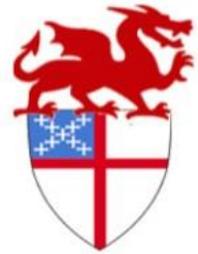


THE SHIELD

Epiphany 2022



THE MINISTER'S MESSAGE

This is my second Season of the Epiphany with you at St George's. Last year was a time of lockdown when we were unable to open our doors to public worship. We began then (and have continued) to provide live and recorded worship on Facebook, and many of you have kept up faithfully with those services.

As we enter a new year according to the secular calendar (our Christian year began on the First Sunday of Advent, November 28, 2021), I am filled with hope for peace among us, health for all, and confidence in God's love to sustain us through any and all challenges.



This year, we were unable to meet for our service on January 9th, the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus. Had we met then, I would have led you in the annual *Renewal of Baptismal Promises*, and I would have gone among you with water so you could remind yourselves of your own baptism and the fact that it makes us all children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Jesus.

Since I couldn't do it this month (we will do it on Easter Sunday), I will use this space to lead us all through a virtual recommitment to these promises.

Through the Paschal mystery, dear friends, we are buried with Christ by Baptism into his death, and raised with him to newness of life. I call upon you, therefore, now that our Christmas observance is ended, to renew the solemn promises and vows of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and all his works, and promised to serve God faithfully in his holy Catholic Church.

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ? I do.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Now that you have affirmed what you believe, I ask you to state how you intend to live your faith. The response to each question is **“I will, with God’s help.”**

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

May our Lord give you strength and commitment to be faithful to these promises in every moment of your life, and may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with the grace to endure all temptations and challenges, so you may be a beacon of light to all those around you. Amen.



EPIPHANY means “revelation” or “uncovering what was hidden.” For me, it is a time of reflection on the many things I don’t understand. One of them is the growing animosity (I might call it “hatred”) among my fellow citizens. A nation whose money proclaims “*E pluribus unum*” (which means *One out of many* or *Many becoming one*) seems to be forgetting its sacred commitment, not to mention the 246 years of dedicated effort to forge a united republic in a world where true democracy is often a minority opinion.

As I considered these five baptismal promises, it became clear to me that the last two of them would serve well as a creed or set of promises for all citizens of our country.

Looking at each person as if he or she is created in the image of God (however we understand or worship the Supreme Being) would certainly change our behavior and words toward them.

Loving our neighbors, especially those with whom we disagree, or who are different from us, would bring us closer to being the kind of children God desires us to be.

Working in all the aspects of our lives to encourage and enable liberty and justice for all, peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of everyone, would help to rule out the kinds of violence, hatred, and rejection that are so harmful to our society today.

If only every citizen made these commitments and kept them, instead of just those of us who renew our promises each year!

I pray this holy season of revealing and uncovering what is hidden will fill you with joy at the bounty and power of God to overcome evil, and you will truly be beacons of light, life, and love in the world around you. May God give you the strength and resolve to do this.

May God bless and keep us all!

Father Tom +

PRAYER AS I PUT ON MY MASK

Creator God, as I prepare to go into the world,
help me to see the **sacrament** in the wearing of this cloth –
let it be *an outward sign of an inward grace* –
a tangible and visible way
of living love for my neighbors as I love myself.

Christ Redeemer, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart
so people can see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes.
Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words,
but with my actions.

Sanctifying Spirit, As the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully –
and full of care – to all those I meet.

May this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner,
and each breath it holds be filled with your love.

In your Name and in your love, I pray. Amen

– Rev. Dr. Richard Bott, Moderator of the United Church of Canada



A MEDITATION ON THE BAPTISM OF JESUS ✕ January 9, 2022

“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” [Luke 3:22]

The gospels disagree on who heard these words of God. In the Gospel lesson for the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, Luke says only “a voice came from heaven.” He doesn’t tell us who heard God’s voice – only Jesus? or also John? or everybody standing around there?

The baptism of Jesus is one of the few events in his life that appears in all four gospels, although not always in the same words, or with the same details.

But regardless of who heard the words, or exactly what they were, the important thing is that we hear them today, and they fill us with conflicting emotions. On the one hand, they are a marvelous affirmation of our belief that Jesus is really the Son of God, and that everything he did and said is pleasing to God, and is what God sent him to do.

