

St. Anne's Episcopal Church

P.O. Box 134, 14 Treble Cove Rd.
N. Billerica, MA 01862

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Service of Holy Eucharist



May 29, 2022
9:00 am

St. Anne's, N. Billerica Online Services can be found at:
Website: <http://stannes-billerica.org>
YouTube: St Anne's Episcopal Church No Billerica MA
Face Book: St Anne's Episcopal Church No Billerica MA
Billerica Access Television (BATV) - See programing guide

St. Anne's Mission Statement

*We seek to be led by the spirit to understand God's purpose for the world
with our mission being to respond through Christ
in worship, education, fellowship and service.*

The Holy Eucharist: Rite Two

We have relaxed mask wearing, have removed physical distance requirements, and are now walking up to the altar rail for Communion. Please turn to page 11 for further instructions.

Prelude

“Cornet Voluntary”

John Travers

If today is your first visit with us, welcome. We hope you will find peace and joy here.

Please join us for coffee hour after the service. If you are a child, we offer in-person class once a month on Thursday afternoons, and take-home materials at the beginning of every month. Email bkomarinski@gmail.com or speak to Brenda, who is often our acolyte and crucifer. If you are an adult or young person, speak to anyone or to Mother Jennifer. All are welcome here.

Please stand for the procession; then you may be seated.

Welcome & Announcements

Prayer from the Episcopal Bishop of West Texas p. 18

The Word of God

Standing, as you are able

Celebrant Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Collect for Purity

Song of Praise

“Heleluyan”

WLP 783



He - le - lu - yan, he - le - lu - yan: he - le, he - le - lu - yan;
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia: al - le, al - le - lu - ia;



he - le - lu - yan, he - le - lu - yan: he - le, he - le - lu - yan.
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia: al - le, al - le - lu - ia.

* May be sung as a round.

Hymn permission used by Rite Song a one-time use reprint license for congregational use.

The Collect of the Day

The Celebrant says to the people

The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us pray.

The Celebrant says the Collect.

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.

People Amen.

The Lessons

The people sit. The lessons, as appointed, are read, the Reader first saying

A Reading from the Book of Acts of the Apostles (16:16-34).

With Paul and Silas, we came to Philippi in Macedonia, a Roman colony, and, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." They spoke

the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

After each Reading, the Reader may say

The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Psalm

Psalm 97 (BCP p. 726)

- 1 The LORD is King;
let the earth rejoice; *
let the multitude of the isles be glad.
- 2 Clouds and darkness are round about him, *
righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne.
- 3 A fire goes before him *
and burns up his enemies on every side.
- 4 His lightnings light up the world; *
the earth sees it and is afraid.
- 5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, *
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
- 6 The heavens declare his righteousness, *
and all the peoples see his glory.
- 7 Confounded be all who worship carved images
and delight in false gods! *
Bow down before him, all you gods.
- 8 Zion hears and is glad, and the cities of Judah rejoice, *
because of your judgments, O LORD.
- 9 For you are the LORD,
most high over all the earth; *
you are exalted far above all gods.
- 10 The LORD loves those who hate evil; *
**he preserves the lives of his saints
and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.**
- 11 Light has sprung up for the righteous, *
and joyful gladness for those who are truehearted.
- 12 Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, *
and give thanks to his holy Name.

The Gospel

Then, all standing, the Priest reads the Gospel, first saying
The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to John (17:20-26).

People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus prayed for his disciples, and then he said. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

"Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

After the Gospel, the Reader says
The Gospel of the Lord.

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

The Homily

The Rev'd Jennifer D. Beal

The Nicene Creed

All standing, say

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Thanksgiving for the Nation (BCP p. 838-39)

Almighty God, giver of all good things: We thank you for the natural majesty and beauty of this land. They restore us, though we often destroy them.

Heal us.

We thank you for the great resources of this nation. They make us rich, though we often exploit them.

Forgive us.

We thank you for the men and women who have made this country strong. They are models for us, though we often fall short of them.

Inspire us.

We thank you for the torch of liberty which has been lit in this land. It has drawn people from every nation, though we have often hidden from its light.

Enlighten us.

We thank you for the faith we have inherited in all its rich variety. It sustains our life, though we have been faithless again and again.

Renew us.

The celebrant concludes

Help us, O Lord, to finish the good work here begun. Strengthen our efforts to blot out ignorance and prejudice, and to abolish poverty and crime. And hasten the day when all our people, with many voices in one united chorus, will glorify your holy Name.

