

Dear Church Friends:

Something has happened in the life of St. James, and all that was, and that is, all that is yet to come is being held lightly in the palm of God's hands. Long before Covid-19 appeared in our lives, we have been wandering what was next for the St. James community and the people it serves. Since the beginning of the year, people have been coming forward to engage in conversation about what is important to them. Many of them are now on the Vestry. And, others are taking on ministries that feed their souls. For instance, Marie Perrin has started a new Yarn Ministry, Val Le Fleur is reaching out to people on our mailing list, Ed Marciniak is helping with the grounds.

The conversation, it seems, has shifted from saving the church to following Jesus. As we look at the traditions and actions of St. James and what his disciples began to create after His ascension, we realize that we need to go are back to basics.

Instead of asking why don't people go to church anymore, we have accepted it. We are now free to ask simple questions such as: "how are you doing," "what is important," "do you need anything," and so on.

During our isolation, most everyone has asked themselves what is important to themselves, what healthy habits do I want to keep when the restrictions lift, and how can I be of help to others today, and going forward.

In this *Scallop Shell*, you will see the shift. Many of the articles are the product of their own self-reflection. As leaders, our Vestry is trying to discern where God might be nudging us grow in faith and action. While each author wrote independently, a common theme emerged: change. In a conversation with our auditor, who is an Episcopalian, about the Church in general, he said, "People want tradition and action." He has been thinking about this deeply as he is trying to find the right church for his family in their new hometown. How can we engage those that need tradition and action?

Something has shifted in the world, yet we remain moored to the dock that is St. James especially in this storm. Many people of different generations are coming forward to help. They are willing to take a risk and sail out into the choppy waters to see what we will find.

I give thanks to God for the Vestry, our musicians Peter Leibert and Mike LaFleur, and the rest of the worship team including Wendy Connal-Nicolaou, Bob Peck, and Deacon Ron who have made possible our foray into Virtual worship. For those of you who cannot join us for worship in-person or virtually, please know how much we miss you! If you want to learn how to connect virtually, call the office and Dawn will connect you with a "coach."

I remain in prayer for you and your family, and our nation.

Blessings, Kim+



9/11 Ceremony

On Friday, September 11, 2020 Members of Preston VFW, Preston Fire Company, parish members and members of Preston Boy Scout Troop 75 lowered our Nations Flag to half-staff as a memorial prayer was said for the nearly 3,000 people who were killed on September 11. We will pray for peace and reconciliation before God with our enemies. Let them know "We will NEVER FORGET" this tragic day to honor all who died and their families and friends who still feel the pain of 9/11 every moment of every day.



St. James Website

We have a new website thanks to Wendy Connal-Nicolaou who has developed the site and continues to expand the content. Currently, the site has information on our website, education classes and other events. The site will continue to be enhanced as we including recording of our services and the ability to buy Fish and Chips on line before pick up. Please check out the site at www.stjamespreston.org



St. James Parish Yarn Ministry

Autumn is here and winter is just around the corner, and with the cold weather coming it is a perfect time to officially launch the Yarn Ministry and help out people who may be very cold this winter. Already, we have made many scarves and soap sacks (a sack made out of cotton to hold soap that person without a home can use to carry the soap as well as use it to wash up) to bring to St. Vincent de Paul Place in December. We are looking for more scarves, soap sacks, hats, and 7" by 9" sections that will be made into blankets. All donations will go to St. Vincent de Paul Place and the New London Homeless Hospitality Center. Do you knit, crochet or use a loom and want to help? Please email

st.james.parish.yarn.ministry@gmail.com or call Marie Perrin at 860-334-2026. We have a limited supply of donated yarn for use as well. If you do not knit, crochet, etc., but want to help by donating yarn, we are looking for Acrylic 4ply yarn any color.



COVID-19 Ways to Protect yourself and Others

Clean your Hands Often-Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Avoid Close Contact-Stay home as much as possible. If you go out, put distance (6 feet) between yourself and others.

Wear a mask or face Covering-Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around other people in public.

Clean & Disinfect-frequently touched surfaces daily. Including tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, desks, phones, faucets.

If you feel Sick-Please call your medical provider. Do not hesitate to call 911 if you have a medical emergency.

