

Hello new friends,

I'm thrilled to be writing this letter of introduction to you. When I first visited Gloucester in 1991 for a retreat at Eastern Point, I could never have foreseen the journey that would lead me to this moment of joyous anticipation as your new settled pastor. And, yet, isn't that the nature of our spiritual journeys? God often calls and comes to us in surprising ways.

Graduating from Weston Jesuit School of Theology in 1994, I could not have imagined how the religious and spiritual landscape of our country would change. Since then, more and more people, often questioning the beliefs and practices that were handed to them, have left the religious denominations of their birth. At the same time our society has seen increasing struggles: with loneliness and not belonging; of depression and anxiety (reflected in the opioid and suicide epidemics); and of values. To address spiritual longing and need for community, many people are also expanding their spiritual practices with yoga, meditation, energy healing, nature based experiences and more. Though church attendance continues to decline in the United States, new models of spiritual community are growing.

With your commitment to meeting people wherever they are on the spiritual journey, the Annisquam Village Church offers a warm, welcoming spiritual home. As your profile states, "Essentially, we are one, All Faiths: All One. We are all connected." With this vision, you can be a bridge for those seeking a Christian community that is also open to wisdom found in other ways. In meeting with the Search Group, I have been deeply moved by your care for one another, your love of God, and your desire to be a church of connection.

What is it that connects us, helping us transcend differences of religious background, culture, and more? It is LOVE. As your new pastor, I am eager to get to know you; to learn about the surprises along your spiritual journeys; to learn about what inspires you, what troubles you, and how we can be a community that grows through grace in love for one another, for the greater Gloucester community, and for our one precious earth that is in deep peril. I so look forward to joining you on the journey - to see how the God who surprised Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and wise men will continue to surprise us.

May the blessings of this holy season be yours, Rev. Sue