



RECTOR: REV. DIANE WONG
PARISH OFFICE: 781-648-4819
EMAIL: ADMIN@SAINTJOHNS-ARLINGTON.ORG
WEB SITE: [HTTP://WWW.SAINTJOHNS-ARLINGTON.ORG](http://WWW.SAINTJOHNS-ARLINGTON.ORG)
FACEBOOK: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/STJOHNSARLINGTON](https://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/STJOHNSARLINGTON)

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – Spring 2022

A Message from the Reverend Diane Wong, Rector

Is expressing thanks and gratitude in the season of Lent qualifies as a Lenten practice? Traditionally we have been asked to make sacrifices during Lent as a way to remember Jesus' sufferings and sacrifice for us; and the more challenging our sacrifice, the more pious we think we are. But Lent is really a time for us to turn back and get closer to God, so we can **appreciate** deeper Jesus' sacrifice and love for us, and so align the way we live with God's way.

The response that usually accompanies appreciation is being thankful or grateful. The hope is that we are grateful not just for Jesus' sacrifice and God's love for us during Lent, but every day - Perhaps truly taking time to notice and reflect what we are thankful for is a sacrifice in itself.

We tend to express thanks for our family and friends, our pets, or nature or our health. But the practice is for us to especially notice things we normally don't and give thanks for them. Give thanks for our body, no matter its shape and size, and the ways that we care for it. A friend of mine often said when she got up in the morning and she could put her two feet on the floor, she gave thanks to God. Give thanks for the home we live in; for our kitchen, our bathroom and bedroom, no matter the size. Give thanks for our favorite vegetables and also those we tolerate; give thanks for all the people who work together to provide us fresh food; for the books we have but don't know where to put them in our home. Give thanks each time we trust in God, and not having to ask for certainties.

Even more importantly, notice the dark places in us and give thanks for them, but notice also the power of God's light in us and around us. Notice and give thanks for our voids and then also for things that bring us purpose and support. And we want to notice things that no longer serve us well in connecting with God, and give thanks for being able to let them go.

As we journey further with Jesus into Lent and closer to Easter, we might find new life, new opportunities and new things to be grateful for. "In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is with gratitude that life becomes rich."
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Appreciatively,

Diane+

Bishops Call for Prayer & Ingathering for Ukraine Crisis Response Fund

March 23, 2022

Dear People of the Diocese of Massachusetts,

We continue to grieve the brutal military attack by Russia on the sovereign nation of Ukraine, now four weeks underway. Daily scenes of attacks on medical facilities, civilian domiciles, and even upon those fleeing Ukraine via attempted humanitarian corridors, have left us all feeling horrified, angry, and helpless.

Your bishops joined with our colleague bishops of The Episcopal Church, gathered together for a meeting of the House of Bishops at Camp Allen in Texas, in issuing a statement about the war in Ukraine. We decry the actions by Russia as “a fundamental violation of the rights and dignity rightly accorded all people, and a flagrant breach of international norms.”

We call upon leaders of the nations to work for an immediate end to this unjustifiable carnage. We pray for God’s protection and defense of those who remain in the path of warfare, and those who have been displaced. We pray also for the protection of those who have risked their own safety to speak out against the war in places where such prophetic posture is dangerous. We pray that all refugees be received with compassionate and equal treatment and dignity.

The full statement from the House of Bishops may be found [here](#).

In the Diocese of Massachusetts, prayers for the cessation of war in Ukraine have been earnestly lifted at prayer vigils and other events in congregations across our diocese. We urge continued prayers by every Episcopalian and at every worship service in our churches. Such prayer is our bounden duty, and is itself no small thing.

In the Diocese of Massachusetts, prayers for the cessation of war in Ukraine have been earnestly lifted at prayer vigils and other events in congregations across our diocese. We urge continued prayers by every Episcopalian and at every worship service in our churches. Such prayer is our bounden duty, and is itself no small thing.

