

The Shape

December 2008

The Episcopal Church in Almaden

6581 Camden Avenue, San José, California 95120 408•268•0243 www.eca-sj.org



When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Matthew 2:10-11

Opportunities at ECA

Worship

- December 7 – Second Sunday of Advent
7:30 AM & 11:00 AM Holy Eucharist
- December 14 – Third Sunday of Advent
7:30 AM & 11:00 AM Holy Eucharist
- December 21 – Fourth Sunday of Advent
7:30 AM Holy Eucharist
10 AM Joint Service (ECA & AVUCC) Instant Pageant
Youth Bake Sale and Servant Auction
- December 24 – 5 PM Joint Venture Family Christmas Service
Children welcome, Children's choir, children's
sermon, Christmas carols, communion
7 PM AVUCC Lessons and Carols
10:30 PM ECA Midnight Mass, Candlelight service,
ECA Adult Choir, sermon, communion
- December 28 – 7:30 AM Holy Eucharist
11 AM Holy Eucharist (Folk Music)

Adult Study (details within this Shape)

- Thursday at the church 10:30 AM on December 4
Wednesday Rector's Bible Study, December 3, at Susanne
& Arnold Moore's home, 6:30 PM Potluck Dinner,
7:30 PM Bible Study.

Children and Youth Study

- Sunday School at 10:10 AM December 7 & 14
Christmas Instant Pageant December 21 at 10 AM

Fellowship – Adults

- Women's Walk & Talk – 8 AM, every Wednesday
Men's Breakfast, Thursday mornings, 8 AM at Denny's
ECA Christmas Party (adults & guests) – December 13
Details on page 6

Fellowship - Teens

- December 13 – Baking for Sunday the 14th Bake Sale
December 21 – Instant Pageant, Auction, & Bake Sale

Outreach

- Alternative Christmas Shopping – Sunday, December 7

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30 am and 11:00 am

RECTOR

The Reverend Stephen Mills
408-802-5347
rector@eca-sj.org

MINISTRIES

ACOLYTES	Marcus Bond
ALTAR GUILD	Margaret Halliwell, Anna Spanjaart
COFFEE HOUR	Pete Mayo
FOLK CHOIR	Andy Kerr
GREETERS	Sharon Mills
GOD SQUAD	Stephen Mills
GOOD SAMs	Kelli Casale / Brenda McHenry
HAND BELL CHOIR	Maryke Williams
KIDS' BREAKOUT	Leslie Rousseau
LAY READERS	Jenny Hoyt
MONTGOMERY MEALS	Amy Griffith
NURSERY	Dot Allfrey
PRAYER VINE	Ann Avoux
USHERS	Dave Byers
SR HIGH YOUTH GROUP	Jon Mills
STEWARDSHIP	HANK DeVoss, George Romer
JR HIGH YOUTH GROUP	Bonnie McPherson
WORSHIP	Andy Kerr
WEBMASTER	Kim Petruzzelli
YOUTH SUNDAY	Jim McPherson, Bryan Bond

ECA STAFF

CHRISTIAN ED. DIRECTOR	
MUSIC DIRECTOR, ORGANIST	D. Asa Stern
TREASURER	Bill LaVallee
YOUTH DIRECTOR	
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	Dennis Elliott

CONTACTING

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TELEPHONE NUMBER	408 268-0243
E-MAIL ADDRESS	Theshape@eca-sj.org

The Shape

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OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

From Stephen



I want to thank all of you for making our Annual Meeting a joy-filled event. I especially want to thank Susie Ferguson for her wonderful organizational and party and retreat planning skills and her leadership as Senior Warden these last three years. Congratulations to Doug Dunham, Donna Miller, Alex Dykes, and Ron

Howie for their election to the Vestry; to Melinda Jennings, Ron Howie, Mary Leal, and Francie Kerr on their election to the Joint Venture Board of Directors; and to Todd and Kimberly Axtell, Mary Leal, Betty Wood and Melinda Jennings on their election as delegates to the Diocesan Convention. For those of you who were not at the meeting, I have chosen Kimberly Axtell to be Senior Warden for the coming year.

