



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

January 2021

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- Sally Ward
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From the Rector's desk ~

Like many of you, I have been eager to see the end of 2020. It has been a tough, tough year in so many ways. As somebody recently said, "I'm going to stay up late this New Year's Eve. Not so much to see the new year in, but to make sure the old year leaves!"

It would be easy to compose a litany of lament about 2020. But upon reflection, 2020 has made me realize more than ever how much I am grateful for:

- Supportive and caring friends, family, and parishioners
- Health insurance and excellent medical care, especially when Lee had his knee replacement, and I went through breast cancer treatment
- Wonderful neighbors
- A warm, comfortable home
- Employment
- Fabulous clergy colleagues, especially Deacon Mike
- Although not ideal, technology like Zoom and Facebook that enables us to stay connected and make our services available to those at home
- A generous grant from the diocese that has enabled the parish to do videoconferencing and livestream our services
- Another diocesan grant that has helped the parish finances during the pandemic
- A strong, caring Vestry willing and able to make difficult decisions
- Takeout!
- Living in Oregon, and being able to visit the Oregon Coast
- Netflix
- Parishioners who have continued to support St. Thomas with their time, talent, and treasure
- Christmas lights
- Christmas music
- An amazing husband
- The public library
- Grocery store clerks, restaurant workers, sanitation workers, and all other essential workers
- Physicians, nurses, and all other medical caregivers
- God's infinite love, especially as expressed in the gift of Jesus Christ



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I could go on, but you get the picture.

It seems that rather than a litany of lament, I have written a litany of gratitude. Perhaps we should all try this exercise at the end of each year.

Happy New Year!

Peace and many blessings,

Ann +

Endowment Fund News



Happy New (and Better) Year!

Remember the Roman god Janus? He's the guy who gave us "January," the month filled with hope for new tomorrows. But Janus was two-faced. One stared back while the other gazed ahead. That's what most of us do as we anticipate New Year's Eve, champagne and better days to come.

So let's look back. Two years ago your Endowment Board voted to move our investment portfolio from Oregon Community Foundations' Main Investment Pool to its Social Impact Pool – not for any ideological reasons, but simply because the latter had a better track record.

This record has continued. For the year ending Sept. 30, 2020 (last available report), **our portfolio rose 11.3%. The Main Investment Pool – just 5.5%!**

On behalf of The St. Thomas Endowment Board – we look back and thank you for your support in 2020 and forward to the better year awaiting us!

Duncan Murray, Chair

GrassRoots Garden

This March will mark GrassRoots Garden's 30th birthday. In normal times, we would have been planning ahead for a large 30th anniversary celebration. This year, though we know the Coronavirus vaccine is beginning to roll out, it may be three months, or even six before vaccines are widely available in the community. Until that happens, GrassRoots must remain in our emergency response, pandemic mode. Therefore, we are still closed to the public and for drop-ins. We continue working with a handful of people who come on a schedule, making it possible for us to overlap their work and maintain proper social distancing and safety protocols.



Though we remain in pandemic mode, we still look to the future. Thus, this winter we are forming a very small team of individuals that will prune the orchards under the instruction and guidance of Master Gardener Jim Rundall. This new crew will be made up of Garden staff and a few, select individuals. Besides pruning the orchards, where we have apples, pears, Asian pears, a few plums, and a couple of cherry trees, they will also be pruning the berry patch, which has raspberries and thornless blackberries, the blueberry patch, and the huge overhead grape arbor. During this down season, it is a great opportunity to build a pruning force for now and future years.

Wintertime is also the season we do lots of garden cleanup, getting things organized and ordered, as well as cleaning out problematic weedy patches. We clear and broadfork sections and begin preparing and mulching beds for spring planting.

GrassRoots will likely not open until there is a much greater rollout of the vaccine in the community, which we expect in mid or late spring at the earliest. When we open, we anticipate it happening in phases. We look forward to the time when we can come together and celebrate both our 30th anniversary and a homecoming after so many seasons spent apart.

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We send our best to everyone during these difficult times and the hope that the new year brings you relief and comfort.

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

Bishop Elect



The Transition Committee for the 11th Bishop of Oregon is excited to announce that required consents from the Standing Committees of The Episcopal Church have been received, and the Ordination of our Bishop Elect will proceed according to schedule on January 30, 2021. Although attendance will be limited due to Covid-19, the ordination will be livestreamed so that we are all able to witness this sacred ceremony. Please check the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon website for more information about livestream access.

In celebration of our new Bishop Elect's Ministry among us, we would like to invite you to offer gifts that will directly support her work and presence with us. Gifts in support of the purchase of Vestments and Episcopal jewelry for the Bishop Elect would be particularly welcome. Gifts to her discretionary fund would also be welcome.

