



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church



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

July 2026

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

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From the Senior Warden ~

There have been many wonderful developments at St. Thomas over the past few months. Our building has been updated and painted, giving it a fresh look that mirrors our renewed outlook on life and faith. Most importantly, our new Interim Rector, Nathan LeRud, has brought a breath of fresh air to our worship and pastoral care. I have noticed – and perhaps you have too – a newfound energy in our Sunday services, which has even attracted new community members to join us for the first time. People are really forward to our weekly services.

Our ministry with our community and campus partners also continues to grow and flourish. We enthusiastically welcome back Head Start; while they never left completely, they will now be fully occupying the education building once again. GrassRoots Garden is operating at full speed and the CCC continues to flourish. A quieter ministry, All Ears is thriving, and we will soon welcome a new tenant who will be utilizing the nursery once a week.

With all these blessings in mind, I want to gently remind everyone that this season of renewal is a journey, not a permanent destination. Nathan is our Interim Rector and will not be with us indefinitely. While we celebrate this vibrant momentum, we must not become complacent. We need to actively look ahead and strategize on how St. Thomas will operate, grow, and function for the foreseeable future.

I would love to hear your voices, your insights, and your ideas for our shared future.

Faithfully,

Joe

Senior Warden



St. Thomas Book Group



We are approaching the lazy days of summer, and what better way to enjoy some summer relaxing than with a good book. Whether reclining on a lounge chair on your patio, stretched out on a beach blanket with the rhythm of the waves nearby, or enjoying a camp site retreat, there is nothing like a good book to while away the time. The St. Thomas Ladies Book Group is doing their part to enhance those summer hours devoted to rest and relaxation. The book selection for July is Fellowship of Puzzlemakers by Samuel Burr. The title alone suggests another way to while away some summer hours. These enthusiastic readers will meet in the Parish Library on July 23 at 1:30 pm. Interested readers are always welcome, or consider reading along with them on your own time. And consider checking out the bookshelves in the Narthex. Many of the used books are those that have been selected and reviewed by the Book Group.

Outreach

The Outreach Ministry approved the contribution of \$500 to each of the food pantries sponsored by St. John the Divine and St. Matthew's for the month of June. In keeping with the goal of



providing hands on service activities for our St. Thomas parishioners two projects are scheduled for the immediate future. In coordination with the Center for Community Counseling the packing of food bags for their Nourish program will be on an every-other-month rotation. The next opportunity will be June 28 during coffee hour. This is a fun and easy task in which to participate while you enjoy coffee, treats and conversation.

The annual shoe sorting extravaganza will take place on Tuesday, August 25 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at Willamette Christian Center. Those who have participated in this before can attest to the high energy effort. Some participants have brought grandchildren adding to the enthusiasm. Mark your calendars for the Harvest Brunch following the service on October 18. As in past years, this is a fundraiser for Outreach. Details are still in the works, but rest assured, the food will be delicious and generous.

New Usher ~ Rev. Frank Moss!

We are happy to announce that our priest associate, Frank Moss, has joined our Usher Team.

Frank, a native of Virginia, graduated from Princeton University and attended seminary in Cambridge, where he met Betsy, now his wife of 57 years. Frank and Betsy have two children – Liz and Haze and two granddaughters.

Frank has served churches in Virginia, New York, Vermont, Connecticut, Indiana and Massachusetts. Upon retiring from full time duties in 2006 Frank and Betsy moved to Oregon. Frank served as an interim at the church in Pendleton, lived in Portland, and in 2016 moved to Eugene to be closer to Haze and his family.

Please join us in welcoming Frank to our usher team.

Sandra & Duncan Murray
Usher Co-Chairs

Creation Care

The Creation Care team had a preliminary pickup and delivery of electronics recycling this past spring, but our usual schedule for that effort is mid-summer.



