

The Shape

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

FROM STEPHEN

Greetings and peace. As I write this we stand poised on the brink of Lent. Lent is that forty day period (not including Sundays which are always Feast Days) in which we prepare ourselves for the miracle of the resurrection at Easter. It is a time of introspection and prayer and of fasting and self-awareness. It is a time to look inward at ourselves and at our lives, to make amends to ourselves and to others and to change the way we live our lives accordingly. This is not an easy process. It is as difficult and filled with peril as anything we can do or undertake. Some people get so overwhelmed that they abandon the process almost before it starts. So that will not happen to you I would suggest that if you begin feeling overwhelmed, you come talk to me.

While we are on that subject, one of my colleagues, The Reverend Linda Taylor, of Saint Mark's in Santa Clara recently published a list of suggested examples of when it is appropriate or "important enough" to come and talk to the priest. With some minor editing here is her list of when to call. Please call:

- When you are ill or anticipate surgery, especially when you are hospitalized.
- When there is a death in the family (pet's included!) or of a close friend or neighbor.
- When a baby is born or adopted.
- When you are thinking about baptism or confirmation.
- When you are considering marriage or divorce.
- When you need spiritual counsel, including the need to make a private confession.
- When you would like a blessing for your home.

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FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

Lent is a time of soul-searching and repentance, a time of reflection and taking stock, a time of forgiveness and reconciliation. I wonder if we are up to the task one more time.

A well known scripture about forgiveness is Matthew 18:21. Peter asks how often he should forgive someone who sins against him. He suggests seven times. Personally, that seems more than fair to me. How about you? Jesus answers, "No, not seven times, but seventy times seven!" That's 490 times! That's once a month for 5 years (less 2 months, if you must be precise) or every day for one year four months plus a few more days. What is Jesus asking us to do?

Somehow I don't think He is giving us permission to "get even, hold a grudge, or hang on to our anger." (You may want to read the full scripture Matthew 18:21-35, which is the parable of the unforgiving debtor.) We are being called to forgive each other in our families, in our churches, in our communities, and in our world by the same measure that Christ desires and is willing to forgive us. Jesus wants us to reconcile our relationships with one another in all our environments with His love.

This is not an easy task. It means looking at one another in a new way and recognizing the humanity of each other, not as one who has wronged us, but as a human being in the image of Christ. We have to humble ourselves and give up the desire to get even or punish the other. We have to shift our feelings towards the other so to build a new relationship, build a bridge not a higher wall. We desperately need to do this in

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FROM THE EDITOR



“Get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it lest you be like the cat that sat on a hot stove. It will never sit on a hot one again but neither will it sit on a cold one.” *Mark Twain.*

There are many versions of this quote running around, but the essence that spurred the variations is the same: use reason and logic when dealing with past experiences, being careful to not miss the forest for the trees. God gave us the incredible gift of reason, however, it would seem that many of us never make use of it. There is a tradition in the Anglican church of the “three legged stool” which is used to attempt to describe the fundamental Anglican ethos. The three legs are scripture, tradition, and reason. It has long been held by many that these three together make us what we are. Scripture is of course perhaps the most obvious. Tradition is perhaps equally obvious, except that we often do not completely understand the history. For instance, how many of you know what a lavabo bowl is for? Do you know we use one? Do you know the origin? Not to keep you in suspense, it’s the ceremonial wash bowl that is used by the celebrant before the celebration of the Eucharist to wash the fingers/hands. The origin is Latin of course, based in the book of Psalms (26), “lavabo” when translated to our native tongue is “I shall wash.” The most difficult to really understand is the third leg: reason. We have used this third leg to break ourselves free from the Jewish ritual cleansing laws, the prohibition on pork and mixed fibres, divorce, etc. The logic here is that we must accept that the scripture was inspired by God, not written by God. Then we must attempt to make a logical, contextual analysis of the scripture to decide how to apply it in our lives today. This is a very difficult thing for most people, and it results in being labeled “a la carte Christians” id est, people who pick and choose what scripture applies to us and what does not. I believe that all of us choose what applies to us and what does not, the trouble is, and the goal should be, to apply reason to the decision. Next time you decide something is wrong, or right, think about why you believe what you do. Research the background, check your sources, read the scripture, think about the context, then formulate an opinion. Try to avoid narrow interpretations such as taking one line at a time, take the greater story as a whole and understand its message. There is a sci-fi comedy produced by the BBC called “Red Dwarf” that spoke on this subject in an offhand way. In one episode, Rimmer said his parents were Seventh Day Advent Hoppists. Apparently their bible had a misprint in 1 Corinthians 13 “Faith, hop and charity, and the greatest of these is Hop.” Since they were literalists and they did not apply reason, they spent every seventh day hop-

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

6581 Camden Avenue, San José, CA 95120

Tel 408-268-0243 • Fax 408-268-4207

www.eca-sj.org

SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30 AM and 11:00 AM

RECTOR

The Reverend Stephen Mills

408-802-5347

rector@eca-sj.org

MINISTRIES

ACOLYTES	Valerie Tysanner
ALTAR GUILD	Elaine LaVallee, Betty Wood
COFFEE HOUR	Pete Mayo
FOLK CHOIR	Andy Kerr
GREETERS	Sharon Mills
GOD SQUAD	Jenny Hoyt
GOOD SAMS	Jenny Hoyt
HANDBELL CHOIR	Maryke Williams
KIDS' BREAKOUT	Leslie Rousseau
LAY READERS	Dennis Moran
MONTGOMERY MEALS	Amy Griffith
NURSERY	Lorry Long
PRAYER VINE	Dorothy Willard
USHERS	Dave Byers
SR HIGH YOUTH GROUP	Robin & Terry Root
JR HIGH YOUTH GROUP	Katie McCormick
WORSHIP	Sandie Mueller
WEBMASTER	Kim Petruzzelli
YOUTH SUNDAY	Jim McPherson, Bryan Bond

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TREASURER	Maryke Williams
YOUTH DIRECTOR	Katie McCormick
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	Desi Brown

CONTACTING

The Shape

MARCH EDITION	
ISSUE NUMBER	030106
EDITOR	Alex Dykes
TELEPHONE NUMBER	408 268-0243
EMAIL ADDRESS	shape@eca-sj.org

THE SHAPE IS USUALLY A MONTHLY PUBLICATION
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

FROM THE EDITOR

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ping, they hopped to church, hopped thru the service, then hopped home to spend the evening hopping. When you take it to that extreme it sounds rather silly doesn't it? If we do not apply reason to life and spirituality, then we truly will be like the cat who sits on the stove, or the comedians hopping while eating dinner.

Alex Dykes

FROM STEPHEN

[continued from cover]

- When you want to celebrate your wedding anniversary.
- When you want to make a formal commitment to membership in the Episcopal Church in Almaden.
- When you are considering leaving the Episcopal Church in Almaden.
- When you are considering a special ministry.
- When a life transition of any kind is imminent.
- When you find yourself thinking that you need to talk to me.

