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 Anne Kanter, Jr. Warden John Cribb Elaine Goodman Lisa Gonzalez Esta Kandarian Jo Oliver 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:

Once again, the Parish Council has identified better welcoming guests and integrating newcomers as a goal for the coming year. Although we at St. Ben's pride ourselves on being welcoming, we're still doing a less than perfect job – we often don't wear our name tags, and we talk mostly to people we already know. Coffee hour can be intimidating even for the most gregarious.

There are many reasons that people choose to visit a church, but author Philip Yancey in his book "What's so Amazing about Grace?" says that whenever someone goes to church they are looking for God's grace: they are looking for the experience of God's unconditional and overflowing love given unconditionally.

I wonder to what extent people who come to St. Benedict's experience grace? Do we offer a welcome marked by grace? And to what extent do we greet one another, and treat one another with grace?

What would a grace-filled welcome look like? There's no one size fits all... God welcomes us just as we are. Some people will welcome an effusive "y'all come" whereas others are looking for a quieter place to be. Some will welcome being asked to take part in ministry while others would leave every fast!



But I think that everyone wants an authentic experience of connection. I once visited a church where the greeter offered me a hug but was looking over my shoulder for someone she knew. That was not an experience of authentic welcome. I felt diminished not embraced. A warm handshake with a welcome which was unhurried and genuinely for me would have been much more welcome than the careless hug.

The more we can practice extending grace to each other, the more we will naturally extend grace to our guests. Just as God offers us grace – totally unearned belovedness demonstrated in

the life and death of Jesus – so we can offer grace to each other as members of Christ's body. I think this would look like courtesy, gentleness, humility, long-suffering. I think it would mean being totally present to the person we are talking to while making sure that we are not blocking access to the coffeepot or to the church door. I think it would mean not rolling our eyes at someone's idiosyncrasy and never talking unkindly behind people's backs.

Holy Week and Easter are seasons of especial grace; the time when we remember in detail God's "Amazing Grace" "that saved someone like me." It is God's gift to us that brings us into relationship with Godself through the passion of God in Jesus the Word. Even as we remember God's gracious gift, let us seek to be intentional in offering grace to one another and to all those whom God sends to us.

With blessings,

Caro+ Rev. Caroline J. A. Hall



Parish Council

Caro Hall+

The Parish Council held its annual planning retreat at the end of February and welcomed new members Esta Kandarian, Jo Oliver, and Barbara Skipper. Thank you Pamela Bleisch, Michael Lucas and Celeste Pennington for your faithful service. On Friday night we met at the church and gave thanks for all that has gone well this past year. We were grateful for many things including the Abundance Shop, Sunday worship, the music program, the clergy team, the newsletter, the Altar Guild, the prayer ministry and God's presence with us.

On Saturday we met at the lovely home of Rob and Donna Ross – thank you for hosting us! We read I Corinthians 12 together and thought about how everyone has an important role in the Body of Christ expressed in St Benedict's. We considered Care Values and Goals for 2016. These are:

- I) Building and Fund Development: engage a consultant to host a congregational workshop during the summer to result in an agreed Building and Grounds plan by Oct 1, and complete the Blessing the Future Campaign plan and establish initial funding of the endowment by Sept 1.
- 2) <u>Welcoming:</u> develop a more effective system for welcoming guests and integrating new members, and then educate the congregation. By Dec 31
- 3) <u>Service and Social Justice</u>: create a team who will provide dynamic leadership in the areas of community service and social justice.
- 4) <u>Process</u>: implement a useful and functional operations manual, with a draft by June 1, make sure the Parish Council is fully familiar with it and make it part of our congregational culture.
- 5) <u>Formation</u>: Continue to provide opportunities for spiritual exploration without judgment for living as God's people in the world, utilizing Bible Study, Quiet Days, Retreats; and develop a Hollister Institute Steering Committee by Sept 30.

We also elected Anne Kanter as Junior Warden - thank you Anne!







Special Thanks and Recognition. Pam Bleisch and Celeste Pennington were thanked for their service on the Parish Council. Carol Baker and Michael Lucas were given "Above and Beyond" awards for outstanding service; Michael for designing the Great Room project and Carol for her work with kitchen and supplies. Finally, Rob Ross received the Vestry Cross for his work on the St. Benedict's website.

