

Enjoy the St. James Nov. Journal



St. James Community Journal

November 2013

Dear St. James Members and Friends,

Please enjoy reading our November edition of the St. James Community Journal. For our upcoming events please view the News and Events page or the Calendar on our website at www.stjamessf.org.

If you have comments about this month's Journal or items (especially pictures!) that you'd like to contribute for the next journal please contact Rose Scarff. For more information about St. James please contact Erazm Pochron in the church office at stjames@stjamessf.org.

Thank you!
Rose and Erazm

Going Solar at Saint James

By Rev. John Kirkley



At its October meeting, the vestry agreed to appoint a small task force to solicit bids for the installation of solar panels at St. James, and to review various financing options. The members of the Solar Task Force are Tom Matthews, Brad Drda, and Brad Meikle. They will make recommendations to the vestry on how to proceed, with a goal of moving to renewable energy in 2014.

This is an initiative that reflects concern for the long-term sustainability of St. James, as well as the health of the planet. Global climate change is one driver. Another is the looming post-fossil fuel economy. The combination of these factors will make for a very different world in the next 50 – 100 years. Solar energy moves us in the direction of renewable, locally sourced energy that will mitigate the negative effects of these long-term developments, while also reducing – if not eliminating – our utility costs.

These are good reasons for going solar. Yet, as noted in the Guide to Going Solar published by California Interfaith Power and Light, there is a faith case to be made:

"First, opting for renewable energy indicates that your house of worship is caring for the local and global community. Your carbon emissions will decrease, making a positive impact in the air quality in your local region, while decreasing the harmful emissions that contribute to global climate instability."

Second, you are looking ahead and making a commitment to treat the planet and future generations with respect and care by reducing your carbon footprint.

Third, your congregation is taking faith principles of environmental stewardship seriously. All major religions include teachings on caring for the Earth, from the tikkun olam of the Torah, to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, to the call to love our neighbor in the New Testament. You are enacting the religious understanding of conservation; being a steward of Earth's resources not because they are limited, but because we are mandated by our faith to live in life-giving harmony with all of Earth's inhabitants.

Fourth, you are in solidarity with the global interfaith community. There is a growing recognition within the faith community that all of Earth's inhabitants and resources are interconnected. This solidarity of understanding is leading to practical commitments by world faiths in terms of carbon reduction, green strategies and environmental education.

Finally, your solar system will be an example to your congregational members as well as to your larger community. Your congregation will be truly a light to all, a statement of hope for a cleaner, healthier world, now and for future generations."

This solar initiative is consistent with the understanding of human responsibility for Earth stewardship found in the biblical creation story.

While the creation story includes the images of creating and making, the dominant metaphor is that of speaking. "God said" is the characteristic image for the relationship between God and creation: it implies a dialogical relationship, speaking and responding. This metaphor of the relationship between God and creation as dialogical, as word and response, gives a very different texture to our usual way of thinking about divine power.

The creative Word of God is not "must be," but rather, "let be." "Let there be light." It is not a word of command, but of permission. This is a clue to the sense in which we are created in the image of God. To be so created is to participate in the ongoing dialogue of the whole Earth community with God, and with each other. To realize our humanity in the image of God is to enter into this life-giving dialogue, not speaking a word of command, but a word of permission, of "let there be." We need to see our humanity as coming to fulfillment ultimately and only as a part of a much larger and inclusive Earth community.

The dominion of the human in relationship to the Earth and its creatures, then, must model the dominion of God over all things. In the words of Walter Brueggemann, "The image of God in the human person is a mandate of power and responsibility. But it is power exercised as God exercises power. The image images the creative use of power which invites, evokes, and permits. There is nothing here of coercive or tyrannical power, either for God or for humankind . . . Thus the task of 'dominion' does not have to do with exploitation and abuse. It has to do with securing the well-being of every other creature and bringing the promise of each to full fruition."

Partnering with God to secure the well-being of the whole Earth community is what it means to be created in the image of God; exercising power in life-giving ways. Going solar at St. James is one way to reflect our being created in God's image, remembering that God's creation, in all its parts and as a whole, is "good" – indeed, "very good." (Genesis 1:31)

Persistence Patience Persuasion

by **Elizabeth Nelson**



The following is an excerpt from the sermon Elizabeth Nelson gave on October 20th. [The full version can be found](#)

[here](#). The lectionary it is based on can be found in Genesis 32:22-31 and Luke 18:1-8

In the world we live in, the road to justice is so long, so full of switchbacks and rockslides and ambushes, that it can break your heart. And that's why, if you seek God's justice, you *do* need to pray always, without ceasing. Not because some critical mass of prayer will finally convince God to come and knock your opponents out of the way; that's not what God does. You pray always in order to keep your heart and mind open, always, to God's love and creativity—because that's what gives God's people the strength, day after day, year after year, generation after generation, to keep calling for justice and compassion, to keep working for them: persistently, with the utmost patience, whether the time is favorable or unfavorable. God's love and creativity, made present in your heart through prayer and made present in the world through your persistence, is the only thing that will eventually soften, or at least wear out, the resistance of those who oppose justice.

