



CHURCH MOUSE

Spring 2023—St. John's Episcopal Church 1707 Gouldin Road, Oakland, CA 94611

Rector's Letter

Scott Denman

In Robin Williams' list of the top ten reasons to become an Episcopalian, he lists number 5 as "church year is color coded." I love that our tradition embraces color in all its variety and those colors are associated with seasons. I actually became an Episcopalian because of this spiritual color coding.



I had been in a tradition that did not value the idea of a journey. You were either in or out of faith and that was it. Doubt, hard times, embracing the rainbow of emotions that come with living a life on this planet, was highly discouraged. The church I was in was welcoming but the theology was not. I felt a need to hide pieces of my internal spiritual landscape and identity because anything other than conformity and an unwavering faith, as defined by them, was a sin. But I was filled with questions, suffering, doubt, and grief. It was in Lent that I found a church that welcomed all of me and, in fact, taught me that the landscape I was in was one that Jesus was familiar with. The Episcopal Church was not only saying "All Are Welcome," but also "All Of Who You Are Is Welcome."

We have changed seasons once again in our liturgical year. The colors of our banners, stoles, and altar frontals have changed from white, to red, and finally to green. As we leave the season of Easter and enter the season of Pentecost, we have the opportunity to gather strength and encouragement from the stories and traditions of our church. Like the disciples who really had a hard time adjusting from following Jesus, to actually finding their own unique identity as prophets, healers, and bearers of good news, we too are emerging from the Lent of a pandemic and the proclamation of an Easter that invites us to become who we need to be to meet the future. Like the disciples we are tempted to go back to our form of fishing and do what we know. But Jesus met them by the sea, fed them breakfast, and reminded them that the old could no longer contain the Easter that was being birthed within them.

As a church we find ourselves in a similar place to the disciples. We are tempted to go back to what we know, but Jesus is calling us to a greater vision. I hope you will read the Senior Warden's article in this "Mouse." Pat Harden has clearly itemized some of the many ways we are actively restructuring our committees and ministries. There is new energy as we continue to regather and redefine who we are and who we will become as we move forward, not backward, and I am truly excited and energized by what I see and feel happening here at St. John's.

The transition out of a pandemic has opened up the possibility to become, as the Apostle Paul put it, "new creations in Christ." It is time to reaffirm our true colors individually and communally and embrace the rainbow that is our faith journey. The landscape we have traveled through, the landscape we are currently in, and the land we are headed toward are all sacred because God walks with us every step of the way. Thanks be to Lent and Easter, and now. Welcome to Ordinary Time!

Upcoming Events

- June 18 - Father's Day—Parking Lot Cake in honor of Gordon Everett
June 21 - Holy Hike in Golden Gate Park
July 1 - Barbara Sloane's memorial service
July 4 - Independence Day
July 16 - Peter Freeman Sundaes
Aug 26 - St. John's Auction
September 4 - Labor Day

Worship Services

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

The Rev. Scott Denman, Rector
Editor: Siv Ricketts
Layout: Kathy Araujo

All Choir Rehearsals Summer Hiatus

From the Senior Warden

Dear Parishioners,

It's my honor and privilege to serve as your Senior Warden this year. When my predecessor Judy Kridle stepped up to become chair of the Steering Committee for the Gateway Project, I was named Senior Warden at the January annual meeting. Her dancing slippers are the proverbial "big shoes to fill."



We are fortunate to have a very engaged and energized Vestry, with three new members (Michael Daly, Sarah Jones, and Gene Williams) joining our one- and two-year veterans. The year kicked off with our first in-person retreat at beautiful Bishop's Ranch since the pandemic. The rare sight of snow-capped mountains surrounded us as we brainstormed how to make our Vestry service deeply meaningful as well as impactful. As a result of that work, we have formed a subcommittee to focus on enhancing the "Vestry experience." This team is exploring ways to deepen and build the communal and spiritual dimensions of Vestry service.

