## Date of Sunday Service: January 19, 2020

### Second Sunday after the Epiphany

#### Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In a week from Sunday, we will have our Annual Meeting. In a way, I have always dreaded the Annual Meeting because it means writing a long Annual Report, going over the past year, seeing what went right as well as wrong, and then plotting a course for the coming year.

On the other hand, I look forward to the Annual Meeting because I get to look back at the past year to see what went right as well as wrong, and then plot a course for the coming year.

By that I mean, nobody really enjoys writing Annual Reports — you have to do them, but they are a lot of work in an already busy time of year. And they do force you to look at your weak areas — of which St. James' has a few. On the other hand, they are a lot like looking at a family album where you see some amazing things that happen in your life together, and you think, "What a bunch of misfits we are! But boy, do I love them!" (At least, that's how I look at MY family).

Of course, we're not a regular family. We are a community of *choice* — we choose to be here because there's something special going on. With all the hiccups and missteps and sometimes miscommunication, we have something here that is hard to replace.

It's my belief that St. James' embodies a beautiful mix of what some theologians call the "already/not yet." That's a concept that suggests we don't simply look toward the next life for the Kingdom of God, but we seek to embody it here on earth right now. Like all concepts, it can be abused to justify heresies like the "Prosperity Gospel", but at its heart, it is about us living like the children of God we are even as we recognize the imperfections in ourselves and the world.

Here's what I mean. St. James' is small but not willing to simply hunker down and be our own little clique. We reach out to the community in manifold ways from our Fireside Chats to Graveyard Tours to our Community Garden to Reading Adventures and our work with the Food Pantry.

Like most congregations, St. James' has grown older, yet we have grown with younger families and seek to offer every age group serious "meat" to chew on theologically (and age appropriately, of course). We have space for all.

St. James' is "traditional" in that we use an ancient liturgy and don't have hymns cast up on a screen — and our hymns are pretty old, too. Still, we strive to offer liturgy that speaks to people's souls today. And it's pretty amazing that the old form provides enough room for new souls to thrive.

St. James' is hardly an activist parish — the Vestry has not typically made political pronouncements, we don't endorse political candidates, and it's not common for us to organize protest marches.

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

Nevertheless, it has always been our MO to lift up the Gospel and its requirements for those of us seeking to follow Jesus right here and right now. It has always been our way to point to the very people Jesus served and remind the Body of Christ that we are called to the same service.

St. James' is not the most culturally diverse congregation in the country either. We know this. But neither are we satisfied with remaining the same as we were yesterday. It has been my experience that every single difference brought to us by our various parishioners has made us richer, deeper, and more like the Kingdom of God.

That's what I mean when I say we embody the already/not yet. In so many ways, we see where we're going and we trust that we'll get there, but we know we're still on the journey, still working each step as it comes, and still willing to take each step even if it feels like a giant leap. That's what I love about this place and what inspires me.

Which means, I guess I'll have to go dig back to last year and see all the things we did that embody (and miss) God's Kingdom of Love. Then, we'll plot a course for the next steps. Together.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

### Thought for your week:

**“The journey is never ending. There's always gonna be growth, improvement, adversity; you just gotta take it all in and do what's right, continue to grow, continue to live in the moment.”**

— Antonio Brown, Former Wide Receiver for the New England Patriots

### Worship This Week:

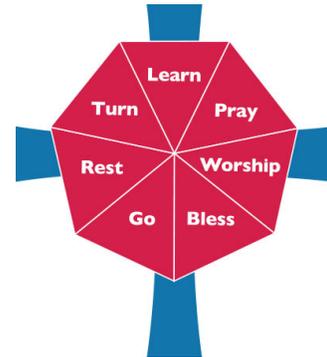
Tuesday	6:30 PM	Evening Prayer (at the Chapel)
Wednesday	10 AM	Morning Prayer (Wilks Room)
Thursday	11 AM	Bible Study
Sunday	8 AM	Eucharist Rite I
	10 AM	Eucharist Rite II

**If you have anything to add to the E-pistle, please contact either Fr. Chuck, Dyan in the Parish Office, or Brian Rance. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday evening. Thanks!**

## Announcements

### *Between Service Class - Rule of Life:*

THE WAY OF LOVE classes continue this **Sunday, January 19** with the second half of “**GO**”. These classes are open to all, and you don’t have to have been to previous classes. Each session lasts from **9:15 - 9:45 AM** in the Wilks Room.



### *Inquirers Class This Sunday:*

Following the 10:00 AM Eucharist, we will have our Confirmation Class. The theme today: History. Please join us if you want to be confirmed, received into the Episcopal Church, or would like to reaffirm your faith. OR if you’d just like to sit in on a class for the fun of it!

### *St. James' Women's Group:*

The St James’ Women's Group will be meeting on the following Wednesday nights, 6:00 PM at Antonella's in Hyde Park:

**January 22**, February 19, March 25, April 29, May 20, and June 24.

Hope you can join us for some or all!

