

Enjoy the St. James Feb Journal



ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
A joyful, inclusive community

St. James Community Journal February 2014

Dear St. James Members and Friends,

Please enjoy reading our February edition of the St. James Community Journal. For our upcoming events please view the News and Events page or the Calendar on our website at www.stjamesf.org.

If you have comments about this month's Journal or items (especially pictures!) that you'd like to contribute for the next journal please contact Rose Scarff. For more information about St. James please contact Erazm Pochron in the church office at stjames@stjamesf.org or (415) 751-1198 x2.

Thank you!
Rose and Erazm

Fishing for People: Life in the Kingdom of Love

By Rev. John Kirkley



On the last Saturday in January members of the vestry gathered for our annual retreat. We spent the day reflecting on the story of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and the call of his first disciples, a group of fishermen, in Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 4:12-23). Jesus invites them to follow him and learn to "fish for people."

Since then, I've been meditating on this image of "fishing for people." I'm struck by the fact the disciples are net fishing, not pole fishing. Pole fishing is an individual activity. Net fishing requires a group of people. Pole fishing is leisurely, even somewhat passive. One casts his or her line and waits to get a bite. You can do it by yourself. Net fishing is hard work. You actively cast the net, set with weights, and drag it back in. It requires the help of other people. Line fishing is about catching one fish at a time. Net fishing is about hauling in as much as you can. It isn't very discriminating.

Following Jesus, then, is a communal endeavor. It isn't about saving individual souls so much as it is about creating inclusive community. "Fishing for people" is about creating a thick nexus of relationships, of realizing that we are bound together in the net of life. We don't choose to be in the net, but here we are. What are we going to do about it? How do we live in such a way as to manifest God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven?

Fishing is also about bringing something up from dark depths into the light of awareness. It is a metaphor for making conscious what is unconscious or preconscious. It seems to me to work well with Jesus' message, "Wake-up! God's kingdom is here and now." "Fishing for people" is about inviting them to become aware of life in

the kingdom of love. Following Jesus is about learning how to stay awake and in touch with this reality.

Christian discipleship is a school (of fish!) in which we are learning together how to be fully alive, fully human, as Jesus taught and lived. It is a process of touching into our deep passion for life, that which energizes our compassion and creativity. It is about connecting deeply with one another and with our Creator.

Members of the vestry identified a number of things about which we feel passion:

- Creating meaningful art
- Caring for the earth
- Community – helping people connect with others and with God
- Being open to the guidance of the Spirit
- Finding peace in prayer
- Communicating well – listening and speaking
- Innovate education
- The quality of our care for others
- Children

These are just some examples from the list we generated. It is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive. It does serve as a touchstone for our work as a vestry, reminding us that we need to be guided by and give expression to these passions. And not just the vestry. What if all of us at St. James aligned our work with our passionate desire to be fully human, fully alive?

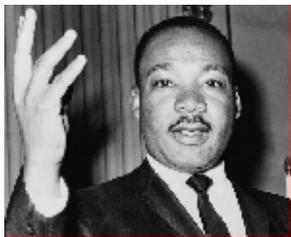
I'm not talking about our jobs necessarily – what we get paid to do – though it is a tremendous gift when our job aligns with our passions. I am talking about what gives our life meaning and purpose, those things that reflect life in the kingdom of love. I'm talking about fishing for people. What if we practiced those things that nurture our awareness of God's kingdom and engaged in work we feel called to do in response to that awareness?

As a vestry, we are renewing our commitment to align our work with our passions, the energy that flows from awareness of God's kingdom here and now. We are not certain what this will look like. It is an experiment – a Jesus experiment – if you will. Our hope is that it will issue in invitations and opportunities for all of us to love one another and God in new and creative ways. What would it look like if St. James were a learning lab in which people could experiment in taking practical steps to follow Jesus, trusting that he is a reliable guide to life in the kingdom of love?

I wonder.

Remembering Dr. King

by *Charlie Gregg*



On this day of remembering Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I am heartened that my children don't know what race means -- they see the differences in people, their skin color, the color and length and curl of their hair, their height. But those differences aren't imbued with good or bad. After we said our highs and lows at dinner on Thursday, Kate brought up Dr. King and showed off her Scholastic circular. My K and 1st grade children knew much more than I could imagine about Dr. King's life -- certainly much more than I had learned at their age. More importantly, they knew about his struggle to bring justice to African Americans in our country. Most importantly, Charlie Campbell knew that Dr. King fought using only love, and no violence, and no hitting, even while people

were trying to kill him and hurt his friends. Just for talking. I was verklempt.

