

Enjoy the St. James Nov. Journal



## St. James Community Journal November 2014

Please enjoy reading the November St. James Journal. For our upcoming events please visit [www.stjamesf.org](http://www.stjamesf.org). If you have items for the next journal, please contact Rose Scarff. For more info about St. James please contact Erazm Pochron in the church office at [stjames@stjamesf.org](mailto:stjames@stjamesf.org) or (415) 751-1198 x2. Thank you! --Rose and Erazm

### Prayer for Practical Atheists

by The Rev. John Kirkley, Rector



"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." When it comes to prayer, St. Paul keeps it simple. He breaks it down to asking God for what we need. Here he is consistent with Jesus and the whole thrust of the Bible. Jesus taught his disciples to pray by asking for a series of petitions: your kingdom come, your will be done, give us our daily bread, forgive us our debts, don't lead us into temptation, deliver us from evil. Ask, seek, knock on the door, persistently demand a response, expect God to be at least as generous in responding as a half way decent parent.

For Jesus, prayer is a simple matter of asking our Father/Mother for what we need with child-like trust. Prayer is the means whereby we open ourselves to the answers we seek and the power to fulfill our petitions. Jesus taught that God answers prayer and that prayer has the power to change our lives and the lives of others.

As Anthony De Mello notes,

*All our philosophical objections notwithstanding, the Bible shows us a God who leaves himself wide open to being influenced by the prayers of those he loves; a God who will reveal his plans to his prophets precisely so that they will make him change his mind and his plans through the power of their prayers; a God who has, by his own decree, subjected himself to the mighty force of persistent prayer.*

God invites the interpersonal exchange, the give and take of prayer. It is a mark of loving relationship, even when it is difficult, dry, or oppositional. We never advance so much in prayer as to move beyond the simple imperative of asking for what we need. It is this vulnerability and trust that opens the crack in the door through which God's power flows into our lives.

In one of his homilies, Abba Macarius of Egypt claims that even the gravest sinner can aspire to become a mystic if he is willing to turn to God in vulnerability and trust:

*For even a baby; too weak for anything and unable to walk to his mother on his own little feet, can yet roll about and scream and cry because he wants her. Then the mother is sorry for him, and at the same time pleased that*

*the little one desires her so much. Therefore, as he cannot come to her, she, moved by his longings and by her own love of her child, takes him up and sweetly fondles and feeds him. Thus also deals the loving God with the soul who comes to him and longs for him.*

What a beautiful image of God our Mother! Our sheer desire for God, regardless of our worthiness or unworthiness, our dependence upon God, and our trust that God will do for us what we can not do for ourselves are enough to bring us into God's presence and power. As Anthony De Mello points out, "Any child can do this. That's the trouble with so many of us: we have ceased to be children, so we have forgotten how to pray."

"The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God." St. Paul instructs us to blend our petitions with thanksgiving, believing that we already have received what we need! Commenting on this passage, De Mello asks, "When friends give you a check, do you first wait to have it cashed in the bank before you thank them? When you realize that God is going to give you what you are asking for, that is the moment to begin to thank him."

Years ago I had a spiritual director named Sarah. At the end of each of our sessions together, she would pray for specific needs that emerged in our conversation, asking God to provide them for me. She always ended the prayer by saying "Thank you" rather than "Amen." It always struck me as odd, until I read this passage from Philipians again. She knew what it means to pray with faith.

Jesus taught us to pray with faith: "So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." He repeatedly noted when he healed people that it was their faith that made them whole, and he admitted his powerlessness to heal or do other signs in his hometown of Nazareth in the absence of faith.

Prayer is powerless in the absence of faith, yet it isn't something we can force ourselves to have. Just the willingness to bring our needs to God is a start. "Faith comes as a gift from just exposing yourself to God's company. The more you deal with God the more you begin to realize that nothing is impossible for him." This is a matter of experience, a trust that develops in the context of relationship.

## Stewardship Letter

*by Carol Overman*



Editor's note: *You may have already received this letter in the mail, along with a pledge card, but if you haven't pick up a pledge card and the booklet [Meditations on Gifts and Giving by Members of St. James](#) the next time you are in church.*

"You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all - irrespective of how we got here - in what he is building. He used the apostles and the prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day - a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home."

- Ephesians 2:19-22, The Message

Dear Friends,

The phrase that immediately strikes me in this scripture is "irrespective of how we got here." I arrived at St. James in May of 2004. I had lived in the neighborhood since 1994, and had seen this little, white church, noting

that it was Episcopal. I had been confirmed as a youth in an Episcopal church in my home state of Indiana, but had no more than a casual curiosity about St. James. However, my casual curiosity changed to something else altogether, a sudden feeling of being compelled to walk through that red door. Several months before that Sunday in May, my husband and I had separated and were in talks regarding our impending divorce. I felt rootless, deeply sad, and guilty. I felt very broken.

