

The Benediction

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

The Rev. Dr. Caroline Hall

Rector

The Rev. Jen Crompton

Deacon Trailblazer

The Parish Council

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Warden, Cathy Gildea, Clerk
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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,

Epiphany is here and the days are getting longer as the light returns. Tomorrow the sun will set later than today. By one minute. I won't even notice.

If I were Jesus, I might say "The kin-dom of God is like the coming of the light after the winter solstice. It starts so slowly that it is imperceptible but it grows and grows until one day we notice that the days are longer, and we rejoice."



I have faith that the days are getting longer but I can't see it. The difference is too small for me to notice without looking it up on the internet. This is the challenge of faith. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen... By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible." (Heb. 11:1,3)

Everything starts on the inner, in the world that is not visible. It starts with prayer, with thought, with intention, with the breath of God. There are many things starting in our communal life right now and many of them are still unseen; this New Year is a time for bittersweet excitement and anticipation.

The Discovery Team working with Deacon Jen has been making new relationships and deepening connections with our neighbors through Octoberfest and the Advent Pop-up. This is preparing the way for new ministry and new opportunities to share God's love beyond the walls of the church. The Transition Team is creating opportunities for us to think about the journey we have taken as a church in the thirty plus years we have existed and the places we are going as we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

For many years we did not have a building and so we used the analogy of pilgrimage for our life together and invited people to "come journey with us"; since we have had the church we have been far more aware of place and have moved through "nurturing the mind and soul of Los Osos" to "a place for all people." These are all valid and useful statements about the way God is calling us to build God's kin-dom. I wonder what will come next? I wonder what our collective thinking and dreaming will lead us to?

I wonder what God is already preparing "by the word of God" for the next phase in the life of this faith community?

With the writer to the Hebrews, we can have "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" that just as the days really are getting longer, so God really is doing a new thing among us. And we can participate in that new thing that is not yet visible by our prayer that God will lead us in the paths that s/he is preparing for us, by our intention to create together the faith community of the future whatever that may turn out to be, and by our faithfully following the word of God as we hear it.

I am grateful for each one of you and especially for those in leadership in this congregation for your faithful service and witness to the incredible and unconditional love of the God of the universe. I am excited to see how God works at St. Benedict's in 2023.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Caroline". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline J.A. Hall

@StBens_LosOsos

A Report from Your Transition Team

Alan Kiste, Secretary

Our Team has been very busy meeting with Bishop Lucinda and Canon Martha to plan our next steps as we approach Rev. Caro's retirement.

Our next steps are designed to prepare us to write our Parish Profile. The Parish Profile is a highly detailed document that describes St. Benedict's: its mission and ministry, its people, its past, present, and future, and the context in which we work and worship together in Los Osos and beyond. We will need the full participation of everyone in the congregation to ensure that we have the most thorough, most complete, and most comprehensive Parish Profile so that we can find the best fit for our future Rector.

The next steps are as follows. Please mark your calendars so that you can participate in these important events!



- 1) The Parish Survey. Due January 29. The online survey is live now. You can complete it online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StBens>. Print copies will be available on the Usher's Table in the sanctuary for those who would like to complete it that way.
- 2) Story Gathering get-togethers. These will be small group gatherings held in homes or at the church, with one via Zoom. The purpose is to hear your stories about your involvement at St. Ben's over the years. Sign-up sheets will be available in the Great Room at church. Days and times will be:
 - a. January 14, 10am-12pm at Roz and Jim Malone's, 1032 Kerry Drive, SLO
 - b. January 14, 1pm-3pm via Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/797776046?pwd=VUFZSXY3UVpNVitJaDl2VmhPS3E2UT09>, passcode is 93402
 - c. January 15, 3pm-4pm at Roz and Jim Malone's, 1032 Kerry Drive, SLO
 - d. January 21, 10am-12pm at Michael and Ann Lucas's, 2637 Koa Av, MB
 - e. January 21, 3pm-5pm at Alan Kiste and Brian Spolarich's, 2356 Doris Ave, LO
 - f. January 22, after church at church
 - g. January 28, 10am-12pm at Michael and Ann Lucas's, 2637 Koa Av, MB
 - h. January 28, 3pm-5pm at Alan Kiste and Brian Spolarich's, 2356 Doris Ave, LO
 - i. January 29, after church at church
- 3) Parish Annual Meeting and History Gathering, facilitated by Canon Martha after church, February 5th.
- 4) March events: Legacy Event and Neighborhood Walk. Time/location TBA
- 5) "What we have/What we need?" meeting, April 2nd (Palm Sunday), facilitated by Canon Martha after church.
- 6) May: Parish Profile completed by the end of the month for approval by Bishop Lucinda
- 7) May 31: Caro's Farewell Service and Party, Bishop Lucinda attending
- 8) June: Post Parish Profile and begin search for a new Rector.



