



THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S
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“Never let a crisis go to waste”



The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

RECENTLY HEARD a clergy person say these words which really caught my attention: “Never let a crisis go to waste.” This points to the important spiritual insight that we need to be alert to the spiritual lessons we can learn from any situation, including those of challenge and crisis. And of course, the Easter promise of new life and resurrection, coming out of the crisis of Christ’s death on the Cross, is a lesson to keep our eyes open for new beginnings and blessings even out of the most life-denying situations. God often uses crisis to open our eyes spiritually. I believe this seems true of the challenges of the pandemic and the crisis over racial injustice that we have confronted in our nation.

What spiritual insights and lessons have you learned over the last year from the crises that we have faced? I have heard many

parishioners reflect on how the pandemic has sharpened their sense of what is really important and what makes for a blessed life. In terms of personal life, people have commented on how they have gained clear sightedness about the importance of family and loved ones. Many have spoken about the importance of human connection and have made more time to reach out to friends. Others have spoken about a new sense of the preciousness of time and slowing down to focus on what truly matters and is life-giving. All of these seem to reflect a Christian understanding of what makes life worthwhile.

Other people have spoken to me about how the pandemic and the crisis over racial justice have made them reflect more deeply about how we are all deeply bound into bigger systems and mutual relationships of interdependence. As John Donne, the 17th century English poet and clergyman wrote, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . . any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.” People have spoken to me about how, as Christians, they have been awakened to the need to address systemic issues of racism and unfairness in our nation. They have reflected about how it is important to put our faith into action to fulfill the call of Christ

to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

As I have been considering the response of people to the current challenges and their hopes for the future, it has made me meditate on the words spoken by the risen Jesus to Mary Magdalene on that first Easter morning when she encounters him in the garden outside the empty tomb. “Do not cling to me,” Jesus says to Mary. I have been reflecting on the implications of these words on what we have learned from the crises and about our hopes for our individual and collective lives as a nation.

When Jesus spoke those words, the implication was that with Christ’s resurrection, things were not going back to the way they were before. Yes, he will be with them, but no longer in the flesh. He will be with them in a new and even more powerful way through the power of the Holy Spirit. And indeed, this will allow new and wonderful things to happen. The good news of the Gospel will no longer just be limited to the people of Israel, but with the power of the Holy Spirit it will spread through all corners of the Roman Empire to eventually become the global faith it is today. But it is not hard to imagine that in many ways Mary and the other disciples might have wished that it did not have to be quite like this. Of course, they wanted the gospel to spread, but you can

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imagine they might secretly have wished Jesus to still be with them in the flesh. But spiritual masters will tell us that spiritual growth always involves letting go of things in our lives. As C.S. Lewis said, "We can't receive new gifts if we are carrying too many packages."

As we reflect on what we have learned from the pandemic and the crises confronting our nation, what things, habits, and outlooks will you need to stop clinging to, so that you can fully embrace your hopes for a new and more meaningful life following more closely in the steps

of Christ? Never letting a good crisis go to waste means finding out how God is calling you to let go of what stands in your way of more fully embracing Christ's way of love. But we do not make this journey of faith on our own, none of us is an island. We tread this path in the company of each other at St. Andrew's, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,



Warden's Message Signs of Spring



Paige Manning, warden

AS I GAZE OUT MY WINDOW in early February it is a cold, gray, winter day. But the sunset is noticeably later than it was a few weeks ago, so I know that spring is coming soon. One thing I always look forward to is the appearance of the first flowers of the season, often those appear for me to be beside the church's side entrance on Denton Road, when the first crocuses poke up their welcoming heads. I am not a gardener, but I am extremely grateful for all our members who tend the parish gardens and make

this possible.

During this long, strange winter, there has been much unseen progress, and hidden growth inside our church, as part of our capital campaign program of updates to the sanctuary, the narthex, and the children's chapel areas. I was able to get an early look at the progress recently, and I can report that the work is moving along rapidly, and that the results of our updates to date are impressive. I join everyone in eager anticipation of the day when these "flowers" bloom in full view and we can all enjoy the beauty of our sacred spaces together, inside the church again. Like a long winter, we have endured our pandemic-related closures and restrictions with New England grit and patience. But we trust that the days when our church can open up like a spring flower, and we can enjoy the new beauty, are coming, as surely as the first days of spring. Have faith!

