

St. James Parish

Epistle



September 2021

Rector's Message

Change, whimsy, and God's mercy

Recently our little girl (she'll be 18 in about six weeks) walked down the steps of the rectory, got in a car (still ours, I think), and drove off for the first day of her last year of high school! Her completion of high school promises radical change for her mother and me: a house without the constant presence of our high-spirited gal, her uproarious laughter, wise-cracking sarcasm, and the ease with which we love her, as she prepares to head off for college and other adventures. I can imagine days of sobbing (her mother might cry, too) and shuffling about, not knowing what to do with myself. We have been down this road with our two oldest children, of course, but the youngest and final Roberts child to leave our nest promises as-yet-to-be experienced change for us and, lest I forget, for Olivia, too. My wife posted a side-by-side picture on Facebook this morning of Olivia on her first day of school in kindergarten and the other taken on the first day of her senior year. The change cannot be denied! And though she has the same adorable, little pixy dust face she has matured – changed - and taken on the shape of a young woman who is beautiful and hopeful. I'm guessing that changes are afoot in your house, too, of varying types and degrees of intensity. I am mindful that life is so full of change, nearly constant, and we often curse it, dread it, wrestle with and refuse to accept it. Yet, no matter what we do, there change is, staring us in the face, refusing to be denied and, often, bringing new beginnings and opportunities that will enrich our lives in ways we never could have fully expected.

As we spent our wonderful week at the beach this summer, I went through the ritual of looking for broken pieces of shell on the beach: beautiful but

broken, no longer complete, still becoming what God intended for them to be. What each shell fragment had in common was that they had been smoothed out by years of tumbling and churning about in the relentless and powerful sea. The changes that we go through in life may seem negative and hard, as oftentimes they are. The events that shape our lives are like the powerful pounding of the sea: they batter us and break us but, ultimately, they form us – with God's help – into a person of great beauty and purpose. God's great mercy and love, as the old hymn goes, is as wide, wonderful, deep and unknowable as the great ocean He created by His own design. All things God made change, whereas the mercy and love of God, mysterious and blessed, never changes. Isn't that funny? All things the Maker made change and fluctuate, live and die and yet the Holy One never changes, fades, or rests. We are held, in all the tempests and changes of our lives, challenging though they may be, by the God of heaven and earth, sea and sky, who blesses the passages of life. Just as the small, earthbound angel grows into a woman or man of independence, possibility, and great worth in God's kingdom, all change promises new pathways that with patience and time, God will reveal.

*There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the
wideness of the sea...*

*For the love of God is broader than
the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal is
most wonderfully kind.*

Frederick William Faber, Hymnal 1982, #469

In Christ,
Fr. George+

Warden's Corner

In Prayer we ask God for help and guidance.
During Meditation we listen for the answers.

Through Prayer and Meditation I've learned to become sensitive to the quiet as well as the clamorous pulls on our energy, our time, our emotions. I am becoming connected – to myself, God, the Universe and others and in a way I have never been before. To deny these pulls is to deny the connections.

That quiet tug on our consciousness may be telling us what we need to do. We think about an old friend and contemplate calling them, but we don't. Why would I do that now? But maybe that friend is calling out to us. Or we have a problem we haven't known how to solve. That situation begins to work on us, bothering us, interrupting our day. Maybe our instincts are telling us it's time to do something about it. God talks to us through our consciences, our minds, our hearts and through other people.

Since I started a daily morning prayer and meditation ritual, my life has become more peaceful. I'm learning to feel that tug or push that comes from God.

My thoughts and actions are redirected.

One way we know it is time to do something not on the calendar, clock or checklist is to pay attention to the quiet pulls on our energy and our moral compasses. Being conscious of these impulses, then trusting ourselves to naturally know what to do and when to do it puts us in harmony with God, the universe and our soul.

