



The Beacon

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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

February 2024

Volume 25 Issue 2

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- Nancy Osborne
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From the Rector's desk ~

Right now my head is spinning. Just a few days ago we at St. Thomas had our Annual Meeting--and a well-attended and positive one, I might add. Yet no sooner have we enjoyed that yearly event than our thoughts turn to Lent. This year the season after the Epiphany is shorter than in many years, so Ash Wednesday is in just two weeks—February 14 (Valentine's Day!). Before you know it, we'll be putting away the green vestments and hangings and shifting to purple.

To get ready for Lent, St. Thomas used to have a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper put on by the choir. But as the choir has gotten smaller and as fewer parishioners are able to go out at night, last year we shifted that tradition. Instead of a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, the choir will put on a Mardi Gras-themed super-coffee hour on Sunday, February 11, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. (Donations at the coffee hour will go toward the choir fund.) I will be going back and forth between the Coffee Hour and the Vestry meeting taking place in the library, primarily so that I can burn last year's palms from Palm Sunday to make ashes for Ash Wednesday.

Although burning the palms isn't as dramatic during the day as it is when done at night, it's always a meaningful activity and is especially fun for kids. Then the following Wednesday, February 14, we will have our traditional Ash Wednesday service at noon, with the imposition of ashes.

In addition, during coffee hour on February 18, March 3, and March 17 I am offering a book study on Celtic Christianity. The book is *Listening for the Heartbeat of God* by John Philip Newell, a scholar, pilgrimage leader, and teacher of Celtic spirituality.

Celtic Christianity emphasizes the essential goodness of creation and of humanity made in the image of God. The book traces the lines of Celtic spirituality from the British church in the fourth century through to the twentieth century. John Philip finds Celtic spiritual roots in the New Testament, in the mysticism of St. John the Evangelist. John was especially remembered as the one who lay against Jesus at the Last Supper and heard the heartbeat of God. Hence he became a Celtic image of listening to God in all of life.

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With Lent’s emphasis on simplicity, reflection, and repentance, observing Lent can be spiritually nourishing. Remember, *repentance* does not mean remorse or wearing a hair shirt! In the biblical Hebrew and Greek, it means changing one’s mind, going in a different direction. I’m inviting you, therefore, to join me in the observance of a holy Lent.

Peace and many blessings,

Ann +

Parish Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of our St. Thomas faith community was a heartwarming reflection of who we are as devoted parishioners. There was a wonderful turnout,



and the enthusiastic responses of those present included laughter, encouraging words, and hearty applause. All present contributed in some way to our worship services, ministries, and community outreach, so the accolades were abundant as we recounted the successes of 2023. Those unable to attend can pick up a copy of the annual report located on the Narthex table, and all are encouraged to read the thoughtful reports that tell the St. Thomas story for 2023. The meeting was closed with Rev. Ann’s prayer of thanksgiving for God’s grace that is the source of love and light in our faith community.



Parishioners filled the Parish Hall for the Annual Meeting and commissioning of the Vestry for 2024

Endowment Fund



What Is The Endowment Fund?

Charlie Warren established the St. Thomas Endowment Fund on June 10, 2010 to

“...develop ministries beyond what is possible through (the Church’s) annual operating funds...” Possible ministries include capital, one-time programs or projects funded by individual donors. Charlie allowed for a wide array of donations – cash, stock, real estate and a variety of estate plans.

In the 2010 Annual Report Charlie proudly declared that the initial funding drive raised \$26,725. As of September 30, 2023 our Endowment Fund held **\$241,072.81!**

The Endowment Fund is governed by a Board of Directors, which consists of Rev. Ann Gaillard, Lee Gaillard, Beverly Jackson (Clerk), Cindy Jensen, Diane Landon, Duncan Murray, Chair and John Spruance.

Whether giving to honor a loved one and/or to start a new ministry, donors realize that **their gifts create a lasting personal legacy of their Christian faith and values.**

Endowment Fund rules stipulate that the Board can only make grants from funds exceeding a \$250,000 minimum balance. Recently, and only temporarily, assets exceeded that amount. **Thus we were able to make the first ever grant, which funded The Young Musicians at St. Thomas Program.** Under the direction of Music Director Keri Davis, this grant brought five talented musicians who sang or played instruments at our worship services.

Part of the Endowment Fund is The Legacy Society, which consists of those who’ve included The Fund in their estate planning.

Now we’re closing in on the \$250,000-plus balance that will let us make new grants. Thanks to the generosity of our Congregation we hope to achieve our goal soon. If you have questions about the Endowment Fund please speak with me or any Board member.

