



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

December 2019

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From the Rector's desk ~

Every once in a while, parishioners ask me why here at St. Thomas we wear blue vestments during the season of Advent instead of purple. Certainly, purple is often the liturgical color worn during Advent. You see it in most Roman Catholic churches and in many Episcopal churches. But for a number of reasons, churches are using blue during Advent with increasing frequency.

First, although it may seem new to us, blue is really a traditional Advent color, especially in Britain, where it was widely used before the Reformation; so many Anglican churches are now using blue in order to recover an ancient tradition.

Second, blue is used in order to clearly distinguish Advent from the season of Lent. The color purple, which we use during Lent, is an ancient royal color that symbolizes the sovereignty of Christ. It is also the color representing repentance, which is the dominant theme during Lent. Although the four weeks of Advent certainly contain penitential elements, especially in the scripture readings, it is much more a time of expectation and hope. The color blue represents these themes. The royal blue used in many churches symbolizes our expectation of the coming of Christ our King; and the sky blue we use at St. Thomas symbolizes our hope for a new day for humankind, the new day that arrives with the birth of Christ.

So, during Advent these themes of repentance, expectation, and hope live in tension with each other. We see these themes living side by side particularly in the readings of the second Sunday in Advent. The prophet Isaiah declares that “a shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord...On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.”

In the Gospel passage, fiery John the Baptist is preaching repentance, baptizing sinners, and proclaiming the coming of the Messiah, the person for whom all Israel has been waiting for so long: “In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near...I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me....’”

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Finally, Paul's letter to the Romans blesses his readers with these words: "Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.' May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Peace and many blessings,

Endowment Fund News



Our Congregation Steps Up!

It gives me great pleasure to report to you that, since our September 22 "Planned Giving – Right For You?" event, our congregation has answered "Yes! It is right for us."

Barely seven weeks have passed since we met to consider that question. And in that brief period, you, members of St. Thomas, have added six bequests to our Endowment Fund and given \$8,066.26 in one-time gifts!

Thanks to you, The Endowment Fund's assets now total \$163,709.67. So, we're just \$86,000 away from beginning to fund exciting new projects and ministries for our church.

Thanks to your generosity The St. Thomas Endowment Fund has taken big steps forward in 2019. Please join me in praying for an even more successful 2020.

Duncan Murray, Endowment Fund Chair

St. Thomas Crafters



Looking for a break from the holidays? Looking for fellowship with friends? If so, you're invited to join the St. Thomas craft group on Dec. 7th at 2 pm. Due to scheduling conflicts with the church library, the crafters group will meet in the café area of the Market of Choice on Willakenzie Road. Bring a portable craft of your choice or come prepared to knit hats for the kindergarten children at Twin Oaks school. Mary Adams will bring a simple pattern or two if you want to add your support to this important Outreach project. Bring a friend!

Diocesan Bishop Search



Bishop Michael Hanley is retiring in January 2021 and the search is underway for his replacement. The closing date for applications was November 1, 2019 and the Search Committee is scheduled to begin reviewing applications soon. For more information about the search process and timelines, visit oregonbishopsearch.org.

Mary Adams and Sue Colvin can provide additional updates on the search and transition process, if you would like this information between now and the Bishop's ordination in January 2021. Mary serves on the Search Committee and Sue serves on the Transition Committee.

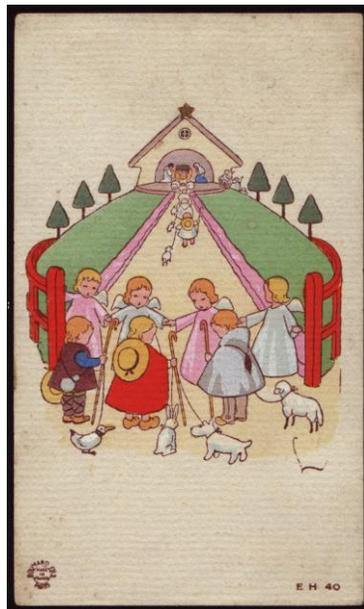
Sunday School Activities



Our youngest St. Thomas parishioners have been learning and growing in understanding of God's infinite capacity for Love with words and lessons featuring each letter of the alphabet. We have all been enjoying the colorful bulletin board display in the Parish Hall. Now as the children begin the season of Advent, they are waiting, listening and anticipating the coming of the Christ child, the Messiah, the Light of the World. Look for the bulletin board display to continue to grow as the children share their expressions of the significance of Advent – hope, peace, joy and love. At the early service on Christmas Eve, the children will once again share the story of Christ's birth.

St. Thomas Preschool

The St. Thomas Preschool will offer its annual Christmas program three times in December and you're invited! Join the Preschool for Christmas music and the Nativity story at 12:15pm on December 16, 17 or 18. The sweet voices and high energy of our own preschool kids is bound to lift your spirits and put you in a holiday mood! Mark your calendar.