Blessings,
Jim Wilkie, Co-Warden

Change in Amy's status

Amy Steele has been our Youth Minister since March of 2018. Amy has led a class through the Confirmation process (COVID has delayed the actual Confirmation), helped us soldier through COVID with classes and contact with our young people, and has been a great boost to us in many ways. As we prepare to enter into a new program year, however, Amy and I realize that, beyond this year, we will have a large concentration of our active youth and children in the younger grades and not nearly as many in high school. We are, reflecting the changing youth dynamics at St. James, therefore changing Amy's title to Director of Children and Family Ministries, effective immediately. Amy will be responsible for recruiting teachers, engaging with our families and children, planning fun events for our youth of all ages, teaching, and providing support and Bible study for our current high school aged youth. Please connect with Amy if you have a child aged zero to senior in high school. We want to help support families, especially now, when COVID continues to make things difficult. I think everyone will find a receptive ear with Amy, someone willing to be creative in how we get our children and youth excited about church and learning more about Jesus' great love for us.



Celebration Sunday, September 12th!!

All are welcome and encouraged to join us after the 10:15 service on Sunday, September 12th, as we Celebrate the beginning of a new church school year and moving back to our traditional two services at 8 am and 10:15 am. We will serve lunch in the parish hall, but into to-go boxes, so that folks can take lunch home or eat them here. We will provide hamburgers and hotdogs, chips, drinks, and sides. **We are asking for volunteers to help serve,** make to-go boxes for folks not comfortable coming inside the parish hall, and to help keep this process safe and efficient.

We also are asking for contributions of sides (potato salad, baked beans, macaroni salad). Please let Robyn Shover know if you can contribute and we are asking for you to make a tray (or container) full, so that we will have a lot to share.

Church School

Welcome back St. James to another church school year! There is so much in the Church School 2021–2022 year to look forward to and we are excited to be back together again. We are looking forward to hosting K-5th grade events every other month (more to come on this) and continuing our work with the *Weaving God's Promises* curriculum. I am delighted to bring back more in-person events as we are comfortable and holding church school in person. We are still working out the final details, but are eager to get back together again.

The first day of Church School will be **September 12th** at 10 am. Please arrive 30 minutes or so before the start of Church School to complete registration for this year, go to <https://bit.ly/2YbpP89> to register your child, or follow the QR code!



I am so thrilled to be taking on my new role as Director of Children and Youth Ministries and working with our youngest parishioners as they grow closer to god! Our theme this year is "Tree"mendous Faith and we will spend the year learning how we can grow in God's word.

Blessings on a new church school year and as always please feel free to email me with any questions (amy.sjyouthminister@gmail.com)!

Adult Christian Formation 2021-2022

Dear friends, we are on the precipice of a new program year and we thought it might be interesting to take a look at World Religions over the course of this year. Exact dates are still being formulated, but we will have an overview in October of the religious traditions we will cover. In December, Rabbi Michael Pincus, Congregation of Beth Israel in W. Hartford, will join us to discuss Judaism. Over the course of this program year we will have the opportunity to hear more about Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and possibly a few traditions that are sometimes considered part of the Christian tradition, but are very different than what we may know. More to come!!

Youth Ministry + Teen Bible Study

Welcome back St. James Youth to another church school year! There is so much in Church School 2021–2022 to look forward to and we are excited to be back together again. This year the Youth Ministry will look a little different than years past. We will hold traditional Church School on Sunday mornings for our middle school aged students grades 5–8 and continue our work with the *Weaving God's Promises* curriculum.

The first day of Church School will be **September 12th** at 10 am. Please arrive 30 minutes or so before the start of Church School to complete registration for this year, go to <https://bit.ly/2YbpP89> to register your youth, or follow the QR code!



However, we are excited to announce we will be doing a Teen Bible Study! This is a new learning opportunity for our high schoolers– many of whom have gone through the confirmation process and are ready to get a deeper understanding of scripture and how it relates to their everyday lives. In lieu of traditional Church School, we will gather twice a month immediately after the service to explore the Bible, gain deeper understanding of the Lord's word, and grow deeper in faith. More information regarding the calendar and curriculum will be coming soon, but families and high schoolers are encouraged to register online or in-person on September 12th.