If you missed the spring recycling effort, another electronics recycling will happen in early August. Any used or outdated electronics (televisions, radios, small appliances, computers, phones, etc.) can be dropped off at church between July 22 to

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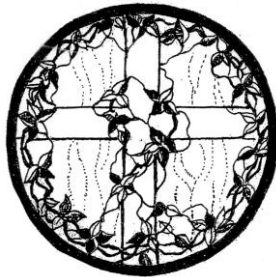
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August 2. The team will get them hauled off to Next Step on August 4.

Remember your cans and bottles for recycling can be dropped off at church in the closet next to the office door on the north side of the Parish Hall in the breezeway. This regular effort assists St. John's with their food pantry and meals program. And many thanks to Deacon Mike for transferring the cans and bottles for recycling!

St. Thomas Church History

The following is the fifth and final installment of the church history first compiled by founding parish members Ferne and Dave Hoffman and updated by this editor.



The “old farmhouse” continues to be used by the Center for Community Counseling, initially established as Aslan House. The center’s mission is to provide affordable counseling for adults with limited resources. St. Thomas provides the space and the CCC is responsible for the staff, both paid and volunteer.

Food for Lane County manages the Grass Roots Garden, which utilizes 2½ acres to grow fruits and vegetables. Over 30,000 pounds of produce was produced in 2003 to feed the hungry in the community. By 2022 the garden produces on average 80,000 pounds of produce per year. Hundreds of students, amateur and master gardeners volunteer in the garden under the supervision of the manager for the garden. During the years of operation, the garden has developed raised beds, arbors, orchards, and green houses and has established a kitchen for food preparation and a shelter for instructional sessions. The garden is open to the public during established hours, offers tours and training sessions to school groups and holds

numerous special education programs and an annual plant sale.

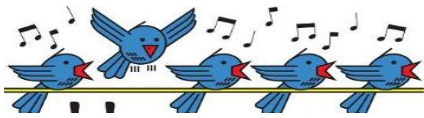
The Fellowship Hall with a beautiful furnished library and well-designed kitchen provides space for those events which bring the congregation together, such as potlucks/programs, youth activities, Bible study, the Holiday Faire, anniversary and wedding receptions and work parties. For a use fee the Parish Hall allows for community organizations and private parties to enjoy the facility amenities. Regular users include Alcoholics Anonymous, Yoga and Tai Chi groups, P.E.O. and Lions Club. The diocese utilizes the hall for various meetings and events.

For several years St. Thomas partnered with other community churches to host homeless families in our community. When St. Vincent de Paul established a full-time home to serve these families, the church Fellowship Hall was no longer needed for this service.

Beautification and enhancement of the St. Thomas grounds and facilities has been creatively and thoughtfully considered. Over the years parish members have designed and made or commissioned quilted and painted hangings, wood and tile creations and stained or etched glass windows for the sanctuary, parish hall, columbarium and classrooms. These continue to be special remembrances of dedicated parishioners. In 2025 a generous anonymous donation from a parishioner provided the *Stations of the Cross* icons for the Sanctuary to be displayed during Lent through the Easter season .

Our Companions in Ministry – Center for Community Counseling, Head Start, the GrassRoots Garden, and All Ears – are vital to the life and mission of the parish. St. Thomas’ mission statement reads, “Give thanks and praise to God and share God’s love.” This is our goal for today and for tomorrow.

Grace Notes



Our St. Thomas faith community operates with the dedication and devotion of lay leadership. Some of us have obvious roles to address church worship, ministries and business. But there are many among us who contribute to the life of the church with quiet grace.

Beverly Jackson has been a member of St. Thomas for over thirty years. She has served on Vestry and as Senior Warden multiple terms. Beverly has continued in the position of parish clerk for many years, a position that requires her review and signature on all official church documents. All these contributions have been especially beneficial to our parish business and life. But the invaluable task that may go unnoticed is her expertise in drafting all the facility use agreements. Our very active business of letting out space in the church for a use fee requires careful expertise in drafting those agreements. With her business acumen and knowledge of real estate law from her career in commercial real estate, Beverly graciously and efficiently responds to every request for a use agreement. Often those agreements require multiple drafts before the Facilities Oversight Committee gets to the final agreement. Beverly does all this with patience, persistence and always with the best intention for St. Thomas Church. Beverly's notes of grace may not be heard, but they are certainly essential for the use of our facilities, and her efforts pay dividends for our annual budget.



