

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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Sandy Fisher, People's Warden

Cathy Gildea, Clerk

Lisa Gonzalez, Treasurer

Esta Kandarian, Abundance Shop

Pamela Bleisch

Sarah Chesebro

Diana Hammerlund

Berkeley Johnson

Helen Schnieders

Benediction Publisher:

The Rev. Dr. Caroline J. A. Hall

Benediction Editor:

Cathy Gildea, cathy@gildea.com

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:

facebook.com/stbenslososos

or on our website:

[stbenslososos.org/facebook](https://stbenslososos.org/facebook-including-live-stream/)

including-live-stream/

Service leaflets are available each week under the Worship tab on our website

Church: 2220 Snowy Egret Lane
Los Osos, CA 93402

Mailing: PO Box 6877
Los Osos, CA 93412

(805) 528-0654

office@stbenslososos.org
www.stbenslososos.org

Dear Friends,

Lent is upon us. That challenging season when we remember that we are mortal and that we are mired in sin and at the very same time remember that God's grace meets us where we are. Our gospel readings this year show Jesus in conversation with a variety of different people — from Nicodemus who came at night, to Martha and Mary when their brother died. In each case, Jesus meets them where they are both geographically and emotionally/spiritually.

This is also our calling as the disciples of Jesus — to meet people where they are. We already do this in remarkable ways; through the Abundance Shop which for



more than 30 years has provided a service of God's love; through Ashes to Go; through cooking great food for the Community Dinners; through Los Osos Cares; and through Laundry Love. Each of these provides a time to make new relationships, to meet people where they are and offer them the love of God.

The Discovery Team is doing this even more intentionally; by inviting people to prayer and conversation over a cup of coffee, they are making new connections and listening for clues to where God is calling us. In the parish survey y'all were very clear that one of St. Ben's priorities is to "explore ways of being Church in a changing world". This is the work of the Discovery Team – to discover how we can connect with people who are connecting with God perhaps in different ways or have a yearning to do so. The focus is on people under 50 because we know that they experience life differently from the Boomer generation.

As we walk on our Lenten pilgrimage, and on the continuing pilgrimage to the church we are becoming, we remember the disciples who Jesus sent out to go to the towns and villages he intended to visit (Luke 10:1-23). They were not given a lot of advice about how to present the message except that they were not to over-prepare. As we meet people where they are and listen to their stories so we can ask, and trust, the Holy Spirit to prompt our words and to use our genuine openness to draw people to him.

One of the places we meet people is now online, and we are looking for ways to increase our presence on Instagram, and maybe even TikTok. Please pray that God will send us the resources that we need to connect with people online in a new way.

The church St Ben's is becoming is already in the heart of God. God already is going before, and preparing the paths for us to walk in, softening the hearts of those she is calling to participate in this new adventure. What is needed is for the people of St Benedict's to be intentional in seeking the new paths and daring to walk in them.

With love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Caroline".

Caroline J.A. Hall

@StBens_LosOsos

A Report from Your Transition Team

Brian Spolarich, Chair

The Transition Team completed the Parish Survey and our **Storytelling Gatherings** during January. We were also happy to host Canon Martha, who led our history-gathering session during our annual meeting. We have had wonderful participation from the Parish, including 81 total responses to the survey, which is an amazing response rate. Thank you!

We are identifying topics for our **Legacy Event** and the Discovery Team is leading the **Neighborhood Walk** event, both of which are scheduled for March. The last Parish event is the **“What we have/What we need?”** meeting, April 2 (Palm Sunday), which will be facilitated by Canon Martha after church. Please plan to attend. Your Transition Team is Brian Spolarich (chair), Alan Kiste, Michael Lucas, Roz Malone, and Jane Wu. Please ask us if you have questions or concerns or 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.



Key Transition Activity — The Neighborhood Walk

Deacon Jen Crompton

As part of our parish's transition work, we will be conducting a Neighborhood Discovery walk. One of the key transition milestones for us to come together as a parish, this is an opportunity for us to see the familiar aspects of Los Osos from a new perspective and help discern how God is calling us into deeper relationship with our neighbors. It is also an opportunity for us to discuss how we represent our community to potential rector candidates in the parish profile.

We will meet after the 10:30 service, break into small groups, and head out for about an hour's exploration of predetermined routes through Los Osos. We will then reconvene at church to debrief and share our observations over lunch. We want to ensure everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard so you can share what you love about Los Osos and your ideas about how we can deepen our ministry here. Whether it is by walking, driving, or just sitting still in one place, everyone can participate.

