

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*

Esta Kandarian

Alan Kiste

Ben Nucum

Barbara Schippers

Helen Schnieders

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Sunday Services

8:00 am (2nd, 3rd, 4th Sunday each month) - 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,

Merry Christmas, and happy Epiphany! The season of light and of revelation is upon us, when our readings and our reflections turn to the presence of God revealed to us in Jesus the Christ, starting with his baptism and completing with his transfiguration on the mountaintop.

Where do we see the presence of God revealed today? Perhaps at the ocean or watching a sunset from the top of a hill... God is present in Creation and in the beauty of animal companionship, but especially among God's people. God is here and God is in us and among us. We are the royal priesthood, the body of Christ which the Holy Spirit uses to show forth God's glory in the world.



It's quite astonishing that God chooses to use us to continue God's self-revelation. I know that most days I don't feel that I am shining with God's glory. But then I remember those words of Thomas Merton, "There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun... it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes."

That is who we are – we are the beloved of God; we are walking around shining like the sun in our innermost core, in the place where we are most authentically ourselves.

Our spiritual work is to peel away the layers of self-doubt, of self-absorption, of selfishness so that the light can shine. And that spiritual work is not ours to do alone but in partnership with the Holy Spirit and in fellowship with each other. Every interaction, every conversation is another opportunity to be giving and forgiving and to let our light shine, remembering that "our light" is but a reflection of the one true Light which came into the world that first Christmas day.

Jesus not only said, "I am the Light" he also told his disciples "You are the light". It is our mission and ministry to shine with God's light wherever we are and whatever we are doing, not just when we are worshiping but also when we are shopping, when we are cleaning the house, even when we are paying the bills. Because every part of our individual lives and our life as a faith community is sacred, every part of our life is part of God's life.

This Epiphany let us look for the radiance of God not just in the pages of Scripture, in Creation and in our common worship but everywhere the people of God go, and in everything we do.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Caroline'. The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Caroline J.A. Hall

@StBens_LosOsos

Annual Parish Meeting

The annual parish meeting will be held on **January 23rd starting at noon**. This is an important meeting where we take care of business for the year – electing Parish Council members and representatives for Deanery and Diocesan affairs. We also receive reports from all the different groups in the parish and consider plans for the coming year – particularly the budget.

We also give awards to recognize outstanding service – you will need to stay to the end to see who is honored this year, and to welcome the new Senior Warden as Stef Shuman is stepping down from that role at the end of January.

All members and regular attenders are encouraged to participate in this meeting which last about 90 minutes and will be available on Zoom. Lunch will be provided for those who attend in person.

Highlights of the Parish Council Meetings

- Approved Ron Thompson's suggestion that he and Laura's daughter Alice would install above ground irrigation to the new tree planting at the east end of the property for considerably less expense than the quote we had received. Pledges have been received that will cover this.
- The tree planting day is scheduled for Jan 29
- Los Osos Garden Club is interested in providing understory plants to go between the trees.
- We expect to complete 2021 in a good financial position but pledges for 2022 are a little behind last year, and the 2022 budget will likely be a deficit budget. At the Finance Committee's first pass it was \$45k in the red.
- As budgeted, 1% of our annual income was donated to local non-profits: Los Osos Cares, Los Osos Cares Community Dinners, People Helping People, Laundry Love, and South Bay Community Center. This is in addition to money tithed from the Abundance Shop income.
- The Abundance Shop is doing very well and is probably having its best ever year financially. We need more cashiers. Agreed to hire Jay Matthew four hours per week as additional help for Esta, and to increase Esta's pay as an acknowledgement of her outstanding work.
- By-laws will be reviewed and brought to the Parish Meeting. A small group will work on this.
- Community dinners – Los Osos Cares has been providing cash to cover the costs of the main dish each month but has run out of money. This will in future be covered by the Rectors Discretionary Fund and/or Outreach funds.
- The Nominations Committee announced the slate for Vestry with three year terms starting Feb 1, 2022: Cathy Gildea, Pamela Bleisch and Sandy Fisher.
- The new Parish Council will hold their planning retreat February 25-26 with Canon Martha in attendance.
- The Parish Council needs a new clerk.

