

A Message from the Vestry to the Congregation of
St. James the Less
Originally Offered at a Congregational Meeting on July 30, 2017

“Jesus is the center of our faith.
Community is the center of our lives.
Reconciliation is the center of our work.”
Palmer Becker, Mennonite Theologian

The last six months have been deeply challenging for the people, clergy and staff of St. James the Less. There are strong and conflicting feelings among us, of anger, hurt, loss, confusion, fatigue, and more; but strong feelings keep us mindful that something important is happening. We must be thoughtful and kind about what we say and how we act so as not to make a tough situation worse.

During this time, your vestry has worked hard to address issues as they arose, to oversee and support the ministries of the church, and to care for our priests, as best we know how. We have also maintained a deep commitment to listen and care for the members of this church that we all love so much, the faith community that has meant so much to all of us, in times of joy and sorrow, in brokenness and in reconciliation; and also in peace. We have suffered and celebrated together; and it has strengthened our faith and our community. When Karen asked the vestry what we loved most about our church, we said each other. That will not change, though the bonds of our affection have been tested by recent events and what feels like too many years of transition. We have been tested in previous times, and we are still here. We will meet our current challenges in the same way we always have, with love and care for one another, and faith and trust in the God who loves us all.

As we listen to you, one of the things we have heard over and over is that there is a need for transparency. Some parishioners say we have withheld information they thought we should share. Some speak of keeping secrets. We do not agree with these characterizations. What we have done is hold certain information in confidence, as required by our role as vestry members, for the benefit of the whole church. Like you, we also value transparency and open communication. One of the ways we will continue to honor requests for transparency is to communicate with the parish regularly. We'll do this with in-person meetings, and written communications in our bulletin, e-blast and elsewhere.

We decided that today would not be a day for dialogue for three reasons:

1) First, we have information, thoughts and feelings we want to share with the group, which requires time to speak from the heart, and to be truly heard.

2) The questions before us, to which people are eagerly seeking answers are complicated questions. There is no single cause answer to what has happened or why events have happened the way they did. In attempting to answer these questions we have learned that partial answers do more harm than good. Repeating partial answers has been re-stimulating the pain in our community, providing neither closure nor healing. And...

3) Partial answers grounded in different sets of facts lead to arguments that never end. As is the case in other aspects of public life, in politics, in government, in the workplace, when people start with different information, they arrive at different conclusions, and find it frustrating and difficult to reach a shared understanding of what happened or what should be done about it. This maintains an atmosphere of tension and confusion that hurts every community. And we **are** a community of faith at St. James the Less, called to worship Christ and minister **together**, not as isolated individuals. How we speak and how we act determines the quality of our community life.

As our healing process continues we will share information we know to be reliable, so that our discussions, rather than tearing us apart, will deepen our understanding, our trust, and our connection to one another as a community of faith.

When our rector departs at the end of August, the vestry becomes the canonical authority of our church until our next priest arrives. As the vestry steps into this role, we are humbled by the responsibility for the spiritual and earthly well-being of our faith community. It falls to us to hear, to honor, and to bring into harmony an array of widely divergent views. With God's help, we will do this.

Fortunately we are one in Christ Jesus, who knows and loves us all; the same Jesus who knew that we would encounter differences living together in a Christian community, and still expects us to engage those differences, not as enemies, but as brothers and sisters; who knew that we would get it wrong at times, and still expects us not to stop in the middle, but to keep trying; who loves us when we get it right and never stops loving us when we get it wrong; the same Jesus who has promised, PROMISED, always to be with us. Thanks be to God.

NeverTheLess - August 6, 2017

TODAY AND THIS WEEK

WELCOME TO ALL, especially if you are visiting us today. We are delighted to have you here. Nametags are an outward symbol of radical hospitality. If you don't have one, please see an usher or a greeter for assistance. If you are visiting, we also invite you to fill out a pew card and put it in the plate.

SCHEDULING NOTE: Margaret has early morning appointments on Tuesday morning, August 8 and on Wednesday morning, August 9, and will be late to the office both days.

