

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. Faye Hogan

Associate Priest

The Rev. Sharon G. Dalrymple

Deacon

The Parish Council

Maria Kelly, Sr. Warden

Anne Kanter, Jr. Warden

John Cribb

Lisa Gonzalez

Esta Kandarian

Ken Kenyon

Rod Morse

Francis Rivinus

Barbara Skippers

Kathie West

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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:

Welcome to 2017! And welcome to St Benedict's 30th anniversary!

Now that the New Year is here, there is much to do to be about God's business. Epiphany starts on January 6th – the season of God's revelation of God's self. Because we see the Christ revealed in each other this is a season for us to consider our own part in God's mission.

We welcome Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves for her regular visitation this month. As our bishop, Mary symbolizes our connection to the wider Episcopal Church and beyond that to the church throughout the Anglican Communion and indeed the whole world. So when she comes, she welcomes those from other faith traditions into the Episcopal Church and confirms those who are ready to make an adult confession of faith. That is her role as a symbol of unity within the church. But bishops do not make the church, neither do clergy. The church is composed of lay people.

The church, the Body of Christ is you. How does your own mission and ministry tie in with the *Missio Dei* (God's mission)? And how is it expressed in the Body of Christ at St. Benedict's?

I am grateful that St. Benedict's is a community where nearly everyone plays an active role, and those who are no longer able to contribute their time and energy join with us in mutual prayer and support. Yet it is good once a year to re-examine our own contribution. There are gaps that need to be filled, and there are things that we may need to stop doing. There are many opportunities to contribute to building up the faith community and several of them are highlighted in this newsletter.

Our annual Parish Meeting on January 29th is a time for us collectively to consider our ministry for the coming year. This is a meeting for everyone, not just those who have been here since Adam was a wee boy. Faith community is more than Sunday morning worship; it is building together a temple for the Holy Spirit. I hope that you will join us to collectively reflect on questions which affect our mission and ministry.

This season of reflection on our outer ministry will lead us into a season of inner reflection during Lent. Inner and outer are always intricately connected in the spiritual life. Grace without loving one's neighbor is not barren, and doing good works without loving God is emptiness. Ministry is having compassion on oneself *and* one's neighbor.

The good news is that we are never alone and the more we attune to the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit the more we will find ourselves healed, enriched and inspired for the ministry which is our participation in the *Missio Dei*.

May God richly bless us as we seek to worship and serve him/her with all our hearts,

Caro+

Rev. Caroline J. A. Hall



St. Ben's EarthCare Receives Cool Climate Award

Joe Morris

On November 15th, at a special ceremony in Oakland, our congregation and its EarthCare committee received a splendid and quite unexpected award for our environmental efforts. California Interfaith Power and Light, an ecumenical association of religious groups statewide, awarded us one of their fifteen "Cool Climate Awards" for 2016.

Nearly 200 attenders of churches around the state, from Humboldt to L.A., assembled, chatted, listened to a youth choral group, and then heard talks and videos about

the winners. The projects varied creatively. A Baptist church in Oakland had organized its members to halt a coal processing plant from being built less than a mile from the backyards of their congregants. In Santa Rosa, a Methodist church installed an electric-car recharging station for the community, while in Palo Alto a Catholic church did a total drought-tolerant landscaping of its property.

St. Benedict's was the only religious body to be an awardee in SLO County. EarthCare has been in existence for little more than a year and a half, but in that short time, it has completed a variety of projects—planting native plants about the property, initiating a special Earth Day service last April, pulling up invasive weeds in nearby areas, attending local hearings on environmental matters, and launching two series of environmental discussions connecting spirituality with care for our Earth.

Are we a COOL CONGREGATION? Of course, we knew the answer was affirmative, but we now have documented proof!



Representatives of the organizations receiving the Cool Climate Awards including our own Joe Morris.

Annual Parish Meeting

The annual Parish Meeting will take place on January 29th after the 10:30 service. Lunch will be provided. The main items on the agenda will be:

Election of Vestry members and Deanery/Diocesan Delegates

Discussion of the Vision Plan for further developing the grounds

Decision about the 2017 Budget.

