

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 Parish Council

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Jane Wu, Jr. *Warden*

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Sunday Services

8:00 am - Worship service with Scripture reflection, via Zoom. (Zoom address is available under the This Week heading on our website.)

10:30 am - Spiritual Communion service, live-streamed on Facebook: www.facebook.com/stbenslososos/ or on our website: <http://www.stbenslososos.org/facebook-including-live-stream/>

Service leaflets are available each week under the Worship tab on our website

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Dear Friends: We live in turbulent and worrying times. No previous generation has seen the things that we see daily – the degradation of the environment leading to massive fires and devastating storms, to drought and to mass extinction; a deadly virus which is killing people all over the planet – currently 227,000 in the US and an estimated 1.17 million worldwide; institutional racism which means that Blacks and others of color are disproportionately affected; and on top of it all, the questioning of basic facts and the redefinition of truth as infinitely malleable.

In the midst of this, we are called to be peacemakers. We are called not to be nice and to de-escalate every form of conflict but to actively build the alternative- God's *shalom*. Shalom is an active peace – shalom is the peaceable kin-dom where everyone is respected and we all seek and serve the Christ in all beings. The ultimate effect of living into the fullness of our baptismal vows will be to build shalom.

And I am grateful to be in the middle of a faith community which is working to do exactly that. We are working to create a little shalom, a demonstration of God's reign, here in Los Osos and beyond. And the guide we have is Jesus himself, and the Holy Spirit who is leading us forward on the paths that have been prepared for us to walk in. In the middle of a civilization gripped by fear, anxiety and violence we are called to be the ones who bring peace. "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7) That's our job – yours and mine.



It takes courage and perseverance to remember that "God reigns" when everything is chaotic around us. But that is the truth that beings shalom. God reigns and God reigns in our hearts and in our lives even when it seems exactly the opposite, even when lies and corruption and oppression seem to have the upper hand. We know the truth and we live the truth.

And as we live the truth that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God and the hope that everything will be set right in the coming reign of God, so we can allow ourselves to relax in the serenity of the peace of God. We can focus on the little part of shalom that God is giving us to build today. It may be looking after family, praying for the President and the election, talking to the checker in the market, buying local organic food, writing to the Editor, calling our representative... there are many, many things we do each day that build loving community, that build shalom.

The important thing is that we do them with integrity and with love. And at this time of gratitude and thanksgiving I am grateful for each one of you and for the ways you make God's incarnation real in this town, this county. Thank you for every time you pray. Thank you for every time you pick up the phone call a friend. Thank you for every time you tune in on Zoom or Facebook. Together we are building a community of resistance, together we are building God's shalom.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Caroline', written in black ink.

Caroline J. A. Hall

@StBens_LosOsos

Finances

Thank you to everyone who has given so generously to help St Ben's weather this difficult time. Many of you have gone above and beyond in your generosity and though we won't know for sure until the end of the year, it is looking increasingly probable that through God's grace expressed in your generosity and the Federal Payroll Protection Program funds we will end up very close to budget if not better. Thank you and thank God!

I am thrilled to share with you that the Abundance Shop has become more abundant in the last couple of months. We are now making a little profit though sales year-to-date are down 40% in comparison with the first 9 months of last year, and expenses are higher so the profit is only 10% of what it was at this time last year. In September itself sales were up to 73% of last September's sales but expenses were quite a bit higher as we have more paid staff than we did then (and many less volunteers). Obviously, we will be assessing all that as we come to the end of the year, trying to make wise decisions for the year ahead.

We welcome Minerva Soto as our new manager (see her article below) and hope that you will make her welcome. We need more volunteers to help in the store – especially as cashiers to welcome our customers and sell them the great stuff we have been given. Please consider whether you can give a few hours a week to do this or even just one shift per month. Precautions are in place to make this as safe a shopping experience as possible for both customers and volunteers.

A Layman's View of Saint Benedict's Finances – 2020

Steve Cake (for the St. Benedict Stewardship Committee)

This year, 2020, has been a surprise to us all, and yet our parish continues to function quite well, although with a bit of stress.

As we know, the Abundance Shop has been a major supporter of Saint Benedict's finances and program; however, between mid-March and the end of July, it was closed completely. As the church was able to obtain a Payroll Protection Plan loan, we were able to continue to pay our store manager and assistant manager, as well as other church employees. I understand that the church has met the conditions for forgiveness of the loan, and that we expect the loan will be converted to a grant.

