

Pastoral Message
July 3, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."

Dear friends in Christ,

These words from Psalm 121 are a special comfort for us these days. Living in western North Carolina, we see mountains all around us, and sometimes, those mountains call us into prayer—prayers of gratitude and also *prayers of need*. We don't have to be in church or have our prayer books open to experience a summons to prayer! We just have to "lift our eyes to the hills" and pray our hearts. *Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth!*

Ty and I always wanted to spend more time in the mountains of western North Carolina. That's why we moved here in 2016. This year, we will be exploring places we haven't had time to explore "in our own backyard." In the BCP, we have a wonderful prayer "For the Good Use of Leisure" in which we pray for the grace "to use our leisure to rebuild our bodies and minds [so] that our spirits may be opened to the goodness of your creation" (p. 825). Walking, hiking, and just looking *with eyes to see* the beauty of *this* place will be enough of a vacation for me (I will be "away" July 10-18 and August 14-21.) My hope is that each of us at St. James will find ways to be intentional about our own use of leisure this summer—and that we can "safely" renew our connections with friends and family members and people we can share our stories with about how we are living through these times.

Life at St. James

At St. James, we are still observing our state's Phase Two guidelines, as well as the guidelines the bishop sent out in May. Our office is closed. Christie and I are still working from home. We come in to livestream services and are available by phone, email, and Zoom on workdays (Carol-T, W, Th; Christie-T, W, Th, F). Other staff members come in to the office for "essential work" that can only be done there. We have a plan for them to work at home should any of them be exposed to COVID-19 and need to quarantine. If you need to drop something off at St. James, we ask you to notify us ahead of time so a staff member can meet you at the door. Contact Karen at 828-693-7458 or karen@stjamesepiscopal.com to do so. We are unable to accommodate "drop in" visits at this time, I am sorry to say.

At its June meeting, the Vestry decided against opening our indoor meeting areas to small group meetings. (The Vestry will revisit this decision at its August 4 meeting.) However, outdoor meetings (up to 10 people) can be held if they are scheduled in advance. We ask for advance scheduling because of the safety protocols that must be followed. Teri Smith, our part-time Facilities Manager, can be reached at 828-694-6938 or teri@stjamesepiscopal.com for details.

Deacon Tim Jones has begun a “reservation only” meeting in the courtyard for Evening Prayer during July and August. For details or to make a reservation, you can contact him directly at tim@stjamesepiscopal.com. Christoph Herpel, our Children’s, Youth, and Family Minister, has begun to have small outdoor youth gatherings as well. Brad Gee has met with sections of the choir in the courtyard (no singing, unfortunately) and will continue to do so from time to time. All of these meetings require participants to wear masks, observe physical distancing, and sanitize their hands before and after the event. There may be additional requirements, which will be communicated by the person scheduling the meeting. It’s wonderful to be able to have some in-person gatherings outdoors, and we hope to be announcing more opportunities as time goes on.

Space Changes and Access to St. James: Changing Locks, Expiring Codes

Our lease with Head Start went into effect June 1. Head Start is leasing some of the space the SFLF once used and will begin to welcome students when the governor indicates that it is safe for public schools to re-open.

As part of this transition, we are rekeying our outdoor locks and changing our electronic access to the building. Starting July 13, the codes most of us have been using to access the back entrance and the hallway next to the reception area will expire. These changes will have the immediate effect of keeping St. James more secure. They may also pose a temporary inconvenience to those of us who are used to having access to the building when St. James is closed.

Since we are not having any indoor meetings right now, I am hoping it won’t be too much of an inconvenience. In fact, this is a great time to redo our methods of access. If you are involved in a ministry that requires you to have access, as a few of us are, you will still have access. If you need to have access on a one-time basis, let Teri Smith know, and she will work with you. If you are at church and need to get in, she has an emergency number you can use if you call her at church (see above).

Code access will resume once we can have in-person meetings. We are looking forward to that day, and the day we can resume our in-person worship in church, just as much as you are. That day will come. In the meantime, we will be doing everything we can to stay in touch and to find creative and safe ways for us to gather.

Thank you, once again, for your prayers for St. James, and for ALL your support!

Keep the faith,

Carol+