SERVING, HEALING AND LOVING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD

ST. MARY’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2022
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Call to Order

Declaration of Quorum
According to the By-Laws of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, sixty percent of members present in person shall constitute a quorum.

Appointment of Clerk

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of January 2021

Amendment to Section 4.3 of St. Mary’s Bylaws

Nominations of Vestry Candidates

Nomination of Diocesan Convention Delegation 2021

Reports
Reflection on Ministry during the Covid Pandemic 2021
(Please see written reports later in this Annual Report)

Thanksgiving to Outgoing Vestry members

Adjourn
Sunday, January 23, 2022

Phil Boroughs, SJ defines Spirituality within the Christian context, as “the experience and the expression of the revelation of God in the Spirit of Jesus, to which the believer lovingly responds in prayer and service as an individual, as a participant in a faith community and as a member of the human family within creation.”

Paul offers encouraging words in his Epistle to the Philippians chapter four verse three, “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

Spirituality and scripture rooted in prayer, joy and faith is what will sustain our community and help us grow. I trust and believe we truly have a unique Gospel to proclaim. A Gospel of love, acceptance, forgiveness, and joy in Jesus. What a journey we have taken thus far dear friends. I remember how with enthusiasm and energy and our 2020 annual meeting we had so much to look forward to in 2020 and then we were struck and continue to be in a pandemic. We continued faithfully remotely.

I’m excited that we were able to come back to worship in person this past September 2021 and we continue to worship safely in person and online through these times of uncertainty. This has indeed been a very challenging time and how wonderful that we can endure this together through prayer, through the divine supper the holy Eucharist, and in community.

I am excited to start off 2022 with the renewed sense of purpose, vision as we allow the Holy Spirit to breathe life into our Strategic Plan and becoming in living out the gospel in Laguna Beach and Orange County. I look forward to continuing to worship together in the name of Jesus and showing what it means to be the human family. We live in profoundly divided times in spaces where everyone is looking for a sense of identity. My identity is rooted in the life and love of Jesus. It is with this renewed energy despite health concerns in my own life, despite grief and loss of loved ones, mentors, I believe Jesus continues to call me, to call you and to call us to bear witness to the gospel, the good news of life held in the spirit of God our divine creator.

Wherever you find yourself in your journey of life know that you and anyone you know can always find a word of hope, compassion, and love at Saint Mary’s in Laguna Beach dear friend. I see a renewed joy even amid uncertainty. I give thanks that God allows me to serve you in the
name of Christ. I am struck by the desert mothers, the forgotten desert mothers like Saint Mary of Egypt, St. Mary Magdalene, St Pelagia, and St. Eudocia Sama who have profound wonderful sayings that encourage me and encourage us. The gift of some of their sayings and the gift of Saint Mary’s in Laguna Beach in this time is the gift of living hope. What I believe the world needs now is prophetic living hope. The forgotten desert mothers, the amas teach us I believe to take charge of our own lives and not to be defined by expectations. In Christ we have the freedom to risk all to follow the lead of the spirit in preaching and living the good news we are free to step away from our own trappings that might keep us trapped to our faults and false self. The ammas model for me and for you, possible ways out of this trap and into a path of freedom this helps us examine, our tendencies toward negative self-talk and self-limitation. The ammas model for us a way to engage the concerns and pain of our neighborhood, our county, our country, and our world. Christianity is still wracked with racism, anti-Semitism, poverty, greed, misuse of power and the marginalization of people. Yet there is a yearning I believe for reconciliation, for a way to be found for Christianity to become fully one in Christ. This prophetic transformation begins with our own interior transformation and then we live out of that integrity. This is how we grow as people, and as community. How do we let our spirituality influence our choices? How do we receive people of other faiths, different cultures and races as Christ? How do we let people who are different from ourselves influence inform and teach us? I believe that is the gift of Saint Mary’s, Laguna Beach. That is the gift of Jesus.

