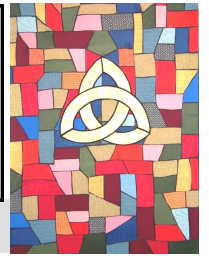




St. James' Notes



December 2020



Empowered by the Holy Spirit to be faithful disciples of Jesus, St. James' serves as a beacon of God's love and as a caring Christian family for the community, the nation and the world by seeking to restore all to unity with God and one another and by proclaiming the Good News through worship, witness, education, fellowship and service.

St. James' Episcopal Church at Mount Vernon
A parish church in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia and member of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Dear People of St. James',

The dominant themes of Advent are anticipation and preparation. We anticipate the festivities of Christmas Day, and we prepare by sending cards and gifts, by decorating and cooking and sharing the music of the season. We anticipate the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child, and we prepare a place in our hearts for him to live. We anticipate the second coming of Christ, and we prepare by doing the work in the world of reconciliation, justice, and compassion that Jesus has given us to do.



This Advent season is unlike any we've shared before. Christmas parties, holiday caroling, the warmth of family and friends gathered together... the coronavirus has rendered these things potentially unsafe. It leaves an ache in my heart.

And yet, we live in preparation and anticipation. The long-promised vaccines are on their way. We prepare for their coming by keeping one another safe, and we anticipate the day when we will be able to be together again in person.

And as I walk through my neighborhood, I see more Christmas lights shining in the dark, and I exchange glad greetings with my neighbors. The light that came into the world 2000 years ago still shines, and it still shines brightly in the darkness.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

In Christ,
Charles+

Look on the back page for information about our Christmas Services.

Look for Zoom links on the church website www.stjamesmv.org and in emails.

Sunday Worship

10:00am Online Morning Prayer with St. James' followed by Zoom fellowship time.

Wednesdays

11:30am Join us online for 30 minutes of Bible-centered study and conversation.

Noon Online Noonday Prayer and fellowship.

St. James'
Episcopal Church
at Mount Vernon

The Diocese of Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff
Bishop Suffragan &
Ecclesiastical Authority

The Rt. Rev. Jennifer
Brooke-Davidson
Assistant Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Porter Taylor
Assistant Bishop

The Rev. Charles F. Brock
Rector

Staff

Jenny Kennedy
Parish Administrator

Alan Moser
Director of Music

Vestry

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St. Warden, Christian Education
dianacourtney3@gmail.com

Chris Marbaker (2022)
Jr. Warden, Plant & Property
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Mckayla Braden (2022)
Mission & Outreach
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Mary Bramley (2023)
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James Eustis (2023)
Evangelism & Publicity
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Mary Jane Van den Berg (2021)
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Andy Wormser (2023)
Fundraising
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Mike Morgan
Treasurer
mike007morgan@yahoo.com

Susan Clark
Register
clark5034@aol.com

Trustees

Peg Iber
Lib Mueller
Ray Smith

Prayers

Happy Birthday

- 1 Ray Smith
- 3 Peg Iber
- 10 Adriana Rodriguez
- 12 T. J. Cleary
- 25 *Our Lord & Savior*



Prayers are offered when we worship. Please let the church office know if you would like to add a name to the list.

We pray for strength, guidance and healing for: Esther, Muriel Sue, Paula, Lynn & David, and Fred.

Grocery Cards

The Rev. Pedro Cuevas has been delivering Prepaid Grocery Cards to families in need in the Latino community. If you would like to support his ministry, please mail Grocery Cards or a donation to the St. James' office. If you send a check, please write "grocery cards" in the memo line. Thanks.



Support Rising Hope Church



Please remember the homeless and hungry in our community and consider making an online donation to Rising Hope Mission Church, who supports so many in our community.
<https://risinghopemc.org>

Online Yard Sale

The Virtual Yard Sale is going strong! Items are being sold on eBay and Craigslist. Just a few ideas of fast and popular items: Anything Pokemon, Nintendo, White House Ornaments, Old Star Wars or GI Joe figures. Old video games are also good sellers. Email or text Marghe with photos and a short description, Marghe will answer you. You could also look up your item yourself on eBay. Contact Marghe Bowker (703) 799-1567 marghebowker@gmail.com or the church office if you have questions.



