



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

February 2021

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Sr. Warden
- Janet Calvert
- Jon Davies
- Dave Fredmonsky
- Ed Johnson
- Erica Mongé
- Sally Ward
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From the Rector's desk ~

I know I say the same thing every year at this time, but it's true: It's hard to believe, but Lent is nearly upon us. I'm in good company, though. At Bishop's Office Hours last week Bishop-elect Diana told the clergy that Ash Wednesday always seems to catch her by surprise.

This year, of course, because of the pandemic the beginning of Lent will look very different from previous years. We won't be able to have our traditional Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 16th, but I hope that you and your family might do a pancake supper on your own, perhaps with beads and horns and masks. We will, however, have an Ash Wednesday service at noon on the 17th; we will have ashes, though the imposition of ashes will be done a little differently, with safety in mind. The service will be streamed to our Facebook page so those of you at home can attend the service online; information about ashes for you will be forthcoming. Given that we are nearing 450,000 dead from COVID-19, perhaps this year more than ever these words from our liturgy will resonate: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

While Ash Wednesday will be different, the Lenten season is still an opportunity to explore ways to grow and deepen our relationship with God. For some, that might include the traditional Lenten disciplines of fasting and daily scripture reading. "Giving up" something for Lent and/or "taking on" something for Lent helps us to exercise our spirits, just as going to the gym or daily walking exercises our bodies. Spiritual health is just as important as physical health.

Here are some additional suggestions for deepening your spiritual life during Lent so that you may become closer to God:

- 1) **Have Coffee with God:** Set aside ten or fifteen minutes each day to "have coffee" with God--in other words, to talk to God about the anxieties or temptations or other aspects of your life that might be impeding your relationship with God. After you have "vented" to God, sit in silence for a few minutes and listen to what word God might have for you. Then ask God to help you be aware of God's presence as you go about your day.
- 2) Go on-line to SignsofLife.org for videos, prayers, reflection questions and a calendar of Lenten daily practices to deepen your experience of Christian vocation. to www.lentmadness.org/.



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- 3) Participate in **Lent Madness**. Lent Madness began in 2010. Modeled on basketball's "March Madness," Madness is a fun, engaging way for people to learn about the men and women comprising the Church's Calendar of Saints. The format is straightforward: 32 saints are placed into a tournament-like single elimination bracket. Each pairing remains open for a set period of time and people vote for their favorite saint. 16 saints make it to the Round of the Saintly Sixteen; eight advance to the Round of the Elate Eight; four make it to the Faithful Four; two to the Championship; and the winner is awarded the coveted Golden Halo. To participate, go to www.lentmadness.org/.
- 4) **Building Faith** has numerous resources for spiritual growth, including excellent ones for families, children, and teens: <https://www.buildfaith.org/lent/>.
- 5) If you are a book person rather than an on-line person, **Redemptorist Press** is a wonderful resource for books and other publications to enhance your spiritual life: <http://www.rpbooks.co.uk/>.

May the blessings of God surround you and uphold you during this holy season.
Peace and many blessings,

Ann +

Preschool Building Committee

As a follow up to the Vestry decision to close the St. Thomas Preschool based on safety concerns and the financial impacts of COVID-19 on the Preschool budget, a committee was formed in December to work on marketing our Preschool to an outside tenant.

The Preschool Building Committee meets every Tuesday. As of this reporting there are three potential tenants who are interested in the building. Two of these interested parties have been shown the building and Rev. Ann is in the process of scheduling other visits. In addition, a subcommittee

has met about marketing the building on social media. To that end, a professional photographer was hired to take pictures of the building, including the playground. Several Vestry members joined Rev. Ann in "staging" two of the classrooms for the photographer. The photos are impressive. The committee is working with our new parish webmaster, Joshua Mongé, on getting the photos and pertinent information on the parish website and then going from there. The members of the Preschool Building Committee are: Janet Calvert (co-chair), David Fredmonsky, Ann Gaillard (co-chair), Cindy Jensen, Katrina Jensen-Duer, Dallis Rohde, Mike Watkins, and Judy Wilson.

Endowment Fund News



Meet Your Endowment Fund Board!

During 2020 there were several changes to The Endowment Fund Board. Let's take a look at them...

