“Love takes off the masks we think we cannot live without and know we can’t live within.”
James Baldwin

Tell the Truth

Have you ever told a truth, before? And not like any kind of truth; but a big scary truth about yourself. It may be to your partner, your family, your community. What was that feeling like? If you are anything like me, it can be far more comfortable to just be in the ambiguity, and not let it out. I remember when my sister came out to Johanna, me and my parents and told her truth about being gay. (I received her permission to tell her story.) It was hard and maybe different for all of us, but the liberation that Manju (my sister) felt was so obvious. It still makes me tear up. Her truth gave us wings to tell our truths, and in essence to be more free.

In one of my most recent sermons, I quoted the Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President of Union Theological Seminary, on a recent On Being Podcast where she was interviewed by host, Krista Tippet. One of the points of discussion was around unacknowledged trauma. My understanding of what she articulated surfaced around the trauma of our lives, from our family, how we were raised AND she also named the collective trauma that our nation has experienced. It doesn’t take a political scientist to understand that we are at a point in our life as a nation where the forces of division are coming to rip us apart. Dr. Jones calls this a “reckoning.” Whether it’s the forces of white supremacy, or the way we have treated the planet, the reckoning has begun. The reckoning has come because we haven’t told the entire truth of who we are as a people.

Maybe we don’t like truth. And maybe for good reason? It is much easier to be cozy with the lie we tell ourselves, a lie that has become all too comfortable, than to sit with the uncomfortable nature of truth. It is no wonder that we see all the divisions of our country, around so many things. For example, after we had our first Black President, there was an all too common narrative that we are a post-racial society. No, my friends, that’s what we call a lie. A lie because it papers over all the systemic injustice that is so pervasive, from our criminal justice system, to our housing situation, our education system, I could go on. This is what the political philosopher, Hannah Arendt called, “the banality of evil.” Evil that is so banal, so a part of our system, that it is normalized.

As a nation, we need to stop telling lies about who we are, and to do the work of acknowledging our collective trauma. This was the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, whose life we celebrate this month. And because he was telling the truth and acknowledging historic trauma he was shot and was killed. This will hurt, it will hurt a lot; but it’s better than walking along and pretending all is well and that if we just ignore it, everything will be fine.
The *Witness* …

is the newsletter of St. James Church, New London, Connecticut. It is published six times a year for the information and edification of St. James members and friends.

Submissions are always welcome and should be submitted by the tenth of the month before publication. While your submission is always welcome, we would prefer to receive it by e-mail or memory stick in Microsoft Word format.

Please continue to forward your submissions to the church office or email them to: parishoffice@stjamesnl.org.

We also welcome your comments and suggestions. This is your newsletter.

76 Federal Street
New London CT 06320-6601
860-443-4989
www.stjamesnl.org

Find us on
Facebook: St James Episcopal Church
&
Instagram: st_james_newlondon

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**Rector’s Report Cont’d**

I wanted to address this topic in the first newsletter article of 2020, because as a community of faith, as a Church, we are called to tell the truth, we are called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the love that we find in Jesus, when he was born in the manger of our own hearts. He was born in the shadow, in the dark, in the wonder, the joy of our own hearts. A love that transforms us not to be afraid of embodying our whole selves and to tell the truth. In fact, this love sets us free, “it helps us take off the masks we think we cannot do without, and know we can’t live within,“ as James Baldwin writes about.

As a community of faith, of people daring to love and truly walk with each other, we need to be bold in taking off our comfortable masks, and believe that God’s grace will be sufficient for all of us. Let us not be afraid, for if God is with us, who can be against us.

In peace and love,
Ranjit

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**Newsletter Name Change**

Dear friends,

You might have notice that I have changed the name of *The Net* to *The Witness*. As you know this has been something that has been in the works for the past year or so, as I reached out through our newsletter and on Sunday mornings to receive new names. While I celebrate what *The Net* has been for so many years, I believe we need to move in a new and different direction in 2020.

