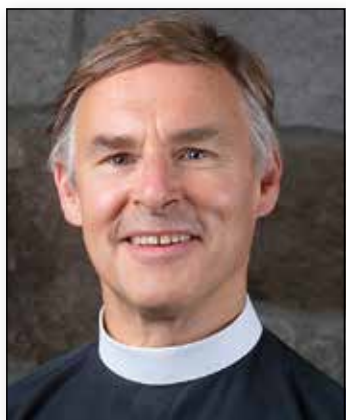


THE CALL

ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

NO. 413
FALL 2026

Back to Church



The Rev. Adrian Robbins-Cole

AS ANOTHER SUMMER draws to a close, many of us find ourselves returning to familiar routines. Schools reopen, holidays begin to fill, and life settles into its familiar rhythm. September has always felt a little like a second New Year—a time to begin again.

It is also a wonderful time to come back to church, which is the theme of this edition of *The Call*.

For some, the summer has meant traveling and discovering new places. For others, it has been a season of family gatherings, gardening, reading, or simply enjoying a slower pace of life. These are good gifts. Rest is part of God's intention for us. Even Jesus invited his disciples to "come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while."

Yet rest is never meant to be an end in itself. It renews us so that we can return to the deeper rhythms that sustain our lives. Among those rhythms, gathering with God's people each

Sunday has nourished Christians for two thousand years.

Church is much more than a place where we fulfill a religious obligation. It is where we remember who we are. In a world that constantly tells us our worth depends on success, appearance, or achievement, the Church quietly reminds us that we are beloved children of God. We come with our joys and our worries, our hopes and our disappointments, and discover again that we do not carry life's burdens alone.

But coming back to church is not just something we do for ourselves. It is also a gift we give to our neighbors and our wider community. In its own quiet way, simply being part of a Christian community is a form of evangelism. (I know—that word can make many Episcopalians want to run a mile in the opposite direction!) But let me explain what I mean.

About a year ago, I was talking with someone who had recently joined St. Andrew's and whose young children had become part of our Sunday School. I asked what had prompted them to start coming to church. They told me that the previous Thanksgiving they had traveled out of state to be with family. As they spent time with their siblings and relatives, they noticed something striking. The families who attended church seemed, on the whole, to be happier, more resilient, and more emotionally grounded than those who did not. They found themselves wanting that same sense of stability, purpose, and community for their own family, and so they decided to come back to church.



Photo: Peter B. Lull

Their story reminded me that the benefits of belonging to a church extend far beyond Sunday morning. As we are shaped by worship, friendship, prayer, and service, we become people who bring greater kindness, hope, and compassion into our homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Our lives become a quiet witness to the difference that faith can make. Others may begin to wonder whether they, too, might find the same sense of meaning and belonging.

This is nothing new. In Acts chapter 2 we read that the early Church grew because people were drawn to the extraordinary love and generosity they saw among the first Christians. In the competitive and often harsh world of the Roman Empire, communities where people genuinely loved, cared for, and supported one another stood out. Their life together was itself a powerful testimony to the gospel.

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My prayer is that, as we return to church this September, we may become that kind of community: a place where our own lives are enriched by God's grace and where, through the love we share, others catch a glimpse of Christ. In a world that often feels fractured,

lonely, and uncertain, may St. Andrew's be a community of hope, belonging, and joy for all who walk through its doors.

Yours in Christ,



Warden's Letter

Sharing our Gifts



Ginny Snow, warden

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."
— 1 Peter 4:10

THIS PAST WINTER, I had the opportunity to join the search committee for St. Andrew's new Organist and Music Director, a process that ultimately led to the hiring of Andrew Sheranian.

Over the course of four months, the eight-person committee established an evaluation process, reviewed 26 applications, watched performance videos, discussed each candidate, conducted on-site visits, and prayerfully discerned who would be the best person to join our parish community. Throughout the process, committee members shared their perspectives openly, respected differing opinions, and worked collaboratively toward a common

goal. Everyone was fully engaged and committed to finding the right leader for our music ministry.

While identifying our new Music Director was an important decision, what left the greatest impression on me was the dedication and spirit of the volunteers who served on the committee. They generously gave their time, energy, and thoughtful attention because they care deeply about our church and its future. Their commitment reminded me that St. Andrew's is strengthened not only by its clergy and staff, but also by the many parishioners who willingly share their gifts in service to others.

As we prepare to return this fall, there will be many opportunities to become involved in St. Andrew's. Whether you host Coffee Hour, teach Sunday School, serve as an Usher, bake for an event, assist with our online worship ministry, or join a committee, every act of service helps strengthen our community.

