



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church



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

October 2026

Volume 27 Issue 9

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Vestry:

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

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Rev. Nathan LeRud

Deacon – Mike Watkins

Parish Administrator –

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Senior Warden's Message

With the change of seasons, it's a time for reflection. As we look around St. Thomas, we can see all the good things that are happening. There's a renewed energy in our congregation. Our Interim Priest Nathan has certainly helped generate a lot of that spirit. (Thank you, Rev. Nathan—we appreciate you!). That positive energy is also coming from lay leaders and so many volunteers who are stepping up in meaningful ways every week.

Our model is clearly working! For that reason, **the Vestry has decided that we will call a half-time Rector.** Importantly, our work with Nathan has assured us that a half-time rector is exactly what we need to ensure that our weekly services and pastoral care receive the attention they require. This clarity helps us “right size” the requisition our Search Committee will be putting out in the months ahead. By calling a half-time priest, however, we will also require the continued commitment on behalf of lay leadership and the congregation to help run the church.

As we move forward, we continue to have confidence that we will attract and find the right candidate. Personally, I am encouraged about our path forward.

St. Thomas is currently in a phase of growth. New faces in the pews. New members joining the congregation, the choir, our committees. How big or small that growth becomes depends on many factors. But here's what we can be confident about: the dedication and spirit that we bring to church each week and that we share with the community through the good works we do.

As our Mission Statement reminds us, we come together to *give thanks and praise to God and share God's love*. What turns those words into action is our active engagement—nurturing, feeding, worshipping and healing.

Let's keep that mission in mind as we welcome newcomers with open arms and a spirit of community. And let's make sure we shape that experience for each other. This is what it means to be St. Thomas: growing together, in motion and moving forward.

Faithfully,

Joe Tulacz

Bishop's Visit

On September 13 Bishop Akiyama presided over the Holy Communion Service at St. Thomas during which she shared an inspiring sermon on the grace of forgiveness. It was an uplifting service during which all present renewed our Baptismal vows. Following the service the Bishop joined St. Thomas worshipers in the Parish Hall at which time we were able to show off our usual lively post service gathering with an array of delectables. Many thanks to the Bishop's husband for providing the memorable photos.



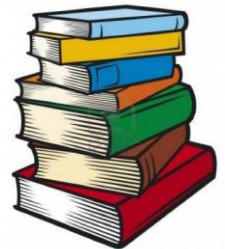
Endowment

The Endowment Board met on September 5 at which time Cole Jones formally accepted the position of Treasurer. The board was instructed to review the Enabling Resolution of the St. Thomas Endowment Fund and to prepare questions and comments for the October board meeting. There is need for clarity regarding the authority for allocation of funds. The committee is requesting a meeting with the Oregon Community Foundation representative. The July 2026 statement from OCF shows a balance of \$318,740.29 in our St. Thomas Endowment Fund.



St. Thomas Book Group

Ladies who are passionate about reading and quilting, this is the St. Thomas Book Group gathering especially meant for you. But even if one is not a quilter, as a reader one can appreciate the process of quilting as it relates to American life. While quilting may seem to be a singular effort, historically it was a communal experience and the history of America is reflected in this uniquely American fabric art. The Book Group selection for October is How to Make an American Quilt by Whitney Otto. Whether a novel or an historical retrospective, this selection will surely generate some thoughtful discussion as the Book Group gathers in the Parish Library at 1:30 pm on October 22.



Grace Notes



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.*

At St. Thomas we employ Bree Jones as our nursery care provider and several parishioners take turns serving as the requisite assistant. Bree along with these gracious volunteers – Judy Wilson, Linda

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Whitehead, Tricia Crisafulli, and Anne VanDerveer – are a true blessing. Several years ago due to a lack of Sunday School age youth, St. Thomas made the decision to eliminate our Sunday School program. But now those nursery school age youth are ready for a more formal Sunday School lesson.

We have enjoyed the attendance of some new families with young children. While the presence of these youth is sporadic, a plan has been devised to offer a once-a-month Sunday School class in the nursery room. A schedule has been set with the parents through the end of the year, and Cindy Jensen is preparing and teaching the class. The first session was on Sunday, September 20, and five children were present, four participating in the lesson and activity and one enjoying the attention of Bree and Judy. Future sessions will occur on October 18 and November 22 with the annual pageant to occur on December 20.

This is a positive start, but what is needed is an additional volunteer each Sunday to mind the “littles” and/or assist with the lesson. No prep work is required; just a willingness to assist and engage with the youth until we are called into church at the time of the peace. A binder of activities has been prepared for each child, so when they attend church on a Sunday when the class is not in session, they have lesson related activities to do quietly in the pew. We pray for the growth of this program and ask that parishioners consider supporting the effort as they are able.

