



The Epistle

December 2018

The Episcopal Church of St. James on the Parkway

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

Report to the Congregation from the Vestry about the 3-Church Initiative

Sunday, December 2: 9:00–10:15 AM

Who knew? Who knows?

The Rev. William Heisley

It was about 1954, I think. My grandfather was the pastor of our Evangelical United Brethren congregation and had been for well over a decade. Then came the fire. The church, a frame building of a certain age, became a pile of ashes in a few hours.

Then came the rebuilding campaign. I was not yet in school so I don't remember a lot. They wouldn't tell little boys much in those days. But I do remember that my grandfather acted as general contractor for the new building and my father as the head carpenter, all of their time given gratis.

And I remember that my grandfather, somewhere in that process – maybe just as the building was completed? – had what I was told was a nervous breakdown. I still don't know exactly what that meant, since medical and psychological diagnoses are more advanced these days. I just know that he was shut away in his house, often in his bedroom, for what seemed like an eon to his favorite grandson.

What does this have to do with St. James on the Parkway? Just this: times are always uncertain. We are always in

transition, from this moment to the next and we can never with 100% certainty know what will come next. Who knew that our church would burn to the ground? Who knew that we would rebuild, a fine, new building of stone with beautiful stained glass? Who knew that the process would wear my grandfather to the emotional bone? Who knew?

Who knows?

I am not suggesting that we of St. James have a fire, or that we rebuild, or become emotionally distraught. Quite the opposite. I am telling you that in every time we are in transition and only God in the power of the Holy Spirit can guide us safely through the twists and turns of life. It is our responsibility to listen and to really hear what the Spirit is saying.

Thus, this Sunday we meet to speak and to listen to each other so that we can continue in our mutual discernment. We do not meet to make any decisions, except to meet again in late January. Then we'll decide. But we'll only decide if we should continue to talk. Nothing else.

Our process needs to be very clear and we are making it as clear as is humanly possible. (See the letter you

received in your mail slot and via email recently.) Then, with the full consent and participation of the Holy Spirit we will...what? Only the Spirit knows.

Except this: the Spirit knows! And all will be well. All shall be very well, indeed.

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From the Senior Warden Louis Hoffman

The 3-Church Initiative. How did we get here?

The **Parish Information Meeting** is coming up from **9:00 to 10:15 AM** on **Sunday, December 2**. Please read, digest, and prayerfully consider the *Report to the Congregation from the Vestry about the 3-Church Initiative* that was e-mailed and mailed to everyone on the congregation's mailing list in late October. If you don't have yours, there are copies on the black table in the Narthex and also posted on the Action Wall in the Narthex. I hope you've listened to the Wardens' and Vestry Members' talks at church and asked your questions and shared your thoughts.

As a prelude to the meeting, **I want to explain how we got to this point.** Some of you may be wondering whether the Vestry considered any other options. And you may have ideas that don't involve the change, hard work, and, yes, trauma that cooperating and sharing space with two other churches would surely involve. To best answer these questions, I'll go back about three years to remind us all of how, in fact, we did get to this point.

There's been a lot of discernment, strategic planning, etc. at St. James in the nearly 21 years that Rebecca and I have been members. But the "modern" era of charting a course to our future started on Palm Sunday 2015 when more than forty members of St. James gathered after church in the Great Hall to brainstorm about St. James' future. That afternoon generated nearly 400 ideas.

Enter ACORN/2020. ACORN/2020 was a working group of Rosemary Caspar, Neal Cuthbert, Victor Gonzales, Aileen Johnson, Tony Kloiber, Jim Larson, Tony Morley, Joe Ordos, Anne Scheible, and me. There was a lot of

conversation about the framework under which we'd proceed before getting into the monumental job of sifting through the nearly 400 ideas. Some could be dispensed with more easily than others. We didn't seriously consider an indoor water park! Many ideas overlapped or were related. **The ideas, like maple sap, were boiled down to maple syrup** (did you know that it takes forty gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup?) – our final report to the Vestry.