Brief presentation about planned giving and the Endowment Fund

Special Awards

These are practical matters that concern us all, and the Parish Council hopes that you will plan to be there. If God is calling you to serve on the vestry (you have to be Episcopalian) or as a delegate to the Deanery and Diocesan Convention, please contact the Nominating Committee – John Cribb and Maria Kelly.

Finances and Building

With the staining and painting that happened just before Christmas, the Great Room project is now officially over. It now remains for us to decide where to put everything we want to keep and to get any additional furniture that we need. Soon we will be moving the small meeting room from the south end of the building to the north, and putting the Parish office in the current small meeting room.

If you have room in your garage for the fabric for quilt making, please let Pam Bleisch know as we clearly do not have the space for it but neither do we want to give it away.

It looks as though we'll end the year pretty much on budget, but since we started with a deficit budget of \$15,000 our reserves will have taken quite a big hit. Although we expect to (finally) refinance the bank loan in January, we will probably still need about 10% more money in 2017 than we can currently see if we are to pay for a three-quarter time Rector and balance the budget.

We think we will be able to keep the building permit open for another two years so we don't have to make an immediate decision about installing the fire sprinkler system at a cost of about \$140,000.



Vision Plan

Now that the inside of the building is complete it's time to turn our attention to the grounds and to how we might further develop the land in the future. Having a plan enables us to make intelligent decisions so that we don't decide to put a community garden where we might in the future expand the parking lot. It will also guide our decision making when someone comes up with the energy for a new project.



The Parish Council hired Adrienne Harris (the former Executive Director of the Morro Bay Estuary Program) to help us with the planning. She asked for input from the parish and has been researching planning requirements and possible design ideas for the things we prioritized (expanded veranda, expanded parking, a place for private prayer, solar panels and space for Sunday School) as well as some things which have long been in the plan – a labyrinth, children's play area, chapel and columbarium.

The plan will be presented at the January 29th Parish Meeting for discussion. The Parish Council is not proposing that we start raising the money to make it into reality at this point but that we are all holding the same vision together for the next steps in developing the land that God has given us.

Spiritual Journey Groups

Have you ever wanted to know more about the people next to you in the pew? Or wondered how we all ended up here together? This is your opportunity.

During Epiphany/Lent, spiritual journey groups will meet three times, once a month in January, February and March. Each group will have about 6 members. At each meeting there will be time for prayer and brief sharing together, and then two members will have 20 – 30 minute each to share their faith story in any way

they wish. There will be some ground rules so that this will be a confidential and safe space to talk and get to know one another in a deeper way. The groups will meet at the church unless a group member wants to invite the group to their home.

If you want to participate, please email office@stbenslosos.org no later than **Jan 15**, and tell her which of the following times would work for you: Monday evening; Tues morning; Wednesday morning; Wednesday evening; Thursday afternoon; Saturday morning; Sunday afternoon. She will do her best to fit everyone into a group in a timeslot that works for them.

Deacon Dispatch

Sharon G. Dalrymple

I sincerely hope that you all had a very Merry and Blessed Christmas! During this Christmas season so far we have certainly enjoyed beautiful Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning Services as well as some great Christmas carols, wonderful fellowship and good eats. And on top of all of that, a number of us were able to go home to family and friends and gifts under the tree.

Remembering how blessed **we** are, now I ask you to take time to think about all those less fortunate—those who didn't have family and friends to celebrate with and certainly had no presents underneath the tree.

As you probably know San Luis Obispo County has a very large population of homeless folks. Normally our weather is just about perfect which makes a good spot for the homeless to spend their nights rough (if there is such a thing as a "good spot" to be homeless!). Recently however, it seems to have been unusually cold at night with some nights below freezing. We at St. Ben's are working on ideas for a warming station, but until that time and place is established, I ask you to think about how you can help **right now**.