I look forward this 2022 to continue to grow all our ministries with you. I especially welcome Ryan Martin as our new Office Administrator. I give thanks that we continue to have on average 12-16 people tune in online services. I look forward to growing with you our Lay Eucharistic Ministry Training, Lenten Christian education during the week, Sunday morning Christian Education, inviting compelling speakers into our church, hosting concerts, and nurturing our ministries with love. We will keep exploring Bible Study scripture that affirms the importance of recognizing and seeing my neighbor. Thank you for your presence. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your talents. Thank you for sharing of your treasure, of your money of your abundance and of your very self. I am truly blessed to journey with you, your loved ones, your family, and it is a privilege to be called your rector. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Your servant in Christ, Lester+
Greetings, people of St. Mary’s,
It was an amazing transformative journey we at St. Mary’s travelled this year. We started out at the beginning of the year still in full pandemic lockdown, continuing many months of closure from throughout the prior year of 2020. No in-person anything. We honed our Zoom and Facebook skills and peeked at each other on a phone or computer screen. Then vaccinations came. We thought we would soon see the end of this. It changed but did not go away. At some point we were allowed to hold modified in-person Sunday services – with pews stripped of every possible thing one might hold or touch, like a prayer book or a hymnal, and roped off with yellow “police tape” to ensure we didn’t inadvertently interact with one another. No singing, as it is the worst spreader of the airborne virus. We took people’s temperatures before they could enter the church and enforced wearing of masks. This is not the church we were used to, but it was something.

We had a Vestry, but we didn’t have a Senior Warden until about June. It is a requirement and the position needed to be filled, and I was asked. In prior times, the Vestry would start the year with a retreat, to get to know one another and focus on the tasks ahead. The Sr. Warden and the Rector would meet regularly, each week throughout the year to discussed goals and priorities and what needed to be done. None of that came to pass at this time. In July Fr. Mack went on vacation in Hawaii with his family. I had no idea what was expected during his absence. Then two things happened. The first was when Fr. Mack returned in August; he was very ill. Seriously, in-the-hospital, life-threateningly ill, for potentially a long time. It was brought to my attention, according to our bylaws, that in the absence of the rector, the Sr. Warden is in charge. That was a wake up call, if any could be!! And the second thing was that we had gotten the word that we could reopen to two in-person services in September, real services, with prayer books and hymnals, and sans the “police tape.” We were really happy about that, but presently we were without a rector, or a “Plan B.” We had to figure out how to make it happen. It takes a lot of people and a lot of planning to put on a service, especially when we hadn’t done one in awhile. In addition we had to let everybody know, and get the people to come.
SENIOR WARDEN’S REPORT (CONTINUED)

In August 2021, within a few short weeks, many things came to pass. If the Sr. Warden was in charge, the Sr. Warden needed to know what to do. To start, I called a Meeting of the Wardens, Pat August, Warden of Buildings and Grounds, also head of the Alter Guild, and knowledgeable of everything that goes on here, and Barbara Van Gaasbeek, Warden of Programs, better known as the head of the Outreach program, and instrumental in handling our Covid response and ensuring our safety in that regard, instigator of the “Sock Swap” (more about that later). They were able to provide me with a quick course in “Sr. Warden-ing 101,” what it takes to run a church, who did what, and most importantly, to name names of the many individuals at St. Mary’s who were doing the necessary tasks to keep the church running.

Lockdown or not, day after day, week after week, there are a host of individuals who do this work here at St. Mary’s, none of them are paid, they are all volunteers; they know what needs to be and they do it without waiting to be told; they do not seek recognition; they make us who we are. I asked Barbara to make a list of all these people and these tasks. It turned out to be a list of two pages, single spaced. It is impressive! Among other things, even during the lock down we continued to feed the homeless. We had a successful food drive for The Pantry, and we were preparing to send donations to Haiti. The ECW put on summer concerts open to the public outside on our terrace, providing not only good music, but an opportunity for safe social interaction at a time when that was so needed and nearly non-existent, and raised money for local charities. A sleepy little beach church we are not!

As a result of the Warden’s meeting, we identified areas of weakness and strength, and began forming plan to move forward. A Vestry meeting was scheduled for August 22, 2021. At that meeting, Barbara reported that we needed additional people to take responsibility for leadership in the areas of education hospitality, Supper Clubs, and newcomers. Mark Clymer was already ahead of the game in ordering a new banner advertising the two services.

