



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

December 2023

Volume 24 Issue 11

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- Lucy Barnett
- Chris King
- Mike Richardson
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- Joe Tulacz
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From the Rector's desk ~

“How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.” This line from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* is one of my favorites. I remember it particularly during the season of Advent, when we are nearing the darkest time of the year, celestially speaking, yet we light at least one candle on the Advent wreath each Sunday. During December Lee and I put (artificial) candles in our windows. Cultures observing St. Lucy’s Day on December 13 (Lucy/Lucia means “light”) celebrate with candles, pointing to the arrival of the light of Christ at Christmas.

Non-celestially, our world is in the midst of deep darkness—Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, climate change, authoritarian threats. Such darkness can plunge us into the deeper darkness of depression and despair. But it is precisely during these times that we must seek and hold onto the scripture promises that Light dwells among us. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” the prophet Isaiah tells us. “Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.” And of course the gospel of John: “What has come into being in [Christ] was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Anne Lamott, one of my favorite writers (and as she refers to herself, “a bad Christian”) wrote this in a recent piece in the *Washington Post*:

“Today I woke up old and awful in every way. I simultaneously cannot bear the news and cannot turn it off: It’s cobra hypnosis — Gaza, Israel, the shootings in Maine. The world is as dark as a scarab. I have two memorial services on my calendar this week. My body hurt quite a lot when I got out of bed this morning, and I limped around like Granny Clampett for the first hour, until it unseized. Worse, my mind hurt, my heart hurt and I hated almost everyone, except my husband, my grandson and one of the dogs...

“In many of Albert Bierstadt’s Western paintings, there is a darkness on one side, maybe a mountain or its shadow. Then toward the middle, animals graze or drink from a lake or stream. And then at the far right or in the sky, splashes of light lie like shawls across the shoulders of the mountains...

“In the center of many Bierstadt paintings, you sometimes see animals grazing or drinking. They’re fine, they’re animals; they are just doing animals. But they are not the point — the point is the light. No matter how low you are, the light can reach you. It falls on animals, including us. This is

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positively biblical. Some of Bierstadt's animals are lined up at the water as if they're going to march onto Noah's Ark. Or they're huddled together as on a park bench, just hanging out. You have to wonder if the older deer are slightly surprised upon waking every morning, as I am, fumbling around for their glasses...

"In my younger days when the news was too awful, I sought meaning in it. Now, not so much. The meaning is that we have come through so much, and we take care of each other and, against all odds, heal, imperfectly. We still dance, but in certain weather, it hurts. (Okay, always.)..."



"Sometimes at the right or the top center of Bierstadt paintings is a trippy splash of light, often a mystical, jagged slash that breaks through dirty-looking or white-fire clouds. There might be bright reflections, or long, slanted fingers of sun shining down with religious airs, organ music playing softly in the background. Puffy rainclouds glow. All say, 'Yes, there is the deep dark, but we have some light as well.'"

Peace and many blessings,

Ann +



Endowment Fund News

Time To Say "Thank You!"

Christmas is the time to both celebrate Jesus' birth and give thanks to those whose efforts have added to our lives throughout the year.



So at this most wonderful time of the year I want to thank those who have added to my life as chair of The St. Thomas Endowment Fund.

I'll start with those who served as Directors of The Fund during the year: **Beverly Jackson** (ex officio), **Len Calvert**, **Rev. Ann Gaillard**, **Lee Gaillard**, **Diane Landon**, **John Spruance**, **Tom Whitehead**.

Next, a big, "Thank You" to **Cindy Jensen**, who planned the Legacy Society Lunch and whose staging of it made it a very, very special event.

I also offer a very personal and special thanks to **Rev. Ann**. Her support, advice, and wonderful sense of humor made my job a whole lot easier.

Finally, and most important, I thank you, the **congregation**, for your support of The Endowment Fund throughout the year. Without you there would be no Endowment Fund.

On behalf of The Endowment Fund Board I wish each of you a blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year!