The final report to the Vestry offered the following ideas that basically involved increased use of our property to generate funds bring the building into a good state of repair and to 21st century accessibility, architectural, comfort, and engineering standards:

- St. James as a Place for the Arts that also served people with mental health needs through the arts.
- St. James as a center for early childhood education possibly in cooperation with Breck School.
- St. James in a partnership with other Episcopal Churches and other churches in the community.
- St. James as the home of an Abrahamic Tri-Faith Center bringing Christians, Jews, and Muslims together.
- St. James working with our neighborhood churches, Lake Nokomis Lutheran and Minnehaha United Methodist, with whom we already work.

Also included were assessing our finances, assessing the condition of our building and property, and affirming our relationship with Mandala. These ideas were shared with the Vestry and

the congregation. The *Action Wall* was created in the Narthex. Members were invited to share their thoughts about these ideas and, most importantly, to volunteer to do the work to move the ideas forward.

- Neal Cuthbert and Joe Ordos had conversations about the St. James as a Place for the Arts initiative none of which resulted in the level of commitment needed to proceed.
- Rosemary Caspar reached out to the child care community generally and to Breck specifically and found no interest.
- Anne Scheible had extensive conversations with the Vicar at All Saints and the Rector at Holy Trinity from which we learned much and which has deepened our relationship with the First Nations Kitchen at All Saints. Neal Cuthbert had conversations with the Spirit of St. Stephen Catholic Community.
- Ruth Anne Olson spearheaded the Abrahamic Tri-Faith Initiative that planned the wildly successful *This is America* on Independence Day 2017 and opened up invaluable conversations with our Jewish and Muslim neighbors. Ruth Anne, Max Athorn, Rebecca Hamblin, Monica Herrera, and Pat Morley continue doing important work. But a tri-faith center that "saves" St. James isn't on the group's current horizon.
- Tony Morley and I talked to colleagues at Lake Nokomis Lutheran and Minnehaha United Methodist that led to our *Nokomis Serves* community service and social justice cooperative that's been joined by Living Table United Church of Christ.

It's this last conversation that led to the creation of The Discernment Team of three clergy and three lay leaders from Lake Nokomis Lutheran, Living Table UCC, and St. James. We've been meeting since last December. In addition to trying to get a grasp on a difficult task, we've arranged three joint worship services in May, June, and July and a community dinner and information meeting in May.

So the 3-Church Initiative Vestry Report now before you is far from the only idea considered, nor did it come out of the blue. The Report that you now have is the distillation of your nearly 400 ideas from Palm Sunday 2015 and the result of thousands of person hours by ACORN/2020, the Vestry, staff, and volunteers. **This long**

and winding road – gathering hundreds of ideas, separating the wheat from the chaff, processing them into five realistic proposals, and then reaching out to find outside interest in those ideas – **brings us to where we are now.**

And that is a proposal to spend 2019 examining (a) the marketability and value of property owned by the three churches, (b) thinking about "living together" in one space while sharing community service and social justice ministries, faith formation, lay staff, and space, (c) the architectural, engineering, and financial challenges of doing so, and (d) making a financial commitment to the process.

If St. James proceeds as the Report suggests, it'll mean lots of work and, if the work is fruitful, great change.

Remodeling and expanding St. James to welcome our Congregational and Lutheran neighbors, remodeling Lake Nokomis Lutheran to accommodate our Congregational neighbors and us, or creating a new space from scratch—all these are, quite frankly, terrifying. It will, to say the least, involve much more change than most of us are comfortable with.

But, whether we like change or not, it's going to happen. In my view, the 3-Church Initiative offers all three churches the rare and valuable opportunity to move forward planfully and prayerfully, guided by the boundless opportunities for mission in the community and the world rather than by the limitations of our money and property.

What's on your mind? An invitation.

by Ruth Anne Olson

On the heels of our December 2 all-parish update and conversation, we all most-likely will have something on our minds. And what better place to put them forward, to share with others beyond those few with whom we drink coffee in the Gallery each Sunday morning —than the upcoming *Epistle*.