If you are interested in making such a gift, please make your check payable to THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF OREGON and indicate in the memo line, or in an attached note, the category to which you would like your gift directed (vestments/jewelry or discretionary fund). Checks should be mailed to the following address: The Episcopal Diocese of Oregon 11800 S. Military Lane Portland OR 97219-8436. A list of donors will be published in the ordination service bulletin. Your name will appear on this list if your check is received by January 23, 2021. If you do not wish your name to be published, please so indicate. All gifts will be acknowledged.

Advent Study Group



A small but engaging group of parishioners met via zoom on Wednesday evenings during Advent to thoughtfully consider the assigned reading Waiting for the Wonder by Katerina Katsarka Whitley. These lively discussions were led by Deacon Mike Watkins and included Anne VanDerveer, Joe Konieczka, Dallis Rohde, Florence Litzenberger and Cindy Jensen. The readings infused our Advent experience with an appreciation of the anticipation experienced by the prophets and participants in the Christmas story. The short vignettes presented the point of view of prophets, ordinary people, kings, Magi and various critters who expressed hope in the prophecies that promised the coming of a savior who would lift humanity and bring justice and peace to a weary world. For the participants this was a welcome interlude that served to enrich our Advent preparations during what has certainly been a challenging year and an unusual way of celebrating during the season of Christmas. It proved to be a satisfying way to connect with our faith community. The ultimate question that was posed in our last session was – How do we as people of faith inspire hope in this weary world? Something to ponder as we look ahead to a New Year. Further readings and discussion group opportunities are being considered by Deacon Mike, so stay tuned.

January Birthdays

- 5 Kelly Phillippi
- 6 Dallis Rohde
- 11 Gary Jensen
- 27 Duncan Murray
- 30 Russ Duer



Sunday School Youth Connections

During December the Sunday School children received an Advent lesson packet that included readings from Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8. Judy Wilson lovingly prepared the packet and mailed it to Tilda Rohde, Sofia Garcia, Christopher and Emily Hente and Mason and Lucy Duer.



The children were encouraged to listen to the words of Isaiah, “I will send my messenger to prepare the way. He will be a voice of one crying in the desert. Prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.” In addition to coloring pages, word games and a multiple-choice quiz, the packet included a stand-up manger scene to complete with the provided stickers.

Rev. Ann enlightened the children with a special sermon posted to the St. Thomas Facebook page. She told the children of the angel Gabriel and how he came to Mary to tell her how she was favored by God and would have a son and name him Jesus, and he would be the savior of the world. Gabriel told Mary not to be afraid and with that message Mary trusted God. Rev. Ann reminded the children that when they are frightened or confused, they can remember the message of Gabriel, “The Lord is with you.”

Preschool Building Committee

A Preschool Building Committee of parishioners Dave Fredmonsky, Dallis Rohde, Janet Calvert, Mike Watkins, Cindy Jensen, Judy Wilson and Katrina Jensen met via zoom to receive their charge and discuss a strategy for negotiating a use contract by July 2021. Rev. Ann shared the closure statement that terminated the St. Thomas Preschool and from that reading the members proceeded with a thoughtful discussion of the possibility for a new early childhood education and day use non-profit tenant, the facility assets, the rental requirements, and a strategy for moving forward. A list of

potential contacts was considered, and members determined who would make those contacts. Cindy Jensen will work with the new parish webmaster, Joshua Mongé, to prepare an online and/or hard copy document featuring the preschool building availability. All agreed that this is a matter of urgency in consideration of the need to address a considerable shortfall in the parish budget from the lack of a preschool tenant.

Grace Notes

Late in Advent *grace* took the form of a celestial event – the *Christmas Star* graced the heavens. The near perfect alignment of



our solar system’s largest planets, Saturn and Jupiter, created a great light in the heavens. From an early age I learned that stars twinkle, planets shine, so there was no “twinkle” to be seen. Instead, what appeared in the southwestern sky shortly after sunset for a few days just before Christmas was a bright, glowing orb that pierced the darkness.

But in western Oregon in December rain, fog and gray skies are the norm, so on that first scheduled day of the celestial event, my anticipation was squelched for our view was restricted. But on the second day the clouds cleared in time for me to view the aligned planets from our hilltop vantage point. There it was! Awe-inspiring brilliance appeared for about ten minutes before the gap in the clouds closed over our view. Then about twenty minutes later the clouds parted to give us an extended and even more brilliant view before the *Christmas Star* slipped over the horizon.

