



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

Give thanks and praise to God and share God's love.

December 2022

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- Jon Davies, Jr. Warden
- Diana Garcia
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- Linda Whitehead
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From the Rector's desk ~

Some of you are familiar with those children's letters to God that circulate around the internet and are compiled in a little book by Stuart Hample and Eric Marshall. Here are some of my favorites:

“Dear God, Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?” Lucy

“Dear God, Thank you for the baby brother but what I prayed for was a puppy.” Joyce

“Dear God, It is great the way you always get the stars in the right places.” Jeff

“Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it.” Nan

“Dear God, Are you real? Some people don't believe it. If you are, you'd better do something quick.” Love, Harriet Anne

Harriet Anne's prayer is the oldest, most authentic prayer in human history and just as relevant for us today as ever. *Are you real, God? Where are you? Why is this happening to me? Please do something.*

It's a prayer that has particular resonance during the Advent season, as we wait and prepare for the birth of Jesus. It's a prayer of longing uttered by the prophet Isaiah — “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down”—when the people of Israel were wrenched from their homes and lived as captives for 50 years in Babylon, until they finally were allowed to return home only to find Jerusalem and its Temple destroyed. We remember them waiting for God to come every Advent when we sing, “O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.”

Are you real, God? If so, do something, quick!

It's a prayer that resonates right now, as we suffer through a dysfunctional and quarrelsome Congress, our nation's unholy tolerance of gun violence, an ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, the effects of climate change, and the terrible war in Ukraine.

Are you real, God?

The answer of faith is *yes*. God *is* real. God *is* present, as people return to their devastated city, as suffering happens, as innocents die, as disease claims its victims. God *is* present, on the cross, in the manger. God comes, God is there, in the midst of it all, Emmanuel, “God with us.” As Karl Rahner wrote in *Everyday Faith*, “Advent is not a mere looking back to something past but is man's entrance by faith, hope and love into the process which began when God himself entered the history of his world and made it his own. ...

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God has started on his way. He is already there,
hidden, and the revelation of his being is at hand."
For "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."
That is what we are preparing for in Advent. That is
what we are longing for. That is Christmas.

Peace and many blessings,

Ann +



First Coming

By Madeleine L'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and
doubt.

To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Endowment Fund News

2022 – What A Year!

Thanks to your generosity, in
2022 **our Endowment Fund
made its very first grant!** We
called it "The Young
Musicians at St. Thomas
Program."

Because our Fund's balance finally exceeded
\$250,000 this grant brought the remarkable talents
of five young musicians to our Sunday services.
Some sang, others played instruments. All were
inspiring.

Thanks to a weak economy our investments shrank
as 2022 wore on. Economies eventually recover.
When ours does we'll regain our ability to fund
exciting new ministries.

While we await better times I'd like for you to join
me in thanking those who served on our Fund's
Board of Directors during 2022: **Len Calvert, Sue
Colvin, Rev. Ann Gaillard, Lee Gaillard, Beverly
Jackson, Diane Landon, John Spruance, Tom
Whitehead.** Throughout the year I have received
valuable guidance from these dedicated members.

One final, very important thought as we close out
2022 – Thank you, the congregation of St. Thomas,
for your support of our Endowment Fund. That
support will make our Fund successful in 2023 and
for years to come!

Duncan Murray, Chair

Altar Flowers



During Advent greens will grace the altar.
Contributions to the Christmas floral arrangement
and poinsettias will be due December 16. A form to
include with your contribution and designation of
memorials or tributes is printed on the back page of
this Beacon edition.

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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.

St. Thomas Ladies Book Group



The St. Thomas Ladies Book Group will not meet in December, but members have already determined the selections for 2023. The new listing of book selections will be posted on the Parish Hall bulletin board, so interested readers can follow along with each month's chosen book.

Meanwhile book group readers can get an early start on the assigned reading for the January 26 meeting, Daughter of Fortune by Isabel Allende.