Welcome to EarthCare!

Bob Pelfry

St. Benedict's evolving Green Group has evolved a new name: say hello to "EarthCare"!

This change in name was based on a decision by the group on its February 10th meeting to firm up its mission statement as well as its official name. "Green Group" seemed a bit too generic, whereas "EarthCare" specifies both Nature and our human response to Nature's current plight—"Caring." In this regard, the finalized mission of the group includes three main objectives: 1) support for individual member's spiritual path in the light of environmental concerns; 2) the providing of pertinent information and motivational activities regarding environmental issues for the St. Benedict's community as a whole; and 3) choosing specific activist initiatives, including those sponsored by already existing agencies, that are of concern to both the St. Benedict's community and the Los Osos community as a whole.

Other actions at the February 10th meeting included Alice Welchert's report on the "Phillips 66 and Union Pacific" oil trains open session at the Board of Supervisors meeting of February 3d. Alice, who attended the meeting, reported that testimony was massively "against" approval, but that more public input will be scheduled for February 25th. She also attended the Morro Bay meeting of the California Coastal Commission which met in Morro Bay on the morning of February 10 to rule on the dismissal of Commission Chair Charles Lester. She reported that despite hundreds of people who met to support Mr. Lester, the Board met in private session and removed him from office.

Marie Moore reported the good news from an Audoban Society meeting that our local fishing industry has reached a sustainable level of harvesting and productivity based on the reduction of local fishermen from approximately 250 to the current number of 75. On the other hand, the report also noted that approximately 90% of ocean fishing worldwide is done in a "clear cut", unsustainable mode.

Caro Hall noted that Federal researchers have identified a group of insecticides known an "neonics" as significantly responsible for the current catastrophic decline of the bee population nationwide. The suggestion was made that the buyer for Miner's Hardware in Morro Bay be approached with this information and thus begin the process of bringing consumer pressure on Miner's to support substitute insecticides for local purchasers. Caro also shared her concerns about the "epidemic" of invasive mustard plants that are threatening to drive out other plant species in Los Osos. She hopes that members from St. Benedict's will become active in helping the community address this issue.

On a lighter note, Joe Morris told the story of finding a cross carved into the bark in an ancient oak tree near Templeton by a Franciscan during the Mission era over two hundred years ago. Joe heard the story from a local and was delighted to eventually be able to track down and identify the "natural cross" still clearly visible in the venerable tree.

The group then discussed possible ways of celebrating Earth Day, April 22d, here at St. Benedict's. Suggestions included: a sermon by Caro on the Earth Day theme; a prayer/ritual procession—possibly liturgical—involving the St. Francis garden; a handout before the Earth Day service communicating pertinent information about environmental concerns; and, finally, "EarthCare" sponsorship of a speaker who will make a presentation on the impact of climate change on our local coastline. This presentation will be publicized in the larger community.



With its new name and clarified mission statement, "EarthCare" invites any interested members of St. Benedict's—and any of your community friends—to attend our next meeting...

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 9, 2:30 pm @ St. Benedict's

EarthCare welcomes Heidi Harmon

Caro Hall+

EarthCare, formerly known as the Green Group, welcomed Heidi Harmon as a special speaker in February. Heidi is a well-known local activist who entered the race for State Assembly in order to bring attention to the issues of climate change. Heidi encouraged us to keep a spirit of hope despite the grave nature of the cli-



from heidiharmon.org

mate change issue, including the strong element of denial still issuing from important political, commercial, and religious segments of society. As examples of hopeful steps, Heidi mentioned the following:

- Locally, Jan Marx—mayor of San Luis Obispo—has announced that she is eliminating carbon stocks from her personal portfolio. She is urging the city of San Luis Obispo to take the same step, and is in contact with other mayors who are considering taking the same steps;
- A successful local campaign to ban styrofoam containers;
- the emerging public opposition to the rail spur to the Phillips 66 Santa Maria refinery which would substantially increase the number of oil trains passing through the county. (Members of St. Ben's Earthcare attended the initial hearings);
- President Obama's veto of the Keystone pipeline;
- A Canadian court recently accepted the concept of "climate justice" as a legal issue in a court case. This decision opens the path for other legislation based on the emerging issues of "climate justice."

