



# Open Doors

The Newsletter of St. James Episcopal Church

---

December 2016

F R O M T H E



RECTOR

One of the huge differences when I moved to the U.S. from Australia was Advent. In Australia it's well and truly

coming into summer. The sun is bright, even harsh, and the evenings are long. Christmas carols about snow and cold are sung less and less frequently, and candles can be dangerous in the dry heat.

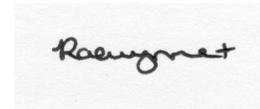
Here in the northeast of the U.S. exactly the opposite is happening. The air is crisp and the dark seems to come unbelievably early. And so the burning of candles and the hope for light connect deeply with us.

One of my favorite parts of the gospels is the opening of the gospel of John. We read it after Christmas, but I invite you to read and reflect upon it this Advent, as a way of preparing for the coming of Christ and opening your hearts to his light and love.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life,

and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." John 1:1-5

Blessings,





## THE WARDENS' COLUMN

### Advent

In one sense Advent is such a rich time of anticipation and promise. We busily plan our days, our gatherings, our purchases. We decorate and listen to joyful music. But in another sense we feel burdened, even if those burdens are of our own making. There is a weight dragging at us.

This year there is an even greater sense of heaviness. The post election mood, whether we are jubilant in victory or stunned by loss, presents us as individuals and as a nation with one very clear truth: we are a country deeply divided. Naturally, with only two major political parties, there is always a divide. But this divide we have within us is as dramatic and mind bending as they come.

The Convention last month focused on "Racial Justice and Reconciliation". A worth and compelling theme brought to life vividly throughout the Convention. But the chasm facing us is even broader, deeper, more diverse. It is economic, social, educational. It encompasses race, gender, ethnicity, belief. It speaks to the loss of power and authority. There are so many who feel their voices are no longer heard, their vote no longer counts.

So how does one cross the divide and begin the healing process? When our bishop was asked if he had "come to make more trouble" or to help, it raised the question for him of how our message, as disciples of Christ, had gone so terribly wrong. Here he was a man of the cloth, there to support and console, and yet taken for a trouble maker, not a healer.

And it raises the question in our own community – how is our church, our faith, perceived by our neighbors? As we cast

### CHRISTMAS AT ST. JAMES

#### **Christmas Eve - December 24**

5:30 p.m. Family service with Nativity Pageant and Eucharist

9:00 p.m. Traditional candlelit Christmas Eve Eucharist with music for the season

#### **Christmas Day - December 25**

9:30 a.m. Christmas Eucharist

#### **Christmas 1 - January 1**

9:30 a.m. Service of Lessons & Carols

#### **Epiphany 1 - January 8**

Epiphany Brunch following the 9:30 a.m. service.

about for hope in a time of vehement protest and profound insecurity, we need to think about what we can do to make things better. As with most problem solving, the first step is the hardest.

Here at St. James, and in all our parishes island-wide, we have been asked by our bishop to exercise our faith, to spread the Word, to open our arms not only to our friends but also to strangers. "Acts of kindness" take on a life of their own. We can engage a parishioner we have not spoken to before. We can invite an acquaintance to Christmas Eve services. Give a small bouquet or fresh baked cookies to a neighbor who seldom gets out of the house. Carry around a couple of extra toys in the trunk of the car, just in case. Or call someone who is newly bereaved with words of comfort. The size of the gift hardly matters. The giving is everything.

As we approach the light of that miraculous star guiding all to Bethlehem, let us bring together all who are in the shadows and share the beauty of that light.

Lord Jesus...clothe us in your spirit that we,  
reaching out our hand in love,  
may bring those who do not know you  
to the knowledge and love of you.  
*(Prayer for Mission, Book of Common Prayer)*

In peace,  
*Alex & Jennifer*

## **PLEDGES FOR 2017**

As of December 1, 63 parishioners have made pledges of support for St. James for a total of \$146,364.00. It is not too late to make a pledge if you haven't done so. Pledge cards are available in the rack at the back of the church, or in the office. Completed cards can be placed in the offering plate on Sunday, or mailed to the church office. If you make a pledge, you will receive a statement at the end of the year for tax purposes. Please prayerfully consider how you can make a difference by supporting St. James' programs and ministries.

