

THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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Our Lakeside Cottage and Summer Spiritual Practices



The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

“SITTING ON THE DOCK of our lakeside cottage.” This is the answer that immediately popped into my head in response to the theme of this edition of *The Call*: “What are your summer spiritual practices?”

Our dock sits on the magnificently beautiful Thompson Lake in Maine. The lake is about 12 miles long stretching up to the town of Oxford to the north, and down to Casco in the south, where our cottage is located. The lake is about two miles wide for most of its length. Not only is the lake

so beautiful, but also the sky above the lake is so big.

Although we have had our cottage for almost 20 years, every summer I find myself sitting on the dock in awe of the beauty and wonder of God’s creation. And it feels like the vast sky seems to ask me about my own place in God’s created order and about the direction of my life. It seems to say to me, “How are you using the life God has given you to bring Christ’s love and purpose into the world?”

For me, trying to address this question is my summer spiritual practice. I am incredibly grateful that I have the time and space over the summer to reflect on this question away from the busyness of normal life with its many demands.

But I don’t do this reflection sitting on the dock on my own. As well as having Sarah with me on the dock to chat about things, I also have my other great love, which is books. Reading is my other summer spiritual practice and I find the books I read on the dock often give me important insights and direction to my spiritual self-reflection.

When we go to Maine, I usually take a monstrously large pile of novels along with spirituality and theological books. I know I won’t read most of them, but I often feel that I end up reading the books I am meant to have read—perhaps the Holy Spirit has a hand in this!

I am already building up the pile of spirituality and theology themed books that I plan to take. The books in my preliminary pile include *C.S. Lewis: Eccentric, Genius, Reluctant Prophet* by Alister McGrath, *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl, *The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God* by Justin Brierly, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* by Nabeel Qureshi, *Cloistered: My Years as a Nun* by Catherine Coldstream, and *Praying like Monks, Living Like Fools* by Tyler Staton.

But I often find it is the novels I read that touch my soul most deeply. When I was an agnostic/atheist after I left college in my early twenties, it was the novels of Leo Tolstoy and E. M. Forster that unexpectedly reignited in me the spiritual quest that led me back to my Christian faith and eventually to the priesthood.

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So, when I pick up a novel, I do so never knowing how God might speak to me through the pages. So far in my pile I have a new novel by Paul Theroux, *Burma Sahib* which is about George Orwell's days as a British imperial policeman in Burma before he gave it all up to become a writer. I am also keen to read the new novel by Zadie Smith, *The Fraud*. If you have any suggestions of novels, particularly recently published ones, I would love to hear from you.

I want to end by mentioning a final summer spiritual practice that Sarah and I share which has nothing to do with the dock or the lake.

When we are in Maine we love going to our local Episcopal church for the Sunday service. The church we attend is Christ Episcopal

Church in Norway, Maine. It is a tiny church and feels full when the 30 to 40 members of the congregation gather for Sunday worship. It is such a treat for us as clergy to sit in the congregation and enjoy the service. We are lucky because the rector, Rev. Canon Nancy Moore, is such a great preacher and we always walk away feeling spiritually fed. We have also gotten to know quite a few of the parishioners, and it is nice to feel part of a church community for the summer.

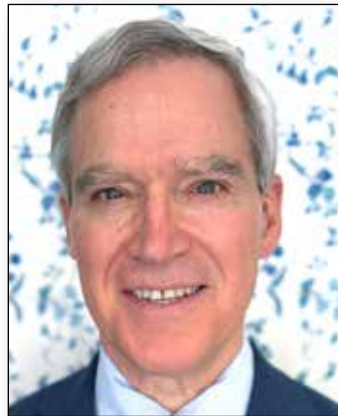
I hope you have a good summer enriched by your own summer spiritual practices!