One morning, I remember meditating in the Sanctuary and my eyes were affixed on our Saint James hanging, and in particular the fierceness of his eyes. It made me to think of his incredible “witness” as he followed our now Lord and Savior and ultimately gave his life. It is very moving, and is now my felt belief that this is how the Holy Spirit wants us to follow Jesus out into New London and the broader world.

Wherever and however that may be … to be “A Witness”.

With much respect,

Ranjit
News from our Deacon

In 2020, I will be using my time at St. James to focus on two projects. One project that I am committed to is to create at least one pollinator pathway (see separate article) in New London and the other is to do a set of interviews with people who worship at St. James.

A team of helpers will be conducting interviews with me of people who attend services at St. James regularly. This will help us get to know members of the congregation better and to see the many varied ways people live out their faith at St. James, at home, and in the community.

We also will be doing Asset Based Community Development Interviews. ABCD looks at the gifts and assets of individuals and groups who have similar interests or needs. It emphasizes our strengths rather than our limitations. These interviews will also be held with members of the extended community.

Deacon Ellen

Holiday Parish Office Hours

The parish office will observe the following holiday schedule:
Monday, January 20—Martin Luther King, Jr Day—office closed
Monday, February 17—Presidents’ Day—office closed

Sunday Schedule

January 5—Christmas Lessons with Holy Eucharist during the 8 AM and 5 PM service. Christmas Lessons & Carols with Holy Eucharist during the 10 AM service
January 19—MLK Scholarship Memorial Service is at 3:00 PM in the Church. A reception will follow in the Parish Hall
January 26—Annual Meeting after the 9:00 AM (One Service) in the Parish Hall. Fr. Koshy Mathews celebrating and Fr. Ranjit K. Mathews, preaching.

Epiphany begins Monday, January 6

Epiphany is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God incarnate as Jesus Christ. In Western Christianity, the feast commemorates principally the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and thus Jesus’ physical manifestation to the Gentiles.
Annual Parish Meeting
Parish Committee Reports Due

It’s that time again — time for committee and activity chairs to produce their annual reports in preparation for the Annual Parish Meeting. While there’s never a lack of activity in the parish office, we hope to schedule the work we need to do — to complete and compile the reports.

Therefore, all reports are due in the parish office by Friday, January 10. Any submissions not received by that date will not be in the report.

Sunday, January 26, 2020, St. James will hold its Annual Parish Meeting. There will only be one service that day, at 9:00 AM, so that we may all gather together as a single parish family and transact the “business” of our parish.

That day, immediately following the service, parish financials will be presented, an annual report of the various committees and ministries of St. James will be distributed, and new officers of the parish will be elected by members in good standing.

The following is a canonical (“legal”) description of a member in good standing:
Be baptized,
· Be at least 16 years of age,
· Be faithful in corporate worship,
· Have received communion at least three times during the preceding year,
· Have contributed to the financial well-being of the congregation.

Only members in “good standing” will be eligible to vote for our new officers; however all are invited to attend, become more informed about the life of St. James, and prepare yourself to more fully participate in the life of the St. James parish family.

Interviews with potential 2020 wardens

Senior Warden Nominee—John Umland
John and his wife Carla attend the 10 o’clock service and sit up front on the right side. Ken Moorhead, whom they drive to church, sits with them. John has been aware of St. James ever since he moved here because as he says, “The steeple is hard to miss.” He has been a member for five years, he likes “the generosity of the episcopal theology”. He is on the vestry now and serves on the Faith in Action committee. He attends the Adult Christian Formation classes regularly. He volunteers at the Homeless Hospitality Center and serves on the Board of Start Fresh, the local refugee resettlement program.