I attended my last Diocesan Convention last month. The highlight of the convention was the Bishop giving an award to Bill and Elaine LaVallee for their ministry to foster children. Bernie and Riker were there also and their exuberance spoke eloquently of the wonderful ministry of Bill and Elaine. At Convention this year, as I looked around the room, I realized that the church has changed much in the 24 years I have been a clergy and the pace of change is accelerating. I look at the new, young leaders coming up, and I feel comforted and comfortable turning the reins over to them. It is a good feeling.

It is hard to believe that Advent is here already. You know what that means – frantic activity and not finding a parking space in the mall until after Christmas. Actually, what it means at ECA is a number of activities to try to restore some sanity to the secular feel-good frenzy. Advent is a time to

examine our lives and prepare a place in our hearts for the Christ Child to be born. It is a time to consider our lives and our lifestyles. One of the important aspects of our Christian journey is how we show our love of God through what God has given to us. You should have received a pledge card either in person at the Stewardship Dinner or in the mail. If you have not already done so, please prayerfully consider how to best serve God and please do so as soon as possible.

On Sunday December 7th we will have “Alternative Christmas” which gives us an opportunity to witness to the love of the Child who is to come for the whole world and acknowledge that we are part of the whole human family.

On Saturday, December 13th we will have our Christmas Party. Find the details on page 6. Please come and join our celebration!

On Sunday, December 14th we will begin the Youth Group Bake Sale after the 11:00 service. This is an opportunity to save some time, have homemade goodies to serve to your guests and to support our youth groups. I recommend the peanut brittle highly.

On Sunday, December 21st our children will enact the story of our Savior’s Birth in the Christmas Pageant in our “Instant Christmas Pageant”. This invites and encourages all the children to be a part of the pageant. The pageant will be at 10:00 AM and there will be no 11:00 service. There will be a 7:30 service, however.

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From the Editor



Christmas is almost upon us, and it is this time of year that for many of us is filled with fond memories.

I recall being a child despite having the attention span of a gnat, I still managed to look forward to Christmas at least as early as October ever year. I recall the Christmas baking and decorating, going out with dad to cut down a tree that dwarfed the station wagon, shuffling it off home to find that it was about 8 feet too tall for the living room. The smells of a Christmas goose cooking mingle with the memories of trying to out-light the neighbour's homes with Christmas lights. Christmas lights were our specialty once upon a time. As frugal as I remember my dad being, he never complained when we had the house re-wired with a new 160 amp service dedicated to our lighting addiction. He didn't bat an eye when we put a 25ft tall Christmas tree on the second story, and more amazingly, not a peep was heard when the PG&E bill came in January... I recall the years when we popped pop corn and stung it on threads to decorate the tree and I distinctly remember the year the tree fell over. (on-top of my mother). Somehow no matter what the situation has been, Christmas has always seemed magical in a way. Even when Rob and I were jammed together into a 500 square foot studio apartment we somehow managed to fit a Christmas tree in (well, ok, so it was more of a Christmas twig).

The funny thing is: when I think of these fond memories they are about things. Is that what Christmas is really about? This year I feel that we are all called to contemplate the things in our Christmas life. Do we really need to buy the fanciest tree? Do we really need to spend so much on ourselves? What

about spending on others? What about spending our time – if not some of our hard earned cash – on those less fortunate than we. Perhaps then we may find the true spirit of Christmas and look upon it as fondly as those memories of red rider wagons and Christmas crackers.

Alex Dykes

Rector

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On December 24th we have three services.

At 5:00 PM we have our joint family Christmas celebration with our brothers and sisters from AVUCC. Kevin Smith and I will be sharing the service. The sermon and the service will be child and family friendly The Children's Choir will sing at this service.

At 7:00 PM AVUCC will have a service of Lessons and Carols with the AVUCC adult choir.

At 10:30 PM we will have our "midnight mass" with Lessons and Carols, Eucharist, candles, and special music by the ECA adult choir. From everything I have heard and seen, Asa Stern is doing a wonderful job with the choir and I am looking forward to hearing them at Christmas.

