

The Benediction

St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Los Osos, California

The Rev. Dr. Caroline Hall

Rector

The Rev. M.E. Pratt-Horsley

Rector Emeritus

The Rev. Donna Ross

Associate Priest

The Rev. Barry Turner

Associate Priest

The Rev. Sharon G. Dalrymple

Deacon

The Parish Council

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Pamela Bleisch Strawn, Jr. Warden

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Sunday Services

The first Sunday of each month:

10:30 am One service of Holy Communion with music

All other Sundays:

8:00 am Holy Communion with inclusive language

10:30 am Holy Communion with music

Refreshments and fellowship follow each service.

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Dear Friends:

Amazingly enough, fall is here. My yard is once again full of house finches and the children are back at school, with soccer practice in full swing.

Which affects my dog walking schedule. It never ceases to amaze me how interconnected our lives are in community whether it's faith community, local community or the global community.

I am grateful for this community of St. Benedict's and the way God continues to work miracles in our midst, constantly revealing herself to us in new ways – sometimes so subtle that we hardly notice and can't articulate them and sometimes very obvious. I am grateful for Arianna's dance and for Dr. Jean's toothless smile; for people who shoulder new responsibilities and for people who lay them down. I am grateful for everyone who contributes in small and large ways to make the miracle of Christ's Body manifest in peace and in love in this place.

I have been reflecting on the word love. I find the idea that "Love makes a Subaru" very disconcerting – a key spiritual value has been co-opted for commercial gain. Of course it's not the first time that has happened – we're seeing it more and more as American society reaches for something deeper that spiritual longing is used to sell cars. I wonder whether it's better than using scantily clad young women? But somehow we need to reclaim the word or at least the value and the truth it contains.



So I've been thinking about using "blessing" as an alternative to love. "Compassion" often works well to designate the core value of our faith, but it always feels a little passive to me, whereas being a blessing, offering my life as a blessing, giving a blessing to others, to God, and to the environment feels more active and powerful. So then my morning prayer becomes, "Holy One, make me a blessing to all I touch today."

I thank you for the blessing that each one of you gives to me and to us. I am looking forward to our annual Gratitude Dinner when we can give thanks for one another and for the many blessings God has given us this year.

Please make sure you put **October 16** on your calendar and plan to be part of the party.

Blessings to you and yours,
Caro+

Rev. Caroline J. A. Hall

Remembering Joann Rusch

In this issue of The Benediction we will be remembering Joann Rusch by publishing several of her poems. We are grateful to Carol McPhee, Bev Boyd, and Bonnie Young for selecting the three poems presented here.

Episcopal Church Convention

Alice Welchert

At the 78th General Convention (GC) in Salt Lake City, the Episcopal Church voted to divest a portion of church holdings from fossil fuels and reinvest the monies in clean energy -- a step in the right direction. The resolutions cover some \$380m in church holdings. Not covered is the pension fund, the denomination's biggest asset, at \$9bn, as the GC does not have control over these assets. Another \$4bn are controlled by parishes and dioceses. The GC encouraged these entities to begin looking at divestment. A resolution to create regional teams to educate the church about divestment issues also passed.

Other denominations have taken more decisive action related to divestment. For example, the United Church of Christ voted to quit fossil fuels in 2013, the Unitarian Universalists Association, representing over 1,000 congregations, voted to divest their \$175 million endowment from fossil fuel companies in 2014 and earlier this year, the United Methodist Church instructed managers of its \$21bn pension fund to drop coal holdings. That said, a number of Episcopal dioceses have been advocates of divestment for a few years and hope GC resolutions this year will spur further activism.

"The vote says that this is a moral issue and that we really have to think about where we are putting our money," said Betsy Blake Bennett, archdeacon in the Episcopal diocese of Nebraska, who supported divestment. "At a point where we are losing species and where human life itself is threatened by climate change, the church, by acting on it, is saying that this is a moral issue and something that everyone needs to look at seriously."

The GC also commended Pope Francis' Papal Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si'*, and has encouraged the Presiding Bishop to write a Pastoral Letter to the Church on climate change before the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Paris in late 2015. Bud Cederholm, a retired church leader dubbed the "Green Bishop," said he thought the timing of the Pope's message had also helped ease passage of the measure: "When the largest denomination in the world, when their leader makes a statement like that, it get the rest of the Christian world's attention."

