

St. James Parish

Epistle



January 2022

Rector's Message

I preached, with some help from WH Auden's Christmas oratorio, *For the Time Being*, his only foray into explicit Christian objects, some Christmases ago. I returned to Auden's masterful work on the coming of Christ, and its meaning for our lives, for reasons unknown to me, during this past Advent. I have been drawn to Auden for many, many years, as he deals with the real matter of lives and the attendant joy and grief that inhabit our existence. *For the Time Being* is not simply an elegiac witness to the power of Christ's meaning but how we so often can miss the point and how violence, greed, thirst for power, and so much more obscure the gift God granted through breaking into the world as the Child in a manger.

The longish season of the Epiphany officially begins on January 6th with the Feast of the Epiphany and carries on until Ash Wednesday, this year on March 2nd. Epiphany hails the revealing of Jesus to non-Jewish persons (Gentiles), embodied in the three kings who come from afar seeking a foretold, prophetic child. Auden's kings are non-believers, they do not pay much attention to the thing that they seek; they are simply on a quest. Yet, when they gaze at the Divine Presence, shining from and in Jesus, they are transformed. But the most wonderful figure in Auden's *For the Time Being* is Simeon, the same prophet we meet in Luke's Gospel, he who has been waiting his whole life to see the Messiah. Jesus is brought to the Temple to be named and Mary to be purified after the birth, as was Jewish custom in the first century. Simeon, nearly blind with age, sees in Mary's arms the Savior of the world and utters the Song of Simeon that we find in our Evening Office. Auden gives him these beautiful words to say:



And because of His visitation, we may no longer desire God as if He were lacking: our redemption is no longer a question of pursuit but of surrender to Him who is always and everywhere present. Therefore, at every moment we pray that, following Him, we may depart from our anxiety into His peace (p. 53).

We celebrate, during the season of Epiphany, with open and upraised hearts, because the Light of the world, the Star of Bethlehem, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, has been revealed in a vulnerable baby. Our Savior entered the world, in the end, as all babies do: with pain, blood, crying, and breath. Jesus would leave this world as all do: taking a final breath. Jesus' last breath, as we diverge from all other lasts, would be the final breath that death would hold over us. Christ, through His vulnerable and broken body, and His perfect love, brought heaven within our reach. God, through Christ, has done this and we, my brothers and sisters, should be glad. Christ came to us in humility and He left this world in humility and by that humility, He broke death open and released us forever. The Light still shines in the darkness and leads us to the manger to see Him in all of His vulnerable, yet unbowed glory. Let us rejoice that God understand us so well, loves us so well, and took us all upon Himself in the Baby in the manger, the Man on the Cross, and the Redeemer through whom we live forever. Blessed Epiphany,

In Christ,
Fr. George+

Warden's Corner

Every year on the 2nd weekend of December between Thanksgiving and Christmas I take time to recharge my batteries by going on retreat.

One of my meditation readings asked me to contemplate this quote and question. From Thomas Macaulay: "The measure of a person's real character is what they would do if he knew they could never be found out."

Remember the tale about the poor, tired shoemaker who cut out his last bit of leather and awoke to find a beautiful pair of shoes sewn for him? Night after night two little elves secretly worked from midnight to dawn sewing shoes to help the old craftsman. Helping the shoemaker without his knowing who they were made the elves very happy, and they danced and sang as they worked away. These elves knew their reward was in the doing of the good deed, not in the discovery of them doing it.

There was also a Hallmark movie from 2003 about the anonymous person giving gifts, money and wishes. A reporter was sent on assignment to find who this person was and write an article exposing the person. The reporter eventually tracked down man responsible for these acts of kindness who worked at an orphanage. After talking and walking a while in that man's shoes, she wrote the article without exposing him. It was just the right thing to do.

What secret gift of kindness can I give today?

Now please join me in thanking Mimi Hostetter, Robyn Shover, and Co-Warden Kim Pereira who are rotating off the Vestry this year. It was a pleasure to serve with each and every one of you. When you see them take time to thank them for their service to St. James.

Wishing everyone a *Merry Christmas*. And while we enjoy the commercial side with Santa, gifts and family gatherings, let's take time to remember the true meaning of Christmas. The birth of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Jim Wilkie, Vestry Co-Warden

Join us for worship on New Year's Day: *Feast of the Holy Name*



On **Saturday, January 1st, at 11 a.m.** in the chapel we will celebrate the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus with Eucharist. Please join us for this day that marks the beginning of our new year, but celebrates Jesus, the Christ. A short reflection will precede the celebration of Holy Communion, with prayers for healing following. Come lay your challenges and joys at the feet of our Savior. This service is in person only and will not be livestreamed.