We will revive our Youth events every other month (more to come on this). I am delighted to bring back more in-person events as we are comfortable and holding church school in person.

Blessings on a new church school year and as always, please feel free to email me with any questions at amy.sjyouthminister@gmail.com!



From the Deacon's bench

Welcoming Good Spirits

As we learn about the ministry of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark, we hear about Jesus' first miracle, the healing of the daemonic, a man possessed by a spirit. As we'd expect, the spirit was unclean. By the time the New Testament was written, all the spirits were thought to be evil, even satanic. But in many cultures, past and present, you could also be possessed by a good spirit. I imagine that's why we sometimes say that a happy person is "in good spirits". The Greeks used the word *eudaemonic* to describe a person who was living a good and virtuous life. Perhaps *possessed* is not bad in itself. Rather it's the kind of spirit that possesses you. So how do you encourage an in-dwelling of good spirits, healing the fractured soul, finding serenity? Certainly, the choices you make in your life have a direct impact on your sense of well-being. Many people strive to live out the philosophy found in the Serenity Prayer by the Protestant theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. Here's the version he is said to have preferred: *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.*

The struggle for me in living out this prayer has been the wisdom to know the difference. When facing a challenge in life, it's not so easy to determine whether change is possible. Conventional wisdom often advises us to leave well enough alone. Many times we believe the stereotypes we see on the evening news and assume that a certain group is beyond help, unreachable. It takes a special kind of courage to believe that change is possible when conventional wisdom says that it is not.

The Freedom Writers Project is a wonderful example of this kind of courage. Perhaps you've seen the 2007 movie based on this true story of courage in the face of adversity. In the Fall semester, a new teacher entered Room 203 at Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California. Erin Gruwell had been warned that her new students were "unteachable, at-risk" teenagers. The class was a diverse mix of African American, Latino, Asian, and Caucasian students, many of whom had grown up in rough neighborhoods in Long Beach.

In the first few weeks of class, the students made bets about how long their new teacher would last.

Then a classroom event changed their lives forever. Erin Gruwell intercepted a cartoon that was circulating through the room. The drawing was a racial caricature of an African American boy in the class. When Gruwell compared the cartoon to Nazi caricatures of Jews during the Holocaust, she was met with puzzled looks. She realized that her students had never heard of the Holocaust. But they knew all too well the results of racial hatred in their own communities. Almost all of them had been victims of gang violence, lifting their shirts to show their scars. Gruwell took advantage of the powerful energy she'd sparked in these kids that were thought to be unreachable.

By creating a classroom that valued and promoted diversity, she transformed her students' lives. She encouraged them to rethink rigid beliefs about themselves and others, to reconsider daily decisions, and to re-chart their futures. Her unreachable students became critical thinkers, aspiring college students, and citizens for change. They even dubbed themselves the "Freedom Writers" – in homage to the Civil Rights activists the "Freedom Riders" – and published a book.

From the moment they named themselves the "Freedom Writers," the students of Room 203 changed from a group of apathetic, frustrated students to a closely knit, motivated family. Through all of this, Gruwell fought the conventional wisdom that these students were beyond help. Somehow she realized that she could encourage these children to believe that their lives could change when even they doubted that a new life was possible. She treated her new students with compassion rather than suspicion, enabling a transformation. The spirit of racial hatred and distrust was replaced with a spirit of love and cooperation.

As Jesus' healing hands in the world today, it is the role of the church to heal people who feel torn to pieces. The church must urge us to see ourselves anew, to see ourselves as God sees us. Healing occurs when we can see what God intended in us, the gifts God has given us, and the beauty God sees in us. Instead of believing our lives will never change, let us hear the boast of the apostle Paul that in Christ we are a "new creation;" the "old has passed away;" behold, "everything has become new". The old, unclean spirits have been driven out and a new spirit, the holy spirit, dwells within us.

