

SUNDAY SERVICES ONLINE ONLY DUE TO COVID-19

THE GRAPEVINE

ST. JAMES PARISH • WILMINGTON, NC
WEEK OF JULY 5, 2020

THE REV. JAY SIDEBOTHAM



Independence Day 2020, a holiday weekend unlike any I recall.

For sure, we focus this weekend on the love we have for this nation, for ideals of freedom and equality that have shaped it, even if not realized for all Americans. But this year, as the Covid19 climbs in the news and in our neighborhoods, as the pain of victims of racial injustice is replayed on television, as uncertain economy adds to anxiety, how will we celebrate? As we observe this weekend, even through masks and at social distance, what does our faith have to say to us?

The Fourth of July, a.k.a., Independence Day, is one of a few secular holidays included in the lectionary of the church. (The others are Thanksgiving and Labor Day.) Along with that designation come scripture readings to inform our observance. It's striking that while the word "independence" does not seem to show up in scripture, the theme of freedom is all over the place. It is not so much freedom from restriction. It is not license. It is freedom for a new way of life, freedom to live the way of love, freedom worth celebrating. So let me highlight a few of those readings.

The selection from the book of Deuteronomy envisions a new land into which the children of Israel will be invited. Moses gives guidelines for what life in that land should look like. (See Deuteronomy 10:17-21) The God who led the people into that land is one who "executes justice for the orphan and the widow," so the children of Israel were to

do the same, to love the stranger, to provide for them food and clothing. In many corners of our nation, along the borders, in the cities, blocks from our church, we have growth opportunities if we are to live into that vision. How might we embrace those growth opportunities as we observe Independence Day 2020?

From the New Testament letter to the Hebrews (11:8-16), a chapter described as the Hall of Fame of faith, the story of Abraham serves as our model. He looked forward to a "city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." The passage continues to cite other saints who held onto the promise, not thinking of a land left behind, but desiring a better country. How might we make that hope of a better country a reality as we observe Independence Day 2020?

Then, in the gospels, we read a portion from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43-48) in which Jesus tells his disciples to love enemies, to pray for persecutors. It's an interesting way to celebrate our independence, our freedom. It's a timely word for a country that feels more divided, more partisan than I can ever remember. What would it mean for us to embrace love as the guiding principle for our common life, as a nation, a city, a church, a neighborhood, a family? How might we walk in the way of love as we observe Independence Day 2020?

If you've ever doubted that scripture is a lively word, these readings chosen for Independence Day quell those doubts. While many of us have experienced amazing blessings and privileges as citizens of this nation celebrated this weekend, may we at the same time observe this holiday (in our church, a holy day) by expanding those graces to all, perhaps participating in the conversations into which our fine Senior Warden, Steve Thomas, invites us, conversations about racial injustice and our church's response to such. May all we do, and may our celebration of this day be offered in the spirit of Jesus who said to his disciples: If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

ST. JAMES UPDATES

SERVICES SUSPENDED FOR THE TIME BEING

ONLINE RESOURCES CAN BE FOUND AT:
www.stjamesp.org/covid19

CONDOLENCES TO:

Judy and R.V. Fulk on the death of their son-in-law,
Stephen Fuchs.

Carroll Johnson on the death of her husband, Otis H.
Johnson.

Glenda Iames O'Neal on the death of her husband,
Thomas G. O'Neal, Jr.

Jennifer O'Neal McGee on the death of her father,
Thomas G. O'Neal, Jr.

GIVING ONLINE

To help make it easier to donate and support St. James Parish, we'd like to include this QR code that will take you directly to our general donation page or if you prefer, you can visit: <https://onrealm.org/StJamesParish/give/> Thank you for your support!



DON'T FORGET TO TAKE THE RECTOR SEARCH SURVEY!

Tomorrow, Monday June 6th, is the last day to participate in the St. James Rector Search Survey! We need everyone to take the time to complete the survey in full. Your perspective is crucial to our search process. You can find the survey on our website: www.stjamesp.org.

A LETTER FROM OUR SR. WARDEN, STEVE THOMAS

Good Morning, St. James!

As your Sr. Warden, I'm here this morning to give you a brief update on all the many things going on in the Parish and to talk with you about an important subject that concerns us all.

First, let me report that the Vestry held its Mid-Year Retreat last weekend and it was very good.

