

# 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**

Anne Kanter, Sr. Warden

Rod Morse, Jr. Warden

Pamela Bleisch Strawn

Lisa Gonzalez

Esta Kandarian

Barbara Schippers

Kathie West

**Benediction Publisher:**

The Rev. Dr. Caroline J. A. Hall

**Benediction Editor:**

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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:**

A couple of weeks ago I asked you to consider the special flavor of St. Benedict's. Later, flipping through "From Yurt to Cathedral" a document written by St. Ben's in 1995 which talks about our ideal church, I found the sentence, "To us, the worship service, wherever it is celebrated, is linked inextricably to serving God in all persons and in the community as a whole."



I think this is part of our unique flavor.

Obviously it is only a part because there are many churches which would share the same ideal. But we have crafted liturgy which often challenges and inspires us, liturgy which helps us to grow and to experience the presence of God. Liturgy which at its best opens our hearts to the whole of creation. Our worship is at the very center of our faith community. When we gather we most often gather for worship and it is there that we celebrate the major events in each other's lives – whether the birth of a grandchild, a medical procedure, or the death of a beloved friend.

For our worship is not separate from the rest of our lives. It is part of the rhythm of our corporate and individual spiritual breathing. We put time and space aside for common worship, in order to honor its centrality, but our life in Christ does not end there. At the end of each eucharist we are sent out once again to love and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves.

For many years St. Ben's has been concerned to become simultaneously financially viable and housed in a church building. We are just about there. Last year we invited a consultant to help us think about the next steps for developing the property. Now that we have a plan we can let that go until the Spirit moves us, and focus on the mission we have here in Los Osos - the unique role we have to play in this community and beyond.

In the past couple of years we have been encouraged by Deacon Sharon to be more involved locally, not just as individuals but as a church. In the past few months we have used the new Abundance Shop location for carol singing, to host a Chamber Mixer, and to distribute Ashes to Go at the beginning of Lent.

In addition to our ongoing commitment to the Prado Day Center and to helping those God sends to us, several of our members are passionately involved in work to assist the homeless: Barbara Schipper through Hopes Village; Jo Oliver through HomeShareSLO; and Barbara Hirahara through the People Helping People Resource Center. In addition, as a result of conversations we have been having at St Benedict's, there is a Los Osos community meeting planned for Monday March 6 to talk about ways that we might help the homeless here.

This year, as St Ben's marks the 30<sup>th</sup> year of our life as an Episcopal Congregation in Los Osos, we plan to celebrate and to discern. The celebration will take place when Bishop Mary visits us on June 8<sup>th</sup> for an anniversary service and to bless the Great Room, and at a big party planned for October 20<sup>th</sup>. The discernment will be the creation of a 5 year mission plan. Canon Brian Nordwick of the diocesan staff will be working with us to create this. These are exciting times and I am grateful to God and to each of you,

Blessings

Caro+

## Mary Elizabeth

Caro+

The Rev. Mary Elizabeth Pratt-Horsley, Rector Emerita of St. Benedict's, Los Osos, died unexpectedly in her sleep on Sunday morning, following many years of living with rheumatoid arthritis and more recently with COPD.

Mary Elizabeth spent much of her childhood in Mexico City and Caracas and then lived in Paris for 8 years as a young adult, so she was fluent in both Spanish and French. A long-time member of St Thomas, Sunnyvale, Mary Elizabeth taught French at a Bay Area community college. She studied at CDSP and was ordained in 1995. She used her familiarity with Latino culture as director of the Santa Maria Urban Mission in San Jose from 1995 to 2000.

Mary Elizabeth came to St. Benedict's in 2000 at a time when the church was in considerable turmoil and conflict. It was during her time as rector that the church building was moved from Camp Roberts, and that services began in the as yet unfinished sanctuary. It was also during this time that the diocese strongly urged St. Benedict's to close as it was thought to be an unsustainable parish.