I believe all four gospels wanted to get this message across. Remember that they were not live television reports from the scene of the action. In fact, they were most often oral histories, repeated many times over the years before they were written down for us. And yet, they were such important words that their meaning and impact comes through clearly to us.

But when Jesus heard them, his immediate reaction was uncertainty. He just didn’t know what to do about them, so he headed out into the wilderness to pray and meditate about them for “forty days” (meaning simply “a long time”).

We do know that, while he was there, he wrestled with what God’s words meant.

*Was he to live with his every need met miraculously, so that all he had to do
was ask for anything and it would be provided?*

Was he a powerful ruler to whom all the nations of the world would have to bow down?

Was he a superpower who could jump off tall buildings without getting hurt?

The answer to all these questions is “no.” Jesus was fully human – a man just like you and me, and he had to struggle like us to understand what God expected of him. And his struggle, as we’ve heard, wasn’t easy – it was like fighting a battle with all the conflicting thoughts and temptations inside his mind.

I think the one thing Jesus could count on – something he could come back to, whenever he had doubts or was unsure what to do – was the simple, affirming statement from God: “you are my beloved child, and I am pleased with you.”

Jesus carried God’s message through all that happened to him:

When his family doubted his sanity and wanted him to just come home and be a carpenter.

When his synagogue was outraged at his preaching and wanted to push him off a cliff.

When many of his followers found his teachings too difficult and just walked away from him.

And I guess, I *hope*, he remembered God’s words when he hung on the cross, dying for you and me: “You are my child. I love you. I am pleased with what you are doing.”

But you know something? Those words from God are not just for Jesus.

No, they have come down to us over nearly two thousand years, and they are immortalized in all four gospels, because they are for us – they are spoken by God to you and me:

“You are my child. I love you. I am pleased with you.”

Oh, if only we would listen! If only we would be quiet, stop all we are doing, and let God’s words ring in our hearts.

We live in a world today where it is very hard to believe that anything is going right. We are just not sure what we are supposed to do, and the fear of doing the wrong thing often paralyzes us into inaction.

We might hear God speak these words in our hearts and think to ourselves: “I am such a sinner. I make a mess of everything. I do the things I shouldn’t do, and I don’t do the things I should do. There’s no way God could possibly be pleased with me.”

Add to that the dozens of voices, each out-shouting the other, who try to tell us what to think, what to believe, what to do – about every possible question facing humanity.

In light of all this, how could we possibly see ourselves as God’s beloved children who are pleasing God?

What we really need today is the ability to shut out those clamoring negative voices, to get away from the conflict and turmoil around us, to find a way to be quiet within ourselves and just listen to God saying the same thing to us that Jesus heard.

Listen for those words. Trust them. Believe them. Accept them. Live them.

You are God’s child. God does love you. And God is truly pleased with you. Amen.

FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN – Jim Rice

Thanks to everyone who took part in decorating St. George's for the Christmas Season! We now turn our attention to some necessary and costly maintenance.

As many of you have pointed out, over the past year some vinyl siding has blown off from the [embattlement](#) area (square tower above the center of the nave). Additional siding has blown off in heavy winds. Fortunately we don't see any structural damage yet, because the new siding was installed over the old after the fire in the 1980s. Now, it has become brittle from years of age and weather. The Vestry approved the plan to re-cover all four sides of the embattlements, rather than just replace or patch the parts that have been damaged.



I have been in touch with several contractors, but the height of the work site and the need for scaffolding and climbing seems to be an obstacle. We received one estimate of "about \$2,500" - just to put back the pieces that blew off - but there was no firm commitment, and now the weather prevents us from doing anything for the next few months. This is necessary maintenance to replace 30 year-old siding, and we need to complete it this year. It will be expensive, but doing this is key to our stewardship of the magnificent buildings that have been left in our care.

Another issue we have been dealing with is the boilers (the church is heated with hot water radiators). We replaced three old boilers about 11 years ago with two new energy-efficient units, and they had been doing well. However, we discovered a problem where swirling wind sometimes caused the exhaust from one boiler to enter the intake of the other one, causing damage to the interior of that boiler. We raised the exhaust pipes several feet to eliminate the problem, but the damage was done. We replaced many parts to try and get the damaged unit working again but it's not reliable and it keeps failing. I can't see any reason to keep throwing money at this failing unit, so I asked the contractor to give us a bid on a new one. We received an estimate to replace the damaged unit for \$7,000, which was accepted by the Vestry. The replacement work should be under way soon.