But for now, we must persevere in our caution around this viral pandemic, even as we pass



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the one-year mark for the major disruptions in our lives. We send heartfelt thanks to Adrian, Margaret, Mia, Wardie, all the staff, and parish volunteers for their extraordinary efforts to keep St. Andrew's smoothly functioning, and safe, during these times. All the key elements of our church life and missions have continued, albeit in modified formats: worship, music, outreach, education, youth programs, and pastoral care are still vital parts of our church life.

Our stewardship campaign for 2021 has been strong, and we are financially stable.

For the second year, St. Andrew's will celebrate Easter remotely, via recorded services and virtual gatherings. While we all miss the joys of in-person services, I am very grateful for the beautiful music, readings, and sermons our creative clergy and staff put together each week, and Easter will be no exception! As we did for Christmas, the church will distribute packages of

pre-blessed wafers and wine for at-home communion during Easter services.

As a personal note, I would like to add my thanks and praise to outgoing warden David Hamlin, and all the outgoing vestry members, for their strong leadership. I also welcome incoming warden Will Nystrom, and all the incoming vestry members for 2021. I look forward to working together to keep St. Andrew's strong in the coming year!

New Life: Some “Fight” Required



The Rev. Margaret K. Schwarzer

WHEN SPRING FINALLY arrives, I look forward to seeing the carpet of delicate snowdrops which pop up near our church's Denton Road door. They bring new life, freshness, and beauty to the dirty snow and raw earth surrounding them. Our Memorial Garden comes alive with green too, and our neighborhoods begin to see crocuses and hyacinths. Tiny green shoots and tightly curled leaves hover above the ground, ready to begin sucking up sunlight and air. All of those stems, buds, and blossoms look sweet and tender.

Farmers know about the tough battle those “tender” plants always fight before becoming visible to

us. Seeds are soil ninjas. They are heavyweight boxing champions of dirt. Nothing tender about it. Any plant we see in the spring has been striving for weeks. They have been pushing aside dirt many times their own weight, determinedly moving towards something they have never experienced: sun and sky. And the seeds don't make a run for light before securing other priorities first. Most seeds don't even need light to germinate. Seeds grow downward first. The seed's cells elongate, divide, and grow downward to anchor the seed in place and to absorb water and other nutrients. Roots come out before glorious stems and leaves. During winter dormancy, seeds appear to be lifeless, but they are actually powerful living beings. They are waiting for the right circumstances to burst into fuller life.

In a “normal” year, I'm ready to be captivated by the delicate beauty of spring; this year, I appreciate learning about the fight. This winter has been a tough one. No sentimental spring for us. Instead, we have a chance to remember that struggle and grace work together. This spring brings an opportunity for us to trust that God is with us in the struggle, even as we head for a new reality that we haven't expe-

rienced yet: expanding new life in a world of vaccines and COVID viruses.

As Easter season approaches, I want to celebrate all the work that has been done in the dark: all the work done underground, and all the work done in our separate homes, as we have been praying, striving, loving, and working in isolation. Our love and our faith have been rooting us in place, helping us to withstand the challenges of our days. They will continue to do so as we strive—with God's help—to emerge from this pandemic. We will find new life waiting for us, and we, ourselves, will be new life in motion.

How Love burns through the Putting
in the Seed
On through the watching for that
early birth
When, just as the soil tarnishes with
weed,
The sturdy seedling with arched
body comes
Shouldering its way and shedding
the earth crumbs.

—from “Putting in the Seed”
by Robert Frost

Hydroponic Sacredness



The Rev. Maria (Mia) Kano

I AM NOT A GARDENER. Like many millennials, I've never owned my own home—and home ownership feels a long way off. Still, that doesn't mean my peers haven't fallen in love with plants. Many of my friends are quite proudly obsessed with their own apartment-friendly, portable gardens comprised of well-tended potted houseplants. My husband, Aaron, and I have both been wary of joining the houseplant crowd, though, considering how quickly plants have historically withered under our care.

So, when Aaron got into the idea of growing fresh herbs to kick his cooking up a notch, I was initially skeptical. But then he received a hydroponic garden kit as a birthday gift. In a hydroponic system, plants do not need soil or natural sunlight. The plants receive twelve hours of artificial sunlight from their own dedicated lamp. Suspended in a nutrient-rich solution, their roots need much less water and much less frequent watering. At the same time, the plants grow faster and produce more prolifically and consistently irrespective of season or weather. And they come in a futuristic space pod design that can be set up anywhere you like.

I won't have paid much attention to Aaron's hydroponic garden experiment except for the fact that his foray into futuristic plant-care coincided with two simultaneous seismic shifts in my spiritual life. Aaron's kit arrived just as we had begun to realize we might need medical intervention to conceive our first child. It was also around the same time that our parish

was concluding that we would be worshipping solely online for the foreseeable future. I struggled with both new realities, stubborn in my definition of what was natural—and therefore sacred and “real.”

