Waiting and watching. These two things were two of the most difficult things to do during the Christmas seasons of my childhood. I knew where my parents kept presents (they were in the closet), and it took a high degree of will power not to take a peak. And I would fail. Hehe. I would fail again and again.

Fast forward a couple of decades, and a posture of waiting and watching is still difficult. And I do think it is about a posture. All the Church seasons are my favorite, and for different reasons; but Advent opens us up to a posture of receiving Christ into our hearts. And yet, as we adopt a posture of receiving the birth of Christ, what can we till in our hearts, to create a nurturing and conducive environment? For me, I need to intentionally not allow our national politics to take too much of my time. This has been difficult for me to do, because our political polarity is more in our public discourse than years past.

And yet think on Mary. She became the God bearer for the Christ child. She created space for Jesus in the inn of her heart. Advent is a time, again, to clear out any cobwebs you might have in your heart. And yet, this will require intentionality. We will need to pray with intention, and also take steps to make these prayers a reality. I know that I will need to make sure that I do not put on the television around specific times, so that I don’t get inundated by negativity. Yes, there is a real need for the media, it is of course, the fourth estate and we need it so that we have all the most relevant information to make informed decisions, and yet, I can be intentional about when I should turn it on.

Where are those spaces in your life, where you can create more silence, more time to just sit and revel in the gift of Christmas? We are beginning to see all the commercials around Christmas, and the commercialization of this most sacred day. We live in a market based economy, so it is what it is; and yet I wonder if we can take a step back from the way in which we have traditionally engaged the season, and posture our heart to understand different ways of opening up “presents” with our loved ones?

For example, instead of giving a gift card to Best Buy, how about giving a piece of paper that says, I gift you two hours of my time? The gift card could say, two hours of undivided time from me, redeemable any time. Our relationships with each other, those precious times of building bonds of love and trust, are sacred to all of us, and if that is so, why shouldn’t time be the most important, real world gift. If you think about it, we may, sometimes, be running short of money, for this and that; but in our relationships with one another, it is our time that is most valuable.

My friends, this Advent Season, what is the posture of your heart? And where is it directed towards?

In Christ,

Ranjit
News from our Deacon

During the Advent season, we are asked to prepare the way of the Lord, to get ready for “the light of the world” to shine through us. We need to open up spaces in our minds, souls and hearts so that God has room to germinate His will in us, just as Mary did over, 2000 years ago.

How do we do this?

We take time to be silent, to listen to God instead of keeping ourselves busy and entertained every minute of our day. Practice putting all electronic devices down for an hour a day, no input except for the people you may be with. I see people checking their phones in church all the time. Leave the phones in the car when you come to worship. See what you may be missing. Hear what you may be missing.

God does not judge us on how much we accomplish in a day. If you get Netflix, watch season 1 of “The Good Place.” Life is about relationships, it is not about our transactions. Have a Holy Advent and a Joy-filled Christmas!

Deacon Ellen

Advent begins Sunday, December 2

“Give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.”

from The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent, The Book of Common Prayer, p. 211

St. James’ Mission Statement

We are a forward looking, multi-cultural and inclusive faith community, proclaiming and doing Christ’s work of love and justice in the greater New London area and the world.

Approved at the April 10, 2018 Vestry meeting.
Senior Warden’s Report
As the Christmas season begins, the majority of those at St. James are faced with the usual holiday splendor; shopping for presents, attending parties, baking cookies and all of the other traditions in our lives which make this time of the year so joyful!

During the holidays, I often think of my family who live in Pennsylvania and I realize how truly blessed I am to have their support when things go wrong in my life. Unfortunately, many of our members and visitors who attend St. James have not been as fortunate as I have been and they struggle each day to have their basic needs met.

If I could have one Christmas wish this season, it would be to encourage each and every one of us to reach out to those in the pews, (especially individuals who live in a marginalized sector of our society or may be going through a difficult time) and invite them for coffee and conversation after the Sunday service. The kindness that you provide may truly be the best gift of the season!

Faithfully,

Lori Sarkett

Sunday Parish Events—December

December 9—St. Nicholas Bazaar after both morning services
   Anglican Singers Advent Lessons & Carols at 5:00 PM in the Church
December 9 & 16—Advent Faith Sharing is in the Parish Hall after the 10:00 AM service
December 12 & 19—Bi Lingual Eucharist at 5:15 PM in the Hallam Chapel
December 19—Potluck Supper and Advent Meditation at 6:00 PM in the Hallam Lounge
December 23—Greening of the Church after the 10:00 AM service
December 30—One Service—Lessons and Carols in the Church at 9:00 AM with a potluck brunch immediately following the service in the Parish Hall.

