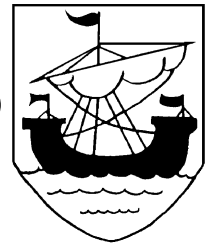


Canterbury Tales



The Newsletter of St. Anselm's Church, Lafayette, California

November, 2021

From The Rector

Retirement

I'm a bit of a nerd and one of the ways this plays out is in checking in each morning after a storm to see how much rainfall it brought us. I was happy to see the totals from the recent storms. We aren't even into winter yet and we have a third of our normal annual rainfall!

I also watch the reservoir data, and am looking at what the reservoirs looked like on October 16th before we got our first rain. Dismal numbers. The three largest reservoirs in Northern California were under 30% of total capacity, and the San Luis reservoir in Central California was down to 10% capacity.

Go ahead, say it: '*Father John, get a life!*' But I am looking forward to watching (hopefully!) those numbers climb this winter.

With retirement just a couple of weeks away, I feel like a high school senior. Remember that year? The one question that seemed to be constantly asked, '*Where will you (do you want to) go to college?*' Different question this time: '*What will you do in retirement?*' My answer is, "I don't know." I have a number of things I am considering, but in walking through this phase of life with members of my flock, I have learned a lesson from many of you: 'Wait until you are retired, then decide.'

Why is it that we need to fill our plates as soon as they are empty? One of my grandfather's favorite bromides was:

If its full, empty it.
If its empty, fill it.
And scratch where it itches.

Good worldly wisdom, but I don't think it is realm of God wisdom. It is easy to walk into Advent with a 'to do' list for Christmas and neglect the quiet which the season asks of us. It is not as easy with Lent, but we can still let our worldly cares and responsibilities leave us unaware when the redemptive power of the Passion is played out for us anew.

The holy can show us things. And we are most receptive to those nudges when we are quiet, when we are open, when we are unsure.

There is so much I will regret leaving behind. And I need some good advice about what should lay ahead for me.

I think I know where that comes from.

John+

Anselm's Angels

Continuing thanks to the special people who continue to keep in-person services safe and successful:

Chris Young for his tireless work as our cameraman and Zoom expert and spearheading the removal of the juniper bushes to improve fire safety on the property.

Sylvia Williams and the members of the **Altar Guild** for their work to make sure the sanctuary is clean and safe.

A big thank you to **Judy Peak** for juggling the schedules for our in-person LEMs and lectors on a weekly basis. Special thanks to the volunteers who serve in these ministries.

Joni Pearce for creating a SignUpGenius page to aid in enlisting coffee hosts — and a big thank you to the volunteers who have hosted.

Doug Merrill for serving as our weekly usher and ensuring that our contact tracing is accurate.

A huge thank you to **Eva Woo Slavitt** for all the shopping and volunteer coordination that made our return to hosting Winter Nights a tremendous success! Thank you to the many volunteers who helped: **Barbara Bevilacqua, Jeff & Connie Boero, Anne Brown, Naomi Chamberlain-Harris, Sharon Doi, Bob Eddy, Sally Fischer, Mara Elizabeth Flynn, Sheila & Norm Gorsuch, Pam Green, Dharmini Harichandran, Zoe Hekmaty, Laura Ho, Trevor Holoch, Michael Hollinger, Angela Lucas, Doug Merrill, Marian Mulkey, Vicki Pappas, John Powers, Sally Roberts, Greg Rodolari, Denise Slavitt, Howard Slavitt, Randy Smith, Ryan Smith, John & Liz Sutton, Cathy & Paul Witkay** and **Chris Young**. Special thanks to **Holly Higgins** and **Michael Lane Preschool** for their kindness and sharing the space with us.

"THANKS FOR GIVING" BRUNCH

This year the Stewardship, Harvest Festival and Winter Nights committees are holding a "Thanks for Giving" brunch to celebrate the success of these programs and to thank the generosity of our St Anselm's supportive community. The brunch will be held on November 21st after the 9:00 AM service at approximately 10:00 AM. Given the COVID dining restrictions and the possibility of rain, there will be a tented area provided for outdoor seating and spaced-out tables in Jackson Hall for overflow seating. We will be limited to no more than 100 people for the sit-down brunch. We will also provide a traditional coffee hour set up for any attendees in excess of the 100 brunch limitations.

