

# 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**

Maureen Titus, Presiding Warden

Lisa Gonzalez, Treasurer

Pamela Bleisch

Sandy Fisher

Cathy Gildea

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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/](http://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,**

It's Lent – that season that we have come to love and hate. Love it because it is such a holy time and hate it because it's a nuisance – we have little disciplines like not saying “Alleluia!” and some of us feel vaguely guilty like we should be doing something that we're not, or not doing something that we are.

During Lent we often use the image of pilgrimage – we are a pilgrim band – and we remember the forty years that the Israelites spent walking in circles in the desert, and the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert being tempted and we hope that our forty days of Lenten pilgrimage might be easier than either of those experiences.

But it seems that this year our Lenten pilgrimage will be intricately tied up with the welfare of the people of Ukraine. This may be a tough Lent as we go forward putting one foot in front of the other, grieving and praying and sending alms for our brothers and sisters who are suffering so much. It may be a tough Lent as we wake up each morning to more sadness.

Yes we are a band of pilgrims heading sadly through the desert to the Promised Land, but my friends, we have a Promised Land. We know that there is a place and a time, a dimension where God's reign is complete – a place of peace and justice and mercy and above all Love. And that is where we are headed. Come the evening of April 16 I know that I will be once again celebrating the resurrection, and I hope that you too, however foot-sore and weary, will join me around the new fire of Easter.

We are the people of the resurrection, but Lent reminds us that however much we want to pretend otherwise, we are also the ones walking in circles in the desert. We are both the ones trudging through the desert *and* the ones dancing around the new fire celebrating the redemption of the cosmos. And somehow by holding both those truths we bring a gift to the world, a gift of joy and hope and new life even as we witness the suffering and pain that is part of being human in a broken world.

I am reminded of one of my favorite hymns:

I have fixed my eyes on your hills, Jerusalem my destiny  
Though I cannot see the end for me, I cannot turn away  
We have set our hearts for the way: this journey is our destiny  
Let no-one walk alone, the journey makes us one.

As we make our Lenten journey this year, whatever it may mean for us as individuals, for us as a community of faith and for the world, let us not lose sight of the goal, the end of our journey -that is the new Jerusalem, the new Creation, the reign of God. It is oneness with each other and with Godself.

In Christ,



Caroline J.A. Hall



@StBens\_LosOsos

## Highlights from the Parish Council Retreat

The Parish Council met for its annual planning retreat at the end of February. We welcomed new members Pamela Bleisch, Cathy Gildea and Sandy Fisher.

Thank you to Cathy Gildea for stepping up to be Clerk if the Vestry – the position of People's Warden is currently vacant.

After reviewing the parish's responses to the Mutual Ministry Review and defining some areas of work, we reviewed St Ben's Core Values and found that the ones on the website were not in fact the final iteration. Pamela and Esta who were part of the drafting team will try to find the final version and if not, edit the available ones. We agreed that over all they are still relevant but that we need a statement about our approach to scripture. Caro+ will draft something.

We adopted the following new five year Goals:

As we double down on a life centered in eucharist, prayer, and scripture, we will strive to execute a

1. Grace-filled rector transition that embraces growth and builds on our strengths;
2. Build and support a sustainable cadre of the next generation of lay leadership;
3. Provide long term financial stability to support the life of the parish;
4. Become a green business;
5. Develop plans for the next stage of property development; and
6. Evaluate the feasibility of building a rectory onsite.



## Transition Planning

The Parish Council has started preparing for Caro+'s retirement in 2023. An initial meeting with the Bishop and Canon Martha (who is responsible for transitional planning) gave us some options about how we might proceed. Alan Kiste chairs St Ben's Transition Committee which will be overseeing the process. Here is the draft charge to the committee:

The Transition Committee is responsible to the Parish Council for facilitating and overseeing the transition from Caro+ to the next permanent priest.

