

The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

November 2026 **Volume 27 Issue 10**

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- Susan Christsensen, Jr. Warden
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- Nancy Osborne
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From the Senior Warden

To the faithful people of St. Thomas,

As the autumn air settles in and the holidays approach, it is a wonderful time to reflect on the life and growth of our parish community. This season brings a deep sense of reflection, celebration, and joy, along with several exciting updates across our campus.

As we look toward the end of our current liturgical season, we think of preparation. Advent begins on November 29, 2026, marking the start of a brand-new church year and inviting us into a time of quiet meditation. Amidst our holiday preparations, our Rector Search Committee continues its dedicated and faithful work. Please keep our committee members in your ongoing prayers as they prayerfully review profiles and discern the next chapter of leadership for our parish.

At the same time, our annual stewardship campaign is underway, and we warmly invite every member of our parish family to consider your financial commitment for the coming year. The ministries, outreach, and beautiful worship we share each week are sustained entirely by your generosity, ensuring our parish remains a beacon in the wider community.

We also have been blessed to welcome several new faces and families to our Sunday services recently! If you see someone new in the pews and during coffee hour, please introduce yourself and help them feel right at home – a strong, vibrant community is built one welcoming handshake at a time. Alongside these new connections, our campus continues to be a hub of lively activity. Whether through fellowship, outreach, or gathering together outside of Sunday worship, there are many wonderful ways to get involved.

Thank you all for your continued dedication and prayers for this community.

Senior Warden,

Joe Tulacz

Search Committee News

We're Back at Work!

After several months of waiting, we now know that our job is finding the best half time rector for St. Thomas.

At the direction of the Vestry, our formal search for our new rector will begin January 1, 2027. Why then? Because we are fortunate to have Nathan LeRud, our priest-in-charge, through May of 2027. We feel that this timeline gives us the ability to get our search fully under way.

We're spending the next two months refining our search strategy and thinking of creative ways to make our effort more widely known than usual. One Search Committee member has already come up with a creative idea!

During the next several months and, if necessary, beyond, we ask for your continued patience, prayers and support. And please remember- Our timeline is not necessarily God's timeline.

Duncan Murray, Chair

Outreach

On Sunday, October 18 the Outreach Committee treated the parish to a delicious lunch lovingly prepared by all the excellent cooks serving this committee. Forty congregants and visitors sat down to enjoy the generous fare and contributions to the Outreach ministries were collected. Those who could not stay to dine were able to pick up *take out*.

The Outreach Committee is looking ahead to the annual packing of Thanksgiving boxes for One Hope. The event is scheduled for November 22. Location and time to be announced.
Outreach members are also busy shopping for the sweat suits given to children enrolled in the Head Start program at St. Thomas. This annual gifting to support our Head Start ministry companion will culminate in the post service bagging of the holiday gifts in early December.

As is an annual tradition, St. Thomas parishioners are encouraged to contribute new hats, underwear, gloves and socks to the St. John's H.U.G.S. holiday offering to support the regular visitors to their food pantry. There is a bin in the Narthex for contributions.

In-gathering at St. Thomas

Sunday, November 1 is *All Saints Day*, and as is our tradition at St. Thomas, it is the Sunday on which we present our annual pledge to support the mission and operations of our church home. The theme this year reflects the loving devotion of our St. Thomas faith community – *Expanding Our Compassionate Community*. The focus is not only on giving as we are able to support the operations of St. Thomas Church. Equally important is the emphasis on giving of your time and talents to contribute to the lay leadership responsibilities of the church and to engage in our faith community by sharing our talents and special interests. For those unable to attend on November 1, pledge cards can be mailed or dropped off at the church office.

Fall Back

Be sure to set your clocks back before you go to bed on October 31 – All Hallows Eve – and enjoy an additional hour of sleep. Then arrive rested and refreshed Nov. 1 for our In-gathering service at St. Thomas.



