

St. John's Episcopal Church



St. John's Eagle

*"Have you not known, have you not heard
those who wait for the Lord shall mount
up with wings like eagles."*

Isaiah 40:28,31

Hardened Hearts

"O Almighty God, who pourest out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections, we may worship thee in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (BCP, page 833)

Beginning in the 7th chapter of Exodus, we read about God working through a series of plagues to free the people of Israel from the oppressive rule of Pharaoh in Egypt. We also read about Pharaoh's refusal to give in and, repeatedly, we read about the hardening of his heart. Sometimes in the narrative, we read that it is specifically God who hardens the heart of Pharaoh but, at other times, it seems that Pharaoh's heart is hardened by his own decision.

We all know about being hard-hearted. We watch it in others. We see it in ourselves. Sometimes our hearts are hardened due to the difficulties in life. In those times, it feels like something outside ourselves has imposed a hardness on us. It's like we have no control over the events and they hurt us so much or threaten us so much that we close ourselves off from all that is good and hopeful.

At other times, it seems like people choose to be hard-hearted, closed-minded, and mean-spirited. They, and we, just refuse to see any good going on in life and only focus on what is wrong. Some people seem to work pretty darn hard to be cold and distant. Maybe they fell into some hard times long ago and now just keep on making poor choices which affect them and the people around them.

So much of life is trial and error. One of the great benefits of a daily reflection and meditation practice is that we get to review our lives on an ongoing basis. We can look back on events and consider how our actions played into hardship or breakthroughs. We can affirm our healthy behaviors and learn from our unhealthy behaviors. We can give thought to what is beyond our control and what is within our control.

When life has beaten us up, it helps just to acknowledge it honestly. One way we learn to stand up for ourselves and take better care of ourselves is to admit when something or someone has run over us. Our friends might betray us, our loved ones might let us down, a disease or tragedy might take away something we cherish. If we don't acknowledge the hardship we have been

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Rector:
Robert C. Wisnewski, Jr.

Associate Rector:
Jamie Osborne

Priest Associate:
Deonna D. Neal

Staff:
Libby Poole
Financial Administrator

Anne Tippet
Assistant to the Rector

Christian Formation:
Sarah Collier
Director of Children's
Christian Formation

Joleen George
Director of Youth Ministries
and Parish
Communications

Music:
Joel Gregory
Organist and Choirmaster

Maintenance:
Mike Jarrell, Superintendent
Myron Smoke, Judson George

Vestry of St. John's:
Jimmy McLemore Sr. Warden
Radney Ramsey Jr. Warden

Class of 2021
Virginia Banister
Richard Bradford
Kathryn Dailey
Mike Jenkins
Stephanie Norrell
Todd Westhauser

Class of 2022
John Carter
Will Gunter
Katie Keller
Mary-Nelms Parsons
Nick Prillaman
Emily Wise

Class of 2023
Betsy Cannon
Cissy Johnson
Brice Johnston
J.R. Marshall
Scott Mitchell
Dudley Perry
Will Hill Tankersley, JR.

Treasurer
Helen Wells

Clerk of the Vestry
Anne Tippet

THE LESSONS:

Acts 2:14a,22-32

1 Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

Psalm 16

THE COLLECT:

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

through, resentment builds and we develop a hard edge which we might not even be aware of. Just to admit that I have been wounded somehow softens my heart and opens the door to healing.

In our reflection time, we might discover that we keep making poor choices in our interactions. Being hard-hearted is one way of trying to control my environment. If I can close someone or some emotion out of my life, I might feel more protected. Being tough-minded and judgmental puts me in a place of superiority and temporarily that feels pretty good. But the emptiness of thinking poorly of others gnaws away at us and produces a grimness that comes to rule our attitudes.

The great news of the resurrection is that we aren't required to change who we are in order for God to accept us. God accepts us where we are. God loves us and knows our entire hearts and motivations. God sees our present reality and our deep potential. The best thing about the resurrection, though, is that God's coming to us softens us and produces a willingness to change and grow. We don't have to do any work for God to come to us. God's coming to us produces a desire to work tirelessly for the betterment of the world and ourselves.

The one thing we bring to spiritual growth and making the changes in our lives that are to our benefit is awareness. Just admitting what is going on in our hearts is the one little softening that allows God to take us into a brand new way of living. We all have a conscience and finding a little time each day to let our conscience speak to us is really all it takes to move out of hard-heartedness.

It's Easter Week. The Easter season stretches out for 50 days. It's a great time to take stock of where we are, the ways in which we have been wounded, and the ways in which we are being invited to grow into new creatures. Maybe one lesson of the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh is that, as long as we are hanging onto a grim approach to life, things are just going to get worse and worse for us. God doesn't punish us but God does allow the circumstances we choose to play themselves out.

