

The Messenger...

February 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:



Letter from a Holy Land Pilgrim

(This letter was received on from Dawn and Bill, who went on the Holy Land pilgrimage with me in 2015. They're members of Emmanuel Fellowship Church in Gonzales)

"Dear Fr. Randy...

Well, the sights and memories are still spinning through our minds. That trip was truly the best time we ever had. The Bible is so much more alive, Jesus is so much closer and God is even more REAL! Thank you for taking the time to share with all of us "Forever Moments." Bill and I are different; we understand more and want even more from what our God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit has to offer us. We made so many friends and there was and always will be a kindred spirit binding us "ALL" together. Thank you again! Glory to God!

Love, Dawn and Bill."

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Details will soon be forthcoming on next year's 2019 St. James' pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The dates are pretty solid at this point [February 4-13] and I have a wonderful guide reserved. The cost is somewhere around \$4,000 (I'll have the exact figures soon). This includes airfare, transportation, tips, entry fees, and meals (except lunch). You pay for lunch (usually \$20 or less), camel rides, souvenirs, and things like freshly squeezed pomegranate juice on street corners (around \$4—must get at least one!).

The itinerary will be released very soon, and registration will then be open. A small deposit is required to hold your place. You must have a passport that has an expiration date at least 6 months after we return from the trip. No shots or vaccinations are required. American money is accepted, and credit cards in most places (although you can save some money on purchases if you use cash).

This is going to be an absolutely amazing, life-changing opportunity to make the Bible come alive in a new way as you visit the places where so much of what we read about in scripture is experienced, touched, tasted, smelled, heard and seen in 3-D color! You will stand in the same places Jesus once stood as you visualize him teaching, healing and casting out demons in the same air space where you are. My favorite site is Jacob's well in Samaria, where Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well at noontime. This is one of many undeniably authentic sites.

Sign up on the Holy Land Pilgrimage trip if you are interested. I will be teaching a series of classes to prepare those who are going, and anyone else who is just interested. Invite your friends, relatives and neighbors to consider coming too! I can't wait until next February! The Holy Land is a special place on God's earth because it's the heart of the biblical story and the path where the footsteps of the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ, were trod. Come retrace those very steps with me! You'll never be quite the same.

Blessings,
Fr. Randy+

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Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting was held in the parish hall after worship on January 21. A summary of our 2017 ministries and the 2018 budget was presented. Two new vestry members, Art Denmon and Carol Mayo were elected to replace Terry Dahlman and Tina Wage on a 3 year rotation. Charlie Davis and Kelly Boughton are Diocesan Convention Delegates (Art and Carol are alternates). As a special treat, Terry and Susan Dahlman celebrated their 50th anniversary with cake and several champagne toasts at the meeting after receiving a blessing in the church! Overall, we enjoyed much fun and fellowship as we celebrated together the life of our parish! A brief vestry meeting took place after the Annual meeting to elect a clerk, Marion Flowers, and junior warden, Paul Lasiter. Fr. Randy announced that Bill Shehee will be the Sr. Warden for 2018.

Bishop Michael Smith Confirms, Receives and Renews!

Bishop Michael Smith, assisting bishop of Dallas, came to celebrate and preach and gave a talk during our TEACH time on Native American ministry. He confirmed Gloria Crenshaw, Barbara Austin, Lorna Rudd and Kelly Boughton. Art Denmon was officially received from the Roman Catholic Church after attending the Episcopal Church for several years. Seven parishioners (Bill Shehee, Judy Evans, Taylor Golden, Ken Vieux, Vicki Vieux, Tina Wage and Claire Stout) renewed their baptismal vows with the bishop. Bill and Judy were both given a recognition gift for being designated teacher's pets. No, actually it was for having perfect attendance at all twelve of the 2-hour Confirmation sessions!

Karen Melton made a wonderfully delicious **EPIPHANY CAKE** with several surprises inside that impart various blessings to those lucky ones who receive them. Fortunately, nobody swallowed one of the hidden goodies, which are not edible! Those who received special blessings are Ed Adams, who found the bean (king of the party), Linda Shehee got the dime (increased wealth), Denise Waldrep got the button (increased ecclesiastical wisdom), Glen Stout got the cross (blessings of the church), and Susan Huffman got the thimble (increased industry)---therefore Susan gets to make the cake for next year!