Amen.

The Peace

All stand. The Celebrant says to the people

People The peace of the Lord be always with you.
 And also with you.

Then the Ministers and People may greet one another in the name of the Lord, remaining in your pew as you signal a gesture of peace to one another.

The Holy Communion

Offertory Sentence

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God. *Ephesians 5:2*

We have placed offering plates in both the front and rear of the church. We are very grateful for your gifts and offerings. You may leave them in the plates as you enter or leave our service of worship.

All who seek God are welcome at this table. May God find you here.

Offertory hymn

“Hail thee, festival day!”

Hymnal 216 (v. 1,2)

Refrain

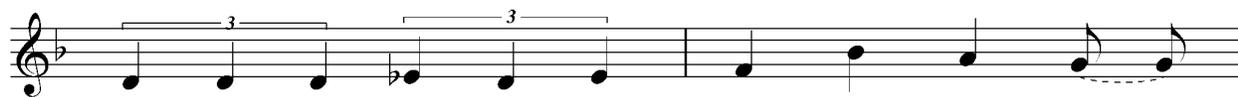
Hail thee, fes - ti - val day! blest day that art hal - lowed for
ev - er, day when the Ho - ly Ghost shone in the
world with God's grace. *First time only* grace. **2**

1 Lo, in the like - ness of fire, on those who a -
3 Hark! for in myr - i - ad tongues Christ's own, his —

wait his ap - pear - ing, he whom the
cho - sen a - pos - tles, preach to the

Repeat Refrain

Lord fore - told sud - den - ly, swift - ly, de - scends:
ends of the earth Christ and his won - der - ful works:



2 Forth from the Fa - ther he comes with seven - fold
 4 Praise to the Spi - rit of Life, all praise to the



my - sti - cal of - fering, pou - ring on all hu - man
 fount of our be - ing, light that dost light - en



souls in - fin - ite rich - es of God:
 all, life that in all dost a - bide:

The refrain may be sung once by choir alone and repeated by all. The stanzas may be sung by choir alone, alternately by contrasted groups, or by all.

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The Great Thanksgiving

Eucharistic Prayer D, BCP p. 372

The people remain standing. The Celebrant, whether bishop or priest, faces them and sings or says

	The Lord be with you.
People	And also with you.
<i>Celebrant</i>	Lift up your hearts.
People	We lift them to the Lord.
<i>Celebrant</i>	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People	It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds

It is truly right to glorify you, Father, and to give you thanks; for you alone are God, living and true, dwelling in light inaccessible from before time and for ever.

Fountain of life and source of all goodness, you made all things and fill them with your blessing; you created them to rejoice in the splendor of your radiance.

Countless throngs of angels stand before you to serve you night and day; and, beholding the glory of your presence, they offer you unceasing praise. Joining with them, and giving voice to every creature under heaven, we acclaim you, and glorify your Name, as we sing (say),

Celebrant and People

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The people stand or kneel.

Then the Celebrant continues

We acclaim you, holy Lord, glorious in power. Your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love. You formed us in your own image, giving the whole world into our care, so that, in obedience to you, our Creator, we might rule and serve all your creatures. When our disobedience took us far from you, you did not abandon us to the power of death. In your mercy you came to our help, so that in seeking you we might find you. Again and again you called us into covenant with you, and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.

Father, you loved the world so much that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior. Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, he lived as one of us, yet without sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation; to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy. To fulfill your purpose he gave himself up to death; and, rising from the grave, destroyed death, and made the whole creation new.

And, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us, he sent the Holy Spirit, his own first gift for those who believe, to complete his work in the world, and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it, and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

When the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end; at supper with them he took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption. Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead, proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand, awaiting his coming in glory; and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us, this bread and this cup, we praise you and we bless you.

Celebrant and People

**We praise you, we bless you,
we give thanks to you,
and we pray to you, Lord our God.**

The Celebrant continues

Lord, we pray that in your goodness and mercy your Holy Spirit may descend upon us, and upon these gifts, sanctifying them and showing them to be holy gifts for your holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.

Grant that all who share this bread and cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ, to the praise of your Name.

Remember, Lord, your one holy catholic and apostolic Church, redeemed by the blood of your Christ. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, and preserve it in peace.

Remember Michael, Alan, Gayle, Carol, Jennifer, and all who minister in your Church.