Yours in Christ,



Warden's Message

The shared practices of faith



Tom Faust, warden


I AM PLEASED TO WRITE TO YOU as the new junior warden of St. Andrew's, freshly minted as of January this year. Being named Thomas is a tradition among the male members of my family that ultimately honors St. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus best known for doubting the resurrection. As told in the Gospel of John, when the other disciples said to Thomas "We have seen the Lord," he replied,

"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Over the many centuries of Christendom, St. Thomas is certainly not the only follower of Jesus to have had feelings of doubt. Maybe you too have gone through periods of questioning in your faith experience.

A favorite sermon of mine on the topic of faith was preached by our former Associate Rector Cat Healy back in April 2018 (if interested, you can find it on the St. Andrew's website under the worship and resources tabs). Cat reminded us in her sermon that, while Thomas was experiencing doubt, he remained in community with his fellow disciples, continuing to pray and to share in the breaking of the bread.

As Cat preached, belief is best thought of as a state of relation-



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ship with God and not merely a state of mind. She goes on to say, "It is a commitment to God characterized by our actions, not by our feelings. Feelings always come and go. But, if you keep on with the actions, if you choose to be like Thomas and stick with the fellowship and the prayer and the breaking of bread, some amazing things can start to happen. You may find that the feelings will follow or that, if they have been gone, they come back stronger than before. Just like the disciplines of love, the disciplines of belief can transform

your heart and make it a place that is ready to receive the experience of the living God."

Unlike St. Thomas, we are unlikely to have the opportunity for our beliefs to be affirmed literally by touching the wounds of Jesus. But, like St. Thomas, we can continue to maintain the disciplines of faith that make belief a possibility. While summer often brings more time for relaxation and reflection, travel that pulls us away from the fellowship of St. Andrew's can also make the practice of faith more difficult to maintain.

As you go out into the world this summer, remember the words of St. Thomas when Jesus guided him to touch his wounds, "My Lord and my God," and the responding words of Jesus, "Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Have a wonderful summer and remember to practice the disciplines of faith wherever you are. Through the shared practice of faith, our St. Andrew's community can remain close even while we are apart in distance.

Summer Church



The Rev. Margaret K. Schwarzer

MOST EPISCOPALIANS I know are as religious during the summer as we are during the fall, winter, and spring, but we like a change of venue. We swap out some of our regular church Sundays for the soulfulness of a vast ocean near a sandy beach, the beauty near a lake, the grace found inside a tiny summer chapel, or the blessings of a whole day spent digging in our gardens at home. The outdoors—the glory of creation—and the adventures found in new (vacation) travels engage us in the summertime.

This past fall, a 9am Christian learning class asked us one

question, "What has the church given you?" The list, which grew from the 30 members of the class, was so inspiring that I've kept it on a wall in my church office ever since last October's class.

I can't list all the words, but here is a partial list in the chart below.

I hope you will make mental notes when you find a moment of "church" in a seemingly unlikely place this summer. Maybe you will feel the grace of community at a riveting summer cocktail party when you look up and see 25 other people being boldly alive, laughing, snacking, and drinking as if the world will never end. Or perhaps you will feel the oneness

of the world when you dig your toes into the sand at a family beach picnic, glance up into the sky, and catch a glimpse of the moon during a bright afternoon sky.

Grace is all around us. Soulful "church" moments happen inside and outside of buildings when we have trained ourselves to look for them.

I'll be inviting myself to stay alert to "church" moments when I'm away this summer. I hope that when we regather in the fall, you will share some of your moments of outside summer church with me, and I will have the opportunity to share one or two of my moments with you. Godspeed.

What Has the Church Given You?

<i>faith</i>	<i>community</i>
<i>hope</i>	<i>education</i>
<i>ritual</i>	<i>forgiveness</i>
<i>service</i>	<i>gorgeous music</i>
<i>warmth</i>	<i>the peace of God</i>
<i>new life</i>	<i>spiritual growth</i>
<i>challenge</i>	<i>the goodness of people</i>
<i>centering</i>	<i>the generosity of people</i>
<i>grounding</i>	<i>living out the Life that brings life</i>



What I Will be Reading this Summer



The Rev. Dr. Sarah Robbins-Cole

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY someone is passionate about something, ask them to tell you their backstory. So, if you would like to know why I am passionate about being a lifelong learner and educator, let me tell you a little about my childhood.