Thus, an invitation! The January *Epistle* will offer an open forum for thoughts about the 3-Church Initiative: where we are, how we got here, where we might go, and whatever is on your mind about the future of St. James.

- We welcome random jottings, well-thought-out essays, or incomplete sentences and disconnected phrases. Drawings, cartoons and other scannable images — maybe carefully crafted poetry, doggerel or haiku. All are welcome.
- Submission deadline is 6 PM on Saturday, December 22.

- Each must be signed (i.e. no anonymous pieces, please) and 250 words or less.
- Send to me: via email olson248@gmail.com; postal at 825 Summit Avenue, Apt. 806, Minneapolis, MN 55403-3186; or hand them to me in person.
- I'll lightly edit each piece for spelling and grammar, and then turn them over to Beth Harvey to work her magic with layout and design.

This is a busy season of Christmas and New Year, but Beth and I promise to do our best to have the finished *Epistle* in your inbox at 6 AM on Wednesday, January 2.

Then sit back, reflect on the collection of ideas before you, and think forward to the Annual Meeting of January 27.

January Epistle

Submission deadline: Sat., Dec. 22. olson248@gmail.com

Publication Target: Wed., Jan. 2

Content: Ruth Anne Olson

Design & Publication: Beth Harvey

From the Senior Warden Louis Hoffman Update.

Better Space Task Force

After an initial outburst of decluttering, rearrangement, and sampling of new chairs, you may have noticed that Better Space Task Force work has ground to a halt. Beth has been ill and I've been unexpectedly out of town. But work is resuming.

New chairs have been ordered. Expect them in early to mid-December. Thank you to those who sampled the new chairs and gave your opinion. **The painter will be out for plaster repair, painting, and woodwork** between December 23 and January 1. Although some painting and refinishing work will likely happen after that. Thank you to Joe Ordos for helping with the color selection.

Pews have been removed from the Nave to make way for the PrayGround. Beth is re-starting work

From the Senior Warden Louis Hoffman: Update.

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on reframing the Rectors' photos. And plans are being made for a junk monger to remove all of the old chairs, tables, and assorted other stuff that still clutters the church.

The remaining work – electrical repair, installation of ceiling fans in the Gallery, ordering oil cloth tablecloths, and refinishing the tile floors – is yet to be scheduled or funded. The BSTF Fund – now officially the Mary Anderson Better Space Task Force Fund – includes donations received in honor of Mary, plus donations from Rebecca Hamblin and Louis Hoffman, Mary Nease, and Anne Scheible. Please consider a gift to this Fund to help finish this work.

Nomination Committee Needed

The Annual Parish Meeting is at 9 AM on Sunday, January 27, 2019. Much has been said on the big decision – whether to proceed with the 3-Church Initiative with Lake Nokomis Lutheran and Living Table United Church of Christ. But the regular business of the Parish must go on. That means electing a Senior Warden to replace me (I'm barred by Canon Law from more than four consecutive years of Vestry service), a Junior Warden, and two Vestry Members to replace Mary Nease and Debbi Ramos. Vestry Members are limited to one three-year term.

The By-laws require a Nominations Committee of three to five members, of which a minority may be retiring Wardens or Vestry Members not eligible to re-election. That means that Debbi, Mary, or I may serve. But that there need to be at least two non-Vestry people on the Committee. Nominating Committees traditionally don't nominate their own members.

So if you're dead-set against service as a Warden or Vestry Member, con-

sider volunteering for the Nominations Committee!

Nokomis Serves

Nokomis Serves, the community service cooperative of Lake Nokomis Lutheran, Living Table United Church of Christ, Minnehaha United Methodist, and St. James, is moving forward slowly, with small but significant amounts of cross-church volunteering. Next on our agenda is working on ways to improve cross-church volunteering beyond the paper catalog (available on the black table in the Narthex) including presentations at each church's adult forums, in their children and youth programs, and in in-church "temple talks."

