



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church



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

May/June 2026

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Vestry:

- Joe Tulacz, Sr. Warden
- Susan Christensen,
Jr. Warden
- John Banks
- Nancy Osborne
- Mark Pezzoni
- Mike Richardson
- Holly Spruance

Interim Rector –

Rev. Nathan LeRud

Deacon – Mike Watkins

Parish Administrator –

JB Hoover

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Senior Warden's Message

After several months of experiencing and appreciating the services of a succession of supply clergy, a potential interim rector was referred to St. Thomas. As Senior Warden I had the pleasure of meeting with Rev. Nathan LeRud along with Junior Warden Susan Christensen. Following that initial meeting, Nathan met with Holly Spruance and the parish personnel committee. With the endorsement of the Vestry a covenant with Nathan LeRud to serve as interim rector has been confirmed.

As a fifth generation Oregonian, Nathan served congregations in New York, New Jersey and Portland before relocating to Eugene to begin a master's degree in couples and Family Therapy at the University of Oregon. For the past decade he served as dean of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland. He holds degrees from Whitman College and General Theological Seminary, is active in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue and for several years co-hosted the podcast "The Gospel of Musical Theater." A writer and practitioner of contemplative spirituality, Nathan also serves as a spiritual director and retreat leader.

On Sunday, May 3 our St. Thomas faith community will welcome Rev. Nathan LeRud as our interim rector. This assignment will be of great benefit to St. Thomas as we continue to navigate our search process Nathan will serve in a half-time position focusing on worship ministries and pastoral care.

Faithfully,

Joe Tulacz, Sr. Warden



In Memoriam

On Wednesday, April 1, just shy of her 99th birthday, our dear sister in Christ, Barbara Root passed peacefully into the Lord's heavenly embrace. Barbara was dearly loved and appreciated by all in her St. Thomas family.



Those who were able to visit her in her last months in the nursing home always found her to be mentally sharp and ever devoted to the Lord, her family and her St. Thomas family. We will miss her physical presence at the end of the fourth pew on the left side of the sanctuary, but we will always cherish the faith-filled spirit Barbara embodied. It is that beautiful example of faith that remains with us.

Barbara had an impressive yet especially loving presence at St. Thomas for forty years. She always maintained a thoughtful grace while sharing her tremendous liturgical knowledge, and with those attributes she imparted her wisdom to guide our parish in correct service practices. Barbara graciously trained countless Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors. I recall one of her earliest tasks for the parish was to update the baptism and confirmation records of every parishioner to confirm church membership. An impressive undertaking was the formation of the annual Lenten study guide. Barbara and her co-editor Mary Thomas invited church members to write a one-page article based on the assigned readings for each day of Lent. Parishioners were tapped for the task in December and had a month to prepare their article before Barbara and Mary edited and compiled the booklet for every member to have a study guide to review each day of Lent. It was a project carried out over several years, and so impressed the Diocese that the church received an award for Barbara and Mary's efforts.

With all that she gave to St. Thomas in time, knowledge, and loving devotion, in the end it was her grace that was the most apparent. On a visit to the care facility I had the precious opportunity to just hold her hands and talk to her – sharing with Barbara how much we all loved her and appreciated the gift she had been in our lives. Barbara did not

say much, but when she did she repeated several times – *grateful, grateful, grateful.*

Endowment Fund

The Endowment Board – consisting of Paul Barnett, chair, Beverly Jackson, clerk, Diane Landon, Cindy Jensen, Cole Jones, Tom Whitehead, and Joe Tulacz, senior warden – met on April 12 to consider the requisite quarterly review. Paul reported the following fund financials:



Oregon Community Foundation Fund	\$309,172.15
Columbia Bank Checking	7,102.75
Columbia Bank CD	10,333.10
Total of all accounts	\$326,608.00
Available for distribution	\$ 10,536.00

The Chair reported the updating of the OCF accounting system has caused delays in fund reporting. The board is seeking confirmation of the percentage amount that can be drawn from the fund in a calendar year above the \$250,000 invested portfolio. For the 2026 budget the Endowment board recognizes the need to use available distribution funds to assist with capital improvements, specifically the painting project of the church exterior.