Heidi's main topic, however, was the global climate summit that met in Paris last December. She noted that the treaty signed by over one hundred and ninety participating nations was non-binding, and yet is a huge step forward because of the degree to which it reflected a growing global consensus on what the basic goals and timeline of climate change action must be. She noted that the Paris agreements stipulate that the human community cannot maintain its present level of functioning if average yearly temperatures are allowed to rise more than two and one-

half degrees Celsius from current averages. Even if this goal is met by the beginning of the next century, catastrophic weather events will become much more frequent, with social and political ramifications that are potentially more disruptive than the natural events themselves.

Heidi suggested that the mantra for all groups who want to be active in the area of climate change should be, very simply: "Keep It In the Ground." Carbon, that is. Finally, she listed "Solar, divestment, and 'meat'" as the probably the three most effective areas for activism at both the local and the global area.



The Great Room: Building Update

Maria Kelly

Construction officially started on the Great Room on Tuesday, February 16. Or at least the lumber was delivered! The team of Jeremy Slamacha and Aaron Olcott, both contractors, had most of the framing completed later in the week. Here is a list of things that will need to be done before the area is ready to use:

Framing. The roof within the space being completed is very high. All the ceilings will be dropped at varying levels to accommodate light and mechanical equipment being placed above. Special design considerations were taken

since some of the original configurations of windows and doors are being changed.

Inside the walls. There will be a substantial mechanical system installed to manage the heat and cooling of the North side of the building. There will be a completely different system then the one that heats the sanctuary and South side of the building. No sense in heating the entire space if only portions are being used! There will also be electrical wiring and plumbing work to be completed as well as insulation installed before the drywall work starts.

Drywall. Some of the drywall that was originally installed may have to be replaced. The entire space will be drywalled and then painted.

Flooring and Details. The sequencing of these will all fit in with the above. There will be doors and hardware and light fixtures that will have to go in. The Great Room space will have wainscoting installed as a similar feature as the sanctuary and will help with chairs and tables being placed against walls. There will be a unique "garage" style door installed in the Great Room that will split the area into an approximately 1/3 and 2/3 split so that both areas can be utilized as needed. Light fixtures and other details will help to tie in the design of the rest of the building even though a decade has passed.

Inspections. There will be scheduled inspections for the work to be reviewed to ensure it is all compliant. These will happen throughout the process and there will be a final sign off at the very end. Permits stay "open" for one year and then there needs to be an extension filed. We anticipate that this project will be complete in a much shorter time frame.

this project will be complete in a much shorter time frame, hopefully three months.

This is a very exciting time for us and I'm looking forward to planning the party to christen the space. In the meantime, please do not enter into the construction area for safety reasons. Michael and I will do our best to accommodate visual updates on Sundays when there will not be work in progress. In the meantime if any issues arise out of the process, please email Maria Kelly at mmkelly66@gmail.com or phone her and leave a message at 805^-423^-5331 .





Signing off on the project plans with the contractor is soon followed by the arrival of lumber. Below is some of the framing work in the Great Hall. Photos by Maria and Danna.



ABUNDANCE SHOP

Francis F. Rivinus

Abundance Shop customers continue to show their loyalty and satisfaction through their patronage. We finished up 2015 well and were able to present St. Benedict's with a check for \$5,000 for the last quarter of 2015. So far, our first quarter of 2016 has been good keeping pace with our results for 2015 despite several days of inclement weather.

The last two donations of 2015 made in the Abundance Shop's name went to local charities the Noor Foundation Clinic and the Feline Network.

This month we are holding a volunteer meeting to review procedures, discuss what is working and what could be improved and seeking new ideas for enhancing the Abundance Shop outreach to the Los Osos community. Then in March we will have the annual Abundance Shop volunteer 'Thank you' party. It will be catered by Faith Watkins and hosted by Kevin and Judith Cadigan at their house.

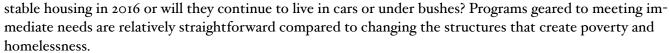
News from Prado and Beyond

Alice Welchert

Early in December (seems like a long time ago now!) I delivered donations from St. Benedict's to the Prado Day Center. A staff member asked if I would like a copy of the "Children's Wish List" and I said sure. Twenty-two children were listed by age (ranging from 2 months to 16 years), with "1st, 2nd, or 3rd" wishes for each. The needs and desires of these young ones ranged from diapers to Legos, from shoes to a drone (11-year-old boy). Shawn Ison, the Homeless Services Manager, forwarded an updated list that swelled to 32 children. Adult needs were also included, from haircuts to sweatshirts to gift cards for food.