A Song for Singing Out of Light

Caro+ Hall

That might be the title of my next book. For some time, a few people have been encouraging me to write a book which articulates the theology that I grapple with and express in my sermons and teaching. Theology, like liturgy, is truly the work of a spiritual community not an isolated academic and so I am inviting anyone who would like to join me in a journey to explore the ideas and concepts that would form such a work.

I will offer some kind of reflection each month and ask those participating to come together to talk over what they think I'm saying and their own take on the subject. That will provide input to my thinking and hopefully the process will build and

Traveling Through a Life

Joann Rusch

She finds herself on an unfamiliar road
in a place she doesn't know. There seems
to be no exit. On the small table in the café
there's scarcely space for the lunch she's ordered.

She has brought a book of Rilke's poems.
She turns to "Archaic Torso of Apollo."
She moves down lines from head to torso
of the sun god with his "translucent shoulders,"
"dazzling breast," then decides: "You must
change your life."

Is it she who must change her life? For all
those she has hoped to please, she has tried
to make a self into someone new. The voice
left first, but whenever she turned south,
the slow slur returned.

When offspring called her "Mother," was it
she or they who carved out her new life?
When they needed her less, who decided
she would care for abandoned children
or wounded women hoping to rename
themselves?

Is there a goddess who commands at the start
of each day whose clothes we will wear?
Or is the one she lives with now at last herself?
Someone beginning to seem familiar.

(A Song for Singing, continued.)

eventually there will be chapters and part of chapters to discuss and critique. I have no idea how this will work and how long it will take but I'm excited by the idea (thank you, Donna+) and look forward to our conversations. Some of the things we'll cover are: how do we understand the nature of God? What is the sin matrix and how does it relate to original sin and the work of Rene Girard? (Don't worry if you nothing of Girard – you will if you hang around) Was Jesus truly teaching non-violent resistance or is that just a twenty first century reading of his teaching? What is the relationship between spirituality and political action?

In order for the maximum number of people to participate I think we'll have two different meetings each month, both covering the same material. One will be on the first Sunday afternoon, after lunch and the other will be one Wednesday morning at 10am, starting in September. Watch the Benediction Weekly for the announcement of the first meetings.

Jazz Concert

Many, many thanks to Janelle LaFond, Lorraine Schwenk, Liz Maruska, Lisa Gonzales and everyone who helped to make the Jazz Concert such a wonderful event. It is always a special time and this year was one of the best yet. One participant said "It was the best concert I've been to all year." It takes a lot of work from a lot of people to put this on and it is so worthwhile. So thank you, thank you, thank you!



A packed house listens to Inga Swearingen and vibrophonist Charlie Shoemake. Picture from Inga Swearingen Facebook.

The New Tabernacle

Pamela Bleisch



On Sunday April 19th, at the 10:30 service, the congregation consecrated a new Tabernacle. The Tabernacle is a small cabinet that sits on the altar, to hold the reserved sacrament. A portion of the consecrated bread is set aside after communion has been received; this reserved sacrament can be taken to the ill or housebound, so they can share in the Eucharistic feast.

Anne Kanter created two stained glass panels for the Tabernacle, and Bill Hayes crafted the wooden structure for it, out of oak he had set aside from the old chapel's oak front pews' modesty railing. The stained glass panels depict the Holy spirit descending as a dove, and the Eucharistic bread and wine. The panel shows the communion chalice surrounded by sprays of bay laurel.

Bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) was important in Greek and Biblical culture. A wreath of laurel crowned the victor of the Pythian games. Paul refers to this victory crown in Philippians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 2 Timothy 2:5, and 2 Timothy 4:8. The native California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*) is also known as Balm of Heaven or Oregon myrtle. Just like our dear Anne, this plant thrives both in California and Oregon.

It was fitting that the St. Benedict's Tabernacle was dedicated on the Sunday we celebrated Earth day. After the service, folks were able to admire the beautiful Tabernacle up close, and talk to the craftsmen. At coffee hour, everyone was invited to take home a fresh sprig of sweet bay laurel provided through the thoughtfulness of Barbara Schippers.

