

# 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

Maureen Titus, Warden  
Sandy Fisher, People's Warden  
Cathy Gildea, Clerk  
Lisa Gonzalez, Treasurer  
Esta Kandarian, Abundance Shop  
Pamela Bleisch  
Sarah Chesebro  
Diana Hammerlund  
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The Rev. Dr. Caroline J. A. Hall

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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:

[facebook.com/stbenslososos](https://facebook.com/stbenslososos)  
or on our website:  
[stbenslososos.org/facebook-including-live-stream/](https://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,

This is the last time that I will be writing this column as your rector and priest. Jill and I have been members of St. Benedict's for most of the last thirty-one years and it has been a privilege to be raised up among you for ordination, and then invited to be your priest and eventually your rector.

This is a big change for all of us, and it is a time of grief as well as hope and even excitement. Every change has an aspect of grief, and every occasion of grief builds on past experiences. The other day, I found myself sobbing uncontrollably over the death of Rachel Espinosa, three years ago this week. My grief at leaving you brought up that older pain and I realize how little I wept at the time of her death, when we were all trying to make sense of the beginning of Covid.



Each one of us responds differently to change and to grief. As a faith community we have experience both of coming together, and also of shattering apart in conflict in the midst of sudden change. My hope and prayer is that we have been sufficiently intentional about this parting that you will pull together as the midwives of the new church, the new St. Ben's that is coming into being.

The disciples did not have the privilege of knowing well ahead of time that Jesus would be leaving them. It was a rapid change, first the horror of the crucifixion, then the surprise of the empty tomb, then the joy of Jesus' occasional visits and finally the ascension and (wait, wait there's more), Pentecost! The coming of the Holy Spirit changed everything.

They did not have long to process their grief before they were given a new task and had a growing community to lead. God knew that this was coming and Jesus had given them hints but nonetheless it was a surprise.

I don't know what God has in mind for St. Ben's. I am sure there will be times of surprise. I also know that the qualities of openness, hospitality, faithfulness, service, and great conversation which have been part of our DNA from the beginning will continue. I look forward to seeing what God is doing in the midst of this congregation and how she is continuing to bless the wider community through you all.

*May the road rise up to meet you.*

*May the wind be always at your back.*

*May the sun shine warm upon your face;*

*the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,*

*may God hold you in the palm of her hand.*

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; Alan Kiste, Michael Lucas, Roz Malone, Jane Wu

Over the last several months, the Transition Team has been hard at work planning transition events such as the Church Survey, the Storytelling Gatherings, The History Taking event (facilitated by Canon Martha), the Neighborhood Walk (organized and led by our fabulous Discovery Team), and our recent Roles and Responsibilities event (also facilitated by Canon Martha). All of the information we've gathered is currently being written into a draft of our Parish Profile. This draft will be given to our Search Committee for improvements before they give it to the Vestry for approval and then send it on to Bishop Lucinda for comments and edits. Then it will be posted and visible at a national and diocesan level.

Speaking of the Search Committee, we need to form one! Is there a particular ministry of the parish that you're passionate about that you want to make sure is a priority for our new rector? Is there something about our worship that is deeply meaningful to you and you want to see continue? Is there something you've always wished St. Ben's do together, but we've never found the right way to implement? If any of those are true, or you just have a spiritual calling to think about the next stage of our life together, being on the Search Committee is a great way to make sure your views are represented as we search for our next rector. This is the most important work of the church right now: choosing a new rector. The Vestry wants to ensure a broad range of voices contribute to the search process, so please fill out the brief "Statement of Interest" form located on the Usher's Table (or ask Hannah to mail you one). These are due May 7 to enable the Vestry to choose a committee at the May Parish Council meeting. The Search Committee will then conduct the search process, including interviewing new rector candidates and presenting a slate of possibilities to the Vestry.



The Transition Team is also assisting the Parish Council in other transition events:

- 1) Caro's farewell party. St. Ben's knows how to have a great time together and this party will be something to remember! The date is May 19. The Parish Council is looking for donations to defray the cost. Please write "Farewell Party" in the memo line of your check or make contributions online at our website.
- 2) The Rutter "Requiem", requested by Caro+ and performed by a combined choir of Deanery Churches on May 21 at St. Barnabas, Arroyo Grande. Please join us for this beautiful work of sacred music.
- 3) Caro's final worship at St. Ben's, May 31. The bishop and many of our friends and church family will be gathering to worship together to officially say goodbye.