Join us on our Neighborhood Walk! Sunday March 12, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm / lunch provided

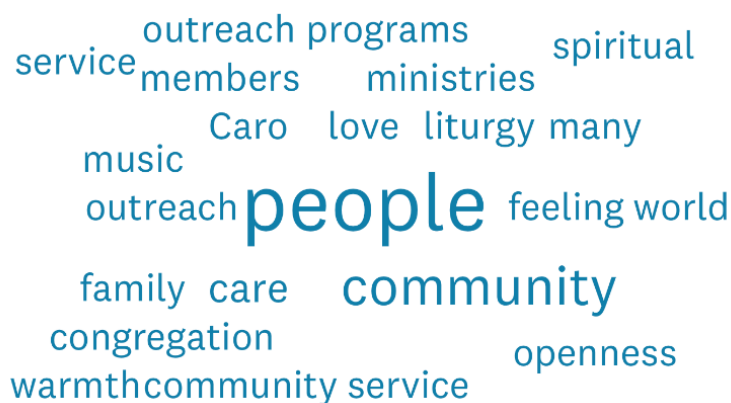
Annual Meeting

On February 5 we gathered together for our annual meeting and elected new parish council members and diocesan representatives, approved our budget, and reviewed responses to the parish survey and the rector’s report. The parish adopted a shortfall budget; 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. The parish survey responses highlighted the aspects of St. Ben’s that attracted and draws current members near to our communal life, as well as the many activities and ministries that keep people engaged. Respondents identified exploring ways to be church in a changing world and local community outreach events as key areas to prioritize in the future.

Highlights from the Parish Council Retreat

The parish council kicked off the year with a retreat at which we welcomed Berkeley, Sarah and Diana, reviewed feedback from the parish survey and used it to guide the formation of our goals for the coming year. Focus areas for 2023 are:

- Continue our work to live into our goal of full trans inclusion,
- Promote broader understanding of and engagement in the work of the Trailblazer program as part of how we “become new church”,
- Hire a Music Director,
- Do outreach to families with children,
- Find ways for people to not feel like they have to do so much, and
- Develop our corporate prayer for our church community and goals.



Stephen Ministers

Deacon Susan Arnold

Are you looking for opportunities to enrich your spiritual life and experience the satisfaction of serving others? The Stephen Ministry program is looking for those who have the qualities of compassionate, non-judgmental listening and a desire to serve.

We are planning to hold a class soon. The class includes readings, lectures, and roleplay — about 50 hours in all. If you are interested in finding out more about this opportunity, please contact our Stephen Ministry Coordinator for the Deanery at dcnsusan.stbarnabas@gmail.com (805) 550-2907.

What is Gender Inclusivity?

Cathy Gildea

At one of the Discovery Team’s Prayer Pop-Up events, I met two young adults who shared that they love to shop at the Abundance Shop. Their sartorial flair was delightful but left me feeling somewhat at a loss as to how to address them because of its gender non-conformity; I realized I need to become more gender literate. Fortunately, in the internet age I was able to find and explore the [Understanding Gender](#) website. This online resource guide may trigger some reflections on how gender roles and stereotypes have impacted your own life; it made me wonder what would be possible if we could live without these types of constraints.

Spiritual Conversation

The weekly spiritual conversation continues the Celtic path based on the book by Julianne Stanz "Braving the Thin Places." You are welcome even if you don't read it. Note the new time of 10:30 each Tuesday on [Zoom](#).

Lenten Devotional

Booklets for the Lenten devotional "Practicing Compassion with all your Heart, Soul, Strength and Mind" are available now. You can also get a pdf or purchase it as an e-book. If you prefer, you can get each day's reflection by email. Check it out at LivingCompass.org/Lent.

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 begins 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 2, 10:30 a.m., Palm Sunday Liturgy with Blessing of Palms, Procession, and Passion Gospel.

Stations of the Cross April 4, 4:45 p.m. 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. The wonderful Stations were gifted by the Hirahara family and made for us by Chloe White. Tuesday, April 4, at 4:45 p.m. and Good Friday at 2:15 p.m.

Maundy Thursday April 6, 7:00 p.m. 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 7, 12 noon, (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 p.m. as a way of personally connecting with Jesus' sacrifice. We will mark the day with a traditional Good Friday liturgy at 12:00 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.

Holy Saturday and Easter Vigil April 8, 7:45 p.m. 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 7:45 p.m. 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 9, 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Our celebration continues on Easter Morning, with a contemplative communion service at 8:00 a.m. and a Festival Eucharist at 10:30 a.m.

