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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – September 2021

A Message from the Reverend Diane Wong, Rector

In the past 15 months, Covid kept us as a church behind closed doors in our homes. Now that we are able to be back in the church and out in the community, resuming our ministries, it would be helpful for us to revisit the values that guide the way we do ministries. These values are based on the many stories in the bible, the way Jesus carries out his ministry, and his teachings. From the stories of the call of Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Mary, to stories of Jesus calling the 12 disciples and sending them out, to Paul's letter written to the churches that he founded, here are some important values for us to keep in mind:

1. Each one of us is called to ministry, and every one of us is worthy to be a part of God's mission. God is with us and in us to guide us, and God provides us with what we need, but this does not mean things will be easy. In our ministry, it is OK to make mistakes. We are not called to be perfect, but to be faithful. The important thing is for us to trust God enough to say, "yes".
2. Whom God calls is not for us to judge. As a parish, we make it possible for our fellow sisters and brothers in faith to share their gifts and participate in the ministry to which they feel called, whether it is helping in Church School, being a greeter on Sundays, taking care of the church building, singing in the choir, serving on the Vestry, feeling called to ordained ministry, or wherever they are in their spiritual journeys. Paul's letters remind the churches to value all gifts and people. In fact, the least would be treated with greater respect. We value everyone and every gift in our parish.
3. We make sure our parish is a safe and supportive environment for anyone to serve. No gift is too small or trivial. Paul talks about equipping the saints. Jesus teaches the disciples a lot in private, and he sends them out to practice what they learned. So we support and equip one another through encouragement, instructions, modeling, and the chance to practice; and we communicate and work in teams. If you feel called to ordained ministry, we support you by helping you discern your call. We support and lift up each other.
4. These values allow us to build an inclusive and loving community. Because God is with us in our life together, we can give thanks for all that we experience - our trials and tribulations, fulfillment and consolation.

As we move into a new year, I am excited by the opportunity for us to be a stronger, more inclusive and empowered community, serving with faith, joy and thanksgiving.

Appreciatively,

Diane+

Communication and Community

By Dorothy Mallam

To help St. John's move forward, the Vestry has been working on communication, cohesion, and community this year. Through our discussions of Part-time is Plenty by Jeffrey MacDonald, we have been studying how to thrive as a small congregation with a part-time priest. We have learned that not only do we all need to use our talents at St. John's, we also need to practice active communication. When COVID-19 struck, we explored how to keep in touch and offer support to every member of St. John's. We did not want to let isolation break up our church community. The Vestry regularly contacted everyone in the Parish through phone calls, emails, and cards. As a result, we had more conversations, found comfort in each other, and drew closer as a Christian community.

Communication and community were themes for our Annual Parish Retreat in May. Retreat participants expressed how deeply they appreciate our church community and find strength in the Body of Christ. Building better communication and strengthening community are all part of Stewardship at St. John's.

In our Vestry meetings, we have come to value a team approach when working on a project. Teams of three have worked the best. Recently, our "Welcome Back Picnic," which was organized by Julie and Amy Meadows and Christine Stevens is a great example of how this "rule of three" works well. Team members communicated with other church members by sending out invitations, announcing the picnic in the bulletin, and making announcements during Sunday services. They kept the Vestry informed about how to support and help their efforts. I think anyone who attended -over 25 parishioners- would agree that it was a joyous event with lots of good food, beautiful scenery, and good fellowship.

Moving forward, there are many opportunities for new ministry at St. John's. These ministries allow us to be an integral part of our church community and also to reach out to those who are vulnerable in our area. I encourage everyone to give their time and talents to St. John's. You will never be asked to do anything without support. Working and communicating effectively with church members will bring us into closer community with each other, strengthen the Body of Christ, and deepen our relationship to God.

Dorothy Mallam, Co-Warden

Saint James Day in Indiana

By Joe Curro

Some of my greatest "God moments" this summer came during a visit to South Bend and Notre Dame, Indiana for a Saint James Day Celebration that was organized by the Midwest chapters of American Pilgrims on the Camino.

The Feast of Saint James is celebrated on July 25th. Traditionally, there is added significance and a "jubilee celebration" in years when this date falls on a Sunday. Pilgrims would ordinarily descend in great numbers upon the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain for fireworks, light projections, and a great fiesta. Like so many other things, COVID-19 interrupted many people's plans and intentions.

