

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

A Letter from the Rector for July 24, 2020

Dear People of St. James',

One of the ancient traditions of the Church that was brought back to life with our "new" 1979 Book of Common Prayer is the lighting of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil. This special candle symbolizes for us the return of The Light of Christ to the world with Jesus' Resurrection on Easter Sunday. We light a new Paschal Candle at the beginning of the Vigil, and it burns through all of our gatherings for worship through the Easter Season, up through the Feast Day of Pentecost. Then, after we recall the flames of the Holy Spirit descending upon the first Apostles at Pentecost, we retire the Paschal Candle for the remainder of the year, bringing it out again only for special occasions like Baptisms and Burials. You might say that from Pentecost onward through the Church year, when the Paschal Candle is no longer burning before our eyes, we know we are carrying that Light of Christ within us, as Jesus' disciples for our own day.

"So, what happens to the Paschal Candle *then?*," you might be wondering. Paschal Candles are generally massive ([and expensive!](#)) pieces of functional artwork, heavily decorated and rich with symbolism. Usually, only a portion of the candle is spent during the course of a year. What then? The answer is that, in most cases I've seen, Paschal Candles from years past end up stored away in a drawer or closet of the church, awaiting some guidance as to what can be done with them.

Here at St. James' Church, we are breathing new life and new purpose into the many years' worth of Paschal Candles that were gathering dust in storage. As a spiritually-meaningful fundraiser for our Church, something especially needed in our present pandemic times, candles stretching back over ten years are being melted down and re-fashioned into smaller candles for use in our home devotions. Why bother with such "practical housekeeping" at a time like this? Because, I think, these old treasures of ours have been lying around, patiently waiting to serve once again in *just* such a stressful time in our congregation's life as this. We are no longer able to gather together around our altar as we all dearly long to do. The painful truth is, that given the ferocity of the novel coronavirus as it continues to spread across our country, we don't know when or how we will be able to congregate together again

for Holy Eucharist around our common altar. We do know, however, that our Paschal Candles all burned at that altar throughout Easter seasons of the past, and accompanied us through our occasions of greatest joy and sorrow. Now, we all have an opportunity to obtain for ourselves and share with those we love a bit of that Light of Christ, safely in our homes. We now can light these candles and remember, connect, and keep vigil through this long night in the wilderness that has descended upon us. True, we may not be able to come to Church as we would like, but we *are* now able to bring Church home to us and to others in a new way, through these “St. James’ Parish Candles.”



The candles are hand-made entirely of wax recycled from our Paschal Candles. No fragrances or colorings or any kind have been added, to preserve their purity. They are contained in an 8 oz tin, so that they may be shipped without fear of breakage, and they will burn for many hours. Please note that supplies are limited. Once the supply of wax is exhausted, the sale will come to an end. Each candle costs \$10, with all proceeds supporting the general operations of St. James’ Church. To place an order, you may reach out to St. James’ primary email address welcome@saintjamesdanbury.org, and arrangements will be made for your purchase. *(Special thanks to Yvonne Kiddoe and Carolyn Flynn for their assistance in*

prepping the Candles for melting!)

In many ways, this small fundraising endeavor resembles both the challenges and the opportunities that St. James' is facing in our present reality and an uncertain future. In the weeks, months, and years to come, your parish leaders will be examining all the blessings and gifts and treasures our parish possesses, and discerning creatively and prayerfully how God might be leading us in new ways to make the most of all that we have, all that we are, and all that we might be, with God's help. Our Easter celebrations of years past are about to burst into flame once again, as these candles depart from St. James' grounds, and enter the homes of parishioners and loved ones alike. May we treasure these candles as hopeful reminders of how the love of God, the Light of Christ, can never be taken away from us. Jesus once told his disciples, "Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." May we emerge from this extraordinary time of struggle and trial stronger for the challenge, wiser for the experience, and better-trained to do our part, by making the most of what is new and what is old, to help usher in that kingdom of heaven for our own day.

May the Light of Christ continue to burn in you!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+