



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church



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

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Senior Warden's Message

Dear St. Thomas Community,

At times, clarity comes easily. At other times, it requires stepping back and being deeply honest with ourselves – admitting when we feel lost, confused, or uncertain about which step to take. It takes true emotional maturity to acknowledge that we don't have all the answers.

St. Thomas is in a season of searching. We are seeking the right path forward to grow and thrive, both for today and for generations to come. Our lay leadership and faithful congregation dedicate immense time and energy to serving our community and sustaining the ministries under our roof. For that, I am deeply grateful.

When uncertainty sets in, it is tempting to carry the weight alone – to spin in circles to try to make everything perfect and fix every challenge single-handedly. But the truth is, no single person can do it all. We are a body of believers, a shared community.

To build a vibrant future, we must pool our collective wisdom, strength, and resources. Growth will not come from one person's efforts, but from all of us stepping forward, pitching in, and moving ahead together as one parish.

Senior Warden ~

Joe Tulacz



Grace Notes



Grace was in full bloom in the GrassRoots Garden on Saturday, August 15 as volunteers, staff, St. Thomas parishioners and interested citizens explored the garden paths, viewed demonstrations and were inspired by Garden experts. It was a celebratory thirty-fifth anniversary gathering to recognize the success of the GrassRoots Garden project, an outreach project of St. Thomas Church in collaboration with Food for Lane County. Countless community members who have been the recipients of the Garden bounty and an eclectic mix of attendees gathered to explore the Garden and share memories of their Garden experiences – Master Gardeners, Garden plot sponsors, Garden workers, recipients of Garden produce, Garden staff, and many who simply enjoy time in the Garden or any garden.



During the program Janet Calvert was introduced as the St. Thomas Church member who, along with Food for Lane County representatives and OSU Extension, conceived of the idea of a joint effort to put our vacant 2.6 acres to practical use for



the benefit of underserved and food insecure members of the community. Thanks to Janet's vision this practical alliance put the acreage into nonprofit status, and with Janet's association with OSU Extension, the Master Gardeners came on board to assist with the Garden design, bed

construction, crop selection, planting and maintenance instruction.

Merry Bradley, the education coordinator for the Garden, has provided an in depth history of the Garden in the past two Beacon editions and concluding in this edition. Merry led a wonderful program that allowed Garden participants throughout its history to share their experiences and special remembrances of GrassRoots. What the Garden has become during its thirty-five year history is truly grace magnified. The GrassRoots Garden is a blessing to so many – it enriches our community through its direct support to those who are food insecure; it beautifies the grounds of St. Thomas Church; it provides service opportunities to youth and adults; it is a classroom for gardeners and nature lovers; and it is a source of satisfaction for those who see the results of their physical efforts. The Garden is a sanctuary for any who till its soil, plant the seeds, weed and prune the beds, or harvest the produce. Whether one is engaged with a faith community, a practitioner of a particular discipline, or just a lover of gardening, the GrassRoots Garden is a space where grace notes can be heard in the hum of the bees, the breeze through the trees in the orchard, the gurgle of water in the swale, and the industry of all the Garden volunteers. It is a natural sanctuary in our St. Thomas backyard.



Left: Overview of the Garden and Merry Bradley introducing Janet Calvert; Above: Celebratory gathering in the Parish Hall



St. Thomas Book Group



The St. Thomas Ladies Book Group will enjoy the last lazy days of summer reading Between Earth and Sky by Amanda Skanondore. No doubt the discussion will be thoughtful and lively as these enthusiastic readers gather in the Parish Library on Thursday, September 24 at 1:30 pm to share their impressions of their latest read. Interested readers are always welcome.

Outreach

Our St. Thomas faith community was well-represented at the One Hope shoe sorting event on Tuesday, August 25 at Willamette Christian Center. This is the fourth year our parish has participated in this lively and organized event to assist with the provision of back to school needs for underserved youth in the community. An enthusiastic contingent of St. Thomas parishioners sorted shoes by size, then paired them for the runners to place in the rows for each shoe size – boys and girls size 1 through men and women's size 13. Needless to say, several of us got our steps in.



St Thomas volunteers included Anne VanDerveer, Lori Fisher, Eli Fisher, Lucy Fisher, Joe Konieczka, Susan Christensen, Dale Bixler, Mike Richardson, Lucy and Paul Barnett, Diane Landon, Adeline Hoover, Mark and Debbie Pezzoni, Linda Whitehead, Gloria Baker, Cindy Jensen and Tricia Crisafulli (who brought two neighbor friends).



Summer Music



As the choir enjoys a well-deserved summer break, individual members have stepped up to provide musical support during our services by singing the offertory, serving as cantor or lending their voices from the pews as they provide vocal support to the congregation. On Sunday, August 16 we were once again graced with the guitar and vocals from Jon Davies and his singing partner Bill MacDonald as they shared an especially uplifting song Jon had composed called “The Bright Side of Heaven.” Joining Jon and Bill with the service music were Joe Konieczka and Bree Jones. We are grateful to the choir members who, even during their summer hiatus, give of their time and talent to this musical ministry.



Young Musicians Program

The Sunday, August 23 service was enriched by the vocal talents of Tifa Moana (“Tifa”) Panapa who sang the prelude and offertory hymn. Tifa is a sophomore at Willamette High School. This editor recalls her wonderful performance in the recent Shedd production of *Brigadoon*,



her first Shedd theatrical production. Tifa is a member of the Youth Ensemble and appeared in her first high school musical last year – *Something Rotten Jr.* She has participated in five Harburg Academy Theater Camps at the Shedd and plans to continue participating in this program until she graduates high school. Tifa expressed her gratitude to Keri Davis and the St. Thomas faith community for giving her this chance to sing at a service. Most importantly she thanks God for allowing her to spread His love through music.

