

The Benediction

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

The Rev. Jen Crompton

Trailblazer

The Parish Council

Maureen Titus, Presiding Warden
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

Maureen Titus, Presiding Warden

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
including-live-stream/

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

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Message from our Presiding Warden, Maureen Titus

Season's Greetings!!!

It always seems to me that the end of a year is a "blur" in time, we have Thanksgiving and then it is Christmas and New Year's Day. We had our Gratitude Dinner celebration, our time of reflection for Stewardship and the Season of Pledging our financial support for St. Benedicts. We have sent off the final Parish Profile with many prayers for Bishop Lucinda to give her approval so a Rector search can begin. We have had a very active and transformative year in 2023, looking forward to 2024 and what more we will experience.



During this special time of Advent, we focus on the birth of Christ and all the celebrations we are anticipating. Gatherings with family and friends take over much of our time and energy. However, there are many people in our community in need throughout the year and at St. Ben's we do as much as we can to provide food at Prado and Community Dinners. The Abundance Shop offers low-cost clothing, household items and a warm greeting to all who walk in our door. The outreach by Rev. Jen and the Trailblazer team is love in action and Laundry

Love provides clean laundry for those who need our help and it is such a positive outreach for St. Ben's. We welcome you to join us in these programs, if you haven't had the opportunity to do so.

At a recent Sunday service provided by Lisa Gonzalez she talked about seeing Jesus in those around us. What a wonderful reminder for us to treat everyone with care, love and dignity. Consider the poor, hungry, sick, lonely, the prisoner and the despised. With the concept expressed so lovingly by Mother Teresa, "Whenever I meet someone in need, it's really Jesus in his most distressing disguise. It's him I help." With this we learn we are not only caring for the person, but we are also caring for Jesus.

Wishing that this Season of Advent fills your heart and home with peace, love and happiness.

The best parts of the Season: Peace, Hope and Love.

With love and gratitude for all of you,

Maureen Titus, Presiding Warden

An Update from Your Search Committee

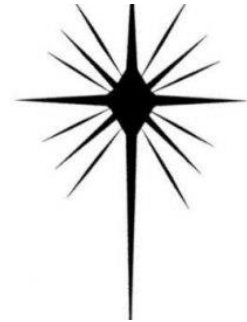
Brian Spolarich, Chair

As you may have heard during the Sunday announcements, we have completed the requested changes to our parish profile and resubmitted it to the bishop for approval. We have not yet heard back from the bishop on the revised profile, and so we enter the season of Advent with a sense of waiting and anticipation.

As a reminder, here's the process:

- The Search Committee is responsible for creating the Parish Profile and any requested revisions.
- The subset of the Parish Council that comprises the Vestry (that is, the confirmed Episcopal members of the Parish Council) vote to approve each revision of the Profile.
- Our Presiding Warden Maureen then sends this to Bishop Lucinda for her approval.
- If the Bishop has any changes, it goes back to the Search Committee, then approval by the Vestry, and then approval by the bishop.
- Once the Bishop has approved, we will post the final version of the Profile on our web site and share it widely with the congregation at that time.

Advent reminds us to use this time to prepare ourselves for the joy that lies in wait for us, although we do not know the day or the hour. Looking forward, once the Profile is approved by the bishop and published, we will post a job advertisement on the Episcopal News Service web site. We are also developing "first round" interview questions in preparation for that stage of the process.



Advent Retreat

Diocesan Retreat December 9th at St. James in Paso Robles

You are invited to a diocese-wide Advent Retreat and we hope you will join us! There will be three retreats, with the hope that one is happening near you. We will gather at 10 am for worship, Bible study, and reflection.

You are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and bring a journal or computer if you are someone who enjoys writing while reflecting. Lunch will be provided, and there is a suggested \$10 donation to help with the cost of lunch, but this is not a required contribution.

The retreat will end by 3 pm. The theme of the day is "The Mysteries of the Season of Advent," and the retreat will be led by the diocesan Advent Retreat committee.