And if that's true, then in today's parable the figure for God is not the hard-hearted judge. The figure for God is . . . the widow. God shows up in the world exercising not power, but persistence and patience and persuasion. God stands with those whose only power is the willingness to keep showing up, day after day, calling for justice and compassion – calling in our courts, calling in our market place, calling in our churches, calling in our hearts. . . .

Let's talk for a minute about Jacob . . . because we've been talking about persistence, and Jacob is, among other things, a poster-child for persistence. Take a look some time at his whole story in Genesis, and you'll read about a man who is relentlessly persistent – not in pursuit of justice, exactly, but in pursuit of winning, being the smartest and getting the most. The part of his story that we heard today comes at a turning point in Jacob's life . . . and Jacob is left alone . . . to wrestle all night with Someone he can't quite see.

How's that for a parable?

Here again, persistence is a theme. Jacob will not quit; the Stranger has to cripple him to end this wrestling match, and even then, Jacob won't let go until the Stranger blesses him. He gets a blessing and a new name, and even *then* Jacob isn't done. "Tell me *your* name," he says, and the Stranger says, "Why do you even ask?" Jacob knows who that is; he's been wrestling with that Stranger his whole life. . . .

If this sermon were a box, and if I had to put a label on the lid, I would put two labels. The first label would read, "Pray always, without losing heart." God hasn't lost heart; in the face of all the chaos and pain and injustice that human beings suffer and inflict on one another, God's love and creativity remain infinite, and available to us whenever we manage to open our hearts to God's. The second label would read, "Don't try to put God in a box." If there was room on the label, I'd add, "Don't even try to put stories about God in a box."

Here's a story where God appears (maybe) as a woman calling for justice – calling over and over and over again, until she wears a hole in the hardest heart. Here's a story where God appears (maybe) as a mysterious Stranger who wrestles a confidence-man to a standstill, and then gives him most of what he wants anyhow. Which story tells the truth about God? Yes. (Maybe.) God finds each of us, calls and touches and changes each of us, as we are and where we are in each moment . . . with love, with creativity, and with a persistence that we can't begin to explain or contain. It's messy. It's bothersome. It's demanding. It's frightening. It's the best news there is.

News from the Vestry

By Barbara Webb, Senior Warden



Good News! As of the date this article was written, we have received pledges of \$105,212, almost half of our pledge goal. Thank you all who have already pledged. If you have not pledged, please do so. And don't forget to

complete the Member Information Form.

Your vestry met on October 20th to consider a long and involved agenda. Some of the highlights:

A 3 session advent series featuring the talents of members of the congregation is the next program being offered by the Christian Education Committee. You will be hearing more information about this later.

In case you have not heard, the diocese approved St James' application for \$35,000 assessment relief.

Please see Rev. Kirkley's article on Going Solar at St. James. Several churches and religious institutions in Northern California, as well as the rest of the State, have gone solar – Grace Cathedral, St Mark's Episcopal Church in Berkeley, St Paul's Episcopal Church in Walnut Creek, Church of Our Saviour in Mill Valley, Congregation Shir Hadash in Los Gatos, Christ the King Lutheran Church in Fremont, Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in Big Sur. It will take faith and money, but it is doable. Let's make St James "green."

St James has two new renters: Maggie Mickaili, who runs a Spanish language learning program called "Estrellitas en Espanol"; and Avi Downes who teaches piano. If you are interested in Maggie's Spanish program, check the [community partner's page](http://tinyurl.com/ljs62vp) on the St James website – <http://tinyurl.com/ljs62vp>. If you are interested in Avi's piano lessons, contact Erazm in the Church office.

Welcome new members Susanna Anderson, Leo Catalano, and Camille Taylor.

Thank you Fred Goff for the Oktoberfest Band. That was fun!

I hope many of you went to Robert Foster's showing of his photography. Beautiful pictures. Robert, you are truly talented. And thank you Elia for hosting the event.

Do you need to get yourself psyched for the big meeting at work or settle down after the fight with the boss? I invite you to come to the Tuesday morning and/or Wednesday evening prayer service. A half-hour of prayer and quiet time. Tuesdays at 7:30 a.m. in the chapel and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., also in the chapel.

