



THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

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SUMMER 2023

Taking Stock: The State of St. Andrew's



The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

THIS TIME LAST YEAR, as we were emerging from the pandemic, I was wondering what the future of our parish would look like. Would people return to in-person worship in the church? Would we ever see pre-pandemic levels of attendance? What would happen to our online attendance? We were also facing a dramatic drop off in volunteers which threatened to endanger our ability to sustain our ministries in the parish.

And now a year later, I could not be feeling more hopeful about the future of St. Andrew's. Although I don't believe we will really know until the summer of 2024 what the "new normal" will be, I believe the current signs are hopeful. By summer next year in 2024, I think we will have a good sense of our new reality.

One of the most hopeful signs has been the large number of newcomers who have joined St. Andrew's over the last few years. Since the beginning of the school year in September 2022, we have seen many new people coming

to St. Andrew's in person. Quite a few of these people informed us that they had been following us online throughout the pandemic. Some told us that although we might not know them, they felt they had come to know the clergy team very well! Our newcomers have been old and young, single, couples, and families. And on almost every Sunday we have continued to see new people checking us out.

We have seen a steady increase in in-person attendance since September. This attendance is still below pre-pandemic times, but with online attendance factored in, the total attendance levels are close to pre-pandemic levels. One trend we have noticed is that some longer standing parishioners are attending church in person less frequently than in pre-pandemic times.

Another very hopeful factor has been the re-engagement of many volunteers to help maintain the full range of programs at St. Andrew's. The robustness of our programs has undoubtedly been an important factor in attracting and retaining both existing and new members. When we have asked newcomers about what has attracted them to St. Andrew's, among the factors they have mentioned are the church school, the adult education programs, the music, the warm and friendly congregation, and our commitment to outreach.

Spiritual Center

As we look to the future, I believe it is key for us to always remind ourselves that St. Andrew's is here to help sup-

port people in their spiritual life. We want to help people to experience Christ's love in their life and to have a sense of purpose in life by discerning how God is calling us to use our time and talents to share Christ's love in the world. Without a sense of this mission, it would be easy for us to drift. The desire for us to recommit ourselves spiritually as we emerged from the pandemic led us to undertake the RenewalWorks Spirituality Index. From this initiative we learned a definition of spirituality that we now place at the top of our weekly Sunday bulletin to remind us of our mission: "Spirituality is about how we are in relationship to God, to other people, to the world around us, and to ourselves."

Future Initiatives

Over the last few months the vestry has been meeting to see how, based on the feedback you gave us from the RenewalWorks survey, the ministries of the church can support you in your spiritual growth. The unifying theme of the goals is about accessibility and making St. Andrew's a center of lifelong Christian spiritual formation. This can mean anything from ways to make the Bible, our worship services, and the Episcopal and Christian tradition more accessible, to making our building and how parishioners get involved in ministries more accessible.

Some of the initiatives we will be undertaking this year are:

- an Introduction to the Bible course,
- an Enquirer's course about the Episcopal Church,

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Congratulations to the Class of 2023

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- guided tours of the church,
- an instructed Eucharist,
- new signage inside the church,
- a ministry fair, and
- sermon "talk back" sessions. After each 10am Sunday service the preacher will be at a table at coffee hour for you to ask questions or discuss the sermon and Sunday readings further.

Our hope is that these different initiatives will help us grow in our spiritual lives.

Yours in Christ,



Warden's Message Happy summertime everyone!



Will Nystrom, warden

I SPENT A BIG CHUNK of January this year in Toronto on business (I know, lucky, right?!). And I very much missed my family. I also missed church and our beautiful community together. So I started following an app (also a website) called "d365" which provides a daily devotional that you click through with the headings: Pause/Listen/Think/Pray/Go. Guest ministers construct these mini-services or lessons each day for a week at a time. The readings follow the Common Lectionary (Bible reading schedule) that we follow at St. Andrew's and across many other denominations.

One of my favorite passages I encountered during those cold, dark weeks in Toronto was from Dave McNeely, the Coordinator


for the Faith & Justice Scholars Program and Adjunct Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, TN. His prayer each day of the week was:

*May God meet you in the margins
And find you in the cracks.
May God bless you in the wanting
And in everything you lack.
May God fill the empty spaces
And become your all in all.
May God lead you to the places
Where you're the answer to God's call.*

I love that prayer. It speaks to God filling—what Sarah Robbins-Cole spoke of during a sermon—the God-shaped hole in our heart. And it's a perfect segue to our theme for this edition of The Call of "taking your faith with you during your summer travels."

Suzanne and I (with Maddie, Lily and Hazel for different bits and chunks of time) will be in Long Island this summer, as we normally are. But this summer, Suzanne and I have decided to regularly attend the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Greenport, to help "fill in the cracks" and keep the spiritual journey alive when we are outside the St Andrew's orbit.