The church office is generally open from 9:00 am. to 5:00 pm. Monday through Thursday and from 9:00 am. to 3:30 pm. on Friday. You may call during those hours to schedule a time to talk to me. I do work up to three evenings a week and unlike today's doctors, I do make house calls. You may also drop in when you see my silver Honda in the parking lot, and I promise that, if possible, I will meet with you.

May the blessings of a Holy Lent be yours this year.



Salaam,
Stephen

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

[continued from cover]

our families, our churches, our communities, and our world.

One Sunday in February, the choir's anthem was "for all who long to start over, to begin again." They sang The God of Second Chances by David Haas. The words in his song could easily be a prayer for each of us willing to consider forgiveness and reconciliation this Lent.

O God of second chances open our lives to heal.
Remove our hate and melt our rage. Save us
from ourselves.

Still our anger; open our minds to peace.
Embrace our fear, and hold us close. Calm the
storm within.

Shake our resentment, open our way to choose
the way of love over revenge.
Show us a new way.

O God, grant compassion. Open our hearts to
love.

May we let go of all our hurt. Help us to move
on.

O God of second chances; may we forgive
ourselves

May we become your living sign; Children of
God's love.

I wonder...what would our families, our churches, our communities, our world be like if each one of us forgave and reconciled with just one other person, who then just might be moved to do the same with another.

Susie Ferguson
Senior Warden

VESTRY NEWS

The vestry decided that after 2 or more years without a vestry retreat, it was time to get back in the routine of doing so, and went on a retreat January 20-22 to Mission Springs Conference Center in Scotts Valley. All 12 vestry members and Stephen were able to go. The weekend provided a time for the vestry to get to know one another better (we have 6 new members this year), and to share with one another what we believe the purpose of the church is. After brainstorming the purpose of Christ's church, we focused on ECA's role, and then talked about what ministries we have or need to fulfill that purpose. Lastly, we took those ministries and divvied them up so that we each take leadership and supporting roles as acting liaisons for each of the ministries. (See 2006 Ministries and Vestry Liaisons.) At the conclusion we came up with the following Vision and Mission statements.

Vision

ECA proclaims God's love for the world through evangelism, worship, forgiveness & reconciliation, inclusiveness, spiritual formation, outreach and hospitality.

Mission

ECA, through worship, study, fellowship, and outreach, strives to nurture and grow a strong faith community of believers, a family of all ages, where each member feels welcomed, loved, and valued. Ultimately, each member becomes confident, and compelled and equipped to lovingly support and serve one another as well as the community at large.

The vestry thanks their spouses and all those who supported them in prayer over the weekend. Everyone on vestry was unanimous in the belief that this retreat was worth the time and money spent. We are hopeful the practice will continue in the years to come.

The Vestry

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN LENT

When we think of Lent, we often think of the season as being a time of giving something up. Disciplining ourselves to abstain from something we love is a wonderful form of worship to God. God wants us to exercise self-discipline. Jesus became very frustrated with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane when they gave into sleep and could not keep watch with Him for an hour. Staying awake when you are tired definitely requires self-discipline!

Instead of giving up chocolates or cookies or peanuts this year, why not try *taking on something* that would be pleasing to God? Perhaps something that will grow and nurture your relationship with Him? You might try making a personal commitment to serve in some way at church or write notes to people who are sick. You might try making a commitment to the Lord to get up a half hour early and read his word every day during Lent, or start writing to Him daily in a prayer journal.

I was recently given a book called The Prayer of Jabez. Jabez is a person mentioned in the Old Testament in a long genealogical list. Amid this long list of boring names, is the following paragraph.

Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

For some reason, his name warranted special mention. He had a rough beginning in life. He prayed a special prayer, and things ended very well for him. Each of us can pray Jabez's prayer. We can

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STEWARDSHIP AT ECA

In the coming months we will be working to increase understanding of Stewardship at ECA and to establish an ongoing process. It is my sincere hope and prayer that the following will serve as a catalyst for the greater glory of Jesus' mission at ECA. Look for more thoughts on Stewardship in this section next month. I expect to hear from you as well as we grow toward a working model of Stewardship at ECA in the coming months.

Time

A key element of the church's life is the time we give to each other by being a friend, a comforter, a nourisher, lifter, waterer, setter-upper, cleaner-upper, organizer, caller, prayer, writer, witness, and the list can go on and on. The important part is to do it. ECA is the place where it gets done. Without you, it doesn't.

Talent

One of the largely unknown areas of stewardship is the talent we have to give if only we collectively knew what you are good and passionate about as well. In the coming months we will be emphasizing uncovering the jewels we have so we can shine a light on our parishioners and the community we live in.

Community Service

There are myriads of opportunities within our community for giving of our time and talent in a way which shows brightly on our Christian life incubator here at ECA. We can be goodwill ambassadors to our community by example.

Ministry Support

The 2006 Pledge "Card" included opportunities for self nomination for involvement in our various ministries. Everyone benefits when you get involved in a ministry in any way. This is where "many hands make shorter work", "it is better to give than receive", and "I received more in return than I gave by being involved" really becomes real.

Thoughts on Pledging (parts of which were given in homily at a 7:30 am service last December)

The act of pledging is far more important than the amount.

Participation in the financial life of this Christian community is paramount.

It involves "sacrifice". That involves prayer on our part to divine what that means to you. Perhaps, striving to tithe is a sacrifice for you or, simply pledging at all is a sacrifice since it is a paradigm shift.

Pledging is not a contract (no one is going to attach your wages or put a lien on your house).

Pledging is an act of faith and a commitment to ECA that good things will happen when you 'invest' yourself.

Ask yourself whether you are satisfied with and are taking a part in what we are doing here as we seek to carry out Christ's work in the world; I emphasize the big picture because that is Christ's challenge to us. If you are satisfied, expect more. If you expect more, have the faith to drive it with your money. Withholding money is negative; giving more, expecting change, and getting involved is positive

No matter what your private answers are, there is no mistaking that the need is there and that your money will be well-spent to do things like pay for our priest, administrative assistant, music director, education & youth director, taxes, and the lights and heat – the basics.

Money is an enabler for Vestry. I have been on several Vestries and there is nothing more hog-tying to a Vestry than having no freedom to do anything beyond the basics.

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THERE'S A WIDENESS IN GOD'S MERCY

As most of you know, I have been attending seminary now for close to five years. And hopefully, if I've completed all my requirements, I will be looking forward to graduating next June.

Most of you ask, "What am I studying?" I find that my classes fall into three basic categories: history, theology and liturgy. My degree requires four history classes, two liturgy classes, and one class each in the following subjects: Christian education, Greek or Hebrew, ethics, pastoral care, preaching, Old Testament, New Testament, constructive theology, and two classes in field education. I can fill in the rest of the required 24 classes in subjects that interest me. But I find that a mere recitation of class subjects and papers don't describe what I am in the process of learning.

