



# Open Doors

The Newsletter of St. James Episcopal Church

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May 2008

FROM THE



RECTOR

Occasionally I read something that catches my attention - and holds it.

This month I want to share one with you.

This is a letter to her parish from a priest

who recently participated in Kairos, a program something like Cursillo for people in prison:

"Once many years ago as a lay person, I worked on one of those old-fashioned every-member canvasses. Teams divvied up the whole congregation and visited everyone. We were to seek pledges of course, but we were also charged with listening to how each person viewed their relationship with the church. I was hesitant, but we got prayed-up and fired-up, and went forth, as the Bible says.

People received us courteously for the most part, and we learned far more than we expected to about attitudes towards church. There were some enlightening moments. I remember visiting the especially grand, lavishly-furnished home of a couple with three children. They didn't have time for conversation, and they declined the envelope they could use to make a pledge and seal it inside. "Just put us down for \$100," the woman said. "That's all we can do. Private school tuition for the kids is so high these days."

To this day, I remember my self-righteous, judgmental reaction. This affluent family used more than \$100 a year of the church's childcare costs, I thought. How low is church on their priorities, anyway?

Years later in another parish, I was sitting in conversation with some other parents. We were lamenting the pressure that "travel soccer" put on getting the kids to Sunday School and ourselves to church. There was a moment in the conversation when it seemed we were viewing church attendance and raising kids to be Christians as just another nice and worthwhile activity, along with organized sports, piano lessons, and debate club. You have the scheduling and transportation issues, the desire to raise well-rounded, responsible young people whose academic records will include lots of extracurricular activities to impress the college admissions offices.

But I also had one of those "Aha!" moments. Church, I thought, is not just another activity to be juggled and "fit in" with other worthwhile pursuits. What we do in church isn't just "nice." It's a matter of life and death. Was I being a self-righteous snob? Was I taking a "nice thing" too far? Thinking about these internal questions eventually led me to seminary. But this past weekend, so many years later, I learned more.

With four other Grace Church women, I spent

three and a half days in a women's prison near Richmond doing Kairos, a very structured prison-ministry event. I chafe a little under lots of rules and scripts. I'm a law-abiding sort of a gal, but I cherish the chance to make choices, change my mind, and have breakfast for supper if I feel like it. But I got with the program and did my best.

It's the prison environment itself, though, that so appalled me. The bars and the enclosure of course. But also the rigidity. You eat what and when you're told, and with whom. You line up to be counted like so many cattle, and you wear a shapeless blue shirt, no exceptions. You may possess only certain things. You earn 27 cents an hour at pretty hard labor, and pay the prison over \$7.00 for a phone call home. You sleep in a bunk room with 50 other women when you're told. Don't even ask me about the bathrooms we shared with the inmates.

Just before Kairos weekend, a relative of mine gabbled on by phone about how all the people in prison had committed crimes in order to have free "country club accommodations." I wish she could have joined me for those four days.

Of the few dozen inmates whose lives and stories I came to know, I must say there were a number who were afraid of being released. But it wasn't because they were lazy chiselers who didn't want to work or take responsibility for their lives. It was because they were terrified that if they were returned to their old environments, they would fall back into their old ways. It's so easy for us on the outside to say, "Well, just don't do it."

But going home each would encounter the pull of old relationships, inadequate job

opportunities, available drugs and unresolved addictions, dependent children with school, mental health, and substance problems, relatives with dire medical conditions, and their own past histories of being beaten, sexually abused, abandoned, or deprived of love. It would take the willpower of a saint to overcome all these things.

What I found in these women, though, is a most authentic and powerful desire to be a saint. I am not exaggerating. And I'm not talking about an abstract or self-indulgent or self-dramatizing scenario. They aren't trying to emulate Mother Theresa or gain some heavenly reward.

Rather, they are trying to save their lives.

Their belief in Jesus is not sentimental or intellectual or something "nice" that will make them more respectable or well-rounded. They've come to believe that Jesus, and nothing else, can save them from, quite literally, a fate worse than death. They hardly dare to believe it's true, that they are loved, forgiven, empowered to forgive, and that they can get clean and live changed lives.

They know Jesus is their only hope.

I felt the power and intensity of this reaching for Jesus as a nearly physical force in that claustrophobic, cinder-block basement prison room where we met. It made my own faith feel small and insignificant. And I was appalled to think that being a Christian should in any sense be like an extracurricular "elective."

Prison is not a country club. There's nothing to envy in these inmates' lives. But I tell you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, these women in prison have it right.

