

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: February 4, 2018

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Last Sunday, we had our Annual Meeting, and by all accounts (so far), it was a pretty good day. The budget was passed with compliments to the treasurer. We elected three new members of the Vestry who are taking on this role for the first time. We saw how much we do even in what I dared to call a "quiet" year.

We also looked at some more difficult realities. Pledging has dipped this year. So has attendance (even as we technically saw a growth in membership). As part of a way forward to improve attendance and a sense of who we are as the Body of Christ, I put a questionnaire (of the type I normally despise) in the Annual Report. Though only a portion of the congregation filled it out so far, I thought it might be interesting to share some of the results.

First, of those who responded, roughly 60% have attended St. James' 20 years or less. But we also had respondents who have attended more than 60 years.

Second, most felt that they do attend about the same amount this year as in the past. A few, however, said they attend less, and there were three primary reasons: A) Health, B) Travel, and C) Sports.

I'm not interested in pointing a finger at sports or travel as something to blame or as an excuse. In the world we inhabit, those things are simply facts of life. So are health problems. But it's important to get a baseline and to see what areas of life need our attention.

There were other reasons for people attending less.

One respondent noted Anger at the Rector, which I take seriously. As I've said before, it is inevitable that I will make mistakes or take positions that upset. Sometimes that's unavoidable, and sometimes that's just me messing up. I do encourage you to contact me when I disappoint and let me know - it's only this way that we can look for resolution and reconciliation.

Other reasons included music, work conflicts, and questioning faith.

Interestingly, what some people saw as impediments to participation in the church, others saw as positives. It just shows how complicated our collective life is. This is not to dismiss the concerns that were raised. On the contrary. I have been looking at the preliminary results with the wardens, and we will gather with the Vestry to see how parish leadership can best work to make St. James' a place that draws people in - like the countless fish Jesus drew in with nets that had labored in vain the entire night before.

As long as the church involves people, of course, it will never be perfect. But we know from experience that we can be a better representative of the Body of Christ, that we can more faithfully address the concerns of our parishioners, and that we can increase our participation in worship, service, and fellowship.

In order to continue this examination, I am including the questionnaire in this week's Epistle. Please print it out and return it to the parish office. As you can see, you may or may not include your name. But if there is a specific concern you would like addressed, it would be helpful to give me some way to contact you to learn more.

We are rapidly approaching Lent.

That is a season of self examination, reflection, and repentance. Even if we think of it as "down" season in the church, Lent is actually quite hopeful. It is a season that tells us that it's okay to look at who and how we truly are. We don't have to try to make ourselves look better than we are - God will be with us and love us no matter what.

Yet it is only through that self-examination that we can move closer to the ideal God has in mind for us - what is often called the Beloved Community. So let's approach Lent as well as this new year with honest self-examination and hope. We have a lot of good to work with, and that makes me think St. James' is going to have a very good year.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

ATTENDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20

You are a member of St. James', and we are blessed to have you. Your presence is crucial to the life of this parish. When parishioners come together, everyone's life is made more joyful, fuller and in general better.

In our ongoing effort to increase attendance by current members, we would like to ask you a few questions. Please take this seriously and answer as honestly as you wish. You may include your name or not - that is up to you. If you do, your answers will be held in strictest confidentiality, though the general information will be collated for parish consideration.

No matter how often you attend, we want to hear what keeps you away or keeps you coming back.

Thank you in advance for your help understanding what is needed to advance the work of the gospel.

- 1 How long have you attended St. James'? _____
- 2 On average, how regularly did you attend over the past 12 months?
 Weekly Biweekly Monthly Bimonthly Less often
- 3 Was this more than, less than, or about the same as the previous year?
 More Less About the same
- 4 If you attended **less** this year, to what do you attribute this? *Check as many as apply and use as much space as you need to elaborate on any point:*
 Work Sports Travel Health Family complexities
 Anger at the rector Anger at other parish leadership Anger at the Episcopal Church
 Music quality Sermon quality Sunday School size Loss of Faith Other
- 5 If you attend **more**, to what do you attribute that? *Check as many as apply and use as much space as you need to elaborate on any point:*
 Health Family Seeking Closer Relationship with God Good Fellowship
 Music quality Sermon quality Sunday School size
 Other
- 6 Answering as honestly as you can, what would make you attend more? We will leave this open for you to answer as you choose, but it can range from “Nothing” to small changes like “Need a ride,” to significant things like “Change in leadership.”

7 If there is anything you feel needs to be said that is not addressed here but needs to be said, please let us know.

Name (optional)_____

Announcements

A PLEDGE PLEA: If you have not pledged yet, please do so. Letters will go out next week from the Vestry to remind you about your pledge. Please help!