Treasurer Dick Swintek reported that the annual audit with the Diocese had been completed, pledge letters sent to members, and financial statements through July 31, 2021, were provided. Dick had completed the application to convert our government paycheck protection loan to a grant and approval was expected, and negotiations were in progress to reduce our mortgage loan rate. We agreed to move forward with our search for an administrative assistant, an effort that would be headed by Valerie Casey. Mike Metzler gave us an overview of our Strategic Plan, which had been developed in 2019, but implementation of which had been deferred due to the pandemic. It was time to move forward with it. We agreed to hold a marathon meeting with all the Vestry and other interested persons on the following Saturday, August 28, 2021, to begin the process of implementation of the Strategic Plan. And we discussed plans for our reopening and return to two Sunday services. In true St. Mary’s fashion, we decided that the best way to do that was to make it a party, a celebration, to personally invite everyone, to play games and serve food. Barbara Van Gaasbeek would be in charge.

The marathon meeting for the Strategic Plan on August 28, 2021, was truly amazing. On very short notice we had 100% participation of every Vestry member, plus several others. These are truly committed people. Mike Metzler, a true professional, led us through the steps. We were divided into three task forces, each responsible for certain of the goals and objectives of our
strategic plan. Each task force identified its “Champion” (leader), and we began this important work. The success of the break out sessions was a testament to the commitment of all the Vestry members and the fact that they came to this session with thoughts and concerns that they were ready to articulate. We agreed to reconvene on Saturday, September 25, 2021, and that the various tasks forces would meet in the interim to define their priorities. After the meeting on September 25, the task forces which were now fully engaged in their work continued to meet periodically as needed through the next three months. The results were compiled into a report which was presented at the Vestry meeting, December 19, 2021. The report of 26 pages reviews every goal and objective of the Strategic Plan, according to the S.M.A.R.T. format (Specific goal, Measurement, Achievable, Result desired, and Time frame). It is a monumental work and all those who participated are to be commended. It is available for any to review.

But for all its detail, the underlying goal of the Strategic Plan is to support and fulfill our mission which is to “be open to God’s love and guidance and to embrace all in the name of Jesus Christ. St. Mary’s Vision is to be an inclusive community called to Serve, Heal and Love in the Light of God.” We do that well. We are a wonderful, inspired place. We will do it better if we increase our membership. Per the Strategic Plan our goal over five years is to increase membership by 120 persons. We wish to reach all demographics, but particularly want to increase young people and families. It is by increasing our membership that we will reach farther and be able to provide the important programs and offering that will make us a viable spiritual home to many.

The work on the Strategic Plan is not done, however. Mike Metzler assures us it will be easy, and I trust him because he knows what he is doing, and he has done it many times before. But I will not rest until I see names associated with the various tasks, and we have a system of follow-up and accountability in place. In reading through prior Annual Meeting reports in and reading of other plans and promises that were made that did not come to fruition, I am reminded that desire and good intentions do not achieve the goal. The work has been done to develop the plan, and the next step is to fill the positions. That will begin immediately. I would encourage all those who attend St. Mary’s, by that I do not refer just to those who attend on Sundays, but I include all those who participate in any way, to find a place where you can participate. I do believe in St. Mary’s as a place that is not one of obligation, but one of opportunity, as in “We get to do this.” Anything we do for St. Mary’s connects us more closely to our community, and to our own spirituality. We are rewarded far beyond what we give.

The reopening celebration of September 12, 2021, is one for the history books. It may be remembered affectionately as Barbara’s “Silly Sock Swap.” Yes, there is a story there. We exceeded our estimates of attendance. It is a testament to St. Mary’s people’s penchant to show up for a party. We made a concerted effort to call every single person on our membership list to let them know. This was a challenge because as a result of having had no permanent employee in the church office for a number of years, we found our member list in disarray, sorely out of date, and contained in several different locations. Carrie Joyce who had stepped into the office
SENIOR WARDEN’S REPORT (CONTINUED)

administrator position for us, tireless volunteer that she is, spent many hours updating and consolidating the member list. We called them and they came.

We ended the year with the “Festival of Lights.” This was a marvelous party, hosted by the ECW for the whole St. Mary’s community. ECW reminds us to let our light shine. It started among a myriad of lights with caroling and hot cider on the lower terrace at sunset, including with Fr. Mack on drums, after which we all had dinner together in the Guild Hall, and were entertained by the Laguna Beach Chamber Singers, who thanked us for providing them with rehearsal space.