There are so few — too few — days we have left together worshiping and working with Caro. The Transition Team hopes we can all make a special effort to spend the next several weeks taking every opportunity to show up, be present, remember, and celebrate Caro's wonderful ministry at St. Ben's.

What will church life look like after Caro+ leaves and before a new rector is chosen? The Transition Team and Parish Council is working to make sure we have pulpit supply during this time. We're hoping that most weeks will be a typical St. Ben's Eucharist with the Liturgy Committee and Music Committee working together to plan the Sunday service. There may be some Sundays when we cannot find someone who can celebrate Eucharist, and then we will use the Liturgy of the Word. This time of transition will require patience and mutual forbearance as everyone will be doing the best they can to continue without a permanent rector (and no Music Director). If you have interest in serving on either the Liturgy or Music committees, please contact Sarah Chesebro or Brian Spolarich.

Some have wondered if or assumed that Deacon Jen will "step into Caro+'s role after she retires". So as to clear up any potential misunderstandings, that is not the plan. Deacon Jen can currently preach, and once they are ordained in June, can serve as part of our pulpit supply. But under the diocesan Trailblazer program guidelines they cannot become our next rector, and neither will they be providing clergy leadership to the parish apart from the Trailblazer/Discovery Team process.

According to church canons, once Caro+ leaves, she cannot come back to St. Ben's for at least a year, and then must be invited by the new rector. Therefore, we need to spend the next several weeks being intentional about saying our goodbyes.

And, don't forget to pray!

## Transition Prayer

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.

## Message from our Presiding Warden

By Maureen Titus

Happy Spring to everyone! The season of change, growth and new beginnings in so many ways. We have many events happening in the next few weeks and we will need each other for support and to remember what a wonderful church family St. Ben's is to all of us.

Hopefully we have your application to be on the Search Committee, which is due to me by May 7. We would like a broad spectrum of members to be part of this search for a new rector for St. Ben's. The Vestry/Parish Council will select the Committee after May 7. The Parish Profile will be created, then presented to the congregation for final comments. We will be wanting to showcase, in the best way possible, our Parish to a prospective candidate.

We hope to see you at Caro's Retirement Party on May 19, Friday 6:30PM. Then we have two special services, Sunday May 28 Caro's last official Sunday with us and the bishop will be here on Wednesday May 31 for her service to bless Caro+ in her future retirement.

I ask for your support and many prayers during this time. We will have several different clergy here to assist us with Sunday services over the next few months. Our church family will be available to help in any way we can as well. Please feel free to contact me, if I can't find a solution, I will ask for others who may have other solutions.

## Highlights from the Parish Council

Your parish council has been busy organizing the many activities associated with the rector transition, farewell, and search process as well as ongoing parish business. Specifically,

- We're going solar! Our proposal to work with the non-profit RE-volve to finance and install solar panels has been approved by the bishop, standing committee, and board of trustees. We were able to have the necessary agreements in place in time to secure the most favorable rates with PG&E. We now have 2 years to get the project started.
- Thank you to Hannah and Bill Gaines Audio Inc. for the resolution of the problems with our audio / visual system. You'll hear the difference!
- The parish council approved our land acknowledgement statement.
- The parish council agreed to explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of our image in the community including new signage for the Abundance Shop and possibly a new logo.

## Finances

Our total income in the first quarter has been higher than budgeted because (1) several people paid their full pledges in advance and (2) the Abundance Shop was twice as abundant as we had budgeted — contributing \$18,000 to St Ben's so far this year. As a result, income is \$33,000 ahead of budget but much of this is the effect of receiving income at the beginning of the year that had been budgeted to come in over 12 months.

Expenses were about \$3,000 less than budgeted — most of this comes from the lack of a regular musician. We hope that that will not be a savings for much longer! As a result, although we had anticipated a loss of \$27,000 by this point, we actually have an extra \$10,000 in the bank. Thanks be to God.

