

# 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**  
Maria Kelly, Sr. Warden  
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Francis Rivinus  
Kathie West

## **Benediction Publisher:**

The Rev. Dr. Caroline J. A. Hall

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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:**

The season of Epiphany is here with its theme of revelation: God's revelation of Godself in Jesus Christ and in the small and large encounters we experience with the Holy Spirit.

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit reveals God to us is through Scripture. As we read the words of those who have followed God before us and have written down their understandings of the movement of God, so the Holy Spirit interprets their words to us. If we choose to listen, we can find the very words taking on new life as they reveal divine wisdom and love and holiness to us.

There are many ways to do this. Hopefully, the Sunday sermon serves to make the Word relevant to our lives. There is also a small booklet Forward Day by Day that is available by the ushers table. Each day it provides a simple meditation on a Bible verse. If you prefer to get it on-line it's available at:

<http://prayer.forwardmovement.org/>.

And this month we start a new Hollister Institute class which will be based on Richard Rohr's book, Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality.

God is not limited to sacred text; God may be found in poetry and spiritual reading from many traditions; in our relationships with one another; and in the way we respond to the events of our lives. I encourage us all to pay especial attention during these few weeks of Epiphany (January 6 to February 9) to where God is speaking to us, and then to share it with one another.

As we take the time and the courage to share our experience of divine Spirit working in large and small ways in our lives, in inklings, in coincidences, in answered prayer, through Scripture or through nature, so we amplify the revelation. And who among us does not want to have a greater and deeper experience of God and God's amazing love for us?

This is one of the great advantages of faith community; we can encourage one another and help each other to find a deeper knowledge of the reign of God. It's like the logs of a fire – pull one out and it is likely to gradually stop burning – put it back in again and it finds new energy in the flames of the fire.

In this season of revelation let us inspire one another with our revelations of God and of God's grace.

With love in Christ,  
Caro+

Rev. Caroline J. A. Hall



## Blessing the Future

Most of you know that St Benedict's received a large gift of stock which we will be selling over a few days. We do not know exactly how much it will realize, but since the market has dropped quite a bit since we received the news (it took several more weeks for the transfer to complete) we now anticipate that it will be about \$390,000. We also received a most generous gift of \$13,000 to repay the balance of the money we owed the diocese, which we have been repaying at a slow but steady pace for several years.

This leaves us with approximately \$410,000 that we owe the bank and \$32,200 which we owe one individual member who made us a generous interest free loan over ten years ago in order to get the roof on the church. That person would like their money back at this point.

At our special Parish Meeting in November you gave the Parish Council input on the way you would like to see us use this gift. There was strong support for repaying at least 50% and maybe more of the outstanding bank loan with a particular emphasis on freeing up funds to paying staff a fair rate for their work. There was also support for seed funding an endowment fund, and for funding the Building fund in order to begin to prepare for some major anticipated repairs. There are many different ideas for developing the property, so we might consider using some of the money to develop a staged plan for the grounds.

The bank seems happy to restructure the loan for the remainder of its eight year term. Using that information and the actual money that we realize from selling the stock, the vestry will bring a budget to the Parish Meeting on January 31 both for the annual operating budget and also the use of the funds that don't go to pay off debt.

## Rector's Discretionary Fund and Homelessness

Caro Hall+

A couple of weeks ago there was a young woman waiting for me after the 10:30 service. She asked if I remembered her and I had to admit that I didn't, but when she said that she and her husband had just got back from Arizona it all flooded back. This young couple called me a few years ago saying that they were planning to go, with their baby to her father's home in Arizona, but someone had stolen all their money. I was pretty skeptical about their story, especially when they told me that they had been thrown out of Prado Day Center. I gave them enough money to buy gas to get to Arizona, but figured they'd probably spend it on drugs or alcohol.

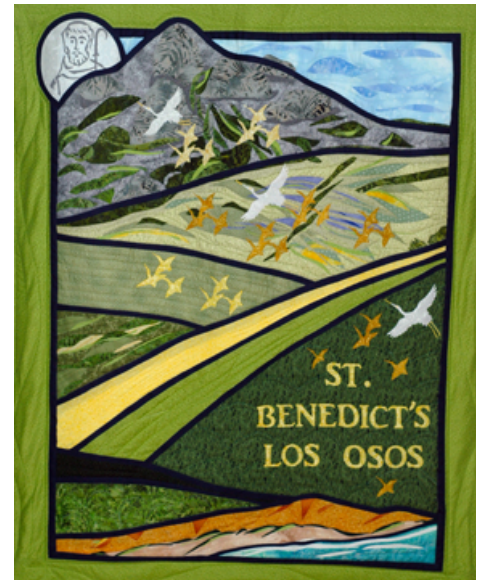
They didn't. They spent it getting to Arizona where they were able to get clean and sober, have another child and get work. But then her husband lost his job and things were difficult with her dad, so they decided to come back and now they are on the priority list for housing in SLO but having difficulty paying for diapers and baby food. I gave them some more money from the Discretionary Fund.