GrassRoots Garden

Part 3 of the 35th Anniversary History Teaching, Advocating, & Sustaining the Mission

Education has always been central to the GrassRoots mission, and Master Gardeners have been among its most dedicated teachers.



As the Garden’s primary educational force, Master Gardeners have led composting and pruning demonstrations, weed walks, herb walks, pollinator walks, compost tea workshops, and Seed to Supper classes. They have taught participants of all ages, from preschoolers to college students and community gardeners, using our “learn by doing, each one teach one” approach.

Their outreach extended to foster youth, court-adjudicated programs, and alternative education schools, including Looking Glass, Stepping Stones, Network Charter School, Northwest Youth Corps, and others. Through these efforts, Master Gardeners helped make the Garden a welcoming place where people of all ages and backgrounds can learn, grow, and contribute.

OSU Extension staff, Nellie Oehler, and Master Food Preservers also played a vital role. They helped establish the Garden’s outdoor kitchen and led cooking and food preservation classes. Participants learned how to prepare healthy garden lunches that everyone gathered to share each day, reinforcing the sense of community and belonging that makes GrassRoots unique.

Whenever questions arose about crop diseases,

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pests, or crop selection, Lane County Extension agents Ross Penhallegon and Erica Chernoh were there to provide guidance, consultation, and expertise. Their knowledge helped ensure that the Garden could continue to grow and adapt successfully.

Extension personnel and Master Gardeners also helped sustain the Garden during some of its most challenging moments. In 2000, GrassRoots Garden and the entire FOOD for Lane County Gardens Program faced elimination because of agency budget shortfalls. Ross Penhallegon and Master Gardener Karen Ailor appeared before the board month after month, helping advocate for the program and ultimately helping save both the Garden and the broader FFLC Gardens Program. When the Garden was challenged to raise \$80,000 in six months, Master Gardener Lynn Negus created the Adopt-a-Plot fundraiser. Master Gardeners also supported flower sales, Christmas tree sales, and the annual plant sale, helping sustain the program financially.

Many others contributed behind the scenes. Master Gardener Iris Sayre helped write newsletter articles, annual reports, thank-you letters, letters of recommendation, grant proposals and documented the Garden's history by writing its first ten-year history. Lynn Negus created detailed maps of the Garden. Both Iris and Lynn helped plan events. Mac Williams, husband of a Master Gardener developed and maintained the first computer program used to track volunteer participation and annual crop production.

To the many Master Gardeners, Master Food Preservers, and Extension staff who have contributed from the Garden's earliest days to today, we offer our heartfelt thanks. Through your knowledge, generosity, and dedication, you have helped nourish our community, educate thousands of gardeners, and build a place where people can learn, grow, and belong.

Shared Services Continue

In keeping with our 2025-26 practice of sharing the fifth Sunday worship service with St. John's and St. Matthew's, fellow Eugene/Springfield area

churches in transition, eighteen St. Thomas parishioners celebrated the August 30 Sunday service at St. Matthew's. It was an uplifting service with the pews filled with members of the three faith communities. We were graciously welcomed by St. Matthew's Senior Warden Linda Appling. A hearty barbeque and good fellowship followed the service.

It is especially notable that these three churches make a considerable contribution to our greater community. St. Matthew's hosts a community garden, three shelters for women who they guide towards rehabilitation, an after school program, and a food pantry. St. John's also hosts shelters for three onsite residents, a food pantry, and a weekly meal for food insecure community members. When considering these efforts along with the outreach of St. Thomas, the impact of our combined community service efforts is significant. The dedicated shared support of the vitality of our three parishes not only strengthens our individual churches but continues to provide essential services to Eugene/Springfield.



St. Matthew's altar and the Community Garden at St. Matthew's

Reflections

The words from the song Jon Davies shared early in August is offered as the *Reflection* for this edition. Thank you Jon for sharing your words of wisdom and heartfelt vocals with our St. Thomas faith community.



Bright Side of Heaven

By Jon Davies & Bill MacDonald

Verse 1

I never thought I'd amount to much
At least that's what I was told
Never thought I'd live so long
To worry about growing old
But here I am at sixty-seven
So rich in love on the bright side of heaven

Verse 2

Always tried to swim upstream
but a salmon I am not!
When my parents said son you will
I'd say I will not
But learning when to stand or kneel
A priceless lesson
Finding my way to the bright side of heaven.

Bridge:

Sitting on the riverbank
Watching the river flow,
Learning when to hold on
Or when to let go

Verse 3

Never thought I'd find a love
That makes me feel the way you do,
Never thought I'd find one person
To whom I could be true

But then I met you
With love I trusted in
Now we're living
On the bright side of heaven.

Verse 4

I like to think my success
Is all because of me
Sometimes I wonder
What it would be like to be free
But then I realize
All I have and do
Lord, it's because of you
On the bright side of heaven
Bright side of heaven
Bright side of heaven
Bright side of heaven

September Birthdays



2	Lucy Duer
12	Linda Whitehead Charlotte Heltman
17	Harlen Rohde
29	Gail Morgan
30	Tilda Rohde

September Anniversaries



7	Joe and Anne Konieczka
15	Mark and Debbie Pezzoni