

# THE EPISTLE

THE MISSION OF ST. JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, A CENTRAL CITY CHURCH,  
IS TO WELCOME ALL PEOPLE INTO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AND TO SERVE IN HIS NAME

## THE RECTOR'S RAMBLINGS



Life is full of changes. Keltie knows this well. He's in the process of moving to Madison which means that he has to leave behind the home that he grew up in (well, to the extent that he has grown up!). He also has to leave his puppy friends at Happy Hounds, the day care that he goes to. And Jamie. And me.

What he gets is a great new condo with lots and lots of windows that look out on an enormous population of squirrels. He gets a neighborhood with great walking trails and new places to sniff (and interminably lift his leg). And he gets a new day care called Ruffin' It Resort. Think the Caesar's Palace of doggy day care (for sleep time the dogs don't have crates, they have "bungalows." Seriously.)

Keltie is learning in his own doggy life that in order to have new things come into your life, sometimes other things need to end. In the Christian life this is the central metaphor of our existence: death/resurrection.

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Our relationship with God has several compelling themes: call, covenant, and forgiveness, among them. We are called by God into relationship with God and to do God's will for us. And we are in a perpetual and infinite covenant with God established when God put that rainbow in the sky and told us that there would always be a relationship between us. Always. And we continue to live within the blessing of God's mercy, within which God is inclined to forgive us our sins—as we forgive those who sin against us. All of these themes play themselves out in our relationship with God.

But the primary theme of our existence as Christians is another one: it is the theme of death and resurrection. That things sometimes need to die before they can rise. Some things need to end so that new things can come. Some things need to give up their lives so that new life can be born.

It is so in the life cycle of St. James'. It's an exciting time. A bit scary. Death is part of life and human existence, but grief is part of death. And so it's also a bit sad. Our music program will change. Our use of the building simply must change. People will go and people will come. Change is part of the law of human existence. Death happens to all of us.

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But that's not the end of the story. The larger story is about resurrection. The greater and terribly hopeful part of the story is that after death comes new life. Resurrection. That's our story. It's our *central* story. I am so eager to see what St. James' will be as we embrace this time in our history of death/resurrection. For sure, it will be full of God's blessings. And maybe even a squirrel or two. Well, I'm counting on the squirrels...

With love, Mother Debra+



## FROM THE DEACON'S BENCH

“Stimulus”

There's a word we hear a lot of today. “Stimulus” has become the new “in word” in our vocabulary. Congress and the President are spending trillions of dollars to revive the economy with stimulus legislation.

This is also a word that is appropriate to this time of year. We are moving away from the gray, cold, snowy days of winter into the brighter, greener, colorful days of spring. The stimulus of the changing seasons lifts our spirits and creates more energy in us to get out and do things we couldn't do during the winter season.

In our spiritual lives we are coming into the season of Easter. We are leaving the self-examining penitential season of Lent to travel through the dark days of Holy Week, culminating in the joyous celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter. The joy of Easter can be a stimulus for each of us to deepen our faith and continue our growth as Christians.

Just as we spend money to revive

the economy, we can use the stimulus of the joyful news of Easter to deepen our faith and grow like the flowers of spring.

Just as flowers need cultivating to flourish, so does our faith. If we are stimulated by Lent and Easter, perhaps then we need to find a way to cultivate it so that we can grow strong in our faith.

We hear a lot about “earmarks” in the news, those pieces of legislation inserted into larger ones to get special funding for pet projects of individual congresspersons or senators. Perhaps we can insert our own earmarks into our faith stimulus to assist us in growing.

For example, was there a particular part of your Lenten discipline that helped you in self examination?

Did you give up something that you now feel you could live a better life without? Why not make it your earmark in your daily discipline?

There are other things we can do to build upon this stimulus to grow. Consider making Wednesday evening Eucharist a mid-week stimulus, or attend the ongoing Bible

study at 9 AM on Sundays.

In the area of action there are lots of opportunities. Commit to one Saturday for 2½ hours to serve at Red Door Clothes or to 1½ hours on the second Saturday to help the Second Saturday Sorters (contact Teresa Jackson or Gust Olson for the former, and Deacon Ned for sorting). Or commit to Sundries at The Gathering on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month for 2 hours (contact Kris Ochocki). Doing the work the Lord would have us do is always stimulating, especially the smiles, the “thank-yous” and “God bless you.”

Finally, look around you on Sunday morning and you will see lots of opportunities. See one you like, contact Mother Debra.