St. Thomas Book Group



As the sunflowers fade with the end of their bloom season, the Ladies Book Group will celebrate those bright blooms that grace our gardens when they meet on November 19 to share their impressions of the November book selection, The Secret Life of Sunflowers by Marta Molnar. This will be an especially busy session when the ladies meet in the Parish Library at 1:30 pm. In addition to the book review, the lively discussion will include suggestions for books to read in 2027. Book group regulars will not want to miss the opportunity to suggest their reading choices for next year. And, as always, interested readers are welcome to drop in and experience the love of books with these avid readers.

Grace Notes



The life of our St. Thomas faith community is infused with *grace*. Everything that goes on at St. Thomas depends upon our network of ordained and lay leadership. We are grateful for the especially thoughtful and enthusiastic attention to worship and pastoral care provided by our interim rector Nathan LeRud and our Deacon Mike Watkins. Parish Administrator JB Hoover is the face of church operations with his cordial and thoughtful attention to the office duties and schedule of parish facility use. Our lay leadership structure covers every aspect of church operations from funding to maintenance to use agreements.

We may be a small parish, but we are an engaged parish! It seems that every St. Thomas parishioner, no matter one's age or physical abilities, is involved in some way with making our church the community of caring worshipers that it is. And to function as well as we do, we are all mindful that there is a process to getting issues addressed, accomplishing tasks and achieving goals. At the top of the action pyramid is the Vestry, capably led by Senior Warden Joe Tulacz. The Vestry is tasked with approving all actions and expenditures. Pivotal to those decisions are the considerations of Treasurer Anne VanDerveer, the Finance Committee and even the assigned plate counters. In the chain of review and requests for Vestry consideration of maintenance and facility use are the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Facilities Oversight Committee.

Our Worship services are enhanced by the dedication of our Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors, which require scheduling for their services, all capably managed by Holly Spruance. When one arrives at St. Thomas for Sunday services, our loyal team of Ushers, led by Duncan and Saundra Murray, graciously greet worshipers, distribute bulletins, and maintain a count of attendees. Enhancing our worship services are the talented contributions of our music director, Keri Davis, the choir, the visiting Young Musicians. The thoughtful attention to service details are the responsibility of the Altar Guild led by Linda Whitehead. And we must always be prepared for any "littles" that grace our services, and Brea Jones manages the nursery to accommodate our youngest worshipers. It seems that everyone in the parish takes a turn at hosting our Sunday coffee hour *events,* but those enthusiastic gatherings could not happen without the dedication of our Kitchen Queens, led by Adeline Hoover.

Communications are key to making sure all that goes on at St. Thomas is reported, shared and celebrated. This editor has the fun task of producing the *Beacon,* but there are important players in the chain who quietly do the work of managing the website and streaming services – Maggie Meneghin, Joe Konieczka and John Banks. At this time our Search Committee, led by Duncan Murray, is especially important as the spirit, dedication and community presence of St. Thomas is broadcast throughout the Diocese and beyond.

There is certainly grace to be celebrated and grace to uplift and carry our St. Thomas community forward. While some are specifically mentioned in this article, all are engaged as worshipers, doers, and contributors. Please take a moment to view the bulletin boards in the Parish Hall and sign your name where ever you are involved. God's *grace* is present at St. Thomas.

Expanding our Compassionate Community

The theme of our Stewardship efforts will continue beyond the traditional season of monetary pledging. Your Vestry and Stewardship chairs – Nancy Osborne and Anne VanDerveer – have determined that our engagement with each other is every bit as important to our faith community as our financial support. Check out the bulletin boards in the Parish Hall to get an idea of all that we have going on at St. Thomas in the way of ordained and lay leadership supported by a comprehensive committee structure to offer worship, pastoral care and church operations. Over the years dedicated groups have formed to offer Bible study and book sharing, and now more groups are emerging.

- The Crafting Together group organized by Susan Christensen meets on appointed Saturdays from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm when an event has not reserved the Parish Hall. Participants bring their card making, needle point, bead making, scrapbooking, knitting, and quilting projects to work on and share. Ten crafters – church members and non-members – have already enjoyed this crafting opportunity. Future crafting dates are Nov. 7 & 14 and Dec. 12 & 19.
- The Women's Bible study group organized by Nancy Osborne will now meet on Tuesday mornings from 10:30 – 11:30 am in the Library or Parish Hall depending on availability.
- There are the regularly scheduled Outreach hands-on activities orchestrated by the Outreach committee. See the Outreach [illegible] ivities.