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What is Lent?

Lent is the most penitential season of holiness in the Church Year, preparing us spiritually for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection 40 days later. Christians are expected to set aside time for increased personal devotion, prayer, fasting, Bible reading, meditative reflection, self-examination of our conscience, confessing and repenting of our sins, and receiving forgiveness from the Lord. Focusing on Jesus' crucifixion helps make us aware of the gift of salvation that is too often taken for granted. This is a time when we fast on certain days to give more careful attention to our spiritual nature. We may also abstain from certain rich foods as a means of simplifying our diets, taking better care of our bodies which are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and identifying with those who don't have enough to eat. Fasting is primarily an act of worship acknowledging that God's throne rules our heart by giving priority to feeding our souls over indulging our appetites.

Lent slows us down so we can listen to God. All Sundays are resurrection feast days. So even in Lent, Sundays are not technically counted among the 40 days of self-denial between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, yet they retain a penitential character to remind the Body of Christ gathered that repentance and grace are the keys to living in the Kingdom of God.

Lenten Rule of Life

Consider adding these things to your Rule of Life in Lent:

- ¥ *Attend worship more regularly*
- ¥ *Give up a bad habit and replace it with a good habit*
- ¥ *Read a chapter a day from one of the gospels*
- ¥ *Pray daily one of the family devotions from the BCP (p.137-140)*
- ¥ *Call friends who aren't present at church to see how they're doing*
- ¥ *Speak words of kindness and encouragement, not criticism and judgment*
- ¥ *Try on a new ministry with a heart to "give" and not just "receive"*
- ¥ *Focus on developing a heart of **GRATITUDE** rather than complaint*
- ¥ *Ask someone how you might pray for God to bless them...and/or consider asking about starting a new group reunion prayer group*
- ¥ *Be a prayer champion for a particular person and/or pray daily for our parish members and friends using a copy of the list to be provided in the parish hall.*
- ¥ *Invite and offer to bring someone to worship or a church event*
- ¥ *Ask the Holy Spirit to let **grace & love** characterize your life....maybe consider signing up for an upcoming Cursillo weekend.*
- ¥ *In **ALL** things, give thanks to the Lord, and focus on the good and positive!*
Remember, our thoughts determine our behavior.

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MARDI GRAS IS ALMOST HERE

WOO-HOO!!

HURRY!! TICKETS WILL GO FAST AT \$12.50 A POP!!

Is it Shrove Tuesday, Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras? YES!!

....*Whatever, it's a Magnificent Meal!!*

Holy Cajun Food Fest Batman! It's that time again!! **YUMMM!!** But wait! Let's get the whole story first! Shrove Tuesday denotes the old custom of one's sins being "shriven" prior to the Lenten season of fasting and prayer. So confessions are heard by appointment on this day. A more familiar name for the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is "Mardi Gras," a French phrase translated as "Fat Tuesday," which is traditionally a gala celebration. This is not so much a church celebration as an opportunity for one last indulgent party prior to the fast, the idea being to rid the kitchen of all sweets and fats and rich, decadent foods (the good stuff!).

So our annual Mardi Gras party (**NOT TO BE MISSED!!**) begins on Tuesday, February 13, from 5-7 PM, with some amazing cajun concoctions that promise to be not only mouth-watering, but bring a long lasting smile of pleasure to the face of all who partake. I have never been to this culinary extravaganza, so I asked Sunny to fill me in. Here's what you're in for:

Food is gumbo - shrimp, crab, sausage; chicken and sausage jambalaya; seafood boil - shrimp, crab, corn on the cob, okra, potatoes, artichokes; crawfish and goodness knows what else. Oh, bread pudding. Cooked outside on fish fry flame and in a "huge" pot - taken inside by a couple of big strong guys and dumped on a round table covered (with newspaper and floor taped with plastic) - Canon David Pettrash said he had never seen anything like it. The country club doesn't even plan anything for that night 'cause they are all at St. James. Come and share the feast!