Members of St. Benedict's responded generously. The winter 2016 newsletter from Friends of Prado Day Center notes that "St. Benedict's of Los Osos donated nearly \$600 worth of gift cards." In addition we gave many toys and some of us discovered "Whiz Kids", a fun and refreshing children's store owned by a friend of Judith Cadigan. One member made a donation to the SLO City Department of Parks and Recreation for a Prado account that enables young people to engage in enriching activities.

As steward of the Rector's Discretionary Fund, Caro+ has many conversations with vulnerable, homeless people, who come to St. Benedict's looking for help (see her article in The Benediction January-February). She noted that our faith community "has long supported People's Kitchen in San Luis Obispo, the Prado Day Center, and the Maxine Lewis Homeless Shelter." I am glad for these ministries while agreeing with her that "these are little more than a bandaid on a more serious underlying problem," i.e. "housing is expensive and difficult to get." Will the 2015 "wish list" kids and adults find safe,



A Tribune article, "Seattle experiments with new solutions to ease homelessness (2/19)," reads:

"Ten years ago, a coalition of leaders came up with a plan to end homelessness by 2015. In that time, the city and county built more than 6,300 housing units and helped nearly 40,000 people find homes. Yet the number of homeless people has continued to climb. Seattle homeless advocate Timothy Harris believes previous efforts failed because they didn't address underlying problems that are making people poor, "including income inequality." He and others believe that "interim survival solutions, such as tent encampments and emergency shelter" are also needed.

Perhaps you read the 1/19 Tribune article, "Grover Beach area cleared of homeless" to make way for a \$2 million train station remodel. The accompanying picture of Charles Hubert pushing all his worldly possessions away from his camp community is an image of injustice. The notion of "clearing the homeless" makes human beings sound as disposable and undesirable as trash.

We are challenged by the Gospel to go beyond charity and work for justice. The goal is enormous, like putting the brakes on climate change and ending reliance on fossil fuels. St. Benedict's Earthcare, a group in its infancy, has adopted a goal that feels overwhelming — to care for the earth, in ways that may be big or little, at times individual, at times collective, through action, prayer, education, sharing and spiritual support. In the same spirit, there are many opportunities for our faith family to move beyond charity and work for justice for people who have no safe, stable place to call home. An action might be as easy as contacting Kerry Brown, kbrown@co.slo.ca.us, in support of increasing affordable housing in Los Osos, as Caro+ has en-





couraged us to do. Or it might be writing a letter to the editor, such as Caro's letter (1/28) about action taken by the county Board of Supervisors that favors the profits of developers over the needs of vulnerable people. Actions might include increased support of interim solutions, like Hopes Village. Perhaps supporting the SLO Housing Connection (slohousingconnection.org) would be a move away from the status quo and towards justice.

During Lent we ponder the life and passion of the One who had no place to lay his head. May it be a time for us to remain at the foot of the cross when we'd rather turn away from suffering. May we say "yes" to the particular call of discipleship in our own community.

The Cosmic Egg

Donna Ross

The Bible takes all three levels of human experience seriously:

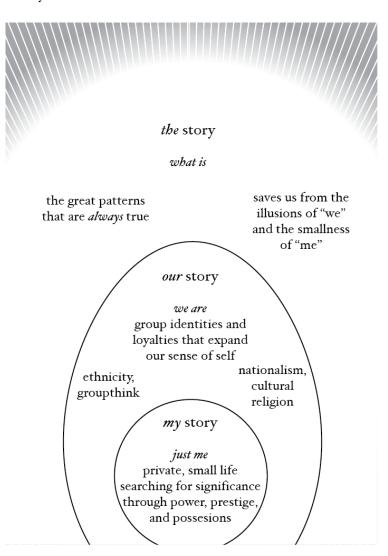
- The yolk...my story (the truth I've learned through my own experiences)
- The white...our story (the truth I've learned from my family and from my community)
- The outer dome... The Story (the truth everywhere and always)

My story and our story take on deeper meaning when we connect them to The Story. For instance:

- Pain and suffering: One of the themes that develops in the Hebrew Scriptures reaching its fullness in the crucified Jesus is the significance of pain and suffering: *The Story* tells us that somehow God can always be found within and through our own pain.
- Forgiveness is another theme woven through *The Story*, from Joseph in Egypt to Jesus on the cross. These stories of forgiveness are not just *our* story (Jewish or Christian), they point to *The Story*. It doesn't matter if you are Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, or Jewish if you are able to forgive and receive forgiveness, you are connected to *The Story* the sacred experienced always and everywhere.