Our Saturday work-days (9AM until Noon) will resume on March 19, weather permitting. We don't have a sexton, so all major clean-up and maintenance is done by volunteers. We owe them all a debt of thanks, and I encourage everyone to join in as you are able.

THE WOMEN OF SAINT GEORGE'S

The Women of St George's donated 25 toiletry bags to the HRDC's women and families transitional housing facility in Cumberland. The Women will not meet during the winter months. A decision will be made at the first meeting of the year regarding what we will collect and donate to in the coming year. For any questions regarding the meetings or gathering times, see Karen Bonner, President.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

January 2	Second Sunday After Christmas
January 6	The Epiphany
January 9	First Sunday After the Epiphany – The Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ <i>This year, we will observe the “full” season of Epiphany – all eight Sundays.</i>
February 27	Last Sunday After the Epiphany – The Transfiguration of Christ <i>According to our traditional calendar, Septuagesima Sunday is February 13, Sexagesima is February 20, and Quinquagesima is February 27. (“Quadragesima”- meaning “Forty Days” - is the Latin name for Lent.)</i>
March 2	Ash Wednesday – Holy Eucharist with the Imposition of Ashes in the church at 7 PM. <i>Weather permitting, Father Tom will distribute “ashes to go” at the Rectory back door from 5:00 to 6:30 PM.</i>
April 10	Palm Sunday – service at 9:30 AM
April 14	Maundy Thursday – service in the parish all at 7 PM.
April 15	Good Friday – service in the church at 7 PM
April 17	Easter Sunday – service at 9:30 AM



Can you find the names of sixteen (16) books of the Bible hidden in the paragraph below?

Hint: Some of the books have 1st, 2nd, etc. in their complete names – just ignore the numbers.

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible (merely by fluke). It kept some people looking so hard for the facts, but for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalized, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there really are 16 names of books of the Bible in this story!

For those who don't find them all, the answers are on page 9.

INFORMATION FROM OUR PARISH NURSE



First of all – **get your COVID vaccination and booster** – for yourself, for your family, friends & neighbors, and for everyone around you.

As the parish nurse, it seems like I continually ask people to wear a mask, wash their hands or social distance. I know we get tired of hearing these things, but until COVID 19 is under control all of these things are necessary.

Please do not neglect to continue to see your healthcare providers on a regular basis, keep updated on your medications, and things like your flu shots.

Unfortunately, the community of Mount Savage has lost a number of friends to COVID. I know we would all like to resume our old lives with family and friends gathering together – but this doesn't seem possible at this time.

Please remember – if you need assistance getting to doctors' appointments or for tests please call the church office and leave a message. Someone will get back with you to help..



GUEST MEDITATION + WHAT IS RELIGION?

Imagine that we all live in *The Cathedral of the World*. Light pours in through stained-glass windows. Every religious “tribe” stands at its own window and experiences the light in its own way, according to its own beliefs and perspective.

The [religious relativists](#) say, “It doesn't matter at which window I stand; the light is the same.”

[Religious seekers](#) say, “I don't like the light at my window; I am going to move to another window.”

[Fundamentalists](#) say, “The light only shines through my window.”

And the [religious fanatics](#) go around with hammers, smashing everyone else's window!

[St Augustine](#) used the Latin word *religio* (to bind together) to describe the bond between God and people.

Healthy religion unites people; toxic religion corrupts and uses God to create separation and hurt in the world. Religion is often “weaponized” – used to wage war, enslave and terrorize people, exploit the poor and vulnerable, even to compel people to abandon their own deeply-held and ancient beliefs and their unique relationship with God.

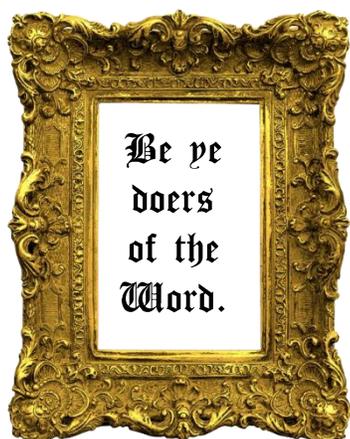
Religion should reconnect human beings – with creation, with each other, with God, and with Love ([God IS love](#)). It should reunite us and re-introduce us to the ground of our being, the source of our existence. Some of what we attribute to God and God's “will” is actually about us, about what we want, about preserving and sanctifying our world-view. In other words, *we create God in our own image*.

