

# The SPIRE

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



## DECEMBER 2015

### Upcoming Events

November 29th –  
**Advent Begins**

December 4th & 5th –  
**Diocesan Convention**

December 5th – Parish Work Party

December 13th – Youth Group  
Christmas Tree Trimming Party

December 15th – 7:00pm/Hall  
Vestry Meeting

December 19th– Church Greening

December 20th – 7:00pm  
Sierra Madre Candlelight Walk

### Christmas Services

Thursday, December 24th

Family Service & Pageant  
5:00pm

Hymns & Carols at 10:30pm

Midnight Mass at 11:00pm

Friday, December 25th

Mass at 11:00am

December 27th – Noon/Library  
Parish Ministry Council Meeting

### 2015

### Pledge Payment Snapshot

January - November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015



2015 Budget Amount:

\$235,000

YTD Budget: \$217,087

YTD Actual: \$222,713

### FROM THE RECTOR

As I write this, Advent is about to begin. I realize that with all the distractions and busyness, I sometimes have a hard time engaging in the season itself. For me, Sundays are the best. I love the Advent hymns. Saying and singing the Great Litany is something wonderful and moving. But the weekdays of Advent seem to have another agenda altogether.

This year, our children are starting off the season by making their own Advent calendars. There are several devotional materials available as well. Forward Movement Press each year brings out a new resource. This year it focuses on the Magnificat. My friend and colleague Bruce Linsenmayer along with Episcopal Relief and Development has come up with a devotional (and PRACTICAL) approach called a Season of Resilience.

(<http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploads/EducationFileModel/159/file/SoR-fullpage.pdf>)



It is a one week at a time routine of accumulating everything needed for a home disaster preparedness cache. Theologically, this is brilliant. Advent

is all about getting ready.

I pray that this season of Advent will be one of joy and anticipation for all of us.

**Blessings, MAB+**

## PAJAMA DRIVE

### DECEMBER OUTREACH

We are gathering new Pajamas for Newborns and Toddlers to be donated to the Angel Interfaith Network. This is a worthy organization that assists new moms or dads with babies and/or toddlers that are discharged from LA County/USC Medical Center. They are based at the hospital and work with chaplains and staff to meet unique physical and spiritual needs of patients and families. They assist families with food, transportation, shelter, and baby supplies and are in need of new:

- Baby Sleepers
- Baby Blanket Sleepers
- Boys and Girls Pajamas up to size 7-8



*Please bring your new items to church on or before Sunday, December 20.*

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon Women's Room of Friends In Deed

Ascension served 48 guests, 12 volunteers, and 4 Friends in Deed (FID) staff at the Women's Room Thanksgiving Luncheon on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Historic First Lutheran Church in Pasadena. As Marlene Martinez, Program Director from FID stated in her email to the FID Director and others, "A special Thank You to Church of the Ascension for providing such a delicious heartfelt meal. From turkey to dessert, ... we were all stuffed!"



Everything appeared to go very well. The food you prepared *was* delicious, beautifully presented and delivered to Ascension on time. The imaginative fall centerpieces created for each table by a family at Ascension and positioned on a festive runner supplied by FID were the focus of each table. They were surrounded by additional decorations in fall colors and lots and lots of Hersey's Chocolate Kisses. At the end of the meal, each centerpiece was awarded to one lucky lady at each table. Our Ascension kids created colorfully decorated little turkeys as table gifts for each lady. You could hear the ladies talking about the little turkeys amongst themselves, admiring the work our kids invested in their creations. The room looked bright and light and touched with the colors of fall and Thanksgiving.

I believe that it was a happy time for all, including those of us from Ascension who served. Sounds of laughter and conversation were accompanied by gratitude for the good meal and the requests for seconds. We supplied take-out boxes for the ladies in preparation for their requests to leave with those Thanksgiving leftovers that we all appreciate. Perhaps they appreciated them even more. In addition to the leftovers, each lady left with an incredibly festive small bag of homemade cookies and fall candies decorated with care and attention to detail prepared by two Ascension contributors.