Remember all your people, and those who seek your truth.

Remember our parishioners Barbara Rogers, Bob MacKenzie, Chick Meech, Cyndi, Donald Fudge, Donald Sutton, Sr., Elaine McLaughlin, George Squires, Sr., Helen, Janet Lyna, Jean Flight, José Soreso, José Torres, Sr., Joshua Young, Kathy Chang, Kevin Senna, Lee Conley, Linda E., Marie Horgan, Mary Lander & her daughter Christine, Norm & MJ Zarella, Paul Hamner, Sally DiRocco, Sue Kennedy, Tammy, Tom, Vicki Mahoney, Yvonne Hopkins.

All who are ill with Covid-19. All who are affected by the war in Ukraine.

Remember all who have died in the peace of Christ, those whose faith is known to you alone, and all who died by violence these past weeks, especially those in Uvalde, TX, and Buffalo, NY; bring those who grieve into Your company and those who have died into the place of eternal joy and light. We pray especially for Al Westerlund and Richard Hyatt on this first anniversary of their deaths. We miss them, and all who have gone before them.

And grant that we may find our inheritance with the Blessed Virgin Mary, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with St. Anne and all the saints who have found favor with you in ages past. We praise you in union with them and give you glory through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, all honor and glory are yours, Almighty God and Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. *AMEN.*

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People and Celebrant

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.**

And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread. A period of silence is kept. Then may be said

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
People Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

The ministers receive the Sacrament, and then immediately deliver it to the people.

*Please come forward to the altar rail to receive Holy Communion when an usher indicates. You may cross your arms to receive a blessing if you wish. A gluten-free wafer is available. Holy Communion will be distributed in both kinds: distribution of the wafer by the priest from the paten to be followed by receiving wine from the Lay Eucharistic Minister's common Communion chalice. Intinction (by dipping one's own wafer and hand into the cup) will not be offered. **HOWEVER**, distribution of the single serve kits (container with wafer and wine) will continue. The communicant can choose to only drink wine from the single-serve kit while leaving the host in the container. Our altar guild will reverently and properly dispose of the uneaten wafer. The communicant will consume the wafer and wine at the altar rail, and when returning to their pew an usher will be at the bottom of the stairs to collect the empty container and napkin.*

Communion hymn "God sent his Son, they called him Jesus" LEVAS 43 (1,2,3)

1. God sent His Son, — they called Him Je - sus; — He came to love, —
 2. How sweet to hold — a new - born ba - by, — And feel the pride, —
 3. And then one day — I'll cross the riv - er; — I'll fight life's fi -

1. — heal, and for - give; — He lived and died — to buy my
 2. — and joy he gives; — But great - er still — the calm as -
 3. - nal war with pain; — And then as death — gives way to

1. par-don, — An emp - ty grave is there to prove my Sav - ior lives. —
 2. sur-ance, — This child can face un - cer - tain days be - cause He lives. —
 3. vic - t'ry, — I'll see the lights of glo - ry and I'll know He lives. —

Be - cause He lives — I can face to - mor - row; — Be - cause He lives —

— all fear is gone; — Be - cause I know — He holds the

fu - ture, — And life is worth the liv - ing just be - cause He lives. —

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*After Communion, please stand as the Celebrant says
Let us pray.*

Celebrant and People

**Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Priest may bless the people.

May Almighty God, who has redeemed us and made us his children through the resurrection of his Son our Lord, bestow upon you the riches of his blessing. *Amen.*

May God, who through the water of baptism has raised us from sin into newness of life, make you holy and worthy to be united with Christ for ever. *Amen.*

May God, who has brought us out of bondage to sin into true and lasting freedom in the Redeemer, bring you to your eternal inheritance. *Amen.*

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. *Amen.*

The Celebrant dismisses them with these words

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia.
***People* Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.**

Postlude

“Fantasia 1”

Georg Philipp Telemann

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After the procession retires, you may sit quietly until the end of the postlude.

We have placed offering plates in both the front and rear of the church. We are very grateful for your gifts and offerings. You may leave them in the plates as you enter or leave our service of worship.

Physical distancing between households, and mask wearing in the church building, are now optional. We continue to encourage mask wearing while singing. Those who would like to continue to observe physical distancing of six feet between households may choose to sit in the Alcove area.

Our service is taken from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer; the Hymnal 1982; Lift Every Voice and Sing II (LEVAS); Wonder, Love, and Praise (WLP); and the Book of Occasional Services. We begin Holy Baptism at p. 299 in the Book of Common Prayer and continue with Holy Eucharist at p. 372.

