

Saint Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church
CANTERBURY TALES

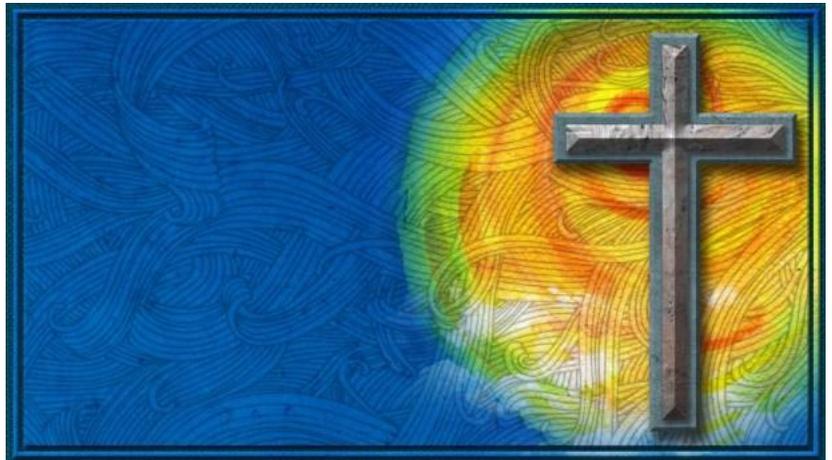
∞ APRIL 2020 ∞

Lentiest Lent

By the Reverend Julie D. Bryant, DMin., Priest-in-Charge

There is a bit of irony making its way around among those who can appreciate some wry humor in these most unusual days. The full statement is 'This is the Lentiest Lent that I ever Lented,' a commentary on the pandemic we're facing worldwide, and the measures we hope will slow its spread and lessen its impact. Grammatical irregularities aside, that statement certainly captures what it is to find oneself plunged more thoroughly into longing for community, into an awareness of the fragility of life, into the challenge of making sacrifices for others.

As much as I might like to settle immediately into routines that make the most effective use of forced solitude, it is more disconcerting than I thought to be without the touchpoints of daily interaction with fellow staff at the church and preschool, with the parents and congregation I was just coming to know, with all of the new places I cannot explore. Some days it is manageable, other days are a succession of picking up and putting



down the same things, and not completing whatever tasks I meant to accomplish with them. In order to keep anchored, I have set some new routines including a definite beginning and ending to the day. I am making a few more notes about the day, so that I can pay attention to places where I am prone to overindulge in things likely to get me off-track. I've taken to seeking out music that pleases my soul and giving myself permission to be a little schmaltzy to hold small sorrows at bay. There are real griefs that need my attention, and more grief to come if predictions of expected illness and death hold true.

A colleague asks daily 'where did you see love today?' The responses range from small acts of kindness to large-scale generosity. Reading through them warms my heart, and resets my inner compass, helping me to notice more about what good is happening. There is good happening all around, and more good to come.

Each day brings some shift in the landscape as numbers and predictions change, as limits slide around and we all grasp for certainty.

(continued p. 2)

It is our grasping that may be the Lentiest thing of all here - most in need of repairing. This season of recognition and repentance in pursuit of reconciliation is about surrendering our grasping and gripping for proof that God finds us worth loving. It is about letting ourselves be loved without questioning whether we're worthy, as though we are better judges than God about who deserves loving. We belong to God, start to finish and beyond on both ends. If the good that comes out of this pandemic-inspired diaspora is a deeper dependence on God, we will have gained something during this loss of the independence we treasure. Dependence on God is freedom in a way our beloved independence can never be.

We're on the last days of this Lenten season, about to enter Holy Week; what better time could there be to offer up the illusion of self-determination in favor of God-dependence? *Julie+*



Easter Flower Dedications ~ Don't wait!