Perhaps your New Year's resolution includes reading more to enlighten, inspire or entertain. New members are welcome! The book group meets on the fourth Thursday of the month at 1:30 pm in the Parish Library.

Grace Notes



This editor always appreciates the grace passed along by fellow parishioners. The following missive was shared by Joe Konieczka after a visit to his parents in Michigan. Joe found the message on his mother's end table and when he asked her about it, she said it is something she reads daily. The message, which almost reads like a poem, was written by Rev. Elizabeth Keaton, an Episcopal priest.

There was a moment when Moses had the nerve to ask God what his name is. God was gracious enough to answer, and the name he gave is recorded in the original Hebrew as YHWH.

Over time we've arbitrarily added an "a" and an "e" in there to get YaHWeH, presumably because we have preference for vowels.

But scholars and Rabbi's have noted that the letters YHWH represent breathing sounds, or aspirated consonants. When pronounced without intervening vowels, it actually sounds like breathing: YH (inhale); WH (exhale).

So, a baby's first cry, his first breath, speaks the name of God.

A deep sigh calls His name – or a groan or gasp that is too heavy for mere words.

Even an atheist would speak His name, unaware that their very breath is giving constant acknowledgement to God. Likewise, a person leaves this earth with their last breath, when God's name is no longer filling their lungs.

So, when I can't utter anything else, is my cry calling out His name?

Being alive means, I speak His name constantly.

So, is it heard the loudest when I'm the quietest?

In sadness, we breathe heavy sighs.
In joy, our lungs feel almost like they will burst.

In fear we hold our breath and have to be told to breathe slowly to help us calm down.

When we're about to do something hard, we take a deep breath to find our courage.

When I think about it, breathing is giving God praise. Even in the hardest moments!

This is so beautiful and fills me with emotion every time I grasp the thought. God chose to give himself a name that we can't help but speak every moment we're alive.

All of us, always, everywhere.

Waking, sleeping breathing, with the Name of God on our lips.

Outreach

On Sunday, November 20 a wonderful contingent of St. Thomas parishioners participated in the One Hope effort to pack food boxes for families in need in our Eugene/Springfield community.



The St. Thomas Outreach committee, with the thoughtful direction of Tricia Crisafulli, has partnered with One Hope in their efforts to address the humanitarian needs of our community. The photos tell the story of a satisfying experience carried out with great enthusiasm.



Just some of the boxes waiting to be filled



Our youngest St. Thomas members, Eli and Lucy Fisher, made their contribution to the effort. And Grandma Anne helped, too.

Many hands make for light and joy-filled work.



St. Thomas is looking for a few good women and men!

At the end of January at our parish's Annual Meeting, we will be electing new members to the Vestry and delegates to Diocesan Convention. And **WE NEED YOU!**

The role of the Vestry is to ensure the physical and financial well-being of the parish, and to help make decisions regarding personnel and communications. Vestry commitment entails to one evening meeting per month (on Zoom) plus any other ad hoc meetings in case of emergency (rare).

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We will also be electing at Annual Meeting two parish delegates to Diocesan Convention. The delegates represent St. Thomas and its interests, especially with respect to the Diocesan budget, resolutions, and elections. The commitment entails three Sunday afternoon meetings (on Zoom) plus attendance at Diocesan Convention at the end of October. Convention may be in-person or on Zoom.

If you have any questions or interest, please, please, please talk to Senior Warden, Len Calvert; Rector Ann; or anyone currently on Vestry: Jon Davies, Diana Garcia, Beverly Jackson, Cindy Jensen, Ed Johnson, Anne VanDerveer, Linda Whitehead.