However, Mary Elizabeth's ministry brought healing to the congregation and the vision to keep moving forward against great odds. The courage and optimism that she brought to her own life brought strength to the church and she continued as Rector until early 2006 when her health made it difficult for her to continue in active ministry.

Mary Elizabeth was not only a linguist but an accomplished quilter and a musician. She shared her gifts and her love freely with everyone she met.

Even in retirement she continued to offer her gifts to the church, leading St Benedict's healing ministry and providing opportunities for social connection such as Movie Nights, Meet Me in San Luis, and the Lunch Bunch. Mary Elizabeth was an active member of the clergy team, continuing to lead the smaller services even after she slipped and fell while celebrating the main Sunday service. Her final sermon is available on our [website](#). A celebration of Mary Elizabeth's life will be held on March 18 at 3:30 with Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves presiding.

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## Vestry Report

Pamela Bleisch

Your Vestry/ Parish Council for 2017 consists of Anne Kanter (Senior Warden), Rod Morse (Junior Warden), Lisa Gonzalez (Treasurer), Pamela Bleisch Strawn (Clerk), Esta Kandarian, Ken Kenyon, Francis Rivinus, Barbara Schippers, and Kathie West, with the rector, Rev. Caro, presiding.

The basic responsibilities of the Parish Council are to help define and articulate the mission of the congregation; to support the church's mission by word and deed, and to ensure effective organization and planning. The Vestry, in addition to those responsibilities, also manages resources and finances. The senior warden is a support person for the rector, and leads the parish in the rector's absence. The junior warden has responsibility for church property and buildings.

Please pray for our work this year:

Holy God, the navigator of our souls, hear us as we hold up before you our Parish Council/ Vestry. Be with us in our yearning to chart a course together, inspired by the presence of your Spirit. Give courage to our clergy, all of our leaders, and each of us, as we voyage forward with your blessing, to your glory. AMEN



## Finances

Although we finished 2016 in the black as far as our income statement was concerned, we actually used up a lot of our cash reserves. This was because we had budgeted to re-amortize the loan and reduce our monthly payments by \$1500. Due to circumstances beyond our control we did not do so and continued to pay over \$2000 each month. As our monthly interest payments had dropped, most of this went to pay off principal and so did not appear on the income statement. So the good news is that we reduced the debt quite significantly and now owe less than \$80k. The bad news is that we used up about \$18k of our cash reserve. We're not broke but it is always prudent to have a good cash reserve both to tide us over the months when income is lower and to be in hand if and when unexpected emergencies arise.

We are grateful to God who has blessed us with so much. At one time it would have been inconceivable that we had a cash reserve! We are also grateful to all those whose contributions to the Blessing the Future campaign are a big reason that the debt is going down fast.

On Ash Wednesday we delivered to the bank all the paperwork they requested in order to re-amortize the loan (we had to go back and get a new resolution from the diocese and several signatures). Hopefully our April payment will be the first one at \$510. The reduction in payment is what has allowed us to agree to pay the Rector three-quarters time for a full twelve months of the year, instead of the ten months agreement she has had for the past 12 years. This will provide for greater continuity in our life together.

## Building

In order to complete the current County permit, we need to make some changes to improve our ADA compliance. These changes will include some small things like new signs and some big things like new doors into the sanctuary.

We also need to resolve the fire sprinkler system. The Parish Council has agreed to re-visit the sprinkler issue in July. At that time we will discern whether to go ahead with a new loan to install it, or whether to remove the pipes from inside the sanctuary and accept that they will have to be replaced at some point in the future.

Maria Kelly has started work on the things which are in the far corner room. These all have to be either (1) stored or (2) thrown out. There is very little storage space available. Once that is complete, we will start to use that room as the small meeting room/ Sunday School room and will repaint the current small meeting room prior to making that the Parish Office where Danna will have her desk and the main PC. At that point, Lisa will start doing the book-keeping on site as well.

