



The SPIRE 2019

*The Newsletter of the
Episcopal Church of the Ascension,
Sierra Madre, California*



DECEMBER

Upcoming Events

December 7th – 8:30am—Noon
Advent Quiet Day

December 8th – Noon/Library
Parish Ministry Council Meeting

December 14th – 7pm
Christmas Season Music Concert @
Church of the Ascension

December 17th – 7pm/Hall
Vestry Meeting

December 22nd – 7pm
SM Candlelight Walk

From the Rector

It has been a little over a year since the Camp Fire devastated the communities of Paradise, Magalia, and Concow in Northern California. For the past year, I have sat in on Zoom conference calls almost every week with those Episcopalians working toward recovery. The group includes the bishop, diocesan staff, the priests and deacons in the various communities affected, and an assortment of willing and dedicated lay people.

If asked before the fire, not one of them would have imagined what this past year has brought. Yet they have teamed up to help where they could and have served to the best of their abilities. Again this week as I sat listening to them, and knowing their stories, I couldn't help but reflect that God is able to use people who are unlikely and perhaps ill-equipped to live the message of hope and redemption.



Certainly this is one of the themes of Advent and Christmas. God calls upon a young woman to bear the Christ Child. God calls upon a righteous man to stand beside her. God calls shepherds to witness to the birth. God calls wise foreigners to seek out the newborn Christ. Unlikely, and perhaps ill-equipped people, and yet God has a plan. This Advent, let us ask ourselves – “How is God calling me to live the message of hope and redemption?”

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services

Tuesday, December 24th

- ◇ Family Service & Pageant 5:00pm
- ◇ Hymns & Carols at 10:30pm
- ◇ Midnight Mass at 11:00pm

Wednesday, December 25th

Mass at 11:00am
NO CHILDCARE

MAB+

Vestry Nominations Due Now!

See article on page 3..

November Pledge Payment Snapshot



2019 Budget \$220,881

YTD Budget: \$202,474

YTD Actual: \$190,572

Difference: \$-11,902



Hillsides

2019 Ascension Christmas Outreach

For Outreach this Christmas, we will again be working with Hillsides.

This year Hillsides has asked us to focus exclusively on providing food for the people they support. We are being asked to buy \$25.00 Ralphs / Food 4 Less / Kroger gift cards.

If you prefer, you can donate cash (and we'll purchase the gift cards) or checks made out to Hillsides.

Please bring your donations to Ascension by Sunday December 22.

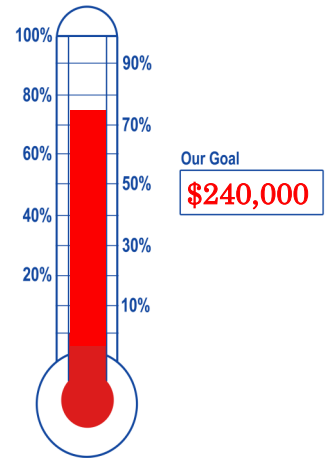


2020 Stewardship Update

As we begin to close out 2019 with holidays and busy family gatherings, please remember that we are also preparing for 2020 and need your stewardship pledges! To date we have received **\$177,784** against our target of \$240,000. Please remember the final number is needed so that we can budget for 2020. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or any other vestry member.

Happy Advent!
Gordon Tomaske, Sr. Warden

Thank You to those who have already pledged!



The 11th Annual Women's Room Thanksiving Luncheon was the highest attended in event history. The mild weather allowed many women to be able to walk to First Lutheran to enjoy a plentiful meal, with enough for leftovers. This year, we served 47 women, 12 Women's Room volunteers and 9 staff members, for a total of 68 people!

Special thanks to everyone who participated in some way. Thanks to those who: donated money; cooked or purchased food--especially those who picked up last-minute items; transported supplies and food; decorated and set-up the hall & kitchen; heated and prepped food for serving; served food in the buffet line; refilled drinks; served pie; cleaned up; transported supplies back to Ascension; and cleaned up the Ascension kitchen and put supplies away. We had over 40 volunteers, including Ascension families and their friends.