In an attempt to keep the jubilee year special, some of the American Pilgrims on the Camino chapters organized what was originally intended to be a regional celebration at St. Mary's College. This quickly turned into a de facto national gathering, with at least 25 states represented. (In case you are wondering, all attendees were required to present proof of vaccination.)

We stayed in the St. Mary's dorms and took daily walks around the area, including several visits to next-door University of Notre Dame. Particularly powerful were an evening walk to the candlelit grotto, a 1/7-scale replica of the one at Lourdes, and a special Mass for gathered pilgrims in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the Notre Dame campus.

The power of gathering with fellow pilgrims and swapping stories of our experiences on the Camino de Santiago is difficult to overstate. The atmosphere was enhanced by a special concert by Dan Mullins, a singer-songwriter and host of the My Camino podcast, who joined us remotely from Australia. (I had a blast playing harmonica with our impromptu Pilgrims' Ensemble to accompany a couple of his numbers.) We had many additional talks by a number of luminaries of the Camino community. Throughout the weekend, our sense of nostalgia was heightened by the Herculean efforts of the St. Mary's dining services staff to prepare authentic Spanish dishes, and we rejoiced in a special performance by flamenco dancers and musicians on our final evening.

Many of us are missing the Camino, particularly during this time of strife. The opportunity to come together in communion with one another and to embolden one another's hopes for the future was meaningful and -- I dare say -- holy.

Book Review

By Joe Curro

***The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams
Avery (2016), 371 pages.**

The Book of Joy is a delightful and thought-provoking record of Archbishop Tutu's visit to Dharamsala, India, on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's eightieth birthday. The two men provided extraordinary access to their collaborator, Douglas Adams, to record their encounter and to facilitate conversations and reflections on the emotions that make us all human and the spiritual practices that sustain them.

This visit was originally intended to be a reciprocal one, a follow-up to a planned similar meeting in South Africa that was blocked by the government out of fear of riling China and disturbing associated business interests.

In a sign of their deep bond, the Dalai Lama affords Archbishop Tutu the rare honor of traveling to the airport to greet him personally and the even rarer honor of meeting in his personal dwelling place. Their affection for one another and their sharp senses of humor come through continually and lighten the tone of some otherwise heavy discussions.

Archbishop Tutu sits in meditation with the Dalai Lama, and they share in the Eucharist. The Dalai Lama even bends his monastic vow to eschew alcohol by taking a drop of Communion wine.

The book is broken into three sections, in which these spiritual giants discuss the nature of true joy and the obstacles to attaining it, converging ultimately on what they call the “eight pillars of joy.” The pillars are qualities of mind and heart that are essential in the quest for joy.

Joy is described as being distinct from and deeper than happiness and as occupying a wide range of feelings, ranging from the Buddhist idea of *mudita* or celebration of others’ good fortune to the opposite extreme of *schadenfreude*. The spiritual quest by the archbishop and the monk is particularly poignant when one comes to understand the terrible suffering and survival of each man through the respective travesties of South Africa’s apartheid era and China’s violent subjugation of Tibet.

The book ends with a very helpful reader’s guide and some practical meditation exercises aimed at cultivating joy within each of us.

The world has been blessed with the gifts of Archbishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama. *The Book of Joy* is but one of those gifts.

Today's New Normal vs The Old

By Barbara Greene Seyon

In today's world of work what is new to some is run-of-the-mill old for many others, namely, part-time work.

For many sectors of the work world, the global health crisis compels a new way of keeping in place a workforce which had to flee it because of the virus. Working part-time by mandate or choice impacts all levels of an enterprise, no matter its sector. Though long-standing, the debate on whether or not the part-time mode works as effectively as the full-time one for the person in a leadership position is waged more forcefully today. Whether or not one is better than the other, however, is determined by many factors, not just one.

It is because of my own challenge at this time, and what I see in part-time leadership at our parish, that I hear this debate more clearly now.

At the moment, I'm on tenterhooks regarding whether I should accept or reject a part-time leadership gig. I turned to an old stand-by exercise to help me decide: I grabbed my yellow pad, drew a vertical line down a sheet, and had at it with the reliable pros and cons list. A review of that list shows equality for pros and cons. This time though, the exercise enabled me to see an important distinction between the two work modes; and, as a member of St. John's, my list enabled me to highlight the feature that can determine whether or not a part-time leadership position works. Indeed it can -- but in my view, only when there is an active participatory team in place to work in tandem with leadership. Reverend Diane, in her part-time position at St. John's is an example of how that mode can work. But there is a caveat!

