

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

A Letter from the Rector for July 3, 2020

Dear People of St. James',

Looking towards this Independence Day weekend, I have been thinking about just how *interconnected* we still are in our parish community. Even though we are away from one another in body, we are still quite dependent upon one another for our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. That is precisely why your Worship Committee has taken such care to gather surveys from members of our church regarding our options and interests for in-person worship at this time, and in the weeks to come. All of us are longing to resume our celebrations of the Holy Eucharist together, singing our hearts out like never before, and lingering at each Coffee Hour as if it were our last. I doubt that any of us who emerges from the other side of our present pandemic will ever take for granted (again) the precious gift it is to simply get up and go out to church on Sunday morning! But we also know that the coronavirus is still very much present with us. While infection rates have been declining in our state, we well know the same is not at all true in many parts of our country. In fact, the number of new cases per day nowadays appears greater than ever. Our bishops address these and many other considerations in their latest document regarding Covid-19 Protocols and Considerations for Phase 3 of Re-Opening Connecticut, which you may download [here](#).

These ever-shifting pandemic realities make the planning work of our Worship Committee even more important. We are especially challenged by the new reality that we will need to continue to provide video broadcasts of worship as an essential aspect of our common life together. So, in order to expand and strengthen our capacities for further incorporating technology into our worship life, I would very much appreciate gathering together a band of volunteers willing to grow, learn and practice our "techy" skills for the good of St. James' burgeoning virtual community. As you see and hear in our Sunday morning worship each week, our Music Director and Choir Members and Choral Music Editor all do a magnificent job of taking advantage of technology to provide our music for us. Our Lectors and Intercessors record themselves reading and praying each week, and upload their files into a designated folder in "the cloud." Then,

using the camera on my telephone and a software application called “iMovie,” I manage to pull the rest together into the finished product. That has worked well for us, while we are worshipping apart from one another. As we expand in the future into offering both online **and** in-person worship, however, we will need additional assistance to pull off being the church we need to be in 2020. I had never touched movie-making software prior to our current pandemic, so I can attest to the fact that previous experience is not required, only a willingness to learn. If you are willing to help out and learn and experiment with new technological tools, please let me know, so we can figure out our future together.

Since I am planning to take some time for vacation in August, it will be especially important to have a handle not just on our technological tools, but also on our worship leadership. Fortunately, Bishop Ian Douglas is planning to conduct a training session next Saturday, July 11th, from 9-11am for Lay Worship Leaders. You all have seen what Morning Prayer looks like each Sunday. Unlike the Holy Eucharist, both lay people and clergy may be licensed to lead Morning Prayer, as well as the other services of the Daily Office. It would be a great support to me as the rector of St. James’ to have a group of parishioners trained, capable, and willing to lead our services of prayer, both in case of my absence and as a resource for scheduled, lay-led worship. More information and the registration portal are available [here](#). Please let me know if you are interested in further strengthening St. James’ worship capacity and options by completing this on-line training, because I, as the Ecclesiastical Authority of your church, will need to attend the training together with you.

You also may have heard or read that we have been waiting to hear about a Diocese-wide service of prayer for racial justice to be held over Independence Day weekend. It has just been announced that both of our bishops will be leading that service on Saturday, July 4th, at 9am. St. James’ usual Saturday Morning Prayer service will be suspended that day, so that we can join fellow Episcopalians from all around the state in prayer together on the Diocesan [Facebook page](#) or [Youtube channel](#).

And finally, continuing on our theme of connections and interdependence, I’m happy to share with you the news that pledges for our [Joining Jesus Capital Campaign](#) have continued to arrive this week. Our pledge total now stands at \$402,000, which is 89% percent of our \$450,000 target. It’s not too late to add your pledge of support to the

campaign, and every pledge will help get us closer to the goal. Please note also that pledges of all sorts are welcomed and needed. Some of us have made 5-year pledges, some one-time donations, and others are committing to a disciple of prayer for the church. Commitments of any kind may be indicated on your pledge card. Adding your faithful response to your fellow parishioners is what truly matters, as we make our way forward together!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+