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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – December 2020

A Message from the Reverend Diane Wong, Rector

The different gospels offer us different emphases on the season of Advent. The Gospel of Mark reminds us that we are waiting for the coming of Christ, and our waiting is characterized by participating in God's mission and dream. The Gospel of Matthew, on the other hand, reminds us that God is with us through Jesus; and the Gospel of Luke points out that with the birth of Jesus, the world order is going to be turned upside down; the unexpected and the unlikely people are called to be a part of Jesus' story. These emphases are different, and yet similar - "Jesus is the reason for the season."

If Jesus is the reason, then loving our neighbors is the reason - those who have lost their jobs and cannot afford to pay rent, who cannot afford to put food on the table for their families, who do not have warm clothing for the cold New England winter, who cannot afford to get toys for their children for Christmas, and those whose homes and livelihoods are jeopardized by climate change.

This newsletter highlights some of the opportunities that invite us to love our neighbors by giving of our money, time, and our energy. We are given opportunities to bear witness that God is with us, to be God's presence and to participate in God's dream. Directly or indirectly, small or big, our acts of love will give hope and peace to someone and some family. Our acts of love say to them that they matter.

"Jesus is the reason for the season"

Advent and Christmas Blessings to you all.

Diane+

**** Christmas Eve Service 12/24/20 at 5 p.m. on Zoom ****

Tearfund

A Long Tradition of Addressing Poverty and the Care of Creation

By David Wilcox

Back in May 2020 the Book Group at St. John's began reading a wonderful book entitled, Saying Yes to Life, authored by Ruth Valerio. Using the creation story from Genesis as the backdrop, the book focuses on caring for God's gift of creation that surrounds us. Ruth Valerio is an environmentalist, theologian and social activist and the Canon Theologian at Rochester Cathedral in England. Her book frames caring for God's creation not only as safeguarding our environment for future generations, but also as an act of respect, praise and thanksgiving for the natural world and the ongoing gift of creation God has given all of us. It is a remarkable book and full of facts, insights, and actual steps one can take in your everyday life to care for creation.

Throughout the book Valerio references projects undertaken around the world by an organization called Tearfund. Tearfund is a British organization focused on empowering communities around the world by bringing low-tech, sustainable solutions that help address poverty while also focusing on caring for God's creation. The organization has been alive and well in Britain for over fifty years. Tearfund has not only helped countless individuals, families and small communities in Africa, South America, and Asia, but also linked supporting congregations in Britain with the congregations and communities they are empowering. For instance, they have developed low-tech design solutions for smokeless cooking stoves in many villages to help improve air quality in homes to reduce respiratory disease, drastically reduce the cutting of firewood and prevent erosion and deforestation in communities. During the COVID pandemic they have worked around the globe helping disseminate a low-tech solution so communities can build hand-washing stations in villages where running water is not always reliable, thus promoting critical hygiene and water conservation at the same time. They work with communities in Africa using local communal savings funds to bring reliable, low-cost solar power to villages and families that have never had electricity.

Tearfund has begun a chapter here in the United States – Tearfund USA. The focus is similar to the mother organization in Britain, calling on the global church to play an active role in addressing our world's most complex problems: global migration, poverty, environmental degradation, and racial injustice. The mission is similar too. As congregations in America learn more about global poverty, injustice and environmental issues they contribute to and support efforts in congregations in other parts of the world to solve these problems on a local level. In terms of environmental awareness, the call to American congregations is to learn how to heighten our awareness of preserving and sustaining God's creation since we in the Western World consume a disproportionate amount of the world's resources for our own needs. We in America have much to learn about how to take care of God's creation. Tearfund USA can bring our faith into action, helping us as well as communities with needs in other parts of the world.

St. John's has begun a dialogue with Tearfund USA to discover how we might strengthen our efforts for the care of creation and perhaps engage in the work the organization is doing around the world. This dialogue is just beginning, but it is our hope we can learn more along the way – how to reduce our carbon footprint, promote a “greener” church, bring our lessons to others in the community, and most of all help communities elsewhere in the world address poverty, injustice and environmental degradation.

If you would like to know more about Tearfund USA please visit their website: <https://www.tearfundusa.org/>. The website also has a wonderful catalog of gifts one can give that are proven empowerment tools for communities to address gender equality, refugee assistance, care of creation and tools to help churches and communities overcome poverty and injustice.

If you would like to know more about Tearfund or how St John's may learn more from Tearfund about our care for God's creation, please talk to Diane, David or Dorothy.

Creation Care Justice Network

YOU are invited to the 3rd annual Creation Care Justice Network retreat for refreshment, relationship-building, and reflection. Participate virtually.

When? Saturday, January 9, in the morning (probably 9:30 or 10:00 - noon)

What? The heart of the time will be a "World Café" model of wrestling with a "compelling question" about our faith and climate change:

- small group interactions
- art
- embodied spiritual practice
- conversation that delves deeply

Who? You and anyone in your parish or community who feels called to the work of addressing climate injustice and global heating through the lens of faith.