Building Update

Maria M. Kelly

Please accept my apology for not providing an update in the previous newsletter. My standard excuse of "life happened" is what I'm offering. The good news is that we anticipate submitting our documents to the planning department before the end of August. As the planning department reviews the documents, we'll be able to start interviewing contractors.

As soon as our documents have been submitted, we'll be renting a large storage container for everything we want to store during construction. There will be some items that will need to be hauled to the dump or donated.

If you are interested in assisting with dump runs please let me know. If you have any items stored in the back areas of the church and need help moving them, please let me know.

You can reach me at mmkelly66@gmail.com.

Before too long, we'll be looking to repair our veranda. There is extensive work that needs to be done. Decisions will be made shortly regarding materials, painting and timing. Keep your eyes open for a painting party in the not too distant future. All the pieces that need to be replaced will need to be pre-painted and for cost saving measures, it would be great if we could take on some of this work ourselves.

As always, if you have any questions, please let myself or our Junior Warden know and we will see if we have the answers.

Thank you and please continue to keep us in your prayers.

Prado: When the Bread Finally Arrives

Alice Welter

Daniel Berrigan, Catholic priest, poet, teacher, peace activist and convicted felon (civil disobedience) said:

"Sometime in your life, hope that you might see one starved man, the look on his face when the bread finally arrives. Hope that you might have baked it or bought it or even kneaded it yourself. For that look on his face, for your meeting his eyes across a piece of bread, you might be willing to lose a lot, or suffer a lot, or die a little, even."

Why would Berrigan want us to see the look on a starved man's face "when the bread finally arrives"? I think it is because when we see the hunger of another human being and our ability to alleviate it, even for one hour, we might become more radically Christ-like.

The starved man, woman, and child live in SLO county. Some of them come to Prado for daily meals and other basic needs, including human contact and dignity. Members of St. Benedict's who serve lunch at People's Kitchen may experience the kind of encounter Berrigan described, as eyes meet across a piece of bread or serving of shepherd's pie. Jesus the Christ is both the

New Genesis

Joann Rusch

Once again the world will resolve that we have fought the last of our wars. That day mourning doves will drop down and walk pigeon-toed on the road. That night a soft gray rain, not a red rain, will fall and thousands of small frogs will cavort and sing their raspy songs.

On the second day of no war, satellites will broadcast no warnings. Ordinary chatter over breakfast will begin with "Good morning!" as the four-footed animals look up, surprised. By the third day some will believe it. They will begin to whisper the news in many tongues.

The Arctic will look down on the rest of earth and will end its weeping. On the fourth day the old men will call to the young women and men crouching in trenches in faded brown and olive drab uniforms. The younger ones will put down their weapons and will be embraced.

Early on the fifth morning the women will drape themselves in bright scarves, yellow and red. They will laugh and spread tables with warm bread and persimmons, jams and biscuits. Trees will color their limbs with fruits bearing new seeds on the sixth day, as fresh streams feed the rivers.

And on the seventh day the musicians will tune their violins, their fiddles and sitars. There will be dancing. The Glockenspiel will announce the peace. And the doves will see that it is good and will cease their mourning.

(Prado, continued)

Starved One we feed when we bring our donations of instant oatmeal and peanut butter and place them in the Prado boxes and the One Who Feeds the starved woman, man and child. Namely, all of us.

The need for food, especially breakfast items such as dry cereal, instant oatmeal, peanut butter, jam, juice, protein bars, bagels, coffee, creamer, sugar, paper bowls plates, plastic cutlery -- is ongoing. Donations during the summer months, when many people travel, have been a down a bit. When we bring these offerings to church we don't actually see the people they benefit, but we are still connected to them. As we push our shopping carts through the supermarket, we could imagine a particular hungry person -- an elderly woman, a child -- and the look on her face when the bread finally arrives.

Abundance Shop

Francis F. Rivinus

Linda Blackwell is recovering well after her July surgery and is already putting in appearances at the shop. We are thankful for her good recovery and glad to have her back again. We are also happy to report that Betty Field-Haley will not require surgery.