Diocesan Spring Renewal

This year we welcome the Rt. Rev. Diana Akiyama, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, as the Keynote Speaker at our in-person diocesan Spring Renewal. She will engage us more deeply with our theme for 2023, "Courage in the Wilderness." We will worship, share a banquet to honor our ministries, enjoy presentations and conversation, and most of all, simply be together as a diocese.

The Rt. Rev. Diana Akiyama was born in Wheeler, Oregon, and grew up in a Japanese-American community in Hood River. Bishop Akiyama was the first Japanese-American woman ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church, ordained 1988 in the Diocese of Eastern Oregon. She was ordained and consecrated as bishop on January 30, 2021, at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland.

Bishop Lucinda invites everyone to attend and greet Bishop Diana April 28-29 at Sherwood Hall in Salinas. Information and registration online at realepiscopal.org/spring-renewal-2023/.

Celebration of Caro+'s Ministry with Us

As you know, Caro+ (and Jill) will be leaving St. Ben's when Caro+ retires at the end of May. There will be several opportunities to gather for celebration and leave-taking:

May 19 6:30 p.m. PARTY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Invite your friends

May 21 Requiem by John Rutter performed by the combined choirs of St. Benedict's, St Stephens, and St. Barnabas. At St. Barnabas church in Arroyo Grande. Time TBA.

May 28 Pentecost and Caro+'s Last Sunday

May 31 Evening service with Bishop Lucinda — ending Caro's pastoral relationship with St. Benedict's

Abundance Shop News

Esta Kandarian

The Abundance Shop is off to a strong start in 2023.

January/February sales did not slow down at all from our very strong holiday season of November/December. I think this is unprecedented, and we are very thankful to all our volunteers for making this possible. We are very happy to have Vivian Leinio and Michael Lucas on board this year. Vivian sorts donations on Tuesdays, and Michael helps with the heavy lifting. I am still looking for someone to help sort donations on Thursdays.

We were able to assist several individuals affected by the recent rain with vouchers. None of these individuals came into the shop expecting assistance, and were so pleasantly surprised when it was offered.

We completed our recarpeting project in January, and the shop is looking very spiffy! Thank you to custodian Celeste Pennington, who has now deep-cleaned literally every inch of our shop.

Please drop by and visit!



Leadership Changes in the Altar Guild

Sarah Chesebro

At Saint Benedict's, "Altar Guild" is an umbrella term for three separate ministries that work together to prepare for services: Altar Guild, Sacristan Team, and Flower Guild. The Rector is the "Head of the Altar Guild" as she has canonical (pertaining to the Canon law of the Episcopal Church) responsibility for the ordering and conduct of all services. In preparation for the retirement of our dear Caro+, all three ministries will have to assume a greater leadership role in the coming months. We now have leaders for all three lay ministries:

- Director of the Altar Guild – Diana Hammerlund. The Altar Guild is responsible for preparation of all things necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist or any of the other sacraments and offices of the church.
- Sacristan – Sarah Chesebro. The Sacristan Team is responsible for the care and use of the vestments, hangings, and furnishings that are used during worship.
- Director of the Flower Guild – Sharon Porter. The Flower Guild is responsible for providing floral arrangements to enhance our worship services by bringing the beauty of God's world to our worship space.

Many thanks to Laura Thompson for her dedication to the Flower Guild since 2016. She has been most generous in time, talent, and resources over the last seven years. Laura decided it was time to retire from this position last year. To my delight, Sharon Porter accepted the position of Director of the Flower Guild!

Since 2015 I was wearing two hats: The Director of the Altar Guild and Sacristan. I asked Diana Hammerlund to take my place as Director of the Altar Guild, and she said yes! Blessed be!

Messy Church at St Benedict's: Sowing Good Seed

Pamela Bleisch

At 5:30 on Friday, February 17, you would have seen the veranda full of children racing up and down in a free-form game of run and chase. When almost out of breath, but still full of spirit, we proceeded to the St. Francis garden, where the children took turns hoeing an empty patch, sowing wildflower seeds provided by Sarah Chesebro, and watering abundantly. Craft time next: we gathered in the Long Room to cut and paste colored papers into a lovely collage of California poppies. Time for worship! We gathered in the sanctuary, where Pamela led the lighting of the candle, told the Parable of the Sower, and led the wondering questions, after which Rev. Caro taught us a new song, led us in the Lord's Prayer, and said a final prayer. To close our worship, the children took turns changing the light of the candle, noticing that even as the flame goes out, the smoke lingers in the air, becoming a part of us. After washing our hands, we gathered in the Long Room, where Barbara Hirahara provided a tasty, hot supper of chicken tenders, along with potatoes & broccoli *au gratin*, with cake and ice cream for dessert. Barbara led us in singing "The Johnny Appleseed Grace," starting: "Oh, the Lord is good to me, and so I thank the Lord!"