Junior Warden Nominee—Chuck Sharp
Chuck and his husband usually attend the 10 o’clock service and sit a little more than midway to the front on the right side. They both act as greeters and ushers. He and David saw the Episcopal Church WelcomesYou sign in 1986 and tried St. James on where the Lewis and Merrill families befriended them. They returned last year after an extended time in Holland for a work assignment. He is an active member of the Faith in Action committee and went on the trip to the border in September. He spends a lot of time supporting various members of the parish and community. He attends Centering Prayer and Christian Formation classes when he can.
Birthdays

January
1  Henry Peyton
2  Scott Wardwell
5  Kelly Dunning-Vazquez
5  Sean Dunning-Vazquez
5  Myrna Fulton
6  Diane Theis
7  Carla Woodward
7  Edward Rae
10  Ann Burdick
18  Alma Dunning
22  Florence Bath
23  Ranjit K. Mathews

February
3  Laura Jean Brewster
9  Mary Lycan
11  Deanna Bossdorf
13  Wilbert Miller
17  Joanna Delancy
19  Timothy Breitenstein
20  William Crawford

St. James Supper Group
Join fellow parishioners for dinner, fun and fellowship. We meet at a local restaurant for the fun of being together and trying new restaurants.

January Gathering: Friday, January 24th at 6:00 PM
The Spice Club Restaurant, located at 239 Main Street, Niantic

February Gathering: Friday, February 28th at 6:00 PM
Mi Casa Mexican Restaurant, 31 Golden Street, New London

Please contact Lori Sarkett at 860.287.5500 or lorisarketthne@gmail.com for more information. Rides are available and encouraged!

St. James Book Club
On Thursday January 23rd at 6:00 PM, the book group will meet at the home of Deb Downes, 1015 Groton Long Point Road, Groton. The book "Northanger Abbey" by Jane Austen will be discussed.

On Thursday February 27th at 6:00 PM, the book group will meet at the home of Alma Peterson, 863 Montauk Ave., New London. The book "One day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" by Alexander Solzhenitsyn will be discussed.

Books are on reserve at the New London Public Library. Please bring your driver's license and local library card to pick up the book. For more information about the book group, please contact Lori Sarkett at 860.287.5500 or lorisarketthne@gmail.com.
Church School

Happy New Year St. James Church Family!

The church school teachers would like to begin the new year by saying a big “Thank you” to all of you for supporting and encouraging our church school with our various endeavors.

There is never a dull moment down here at the church school room. We have had a busy few months learning about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and mapping out their journey through the desert into the promised land. We learned about a couple of Bible superheroes like Samson and David. In December we transitioned to the New Testament, where we revisited the stories leading to and including the birth of Jesus. We will be focusing on the New testament for the next few months until Easter.

Our church school children will be hosting a theme-based coffee hour on one of the Sundays in the coming weeks. Please look out for the date in the weekly announcements.

Peace and prayers,
Robin, Gena and Johanna

Here are some pictures from church school.

Making Christmas cards for our parishioners who can’t make it to church regularly.

Addy, Cora and Dhruv teaching/acting out the lesson about God appointing Joshua as the new leader.

Children reflecting and writing about their different gifts and how they share their gifts with others.

Mapping out the Israelites’ journey through the desert into the promised land.
Carolining at New London Rehab, Beechwood and Harbor Village

Collaborating with Caring for Creation to plant seeds that will help with pollination come Spring.

Thank you Lanz Family for hosting us.
Pollinator Pathways
St. James Caring for Creation Committee and the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network of which St. James is a member have already signed on to New London’s Pollinator Pathway Project. Pollinator pathways provide a wildlife corridor providing habitat and nutrition for pollinators and healthy pesticide-free yards and public spaces for pollinators, pets and families.

The Sunday School got together with Judy Benson and their teachers after they went caroling and planted wild flowers in jugs. First they cut the gallon milk jug in half. Then they filled the bottom half with dirt. They then took seeds off of milkweed, coneflower, thistle, goldenrod and NY iron rod plants and put them in the dirt. They poured a layer of sand on top and placed them outside where they are expected to sprout in the spring.

