

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: November 18, 2018

Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

NOTICE: Once again, worship will be in the Parish Hall. That is both services.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I had planned on giving you a summary of the Diocesan Convention this past week. There were some great things happening. Walter Koch, our delegate, will give a brief report (see below).

But this week, something else happened in the broader church that needs to be addressed. The Bishop of Albany, the Rt. Rev. William Love, has chosen to directly disregard directives of the General Convention.

First some background. At General Convention this summer, the church as a whole, bishops, priests, and lay delegates, all voted to ensure that all people who are legally entitled to marry, are allowed to marry in our church. This mostly affects same sex marriages.

The Convention does not require clergy to officiate same sex weddings if their conscience won't let them, but made it clear that provision must be made for such marriages in every diocese.

This week, Bishop Love banned same sex marriages in the Diocese of Albany (our neighboring diocese). This places clergy of that diocese in a precarious position because they have sworn to uphold the teachings and practices of the church (General Convention) but also to obey their bishop.

The Presiding Bishop sent out a tentative first statement noting that the church is treading lightly but also asserting that bishops have their own oaths to adhere to the guidance of the General Convention. What this may mean is unclear. Perhaps, LGBTQ members of the Diocese of Albany will simply have to travel outside the diocese to be married. That is not sustainable. Perhaps the Church will bring charges against Bishop Love for abandoning the faith and practice of the Church. It's possible that some middle way can be found.

Whatever happens in the Diocese of Albany, this changes nothing in the practice and belief of the Episcopal Church and in the Diocese of New York. Lest there be any doubt, same sex marriage is available in this diocese, and if asked to perform one, I would do so — provided the couple went through the normal pre-marital counseling and was legally entitled to it.

In our church, we believe that God's love has many manifestations. We believe that God is Love, and that this love is not bound by gender, nationality, ethnic origin (remember, there used to be laws against people of different ethnicities marrying), or anything else. Love is love.

Our understanding of human sexuality has evolved and grown over the years as we begin to better understand how the human body is composed and works. Even if we don't understand how others operate, however, the one thing God asks of us is always clear: Love all. Those who are different as well as those who are like us. And, it should go without saying, allow them to love as well.

If you have any concerns about this, I encourage you to come to me to discuss those concerns. In the meantime, I ask you to hold our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Albany in your prayers. I am certain this is not an easy time for them.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

A Word About Infrastructure and Money

I wanted to give you an update on our physical plant issues and talk about what this will mean in the life of the congregation.

As you know, we've been worshipping in the Parish Hall for a few weeks now. The HVAC system which we were in such desperate need of has now been installed. Work was completed Thursday. However, we still have to go through the mold abatement process, and this is more complicated than initially thought. Before we can get estimates on the work needed, New York State law requires that we first get an assessment of the need by an independent third party (expert in the field but not eligible to bid). We are working to get an assessor here as soon as possible, but that requires more money and time.

After the assessor gives an official list of what needs to be remediated, then bids go out to firms to do the actual work. We are required to have at least two estimates. After we choose a company, then we have to schedule the work. It's estimated that the work will take about a week. After that, the assessor has to come back and certify that the church is mold free.

I really do appreciate your patience through this process. None of us is an expert in these things, so we are learning on the job.

I need you also to understand what the costs of something like this mean for our church. The HVAC system alone will run us close to \$60,000. The mold abatement and assessor payments could run (an educated guess) somewhere in the neighborhood of \$16,000. That's \$76,000. It does not even approach some of the other infrastructure issues we have here: slate roof work on the parish house, organ repair beyond normal expense, trees that need to come down, front porch of the parish house, leaking in the basement of the parish house, basement of the chapel overhaul. There's more, but you get the idea.

These expenses will require a Capital Campaign. I've spoken about this before, and we've already begun the work of forming a Capital Campaign Committee. But you need to understand that these costs are entirely separate from those expenses of simply being the church. Capital Campaigns are

entirely separate from our annual Pledge Campaign. And our congregation faces significant funding issues on the Ministry side as well.