### *Thank you to all who made the Fireside Chat a Success:*

Our first Fireside Chat of the Season is “In the can.” Many thanks to Randy Soden, Grant Ferris, and Steve Woodcock for doing the tech work. Thanks to Donna Coffman-Tracy and Mike Fenwick for organizing the reception. And of course, thanks to Shannon Butler for a great talk! But we especially thank Sue DeLorenzo who created the Fireside Chats 10 years ago and who has stepped aside as coordinator to let a new generation step up.

Mark your calendars for the next Chat: **February 6:** *Oh Freedom, Sweet Freedom: Using Music to Teach Abolitionist History.* The speaker is Peter Buntin, Chair of the Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING:

The Annual Meeting of St James' Episcopal Church, Hyde Park will take place on **Sunday, January 26, 2020**. The day will start with a **9:00 AM** Eucharist, then continue with the business portion of the meeting. At the meeting, we will approve the 2020 budget and will elect a new vestry. There will be a continental breakfast through the hard work of Dean Caswell and Doug Belding.

**QUALIFIED VOTERS:** According to our by-laws, "Persons of the ages of eighteen years or more belonging to the parish, who have been baptized and are regular attendants of its worship and contributors to its support for at least twelve months prior to an annual election or a special meeting of the corporation at which they are in attendance, shall be qualified voters thereat." Polls must be open for at least one hour and will be open before each service. Also, according to our by-laws, "If for good cause, a voter is unable to attend the Annual Meeting, he/she may, within ten days of the election, secure an absentee ballot from the rector. To be counted, the ballot must be returned to the rector prior to the closing of the polls."

## ANNUAL REPORT DEADLINE LOOMING:

Please remember to turn in your Annual Report by Tuesday, January 21. You should write a report if you lead a committee or ministry at the church.

January 2020						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>12</b> <b>9:15 AM</b> Between Service Class <b>12</b> Inquirers	<b>13</b> <b>Office Closed</b>  <b>7:00 PM</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>14</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> Evening Prayer	<b>15</b>  <b>10 AM</b> Morning Prayer <b>2 PM.</b> Hyde Park Assisted Living Eucharist	<b>16</b> <b>11 AM</b>  BIBLE STUDY  <b>3:30 PM</b> READING ADVENTURES <b>7 PM</b> Fireside Chat	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> <b>8 AM</b> Men's Breakfast
<b>19</b> <b>9:15 AM</b> Between Service Class <b>12</b> Inquirers	<b>20</b> <b>Office Closed</b>  <b>7:00 PM</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>21</b>  <b>7 PM</b> <b>Vestry Meeting</b>	<b>22</b>  <b>10 AM</b> Morning Prayer	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>

<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	
<b>9 AM Joint Service &amp; Annual Meeting</b>	<b>7:00 PM</b> Choir Rehearsal	<b>6:30 PM</b> Evening Prayer	<b>10 AM</b> Morning Prayer			
<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.</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/>

- 19 St. Joseph's Church, Bronx
- 20 Pilgrims to the Diocese of Cuernavaca, Mexico
- 21 Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission
- 22 Trinity-Pawling School, Pawling
- 23 Canterbury Downtown Chaplaincy, Manhattan
- 24 St. Paul's on-the-Hill Church, Ossining
- 25 Youth Choristers of the Diocese

### Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Vince Asher, Ashley, Joe Baldwin, John Bohlmann, Justin Bohlmann, Fr. Fred Cartier, Patty Caswell, Sue Dingee, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), John and Gloria Golden, Kathy Graff, Robert Guariglia, Clifford Hallmark (father of Alyssa Raugalis), Dalton K., Edith Kline, Ashley Konyn, Hope Jennings, Rosemary Leuken, Lorraine, Joanne Lynn, Jim Lynn (Carol Bender's brother - facing surgery)., Doris Mack, Margaret, Andrew Mendelson, Beth and Ginero Milano, Lillian Peralta, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (deployed to the Middle East), 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):	Chris Granados-Kramer, Jodi Triola and Brian O'Leary
Birthdays (this coming week):	Craig M. Slegel, Joan Oetjen, Isabela Handman Quines and Alix Ciferri
Acolytes:	January 19: Bill Fenwick and Jack Canez January 26: Emily Glancey and Braeden Hall
Altar Guild:	January 19: Team I January 26: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	January 19: Shannon Butler and Sue DeLorenzo January 26: Lucille Ogden and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	January 19: Wilma Tully/Barbara Slegel January 26: Russell Urban-Mead/Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	January 19: Andrew and Tonya Hall January 26: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	January 19: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher January 26: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	January 19: Kirstin Horn, Austin and Audrey Horne January 26: Kim Illuminate, Hope Jennings, Jada Jennings and Peter Khan
Coffee Hour Hosts:	January 19: Deirdre Mae Micker and Brian Rance January 26: Annual Meeting (Breakfast)

## This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 49:1-7  
Psalm 40:1-12  
1 Corinthians 1:1-9  
John 1:29-42

## This Week's Hymns

Processional: 616 — Hail to the Lord's anointed  
Sequence: 684 — O for a closer walk with thee  
Offertory: "Here I Am, Lord"  
Communion: 535 — Ye Servants of God, Your Master proclaim  
Recessional: L136 — I have decided to follow Jesus

## Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on First Sunday after the Epiphany

*"Let It Be So For Now"*

The baptism of Christ seems a little out of sequence doesn't it? I mean, just last week we were observing the visit of the Magi to the little baby Jesus. And a week or so before that, we were celebrating the birth of that baby.