Additional help is always welcome wherever you are able! Contact Nancy or Sunny to see how you can help with set up, take down, cooking, serving or selling tickets! Get the word out to your friends and neighbors by either selling tickets or buying them and giving them away. All profits benefit our parish outreach. Tickets are a bargain at \$12.50 apiece. But there are only 125 and they go fast, especially in the community. Best deal anywhere!! Call Sunny for tickets or purchase them at church starting this Sunday! Procrastinators beware! Don't hesitate and miss out!

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Ash Wednesday, February 14, Noon and 6 PM

Ash Wednesday begins the 40-day spiritual wilderness journey called Lent. The Book of Common Prayer describes it as one of only two days of strict fasting. Good Friday is the other, the exception being when prohibited for medical reasons. The Ash Wednesday observance of receiving the imposition of ashes is one of holy obligation (not to be missed except for grave reasons). The ashes smudged on our foreheads are reminders of mortality, humility before God, sorrow and repentance for sins, and deep prayerful reflection and self-examination of our conscience. Ash Wednesday is a powerful and necessary way to begin the spiritual rhythm of the Lenten season that draws us closer to our Lord as we seek and receive God's grace through Jesus. This year there are two times during the day to observe Ash Wednesday: Noon or 6 PM. The Church calls us to participate in a Holy Lent through the her wisdom of feeding our souls with the food of life...and, as always, bring a friend!

LENTEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS EVERY FRIDAY

Each Friday at noon (February 16 – March 31) this Lenten devotion allows us to follow the last steps of Jesus' journey to the cross. We gather with prayerful intentions for the Lord to fill us with the grace and will to better follow the way of Jesus as we strive to take up our own cross, deny ourselves and follow him. The devotion takes about 25 minutes, and is a worthwhile substitute for Friday lunch by feeding us spiritually rather than physically. The tradition to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays is to help us remember the gift of Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified for our sins.

WHAT IS HOLY WEEK? (March 25-April 1)

Holy Week is the Church's way to help us participate in the last week of Jesus' life, from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to the last supper with his disciples, his agony in the garden and ultimate betrayal, his unjust trial, and subsequent suffering, torture and crucifixion, all of which prepare us for the Day of the Empty Tomb. Following Jesus' footsteps throughout this week promises a profound impact on our Easter experience. The opportunity to be formed in the shape of Jesus' cross allows us to celebrate a deeper and more powerful resurrection.

STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT HOLY WEEK IN THE MARCH NEWSLETTER!

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BONUS LENTEN ARTICLE!! (*HooRah!*)

DO YOU PRACTICE THE ART OF DYING:

An Important, even vital, Lenten Reflection

By Fr. Homer Rogers (1915-1980)

*[Known affectionately as “Padre” around the Diocese of Dallas,
many considered Fr. Rogers the “Spiritual Father” of the Diocese]*

“Now I lay me down to sleep / I pray the Lord my soul to keep / If I should die before I wake / I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

When I was a young child I was taught to say that prayer, and it seemed to me to be very right and proper. In fact, if I remember correctly, it was comforting, but that may be because it was a rhyming jingle, like all good nursery rhymes. When I grew older and wiser, I regarded that prayer as morbid. The very idea of teaching a small child to think about dying in his sleep was appalling!

Yet this child’s bedtime prayer grew out of the Church’s ancient wisdom about death. Death is not a subject to be avoided, like something obscene. On the contrary, it is something to be faced realistically, and while one is in the best of health. One thing is absolutely certain. I am going to die someday, and so are you. And we don’t know which day. In all probability, I shall not be ready. It is something I do only once, so I can’t really become experienced in it. And if I goof it up I can’t go back and do it over. And it is certainly one of the most important events in my life.

So it would be well if there was some way I could get ready for it. And there is. Centuries ago, the Church worked out a method of practicing the art of dying, so I can become, if not expert, at least reasonably competent.

The way you do this is quite simple. When you were a child you played all sorts of make-believe games beginning with, “Let’s pretend this or that...” So let’s pretend that we know, somehow, that a week from Saturday is going to be our last day on earth...