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper:

Join us **Tuesday, February 13 at 6:00 PM** for the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper! We eat pancakes for dinner! We have Fr. Chuck's Pancake Decorating Fun! We have Fellowship as we prepare for the Lenten Fast.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES

ASH WEDNESDAY is **February 14**. Begin the Lenten Season the right way with the Imposition of Ashes. The iconic phrase, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" sets the tone for a season of reflection and repentance. To help you better worship, there are three services offered that day. **6:30 AM, 10:00 AM, and 7:00 PM**. Please try to make one of them.

Women's Dinner:

St. James Women's Group will meet Monday, February 19th at 6:00pm at Coppola's in Hyde Park. Please RSVP by Wednesday, February 7th to Regina Ardini (rdawordgarden@gmail.com) or Patty Glancey (pglancey@ymail.com). We look forward to seeing new and familiar faces in 2018!

Between-Service Class This Week:

This week, we will look at the raising of Lazarus and other miracles raising the dead. As always, this class begins at 9:15 and ends at 9:45.

Write a Lenten Meditation:

Lent is fast approaching, and with it, our Lenten Meditation booklet. The sign-up sheet is available in the Narthex, and I hope you will sign up this Sunday!

Inquirers Class This Week:

Next class, **Wednesday, February 7** we conclude our look at the Sacraments with an examination of **Holy Communion**. Class begins at 7:00 PM. All are welcome to join us for one session - or for the entire series!

Are You Getting the Episcopal New Yorker?

If you're not receiving the *Episcopal New Yorker*, the quarterly magazine of our Diocese, email Andrew Gary at agary@diocesenyc.org with your name, mailing address, and the name of the congregation where you are a member. You'll receive the newspaper four times per year. It's that simple - keep up on news of the Diocese and read Engaging yet challenging articles about our faith.

Become An Acolyte:

Whatever your age, if you want to become an acolyte, we will make a place for you. If you attend Sunday School, we will work to make sure you don't miss too much!

Grace Church Millbrook is proud to announce that we are a partner site for this year's Trinity Institute Conference



February 2 - 3 in New York City and webcast live at Grace Church Millbrook NY.

We all want to create a better world—and that require action and connection. Discerning shared values is crucial to forming powerful partnerships and moving forward with courageous intention, Explore how you and your community can set a collaborative course at Values in Action, a Trinity Institute conference. Learn how to use the power of community to form strategic alliances. Because once we've found connections at the deepest level of our values, we can make progress beyond belief.

This year's conference features leading activists, theologians, authors, and experts on how to integrate core values into strategic and effective action, including:

- [the Most Rev. Michael Curry](#), Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church;
- Michelle Alexander, author of [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#);
- [Pádraig Ó Tuama](#), poet, theologian, and mediator;
- [Jose Antonio Vargas](#), Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, filmmaker, and undocumented immigrant;
- and [more](#).

Opening worship service and keynote speech, Friday 7-9

Presentations, workshops and times to meet and eat: Saturday 9-5

To sign up or volunteer to help, email us at office@gracemillbrook.org or call M-F 9-2 at 845-677-3064.

February 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 Unction	5 Office Closed 7:30 PM Choir Practice	6	7 10 AM Morning Prayer 7:00 PM Inquirers	8 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures 7:00 PM Fireside Chat	9	10
11	12 Office Closed 7:30 PM Choir Practice	13 6PM Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	14 ASH WEDNESDAY 6:30 AM - Ashes 10 AM - Ashes 7 PM - Ashes	15 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	16	17 8:00 AM Men's Breakfast
18 3 pm Youth Group	19 Office Closed 6 PM Women's Group @ Coppola's	20 7 PM Vestry	21 10 AM Morning Prayer 2 PM Eucharist at HP Assisted Living 7:00 PM Inquirers	22 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 PM Reading Adventures	23	24
25 Episcopal Visitation with Confirmations	26 7:30 PM Choir Practice	27	28 10 AM Morning Prayer 7:00 PM Inquirers			

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.

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/>

- 4 Church of the Epiphany, Manhattan
- 5 St. Joseph's Episcopal Church, Bronx
- 6 Church of the Divine Love, Montrose
- 7 La Academia Ecu mica de Liderazgo
- 8 Grace Church, Port Jervis, Delaware Catskill Episcopal Ministry
- 9 St. Mark's Church, Mount Kisco
- 10 Diocesan Anti-Racism Committee

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Mariel Carter, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Tedi Kramer, Hope Jennings, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Beth and Ginerio Milano, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), Pat Rooney, John Ross, 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): Daniel Matranga, Deirdre Mae Micker, Tanya S. Hall, Dalton M. Slegel, Suzanne Glancey and John Seagren, Jr.

