



# The Beacon

## St. Thomas Episcopal Church

*Give thanks and praise to our Lord and share His love.*

August 2019

St. Thomas Episcopal Church Mission Statement

Volume 20 Issue 8

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### Vestry:

- Erika Hente,  
Sr. Warden
- Janet Calvert
- Sue Colvin
- Dave Fredmonsky
- Diane Landon
- Debbie Pezzoni
- John Spruance
- Anne VanDerveer
- Judy Wilson
- Tom Whitehead,  
Treasurer
- Beverly Jackson,  
Clerk

**Rector** – Rev. Ann Gaillard

**Secretary** – Donna Hall

1465 Coburg Road

Eugene, Oregon 97401

**Phone:** 541-343-5241

**Email:**

[stthomaschurcheugene](mailto:stthomaschurcheugene@gmail.com)

[@gmail.com](mailto:stthomaschurcheugene@gmail.com)

**Beacon Editor** –

Cindy Jensen

**Webmaster** –

Lindy Moore

### *From the Rector's desk ~*

As you can imagine, summer has been in full swing here at St. Thomas. Our choir is taking a well-deserved vacation, while our Music Director Keri Davis has been bringing in a wonderful variety of guest musicians to enhance our Sunday worship. The Grassroots Garden is busy with summer programs. And as I write this today, I am looking out my office window at our playground, where our Preschool campers are enjoying a “beach day” – complete with swimsuits, towels, wading pools, and sprinklers to run through. By the time you read this, I will have returned from a two-week vacation in the Seattle-Vancouver-San Juan Islands area.

In the spirit of summer, I would like to offer you one of my favorite poems by the late Mary Oliver, who died in January. In her poetry Mary Oliver often explored the link between nature and the spiritual world. Her poems are accessible yet often profound and visionary. I hope you enjoy this poem as much as I do.

### **The Summer Day**

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the  
black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean –  
the one who has flung herself  
out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down--  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.



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*From the Rector's desk ~ Continued from page 1*

Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?



—Mary Oliver

Peace and many blessings,

*Ann* +

## **Helping Others**

Every Episcopal church has a special checking account called the Rector's Discretionary Fund, also known as the RDF. This fund is intended to be available to the Rector to help those in need. People frequently come to the church asking for financial help with rent, utilities, gas, food or medicine. Reverend Ann purchases gas cards and food cards and writes checks directly to landlords, utility companies, or pharmacies. Some recipients are parishioners while many others are not.

This fund is different from the Outreach Fund. Outreach dollars tend to help agencies that help people, while the RDF is used to help people directly. When Reverend Ann was installed as our priest, the money from the offering at her installation service went into the RDF. When money is donated to the church for weddings or funerals, that money goes into the RDF.

Occasionally, one or two parishioners have donated directly to the RDF. Unfortunately, however, those contributions have not been able to keep up with the needs of people in our community. Thus the current balance of the RDF is near zero, resulting in Ann's having to turn people away.



At their July meeting, the Outreach Committee graciously agreed to make a donation to the RDF for the rest of the calendar year. The Vestry has

also designated the loose plate offering on the first Sunday of each month to go to the RDF; this designation is in keeping with the Episcopal Church canons. If you would like to contribute additionally to this fund, you can do so by putting cash into the plate on the first Sunday of the month, or you can write a separate check with RDF in the memo line.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated!  
Anne VanDerveer  
Vestry Liaison to Finance Ministries



## **Endowment Fund News**

Is Planned Giving Right for You?

We all think about how we want our treasures distributed when we end our time on God's Earth. Some of us choose to leave a portion of them, as a token of our gratitude, to St. Thomas.

To ensure that our gifts go where we intend, we list them in our wills. That's Planned Giving, which gives us the opportunity to build a legacy of our Christian values. Do we have to be "rich" to do this? No. Whatever the size of our estate, we can leave part of it to St. Thomas.

On Sunday, September 22 at the 10:00 coffee hour, Sara Brandt, Senior Philanthropic Director for the Oregon Community Foundation, which manages our Endowment funds, will help us think about how Planned Giving might work for us.

Sara brings with her 37 years of experience advising families on the advantages of Planned Giving. During her brief time with us she'll share how we might benefit from including the St. Thomas Endowment Fund in our wills. And she'll answer our questions.

