



The Epistle

April 2017

The Episcopal Church of St. James on the Parkway

A community growing in Christ, called to worship, learn, and serve.

3225 East Minnehaha Parkway • Minneapolis, MN 55417 • 612-724-3425 • www.stjamesotp.com • stjamesotp@comcast.net

Easter: A Delightful Life

The Rev. William Heisley

I sit here looking beyond my computer through a second story window across a nascent prairie to trees, coniferous and deciduous. Swaying in chill spring zephyrs, shaking and looking for the warmth of the too distant sun. I sit here and I think that there must be something here that I should write. But what do the people of St. James need to hear?

Several years ago an elderly Episcopalian worshipped with some regularity at my Lutheran parish in New York City. He and I were talking one time and I said that I struggle with what to preach. It seems that after being a preacher for three decades there is nothing left to spark my imagination. He told me that I was thinking about all of this in the wrong way. People don't need to hear anything new. They need to hear the Gospel. The centuries old story of Jesus and his loving Resurrection for all of us. For you. Even for me.

Laced with grey light the trees outside my window will soon be wet with

rain, even snow, I am told. And I am reminded about how we Christians need to get wet, too. We have walked through Lent preparing to renew our baptismal vows. Preparing to again be filled with hope and light, to bring peace and joy into lives fraught with struggle, shame, anxiety.

Easter is the greatest baptismal feast of the Church. The Paschal mystery, the fact that God's only Son became a human being, lived, suffered, died, and rose from the dead for our sins, for love of our bodies and our lives both temporal and eternal, The Paschal mystery tells us that as we were baptized into Christ's death, we were also baptized into his Resurrection. The Book of Common Prayer: "Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble."

Indissoluble. The chill zephyrs of our lives, the grey clouds over us, the absence of the sun, nothing can separate from the love of God in Christ

Jesus washed over us on that fateful, that faithful day of grace when we were splashed, doused, drowned with probably-too-cold water. God loves us and owns us and all is well, all shall be well. Maybe this is what you need to hear. Maybe this is what I need to hear.

My friend Gertrud Mueller Nelson taught her children an old central European custom to celebrate Easter. On Monday, the day after Easter Day, it was common for young men to call on the homes of the girls who had caught their eye. When the girl opened the door, the men would splash them with water. Then everyone would gather inside for pastries. On Tuesday, the following day, the scenario was played out in reverse.

I love this custom. The utter, the sheer delight in our attachment to the Resurrection through Holy Baptism is brought home. Literally. Through people's front doors.

How will your life become more delightful this Easter, oh baptized friend?

Your Invitation: Be a Good Host!

On Sunday, April 23, we will host four very special, very important visitors: two Muslims and two Jews. We will welcome them to our 9 AM Coffee Hour in the Chapel Hall and engage in largely informal conversation with them until about 10:15. PLEASE attend to show your support for our sisters and brothers in the various faith communities of Minnesota and the world.

Refreshments will be served, sponsored by the small working group that has been meeting for some months with our guests. The purpose of the visit is to begin to introduce these new friends to the larger context of our parish. This visit is a logical next step, growing out of Acorn 2020's recommendation that we engage in interfaith dialogue.

The St. James Vestry, and all parish leaders, including Fr. Heisley, are extremely excited about this event and about continuing to extend the hand of peace and charity that we have been given so generously in the Resurrection of Jesus. Join us on April 23 and pray continually for the peace and wholeness of our communities.

From the Senior Warden Neal Cuthbert

Bravely Approaching Cross Roads

Sadly I am one of those people who tend to overuse the word interesting. Today, as I write this I spent a part of my afternoon at the memorial service for the husband of a dear friend and colleague. The crowd assembled for the service was diverse, celebratory, and reflecting her husband, a wonderful and interesting cross section of the Minnesota political and social landscape. It made me reflect on the current state of affairs at our dear St. James, and how we as a parish have bravely approached a cross roads we've observed on our collective horizon for many years and could have continued to avoid if we were so inclined. Over the past year we've had several disruptions which I've talked about -- Jim retiring, our music director abruptly leaving, among others -- and how we as a community managed to move forward from these and have actually progressed. We are now in the process of digging deeper in to the recommendations from our

Acorn 2020 process. Several of the paths explored via this process resulted in what I call "clear ends", meaning that we know with some clarity that a certain idea or scenario would be difficult or impossible to come to fruition. This is a good thing and a blessing.