Birthdays
(this coming week): Kasey Gaulin and David Wardell, Jr.

Acolytes:
February 4: Deirdre Mae Micker and Bill Fenwick
February 11: Nancy Montero and Jaylen Thatcher

Altar Guild:
February 4: Team II
February 11: Team III

8 a.m. Readers:	February 4: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan February 11: Julett Butler and Lynne Koch
10 a.m. Readers:	February 4: Wilma Tully and Judy Douglass February 11: Wendy Urban-Mead and Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	February 4: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher February 11: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher
Pledge Clerks:	February 4: Joanne Lown and Sue DeLorenzo February 11: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	February 4: Kirstin Horn, Austin and Audrey Horne, Kim Illuminate, Hope Jennings, Jada Jennings and Peter Khan February 11: Jack, Suzann, Brian and Faith Kinne, Morgan Kinne, Milena Jewel and Abby Jewel, Irene Kipp, Edith Kline, Rudy Knakal and Walter and Lynn Koch
Coffee Hour Hosts:	February 4: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil February 11: Jodi Triola and Mike Fenwick

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalm 147:1-12, 21c
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 381 - The Strong Word Did Cleave the Darkness
Sequence: 1 - Father We Praise Thee
Offertory: "O God Beyond All Praising"
Communion: 321 - My God, Thy Table Now Is Spread
Recessional: 411 - O Bless the Lord, My Soul

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (January 28, 2018)

"Annual Report"

It has been a quiet year at St. James'.

Truly.

Since our last annual meeting, we have been a quieter congregation in at least a few ways. We did not have Vacation Bible School this past year. There was no Community Thanksgiving service. We did not have an Epiphany Pageant. Youth group has been spotty and sputtering. And the very low attendance on Sundays' - especially at the 10 AM service - has been a deep and long-standing concern for me all year.

Mind you, quiet is a relative term. St. James' has never been a congregation content to sit around and watch the grass grow.

Let me list a few of the ongoing ministries we have continued to drive this year:

Fireside Chats - drawing the biggest crowds so far last season.

The Men's Breakfast which brings parish men together once a week for fellowship and the occasional bit of work.

Altar Guild, ushers, choir, acolytes, lectors and lay readers all have served faithfully for the benefit of our mutual worship. The members of each of these ministries will tell you that they would love to have you join them. The more the merrier.

The same is true, I'm sure, of the Coffee Hour hosts who week after week, year after year, provide that spark of fellowship and camaraderie so essential to our life together.

Reading Adventures continues its renewed life at North Park Elementary school, weathering the retirement of one principal and the entrance of a new, very supportive principal.

The Lenten Meditation booklets once again proved to be a source of inspiration and encouragement for many beyond our church walls.

The Mother's Day Tea - one of our newer traditions in Hyde Park that brings people from all over into our doors and raises important funds for our ministry.

Sunday School that continues to teach our children the faith of Christ.

The adult bible study has gained a small but loyal group and has even brought in the occasional non-parishioner/seeker. It is, I believe, just scratching the surface of its potential.

The Community Garden which continues to feed the hungry as well as teach healthy habits in meal preparation.

The ever-popular Graveyard Tours which have become a tradition in Hyde Park and drew in record profits this year.

The Thanksgiving Baskets and Christmas Stars that bring joy and cheer to neighbors in financial distress.

You get the idea - if we added nothing else, this would be a busy church. And that doesn't even include worship.

Yet we did **add** a few new ministries. Last Ash Wednesday, we joined the growing number of congregations offering "Ashes To Go" where clergy go out to public spaces and provide ashes to all to come to them. It is also a time to offer counsel to those who seek it. Just last week, someone at Cranberry's, where I stood last year, asked if I would do it again.

Last March, St. James' also played host to a live webcast of the Trinity Institute held at Trinity Church, Wall Street.

Also last March, as a result of last year's Annual Meeting at which I stated that I would like to increase adult education, we began a "Between Services Class." Lasting just a half-hour from 9:15 to 9:45 sharp, we have covered a range of topics and are currently discussing biblical miracles and their meanings. This class has gained a solid following, and I see it going on and growing.

Another thing arising out of last year's Annual Meeting was the introduction of Morning Prayer. During Lent, we had daily morning prayer. At Easter, participants decided to make it weekly Morning Prayer, so that every Wednesday, we get together to pray, each week led by a different volunteer. Right now we have a group of five lay Morning Prayer leaders.

