



The Beacon

July 2015

St. Christopher's Community Church

7902 Steamboat
Island Road NW
Olympia, WA 98502
(360) 866-2111

Sunday Worship and
Sunday School
10:30 a.m.

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Did you know...

St. Christopher's has a Mission and Values statement? Here it is...

Why is this important?
Click this link for an article entitled, "[Why articulate your mission and vision](#)". Stephen Covey, author of many leadership books, argues that having a mission and vision is helpful not only for organizations but also teams, committees, and task forces and even families and individuals.



Our Purpose:

St. Christopher's lives, shares, celebrates, and grows in the transformative and inclusive love of God through Christ.

Our Values:

1. Jesus is the center of our community and shows us who God is.
2. God's empowering love offers renewal each day.
3. The diversity of all life is a gift of God.
4. Created by God, we are connected to all of God's creation.
5. Questions are part of a living faith.
6. The Spirit moves all to share their gifts.

Did you know...

St. Christopher's received a 'face lift'?

New paint on the exterior was completed at the end of June. Thanks to the project heads who helped get this accomplished and the painting company who made sure none of us had to climb really tall ladders!

Blueberry Bash Silent Auction — Treasures, Time, & Talents



We are now accepting donations for the 2016 Blueberry Bash Silent Auction. The theme this year is Treasures, Time and Talents. Do you have a treasure just lying around that would make a good donation? Do you love to bake and could donate a “dessert a month for a year”? Do you draw or paint or make jewelry? Baskets around a theme such as movies or babysitting have been in great demand in years past. Use your imagination! Donations accepted until August 12th. Contact Cindy Goldsmith if you have any questions.

Blueberry Bash is Sunday, August 16.

Open Hands Food Bank Garden

St Christopher's Open Hands Garden has been continuing to produce fresh vegetables in support of the Thurston County Food Bank through this unusual hot spell. Recently, 15 pounds of fresh carrots were delivered. Throughout the summer we will continue to plant and harvest, so please join us **Thursday evenings 5 pm to about 7 pm** to join the fellowship and making a contribution the community. No experience is necessary. Contact Bill Hanna for more information.

St. Christopher's Goes to the Griffin Neighborhood Picnic

This month St. Christopher's will staff a table at the annual Griffin Neighborhood Picnic on the afternoon of **Sunday July 26th**. We will have signs and pictures depicting church activities and have handouts to familiarize visitors, and Steamboat residents with our church and our commitment to the community. Stop by from **Noon to 4 pm** at the picnic location next to the Griffin fire department and driving range. Free hot dogs, hamburgers and soft drinks are available courtesy of the Griffin Neighborhood Association.

Go to <http://steamboatland.org/> or contact Bill Hanna for more information.



A Letter to St. Christopher's from Ann Greene.

Some of you have noticed Ann Greene's recent absence from St. Christopher's. She sent us this letter on May 25th. We regret its absence from the June edition of the Beacon.



Dear Fr. James, Deacon Patti, members of the Vestry, and St. Christopher's Church,

After several years of discernment, searching, praying, reading, and because of doctrinal considerations and my specific need to be with my family, I am being led by God to the Catholic Church. This has been a wonderful journey and has been building for some time, and the persistent longings have piled up. I know Jesus loves this church and the one I am going to.

My joy at this point is interlaced with sorrow at leaving this body of Christians in which I have known God's love, mercy, and grace....who have given me far more love and esteem than I have merited.

I am so grateful for Fr. James, the staff and everyone here for their hard work and dedication and will commit myself to praying for this church and for all of you. I give thanks for my involvement at St. Christopher's. It isn't easy for me to say I have to go....in fact, it hurts. But hopefully the pain will be softened when you learn I am going to settle at St. Michael Catholic Church. This is happening very quickly, on May 31st. My becoming Catholic isn't an abandonment of my Christian faith; it is the fulfillment of it, and I am truly excited about it.

