

Saint Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church
CANTERBURY TALES

❧ FEBRUARY 2021 ❧



Rev. Julie D. Bryant, DMin., Priest-in-Charge

Lent Launches Mid-Month

"You hate nothing you have made," so begins the prayer that opens the season of Lent.

How differently we might understand the world if we took those words to heart! And, how differently we might act in relationship to the natural world and our fellow inhabitants! Critique and envy creep in where only appreciation belongs, prodded or dragged along by fear, until there is little room for delighting. What is meant for glory instead becomes shadowy suspicious displacement of that which God declared good at creation. Reclaiming the good by embracing this prayer's assertion this Lent could move us a step closer to God.

More often than not, I see Lent and its disciplines caricatured into a stream of suffering, when the purpose of the season is healing and reconciliation with God and with one another. Rather than groaning our way into the season with a plan for self-flagellation and punishment, if we greet Lent as a time for identify the things that stand between us and God, and with an intention to replace those with better practices, we can welcome Easter as a people renewed in our faith.

Last year, we began Lent with Sylvia Sweeney's* just-published book of Lenten devotions focused on care of creation, and the impact of commercial enterprise on the landscape and inhabitants. God created an interdependent web of life. When there is disturbance or imbalance in one area, it ripples across the whole. Likewise, when a segment of creation is thriving, the benefit goes beyond that small section to improve the health of other portions. We were plunged into the reality of a global pandemic mid-Lent, reinforcing the connection between various parts of the global population as we watched the rapid spread of infection across our communities and around the world. If ever we needed a reminder of how closely connected we are, Covid-19 is bringing that message home.

One of two collects near the close of Compline asks God to "grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil." The truth of that statement is not limited to the physical well-being we enjoy because many hands have labored for food, for safe passageways, for fair application of law and justice, but rather includes the spiritual work of healing that comes through dialogue based on careful listening, from receiving challenges to our assumptions with willingness to be changed, from nurturing an expectation that all parties in conversation are well-intentioned.

Spiritual practice is both individual and communal work, for the effect of deeply private conversion of the heart is the realignment of one's self with all of God's beloveds as well as with God. When spiritual practices include meeting as a group or in partnership, an added layer of accountability reinforces individual intentions.

We will send to each home some suggestions for Lenten practices of healing and reconciliation, and a listing of several additional weekly worship opportunities on-line. The same material will be distributed digitally. As Holy Week approaches, another round of communication will go out. When we are able to do so with a high degree of safety and comfort, we will resume worshipping in person.

Julie+

*The Very Reverend Sylvia Sweeney, Ph D, has since retired from her position as Dean of Bloy House, continuing as Professor of Homiletics. Her 2020 book is titled *Winged with Longing for Better Things*.

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Encouraging Prayers

The worrying year behind and continuing fatigue from the changes pandemic protocols have prompted has me reaching for sources of encouragement and words that express my aches and longings. Perhaps these prayers from Andrew Greeley will encourage you, too. JDB+

A Prayer when Discouraged:

Jesus Lord who said that your yoke is sweet and your burden is light, lift up my weary soul, rekindle my enthusiasm, stimulate my energy, excite once again my imagination, and refresh my spirit. Do all these things for me, I beg you, so that I may serve you with greater generosity and deeper faith. I ask this of you with the Father and the Spirit. Amen.

A Prayer in Time of Worry:

O loving God, without whose concern a single sparrow does not fall, help me in my anxieties and concerns to know that in your power and love all manner of things will be well and every tear dried, every hurt healed, every pain soothed. Grant that in times of worry, I may manifest the confidence of the Spirit to all around me. I ask this in the name of the same Spirit and in Jesus the Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Troubled Friends:

Lord God, who sent Jesus to bring peace and grace to all humankind, shower that grace on my troubled friends. May they find in your love illumination and reconciliation, hope and joy, and the resurrection experience of beginning again. Grant that they may understand that resurrection isn't supposed to be easy. I ask this in the name of the same Jesus. Amen.