Additionally, we urge sacrificial support from all our members and congregations for humanitarian relief efforts in response to the Ukraine crisis. Episcopal Relief & Development is working with the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, the Anglican Diocese of Europe, and numerous ecumenical partners to reach refugees in Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia. Financial contributions provide direct support to equip local agents with the specific forms of emergency assistance needed.

We call upon all congregations in the Diocese of Massachusetts to conduct ingatherings for the Ukraine Crisis Response Fund of Episcopal Relief & Development on one or both of two upcoming Sundays, April 3 and April 10.

Detailed information on that fund is available [here](#). Resources for announcements, bulletin inserts, and links for direct online giving are all available at that site.

We join all of you in praying, giving, and laboring for the furtherance of God’s Peaceable Realm here and now, in the world God has given us.

Faithfully and fondly,

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates, Bishop Diocesan
The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, Bishop Suffragan

Reactions to Active Bystander Training by True Story Theater

by Mary Jo Larson

Twenty-six people from St. John's Church, Calvary Church, and Park Avenue Congregational Church spent two hours on Saturday, March 26th learning how to intervene when we witness events that make us uncomfortable because they exclude or attack people because of their social identity. We practiced simple comments we can make, and practiced steps to take that promote additional dialogue and discussion, so that the behaviors are not repeated. Reactions were very positive. Here are some of the comments of the people who attended:

"the role playing was awesome! really gives a template for responding"

"Great to use approach of asking people for a specific help"

"I like the simplicity of 'I don't agree' as a speak up line - it makes me feel less pressure"

"To be curious when someone says something I find offensive--to dig deeper"

"As an introverted person, this training offers concrete ways of feeling empowered and given a voice"

The trainers from True Story Theater provided a 26-page handout before the workshop that they have assembled over many years with the best materials on active bystander approaches. They encouraged us to share the handout with others. It contains valuable information on the spectrum of bystander situations, responding to everyday bigotry, how to engage in dialogue, how to approach conversations across political differences, responding to public attacks, addressing "obliviousness" or "unconscious biases," and welcoming feedback.

Contact Mary Jo Larson (mjlarson44@gmail.com) if you would like to receive a copy of the handouts.

Lent, Mindfulness, and Thanksgiving

by Joe Curro

For this month's newsletter, Reverend Diane challenged us to look at our Lenten practices as more than acts of sacrifice, but as acts of thanksgiving.

Like many people, I engage in a number of dietary restrictions during Lent. I avoid sweets, alcohol, and caffeine, and I refrain from second helpings and try to use smaller plates. I also observe meatless Fridays. Additionally, I attempt to adopt a "digital diet," throwing off my habit of eating in front of the computer or television and cutting down on digital distractions in other of my daily activities. (I will admit that this last practice is particularly difficult, given my thirst for news about the tragic events in Ukraine, which is in a part of the world where I spent a considerable amount of time.)

One last practice that I pursue is to identify a piece of clothing in my dresser or closet each day for donation. (This practice has not been so difficult this year, as the pandemic has contributed to a more sedentary lifestyle and concomitant difficulty in fitting into much of my wardrobe, not to mention far fewer occasions for more formal attire!)

All of these practices do indeed involve giving something up. But they also contribute to mindful gratitude that I do not face the challenges of hunger and poverty that afflict so many in the world.

By concentrating on the meal before me without attempting to multitask, I am able to more fully appreciate this bounty of the earth and the labor of farmers and truck drivers and grocery store workers and all of the other people who brought it to my table. In selecting items of clothing for donation, I can reflect on all those in the world who struggle to obtain proper clothing and shelter.

Our Lenten reading was Living Buddha, Living Christ by the late Buddhist monk and spiritual leader Thich Nhat Hanh. The book sparked lively discussion about the concept of “mindfulness.” I for one believe that mindfulness is a valuable adjunct to Christian belief and practice. Both mindfulness and the concept of “interbeing” serve to make us more compassionate individuals, who experience empathy, charity, sacrifice, and thanksgiving as points along a continuum of human experience.