As we emerge from the pandemic, one of Vestry's goals is to restructure committees of the Vestry to ensure they are fully staffed and functioning effectively. It's our own, post-Covid "infrastructure rebuild." To date, we have revamped the Personnel Committee, restructured the Communications Committee, and created a Governance Committee. A restructuring of the Building and Grounds Committee is also in the works. The Governance Committee reviewed and revised the Vestry "job description" and is updating the Bylaws so that they accurately reflect how we operate.

Other priorities of the Vestry this year are the hiring of an associate rector and continued progress on the Gateway Project. We have created dedicated teams of Vestry and Parish members to move these key initiatives forward. Beyond these high stakes projects, the Vestry monitors the budget and works hard to support the overall health and well-being of the wonderful community that is St. John's!

If you'd like to know more about any of these initiatives or are interested in lending your talents as a volunteer, you can reach out to our People's Warden Sarah Jones or me for more information or to share your thoughts. It really does take a village!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia L. Harden". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Patricia Harden
Seniorwarden@stjohnsoakland.org

Facilities Master Planning Update: The “Gateway Project”

Judy Kridle

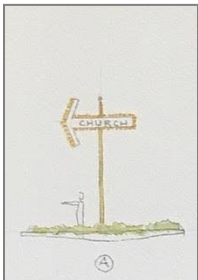
The Gateway Project (formerly called the “Invitation Bridge” and, before that, “Time To Build Up”) includes a “turn around.” What and where is it?



The first phase of the Gateway Project will include creating a new entrance to St. John’s property off Thornhill Drive. When you turn into St. John’s new entrance and cross the two-way bridge, you will see the turn around up ahead, beyond the parking area that will border the driveway from the bridge. It will be slightly uphill and adjacent to the two decades-old redwoods that tower over the west end of the church patio. The turn around will provide a place for curbside delivery and pickup as well as a way for cars and emergency vehicles to turn around safely and head back down to the bridge. The loop will be designed to accommodate the largest and heaviest fire and garbage trucks.

In the center of the turn around will be a level platform 27 feet in diameter. We’d like your help in deciding what to place on that platform in the center of the turn around. The current proposal is to partially landscape and partially pave the space, with a curved bench on the downhill side of the circle.

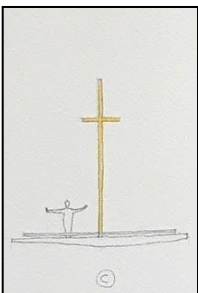
Following the informational updates held after worship services this past December and January, we received many expressions of interest and ideas for what to do. The following series of sketches by Facilities Master Plan Steering Committee member Bob Davidson reflect some of those ideas.



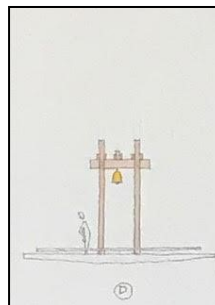
A. One suggestion was a sign that points the way to the Entry Terrace (patio) and the Church. This sketch is a bit tongue-in-cheek, with an arrow and blinking lights.



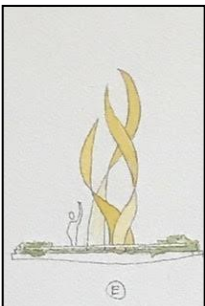
B. Some suggested planting a Live Oak tree in the center of the space.



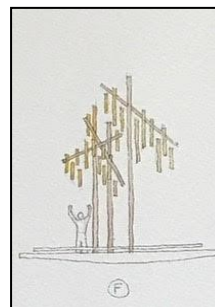
C. Another suggestion was to install a symbol representing the spiritual nature of our community. This could be a simple cross or...



D. ...relocating our existing bell and installing it on a new structural element.



E. Others suggested installing an abstract sculpture such as one depicting flames.



F. Another suggestion was to install a kinetic sculptural piece that would respond to wind, rain, and heat by moving and clanking, chiming, ringing, and/or humming

G. Input and additional ideas are welcome. Email the Facilities Master Plan Steering Committee at steeringcom@stjohnsoakland.org.



Have you heard of our new adopt a pothole program?

Scott Denman

Most of our parking lot has been repaved. And we would love to have your support by adopting a pothole of any size and sending it to hell. If you adopt a pothole you will not only relieve future stress but also honor Gordon Everett, who for decades has been coming by to fill potholes with bags of asphalt in the back of his famous red truck.