We are super excited to meet a new community and experience the rhythm of the services there, which



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PARISH OFFICE: 79 Denton Road,
Wellesley, MA 02482-6404
781.235.7310 | FAX: 781.235.0067
standrewswellesley.org

PUBLISHER: Dan Dent
EDITOR: Katharine Clark,
Parish Administrator
kate@standrewswellesley.org

as a summer community, will be their busy season! The rector, Rev. Roger Joslin, is not unknown to us, as each Memorial Day he comes to our small yacht club and performs a blessing of the fleet, traditionally to ensure a safe and bountiful sea-

son on the sea. But it will be lovely to deepen that relationship and see a new side of a local community that means so much to us.

So, my friends, enjoy the summer! God will be there to “fill the empty spaces” if need be. (God

also will be waiting for you back at St. Andrew’s in the fall.) And if you have the time and space to pop into a local church during the summer, do it. You will doubtlessly be welcomed with open arms.

“... they to Canterbury went, The holy blissful martyr there to seek ...”



The Rev. Margaret K. Schwarzer

THE CANTERBURY TALES, written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the 1380s, describes 30 pilgrims who travel to Canter-

bury, England, seeking a spiritual adventure and an answer to their prayers.

Six hundred and forty years later, 26 pilgrims from St. Andrew’s will travel to Canterbury, London, York, and remote parts of northern England seeking spiritual adventures—and plain old fun—as a band of modern Christians.

At the start of shared adventures, prayers get made and hopes are raised; I hope the prayers of all our pilgrims will be fruitful. We go seeking to understand our ancient Anglican roots and to stand in places where Christians have been continuously worshiping Christ for over 1,000 years.

We will participate in evensongs

in several cathedrals and experience the sacred art and architecture of England. We will also drink warm beer (Brits don’t like cold beer!), explore Rochester and Durham, visit Churchill’s War Rooms, and have some fun.

Please keep us in your prayers for fifteen days in July; we will light candles for you in Westminster Abbey. Then, join us in the fall at a 9am Sunday morning class. Several of us will share our discoveries—historic, spiritual, and secular—with you.

Godspeed in your summer adventures, large and small. May you find refreshment and grace in good measure.



Image: Adobe Stock



Once More to the Lake



The Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole

Look

The morning lake
was as smooth as a mirror.

A few angels were even seen
flying down

just after dawn
to check themselves out.

—Billy Collins

AS SOME OF YOU KNOW, I love lakes. So, when I read the poem “Look” in Billy Collins’ most recent collection of poetry *Musical Tables*, I found myself just pausing for a while and thinking about these simple and beautiful words.

The poem transported me to Kellogg Pond in Barnard, Vermont, a pond owned by my Uncle Ed and my Aunt Celina where I spent many summer days in my childhood. They were happy times. I spent days with my cousins tipping canoes and hiding in the resulting air pocket that hid us away from the gaze of our parents, sailing in a yellow sunfish, standing balancing with our feet strategically placed on opposite sides of innertubes and diving into the water, and swimming out to an island that you were only allowed out to once you really knew how to swim. It was a rite of passage in my family.

What those days taught me, besides the simple joys of slow summer days, and the joys of extended family, is the capacity to wonder: Why did God make the earth so beautiful with red clover and shimmering birch bark and leaves? Why couldn’t Uncle Ed stay ahead of the beavers who were always trying to block the drainage system he installed in hope of keeping a beautiful pristine lake?

It was not until I was in theological college, and I was taking a class on nineteenth century continental thought that I began to

connect this capacity of wonder to what Samuel Coleridge called “imagination.” When we think of imagination now, we tend to think in terms of creativity or the magical world of childhood. However, what Coleridge was trying to figure out is how human beings could conceive and understand God since our intellect was inextricably tied to time, space, and the material world. And so, he proposed that the way we experience God, and know God, is through our mental faculty of imagination.

Imagination, according to Coleridge, is the faculty that we can employ which helps us and allows us to transcend the chasm between mortal man and immortal God. You can see how Coleridge had an impact on American transcendentalists.

Where this poem brought me, and what I invite you to consider is that in order to employ imagination as Coleridge describes it, we must fine tune our senses, and remind ourselves to look for God’s presence in the world around us and in the people we meet. Gaze at still lakes, smell flowers, love with abandon, look for angels, and expect to meet God.

Parishioner Reflections

Taking faith with us during summer vacations

FOLLOWING ARE REFLECTIONS from our fellow parishioners on taking faith with us during summer vacations. Their stories are a testament that moments of spiritual renewal can take many forms. In some instances such trips can be intentional

attempts at renewal, and at other times they are simply getaways with families and friends. Underpinning the following reflections is a pursuit for a deeper, more spiritual connection to God and faith.