Questions? Please email Canon Martha at canonmartha@realepiscopal.org.
The link is also available on the diocesan home page <https://www.realepiscopal.org/>

Highlights from the Parish Council

As we conclude our season of creation care and stewardship and move into the new church year and the season of anticipation that comes with Advent, your parish council remains focused on the stewardship of our beloved community and the building and land with which we have been entrusted. It was a delight to host the annual Gratitude dinner as an expression of thanks for the love and support you extend to us and to each other.

Coordinating events for us to spend time together in fellowship is an important part of the council's ministry, whether it is coffee hour, monthly potlucks, or special events like the upcoming Star Party.

Good stewardship of our assets means careful attention to building maintenance decisions and repair, which have included replacing the water heater so we can use the dishwashers again, repairing damaged electrical wiring for the fire sprinkler pump, and drywall repair in the loft ceiling. Looking to the future, the parish council is seeking bids to replace the roof. This will enable us to move ahead with the long-anticipated installation of solar panels.

Our community extends beyond our friends and sanctuary and out into the community around us. The parish council addresses questions about how best to continue to support outward facing ministries, including the Abundance Shop, Laundry Love, the Discovery Team, community dinners, and the Prado Day Center.

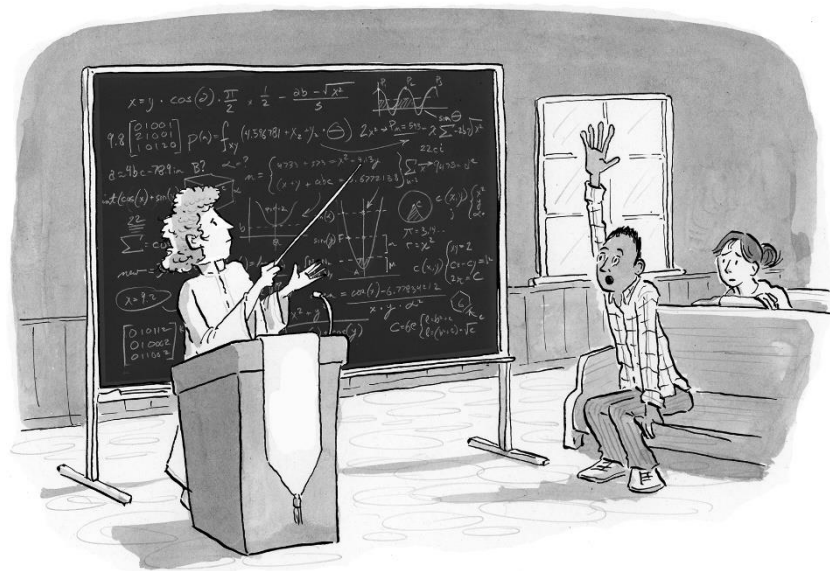
Like all of you, we also eagerly anticipate the coming of our new rector, although we do not know when that will happen. As part of our season of preparation and anticipation, we plan to continue to grow our ability to discern the breath of the Holy Spirit in all we do. Each year following the annual meeting, the parish council typically holds a retreat to kick off the new year. This year we will expand that practice and hold a joint retreat that includes the parish council and search committee. Thank you for continuing to hold us all in your hearts as we pray our transition prayer together each week.

Minutes from parish council meetings are posted in the long room.

Annual Meeting January 28th

Mark your calendars for Sunday January 28th. Each year we gather together to review our ministry together and plan for the upcoming year. Reviewing the prior year includes a mutual ministry review (MMR) where we ask ourselves "What are we doing well? What could we do better? What programs should we start or stop?" Watch for information inviting you to contribute your thoughts to the MMR. Planning for the new year includes members of the parish voting on leadership positions that include the parish council and delegates to the annual diocesan convention. We also vote to approve that year's budget.

While sometimes the annual meeting can feel a little routine or pro forma, your attendance and participation is especially important this year. Your support for the individuals elected to leadership goes a long way to help ease the burden of responsibility. Thank you!



"Is it really necessary to go over the quarterly finances in this level of detail?"