Please sign up as soon as possible for either the brunch, while seating lasts, or for the coffee hour by emailing Sheila Wiegand at peekiewiegand@comcast.net. Let's celebrate all that we have accomplished this year!

VETERAN'S RECOGNITION SUNDAY

We will be honoring our veteran's on Sunday, November 14th. If you would like to be included please provide your name, rank, branch of service and when/where you served to Cathy in the office by Wednesday, November 10th. (If you've been previously listed you don't need to call in again).

2022 ALTAR FLOWERS

Thank you to all the generous folks who have filled in our 2021 flower chart and to the Altar Guild for providing beautiful flowers for our sanctuary! And now, the 2022 chart is available for sign-ups. By making a \$45 donation you can have these flowers dedicated to the memory of a loved one, in honor of a family member or simply to the glory of God. Please sign-up for your selected date(s) and complete a dedication card from the stack next to the chart. You may also contact Cathy Witkay at cathy.w@stanselms.ws with your selected date(s) and dedication.

THIS MONTH AT MICHAEL LANE PRESCHOOL

Fall is certainly in the air!

This month at Michael Lane Preschool we weighed, measured, painted, and decorated pumpkins, walked on stilts, learned many new Fall and Halloween themed songs, rode the bikes, bowled, dictated stories, painted colorful leaves for our classroom tree, and enjoyed local produce for our snacks (pomegranates, persimmon, apples, pluots!).

We feel extremely grateful for the indoor/outdoor set up of our preschool, allowing for flexibility on wet days, and lots of overhead coverage.

During this month of giving thanks, we want to thank St. Anselm's Parish for your support and wish you a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Fondly,
Holly Higgins, Director

IT'S TIME TO FALL BACK

Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 7th at 2:00 a.m. Remember to turn your clocks **BACK** one hour on Saturday evening.



COURTYARD COFFEE HOSTS

For those folks who have been attending in-person services, we have been holding coffee hour in the front courtyard. At this time, we are looking for volunteers to host coffee hour during the remaining Sundays in 2021 and the beginning of 2022. Thanks to Joni Pearce, we now have a SignUpGenius form to streamline hosting signups. If you are willing to help out, please go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044bada722a2f85-coffee> and select a date or dates that will work for you. Thank you!!!

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e-mail: cathy.w@stanselms.ws
web site: www.stanselms.us

Editor: Cathy S. Witkay

In-Person & Virtual Sunday Service:
9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

St. Anselm's Staff
The Rev. John Sutton, Rector
The Rev. Naomi Chamberlain-Harris, Deacon
Cathy Witkay, Office Manager

The Senior Warden

Interim Rector Search Status, Winter Nights and What's a Canon?

We've interviewed everyone that has applied for the interim rector position and are now in the process of debriefing with each other and determining which candidate to move forward with. The good news is that we are confident that we will have someone in place by the beginning of December. Many thanks to my interview teammates, Joan Martin and Alex McDonald. A lot of time was spent planning, preparing and doing the interviews. I truly appreciated their honest feedback and the dedication to the process.

Now it's time for straight talk. While we are nearing the finish line for an interim rector it's really important for each of us to remember that this is an "interim rector."

I googled this term and here is a pretty simple description:

"Interim rectors are responsible for carrying out the ministerial duties of the congregation, including preaching during worship services, visiting the sick, administering baptism and communion, conducting funerals and weddings and serving as a resource for church committees."

Know that an interim rector cannot become our permanent rector. This is a strict rule from the Diocese.

It's going to be an adjustment for all as we get an interim rector on board. Let's all be kind, patient and welcoming.

Update from last month on exploration of housing options in Lamorinda to support our new permanent rector. No other activities have taken place since I last reported on the feasibility study. Per the vestry meeting in October, all activities are on hold.

Winter Nights Report

We did it again! We housed 4 families in Jackson Hall for 2 weeks. Food, shelter, jokes and immense kindness was shared throughout the week. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped throughout the week and for the congregation for giving up Jackson Hall. You all made a difference for these families. Extra shout out to Anne Brown for quarter-backing from rehab facility!

