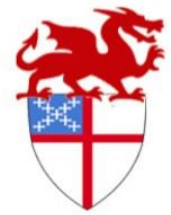


The Shield

September – October 2021



THE MINISTER'S MESSAGE

I have just been re-reading the issue of this newsletter from exactly one year ago, and I'm more than a bit shaken to see how much of what I wrote then is true – again.

We are in the throes of another wave of the coronavirus pandemic, referred to as the “Delta Variant.” *Delta* is the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet, so this is the fourth form of COVID-19 has appeared, and it is far worse than the previous three. It is many times more contagious, and symptoms appear more quickly and can be much worse. To top it off, children are particularly susceptible to Delta.

Fortunately, current observation tells us that the existing COVID vaccines are effective against Delta. Even if we get a “breakthrough” case after being vaccinated, it will most likely be milder and less likely to become fatal. However, it appears that a booster shot may be advised, eight months after receiving the second original dose. We are waiting to learn more about that.

Those who come to church at St George's on Sundays are wearing masks again, and the precautions that we took for a good part of last year and this year are in effect: no touching at the Sign of Peace, Holy Communion brought to you in your pew, and greatly reduced singing. Admittedly, the service seems a bit hollow to me. I have been an organist and liturgist for 55 years now, so I really miss all the music. In addition, I have cut the length of my sermons, all in order to comply with the Bishop's guidance to limit the service to less than one hour.

I receive a report from the Diocese once a week. Among other information, it contains a chart showing the COVID status of each county in our diocese. Our own Allegany County has always been among the worst, in terms of numbers of positive tests and new hospitalizations. With us are the other two Western Maryland counties, Garrett and Washington, and these three counties stand out in a state which leads the country in fighting COVID.

To put things in Health Department terminology, we are firmly in the RED phase (more than 25 new cases per week), but our bishop has allowed us to remain open and continue with ORANGE phase precautions. This is based on the size of our building, the number of vaccinated persons attending, ventilation,

masking, and sanitizing. We are grateful for that, because RED precautions would mean we would have to close the church and return to online-only worship.

But it's too easy to see only the dark side of the situation. I am truly happy to see familiar faces return each week and participate enthusiastically and reverently in our worship. I am glad that we can open the doors and windows to let in fresh, clean air. I am most happy that I can serve St George's in peace, hope, and love.

I see signs of hope all around, and I refuse to be discouraged by apparent set-backs. More people are getting vaccinated, perhaps out of fear or a realization that the danger to them is real and serious. Many people are wearing masks whenever they go out in public or to any place where they cannot know whether the people around them have been vaccinated (in a grocery store, for example). Schools are taking precautions and all medical facilities require masking. I am confident that, sooner or later, the coronavirus will either die off or become something minor that we take for granted and learn to live with.



Most importantly, I trust in God. I am not naïve enough to think that prayer alone will eliminate the virus, because history is full of epidemics and pandemics, and I'm sure a lot of prayers for relief were prayed fervently and sincerely. I absolutely reject any idea that this illness is some kind of punishment or revenge from God. The God I believe in is a God of unchanging love and care.

Finally, the most helpful idea I can think of is to remember that *we are all in this together*. Love of God and neighbor means each of us doing all we can to help and protect those around us – getting vaccinated, wearing masks, distancing, washing or disinfecting our hands often, and avoiding places where spreading the virus is likely. Another important thing is to listen carefully and evaluate any and all information we might hear, and to reject wild accusations or conspiracy theories. Taking care of ourselves and those we love, while ignoring unreliable information, are keys to success in our passage through this difficult time.

I think the most appropriate scripture passage that gives us perspective for these challenging days is found in the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, verses 1 to 8:

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*

*A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.*

This, too, shall pass, and never forget God's love for us is eternal and undying.

May God bless and keep us all!