Myriad accomplishments have been made by the church since Reverend Diane's arrival. I hasten to say, however, that those accomplishments are not singularly Reverend Diane's. Rather, they are those of hers, and the long-standing, extraordinarily caring and dedicated lay leadership team, that has worked and continues to work in tandem with her, as well as individual members of the parish family. Whatever it took to get the task at hand done, all were committed to its completion.

I support the concept of part-time professional work. But I am also aware that more often than not, in order to accomplish all that must be done, the dedicated part-time professional is required to go far above and beyond the time set forth in the formal job description. There are those times that require leadership to go the extra mile alone to do what must be done, and there are times when the lay leadership is also compelled to take part in going the extra mile. Does this scenario depict what takes place at St. John's? I think it does.

So, for continued growth and accomplishments, the broadening of ministries, and all else that must be done to lead and keep the parish strong, the church team must grow in number.

In the spirit of stewardship: Come! Become an active member of St. John's team. The welcome mat welcomes all.

Barbara Greene Seyon



**First day of Sunday School, September 12, 2021. Chirusha de Mel with Children.
Photo by Dorothy Mallam**

Why I Won't Ever Sign the Pink Form

By Jacquie Clermont

I thought I'd buried the psychedelic pink form with my mom in 2018 ... that I could forget all it took away.

But when my doctor pulled it out a few months ago as something I should fill out, it was back in all its sickly sweet death-is-kind regalia.

"No, not the pink form," I say.

The Massachusetts Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment or MOLST form has taken me on a bad trip through the shadow of death with our healthcare system and the courts and lawyers along for the ride. When I returned, I had lost my immediate family, trust in our courts, and faith in the benevolence of our healthcare system.

People look at anyone objecting to any alleged right-to-die initiatives as crazy. And it was thus that my doctor looked at me.

The reason for the color is so no healthcare worker will miss it in a file, if anyone still uses paper files. To me it is more a right to let die — frequently for healthcare proxies or guardians rather than the elderly themselves, who, like my mother, could be incompetent from dementia. The two-sided document has sections where you or your proxy can refuse artificial hydration and nutrition, non-invasive ventilation, and even CPR. You can even refuse transportation to a hospital in the event of an acute illness.

I struggle to visualize what no CPR or ventilation would look like on the ground, where you choke or clutch your breast in pain while doctors and nurses call the undertaker.

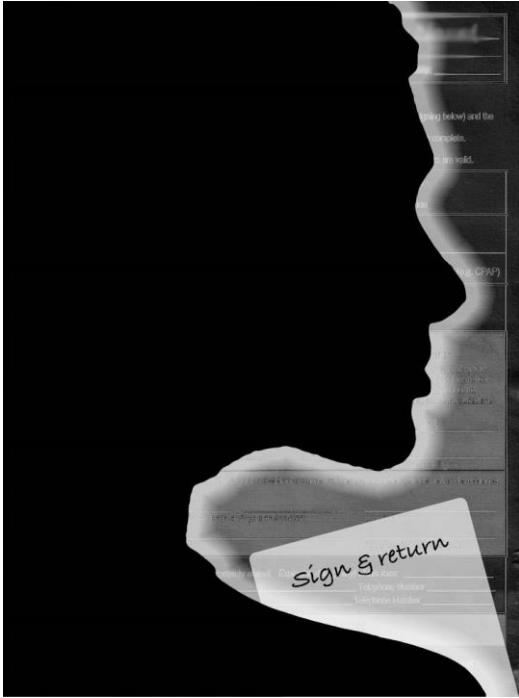
According to the MOLST website, a mysterious .org site that looks like it hasn't been updated in a decade, the goal is that "persons with advanced illness will have their decisions regarding life-sustaining treatments known, communicated and honored across all healthcare settings in Massachusetts." It defines an advanced illness as one likely to take your life in one year. The form is not a legal document; it is a medical document, like a prescription, that must be signed by a patient or patient's proxy and a doctor.

And above all, it is supposed to be voluntary.

Which is not what the nursing home told me. The form was required, it insisted, despite what I saw on a website.

