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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter - Winter 2017/2018

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

We just had our Thanksgiving celebration, and I wonder if naming what you are thankful for is a Thanksgiving Day ritual for you and your family. There are, indeed, many blessings in our lives, and also at St. John's. Against all odds, our parish is not only still standing, but actually getting a little bit stronger, more vibrant, and outward-looking each year. But being thankful for our blessings should not be just an annual ritual. According to Ignatian Spirituality, giving thanks is something we do several times a day.

Why is it important for us to be thankful? There is a deep connection between gratitude and generosity. One leads to the other. Grateful people are more generous and generous people are more grateful. There is also a deep connection between gratitude and faith. One also leads to the other.

In a couple of months, we will hold our second parish dinner conversation to discern and discuss who it is that God called us to be; what our identity is, and how we can walk towards God's future. These questions will also be helpful when we all engage in the parish discernment process as the last phase of the parish transition.

Discernment can be challenging because there is no voice from heaven telling us what to do; there is no 100% guarantee that what we decide is correct. One thing that is helpful is to do a lot of listening to our hearts, to allow our grateful and faith-filled hearts to guide us in envisioning what the future path of this parish may be, and in responding to God's call to ministering to the needs of the greater community more generously, faithfully and courageously. Will gratitude and faith be this parish's sure foundation?

Jesus taught us that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. What we treasure in a thankful and faith-filled heart is different from what's in an ungrateful heart. This does not necessarily mean our ministries will always be successful. But we are reminded that God does not call us to be successful; God calls us to be faithful.

As we begin another new liturgical year, may the practice of being thankful for God's blessings transform our hearts, and may we become what we practice.

Thank you.

Diane+

Parish Dinner and Discussion on October 28th

The First in a Series

by David Wilcox

On the evening of October 28th we held our first in a series of Parish dinners and discussions. These meetings are designed to bring people together and focus on particular topics relevant to the whole Parish. Our focus for the first few meetings is what does God have planned for St. John's and how can we embrace and listen to what God wants our community to be? The Reverend Liz Magill joined us for the discussion portion of the evening. Reverend Magill consults to smaller parishes and is also a skilled group facilitator who prompted a very lively discussion among the twenty or so parishioners who attended the evening.

Several themes and ideas emerged in the course of the discussion. We talked about our views of what makes a church and what it means to be a Christian. We then looked at outward-focused activities St. John's does, such as work with the Food Pantry, the Coffeehouse Concerts, and the Community Dinners. We also discovered that for many parishioners the spiritual life of the parish and our worship – the more inward aspects of our work as a community – are just as important to us as our outward work in the greater community. Reverend Magill helped us understand that we are indeed a “small parish” in terms of our numbers, but this doesn't mean we can't grow in our inner and outward goals. We need to use our resources wisely and make sure there is a place where everyone can use their gifts.

The final part of the evening found us reviewing the various types of tasks involved in running our parish. Reverend Magill had all of us get up and find our place in a line that showed our level of interest in a particular activity, ranging from very interested to not very interested at all. We then ran down a list of various parish activities – serving on the Vestry, spiritual growth, teaching Church School, community outreach activities, and so on. With each activity we moved down or up the line based on our level of interest in the particular activity. The exercise was a brilliant way to enlist people's awareness of what it takes to run a small parish and realize the goals St. John's has begun to set for itself. It was also a wonderful way for people to think about areas of parish work folks would feel comfortable getting involved with.

These ongoing Parish dinners will offer all of us at St. John's an opportunity for us to not only grow as a community in Christ but also grow personally. Please stay tuned and listen for announcements about our next evening together. We will provide a light supper and also have childcare for families.

Prayers of the People – Written by the Children of St. John’s

These are the prayers that the children in St. John’s Church School wrote for Children’s Sunday in October:

We pray for our families, our friends, our teachers and classmates, and this congregation.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for our pets, all animals, and wild things, including the wild things of our imagination such as dragons.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for all plants, all things growing, and all of nature and ask for your help to stop pollution and protect the planet Earth, including volcanoes.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for the people who lost their homes, their pets, and their lives to the fire in California. Please help the fire fighters put out all the fires.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for all people hurt by guns and ask for your help to stop the spread of hatred and to keep all people safe from violence.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray that the people we love and all strangers too will be good people and live good lives.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

CoffeeHouse Concert - Saturday, January 13th, 2018

Dance away your winter blues as Stanley and the Undercovers and friends deliver high-energy, highly danceable, and faithful renditions of classics from the likes of Chuck Berry, James Brown, and other titans of the blues. Clearly it's time to come together as a community and celebrate our connections. Get your groove on and bring as much joy to the party and the challenges that lie ahead as you can. Don't forget your dancing shoes! Please spread the word and help make this a night of celebration. Refreshments available.