One of my primary motivations for attending seminary was because I was aware that my answers of faith were not adequate to the questions I was asking. Why does God allow evil to exist? What exactly is the Trinity? Is God actively involved in my daily affairs or is a God distant spark that set all things in motion? How do I reconcile what I observe in the world around me with what my faith was teaching me?

I felt called to serve God and God's people but how could I do that when my answers felt threadbare and worn? But going to school meant that I needed to be ready to surrender what I did know, my meager stash of pat answers. I needed to be ready to hold up every truth I learned in sermons, devotions and Sunday School and see if I still believed. And there have been times when I wasn't sure if I believed anything, anymore.

But what I have *learned* is that the Christian tradition is broader than anything I could imagine. There are riches waiting to be discovered in the lives and the writings of those who have lived before us. I have been reading and writing about men and women who have struggled to be faithful to God's call in their lives. I have also discovered

that today, Christian men and women are trying to make Christianity relevant to the where they stand – whether they are in socially oppressed situations, or in science and technology, or in cultural traditions very different from my own. The voice of the Divine is not the same in all cases – God's call has been uniquely interpreted for each saint's place and time.

When you read this, I will be just beginning a new semester – my last history class and a class in the theology of education. I will be excited by what I am learning and tired of the grind of class, work and home life. But I am also thankful for this time. It has been a dream of mine to go back to school and study God. And discover, in the process, how I fit into the wide tradition of God's mercy towards humanity.

Kimberly Axtell



YOUTH GROUP

SHYGS

February was a month of service for SHYGS. We kicked off the month by joining members of Greg Lukanc's Boy Scout troop in completing his Eagle Scout project. People came and went throughout the morning and afternoon, but Greg had a large crew; He kept everyone on task and organized and was able to finish the project in one day instead of two. If you haven't had a chance to walk out to the gazebo lately, take a stroll over and check out the fabulous new walkway that leads from the gravel parking lot to the gazebo. Good job Greg!

On Sunday, Feb 12 the group spent the day working with Habitat for Humanity on two houses located on the corner of Julian and 14th streets in downtown San Jose. Two of the Victorian houses that were moved to make way for city hall had been donated to the Redevelopment Agency who in turn donated them to Habitat. Each house is being converted into two condominiums for low income families. It was pretty amazing to see how the Habitat crew and our volunteer adults worked with our 17 teens to guide them through their construction tasks.

We had SHYGS under the house running wire, on top of the house installing sheets of plywood on the roof (in harnesses), wrapping the house in insulated paper, drilling holes through studs and running wire through the walls to prepare for the outlets in the kitchen, framing the water heater walls, putting up plywood in the front room, and a variety of other tasks to move the houses to the next stage of completion. It was awesome! I can't thank our adults enough-they really worked hard and made sure that our SHYGS had a great experience-Jim and Bonnie McPherson, Russ Petruzzelli, Jim and Kathryn McAbee, Bob Green were fabulous. Thank you, too, to Kevin Smith for coming down at lunch time and offering a short worship service and for working with the teens for the afternoon. We also want to acknowledge the generosity of Shirley Lucas for donating \$100 to SHYGS for our food and drinks. I heard more than one teen say that they were ready to do it again! Our teens are so capable and giving.

JHYG

We had a great discussion of world religions at our last meeting. Kim Axtell lead us in contrasting and comparing the first two to Christianity. The kids were very good at asking questions and Kim was wonderful at helping the youth to understand the similarities and differences. We will continue our discussion at the **March 12th meeting**.

Katie McCormick

Our February meeting focused on the topic of drugs. The teens have heard all the dangers in school so we discussed not only the physical and emotional dangers, but also focused on the words of Paul who wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God..", so we should keep them strong and healthy.

We finished the month working the Shrove Pancake dinner with JHYGS-Thank you to Katie McCormick who did all the planning for this event.

Robin Root

SHYGS Coming Up!

Sunday, March 5-Regular meeting 6-8:30

Sunday, March 19th-Tweak Hunt planned and led by Kyle Dando-Meet at church-time TBD

Fri-Sun-March 31-April 2-Happening! Details as we get closer. Let me know if you're interested.

Sunday, April 2-Regular meeting 6-8:30

Friday, April 7-Seder-Joint Youth Event-Watch for details from Katie McCormick

Saturday, April 8-Catacombs, planned and led by Kyle Dando-At Church

2006 TAHOE YOUTH GROUP SKI TRIP

We had four beautiful cabins (all within walking distance of each other) for our JHYG's and SHYG's. The Senior High girls stayed in the Kosta Chalet, the Junior High boys stayed in the Dakar cabin, the Senior High boys stayed in the Bird House cabin and the Junior High girls stayed in the Moose cabin. You may want to take note of picture of Danielle Petruzzelli and the moose rack in the hallway, thus the name of the cabin. This cabin was also the gathering place for our entire group for breakfast, dinner, evening prayers and games. There were 41 people attending 29 of which were youth. Jon Mills was our fearless leader, who along with other parents helped the kids skiing for the first time and those who needed rentals through the first morning. We are very proud of those who were trying skiing for the first time as they were determined to learn even though some got sick and some got very tired. Alpine Meadows provided a variety of runs for every type of skier and we couldn't have asked for better weather. The snow was powdery and perfect.

Those of us who arrived on Thursday night had at least two full days of skiing without having to drive home on the third day. Some of the diehard skiers continued to ski on Sunday.

We made sure that anyone who didn't want to ski on any given day or that was sick was with me. Either getting ginger ale and periodic temperature checks or being put to work helping with the cooking. Speaking of cooking, we had great meals. The chefs prepared big breakfasts that sustained everyone through the morning on the slopes. We had our pop-up cooler/grills for grilling hotdogs and hamburgers at lunch and lasagna and chicken parmesan for our dinners.

We must thank all of the adults who gave their weekend for our youth. Jon Mills, Sharon Mills, Ken McCormick, Russ Petruzzelli, Sharon Mills, Todd and Ellen Lukanc, John and Helen Beacher, Jim Ward and Terry Root.

The Youth that attended were: Kele Lavery, Karen Click, Patricia and Fallone Kabeha, Danielle

Petruzzelli, Brooke Mills, Jessica Skowronski, Caitlin McPherson, Sean McCormick, Jon and Daniel Beacher, Doug Lukanc, Brennan Hall, Tyler Nolette, Alex Rose, Paul Coutinho, Brian Gaydon, Steven McPherson, Taylor Mills, Hannah Ward, Yvonne, Kristin Petruzzelli, Faith Mills, Greg Lukanc, Ryan Hall, Brad Bond, David Mastriana, David Hoyt, and Guido Spanjaart.

