

The Benediction

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

The Rev. Dr. Caroline Hall

Rector

The Rev. Barry Turner

Associate Priest

The Rev. Susan Plucker

Associate Priest

The Parish Council

Stef Shuman, Sr. *Warden*

Jane Wu, Jr. *Warden*

Lisa Gonzalez, *Treasurer*

Lorienne Schwenk, *Clerk*

Esta Kandarian

Alan Kiste

Ben Nucum

Barbara Schippers

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Sunday Services

8:00 am - Eucharist, live at church and available on Zoom (link may be found in the Benediction Weekly under the News tab on our website.)

10:30 am - Eucharist, live at church and 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,

Baptism can be seen as creating a state of grace which then works its way through our lives, gradually transforming us more and more into the Christ-like beings we were created to be. We are all involved in that process. It often feels as though we have warring



factions in ourselves as we deal with all the cultural and inner demons that get in the way of following Jesus and creating beloved community. One Eastern writer describes this feeling differently – he says it's like looking East in winter – we feel the warmth of the sun on our faces but our backs are still chilled by the cold of the winter. The more we cooperate with the grace that has been planted in us the more we move into the warmth of the sun and leave the chill of our sinful natures behind us.

I love this idea, and especially the reminder that it is God's grace working in us which is gradually transforming us not anything that we do. All that we need do is assent, say yes to the process, and the Holy Spirit will take care of the rest.

Looking East in winter is perhaps where we are as a faith community right now – the worst of the pandemic is over – we hope – most of us are vaccinated. We are looking forward to the sun of being able to worship and fellowship together again but we still feel the chill on our backs. We are looking forward to the church we are becoming but the pain of those we have lost and the times of isolation and disconnection still chill us.

Just as at our baptism a state of grace was planted within us, so at the founding of this church a state of grace was planted within St. Benedict's and within Los Osos. God brought this church into being and continues to work with us to grow that seed into a special and unique expression of the Body of Christ – one which can only come into being in this place and among the people who are called to be here. Just like that special mustard seed Jesus talked about which though tiny could grow as big as a tree. That is the kin-dom of God which is planted within us.

St Benedict's continues to evolve. We experiment with different ideas, some stick, some do not. We are at a special moment of growth as we move out of the more restricted times of the pandemic and also I am going on sabbatical for 12 weeks. The rector being away does not mean that y'all get to take a break from being the people of God, the Body of Christ in this place! This is a time for seeing what the Holy Spirit is creating now. It is a time for supporting the lay leadership of the parish as they continue to discern the unfolding of that original gift, the state of grace that was given us at our inception.

Thank you for being an important part of the unfolding of God's gift of grace in this place.

With love

Caroline J. A. Hall

@StBens_LosOsos

We're In!

Yes we are now worshipping inside the church. And we are still being cautious. As always, we are inspired by our core values of welcome and hospitality. That means looking out for those who are the weakest among us. Jesus was very clear in his teaching that God is interested in bringing in the outcasts and the vulnerable, not just catering to the strong and powerful.

So we will continue to wear face coverings when we gather together on Sundays. That prevents us from discriminating between those who are vaccinated and those who are not. It provides additional protection for those who may be particularly vulnerable to infection, and with the Delta variant proving virulent it helps to keep us all safe. This is an added precaution to spreading out and sitting just 3 in a pew. We have sound available in the Great Room and on the veranda so if you start to feel unsafe at any time please move to a safer location.

We will also be careful with singing, chanting and reciting prayers together. We can still put our hearts and souls into the music or the prayer but keep the volume down for now. (Singing sends aerosols much further than just talking.) We will also practice no contact during the peace. You may be comfortable touching or hugging but you do not know for sure that the other person is so please practice restraint and only hug after church when you can check out that both of you are vaccinated and comfortable with touch.

We will not be passing the collection plate for now so please give your gift as you come into the church; and we will continue to receive Christ in the bread only for a few more weeks.

Yes we can have coffee hour again but we need to avoid people hovering around open food. Loving our neighbor now includes not breathing on their food! So we will keep food minimal and either plate it in advance or serve it using tongs.

Some people will continue to join us from home. So we will continue to live stream services. Some people have said that they are not comfortable being filmed during worship. For those people we recommend that you sit on the north side of the church. We will not film the communion circle so that you can be more comfortable receiving.