Look for ways you can help join this project or start one in your own community. Visit Pollinator-pathway.org to find out about projects that already exist in CT. There will be an informational meeting on January 11, 2020 (Networking at 10:00 AM, Program at 11:00 AM). It is being held in Room 101 in New London Hall at Connecticut College. You may park in any space marked for faculty on Saturdays). Sea Grant’s Coastal Certificate Gardening Classes will be held in March. They will focus on supporting pollinators this year. Pollinators are bees, birds, insects, bats and small mammals that move pollen from one plant to another. Look in the Sunday bulletin for more specific information about these classes and other opportunities. You can also talk to Deacon Ellen or email her at deaconellen98@yahoo.com.

Caring for Creation
The Caring for Creation Committee will meet at 5:30 p.m. on January 9 and February 13 in the parlor and at 5:30 PM on the second Thursday of every month in 2020. Projects on our agenda for the new year include working with Deacon Ellen on a Pollinator Pathways project, planning activities to mark Earth Day on April 22, continuing to support the church obtaining solar panels and a new roof for the Parish Hall and planning a group hike in the spring. We've got a core group of dedicated members but we'd love to have some new folks join us! For information, contact Judy Benson, chairwoman, at: moss153@att.net.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Benson, chair
On Sunday, January 26th, The Anglican Singers will offer a service of choral evensong for Epiphany. Featured will be works congruent with this season, including a motet by Renaissance German composer Johannes Eccard; the Service in G (Magnificat and Nunc dimittis) of English composer—and centenarian—Francis Jackson; and a spellbinding anthem by Jackson’s somewhat younger contemporary, Richard Shephard. This service will take place at St. James and begin at 5:00 PM. Please join us, and stay for the reception afterward.

Looking ahead to the remainder of the season, the Singers will present choral evensong for Lent on March 1st. On April 26th, the final evensong of the 2019–2020 season will feature works of Adrian Batten, former director Simon Jacobs, Herbert Brewer, and Edward Bairstow. From August 8th through August 17th, the ensemble will travel to the UK to serve as choir-in-residence at Worcester Cathedral, situated in the city of the same name.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Carr Bingham, Secretary
The Anglican Singers

Outreach Project for January and February

It’s that time of year — when we begin our collection for the Covenant Shelter. We need to provide coffee for the residents of the shelter. We collect coffee, tea, hot chocolate, sugar and sugar substitute, non-dairy creamer, and juice boxes for the children residing there. Your donations may be brought to church any Sunday, or during the week you may bring them to the parish office during office hours.

TO ENSURE DONATIONS GO TO THE RIGHT PLACE, PLEASE CLEARLY MARK YOUR DONATIONS “FOR COVENANT SHELTER”
Christian Formation Program

We will learn about The Episcopal Church during the Epiphany season, beginning on Wednesday, January 15th at 6:00 PM. All you wanted to know about this Church we call home. Worship is at 5:15 PM in Hallam Chapel. Class begins at 6:00 PM. For those who haven’t had time to eat, please feel free to bring your food to eat during the class. We are using, *A Faith for the Future* by Jesse Zink as a reference tool during the course. Please see Deacon Ellen Adams or Fr. Ranjit for more details.

Centering Prayer (meditation)

A Centering Prayer Meditation group will meet on Saturday, January 11 and February 8 in the Hallam Chapel from 8:30 to 10:00 AM.

Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God’s presence within us.

Contemplativeoutreach.org is a wonderful website to look deeper into this practice of meditation.

Sincerely,

Nancy Higgins

The Writers Group

Do you have a writing project you don’t make time for? Do you like to journal? Do you simply enjoy writing poetry? If so, please join the St. James Writers Group.

Our group is ‘no pressure’. It’s a time to make a commitment with yourself to write. We don’t share work or critique each other. We just sit quietly and write and write.