Yours in Christ, Julie +

February Service Schedule

Sunday Eucharist at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom with Father David and Mother Julie.*

*They will alternate preaching the Gospel.

Due to continuing Coronavirus risk, we will be worshipping **online** for the month of February, until further notified otherwise.*

Zoom Meeting ID: 809 865 440. Please call Rev. Julie Bryant: 310-625-9377, for the Passcode.

Special Services:

***Ash Wednesday:** There will be further notices sent via email and a separate mailing for Lent with information about our services, and ashes sent to all members' homes.

****Communion:** if you wish to have it delivered to your home, please email: adminasst@episcopalchurchtemecula.org with: your name, the number of persons receiving, and your telephone number. Also, please let us know if you need Gluten-free Hosts. Please **Do Not Hesitate** to ask for Communion to be brought to you. We are eager to share the blessing of the Sacrament!



A mission of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, Saint 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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****CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS****



Recyclables Wanted:

Recyclables can be dropped off at the church during school hours, in the outside courtyard, or during Saturday Work Parties. It would be very helpful if cans and plastic were already separated. (*We can no longer recycle glass.*)*

* **Help Wanted:** We need volunteers to do a **monthly transport of recyclables** to the recycling center next to Ralph's on 79S and Butterfield Stage. Please contact

Mother Julie if interested: 310-625-9377.

Saint Thomas of Canterbury Work Parties Continue!

We continue to make great progress to renew and refresh the Saint Thomas property!

Our **Saturday work hours are 8:00 a.m. to Noon**. Refreshments will be provided.

Please consider pitching in an hour or two or three and helping with this important effort! If you have any questions, please contact Tom Reid: Treid44@bellsouth.net or

Tess Crawford: Tess.crawford@icloud.com.





“Hear the Word of God” Bible Study Group with Lani-Karyn Jones on Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m.

Lani introduces, then reads passages of the Bible. This is a time to immerse yourself in the beloved Word to let it wash over you and carry you into a deeper relationship with

God and the human family. We will be working on Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy.

Note the New Zoom ID: 832 8612 5079. Please call Mother Julie for the passcode: 310-625-9377. Or participate by phone +1-669-900-9128.

Bible Study Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m.: We are looking at the Service Lessons coming up.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/869278908>

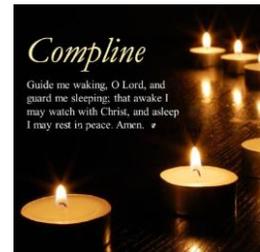
Meeting ID: 869 278 908

Participate by Phone +1 669 900 9128

Password required; please contact The Reverend Julie D. Bryant: 310-625-9377.

COMPLINE is at 8:00 p.m., nightly. Zoom Meeting ID: 216 377 3567.

Please call Mother Julie for the passcode: 310-625-9377. Compline is wonderful way to end the day with time in God's word, with wonderful friends.



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Reminder: Pledge Payments can be made through the mail or electronically via the “Give/Pledge Online” button on the Saint Thomas website: www.episcopalchurchtemecula.org. **Thank you so much for keeping your pledge current.**

Think of who you might honor with your gift to the **BLESS Annual Appeal of The Episcopal Church**. A tribute gift to The Episcopal Church is a thoughtful way to remember loved ones during the holidays and beyond, for friends committed to the on-going ministries of Saint Thomas, to the work of Racial Reconciliation, Creation Care, and to walking the Way of Love.

You can make a gift to The Episcopal Church that supports our shared work in each of these ministries. Your loved one will receive a card, letting them know that a gift has been made in their honor. Also, you will receive a card confirming your gift in their honor. You can give in any of these ways: <https://episcopalchurch.org/give>; or call (800) 334-7626, extension 6002; or text: “Appeal” to 91999. Thank you in advance for inviting The Episcopal Church to celebrate your friends and loved ones with you this year.

