

St. James Parish

Epistle



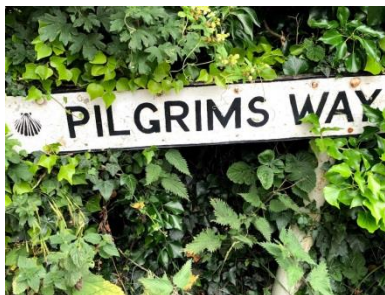
September 2020

Rector's Message

*Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
whose heart is set on pilgrimage.*

Psalm 84:5, NKJV

A year ago I returned from truly the most awesome, fun, moving, and spiritually-driven trip that I had ever been on: my sabbatical journey to the United Kingdom which, over a six week period, took me with my wife, and then our daughters, and then alone, to London, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Oxford, Guildford, , Canterbury, Bath, Wales, Cambridge, Lincoln, York, Durham, and Lindisfarne. Pilgrimage is something that we have discussed fairly freely around here for a few years, but I thought it would be good for us to circle back around, after all that has happened in the last year, nay the last five or so months, and see where we are. Psalm 84, verse five is embedded in a Psalm that speaks a lot about Zion, the holy Mount set in the holiest city for Christians and Jews alike, and is sacred for Muslims, too, and how all the faithful are bound there. Most Christians will never see Jerusalem but, lucky for us, that is not our destination (wonderful as seeing the Holy City would be). Jesus promised the Samaritan woman at the well, “the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship Him” (John 4:23). We are called into relationship with Jesus who shows us the truth of God along the way and our pilgrim path is the one that follows, wheresoever it may lead us.



I recently was asked to become a writer for the publication *Grow Christians*, a blog that commemorates the saints and reflects on our spiritual lives in these modern times. My first assignment was on St. Bartholomew whose feast day is August 24th (go find it, if you are so inclined, at www.growchristians.org). I was struck by the fact that we know almost nothing about Bartholomew, one of Jesus' disciples, and yet, there he is, named as a follower of Jesus from the very beginning. The people who came into contact with Jesus and chose to follow Him were not unlike us: they had families, they had occupations, flaws (some of those are well-documented), commitments, and they were all familiar with the same religious traditions. Jesus was inviting them to look at the world through a lens colored, at once by the witness of Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) but, at the same time, a lens that went well beyond what they knew, in rather dramatic ways. So, the path that Jesus called His disciples on meant their lives would go through substantial changes, something that is very hard for nearly all of us. Change means upsetting the balance of our lives in some way, great or small. We have, in the last six months, had to change the way we interact with most folks outside of our house or work; we have had to adjust to a life without public gatherings, for the most part, few sporting activities, etc., etc. And we have seen, during the same time, a huge protest movement asking for systemic

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[Rector's Message continued]

change in the ways that most of our institutions engage people of color, on top of all the change already wrought by COVID-19.

As hard as it all has been, it may be of some help and comfort to understand we are on a journey and have been called into spiritual travel with the Lord of our lives. Change will always be a part of our encounter with God in Christ and, frankly, we must expect to be changed as we begin to know God more fully. We are in a scary time and change has come, in some ways, much too quickly. But, if we follow the witness of Christ, the words of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, and the love of Him who saved us, then, my dear ones, we can manage the crises and crosses that we are currently bearing. We are on a journey and only one thing is certain: Christ goes before us and with us.

In Christ,
Fr. George+

Would you like to sit in Bethlehem or on Mt Hermon?

A few weeks ago, a parishioner shared a link/meme with me that started me thinking. The link was assigning Biblical names to the places people were NOT supposed to sit, as part of social distancing for a Presbyterian church. I thought we could have some fun with a little different twist. From now until Sunday, September 13th we are going to play a little game. We have 25 pews that we can use within our social distancing protocols. **Between now and September 13th we want you and your family to find places in the Bible that you think it would be fun for us to use to identify which pews are available.** An example could be any physical place in the Old or New Testament. For example, Mt. Hermon, Mt. Sinai, Bethany ... etc.

Each family can submit two entries (only one will be used, but two will help with possible duplications) until we get to 25 places, one for each open pew. Have a little extra fun and, in a few words, say what makes this place famous. For example, Mt. Sinai: Moses picked up a couple of tablets here or Bethany, home to Martha, Mary and

... who? So, let's have some fun with this!!! You can send these in to Sue Deming in the office (st.james.church@sbcglobal.net) or email Fr. George at rector.st.james@sbcglobal.net . Now we only have 3 weeks, so spend some time as a family with your Bible, finding an out-of-the-way place in scripture to send us!

Fr. George +

Warden's Corner

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

When I first wrote about COVID-19 back in March, I never expected to still have it be the focus of my update for September. Yet, here we are and we are all learning new ways to live our lives. These are difficult times, but I hope your faith provides you with some solace. For me, my work with the discipleship team has been transformative, as it has brought me closer to my faith and the St. James community. Recently, our discussions focused on seeing God in nature, and we had the chance to share how the pandemic has encouraged many of us spend much more time outdoors. While these times are very trying, I hope that you can also find some good in the ways things have changed in your life.

Father George, Blake, Amy, Sue, Kelly and many others have been working tirelessly to bring back in-person worship and to keep the spirit of St. James alive for those of us who have not been able to come back in person. Thanks to all of you for your continued support of our wonderful church during these unprecedented times. Please know that the church is here for you if you need anything. God bless and I hope we can all be back together soon.

Blessings,
Kim Pereira, Co-Warden

Church School update

Weaving God's Promises for Children & Middle School

We have decided to use a little more structured curriculum for our pre-K–5th grade church school children this year, with a similar curriculum for the middle school (as well as our high school aged youth, too). The curriculum is called *Weaving God's Promises* (WGP) for Children and Middle School. Their mission (WGP) is “To help children experience how God’s promises of salvation are woven into our lives; to give children a solid grounding for future youth and high-school formation programs, preparing them for Christian adulthood; to foster the spiritual formation and growth of our children in Christ’s love and mercy and to teach the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.”

Weaving God's Promises is a three-year cycle of learning that covers weaving our faith, weaving together the family of God, and weaving God’s beloved community. Each year has its own theme and focus. Over the three years, students will be exposed to the Gospels of Matthew, John, and Luke (in successive years), learning about our Anglican tradition, the saints, the Old Testament stories, the grace of God in the world, and so much more. They will experience an emphasis on our holy calling to care for others and the gospel values of welcome, inclusion, compassion, mercy,



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

The session plans each week are simple and easy to use, making preparation stress-free. Wide range of usable age-appropriate activities are in each session. Theological and historical information on our Anglican/Episcopal history and heritage is included. Finally: all *Weaving God's Promises* resources are on line, so let us know if you are interested in teaching or helping to lead a lesson or 2 this year.

Fr. George & Trish Guglielmo

forgiveness, justice, and liberation in ways that make sense to them at the age and level they are currently in.

Confirmation Corner

Hello Future Confirmands + Families. On September 20th at 9 a.m. we will hold a second informational meeting about what Confirmation will look like this year.

Registration will begin on September 20th as well and will be open until October 4th. If you or your parents have any questions feel free to reach out to Amy Steele at amy.sjyouthminister@gmail.com!



Youth Ministry Updates

School is almost back in session and we are planning what the 2020-2021 Church School year will look like! We will hold Virtual Church School for students in Middle and High School at 11 a.m.–11:30 a.m. every Sunday via Zoom starting the first Sunday in October (the 4th).

Over the summer we decided to utilize the *Weaving God's Promises* curriculum. These areas are covered in *Weaving God's Promises* for Youth to help build faith foundation in the Holy Scripture, the Church, and Christian Living. Please see below for more information.