A BIG THANK YOU to all the people who have taken part in the experiments and the changes of the past few months. Thank you to Lorienne who has organized the Sunday teams – please let her know if you are ready to serve again or for the first time. Thank you to the altar guild who have been amazingly flexible and creative under Sarah's leadership. Thank you to the Membership committee who created the exceptional receptions for the Bishop's visit and John's thank you. Thank you to Dony our sacristan who has moved chairs and moved chairs and moved chairs. And a huge thank you to Jay our tech dude who has done an amazing job with sound and video to include as many people as possible in as many different places as possible, with the assistance of Mike Haley. And thank you to all of you who have taken part in services whether leading or participating or joining in from home.

Finances and Building

Thank you to everyone who raised their pledges and gave early this year. As a result, combined with the much better than expected Abundance shop income, and a PPP loan we are in an excellent cash position.

We are very grateful to have received a bequest from Don Shields. Normally bequests are added to the Endowment Fund but they may be used for other purposes if the church leadership deems that necessary. Once it goes in the Endowment Fund we cannot touch the principle, so the Parish Council has agreed to hold this generous gift in general funds for the time being. This is so that we can be sure there is enough money available to pay the Rector full-time starting in July.

The fire sprinkler system is still in process. There are a few things that need to be finished up and the whole system has to be tested and pass county inspection. We hoped to have it done by last Thanksgiving – but maybe it will be complete by Thanksgiving this year!

As always little things need to be fixed around the place. If you see something that needs attention or if you fix something, please let Jay know in the office (office@stbenslosos.org).

Highlights of the Parish Council meetings

Most of the Parish Council's attention has been focused on things that are covered elsewhere; returning to indoor worship, and paying the Rector full-time. In addition, we have talked about the importance of having committees which are working and regularly reporting back to the Parish Council. A form is being created to help the committee chairs with this. Having a functioning internal structure is important as we look to a time when there will be a clergy transition.

The current committees are: Stewardship with Stef Shuman as convener, Membership convened by Ann Lucas, Finance, convened by Jane Wu, and Landscape with Liz Maruska as convener. In addition, the Staff-Parish Liaison team provides input and advice to the Rector and acts as a personnel committee. John Horsley chairs this.

We agreed to spend money which was not budgeted for repairing the irrigation line to the St. Francis garden area and the center of the parking lot, together with some additional cleanup.

Spiritual Conversation Starting July 6

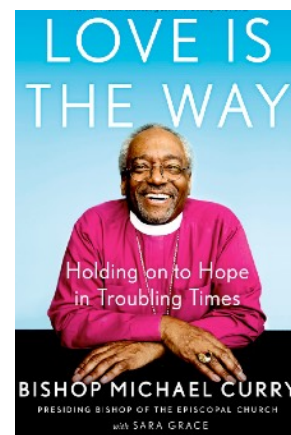
Walk the path of love with one of the warmest, most beloved spiritual leaders of our time, and learn how to put faith into action.

Starting on Tuesday July 6th at 10:15 we shall have an online conversation based on the ideas in Bishop Michael Curry's book [Love is the Way - Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times](#). This is an easy book to read so we will initially aim to cover three chapters each week but if that seems too fast we will slow down.

From the cover: "The way of love is essential for addressing the seemingly unsurmountable challenges facing the world today: poverty, racism, selfishness, deep ideological divisions, competing claims to speak for God. This book will lead readers to discover the gifts they need in order to live the way of love: deep reservoirs of hope and resilience, simple wisdom, the discipline of nonviolence and unshakable regard for human dignity."

St James, Austin has a [reading guide](#) on their website which you may find useful. If you don't have time or inclination to read the book the reading guide will help you to think about it. But as usual there is no requirement that you read the book. You are welcome just as you are.

Four Tuesdays in July at 10:15 on [Zoom](#)



Documentary on Homelessness and its Solutions July 28 7pm

[The Way Home](#) is a series of short documentaries focusing on homelessness in California. We have the opportunity to view two episodes from the upcoming Season 2 (online). The two films we will be watching are:

EPISODE 3: 'Repercussions of Racism' which explores the history of systemic racism on housing policy and homelessness, examining the impact of redlining in Pacoima, a neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley, and solutions to end homelessness. Key themes: race inequity and inequality, organizing, policy and structure

EPISODE 4: 'A Challenge, An Opportunity' shows how the sense of urgency amid the COVID-19 pandemic spurred action, revealing that powerful policies and programs, such as Project Roomkey, can be implemented at an accelerated pace.

Following the two short films (running time about 25 minutes) there will be an opportunity for discussion.

We don't yet have the link for the videos so please watch the Benediction Weekly and your email. It will be necessary to sign up in advance.