We meet on the second and fourth Monday of each month from 6:30 - 8:00 PM. Upcoming sessions are: January 13 & 27 and February 10 & 24. Members of the community are welcome to join us. Bring a friend!

Questions? Contact Emma Palzer-Rae by email at emmapalzererae@gmail.com or by phone 860.961.6067.

Socks for the Homeless Hospitality Center

Many thanks to all our parishioners for participating with the annual gifting of new socks for the guests of the Homeless Hospitality Center. On Christmas morning, a package of wrapped, new socks were given to each of the guests.
Many thanks to our parish family and friends of the parish whose generosity and support made a huge difference to our adopted families this Christmas season. Special thanks to the elves who ran the cookie platter fundraiser this year. The proceeds assisted us with purchasing gifts and gift cards for our adopted families.

Blessings!

The Christmas Giving Tree committee

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**Hats, Mittens and Scarves**

The cold weather arrived with December and elf Walt and I were able to deliver over 400 sets of hats, mittens and scarves to the elementary schools, Covenant Shelter, Homeless Hospitality Shelter and our adopted Christmas families. This was all made possible by the generosity of all of you and I can’t thank you enough. It is truly wonderful to be blessed with all your donations. The mission never stops and I will gladly collect your donations all year long. My knitters worked extra hard this year and I thank them for their time and talent. You certainly have shared with many people. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone.

Sue Chojnacki, chair
860.440.3427

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**St. James Christmas Giving Tree**

Many thanks to our parish family and friends of the parish whose generosity and support made a huge difference to our adopted families this Christmas season. Special thanks to the elves who ran the cookie platter fundraiser this year. The proceeds assisted us with purchasing gifts and gift cards for our adopted families.

Blessings!

The Christmas Giving Tree committee

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**St. James baking with The Drop children**
Jumble Shoppe News

This year’s Christmas Bazaar was quite successful, thanks to the many people who contributed goods and helped with set-up, sales, and clean-up. The Quilters again provided exquisite quilts and craft items for sale, and the Church School children crafted lovely ornaments for sale on the centerpiece tree. Thank you to all! New this year at the venue were Christmas cookies offered for sale by Laura Brewster and her cookie elves, to benefit the Christmas Giving Tree. Judy Benson and her committee from Caring for Creation, along with support from the Altar Guild, were on hand to offer people ready-to-use, multi-use shopping bags as a fund-raiser for the solar roof project.

The Jumble Shoppe continues to need bed linens, towels and kitchen wares, as these items are always in demand by our customers. Costume jewelry is also a big seller. We are accepting donations of winter clothes throughout the next two months. Bringing out new items for display always sparks sales! Please bring donations during shop hours on Tuesday or Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., whenever possible. If this time does not work for you, please contact Dorothy Sieburg at 860-710-1649 to arrange for drop-off or pick-up of donations.

Many thanks to all parishioners who support the Jumble Shoppe as a way to offer high quality used goods to our neighbors and enable St. James to send donations to dozens of missions and community service organizations throughout the year.

Blessings in the New Year,
Dorothy Sieburg, Manager

St. James Quilters

Our mission is to make quilts for the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) Nurse Partnership (which cares for new mothers). We will be donating a number of quilts to the VNA before the end of the year and look forward to creating more in 2020.

The quilters were very busy making crafts in November and December for the St. Nicholas Bazaar.

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 need to know how to quilt as our experienced quilters will gladly teach you. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Mary Chartier at 860.443.0590.

Margaret Murallo, member
Memorials

Each Sunday we adorn the Altar with flowers (greenery during the season of Advent), light a Sanctuary Candle, and consume bread and wine. An Altar flower donation is $45; Sanctuary Candle $5; and, Communion Wine or Communion Wafers, $10. You may donate as a memorial honoring someone deceased, or as a thank-offering to celebrate a birthday, anniversary or other special event in your life. Contact the parish office or an Altar Guild member for more information.