- Tiny annoying heel breaking pothole \$100 (just the cost of repairing one heel)
- There go my new shoes puddle pothole \$200 (just the cost of non-Italian shoes)
- Tire ruining pothole \$500 (less than tries and a new alignment)
- Bottoming out pothole \$1000 (less than five tows)
- Mud accumulating extended pothole \$2000 (Make Moses proud)
- Blind Lucifer pot holes \$3000 (Show Satan how you feel about him)
- Pass Judgement and go directly to heaven \$10,000 (years of swearing instantly forgiven)

Thanks to Brenna Gustafson, Thornhill School will also be adopting potholes. We can really use your help right now to supplement the cost of this project. Don't delay. Send a check to St. John's Episcopal Church (subject line: Send a pothole to hell).

A Liturgy for the Keeping of Bees:

We thank you, oh God, for the blessing of bees, for the wonder of their work, for the sweetness of their offerings, and the delight of their harvest. **We thank you, O God, for the industry of the hive**, which is like a picture of the kingdom of heaven, always at work, in ten million places, unseen (from *Every Moment Holy*).

Are there any beekeepers in the congregation? I think there may be one or two—and soon there will be one more. I am starting a hive in my backyard. By the time this is published I will have a hive with a colony and hopefully a happily engaged queen. I grew up with a beekeeper. The joyful man in the photo is my dad who kept bees all his life. But the wonderful thing for family and friends was that we, as beneficiaries of his passion, always had honey...



In preparation for this new occupation, I have been studying, talking to and learning from experienced beekeepers. What there is to know and do is overwhelming at times. This started as a project to have and share honey, but this commitment is so much more. You cannot get the honey without an investment into the whole life of the hive.

This endeavor speaks to me of stewardship. St. John's is like a hive, and the sweetness of the honey from our hive is the bounty of the work done at church. What is the honey from St John's? Well, of course, there's faith conversations, church, the liturgy and singing, the production of all the related services. But the sweetness and nourishment is also found in mindfulness meditation, the labyrinth, centering prayer, the women's retreat, the parish retreat, softball, the meditation garden, VISION, the friendships, the sharing and caring relationships, and the inspiration we bring to the world. Our community is honey—sticky and sweet and only possible because of the hive and the work done there.

To produce and enjoy honey, we must all support the hive. So, when you think about the St. John's community friendships and activities that you enjoy, remember to give generously to support the team that makes it all possible—all year round.

In gratitude and love,

Lilah Greene
Your Stewardship MinCat



Summer Camp at Bishop's Ranch Registration NOW Open!

It's time to sign up for summer camp at Bishop's Ranch! Coordinate with your friends to attend camp together.

BREAD Explorers

June 25-30

Entering 10th - graduated 12th

Intergenerational Camp

July 2-7

For families of all shapes and sizes

TOAST

July 14-16

Young adults (21+) and BREAD Alumni

BREAD Adventurers

July 16-21 or

July 23-28

Entering grades 7 – 9

BREAD Discoverers

July 16-21 or

July 23-28

Entering grades 4 – 6

Bishop's Ranch offers tiered pricing to help everyone attend camp. In addition, the Ranch offers need-based scholarships as does St. John's (contact [Lori Robinson](#) for more information). For more information and registration, visit [The Bishop's Ranch website](#).



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Episco-Speak: A guide to “insider” information!

Kathy Araujo

Similar to other people groups and cultures, participation in the Episcopal Church comes with new vocabulary words. Many of these terms are shared with other churches while some are uniquely Episcopal. In the next several issues of The Mouse, we will review some of these words.

Episcopal Church The Episcopal Church is the Anglican province in the United States. It has more than one hundred dioceses, and is divided into nine geographical provinces.

Diocese A territorial unit of administration, consisting of a number of individual parishes, under the pastoral oversight of a bishop. St. John's is in the Diocese of California.

Deanery A geographical grouping of parishes under the oversight of the Diocese. St. John's is in the Alameda Deanery.

Parish A local congregation in union with the diocese. St. John's is our parish!

Stay tuned for more definitions in “Mice” to come!