## **CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

All parishioners are invited to the annual St. James Church Christmas Luncheon which will be held on Tuesday, December 6, 12:30 p.m. at the Garden Grill on North Country Road (25A) in Smithtown. The \$35 cost includes all. Contact Fjeril Deal (631-724-3720) to make your reservation today.

## **BAKE A BATCH FOR THE FOOD PANTRY**

Attention bakers! As in past years, we will be running our "Bake-a-Batch for the Food Pantry" project during the month of December.

Many of us enjoy baking cookies for our family and friends. This month, when you are doing your baking, why not bake a batch for the clients of the Smithtown Emergency Food Pantry, who would really appreciate a special treat during the Christmas season? This year, we have invited the parents and children of the Smithtown Nursery School to participate, as well.

Cookies don't have to be fancy – they just have to taste good and travel well. This is a great way to get the kids involved! You can use slice and bake dough, or your own favorite recipes. Cookies may be wrapped by the dozen and labeled as to type and whether there are nuts included.

You may bring the cookies to coffee hour on Sunday and leave them in the designated basket, or leave them in the basket in the hallway outside the church near the Food Pantry cart. They will be transported to the Pantry at the beginning of each week.

- Laurie Mannix

### **ADOPT-A-FAMILY**

If you are participating in the annual Adopt-a-Family program, please be sure to have all gifts in by Sunday, December 4, so that they can be organized for transport to the pick-up site. Thank you to Donna Guinaw and Claudette Plaschka for organizing this program, and to Jack Schultheis for delivering the gifts again this year.

### **PICK-A-STAR**

If you picked a star off the tree on Sunday, November 27, please have the gifts for those in the residential homes back to Stephanie by Sunday, December 11. Be sure to attach the star to the gift. Gifts will be delivered to those in the UCP homes on Sunday, December 18 at 2 p.m.

### **FOOD PANTRY STAFFING**

St. James is responsible for staffing the Food Pantry in January. A sign up sheet is available in Mills Hall for those who wish to volunteer to help out. Please sign up today!

### **2016 PLEDGES**

If you made a pledge for 2016, please be sure to have all contributions for the year into the office by December 31, 2016, so that you may be properly credited for tax purposes.

### **JAM SALE**

Just in time for Christmas stocking stuffers or hostess gifts, we will be offering a limited selection of St. James' famous jam for sale on Sunday, December 11 during coffee hour. Jams are \$5 for an 8 oz. jar.

### **GIVING THANKS**

On Sunday, November 20, we offered thanks for the many good gifts we have received. Here are some responses:

#### **In my life I give thanks for...**

All the blessings of my church family  
and my own family.

My ability to cope with my  
health issues.

My wife, kids & grandkids.

Our democracy.

My comfortable life.

Good friends.

The class of nine men who received service dogs, and are returning home today, whose lives have been so different from mine, but with whom I share more than I would have realized.

Police, firemen and military. People who sacrifice their safety for all of us.