One of the Acorn scenarios, the Tri-Faith Center, seems to have found an interesting spark within our community and with a group of new partners. In the weeks ahead there will be several opportunities to engage and learn more about this. One is during an upcoming Education session where the Tri-Faith partners will come for some low-key conversation and fellowship. This work is building towards an event called "This is America" that will happen at St. James on July 4th which you will be hearing more and more about as the date approaches. Importantly, we will be looking for St. Jamesians to participate, volunteer to help make it happen, and be open to what this work

presents to our community in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

When we were at the very beginning of the Acorn process, a member of the ECM staff came and spoke to the vestry about the need for our community to be open to the Holy Spirit. I'm not often given to talking about the Holy Spirit myself, and tend to be quiet and reflective about my faith life, but I believe with my heart that what will be happening over the next several weeks as a result of the Acorn process, and the work of the Tri-Faith Committee, is truly a manifestation of the Spirit. The Tri-Faith work is not the only culmination of the Acorn process, there will be more about that after the vestry's June meeting, but as one clear, interesting, and energetic manifestation, please be open to it, be amazed by it, and join me in believing that the future of St. James will continue to unfold.

Neighborhood Engagement

On Saturday May 20 from Noon to 3 P.M. St. James will participate in a new neighborhood event, the Bossen Renters' Party. Sponsored by the Nokomis East Neighborhood Association, the Bossen Renters' Party will seek to provide strong links between the residents of that community and the rest of Nokomis East. At its March meeting the St. James Vestry approved our participation and a gift of \$100 to support the event. Joining with other neighborhood expressions of community, St. James' money will aid in the purchase of two bicycles to be given away to Bossen children in a lottery. People will

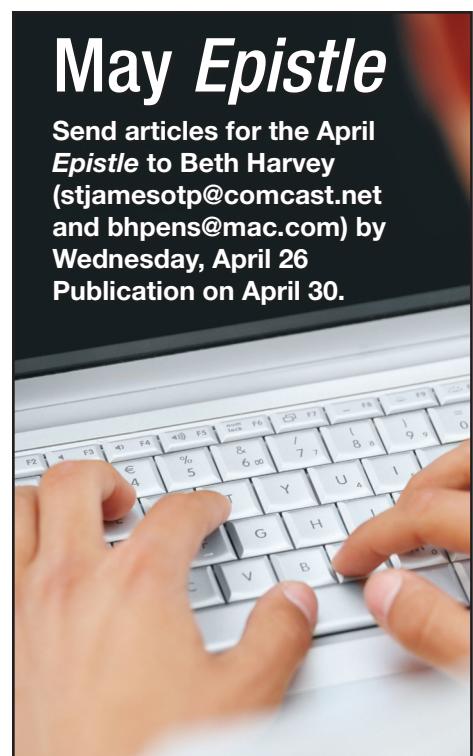
complete a questionnaire about their needs and hopes for the area as their entry into the lottery.

The Bossen neighborhood lies on the east side of Bossen Park which is bordered by East 56th Street on the north, East 58th Street on the south, 28th Avenue South on the west and 31st Avenue South on the east.

Look for more information regarding what we'll be asked to do at the Bossen Renters' Party in the next few weeks. And plan to stop by to let our friends in that area know that there is a home for them at St. James!

May *Epistle*

Send articles for the April *Epistle* to Beth Harvey (stjamesotp@comcast.net and bhpens@mac.com) by Wednesday, April 26 Publication on April 30.



Onè! Respe! (Honor! Respect!)

Hurricane Matthew Recovery Update

by Susan Maas on behalf of the
Haiti Committee

Just six months ago, our friends in the parish of Bonne Nouvelle in Bigonet, Haiti, were reeling. Just six months ago, Hurricane Matthew decimated their crops, their sustenance, their livelihoods. Fruit and nut trees leveled, mountainside gardens collapsed, homes damaged . . . spirits daunted.

