



THE MOUSE

ST. JOHN'S OAKLAND - FEB 2024
1707 GOULDIN RD OAKLAND CA 94611

rector's letter

Many are surprised to learn that the season of Lent convinced me to become an Episcopalian. I had come from a tradition that did not embrace the idea of spiritual seasons. We were told that being faithful meant being upbeat and on top of the world all the time. We were taught that we were victorious in Christ, and we should act like it and feel like it. Any of the darker emotions were considered works of the devil who was trying to wear us down. Our response should be to cling to the promises and believe a little harder. But putting a smile on my face by ignoring the suffering within never worked for me. Believe me I tried.

Avoiding my deeper and sometimes darker dimensions was not working, and so I accepted the invitation of a friend of mine to try out the Episcopal Church. My first visit was during the season of Lent, and I immediately felt welcomed, not just by the people, but by the liturgy and by God. I realized I was in a lent of my own and that having such a lent was not only okay but was a profound part of a truly spiritual journey. I was invited to befriend my doubt, grief, fear, and anxiety, and see them as teachers. I was being invited to be kind and gentle with myself. It was in Lent when I discovered that God was patient, loving, and compassionate and wanted to meet me in my weakness and vulnerability.

Lent is not an invitation to beat yourself up, judge yourself, or tell yourself that you are not good enough or faithful enough. It's a time to return to yourself and know that God is right there loving you as you are, not as you feel you should be. When we accept ourselves, we discover that God has been there accepting us all the time. There is no longer a need to adopt a forced smile. Self-compassion can put an honest smile on our face.

Historically the church has often wiped the smile off Jesus' face because we have not seen suffering, weakness, or vulnerability the way Jesus did, as the pathway to compassion and healing. One relatively unknown way of imagining Jesus on the cross comes from a crucifix, probably from the 13th century, found in the chapel of the castle of St. Francis Xavier in northeast Spain. Jesus' suffering is clear: he is stripped, arms outstretched, head crowned with thorns; he is nailed to the wood. But his face is unusual, not wracked with pain, but peaceful and serene. The sculpture is called "The Smiling Christ." If you look up at the cross you can see this little glimmer of a peaceful smile on his face. If you look down on the cross from above, the smile is not apparent. It is a reminder to not look down on suffering but look up to it as a passageway to joy and happiness.

If you are looking to give something up this Lent, you might consider letting go of self-judgment by being kind to the full breadth of who you are. Don't look down on your weakness or your suffering but look up to Jesus who sees us as we are and feels nothing but love for us. It is then that we will discover that God has been smiling at us the whole time.

Happy Lent.

Scott+



the gateway project matching grant

Great news! Mike and Martha Helms have offered a matching grant for The Gateway Project of up to \$350,000. We are so grateful for their generosity, and for all of you who have donated to the project so far. If you haven't yet donated, or would like to give an additional gift in light of this matching grant, please click here: <https://onrealm.org/StJohnsOakland/AddPledge/gateway>



wilderness season Kathleen Moore

Each year at the beginning of Lent, I head to YouTube and search for one specific video. It's fifteen years old, so the quality is far below what we expect now. The images are all from a series called "40" by British artist Simon Smith. Each panel depicts a day during Jesus' time in the wilderness. Jesus walks, prays, sleeps, meets animal friends, and plays games. He is also confronted with reminders of death, thirst, hunger, and what appears to be deep loneliness. On day 27, Jesus looks stricken and exhausted, and the music swells. The devil appears, and weary Jesus resists him, collapses, and is carried off by angels.

For some reason, this silly interpretation of the familiar story helps me really feel that Jesus – fully human as he was divine – understands. I do not subscribe to the belief that Lent is a time to seek out loneliness or sadness or hunger or exhaustion or pain. I subscribe to the belief that Lent is a time to remember that our God has lived here with us, felt pain and sorrow, and is very close to any human being experiencing their own wilderness season.

For those of you who find yourselves in such a season this Lent, know that God is very near you. And for those who are not in such a difficult season, this is a good time to find new ways to walk alongside those who are; whether they are friends and family close by, or those suffering from disaster, war, and other calamities large and small here and around the world.