Ministers today

Priest-in-charge	The Rev'd Jennifer D. Beal
Lector-in-chief	Mr. Edward Giroux
Lector	Mr. Kevin Kotelly
Director of Music and Organist	Mr. Peter Morelli
Singer	Ms. Maria Martin
Acolyte	Ms. Brenda Komarinski
Lay Eucharistic Minister	Ms. Sue Geen
Ushers	Ms. Dotty Callihan
	Ms. Pat Cregg
Film Crew (Video)	Mr. Ron Desmarais
Film Crew (Audio)	Mr. Mark Komarinski
	Mr. Michael Hopkins, Co-Warden
Film Crew (Assistant)	Mr. Eli Baldwin

Meetings in our parish this week

Tuesday	10 am	Bible Study at St. Anne's
	11:15 am	Conversation and Teaching on Leading Morning Prayer and Practicing Lectern Reading
Friday	7 pm	Parish Film Night
Saturday	3 pm	St. Anne's Social Group Annual Cookout
Sunday (6/5)	10:30 am	Social Conscience Book Group Meeting

Priest's office hours

Tuesday 11 – 5
Thursday 2 – 5

Parish office hours

Thursday 2 – 5

Prayers for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 29, 2022

Anglican Cycle of Prayer: The Church of South India (United)

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: Parishes of the Merrimack Valley Deanery

St. Andrew's Church, Methuen; St. Paul's Church, Newburyport;

St. Paul's Church, North Andover; Merrimack Valley Project; Deacons;

Our Presiding Bishop, Michael; Our Bishops, Alan, Gayle, and Carol; Our Priest, Jennifer

St. Anne's Prayer List

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others

Barbara Rogers, Bob MacKenzie, Chick Meech, Cyndi, Donald Fudge,
Donald Sutton, Sr., Elaine McLaughlin, George Squires, Sr., Helen, Janet Lyna, Jean Flight,
José Soreso, José Torres, Sr., Joshua Young, Kathy Chang, Kevin Senna, Lee Conley, Linda E.,
Marie Horgan, Mary Lander & her daughter Christine, Norm & MJ Zarella, Paul Hamner,
Sally DiRocco, Sue Kennedy, Tammy, Tom, Vicki Mahoney, Yvonne Hopkins

All who are ill with Covid-19

All who are affected by the war in Ukraine

All who died by violence these past weeks, especially those in Uvalde, TX, and Buffalo, NY

Announcements for May 29, 2022

Masks are now optional in the church building, but are still a good idea when singing.

Please join us for Coffee Hour after this morning's service.

Spring and summer fashions have arrived at the Thrift Shop. Come in and update your wardrobe for an inexpensive price.

Open Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 AM until 2 PM.

Are you interested in leading a service of Morning Prayer on a Sunday when we have no clergy leadership? Are you interested in practicing reading a lesson? If you would like to learn more, please come to a conversation and teaching session. The first one will be on Tuesday, May 31st at 11:15 am in the Rector's Office. The second session will be on June 7th, also at 11:15 am. Further offerings will be on the first Sundays in June, July, and August.

Come if you would like to practice reading from our lectern.

Our next movie night will be on Friday, June 3, at 7 pm. We will be watching "Black Indians: An American Story." This is a 52-minute film. A discussion will follow.

The Social Group will meet on Saturday, June 4, at 3:00 PM at Judy Peck's for its annual cookout and the election of officers for the coming year. A sign-up sheet will be posted outside the kitchen area for adult parishioners who plan to attend and what item they will bring to share.

The Social Conscience Book Group will be meeting on June 5th and June 19th, after the morning service (10:30 am). We will continue to discuss *Disability Visibility* (edited by Alice Wong) on these dates. We plan to finish the book during the month of June. All are welcome to join the discussion, even if you have not read the book.

There will be a Diocesan Memorial Service in Celebration of the Life of the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris on Sunday, June 12, at 5 p.m., at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, with a reception following. Because seating is limited, in-person attendance is designated for members of the diocesan community. All in the wider church community are warmly invited to join via the livestream on the Cathedral's website (www.stpaulboston.org). Further details and a registration link are available here: www.diomass.org/event/barbara-c-harris-memorial.