But not for long. Their creativity, hard work and resilience, with our support – your support – are prevailing. There's abundant hope for the future in Bigonet. With our friends in fellow partner churches St. Mary's and Trinity Lutheran in Hovland, plus many, many friends and family members around Minnesota and across the U.S., we raised an astonishing \$11,000 for hurricane relief.

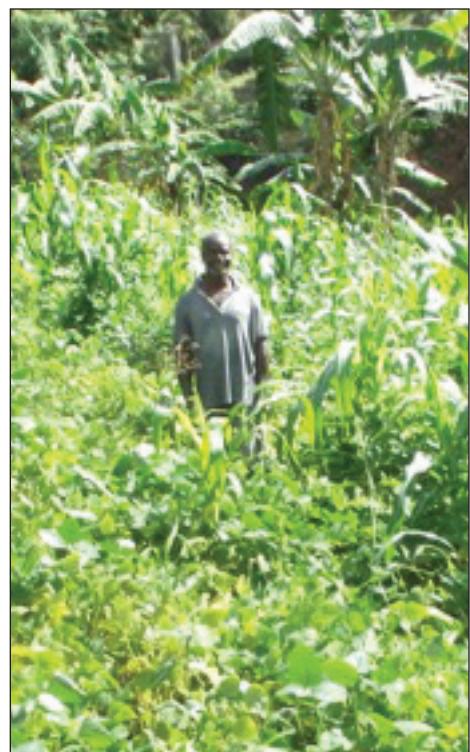
They've used some of that money to provide school lunches for hungry students 2-3 times per week. And some of it to plant tree seedlings, starting just weeks after the hurricane; already the fall seedlings – papaya, mango, avocado – have started to grow. Principal Louis Noncent reports that he can't keep up with villagers' requests to have their photos taken with their newly replanted gardens, bursting with green. As you read this, they're beginning to plant peanut seedlings, which must be planted in April and May. And they're launching a goat program: purchasing pregnant nannies to distribute kids to households around the parish.

This ongoing recovery is amazing. It will take years, but the progress they've made, with our help, so far is incredible. Still, it is recovery. And meanwhile, the day-to-day struggle of summoning the resources to educate hundreds of children in a country where the government provides no support – where there's no basic infrastructure at all – continues. As does our commitment.

That commitment, begun in 2008, to help our friends educate the girls and boys of Bigonet and surrounding areas – regardless of their families' ability to pay tuition – is the central focus of our partnership with Bonne Nouvelle. We'll be renewing it next month, during our annual May Haiti Partnership fund drive. While our hurricane recovery efforts have been an important factor in this remark-

able community's survival, we're not content to just help them survive. We want our friends to thrive. Our long-standing support of Bonne Nouvelle helps them do just that.

Watch for details of this year's fund drive – slated for May 7, May 14, and May 21 – in the bulletin and Epistle. And thank you for the love and generosity you bring to this unique friendship!



Nokomis Serves

Anne Scheible

One of the outcomes of the Acorn 2020 work has been the formation of the 3-churches working group. This group is made up of members of St. James, Minnehaha United Methodist Church and Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church. On March 5th, representatives from the three churches met to launch a collaborative effort in the area of community service. The joint effort is being called "Nokomis Serves". The goals are to assess the existing programs at all three churches, to look for ways to coordinate and support the efforts being made in the area of community service and to expand to better meet the needs of the neighborhood.

Louis Hoffman kicked off the effort by putting together a spreadsheet of the activities each of the churches are presently involved in. A meeting of service/outreach leaders is planned for April. The plan is to introduce this to other churches and/or neighborhood organizations in August and to invite them to join our efforts.



Laptops! Donate Your Used Laptops to Haiti

Do you have (or does your company have) a used laptop computer to donate?

St. John's Episcopal Church in Linden Hills is collecting laptops for their partners in Gressier, Haiti.

If you can help, please contact Dianne Pizey at dianne.pizey@aol.com



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