A Founding Partnership That Took Root ~ Special 35th Anniversary Edition: Part 1

From the very beginning of GrassRoots Garden, Master Gardeners and OSU Extension have been there.

GrassRoots Garden was founded as a unique partnership among three organizations, each playing an essential and equal role in its success. St. Thomas Church provided the land and continues to generously donate its use. FOOD for Lane County (FFLC) provides the coordination staff and operating budget that sustain the program. OSU Extension and the Master Gardener Program have served as the Garden's operational backbone and educational force.

Together, these three partners created a thriving community garden, educational center, and food-assistance program that has touched tens of thousands of lives over the years. One of the two people credited with the original idea for GrassRoots Garden, Carol McBrian, was a Master Gardener. The other, Janet Calvert, a member of St. Thomas Church, worked for Extension. Pat Patterson, head of the Master Gardener Program, came up with the name and spelling of GrassRoots, and Ross Penhallegon wrote the first legal agreement between St. Thomas Church, OSU Extension, and FOOD for Lane County. From the outset, the Garden was built on collaboration and a shared commitment among all three organizations.

Master Gardeners were there to break ground, plant the first garden, and manage crop production. From those earliest days, they became an essential part of every aspect of the Garden's development and success.



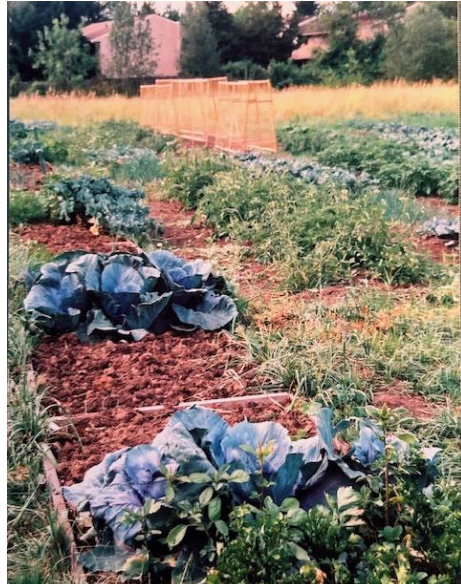
Over the decades, GrassRoots Garden has flourished because of the strength of this partnership. St. Thomas provided the land on which the Garden could grow. FOOD for Lane County

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supplied the coordination staff and operating budget needed to sustain it. Master Gardeners and Extension provided the knowledge, leadership, educational programming, and daily hands-on involvement that transformed a vision into a nationally recognized model of food production, community engagement, and horticultural education.

Master Gardeners and Extension have never simply been volunteers or advisors. As one of the three founding and sustaining partners of this collaboration, they helped build, develop, manage, and sustain GrassRoots Garden. Their contributions are woven into the very fabric of the Garden. They are part of the past, present, and future of GrassRoots Garden.



Could we have ever imagined what the GrassRoots Garden has become from this beginning.



Church member, Dave Hoffman (red shirt), looks on as ground is broken for the GrassRoots Garden. Below- early Garden production.



July Garden 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.

Young Musicians



Cecilia Rutledge was the latest young musician sharing her talents with our St. Thomas community. A sophomore at North Eugene High School, Celia

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has been performing for as long as she can remember. She has been studying classical piano since she was seven years old and has been singing for her whole life. Within the last few years, Cecilia has discovered a love of theater and can be seen in almost all of the productions at North Eugene High School. She has played The Oracle in *The Lightning Thief*, Beth March in *Little Women*, and Trudy in *8 minutes left*. In addition to her performing Cecilia was in the E.Y. Harburg Academy at The Shedd. She just finished a successful run as Chava in *Fiddler on the Roof* at North Eugene High School. Cecilia expressed her gratitude to music director Keri Davis and the St. Thomas congregation for the opportunity to perform and be a recipient of the Young Musicians grant.