## Grounds and Facilities Vision Plan

We do not yet have the final, final, final plan. We are still waiting for the final renderings and a few edits. This plan has been prepared for us by our consultant, Adrienne Harris. Shortly after our annual meeting her father, Fred, whom we have been praying for, died. This has of course delayed the final version. Once we have it, it will be available on the website.

The plan updates earlier designs for the labyrinth, chapel etc. which have part of our vision for the west side property since the very early days. A columbarium has been added to the design at the request of several members. There is

(Vision Plan, continued)

no immediate intention to pursue further development but this plan will provide a guide to the Parish going forward.

There have been a couple of mis-conceptions. The first is that this is our strategic plan. That is not the case. This is simply a vision plan for the facilities so that in the event someone wants to give us a gift – say for a chapel – we know where we will put it and some of the planning hurdles we'll need to consider.

The second is that we have “a chunk of change” to spend on this, which we might better use helping the homeless. That is not true. Again, this is just a vision plan to guide us in the future as money, needs and inspiration dictate. We will this year be creating a 5 year mission plan to guide our ministry to the homeless and to others in Los Osos and beyond.

There are many people in the parish who would like us to develop some kind of housing on the “field” between the church and Clark Valley Road. We do not have the resources to do this on our own and have started a very preliminary conversation with People's Self-Help Housing to see if it meets their criteria. If so, there will be a long multi-year planning time during which we can decide what we would like to use the land for, and whether we want to partner with them. People's Self-Help Housing builds homes for disadvantaged families and individuals and provides them with on-going support.

## Deacon Dispatch

Sharon G. Dalrymple

It must be spring! Trees are starting to bloom, birdies are singing and the grass is green. Oh wait, the grass has been green. Central Cal has been blessed with rain abundant. Thank you God!

And, WE have been blessed. Our parish is finally out of major debt, the great room is but a teeny bit away from being completed, we have drawings depicting how St. Ben's might look down the road, and the best part---WE HAVE EACH OTHER!

Now it is time to take a breath and contemplate our future. For those of you who have started the book “Slow Church” keep on reading. For those who haven't yet started, order a copy because it opens up possibilities for drawing even closer to each other as well as others in our own Los Osos. In reaching out, in asking to partner, in asking to support our own neighbors, we can help each other to become what Christ Jesus has asked us to do.

I remember “One small step for man—one giant leap for mankind”. That is how I look at reaching out to our brothers and sisters right here in our own backyard. I look at ways to do that, and there are many. We are looking at starting a “dog walking” group (or if you don't have one, you can borrow one of mine!—or you get just walk to enjoy the fellowship). How about a knitting/sewing group. You can be working on your own project. This is just a time and place to get together to share tea or coffee and visit with each other. BRING A FRIEND!!! That's the whole idea!

And, there are still many volunteer opportunities for you in our Abundance Shop, which helps support our parish as well as other local charities. Look at your schedule and see if you don't have a few hours a week to sort clothes or maybe do a little cashiering. Heck, if I can do it, anybody can! Francis and Karin are doing a bang up job, but they need a little help. Actually in the coming months, they need quite a lot of help because Shelley and I will be leaving, and there are some folks who are retiring after lots of years of service. So, as your deacon who dearly loves you all, please think about supporting the Abundance Shop so it can continue to be a wonderful asset to our parish and the community!

Look at your calendars! Reach out and touch somebody!! Blessings and Peace to All.

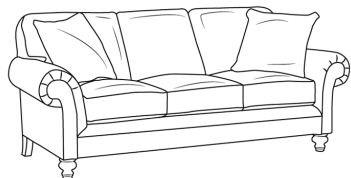




## Living Room Conversations

How do we have conversations when we disagree with one another?