Instagram & Facebook

Karla Umland is curating our Instagram page. Ron Ward and Emma Palzere-Rae will be taking photos for our Facebook page. Please don’t be alarmed if they are taking photos as she is doing it to augment our social media presence and witness to the Gospel. If there is a problem having your picture placed on social media, please reach out to Fr. Ranjit.

With much respect,

Ranjit

Vestry Highlights

At the December Vestry Meeting, the Vestry voted unanimously to accept the 2020 Budget. Jerry Miller and his committee were praised on their hard work and diligence in getting this budget together.

A report was presented from Stephanie Brandon and Fr. Ranjit about the recent Arizona/Mexico Border Trip. A total of $3,500 was donated towards this endeavor. A donation of $500.00 was given to the Tucson Samaritans, and the remainder was given to a local shelter to help with the immigrants.

A presentation was given by The Reverend Mark Robinson, who spoke about the Joining Jesus Campaign, that the Vestry will consider and discuss at a later meeting.

The Parish Voting List was accepted, and will be available at the Annual Meeting on January 26, 2020.

Ann Burdick,
Parish Clerk

Farewell dear friends
Bea McLaughlin
Charlie Kepner
Anthony Ficarra

Memorials
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.

Stewardship

Your stewardship committee is pleased to report that as of December 10, 2019, 59 financial pledges for 2020 have been received. The total pledged amount from these 59 pledges is $173,302. Several more pledges have been received but they will not be tabulated before this article must be submitted. At about this time last year, 68 pledges had been received totaling $150,685. To those who have pledged or intend to do so, thank you for your generous support for Christ’s ministry in and through Saint James parish.

Martin Luther spoke of Christians as being “little Christs” to others. In Holy Baptism, by daily dying and rising with Christ, that is, through repentance, we serve and bless others as Christ has served and blessed us. This is what we experience in the Saint James community. Thank you for your faith made active in love.

Your stewardship committee:
Stephanie Brandon, Sue Menghi, Chuck Sharp, Ron Ward and Bob Bowlin

Pledge Questions

Is your current (2019) pledge up to date? Please make sure that your 2019 contributions are caught up as we approach the busy holiday season. Charitable contributions for tax purposes cannot be made for 2019 after December 31, 2019.

Why don’t I have 2020 Pledge Envelopes? Pledge envelopes are issued as completed pledge cards are received. We try to issue the same number each year to individuals whenever possible. If you are not sure as you what you are financially able to give—no problem, just complete a pledge card stating you will give as you are financially able. If your financial situation changes, we can update the amount at any time.

Greg Rice,
Pledge Secretary
Parish Financials

ST JAMES CHURCH
TREASURER’S REPORT
December 3, 2019

This report covers from January 1, 2019 to October 31, 2019.

Total Income:
Budgeted Amount: $221,250
Actual Amount: $220,939
Amount Actual is Under Budget: $311

The primary contributor to this is Pledge Income, which is $3,271 under the budgeted amount.

Total Expenses:
Budgeted Amount: $364,205
Actual Amount: $381,927
Amount Actual is Over Budget: $17,722

The primary contributor to this is Plant Maintenance and Operations, which is $14,728 over the budgeted amount.

Net Ordinary Income:
Total Income: $220,939
Total Expenses: $381,927
Net Ordinary Income: -$160,988
Endowment Income Applied $142,960
Net Income -$18,028

Summary: As of October 31, 2019, we are $18,028 behind where we expected to be, based on our 2019 budget.

Investment Summary:
Balance 12/31/2018: $3,233,467
Balance 10/31/2019: $3,580,252
Total Value Change: $346,785
Withdrawal 5%: $142,960
Change Pre-Withdrawal: $489,745

Summary: Our pre-withdrawal investment value has increased by $427,897, about 15.1%, through October 31, 2019. After factoring in the 5% withdrawal, our investments are up $346,785, about 10.7% through October.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald F. Miller, Treasurer
Postmaster: Time Sensitive Material, please deliver immediately.
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED.