



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

March 2023

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From the Rector's Desk

One of the great joys in being an Episcopal priest in the Eugene-Springfield area is having a wonderful group of clergy colleagues nearby. Nearly once a month, the clergy from St. Thomas, St. Mary's, St. Matthew's, Church of the Resurrection, and St. John the Divine meet together for coffee downtown and share stories and laughter, talk about the rewards and challenges of parish ministry, and provide compassion and support when one of us is going through a tough time personally or professionally. Our group consists of retired and active deacons and priests as well as the (retired) bishop Neff Powell. It's a marvelous bunch, and I feel so blessed to have them in my life.

In addition, just a few months ago the rectors of the five parishes began meeting regularly to talk specifically about worship planning, outreach projects, financial questions, Christian education ideas, and other topics of particular importance to rectors. At our most recent gathering in early February, we decided to share our Ash Wednesday service times with each other so that St. Mary's (their rector volunteered!) could put together a flyer with all the church's service times to give to our congregations—the idea being that if some parishioners could not attend a service at their own parish, they could attend a service at a different time at another parish. Those of you who were in church the Sunday before Ash Wednesday received the flyer in your bulletin. The rectors now plan to create another flyer for Holy Week and Easter services. Furthermore, the rectors of St. Thomas, St. Matthew's, and St. John's will take part in the Easter Vigil service at St. Mary's on the night before Easter Day. Of these four parishes, only St. Mary's has the human resources to do an Easter Vigil, which along with Palm Sunday is the most complex service of the year. Needless to say, parishioners from all area churches are warmly invited to attend the Vigil. But don't worry! St. Thomas will also have our usual beautiful and joyful Easter Day service!

I foresee more and more collaboration among the area Episcopal churches. As you know, St. Thomas is already collaborating in outreach with St. John's by giving food donations to their food pantry and bringing our refundable empty cans and bottles for them to take to a bottle drop and use the refunds for the food pantry and shelter ministry that they host on their campus. And for several years St. Thomas has provided blankets, sheets, towels, and other items to the Church of the Resurrection for their Home Starter kits. In terms

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of Christian Education, our Deacon Mike and his wife Lauri, who is the deacon at Resurrection, teach a weekly EfM class at St. Thomas which is attended by parishioners from several of the area churches, including our own.

In the coming years, I believe that there will be additional opportunities for collaboration. In fact, I believe that collaboration, particularly among small-to-medium sized parishes like ours, is the wave of the future. Although collaboration with non-Episcopal faith communities is certainly possible and desirable, for now it is a huge blessing to have so many Episcopal churches in our area with which we can share worship services and engage in mutual projects.

So stay tuned for the next flyer listing all the Holy Week and Easter services at our five Episcopal churches!

Peace and many blessings,

A Lenten Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus,

Tomorrow the Lenten season begins. It is a time to be with you in a special way, a time to pray, to fast, and thus to follow you on your way to Jerusalem, to Golgotha, and to the final victory over death.

I am still so divided. I truly want to follow you, but I also want to follow my own desires and lend an ear to the voices that speak about prestige, success, human respect, pleasure, power, and influence. Help me to become deaf to those voices and more attentive to your voice, which calls me to choose the narrow road to life.

I know that Lent is going to be a very hard time for me. The choice for your way has to be made every moment of my life. I have to choose thoughts that are your thoughts, words that are your words, and actions that are your actions. There are no times or places without choices. And I know how deeply I resist choosing you.

Please, Lord, be with me at every moment and in every place. Give me the strength and the courage to live this season faithfully, so that, when Easter comes, I will be able to taste with joy the new life which you have prepared for me. Amen.
--Henri Nouwen in *The Road to Daybreak* (N.Y.: Image, 1990)

Endowment News

2022 – A Difficult Year

The results for 2022 are in – and they’re not what we would have liked.



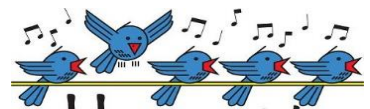
At year end 2021 our Endowment Fund’s total balance was \$275,722.52. Fast forward one year to December 31, 2022, and it was reduced to \$225,078.30. That’s a loss of \$50,644.22, or 18.4%.

What will 2023 bring? I heard one economist advise: “On the one hand we may have a recession. On the other hand, maybe not.” He made me want to find what President Harry Truman wished for – “A one handed economist.”

So let’s all agree that nobody knows what this year will bring. What we do know is that our Endowment Fund is professionally managed by Oregon Community Foundation and holds a diversified portfolio that has earned and deserves our confidence.