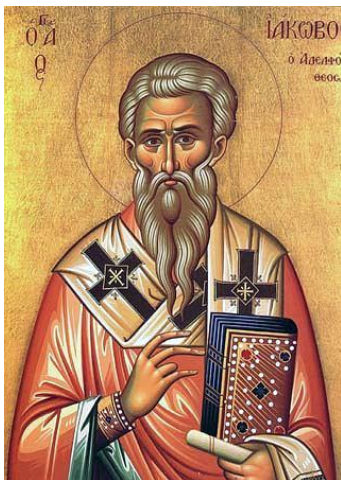
Father Tom +

James Writes to Us Today

Sermon preached on 19 September 2021

Text: James 3:14 through 4:3

For most of this summer, we have been reading lessons from the Epistle of James. This is a very unusual book. We don't know exactly who wrote it, or even if his name was really James.



The gospels tell us of two men named James (*Jacob* in Hebrew). The more well-known is the one always paired with John – the two are called “the sons of Zebedee.” James and John were among the first four disciples that Jesus called, and they seemed to be with him everywhere he went..

Another James is listed among the disciples: James the son of Alphaeus. He is a minor character in the gospels. In fact, he has been called “St James the Lesser.” Many scripture scholars believe there is a third James who is mentioned even less, and that Jesus had a brother named James.

*“[Jesus] came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers **James** and Joseph and Simon and Judas?” – Matthew 13:54-55 NRSV*

Some people find this passage troubling, because they believe that Mary never had any other children, but others think that Joseph might have had a wife who died before he met and married Mary. These could be Jesus' step-brothers, children of Joseph, but not of Mary. Roman Catholics do not accept this explanation. They prefer to call them “cousins” or “kinsmen” of Jesus.

There is an early Christian tradition that this “brother” of Jesus became the bishop of the church in Jerusalem after the death of Peter. Eastern Orthodox Christians call him “James the Just” or “James the Righteous.” Some even call him “James, the brother of God.” He is thought to be the James mentioned in Acts 21:18.

As is often the case with early Christian history, we just don’t know for sure who this writer was, but do we have his letter of five short chapters.

However, even his brief epistle is a subject of debate. Martin Luther had so many doubts about this letter – mostly because it was clearly addressed to Jewish Christians – that he removed it from his translation of the New Testament and put it in an appendix.

Whoever wrote it, this epistle has a lot to say, not only to Jewish Christians 2000 years ago, **but to us today.**

The epistle begins with these words:

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.*

As we have heard over the summer lessons, one of the main ideas of the Letter of James is how important it is for *faith* to be fulfilled by *works*. In other words, it is not enough to say we believe in Jesus. We must live and do as he taught, and follow his commandments. “Faith without works is dead.” –James 2:17

Faith
Without
Works is
Dead

Despite all this, James’ letter is quite amazing. I think we can all see that it could have been written today, for us, to address what is going on in our world right now.

Imagine the letter began with different words:

*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To Christians of the 21st century: Greetings.*

And then, in chapter 3, James goes on to warn us: “Who are the people among you that are considered wise and understanding?” Immediately, we can all think of people who this might be.

He tells those wise and understanding people: “Show by your good life that your works – *remember that James says faith without works is meaningless* – are done with gentleness and wisdom.”

In other words, live a good life, and make sure that you always act with kindness and think of others.

He goes on to tell us not to “have bitter envy” or “selfish ambition.” How much of today’s speaking and writing is full of bitter envy, and how many people are guilty of selfish ambition? He cautions us that “where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will be disorder and wickedness of every kind.” I think we can see disorder and weakness happening all the time today.

James and his fellow Christians were beset by constant “conflict and disputes.” He asks where they come from, and then answers his own question: they come from “cravings that are at war within” us.

In other words, there is conflict and turmoil inside us and all around us: good fighting evil, decency against immorality, truth versus lies, science opposed to baseless rumors and wild conspiracy theories.

James contrasts all that mayhem and commotion with true, godly wisdom, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

There is little of those virtues to be found among us right now, particularly and sadly among those to whom we look for leadership in this troubled time.

And James promises “a harvest of righteousness” for those who make peace. Once again, having faith is not enough – actions that lead to reconciliation are absolutely required.