Shelley and I are ordering a number of sleeping bags from WalMart (the best bang for our bucks). And, we are securing some small tarps and stocking caps from the Dollar Store. This way we can make up some "KITS" to pass out to try to keep our brothers and sisters who are sleeping rough in our community warmer and dryer. With a sleeping bag to crawl into and a tarp to put under and a tarp to put over and a stocking cap for the head, these folks have a chance to at least stay warmer during these cold nights.

We are really just starting into our winter months, so now is the time to act. I am asking all of you who can afford to help to consider putting what you can in an envelope marked "sleeping bags" and putting that envelope into the collection plate. A \$20 bill will put together a "KIT". Of course if you can afford more, feel free to buy as many "KITS" as you can. Shelley and I will do the shopping. And, if you have sleeping bags, blankets, stocking caps, coats, woolen socks, tarps, please bring them into the church or drop them by the Abundance Shop.

Let us be the hands and feet on earth of our Savior as we let the light of Christ shine through us. ***Let us love one another as Christ loves us!***



Remind me after the service to talk with Allison about toning down her Sanctus bell routine.

Sunday Ministries

It takes 12 volunteers in addition to the clergy and musicians to put together our 10:30 service. It's important to have the congregation involved because this is not a clergy performance but the celebration of all the people of God together.

Stef Shuman puts together the monthly server schedule. This is very challenging since most of us don't go to church every week, and many people wear several different hats. Stef has to make sure that each person is available on the Sunday that she assigns them and are not expected to do two things at once. It's quite a balancing act!

In order to make her job easier and to prevent anyone feeling overburdened, we always welcome new ministers willing to serve the congregation. The areas that are most in need of additional help are ushers, tellers and coffee hour.

We also have a new opportunity – Sound Dude. Sound dudes do not have to be male, nor do they have to be ultra-techy. The sound dude of the day will need to put batteries in the mics and set up the sound system before the service, check volume levels on an iPad Mini during the service, and put everything away afterwards. S/he will also deal with minor troubleshooting during the service and may assist with the projectors. Training will be provided!

Please let Stef know how you can help. Thank you.

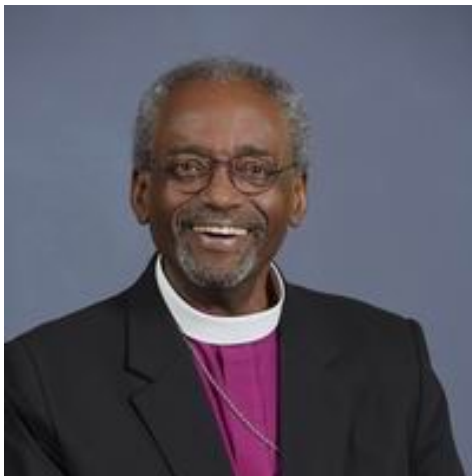
Christmas Carol Concert

A big thank you to Music Director, John Cribb, and the St Benedict's Singers for another amazing carol concert. The church was packed with over 120 people, and the compliments poured in. One couple said they had come every year for the past five years and this was even better! Thanks too to Maria Kelly and Barbara Schipper who organized cookies and cider afterwards.

There's a video available here: <https://youtu.be/DrcQJoqhhCM>; and a second one will soon be on the website.



Who is the Presiding Bishop?



St Benedict's is a church within Diocese of El Camino Real which runs up and down the coast between Palo Alto and Nipomo. Our diocese is one of over one hundred in the wider Episcopal Church which includes dioceses in some other countries such as Haiti and Ecuador. The Presiding Bishop (PB) is elected every nine years to be the Bishop who presides over the House of Bishops. This is a full-time job so the bishop elected has to leave his diocese.

Our current PB, Michael Curry is the first black person to be elected to this position, and he follows on the heels of the first female PB, Katharine Jefferts-Schori.

Bishop Curry has a wonderful "black church" preaching style and is a warm and disarming man. He has chosen evangelism and racism are the two big issues for The Episcopal Church during his time in office. (continued on the next page)

(Presiding Bishop, continued)

It is a great honor for a little diocese like our own to get a visit from the PB early in his term – he's about one year in. This opportunity may not come again. Even if you didn't sign up by the deadline in December, there will be room at the convention hall in Salinas on January 7th, starting at 9:30. Please contact Danna if you want to carpool. (office@stbenslosos.org).