None of this would have come off without Jon Mills organizing the skiers and coordinating efforts up at the slopes. Our kids are very lucky to have such a willing group of parents to help give them this wonderful experience. Thank you everyone who donated money and supported our youth ski trip. They came away with fun memories and good skiing.

Katie McCormick



SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Alleluia banner will be passed around on Sunday 2-19 and 2-26. All the children will write the word Alleluia on the banner which will then be buried on Sunday March 5th because during Lent we do not use the word Alleluia. We will then dig the banner up on Easter morning before the Easter Egg hunt.

There is something else happening on March 5th. The Sunday School will meet in the sanctuary for the Receiving of Scripture ceremony for the fifth graders. This will take place at 10:10 am. during the usual Sunday School hour after which the children will go outside to bury the banner.

Katie McCormick

LADIES LUNCH UPDATE

The 3rd Thursday Ladies Lunch/Dinner group will be changed to the 1st Tuesday Ladies Lunch/Dinner group. There were too many conflicts on Thursday, I hope this is a better time for all.

There are also some changes in restaurants (and there may be more), but for now this is the following dates and places (always check the sign-up sheet in FH):

Lunch - March 7th - Max's Cafe at Westgate shopping center

Dinner - April 4th - Ednaray's Chinese Restaurant in Los Gatos

Lunch - May 2nd - City Hall tour and lunch nearby - space limited to 20 people.

Dinner - June 6th - PF Chang's at Oakridge Mall

Other dates and places will be in the next SHAPE/KALOS. Again, if anyone has a favorite place to share with the group, let me know and I'll include it. Guests are always welcome.

Amy Griffith
(408) 268-0920
amy-g@pacbell.net

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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pray it for ourselves and we can pray it for our church. I encourage you to pick up the book if you haven't already. The author, Bruce Wilkinson, dives into this paragraph from 1 Chronicles, and really makes the scripture come alive. I invite you to read this little book and pray the prayer of Jabez for yourself and for ECA this month.

Lent only comes once a year. It is a wonderful opportunity to break out of some old habits or start up some new ones. Please prayerfully consider what you can offer to God this Lenten season.



GIFTS OF GRATITUDE

Ellen Lukanc, Katie McCormick, & Sharon Mills: Thank you with all your assistance on the memorial service reception in February.

Greg Lukanc: For your enthusiasm and diligence in following through on your Eagle Scout Project, the walkway to the gazebo. It is beautiful, especially the cross design at the entrance.

The Senior High Youth and Adults that worked for Habitat: Thank you for sharing your time and energy to help others.

Susie, Hans, Mary, George, & Stephen: Thank you for all the love and work you put into a very successful vestry retreat.

Pete Mayo: Great job on post-storm clean up.

Marge Devitt: Thank you for the donation of a beautiful desk and filing cabinet.

Mary Leal, Judy Blankenheim, Amy Griffith, and Marge Devitt: Thank you for your diligence in getting the Shape out and folding all our bulletins.

Ed Mueller, Stephen Mills, and Pete Mayo: Thank you for hauling off the rock pile on the Rectory driveway.

Jon Mills: Thank you for all you did in coordinating a very successful and fun Youth Ski Trip.

2006 MINISTRIES & VESTRY LIASONS

Sr. Warden – Susie Ferguson
Jr. Warden – Ron Howie

Business Operations

Vestry Liaisons – Hans Spanjaart (leader), Steve Wing, Ron Howie

Advertising
Annual Report
Bulletin Boards
Communication
Community Use of Building
Counters – Fran Sandrock
Directory / Roster
Facilities
Finance
Joint Venture
Master Calendar
Picture Board – Sandie Mueller & Mel Stonehocker
Shape – Editor: Alex Dykes
Treasurer – Maryke Williams
Website – Kim Petruzzelli

Fellowship

Vestry Liaisons – Suzanne Moore (co leader), Jim McPherson (co leader)

40th Anniversary in 2007
Camping Trip
Dinners in the Hat
Games
Ladies Luncheon & Dinner – Amy Griffith
Men's Breakfast & Bocce – Arnold Moore
Parties & Celebration
Singles Group – Kathy Mastre
Summer Barbecues – Dave Byers & Warren Willard
Tai Chi – Joan Wagner
Welcoming & Hospitality

Outreach

Vestry Liaisons – Inge Bond (leader), Susie Ferguson

Almaden Adv. In Arts – Todd Axtell
Alternative Christmas – Mel Stonehocker
Campus Ministries
Diocese
Episcopal Relief
Lost Boys / Sudan
Montgomery Meals: Amy Griffith, Suzanne, Pete Mayo
New Avenues
Replenish Membership
Santa Maria Urban Mission
Tacky Luncheon – Sandie Mueller

Pastoral Care

Vestry Liaison – Stephen Mills

God Squad – Jenny Hoyt & Sharon Mills
Good Sams – Jenny Hoyt
Junior Warden – Ron Howie
Prayer Vine – Dorothy Willard
TLC

Spiritual Growth

Vestry Liaisons – Mary McPherson (leader), Kim Petruzzelli, Tim Miller

Adult Education
Alpha – Susie Ferguson
Cursillo – Tim Miller
Inquirer's Class – Stephen Mills
Purpose Driven Life
Retreats
Revival
Seniors

Stewardship

Vestry Liaison - George Romer (leader)

Endowment Fund

Worship

Vestry Liaisons – Sandie Mueller (co leader), Tim Miller (co leader)

Acolytes – Valerie Tysanner & Marcus Bond
Altar Guild – Betty Wood & Elaine LaVallee
Breakout – Leslie Rousseau
Bulletin – Stephen and Office Staff
Coffee Hosts – Peter Mayo
Folk Sunday – Andy Kerr
Greeters – Sharon Mills
Lay Reading – Dennis Moran
Matrix – Sharon Mills
Music – John Leslie
Nursery – Lorry Long
Ushers – Dave Byers
Youth Sunday – Jim McPherson & Bryan Bond

Youth

Vestry Liaisons – Kim Petruzzelli (leader), Inge Bond, Jim McPherson

Confirmation – Stephen Mills
Happenings - Diocese
Jr. High Youth Group – Katie McCormick
New Beginnings - Diocese
Sunday School – Christian Ed. Dir. Katie McCormick
Sr. High Youth Group – Robin Root
Vacation Bible School – Christian Ed Director

ECA CELEBRATES LEADERS STYLES

Our church has been blessed with an abundance of leaders. Thirteen of them are on the vestry. Many others lead or chair a myriad of activities for our parish and community.

On the vestry it is evident with 13 leaders we also have 13 styles of leadership. This is also true throughout our parish. Some of us like to reach our goals in a very structured, systematic way. Our management style is organized in a very controlled manner. We respond well to schedules and deadlines and measurable results.