In other news on the subject of volunteers, several people responded to our appeal for additional volunteers and the shop is happy to welcome: Karin Cake, Elaine Goodman, Joe Morris, Sharon Dalrymple and Shelley Watanabe all of whom have indicated that they will help out as their time permits.

The summer proved to be a quiet time for the shop particularly during the latter part of July. The weakness that we experienced towards the end of July let up a bit in August and our results for August are better although still behind last year at this time. We are looking forward to fall and the Halloween season as the shop has acquired a good inventory of costumes and other Halloween paraphernalia.

One thing that has not slowed down is the flow of donations to the shop. The generosity of our community is wonderful and there is a constant flow of new merchandise for our customers to enjoy.



“Laudato Si” at St. Benedict’s

On each Thursday between August 20th and September 24th St. Benedict’s has been hosting a Hollister Institute discussion group based on Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si. Participants in the seminar/discussion series have heard a different presenter for each session lead a discussion about one of the six chapters of the encyclical letter. Scheduled presenters include Carol McPhee, John Horsley, Barry Turner, Joe Morris, Bob Pelfrey, and Caro Hall. Caro is also the “moderator” for each session.

One of the keys to the uniqueness of this document is its title, which is taken from the first two words of a poem/hymn: St Francis of Assisi’s famous “Canticle to the Sun”. This is the hymn in which St. Francis addresses Nature in such personified and relational terms as “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon”. Thus one’s first encounter with pope Francis’ encyclical is with the beautiful words of the most famous of Christian saints, the saint in the entire Christian tradition who came closest to living and preaching the ideal expressed in the subtitle of the encyclical: “On Care for our Common Home”. St. Francis cared for our “common home”, and expressed this care not only with constant acts of service and reverence, but with the beauty of artful praise, as seen in “The Canticle of the Sun”, or in episodes like the living tableau of the first Christmas “crèche” (crib scene) at the tiny village of Greccio in 1223. The encyclical argues that our

(Hollister, continued)

crisis is fundamentally due to our failure to live with attentiveness to the creative beauty and the diligent reverence of a St. Francis that we find ourselves in such dire physical and spiritual jeopardy.

Francis encyclical, in other words, is not just another analysis of the potentially catastrophic crisis which is already knocking on our front doors (e.g., California's current drought is credited by scientists to be at least twenty-five percent due to climate change). Rather, his encyclical is an attempt to integrate the discussion of climate change—which has tremendous scientific and technological complexities that must be addressed—with the larger crisis facing humanity: a crisis of the spirit— or as we would say at St. Benedict's— of the Spirit. Pope Francis insists that there are in fact three relationships that each individual must realize with integrity if there is to be any meaningful chance of resolving the climate change crisis: one's relationship to God, one's relationship to Nature, and one's relationship to one's neighbor. Francis' argument is that when we do see our responsibility to God, to other creatures, and to our neighbor, only then will we be able to make the sacrifices that— especially for those of us in the zones of over-consumption and privilege—will feel increasingly burdensome as our lifestyles undergo the drastic changes necessary to save the planet, other creatures, and ourselves. In this regard, perhaps the basic theme of the encyclical is best captured in this quote from the first chapter, whose title is "What Is Happening to our Common Home?": "Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it."

As a further note: Joe Morris would like to share the following:

Climate Rally in Washington D.C.

This month on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., will occur maybe the largest ever march and rally on climate change. It is scheduled to coincide with Pope Francis' address on September 24th to a joint session of Congress. An ecumenical coalition of dozens of religious and secular groups, e.g. Church World Service, Religions for the Earth, Franciscan Action Network, Sierra Club, Citizens Climate Lobby, will call for a strong and binding international climate treaty and commitment to making lifestyle changes as a moral duty to humanity and our shared global environment. If you wish to attend, check out their website: www-moralactiononclimate.org. Contact me for information about connecting with other locals who will be attending. We hope to get a SLO contingent there. My phone: 549-0355 or dpj1942@earthlink.net. If you ever plan to go on a climate change event, this is the one! -Joe Morris

When I Die Say Goodbye

Joann Rusch

to me with dancing, clapping and a riot of zinnias, unless I choose the wrong season. I'd like Mozart and a riff of Ella's to accompany us. Hallelujahs should be boisterous, or better yet, dancing to "Oh Happy Day."