In Memory of Judith Fleming

Andrew Edson Fleming

Sarah Judith Edson Fleming was born October 20, 1936 and was raised in Chicago. For over 50 years, she worked as a nurse at Alta Bates and later with home health agencies.



Married in 1963 to our father George, they escaped west to Oakland and attended services at All Souls Berkeley. They had two sons, Andrew and Robert.



In 1980 they joined St. John's Chancel Choir (Judith sang alto for 30 years), while Andrew sang in the Youth Choir under Sara Evinger's direction. Both sons participated in youth group and youth choir/youth group productions during high school with Sara and Kellor Smith. Judith also served as Sara's rehearsal assistant for several years.

Judith was St. John's Altar Guild Director for over a decade

before moving to Oregon in 2010. Robert and I know how important St. John's was to our mother, and were grateful he was able to accompany her to Ernest Knell's memorial service last fall. We're glad she could feel the St. John's love with everyone that day.



Judith spent the last three years battling cancer for a second time, and bravely underwent chemotherapy treatments for most of 2021. Judith peacefully passed at home in the afternoon of March 1, and a few hours later Venus and Jupiter rose in the western sky for a rare conjunction. Our generous and kind mother is now in heaven.



Peter Freeman Sundae

Laurie Bennett

Following church on July 16 (and all subsequent third Sundays in July) the Ministry Catalysts will host an ice cream social in memory of Peter Freeman who died on January 10. Peter always celebrated his own July 21 birthday by bringing a cake to church for coffee hour—but we always thought he liked ice cream as much or more than cake. So we will have both in memory of our Minister of Fun. Come and enjoy!

The Bishop's Executive Council

Carolyn George

The **Deanery** is a geographical section or area within a diocese. The Diocese of California is organized into six deaneries, each a group of congregations. The Alameda Deanery consists of thirteen churches or missions. The Deaneries communicate the needs and interest of the churches to the Bishop and bring information back to the churches. An annual convention passes resolutions, reviews and passes the budget for the Diocese and proposes future resolutions.

Deanery meetings (also called convocations) are a forum where church representatives can discuss common concerns, learn about how other churches are handling issues like homelessness, aging congregations, maintaining older buildings, and how to keep our focus on doing the work of the church.

The Deanery consists of all clergy attached to member churches and lay people elected by their congregations to represent them at both Deanery meetings and the annual Diocesan convention. The representatives' responsibility is primarily as a conduit for information from the home parish to other parishes and to the Diocese, and back again. Each church is allowed a specific number of representatives based on the size of their congregations.

Among recent topics of discussion are Deanery grants to member churches. The Deanery collects dues from all member churches and receives funding from the Diocese. A small portion of this total is used to pay for expenses and the rest is available to be dispersed as grants to member churches.

Twelve years ago I was elected as one of St. John's representatives to the Alameda County Deanery. I served with various members from St. John's including Scott Tate, Ken Fuller, Anne Meyer, Greg Slatoff, and Alexandra Slatoff. A member of the clergy is also a mandatory member of the Deanery, so at various times, I served with Rev. Scott Denman, Rev. Krista Fregoso, and Deacon Jon Owens. I served as a general member and was Vice-President for the last 6 years. I served as the Alameda Deanery representative on the Deanery Coordinating Committee in which representatives from each Deanery meet quarterly to discuss Deanery news and concerns and prepare questions to be presented to the Bishop. I found it an interesting way to find out how our neighbor churches are proceeding.

The Executive Council is the Diocesan Board of Directors and, between Diocesan conventions, exercises all the powers of the convention to implement the convention's actions. It is responsible for the budget and finances and is the forum for long-range visioning, strategy, and planning for the health and growth of the Episcopal community in the Diocese of California.

After serving for 11 years on the Deanery, I was nominated to serve as a Convention Executive Council Representative. I was elected at Convention to serve not just one church or Deanery but rather the general assembly, making sure the interests of the entire community are served. Recently I have been appointed to the Nominations Committee to present more candidates to the various committees serving the Diocese.

