

St. James Parish

Epistle



October 2021

Rector's Message

I was in the last days of my sabbatical, back in September of 2019, and was trying to take as many walks in the woods as possible before coming back to ministry. I was up at the Pinney Loop Trail near Washington, CT, a nearly four-mile hike that “loops” back to where it started, converging for a bit with the Appalachian Trail. There were a few beautiful lookouts over the valley and a river whose name escapes me. The terrain was fairly rugged in places and the two trails were marked with different colored blazes. Noteworthy in my journey was a swarm of gnats that descended upon me, making even Egypt’s plague of bugs look tame. I zigged, apparently, when I should have zagged, and ended up walking about two miles beyond the loop. I would have been fine had I wanted to hike up to Maine. I needed, however, to return to Farmington in time to pick up Olivia from school, so I doubled back, my bounty of gnats still in tow. As I hurried to make it back to the car, I slipped coming down a large, wet boulder, and fell flat on my back, arms out like a beetle caught on a whirlwind. I was, thanks be to God, wearing a backpack or I would have surely been injured worse. I struggled to get up; the gnats refused to help. As I finally rose to my feet, every bit of that fall came surging up. My elbows and hands, having flung themselves instinctively out in my fall, were searing with pain and cut up a good bit. I said a few words that a pastor should have long forgotten (the gnats were amused) and began staggering up the trail to my car and toward home.

I have thought about that day many times over the last two years and laughed just a bit at the memory. I am reminded, as I was on that day, my primary problem was that I was in too much of a hurry. When we are hurrying through life – as I so often am – we miss so much of it, slipping and

sliding from one disaster, blessing, meeting, appointment, etc. to another. Now yes, I could have done without the gnats, but the day was beautiful and serene and, had I been paying attention to the trail markers, I would have stayed on course and noted the blessings of God abounding everywhere. Life tends to change perspective when we slow down and look at the world around us. Yes, there is pain, heartache, death, violence, and we cannot completely escape these things. But God has such plans for us and His presence can be felt in all that we see, do, and dream of. I see Psalm 136, which is a great reminder of God’s greatness and great kindness, revealed to us in the natural world, especially as fall beckons.

*Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for His mercy endures forever.*

*Who spread out the earth upon waters
for His mercy endures forever.*

*Who created great lights,
for his mercy endures forever;*

*The moon and the stars to govern the night,
for His mercy endures forever.*

Psalm 136:4, 6-7, 9

God’s mercy has laid out the world before us and lit a spark inside of us, a light no darkness can extinguish. Can we take our time, love the people in our lives, give of ourselves to a hurting world, and still not miss the moments when God’s blessedness and mercy reveals itself to us? “I am not in a hurry,” I will say to myself until I hear God’s voice echoing back His gentle mercy. Then I will say, “I am God’s own, and He desires my joy. Say it with me ...”

In Christ,
Fr. George+

Warden's Corner

The sun was shining when I returned to St. James for my first in-person church service since the start of the pandemic. It was a perfect day for an outdoor service and celebration, and it was wonderful to see our children back for in-person Sunday school. While the news about the pandemic continues to be bleak, I sat on the lawn feeling the warmth of the sun coupled with a soft breeze and I felt hopeful that soon we will be able to return to the things we love. This has been a long 18 months with so many ups and downs, but St. James has remained a steady presence for many of us throughout these difficult times. As a parent and educator, I live by the school schedule.



As such, September always feels like a perfect month to reflect and recalibrate. As we return to the routines and

rhythms of the school year, it is a wonderful time to think about our relationship with St. James and our community. If you would like to become more involved with the church in any way, we would love to have you join us as we begin the new season of worship here at St. James. Blessings to all and may the sun continue to shine on all of you.

Kim Pereira, Ed.D,
Co-Warden

Church School

Fall is here and we've had some wonderful Sunday School classes already! Our children have worked on their "Giving Tree" and have talked about what they can give to show God's love. For the time being we will be meeting as a whole group in the parish hall to ensure social distancing. For the month of October we will be continuing our work with the *Weaving God's Promises Curriculum* and exploring lessons from the Old Testament including Abraham and Sarah receiving God's promise and Joseph's Story. We will also look at Jacob and his story with meeting Angels.

We will also be hosting a Halloween themed **Double Feature Movie Night!** On Friday October 29th we will be starting at 6 pm and watching a family friendly movie with a wonderful message. Snacks, drinks, and Halloween candy will be provided! Feel free to dress up in your Halloween costume and bring a blanket or chairs!

Even though the Church School year is underway, it is not too late to register! To complete registration for this year, go to <https://bit.ly/2YbpP89> to register your child or follow the QR code!

