



ST. JAMES' JOURNAL

APRIL 2020

Rev. Wayne Sherrer — Priest-in-Charge



A sermon from March 22, 2020

Change is difficult, especially a change that we haven't chosen. Not only do we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory, sometimes our new situations can truly be dangerous. In our first lesson the prophet Samuel is afraid. God had decided to replace King Saul with one of the sons of Jesse. Samuel's job was to anoint one of those sons as the new king of Israel. Samuel had every reason to be afraid, for King Saul would have killed him if he found out about it. The Jewish leaders in our Gospel lesson were also afraid. The popular understanding that the Messiah would be a political and military leader like King David made them very uneasy when they heard what people were saying about Jesus. Other men had claimed to be the Messiah. There had already been short-lived revolts that the Roman soldiers had crushed. The leaders didn't want another one.

Change is also difficult when it is a big change and when it happens quickly. We have seen huge changes in just two weeks. There has been the arrival of a new and scary disease into our region. There has been disruption of the familiar anchors of our society. Schools have closed. Church buildings are closed. Many businesses saw their customers disappear even before the government told them to lock their doors. Record numbers of people are suddenly unemployed. Out of fear that conditions will get worse, some people have panicked and bought huge quantities of things that gave them a momentary sense of security. And then others have seen empty shelves and gone home empty-handed.

But the author of Psalm 23 offers a different view of our situation. The Psalm reminds us that God still provides green pastures and still waters. The sun continues to shine. Its light provides energy to plant life and to solar electric panels. The longer hours of spring daylight and the sprouting of early flowers have the ability to restore our souls. Some of you may have seen pictures of fish and even dolphins swimming in the suddenly crystal clear canals of Venice, Italy. As we look around us, we can see evidence that our God is actively renewing the earth. And God is here to guide us into paths of righteousness so we can assist God in that work of renewal.

Most important for our current situation, the Psalmist reassures us that even if we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us. We do not face the dangers of this time alone. While the news has been filled with stories of people behaving badly, there are many other stories of heroism and generosity. Mr. Rogers said his mother responded to scary news by telling him, 'Look for the helpers.' We can see neighbors helping neighbors, teenagers doing free deliveries to seniors, restaurants donating food and medical personnel working long hours under extraordinary conditions.

Financial Stewardship

While many love our historic church building, it is the community we call St. James which is our real treasure. We have often gathered within its walls to give thanks to God and we have used its space as a center for our ministry to others. We have fed the hungry and provided the needy with clothing. We have comforted the grieving and offered hope to the despairing. Offering words of encouragement, we have shared our joys and concerns with one another. We have been a family to those who live alone.

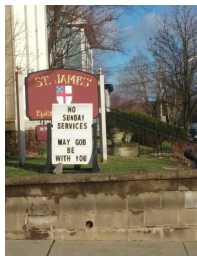
At this time, we have been forced to change how we do those things. Our worship today is different than it was last week and all the years before. We are learning new ways to be together while we are physically separated. We have ways of communication that were not possible during earlier epidemics or wartime. With smart phones and computers, we can see people across town or across the country. We can watch them smile and watch them play. We have ways to quickly transfer money to those who are helping the needy. Without leaving our homes, we have access to information and other resources. We who have that access can share that information with those who don't have it or don't know how to use it. Other priests and I are learning from one another how to lead worship despite extreme physical distance from our congregations.

Through it all, we know that God is still good and is still merciful. We know that nothing can separate us from God's love. God has been our help in ages past. God is our reason for hope during every change over the course of our lives. And we have the promise that one day each

of us will claim our place to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Amen

Fr. Wayne



The St. James' parish is affected in many ways by the current pandemic, just as you are. Our expenses continue, just as yours do. We understand if you are experiencing financial difficulty at the present time and cannot contribute as you thought you would be able. For those who are able, here are the ways:

- ✦ Envelopes can be deposited in the Mitcham House mail slot.
- ✦ Envelopes can be mailed to St. James' Episcopal Church, 214 Washington St., Hackettstown, NJ 07840.
- ✦ If you use online banking, you can send checks from your account or set up automatic payments using the address above.
- ✦ You can visit the St. James' website at stjameshackettstown.org and look for electronic giving through Vanco on the home page.
- ✦ You may contact the church office to have our parish administrator, Julie Mills, set up Vanco for you.
- ✦ Lastly, you may also use a phone app called Giveplus+ to make electronic contributions to the general operating fund or the building fund.

Thank you for your support!