This continuum also neatly encapsulates the Lenten journey for me, as I walk with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, Gethsemane, Golgotha, and—ultimately—the empty tomb of Easter.

What Lent Means to Me: Then and Now

by Barbara Greene Seyon

When I was a kid, I looked forward to every holiday, particularly the ones that ushered in far too much candy. The Easter holiday was one of them and it was among my favorite -- not only because of chocolate-covered Easter bunnies but also because of shopping with my mother so I could be dolled up for Sunday school, the pageant, service, music, and the Easter dinner at home; Reverend Long, our Baptist minister, sometimes joined my family. I learned about the Lent season from my parents and in Sunday School, and was guided through observing it by my parents. Still, as a kid, I did not fully understand the giving-up part of it, but I did it.

As an adult, fully understanding the significance of the season, I observe it, but Reverend Diane's words were thought-provoking when she spoke of the theme for this edition of the church newsletter. I thought of what the season meant to me when I was growing up. I thought of what it has come to mean to me now.

In my global travels as well as here in my own country, seeing, knowing, that, in the midst of extraordinary wealth, so many live life in abject poverty makes me see the need for Lenten season throughout each day of the year -- not one of abstinence to deprive myself of something that pleases me, but an abstinence driven by the need to share -- time, resources, expertise, whatever -- when I think that I cannot.

Today, I attempt to practice a daily Lenten season, one of Justice towards God; Justice towards self, and Justice towards neighbors to ease life for our global family.

Thank You from Arlington EATS

by Andi Doane, Executive Director, Arlington EATS

If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's that we all need one another. When we moved into the St. John's Parish Hall in May 2019, you graciously offered us a temporary home while our space at 117 Broadway was under construction. Not only did you provide us space, you worked hard to accommodate our operations with your tenant schedule.

The plan was for us to be there for two years and we are now approaching our three-year anniversary. We are so grateful for the sacrifices you've made. Honestly, we couldn't have asked for a better place than the parish hall as it has provided the flexibility we've needed to shift and expand our operations because of COVID. It has been a divine match!

We are hopeful that construction will start soon and EATS will be able to move in the coming months. In the meantime, we thank you for your partnership as we serve our neighbors together.



An Arlington EATS Delivery Volunteer

Photo by Arlington EATS

Finding Joy and Peace Among the Blooms of Spring

By Jan Ford & the St. John's Garden Group

Our garden is just starting to wake up and share the hope of spring with us and those who stop by to visit. There are a few snow drops poking their nodding white flowers over the leaves and daffodils full of buds waiting to burst out. We left the leaves on the garden this winter in order to help the tiniest of wildlife survive. We hoped our native ground bees, woolly bear caterpillars and mourning cloak butterflies might have taken advantage of the leaf litter to winter over. These are all native pollinators that have evolved with our native plants.

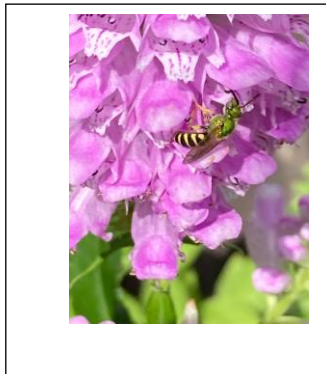
We have been accepted into the Mystic Charles Pollinator Pathways. This organization recognizes gardens that support native plants and pollinators and do not use pesticides. We rely on the birds and other creatures who populate the garden to provide natural insect controls. The organization produces a map that shows all the gardens in the Mystic Charles Watershed that meet specific criteria. We are waiting for our sign to arrive that will acknowledge our efforts. There are two links below. One is for the map and the other is about the national Pollinator Pathway program.