In closing, I celebrate God's grace in this church. It has had a tremendous impact on me personally and spiritually. All of you and your friendship mean a great deal to me, and I will carry you in my affections, and my friendship will continue....I am still a part of the Steamboat Island Community. :)) We are, and always will be, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thank you for being a part of my journey....

Blessings,

Ann

We wish you well, Ann, as you make your new home in the Roman Catholic tradition and at St. Michael's. We look forward to seeing you at Blueberry Bash and at other community events. You remain in our hearts and prayers.

– Fr. James and the St. Christopher's community

“We are, and always will be, brothers and sisters in Christ.”



Hummingbird Rescue at St. Christopher's

By Marilyn Walther

Sunday, 5 July at St. Christopher's was like any other Sunday.... almost. Marty and I arrived a bit early; I checked last minute altar guild stuff and Marty starting folding the inserts and stuffing the bulletins.

"Is there an ornithologist in the congregation?" Marty asked.

"Why?" I answered his question with a question.

Because there was a hummingbird in the church, up on the top ledge of the front window!

Cindy Goldsmith mentioned opening the curtains, but the sun would beat straight in, heating up the church even more, and blinding people.

I sat up in the choir loft and could watch the poor little thing flying up from the window ledge, trying to get out. "God," I prayed, "please help this little one find its way out." Fr. James gave a sermon on having faith – how appropriate. I have FAITH that God will help this bird find its way out, so WHY isn't it happening?

At the announcements, Bonnie Finn brought our attention to the bird and Fr. James gave a prayer. Here's MORE faith. And the little tyke is STILL stuck up there. Marty said that he thought he'd go home right after church to get our limb cutters that he would then lash to the tool to put up banners to create a moveable perch for the bird way up there, and bring him down. This idea was based on an account from Deacon Patti, who'd get hummingbirds out of her garage by "offering" a broom for them to land on and then move them outside.

There was a rush of people to the front after service, everyone offering pieces of advice. I immediately opened the curtain, which, from the choir loft, did look like a hindrance to a little bird. Marty didn't go home but instead got the banner tool and tied on a red bandana, a suggestion from Deacon Patti, which Fr. James conveniently used in his children's sermon on "having faith".

I don't know if the bird actually landed on the bandana or took a "leap of faith", but next thing I knew was that it was clinging to the side of the open curtain. Slowly and carefully, I put my finger next to it and gently pried its talons off the curtain, and it attached to my finger. Carrying it outside, someone yelled to put it in the shade, so I lowered it under a bush and again gently pried it off my finger.

"there was a hummingbird in the church, up on the top ledge of the front window!"

Do you know what it's like to have faith? God doesn't necessarily wiggle the nose or snap the fingers to get things done. God places people where they are needed most and allows the work to be done, in community. It took all our ideas and concern for the rescue of this very small creature. And because God knows us well, he gave me a practice run the day before! I had to remove a hummingbird from the floor of our house, which seemed to be of particular interest to our dogs! I got to pet the back of one of these amazing little creatures!

We didn't need an ornithologist. We had Community!

“God places people where they are needed most and allows the work to be done, in community.”

Dinosaurs and Genesis: Further Thoughts

By Fr. James Thibodeaux

This last month I preached a sermon about the meaning of Genesis and the conflict between the scientific and Biblical accounts of the origin of the universe and of humanity. I labored to lift up Genesis as a sacred story truly revealing God, the nature of God, the nature of the universe, our purpose, and the meaning of our lives. Genesis, I said, answers the 'who' and 'why' questions. Science, on the other hand reveals to us 'how' the universe and humanity came to exist.

After a conversation or two with some of you and hearing some of your questions, I thought I would share some further thoughts.

Genesis Stories

The most common, though not unchallenged, theory of the authorship of Genes is the Wellhausen hypothesis also called the Documentary hypothesis. ([See Wikipedia article here](#)). It says that Genesis is a collection of stories told and handed down by the Hebrews, some of whom later became the Tribes of Israel. Two compilers, the Elohist and the Yahwist, collected these many stories into at least two separate works.

