

Perspective

Gather. Imagine. Build.

A welcoming community
for those seeking to journey in faith
with God's people through the breaking of bread
and in service to others in Christ's name.

From Our Rector

A Year of Discovery



Many of you have now heard members of the Vestry, our wider lay leadership, or me talk about the Vital + Thriving Congregations Initiative of the Diocese. In the final quarter of last year, the Vestry voted for Church of Our Saviour to join the third cohort of this three-year program dedicated to helping us build new mission and ministry in a post-pandemic world. Vital + Thriving (V+T for short!) is a fully funded program partnering the Diocese of California with the Center for Church Innovation, giving us access to decades of expertise in renewing and growing congregations nationwide, and partnering us with sibling congregations here in the Bay Area in a cohort of mutual learning and support.

Each of you now has the opportunity to join us in a year of discovery about our congregation — what we most value, what we dream about, and where we are feeling the call to serve the wider community. This work of discovery has three essential parts:

1. **A household survey.** 30 of our households have already responded, but our goal is 50! [If you haven't completed the survey yet, it takes five minutes at this link:](https://cosmv.org/survey) cosmv.org/survey

2. Listening conversations. We have just pulled together a listening team who will be reaching out to set up one-on-one conversations with members of our parish with a full range of involvement and demographic diversity.

3. A timeline event on Sunday, March 17th. This is the first major community event in the V+T process. Your presence is essential! After our 10 am service and lunch, we will collaborate to put together a remembered history of our community: times of challenge, times we are proud of, and the people and experiences that inspire our journey of faith. Please join us!

Everything we gather will be compiled, anonymized, and reviewed by the V+T team and then brought back to us later this year in a report. The report, along with further questions, will guide us to better understand where the Spirit is moving in our midst and where we are being called together by God into new mission and ministry to grow our community in numbers, spirit, and faith.

Our leadership teams for this work and I welcome your questions and comments! Feel free to reach out to members of our Steering Team:

Christine Maxwell, Amy Paulenich, Kathleen Piraino, and Lisa Salkever. We also are excited to have **John Dedo, Shirley Dockstader, Steve Maxwell, and Pati Stinnett** on board with our growing Listening Team.



Interested in helping? Let us know!

You can learn more about V+T anytime at vitalthriving.org

I look forward to seeing you again soon, and especially on March 17th!

With love to each of you, and every blessing in Christ.

Br. Richard Edward+

Fall Yard Sale Clears Closets and Raises Funds!

On a mid-October weekend last year, Church of Our Saviour held its first yard sale in many years. Our goal was to clear out some of the church's many storage closets and to raise some funds for the Discretionary Fund. Many years of Art Auctions and Children's Christmas Boutiques had left our





closets brimming with treasures that were not being used or appreciated! Under the experienced hand of Joan Peck, a team of parishioners organized and displayed these items for the public while Joan offered free coffee and donuts! After three days, the sale found happy homes for most of our items and raised over \$800 to help those most in need in the community. Thanks especially to Kathleen Piraino, Caroline Gibbs, Mary Washburn, and Jean Gomez for their work in making the sale so successful!

— Tiana Wimmer



The Healing Team Ministry

Need a Prayer?

Those of us privileged to be members of the Healing Team: Pati Stinnett, Nini Lion, Michelle Gomez, Peter Gear, and Joan Peck, have access to a list of prayer requests that are kept confidential. The requests come from parishioners, from clergy, and from members of the team.

Requests for prayers can be given to the Healing Team at healing@cosmv.org, sent to the Rector at rector@cosmv.org, or to the office at office@cosmv.org. Requests for prayers may also be written and placed in the receptacle located in the Baptistry at the rear of the nave, by the prayer candle stand.

Prayer team members have access to the confidential request list online. The list is automatically updated through the cloud whenever a change is made.

Prayers are sent out from individual team members daily, silently or out loud. If the list is long, as it often is, sections of the requests may be parsed out over a couple of days.

Additionally, members of the Healing Team offer hands on prayers during communion at the 10 o'clock service, quietly in the back of the nave by the candle stand.

If you feel called to be part of this important ministry, please speak to Br. Richard Edward.