In honor of Juneteenth, you are invited to a viewing of the local documentary "Contradictory Place: Cotton Mills Alongside Anti-Slavery Efforts in Lowell, Massachusetts," followed by a discussion with UMass Lowell Professor Robert Farrant. Tuesday, June 21 at 7pm, First Parish, 7 Concord Road, Billerica. Sponsored by the Billerica Interfaith Association.

The buildings and grounds committee is looking to get a group of people together to clean up and reline the church parking lot on June 25 at 8 am (rain day: July 9). Volunteers are encouraged to bring leaf blowers, rakes, clippers, pole saws or anything that might help.

St. Anne's Episcopal Church
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stannesbillerica@gmail.com 978-663-4073 rector@stannes-billerica.org
Honoring the Pawtucket and Shawsheen peoples
Social Justice – a way to allow everyone to feel welcome and respected when they come to worship

Remembering two recent events of death by massacre in the United States, and also the approaching two-year anniversary of George Floyd's murder, may these words from the Episcopal Bishop of West Texas guide us.

Prayers Requested - A Letter to the Diocese of West Texas from its Bishop After the Elementary School Shooting in Uvalde

May 24, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Earlier today, a teenage gunman murdered at least 14 elementary-aged students and a teacher in their school in Uvalde. Not somewhere far off, but within the Diocese of West Texas. Not strangers, but children in a close-knit community of which the beautiful parish family of St. Philip's is a vital part. People we know and love are heart-broken and grief-stricken tonight, even as they seek ways to care for and comfort the devastated families and their town. This is so utterly wrong.

Words of outrage are not enough to express our hatred of this evil done to little children who simply went to school this morning. Expressions of sorrow scarcely touch the depth of families' grief tonight. There is nothing we can say today to comfort the parents, siblings, and grandparents whose lives were left in ruins by this evil violence.

What we have to offer is ourselves. To turn ourselves, our hearts and minds, to those who are suffering in Uvalde – to reach out our hands to lift up and to extend our arms to embrace – *this* is what we have to offer, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and following him in whatever ways are available into the pain and brokenness of our brothers and sisters in Uvalde and at St. Philip's Church. We have received power to love and to resist hatred.

And we can pray. We must pray. Ignore the cynics, and pray with all your heart. Let your cries reach to the heavens. Let your anger and despair be your prayer. And listen to God answering in return. Look for God's tears revealed and listen for his perfect and righteous anger. Give yourself over to opportunities to join in the Spirit's work of binding up and healing. Love with all you've got, and never, ever surrender to the darkness.

In the few hours since the news broke, I have already received so many emails, texts, and phone calls from around the Diocese and around the country, offering to do whatever they can, send whatever is needed, to support Uvalde. Episcopal Relief and Development has reached out and offered resources. The Presiding Bishop's office has been in contact. Bishops have called me, including Bishop Scott Mayer of neighboring Northwest Texas and Connecticut's Bishop Ian Douglas, whose diocese suffered the horrific Sandy Hook massacre. Clergy and people within West Texas are standing by, offering love, support, and prayers. As more information becomes available, we will do all we can to uphold our brothers and sisters of St. Philip's,

looking to them and their rector, the Rev. Mike Marsh, for guidance as to how we can support their community.

Because I believe in Jesus, I am convinced that sin and death are defeated and darkness will never prevail over the light of resurrection. Because I believe in eternal life, I trust that the senseless murder of these innocent children is not the final thing to be said about them. If the Gospel is true, it is true in all times and in all places, including in Uvalde tonight. If God is with us, then he is with us even in those times and places where it seems that death and darkness have prevailed.

Jesus loves the little children. He tells the disciples to move aside and make room for them, and he takes the children in his arms and blesses them. In your prayers, make room for the children of Uvalde—all of them, and of all ages—and pray for all victims of violence that the Peace of Christ will be known and welcomed.

Let us pray.

O God our Father, whose beloved Son took children into his arms and blessed them: Give us grace to entrust your beloved children of Uvalde to your everlasting care and love, and bring them fully into your heavenly kingdom. Pour out your grace and loving-kindness on all who grieve; surround them with your love; and restore their trust in your goodness. We lift up to you our weary, wounded souls and ask you to send your Holy Spirit to take away the anger and violence that infect our hearts, and make us instruments of your peace and children of the light. In the Name of Christ who is our hope, we pray. Amen.

Love in Christ,

+David Reed
Bishop of West Texas

**After publication, information was released updating the number killed to 19 children and 2 teachers.*