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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – Spring 2020

A Message from the Reverend Diane C. Wong, Rector

I am thankful to our Vestry and parishioners for reaching out to all of you at this particular time and helping those who need help, and to know that you all are doing well. By now, you know that the social distancing mandate will last till the beginning of May, which means we will not be able to gather in-person for Holy Week and Easter Sunday, and we will continue with our Sunday Eucharist via Zoom. While I am definitely disappointed about this, I am also buoyed by the 25+ people who participated in our first Zoom Eucharist, and our children who participated in their Zoom Church School with Kate Armstrong.

I half jokingly said to Kathleen, our music director and organist, that the first Sunday we come back together, it would be an Easter celebration, but I am also serious about my comment. Our liturgical feast days do not take place only on the appointed days on the liturgical calendar; they are understood as “moveable feasts.” This does not mean we will move the feast days to whatever dates we want, but that the meaning of these feast days can take place anytime in our lives, beyond the bounds of the appointed days on the liturgical calendar. We can go through a Lenten experience anytime of the year, a wilderness experience that is beyond the bounds of the officially appointed days of Lent; it can even last more than 40 days. I always see the crisis our parish went through in 2005-2006 as our Lent and we are slowly living into our Easter.

Whenever we celebrate the liturgical feast days, the important thing is that we are able to connect our lives with the meaning and purpose of these special days, so we can truly live into them and appreciate them more deeply. What could be the meaning of Lent, Holy Week and Easter for you this year? Could this be an opportunity for us to bear the anxiety and fear of each other, to suffer with each other, just as Jesus bore ours? Looking at the sacrifices of the healthcare workers, could this be an opportunity for us to grasp the meaning of laying down one’s life for one’s friends and the meaning of Jesus’ loving sacrifice for us? We will need time to process and reflect on this unusual time. This could be the most lenient of Lents and the holiest of Lents. And Easter may have a totally new meaning for us.

When we do make the connections between our daily experiences and the teachings and life of Jesus, our faith will become so much more alive and strong. Keep reflecting, and may your Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday be strong and alive in your hearts and souls. Stay well.

Blessings,

Diane+

A Pastoral Reflection from Bishop Alan Gates

March 27, 2020

Dear People of the Diocese of Massachusetts,

The story is told of a man caught in the turmoil of an earthquake. With the world falling down around him, he fell to his knees to pray. Fearful, stricken with dread, he could not form the words. A devout and lifelong person of faith, he had heard and spoken countless prayers, in public worship and in private. But in this moment of blind panic, neither the familiar words of the liturgy nor the extemporized plea of his heart took shape.

So he recited as prayer the only thing that came: he prayed the alphabet. “*A, b, c, d, e, f, g ...*,” he offered fervently, “*... h, i, j, k, ...*” On it went, this heartfelt petition, “*... p, q, r, s, t, ...*,” to its ardent Amen.

The prayer was genuine. The prayer was offered. And the prayer, surely, was received. God knew precisely the prayer of this man’s heart.

As Saint Paul has promised, “*the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*” [Romans 8:26-27]

In these troublous times we find ourselves struggling for the right words to say to God and to one another. We search for the right forms, individual and communal. In our longing for normalcy, we may strive to replicate the most familiar ritual elements and routines. Other times we may seek fresh inspiration for our prayers and expressions of community. And sometimes we will need simply to know that for now we are fasting in the wilderness. Sacramentally and socially, we are fasting – yet we are doing that together with one another around the globe, which is its own gift and grace.

Dear friends in Christ, in these days of wilderness journey: Keep it simple. Focus on what matters most. Pace yourself for the long haul. Be patient, with yourself and with one another. Be genuine. Be generous. Be grateful. Love one another. Spare a word to the lonely. Contribute to the neediest among us.

Lean on God and pray. And know that your prayer is good enough, however it comes. *A, b, c, d,*
...

Faithfully and fondly,
+*Alan*

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates

Letter from Bishops Gates and Harris

March 25, 2020

Dear Clergy and Lay Leaders of Our Diocese,

The season of Lent is always a time for returning our focus to those things which matter most. In these strange days we find ourselves doing just that--concentrating our every thought and prayer on health and security, petition and thanksgiving, life and love, God and neighbor.

