



ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
A joyful, inclusive community



Please enjoy reading the February edition of the St. James Community Journal. [For our upcoming events please visit our website >>](#)

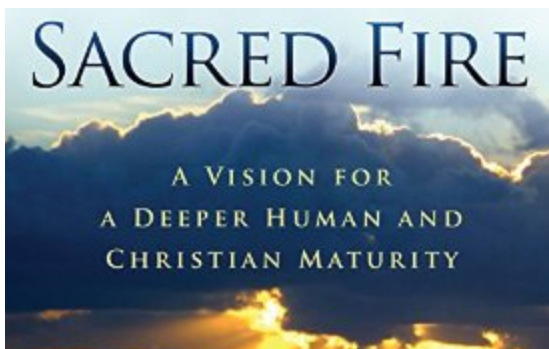
We have a full journal this month and an exciting calendar of events happening in February. If you have questions or comments about the content or formatting, please contact our new editor Natalie Thomas. For more information about St. James please contact Erazm Pochron in the church office.

Thank you!

-- [Natalie](#) and [Erazm](#)

Letting God In

by Rev. John Kirkley
Rector



In his wonderful book, *Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*, Ronald Rolheiser tells the story of a good priest who acknowledges his need for deeper conversion. He wants to become a great priest. He describes the difference in this way:

“I sometimes picture my soul as a mansion with thirty rooms. I had given twenty-seven of them to God, but I had kept three for myself. Conversion for me meant giving up those final three rooms. Sometimes too I quantify that: I had given up about 90% of my life to God, but I had kept back

10%. The difference between being a good priest and being a great one is just that, keeping back 10 percent, holding back on three rooms!”¹

The invitation to deeper conversion is extended to all those who follow the way of Jesus. It is especially relevant to those who, while already good and faithful people, have not yet surrendered to God entirely. Lent is a time to explore the ways in which we resist the invitation to mature Christian discipleship. As Rolheiser puts it, for those who essentially have their lives together, the question now is “How do I give my life away more purely and more generously?”²

¹ Ronald Rolheiser, *Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity* (New York: Image Books, 2014), p. 141

² Rolheiser, p. 18

The tension between our desire for, and resistance to, God is captured beautifully in Margaret Halaska's poem, "Covenant":

The Father
knocks at my door
seeking a home for his son:

Rent is cheap, I say.

I don't want to rent. I want to buy, says God.

I'm not sure I want to sell,
but you might come in to look around.

I think I will, says God.

I might let you have a room or two.

I like it, says God, I'll take two.
You might decide to give me more some day.
I can wait, says God.

I'd like to give you more,
but it's a bit difficult. I need some space for me.

I know, says God, but I'll wait. I like what I see.

Hm, maybe I can let you have another room.
I really don't need that much.

Thanks, says God, I'll take it. I like what I see.

I 'd like to give you the whole house
But I'm not sure –

Think on it, says God, I wouldn't put you out.
Your house would be mine and my son would live in it.
You'd have more space than you'd ever had before.

I don't understand at all.

I know, says God, but I can't tell you about that.
You'll have to discover it for yourself.
That can only happen if you let him have the whole house.

A bit risky, I say.

Yes, says God, but try me.

I'm not sure –
I'll let you know.

I can wait, says God. I like what I see.³

I'm not sure I want to give God my whole heart. It does feel a bit risky. Can I at least let God in to look around a bit? Lent can be a time to experiment with giving God more space to roam around our hearts. I don't have to surrender to love completely, all at once. I can give myself away a little at a time. God is patient, giving me all the time I need to accept that the rooms were never mine to withhold in the first place!

This invitation to surrender to God is, paradoxically, an invitation to freedom. We are invited to become free to love as God loves. St. Julian of Norwich described free people as those who are "so attached to God that there can be no created thing between (their) God and (themselves)."⁴ As we discover our true identity in God, we become freer to love.

We may choose to ignore or even resist such freedom because of our fear of the changes that it would bring to our lives. Recently, I realized that I was spending an inordinate amount of time using my smartphone to fill in the "empty space" of my day – using my Youtube and Facebook apps to tune out temporarily. I was missing how full such spaces are: full of the presence of God and the invitation to love – say a prayer, make a short call to a friend, slow down and breath. I wasn't free. I deleted the apps from my phone.

What rooms are you keeping for yourself? Are there places in your life where you are not free to love? You can make a first step toward freedom by letting God into your heart to look around a bit more during this Lenten season.

The Music of Relationship

by Tina Smelser, MFT
California Counseling Institute



During a recent couples' therapy session, I had an image of myself as a conductor; cueing each person in turn to make sure that his or her sound was heard, signaling one to come forward while signaling the other to hold back, stopping the playing altogether when each person was so focused on his or her own sound that they couldn't even hear the other.

This image led me to ponder some of the musical elements that I have observed in relationships. I write in terms of couples, but these elements can also be applied to relationships with friends, family members, co-workers, etc.