The restoration of life  
 to my critically injured grandson.  
 Mom, cat, Dad.  
 The caring gifts of my neighbors and  
 friends.  
 The healing love letter of song.  
 My family and the continued closeness we  
 share with God.  
 My children, their health and happiness.  
 That my Mom is now living with me.  
 That through God I always seem to have  
 enough of what I need.  
 The autistic children I work with and the  
 staff that works with them.  
 My school teachers.  
 My dog.  
 Pick-a-Star Christmas tree - bringing  
 happiness to those who are homebound, in  
 nursing homes, or disabled.  
 For those who visit nursing homes singing  
 Christmas carols Christmas week.  
 The services that were given to my child  
 by the community. It gave him a happy life.  
 God's grace.  
 Strangers who say "hello".  
 Living in a free country.  
 Being able to enjoy the blessings  
 surrounding us.  
 Recovery and good health.  
 Two granddaughters and a third on the way.  
 A loving and supportive spouse.  
 The love I share with others  
 and they share with me.  
 God putting Igor in my life – a man who  
 puts God in all that he does.  
 The healing beauty of the natural world – of  
 woods, flowers, birds, green things, the  
 Long Island Sound, the sky. Creation speaks  
 to me of the hope and renewal promised in  
 Jesus' death and resurrection.  
 The blessing of new life after death  
 in the person of my niece, Eliza.  
 The passion of clergy who do not believe the  
 church is dying, but continually work to  
 nurture new life.  
 Holy Spirit.  
 Doctors who serve us.

My encouragement from God who keeps me  
 focused and strong.  
 Hope, strength, and faith.  
 Wonderful friends.  
 My twin grandsons who were born several  
 weeks prematurely, but who have grown  
 into healthy and happy three-year-olds.  
 The work I'm called to do and the gifts to  
 accomplish the work.  
 Every new day.  
 The power of love over hate.

**Here at St. James I give thanks for...**

The adult acolytes and how they minister to  
 the younger acolytes.  
 Being surrounded by prayer – in church and  
 in the prayer chain.  
 How the parish community comes together  
 to help each other in times of need.  
 The love and kindness I receive.  
 A beautiful place to worship.  
 Those who serve.  
 Being accepted.  
 The love of Jesus.  
 Caring and loving friends.  
 Our worship together year after year.  
 Sharing of faith.  
 Coffee and cookies after service.  
 The strength to attend St. James from a  
 distance.  
 The Body of Christ.  
 The Vestry.  
 Music.  
 The worship service.  
 The ways in which God has led this  
 congregation these last ten years into greater  
 life and hope.  
 The nourishing food of the sacraments, and  
 being welcomed into a set-apart time in  
 which to quietly reorient my life toward the  
 most essential things.  
 Peaceful serenity.  
 The memories of happy and sad times  
 commemorated here.  
 The beautiful children in Godly Play.  
 My faith community.

A renewed sense of the amazing presence  
and grace of our loving God!  
All of the people at St. James  
and those who have gone before us.  
The support and help that was given to our  
family in the last year by the members  
of our parish.  
The ecumenical Thanksgiving service.  
Our priest.  
The love and generosity I see in everyone.  
The word of our Lord.  
The spiritual resources to get me through  
many difficult times.  
Helping others through prayers and deeds.  
The feeling of being at home.  
The opportunity to share in the church  
worship and holidays.  
The knowledge of God's love, strengthened  
through teaching, every Sunday.  
Being able to worship God with old and new  
friends we've made over many years.  
For all blessings.  
The Food Pantry.  
The giving people with whom we worship;  
their love and hope.  
The warm welcome from everyone.  
For a spiritual home where I can connect to  
God by seeing first hand the giving,  
accepting, and tolerant community of a  
loving church family. For this I am truly  
thankful.

## A THANK YOU NOTE FROM THE SMITHTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On October 29, members of the Cemetery Committee and other parishioners hosted a Cemetery tour for the Smithtown Historical Society. Following the tour, we received this note:

“Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Smithtown Historical Society, I would like to thank you for the cemetery tour you provided to our members and to the community yesterday. Donna, Ruth, and Leighton did a marvelous job sharing your history with our group. I was so impressed with the time it took to prepare for the tour and the passion they had in sharing their knowledge.”

Best,

Marianne Howard  
SHS Executive Director

## NEWS OF THE PARISH FAMILY

Our prayers and sympathy go out to the family of **Ralph Martinsen**, a long time member of St. James, who passed away on November 23 after an extended illness. His funeral was held in the church on Monday, November 28. Please keep his wife, Pat, and children, Karin, Stephan, and Brooke, and their families in your prayers.

