

# St. James Parish

## Epistle



October 2020

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### Rector's Message

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Saint Paul, in his letter to the church in Thessalonica, implored them to rely upon their faith in God and to pray and to offer thanks, even in circumstances that might challenge us to pray at all. We wonder how we might be instruments of prayer that, in times of murky darkness, we might form bonds of unity with our fellow humans BECAUSE of our relationship with God, and grow as Christ requires. We are in an era when there are seemingly no political “norms,” little civility, much division and self-righteousness, and when COVID seems to have hijacked the universe out from under us. Paul’s ministry, lest we forget, was beset with storm clouds, too. He did not have safety or support, most of the time. I have thought so much of how we survive (when that is all we can do, but survival isn’t really living) and even thrive (impossible, right?) as we feel our way around in the dark and try to come closer to Jesus. Knowing Jesus more fully will make endurance, hope, and grace much more likely anytime, but particularly during a crisis. Prayer, ultimately, conversation with the divine light in Christ may be much, if not all, of the answer to the challenge of growing in love, even now.

Prayer is, again, ongoing conversation; a dialogue—not a monologue—with God. Prayer is the most effective process of bringing our will and lives more into alignment with God’s will. Jesus taught us to pray, along with disciples,

by reminding us how we are oriented. “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ....” Christ taught His disciples how to pray by telling them and us that we begin, always, with praise. We must remember, as Rowan Williams proclaims, in his little book *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer*, that “we must get over the idea that God is somewhere very, very far away off, so that we have to shout very loudly to be heard ... On the contrary: God has decided to be an intimate friend and he has decided to make us part of His family, and we always pray on that basis” (p. 66). We pray, in other words, understanding that God has already chosen us, blessed us, forgiven us, and loved us beyond all merit and understanding. And how do we know that? Well, the only way to learn we are loved is by growing our relationship with God. Relationships take time, care, patience, and a sense of goodwill, if they are to thrive. So, we pray that we may nurture the relationship God is already forging with us.

We will begin an exploration of prayer on Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, at 6:30 pm, with an introductory lesson on *Contemplative Prayer*, how we make space to talk to God. Andréé Grafstein, a member of the Spiritual Life Center, a spiritual director, and person of deep prayer, will lead us through a closer understanding of what it means to draw nearer to the Divine Light who made and saved us. There will be five additional workshops during the program year (2020–21), all on some aspect of prayer.

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[Rector's Message continued]

Most of us just want 2020 to be over, hoping that 2021 will be a lot easier to take. But, what do we do if it doesn't get better, at least not right away? How do we live as a beacon of God's light when we cannot see the light ourselves? A first step is always a tentative one, wondering what we are doing, but trying to draw closer to God, somehow. We still have lots of *Forward Movement* daily devotionals in the narthex of the church which is, remember, **always open**. Our Bible study of Romans at 11 am every Sunday is open to all; join us, when you can. The natural world beckons, a rich tapestry of God's own design. Go for a walk, and talk to God but we must, as Christians, nurture ourselves in our life with the Holy One, if we are to find comfort, strength, courage, and blessing for the time ahead.

Finally, Rowan Williams promises us that prayer can bring us back to each other. "... prayer is a significant part in resolving conflict and rivalry. If people prayed seriously, they would be reconciled" (p. 71). A prayerful world would, absolutely, be a more loving world, a more peaceful and God-driven world, and so much of our current challenges would lessen or disappear altogether. Prayer is about patience, reconciliation, hope, and listening. When we listen for God we will, if we are truly listening, hear God. I find it hard now, after many years of practice, to see a beautiful sunset, the ocean, the mountains, a laughing child, a couple holding hands, a bubbling brook, a dragonfly buzzing around, or the lines in my love's face, without knowing, in my whole being, that God is speaking to me. And what He is saying is, "I love you. You are mine."

In Christ,  
Fr. George+

## Warden's Corner

2020 has been a year like no other most of us have witnessed or lived through. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its unprecedented loss of life, loved ones dying alone and laid to rest without proper farewells, families having a problem finding closure. The resulting economic downturn and loss of jobs for those who are barely living from paycheck to paycheck and least able to weather it, The climate issues, the vast wildfires in the western states, more devastating hurricanes than we have seen in decades. Let's not forget the racial upheaval and law enforcement problems. How does our faith fit into this? Now more than ever, we need to draw on our faith and belief that God is in charge, He has a master plan. Our duty is to live a Christ-driven life of love for all, help anyone in need, pray for understanding, guidance and strength to do all that is required.