Easter flower dedications are a traditional way of honoring our loved ones, and glorifying God. This year, we will continue that tradition by inviting you to donate in memory of, or in thanksgiving for, family and friends. Please indicate on your Donation (Suggested \$10 each) that it is for Easter flowers, and we'll be in touch to be sure we record the dedication exactly as you wish. *Rather than buying flowers for inside the Church this year, we will plant bright flowers in our front garden where they can be enjoyed by passersby, too!*



SO...we need gardeners! Please call or email Rev. Julie if you can help with the planting!



A mission of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, St. Thomas is a **"pet-friendly"** church that cares deeply for our beloved pets. We work with local senior citizens to provide food for their pets and support the Animal Friends of the Valleys. We also hold a blessing for the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, and welcome well-behaved pets to attend worship with us.

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Saint Thomas Meets – In New Ways!

Zoom Meeting ID and Passwords are being distributed via email; if you don't receive our emails and would like to attend, please contact The Reverend Julie D Bryant at 310 625-9377.

Congregation TOWN HALL Meeting, Friday, April 3, 6:30 p.m.



4/4 Saturday at 10:30 a.m. Palm-Cross-Making Party

4/5 Sunday at 9 a.m. Palm Sunday

4/7 Tuesday at 3 p.m. Stations of the Cross: Women of the Passion

4/9 Thursday at 6 p.m.
Maundy Thursday Agape

4/10 Friday at 7 p.m.
Good Friday Liturgy

4/11 Saturday at 7 p.m.
Easter Vigil

4/12 Sunday at 9 a.m.
EASTER



Many more ongoing opportunities for worship, service, and fellowship via Zoom. Watch your email, refer to our weekly announcements, and/or visit our church website for schedule details and instructions.

Bishop's Committee News

From the Desk of Your New Senior Warden, Tom Reid

Brothers and Sisters of St Thomas,

I am truly honored that Mother Julie asked me to be the Sr. Warden for St Thomas. We have a passionate, warm and outgoing faith community. I am excited for the future of St Thomas and look forward to seeing us grow spiritually as both a congregation and within the Temecula Valley community.



We are now entering the third week of the California Stay-at-Home order. This Sunday (Palm Sunday) will be our third Sunday where we will be having services virtually instead of at our physical location. It is important that during this time, we stay connected as a church family. More than ever, it is important that we be there for each other and remind each other of Jesus's Love and the strength that God gives all of us.

To be able to worship together and have other type of faith formation, we have setup a series of events via [Zoom](#). These events include:

- Sunday Morning Prayer Service at 9 AM
- Weekly Prayer Services on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday
- End of Day Compline every evening at 9 PM
- Morning Coffee with Mother Julie every weekday morning at 7 AM
- Bible Study every Tuesday at 4 PM
- Other ministry meetings such as Prayers & Squares, MOST, WOW and Youth

The links for the meetings are on the weekly eblast and you will be receiving passcodes by email for added security. The Holy Week schedule is printed on page 3.

Lastly, we have setup a Calling Tree. The intention of the Calling Tree is so we are reaching out to every member of our community on a weekly basis. It is important we stay in touch, so everyone still feels part of St Thomas. We have several people calling including members of our Bishop's Committee and Stephen Ministry. If you have any concerns or needs, this would be a great time to discuss them so St Thomas can assist.

Peace & Blessings,

Tom Reid

More Bishop's Committee—Meet Your Junior Warden

Russell Higgins introduces himself

I have been asked to share some information about myself to the congregation. Below is a little about my family, work experience and religious background.

I am happily married to Karen whom I met while in high school in Connecticut 32 years ago. We have three kids: Thomas (26 and lives in CT), Michael (25 and lives in Murrieta) and Sarah (17 and attends Murrieta Mesa HS).

I have a unique professional background where I have worked for a Fortune 50 company as well as very small family owned companies. Currently, I am Chief Financial Officer for a publicly traded company out of Temecula CA. I have an MBA from RPI and a MAST from the University of Hartford.



Recently, I joined a motorcycle rider ministry called Black Sheep Harley Davidson for Christ, which focuses on ministering to the Harley Davidson Owners Group out of the Temecula HD dealership.