Duncan Murray, Chair

Altar Flowers



During Advent greens will grace the Narthex and sanctuary. Contributions to the Christmas floral arrangement and poinsettias will be due Friday, December 15. 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 their 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 be meeting in December, but these avid readers are anticipating an enlightening, entertaining and thoughtful assortment of books for their 2024 reading selections. The full list is posted on the Parish Hall bulletin board. Members will be reading Comfort and Joy by Kristin Hannah for the January selection, and no doubt they are looking forward to another lively and engaging book review and discussion as their meeting schedule resumes on Thursday, January 25 at 1:30 pm in the Parish Library. If your New Year's resolution includes reading more, then consider joining the Ladies Book Group. New members and visitors are always welcome.

Grace Notes



In a relatively small yet vibrant parish such as St. Thomas, it can truly be said that all members of our faith community are notes of grace, and sometimes symphonies of grace. In highlighting the grace so freely given, this editor risks overlooking the gracious gifts of time and talent offered by so many, and for that apologies are sincerely expressed. Nevertheless, whenever possible it is important to shine a light on those who so selflessly grace our parish with their thoughtful deeds.

In November it was discovered that the two stove tops and oven units had accumulated stains and

baked on food from use by our facility users. Janet Calvert and Adeline Hoover rolled up their sleeves to scrub and clean the units, which are now in good order.

Perhaps you have noticed the stained ceiling tiles in the offices, library, kitchen and parish hallway. Well, fret no more because Anne VanDerveer and Joe Konieczka addressed that issue by replacing the tiles with new clean tiles.

These housekeeping tasks are essential as we offer our facility to the community for meetings and events.

Outreach

The Parish Outreach committee is as busy as ever orchestrating giving opportunities and encouraging parishioner participation.



On November 19 an enthusiastic group of St. Thomas members joined in the One Hope Thanksgiving meal boxes effort to fill 1500 boxes for families in Lane County dealing with food insecurity. Outreach also made a financial donation of \$500 to go towards the purchase of food for the Thanksgiving meal boxes.



Above: Lori Fisher and Joe Konieczka with some eager helpers Anne V. and Lucy Duer with boxes ready to fill





Happy helpers – Mason Duer (left) and Eli and Lucy Fisher (right) with their shopping carts.



Just some of the filled boxes – potatoes, onions, rice, stuffing mix, canned pumpkin, canned milk, green beans and cranberries. Turkey, eggs and butter to be added before delivery.

...but wait, there's more!

The Outreach Committee reported a balance of \$2859 remaining in the Outreach account, as of October 31, 2023. The following distribution of these funds was approved to close out the year.

- \$250 Food for Lane County
- \$500 Episcopal Relief and Development for Gaza Relief
- \$500 Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
- \$250 St. Vincent de Paul for the Egan Warming Centers
- \$250 St. Vincent de Paul for the Season of Joy Drive
- \$250 Heifer International for the Water for Life program
- \$250 Church of the Resurrection for the Tiny Houses of Hospitality program
- \$250 St. John the Divine
- \$250 First Congregational Church for the Food Hub

...the most wonderful time of the year



At St. Thomas we strive to make every time of the year if not wonderful at least livable, especially for those who are food insecure, unhoused, struggling with mental health issues, in need of safe care and education opportunities for their children, or simply seeking a place to affordably exercise or celebrate an important event. Certainly during this time of year we can celebrate the community-centered campus we sustain with our pledges, service, care and commitment to the many tasks and responsibilities that all of our in-reach and outreach require. It all begins with faithful worship to the glory of God, and with prayerful guidance we are inspired to serve as Christ would have us do. Our December efforts bring joy to our parish and comfort to those we serve.

- **Sweatsuits for Head Start Children:** For the past two years the Outreach Committee has orchestrated the purchase and gifting of sweatsuits for the children of the Head Start program here on the St. Thomas campus. Once again parishioners are invited to participate in this joyful giving effort. On Saturday, December 9 at 10:00 am sweatsuits will be sorted into bags by child and classroom. Then during Coffee Hour on Sunday, December 10 a toy and tissue paper embellishment will be added to each gift bag. The children of HeadStart will receive their gift bags before going on Christmas break. Gather in the Parish Hall for one or both of these fun and meaningful "hands-on" volunteer opportunities. These useful and fun gifts will make a real difference in the children's Christmas experience!
- **H.U.G.S. at Christmas:** St. John the Divine in Springfield is once again hosting a Christmas Drive for their Shepherd's Table Food Pantry shoppers. St. Thomas parishioners can support this effort by contributing **new** Hats, Underwear, Gloves, Scarves and Socks for both adults and

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children. Please bring these new items to St. Thomas between now and Sunday, December 10 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 17 during the service we will enjoy an inter-generational Christmas Pagaent followed by the annual Greening of the Church and decorating of the Christmas tree in the narthex.

