



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

December 2020

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From the Rector's desk ~

Advent is upon us--the season of waiting, anticipation, hope, and preparation for our Lord's birth. December's normal whirlwind of holiday parties, shopping, decorating, cleaning, and cooking, all of which can contribute to the joy of Christmas, sometimes makes it difficult for us to hang onto the quiet centeredness and watchful waiting that are so much a part of the Advent season. But this year, a year like no other, the whirlwind will be severely diminished. Although certainly disappointing, perhaps a calmer December might give us more breathing room to experience Advent.

So now I offer you a poem that I think captures the spirit of Advent. I hope you will read it, meditate upon it, perhaps pray it, and let it resonate within you during this time.

Peace and many blessings,

Ann +



The Annunciation

The angel and the girl are met.
 Earth was the only meeting place.
 For the embodied never yet
 Travelled beyond the shore of space.
 The eternal spirits in freedom go.
 See, they have come together, see,
 While the destroying minutes flow,
 Each reflects the other's face
 Till heaven in hers and earth in his
 Shine steady there. He's come to her
 From far beyond the farthest star,
 Feathered through time. Immediacy
 Of strangest strangeness is the bliss
 That from their limbs all movement takes.
 Yet the increasing rapture brings
 So great a wonder that it makes
 Each feather tremble on his wings.
 Outside the window footsteps fall
 Into the ordinary day
 And with the sun along the wall
 Pursue their unreturning way.
 Sound's perpetual roundabout
 Rolls its numbered octaves out
 And hoarsely grinds its battered tune.
 But through the endless afternoon
 These neither speak nor movement make,
 But stare into their deepening trance
 As if their gaze would never break.

Edwin Muir

Sr. Warden's Message

During the past 8 months, the Vestry has been working hard to negotiate the impact of COVID-19 on parish finances. We've had to make some difficult decisions and over the next two months we'll have additional important decisions to make as we consider the recommendations of the Budget Committee.

I'm writing to you today to ask you to consider attending a Vestry meeting if you have input, concerns or questions about the business of the parish. Our meetings are open to all members of the congregation and are as close as your computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone.

If you're interested in attending a meeting, simply call (541-343-5241) or email the church office (stthomaschurcheugene@gmail.com) and ask Rev. Ann to send you a Zoom link. Vestry meetings take place on Zoom on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7 pm.

If the business of the church interests you, I would ask that you also consider volunteering to serve on the Vestry. Three members will retire in January and we're looking for interested and committed parishioners to join us in this important work. If you're a new member of the congregation, don't hesitate to volunteer. We'd love to hear a new voice!

With thanks for your thoughtful consideration,

Sue Colvin
Senior Warden



Endowment Fund News



Want To Reduce Your Tax Bill?

As we hurtle toward the end of 2020, we give special thought to (are you ready for it?) **tax planning**. Maybe Arthur Godfrey said it best: "I'm proud to pay taxes in the United States; the only thing is, I could be just as proud for half the money."

Most of us look for legal ways to reduce our taxes, often through charitable giving. Here are a couple of ideas that might save you money.

Do you have capital gains this year? Thanks to the CARES Act you may be able to **deduct 100% of your capital gains income from your federal taxes** through charitable giving.

Are you over 70½? If so you may be able to use a Qualified Charitable Distribution to donate up to \$100,000.00 from your IRA. Normally withdrawals of this size leave you with a hefty tax bill.

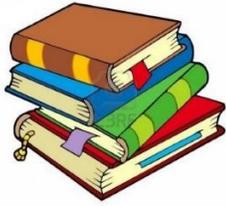
Using either or both of the above strategies depends on your itemizing deductions.

If you'd like more information just give me a call at 541/343-6975 and I'll get you in touch with our tax advisor at Oregon Community Foundation.

This Christmas I hope you'll join all of us on The Endowment Board in giving thanks for the many blessings we've enjoyed during an otherwise difficult year!

Duncan Murray, Chair

St. Thomas Book Group



The St. Thomas Book Group will not meet in December, but their list of book selections for 2021 has been determined by group members. The reading for January is Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck. The group will gather on January 28 at 2:00 pm with Laurinda Andrist hosting.

Men's Bible Study



The men at St. Thomas have begun meeting again for Bible study on Saturday mornings at 10:00 am. There are two ways of gathering together. The Parish Hall is open and set up, with appropriate distancing, for those who want to meet in person. The second option allows for staying at home and enjoying the group through a Zoom meeting. However you choose, know that all are able to be together for Bible study. The link to the Zoom meeting will be provided by contacting either Paul Colvin or Tom Whitehead. The readings to be discussed are posted online at lectionarypage.com which includes notification of the next Sunday's readings.

Advent Study Group

Deacon Mike Watkins is leading an Advent Study Group beginning Wednesday, December 4 at 6:30 pm. Participants will gather on Zoom to discuss the selected reading, Waiting for the Wonder by Katerina Whitley.



Sunday School Youth Connections

The St. Thomas Sunday School staff continue to keep our youngest parishioners engaged with our faith community. Rev. Ann has posted to the website another children's sermon for the children and their parents to view during the month at their convenience. Judy Wilson has taken the lead in sending out monthly packets to Christopher and Emily Hente, Tilda Rohde, Sophia Garcia, and Mason and Lucy Duer. These packets include lessons and activities from the the sermons4kids program and follow the lectionary. This practice will continue until the children can safely meet in their Sunday school room.



