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ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Newsletter – Fall 2026

A Message from the Reverend Diane Wong

The primary reason we pray is usually to ask God to help resolve difficult situations we are in. But praying also opens up ourselves to the Holy Spirit for possibilities we have not seen or thought of before, so we can take actions to resolve those situations.

Each Sunday in the month of August, after Communion, we pray for God's Creation that is consumed by fire, a prayer from the Episcopal Public Policy Network. Three places in this prayer, highlighted below, touched me every Sunday:

...we grieve that the wildfires in Canada are but one sign of a creation burdened by changing climate and the **consequences of human choices...to pursue the changes needed to safeguard your creation.** Where we have failed in our stewardship, we pray, O Lord, that you would **help us amend our ways, repair what we have damaged...**

Climate change is not going to get better with our usual human habits and choices, and a lack of sense of urgency. But the reality is that it is affecting places we never thought would have wildfires, such as Reno, NV where people were asked to evacuate. Or in Phoenix, AZ where the temperature felt like 119 degrees at the time of this writing. And in other countries with life-threatening high temperatures and floods.

Given the choices we make that continue to endanger the environment, what can St. John's do, collectively, to "amend our ways and repair what we have damaged" and be good stewards of God's Creation?

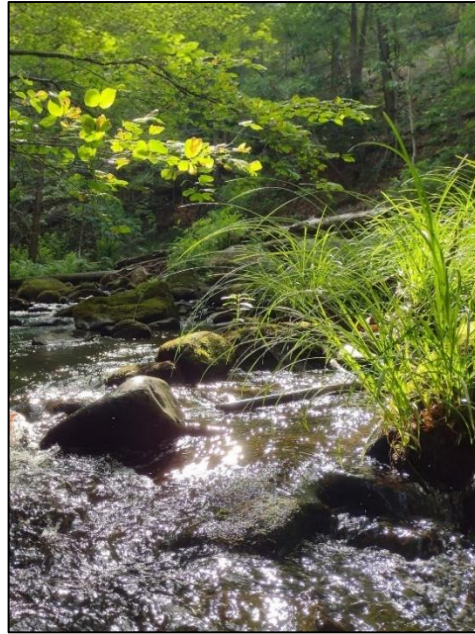
I know this prayer has touched some of you as well; then how can we do better as a church? I'd like us to come up with a few ideas as one body to safeguard God's Creation. I invite you to put your suggestions in the suggestions box at the back of the church, and we, as a church, will agree to commit to two or three of your suggestions.

Appreciatively,

Diane+

Grateful for baptism and the gift of water

By Anson Stewart



We are grateful for everyone's help and participation in Aiden and Laurel's baptism in the garden at St. Anne's in May. Over the rest of the summer, our family also had the chance to appreciate the outdoors and the gift of water in many ways -- hiking along small streams, swimming in the Dordogne, and enjoying sunsets at Mystic Lakes. On a camping trip to Willard Brook, we especially enjoyed the peaceful flow of the water at twilight (along with some joyful splashing around from Aiden and Laurel).

Sunset on Parlee Beach

By Adam Pachter



Along with my older daughter Lucy, I spent a few lovely August days in Maine and New Brunswick. One evening Lucy stayed in the hotel while I headed to Parlee Beach, whose waters are the warmest north of Virginia, for sunset. I intended to make a phone call but could find no Wi-Fi, so instead I enjoyed the solitary splendor, just as God intended.

Peskeomskut Stones

By Nick Venti

Peskeomskut would have been its name
Among the local people—
Where the rock divides the water—
And so it does, spectacular!
Flows here over and around
Volcanic rock that throws up
Mountains in the valley,
Plunging onto sandstone fifty feet below.
We, the settler colonizers, call the sandstone “Turners Falls”
After brutal Captain William Turner
Felled, himself, one hundred years exact before our nation's birth
While leading genocide, killing some three hundred
Aboriginals: Nipmuc, Wabenaki—women, children, mostly,
The native fighters camping half a mile away,
Precisely why our hero, Turner, focused his
Courageous English violence where he did.