Thank you to the St. Benedict Singers!

What a wonderful carol concert we had this year. If you missed it, you can find it on Facebook here:

<https://www.facebook.com/st-benslosos/videos/339399314309993>.

Congratulations to Dave Alm our Music Director and to every choir member who worked so hard to make this possible as a gift to our church community and the people of Los Osos.

If you would like to sing in the choir please talk to Dave. Choir practices are every Wednesday at 6pm, starting January 12th.



"When I answered the call to service, I had no idea it would involve moving so many folding chairs."

Why do we stand up to face the Gospel book?

Stef Shuman

During the Eucharist service there is a procession into the center of the congregation with a deacon or priest carrying a book with a red and gold cover. Inside the book are passages from the four Gospels.



The procession signifies that the Gospel is at the center of our life as a faith community, and also signifies that we are to carry the Gospel out into the community. On some Sundays, the Gospel Procession is led by torch bearers with candles. The two lights are both a token of joy and a symbol of Christ, the light of the world.

Wherever we are seated in the church, it is appropriate for us to stand up as we are able, and turn to face the Gospel book as a sign of reverence and respect. This is also an echo of the Jewish practice of carrying the Torah – the first five books of the Bible – into the congregation as a sign of veneration.

Here at St. Benedict's, the Gospel book is located on the Credence Table at the south side of the room. So if you are seated in the pews on the south side, you should turn around to face the Gospel book when the priest or deacon goes by as the procession begins, and keep facing it as it is brought forward. Those on the north side just face the procession from across the room.

It is one of several parts of the liturgy in which we are invited and encouraged to 'embody' our worship – to move and shift and use our physical being in engaging the spirit in more than just words. (Adapted from an article from The Church of the Incarnation, Santa Rosa CA)

Star Party

The Star Party will be in person this year, on January 5th at 6pm. Join us for a fun mix-up of Epiphany and Christmas traditions.



We will enjoy dinner together. Due to the Covid surge, this will not be a pot-luck but will be commercially prepared, and then after dinner we will crown kings and queens of the Epiphany to bring the Magi and their camels to the creche. Once we have cleared away the dishes and the tables, we will take down all the decorations and the lights and have a small fire where we burn some of the greenery (please bring a little from home if you wish) and any memories of 2021 we want to discard. After blessing the church for the New Year we each take a star word to go, to encourage and enlighten us in the year to come.

Everyone is very welcome. Let Sandy Fisher know if you can help with decorating, with serving and with clean up.

Mutual Ministry Review

Every year we ask for your feedback and your input. You are welcome to share thoughts and concerns with Parish Council members and the Rector at any time, but every January we ask you to take the time to reflect on our ministry. This information helps the Parish Council in its planning for the coming year.

There are two ways you can complete the Mutual Ministry survey – you can go to the online form which is available here: <https://forms.gle/RoQZhXvbWbZur2Tig> or you can collect a paper survey from the back of the church, and return it completed. The survey is confidential but if you want a direct response you do need to let us know who you are.

In addition, Parish Council members will be calling to check in with you and see if there is anything else you want to say – some of us find it much easier to talk than to fill in a form!

So that we can share the results of the survey at our Annual meeting on January 23rd, we ask you to complete your part as soon as possible, and no later than January 16th.

People News

Tom Pickering Tom is living with his daughter and son-in-law in the family house in Cabrillo Estates. He is on hospice care. In his Christmas letter he writes "I'm so grateful we picked Los Osos to build – I do enjoy living here. The views are constantly changing. My son in law took the picture and my new friend is Shyla. She keeps an eye on me when her mom and dad are out of the room. She keeps the floor spotless."