Easter Food Bags Take on a Different Form This Season

As you are aware, St. James' has a long tradition of collecting non-perishable food during holiday seasons to pack up in bags to donate to families we have identified are in need of some assistance. This year it will not be possible to come together to accomplish this activity. However, the Vestry and Mission Strategy Committee have determined that grocery store gift cards can be distributed in place of the food bags to be able to still meet the need. It is quite possible that St. James' may be approached by additional families, neighbors, or even agencies to assist in some way.

Thank you to those who have already donated toward Shop Rite Gift Cards in these recent months. There is still time to donate monetarily to purchase the cards in place of purchasing groceries that many of you do each holiday season. If you have not done so in the past, this is a way to support this effort at this time.

Simply send a check made out to: **St. James' Church Mission Strategy** to the Committee Chair, to his home address:

Paul Bartkus

5 Primrose Lane, Hackettstown, NJ 07840

This helps with simpler bookkeeping for all and would be much appreciated.

Thank you for whatever you feel called to do at this Easter season.

Kathy Lacouture

Being the Church When We Can't Be in Our Building

As the world responds to the pandemic by requiring physical distance between people, the Church in the larger sense and we at St. James' see that the Gospel's message of relationship and reconciliation is needed now more than ever. The fears of becoming infected or of infecting others have been addressed by unprecedented isolation. Our desires to see familiar faces and to touch others with a handshake or an embrace are frustrated by our even stronger desire to keep one another safe and healthy. We need to hear that we are loved and valued by God and by other people. We also are aware of those less fortunate and want to address their needs and to demonstrate God's love for them. What are some of the ways St. James' is being a community of faith at this time?

We are continuing to offer worship through online services. Every Sunday there is a service of Morning Prayer on the parish's Facebook page. The one exception will be Easter Sunday when we will join with the diocese at a festive Easter celebration online with our Bishop. In addition to Sundays, we will have online worship for Maundy Thursday (April 9) and Good Friday (April 10) at our Facebook page. Your comments are always welcome there.

We are continuing to post prayers and inspirational thoughts on our Facebook page each day. We hope they contribute to your spiritual life. You are invited to add your reflections so others may share in your insight.

Our Prayer ministry under the coordination of Barbara Olesen (olesen@comcast.net or 908-797-0515) continues to lift up the concerns of parishioners and those they care about. We will send a Constant Contact each week with the current list of intercessions, parish cycle of prayer for families, and birthdays and anniversaries for the week.

We are looking to strengthen connections within our community of faith and to counter the effects of physical isolation. We have established a parish network with each vestry member or warden responsible for maintaining contact with six other households. We encourage you to supplement that network by reaching out to other members of the parish. If you do not know how to contact a specific parishioner, ask your vestry contact, who has the phone numbers and email addresses for the congregation.

We continue to care for those whose resources fall short of their needs. As is explained elsewhere in this journal, we will be giving only supermarket gift cards, and not our usual bags of groceries to families in need this Easter. Remember also that a portion of your financial support of St. James' is sent to the Diocese. The cooperation of our 96 diocesan parishes supports numerous ministries like North Porch and the emergency shelter in Paterson.

Our office is still open and staffed by our parish administrator, Julie Mills. Dedicated volunteers still count contributions, ensure the maintenance of our building and plan for the resumption of activity when we can gather there again. Father Wayne is available at clergy@stjameshackettstown.org or at 909-454-0816.

Each of you brings the presence of Christ wherever you go. You are a blessing to the world. Go and let your light shine because you are a sign of life. Not only to me, not only to the church, not only to our Lord, but to the whole, wide world. You are a blessing to the world. Go and let your light shine because you are a sign of life. Not only to St. James', not only to Hackettstown, not only to our Lord, but to the whole, wide world.

Fr. Wayne

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St. James' Staff & Vestry

Priest-in-Charge:	The Rev. Wayne Sherrer
Rector Emeritus:	The Rev. Clarence Sickles
Parish Administrator:	Julie Mills
Organist	Dmitry Nikolaev
Sexton:	Pauline Volkert

Vestry

Senior Warden:	Peter Quelly
Junior Warden:	David Olesen

Meg Critchley	Pam Laura	Anne Dutton
Janice Cipriani	Chika Okoye	Kathy Erwood-Lacouture
Marvin Walker	Devin O'Connor	Karina Hernandez

Vestry Clerk:	Pam Laura
Treasurer:	Janice Cipriani
Bookkeeper:	Barbara Olesen

Barbara Olesen, Editor

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