Preschool Building Committee

At their November meeting the Vestry decided to create a committee to explore ways to use our Preschool building, now that the Preschool has closed. Committee members include Janet Calvert, Dave Fredmonsky, Cindy Jensen, Katrina Jensen-Duer, Dallis Rohde, and Judy Wilson, along with Deacon Mike Watkins and the Rev. Ann Gaillard. The committee will begin meeting the first week of December. The committee asks for your prayers as it begins the process of discernment, exploration of possibilities, and making recommendations as we all go forward in the next chapter of the history of St. Thomas.

December Birthdays



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

Grace Notes



We have experienced a fall like no other – the impact of the horrific wildfires, the challenges of dealing with the COVID pandemic and the unrelenting anxiety generated by the national election. There were times when the stress was almost paralyzing. But in the midst of those all-consuming emotions an email message from Rev. Ann provided a mantra that I found myself repeating and sharing multiple times. The quoted conversation came from a Methodist minister and friend of Lee Gaillard. That message was a *grace note* that restored my spirit and calmed those swirling emotions.

When we think, if just this happens, all will be well; or, if this person were in charge, then surely things will be better. But this *grace note* message reminded me that as Christians we have put our trust in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. “The One who spoke order into chaos can still do that today. He is faithful. He is gracious. And He has seen humanity through *way* worse than this.” And then this reassuring quote from *1 Peter 1: 24-25* provides an enduring image:

All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.



The St. Thomas Outreach Ministry is delighted to announce that they collected enough money from the congregation to send \$1200 in gift cards to Catholic Community Services. Part of the contribution was donated from funds previously collected from Debbie Pezzoni and the Bingo players. Catholic Community Services was thrilled that they were able to offer these cards to their clients to help them enjoy a happy Thanksgiving.

Blessings on all of you who keep kindness and generosity in your hearts.

Thank you!
Lindy Moore



As we've noted in previous articles, 2020 has been a year like no other at GrassRoots Garden. Usually, around 3,000 people spend between 21,000 and 25,000 hours with us annually. This year, due to the pandemic, GrassRoots Garden has been upside-down with a fraction of our normal participants spending 7800 hours with us. These few interns and individuals came on schedules with regimented timeframes, working with our three Garden staff. This small crew did the work of many, growing food to meet the now overwhelming need for fresh produce in the community.

Being closed to the public since the middle of March, we had no youth groups or school classes whether preschool, elementary, or high school, and only one, small college group from Bushnell University. As far as corporate groups, those too

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were cut drastically back. Whereas group participation might account for 1200 individuals in an average year, since our closure only 66 people have come as part of groups. All of these came in clusters of less than ten people.

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GrassRoots of the past felt to many like a village of friends and family. When pandemic protocol required we limit our numbers and keep our distance, we worried that much of our meaningful essence as a community was lost. There was no lunch, and socialization was kept to a bare minimum as people worked independently in different areas of the Garden. However, working within our safety constraints, we connected with and taught interns and individuals along the way. Where possible or needed, one person in turn taught another. It was rewarding to see the ownership and pride everyone felt about their specific accomplishments as they developed ease and confidence. Witnessing all that we produced with a very small group created a sense of empowerment.

A recent participant new to GrassRoots said that his time in the Garden lightened his spirit. It was uplifting to witness and participate in the work of creating food in what he had perceived as a world that had become a darker and darker place in the last 20 years. He was appreciative of our willingness to take the time and energy to teach and give him specific garden information, whether that be about amending and fertilizing, or creating hot compost. Even though our crossover time was limited, he felt very honored and that he mattered. It was heartening to find that even in an altered state of COVID and safety restrictions, we still resonated. We had an impact on the lives of the individuals that worked with us, and what they took out into the community.

Due to the pandemic and recent rising numbers of infections, there will be no Carrot Harvest Day this year. We look forward to 2021, the year of our 30th anniversary, and hopefully being much further through the pandemic to a place of safety where we can open the Garden and welcome everyone back again.

GrassRoots Garden is currently closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, contact Merry Bradley: 541-484-7144, merrybradley@yahoo.com.

In-person worship services have started up again! We are now offering an in-person service at 10:00 a.m. every Sunday. Because of COVID, we are limited to 25 people. If you wish to attend, please call Rev. Ann at 518-304-3124. The service is also streamed to our Facebook page so you can view it at home: <https://www.facebook.com/st.thomas.eugene>. In whatever way you wish, please join us for worship!

Reflections



There is no question that we are all weary of the social distancing, the reduced opportunities for travel, shopping, visiting with friends and family, attending events and entertainment productions. So many traditions have been squelched because we have been discouraged from sharing birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and more. We are hungry for the joy-filled moments. But despite all the disappointments, there has been opportunity for thoughtful reflection – time to appreciate our blessings and consider those who are less fortunate. Each of us in our faith community of St. Thomas have found meaningful ways to selflessly give of our time and treasure to assist those in greater need. As I have learned of these gracious acts, my own spirit has been uplifted and encouraged.

Now we begin the season of Advent, that time of preparation when we await the coming of the Savior, the Light of the World. It is such a special tradition in the church, a time of wonder, a sharing of traditions, a reason for *decking the halls*. But wait! We still must practice social distancing. We are encouraged to wear masks that hide our smiles of joy. And how can we consider gifting when there are so many who will do without? We might be asking ourselves, why bother?

Perhaps more than ever we need to put up the greens, hang the bells and ornaments, bake the cookies, send the cards, and most especially bring on the lights! We can energize our spirits, and even if it must be from a distance, we can be the light that Christ, through His infinite love, instilled in our hearts and faith community.

Committee reports and articles for the Beacon are welcome. Please submit in a WORD document, New Times and 12 font, single spaced. Send email attachment to Cindy Jensen at LAJotKDK@aol.com by the 25th of the month.