The “Mission” of *Weaving God's Promises* for Youth:

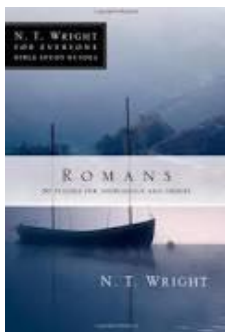
- To help youth experience how God’s promises of salvation are woven into our lives.
- To show youth the way of Christ, not only in the church but also in the world as Christ’s ambassadors.
- To give youth a solid grounding for future and high-school formation programs, preparing them for Christian adulthood.
- To foster the spiritual formation and growth of our youth in Christ’s love and mercy and to teach the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

We are so excited to be back, and will also be exploring ways to gather safely in community with each other! If you or your youth have any questions feel free to reach out to Amy Steele at amy.sjyouthminister@gmail.com.

Bible Study: A walk in Paul's letter to the Romans

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have just completed our planned two-year exploration of the four Gospels: Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark, as part of our call to see, "Who is Jesus to me, really?" We discovered a great deal about the differences, parallels, confusions and clarity that looking at the Gospels as a whole brings to the reader. Each person that participated in our studies of Christ's ministry, life, death, and resurrection came away, I am fairly certain, with new insights about who Christ is to them. I know that I feel tremendously blessed to have experienced the Gospels, in total, with a wonderful group of people who challenged some of my assumptions and helped to solidify others. Our aim in reading scripture is not to merely validate what we already know about God but to help us see God in a new, perhaps deeper, way, particularly when it comes to Jesus, the Christ.

Reading scripture, however, is not a once and done endeavor, rather a lifelong process of discovering how entirely God loves us. The story of God with God's people resonates off the pages of Holy Writ and continues to inform our journey with and to God in the here and now. Beginning August 30th, with an overview of Paul, we are leaving the Gospels behind and moving on to a new frontier: Paul's letter to the Romans. Our last study was enhanced mightily, in my view, by our chosen study guide by the Right Reverend Dr. NT Wright. We as a



group agreed that we will once again rely on Tom Wright's study guide called *For Everyone, Romans*. We have books in the parish office for you, if you would like to participate in our study. Participation does not necessarily mean coming to every (right now virtual)

conversation we have. You can obtain a study guide and read Romans on your own or you can join us when you are able. We are always perfectly delighted for you to drop in now and

again. There has been a small group of folks who have taken a deep dive, not only in reading Scripture, but in joining us for Bible study, too. I hope folks will continue to find strength, wisdom, joy, and comfort in reading God's holy word, as we continue with the Letter to the Romans.

*The books are \$10 which we are happy to waive as needed.

2020 St. James Fall Fair cancelled

In consultation with the Vestry, the decision has been made not to go forward with plans for the Fall Fair this year. However, we hope, fingers crossed, to enjoy the Fair again on the first Saturday in October, 2021!

For now, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused us to re-



consider the feasibility of inviting the public into our relatively small space, to eat, to shop, and to interact with one another. And the possibility of a second wave of the virus in the Fall has to be considered. And so it is with an abundance of caution, and desiring to make a responsible decision for our parishioners, our vendors, and the public, that we will skip this year's Fall Fair. While none of us can predict the future, we will hope for the best, and hope to resume next year.

One more thing: As you may be aware, the proceeds from the Fall Fair (averaging about \$3,500) go entirely to St. James' Outreach programs. If you are able, please consider the amount ordinarily spent at the Fair, and this year earmark it directly to St. James Outreach ministries. Right now, there are many in need of our help.

Adult Christian Formation 2020-2021

We have a tremendously exciting Christian Formation year for our congregation and beyond, in the 2020-21 program year. We will partner with the Spiritual Life Center (SLC), in West Hartford, to present a year on Christian Spiritual Practices. Part of walking the way of Jesus and truly living the Christian life means drawing forever closer to the Divine presence. In our busy lives, however, finding new, creative, AND practical ways to live the Christian life and engage in our spiritual journey (we are all on one, by the way) can be very challenging indeed. So, St. James Parish will present, in communion with the SLC, six workshops on Christian Spiritual practices. Please save these dates.

