



# SAINT JAMES EPISCOPAL

## Lift Up Your Hearts

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21*

Dear Parish Family,

Each Sunday, we have a conversation. It starts “The Lord be with you” and continues with the invitation to “Lift up your hearts.” You all robustly say or sing, “We lift them up to the Lord.” Do you know how precious this moment is? When we all agree, for a beautiful second, that what we need is for our hearts to be lifted to God’s own heart? There’s clarity that emerges from our conversation: we need God, and we need to be close to God.

On any given week, I know there are many of us in worship whose hearts desperately need healing. Whose hearts need deep and abiding comfort. Whose hearts need strength and courage for the week ahead. The church exists to be the place where we bring all our loneliness, struggle, grief, joy, gifts, curiosity, love, addictions, gratitude, and longing. We bring the world’s pain and our concern for our neighbors. We can lift it all up to the Lord.

And when we lift our hearts and our lives to the Lord, we believe something happens. We believe that we are changed into God’s own likeness. Just like the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, we too are transformed. We trust that when we offer our hearts and lives to God, God honors our offering. God does something with us we couldn’t ask or imagine.

When our hearts are near God’s own heart, our lives become like his life. And just a gentle reminder: God’s life is a generous life. A life that is joyfully poured out for the sake of this creation and the sake of humanity. When I think of the people who most remind me of Jesus, they are generous people. Generous with their time and their money and their gifts, with their words, their light, and their hearts. They’ve spent enough time with Jesus that Jesus has rubbed off on them!

In this season of intentional reflection on our giving, I wonder what it would look like to give like God gives? To give with courage and joy? To give out of a sense of deep gratitude that there is a place like the church where we can offer everything in our lives to the One who knows us better than we know ourselves.

I see firsthand what happens when a whole community offers their lives to God and is transformed by God’s own presence: the Gospel is proclaimed, praises are sung, the hungry are fed, the outsider is welcomed, the transitional deacon (almost priest!) is offered a home, the youth gather and find belonging, the little children are welcomed, lights are kept on, deferred maintenance is addressed, staff have healthcare, a Spanish-speaking congregation can flourish, the sick are anointed, the dying are honored, and the grieving can find solace. God really does transform our money into ministry.

Kai and I are praying about how we can give with more courage and joy this year. I invite your own prayers and reflection on giving with courage and joy. Let us lift our hearts to the Lord!

With Gratitude,

The Rev. Kellan Day+