Duncan Murray, Chair

Grace Notes



In 2021 the Endowment Fund gifted our faith community with a chorus of grace notes with the Young Musicians Program. Grace has a way of magnifying into a beautiful chorus of grace notes as exemplified with the anonymous gift of a parishioner to continue the performances of young musicians at scheduled services throughout the year. We give thanks for this special gift of music lifted up in praise by young voices from the Eugene/Springfield community. This gracious gift not only inspires our worship services, but also benefits the young musicians who share their

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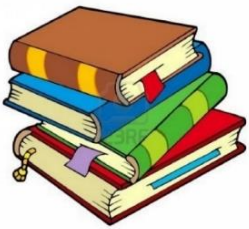
musical talents with us while earning some financial remuneration and gaining performance opportunities.

At the February 26 service Owen Colley performed during the prelude and offertory. Owen is a Senior at Thurston High School. Last December he appeared in *The Sound of Music* at the Shedd Institute for the Arts, his 23rd theatrical production. Owen was part of the male ensemble



and also played the role of Admiral Von Schreiber. He has been acting for seven years at a number of different theatres. He believes he owes everything to his past directors at Rose Children's Theatre, Thurston Theatre, his family who have supported his every step, and his friends who have pushed him further and further into the wonderful theatrical world.

St. Thomas Book Group



The ever-reliable Book Group is scheduled for their monthly meeting on Thursday, March 23 at 1:30 pm gathering in the Parish Library. The March reading selection is Breakthrough

by Michael Grumley. Interested readers are welcome to join this lively group who enjoy sharing their perceptions of the many and varied books in their catalogue of selected books.



Following the February 19 service the parish celebrated Mardi Gras hosted by the choir. All the traditional Mardi Gras paraphernalia was present to enhance the festivities – beads, masks, gold covered chocolate coins and, of course, King cake. During the service the children decorated *Alleluia* banners, and these were buried on the edge of the playground where they will be dug up on Easter Sunday when we can once again proclaim our *Alleluias*. Rev. Ann burned the palm crosses reserved from our last Palm Sunday. Thank you to the choir for providing this special event to begin our Lenten journey.



Above – Mason and Lucy Duer bury their Alleluia banners with assistance from Adeline Hoover. Below – Rev. Ann burns the palm crosses with assistance from the Duers and Chris King.



Organist Chris King wearing his Mardi Gras beads and ready for the celebration.



Recycling Initiative

Our faith community has embraced the recycling initiative with disciplined use of the paper recycling receptacles and the regular contributions of returnable cans and bottles for St. John's parish program to assist the unhoused. Now we are ready for the next phase of our parish commitment to creation care. During the week of March 19 through March 26 we will be collecting recyclable electronics to be transported to Next Step. Home use electronics are approved for recycling including computers, laptops, tablets, printers, audio devices, even Christmas lights.

Drop off recyclable electronics during business hours or after church March 19 through 26.

Our St. Thomas parish is pleased to recognize JB Hoover who has been appointed to the Diocesan Creation Care Committee. JB has considerable experience and expertise in environmental protection initiatives. His knowledge and enthusiasm have proven to be invaluable to St. Thomas and now the Diocese will benefit from his expertise.

News from Diana & Sofia Garcia

We have received good news and pictures from Diana and Sofia who are happily relocated in Astoria. Diana is settling into her new position with Head Start in Astoria, and Sofia is adjusting well to her new school. The photos shared show Sofia enjoying a visit to the ice arena in Eugene before she moved and delighting in the results of the February snowstorm that impacted most of Oregon, an especially unusual event for coastal communities.



Managing our St. Thomas Campus



As Rev. Ann has noted in her Beacon messages, our St. Thomas campus is a vibrant and busy place housing our Companions in Ministry and the many user groups who rent our facilities for their events and business activities. Our *beacon* shines from our location on a main thoroughfare of Eugene, and a variety of entities are taking advantage of our attractive grounds and facilities. But the financial benefit of increased usage also demands regular attention to maintenance and administration. Two new essential committees have been formed to facilitate Rev. Ann and JB in their direct contact with our users. The Building and Grounds Committee is comprised of Paul Colvin, Joe Konieczka, Larry Wilson, Linda Whitehead and Jim Keizur. Their specific role is to address maintenance needs, repairs, upgrades and safety and security issues. The Facility Use Committee consists of Cindy Jensen, Beverly Jackson, Janet Calvert and JB Hoover. They are tasked with oversight of the user fee schedule and facility use agreements and when necessary, consideration of user concerns. While this committee structure allows for thoughtful management of the use and enjoyment of our campus facilities, we are first and foremost a faith community. We welcome those who use our facilities for a single event or on a regular basis and trust that they respect and appreciate this faith-filled environment and are touched by the spirit that abides on our St. Thomas campus.

Daylight Savings Time

Be sure to set your clocks forward before you go to bed on March 11 as Daylight Savings Time begins at 1:00 am on March 12. You don't want to be late for church!