The main initiative will be a Nokomis Serves website to link all of the churches' community service volunteers through on-line signup, and that will involve the three neighborhood organizations — Longfellow Community Council, Nokomis East Neighborhood Association, and Standish-Ericsson Neighborhood Association. Are there any community service and social justice-minded people who'd like to help with this potentially transformative plan?

Communications and Congregational Life

Thank you to Fr. William and Ruth Anne Olson for managing the congregation's communications while Beth was ill and to Ruth Anne for her work on the website and the *Epistle*. We still have a minimal Facebook and no Instagram or Twitter presence. Is anyone interested in helping?

The dream of a community pizza oven is now less unrealistic. There are no Fire or Health Department hurdles as long as at least one person in the congregation has taken an introductory food safety class. Karin Spencer has volunteered to do this should we get to the point of having a pizza oven. **Pizza on the lawn this summer?** Who'd like to write grant proposals? Can't cook pizzas without the money to build the oven!



From the Junior Warden Pat Morley

Space: the new frontier

You may have noticed a "new" space in the sanctuary, on the left as you enter from the narthex. It is actually the same space but we removed five pews and stored them in the basement to make room for our new PrayGround ministry area for children to be closer to the service if families so choose. We plan to make it warm and welcoming for children (and the parents who might be hanging out with them). More to come on that.

We're wrapping up the larger projects around the grounds before the truly cold weather settles in, including roof repair in the Education Wing. That is the last part of our water mitigation for the season. We will address other areas that leak in the future (probably spring, barring emergencies).

We also were able to help our tenant Mandala Montessori School get into fire code compliance without losing our lovely stained glass Exit signs in the sanctuary, thanks to the expert help of Leif Pihl. Otherwise regular maintenance continues—leaky faucets, door knob repairs, etc. But in general, our buildings are in good shape.

As always, a special thanks to all who chip in their time and talents to keep our buildings and grounds welcoming and inviting to all.

From the Treasurer Tony Morley

Financial Report: January-October

Good news about money in 2018 continues. At the end of October, St. James bottom line for the year-to-date was \$15,200 better than forecast by last January's budget. Pledge payments are lagging further behind—now \$3,500 compared to \$3,200 a month ago. But Mandala rent and large special donations more than made up the difference. Expenses remained well under control, though that will soon change with major property repairs still to come. Even so, we'll probably end the year with a surplus. If you can, bring your pledges up to date, and thanks again from your Treasurer!

	YTD Budget	YTD Actual	over / (under)
Pledged Income	105,200	101,700	(3,500)
Other Income	53,800	70,400	16,600
Total Income	159,000	172,100	13,100
Expenses	160,500	158,400	(2,100)
Net	(1,500)	13,700	15,200

St. James endowment and non-budget funds are good news too. Dahl Endowment (Sept. 30) was \$346,200. Piotrowski memorial for music \$700; Piotrowski memorial for altar \$1,800; Mary Anderson Better Space fund \$2,500; Haiti Fund \$7,500; and Tri-Faith balance \$3,900.

Website Launch

by Ruth Anne Olson

It's not new, but it's much improved and infinitely more useful for daily life at St. James. Thanks to patient technical tutoring by Tony Kloiber, photos by Victor Price, and drawings by Neal Cuthbert, we're bringing the St. James website up to date.

Do you ever wonder how to describe St. James to friends and colleagues? Take a look at the home page for ideas about words that capture so much of what we're about.

Have you forgotten to enter a St. James event in your calendar, and found that Beth's latest Update has disappeared from your inbox? It's all there in the website's comprehensive calendar.

Have you wondered what space is available at St. James for a meet-

ing? Been uncertain just what you'd have to do to join the Altar Guild? Heard rumor that we have a knitting group, and wonder when it meets?

You'll find answers to these questions and much much more on our website. It's been a precipitously-steep learning curve. And even yet brings surprises as the internet shifts things around, with no logic discernible to the eye of the neophyte.

