

# THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

NO. 396  
FALL 2022

## Renewal Works, Growing in Our Faith



The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

AS I WRITE THIS ARTICLE in mid-summer, I am looking forward to our regathering on Homecoming Sunday in September. This fall, my hope for St. Andrew's is that we will be looking to the future to see where God is leading us as a parish as we seek to deepen our spiritual lives and faith in Christ.

To help us in our discernment of God's future for us at St. Andrew's, we will be undertaking the *Renewal Works* spirituality initiative. You will remember that we were about to undertake the initiative at the beginning of 2020 just when the pandemic fell upon us. Undertaking the *Renewal Works* initiative in the fall will be a symbol that we are moving forward, with the pandemic, hopefully, in our rearview mirror.

The Rev. Jay Sidebotham, founder of *Renewal Works* who visited back in 2020 to help launch the program, will be back with us on Sunday, September 25, to help launch the initiative.

*Renewal Works* is designed to help churches focus on spiritual vitality. It challenges congregations to get back

to basics, making spiritual growth a priority in their lives and missions. A decade of research exploring the characteristics of vital congregations involving more than 1,800 churches provides the foundations for the *Renewal Works* process.

The process begins with an individual anonymous, confidential, and thought-provoking online survey, called the "Spiritual Life Inventory", or SLI, which members of St. Andrew's will be invited and encouraged to complete. This will take about 30 minutes. The SLI explores the individual's spiritual life and the church's role in supporting it. The anonymous survey responses are collected and collated by the *Renewal Works* organization, and no one at St. Andrew's will ever know your individual responses.

The congregation's responses are viewed as a group by the *Renewal Works* organization and benchmarked against data collected from the other 1,800 congregations surveyed over the last ten years. This provides us with a snapshot of the spiritual vitality of the congregation and where our growing edges might be.

The next step is to form a workshop team of St. Andrew's parishioners representing a cross section of the congregation to review the survey findings and identify our spiritual growing edges, practices, and programs that might help us deepen the spiritual life of the congregation.

The workshop team will receive guidance and help from the *Renewal Works* organization in doing this work.

Workshop team members will consider research-based best practices of vital congregations and explore ways those practices might take root in our congregation at St. Andrew's.

The SLI survey will be available to take online from Sunday, September 25, through Sunday, October 9. The survey is open to all parishioners, and we encourage everyone to participate whether you attend every week or are only able to be with us a few times a year. Your participation is important and will help mold the future of our parish over the next few years.

Yours in Christ,



## In This Issue

### **Renewal Works, Growing in Our Faith**

Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole 1

### **Warden's Message**

#### **Opportunities to Learn and Grow**

Megan Burns 2

### **Getting to Know**

#### **Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole**

Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole 3

### **My Homecoming at St. Andrew's**

Wendy Barry, Michael Vanin,  
and Lisa Howe 4-6

### **Homecoming: A Virtual Army of Volunteers**

Jane Kettendorf,  
Ntonhle Kekana, and  
Julia Pekowitz 7-8

### **A Very Quiet Ministry**

#### **What can I do to help?**

Margaret Zusky 9

### **Sacred Ground, a Film Based Dialogue Series on Race and Faith**

Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole 10-11

## Warden's Message



Megan Burns, warden

**F**ALL IS MY FAVORITE SEASON. Although I've been out of school for some time now, I always think of September as the start of the new year. I love everything about this time of year, from apple picking to leaf peeping and all the glorious days of cooler, but not yet cold, temperatures. It always feels like such a cozy time of year to me—a time when I'm happy to be home in New England and I feel like I'm ready to learn new things.

Some years ago in September, I decided that I wanted to learn more about St. Andrew's. We had been living in Wellesley for a couple of years but had continued to attend church in Boston at Christ Church (Old North) in the North End. Our son was two and I wanted him to start attending church school and learn more about God and the important role that religion plays in our family.

One lovely September Sunday I went by myself to decide if St. Andrew's would be a place for us to learn and grow. At the time, I was in my mid-30s with a toddler at home.

A wonderful gentleman on the membership committee noticed me in the pew and introduced himself after the service. He asked if I was visiting St. Andrew's and when I said yes, he asked if I was a student at Wellesley College.