Advent Meditation and Bi-Lingual Eucharist

Dear friends,

On Wednesday, December 19th, Deacon Ellen and I will offer a meditative evening in the Hallam Lounge and Hallam Chapel. It will be a time for meditation, contemplative readings and group reflection on “waiting and watching” during the Advent season. We will start with a bi-lingual Eucharist at 5:15 PM in Hallam Chapel. Hope to see you there.

In Christ,

Ranjit
Christmas cookie decorating and platter assembly will be on Saturday, December 8. A sign-up sheet will be available on the buffet in the parish hall.

Homemade cookies will be sold on Sunday, December 9, after both morning services. All proceeds will be used to support our parish Christmas giving program.

Cookies for Christmas Giving

Christmas Bazaar

CO-SPONSORED BY THE ST. JAMES QUILTERS AND JUMBLE SHOPPE
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8
9:30 AM - 2:00 PM
SUNDAY, December 9
following both the 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM services

COME TO THE 2ND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR! You will find an AMAZING assortment of beautiful quilts, hand crafts, and Christmas items on display for your Christmas shopping. All proceeds from the sale will pay for the air conditioning unit installed this summer in the parlor.

Jumble Shoppe volunteers will need to man the shop during the Saturday hours. Help from parishioners will be gladly accepted to man the bazaar tables on Saturday and Sunday, as well as to help set up displays on Friday evening, from 5:30 PM to finish. Pizza supper for all helpers! Watch for the Sign-up sheet on the credenza in the parish hall.
St. James Christmas “Giving” Tree

Our parish has always responded with extraordinary generosity and we are looking forward to once again sharing Christmas love with families in need.

The Christmas tree is in the parish hall filled with ornaments. Please select an ornament with a requested item that you will then purchase, wrap and label with the attached ornament. All wrapped gifts may be brought to church through Sunday, December 16. Gift distribution begins Monday, December 17.

If anyone wishes to donate money rather than shop, please make checks payable to St. James with “Christmas Wish List” in the memo line. Monetary donations are needed by December 10 to allow enough time for volunteers to shop and wrap donations.

Socks for the Homeless Hospitality Center

This holiday season, we are requesting donations of new white socks for the Homeless Hospitality Center Shelter guests (male and female). Our goal is to “gift” each guest with three (3) pairs of socks. They may be wrapped (please note on the outside of the package the size and if they are men’s or women’s—if unisex, no marking needed) or unwrapped. Please have all donations to the church by Wednesday, December 12. If you would like to help with sorting and wrapping the socks, please contact Ellen in the parish office at 860.443.4989.

Volunteer for Flower Delivery to Shut-ins

If you would like to help brighten Christmas for members of our parish family who are homebound or in healthcare facilities, how about taking one of the poinsettia plants from our Christmas decorations to him/her? Select someone who is near to your home or office, and it won’t take much time at all!

A sign-up sheet can be found in the parish hall. Please put your name next to the name of the person to whom you’d like to take a plant.

Plants may be delivered immediately following the Christmas Day service or anytime during the week after Christmas Day.
Lo! He comes with clouds descending...

Please join us at 5:00 PM on Sunday, December 9, 2018, for our annual Service of Lessons and Carols for Advent. This yearly event has been a tradition at St. James since 1996 and continues to grow in popularity. Among the carols the Singers will perform—from medieval to contemporary sources—are “Adam lay ybounden,” “People look East,” “E’en so Lord Jesus, quickly come,” “There is a flow’r sprung of a tree,” and “Tomorrow shall be my dancing day.” Interspersed among carols and scriptural readings will be congregational hymns and spoken responses, in which all are encouraged to participate. Following the service, there will be a festive reception in the parish hall.

At 4:30 PM the following Saturday, December 15, the Singers will again join the congregation of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Westbrook, for a holiday concert of carols and seasonal hymns. All are invited to share in that delightful occasion.

A reminder that on December 24, the famous King’s College Choir of Cambridge University will celebrate 100 years of providing the university community, the City of Cambridge, and the world the glorious seasonal music of that inimitable ensemble. The very first performance of A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols took place on December 24, 1918, one month after the end of the Great War. King’s College Choir’s Christmas Eve service is broadcast annually, so check your radio-station listings for the exact time.