## Land Acknowledgement Statement

By Cathy Gildea

What is a land acknowledgement statement and why are they important? According to Kaitlin B. Curtice, author of "Native: Identify, Belonging and Rediscovering God," land acknowledgements are a way of naming the traditional people of the land and the grace with which the land always cares for us as human beings. They are a way to make room for difficult conversations that are still relevant today by asking us to look at creation narratives we tell ourselves about this nation that often neglect to acknowledge the resilience of Indigenous peoples. Curtice invites us to consider that "land acknowledgement is about listening, it is about remembering, and it is about rejecting invisibility."

St. Benedict's parish council has adopted the following land acknowledgement statement.

*We acknowledge with gratitude the yak tit<sup>y</sup>u tit<sup>y</sup>u yak tithini (ytt) / the Northern Chumash People, and the Salinan Tribe / the T'epot'aha'l, "People of the Oaks," on whose ancestral homelands we gather, and whose vibrant culture continues today. May we always remember that the Earth does not belong to us, that we belong to the Earth, and that we are all relatives in life. Help us to be instruments of justice and peace for all people in today's world.*

## Discovery Team

By Deacon Jen Crompton

Your Discovery Team continues its work to reach out to the community around us. Upcoming plans include staffing booths at local Central Coast Pride events. Each year the central coast LGBTQ+ community comes together in joyful celebration, and we will be there representing St. Ben's, offering blessings, prayer, and some water or lemonade instead of our traditional coffee. All are welcome to join and share in our support for our local LGBTQ+ community. You could even help at the booth and then enjoy the rest of Pride Fest. Join us as we share the love!

(Festive pride attire is recommended but not required 😊)

- Trans Pride May 27 in Meadow Park
- Central Coast Pride Fest at Laguna Lake June 3 (near the dog park)
- Pride in the Plaza June 4

**Join us at Central Coast Pride events!**



## Spiritual Conversation

The weekly spiritual conversation continues with the book by Brian McLaren "The Great Spiritual Migration." Selected to coincide with the migration our congregation is making through our rector transition, this book addresses the challenges facing contemporary churches.

*"The Christian story, from Genesis until now, is fundamentally about people on the move — outgrowing old, broken religious systems and embracing new, more redemptive ways of life.*

*It's time to move again.*

*Brian McLaren, a leading voice in contemporary spirituality and religion, argues that — notwithstanding the dire headlines about the demise of faith and drop in church attendance — Christian faith is not dying. Rather, it is embarking on a once-in-an-era spiritual shift. For millions, the journey has already begun.*

*Drawing from his work as global activist, pastor, and public theologian, McLaren challenges readers to stop worrying, waiting, and indulging in nostalgia, and instead, to embrace the powerful new understandings that are reshaping the church." <https://brianmclaren.net/the-great-spiritual-migration/>*

You are welcome even if you don't read it. Note the new time of 10:30 am each Tuesday on [Zoom](#).

## Abundance Shop News

By Esta Kandarian

Life is good at the Abundance Shop! We had fun celebrating St. Patrick's Day and Easter with seasonal decor. Sales continue higher than last year, with lots of newcomers joining regular shoppers.

We voted on the local charities we will support this year and added two new ones to the roster: CAPSLO and Tolosa Children's Dental Center. We have generated enough revenue already to give money to the 4 highest voter getters: Los Osos Cares, Noor Clinic, Laundry Love, and Tolosa Children's Dental Center.

Many thanks to all our volunteers. You are an awesome team!



## Pastoral Care

As we anticipate Caro+'s departure and a period of supply clergy, it is good to remember how we can help support each other. 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.

- Caro+ will continue to provide pastoral care through the end of May. Please contact Maureen Titus after June 1 and she will connect with the clergy on call.
- When you send a message to [prayers@sbenslosos.org](mailto:prayers@sbenslosos.org), the intercessor of the week may follow up with you if it seems appropriate and will reach out if you have particular needs that we can help with.
- There is also a special email [pastoralcare@stbenslosos.org](mailto: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 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.