Doug Engwall, Deacon

Celebrating September birthdays!

Sarah Alligood
Graham Healy
Brenden Wahl
Joy Reeve
Nathan Tuttle
Joseph Ososki
Jordan Howe
Jay Hostetter
Charlotte Vacca
Seth Howe
Mason Lucas
Armen Slusarz
Judy Drake
Pat Clark
Noah Howe

Mia Grieco
Jane Begin
Ben Thomas
Brad Ives



Elle Lansing
Ben Roach
Bob Bogino

Walk Against Hunger 2021!

The Walk Against Hunger is happening onsite again this year, with a virtual possibility, too. Foodshare is the sponsor of the walk and we traditionally have designated our funds to go to our ministry partner, The Friendship Service Center. We are seeking folks who would like to walk with Fr. George and other members on Saturday, September 18th, with registration beginning at 8 am and stepping off at 10 am both virtually and at Dunkin' Donuts Park, 1214 Main St, Hartford, CT 06103 – home of the Hartford Yard Goats. We can meet at the church and caravan over or folks can meet us at the Park. We are waiting for team registration information so that you will then know where to register; we

will get that info out as soon as possible. Please email (rector.st.james@sbcglobal.net) or call Fr. George if you are interested in walking or donating to the walk. **To register and join our team (to walk and/or to**

contribute) please click here

<http://site.foodshare.org/site/PageServer?pagename=index> . After you get to the site, click on

Register, then find our Team (the St. James Heelers), and follow the directions from there.

Very easy to donate there, too! Blessings and hope to see you on Saturday the 18th.

Music at St. James

Summer at St. James was filled with music! We were happy to host this year the 2nd Annual Virtuosi Summer Institute at St. James. For almost a month, the corridors of our church resonated with young music makers playing instruments and singing. This program also organized concerts featuring these young musicians and area professionals, with a variety of performances ranging from sacred cantatas to Bossa Nova and jazz. By continuing this wonderful collaboration, we are able to bring more musicians into our musical family at St. James. Be sure to check out this wonderful program next summer! Next year we will be hosting the Virtuosi Music Academy and the Chopin Foundation with multiple programs spread throughout the year, which will bring young musicians from Farmington and around the world to our community.

Because there is now growing concern about the new Covid variants, we are continuing to find ways to adapt our music-making, so we can remain as safe as possible. We have every intention of coming back to live choral singing this year. In my work at the University of Hartford and CCSU, the choirs I work with have been able to safely rehearse for an entire year without incident. I'm hoping to use what I have learned in my university work and rely on the efficacy of the vaccine to come back to in-person rehearsals and worship with the choir. Making music together has been something that everyone is sorely missing. We look forward to being together again and sharing love and faith in God through music!



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.

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, September 26th at 2 pm.**



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.

This is a quote, from Catholic priest and theologian, Henri Nouwen, on the centrality of prayer:

If we don't have a hidden life with God, ... our public life for God cannot bear fruit ...

The faithful discipline of prayer reveals to you that you are the blessed one ... and gives you the power to bless others

St. James Prayer Team ...
Praying together for you
Always available, always confidential

Pat Clark
Carol Kirkwood
Donna Paye

Back to School Movie Night

On Friday, September 10th, we will have *Back to School Movie Night* with a wonderful Pixar movie, Please arrive by 7:30, as we will begin the movie at that time. Popcorn and drinks are provided, bring your blankets, lawn chairs, bug spray, and any other snacks you may wish to have. Contact the parish office for details on the film!



Friendship Service Center re-opens for volunteers

Friendship Service Center is open for volunteers who wish to help out in the Soup Kitchen. **Our day has been changed to the third Tuesday of each month.** FSC recommends that only those who have received both their 1st and 2nd vaccines volunteer. Three to four volunteers are needed each month. You should plan to arrive 9:15–9:30 am; the shift ends at 1 pm. A sign up sheet is



posted in the Narthex. The new procedure for volunteers is to park in the lot behind the Soup Kitchen and enter through the 241 Arch Street door where your temperature will be taken prior to entering the kitchen.