Zoom Silent Night With Us Christmas Eve

Join us at 6:00pm for our online Christmas Eve Service. Please have a candle ready to light, so that we can enjoy our tradition of singing Silent Night by candlelight. Look for Zoom links on the church website www.stjamesmv.org and in emails.

*Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born!*

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*



Annual Church Meeting

Everyone is invited to our Annual Meeting, which will be combined with our online Sunday Morning Prayer Service on Sunday, January 17, at 10am.



From Mckayla, Mission & Outreach

I am pleased to report that we collected 24 gift cards (5 Walmart and 19 Target) for our Angel Tree. Thanks to everyone from St. James' who contributed; your generosity is greatly appreciated. I was told that **United Community (UC—formally UCM)** plans to make Christmas gift bags for over 700 children this month. They are feeling overwhelmed by the tremendous need in our community. Our contribution of the 24 gift cards (\$25 each) has definitely helped. Gifts to UC are always welcome! If you would like to have your gift recorded on your St. James' Giving Statement, please email Marge Smith h-raysmithdds@gmail.com and let her know the value of the gift cards you contributed to the Angel Tree. Some of the cards were placed in the church office without identification.



Please remember Rising Hope Mission Church this month. There continues to be a tremendous need for food and cash donations. Checks to St. James' are welcome with a note saying the funds are for **Rising Hope**. A fast way to contribute is on line at their website: www.RisingHopeUMC.org. Please find it in your hearts to support them.

2021 is fast approaching; dare I say this? We will all be glad to see 2020 in the rear view mirror, but the need to support our community and world beyond will be no less imperative, perhaps even greater. For such a small church our hearts are always in the right place, and we are so very generous. Our first quarter mission will be again **Episcopal Relief and Development**. Please consider giving generously. I know you are all very familiar with their work around the world to feed the hungry, provide clean water, and to help educate the children where resources are lacking, and much more. Please consider giving through St. James'. It's easy to give and your gift goes such a long way.

First Quarter Mission 2021

Episcopal Relief and Development "Gifts for Life" fund. Your donations will help needy families across the world alleviate hunger and be able to grow/their own food. Make your checks payable to St. James' Episcopal Church, noting what gift you would like to give in the memo line, and drop it in the mail to the church office. Or you may donate online through our "Give Now" button on the church's website. We'll tabulate all, combine partial gifts, and announce the results of our campaign in April.



\$15 will provide nourishment for one child supporting tomorrow's minds today.

\$35 will provide a family with life's most basic necessity - clean water.

\$35 will provide care for a vulnerable mom and her baby.

\$80 will provide a family in need with a goat. A goat can provide a family with a stable source of food and earnings.

\$100 will provide vocational training to help one student pursue a brighter future.

Keep Your Pledge Current with Online Giving

We welcome your on-line donations through a button on the church's web home page: www.stjamesmv.org. You may use this for your regular pledges or for making one-time gifts. You may also mail your pledges to the church office (5614 Old Mill Road, Alexandria VA 22309). Thank you all for all the ways in which you support St. James'.



Choir Notes

Dear St. James' friends,

As I write this, several events and thoughts are converging for me. First, Thanksgiving Day is rapidly approaching, traditionally marked with family feasts and stories of hardship and a great celebration of the thanksgiving by the Pilgrims at Plymouth Plantation. Second, as we look around, we find ourselves pilgrims negotiating our way through the midst of a landscape pockmarked by war, anxiety, cultural division, and pandemic. Third, I had the opportunity yesterday to observe the thesis defense by a fellow student finishing his doctoral program. His writing discussed Christian pilgrimage and the significance of song in that experience. So how do those come together as we enter the season of Advent?



I had never thought really about the life of the church being one of pilgrimage, but I believe my colleague rightly points out that pilgrimage has been a part of our heritage since Biblical times. Certainly, Exodus describes a great pilgrimage. We hear of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, to Rome, or to walk the Camino de Santiago (the way of St. James) across Spain. There are pilgrimages to Iona in Scotland and to the Taizé community in France. People of other faiths make pilgrimages to their sacred sites, like the Hajj to Mecca, or visits to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. I suggest that even as we are making our pilgrim way through the desolation of COVID-19, we are reentering our vital annual pilgrimage to a stable in Bethlehem, where we will again find a child lying in a manger. We have traversed many dark and bumpy roads since we last made the pilgrimage; we look again to a beckoning light.