Outreach

The Outreach Committee gratefully received a donation of \$1,000 from a member of the congregation, bringing their unspent/uncommitted total to \$2,000.

Committee members Debbie Pezzoni, Sue Colvin and Tricia Crisafulli represented St. Thomas at the Bushnell Church Fair. Following a chapel service at Bushnell, Debbie, Sue and Tricia joined Rev. Ryan Baker-Fones at the St. Mary’s table to talk with students and give out snack treats and parish information. Student ministry representatives from

the Eugene/Springfield area presented a lively format of interactive games and giveaways. The Outreach Committee determined that if St. Thomas is to participate in this event in the future, planning should begin earlier to increase our visibility at the fair.



The Outreach Committee is planning their annual Harvest Brunch fundraiser for October 18 following the service. The menu promises the usual delicious fare, and the fellowship is always fun and engaging. Mark your calendars.

The committee received a request for support from St. Matthew’s for their transitional housing program. Outreach approved a contribution of \$500 to the Community Garden Cottages Project at St. Matthew’s. Those who attended the shared service on August 30 were able to view the cottages.

Stewardship

Stewardship is a churchy word we tend to hear this time of year, as fall activities kick off and those of us who live near agricultural communities experience the harvest being gathered in. It’s a word that describes how we care for the communities and places that matter most to us. Some of you have been stewards of St. Thomas – caretakers, supporters, leaders – for many years; others of us have arrived more recently (I’ve only been around since May!). Whenever we arrived, however we got here, this harvest season invites each of us to consider how we want to show up for St. Thomas in the year ahead, through both our financial gifts and our involvement in the community’s life.

This year, St. Thomas’ vestry (our elected leadership) has chosen the theme “Expanding Our Compassionate Community.” Thanks to the



dedicated work of our financial leaders, St. Thomas' finances are in good shape, so we're each invited to think not only about the money we give, but also about how we invest our time. You'll hear more about new ways to get involved in the weeks to come.

For now, I invite you to think back to the first time you set foot inside that little round church on Coburg Road. For some of us, that was so long ago we may not remember it; for others, it was just a few weeks ago. Something drew each of us through those doors, up to the altar rail, and down the hall to coffee hour – and something keeps drawing us back, week after week, to meet new people and greet old friends. Our community isn't just the building that houses it. It's the relationships we build here that give each of us a sense of belonging.

In the coming weeks, watch your mailbox for a letter from this year's Stewardship Committee with more details and an invitation to make a commitment for the year ahead. Then, on All Saints' Sunday, November 1st, bring your completed pledge card to church for our ingathering and celebration, as we give thanks for all the saints, past and present, who have made St. Thomas their home. We give thanks for their legacy as we expand our compassionate community with new ways to get involved, building relationships that will matter more and more in the months and years to come.

Rev. Natan LeRud

Center for Community Counseling

The Center for Community Counseling was recently featured in a KLCC interview with Clinical Director Nasim Talebreza-May in which Nasim shared information about the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group offered at the CCC. This unique group offers a caring community to address the challenges faced by grandparents who unexpectedly step back into full-time parenting. At the CCC they have a place to share their experiences and to receive practical support. This is just one more example of the outreach of our Companions in Ministry.

GrassRoots Garden

On August 15th, we celebrated GrassRoots Garden's **35th anniversary** with about 250 to 300 people attending. It was an extremely sweet, lovely, and memorable event. Though there were lots of people,

there was enough structure, so it never felt chaotic or overwhelming. Instead, the day felt calm, enjoyable, and peaceful.

Through guided Garden tours, people were taken around the Garden to areas of interest and educational activities while learning about some of GrassRoots Garden's history and purpose. Educational stations offered information about composting, compost tea, culinary herbs and edible flowers, weeds, native plants and pollinator gardens.

Under the Grape Arbor, people could add their handprints to make blooms as we painted a GrassRoots banner together and color GrassRoots Garden coloring pages. At another location, Caleb Daniels, a Boy Scout, talked about constructing a new Seed Shack as his Eagle Scout Project. Visitors also learned to make and play zucchini whistles—one of the important things in life!

With the bean tunnel as a backdrop, a portrait photographer took people's pictures and recorded their answers to three questions: **When were you involved at the Garden? What does the Garden mean to you? What difference did the Garden make to your life?** At the photo wall, participants could see themselves and their friends in the Garden, both in the past and present. Throughout the morning and into the afternoon, there was live music in the Garden. Paul Hudson played acoustic guitar, followed by a wind trio of flute, oboe and clarinet.

We also took care of people's food needs! We fired the cob oven and served roasted vegetables, tomato bisque with garlic bread, curry hummus and caramelized onion hummus with fresh veggie sticks. For dessert there were ripe melons, carrot



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cake with buttercream icing, and chocolate zucchini cake with raspberry cream. This yummy food of the Garden was served by people carrying trays and bringing food to everyone a bite at a time throughout the morning and afternoon. Cucumber lemon water stations kept everyone hydrated.