Talking Points from the most recent meeting of the Bishop's Executive Council (EC):

1) CFO and Finance Committee are looking at Parochial Reports. With only two reports outstanding there are some surprising deficits, but on balance, nearly even income. When the parish profile numbers are finalized, at the recommendation of the Bishop, the Assessment Formula Task Force of the EC will consider how we build the budget (the first step before we recommend an assessment formula).

2) EC approved advancing St. Luke's in SF a \$1000 line of credit.

3) The Finance Committee is continuing its Assessment Formula Comparison looking at similarly situated Dioceses.

4) The EC made a decision to fund the Canon for Racial, Social and Environmental Justice with an allocation not to exceed \$150,000 from the Expanding Horizons Leadership allocation.

5) The Bishop's Search Process continues: The Diocesan profile has been posted and the application process is live.

6) The Bishop is appointing Regional Deans to provide ready communication between Dioceses and the Deaneries and they will be in place by the first week of May.

VISION Celebrates 3 Years of Action

Laurie Bennett



Arguably, the best activity to come out of St. John's during the pandemic is the lunch making for Oakland's homeless. Led by Sallie Sadler and Jerry and Bonnie Moran, VISION (Volunteers in Support of Oakland's Needs) started in June 2020 with a purpose to provide meals to homeless people living in various encampment communities. Sallie remembers the idea was hatched in the Moran's backyard during COVID: "Jerry and I both were active leaders of St. James Food Pantry. After that closed, we were in search of a way to feed our disadvantaged population. The structure of VISION allowed for minimal

social contact for health reasons and also helped our congregation feel united in an outreach endeavor. I knew Vinnie through my work at St. James Pantry and introduced him to Jerry shortly after our backyard meeting. My biggest surprise after three years is how enduring and successful this program is and how much the volunteers derive a sense of purpose and community through participating in VISION."

St. John's families prepare PBJ sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs at home and drop them off at St. John's on either Wednesday or Thursday. Teams of "baggers" meet in the kitchen on those days to put these donations into lunch bags along with other items to construct a nutritious meal. The additional food is obtained from the Alameda County Community Food Bank by members of the VISION team who have a license to shop there.



The initial response to the VISION requests for donations of sandwiches, eggs, and volunteer baggers was so great that by July the operation expanded. Kathy Heller had been volunteering with Operation Dignity which primarily serves homeless veterans. By July 2020, there was a Wednesday team making, packing, and delivering lunches to the Operation Dignity headquarters near the Oakland Produce Market.

The Thursday team makes between 150-190 bag lunches each week, picked up by Vinnie Pannizzo who distributes them to various encampments. You can read more about Vinnie's of "Mission for the Homeless" at his website: <https://missionforthehomeless.org/>.



VISION WARMTH (Warm Apparel Recycled Mostly for The Homeless) runs November through December and has collected hundreds of donated blankets, jackets, socks, and shoes for our homeless population; socks are now being collected year round and you can add your contributions to the basket in the church narthex (lobby).

Thanks to all the people who have served on this project over the past three years. Current VISION volunteers are:

Sylvia Ahern, Lyn C. Andersen, Laurie Bennett, Maryann Blouin, Marsha Broquedis, Robert Davidson, Nancy and Gordon Everett, Susan Field, Ken Fuller, Julie Gardner, Carolyn George, Lilah Greene, Jim Hasler, Jo Hazelett, Laurie Johnson, Ashley Judkins, Carol Kizziah, Julie Knell, Nancy Lehrkind, Ann Lester, Linda Long, Molly Marion, Walter Marion, Mary McQueen, Anne Meyer, Bonnie and Jerry Moran, Helen Nicholas, David Nix, Cynthia O'Malley, Ray and Bill Reiss, Philippa Roberts Porter, Nancy Roscelli, Judy Rosenberg, Sallie and Bill Sadler, Lea Seals, Jenny Shears-Teixera, Julie Slater, Alexandra Slatoff, Greg Slatoff, Nancy Swearingen, Silvia Sykes, Susan Tom, Sarah Tracy-Cook, Nancy Walker, Jesse Warr, Donna Wheeler

If you would like to make sandwiches and eggs and/or join a bagging crew, email Sallie Sadler: sallie.sadler.phd@gmail.com.