## Enhancements to the St. Francis Garden

Thank you to Wendy McKeown, Liz Maruska, and Vita Miller who planted 2 Ceanothus bushes in the St. Francis Garden. These plants will grow to 20 feet tall and will help to create a sense of enclosure and privacy in the garden. These members of the Garden club of Los Osos and Wendy's husband John helped with the planting.



## **Blessing of Beneficial Fungi for Soil Health and Carbon Capture**

By Bob Pelfrey

As an extension to the 10:30 Earth Sunday worship (April 16), the Earthcare committee invited interested worshippers and guests to process to the site of the bioreactor on the northwest corner of the property. After safely negotiating the bumpy, grassy ground (squirrels), Caro+ said a blessing and Earthcare member Don Maruska commented on the significance of the bioreactor.

The bioreactor has been growing a form of naturally-occurring “super-fungi” since its construction some fourteen months ago (November, 2021), and the results are truly amazing. The bioreactor has produced approximately five hundred pounds of mycorrhizal



fungi material which can enrich depleted soils. The process is known as “regenerative agriculture”. The fungi compost will not only be used on St. Benedict’s property, but also be available to members of St. Benedict’s and community partners. The bioreactor project is another example of St. Benedict’s finding a way to use its modest resources in a way that benefits not only our own congregation but also the larger community.

## **Earthcare Team Engages Community with Earth Day Events**

Over 60 people attended Earthcare’s April 15 event, “Visualizing Climate Change and a Just Transition.” Citizens Climate Education, ResilientSLO, and Rotary Los Osos sponsored it with St. Ben’s Earthcare Team.

Assemblymember Dawn Addis kicked off the session with a recorded video welcome that included her efforts to represent our interests in a healthy planet. The following articles provide a brief recap of the two-hour program that offered insights and a range of actions we can take.

## **NASA Images of Climate Change Wow Community**

By Don Maruska

Susan Callery, Managing Editor of NASA’s Global Climate Change website, presented compelling images of the causes and impacts of climate change. If you ever have any doubt about the impact of human use of fossil fuels on the climate and extreme weather events, you need to see these images. We are posting a recording of the session with detailed animations at <http://www.StBensLosOsos.org/creation-care>. Be sure to take a look.

## **What’s Needed for a Just Transition to a Climate Healthy Future?**

By John Horsley

In the second part of the workshop, entitled “What is Needed for a Just Transition”, there was a screening of the film “Nation in Transition” produced by the American Resilience Project. Interfaith Power and Light has made this film available a part of its Faith Climate Action Week (April 15 -22). The theme of the Faith Climate Action Week this year is climate justice - a fair and just transition to clean energy.

Nation in Transition follows the coal to solar energy transition in the Navajo nation and across Northern Arizona through the stories of all those involved in the transition, including workers in the coal plant, utility executives and environmental activists. The film presents an excellent example of a just transition. Displaced workers at the coal plant were able to continue working in other jobs for the utility company, and many Navajo households that hitherto had lacked electricity were provided with electricity by means of local solar panels. Although the film shows only one example of a just transition, according to Interfaith Power and Light “the film offers a roadmap for just energy transitions for workers and communities everywhere.”

## Art Award

By Alice Welchert

Guillermo Bermudez (my partner and handyman) won Best in the drawing category at the 2023 Annual Cuesta College Student Art Exhibition for his charcoal self-portrait. The juried exhibition celebrates the talent of Cuesta College students in the fields of ceramics, drawing, graphic design, digital art, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. The artwork was juried by award-winning artist Dane Goodman.

The exhibition is in the Harold J. Miozzi Art Gallery at Cuesta College through May 19.



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Los Osos, CA 93412

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### *St. Ben's Events*

#### **May**

May 8 *Parish Council meeting*  
May 19 *Caro+'s Party*  
May 21 *Requiem performance at St. Barnabas*  
May 27 *Trans Pride at Meadow Park*  
May 28 *Caro+'s last Sunday service*  
May 31 *Evening service with Bishop Lucinda*

#### **June**

June 3 *SLO Pride Fest at Laguna Park*  
June 4 *Pride in the Plaza*  
June 18 *Parish Council meeting*  
June 28 *Ordination of Deacon Jen Crompton  
to the Priesthood*

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