That volcanic rock above
Radiometrically dates to earliest Jurassic
And the three-toed footprints of the dinosaurs
Preserved in muddy rocks below agree.
These ruddy, mica-glinting, brick-like pebbles
Break in tablets, slabs, and somehow
Into shapes we've learned to recognize.
I present to my companion a new cell phone,
And she, delighted, holds its warmth against her cheek,
Talking wryly to me like I'm on the line,
Listens to the frothy voicemails
Left by spawning shad and lamprey.

We modify the waterfall by sliding stones,
Opening the flow and steering it another way,
Bending down to call the migrants up the falls.
And grieve the dead, the salmon that no longer spawn here.
A powerful, ambitious man, Alvah Crocker,
Dreamed of industry and wealth, planned a town,
Sponsored the canals that draw the river flow away.
The river's engineered impediments so interrupt the fish
That these days tanks on trucks give better passage.

We watch a pair of muscled boys
Bravely hurl their dark-skinned bodies
Into the pool below, transforming into fish and eel.
Small groups move to music gringo Yankees call Latin
And cook their suppers on small fires.
But do not misperceive these people as Latinos.
These are the Indigenous of the Americas returned.
The police arrive as we get dressed,
Pursuing a report of wild revelry, fictitious:
A noisy crowd of fifty and a great bonfire.
But by then the beach was hosting just two witnesses, both White
So that these three officers, confused and disappointed, indeed multiplied our number.
Was it Turner's soldiers resurrected
Or the disappearance of the sun behind the hills that chilled us?

Packing up our things,
I collect more stones I recognize:
A lithic cell phone of my own,
One side convex, the other flat, a little divot for a thumb,
A slender wand—TV remote that I might give my father,
And finally a custom left-hand fitting stone
For my sinistral mother,
Who reclines before the television
Without controls for either chair or screen.
My parents aren't religious folk, and not particularly spiritual,
But hold the stones and be reminded:
God's creations satisfy unlike any engineer's will.

Major Impacts of Plastics on Health of Children

By Dr. Wayne Wild

As climate concerned activists, parents, and grandparents, we share a particular concern for the welfare of future generations, the impacts of climate change and other environmental factors on the health of our children and grandchildren. The toxic effects of plastics at all stages are cause for alarm, from manufacture and recycling to presence in the foods we and our children and grandchildren consume, the plastic products in clothes and other fabrics in the home, and the omnipresence in most dolls and toys.

The Minderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Human Health, with lead author pediatrician Philip J. Landrigan, warned: “Infants in the womb and young children are two populations at particularly high risk of plastic-related health effects. . . . [E]xposures are linked to increased risks of prematurity, stillbirth, low birth weight, birth defects of the reproductive organs, neurodevelopmental impairment, impaired lung growth, and childhood cancer. Early-life exposures to plastic-associated chemicals also increase the risk of multiple non-communicable diseases later in life.”

In fact, non-communicable diseases, which are currently the major cause of illness and death in children and are being shown to be linked to the synthetic chemicals as those so abundant in the manufacture of plastics.

“The Lancet Countdown on Health and Plastics” (Sept 2025) noted that “Food contact materials are an important source of human exposure to plastic chemicals. Food containers, drinking water bottles, and sachets, baby food pouches, tableware, and food processing equipment can all release plastic chemicals into food and beverages.” Effects of plastic chemicals endanger infants in the womb, reproductive potential (as polycystic disease and endometriosis), miscarriage, low birth weight, insulin resistance, hypertension and obesity in children.

Finally, early exposure to plastics is also associated with the development of chronic illnesses in adulthood, such as obesity, asthma, and heart and carotid artery disease, even possibly an association with dementia.

We must attend to reduction in plastics production and circulation if we want to protect our grandchildren!