From appetizers to desserts plus everything it takes to set a table, decorate a room and serve a meal prepared with love and gratitude, you helped make a difference for 64 people. Thank you for all that you contributed. The gifts you offered were clearly from your hearts and were received in kind.

A special thank you to all the Ascension individuals and families who contributed their time, food, products, money, a willingness to transport food and/or to serve at the luncheon plus all the prayers necessary to make this happen (which, basically, means everyone).

Anne Shirvanian

Ascension Youth (Creators of Individual  
Little Turkey Table Gifts)

Ascension Youth (Excellent Pie Creators)

Beverly Clifton

Chris Watt

Collette Ostrye

Daughters of the King (Great Pies)

Deacon Ed Sniecienski

Dee Dee and Grace

Diane Rhodus

Fr. Michael and Debbie Bamberger

Henry and Kathleen Tobin

Jan Keppler-Kudla

Jean Rowe

Jessica Meehan

Jobi Harrell

Karen Mooradian

Lisa Reed (Provided the  
foundation for this year's  
WR Luncheon)

Liz and Scott Callihan

Lois Walton

Louise Farrow

Lynne Holl

Maggie Outhouse

Marilyn Burgeson

Mike Beach

Pat Woods

Richele Duffy and Family

Sandra Dickey

Susan Beach

Susan Clifton

Tara and Chris Allen and Family

Ted and Kathy Calleton



The best and brightest Thank You goes to God. He put this in our path and gave us the opportunity to give to others. It was a good day.

*Respectfully submitted, Maggie Outhouse*



Hosted by the  
Daughters of the King

Pie Baking Party for the  
Women's Room Thanksgiving Luncheon  
Sunday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>



*Please join us for a Special Coffee Hour on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> (Rose Sunday) to bid a fond farewell to our dear Anne Shirvanian. She will be moving away from us after many years and will be dearly missed by her Altar Guild sisters. This is everyone's opportunity to send her off with our love and best wishes.*

*Coffee Hour hosted by St. Anne's Altar Guild*

As we continue our discussion about addiction and recovery, there are certain assumptions that are worth thinking about. During the holidays, we'll probably at one point or another find ourselves overly indulging in one thing or another. It's important to remember that human beings are by nature addictive. We all have attachments that do us more harm than good, and we would benefit from breaking away from them.

Early in recovery, I learned the phrase "stinking thinking." Certain addictions are more obvious than others, but aren't we all addicted to our own habitual ways of doing things, our ways of thinking, and how we navigate the world? Do you drive home the same way every day? It's almost impossible to see these habits since they are too often disguised as something else. It's important to learn that we can't heal what we don't acknowledge.

Addiction isn't just an individual affliction. All societies are addicted to themselves and create deep co-dependency on their addictions. This is painfully obvious in today's political climate. In every culture there are shared and agreed upon addictions. They can be hard to heal and certainly stinking thinking keeps us stuck. The problem is that we have all agreed to be compulsive about the same things and blind to the same problems. For example, as Americans we are addicted to oil and our definition of democracy; "our way of doing things, our way of thinking is the only way." The poor are addicted to powerlessness, the rich to entitlement, and sadly, many of us are addicted to superiority. Have you ever taken a moment to consider how we are viewed on the broader world stage based on our co-dependences and particularly unique addictions? There seems to be plenty of stinking thinking to go around. Regardless of race, creed, political affiliation, or nationality, universal addiction is our personal pattern of thinking. We are all equally guilty of cultural lies to ourselves, our neighbors, and the world.

*Real Life ~*

*Real Faith*

It may seem hopeless, but it's not. It starts with taking a first step: "***We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol and our lives had become unmanageable.***"

Perhaps there should be a first First Step...a simple prayer: "Lord, help me to remember that we are all human and like any family, not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. Help me to be patient with others as you are with me."

*Live well, live blessed, be open to change...*  
Deacon Ed+



### Christmas Flower Offering

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dedication \_\_\_\_\_

We are, once again, appealing to your generous nature to enable us to beautify our sanctuary for the Christmas season.

You will notice that there will be NO flowers during the weeks leading up to Christmas. That is because Advent is a Penitential season; therefore, no flowers. This makes it all the more important and special to dress up our beautiful space to express our JOY at the birth of our Lord.