Paul Barnett
Endowment Board Chair

Creation Care

The annual church cleaning project allowed for some recycling and redistribution of collected clutter. The Jensens hauled a truck load to St. Vincent DePaul –



a load that included some cast off chairs and electronics. When pulling up to the off-loading zone an eager woman jumped out of her car that had been following our St. Thomas load of recyclables, and she enthusiastically pleaded for two of the chairs. Proving once again that one person's trash is another person's treasure.

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Remember to recycle your cans and bottles at St. Thomas, depositing them in the storeroom next to the office located in the breeze way on the north side of the Parish Hall. This effort supports St. John's ministries. Continue to set aside your outdated or out of use electronics. There will be another collection in mid-summer for transport to Next Step as we continue our efforts to address *creation care*.

5th Sunday Shared Service

Those who attended the March 29 Palm Sunday service will recall what an impactful service it was. The joyful procession followed by the powerful reading of the Pasion Gospel was an especially moving worship experience. And having a "full house" for this most meaningful service enhanced the worship experience.

With encouragement from the Diocese and the continued enthusiasm of the three Eugene/Springfield churches in transition, the fifth Sunday shared services will continue for the foreseeable future. We can look forward to these shared services: Sunday, May 31 at St. John the Divine, 2537 Game Farm Road, Springfield and Sunday, August 30 at St. Matthew's, 4110 River Road, Eugene. Having St. Thomas members present at these shared church services is a wonderful reflection of the spirit of our faith community. The last shared service of the year will be November 29, and as hosts our St. Thomas faith community will welcome those from St. John's and St. Matthew's. All services are at 10:00 am.

St. Thomas Ladies Book Group

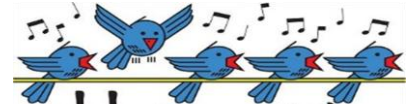
The St. Thomas Book Group will get a good start on their summer reads with the May and June selections. The ladies will read The Rabbit Factor by



Antti Touminen to prepare for their Thursday, May 28 book discussion when they meet in the parish library at 1:30 pm. These ever reliable readers will gather again on Thursday, June 25 – same time, same location – to consider that month's selection,

Nightwoods by Charles Freazier. Interested readers are welcome, but if unable to join the book group, consider adding these selections to your summer reading list.

Grace Notes



Since September of 2025 St. Thomas has been blessed with a steady progression of good and faithful servants – six supply clergy who have rotated through our Sunday services along with our dear Rev. Frank Moss who graciously steps in to serve as needed. Six supply clergy have served our parish in the past nine months. Rev. Debra Vanover and Rev. Dennis Parker were gratefully welcomed to St. Thomas, and the following supply clergy are particularly notable – all are grace personified.

Glen Michaels regaled us with stories of his special relationship with his young grandson while managing to make the charming anecdotes relevant to the assigned scripture reading. When listening to Glen one could easily see how he could charm a court room during his days as a litigating attorney.

Doug Dornhecker was always accompanied by his charming wife who praised our choir. Rev. Doug's sermons delighted us with his wit and wisdom. We will never again hear the phrase, *here's mud in your eye* without thinking of Jesus healing the blind man.

Al Miller always captured our attention with the stories of his travels and people encounters, weaving those delightful remembrances into the days scripture readings, and always without a note and never missing a beat.

Ken Dorsch commanded our attention with his powerful messages delivered with impressive oratory. He was especially helpful during Holy Week committing himself to every service of that week to provide consistency. And if that was not enough, he even shared his talents on the organ as a prelude one Sunday.

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We must acknowledge Diane Landon for her determined efforts – all managed with grace – for scheduling the supply clergy; and not to be overlooked, Linda and Tom Whitehead, Susan Christensen and Deacon Mike, the greeters who welcomed the supply clergy and provided facility directions. Now we are blessed to have an interim rector to provide consistency and steady guidance as we continue to navigate this time of transition.

Search News

As Sr. Warden Joe Tulacz announced in Church recently, we will soon have with us an interim rector. I'll leave it to Joe to give us all details. Because of this welcome event, we will suspend our search for a three quarter time rector. However, should your Search Committee receive applications, we will give him or her full consideration.