Church School update

In December we learned about Advent and different Christmas traditions across the world!

For the month of January we will be learning Lessons from the Gospel of John including the First People in Jesus's Ministry, Jesus Shows His Power in Cana and at the Temple, Nicodemus Pays a Secret Visit, and The Woman at the Well Spreads the Word.

We will also be continuing with Deacon Doug and our Children's Choir as we learn new songs and music!

Friendly reminder there will be NO Church School January 2nd due to Christmas school breaks. We will resume Church School January 9, 2022!

As always, please feel free to email me with any questions at amy.siyouthminister@gmail.com !!

Children and Youth MLK Day of Service

Following the service on January 16th, we are inviting all children and youth to join us from 11:30 am–12:30 pm to engage in a service activity to benefit our St. James church. MLK Day of Service is a long-standing tradition to provide service to the community honor of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We'll learn about the day followed by a service activity.



We hope to see you there! As always, please feel free to email me with any questions!
amy.siyouthminister@gmail.com

From the Deacon's bench

New Year's Resolutions

Did you make any New Year's resolutions this year? Have you ever thought about resolving to improve your inner spiritual state?

The great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy once said, "If you are not happy with your life, you can change it in two ways: either improve the conditions in which you live or improve your inner spiritual state. The first is not always possible, but the second is." In any year of our lives, we may face many situations and conditions that we can't avoid. Job loss, illness, car accidents, rejection by loved ones — all are storms that sweep over us from time to time, and we can do little to control them.

Life comes at you fast. Many of you probably remember that tag line from a series of TV commercials. My problem was that I remembered the tag line but forgot the product. A few minutes on the Internet told me that the commercials were for Nationwide (is on your side) insurance. In my favorite of the series, a man pushes a toddler up on a swing. When the swing returns, the toddler has been transformed into a teenager. The startled dad gets knocked over by the change in weight and age. Most of these funny ads carry a serious message. Life does come at you fast. Sometimes your life can change in an instant. Your comfortable world is shattered, and you wonder if it will ever be the same.

Over the skies of North Vietnam, life came fast at Navy Pilot Bill Shoemaker. Shot down and captured, Bill spent 8 years as a POW. During that time Bill's captors put him through more physical and mental torture than would seem bearable. For three years he was kept in solitary confinement, only able to communicate with other prisoners by tapping in code. Abbreviations allowed short messages to have greater meaning. "GBU" meant "God bless you". Sort of an early version of texting. Bill believes that these short messages helped him keep his sanity.

Also, to keep his mind active in the solitude, Bill would imagine the house he wanted to build when he got back home. He laid out elaborate blueprints in his imagination, counting the number of bricks and board feet of lumber he would need to complete his house. Once he had



the whole picture complete, he would change the plans by moving a fireplace, requiring a revision in the drawing. Bill did come home and was able to build his dream house. His belief in the future and support from his fellow prisoners got him through most difficult of ordeals.

It might surprise you to learn that Bill's story was part of a PBS documentary on happiness. His story was used to illustrate resilience, the ability to recover from adversity. Many people like Bill, when asked if they could choose to erase these difficult episodes from their life, say "No". Surviving these terrible situations helped transform their lives. They had a stronger sense of purpose and better appreciation for all that life had to offer. Of course, we know that many veterans have a difficult time adjusting to civilian life and we must do all we can to support them in any way possible. There's always hope that lives can be changed.

Let's recall the quote from Tolstoy: "If you are not happy with your life, you can change it in two ways: either improve the conditions in which you live, or improve your inner spiritual state. The first is not always possible, but the second is." How might we improve our inner spiritual state? We can pray for those who persecute us, love both God and neighbor, and work to improve the world around us. Best of all, the Lord will help us in these efforts, because God's promise is always true: "You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you. Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine (Isaiah 43)."

Doug Engwall, Deacon

Feast of the Epiphany celebration

On Thursday, January 6th at 7 pm, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord. Epiphany commemorates the revelation of Christ to all of God's people, as the three kings from distant lands, not of Israel, come to find the young Jesus. Matthew seems to depict Jesus as older than an infant by the time three Magi from the East come to find Him, the Child of God. Deacon Doug will help us celebrate with songs for the Epiphany and we will share Holy Eucharist and a time for children. Children and families are encouraged to come, invite your neighbors – people of all ages are invited.



Annual Meeting–January 30th, 11 a.m.