Any time we envision God as punitive, angry, or vengeful, we are calling on aspects of ourselves which make us feel powerful and protected, chosen, above others, and giving ourselves the right to be punitive, angry, or vengeful *in God's name*.

When we read passages in the Bible and other spiritual sources where God is described in this way, we need to firmly anchor those words in the lives and times of the people who wrote them and in the context of their fears, needs, desires, and prejudices. Only when we do that can we sift through and find Love at the heart of all God says and does.

Among “religious” people today, especially in our fractious country, religion often means focusing on “what to do” and “how to do it,” and insisting there is only one “right” way. This includes how we read and understand the Bible, how we welcome, or do not welcome, those who are different from us, and how we speak, pray, and interact as a community.

Sadly, many “communities” these days are better called “tribes” – tightly closed groups where everyone thinks and speaks the same way, and which are quick to discipline or even reject anyone or anything that challenges the standards and beliefs of the tribe. They devote a lot of energy to determining who is “in” and who is “out,” while proclaiming their way is the only way and demanding others follow it.



A more Christ-like expression of “religion” is *putting faith into action* by speaking and doing, without being limited by “that’s how we do it/have always done it.” It requires intentionally breaking out of the boundaries and limits we consciously or unconsciously place on our interactions, our relations with others.

It means being open to all, seeing the face of God in everyone, hearing the voice of God even when it is saying something with which we have long disagreed, and feeling the love God has for the other person (and learning to love every person as God does).

Within our own lifetimes, we have seen an increase in disagreement, especially over issues of human sexuality and behavior.

So, what is “true” religion?

The Letter of James 1:26-27 says,

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Micah 6:8 sums it up well:

He has told you, O Man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

And John 13:35 nails it:

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

As we begin a new year – one that promises to be full of more angry accusations, arguments, and name-calling – and perhaps even open violence – let us seek to practice *true religion*, namely to live out our love for God and neighbor, and to place no emphasis on the things that divide us.

POEM FOR THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST (Last Sunday After the Epiphany)

*When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And Peter, James, and John kept silent
and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. – Luke 9:36*

Why not say it was the altitude, the hot sun, the long hike up the winding trail,
the lack of food and drink, the thin air, wishful thinking?

Why not say we were dreaming, seeing things,
hearing phantom voices in the warm breeze,
manufacturing convenient meanings,
telling wild tales like half-drunk sailors of what was – or wasn't – there?

Why not just say we didn't see
whatever in the world it was we thought we saw? That would be easier.

It was late. We were young. It caught us by surprise, and left us wondering:
without – then or now – even a clue
how to put into words what it was we wanted to be true.

Poem by Bruce Robinson, published in *Covenant* – February 12, 2015

FOOD PANTRY NEWS

The Mount Savage Food Pantry supplies people in the area with gift cards for four holidays during the year – Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. In 2021, 56 Thanksgiving gift cards, and 65 Christmas gift cards were given out. Please remember to let Karen Bonner or Sharon Logsdon know if you are aware of anyone in need of food.

SOUPER SUPER BOWL SUNDAY



During January, St George's will collect *family-sized* containers of vegetables, soups, pastas, beans, rice, etc. to be donated to the [Union Rescue Mission of Western Maryland](#), which offers three hot meals a day, plus shelters for women, men, families, and handicapped persons. Please place your donations in the basket in the church before February 7th.

BIBLE BOOKS ANSWER:

I once made a re**MARK** about the hidden books of the Bible (merely by **LUKE**). It kept some people loo**KING** So hard for the **fACTS**, but for others it was a **REVELATION**. Some were in a **JAM**, **ES**pecially since the name of the books were not capitalized, but the **tRUTH** finally struck home to **NUMBERS** of readers. To others it was a real **JOB**. We want it to be **A MOST** fascinating few moments for you. **YES, THERE** will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require **JUDGES** to help them. I will quickly admi**T IT US**ually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud **LAMENTATIONS** when it is found. One lady says **sHE BREWS** a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can com**PETE**. Relax and enjoy the challenge, for there really are 16 names of books of the Bible in this story!