Perhaps the most important achievement of the year, many will say, was in hiring an office administrator. Not just any office administrator, but a really good one. The discussions in the past had minimized the position, insisting that it be part time, and on other limitations to minimize the expense. This time we went a different way. We wanted to find the best person for the job. We defined the position and advertised far and wide. I was aware of at least 60 applicants for the position, but that was after many more had already been eliminated. Valerie Casey headed the search, and working with Pat August, Barbara Van Gaasbeek, Dick Swintek, Carrie Joyce and myself, invited a number of applicants for interviews. The process was very measured, thoughtful, and thorough. It took two months. In November we welcomed Ryan Martin as our office administrator. He is everything we looked for and more. We could not be more pleased.

In sum, for St. Mary’s, 2021 was more than just re-emerging from the pandemic. The effects of the pandemic were limiting and isolating. But in our estimation, it was not all bad. In a sense we found it was a period of rejuvenation – as if from the dormancy of winter. Such periods of in-turning and introspection are often necessary for renewal, where the depths of the isolation and introspection make the re-emergence all the more welcome and glorious. And so it was for St. Mary’s. We have come through this time knowing ourselves better and knowing what is important. It is not ordinary. It is something to be celebrated. We are back. We reconnected with our identity, who we are, what our purpose is. We speak of the DNA that defines us, of the connection with humanity that brings us together, that does not judge. There was a consensus that much of this had been on “hold” since long before the pandemic, and it was time to retake our place in our community. We count ourselves very fortunate to have Fr. Lester MacKenzie as our rector. We are ever grateful that he made a complete recovery and continues to inspire and guide us. He and I completed the year without ever having a meeting together. That may be a record of sorts, although I don’t recommend it. I do appreciate the confidence he placed in me to allow me to lead. As the new Vestry takes its place, we look forward to partnering with Fr. Mack to advance the objectives of St. Mary’s in this coming year.

It has been a pleasure and an honor,

Joslyn Aitken
Sr. Warden
JUNIOR WARDEN’S 2021
BUILDING/GROUNDS REPORT

A number of things were accomplished this year in spite of the pandemic:

- The wood fence by the left side of the Guild Hall was demolished, replaced and repainted.
- The fan at the rear of the Guild Hall was moved to the middle to facilitate air movement during the summer months.
- A leak on the roof of the north side of the church was repaired and gutters cleaned out.
- Additional lighting was placed, in two phases, in the upper terrace of the Guild Hall to facilitate the safety of people using it and to encourage various uses such as weddings and music programs.
- Estimates were received for the painting of the exterior of the Guild Hall and surrounding walls as well as the dormers, large stained glass window in the narthex and doors of the church. Upon investigation, it was found that all 10 dormers were damaged due to termites and water intrusion and would need to be replaced. The contract for both painting and replacement was let out as approved by the Vestry and a local stained glass expert called in to work with the painters and carpenters. While power washing the wall in the upper terrace in preparation for painting, the existing stucco peeled off revealing the almost 100 year old wall that had been built with no reinforcement. A contract was let to add reinforcement to strengthen it, re-concrete and spackle the wall. This project is completed while the stained glass dormers and painting are a project that will continue into 2021.
- The congregation was asked to help with some exterior painting projects such as the wrought iron handrails and gate in the upper and lower garden, benches in the lower terrace, memorial bench in the front of the church. William Maniaci has painted the 2 benches by the Guild Hall and will paint the memorial bench. Barbara and Jim Van Gaasbeek will work on the wrought iron gate and handrails. A big thank you goes out to Shanna George for repainting the St. Mary’s sign at the front of the church and to these volunteers.
- A committee for the Safe Reopening of the Church was formed consisting of Carrie Joyce, Barbara Van Gaasbeek, Juliana Vandenber, Tyler Kerr, Fr. Mack and myself. The committee studied the CDC recommendations carefully then marked off the church and Guild Hall for safe seating. Training for ushers was set up as were sanitizing supplies for attendees and maintenance staff. My sincere thanks to this group for all their efforts.

Pat August, Jr. Warden
ALTAR GUILD REPORT

The pandemic continues unfortunately but this year we have been able to have church, masks, temperature checks and attendance lists helping to keep those of us who choose able to attend in person. Every effort has been taken to keep the congregation safe and healthy.

