



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church



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

December 2024

Volume 25 Issue 11

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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 secular 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.

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."

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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

A Special Thanks & Third Quarter Success

In just a few weeks I'll end my six-year term as Chair of The St. Thomas Endowment Fund's Board of Directors. Because of the support that you, members of our congregation, have given me, it's been a wonderful experience. So first I want to thank each of you.

I also want to thank everyone who has served on your Fund's Board of Directors during my term. Here they are:

- Laurinda Andrist
- Dick Braun
- Len Calvert
- Sue Colvin
- Rev. Ann Gaillard
- Lee Gaillard
- Barbara Hemphill
- Beverly Jackson
- Cindy Jensen
- Diane Landon
- Burt Schwarz
- John Spruance
- Tom Whitehead

Each of these fine people has been supportive, given good advice and has been fun to work with. So again, to each of you, **A Great Big Thank you!**



Finally, I'm pleased to report that, for the quarter ending September 30, **your Fund's assets totaled \$282,843.18.** The quarterly increase was \$11,085.08 (4.08%). For the calendar year growth was \$31,013.12 (12.32%). The year-on-year increase was \$41,770.37 (17.33%).

Duncan Murray, Chair

Altar Flowers



As is our annual tradition at St. Thomas during Advent, greens will once again grace the Narthex and sanctuary. Contributions to the Christmas floral arrangement and poinsettias will be due Wednesday, December 18. A form to include with your contribution and designation of memorials or tributes is printed on the back page of this Beacon edition.

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 2025 reading selections. The full list will be posted on the Parish Hall bulletin board as soon as the book group members make their determination. No doubt book group members are looking forward to more lively

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and engaging book reviews and discussions as their meeting schedule resumes on Thursday, January 23 at 1:30 pm in the Parish Library. New members and visitors are always welcome.

Reading is one of the best ways to keep our minds informed, entertained and engaged. Even if you are unable to join in the monthly discussions, you can certainly read along and enjoy the wonderful book suggestions.

Apostles' Shield



James the Less

What we know about James the Less, or James the Little, can be written in a very short space. The Bible tells us practically nothing about this disciple.

Maybe you are curious about his name. This James had “the Little” or “the Less” tacked onto his name to distinguish him from the other James (James the Elder or Greater) who was taller and bigger. James the Greater was John’s brother and the son of Zebedee. Little James, we think, may have been the son of Alphaeus. That would have made Matthew and James brothers. Both were tax collectors.

Of one thing we can be sure: James the Less’s mother was Mary of Clopas, who was one of the women who was devoted to Jesus. She stood at the foot of the cross at Jesus’ crucifixion and visited the sepulcher early Easter morning. She may also have been the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A carpenter’s saw is the symbol of James the Less in Christian art. It is believed that his body was sawed to pieces.

Grace Notes



In a small congregation such as ours, it is impossible to overlook absences from church on Sunday. Perhaps that is a good thing for we all matter. The faith inspired devotion of each one of us is essential to the functions of our St. Thomas community, whether it be building maintenance, facility use management, administrative attention, or participation in our worship services. Sunday, November 17 presented Rev. Ann with a myriad of challenges due to multiple absences of service participants. With Deacon Mike away at a clergy conference, Rev. Frank Moss covered the deacon tasks. Then he did double duty covering lay eucharistic ministry tasks as all LEMs were traveling, working or infirm. Duncan Murray provided his ever-reliable oratory to deliver all the readings for that Sunday. Jon Davies added to his choir duties to serve as crucifer for the procession and recession. With several choir members absent, the few remaining choir members lifted their voices to make a joyful noise. As Rev. Ann said, it was a jigsaw puzzle of service orchestration. With the faithful participation of all those who contributed to this beautiful and heart felt service, those of us in attendance experienced the loving grace of our faith community.

Outreach

On November 21 a team of St. Thomas faithful joined in the One Hope efforts to pack Thanksgiving boxes for families in the community who are dealing with the challenges of food insecurity. This is the fourth year St. Thomas members have been involved with the fun and action-packed effort. This year there was an added bonus to enhance the experience. The boxes were packed at the Moshofsky Center, the University of Oregon practice field house, and members of the nationally ranked U of O football team were on hand to assist.