GrassRoots Garden



Carrot Harvest Day 2023

Join in the Family Fun! GrassRoots Garden will again stage its annual **Carrot Harvest Day on Saturday, December 9.** 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 2023 growing season and make plans for the New Year ahead. It's great fun for the whole family. 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 2024 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 2024 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.



Reflections



It is Advent and the anticipation of Christmas – the awe and wonder of Christ’s birth – the coming of Emmanuel, the light and hope of the world. But in a dark and foreboding time, it is difficult to see the light, and perhaps like many, this editor has questioned the appropriateness of carrying on with holiday traditions – the greeting cards, the gifts, the baked treats, and the tree laden with lights and ornaments. But almost like a shout from heaven, I hear the resounding direction – *Of course, you must!* And, I recognize that to do otherwise would be giving into the hate and evil.

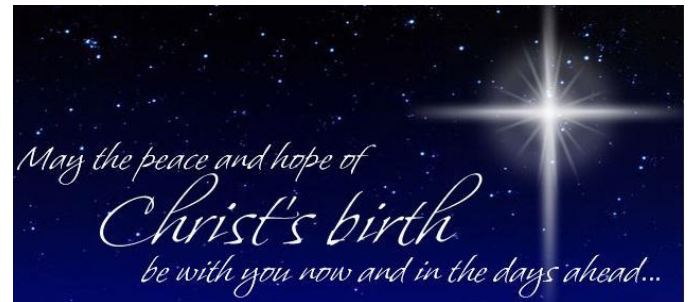
It seems fitting that the Christmas tree is so central to our holiday celebrating, particularly in Christian households. Daniel Cooperrider in his book [Speak to the Earth and It Will Teach You – A Field Guide to the Bible](#) points out that other than God and humans, trees are the most mentioned living things in scripture. From the Tree of Knowledge to the Tree of Life, trees appear on the first and last pages of the Bible and throughout. Cooperrider notes the deep kinship between trees and humans, and throughout the Bible he references their major presence, the models or prototypes of living beings working with God as partners in creation.

Perhaps that is why we find such restorative comfort in a stroll through a forest or take delight in the seasonal display of trees – the spring blossoming and brilliant green foliage, the profusion of summer fruit and their brilliant autumn display. And in Oregon trees are framed by the evergreens to enhance their majesty. Trees lift their

branches heavenward as if communicating directly with the Almighty.

So, decorate our Christmas trees and allow their light to pierce the darkness in our world. *Prepare the way of the Lord* as we experience this Advent season. Celebrate our Christmas traditions and as we are filled with joy, allow God’s grace to inspire our own gracious acts of care and kindness. Even in the darkest times faith inspires hope. You may recall this message written by a child on the wall of a Nazi concentration camp:

I believe in the sun even when it shines not.
I believe in love even when I feel it not.
I believe in God even when he is silent.



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, December 6, 13, 20

5 p.m. Holy Eucharist

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

Sunday, December 10

10:00 a.m. 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 17

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Christmas Pageant, followed by
The Greening of the Church

*Get into the Christmas spirit by enjoying an intergenerational presentation of the
Nativity story. Then after the service, join the fun of decorating the church and narthex
for Christmas!*

Sunday, December 24 – Advent 4

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist



Sunday, 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 usher in the birth of our Lord.*

Join us immediately afterwards outside to sing Christmas Carols.

Monday, December 25 – Christmas Day

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

Sunday, December 31 – Christmas II

10:00 a.m. Lessons & Carols and Holy Eucharist



FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS

Dear friends,

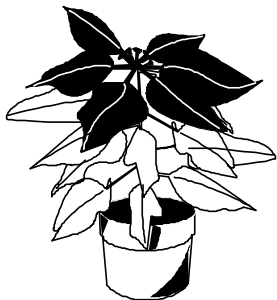
As we do every year, we are inviting you to contribute to the Christmas flowers to decorate the church. Your contribution will be toward both the altar flower arrangement and the poinsettias. The suggested contribution is \$25, but any amount is totally fine. Please make sure we receive your contribution by Friday, December 15, 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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