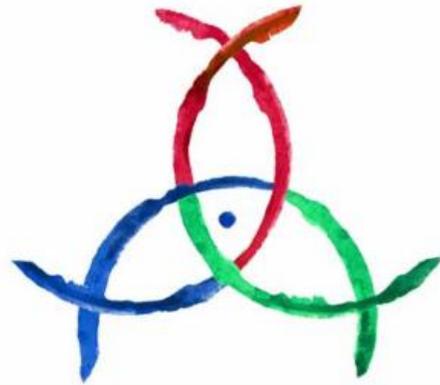


St. John's Episcopal Church
"Make God's Love Known"



Summer 2022 Newsletter



To the Glory of God and for the Common Good, we make God's love known now and for generations to come through worship and service to all.

-- Mission Statement
adopted June 2010

**Some email programs will show this message shortened;
please click on the link at the end to make sure you don't miss anything!**

Thoughts from the Transition Priest

When I came to St. John's as your transition priest, I was looking forward to helping you discern your next chapter of ministry. I was looking forward to doing what parishes often do in a transition between rectors: Calling all parishioners together for prayer and conversation, considering the parish's gifts and possible responses to the wider community's needs, and pondering those things in light of new ways that younger generations engage faith and community.

In December 2020, those seemed like the right questions. I couldn't wait to begin discussing them when the pandemic "ended," and everyone would gather again. However, "gathering again" has turned out to be much more complicated in the pandemic's persistence. And now I'm starting to wonder if those are even the right questions for this time. They are questions reminiscent of Pentecost - the day on which the first apostles received the Holy Spirit, when they were called into and empowered for their next chapter of ministry in Jesus' name.

The spiritual practice of discernment emphasizes attention to what is unfolding in the moment. In this moment at St. John's, there are many goodbyes. The most public ones are the farewell to the Rev. Ann McAlhany, Deacon, and Lorraine Schinck on May 8, and the farewell to Anne-Marie Miller, Family Faith Formation Director, on June 5. (See below under Formation for her letter.) With Anne-Marie's departure, we also say farewell to some particular ways of organizing ministry with children, youth, and families. (See my letter about that there as well.)

In the last 18 months, on the heels of the farewell you said to your rector of 13 years, we've said farewell to other staff too, and leaders who have stepped down from positions without others to fill their shoes. We've had six funerals over the last 18 months. And there are the less public farewells

of people who have left the church before or during the pandemic, or become disconnected despite some efforts to reach out. With Sunday attendance averaging between 30 and 50 people in person, and fewer leaders stretched more and more thin, it is more and more clear that St. John's is not the same community it was.

It is natural to wonder about the parish's survival. Can the community continue to exist after so many departures? In some ways, no. St. John's is no longer the institution it was, twenty or even five years ago. In other ways, yes: As long as there are individuals in Bangor following Jesus together in the Episcopal tradition, St. John's Episcopal Church could continue. Worship, service, and fellowship do not technically require a budget or even a church building. (But how different could they become, and still be recognizable as "your church"? That's a challenging and emotionally-loaded question.)

With anxiety about survival comes an urgency to "solve the problem" quickly so that we can start the next chapter. I can see that same urgency in my eagerness when I arrived here. But having experienced Christ's death and resurrection in Holy Week and Eastertide with you twice now, I am reminded that every new chapter starts with endings. Without death, there is no resurrection. I am also reminded that "trying not to die" is not the best way to live our trust in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, and whose power of resurrection is at work in us. And in the church.

Near the end of the Easter season, we come to the Ascension, when after 40 days, the risen Christ was taken up into heaven. Even though his first disciples had been promised the Holy Spirit, they couldn't have imagined yet how they would receive it at Pentecost. I wonder if they felt abandoned. Maybe they wondered about their survival as a community after what looked only like ending and farewell.

As St. John's goes through this uncomfortable time in between "what was" and "what will be," we have good company in Jesus' first disciples in that time between his ascension and Pentecost. May we join them in prayerful hope and faith in God's future. And may we anticipate with joy our own experience of Pentecost, in God's timing, when we will be called into and empowered for our own next chapter of ministry in Jesus' name.

Rev. Rebecca Liberty

FORMATION

Letter from Anne-Marie Miller, Family Faith Formation Director

"We have to be braver than we think we can be, because God is constantly calling us to be more than we are." Madeline L'Engle

I wrote the letter below in September of 2021 and call your attention to it now as I prepare to be brave and to move onward to whatever lies next. Since this time, I have been discerning my own next steps and path, and have come to understand that this involves my family and I moving on from St. Johns. I do plan to continue helping with the Second Saturday meal, and hope that I will see some of you there and be able to keep in touch.