For further reading: Volume 406, Issue 10507 p1044-1062 September 06, 2025
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)01447-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01447-3/fulltext)

Reducing Plastics in Our Congregations and Homes

Caring for the sacred earth includes reducing or eliminating single-use plastics. Plastic production has more than doubled in the last two decades. Almost 200 million tons of plastic made from fossil fuels pollute our waterways and end up in our bodies as microplastics. Up to 5 tons of greenhouse gases, including CO₂ and methane, are emitted per ton of plastic polluting our water and air. People of faith are called to make mindful decisions about the products we use in order to support a healthy planet for all.

Ideas to Reduce Plastic Use

- Use real dishware whenever possible, or recycled or compostable when not. A youth group created mess kits (dishware + flatware in a bag) for members to bring and use at congregational meals, and many congregations have a designated spot for members' coffee mugs.
- Cook together or have potlucks instead of takeout for congregational meals. Takeout food is mostly packaged in plastic. Various ministry groups (youth, etc.) have cooked meals to raise funds for particular ministry projects.
- Bring your own takeaway containers to restaurants and congregational meals. Keep a bag in your vehicle with reusable containers so you are never without.
- Promote reusable shopping bags. Some congregations sell reusable shopping bags with a logo to members. Collect and use cloth bags for community food pantries.
- Choose reusable sandwich bags, wax paper, or wax paper bags over plastic. Homemade wax paper to preserve and protect food items is a fun and easy craft project undertaken by some faith groups.
- Purchase refillable cleaning products, or use powder, laundry sheets, and hand soaps. Find a local refill store in your community or order bulk refills online.
- Make your holidays more sustainable by reusing decorations. Decorate with natural items (flowers, shells, rocks), collect and reuse items (ex. Easter eggs, dreidels, vases), use cloth table coverings and napkins, and make your own decorations (tissue flowers, paper cranes).
- Champion refillable water bottles and metal straws. Encourage, provide, or sell reusable, metal water bottles and straws.
- Host a used clothing closet or support one by shopping there. One youth group purchased used t-shirts for a tie-dyeing project.
- As you shop look for alternatives to plastic packaging and containers (cardboard, paper, metal).
- Try to fast as a congregation from plastic for a month or longer, and share the idea with others.
- Contact business owners and elected officials, and ask them to support policies and laws that eliminate single-use plastics. At least 12 states and many cities have banned certain single-use plastics, and even more businesses have stopped using plastic bags.

Source: <https://blessedtomorrow.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Plastice-Free-July-Checklist-OHOF.pdf>

Coming to You: Outreach Discussions

By the Vestry

St. John's Vestry has engaged in discussions this year of our outreach activities and mission. Essentially, we are reflecting on how we express our faith and become known as a parish who cares for our Arlington community and people in need beyond our community. This involves questions such as: how can we share our talents and resources with others not attending St. John's? We decided to engage the whole congregation in this discussion this year.

Our plan has several strategies. First, we recommended that all congregants read two books so we would have a common experience and language: *Building an Outreach Ministry to Your Community* by Tyrone Barnette and *Have a Little Faith* by Mitch Albom. Did you get a chance to read these books (available from the library and its Libby app)? There are printed excerpts available at the back of the church. Second, we are hosting a lunch and a dinner on October 8th for all congregants to come together. We will celebrate the outreach ministries we have engaged in the past, discuss current projects, and look for inspiration about new opportunities from ideas brought forward by you and other congregants. We want the lunch and dinner to create a welcoming space for discussion, and we value your opinions whether or not you read the selected books.

Vestry members will be giving you a call to encourage your attendance and hear your RSVP. We will provide food for each event. We hope you can attend either the lunch or dinner.

