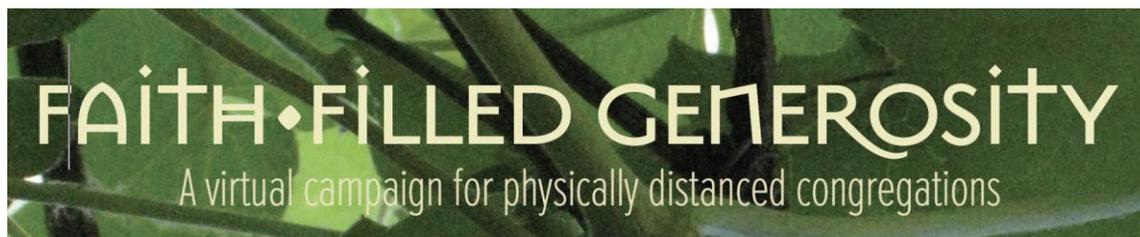


# St. James' E-pistle: **SPECIAL EDITION**

A Letter from the Rector for September 25, 2020



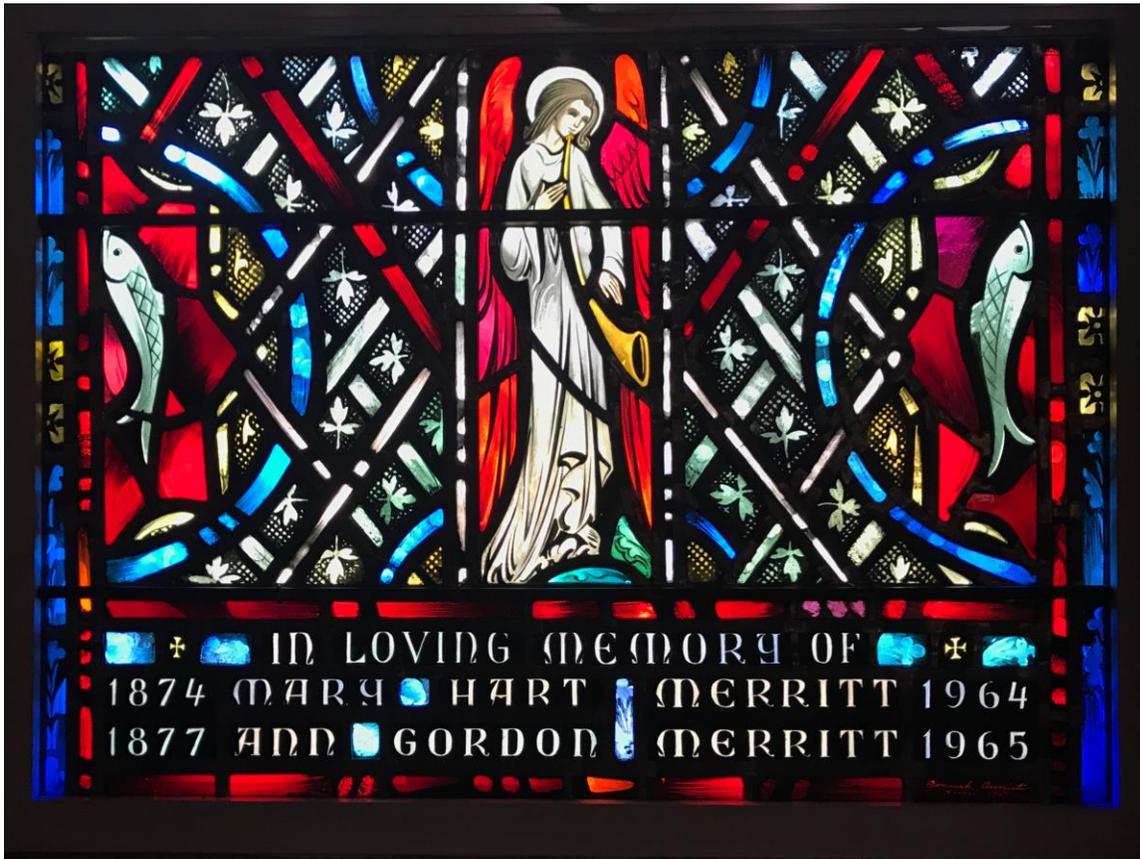
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Dear People of St. James',

Whenever I visit the pews of an Episcopal Church, I always take a moment to pick up a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* in the rack before me. As I hold the book in my hands, I think of all those fellow Christians of the past who have read from those very same pages. Prayers of joy and sadness, frustration and hope, bewilderment and thanksgiving, they all feel infused into those worn pages, tinted now in antiqued shades by the touch of hundreds of faithful fingers. For the most part, you can tell which parts of the Prayer Book have been used the most as soon as you pick up the text. Usually, the BCP will virtually open itself up to page 355, the beginning of *The Holy Eucharist Rite II*, as if it were springing to life in anticipation for worship with you to begin. So it *should* feel, because so it *is*. Those who prayed those prayers for decades are with you still, real and present like a “great cloud of witnesses,” with each turn of the page.

In the nave of our churches, we frequently see the names of some of those ancestors in our faith, and companions in our prayers. Monuments in stained glass and brass remind us that we are inheritors of a tradition and supported by the gifts of multitudes who have sat in our pews before us. In our worship video this Sunday, I will be including a number of photos of those memorials at St. James', benefactors whose names we may have walked past for years without ever actually stopping to notice or thank by name in our prayers. And I think that it's important, as we are entering into our Stewardship Campaign this week, that we **do** recall with thanksgiving those past members of St. James' whose gifts continue to support the life and ministry of our church, just as we

plan for supporting our church *ourselves* in 2021.



One of the least used liturgies of our Book of Common Prayer is called *A Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child*. That unfamiliarity is unfortunate, because the service is a true treasure of joy in our BCP, and also because it contains an incredibly important direction to all of us Christians, laying out in clear and plain terms our responsibilities for our families and our church. The rubric at the end of the service says, *“The Minister of the Congregation is directed to instruct the people, from time to time, about the duty of Christian parents to make prudent provision for the well-being of their families, and of all persons to make wills, while they are in health, arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, not neglecting, if they are able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable uses.”* (BCP, p. 445)

Our ancestors at St. James’ took such direction seriously. The bequests left to St. James’ in the wills of parishioners are treated as sacred by your parish leaders. Those financial gifts are not treated as income for the present, but rather investments for all time. That is why it is the policy at St. James’ not to

spend the original gift, the “principle,” of any bequest. Instead, the gifts are meant to be carefully managed and invested, so that their growth can continue to support our church. In a way, a bequest is like a final pledge made to St. James’. Rather than last for just the coming year, however, a bequest will continue to support the church bit by bit, indefinitely.

Over the coming weeks, you will hear much more about how the pledges of us, the living members of St. James’ today, and the bequests of those who have gone on before us, will be able to support our church in 2021. But for now, to make a right beginning of the season of Stewardship, I, as “The Minister of the Congregation,” encourage you to take a moment to read the names of those who have made such generous, faith-filled offerings in our past, oblations for the vitality of a church they would never see. Then envision, with hope and with joy, your own name joining theirs and thousands of thousands more, as we all seek to “Be a Good Ancestor.”

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. Dustin+*