Somebody once found St. Francis working in a garden and asked him, “What would you do if you knew that that world was coming to an end in ten minutes?” St. Francis replied, “I’d try to finish this row.” Most of us are not that ready, are we? So give yourself more than 10 minutes. Ten days, for most of us, would be more like it.

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First, put your affairs in order. Make your will, if you haven't already. Pay your debts, or at least make arrangements to do so. Go through your desk and attend to all loose ends of personal and business matters that you've left hanging. If you were to die a week from Saturday somebody would have to do that. So do it yourself. Gather together all your important papers, label them properly, and tell somebody else where they are. The aim is that, if you were to die, your heirs would find all your affairs in good order.

Then sit down and write all those old friends you've been intending to write and haven't. Forgive all the people you've been holding a grudge against and tell them so. Apologize to all those you've offended. If married, tell your wife or husband that your love her/him. Tell your mother, father, brother, sister, children, anyone you love, that you love them. Spend some time with your children and grandchildren, and those you love most.

When all your personal affairs are current and in order, then give some attention to your soul. Examine your conscience carefully and confess your sins to God, and do it sincerely and thoroughly. Spend some time in reading the Bible, in prayer & meditation. Go to church and receive your communion. Try to put all your desires and ambitions in the context of eternity and re-evaluate them. Many of the things that have seemed too important will appear trivial, and some of the things we've been ignoring or neglecting will loom large and critical in our new perspective. Christ gave His life on the cross to make a way for us into His Father's Kingdom. Keep that in mind. It matters.

On the last night, I'd arrange to be the last one in the family to turn in. I'd go about the house saying goodbye to all those personal treasures I've loved and depended on, perhaps too much: My books, my favorite foods, my dog, all my keepsakes and treasures. Their only purpose, really, was to excite my gratitude to God, the giver of all good gifts. They served that purpose well.

Next I'd tip-toe around to the bedrooms of my loved ones and silently tell them goodbye. I'd remind myself that God loves them more than I do and that He is quite capable of taking care of them without my help. It's humiliating, but true. If I were to die my family would be inconvenienced and grieved for a short while. But their lives would go on, and they'd readjust, and within a few years I'd not be spoken of very often.

Then I'd say goodbye to my body and its senses. It's been fun to live in, but it's been an inconvenience also. No more rib-eye steaks and walks in the woods. But then again, no more head colds, allergies and sore knees either.

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Next, spend some time looking forward in anticipation to the adventure of eternity. It's a little like planning for a long vacation in a strange country from which we might not return. But we have a companion who's been there before and who can show us the interesting things to do and see. For Jesus will be there.

Then, with an absolutely clear conscience, and with all your affairs in order, you sleep the sleep of the just and wake up to a world in which the grass is greener and the sky bluer. Family and friends are lovelier because it's very much like being born all over again. And all our bills are paid and all our affairs are in order.

Do this every few months. It gets easier every time you do it. Then try it once a month, and finally once a week, and then every night when you go to sleep. Perhaps one day you be like St. Francis, so ready that when your turn comes you've nothing to do to get ready.

This is not only the way to die. It is the only way to live. It's the Christian way—one day at a time. "Take no thought for tomorrow," Jesus said, "Let not the sun go down on your anger."

"Except you repent and become as little children, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of heaven." And so, in our maturity, we return to the simple wisdom of children, and say each night as we retire:

"Now I lay me down to sleep / I pray the Lord my soul to keep / If I should die before I wake / I pray the Lord my soul to take."

FR. RANDY'S RAVE REVIEWS

(Books to Buy, Beg or Borrow)

INWARDLY DIGEST:

The Prayer Book as Guide to a Spiritual Life

By Derek Olson, Forward Movement © 2016

[\$20 paperback / \$9.99 Kindle]

[5 STARS: Best guide book on Book of Common Prayer!]