An Annual Meeting is something that every Episcopal parish in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA (ECUSA, the Episcopal Church) is required to conduct each year, via the Constitution and Canons of ECUSA. Annual Meetings do not sound like a lot of fun, I know, but they are vital to St. James Parish capably and responsibly managing our fiscal and common life together. Article III and IV of our bylaws, revised in 2013 (with a few important amendments since), require that we have at least ¼ of our voting membership in attendance to have a “quorum.” Our quorum is the minimum number of members necessary for valid voting to take place.

When we held our Annual Meeting last January, we were in dire depths of COVID. This year, for better or worse, we are still dealing with COVID, but, at the same time, have tried to get back to a more normal routine in our parish life, as you likely have in your home lives. We conducted last January’s Annual Meeting both in person and via Zoom and we will again this year. We are still in a time of uncertainty and it would be easy to give ourselves over to fear and despair. As we gather to hear about the common life of our parish and pass our 2022 budget, my prayer is that we all hold onto the constant grace and continual Presence of God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We face some potentially difficult, yet necessary, decisions this year. Even as we begin to experience the arrival of new members and lots of buzz and activity around the parish and in church school, our current budget projections are not what we had hoped. Over the last few years, we have experienced a significant loss of pledge income through the death of members and the departure of others. Our per–household pledge, on a positive note, has gone up significantly over the years. We are very optimistic about the future and see possible new growth on the horizon, but these things take time. In the meantime, we must be responsible about how we spend and allocate our resources. So, your presence at our Annual Meeting and your prayers are very much desired.

Please plan to join us on Sunday, January 30th, following the 10:15 service, for the St. James Parish Annual Meeting. You can come to 10:15 service and stay to participate from the pews or return home and participate on Zoom. Thank you for all that you do to be Christ’s light in and from this place.

Conversations on World Religions & Faith: Buddhism

On Thursday, January 27th, as part of our continuing series on World Religions, The Venerable Shim Bo will present on Buddhist practices and teachings and lead us through some rudimentary practices of



Buddhist meditation. Please register at <https://bit.ly/StJamesBuddhism> so that we can send you a link the day before the event.

The Venerable Shim Bo (Sacred Heart) 심보스님 is a Zen Buddhist Monk/Priest who serves as the Abbot and Spiritual Director of White Lotus Haven Zen of Connecticut, Inc. (WLHZ) In this role, he provides Zen Buddhist teachings that include; meditation instruction, sutra study, spiritual guidance, and support, chanting instruction, and zen liturgy for individuals and groups. Venerable Shim Bo directs the development and cultivation of ongoing WLHZ programming and is the Sangha representative to Buddhist-specific associations and the community at large.

Venerable Shim Bo is a fully trained and sanctioned spiritual director who has been providing individuals spiritual guidance and support since 2002 and is engaged in university chaplaincy, is a teacher/mentor for prisoners, and works with Buddhist Global Relief that works to combat chronic hunger and malnutrition and much more.

Angel Giving Tree THANK YOU!

The spirit of caring and of generosity was so evident at St. James this Advent. This parish fulfilled the Christmas wishes of children and adults at the Friendship Service Center and through Farmington Community Services in record numbers. It was evident that you made purchases with loving hearts. Two cars were filled without an inch to spare to make the deliveries to the two organizations. The gifts were received with delight by their representatives. The St. James 2021 Angel Tree project was a huge success, and your co-chairs send a hearty thank you and a wish for a happy and healthy New Year!

Dona Waugh & Linda Larkin

Faith & Fries return!!

In November, 2019 we launched a new community conversation called *Faith and Fries*. In concert with First Church of Christ, Congregational, Farmington, our aim was to invite our two communities, along with the wider Farmington Valley community, to have conversations around faith and culture, faith and society, and the spiritual life, in general. We really were building some momentum, holding our gatherings at Taprock in Unionville, in growing the *Faith and Fries* community, when COVID came along and ... you can guess the rest. Please join us as we relaunch *Faith and Fries*, on **Monday, January 24th, from 7-8:30 pm**. Folks are invited to gather at Taprock Beer Bar & Refuge, in Unionville for a drink, you can grab some fries or a meal, if you choose, and share our thoughts about how cultural events and ideas intersect faith. Invite your neighbors, friends who don't go to church, whomever you think might enjoy stimulating conversation around culture and faith (or a lack of it).



Looking beyond ourselves: Farmington Food Pantry month!

Every year the St. James family has committed to providing non-perishable food items, household items and cash to the Farmington Food Pantry for the months of January and June. The Farmington Food Pantry and the 200+ local families that it currently serves depend greatly on these donations. All clients are pre-qualified through Farmington Social Services. Each month the pantry provides families with 7,000+ pounds of non-perishable items.