Living room conversations are not debates. They are structured conversations intended to enhance understanding. Living room conversations can transform distrust and discord into understanding — paving the way for collaborative solutions. When we have authentic, respectful conversations we strengthen our relationships and advance our understanding of the challenges, opportunities and solutions before us. You and your conversation partners may change your minds on a topic, or you might not. Either way, these conversations will allow you to better understand the topic and better know the people you're talking with.



Last May, Karin Cake and Caro+ attended a training on Living Room conversations and Caro+ has incorporated some of the principles into some of our meetings. It is an excellent way to connect across political and other social differences.

There will be a training on March 18 from 9:30 to 2:30 at St. Stephens in San Luis Obispo for members of all the SLO deanery churches to learn more about this method so that we can use it as a tool for conversing with each other about difficult topics and for talking to our neighbors. If you would like to go and learn more, please let Caro+ know. Everyone is welcome. Please take a brown bag lunch. [www.livingroomconversations.org](http://www.livingroomconversations.org)

## St. Ben's In the News!

St. Ben's Church and members of our congregation have received some media attention in recent weeks.

In January, Lisa Gonzalez was recognized in the *San Luis Obispo Tribune* for making two substantial donations to the church and the YMCA totaling \$790,000. Lisa appeared in a photo with Rev. Caro+ and YMCA CEO Monica Grant, along with a news brief in the Good News section.

Lisa has spent nearly 20 years supporting local nonprofit organizations and St. Ben's by serving on boards and committees, as well as providing low-cost bookkeeping services. Thanks to her generous donations, St. Benedict's was able to retire a portion of our building loan. The YMCA is creating a capital development plan, which will most likely include a renovation of its existing San Luis Obispo facility.

"I either gave it away or it went straight to the government," said Lisa. "I preferred it go to two organizations near and dear to my heart."

In February a photograph taken by administrative assistant Danna Dykstra-Coy of a rainbow over St. Ben's appeared on the cover of the *Bay News* and in the U.K.'s Anglican newspaper *Church Times* to illustrate an article by Huw Spanner about climate change. Danna enjoys photographing our beautiful area and happened to be in the right place at the right time to capture the blessing of a rainbow's arch over our church between storms.

Additionally, the Tribune has recently published letters by Rev. Caro+ and church members. Caro addressed the Cal Poly visit by alt-right provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos on behalf of People of Faith for Justice. She advised San Luis Obispo activists to ignore Milo, rather than give him the satisfaction of a demonstration against his presence. "Let's use the time to do the opposite of what he advocates," Caro+ wrote. "Let us reach out to those we don't know and spend the evening making friends with strangers."



(In The News! continued)

Pam Bleisch Strawn wrote a letter about Franklin Graham's inauguration prayer that she described as a pointed message of religious intolerance. Pam addressed Graham's statement that there is one God and one mediator between God and men, who is Jesus Christ. She wrote that Graham's message deliberately antagonized anyone who does not believe in Christ. "I believe in Christ; I also believe that God is loved by many names," Pam wrote. "I am a U.S. citizen who loves her country, and I respect the bedrock principles of freedom and separation of church and state."

Jay Bonestell is a frequent contributor to the Letters to the Editor. His topics highlight the concerns of policies that harm the poor, minorities, the environment and hypocrisy in party politics.

## Hope's Village

Barbara Schippers

There are people living here in San Luis Obispo County who seek shelter on a daily basis. I have been an advocate for the homeless through a non-profit started five years ago called Hope's Village of SLO.

Please take a look at our website: [www.hopesvillageofslo.com](http://www.hopesvillageofslo.com)



We have great hopes of building a community of tiny homes and forming a sustainable village to house 50 of our chronically homeless people. Hope's Village is more than "housing" -- it is community. Where ever communities are formed and nurtured, chronic homelessness ends. San Luis Obispo County doesn't have to invent the wheel.

An example is in Austin, Texas (if you have a computer please watch this 3 minute video: <https://youtu.be/27XDnHnzdck>) it is proof that communities based on the tiny home model are already successful. They are places of healing for people and they are respectful of Mother Earth.