Anne Carr Bingham, Secretary,
The Anglican Singers
The New London Chapter of the American Guild of Organists will present an organ recital featuring Advent and Christmas on Monday, December 10th at 7:30 PM in the nave of St. James Episcopal Church. The public is invited to this free event.
Christmas Poinsettias and Greenery

Now that Advent has arrived, we think of many tasks that have to be done in our own lives and in our Parish life. One of these takes place on Sunday, December 23 after the 10:00 AM service, with the Greening of the Church. There are a number of ways that you can participate in this tradition, but one way is by giving memorial donations for friends and family or thanksgiving donations for the blessings in your life. These donations are used to purchase the Christmas decorations. The memorial envelope is attached but if you should mislay it, we will have more in the church or the parish office—the deadline for inclusion in the Christmas list is Sunday, December 16. Thank you.

The Altar Guild of St. James

Holiday Parish Office Hours

As we enter the holiday season, the parish office will observe the following holiday schedule:
Monday, December 24—Christmas Eve—parish office closes at 12:30 PM
Tuesday, December 25 through Friday, December 28—Christmas holiday—office closed
Tuesday, January 1—New Year’s holiday—office closed
Regular Parish Office hours resume Wednesday, January 2, 2019

Drop In Learning Center Holiday Celebration

Come join The Drop-In Learning Center
For a night of Food, Fun and Fellowship
Tuesday, Dec.11th
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM
Ornament Making with the St. James Church School
Cookie Decorating
Holiday Songs
... and more
Church School

All Hallows Day Church School and Drop Learning Center

Children singing “This Little Light of Mine” during the Offertory
LET’S COME TOGETHER TO HELP MALIK AND ZAHIDA AND THEIR LITTLE DAUGHTER RONIYA

As some of you are aware, Malik Naveed bin Rehman and his wife Zahida Altaf, and their U.S.-citizen daughter Roniya, have lived for almost two decades in New Britain, CT. Though they are undocumented, Mr. and Mrs. Rehman have led exemplary lives during their many years here, created a loving home for their child, and owned and operated a successful and popular business in New Britain, the Pizza Corner.

Last March, they were informed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that an order of immediate deportation to their native Pakistan had been issued—for just the two of them, not for their American-born child. In desperation like so many in their situation, they sought refuge in a place of worship—for the Rehmans it was the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme. Malik and Zahida were offered sanctuary at FCCOL on March 19th, and there they remained while their attorney sought legal relief for them. Little Roniya was cared for by relatives, but visited her mom and dad each weekend.

That relief—or at least a reprieve—was granted by immigration authorities in October to allow the Rehmans to seek adjustment of their status to permanent legal residency, so on October 16th, Pastor Steve Jungkeit and the congregants of FCCOL held a press conference and a farewell celebration as the family prepared, with relief and gratitude to all who had stood with them during their ordeal, to return to New Britain, be with their child, and get back to managing their store.

But their ordeal wasn’t over as it turned out; it was just beginning. On the night of October 24th, their beloved shop, in the words of Lina Tuck, an immigrant advocate at FCCOL, was “ransacked, vandalized, stripped of food and some equipment.” Ms. Tuck went on to write that the Pizza Corner would be closed for the foreseeable future—thus the Rehmans’ very livelihood is on the line.

The family was devastated. Having bravely come through their travails, to see their business destroyed in this cruel and senseless way, and their financial security imperiled, was almost too much to bear.

Who knows what compelled the perpetrator(s) to such an act of hateful savagery—it’s almost beside the point. What matters now is helping Malik and Zahida get back on their feet so that they can repair, restock, and reopen their business. I hope you will consider reaching out to them with a donation. If their story touches your heart, please write a check payable to FCCOL, noting on the memo line “for Malik and Zahida,” and mail your donation to the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, 2 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, CT, 06371. You can also contact Lina Tuck at fccol@fccol.org for further information. She serves on the church’s Immigration Committee which “supports the humane and dignified treatment of immigrants by providing education and immigrant rights, sanctuary for families in threat of deportation, and assistance to secure legal counsel.”

