

The Benediction

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

The Rev. Dr. Caroline Hall

Rector

The Rev. Barry Turner

Associate Priest

The Rev. Faye Hogan

Associate Priest

The Rev. Susan Plucker

Associate Priest

The Rev. Sharon G. Dalrymple

Deacon

The Parish Council

Pamela Bleisch Strawn, *Sr. Warden*

Michael Lucas, *Jr. Warden*

Lisa Gonzalez, *Treasurer*

Deb Garza

Diana Hammerlund

Steve Hirahara

Alan Kiste

Lorienne Schwenk

Susan Miller

Jane Wu

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Sunday Services

Refreshments and fellowship follow service.

8:00 am Holy Communion
with inclusive language

10:30 am Holy Communion
with music

First Sunday of each month:

10:30 am One service of Holy
Communion with music

2nd & 4th Sunday of each month:

9:30 am Family 'Messy Church'

1st, 3rd, 5th Sunday each month:

10:30 am Children's Chapel

Church: 2220 Snowy Egret Lane

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Dear Friends:

Welcome to 2020! Last night in our special Vespers of the New Year, we read the passage from Ecclesiastes 3 which has been summed up and popularized by The Byrds in 1965:

To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven

I was struck by how the writer doesn't judge the different activities, for example, "A time to tear and a time to sew". I wish I could be as calm about things and allow them to be whatever they are, rather than judging them all the time. ("Fires in Australia - very bad!" "Brexit - probably a disaster" "Meeting our budget - excellent, praise God!" goes my busy brain - always judging things as good or bad.)

There's a [teaching story](#) that goes like this:

An old farmer had worked his crops for many years. One day his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, his neighbors came to visit. "Such bad luck," they said sympathetically. "May be," the farmer replied.

The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it three other wild horses. "How wonderful," the neighbors exclaimed. "May be," replied the old man.

The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. The neighbors again came to offer their sympathy on his misfortune. "May be," answered the farmer.

The day after, military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army. Seeing that the son's leg was broken, they passed him by. The neighbors congratulated the farmer on how well things had turned out. "May be," said the farmer.

The simple truth is that we don't know. We don't know for sure what God has up her sleeve. We don't know what she is doing in our midst and all around us.

My busy brain has a judgment for everything that happens and that impacts how I respond and can make things much worse. When I respond to situations thinking I know exactly what's happening without asking for more insight (both from the Holy Spirit and the people involved) then I may react with a hot temper or a brusque tone.

For the last few weeks I have started each day with the serenity prayer "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." It is making a difference for me. I am able (mostly) to look at things without such hasty good/bad judgement.

As we go into this new decade which will surely have tough times and good times, I commend that prayer to you. May God give us all the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

with love in Christ,



Caroline J. A. Hall



@StBens_LosOsos

Finances

We are delighted that thanks to the generosity of our members and friends and the abundance of the Abundance Shop, we are finishing 2019 with more money in the bank than we started, even though we anticipated ending with less and we did not do a Jazz Concert or other fundraiser this year. We give thanks to God for this abundance which will allow us to start building up the Building Fund which we hope to grow by \$10,000 every year so that next time the road needs fixing, or when we need a new roof, the money is there ready for anticipated major repairs. The Vestry also aims to maintain a Reserve Fund equal to at least three and preferably six months expenditures so we have a cushion in the event of disaster.

Our committed income for 2020 is lower than in 2019 so we will be relying on your generosity and God's continuing provision to pick up the slack. Unfortunately it means that another year will go by without us achieving our goal of paying the Rector full-time. Full details will be available at the Parish Meeting on January 26.

Sprinkler System

The saga continues. It seems that there was an error in the original drawings from 2002 which has only just come to light, or possibly that code requirements have changed significantly. However it happened, we now find that even with the two new stainless steel tanks we will not have enough water to pump to the water hydrant which the fire department will use in the event of a fire. So we need more. More water and more tanks. Michael Lucas and Jane Wu have consulted fire engineers and local experts and there seem no way around it. So look for another tank to appear sometime soon!

Highlights of Parish Council Meetings

Much of the Parish Council's business is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter (finances, sprinkler system, Mutual Ministry Review, Star Party, Nominations, Parish Council meeting).