Its duties include but are not limited to:

- organizing and facilitating all discussions and communications with the diocese and the transition consultant
- creating the process by which St. Ben's decides how to proceed (the Vestry is the final decision making body)
- working with Caro+ and/or the Parish Council to:
  - ensure institutional memory is preserved as much as possible
  - ensure structures and activities are in place to ease the transition - these may include committees, book studies, grief groups etc
  - clarify what belongs to Caro+ and what to the church, and make sure that that is clear and handled before Caro's final day
  - nominate and empower a search committee
  - organize celebrations for Caro+ as she leaves
  - work with Presiding Warden to ensure clergy cover after Caro's departure
  - welcome and onboard new clergy

Please talk to Alan Kiste if you have questions or concerns.

## Finances

At the Parish Meeting in January the parish adopted a shortfall budget. We committed to spending about \$3000 a month more than we expect to receive. Please bear this in mind when making requests for additional spending, or in considering your donations, and pray that God will meet all our wants and needs.

## A Word about Face Coverings

If you go to an indoor concert at present they will ask you both to wear a face covering AND show proof of vaccination. This is because big gatherings are still places where infection can be spread. Given our core value of hospitality we will continue to wear face coverings at the 10:30 on Sundays through Lent, to protect those who are most vulnerable - and we will not be asking for vaccination certificates.

Smaller services and groups can make a decision based on the comfort level of those who are present.

Let's still be really conscious about not using our fingers to pick up food.

## Ashes to Go!

Deacon Sharon visited the right week - we had 97 people come to outside the Abundance Shop for ashes and a prayer on Ash Wednesday.



## MMR Responses

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Mutual Ministry Review. It is very helpful to the church leadership in planning and improving how we relate to each other in the faith community. Here are responses to some of your comments about what you would like us to do different or better:

**Fewer Zoom meetings** - as we return to in-person meetings we will probably want to keep a Zoom option so that as many people as possible can attend. Meetings and services which are both in-person and on Zoom are described as hybrid. We have been doing this for the Sunday 8am and Vespers for some time. If you have a concern about appearing on camera whether in Zoom (which is basically private) or on our live-stream please talk to Jay who will seat you away from the camera.

**Continued and expanded innovation in liturgy and fundamental service structure** -- There are so many repetitive aspects of the services that they can be mind-numbing sometimes. We need to freshen up our offerings to expand our reach to the unchurched - In 1559, a England was as divided as the US today. Under Elizabeth I, it was united into one worshipping community. This was achieved by leaving the theology of some prayers intentionally vague and by not having a statement of faith beyond the ancient creeds. Thus the Church of England, and its descendants, is held together by its liturgy not by its confession of faith. Consequently, we may not make any innovations with the liturgical structure of our main Sunday services. However, we can at other times. If there are at least

six people who want to develop an alternative service at another time, the Rector will be happy to work with you. Many unchurched people want a ritual, liturgical experience. Others do not. Changing our services will not of itself expand our evangelism.

**One concern I have heard (from newcomers) that we want to be careful about is asking or trying to enlist them into ministries; being greeted and welcomed is one thing, but people need time to get acclimated; being asked to sing in the choir or join the altar guild the first Sunday they attend is too much, and has the opposite effect of scaring people and causing them not to come back.** Absolutely agreed. Please do not do this. Please do not even offer a permanent name tag until someone has visited three times.

**We need to reach out to and include younger people (families, teenagers etc)** - We have a lot to offer younger people. If you are willing to volunteer to help with a program for children and their parents please contact Pamela Bleisch or the Rector. Without church members committed to participating we can offer nothing.

**Are we in danger of aging out as a parish? Do we need a plan to rejuvenate our ranks with appeal to mid-life or younger folks?** appeal to mid-life or younger folks? Certainly, our senior folks are getting more senior. If we just see incorporating younger adults as a survival game for the congregation we are going about it backwards. The question is how can we help more people, especially younger ones, to discover the joy of God with us?