Others of us like to be a little more free form in our leadership style. We usually reach our goals, however some onlookers wonder if that could possibly happen. We have some organization, but it can be easily overlooked because of our piles of clutter or when creative juices are flowing. We “go with flow” and enjoy the freedom to do so.

As a parish, let us celebrate the variety of leadership styles with which the Lord has blessed us. Let’s recognize there are many ways to reach the same goal, to be close to Christ and grow His church. If the Lord truly wanted us to all lead in the same style, He wouldn’t have been so creative in passing out His gifts and talents. Let’s uplift each other and praise God for the variety He sets before us.

As we enter the season of Lent let each of us humble ourselves before Christ and recognize the gifts, talents and leadership styles of those unlike us. Remember that all ministries at ECA are the Lord’s. We are merely His servants to move them along in His way and in His time. We are His servants. The best thing we can do for Christ is to develop a ministry that can thrive when we are no longer at the helm. That is what brings glory to God. We are here for a year or two, while God is here for eternity.

We offer our praise and thanksgiving to all of you who are serving in your God-given style at ECA. Included in this Shape is a list of our ministries at ECA and who is in the leadership role for each as best we know at this time. Please contact the vestry liaison if any changes or additions need to be made in specific areas.

Your Vestry

ADULT STUDY FOR LENT

In our tradition, Lent is a season set apart as preparation for the Easter celebration. It is a time to revisit those truths we hold in common.

To honor that spirit, during the Lenten season we are offering an adult education class. This will be a chance to share our stories, to deepen our faith, and discover anew our traveling companions for life’s travels.

For six Sundays during the Christian Education hour, we will discuss our church traditions, our experience of God and how to integrate these into our daily lives.

Come and journey; walk the road to Emmaus and be willing to encounter God along the way.

Kimberly Axtell

STEWARDSHIP

[continued from page 5]

So, please don't be simply satisfied. Dare to dream and make that dream move beyond our current status to higher and more complete service to this community and the world in this place we call The Episcopal Church in Almaden. For example, a paid youth group director, a pastoral assistant, a lighted sign for our church which beckons people in.

It starts with an act of faith and God is waiting for us to act.

Nancy and I have pledged at ECA for over 35 years and our experience is that when we've stretched and committed we were more alive in the life of the church. Please fill out your pledge cards (available in a rack in the Narthex near the elevator) or increase your pledge and make your sacrifice real – Jesus did!

Conclusion

Now, the Vestry has launched a new year, is energized by our potential, is about the process of making dreams come true. Their success is a measure of how successful we all are at giving of our Time, Talent, and Treasure to support our Ministries and our ministry to our extended community.

*George Romer
Vestry Stewardship Chair*

PRESIDING BISHOP NOMINEES

[ENS] The Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop has today announced the names of those bishops it will place in nomination for election as 26th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

[Full text of the committee's announcement, including procedures for nominations from the floor, is posted at http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_71136_ENG_HTM.htm. The 29-member committee is chaired by Bishop Peter J. Lee of Virginia and Diane B. Pollard of New York.]

The nominees' names will be formally submitted to the General Convention at a joint session on June 18, 2006, the day prior to the day appointed for the election of the 26th Presiding Bishop by the House of Bishops.

The bishop elected will succeed the 25th Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold III, whose nine-year term concludes later this year.

The 26th Presiding Bishop will be installed November 4, 2006, at Washington National Cathedral.

The nominees are:

The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander, Bishop of Atlanta
The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick, Jr., Bishop of Kentucky
The Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Bishop of Nevada
The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley, Jr., Bishop of Alabama

Photographs are posted online at http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_71139_ENG_HTM.htm.

EVENTS

March Birthdays

Tim Miller	1
Hayley Moore	1
Anna Spanjaart	1
Bill Taylor	1
Jack Jackman	3
Greg McCormick	3
Judy Graun	4
Luke Appleton	6
Julia Machado	6
Jackie Whitlock	6
Tristania Joslin	10
Jason Ferguson	16
Marie Deveaux	19
Len Whitlock	19
Ainsley Jaciow	21
Gloria Skowronski	24
Eddie Keck	26
Robin Root	28

March Anniversaries

Monte & Debbie Bishop	3
Chris & Trishtania Joslin	7
David & Gayle Byers	10
Henry & Judy Blankenheim	14
Wayne & Anne-Lee Tomczyk	28



TACKY SUPPER & MORE

Come Tacky – May 23, 2006 at 6:30 pm
Fellowship Hall

Have Supper: Soup & Salad & More

Fashion Show provided by:
The Unicorn Thrift Shop

Reservations required: for a fee of \$10 and the
option to bring Soup or a Salad
Door Prizes

this affair will provide monies for
medical and educational support of
Ugandan orphans

Respectfully Tacky,
Joan R. Wagner

NEW ORLEANS AT JV

New Orleans UCC style, it's no joke . . . Saturday, April 1, 2006, 6 - 9 PM, Fellowship Hall will be jumpin' with the sounds of the Dave Kowomoto Trio and culinary specialties of Creole/Cajun cuisine. Enjoy tantalizing seafood appetizers, a "saucy" jambalaya, down to earth red beans and rice and sweet treats.

Come and celebrate our blessings and participate in an effort to support those devastated by Katrina. Proceeds from this event will be donated to Hurricane Relief.

\$25.00 per person guarantees you're in. See you there! Sign up in Fellowship Hall starting Sunday, March 5th.

JoeDingman (408) 997-7891
Janey Sanders (408) 997-0875

BANANA SLUG BAND TO PERFORM MARCH 25

Children and adults of all ages are invited to attend the Banana Slug String Band concert on Saturday, March 25 at 5:00 p.m. in the sanctuary here at Joint Venture Churches as part of our Almaden Adventures in the Arts concert series. Please note the special starting time for the performance is 5:00 p.m.

The Banana Slug String Band is a group of lovable musicians and educators from the coastal redwoods of Northern California. The Slugs are "Airy" Larry Graff, Doug "Dirt" Greenfield, "Solar" Steve Van Zandt and "Marine" Mark Nolan.

With vocals, guitars, mandolin, bass, harmonica, banjo and percussion, Slug songs range from rockin' boogies to sensitive ballads; folk songs to reggae and rap. Music, theater, puppetry and audience participation create a fun-filled learning experience.

The Banana Slug String Band is committed to educational entertainment for children and families through interactive music and performance. They are dedicated to fostering positive attitudes about the environment, providing accurate information about natural history and science, promoting music appreciation, building self esteem in children, honoring creativity, supporting the arts in education and sparking in people a joyful sense of wonder.

Through the production of tapes, CD's, videos, songbooks, picture books, curriculum, activity guides, teacher workshops and concerts, the Slugs

hope to make these values accessible to an increasingly wider audience.

