



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

December 2021

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From the Rector's desk ~

I love Advent.

Advent: The season of light, waiting, anticipation, hope, and preparation for our Lord's birth. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, which means "coming" or "arrival." Advent prepares us for, and leads us to, Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

When we observe Advent, the season gives us a respite from December's normal whirlwind of Christmas parties, shopping, decorating, cleaning, and cooking. All those activities contribute to the joy of Christmas celebrations, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with them. And as most of you know, I LOVE Christmas (my father used to call me the "Christmas Kid" when I was growing up). But the busyness of Christmas preparations 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.

So, as we await the birth of Jesus, I hope you will give yourselves some breathing room to experience Advent—to experience the promise that with the birth of our Savior the old is passing away and all things are being made new. A helpful resource is this: <https://buildfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Advent-At-Home-2020.pdf>.

Perhaps, you might spend a few minutes each morning in prayer or meditation, devotional reading and breathing. In the evening, light the candle on your Advent wreath and say a prayer. At noon each day, perhaps walk out to your front porch, breathe deeply for a couple of minutes, repeating "Come, Lord Jesus."

Here is a favorite Advent prayer of mine: "God of grace, your eternal Word took flesh among us when Mary placed her life at the service of your will. Prepare our hearts for his coming again; keep us steadfast in hope and faithful in service, that we may receive the coming of his kingdom for the sake of Jesus Christ, the ruler of all, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Light a candle. Say a prayer of hope. Feel the anticipation of a baby's birth. Wait, and prepare for the joy of Christ's coming. That is Advent.

Peace and many blessings,

Ann +



Endowment Fund News

Flat Quarter – 1 Good Year for Fund

During what was for most of us a difficult financial quarter ending September 30, your Endowment Fund closed at \$265,114, a loss of only \$31.00.



But, for the calendar year, your Fund gained an impressive \$45,941 (21%). And for the 12 months ending September 30, the gain was an even better \$68,841 (36%)!

Once again – your Endowment Fund Board thanks you for your generosity and thanks Oregon Community Foundation for its steady hand in managing our investments.

This month it's time to think again about that hated word –“Taxes”. But let's think positively. Any donation you give to your Endowment Fund is a charitable tax deduction to the full extent allowed by law.

So, if you “contribute” 20% of your income to Uncle Sam and you donate \$1,000 to your Endowment Fund you reduce your taxable income by \$200. More important, you join our effort to fund exciting new ministries. More about that is coming soon.

Finally, be sure to come to church Sunday, December 5. You'll see and hear some very exciting Endowment Fund news!

Merry Christmas and many, many thanks for your magnificent generosity.

Duncan Murray, Chair



Altar Flowers



By the end of the month the schedule of Sundays for altar flowers will be posted on the parish hall bulletin board. Parish members are encouraged to commit to a Sunday or Sundays and sign up on the preferred date. This is a wonderful opportunity to commemorate a loved one or celebrate a special day. The altar flowers we enjoyed on Sunday, November 13 were given by Len and Janet Calvert in honor of their sixty-first wedding anniversary. This was a true love gift as the flowers came from their garden, and Janet employed her flower arranging talents to create this beautiful display.

During Advent greens will grace the altar. Information regarding contributions to the Christmas floral arrangement will be forthcoming.

St. Thomas Book Group



The St. Thomas Book Group will not meet in December, but members have already determined the selections for 2022. The chosen book list will focus the calendar of official observances for the month. The reading for January is January West with Giraffes by Lynda Rutledge. The group will gather on January 27 at 1:30 pm in a hybrid format with in-person readers in the parish library and others joining via zoom.

Sunday School



The Sunday School children are a dedicated little band of faithful learners. During Advent the children will focus on the true meaning of this season of *waiting and wonder*. With limited numbers with which to present the Nativity story, the Sunday school teachers have determined that the most practical way for the children to be involved in the annual tradition of a “pageant” is to present a tableau. This presentation will happen at the Sunday, December 19 service. Each child will be dressed for their character and with assistance from a reader, they will step out to deliver their character’s line. The congregation will be invited to join in when directed to sing the first verse of appropriate hymns. The children will appreciate the enthusiastic participation of their St. Thomas family.

Outreach

Deacon Mike reports that the Outreach committee is regrouping with thoughtful and manageable attention to specific projects. The committee is focused on providing assistance to the children and



families connected with our Head Start Companion in Ministry. Rather than requesting contributions from the parish during this holiday season, the decision was made to use the existing funds in the Outreach account to purchase much needed sweatsuits for the children.

Rev. Ann and Deacon Mike are also in conversation with St. Mary’s staff regarding St. Thomas parish support of the Saturday breakfasts sponsored by St. Mary’s. This weekly community service provides a hearty meal for the homeless. Participation from St. Thomas parishioners would focus on clean up following the breakfasts. If you are able, communicate your interest with Deacon Mike.