Thank you to the following families, many of whom participated in multiple ways indicated above: **Adolphi, Ammon, Ary, Bamberger, Besocke, Blank-Cheng, Callihan, Clifton, Cundiff, Dougall, Duffy, Ford, Gomez, Hanson, Holl, Gorman, Johnson, Keith, Meehan, Mulleavy, Ostrye, Outhouse, Pinon, Ramirez, Rhodus, Smith-Kellock, Snicienski-Watt, Wagner, Walton, Windell, Woods**, and others we may have overlooked.

Each of the guests was able to leave the luncheon with the following:

- Enough additional food, including dessert and candy, for another meal in a sealable take-away container
- A festive bag filled with cookies (bags filled by a group of teen volunteers)
- A bag with handles containing Christmas/Holiday cards and envelopes (donated by many of you), stamps and a pen prepared by our Outreach Ministry Leader, Scott Callihan and family
- A heavy duty reusable plastic bag with handles to hold their items and keep them dry.

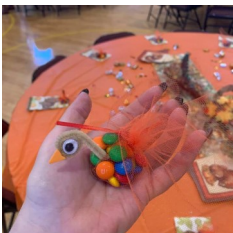


Friends in Deed took all the leftovers back to the Women's Room, though due to the increase in attendance, there weren't many! Your gift to others continued to give even after the Thanksgiving Luncheon.

Marlene Martinez, the Women's Room Program Director, was so pleased with the volume of food and number of volunteers. She indicated that this is one event she never has to worry about because we always show up with plenty of each.

A good day was had by all. Once again, you made a difference.

Respectfully submitted with love and appreciation,
Maggie Outhouse and Nicole Hansen





“When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom, let it be.”

Advent is a time when we prepare our hearts to welcome Jesus. Although we observe this holy season every year, the question remains baffling: How can we adequately prepare for our Messiah, for the Word made Flesh who came into the world to save us? It's a tall order, and we know that even the best preparation is only a pittance compared to what Jesus has done and continues to do for us.

The good news is that God can do amazing things with our pittance. When we approach Advent with faith, hope, and repentance, we can work toward making straight the path of the Lord. Plus, God has given us the wonderful model of the Blessed Virgin Mary to prepare for Jesus. During that first Advent before the birth of Jesus, Mary prepared with unmatched faith, grace, and love. Here are four things we can learn from her actions during the first Advent.

1. Be willing to say, “Yes”

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary at the Annunciation, Mary was a young, unmarried woman. She was certainly a person of great faith, and her life was a holy one. But what God was asking her to do was unprecedented—and risky. It was scandalous for a young woman to be pregnant out of wedlock. Mary trusted, however, that God would make this remarkable event happen and sustain her through it. This trust allowed her to give her “Yes” to God: “Let it be with me according to your word.”

2. Look for the little ways you can help others.

During the Annunciation, Mary learned of another miraculous pregnancy: that of her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was much older and was believed to be barren before she carried John the Baptist in her womb. When Mary heard about her cousin, she immediately left to help her. Journeying far away to help a relative would be a challenge for anyone, but it was especially challenging for a young, pregnant woman who had just received an extraordinary vocation from God. Yet Mary did not think of herself—her first thought was to help someone in need.

3. Glorify God in all you do.

Mary also taught us a great lesson about humility that first Advent. It would no doubt be tempting to puff yourself up a bit if you have just been given the news that you are to become the Mother of God. But Mary did just the opposite. She recognized that it was God who was working in her. Her understanding and sentiments are clear in the beautiful prayer of the Magnificat when she said, “My soul magnifies the Lord” and went on to proclaim, “For the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name” and to praise all his works.

4. Make the best of what you have.

The familiar Christmas story tells us that there was no room for Mary and Joseph at the inn when it was time for Jesus to be born, and so Mary had to give birth to Jesus among the animals and lay him in a manger. This was certainly not an easy way to give birth and welcome the Messiah into the world. Yet Mary never uttered a word of complaint, and she made the site of Jesus’ birth into one we remember today in the beauty of the Crèche. Despite not having much, Mary persevered in faith and made the best of it, resulting in a gift that continues to this day.