In January 2019 Laurinda Andrist resigned. We're lucky that Burt Schwarz was waiting in the wings to replace her. Burt's extensive business experience has proven invaluable.

Later in 2020 we lost Dick Braun and Barbara Hemphill. They are being replaced by the very capable and experienced Tom Whitehead and John Spruance. Burt's term will also be extended.

Other Board members are ex officio Rev. Ann and senior warden Sue Colvin, the ever faithful and reliable Beverly Jackson and, finally, your chair.

Please join me in thanking Laurinda, Dick and Barbara for their service. And thank you for keeping The Endowment Fund Board in your prayers.

Duncan Murray, chair

Parish Annual Meeting



There was not the traditional array of delicious brunch edibles provided by the excellent St. Thomas parish cooks. Nevertheless, the unusual circumstances did not prevent our annual parish meeting from being held via zoom with over thirty parishioners logged into the meeting efficiently presided over by Sr. Warden Sue Colvin. Rev. Ann led us in a prayer for the parish and she recognized with gracious acknowledgements the dedicated service of so many in our faith community. By their service St. Thomas exemplifies the mission of the church to be an active ministry in the community beyond the building and grounds.

Treasurer Anne VanderVeer gave a thoughtful review of the financial circumstances of the parish and the judicious work of the Budget Committee to address the financial challenges. The specific line items were presented in the reports distributed to parish members, but some items are worth noting.

- St. Thomas received the federal government PPP loan which enabled the church to end the year with a small net income despite the challenges resulting from the pandemic.
- The \$40,000 grant from the Diocese enabled the church to efficiently manage all the technology required for zoom services and committee meetings; and going forward, these improvements will greatly benefit rental opportunities once we return to in-person activities.
- The budget for 2020 was considerably impacted by the loss of user group income and the closure of the preschool. The church was responsible for the unemployment insurance claims of the preschool teachers and also had to assume the full cost of the EWEB bill, which had been shared with the preschool.

- For the 2021 budget the committee adhered to the guidance from the Diocese, which included retaining the fulltime employment of our priest and avoidance of full use of our savings.
- To address the budget shortfall administrative and choir director hours were reduced and a cap was placed on priest benefits.
- The budget does not account for the rental of the preschool building as that income cannot be counted on at this time.

In addition to approving the 2021 budget, new Vestry members were elected: Jon Davies, Beverly Jackson and Erica Mongé for three-year terms and Dave Fredmonsky for a one-year term. Also, the delegates to the Diocesan Convention were elected: Mary Adams, Erika Hente and Sue Colvin (alternate).

Rev. Ann gave devotions for those parish members we have lost in 2020: Faye Harris, Garnet Harris, Robin Barrett, Julia Keizur, Jeff Knowlton, George Lamont, Jackie Nelson and Sara Weller.

The meeting was cheerfully accomplished in thirty minutes with the Sr. Warden closing the meeting and Deacon Mike providing the closing Dismissal.

Sunday School Youth Connections

Sunday School teacher Judy Wilson continues to send out monthly lesson packets to our youngest parishioners. The February lessons follow the Sermons for Kids series and will reinforce the children's *journey with Jesus* as they experience Lent.



Parents can help their children access Rev. Ann's monthly children's sermons posted on the St. Thomas Facebook page.

GrassRoots Garden

Greenhouse Renovation

GrassRoots Garden greenhouses are incredibly versatile valuable garden assets.



Every winter and spring in one of our five greenhouses, we grow the enormous number of starts planted out in the Garden during growing season. When the greenhouses are not being used to create starts, they act as grow tunnels where we cultivate crops in beds on the ground year-round. Further, when the Garden is not closed to the public due to COVID, one of the greenhouses becomes our dining hall in the fall, winter and spring. In this dining hall we serve a full spectrum tasty and nutritious lunch every day to garden participants.

Big Momma Greenhouse, one of our five greenhouses, was built about 15 years ago and needed renovation in 2020. Though reconstruction was planned, it was waylaid due to the COVID pandemic. In September, the strong winds that blew in smoke from the wildfires blew apart and devastated the greenhouse. Now, Big Momma Greenhouse is in need of a full rebuild.