If you are interested in signing up for the retreat or becoming a CCJN core member, contact Dawn Tesorero rangerdawn@gmail.com or Lise Hildebrandt lisehild@gmail.com.

Mothers Out Front - Statewide Action Alerts

Anne Wright of Mothers Out Front spoke to us in September at our outdoor service. MOF have activities in the Town of Arlington, and also statewide campaigns. It would be tremendously helpful if a few people can represent St. John's, sign up for their action alerts list, and inform the parish of activities and actions that need our support. If you could, please let Rev. Diane know.

Winter Clothing for CityReach

Common cathedral is hosting a modified CityReach for their unhoused siblings who need winter clothing to survive another winter on the streets. They are seeking donations of:

- * Coats * Socks * Sweatshirts/Sweaters * Pants * Hats *Gloves
- * Handwarmers * Blankets/Sleeping Bags

They are asking that all these items be men's sizes since even the women prefer men's clothing due to its functional nature. Items should be in good condition and clean.

The second date for delivering these items is Wednesday, January 20th from 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. at St. Paul's Cathedral at 138 Tremont Street, Boston.

You can drop these items off at St. John's. Please call the office before coming to make sure someone is here. If you'd like someone to pick up your items to bring to the church, please contact Jan Ford (ford.jd@gmail.com). If you are able to partner with Cate Barr to deliver the clothing to Boston, please let her know (catebarr4a@gmail.com).

Thank you for participating in this opportunity to "clothe the naked" and keep them safe and warm this winter.

Sunday Services

We are continuing with Sunday services at 10 a.m. on Zoom. If you are interested in doing a reading for our Sunday worship service, please let Rev. Diane know. Thank you.

St. John's and Arlington EATS Market

By Andi Doane, Executive Director, Arlington EATS

It's not unusual to see a church and a food pantry work together. However, the collaboration between Arlington EATS and St. John's has been a Godsend to a hunger relief organization in the midst of a pandemic.



In the summer of 2019, St. John's Episcopal Church in Arlington opened its doors to Arlington EATS, a hunger relief organization with a food pantry, that was looking for a temporary home while its building was being constructed. The Vestry worked with the various community renters and EATS to design and organize a schedule that worked for everyone. Each week, the EATS Market (food pantry) opened its doors to 160 families to receive groceries including fresh produce, dairy, and meat.

When the pandemic hit, EATS came to the Vestry and asked for help. They needed to convert their operations from a once-a-week in-person shopping experience to a multiple-day home delivery service in order to protect the health and safety of Arlington's most vulnerable residents. St. John's large Parish Hall was the perfect space to set up a grocery packing system. There are over 150 different volunteers who help in various ways with the workings of EATS. We are mindful of all the precautions we need to take while bringing in volunteers to organize deliveries throughout the week.

Since the start of the pandemic, EATS has seen a 72% increase in families requesting food; delivering food to 285 families each week. Over 9,000 pounds of food is brought in, processed, bagged and then delivered to the doorsteps of hungry neighbors each week.



From a Parish Hall filled with coffee hours, aerobics classes, and community groups to a food processing and packaging warehouse in the midst of a pandemic, St. John's is glad to be a partner to our community and to use God's sanctuary to do the work of the Kingdom.

Thanksgiving Update from Neighbors Eating All Together (NEAT)

Embracing the meaning of Thanksgiving, we at NEAT are so thankful for the amazing opportunity we had to collaborate in a Thanksgiving donation like none we've ever been involved with before. We partnered with Arlington's Council On Aging (COA), Something Savory Catering, Food Link, and Arlington EATS to provide 150 homemade Thanksgiving meals that were delivered safely to 137 Arlington seniors' homes on Thanksgiving morning. As there were some extra meals, volunteers were invited to take one home and some were delivered to new recipients on Friday morning.

Each meal included fresh roasted turkey, stuffing, squash and sweet potato, fresh vegetables, gravy, homemade cranberry sauce, and bread made by the amazing local and minority-owned caters, Something Savory. Food and flowers were donated by Food Link; cards were made by Thompson School kindergarten classes; the Retired Men's Club of Arlington donated money for the purchase of individually wrapped cookies and drinks; and the entire package was finished off with puzzles donated by local business, Maxima Gift Center. Finally, we are thankful to St. John's who have allowed NEAT to grow into the non-profit group that we are today and we appreciate their continued support.

Like every living person, we at NEAT are very frustrated with this pandemic and how it has impacted people especially financially and nutritionally. Our goal is to reach out and help feed people when we can; this past Thanksgiving gave us the opportunity. We are blessed and thankful.

Laura Manion, NEAT President & St. John's Parishioner
Cate Barr, NEAT member & St. John's Parishioner

Arlington EATS Concert Fundraiser – Friday, Jan. 8th, 2021

This one is going to be good! Our next St. John's Coffeehouse Concert will be live-streamed at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, January 8th, 2021. We give thanks to parishioners Cate Barr, Vicki Ford, John Gibson, Charlotte Pierce, and Jeff Munro and Katie Chang of Arlington Community Media for contributing to our effort to achieve food security and support for live music through our Coffeehouse Concerts series.