This Advent season, may we follow Mary’s example of humble faith. As Mary bore the Incarnate Word, let us also prepare a place in our hearts to carry Jesus.

Live well, live blessed, live like Mary,
Deacon Ed

VESTRY NOMINATIONS DUE NOW

Each January at our annual meeting, we elect three new members of the Vestry, the body within the congregation that, with the Rector, leads the parish. Vestry members are elected for three year terms. Vestry meets once a month throughout the year. Additional meetings (and committee meetings) are held as needed. A Vestry member must be willing to accept the responsibility of regular attendance and be willing to serve on one or more committees.

Now is the time for the parish to nominate next year's Vestry candidates. According to the Diocesan guidelines, a Vestry nominee must be 16 years of age or older and be a confirmed communicant in good standing in the Episcopal Church. He or she must also attend church services at Ascension regularly and be a pledging contributor to the parish. A member of the Vestry may not be a member of any other church.

Names of nominees should be submitted to Father Michael or any Vestry member by December 25th.

MUSIC

Check out the MUSIC happenings
at Ascension this month!



ADVANCE RESERVATIONS MAY BE MADE
FOR THE CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT
ON DECEMBER 14 BY EMAIL AT
PARISH@ASCENSION-SIERRAMADRE.COM
OR BY CALLING THE PARISH OFFICE AT
626-355-1133.

A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS WILL GO TO
THE MUSIC PROGRAM AT ASCENSION.

a Christmas Concert with Damian McGinty

Featuring Music from *Santa Fake*

Dec 5 - Kansas City, MO
Dec 6 - Denver, CO
Dec 8 - Lakewood, OH
Dec 9 - Lake Orion, MI
Dec 10 - Duluth, GA
Dec 11 - Philadelphia, PA
Dec 18 - Los Angeles, CA



damianmcginty.com

Ticket link:

<https://a-christmas-concert-with-damian-mcginty.ticketleap.com/a-christmas-concert-with-damian-mcginty---los-angeles-ca/>

A Classical Christmas



AlmaNova Duo

Jessica Pierce, flute

Almer Imamovic, guitar

Saturday, December 14th
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
7:00PM

Tickets \$10/child \$15/adult - RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

25 E. Laurel Ave. Sierra Madre - www.almanovaduo.com - (626) 325-3553

Made with PosterMyWall.com

Santa Claus is coming to town... and so is Damian McGinty!

***HE WILL BE AT CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION ON
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18 AT 7:30PM***

Celebrate the holiday season this year with the mellifluous tones of the charming Irish singer/songwriter/actor on this short but sweet Christmas tour. Be sure to warm up your vocal cords before you arrive because you won't be able to resist singing along! The evening will feature music from the family Christmas movie **Santa Fake**, in which Damian stars in the lead role of Pat Keeley, as well as other traditional Yuletide favorites and Damian's own Christmas originals. Come prepared for an evening of joy, holiday cheer and all the fun and festivity of the most wonderful time of the year. Until then, enjoy the **Santa Fake** film trailer here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0irJzhkNbAw>

NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Have you perhaps noticed a new face in the choir? Or thought you heard the glimmer of a younger voice in the loft? Well, you were correct ~ Lilah Fontenot, high school senior, has joined the ranks of our alto section, and we're overjoyed! Welcome, Lilah!

Later this month a second generation of choristers will be swelling our ranks as they are visiting for the holidays. The Noecker/Rasmussen daughters ~ sopranos Julia, Lindy, and Betsy ~ will be coming from the East Coast; tenor Matthew Ozawa, son of Andrea Booth and Joe Ozawa, is traveling from Ann Arbor where he enjoys a career as opera director at the University of Michigan. So thrilled to have these young people with us!

A synopsis of our anthems for Advent and Christmas include:

December 1 – *Hark, the Glad Sound, the Savior Comes* by David Thorne and Godfrey Ridout's familiar *O Come, Divine Messiah*

December 8 – Martin How's *Advent Message*; during communion, *Remember, Christians All* by Thomas Ravenscroft

December 15 – Gaudete Sunday – Rejoice!