Our “Apportioned Share” to the Diocese of New York has increased significantly - a return to pre-2008-crash assessment levels. We had to appeal to the diocese for a reduction in the increase because it was so large that we could not pay it. This is a temporary solution. The ministry of the Diocese is important, and we *want* to pay our share into it. So we need to think about how we can grow ministry here — on the local level and on the diocesan level.

I say all this not to sound gloomy. Nobody loves to give money for infrastructure, but we need it. Nobody loves to pay “taxes” to the larger institution, but it’s part of who we are.

Most importantly, God is good, and I believe we have a congregation that embraces the challenges of doing God’s work. We do it well, and I’m proud to be part of this congregation. I simply want you to be aware of where we are — let no one say they did not know.

As we prepare for our Stewardship Campaign, I urge you to pray for St. James’ and its ministry in Hyde Park. I urge you also to pray about how you are a part of it and what your financial role in that ministry might look like.

None of this is easy, but it’s my firm belief that what we do — the way we bring Christ’s love to the world — is more than worth it.

— Chuck+

Announcements

This week’s Inquirers Class:

This week, our class is, “What Is Christianity?” A broad overview of what binds all those together who call themselves “Christians”. What are their basic beliefs and practices? Are they all really the same religion?

Report on Diocesan Convention:

I was the St. James lay delegate at the Diocesan Convention in White Plains last weekend. Being a member of the Vestry and feeling some obligation to attend, I had reluctantly volunteered for the position. Not knowing what to expect, fearing a boring series of reports and talks, I am pleased to report that it was a thoroughly rewarding and edifying two days.

There were addresses by the bishops dealing mainly with the current problems and divisions in our society: gun violence, sexual harassment and inequity, immigration, gun violence, racism. While not providing specific solutions to these complex issues, a strong stand was taken against the tragedies and evils resulting from not dealing adequately with these problems. A Christian

approach of not demonizing opponents and having meaningful dialogue was urged, even loving your enemy. Some problems may be too complex for human understating and ability to solve; we must ultimately rely on God.

There was an engaging workshop analyzing the factors involved and the means of dealing with disagreements within organizations, neighborhoods and societies. Father Kramer's play "New York Lamentation" was movingly presented to a hushed audience, with subsequent wide acclaim. Also moving was a Litany service for clerical victims of clerical sexual predators.

Finally, there was time for committee reports, budgetary approvals and diocesan business; it was interesting to me to learn how the diocese functions as a business. Overall it was an inspirational educational experience in an environment of good will and kindness.

— Walter Koch

Community Thanksgiving Service:

On **Tuesday, November 20, at 6:30 PM**, the Hyde Park Association of Churches will host a Community Thanksgiving Service. This annual event has been a part of Hyde Park life for decades and reminds us that we are called to come together to offer thanks.

In these tumultuous times, it is ever more important for us to come together in solidarity and unity. Please make every effort to join us at the United Methodist Church. We want a broad representation!

Join the Reformulated Graveyard Committee:

"In many ways, a graveyard is like an encyclopedia of community history. A cemetery contains birth and death records, genealogies, and historical anecdotes. The stones reflect the times and tenor of the people, their moral and religious beliefs, and their customs. The size and elaborateness of tombstones tell of the wealth of those buried under them, and collectively these monuments reflect the economy of a town through various periods in its history. Changing tastes in art and architecture are found in graveyards, just as in the houses of the town" — Jack Sanders.

The Vestry voted at their October meeting to rejuvenate the Graveyard/Columbarium Committee. There's an important reason for this: The observation or study of graveyard epitaphs and art have become increasingly popular pastimes, especially in the Hudson Valley. St. James' Graveyard has no shortage of interesting gravestones. The Annual Graveyard Tours share our history with the community but the grounds need some tender care and maintenance and mapping to continue this as a self guided tour throughout the year. **If you would like to learn more or volunteer email Vestry member Dan Raugalis at raugalis@gmail.com**

It's Pageant Time!