Congratulations to **Debbie Lawton and Igor Sepulveda**, who will be married at St. James on December 23. We wish them much love and happiness in their life together!

## DECEMBER CALENDAR

- 1 N.A. meeting 7:30 p.m.
- 4 **Advent 2**
  - Holy Eucharist I 8:00 a.m.
  - Holy Eucharist II 9:30 a.m.
  - Children's Formation classes
  - Adopt-a-Family gifts due
- 5 Food Addiction group
- 6 Morning Prayer 9 a.m.
  - Parish Christmas Luncheon at The Garden Grill 12:30 p.m.
  - Recovery group 7:30 p.m.
- 7 Knitters' group 11:30 a.m.
  - Cemetery Committee grave blanket decorating 4:30 p.m.
- 9 Challenger Teen group Christmas Party 6 p.m. - Mills Hall
- 11 **Advent 3**
  - Holy Eucharist I 8:00 a.m.
  - Holy Eucharist II 9:30 a.m.
  - Children's Formation classes
  - Pick-a-Star gifts due
- 12 Vestry meeting 7:30 p.m.
  - Food Addiction group
- 13 Morning Prayer 9 a.m.
  - Recovery group 7:30 p.m.
- 14 Knitters' group 11:30 a.m.
- 15 N.A. meeting 7:30 p.m.
- 18 **Advent 4**
  - Holy Eucharist I 8:00 a.m.
  - Holy Eucharist II 9:30 a.m.
  - Children's Formation classes
  - Decorating of church for Christmas services
  - Pick-a-Star gifts delivery 2 p.m.
- 19 Food Addiction group
- 20 Morning Prayer 9 a.m.
  - Recovery group 7:30 p.m.
- 21 Knitters' group 11:30 a.m.
- 23 Lawton/Sepulveda wedding 2 p.m. Mills Hall reception.
- 24 **Christmas Eve**
  - Family service with Nativity Pageant and Eucharist 5:30 p.m.
  - Traditional candlelit Eucharist 9:00 p.m.

## 25 Christmas Day

- Christmas Day Eucharist 9:30 a.m.
- 26 Office closed.
  - Food addiction group 7:30 p.m.
- 27 Recovery group 7:30 p.m.
- 28 Knitters' group 11:30 a.m.
- 29 N.A. meeting 7:30 p.m.
- 31 **New Year's Eve**

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 EVENTS

- |            |                                 |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| January 8  | Epiphany Brunch                 |
| February 5 | Annual Parish meeting           |
| March 5    | Visitation of Bishop Provenzano |

**DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

Audrey Ercole  
Amy Jeffrey  
Marty Scott  
Julia White  
Kathy Mauro  
Robert Bennett  
Jade Plaschka  
Bob Scott  
Pat Martinsen  
Shirley Huenlich  
Les Bengtson  
Laurie Mannix  
Ron Davies  
Bill Reisenauer  
Genevieve Silano

**DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

Peter & Claudette Plaschka



*Christmas Blessings  
to All*

**CHRISTMAS  
FLOWERS & GREENS**

Each year, members of the Altar Guild, along with other parishioners, do a beautiful job of decorating our church for the Christmas season. You can share in this by honoring your loved ones as a memorial, giving thanks for a special person or significant event in your life, or simply by giving thanks to God, by providing an offering to help defray the cost of the decorations. The names and purpose of this offering will be acknowledged in the bulletins for the Christmas services. Contributions of any amount are appreciated.

You may participate by filling in the form below, enclosing a check (payable to St. James Church) and mailing it to the office, or by using one of the envelopes which can be found in the back of the church. Please return your request to the office by Sunday, December 18, so that it may be included in the bulletins.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Offering for Christmas flowers & greens**

Given by \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In thanksgiving for:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