An exquisite publication I recently discovered, *The Desert Shall Rejoice* by Malcolm Archer, written for choir, organ, and oboe, will receive its Ascension premiere. Sean Dougall will be on hand to present the oboe part. During communion, Paul Ladd, Jr.'s *Drop Down Dew* will be sung.

December 22 – in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The glorious *Magnificat in A Major* by Herbert Sumsion and *Ave Maria* by Adolph Lehmann

December 24 – after a month of waiting, Christmas Eve arrives! A quartet will provide anthems for the 5:00 service: *On Christmas Night All Christians Sing* arranged by Ian Higginson and the lovely French carol melody, *Fragrance, Thou Who Wast Rich* arranged by Charles H. Kitson. At 10:30 we gather for Hymns and Carols, our interactive service of Christmas carols sung by the congregation and anthems sung by the festival choir (resident choristers, quartet, and guests), followed by the 11:00 Christ Mass. Anthems will include:

- *Hodie Christus Natus Est* – Healey Willan
- *On Christmas Night All Christians Sing* – Sussex Carol, arranged by Ian Higginson
- *Thou Who Wast Rich* – *Fragrance*, French Carol Melody, arranged by Charles H. Kitson
- *A Spotless Rose* – Herbert Howells
- *In the Bleak Midwinter* – Harold D. Darke
- *Go, Tell It On the Mountain* – newly-composed by John Abdenour (not what you'd expect – come prepared for a wonderful surprise!)
- *What Sweeter Music* – John Rutter

All are encouraged to share in this glorious celebration of the birth of our Lord.

December 29 – Christmas 1

Nativity Carol – John Rutter

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly – Polish Carol, arranged by David Willcocks

The choir and I are privileged to share in your celebration of this holy season. A very blessed Advent and joyful Christmas to each of you!

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist



Believe it or not we are at that time of the year again where your help and contributions allow the Altar Guild to decorate our beautiful space. We count on your generosity to make this happen. Remember during Advent there are no flowers except for the third Sunday.

Envelopes will be available soon. They will be placed at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall. Thanking you in advance for your making this another beautiful Christmas season.

**For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Sunday, December 15th.
St. Anne's Altar Guild**



An Opportunity for Giving

Please consider making a contribution to our music program for the special music we enjoy here at Ascension.

Donation envelopes will be available at the back of the church beginning the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Sunday, December 15th.



Advent Quiet Day

Saturday, December 7 ~ 8:30am—Noon

I am excited to announce that on Saturday December 7, I will be leading a quiet day (or quiet morning) as a part of Ascension's Advent devotion. The church will be open to provide a space for prayer, meditation, the examen, lectio divina, the rosary, the holy hour and icon prayer; there will be instructions and supplies to explore any of these devotional practices which might intrigue you. The day will start at 8:30am with morning prayer and conclude at noon with the Eucharist. The church will be open all morning so please stop by, whether it be for a few minutes or a few hours, and enjoy a respite in this sacred space as we prepare our selves for the birth of Christ.

Tim Hamlin, Diocesan Discerner

Holiday Shopping Party at Savor the Flavor Saturday, November, 23



It's Christmas Pageant Time! Rehearsal Schedule

December 1- 9 AM & 11:30 AM

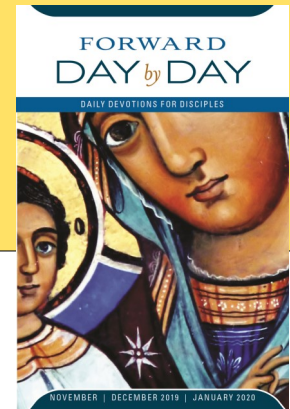
December 8- 9 AM & 11:30 AM

December 15 - 9 AM & 11:30 AM

December 22 - 9 AM & 11:30 AM

December 24th

- Call Time-4:15 PM
- Photo of participants-4:30 PM
- Pageant begins at 5 PM



Pick up a copy of the new Forward Movement Day by Day booklet. Copies can be found at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

A \$2 donation is requested.

WE ARE HOSTED!

Thanks to the hospitality of six hosts, we will be restarting House Church on Wednesday evening January 15.