At such time as we are able to post our search with updated conditions we will do so. In the meantime, please join me in thanking your Search Committee for their efforts and dedication. They are:

Tricia Crisafulli
Cindy Jensen
Maggie Meneghin
Joe Tulacz
Tom Whitehead

As always, on behalf of your Search Committee, thank you for your support.

Duncan Murray, Chair



Young Musicians Program



Our first young musician of 2026 was Charlie Stanford, a senior at Sheldon High School. He made his stage debut as Sam Carmichael in *Mamma Mia!* and has continued performing since. Charlie has been a singer with the Sheldon Varsity Choir and Dublinaires for the past 2 years and currently serves as the Co-President of the Sheldon Theatre Council. He recently performed in the ensemble of *Pal Joey* and *Oklahoma!* at The Shedd and was also a student in the E.Y. Harburg Academy. Charlie recently won the District 12 Solo/Ensemble Competition in the Bass/Baritone division and is headed to State in May. Charlie will be appearing in *Newsies* at Sheldon High School at the end of April, in which he will be portraying Jack Kelly. Charlie would like to thank Keri Davis and everyone at St. Thomas for this opportunity to perform, as well as his family for their constant support.

An interesting side note: Charlie's appearance at St. Thomas was on Easter Sunday. His proud parents and grandparents were present, along with Kirsten Jensen Aird and her family (Cindy and Gary Jensen's daughter). Charlie's mother Whitney Edmans and Kirsten went all through school together beginning in the Three's class at St. Thomas Preschool all the way through Sheldon High School. It was an especially serendipitous reunion for Kirsten and Whitney and a testament to the generational connections of our parish.

GrassRoots Garden



GrassRoots Garden 35th Anniversary Celebration

In March of 1991 OSU Extension Lane County Master Gardeners in partnership with St. Thomas Episcopal Church and Food for Lane County began growing food on St. Thomas Church grounds. What began as a modest effort of a few committed people with big ideas has blossomed into a beloved gathering site for all ages and backgrounds coming together to learn skills, grow connections, and share nutritious food with the most vulnerable in our community.

On August 15 we will celebrate 35 years of growing and learning at GrassRoots Garden. We hope you will join us for a fun day of tours, displays and demonstrations, plant-based bites created in our Garden Kitchen, live music, family friendly activities and a program to honor acknowledge and thank the many people who created, developed and continue to sustain Grassroots Garden.

We would love your help in gathering contact information for people who have participated at GrassRoots; we plan on sending out invitations in late May. If you have any photos to share, we would love to include them in a display. We also welcome anyone interested in helping with event preparations and day of activities, including set-up and take-down, contacting participants, preparing food, leading tours, creating displays and assisting with activities. Please email any contact info, photos or interest in assisting to us at

gardens@foodforlanecounty.org

And please mark your calendars for GrassRoots Garden's 35th Anniversary, August 15, 10:00 – 2:00 pm at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, RSVP gardens@goodforlanecounty.org.

May Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 9:00am–4:00pm, Wednesday 9:00am.-1:00pm
GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church. For more information, contact Merry Bradley at 458-221-0652 or merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org.

St. Thomas Church History



The Following is the fourth installment of the St. Thomas Church History. The final installment will be in the July/August edition of the Beacon. A booklet is being compiled of the full history and copies will be available on the Narthex table beginning in August. As we experience the period of transition, it is important for us to know how we have developed as a parish and as a faith community.

The parish has always taken great pride in the church grounds. Dedicated parishioners have maintained the grounds over the years. The grounds have been further enhanced by the GrassRoots Garden, which allows visitation by community members to view the lush raised beds, orchards and green houses. Every spring the thick wave of daffodils extends along the west bed bordering Coburg Road.

In 2022 the signature cross on the roof of the sanctuary had become so compromised by weathering that it required removal and refurbishing. To further protect the roof, the Vestry and a special committee determined the need to relocate the cross to a featured location at the front of the church. This removal allowed for

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refurbishing the steel cross to its original *Holy Spirit red color*.