Holiday Season at the Abundance Shop

Esta Kandarian

We are having a busy holiday season this year at The Abundance Shop. Special thanks to Linda Crawford, Lori Gentile, Lorri Gill, and Iris Alexandra for pricing and so beautifully arranging the Christmas decor. So far over 40 large bins have been unpacked, with 20 more to go. Please drop by before Christmas! We are planning to close for a week between Christmas and New Year.

I would also like to thank Michael Lucas for his recent work in setting up and repairing one of our outdoor sheds, which we now use to sell tools and other items that don't fit inside the store. Thank you also to Steve Cake and Mike Eggleston, who come in weekly to test and price donations.

Have you noticed the new signs out front matching the one just installed at church? Thank you, Ron Thompson, for working with Ron Crain to design and install the signs!

Please stop by and visit!



Update on Finances

While many things about this year continue unchanged, others are atypical, and finances are no exception. The financial trend continues with higher than anticipated income and lower than budgeted expenses. We budgeted a shortfall for the year, but instead we have a surplus of \$28,024 through the end of October. This gives us a little bit of breathing room for what we know is coming in future years -- capital expenditures for a new roof and increased salary costs once our new rector is here. The treasurer and finance committee are preparing next year's budget, which we will review and vote on at our annual meeting. Given the uncertainty around the arrival of our new rector, we can anticipate that next year will also be a time of change and some level of uncertainty around the budget.

Thank you to the Abundance Shop for this outstanding support and to all of you for your faithful response to the call for financial stewardship.

"It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving." -- Mother Teresa

Christian Crafty Corner: Advent Candles as a Home Devotion

By Pamela Bleisch-Strawn

At this busy time of the year, adding Advent candles to your personal devotions can be a wonderful way to cultivate mindfulness and intention. As we light candles for each of the four weeks of the Advent season, we manifest the light of God as it comes into the world and grows in glory. Each week of Advent offers us the opportunity to contemplate: Hope, then Peace, followed by Joy, culminating in Love.

You can use whatever prayers, readings, or hymns you like. The National Altar Guild Association has prayers and scripture readings for use with each Sunday of Advent, online: <https://nationalaltarguildassociation.org/?p=1342>. I find that singing the first verse and refrain of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," followed by a short silent prayer, is a powerful devotion. I like to do this at dinnertime each evening, as I recenter and remind myself what really matters during the hectic holiday season.

May our hearts and minds ignite with hope, kindle with peace, glow with joy, and burn with love, during Advent and Christmastide, and throughout the coming year.



Instructions for a DIY Advent Wreath:

Pro tip: you need not have a wreath! Find a large circular thing that is wax-proof and flame-proof- a cake tin, a Bundt pan, a platter, or round mirror, a plate for serving devilled eggs, or a round of cardboard covered with aluminum foil. Now, add some greenery: evergreens, berries, ivy, rosemary, lavender, fresh or faux, whatever you like. The circle represents God's never-ending love; evergreens symbolize eternal life in Christ.

You will need five candles. Pillar candles (4 to 6 inches tall) are a good investment, because they stand up by themselves, and will last the whole season of Advent. Taper candles are elegant, but they will require stable candle holders. Whatever you use, take care to secure the candles to your circle, using putty, hot glue, chewing gum... whatever it takes!

Pro tip: the candles do not have to match! Four of them can be any color. The candle in the center of the circle should be white. This "Christ candle" is first lit on Christmas Eve, and then on each of the twelve nights of Christmas, all the way through Epiphany on January 6th.

Never leave your Advent candles burning unattended!

The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis on the Climate Crisis

John Horsley

More than seven years ago a discussion of Pope Francis's encyclical letter on the climate crisis *Laudate Si* led to the formation of the Earthcare group at St Benedict's. Now Pope Francis has published a much shorter follow-up to this encyclical, an apostolic exhortation entitled *Laudate Deum* addressed to "all people of good will". In it he reaffirms the message of the encyclical and calls for a radical change in our relationship with the Earth.