Duncan Murray, Chair

Ladies Book Group



The Ladies Book Group will meet Thursday, February 22 at 1:30 pm in the Parish Library for their monthly book discussion, complete with edibles and lively conversation. The reading selection for this month is Horse by Geraldine Brooks. If the title intrigues you and you enjoy sharing about good books, just know that interested readers are always welcome. Consider the Ladies Book Group an opportunity for engagement and enlightenment.

GrassRoots Garden

As winter stretches on, the winter tasks at GrassRoots are steadily getting done. Rebuilding planting beds in preparation for spring plantings, pruning perennial crops, maintaining tools and equipment, tidying sheds, and planning for the coming year and future projects. One of the future projects that we are really excited about is doing a restoration of our portion of Camas Swale!

We have the exciting opportunity to revegetate the small waterway that runs through the middle of the Garden replacing the weed suppression belts currently in place with native plant communities. Our portion of the Camas Swale, a natural drainage land formation, is the only above ground occurrence in Eugene. The rest flows through culverts throughout the City. Our overall goal is to restore habitat along our swale for wildlife to thrive in (insects, mammals, reptiles, birds, etc.), and provide a space where we can educate the public about the amazing plants endemic to our area. This will involve both meadow/wetland species and some shrubbier plants, with different areas focusing on different plant communities, with an emphasis on edible and medicinal plants where possible.



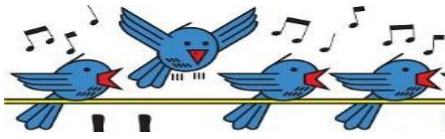
Another related project we are looking forward to getting started is putting in some hedgerows along the edges of the garden, again with a focus on good habitat for pollinators and other critters. We have three potential sites in mind, with one in full shade and two in full sun.



We are looking for ecological restoration enthusiasts to help us get these projects off the ground by assisting with preparation for plantings, creation of planting plans, getting the plants in the ground and tending them as needed. If you're interested, please contact Emily Johnson at ejohnson@foodforlanecounty.org!

Winter Hours: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9:00am to 4:00pm. GrassRoots Garden is located at 1465 Coburg Rd., across from Safeway, behind St. Thomas Episcopal Church. For more information, contact Merry Bradley at 458-221-0625 or merrybradley@foodforlanecounty.org.

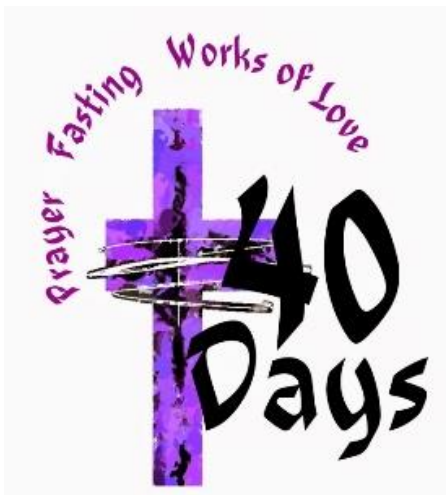
Grace Notes



Look for the helpers. That was the encouraging directive Fred Rogers' mother gave to him as a young boy, and he in turn shared this message with his young viewers. In times of trial, that statement often comes to mind. During the recent ice storm the helpers were out in full force, even when they had challenges of their own. Grace was thoughtfully, courageously, persistently revealed in the acts of so many. The capacity to be a helper, to care for those outside one's own self-interests and needs, is imbued by God whether one is an active worshiper or not. God enables people to be instruments of his grace in wondrous ways. So the snow plow operators and road maintenance workers were blessed with the strength and visual capacity to clear the roads; the utility linemen were imbued with courage and determination to endure long shifts to get communities back on line; first responders were fortified with their specific capabilities to address emergencies; neighbors reached out to neighbors to clear limbs, debris and sidewalks for stranded neighbors; friends and family members shared food and water with those lacking resources; gracious souls covered monitor shifts at the warming centers. The ways community members assisted each other are countless – grace personified, and God's grace magnified.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14.

Ash Wednesday Service ~ Noon



CCC Fundraiser



The above flyer is an invitation for all St. Thomas parishioners to consider – an opportunity to support one of our valued Companions in Ministry, the Center for Community Counseling. Their annual fundraiser will be a night of music and fun celebrated on Saturday, February 10 at the WOW Hall at 7:00 pm. Seating is limited, so don't delay in purchasing tickets. Call 541-344-0620 for more information.