Neither the Rehmans, nor St. James’ dear friends the Rodriguez family, nor other longtime but out-of-status U.S. residents—who have added to, not subtracted from, the strength and vitality of our nation—should endure the fear and uncertainty that these families and thousands like them across the nation have experienced. Pray that Congress finally comes together to enact straightforward, commonsense updates to the existing immigration law, so that these good people no longer have to choose between sanctuary and deportation. In the meantime, let’s help those we can—as much as we can!

Anne Carr Bingham
December Birthdays

The names on this list reflect the information as recorded in the Church database. Is your name (or a family member’s name) missing? If so, please contact the parish office and provide us with the accurate information!

5 Johanna Kuruvilla
6 Joan Jones
6 Elizabeth Ahnell
9 Victoria Brennan
13 Nicholas Streeter
15 Carole Shores
19 Hilda Ziegler
22 Joy Hewitt
23 Mary Hulme
28 Martha Delancy

Racial Reconciliation Working Group

Nine members of the parish went to see The Queens of the Golden Mask on Wednesday, November 14, at the Ivoryton Play House. It was a play about 7 women who formed a women’s auxiliary of the Ku Klux Klan in a small town in Alabama. It was a powerful experience for us all.

It was about hate and love and the cost we pay to have and maintain relationships. It showed how hate was passed down from generation to generation and how different people coped with it. It took place during the 1960’s in Alabama, but it also made it clear how we participate in racism by allowing it to continue as a norm in our society, expressed in different ways, but still here. It showed us how the bible and our faith gets twisted to allow us to do what we want to do in the name of Christ.

It has been 18 hours since I saw the play but it is still on my mind and I am sure it is on the minds of all who were in the audience last night.

As the Racial Reconciliation Working Group, we ask you to face racism as a public sin and intentionally work on it as individuals and as a community to do what we can to understand it and eradicate it for our future generations’ sake.

Farewell dear friend …

Blanche “Binty” Skeffington Brown
November 14, 2018
St. James Quilters

Our mission is to make quilts for the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) Nurse Family Partnership (which cares for new mothers).

Our meetings are on the second and fourth Thursday of the month from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. New members are always welcome. You do not have to know how to quilt our experienced quilters will gladly teach you. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Mary Chartier at 860.443.0590.

Margaret Murallo, Member

Caring for Creation Committee

The Caring for Creation Committee would like to urge everyone to keep the environment in mind this Christmas season. Here are some reminders about how to have a simpler, greener and more spiritually satisfying Christmas season:

1. Less is more. Opt for a few thoughtful gifts instead of a bunch of thoughtless ones.
2. Be energy aware. Use LED lights and limit lighting.
3. Go natural and be creative. Decorate with pine cones, sea shells, cranberries, pine boughs and other natural materials, or strings of buttons, old jewelry or cookie cutters. Avoid tinsel and plastic and metallic wrapping paper and look for recycled wrapping paper and reusable gift bags or use newspapers, old magazines or maps.
4. Shop close to home, buying local items from locally owned stores. Give items with recycled content, energy saving devices, reusable carrying containers and gift certificates, second-hand books and clothing and don’t be afraid to re-gift items. Bring reusable bags when shopping.
5. Slow down. Travel less and say ‘no’ sometimes.

Mark Jan. 16 on your calendars. We’re planning a vegetarian pot luck and environmental movie night starting at 6:00 PM.

Thanks to everyone who helped make our solar rechargeable lantern sales a big success! The lanterns will be ready for pickup in early December. Please watch your email for the notice.

Blessed Christmas to everyone.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Benson, Chair
St. James Book Club

The St. James Book Club will not meet during the month of December. Our next meeting will be during the month of January. Information regarding the book selection and date will be listed in the January newsletter.

Lori Sarkett, Chair

St. James Supper Group

Next Gathering: New Year’s Eve Dinner

Place: Steak Loft, 27 Coogan Blvd., Mystic

Date: December 31, 2018 at 6:00 PM

Deadline: Please contact Lori Sarkett at 860.287.5500 or lorisarketthne@gmail.com by 4:30 PM on Friday, December 28.

Pledge Up-to-Date?

Is your current (2018) pledge up to date? Please make sure that your 2018 contributions are caught up as we approach the busy holiday season. Contributions cannot be made for 2018 after December 31, 2018.

Greg Rice,
Pledge Secretary

Vestry Highlights

At the November 6th Vestry Meeting, a motion was unanimously passed to engage in a companion relationship with the Diocese of Goma. The Diocesan Council of Goma recently also voted to enter into a companion relationship with St. James. This relationship would establish a deep and intentional prayer within our Sunday services and hopefully develop into mission work together as a prayerful relationship.