My parents named both my sister and me as healthcare proxies in a legal document prepared by their attorney, so in June 2013, the psychedelic pink form needed my signature. The facility social worker sent it to me with a hand-written post-it. I got to make one decision on the form — whether or not my mom could be taken to a hospital in the event of an acute disease — and then I was supposed to sign it. My sister had already made most of the decisions about what treatment would and would not be administered (mostly what would not be administered).

I disagreed with the idea of the form, and in particular, with my sister's decisions. My refusal to sign it led to several months of threats by the nursing home to take me to court, which I couldn't imagine it would do.



During one of my visits, the facility's director, a social worker, and a woman purporting to be my mother's nurse delivered a passionate argument that people like mom had nothing left to live for. Why lift a hand to prolong her life?

My mother couldn't see or hear or move around and her life was awful. It would be cruel to give her CPR because doing so could break her bones.

Isn't denying treatment to people on the grounds that they are better off dead the same as killing them? Granted in some situations, I would agree to pulling a plug, but purposely withholding treatment or water or food from a hungry, thirsty, or suffering person for an as yet-to-be-determined "advanced illness" is immoral and dangerous.

I sobbed loudly into a tissue. They did not let up, but—wet-faced—I refused to sign the pink form in front of me.

The nursing home hired a coven of attorneys to name my sister my mother's guardian, solely responsible for all care decisions. Current guardianship laws are famous for being used to remove seniors from their possessions. My parents' attorney would not return my calls, and an attorney I did manage to contact said the only thing I could do was try to prove my sister incapable of being a proper guardian.

I gave up, so it ended with an agreement that I could continue to visit my mom and take her out occasionally. I had to negotiate her presence at my wedding. And my sister, including my two nephews, wanted nothing to do with me.

They sent me a new MOLST signed by the new guardian. Still, I was surprised when no one called an ambulance.

Shortly after refusing to eat her Thanksgiving meal, mom looked up from what had become a near round-the-clock nap as if someone were taking her insides out. She never complained about pain like this. I asked about a hospital.

The nurses gave her an enema, and when that didn't work, they pulled out morphine lollipops.

So Mom, who hated all narcotics including aspirin, died on morphine four years after the coerced signing of a voluntary form for patients who had a year to live. Her explicit wishes as expressed in her healthcare proxy fell under the feet of a moneyed institution, whose motives I can only guess.

Directives like MOLST, which is also used in other states, may have been created with good intentions, but they are open to manipulation for very bad intentions. Imagine the cumulative savings of all that denied treatment.

Can anything be done? Or, is anyone out there crazy like me? I searched for groups opposing MOLST, and I found only one, the Catholic Church, calling MOLST “a document which requires a cautionary attitude on the part of the Catholic faithful.” The Archdiocese of Worcester has a web page entitled “MOLST: DO NOT SIGN YOUR MEDICAL DECISION-MAKING AWAY.”

So the form has come for me, casting a pink shadow on me, reminding me of my own diminished worth. My “advanced illness” at the time my doctor gave me the MOLST form was being over 60.

And again, I will not sign.

Book Club Reflection

By Sarah Boulet

I want to share about the great experience I had over the last year as a participant in St. John’s book group. I found myself looking forward to our (virtual) meetings each week, reading the books we chose, and seeing fellow members. It was purely enjoyable, even though conversations about life and faith got real at times, made me think, and helped me ultimately to grow.

I really appreciated the fact that we sustained our meetings through the pandemic. Personally, I’m a busy wife, homeowner, friend, and mom of three young kids, each with full lives of their own and who were home a lot for school last year. I generally find it hard to do the things that interest just me consistently. I was able to attend book club regularly last year, and I even held on until we took a break for the summer. The same was true for the other participants. I was thinking about what made the difference for me. Why did book club run so smoothly? Why did it feel easy, and why was I able to commit?

On reflection, I think things went so smoothly because we each did our small parts. Nothing about book club asked too much of any one of us. One person started the virtual meeting each week. One person ordered the books at the beginning. The group chose to read manageable amounts of our books at home each week and to discuss these the following week. Members took turns facilitating conversation with simple reflective questions on different weeks. I did this once or twice out of many weeks, with help if needed. During our meetings, members shared what was on their minds, contributing to the conversation or just remaining quiet and listening. We always had enough participation to make for a good conversation. Each of our parts was small. I felt like I was really contributing in doing my small piece each week, yet I didn’t feel overwhelmed.