Do your part to help prevent the spread!

How to connect during social isolation

Follow us on Facebook at:

St. James Episcopal Church Preston

Sunday Worship Service - 9:00 am on Facebook Live or on Zoom

ECCT link for regional info

<https://www.episcopalct.org/>

With current Covid19 updates:

<https://www.episcopalct.org/covid-19-coronavirus-updates/>

Our Local Food Collection

We are still accepting donations of non-perishable food, hygiene & cleaning products. Please leave contributions in the foyer of Punderson Hall. Your continued support is greatly appreciated!

Donations support: St Vincent de Paul Place, the New London Homeless Hospitality Center & the Preston Food Pantry.



St. James Staff

The Rev. Kim Litsey, Priest in Charge

Cell 860.967.8336 | Email: kim@stjamespreston.org

Deacon Ron Steed | Cell 860-326-9576

Bill Day, Bookkeeper | Office Hours: Tuesday 9a to 2p

Dawn Perras, Office Coordinator | Office Hrs: M-T-W 9a to 2p

Office: 860.889.0150 | Email: dawn@stjamespreston.org

Myra Day, Organist

*If you would like to be taken off our directory, contact the church office.
Thank you.*

Dear St. James Family,

Change is a necessary part of life, and it can also be difficult. Change can cause anxiety, instill fear, and be overall unsettling; and it can also be the remarkable transition from what was to what can and will be. This pandemic is changing our world for the foreseeable future, the time for change is here. St James is responding to these changes.

A significant change for St James is our newly formed Vestry. We have members with a great deal of experience and knowledge of the history of St James, some newer members to St James, and some long-term members but in new roles. As a mission focused Vestry, we begin each meeting with a practice called Dwelling in the Word. We read and reflect on a passage from scripture that intentionally focuses us on listening to each other and discerning what God is up to amongst us. It asks us to be present in the moment, aware of our thoughts, patient with others, and listening deeply to the Spirit.

This reflection has brought us to ask what is God calling us to do in our communities. Who are we are we serving, who should we be serving and how?

This question has brought us to understand these times challenge us to do our work in new ways. Our focus is also on the pastoral care of our parish and we have had to become very creative in thinking of ways to keep our St James family engaged in prayer and to ensure that those ministries and services that can be continued are done so in a safe way. While we have not figured it all out, we have made progress. Jan and Phil reminded us to use the local publications like the Preston Pipeline to get the word out. Wendy Connal-Nicolaou has brought us into the 21st century improving our online presence and updating our website. Wendy and Bob Peck have been instrumental in connecting Sunday services online and ensuring each week that all the technology works so we can worship safely as a community in this environment. This new medium, (for us anyway), is allowing us to reach others outside of our local community with folks joining us from as far away as Canada! And if you have not heard from a member of the Vestry yet we are reaching out to our fellow parishioners to say hello, check how you are doing and commit to staying in touch. Please give us feedback on how that is

working. Your Vestry has been focusing on that St James is secure and sustainable during these critical times when reduced revenue and stock market volatility have become the temporary norm. While we still face financial challenges, because of the generosity of all of you we are holding our own, thank you. Bob is also busy thinking about stewardship, how do we continue to be the thriving community we are. Lisa Sharpe graciously took on the challenging role of treasurer in these trying times and is quickly learning about the finances of St James.

The worship team is thinking about the upcoming holidays. How will we celebrate the birth of our Savoir? How can we add spiritual meaning, fellowship and inject some fun into this holiday during these difficult times? We would welcome anyone who has ideas and would like to join this conversation.

We are all going through an unprecedented time. As a church—and as a people—we are being tested every day. The leadership shown by our dedicated clergy and staff, and our engaged Vestry has been exemplary. St James is a strong and faithful community that can face adversity and come out better because of it. As Wardens we are honored and proud to be members of the St James family.

Kathy Buck
Co-Warden

Mary Bawza
Co-Warden

Friendship Gathering

Members of St. James Church Preston and Grace Church Yantic recently gathered to celebrate a Friendship service together. About 34 Members of the two churches held an outdoors fellowship service using social distancing. Braking bread together at last after the pandemic shut down. The weather helped make this gathering a wondrous and glorious blessing in GOD's name.