As we add new information, the site changes almost-daily, So, please check it out: www.stjamesotp.org

And, let me know if you catch a pesky misspelling or other error that's managed to slip through the cracks. It's clear, that the task is never done!



Epiphany pageant

by Louise Robinson

Mark your calendars for the St. James Epiphany pageant, Sunday, January 6th during the 10:30 service. Join us for this annual production, inspired and performed by the young adults of our parish.

St. James Serves

New at Minnehaha Food Shelf

by Anne Scheible

Minnehaha Food Shelf is an ecumenical mission of St. James Episcopal, Lake Nokomis Lutheran and Minnehaha United Methodist churches. The food shelf is located at the Minnehaha United Methodist Church and is open from 10 AM to 3 PM on Tuesdays. We serve more than 500 clients and distribute over 19,000 lbs. of food each month. An additional 11,000 lbs. is distributed by Minni-Harvest each month.

News of the food shelf:

1. The 2019 Pasta Dinner/Fundraiser will be at a new location this year — at Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church, 5011 31st Avenue South, Wednesday, January 9th from 5 - 7 PM. We are excited to have this fun event in a more spacious place. Also, we will be asking for volunteers from the community to help with this event. Watch for announcements!
2. The board has new leadership: Bette Stacy from Lake Nokomis Lutheran is the chairperson, Anne Scheible from St. James is the vice chairperson and Shirley Yeoman is the treasurer. In addition, Jinny Bouvette is the second St. James representative on the board.
3. The good news is that the total number of clients has dropped the last couple of years. However, seniors and children are becoming a greater proportion of the clients. This follows a growing trend.
4. In the past, food shelves have focused on "filling empty bellies". In addition, Minnehaha Food Shelf is starting to look at ways to provide and encourage healthier choices.
5. The Giving Garden at St. James has provided fresh produce for the

Minnehaha Food Shelf (as well as two other neighborhood food shelves) for the last two growing seasons. Although this is a drop in the bucket, it is a much appreciated start to offering more produce. If

you are interested in helping next year there are many levels of volunteer options. For more information, see Anne Scheible: annebillscheible@gmail.com

Food Shelf Fundraiser

Save the date!



Pasta Dinner
donated by Fat Lorenzo's
Plus Door Prizes, Accordion Band & More!

Wednesday, January 9th
5:00 – 7:00 PM

Adults: \$15 | Ages 10 & Under: Free

New Location: LAKE NOKOMIS LUTHERAN CHURCH
5011 S. 31st Ave. S., Mpls • www.minnehaha.org/foodshelf.html

At the corner of 31st Ave. South and 50th Street in South Minneapolis

Grappling with uncertainty: lessons from our friends

By Sue Maas on behalf of St. James Haiti Committee (Liz Athorn, Kurt Hall, Mary Heltsley, Sue Maas, Karen Murdock, Ruth Anne Olson, Louise Robinson)

Buildings crumble, whether due to earthquakes or the gradual decay of age. The uncertainty that we at St. James are grappling with about our physical home is all too familiar to our partners in Bonne Nouvelle parish: their own church was destroyed in the massive 2010 earthquake, and they've been making do in a makeshift temporary structure ever since.

Uncertainty has been a fact of life in Bigonet for years. What our friends know – and have nearly a decade more firsthand experience with than we do – is that relationships are stronger than buildings. So while a replacement space for their beloved church remains an open question, the parish community is solid as ever. And this is their belief about St. James, too: that we will transcend the uncertainty about our physical space to survive and grow like the loving, energetic, committed community that we are. Our friends have deep faith that – as Bonne Nouvelle School principal Louis Noncent said in a recent phone call with members of the St. James Haiti Committee – “God will give you the answers, and drive you to the right way.”