Some questions to consider before our discussion, taken from both books:

Barnette's book:

1. Jesus said in John 4:35, "Wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest?" Pray for your church that it will take full advantage of the opportunities that have been and will be presented to it over the next year. When you pray this prayer, what opportunities do you become aware of that you can share with the church? (Chapter 1)
2. Barnette emphasizes the importance of building relationships in Outreach ministry, to go deeper into people's lives so that we have the opportunity to bring healing and wholeness to those we serve, to go beyond the basic level of help; to be salt and light. (Chapters 5, 6, 8) What components can we add to our existing ministries so we can build relationships with those we minister to? To be salt and light?
3. One way to discern what God wants our church to do in the community is to assess the members of our church. What skills, expertise, passions, and education does our congregation have that could contribute to a ministry in our community? (Chapter 5) We are also reminded to be open to God's grace and open to be used by God. (chapter 14). What can remind ourselves to be open to God's grace and to be open to be used by God? How can we support and encourage each other to be open, despite challenges?
4. What partnerships do we have that are mutually beneficial? What partnerships do we need to form? Are there other churches in our community that we could partner with on some projects? Are there some partnerships we need to discontinue?

Mitch Albom's book:

5. In the book *Have a Little Faith*, the pastor ministered in very challenging conditions. What inspires you about him, his ministry and his congregation? What allowed him and his congregation to continue to be committed to their outreach despite the many challenges?
6. "We all do good things and bad things in life. We are each given a bit of divinity within. When we die, we won't be measured against anyone else but only against ourselves." What would you say to God right now about how you believe you measure up between the work you've done and the work you've been given to do?
7. According to Mitch Albom, Reb says: "when the world quiets to the sound of your own breathing, we all want the same things: comfort, love and a peaceful heart." How does your relationship with God give you comfort, love and a peaceful heart, and allow you to share God's comfort, love and a peaceful heart with others?

Cool and Connected Resource Center at St. John's

By Mary Jo Larson

St. John's opened its parish hall to guests on Tuesday and Fridays in June, July, and August in response to a request from the Town of Arlington for Cool and Connected Resource Centers. With a small grant from the town, we bought a new air conditioner, comfortable folding chairs and cushions, small tables and a Google-linked projector. The idea is that many people in the town may lack air conditioning or be otherwise isolated on days of extreme heat and weather. A group of dedicated volunteers staffed the Center, including Jan Ford, Frank Foster, Eunice Fleming, Mary Jo Larson, Dorothy Mallam, Rev Linda, and Rev Diane. We operated 20 sessions this summer, shared a lot of laughs, practiced some exercises to help us prevent falls, and played the Kings' Corner card game, courtesy of instructor Rev Linda. At the town's request we will open again in June 2027. Calvary Church and Arlington EATS also operated centers on Monday and Sunday, respectively. We have offered to help the town advertise this resource to encourage more attendance next year. Please join in the fun next year.

A Ministry of Presence

By Linda Taupier

One of the ministries to which I feel called is serving as a Chaplain of Presence at the ICE Detention Facility in Burlington. This ministry has deepened my understanding of what it means to be a deacon and reminded me that sometimes the most important thing we can offer another person is simply our presence.

I first went to the facility with a group from St. John's on a Wednesday. Each week, a large group gathers to protest what is happening to people who have been called to check in with immigration authorities. Some people who go inside to check in do not come back out. They are detained and often transported to facilities in New Hampshire or elsewhere, far from their families and communities.

Others are transported from different detention centers for release and may find themselves in an unfamiliar place, unsure of where they are or how they will get to their families. In the winter, some have been released in inadequate clothing, without connections to the area or a clear way to get help.

The Chaplaincy of Presence program is sponsored by the Massachusetts Council of Churches and includes clergy from many religious traditions. Chaplains are not allowed near the entrance of the facility; we stand on the other side of the driveway and speak with anyone who comes to us to talk.

Sometimes people want to tell their stories. Sometimes they ask for prayer. Sometimes a family member simply needs someone to stand with them while their loved one is inside. And sometimes there are no words at all.

For me, this is deeply connected to my vocation as a deacon. The ministry of presence is not about having all the answers or being able to fix what is happening. It is about listening, praying, accompanying, and bearing witness. It is about reminding people that they have not been forgotten.