Look for a sign-up sheet this Sunday to be part of the Epiphany Pageant. The pageant this year will be part of a potluck supper on January 5. Think of it as holy dinner theater! All are welcome to sign up, and you get to pick (or create!) your role. It's a good time to have some fun!

November 2018						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
11	12 Office Closed	13 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	14 10 AM Morning Prayer 2 PM Hyde Park Assisted Living	15 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	16 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	17 8 AM Men's Breakfast 9:30 AM Altar Guild Meeting 10:00 AM Lector Training
18	19 Office Closed	20 6:30 Community Thanksgiving Service	21 10 AM Morning Prayer 2:00 PM. Hyde Park Assisted Living Eucharist	22 Thanksgiving Day Office Closed	23 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY	24
25	26 Office Closed	27 6:30 Evening Prayer 7:00 Inquirers	28 10 AM Morning Prayer 7 PM Vestry	29 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 - Reading Adventures	30 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.diocesenyny.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

- 18 St. Mark's Church (Nepera Park), Yonkers
- 19 Church of the Holy Apostles, Manhattan
- 20 St. Peter's Church (Chelsea), Manhattan
- 21 St. Edmund's Church, Bronx
- 22 Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens and Feeding Programs of the Diocese
- 23 St. Clement's Church, Manhattan
- 24 Grace Church, Monroe

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ashley, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Darlene Calgagni, Mariel Carter, Joanne Clark, 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 Konyn, 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.

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| Birthdays
(this past week): | Margaret McNamara, Katherine Urban-Mead and Richard Ciferri |
| Birthdays
(this coming week): | Audrey Horne, Dean Caswell, Janet Bright, Kathie Champion, Bob Seils, Bruce Mackenzie, Evan Weaver, Ingrid Anne Koch Hodgins, Susan Gausepohl and Kurt Burkhardt |
| Acolytes: | November 18: Riley Hall - Amelia McNamara
November 25: Bill Fenwick, Jack Canez and Mattie Canez |

Altar Guild:	November 18: Team I November 25: Team I
8 a.m. Readers:	November 18: Deb Belding and Lynne Koch November 25: Lucille Ogden and Grant Ferris
10 a.m. Readers:	November 18: Wendy Urban-Mead and Mike Fenwick November 25: Eric Zavadil and Deirdre Mae Micker
Ushers:	November 18: Patty Drake and Bobbie Wells November 25: Maggie and Tom McNamara
Pledge Clerks:	November 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher November 25: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	November 18: Charlotte, Thomas and Peter Finnigan, Jeff Fishwick, November 25: Bonnie Foote and David Foote, Jillian Foster, Karen Foy
Coffee Hour Hosts:	November 18: Deirdre Mae Micker, Wendy and Russell Urban-Mead November 25: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani

This Week's Lectionary

Daniel 12:1-3
 Psalm 16
 Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18) 19-25
 Mark 13:1-8

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 438 - Tell out my soul
 Sequence: 523 - Glorious things of thee are spoken
 Offertory: In Thee, O Lord
 Communion: Taizé: Live In Charity
 Recessional: 410 - Praise My should the king of heaven

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

"Praiseworthy"

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
 That mark our place; and in the sky
 The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
 Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
 In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
 The torch; be yours to hold it high.
 If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
 In Flanders fields.

This poem - written in 1915 by John McCrae in the early days of World War I shortly after the death of his friend in the first Battle of Ypres, is sort of the first world war's Gettysburg Address in that it urges fellow soldiers to fight on. McCrae himself would die in January 1918 of pneumonia, much like our own William White whom we met during the Graveyard Tours.

But the poem, which makes the war sound like a holy venture, cannot be read without these other words from another war veteran.

In 2012, former President Jimmy Carter said in a speech, "War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children."