The Slugs' new CD, *Wings of Slumber*, has won numerous awards including a 2005 NAPPA Gold Award, a 2005 Early Childhood NEWS Director's Choice Award, an iParenting Award, a 2005 Parents' Choice Silver Award and Creative Child Magazine's Seal of Excellence Award. The album, a collection of children's lullabies, was recorded with the help of George Winston, Laurie Lewis, George Kahumoku and many others.

Other Banana Slug String Band awards include: Selected in 2003 by California Arts Council (CAC) for the 2004-06 Touring Artists Directories/Performing Arts Roster, 1996 Howard Bell Award for Outstanding Contributions in Outdoor Education. For the album "Goin' Wild" the 2000 AFIM Indie Award for Children's Album of the Year, the 2000 National Park Service Audio Interpretive Excellence Award, an Amazon.com 5-Star Rating and an Entertainment Weekly 4 Star Rating. And many, many more for earlier albums and performances.

So Come on! Their shows are filled with great music, humor and most of all FUN!!

Remember, the concert starts at 5:00 p.m. Advance tickets are \$15 general, \$8 students and \$5 children (\$20, \$10 and \$5 respectively at the door).

Child care will be provided. Tickets are limited and reservations are recommended. For more information, please call (408) 268-0243.



Update: February 2, 2006

Report on the 26th Annual Meeting of the Diocese of El Camino Real (Session 1)

On January 28, 2006, 147 lay delegates and 67 clergy representing 46 congregations gathered in Sherwood Hall in Salinas to conduct the business of this diocese.

The day began with the Holy Eucharist. The Rev. Brian Nordwick delivered a passionate sermon about making strides toward spiritual health, calling members of the diocese to return to the basics of Christianity: (1) action – living in response to God’s call; (2) commitment - to God; (3) discipline - in study; (4) obedience - in prayer; (5) sharing - our Christian walk with others; (6) accountability – to God and to each other. The sermon concluded with the statement, “TOGETHER with God we CAN, we ARE, we WILL. If we don’t work together, we will die separately.” *The sermon is attached to this update or you can click on the following ECR web link: <http://www.ecrweb.org/DC2006A.html>.*

The meeting was then called to order by Bishop Sylvestre Romero.

Report from the Joint Leaders’ Group: A resolution at Convention in January 2005 called for the major bodies of the diocese to study funding methods, and report back to Convention in January 2006, with a recommendation. The Diocesan Funding Review Committee (DFRC) was appointed by the Joint Leaders (members of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, and Corporation Board) to study funding alternatives. After months of diligent research, the DFRC reported the results of its study, recommending the adoption of a “Ten-Plus” funding plan for the diocese. The Joint Leaders then met several times to review the DFRC Report and arrived at their own recommendation. Ms. Ann Wright, president of the Standing Committee, introduced the Joint Leaders’ Report to Convention. She explained that the Joint Leaders are in agreement that the Fair Share formula must be revised – but also believe that while the diocese is still in the process of examining its vision and structure, there can be no definitive agreement on what should or should not be funded, or how. The Rev. David Breuer, member of the Corporation Board, continued the presentation by offering some historical perspective on the current funding model. Ms. Diane Lovelace, chair of Diocesan Council, spoke next about healthy congregations and supportive diocesan programs, including evangelism, in-reach, and outreach. The Rev. Vincent Raj of Diocesan Council concluded the presentation by reflecting on vision being like a mustard seed – sprouting and growing – signifying new birth. The Joint Leaders recommended that Convention defer a decision on funding, voting “no” on all current funding resolutions, until a diocesan vision has been agreed upon and structure revisions have been accepted. After some debate, the resolution on “Ten-Plus” was tabled until the second session of Convention in October.

Report from the Joint Process Committee: The Joint Process Committee recommended that the “waiting period” - in place since the resignation of Bishop Shimpfky in 2004 - be concluded, and that the diocese now begin its search for the next Bishop of El Camino Real. Delegates agreed that the search process will now begin. It is

expected that a special Convention may be convened in February or March of 2007 to elect the new bishop.

2006 Budget: There was discussion/debate about the stewardship funding line item in the proposed budget. Amendments were offered and discussed at length, but none were adopted. The budget passed without changes and without further discussion. *The full Narrative Budget for 2006, including details of the stewardship program, can be found on the diocesan web site, www.ecrweb.org.*

Resolutions (*Full text of all resolutions can be found on the diocesan web site*):

#1 - Pay Parity for Clergy and Lay Employees - tabled until October.
Study needs to be done on the financial impact of this resolution.

#2 - The Martyrs of the Sudan – passed
The Diocese of El Camino Real recommends ... the inclusion of the Feast of the Martyrs of the Sudan in the calendar of the Episcopal Church... and ... that this diocese seek ways to support the rebuilding of the church and society of the Sudan...

#3 - Holy Habits – passed
As Christian stewards and leaders of the Episcopal Church, we affirm that we are tithing, or have adopted a plan to work toward tithing as a minimum standard for our giving; and that, if we are not already doing so, we are committed to give priority to corporate worship, personal daily prayer and study, and Sabbath time in our own lives; and we invite all members of the Episcopal Church to join us in these holy habits; and...we commit ourselves to present this declaration to our vestries for adoption and signature, and in turn to the people of our parishes, missions, and university centers.

#4 - Proposed Fair Share Formula Change - withdrawn

#5 - 10% Plus Fair Share - tabled until October.
Study needs to be done to make sure the funding formula is in line with the diocesan vision and structure.

Ballot Results – newly elected diocesan leaders:

Secretary - Ms. Denise Chouinard

Treasurer - Mr. Edgar Markham

Directors of Corporation – Ms. Elizabeth Gonzalez, the Rev. William Kelly

Diocesan Council

Clergy - the Revs. Susan Miller and Nayan McNeill

Lay - Ms. Nancy Bowker, Mr. George Lockwood, Ms. Pat Williams

DIEM - Ms. Barbara George, Ms. Carole Morris, Ms. Laura Learned, Mr. Tedd Parske, Mr. Forrest Huff, Ms. Sara Cook, Ms. Janice Martin, the Rev. Lance Beizer

Standing Committee

Clergy - the Rev. Keith Johnson

Lay - Mr. Jerry Witherspoon

Commission on Ministry

Clergy - the Rev. Mario Hauttecouer

Lay - Ms. Joanna Shreve, Ms. Margaret Clark

Ecclesiastical Trial Court

Clergy - the Rev. Mary Lou McKenney

Lay - Mr. Jay Armstead

Diocesan Review Committee

Clergy - the Revs. Patricia Barrett, Arnold Hedlund, Karen Siegfried

Lay - Ms. Michelle Welsh, Ms. Mary Ann Gee

Session 2 of the 26th Convention will meet in San Luis Obispo on October 21, 2006.

