

The Messenger...

December 2017 - January 2018

A publication of St. James on the Lake Episcopal Church

An orthodox parish that welcomes everyone!

Rector: Fr. Randy Melton

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FR. MELTON'S MYSTICAL MUSINGS:



The Difficulty of Preaching Christmas!

Preachers talk when we get together, and most that I know admit that Christmas and Easter sermons are among the most difficult preaching challenges of the year. Odd, isn't it? The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is such a simple but profoundly complex reality. It's anything but the trivial sentimentality we too often assign to it. I wonder a lot about why.....

Has the beautiful Christmas story become so familiar that we've lost any real sense of what its mystery really means to us? Has the amazement at what makes Christmas truly amazing escaped us, and been replaced with superficial amazement of culturally self-manufactured excitement? Has it become nothing more than an annual food fest of gathered family units, with joyful gift giving, overindulgent parties, and acts of kindness done in the "spirit" of Christmas, without any comprehension of what that spirit is really all about?

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Is it no more than a magical time that takes place once a year but wears off within a few days, when we return back to our "normal" lives, having enjoyed what we either considered a "good" Christmas or a "bad" Christmas, depending on our level of happiness or depression? How many ways has the script of Christmas been rewritten to conform to our preferences? The alternative stories are certainly not evil, but neither are they real. Yet they serve to promote good feelings, and that's what Christmas is supposed to be all about, right? How is Christmas more than that? Or is it? We're usually too distracted to really have much care or awareness about the incomprehensible. It's just easier to focus on the simple pleasures of a different narrative.

History is re-written all the time, and always has been. I naively expected to study an objective discipline when I became a history major as an undergrad...amazed and shocked when I found that there are all kinds of varieties and perspectives of history. If we can just focus on the WHAT questions, we get a pretty uniform answer, but when we delve into the WHY, we have a lot more diversity. It can become very subjective then, with lots of levels of interpretive "truth". And yet, the WHY is essential.

The WHY is the most important question in most cases, as it gets to the depth of the superficial WHAT, and leads us to the whole point of the enterprise we're studying, practicing, believing, worshiping or living. But the WHY cannot be pure speculation or else it's just another perspective among many. It has to have merit based on truth by a clear understanding the author, poet, philosopher, religion or morality, which usually requires spending much more time analyzing the WHAT.

Anyone can rewrite the WHAT with a whole slew of WHY's and be doing no more than guessing what the real "truth" is, of the WHAT. But when one truly observes the WHAT while pursuing the true WHY, without any preconceived notions (if that's even possible), it at least has the potential to teach and enlighten us as well as reveal truth at the deepest level.

For instance, the WHAT of Christmas is a joyful thing to celebrate (however it's done), but the WHY of Christmas is perhaps the most profound consideration ever beheld, experienced or contemplated by the world...and in many cases, ignored and rejected. Does any of that make sense to anyone?

In a couple of weeks, I'll preach about something so incredible that one can only fall to one's knees in adoration if you believe what the Church proclaims. The angel says to the shepherds in the field, "Do not be afraid;

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for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." That's the WHAT of Christmas. I pray that by the time the gospel is read at the Christ Mass, I will have some compelling words regarding the WHY of Christmas, that will "give flesh," so to speak, to the biblical narrative... For unto us a Savior is born, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Have a Blessed Advent and a joyous Christmas!
Fr. Randy+

Rector Institution THANK YOU!

Karen and I want to thank the vestry for the generous housewarming gift given to us at the reception Wednesday night. And again, my gratitude continues to overflow for all of you who did so much in preparation for the liturgy, presentations, the food, the reception, the set up, clean up and countless other things that I may not even be aware of. The love expressed and received in this parish is almost inexhaustible and I am so very grateful to be here among you as a partner in ministry. I know I've said this many times, but it bears repeating as long as I have breath I suppose. In the five months I've been here, Karen and I have both come to love you all very much. Thank you so much for the authenticity in being who you are! And thank God for making you that way! I will always be faithfully yours in the love of Christ Jesus,

Fr. Randy and Karen

TEACH Topics, Sunday Morning after Worship:

"Ephesians: Sit, Walk, Stand"

December 3: SIT--Chapter 1-3
December 10: WALK—Chapter 4-5
December 17: STAND—Chapter 6
December 24: No Class
December 31: No Class
January 7: Holy Baptism
January 14: Stump the Priest (submit questions)
January 21: Annual Parish Meeting
January 28: Bishop Smith for Confirmations and TEACH

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ADVENT begins December 3

I'm sorry about getting the newsletter out late, but I was preoccupied with the Institution service. Too much for this priest to handle in too short a time I guess! By now you probably already know about Advent because I told you last Sunday, but here goes in case you forgot!