Today is Veteran's Day, once known as Armistice Day - the day that the War to End all War ended. To mark the 100th Anniversary of the end of that war, we will stop whatever we are doing at 11:11 — even if we are distributing communion — and pause. My alarm is set to go off then. Maybe you want to set your alarms for the same time. In England, the practice is to pause for two minutes. [Can we commit to those extra two minutes to commemorate the fallen and to celebrate the end of one horrendous war?].

The observance was changed in 1954 to acknowledge not only that one war but all veterans of wars. This was the post-World War II era, and treatment of veterans (who who more numerous than at any time in our history both in real numbers and as a percentage of our population), was the best it had ever been.

Remember that Civil War vets received nothing from the government. World War I vets had been promised a war bonus, but after the war the Wilson, Coolidge and Hoover administrations reneged, leading to the Bonus Army camping out on the Washington DC Mall for months until the Army burned down their tent village.

Today, with veterans making up less than two percent of the population, the fact that they receive little attention from the government goes unnoticed, even as we gain increased understanding of the ongoing and damaging effects of PTSD.

So, let us take a moment right now to honor our veterans by inviting them to stand. *[take a moment]*. Thank you.

So, what do these fallen deserve and these veterans deserve? Parades? Praise?

What do the elders who sent our youth into one war after another deserve? What do those of us who profited in many ways from these wars deserve? What do we as a society — as the many societies of the world which continually reach to the easiest recourse of all, attacking the other — what do we deserve? Praise also? What, my brothers and sisters, is praiseworthy?

That is where the gospel comes in. Because nothing in the course of human life is outside the scope of the gospel. Nothing we do is lost to God. Nothing we do should not be addressed in the context of what it means for us to be children of God responsible to and for each other.

And Jesus shows us in a simple story what is praiseworthy. After observing the most powerful people of their society flaunt their privilege and power with their fancy clothes and their elaborate prayers and their generous gifts to the temple, Jesus sees a widow — a poor woman — give a tiny pittance. And he said, THAT is praiseworthy. She has given her all. No parades, no statues for her. Nobody will ever notice what she has done, but nothing goes unnoticed by God, and God sees that she has given herself.

The Hebrew scripture today has the story of Ruth who is also praiseworthy. I wish the lectionary had told the whole story because it is THAT which makes Ruth so extraordinary. Ruth was a foreigner. Her mother-in-law had married a foreigner and moved to Moab to raise her family. Her sons married Moabite women. Then her husband and both of her sons died, leaving her with two daughters-in-law. She sent them away so she could go back to Israel and die. Ruth and Orpah were young, after all, and had a chance at remarriage. Orpah obeyed Naomi and went. Ruth would not leave her, her love and solidarity with Naomi was so great. “Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God,” she says. And then it is Ruth who works diligently to keep Naomi alive, gleaning the fields like the poor do, not out of mere survival but out of love.

It is her giving of herself that the wealthy Boaz notices — and that he finds praiseworthy.

The whole essence of the gospel is that God asks us to give ourselves — to God and to each other. To give ourselves so that others can live and grow and come to know peace. Sometimes people find themselves at war, and it is praiseworthy the way many give themselves so that their comrades can come home. But as President Carter says, even if that war is necessary, [and I am reminded that this weekend is also the 80th anniversary of Kristalnacht - the night of broken glass in which Nazis began their pogrom of Jews in Berlin], even then, it is a necessary evil and it is not our purpose. Our purpose is to be the widow who gives everything she has in a quiet, gentle way, to build up. Our purpose is to be Ruth who leaves her country and willingly makes herself an alien so that she can care for one she loves.

What is praiseworthy in the eyes of God? Understanding that praise on earth is nothing compared to simple words, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” words which those who give themselves

are assured to hear from the lips of God. Understanding that parades, accolades, statues and memorials are nice, but they are nothing compared to the act of self-giving itself.

Countless people gave themselves in countless wars. Many died. Many suffered long-term after returning home. Today, we recognize them - let us do so by committing ourselves to our own self-giving — even if no one ever notices — for the building up of each other, our neighbors near and far, and the Kingdom of God here on earth. 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?