It is hard to leave a job that is more than a job, and to leave comfort, familiarity and the closeness of friends who are like family. But Jesus often calls us to leave what is familiar and what is comfortable so that we can better do His will— and I feel like I am being called onward, at least for now.

Endings are often sad, and I am sad to be leaving. I'm sad knowing that the programs that have been such a part of life for these last years are finished now. But what beginning will follow? What miracle is coming that we cannot even imagine? Until we are brought together again— I pray you blessings and bravery, and that the love of Jesus will continue to transform us and bring us to be more than we are, or can even imagine.

Dear members of the vestry,

I haven't written a Fall 2021 report. But I give you these, the thoughts on my heart as the birds are leaving and the weather has cooled just a bit. A year-ish ago I wrote in my report that the church was changing; and that after the pandemic we would be returning to a different church in every conceivable way. After the pandemic feels distant to me; the need to be a different church, however, does not.

Lately, I spend most of my professional time talking about death and about serious illness, since I've transitioned to a palliative care homecare program. I spend a lot of time thinking about hope and miracles and also about the end of things, and talk to people about some big questions. What's most important? What gives you joy?

There was a man who did such amazing things and said such amazing things that people could not help but follow him. He did his work, he called the twelve, he taught, he prayed, he fed people and made miracles. He preached justice and mercy to the poor. And one of the things he taught us is that death is not an end, but a beginning. We are all dying into new life and it is hard, and we grieve, but it is the only way that we change.

Our church is dying. My hope, as we live in this present moment, is that we are dying into a new way of being Jesus, into a new way of loving each other and our community and our whole world. Into a new way of going into the garden and staying awake to speak our deepest vulnerabilities to the Creator who loves us more than we can ever imagine-- no matter what. Nothing we do on this earth can keep that love from us, and Jesus has promised to be with us at all the times and all the places.

I don't know what this death will look like or feel like, but I know that it will happen, because transformation is what Jesus taught us and what he expects of his church. I don't know how it will feel or what it will be like or what there will be at the end. I don't know all of what I will be called to do as we move from death into what comes next. But I do feel what I am called to do in this time and place, which is to continue to love and teach and discern and serve with our children and youth during this program year, and then to step aside so there is space for what needs to happen next.

Many of our ways of being community have felt very tenuous over this last year and a half. What is safe? What is not? What must we sacrifice for the love of one another? Trying to keep my little programs (which are, like the rest of the mainline church, shrinking yearly for a long time now) afloat has felt lonely and sad much of the time. I don't think I initially realized, though, how long these feelings and sense of isolation preceded the pandemic. I had envisioned that this fall could be a time to experiment a bit with different ways of worshipping together in an intentionally intergenerational way; delta has interfered with that in all sorts of ways.

As we discern together what Jesus wants for us at this time and this place, I ask that we pray together and brainstorm together about children and youth at St. Johns. We are all members of God's family together-- how do we equip and empower each other to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world? How can we be church together? What must we sacrifice for the love of one another?

As we move through our dying together, I look forward to praying about these questions and seeing where God brings us. I am thankful for St. Johns, and thankful for all our members, young and less so, and thankful for the opportunities I've had to be a part of the process of formation. I have trouble imagining the year ahead of us, but I will do my best to live in that present moment and to pray and to hope. What new life, what miracles lie ahead for our children and families, both in this coming year, and in the time that will come after I leave my position in early June?

O God, Help us to be your hands and feet in this frightening and frightened world. Help us to know your peace and healing, and help us to bring it to each other. Help us to share our wounds, with you and with each other, that we may both heal and be healed. Help us to call the vulnerable to us and to care for them, as you allowed the children to come and be present with you. Help us to be your church, and to die together and find the new life that is coming, both in this world and after.

May it be so. Amen.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne-Marie

The Future of Ministry with Children & Youth

by Rev. Rebecca Liberty

This is an excerpt of a letter being sent to families with children and youth, on the occasion of Anne-Marie Miller's departure. Others might be interested as well.

Whenever anyone leaves a leadership role, it raises questions about what happens next. Bottom line: It's complicated, with several factors involved. At this time, we do not plan to restart weekly programs, like nursery staffing, Sunday School, and youth group. We will not be hiring someone to "replace" Anne-Marie (as if that were possible!).

The reality is that far fewer families are connected to St. John's now, and not nearly enough adults to support the previous level of children and youth programming. These last few years of pandemic have been so hard on families, children, and youth. As the pandemic has done in many churches, it accelerated trends that had already begun. (And yet, we are so grateful to Anne-Marie for her care for families and efforts to gather safely during this time!)

As you know, St. John's is discerning its future overall, as the parish will begin a search for its next rector in the fall. Discerning how children and youth and their families are included in the parish's ministries will be an important question in that process. In the meantime, we assure you that children and youth are always welcome in worship and community life at St. John's. (It was wonderful to see children having a great time at our neighborhood block party on May 1st!)