So please join other St. Thomas folks at this very special coffee hour and see if Planned Giving is right for you.

Duncan Murray  
Chair, St. Thomas Endowment Board

## *An Evening with Dorcas Smucker*

This St. Thomas sponsored event was enjoyed by a wonderful turnout of parishioners and community members. Dorcas highlighted her stories about farm and family life in Harrisburg that she shared for many years in her books and as a regular columnist with the *Register Guard*.



Proceeds from this event will go to the Outreach ministry, which sponsored the event. Pictured above is Lindy Moore introducing Dorcas Smucker.



## *August Birthdays*



13	Lindy Moore
14	Len Calvert
16	Judy Wilson
19	Dan Paulson
	Andy Andrist
20	Faye Harris
23	Katrina Jensen
29	Dale Allore

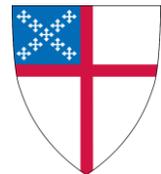


## *The Parish Library*

One of our most frequent guest clergy during the early stages of our search for a Rector following Fr. Court's departure was Bishop John Thornton. His 56 years of ministry in the Episcopal Church, spread throughout the greater Pacific Northwest region, has provided him with a variety of memorable experiences.

Our newest addition to the parish library, *The Brooks Brothers Suit, and Other Stories*, is Bishop Thornton's latest book. This collection of short stories consists of some of his experiences as he shared his ministry with the vast variety of our American citizenry – both famous and infamous – who crossed his path during his long service to the Church. Some of the stories are funny; some are poignant; all are a good way to spend your time reading during these long days of summer. You will find the book featured on one of the easels in the library. Feel free to sign it out and enjoy.

Barbara Root  
Parish Librarian



## *From the Diocese*

The Diocesan Vision and Relocation Committee and the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Oregon Search Committee invite you to a diocesan-wide listening session at **Church of the Good Samaritan, Corvallis on August 17 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.**

- Review new mission statement and logo
- Update on the sale of The Bishop's Close and relocation of the diocesan office
- Timeline and FAQs regarding the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Oregon Search and Transition

There will be an opportunity for questions and feedback in a variety of interactive activities and discussions. For those unable to attend, the listening session will be shared online along with digital opportunities to provide input and commentary.

## *GrassRoots Garden*



Grassroots Garden's mantras of "Learn by Doing" and "Each One Teach One" spread internationally recently thanks to the work of Stefan Verbano, a former intern at GrassRoots Garden and a recent Peace Corps member. Though having grown up in a suburban setting on a pop-tart sort of diet, Stefan immediately comprehended and appreciated our rough and rugged garden experience, where we learn by doing as we teach life skills and provide food for those less fortunate. He volunteered at GrassRoots during 2010 and 2011 before he left for the Peace Corps. His stated goals in participating at GrassRoots were to soak up as much information, experience and skills as he could before beginning a 2-year assignment for the Peace Corps in Zambia. In this African country where the temperature regularly reaches 105 degrees, he lived in a rural village in a tiny, thatched-roof, two-room hut with mud walls, which lacked electricity and indoor plumbing. He lay awake listening to the night sounds of rats above his head scratching the thatch in their search for seeds. He was the only white person in the remote village and no one else spoke English. On a recent visit to GrassRoots, Stephan credited his experience at the Garden with inspiring him to persevere even during the most challenging times of his service. Because he had taught others at GrassRoots, he knew he could teach the people of the village.

In Zambia, there is no welfare system, food stamps, or governmental aid programs or safety net. You have what you have, or you don't. In the village, it's not about the individual or even the family; it's about the village and everyone's survival. Stefan's role in the village was to increase their capacity to grow food as well as to earn more income. Prior to his coming, the village grew corn to sell to the government using synthetic nitrogen pellets. At the end of a whole year, they would sell their bags of corn and would receive only \$200 for the entire village. They had cut down the forest that once surrounded the village to make biochar. The soil was light tan, not brown, and was extremely depleted with no apparent life in it. Every time they

grew corn with the synthetic nitrogen pellets, the villagers further deteriorated the health of the soil.