As we attempted to create life with modern medical assistance and as our parish learned to depend on Zoom, Aaron's happy, flourishing herbs grew to mean much more to me. There is something to mourn in the absence of digging in the fresh soil of one's own land. There is a palpable disconnection between our herb's steady growth and the rhythms of weather and seasons. Our little indoor garden does feel separate from the “natural” way of things.

But Aaron's plants are no less sacred or delicious because they are nourished by artificial light. Their existence is no less miraculous either, though some of the miracle lies in God's gift of innovation to the engineers who crafted the hydroponic system's ingenious design. The dill stems still reach out in green, pungent alive-ness, the mint leaves still unfurl triumphantly after each harvest. Life is still life. Prayer is still prayer. Basil is still basil.

Aaron's garden taught me that the strict fence I had constructed between “natural” and “artificial” was a needless barrier holding me back from appreciating God's thorough presence in our modern lives. The Holy Spirit is moving in our kitchen, our family, and our parish in unplanned and unrecognizable ways. But technology has added to our miracles in these strange new days, not taken them away. The methods do not matter, in the end. What matters are the shared meals of pesto pasta, the miniscule kick of our unborn son against my belly, and the familiar murmur of the Lord's Prayer. Sacredness is alive and well.



Photo: Mia Kano

Aaron's basil, mint, and dill flourish in defiance of the snowfall.

Parishioner Reflections on Gardening

Following are reflections on gardening as a hobby, as an escape, and as a spiritual practice from the St. Andrew's community, collected so that we can take a moment to reflect and be inspired by the faith that sustains us giving us strength.



Photo: Ruth Ecker

Reflection of a Nine-Year-Old

Ruth Ecker

MY FATHER AND I GREW UP in Virginia in the same home built by my English grandparents. The garden was captivating. "Ever present, but never the same." There a child could appreciate the gifts, left by another generation, which predictably re-appeared each year. Long-lived daffodils, peonies, irises, and even heirloom roses that climbed up the "War of the Roses Trellis." (The red rose represented the House of Lancaster and the white rose, the House of York.) A sweet aroma in August, wafted from a massive gardenia bush outside the sun porch. These and other plants made a seasonal appearance, then faded.

If I was to plant a garden, I wanted it to be from seeds that would produce flowers all season long. I learned that for a seed to

germinate and the plant to thrive, it must be situated in a hospitable spot, with the right exposure, moisture, soil, and fertilizer. I used fish heads to attract worms galore!

Weird . . . that seed, gathered in a mature plant's decline, represents potential and hope for the next season. That seed, when planted in soil, germinates, and with a life force, makes its way toward the light, pushing obstacles aside. Embedded in that seed is the instruction to be what it is meant to be—to become the color, size, and form it is meant to be. Hmmm, I thought, maybe God is showing us something. When His word is planted in our hearts, we grow with a life force, fighting our way toward the light, becoming who we are meant to be, and thriving.

A Garden

D.D. Alexander

God exhales and we tumble,
cloaked with his dust
alighting in Eden
with eyes wide shut.

The becoming around us,
sings to our soul,
the rhythm—reminds us,
of a promise of old.

Plunging our hands
full of seeds in the dirt,
conjuring hope
that time will unearth
A garden connects
the material realm
to joy,
and miracle,
and God's hand on the helm.



Photo: D.D. Alexander

Gardening is a Heart Breaker

Wardie Mannix

IT'S AN ACT OF HOPE which often doesn't turn out the way you plan it; sometimes it turns out better, sometimes not, sometimes you wait and wait and nothing happens or else something happens but not what you expected, i.e., lots of foliage, but no flowers.

When I was growing up, we lived down the way from my grandparents' farmhouse in Wilton, Connecticut. I tried growing nasturtiums on the stone wall at the entrance to the driveway. I nestled in the seeds and watered and waited. I could picture the beauty of the orange and red colors cascading over the stone but there wasn't nearly enough sun so nothing ever happened.

Then I tried roses inside the pool gate but, same problem, they got leggy and weak with a bloom here or there. But, there were too many oak trees and the soil was probably deficient. Oh well.

I'd walk up the hill to my grandparents' house and the red roses would be falling over the tall stone wall by the back door. The back fence of her garden would be filled almost unrecognizably with the number of soft pink blossoms. She even had a sun dial with rose bushes around it.