I encourage you to visit the Ministry Fair during Coffee Hour in September to learn more about the many ways you can become involved. Whether you have a few hours to give or are looking for a deeper commitment, there is a place for your gifts at St. Andrew's.

I hope you had a wonderful summer, and I look forward to seeing everyone at "Welcome Back Sunday" in September!



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A publication of
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

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Exploring Your Faith



The Rev. Margaret K. Schwarzer

“Be curious...”

– Ted Lasso and Walt Whitman

SEPTEMBER ALWAYS HOLDS the energy of new beginnings. What new beginning do you want to claim this month? Where does your curiosity want to lead you?

St. Andrew's adult formation advisory committee and I invite you to be curious about your Christian faith. What part of our Sunday service is your favorite part? What part annoys you, bores you, or puzzles you? Are you curious about the practice of forgiveness, the power of confession, the specific Christian values and beliefs which bring depth and soul to our daily lives? Honesty, compassion, kindness, and mercy make life worthwhile.

This fall, St. Andrew's is offering many opportunities to help us engage and deepen our faith. You are invited to be a part of all of them, as time and interest allow. Come to one or come to one every week. You are always welcome. Here are a few to consider joining:

1. Episcopal 101 – our inquirer's class. This September, we offer three classes that identify the core spirituality, governance, and theology of the Episcopal Church. This series is designed for adults who want to be confirmed in our

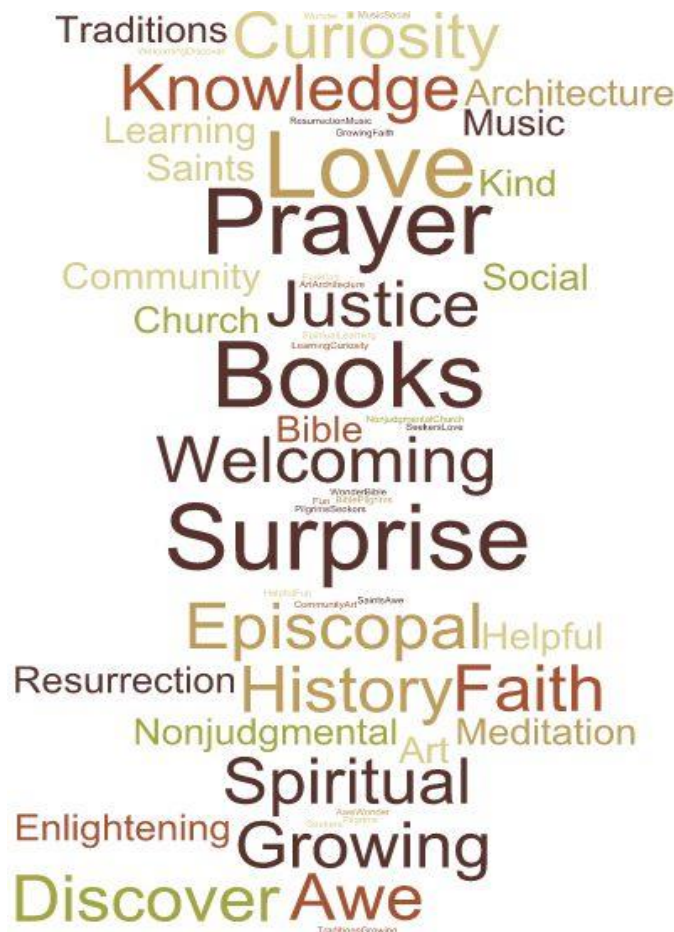
Christian faith or learn more about the Episcopal Church. We will also share our own spiritual journeys. Bishop Julia will confirm and receive adults into the Episcopal Church at St. Andrew's on October 4. Classes will be offered September 13, 20, and 27.

2. The Turkey Trot. Join St. Andrew's team and run the Wellesley Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving Day. Last year, over 70 of us met near the starting line, wished each other a Happy Thanksgiving, and then ran the race, raising money to lessen food insecurity through our entrance fees. We won the prize for "biggest team" and donated the prize money to support two of our parishioners' prison ministry.

3. 9am Christian Learning classes and Bible Studies. We offer a class on a facet of Christian faith every Sunday at 9 am from September – June. We offer three different Bible studies monthly: a weekly “Beginners’ Bible Study” on Thursdays at noon (on Zoom), a Men’s Bible Study which meets twice a month on Saturday mornings, and Open Bible Study classes which meet monthly on Tuesday mornings or Wednesday evenings. (Open Bible Studies are hybrid classes held in-person and on Zoom.)

Join us to learn more about the Christian life, discover ways to claim hope and purpose in a complicated world, and find fellowship and new friendships along the way.