The compiler from the northern tribes called God “Elohim,” the God of the Mountains. It was common in that era and area to attribute deities to parts of creation – storms, fertility, the sea, etc.¹ And that makes sense. Look at how many times the story of God and God's people takes place on or around mountains – Noah and the Ark come to rest on Mt. Ararat, Abraham



The Garden of Eden as depicted in the first or left panel of [Bosch's The Garden of Earthly Delights Triptych](#).

almost sacrifices Isaac on Mt. Moriah, Moses at Mts. Sinai and Horeb etc. In fact, the Sermon on the Mount and the Transfiguration of Jesus on the mount are both allusions to this ancient tradition. We call the compiler of the traditions that call God “Elohim,” the “Elohist.”

In the southern part of Israel, probably from the tribe of Judah, was a Jewish compiler who collected stories from the southern tribes. This editor referred to God as Yahweh, translated simultaneously and mysteriously as “I-am-who-I-am / I-am-that-I-am /I-will-be-who-I-will-be.” The compiler of these traditions is called the “Yahwist.”

The works of the Yahwist and Elohist were combined with the historical works of the several historians collectively known as the Deuteronomists. (They created the multi-volume set, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel.) The person or persons who put these three collections together is called the “Priestly” writer, who probably wrote during the time of the Exile to Babylon and was influenced by the practical and theological needs of that day: “Where is God in our tragedy?” “Do we need the priesthood if we have no temple?” “What do we do now that we are in exile?”

Genesis 2 describes an intimate God who creates a garden, walking on the earth and causing things to grow. This is one of the Genesis creation stories and was contributed to Genesis by the Yahwist. Genesis 1 is the story of a cosmic and singular God who brings created order into existence out of chaos. It is a separate creation story of Genesis attributed to the Priestly writer.

Genesis and Meaning

The inclusion of both stories of Genesis reveals a people who are willing to find God’s truth in two competing explanations of origin. Instead of a theological war fighting over whether God’s interaction with creation is cosmic (Gen. 1) or intimate (Gen. 2), we find that Genesis upholds both. Beyond simply telling us where the universe came from, Genesis teaches that humans are given work to do in the created order *and* the imperative to rest from their work just as God did. Genesis tells us that the original nature of creation is good (Gen. 1), but that the evil we experience in life is in large part, though not solely, the result of our own choices (Gen. 2-3). And this good/evil conflict now provides an impetus for the readers to make purposeful decisions and take intentional action. Genesis calls us to be grateful for creation and also to yearn for its full wholeness. It exhorts us to be both reflective and active in the living of life.

What Genesis does not do well is explain *how* we got here. Genesis 1 and 2 are harmonized, but not in full agreement. Genesis 1 has some logical, though not poetic, improbabilities if not outright impossibilities - that vegetation is created before the sun, for instance (Gen. 1:9-18). And what about the dinosaurs?

“The inclusion of both stories of Genesis reveals a people who are willing to find God’s truth in two competing explanations of origin.”

Genesis and the Dinosaurs

Genesis has no record of the dinosaurs. It describes creation in a way that is not at all what evolution says. So what, as Christians are we to believe? My answer is Genesis.

No, I don't mean a literal six day creationism. In fact, I have more reason to believe science when it comes to evolutionary theory and dinosaurs than Genesis. And I do believe science in those respects. But here is where I believe Genesis. In the first two chapters alone, Genesis teaches that competing understandings of reality don't always mean one is true and one is false. For instance we believe in a cosmic *and* an intimate God, remember? I believe both Genesis 1 *and* Genesis 2, the Yahwist *and* the Priestly writers. And so I *also* believe evolution.