Roses grew for my grandmother, as did delphinium, snap dragons, and peonies. But then again,

maybe they didn't really grow for her, they grew for Mr. Gilbert. My grandmother called him, "George," but he was always "Mr. Gilbert" or "Mr. G." to us. That was the way it was back then. He wore overalls, rolled his own cigarettes, and drove an old jeep. He could grow anything and make anything.

In the cellar of my grandparents' house there was a walk-in refrigerator and freezer filled with grape jelly and apple pies made by Mr. G's wife, Kitty. There was other stuff hanging and tucked in corners in there too, but it was so cold I never hung around inside much . . . back to the garden.

Gardening up at Granny's was a lot of following Mr. G around. I don't know how he stood us, in retrospect. My mother had eight children in 11 years, and we were always crawling all over the property, but he seemed a patient man and very kind with a smile in the ready. He drove an ambulance in World War I, and Kitty wouldn't marry him until he started the foundation on their house, down the hill from my grandparents'. That's what the grownups said, anyway.

So, for a while there, I was in "garden heaven." I read books on gardening and mentioned to Mr. G. that I was thinking of begonias because they tolerate shade. He asked, didn't I know they came from

tubers, which had to be started early? Well, he said, I guess I could start them in my greenhouse. His greenhouse was an old messy looking thing, to my eyes, next to his house.

Well, June came and the begonias appeared on our back stoop in flower boxes, the dark green leaves well along. And, oh yes, the huge bouquets of peonies always appeared on my birthday, June 9. Granny brought them over for dinner, but I wonder that Mr. G. didn't pick them. I never saw Granny in a pair of pants in my life. She didn't seem to hang out much in the garden. She had other things going on.

It all came to an end when I was 16 years old. Granny died and then, soon after, so did Mr. Gilbert. But I was hooked: I was a lifer in the pursuit of beauty.

Wherever I've lived, I've tried to grow something somewhere. When I moved to Wellesley in 2007 to take the job at St. Andrew's, my landlady on Dover Road did not want me fooling in her garden. So, I gravitated to the Memorial Garden where Alex Stretelski held court. He didn't like pruning the roses that much. He just liked to let those big rugosa roses have their way. He would bring rose petals in a cup from the roses that were spent to me and Rose Erler, then our parish secretary. I'd just find them on my desk.

When Alex died suddenly in the summer of 2010 when I was away on vacation, I found myself taking over his Memorial Rose Garden. I've had help. Alex's sister, Liz, is a landscape architect and master gardener, and she looks in on the garden at the beginning of every season and whenever I call. Terry O'Toole is an excellent pruner and others have helped water. Steve edges. I won't get into the "ins" and "outs" of roses, but suffice it to say, we've had good years and not so good years. It is what it is, as Kitty used to say.



Photo: Ruth Ecker

I Love Gardening

Ellen Staelin

LOVE GARDENING. I love to learn and know plants, to imagine plant combinations, and to design a garden. I love to plant and tend a garden. I love to see other gardens and appreciate the sensibility and talents of other gardeners. I wonder why God plants this love of beauty in our souls.

The tasks of creating a beautiful garden are akin to all the other tasks in life. You must identify your goals, know your resources and your constraints, and work to implement and maintain your objective. Along the way you come to learn to nurture the soil, appreciate the sun, and treasure water. You

marvel at the miracle of life itself, the miracle that brings forth a plant from a tiny seed. And you realize that the life cycle of plants mirrors your own life cycle. You too, will grow, reproduce, and die. I just hope that in the process I will bring joy to the lives of other people as gardens bring joy to me.



Photo: Ellen Staelin

A Small Organic Plot in Wellesley

Pam Kubbins

MY LOVE OF THE EARTH is in my family roots. I am grateful to my grandmothers, Catherine and Florence, who embedded in me a lust for fresh vegetables, fruits, and flowers. Catherine grew trees that produced the most luscious of cherries, the juiciest pears, and the most fragrant peonies, while Florence made her own piquant horseradish from her own home-grown garden plants.

Fast forward to our gardening life on our small organic plot here in Wellesley. My husband, Paul, and I have been composting our own soil for over 30 years. Using only sustainable and nontoxic gardening practices that are kind to the soil and all living beings, we grow indigenous species that bloom and produce from February through October!



Photo: Pam Kubbins

Our organic pollinator garden.

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Photo: Ellen Staelin

A photograph of a lush field of wildflowers and grasses. The foreground is dominated by a large, flat, grey rock. The field is filled with various flowers, including yellow sunflowers, purple flowers, and white flowers. The background shows a line of trees under a cloudy sky.

THE CALL