Jesus continually moved toward people who were vulnerable, displaced, or pushed to the margins. He saw the person behind the label and affirmed the sacred worth of each individual. Chaplaincy of Presence calls us to do the same.

Standing across a driveway may not look like traditional ministry. There is no sanctuary, altar, or pulpit. Yet that driveway can become sacred space—a place where someone can be heard, where a family can be accompanied, where prayer can be offered, and where human dignity can be affirmed.

Sometimes ministry begins with doing. Sometimes it begins with speaking. And sometimes it begins simply by standing there.

For me, that is what it means to be called to a Chaplaincy of Presence: to stand at the edge, to listen, to pray, to accompany, and to bear witness to the sacred worth of every person.

I invite our parish community to hold in prayer all those who are detained, their families and loved ones, those who work at the detention facilities, and all who offer ministry and support to those affected. May our prayers help us remain attentive to the dignity and humanity of every person.

Living, Loving and Learning Along Side a Little Bichon

By Eunice Flanders

I drive by Saint John's Episcopal Church regularly enroute to my chiropractor's office which is the next block down towards Massachusetts Avenue. Over the years treating my back, I admired the grey stones, and the architecture. It reminded me a bit of Christ Church Episcopal in Montpelier, Vermont which I attended growing up, but what led me to enter St. John's red doors was reading on the website that dogs were welcome. "Wow!" I thought. "A church that welcomes dogs! How novel!"

My sister Lois, who lives in Vermont was visiting me in Belmont for a week. We sometimes read sections of the Bible over the phone together and talk about it. I thought it would be stimulating to attend church, and I figured we could check out St. John's since it was dog friendly and close by. So Lois, Claire (Lois's dog) Tucker (my dog) and I entered St. John's little community with no expectations, but with great curiosity as to how having our dogs with us would work out. We love our dogs, but would the congregation? They did!

The poet and dog lover herself, Mary Oliver, published a collection of dog poems in a small book titled *Dog Songs*. One of her poems beautifully illustrates a shared moment of love between Tucker and myself. Here it is:



He puts his cheek against mine
and makes small expressive sounds.
And when I'm awake or awake enough

He turns upside down, his four paws
in the air
and his eyes dark and fervent.

"Tell me you love me," he says.

"Tell me again."

Could there be any sweeter agreement? Over
and over
he gets to ask.
I get to tell.

Oliver's poem is simple but captures the mutual love I have with Tucker. Tucker teaches me about love every day. He also is a role model of living in the moment. I watch him and emulate his being present. I have learned from Tucker to observe more closely, to listen, to notice new scents. I have a sitting practice and each morning Tucker sits with me. At times, I close my eyes, and breath and seek "no mind" but often in summer, I sit in the back yard and practice being like Tucker--completely present. I look, I smell, and I listen to the world. I look at nature in our postage stamp back yard. I am more aware of all going on in the natural world around me because Tucker has modeled it for me. The call of the blue jay, the clouds colored violet pink and white, the ant scrambling on the cement, the swaying branches of the Norway maple. Sitting and

practicing being fully present puts in perspective my little life. Those moments of being in the back yard with Tucker, whose nose smells for more than mine, whose ears pick up sounds much better than mine, puts in perspective the world, a world which is enormous and amazingly complex and interesting. I focus on the colors, the light, and the beauty. Tucker is the object of my love but also my teacher. I am a disciple of his love.

Tucker trusts in his family fully and as most pets, completely predisposed to love. Tucker is aware of my love, but also senses when I am anxious, angry, or sad. He like all dogs, has such a keen sense of smell; it is likely, he smells each feeling emanating from my skin.

In a special edition of National Geographic, “The Genius of Dogs: Understanding Our Best Friends,” Brandon Keim writes about developing dog friendly cities:

Many U.S. states now have laws requiring restaurants dog-friendly dining areas. When families have a night out, the dog can be included. Workplaces too are opening their doggy doors routinely allowing workers to bring their dogs to the office. Having them is food for morale and productivity—and, for the dogs, it certainly beats being left home alone” (91).