Stitch Happens!

Sylvia Ahern

Whether Christian, or Buddhist, or Witch
We're most happy to have you, to bitch
About things geriatric,
Bari- or theatric
As long as you happen to stitch.

We gossip a bit - though not churlish,
And though post-menopausal, still girlish.
Busy fingers in laps,
We make sure that Stitch Haps
At our gatherings knittish and purlish.



Do you enjoy handwork? Come join us! Knitting (we can teach you the basics), crochet, quilting, mending. Some of us meet every two to three weeks; the exact day and location bounces around. No commitment required, so come when you feel like it. All are welcome!

To get on the invite list, email sylvia.ahern@gmail.com or sallie.sadler.phd@gmail.com or sevinger551@gmail.com.

Because, you know, stitch happens.

Scamperings of the The Mouse?

Siv Ricketts

Welcome to the third issue of St. John's rebooted newsletter, The Mouse. Going forward, The Mouse will come out four times a year—in February, May, August, and November—plus a special Annual Report issue in January. The Communication Team chose those months as strategic times for parish communication:

- the Winter issue will come out before Lent and Easter;
- the Spring issue will catch us up after Easter & the Parish Retreat;
- the Summer issue will welcome us back to our program year;
- and the Fall issue will come out before the fall and winter holidays.

Our intent for The Mouse is to offer both information and inspiration. We will communicate St. John's news and events, of course, and we also want to share stories of what's happening behind the scenes, on and off St. John's beautiful campus, in the lives of our parishioners and those with whom we interact. We hope The Mouse will help you become better acquainted and connected with the St. John's community, and we hope you will find something in each issue of The Mouse that you can't wait to share with friends and family.

If you'd like to share a story in The Mouse, or have a story idea, please email me:
admin@stjohnsoakland.org.

Alexandra and the Presiding Bishop

Greg Slatoff

My daughter Alexandra Slatoff has been raised in the St. John's faith community and has been continually empowered by its vigor and freedom.



At her Confirmation, Alex had trouble memorizing her passage from Ezekiel ("dry bones") and so performed the passage as a blues song complete with harmonica. Bishop Swing was in attendance, smiled with delight, and later congratulated her. Alex worked with the Bishop on several projects and when, following his retirement, the Bishop helped to create the UN Millennium Environmental Goals, she incorporated them into her college and teaching curriculum. As a Deanery representative for several years, she has worked with Bishop Marc and was recently appointed to his Youth Advisory Committee. During a recent reception for Bishop Curry, she approached the Bishop to tell him how much she admired his work. **Bishop Curry thereupon insisted on creating a cell phone video so he could greet and bless "the students of Room 4," Alex's middle school classroom and domain.**

I share the foregoing not just as the boasting of a proud father, but also as praise for the St. John's community. Our community encourages originality and challenge in its exploration of faith. Such encouragement not only deepens faith, but also empowers us to, without pause, let our voice be heard in the larger Episcopal community. Bishop Curry's warmth and energy are legendary; however Alex's casual greeting to him, her unhesitant sharing of faith and experience, allowed the Bishop the opportunity to display his warmth to Alex and the students of Room 4.

Alex's ease of faith, with fellow congregants or the highest echelons of the Church, is one of the many gifts she received from the St. John's faith community.



Coming Fall 2023

**Innovative sessions * field trips * mentoring
& the challenge to ask all the tough questions**

**Contact Lori Robinson for info
lori@stjohnsoakland.org**

St. John's Parish Retreat Recap

Lori Robinson

On the weekend of May 5-7, St. John's gathered at The Bishop's Ranch in Healdsburg for our annual parish retreat. The weekend was filled with laughter and fun along with many activities including a BBQ, bingo, and making s'mores around a campfire. Two of our retreat participants led morning meditation before breakfast. Scott Denman taught youth magic tricks and then they put on a magic show for everyone. We made crafts (a suncatcher wind chime and a bird feeder), hiked, read, took naps, and just hung out. Sunday morning worship was held outside overlooking the valley and the grazing cattle. Those who weren't able to be there were missed and we hope to see you at next year's parish retreat on May 10-12, 2024.