Many things in life are beyond our control. We have no control over how we feel right now or the level of pain we have experienced. But we do have some control over our awareness. Admit your resentments or else they will rule your heart. Sit still and admit the pain in your life. Watch that pain be changed into something else. That's the real power of the resurrection: God's ability to heal and forgive the things we believe are beyond hope.

Yours faithfully,
Robert C. Wisnewski, Jr.

JOY AND CONCERN

Your prayers are requested for the following parishioners: Glenn Price, Christopher Marshall, Sarah Stone, Jim Thomas, Karen Jarrell, Eddie McDowell, Shirley Price, Florence Jordan, Joe McGough, Cynthia Hill, George Wakefield, Frances Condit, Johnny Smith, Delia Cerpa, Marilyn Pickett, Linda Hutchinson, Katie Keller.

We pray for two who have died, Clint Carter and Dave Johannes.

Prayers are also requested for these friends: Rob Ludington, Barry Green-Burns, Gloria Hudgeon, Mary Linger, George West, Randy Rushton, Phil Dotts, Doris Thornton, Tommy Oliver, Ruth Jones, Karen & Angelo Pacheco, Acra Hackney Samuels, Margaret (Marty) Hackney, Ed Sellers, Tom Broadhurst, Ricky Hatfield, Willie Fred Gamble, Monica Powell, Chase Pickett, Al Perkins, Debbie Steindorff, Pam Litel, Aaron Hines, Daphne Oliver, Dawn Damato, Dottie Campbell, Scott Bradford, Mary Steindorff, Jack Mitchell, Margaret Carlson, Paula Hamm Roberts, Kim Barnhart, Lavada Spears Persons, Charles Colvin, Cookie Ziblich, Charlie Smith, Clemmon Barlow, Chuck Holley, Sandy Lynn Stevens, Masha Kloberg, Andy Silverman, William Hardwick Ray, Meredith McLemore, Elizabeth McLemore Baker, Ernie Reddick, Vaughan Dozier, Jennifer Passineau, Raye Gregory, Richard Burk, Bob Capra, Gillian Flory, Eleanor Jones, Cabbot Stough.

Please notify us when you are sick or hospitalized so that we might provide pastoral care.

Monday Noon Bible Study via Zoom

The Monday 12pm Bible study will be offered via the streaming service Zoom. It is a free service and easy to use.

An email will be sent out each week to all that would like to join, with a link to the Zoom meeting.

Here's a quick tutorial on how to join a Zoom meeting

If you would like to participate in the Bible Study, please let Robert know, and he will add you to the weekly email. His email address is robert@stjohnsmontgomery.org

Make Sure You Are In The Know!!!

Services Available on Facebook Live and YouTube
(Recordings on www.stjohnsmontgomery.org)

FB page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsmontgomery/>

Youtube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS2K0pViHs7eS7-lhghifHQ>

Recordings of those Sunday services will be posted on our website.

Please contact Robert with any pastoral needs or concerns: 334-312-0347 or robert@stjohnsmontgomery.org.

THIS WEEK AT ST. JOHN'S SUNDAY

10:30 am Morning
Prayer with Sermon

MONDAY thru FRIDAY

8:10 am Facebook
Live Morning Prayer

9:00 pm Facebook
Live Compline

St. John's Faithfulness

Required Weekly

\$35,556.41

Received Sunday

\$27,399.80

Required to Date

\$533,346.15

Received to Date

\$570,076.38

Keeping Pledges

Current

During the time in which St. John's is closed to group gatherings and public worship, our expenses continue. You can mail your offerings in using your pledge envelopes and adding a stamp. You also can use Bill Pay through your bank or instruct your bank to do an automatic draft. Thank you for your continued faithfulness in your stewardship.

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The Eagle is available on the
internet at
www.stjohnsmontgomery.org

Mite Boxes
Keep putting your
coins and bills in-
to your Mite Boxes,
both children
AND adults!! All
Mite box money
will go
to Common
Ground

Streaming Services

St. John's will offer Morning Prayer Monday-Friday at 8:10am and Compline Monday-Friday at 9:00pm. All of these services will be offering on the St. John's Facebook page via Facebook Live
Sunday Morning Prayer & Evening Compline
Morning Prayer performed in the chancel with a sermon will be offered by both Facebook Live and YouTube, every Sunday at 10:30am.

Compline will be offered at 9pm on Facebook Live

If you would like to watch any of the services via Facebook, it is easier to access if you have a Facebook account.

The Sunday morning service of Morning Prayer is also live streamed via YouTube. You do NOT have to create a YouTube account to view the service.

The link to the St. John's Facebook page is:

<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsmontgomery/>

The link to the St. John's YouTube page is:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS2K0pViHs7eS7-lhghifHQ>