I am asking that St. Benedict's join in helping to make this vision of tiny homes for the homeless in SLO County come true by advocating with HVSLO for the homeless. I am hoping that we will invite other congregations to join us in accomplishing this goal. By working together we can change the course of homelessness and make a difference in people's lives.

Developing a community such as Hope's Village doesn't happen overnight. It takes months. It takes years. St. Benedict's has been building a community, including the physical building of our church, for decades. Will our congregation also resolve to be in it for the long haul for people who are homeless?

Please watch the 3 minute video. It's a vision of what we can accomplish here, in our county and in our time, by working together. I hope that all of you feel the spirit to join in helping our neighbors living on the street. Bless us... each and every one of us!

## Ashes to Go

We usually expect people to come to church, but sometimes we have to take church to the people. That's what Deacon Sharon and Caro+ did on Ash Wednesday. We "ashed" 47 people who are not members of St. Benedict's, and 6 of our own members.



## Welcome!

We welcome Theresa Simons as a new member of Christ's Church. We baptized Theresa on Sunday February 26. When Bishop Mary was here in January she confirmed J.W., Joan Ghilotti and Michael Lucas and welcomed Barbara Schippers and Margaret Fegan into the Episcopal Church



## Mutual Ministry Review

Thank you to those of you who completed the Mutual Ministry Review this year. As always, there were some specific suggestions which we will consider going forward. In general, the Parish Council heard that **what we're doing well includes:**

Openness	Support in hard times	Meeting individual needs
Tradition	Worship	Providing opportunities to serve
Christ centered	Excellent readers	Reaching (some) goals
Good taste! Aesthetics	Depth to theology/preaching, etc.	Effort to be involved in the community
Kindness	Conversation about Scripture readings	Outreach to homeless
Inspirational clergy	We have articulate people	Abundance Shop
Inclusion/everyone	Welcome: Veranda, sanctuary, lay-out, singing, music	
Sense of family/community		

### Areas that we need to pay attention to include:

More members	Team building and volunteer recruitment	Leadership identification and training
How we welcome/integrate	More people for Sunday service rotas	Abundance Shop staffing
Creating a new church directory with interests/keywords		Financial stability
Increase rector to F/T in 5 years		Ethnic diversity

### Goals for 2017

As a result of the Mutual Ministry Review and the Parish Council retreat we have established the following goals for 2017:

Develop a 5-year mission plan, continuing to be involved in Los Osos	Plan for sprinkler system by October 2017	Newcomer events
Volunteer coordination - Identify potential leaders and support volunteers	Permit completion	Church directory with interests
Building	Address ADA compliance	New brochure
	Encourage civil discourse	Rainbow banner
	Welcoming and integrating people	Create a sustainable Hollister institute Leadership team



# Hollister Institute

## **The Worshipping Community:**

Praying with the God of Becoming and Relationship

**Meeting on Thursdays – March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 – from 10–11:45 am**

Inspired by Rabbi Bradley Artson's "God of Becoming and Relationship" we will focus on questions such as:  
Why do we pray?

Why do we reflect on Scripture and other sacred texts?

How do we make peace with each other?

How do we share God's peace with the world around us?

To register for these discussions, and for more information, email [donnaross@charter.net](mailto:donnaross@charter.net).

## **America's Original Sin** by Jim Wallis

**Thursdays at 7pm March 9, 16, 30 and April 6 (no discussion on March 23rd)**

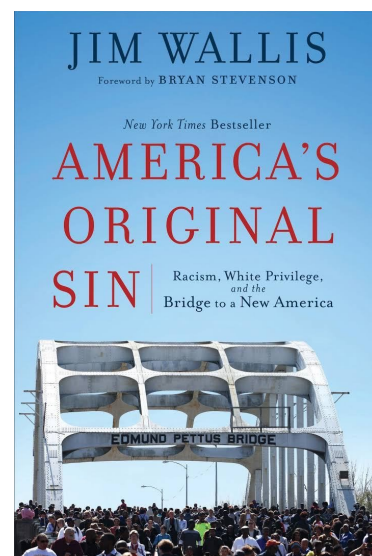
America's problem with race has deep roots, with the country's foundation tied to the near extermination of one race of people and the enslavement of another. Racism is truly our nation's original sin.