Frequently Asked Questions About Transition

Q: Why are we doing this process?

Whenever a clergy person leaves or enters a congregation, the dynamics of the congregation change. What we know to be true at a certain time in the history of the congregation may not continue to be true in this present time. Clergy are called to serve congregations at different points in the history of that congregations, and the needs, circumstances, and yearnings of the congregation change. This parish isn't the same as it was in 1993, or 2003, or even 2013. The transition process is about rediscovering who we are, what we are called to become, and who we are called to serve.

Q: How long is this going to take?

This is a question that is asked often during the process. The simple answer is, "It takes as long as it takes." Search processes are affected by the time it takes to get everyone on board to form a Search committee, complete the parish tasks of transition, write the profile, have Vestry and Bishop approve of the document, interview prospective candidates, and find the right clergy fit for the parish. It can take a few months or several years. The standard amount of time is generally about 12-18 months. Because we are doing a "search in place" and beginning the process before Caro+ leaves, we hope that the entire process will be complete during the 2023 calendar year. We hope to finish writing the profile and have it approved by the time Rev. Caro leaves in May. Then we will begin the search and interview process.

Q: What is the difference between a call and a hire?

A Call is based on a discernment process, inviting the identity and context of the parish, and the dreams of the parish to partner with what God's dream is for the parish. The entire parish is involved in the discernment process all along the way, so that the Holy Spirit is at the center and revelatory in the prayerful process. A hire for a job is based on skills and qualities, with an aim toward meeting very specific needs, in an often measurable, quantifiable way. A "hire" seldom would involve an entire organization, nor is it usually prayerful, although it may be thoughtful.

Q: What is the role of the Vestry during time of Transition?

The Vestry is charged with over-seeing the day-to-day operations of the parish, with attention given to administrative support, ministry teams, buildings and grounds, finances, communications, and pastoral care. They ensure that the basic requirements of reporting and canonical responsibilities are maintained. The Vestry selects the members of the Transition Team and then lets them do their work. Vestry members stay well-informed, communicate frequently, and work well together and in collaboration with the Office of the Bishop to maintain clarity and transparency.

Q: How can I help?

It is very important that you serve on the many ministry teams of the parish that need good, positive leaders during this time of transition.

Q: Who do I contact with questions, comments, or suggestions?

Your Transition Team is Brian Spolarich (chair), Alan Kiste, Michael Lucas, Roz Malone, Lorraine Schwenk, and Jane Wu. You can also chat with any Parish Council member.

And, don't forget to pray!

O God our Firm Foundation, you have blessed St. Benedict's with our wonderful Rector, Caro+. I especially thank you for *(the aspects of Caro+'s ministry that are particularly meaningful to you)*. Be with me, I pray, and be with all of us as we to celebrate Caro+'s many gifts. Be with Caro+ as she too celebrates her time among us. We pray in the name of Jesus, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns with you, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

O God of Every Transition and Change, we remember to you our friend, our future Rector. We do not yet know them, and they do not know us. But we ask that you will fit and knit us all together so that we will all have hearts, minds, and spirits open to that "still, small voice" that directs us toward your will. In the name of the Spirit who shelters us, the Son who walks with us, and you the Parent who watches out for us, together in the Trinity. Amen.

Building and Grounds

You may have noticed that things look a little different around the parking lot. We received a generous gift from the family of Pat Armstrong, who planted two new toyon trees on the parking lot berm and also paid for a significant amount of landscaping around the parking lot and memorial garden. On a sadder note, our regular groundskeeper, Alice Smith, pointed out that one of the cypress trees is having difficulty, and when Liz Maruska followed up with the tree experts, they found three cypress which have cypress beetle and will need to be removed.

After some discussion the Parish Council has agreed that we need to update the grand landscaping plan to take account of the water tanks and the need for permanent vehicular access to them. The most recent grand plan calls for a columbarium and a labyrinth. We don't want to plant trees only to realize that they are where we want to put something else. So, the Parish Council has asked the Landscape Committee to restrict further general planting to two additional trees until a new plan is in place.

It seems appropriate to wait for the new priest before working on the new plan.