I still believe God is the ultimate origin from whence all things come. I believe the universe was meant to be good, but isn't always so. Now that's a Genesis thought. Strict evolutionary science can't make a judgement like that or give advice on what to do about it. When I try to make science provide moral judgement or give ethical advice I come up with things like eugenics (think [U.S.](#) and [Nazi](#) attempts at genetic selection), and self-preservation at all costs – definitely not what I think is good. Genesis, on the other hand, says God creates and preserves. Therefore, we should act according to God's purposes and trust God to create and preserve. Fear (i.e. holy awe) of God, not fear of (i.e. the terror of) extinction or entropy is our motivation. Genesis calls us to the faith that no matter what we experience or what we discover, God is everywhere and calling us to act according to the original purposes of creation. And those purposes are good, designed out of love.

So in the end, dinosaurs did exist. The universe was not established in 6 days. That's poetry – very beautiful, awe-inspiring, truth-revealing, sacred poetry. And our species likely evolved from another one. That's hard to swallow because it makes us feel a little less special and a lot more humble. But why should it surprise us that God would humble us? Yes, "Survival of the fittest" may explain our reality now and in the past. But all along, God has intended goodness for us and all Creation. God challenges us to follow a different path than that of our instincts for selfishness and hostility. We are created in the image of God – meant to be creative, to love and save life, to be compassionate and just, to reflect and act wisely. This is the truth of Genesis that evolution cannot and is not meant to tell.



***“God has
intended
goodness for us
and all
Creation.”***

**For further
contemplation
and study
about Genesis
and creation
stories:**

Read the Enûma Eliš ([click here](#) for the Wikipedia article and [here](#) for the full text). This was the creation story of ancient Babylon.

What parts of the Enûma Eliš do you find in the Bible, particularly Genesis? What parts are very different?

How did the Priestly writer of Genesis, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in exile in Babylon, redeem or correct some of the Babylonian Enûma Eliš text?

What message about God and reality is Genesis trying to give in agreement with the Enûma Eliš?

What messages of the Enûma Eliš are redeemed or corrected in Genesis?

The story of the writing of Genesis is a story of God taking what we have and understand, adopting it and redeeming it. Where else in the Bible do you see God adopting and redeeming?

¹For an example of Canaanite deities, refer to the story of Elijah. This is a story that takes place long after the time that Genesis covers. Elijah has a divine fight with the devotees of a Canaanite god the Bible calls “Baal.” This is likely the Canaanite god Hadad, the Lord of heaven (sky), storms, and fertility. Baal literally means “Lord”, and was the proper way to address Canaanite deities, since they believed as the Israelites did, that the proper name of (their) God was too holy to speak aloud. For the northern tradition this was a contest between the Lord of the sky and the Lord of the mountains – a very stormy contest indeed! And for southern Israelites it would have been a contest to see who really is the Lord of Heaven (that is of the sky and the entire cosmos, including fertility and destiny).

July Sunday Service Volunteer Schedule

	July 5	July 12	July 19	July 26
Greeter		Annette Edwards	Wyatt Finn	Bonnie Finn
Acolyte		Chris Kneeland	Karen Ehler	Annie Buel
Chalice Bearer				
Reader		Becky Finn	Ericka Boysen	Alredo Muñoz
Coffee Hour		Ericka Boysen, Linda Bradford, Carrie Bowen	Shari & Bob Buel, Sherry Christianson	Annette Edwards, Claire Elliott
Altar Guild	Marilyn Walther	Lisa Andrew	Bonnie Finn & Sherry Christianson	Cindy Pitcher & Annette Edwards
Altar Flowers	Vance Aeschlman		Soetenga Family for Carolyn's birthday	Kirkendall Family for anniversary and Keith's birthday

Contact Volunteer Connections at stchristophervolunteers@gmail.com to help fill in the rest of this schedule!

If you are unable to provide service on the day scheduled, please make arrangements to find a replacement or trade places with someone. Thank you!



St. Christopher's Community Church

Office Hours
Mondays, Tuesdays, & Thurs-
days, 2:30-5:30 p.m.— or by
appointment

360-866-2111
office@stchristopherolympia.org

Pastor & Priest
Fr. James Thibodeaux

Sunday Worship Hours
Worship and Sunday School at
10:30 a.m., with nursery care