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## ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter - September, 2017

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### **A Message from the Priest in Charge, Reverend Diane C. Wong**

I trust that your summer is going well. In a couple of weeks, summer vacation will be over and we will all be returning to our normal schedules at home, at school, at work, and here at St. John's too. September is turning out to be a busy month for our church. There is garden work day on Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup> in the morning, with our regular coffee house concert in the evening. Nursery care resumes on Sunday, the 10<sup>th</sup>, the Vestry meets on Monday, Sept 11<sup>th</sup>, and the NEAT community dinner is on Saturday, Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>. On Sunday, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>, Church School will resume with the blessing of the backpacks, and then on Saturday, Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>, Common Art will have a display at our parish. We are still aiming for a vestry retreat on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Some may feel there is too much going on for a small parish, and wonder why we need to be so busy. That is an important question to ponder because if we are busy just for the sake of being busy, what we do would offer little meaning and nourishment. With any ministry that we undertake, it is important to keep asking ourselves how we are furthering God's purpose, if we are creating and strengthening a sense of community at St. John's and in our neighboring communities, if we are continuing the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, how we are proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, how we are striving for justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of every human being, and if we are providing opportunities for God to renew the spirit of the parish so we can be God's servants in faith, hope, and love.

As a parish, we need time to come together to minister, as well as to play and to be quiet. Work or play, whatever we do as a church, the ultimate goal is to provide the space and the opportunity for ourselves and others to experience God's presence and to allow God's love to manifest. If our ministries are seeds for that to happen, we would become what a church is supposed to be and we would be blessed.

Whether at work, at rest or at play, let's be instruments of God's dream; and let God's dream guide, inspire and renew us.

Thank you.

Diane+

## Of Darkness and Light by Joseph A. Curro

On August 21st, people in the United States -- from Oregon to South Carolina -- will be able to see a rare, full solar eclipse. This is a moment when the Moon will slide between the Earth and the Sun, blotting out all light, except for a shimmering corona. Small towns along the ominously named "Path of Totality" anticipate a deluge of visitors from around the world and will struggle to control traffic; to ensure there is adequate food and water; to provide sleeping accommodations; to maintain adequate cellular service, internet bandwidth, and continued functioning of ATMs and point-of-sale terminals; and to facilitate safe enjoyment of this once-in-a-lifetime event.

One recalls the hysteria at the dawn of the new millennium when the thundering wave of the Y2K crisis crashed on the shores of civilization, albeit leaving nothing like the tsunami-level destruction that had been predicted.

Indeed, throughout the ages and in many cultures, solar eclipses have been accompanied by a sense of foreboding. Myths, superstitions, and legends abound regarding angry gods and mysterious beasts that steal or devour the sun and of bad omens befalling pregnant women and others unlucky enough to be caught in the eclipse's shadow. Christianity is not untouched by these tales. Scholars continue to debate whether the crucifixion of Jesus coincided with an eclipse. In Luke 23:44-45, it is written:

"It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two."

The mystery and the excitement of this approaching astronomical event create an irresistible allure. Answering its call, my family and I are packing up the tent trailer and joining an estimated 100,000 others to descend upon Hopkinsville, Kentucky (pop. 3 1,577), which is also known by the hashtag #eclipseville. For 2 minutes, 40.1 seconds, Hopkinsville will be ground zero for the greatest point of eclipse in all of North America.

Coincidentally, the eclipse will occur on the 62nd anniversary of another reported influx of outsiders to Christian County, Kentucky. In 1955, a group of local farmers and itinerant carnival workers called in law enforcement and military personnel following an alleged shoot-out with extraterrestrials that they said had been peering into the windows and doors of their farmhouse. The so-called "Kelly-Hopkinsville Encounter" is commemorated every August with the Kelly Little Green Men Days festival, which is marked with costume contests, talks, music, and a screening of the movie "E.T. – the Extra-Terrestrial". We look forward to attending, and we assure the people of Kentucky that we come in peace!

The eclipse promises to be a dramatic and life-changing event, providing a new appreciation for the awesome, life-giving star that sustains our solar system. Fleeting darkness will assuredly lead us to more greatly value the light.