We are going ahead with plans for a new heating system. The current gas furnaces are limping along but could need a major repair anytime so the Parish Council has agreed to replace them with electric heat pumps. These are more environmentally friendly than gas, and one day we will get solar panels which will make them even more economical. The heat pumps are on order so we hope to see them installed in the next few weeks. This is made possible by your donations to the Building Fund.

Finances

We ended the year with about \$5000 more income than we budgeted. However, back when we agreed the budget, we expected to exceed our income by \$32,000 so this still leaves us pulling a significant amount from reserves. This was necessary because we decided to pay Caro+ full-time.

Later in the year, the opportunity to engage Deacon Jen also came up and the Parish Council decided to go ahead on faith, paying a portion of their salary, which adds another about \$12,500 expenses in 2022.

The Abundance Shop continues to be an abundant blessing, and this year brought in net income of over \$50,000 even though a new carpet was fitted and other repairs made. We tithe 10% of the income, sharing the abundance with other non-profits in the area.

So, when the dust settles on the end of year accounts, we will be well in the red for 2022 but able to cover this from special gifts and bequests. However, it is clearly not a sustainable level of expenditure for St. Ben's at its present size.

Annual Meeting

Our annual Church Meeting will be held on February 5th after the 10:30 service. This is a special and important meeting as it will largely be used for work towards the transition from Caro+ to our next permanent priest. Canon Martha will be with us to lead that portion of the meeting.

We will also do our regular annual business meeting in order to elect new Vestry/Parish Council members and deanery delegates; approve the budget for 2022; hear the Rector's report and hopefully get feedback from the Parish Survey. If you would like to serve on Parish Council or as a Deanery and Diocesan delegate, please talk to Esta Kandarian or Sandy Fisher. Please plan to participate even if you don't attend church regularly.

Carol Concert

A big thank you to everyone who made this Year's Celebration of Carols possible. Everyone who came enjoyed it and the choir sounded great thanks to Dave Alm's preparation and the polishing done with Scott Glysson and Paul Woodring. Thanks also to Brian Spolarich who put much of the program together, to Lorie Schwenk who provided lunch, to Maureen Titus and other members of the Parish Council who helped with refreshments, to Ann Lucas for stepping in to accompany and lead a choir practice, and to everyone who moved furniture and poinsettias and then moved them again.

If you missed the concert you can listen to the recording here:
<https://www.facebook.com/stbenslososos/videos/558491159193872>

Spiritual Conversation

Consider joining the new Spiritual Conversation starting on Tuesday January 10th at 10:15 on Zoom. The discussion will be based on ideas in “Braving the Thin Places: Celtic Wisdom to Create a Space for Grace” by Julianne Stanz. This is what the book’s cover says,

A “thin place” is where God’s grace is waiting to happen.

Your thin place might be an important threshold, a soul friendship, a fresh chapter in your own life story, a painful secret or fear, or a time of hardship. Whatever the circumstance, a thin place is where God and humanity meet in a mysterious way. These moments open us to places of rawness and beauty. When we enter into a thin place, something seems to break open inside us, and words are inadequate to describe what we are experiencing. In these moments, we feel a sense of breakthrough as we break free of the ordinary and experience the extraordinary amid our daily lives.

Drawing on her Irish-Celtic heritage, Julianne Stanz helps us explore those times and holy places of transformation. Inspired by faith and guided by spiritual practices, we can experience each thin place as a point of departure on a sacred journey to a truer understanding of who we are meant to be.

As always, you are welcome to participate in the conversation even if you do not read the book.

Piano Recital

Local pianist Jack Artusio will be giving a recital at St Ben’s on January 22nd @ 3pm (open to the public). He has lived and taught on the Central Coast for decades and has performed numerous recitals around California over the years. Mr. Artusio will be performing works by Haydn, Beethoven, Debussy and Rachmaninoff. There is no charge; however, your donations to the pianist are welcome.

Music Going Forward

We still have not found a music director, so please continue to hold that in your prayers and continue to ask around. In the meantime, on some Sundays we will have a pianist and when we don’t, we will use recorded music, other musicians will lead us or we may sing some of the music acapella. We hope that the choir will be able to continue and sing about once a month.

Please don’t be shy. Praise God with your voice and enjoy the sound of our making music together.

Ash Wednesday

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, February 22nd. We will be offering Ashes to Go at the Abundance Shop in the morning and will have a service at the church at 6pm.

Bless this Mess: Messy Church

Pamela R. Bleisch

Messy Church offers an informal church experience for families of all ages, and an opportunity to meet other families in our community. We gather monthly to encounter God’s love through crafts and activities, a Bible story, song, prayer, and a wholesome family dinner.

