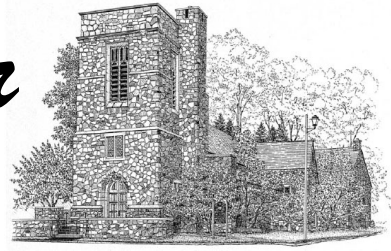


St. James Newsletter

January 2012



From the Rector:

Radical Hospitality. This expression captures the heart of Christian mission. God calls us to reach out in ways beyond the ordinary, bringing people together to serve the neighbor and the stranger in surprising and life-giving ways. Through radical hospitality, we join in God's mission of reconciliation, restoration and new life.

In this world where barriers of age, ethnicity, economic class and other markers of difference so often divide us, the church brings diverse people together, not only by serving them, but by working with them. At our best, we do this on Sunday morning, with our open doors and our Book of *Common Prayer*.

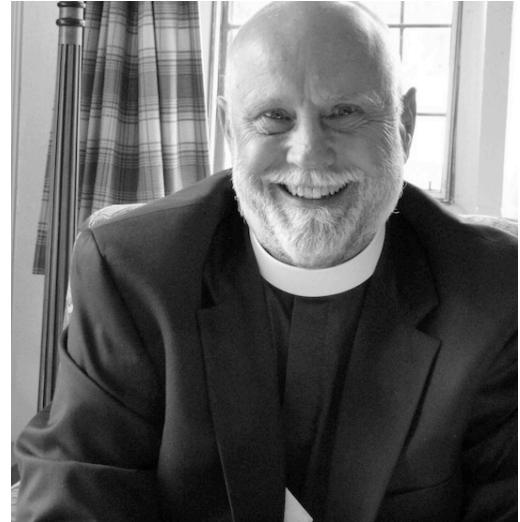
During the last few weeks, the people at St. James have begun working with new partners in service, living out radical hospitality. Jean de Dieu Tshileu introduced us to his project of melding soccer, education and farming to create a self-sustaining village development project in his village of Bakwa-Tshileu in the south central region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Outreach Committee recommended, and the Vestry approved, a gift of \$5000 toward this project, funds raised at the St. James Fair. This contribution begins a relationship with Jean's project, also supported by a broad-based group of Woodstock neighbors, with whom we at St. James will be serving to support the work in Congo.

Betsey Caldwell's advocacy with Operation Warm, Inc. brought 750 winter coats to needy Vermont children. St. James has worked with public schools throughout the area to hand out the coats. We will continue these efforts through diocesan networks as well. Again, through our Outreach funds, we are making personal connections, which may lead us in other directions of service.

Closest to home, Alison Clarkson brought the parish into conversation with the Rainbow Playschool, whose Little Theater facilities were flooded out by Tropical Storm Irene. In December, the Vestry approved the use of our Parish Hall basement for the daycare facility on a temporary basis. We will be hosting the Playschool's children, representing 30 area families, with 18 toddlers present at any one time. Rainbow staff, board members and friends have been working overtime to turn our basement into a clean, safe and inviting space for children.

This is Radical Hospitality in action, working with people we did not expect to work with, serving people we did not expect to serve. God's surprising spirit at work in the world, through the people and places of St. James.

~ *The Rev. Norman MacLeod*



Brains and God

Is God smart? Smarter than any one of us? Does God think things over, come to a decision, then, well, then what? Has God got any brains at all? If God is some kind of a "divine mind" how does that mind function? Is God a big ball of energy physicists like to explore and poke around in? Is God "God" at all? Is God some useful human construct and coping mechanism? Makes you tired to think about all of it.

God is best known through experience. When it comes to knowing God, the receptor for experience is located in your body, not your head. Your head can analyze the experience, play with it, poke around with it, but it can't be the initial receptor of the God experience. It is your nervous system, particularly its receptors in your heart area and spine that responds to the presence and reality of God. Your head is handmaid to your heart; heart first, head next, along with other receptors.

The people who seem smartest about God are those who operate on this understanding. To try to make your head/brains go first in knowing God is to use a secondary receptor, one that can contribute to the whole but isn't the first line of understanding.