Just as eclipse-watchers are confident of the return of the Sun, we as Christians draw strength from our faith in the return of the Son. The celestial corona is visible for mere minutes, but Jesus wears the crown of his kingdom for all eternity.

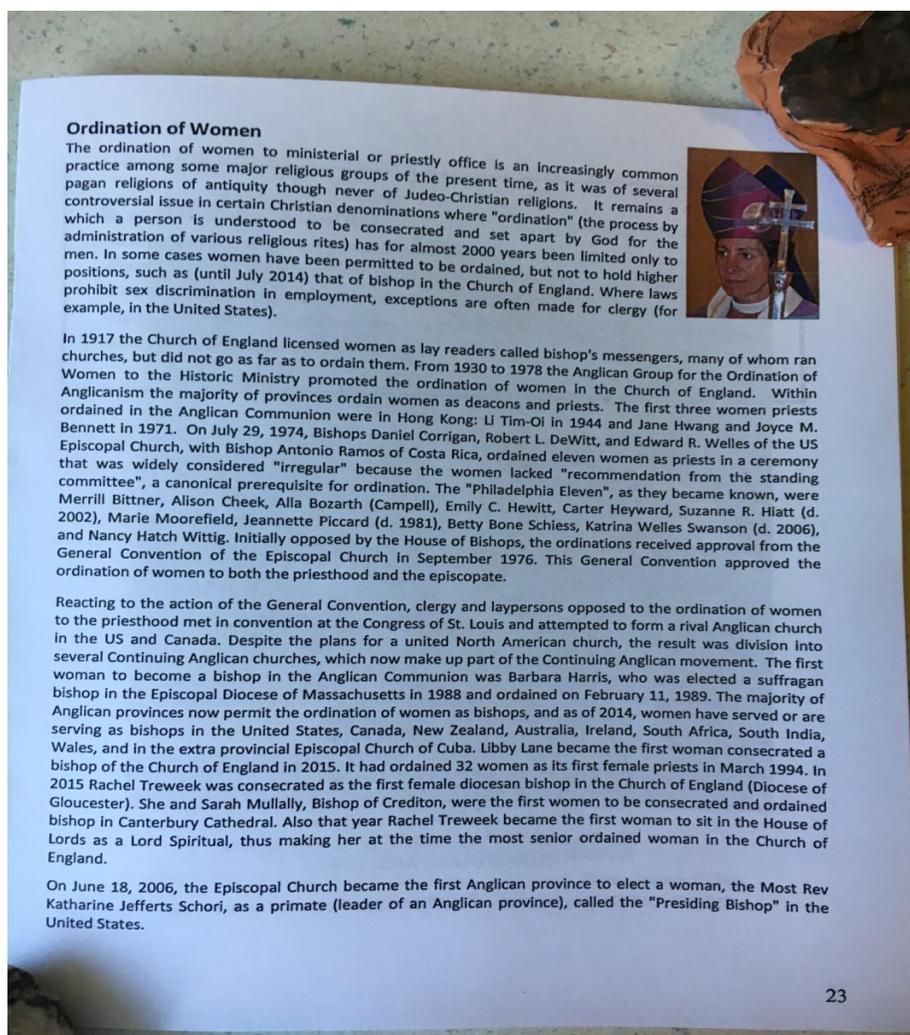
Our route through Kentucky will take us to the Abbey of Gethsemani, the spiritual home of famed monk, poet, and peace activist Thomas Merton. A quote of Merton's provides an inspirational meditation for our journey:

"We cannot arrive at the perfect possession of God in this life, and that is why we are traveling and in darkness. But we already possess Him by grace, and therefore in that sense we have arrived and are dwelling in the light. But oh! How far have I to go to find You in Whom I have already arrived!"