I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with members of St. John’s and share and learn about faith in a different way. I see that each member of our group showed up and did the small bit they could each week, contributing but not carrying the whole load. Our book club was a success and remained enjoyable and sustainable. I look forward to doing more little bits and to more book club!

St. John's Garden Container in Arlington Heights

By Cate Barr, Jan Ford, Dorothy Mallam, and David Wilcox

Last year, during the onset of the pandemic, a number of us at St. John's thought about adopting one of the many beautiful garden spots around Arlington that are hosted by the Arlington Garden Club. We wanted to create an opportunity to show our care for God's creation and also have a small spot for a beautiful garden in Arlington.

This summer we were finally assigned a garden plot in Arlington Heights on the south corner of the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Park Avenue. It is a small, round, raised planter and we have been slowly rehabilitating the spot and tending the garden this summer. If you are in the area, please stop by and visit it, and if you would like to help us during our occasional garden workdays, please let any of us know; we would love to have you be part of the team.



St. John's Garden Container – and the St. John's Gardeners

Creation Care

By Jan Ford

This is the month of Creation Care. We hear the joy of creation in the hymns we may sing, “All Creatures Great and Small,” “Earth and All Stars,” and others. We especially hear it when we listen to the wind rustle the leaves and to birds singing their unique songs. We feel it in the coolness of the shade of multiple species of trees. We smell it following the rain and in so many different flowers. We see it in the colors of nature.

Have you ever thought about how many shades of green there are in nature? When I walk in the woods or a park or work in a garden, I am always in awe of the journey that all living things—especially plants—experience. Every seed holds a tiny plant waiting for the right conditions to burst out and grow into a unique species.

Many native plants have evolved to co-exist with the insects, birds, and wind that pollinate them and then, when they return to seed, to spread by specific means that insure the continuation of that plant.

What a gift we have been given! What a responsibility we have to care for that gift and to nurture and protect it.

Coastal Maine Gardens

By Jan Ford

Although not quite a journey, a three-hour trip to the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay Harbor, Maine is a wonderful excursion to a truly unique location. There are over 240 acres of woods and spectacular gardens, including a pollinator garden, a sensory garden, a formal garden, a meditation garden, and a children’s garden.

Sited along the Sheepscot River, the paths and trails take you over bridges, through the gardens, down to the water’s edge, and into the woods (should you wish to venture that far).

Right now, there is a special exhibit of five enormous trolls, each of which speaks to the parts of a tree: roots, trunk, branches, leaves, and flowers. They serve as the Guardians of the Seeds. These will stand for as long as they are sturdy.

Reservations are required in order to maintain social distancing. The gardens are open through October 17 and reopen on May 1. Although there is only a short time before they close, I imagine a visit at this time of year would be a treat, with the cool fall weather making for comfortable walking. More information about the gardens and the trolls is available at their website:

<https://www.maine gardens.org>



Lilja who Speaks for the Flowers



A Pollinator in the Pollinator Garden



Autumn Leaves

St. John's Prayer Team

We are: Dawn Shearer, Frank Foster, Dorothy Mallam, Orna Gardini, Christine Stevens, Paula Marron, David Wilcox, and Rev. Diane. If you have any prayer requests, thanksgivings, joys or sorrows, please submit them to prayer@saintjohns-arlington.org. We are committed to keeping these requests in the strictest confidentiality.

A Special Notice to the Parish

by Barbara Greene Seyon

I recently received a letter and information from a representative from AmeriCorps regarding its National Teaching Fellowship program. It occurred to me that members of St. John's might have an interest in this organization's paid fellowship opportunities in education for yourselves, your children, or grandchildren.

Please know that I am not affiliated with AmeriCorps in any way, professionally or otherwise. The organization's outreach to me is solely because I am faculty in higher education. Their note requests that I please "...pass on this information to anyone [I] think might be interested." I'm including St. John's in my pass-along list.

This school year has begun; AmeriCorps' notice arrived after this school year's application deadline date. Explore the fellowship information below to glean an idea of whether or not you have an interest. Whether or not you can enter midyear is something you'd have to ask when you contact them; and if you can't, you might consider next year.

The website at the end of this notice takes you directly to the page for AmeriCorps' Fellowship Program.