When I was eight years old, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. I had been attending a local public school in Providence, Rhode Island. In third grade, my parents moved me to a private girls' school when it became clear I was not thriving in the new fad in elementary education: the open classroom.

When I moved from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School in the East-side of Providence to the Lincoln School, a private girls' Friends school, I went from being a strong reader for my grade to being a weak reader who needed extra help. My parents recognized that something was not right, so they brought me to Massachusetts General Hospital to be evaluated. There I was diagnosed with dyslexia.

From that experience I found out that I was excellent at spatial relations. However, my reading, my spelling skills, and my ability to repeat numbers in the reverse order that I heard them back to the examiner were far from strong. However, between the extra help Lincoln School provided and the hours of extra tutoring (namely phonics), my parents contracted for me, I became a proficient reader, and the rest is history. And those phonics lessons paid off. I beat Adrian at Wordle every single day. He is, however, excellent, in fact a "genius," at The New York Times Spelling Bee.

My passion for teaching was kindled years later when I was a school chaplain in London, at Kings' College School Wimbledon, a highly selective, all-boys public (i.e. private) school that catered for boys aged seven to 18. Along with chaplaincy duties, I taught high school religious studies, philosophy, ethics, and English.

During that time, I trained and became a certified teacher through the Counsel for British Teachers (CfBT). The training was invaluable. I learned how to write curricula, lesson plans, and most importantly, I learned about differentiation. That is, I learned how to teach lessons that prepared the boys to pass their national exams. I also learned how to teach in a way that reached the highly gifted students, and also teach those who struggled with ADHD, Asperger's (a former name for what people called high functioning autism), dyspraxia, and dyslexia.

Although I completed my teaching certification in 2004, I still use what I learned when I write curricula and lesson plans for church school. I want every child who comes to our church school classes to feel welcome and able to learn in the way that they learn best. So, for example, in the upper school, we move around a lot, because I know sitting still and paying attention is hard for that age group. We act things out, we look at art, we sing, and we touch and hold artifacts from our faith and liturgies. Basically, I write lesson plans that I wish I had had when I was struggling in third and fourth grade.

So, this summer, enjoying my newfound freedom to read whatever I want, having completed my doctorate, I will be reading, in preparation for next fall, books on education. One book I am excited to read is *Breaking Free of Child Anxiety and OCD: A Scientifically Proven Program for Parents*, by Eli R. Lebowitz. I will also be reading, *Belonging: The Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides* by Geoffrey L. Cohen. I am also taking recommendations. Please let me know what books you are reading on this topic that you have found helpful.

You may be wondering what this has to do with our faith and St. Andrew's. For me, church is a place where everyone belongs regardless of academic "success" or learning style. One of the ways that we demonstrate to children we care about our faith and them, is our willingness to teach them in ways that are accessible to them.

Summer Ministry with the B-SAFE Program



Margaret Zusky

THE B-SAFE PROGRAM is a five-week, full day academic and fun summer enrichment program at St. Stephen's that St. Andrew's has been part of since the 1990s. Students develop skills in humanities, math, science, health and wellness, and the arts. On Fridays, they enjoy field trips and travel outside the city to lakes, farms, and parks for a day of swimming, games, and a picnic lunch.

Many parishioners have participated over the years, many every

year. In this way, we can take the spirit of St. Andrew's out into the community in the summer.

"It is enjoyable to be part of the B-SAFE week—it is the chance to be with the kids in all their energy—creative, funny, kind, cooperative (or not). I also love getting to watch the wonderful staff and teen counselors who are the backbone of the summer program and their relationships with the kids. Last though not least, it is fun to work alongside fellow St Andrew's parishioners in such a worthwhile activity outside the confines of our usual setting." —*Sandy Warren*