Heartfelt thanks to parishioners who donate flowers during the year and especially for Easter and Christmas. Flowers help us all celebrate special people in our lives and at Easter and Christmas to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection and birth. A special thank you to Claudia Mellins, Linda Bratcher and Carrie Joyce. These ladies have continued to pick up the flowers for the church saving the church the delivery fee and allowing the donated money to go farther in the budget.

The ministry of the Altar Guild is a quiet one and a special one. Every service during the year is set up by one of the members and every one cleaned up by one of the members. If you are interested in this ministry please speak to Fr. Lester or to me. The current members of Altar Guild are: Pat August, Claudia Mellins, Carrie Joyce, Helen Meyer, Linda Bratcher, Carol White, and Mark Clymer.

We are hoping that 2022 continues to provide a safe place at church with vaccinations, boosters and safe practices so we can continue to have church services and our community together.

Pat August, Altar Guild Directress
Since taking on this responsibility, and since I live in Irvine, I spent some time starting to get to know the Laguna Beach community better through reading Stu News and the Indy.

Community engagement was hard to do since the pandemic was still flourishing and various mandates from the State did not clarify matters!

Once it was safe to do so, St Mary’s held a very lively Reopening Party in the Parish Hall in September. Joslyn Aitken, Leslie Derrick and I organized the party and we had a boisterous full house of about 65 people who enjoyed being together again, and enjoyed being able to finally attend in-person worship.

Heading up Outreach dovetailed nicely this year with my Junior Warden responsibilities, since we carried out a six month food drive to benefit the local Food Pantry, and in Advent we were able to deliver 70 items of clothing for teens at the local Waymakers Teen Shelter.

I have spent much time reviewing existing programs, noting where we did not have programs in place that we should have, what worked and what did not, and making suggestions for where we might improve matters, along with my co-members of the Task Force charged with examining St Mary’s programs within the Strategic Plan. We also have a list of some new programs that we hope to see carried out in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara van Gaasbeek
Junior Warden, Community Engagement and Events
The ECW is a historic branch of the national Episcopal Church of which all women are invited to join. The ECW provides leadership and support through ministry, programs that feed, educate, serve the community, offer fellowship, and promote women. The vision of ECW for all women of the Episcopal Church is that we become a vibrant blend of all ages, come together as a peacemaking, and healing part of the Church. We aspire to be a Godspark, shining and sharing the love of Christ. ECW works in affiliation with United Thank Offering each year at St. Mary’s.

St. Mary’s ECW meets the second Tuesday of each month beginning at 6:00 pm. When possible we meet in members’ homes, when deemed best for all we Zoom or meet on the historic Upper Church Patio. Our meetings include a potluck meal, hospitality, fellowship, business as necessary, supportive relationship, and prayer. Dues are $15.00 a year to assist with budgeted costs. MemberPlanet hosts our ECW website and is used for information sharing, sign-up and invitations.

The majority of funds earned by the ECW comes directly from events proposed by the Fundraising Committee at the beginning of each year. The outside, socially distanced Summer Concert and Event Series was born in 2020 in response to pandemic restrictions of our traditional activities. The results went far beyond fundraising in bring camaraderie, unity, joy, support, fellowship and, importantly, recognition of St. Mary’s as a leader in times of need. It was reprised in 2021. The Summer Concert and Events Series II lead our 2021 funding for ECW Outreach, again with great success. In total, six events were hosted outside and socially distanced, on the St. Mary’s Terrace in the Ruins. A final fundraising event closed the year on December 11th. Festival of Lights began amid a host of festive holiday lights Carol singing on the Lower Patio and then processed into the Guild Hall for a served dinner, serenading by the Laguna Beach Chamber Singers, and Silent Auction. All events are open to the parish, as well as the community, as we strive to embrace the belief, “the Church is a family expecting company!”

Each year the proceeds earned in Fundraising support the work of Outreach. An extensive effort is undertaken, following a discerning process the Outreach Committee, to review each potential non-profit brought to our attention. Following a review of their finances, organization preservation, and social impact, 5-7 non-profits are introduced to the membership.
for approval and funding. Funding is then sent to those recipients approved with the expectation of creating a relationship going forward.

