

South Church newsletter
Spring 2019

A few weeks ago, on an encouragingly spring-like Saturday, my family and I went down to Boston intending to go the Museum of Fine Art to see an exhibit of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. I was feeling energized by this little getaway, the sunny day and the prospect of looking at art. But as any of us who have driven in Boston know, driving in Boston is a killjoy. And Boston was buzzing and parking spaces hard to find. We wound our way around the labyrinth-like roads near the MFA with no luck as the afternoon got shorter. Seeing the long line out the door of the museum was the final kicker. We needed a new plan. And then we remembered the Arnold Arboretum. The first and last time we had been there was for my brother-in-law's wedding on a much warmer day in July a few years back. Now on this equally lovely day, we joined others in the arboretum who had come to rejoice in spring emerging in hopeful bursts of color—the scattering of white crocuses, the carpet of blue scilla, the thicket of yellow forsythia, and the isolated riots of pink azalea. And then there were the trees—glorious in their variety and close to “coming into leaf/Like something almost being said,” as the poet Philip Larkin described. At least I got to see tree art, I said to my husband as we left the park. I felt pleased that things had turned out as they had.

“Begin afresh, afresh, afresh,” ends Larkin's poem about trees. How often are we asked to do this: To look at something in a new way. To try a new approach. To find our way out of a dead end. This is the reminder of spring and the invitation of creativity.

I am a writing teacher, so I know all too well how writers struggle with revision. But what I love about revision is the idea of re-visioning, of re-seeing. The difficulty, often, is in letting go of the first draft—or the first plan, as was the case with the MFA—the one that got me to where I am now but may not serve me any longer. The challenge is to open myself to a new possibility when I maybe feeling attached to what I have known. Revising “drafts” has been a part of my growth experience. I hope I continue to see the gifts in this creative process just as I was able to recognize that the trees in the Arnold Arboretum are just another kind of art.