A Spiritual Home Away from Home



Sarah Dent

for all or part of June, July, and August. Perhaps we have a spiritual home away from home during this time. No one is to say how or if we find a spot to feel the presence of God, but I am fortunate that for one week in August, my family and I land in a place of natural beauty (a way to feed your spirit, no matter what) and a remote spot to worship though without walls, stained glass, or choir.

Accessible only by boat, canoe or kayak, Chocorua Island (“Church Island” to the locals) is the scene of many a family wedding and baptism for both the Dent family and many other Squam Lake residents and guests. Complete with a

cross made of birch, hand-pumped organ, mini copies of the Book of Common Prayer and Hymnal and wooden benches, the island’s open-air chapel allows me time for reflection and to engage in the sights and sounds of the trees, birds, lake and, of course, the guest preacher.

Though for only one summer Sunday, I am grateful to this external space which feeds me internally and allows me to witness with awe and wonder our physical and spiritual worlds in harmony.

Wishing you a restful and relaxing summer (wherever you may be).

HITTING THE ROAD for the summer months? Many of us are away from the comfort and familiarity of St. Andrew’s



Squam Lake from Red Hill

Watercolor: William Trost Richards, 1874

Image: Adobe Stock, Wickenwood



God loves it when we play



Betsy Milane

THINK GOD LOVES IT when we play. That's what summers are for, right?

No one played harder than my father did, and his best hours were spent sailing. He started with a little boat, on a lake, near Lake Michigan. He spent every free hour in the boat, racing, sailing. One day his father looked at the weather, and advised my father, who was all of 12 years old, that it was too windy and rough for him to safely take his boat out. My father agreed and my grandfather left for work, confident he had advised his son well.

During the day, when he was driving near the lake, my grand-

father saw a sailboat, the only one out on the lake, sailing. His first thought was: "Wow, that sailor really knows how to handle these conditions." The second was: "Boy, that's a beautiful boat." Then he realized it was *his* boat, and my father was sailing it in defiance of his orders. My grandfather waited at home for my father, ready to punish him. Luckily, my grandmother intervened, saying technically my father had followed his father's directions: He had been told not to sail *his* boat. Nothing had been said about sailing his father's boat. The point won the day, and my father sailed, all he could.

Dad left his little skiff for bigger boats and had his own 50-footer which he sailed on the Great Lakes every weekend and many weeks of the summer. Standing next to me on a dock watching a race, he told me that there was no sailboat race he didn't want to be in.

Big boat racing did nothing for me, but I discovered joy racing my own J-22 on Long Island Sound. During the race I would find myself in a trance, the cares and worries of my land life gone, thinking nothing but making the boat

go fast. I was the helmswoman and I excelled at feathering the boat to windward, finding speed while my sails were blanketed by another boat, holding my breath as I gained an inch, then a foot, then three feet, then 22 feet. The exaltation I felt when I had passed our competitor and we would be in free air surging ahead was unlike any other feeling.

Every Sunday night Dad and I would call and ask each other how our races were. There was an understanding between us that recognized an unspoken feeling that we were completely alive during our hours on our boats.

Eric Lidell, the Scottish Olympic runner and missionary, said, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." Although sailing was tough and frustrating and uncomfortable, I know God was there for both of us, feeling our transcended joy.

I hope that your faith and worship take you to places this summer, where you can find God's pleasure in you. What better place for your faith to find you and manifest itself?

Congratulations to the Class of 2023

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Wellesley High School

Cameron Cowperthwaite

Noble and Greenough

Katie Cunningham

Wellesley High School

Alexander Dehn

Wellesley High School

Benjamin Dehn

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Charlie Denomme

Thayer Academy

Clara Eikeboom

Winsor School

Owen Graves

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Sophie Hunter

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Caroline Jolley

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St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Officers, and Staff

Warden Will Nystrom wardens@standrewswellesley.org

Warden Megan Burns wardens@standrewswellesley.org

Treasurer Harry Condon treas@standrewswellesley.org

Clerk Peter Lull clerk@standrewswellesley.org

Rector Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole adrian@standrewswellesley.org

Associate Rector for Adult Formation and Membership

Rev. Margaret Schwarzer margaret@standrewswellesley.org

Associate Rector for Youth and Families

Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole sarah@standrewswellesley.org

Parish Administrator Katharine Clark kate@standrewswellesley.org

Pastoral Associate Rev. Karen Vickers Budney revkar7@comcast.net

Music Minister Helen Ward Mannix wardie@standrewswellesley.org

Financial Administrator Joanne Butler joanne@standrewswellesley.org

Christian Learning Coordinator

Susan Jackson susan@standrewswellesley.org

Youth Music Director Ciara Celli ciara@standrewswellesley.org

Sexton Stephen F. Killeen steve@standrewswellesley.org

Assistant Sexton William Clover



ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
79 DENTON ROAD
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 02482

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