Lastly. . . I want to let you know that I am being installed by the Bishop as the Canon for Marketing and Communications on November 4th during Evensong at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. I am honored to take on this role and even more honored to know that Fr. John will also be joining me in this ceremony officiated by the Bishop and Dean. All from St. Anselm's are invited to the 5:30 PM service. It will be live-streamed and also available on YouTube afterwards.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at eva94549@gmail.com or your Junior Warden, Joan Martin at jkm@jmartinfamily.com, with any questions or concerns.

Eva Woo Slavitt

Stephen Ministry

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (*Galatians 6:2, NRSV*)

Have you ever experienced a crisis in your life? I have! This summer I had a very difficult and shocking breach with a close relative that I feared would become an estrangement. I asked everyone I felt close to, including our St. Anselm's Prayer Chain to pray for me and my relative. I also sought the care of a Stephen Minister who listened and prayed with me. I felt held in love and care by the Stephen Minister, and as a Stephen Minister and Leader, myself, I was very aware that there were more than just me and the Stephen Minister present to create healing and comfort. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (*Matthew 18:20 KJV*) The crisis somehow ended, helped by prayer, the care of a Stephen Minister, and a gift to my relative of homemade Spanakopita. I am forever thankful.

St. Anselm's is fortunate to have a Stephen Ministry program that offers confidential, one-to-one Christian Caregiving to those who are suffering a crisis. Stephen Ministers receive 50 hours of training to learn how to listen to, care for, and walk with those going through difficult times in life. Please contact me, Deacon Naomi or Father John for more information.

Vicki Pappas
Stephen Ministry Leader

Stewardship 2022

This is the last *Canterbury Tales* before Father John retires on Sunday, November 28th after 23+ years of exemplary service to our St. Anselm's community.

I must admit that I was saddened when I first learned of his decision. The anxiety I felt was similar to 2016 when Kelsey, our youngest child, graduated from Carondelet High School and was preparing to travel 3,000 miles away to enroll at Florida Atlantic University. After dropping Kelsey off in Boca Raton, Cathy and I returned home as "empty-nesters" and we did not know how we would fill the void after having raised our kids over the prior 25 years.

I'm pleased to report that Cathy and I adjusted and found we really enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time traveling and doing things together again that didn't involve school, sports, dance or other kid activities.

Don't get me wrong – we will REALLY miss Father John. He did so many things with quiet grace, warmth and humor and we were blessed to have him with us. We all enjoyed his sermons (most of them, anyway ☺) that weaved his personal stories, real-world experiences and insights with biblical interpretations. He never let us forget that God was with us at all times and that he (or she) loves us completely.

However, just like how we all strive to raise our children to learn how to live independent lives, Father John's work at St. Anselm's is done. He has taught us that together we can not only support one another but our little church in Lafayette can make a difference in our local community and the world. I am so inspired by how our parish comes together to welcome our guests during Winter Nights, support the Trinity Center and other community initiatives. And, after George Floyd's death, the Sacred Ground program brought us together to learn more about America's collective history seen through the lens of different races and share our feelings through deeply personal conversations.

The coming year will be challenging as we come together to share our needs and wants to collectively determine who to invite to be our next rector. We can expect it to be uncomfortable at times. However, when COVID forced us to shelter-at-home, we learned that if we focus on what's most important, we can adapt to changes – even a global pandemic! We created new ways to safely celebrate Mass and continue to support others at St. Anselm's as well as those less fortunate in our community.

COVID also resulted in parishioners deciding to move out of the Bay Area to be closer to family or for other personal reasons. As a result, we've lost several significant contributors to our St. Anselm's operating budget. On behalf of our Stewardship Commission, I ask everyone to take a little more time this year to think about what we can do to make certain St. Anselm's has the financial support necessary to meet our needs. Our parishioners have always come through when needed and this is a year when we need everyone's support. Therefore, our 2022 campaign theme reaffirms that "***We are the Body of Christ.***"

Father John taught us that we could accomplish most anything if we work together and follow our hearts. Since its beginning 60+ years ago, St. Anselm's parishioners have contributed so much time, treasure and talent to create St. Anselm's — the amazing little church we are today!