Sunday, June 28 our Sunday service was graced with another young musician – Jayda Puhn, an incoming senior at North Eugene High School. Jayda has been singing and acting since elementary school. Jayda frequently appears in North Eugene High School and Pegasus Playhouse productions.

... and Seasoned musicians, too

Sunday, June 21 was an unusual day at St. Thomas. Our dedicated music director was absent. Rev. Nathan reminded us that historically there was no music accompaniment in church and worshipers sang acapella. Our ever faithful cantor, JB Hoover, stepped up to give us a note and we sang the hymns

for the service without Keri's musical accompaniment. Not too bad, thanks to choir members scattered about the sanctuary and the benefit of some familiar hymns. Needless to say, we all were reminded of the gift of Keri's talents.

Jon Davies, faithful St. Thomas congregant and choir member, enhanced the service with his guitar playing and vocal accompaniment as he shared one of his personal compositions for the offertory hymn. Below, in his own words, Jon shares the story that inspired his especially touching and heartfelt song of remembrance.

Ode to Aberfan: Our Sweet Gwendelyn

In 1966 a terrible disaster occurred in the Welsh coal mining town of Aberfan. A hillside of waste from a coal mine liquified after heavy rains, slid down a mountain and buried an entire elementary school. Over 100 children and 20 adults lost their lives in this tragedy. I feel a personal connection to this tragedy as I am Welsh, and my great grandfather was a coal miner from Aberfan. He may have worked at this mine before bringing our family to America. After visiting Wales, I made a solemn promise to honor the children and all who were affected by this tragedy. To fulfill this promise I wrote, ***Ode to Aberfan: Our Sweet Gwendelyn***.

This tragedy reminds us that our children are the most precious gifts we receive; therefore, we must do everything in our power to keep them safe. It also teaches us the importance of learning to cope with the grief we have and will experience in our lifetimes, and how our faith can comfort us.

In loving memory of all those who lost their lives that day.

Jon Davies



Ode to Aberfan: Our Sweet Gwendelyn
By Jon Davies

Verse 1 Gwen awoke on a wet, Welsh morn
Ten short years from the day she was born
In the mining town of Aberfan
Walked to school where tombstones now stand

A sad, dreary sight
Hard rain a fallen
For three dark days and night
As if sunrise was stalling.
Ashamed to face the dawn

Verse 2 The silence of the meadow lark
Broken by Billy's brown dogs bark
As if he knew just what was coming.
A freight train roar, no time for running.

A mountain of waste, busted out its sides
Tore down that valley in a deadly landslide
Buried the school, where our Gwen died
With 100 more children right by her side

Verse 3 The miners dug sludge
They rescued a few
But the muck wouldn't budge
Despite all they could do
Giving up hope never entered their heads.
With bloody raw hands
They recovered the dead.
The miners were too numb to cry
Folks started to ask why.
While All Welsh people prayed and mourned
For those children and the children who'll never be born

Verse 4 Grieving parents trying to make sense
Of the loss of their children so innocent.
Their bitterness cut like a sword
The onus fell on the National Coal Board
Was it incompetence, neglect, or greed,
Those in charge were let off Scott free

*Through the misty glow of a warm, Welsh moon
Children singing an ancient tune
To the rhythm of Taff's river roll
Peace to you and your grieving soul*

Verse 5 In a dream dad sees Gwen skipping rope
What she says brings him a sliver of hope.
Daddy, you come when Momma's asleep
So that no one will ever see you weep.

I miss you too Daddy, but hear me say
I see you Dad, each and every day.
Please, please grieve no more
Life is what living is for.

You can see me Daddy if you know where to look
I'm often above old Owen's brook
I was the arc in last night's rainbow,
Leek white and green, if you need to know
I am the dew where the tall grass lay
I walk you to work each precious day
Love you like there's no tomorrow,
When I touch your hand there is no sorrow

Verse 6 Daddy, miss me, but know I'm safe
Do not blame others
Please give them grace.
Love the survivors
We did not choose to die.