Now Jesus is a grown man — that's a heck of a growth spurt. So what happened?

Well, this is just speculation, but we're Episcopalians and have always had the tradition of infant baptism — so even though he's an adult, we put baptism right up next to birth. Doesn't *quite* make sense, but let it be so now.

Besides, that's kind of emblematic of Christ's entire ministry. There's so much of it that doesn't seem quite right. The very baptism doesn't quite seem right. That's what John the Baptist was saying: I should be baptized by you and yet you come to me?

Then right after the baptism, right after the spirit of God descends upon him and the voice of God says "This is my son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased"... God drives Jesus into the wilderness to fast and be tested. That's not right.

There's so much more though, that's a bit off.

His birth isn't quite right. He is born on the run, as it were, according to Matthew, living as a refugee for a time. Not only that, but the only people who recognize him are the poorest of the poor and foreigners.

As he grows, he is in regular conflict with his family (remember the wedding at Cana; Or in John 7 when his brothers make fun of him; or in Mark 3 when his family thinks he's out of his mind).

It doesn't seem quite right even in his teaching when he tells the parable of the bad guy who sows weeds in the midst of a farmer's wheat field. And what does the farmer say? Let it be so now... let the weeds grow... for now.

There are so many other ways — like the crucifixion itself — in which things progress in an off-kilter way. Why? And why does he seem okay with things being not quite right? How can he live with this “let it be so now” attitude?

Well, notice at his baptism, that Jesus says Let it be so now ... to fulfill all righteousness. Things may not seem quite right, but in the bigger picture, they fall into place. Being baptized in the days of John wasn't about giving your life over to following Christ but was an act of repentance. You could do it repeatedly. But Jesus is the Son of God who doesn't need to repent of anything — that's what John is bothered by. Yet Jesus says it fulfills all righteousness because it puts him squarely within the traditions of the people of God. Which is hugely important to Matthew's audience. Jesus submits to this humbling act as a sign that he is one of us.

It doesn't seem right — but on the other hand, would the people of Israel have listened to him if he had separated himself from them? Would his teaching, his healing, his sacrifice have had the impact they did?

In all of his ministry, Jesus worries less about people showing him the proper respect, or things looking right, or situations being proper ... he worries less about those things than about fulfilling righteousness — and for him, that is always, always embodying God's love.

You know what it's like in your life to let things go that aren't quite right for the sake of the bigger picture. Ever have a kid give you a picture they drew? The people are misshapen with hands bigger than their heads and different numbers of fingers, the house is smaller than the dog, and you can't tell if those are trees or sheep.... but you praise the beauty of that picture because there's something bigger at play.

Or sometimes you sit with family or friends who say things that are questionable — whether it's just a bad joke or an expressed view that you don't hold with. And you let it slide because to address it at that moment would be to cause more harm.

The fact is, we live in a world that is not quite right in more ways than we can count, and this is the world we are given to live in, in which we are called to operate. And more often than not, things *won't* be right. We have a growing income gap with growing poverty, mass incarceration, climate change, increases in hate crimes and institutional racism.

Let it be so now.

Jesus says we are to live within the system in which God has placed us. We are to look around and see the bigger picture — the desire of God that we love God and act with love toward our neighbors. We may not always have to prove ourselves right in every argument if that would cause harm to someone else.

That doesn't mean that Jesus *ignores* what's wrong in the world. Not at all. In the reading from Acts, Peter reminds us “how [Jesus] went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.” Jesus did NOT ignore the pain in the world or the oppression. And we do not either.

Yesterday at one of the series of Apology retreats that Fr. Masud and I have been leading, Fr. Masud began with a prayer from the Book of Common prayer that reads in part: “Grant us grace fearlessly

to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression.” That’s not the prayer of people who ignore what’s going on.

But let it be so now is a way of saying that you don’t wait for things to be right. You don’t wait for people to give you the proper respect — that’s irrelevant. We are in an imperfect, messed up world, and there is no way that any of us will ever make it all right. When we die, I guarantee it will be still be a violent, messed up world.

Act anyway. And if, to embody God’s love, it’s necessary do something unnecessary or humbling or irritating to those around us — let it be so. The point of Christ’s baptism wasn’t to please certain people — it was to better embody God’s love. The point of being in tension with his family was not to upset them but to do the work that better embodied God’s love. The point of the parable of the weeds and wheat isn’t to ignore the weeds but to show that we can embody God’s love in the midst of a messed up world

This all requires a certain humility and practicality. Is righteousness fulfilled by our action? If so, it doesn’t matter if people are impressed by us or don’t even notice us. And if that doesn’t seem quite right, well, let it be so for now. 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](http://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?*