Donation envelopes are available at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall. **For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Sunday, December 13th.**

*In Christ, 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.

Music offering envelopes will soon be available at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

**For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Sunday, December 13th.**



*Thank You for your support.*

## “Are you ok?”

Recently, I have had several little lumps and bumps. In the grand scheme of things, the blessing is that each occurrence could have been so much worse. But I was left most disturbed by one particular thread each event shared: each person directly involved never asked me if I was ok.

My friends and family asked me if I was ok, and my insurance company the same; but as my path crossed with these strangers, my general well-being was never addressed. My asking each of the others involved if they were ok did not prompt a return of the question to me, and, unfortunately, their general treatment of me was less than kind. I took this disinterest all in stride. It is an interesting world we live in. To each his own. *Blah. Blah. Blah.*

Each night as I work out at the gym, I greet others there with half smiles, slight head nods; and we then each proceed in our own individual work outs. One particular night, it was a full evening. Every treadmill was occupied with individuals all with their headphones plugged into the tvs and radios attached to the workout machines. Despite having the show I was watching up very loud, a huge thud startled me. A woman was on the floor, and the hum of the room became instantly silent. She had missed a step and fell backwards off the machine. The room froze in silence. My recent ponderings somehow clicked in, and I was able to break my own shock and say: “Are you ok?” The rest of those who witnessed seemed to break their own shocks and all joined in, helping her up, getting water, and asking her repeatedly if she was all right.

In communities where I am a known entity, I am blessed to be seen, loved, and nurtured. In the external world full of strangers, it seems to be a much different story. We hear inspiring stories on the news of strangers helping one another, yet such helping continues to be a practice that humanity struggles with. Stories from the bible like the innkeeper who allowed a pregnant woman, a stranger, stay in his stable teach the importance of helping others we might not know. Jesus regularly spoke of and led by example the importance of helping all people, not just the ones we know personally.

The holiday season is the time of year during which goodwill and peace are emphasized, particularly by the media. It has become the 6-week period when modern culture has allocated half the news stories to focus on the kind and charitable actions of others. As Christians, we know such charity should be a year round focus. As we prepare our hearts this year to welcome the Christ child, may we each fully embrace His greatest lesson to all of us: love one another. One place we can start is by asking others if they are ok.

*Submitted by Jobi Harrell, Minister to Younger Persons*

## NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Some of my very favorite music was written for Advent and Christmas – in fact, there are so many wonderful anthems for these seasons that selection becomes extremely difficult! Ascension will be experiencing the following during December:

### The 6<sup>th</sup>, Advent 2

*Hark, the Glad Sound!* by David Thorne and Thomas Ravencroft's hauntingly beautiful *Remember, Christians All*. In addition, we'll be processing with the Great Litany as in previous years, and will continue to do so throughout Advent.

### The 13<sup>th</sup>, Advent 3

Paul Manz' gorgeous *E'en So Lord Jesus, Quickly Come* and *Drop Down Dew* arranged by Paul P. Ladd, Jr.

### The 20<sup>th</sup>, Advent 4

*Song of Mary* by Richard Shephard, a paraphrase of Mary's *Magnificat*, coupled with Adolf Lohmann's setting of *Ave Maria*.

### Christmas Eve

A guest quartet will provide choral music for the 5:00 service, then will join with the choir for the 10:30 service. Tone chimes and flutes will be featured throughout the evening's anthems; and, of course, the congregation will join in singing many Christmas carols. Anthems to be sung during 10:30's Hymns and Carols include:

*Gaudete*, a 1582 composition arranged by Robert Batastini

*All Glory Be to God on High* by Johannes Cruger, arranged by Richard Proulx

*Christmas Night* by John Rutter

*From Bethlehem, Fair City* by Richard Proulx

*Hush You, My Baby* by Hughes Huffman

Anthems during the Christ Mass will include:

*Sing With Joy* by Johannes Cruger

*What Sweeter Music* by John Rutter

I promise you an evening of beauty and joy! And I wish for each of you a meaningful Advent and most blessed Christmastide.