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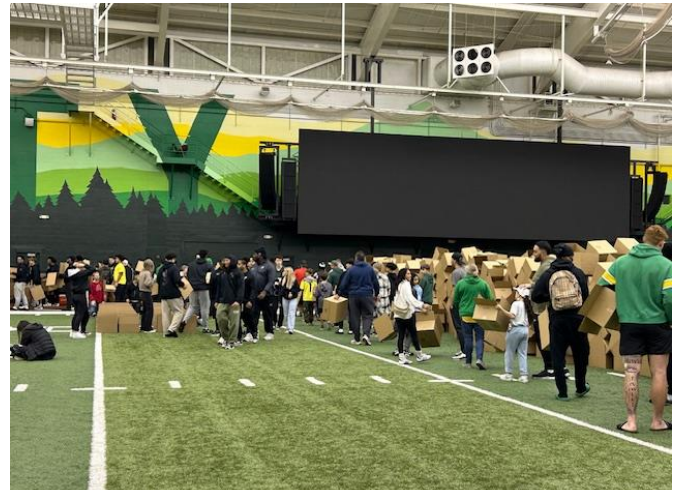
The hard working volunteers joyfully worked to fill 1600 boxes, which will provide Thanksgiving meals with all the trimmings to that many families.



Above: Coach Dan Laning with Tricia Crisafulli's son Pat Commins and daughter-in-law Grace Vangel.
Below: Mike Richardson filling a food box.



Below: Anne VanDerveer at the "potato station"



Team St. Thomas and 200 volunteers averaged six rounds of the field house each to fill 1600 Thanksgiving boxes for families throughout Eugene/Springfield dealing with food insecurity.

Once again, this year members of the Outreach Committee have used some of their funds to purchase sweat suits for each of the students at the Head Start preschool on our St. Thomas Campus. Following the December 15 service and during coffee hour, the helping hands of parishioners will be greatly appreciated as gift bags are stuffed and made ready for delivery to the children.

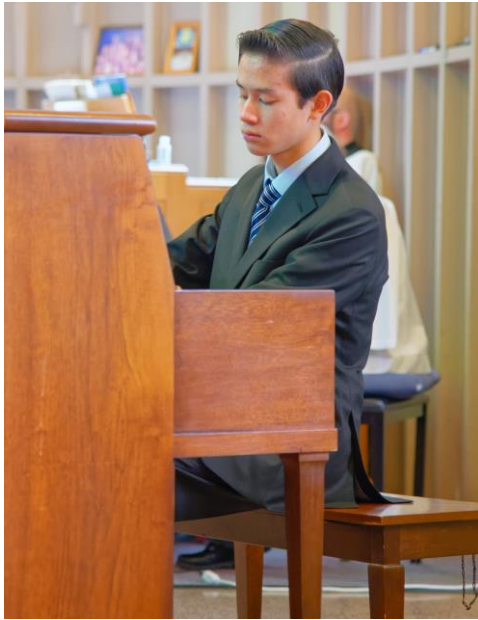
During Advent St. Thomas parishioners are encouraged to contribute to the H.U.G.S. effort sponsored by St. John the Divine. New hats, underwear, gloves and socks can be dropped off in the box in the narthex until December 15. These much-needed winter items will be distributed to the unhoused who frequent the food pantry at St. John's.

December Birthdays



21	Larry Wilson
25	Dave Fredmonsky
30	Adeline Hoover

Young Musicians' Program



On Sunday, November 10 Boaz Messer graced our service with his uplifting piano performance. Boaz inspired all in attendance as he played beautifully orchestrated and emotionally presented prelude, offertory and postlude music. What is even more impressive is that Boaz has only been playing piano for two and a half years, and he is only fourteen! Boaz is a student of our St. Thomas music director, Keri Davis. In addition to his schoolwork and study of music, Boaz dedicates his spare time to making YouTube videos which allow him to share his passion for crafting dioramas. He also shared that he has a passion for cooking and baking. Above all, Boaz expressed his greatest joy is serving and loving the Lord Jesus Christ and striving always to do His will.