## Reflections by Jacqueline Barnard

While I was house-sitting in Falmouth for my dear friend who went to Canada for three weeks to visit her family, I attended the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church service on the eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 30<sup>th</sup> - H.E. Rite II. The singing was especially joyful: a Torah Song, "*Open your ears, O faithful People*" (#536 in the 1982 Hymnal) and a Swedish Folk Melody, "*Children of the heavenly Father*" (#213 in LEVAS). The Reverend Louise Forrest gave the sermon, mostly about the ordination of women priests in the Episcopal Church. (Please see the photo below.) I have a few hard copies to share. By the way, the service was just under an hour long!

Tea was on the lawn following the service - I met a member who told me about the yellow lichen that grows on the old stone wall border at this time of the year. I had been wondering about this yellow lichen as I saw it growing on the old gravestones on Cape Cod near Wellfleet. She told me that this lichen only grows on old stones! I wonder why?



## From the Bookshelf by David Wilcox



Since Pentecost our Epistle readings have focused on Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul is a complicated disciple and yet the seven authentic letters written by Paul make up more than a quarter of the New Testament. Most all of us know the conversion that took place for Paul on the road to Damascus. His letters to the early churches provide an interesting perspective on the early communities of those who followed Jesus the Messiah. But these letters and Paul himself have generated controversy over the centuries. Thomas Jefferson referred to Paul as "the first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus". George Bernard Shaw mentioned, "it would have been better for the world if Paul had never been born." Paul's view of Christianity, largely taken from the letters, has over the centuries painted a very bleak, strict, and some would say unforgiving view of what it means to be a Christian. His verses from his letters are often pulled out as ammunition in attacks against Jews, women, marriage and gays. As a result the vision of Paul is, to say the least, quite complicated and he has earned quite a bad reputation as a result.

This summer I have been reading two books that take a fresh look at Paul: What Paul Meant (Penguin Books, 2006) by Gary Wills and Paul Among the People (Image Books, 2010) by Sarah Ruden. Neither are theologians; Wills is Catholic and Ruden is Quaker. Both are remarkable writers and thinkers. Both received doctorates in classical languages (Wills from Yale and Ruden from Harvard). The perspective they each bring to their reading of Paul's letter, as classicists alone, is astonishing and helps set Paul and his message in the first-century Greco-Roman world in which his letters were written.

Ruden's work is quite enlightening as she not only looks at Paul's words (he was a native Greek speaker and was fluent in Hebrew) from the vantage point of a trained classicist, but she frames them within the context of the Greco-Roman culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. She tackles his views on a number of topics such as women (actually very liberated at the time), slavery, and homosexuality just to name a few. In the process she provides us with an amazing wealth of information about the culture in which Paul wrote, the challenges he faced, and the essence of his message of Christ's love.

Wills takes a somewhat different approach and aims to clarify what Paul's life, letters and teachings meant from a close reading of these letters, turning to the ancient Greek to clarify centuries of misinformation and misinterpretation of these epistles. In the long Western tradition that has portrayed Paul's message as one focusing on sin, guilt and the tortured conscience, Wills scrapes away all these layers of interpretation and reveals just how radical Paul's teachings were then and now. The result is a liberating and refreshing view on the early Christian communities, the teachings of Christ, and a guidepost for how we may carry Christ's message forward in our own lives and communities.

We will continue to hear from Paul for the rest of this year. If you would like to delve deeper into his teachings and the world in which he was writing I would recommend both of these books. They are well written, easy to read, and you will come away with a richer understanding of Paul, his message, and the very early Christian communities.

## Thank-you Breakfast for Our Liturgical Ministers by Rev. Diane Wong

If you are part of the Altar Guild, a lector, an usher, or a Lay Eucharistic Minister; or if you are interested in the Liturgical Ministry, you are invited to a breakfast on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

Have you wondered what the different vessels are called? Have you noticed that different liturgical seasons and pastoral services require a slightly different setup and liturgical involvement? We want to provide this opportunity for you to clarify any questions that you may have, or to review any procedures that you feel would be helpful. If there is any updated information about our Sunday worship, we also would like to share it with you at the breakfast. Most important of all, we want to thank you and show you how much we appreciate your being a part of St. John's Liturgical Ministry. So mark your calendars for October 7<sup>th</sup>.