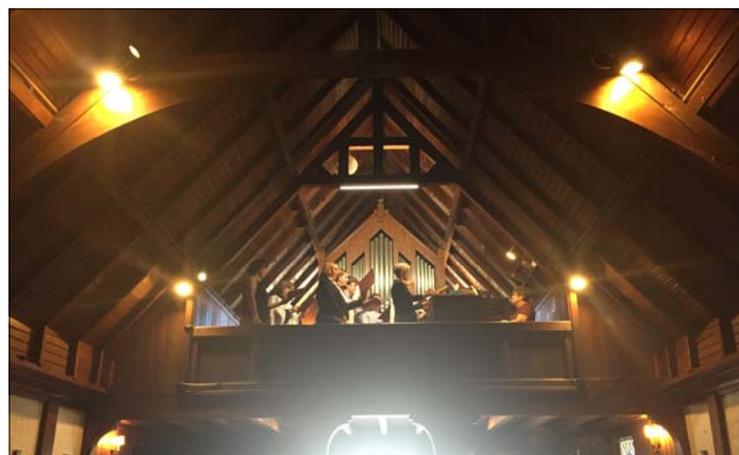
*What sweeter music can we bring than a carol,  
For to sing the birth of this our heav'nly King?*

~John Rutter



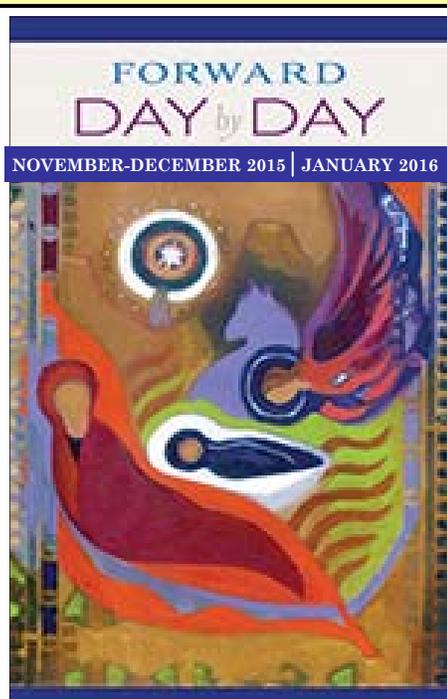
*Debora Huffman*

Director of Music and Organist



**Ascension Choir**  
**Fauré Requiem~ Sunday, November 1st**





Don't forget to pick up a copy of the new Forward Movement Day by Day Booklet. You can find copies at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

A \$2 donation is appreciated.

*Thank You.*

## *Save the Date!*

### Youth Group Tree Trimming Party

All Youth Invited!

Join us in Hawks Hall on Sunday, December 13th after the 10:15 service.



## Parish Work Party

Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>

8:30am to 11:30am

**What skills  
can you share?**



Contact our Verger, Mike Beach, at the parish office to see how you can help.

## 2016 CHRISTMAS PAGEANT INFORMATION

### Pageant Rehearsals and Costume Fittings

9 AM - 10 AM November 30<sup>th</sup>

9 AM - 10 AM December 6<sup>th</sup>

9 AM - 10 AM December 13<sup>th</sup>



### DRESS REHEARSAL

December 20<sup>th</sup> following the 10:15 Service

Contact Jobi Harrell at [jobiharrell@gmail.com](mailto:jobiharrell@gmail.com) for information.

## Preparation...

Spiritual reading, contemplation, and meditation are not always easy for me to do. Sometimes, I find it difficult to find that switch that turns off my brain and opens my heart to the messages that God might have for me. The website, [www.Upperroom.org](http://www.Upperroom.org), provides several tools that I routinely use, including **Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life**, a quarterly journal (paid subscription), as well as the digital **Weavings Monthly Newsletter** (free). I often find that the simple act of picking up the journal or reading the article in the monthly newsletter helps to quiet my thoughts and focus my spiritual energy.

The following article was published in the November **Weavings** 2015 Newsletter. The author, John S. Mogabgab, passed away in August of 2014. Within his long and rich legacy, he established **Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life** in 1986 as the founding editor.