Recipients for 2020-2021 Outreach included the following:

- Sally’s Fund
- St. Mary’s Rhodes Cottage Reimagining
- Laguna Beach Community Clinic (possibly matched funds)
- St. Michael’s Church, Riverside, Food for Feeding Ministry
- Laguna Beach Community Foundation, COVID 19 Relief Fund (matched by city funds)
- Blue Bell Foundation for Cats-Educational programs
- Pacific Marine Mammal Center- Educational program

In closing, I wish to thank all those who supported the ECW, and their events, through attending, underwriting, donations shared, local business support, services as provided, creative efforts to organize and advertise these events, and the necessary set-up and take down of chairs and tables making this year so very successful. Special appreciation goes to Gary Shapiro, George Zoumer, Dr. Julia Lupton, UCI Shakespeare Center, Jason Feddy, Fr. Lester Mackenzie, Kayla K. and the Black Orchid trio, and Tommy Benson. The sharing of their many gifts and talents made our Event Series so highly successful.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Bratcher
ECW President
2021
Waymakers Teen Shelter and Native American Heritage Association, Lent 2021

St Mary’s supported two very worthwhile causes this Lent, raising a total of $1,300.00, despite the limitations imposed on us all by the pandemic. This amount was split equally between these two non-profits, with a check for $650.00 each given to The Teen Shelter and the Native American Heritage Association (NAHA). The Teen Shelter provides short term crisis intervention for children aged 12 to 17, and can house a maximum of 6 teens. Like other non-profits, the Shelter experienced a shortfall in donations due to the pandemic.

The NAHA fights for the poverty-stricken on the reservation in South Dakota, raising funds to provide fuel, food and a means to improve their dilapidated housing, where brutal weather makes it very difficult to even survive. The need here is truly desperate.

Laguna Pantry Food Drive, June through November, 2021

Starting in June, parishioners faithfully brought their offerings of food to church every Sunday for six months. We were able to take to the Food Pantry a wonderful total of 902 pounds of beans, tuna, peanut butter and jelly, cereal, rice, pasta and pasta sauce, and mac ’n cheese. These are the staple foods most in demand at the pantry, which has seen a huge increase in the number of hungry families they serve, again due to fallout from the pandemic.

Comfort for Christmas Clothing Drive for the Teen Shelter, Advent 2021

Waymakers Teen Shelter always has need of warm and comforting clothing such as beanies, pajamas, socks, slippers and plush throws. Teens in crisis often arrive at the shelter with only the clothes on their backs, and nothing to sleep in. St Mary’s again gave so generously and we delivered over 70 items to the Shelter just in time for Christmas.

With deepest gratitude to all who so generously and faithfully contributed to these causes. It is truly appreciated. Thank you, St Mary’s, for caring so much for those in need!

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara van Gaasbeek and St Mary’s Outreach Committee
Men’s Bible Study

Men’s Bible Study has continued in 2021, during the pandemic as it has for ever eleven years, providing fellowship and growth in the understanding of God’s word. The group meets in the church parish office on Thursdays at 8:00 am. This is a very cohesive group with a goal to study scripture and to allow the Holy Spirit to teach them what it means for them today. The group opens and closes in prayer. They do not have a strict format, they read scripture and then pause for reflection.

Thursdays at 8:00am, Parish Office Library

ECW – Episcopal Church Women

Meets the second Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at a member’s home. Yearly money is raised through bake sales, Christmas bazars, and other activities. This section was reported by Linda Bratcher (beginning on page 8)

Taizé Mindfulness Meditation Services

“Contemplation is nothing more than one’s whole person being seized by the reality of God’s Love.” – Roger of Taize

Our Taize worship involves sung and chanted prayer, meditation, a period of silence, liturgical readings and the use of candles. We are led by beautiful instrumental and guitar musicians, Shauna McFadden. For more information, contact Nancy Sellas.

First Thursdays, 7:00 pm, Church
ANNUAL REPORT IN-REACH (CONTINUED)

Healing Service and Prayer

“Jesus says, ‘Come to me all you are troubled and I will give you rest.’ So come. You who are burdened by regrets and anxieties, you who are broken in body or in spirit, you who are torn by relationships and doubt, you who feel deeply within yourselves the divisions and injustices of the world. Come, for Jesus invites us to bring him our brokenness.”

We gather in community each Tuesday for a prayer service, Gospel reading, and check-in. For more information, contact Nancy Sellas.

Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m., currently meets online (Conference Call Format)

Rector’s Daily Noon Prayer

Log online Monday – Thursday at 12pm NOON for a short prayer from Fr. Lester and grow in your faith.