As we consider lay leadership at St. Thomas, the Creation Care Team is looking for another member.

- [illegible] gnificant interest in a [illegible]. John Banks is [illegible] n initial hiking event [illegible] November. At that time day and time preferences along with skill level expectations and interested locations will be considered.
- There is interest in forming a Welcome group to match current parishioners with newly attending individuals and families.
- Good cooks, of which we have many in the parish, are always looking for new recipes, culinary techniques, and the opportunity to share good food together. There is interest in forming a cooking group.

To bring these wonderful engagement ideas to fruition, a group leader is needed. Perhaps one of these ideas is calling you, so let Nancy and Anne know of your interest. Be sure to note on your pledge forms the engagement groups you are participating in or are interested in joining. Let's add to our faith-filled connections.

The 2026 Annual Meeting of the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon



We are especially thankful for the time and commitment provided by Rev. Nathan, Deacon Mike and delegates Michael Richardson and Nancy Osborne who gave up the weekend of October 23 and 24 to represent St. Thomas at the annual convention of the Diocese of Oregon. The theme of convention was The Church in Transition. It was reported that attendance for churches in the Diocese is actually increasing a half percent a year due to the influx of Spanish speaking congregants. There are nine Spanish speaking congregations in Oregon. Of particular note is the parish in Hillsborough which has combined its two separate congregations into one faith community with both Spanish and English services.

Creation Care Team



With the departure of Rev. Ann Gaillard, the team now consists of JB Hoover and Gary and Cindy Jensen. If this is a lay leadership opportunity that speaks to you, please contact JB or Cindy Jensen and let them know of your interest. Currently, the Creation Care team facilitates the recycling of paper, cans and bottles and negotiates the collection

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of electronics for delivery to Next Step. The team was instrumental in securing an electrical refit to accommodate the installation of new electrical stoves and ovens for the parish kitchen. We are especially mindful of the charge from the Diocese for every parish to be carbon neutral by 2030. This is a tall order, but St. Thomas will continue to make a realistic effort to reduce our carbon footprint.

GrassRoots Garden

From a broader perspective, a farm is just a managed ecosystem. Most large-scale industrial farming simplifies the ecosystem into two elements: the plant crop, and the consumer (humans or livestock). Since plants did not evolve to grow in isolation from other life forms, if you focus on trying to isolate those two pieces, you have to step in to take on all roles in a healthy, more complex ecosystem: you have to add fertilizer to feed your plants, and pesticides and fungicides to rid yourselves of the pests and diseases that are also interested in feeding off your crops. The problem with this isolation approach is that it takes a lot of energy and resources to maintain your simplified ecosystem.

An alternative way of farming involves managing a complex ecosystem that encourages a greater diversity of organisms to combat pests with fewer inputs. GrassRoots Garden's swale and hedgerow plantings are specifically designed to increase our critter biodiversity by providing them undisturbed habitat refuges. There are myriad benefits of having a diverse array of critters living on site:

- Garter snakes eat slugs! Need I say more?
- Chickadees and Western Bluebirds eat thousands of caterpillars when feeding their chicks in the spring- including destructive cabbage moth caterpillars
- Yellow jackets and wasps diligently scour our nursery all summer, pulling off caterpillars from our fall and winter brassica starts
- Native bees and flies provide pollination all growing season long, even when the weather is too cold and wet for honeybees
- Ladybugs and their larvae as well as hoverfly larvae eat loads of aphids



By embracing a complex ecosystem and creating habitat to sustain it, we spend less time, energy and money managing pests, and provide valuable, needed habitat for critters, especially migrating species of insects and birds. Good land stewardship and good agricultural practice go hand in hand, and we invite you to come see it in action!
We will be planting the final stretch of the swale at GrassRoots on November 14th from 10am until noon- and we would love to have you join us! Here's the link to register: https://mobilize.us/s/WLceUj



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"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 fundraiser lets you select and sponsor a 40-foot vegetable bed from over 100 producing beds, honoring a friend, relative or associate with a gift that grows throughout the 2027 gardening year. Visit the Garden to choose a bed from sections named for beneficial insects, such as Ladybird Beetle, Dragonfly or Damselfly.