Tone

In referring to arguments between couples, I have often heard such statements as "Well, it wasn't so much what she said, but it was that sarcastic tone she used", or, "when he talks to me in that tone, it feels so patronizing". The same words spoken in a different tone can be received very differently, at an emotional and even physical level. Awareness of the tone one uses, and willingness to consider its impact can make all the difference in keeping an argument from escalating.

³ Quoted in Rolheiser, pp. 142-143

⁴ Quoted in Rose Mary Dougherty, *Discernment: A Path to Spiritual Awakening* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), p. 29

Rhythm

Each of us has a different rhythm. This can include how fast we move and talk, how much space we need between activities, the time of day when we feel most alert. Conflicts can arise when, for example, a faster-moving member of the couple feels that the slower-moving member has no sense of urgency, whereas the slower-moving member was making an extra effort to go faster than his accustomed speed. It is important to become aware of these differences, to accept and honor them without judging one as better than another, and to realize when compromise is called for.

Harmony

If two people played music together, each playing the same notes on the same type of instrument, the result would be a very one-dimensional sound. The richness of relationship comes from having one's unique sound come together with that of another. That means having enough sense of yourself to not completely lose your own sound, the ability to listen to the other and not drown out their sound, and the willingness to adapt your sound at times for the sake of the duet. This doesn't mean never having conflicts! In fact, there is particular satisfaction when a chord of resolution finally arrives after a period of discord.

Entrainment

This term refers to the way that vibrations of one object will lock into step with the vibrations of another. Entrainment is talked about in the context of music therapy in terms of the way that a person's heartbeat, breathing, and brainwaves will become synchronized with the music he or she is listening to. When each person in a couple comes together at the end of the day from their different roles and responsibilities, it can take some time to "tune in" to each other, to get on each other's wavelength. You may want to ritualize this process; perhaps taking a walk together, sitting in meditation together, exchanging a shoulder massage, preparing a meal together, etc.

Practice

Musicians can hone their craft in many ways; listening to music, watching others perform, studying theory. But ultimately there is no substitute for the actual time spent practicing on the instrument. Likewise in relationship, there is value in each person developing his or her own individual self, but there is no substitute for actual time spent together in order to nurture the relationship.

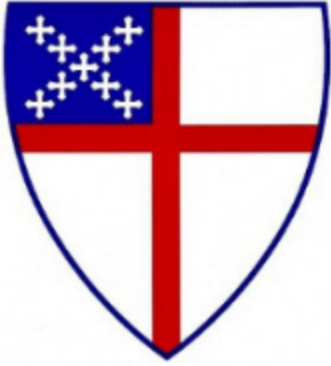
I encourage you to listen attentively to your own sound and the sound of your partner, and to experiment with some new improvisations together!

We are reprinting this article from our archives. We find its message timely and enduring.

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.

News From the Vestry

by Doreen Canton
Senior Warden



The annual Parish Meeting was held on January 10, 2015 in the Parish Hall following the 10 am service.

We had a presentation by Jennifer Martinez, Executive Director of San Francisco Organizing Project/Peninsula Interfaith Action (SFOP/PIA), a national network founded over 30 years ago that brings together multicultural and faith-based communities with a focus on social justice. Issues she addressed included health care, affordable housing, immigrant integration, and improvement of public education.

Two resolutions were passed at the meeting: the Resolution on Inclusivity adopted in 2000, with a slight revision of wording; and adoption of a proposal for the Vestry to appoint a committee for discernment about becoming a Member Congregation of SFOP/PIA. The Rector, Sr. Warden, Jr. Warden, and Treasurer provided their respective reports.

Also, Brad Darda, Kathleen Walker, and Ed Wilcox were elected to the vestry and Mary Balmana, David Differding, and Warren Wong will serve as our deanery representatives this year, with Peter Krag as an alternate. If you missed the meeting, please pick up a copy of the 2014 annual report from the Narthex or the office.

On January 18, 2015 we were graced by the presence of the Bishop Andrus to bless the new solar panels that were recently installed and are now supplying our electricity. Again, our thanks were expressed to the Solar Panel Commission for the time and research they put into this project.

Additionally, the vestry met on January 23 for a brief organizational meeting to elect Brad Darda as Jr. Warden and to approve the treasurer, rector, and Sr. Warden as signatories for the St. James bank accounts. This short meeting was followed by a fellowship dinner.

The following day, we all headed to Vallombrossa Retreat Center in Menlo Park for a wonderful day of spiritual renewal and lively discussion on Jonah. This was a day of deep reflection, sharing, and discussion that gave all of us a new insight into the story and provided us with the opportunity to get to know each other better and appreciate different points of view.