Pope Francis criticizes what he calls the "technocratic paradigm" which assumes that the human being has no limits and whose abilities and possibilities can be infinitely expanded thanks to technology. Nature is seen merely as a resource to be exploited in the pursuit of economic growth at all costs. Instead, we need a complete change of mindset. Human beings are a part of nature, and cannot be separated from it, no matter how powerful technology becomes. "Let us stop thinking, then, of human beings as autonomous, omnipotent and limitless and begin to think of ourselves differently, in a humbler, but more fruitful way", remembering that we are created, not creation's masters. We need to recognize the intrinsic value of nature as God's creation, adopt sustainable practices and promote environmental justice.

The apostolic exhortation is an urgent call to climate action given that "our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point". "The necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed". Pope Francis hopes that the United Nations climate change conference, COP28, which begins in Dubai on November 30, will allow for a decisive acceleration of energy transition, with effective commitments subject to ongoing monitoring. He calls on those taking part in COP28 to consider the common good and the future of their children rather than the short-term interests of certain countries or businesses. "The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it".

*Welcome to our journey through Advent and our focus on
Practicing Wonder with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind.
In these challenging and complicated times, on the surface it may
seem like focusing on wonder is a luxury, a nice bonus or extra in
one's life if one has the space to do so. But in reality, it is critical
to our well-being.
Living Compass.org*

Spiritual Conversation

The Tuesday Spiritual Discussion group will be using an Advent program sponsored by a group called Living Compass. The four-week program includes Sunday and weekday meditations for the Advent season. We will begin the program on Tuesday December 5 at 10.30 on Zoom. The program booklets are available as pdf electronic copies for free or a print copy available for \$1.00 plus postage. A limited number of print copies have been received and will be available in the back of the church. Order your booklets at <https://www.livingcompass.org/advent-lent>.

The group meets on Tuesdays at 10:30 am on [Zoom](#). You are welcome to join the conversation even if you don't read the book.

Update from the Liturgy Team

By Sarah Chesebro

The Liturgy Committee is hard at work preparing for the Christmas season! We all look forward to the very special services that we experience during Advent and Christmas, and this year is no exception. We are so grateful for everyone who contributes to our worship, it truly is a community effort. Scripture readings, prayers, music and hymns, sermons, lay ministers and ushers, altar guild, flower guild and sacristan combine to touch our soul with the special meaning of Christmas and create memories for a lifetime. Much appreciation to Jane Wu, who is taking a well-deserved break from the committee and welcome to Cathy Gildea who has replaced her. We would also like to extend a special thank you to Rev. Jen Crompton for leading our services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and to Lisa Gonzalez and Berkeley Johnson for leading our Blue Christmas service.

Liturgy Committee

Sarah Chesebro, *Convener*

Cathy Gildea

Jen Smith

Rev. Jen Crompton

Rev. Judy Stevens

Rev. Jerry Walton

John Horsley

Roz Malone

Bryson McKelvey

Christmas Celebrations

| | | |
|----------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dec 19 th | 5:30 pm | Blue Christmas service – a simple quiet service for those who find Christmas a challenge |
| Dec 24 th | 10:30 am | Eucharist celebrating the 4th Sunday of Advent |
| | 4:30 pm | Carols and Communion around the Creche – child-friendly celebration for all ages |
| | 7:45 pm | Carols for Christmas Eve, followed at 8:00 pm by a Festival Eucharist |
| Dec 25 th | 10:00 am | Quiet service followed by brunch |



Poinsettias

Help make the church festive for Christmas. You can donate a poinsettia in honor of a loved one for a suggested donation of \$15. Envelopes will be available at the back of the church in December.

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2220 Snowy Egret Lane

Los Osos, CA 93412

St. Ben's Events

December

December 9 *Advent Retreat St. James Paso Robles*
December 19 *5:30 pm Blue Christmas*
December 24 *4:30 pm Carols Around the Creche*
December 24 *7:45 pm Carols / 8 pm Eucharist*
December 25 *10:00 am Christmas Day Eucharist*

January

January 5 *Star Party*
January 28 *Annual Meeting*