GrassRoots Garden



As the weather continues to be wintery with snow flurries aplenty, we at GrassRoots are looking to spring and are busy mapping out our crop rotations for the 2023 growing season.

We rotate our crops around the Garden to mitigate pest and disease pressure on our plants: planting things in the same spot year after year tends to increase pest populations for that type of plant, and diseases can also build up in an area if there is a host plant present there every year. Our goal is to rotate our crops around such that we never plant the same crop in the same area for 3 years after it was last planted there. We are especially focused this year on our nightshade family crops (tomatoes, peppers, potatoes and eggplants) as we have had issues with Verticillium wilt the past few years and are working on mitigating its spread.

The other critical part of our planning process is planning out timings for all the crops we want to grow. We organize each year into three rotations based on timing of planting out the crops. Rotation 1 includes all the plants we will direct sow or transplant out into the garden from early spring until May 15th. Rotation 1 crops include peas, potatoes, onions, cabbage, chard, lettuce, beets, kohlrabi and kale.

Rotation 2 includes all the crops we will direct sow or transplant out between May 15th and July 15th. This is our most diverse and largest crop rotation, and it includes tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, cucumbers, winter squash, corn, beans, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, parsnips, carrots and more. Given that Rotation 2 is so large, GrassRoots is a very busy place between mid-May and mid-July!

Our Rotation 3 planting starts on July 15th and goes through mid-September. Rotation 3 crops include celery, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, collards, kale, kohlrabi, bok choy, lettuce, cabbage, beets and leeks to name a few. The crops of rotation 3 will be our fall and winter crops in the Garden, and in the case of some overwintering vegetables, our early spring crops.

Once we decide where we want to plant everything and when, we work backwards to determine when we need to start seeding. Many of our crops that we will transplant out in the Garden need 5-8 weeks of time growing to get big enough to plant out, so it is necessary to get seeding in February to ensure we will have plants to put out in April.

Winter Hours: T, Th, Sat, 9am-4pm. GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church. For more information, contact Merry Bradley 458-221-0652, merrybradley@yahoo.com.



March Birthdays

15	Barbara Hemphill
16	Debbie Pezzoni

March Anniversaries

6	Larry and Judy Wilson Dave Fredmonsky and Gayle Morgan
20	Paul and Sue Colvin

Continue reading, and please consider sharing your own reflections.



Reflections

During the blustery weather of late February – wind, snow, rain and frigid temperatures – the harbingers of spring have remained undaunted as their emergence is defined by the seasonal transition. The heather is blooming along the garden border; bright green daffodil shoots are



pushing up from the ice encrusted soil; and the bluebirds have returned for a brief respite on their determined migration to spring nesting grounds. In the midst of this inclement weather, I was captivated by a determined bluebird hacking through the crust of snow on our lawn to find a bit of food – sustenance for the migratory journey. The regular changing of the seasons is a lovely and heartening exemplification of God’s creation – a confirmation of nature’s ability to overcome the darkness and environmental challenges.

Just as with nature, there is for us the hope of recovery and renewal, but first we must experience the challenges and endure the hardships, for that is life. For several years I worked for a boss whose final assessment of all challenges was *life’s hard*. Being a *Pollyanna* who tries to focus on the goodness in people and sees lessons in all life experiences, this mantra was difficult to hear. I would always quietly add my positive perspective to the circumstances. Yes, there are challenges in life, difficult people and tragic events, but as people of faith we know God is good. Through faith we are empowered to make a difference, no matter how small or magnanimous, we can affect change for the better. We can bring about goodness in the most troubling of circumstances.

Lent is that opportunity to evoke goodness. It is not about *giving up* something but about *taking on* the mantle of renewed and strengthened faith. It is about being the *light in the darkness*. Yes, it is an effort that requires discipline and determination, but one’s Lenten journey can be a restorative experience. So, this Lent I will think of the example of that little bluebird and with determination seek

spiritual nourishment that will sustain me through life’s trials so that I may serve the Lord and see God’s glory in all his creation.

Welcome Spring ~ March 20!



Lenten Study Group

A thoughtful and spirited group is meeting after coffee hour on the Sundays in Lent to discuss the book Why Is There Suffering by Bethany Sollereeder. During our first session the following poem was shared – a faith-filled remembrance as we respond to all the challenges of our current events with fervent prayer.

The Footprints Prayer

One night I had a dream...

I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand;
One belonged to me, and the other to the Lord.
When the last scene of my life flashed before us, I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that many times along the path of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest time in my life.
This really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it.
“Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, You would walk with me all the way;
But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, There is only one set of footprints.
I don’t understand why in times when I needed you the most, you should leave me.”

The Lord replied, “My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times of trial and suffering.
When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you.

Anonymous