In the last month, the number of calls on the Rector's Discretionary Fund from people who are homeless has skyrocketed. We have heard from families, people with disabilities, people who are medically fragile... all living in their cars or under bushes.

St Benedict's has long supported People's Kitchen in San Luis Obispo, the Prado Day Center, and the Maxine Lewis Homeless Shelter. Yet these are little more than a bandaid on a more serious underlying problem. Housing is expensive and difficult to get. Even if someone can afford to pay rent, there is practically nothing available. Hopes Village continues to look for a 5 acre parcel where they can create a small village of little dwellings. But even this is not a permanent solution.

San Luis Obispo needs more affordable housing which means higher-density housing. Our county housing and land use plans tend to favor large houses on large lots. These don't help the working poor. Right now, the Community Plan for Los Osos is being revised. This will provide the blueprint for development in the town and surrounding area for many years to come. You can read it here: <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/loplan.htm>

I encourage you to take a look at the plan and contact Kerry Brown [kbrown@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:kbrown@co.slo.ca.us) to let her know that you want to see a significant increase in affordable housing in Los Osos.



## New Camaldoli Retreat

Brian Spolarich

In November I spent a few days at a personal retreat at The New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur. Alan mentioned the fact of this to a few of you, which generated some surprise and curiosity. I thought it might be useful to share some of my reasons for taking a personal retreat, my experiences there, and thoughts on how a similar practice might enrich your spiritual life.

I have always been curious about intentional and spiritual communities, and they have held something of a fascination and attraction for me much of my life. In fact, it was through reading Kathleen Norris' *The Cloister Walk* during Holy Week in 2011 that I became aware of Benedictine spirituality, and when I moved to the Central Coast that summer, it seemed somehow appropriate to visit St. Benedict's.

This trip to The Hermitage was in fact my second such retreat, the first one in spring of 2013. Both retreats came after a period of intense activity and change at my work, and are now part of my personal practice of self-care. I live with a mild form of Bipolar Disorder, which I manage through medication, psychotherapy, and learning to listen to the needs of my mind and body. Sometimes this includes solitude and retreat from the demands of daily life.

The Hermitage at Big Sur is a monastic community in the Benedictine tradition, the rich history and details of which you can find in Wikipedia. The brothers there offer a marvelous ministry of hospitality, worship, prayer, delicious food, and a fabulous bookstore. The property is perched atop the cliffs above Highway 1, and offer magnificent views of the coast to the south and the ocean. Accommodations include simply-appointed individual rooms in the guest house, along with more private individual hermitages. Silence is observed where practical, except for sung prayer during the Liturgy of the Hours observed four times per day.

My retreats at New Camaldoli are typically three nights. I rise early, attend Lauds, spend the morning and afternoon reading and walking, attend Mass and Vespers, and meditate in the evening. Having such a long period of time for reading and quiet for me is a real delight. I take books for spiritual reading as well as those more for fun, including classic science fiction and fantasy, often rereading books that I love. Books have always been a passion, and I feel as if I am in the company of friends both old and new.

I do not consider myself a particularly "good" religious or spiritual person, and my spiritual practice is irregular at best. But there is for me in the beauty, quiet, and prayer of a place like the Hermitage an easing or "spaciousness" that is harder to find in daily life, and sometimes in that spaciousness I feel the presence of the Holy.

We are blessed to have this community at our doorstep. Perhaps your personal spiritual journey might include a visit? Wherever you are on that journey, I pray you will find something transformative atop the cliffs in the silence at Big Sur.



The Altar and Rotunda in the Sanctuary at New Camaldoli

## The Shire @ Canterbury

Berkeley Johnson

Much has happened in the time since I last wrote to you in November. As I am sure most of you know, a significant event occurred on the campus at Cal Poly this past fall when a student organization got approval from the university to erect a "free-speech" wall on Dexter Lawn. The wall quickly turned into an opportunity for students publicly and anonymously to post hate speech directed at the school's under-represented minority communities. Regardless of the free-speech rights of the dominant white, heterosexual, Christian majority at Cal Poly, it revealed the lack of tolerance and understanding of diversity that plagues the campus and the chilling and often hostile atmosphere that minorities encounter there on a daily basis.