"For the past 15 years or so, my experience with B-SAFE has been a broadening one. The B-SAFE children are shy, polite, and a pleasure to be with. I take tremendous pride in the Episcopal Church's reaching out into the community, in all kinds of situations and under all kinds of circumstances. B-SAFE has enabled me to answer God's

call for me to go forth and practice His ministry." —*Paul Shackford*

"I really love to connect with the kids and find out what makes them excited to be at B-SAFE. Their energy is infectious! Seeing them enjoying the activities at the church (last year they really loved doing karaoke) and the water at Hopkinton or Ashland State Park is one of the highlights of my year. I also enjoy the opportunity to give back with my girls." —*Karen Pekowitz*

"I have enjoyed the field trips. It's interesting to go to the different state parks or locations where I probably wouldn't otherwise go. It's fun to go with a group of enthusiastic young people who are not your typical Wellesley kids. It feels good to give these young people an enjoyable time that they wouldn't necessarily have otherwise." —*Cynthia Hunt*



Photo: Courtesy B-SAFE

A group of B-SAFE program participants

Parishioner Reflections

What are your summer spiritual practices?

Taking Faith with You This Summer



Betsy Millane

A TERRIBLE THING happened when I was seven years old. A drunk driver hit our car as we drove home from the movies. My baby brother hit his head on the dashboard and developed a blood clot on his brain. I went through the windshield.

Hundreds of stitches later, no one knew what I would look like. We didn't know what would happen to my baby brother. He confounded the local doctors, who were doing all they could for him.

But my grandfather, who insisted on donning a surgical gown and mask so he could hold my hand and listen to my cries, witnessed the doctor's skill while he stitched me up, knew all would be well

because he had faith. He was the one who looked long and hard into my scarred face around the dinner table when I left the hospital, looked at me when no one else could and averted their eyes from me, because he had faith I would look better.

He was the one who told my parents to get my ailing baby brother to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota to find out what was wrong with him, and found the private plane to get them there. He had faith in the doctors at Mayo and he was rewarded when my brother recovered.

Maybe the family borrowed his faith then. Perhaps faith has the power to summon the angels.

I am sure faith didn't come easily to him. He'd seen a lot as a young man in charge of taking care of his family after his father died, and maybe he felt that faith had made a fool of him for believing things would be alright. As you read in an earlier edition of *The Call*, he watched from the shore of Lake Michigan as his brother clung to life on a boat gone aground, while everyone else died in the surf. I wonder where the habit of faith was then. Maybe it started there when his brother was saved.

The family might have thought it was his business acumen that al-

lowed him to preside over his successful family real estate business, but I can see now that all would not have happened without his faith in himself. Faith was a habit. It allowed him to rise above the rest. Faith was his strength, cultivated through long, trying practice.

A parishioner at St. Andrew's, one I interviewed for an article, said to me: "I put my faith in God and know in his hands it will be alright." I admire him because I know having faith takes strength and courage, which he has in abundance, but isn't easy to practice, and practice is necessary for faith. I think faith wakes up the angels, much as exercise wakes up your body.

So, take your faith along with you this summer, and if you haven't got much faith, practice it in the trivial things: Have faith that you find a good spot for the fireworks, find a good restaurant for a celebration, that the traffic jam will ease up and you will get to your destination safely. Have faith that family squabbles will heal, that reunions will occur, that God is somewhere out there working with you. God has a good relationship with faith. Because faith doesn't take time off, even when you do.



Photo: AdobeStock

My Reception into the Episcopal Church



Elmore Alexander

I WAS CONFIRMED in the Methodist Church in 1962 and joined the United Church of Christ in 2023. During COVID, my wife, Pam and I decided that we needed to find a better fit for our worship, religious study, and social justice needs. Our looking stopped when we made our first virtual visit to St. Andrew's, and we decided to join before ever stepping foot inside the sanctuary. Being received into the Episcopal Communion completed our

journey. I don't remember my confirmation, but I won't forget the ceremony last week at All Saints Parish, Brookline, when I was officially received into the Episcopal Church. The opportunity to share the experience with Pam, Rev. Margaret Schwarzer, Rev. Dr. Sarah Robbins-Cole and the confirmands and their families was especially moving. "Tis a gift to come down where you ought to be."



Photo: Peter B. Lull

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