Advent, the beginning of the new liturgical Church year, actually means "coming," as in the "coming of Jesus." Advent is a season when the air is filled with expectancy and anticipation. It's a strange mixture of solemnity and joy as we prepare and wait for the arrival of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, when we celebrate the "Word becoming flesh among us," while also anticipating Jesus' 2nd coming for the final judgment and the establishment of God's Kingdom in its fullness.

The color blue signifies the expectant nature of Advent as it prepares us for Jesus by self-examination, reflection, prayer and study. Blue is also the traditional color for Mary, who is the means used by God to bring about the incarnation of our Lord. She's the Theotokos, meaning "mother of God" or "God-bearer". Our Advent & Christmas Eucharistic Prayer shifts from A to B, with its more explicit incarnational emphasis. Advent presents a season of mixed emotions: fear, anxiety, expectation, hope, joy, penitence and celebration. **This year Christmas Eve morning is the 4th Sunday of Advent and we celebrate the Christmas (Christ Mass) Eucharist that evening at 6 p.m.**

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

Liturgically, the color is festive white to celebrate the Holy Nativity, the birth of Jesus. The Song of Praise is "Gloria in Excelsis," and Eucharistic Prayer B is used, with its more explicit incarnational emphasis.

HANGING OF THE GREENS normally occurs the Sunday prior to Christmas, December 17. Watch for the announcement of the exact day and time to decorate the church for Christmas.

Sunday, December 24, Christmas Eve:

9:00 a.m. ADVENT 4 Eucharist

6:00 p.m. FESTIVAL CHRIST MASS

Sunday, December 31: 2nd Sunday of Christmas

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 7: Baptism of Jesus (1st Sunday of Epiphany)

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

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EPISCOPAL POP QUIZ!

1. Is the Episcopal Church protestant or catholic? Explain.
2. What does "Episcopal" mean anyway?
3. What is "Apostolic Succession"?
4. What do the Greek words "homoousia" and "homoiousia" mean and how do they relate to the Council of Nicea?
5. What is a sacrament and how many are there? Briefly describe them.
6. The so called "3-legged stool" of "Scripture, Tradition and Reason is the source of authority for faith and morals for Anglicans. Briefly define each and explain how they are a test of truth for Anglicans.
7. The 4 orders of Ministry are Bishops, Priest, Deacons and Laity. Describe briefly what each one does.
8. Who is the Holy Spirit and what all does he do?
9. What are the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit? How are they received and for what reason?

BONUS QUESTION:

What soft drink has the same letters in its name as "Episcopal"??



How'd ya do?

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VESTRY Nominations: Deadline December 17

Time to begin thinking about Vestry nominations, which will be accepted from Sunday, December 10 through December 17. Tina Wage and Terry Dahlman rotate off at the Annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 21, 2018, leaving two vacancies for 3 year terms. In order to nominate and/or vote for someone, you yourself must be a member in good standing in this parish for the past year, at least 18 years of age, and you must be known to the parish treasurer as a giver of record. It is wise to check with Fr. Randy first before talking to someone about a nomination to ensure that he/she is a qualified candidate as specified by canon law.

Brief biographical sketches are made available to parishioners at least 2 weeks prior to the parish meeting. Since there will be ample opportunity for submitting names to the Rector, no nominations will be made from the floor. If more nominations are needed when the deadline rolls around, the remaining Vestry members will serve as a nominating committee to ensure that at least enough candidates are presented to fill the vacant positions.

Canonical Vestry Qualifications: Vestry members shall be confirmed communicants in good standing of St. James for the past year, a giver of record known to the Treasurer, and be at least 18 years old. Communicant in good standing is defined as: Any member confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church by a Bishop of this Church, who has received communion at least three times during the preceding year and who, for the previous year, has been faithful in attending worship, and at working, praying and giving for the "spread of the Kingdom of God." These are the very minimal requirements set in the church canons.