Larry Swafford's memorial will be on January 15th at 2:30 in the church. Please consider joining us for this service to remember and celebrate Larry's life.

J.W. will be returning home in early February. He is not eligible for affordable housing from any of the local organizations and so will probably go back to living in his vehicle unless anyone has a place they can offer him. However, he needs a vehicle to live in. Please consider making a donation so that we can buy him a van.

Betty Field Haley is living in the Arroyo Grande Care Center. She enjoys having visitors. Please call the activities director 24 hours ahead of when you hope to visit, and take proof of vaccination with you. 805-489-8137



Diocesan News

Join the 2022 "Storied Pilgrimage with Race" course. The unique curriculum of [*A Storied Pilgrimage with Race*](#) explores issues of race in our diocese; it is a holy offering of video interviews, education, action items, and room for reflection. Throughout 2022 you are invited to participate in this course by attending monthly Zoom calls to undertake this journey together. Completion of this pilgrimage fulfills the requirement for anti-racism training in the Diocese of El Camino Real; it is required for clergy and strongly encouraged for all in leadership.

The group will meet 7pm to 8:30pm on **Jan. 25, Feb. 22, March 29, April 26, May 31, June 28, July 26, August 30, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 15, and Dec. 6.** To sign up, please email the Rev. Canon Martha Korienek at canon-martha@realepiscopal.org by January 24, 2022.

The Diocese of El Camino Real's **School for Ministry** is opening a course in the winter of 2022 to prepare individuals to apply for a Lay Preaching license. Full details, a Q&A, and an online application link are available in today's news announcement in English and Spanish, [available to read and download here.](#)

The Trees Are Coming! The Trees Are Coming!

Liz Maruska

Imagine stately Coast Live Oak, Island Oak, and Monterey Cypress trees adorning the Clark Valley Road perimeter of our St. Benedict's property and turning CO₂ into living carbon as food for trees to enhance climate health. We're scheduled to take a big step toward that dream on Saturday, January 29. A team from ECOSLO will be on hand to plant 14 trees from these varieties. The trees have a head start in the 15-gallon container size.

St. Benedict's is fortunate that Ron Thompson has volunteered his time to install the irrigation system needed to support the trees in their early years. His daughter Alice who has landscaping experience will be working on a contract basis. This will enable the irrigation system to go forward with the budget available from church members' donations. Hallelujah!

Wendy McKeown and Vita Miller from the Los Osos Valley Garden Club have played key roles with Landscape Committee leader Liz Maruska and members Ron, Michael Lucas, Celeste Pennington, and Jane Wu to bring this project forward.

Come celebrate the planting targeted to start at 9 AM. You can watch, bring donuts and coffee, dig holes, and enjoy being outside.

What's the future? Another 16 trees are in the works for the west side of the property and in front of the water tanks. The landscape committee is working to choose the trees that will preserve neighbors sight lines and bring beauty to that part of the property.

Thanks to the Parish Council and everyone in the congregation who has given time, energy, money, and encouragement for our efforts to glorify God.

Meet the trees...

Top: *Coast Live Oak*: With age, this tree develops a large spreading canopy which is often greater than the total height. An important tree in the California landscape. Maximum tree height: 70 feet; Canopy width: 20-70 feet; Growth rate: ~24 in/year

Middle: *Island Oak*: This evergreen Oak is a desirable landscape tree in southern California. Smooth gray bark when young bark becomes brown and blocky with age. Found natively on the Channel Islands. Prefers deep, moist soils but can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions. Slightly toothed, glossy green leaves are covered with tan hairs below. Maximum tree height: 50 feet; Canopy width: 25-40 feet; Growth rate: ~24 in/year

Bottom: *Monterey Cypress*: Good wind screen in coastal areas. Develops a wind-sculptured form. Maximum tree height: 65 feet; Canopy 30-40 feet. Growth rate: ~36 in/year