The Bishop is Coming

On Sunday, December 8 Bishop Diana Akiyama will visit St. Thomas and preside for the Eucharist. Following the service our traditional coffee hour will be a special event to greet Bishop Akiyama and to celebrate new confirmand Noah Kaplowitz and to affirm Joanne Gross being received into the Episcopal Church/Anglican Communion.



Noah with his son Lewis cutting the celebration cake following Noah's baptism on November 3.



GrassRoots Garden



Carrot Harvest Day 2024

Join in the Family Fun! GrassRoots Garden will again stage its annual Carrot Harvest Day on Saturday, December 14. 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 2024 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 the 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 2025

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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 season 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 2025 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



We are in a contentious time in our country, and as people of faith the discord can be disheartening. But it is not a unique experience for throughout our nation's history as well as world history, there have been periods of considerable conflict and strife. And the issues are never fully resolved. They can hibernate or segue into other forms of contention.

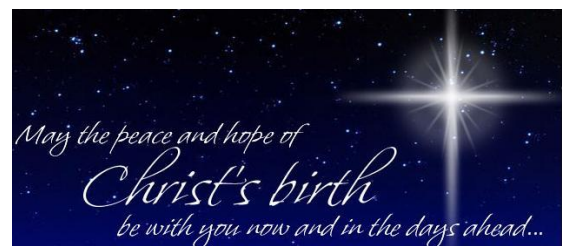
The more pragmatic among us might say that is just human nature, but I prefer to trust in the goodness of the human spirit and the determination to overcome dark times. During his time of year when we experience Advent, the promise of the Messiah, we look for the light that overcomes the darkness. In the best of circumstances, the light shines through no matter the time of year.

After decades of being involved in holiday ice shows as a skater and later as a coach and skating director, I happily recall the delight skaters, crew and audiences experienced with these productions. Skating as a sport and physical discipline can be a mean business. But I had a message shared with all my skating students, a message learned from my mother, and that was and still is to conduct oneself with grace and dignity on and off the ice. It was not easy, especially when skaters were preparing for competitions and the ice was crowded with other skaters doing the same. My coaching style was to encourage all skill levels, to share the ice, to celebrate the successes of other skaters. That is the way to be a bright light on and off the ice.

So at this time of year, I fondly recall those annual holiday ice shows that truly were the best of times on the ice. It was exhilarating and joyful. Skaters of all levels came together to present an entertaining show that captivated the audience with the beauty and joy of skating under the lights. And the skaters, too, were energized to face the year ahead as the training became more grueling, the testing more demanding and the competition stiffer. Those annual ice shows were a bright light for me and for my skaters.

Perhaps this is a simplistic analogy for managing life's greatest challenges, but it is a message that has always served to recalibrate my spirit. It is more than just sharing the ice. The effort to come together despite our differences can overcome challenges and create something truly wonderful. It is effort that is energized by the light within each of us.

Share the grace you have received and be the light you wish to see.





Advent and Christmastide at St. Thomas

Sunday, December 1

10:00 am Holy Eucharist

*The lighting of the Advent wreath begins with the candle for Hope.
The Joy, Love and Peace candles will be lighted on successive Sundays.*

Wednesdays, December 4, 11, 18

5 p.m. Holy Eucharist

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

Sunday, December 15

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 22

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!*

Tuesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve



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

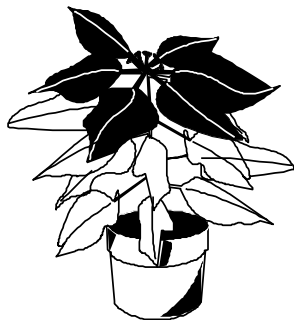
*A joyful celebration of the Nativity with music to usher in the birth of our Lord.
Join us immediately afterwards outside to sing Christmas Carols.*

Wednesday, December 25 – Christmas Day

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

Sunday, December 29 – 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 Wednesday, December 18, 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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