Yes. Dogs provide the unconditional love we read about in the Bible and what Jesus modeled for his disciples. Of course dogs should be allowed in church! St. John’s red doors being open to me and Tucker led me to this church home.

Remembrance of Red Commendation

By Frank Foster Jr

I passed the red geranium today
and thought of forgotten springs
Home from Sunday School at year end
With a large plastic pot
 Flame filled
Would future scholars be inspired by
 Flame filled truth?

St. John's Ministry with the Somerville Homeless Coalition

By David Wilcox



St. John's is in its sixth year of working with the Somerville Homeless Coalition. The Coalition provides a range of services including emergency services, food assistance, shelter and homeless prevention to individuals and families who are facing housing insecurity in Somerville, Arlington and Medford. St. John's supports the group in a number of ways. The cornerstone of our work are the Monday Night Community Dinners meals we provide for clients. These meals take place four or five times a year. Our team of volunteers meet at the Somerville

Community Baptist Church on College Avenue in Somerville to set up and serve the meals. Meat and vegetarian lasagna are the most popular entrées and we also provide salads, rolls, and homemade cookies. During each dinner we typically serve over 85 meals, some for clients who wish to sit and enjoy the meals in the dining area and other meals to go. The work is a wonderful opportunity to help others and also enjoy the fellowship of working together as a team.

Deacon Linda Taupier has also added another important dimension to this outreach ministry, helping us provide critical personal care bags for clients that include toiletries and personal care items. These items are critical to so many individuals who do not have permanent housing and the clients are always pleased to take away one of the care bags after dinner. We would welcome anyone who would like to join us at the Community Dinners or make baked goods ahead of time.

Please contact David Wilcox wilcoxpost@gmail.com, Tirsa Moya tirsamoya@gmail.com or Deacon Linda deaconlindat@gmail.com if you have an interest in helping us or would like to find out more about the ministry.

St. John's Supports the Guatemala Aid Fund (GAF)

By Mary Jo Larson



St. John's has been a partner with GAF since 2019 and we encourage your continued support to this Arlington-based charitable organization. The founder is Bethany Eisenberg, who has volunteered in the past with our church school and sponsored a teen event at St. John's.

GAF supports many programs organized and delivered by local people in Guatemala. These programs include school support, family counseling, malnutrition prevention in rural San Jose Sololá and child protection services in Guatemala City — are of which are desperately needed because of the high poverty levels in Guatemala and insufficient government resources or public education and health programs. Programs reward children for their efforts to stay in school, are encourage more parents to become involved in children's schooling. Programs engage adults in opportunities for employment and education that open doors for new future directions with dignity and work, not handouts that perpetuate existing conditions.

GAF also develops and sponsors special projects. A 2026 Safe Water Project is creating a permanent, clean water supply at the Las Minas village area Community Center in San Jose Chacaya Guatemala. This is an area where 90% of the indigenous population currently suffer from intestinal issues.

The new Women's Entrepreneurial Project operates in the Village of San Jose Chacaya. These women are Weaving futures in their own community while preserving Mayan traditions, sacred lands, and their indigenous Kaqchikel language. Women also have education, a cooperative daycare and economy-building skills.

GAF also offers custom designed social and cultural tourism trips with visits to the Fatima Protective Home & School in Guatemala City, the SOLOLA Community Center and clinic and rural villages in the lake Atitlan Region, ceremonial sites that are threatened, and native forest land.

You can be involved as a donor, a collaborator with local fundraisers, a volunteer, or a future visitor on a GAF-hosted trip. To learn more about GAF opportunities visit with Mary Jo Larson. To donate visit the website: <https://www.guatemalaidfund.org/>.

