

The Vine and Branches

SAINT JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH
DILLON, MONTANA

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May-June 2021

GREETINGS FROM FATHER DONNEL O'FLYNN:

I'd like to thank Carol Meacham for an invitation to write something for the May/June Vine and Branches. As I write, it is still April. The vestry and I are still working out the details of my time with you at St. James. For now then I will just say a few general things about how I see my role as interim priest.

Let me build on the image of a vine and branches, which is so well-known at St. James! Jesus introduces this image in the Gospel of John to describe his relationship with his followers. Jesus is the vine, he says, out of which grow smaller branches. These represent average Christians like us. Jesus stresses how important it is for the branches to stay connected to the vine, so that the life-giving sap can pass from the vine to the branches. It is a beautiful picture of the Christian life! The result, when we stay connected to Jesus, is that we bear fruit. The fruits we bear are, I believe, what St. Paul calls, "the fruits of the spirit." These are things like love, joy, peace, gentleness, etc. (A full list can be found in Galatians 5:22-23).

If you have ever visited an actual vineyard, however, you probably noticed one more element. The vines are supported by a *trellis*. The trellis provides structure, so that the vines and branches can most effectively do their business of bearing fruit. I believe that my role as interim priest is something like those trellises. My aim is to provide structure and support to facilitate the all-important work of the people of St. James staying connected to Jesus and bearing spiritual fruit.

When I talk about providing structure what I mean is pretty straightforward. I mean things like leading worship, shaping the vestry agenda, training and encouraging different lay ministries. I am confident that the bearing of spiritual gifts will follow. Jesus

will ensure that it does. If providing some support for this all-important result is my work, then I look forward to getting started.

How long will this go on? What I can say is that Bishop Stebbins believes that St. James can make significant progress in six months. My lodging arrangements in Dillon run through October. This time will pass quickly, so we need to keep our focus on what comes next. Parish leaders will continue to have to work with the Bishop and her staff, especially Cannon Chris Roberts, to prepare to call the next Rector. Again, I will provide support for this work, but it has to be done by the people of St. James. We all have a role to play, first and foremost, by prayer. Do please ask the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit!

My in-person debut will be on an auspicious date—the feast of the Ascension. I will drive down to Dillon on Thursday, May 13, and arrive in time for a 7:00 PM service. Ascension Day deserves more attention than it often receives. It is after all a "principal feast" of the church year, on the same level as Christmas and Easter. I hope at least a few of you will help me celebrate it. Then I will be in residence for the next ten days, through the feast of Pentecost on Sunday, May 23. After that I will be in residence for ten days each month, to include the third and fourth Sundays of each month. I will also be available by phone or internet the rest of the time.

So, there will be more to come. I expect to have fun being with you in Dillon in coming months and hope you will too. Blessings to you and yours,

Donnel



EPISCOPAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD) programs alleviate hunger and improve food supply, create economic opportunities, strengthen communities, promote health, fight disease, respond to disasters and rebuild communities. ERD follows an integrated model, implemented through a global network of partnerships.

If you would like to donate to ERD, please check out the website at:
<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/> You can designate an offering through St. James by noting "ERD" in the memo line of your check.

Kathryn Hatch

Dates to Remember

Morning Prayer Sundays at 10 am.

Theology on Tap at the Brewery Sundays at 4 PM.

Ascension Day Service with Father O'Flynn Thursday, May 13 at 7 PM.

Holy Eucharist with Father O'Flynn : May 16 and 23, June 20 and 27: 10 am

From the Annual Treasurer's Report:

The annual audit of the church's accounting system was performed. Barb Hagen and Manny Hoag of the Diocese performed the audit. The accounting was in order. There were some recommendations for procedure changes to reflect best practices developed by the Diocese. Lynn Anderson performed an audit of some prior year cash transfers from the Endowment account to the checking account. There were no discrepancies found.

Thank you Kay Roach:

St. James vestry is sad to announce that Kay Roach is "retiring" from her gift to us as Treasurer. She has aptly led the finances for the past several years and St. James has certainly benefited from her gift. Words cannot express the appreciation for all you have done. Our new Treasurer is Terri Furlong and Kay has offered to train her as well.

Lee Graves, Senior Warden



Welcome Terri Furlong, Treasurer

I asked Terri to write something to introduce herself to St. James as our new Treasurer. I think you will find her background very interesting and diverse.