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



Youth Ministry + Teen Bible Study

Teen Bible Study will have their first meeting immediately following the 10:15 church service on Sunday, October 10th. In October we will also meet on Sunday, October 17th and Sunday, October 31st following the 10:15 service. All students in high school are invited and encouraged to participate! Bible Study books will be provided!

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

St. Francis & the Blessing of the Animals: October 3rd at 3 pm

St. Francis lived a relatively short life, dying at 44 in 1226, possibly of tuberculosis. He was canonized (made a saint) by Pope Gregory the IX, only two years later. The making-a-saint process usually takes centuries, or at least decades, but the swift action gives some idea of the respect that Francis had in his own day. His reputation and folk's devotion to him has only grown over the last 900 years. He established the Order of Friars Minor, a religious order devoted to poverty, chastity and, above all, charity, now called universally, Franciscans. Care for and identification with the poor was a major part of Francis' life and work. Born into a very wealthy family, Francis realigned his priorities in young adulthood when he took off his cloths, laid them near his father's feet, and went off to pray and discern, continually, God's call on his life.

He would travel, preach, and work for the healing of the poor, along with establishing and organizing what would become the fastest growing religious order of its day. He famously received a *stigmata*, bleeding wounds in the same place that the body of Christ was wounded, during crucifixion. He would carry the stigmata for the rest of his life, wounds that may, in part, have expedited his rapid decline and death, along with illness.

His feast day, observed on October 4th (he died on October 3rd), has tended to be commemorated with the blessing of animals. Francis was purported to be a great lover and nurturer of creation, particularly animals. One account describes how one day, while Francis was traveling with some companions, they happened upon a place in the road where birds filled the trees on either side. Francis told his companions to "wait for me while I go to preach to my sisters the birds." (from St. Bonaventure's biography of Francis some 40 years after the saint's death). The birds surrounded him, intrigued by the power of his voice, and not one of them flew away. He is often portrayed with a bird, typically in his hand (see our statue on the Memorial Garden patio).

On Sunday, October 3rd, at 3 pm, we invite folks to gather on the front lawn of St. James Parish, where we will hold our annual *Blessing of the Animals* in honor of Francis and as our own blessing of the created world God has given to us.

The wearing of masks will be required and we will socially distance, even though we are outdoors. Bring your furry friend (or scaly, or whatever, as long as it is not poisonous or aggressive) for a blessing! Gathering in what way we can to honor the world, as we may, is a great privilege and blessing. See you then!!



Halloween Double Feature Movie Night!

On Friday October 29th, we will host a Halloween themed **Double Feature Movie Night!** We will be starting the first movie at 6 pm and the second movie at 8 pm.

Our 6 pm feature will be a family friendly movie! with a wonderful message about praying for the souls who have no one to pray for them, as the movie portrays, and who are in most need of God's mercy.

Our 8 pm feature will be more geared to our teens and adults! But children are invited to stay if families wish!

This is a fun 90's movie that will get you into the Halloween spirit!



Snacks, drinks, and Halloween candy will be provided! Feel free to dress up in your Halloween Costume and bring a blanket or chairs!

From the Deacon's bench

Being Like Mary in a Martha World

You probably remember the gospel story of two sisters, Mary and Martha, when Jesus stops by for dinner.

During Jesus' visit, Martha is working hard in the kitchen, while her sister is conversing with Jesus in the parlor. Martha complains to Jesus, asking him to send Mary into the kitchen to help. Jesus then says to Martha that Mary "has chosen the better part." One way to reflect on the question is to take an either-or approach. Is it Better to be a Mary or a Martha?

Every summer, when my family gathers in northern Michigan, we depend on our very own Martha to organize our reunion. She tells us what food to bring and when to arrive. Without her, we would show up at different times all bearing beer, bratwurst and baked beans. Sometimes I feel a little rebellious and bring watermelon rather than the requested chips. Sometimes we fail to clean up after ourselves and Martha gets miffed. But the party would not happen without our Martha and I'm very thankful she's willing to take on this important role.

Jesus says Mary is the model. But Martha is the reality. There's no question we live in a Martha world. What's at issue is how we can take time to be like Mary in our Martha world.

For starters, we might stop talking for a second and listen. We tend to be terrible listeners. My mother-in-law had a cartoon on her refrigerator, perhaps as a reminder to herself. Two men are watching their wives in animated conversation. One man says to the other, "She's not listening. She's just waiting." In many conversations, we find ourselves just looking for an opening to insert our opinion. The activist in each of us prompts us to speak up, to express ourselves, to make our demands. Jesus calls us to stop talking. Stop, sit quietly, and listen to what Jesus is saying. Maybe the words we speak would be wiser if we listened a little more to what Jesus is trying to say to us.