GrassRoots Garden

As the cold weather quickly approached and the last of the main season crops needed to be harvested, we at GrassRoots were extremely grateful for the large influx of garden participation of college and high school students in October and November. With their physical and focused efforts, we were able to complete the harvest, clear empty vines and spent plants, take in irrigation, mulch beds with a thick layer of shredded leaves, prune back flower beds, sort and secure held back produce for later use in the winter and put-up applesauce, tomato puree and hot sauce. All of this was accomplished by the end of the third week of November. How wonderful it was to actually feel caught up at the end of the season just in time for Thanksgiving. Our heartfelt appreciation to all!



Join in the Family Fun! GrassRoots Garden will again stage its annual **Carrot Harvest Day on Saturday, December 10.** Arrive at 10:30 AM to select your spot for harvesting the biggest carrots. We pull at 11:00 AM sharp. We'll enjoy carrot ginger soup, carrot cake, hot crusty Metropol bread and hot chocolate while the carrots are judged.

Prizes will be awarded for the heaviest, longest and most unique carrots.

We hope this year's celebration brings out past and present friends of GrassRoots to the Garden. We'll acknowledge the challenges and celebrate the successes of the 2022 growing season and make plans for the New Year ahead. We hope to see you there!

“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 2023 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. The kiwi arbor, berry patches, greenhouses and other structures and gardens are also available for adoption in 2023 from \$250 to \$1000 each. Donors of \$50 or more include name placement on our Donor Recognition Wall. We can send you an Adopt-a-Plot brochure and donation form via email: Please contact Jen Anonia at jen@foodforlanecounty.org.

New Winter Hours: T, Th, Sat, 9am-4pm. GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church. For more information, contact Merry Bradley: 458-221-0652, merrybradley@yahoo.com



Lee's Epiphany Series

Epiphany--that shock of recognition! Who made the world--or this little grasshopper? What is the soul...and do foxes have them? What did the garden of Eden look like? How did Jesus, tender and luminous, calm the dark and violent sea? Join us for "Poems of the Spirit", a four-part forum series meeting in the library during coffee hour on January 15 and 22, and then on February 5 and 12. We'll see a poet ask why sinners' ways prosper or how Abraham and Isaac might have fared in the 20th century...while another explores how beautiful paradoxes and contradictions contend in the conceiving of an omnipotent God born within a helpless human baby. Mary Oliver, John Donne, e.e. cummings, Anthony Hecht, and others--the poetic gifts they have given us!

If you plan to attend, please email me (leegaillard@gmail.com) or let JB know before Sunday, January 8, so I can be sure to have sufficient copies of the poems on hand.

Thank you.
Lee Gaillard

Creation Care Announcement

Those of us who have been involved in encouraging Creation Care at St. Thomas are incredibly grateful to all those parishioners who have been diligent about putting (clean) paper into the red recycling baskets ("RED = Recycling!").

The Creation Care group (Gary and Cindy Jensen, JB Hoover, Ann Gaillard, and the St. Thomas children) have now gone a step further.

As of December, St. Thomas will now be accepting plastic and glass bottles and aluminum cans that are refundable and recyclable. (In other words, those plastic and glass bottles and cans that you receive 5 or 10 cents for when you take them to a bottle drop.) St. Thomas will collect them, and as part of Outreach, will take them to St. John the Divine in Springfield, where they will be cashed in to support the St. John's shelter program and food pantry. So not only will your donation of bottles and cans help



the environment, but it will also assist the hungry and the homeless.

You may bring your empty (please rinse!) cans and bottles to St. Thomas during office hours: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 10-2. It is wise to call first. Or you may bring them to church on Sunday mornings.

THANK YOU for helping in all ways!

Reflections



Through a child's eyes the Christmas season is magical. As Christians we strive to instill in our young people the *wonder* that encompasses this time of year – the coming of Emmanuel, the birth of the Christ child, God's gift to all mankind, the *light of the world*. In our secular, commercial culture directed by consumerism, sophisticated marketing and media messaging, the true meaning of Christmas too often gets lost in all the noise.