What I experienced immediately at St. James was a collective intimacy about the service, and a very welcoming community. As the months unfolded this church became a refuge for me, and building inside me was a profound sense of real compassion that permeated my feelings about my crumbled marriage. The 'strangers' at St. James became my friends, and I had a new home, where I didn't feel 'outside' any more. I began to realize that this home was not just St. James, but also a place where I lived with myself.

I believe that to 'belong' also means more than being accepted, more than being somewhere where you are free to be yourself. To me, it also means to belong "to yourself," and not to be a stranger to your own pain and regret. Worshipping at St. James gave me a very unexpected grace to make peace with the pain I felt ten years ago, and it was and continues to be life changing for me.

Each of us has a strength that holds this community in place, and we are all an integral part. As these integral "bricks and stones," we honor our community, not just by being there with each other, but by giving St. James the financial resources to continue the very important work our church does for us, as well as farther afield. Although I do not live in the neighborhood anymore, St. James is still where I belong. We all arrived via different paths, but collectively we are part of what God is building.

During this pledge season, please reflect deeply on what St. James has meant in your own life. What is your unique story? After all, we are no longer strangers to each other. We belong together.

## News from the Vestry

by **Barbara Webb, Senior Warden**



By now you have received the 2015 pledge packet. Please read the beautiful letter from Carol Overman on what St. James means to her. Read the Guide to Giving. Reflect on this year's theme *You Belong Here*. Look at all of the "stuff" that your pledge dollar supports; did that surprise you? Read the St. James Mission Statement and you'll find that the two go together like hand 'n glove.

Consider the pledge card with prayer. Stewardship is not just about money, although your pledge dollar is a very big part of it. Stewardship is about giving of your time and talent also. Besides pledging the dollar amount that fits into your circumstances, review the back of the card and give some thought to where your talent lies and the time you can give of that talent to St. James. Your Vestry has already pledged time, talents and dollars. Join us.

If you did not receive a Pledge Packet, the Guide to Giving (including pledge cards) is on the table in the Narthex. In addition please take a booklet [Meditations on Gifts and Giving by Members of St James](#), Stewardship 2015.

On Friday, November 14th, from 6:30-9:30 p.m., St. James will be hosting "Meet the Artist", a fundraiser to benefit our many programs and outreach ministry. The artists are all local and will feature fine arts, drawing, painting, ceramics, jewelry, and more. For \$20 dollars you can shop, indulge in wine and cheese and, if you are one of the lucky ones, win an art piece. Come and bring a friend or two.

GOOD NEWS!!! For all of you that have been struggling and cursing the coffee maker in the kitchen, we will be

buying a new one. YAY!!!

Reminder: the [Minutes of the Vestry Meeting and the Financials are posted online](#) on the Church website – [www.stjamesf.org](http://www.stjamesf.org).

## Stained Glass Window – Christ the King

*by E. A. Nelson --August 2014*



They say he is knocking on a door  
that has (see? understand?) no handle  
on the outside, only within;

they say he is knocking on a door,  
but honestly, the rich brown bulk  
that looms beside him and under his hand  
looks more like a tree than a house,

an ancient, years-around trunk,  
smooth beneath, shingle-rough with bark above,  
the branches lifted out of sight into the sky.

They say it is a picture of the end-times,  
with him as Judge and King – see the crown,  
the robe, the venerable white hair;

they say it is a picture of the end-times,  
but honestly, the flowers reaching up  
to nod at him seem rooted not in awe  
or fear, but cheerful daily freshness;

the misted country behind him, too,  
is bathed in a friendly twilight,  
no flicker of apocalyptic fire.

He could be a king indeed – not the castle-proud kind  
but one who comes himself to search the forest,  
lantern in hand, for a lost hound, or horse, or child;

he could be a king indeed, and searching –  
but honestly, the way he leans his hand  
against that ancient living pillar of tree,

the way the flowers turn their sweet daily faces  
nodding up to his, I have to wonder  
if he has not already found, here in the heart  
of this world's forest, just what he came to seek.

## The Stress Trap: Men Living with Anger and Emotional Detachment

by **Tim Lewis, Psy.D.**  
**California Counseling Institute**



The number of men living under severe stress has remained at epidemic proportions despite advances in self care over the last generation. It is estimated that 43% of all adults are suffering the adverse health effects of stress including increased risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems and asthma. Less serious, but also troubling are concerns like frequent headaches, difficulty sleeping and upset stomach plague many American men today.

