



The Epistle

January 2017

The Episcopal Church of St. James on the Parkway

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

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Christ Climbed Down

The Rev. William Heisley

Perhaps my most favorite poem for this time of year is “Christ Climbed Down” by the renowned beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Each of six verses begins with this line: “Christ climbed down from his tree this year.”

The act of climbing down from the tree, living well enough, long enough, through condemnation and torture and crucifixion, to shinny down the rugged tree of the cross, to land, feet on the ground, is to live again, yet again, on the soil that is made sacred by his every step. Christ climbed down and lives and walks into Advent and Christmas, waiting to be born again, waiting to go through it all anew, waiting to give himself to us, unthinkably, over and over.

In Ferlinghetti’s poem there is a thoroughgoing disdain for all that Christmas has become in our North American culture: rootless trees whose meaning has been lost, plastic decorations, a VW sleigh hauling too many gifts to children who have too much, and too few gifts to children who have too few, a disdain for the fact that Christmas has become not a time to return to the love that showers us in the birth of Jesus in a meager stable, but a time for people to ignore its truths so that they can placate themselves with commerce, with things.

Oh, but it’s a time for family. True! And happily so! But our concept of family needs to be large enough to embrace those who have too little, those

who suffer, those who observe Christmas in a blue condition, depressed, alone, eager for the holidays, the days rooted in the term “holy days,” to pass so that the numbing effects of quotidian life might return.

But Christ climbs down from his tree this year as He does every year. He climbs down to be with all of us, in our faith community, in our homes, in our sadness, and in our joy. Christ climbs down because down here is where we are. No where else. Rooted to this place and this time. And He climbs down to remind us that no matter how much we seek to ignore his presence

He is here, God with us, Emmanuel.

Do not tear down your tree, put away your candles, burn your gifts when you read this. Do exactly the opposite. Understand that it is here in all of these things that we are met and blessed, met and given new life, met and made holy, again and again, God’s holy people in the love of the Infant, who climbs down, plants his feet on terra firma, and loves us so that we might love Him, but also so that we might love all of His holy ones.

Christ climbs down and the world is resanctified. In his presence is eternal joy.

Financial Report: November 2016

St. James continued to enjoy the favorable operating results that we have been experiencing throughout most of the year. Total income through November has been favorable, mainly due to unpledged income. This has been a combination of loose plate offerings and unrestricted memorials.

Expenses have also been favorable, as a result of staff turnover in both the clergy and lay staff categories.

The outcome is a net surplus which is favorable to budget by nearly \$19,000. Here is a summary of the November results, with all dollars rounded to the nearest \$100.

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance Fav./ (Unfav.)
Pledged Income	\$120,300	\$121,500	\$1,200
Other Income	\$75,700	\$68,200	\$75,00
Total Income	\$196,000	\$189,700	\$6,300
Expenses	\$177,100	\$189,500	\$12,400
Net Surplus	\$18,900	\$200	\$18,700

Gifts from Bigonet

by St. James Haiti Committee

Several weeks ago, St. Jamesian Anne Scheible commented that the people of Bigonet could teach us a lot. As St. James enters into difficult decisions about our building and our future as a community, might we learn about challenge, resilience and hope from our partners in Haiti? Two stories, and several photos, can teach and inspire.

Scene 1.

It's January 2010 and an earthquake has left utter destruction, leveling most-every structure in the village, including Bonne Nouvelle's historical and beautiful church building.

Fast forward to November 2016. It's celebration time — Bonne Nou-

velle's yearly festival. It's true that the people of Bigonet have had no money to repair their church, which still stands as a patchwork of tarps, tin and wood. But a church is its people, not its building, and for sure Bonne Nouvelle is about faith, not architectural grandeur. And so the people of Bigonet make beauty from what's at hand. And they come together in praise and thanksgiving.

Scene 2.