St. John's is already doing Lenten wilderness work by raising money for World Central Kitchen and Episcopal Relief & Development during this year's Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and Tuesday Lent Gatherings. I am looking forward to walking with you through Lent, and finding out what each of these 40 days brings.

You can watch the video online by navigating to thleen.net/lent

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb 13 - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, 5:30-7:30pm
Feb 17 - Jeff King's Memorial, 2pm
Feb 19 - President's Day; office closed
Feb 21 - St. John's Players auditions, 7pm
Feb 23-25 - Vestry Retreat
Feb 25 - CnC Field Trip
Mar 1-3 - Women's Retreat
Mar 10 - Genesis "Come & See" Event, 11:45am
April 1 - Easter Monday; office closed
May 10-12 - Parish Retreat

SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES

*Join us for worship
Sundays at 7:45 & 10am*

Feb 14 - Ash Wednesday, 6:30am & 7pm; labyrinth walk at noon
Feb 18 - The Bishop's Visit to St. John's
Mar 24 - Palm Sunday
Mar 27 - Remembrance Eucharist, noon
Mar 28 - Maundy Thursday, 7pm
Mar 29 - Good Friday, 7pm
Mar 30 - Easter Vigil, 7pm
Mar 31 - EASTER, 7:30, 9, & 11am
April 14 - Intergenerational Service
May 19 - Pentecost; iConfirm Service



the st. john's players

Nancy Lehrkind

The St. John's Players, an amateur all-ages theatre group, will aim to produce three productions per year (late April, late summer, mid-Autumn). Volunteers will be needed for actors, costumes, set design and construction, audio, lighting, graphics and advertising, photographer, running a light board, and props, no experience necessary.

This will be a fun activity for St. John's, with neighbors and friends welcome to join in. I have produced 22 plays over the past 12 years and thus have the experience to train others and launch this endeavor for St. John's. My preference would be to begin in late April with a production of "God of Carnage" by Yasmina Reza, a terrific comedy involving two couples meeting to resolve a playground dispute between their respective 11-year-old sons.

Auditions will be held at St. John's on February 21 at 7pm. If interested, please email Nancy Lehrkind: Lehrkind@grubbco.com.

get in the hearing loop

Susan Pierpoint

Hearing aids and cochlear implants cannot separate important speech sounds from background noise; nor can they pick up all sounds from a distance in church or a performance hall. Increasing the volume of your hearing aid or cochlear implant won't necessarily increase the clarity of what you hear. With those types of situations a Hearing Loop (HL) system can make a BIG difference!



A Hearing Loop system is a wire connected to an electronic sound source that transmits the sound to a telecoil (t-coil). The wire can be connected to any source that produces sound electronically. A hearing aid or cochlear implant equipped with a t-coil program is required to hear with a HL system since HL transmits the sound electromagnetically directly to the hearing aid. The electromagnetic signal is picked up by the t-coil in the hearing aid or cochlear implant. Most newer hearing aids switch automatically to a Hearing Loop when one is detected, but it's also easy to switch manually if there is a "t" (for telecoil) option on the hearing aid or cochlear implant.

For those hearing aids without a built-in telecoil, there might be an option to purchase an accessory from your hearing aid audiologist that will work with your brand of hearing aid and an HL system. Some public places equipped with an HL system also have separate headphone receivers that can be used with the system if your hearing aid is not t-coil compatible.

The HL system has been in existence for more than 50 years, though still not all that common in the United States. Fortunately, St. John's installed one several years ago. Google maps even notes where Hearing Loops can be found and St. John's is marked on Google maps as a designated HL site.

electing a new bishop

Carolyn George

The Lay and Ordained Delegates from St. John's joined over 300 other Delegates at Grace Cathedral on Saturday, December 2, 2023. Two days were reserved for voting.

Our current Bishop Marc Andrus began our day with a Vigil for the Election of the Bishops. It was truly wonderful to hear the liturgy and prayers read in English, Spanish, Tongan, Tagalog, Cantonese, and more by members of congregations from all over our diocese.