Just as the government seeks, with money, to create measures that will be a stimulus to the economy. Just as the coming of Spring serves as a stimulus to lift our spirits. So, too, can Easter serve as a stimulus to find new ways to grow in our faith.

Deacon Ned

**VESTRY NOTES FOR MARCH, 2009**

The vestry met for its regular monthly meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup>. This was a change from its normal meeting date of the third Wednesday of the month so that the vestry meeting would not conflict with the Wednesday evening Lenten study. The vestry was updated on progress to settle our insurance claim and made plans to start repairs. There is a financial incentive of several thousand dollars to make repairs speedily. There have been offers from several other groups to help with the clean up and painting, but with so much work to do, a great many volunteers from St. James' will also be crucial to meeting our deadline.

The vestry was also asked to offer input into several other upcoming issues. The diocese sought information about where to donate money in support of the Millennium Development Goals. Among the agencies the vestry suggested was Hunger Task Force, Heifer International, the Central Asia Institute and Kiva. The vestry also offered some suggestions of directions to pursue in upcoming grant proposals. Finally, in addition to a rousing book discussion, the vestry also offered some input on music that will be used to help plan for the future of the program.

The next meeting of the vestry is also transferred to a different date. In April, the vestry will meet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:15 in the lounge.

John Washbush

**FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR**

Pablo Casals, a Spaniard who lived in the twentieth century, is considered by most to be one of the greatest cellists of all time.

When Casals was eighty-four years old a fan asked him why he, obviously skilled and famous, still practiced four hours a day. Casals answered, "I believe I am making progress."

For me, this is not only inspirational as a musician, but also as a Christian.

Karen Beaumont

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS — SAVE THE DATE**

Come join your fellow Jamesians on Friday May 1<sup>st</sup> as we celebrate with Mother Debra our ten years together as a Parish Community. We will be having dinner at Peony's, located at 11120 W. Blue Mound. The time has not been set yet, but stay tuned for more information. Hope to see you all there.

God's Blessings,  
Beth Taylor



**DEACONSPEAK**

Sunday after Sunday after Sunday (and even on special weekday services) you see me at the front of the community in worship. That is why you are more likely to notice my absence, which has occurred a couple of times very recently. I greatly appreciate your inquiries to Loraine when I am away, such as a couple of recent weekends when I was attending some youth events in the diocese.

On these occasions please know that I miss you very much. While I may be very busy and am enjoying the opportunity to minister with young people, still I miss the “St. James’ experience” of worship – which means you. Granted, the “St. James’ experience” is different every week. Surely our basic form of worship is consistent from Sunday to Sunday. But the “St. James’ experience” is different every week because of you – the community. When I am in front and have the privilege to look out at all of your faces, I see who you are and who is there (or not there). And that changes every Sunday.

So I miss you when I am away. In the same way, though, when I am present and any of you are away, I miss you as well. Each of you brings your spirit, presence and prayers when we gather. Together we form the community that makes the “St. James’ experience” real and tangible. So if you are away from worship, there is a hole or a void, and the community is different – it is diminished. The worship is still valid and fulfilling, and we glorify God together with all who are present. (An analogy might be like when you have a bunch of candles in a dark room, you can see. If you take a few candles away, you can still see to do what you are doing, and if you have all of your candles lit, the illumination is even brighter.)

The take away from this musing is that I miss all of you and each of you, whether I am away or you are away from Sunday worship. The corollary would be that I enjoy all of you and each of you when we join together in prayer and song. Especially with Holy Week close upon us I pray that we make every effort to worship together, and then we make the “St. James’ experience” as full and bright as we can.

Your servant in Christ,  
Deacon Terry

**COMMON GROUND UPDATE**

On March 19, 12 Jamesians joined over 400 members of Common Ground at a Delegates Assembly. It was an exciting meeting, and I was proud, as always, to be there as a member of St. James’. Our mission at St. James’ is to welcome all people into the presence of Christ and to serve in His name, and Common Ground is an organization that allows me to do just that.

Common Ground has several important campaigns in process right now, and we heard updates about two of them: Youth Summer Jobs and Healthcare. The Youth Jobs campaign recently pressured the Milwaukee Common Council to agree to invest an additional \$250,000 to the Earn and Learn Summer Youth Jobs Program. This is a program sponsored by the city that offers high school youth opportunities to earn income, exposing them to the working world and improving workforce preparedness. In a year when the Milwaukee Common Council is cutting the city budget in many areas, this victory was something worth celebrating – as both a victory for Milwaukee youth and a victory for Common Ground.