My children, talking about a saint, a martyr for justice, a father of four, killed at 39 while challenging us to be touched by the better angels of our nature, while changing the world for our children. A man who lived in the shadow of death. The night before he was killed, Dr. King gave a speech in Memphis and said,

"Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land! And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man!"

He gave his life for us, for his children, for our children. What morning have we woken to, after his dream? I know that so many of us struggle with the legacy of racial and racist views and we have so far to go, but my heart is glad that my children see only that their skin is peach (because that's the name on the crayon they use for their self portraits), and their friends have brown skin or have straight black hair or green eyes.

During my son's Kindergarten year at the majority Asian-American Chinese Immersion School at De Avila, I tried to tease out a play date candidate knowing only his first name while doing the progressive person's dance around race. I asked all kinds of questions about his last name (me: Is it a Chinese name? CCG: Like what's a Chinese name? He lives in the State of San Francisco, in America.), about what language he spoke at home (me: does he speak English or Cantonese? CCG: yes), and about what he looked like (me: what is his hair like, his skin? CCG: it's straighter than mine, and his lips don't get chapped as much.). Finally, my son said, "Daddy, are you asking what kind of food he brings for lunch? His bah ba makes chow mein and I want that instead of sunflower butter sandwiches." It's food that matters!

This year, I was horrified to find that my daughter called the only blond, white girl in K-2 at her majority African-American school her "twin". But there wasn't any value to it, no judgment -- only that they looked kind of alike. My mistrust and fear of my own racial views threatened her joy at innocent play with another child. As with race, I think my children have moved past homophobia. Two moms, two dads? So what? They have one mom in one house and one dad in another. They certainly know that they can marry anyone if they love them.

Martin Luther King was a father, a father who dreamed despite the overwhelming likelihood of violence. Because they believed it was important, my parents joined arms with so many others in 1963 at the March on Washington. My grandmother evacuated my older brothers and sister, certain that riots would overwhelm the city. That violence would rule the day. My mother and father saw past the fear to join Dr. King in hope. The legacy of their hope, of Dr. King's dream, of love instead of hate, is that my children can talk about differences without disparagement, see color without judgment.

They do know another kind of injustice, though. One that I take part in, one that I perpetuate daily. As we move together and walk past stereotypes of race, of gender, of sexuality, I hope we can march on to take on the injustice of poverty that is all around us. The March on Washington was for Jobs and Freedom -- my dream for my children is that they will value "less". Rich and poor, with and without. They feel their wants, they talk about what they "need", what others have and have not. They value "more" and disparage "less". This is my fault. Growing up, wealth was rarely talked about in our comfortable middle class suburb. I viscerally recall my father's strongly negative reaction when I innocently asked him how much money he made. Disparities in toys and TVs and iPads, the size of a home, trips and vacations and ski houses, homeless men asking for change at the traffic light -- these are topics they are well versed-in already. My family is shockingly fortunate in many, many ways, but it is human to dwell on what we lack. I resolve to be grateful and to be thoughtful.

So I will talk more. More about more and less in the hope that they will create justice in our fragile society and keep our God-given natural world safe. If we ensure that all of us have at least what we truly need, if we stop using up our planet to get more, we will ease hunger, alleviate poverty and move towards social justice.

I'm not sure... not sure what I can do and whether I'm ready, but I will try, try to walk my talk. To create the world I dream for my children and to put aside my fear and my uncertainty.

Dr. King said, *"Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness."* I hope to rise to his challenge for my children's sake. Thank you, Dr. King, for your life and legacy.

Link to Martin Luther King, Jr. and the King Center <http://www.thekingcenter.org/> as well as wikipedia on the March on Washington http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_on_Washington_for_Jobs_and_Freedom.

Here is the text of his "I've been to the mountaintop" speech:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>.