Contemplative prayer, Andree Grafstein, MA, C.A.G.S. Thursday, October 1, 6:30–8:30 pm. Andree is an experienced spiritual director, retreat director and program presenter with over thirty years of experience. She is a member of the Spiritual Life Center community in West Hartford where she offers spiritual direction and supervision, and is a member of the Spiritual Direction Internship Training Team.

Lectio Divina, Celeste Calabotta. Tuesday, November 10, 6:30– 8:30 pm Celeste is a spiritual director and Lay Carmelite, and has been in retreat ministry at Our Lady of Calvary Retreat Center in Farmington for 10 years and began studying contemplative prayer over 15 years ago. She has coordinated Lectio Divina prayer groups at Our Lady of Calvary and St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in West Hartford.

Spiritual Direction, The Reverend Tom Carr. Saturday, December 5, 10 am – noon. Tom Carr is Pastor of Second Baptist of Suffield, Connecticut. His primary interests are in preaching, worship leadership, teaching and spiritual growth. He is a certified Spiritual Director. Spiritual direction is one person, walking with another person or group of people in the process of paying attention to the movement of God in his or her life, as s/he grows in intimacy with God.

Praying the Daily Office, The Reverend George Roberts. Tuesday, January 5, 6: 30–8:30 pm. Fr. George has spent a lifetime utilizing the Daily Office as an integral part of his life of prayer, devotion, and growth in closer awareness to God's call on his life. Fr. George will take us on a journey that will highlight the monastic beginnings of the office and highlight how we can use the Divine office as a tool of prayer of connectivity and walking closer with God.

Ignatian Spirituality, Judy Pluta, BA, MA, Boston College, NYU. Saturday, March 20, 10 am – 2 pm. Judy serves as a Spiritual Director, Supervisor and a trainer of Spiritual Directors and Supervisors at The Spiritual Life Center in West Hartford. Her Jesuit Volunteer Corp and Boston College experiences provided an introduction to the richness of Ignatian Spirituality over 35 years ago.

Praying with Art, Lisa Hudkins. Saturday, April 17, 10 am–noon. Lisa Hudkins is a retired educator with 40 years in education teaching many grade levels as well as mentoring student teachers and beginning teachers. Lisa is a graduate of the Spiritual Director Internship program at the Spiritual Life Center in West Hartford. Lisa runs various book clubs and retreats at Lourdes in Litchfield. She enjoys bringing her love of contemplation and body wisdom into her life.



COVID thoughts & updates

It has been a while since I have formally said anything specific about COVID-19 in the *Epistle* or in the form of a letter. I certainly address the pandemic often in sermons and amongst parishioners. COVID's continuing presence on the world scene and its propensity to alter many of the ways we conduct our lives, is not news to anyone who hasn't been stuck in a cave at the North Pole ... Santa, are you listening? We are now preparing in earnest for the beginning of a new program year and I wanted to take a moment and say a few things about how we are doing, what we are hoping to do in the fall, and to remind you that we are here, that we love you, and we desire your feedback, questions, concerns, and difficulties as they arise.

Please see the article, in this *Epistle*, about our Adult Formation series on Christian Spiritual Practices and consider taking part in one or two of them. You will be hearing more about how and when we will offer church school (mostly on line), Confirmation classes, Youth Formation, Bible Study, and so much more in this *Epistle* and/or soon thereafter. We are in the process of making decisions about when we will hold in-person (and virtual) worship for the fall. We are contemplating how we might engage further, as a community, in conversations around race and equity in our country, communities, and in the world. Your Vestry and staff are aware, that said, of how much Zooming everyone is doing right now, so we are constantly trying to find a balance between communication, holding things via Zoom or Google Meets, and what constitutes overload, with all the other things you are doing in your lives.