In Photo: Peter Liebert [L]; Mike LaFleur [R]; Jane Liebert [BR]

Treasurer's Report

As your new treasurer, I want to tell you how grateful the Vestry is for your continued participation and support of our parish members, as well as others who have been worshipping with us during the Covid-19 pandemic. We sincerely hope all is well with you and your families and loved ones.

I have been working with our wardens, bookkeeper, other vestry members, and Rev. Kim to assess our current financial situation in an effort to plan for the future.

We have been fortunate to have many members continue with their weekly pledges. Some members have paid their pledges ahead of schedule which has been very helpful. Additionally, some people have generously increased their giving. Our thanks to each and everyone of you!

We were able to secure a Paycheck Protection Program Loan, (PPP) to cover the salaries of our staff. However, those funds will run out at the end of October. The good news is we are applying for "loan forgiveness," which God willing will make this a grant as allowed by this government program. We also have taken a loan from the Diocese in the amount of \$40,000.00 to ensure we have funds to cover expenses. As of August, we are in the process of paying this loan back. And as you know we have been unable to raise money through special events, and we lost \$13,000 in expected revenue from Fish and Chips. Fluctuations in the stock market has lowered the level of our endowment funds also. As a result, since March of 2020, the Vestry decided not to take withdrawals in order to allow the principle to grow. The good news with improvements in the market the endowment has recovered much of the earlier losses. However, we know that this is an unpredictable year.

We have now come to the point that we will need to begin to draw on the endowments monthly because our expenses will be greater than our income. It was a difficult decision, but a necessary one in order to continue to serve the St. James community.

I look forward to keeping you abreast of our financial picture especially as we move through this stewardship season. If you have any questions, please give me a call.

Lisa Sharpe, Treasurer

Seeing these times of change as an opportunity

by Bob Peck

As we move deeper into the fall of 2020, the only thing that seems certain is uncertainty. Most of us have experienced change to some degree over the years and in every instance, we have persevered and adapted. There are many reasons for this; our nature is to be tenacious and the things we hold dear are ever so important to us. In hindsight, we find that change was the opportunity needed to adjust our lives and stay current; to remain relevant.

These past eight months have turned most of the things we took for granted upside down. To continue our life journey requires change. We have had to learn new ways of communicating with each other, adapted to new ways of providing for our families, and come to fully understand the times we are living in so we and our beloved are safe and secure.

We are blessed in our Christian Faith Community to have our foundational beliefs and doctrines to strengthen us as we adapt. Our prayers and covenants provide peace in a time of turmoil. It is at times like this we need to change the way we look at life. We can see God in the midst of the chaos, leading us towards the epicenter of human suffering. Here, as Christians, is where we will do our work. At this moment we are reassured that we will overcome and, in so doing, we will help mend the brokenness of the world.

Vestry members are making wellness calls. We want to keep in touch and ensure the congregation's well-being. We also hope to start a number of conversations where we can discuss one another's hopes for mending our broken world and how St. James, as a Church family, can positively impact specific areas of society. We hope to provide an intimate space where everyone can share their concerns. In order to make Change an Opportunity in our lives, we hope to develop a focus on Parish Mission and get a commitment of time and financial support from all of our active parishioners to be the change agents Jesus asks us to be. Together we can make change in our community, thus making opportunity for spiritual and social transformation for us and all of the people that are now coming to us.

Our Work

With the increased violence against black and brown people in our country a study group has formed in order to learn more about racism and our role in combating it. There are about 8 of us on any given Monday evening, coming together to learn about and discuss the concepts of such things as the origins and history of racism, white supremacy, and how our whiteness makes us complicit in systemic racism. We started at the deep end of the pool by reading White Fragility, Why It Is So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DeAngelo. This was a difficult read for most of us. DeAngelo, a white woman, explores white fragility, which is when white people become defensive when confronted with the idea they are complicit in systemic racism. Racism as a practice is not restricted to bad people. We have learned racism is inherently about power within society, wielded by those who have it against those who don't. White control of society became the "normal" or "standard" state of affairs in our society. The purpose of this book is to change white people's understanding of racism and asks that instead of feeling guilt or shame rather we reflect, listen, grapple with and seek more understanding in our relationships with black and brown people.