There is no "minimum age" to be part of the body of Christ. Even though children and youth programs are paused for now, ministry with children and youth continues. As we follow Jesus' Way of Love together, young people are invited to turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, and rest—right alongside older members of the community.

Let's talk, individually or in a group meeting, about gathering our younger members together in ways that would be life-giving for your family. We could talk by phone or visit in person; email is the best way to arrange that, transitionpriest@stjohnsbangor.org.

Adult Formation

by Patricia Sprague

Praying the Gospels: Ignatian Contemplation. Each week, immediately following the conclusion of the Sunday service, a group of your fellow parishioners will be gathering in the chapel to pray that week's Gospel passage using a spiritual discipline developed by St Ignatius of Loyola five centuries ago as part of his *Spiritual Exercises*. In this type of contemplation, we place ourselves within the Gospel stories, thereby allowing the events of Jesus' life to be present to us right now. It is a very active way of praying that engages the mind and heart and stirs up thoughts and emotions. It is a form of prayer that is at once powerful and easy. Each session should last approximately 30 minutes. Our first Sunday was May 15th. For more information, talk to Pat Sprague or email formation@stjohnsbangor.org.

COMMUNITY

Wear Orange to End Gun Violence

June 3 - 5, 2022

As we face yet another mass shooting, this time at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, it's more important than ever to speak out against gun violence.

**wear
orange**

Every year in June, members of the movement against gun violence in every state across the

country come together to honor survivors of gun violence and to demand a future free from this crisis. This year's observance is June 3-5.

Wear Orange originated on June 2, 2015—what would have been Hadiya Pendleton's 18th birthday. Just one week after performing at President Obama's 2nd inaugural parade in 2013, she was shot and killed at the age of 15. In the aftermath, teenagers in Chicago who wanted to honor their friend wore orange to raise awareness around gun violence.

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship of Maine wishes to honor Hadiya and the more than 110 people shot and killed every day in the United States. Every parish in the Diocese of Maine is encouraged to join in National Gun Violence Awareness Day and Wear Orange Weekend June 3-5. Show our support for prevention of gun violence!

Bangor Pride Festival, Saturday, June 25

St. John's will be participating in the parade together with St. Patrick's, Brewer, and St. James', Old Town--and Bishop Brown will be joining us! The parade will take place from 11am - 12pm, and the festival portion of the day (at which we will have a booth together) will take place from 12pm - 4pm. Stay tuned for more information on how to participate, and when to meet at the parade lineup location (Front St. along the Bangor Waterfront).

Reflections on the Stile Antico Concert

by Bruce Mallonee

On April 24, this London-based ensemble of 12 unaccompanied singers brought their repertoire of mostly early music to St. John's, as part of the Collins Center's Chamber Music series. The concert was originally planned for the Spring of 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic.

Many contributed to readying the church for the singers, the CCA staff, and the public. Cindy Lufkin cleaned and polished. Lorraine Schinck arranged abundant Easter lilies all around the nave, including an effusion from the baptismal font. Jim Blanchette and Ralph Whedon replaced a busted toilet seat and painted rusted baseboard heat covers. LeeAnne Mallonee placed orchids in the dressing rooms. Vanessa Young hauled a vacuum cleaner from vesting room to hallway, from nave to narthex, to capture last-minute dust. Eric Boberg ensured a seamless handoff of tech equipment to CCA staff. Thanks to all of them, and to everyone unnamed here, who had a hand in welcoming our guests.

The concert was a preview of our block party and public welcome on May 1. Patrons commented on the church and its beauty and asked when it had been built. There were a lot of patrons; Danny Williams, the Director of the CCA, had to count tickets sold to make sure he did not run afoul of the fire marshal. Then came the concert.

To say the singing was magnificent would overburden that one word—it was sublime, ethereal, dramatic; it transported the listeners, who applauded loudly at the end of every set of pieces, then rose and applauded at length at the end of the concert. And not only the audience was pleased. Danny reported to me that the singers had been very happy with the setting, the audience, and the acoustics, the latter of which were just right: not harshly reverberant, not muddled by the carpeting and hundreds of seated people, but simply lively and responsive. As we spoke, several singers walked by and confirmed their enjoyment of the experience.

It seems likely St. John's will have more chances to host outside groups, including from the CCA. It would not be surprising if Stile Antico itself returned on its next trip to New England. Every such event furthers our mission to be a place of joy and service to God and our neighbors.