Here's a practical exercise. When you look back over your own life, ask yourself:

- What times, and events, and people, have shaped me into the person I am today? (All this experience adds up to my story, my truth – my life as I have lived it.)
- How does my story relate to our story? (Our story started with my parents, my family, my church, my schools—their understanding of the truth shaped my understanding of the truth.)
- How do these stories (personal and communal) relate to The story? (The Story = truth experienced always and everywhere)



Perpetual Memorial Plaque Coming to St. Francis Garden

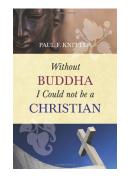
Danna Dykstra-Coy

With much input and collaboration, we're happy to announce a future addition to our lovely St. Francis Garden. When visiting the garden, look for the beautiful green marble plaque as a perpetual memorial to our loved ones.

The plaque is inscribed with ten names of those we love, but see no longer. The names include: Wes and Lois Felmlee, Sam Armstrong, Nancy Betts Bean, Andy Ross, Eleanor St. Hilaire, Lillian Long, Chuck and Martha Thistlethwaite, Puck Gonzales and Sabrina Hammerlund. "May light perpetual shine upon them."







New Series Begins April 12: Finding Christ through Buddha

A five week Hollister Institute Class starting Tuesday April 12 at 7:15pm. During this class we will explore the ways that an understanding of some aspects of Buddhism can enhance our experience of Christian spirituality. Group members will be encouraged to share books, authors and practices that they have found useful. The key text will be Without

Buddha I could not be a Christian by Paul F. Knitter. Knitter describes his difficulties with Christianity – many of which will seem familiar to St
Ben's readers, and how his understanding of Buddhist insights helped

Remember St. Benedict's in your will

him to resolve these issues. Led by Rev Caro.

If you haven't made a will, this is a good time to do so. You never know when you might die, and dying without a will can create complications for your heirs and reduce your estate by a lot of tax. After you have thought about your family, please think about St Benedict's. You can bless the future of St. Ben's by leaving the parish a percentage amount of your estate, a specific dollar gift, or the residual after your family has received your gifts. If you already have a will, you don't have to re-write the whole thing, but can simply add a codicil.

Why bother? When your wishes are made known it will say a great deal to your family about your values if they see you have remembered your faith community. And you can help ensure that in the future others may be blessed by the ministry of this church in the way you have been.

Upcoming Events

Lenten Quiet Morning March 12 9:30 and 12:30

Take a few hours out of your schedule to reflect on the events of Holy Week. During this Quiet Morning we will reflect on the meaning of the passion of Christ and Jesus' crucifixion, and together create Stations of the Cross. The "stations" or stops along the Via Dolorosa – the path Jesus took to the cross – help us to reflect more deeply upon the great love he showed for us and also the places of pain and of grace in our own lives.

No previous experience is necessary and everyone is welcome. Led by Elaine Goodman and Rev. Caro.

Soup for Syria March 12 7 pm

Here is a great opportunity to try out some new soups at the same time as helping Syrian refugees. Best selling author and food writer, Barbara Abdeni Massaad, has brought together 80 chefs to produce a wonderful book of soup. The proceeds from its sale will be donated to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR to provide urgently needed food relief for Syrian refugees. In addition to offering soup to sample and books to buy we will show short videos about the lives of some Syrian refugees.

This promises to be a fun evening and a great way to have a Lenten soup supper! Please let Pam Bleisch know if you would like to make a soup or help in some other way. We will have our monthly Saturday night eucharist at 5:30, with a special focus on refugees so, if you wish, you can come to both and make an evening of it.