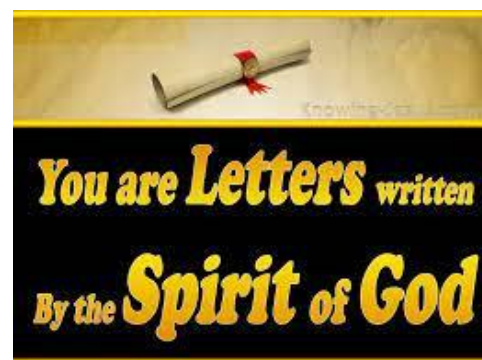
We are working on times for our worship services, too, trying to reach as many people as possible, virtually and in person. Right now, and for now, it does not make sense, in terms of limited resources and limited attendance, to hold more than one in-person service. We are trying to settle on a time that seems to work best for the most people. We really, really do not want anyone to feel left out!

And there is so much to be thankful for!! The parish has been amazing in keeping up with pledging. Our pledges are ahead of where they were scheduled to be and our invested funds are doing well (after taking a huge beating in February and March). We need for folks to keep sending in your pledges, knowing that we need to stay the course in order to continue to meet our responsibilities and do the work God has commissioned us to do: to proclaim the Gospel in as many ways as we can and to support one another all the while.

Please know that I thank you all for your support which, by God's grace and my family's patience got me out of bed during the darkest days of this pandemic, when I had no idea what to do or how to do it. I am blessed to be here with you and, frankly, we are all blessed. This is an awesome parish, with much love to offer, and a desire, I believe, to know Jesus more fully. God bless St. James and each of you, even as you read this overly long (no surprise ☺) love letter from me to you.

"Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This letter is "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, [carved] not on tablets of stone but on human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

In Christ Jesus, blessed,
George+



Prayer Team

From time to time, the Prayer Team shares something that we have found helpful, in the hopes that you may find it helpful, too.

Today I was thinking about how life has changed as a result of COVID-19; how seeds of transformation are present, perhaps most present, in challenging times ... and I found this ...

Donna Paye

COVID Poem

When this is over, may we never again take for granted

A handshake with a stranger, full shelves at the store, conversations with neighbors

A crowded theatre, Friday night out

The taste of communion

A routine check-up, the school rush each morning, coffee with a friend

The stadium roaring

Each deep breath, a boring Tuesday

Life itself.

When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people we wanted to be

We were called to be, we hoped to be

And may we stay that way – better

For each other

Because of the worst.

Laura Kelley Fanucci

Celebrating September birthdays!

Sarah Alligood

Jane Begin

Ben Thomas

Brad Ives

Nathan Tuttle

Joseph Ososki

Jordan Howe

Jay Hostetter

Charlotte Vacca

Seth Howe

Mason Lucas

Armen Slusarz

Myla LaSalle

Elle Lansing

Ben Roach

Bob Bogino

Mia Grieco

Brenden Wahl

Joy Reeve



Judy Drake

Pat Clark

Noah Howe

Hayley Root

Your picture in a brochure or on the 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 Prayer Team ...

Praying together for you

Always available, always confidential

Pat Clark

Carol Kirkwood

Donna Paye

Armen Slusarz

St. James Parish

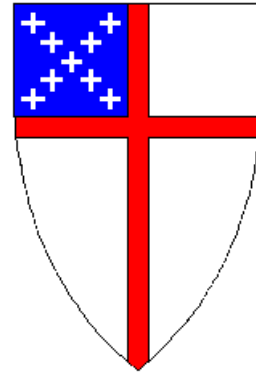
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Email: st.james.church@sbcglobal.net

Website: www.stjamesfarmington.org



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	Rector
Amelia (Amy) Steele	Youth Minister
Blake Hansen	Director of Music
Susan Deming	Parish Administrator
Kelly Nauss	Sexton
Laura Vacca	Nursery Supervisor

OFFICERS

Kim Pereira & Dona Waugh, Wardens
EJ Ososki, Treasurer
Jerry Hess, Asst. Treasurer
Jessica Watkin, Parish Clerk

VESTRY

2021

Mimi Hostetter
Kim Pereira
Robyn Shover

2022

Thomas Nelson
Foster White
James Wilkie

2020

Julia Grieco
Rebecca McFarland
Dona Waugh

St. James Parish

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