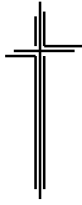


# E~Portion



St. Francis Episcopal Church  
70 Highland Street  
Holden, Massachusetts 01520

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"A prince was once sent into captivity and compelled to live anonymously among rude and illiterate people. Years passed by, and he languished with longing for his royal father, for his native land. One day a secret communication reached him in which his father promised to bring him back to the palace, urging him not to unlearn his princely manner. Great was the joy of the prince, and he was eager to celebrate the day. But no one is able to celebrate alone. So he invited the people to the local tavern and ordered ample food and drinks for all of them. It was a sumptuous feast, and they were rejoicing; the people because of the drinks and the prince in anticipation of his return to the palace. The soul cannot celebrate alone, so the body must be invited to partake in the rejoicing of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a reminder of the two worlds--this world and the world to come; it is an example of both worlds. For the Sabbath is joy, holiness, and rest; joy is part of this world; holiness and rest are something of the world to come."

(Abraham Joshua Heschel, *"The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man."*)



The dominant religious culture of New England is still permeated with Puritan values, some of which are worthy of retaining and others of which should probably be critiqued. Many of us slow down a bit in the summer months and are privileged to take time out for family and friends in places that are holy and sacred for us. But September rolls around and that Puritan work ethic kicks in again. Rest is something we'll do again next summer, we think; now is the time for us to get busy...

Actually I doubt few of us say it that directly. Many people come to Labor Day weekend almost like New Year's Eve, with resolutions that this autumn will be different. But it is like a vortex that sucks us in: back-to-school and the myriad activities that go along with it. We run like crazy all week and Sunday comes and we are exhausted...

I invite you to truly make this September (and beyond, but let's take it one month at a time!) different. And I think it is helpful to let go of Puritan guilt about what cannot or should not be done on the Sabbath and turn to our Jewish forebears who know something about Sabbath-keeping. Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the great twentieth-century rabbis, said that Sabbath is "like a palace in time, with a kingdom for all...it is not a date, but an atmosphere."

Of course, for Jews (and some Christians) the Sabbath is observed as the seventh day--which of course is what Scripture means by the Sabbath, even in the New Testament. But early on the Church changed its day of worship to the first day--the day of Resurrection and over time this first day became the Christian day of rest. Ultimately, however, Heschel is right: Sabbath isn't a date, but an atmosphere. It's a holy pattern, a discipline. For my own part, keeping Sabbath as the first day fits well with my theology of stewardship. As with our talents and treasure, if we wait until we see what is left at the end of each day or week or month, the answer is likely to be, "not so much." But if we put first things first, the rest seems to fall into place.

This is not magic or superstition, not something clergy are "supposed to say." In my experience it is simply true--a wisdom that comes not only from Scripture but common sense. (See Steven Covey's *First Things First* and many others.) It only feels counter-intuitive in a culture that worships the false god of "busy-ness."

Sabbath is meant to be enjoyed; it is a delight according to the Psalmist. It is a practice that we need to cultivate together at St. Francis Church—and hold one another accountable to that vision that brings abundant life. As we approach Labor Day, many of us feel more grounded and centered in our bodies than we are likely to feel a month from now. Why is that? What is it that we know right now that we are in danger of forgetting by Columbus Day?

This doesn't mean that our work doesn't matter; in fact, it suggests just the opposite. But work is made holy when it is punctuated by Sabbath rest. Work falls into its rightful place, as co-creative activity with God, when it is offered as service to God rather than becoming a false god. We are not our work or our achievements or accomplishments. We are, each of us, beloved of God. The Sabbath is a "palace in time"—a space where we remember who we are, and whose we are, so that we can then be sent into the world to do the work God gives us to do.

As we enter this season together, I invite you to be more intentional at home and in worship as a people who keep the Sabbath holy—and create an atmosphere that allows us to embrace that holiness and live more deeply into it, as always, with God's help.

Shalom,

*Rich*



**Sunday, September 13th**

**Choir Rehearsal**

Sunday at 8:00 a.m.

**Commissioning of Lay Ministers**

At all 3 services

**Church School Move-Up Day**

Sunday at 9:45 a.m.

**Youth Program Kick-off**

After the 10:00 a.m. service until 5:00 p.m.