Please see below our latest updates. These guidelines reflect Governor Baker's March 23 advisory, with its definitions of "Essential Services," as well as consultation with civic health and policy officers, New England bishops, advisors from churchwide emergency management departments and others.

We continue to be deeply grateful for every way that you are serving your congregations and your communities, every way that you are finding to be the Church in this unprecedented circumstance. May God bless us abundantly with wisdom, compassion, courage and grace.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates

The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris

Worship

You should now plan for **no in-person public worship services until May 31**. We will hope fervently that we might have a Spirit-filled celebration of Pentecost on that day. As with our [March 21 communication](#), this restriction governs in-person worship open to the public. **Online and live-streamed services from church buildings remain permissible**, as long as *fewer than 10 people* are present, *physical distancing* is maintained and *strict hygiene measures* are observed. Our current listing of churches providing online worship is available [here](#).

If Holy Eucharist is celebrated for live-streamed services, the celebrant alone should receive the sacrament (understood as receiving on behalf of all the people) or the celebrant should abstain (understood as sharing in the fast of all the people). Others present for the videotaping or broadcast should not receive. In place of the Invitation ("The gifts of God..."), the following Prayer of Spiritual Communion, as used at Washington National Cathedral, is recommended:

My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen. (St. Alphonsus de Liguori, 1696-1787)

A suggested **form for an Agape Meal** is available [here](#). Remote consecration of elements in viewers' homes is not sanctioned. Instead, the Prayer of Spiritual Communion (above) or the creative observance of an Agape Meal is commended.

Private **funerals and memorial services** may proceed as long as *fewer than 10 people* are present, *physical distancing* is maintained and *strict hygiene measures* are observed. An outdoor graveside option is strongly recommended.

Expanded liturgical resources have been gathered by members of our Liturgy and Music Commission for use in homes and online worship. A letter from the commission leaders introduces a host of links to resources for praying the Daily Office, praying with children, formation podcasts, grace at meals, suggestions for "Triduum Under Quarantine" and more. Find this compendium [here](#). Additional liturgy and formation resources have been compiled by the Episcopal Church Foundation [here](#).

Plans continue for **diocesan online service offerings for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day**. These pre-recorded videotaped services from the Society of St. John the Evangelist, the Society of St. Margaret and the Cathedral Church of St. Paul will be available for use by congregations which do not have resources to offer streaming worship, or as a complement for those who do. Further details will be forthcoming soon.

Mental health and domestic violence resources

During this time, ordinary channels for mental health support may be disrupted and support groups, like 12-step meetings, may not operate at the usual places and times. Those under quarantine, sheltering at home or feeling isolated or fearful may need additional support. The risk of domestic violence may increase. Stay in touch with people in your congregation through phone calls, video chats and notes. Find resources for additional support listed on our diocesan [COVID-19 Updates](#) page.

Financial and operational matters

COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund: We have established a **COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund** to respond to emerging, urgent needs in our congregations and affiliated organizations, and in support of collaborations with ecumenical, multifaith and community partners. The fund will address critical community needs and congregational sustainability during the time of the pandemic. A grant application with more guidelines will be available soon. The fund is now open to receive online gifts at www.diomass.org/give-now. We are deeply grateful for your sacrificial generosity. *"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2).*

A Pastoral Message from Bishop Gayle E. Harris

March 20, 2020

Friends in Christ:

*God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy power;
crown thine ancient Church's story;
bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour...
...for the living of these days.*

From Hymn 594, The Hymnal 1982

Words by Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969)

A few days ago I sent some of my thoughts to the vocational deacons of our diocese, and I wish to share those and other reflections with all among and connected to us during this time of crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are difficult days for the people of Planet Earth, our island home. These are challenging days for Christ's Body, the Church. While the pandemic of COVID-19 has forced the isolation of one from another, and the present global fear is new to most of us in 2020, pandemics and fear are not new in humanity, nor to the Church.

We can remember the fear and the epidemics of SARS, MERS, Ebola and other diseases that most of us have not experienced directly. As a seminarian, I was involved with ministries in Oakland and San Francisco when AIDS, mysterious and unnamed, began to strike fear. As I was growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, my parents lived with fear every spring trying to keep me inside for fear of my contracting polio, as my uncles did (one died, one was disabled), until the vaccine was developed and widely distributed when I was about eight years old.