## Advent and Gratitude

by John S. Mogabgab

As the days darken and the chill of winter spreads over the land, we enter a season of waiting, a time of watching for things hidden from all eternity in the mind of God. The Gospel texts call out: "Beware, keep alert" ([Mark 13:33](#)).

How do we remain alert for the signs of God's entrance into our lives and the life of our time? What can keep us awake in the drowsy atmosphere of habit that cozily blankets our days? According to Paul, the answer is gratitude. To the Colossians he writes, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving" ([Col. 4:2](#)). Paul is here pointing to the profound relation between spiritual alertness and the act of offering thanks. Gratitude refreshes our mind with the memory of God's gracious ways and sharpens our desire as well as our capacity to "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" ([Psalm 27:13](#)). Gratitude gathers us into that double helix of grace descending and praise ascending that forms the basic design of life with God. Gratitude is the gesture of a heart opened to receive God, a heart acquainted with the shape of things to come, a heart alert to the tremors of a new creation in the birthing.

Advent begins with the end of time and ends with the beginning of God's time among us in the flesh of our common humanity. Gratitude, the wellspring of vigilance, embraces ends and beginnings.

The strange and distressing Gospel readings that inaugurate this winter season of holy waiting advise vigilance, but they also teach that nothing in life should be taken for granted. Great human achievements, like the Temple in Jerusalem, can become rubble ([Luke 21:5-6](#)); ordinary forms of human companionship can be disrupted without notice ([Matt. 24:40-41](#)); even those cosmic immutables, the sun and the stars, can come undone ([Mark 13:34-35](#)). All of life is gift, and our most fitting response to this is gratitude for what Romano Guardini calls "all the hidden and holy bonds between the Creator and ourselves." Through gratitude we see with ever greater clarity that these hidden and holy bonds become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone in the child of Bethlehem, who cinches us securely to God's own fullness of life.

<sup>1</sup>Romano Guardini, *Prayer in Practice* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1963), 72-73.

From *Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life*, Vol. VII, No. 6 (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room: 1992), 2-3.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Maggie Outhouse*

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**

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## DECEMBER 2015

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<b>1</b> 10am Tuesday Morning Prayer	<b>2</b> 5pm Mass 5:30pm Yoga 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>3</b> 7am Mass 9am Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Parish Work Party 8:30am
	Parish Administrator Out of Office					Diocesan Convention
<b>6</b> 8am Mass 9am Pageant Rehearsal 10:15am Mass 10:15 Sunday School EFT Mtg at 2pm/Library	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 10am Tuesday Morning Prayer	<b>9</b> 5pm Mass 5:30pm Yoga 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>10</b> 7am Mass 9am Forum	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> 8am Mass 9am Pageant Rehearsal 10:15am Mass 10:15 Sunday School EFT Mtg at 2pm/Library  <b>Youth Group Christmas Tree Trimming Party</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 10am Tuesday Morning Prayer  <b>7pm Vestry Meeting</b>	<b>16</b> 5pm Mass 5:30pm Yoga 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>17</b> 7am Mass 9am Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	<b>18</b>  <b>Private Party/Hawks Hall 4pm</b>	<b>19</b>  <b>Church Greening</b>
<b>20</b> 8am Mass 9am Pageant Rehearsal 10:15am Mass 10:15 Sunday School EFT Mtg at 2pm/Library  <b>Sierra Madre Candlelight Walk</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 10am Tuesday Morning Prayer	<b>23</b> 5pm Mass 5:30pm Yoga 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>24</b> <b>Family Service &amp; Pageant 5:00pm</b> <b>Hymns &amp; Carols 10:30pm</b> <b>Midnight Mass 11:00pm</b>	<b>25</b> <b>CHRISTMAS DAY MASS 11AM</b>  Parish Office Closed	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour 10:15am Mass 10:15 Sunday School EFT Mtg at 2pm/Library  <b>PMC MTG AT NOON</b>	<b>28</b>  <b>JANUARY SPIRE ARTICLES DUE</b>	<b>29</b> 10am Tuesday Morning Prayer	<b>30</b> 5pm Mass 5:30pm Yoga 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>31</b> 	  Parish Office Closed	