**Confirmation Class**

Informational meeting with parents and potential Confirmands

11:30 a.m. in the Scruton Library

*\*If you are entering 10th grade and did not receive a confirmation registration packet,  
please notify the church office and join us at this informational meeting.*



The Church School program is available on Sunday mornings for children who are in preschool (age 3 by September 1<sup>st</sup>) through grade 5. (The Rite 13 program will be available for students in grades 6 and 7.)

Church school classes will begin with "Move Up" parties on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Children should arrive 15 minutes before the 10:00 a.m. service and join their classes in the following rooms:

Preschool/Kindergarten: Upstairs Faith Room

1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade: Upstairs Hope Room

3<sup>rd</sup> grade: Upstairs Charity Room

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade: St. Clare House

[The St. Clare house is the small blue house at the end of the parking lot.]



Registration begins on August 30<sup>th</sup>. **Forms need to be completed on all students**, even if they are not new to the program, since these forms are given to the teachers.

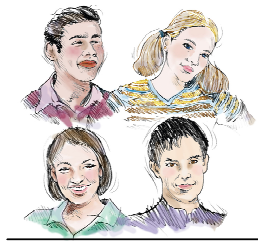
### **Saturday: Children's Ministry of the Word**

On Saturday nights, during the 5:00 p.m. service, we will offer a "Ministry of the Word" program for children. Children will be encouraged to sit together toward the back of the church with the program leader for the beginning of the service. When it is time for the lessons to be read, the children and program leader will go to the library or narthex to share one of the readings. This will allow the children to hear the reading at a slower pace in more child-friendly language. It will also give them the opportunity to ask questions and participate in discussion about the lesson. The children will then return for the sermon and for Communion.

If you have any questions about either of these programs, please contact the Church School Coordinator, Susan Bastardo, at (508) 829-0600 or [SMBslp22@hotmail.com](mailto:SMBslp22@hotmail.com).



### **Youth Program – A Whole New Look**



*Youth Program*

Rite 13: 6th and 7th graders ~ Sunday afternoons from 4:00–6:00 p.m.

Mentors: Robin Carlo, Ann Scannell, Tina Nylén

J2A (Journey to Adulthood): 8th and 9th graders ~ Sundays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Mentors: Kathy Halloran, PJ Mann, Julie Russell

Sr. High Youth Group: 10th, 11th, and 12th graders ~ Sundays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Mentors: Jill Williams, Mike Delorme, Donna Mann

A dessert reception and information session is planned for youth and parents on Wednesday, September 2nd, beginning with Eucharist at 7:00 p.m. Please RSVP to [assoc.lector@gmail.com](mailto:assoc.lector@gmail.com).

Youth program kick-off will be Sunday, September 13th after the 10:00 a.m. service until 5:00 p.m.



### **New Ministry Opportunity, New Music Opportunity**

As part of the St. John's Legacy, four octaves of English Handbells now reside at St. Francis. I have been directing Handbells for over 20 years and have worked with ringers from third grade up. I have been directing at Wachusett High School for 10 ten years.

I would like to invite anyone in third grade and older, with or without musical experience, to come to an informational gathering on Tuesday evening September 15, 2009 from 6:30-7:00 p.m. Come hear about the bells and try them out.



Thanksgiving Eve 2009 will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dedication of the Handbells at St. John's. To have them ring again and be rededicated to serve our Lord at St. Francis around that time would be great. (Some members of our church school will get to see and hear them as part of their class this fall.) Even if you just like to hear them ring, come learn a little more about the handbells. There is enough room for up to 14 people to ring four octaves. If there is enough interest, smaller ensembles could be formed, as well as a young people's choir.

For more information or if you have questions, contact Jeff Heath, [lightsman@charter.net](mailto:lightsman@charter.net) (put "Bell Choir" in the message line), or 508-829-4981 evenings.



### **Discerning our Future Task Force** **Final Report**

The Discerning our Future Task Force (DOFTF) has completed its report to vestry on the work they completed over the past year. Much of the congregation contributed to this effort and we would like to share our findings and recommendations with all of you! There were many strengths identified within the parish that will be essential in helping to improve St. Francis and there were some messages for opportunities that were loud and clear! There are two areas in particular that were strong themes throughout the process, and there are many areas that individuals in the congregation may be able to help out with to help strengthen both the parish and the communities we live in.

Please join us for one of our information sessions where we will share the reports and also continue to hear your voices! These sessions will be held after the Saturday night services on September 19th and 26th or after the 10 a.m. services on September 20th or 27th.