In addition, the following list of "qualities" are also suggested for consideration. Although not canonically required, they offer a standard that befits the position:

- *A strong commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- *Worships regularly and has a prayer life.
- *Involved and familiar with overall parish life
- *Demonstrates leadership qualities; comfortable making decisions
- *Able to work with others who may have differing opinions
- *Able to express convictions, gently challenge and be challenged
- *Tactful and respectful of others and a team player
- *Open minded and a good listener
- *Able to see long-term possibilities
- *Positive attitude about the life of the parish
- *Able to work in a positive manner with the Rector

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- *A person of high integrity, fair-minded and honest
- *Currently involved in a parish ministry in the church and beyond
- *Dependable, reliable and responsible
- *Wants to be part of a solution, not a problem
- *Does not bring a special interest agenda to the vestry
- *Able and willing to give time and energy required of Vestry ministry
- *Model of Christian stewardship (time, talent and treasure)

Permission must be received in writing before submitting the name of a potential nominee to Fr. Randy. The deadline for submissions is Sunday, December 17. Please pray about this before nominating.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held after worship on January 21 in the parish hall. A summary of our 2017 ministries will be presented, as well as the 2018 budget. Two new vestry members will be elected (qualifications are listed in the previous article). A brief vestry meeting will take place right after the conclusion of the Annual Parish Meeting to select a secretary and junior warden, and verify a meeting time that's agreeable to all.

Come enjoy the fun and fellowship as we celebrate together the life of our parish! There will be an **EPIPHANY CAKE** with several surprises inside that impart various blessings to those lucky ones who receive them. Be careful as you chew and don't swallow one! They include a bean (king or queen of the party), a dime (increased wealth), a button (increased ecclesiastical wisdom), a cross (blessings of the church), and a thimble (increased industry). The person receiving the thimble gets to make the cake for the next year. AND we get our new pictorial parish directories!!

COME JOIN THE FUN!!

BONUS ARTICLE!! (*HooRah!*)

LETTERS OF GOD

"Do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You know that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." (2 Corinthians 3:1-3)

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In a very short time now, we'll celebrate the feast of the arrival of God's ultimate love letter to us, the Incarnation of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). That letter provides us with a message of hope and assurance that no other Christmas gift or card can. Yet we find that we do receive different expressions of that same letter through the lives of various people, don't we? Sometimes it's a loved one, sometimes a stranger, and sometimes a casual acquaintance. But the Lord definitely uses folks just like you and me to send clear messages about his love for us through our personal encounters. His love is made evident in very "*incarnational*" ways.

When a person is baptized into Jesus Christ, that person becomes a new letter of God. The Holy Spirit writes his letter on our hearts. Each of us is a unique and personalized letter, yet each reveals the same consistent message of truth and love describing the nature of the letter's author. We are letters that are addressed to everyone everywhere. We are not to be sealed so that it is difficult for others to read us. We are not to be confidential letters that are only to be read in secret by a select few or ourselves alone.

We are to be **BOLD** letters that proclaim the message written on our hearts clearly by what is seen in our lives. A Christian's life is one that's intended to be an **OPEN** letter that says, "*Read me! I am God's love letter to you!*" Does that sound arrogant? The power of the Holy Spirit resides inside of us to reflect the Risen Christ through our words and actions. It's a very humbling reality to think that Jesus would use us this way, but he does. It's nothing to brag about because it's **about** God and **from** God, not us. It's simply the way grace works.

But there is such a thing as "*responsible grace.*" In this context, that means that we must remember never to leave our letter behind, but to carry it with us everywhere we go. It means never forgetting that what's in our possession is a sheer gift to be shared with others. Perhaps this Christmas, we'll take another look at God's love letter that lies in the crèche surrounded by animals and hay, angels and shepherds. That same letter lives inside of each one of us in a timeless fashion. May we be "*responsive*" to that "*grace*" by being intentional in our efforts to live according to the message written on our hearts so that the letter of our lives, written by the hand of God, may be clearly seen and understood by all who meet us.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name"
(Psalm 103:1).....**Fr. Randy+**

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UPCOMING EVENTS TO CALENDAR!

Kairos Prison Christmas Party (December 9 at Beto Prison)

Teen Youth Ministry, December 6 & January 17, Wednesday 6-7:30 pm

Noon Healing Eucharist each Wednesday

Sunday Morning Healing Prayers (8:30-8:45 am Sundays)

Praise and Worship, 2nd Sunday, 6:00 pm

Evening Prayer & Dinner Fellowship, Last Wed, **Canceled** in DECEMBER

Daughters of the King, 2nd Sunday, 4:30 pm

Men's Group Reunion, Tuesday, 7 a.m.

Women's Group Reunion, Tuesday, 9 a.m. (1st and 3rd)

Weekly Prayer Group, Tuesdays, 4:00 pm

Women's Bible Study, 2nd and 4th Monday, 6:00 pm

Men's Bible Study, Thursdays, 6:00 pm

Annual Parish Meeting, Sunday, January 21, after worship

Bishop Smith here for confirmations! Sunday, January 28

Office Hours & Contact Information

Monday: Fr. Randy's Day off

Tuesday: 9:30 am - 1 pm

Wednesday: 9:30 am - 1 pm

Thursday: 9:30 am - 1 pm

Friday: 9:30 am - 1 pm

Saturday: Office Closed

OFFICE CLOSED CHRISTMAS WEEK (Dec. 25, 2017-Jan, 2, 2018)

But Wednesday Eucharist on 12/27/2017 is NOT canceled.