Three ballots were taken. Austin Rios was ahead in the first ballot, although Phil Brochard had a strong showing, and Augusta Anderson was in last place.

A second ballot was taken, but never counted because Anderson withdrew during the counting. The third ballot reached a strong consensus for Rios. None of the candidates were allowed to be inside the convention. After the elections, Bishop Elect Rios addressed us via Zoom from his home in Rome.

This was truly a wonderful event with strong fellowship and quick consensus. We look forward to our future with Bishop Austin Rios beginning July 24, 2024. The bishop-elect will be ordained and consecrated on Saturday, May 4, 2024, and will serve as bishop coadjutor with Bishop Marc Handley Andrus until July 2024, when Bishop Andrus will retire.

Almighty God, giver of every good gift, by your grace you have called us into one fellowship of faith: Look graciously on the people of the Diocese of California during this time of transition. May we be guided in heart and mind by your Holy Spirit to welcome a faithful pastor who will care for your people and equip us to perform the work of the Church. Grant us in doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do. In your light may we see light. Amen.

Bishop Marc Andrus will be our celebrant & preacher during the 10am service on Sunday, February 18





holding space

Lori Robinson

I talk a lot about how important it is to “hold space” for children and youth in faith communities. But what does that really mean? While I don’t have an official definition for the phrase, here’s what it means to me...

Holding space means showing up for children and youth wherever they are.

It means creating appropriate space for them in our adult spaces.

It means making sure they know they are loved and known within the community.

It means respecting their needs and adjusting our adult spaces to meet those needs.

Most churches want to believe that they do all those things. But while we want children and youth to feel welcomed and included, it can be hard to change our physical, emotional, and liturgical spaces to authentically include them. It’s much easier to send them off to their own separate spaces to do their own thing. And there’s value in children and youth having formative experiences with their peers. Yet it’s also a common practice for adults to separate themselves from children and youth for their own comfort. Or to include them in ways that are performative but not inclusive.

Here are some examples of ways faith communities often fail to honor children and youth:

- Excluding young children during a sermon.
- Expecting children and youth to sit in one place and quietly listen for the duration of worship.
- Liturgy and music that requires being able to read or that uses outdated language.
- Offering childcare instead of making space for children in worship or events.
- Seeing youth for what they can “do” rather than who they “are.”

The list goes on, but the point is that children and youth are often not seen as full members with all the same rights and benefits of adults within faith communities. Holding space is the opposite of that. Holding space means that in what we do and how we worship, we make sure that there are comfortable entry points for our younger members. That requires us to take seriously Jesus’ call to let the children/youth come to him. And it means being willing to get out of the way so they can move to the center.

Who sits at the center of a faith community says a lot about what that community values. I have a friend in Children’s Ministry whose dream is to let the children have the sanctuary on Sunday mornings and put the adults in the spaces usually allocated for children. Their point is that children and youth deserve to be at the center of a faith community, not on the margins.

As we enter the liturgical season of Lent, I invite us to think about how we can be more fully present for children and youth, those already at St. John’s and those in our local community. *How can we hold authentic space to honor who they are and what they need? How can we more fully center them, even if it dislocates us a bit? What can we do as a community of faith to allow children and youth to simply be who God has created them to be?*

a fun way to do business: the 2023 annual meeting

Laurie Bennett

St. John's Annual Meeting on January 21, 2024, combined a short service with a slightly longer business meeting, a 2023 year-in-review video, and a potluck lunch.

St. John's 2023 Annual Report can be found on St. John's website under Inform / News, or click [here](#). You can view the "Not To Be Missed" 2023 year-in-review video [here](#).

Special thanks go to the outgoing Vestry class of 2021 (Pat Harden, Julie Knell, Lara Pierpoint Weir, Kirby Marion) and the incoming Vestry class of 2024 (Steve Baronian, Nancy Lehrkind, Jen Howard Lukens, Linda Williams). The 2024 Deanery Delegates are Greg Slatoff, Lilah Greene, Alexandra Slatoff, David Mundy, and alternates are The Rev. Dr. Fran Toy and Ken Fuller. Steve Baronian is the new Senior Warden. The People's Warden will be elected at the February Vestry Retreat.