Oddly enough, I had a recent encounter with pilgrimage from another aspect: I was studying a particular hymn, "Brother, sister, let me serve you" ("The Servant Song") (1977), written by New Zealander Richard Gillard (b. 1953). You may remember it—we have sung it in church on occasion. Gillard saw our Christian journey as a pilgrimage of service and fellowship. Two phrases of Gillard's text seem particularly appropriate to our situation: "We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow travellers on the road" and "I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear." As we make our darkened journey toward the manger this Advent, may we keep the pilgrim songs of our forebears in our hearts, be hopeful, and hold the Christ-light up high for each other and for all the world to see.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Alan



St. James' Book Club



Book Club has decided to cancel the December meeting—but hope all will keep reading as we hope to meet again in January. Members will be contacted before each meeting to determine the best place to meet either outside or at a member's house and takes steps to insure social distance. The book for January 14 is **Summer's Lease** by John Mortimer. The book for February 11 is **The Return of Eva Peron with The Killings in Trinidad** by Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul. Please call Lib Mueller (703) 360-0561 or Marghe Bowker (703) 799-1567 if you want to know more. All are welcome!

Highlights of the 226rd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia

For the first time in 226 years, the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia gathered not in person, but online. More than 450 delegates attended the November 14 Convention via Zoom.



Elections to Standing Committee

Clergy Delegates: The Rev. Laura Minnich Lockey, James Madison University Campus Ministry and The Rev. B. Cayce Ramey, All Saints Sharon Chapel, Alexandria.

Lay Delegates: Jessica Atkinson, St. George's, Fredericksburg and Margaret Arnette Woody, St. Thomas, Richmond

Budget

The Convention delegates considered a budget presented by the Executive Board which reflected cuts necessary to balance the budget anticipating receipts of approximately 15% less giving by parishes to the Diocese. The budget featured increased funding for the work of race and reconciliation but also numerous cuts in virtually all other areas due to anticipated reduced giving to the Diocese. Budget amendments were proposed to restore funding for campus ministries to be funded by a hardship waiver of giving to The Episcopal Church. After an extended discussion the Convention declined to approve the budget and thereby referred the budget back to the Executive Board.

Resourcing God's Mission

The Task Force on Resourcing God's Mission in the Diocese of Virginia, led by the Rev. Sven vanBaars, addressed the gap between opportunities and funding of God's mission by naming the patterns of giving in our diocese while comparing those patterns to other dioceses, learning about giving from our congregations, and exploring ways to increase giving. The new giving plan would ask all congregations to commit to a covenant of giving that dedicates 10% of pledge and plate income to the ministry of the Diocese of Virginia. Those congregations that are not giving at this covenantal level would engage in a process of conversation about congregational growth and possibly a waiver. The task force suggests putting forward a resolution at the 227th Annual Convention that would replace the Virginia Plan for Proportional Giving with what we are currently calling the "Virginia Covenantal Giving Plan".

Delegates to Convention passed the following resolutions:

R-1 Updating Rules to Assure Fairness In Virtual Church Governance Meetings

R-2 Stipendiary Clergy Parental Leave Equity

R-3 Resolution to Authorize an Election of a Bishop Diocesan

Highlights of Bishop Goff's Pastoral Address

In her pastoral address, the Rt. Rev. Susan Goff, Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority, illuminated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on church life and diocesan ministry this year. The Bishop's office directed all of its energies into providing support and resources to clergy and vestries as they worked to lead congregations through the dual pandemics of COVID and nationwide racial crisis.

"Even as these new priorities demand our focus, we have not abandoned the four priorities we named last year," said Bishop Goff. The four priorities remain: healing across differences; resourcing God's mission, care of God's creation and evangelism.

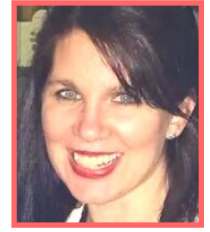
She reported that the Task Force on Resourcing God's Mission has identified a plan to strengthen giving from congregations to the diocesan budget. At the same time, the Diocese is "actively at work to find ways to unrestrict some funds and to sell undeveloped land where we don't anticipate planting a new congregation. These efforts, along with strengthening giving from congregations, will put us in stronger financial health in years to come."