## Christian Education Events by Mary Jo Larson

**Nursery Care starts 9/10/17** - Nursery Care for babies and toddlers (up to age 3) is available at the 10 am service and will start on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

**Nursery Care assistance needed** – Volunteers are needed to help Kayla in the nursery. We are asking for a once a month commitment. There is no planning required, just a warm and gentle presence. Please speak to Mary Jo Larson if you are interested.

**Church School starts 9/17/17** - Church school for children ages 3 to 11 will start on Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the 10 am service. We follow the curriculum lessons of Living the Good News to promote the spiritual development of the children. Feel free to drop in with your child to see what we do. A parent co-op was formed to provide training to parents and other interested adults to lead weekly sessions.



**Blessing of the Backpacks 9/17/17** - Children, students and adults: bring your backpacks to church to be blessed on Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Church School Assistants Needed** - Can you assist our church school? Church school parents are seeking the help of the St. John's Community — you don't need to be a parent, just interested in children. You can sign up to help once a season, once a month, or, if you have a special talent you want to share, on one or several occasions. Contact Mary Jo Larson for more information ([mjlarson44@gmail.com](mailto:mjlarson44@gmail.com)) or come to our planning and training sessions (see below).

**Church school planning and training sessions** - Mary Jo will host two sessions in September where parents can review the Fall curriculum, sign up for teaching, and exchange ideas for enjoying the sessions they lead or assist. Activities for children will be available while we meet. Please hold Sunday, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> and Saturday, Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> for a meeting and picnic.

## Christian Community Events by Mary Jo Larson

**Kickoff for The Living Compass Wellness Program** - We are planning a kickoff for the St. John's Wellness program, The Living Compass, for Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. Come hear and experience the ways we as a Congregation can broaden our understanding of wellness and have our faith inform our wellness. This information session will tell you about opportunities to join a small group or participate in a one-time retreat to nourish your own wellness in community with others.



**Seeking Input for Spiritual Growth and Development** - Do you have ideas on spiritual growth and development that you would like to see at St. John's? We will be hosting a community dinner in the near future and we will be seeking your ideas at the dinner.



## Worship

**Our fall worship schedule resumes on Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> with two services each Sunday: H.E. I at 8 a.m. and H.E. II at 10 a.m.**

**Nursery Care resumes on Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> (children 6 months to 3 years) – available on Sundays during the 10 a.m. service**

**Church school resumes on Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> (for children ages 4-11 years) – available on Sundays during the 10 a.m. service.**

**Beginning on Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, choir rehearsal is Sunday at 9 a.m. – Come lend your voice to the choir !**

**Altar Flowers:** We invite people to use Altar Flowers to remember, celebrate, or give thanks for special occasions or people. Open dates for altar flowers at this time are December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017; January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018; January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018; and February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Miriam Davison at 781-643-1679.

**Gluten-Free Hosts:** We also offer Gluten-Free Hosts for communion. If you would like to receive gluten-free hosts, please let Rev. Diane know ahead of time or during the Peace.

## Upcoming Events

- **Yard & Garden Cleanup – Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup>**
- **Coffeehouse Concert with Reggie Harris - Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup>**
- **Vestry Meeting - Monday September 11<sup>th</sup>**
- **NEAT Community Dinner - Saturday September 16<sup>th</sup>**
- **Common Art Exhibit - Saturday September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

## Common Art Exhibit at St. John's by Cate Barr

On Saturday, September 23, St. John's will be hosting a Common Art exhibit in the parish hall from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm, during which time parishioners, friends, neighbors, and the Arlington community are all welcome to come and view this unique exhibition. Everyone is encouraged to purchase these original works of art. As hosts, we will be providing breakfast for our guests and later, lunch and beverages. The artists will display and then pack up their work themselves; St. John's will set up the space with tables and dividers and assist the artists as they wish. Several of the artists are pictured below with their artwork.