In other news, we hired Esta Kandarian as a temporary Assisting Manager at the Abundance Shop and requested some organizational updates (think job descriptions, up-dated policy manual) by the middle of January at which time we will review Esta's position.

We also reviewed our goals for 2019 which seem to have been a little ambitious and asked whether we need a culture change so that we do what we say we're going to do or whether we just set too lofty goals.

Administrative Assistant

Since Laura DeLoye left in October we have not found a replacement. Many thanks to Ann Lucas and Stef Shuman who are filling in on a volunteer basis. Despite their care, a few things have been slipping through the cracks and it will be good to find the right person for this important position.

We are looking for someone who is great with MS Word and Excel and very comfortable with Facebook and websites, as well as able to work on their own or with others around. The ideal candidate will enjoy creating community and will be a person of faith. The hours are 9:30 – 12:30 Tuesday -Thursday.

Mutual Ministry Review and Parish Meeting

Once a year we pause to think about our common life together. As we listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we get to consider what is working well and what needs attention, where God is blessing us and where God is calling us. We do this through the annual Mutual Ministry Review and then the Parish Meeting. These are not just for people who have been coming to St. Ben's for a zillion years – they are for everybody, and your voice is important because you are part of this expression of the Body of Christ.

The Mutual Ministry Review will have two parts this year. We invite you to complete a short survey either online or on paper. In addition, Parish Council members will be calling each household to touch in and to hear any particular concerns or blessings that you want to share.

The Parish Meeting will take place after the 10:30 service on January 26 and lunch will be served. We hope that you will plan to come to participate in conversation about our life in the past year and the results of the Mutual Ministry Review. We will also elect new members of the Parish Council (if God is calling you to stand, please let Pamela Bleisch know), agree our budget for 2020, recognize outstanding service and have a conversation about how we can better welcome all shades of political opinion in our faith community.

EVENT!

Rector's Rant

Please do not put leftovers in the fridge unless you are personally going to be responsible for taking them out again in which case please put your name and the date on them – also any personal items you may leave there. None of us like to waste food but putting food in the church fridge is just transferring responsibility for it to someone else who later has to throw it away. Beverages are ok as those get used for Vespers and other meetings. But please do not leave the end of your casserole, meat slices or dip etc. behind, please take it home and throw it away or put in the green bin and it will get sent to the county composter.

Similarly, if you find you have something excess at home the Abundance Shop is set up to receive your unwanted stuff, not the church. Recently many things have appeared in various places in the church – particularly the kitchen. There is no way to tell whether these things belong to people who forgot to take them home or whether they have been left by well-meaning folk thinking that the church could use them. We have no space to store things and no one who is responsible for keeping the kitchen tidy for us all to use. So please take your pots and pans and containers home as well as your leftovers.

Finally, if you bring something to replace something that is no longer working well, please take the thing you're replacing away so it's clear what is happening and we don't send the new better thing to the Abundance Shop.

Thanks for listening, Caro+

Star Party!!

Monday January 6th is Epiphany and so it is the annual Star Party. This is a fun event for everyone. Starting at 6pm we will enjoy delicious food (please bring your favorite dish to share) crown the Kings and Queens of Epiphany, sing together and light a small fire – bring a few twigs from your Christmas decorations to include. We will also take down all the Christmas lights, flowers and candles and the crèche, stacking them away carefully for next year.

EVENT!

The night wouldn't be complete without a Star word – pick a star and on the back you will find a keyword for 2020.



Hollister Institute

It's Back! After a year's sabbatical, the Hollister Institute is re-opening its programs with a study of the book Climate Church, Climate World by Jim Antal.

Environmental leader Rev. Jim Antal from the United Church of Christ calls climate change " the greatest moral challenge humanity has ever faced. "He presents a compelling case that it's time for the church to meet this challenge, just as the church addressed previous challenges such as slavery and civil rights.

Antal calls for the church to embrace a new vocation so that future generations might live in harmony with God's creation. He suggests practical ways that Christians can reorient what they prize through new approaches to worship, preaching, witnessing and other spiritual practices that honor creation and cultivate hope.