A wise person once said, "it takes eight exposures to inspire action." With that in mind, we appreciate all-hands-on-deck among parishioners to get the word out. So anything you can do to send links via email and social media to your friends and relations, pets, and casual acquaintances would be so helpful! In your messages, you can link to our [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#), where the concert will be live-streamed. [ACMi.tv](#) will carry the event live on their public access channels, as well (check their website for your channel number on Verizon, Comcast, or RCN).

The concert will be opened by Arlington Poet Laureate Steven Ratiner and our own gifted musician and composer, Todd Brunel.

Headline performer Akili Jamal Haynes is a composer and multi-instrumentalist who began his career at age 15 as a trombonist under the mentorship of Wynton Marsalis. He currently teaches at Berklee School of Music and privately.

Performer Val Jeanty, also known as Val-Inc, is a Haitian electronic music composer/drummer/turntablist and educator. She is a pioneer of the electronic music subgenre called "Afro-Electronica," later renamed "Vodou-Electro."

Music of Akili and Val:

- <https://ofa.fas.harvard.edu/people/akili-jamal-haynes>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Val_Jeanty

When you tune in to the show there will be instructions for online payment. Or if you would like to donate by check, please write the check to St. John's, with a note in the memo line that it is for the Arlington EATS Fundraiser Concert.

In the fall of 2021, Arlington EATS will move from its temporary home at St. John's into a newly constructed space at 117 Broadway. For the first time in its 30-year history, all of Arlington EATS will be under one roof, dramatically increasing efficiency. Over the next year, the organization must raise \$1.25 million to realize this vision.



ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GIVE BACK THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?

Three Easy Ways to Give Back:

ETSY - Find unique pieces from Guatemala for your loved ones. Check out our new Etsy shop! 100% of the sales on this site go to support Guatemalans in the communities where many of these items are made.

AMAZON SMILE - If you are shopping for gifts on Amazon this holiday season, make Guatemala Aid Fund your preferred charitable organization. You will automatically generate donations for GAF at no cost to you. You shop, Amazon gives.

DONATE - If you have been looking for a fiscally responsible charitable organization that promotes education, the preservation of the environment, support of the local workforce and the empowerment of people in need in a very vulnerable part of the world, we invite you to check out our website at www.guatemalaaidfund.org and consider making a donation.



A few of the folks helped by GAF

Holiday Help

St. John's will be participating in the Town of Arlington's Holiday Helping Hands program. Due to the public health crisis, the format will be different this year. Individual families will not be "adopted"; instead, we will be donating gift cards in increments of \$25 to places such as CVS, Walgreens, Target, Stop&Shop, etc. On behalf of St. John's, Christine Carney will purchase the gift cards and drop them off at the AYCC (Arlington Youth Consultation Center) by December 4th. Anyone wishing to participate can do so by donating to St. John's to contribute to the cost of the gift cards. Please donate separately from your regular pledge and indicate in the memo section on the check "Outreach-Holiday Help". Please feel free to call Christine Carney at 781-844-2038 or email her at cccarney67@gmail.com for any questions.

Rector's Discretionary Fund

Many Episcopal parishes have a rector's discretionary fund to help those in need, whether they are part of the parish or the larger community. Someone might need assistance for bus fare to go to New Bedford; another person might need assistance towards a phone bill.

Money for this Fund is part of St. John's budget. When there is a funeral held in the church, the fee for the clergy also goes towards this Fund. There have been more individuals coming to Rev. Diane requesting help in the past few years. Another way for you to help your neighbors is by contributing to the Rector's Discretionary Fund.

Arlington EATS Market & Donations

Arlington EATS and the Town of Arlington will deliver shelf stable food to any Arlington resident in need. To receive food, call the Arlington Food Hotline at 781-316-3400 or go to arlingtoneats.org/requestfood.

AEM is now accepting donations on Tuesdays 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. AEM puts out a table on Lombard St. for donations. Donations of the following would be especially appreciated:

- ** Cereal (especially Cheerios!) ** Gluten Free Items (pasta, snacks, soups, etc.)
- ** Shelf stable soup ** Peanut butter alternatives (i.e., Sunbutter or Almond butter)
- ** Snacks (regular sizes, please) ** Soy Sauce ** Shelf Stable Soy Milk or Almond Milk
- ** Brown Paper Bags ** Sunscreen ** Incontinence products

Please do not donate soda, sports drinks, medications, jumbo or single serving sizes.

Financial donations of any amount are also welcome. Checks can be made out to Arlington EATS Market and mailed to AEM at the church. Or you can contribute online at their website: www.arlingtoneats.org .

**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 ; F 1-3. Church Office phone: 781-648-4819

Email: admin@saintjohns-arlington.org

Web site: <http://www.saintjohns-arlington.org>