The influenza pandemic of 1918, yellow fever, smallpox, bubonic plague, the Black Death--the list goes on of deadly communicable diseases that have visited us. All began as mysterious, even invisible, agents of panic, suffering and death. And what are now "childhood diseases" were at times intentionally given to the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas by invading Europeans to cause death among those who had no immunity.

The precautions mandated by Governor Baker of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the directives of our Bishop Diocesan Alan Gates and the statements by our Presiding Bishop and Primate Michael Curry have been for our protection, and largely to curtail exposure to COVID-19. They will temporarily keep us from public worship and providing ministry in our physical presence, but they do not dismantle our pastoral and spiritual ministries in the world and with each other.

I, like you, miss being present with others. I long for the sacrament of the Eucharist, not only the act of the community of faith, but the grace and strength I need to keep hope alive in these days. I turned to my *St. Augustine Prayer Book*, to the section titled "Spiritual Communion: When unable to attend the Mass," and these words jumped off the page:

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock:
if any hear my voice, and open the door,
I will come to them,
and will sup with them
and they with me.*

--Revelation 3:20

In union, dear Lord, with the faithful at every altar of thy Church where the blessed body and blood are being offered to the Father, I desire to offer thee praise and thanksgiving. I believe that Thou art truly present in the Holy Sacrament. And since I cannot now receive thee sacramentally, I beseech thee to come spiritually into my heart.

I unite myself unto thee, and embrace thee with all the affections of my soul. Let me never be separated from thee. Let me live and die in thy love. Amen.

--St. Augustine of Hippo

As we do continue in a spiritual community, we can offer solace and ministry to those who are alone, vulnerable, afraid, confused and ill by communicating our presence in ways to which we are unaccustomed, by the use of telephone, electronic and social media. Let us also rely on the power of prayer to encourage and support one another. As members of the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement we have a rich and creative tradition to face days like these. We also have the liturgical and spiritual resources of several hymnals and *The Book of Common Prayer*. It is time to rediscover the wealth of prayers and worship services for individuals and families within it. These resources can help us to articulate our hopes and needs, especially when words may fail us. If you do not have a copy, *The Book of Common Prayer* is available online [here](#).

The Daily Offices are prayerful worship services intended for congregations, individuals and families, and do not require clergy to officiate. Please see the following:

Pages 17-135

Morning Prayer (Rite I or II)

Evening Prayer (Rite I or II)

Compline (for the end of the day)

Page 136-143

Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families:

In the Morning

At Noon

In the Early Evening

At the Close of the Day

Pages 814-841

Prayers and Thanksgivings (Various)

St. Augustine of Hippo once said "they who sing pray twice" acknowledging that in song we tie heart and mind with our whole body in the act of singing. As I turn to prayer, our hymnals and the spirituals of the black religious experience keep coming to mind. The one hymn from *The Hymnal 1982* that continually comes to mind, and that I pray for the world, is Hymn 680, with words by Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

*O God, our help in ages past, our help for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home.*

May we continue in faith and may we know God's grace is present to give us strength and hope. Let us pray for the sick and isolated among us, and those who are despondent and disconsolate from fear. Let us also pray for first responders, the medical community, government leaders and biological scientists and researchers to be led by courage, compassion and the wisdom of God.

Yours in Christ,

+Gayle

The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris

Digitally Nurturing Faith and Spirit

by Joe Curro

Over the past few years, I have taken advantage of a number of online resources -- websites, apps, and podcasts -- that have helped me to grow in my faith and in my spiritual life. During this difficult time, when we are cooped up in our homes and physically separated from our church community and others, I thought that some of these ideas might be of particular use to fellow parishioners.

Meditation and Inspiration

Forward Day by Day by Forward Movement is a wonderful way to start each day. Even if you don't have the little booklet that is distributed at St. John's every few months, you can read the daily meditation online by going to <https://www.forwardmovement.org/>. Forward Movement also offers this as a daily podcast and through an app that is available for Android and Apple iOS devices.

