

Wow! Thank you Congressman Carbajal. And thank you to all of you who nominated me for this honor. I know that many of you suggested me – I would particularly like to thank Brian Spolarich and Alan Kiste who spent many hours on their recommendation, and my spouse Jill who organized a write-in campaign. I am so grateful to you all. I am grateful also to the Chumash Nation on whose land we stand today.

As I listen to all the things you mentioned that I have been involved with, I wonder how I could have done it all? And of course, the answer is that I didn't. At least, I didn't do it alone. I did it with all of you and another coupla hundred people who aren't here today.

And we did it, and we do it because we share a common vision though we may use different words to describe it. We share a vision of a sustainable resilient community based on mutual love and support. Martin Luther King Jr. called it "beloved community", Jesus Christ called it the "reign of God". In this community there are no outsiders, no-one is left behind. In this community, conflict is resolved or lived with in an atmosphere of mutual respect and listening. There is no racism, no homophobia or transphobia, no sexism and where those old prejudices rear their heads the hard work of reparation, reconciliation and relationship is undertaken with determination. In this community – which the prophet Isaiah called the peaceable kingdom – humanity lives in harmony with the rest of Creation.

This is the vision which I believe we share, though you might paint it in different words or with different emphases.

Here at St Ben's we are blessed to have these beautiful quilts, made for us by the Rev Ann-Lining Smith. Members of the church contributed different fabrics and she stitched them together into a work of art. That is how it is with us, the builders of resilient community. Each of us brings our gifts, our skills, our time and makes our small contribution and those contribution are stitched together into something lovely. I am grateful to have been both a contributor and to a small extent a quilter among you.

But I have never done it alone. I would like to mention just a few people who have been major collaborators these many years:

- Susan Polk who brought the Court Appointed Special Advocate program to San Luis Obispo and was my first employer.
- Gina Whitaker who was my first employee [at the Court Appointed Special Advocate program] and who worked alongside me in People of Faith for Justice and the Coalition of Welcoming Congregations. Gina has a gift of connection and I still rely on her digital rolodex and her passion for community.
- Anneka Scranton whose brainchild became People of Faith for Justice and who continues to advise and challenge me.
- Jenni Adams of the Lumina Alliance who has been my inspiration, coach and sounding-board for over 25 years, and therapist Lynn Marie who keeps me sane and humble on the golf course.
- Fr. Matthew Conrad who taught me all I know about being a parish priest.
- Linda Quesenberry who invited me into the very beginning of Los Osos Cares and who uses her gifts of connection and imagining the possible to create ever-growing bonds of community
- Yael Korin who worked alongside me in the pilot safe parking program and the warming shelter; who invited me into the LOCAC Unhoused residents committee and whose dogged determination is an inspiration.
- Nothing would be possible without all the volunteers of Los Osos – those who work in the Abundance Shop, volunteers for Los Osos Cares and Womenade, People Helping People, South Bay Community Center, Rotary and more. Thank you for showing up. For rolling up your sleeves and doing what needs to be done.
- And of course the people of St. Benedict's who have supported and loved me, and have picked up my ideas – well, the better ones - and run with them, helping to develop programs like the Community Dinner, the overnight Warming Shelter and Laundry Love as well as maintaining the mission of the Abundance Shop to provide inexpensive clothing and household goods to our community and to be a center for reusing and recycling so that together we can live more lightly on the planet. If I mention any of y'all by name I leave out the other 99... but asking the forgiveness of those of you who I offend, I want to highlight just a few people: Barbara Hirahara whose willingness to say 'yes we can do that' is responsible for many projects, Lisa Gonzalez who

is my right hand for all things financial, Alice Welchert whose quiet loving service for the marginalized is an inspiration, Bob Pelfrey whose consistent presence has underpinned our ecological work and our prayer life, and Maureen Titus whose organizational skill can move mountains.

I have just focused on those members of St. Benedict's who provide leadership in our work in the wider community. Each and every one of you St Ben's people contributes to the vibrant life of this creative and fabulous faith community which for me is the basis of beloved community.

These are difficult times. The first century in Palestine was also a difficult time. Jesus brought hope and so can we.

It may seem that we are just a small community on the edge of the left coast, with little power or sway, but my friends we are also a beacon of hope. As we offer one another the gift of peace and of mutual respect, as we look out for the weak and encourage the brave together we are creating beloved community. As we look after the earth and reduce our carbon footprint we are creating a sustainable community of resistance. And the effect of that is greater than we can imagine. It stretches from here to Washington DC and beyond. Together we create an antidote to the despair and darkness that afflicts so many, our little lights together become a great star of hope.

I am grateful to Congressman Carbajal for his work on our behalf in Washington, for his leadership and for bringing us all together today to celebrate the community of St Benedict's, Los Osos, and beyond.