We reviewed all the progress and activity of 2020 so far and were very happy with it. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, St. James has continued to push forward in many areas. Specifically, I want to highlight the work of three very special groups:

- The **Rector Search Committee** has been meeting at least weekly and working tirelessly through the process of carefully seeking St. James' next Rector. Thanks for your invaluable assistance to them through response to their calls for help – whether by completing the Parish survey or participating in a Focus Group.
- The **Strategic Planning Group** has been meeting for past 8 months and pouring countless hours into their work of visioning for us the future of St. James. They presented their final recommendations to the Vestry at the Retreat and we are considering those recommendations now.
- Finally, a subcommittee of the Vestry has been working very hard also on a **new organization** of how we support the ministries of St. James through additional empowerment of each ministry and support of lay leaders in the Parish. You will be hearing more about that improvement soon and we hope you are as excited as we are about what it will mean for St. James!

One other important topic the Vestry spent a lot of time discussing during the Retreat was that of racism. We shared very openly with one another our own perspectives and history with racism and it was very powerfully moving. The consensus was that St. James needs to more actively and consistently engage in the process of helping heal our community of the deep wounds of racism in whatever ways we can. That we are, in fact, called to do more to help all of God's people - including both our own members and those Wilmingtonians we do not yet know – to realize the love and value Jesus feels for all of us equally.

Again, we believe we are called to do more:

- **Do More** than to relegate the job of reconciliation and healing to just our Clergy.
- **Do More** to help educate our Parishioners on the inequalities that are currently present in our society.
- **Do More** than to simply watch while some members of our Parish devote energy to other groups' causes because we do not have one they can engage with.
- **Do More** than to remain quiet in our white steeple at the corner of 3rd and Market.

Simply put, we need to **Do More** to do than we are doing now.

As we heard in Cheryl's sermon last week, *"Anything we do (or worse – don't do) will be seen as wrong in the eyes of some"*, but we on the Vestry do feel St. James needs to be a leader in promoting - through action - the racial healing of the Wilmington Area. And we are confident that we can be a leader, if we set our mind and energy to it. With the resources of our Parish, we know that there is not much we cannot help accomplish.

It may surprise you to know that in college I played on the N.C. State rugby team. Now, I was not very good (I was a good bit skinnier back then!), but I really enjoyed the sport and still enjoy watching it. For anyone who has seen rugby played (but does not understand it), watching it can be frustrating. Each team pushes to gain yard by yard, only to often lose them right back to the other team – and so it repeats until the will of one team pushes the ball in for a score. Sure, there are the occasional break-away scores that are quick and dramatic, but for the most part the team that wins the match simply has more perseverance and will to win than the other. The fight for human rights and equality has been a long one in the United States and has been full of both small victories and setbacks along the way. It is time that St. James throw our full weight behind the "team" fighting to promote racial healing in Wilmington and our Nation.

Based on this, I am announcing the forming of a **Racial Healing Task Force** here at St. James. The group will be composed of any Parish Member who shares a passion for the mission of healing and love and ability to share some of their time. **The Task Force will begin meeting the week of July 6th** and will be charged with brainstorming any and all ways St. James can make a true difference in this calling. The Task Force will present recommendations for action(s) to the Vestry **by the end of July** for consideration and approval and then we will engage the entire Parish in the execution of these plans. Some immediate actions recommended in the short-term may be put in place even sooner. If you are interested in joining this Team, please simply email me or call me at my contact information shown below and let me know as soon as possible. It's that simple, but it is up to you.

If you are unsure if it is time for you to engage in this "cause" I would point out that based on the myriad of national examples that our progress toward treating one another fairly is just not getting there with the same people fighting for it. People continue to die and suffer and live under less innate opportunity that you or I have been given, simply because they look different. This week we learned that racism is alive and well even within our Wilmington Police Department with Senior officers literally and verbally hoping for another Civil War so they can "set 'em back four or five more generations". In short, the need is urgent and we need to step up and be the change that is needed. Innocent people's lives depend on it.

Finally, I want to leave you with a thought. I want you to picture a community healed of racial divide and hate. Your community of Wilmington. I want you to picture where you see St. James in that picture. Where do you see yourself? From Matthew: *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." "Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house."* We are that city on a hill, fellow Parishioners. Help add your light to this world with us. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sr. Warden, Steve Thomas: stevethomas@live.com ~ (910) 876-2655

ST. JAMES VISION STATEMENT

To build community through ministries that strengthen our faith.

ST. JAMES MISSION STATEMENT

To welcome all to grow in love of God and neighbor.

WEEKLY PRAYERS OF LAMENT AND REPENTANCE

All are welcome to join religious communities from all around Wilmington as we pray Prayers of Lament and Repentance on the Wilmington City Hall steps (102 N 3rd St) Wednesdays at 9:00 a.m.

WILMINGTON EPISCOPAL FOOD DRIVE

Episcopal churches all around Wilmington are joined forces to support Nourish NC. Together we gathered over 3,300 lbs of food for Nourish NC.