*Valentine's Day is
Wednesday, February 14*

Outreach

The Outreach Committee report in the St. Thomas 2023 Annual Meeting booklet summarizes all the amazing work of this committee and the generosity of our faith community— generosity in



financial contributions as well as our physical labors and spiritual support. But there is more to the story, as treasurer Anne VanderVeer has reported in her thorough financial statements. In addition to the \$5,000 budgeted and thoughtfully distributed to designated community projects, additional funds for Outreach endeavors were collected from the birthday box, the book launch, used book sales, and Heifer contributions. Parishioners also gave generously to Episcopal Relief for the Syrian earthquake and Maui fire relief efforts. Anne also calculated into our parish outreach the first Sunday of the month discretionary fund contributions and the annual utility costs of \$1400 provided to the GrassRoots Garden. All of these financial contributions total \$14,558 or 5% of our operating budget. Not calculated into the giving total, but worthy of note are the regular contributions to the Home Starter Kits and the personal items to the H.U.G.S. collection. All in all, a worthy effort from our faith community. The phrase *small but mighty* comes to mind.

St. Thomas Music Ministry



Front and Center – Organist Chris King and Music Director Keri Davis; Choir members – Jon Davies, Joe Konieczka, JB Hoover, Maggie Meneghin, Paul Colvin, Sue Colvin

Every Sunday our St. Thomas choir proves that it's not the number of members but the magnitude of the spirit that matters. Whether singing hymns of praise, joyful alleluias or familiar folk spirituals, the congregation is inspired to lift our voices in song. Music director and piano accompanist Keri Davis works her magic to arrange music that suits the limited numbers, and organist Chris King enhances every musical arrangement with the rich tones of our St. Thomas organ. Music enriches our worship experience and is such an integral part of the Episcopal liturgy.



For two years we have been treated to the talented student performances orchestrated by Keri and funded by the Young Musicians program, first sponsored by the St. Thomas Endowment Fund and then by an anonymous donor. Keri announced that the program will continue for another year, once again with the support of an anonymous donor. What a gift! So for several Sundays throughout the year we will enjoy performances by selected young musicians. The first visiting musician is scheduled for Sunday, February 4.

The young musicians who visit St. Thomas gain performance experience as many have aspirations of musical careers. And while we are uplifted by their performances and appreciate their talents, we trust that they will take with them remembrances of a vibrant faith community. These young musicians may attend other churches or perhaps they have no church affiliation. At St. Thomas they experience our beautiful worship ritual and liturgy, witness our fellowship, and learn of our community outreach. Just as we are inspired by the musical talents of the visiting young musicians, we trust that they feel God's grace at St. Thomas and continue to share that grace through their music and life experiences.

Reflections



A terrible beauty ~

No doubt the ice storm of January 2024 will be long remembered. We all have our stories to tell and challenges to recount. This was the view from my back windows during that long week when we were literally “iced in” on our forest hilltop. This view captivated my attention every time I passed by the windows. Two inches of snow coated with over an inch of solid ice – pristine, beautiful, and at the same time dangerous and forbidding. As Cooperrider notes in [Speak with the Earth and It Will Teach You](#), God’s glory on display is a *spectacle of mindfulness*.

This view was a source of reflection as I was ever mindful of those without a roof over their heads, a warm fire, a functioning generator, and a dedicated help mate. Said help mate was relegated to hauling water from the storage tank because the pipes froze, and the pumps gave out. We practiced our sponge bathing and water boiling rituals from our camping years, allowed the laundry to pile up, cleaned our dishes in the sink, and took advantage of those freezer meals. Again, we were blessed with the capability to manage comfortably.

Any attempt to walk down the hill to check out our road was met with spills and a few thrills, so we stayed put until our steep road was manageable with four-wheel drive and chains. And even then, travel into town was too treacherous to attempt. So we kept busy managing our situation and appreciated our blessings while praying for those with far greater challenges.

There are lessons in this *terrible beauty*. While we delight in the majesty of nature in all the seasons, we also recognize its power, the presence of God in all God’s might and majesty.

*There is only one world, a world that God loves.
Since God loves it, we not only can but should.
In fact, loving the world (not God alone), or rather,
loving God through loving the world, is the
Christian way.*

~ Sallie McFague

A New Feature

Just for fun and to encourage readership, there will be a monthly quiz question to consider at the end of each *Beacon* edition.



Send your monthly answer to the editor at lajotkdk@aol.com. The names of all monthly participants will be noted, and correct answers will be announced in the following monthly *Beacon*. At the 2025 annual meeting there will be a drawing from all the names of participants to determine a winner of the prize. The more you participate, the better your chances of being declared the *Beacon Reader of the Year*.

February 2024 Question: What was the original name of the St. Thomas parish newsletter?
Bonus Question: Who was the editor?

February Birthdays
27 Sally Schwarz

February Anniversaries
2 Tom and Linda Whitehead
15 Lucy and Paul Barnett