Prayer is powerful.

COS Outreach

Another Successful Year of Giving (Tree!)

The past holiday season, Church of Our Saviour again participated in a “Giving Tree” which provided holiday cheer for residents of Episcopal Community Services housing in San Francisco. Many of those living in ECS housing were recently without homes and still have many needs. This year, instead of purchasing individual gifts, COS donated \$1,100 to fund hot meals for the annual holiday party for ECS residents. In addition, many members of our parish baked cookies and other homemade treats to be served at the party! All COS donations were warmly welcomed by ECS who noted COS was one of their best partners for the Giving Tree and expressed deep appreciation for our parish and all who participated.



United Thank Offering

Lent 2024: 40 Days of Gratitude and Presence

By Heather Melton, UTO Staff Officer

This year our theme for Lenten materials is “40 Days of Grateful Presence” and a call to giving thanks for the many things in our lives we take for granted. Our hope is that during the 40 days of Lent we can all use gratitude to help us be more present in our daily lives. In order to do this, we’ve got the following materials for individuals and congregations:



- Daily text message prompt to notice and give thanks for something in your life that you might take for granted.
- Printable calendar with the same prompts as the daily text message that you can print out and hang on your fridge to mark the days until Easter.
- Lenten materials for families – this year we have a special 40 days coloring sheet from Kristen Wheeler to help kids mark off each day until Easter and a weekly prayer (similar to what many of us use during Advent) that individuals or families can say along their Lenten journey.
- Zoom book group – this Lent we'll be reading "Thanks a Thousand" by A.J. Jacobs; it's the story of what happened when he tried to thank everyone who contributed to his daily cup of coffee.

You can sign up for text messages and book club or download any of our Lenten resources at unitedthankoffering.com/lent. We look forward to being a part of your Lenten journey in 2024. Lent 2024: 40 Days of Gratitude and Presence.



Who's in the Pews

By Rosine Reynolds

Our African Family

When she first came to this country, Akosua Ombonga was dropped off in San Diego with a four-week scholarship and a view of the sea, which she's always loved. When she and Kemari had married in 2021, they honeymooned in the Seychelles and Zanzibar.

Once they set up housekeeping in California, they were disappointed to find the churches around them "good, but almost empty," and this was not what Akosua was used to. She remembers her mother's strong faith when she would walk to their home church in Ghana wearing shredded slippers.

Happily, Church of Our Saviour presented a different story. After their son Malachi was born, his parents were pleased by the enthusiastic crowd that turned out for his baptism. The congregants were likewise delighted by the sight of the extended Ombonga family gathering for this exuberant baby.

Many of them showed celebration in the fabrics and colors of their native Africa. Many of the new visitors were from Kemari's family.

Now Akosua Ombonga directs both our church's Godly Play, for younger children, and Faith Quest for the older ones. How are they different?

The older children's program is more complex, says Akosua. Their teacher wants to "engage them more, help them find their path." She remembers the strong influence her home church had on her and her brothers as they were growing.

Possibly because of that happy connection, Akosua is enthusiastic about keeping parish dinners a part of her busy schedule. Shortly after she became Director, she organized the first of the series, and she and Gerry Caprio provided the food. The second dinner was a pot luck. At this writing, two more are planned.

What is Akosua's favorite ingredient for a parish supper? Is it potato salad? Hot dogs? Barbecue?

"Chicken," she says. (We can do that!)

Google says that Akosua's home town airport in Accra is almost 8,000 miles away from San Francisco. She hasn't seen her family there in almost two years. Let's continue to make this a happy part of her ministry in California.

Parable of the Great Pearl

— Akosua Ombaga

I was reintroduced to the Parable of the Great Pearl during Sunday's Godly Play. This short parable is found in Matthew 13:45-46.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

The merchant recognized the pearl's superior value and made a decision that might've seemed unwise in the eyes of many and even our children's eyes on Sunday. However motivated by what he knew the pearl was worth he did not mind giving it all up.

I have considered this and asked myself if I will do the same. Honestly, I do not know for sure. But I can attest to the fact that if you ever gave anything up for the Kingdom of God, it would not be an unfair bargain.