- Jan 9: The Climate Crisis and a Loving God
- Jan 16: Care of Creation: the Church's Vocation
- Jan 23: The Moral Imperative – how do we respond to the Climate Crisis
- Jan 30: Giving Voice to Every Creature Under Heaven – Creation in Worship
- Feb 6: Witness – Climate Action in the Community
- Feb 13: Moving from Fear to Hope

Each session will include a short summary of Antal's ideas, together with questions and activities to help us grapple with the climate crisis in a new way. Members of Earthcare will lead the conversations.

Classes start at **10am on Thursday mornings** starting January 9th and continuing for six weeks.

Bishop Lucinda's Consecration

On Saturday January 11, Bishop Mary will pass her crozier to the newly consecrated Bishop Lucinda Ashby and will cease to be our bishop. This is a special occasion and a time of celebration for the diocese as we welcome a new bishop for a new decade. Several people will be going to Saratoga for the service from St. Ben's and there are still seats available. If you want to go you can get your tickets here: <https://www.realepiscopal.org/info-consecration-tickets/>.

It will be possible to stream the consecration from the diocesan YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuxbNrXCTqiFptAOaYIzKgQ>

If you would like to join with others to watch the live-stream of the service which starts at 11am, you can join in a Consecration Party at St Barnabas in Arroyo Grande. For more information contact Robert Merritt, RxMerritt@gmail.com or 408-891-2619

EVENT!

Please note: the Saturday night Eucharist will be at 6pm on January 11, instead of the usual 5:30.

Rector's Sabbatical

Rectors are usually eligible for a sabbatical – paid time off for recharging – every five years but because Caro+ is still on a part-time contract she is only just now eligible, after 14 years of ministry at St. Ben's. She will be taking nine weeks of sabbatical time, probably with some additional vacation weeks, in the late summer or early fall. More details will be forthcoming as her plans firm up, but she expects to spend some time visiting family and friends, and some of the time catching up on reading.

While she is away, the Parish Council will continue to lead the congregation and members of our clergy team, together with guests, will lead the services.

The Shire at Canterbury

Berkeley Johnson, Canterbury Chaplain

I am writing to update you on my discernment with the diocese and on Canterbury as we get ready to enter the 2020 winter and spring quarters.

I'm sorry it has taken me so long to let you know what's going on with my discernment process, but the letter from the Bishop never arrived and had to be re-sent, so I just received it recently. In short, it was determined following my meeting with the Commission on Ministry (COM) in October that while they were very affirming of my lay ministry and want me to explore that further with the diocese, they also were not hearing what they needed to hear in order to move me forward in the ordination process.

In any event, I really believe that I/we need to trust the Spirit's wisdom in these matters, just as I had to fifteen years ago when the decision was the same. Ultimately, I have come to realize I would never have been led into the ministries - college and young-adult and hospice - that have been so transformational for me had I gotten ordained back then, and so I continue to trust that the Spirit has something else in store for me going forward. It's always hard not knowing what that might be, but I've also kind of learned to live with that uncertainty. Because Bishop Mary is leaving and Bishop Lucinda is coming in, I will have to wait until +Lucinda gets settled and then meet with her to take another look at how the diocese may want to work with me to explore other avenues and ways to utilize my gifts for ministry.

With regard to Canterbury, we had a wonderful 2019 fall quarter. As has been the case for the past several years now, we had students and young adults with us every Sunday for the main part of our program while school was in session. Then, about midway through the quarter, we started a new queer theology study group, Believing Out Loud, on Wednesday evenings at Cal Poly. It was a joy to explore this emerging and significant field of theological study with our students, and we are planning to continue it in the coming year. Lastly, we closed out the fall quarter with an Advent Lessons & Carols fundraiser that was attended by a few hearty souls who braved the weather and the timing (it was the day before finals for our students!) to make it a special and festive event.

Please keep us all in your prayers as I embark on my final six months as Canterbury chaplain to the SLO Deanery, and as the Canterbury Board searches for a new person to guide the ministry into its next phase. I have loved serving Christ in this most special and sacred way, and the relationships with all of you, and with the students and young adults who have passed through this ministry, are some of the most cherished memories I have.