The vestry will be meeting on the 3rd Monday of the month from 7-9 pm in the Parish Hall, with two exceptions, February and December, when we will meet on a Thursday night. The meeting day was changed to allow more Sundays to be available for Christian education. Please remember that vestry meetings are open to all and you are very welcome to attend. The next meeting is on Thursday, February 10th at 7 pm. Approved minutes from the vestry meetings are posted on our website.

Instruments for the Healing of the Earth: Blessing Solar Panels at St. James

by The Rev. Joseph Peters-Mathews (Reprinted from Pacific Church News)



A crowd of around 35 people gathered in the garden area of St. James, San Francisco, on Sunday, January 18 for the Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, bishop of California, to bless St. James' new solar panels at the start of the weekly Eucharist.

An electronic tablet was on display in the narthex noting and tracking how much solar energy was being generated by the new system.

American Solar — through a partnership between the Diocese of California and American Solar that was announced in the early fall — installed the panels. Congregations are able to request a free estimate of the savings in energy costs to be realized by each congregation under this program, and the diocese hopes that 100% of congregations will transition to using solar energy. Bishop Andrus said that currently about 20% of congregations in the

Diocese of California have incorporated solar into their energy portfolios.

The benefits to each church are twofold: (1) answering the call to be good stewards of God's creation by switching the church's use of electricity away from fossil fuel generated power, and (2) reducing the cost of the church's monthly energy bills. There may be no initial cost to the church under this program, which is based on the use of a "power purchase agreement," whereby a third party owns the solar panels, and the church simply purchases the energy produced by the panels from the third party at a price lower than that charged by their local utility company. The American Solar PPA program uses SunPower solar panels which are likely to be in service for 40 or more years. Members and friends of the congregation are entitled to a \$500 rebate and American Solar will make an additional \$500 contribution to the church for each referral from its congregation.

In conversation before the service, Bishop Marc noted the growing progression of social justice concerns from race and gender, to LGBTQ inclusion, and continued work for environmental justice — including the use of solar power.

After the panels were blessed, the assembly (which grew steadily) moved into the church for the usually celebrated Eucharist. The theme of light — for Epiphany season and blessing of solar panels — shone through the music with such hymns as "I want to walk as a child of the light" and "This little light of mine." The Rev. John Kirkley, rector, delivered the sermon. Special music for the day included a setting of words from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Mountaintop" speech in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. St. James parishioner Elizabeth Nelson composed the music.

Please contact Charlie Gregg at American Solar at charlie.gregg@americansolar.net or 415.868.1111 ext.133, for more details.

Christmas 2014 Sermon
by the Rev. T Vincent Jang



Rev. T. Vincent Jang shares his Christmas sermon with us.
In the beginning was the word and the word was with God.

You are standing about. Without warning a bunch of angels appear. The angels always assure the person being spoken to: “Be not afraid” or “fear not”. You’d be shocked if some angels appeared to you suddenly and starting talking to you especially when you least expect it.

What a powerful statement of assurance that is: Be not afraid.

By the word of God, the world was created. By the word of God, the message from the Angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Emanuel...God with us.

Then suddenly with the choir of angels they glorify God by proclaiming:

Glory to God in the Highest and peace to people of goodwill.

In the Eucharist, by the word of God, Jesus said: This is My Body and This is My Blood meaning the bread and wine we take becomes the Body and Blood of Christ.

Ask and you shall receive. It’s by the word, such as God created the earth and by God’s word and it was created.

We celebrate the birth of Jesus because God chooses to become human by God’s word.

The Angel of the Lord announced to Mary and she was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit with her consent.

Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus, words paraphrased from Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary.

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us...the birth of Jesus.

These are words that changed history.

What about words like I pronounced that you are husband and wife, spouse and spouse found in the marriage rites.

Receive the Holy Spirit for the work entrusted to you as a Deacon or Priest in the Church found in the ordination rites.

You are commissioned for the work of God in the office of and then you name that office, words from the Book of Occasional Services.

Or like the centurion who said to Jesus, give the word and I know by the time I get back my servant shall be well from his illness because when I give an order I know it will be carried out.

Wondrous Creator

by the Rev. Ginny Doctor

Thanks to Carole Jan Lee for requesting this prayer be added to the journal.

Wondrous Creator,

Creator of mother earth and all that she holds,

be with us in all of your ways:

In our mother earth where our ancestors rest we stand on holy ground.

In shining sun we gather the warmth of your words.

In grandmother moon we feel the changes that you bring to honor all.

In thunder and lightning we are awakened to open our hearts to receive your spirit.

In rain and snow our sacred water cleanses our bodies.

In river, lake, creek, stream we are nourished by the life and peace you bring.

In wind we smell your breath calling us to life with you.

In stars we see your presence of hope that dances in our hearts.

In four leggeds and winged we feel the humility of our being.

In plants and flowers we become the beauty your strength gives.

In each other we feel the love that brings us all to be with you.

In ourselves we hear your voice gently calling us to you,

Wondrous Creator.