Apple, Pear, Asian Pear, Cherry and Plum trees also make great gifts, heralding Spring with blossoms and Fall with lovely fruit. Choose a specific tree from over 100 orchard trees and, if you wish, create your own garden tag or marker to accompany your gift. Each bed, tree or compost bin can be sponsored for a one-year fee of $50, while the kiwi arbor, berry patches, greenhouses and other structures and gardens are available for adoption in 2027 for $250 to $1000 each. Donors of $50 or more receive name placement on our Donor Recognition Wall. We can email you an Adopt-a-Plot brochure and donation form. Please contact Jen Anonia at jen@foodforlanecounty.org.

November Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 9:00 a.m.– 4:00 p.m. 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.

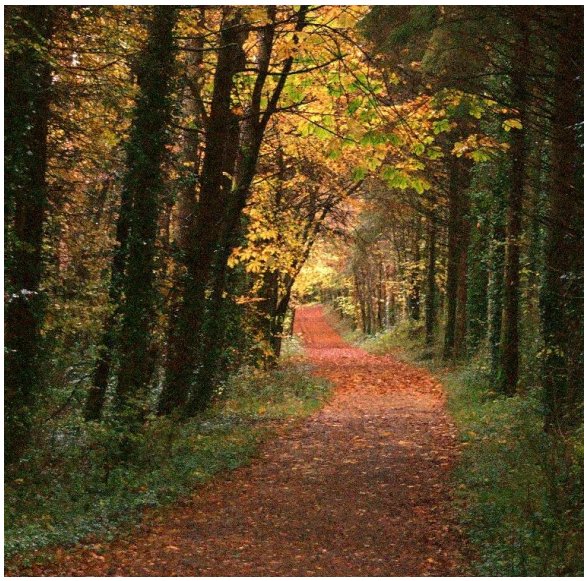


A New Baby!

A new baby has joined our faith community and we rejoice in the safe arrival of Llewelyn Edward Jones born to Maggie Meneghin and Cole Jones on October 14. Mother and baby are doing well. We all look forward to meeting this precious addition to the Jones family when big brothers William and VO accompany him to church.



Reflections



Teach your children well…just look at them and sigh and know they love you.

The strains of this 60's anthem by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young often echoed in my mind during the years we raised our children, nurtured our

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grands, or worked with youth in the Camp Fire program or in Sunday School. The full lyrics are actually cautionary but so impactful. As we teach children, whether related to us or not, we have the privilege of guiding them in a positive direction. And the greatest lesson is what we learn from them from the bright eyed innocence of young ones to the sometimes jaded challenges of teens.

It has been three years since we have had a regular Sunday School program at St. Thomas. We all know what a painful decision that was to disband such an important ministry. But young children have been occasionally attending St. Thomas with their families. To encourage the attendance of these young families a once-a-month Sunday School class has been offered. I dusted off my Sunday School files to do what I enjoy doing – teaching children while learning from them.

For the first session five children ages four to seven joined me, and a second class of three children occurred on October 18. For now the classes are held in the nursery room where Brea Jones is on hand as the nursery attendant while this teacher leads the lesson. Students Maeve, Declan, Juniper and sometimes Eli, Lucy, Atlas and Hazel are a delight. Those children who have attended this revived Sunday School have been given a notebook filled with age appropriate activity pages focused on our church service practices. The lessons are interactive engaging the children in Bible stories that teach us about how to practice our Christian faith. The children can bring their notebooks to church and do the quiet activities in the pew with their parents on those Sundays when a class is not scheduled.

A highlight of the service on Sunday, October 18 occurred when Rev. Nathan brought the children forward to the altar for a better view of the Great Thanksgiving and then allowed the children to present the host for all to share. That is what this former teacher calls experiential learning, but for all who witnessed this it was truly an example of *teaching our children well.*

Matthew 19:14
Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

November Celebrations



November Birthdays

11	Diane Landon
13	Saundra Murray
21	Cindy Jensen
27	Keri Davis