We are currently reading Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram Kendi. Kendi organizes the book through five of influential or representative individuals in racial thought across American history. From Puritan Minister Cotton Mather to Thomas Jefferson, from abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to the scholar W.E.B. Du Bois to activist Angela Davis, Kendi shows how and why some of our leading proslavery and pro-civil rights thinkers have challenged or helped cement racist ideas in America.

One of the most provoking ideas Kendi writes is when he disputes the common misconception that racism stems from ignorance. Kendi believes racial discrimination led to racist ideas which led to ignorance and hate. Kendi writes; "Time and again, powerful and brilliant men and women have produced racist ideas in order to justify the racist policies of the era, in order to redirect blame for their eras racial disparities away from those policies and onto Black people." Kendi talks about the racist ideas he himself had bought into during his life. He asks

that we also examine and then shed our racist ideas and truly commit to racial equality.

This is extremely tough work but our work. Each book club discussion we answer the following questions based on our reading:

- 1) What historical fact or concept emerged in the reading that impacted you the most?
- 2) What did you learn or feel that helps you better understand the call to be an antiracist today?
- 3) How is your faith in God helped or challenged by what you are feeling?

Simply, what did you learn, understand, and believe? We know God is calling us to heal the hurt and injustices inflicted on our brothers and sisters. To do that we must first understand what that pain is and our role in supporting systemic racism. This is our work and everyone is invited to participate.

Being a Deacon in the Time of Three Pandemics

By The Rev. Deacon Ronald Steed

Some of you may not realize that I am one of thirty active vocational deacons in Connecticut; that's not many! Ordaining individuals to be deacons, was established within The Episcopal Church at the publication of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. This has restored the diaconate to some of its early Christian roots where there were some who remained as deacons for all their ordained lives.

As Christian disciples, we are called to diaconal service: to proclaim the Gospel with our lives, and to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely. This is what Bishop Laura often calls the "apostolic" part of being a disciple... to be sent out into the world as a servant to our neighbors in both word (Gospel) and deed. And while all of us are called to servant ministry, a few of us are called to ordained ministry as vocational deacons in an ordered relationship with a bishop. Much of our work has to do, not only with trying to live out the idea of servant ministry, but helping all of you live out that call as well.

Probably the most important thing that all vocational deacons do is to work in the world, just as many of you have done and many still do. I certainly see my job at the New London Homeless Hospitality Center (NLHHC) as the most important part of my ministry as a vocational deacon. I can say for all of

my colleagues, COVID has put a lot of obstacles... and opportunities... into our work.

One of the things that I love about shelter work is that it puts me in the very middle of the “triple pandemic” some of the most challenging controversies of our time (COVID, poverty, racism). I am dealing every day with people who are systematically impoverished... whose only choice if it were not for the shelter, would be to sleep in a car or in the woods. And, I am in the very middle of systemic racism and I witness its effects on our community every day. It forces me to confront my own privilege as a middle-class white man every single day; there is no way to escape it. My own hands are in this muck trying to make it better, and at the same time, my own hands are part of the problem! As gut-wrenching as this sounds (and it is!), I know that this is God’s very strategy for the salvation of the world... to work THROUGH people who are ALSO part of the problem.

One of my prayers not too long ago was to be able to live life fully and deeply... to FEEL life’s impact on me (I did specifically ask for joy, but it turns out that there is a fuller package of emotions that come alongside with joy!). Believe me, that prayer is getting answered at NLHHC. I did not realize at first that what I was feeling there was the answer to a prayer. But I’m beginning to understand that diving into these emotions is an important part of the work I think I’m called to do there. And the fruit of this work is empathy... the deep knowing-in-the-heart of someone else’s suffering. I don’t always have the answer to their problems. I’m coming to know, through our guests and staff perhaps, a measure of Christ’s suffering on our behalf as well.

I wonder where we might be getting a call to service in the time of COVID. Where are you encountering the full range of emotions? With your neighbors? With family members?