Flower and Candle Dedications:

Thank you for the flower donations over the Christmas season! **Now we are ready to have flower and candle dedications for 2021!**

To make a dedication, please send a note to the church, or email adminasst@episcopalchurchtemecula.org with the date, dedication details, and your name. (For example: “Sunday nearest January 6. In Memory of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, who made the most of life’s journey, from Bright Star and the Angels.”)



The suggested donation for Sunday flowers is \$35, and for a Sanctuary Candle, \$5. Donations can be sent to the Church, with “Flower” or “Candle” written in the “Memo” line.

KEEP THE DATE!

The Saint Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church’s **Annual Meeting** is scheduled for **Sunday, February 21**, following our 9 o'clock worship.



Saint Thomas Preschool Events



During the month of January, we celebrated the National School Choice Week, from January 24-30, with fun activities in the classrooms, themed days, and a time to say thank you to our families for bringing their children to STEP.

Coming up in February, we will be closing early on the 12th for a teacher in-service day. We will be exploring how to carry our learning activities outside into “outdoor classrooms”! Also, we will be having a St. Valentine’s Day Party on the 12th.* The students will exchange cards and non-food items if they want. *Church members are encouraged to put together Valentine cards or gifts for the students and staff. Please contact Chantel in the Preschool office to arrange for drop-off of these items. Your generosity will be much appreciated! (There are 40 students and 7 staff.)

Please bring your recyclable bottles and cans for the preschool to cash in! They can be brought any time Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., or during the Saturday work parties. Thank you so much!

Also, we have STEP merchandise for sale (baseball tees, crew-neck sweatshirts, v-neck shirts, white t-shirts, masks, and mugs). Please call the school office: (951) 302-8498, to arrange a purchase and pick-up.

Thank you for helping to support our school!

Hey, Saint Thomas members and STEP parents, Follow us on Instagram!



#stthomasintemecula #stepreschool #stepreschoolmerch
#virtualclassrooms2020



Good News for Saint Thomas Episcopal Preschool

Dear Saint Thomas of Canterbury family,

As you have heard announced at Sunday worship on January 3 and 10, a group of students and staff were quarantined after a student tested positive for Covid-19. Neither the student, nor any member of the student's family, developed symptoms of the virus during quarantine. And, of the several quarantining persons who were tested, none have reported a positive diagnosis, or symptoms.

While no one wanted us to have to test our preparedness, we are pleased to have had the cooperation of families, and glad to report that the Riverside County Health Department praised our response. God willing, we will not have need to revisit the process.

Daily Covid-19 protocols include health checks, isolating groups of students, and thorough disinfection. If a student or staff member comes into contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, they are required to quarantine for 10 days. If a staff member or student tests positive, the County's contact tracing effort begins, along with individual counsel and follow-up.

The second piece of news involves the appointment of a new Director.

When Sandra Guajardo suddenly became ill in July, Mrs. Laura Wood and Mrs. Chantel Blas stepped in to share the responsibilities of administering the Preschool. Mrs. Wood served as Director in the early 2000s and has continued as Assisting Director while focusing primarily on teaching. Mrs. Blas joined the STEP staff several years ago, teaching near-full-time while continuing her own coursework. Together, they addressed rapid changes in Covid-19 response, expanded the emergency license to serve elementary-aged students, and adapted the facility and cleaning protocols to meet the safe(r) standards for staff and students.

When Ms. Guajardo was not able to return after more than four months, it was necessary to move ahead with filling the Director position. The peculiar circumstances of this Covid-19 time, along with the months of effective response Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Blas had already accomplished, factored into the process we undertook to select a Director.

Canon Serena Beeks, long-time Executive Director of Episcopal Schools for the Diocese of Los Angeles, and serving in that same capacity for San Diego, came to our aid. Dr. Beeks interviewed Chantel Blas on behalf of the Bishop's Committee, and strongly recommended that she be appointed STEP Director. The Bishop's Committee agreed, and Chantel has accepted! Families have expressed their delight at the choice, having been in constant contact with her since mid-summer.