**Can another deacon come to share the workload?** Deacons are usually volunteers even though they often have three or four years of significant training before ordination. There are only three active deacons in SLO Deanery and they are all assigned to other churches. We would only get a deacon if another deacon came to the area and was then assigned to St Ben's.

**Pastoral Care** - it would be helpful to know what your concern is - have you needed and requested care you have not received? Or are you seeing a lack? Much of our pastoral care is provided informally and is the result of someone letting us know they have a need. This is an area that we could make a bit more solid, though informal care of one another will always be most important. If you have specific concerns please talk with the Rector, Presiding Warden (Maureen Titus) or another member of the Parish Council so we can better address this.

**Planning for Caro's retirement and the hiring of the next Rector of St. Ben's** - We must plan for it, even though the prospect seems sad and even scary. Yes we are doing that, please see the article about transition planning.

**I also think it's CRITICAL to bring back a simple coffee hour** - We have had a simple coffee hour after the 10:30 service for many months. We are buying pre-packaged cookies and put out the coffee pot etc. Please put your own cups etc in the dishwasher when you are done, NOT in the sink. We can start having more complex coffee hours again when we have volunteers.

**I have failed in many attempts to clearly understand the audio messages due to my hearing and the heavy echo effect of the sanctuary It may just be me, but has carpeting ever been considered?** We have not wanted to have carpeting as it is less durable and also subdues the brightness of the space for music. But it may be a consideration for the future as the floor deteriorates. In the meantime please talk to Jay to see if he can help you use the assisted hearing system available from the ushers, sit somewhere different or perhaps change the over-all volume so there is less echo. There are usually copies of the sermon available so you can read along.

**Home visitation for those who have met spiritual trials, not necessarily clergy.** There is a program of Stephen Ministers in the county who are lay people who can accompany those in times of difficulty. If you would like more information about this, please ask the Rector. Also, if you have a need, please let Jay or Caro+ know and they will try to get you help.

**Some way of getting to know newer members, even if only a bit about them in a newsletter.** Great idea - is there a journalist who would like to take this on as a project? The newsletter only comes out six times a year.

**I would like us to use less paper for worship leaflets. Perhaps we could try projecting some parts of the service on the walls.** Yes, it would be good to use less paper but the wall is not so good for some people with poor eyesight, and it is time-consuming to prepare and do. As things continue to improve we can go back to using hymn-books. Some people might like to experiment with using the on-line service leaflet on their devices while in church.

## Spiritual Conversation

Please consider joining a new Spiritual Conversation, starting on **Tuesday March 8**.

We will be discussing prayer from a process theology perspective using *In God's Presence* by [Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki](#) as a basis. Suchocki is now retired - she used to teach at the School of Theology in Claremont.

During the first session on Tuesday March 8 at 10:15 we will watch a brief video of Suchocki talking about prayer which will both be an introduction and help us to frame our first conversation. As usual you are welcome whether or not you read the book!

Tuesdays at 10:15 starting on March 8 and continuing through the month. Join the conversation on [Zoom](#).

## Lent Study has started but you can still join in

The Lord's Prayer is among the greatest treasures of faith. This six-week study explores the key phrases of the Lord's Prayer as they lead us to greater spirituality and growth.

- March 3 - Keeping Our Distance: How close can we come to a holy God?
- March 10 - Crossing To the Future: What is the Kingdom and what is the Kingdom yet to come?
- March 17 - Willing Obedience: How can we glorify God in our daily lives?
- March 24 - Feeding Ourselves: What place does self-sufficiency have in Christian life?
- March 31 - Writing it Off: What does the reality of our forgiveness say to our treatment of others?
- April 7 - Crying For Help: How does a Christian respond to the enormity of evil in the world?

This discussion group will be based on materials provided by the [Kerygma Program](#). Participants are encouraged to read the resource book which is available from the church for a suggested donation of \$17 (includes shipping). Sessions will be led by the Rev. Caroline Hall

You may participate in person at the church or by Zoom. It's not too late to join in!!

