

Enjoy the St James Dec Journal



ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
A joyful, inclusive community

St. James Community Journal December 2014

Please enjoy reading the December St. James Journal. For our upcoming events please visit www.stjamesf.org. For more info about St. James please contact Erazm Pochron in the church office at stjames@stjamesf.org or (415) 751-1198 x2. Thank you!

Homecoming

by The Rev. John Kirkley, Rector



"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain shall be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isaiah 40:1-5)

Isaiah speaks these words of comfort to a people suffering in exile in Babylon, longing to return home to Israel. They were bereft of hope, their Temple in ruins, certain that God was punishing them for their sins, when along comes the prophet to proclaim forgiveness and a vision of homecoming. This is good news indeed! Then, in 539 the Persian King, Cyrus, conquered Babylon and a year later declared that the exiled Jews were free to return home and rebuild their Temple.

Baruch appropriated this vision of homecoming more than three hundred years later, after the return of the exiles to Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple. Even when we are "home" we can feel alienated and unsafe. Israel was home again, but now under the rule of a Syrian king, Antiochus, who profaned the Temple and executed Jews who refused to forsake their religion. When home becomes an occupied territory, when one's culture and identity is being suppressed, it doesn't feel much like home anymore.

Thus, the promise of homecoming must be renewed: "Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory of God . . . For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and justice that come from him." (Baruch 5:1, 9) This promise was fulfilled, in part, by the Maccabean revolt against Syria that restored the Temple and re-established Judean independence.

Then, along came the Roman Empire. Judea and all of Palestine became an occupied territory again, leading to further revolts in opposition to Roman oppression. Some two hundred years after Baruch's writing the Temple was destroyed again; Jerusalem became a wasteland. Many Jews went into exile again, fleeing their homeland.

Not long afterward, Luke's Gospel appeared conveying the message of yet another prophet, John the Baptizer, who once again appropriates Isaiah's promise of homecoming for his own time and place. John gathered a new community that was preparing for the renewal of Israel. God would once again make a way for the return of the exiles, a true homecoming in which all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Do you see a pattern here? Exile and return, occupation and liberation, alienation and homecoming: this seems to be the way of the world. It isn't merely a long ago and far away story. It is our story. It is the story of millions of refugees around the world: Palestinians, Sudanese, Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghanis, fleeing occupied territories they long to reclaim as home. It is the story of brave U.S. servicemen and women serving abroad in a tragic exile not of their own choosing. It is past time for them to come home. It is the story of Central Americans fleeing across our borders, many of them children, hoping to build a new home here free from destitution and violence.

It is the story of people living with disabilities, struggling to feel at home again in their own bodies. It is the story of people caring for loved ones with dementia: exiled to a forgetfulness that can leave them feeling lost, while their loved ones grieve the sense of home they once shared. For many of our neighbors, exile and the fear of exile has to do with rising housing costs and the threat of eviction. Their sense of "home" in San Francisco feels tenuous at best. "Home" can also be a relationship that is no longer viable, with divorce feeling like a kind of exile from what was at least familiar, even if it wasn't always happy.

We are all characters in the story of exile and return. Sometimes the home for which we long is a place on a map; sometimes we find ourselves exiled from the landscape of our own heart. Too often, we live in exile from both. We long to come home to our people, to our family, to our self. Even more, we long to come home to God, in whom we find our true and lasting rest.

Thus, we find ourselves here again in the season of Advent, listening to the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "O God, make a way for us to come home again. Let us, all of us, see your salvation. We're tired of wrapping ourselves in threadbare garments of sorrow and affliction. Dress us instead in the beauty of your presence, in the warmth of your peace and justice, in the splendor of your compassion and forgiveness. Please, please, dear God, bring us home again."

This Advent Season, I invite you to reflect on your own experience of exile and return. In what sense are you grieving a lost sense of "home?" What does "homecoming" look like for you? How can we find our home in God together at St. James?

Out with the Old; In with the New

by Rose Scarff, Editor



For almost two years now, I have had the good fortune to be the editor of the St. James Journal. With a lot of help from Erazm Pochron, our multi-talented Director of Operations, we brought the Journal into the electronic world. Since our weekly newsletter, both electronic and paper, lets everyone know of the events coming up, our idea for the Journal was to have longer articles filled more with ideas than news. Thanks to our many and varied contributors, I think we have accomplished that goal.

The one thing neither Erazm nor I have been happy with is the way the newsletter looks: too text heavy and not enough pictures. Because of the interface with the website, we are limited in what we can do. I hope that will not always be the case.

When I announced that the December issue of the Journal would be my last one, Natalie Thomas immediately

volunteered to be the new Journal editor. Since doing e-newsletters is what she does for a living, I for one look forward to seeing the next rendition of the St. James Journal.