While I'm unsure if I can give everything, as the merchant did, I have made it a goal this year to give God an hour of my day daily. In that hour, I study the Bible, pray, and listen to sermons, among other things.

You can think about this and decide what to give God. An hour of your day, your efforts, your resources etc. I don't know what it will be for you, but one thing I am positive of is that, the Kingdom of God is of so much value that your sowing will not be in vain

Altar Guild

Church Colors

by Gay Rawlins Johnson
Former Altar Guild Chair

Have you ever wondered why the colors on the altar and Fr. Richard's vestments change throughout the year?

Well, here is a very simplified version of the church seasons and what some of the colors mean....

The church calendar begins with ADVENT, four Sundays before Christmas Day. Dark blue or purple/violet (penance, sacrifice, preparation) are typical for this season. The ADVENT wreath has 3 purple candles and one pink (for the 3rd week of ADVENT). We have a gorgeous weaving that we hang on the reredos (wall behind the altar) during ADVENT and a coordinating altar frontal (the hanging that hangs in "front" of the altar) and vestments for the Rector.



CHRISTMAS is considered "festive" and lasts through EPIPHANY (January 6) and we use our rich gold and white (purity, joy, celebration) embroidered "festive" altar frontal and matching vestments for the Rector. They are heavily embroidered with gold and red.

After EPIPHANY comes ORDINARY TIME which is universally marked by green (hope, new growth, anticipation). It is the longest season, and we have three green frontals and matching vestments.

LENT begins with ASH WEDNESDAY and purple and/or violet is used. We take all the “décor” away (frontal and flowers) and we cover the large gold cross with a purple drape. The Rector wears purple.

HOLY WEEK begins with PALM SUNDAY and we dress the altar in red/scarlet (sacrifice, blood, fire) with a red and black set of frontal and matching vestments.

On MAUNDY THURSDAY of Holy Week we remove everything from the altar area in preparation for GOOD FRIDAY and to mark the death of Jesus Christ.

On the evening of the EASTER VIGIL and for EASTER SUNDAY we are back to our “festive” frontal and vestments to celebrate the resurrection. EASTER lasts til PENTECOST (seventh Sunday after Easter), and we go to red...lots of red...representing fire/flames and the arrival of the Holy Ghost!

After PENTECOST we go back to ORDINARY TIME (green) 'til CHRIST THE KING Sunday.... “festive” or White.....and then the church calendar begins again with ADVENT!

Of course, there are exceptions and additions to the calendar every year, but the above are the “basics”.



COS is so blessed to have beautiful matching and coordinating frontals and priestly vestments. There is a matching stole that the priest almost always wears under the vestments.....You'll probably not see it on a Sunday, but you will if you come to Wednesday eucharist!



United Religions Initiative (URI)

Sometimes we are moved to alter our usual Altar display. Especially for St. Francis of Assisi Day, when we hang our special frontal made by us, incorporating images of our pets. One year we made candles and for Candlemas displayed them on the reredos. Similarly, fruits and vegetables were displayed for Thanksgiving one year. It is fun to break the mold sometimes!

The vision for the [United Religions Initiative \(URI\)](#) was sparked by an invitation from the United Nations to The Right Rev. William Swing, Founder and President Emeritus.

Bishop Swing was invited to host an interfaith service in June 1995 to help commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter. Through this invitation came

“a sudden realization that religions, together, have a vocation to be a force for good in the world.”

The seed planted in Bishop Swing took root in hundreds and then thousands of people who joined in a global appreciative process to create a shared vision of the world they wished to inhabit and of a global interfaith organization that would engage people of all backgrounds in making that vision a reality.

From 1996-2000, people around the world participated in writing URI's [Charter](#), which was signed in June 2000. Bound together by the Charter, which gives voice to the URI global community's collective mission, vision, and values. The URI structure is decentralized and comprised of self-organizing groups (called Cooperation Circles). Since its inception, URI ignites people all over the world to share their dreams, initiate cooperative action, and fulfill their aspirations.



Dear Friends,

In 2023, Episcopal Impact Fund worked diligently toward a vision of an equitable Bay Area, in which every person has the resources they need to thrive. As a community, we invested over \$900,000 in grants to non-profit organizations and churches advancing pathways out of poverty throughout our region.