While men are exercising more and watching their diet, many find that they are still navigating their days on a "low simmer" of frustration. This frustration tends to "boil over" when confronted with obstacles such as disrespect, loss of control or dwindling life choices. Though fewer men are reaching for the bottle as in their father's generation, other strategies like "manning up," and "keeping it in" tend to have limited effectiveness in managing feelings related to stress. In fact, these types of strategies often contribute to greater outbursts of anger or emotional retreat from others. Career, marriages and other important relationships often suffer or even fall apart as a consequence.

In my work I often find that much of this stress is related to a growing awareness that as men we often feel like we are trying to please everyone, but end up fully pleasing no one, including ourselves. While admired and often rewarded for assertiveness in the workplace, men today are often at a loss for what role to play in their own lives.

Critics have pointed out that the most celebrated television dramas of our day echo men's search for a more satisfying role in life given the empowerment of women over the most recent generations. Don Draper of television's "Mad Men" embodies a "traditional" male caught in the cross currents of the emergence of feminism during the 1950's and 1960's. He discovers the limits of healing to be had from "wine, women and song" and becomes increasingly aware that his life has drifted out from under him. Tony Soprano and Walter White of "The Sopranos" and "Breaking Bad," represent contemporary adaptations of males adrift and gone very bad, indeed. Walter seeks cash and control to quell his anxieties. Tony, one of the most infamous therapy clients of all time, does the same, but with an added emphasis on more traditional pleasures.

Clearly, using these anti-heroes as role models would lead to similar, negative outcomes and much of the content of these shows, though well crafted and compelling dramatized, functions as fantasy and wish-fulfillment. This leaves many men wondering just what it takes to manage their own feelings of stress-related role confusion.

I have found in my own work that helping men ground themselves through mindfulness techniques helps to bring greater clarity to their values. Such clarity leads to a more acute awareness that some of the noise of life can be "turned down" in order to bring greater focus to those aspects of our lives that are truly meaningful. In a similar vein, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), teaches strategies to increase your ability to cope with painful thoughts and feelings that lead to stress. Developed by Dr. Russ Harris, ACT breaks mindfulness skills into three categories:

- 1) Diffusion: distancing from, and letting go of unhelpful thoughts, beliefs and memories
- 2) Acceptance: making room for painful feelings, urges and sensations, and allowing them to come and go without a struggle
- 3) Contact with the Present Moment: engaging fully with your "here-and-now" experience, with an attitude of openness and curiosity

"Going it alone" has never really been a viable option and many men today are paying the price in unnecessary

high levels of stress, anger and emotional detachment. These interventions, along with peer support, help to decrease isolation, improve relationships while adding a greater sense of richness to life that is lacking for many.

*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](http://www.californiacounseling.org).*

## **Address to the 165th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California**

**by The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop of California**



*Editor's note:* The following is an excerpt from the Bishop's address, the entirety of which can be found at <http://bishopmarc.typepad.com>

*"...So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...."*

I bring this quote from scripture to you, because of the many burdens that face humankind today. With gun violence wracking our cities, the hyper-violence of ISIS convulsing the Middle East, the impacts of climate change that beached 35,000 walruses in Alaska in the past month, pandemics like HIV/AIDs and Ebola and global economics that are growing disparities in incomes across the globe and in the Bay Area - we understand brokenness and a need for healing on many levels. In our world today, reconciliation is needed but perhaps feels to be in short supply ...

One of the prominent features of our diverse diocese is its religious diversity. There are not only many languages, cultures, and races here, we have every possible expression of religion, from the great world religions to indigenous religions followed by immigrant groups from all over the world. From shamans to Buddhism, from Sufism to Pentecostal Christianity, it is all here.

And, as with the tremendous learning that comes from our other expressions of diversity coming together in classrooms, neighborhoods, and workplaces, the coming together of religions is a potent way to learn - to learn about other ways of seeking God, or meaning in life, but also to learn more about one's own faith by seeing it in the context of other faiths. Over the last two years I have had my own powerful interfaith experience, with Tibetan Buddhists.

Through serendipity I have been able to participate in two big Tibetan Buddhist retreat weekends, as one of the keynote speakers. The theme for these weekends was Being Brave: Is Enlightened Society Possible? As I listened to the Buddhist keynote speakers, Pema Chodron and the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, I began to hear that enlightened society is possible because, in their view, of the basic goodness of humanity.