Lastly, another casualty of COVID-19 2020 is its effect on the upcoming elections; many of us will not be comfortable going to the polling stations, and might not have confidence in the postal services delivering mail-in ballots. However, voting is our right and, regardless of who you are casting your vote for, you should vote. I am, therefore, volunteering to collect your mail-in ballot and deliver it to the Dropbox at the respective city hall. Please contact me, if you need assistance with voting by mail.

Blessings,  
Dona Waugh, Co-Warden

## 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.

## Worship with all CT Episcopalians

Our Annual Convention for the Episcopal Church in CT is being held virtually this year. Over the last couple of years, the Convention has encouraged folks to come to a Diocesan wide worship service on the last day (Sunday) of the Convention. This year, because of COVID, **folks are invited to a virtual ECCT Convention service on Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, at 10 am.** So, in lieu of our usual 9:30 service, we are encouraging everyone to join the ECCT service, which promises beautiful music and liturgy, and probably one of the Bishops preaching. We will send more details out as we have them, including a link to connect to the service. Regular service will continue, in person and Facebook Live, the following Sunday at 9:30 am.

**St. James will hold, on the day of Convention worship (October 18<sup>th</sup>) a special, in person 8 am Eucharist, Rite I.** All and anyone are invited to this early service which will be celebrated without music (as is customary for that service time). This is for the 18<sup>th</sup> only, with us going back the following week to our current 9:30 am, virtual or in person, with music and Holy Eucharist.

## St. Francis & the Blessing of the Animals: October 4<sup>th</sup> 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 fasting 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 4<sup>th</sup> (he died on October 3<sup>rd</sup>), 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 October 4<sup>th</sup>, 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!!

## Church School opening!!

We are continuing to work on some fun, Jesus-centered learning about God for our youngest members for Church School in October. We plan to begin October 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:40 am, for grades pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup>. Amy Steele, our youth minister, will lead our young members in a fun, informative class using *Weaving God's Promises*, with lots of material to share that families can work on with their children during the course of the week. Our desire is to grow young folks who know the love of God in Christ, learn about Holy Scripture and their stories, and understand that being a disciple of Jesus is not only a blessing but fun, too. We will learn how our faith helps us to grow and to build community and relationships.

Our hope is to split into two classes in November – one for pre-K to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and the other for 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> graders. Our ability to



have two classes (and have them live) will depend on family interest and folks willing to teach for a few weeks this fall and winter.

Please contact Trish Guglielmo or Father George at [rector.st.james@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rector.st.james@sbcglobal.net) if you are interested. Please see Amy's piece in this *Epistle* relating to 6<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade Christian Formation and Confirmation classes.

Fr. George, Trish Guglielmo, & Amy Greaves

## Confirmation Corner

Hello Future Confirmands + Families!  
Registration has begun for the Confirmation Class of 2020-2021 and will be open until October 4<sup>th</sup>. The link for the Registration Google Form is  
<https://forms.gle/4iz9CvfZMzTQ69Nq5>

If you have any questions or need a copy of the Confirmation Expectations, feel free to reach out at [amy.siyouthminister@gmail.com](mailto:amy.siyouthminister@gmail.com) !

## Youth Ministry Updates

Hello Fall!! Get ready for our first Virtual Church School class Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at 11 am–11:30 am for students in Middle and High School on Zoom!! We will have weekly virtual classes at the same time each Sunday!

Over the summer we have decided on utilizing 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.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

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 at [amy.siyouthminister@gmail.com](mailto:amy.siyouthminister@gmail.com) !



## Bible Study: Paul's letter to the Romans

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have completed our 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?" 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.



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. We have left the Gospels behind and moved on to a new frontier: Paul's letter to the Romans. We as a group agreed that we would once again rely on Tom Wright's study guide called *For Everyone, Romans*. We have books in the parish office for you (\$10 per copy), 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.

## Global Missions engagement

This pandemic has taken away our ability to function on autopilot. In some very interesting ways, COVID-19 offers us an opportunity to step outside our daily routines and reflect on our norms, actions, thoughts, and beliefs that we simply took for granted. This kind of reflection and learning is what we seek to do as a community of believers engaged in Global Missions. Companions in Mission Ministry Network of ECCT is offering a 7 week opportunity to sit together with some of the leading voices in Global Missions from across the Episcopal Church and engage with our stories of mission engagement. These sessions are informed by the book *Questing: The way of love in global mission* authored by The Rev. Dr. Titus Pressler and The Rev. Dr. Grace Burton-Edwards, available on Amazon. No prior experience in Global Mission is required to attend these sessions. Participants are encouraged to read the book. Brought to you by the Companions in Mission Network of ECCT.