Thank you all for this opportunity to learn and serve at St. James during the past two years. And a special thank you to all the contributors. Without you, there would be no St. James Journal.

News from the Vestry

by Barbara Webb, Senior Warden



Your vestry met for a short meeting on Sunday, November 16 after the luncheon and party for Bethany Baugh. Bethany, we shall miss you. God speed.

Stewardship is doing well. As of this writing, 62 pledges totaling \$163,379 have been received.

We spent several minutes debriefing the Art Fest. The Church did well enough that we will make this an annual event. There are things that can be done to make the event run smoother. If you have an idea or comment, get them to us; either to me, or Fr. Kirkley, or Erazm in the office. Did you attend? Did you buy anything? I did.

For the past 2-3 months, St. James has been conducting an inventory of everything we own, from the windows, brass, furniture, vestments, books, you name it. Mary O'Neal, a new parishioner with extensive experience appraising art and Church items, has been spearheading the work. As of this writing, the inventory is 95-98% complete. The plan is to notify the congregation of the final figure(s) at either the annual meeting or pie Sunday. We have some serious value at St. James. Thanks Mary for all your hard work.

Welcome new members Tracy Thomas, Virginia Marken, Jennifer Burns, and Christopher and Natalie Thomas. And a very warm welcome to Rev. Gwen Buehrens, our new Priest Associate. Do you realize that now with Gwen, we have five ordained clergy at St. James? How blessed we are.

Upcoming events -

Parish Workday before Christmas -- Date to be announced.

Advent Series -- Wednesdays before Christmas (Wed., Dec 3, 10, 17) focusing on the book "Cave of the Heart".

Annual Meeting -- Sunday, January 11.

Poetry Corner



Walking the Outdoor Labyrinth at Bishop's Ranch

By E. A. Nelson

The rosemary bush that splays
aromatic spikes across two quarters
of the patterned path

is at the center.

The lavender that raises heat-dried blossoms
between stones just north of the rosemary
is at the center.

Each pad of moss is at the center,
each seed-pod, each sprout and curl of clover,
each stone-plant and each stone,
veined with runes, set with care at the angle
for clearest reading – each of these,
along with the dust-striped cat, who,
seeing you halt as if lost, comes padding
between the runic stones, path-regardless,
to brush your ankles:

each of these
is at the center, and so is that tiny star
the sun, polishing stones,
waking fragrance from rosemary and lavender.

With every step you take
into, along this path, away from it, you stand
at the center, and all that forms
the pattern and keeps it company
stands with you: Maker and all things Made,
traveler and each step traveled,
rooted and walking, leaf and seed,
fragrance and breathing, stone and flesh,
beloved and loving – at the center,
pattern and path, in the warm light
of sun, of stars, of All.

Christmas Pagaent

By E. A. Nelson

"Mommy, I know this part. I know all the parts."
– Five-year-old performer, too frequently prompted.

Tidings of joy: the show can go on.
The angel knows all the parts.

If the shepherds forget to be astonished
or the sheep forget to bleat and graze,
the angel will cue them.

If the star forgets to shine
or the wise men forget to adore,
the angel is ready to prompt.

In a pinch, if the baby forgets
to wake and refrain from crying,
the angel could fold her wings tight
and slip inside the swaddling clothes

and play that part too, leaving the glorias
to the rest of the heavenly host.

It is one reason that Mary and Joseph
look so peaceful as they sit there mute
behind the manger, a pageant flowing around them.

They know they can trust the angel.
The angel knows all the parts.

Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas

**by Meg Bloomfield, Executive Director
California Counseling Institute**



A year ago, my family was in the center of a deep pit of sorrow. It was crippling and at times too much to hold. We shared this with another family whose son, a young man, was dying of a very aggressive cancer, and there was nothing anyone of us could do to stop it. We carried this grief through his mid-November birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas and the New Year.

I found myself helpless in the face of my daughter's care for Rafa, her gentle giving nature put to unendurable tests. I could not fix this; I could not take her gut-wrenching pain away. I could only witness her brave heart.

I was lucky last year. I had found a therapist who was listed with my health insurance and agreed to take me, so I paid only a small co-payment. As luck would have it, or synchronicity within the universe, she had previously worked in a hospice care facility and was able to guide me through my grief and sorrow. She was my witness, lending me her gentle support and care. She made sure I could continue to see her when my yearly-allocated sessions were up in November. She continues to bear witness to my story, my evolving understanding of who I am and my intent to live a life of integrity.

At Thanksgiving, for the past 30 years, CCI runs the Client Assistance Fund (CAF) Campaign. The CAF allows client access for low fee therapy with licensed therapists and our interns. We have clients who want therapy but would not otherwise be able to afford it. We have offered low fee therapy to thousands of people over the years to get the help they need and want; to navigate the difficult times that life presents.