Of course, this is all through my lens as a "white" father raising peach children. I was humbled to read Hamden Rice's post on DailyKos about what MLK actually did. It's not about white people... Here's a bit of it. *"What most people who reference Dr. King seem not to know is how Dr. King actually changed the subjective experience of life in the United States for African Americans. And yeah, I said for African Americans, not for Americans, because his main impact was his effect on the lives of African Americans, not on Americans in general. His main impact was not to make white people nicer or fairer."* <http://bit.ly/19KPe8M>

So I'm again left with doing what I can to raise children who will reach for social justice for all people and remember MLK's legacy, his love and his commitment to us and to our children -- without fear of the consequences.

News from the Vestry

By Barbara Webb, Senior Warden



A lot has happened since my last article. The 2013 Annual Meeting was held on Sunday Jan, 19 immediately after the 10 o'clock service. Doreen Canton coordinated a delicious lunch. There are copies of the annual meeting report in the Narthex. It contains reports from the Rector, Sr. Warden, Jr. Warden, Treasurer, and many of the several wonderful ministries available at St James.

Two resolutions were discussed. Resolution No. 1 – to reduce the size of the vestry from a total of 13, including the rector, to 12 in 2014, 11, in 2015, and ultimately 10 thereafter (9 vestry plus the rector). Because of the difficulty in recruiting persons to stand for vestry positions, this seemed like the way to go. Resolution passed unanimously without discussion.

Resolution No. 2 – to select members of the vestry and deanery by casting lots instead of by ballot. This would only be applicable if there were more nominees running than there were slots available. There was much discussion on this. Some were concerned that it by-passed the democratic process, others thought it was a great way to go. The resolution was tabled for further consideration. Maybe at Pie Sunday, maybe at next year's annual meeting. Something to think about. [See Resolution Article below.]

Vestry and Deanery members for this year are:

2014 Vestry: new members Carla Borsoi, Doreen Canton, Petrina Grube, Ullrich Schwertzschlag will join Mary Balmana, Giselle Bosc, Noreen Huey, Bill Newlin, Elia Pochron, Eleanor Scott, and Barbara Webb. Barbara Webb has agreed to again serve as Sr. Warden.

2014 Deanery: Dave Differding, Jette Swan, Warren Wong, with alternate Mary Balmana.

The annual Vestry Retreat was held on Saturday, January 25, at Easton Hall; located at the Church School of the Divinity in Berkeley. The retreat was done differently this year. It was a one-day retreat with lunch on-site (great

deli sandwiches, salad, and cookies), and dinner after with time to reflect, visit and enjoy each other's company.

The focus of the retreat was Fishers of People: A Day of Reflection on Matthew 4:12-23. By focusing on the Gospel passage a portion at a time, journaling, meditation, sharing in pairs and as a group, it deepened our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. And reminded us that the church is not a business, it is a House of God. We have to BE a Church first before we DO Church. It was exciting and wonderful. Look for some new ways of doing, hearing about, and participating in St. James ministries.

The January Vestry Meeting was held on Sunday, the 26th. Vestry officers are: Sr. Warden, Barbara Webb; Jr. Warden, Doreen Canton; Treasurer, Bill Newlin; Clerk, Helen Lantz.

Perspective

by Tina Smalser, MFT
California Counseling Institute



"I've looked at life from both sides now..." —Joni Mitchell

Last fall, I took a short trip to a small town in the redwoods of Northern California, came back to San Francisco for two days, and then took a short trip to New York City. I had expected that the week would be an experience of contrasting environments, but I hadn't expected the lesson I would learn about the importance of perspective.

When I returned from the slow pace and spaciousness of the first trip, I didn't feel ready to come back to San Francisco. As I hit the predictable traffic due to construction on Franklin Street, I felt myself tightening up, thinking "this is crazy! How can people live with all the noise, congestion and frustration of the city?"

Then I went to New York City. With all of its wonderful qualities, its vibrancy and energy, it is also many, many times bigger, more crowded, and more noisy than San Francisco. This time, I did feel ready to return. This time, as I drove back from the airport, it struck me that San Francisco feels liveable, human-scaled. After the incessant New York sounds of traffic, subways, leaf blowers, jack hammers, San Francisco's relative silence was music to my ears.

This was a powerful experience in seeing how the same stimulus can be experienced so differently, depending on where one is coming from. The familiar phrase of seeing the cup as half full or half empty comes to mind.