The second major campaign we discussed at the Delegates Assembly was the Healthcare campaign. Common Ground is in the process of developing a Healthcare Cooperative for small businesses, self-employed people,

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## MY NEW AND UNEXPECTED LEARNINGS

I love it when new learnings come in unexpected places and ways. I recently was offered the opportunity to dog-sit for a week in Florida. “OK,” I said eagerly! I’d do almost anything to get to a warm place and away from this cold, snow and ice. And I was grateful I’d have a place to stay and so then felt I could afford to go. Well, I have 2 cats that I love dearly and haven’t lived with a dog in 20 some years. I could never have imagined the outcome.

The little dog’s name was Ellie—15lbs., mostly white and full of life, curiosity and not quite a year old.

*She watched me.* (My every move and she even knew when I pulled into the parking lot.)

*She was excited when I returned.* (Literally jumping her whole body off the floor.)

*She followed me everywhere and never left me alone.* (Even in to the bathroom!)

*She was always behind me.* (When I was looking for her someplace else.)

*She accepted me.* (Even when I was tired, dirty, late, or crabby.)

*She sometimes did as I had hoped or wanted.*

*She adored me.* (There was no question about that!)

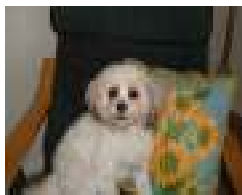
As I later mulled over Ellie’s qualities and my days with her, I realized how healing the time was for me.

Then I thought about God... Those are the *same qualities* I’m learning about God. With God those things often seem more faint, distant, foggy and fuzzy. But with Ellie—they were so clear!

*Thank you Ellie!*

*Thanks you, God!*

Jill Littlefield



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and non-profits in order to negotiate better premiums and enable more people to receive better access to healthcare.

We also spent some time discussing an important national issue: the economy. We broke into small groups and spent some time sharing our own stories of how the current economic situation is affecting each of us. These small group conversations brought a powerful personal touch to the issue and made real the breadth of the problem.

Ground will be working to secure \$3 million from President Obama’s economic stimulus package for local initiatives such as pothole repairs, street signs, and park improvements. If you have ideas for improvements that could be made near St. James’, please let one of St. James’ Core Team members know. We are: Linda Steiger, Beth Taylor, Kris Ochocki, and myself.

Dorota Pruski

**HOLY WEEK**

On Ash Wednesday 2005 I found St. James'; I was spiritually depleted and wanting to reconnect with God. Within a few weeks, I began thinking I had found a "spiritual pot of gold." Everything seemed to fall into place. The Lenten study was exactly what I needed to hear and adult education helped me in understanding the community known as St. James' and "the middle way."

As Holy Week approached, Mother Debra encouraged parishioners to give themselves a gift; to experience all that the week offers in preparation for Easter Sunday. I thought, wow, how could anything top the gifts I had already received.

I had never experienced the journey of getting to Easter Sunday. On a rare occasion, I dropped in on Easter Sunday.

Getting from Passion Sunday to Easter is a step at a time and not always comfortable. Part of the journey, of course, includes Maundy Thursday. The concept of someone washing *my* foot wasn't really appealing to me. I had to talk myself all the way to the foot washing. Amazingly I survived and so did Mother Debra. I noticed that evening and every Maundy Thursday since, many people do not participate in Jesus' washing of disciples' feet. Apparently many of us do not like how our feet look and/or smell. Or is it something else? Am I worthy? Am I supposed to do this?

For me it is all of the above. As my depth of understanding the journey continues to evolve the foot washing has become part of my psyche. It is a humbling experience which gives the gift of humility while I await the resurrection of Jesus. Can you imagine how uncomfortable the original disciples must have been? And not participating wasn't an option.

I was more comfortable and familiar with Good Friday, but nothing prepared me for the stunning revelation I had when I attended my first ever vigil on Saturday night. I thought it was a quiet vigil like the one done after services on Maundy Thursday. The Saturday service is beautiful including incense, candles, choruses, our Bishop and many lay people. And then the moment arrives when Jesus is resurrected and he becomes the real Jesus, our Lord and Savior. This moment makes Easter Sunday all the more glorious because I participated in the resurrection.