There must be stories and laughter, although a few tears for all we're going to miss are acceptable as well. Don't embarrass me or God with hyperbole or praise or pretend you know what's in store for us.

Pray for dreams to light the unknown.
I've come to know that in dreams whales play in shallow surf, then come ashore to roll close and lie next to me. In dreams a cougar may bring a message, then rest a spell before she leaves with her mate for the deep woods.

The dream from which there is no waking could be soon or light years away. In the daylight of now I write and read these lines, brew the morning coffee, walk the dog around the block and call a friend, until that day when you bring zinnias and clap your hands.

Upcoming Events:

Sock Hop! September 18

St. Benedict's Sock Hop is September 18 at 6pm. Dance to the sounds of The Bald Spots and DJ Alak Speck. The Drive-in style menu will include hot dogs, chili dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, root beer floats and banana splits. Tickets are \$30. Contact Maria Kelly at mmkelly66@gmail.com or at 805-423-5331 for tickets or information.



Fall Quilting Bee, September 26

The Fall Quilting Bee will be Saturday September 26th, 10 am to 3 pm, at St. Benedict's church. St. Benedict's parish, family, and friends, are coming together to sew as many comforters as we can in

one fun day. Thanks to the Abundance Shop and our team of fabric-squirrels, we have gathered piles of beautiful fabrics, gently-used sheets, blankets and mattress pads. \

Five beautiful quilts were produced at the June Quilting Bee. These have already been mailed to Lutheran World Relief; soon, they will be sorted and shipped to refugees all over the world.

How much comfort can we send this fall? We are mindful especially of the Syrian refugees. On July 9, 2015, the UN refugee agency reported that the number of Syrian refugees has surged over 4,000,000 people in tent camps in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraqi Kurdistan. October is their rainy season, with high temperatures in the low 40's.

To donate or participate, please contact Pamela Bleisch Strawn: pr.bleisch@gmail.com, or 805-602-1240.



Harvest Dinner Fundraisers, October 2 and 3

On October 2 and 3, we will be having two Harvest Dinner fundraisers. In addition to the good food and beverage St. Benedict's is known for, these dinners will provide an intimate private home setting for great conversation and fun as each evening will be limited to eight participants. The October 2 dinner will be at John Cribb's home in SLO. The Los Osos home of Kevin and Judith Cadigan will be the location for October 3. John Cribb and Maria Kelly will prepare and host an experience not to be missed. The \$60 per person five course meal will feature Mushroom Bruschetta, Proscuitto and Sage Wrapped Sweet Potato Wedges, Butternut Squash and Green Apple Soup, Brussels Sprout Salad, Marinated Pork Tenderloin over Garlic Mashed Red Potatoes and Candied Pumpkin and Gingerbread Trifle. Wine pairings accompany each course. Don't delay in contacting Maria Kelly at 805.423.5331 or mmkelly66@gmail.com to hold your reservation.

Gratitude Dinner, October 16

Once a year the Parish Council provides dinner for the whole parish. You don't have to do anything, just show up. This is our way of saying thank you for each other and for all that being part of St. Ben's means to us. Please put it on your calendar and plan to be there. We also extend a welcome to all the Abundance Shop volunteers who help us to provide excellent service and a face of God in the town.

Canterbury Chili Cook-Off, October 18

SLO Canterbury is inviting deanery parishes to compete in a chili cook-off on October 18. Winners in meat and vegetarian categories will have bragging rights to the best chili in the deanery. Our special guest judge is none other than Bishop Mary. This fundraiser for Canterbury will be held at St Stephens from 4 to 6:30 and includes a BBQ, raffle and silent auction. BBQ tickets are \$10 by October 11 and \$12 at the door.

Canterbury is the deanery's ministry to college age young adults whether attending school or not. Come see their meeting space, The Shire, and discover what they're doing.

Contact church office, Jeremy Bond or Susan Arnold for tickets **or to contribute an item** to the silent auction.

Help out!

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