The Covenant Shelter Annual Appeal letters are being assembled to be sent out and preparations have begun for the Merrill-Fontaine Award Dinner and Raffle.

Ann Burdick, Parish Clerk
Stewardship

Stewardship Pledge Campaign – A Very Special Thanks

The pledge forms gathered each fall by the Stewardship Committee have several purposes, and only one is to help our Finance Committee to plan a budget of income and expenses for the upcoming year. Just as critical to the life of St. James are the pledges of time and talent that allow us to continue to involve our members in the many ministries we provide to the parish, to the New London community, and to the world beyond. Our listing in The Net of the parishioners who have returned a form is meant to acknowledge these pledges, whether or not they include a financial commitment, which some people just cannot make. For some, a ministry done at home, such as knitting a prayer shawl or praying for those listed on our parish prayer list, is what they can contribute, and we honor those pledges listed here as well.

We believe the list of pledges below is correct; however, if you submitted a completed pledge form by November 11 and your name is not listed here, please call Ellen in the parish office at 860-443-4989. We will update this list in the January edition of The Net. If you need a pledge packet, please call the parish office or pick one up at either of the two entrances to the church this Sunday.

Eloise Adams, Cheryl Alison, Ralph and Martha Anderson, Patty and Steve Anderson, Grace Barnum, Pandora Barnwell, Kenneth Belknap, Judy Benson and Tom Clark, Anne and Robert Kim Bingham, Deanna Bosdorff, Arthur Boulanger, Robert and Ellen Bowlin, Garrett and Victoria Brennan, John and Geraldine Brewster, Katherine Brighty, Reid and Ann Burdick, Ray and Mary Chartier, Sue and Walter Chojnacki, Joanna Delancy, Deb and Dave Downes, Kristine Drew, Shirley Evans, Eleanor Godfrey, Andrea Griffin, Dean Hantzopoulos, Mary Ellen Harris, Kathy Harrington, Barbara Harry, Karen Jean Hatcher, Joy and Peter Hewitt, David and Nancy Higgins, Arlene Hislop, Grace Jones, Joan Jones, Jan and Charles Kepner, Diane Larson, Ranjit Mathews and Johanna Kuruvilla, Effie McCarthy, Carol McCoy, Edna Miskell, John Nave, Carol and Bruce Patterson, Stephen and Marilyn Percy, Evelyn Peyton, Marcia Pierce, Laura and Matt Pinson, William and Emma Rae, Greg Rice, Edwin Roberts, Joan Robinson, Jean Rogers, Carlton and Sheila Saari, Lori Sarkett, Anna and George Shaw, Barbara Sherman, James and Carol Shores, Beverly Skeffington, Fred Smith, Nicholas Streeter, Diane Theis, John and Karla Umland, Nancy and Thomas Vogel, Mary White, Ron Ward and Carla Woodward.

The Stewardship Committee
ST. JAMES CHURCH
TREASURER’S REPORT
November 6, 2018

This report covers from January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2018.

Total Income:
Budgeted Amount: $196,876
Actual Amount: $206,693
Amount Actual is Over Budget: $9,817

Total Expenses:
Budgeted Amount: $320,367
Actual Amount: $329,560
Amount Actual is Over Budget: $9,193

Net Ordinary Income:
Total Income: $206,693
Total Expenses: $329,560
Net Ordinary Income: -$122,867
Endowment Income Applied: $123,498
Net Income: $631

Summary: As of September 30, 2018, we are $631 ahead of where expected to be based on our 2018 budget.

Investment Summary:
Balance 12/31/2017: $3,306,459
Balance 09/30/2018: $3,299,942
Total Value Change: -$6,517
Withdrawal 5%: $123,498
Change Pre-Withdrawal: $116,981

Summary: Our pre-withdrawal investment value has increased by $116,981, about 3.5%, through September 30, 2018. After factoring in the 5% withdrawal, our investments are down $6,517, about 0.2% through September.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald F. Miller, Treasurer
Schedule for Christmas Celebrations

Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24

5:00 PM Children’s Pageant & Festive Holy Eucharist with Christmas Music

10:45 PM Choral Prelude

11:00 PM Festive Choral Eucharist

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25

9:00 AM Holy Eucharist (with music)

First Sunday after Christmas, December 30

9:00 AM Lessons and Carols with a potluck brunch following the service