Every year is a busy one for the St. Thomas Outreach Ministry. We are a small, but mighty group of individuals and heartfelt thanks go out to: Sandra Bristow, Janet Calvert, Donna Hall, Diane Landon, Florence Litzenberger, Lindy Moore and Debbie Pezzoni.

In January, we start mapping out the projects we manage and the months in which they will occur. To achieve our goals, we are always in the process of raising money for our ongoing missions. Those are: Episcopal Relief, the Eugene Police Department, FISH, Habitat for Humanity, the Heifer Project and the Eugene Mission. This year we were able to assist in a really substantial way to the Home Starter Kits and to Bags of Love. We will also put together 20 Thanksgiving food boxes for families in need and 75 Christmas bags for school children. We end the year by collecting new underwear, socks and pajama bottoms for unhoused adults at the Eugene Mission with "Undies Sunday." Additionally, we raise money throughout the year to support other ongoing projects from Episcopal Relief.

February is when the Super Bowl is played so we have "Souper Bowl Sunday." We collect money in large soup cans to help pay for our projects. In March, we collect money to purchase blankets for disaster relief. A simple, warm blanket can make all the difference to someone who has lost everything.

"Nets for Life" usually occurs in April/May. By purchasing a mosquito net, we can help to prevent the spread of malaria by distributing long-lasting, insecticide-treated mosquito nets to susceptible populations in developing countries, especially in Africa, Asia and South America. Studies show that the use of insecticide-treated nets can reduce the transmission of malaria as much as 50%.

June is "Peanut Butter Sunday." We ask the congregation to bring in cans of peanut butter to donate to FISH (Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help). The FISH Food Pantry is one of the first

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food banks in Oregon designed to allow low-income families to choose the groceries most appropriate for their family. July and August, we begin collecting school supplies for children from low income families and in September and October we collect coats to provide to children in need of warm outer wear.

November brings Thanksgiving and the time for us to gather food to fill our Thanksgiving boxes. This year, we are sending the boxes to River Road/El Camino del Rio Elementary School. December is when we fill gift bags for school children. We distribute hats, gloves, candy, coloring books and crayons for 75 kids in a low-income area. And in the next few weeks, there will be a bin in the lobby for "Undies Sunday." We will collect items until December 22nd and then they will be delivered to unhoused adults in time for Christmas.

Another interesting feature about our ministry is the "Heifer Tube." It's the wire tube on rollers found at the front of the church. People drop their loose change in the tube to support the Heifer Project. Heifer International is a global nonprofit working to eradicate poverty and hunger. Heifer distributes animals, along with agricultural and values-based training, to families in need around the world as a means of providing self-sufficiency.

Outreach is profoundly grateful to the members of St. Thomas for their continued support and partnership with our ministry.

*Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song – Psalm 95*

With love, Lindy Moore

St. Thomas Book Group

The Ladies' Afternoon Book Group will not meet in December, but will begin again on Thursday, January 23 with a new reading list for the 2020 year.



GrassRoots Garden Happenings



Join in the Family Fun! This year's Carrot Harvest Day will be Saturday, December 7. Plan to arrive at 10:30 AM to select your spot for harvesting the biggest carrots. We pull at 11:00 AM sharp. Enjoy carrot ginger soup, carrot cake, hot chocolate and warm, crusty bread while the carrots are judged. Prizes will be awarded for the heaviest, longest and most unique carrots. We will reflect on the challenges and successes of the year and talk about goals for the new year to come.

"Give a Gift that Grows!" "Our Adopt-a-Plot Program at FOOD for Lane County GrassRoots Garden can fill many of your holiday needs. This worthy GrassRoots fundraiser allows you to select and sponsor a 40-foot vegetable bed from over 100 producing beds while honoring a friend, relative or associate with a gift that grows throughout the 2020 gardening year. You may want to visit the Garden and choose a bed from sections with names such as Ladybird Beetle, Dragonfly, or Damselfly or other beneficial insects. Apple, Pear, Asian Pear, Cherry and Plum trees also make a great gift, heralding the seasons with blossoms in the Spring and lovely fruit in the Fall. Choose a specific tree from over 100 trees in the orchards and if you wish, create your own garden tag or marker to give with your gift.

Each bed, tree, or compost bin can be sponsored for a one-year fee of \$50 that includes name placement on our Donor Recognition Wall and a card acknowledging your gift. A new kiwi arbor, blueberry patch, greenhouses and other structures are also available for adoption in 2020 from \$250 to \$1000 each and include a donor or gift recipient's name plaque on the structure. We can send you an Adopt-a-Plot brochure and donation form via e-mail. Please contact Zoë Livelybrooks at zlivelybrooks@foodforlanecounty.org.

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Winter Garden Hours are Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church. For more information, contact Merry Bradley at 484-7144 or merrybradley@yahoo.com. Thanks for your caring and support!

St. Tom's Coffee House

The first Coffee House seasonal event – the Harvest Variety Night held on November 2 – was a rousing success with 70 people in attendance to enjoy an array of musical performances presented by area high school students, U of O music students and St. Thomas choir members. The event was beautifully orchestrated by our parish music director, Keri Davis. Attendees made contributions to support the efforts of *The Sock Lady*, and Keri delivered both socks and funds anonymously.