Michael Daly reviewed the 2023 finances which showed a tiny surplus. The 2024 budget is in process and should be ready for the February in-depth presentation to the parish. Lunch was a fabulous potluck with 25 dishes for parishioners to try. Rev. Scott ended the meeting with this important message: *St. John's is YOU. Thank you to all our volunteers, staff, and each one of YOU. You make this community of faith run.*



2024 parish retreat

May 10-12

at The Bishop's Ranch

Registration is open!





armchair travelers Ken Fuller

Many thanks to Fred Felder, Nancy Kho, and Judi Marr who presented their travels at gatherings in fall 2023, and to all who attended! We will continue the series in fall 2024 with another round of presentations by some of our St. John's travelers. We will meet one Wednesday per month from noon to 1pm. Attendees are welcome to bring a brown bag lunch to eat during a presentation of about 30 minutes plus time for questions.

Please take loads of photos when you travel this year!

shrove tuesday pancake supper

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 5:30-7:30pm

Let's celebrate together before the lenten season of prayer and fasting. All are welcome. In addition to eating delicious pancakes with Vermont maple syrup, there will also be an opportunity to decorate ALLELUIA banners which will be put away during Lent and brought out for worship on Easter. Donations will be accepted for World Central Kitchen.



lent gatherings

Tuesdays, Feb. 20 to Mar. 19, 5:30-7pm

Join us for a casual, family-style soup & bread supper and meaningful conversation. We will be learning about the work of Episcopal Relief & Development and engaging in questions from daily meditations written by Miguel Escobar. Though not required to enjoy these gatherings, you can sign up to receive these daily meditation in your inbox [here](#). Please stop by anytime between 5:30 and 7pm as your schedule allows. We hope this will be a time to take a breath, enjoy a meal, and connect with one another and Christ during this season of Lent. Children are welcome!

*Would you like to contribute soup and bread? Sign up [here](#).
Questions? Contact Kathleen: kathleen@stjohnsoakland.org.*



our new sr. warden

I am pleased to announce that **Stephen Baronian** is our new Senior Warden! Although Steve was just elected to the Vestry at the annual meeting, he is well prepared for stepping directly into this challenging role. Steve has served on staff and knows the inner workings of the office. He is also well-equipped to walk with us through a building project, having functioned as our project manager for our renovation effort following "the great flood" which impacted much of the first floor. Steve also brings tremendous pastoral skills to his leadership having recently graduated from an intense chaplaincy internship at UCSF where he now works as a chaplain one day a week. May we all express our gratitude to him for his deep desire to serve St. John's!

Scott+



2024 ST. JOHN'S WOMEN'S RETREAT

Practicing Presence

*Coming Together Attentively—
to One Another, to the Moment,
to the Spirit*

March 1–3, 2024

This year we will both examine and practice mindfulness—just as contemplatives have done over millenia—but especially as women. Marilyn McEntyre will lead us.

A former member of St. John's, Marilyn McEntyre is a professor and author of over 20 books, including *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* (2021), *Speaking Peace in a Climate of Conflict* (2020) and *Where the Eye Alights* (2021), a book of lenten readings. Her deepest interests lie in connections between spirituality, language, and healing the earth and each other. She gives retreats and workshops and teaches for Western Seminary, Westmont College, and New College Berkeley.

Find her website at marilynmcentyre.com.

REGISTER by Feb 15th

Scan the QR code or go to
<http://tinyurl.com/577334zn>



**Never been to a women's retreat?
We REALLY want you to join us.**

Full weekend and Saturday daytrip options
Partial scholarships are available; just ask!

Organizer: Sarah Jones: 510.682.5327 |
sarahcjones@sonic.net

The Bishop's Ranch | 5297 Westside Road
Healdsburg, CA 95448 | 707-433-2440