GOING BACK TO BASICS

Sermon for the 26th Annual Meeting of Convention, January 28, 2006, by the Rev. Brian P. Nordwick

*Dear God,
take me where you want me to go,
help me meet who you want me to meet,
tell me what you want me to say,
and keep me out of your way. Amen
(Fr. Mychal Judge)*

My sisters and brothers in Christ: It is my honor to stand here before you as one called to this task in God's service. I am humbled for the opportunity. There are many roles that I play – husband, father, administrator, deacon, friend - and most importantly a Christian man serving God. The perspective I offer this morning is that of one Christian man who is trying to be obedient to God's calling. On November 3rd during my morning workout and prayer time at the gym in Hollister, God got my attention and said he had a message for me to share with you here at this Convention. What follows is what I believe God desires us to do - and to be - as a diocese. This includes a basic start-up action plan to begin our journey anew – the basic actions of a committed Christian life.

First, I want to share with you some background information about who we are. We live in a part of this world where God has given us special talents and resources to further God's kingdom. This diocese is culturally diverse – with people coming from all parts of the world. We have great economic diversity. Right here in Salinas, we sit in one of the most agriculturally rich areas in the world. People travel from around the world to learn how to grow and market crops that are produced in this valley. At one time there was a weekly national news magazine that listed Salinas as having more millionaires per capita than any other city in the state of California. On the other hand, that article stated that Salinas was second only to the city of Oakland for having more poverty stricken people living within its boundaries.

To the north, the Silicon Valley has become a worldwide information and technology center. Its economy is as large as that of many countries. It creates cutting-edge technological advances that have changed the way we live our lives. We have become a faster paced society as a result of these changes – able to do more in a shorter period of time. To the south, San Luis Obispo County is described by many as “God's country”. It boasts of a major wine industry, and is becoming one of the fastest growing areas in the state. To the west, from the coastline in San Luis Obispo to the Monterey peninsula and extending inland to the Santa Cruz mountains – this diocese is one of the most beautiful places on the planet Earth! In another extreme, El Camino Real hosts one of the highest prison populations per capita in the country. We have higher education institutions of world renown. Also, we live in an area where conservatively, 60% of our population has either lapsed or does not attend church.

El Camino Real is truly a diocese of abundance and wealth and diversity. The possibilities for our Christian ministries are endless. Our Diocese *is* a community endowed with many resources and talents, which God has given us to use in furthering God's kingdom. The questions are: what are we doing with them? And who are we today as we worship here in Sherwood Hall?

From my vantage point, we are comprised of 51 congregations of various sizes and worship experiences reaching out into our communities – including our pre-schools, schools, chaplaincies, the ministry of Santa Maria Urban Ministry and other outreach ministries and programs that we support.

This diocese is in transition. We are nearing the end of a long waiting period – a period of sometimes painful growth – before beginning the process to call our new bishop. We have listened to one another and dialogued

with one another through several lay and clergy conferences in 2004 and 2005. Presently, we have several congregations in search for a new priest and spiritual leader. Realistically, in the next 5-10 years El Camino Real will experience almost a complete turnover in its clergy as they near retirement or accept new calls to service. This is a fact that will have an impact on our ordained leadership for the future. This is a fact that will have an impact on our lay leadership for the future. It will be a critical issue of concern for a new bishop in recruitment and deployment.

Being totally honest with ourselves, we need to admit that we have been more a dysfunctional diocese than functional. But this is changing. This diocese has worked hard and continues to work at becoming more functional. We are taking ownership of who we are, and are making strides towards spiritual health. With God's grace, this diocese will become more functional every day.

This diocese is a community which acknowledges that we have several missions and parishes that are struggling - each trying to survive financially while getting the work of the church completed. Sometimes, it's like trying to put a square peg in a round hole. It just can't be done no matter how hard we try. This frustrates us, discourages us, and de-energizes us. I know through my experience working with congregations that financial problems can create a "frozen" state that stops forward movement cold in its tracks. Sometimes we get so caught up in the difficulties that we forget to look for where God is working.

The good news is that in most places we are not paralyzed, and we have not given up. We are all looking for real solutions. The truly Good News is that God has not given up and God continues to work; God *is* the real solution. This diocese is trying to work together toward a common mission and vision - one that values a Christian ministry that is shared by all, and holds each of us accountable for our actions in a shared ministry that is open, vital, joy-filled and life-giving. We do our best to model this way of working in your diocesan office - working together as a selfless team helping each other. We have implemented many good business practices that have improved our operational effectiveness.

Last year, the DFRC - a committee of dedicated Christians - concentrated tireless efforts on reviewing diocesan funding options to carry out the ministry of the Diocese of El Camino Real. As they recommended, this work now continues with the creation of a diocesan evaluation and structure committee to look at how we can be better organized and more effective in our ministry to each other and the communities in which we live and work. Their first meeting was held yesterday with the facilitation of the Rev. Canon Keith Brown.

We realize that we have a long way to go. Perhaps the real question as we sit here today is: What are we called to be? What is our mission and vision?

What I am about to share is my personal viewpoint of our mission and vision, one that I feel God wants me to share with all of you. I believe that by our baptismal vows this diocese with all of its individuals - and as a collective body - is called to spread the Good News in this uniquely diverse and abundantly rich area of the central coast of California. If we all work together, with God's help, we will become a visible source of inspiration - a powerhouse of Christian ministry that cannot but help to expand and grow as the Episcopal Church in Central California. How? Scripture, tradition, reason and liturgy blended with contemporary and traditional music - mixed with teaching and preaching that is applicable to this part of the world in which we live in. If we do all these things well - even though it seems impossible - our unique way of doing ministry can inspire the entire country - for generations to come. This is my vision. Am I a dreamer? Of course! Can it happen? Yes it can - and I believe it can, starting today! Let us not forget that all things are possible through Christ who strengthens us...From Zechariah: *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the LORD of hosts? Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness."* (Zechariah 8: 6-8 NRSV)

Working together with God, we can do it. To become a visible source of inspiration of Christian ministry that cannot help but to expand and grow as the Episcopal Church in Central California, we need to return to the basics of Christianity. These are basic things that I believe every Christian person needs to do and be.

It starts with *us* as leaders in the diocese. In my life, I have learned that when I am about to embark on a major change – or have major decisions to make - I need to return to my foundation – or the roots that nourish the vine and the branches. Let's start right now. Remember when you first became a Christian? What motivated you into Christian action as a leader in the church? Can you remember? I pray that God will help us all always remember what gave us the passion and desire to serve God in the church.

If we're honest with ourselves, we all have things that get in the way of that initial passion we had as a new Christian or Christian leader. Life happens. We all need to let go of the past - remove the obstacles between us and God and each other. Let go and let God take whatever is burdening us and holding us back by leaving our grudges, discontents, anger, and sinful nature at the altar today!