Blind Faith by Kevin Harkins

There was a time when, if someone asked me to talk about how my blindness relates to my faith journey, I would have been indignant. “Why do people have to fixate on my lack of eye sight when being blind is not what defines me as a person,” I would mutter to myself. But I have come to the knowing that the challenges faced by people with disabilities are also an instrument whereby others can learn to perceive far beyond what they see.

A friend once asked me if I thought I spend more time inside my head because I’m not distracted by visual cues. As I thought about this question, I gained an appreciation for its relevance.

Indeed, I even had teachers in school lament that, other students would be distracted by the tools we blind folks use to take notes. I didn’t understand why the other kids couldn’t simply focus on what the teacher or the test instead of the click of my stylus or the microphone in my hand. What seemed like a peculiar question at first ultimately led me to a greater appreciation for my ability to zero in on conversations, thoughts and feelings.

In church, I believe I gain much by not having the option of following along on a printed page. Instead, the lessons and prayers seem to seat themselves more readily in my thoughts and my heart.

I have wondered why God made me blind. I don’t suppose to know the mind-set of the creator, but I suspect it could be because my lack of sight, (not a lack of vision), is in fact a platform from which to enrich the lives of others. Scripture teaches that each of us has specific gifts and that, combined, we make up the Body of Christ. It is the sum of our individual journeys, our abilities and fears, our problems and our delights that comprise every stroke of the artist’s brush.

You may have asked yourself, why did God give me a bad heart, or, why do I have to struggle with alcoholism, or, why aren’t I taller or more creative. I submit that it is not our perceived shortcomings that define us, but our strengths and our talents and our gifts. These are the mechanisms by which we are meant to help those who have different abilities. I am truly thankful that The Artist sees the whole picture.

Southeast Region Convocation

On October 3rd, we held our Southeast Region Convocation. One of the reasons I love = these convocations, is that it is a chance to celebrate the common life that Episcopalians have together in Southeast Connecticut. There are sixteen parishes and a summer chapel is this part of the state, and while each faith community is different, they are all definitely Episcopalian.

At the convocation, Jennifer Frank, one of the authors of Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery (2005) addressed the research and writing of this book and the transformative impact it had on her own life and the lives of the other authors: Anne Farrow and Joel Lang. We had the opportunity to ask her questions and to break into small groups to discuss what we had heard.

This fascinating book, written by these three journalists of The Hartford Courant, examined the North's active role in southern and African slavery. Much of the book was focused on Southeast Connecticut, where the population of black slaves was by far the largest in New England. There was a significant section on the Connecticut slave (later freed) Venture Smith, whose farm was located on what is now Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington. Much was written about the stake that textiles mills in Norwich and other New England towns had in southern slave-grown cotton; about northern farmers whose crops would be shipped to the Caribbean to feed slaves who worked on sugar cane plantations, and whose sugar was shipped back to New England to make rum; and about whaling ships from New London and most other parts of New England that were used in parts of the "triangle of trade" that shipped human slaves and slave-made products around the world. An entire chapter was devoted to the making of ivory piano keys in Ivoryton, CT from elephant ivory at the cost of over two million lives from Africans slaves, a connection, incredibly, that is still not widely known in the towns around Ivoryton. In short, the authors did an excellent job of undermining the "received narrative" that many of us learned in school about the role of the North in southern slavery.

Crop Walk

On October 18, a team composed of Elaine Hess, Judie-Blackburn Cochran, Janet D'Alesandre (photographer) and Deacon Ron from St. James and Grace Episcopal Church raised money for the hungry by participating in the Gales Ferry Crop Hunger Walk. We give thanks for their annual commitment to this event. Praise God for their dedication!



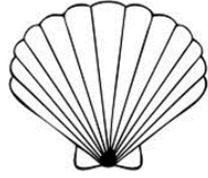
Christian Formation Programs

Every week we offer Dwelling in the Word & Compline on Thursday evening from 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM over Zoom. In one hour we explore scripture and end the evening with the peaceful service of compline.

On Friday morning at 8:00 AM, a group of people gather on Zoom for Guided Healing Prayer. This is a time of being fed in prayer and God's healing power. Go to the website at stjamespreston.org to retrieve the link or watch for it in the weekly email.



Happy Thanks



The Scallop Shell

November 2020