So, put the following dates on your January – June 2020 calendar:

January 15—Cox Family
 February 19—Meehan Family
 March 18—Copeland Family
 April 15—Hanson Family
 May 20—McGuffie Family
 June 17—Jean Rowe

Note: We are meeting on Wednesdays this year so that choir members can participate.

I am so pleased to report this good news. What a great way to start the secular new year. See you at the Cox family home this January.

Jean Rowe



A little humor to share from the 2019 Church Pension Group calendar.



St. Swithin's

by the Rev. Jay Sidebotham

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Our vision is that *The Episcopal Church of the Ascension* serves Christ today for those
who will come to know Christ tomorrow.

WORSHIP, FORMATION, PASTORAL CARE, FELLOWSHIP, OUTREACH, PRESENCE
25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024 ~ 626-355-1133 www.ascension-sierramadre.com

DECEMBER 2019

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 ADVENT BEGINS 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass	2 Fr. Bamberger Out of Office / Clergy Support Group	3 10am Prayer in the Library 2pm—2:50pm Gooden Mindfulness Class/Hall	4 8:45am—1:30pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall	5 7am Mass 8:15am—Gooden Chapel w/Eucharist 10:15am Staff Mtg 9am Forum 3pm- 6pm-Organist Rehearsal/Church 7:30pm—Choir Rehearsal/Hall	6 Spiritual Direction Rectors Office 10:30am Private	7 Advent Quiet Day Church/Hall 8:30am—Noon
8 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass Noon—PMC Mtg/Library Christmas Pageant Rehearsals 9am & 11:30am	9 8:15am—Gr 5-8 Gooden Chapel 9am—Gr K-4 Gooden Chapel 2pm—2:50pm Gooden Mindfulness Class/Hall Pasadena Photochromers Meeting (private) Hawks Hall 6:30pm—9:30pm	10 10am Prayer in the Library	11	12 7am Mass 8:15am—Gooden Chapel w/Eucharist 9am Forum 3pm- 6pm-Organist Rehearsal/Church 7:30pm—Choir Rehearsal/Hall	13 Piano Rehearsal Hall 4pm—6pm Private	14 Piano Recital Hall 1:30pm—5pm Private Christmas Season Music Concert & Reception Church/Hall 7pm *Entry Fee*
CARPET REPLACEMENT PARISH OFFICES						
15 Clergy—McGuffie 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass 11:45am Discernment Cmt Mtg/Library Christmas Pageant Rehearsals 9am & 11:30am	16 8:15am—Gr 5-8 Gooden Chapel 9am—Gr K-4 Gooden Chapel 2pm—2:50pm Gooden Mindfulness Class/Hall	17 10am Prayer in the Library 2pm—2:50pm Gooden Mindfulness Class/Hall Daisy Troop Meeting Hall 4pm-5:30pm Vestry Mtg Hall/7pm	18 8:45am—1:30pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall Damian McGinty Concert & Reception Church/Hall 4pm Setup 7:30pm Start *Tickets Required*	19 7am Mass 8:15am—Gooden Chapel 9am Forum 10:15am Staff Mtg 3pm- 6pm-Organist Rehearsal/Church 7:30pm—Choir Rehearsal/Hall	20	21 Greening of the Church 8am—Noon SMM Music Recital Church/Hall 2pm—6pm Private
Fr. Bamberger Away						
22 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass Christmas Pageant Rehearsals 9am & 11:30am	23 Pasadena Photochromers Meeting (private) Hawks Hall 6:30pm—9:30pm	24 Christmas Pageant Call Time 4:15pm Photos 4:30pm Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services Tuesday, December 24th ◇ Family Svc & Pageant 5:00pm ◇ Hymns & Carols at 10:30pm ◇ Midnight Mass at 11:00pm Wednesday, December 25th Mass at 11:00am *NO CHILDCARE*	25	26	27	28
Christmas Pageant Rehearsals 9am & 11:30am SM Candlelight Walk 7pm						
29 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass	30 Deacon Ed Away	31 10am Prayer in the Library	NEW YEARS DAY OFFICE CLOSED			

Spire Creator: Kim Lumino, Parish Administrator