Mrs. Blas has almost 18 years' experience in early childhood education and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in the field from Pacific Oaks College. Chantel and her wife Caite, along with their son Benton, are active members of Saint Thomas Church.

The Preschool is a vibrant part of the Saint Thomas community, and I am so glad to share the news that our community continues to be cautious about the Covid-19 virus, and that we are moving forward with confidence and hope for a bright future.

Yours in peace, Julie D. Bryant+

Sacred Ground

by

Dr. Deb Mitchell

On Saturday, January 23, participants in both groups held a joint meeting convened by group leaders Vince Walton and Russell Higgins.

Having reached the midway point of our sessions, dialogue focused on what we have learned regarding racial understandings through videos, readings and discussions. We have grown individually by sharing our own stories and listening intently to the stories of others. We have explored subjects that perhaps we didn't want to think about and are learning to "stay in the conversation" despite personal comfort zones. Much discussion focused on the select history that we were taught in the public schools.

Looking to the future of our St. Thomas community as well as the Temecula community, we are "roughing out" continuing conversations to broaden and educate ourselves regarding current social trends including identity and diversity and how our church facility and communications reflect an appreciation of diversity and better extend a welcome to all members of our communities without presuming that what we currently do is adequate.

Much time and effort has been expended by this first group of participants on behalf of the whole congregation with the idea that it is appropriate to share and expand ideas with our congregation encouraging them to "widen the circle" by becoming participants in future sessions. Transformation has at times been challenging but also very welcome.

We extend our thanks and appreciation to participant Warren Rippé who has made a concerted effort to include music of many cultures in our virtual services and recognize the arts as a means toward inclusivity.





St. Thomas of Canterbury
Episcopal Church

STEWARDSHIP: Time and Talent Volunteers Needed

Stewardship Letters have been sent to the Congregation asking for a commitment of time and talent as we leap into 2021. Currently, we have the following immediate needs. If you are interested, please reach out to Mother Julie. **Current needs:**

- Able to become Associated with the Preschool (simple background check and fingerprinting process, in order to support teaching staff with daily check-in and check-out of students, and watch over napping children during staff lunchtime.
- Opportunity to engage with Lessons, Virtual Learning Support, Crafts and other activities as well.)
- Able to assist with Weekly Offering Count
- Willing to staff the Church Office a few hours a week, with occasional volunteer tasks
- Able to oversee various projects, indoors and outdoors, related to maintaining our property

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Bishop’s Committee Prospective Member Information Event

Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 6:00 in the evening



With 2021 already underway, it is time to start the process for adding new members to the Bishop’s Committee (BC). Serving as the working leadership team for the congregation and working closely with Mother Julie Bryant, Priest-In-Charge, the BC provides many unique opportunities to serve the church. While we face these challenging times, St. Thomas needs faithful members who are willing to join in this important work. To help provide more information about the work of the BC and opportunities to become involved, we will hold a Prospective Member Event on Saturday, February 6, 2021. Because of Covid-19 concerns, this will be a “virtual” event. However, dinner will be provided and a meaningful conversation will be held. Please contact

Tess Crawford to express your interest in attending this event, and so that we can prepare in advance to properly welcome and extend hospitality to each of you. For more information, contact Tess Crawford, BC Member (2022), 951.378.3300, tess.crawford@icloud.com.

**“Donating to a Charity [including St. Thomas of Canterbury]
Using a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)”**

“If you are looking to make a non-deductible donation to charity, you may want to consider a QCD.”

- **BY FIDELITY LEARNING CENTER**

“If you are age 72 or older, IRS rules require you to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) each year from your tax-deferred retirement accounts.

The CARES act temporarily waives required minimum distributions (RMDs) for all types of retirement plans (including IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, 457(b)s, and inherited IRA plans) for calendar year 2020. This includes the first RMD, which individuals may have delayed from 2019 until April 1, 2020.

