

August 7, 2022

Happy Fifteenth Anniversary, Sophia Christi!

I've been musing about this fifteenth anniversary for weeks now, pouring over photos and sorting through files, remembering people and events that helped shape the history we celebrate this month. I calculated about 175 newsletters were written and sent during this time, though that first year is a little sketchy. In those first few months following ordination (July 28, 2007) I was just surprised people kept showing up for Mass! Someone decided that having a potluck dinner after the liturgy would help people get to know one another, so the potluck became a lovely part of our tradition. We had many meetings in those early years, both in Portland and Eugene, as it became evident people wanted an ongoing faith community served by a woman priest even though most were also members of a traditional parish. In those initial meetings people gave voice to their hopes and dreams for a community that welcomed their ideas and input into liturgy, allowed for creative participation, and built on the insights of progressive theologians. When we came together for a community-wide retreat in 2009 to reflect on our mission, it was clear that "inclusivity" and "welcome" were foundational values for everyone there, and we hoped to provide a spiritual home for people alienated from the institutional church.

Throughout these 15 years hundreds have come through the doors of Sophia Christi. Nearly 400 remain on our mailing list and receive this newsletter every month. When Covid interrupted our monthly gatherings in Eugene and Portland and forced us to cancel the annual retreats and picnics, it inadvertently launched us into the wider (and more inclusive) Zooming world. More people from the region (as well as people from out-of-state) are now able to participate in our monthly activities and online conversations than would ever have been possible before. Covid changed us, and it completely altered what was required of me and the Council. After two and a half years of adjustments, with steep learning curves throughout, we need more involvement from members of the community going forward. Technical and communication skills are especially needed in this new and ongoing virtual environment.

So, as we turn this corner and move into our sixteenth year, I welcome all of you into this Spirit-led adventure. Where (and how) are we going, Sophia Christi? I see us living and moving together in some mysterious way, led onward by Sophia, following the voice of that reality we name 'Wisdom of Christ', 'Sophia Christi'. During the pandemic members of the parish council have demonstrated a tireless commitment to the vision at the heart of this community. They have worked to make sure our monthly Masses continue by learning and implementing new technical skills, offering new opportunities to connect through social media, and maintaining a virtual social hour each month. They have generously given their time, skills, and energy to ensuring Sophia Christi continues and grows through the changes imposed by the Covid plague. I firmly believe the *Being* that is 'Wisdom' in Proverbs 8, the *Being* translated as 'Sophia' by the Greeks, is Real, and She is leading us, and all small bands of Earth-lovers and Wisdom-seekers. She connects all nodes of light in the great web of Creation, and ushers us toward a large-scale, world-wide transformation for the good of all beings, and the planet itself. I think that's why we're here, Sophia Christi, to be one node of light in that great Web of being.

So, what gifts do you have to offer, you who are reading these words? You are part of this great adventure. The non-profit that is Sophia Christi has room for you. If there is something you wish to contribute, and Sophia, the playful one, is nudging you to find a way, listen to Her. She will help you and guide you on the path that is yours.

Readings for Liturgies can be found on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>.

Upcoming Events:

Online Mass Schedule Continues This Month

Mass via Zoom will be Saturday, **August 13**, at **5:00pm**. Our Masses are online every 2nd Saturday-of-the-month.

Zoom Invitations for August Liturgy

If you have regularly participated in Sophia Christi liturgies or have recently requested a Zoom invitation to our online Masses, you will automatically receive a Zoom invitation this month. Invitations will be sent Friday, August 12. If you have not been involved in the past but would like to participate in the online liturgies, let Toni know by responding to this email no later than Wednesday, August 10.

Pastoral Update

Join Us This Month For Our August Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together

This month's Sophia Christi Zoom Get Together is on Saturday, August 27, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. These relaxed, informal gatherings are a wonderful opportunity for us to come together and enjoy each other's company. All are welcome and there are no expectations around participation. Toni will send the Zoom link out the Friday before our gathering. Please contact Josie via email if you have any questions (Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com). See you on the 27th!

Sophia Christi Prayer Vigil to End Gun Violence

We are pleased to announce that Sophia Christi will hold a prayer vigil to end gun violence on Thursday, August 18th, between 7:00 and 8:00 pm. This will be a communal activity practiced individually rather than in one another's presence. During that time we invite you to light a candle and spend some time in prayer and quiet reflection, knowing that our parish community will be together in spirit. The idea for the vigil sprang from our May Zoom Get Together during a discussion about the recent Buffalo and Texas shootings and our shared desire to engage in spirit-driven action to end gun violence. If you have questions, please contact Josie at Josephine.miranda64@gmail.com. –Josie Miranda, Sophia Christi Councilmember.