St. James on the Parkway is reaching the end of its second formal, five-year commitment to the parish of Bonne Nouvelle. We’re due once again to seek Vestry approval for another commitment to this one-of-a-kind, life-changing (on both “sides”) partnership. Despite fundamental questions about the viability and future structure of our church, it’s hard to imagine that we



Following the earthquake, visitors from St. James hear tales of survival and community from women of Bigonet. November 2010.



Eight years later, Bonne Nouvelle and St. James share stories of partnership and community. June 2018.

would walk away from this unique and mutually rewarding relationship . . .

As this issue of the *Epistle* goes to press, the Haiti Committee is beginning to plan, with our partners, for an October visit to Minneapolis from a delegation of Bonne Nouvelle educators. We’re exploring the possibility of joining forces with Messiah Episcopal in St. Paul to bring this year’s visitors, as one of our potential guests, Shiller Fills-Aime, both teaches at Bonne Nouvelle AND is principal at l’Acul School in Messiah’s partner parish.

Many of you will recall that the U.S. government denied our friends’ travel visa applications last time (in 2017);

please keep our prospective guests in your prayers as they go through the same grueling process again. And if you’re potentially interested in hosting a couple of travelers in your home for a few nights, reach out to a Haiti Committee member*! It’s easy and so much fun.

As principal Louis Noncent said in the November phone call, “There is often ‘no’ in the world, but our relationship is so strong, so there is no place for ‘no’.”

Lots of question marks lie on the horizon, but whatever 2019 brings, hope, faith, and love will help us figure it out.

Adult Forum

Three Sundays, twelve verses, much discussion

By Tony Morley

Every Sunday the Church assigns four Bible readings for that day's Eucharist. On the three Sundays before Christmas (Dec. 9, 16, 23) the Adult Forum will take a single verse for discussion from each of that day's readings. Verses will be chosen for their possible personal power, their historical importance, their strange sound to modern ears, their contemporary ethical challenge. Maybe we'll manage to discuss all four, or maybe just one will fill the hour. No matter what, we'll give the text some serious attention.

Each week the Thursday St. James email and the Sunday bulletin will announce the following Sunday's verses. Read up in advance or come cold, you'll probably meet some meaning you haven't met before. In the Gallery, 9:25-10:15 AM, with coffee and conversation to warm up your mind.



By Ruth Anne Olson

A picture's worth a thousand words, and we're increasing our use of photos on the website, in the Epistle and in other forms of St. James electronic and printed communication. If you do not want us to use any photos of you, please let me know.

olson248@gmail.com

Thanks.



Sunday Schedule

8:00 AM Worship: Nave
8:45 AM Coffee & Conversation
9:30 AM Adult Forum: Gallery
10:00 AM Choir Rehearsal: Choir Room
10:15 AM Nursery Available: Education Wing
10:30 AM Worship: Sanctuary
11:45 AM Coffee & Conversation

12/01 4:00 PM First Nations Kitchen Fundraiser
3044 Longfellow Avenue South

12/02 9:00 AM Report to Congregation about
3-Church Initiative
See Sunday Schedule above

12/05	7:15 PM	Choir Rehearsal: Education Wing
12/06	7:00 PM	Finance Committee: Gallery
12/09		See Sunday Schedule above
12/11	7:00 PM	Vestry: Gallery
12/12	7:15 PM	Choir Rehearsal: Education Wing
12/15	11:15 AM	Food Shelf: At-Taqwa Mosque 1608 Como Ave., St. Paul
12/16		See Sunday Schedule above
12/19	7:15 PM	Choir Rehearsal: Education Wing
12/20	6:30 PM	Yarn Crafters: Gallery
12/21	6:00 PM	Special Epistle Deadline
12/22	10:00 AM	Building Work Day: Church & Grounds
12/26		See Sunday Schedule above
12/24	7:00 PM	Christmas Eve: Holy Eucharist
12/25	10:30 AM	Christmas Day: Eucharist
12/26	7:15 PM	Choir Rehearsal: Education Wing
01/06	10:30 AM	Epiphany Pageant See Sunday Schedule above