For the remaining days of this event rain and cloudy skies shrouded our view, but the image of this awesome reminder of God’s glorious creation is firmly affixed in my mind. It is the light of God’s grace that pierces the darkness and inspires us to have faith in a baby – the prince of peace. It is the light of God’s grace that ignites our faith so that we may be instruments of his peace – to protect the innocent, sustain the hungry, shelter the homeless and encourage hopeful hearts for a world worthy of His grace.

Parish Annual Meeting



The 2020 Annual Meeting of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Eugene, will take place on Sunday, January 31, 2021.

Needless to say, this year's Annual Meeting will look very different from those of years past. Most of the meeting, if not all, will take place virtually/electronically. The Vestry is in the process of deciding what format(s) will work best for the congregation. We are seeking to be as flexible as possible, and we will give you more information in the coming weeks before the Annual Meeting.

The good news is that, because of the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, the diocese has declared that all parishes may do the bare minimum according to their bylaws. What that means for St. Thomas is all that our Annual Meeting *must* accomplish is to elect new Vestry members and delegates to Diocesan Convention. However, parishioners will certainly receive ahead of the Annual Meeting the Annual Report and the 2021 budget that has been approved by the Vestry.

We are grateful to those parishioners who have put their names forward as nominees for Vestry this coming year:

Jon Davies (3-year term)
Beverly Jackson (3-year term)
Erica Mongé (3-year term)
Dave Fredmonsky (1-year term, completing Bill Janes' term)

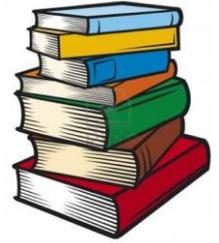
We are equally grateful to those parishioners willing to serve as delegates to Diocesan Convention:

Mary Adams
Erika Hente
Sue Colvin (alternate)

More information about the nominees and the Annual Meeting will be forthcoming, so stay tuned to your email!

St. Thomas Book Group

The St. Thomas Book Group is scheduled to meet virtually in the parish hall with respect to masking and social distancing on January 28 at 2:00 pm. Members and any interested readers will gather to discuss



and share impressions of the assigned January reading, Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck. Laurinda Andrist will serve as hostess. The selected reading for February is The Golden Poppies by Laila Ibrahim.



In this year of a myriad of challenges the Outreach committee of St. Thomas has continued to prevail due to the quiet and determined efforts of its members who have been led with steady determination by Donna Hall and Lindy Moore. With the lack of in person services, which are the greatest source of funding for Outreach provisions to the community, the committee still managed to inspire St. Thomas parishioners to support the Outreach efforts.

Before the COVID shutdown the Outreach committee collected funds on Super Bowl Sunday and in March blankets were contributed to assist the homeless. Once schools were closed in mid-March, the Outreach Committee partnered with District 4J and specifically River Road Elementary School/El Camino del Rio to assist with gift cards for food and personal needs to be distributed to families in need. During the August appeal alone St. Thomas parishioners contributed \$2,000 to this effort.

When the horrific Holiday Farm Fire devastated the Mackenzie River region, the Outreach committee secured car loads of personal needs and food supplies along with gift cards and cash to assist the families displaced by the fire.

Throughout the summer and fall the Outreach committee continued to encourage contributions

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from the parish for the purchase of gift cards for District 4J families in need of food stability. This effort included the gift cards provided to families during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season.

So, as we close 2020, we acknowledge these parish angels who have managed to lead our efforts to serve the community despite the inconveniences of the pandemic.

*You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.
2 Corinthians 9:11*

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. 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>.



Reflections

In expressing dismay over all the challenges of the year 2020, so many times we have heard someone say, “I can’t wait for this year to be over.” And how many times have you declared that yourself? Because of the admonishment of a school principal expressed to me years ago when I was a first-year teacher, I have resisted such *can’t wait*



declarations. After a frustrating day of teaching, I found I had locked my keys in my car. The school principal patiently assisted me in unlocking my car with a clothes hanger. When I sighed and said, “I can’t wait until Friday,” this dear and very wise man firmly said, “Ms. Jensen, do not wish your life away.” That message became a mantra I have repeated countless times.

And so it is with 2020. It has certainly been an unusual year, fraught with challenges, separations and anxiety, but it has also been an opportunity for thoughtful reflection, counting of blessings, prayerful consideration for the well-being of others, learning and personal growth. As such it has been a year to embrace rather than to wish away.

Our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has become a popular guest for the talk shows, and on a recent edition of the Today Show Bishop Curry was asked for guidance as to what we can do to better navigate life in the year ahead. His message was simple and true to his theme of love. 1.) Recognize what hurts. 2.) Consider what helps. 3.) Determine what I can do. May we embrace the opportunity to do just that as we strive to inspire hope in this weary world.

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.