The Abundance Shop

Karin Cake

The Christmas flurry came in all the doors in November, the volunteers as busy as the Elves in the far North. The shop bulged at the seams and shoppers came with family and friends from all over the county and state...and farther. The amazing donations included things we'd never seen or even imagined...

- A Rainbow kachina doll measuring more than a foot high.
- Several hand thrown pots of well known local potters.
- Men's jackets, full length coats and beautiful sweaters (the coats snatched up almost immediately by young teen boys who know this winter's trend)
- Bikes, trikes and, star-studded bedding for kids.
- Legos that came in late and just got marked to 1/2 price.
- Art, photos, books; Asian, Mexican, Italian, Hawaiian, Polish and French, as well as lots of local art and crafts from the fruitful 70s and 80s and the present.
- Clothing from all over; good for Fiji, Kenya, the Antarctic and everywhere, summer and winter. Just right for this time of year in Los Osos (known by the cool kids as LO)
- We have huge split leaf philodendrons and bamboo rootings and succulents of many kinds ready to root at a week's notice.



The families have been coming in regularly now that the kids are out of school. The kid's racks, book shelves and toy baskets are emptying and refilling daily as our sorters keep up with the demand as well as the supply.

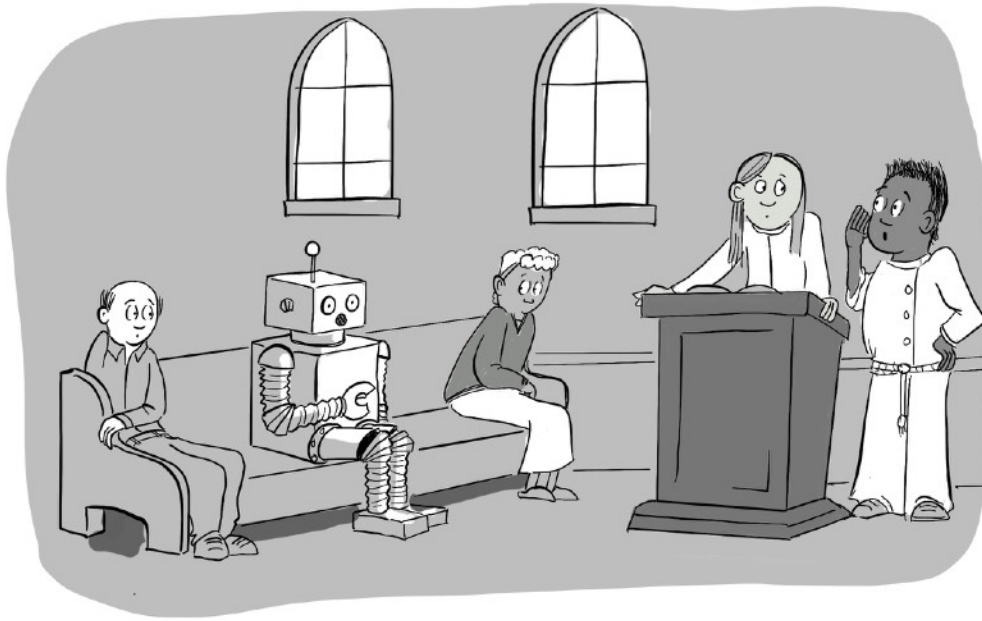
This is the humming, alive scene of conversations; book nook browsing; idea sharing and surprises every day that our elders envisioned when they began this community gathering place. They wanted a church presence in the heart of the community. They wanted a resting place for the goods that were no longer needed in one household to be found for another life with new owners. They began years ago giving job training opportunities for folks who needed a fresh start...a tradition that has seen about 8 people this year getting training and recommendations for work.

The time is soon when this year's volunteer group will be choosing the recipients of 2020's donations from our profits. Last year's group included The Noor Medical Clinic, The Women's Shelter, Los Osos Cares, Animal Rescue and many more. Exciting times in an exciting place. Thanks for your ongoing support of our efforts!



Caption Contest!

The Benediction is holding its first-ever caption contest. Email caption ideas for the cartoon below to Ed (ed.himelblau@gmail.com) before the end of February to enter the contest. Selected captions will be printed in the March-April edition of the Benediction. Good luck!



Your caption here!

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