When students began to organize and demonstrate against this hate speech, they were met initially with derision by many students who argued that they were simply exercising their 1st Amendment right to freedom of speech, and that if minorities can't "handle" the free expression of ideas on a college campus, how are they going to be prepared for the "real world.?" Terms like "cry-bullies" appeared, seeking to cast the students who were being marginalized as the intolerant ones. (continued)

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The university responded by holding a forum, where students of color and other under-represented groups courageously got up and spoke about the daily instances of discrimination they encounter and, sadly, of their regret over having chosen to come to Cal Poly. Clearly, the time and need for institutional action had arrived, and to his credit, university president Jeffrey Armstrong saw this and spoke of his own lack of awareness of privilege based on his upbringing and his recognition of the issues and challenges facing the university, as well as the need to implement reforms to make Cal Poly a more open and welcoming environment for all students.

From the outset, I recognized this as an opportunity to minister to and support the students who had organized into the the SLO Solidarity group. I was careful not to intervene or attempt to guide the group in any way; but rather, I showed up at their meetings and offered myself as a pastoral resource and support to them. Also, because of the nature of online communication (I trust we've all experienced the "Comments" sections) I was able gently to re-direct students who were criticizing the group's existence or methodology back to the university faculty and staff who teach and have training in anti-oppression work.

As I write to you, the students are now on their winter break, but they plan to resume with this work when they return in January. The SLO Solidarity group has gone from a marginalized group to one with strong support now from many corners. In my time here, I have never before seen the Cal Poly faculty and staff publicly support an initiative like this, and the larger SLO activist community has come out in support as well. Reforms such as diversity training and awareness, which are present on other campuses around the country, are being discussed, and it appears that Cal Poly is now finally headed in that direction.

Most of all, my ability to serve publicly in this capacity as a chaplain gives the students a vision of spiritual and pastoral leadership that most of them have never encountered before. For this, I am thankful beyond measure for my formation and training in the Episcopal Church, and for your support of this Canterbury Ministry over the years. I have offered our space at The Shire to the students for organizing as well as respite from their work and studies, and I hope to continue to develop this relationship as 2016 progresses. Thank you for all you do to support our campus ministry here in SLO.

## The Paris Conference on Climate Change

John Horsley

Following the Hollister series on *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis's encyclical on the environmental crisis, especially climate change, some of the participants agreed to continue meeting to follow up on the discussions. The "Green Group" will also report from time to time on significant developments related to climate change. The publication of *Laudato Si* was timed to influence the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP – 21) in Paris that has just reached a successful conclusion, and so our first report will cover the agreement obtained at this important event.

Since the start of the industrial era the average global surface temperature has already risen almost 1° C (1.8° F). An average surface temperature rise of 2° C is considered to be the threshold above which climate change will lead to very dangerous, perhaps catastrophic extreme weather events and rising sea levels. The conference set a target for an increase in temperature of "well below" 2° C, compared to the pre-industrial era, with a call to make an effort to keep the increase no more than 1.5° C. The 2° C target requires fossil fuels such as oil and coal to be completely phased out by 2060, and the 1.5° C target would require them to be phased out much sooner, a very ambitious target.

Before the conference 186 participating countries made pledges specifying the amount of reductions in emissions of "greenhouse gases" (carbon dioxide, methane) they were prepared to make. The pledges will be monitored by setting up a schedule of regular reviews of progress every five years. However, the total reduction in emissions that would be achieved even if all countries followed up on their pledges is not enough to reach the 2° C target, so countries are strongly encouraged to develop plans to go beyond their pledges and gradually increase their reductions in emissions over time. The aim is to reduce net emissions of greenhouse gases to zero in the second half of the century.

Some of the most difficult negotiations arose from the fact that countries are in very different stages of development. Countries in Europe and North America that have been industrialized for a long time are responsible for most of the increase in greenhouse gases, but developing countries will be the most affected by climate change. Financial assistance for developing (continued)

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countries to help them deal with the effects of climate change and install renewable sources of energy is simply a matter of justice. The agreement reinforced a commitment made by developed countries at a previous climate change conference to provide \$100 billion per year for these purposes by 2020 and called on the amount to be increased after 2025.

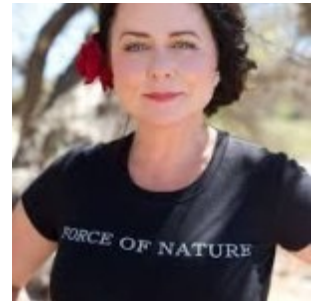
How likely is that the Paris Agreement will achieve its goals? The agreement is not a treaty, so its implementation will depend on international and domestic pressure on governments to follow through on their promises. This is where we can all have input. Environmental organizations such as 350.org and Creation Justice Ministries (which represents 38 Christian denominations, including the Episcopal Church) will play an important role in making sure the United States fulfills its commitments under the Agreement.

The Paris agreement is not perfect but it does represent the most ambitious attempt by the world community to tackle what is without doubt the planet's biggest challenge. As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said at the close of the conference, "Now the real work starts".