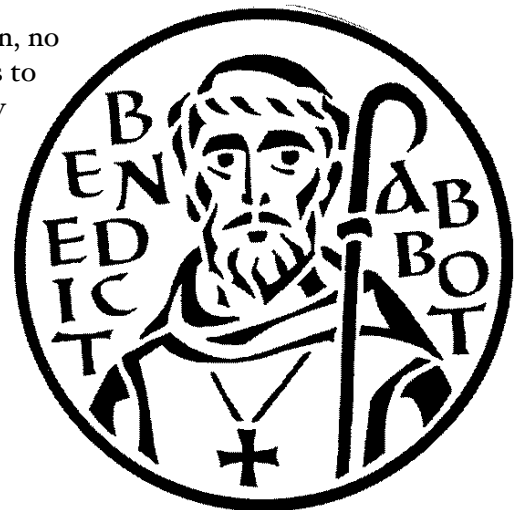
At the end of July, the Abundance Shop was able to reopen with reduced hours and restricted access, and continues to operate quite successfully. Its revenues have been gratifying, but nowhere near enough to erase the loss of revenue during the 4 ½-month closure.

A number of us, as parishioners, have been able to step up our giving to assist with the Abundance Shop shortfall, so the church has managed to remain cash-positive throughout the shutdown. However, as we had started the year with an unbalanced budget, the generosity of parishioners continues to be needed. We believe we will end the year in a position of solvency.

It is our hope that, for the coming year, each of us can pledge a contribution, no matter the amount, to the 2021 Pledge Campaign, allowing Saint Benedict's to continue to serve its parishioners and be a presence in our community. Any increase will allow us to expand our good works, and will be gratefully appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Saint Benedict's Stewardship Committee: Stefanie Shuman, Cathy Gildea, Michael Lucas, Stephen Cake



New Ministry Teams

The Parish Council has organized some new ministry teams to help with the leadership of the congregation:

The **Membership Team** will be thinking about how we encourage visitors to become active members and how we nurture each other as members so that together we are an ever-growing, ever-learning vibrant community. Ann Lucas is the chair. (Continued)

The **Stewardship Team** will be helping us to think about how we act as though we really believe that God has given us everything and that we are but stewards of our time, our abilities, our “possessions” and our money. Stef Shuman is the convener.

The **Finance Committee** will meet quarterly to review the financial statements, and to assist the Treasurer in making sure that we have a high level of transparency and integrity in all our financial dealings. In addition, it will act as the Endowment Committee. Jane Wu is the chair.

If you would like to volunteer for one of these teams, please contact the chair or the convener who will be pleased to hear from you.

Thrift Shop News

Minerva Soto

The Abundance Shop is still operating on abbreviated hours five days a week and open from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. We have had some personnel changes recently. We are presented with the normal challenges that this brings. Yet it is a vibrant community of caring individuals committed to the success of this operation in good times and bad.

We count on our special Volunteers to help us with daily operations. I would ask that if there are any of you out there who might be able to donate hours to the shop, in whatever way you can, we welcome the assistance. As of this moment we have some wonderful people who have been quietly doing the work that keeps us going and to them we owe a debt of gratitude.

I have been hired to manage The Abundance Shop and am happy to be part of this lovely place and special ministry. We do see ourselves as caring for the community in a unique way and it is manifested daily. Those who visit us share stories of their lives and situations and inspire us to always count our blessings. It is a tough time in our country and people are feeling the pain. We are happy to bring a smile, share a moment, and provide an important outlet as people navigate a whole new world.

I will leave you with this beautiful poem. I don't know who wrote it but it has kept me hopeful throughout life.

God bless your day wherever you are,
And keep your courage bright,
For the spirit of man is the candle of God,
And it burns on the darkest night,
Amen, Many blessings.

God bless your day wherever you are,
And keep you strong in faith,
For the spirit of God is the refuge of man ,
And the light in his dwelling place.

Services are held outside the church and social distancing is observed.



Worship in the next few months

Although SLO county is in the red zone, it seems probable that there will be a fall/winter spike in Covid infections and we want to avoid moving ahead too fast and then having to backtrack. So we are continuing to proceed with great caution. We will continue our current pattern of having the 8am service on Zoom and the 10:30 broadcast on Facebook for the foreseeable future. We will also continue to broadcast the 10:30 service on Facebook even after people are worshipping in the church.