STEWARDSHIP

FORMING STEWARDS AT SJTL "Stewardship is using the gifts that God gives us to do the work God calls us to do." We're looking for a few good folks to help us rethink and retool the way we think and talk about stewardship and fundraising. This is not just the annual fall pledge drive! Please prayerfully consider helping with this effort, and let George Spagna know of your willingness to participate.

ALSO OF NOTE

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL will be August 14-17. *Digging for Treasure: Parables Revealed*. Dig into vacation Bible school! Bible stories, games, crafts, snacks, and other activities will help us dig deeper to reveal the treasures in Jesus' parables. Music will be provided by Steve Pace and Brett Bajcsi. While the materials are geared towards children in grades Pre-K-5, younger and older siblings and friends are always welcome. Registration forms are available in the hallway at Information Central. And you may contact Ragan Dyer, crbdyer@yahoo.com, for questions or to register.

RECEPTION FOR ANNA volunteers are needed to help with a stand-up reception for Anna on Sunday, August 27, immediately following 10:00 church. Please bring a sharable finger food. Clean-up help is also much needed. Please call Ricki Carson at 229.5349 to let her know how you can help. And please, she asks, leave a message if she doesn't pick up!

On a related note, we are also collecting a purse for Anna. If you'd like to contribute, you may send a check to the church, or drop a check in the plate; indicate the funds are for Anna's purse on the memo line.

SJTL CAMPERS – twelve—count 'em, 12!—of our younger parishioners are enjoying Shrine Mont as campers this summer, a week or 2 at a time. They love to get "regular" mail. If you'd like to drop a note to a camper, or three, you may take a list of campers, dates, and mailing instructions from the bulletin board at Information Central.

WARM SMILES AND FRIENDLY HANDSHAKES ...We seek the gift of your talent! Summer is an ideal time to try out a new activity. We especially need ushers and people to count the offering. Any committee would be happy to welcome you. If you would like to contribute your talent to our volunteer pool, please contact Margaret in the office.

SERVING DISHES AND UTENSILS we have amassed an array of serving spoons (mostly) and a few dishes. If you are missing something from your kitchen, please check the table in Brydon Hall, see if anything there belongs to you.

SHRINE MONT

PARISH RETREAT AT SHRINE MONT our favorite weekend is fast approaching! September 22 – 24. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board at Information Central in our hallway. \$125 for adults, \$50 for children 4-12 years. Some financial assistance is available.

SHRINE MONT BOOK DISCUSSION SELECTION We will have a discussion of "Walking the Bible" by Bruce Feiler (2001, Harper Collins Books), for those who are interested in taking part. The book reflects the author's desire to reconnect to the Bible by retracing stories of the Old Testament to their actual locations. It is a fascinating adventure story, archaeological study and personal spiritual exploration. SJTL has one copy that will be available to borrow. It is also available used and for Kindle readers. For those of you who have "visit the Holy Land" on your bucket list, this is the book for you!

PRAYER LIST – August 6, 2017

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: Please pray for the clergy and congregation of Kingston, Mathews

Anglican Cycle of Prayer: Puerto Rico - (XI, The Episcopal Church) The Revd Rafael Morales Maldonado

For our parishioners requesting our prayers: **GUS** Miller, **MAUD** Brumback, **PAT** Funk, **DICK** Harman, **HENRY** Mayer, **ERIN** Yagla, **STEWART** Dishman, **DON** Jones, **CHARLIE** Thompson, **NED** Stiles, **JOANIE** Burgoyne, **GAYELLEN** Wagner, **SALLY** Ellithorpe, **JIM** Cobb, **SYLVIA** Spagna, **BOB** Ellithorpe, **BETH** Harrison, **JACK** Keck, **CHRISTEN** Meacham, **HADEN** Hopkins

For those serving in the diplomatic corps, the military, and as missionaries: **KEMPER** Jones, **GREG** Ericksen, **ANDREW** Walton, **ROBERT** Ham, **MATTHEW** Thomas, **PHILIP** Morison, **JAMES** Ashley, **ANDREW** Brunson