Being a Christian isn't a pleasant choice, a respectable part-time hobby, or intellectual assent to a handful of hardly-believable propositions.

It's what you stake your whole life and all eternity on.

What's in the Bible is more important than anything else, and a relationship with God is a matter of life or death. Without God, we hold absolutely nothing of value in our hands. Without God, we perish. It is as simple as that.”

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A personal note: thank you for your prayers for my father. He has had his heart surgery, and as of today (Monday 4/28) is recovering in hospital. Also, Thursday brought that news that Barbara Darling, the priest who mentored me as I explored the possibility of ordination and began seminary, has been appointed the first woman bishop in Melbourne (and second in Australia). She will be consecrated on May 31. So instead taking a planned vacation in late May and early June in CT, I will head to Australia at that time. As well as the consecration, I will be able to visit my parents (which is good given my father's surgery) and stepparents, my 90 year old grandmother, and many friends. I haven't been back for 4 years, so I look forward to it. Please pray for Barbara+ as she prepares for her consecration.

- *Raewynne*

## A WORD FROM THE WARDENS

The contract has been signed for the sale of the house at 493 North Country Road. We now must receive approval from the Diocesan Standing Committee and the Supreme Court of New York before the sale can be finalized.

Marc DeSimone submitted his resignation to the Vestry. The remainder of his term, ending February 2009, will be filled by Charlie Kreussling. Charlie will also serve as chair of the Finance Committee. We thank Marc for his dedication and financial counseling during his term of service on the Vestry.

We encourage ALL members to take part in the Spring Coffee hour discussions - "*Now What?*" *The Future Direction of Our Parish*. Your thoughts, ideas, and dreams are important to be heard and we really want to know what you are thinking.

If you were not able to attend the coffee hour on Sunday, April 27, please speak with Raewynne, Jeff Smith, or Donna Austin. We filled out a questionnaire for the diocese. The Bishop Search Committee is seeking input so that they may develop an accurate profile of our diocese. Please make sure that you fill out a questionnaire and return it to the office this month.

The majority of the Vestry, and Laurie (our Parish Administrator) were able to attend a retreat at Trinity Conference Center in West Cornwall, Connecticut. A beautiful place, wonderful food, but best of all is that we had time to spend together, to get to know each other, so that we can better work for the good of the church.

- *Pat & Jeff*

## **STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL AND YARD SALE**

Once again, the Strawberry Festival and Yard Sale is upon us. This year, in addition to the normal fare, we are adding a craft table, a bake sale table, and a plant table. The Festival will be held on Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup> from 10 A.M. - 3 P.M. Donations for the yard sale may be dropped off following the end of Sunday School on June 8<sup>th</sup>. We would appreciate items of value in good condition. The only way the Festival works is because many people give their time and effort. If you can bake a cake or help set up, give me a call!

*- Jeff Smith*  
816-1376 (cell)  
862-6972 (home)

## **JAM SESSIONS**

In preparation for the upcoming Strawberry Festival, we are again running our weekly jam making sessions in Mills Hall. In addition to the usual seasonal strawberry recipes, we have some new recipes to try. Come and join the fun on any of the following dates:

Thursday, May 1, 4:30 P.M.  
Thursday, May 8, 4:30 P.M.  
Thursday, May 15, 4:30 P.M.  
Thursday, May 22, 4:30 P.M.  
Thursday, May 29, 4:30 P.M.  
Wednesday, June 4, 4:30 P.M.  
Thursday, June 12, 4:30 P.M.  
Thursday, June 19, 4:30 P.M.

All sessions are held in the Mills Hall kitchen. Donations of new 8 oz. and 12 oz. canning jars and large bags of sugar are gratefully accepted, as we are trying to keep

expenses down and revenues up. Call Nancy Rasmussen at 724-2083 for further information.

## **ST. JAMES' OUTREACH**

**Smithtown Food Pantry** - Thank you to all the parishioners who worked at the Food Pantry during April, and thank you for your food donations. We helped feed many families. Although our month to work there is over, the food needs continue. Donations of juice, pork and beans, hearty soups and stews, canned meat and fish, cereal, peanut butter, and jelly are always needed. Drop food off at St. Thomas' parish house (container on back porch) or at our church.

**Episcopal Relief and Development** - Thank you to all who Fasted for Friday Lunch during Lent. We received even more money after the report in last month's newsletter. We were able to send \$720 to ERD to be used for World Hunger Relief.