Rector's Sabbatical

Caro+ will be on sabbatical starting August 2nd and returning to take services on October 31st when we will celebrate All Saints Day. If you want to talk with her before she goes, please make an appointment very soon.

In her absence, Sunday services will be led by Susan Plucker+ and the Rev. Brian Stein-Webber. If you have a pastoral concern, please contact Senior Warden Stef Shuman. Jay Matthew will be continuing in the office to answer questions and help with administrative details. The Parish Council will be responsible for the congregation in the Rector's absence.

Thank you to John Cribb, new Music Director, and choir resumes

On Sunday June 30th we held a special thank-you gathering for John Cribb who has been our music director for the last 13 years. John suffered a stroke in 2019 which has prevented him from being able to continue in this position. John continues as our Music Director Emeritus; he will always have a special place in our hearts and we are deeply grateful to him for the music program he created here at St Ben's.

Choir will be starting again in August so this is a good time for new or returning members. Please contact Ann Lucas if you are interested.

The service will still be live-streamed on Facebook so you can join in from home. For now, the 8am service will continue on Zoom. Vespers has already moved back to the church (Tuesdays at 5:30pm) and although we will not be sharing a potluck yet you are welcome to bring yourself a snack and stay to enjoy a soda or glass of wine afterwards.



Left, John Cribb receives the Music Director Emeritus certificate from Alan Kiste (right). Urma the Unicorn led us all in singing "For he's a jolly good fellow" to John (left... in case you weren't sure). Photos by Betsey Bruner

Dave Alm, New Music Director

Please welcome Dave Alm as our new Music Director, starting July 25. Dave studied at UC Berkeley and then studied Music Composition at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. He is well-known locally as an excellent accompanist, and a fine choir director. Dave has previously played for the Saturday evening service when John was unavailable.



Creating the Center for Pastoral Care & Grief Support

Berkely Johnson

I met recently with the Parish Council to discuss creating a *Center for Pastoral Care & Grief Support* at St. Ben's. The presentation resulted in a lively discussion, and I was asked to submit an article to the Benediction Newsletter as a next step to gauge our level of interest in such a project.

The idea is that, as pastoral needs arise within the parish, there would be a mechanism in place to address those concerns. While the present model of contacting the office or the Rector directly would certainly continue to exist, there would also be an alternative way for you to let us know about any needs you, or someone you know, might have. The *Center* would then collaborate with the Rector on an ongoing basis to review how the various needs within the parish are being addressed and met.

It is envisioned then that we would need someone who is willing to be a "point person" to receive requests, confer with the Rector, assign volunteers as appropriate, and generally keep track of how things are going. Thus, we are wondering who might have gifts to contribute to this ministry, and feel called to come and get involved.

Ideally, the *Center* could help organize coverage for short-term, one-time needs within the parish, such as bringing soup or a meal to someone recovering from surgery or illness, or helping with a specific project, like yard work, or cleaning out a garage; and then it would also be there to address more long-term requests, such as bringing communion to people on a regular basis, or simply offering pastoral visits and support to folks who can't, or don't, get out so much anymore. We discussed the possibility of utilizing Stephen Ministers, and having folks complete the Stephen Ministry training, so that they become more properly acquainted with how to provide pastoral care safely and effectively.

The other idea for the *Center* would be to provide Grief Support to folks in the parish as the need arises, and to assist the Rector in situations where they might not be available to respond "in the moment." The thought here is that we would be there to address immediate needs, and then assist with a referral for those who might need ongoing grief counseling.

Abundance Shop Update

Esta Kandarian



I am pleased to report that the Abundance Shop is doing very well! Sales for the current quarter have returned to pre-pandemic levels, with the month of June being particularly good. The shop has been able to transfer \$20,000 to the church so far this year.

The Abundance Shop supports our community in a number of additional ways. Ten percent of shop income is tithed to local non-profits selected by volunteers. So far this year customers have also donated \$680 to the Rector's discretionary fund. We fulfilled eight vouchers for free store merchandise, and a number of customers regularly purchase items to give to unhoused neighbors. Comfortable, durable clothing and shoes for men are popular and often in short supply.

Customers comment frequently about the high quality and reasonable prices of our goods, the cleanliness and orderliness of the shop, and the peaceful and friendly environment. Our customer base continues to grow.

We are still operating on reduced hours for both shopping and donating. To do more, we need more help! I share the following encouragement to volunteer from our newest cashier, Ann Lucas:

"I wish I hadn't waited so long to start volunteering at the Abundance Shop! It is a lively and welcoming atmosphere, it's fun to see what people purchase, it's fun to do a little (or a lot) of purchasing oneself, and it is a thrill to see the very real way that the shop brings in the money to support our church and its missions. If I had to pick the "best" thing about working at Abundance, though, I would have to say: meeting our neighbors. Having the opportunity to talk to people, small as the talk may be. Representing the face of St. Ben's to the community."