To do this, we need to increase our technical capacity and so we are looking for someone who is comfortable with technology to help prepare and to run the tech aspects of Sunday morning. If you know someone who might be interested in receiving a small stipend for helping with this, please let Caro+ know.

The outdoor 4pm Thursday People's Church service came to end this past week with the end of daylight savings time. A big thank you to the Rev. Mike Eggleston, and also to Tim Rochte and Vaughn Kaser from Trinity, for making this possible. We did not really gather the people we hoped to attract, and so continue to discern how/what we can offer to people who do not resonate with a church setting.

We have been experimenting with a 9:30am Sunday service and this has been a good experience so we will continue, depending on the weather. We will send out an email no later than 8am on Sunday if the service is cancelled. So if you're not sure, please check your email. Otherwise we will continue with the 9:30 service for the foreseeable future. If you have suggestions about how to make it better, please tell Caro+.

If you would like to host a small gathering to receive the consecrated bread together, please let Ann Lucas, chair of the Membership Team, know. (alucas@allenhancock.edu)

At **9:30 on November 1** and at **10:00am on Christmas Day** we will offer an outdoor eucharist service with communion – on those two days you will be able to receive the Body of Christ in the bread (only). Every other Sunday, bread which has been consecrated at the 8am service is available for distribution from 9:15 to 9:25; and bread consecrated at the 10:30 service is available between 12:30 and 2 in the parking lot. Please let Caro+ know you are there by phone or text and she will bring it out to you.

We are allowed to have a maximum of 6 people in the church to lead and record worship. These people are scheduled in advance and are of course taking a degree of risk by gathering together. If you wish to be a reader at the 10:30, or are a certified Eucharistic minister and would like to be scheduled please let Lorienne know (purrsbythesea@gmail.com). For the 9:30 we need two ushers to check that we are all well, wearing masks and sanitizing our hands and a reader as well. Of course, the Altar Guild are very busy making sure that everything is in the right place at the right time, properly sanitized and the Flower Guild are producing lovely arrangements. There is room for new volunteers for both these groups.

Other opportunities to connect

In addition to Sunday services there are several other opportunities to connect.

- On Sunday mornings **Coffee Hour** takes place on Zoom at about 11:30-12:30 – this is an informal conversation with whoever shows up.
- **Prayer in the Morning** on Tuesdays at 9:45 lasts about 25 minutes and is followed at 10:15 by a **book discussion**. This is always a good conversation even if you haven't read the book! (on Zoom). *There will be Prayer in the Morning but no book study on November 24.*
- **Vespers** continues at 5:30 on Tuesdays on Zoom. This is a short (30-45 minutes) time for prayer, bible reflection and sharing. Everyone is welcome.
- Thursday morning **Bible Study** is 11am-12noon on Zoom. We are currently doing a close reading of Romans, Paul's most profound theological statement. Even if you don't agree with him, it raises many issues that are fundamental to our faith and so I encourage you to consider joining in.

(Continues)

- **Saturday worship** takes place every 2nd Saturday (Nov 14, Dec 12). This is normally a eucharist service – right now of course it's spiritual communion – and uses different language and different music than Sunday mornings. It is a quiet and meaningful service. Right now we broadcast it on Facebook.
- **Healing prayer** – members of the healing prayer team are available during the week to pray with you. The phone number of the person of the week is in the Benediction Weekly.
- **Cloister groups** – do stay in touch with the other members of your cloister group and your cloister group leader so that we can support one another and keep in touch.
- **Pausing** – every evening at about 7pm Caro+ shares a poem or a reading, a psalm and a prayer. This is usually 3-5 minutes. You can catch this on Facebook – some people use it to end their day, others to start their day the following morning.
- **In-person meetings** - there have been a few informal social gatherings on people's patios and decks. If you would like to organize one of these please contact Ann Lucas.

No St Ben's Turkey this year – but we will still be Thankful

Given all the complications, safety requirements etc. we will be loving each other by staying home for Thanksgiving this year. The Los Osos Cares Community Dinner will provide a turkey dinner to go, at South Bay Community Center at 5pm on Thanksgiving Day. So you can get a meal there if you don't want to cook.

There will be a **Thanksgiving morning service at roam** on Facebook – just a short one so that we can give thanks together. See you then.



Photo: Worship and Church Business is conducted via Zoom in 2020.

Advent is Coming!

This year, the first Sunday in Advent is November 29, right after Thanksgiving. Advent is the season of preparation for the incarnation, the coming of God as human, and a time of spiritual preparation for the coming of the Christ child anew every Christmas.