We thank the Lord for all our families, and for our dedicated Messy Church team: Connie Weldon, Barbara Hirahara, Sarah Chesebro, Rev. Caro, Deacon Jen, and Pamela Bleisch.

Food Donations for 40 Prado Shelter

Sharon Porter

It's been too long since we've donated breakfast food to 40 Prado Shelter. So, let's do it again! The need is now greater than ever due to the weather. Hot cereal in individual packets and large boxes of cold cereal are welcomed. Please donate unexpired food (expired food has to be thrown away). There's a large bin next to Hannah's work station to place your boxes. When it's full, I'll deliver it to the Shelter.

Thank you to everyone who contributes.

Ashes to Go 2023

Once again, we stood outside the Abundance Shop on Ash Wednesday, offering God's blessing with prayer and ashes for those who stopped, and a wave and a smile for those who passed. Deacon Sharon Dalrymple flew in from Texas to join us for the morning. It was cold and at times windy but we had prayed and "ashed" 48 people by 11:00 a.m. Then the Discovery Team took over with a pop-up prayer station, coffee provided. Despite the weather (which included hail) they prayed with and ashed another 31 people and gave out four do-it-yourself kits to be taken to friends.

Let us continue to pray that God will bless all those we connected with on Ash Wednesday.



Responding to Christian Nationalism

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry says that extreme Christian Nationalism is "an unholy conflation of Christianity and White Supremacy often tinged with Americanism." To learn more, join a virtual Lenten program with the ECR Social Justice Committee to learn about Christian Nationalism — what it is, why it is an urgent threat to our democracy and our faith, and how we can respond to it. The five discussion sessions will be on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. from February 28 through March 28. [Please register for the Zoom series here.](#)

Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy. Christian Nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation. [The Social Justice Committee of El Camino Real](#)

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care means different things to different people at different times, but it is always the way we share God's love with each other. A lot of this happens informally as people reach out to one another to share their burdens and/or to offer prayer and a helping hand.

- As the Rector, Caro+ sometimes is asked to meet with people for conversation about spiritual and other issues that are concerning them; visits people in hospital; calls or texts people who she knows are having a difficult time; and reaches out to people who she thinks could use some extra encouragement.
- When you send a message to prayers@sbenslosos.org, the intercessor of the week may follow up with you if it seems appropriate and will let Caro+ know if you have particular needs that we can help with.
- There is also a special email pastoralcare@stbenslosos.org which goes to Helen Schneiders, Berkeley Johnson, and Caro+. You can use this to ask for help, or use the communications card in the pew.
- If you can offer practical help, such as meals for those just out of hospital or in another crisis, rides to medical appointments or to church, or would like to visit someone who can no longer get to church easily, please let Helen or Caro+ know.
- In addition to Caro+ and Deacon Jen, Lorie Schwenk and Lisa Gonzalez are available to bring you communion if you cannot get to church because of health issues. Please don't hesitate to ask.

“Visualizing Climate Change and a Just Transition” Community Workshop

10:00-noon, Saturday, April 15, St. Benedict’s

The Earthcare Team and the Citizens Climate Lobby are sponsoring a special event in celebration of Earth Day. It will include a presentation by Susan Callery from NASA on “An Out of This World View of Climate Change.” See amazing photos and graphics that bring the impacts of climate change into focus. Then, we’ll have a video from Interfaith Power and Light about what’s needed for a just transition to a healthy climate. Both segments will include Q&A and discussion. Join us for fresh insights and lively discussion, including resources to help each of us do what we can for a healthy climate. Climate Fellows from Resilient SLO also will be on hand to help attendees use a free app to help you reduce your greenhouse gas emissions and save money.



Save Energy and Money — Sign Up for Free Help from Climate Fellows

Did you know that St. Benedict’s has the largest team with 17 households on the free app www.ResilientSLO.org? Those households have saved 18 tons of CO2 emissions and over \$3000. Now is a great time to get more of our parish’s households on board, and for those already on board to get support for even greater savings. Through a special grant from the State of California, our county has Climate Fellows to accelerate enrollment in the free program. These Cal Poly students also can help you with information about concrete resources (products, rebates, etc.) to help you get results. Please let Don Maruska know if you are interested so he can get support for you now. Don@DonMaruska.com or (805) 772-4667.