Mondays – Thursdays at 12:00 p.m. through Zoon

Altar Servers, Chalice, and Readers

The schedule of servers and readers is posted in the Narthex and on the Church Website. For more information if you would like to serve or read, contact Claudia Mellin.

Rector’s Bible Study

Join Fr. Lester every Wednesday at 11:00 am to 12:00 p.m. online through Zoom and dive deeper into Scripture. The group that meets is cohesive and the format of the weekly Bible Study is laid back – allowing time to read God’s Word, discuss how the Word can be applied to today.

Wednesdays at 11:00 am, online through Zoom
2021 MUSIC REPORT

2020 was another year of spiritual and musical growth on many levels for St. Mary’s Choir. We were sad to say good-bye to Jane Riedel as she moved to a church closer to her home. We missed intensely singing together for a year, and when we finally were able to come together again in the spring, we “didn’t miss a beat!” We appreciate all the more being together and singing some of the most beautiful sacred music ever written under the guidance of our remarkably gifted, loving and dedicated musical director Bob Gunn.

We have grown over the years to become a truly remarkable choral ensemble. We are very grateful for the dedication and service of:

Sopranos: Joslyn Aiken, Carrie Joyce, Shauna McFadden, and Tina Tipps
Altos: Shanna George, Pat Kollenda, Carol White, and Karen Zfaty
Tenors: Tom Davis, Kathy Hanke, and Rebecca Lyles
Basses: Bob Gunn, Ed Hanke and new member Kellen Ford (Welcome, Kellen!)

We welcome to our choir family all who would come to help us lead worship. There are many reasons we are drawn to sing in St. Mary’s Choir, including:

1. The opportunity to accomplish something together that none of us can do alone: to sing together - in harmony – to the glory of God.
2. The opportunity to serve God and to serve our parish family.
3. The opportunity to prepare for and glimpse heaven’s choir singing along with us.
4. The opportunity to read, hear, sing and meditate on words of truth, love, peace, joy and hope. In rehearsal, as we hone each passage, the repetition moves those words into the deepest parts of our souls – and they reside there in us throughout our lives, reminding us of God’s unfailing love.
5. The opportunity to experience and participate in the art of beautiful poetry, melody and harmony.
6. The opportunity to exercise our intellects – singing uses both sides of the brain simultaneously.
7. The opportunity to be part of a close family within the parish family. Working and worshiping together each week draws us close – we have become, over the years, the closest of friends. We share each others’ joys and bear each others’ burdens.
8. The opportunity to leave the stresses of life behind by such focus that everything else fades away, and, then, to return - calm and energized.

Our choir is privileged to do all of these things under the direction of our very gifted, dedicated, loving and funny Musical Director, Bob Gunn. Bob elicits excellence in the gentlest, most humorous ways. He makes us sing better than we really can! His beautiful piano accompaniments during communion and other moments in the service lead us into intimacy.
MUSIC REPORT (CONTINUED)

with God. As every choir member would tell you, we are extraordinarily blessed to be able to make music and serve our parish under his direction.

As we prepare for the music of Sunday mornings – hymns, responses, psalms, offertories, and communion – and as we prepare for special seasons and feasts – Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, we sing with joy and gratitude and we look forward to moving into this new year singing God’s praises! Please consider joining us!

Karen Zfaty
Choir President

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The following activities were accomplished by the Communications Committee in 2021:

1. New On-line Services and general information banner for the front patio

2. Major enhancement to the St. Mary’s YouTube channel by uploading Facebook Live service videos beginning with Day of Pentecost, May 31, 2020. Established playlists according to the liturgical calendar and uploaded all new service videos weekly.
3. Provided a press release including photographs to Stu News and the Laguna Beach Independent, which was published, announcing ECW’s Outreach campaign of donations to local non-profit organizations.
4. Paid Advertising (1/4 page) in the Laguna Beach Independent for on-line Holy Week Services dates and times.
5. Provided a press release including photographs to Stu News and the Laguna Beach Independent, which was published, announcing ECW’s donations to Working Wardrobes.
6. Paid Advertising (1/4 page) in the Laguna Beach City Guide to be published mid-June. The Guide is distributed to restaurants, retail stores, hotels, and other locations.