To Father John:

Words cannot express our gratitude for all you've done for us over the past 23+ years and we wish you and Liz health and joy in the coming years as you explore the world beyond Lafayette. **WE WILL MISS YOU!**

Paul Witkay,
Chair, Stewardship Commission

Jubilee Farm Church – Creating connection to God, to each other, and to the land.

It's been over a year since I was appointed as the first Diocese of California Farm Church Missioner to the then-unnamed Jubilee Farm Church in Brentwood. Jubilee Farm is the Episcopal vision for mission and ministry in the Brentwood area in far east Contra Costa County. It is at the center of an inclusive housing project known as Bluebird Village, a mixed-income community featuring affordable rental housing and single-family homes with onsite services to offer regular community events, educational opportunities, and other gatherings that will nurture relationships across socioeconomic divides while fostering environmental stewardship, sustainability, and self-sufficiency. Jubilee Farm offers a non-traditional example of Church that isn't dependent on buildings, but gathers instead around common mission and ministry; a place where God is worshipped through connection to the land God created; where people can reconnect with God, with the land, and with their neighbors through worship, work, and play; where people care for creation by cultivating and nurturing the earth, feeding the hungry, and practicing environmental sustainability, all the while fostering relationships across income, race, educational attainment, religion - to God, to each other, and to the land, by caring for the land and the people God created.

In that year I have educated myself about sustainable farming practices such as permaculture and carbon sequestration, and explored environmental justice and food sovereignty. I am a priest not a farmer, but I brought to this project my local knowledge as a long-term Brentwood resident with deep roots in this community and in the Episcopal Church in far east Contra Costa County, and a passion for exploring new ways of experiencing and embodying church, to meet the needs of all people. And after all, this is Brentwood, the agricultural core of the Bay Area, how hard could it be? The land, which was formerly a walnut orchard, has lain fallow for about thirty years. The soil is well rested and fertile. As a local farmer commented when I consulted with him early in the process, you could simply throw some seed down and as long as it has water something will grow (which BTW, we did at the eco-confirmation held on the land back in April – we threw down poppy seeds which will hopefully germinate next spring – stay tuned!).

And therein lies the rub.... Seeds and plants need water to grow, and there is currently no water source on the land. Brentwood gets only ~13" of rain a year, and last winter it was barely half that amount. Sometimes I wonder at the wisdom of planting a farm in a drought. It seems irresponsible and counter intuitive. But people still have to eat, and sustainable agriculture practices such as permaculture, no-till farming, and carbon sequestration to which Jubilee Farm is committed, provide other environmental benefits, and hopefully will encourage others to do the same.

I'm not going to lie – it has been a steep learning curve. How does a priest-who-is-not-a-farmer plan and construct a farm on land with no water? How do you create community when you don't have a physical space? How do you balance the need to house people with the need to honor the integrity of God's creation?

You walk the land and pray and ask God to open your heart and mind to God's will for the land and inspire your ministry. You find out who the people with experience are and you ask them to advise you. You discover the people who are as enthusiastic and passionate as you about this type of ministry and you get them involved. And you develop an online presence.