My parents are very religious, and the Episcopal Church has been a part of my life since I was born. I have always believed that one's life must have Peace, Balance, GOD, and family. I realized last year I needed more balance in my life and decided to run for the Bishop's Committee this year. Once I joined the Bishop's Committee and realized the Junior Warden's position was open and had a finance focus, I was called to step up and use my experience to help the Church. I believe all things happen for a reason and GOD telling me I was out of balance last year lead me to join the Black Sheep and volunteer for the Bishop's Committee.

St Thomas of Canterbury has become home to me. This Church and its congregation have a lot to offer and is extremely friendly. I am proud to say that I am a member and look forward to being one for a long time.

While I know St Thomas is in a transitional period, I look at it as a great time to help define who we are and what we want to be. Having served on a vestry in the past, I understand that serving on the Bishop's Committee is a privilege and am honored to commit myself to serving.

I look forward in working with the Bishop's Committee, Finance Committee and the rest of the Congregation over the next 3 years.

GOD Bless,

Russell Higgins

First Youth Member Elected to the Bishop's Committee

Lauren Walton Reflects on Her Call to Serve and Coping with Change



I have been a member of St. Thomas for 12 years. This is my second family that gets together every Sunday. I am involved as an acolyte and I help with the Nursery/Sunday School. I also participate in the Canterbury Youth Group. I attend Murrieta Mesa High School as a Junior. I pursue my passions which are: Band, Golf, and Track and Field. I am honored to be a part of the Bishop's Committee as a youth representative for St. Thomas, because I believe it is very important for the next generation to have a voice. I hope to communicate the needs of our youth to church leadership and contribute to shaping programs that can help us grow in our faith and participation in our church community.

Due to the COVID-19, all the schools have shut down and are continuing with "distance learning" for the rest of the semester. During the first two weeks of the shut down the Murrieta Valley School District used this time to prepare for online classes. We were assigned simple review work of previous learnings. I was given math problems and English questions each day. This review was not mandatory, so I only did a few days. March 30th to April 3rd was our scheduled spring break. I was supposed to visit colleges this week, but that was canceled. The district provided computers to the students who needed them, and school will resume via distance learning on April 6th. This will help a lot with the boredom that my friends and I are starting to feel. I have talked with a few friends who have been doing distance learning and they have told me all their teachers are assigning more homework than they usually do. This makes me a little nervous, but I look forward to the challenge.

To keep myself from becoming bored these past few weeks, I have been doing many fun at home activities. I have completed several 1000-piece puzzles. My love for music has me practicing my clarinet and saxophone. I also FaceTime with my friends at night. So far, I have participated in several Zoom calls with the Bishop's Committee, and "visited" my Dad's family weekly, my Mom's family, and the youth group on Sunday afternoons.

I have faith that we will all get through this and stay strong as we continue to reach out to one another. I pray for my St. Thomas family and I can't wait to see everyone in person when this crisis is over.

Lauren Walton

Canterbury Youth Group

St Thomas Youth Participated in the Diocesan Nightwatch Event

On Saturday night, February 29th, 43 youth from 12 congregations in our diocese gathered at St. Paul's Cathedral for Nightwatch—an annual event that takes place during Lent. This year's theme was *Leap of Faith!* Among many other activities, during the night, the youth came to the altar in one-hour shifts.



They watched throughout the night, completing the task that was so hard for the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. A strong delegation represented St. Thomas as seen here, led by Monica Walton.

Ministry Adapts to Needs: Mask Making in the Time of Crisis



The St. Thomas Prayers and Squares Ministry is making face masks to assist care givers at Temecula Valley Hospital. Deb Mitchell, Marva Ross, and Pam Bowen (at left, not yet a member but surely soon to be recruited by Deb, Prayers and Squares coordinator) completed 70 masks which were taken to the hospital March 28. Rev. Julie Bryant also donated 20 of the masks to another agency in need.