At Thanksgiving, we go around the table and share our life's blessings. Last year, we were all thankful for family, for the love and support we are able to give each other, and for the presence of Rafa and his family in our lives. This year it will be very much the same, with thanks for our resilience to weather the difficult times we have shared.

If you have never donated to our CAF Campaign, and want to help us with this important program, please consider going on our website and making a donation.

We offer you our blessings and wishes for a safe and healthy holiday season.

California Counseling Institute has served the Episcopal Diocese for over 20 years, as well as San Francisco Presbyterian and Methodist churches by acting as a resource for psychotherapy to Bay Area Ministers and their parishioners. Our experienced therapists believe that the healing process is best achieved through the integration of psychotherapy and spirituality. CCI is a non-profit Institute, dedicated to providing therapy to people of all income levels, and can provide therapy to low-income clients by supplementing their cost through the Client Assistance Fund. www.californiacounseling.org.

Resolution of Inclusivity

by The St. James Vestry & people of St. James



A Resolution adopted unanimously by the Vestry of St. James Episcopal Church on December 17, 2000 and reaffirmed each year at the Annual Parish Meeting of St. James Episcopal Church, San Francisco

Whereas all people are created in the image of God and are worthy of respect and honor; we are called to respond to the love of God in ourselves and to offer God's love to one another. In our baptismal vows we promise, with God's help: to seek and to serve Christ in all persons, to love ourselves and our neighbors, to respect the dignity of every human being, and to strive for justice and peace among all peoples. This is the Gospel to which Jesus calls us, and by which the Holy Spirit moves us, when we open ourselves to God's infinite grace; and

Whereas our churches and our society have frequently ignored this call; and yet, at the same time, the church has been, and is, a spiritual home for millions, and has often worked tirelessly for and with the poor and the oppressed, has built and maintained countless schools and hospitals through the ages, has been a strong force in the civil rights movement, has supported efforts to stop violence, and in modern times has championed the rights of women; and

Whereas we recognize that, along with the blessings the church has brought to many, inside and outside the institution, the church has also often reflected the prejudices of society including racism, sexism, homophobia and religious exclusivity. The church has too often been unjust and self-righteous rather than loving and inclusive. Fear, prejudice and discrimination are part of a history of oppression within the church and society that distorts our relationship with ourselves, with God and with other people, and diminishes the humanity of both oppressors and oppressed; and,

Therefore we resolve to make explicit our welcome to all people: to women, men, children and youth; to people of all colors; to lesbian and gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, and straight people; to single, married and partnered people and to all families, however constituted; to people of all cultures, classes, ages and abilities; to people of all faiths and to all questioners and seekers journeying more deeply into the Holy. The Episcopal Church of St. James, San Francisco, welcomes you; and,

We resolve to welcome one and all to join our communion table without prerequisite, to live and work together, and to participate in all aspects of the ministries, governance, stewardship, leadership and fellowship of this congregation. We unreservedly encourage all people to join with us in bearing witness to God's grace according to the gifts given them, and in carrying on Jesus' work of reconciliation in the world; and,

We resolve that wherever we see divisions created by prejudice, we will seek, with God's help, to be a place of reconciliation, offering a love that casts out all fear. Where we see injustice and ignorance, we will offer our ministry of advocacy and education, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, and into ever-deeper communion with God, with ourselves and with one another.

DECEMBER CALENDAR

December 3, Wednesday	7 p.m. Advent Series: "Prayer in the Cave of the Heart"
December 4, Thursday	6:30 p.m. <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
December 7, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. MHM/Mary Sunday 9 a.m. Choir Practice
December 10, Wednesday	7 p.m. Advent Series: "Prayer in the Cave of the Heart"
December 13, Saturday	7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast
December 14, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. St. James serves at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality Noon – Vestry Meeting – Caldwell Room 4 p.m. – Youth Group Junior High Night
December 17, Wednesday	7 p.m. Advent Series: "Prayer in the Cave of the Heart"
December 18, Thursday	6:30 p.m. <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
December 21, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. 9 a.m. Choir Practice 4 p.m. – Youth Group Senior High Night
December 24, Wednesday	5 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Service 10 p.m. – Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols
December 25, Thursday	11 a.m. Christmas Day Holy Eucharist
December 28, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
Every Tuesday	7:30 a.m. Morning Prayer & Meditation
Every Wednesday	6:30 p.m. Evening Prayer & Meditation 7:30 p.m. Buddhist Meditation in Caldwell Room

The St. James Community Journal is a monthly publication on behalf of:

St. James Episcopal Church

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