I have noticed it recently in terms of the weather. As I write this, the San Francisco Bay Area is experiencing one of the driest Decembers on record. By the end of the month, a "beautiful, sunny day", no longer feels very beautiful as I know how badly the earth needs rain. I expect that when rain comes, it will be a beautiful welcome sight, and no one will complain...at least for a while.

In psychotherapy, we sometimes talk about the idea of "reframing". We may work with a client to help them see their experience from a different perspective. The idea is not to invalidate one's experience, but to explore if there are other ways to see the same situation. This may involve understanding some of the early experiences that predispose us to see things in particular ways; ways which may no longer be relevant in the present. Or it may involve finding meaning in an experience which seems negative. It may involve coming to a place of gratitude for what one has rather than focusing on what one doesn't have.

The concept of perspective is very important in communicating; at work, with acquaintances, in primary

relationships. It is important to realize that we are each looking at a situation in a particular way, and to acknowledge that the other has a different set of life experiences he or she brings, which may make the situation look entirely different.

Perspective can change with time, with distance, with spiritual practice. Have you ever noticed that something which seemed vitally important some months ago is barely a concern now? Or how some work issue over which you have obsessed is no longer on the radar when you are away on vacation? Or how in a meditative or prayerful state, you are more able to see everything as connected and changeable?

If you can keep in mind this idea of perspective, it can help to give you space when you are feeling constricted in thought or emotion. Even if you can't currently access another perspective, it can be helpful if you can hold in mind that another perspective is possible.

"We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses." — Abraham Lincoln

Amending Vestry and Deanery Election Procedure



Editor's note: the following resolution was proposed at the Annual Parish Meeting, but after much discussion, was tabled until a later date, to give everyone more time to think about it. Following the Resolution you will find an article from The Vestry Papers on this subject. We hope this will help everyone with their decision when the Resolution comes up again.

[Proposed] Resolution 2: Amending Vestry and Deanery Election Procedure

Resolved, that Article 4, Section 4.7 of the Parish By-laws will be amended to read as follows: "Selection of members for the Vestry shall be done in the nature of casting lots. Names of all nominees shall be put on separate but like slips of paper and placed in a receptacle so as to prevent seeing any of the names on the paper slips. The Rector shall then ask, at random, one or more members in attendance to draw one name slip from the receptacle. As many name slips as positions to be filled on the Vestry shall be drawn. Those parishioners whose names are drawn will serve on the Vestry." And be it further

Resolved, that Article 4, Section 4.8 of the Parish By-laws will be amended to read as follows: "Selection of Deanery Delegates and Alternates shall be done in like manner, with as many name slips as Delegate positions to be filled drawn first, followed by the drawing of as many name slips as there are Alternate positions to be filled; except that, those persons who wished to be nominated for an Alternate position only, will have their name slip added only after the Delegate positions have been filled." And be it further

Resolved, that these changes will become effective as of January 1, 2015.

Explanation

Currently, Vestry and Deanery Delegate elections are conducted by ballot, in which candidates with the most votes are selected to fill vacancies. Although recent elections have rarely been contested, especially for Vestry seats, the process is inherently one that creates the potential for winners and losers. It encourages a spirit of political competition rather than spiritual discernment.

Moving to a model of casting lots among nominees recovers the biblical model of apostolic succession depicted in Acts 1:15-26, where lots were cast to choose between two nominees to replace Judas as one of the twelve apostles, following a period of prayerful discernment. It is a model which has begun to be used in other Episcopal congregations and has been found to encourage an atmosphere of prayerful deliberation in both the nominee recruitment and selection process, and a deeper trust that God will provide us with the leaders we need. It has also been found to encourage more people to be willing to be considered for nomination, since all nominees feel affirmed by the congregation, whether or not they are selected.

The outgoing class of Vestry members can still function as a nominating committee, and nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting would also still be in order. In the case where the number of nominees is equivalent to the number of vacancies to be filled there would be no need to draw names since election by acclamation would also still be in order. Note that this change of procedure, if adopted, will not become effective until 2015.