Relatives & Friends: *(people added this week are in italics)* **MAC** Pace (father of Steve Pace), **ANNE MARIE** Fisher (friend of the Jones family), **PATRICIA** Reppert (aunt of PK Kinser; friend of the Meyer family); **WILL** Holman (friend of the SJTL Parish), **JOHN** Murphy (father of Erin Murphy), **JANE** Markwood (mother of Tim Markwood), **NANCY** Margie (friend of Aleta Meyer), **MARY & JIMMY** (family of Tammie & Bob May), **ORIANA** Hargrove (friend of Bobbie & Tom Street), The Rev. **NANCY** Cox (friend of the Meyer family), **LYNN** Forehand (cousin of Joyce Blunt), **VICKI** Snelgrave (cousin of Joyce Blunt), **HAMILTON** family (friends of the Roberts family), **BETTY FAY** Thomas (sister of Mary Lou Brown), **CAROL** Brown (sister of Bob Brown), **BETH** Vannais (cousin of Bob Brown), **CARLENE** Hockett (friend of Ricki Carson), **EARL** May (brother of Bob May), **GINNY** Walker (niece of Karl and Ginny Meyer), **KIM** Cave (friend of Pat Jordan), **JANET** Cobb (sister of Jim Cobb), **KATHERINE** Anderson (friend of Katherine Tinker), **KATHY** Balducci (friend of Jenny Bruce), **BILL** May (brother of Bob May), **BETSY** Owen (sister of former organist's wife, Elaine Hooley, friend of the parish), **WIL** Lawrence (son of Ann & Wilbur Lawrence), **DONNA** Hoffman (friend of Karl and Ginny Meyer), **CONNIE** Barney (friend of the Pace family), **LELIA** Moran (friend of the SJTL parish family), **PAM** Whittaker (friend of Beth Markwood), **AUDREY JO** Weaver (mother of Tammie May), **SUSAN** Adams (sister of Steve Pace), **MOLLY; MAGGIE; MARK** Longaker, the **SPIVEY** family (friends of Margaret Rush), **SHARON** Hooper (friend of Dawn Davis), **BILL** Russell (friend of Margaret and Chris Belyea), **RUTH** Syman-May (friend of the SJTL parish), **SAM** Hulsey and Family (friends of Charles & Faye Joy and Lula Hopkins). **DAVID & TRACEY** (family of Ricki & Jim Carson), **ERIN** Carroll Cullather (friend of Aleta Meyer), **SAVANNAH** Wood (friend of Beth Markwood), **SHELBY, GIL** Beaudry (Sylvia Spagna's mother), **SALLY & LILY** (daughter and granddaughter of Ricki and Jim Carson), **BETSY** (sister of Jim Carson), **JODY** May (aunt of Bob May), **KATHY** Coleman (friend of Margaret Rush), **ANDY** Roberts (friend of Mary Lou & Bob Brown), **TERRY** Shaw (friend of Sandi Shirey), **JOANIE** Watkins (sister-in-law of Bobbie & Tom Street), **STEVE** (family member of Fran McConnell), **JP** Temple (nephew of Alice & Jim Cobb), **VICKI** Wynn (friend of Doris Hassell), **BRUCE** Innes (friend of Monroe and Sara Reece), **FRANK** BEAUDRY and family (Sylvia Spagna's family), **MELANIE V.** (friend of Ruth Savino), **DUFF** Green (brother of Melissa Hoar), **AUBREY** Fletcher (friend of Ann and Wilbur Lawrence), **TOM** Slaughter (brother of Ann Lawrence), **DEBBIE** Hill (friend of Pat Jordan), **SCOTT** (friend of Doris Hassell), **CRYSTAL** McLaughlin (friend of Anna Brawley), **NORA** Hall (friend of Kris and Rich Holt), **JR** Cook (friend of Anna Brawley), **DAN** Brummitt (uncle of Margaret Rush), **ANN** Taylor *(friend of SJTL parish)*, **SUZANNE** Huff *(friend of the SJTL parish)*, **JUDY** Sledd *(friend of the Jones family)*;

VESTRY MEMBERS: Yancey Jones (Senior Warden); Rebecca Cline (Junior Warden); Dawn Davis; Richard Grosse; Beth Markwood; Ricki Carson; John Hoar; George Spagna; Janet Taylor

The altar flowers today are given by Wiley, Bob, Tracy, and Ian Hughes in loving memory of Joan Hughes.