

Some Church

Reflection by Reverend Rebecca M. Bryan

June 9, 2024

I would like to begin by extending a huge thank-you to all of the volunteers who helped our church this year, including Pastoral Care Associates, Parish friends, Worship Associates, Adult Choir members, teachers, builders, ushers, Board members, bean counters, roof replacers, greeters, and so many more—all of you—you make us who we are. This is OUR CHURCH. Thank you.

Also, please join me in thanking our staff members who have been extraordinary this year: Diane Carroll, Church Administrator; Mara Flynn, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry; Justin Murphy-Mancini, Director of Church Music; Donny Rogers, our amazing Sexton; Cynthia Walsh, our previous Director of Engagement and now Facilities and Events Manager; Reverends Stan Barrett and Jane Tuohy, our Affiliate Ministers; and our two newest team members, Dan O'Shea, our Director of Finance; and Kate Lamie, who is working with us on communications.

Oh what a year it has been!

This was a year filled with joy and loss, heartache, shock, excitement, imagination, and song. This was a year where we lost beloveds, welcomed new members and friends, supported emerging lay leaders, and bowed in gratitude to those leaders who have worked tirelessly on behalf of our beloved congregation for decades.

We studied interconnectedness as our annual ministry theme. Next year we will be diving deep into the annual theme of "Truth." The church year will start in September and wrap up in June. Monthly ministry themes will include communication, common ground, spaciousness, bravery, relationships, hope, reparations and repair, and beauty.

It will be a year with much happening in the world, including national elections and continued efforts to strip people of their rights, especially members of the trans community, refugees, and victims of gun violence and other oppressions. We will continue to contend with the reality of climate destruction, and we will worry about how

to create the world we believe in for our children and grandchildren. It is not easy to care. *It is harder not to care.*

We will continue our longstanding commitment of ensuring that this sanctuary and congregation are safe havens, welcoming to all people. We will care for each other and do what we can to act in the larger world and be the beacon of religious liberalism for this area.

We will offer meaningful programs that respond to what you need and desire, while continuing to offer weekly Sunday worship where we hope everyone will come for respite, challenge, and comfort, and to be with one another.

There will be new offerings such as an 8am Sunday contemplative service led by Alan Seale on the first Sunday of each month, for those who want thirty minutes of introspection. Throughout the year we hope to have the sanctuary open at other times during the week so people can come and sit or gather. I will be offering a yearlong program entitled "Sacred Journeys," which will include regular connections via emails and video offering spiritual sustenance, times to come together with others, as well as several local half-day or daylong retreats.

We are also one of eleven congregations which are participating in a yearlong learning circle led by Paula Cole Jones, focusing on supporting us in Creating the Beloved Community and implementing the 8th Principle.

There are several things that will be happening with our building! The roof is soon to be replaced and we are working hard to replace the steeple lights so that we can once again be that beacon of light. Thank you to the grants team for all of their hard work on these and other initiatives, including helping us prepare for our 300th anniversary which will start on January 1, 2025.

We will spend the fall engaging everyone in more focused discernment about the uses of Parish Hall. We know that there is historic preservation necessary in this building, and that we have a congregational commitment to green building

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operations and construction. We heard much consensus on general hopes for Parish Hall; now we need to get more specific. We hope to have congregational consensus by the start of 2025 so that we can engage in work that will allow us to understand what this will all cost and begin a Capital Campaign soon thereafter.

There are so many people who are working hard on all the aspects of this project. I want to especially thank Lark Madden, who has agreed to chair the Capital Campaign. He needs help of all kinds, including a co-chair. Please talk with him or any Board or staff member if you would like to get involved in the Capital Campaign or any part of this important project.

In the midst of all of this we will be welcoming our new Assistant Minister of Congregational Life, Reverend Laurel Gray and our new Director of Church Music, Nick Place. They will start in August, and we look forward to you getting to know them both and working with them.

Our 300th anniversary will be celebrated from January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025. This anniversary is an important and exciting milestone. There are many ways you can participate and help, so stay tuned to learn those details in September. In addition to updating our published two-volume FRS history, we will be publishing a book of my sermons preached over the last six years. Diane Forman and I are still looking for assistance with e-publishing. Please let us know if you can help.

It is a lot, and it is good, and we are fortunate. The world needs this kind of community committed to love, mutual care, and engagement with issues of justice.

But even more than the world, we need this spiritual community. I need you.

I see you.

(opens arms)

I am here.

Enjoy our worship services over the next two weeks and then through the month of July. These services are going to be wonderful, with many special guests. Please also come to the

ongoing programs through the summer and to the new and fun community gatherings in August, including a beach cleanup afternoon and a trip to the historic Arlington Street Church in Boston.

I will be on vacation starting at the end of next week and returning earlier than usual at the start of August so that we can welcome our new staff and prepare for our exciting year ahead.

As I said in my first sermon of this church year:

Sometimes we are given very big tasks to do.

Sometimes tasks we have to complete can feel so big...

It's like at the start of a new school year when the teachers tell you everything you have to learn that year and all the big assignments that will be due...

Times like this are when it helps to remember what matters and to keep it in the moment. It also helps to remember our connections, our friends and family, and our church, and look for opportunities to be kind, because how we act matters.

You matter. We all matter. Our words and actions make a difference because everything is interconnected.

We are connected to dust mites, spiders, and butterflies. We are connected to our friends and family, our community, and this church. The more you think about, learn about, and feel interconnection, the bigger it becomes. It is a big truth with lots of implications, and a lot of things happen because of it.

Choose wisely friends. Choose love, kindness, and truth. Choose each other.

Have a wonderful summer.

I love you.

Amen.