As a practitioner of centering prayer, I have also appreciated the mobile app that is available from Contemplative Outreach (<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/>). The app can be installed on iPhones, iPads, and Android devices. Its primary purpose is as a meditation timer, and it can temporarily disable other notifications from your phone. The app can be configured to include a wide variety of opening and closing prayers and reflections, and the timer chimes and background image can be changed to suit your personal preference.

Other resources which I enjoy include:

- The World Community for Christian Meditation (<https://www.wccm.org/>), which provides a wealth of inspiration, much of which can be delivered to your Inbox daily or weekly.
- Society of Saint John the Evangelist (<https://www.ssje.org/>), the Anglican religious community in Harvard Square, which makes monastic wisdom, reflections, and sermons available via the web and email.
- Center for Action and Contemplation (<https://cac.org/>), an organization run by Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr, Episcopal priest Rev. Cynthia Bourgeault, and numerous other spiritual leaders. CAC offers a wealth of email newsletters, podcasts, and online courses.

A bit outside the mainstream is *The Liturgists* (<https://theliturgists.com/>), which began as a podcast focusing on the intersection of art, science, and faith, but which has grown into much more. *The Liturgists* has traditionally emphasized support for people who have gone through faith transitions and was a great companion to me as I made my own transition from the Roman Catholic to the Episcopal Church. Be warned, though, that many of the topics tackled by this podcast and site are extremely difficult, and the language is occasionally strong.

Daily Office

There are many means to read or listen to the Daily Office online, taking away the need to flip wildly through the pages of the Book of Common Prayer, searching for the day's readings. The aforementioned Forward Movement app and web site are particularly good resources. The web site in particular provides an incredible amount of control to choose the Rite, version of scripture, number of readings, and more, customizing your experience. It also automatically displays the correct prayer service, based on time of day. Forward Movement also puts out an audio podcast of Morning Prayer.

My personal favorite way to listen to Morning Prayer is via the podcast of the Episcopal Church in Garrett County, Maryland (<http://episcopalchurchingarrettcountry.org/>), which is available on major podcast platforms. The podcast sets the reading of Morning Prayer to the relaxing music of Native American flutist R. Carlos Nakai.

One can listen to Mid-Day and Evening Prayer (as well as Morning Prayer) through The Trinity Mission (<https://thetrinitymission.org/>). The Trinity Mission uses an Anglo-Catholic lectionary, but in form it is close to the Episcopal Church.

For even more online resources related to the Daily Office, I recommend visiting the Mission of St. Clare (<https://www.missionstclare.com/english/>), checking out their website, and downloading their app.

Holy Eucharist

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, many parishes have moved to streaming of their services. The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts has published a list of online worship opportunities at <https://www.diomass.org/news/diocesan-news/virtual-worship-opportunities>.

An online version of the *Book of Common Prayer* can be found here:

<https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/book-of-common-prayer/book-of-common-prayer-2006.pdf>

Sacred Music

As the father of a devoted young church musician, I would be remiss if I didn't include something on this topic. While you can find plenty of sacred music on Spotify and elsewhere, one of my favorite sources is Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tp7r>), which features performances from around the UK.

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As we navigate through the trials of this public health crisis, I hope that everyone will take steps to keep themselves healthy in body, mind... and spirit! I offer the above as a small measure of help in the last of these.

Book Review

By David Wilcox

A Pilgrimage to Eternity: From Canterbury to Rome in Search of Faith

By Timothy Egan

Viking, 2019

Last year at this time, when traveling was relatively risk free and we were not in the midst of this pandemic, Charlotte and I spent some time in England and made a journey from London down to Canterbury to visit the medieval city and the Canterbury Cathedral. While there I learned of an ancient pilgrimage path, the Via Francigena, from the Cathedral to Rome. The back drop for Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, this path has a rich history and took pilgrims from England into France, through parts of Switzerland and into Italy and finally to Rome. Of course, the English Reformation went a long way in reducing the importance of this pilgrimage and Anglican journeys slowed to a trickle. Not as well-known as the Camino de Santiago through France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela, the Via Francigena remains one of the ancient pilgrimages in European Christianity.