The lack of affordable housing in the San Francisco Bay Area has reached a crisis point. Low-

income Bay Area households

experiencing high rent burdens face housing and economic insecurity

that disrupt family

stability. Through our Community Grants program, we fund non-profit partners who create housing solutions for Bay Area families, children, and young adults. We support churches within the Diocese that provide basic needs such as food to community members in need.

We continue to engage in systems change work through our Advocacy program, and encourage community building and constructive social change by hosting regional volunteer days at both community partner and congregational grantee sites.

Without the dedicated support of our community, this impact would not be possible. We are deeply grateful to you for your generosity and time and look forward to a more equitable 2024.

We invite you to experience stories of hope and resilience in our 2023 Impact Report. Read the highlights on our [website](#) or download the full report [here](#).

The Year in Review

Episcopal Impact Fund

Make Your Reservation Now for Bishop-elect Rios'
Ordination & Consecration
Saturday, May 4th, 11 am @ Grace Cathedral



<https://diocalbishopsearch.org/registration/>



A good crowd turned out to hear the candidates for Bishop speak on November 5, 2023.





Thank you
photographers!
Terry Peck,
Tiana Wimmer,
John Dedo,
Joan Peck



Church of Our Saviour

Key Events & Holy Days for 2024

January 28 – Parish Annual Meeting

February 3 – 2024 Vestry Planning Retreat

February 4 – Candlemas

February 13 – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner

February 14 – Ash Wednesday

March 24 – Palm Sunday – Holy Week Begins

March 28 – Maundy Thursday

March 29 – Good Friday

March 30 – Easter Vigil

March 31 – Easter Sunday / Easter Egg Hunt

April 23 – Parish Dinner

May 4 – Ordination & Consecration of Austin Rios @ Grace Cathedral

May 19 – Pentecost

May 26 – Trinity Sunday – Last Day of Sunday School Year

June 1 (tentative) – Confirmations at Grace Cathedral

June 16- Fathers Day Picnic

June 23 ~ 28 – General Convention, Louisville, Kentucky

July 24 – Bishop Transition

September 8 – Parish Anniversary / New Sunday School Year Begins

October 6 – St. Francis of Assisi Sunday - Blessing of the Animals

October 25 ~ 26 – Diocesan Convention @ Grace Cathedral

November 3 – All Saints' Sunday

November 10 – Parish Dinner

November 22 – Advent Wreath Making

December 1 – First Sunday of Advent

December 22 – Pageant Rehearsal

December 24 – Christmas Pageant and Christmas Eve Mass

December 29 - Last Sunday of the Church Year



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR

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on Facebook at facebook.com/oursaviourmillvalley

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop of the Diocese of California

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Ecumenical Associate	The Rev. Gerald Caprio	youth@cosmv.org
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Adult Education	Richard Edward Helmer	
Altar Guild	Koko Peters	
Care of Creation	Mark Tarpey-Schwed	
Coffee Hour/Parish Life	Parish Office	office@cosmv.org
Confirmation	Richard Edward Helmer	rector@cosmv.org
Eucharistic Ministers	Rosalind Patterson	
Healing Team and Prayers		healing@cosmv.org
Lectors	Parish Office	office@cosmv.org
COS Cares / Pastoral Care	Lisa Salkever, Caroline Gibbs Amy Paulenich, Gerry Caprio	cos-cares@cosmv.org
Stewardship	Kathleen Piraino, Cathy Marhefka, & Nic Meredith	
Ushers	Amy Paulenich	
Godly Play (Pre-K – 3rd Grade)	Akosua Ombonga	godlyplay@cosmv.org
Faith Quest (4th-6th Grade)		
Middle Saints for	Gerry Caprio	youth@cosmv.org
Middle Schoolers		
(7th & 8th Grade)		
High School Youth Group	Gerry Caprio	youth@cosmv.org
Baptisms, Confessions, Weddings, Pre-Marital, Pastoral Counseling & Spiritual Direction	Richard Edward Helmer	rector@cosmv.org



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