

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

A Letter from the Rector for May 1, 2020

Dear People of St. James',

There's a quotation from E.M. Forster's novel *Howard's End* that has been paddling around in circles in my mind for many weeks now. Its insightful wisdom is matched only by its brevity: "Only connect," he wrote. "Only connect." In our present days of physical distancing, when we are even wearing masks to cover our faces from one another, how much more difficult, how much more important it is, I think, that we hold fast to Forster's reminder: "Only connect."

So much of the activity of St. James' these days has focused upon maintaining our connections with one another. We have adapted our familiar patterns of fellowship to our current circumstances, gathering together in our virtual parish hall for **First Fridays** (happening [tonight!](#)) and **Sunday Coffee Hour** (happening [Sunday!](#)) to check in with friends old and new. We are also taking advantage of the powers of technology to extend the reach of our circle far beyond the bounds of our traditional physical gatherings. For example, every week, our Sunday Morning Prayer broadcast on Facebook and YouTube brings together a worshipping community that is spread out all across the county. Just last week, our Prayer Service was attended by worshippers not only in Connecticut, but also in West Virginia, Maine, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, Arizona, South Carolina, Alabama, and Texas. So, it appears that while we are maintaining our connections as a local congregation through these trying times, we are also weaving *new* bonds into a much larger and more dispersed fellowship.

Every single day, members of St. James' have an opportunity to connect with one another. Whatever the day has brought, from Monday through Friday we can all close the day together with Evening Prayer or Compline services (posted on our parish calendar [here](#)). And on the weekends, we have Morning Prayer offerings on Saturday and Sunday to get us up and off on the right foot again. Also, in an effort to leave no one unconnected, we are including an option for those without computers

to dial in with their telephones to all of our Zoom worship and fellowship offerings. And this very message that you are now reading will be mailed out in hard copy to those on our mailing list who do not use email. I thank all our leaders and participants who are putting so much care, attention, and support into our ever-expanding network of connections. In the end, it really is as simple as that: Only Connect.

In the month to come, I encourage you to continue to take advantage of all our opportunities to connect with one another, both for you own good, and for the well-being of your friends old and new here at St. James'. So often, I've heard the refrain repeated by those who called their "Phone Buddy" or reached out a caring word to others: "I called intending to make someone else feel connected and cared about, but it turns out that *I* was lifted up far more by the conversation than I expected!" Those experiences frequently take us by surprise, but they really shouldn't. The delights that those moments of connection offer our minds and spirits have sustained Christian communities through countless hardships and trials over the centuries.

Our present pandemic is the challenge for our own time, one that is currently separating the members of our Body from one another. But as we maintain our connections, using the advances of technology, and old-fashioned penmanship, and a touch of grit, we are spiritually weaving the threads of our community, near and far, tighter and tighter together. What will that tapestry look like when our present challenges pass? For now, we cannot know. We will only be able to behold this new St. James' when we are able, in due season, to step back from a distance and behold what new creation we have become. In the meantime, let's keep on weaving!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+