Thank you to all of you who support the shop by volunteering, donating, and shopping!

Special Season of Creation series on Creation Care and the Climate Crisis

Don Maruska and EarthCare

The Earthcare Team of St. Benedict's encourages your participation in lively sessions of the "Beginner's Guide to Creation Care and the Climate Crisis." The sessions will include short Bible studies, video clips, and discussion.

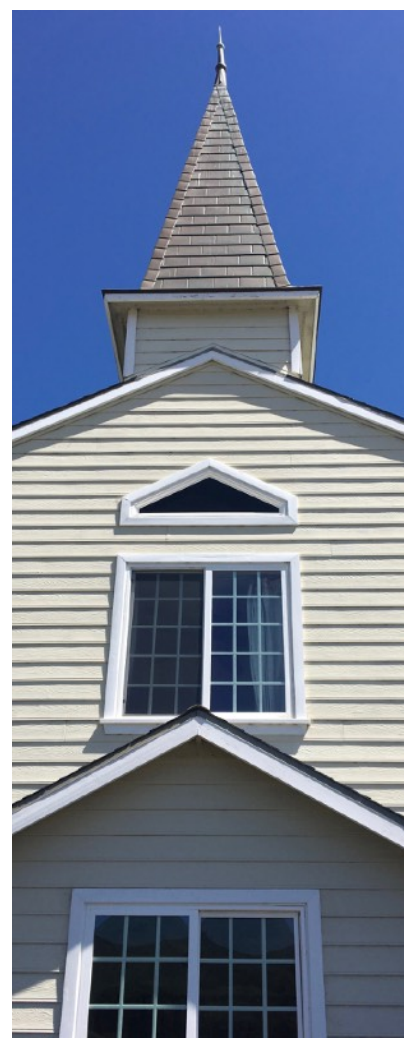
This program culminates over a year of effort in preparing useful information in engaging ways. The goal is to help you move from despair to hope and practical actions you can enjoy. "We've focused on distilling lots of information into easily digestible segments," commented member Don Maruska. "Come check out what we've cooked up and find out what you can do."

Be sure to mark your calendars. The sessions will be 6:30-8:00 p.m., Thursdays, September 9, 16, 23, 30, and October 7, via St. Benedict's Zoom: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/797776046?pwd=VUFZSXY3UVpNVitJaDl2VmhpP-S3E2UT09> Passcode is: 93402.

- September 9: What Is Climate Change and What Are Its Consequences?
- September 16: What Is Our Christian Vocation in Creation?
- September 23: What's a Christian to Do about Climate Change?
- September 30: What Can We Do as a Congregation?
- October 7: How Are We Called to Be Public Advocates for Climate Health?

We are also inviting participation across the Deanery, Diocese, and beyond in these timely discussions.

EVENT!



ON-GOING ACTIVITIES AT ST. BEN'S

ABUNDANCE SHOP– Thrift shop at 2025 9th St.

COMMUNITY DINNER – Providing and serving food at SBCC, on 1st Thursday of odd-numbered months, in conjunction with Los Osos Cares.

EARTHCARE – Discussion/action group seeking local solutions to environmental concerns. 3rd Wednesdays 3:00 pm on ZOOM

HEALING SERVICE - A time for prayers for healing at the 10:30 service on 5th Sundays.

HOLLISTER INSTITUTE Opportunities for stimulating discussion and thoughtful exploration. Currently: "Love is the Way" by Michael Curry, Tuesdays at 10:15am on ZOOM.

LAUNDRY LOVE - Helping low-income families with funds, soap, and friendly assistance at Osos Clean Laundry. 11am and 4pm on last Wednesday of each month.

MEN'S BREAKFAST GROUP – Morning social gathering, 2nd Saturdays 8am at Budget Café, 3121-J S Higuera, SLO

PEOPLE'S KITCHEN – Providing and serving lunch at 40 Prado, 1st Saturday of even-numbered months

SATURDAY EUCHARIST– Evening Eucharist on 2nd Saturdays at 5:30pm, live at the church and live-streamed on Facebook.

VESPERS AND CONVERSATION – 5:30 pm Tuesdays live at the church and on ZOOM, followed by social time.



“That was the most dramatic reading of Philippians I’ve ever heard.”

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