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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – Autumn 2022

A Message from the Reverend Diane Wong, Rector

As we gather for worship weekly and live into a new program year, I can feel the presence and power of God's love among us. I would like very much to thank you all for your patience, generosity of spirit and commitment to St. John's in the past couple of years when the rhythm of our communal life was disrupted. I am grateful for your abiding care of one another, and for your flexibility as we navigated the changes and challenges of this time together. The pandemic has been hard on all of us and on our parish, and it has affected us all in both positive and less positive ways.

I am also grateful that we are in a very different place than we were last year at this time. Vaccines and boosters are providing protection from serious illness. While the virus has certainly not gone away, we and the world are learning how to live with it; so restrictions have eased in many places to signal a return to normalcy.

At St. John's, since Sunday, Sept. 18, we have made the wearing of face masks a recommendation, but for the choir it is still strongly recommended. Following the recommendation from the diocese, those who wish to continue to practice social distancing can use the front pews on the right hand side. I am particularly excited and grateful that crucifers and LEMs are part of the services again. And the chalice is made available to those who would like to receive the Blood of Christ. This will take the form of sharing the chalice and NOT by intinction, according to the diocesan rule. The rim of the chalice will be cleaned after every use. When conditions allow, our worship service will continue to move towards how it is supposed to be.

I want to reassure everyone that the hybrid format of worship will continue as Zoom is the only way for some of you to attend church, and I am thankful for your faithfulness. For others, one important way for you to help our worship service to return to normal is by being at the church on Sundays **in person**. The Eucharist is meant to be celebrated as a community together, in body, mind and spirit. The prayers, responses, singing and communion are meant to be done in community. Your presence, on Zoom or in person, gives life to the parish; and your in-person presence nourish each other in a special way.

We will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 in order to keep everyone safe. In the meantime, may God grant us wisdom, vision, fellowship and patience as we work together to meet the needs of our time and build up the Kingdom of God.

Blessings,
Diane+

MEET OUR STAFF

Chirusha de Mel

Interview by Barbara Greene Seyon



Chirusha de Mel joined our parish as Church School Coordinator during the pandemic in 2020.

Chirusha is an educator who loves working with children. Her mother, her role model, is also an educator and taught Sunday school at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Cambridge for many years; and was the Director of its After-School Program. Chirusha said that she "grew up at St. Peter's Church." When her mother decided to leave her position as teacher of the little ones, she encouraged Chirusha to assume the responsibility and she did.

Chirusha currently teaches pre-kindergarten children in Westborough, MA. One of her future goals is to teach at the kindergarten level, and she has an interest in the Boston public school system. Meanwhile, she is pursuing graduate studies online for a master's degree in education at George Washington University. She is trilingual, enjoys traveling, fine foods, and dancing. She moved to Douglas, Massachusetts when she was five years old.

Her parents came to America from Sri Lanka in 1989. Her father, a civil rights lawyer in Sri Lanka, shifted careers in America and studied at the EDS Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her mother also did her masters at the EDS Divinity School.

In response to my question, Chirusha said that it was a call from Rev. Derrick to Rev. Diane for assistance finding someone for St. John's that brought her to our parish. She said that she enjoys being at St. John's, that she "feels included," and that "Diane and Anna" (with whom she works directly) "and everyone at St. John's have made it a welcoming community for her.

Welcome, again, Chirusha. St. John's is blessed to have you among its role models and beacons of light for its youth.

Susan Brooks

Photo & Interview by Barbara Greene Seyon



Susan Brooks, our part-time Parish Administrator, celebrated her sixth anniversary at St. John's on Labor Day of this year. Born in Augusta, Maine; Susan lived in upstate New York during early childhood. Her family moved to Arlington when she was 10 – she went to public schools in Arlington from 5th grade through high school.

After college in Vermont, Susan moved back to the Boston area and lived primarily in Somerville - until this past spring, when she moved back to Arlington. She absolutely loves her new apartment and appreciates her friendly neighbors and the prime location in the heart of Arlington Center. Susan is close to her large family: her mom, four younger sisters, brothers-in-law, five nieces and five nephews, and a great-niece and great-nephew.

Susan earned a B.A. in Sociology from Middlebury College as well as a Master's Degree in Psychology from Lesley College. In addition to administrative work, she has worked as a technical writer and editor for various tech companies, as a massage therapist at a spa in Harvard Square, and as a companion/aide to seniors. All of her varied education and work experience has given her a wealth of skills and talents that come into play in her job as Parish Administrator. She enjoys interacting with St. John's parishioners, and with the volunteers and clients of Arlington EATS Market.

In her free time Susan enjoys socializing with friends, playing Scrabble, taking yoga classes, eating at local restaurants, and traveling. She will soon be vacationing in Iceland – her first time visiting Europe!

Although six years have passed, we continue to welcome Susan. We are blessed by her presence and diligence as a member of the St. John's family.

Erwin Rosales

Interview by Joseph A. Curro, Jr. and Rev. Diane Wong

At the end of the summer, Erwin Rosales joined the St. John's staff as our new sexton. Erwin is a native of Guatemala, who came to the United States 32 years ago to seek better work opportunities. He appreciates the relative safety and freedom of the U.S.

Erwin's family--including his mother, two brothers, and nephews--are still in Guatemala, and Erwin continues to support them financially. Sadly, his father passed away about four years ago.

Before working as a cleaner, Erwin worked in restaurants and at a car wash. He now cleans six days a week, beginning his days as early as five in the morning. Before turning in each evening, Erwin enjoys watching a little television. A devout Roman Catholic, with a deep faith in God, Erwin attends church on Sundays, after which he observes a day of rest.