You can play pickleball even if you are not athletic

By Mary Jo Larson

You probably have at least one family member or friend who cannot stop talking about pickleball. It is so engaging and fun that people tend to “evangelize” about it. I have been playing about 3 years and it never gets old. I am volunteering to teach anybody at St. John’s how to play, and all you need are tennis shoes and an hour of free time. We will meet at Spy Pond courts at a time of your choosing and I’ll teach you the rules and how to sign up for free local play. Maybe we can get a group together for a group lesson, or maybe you want to learn with a family member. It has been good for my mental health! Contact me at 617-513-7580.

Pierce Press to Publish "The Iceberg & The Penguin"

By Charlotte Pierce

Description

“There once was a little iceberg that was born too soon.”

To be published on April 22 2027 (Earth Day), by St. John's parishioner Charlotte Pierce, *The Iceberg and the Penguin* is a picture book with an environmental theme that gently shows children the importance of caring for God's creation. When the Little Iceberg's glacial home fractures as the ocean warms, it finds itself "born too soon" and swept away from its Antarctic habitat. Lost and alone, the Little Iceberg discovers a loyal companion in an intrepid young penguin, transforming a journey of displacement into a beguiling story of friendship, resilience, and hope.

Perfectly accompanied by illustrations by **Daniel Fiore**, an introduction by famed oceanographer & Mission Blue founder **Dr Sylvia Earle**, and an enthusiastic review from actor & environmental activist **Pierce Brosnan**, Spielberg’s story underscores the importance of connection and the quest for a safe home in a changing environment. Through the budding friendship between the shrinking iceberg and its penguin pal, the story highlights the comfort and resilience found in unexpected companionship. *The Iceberg & The Penguin* ends with a message of hope after the characters' shared journey.

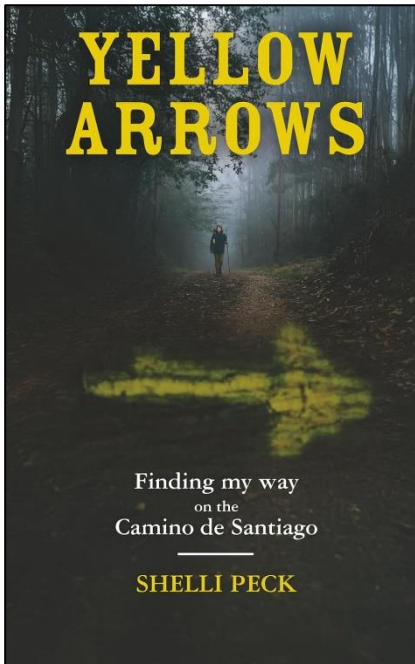
The Inspiration

The story of *The Iceberg & The Penguin* was born from a transformative experience for author & screenwriter Anne Spielberg during a cruise in the Chilean Fjords. While observing a massive glacier "calving" in the Falkland Islands, she witnessed a small, solitary iceberg being pulled away from its parent glacier. This visual prompted her to imagine the Little Iceberg struggling to return home and led to the story’s central opening line: *"Once there was a little iceberg that was born too soon."*

Publication date: April 22, Earth Day 202. Available through Ingram and the publisher. ISBNs: 978-0-9970681-7-7 (hardback) and 978-0-9970681-8-4 (paperback). Author bio, events & updates at AnneSpielberg.com & PiercePress.com.

Yellow Arrows: Finding my way on the Camino de Santiago

Reviewed by Joseph A. Curro, Jr.



Shelli Peck, 2025
301 pages
On [Goodreads](#)

In *Yellow Arrows*, author Shelli Peck takes the various strands of her life and weaves them together into an engaging and very introspective Camino memoir. The author invites us into a world marked by psychologically abusive relationships with her mother and ex-husband, her divorce, and the subsequent impact on her two daughters. She paints a picture of a workaholic, looking for something new.

Many readers will relate when Shelli finds what she is looking for in the Camino de Santiago. As she makes post-pandemic plans to retire early and to walk alone, she is surprised when her husband, John, unexpectedly decides to join her on this trek across Spain. They throw themselves into an ambitious training program along the roads around their Nebraska home, making sure to gear up at the closest outdoors store... 200 miles away!