I confess that I don't remember what the sermon topic was that day. All I knew was that St. Andrew's had some very welcoming (and flattering!) people who gave me the first sign that this was a place my family could call a spiritual home.

A couple of years later, once again in the fall, I was asked to be one of the adult leaders of the Rite-13 class. St. Andrew's gave me an opportunity to meet some fantastic young people and their families. It also gave me an opportunity to learn from the other leaders and the clergy as well. I was able to reach back to the religion classes I took in college and share that knowledge with these wonderful middle schoolers.

Most recently, Adrian asked me to serve as warden for this church that I've relished being a part of for over a dozen years now. Though it's been a long time since I've been in a formal educational setting (and I doubt I'd be mistaken for a college student these days), St. Andrew's has provided me with so many opportunities to learn and grow in a spiritual sense. I'm also given the chance to share what I know with the other members of this vibrant community.

So, it comes as no surprise to me that, just as when I was in college, I feel so much at home in an environment where I continue to learn every day.



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# Getting to Know Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole



The Rev. Sarah Robbins-Cole

**T**HERE ARE SO MANY reasons that I am excited to be joining the staff at St. Andrew's, half-time, for this program year as your Interim Associate Rector for Youth and Family.

First, I am looking forward to getting to know the St. Andrew's church family.

Second, I am looking forward to enjoying the rich variety of programming—everything from joining in the wildly popular Turkey Trot to Bargain Haul.

Third, I look forward to joining you for worship services.

And finally, I am looking forward to getting to work with the children and youth of the congregation.

Let me tell you why I am passionate about Christian formation for children and teens: it makes a positive difference in the lives of our youth.

Growing up has never been easy. I have never heard anyone say, "If only I could do it all over again, I would definitely go back to middle school." We don't say that because we know it is hard. And it appears that in many ways, it is even harder now than it has ever been.

If you are interested in learning about why this is so, there are two books that I found particularly convincing: Lisa Miller's *The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and our Quest for an Inspired Life* (New York: Random House, 2021),

and Jean Twenge's, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

What these authors rightly tell us is that although what they are studying is alarming, there are things that we can do to help our children.

One of the main takeaways from these books, and others, is that providing your child with faith formation, both by attending a congregation regularly, and practicing faith at home, goes a long way toward providing your children with coping skills to help them navigate adolescence. It can start with something as simple as saying grace at meals, reading a short devotional at the dinner table, or talking about what happened at church or church school.

If you find that you have to miss church on Sunday because of sports or another commitment, make a commitment to watch the service later online—and talk about it. Let your children know that church is important to you and why.

So, what is it about faith that is so vital in raising children? What experts rightly tell us is that our Christian faith has important ingredients that help children flourish.

First, our faith teaches purpose and meaning that is outside of ourselves. The sad truth is, the more we focus on ourselves, the less happy we become.

Second, our faith teaches us the importance of forgiveness, love, kindness, generosity, and gratitude. These are all skills that undergird a happy life.

Third, our faith teaches us that we are beloved children of God and that there is nothing they can do to have that love taken away from them. God loves us regardless of grades, test scores, achievement

in sports, plans after high school, or popularity.

And finally, church (or mosque, temple, synagogue, et al.,) provides children with a unique opportunity that is difficult to find elsewhere: intergenerational friends. These intergenerational friendships can offer unconditional love, acceptance, and support to our children when they may need a different adult other than their parents to listen to them.

I am so passionate about the relationship between faith and flourishing that it is at the heart of my doctoral work. This fall, I will be working with Wellesley College students to help them establish "Happiness Habits" from our Christian spiritual traditions, to help them to be, well, simply put, happier.

If you are interested in hearing more, I would love to tell you what I am learning! Just let me know.



Photo: Adrian Robbins-Cole

# My Homecoming at St. Andrew's

## Parishioner Reflections

**F**OLLOWING ARE REFLECTIONS on coming home to the church after a summer away or, in some cases, after being away from the church for other reasons. We asked a few parishioners what makes St. Andrew's

home for them. We hope you enjoy these reflections, whether you are returning this fall or walking through our doors for the first time. We hope you find a home at St. Andrew's Church.

### Wendy Barry



I VIVIDLY REMEMBER the first time I felt at home at St. Andrew's. On a Wednesday morning in February 2003, I pulled my car up in the circle on Denton Road, opened the side door, and tentatively walked up the stairs.