Through his time at GrassRoots, Stefan fully embraced the concepts of "Learn by Doing" and "Each One Teach One" and integrated them into his approach with the villagers. Since Stefan did not have common language with the villagers, he found a translator to teach him some basic words, like manure, plant, corn, chickens. He used this rudimentary language to try and convince the villagers to use chicken manure to grow the corn and to replenish the soil with organic matter. They did not believe you could put manure in the soil and were skeptical. He did a trial, growing a patch of corn with chicken manure instead of the synthetic nitrogen pellets. His corn grew as well as the villagers' corn and opened up the possibilities of their incorporating his ideas into their practices.

With the success of his plot, Stefan was able to convince the villagers to invest in chicks and feed. As the chicks matured into chickens, the villagers received eggs and learned to compost the manure and then spread it to revitalize their soil. Ultimately, they also had chickens to eat. After a time, they had more manure than they needed to grow the corn and started to improve the soil of other sites with manure to grow other vegetables for their own diet. Gradually they improved their health through a more diverse diet, incorporating eggs, chicken and vegetables into their meals. They also learned to reserve some of their chickens and eggs to hatch more chicks, and to create a sustainable cycle of raising chicks and chickens for food and for manure to grow other food.

Eventually, their operations increased to the point that they had enough manure to bag and sell to other villages. They shared their newly developed knowledge and experience to teach other farmers in other villages to use chicken manure to improve the health of their soil. Stefan's experiment in growing a small plot of corn spread to several villages improving their diet and financial security. What started with skepticism and rudimentary words turned into "learn by doing" and "each one, teach one" as Stefan shared his concepts with local villagers who then reaped the benefits. Villagers who learned from Stefan were able to translate the

new concepts into their native language, facilitating the sharing of skills and resources with other villages and impacting the health and wealth of everyone's lives.

For Stefan's part, he received deeply bonded friendships, faith in humans, compassion, and gratitude as warm water fell on his body from a shower once a week. Stefan felt success in moving this process forward and it changed him and his life forever for the better. His actions reflect the best of what GrassRoots Garden, St. Thomas Church, FOOD for Lane County, Master Gardeners and a caring community have to offer – to create the world we want to live in and then help others.

Summer Garden Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, and behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church. For more information, please contact Merry Bradley at 541-484-7144 or [merrybradley@yahoo.com](mailto:merrybradley@yahoo.com). Thanks for your caring and support!

## ***Editor's Reflections***

When preparing this monthly edition and the accompanying calendar, I asked parish secretary, Donna Hall, if there were any special events or dates for posting. The simple answer was that August is a quiet month, which got me reflecting on what constitutes "quiet" at St. Thomas. As you visit the church – whether for services, to attend a meeting, participate in a Tai Chi session, drop something off at the office or help out in the GrassRoots Garden – you will surely notice the results of all that is "quiet" at St. Thomas. The grounds are well-groomed; the rose bushes are pruned; carpets are cleaned; library books are perused; the kitchen is clean and in good order; people are coming and going at the Counseling Center; volunteers are digging and gleaning in the GrassRoots Garden; and even in the "quiet" of summer the preschool hums with classroom cleaning and maintenance in anticipation of the little learners whose happy voices will again fill the playground. If you take a moment to view the bulletin boards in the parish hall, you will see evidence of parish outreach at work in the community beyond the doors of St. Thomas.

Quiet? Not really, for the spirit of parish life continues to hum with activity even in these warm summer days. In fact, it is a rather noisy spirit. I encourage you to take time to reflect on the spirit of our St. Thomas parish during this "quiet" month and feel the spirit alive and noisy. Stroll the GrassRoots garden or even dig in the dirt; check out a book from the library or the sale table in the parish hall; drop in for a Tai Chi or chair yoga session; volunteer for coffee hour; be a presence as we worship together.

A recent visit to Ireland afforded me the opportunity to visit Kylemore Abbey located on the grounds of an estate in the Connemara Mountains, County Galway, and now managed by the Benedictine Nuns. The nuns work to maintain the beautiful gardens and extensive arboretum and begin each day with this prayer:

Lord, help me live this day,  
quietly, easily;  
to lean upon your great strength,  
trustfully, respectfully;  
to await the unfolding of your will  
patiently, serenely;  
to meet others,  
peacefully, joyously;  
to face tomorrow,  
confidently, courageously.  
Amen.

As new features and formatting are explored for our parish newsletter, I invite you to consider sharing your own reflections, travel experiences and community involvement in a column called just that – *Reflections*.