Rockey Sigloh is a Master Gardener who initially came to GrassRoots in 2000. During a period that he was semi-retired, he helped construct our first greenhouse and potting tables, as well as build our large grape arbor and other structures. Four years later, he went back to work full time and had to take a break from his work with us at the Garden. Last year, Rockey retired from Rainbow Valley Design & Construction. In January, he once again returned to GrassRoots. This winter, Rockey will join Rich Heil, a longtime garden participant who has helped with many building projects, to reconstruct Big Momma Greenhouse. We look forward to our new Big Momma Greenhouse being a great asset to the Garden for years to come.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Rich and Rockey for all of their construction efforts, and welcome Rockey back to GrassRoots. We're so glad he's returned.

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



Since its inception the St. Thomas Outreach Committee has followed the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ "to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked and visit the sick and imprisoned." The committee members have been particularly devoted to their ministry by sharing our blessings with those in need in the community.

In keeping with this mission, the following groups have received assistance from the Outreach ministry: the Eugene Mission; Eugene Police; Episcopal Relief; FISH; Heifer Fund. Other projects have included Home Starter Kits, school supplies, Thanksgiving baskets, Christmas bags including knitted hats from the congregation, gasoline vouchers, undies for the Mission, and Coats for Kids. In addition, financial support has been provided to Catholic Community Services.

The Outreach Committee membership includes Lindy Moore, Donna Hall, Diane Landon, Janet Calvert, Debbie Pezzoni, Sandra Bristow, and Florence Litzenberger. The committee acknowledges Lyn West, Shirley Collard and Sally and Bert Schwarz for their special participation when called upon. Bert also stepped up to deliver the food to FISH.

At this time the members have decided to suspend its projects for six months. Several members are no longer available to continue. Although the committee will not be meeting it will continue to accept anniversary, birthday, and special offerings. As a parish we look forward to a revitalized committee to continue this worthwhile mission.

Sincerely,
Florence Litzenberger, on behalf of the Outreach Committee

Faithful Funnies

This came from a parishioner in OK. Squirrels were a running joke there because of the uproar when squirrels made a nest in the space above the organist's bench.



And then there is this:

The **Presbyterian church** called a meeting to decide what to do about their squirrel infestation. After much prayer and consideration, they concluded that the squirrels were predestined to be there, and they should not interfere with God's divine will.

At the **Baptist church**, the squirrels had taken an interest in the baptistry. The deacons met and decided to put a water-slide on the baptistry and let the squirrels drown themselves. The squirrels liked the slide and, unfortunately, knew instinctively how to swim, so twice as many squirrels showed up the following week.

The **Lutheran church** decided that they were not in a position to harm any of God's creatures. So, they humanely trapped their squirrels and set them free near the Baptist church. Two weeks later, the squirrels were back when the Baptists took down the water-slide.

The **Episcopalians** tried a much more unique path by setting out pans of whiskey around their church in an effort to kill the squirrels with alcohol poisoning. They sadly learned how much damage a band of drunk squirrels can do.

But the **Catholic church** came up with a more creative strategy! They baptized all the squirrels and made them members of the church. Now they only see them at Christmas and Easter.

Not much was heard from the **Jewish synagogue**. They took the first squirrel and circumcised him. They haven't seen a squirrel since.

Ordination of Ryan Baker-Fones

Our St. Thomas sponsored ordinand Ryan Baker-Fones was ordained to the priesthood at the Cathedral on December 12, 2020. While the COVID restrictions limited attendance, the service was live streamed so many were able to witness this especially significant moment for Ryan and his family. St. Thomas parishioners were able to experience Ryan's first celebration of the Eucharist on January 24 in the St. Thomas sanctuary. His St. Thomas family is so very proud of Ryan and his commitment in faith. He will contribute thoughtful leadership, caring compassion and wonderful enthusiasm to the Episcopal church and the greater community. Congratulations Fr. Ryan!



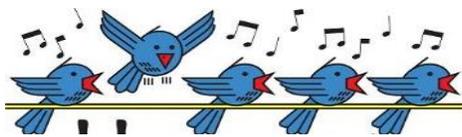
Photo of Ryan and family following ordination to the Diaconate in August, 2020.

St. Thomas Book Group



The St. Thomas Book Group is scheduled to meet virtually in the St. Thomas parish hall on February 25 at 2:00 pm with respect to masking and social distancing. The gathering will discuss this month's selection, The Golden Poppies by Laila Ibrahim. No doubt they will enjoy another lively discussion. Looking ahead the March selection is A Light in the Wilderness by Jane Kirkpatrick.