Deb called TVH and spoke with the Health Director before beginning this project to ensure the masks would indeed be helpful. While the 100% cotton masks are only 50-60% effective against the virus, the director said, "something is better than nothing." The masks can be used over the N95 mask to prolong their repeated usage. The health care worker accepting the masks was extremely grateful and commented on the fun fabrics used.

Elastic and twill tape used to secure the masks in in short supply, even online. We will continue to make more and encourage any of you who sew to please join in our effort. The masks are easy to make and take about 15-20 minutes each. We will provide fabric and elastic/tape. Please check your sewing supplies. We need 1/4" elastic and twill tape or grosgrain ribbon no wider than 3/8". Contact Deb Mitchell: 951-440-1919

Since beginning the project, and since the state officials have suggested all wear masks while out, we have had requests from the congregation, and we will do our best to help.



Health Update: Dr. Rather's Insights

Blessings to everyone. As I begin this month's article, it is obvious that Covid19 Coronavirus is the topic. I think we are responding well to precautions, and that we continue to respond to "social distancing" is of utmost importance.



Dr. John Forsythe, a professor of psychology at Albany University in New York is an expert in treating anxiety disorders. He was quoted in a recent article in the *San Diego Union Tribune* newspaper discussing our thought processes when we isolate during a pandemic. He states that the biggest problem we face involves the loss of our daily routines that give us the comfort and safety of predictability. The isolation associated with social distancing causes us to experience several negative emotions which include anxiety, sadness, anger, and the frustration of the unknowns facing us. How do we deal with these emotions?

The best advice of psychologists is to first accept those negative emotions and try to alter them instead of fighting them. Plan and develop new routines at home such as doing puzzles, reading the classics, and connecting socially through emails, text messaging, and sending photos. Probably most importantly, remember that science proves consistently that exercise, good nutrition, and socializing are emotionally related to our well-being. Take a walk, get some fresh air, but keep your social distance. This is a marathon race and not a sprint. We are going to win but be aware that it may be several months from now before we all can return to that normalcy of life that we love and share at St Thomas. Do not surrender to normal restlessness as it could be fatal to yourself or to someone in your family.

In conclusion, one of the newest and earliest symptoms besides fever, a dry cough, and shortness of breath appears to be ANOSOMIA which is the loss of smell, including loss of taste, which is associated with it. This can be the initial symptom. Be aware, vigilant, and stay well.

Until next time, your friendly, but retired, dermatologist,

Ed

The Power of Prayers—and Squares

The Editor's Personal Reflection of Thanksgiving

In a time of crisis, we look for comfort from the familiar (see Dr. Rather's article on the previous page). We also are naturally drawn to pray on our own, in groups, and as a community. As a wise person once said, prayers are answered, we just don't always know when or how, and rarely if ever the answers match our expectations.

Over the years Andrea and I have requested several quilts from the Prayers and Squares Ministry. Some recent recipients included Andrea's 92-year-old aunt Barbara Moon, a chronic sufferer from COPD who was having a particularly difficult time in and out of hospital after several falls. Another was a friend from college who had multiple myeloma, no immediate family members, and was facing painful and comprehensive treatments. The most recent request was for my daughter Aniela, an athletic and healthy young woman who suffered a knee injury and was about to start a prolonged and frustrating rehab from surgery. Two of these quilts are pictured here in their recipients' homes.

None of these recipients are particularly religious. Yet they all recognized the power of prayer and appreciated in effusive terms the gift and connection the quilts represented.



They understood that those many fingers of strangers that tied all those knots and said prayers for them was a major connection, a general acknowledgement of our shared human condition, and a common way for us to identify. I am grateful and thankful to this ministry, so capably led by Deb Mitchell, but I also see it as a metaphor for our current challenge to stay and pray together even as we are physically separated. We are all connected by our common humanity and our equal status as children of a loving God.



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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

8:00am Holy Eucharist

10:15am Holy Eucharist

10:15am Children's
Chapel/Sunday School

Wednesday

7:00pm Healing Eucharist