Spruce Up Saturday March 19 9:30 am

The grass is growing and the squirrels are getting fat. So are the weeds, and the cobwebs. Join us on Saturday March 19 from 9:30 as we clean the brass and silver, spring clean the sanctuary and maybe even the kitchen, and weed and prune the gardens. Everyone is welcome regardless of skill level – we'll find something for you to do! Lunch will be served and a good time will be had in the service of God and each other.









Pictures from the Winter Quilting Bee

Sustainable Seafood April 18 7 pm

Sustainable Seafood, a talk by Steve Hendricks, 7 PM Monday April 18 at St. Bens.

What You Should Know About The Seafood You Eat! The GOOD, the BAD, and the UGLY!!! What are the best seafood choices and why? Does it matter how seafood is harvested or farmed? What seafood is healthy/unhealthy for me? We will explore various commercial fishing methods, including fish farming, and their impacts on the marine environment.

Steve Hendricks grew up on the Central Coast. He holds a B.S. in Fish Biology from Humboldt State, an M.S. in Fish Biology from Oregon State, and worked for more than a decade as a fish biologist in California, Alaska, Oregon and Idaho. For the past 10 years he has taught biology at Cuesta and Hancock Colleges. Steve is an avid fisherman who is very concerned about the future health of our oceans.



Holy Week is a time for us to ponder on the incredible love that Jesus the Christ, the Man/God showed to humanity by allowing us to kill him, and the tremendous sadness that we each have within our own nature the ability to do that to another human being. Jesus did not respond to human violence with violence but with non-violent resistance and showed by his resurrection that violence is powerless over life. God's unconditional love is shown in that even though humanity did its worst, Jesus the Christ came back and stays in relationship to us.

Palm Sunday March 20 8am and 10:30 am

Holy Week starts with Palm Sunday, when we remember Jesus' triumphant ride into Jerusalem, incongruously on a donkey. This is the service when we process with palms and then go suddenly into the Passion Gospel, relating Jesus' betrayal, trial and death; it's a sudden change which brings us up short and connects us to the pathos of human love and human loss. 8 a.m., Contemplative Communion. 10:30 a.m., Palm Sunday Liturgy with Blessing of Palms, Procession and Passion Gospel.

Special Service with Bishop Mary Wednesday March 23 6:30 pm

On Wednesday, March 23, members of all the Episcopal churches in San Luis Obispo are invited to St. Paul's Cambria for a special service at 6:30pm. The service, led by the Bishop, will include blessing the oils which are used for baptism and healing, and renewal of vows for all orders, from lay people to Bishop.

Maundy Thursday March 24 7pm

On Maundy Thursday we remember Jesus' last supper with his friends and the subsequent betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. After a simple Eucharist with (optional foot-washing) the church is stripped of all its color and artwork, ending with the stripping of the altar, reminding us of how Jesus was stripped naked. We depart in silence, just as his disciples left him, silently melting into the night.

We will again be joined by friends from Trinity United Methodist church for this evening of bitter-sweet remembering. There will be no dinner this year.

Good Friday March 25

Good Friday is the day when Jesus was crucified. The Scriptures tell us that he hung on the cross for three hours, which we remember from noon until three. Some people choose to fast until 3 pm as a way of personally connecting with Jesus' sacrifice. We will mark the day with a traditional Good Friday liturgy at 12 noon and the church will be open for prayer and meditation from then until 2:00 when we will walk the Stations of the Cross. Then in the evening at 7:30 we are invited to Trinity UMC where our combined choirs will lead us in a program of readings and music.

Holy Saturday and Easter Vigil March 26 7:30 pm

Holy Saturday – the time when Jesus was in the tomb.

Then ... Finally we get to Easter, but we can't quite wait until Easter morning, so we celebrate the night of Jesus' resurrection starting at 7:30 pm on Saturday with the Great Vigil of Easter. During this ancient service we light the new fire and bring light into the church for the recounting of our salvation history. Then, after we have renewed our Baptismal Vows, we celebrate the resurrection in a joyful singing of the Gloria before celebrating the first Eucharist of Easter. **8 p.m., Easter Vigil, the first service of Easter**

Easter Day Sunday, March 27 8 am and 10:30 am

Our celebration continues on Easter Morning, with a contemplative communion service at 8am and a Festival Eucharist at 10:30am. Everyone is welcome, young and old to this as to all our services.

The Benediction

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