Yours in Christ,  
DOFTF



### **An Epistle of Straw?** **Exploring the Epistle of James**

Thursday Nights in September: 9/3, 9/10, 9/17, 9/24 at 7:00 p.m.  
St. Clare House

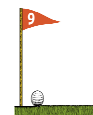
The great reformer, Martin Luther, reportedly described the Epistle of James as "an epistle of straw." He didn't mean it as a compliment! As Luther understood it, the good news of Jesus Christ was about "faith alone"--we are justified by God's grace through faith. In other words, we are not saved by our good works. The Epistle of James wrestles with the relationship between faith and works. He insists that his readers not merely *hear* the word, but become "doers of the word" (James 1:22) and that "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (James 2:17)



During the month of September, the lectionary will have us reading from James each Sunday. This Bible Study will give us an opportunity not only to explore the specific epistle readings that we will hear as the gathered community each weekend in September, but also to step back and ask some larger theological questions. What was the point Luther wanted to make and is that point valid today? If we are truly saved by faith and not by works, then what is the point of doing good? What insights does this little epistle have to offer us as twenty-first century Christians? Or is it just an epistle of straw?



**St. Francis Annual Golf Tournament**  
Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at Kettlebrook Golf Club  
Watch for the sign-up sheet on the table in the narthex for more details on time and costs.



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The El Salvador Mission Committee would like to invite anyone interested in learning more about our mission work in El Salvador and/or participating in the next mission trip to El Salvador. Meetings will be held Saturday, October 3rd after the 5:00 p.m. service and Sunday, October 4th after the 10:00 a.m. service.

A Prayer Shawl Workshop is being held on Saturday, September 19, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in West Boylston. Cost is \$20.00 per person with a registration deadline of September 2nd. Please check out the flyer on the church bulletin board for more detailed information or speak with Beryl Turner.



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**Yes, We are!**  
**Having the Church Mouse Fair this Fall...**  
**Saturday, October 17, 2009**  
**9 a.m. to 12 noon (Please note the new hours!!!!)**

**Attic Treasures ~ Including Books, CD's, DVD's, Puzzles, Toys, Plants and Miscellaneous -**

The Church Mouse Fair is the perfect place to donate those good, clean usable items that you'd love to have find a new home...and it's a great place to get some "real deals." (Please note that we cannot accept tires, cribs, television sets, computers, encyclopedias, textbooks, or subscription magazines because of recycling regulations.)

**Drop Off Times for the above items: October 12 - October 16 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

Volunteers are encouraged to pitch in for any amount of time they can during the week or on the Saturday of the fair. This could be a great service project for high school students who need a few service hours this coming fall!

**Baked Goods** - Yummy! Calling all bakers! This is another best seller at our fair. So, if you're able to donate pies, cakes, cupcakes, cookies, you'll be creating many happy faces. In particular, we would like to encourage items in half sizes or smaller portions for the benefit of senior citizens who would enjoy some homemade goods without the necessity of eating a whole cake on their own. **Drop Off Times for baked goods: October 16 - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

**Crafters** - We've been crafting away during the summer and welcome all donations, ideas, and newcomers who would like to join us on Wednesday mornings from 10 a.m. to 12 noon as we create special items. It's fun and a great way to meet others in our community. If you've been working on items at home or would like to do so or would like to suggest another day/night for gathering, just let us know and we'll see what we can do. Many of our items are works in progress and the more Church Mice, the merrier!

For more information, questions, suggestions, etc., please call Donna Alarie at (508) 847-8574 or email at [Donnachesspals@aol.com](mailto:Donnachesspals@aol.com).





The deadline for the next Little Portion is **Thursday, September 17th.**

Please have all information to the office by this date. You can leave it in the office mailbox or email it to [stfran@verizon.net](mailto:stfran@verizon.net). Please note this issue will include all information for our return to regular worship and ministry schedules.

The Little Portion will be mailed on Thursday, September 24th.



**The 9th Annual Central Massachusetts Arthritis Walk** will be held at Bancroft School in Worcester on Sunday, September 13, 2009.

This year the Arthritis Foundation has selected Emily Toning, a member of our parish, to be their Walk Ambassador: For more information, visit [www.emilypinkteam.org](http://www.emilypinkteam.org)

Please consider making a donation to the Arthritis Foundation to support this effort.



September 10th is the last day for submitting recipes for the church cookbook. We would like to have the books ready and available at the Church Mouse Fair.

Please submit your recipes to Gloriann Switzer at [switzs@charter.net](mailto:switzs@charter.net) or drop them in the basket on the table in the narthex.