Jon and I had recently moved to the area from Boston, and I was seven months pregnant with our first child. To say that the pregnancy was stressful would be an understatement—ultrasounds had shown that our baby girl would be born with a facial deformity, and she had a major surgery scheduled shortly after the due date.

While we had medical support in place, I came to St. Andrew's looking for spiritual support. Without an appointment, I knocked on the assistant rector's door and she quickly set aside her task, introduced herself, and welcomed me with a cup of tea. Over the next hour I shared our story—the anger, anxiety, fears, and hopes, and received back from her acceptance, love, and support.

Prayers were said and plans were made to welcome us and our little one into the parish. When I left her office, I was lighter, more peaceful, and I knew that we had found our new church home at St. Andrew's.

That baby (Emma) is heading off to college this fall, healthy and full of promise, and as September approaches, I look forward to returning to the weekly routine of gathering with the St. Andrew's community, knowing I am home in the company of people who will lend their love and support to our family.



Photo: Rob Brandt



## Travis Anza



FOR ME, HOME IS THE PLACE that provides comfort and acceptance. It's the moment when you walk into your house and see your family on the couch next to your empty seat.

My spot on the couch at St. Andrew's is the pew up against the back wall; my family is the church full of parishioners who don't mind the not-so-quiet young family behind them.

For me, home is where you can open the refrigerator

as many times as you'd like and take nothing out, like walking in and out of the Bric-a-Brac room at Bargain Haul seven times.

For me, home is where you're allowed to wear what you want and sing off key, like at St. Andrew's when I get to dress up as one of the three kings or an angel for the Christmas pageant, and no one critiques my—trust me—very off-key rendition of *Silent Night*.

For me, home is where people smile just because you are there, like at St. Andrew's when my son, Oliver, was baptized and the entire choir, all congregated around the lectern to observe, beaming smiles of joy.



## Michael Vanin



AS A FORMER WARDEN and member of several committees (finance, stewardship, fellowship, usher crew, coffee hour host, flower guild), I have felt it is my duty and pleasure to support St. Andrew's in time, talent, and treasure.

Over the past many months, most of us have tried to protect ourselves from COVID by isolating ourselves in a protective bubble that has separated us from what is important in our lives—family, friends, work, church.

My situation is a bit more dire. After suffering three spinal compression fractures four years ago, I have lived with a constant and debilitating back pain. I sought relief through multiple traditional and non-traditional procedures and remedies—all of which have fallen short of any long-term solution.

Throughout my struggles, St. Andrew's and fellow parishioners have offered much needed and appreciated friendship and support. You may have heard my name on the St. Andrew's parish prayer list. As I watched church services online and heard my name, I felt very connected to the community.

As I write this passage, I am recovering from a second spinal surgery and am very encouraged that the only pain I feel is from the incision, no pain from those nasty "kissing" compressed bones.

I am looking forward to resuming most of my normal activities very soon. I expect that this fall will be a special homecoming for me. I give great thanks to the St. Andrew's community for the support it has given me over this difficult time of my life.

While I (and we) have been blessed by the creativity and commitment to bringing services into our home by YouTube or Facebook, there is nothing that compares to attending Sunday services in person—singing hymns with the choir, catching up during coffee hour, and re-engaging with fellow committee associates.

Those of us who have been members may tend to think that St. Andrew's is like most Episcopal churches. It is not, it is a very special place. As stated in the Statement of Affirmation, "we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person."

An organization that places such a high value on each member creates a community to which I am proud to belong. I can't wait to finally come back home. Thank you, St. Andrew's.

## Lisa Howe



PICTURE THIS. A seven-and-a-half-year-old girl, adorned in a white lace party dress, white gloves, veil, and dress shoes, seated in a pew in an imposing nineteenth century Tudor gothic church in Brooklyn, New York, along with 100 of her fellow first

holy communion candidates, listening to a priest pontificate from on high in a marble pulpit.

That was me—and it was in that moment that I realized there must be more to faith and religious practice than submissive acceptance and punitive judgment. Maybe we were an unruly cohort, but all I remember from the preparation for this holy sacrament is being chastised for bad behavior and nothing about the blessing of joining a spiritual communion of faith.