I highly recommend this book for all Episcopalians (and anyone else who is interested in using the Book of Common Prayer as a resource for prayer). In fact, I gave each person confirmed a copy of it. INWARDLY DIGEST not only

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guides one through the intricacies of the Book of Common Prayer, but it does so in a deeply spiritual manner. There are so many insights that will enhance the way you approach your prayer life. The author has a clear and practical understanding of not only the purpose of the BCP, but of the state of the soul and how to utilize deeply grounded spiritual practices in a way that enhances the use of the BCP.

INWARDLY DIGEST is a valuable book you will want to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest, not only for yourself, but even more so in a study group where you can discuss and implement the content by sharing your thoughts with one another without rushing. You will learn a lot about the Book of Common Prayer from this book, but even more important, it will deepen your prayer life! I know I used some form of the word "deep" at least 3 times. That simply means "very enriching." But "deep" expresses it best! This is the best resource for the Book of Common Prayer that I've come across in 35 years of ordained ministry, because it provides for the state of the soul as well as the mind.

THE JUDAS CONSPIRACY: A Raw Look at Real Faith in Hard Times

By Leslie Williams, JoSara MeDIA, © 2011

(4.5 STARS: Spell-binding Religious Mystery)

Leslie Williams is a friend and seminary classmate who is an accomplished author and novelist. She is married to Fr. Stockton Williams, another close friend who is the recently retired rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Kerrville, Texas. This book is an thoroughly engaging mystery! I'm usually pretty good at figuring these things out regarding plot, good guys/bad guys, etc. But this book was filled with surprising twists and turns! Judas Conspiracy had me on the edge of my seat all the way through. Couldn't put it down. Do you ever get into a book that as you're reading the last few chapters, you find yourself reading a little slower because you don't want it to end? My only disappointment was that it had to end. Look forward to more mysteries from Leslie. She's definitely got a gift for this kind of writing! It is a similar kind of mystery to the DaVinci Code, if you read that.

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UPCOMING EVENTS TO CALENDAR!

Teen Youth Ministry, Feb 21, Mar 7 & 21, Wednesday 6-7:30 PM

Noon Healing Eucharist each Wednesday

Stations of the Cross each Friday at Noon, beginning February 16

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

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

Evening Prayer & Dinner Fellowship (Last Wednesday, 6 PM)

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

Men's Group Reunion, Tuesday, 7 AM

Women's Group Reunion, Tuesday, 9 AM (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

Mardi Gras, Tuesday, February 13, 5 PM

Ash Wednesday, Wednesday, February 14 Noon & 6 PM

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

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

February Birthdays

2 Willene Trotter

9 Charlie Davis

13 Jo Miniat

13 Karen Melton

25 Ray Brown

February Anniversaries

1 Bruce & Carol Mayo

12 Bill and Linda Shehee

14 Glen and Claire Stout

16 Gary and Linda Gallatin

19 Bob and Terry Keller

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FEBRUARY MEMORIAL...

6	Richard Van Horn	14	Nancy Adams
8	Opal Green	14	Joe Riley Wingate
9	Elmer Singletary	17	Jim Gallatin
9	Richard Patrick	18	Jack Sauer
13	Marilyn Labson	26	David Brooks
13	Malcomb Morriss		

SUNDAY MORNING MINISTRIES FEBRUARY...

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>
4	Miller	Sharon and Denise	Jacob	DeLois	Ray	Paul Bill	Gail, Deanna, Barbara, Gloria	Young kids: Kelly Older kids: Linda	Vicki
11	Horton	Sharon and Denise	Tissy	Phil	Tina	Gail Sharon	Susan D Patsy Rita F.	Young kids: Martha Older kids: In church	Paul
18	Ray and Marian	Shirley and Susan H	Carol	Paul	Claire	Paul Sharon	Shirley Nancy Marilyn	Young kids: Gail Older kids: Bob	Phil
25	O'Connor	Shirley and Susan H	Paul	Art	Annette	Bill Gail	Rita D Bari Claire	Young: Sharon Older kids in church	Carol
							.		

DOK Prayers with Priest:

Feb. 4: Bonnie Dill

Feb. 11: Carol Mayo

Feb. 18: DeLois Bomberger

Feb. 25 Gail Beaupre

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