A thriving faith community requires a strong communication system. In the 1990's a monthly newsletter was established – *The Church Mouse*. By 1999 and with the advent of word processing the newsletter evolved into *The Beacon*, which was mailed out monthly to parishioners until 2017 when email delivery became the most expedient way to deliver this monthly missive. The rector, parish ministries and Companions in Ministry contribute regularly to the monthly newsletter. In addition, a parish website was developed and has been updated to reach the greater community.

During Fr. Court William's tenure at St. Thomas and with the financial contributions of parishioners, the courtyard was redesigned and converted to a columbarium and ossuary. At the same time the wing of offices and classrooms bordering the courtyard was reconfigured into Sunday School classrooms and a nursery.

Also, during Fr. Court's tenure the St. Thomas Endowment Fund was established with the goal of reaching an endowed fund of \$250,000. This investment is intended to generate funds for capital improvement and enrichment projects. In 2021 the endowment goal was reached enabling the first enrichment benefit to the parish. An expenditure from the fund earnings was applied to the Young Musicians Program allowing for young musicians from local high schools and the University of Oregon to perform during Sunday services. Each student performer receives \$200 to assist with their music education.

Reflections



As this editor has updated the parish history, so many St. Thomas traditions and activities have come to mind. All were wonderful and regular occurrences that sadly are no longer, either because of the decrease in numbers or the inability to do those things with diminished physical capabilities. But they are memorable and certainly contributed to the spirit of our faith community. Here is a list of some of those traditions. There are those among us who must certainly have other remembrances, and this editor invites you to share them.

- Annual Family Camp Weekend at Camp Lane – In addition to great shared meals prepared by parishioners over a three-day weekend, we delighted in a hysterically funny Gong Show Talent Review.
- Pancake Breakfast and Service at Armitage Park – This event featured sourdough pancakes made by Len Kearney. (See the memorial Dogwood Tree on the south lawn.)
- Church Mouse Holiday Faire – First held in the Education Building and then in the Parish Hall, this event attracted eager buyers from the community. In addition to shopping the twenty plus vendor booths, attendees could enjoy a soup and pie lunch provided by the Monday Bible Study ladies.
- Women's Bible Study led by Mary Thomas and then Lyn West – These dedicated souls were dubbed the Monday Lunch Bunch.
- Acolytes – Youth from fifth grade through high school attended services. A dozen or more acolytes each year attended the annual training and rotated service providing crucifer, candle bearers, and on special occasions a thurifer, second cross or flags might be added depending on the service requirements and occasion.
- Youth programs – Of course we enjoyed a large Sunday School program, but of special note is the middle school/high school youth group led for years by Anne VanDerveer and Joe Konieczka.
- Gathering of the Greens – Len Calvert and friends cut a variety of greens to decorate the church for Christmas. For years the greens were collected from Jensen's tree farm. When Len could no longer manage that task, Joe and Anne brought out the youth group to fill a pickup with greens.

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We cannot lament the passing of these activities, but it is heartwarming to recall the fun. Times change and circumstances warrant different activities. While these special traditions contributed to the character of our faith community, we have new traditions to celebrate most especially our Companions in Ministry, our dynamic Outreach programs, and the strong lay leadership that all contribute to a strong dynamic for St. Thomas. And for it all we say, "Thanks be to God."

Beacon Schedule

Due to the summer travel schedule of the *Beacon* editor, there will be combined editions in the months ahead – May/June and July/August. Those who have announcements or wish to submit articles will need to submit information or content by July 3 for the July/August edition. Looking ahead, parishioners are encouraged to consider their own *reflections* to be included in that segment of the *Beacon*. We all have stories to tell about our life experiences or impressions. It is our shared stories that contribute to our welcoming spirit as a faith community.

June Birthdays

- 6 Shirley Collard
- 7 Lori Fisher
- 7 Margaret Heltman
- 8 Beverly Jackson
- 19 Anne VanDerveer



June Anniversaries

- 6 Duncan and Sandra Murray

May/June Dates of Note

**May 3 – First Sunday with interim rector
Rev. Nathan LeRud**

May 10 – Mother’s Day



May 24 - Pentecost



May 25 – Memorial Day

**May 31 – Trinity Sunday
Shared service at St. John’s
with St. Matthew’s and St. Thomas**



June 7 – Choir Celebration

June 14 – Flag Day



June 19 – Juneteenth

June 21 – Father’s Day