But I was being raised in a household of devout Roman Catholics, descended from generations of similarly faithful ancestors. It was not until I left home for college that I was free to explore (and explore I did!).

On Easter Sunday, 1981, I accompanied a college friend, an Episcopalian, to services at Trinity Church in Boston. It was a two-hour ceremony. The flowers and music were glorious.

Yet, it wasn't until 1988 when I was newly married and residing in Fairfield, CT, that I discovered I had finally found my spiritual home in the Episcopal church.

I loved the community feeling among the congregation and the many fellowship opportunities to interact outside of Sunday services.

More importantly, though, was the affirmation I received from the rector's sermons that it was OK as a person of faith to question, to have doubts, to seek truths. I learned how one could interpret the meaning of "sin" as in the archery term to "miss the mark."

This seemed a more loving and forgiving perspective on human nature than the association from my youth of being born with the stain of original sin.

When we moved to Weston in 2005, I found myself searching for a new church where we would find a similar community. While we gave a couple of local churches a try, it was not until I happened to attend a service at St. Andrew's with my in-laws, commemorating the stained-glass window given by my mother-in-law's family, that I felt with certainty that I had found a new spiritual home.

The sermons that I have listened to over the past 15 years at St. Andrew's speak to my humanity, social conscience, curiosity, and intellect. There is something so comforting about knowing in your heart of hearts, "I belong here."

I feel blessed to have found at St. Andrew's, a community of like-minded individuals to share my spiritual journey.

Photo: Peter B. Lull



# Homecoming

## A Virtual Army of Volunteers

“HERE’S THE CHURCH, HERE’S THE STEEPLE, open the doors and see all the people!” This familiar children’s rhyme rings true for us at St. Andrew’s—you open the doors and find activity everywhere. The clergy are the face of the church. Behind the scenes are people answering the phones, polishing, cooking, greeting, ushering, collecting and delivering meals, singing, arranging flowers, ironing, reading, praying. It

is a virtual army of volunteers who keep the wheels of St. Andrew’s turning.

Homecoming/coming home in September is a fresh opportunity to chip in, to help out in the St. Andrew’s family. New volunteers are always welcome and needed, and as you know, many hands make work light, expanding our friendships and community



Photo: Peter B. Lull

### Jane Kettendorf



JANE KETTENDORF started volunteering in 1974 as a check-out person at Bargain Haul. “From there I went on to women’s, infants, furniture, and then French Shop for the past 20 some years. I baked for the Bake Sale, taught church school and spent many years on the altar guild. In the 70s, Nat and I were active in the couple’s club, where we met lifelong friends. Until recently, I volunteered to help with

luncheons and funeral receptions. Now in my doddering old age, I knit for the homeless and enjoy new friends through that activity.”

P.S. “We bought our first house through Bargain Haul! We saw the Bargain Haul sign, went into the church, Rev. Clark met us and we told him we were house hunting. He told us Mrs. Kingsberry was selling her house and introduced us. We bought the house on Appleby Road and walked to church every Sunday for the next ten years.”

## Ntonhle Kekana



the warm welcome we felt from the church as a family

NTONHLE KEKANA arrived at St. Andrew's in early October 2019. "I was drawn to St. Andrew's because Adrian preached about how we can walk in love and serve others in our communities and the world. I loved that. The love I received from the ministers,

made my family love St. Andrew's. The invitation to come and help whenever I can made it easy for me to see the passion and dedication from all who serve at St. Andrew's—they love what they are doing.

"From the start, everyone was willing to teach me how things are done here. I was welcomed. Above all, the love of Christ at St. Andrew's through all its members made it so easy for me to do the same—to serve God and the church."



St. Stephen's B-SAFE Youth Program

## Julia Pekowitz



patient's day by walking them to their car and having a conversation with them.

Through St. Andrew's, I have been involved in B-SAFE for several years. I love working with the children and seeing their smiling faces when we

JULIA PEKOWITZ has been a very active volunteer in the community. "Recently I became a volunteer at Newton Wellesley Hospital, working in the Day Surgery Unit. I am grateful to have this experience and to know that I made a slight difference in a

play games with them, do crafts, or just have a quick conversation. It is so simple to make their day, and it is very rewarding to know that I can make someone happy just by spending a few minutes with them.