Apostolic Selection? Choosing Vestry Members

by John Mark Wiggers



From the *Vestry Papers* issue on Vestries: Listen to God's Call (January 2014):

In recruiting people for the ministry of vestry I have found several points of hesitation on the part of potential nominees. I often hear stories of people who stood for election and were surprised how hurt they were when they were not elected. Others felt that they were not well known enough to be elected even though they were faithful in serving the congregation and had something to offer by serving on the vestry. When I came to serve as rector of St. James, Knoxville, Tennessee I saw an opportunity to explore the matter of vestry selection. There had to be a better way to select vestry members than an election that might favor the popular and exclude gifted ministers.

A friend recounted that he had served in a parish where vestry members were selected by randomly drawing the number needed from a pool of nominees. I asked my bishop, George Young, what he thought about this process and he was excited. In fact, he had practiced this method in a congregation where he had served. I discussed the prospect with the senior warden and other leaders. We then presented this to the vestry to consider allowing the parish to propose a change in our parish by-laws. The vestry liked the idea and we set about informing the parish of the proposed change.

In a letter to the congregation, the parish newsletter, and Sunday announcements we referenced Acts 1:15-26 where Peter called the apostles together to choose someone to replace Judas. The apostles chose two faithful people, prayed, and cast lots. Now we don't think of our former vestry members as being like Judas, but choosing faithful candidates and asking for God's guidance resonated with many of us. We also had two opportunities to discuss the by-law change during public forums prior to our annual meeting.

At our annual meeting the discussion was more heated than the earlier forums. Those who dissented primarily did so out of a spirit of democracy. They wanted their vote to count. It was noted that this matter of selection called on us to carefully consider our nominees. We also wrestled with whether to allow nominations from the floor in this process. We decided to allow nominations from the floor and to encourage parishioners to prayerfully and deliberately engage the nomination process. By the end of the meeting a by-law change was approved allowing us to "select" vestry members rather than "elect" them.

We've now used this process for three years. Our nominating committee, comprised of the four outgoing members, carefully considers candidates for nomination. At our last annual meeting we presented eight well qualified candidates for four available seats on the vestry. During the meeting we shared stories of ministry,

naming all of the nominees as capable leaders. We prayed for God's guidance and recalled the apostles' example. We then chose four other members of the congregation to come and share about a ministry that they are part of after which he or she was invited to randomly select one name from the eight names placed in a basket.

Eight nominations was a high for St. James. I feel that our selection process was encouraging to some who might not have stood for vestry otherwise. I am finding that those who are not selected do not feel rejected but affirmed by the parish. This process calls on the parish to recognize and name faithful leaders among us. On a practical note, I personally appreciate doing away with the logistics of balloting and focusing instead on stories of ministry.

Months after we initially made the by-law change someone asked me if we were still going ahead with allowing nominations from the floor. They were concerned that such a nomination could be used in a manipulative way. I expressed that I certainly hoped that all nominations could be considered and made in advance of the meeting. Even so, I acknowledged that we would continue to allow nominations from the floor and that this was probably the right thing to do. To this the parishioner replied, "Wow! You really do believe in God!" Yes, I do. I don't think voting by ballot promotes disbelief, but I find the selection process we are using calls on the faithful to trust that God will guide us and provide the leaders we need.

John Mark Wiggers serves as the rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Knoxville, TN. He has been ordained 14 years and served in Dothan, AL and Atlanta, GA. John Mark and his wife Liz have two boys (14 and 8), and share a love of cooking, board games, and documentaries. The whole family loves serving at camp and youth retreats. They hope to start a family band if the parents start practicing their instruments.

Resources

- Build a Healthy Vestry by Janie Kirt Morris (in English and Spanish)
- St. James Episcopal Church, Knoxville, TN
- Vestry Selection Bylaw used at St. James Episcopal Church
- Vestry Selection by Anne Ditzler
- Vestry Discernment Process by Janie Kirt Morris

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

February 2, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Mindfulness Meditation after 10:00 a.m. service
February 6, Thursday	6:30 p.m. <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
February 8, Saturday	7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast-Keeping Faith in a Competitive World
February 9, Sunday	Service at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Service 9 a.m. Choir Practice St. James serves at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality 7 – 9 p.m. The Way of Christ Study Group
February 16, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
February 20, Thursday	6:30 p.m. <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
February 22, Saturday	10 a.m. Women's Group meeting at Creative Canopy
February 23, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. 9 a.m. Choir Practice 12 noon – Vestry Meeting
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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