Getting Through This Time

**by Julie Terraciano, MFT
California Counseling Institute**



We've all heard people say: "If I can just get through this time, all will be good." Clients often come in after suffering the loss of someone dear, a change in health status, a break-up or a loss of job. Since they are in pain, they want the pain to go away and, often, as soon as possible. This is human nature. We want to get through whatever it is, get it behind us, so that we don't have to deal with it and its ramifications going forward.

When clients enter therapy they often feel the need for solutions, strategies, suggestions that will help immediately. Again, this is our nature as the problem-solvers that we humans are. It has served us well over time in dealing with outside threats, dangers that we could not anticipate and the daily challenges of living in an ever more complex world.

We certainly read and hear enough about an app for this problem and an app for that solution. We get through our landscapes and our time with GPS, smartphone, i-pad and whatever other accessory we deem indispensable. Otherwise, we sometimes feel we can't get there from here and that we're lost.

What we don't take into account is that we will get through the current devastating moments by taking the time we need to grieve, quietly and in outward expression, with the support of others. When clients are afraid, sad or

angry we, the therapists, sit with them and suggest that they remember to "breathe". Reclaiming the breath and our natural breathing process with intention provides a path to inner pain, revelation and, ultimately, peace. It allows us to experience the deeper feelings behind the outward symptoms.

Working as a therapist over the years, I have always appreciated the privilege of helping people sit with their pain by accompanying them in those break-through and quiet moments where they see themselves reflected in a respectful mirror. When I encourage them by offering understanding, they respond in a way that I can see that they feel the utility of being seen for who they are. I feel their relief. I sense that they are no longer trying to simply get through a particular painful time, but that they are finding their place in their own time.

Garrison Keillor on Episcopalians

shared by Carole Jan Lee



"We make fun of Episcopalians for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them. If you were to ask an audience in Des Moines, a relatively Episcopalianless place, to sing along on the chorus of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Episcopalians, they'd smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! . . . And down the road!

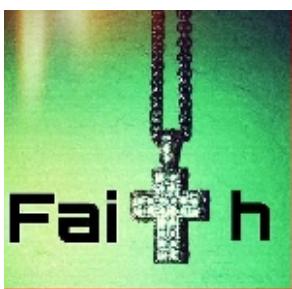
Many Episcopalians are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony, a talent that comes from sitting on the lap of someone singing alto or tenor or bass and hearing the harmonic intervals by putting your little head against that person's rib cage. It's natural for Episcopalians to sing in harmony. We are too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison.

When you're singing in the key of C and you slide into the A7th and D7th chords, all two hundred of you, it's an emotionally fulfilling moment. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other."

More *Garrison Keillor on Episcopalians* next month!

Faith's Imagination

by Rose Scarff, Editor



One of the pleasures of my job as a Parish Administrator is the opportunity to read the words of hymns when I am creating the weekly bulletins. Most I am so familiar with I don't really read them but just start singing them to myself. But, occasionally, I come across one new to me or I catch a line in such a way that I look at the hymn

differently. Such was the case this week--while trying to get a hymn to fit from one page to the next a word broke apart so that it made no sense until I could see the whole line together. *Faith's imagination*, I read. What's that, I wondered and have been wondering ever since. I have no answer yet. But I give you here three verses of that hymn so you can wonder too. The words are by Carl P. Daw, Jr.

Gracious Spirit, give your servants joy to set sin's captives free,
Hope to heal the broken hearted, peace to share love's liberty.
Through us bring your balm of gladness to the wounded and oppressed;
Help us claim and show God's favor as a people called and blessed.

Loving God, who birthed creation from the nothingness of space,
Kindling life where all was empty, turning chaos into grace:
When we feel confused and fruitless, dawn upon our restless night;
Give us faith's imagination, hope's renewing, love's delight.

Triune God, eternal Being, never ending, unbegun,
Boundless grace and perfect justice, righteous and forgiving One:
So enfold us in your mercy that our wills and yours unite:
Through us may the world behold you, find your love, your truth, your light.

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

November 1-3	St. James Parish Retreat at Bishop's Ranch
November 3, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Mindfulness Meditation after 10:00 a.m. service
November 7, Thursday	6:30 p.m. <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
November 9, Saturday	7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast-Keeping Faith in a Competitive World
November 10, Sunday	Service at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Service 9 a.m. Choir Practice St. James serves at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality 7 – 9 p.m. The Way of Christ Study Group
November 17, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
November 21, Thursday	6:30 p.m. <i>Lectio Divina</i> group
November 23, Saturday	10 a.m. Women's Group at Creative Canopy
November 24, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. 9 a.m. Choir Practice
Every Tuesday	7:30 a.m. Morning Prayer & Meditation
Every Wednesday	6:30 p.m. Evening Prayer & Meditation 7:30 p.m. Buddhist Meditation in Caldwell Room

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