<https://www.pollinator-pathway.org>

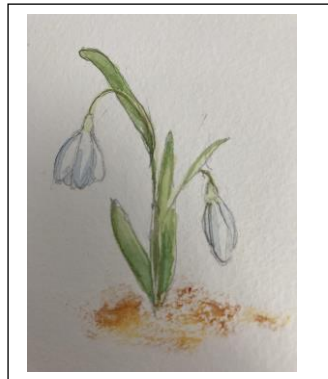
<https://www.belmontcitizensforum.org/2021/01/05/mystic-charles-pollinator-pathways/>
(scroll down to locate the link to the map)

We always welcome help with maintaining the garden but also hope that you will stop by to visit, give thanks for God's amazing gifts, and find some joy and peace there.

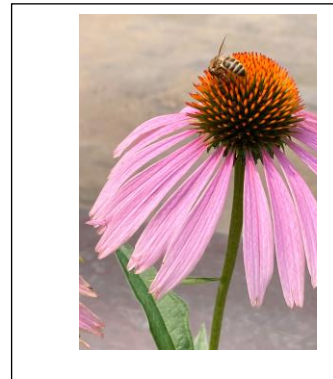
The photos below were taken last summer by Jan; and the drawing of snowdrops, also by Jan, is from this spring.



Obedient Plant



Snowdrops



Purple Coneflower

Updates from Our Mission Partner – Guatemala Aid Fund

by Mary Jo Larson

Our partner program, Guatemala Aid Fund (GAF), has completed its new community center in the Sololá district over the last two years. It is now seeking funding for the projects operating from the community center: educational tutoring, nutrition, medical services, counseling, and other programs for indigenous adults and children in the community. Here are some statistics of what has been accomplished in 2021 alone.

- Number of children with an ongoing source of care ...126
- Number of counseling sessions provided ...120
- Number of clients whose nutrition has improved ...345
- Number of children who have access to healthcare ...119

In 2022, GAF is starting a major new project to build two wells with solar panels for pump and water treatment so that Sololá families will have potable water. Families do not have indoor plumbing; their current water source is not sanitary and spreads disease. GAF is also fundraising to support employment of indigenous people in new positions that support the community center: land rangers, Mayan Heritage teachers, and other teachers.

This month, the Vestry received permission from the Diocese to send the remaining Mission Tithe grant funds to GAF to help with current projects in Guatemala. Many congregants give regular contributions to GAF. If you would like to learn more about their projects and make an individual donation, please visit <https://www.guatemalaaidfund.org/>



Children in San Jose Chacaya Solola that benefit from the Association for the Eradication of Poverty Programs GAF supports



The Family Counseling and Parent Training Classroom constructed in Guatemala City 2019 to support efforts to reunite children with safe family



2021 Hiring & Training of Indigenous Mayan Teachers in their own village



2021 Constructed Community Center with Library, Clinic, School Support, Malnutrition Prevention, and Health Programs.

Spring-Inspired Coloring with Friends

Submitted by Cate Barr

The coloring book pages below are from the "I'd Rather Be..." Coloring Book For Grown-ups. Gifts of Art, Michigan Medicine.



I'd rather be free as a bird.

Karl Laub



I'd rather be wandering among the beauties.

Jenn Millspaugh



I'd rather be feeding the birds.

Sue Holdaway-Heys

LGBTQIA+ Community Conversations

The Arlington Public Schools LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Task Force, the Arlington LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission, and the Arlington Human Rights Commission proudly present a series of LGBTQIA+ Community Conversations, focused on community-wide education and the amplification of student voices and leadership in Arlington Public Schools

When/Where:

**Arlington Town Hall | 730 Massachusetts Avenue
Tuesday, March 29th & Tuesday, April 26th**

Sessions begin promptly at 6.45 p.m.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Join us for a discussion featuring: a panel highlighting the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in Arlington Public Schools; an overview of LGBTQIA+ language, definitions and terms; and best practices to ensure and promote safe, inclusive learning environments for LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and caregivers.

To view the actual flyer, click on the following

link: **<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GrDcksJtGzl7-ezK-SCyXWTjk7Cl6QE4/view?usp=sharing>**

Sincerely,

Roderick MacNeal, Jr., Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Arlington Public Schools

Sale by GSA of AHS

The Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) of Arlington High School is selling two beautiful t-shirt/sweatshirt designs this year. Both designs were created by AHS GSA students.