Erwin lives nearby, in the Alewife area, and he recently celebrated a birthday on September 9th.

Welcome, Erwin! We are blessed to have you!

Anna Bilsky-Endo

Interview & Photo by Joseph A. Curro, Jr.



Anna Bilsky-Endo started working with St. John's in May as our nursery assistant. Anna is a senior at Arlington High School, who is just starting her college search. She loves working with children, which she has previously done as a babysitter and through other jobs and activities. She hopes to have more such opportunities in the future.

In her spare time, Anna likes to spend time with her friends and enjoys going into Boston. She particularly likes to be outside and to travel to areas with warmer weather, like Puerto Rico and Hawaii.

Anna encourages parents to know if there are specific toys or books or activities that are special to their children. While there are a good number of toys in the nursery already, parents are invited to send in special comfort or play items with their kids.

Welcome, Anna! Our kids are lucky to get to spend time with such a caring young person.

St. John's Newsletter Youth Pages

Claire Dornan

Photo and Article by Barbara Greene Seyon

Claire Dornan is a member of St. John's Church. She is 11 years old and a student at Gibbs School in Arlington, MA. Claire is Dorothy Mallam's granddaughter. Dorothy is a long-standing, very active member of our parish.

Claire enjoys writing and has a story in progress; we are pleased to publish Chapter 1 of it on the Youth Page of our newsletter. We will publish additional chapters whenever Claire is ready to share them with us.



Claire and Her Story Illustration

Lost at Sea by Claire Dornin

Summary: Once there was a princess with long, dirty blonde hair and deep blue eyes. Her name was Marabell. She was no ordinary princess. She longed for adventure. What would happen if Marabell went a little bit too far from home for a little bit too long? Can she overcome the challenges in her way and get back home?

Chapter 1

"Come! Eat lunch!" her mother said one day.

"Fine," Marabell replied, crossly. Marabell gobbled down her lunch and sprinted outside, not bothering to change out of her long pink silk dress, or her amethyst and diamond crown that was threatening to fall from her no longer neat hair. She was running to meet four best friends Kate, Jack, Colin and Lilly.

"Oh! You're here. I thought you had more important things to tend to than your best friends," Kate said coldly. Kate had long dark brown hair and dark eyes and was angry that Marabell didn't have very much time away from the castle.

"Ignore her. She is just having a bad day," said Jack, a boy with strawberry blond hair and hazel eyes.

Meanwhile, Colin was building a slingshot and aiming it at Clearwater Palace. Colin was a tall boy with short blond hair and bright green eyes. "Colin!" Lilly shrieked. Lilly was a shy girl with elbow length hair and cobalt blue eyes.

"Colin put that slingshot down!" Marabell said, twisting her waist long dirty blond hair into a long braid.

"Fine," an incredibly annoyed Colin replied.

"Marabell do you want to - - -," Kate started to say but was cut off by a high pitched "ruff." Then a small Golden Retriever puppy came running from the large shrub a few feet away.

"Come here, Trixie," Marabell called, but Trixie ran past her and jumped onto the small sailboat named The Aqua Fin.

"No!" they all shouted in unison, and Marabell, Colin, Jack, Kate and Lilly jumped in after her, and the boat wobbled from side to side. Then Trixie, who had never been in a boat before, got scared and started chewing on the rope that was tying them to the grassy shore nearby.

After a few minutes of trying to find the rope to pull themselves back to shore, Kate found the chewed half of the rope and told her friends, "Guys, Trixie chewed the rope."

"That's fine," Marabell said. "I'm sure we can sail back. But was she was wrong, oh so very wrong. The wind was blowing very, very fast, and the few minutes they had wasted scrambling had been time they couldn't afford to lose. In that wasted time, they had been swept out to sea. The wind was too strong for them to push against, so the only way for them to go was forward, with nothing but blue sea ahead.

See How St. John's Garden Grows

Photos and Article by Jan Ford

The first year, they sleep. The second year, they creep. The third year, they leap!

This describes how our garden has grown. Three years ago, several St. John's members gathered pre-pandemic to plant the garden that would grow into a place of beauty, rest and respite. Beyond what it offers to the humans who visit, there are the many insects and birds who visit for the nectar, pollen, seeds and shelter. Many of these have co-evolved: plants to support the creatures that visit and creatures that pollinate and move the seeds of the plants.

We are now part of the Mystic Charles Pollinator Pathways, gardens that grow native plants to support pollinators. Pollinators that pollinate not only the flowers in our garden but the vegetables in other gardens and farms that sustain us. The lower garden is an alternative to a grass lawn, filled with low-growing, mostly native plants. Sitting on the bench, digging in the soil, breathing in the scents, watching the bees; all of these are God moments for which we give thanks for the peace they bring.



Planting Day



The Beginning



Sweat Bee on Echinacea



Bumble Bee on Bee Balm



Native Bee on Aster



Wasp on Butterfly Weed



St. John's Mystic Charles Pollinator Pathway Sign

To view the map of the Mystic Charles Pollinator Pathways, go

to: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=16F5NBwu3LsRKu_2VzxmDiWm2UHWOEPr&ll=42.41369459999999%2C-71.15478860000002&z=13

Celebration in Appreciation of Jan Ford's Altar Guild Service

Photos by Charlotte Pierce and Dorothy Mallam

Earlier this year St. John's held an outdoor luncheon party to celebrate and thank Jan Ford as she retires after many years of commitment and service to St. John's Altar Guild. Cate Barr and Christine Carney did a wonderful job planning the event. The weather cooperated, and everyone had a lovely time.





**St. John's Episcopal Church
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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.

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