A RABBI LOOKS AT GOD: God of Becoming and Relationship

by Rabbi Bradley Artson

January 12, 19, 26 and February 2

To register for the discussions, contact Donna Ross at donnaross@charter.net.

When you register, you'll receive information on how to purchase the book, and a copy of the Introduction to get you started on your reading.

Rabbi Artson introduces the book:

I wrote this book for you if you want to be able to locate your life in a single, encompassing story, one that includes everything from the first moment the universe began until yesterday, a narrative that embraces deepest personal meaning, a yearning to love and be loved, a quest for social justice and compassion.

I wrote this book for you if you feel wounded by conventional religion, with its domineering God and not infrequent assaults on common sense, scientific method, and human dignity, or if you feel wounded by combative secularism and its not infrequent assaults on any real sense of purpose, transcendence, or belonging.

I wrote this book for Jews who are seeking a way to integrate their admiration for Jewish values and ethics with a spirituality that cannot put on blinders and forget what their minds learned in science labs and history classes.

I also wrote this book for non-Jews who are interested in what wisdom Judaism might contribute to their lives but cannot endure yet another system of counterintuitive faith and mandated obedience.

And I wrote this book for all of us, beyond labels, seeking a way to celebrate the dynamism and unity of this marvelous, mysterious, awe-filled world. Finally, I wrote this book for myself, so I could continue to hold onto Torah as a way of life without abandoning or betraying my best values and the people I love most.

Lectio Divina

Each week in the Benediction Weekly you will see a list of verses for Lectio Divina (Latin for "Divine Reading"). It is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word.

Lectio is not Bible study, but a kind of prayer .

Lectio is not learning *what the words means*, but listening for the *Word that gives meaning*.

This is how you do it...

Read the passage slowly, silently or aloud. Take a few minutes for silent reflection, and identify the words that speak to you.

Read the passage a second time, and listen to the text again. Ask yourself, "How does this speak to my life today?"

Read the passage a third time, and ask yourself, "What do I believe God wants me to be...or do? Is God inviting me to change in any way?"

Conclude with prayer (not a prayer of words, but a time of remaining open to the Spirit who speaks through the *lectio*).

Make a record of the thoughts, images, and insights that came in your time of prayer.

Upcoming Events

Star Party, January 6, 6pm

Yes, it's time for the **Star Party on Epiphany, January 6**. We'll gather at the church at 6 pm for a potluck dinner, and much merriment as we welcome the three kings or queens of the Epiphany, add the magi to the creche and then "undress" the church, taking down all the decorations and burning the greens. If you wish, bring some twigs from your own decorations to burn.

And there'll be a special star word to get you started on your year...

Bishop's Visit, January 15

Bishop Mary will be here on January 15th for her regular visitation. During the service she will be confirming JW and Michael Lucas, and receiving Joan Ghilotti and Margaret Fegan into the Episcopal Church. If you would like to be confirmed or received or baptized please talk to Caro+ and send Danna an email (office@stbenslosos.org).

Following the service and coffee hour, Bishop Mary will visit and bless the Abundance Shop.

Please plan to be at church that morning to welcome her. There will be an 8am service for those who need an earlier time or a quieter worship experience.

Prayers for our Country, January 19, 7pm

On the eve of the Inauguration, we will have a special service to pray for our country at this time of change. Everyone is welcome, regardless of political beliefs!

Exploring our Spiritual Gifts, February 4, 9:30 - 12

Each one of us has been given unique gifts and abilities. In the Body of Christ there are many different parts which work together to make up the whole. In this morning workshop led by Caro+ we will use Bible Study and a variety of exercises to help us discern the gifts that we have been given and the calling that God has for us today.

Pre-registration is required as an on-line assessment is involved. Please let Danna (office@stbenslosos.org) know that you plan to attend.

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