A parallel: your mouth is the principal receptor for food that nourishes your body. You can stuff food in your ear or your eyes and nose, but why when you have such a satisfactory first line receptor? Your eyes, ears and nose can contribute to your understanding and enjoyment of food, but they are not the primary receptors of this nourishment. So again, your nervous system receptors in your upper torso and your spine are your primary spiritual receptors to which your mind, eyes, nose, ears, fingers, etc. can contribute, but they do not come first.

Back to brains and God: Is God smart? Answer: Sure. God seems to have good survival skills that aren't dependent on really anything, and that is a measure of smarts that the planet at least seems to admire. Believe in God, don't believe, have a relationship, ignore - God seems to motor along pretty evenly through any of the above.

What is important, though are brains and Us. Are we smart when it comes to our

relationship with God? Are we sensible about letting our heart and soul experience God and then let our brain work with that if it wishes to? Are we up for knowing God the way God is best known, heart open and listening for God's presence? Or are we more comfortable stuffing food in our ear, God thoughts in our brain, and leaving our primary receptors unused?

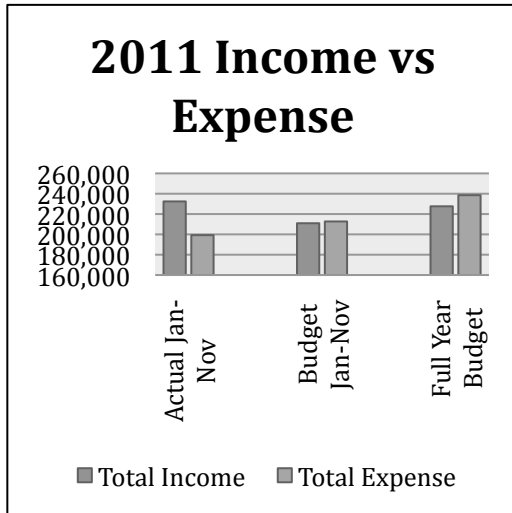
We want to use the primary receptors. We may have been poorly taught about spiritual health and awareness of God, but we can unlearn all that in a jiffy; because our receptors are ready and waiting to be used; and God is right there to say Hi and fill our hearts with gladness.
~ Jane Wolfe

Green Bags for The Food Shelf

St. James has shown fantastic support for the Woodstock Community Food Shelf in 2011 by filling "Green Bags." The project will begin again on the last Sunday of January when we hope many of you will again take a green shopping bag to fill. The bags should be returned to the church on February 12, 2012.
-Karen Vitols



Treasurer's Report



The above chart is as of November 30, 2011.

The positive year-to-date outlook is due mainly to the unanticipated bequests we received earlier this year. Thanks to a mild fall the heating oil in the tank lasted until December, which is one of the reasons our expenses through November are lower than expected.

Many thanks to all of you who have completed your 2011 pledges. If you have not sent in a 2012 pledge yet, it is still most welcome at any time.

~ Karen Vitols

Senior Warden's Report

Rectory Purchased!

In many of the Advent services, the theme of "waiting" was paramount. I am pleased to announce that one thing St. James has been waiting for has come to pass: we closed on the Rectory purchase on December 13th! Thanks are due to George Calver and Bob O'Donnell for all their help in coordinating inspections, shepherding our paperwork amongst the diocese, Woodstock, and the state. I also want to again express the debt of gratitude we owe the Morel family - without their generous intervention we would never had the time to realize our dreams nor the chance to achieve them.

In other news, the Vestry had our first retreat with our new Rector. We spent a morning getting to know Norman, helping him getting to know us, and starting the work of St. James' new beginning. I believe I speak for the entire Vestry when I say we

are excited to move into this new chapter of the life of St. James. Another wait has ended!

And, as I write this, my wait continues. I wait for my father-in-law to arrive for the holidays, I wait for the kids to go on Winter Break, I wait for Christmas. Yet, as you read this, your wait has ended. I sincerely hope all of you had wonderful celebrations amidst all the blessings of the season. That your holidays were joyous and bright, and your memories fond. We used to print the beginning of poet W. H. Auden's 'Christmas Oratio' in our bulletins - as we move into 2012, I wanted to share it with you again:

"Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree,

Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes --

Some have got broken -- and carrying them up to the attic.