Better to be being than doing. A person who has learned how to be a human being, will have no trouble working out how to be a human doing. During my chaplaincy training, I found it very difficult to be in a patient's room without doing something. I had a routine that included an

introduction, some inquiry into the patient's history, and a generic prayer. It took me months to learn the ministry of being. Now my volunteer ministry is with older adults and every month some of them disappear. The staff rarely tells me whether a resident has been transferred or gone to be with the Lord. Perhaps there are concerns about privacy, but I wish the community was more open about these departures, earthly or otherwise.

We Christians mourn our loved ones because we will miss their presence in our lives, but we mourn with a hope of a larger life beyond this one.

The book of Revelation describes a new earth lighted not by the sun, but by the eternal presence of God and the Lamb, which eliminates light. That's figurative language, perhaps, but it is communicating something about the presence of God. We could call that new world the home of God, as Revelation does. But according to Revelation, what makes it the home of God is not the absence of people but the presence of them. The writer of Revelation says, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them". God is our eternal home and we need not fear anything that will separate us from the love of God.

Doug Engwall, Deacon



Music Notes

Igor Stravinsky said once in reference to his work on the Rite of Spring, "I am the vessel through which Le Sacre passed." I am often reminded of this quote as I continually reconcile the personal, extra-personal, and spiritual facets of making music. Music, unlike most art forms, exists fully formed and realized by the composer. One of the musician's goals is to transform notes on the page into sounds that capture the intentions of the composer. What can happen between that process is that music can become full of "self." It's difficult to discern what are the composer's intentions and how your own tastes and habits shape what you do. It's a balancing act that can easily tip too far in either direction. Whenever I struggle with that, I turn to Stravinsky's quote, and remind myself that there are forces in play that move beyond self. Music is a gift we have been given, and when we perform it, we have to



continue the legacy of that gift. So few things in life have the ability to grab our souls like music, and to move us as individuals and a community. This to me is what grounds me in God's presence.

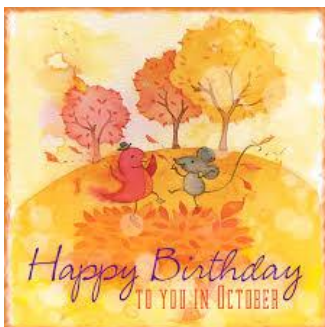
When music becomes more than pleasing one's self, it becomes an act of love that resonates with an entire community. It becomes a part of our collective, and can focus our attention. Music passes through so many barriers before it roots itself into our souls, but if God is allowed in at each step, we cannot help but be moved.

Blake Hansen
Director Of Music

Celebrating October birthdays!

John Reeve
Amy Steele
Ben Martin
Gigia Ingimarsdottir
Olivia Roberts
Beverly Poggio
Babs Findlay
Joe Lansing
Pat Hadlow
Carolyn Ives
Colt Propiescus
Michael Slusarz
Erwin Schramma
Emma Buth

Grier Torrence
David Faubert
Andrea Harris
Amelia Tuttle
Preston Lathrop



Adult Christian Formation 2021-2022

We have an exciting Adult Formation program year planned that has us host a series called ***Conversations on World Religions and Faith: A beginning***. On **Tuesday, October 26th at 6:30**, we will have an overview of this year's Adult Education program at St James which will be an in-depth look at some of the major religions that are followed by people in the United States and around the world. This first session is intended to be background for the religions that will be discussed in depth by the various speakers who will join us over the next six months. Additionally, the overview will be informed by the current scholarship on what is now more often being called InterReligious Studies. Our time together will be a prelude to what our exciting speakers will cover over the course of the 2021-2022 program year.



Mimi Hostetter will get us started with an overview of the religious traditions we plan to explore in the coming months. Our first conversation, on **Tuesday, December 7th from 6:30-8 pm**, will be on Judaism with a presentation and Q & A with Rabbi Michael Pincus of Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford.

Subsequent conversations will cover Islam, Buddhism, and more by practitioners of the specific faith being discussed. All are free and open to all. **The conversations held in 2021 will be via Zoom** with a re-evaluation as we move into the winter and spring of 2022. We understand that 90 minutes is only enough to scratch the surface of each of the traditions discussed, but felt it was an important step to learn more about the faiths that have, in ways great and small, touched our own Christian faith.

Prayer Team

From time to time, the Prayer Teams shares some of what has been helpful to us, in the hope that you might find it helpful too.



A prayer for those who have suffered loss ...

For all those who woke this morning
to the loneliness of bereavement...
the empty bed or chair,
an unaccustomed quietness,
a life now incomplete...
may they know your presence
in the quietness of the day,
and through the love of friends
who offer their condolence.

And in the darker moments
may they reach out to hold your hand
and feel the warmth of the One
who had already passed from death to life
to welcome others into His kingdom.

Unknown

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

Always available, always confidential

Pat Clark
Carol Kirkwood
Donna Paye

Your photo in print 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.