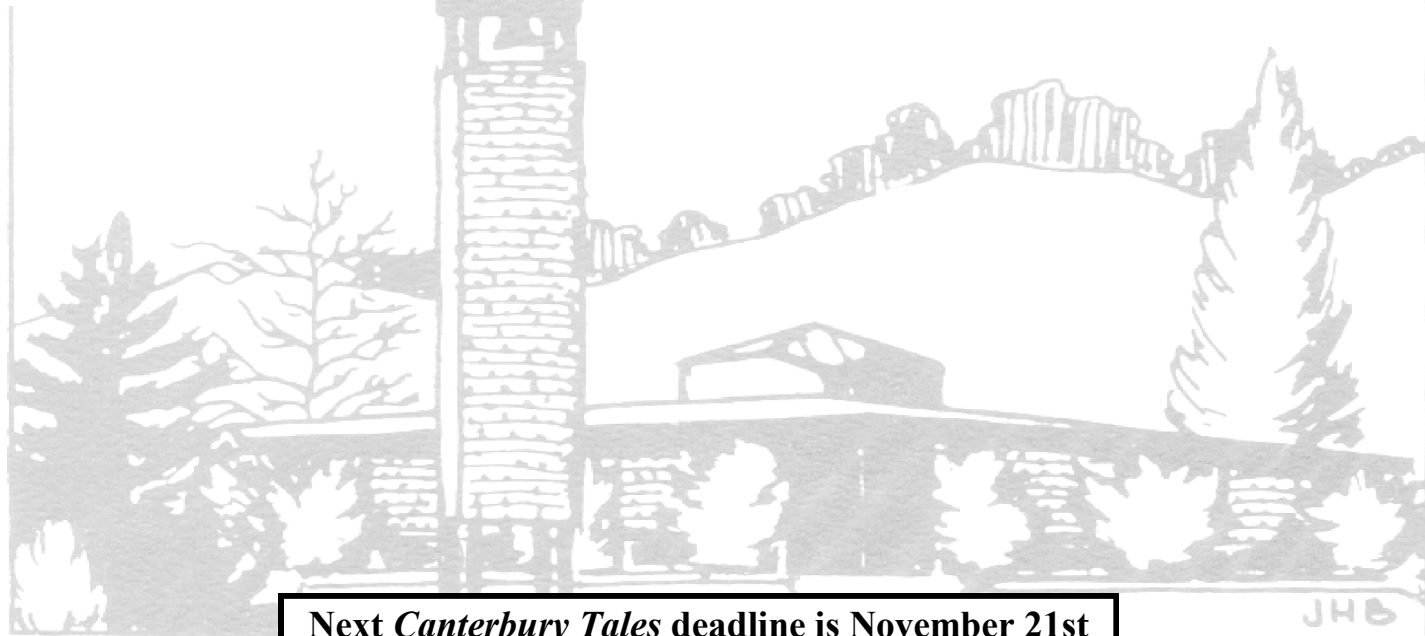
Initially I worked with a Circle of Advisors – Episcopalians around the country who had done this sort of thing before, and they provided invaluable guidance and support – what things to consider, who to contact, where there might be resources and expertise to mine. More recently I formed a planning and development team (PDT) – local Episcopalians with related interests and knowledge. We consulted the Contra Costa Master Gardeners and found out how they started their demonstration gardens in similar circumstances. We are writing a business plan, creating a timeline of tasks, and attaching a dollar amount to each to create a budget. We are exploring possible collaboration with local organizations and educational institutions, and researching grants and other sources of funding. And... we are getting ready to throw some seed on the ground!

This fall we plan to gather as much free horse manure as we can and spread it on the ground, and then sow a cover crop taking advantage of whatever winter rain this season provides to augment the soil and provide much needed nutrients, to enrich the soil for the day when we will plant fruits and vegetables.

If you want to get involved or simply have questions, check out our website at <https://www.jubileefarmchurch.org/>, email me at brentwoodfarmchurch@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/jubileefarmchurch> or follow us on Twitter https://twitter.com/jubilee_farm and Instagram [@rev_farmerjane](https://www.instagram.com/rev_farmerjane).

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Jane Stratford
Diocesan Missioner to Jubilee Farm Church

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Next *Canterbury Tales* deadline is November 21st

SCHEDULE OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

November 2nd and each Tuesday in November — Morning Prayer will be held via Zoom at 9:00 AM. To be invited, email Deacon Naomi at orchidsnrch@yahoo.com.

November 2nd — Grief Support Group will meet via Zoom at 12:00 noon. To be invited, email Deacon Naomi at orchidsnrch@yahoo.com.

November 3rd — Michael Lane Preschool Board will meet via Zoom at 1:30 PM. Board members will receive an email from Father John with the meeting link.

November 3rd and each Wednesday in November — Evening Bible Study will meet via Zoom at 7:00. To be invited, email Cathy Witkay at cathy.w@stanselms.ws.

November 4th — Installation of Eva Woo Slavitt as the Canon for Marketing and Communications at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco during Evensong, 5:30 PM.

November 6th — Work Party will be held at St. Anselm's from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon. Lunch will be provided.

November 7th — Cancer Support Group will meet via Zoom at 1:00 PM. To be invited, email Julie Rinkenberger at jrjpmaggie@hotmail.com.

November 18th — Vestry will meet via Zoom at 7:00 PM. Vestry members will receive an email from Father John with the meeting link.