Food and monetary contributions may, of course, be made any time of the year. If you wish to make a monetary contribution, write the check out to *St. James with Farmington Food Pantry* in the note section. Please consider buying double many of the staples that are regulars on your shopping list and bring the duplicates to the narthex and place them in the box labeled **Farmington Food Pantry**. Please be generous.

Teen Bible Study

In December, Teen Bible Study will meet on Sundays, January 9th and January 23rd following the service. All students in high school are invited and encouraged to participate! Bible Study books will be provided with some at home continuation throughout the weeks! We will be working on "Weeks 11-14" in our Bible Study book. As always, please feel free to email me with any questions at amy.sjyouthminister@gmail.com

Prayer Team

From time to time, The Prayer Team shares something of what has been helpful to us, in the hope that you may find it helpful, too ... As we look ahead to a joyful Christmas, but also beyond into a New Year, I came upon this Christmas Prayer.

A Christmas Prayer for Action

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and the princes are home, when the shepherds are back with the flocks,

Then the work of Christmas begins...

To find the lost, to heal the broken in spirit, to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all peoples, to make a little music with the heart ... And to radiate the light of Christ, every day, in every way, in all that we do, and in all that we say...

Then the work of Christmas begins.

Howard Thurman

**St. James Prayer Team ...
Praying together for you**

Always available, always confidential

Pat Clark

Carol Kirkwood

Donna Paye

Minutes of the Vestry of St. James: November 18, 2021

Present via Zoom: Fr. George Roberts, Carol Kirkwood, Kim Pereira, Jim Wilkie, Tom Nelson, Foster White, Kimberly Faubert, Maina Rice, Anna Whilby.

Absent: EJ Ososki, Mimi Hostetter, Robyn Shover

Meeting called to order 7:06pm

Minutes of October 21, 2021, Vestry Meeting

Foster moved to accept the minutes. Tom seconded. Unanimous vote to accept the minutes.

Ministry Reports

Finance/Treasurer's report – October 2021

Foster moved to accept the report. Kim F seconded.

Discussion / Questions

- Budget is on track with minimal variances as of October 2021 – \$13K ahead.
- Jerry Hess is always available to give any explanations on investment questions
- If all stays on target year end, we will be at smaller projected deficit.

Unanimous vote to accept the financial report.

Stewardship Project

- Fr George stated 75-80% usually come in toward end of appeal and some are in after end date.
- Vestry encouraged to get in their pledges soon if not done yet.
- Thanks to Kim F for the beautiful lighted Stewardship tree that is in the church, it has generated lots of positive conversations and comments.

Capital Campaign Feasibility - Improving Building Accessibility

- Fr George, Jim W, John Smith, (Kim P and Neil Clark joined via Zoom) met with Leland Torrence to get his opinion about improving building accessibility. Leland is the brother of long-time parishioner Grier. Leland is the owner of a company that specializes in prolonging a buildings replacement period by extending its usefulness and maximizing its efficiency.
- Jim W reported that it was a very productive meeting as they walked both the exterior and interior and many ideas shared.
- One idea to consider is have a "Fair" to look at needs assessment. Where community

trades people and others who have an interest / investment in the church / Farmington community and its history come together. They would offer their expertise and ideas free of charge, we could provide a lunch. Possibly look at holding it in the Spring. Leland and John Smith have both had experience and are familiar with this type of process in their communities.

- Need to create a 5-10 year to do list. Lots to consider when making changes and often one change leads to another. Best to break things down into projects to get to the whole. Areas of assessing include accessibility, drainage, building, elevator vs lift. What helps the most amount of people?

New Business

Resolution for housing allowance

A motion was made by Kim F for housing allowance resolution as stated below.

"Resolution of the Vestry Meeting of 11/18/21: Whereas the Rev. George Roberts is employed as a minister of the Gospel by St. James Episcopal Church, Farmington, CT, which although providing a residence for him does not provide the full cost of maintaining and furnishing such a residence, the Vestry resolves that of the total compensation of \$103,150 to be paid to the Rev. Roberts during 2022, that \$7,200 be designated a parsonage allowance within the meaning of that term as used in Section 107 of the IRS Code of 1986 as amended, but in any event until further notice the parsonage allowance shall be \$600.00 per month."

Motion seconded by Anna

Unanimous vote to accept the resolution as stated.

Discussion of possible new vestry members

- There will be 3 openings as terms will be up for Mimi, Robyn, and Kim P.
- The 2022 Annual meeting will be held on Sunday January 30, 2022.