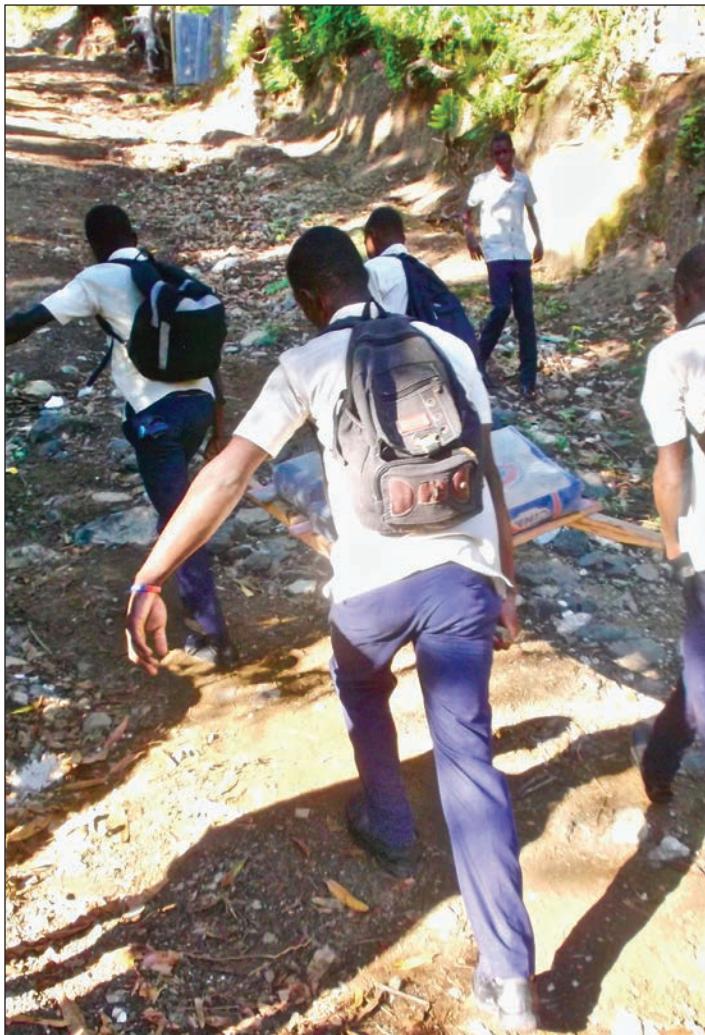
It's October 2016. Hurricane Matthew has dealt yet another cruel blow to our friends in Bigonet, destroying crops, trees and livelihoods.

Fast forward to December. In partnership, St. James has raised money and the people of Bonne Nou-

velle have put every penny to work. They've cooked rice and beans for children who otherwise would have no food. They've created a tree nursery — for avocados, grapefruit, mango, banana, oranges and more. New trees have begun to sprout, and when the plants are strong, families will take them to their homes in the mountains. They'll tend them, and look to the day 2, 3, maybe 5 years in the future when once again they'll have fruit to eat, crops to sell.

St. James struggles, not from earthquake nor hurricane, but from a long slow erosion of our parish finances. We're learning about challenge, resilience, hope and hard work. Our partners are able teachers.





Left: Bonne Nouvelle: outside. Top: Bonne Nouvelle: inside.
Above: Students haul supplies up the mountain.
Right Middle: Families create pots fill them with dirt.
Right: Waiting for growth.

Pastoral Care: Please Let Us Know!

The Rev. William Heisley

One of the frequent obstacles to doing effective parish ministry is not knowing who is in-firm, sick, hospitalized, in a residential facility either short or long term, and who would like a pastoral visit.

Since one of the keystones of pastoral care is visitation I am eager to serve you and yours wherever and you might be. There are sometimes issues caused by the fact that I live 30 some miles west of St. James and work only part time as your Transition Priest. Neverthe-less, I seek to do the most and the best that I can.

Therefore, PLEASE let me or Beth Harvey, Office Administrator, know of your needs so that I can do my best to be with you and so that the entire faith community of St. James might pray for you.

My cell phone number is: 612-968-7439

Beth's cell phone number is: 612-250-9795

If you prefer to reach her, she will relay information to me in a timely fashion.

Please do not leave a message at the office since phones are not checked regularly.

Know that at St. James you are loved and cared for no matter what your estate in life, your situation, your needs. We will do our best – with the help of the Holy Spirit!

Acorn 2020 Report and Recommend

by Tony Morley

After well-attended Review & Listen sessions in Chapel Hall on December 4 and 11, Acorn focused its final meeting, December 14, on reporting and recommending for the Vestry. Members accepted individual assignments for different parts of the package, to be completed by January 5.

On January 10 Acorn's work will be on the Vestry agenda.

Almost 50 parishioners attended one or both the open meetings that Acorn sponsored in December. Information was shared about the five potential partnership themes that Acorn has been exploring to build a sustainable St. James future. Questions and comment stimulated by the sharing entered naturally into Acorn's follow-up discussion.

The five themes are children's education, work with neighborhood

churches, work with other Episcopal congregations, a Christian-Jewish-Muslim center, and St. James as a place for the arts. For the Vestry, Acorn will suggest next steps in each area. In addition, it will urge supportive action in regard to finances and the physical condition of building and grounds.

Acorn is a nine-member group appointed by the Vestry. It has been at work since fall of 2015. The members are Victor Gonzales and Tony Kloiber (co-chairs), Rosemary Caspar, Louis Hoffman, Aileen Johnson, Jim Larson, Tony Morley, Joe Ordos and Anne Scheible.

February Epistle

Send articles for the February Epistle to Beth Harvey (stjamesotp@comcast.net and bhpens@mac.com) by Monday, January 23. Publication on January 31.