"It's time we right this unacceptable wrong," says bestselling author and leading Christian activist Jim Wallis. Fifty years ago, Wallis was driven away from his faith by a white church that considered dealing with racism to be taboo. His participation in the civil rights movement brought him back when he discovered a faith that commands racial justice. Yet as recent tragedies confirm, we continue to suffer from the legacy of racism. The old patterns of white privilege are colliding with the changing demographics of a diverse nation. The church has been slow to respond, and Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week.

In *America's Original Sin*, Wallis offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. He speaks candidly to Christians—particularly white Christians—urging them to cross a new bridge toward racial justice and healing.

Whenever divided cultures and gridlocked power structures fail to end systemic sin, faith communities can help lead the way to grassroots change. Probing yet positive, biblically rooted yet highly practical, this book shows people of faith how they can work together to overcome the embedded racism in America, galvanizing a movement to cross the bridge to a multiracial church and a new America.

Led by Caro+





## Upcoming Events

### Holy Week, April 11-April 16

During Lent we focus on spiritual discipline and inner work as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the great mystery of Easter. This culminates in Holy Week when we remember the last days of Jesus' life, his death and resurrection. We will have services each day during Holy Week:

Tuesday April 11: Vespers 5:30

Wednesday April 12: Blessing of Oils and Renewal of vows with Bishop Mary, St James Paso Robles at 6pm

Maundy Thursday, April 13: Stations of the Cross 6:15

- Eucharist with foot washing 7pm

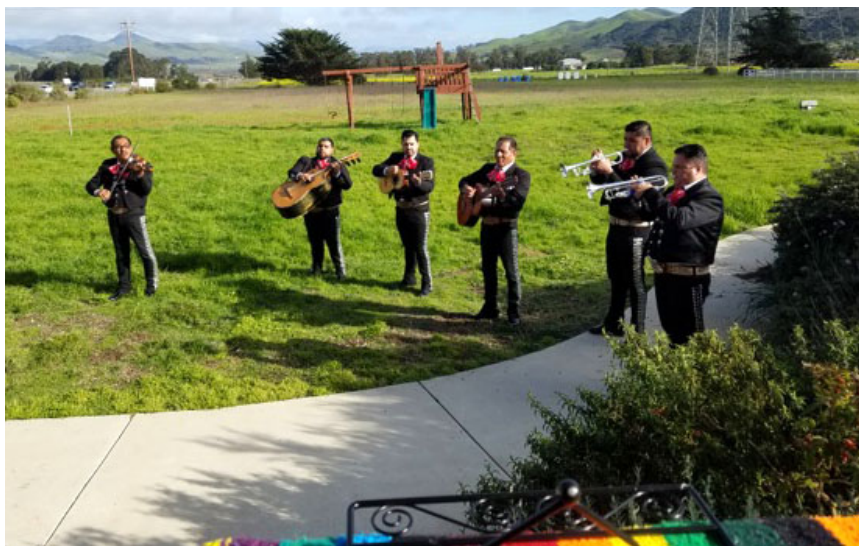
Good Friday April 14: Liturgy with veneration of the Cross 12noon

- Stations of the Cross 2:30pm
- Tenebrae with combined choirs, Trinity United Methodist 7:30pm

Holy Saturday, April 15: Easter Vigil 7:45pm

Easter Sunday: services at 8 and 10:30

A Mariachi band performs at the Elizabeth Pickering memorial



At least 25 from St. Ben's participated in the Women's March on January 21



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