Join us, and see how God is blessing our mess! 3rd Fridays of the month at 5:30 pm in the Long Room

Do you enjoy crafting, storytelling, cooking, or serving? Want to join the fun team that offers this monthly program? Call or text Pamela at 805-602-1240.



Seth Vanderhoof, Payton Chesebro, and Ross Vanderhoof enjoy Messy Advent, December 2022.

Trailblazer Discovery Team

Rev Jen Crompton

The Trailblazer Discovery Team is working hard to put our congregation's passions into action. The passions we've identified for our mission thus far are prayer, love for our neighbor, and hospitality. As a follow-on to our successful participation in Oktoberfest, we have created the Prayer Place Pop-up, which debuted as an Advent pop-up coffee and prayer spot next to the Abundance Shop--think mobile coffee hour with prayer available, and it's been a smashing success! We had many folks stop by, taking a cup of coffee to go or staying to chat with us and then accepting a prayer to send them on their way. We had many touching moments as folks shared their story with us during this sometimes-difficult time of year. We've learned how vital this ministry has been to those who stopped to chat. The partnership with the Abundance Shop was truly wonderful, and we are so grateful for the space. Through this partnership, we were able to reach a broad audience, including younger shoppers that enjoy the shop regularly. As we've been experimenting with different ways to put our passions into action, like every promising start-up, we have reached the point where we are ready to expand our work.

We hope to continue our work moving forward by expanding our team and work. That means we need your help. Are you passionate about hospitality, connecting with younger people in our community, or prayer? Maybe your passion is inclusion or social justice, which helps you feel connected. If you feel called by any of what we've been doing or something we have yet to try, don't hesitate to contact Deacon Jen, Sandy Fisher, Cathy Gildea, or Barbara Hirahara and let us know. You can email Deacon Jen at jen@stbenslosos.org.



Trailblazer Discovery Team at the Prayer Place Pop-Up.

The Benediction Welcomes a New Editor

Cathy Gildea is the new editor of *The Benediction* newsletter. We are grateful to Cathy for taking on this role. Watch for emails from Cathy with information about when and how to submit newsletter articles.

Cathy takes over for Ed Himelblau who edited *The Benediction* since 2014. After compiling and printing 50 issues of the newsletter, Ed is passing the torch. He plans to continue contributing cartoons to *The Benediction*. (Samples of his cartoons for the *New Yorker* and other publications can be seen at <https://www.himelblau.com> or google 'himelblau'.)

Ed is grateful to Hannah Jay and to Caro for their consistent support and for helping assure that the newsletter is available to all. And thanks to everyone for reading!



"Make sure someone gets a picture of this for the newsletter."

What Are Your Epiphanies About Creation Care?

St. Benedict's Earthcare Team

We begin each monthly meeting of St. Benedict's Earthcare Team with a time of sharing about what we are seeing as God and humans caring for creation. Like the season of Epiphany, this is a time of wonderment. What is happening in creation and how are we responding to God's ongoing gift of the amazing world we enjoy?



We invite each member of the parish to join us in tuning ourselves into our dance with God and creation. What are you seeing? What wonders of creation delight you? How are you partnering with God to honor and enjoy creation?

As means of inviting you into this exploration, we plan the following.

- * Brief three-minute sharing of epiphanies during Announcements each Sunday of Epiphany.
- * Celebration of creation care stewardship by parish members.
- * Resources you can tap to enhance your creation care experiences.
- * Opportunities for each member of the parish to add personal observations on the "Creation Care Epiphanies" boards we will display on the wall between the Sanctuary and the Great Room.

We hope you enjoy these invitations to welcome God's presence in creation and the joyful ways we can give thanks and care.

St. Benedict's Hosted Community Climate Workshop

On Saturday, November 12, St. Benedict's Earthcare Team convened a Community Climate Workshop. Over 35 persons attended with a range of ages and most from outside of St. Benedict's membership. We were delighted with the lively interest in actions people can take for a healthy climate.

The program included four presentations:

- "Hopeful Solutions to Climate Change" with Don Gaede, Citizens Climate Lobby
- "Reducing Our Carbon Footprints" with Kristen Hazard, ResilientSLO
- "Opportunities for Meaningful Action" with Grant Helete, ECOSLO
- "Doing What You Love for a Healthy Planet" with Don Maruska, Climate Solver



The workshop also included information booths with the Citizens Climate Lobby, ECOSLO, ResilientSLO, Tableware Share, and St. Benedict's featuring opportunities for people to get involved.

If you missed the workshop, you can watch an introductory video and view the presentation materials at <https://www.stbenslosos.org/creation-care/>.

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