Thank you for helping with this mission project. Please contact Linda Larkin with questions.

Minutes of the Vestry of St. James: June 17, 2021

Present via Zoom: Fr. George Roberts, EJ Ososki, Jim Wilkie, Mimi Hostetter, Tom Nelson, Foster White, Kimberly Faubert, Anna Whilby

Absent: Kim Pereira, Carol Kirkwood, Robyn Shover, Maina Rice

Meeting called to Order 7:14 PM

Minutes of May 20, 2021

Motion to Accept as circulated Foster White, Second Mimi Hostetter; Passed without objection.

Finance/Treasurers Report

Motion to accept EJ's May 31, 2021, Finance Report; Mimi Hostetter, second Jim Wilke, Passed without objection.

Ministry Reports:

St James Sign: Completed, changeable service times capability added to sign, landscaping under sign accomplished by volunteer effort.

Feasibility update: Fr. George reported we are still awaiting additional cost estimates for interior work to permit handicap accessibility. In addition, we received a very rough estimate, from Loureiro Engineering Associates in Plainville, for a general cost estimate for exterior renovations to permit a ramp for handicap access, of \$5,000. A comprehensive discussion followed focused on; if we should create two tasks; one concentrating on interior renovations, and the other on exterior work to provide better exterior handicap access. It was a consensus that we should consider gaining cost estimates for interior renovations then cost proposals for exterior work. It was further agreed to seek at least two more additional rough estimates to attain cost proposals for exterior work. It was hoped that we could have these estimates by our September Vestry meeting and that we would have sufficient cost proposals for both interior renovations and exterior renovations to present to the Parish at our Annual Meeting.

Stewardship-Project resource: Fr. George reviewed the Stewardship Calendar for 2021-2022 using Project Resource.

New Business:

Celebration Sunday: This year the event will take place on September 12, 2021. Fr. George expressed the desire for this to be an in-person picnic. Discussion followed relating to the

possibility of a picnic event if COVID restrictions were still in place. Would families feel comfortable attending a traditional style picnic? A suggestion was made that "Food Trucks" may provide a viable solution for this issue. Jim and Kim volunteered to obtain information on the cost and availability of "Food Trucks" for this event.

Service Times on and after September 12, 2021. A discussion followed pertaining to re-starting two services on this date: 8 am and 10:15 am. It was determined that a quick electronic survey should be done to ascertain the needs and desires of Parish members. The results will assist in making a good decision.

Coffee Hours: Fr. George stated that it would be appropriate for Coffee Hour to begin after the 10:15 service on and after September 12th. Changes need to be made; need more people to volunteer for this function. One group to prepare and serve coffee, and another rota for people to provide snacks? "Re-imagine" Coffee Hour as it is needed to bring the congregation back together and need to include families with children in our planning.

Old Business

Evangelism: Who we are? Who might we be? Fr. George thanked those Vestry members who responded to the statements reviewed at our May Vestry meeting. A discussion followed relating to the nature of these expressions. Some of the concepts expressed were that St. James is and should be God Centered and Christ Centered. We will need to reach outside our "comfort zones", We will have to be able to be willing to accept change. Our discussion concluded with the belief that we will need a "working Group" to re-examine and re-create, if necessary, both our Vision and Mission Statement.

Adjournment: 8:55 PM, Foster White made a motion to Adjourn, seconded by Mimi Hostetter motion carried without objection.

Minutes of this meeting taken by Foster White.

Respectfully submitted

Carol

Carol Kirkwood, Clerk

St. James Parish

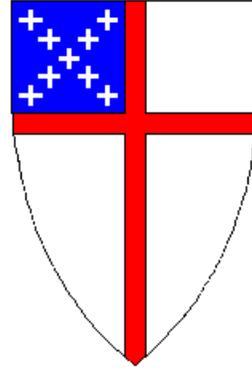
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MISSION STATEMENT:

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

St. James Parish

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