And just for fun, last Lent, St. James' participated in Lent Madness. We placed a large bracket of saints (donated by Jim Oppenheimer) on the Parish House wall and followed the online voting for which saint would win the "Golden Halo." This parody of March madness is a sneaky way for people to learn about the saints of God who have helped the church grow closer to being the beloved community Christ desires. And it works. One Tuesday evening, I saw a bunch of Boy Scouts debating who they wanted to win - which gave me an opening to discuss with them what it means to be a saint.

This past year, inspired by the Men's Breakfasts, a group began holding Women's Dinners, and it has drawn a significant number of attendees.

This past year, we called Sarah Rodeo as our new music minister following the departure of Mary Grosskopf. However, as Fall approached, Sarah announced that she was leaving to go to Yale for graduate school. We were fortunate to be able to hire Glenn May to replace her with very little break in service. Welcome Glenn!

We also we happy to welcome JULETT BUTLER THIS FALL AS OUR POSTULANT TO THE DIACONATE. SHE ATTENDS MOSTLY THE 8:00 AM SERVICE SONSHE CAN FULFILL HER OTHER MINISTRY AS A CHAPLAIN AT VASSAR. BUT WHILE HERE, JULETT IS ACTING AS LAY READER ANDHAS ALREADY CONTRIBUTED IN THE FIRM IF A PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY.

AND We hired a new sexton, Dennis Adipietro, who replaced Richard Secor after his retirement. Dennis quickly made a place for himself here, and he is doing good work indeed.

VESTRY CANDIDATES - 3 WHO NEVER WERE ON BEFORE (this is good news)

Since you deserve to know what else I do during the week, here are a few of the activities I've been involved in outside of worship, parish education, and pastoral care: I stepped down as the Dean of the Dutchess North deanery - which was merged with two other deaneries to make one county-wide clergy organization. Of course, I still meeting monthly with the Episcopal clergy of the county.

I was elected to the Regional Council and subsequently appointed as the chair of the Council's executive committee. I continue as the convener of the Hyde Park Association of Churches with our monthly meetings. I continue on the Town of Hyde Park's Ethics Board, though that has taken very little time this year. I continue on the Renaissance Rehabilitation Center's ethics committee, which also demands very little time.

Early in the year, I joined the Reparations Committee of the Diocese of New York and have been active in promoting its Year of Lamentation - the first year of a three year cycle in which the diocese mourns the harm done by slavery in New York, often with the church's active participation, apologizes and repents, and seeks ways to set us and our society on a holier course.

Part of my role has been to write a play, "A New York Lamentation" - as you well know by now! It opened for the first time last Sunday at Christ Church, Staten Island and was, overall, a good beginning to the year.

Building off of that work, I was invited this fall to address the Poughkeepsie Rotary Club to discuss slavery in New York.

I have also conducted classes for the Marist Center for Lifetime Study, and for Christ Church centering around the ways in which we prepare for death.

I began offering a monthly Holy Eucharist at the new Hyde Park Assisted Living center on 9G. It has been a committed group who seek the nurture of communion.

Last June, I spent a week at Virginia Theological Seminary at a preaching course. The course includes monthly meetings with other course members in which we preach to each other. It will conclude this June with another week in Virginia.

And somewhere in there this Fall, we celebrated my being here for twenty years! Which still boggles my mind because it still all seems pretty new to me.

As for future activities: Much of what I have been doing will continue. The committees I'm on will remain. The services I conduct will remain. The classes I teach... they'll remain, too. The "New York Lamentation" play will be performed three more times, the next one being at Christ Church in Poughkeepsie - Sunday, March 4 at 3:00 PM. I hope you will be there - and I believe it could be the catalyst for a fruitful series for the Between-Services class.

I was in conversation with our Sunday School superintendent about a new initiative with Sunday School. As we know from last year's attempted switch in Sunday School times, not every experiment works, but failed experiments are also worthwhile because hey, you never know. This initiative is to reintroduce a form of Family Service - once a month or once a quarter with students taking on various roles such as usher, lector, lay reader, and of course acolyte. These have generally been successful, but they take a lot of work and planning.

But what I - we - need to focus on more than anything this year is attendance and stewardship. These two areas are where the parish is a bit in the wilderness right now. Just based on the numbers, attendance is down roughly 20% at the 10 AM service this past year. It is not that we have lost members - although a couple have moved away from the area. It is, rather, that parishioners are attending church less often. We may claim to be active members, but when attendance dips below once a month, this causes problems.