Compensated Fellowship Programs

Massachusetts

(Somerville/Boston) for the upcoming 2021-22 school year.

Citizen Schools helps all students thrive in school and beyond through hands-on learning and career mentors.

National Teaching Fellows change the lives of middle school students by providing academic support, partnering with career mentors, and delivering critical hands-on learning experiences.

National Teaching Fellows will also be part of the local community and affect change from within by building connections between students, families, schools, volunteers, and community resources.

Since 2002, Citizen Schools has hosted over 2,000 AmeriCorps alumni, with AmeriCorps Teaching Fellows having served over 145,000 students.

National Teaching Fellows receive an annual living stipend of \$23,550; and are eligible to receive the Segal Education Award of \$6,195; forbearance of student loans; and medical, dental, and vision insurance.

This teaching fellowship would be a good fit for recent college graduates or students who've completed at least 60 credits who are service- and team-oriented and are passionate about closing the opportunity gap in education.

<http://careers.citizenschools.org/p/ff3e4ea58fa3-ameri-corps-national-teaching-fellowship-class-of-22-boston-somerville>

Neighbors Eating All Together (NEAT)

By Laura Manion

The summer has come and gone, and we at NEAT have not been busy, unfortunately. We have met a few times and discussed how we might be able to help, but there were no opportunities to lend a hand. We also discussed when we would be able to host dinners again, and—alas!—we did not have an opportunity for that either. But even though we at NEAT are at a standstill for dinners and helping, we were not completely idle.

When we met over the spring and summer, these were the first times we were able to gather in person and see each other's faces. We were able to laugh together, snack together, and plan together an uncertain future. We were still motivated by each of our desires to help lend a hand and to compliment other efforts to stop food insecurity with our skills. We were still a team, and we still planned.

In the near future, we are hoping to volunteer at Mystic Market, a food pantry in Medford that works closely with Food Link, to help distribute food. We are moving forward with our website and securing our non-profit status. We are hoping to coordinate with the Council on Aging, the Arlington EATS Market, and Food Link to see how we may help. In addition, we are ready to host dinners again at St. John's whenever it is safe.

God has guided and supported us in all our efforts, and I have been inspired by the enthusiasm and commitment our team still shows, even during this pandemic time. I saw God in the eyes of our team, in the words and desires expressed by the friends we have made, and in the hope we all share to further our mission to gather people together and build a community of friends. God is always present and ever visible; and we are all forever thankful.

We will keep St. John's posted as to our progress, and we are so appreciative of all the continued support. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Want to Fight Hunger? **Be Part of the Food Link Team at the Ride For Food!**

Have a summer adventure OR train for a beautiful fall bike ride on behalf of [Food Link](#). It's all possible at the 2021 Ride For Food. You can do a ride or adventure on your own time, or join our traditional in-person charity bike ride event, which is back for 2021! Either way, you'll be part of the community fighting hunger in Massachusetts.

The in-person charity ride is on Sunday, October 3rd. It's in Dedham and you can choose 25 or 50 miles of gorgeous fall scenery.

Our team captain Karin will support your fundraising efforts, and has all sorts of adventure ideas if you take the "adventure on your own" option. Karin Turer can be reached at 617-599-8509 or karin@tugboat23.com

Please consider joining the team, sharing with friends, or making a donation here:
<https://ride.threesquaresne.org/foodlink2021>

8 a.m. Service to Resume - Sunday, September 26th

The 8 a.m. service will resume in the Sanctuary on September 26th. It will be a Rite II service.

Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, October 3rd, right after the service, outside of the church. Do bring your pets or pictures of your pets for a blessing. The more the merrier.

Milestones

September birthdays: David Wilcox, Amy Meadows, Miriam Davison, Jan Ford, Meaghan Sullivan, Jane Commons

October birthdays: Rin Barr, Christine Carney, Barbara Hayes, Emelia Blankson, Andrew Nyamekye

**St. John's Episcopal Church
74 Pleasant Street
Arlington, MA 02476**

Rev. Diane Wong's office hours: Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. John's.
Please feel free to arrange with Rev. Diane for other times to meet.
Her cell phone number is 617-417-8102. Her email is dianeckwong@gmail.com.

Church Office hours: M, W, Th 10-1 :30 ; Fri 1-3
Church Office phone: 781-648-4819 Email: admin@saintjohns-arlington.org
Web site: <http://www.saintjohns-arlington.org>