One of the benefits of age is the desire to want less and experience more – to savor the experiences and embrace time with friends and loved ones. We seek ways to enjoy the quiet moments, to give as we are able to cherished causes, to lend our hands to service, to take in the delight of children enjoying the season, to share warm fellowship with those we hold dear. This is Christmas. This is reflecting God's love and light in the world.

With this in mind, there are several ways to experience the wonder of Advent and the joy of Christmas at St. Thomas as we celebrate...

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the most wonderful time of the year



As the strains of that popular holiday tune runs through our minds, it is important to pause and consider the many ways we can truly make it wonderful by our acts of giving, caring, sharing and serving. December promises to be busy as usual, so please take note of these parish activities.

- **Sweatsuits for Head Start Children:** Just like last year, the Outreach Committee has purchased sweatsuits to give to the children of the Head Start program here on the St. Thomas campus. During Coffee Hour next Sunday, December 4, there will be an opportunity for all St. Thomas parishioners to pack the sweatsuits in gift bags for the children, who will receive them before they go on Christmas break. So please join us in the Parish Hall during Coffee Hour for this fun and meaningful "hands-on" volunteer opportunity. Last year's Head Start families were so grateful for the sweatsuits. They are a marvelous gift that can make a real difference in the children's Christmas experience!
- **H.U.G.S. at Christmas:** St. John the Divine in Springfield is hosting a Christmas Drive for their Shepherd's Table Food Pantry shoppers. We are therefore collecting **new Hats, Underwear, Gloves, and Scarves and Socks** for both adults and children. Please bring these new items to St. Thomas between now and Sunday, December 11 and deposit them in the bin under the table in the narthex. St. Thomas will then bring the items to St. John's for distribution.
- On Sunday, December 11, there will be defibrillator training in the parish hall during coffee hour. Paul Colvin and the Safety committee are providing this training.
- On Sunday, December 18 during coffee hour we will enjoy the annual Greening of the Church and decorating of the Christmas tree in the narthex.



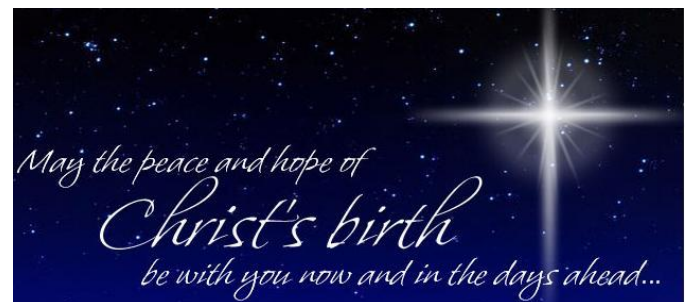
This is the
irrational season

Where love blooms
bright and wild.

Had Mary been filled
with reason

There'd have been no
room for the child.

Madeleine L'Engle



December Birthdays



21 Larry Wilson
25 Dave Fredmonsky

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.



Advent and Christmastide at St. Thomas

Wednesdays, November 30, December 7, 14, 21

5 p.m. Holy Eucharist

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

Sunday, December 4

10:00 Holy Eucharist followed by Christmas Gift packing

*Please join the members of the Outreach Committee during
Coffee Hour to pack the sweatsuits we are giving to our Head Start children for
Christmas.*

Sunday, December 11

10:00 Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 18

10:00 Holy Eucharist followed by The Greening of the Church *Come join the fun of
decorating the church and narthex for Christmas!*



Saturday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist followed by Carol Sing

*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.



FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS

Dear friends,

As we did last year, we are inviting you to contribute to the Christmas flowers to decorate the church. Your contribution will be toward both the altar flower arrangement and the poinsettias. The suggested contribution is \$25, but any amount is totally fine. Please make sure we receive your contribution by Friday, December 16, so that we can add your name to the list of persons donating in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

YOUR NAME _____

IN MEMORY OF _____

IN HONOR OF _____

This form may be sent to the church office or drop it in the offering plate. Please make sure your donation accompanies the form. If you are writing a check, please put "Christmas flowers" in the memo line. Thank you!



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