They did not choose to live.

Daddy, the colors here are brighter
The lilacs smell sweeter
The air's much lighter
Bees don't sting, hearts don't ache.
Every Friday we get to eat cake.

Verse 7 Be patient, be patient, O Father of mine
We will meet again
When it is time.
I'll grab your hand at the river's bend
And take you to the place
where all hearts mend.

Please wait for us, sweet daughter of mine
We so long for the day when it is time
We'll dance and laugh and cry all night
As once again the world turns bright
When we never have to say goodbye again
To our darling daughter sweet Gwendolyn!
To our darling daughter sweet Gwendolyn!

*Through the misty glow of a warm, Welsh moon
Children singing an ancient tune
To the rhythm of Taff's river roll
Peace to you and your grieving soul*

Music and lyrics by Jon Davies

Reflections

In response to the editor's request for submissions from the congregation, this reflection was submitted by our resident published author Tricia Crisafulli.

Author's note: I originally wrote this essay in 2009, based on something that had happened to me in about 1990 when I lived in New York City. It's a memory I'd love to share with you today.

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It was an unbearably hot day in New York City, the kind when the sun beats down on pavement clogged with cars and makes maneuvering down a crowded sidewalk feel like fighting one's way through a tropical jungle. I was no stranger to hand-to-hand combat those days, at war with much of my life: a broken engagement, difficulties at work, and the feeling that I, with my 30th birthday on the horizon, had no plan for my life.

On the way home, I ducked into the one place that had become my habit that summer: a small chapel off the grand St. Ignatius Loyola Church on Park Avenue. Early on weekday evenings, I attended a small service along with a handful of elderly well-dressed ladies. They sat like little gray birds with colored wings in their pastels and summer whites. I slipped into the back pew, looking at them in awe; seeing the diamonds on their hands, the pearls at their throats. Week after week I watched them, wondering what their lives must be like, and surmising that they must be wives, mothers, and probably grandmothers.

They were privileged — a cut above the rest of us. Or so I assumed.

Then he came in.

In the heat of an August day in New York City, the man gave off a gagging stench. As soon as he walked into the chapel, I buried my head in my folded hands and breathed through my mouth, all the while praying, "Please don't let him sit next to me. If he does, I'll have to leave."

Shaming thoughts rushed in on the heels of that prayer. Where was my compassion for this homeless man? He was my age, or so I'd guess, his large frame draped with several layers of jackets and coats despite the heat. No doubt he was mentally ill, and probably physically as well.

I challenged myself to see the Christ in him, but I couldn't do. I bowed my head, this time in shame.

The man made his way slowly up the aisle of the chapel toward the front pew where the

grandest lady of them all always took her seat. Over the weeks I had come to admire her style and classic features. In her youth, she must have been quite a beauty. When the man sat down, I saw her turn her head, the diamond earrings she wore sparkling in the sunlight angled through the window. *She'll get up now and leave*, I thought to myself. Instead, she did the opposite.

This lovely lady slid closer to the man and held out the prayer book to him, reading aloud every word and tracing each line with her finger. She never left his side the entire time, as gentle with him as any mother with her son. Sitting in the last pew of the small chapel, I watched her with a different kind of awe that day, not for her wardrobe or jewelry, but for the simple grace that she exuded.

No, I could not see Christ in the homeless man who shuffled into the chapel that day. As hard as I tried, I could not get past the filthy rags and the offensive odor. But in the gentle expression of a Park Avenue matron, with all her diamonds and pearls, I found the compassionate face of my Lord and Savior.

July Birthdays

3	Lucy Barnett
4	Florence Litzer
6	JB Hoover
22	Tom Whitehead
25	Lucy Fisher



Happy Anniversary!

July Anniversaries

11	Gary and Cindy Jensen
25	JB and Adeline Hoover Maggie Meneghin and Cole Jones