## Heidi Harmon to speak at Green group meeting

Join the St. Benedict's Green Group on Wednesday January 13 at 2:30 for a special meeting with speaker Heidi Harmon. Heidi is the chair of the Climate Change Task Force for Santa Lucia Sierra Club and Program Director for the local chapter of 350.org. She will be giving us her perspective on the Paris Climate Change Conference, and talking about what we can do locally.

**EVENT!**



## St. Benedict's on KCBX

Danna Dykstra-Coy

St. Benedict's has begun efforts to reach out to our community in non-traditional ways. You might've heard St. Ben's mentioned in public service announcements on KCBX public radio throughout December, inviting the community to our special church services and Christmas programs. St. Ben's Christmas Concert was also advertised in scrolling electronic bulletin announcements at the Los Osos Community Services District's bulletin board, located at the corner of Los Osos Valley Road and South Bay Boulevard.

In the fall we began using the non-profit Central Coast Welcome Service's monthly lists of new Los Osos homeowners to invite the newcomers to our regular church services, concerts and special services, such as the Blue Christmas service for those who are feeling sad during the holiday season. St. Ben's will continue mailing postcards to newcomers through the New Year, welcoming them to the community and inviting them to join us.

While the electronic bulletin announcements are free, church donations paid for the KCBX radio campaign. St. Ben's will continue to participate and explore various forms of media advertising with the support of continued donations. We are grateful for your contributions to expand our reach beyond our church walls.

## Art for the Sgt. House

Sylvia Barker

The art committee for Sgt. House (the Diocesan office which is a newly restored Craftsman home in Salinas) is seeking art to adorn its walls and celebrate the talented artists in our diocese. Art pieces may be loaned for display only or listed for sale. Art will be rotated on a regular basis and selected (juried in) by the committee. Fabric art (such as quilted wall hangings) and paintings should not be larger than approximately 50". Space is limited. Of particular interest is art which represents the Central Coast of California. There is no age requirement...Children are welcome to participate!

The committee is hoping to have selections displayed by Epiphany. Please contact Diane Coffin at dicopaso@gmail.com and include a photo, size of art piece and medium.

**Robin Williams, Episcopalian**

Comedian Robin Williams (1951-2014) was raised as an Episcopalian. For a television special he authored a comedic list, "Top Ten Reasons to be an Episcopalian". Here is the list...

10. No snake handling.
9. You can believe in dinosaurs.
8. Male and female God created them; male and female we ordain them.
7. You don't have to check your brains at the door.
6. Pew aerobics.
5. Church year is color-coded.
4. Free wine on Sunday.
3. All of the pageantry - none of the guilt.
2. You don't have to know how to swim to get baptized.
1. No matter what you believe, there's bound to be at least one other Episcopalian who agrees with you.



# Hollister Institute

## New Series Begins January 14 and concludes March 17.

The Hollister Institute invites you to join us in January as we discuss Richard Rohr's *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality*.

You can read and reflect with us online at [faithmatters.us/an-invitation-to-things-hidden/](http://faithmatters.us/an-invitation-to-things-hidden/) and/or participate through our discussion group on Thursday mornings at St. Benedict's, Los Osos (from 10am - noon).

Email [donnaross@charter.net](mailto:donnaross@charter.net) to register for the Thursday discussion group and/or to receive notification when new posts go up.



**Franciscan priest Richard Rohr** is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is the author of numerous books, including *Falling Upward: Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (2011); *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (2009); and *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (2008).

**Richard Rohr introduces *Things Hidden* by writing:** The Bible can be confusing because it records a very human history of our struggles with faith and doubt. But since Scripture continues to give us amazing new revelations from the Spirit, we need to sift through it to find what really matters.

### ***Things Hidden* will help us see...**

The Bible's primary themes: Who is God? and Who are we?

The development of very human characters, from Abraham to Jeremiah to Paul.

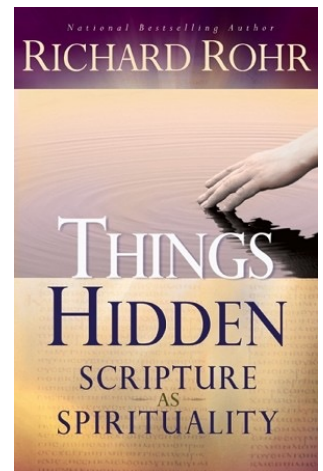
The earthly ministry of Jesus, and his final revelation as the Christ.

The God who is always with us.

The deepest meaning of *Emmanuel*.

The goal of *Things Hidden* is *not* to teach us 'what the Bible says' but to help us grow in our own relationship with God:

Consider what Rohr says about prayer: "*I am increasingly convinced that the word **prayer**, which has become a functional and pious thing for believers to **do**, is, in fact, a descriptor for inner experience. We will understand prayer and inner experience this way throughout this book.*" (see *Things Hidden*, p. 5)



Order your own copy of ***Things Hidden*** from your local bookstore, Amazon, or Barnes & Noble.

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