Blessing and Sharing of Beneficial Fungi Compost for Healthy Trees

Noon, Sunday, April 16, St. Benedict’s

The simple bioreactor we built in October 2021 is now mature and ready to deliver fungi compost that promotes healthy trees. Naturally occurring fungi have been feeding on the mixture of dried oak leaves, horse manure, and wood chips that we’ve been keeping moist in the unit at the back of the church property. The result is a compost that’s high in mycorrhizal fungi. These fungi feed the roots of trees with the minerals they need. Some studies have shown that they can help trees multiply their conversion of CO2 from the atmosphere into living carbon in the soil. The plan is to use the fungi compost for tree plantings in the area to promote a healthy climate. We’ll also have small amounts of the concentrated product available for you to take home and try on your trees.

At noon (following the end of the 10:30 a.m. church service) on Sunday, April 16, we will have a blessing and sharing of the fungi compost. Hear the story of the bioreactor and how to take the concentrated compost and make a tea to nourish trees.

The construction of the bioreactor occurred with the guidance of Tim LaSalle, Professor Emeritus in Agriculture from Cal Poly and a leader in regenerative agriculture. A generous donation from a member of St. Benedict’s covered the out-of-pocket costs for materials to construct the bioreactor. Volunteers from St. Benedict’s Earthcare and Landscape team, Rotary San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, and the Los Osos Valley Garden Club provided several hours of labor to create the bioreactor.

Come celebrate efforts to support nature’s work to provide a healthy climate for all.

Climate Change: What's Faith Got to Do with It?

Podcast Review by Mike Eggleston, PFJ Board Member

People of Faith for Justice is a San Luis Obispo County-based alliance which posts monthly podcasts in which local individuals working for peace, civil rights, or ecological and economic justice are interviewed. SLO County resident Deb Pritchard and St. Benedict's Don Maruska were the interviewees for the January 26 podcast, entitled "Climate Change: Global Challenge, Local Solutions." All are encouraged to give a listen to the 41-minute podcast. You may find it encouraging, informative, inspiring...and hopeful.

Deb was a delegate to the COP27 Climate Change Conference convened by the United Nations in Sharm-El-Shiekh, Egypt, in November 2022. She also is a local environmental activist, and for ten years observed climate change firsthand while working (and snorkeling) in the Philippine Islands. Don is well known at St. Benedict's and beyond for his environmental advocacy and for his 2022 book, *Solve Climate Change Now: Do What You Love for a Healthy Planet*. Gina Whitaker and Jason Sisk-Provencio conducted the [interview](#). Access it by Googling People of Faith for Justice podcasts, it's their 25th episode, posted in late January. You can also find it on the PFJ website, peopleoffaithforjustice.org, and on social media.



Both Don and Deb have worked with governments and nonprofit organizations, and a theme that both return to throughout the interview is "Don't wait for governments to take the lead nationally and internationally. Take action yourself, and locally." Find that sweet spot, as Don says, where the passions of our own hearts and the environmental needs in our community (and world) intersect. Then take action, and don't worry for a moment if it seems too small to make a difference. Don quoted theologian Frederick Buechner that we are called to the "place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Both of them pointed out our good fortune to live in a county which has many residents who are helping to make SLO County a national leader in "solving climate change now." Both, for example, cited how the Resilient SLO organization has helped them to reduce their own carbon footprints by about 50% in recent years, and is seeking to help 500,000 Central Coast households cut their emissions in half by 2030. Which could give us joy on many levels, as Don pointed out, economically, ecologically, even neurologically.

Both interviewers and interviewees stressed often that we need to move from being motivated by fear and guilt, to being moved by compassion and love. Give it a listen, increase, as Don would say, your environmental Awareness, Actions, and Advocacy.

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Los Osos, CA 93412

St. Ben's Events

March

March 5 *Potluck*

March 12 *Neighborhood Walk*

March 19 *Parish Council*

April

April 2 *Potluck*

April 2 *Palm Sunday &
"What We Have/ What We
Need?" with Canon Martha*

April 4 & 7 *Stations of the Cross*

April 6 *Maundy Thursday*

April 7 *Good Friday*

April 8 *Easter Vigil*

April 9 *Easter Sunday*

April 15 *Climate Workshop*

April 16 *Parish Council & Blessing of Compost*

April 28-29 *Diocesan Spring Renewal*