There will be no services on Christmas Day.

Come celebrate and may you have a Holy Advent and a Blessed Christmas!

*Salaam,
Stephen +*

Senior Warden

I cannot say that I am saddened to be writing my last article as your Senior Warden. You see, I do feel very strongly that the Lord is calling me into another ministry in which to serve Him and you at ECA. The Lord is calling me to be re-energized by His Spirit and a new focus for serving. I think the Lord is calling me to help you be re-energized as well.

We may be a small church but in many ways we are strong and mighty. We may only number about 104 families these days, but 66 of those families come quite regularly and are definitely strong in our many ministries. Praise the Lord for those faithful ones.

I know many of you wonder where everyone is on Sunday. In truth the 66 only represents 124 individuals, and 24 of them being children, youth and teens. So given that number on Sunday morning with 2 services dividing us, we are looking at the possibility of 62 in the pews early and late. Of course that's if you all come. (For your own reference the others break down to 15 families we rarely see but continue to pray for, and 23 who come on the average of once a month at most, and at least once a quarter, which includes Christmas and Easter.) With a sanctuary that can handle 175 easily, not including the choir, is it any wonder we ask, "Where is everyone?"

Many of you are on overload with more than enough to keep you busy with work, family, kids' activities, and church. It is quite evident when you look over our most faithful 66 families they also serve and serve again and again on our various ministries at ECA. Yes, many of you have served to points of exhaustion and it is no wonder it took many, many calls to fill our needed slate for Vestry & Joint Venture for 2009. It is obvious our talent

at ECA of which we are richly blessed is in need of being re-energized.

I am sure your vestry next year will want to seriously look at how we can do that. Certainly growth is one way and I would like to offer three ways that we might consider going about new growth to our church.

First, let's consider focusing on the many ways that we are alike instead of highlighting our individual and sometimes controversial differences. I think the world often tries to marginalize and fractionalize us by trying to put us on different sides and in different boxes. Sometimes we forget we are really much more alike than we are different, with many of the same dreams, desires and aspirations, as well as the same concerns and cares. I wonder what we could gain by highlighting more of how we are alike with the community around us.

Next, this is the day of the "agenda." We have them for all sorts of political positions and in the church as well. Agendas, like soapboxes, often can be divisive, because everyone believes they must take a stand. What if we looked instead for the qualities we desire in individuals or circumstances? Everyone wants understanding and acceptance and sometimes the best way to achieve such is to focus away from ourselves. Try being more accepting and understanding with others and often it will be returned to you. Example can be far gentler than words and rhetoric and often reaps greater benefits.

And lastly let's seek to share what has been most meaningful to each of us through ECA with someone we discover is in need of the same thing. For

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Senior Warden

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example, you have new understandings and insights from your Bible study. You recognize one of your friends or acquaintances has questions about life, dealing with problems, etc., that might be answered through Bible study. Take them along. Introduce them to your friends at ECA through the Bible study. Or maybe ECA's fellowship and parties have given you a special sense of family and connection. You have a friend or neighbor who doesn't belong to a church but likes social gatherings; bring them to one or two. Give them a chance to meet us in ways other than on Sunday. There are many doors in to our church, but someone has to be willing to share and to invite.

There is much that is good and rich and meaningful at ECA. There is a warm and loving family right here with lots more love to go around and share. Let's look for the best ways to share it in as many places as we can with as many people that cross our paths in the coming year.

Susie Ferguson
Senior Warden



Magical Christmas Party!

Please join us Saturday night, December 13th, for ECA's annual Christmas Party. This year's theme will be A Magical Christmas with all adults in the church invited to take part in the festivities. The evening will begin at 6:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall with hearty appetizers and beverages provided – or, if you prefer, you may bring your own favorite vintage to share. After the appetizers, we will adjourn to the Sanctuary for a light-hearted and raucous holiday celebration. We will finish off the evening back in Fellowship Hall for dessert and coffee. The cost for the evening is \$10 per person.