**A Children's Clothing Collection** - is being held for children in foster care. Place new or clean, gently used clothing, suitable for children from infancy through twelve years old, in the box placed in the hallway of the Christian Education building. Questions? Contact Jerilyn Glogg at 499-6218.

*- Sue Krall*

## BISHOP SEARCH

On Sunday, April 27, parishioners participated in a session that is part of the search for the new Bishop Coadjutor during coffee hour. Questionnaires covering current impressions of the diocese and future hopes for the diocese and new bishop were completed. If you missed our gathering, additional questionnaires are available in the back of the church. They must be completed by mid-May for forwarding to the search committee.

At our meeting, the children were asked for their input. Here are their answers to the question, "What do you like about church?":

- \* Learning about God and Jesus.
- \* Visiting your friends and other people every Sunday.
- \*Smaller churches.
- \*I like to go to Sunday School.
- \*Worshipping God and Jesus.
- \*Many acolytes.
- \*Interesting opportunities.
- \*I like to go to the church because we pray and respect God and we all love God. We love you God. We will !!!

Prayer for the calling of a new bishop:  
*Gracious God, giver of every good and perfect gift, by your Spirit fashion our lives according to the example of your Son, and guide us as we seek to choose a Bishop Coadjutor for our Diocese of Long Island. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory, so that we may receive a faithful pastor who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION & EDUCATION SPRING COFFEE HOUR DISCUSSIONS

### "Now What?" The Future Direction of Our Parish

On April 20 the CF&E Committee hosted a 40 minute coffee hour discussion to draw together the themes of our fall/winter book group discussion of Diana Butler-Bass' *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood is Transforming the Faith*. As a result of this discussion, the group identified the following themes or practices as characteristic of our witness here at St. James:

Hospitality: Welcoming Strangers  
Worship: Experiencing God  
Beauty: Touching the Divine

It was also noted that St. James is a place for Healing and Contemplation for many of us.

Our second session on Sunday, May 18, 10:50 A.M. to 11:30 A.M., will be geared toward "Dreams." Building on the strengths and themes identified in our first session, we will explore the possibilities of what our church could be doing. What are we passionate about? What is Christ calling us to do? (Special note to "8 A.M.ers" unable to make the 10:50 discussion on the 18<sup>th</sup>: we will meet between services on May 25<sup>th</sup> to review the results of the 18<sup>th</sup>.)

Watch the Sunday bulletin for confirmation of the discussion dates for June.

To continue your own reflection, copies of the discussion summaries from fall and winter are available in the narthex.

- Chris Mauro

## YOGA CLASSES

Our yoga classes have gotten off to a good start under the guidance of Mary Jane DeVito. Classes meet on Tuesdays from 5 - 6 P.M. and Thursdays from 7 - 8 P.M., and it is not too late to join. The classes are fun and there is no pressure to perform. Just do what you are able to, and that is good for you! Both men and women attend the classes; no commitment is necessary. Drop in on a class and see what it is all about.

## FESTIVAL OF FILMS AND FAITH

The Festival of Films and Faith, sponsored by the Greater Port Jefferson-Northern Brookhaven Arts Council and local area churches continues during the month of May with two screenings.

The next film, to be shown on May 22, is entitled "The Namesake," and stars Kal Penn. While he respects his immigrant parents and their decision to rear him in his United States birthplace, Gogol Ganguli is torn between Indian traditions and the modern Bostonian lifestyle. Director Mira Nair's though-provoking coming-of-age drama explores first-generation Americans' delicate dance between culture and identity. 2007; rated PG 13.

The last film to be shown, on May 29, is entitled "You Can Count on Me," stars Laura Linney, Rory Culkin, and Mark Ruffalo. Small-town single mom Sammy Prescott is preoccupied with raising her son, Rudy, whose become sullen – and curious about his missing dad. Amid romantic and work troubles, Sammy's wayward brother Terry appears. This intimate, Oscar-nominated

drama won the Sundance Film Festival's Grand Jury Prize. 2000; rated R.

These evenings are always enlightening, though-provoking, fun and delicious. Films are shown at 7 P.M. and followed by a discussion and reception. Free tickets are available in the narthex, or the office.

- Sue Krall

## MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS BUILD FOR HABITAT

On Saturday, May 10, mothers and daughters will be building a Habitat house for a single mother and her daughter. The next day is Mother's Day, of course. How appropriate! At St. James we can help in two ways:

First, if you no longer have a mother to buy a gift for or if you want to give thanks for having a great mother, perhaps you would like to contribute to the supplies needed for this single mother's new Habitat home. If so, make your check payable to "Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk" and write "Mother's Day Build" on the memo line. Send the check to our church office as soon as you are able.

