



The Epistle

The Deans Note— March 2018

UPCOMING EVENTS

Maysa and Saeed Farewell	March 4
Time Change	March 11
Maundy Thursday	March 29
Good Friday	March 30
Holy Saturday	March 31
Easter Sunday	April 1
CPR Course	April 14

Recently, we begin our observance of Lent and we are undoubtedly asking each other, “So, what are you giving up for Lent?” This is what got me to thinking about being tested and tempted by things and wondering if giving something up for Lent is a productive thing for most of us. I was thinking about giving up caffeine. But the thing with caffeine in our society is that it is incredibly hard to get away from. And what is the point of giving it up for Lent if we are going to take it up again on Easter Day or just thereafter? What do we get from it but maybe some self-satisfaction?

When I think of Jesus being led by the Spirit (Matthew 4.1-13) out into the Wilderness. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness (*Jeshimmon*). He was led there *as he was* with what little he might have had at his own Baptism. The Wilderness was also known as “the Devastation” It was an area of Israel 35 miles long by 15 miles wide. It stands between the inhabited plateau of Judea and the Dead Sea. The hills were like dust heaps. The limestone looked like it had blistered and flaked. It felt like a glowing crucible. Jesus went here intentionally to be tested concerning his ideas about ministry and how he would serve God. He was to be tested as he considered how to win the hearts of men and women so that he could draw them into the kingdom of God. It was a battle would not end until his last breath on the Cross at Calvary.

Think of it this way: before you begin a project of any kind, it is important to think about and carefully choose the methods that you are going to use to get to your goal. And if I understand things correctly, Jesus is treating salvation like air conditioning. It is great to be in and even better to be shared. But for it to be a blessing, you must choose to walk into it. It is free to all who would come into, but it is not free to provide it.

Jesus, by going to the Wilderness, left behind the world. By not resorting to the uses of divine grace and power, he walked away from the easier path of riches, power and fame to get people to salvation. Instead, he chose the path of suffering, humiliation and death – the harder road by far. Jesus was tested in every way that we are. He was given the opportunity to use power for himself, to call upon his relationship with his Father and to compromise his way into things by offering his worship to someone else. He was tested in every way, as we are, but did not sin.

As I look at the Church today, I often here the grumbles and stumbles of those people who were led on that first Exodus out of slavery in Egypt and into the Wilderness. I wonder who often Moses and Joshua heard the same question, “Are we there yet?” How many times did Moses have to put up with the people asking, “Were there no graves in Egypt, that you had to bring us out here? It is better to go back and serve the Egyptians and die there.” It is easier perhaps to live the thing one has always done. But if there is going to be real change in the life of the Church, if there is going to be real life, true faith and a communal deepening of trust in God and in each other, then we are going to need to take some risks to make things different and better for those who are going to follow behind us into the future, into eternity. We are not here to preserve the past to make us comfortable with ourselves, but rather to serve and make sacrifices for family, friends and neighbours in the present so that those who would walk into God’s kingdom with us, can do so, into Eternity.

We need to move away from counting the number of heads that are in Church on a Sunday morning and start considering how many times between each hour of prayer we manage to impact another person for the kingdom of God because Jesus would. We need to start considering how we can impact the lives of people around us and then bring that to worship so that we can invigorate our worship. We need to go and do then come and pray so that we are learning how to do for God and then learn how to ask for what’s next. Are we a more compassionate people? Are we closer to becoming the worshipping community that we want to be? How are we fulfilling the mission we believe that God has called us to?

It is easy to look around and think that this kind of talk is pointless... there is only hope for the church building to be around for a little while longer and then everything is going to come crashing down. Only thing is that is the kind of idolatry that satan wants – self-idolatry. We can become our own worst idols through thinking only of ourselves. We have been experiencing all that God can give us – do we expect him to stop giving?

The question needs to be asked “Is God done with us yet?” Are you dead enough yet, that God can raise you up to new life? Will you live out your baptism and mission according to what God asked of you? This is the test. How hard did you study?





Sunday Lunches through Lent

The St. James ACW will once again be organizing a simple lunch of soup, bread and cheese during the 6 Sunday's of Lent. These special times of fellowship for the people of St. James are made possible with the participation and support of the entire congregation. Please help by signing up to bring a pot of soup or to help with set up and clean up.