Timothy Egan, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of such books as *The Worst Hard Times* and *The Immortal Irishman*, made his own journey on the Via Francigena and has captured his experience in a wonderful book that shares his day-to-day travels as well as his own spiritual quest as he treks from England to Rome. Egan's story examines not only his own complicated history with the Church, but also examines the history of the Church as he encounters relics and shrines along the way. He is ever cognizant of the decline of faith in Europe in the twenty-first century, examining it in contrast to the ways in which Christian faith permeated so much of everyday life in Europe for centuries. Raised in a devout

Catholic parish in Spokane where the young parish priest abused friends of Egan's younger brother, Egan unveils his own conflicting feelings about the power and doctrines of the Church while also connecting with the millennia-old message of Christ and his disciples. The result is a narrative full of the history he encounters along the path, his examinations of his faith, and the beauty he experiences along the trail. Egan is a master storyteller and he shares wonderful vignettes of his encounters with locals and monastics along his journey as well as the travails of a pilgrim finding places to stay and nursing blisters on his feet. He offers not only a rich travel log but also a deep reflection of his own faith and how that squares with the history of the Church that has given rise to his faith.

In these times *A Pilgrimage to Eternity* offers a welcome anecdote to the constant news about the escalation of COVID-19 cases in our community and the world. Homebound and isolated, one can share with Egan the journey he makes and also ponder the questions he raises as well as the answers he finds along the way. I am still reading the book, taking it slowly; I haven't finished it yet. But isn't that the point of a pilgrimage in the first place. The journey is never truly over, even after we've reached our destination? I invite you to join Egan on his journey and see where it takes you. You'll be surprised at what you discover along the way.

St. John's - Worship and Fellowship During the COVID-19 Pandemic

For Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services, we will access the video / recording provided by our bishops. Watch for an email sent out on the day of the service.

St. John's has signed up for a Zoom account, so we are doing the following:

1. **Zoom Office Hours** - Rev. Diane will hold her normal office hours on Saturday, 11 - 2, via Zoom. Just give her a call on her cell phone (617-417-8102) and she will send you an invitation to join her through Zoom. Or simply chat on the phone.
2. **Zoom Sunday Worship Service** - We have started holding Sunday worship services via Zoom. Information and invitation are sent out each week.
3. **Zoom Sunday Coffee Hour** - Starting Sunday March 29th. Bring your favorite coffee and coffee mug and join our fellow parishioners for fellowship. Invitation will be sent out on Saturday with the time and Zoom link.

** This is a stressful time so don't hesitate to reach out to someone at the church, one of the Vestry members, the Wardens, or Rev. Diane. **

March Birthdays: Billy Herman, Donna Downing, Bill Ford, Don Webb, Tom Davison, Savannah Curro

April Birthdays: Michael Boulet, Julie DiMilla, Claire Dornin

PRAYER: COVID-19

**By Rev. Jemma Allen, Anglican Priest, New Zealand
(February 20, 2020)**

For those who are sick
and those who care for them,
that they might be restored to health
and receive all that they need this day:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those who have died
and those who mourn,
that they might know consolation:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For nurses and doctors,
and all who work in hospitals and medical care,
that they might be sustained with energy for their work,
and might have all that they need for good patient care:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For public health experts,
for scientists and bioengineers
working to understand the virus and to find treatment and prevention
that they might have insight and success:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For the World Health Organisation,
for government officials,
that policy and practice might be wise and effective:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those in quarantine,
that their spirits might be sustained,
and for those separated from people they love
by the circumstances of this illness:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those who are afraid,
that they might know peace:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those who are being harassed or persecuted
as racism is expressed around this illness,
that they might be protected:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those whose sin of racism clouds their eyes, minds and hearts,
that they might repent and love their neighbour:
Gracious God, receive our prayer.

Gracious God, receive our prayers,
those made with these words
and those made in the murmurs of our hearts.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

NOTE: Copied "as is" with British spelling

Source: <https://revgalblogpals.org/2020/02/20/thursday-prayer-covid-19/>

Arlington EATS Market Procedural Change

St. John's remains the location for the Arlington EATS Market, but as of March 30th, the Market is closed to shoppers. Volunteers are still coming in to sort and bag food. 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.

Arlington EATS Market Donations

For the duration of the COVID-19 shutdown, AEM is only accepting financial donations. They are grateful for whatever you can contribute. Checks can be made out to Arlington EATS Market and mailed to the church. Or you can contribute online at their website: www.arlingtoneats.org . Thank you.

**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
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