Bruce Mallonee
Chair, Committee on Music and the Arts

Worship

Opportunities for New Worship Assistants

by Rev. Rebecca Liberty

Sunday morning worship at St. John's depends on many people. While the presider may have the biggest speaking part, there are many other ways to participate, in multiple necessary roles. Can you try one out, trusting that you will be trained and supported along the way? We want to add more people to all these lists in the fall. Before that, we want to give people the freedom to experiment during the summer, to try out a new role before committing to the coming year.

You may find, as countless others have before you (some of whom you'll hear from on June 19), that assisting with worship is a blessing to your own spiritual life, as well as to the community of faith. Please talk to me (Rev. Liberty) if you'd like to know more about any of these roles, and I can direct you to the right person:

Acolyte (carrying the cross, lighting candles)
Altar Guild (setting up for communion)
Choir (starting Sept. 14 after the summer break)
Eucharistic Visitors (bringing communion to people's homes)
Lector (reading the lessons)
Prayer leader (Morning/Evening Prayer or Prayers of the People)
Tech Team (running the live-stream from the rear of the church)
Usher (supporting hospitality, safety, and order during worship)

Leadership

Vestry Update

St. John's Vestry discussions have been focused on two ongoing issues these days: The search for a new rector, and the potential sale of the parish house at 234 French Street.

Search process: The Vestry plans to establish a search committee to begin work this fall. We will meet with Bishop Brown on June 2 to become clearer on the process ahead. We will also be looking at ways to meet needs for worship and pastoral care between Rev. Liberty's departure at the end of the November, and the start of our new rector.

234 French: The Vestry would like to thank Don Lewis and his team of leaders, as well as many parishioners who have attended two open meetings on this topic this spring. At our May meeting, the Vestry considered two initial proposals for the purchase of the building, and opted not to accept either of them. Instead, the building will now be listed with a realtor. There will be more opportunities for input as the process unfolds. In the meantime, a committee is being formed to inventory the parish house and plan for (what we presume will be) a move of the offices over to the church building.

In addition to these topics, the vestry also spent part of our spring meetings in conversation with our two departing long-time partners in ministry: The Rev. Ann McAlhany, Deacon, and Anne-Marie Miller, Family Faith Formation Director. We are grateful for their ministries that have shaped this parish, and we will miss them both.

This is a time of much change at St. John's, and we are grateful to be going through it as a community. You can find our individual contact information below (and in the weekly announcements), and we would be glad to hear from you with any ideas, support, or concerns. Thank you for your prayers for this community's future, especially this Collect for Discernment for

St. John's:

Trustworthy God, You have been our shepherd through joy and sorrow for almost two hundred years. Guide us as we discern the path forward for St. John's, that we may continue to make Your love known through worship and service. For all that has been, we thank You, God, and trust You for all that is to be. Amen.

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Summer at a Glance

Sunday Worship at 10 am (through June 12) or 9 am (June 19-September 4), in person and on [YouTube](#)

Sundays at 11:15 (1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sundays), **Praying the Gospels: Ignatian Contemplation** in the chapel

Second Saturday lunch in the Undercroft at 12 pm: June 11, July 9, August 13

Men's Breakfast at the Coach House Restaurant in Brewer Tuesdays at 7 am: June 14, July 12, August 9

Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen at the Salvation Army, Tuesdays, 9 am-12:30 pm: June 28, July 26, August 23

In addition to those regular events, here are some special ones:

Thursday, June 2nd, 6:30pm: Vestry Meeting with Bishop Brown

Saturday, June 4th: Pentecost in Portland has been cancelled.

Sunday, June 5th, 10:00 am: Eucharist with choir, in-person and on [YouTube](#), followed by a festive celebration to say thank you and good-bye to Anne-Marie Miller.

Sunday, June 12th, 10:00 am: Eucharist with choir, in-person and on [YouTube](#), last 10:00am service for the summer.

Sunday, June 19th, 9:00 am: Sunday worship moves to 9:00am for the summer.

The week of June 19th: Parish Office annual summer closure

Monday, June 20th, 2:00pm: *Day change for this month* Women's Book Group - Reading "Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography" by Peter Conn . Zoom link available from Jane Z or Marisue P.

Tuesday, July 19th, 2:00pm: Women's Book Group - For more information or for the Zoom link please contact Jane Z or Marisue P.

Tuesday, August 16th, 2:00pm: Women's Book Group - For more information or for the Zoom link please contact Jane Z or Marisue P.

Sunday, September 11th, 10:00am: Worship returns to 10:00am for the fall.

Opportunities to Pray Together

Morning Prayer:

Monday - Friday, 9:00 am on Zoom & Facebook.

Evening Prayer:

Monday - Friday, 5:30 pm live on Zoom.

The next newsletter will come out in late August. Please watch the Sunday announcements and the weekly email (This Week at St. John's) for updates. If you have anything to include, please send it to office@stjohnsbangor.org by August 10th.



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