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA, payable directly to a qualified charity, as described in the QCD provision in the Internal Revenue Code. Amounts distributed as a QCD can be counted toward satisfying your RMD for the year, up to \$100,000. The QCD is excluded from your taxable income. This is not the case with a regular withdrawal from an IRA, even if you use the money to make a charitable contribution later on. If you take a withdrawal, the funds would be counted as taxable income even if you later offset that income with the charitable contribution deduction.

Why is this distinction important? If you take the RMD as income, instead of as a QCD, your RMD will count as taxable income. This additional taxable income may push you into a higher tax bracket and may also reduce your eligibility for certain tax credits and deductions. To eliminate or reduce the impact of RMD income, charitably inclined investors may want to consider making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). For example, your taxable income helps determine the amount of your Social Security benefits that are subject to taxes. Keeping your taxable income level lower may also help reduce your potential exposure to the Medicare surtax.”*

Consult your accountant regarding this option.

*This information was forwarded by Marva Ross, found on the following website:
<https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/personal-finance/retirement/qcds-the-basics>.



Health Update by Dr. Ed Rather

Happy February, everyone... it will be St. Valentine's Day soon!

For almost everyone, information concerning the CoVid-19 vaccine distribution has been confusing. The President of the American Medical Association, Dr. Susan Bailey, has just recently made a viable assessment of what has been happening, and the need for a federal response. "Since March, the AMA has called on the federal government to implement a coordinated national strategy and pull every lever to ramp up PPE production for N95 masks, gowns, gloves, as well as testing supplies—and coordinate distribution. We commend the new administration for moving swiftly to implement a desperately needed national strategy to combat COVID-19, including a health equity task force to address the inequities that have been exacerbated during the pandemic."* Hopefully we will be seeing a great improvement in the overall delivery of the vaccines. What do you think?

Because of our own Kathy Foxen relaying information last week in an incredibly rapid response by her, Kay and I conformed to the newest guidelines for getting the vaccine. We went **online** essentially instantly after talking with her and were able to make an appointment at a pharmacy for the Moderna mRNA vaccination. It left us with a sore arm and perhaps an increased fatigue for the next 24 to 36 hours, but all in all not too bad. I felt a little badly getting it so fast, but the people I have talked with have been so encouraging making a good case that with our age, if we did get sick, we would more likely than not end up in the hospital and maybe the ICU. We certainly did not want to contribute to the terrible hospital problems going on at present, so I am trying not to feel guilty. Our second shot is due in mid-February and I will keep everyone posted.

By the way, as usual, all sorts of **misinformation** can be found on the world wide web someplace or other. Do not let your personal thinking be compromised by people expressing all kinds of crazy ideas that have absolutely no scientific basis. In other words, CoVid-19 is not the flu, **the vaccines have not been** developed for population control, they do **not** cause infertility, and even though there are some side effects, the severe allergic reactions are few and far between. The medical and pharmaceutical professionals are being extraordinarily careful.

You might have noticed one batch of Moderna was pulled recently due to somewhere between five to ten reactions took place. I do think getting your shot in a pharmacy or other medical facility is best if you just happened to have a reaction. And if you need more information concerning the efficacy and safety of mRNA vaccines, there is an excellent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in the December 31, 2020, issue, which I am sure you could Google.

Speaking of reactions made me think of some recently reported signs of Coronavirus illness in **children** which would be worth remembering. These include redness and swelling of eyes and eyelids, an urticarial (hive-like) reaction early on, a measles-like skin rash, and later having a chicken-pox type of skin eruption from small blisters to scabs. This disease continues to be strange in the way it presents itself.

Meanwhile, as we continue to shelter, be sure to stay active, move around, get fresh air, and stay connected with friends and loved ones. All of these things boost our mood in a positive way. Sing, listen to music, and watch for the end of the tunnel! It is going to be here soon, I think.

As always, your friendly (but retired) Dermatologist,

Ed

* Information taken from 21 January 2021 American Medical Association (AMA) news online:
<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/ama-statements/ama-applauds-biden-administration-swift-action-covid-19>.