I started office work when I was 13 in my father's brokerage office. I really wanted to be an auto mechanic, but our pony threw me and cracked my tailbone, so I wouldn't have been able to do that for too many years.

I majored in Business Administration in college, with a minor in Psychology. I didn't have too many business opportunities after a move to Quincy, WA, so I started my own bookkeeping and tax business. I did that for 42 years until retiring in December, 2020.

I was the church treasurer in Ephrata, WA for a few years until marrying Mark and moving to Columbia Falls. After his retirement, we moved to Dillon to be nearer my family and get away from all the traffic up north.

I am happy to be your new Treasurer and will do my best for us!

Terri

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION UPDATES

In conversation with parish leaders I have learned that there is a desire at St. James for effective ways to work on individual spiritual growth. Especially as we are still in a time of not being able to meet in person as readily as we might wish, finding guidance via our cell phones is a possibility worth exploring. A new venue for this has recently been announced by the Second Breath Center, located at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in North Carolina. For 30 years, the Center has offered life transforming spiritual practices and teaching rooted in the Christian Wisdom Tradition.

Second Breath has now launched an app designed to be a spiritual companion that creates space to reconnect with God, refill your tanks and cultivate what Jesus of Nazareth described as “fullness of life.” The Second Breath app has hundreds of guided spiritual practices that focus on heart, mind, and body, plus inspiring audio reflections, monthly series, and a daily centering to help you make spiritual practice a habit. There is a lot of free content and additional premium perks are available at less than \$5/month for an annual subscription. For more information check out the Second Breath Center website:

<http://secondbreathcenter.com/app/>

Donnel

Bible Study—Alleluia! St. James parishioners are interested in restarting weekly Bible Study. Carol Meacham, who did a great job leading it in the past, is focusing her talents in other areas and is unable to lead, but will be an active participant. Thank you, Carol, for your service!

Father O’Flynn will hold a weekly Bible Study that allows learning and discussion of the scripture lessons appointed for the upcoming Sunday. Mark your calendars for the first study, **Saturday, May 15th at 10:00 in the Guild Hall**. A light brunch will be served. Continuing Bible Study day and time will be determined on the 15th. Zoom is available for those who wish to attend virtually.

Contemplative Prayer—Randy Harris in the forward to *Leaning Into God’s Embrace* says, “Somehow much of our praying gets stuck in the realm of asking God’s blessing on our long list of agenda items.” Contemplative Prayer offers us the opportunity to practice “Be still, and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10. Jackie Halstead author of *Leaning Into God’s Embrace* says it “is about relishing the presence of God.”

A six-week study on Contemplative Prayer will begin the third week of May 2021. This series is for beginners, but those who practice Contemplative Prayer are welcome to join. Contemplative Prayer is new to me; therefore we will walk together to learn this exciting new way to experience God. If you’re interested in the Contemplative Prayer series, contact me via email at

keroachcpa@gmail.com or phone 206-321-7649 by May 5, 2021.

The participants will determine class day and time.

Kay Roach



BALANCE

Now that most of us have received the vaccine, things are looking up. Our interim priest, Father Donnel O'Flynn, is continuing all of our safety precautions while offering a return to some of the things we have been missing. He plans to have discussion groups, both in person with social distancing and also via Zoom.

I read an article recently about "balance". I started thinking about the balance in our lives. It is a difficult topic right about now. However, there is light at the end of this very rocky tunnel. The inability to see friends and family has taken a huge toll on all of us. Not being able to work, shop, socialize, go to restaurants or other venues outside of our homes has created a huge void in our well-being. Communicating through emails and virtual visits has definitely helped us cope with the situation. ***Loss—Resiliency***

To begin, the pandemic created fear, isolation, uncertainty and doubt. But St. James offered hope at first by closing as per Bishop Marty's instructions to ensure our safety. Secondly, upon re-opening we implemented strict sanitization procedures: social distancing in the pews, wearing masks, washing hands, a service without singing and any type of personal contact. Do you see the balance here? ***Fear—Safety***

So, another example of balance; continuing to follow safety precautions while returning to our much missed activities. ***Caution—Excitement***

Above all, we have God's love to help us find balance in our lives.

Carol Meacham, Editor