The funds raised from the Lenten Lunches are used to support the many projects and missions that take place at St. James. The cost this year is \$5.00 per person or \$10 per family.

Pre-Authorized Remittance

Pre-authorized remittance, or PAR, allows you to support your church through automatic monthly withdrawal from your bank account. If you have automatic withdrawals from your bank account to pay your bills, taxes, or a mortgage, then you already understand the PAR principle.

Besides being convenient, using PAR for your offering ensures regular monthly givings to help our church's ministry even when you are away. You will be providing our congregation with a dependable flow of contributions, which increases our overall financial stability.

How do you get started?

Prayerfully decide what you will give each year and divide that amount by 12.

Fill out the authorization form and attach a cheque marked "VOID".

Enclose both in an envelope labeled **PAR Information Attn: Treasurer**. Place the envelope on the offering plate on Sunday or leave the envelope at the church office.

The amount will be transferred from your account to our congregation's account on the 20th of each month. You can modify or cancel your donation, change how it is designated, or change your information at any time.

Making an offering is an important part of our worship time together. We will give you PAR cards to place on the offering plate as a symbol of your gift.

If you would like more information, please speak to Kathy or Inez.

Thank you for considering PAR.



CPR Training

On April 14th there will be a CPR Training course in the Lower Hall at 9 a.m. The course is 4.5 hours and will need a min. 3 people and max. 10 people, with a cost of \$70. The sign-up sheet is located at the back of the Church.

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**We are proud that our mission is to
welcome, accept and encourage all
people in the name of Christ**

Thank you

In 2015 our family left our war-torn country of Syria, and our once beautiful city of Damascus. We traveled to Turkey, and then through the kind generosity and humanity of St. James Anglican Cathedral we arrived in Peace River in early June 2016. As refugees we arrived with many tools to help our family succeed in our new county: previous university education from Syria, some experience in our careers, some English, and a strong desire to build a new life and succeed in Canada. During our time here we have had the privilege to meet many great people, make wonderful friends, enjoy the community, obtain employment, and improve our English.

We are grateful to so many, including St. James Anglican Cathedral as our generous sponsor for our first year. They offered us sponsorship and along with Canada Immigration, provided us with a foundation to begin our first steps in a new country and culture. They offered this without any prior knowledge of us, and with no benefit to them, except to make the world a better place through their humanitarian efforts. This first year provided us with many opportunities and challenges.

We loved our city and life in Damascus, and so the move to Peace River was a big change and adjustment for us. We have enjoyed the many opportunities and benefits for our family in Peace River, but miss the energy and busy life a large city has to offer. We are now ready to embrace a bigger centre.

We feel indebted to St. James Anglican Cathedral and the Canadian government for their generosity and faith in sponsoring people whom they had never even met, and we wish to honour their vision by having our family achieve our potential and goals. To fulfill our family's dream and the goals of sponsorship of the Anglican diocese we are now planning our family's next step in Canada; we are relocating to Edmonton to further develop our skills and pursue our dreams. Achieving our family's goals will honour the Anglican Church and Canada's humanitarian efforts, and will continue to help us in our preparation for Canadian citizenship as well.

We also wish to thank the town and people of Peace River who have opened their homes and their hearts to us, and helped us in so many ways. We leave with heavy hearts, but feel this move to Edmonton will be the best for all our family. We have enjoyed our first step in Canada and all our experiences together in Peace River; we feel people here are like our family and we will keep in touch. We are only a short trip away and we look forward to visiting and meeting people from Peace River in Edmonton. Our home is your home.

Many of you have become cherished friends, and will be a part of our "Canadian" family forever. We will never forget your generosity, your kindness and your support throughout these many months. We have faced many challenges, and persevered despite the cold temperatures and snow in winter, and the mosquitoes in the summer!

Thank you again from the bottom of our hearts. We wish you all the best.

Maysa Al Haffar, Saeed, Sami and Wissam Al Hallak



Don't forget to set your clocks 1 hour ahead on March 10, 2018 or you will be late for Church!