SAINT GEORGE'S PRAYER LIST

Becky Watkins
Bonnie Pryor
Bud Bridges
Carolyn Monahan
Charles Glass
Darrell & Mary Sue Glass
Dawn Downey
Dennis Carder
Diana Michael
Don Witteg
Ellen Jenkins Davis
Emily Carnell
Evelyn Hausrath
Frank Morgan
Grace Lepley
Grayson Turano
Henry Snyder
Janet Reynard
Janie Taccino
Jeff Hall
Jerome Cassidy
John Bridges
John Watts, Sr
Judy Hudson
Lester Beal
Lynne Campisi
Mario Campisi
Mary Louise McKenzie
Mina Uhl
Ollie Rephann
Porter Beard
Robert Flynn
Rusty Bridges
Ruth Beal
Sandra Swanger
Shawn Dom
Shirley Bridges



Prayer for the Sick

O God of heavenly powers, by the might of your command you drive away from our bodies all sickness and all infirmity: Be present in your goodness with your servants for whom we pray, that their weakness may be banished and their strength restored; and that, their health being renewed, they may bless your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Those Who Care for the Sick

Sanctify, O Lord, those whom you have called to the study and practice of the arts of healing, and to the prevention of disease and pain. Strengthen them by your life-giving Spirit, that by their ministries the health of the community may be promoted and your creation glorified; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PLEASE NOTE: If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email, rather than postal mail, please call or email the office and help us save money on printing and postage.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

January

Birthdays

Peggy Hess
Sarah Johnson
McKenzie Glass
Kay Wade
Kenneth Preston, Jr.
Holly Warne
Carol Harr
Kristi Downey
Bob Kreiger
Joseph Neder
Macy (Beal) Eichhammer
Carla Kaufman
Alice Stevens
Lauren Elizabeth Kreiger-Soles
Lydia Martin
Steven Natolly
Rick Neder
Krista Imes Sweitzer
Lauren Krieger
Rebecca Stevenson
Alice Neder
Denis Brion
Taylor Logue
David Festerman

Anniversaries

Dee & Elliott Stallings
Sarah & Rob Johnson
Harold & Virginia Bishop
Jim & Lydia Martin

February

Birthdays

Judy Hudson
Abigail Hall
Marie Ellis
Rebecca Short
Beth Durst
J.D. Durst
Becky Weatherholt
Taylor Downey
Drake Downey
Virginia Bishop
Ethan Tummy
Kenneth Preston
Hope Stevens
Pam Neder
Mary Ann Yutzy
Clarence Finzel
Bev O'Donnell

Anniversaries

(None this month)

You may purchase the 2022 Parish Calendar of Birthdays, Anniversaries, and Memorials for \$1.50 from the Women of St George's. Please call the office if you would like a calendar mailed to you.

God's Blessings!

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Mount Savage, Maryland 21545



Contact Information

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Web Page
www.stgeorgesmtsavage.org

Mailing Address
PO Box 655
Mt Savage, MD 21545

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
www.episcopalmaryland.org
1-800-443-1399

The Anglican Communion

The Most Rev. and Right Honourable
Justin T. Welby, *105th Archbishop of Canterbury*

The Episcopal Church

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, *27th Presiding Bishop*

The Diocese of Maryland

The Right Rev. Eugene T. Sutton, *14th Bishop of Maryland*
The Right Rev. Robert W. Ihloff,
Assisting Bishop, 13th Bishop of Maryland

Parish Officers, Staff & Volunteers

Dee Stallings	Senior Warden, Organist, Vestryperson, Treasurer of the Women of St George's
Jim Rice	Junior Warden, Worship Leader, Acolyte Leader, Vestryperson
Ken Preston	Treasurer
Lynda Folk	Assistant Treasurer
Peggy Hess	Registrar, Eucharistic Visitor, Secretary of the Women of St George's
Karen Bonner	Altar Guild Chairperson, President of the Women of St George's, Vestryperson
Sharon Logsdon	Parish Nurse, Eucharistic Visitor, Parish Secretary, Vestryperson
Jeff Hall	Vestryperson
Karen Preston	Vestryperson, Parish Secretary