The holly and the mistletoe must be taken down and burnt,

And the children got ready for school. There are enough

Left-overs to do, warmed-up, for the rest of the week --

Not that we have much appetite, having drunk such a lot,

Stayed up so late, attempted -- quite unsuccessfully --

To love all of our relatives, and in general

Grossly overestimated our powers."

Respectfully,

Carl Groppe

A Letter of thanks...

We recently received a nice note from the Department of Children and Families;

"Just a note to say thank you for your generosity in supplying us with Christmas stockings for our foster children. We had a hugely successful party for all the kids in our custody and everyone went home with a stocking. We could not do this without our PINS partners.

~ The Staff at DCF

Farewell 2011, Welcome 2012

As the old year walks out the door, we can give it a pat on the back and say “Job well done!” At least as far as St. James is concerned, 2011 was a year of accomplishment. Under the persistent and skillful leadership of Steve Swayne, and with timely help from Joseph Morel, our Ministry Discernment Committee selected new rector candidates for us. Then with the guidance of our hopes, prayers, and maybe even the Holy Spirit, the Vestry called Norman MacLeod to be our new rector. Carl Groppe and Bob O’Donnell negotiated financial, legal, and Diocesan by-ways leading to the purchase of our new Rectory next door. In 2011 we finally made our way out of that wilderness called “transition.” We didn’t wander there for 40 years, but we were certainly there a long time! Thank you, Steve, Joseph, Carl, Bob, and everyone else who pitched in and kept St. James moving forward through all the challenges.

Welcome 2012! We have lots of plans for you!

We’ve hired a Sunday School teacher and two nursery helpers to welcome the children we hope young families will bring to our church. A connection to the far land of the Congo has come to us with Jean de Dieu Tshileu, who shows us how to help educate his home village. Our commitment to repairing our beautiful buildings for the shelter and inspiration of God’s work in the world can now benefit from more of our time and attention. In the words of our interim prayer, in this New Year let us continue being imaginative about our future and daring in our faith.

~ *Candace Vandouris*

Gifts from Parishioners for Flood Victims

A big “Thank you!” and “Hugs to all” were the response we received when we delivered household goods, toys, books and much more to our adopted family in early October.

Times have been tough for this family since they lost everything they owned in the Flood. But with the help of loving people like those at

St James they are starting to put their house and life back into order.

Many times the family has repeated how much they appreciated all we did for them. They are pretty much set now.

It amazes me how much our little church steps up and does what has to be done when someone is in need. Not only the Vermont way, but also the Christian way.

Thanks so much for all you did!

~ *Bev Kinne for S.T.*

St. James Welcomes New Sunday School Director Child Care Now Available During Sunday Services

Beginning Sunday, January 8, the parish will offer nursery care to children from infancy up to ages of four or five. Sunday School is geared for ages four and up. This will be available as of 9:30 a.m. until about 11:30 each Sunday. Two nursery helpers, Chrystina Janawicz and Emma McLiverty, will be present, under the supervision of the new Sunday School Director, Kim Edgerly. If you are aware of families interested in attending St. James, but concerned about bringing their young ones, please let them know about this new option!

Of course, young children are always invited to be in church throughout the service

Rainbow Playschool Now in Residence at St. James

Starting January 2, 2012 the halls of St. James will be filled with the sounds of happy children. Rainbow Playschool, displaced from the lower level of the Little Theater due to the flooding of Tropical Storm Irene, has now found a new, temporary home in the large space below the Parish Hall.

After several inspections by local and state authorities, painting and some basic carpentry repairs to the space, Rainbow has received the green light to bring the children to St. James. The Playschool serves 30 families in the area, with as many as 18 children present at one time. Their hours will be from about 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Rainbow Director Dawn Gieseke, her husband Eric, and members of the Rainbow board worked hard between Christmas and New Year's Day to clean, paint, box in hot pipes and accomplish the many tasks needed to welcome

little ones who will be using our church for perhaps the next six months, while the daycare program seeks a permanent location.

The Vestry agreed at a Dec. 11 meeting, unanimously and with enthusiasm, to offer the use of St. James space for this vital non-profit community program.

St James Newsletter

January 2012

(802) 457-1727

email: office@stjameswoodstock.org

www.stjameswoodstock.org

St. James Episcopal Church

On the Green

Woodstock, VT 05091