On July 31st, Warden Christine Carney, Rev. Diane Wong, Joe Curro, Jan Ford, and myself met with Heidi Lee from Common Art where she is the Artist Coordinator. Heidi explained to us how these exhibits are run and about the artists she works with and supports, as well as their preferences when exhibiting and selling their work. Their goal is to have one showing a month; Heidi works to create and sustain relationships with churches and other venues to make this happen. Likewise, Common Art artists trust Heidi to advocate for them and this relationship is a big reason why this job is so meaningful to Heidi.



All artwork at this exhibition on September 23rd will be for sale. Everyone interested in buying should bring cash for their purchases; checks are only preferred for works priced at over \$100.00. Also, this artist community is always in need of materials and supplies, so we want to encourage everyone who attends this event to bring an already stretched canvas. Canvases can be purchased at Play Time in Arlington Center, Michaels at the Porter Square Shopping Center, and many other suppliers in Cambridge and Boston. If you are unable to purchase a canvas before the showing, donations for materials will also be collected.

We learned about Common Art after several parish parents and teens attended CityReach weekend events in 2016 and 2017. CityReach is another program under the Common Cathedral umbrella. CityReach is “an overnight urban outreach program begun in March 1996 for youth (with accompanying adults), young adults, and college students from churches of any denomination. The program gives these young people the opportunity to learn firsthand about homelessness from people who have experienced it. During the 20 hour session, participants join CityReach staff in street ministry and offer hospitality, food and clothing. This is followed by times of sharing and reflection.” Every one of us who participated in CityReach had an informative and amazing experience—listening, observing, working, sharing together, and meeting all the generous CityReach staff and folks from other parishes and denominations, other “Believers” as Heidi Lee puts it.

Common Art is a program at Common Cathedral, Ecclesia Ministries, Inc. of Boston and it supports local artists and folks who are just discovering their creative voice in every way one might imagine. Sharing Common Cathedral words on this mission, I think, is most succinct and heartfelt: “Welcome to Common Art - a program of common cathedral which provides space, materials and caring support staff to support unhoused and low income individuals as they develop their artistic abilities. People who live in shelters, rooming houses, on unclaimed couches and benches, and on Boston's streets, gather every Wednesday at Emmanuel Church on Newbury Street to draw, paint, sculpt, make crafts, and to share with other artists in like circumstances.

For most members, Common Art is a singular chance to express their artistic gifts. For some, art is a professional path, interrupted and suspended by calamity and homelessness. For others, it's an opportunity to express unheard opinions, ideas and truths. For others, it's pure joy, an oasis of form and color in otherwise dry times. For all, it's a simple and welcome relief from daily difficulty. For many Common Art members, art is a way of life. For others, it's a new discovery. But for all, art is passion, expressing and affirming life itself, a defiant or gentle "yes" in the face of stigma amid the constant struggle of poverty and homelessness."



Please visit the Common Art website to learn more at <http://commoncathedral.org/common-art/> and thank you for attending and supporting The First Annual Common Art Show at St. John's Episcopal Church. I know I'll be there!

## Support Mary Jo in Hike Mt. Washington for Mental Health

Did you know that 1 in 4 families is affected by mental illness? Mary Jo Larson is joining the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit of Mt. Washington for Hike for Mental Health. It is a great group of people who want to reduce the stigma of mental health conditions, fund mental health research, and fund improvement of trail systems. 100% of what Mary Jo raises will go to research and hiking trails, none of it to overhead (which is covered out of pocket by trip organizers and other donations). To support mental health research by making a contribution at Mary Jo's web page [Click on this link](#). If you want to hike yourself, find out more at [www.hikeformentalhealth.org](http://www.hikeformentalhealth.org).

## Memorial Garden Update by Jan Ford

Plans have been drawn up and a committee formed. We are waiting for the completion of the ADA-compliant sidewalk installation, and will move forward at that time. Many thanks to Jacqueline Barnard, Cate Barr, Lyca Blume, Jeanne Danton, and Sarah Phillips, all of whom have volunteered to help with the garden. There is room for many more volunteers and opportunities to provide plants and memorial pavers.