The problems are spiritual, practical, and relational. On a spiritual side, we need church. Sometimes we come to be comforted - but we always come in order to leave changed - closer to God. Going to church is an intentional setting aside time to be present with God. It's making time for that moment when God touches your soul. It doesn't happen every week, but preparing for it makes it more likely. It's like bird watching - if you go out looking for birds, you're a whole lot more likely to see them than if you're walking around with your head buried in your smart phone. Only the bird we're looking for in church is the Holy Spirit coming down as a dove.

So, spiritually, your soul needs this place.

Relationally, your heart - and the hearts of those around you - need you to be here. This is where you grow closer in relationship with your brothers and sisters. Around the tables for, say, Lenten breakfasts, or at Morning Prayer, or in the choir loft, or in a work party. And certainly at Coffee Hour. This interpersonal relationship lets your fellow parishioners feed you, even as you fill the hearts of those everyone else here. Because what touches your soul on any given Sunday may not be the sermon or even communion. It might be the person in the pew across from you who touches your soul. When you're not here, the light burns a little less brightly.

Which brings me to the practical need of attendance. We have guests come here regularly. They need you. They need your welcoming smile. They need you to show them how to use the prayer book or which hymnal we're using, or how to receive communion. When you're here, you make a difference even to people you've never met before and may never see again. You are the face of Christ to them.

But to be that face, to be the person your friend needs to see, to catch sight of the Spirit at work, you have to be physically present.

I know, I know, I'm preaching to the choir - literally. Only this is an issue of frequency, not so much of dropping out. And that's something we can **all** look at.

In order to make better attendance a focus this year - let's call it our "Year of Attendance" - I am starting with a survey for every adult and teen in the congregation. There is a copy of it in your Annual Report package, and loose copies will be available. For people who are not here - or who rarely attend - I will send them copies as well.

Please, please, please, take a few minutes to fill them out and return them to me - today if possible, but as soon as you can - because this is information we need to determine how to best grow.

I've also included a chart in my report. It is a Proportional Giving chart. I had hoped that the "St. James' is..." campaign would inspire more people to pledge and to increase their giving. The idea was to show how powerful agents of God we are together - if we work together. And that work, because it is in the world, requires a lot of money.

It hasn't worked that way. This year, several pledges actually decreased while several others haven't come in at all. Yes, a few have increased, and I'm truly grateful for that. And several who reduced their pledges have explained their extenuating circumstances which made a reduction necessary. I appreciate that. Sometimes, you just aren't able to give as you would like.

But I have a suspicion that lower pledging is connected with lower attendance, and as surely as the one is a spiritual one, so is the other. When we stop thinking of our possessions as loans by God to use for the spread of God's Kingdom and start instead to think of them as "Mine, mine, mine," then we grow farther away from that Kingdom of Heaven.

The Episcopal Church has a standard it says we should all follow - and to the best of my knowledge very few if any do. That standard is called the tithe - 10% of our income (however you define it). While practically nobody does hit the 10% mark, it is still good to know where you stand. Are you giving to God 1%, 2%, 5%?

That's what the Proportional Giving chart is for - to help you evaluate what you're giving. It doesn't tell you what you should give - but it helps you know what percentage of your income is lifted up to God as pledge.

As surely as I plead with you to be present in church - for your sake and that of others - so do I plead with you to make a pledge if you've never done it before. Pledge cards are here for your convenience. If you HAVE pledged, thank you. But are you able to increase it this year? Please lift that up to God in prayer.

Throughout the year, I intend to explore initiatives that will help people increase their attendance. Yes, we have always wanted that, just as we have always wanted more prayerful giving. But this year, we will give it extra focus. We will make it the Year of Attendance,

Enough with the fretting. In all things, God is good - and even when we are going through some wilderness times, we are still a beacon of light for the community. A couple of weeks ago, I told you how a woman came to find her coat in the church. She had left it there when she stopped in one afternoon to pray. She'd just had a bad day and needed the church - and forgot her coat when she left. We had a great conversation about it.

On Tuesday night when I was at the Vestry meeting, she showed up again, knocked on the door of the meeting and asked if she could see me for a minute. Turns out she had come back to pray and left after the time lock had engaged, so that she couldn't get back in. Only, she had left her cell phone there. We had another brief chat, and it became clear that for her, St. James' is a place of peace, comfort, and the presence of God.

Sometimes we forget how extraordinary this place is. This year, I would like you a simple challenge. Come in - the church is open all day every day till 6:30 PM - and sit down. Just sit here alone and take it in. This is your home. This is where God will touch you in remarkable ways you can not yet imagine - if you make yourself ready to be touched. Thank you.

NOTE: Audio recordings of some sermons are now available on St. James' website, www.stjameshydepark.org Look under "Worship"