At 1 o'clock, we gathered inside the Church for a ceremony, with a photo show playing in the background. It was an opportunity to honor, acknowledge and thank St. Thomas parishioners, FFLC and Master Gardeners, long-time and current participants, and particularly those who initiated the Garden. Attendees enjoyed sharing how the Garden was started, remembering the early years, and reflecting on what the Garden meant to them and the impact it had on their lives.

As people mingled and connected after the ceremony, there was more live music. Kit played autoharp and sang original GrassRoots Garden songs. Gabriel played his violin, and Nikki finished the afternoon with more acoustic folk music.

Overall, the day was a wonderful opportunity for people from the past to reconnect and have time together while seeing what had become of the Garden, while giving more current people the chance to meet those from the past and learn a bit of the Garden's history.

Quality canvas **GrassRoots Garden 35th Anniversary commemorative tote bags** were available for \$17. If you missed the celebration, we still have tote bags available to purchase online here: <https://grownby.com/farms/food-for-lane-county-youth-farm/shop/product/o3Lc0HY7THwmFmERBjy8?goBack=farmshop> and pick up at the Garden.

Thanks to all who attended and to everyone who helped put it on and make it possible. It was a very special and remarkable day!

October Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Wednesday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

For information contact Merry Bradley at 458-221-0652 or merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org.



The flip side of the GrassRoots tote bag denotes the Food for Lane County sponsorship of the Garden.

News of Chris King

Rev. Ann Gaillard has been in touch with Chris King – former Vestry member and organist at St. Thomas – and shares the following update.

You will be pleased to hear the latest on our beloved former organist, Chris King, who (alas) had to leave us last April. Chris is happily ensconced in a lovely apartment in Spokane, WA; fortunately, he was not affected by the Spokane area fires this past summer.

Particularly exciting is the news about Chris's new job as organist at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Spokane! One Sunday last summer Chris decided to attend worship at the cathedral. As he was leaving at the end of the service he greeted the Dean of the cathedral and happened to mention that he had been organist here at St. Thomas. The Dean looked at him disbelievably, told him to come with her, and then introduced him to the Music Director. It turned out that they were looking for a new organist, and not long afterwards Chris was hired for the position.

Because the music program at the Cathedral is so extensive, Chris is one of two organists so he is able to share the load with someone else. Chris very much likes his organist colleague, the Music Director, the Dean, and the Bishop of the diocese.

Although we all miss Chris, we can celebrate his good fortune and his happiness in his new circumstances.



Reflections



Autumn may be the last season of the year, but in so many ways it is a time of beginnings. While nature may put on her most glorious coat of colors as the year draws to a close, there are new beginnings in every aspect of life. This is the time of year when farmers turn over their fields to prepare them for spring planting. Gardeners clean out the garden beds, plant bulbs for spring blooms, and mulch the beds to improve the soil. Outdoor furniture is cleaned off and stored away in garages that are swept clean of the summer dust. Businesses are promoting new fashions and Christmas merchandise. And most apparent is the beginning of a new school year as children return to the classroom and college campuses welcome a cadre new and returning students.

As dedicated members of a faith community, the annual stewardship campaign marks the beginning of another year of commitment to the support of our parish home. All new beginnings are an opportunity for thoughtful assessment, commitment and a promise of hope – hope for a successful school year, for a sound parish budget, for the bright blooms of spring, for a bountiful crop in the fields. It all begins with faith – faith that is inspired by the grace of God that enables us to be our best selves as students, gardeners, farmers, professionals, community members, and yes, as dedicated members of our faith community.

A clean slate, a fresh start, a hopeful outlook – this is the excitement generated during this time of year. It is a season that closes out the year in glorious color while providing the promise of renewal in our personal lives and for our St. Thomas faith community.

October Celebrations

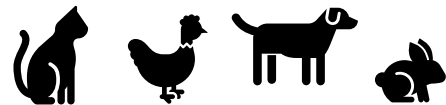


October 6 Katrina Jensen & Russ Duer

Celebrate Creation with the Blessing of the Animals



*Bring your beloved critters
(leashed or caged, please) to
St. Thomas Church for a
blessing to commemorate the
Feast of St. Francis.*



*Cats, dogs, snakes, elephants,
parakeets, alligators, emus, lizards,
plush toys, and animals of all stripes
and colors are welcome at a special
service of blessing and prayers
especially for them.*

**Sunday, October 4
11:00 a.m.**

**St. Thomas Episcopal Church
1465 Coburg Road, Eugene
www.st-thomaseugene.net
541-343-5241**