What do we love about St. James

As part of our *Annual Appeal for Stewardship*, we are doing a fun project we hope everyone will want to participate in, young or old and everywhere in between. You can participate as a family or an individual, a couple, whatever pleases you. **We would love for everyone to put together a 30 second video, telling the camera (cell phone is fine!) what you love about St. James.** Ask your children, respond as a family, but we want to get as wide a participation as possible AND we want everyone to have fun. Our Director of Children and Youth Ministries Amy Steele will edit and put these videos together in a longer video for the ingathering in December, at the end of the Appeal. But all during the Appeal we plan to share as many of these videos as we can on Facebook, on our website, and so on, so if you send it a video, you will need to be comfortable sharing it. Send your videos to Amy at amy.sjyouthminister@gmail.com and if you have questions, email Amy or Fr. George at rector.st.james@sbcglobal.net. We are so looking forward to seeing and hearing your videos for our **Love St. James Project** 😊.



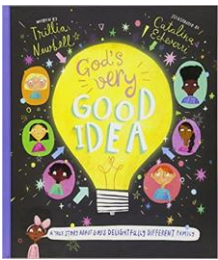
FSC re-opens for volunteers

Friendship Service Center is open for volunteers who wish to help out in the Soup Kitchen. **Our day is now the 3rd Tuesday of each month.** FSC recommends that only those who are completely vaccinated volunteer. Three to four volunteers are needed each month. Plan to arrive 9:15–9:30 am; the shift ends at 1 pm. A sign up sheet is posted in the Narthex. A new procedure for volunteers: park in the lot behind the Soup Kitchen and enter through the 241 Arch Street door; your temperature will be taken prior to entering the kitchen. Thank you for helping with this mission project. Contact Linda Larkin with questions.

Touching on equity, race, reconciliation, & healing

Mike Whilby is a member of our church, along with his mom, Anna, and he has brought to us a wealth of energy around issues of inequality, race, disability, and mass incarceration. Mike is a disabilities advocate for the state of CT, so he has a great deal of passion. He has been sharing short reflections on books selected to highlight basic areas where equality and fairness are a challenge but looking at it from a “God’s eye view,” if you will, which is where these books lay their foundations.”

God's Very Good Idea by Trillia Newbell
Age levels: 3–6 years old



The author of this book, Trillia Newbell, dives into a more descriptive manner of the different ethnic and diverse backgrounds of all people that make up this world. She expresses very clearly that God

created all of us in his own image. In doing so, God is displaying to us that we are a part of his family and what a family it is! By using an array of colorful illustrations, Trillia is able to show kids the uniqueness that each one of them brings to this world and that everyone around us can and should work harder on loving one another as well as God.

Mike Whilby

Movements in Faith

We’ve resumed the once monthly (4th Sunday of every month) worship celebration called *Movements in Faith*. *Movements in Faith* was developed last year, but went on hiatus due to COVID-19. *Movements* is a worshipful time intended to serve people with special needs and their families, playing simple, but fun and worshipful music, playing a game to open, hearing a reading from scripture, and all can join in with special instruments that anyone can use! All are welcome and



invited, no matter where you are on your spiritual journey, no matter your need, no matter your tradition. We will have our service outside on the front lawn. Many families with a member who has special needs have felt unwelcome in church settings in the past. Again, all are welcome. Bring your own lawn chairs, if you would like, but chairs will be available for all. **Our next *Movements in Faith* gathering is Sunday, October 24th at 2 pm.**



St. James Parish

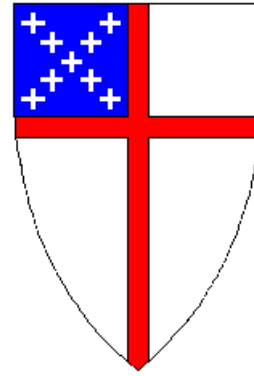
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MISSION STATEMENT:

*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		OFFICERS		
The Rev. George C. Roberts	<i>Rector</i>	Kim Pereira & Jim Wilkie, <i>Wardens</i>		
The Rev. Doug Engwall	<i>Deacon</i>	EJ Ososki, <i>Treasurer</i>		
Amelia (Amy) Steele		Jerry Hess, <i>Asst. Treasurer</i>		
	<i>Dir. of Children & Youth Ministries</i>	Carol Kirkwood, <i>Parish Clerk</i>		
Blake Hansen	<i>Director of Music</i>	2021	VESTRY	
Susan Deming	<i>Parish Administrator</i>	Mimi Hostetter	2022	
Anthony Nauss	<i>Sexton</i>	Kim Pereira	Thomas Nelson	2023
Laura Vacca	<i>Nursery Supervisor</i>	Robyn Shover	Foster White	Kim Faubert
			James Wilkie	Maina Rice
				Anna Whilby

St. James Parish

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