## Ministry Opportunities

**Donate Back-to-School Items in August and September** - Have you seen the purple bin at the back of the church? The Church School is sponsoring this donation event. Please bring school supply items to be donated to the Thompson School. Church school children, please bring items on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Consider donating backpacks, pens and pencils, crayons or other things you enjoy bringing to school.

**Ministry of Caring for the Church** - Our sexton, Don Richardson, is on vacation from August 16<sup>th</sup> through September 1<sup>st</sup>. Can you volunteer once or twice during this period to assist with keeping our church clean and safe? We have a Google schedule where you can sign up for a day or two ([click this link](#)). Also there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board outside the office. The time of day you do the task is up to you (note Monday exception). We hope that you can pitch in! Thank you. Tasks include:



Sunday--Check the Sanctuary after services and make sure the front door is secure; take out trash and recycling to curb (Trash is behind shed door in kitchen.)

Monday--Bring in trash barrel (after 2:00 pm); empty dehumidifiers in the parish hall; empty waste baskets; put away card tables in Memorial room

Wednesday--Vacuum entry hall; empty dehumidifiers in the parish hall

Thursday--Clean the bathrooms; stock the paper towels, toilet paper, and soap using supplies in the closet by the stairway near the nursery

Friday--Vacuum Memorial room and Sanctuary if needed

Saturday--Light the 7-day candle in the Sanctuary using a ladder; empty dehumidifiers in the parish hall

**Watering Help Needed** - Are you able to stop by the church to water the planters at the front of the church and the plants along the walkway? Frank has volunteered to water on Thursdays. It would be helpful to have someone who could water on Tuesdays and Sundays. We are looking for different people to take part in caring for our plants. Let Jan Ford (781 648-0143) know if you can help. We have a hose on a reel that is connected to a water source.

**Yard Clean-Up Day - Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup> - 9:00 am to noon** -

Our beautiful banner welcomes everyone to our church but our yard needs some TLC. Some of the tasks will be to clean up the foundation beds, plant the hostas on the banking to the right of the church, finish the clean-up behind the shed, and weed along the walkway to the main entrance. The goal is to have the front of our church look inviting for the beginning of a new year. We'll share some pizza and goodies at the end of the morning. There's joy in working together and seeing the fruits of our labor. Come join us - there is a signup sheet on the piano in the Sanctuary. Please bring trowels, weeders, spades and leaf rakes if you have them. We will have extras to share as well.



**Shade-loving Plants Needed** - Do you have hosta, Solomon's seal, or shade loving ground cover that you are able to split and share with us? We are hoping to remove the invasive bittersweet and plant the banking along the right side of the church with hardy plants that will thrive and improve the vista. Please bring them on the clean-up day on September 9<sup>th</sup>, or leave them behind the shed.



**Food Pantry** - We encourage people to continue to drop off food for the Arlington Food Pantry. We collect and donate food throughout the year – donation baskets are at the rear of the Sanctuary. Additionally, the Food Pantry is always in need of volunteers. Visit the food pantry's website at <http://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/health-human-services/food-pantry> or see the posters on the downstairs bulletin board for more information.

**Conversation Practice for English Language Learners (ELL's)** - We are pleased to announce that St. John's will continue to host an intermediate-level conversation group for ELL's as part of our outreach program in the fall. The group will meet on Thursday evenings from 7 pm to 8:30 pm in the Memorial Room. Our classes are facilitated and administered by English at Large, a nonprofit organization founded in the early 1970's to provide free classes to help refugees and immigrants learn English and become accustomed to and integrated into American life more easily. Facilitators are trained in a free, 3-hr session by English at Large. English at Large is also looking for tutors to teach English one-on-one, and will give them the required 12-hr training for free. For more information, please email Vicki Ford at [vpford@gmail.com](mailto:vpford@gmail.com).

**St. John's Episcopal Church  
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**Rev. Diane Wong's office hours - Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 3 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](mailto:dianeckwong@gmail.com)**

**Church Office is open M, W, Th 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Please call to see if the office is open at other times.  
Church Office Phone: 781-648-4819 Email: [st.johns\\_arlington@verizon.net](mailto:st.johns_arlington@verizon.net)**