On a personal note, Bishop Goff announced that she is now cancer free. The Bishop was diagnosed with breast cancer in February and underwent surgery, months of chemotherapy and radiation. She said she felt blessed to have been able to work full-time through the course of treatment.

The full video of Bishop Goff's Pastoral Address is posted on [Facebook](#).

From Diana, Senior Warden

I've been feeling a little sorry for myself lately. I'm in the process of selling my house and downsizing. But that's not what has me down. I close the house sale on December 15. Then three days later, on December 18, my oldest comes home for holiday leave from his infantry training in the Army in Ft. Benning, Georgia. I've been feeling disheartened about him not getting to come "home." About us not being able to have a "regular" Christmas together. About us being in a new place, and about him not being able to sleep in "his room."



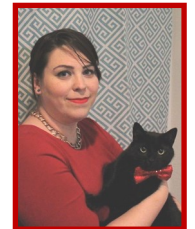
I've also started thinking about our holiday celebrations during the pandemic. There won't be any big family gatherings. There won't be any candlelight Christmas eve services; no singing of Silent Night; no children's impromptu Christmas song at the beginning of the early service. My family's tradition of braving the chilling temperatures to watch the lighting of the National Christmas Tree won't happen this year either, and no dinner at Elephant and Castle afterwards to warm our hands, hearts and bellies.

But home isn't just a place, and Christmas isn't just a tradition. So, it doesn't really matter where we are when my son comes home, or how we celebrate. Home will be wherever the family is, and Christmas will still be about the miraculous birth of our Savior.

In the season of advent we celebrate four themes: hope, peace, love and joy. The birth of Jesus brings us all these themes, regardless of how or where we celebrate. So, I wish you all hope; that God's hand is watching over all of you in the midst of the challenges of 2020. I will you all peace, in knowing that His plan for you is already in motion. I wish you all love, that no matter how near or far your family and friends may be from you, that you feel enveloped in their love and the love of Christ. I wish you all joy in celebrating the birth of Jesus and our salvation through this miracle.

From Mary, Administration & Finance

The last time I wrote a December newsletter was December 2018 and my opening line was "What a year. I think I could just type that and almost everyone reading this would know what I mean." Who knew that it would apply again this year! As Administration and Finance, my year was focused on the St. James' budget, getting together an audit committee, ensuring our stewardship season took place, as well as doing my duties as Vestry Member of the Day on my assigned Sundays. What I did not know at the beginning of my term was that everything I would normally be doing, I would be doing from home and VOD does not translate into the virtual world.



We are working on the 2021 budget to be presented at the annual meeting. Thank you to everyone who made their commitment during the Stewardship Campaign. Budget preparations are much easier when pledges are in hand. I am so delighted to report that we are close to our 2020 numbers in pledges, with only being shy by a few thousand dollars as of the end of November. If you were not able to turn in a pledge card for 2021, there is still time! If you wanted to submit a pledge card but are unable to, thank you for considering St. James' and know that your presence as part of our church family is a gift.

For expenditures, we have moved our request process to virtual. While we no longer fill out the chit sheet in person to be signed off, Jenny does prepare one, emails it to me, and I approve via email. I am proud that we have kept up our accounting procedure even in a pandemic. Due to COVID-19, we have postponed the audit until March, to be able to do the 2019 and 2020 audit at one time. The Diocese has granted extensions and it allows us to be able to run our audit in a safer environment.

Thank you St. James' for your continued support of the vestry and of the church!



St. James' Episcopal Church
Mount Vernon, VA
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Alexandria, VA 22309-3332
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Christmas Worship Schedule

Thursday, December 24 6:00pm - Christmas Eve

St. James' Christmas Eve service on Zoom. Please have a candle ready to light for the traditional singing of Silent Night.

Sunday, December 27, 10am - Sunday After Christmas

St. James' will share the Diocese of Virginia's service of Lesson and Carols on Zoom.

Sunday, January 3, 10am - Feast of the Epiphany

Three Kings' Sunday. Join us for an Epiphany Prayer Service on Zoom.

Sunday, January 10, 10am - Baptism of Our Lord

We will celebrate the Baptism of our Lord by renewing our own baptismal vows.

Look for Zoom links on the church website and in emails.

www.stjamesmv.org