Joe Konieczka and Sally Schwarz perform a duet



Keri Davis providing introductions and Ryan Baker-Fones on guitar with vocals



Dallis Rohde with daughter Tilda and friend



Mary Adams performing a solo



Keri accompanying two of her students



December Birthdays



- 21 Larry Wilson
- 25 Dave Fredmonsky
- 31 Emily Hente

Christmas Bingo

This fun event is back for another afternoon of lively fellowship. Join in the festivities on Friday, December 6 at 3:00 pm.

Reflections



This is such a special time of year – a time of joy-filled celebrations with loved ones; magical wonder for young ones; opportunities for caring and sharing that generate warm feelings. It is also a stressful time to get it all done by December 25th. As the season of Advent begins and before we get caught up in the decorations, shopping and celebrations, let us reflect on the true meaning of this season.

We are waiting, anticipating the *coming* of the promised one, the Messiah. The word “advent” is derived from Latin and means *coming*. The four Sundays (weeks) before Christmas are intended for Christians to prepare for the *coming* of Christ into our lives. We can consider the *coming* of the Messiah first as the birth of Jesus over 2000 years ago; second as Christ *coming* into our hearts now; and third as Jesus returning in the future as Christ the King and redeemer.

There is no confirmed date of Christ’s birth, but Biblical scholars estimate that he was born in 4 BC. The first recorded date of a celebration of Christ’s birth was 336 AD during the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor, but the celebration was not an official state festival. The naming of the day honoring our Lord’s birth comes from Christ’s Mass, the service mass that is to take place after sunset and before sunrise the next day, hence *Christmas*.

There are several theories as to the assigning of December 25 for the celebration of Christ’s birth. The Annunciation of Mary on March 25 is recognized as the day Mary learned she was chosen to bear the holy child, and nine months from that date is December 25. The Romans celebrated the festivals of *Saturnalia* and *Dieu Natalis Soles Invicti*, the birthday of the unconquered Sun, known as *Sunday*. Early Celts and Anglo/Saxons celebrated

the Winter Solstice, the shortest time between sunrise and sunset. These pagan festivals recognized the ending of winter and the coming of spring, and the people rejoiced in the sun winning over the darkness. This was a time of year when people were already engaged in celebrations. The early Christians recognized Jesus as the light of the world and believed that this was the right time to celebrate his birth. Over time some of the symbols and traditions of the Solstice were adopted to enhance the Christmas celebrations.

The early church recognized January 6, Epiphany, as the more significant Christmas celebration because that was considered the date of the revelation that Jesus is God’s son. When Pope Gregory sent St. Augustine of Canterbury to minister to Western Europe and Britain, he used the Roman Calendar, which had shortened the year by 12 days and in doing so moved the Christmas celebration forward to December 25.

Advent was first defined about 567 when monks were ordered to fast during December leading up to Christmas. Orthodox, Eastern Catholic and Celtic sects referred to this forty-day period before Christmas as the Nativity Fast. Symbolic traditions began to develop, too. The first Nativity scenes were referred to as *advent images*. These were wooden boxes with the image of Mary and the baby Jesus, covered with a white cloth then carried from door to door. People would give the bearer a half penny to see the contents of the box. It was considered unlucky if one did not see the *advent images* before Christmas.

In the 1700’s various arrangements of candles signifying the Sundays of Advent came into practice, the most popular of these being the Advent crown. This wreath of greenery holds three purple and one pink candle with a white candle in the center. Candles are lit each Sunday in Advent: the first purple candle represents *hope*, the coming of the light of the world; the second purple candle is for *joy*, the good news proclaimed by the prophets in the Bible; the third candle is the rose candle, Mary’s candle that signifies her *love* and devotion to God; the fourth purple candle is for *peace*, the message of the one who is to come; and finally the center white candle is for Jesus, *the light of the world*.

Advent and Christmastide at St. Thomas

Sundays, December 1, 8, 15, 22

11:30 a.m. Light of the World

This 4-part Advent series explores with biblical scholar and author Amy-Jill Levine the biblical texts surrounding the story of the birth of Jesus.

Wednesdays, December 4, 11, 18

5:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist

A brief, quiet, meditative service for spiritual respite during the holiday busyness.

Sunday, December 15

11:30 a.m. The Greening of the Church

Come join the fun as we begin to decorate the church for Christmas and trim the Christmas tree in the narthex!

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, December 16, 17, 18

12:15 p.m. Pre-School Christmas Pageant

Celebrate an early Christmas with the children of St. Thomas Pre-School.

Tuesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist

A festive, joy-filled celebration of the Nativity with music and children's pageant.

8:00 p.m. Choral Sing

8:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist

A candlelight service with choir to joyfully usher in the birth of our Lord.

Sunday, December 29 – Christmas I

9:00 a.m. Festival of Lessons and Carols, followed by a celebration of Holy Eucharist

Please note: There is only one service this day.