Lastly, he tells us that we all “want something and do not have it.” And it’s not because we don’t ask for it. No, it is because we do not ask in the right way, or with the right intention.

“O Lord, punish our enemies – those who disagree with us, who always take the wrong side in everything, who are so stubborn they can’t see that we are the ones who are right.”

James says – and I can assure you – God never answers prayers that come from our selfish desire to win, to shame our enemies, to have our own happiness and safety at the expense of others.

Every time I drive to church up Route 36, I pass a house with a large banner out front that says “All Lives Matter.” How I hope those people actually believe those words literally! I always say a prayer that they mean it.

As I reflected on this passage from the Epistle of James, I was struck by how true and appropriate his words are for us, for the world we live in, and the challenges we are all facing.



We need to take careful heed of James' words to us, and – as we prayed in our opening Collect on September 19th – to remember that we are “placed among things that are passing away,” and “to hold fast to those that shall endure.”

Amen!

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

The last year has not been an easy year, but thanks to the loyal members and staff of St. George's we are still an alive and functioning parish. Thanks to all who attend and follow the protocols passed on by the CDC and the diocese. Thanks to all who continue their giving to St. George's even if you can not attend in person and thanks to our staff and our officers who continue to see to the business of the parish. I know we are all looking forward to the time when we can go where we want and wear masks or not, as we wish. Thank you to all for your continued prayers for our parish and our country. –Dee Stallings

FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN

As we move into fall and near winter we need to look at what we need to get done and prepare for the cold months. We only have a couple work days left. – *Jim Rice*

FROM THE WOMEN OF SAINT GEORGE'S

Our next meeting will be on November 15 at 7 PM in the Dining Room, downstairs from the Parish Hall. The December Christmas Party will be at Hobo's Restaurant – date and time to be announced, subject to the COVID situation.

We are collecting items for the Family Crisis Center. Donations for November should be washcloths and towels. We will be packing the bags at the November meeting.

All women of the Church are welcome to attend the meetings, which take place the 3rd Monday of each month at 7 PM in the Dining Room.

RUM CAKES FOR CHRISTMAS

Once again this year, the Women of St George's will be selling delicious home-made rum cakes, baked by Judy Branham. The price of each cake is \$20. Please see Peggy Hess to reserve your cake(s) by Sunday, October 3. They will be available at the church in early November.



Bishop Sutton's Eight Rules for Preaching in Difficult Times

1. Preach the gospel, not politics. Preach the Bible only as it feeds into the Good News of Jesus Christ and God's enduring love.
2. Resist giving simple answers to complex problems. Think about the ramifications and implications. Avoid an authoritarian, hierarchical approach (i.e., not "from God → to the preacher → to the people").
3. Be humble in your use of the word "truth." Follow Jesus' method of using parables more than pronouncements.
4. The pulpit is not the place for catharsis and unresolved anger. Get therapy.
5. Love people, not positions. Positions on many issues change with the time, but love is eternal. People remain, to be loved. All public issues are also pastoral issues. Loving people means understanding and empathizing with all sides. Avoid "moralizing" – giving people a list of dos and don'ts (authoritarian). Instead, be a witness to the Gospel.
6. The sermon is the beginning of a hoped-for conversation, not the end of a conversation or the entire conversation. If people don't want to talk with the preacher, then the preacher has failed to stimulate the conversation.
7. Show some courage. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Courage is more effective, and in the long run, it's easier and less costly than cowardice."
8. Be willing to listen, to change your own mind about an issue, be willing to repent.

Four Rules for the Other Side of the Pulpit

1. Cut your preacher some slack. They really are trying to say and do the right thing. Give them the benefit of believing that they are sincere and good-willed.
2. Acknowledge in yourself that Jesus was both a spiritual and political teacher – not partisan, but someone who cares about how people are living their lives.
3. Read and meditate on the cited Scripture passages and have that conversation with God and others that your preacher is inviting you to have. Walking out the door is not a conversation.
4. Be willing to listen, to change your mind about an issue; be willing to repent.

– *The Right Reverend Eugene Taylor Sutton, XIV Bishop of Maryland*



Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope.