This year we will be preparing together by using a study guide prepared by Amy-Jill Levine. In *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent*, Jewish biblical scholar Levine explores the biblical texts surrounding the story of the birth of Jesus. The study will be on Tuesday mornings at 10:15 on Zoom and materials include a video which we will watch together, and a participant's book which you will want to purchase.

Please talk to Caro+ if you would like to participate but cannot do so at that time and we will explore a second group meeting.

Some of you have experienced Levine's work before but if you have not, you can get a feel for her style and the study material by watching the video for the first session, available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzUjI-o8FhI>

Christmas Services

The **Christmas Eve** service will be at 8pm on December 24, broadcast on Facebook; and the **Christmas Day** service will be in the parking lot at 10am, weather permitting. **Blue Christmas** will be broadcast on Facebook on Saturday December 19 at 5:30. We also expect to have a special service of **Christmas readings and music** broadcast on Sunday December 20 in the early evening.

EVENT!



The People's Worship on the grounds near the St. Benedict garden.

What I'm reading - Cathy Gildae

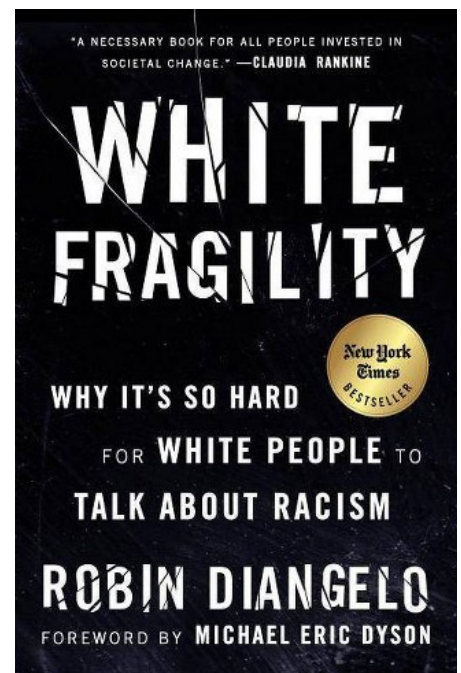
The Black Lives Matters movement has inspired me to look more closely at how we got to this moment and what, if anything, I can do about it. The answer is a lot. "White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism" by Robin DiAngelo is a good catalyst for examining and dismantling my own inherent assumptions about race and responding in a more resilient and effective manner.

For example, DiAngelo discusses the effectiveness of the "good / bad binary" at both hiding everyday racism from view and supporting its perpetuation. When our culture reduces racism to the overly simplistic idea that "you cannot be a good person and participate in racism; only bad people are racist" the result is a highly emotionally charged

environment that makes it nearly impossible for the average white person to understand, much less interrupt, racism. DiAngelo suggests that it is much more useful for each of us to think of our lives as an active

continuum; this changes the question from "Am I racist?" to "Am I actively working to interrupt racism in my present context?"

Up next time, exploring the very real consequences of systemic racism in "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander.



Earth Care: Share What You've Done to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

What have you done to reduce your carbon footprint? As we've highlighted, research shows that if everyone on the planet were to have the North American lifestyle, we'd need 5 planets worth of resources. So, how we are living is not only unsustainable but also unfair. This is a call to all persons of faith to live more simply so that others may simply live. If you have taken actions that you haven't already shared with St. Benedict's Earthcare Committee, please send a quick note to Don@DonMaruska.com. The Committee is preparing a series of sessions for the Episcopal Church on climate action. Your examples will be helpful illustrations of how parish members can take action. As a quick reminder, here some opportunities for you to consider:

- Join St. Benedict's team to share and track our results at www.sustainislandhome.org
- Take the bus, bike or walk more often for less carbon emissions (and good exercise)
- Eat lower down the carbon chain (less red meat, more fish, chicken, & plants)
- Replace standard light bulbs with LED energy saving (and long-term cost-saving) bulbs
- Exercise your Solar Choice with PG&E to get carbon-free energy
- Purchase carbon offsets for air travel to support healthy forests
- Switch your investments away from fossil fuel stocks to fossil-free ones (e.g. SPYX fund)
- Buy or lease an electric vehicle to reduce CO₂ pollution
- Install solar panels to save money and reduce emissions

Enjoy the bounty of God's creation by sharing it with others. Thank you.



Good news! We were cleaning out the storage room and we found the Nativity Scene, the tall candelsticks, and Janice Hornbeck.

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