Unlike some religious views, including views held within the world of Christianity, that see human nature as at best neutral, a blank slate waiting to be filled in, good or bad, or at worst as hopelessly depraved, Tibetan Buddhism holds that humans are essentially good. As this basic goodness is manifested it can spread, to a community, a society, and finally the world.

What came to mind while listening to these inspiring Buddhist leaders talk about Enlightened Society was the vision statement we constructed seven years ago for the Diocese of California: The Beloved Community Vision Statement. Enlightened Society, Beloved Community – there was an instant resonance between these two evocative terms.

Enlightened Society emerges from basic human goodness, in Tibetan Buddhist thought. Of course Buddhism recognizes that goodness is clouded, and thus that society is far from enlightened. Practices of mindfulness uncover the basic goodness in the human heart and allow it to shine forth. What about the Beloved Community – how does it come to be?

The phrase Beloved Community surfaced in the very early 1900s within the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In the mid-twentieth century, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation used Beloved Community extensively in his writing, sermons and lectures. Here is one example of Dr. King's use of Beloved Community:

*"There is another element that must be present in our struggle that then makes our resistance and nonviolence truly meaningful. That element is reconciliation. Our ultimate end must be the creation of the beloved community."* April 15, 1960, in Raleigh, North Carolina

Mindfulness in Buddhism helps manifest Enlightened Society; reconciliation leads to the Beloved Community in Martin Luther King's Christian vision. There is a way that Christian reconciliation is akin to mindfulness revealing basic human goodness in Buddhism, and this is the underlying work of Christ in the world. St. Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth:

*From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The basic work of reconciliation is the work of Christ, and the reconciling work of Christ was to reunite humanity and all creation with God. The reconciled state is something that is, like basic goodness in Buddhism. But as observed earlier, reconciliation seems to be as lacking in our world as basic goodness, much less Beloved Community and Enlightened Society. In the face of suffering and injustice and an imperiled earth, what is our role in bringing Christ's reconciliation in showing forth the Beloved Community?

## **Editor Needed**

**by Rose Scarff, Editor, St. James Journal**



It has been almost two years since I took on the job of editing the St. James Journal and I have enjoyed every month getting the first read of the wonderful articles shared with us by our leadership, our parishioners and our partners at CCI.

But during this past year many things have changed in my life, and larger commitments have left me with very little time to devote to editing the Journal. After much soul searching I have decided to step down as editor with

the December issue being my last Journal.

Anyone out there interested in picking up the Editor's baton? The job as it stands involves sending out a reminder of the date articles are due to the usual contributors, editing them when they come in and uploading them to the website. Erazm does the final wizardry to make everything work on the website, sends the Journal out by email to everyone and prints out a few copies to mail to those without email. Erazm and I developed this very basic version of the Journal, but I would love to see someone as editor who has greater web-based experience than I do, who could help create a more attractive-to-look-at Journal.

If you think this might be a fit for you, please let me or Fr. John know. Many thanks!



## NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Oct. 31-Nov. 2	<b>St. James Parish Retreat at Bishop's Ranch</b>
November 2, Sunday	Services at <b>8 a.m. &amp; 10 a.m.</b> <b>9 a.m.</b> Choir Practice <b>5 p.m.</b> Speaker Event: Jon Young
November 6, Thursday	<b>6:30 p.m.</b> <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
November 8, Saturday	<b>7:30 a.m.</b> Men's Breakfast
November 9, Sunday	Services at <b>8 a.m. &amp; 10 a.m.</b> St. James serves at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality
November 14, Friday	<b>6:30 p.m.</b> St. James 2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Art Show
November 16, Sunday	Services at <b>8 a.m. &amp; 10 a.m.</b> <b>Noon</b> – Vestry Meeting – Caldwell Room <b>4 p.m.</b> – Youth Group Junior High Night
November 20, Thursday	<b>6:30 p.m.</b> <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
November 22, Saturday	<b>10 a.m.</b> Women's Group meeting at Creative Canopy
November 23, Sunday	Services at <b>8 a.m. &amp; 10 a.m.</b> <b>4 p.m.</b> – Youth Group Senior High Night
November 27, Thursday	<b>10 a.m.</b> Thanksgiving Service
November 30, Sunday	Services at <b>8 a.m. &amp; 10 a.m.</b>
Every Tuesday	<b>7:30 a.m.</b> Morning Prayer & Meditation
Every Wednesday	<b>6:30 p.m.</b> Evening Prayer & Meditation <b>7:30 p.m.</b> Buddhist Meditation in Caldwell Room

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

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We welcome your articles  
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