Habitat for Humanity International was founded in the mid 1970s, a spin off from an initiative by Koinonia Farm to provide affordable housing to low income families in Americus, Georgia.

The Koinonia Partnership Housing Program involved families in need of adequate shelter working side by side with volunteers to build simple, decent houses, which they would then own with an affordable mortgage. That concept became the centerpiece of Habitat for Humanity.

- Established in 2008, the local affiliate, Allegany County Habitat for Humanity, has built four homes for deserving families: two in Cresaptown, one in Cumberland, and one in Frostburg.
- Homes are built by a mix of skilled tradesmen (some working *pro bono*) and volunteers. This collaborative effort helps to keep costs down so homes are affordable for the prospective homeowners.
- All four of the homes built by Allegany County Habitat for Humanity are occupied by their original owners. It has been gratifying to note the significant difference that decent, affordable housing has made in the quality of life for these families. Potential homeowners are carefully selected, must meet income guidelines, and are expected to participate in the construction of their home, investing "sweat equity" into their residence.

Allegany County Habitat for Humanity has always been an all-volunteer effort and never had paid staff to administer the organization nor to manage and supervise our builds. Maintaining the effort we have for over 12 years and through 4 builds, with only volunteers at all levels is the exception not the rule among Habitat affiliates nationwide.

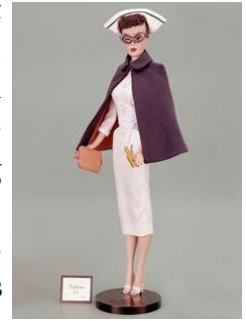
The Allegany County affiliate faces a number of challenges as it seeks to grow its capacity to make a significant contribution to the provision of affordable home ownership for low-income families here:

- We need to reconstruct our model for staffing a build and working with volunteers. This will probably involve paying a construction manager to coordinate work with our contractor and supervise volunteers on the work site. We are seeking to expand the breadth of skills and expertise on our Board of Directors.
- We are working to begin a build yet this year in South Cumberland where we currently own four building lots. Long term, we want to establish the capacity to build every two years and work on smaller repair projects in the off years.
- We need to engage a loyal following of volunteers and keep them engaged in meaningful service to the community even when we are not building a house.
- To sustain this level of effort, we need to significantly expand our sources of revenue, and we need the resources to hire a part-time executive director and probably to pay for construction management and supervision and training of volunteers.

Sharon Logsdon is our Parish Habitat Liaison. Please direct any questions or ideas to her.

INFORMATION FROM OUR PARISH NURSE

Hopefully we are on the upswing of stopping COVID 19 or at least getting it under control as well as its many variants. Hopefully everyone has received their vaccine and flu shot for this year. For those of you in close contact with small children, who are too young to get the vaccine, remember the vaccine is a way to protect them. The vaccine does not prevent us from getting COVID but lessens the possibility of a life threatening event. The current research is limited in long term problems being made worse for those of us with cardiac or respiratory disease. Keep up your mask wearing in crowds and general hand washing.



Just a reminder: we have several parishioners in the nursing homes and homebound. Please remember them in prayers and with cards (but do not visit them because of COVID).

Ruth Beal – Sterling Nursing Home	Darrell Glass at home
Kaye Dewey – Hearthstone (Lion’s Manor)	Evelyn & Gene Hausrath at home
Mary Sue Glass – Sterling Nursing Home	Eleanor Robinson – Sterling Nursing Home

MOUNT SAVAGE FOOD PANTRY



The Food Pantry will be offering gift cards for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Please contact Karen Bonner or Sharon Logsdon if you know someone in need at any time. The pantry is accepting monetary donations only at this time.

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

HRDC is once again collecting new coats, hats and gloves for children (all ages). Please bring all donations to the Church on or before **October 24th** and leave them in the Parish Hall, on or near the coat rack.



The Union Rescue Mission is in need of diapers (sizes 4-6), baby wipes, feminine hygiene products, and men’s deodorant and socks. Place these items in the box in the Parish Hall.

SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP

October 31	All Saints and All Souls Sunday (transferred from November 1st) Procession and prayers through the cemetery (weather permitting)
November 7	Annual Parish Meeting after the service
November 12-13	237th Convention of the Diocese of Maryland

Saint George's Prayer List

Joshua Abbot
Ruth Beal
Porter Beard
John Bridges, Rusty Bridges & Shirley Bridges
Dennis Carder
Emma Carnell
Fred & Della Cook
Bob Croft
Ellen Jenkins Davis
Dawn Downey
Robert Flynn
Clarence Finzel
George Frankenberry Jr.
Sarah Frantz
Charles Glass, Darrell & MarySue Glass
Jeff Hall
Angela Hill
Evelyn Hausrath
Harvey Hogamier
Judy Hudson
Tammy Kern
Tyler Kisamore
Susan Kirby
Grace Lepley
Carol McCleaf
Diana Michael
Carolyn Monahan
Janet Reynard
Ken Shaffer
Henry Snyder
Sandra Swanger
Janie Taccino
Dave Thomas
Grayson Turano



Prayer for the Sick

O God of heavenly powers, by the might of your command you drive away from our bodies all sickness and all infirmity: Be present in your goodness with your servants for whom we pray, that their weakness may be banished and their strength restored; and that, their health being renewed, they may bless your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

September

Birthdays

Clifton Hobbs
Tom Beal
Bradley Preston
Cooper Preston
Ryan Diehl
Jeremy Snyder
Darrell Glass
Alison Downey
Mei-Le Apalucci
Jerry Davis
Mary Sue Glass
Kyle Kreiger-Manor
Ashley Femi
Leslie
Bob Weatherholt
Hye Rice
Madyson Parks

Anniversaries

Andrew & Sarah
Eva & Jim Wilson
Craig & Debbie
Joe & Alice Neder

October

Birthdays

Maggie Tummy
Judy Boston
David Snyder
Brian Geary
Jennifer Bonner
Savannah Preston
Noah Preston
Chris Davis
Jeremey Bradshaw
Autumn Beal Workman
Robert Otto
George Stevenson
John Watts, Jr.
Tom Kaufman
Jim Wilson
Samuel Johnson
Parker Radditz

Anniversaries

Billi & Amy Davis
Joe & Tracy Winn
Betty Jane & Kee
Vicky & Rick Glass

God's Blessings!

Saint George's Episcopal Church
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Mount Savage, Maryland 21545



Contact Information

Links are active in PDF version only

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Web Sites

www.stgeorgesmtsavage.org
www.facebook.com/stgeorgesmtsavage

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

www.episcopalmaryland.org
1-800-443-1399

The Anglican Communion

The Most Rev. and Right Honourable

Justin T. Welby, *105th Archbishop of Canterbury*

The Episcopal Church

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, *27th Presiding Bishop*

The Diocese of Maryland

The Right Rev. Eugene T. Sutton, *14th Bishop of Maryland*

The Right Rev. Robert W. Ihloff,

Assisting Bishop, 13th Bishop of Maryland

Parish Officers, Staff & Volunteers

Dee Stallings	Senior Warden, Organist, Vestryperson (2023) Treasurer of the Women of St George's
Jim Rice	Junior Warden, Worship Leader, Acolyte Leader, Lay Eucharistic Minister, Vestryperson (2022)
Ken Preston	Treasurer, Camera Operator, Vestryperson <i>ex officio</i>
Lynda Folk	Assistant Treasurer, Vestryperson (2022)
Peggy Hess	Registrar, Altar Guild, Eucharistic Visitor, Secretary of the Women of St George's, Vestryperson <i>ex officio</i>
Karen Bonner	Altar Guild Chairperson, President of the Women of St George's, Vestryperson (2023)
Sharon Logsdon	Parish Nurse, Eucharistic Visitor, Parish Secretary
Karen Preston	Vestryperson (2024), Parish Secretary, Altar Guild
Jeff Hall	Vestryperson (2024), Usher
Russell Bridges	Bell ringer, Altar Guild (candle oil)
Elliott Stallings	Bell ringer