The Companions in Mission Network is a network of the Episcopal Church in CT whose mission is to support and inform individuals and congregations in the area of mission: local, regional, and global.



To sign up, it is free, follow this link.  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/390743668991900/>

## Making Music during a pandemic

Making music during this time of pandemic has certainly challenged not only how we can make music, but also how we view its place in our lives. Perhaps more than anything else we do, performing arts have had to transform completely in order to maintain existence. My life and work before the pandemic was almost entirely centered around making art in public spaces, with large crowds, indoors - everything that we have tried to avoid since this pandemic hit.

The arts and entertainment industry not only have a huge impact on our economy, but they also permeate almost every aspect of our lives. Take a moment to think about where music and art are found – at home, in the store, the car, church. And yet, when trouble hits, when budgets at the federal, state, town and school level are strained, what is the first thing to go? Arts and music. Art and music holds such an important place in our lives, that without its absence we tend to take it for granted. If anything, this pandemic is teaching us all what is really important to us, as a collective and as individuals. I hope we can all come away from this with a stronger sense of what we need, what we really desire, materially and spiritually.

Like everyone else, I have been learning how to make and record my music for digital audiences. Although nothing can replace the experience of a live concert, it is important to maintain touch with our audience, letting them know that we are here, and we are making music. This has been no different at St. James either. Our choir rehearsals have moved online, we live stream services the best we can, and we continually work to improve our presentation so we can send the strongest message possible to our church family.

If anyone has an interest to learn with us as we continue to expand our technical knowledge and increase our live-streaming capabilities, please be in touch so we can perhaps begin a ministry focused on this. It's important in this time to work harder than ever to reach people. We are desperate for contact,

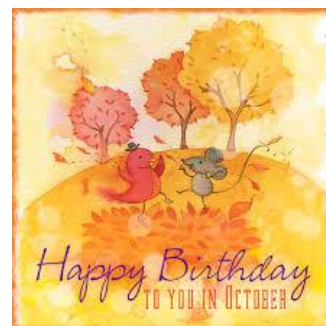
for community, and we have to offer that in the safest way possible.

I would like to thank the CT Virtuosi for their outdoor performances this past August. The live concerts held on the front lawn sparked new life during this time. Not in my time here has anything like this been done - the beauty of the town, the church, and the music was all brought together in one harmonious voice. We look forward to future collaborations as we work to provide our community with beautiful music!

*Blake Hansen*

## Celebrating October birthdays!

John Reeve	Grier Torrence
Amy Steele	David Faubert
Ben Martin	Andrea Harris
Gigja Ingimarsdottir	Amelia Tuttle
Olivia Roberts	Preston Lathrop
Beverly Poggio	
Babs Findlay	
Joe Lansing	
Pat Hadlow	
Carolyn Ives	
Colt Propiescus	
Michael Slusarz	
Erwin Schramma	
Emma Buth	



## 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.

**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

Spiritual Direction, The Reverend Tom Carr. Saturday, December 5, 10 am – noon.

Praying the Daily Office, The Reverend George Roberts. Tuesday, January 5, 6: 30–8:30 pm.

Ignatian Spirituality, Judy Pluta, BA, MA, Boston College, NYU. Saturday, March 20, 10 am – 2 pm.

Praying with Art, Lisa Hudkins. Saturday, April 17, 10 am–noon.

## 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 came across this quote while reading *Monday Matters*, an online offering published by RenewalWorks. We most often think of our life's journey as one for which we prepare, and learn, and work, and strive ... One where performance is measured in so many ways. Here, Thomas Merton references something different...

*Our real journey in life is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening, and of an even greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts.*

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

*Always available, always confidential*

Pat Clark  
Carol Kirkwood  
Donna Paye  
Armen Slusarz



## St. James Parish

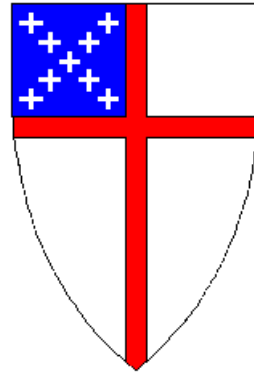
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### MISSION STATEMENT:

*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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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