I volunteered to host the St. Andrew's Spring Tea, and this was a ton of fun! This experience was very rewarding because I could see how happy it made other parishioners, and I was able to create a successful event all while having fun. Volunteering is so important because you never truly see how much you can help others until you volunteer your time and see the difference in the faces of others."



# A Very Quiet Ministry

What can I do to help?



Margaret Zusky

**C**AN YOU KNIT? Are you in a quandary about how to give back? Help out? Use your resources? Do you have time to spare? Can you do two things at once? Like watch a movie or the news and knit, crochet, or sew at the same time?

So often we ask ourselves, “What can I do to help?” To help refugees, victims of natural disasters, the sad and bereft, homeless mothers and their babies, a friend undergoing chemo. It can feel overwhelming. We offer our prayers but want to offer something more concrete.

St. Andrew’s women, for the past 16 years, have used their hands to make hats, scarves, mittens, prayer shawls, cowls and ear-warmers, dolls, blankets, balaclavas, neck warmers, and washcloths—to offer much needed gifts of love. Hats for the homeless, hats and comfort dolls for Haiti, chemo caps, newborn baby hats, infant hats to Rwanda, hats and blankets for orphans, and mariner’s hats. The ministry has grown to include women from the Needham Council on Aging and Waterstone Ladies. There are now almost 20 active St. Andrew’s knitters (11 have moved or retired and five former knitters have put down their needles and are resting in peace.) Since 2006, more than 14,000 gifts have been distributed to St. Stephen’s, Health Care Without Walls, Bridges to Moms, Bridges to Elders, and *common cathedral* as well as the international outreach to Haiti and Rwanda. Plans for a shipment to Ukraine are in the works.

Started in 2006 after parishioners visited Christ Church Bay St. Louis in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, their needs fed our call to action.

Responding immediately to the needs of this community,

St. Andrew’s got busy and sent 100 handknit prayer shawls. This very quiet ministry does tremendous, beautiful work, and it can all be done on your own timetable, as slowly or quickly as you care to or are able to knit, in your own home or with a friend. You can start small with a simple knit scarf and perhaps work your way up to more fanciful patterns and items as you gain skill. This is a ministry without meetings! No timetables! No deadlines! But there is a constant call for more of the finely knitted gifts we can make.

Knitting is a fine, meditative exercise that produces tangible results. It is a gender neutral activity and it would be terrific to see some men pick up needles! You, too, can knit! Yarn, patterns, needles will be given to you along with free lessons! When you want to get started, you can reach out to Donna Kell, the Kick Starter of this project. You can reach her at [donnaalb.kell@gmail.com](mailto:donnaalb.kell@gmail.com). She is eager to welcome more idle hands.



Photo: Zamznuti Tonovi, Adobe Stock

# Sacred Ground

## A Film Based Dialogue Series on Race and Faith

OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS a group of about 30 parishioners at St. Andrew's has been participating in the Episcopal Church's *Sacred Ground* course—a film-based dialogue series on race and faith. At St. Andrew's, the *Sacred Ground* course has been led by Adrian Robbins-Cole, Laura Brown MacKinnon, and Joanna Horobin.

*Sacred Ground* is an 11-part series built around an online curriculum of documentary films and readings that focus on the stories and experiences of Indigenous, Black, Latino and Asian/Pacific American histories as they have interacted with European American histories.

For those of us who have participated in the course, it has been an enriching, eye-opening, educational, surprising, and sometimes challenging experience. "I never knew that!" is a comment you frequently hear in the small group discussions as we reflect on the films we have just watched about the history of different racial groups in America.

While some of the material can be very challenging, the overall tone is one of hope. And although the documentaries are often about what has happened in the past around issues of racial justice, the vision is forward-looking about our hopes for creating an America

in which all people feel at home, loved, and valued.

This vision was laid out in the first film we watched, the PBS documentary *American Creed*, in which former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David Kennedy come together from remarkably different backgrounds, life experiences, and points of view to explore the idea of a unifying American creed. Their conversation frames the stories of a range of citizens striving to realize their own visions of America's promise across deep divides.