Discussion of Vestry Retreat

- Plans to hold a Vestry retreat on Saturday February 5, 2022, 9 am – 3 pm - to be decided if in person or on Zoom once date is closer.

Other Discussion

- Fr George sensitive to checking in with those not seen or heard from in a while and has sent notes. Maina has made some contacts of families and people she has not seen to see how they are doing. Others have done the same. Vestry encouraged to reach out. Fr George brought up it may be time to revisit considering a Pastoral Care Team.
- Fr George and all vestry members feel it is time to put the prayer books and hymnals back in the pew racks. Bibles will also be added to the pew rack. The Bibles can be used during quiet time or to follow service readings.

Discussion of Racial reconciliation, healing, and justice. Grassroots? Pursue available grants.

- There are grants available through the diocese to be used for providing workshops, speakers etc. on racial reconciliation, healing, and justice. Grant process is simple, but you must be in collaboration with other communities in offering workshops, class, speakers etc. Fr George has been meeting with priests of St Albans Simsbury, Trinity Tariffville, and Grace Hartford.

Bishop Laura Visit on Nov 14th with Vestry

- Congratulations to our confirmands: Kevin Ives, Benjamin Martin, Lindsay Hillemeir, and Lila Manton.
- After the service Bishop Laura and Maggie Breen, Region Missionary met with Vestry members where we discussed "A Call for Unity" written in 1963 by 8 Alabama white clergy and the response of Dr Martin L King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail".

Old Business

Audiovisual Equipment for automated streaming

- Think about doing the system ourselves with buying just a new camera and computer – would be less expensive
- Would need 4 or more people trained to run the system to set up on-duty rotation. All would be trained – training not complex.

Foster made a motion to adjourn. Carol seconded. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Adjourned at 9:16pm

Respectfully Submitted

Carol

Carol Kirkwood, Clerk

Sunday Adult Bible Study

Sundays at noon we gather virtually for our Bible study with a set of Letters from Paul: Ephesians and Philippians. The study guides, *For Everyone*, are available in the office with a cost of \$17 for both (1 book for each Letter). Please do not worry if you cannot afford to pay for books; no one will be left out, just let Fr. George know. All are welcome!

Notes from the Parish Office

The 2022 Altar Flower Chart is now in the narthex. Please sign-up for a Sunday when you would like to donate and dedicate the flowers for the day's services. Note that there will be no altar flowers during the Lenten season.

If you pledged for 2022 and requested envelopes, the boxed envelope sets are available in the narthex for you to pick-up. Please contact the parish office if you would like your envelope set dropped off at your home.

Celebrating January Birthdays

Anna Bongiorno
Erik Ososki
Peter Wack
Andrew Martin
Evan Chekas
Eli Johansen
Barbara Preneta
Regan Kelly
Philip Pearson



Your picture in a brochure or on our website?

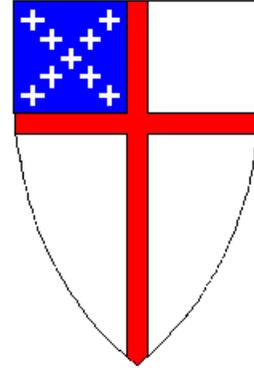
St. James Parish uses candid photos of various church activities on our website and in publications (like this *Epistle*). If you prefer that your photo NOT be displayed, please contact the parish office; we maintain a list of members whose likeness is not to be shared.

St. James Parish

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MISSION STATEMENT:

We welcome all to worship and nurture spiritual growth through faith, grace and reason.
We reach out to those in need as a caring community
and live Christ's teaching to love one another.

STAFF

The Rev. George C. Roberts	<i>Rector</i>
The Rev. Douglas Engwall	<i>Deacon</i>
Amelia (Amy) Steele	<i>Dir. of Children & Youth Ministries</i>
Blake Hansen	<i>Director of Music</i>
Susan Deming	<i>Parish Administrator</i>
Anthony Nauss	<i>Sexton</i>
Laura Vacca	<i>Nursery Supervisor</i>

OFFICERS

Kim Pereira & Jim Wilkie, *Wardens*
EJ Ososki, *Treasurer*
Jerry Hess, *Asst. Treasurer*
Carol Kirkwood, *Parish Clerk*

2021

Mimi Hostetter
Kim Pereira
Robyn Shover

VESTRY 2022

Thomas Nelson
Foster White
James Wilkie

2023

Kim Faubert
Maina Rice
Anna Whilby

St. James Parish

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

