

Stories of Gifts and Giving

by the people of
St. John Episcopal Church

A Gift from St. John's to the Community

Halloween is a festive time that we welcome (mostly) kids into Theresa Hall. It may be the only time that many kids have ever been in a church. I hope that they remember our hospitality and think of St. John's as a safe place where they are welcomed and given nourishment.

- Sally

The Love of God

For my entire life (since conception, most likely) I was taught that charitable giving was between God and me and that we did not talk about our good deeds or giving. I writhe in discomfort at the idea, though I support the intent.

For me, it is important to take the love of God and of our church family with me as models for my acceptance and treatment of every person I meet outside the church walls.

I don't preach to them or - deliver me! - witness to them (what hypocrisy!). It's more about quietly and sincerely doing the things listed on that banner out front beside our sign.

-Anonymous

Gifts from the Sanctuary

In the quiet after Eucharist, I see a sideways hug and a gentle kiss on the cheek given to a woman with a new cancer diagnosis.

In the empty sanctuary, I wait while a woman prays at the rail before setting up the altar. For her it's a holy and sacred act.

On a bright Sunday I see the sun shine through a colored window casting a lapis glow over the pews.

On other Sundays I hear a future grandpa proudly announce a daughter's pregnancy. I see a woman wrap her arms around a friend and hold her to share in the pain of a passed parent. I see the outside brought inside via flowers at the altar - artistry and beauty in two brass vases. I see a woman tear up when a long-absent couple are back in their regular pew.

I hear Cynthia play You'll Never Walk Alone: *When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark...*

Perhaps the best gift of all is that at St. John's we don't walk alone, we walk together. Amen

- Judy

Virginia Was a Gift

For some time now, Kay & I have made home visitations to members of St. John who could not attend services here on Sundays. Usually this would include Communion followed by some talk about the meanings of the readings and highlights from the day's service. The Gospel reading is always part of this ministry and sometimes other current readings as well. And of course Holy Eucharist.

When Virginia Fitzgerald became less able to attend church, Kay & I began going to her house. It was a wonderful experience for all three of us. I recall Virginia settling back, closing her eyes and following the service. We all grew through these meetings with God. Later on when Virginia spent her last month or so in Coquille Valley Hospital, we visited there as we could. We brought her the Eucharist as at her home. She was always lifting our spirits. Later still she lapsed into sleep. She may have heard us at times but she was at peace with passing on and had no fear that I could tell. We continued visits without communion, just talking and touching. It was a wonderful experience. Virginia was a gift. Her Celebration of Life will be Saturday, November 16 at 3:00 PM. In lieu of flowers, you can make a gift to her son, Michael Fitzgerald at Umpqua Bank.

- Bill

An Extended Family

I feel a special relationship to St John's as it was one of the first real connections I made when my husband Steve and I moved to Bandon over six years ago. It is always difficult to uproot from your home, community and support system, and I felt a deep sense of loneliness as I left good friends and familiar surroundings in 2013.

It did not take long to acquaint myself with St. Johns and its parishioners as they all greeted me with open arms. Happily I have developed life-long friendships.

The church truly has become an extended family to me and I am very thankful that I have the opportunity to serve in various capacities. My first opportunity was on the Altar Guild of which I knew nothing about. I learned some of the rich history in the Episcopal tradition and this knowledge has enriched my understanding of why we do some of the things we do. I love the traditions of the church, the Book of Common Prayer and the Holy Eucharist.

When we were left without priests over the years, St. John's members held strong and kept the momentum moving forward. We as a congregation proved to be tenacious, focused, and ever hopeful that our future was bright. We were even able to start a viable and necessary outreach program (the Loan Closet) amid the uncertainty of securing a priest.

I appreciate the collective wealth of knowledge, leadership and talents of our members and look forward to many more years of life at St. Johns.

- Mary

The Precious Gift of Friendship

I believe it was around 2002 when Jim Lawson, retired architect, and the late Terry James, retired engineer, remodeled St. John. They added the stained glass windows to the narthex, added the office in front, the ramp front door, and created the library/meeting room in back.

Joe Moya, Richard Clark, Terry and Jim did some carpentry work and added new windows in Theresa Hall. Then, Barbara Mudge's (Rev Mum) son designed the front yard with the Celtic cross dedicated to Bobbie Aasen.(We do miss the bell tower and the bell which used to ring!)

Karen Sinko, Rev Mum and I helped begin the first preschool in Bandon. There was Head Start and a religious preschool and ours (which is now housed in Ocean Crest). The preschool had kids' paintings all over Theresa Hall with walls painted bright red and yellow and a loft full of pillows for reading books and "time out". In back was a fenced playground.

From the moment I saw St. John, it reminded me of a church in an English village. When I first attended I met 5 retired teachers from California (like me), including the soon to be Vicar, Rev Barbara Mudge (Rev Mum). The gift I have been given is the precious gift of friendship.

Though small in number, we have always given to the community: our Good Neighbors food distribution, the EAT program (begun by Allison, John Hubbard, and Rev. Mum), and that wonderful Halloween celebration. At one time we had the "Day of the Dead" or All Saints in the sanctuary after the candy distribution.

This year was special, so many folks appreciated the socks, gloves and hats. And the Loan Closet has been such a hit! Hope I don't need anything from there very soon.