As Holy Week approaches, I encourage you to heed Mother Debra's call to live the journey from Passion Sunday to Easter. Each year has brought me personal renewal and new revelations.

Linda Steiger



## THE POWER OF WITNESS

As a community, St. James' is one of the few places where you could ask almost anyone what our mission statement is and they could at least tell you the thrust of it, if not recite it word for word. It is familiar because we reflect on it, we plan based on it, and we try to the best of our ability to live it out. As a community we welcome the opportunity to witness that is implicit in our mission – we strive to welcome all people into the presence of Christ and to serve in His name.

“Ok, Washbush, we know this already.” What we may not be aware of is the impact of that witness, and not in big and flashy ways, but in the subtle touches on individual hearts. It is wonderful for the diocese that there is at least one church that welcomes all, no matter their color, income, or orientation. It is even better when that witness touches one person, who after years of searching for a place to feel accepted, can call St. James' their parish home. It is wonderful that we can offer clothes or sundries to hundreds who are in need and help them be comfortable and warm. It is equally wonderful when we are able to pack up a little from fellowship and keep one person from being hungry on a Sunday afternoon.

It is wonderful that we can gather with family and friends to pray with them as they bury a loved one, but equally wonderful that we can gather even just a few at a grave site to pray for a soul who has no one. Witness doesn't require big acts. It just requires that we listen to God's small voice in our hearts and do what we can because we can.

And it may be those little things that make the greater impact. Ellie recently shared a wonderful moment with me that attests to the impact of the little things. She doesn't know how other churches act; she only sees St. James'. She doesn't know the trials people face on the street, but she can see the lines of weariness lift with a kind word and a cup of coffee. She doesn't know the hard work that leads to rough and calloused hands, but she can see the relief and the smiles that come from a small bottle of lotion.

She can't see the challenges of loving the “wrong” person, but sees the love that can't possibly be wrong

because it is true love. Those small witnesses are as important, if not more so, than the big ones.

Ellie was asked to compose an “I Am” poem for her fourth grade class.

*“I Am”*

by Elizabeth Washbush (age 10)

*I am friendly and fun  
I wonder why we don't speak French  
I hear music and dancers  
I see my pet cats  
I want a cell phone  
I am friendly and fun*

*I pretend to babysit kids  
I feel gleeful  
I touch pixies  
I worry about people who don't have homes  
I cry when people die  
I am friendly and fun*

*I understand that it is OK to be gay  
I say that everyone is my friend  
I dream that I have a little sister  
I try to keep my desk clean  
I hope for a Nintendo DS  
I am Elizabeth Washbush*

Thank you. Thank you for your part in helping to form a wonderful little girl. Thank you for your courage to witness in great ways and in small ones. Thank you for witness to love one another as Christ loved. Thank you for being you. Thank you for being St. James'.

John Washbush

**STUMP THE PRIEST**

Dear priest,

Why do we say “alleluia?” What does it mean and why do we not do it during Lent? Signed, Alleluia deprived.

Dear deprived,

“Hallelujah,” according to *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church* is an ancient Hebrew praise-shout. It means, “Praise, Yah,” which is a shortened form of the word “Yahweh,” or God. It is translated in Latin as “Alleluia,” and into English as “Praise the Lord.” The Hebrew form was considered more appropriate than the Latin for the Psalms, which are part of the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible. The Book of Common Prayer states the *Alleluia* is omitted during Lent. It is a joyous praise word and during Lent we have a different focus. Lent is almost over. *Alleluia* and *Hallelujah* will come back soon, I promise.

**READING ON WORSHIP**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the nineteenth-century English poet, critic, and philosopher, wrote a dense book entitled *Aids to Reflection*, which I recommend only to those who have much patience. I did not have much patience when I checked it out from the library, but one line stuck out so beautifully. I would like to share it with you.

Coleridge wrote: “‘pray always’ says the Apostle; – that is, have the habit of prayer, turning your thoughts into acts by connecting them with the idea of the redeeming God...”

Karen Beaumont

**WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?**

On some level, this is one of the most fundamental purposes for coming to St. James’, to care for the disposition of one’s eternal soul. Well, what about the disposition of one’s earthly remains?

Recently a donor provided to St. James’ two cemetery plots at Wisconsin Memorial Park in Brookfield. The vestry has considered how best to make use of this donation and has decided to offer them for sale. The vestry also decided that the St. James’ community should have the first opportunity to purchase them. If you would like more information, please talk to Loraine Garner or Mother Debra.