Adult Formation



Back-to-Church Bingo



The Rev. Dr. Sarah Robbins-Cole

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE we're almost at the end of our vacation in Maine, and I have not finished a single book. Not one. There are, admittedly, mitigating circumstances. I somehow managed to leave my favorite reading glasses at home, which has not helped matters. But the real reason is that this summer has been very different from previous ones.

For several years, life at our lake has been wonderfully quiet.

My days followed a comfortable rhythm of a morning workout, walks with Adrian, swimming, reading on the dock, and church on Sunday. It was restorative in its own way.

This summer, however, has turned into something entirely different. I understood why I hadn't finished a single book when I wandered into the Casco Public Library yesterday for mah jongg and noticed on the way in a summer reading Bingo card encouraging patrons to read books from different genres (see <https://www.cascopubliclibrary.org>). I love challenges, so naturally I began plotting how to fill every square. Then it dawned on me that, in a way, my whole summer had become its own Bingo card which has included playing rounds at a little public golf course, the library's mah jongg and canasta groups, cheering on the World Cup at the local pub, and conversations with people who

were strangers only a few weeks ago.

I wouldn't describe this summer as particularly restful, but it has been deeply life-giving. There's something heartwarming about walking into a place and hearing someone call out, "Sarah! Great to see you!" Or, "Hey guys, meet Adrian and Sarah." These types of simple greetings remind us that we belong somewhere. But not only does it make us feel better and help life feel more interesting, research consistently suggests that learning, social connection, and meaningful community contribute not only to human flourishing but even to longevity and brain health. We were created for connection.

As I reflected on this year's "Back to Church" theme, I began wondering what would happen if we approached church the way I've approached this summer. What if, instead of simply returning to familiar routines, we challenge ourselves to try something new?

So, in the spirit of the Casco Public Library's reading challenge, I've created a Back-to-Church Bingo card. Use this one or make one of your own. Try a few new things this fall and then pay attention and notice what happens. You may discover new friendships, a deeper sense of belonging, and perhaps even a new way that God is inviting you to grow within the St. Andrew's community. You may discover a ministry you never knew existed. You may discover gifts you didn't realize you had. Most of all, you may discover that this church begins to feel even more like home.

Back-to-Church Bingo				
Meet a new member	Stay for coffee hour	Attend Adult Learning	Join a new ministry	Come to church four Sundays in a row
Co-host coffee hour	Donate to a food drive	Go to a Bible study	Attend the October fellowship event	Write a Call article
Visit Agassiz Village	Help with Bargain Haul	FREE SPACE	Buy something at the Alternative Gift Fair	Meet with one of the clergy
Donate to an outreach effort	Stay seated for the postlude	Attend Common Cathedral	Invite someone to church	Sing in the choir for a special service
Volunteer at a parish event	Read a book from the church library	Wear your name tag	Attend a newcomer event	Introduce yourself to someone new

Parishioner Reflections

Back to Church

THE THEME FOR this issue of *The Call* is meant to remind us that, after the quieter months of summer, returning to St. Andrew's in the fall is returning to the friendships that sustain us, the ministries that challenge us, and a community that assures us we do not walk alone in our faith. We asked parishioners at Coffee Hour to answer the question, "Why I love St. Andrew's!" Here are their reasons. What are yours?

"I love St. Andrew's because the clergy and congregation consistently help me grow in my faith."

"...for the clergy, their messaging – a discussion, not a lecture."

"...for the music, the parishioners, and the sense of community that is fostered."

"...for the warm welcome that we received on our first Sunday here. The people are so kind and welcoming and the clergy – fantastic! My husband and I have never been happier in a church community."

"...because of the wonderful curiosity of parishioners and our outstanding, dedicated clergy and our amazing music program."

A New Beginning



Andrew Sheranian, MM, AAGO
Organist and Director of Music

AS I BEGIN my work as Organist and Director of Music at St. Andrew's, I want to say how grateful I am to join this wonderfully vibrant parish. I look forward to getting to know you all in the months ahead as we begin a new church year together.

Music has been part of my life from the very beginning. I grew up in a deeply musical family, where singing and playing together were simply part of everyday life. Though raised in a different tradition, it was the Episcopal Church that first welcomed me as a teenage organist. At St. Philip's in the Hills in Tucson, I was given the opportunity to practice, play for

services, and discover the beauty of Anglican worship—a gift that ultimately shaped both my vocation and my faith.

That journey led me to study organ at the New England Conservatory and Yale University, followed by nearly twenty-five years serving Episcopal parishes in New York and Boston. Along the way, I developed a lifelong love for the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and founded The Bach Project, a Boston-based ensemble devoted to sharing his extraordinary music.