Grace Notes



On Sunday, October 31 the parish was treated to an exclamation of grace with the visit to our worship service by the Head Start Director of Operations Charleen Strauch. In her address to the parish, Charleen spoke of the work of Head Start in our community as it serves not only the day care and early childhood education needs of marginalized children but provides support to their families with a variety of essential services, as well. Charleen expressed the profound appreciation of Head Start for the lease of the St. Thomas education building and playground. Our newest Companion in Ministry is truly a symphony of grace notes from the thoughtfully administrated Head Start staff, the maintenance of the playground, the respectful care of the facility to the delightful chatter and busy-ness of the children.



GrassRoots Garden



At GrassRoots Garden, with the help of St. Thomas Church, FOOD for Lane County and OSU Lane County Extension Master Gardeners, we grow food for those in need in the community. We teach people how to grow food and teach them to teach others. Besides teaching gardening, we teach job and life skills, and most importantly we help people learn to work together and get along. We create and nourish a diverse and supportive community.

In non-COVID times, we typically grow about 60 pounds of organic produce annually and work with approximately 2,500 different people, who spend about 25,000 hours with us each year. We are currently reopening the Garden to groups and drop-ins as we transition through the pandemic. We worked with 134 participants on one day the Saturday before Thanksgiving!

Besides the Garden, we have an Outdoor Kitchen. Here we teach people to cook and preserve while we make a full spectrum lunch, which we sit and eat together daily. Since so many of us now primarily eat fast food or processed food, for some, eating freshly prepared food can taste weird. We feel if you do not cook, eat and appreciate freshly prepared food, why grow a garden? So, we're endeavoring to re-educate peoples' taste buds, one person at a time.

We also find when people work together and eat together, community becomes family. This helps those who may be struggling in their lives to connect, feel supported, network and access resources, so they can move forward.

Anyone who participates at GrassRoots is invited to share the harvest. Therefore, we give direct access to the fresh produce, so participants can more readily and affordably make nutritious meals for themselves and their families.

In the Garden we work with everyone from preschoolers and homeschool families to retirees, elementary, high school and college aged students, faith-based and corporate groups. There are people with special needs, honor students and court-ordered individuals. There are people from the community, who just want meaningful involvement in their lives. Everyone works together, often all at the same time. It's a cross section of the population that usually doesn't cross over, though at GrassRoots, they act as one doing good for the greater whole.

At GrassRoots we get to create a world we'd like to live in, as we teach and empower people so they can help others and pass it on. We provide a space for the community to help itself.

Together with you, St. Thomas, we make a difference in people's lives--changing lives for the better.

We're deeply and sincerely grateful for your generosity, caring and support!

Winter Hours: T, Th, Sat, 9am-4pm for drop-ins. Masks required. For more information, contact Merry Bradley at merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org or 458-221-0652.

December Birthdays



21	Larry Wilson
25	Dave Fredmonsky
31	Emily Hente



Reflections



Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended, but with intention. So, go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.

L.R.Knost

*From St. Alban's Episcopal Church
contemplativeMonk.com*

In the midst of all the negative noise that has impacted our lives – rude behavior, social media meanness and the injustices we witness in our community and across the globe in the daily onslaught of media news reporting – this restorative quote provides solace and a calming reminder that darkness can be overcome. The light is within each of us, that light that was ignited by God's infinite love for us. It is an empowering light that can change the world one intentional act of love, one determined believer, one extravagant effort at a time. Multiplying all the efforts of those "ones" can have a powerful impact on our community, indeed our world.

Perhaps the cynic would consider these singular efforts as simplistic, but the optimist, the faithful among us hold the power to make a difference. *Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.* The words of that uplifting song resonate in my mind, so at this time of year when we prepare for the coming of Emmanuel, the Christ child, the light of the world, let us resolve to share the gift of His light – to be intentional, extravagant, and unconditional in our determination to love and care for one another.

Advent and Christmastide at St. Thomas

Wednesdays, December 1, 8, 15, 22

5 p.m. Holy Eucharist

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

Sunday, December 12

11:15 a.m. – The Greening of the Church

Come join the fun of decorating the church and narthex for Christmas!

Sunday, December 19

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Christmas Pageant

Get into the Christmas spirit by enjoying our children's presentation of the Nativity story.

Sunday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

Holy Eucharist followed by Carol Sing

5:00 p.m.

A festive, joy-filled celebration of the Nativity with music to joyfully usher in the birth of our Lord. Join us immediately afterwards outside to sing Christmas Carols.

Sunday, December 26 – Christmas I

10:00 Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 2 – Christmas II

10:00 Holy Eucharist



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.