## Stations of the Cross

The wonderful Stations gifted by the Hirahara family, and made for us by Chloe White will soon be back up! There will be an opportunity to pray with them in-person on Tuesday in Holy Week (April 12) at 4:45 and again on Good Friday (April 15) at 2:15pm.



The Women of Jerusalem

## Holy Week

Holy Week is a time for us to ponder 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.

**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. April 10 10:30 a.m., Palm Sunday Liturgy with Blessing of Palms, Procession and Passion Gospel.

Stations of the Cross: walk the Via Dolorosa – the way of tears - which is also the Way of Peace and of Hope as we follow the story of Jesus' journey to the cross and beyond. Tuesday April 12 at 4:45pm, and Good Friday at 2:15pm.

**Maundy Thursday April 14**, 7:00pm 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.

**Good Friday April 10**, 12noon, 7:30pm (stations at 2:15) 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 2:15 when we will walk the Stations of the Cross. Then in the evening at 7:30 we are invited to Trinity United Methodist Church where our combined choirs will lead us in a program of readings and music.

**Holy Saturday and Easter Vigil April 16**, 7:45 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 just after sunset, at 7:45pm 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.

**Easter Day Sunday, April 17**: 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.

## Diocesan Spring Renewal

The diocese is planning a Spring Renewal event on April 29 and 30. Originally intended to be in-person it is now going to be on-line which makes it much easier for us to attend. Full details will be available soon.

## Welcome Home JW!

It's great to have JW home and starting to take care of things around the church again. Thanks to Bob Pelfrey for organizing his welcome home, and thanks to everyone for your generosity. As a result of your gifts, JW has wheels.



## Lent -- a Time to Live Simply So That Others Can Simply Live

Don Maruska on behalf of the Earthcare Team

As people of faith we have a special calling to care for all of God's creation. Part of that calling is to acknowledge the unfair share of resources that North Americans consume. The greenhouse gas emissions we emit here increase global warming for all. Often, the impacts of global warming disproportionately impact those who contribute the least to the problem.

So, what can we do and how can we do it?

Fortunately, the Episcopal Church has provided a great tool at [www.SustainIslandHome.org](http://www.SustainIslandHome.org) to help us. When you go to [www.SustainIslandHome.org](http://www.SustainIslandHome.org) and click on "Join the Challenge," you enter our state (California), diocese (El Camino Real), community (Los Osos), and church (St. Benedict's), you'll be whisked to a place to join other members of our parish in finding ways to save resources (and often save money too). If you take a few minutes to input

some information about your home, you'll get a list of actions tailored to your situation. Here are the action categories.

You can click on the filters of interest to you and get specific suggestions along with explanations about how to implement them. If you encounter any difficulties in using the online tool, please connect with one of the members of St. Benedict's Earthcare Team for support.

Give God's creation a gift this Lent and enjoy making a difference.

Sustaining Earth, Our Island Home  
A Call to Action for All Episcopalians

Be Energy Smart   Clean Energy Home   Shift Your Ride   Eat Green & Waste Less

Be Water Wise   Community & Learning   Resilience

Filters   GETTING STARTED   HANGING OUT AT HOME   THE BIG ACTIONS   YOUTH FRIENDLY

## The Trees Are Here and Growing

By Liz Maruska on behalf of the Landscape Committee

On January 29, the Landscape Committee, ECOSLO, and the Los Osos Garden Club planted 14 trees on the church property. Most are along Clark Valley Road and three are in front of the water tanks on the west side of the church property.

We are fortunate that the Los Osos Garden Club returned on February 5 to plant an understory of 34 plants of Yankee Point ceanothus and pink California Currant. They will add to the beauty and multiply the carbon sequestration benefits. Ron Thompson volunteered his time to install the sprinkler system along with the landscape efforts of his step-daughter Alice. We are now fully operational!

There will be a blessing of these plantings in the spring. Meanwhile, enjoy these additions to the church grounds.



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