MASK REMINDER

The parish office staff continues to work regular office hours, on-site. If you need to visit, please know the staff will be wearing masks and we ask that you do, too. If you don't have a mask, we can provide one for you. Thank you.

VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR

Each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom

We're trying something new! A Virtual Coffee Hour on Zoom! The fun starts Sunday at 10:00 a.m. Find out more info on our website: <https://www.stjamesp.org/blog/virtual-coffee-hour/>

PEOPLE COMPUTERS JESUS BIBLE STUDY

Join us for People Computers Jesus Bible Study (PCJBS). We are "meeting" Wednesday Mornings online. If you're interested in participating, reach out to Cookie at Cookie@stjamesp.org to learn how! This Bible Study is led by our St. James Youth Group! Now starting at 10:00 a.m.

MORNING PRAYER CONTINUES

Monday-Friday | 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. | Zoom

Our Weekday Morning Prayer continues through quarantine! We'd love to have you join us on weekday mornings at 8:00 am for Morning Prayer on our Zoom! Zoom is a video conferencing tool that allows us to hear and see one another. You can now find copies of the readings and the link to the Zoom Meeting on our website.

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY: NEW PROGRAM YEAR BEGINS IN SEPTEMBER

On September 23, the Wednesday evening Education for Ministry (EfM) group at St. James Parish will begin a new program year. We have several places for new members, and we invite your consideration of whether this is the time for you to begin EfM. If you would like to know more about EfM at St. James, please contact Bill Bivins at wpbivins@gmail.com or Karen Clark at clarklc11@gmail.com. We hope you will consider our program and let us know if we can provide further information.

MEET ON ZOOM: RENEWALWORKS FOR ME

Thursdays | 7:00 P.M. | Zoom

All who are participating in RenewalWorks for Me are invited to join a weekly zoom group meeting with Jay Sidebotham on Thursday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Even if you haven't read or haven't started RenewalWorks For Me yet, come join us and see what it's all about! Find information about the Zoom on our website. If you would like to be emailed the link to join each Thursday, please reach out to Erin at communications@stjamesp.org.

QUIET REFLECTION AT LEBANON CHAPEL

Please note that the invitation for Quiet Reflection at Lebanon Chapel, scheduled for the first Saturday of the months of August, September and October will be cancelled until further notice. Many of us would cherish this opportunity right now. While we wait to worship together in person again, we will hold the picture of this beautiful chapel and its grounds in our minds and hearts, and give thanks for the time when we can safely return.

ST. JAMES DAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Registration for school year 2020-2021 is OPEN. Anyone interested in visiting and touring the Day School should contact Amy Taylor at director.dayschool@stjamesp.org. All registration is done through the St. James website, www.stjamesp.org/registration.

ONLINE VBS IS COMING!

July 27-30 | ONLINE

This summer we, St. James Parish, are partnering with Christ Church Cathedral, St. John the Divine and St. Martin's in Houston Texas to offer you a virtual Vacation Bible School. We are going to FOCUS and look closer at God, God's truth and the people God calls us to love. We'd love for you to join us- no matter where you are! July 27-30 - it is ABSOLUTELY FREE and we are going to have a ton of FUN!!!! If you have questions or need further assistance, please email Shannon at christianinformation@stjamesp.org. We do ask that you register online to let us know you plan to attend so we can prepare supplies accordingly!

ST. JAMES PARISH

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NEXT WEEK AT **ST. JAMES PARISH** ONLINE WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

MONDAY, JULY 6 - FRIDAY, JULY 10

MORNING PRAYER DURING QUARANTINE
8:00-8:30 AM | Zoom | Led by Jay Sidebotham

You can find the Morning Prayer linked on our website around 8:00 a.m. Please let Erin at communications@stjamesp.org know and she will help you get access to the video.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

PRAYERS OF LAMENT AND REPENTENCE
9:00 AM | Wilmington City Hall Steps

PCJ BIBLE STUDY
10:00 AM | Zoom | Led by our Youth Group and with Youth Advisor support

THURSDAY, JULY 9

RENEWALWORKS FOR ME
7:00 PM | Zoom | Led by the Spiritual Growth Committee

SUNDAY, JULY 12

MORNING WORSHIP

8:00 AM | YouTube | www.youtube.com/st-jamesparish

Sunday Morning Worship may be found several ways. The easiest will be through our email that will come on Saturday night. Simply click the image link to view the service.

EDITORIAL DEADLINES: The deadline for the June 14th e-blast is Friday, July 10th. The next issue of the Grapevine runs on July 19th, 2020.