Admission: \$12/\$15 in advance; \$15/\$18 at the door. Proceeds benefit the Arlington Food Pantry, and affordable housing through the Housing Corporation of Arlington.

December Birthdays

Happy Birthday to Lyca Blume, Sarah Boulet, Donna Sullivan, and all of St. John’s parishioners with December birthdays.

Neighbors Eating All Together

NEAT Community Dinners

By Laura Manion

A few years ago, St. John's joined an Arlington ecumenical group who were helping to raise awareness and money in support of the Arlington Food Pantry and the Housing Corp of Arlington. During those meetings, a need was recognized for guests who participate in the Food Pantry and lower income support options that Arlington provides: that need was community connection. We realized that many of the guests might not have the opportunity to speak with other families, go out to dinner or feel a fellowship within the town. Therefore, a community dinner idea was planted.

Since that time, St. John's, Park Ave Congregation, Food Link, Arlington Food Pantry, and many Arlington residents have volunteered their time and talents to host the Neighbors Eating All Together (NEAT) Community Dinners, which happen every third Saturday of the month at St. John's.

At these dinners, we work with Food Link, an amazing gleaning program here in town where they rescue food from Trader Joes, Whole Food Market, bakeries and farmer's markets around the area, and then disburse that rescued food to many people including the Arlington Boys' and Girls' Club, Arlington Eats, Arlington Food Pantry and now the NEAT Community Dinners. Food Link provides free coffee, bread, dessert and fruit which we use at each dinner. Our past dinners have been catered by D'Agostinos, and we've served pasta and chicken meals along with the donated Food Link foods. At our most recent dinner, in November, Blue Ribbon BBQ donated 100 meals which we served to a packed house.

We have hosted four dinners, with the next coming up on December 16th; and so far we've seen many returning guests as well as volunteers. We believe that we are getting the word out throughout town about these efforts, and we know that we are getting people through St. John's doors. This effort is nondenominational; and we plan as a group to reach out to town officials for more help in fundraising and awareness. If you would like to help, we also welcome new volunteers. 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:40b) We welcome your ideas and questions as well.

To the volunteers and people involved, I am very grateful for such a committed group. Your efforts have allowed us to provide this community outreach service, and it's very exciting. Thank you. If you'd like further information, would like to volunteer, or just have questions, please call me at 617-852-1380 or email me at lpmanion@gmail.com. And please feel free to join us on December 16th for a special Christmas / holiday community dinner – ALL ARE WELCOME!!

Christian Education Events by Mary Jo Larson

Christmas Pageant on December 17th

The Children's Sunday School will perform their Christmas Pageant on Sunday, Dec. 17th. Each Sunday in Advent they are rehearsing their songs, and reenacting the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Many church members are contributing to this event. Dorothy Mallam is our director. Bridget Carney is a supervising director. Savannah and Sierra Curro are leading the children's practice of songs. Please invite all your family members and friends to attend the 10 o'clock service on Sunday the 17th and participate in this joyous event.

Guatemala Coin Collection and Worry Doll Creation

The partnership between the Guatemala Aid Fund; Arlington, Massachusetts; and St. John's is growing. Bethany Eisenberg visited with the church school children at St. John's in October to discuss what it is like to be a child in Guatemala and the difficulties in attending school. The children asked provocative questions and stayed engaged the whole time. They decorated cans to collect coins and change at home and among their friends to support a GAF fundraising project to buy a bus to take the children to school. See more about projects at: <https://www.facebook.com/GuatemalaAidFund/>. As of the Advent 2 Sunday, St. John's adults and children combined collected over \$300 for GAF. Bethany returned on Sunday, December 10th to handcraft Worry Dolls with the children. The children expressed interest in this traditional craft form, and learned more about the legend associated with the dolls.

Our Health and Spirituality - Making the Connection

By Mary Jo Larson

An early church leader, Irenaeus, said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive." Have you ever felt that the competing demands and crises of daily living are competing with being who you are called to be? Being fully alive is to be who God intends us to be, according to psychologist Reverend Scott Stoner, the developer of The Living Compass (TLC) program. Rev. Stoner and his family-therapist wife, Holly, developed TLC program to help each of us draw upon our spiritual practices to support a wellness-focused life.