Secondly, if a mom and daughter team from our church would like to help build on May 10, please let me or Ken LeCluse know as soon as possible. We will use the money collected (above) to sponsor you. Habitat requires that the daughters be at least 16 years of age. If you daughter is not yet 16, keep this in mind for a future Mother's Day build.

Sometimes we need to think outside the box: a mom age 55 with a daughter age 30 would qualify too! Call your mom. Or call your daughter. See if she would like to join you. I can't think of a more meaningful way to spend time with your mother (or your daughter). Those who help others, help themselves.

- Sue Krall 862-6563  
- Ken LeCluse 588-1176

### NEWS OF THE PARISH FAMILY

We have several June high school graduates in our parish family this year. At press time we had information on the following:

Jade Plaschka was accepted to all the schools to which she applied, and has chosen to attend SUNY Geneseo, where she will be on the swim team. She is interested in psychology.

Dana Wachter has been accepted to St. Joseph's College where she will also be on the swim team, and has been awarded an academic scholarship. She plans to study elementary special education.

We mourn the passing of two members of our parish family:

Ginger Tuttle passed away on April 12 after a long illness. She was a long time member, who moved to Pawley's Island, SC a few years ago with her husband, Bill. Ginger was a very talented artist, and one of the founders and designers of the Biblical Garden. Our sympathy and prayers go out to Bill and their family at this sad time.

Kathleen Dexter, an active member of our family, passed away on April 13. She was involved in many aspects of church life, an avid golfer, beloved mother and grandmother to a large family, and esteemed businesswoman. A funeral service was held in the church on April 18. Kathleen will be missed. We extend our prayers and sympathy to her family.

In addition, Frances Grottini, mother of Tom Aiuto, passed away suddenly on April 23. We send our sympathy and prayers to Tom, Linda and Marlaina.

On a happier note, George Robert Borden, son of Carleton and Dorothy Smith Borden, will be baptized on Sunday, May 18 at the Congregational United Church of Christ in Valley City, North Dakota. George is the grandson of DuBois T. Smith, formerly of St. James parish. We send our blessings and good wishes as George is welcomed into his life in Christ.



## CALENDAR FOR MAY

- 1 Bible study 10 A.M.  
Jam session 4:30 P.M.  
Yoga 7 P.M.
- 3 LEM/EV Training session  
9 A.M. - Mills Hall
- 4 Maybee farewell party
- 5 Finance Committee 7:30 P.M.
- 6 Yoga 5 P.M.  
Recovery group 7:30 P.M.
- 8 Bible study 10 A.M.  
Jam session 4:30 P.M.  
Yoga 7 P.M.  
Choir rehearsal 8 P.M.
- 10 LEM/EV Training session  
9 A.M. - Mills Hall
- 11 **Mother's Day** - no Sunday  
School classes
- 12 Vestry meeting 7:30 P.M.
- 13 Yoga 5 P.M.  
Recovery Group 7:30 P.M.
- 15 Bible study 10 A.M.  
Jam session 4:30 P.M.  
Yoga 7 P.M.  
Choir rehearsal 8 P.M.
- 18 C.F.E. Book discussion group  
10:50 A.M.
- 20 Yoga 5 P.M.  
Recovery Group 7:30 P.M.
- 22 Bible study 10 A.M.  
Jam session 4:30 P.M.  
Yoga 7 P.M.  
Choir rehearsal 8 P.M.
- 26 **Memorial Day** - office closed
- 27 Yoga 5 P.M.  
Recovery group 7:30 P.M.
- 29 Bible study 10 A.M.  
Jam session 4:30 P.M.  
Yoga 7 P.M.  
Choir rehearsal 8 P.M.

## MAY BIRTHDAYS

Matt Coleman  
Maria Bataller  
Karen Noack  
Barbara LoPresto  
Alyssa Green  
Jeremiah Glogg  
Cathi Hart  
Alec Douglass  
Thomas Mauro  
Ryan White  
Sarah Miller  
Walter Schiff  
Dana Wachter  
Sondra Redfield  
Andrew Linthwaite  
John Donohue  
Allie Brady  
James DeSimone  
Joan Strassle  
Walt Kregler

## MAY ANNIVERSARIES

John & Florence Donohue  
Mike Ledgerwood & Fyayne Thorngate  
Bill & Maria Bataller  
John & Jean Matheson