What unfolds is a very endearing love story. Shelli's and John's deep

affection for each other shines through the book, highlighted by an impromptu birthday party at the little meseta albergue in San Bol, periodic romantic interludes (both real and imagined!), their playful singing of the first three words of songs (an agreed-upon way to avoid getting on one another's nerves), and their emotional arrival in Santiago. Shelli attempts to hide her rapidly worsening blisters, but she ultimately surrenders the care of her feet to her husband's loving ministrations.

The love extends to the others who share the path with Shelli and John. The couple makes up amusing names for other pilgrims they encounter, and they relish re-encountering their various "swarms" along the way. Shelli fights her maternal impulses when encountering a young woman from Israel, and she is greatly moved by the gift of a silver shell from another.

The author struggles with fits of conscience throughout the book, smoothly segueing between her inner journey and the physical path. She places a stone, on which she has written the word, "Regrets," at the foot of the Cruz de Ferro. And she struggles with present guilt over not offering her walking pole to a struggling pilgrim and repeating the exact same question to another pilgrim twice in the same evening.

Shelli Peck is a wonderfully descriptive writer, who is able to keep her story moving ever forward. The honesty in her narrative is refreshing, and this book reminds us of the higher purpose which pilgrimage can serve in our lives.

Cruise to the UK & Ireland

By Jan Ford



Bill and I took our first cruise to visit the UK and Ireland this summer. We had the opportunity to visit some amazing locations and to learn a bit about the homelands of some of our ancestors. We also visited many churches including an early Viking church, a Children's Church and the Anglican Cathedral of Ireland. One of the highlights of the children's church was the Baptismal font, a gilded angel that came down from the ceiling holding a bowl of water! Wouldn't our children love that?



At the Cathedral we learned that Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels, had been the Dean and during his tenure would give 4-hour sermons while standing in a wheeled pulpit. Should a parishioner nod off, he would be wheeled to the offender and "name and shame" them. Thankfully that would never be condoned today.

I also had the wonderful experience while sailing of watching the sun rise over the North Sea. There is something special in greeting the day with the realization that each new day is a gift of hope and gratitude.

Photos from Cate Barr



My son Henry Barr and his now-fiancee Amy Salvati just after getting engaged.



Two photos from our extended family get-away to Newfound Lake the week of Sept. 7, which was the first time in (sadly) 14 years all four of my sisters had been together – with other family members of course. It was a very nice vacation and we got to meet my niece's daughter Athena who's now 2 ½ years old.

Your participation in pledging is important!

By the Finance Committee

St John's Finance Committee offers these thoughts about the Episcopal tradition of 'pledging' your support as a member of St. John's. In late October, we will host Stewardship Sunday where we ask all parishioners to reflect on their gifts of time, talents, and tithes for 2027. This year it is vitally important that parishioners claim St. John's as your church home through participation in stewardship activities.

The Diocese of Massachusetts will be advising St. John's during our transition to a new Rector, and in that process they will look at the size of our congregation. Congregation size is reflected in average church attendance, number of people who make annual pledges, and income raised. You can demonstrate your commitment to St. John's and help the church by submitting a pledge.

2027 pledging will start at the end of October. Some people pledge an amount per year, others a weekly or monthly amount. A pledge reflects your intention, and St. John's understands that circumstances may change so that these intentions are not always fulfilled. Importantly, we seek to achieve 100% pledging participation, and be aware that no amount is too small.

We thank each of you who offers monetary gifts during the collection, whether you pledge or not. We also thank each of you who have already pledged. If you are new to St. John's or are a regular giver but have not pledged this year, please know that a pledge for any small gift will help us achieve our goal of 100% participation.

Submitted by the Finance Committee

(John Gibson, Vern Brown, Frank Foster, Mary Jo Larson, Rev. Diane Wong)

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Rev. Diane Wong's office hours: Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. John's.

Please feel free to arrange with Rev. Diane for other times to meet.

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