More important than any résumé, however, is my conviction that music is central

to the Church's life. When we sing together, we pray together. Congregational singing unites us across generations, draws us more deeply into the liturgy, and gives voice to our shared faith. My hope is to build upon St. Andrew's rich musical tradition by encouraging joyful congregational singing, nurturing singers of every age by fully incorporating the children's choir with the adult choir, and offering music that inspires and prompts actions to bring about more justice in the world.

I look forward to making music with you and to welcoming everyone into the song of this parish.



Photo: Peter B. Lull

The Church We Bring Through The Door



Lee Eichelberger

I'M NOT SURE how many of you might know it, but I am what some used to call a P.K. — short for 'Preacher's Kid.' My dad was a Presbyterian minister in the southeast and I grew up in many different churches, including one

he founded. I remember once when I was about 8, he told the congregation (that's the word Presbyterians use for the parish) that the building we were all in was NOT a church. I found this shocking! We all called it a church. There was even a sign out front that said 'church.' He continued: "This..." he said raising his arms upwards, "is just a building. The real church is all of us here together. And no matter where we are together — that's where the church is." It took my young mind a while to make sense of this but over the years I came to see the wisdom of these words.

The St. Andrew's building is full of beautiful windows, icons of saints and that plant that seems to be taking over one of

the back doorways — but it's still only a building. What makes St. Andrew's a church is all of us. The life we bring through the door in our shared faith. Us being together in joy and worship, doing our best to sing on key, and spending time together over coffee or an open Bible. Us trying to live the best life we can and share it with our families and one another. For it is our love that carries the Holy Spirit into an old building and to each other.

I invite you to consider the insight that bedazzled a child so when you return to church, you are not returning to a building — as glorious and beautiful as it may be — but to the beauty and glory of our shared faith and fellowship.

Renewing Our Commitment to Community



Costas Panagopoulos

AS SUMMER DRAWS to a close, the return to school brings a familiar sense of renewal. Classrooms reopen, students reconnect with teachers and friends, and families settle again into routines centered on learning and growth. For many, this season also marks a return to church—a return not simply to a building, but to a community

grounded in faith, fellowship, and service.

As a political science professor, and as a local elected official, I am reminded that healthy communities and healthy democracies depend on many of the same virtues: respect for others, a willingness to listen, concern for the common good, and a commitment to participate. Schools prepare young people to become informed and thoughtful citizens. Churches call us to care for our neighbors, especially those who are vulnerable or overlooked. Both institutions remind us that we belong to something larger than ourselves.

That message is particularly important in an election year. Civic engagement is not limited to voting, although casting an informed ballot is one of our most important responsibilities. Participation also

means learning about the issues, listening to different perspectives, attending community meetings, volunteering, helping others register to vote, and modeling respectful dialogue for our children. Politics can sometimes feel divisive, but public service should ultimately be about strengthening communities. Our faith traditions and civic traditions both challenge us to move beyond self-interest and ask what we can do for one another.

As we return to school and church this season, we have an opportunity to renew our commitment to community. Let us enter classrooms, congregations, and public life with humility, curiosity, and compassion. Democracy is strongest when citizens participate, communities serve, and neighbors recognize their shared responsibility for the future.

Returning to Reach Out



Cam McCormick

WELLESLEY IS LOVELY during the summer – much less traffic and it's a shorter wait for the book you want at the library. But returning to church in September has its own joy, with full pews, animated conversations at Coffee Hour, and children careening around the Hunnewell Lawn at the Parish Picnic. I look forward to gathering after a couple of summer months away and plan for events to give of our time and talent to those in need around us as part of our church's vibrant Outreach Ministry.

We don't take a total break in the summer – in July we once again hosted the B-SAFE summer enrichment program of St. Stephen's Youth Programs by providing snacks and tickets to a fun day at Kimball Farm in Westwood. But the

September-to-June program year brings many opportunities to give of our time and talent to communities that we care about. Before you know it, we will be filling the Thanksgiving Grocery bags, The Giving Tree will rise in church, and winter coats will be collected. In February, we will light up the Parish Hall with the energy of packing 18,000+ meals, and shortly thereafter our Bargain Haul will harness our whole parish toward a huge financial infusion to Outreach. Several times we will prepare a healthy meal for St. Stephen's as well as bring lunch and fellowship to the homeless congregation at common cathedral, and through it all the St. Andrew's Stitches will be crafting lovely, warm items for donation.

These activities will give me a chance to gather in faithful and generous purpose with many dear friends at St. Andrew's and to feel a warm spirit of caring for others. I invite you to check the weekly email for opportunities for you to join in these exciting efforts.



Photos: Peter B. Lull



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