The first option (a GSA logo) was created to celebrate the GSA and spread a sentiment of awareness and inclusivity of the LGBTQIA+ community at AHS. You can purchase three options (two styles of t-shirts and one sweatshirt). Here is the link: [GSA Logo T-shirts/Sweatshirts](#)

The second option (Gosling Love t-shirts) sends a message of celebrating love in all forms. Here is the link: [Gosling Love T-shirts](#)

We need to sell 39 more GSA logo t-shirts/sweatshirts for the order to run. We have already met our minimum for the Gosling Love t-shirts.

All proceeds will be donated to the [Transgender Emergency Fund of Massachusetts](#). Last year we raised almost \$2,000 for them.

Please consider purchasing one. Please also share this information with anyone who you think would support the fundraiser.

The campaign ends March 29 with estimated delivery to you on April 14.

Lenten Practice

by Frank Foster

This Lent, I am continuing an earlier practice of increasing my time of prayer by about a third. So instead of fifteen minutes in the morning it is closer to twenty minutes. This gives me a deeper connection with the people or issues for which I am praying. It also slows down my prayers so I can not only bring the matter to God but take time to listen for God's response. My times of prayer during Lent have become times of deep awareness: of local needs and realities but also of larger, on-going needs. This forms in me a resolve to continue the support I have been led to give but also to expand it in some way.

As a child, I always wondered if my small efforts would amount to much. As an adult, I realize I can enlarge my thanks to God and to the Church. A prayerful Lent gives an opportunity to plan this and put it into practice.

News from Bethany House of Prayer

by Joe Curro

For the past three years, I have had the honor of serving as a board member and clerk for Bethany House of Prayer in Arlington Heights. The last year has seen significant changes.

St. Gabriel's House, where many of us have gathered in the past for parish retreats, has undergone major renovations, including the addition of an outside wraparound porch and modifications to improve accessibility. While most programming has been virtual during the pandemic, groups are slowly starting to return to Bethany for in-person events.

In the fall, Bethany's co-founder and longtime executive director Julia Slayton brought her ministry to a close, leaving to pursue other passions. After an extended search, we were very happy to welcome the Ven. Dr. Dawna Wall as our new executive director at the beginning of March.

Dawna most recently served as archdeacon and parish priest in the Diocese of British Columbia and in Victoria. Her call to the contemplative life and to facilitating contemplative experiences for others has included a long-term affiliation with women's monastic orders, and she is herself a novice in the Community of Francis and Clare. Dawna was first ordained in the US in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and after later ordination as an Anglican deacon and priest, she served in Ottawa and Victoria. She has had extensive experience teaching and exploring and working with the insights of First Nations and Indigenous People, and there is great hope for the future of Bethany under her leadership.

If you are interested in participating in Bethany House of Prayer's contemplative offerings, I urge you to check out the listings at <https://www.bethanyhousearlington.org/contemplative>. Most are still digital, but plans are evolving to reactivate in-person offerings. Spiritual direction is also available for those seeking a more personalized exploration of their faith and their relationship to God.

Holy Week Schedule

Easter Egg Hunt on Palm Sunday & Easter Egg Decorating on Easter

Easter is on its way! We will be having the Easter Egg Hunt on April 10th, Palm Sunday, at 10 a.m. On Easter Sunday, April 17th, we will be decorating Easter eggs; it will be lots of fun, so please join us on April 10th and April 17th to celebrate Easter!

Maundy Thursday, 4/14 - Holy Eucharist with Footwashing - 7 p.m.

Good Friday, 4/15 - Episcopal Church Good Friday Service with Communion - 12 noon.

Easter Sunday, 4/17 - Holy Eucharist at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.

**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 Office Email: admin@saintjohns-arlington.org
Treasurer Email: treasurer@saintjohns-arlington.org
Web site: <http://www.saintjohns-arlington.org>**