The first step is a self-assessment of eight areas of wellness. There also are a variety of formats for small groups to engage in exploration, learning, and sharing around ways to support personal growth in each of the eight wellness areas. I was tremendously invigorated by the training session Rev. Diane and I attended on how to create small groups and one-time retreats to support learning and practice of these self-care wellness practices. St. John's will be offering a Lenten program based on TLC that we hope you will participate in. More information will be provided in the coming weeks. Please share the news with your family members and friends.

Report on 232nd Diocesan Convention by Frank Foster

The 232nd Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts was held on Saturday, Nov 4th. The Convention's theme was "Imagine embracing brave change with God's help". Delegates from St. John's were Rev. Diane, Mary Jo Larson, and Frank Foster. All delegates at the convention voted for Alternate Deputies to General Convention, a Lay member of Cathedral Chapter, and a Clerical Member of the Disciplinary Board. In the early part of the Convention, a balanced budget was adopted which included a new assessment formula resulting in lower amounts for many parishes, including St. John's. In the afternoon, delegates voted on two resolutions: 1) The diocese will commit itself to living out the principles of the Paris Climate Accord, with other denominations joining with us in response to climate change; and 2) The diocese will establish a network of congregations and individuals involved in elder ministry.

Delegates also passed an amendment to the Diocesan constitution passed in 2016, which enables our Diocesan Youth Council (DYC) members to participate in conventions. The DYC also gave a presentation about their trip to the Episcopal Youth Event in Oklahoma City.

Lessons & Carols & Light Supper on December 10th

The beautiful Anglican tradition of Lessons and Carols will be held on Sunday evening, Dec. 10th at 4:30 p.m., followed by a light supper and a sing-along. Lessons and Carols chronicle our salvation history starting from creation. We hope to see you as we prepare ourselves to wait for the coming of Emanuel. Please bring a salad or a dessert to share – sign up in the Parish Hall.

Pledge Sunday on December 17th

Sunday, Dec. 17th will be Pledge Sunday. The Finance Committee asks all parishioners to turn in their blue pledge forms on or prior to that day, and thanks them for their consideration of St. John's in their 2018 contribution planning.

Annual Meeting January 28th

The 2018 Annual Meeting for St. John's Parish will be held on Sunday, January 28th, 2018. Please submit reports by January 8th.

Upcoming Events

Festival of Lessons & Carols – Sunday, December 10th at 4:30 pm

NEAT Community Dinner - Saturday December 16th at 5 pm

Christmas Pageant– Sunday, December 17th at 10 am service

Vestry Meeting – Monday, December 18th at 7 pm

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

**** Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 10th at 4 :30 pm ****

**** Morning Services on Sunday, December 24th: ****

**** Holy Eucharist Rite I at 8 am ****

**** Holy Eucharist Rite II at 10 am ****

**** Christmas Eve Service on Sunday, December 24th at 5 pm ****

Advent Book Discussion Group

We come across the phrase "the dream of God" often. What is the dream of God? What is the dream that the Messiah comes to fulfill? For this Advent, there will be a book discussion on the book The Dream of God by Verna J. Dozier. We will meet on three Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m., starting on Dec. 6th. If you are interested in joining the book discussion, please sign up on the signup sheet or contact Rev. Diane. Thank you.

Christmas Flowers

Poinsettias and greens truly make our sanctuary beautiful, and bring the church visually alive for the celebration of Jesus' birth. To ensure that we get the number of poinsettias we want, we need to place our order by Monday, Dec. 11th. Flowers may be given as thanksgiving for a person or a special occasion, or as memorials, or in celebration. You may also choose to have contributions made to the greens or the general flower fund. Please fill out the form with a check and leave it in the office, or place it in the collection plate, or mail it in. More forms are available in the rear of the sanctuary and in the office. Thank you very much.



Worship

Our regular schedule consists of two services each Sunday: H.E. I at 8 a.m. and H.E. II at 10 a.m.

Nursery Care and Church School are available on Sundays during the 10 a.m. service.

Choir rehearsal is Sunday at 9 a.m. – Come lend your voice to the choir !

Gluten-Free Hosts: We 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.

Altar Flowers: We invite people to use Altar Flowers to remember, celebrate, or give thanks for special occasions or people. If you are interested in contributing to the flower fund, please contact Miriam Davison at 781-643-1679. We invite you to contribute to the altar flowers for any Sunday in 2018, especially January 28th. Thank you for supporting St. John's flower ministry.



Ministry Opportunities

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).



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.

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



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.

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