From today's Gospel (*John 15:1-8, the Vine and the branches*), we might need to do a little pruning. I'd like to personally share that I came from a place of darkness into the light of Christ and have had to prune back in those areas of my life that keep me from God. I continually have to check myself to assure that I stay in the light. I have friends in this room that witnessed my adult conversion to Christianity on a Cursillo weekend held at La Selva Beach some 25 years ago. They were there to carry the message of Christian love to me back then – to bring the light of Christ into my world. In turn, I'm here today to do the same.

I know that God has loved me and given me a passion to love others. To that end, I want to tell each of you that I love you – no matter who you are, where you've been or what you've done – I love you. Because God loves me, I have to love you. If I've wronged you in any way through what I've said or done in the past, through something that I left undone – or through my words or actions of this day, I beg your forgiveness. In turn, I forgive you, and love you for who you are - as the unique individual that God created in you. God does not make any junk.

Let us re-dedicate or dedicate our lives to Christ with fervor – it's time to start anew! Let us tell each other our resurrection stories. We all have one. As a diocese, we have one in the making....right here....right now! Daily, let us call upon the Holy Spirit, to empower us into courageous action. If people see that we are in the process of building the kingdom of God, people will come and want to be a part of that building process! The time is now.

All these are great words, and I'm sure most of you would agree that they are great ideals. But words mean nothing without action. We need to put into practice our Christian faith.

First, action is a disciple's life in response to God's call. We need to be doers of the word, not just hearers of the word. Wise people build upon firm foundations. I suggest that we get going – right now by answering God's call and agree to a simple plan of action - to start anew. It's time to put our words and beliefs into action.

Second, action is exemplified in commitment – we need to re-dedicate or commit our lives to Christ, honestly admitting our shortcomings and moving on. We'll do this in a few minutes as we confess our sins and renew our baptismal vows with Bishop Romero. This is our action step. (Before I continue, I need to say that if there is any one here that needs to talk about their commitments or needs someone to pray with them and don't know who to talk to, I want you to know that you are the most important person in this room. There are many here today – including myself – that are available to talk to you and pray with you. Please seek one of us out.)

Third, we are called to discipline ourselves in daily study of scripture and other spiritually enriching activities such as bible studies, seminars, spiritual direction – to name a few – including attending worship every Sunday

– tomorrow included!

Fourth, we are called to be obedient to our conversation with God by daily praying for the church, the diocese and the world – praying always for knowledge of God’s will for us – listening for the answers – and having the courage to follow through with action when appropriate. Our action step: make an appointment with God, and keep it!

Fifth, we are called to share our Christian walk with others who have not yet had the experience of what it means to be a joy-filled Christian - by being a friend, making a friend, and leading that friend to Christ. We are ambassadors to bring the light of Christ into the world. We need to share our resurrection stories. The only way we can keep what has been given to us is to give it away. Our action step is to share God’s way of life with others. Studies show that well over half of our population is either lapsed or unchurched. Make a phone call to a friend or family member, take someone aside at work and give them a helping hand, tell your story to someone who is in need of hope through God’s grace.

Lastly, we are called to hold ourselves accountable to our commitments - to God - and to each other.

ACTION...COMMITMENT...DISCIPLINE...OBEDIENCE...SHARING...ACCOUNTABILITY.

There is a commitment form at the end of this sermon. Bishop Romero created these for you to complete. These are commitments between you and God. Put this commitment sheet somewhere where you can see it on a daily basis, on a bathroom mirror, a car dashboard, a computer screen! Feel free to make copies for every member of your congregation and family to hand out in church. I would challenge every member of every congregation in our diocese to do this for the rest of 2006.

God only wants the best for us. I believe, if we do these basic things – consistently, persistently, day after day – our lives individually and collectively will change for the good. People will see the new life that has sprung forth and will want to be part of the new life they see in us. We will discern God’s will, and have the passion to carry it out. This will be our motivator as we move forward in making a difference in El Camino Real. We can become a visible source of inspiration of Christian ministry that cannot but help to expand and grow as the Episcopal Church in Central California. It starts right now, today, with you - the leadership that is representing your congregations. Together, we can do it. It’s time. The choice is ours – each and every day of our lives – whether to take action or not.

This diocese – The Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real - has tremendous potential to grow and to flourish as a Christian body of Christ. I am convinced of that. We have an opportunity – yes, an obligation - as Christians to do something with that. We have an opportunity to make a difference. We have an opportunity to be the powerhouse that God intends us to be. But we cannot do it alone. We need each other – and, with God’s grace, together we will become a model of ministry that welcomes, teaches, empowers and enables Christians to live a joy-filled life in Christ Jesus. Together, we will identify who we are and what we need to do to move towards becoming a witness of growth and ministry that is pleasing to God. If we don’t work together, we will die separately.

My hope - is that together - we will look back 10 years from now at January 28, 2006 as a new beginning where our resurrection as a diocese began. For today’s Convention and for the days to come, I pray that – together - we can discern God’s will for us. I pray that the Holy Spirit will encourage us and empower us to take right action in completing our mission that will move us towards our vision.

Well, it’s time for me to become your Administrator, God’s Deacon, Sheila’s husband, Sarah’s father, and your friend and brother in Christ for the rest of this day – never forgetting that the foundation that allows me to be all these comes from God and my Christian faith. As we continue with the business of Convention and later leave

to go back into the world, we may be confronted with distractions that will take us away from the basic principles of living a Christian life. I offer the following words from Paul's letter to the Romans as words of encouragement when the times get rough:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39 NRSV)

*Dear God,
take us where you want us to go,
help us meet who you want us to meet,
tell us what you want us to say,
and, oh dear God, keep us out of your way.
In Jesus' name - Amen*

GOING BACK TO BASICS

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ by praying, worshiping, proclaiming the Gospel and promoting justice, peace and love. (BCP pp 854-5)

As a member of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of El Camino Real, I make my personal commitment to

- Nurture my life spiritually by:
 - Studying (the Bible and other books)
 - Praying daily (make a list of those you pray for)
 - Worshiping
- Obey God and work to bring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ (be active in your parish and community – share the Good News with others).

LO ESSENCIAL DEL CRISTIANO

La misión de la Iglesia es restaurar a todos los pueblos a la unión con Dios y unos con otros en Cristo y se lleva a cabo al orar y rendir culto, al proclamar el Evangelio, y al promover la justicia, la paz y el amor. (LOC pp 746-7).

Como miembro de la Iglesia Episcopal en la Diócesis de el Camino Real, yo me comprometo a:

- Nutrir mi vida espiritualmente por:
 - Medio del estudio (leyendo la Biblia y otros libros)
 - Orando cada día (haga una lista de la personas por quienes quiere orar)
 - Participar en el culto de la Iglesia
- Obedecer a Dios y trabajando para restaurar a todos los pueblos a la unión con Dios y unos con otros en Cristo (ser activo in la Iglesia y comunidad – compartir las buenas nuevas con otros).