- Myra

Sitting on the board of St. John's BAC is a Gift of Knowledge

This is my second time on the board in the nine years that I have been attending St. John and it's been an honor to participate. I recommend each and every one of you participate as a board member at least once. You will not only learn how a church, our church, is expertly managed you will experience the grace that comes with knowing you are preserving our little church community for the future.

- Lani

Their Gratitude is Payment

Two years ago St. John launched a medical equipment loan closet. The goal is to provide durable equipment to community members that have either short term needs or to provide for immediate needs while they source a longer term solution.

The need and the response has been overwhelming. Judy envisioned and implemented a program that has several volunteers responding to calls, meeting with clients or their caregivers, ensuring equipment is cleaned and in good working condition. The service has been communicated to medical providers, hospitals, physical therapists. This came at a point of critical need because the business that provided equipment in Coos Bay had recently closed. We have served clients from Reedsport to Gold Beach.

We meet clients when they're in crisis having had either surgery or a medical condition that limits their mobility or ability to care for themselves. Many of them have financial limitations and their disability has caused more stress. When I tell them the equipment is free, I've seen people tear up, they just can't believe it. Their gratitude is payment enough. We hear their stories, we cry when they've returned equipment used by a family member that has passed.

This has been such a rewarding experience for me personally and is such a needed community service.

- Sally

Why I Pledge – November 10, 2019

Not all gifts are tangible, but even the smallest can make a difference. When I moved to Bandon, I was welcomed at St. John as though I had always been part of the "family," even though I had only joined the

Episcopal Church a couple years earlier and had a lot to learn about the seasons, liturgy and customs of the Episcopal Church.

Soon after I began attending St. John's I was asked to fill in as Lector one Sunday. I was petrified. Stand up in front of a whole church full of people? Read aloud to them? No way! I'd always been too self-conscious for public speaking. Somehow they persuaded me to do it "just this once." When it was my turn to read, I tripped on my way to the lectern. My eyes teared up and the words on the page wouldn't hold still for me to read them. My vocal chords tightened so I couldn't speak. My face probably turned scarlet with embarrassment. But no one reacted to my awkwardness and no one came to my rescue. They all sat there patiently waiting to hear the Word of God. It wasn't about me, it was about the liturgy, the "work of the people."

Somehow, I got through the reading and sat down. After the service, one of the older members pulled me aside and asked me to speak up louder next time. I swore there would *never* be a next time. Marion Hebden was a retired teacher. She gave me some kind words of encouragement and promised to help me learn how to do better. For the next few Sundays, we met in the empty church. I stood at the lectern. She stood near the back row while I read silly tongue-twisters from an elocution book her father had written many years before. I nearly had to shout, because she was a bit deaf. Marion helped me overcome my fear of speaking in front of people, not just at church, but elsewhere.

Soon, I was eagerly signing up to be Lector, Intercessor, and Lay Eucharistic Minister so that the voice Marion helped me find could be of service to God and his church. The confidence she helped me find led me to a term on the Diocesan Council and several terms on the BAC.

Each time I have stepped into a new role, I have recalled Marion's kind encouragement. She is one of many people who have come and gone from St. John that I consider our spiritual ancestors -- as important to our understanding of God's intentions for us as the men and women we read about in scripture. They worshipped here, raised their families and served this community. I had the privilege of knowing some of them and can still see their faces when I close my eyes. I feel their presence every time I enter here, and I thank God for their faith, their special gifts, their generosity and perseverance. They built this church, not once, but twice, because they firmly believed that Bandon needed an Episcopal presence, and because they had faith that one day each of us would enter here and carry on their work.

And I have faith that long after I am gone, the people of St. John will still be serving this community and the world.

Part of carrying on the work of this church is contributing financially – not just randomly tossing a few dollars in the plate from time to time or supporting one pet project or another – but committing to a weekly or monthly or yearly amount, however large or small, that the BAC and Finance Committee can count on to keep the lights on, the doors opened and our ministries alive.

I pledge to do my part, and hope you will too.
- Denise

A Special Gift from St. John's

I looked forward to receiving a card from Virginia Fitzgerald at birthday and anniversary times. Her beautiful handwriting was a true gift. I will miss getting those.

- Sally

This Gift from St. John

I treasure the peace and comfort St. John's gives me at Sunday service. Our sanctuary is beautiful and relaxing. I am thankful that Sally brought me to the Episcopal church.

The gift to our community that I am most proud of is the \$2000 donation we made this year to Ocean Crest elementary school kids for books. I have volunteered there for eight years now helping kids with reading and math. The need for one-on-one help is greatly needed and much appreciated by the principal and teachers. I really enjoy making a difference for the children who struggle with basic skills. Community resources were pooled this year to provide a book a month for every child enrolled. Over 250 children will benefit from this gift from St John.

As Junior Warden I enjoy making St John as welcoming and beautiful as possible. This takes time and financing from the congregation. Many of us volunteer to better St. John but nothing can happen without generous giving to continue the mission of St. John.

- Tom

I've Been on the Altar Guild for Almost 100 Years 😊

We used to spend considerable funds on flowers, especially when none of our gardens were producing and we didn't have any at the church. We even tried artificial flowers and were immediately shut down.

Then Caroline joined us! Every Sunday beautiful fresh flowers from her farm!

- Myra