NOTE: There may be exceptions to those posted hours due to outside appointments, errands or pastoral needs. If you don't see Fr. Randy's car, it's because he often parks in the back near the shade. Appointments may always be made at other times if necessary.

FR. RANDY'S EMAIL: soulman4jc@gmail.com

FR. RANDY'S CELL: (830) 481-8290

EPISCO-QUIZ ANSWERS!

If you don't know the answer to any of these questions, ask someone who has attended the Confirmation Classes! They'll be glad to help! ****NO PRESSURE GUYS** I HAVE FAITH IN YOU!!!**

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DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS...

1	Kitty Whitted	18	Jock Miller
2	Linda Shehee	19	Marshall Barton
6	Mike Horton	20	Terry Dahlman
8	Rita Davis	21	Maggie Williams
13	Carol Mayo	25	Lucy Miller
14	Bill Shehee		

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS...

6	Bill Miniati	25	DeLois Bomberger
10	Bob Keller	29	Art Denmon
16	Georgeanne Langeloh		

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES ...

12	Bob & Annette Jenkins
12	Charlie and Rita Davis
15	Jim & Ann Cavan
29	Jerry & Carroll Morriss
29	Craig & Debra Wilson

JANURAY ANNIVERSARIES...

1	Marvin & Stephanie O'Connor
5	Randy & Karen Melton
17	Chris & Dawn Tremethick
20	Terry and Susan Dalhman

DECEMBER MEMORIAL...

1	Kay Clendenon	21	Emily Bradley
4	Emery Tuttle	22	Doyle Files, Sr.
6	Tim Miller	23	Anna Nellinger
9	Robin Wilson	25	Grace Reagan
12	Jackie Mize	26	Jean Sauer
14	Virgil Holt	30	Lorene Ayers
16	Al Waldrep	31	David Flowers

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JANUARY MEMORIAL...

1	Tillie Branham	21`	Ray Humphreys
5	Frances Olsen	21	Norman Ayers
10	Donald Green	22	Virginia Pittman
12	Jo Moore	24	Les Allsup
14	Ryland Bradley, Jr.	25	Genevieve DeRosa
19	Clayton Ayers	26	Sharon Holland

SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRIES DECEMBER...

Remember, it will be up to you to get a replacement if you cannot fulfill your obligation.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Greeters</i>	<i>Altar Guild</i>	<i>Acolyte</i>	<i>Crucifer</i>	<i>Lesson Reader</i>	<i>Chalice</i>	<i>Coffee Hour</i>	<i>Sunday School</i>	<i>Fred</i>
3	Ray and Marian	Shirley and Susan H	Art	Phil	Tina	Paul Gail	Rita, Bari, Clare	Young kids: Gail Older kids: Bob	Vicki
10	O'Connor	Susan D. and Kitty	Jacob	DeLois	Claire	Bill Paul	Sunny, Kitty, Meridel	Young kids: Kelley Older kids: In church	Phil
17	DeLois and Rosemary	Susan D. and Kitty	Tissy	Bill	Bari	Gail Sharon	Sharon, Marian, Judy	Young kids: Martha Older kids: Linda	Paul
24	Dahlman	Linda and Kelly	Paul	Terry	Annette	Sharon Gail	Gail, Deanna, Dawn	No Sunday School	Gary
31	Davis	Linda and Kelly	Carol	Paul	Deanna	Bill and Gail	Susan D, Patsy, Rita F.	No Sunday school	Vicki

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SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRIES JANUARY

DATE:	Jan. 7	Jan. 14	Jan. 21	Jan. 28
Greeter:	Shehee	Broughon	Jenkins	Tissy/Gail
Altar Guild	RitaF/Carol	RitaF/Carol	Nancy/Willene	Nan/Willene
Acolyte	Kelly	Phil	Terry	Art
Crucifer	Bill	Terrt	Tina	Phil
Reader	Sunny	Bari	Kelly	Marian
Chalice	Paul/Gail	Gail/Sharon	Bill/Paul	Sharon/Bill
Coffee Hr	RitaD/Bari & Claire	Sunny/Kitty, & Meridel	Carol/Dot, & Annette	Sharon, Judy/Marian
Sun School	Y-Gail O-Bab	Y-Sharon O-Church	Y-Martha O-Linda	Y-Kelly O-Church
FRED	Vicki	Phil	Paul	Carol

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