Fifteenth Anniversary Commemorative Booklet

If you go to our website—sophiachristi.org—and click on the cross icon beneath the column “In Our Community” on the Homepage, it will take you to the booklet created by John Coutu specifically for our 15th Anniversary celebration. John has taken photos at most of our anniversary events, and at picnics, and potlucks. We also have a few pictures taken by others, even a couple from our first community-wide retreat at Silver Falls. Over countless hours he curated hundreds of photos and created an online booklet you can download and print if you are interested. We hope you enjoy viewing some of Sophia Christi's history through the faces, ministries and activities that have graced our community over the years.

Staying Connected – Zoom Gatherings and Facebook Options

In addition to our monthly Masses and social gatherings over Zoom, we also have the Sophia Christi Facebook page. You can join the page and check for postings about online courses and other offerings, as well as post information you would like to share. FB also provides the option of hosting a private group discussion in one of its meet-up rooms. If anyone would like more information about this

resource, or if you are interested in facilitating a discussion with other Sophia Christi members please contact Anna Lankutis lankutisa@gmail.com, or Rachel Wheeler rastonwinchel@hotmail.com.

Care Team

If you are interested in being a part of the Care Team or have a need that the Care Team might respond to, please contact Kathleen Glover gloverconnection@yahoos.com or Pastor Toni.

Council Member Reflection

Happy Anniversary, Sophia Christi!

Pastor Toni has shepherded the congregations of Portland and Eugene for 15 years, striving to provide a Faith Sanctuary that is inclusive and welcomes all. True hospitality in the spirit of the early church where the focus was on community and care for one another, often with women leading the way. Many have found a welcoming and safe home within the arms of the Sophia Christi community for 15 years and my prayer is that the Community will continue, creatively, compassionately, and vibrantly to pave a way for all seeking a safe liturgical sanctuary. Congratulations Toni, and may you be richly blessed in all the work you do and have done on behalf of Sophia Christi. – Anna Lankutis, Council Member

Member's Corner – Sharing Reflections

This space in the newsletter is available for sharing our stories, insights, and experiences. Consider sending a short paragraph of your own for inclusion in next month's edition. Deadline is March 28 for the April newsletter.

Website

Outreach has always been part of the mission of Sophia Christi and our website is an important aspect of that mission. The web address is www.sophiachristi.org

A continuing pastoral invitation—In the normal course of life I have the opportunity to meet with you personally when a pastoral issue arises, or you want/need spiritual support. But we are somewhere outside the range of 'normal' now. Please let me know if I can assist you in this strange time we are living through. I am still available by phone (503-286-3584) and you can still reach me through this email address. Feel free to use either one.

When I became an ordained priest, I had to figure out how to live into that role and responsibility. There were a lot of opinions about what was needed, but everyone seemed amazingly patient and forgiving as I sought to find my footing. People who came to Mass, stayed for potlucks, and attended community meetings showed remarkable loyalty toward the vision emerging around this new thing happening, this community with a woman pastor. But I knew very little about being a pastor, so I instinctively relied on partnership and collaboration to build community and create a tangible presence in the church, and in the world. This community was to be a gateway for spiritual connections with others wanting to grow in love and compassion while working for justice and helping to heal a fractured church and a broken society. Everyone's voices, abilities, needs, skills and insights are essential in growing a community. Pope Francis has codified this maxim by setting aside two years for a church-wide synod process that underscores the need for each person to recognize their important role in creating a just, inclusive and welcoming church. What is true for the institutional church (and society, as well) is also true for our small, growing, Sophia Christi community.

Over and over in this newsletter I have wanted to fill the need for hope—my own and yours—in these incredibly painful 'dark ages' we are passing through. And I intend to

continue, bringing Scripture to bear on both faith and hope, underscoring our connectedness during this intense and stressful transitional time. But today, in this month celebrating our fifteen years as a community, I am reaching out to you who are reading these words. I want to say thank you for being here, for your many comments of appreciation over the years, and for your continuing presence and prayers. In the Gospel for next Sunday, the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, (and our 15th Anniversary celebration) Jesus says, "I have come to set the world on fire." Well, we certainly have experience with a world on fire these days! Fire is destructive but also transformative, and it is associated with love, with passion and with compassion. Teilhard de Chardin said: "Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, [humans] will have discovered fire!"

May it be so. The forces of salvific thinking must grow to counteract the dark powers dominating our world. May Sophia Christi be one small part in the harvesting of justice-making love energy. May we continue to be a radiant light node in the web of Creation, assisting with that discovery of transformative fire.

Happy Anniversary, dear Sophia Christi,

Toni