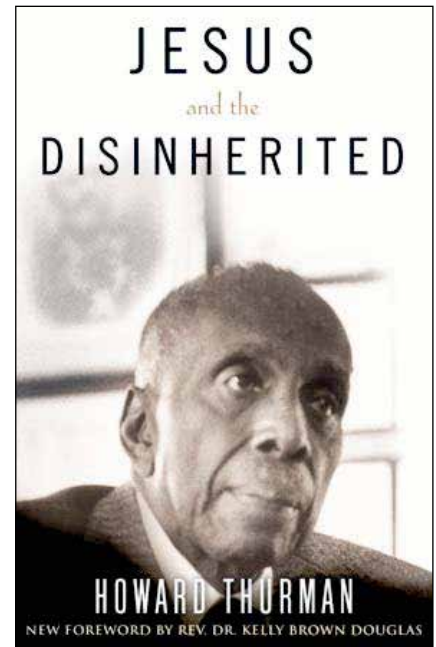
I believe that what makes the *Sacred Ground* course so compelling is that it is story-based as opposed to a theoretical or academic discussion about race theory. Instead, in a manner that touches our hearts and souls, we are invited by the films to see America through the lived experience of different racial and ethnic groups of people.

The *Sacred Ground* course is part of the Episcopal Church's response to the invitation by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry for us as Episcopalians to make a long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice as we seek to follow the teachings and life of Jesus.

Bishop Curry has named this commitment *Becoming Beloved Community* and has linked the commitment to our Baptismal Covenant in the Book of Common Prayer (page 304-305).

In the Covenant we commit that we will "persevere in resisting evil," "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ," "seek and serve Christ in all persons loving our neighbor as ourselves," and "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

The *Sacred Ground* course was developed by Katrina Browne,



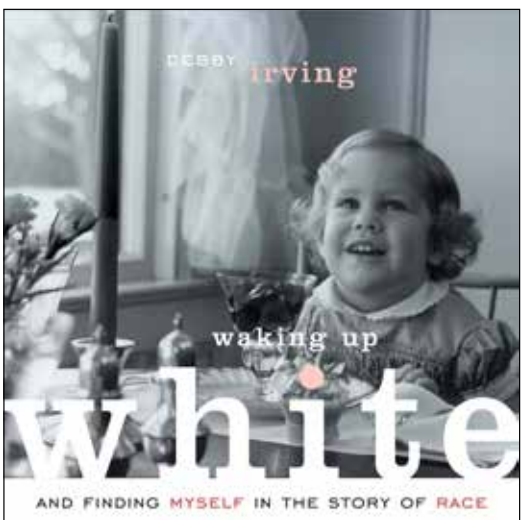
the producer and director of the documentary *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*. Browne is a life-long Episcopalian.

At St. Andrew's, a typical *Sacred Ground* session is two hours long. We begin with a prayer and a reading from the Bible. We then watch one of the assigned documentary films together. After this, we split up into three dialogue groups to discuss the film we have watched and the reading material we will have looked at prior to the session.

Usually, the reading material consists of short articles or extracts from books related to the session topic. There are also two core books from which we are assigned chapters for different sessions. These core books are *Waking up White* by Debby Irving and *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Dr. Howard Thurman.

In the "dialogue groups," we reflect on three sets of questions.

The first set of questions is about the history covered and includes questions about what we had learned which we had not been aware of, what spoke to our heart, and what new understanding do we now have of the past.



The second set of questions is about present-day legacies and includes questions about how any of the present-day legacies in the material spoke to us. Did we find ourselves struggling or wanting to push back against any material?

And the third set of questions is about looking forward and includes how does what we have heard affect how we understand the call to *Become the Beloved Community*. Does it inspire us to take

any action in relation to issues of racial justice?

Our present *Sacred Ground* course will be continuing until the new year. We hope to offer the course again for parishioners in 2023.

Our hope for *Sacred Ground* is that it will help both the individual lives of the participants and our life as a parish to commit ourselves to Bishop Curry's invitation to us to make a long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice as

we seek to follow the teaching and life of Jesus.

A sign of our commitment as a parish to this process is that we have asked the vestry heads of our different ministries to undertake a self-reflection about ensuring that we are open, welcoming, and inclusive to all people in our activities as a parish.

If you have any questions about *Sacred Ground*, please do not hesitate to contact Adrian.



Photo: Leslie C. Saber, Adobe Stock

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Photo: Peter B. Lull

# THE CALL