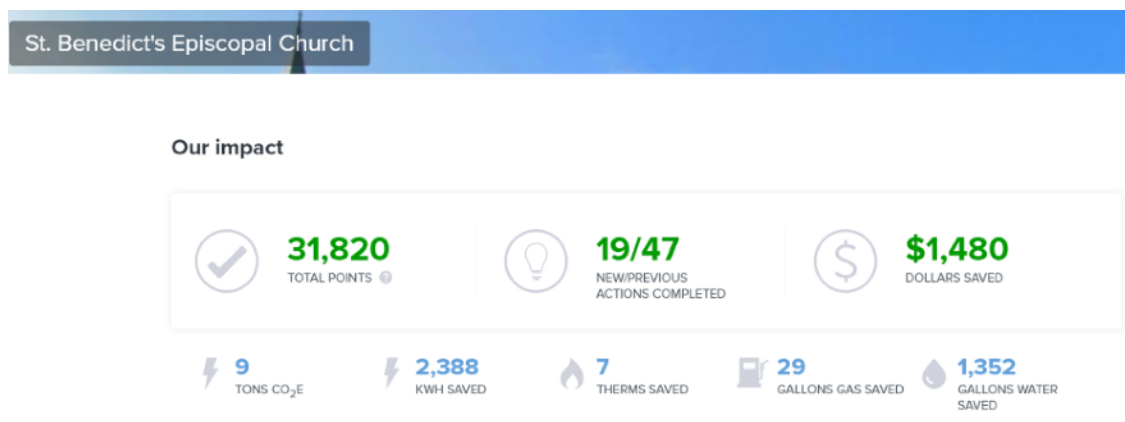
Epiphany – an Invitation to Understand our Role in Climate Health

by Don Maruska on behalf of the Earthcare Team



The season of Epiphany offers us a great opportunity to explore and understand our personal roles in climate health. How do our personal choices affect greenhouse gas emissions that are warming the planet and destabilizing our climate? What actions can we take to benefit the planet and our pocketbooks? In short, we can have a personal epiphany about our relationship with the climate.

Thirteen households in St. Benedict's have joined the Episcopal Church's call to Sustain Our Island Home (www.SustainOurIslandHome.org). Thus far, those households have taken 19 actions, reduced their CO₂ emissions by 9 tons, and saved \$1,480. (See screen shot of our progress.)



If you haven't signed on to the program, it's relatively easy to do and the app protects your personal data (www.SustainIslandHome.org). In 10 to 15 minutes, you can set up your household energy profile. This gives you a baseline for your energy use. As you take actions, you will receive ongoing updates about your decreases in carbon dioxide emissions and dollar savings. Your household results can be added to those of others at St. Benedict's, and the impact of Episcopalians by congregations, across the diocese, and across the Episcopal Church will be calculated to encourage more people to become good stewards.

The goal for the season of Epiphany is to help more households get signed up. To support that objective, members of St. Benedict's Earthcare Team will be reaching out to you and inviting you to join. We'll also be available after church services with laptops and face masks to help you speed through the sign-up process.

During Lent, we will be featuring key actions households can take to cut their emissions, enhance their quality of life, and save money. With 70 actions, ranging from easy to hard, everyone can do something to drive down their carbon footprint.

Join us in caring for Creation through the choices we make in our homes and daily lives.

Dispatch from Slovakia

Michael and Ann Lucas

Ann and I thank you for your thoughts and prayers while we were away the last months! My time for teaching and research in Slovakia was not as expected due to changing regional covid protocols but provided a rich experience none the less. The University of Prešov is a dominantly liberal arts school in the city of Prešov in the eastern end of the country, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, and an hour drive from Poland, Ukraine, and a bit farther from Hungary. It is 5 hours by train to the capital, Bratislava, in the western side of the country, and then an hour to Vienna where we flew to and from. The town of 90,000 [like SLO] has a beautiful riverside setting with forested hills on the horizon, and a medieval walled city at its core. Portions of the wall remain, but fires destroyed most medieval buildings. They were replaced by outstanding Baroque facades at the elongated town center.