Grace Notes



The New Year arrives in the depth of winter, but even in earth's darkest days and coldest hours there is hope. Why is that? Is it the thought of a fresh start, a new beginning, the promise of new opportunities, the turning of a page? We face so many current challenges, and the hard reality is that a New Year is not the flip of a switch that ends the pandemic, nor does the promise of a new administration fix all our ills. Yet...spring WILL come, the vaccines *will* bring COVID under control, and there *is* HOPE.

(With gratitude to Lee Gaillard for inspiring this message and sharing the following poem.)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers

by Emily Dickinson

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

February Birthdays

27 Sally Schwarz



February Anniversaries

2 Tom and Linda Whitehead

15 Lucy and Paul Barnett



In Memoriam

Col. John Cottell is fondly remembered as a true gentleman. For several years this distinguished British immigrant graced St. Thomas with his presence worshipping



among us. His wife wrote a fascinating book about his years as an espionage agent during World War II, No Cloak, No Dagger, written under the pen name Grace Stoddard. Col. Cottell and his wife were frequent speakers sharing the stories of his dangerous and important service for which he received an honorary dukedom from the French government. In recent years John had failed and on Wednesday, January 13 he passed peacefully into our Lord's heavenly kingdom.

Long-time former parishioner Harriet Blundon Nikitins passed away December 4, 2020. Harriet was a nurse by professional and a faithful Lay Eucharistic Minister at St. Thomas for many years. She raised a loving and devoted family and survived two husbands. Harriet was a giver and a blessing to all who knew her. She spent her final years of her 90 years residing at Sheldon Oaks.

Men's Bible Study



A new member, Jon Davies, has joined this dedicated and enthusiastic group on Saturday mornings at 10:00 am. The men meet in a hybrid format with three in the parish library and the other participants joining via zoom. It is reported that much laughter and engaging conversation can be heard from this faithful Bible study group.

Two of our parishioners have used their stimulus checks from the government to give to the church. One parishioner gave most of their check to the general fund, the other gave their check to the Endowment Fund. We are grateful for their generosity!

Reflections



During these many months of social distancing, working from home and limiting travel and visiting, the days just seem to run together. But despite the challenges, loneliness and boredom that have impacted so many, it is possible to see the blessings of each day. Sunrises and sunsets are exclamations of God's presence in the universe. Rather than allowing the days to seamlessly drift one into another, sunrises and sunsets can frame our days.

Of course, one must be an early riser to witness the sunrise, but when there is that glimpse of glory it is as if God is giving us the promise of not just a new day, but new opportunities. True, in Oregon our days are often greeted with fog or gray rain clouds, but when the sunrise breaks through, we can embrace the gift of God's promise.

Likewise, sunsets are often shrouded in the Oregon mists, but what awesome glory when the sunsets grace the sky. It is the hope for tomorrow rolled out in a profusion of magenta, purple, pink, lavender and golden hues. The subtle color changes are captivating for one gazing transfixed on the waning day as it slips away into an emerging dark night.



To me every sunrise and sunset is a divine gift. Though I have tried countless times, the camera cannot capture the magnitude of these celestial blessings. But when the sun sets in such glory, I often sing to myself a long-remembered camp song to the tune of Taps.

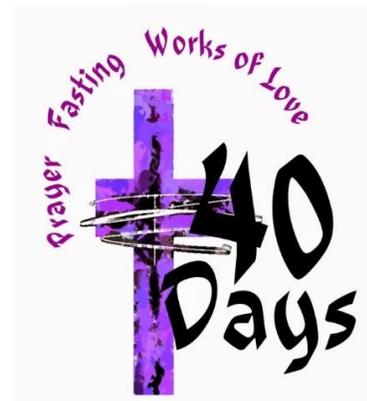
Day is done. Gone the sun
from the lakes, from the hills,
from the sky.
All is well. Safely rest.
God is nigh.



Valentine's Day is Sunday, February 14

In-person worship services will continue with the prescribed restrictions. St. Thomas is offering an in-person service at 10:00 a.m. every Sunday. Because of COVID, we are limited to 25 people. 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!

*Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on
February 17*



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.