7. Documentation of instructions for the broadcasting of Facebook Live services.
8. Provided a press release to Stu News and the Laguna Beach Independent, which was published, announcing the Indigenous Peoples Celebration to be held on Oct. 24, 2021.
9. Provided a press release to Stu News and the Laguna Beach Independent, which was published, announcing the Bonita Jaros Concert to be held on Nov. 6, 2021.
10. Provided a press release to Stu News and the Laguna Beach Independent, which was published, regarding the Six-Month Food Drive for the Laguna Beach Food Bank.
11. Planning for an upcoming press release to Stu News and the Laguna Beach Independent, regarding the Advent Outreach Program: Comfort for Christmas, a benefit for the Waymaker’s Teen Shelter.
12. Two weeks of Christmas Services advertising in the Laguna Beach Independent and Stu News.
13. New Sunday Services Banner and new Christmas Services Banner for the front patio.
REPORT ON THE 126TH CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES

Mark Clymer and Marc Mullendore, Lay Delegates for St. Mary’s

The 126th Annual Meeting of Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles was held on Saturday November 13, 2021, virtually and in-person at the Riverside Convention Center, Riverside California. The theme of the Convention: “Truth and Love”, was drawn from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (4:14): “Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” The convention bade farewell to Bishop Diane Bruce as she takes her leave to become Bishop Provisional in the Diocese of West Missouri.

The purpose of the Convention was to conduct the business of the diocese including: the passage of a budget for the upcoming year, election of Clergy and Lay for various elective offices, and consideration of proposals submitted for consideration. Also included in the convention schedule were an address by the Bishop Diocesan, the Rt. Rev. John Harvey Taylor, and an address by the Bishop Suffragan, the Rt. Rev. Diane Jardine Bruce. Finally, the convention featured the Margaret Parker Lecture, which was delivered by climate scientist Mary Nichols, and focused on the care of our planet, a priority for the diocese and the wider Episcopal Church.

The Convention passed a responsible balanced budget for 2022 that does not draw on the sale of equity owned by the Diocese of Los Angeles. Income for the budget comes from the Mission Share Fund (contributions from Missions and Parishes), the Corporation of the Diocese, as well as grants from the Seeds of Hope Program and IRIS Refugee Resettlement program. Outlay of the budget includes: the Church in the World, Advancement, Stewardship and Care, Facilities, Missions and Congregational Development, Multicultural Ministries, Christian Outreach, Seeds of Hope, PRISM Chaplain Ministry, and Formation and Transition Ministry.
Clergy and Lay individuals were elected to fill all open elective offices in the diocese. Our Rector, the Rev. Lester V. Mackenzie, was elected to a four-year term as a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese. The Standing Committee, which meets once a month, acts as the Ecclesiastical Authority when the Bishop and the Bishop Suffragan are absent or incapacitated. The Committee provides advice and consent to the Bishop on property issues, presentment issues for clergy, recommendations from the Corporation, and other legal aspects of the Diocese. The Standing Committee participates in the consents to the elections of and consecrations of Diocesan and Bishops Suffragan for other Dioceses. The Standing Committee, acting on the recommendation of the Diocese’s Commission on Ministry, votes to approve or disapprove the admission of persons in the process to ordination.

The Convention reviewed and voted in favor of four Proposed Resolutions:

1. Empowering the Diocesan Compensation and Benefits Committee to develop information and guidelines to assist parishes, missions, schools, and other affiliated institutions to adopt hiring and employment practices and salary and benefit levels that are just, equitable, reasonable, and humane.
2. To renew the Diocesan relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem for an additional three-year cycle, commencing with the 126th Convention and spanning the years 2022 to 2024.
3. To Submit a resolution to the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in 2022: Resolved, the House of Bishops/Delegates concurring, that the 80th General Convention include and enter Barbara Clementine Harris, Bishop to the Lesser Feasts & Fasts Calendar of the Church Year to be celebrated on March 13.
4. That the Convention urges the Bishop, working with the Diocesan Deputation at the 80th General Convention, and acting through resolution or other appropriate means, to work toward the inclusion of the Juneteenth Feast Day in Lesser Feasts and Fasts with the appropriate proper to be prepared by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

The convention concluded with the celebration of Holy Eucharist with Bishop Suffragan Diane Jardine Bruce as Celebrant and the Archdeacon Laura Siriani giving the homily.