We were a ten-minute walk from the historic core, and the university was compact and along the river in a series of 1960's 'socialist' modernist buildings. We stayed in the 'stary internat' [old dormitory], a three level 300 room monster from the 1950's renovated in 2020, but with a beautiful 2-bedroom apartment that overlooked a courtyard and park. We had room for an electric piano for Ann to play, volunteered from a student in one of my classes. While we had wonderful markets to shop at within walking distance, we missed out on much of the restaurant, café and pub culture of the area due to covid protocols which got increasingly restrictive over our visit.

I taught two classes, one on 'Embodied Aesthetics' and the experience of architecture and the other on an 'Aesthetic History of Built America'. The students [supposedly] were ready to study in English, but I soon found that was to be taken with a grain of salt [maybe a large one]. We did a 'monitor and adjust' and they worked out fine with their end presentations in English in both classes. Some of the students are 'Erasmus' students who are free to study in multiple countries, and many at the school are from Ukraine. This means a lot of them go home on weekends and with covid vaccinations lower in all the surrounding areas, many were sick or in quarantine. English skills with those under 30 are good enough for simple conversation, but for older Slovaks not so much- German is the primary 2nd language for some.

My research was on the wooden churches that at one time were common in the hundreds of small villages of the region, but are now only surviving in about 50 locations, mostly in remote mountain villages. These are 300 years old and have survived destruction from World Wars I and II as well as socialism that marginalized the primary 'Greek Catholic' denomination, including exile of their priests. The Greek Catholics follow an Eastern Rite but fall under the Roman Catholic hierarchy and use the Western calendar. The structures are spectacular, intimate, vernacular log buildings, sometimes painted inside, and with an Eastern Rite iconostasis- a wall that separates the altar from the nave with sets of doors for priests and deacons and filled with layers of icons its height and length. Most of these are exquisite and are the ones original to the churches. We were able to worship with the locals in four of them.

While covid protocols did not allow travel outside the city the last six weeks of our time there, we did get out for 8 days of field work and importantly for the preparations for All Saints Day, where the graves of one's family are decorated with flowers, candles, and lanterns.

The Greek Catholic Cathedral and core theological seminary are in Prešov, and the Pope visited early in our stay next to the university and presided over the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom with 30,000 in attendance. I got to attend, getting a good standing room place in the dark at 5am, but seeing the early preparation rituals of chants over the icons which had been brought in and blessing of the altar. It was one of many surrealistic experiences!

There is much more to relate, and perhaps I will do a slide show sometime later this Winter. We are very happy to be home with you!



Image: The historic core of Prešov, Slovakia with the socialist memorial and Sv. Mikuláša [St. Nicholas] Roman Catholic Cathedral [a church was here since 13th c. this version 1515].

Spiritual Conversation

On **Tuesday mornings** a spiritual conversation takes place on **Zoom starting at 10:15**. Most often we use a book as the basis for the conversation but everyone is welcome whether or not you have had time or have interest in reading the book.

Starting on January 25th the conversation will be based on the book, [Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of St Benedict](#). The publisher says

Through personal anecdotes and thoughtful comparison, four prominent Buddhist scholars—including Joseph Goldstein and Yifa—reveal how the wisdom of each tradition [Christian and Buddhist] can revitalize the other. *Benedict's Dharma* is a lively and compelling dialogue which will appeal not only to Buddhists and Christians, but to anyone interested in rediscovering the value of an ancient discipline in the modern world.

This seems to be a good follow-on to some recent spiritual conversations on Buddhism and Christianity, most recently centered on the [The Book of Joy](#) which is based on conversations between the Dalai Lama and the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

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