There is now a sign up sheet in Fellowship Hall with one of the committee members there after each service to sign you up and collect your money. Last day to sign up is Sunday, December 7th. If you are so inclined, we invite you to pull out all the stops and wear your most festive holiday duds.

Our large and enthusiastic committee has planned every detail of what we expect to be a fun-filled evening. However, at the end of the evening we would welcome anyone who can to help us clean up. Since we are not providing community baby sitting, we would welcome any of our teens who would like to come forward to provide baby sitting in individual homes and would suggest that anyone needing baby sitting services for the evening, contact one of our highly capable teens.

Jerry Ferguson
Chairman, A Magical Christmas

December Reflections

During December many northern Hispanics celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12. The story is a simple one: Juan Diego was walking along a hilltop and saw a vision of a young girl. She asked that a shrine be built in her honor there. When, Juan Diego presented her request to the local bishop, the bishop asked for a miraculous sign. Juan Diego went back to the hilltop at the request of the Virgin and found roses blooming there in the middle of winter. He gathered them and brought them to the bishop. The weight of the roses formed an image of the Virgin in his cloak. This story has always struck me as a strange one: the bishop asks for a sign and receives roses in wintertime, when no rose should be blooming. And yet, the story speaks to me of hope.

Roses usually bloom in the fullness of summer, when the air is soft and languorous. Their scent thrives on warm breezes. It reminds me that the work done in the deep mid-winter to trim the canes and clear away the fallen leaves has paid dividends in riotous blooms and extravagant colors. My hard work pays off months later and hope, like the roses' wafting scent, floats on the breeze.

Like Juan Diego's roses, there are other signs of hope.

We just had a historic election: the elevation of the first African-American to the highest office in government. And his election was based on hope – hope of change, hope for a better life than what we are living now. Hope is in the air.

This is also the beginning of the liturgical year, which begins with Advent – a season of anticipa-

tion and hope as we look forward to the Incarnation of the Christ as a human baby. Hope is in the air.

In the fullness of time, the work we do now will be honored by God. Sometimes the road is rough and it seems difficult to discern what lies ahead. There are many obstacles and barriers to progress. Sometimes it even appears that we are losing our way and need to go back to familiar ground. Yet God is with us every step of the way. The hard work we do in our various lives to build up the kingdom and God people will have its own reward. God is present among us. And like roses in winter, our lives will continue to bloom as God is made manifest in our lives.

Kimberly Axtell

Women's Walk!

New Fellowship Opportunity for the Women of ECA and their friends!

Women's Wednesday Walk & Talk – Joy and Susie would like to invite all the women of ECA who might have flexible morning schedules on Wednesdays to join them for a walk along the Los Alamitos Trail. They meet at 8 AM in the parking lot just south of ECA on Camden. They walk to the lake and back (approximately 3 miles round trip) which takes about one hour. All walking levels are welcome. Everyone can walk as far as they feel comfortable and at a pace that works best for them. This group meets rain or shine. If rain is too much even with umbrellas the group can decide to adjourn for coffee and chat. Why not consider inviting a friend who may not have a church family to join us, too. It is great fellowship and great exercise!

28th Diocesan Convention

A Report From 28th Diocesan Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real

Bishop Mary – who is greatly beloved – spoke to us. She said that in this world of complexity and exponential technological changes we are encouraged to move into the deeper stillness of God’s abiding presence. She said the timeless principles of our faith will make space more available to us.

She asked two things of us in the coming year:

1. Mentor someone. We might ask generally, “What would you like to be “mentored” on?” and then connect people with people.
2. Create a larger sphere of comfort for yourself. Ask yourself where your edge is – then go beyond that edge and stretch yourself. Listen and hear what concerns and challenges are out there.

Bishop Mary spoke of her stretching experience at the Lambeth Conference in England this past summer. She had a chance to meet and get to know

Bishops from many part of the world and from different cultures. She has made special friendships with two Bishops; and these three Bishops shall start the formation of Companion Dioceses. They are Bishop Geraro Upango from Western Tanganyika, Tanzania and Bishop Michael Perham from Gloucester, England. Starting in May these three Bishops will visit all together at each others Diocese and get to meet and come to know the people there.

Bishop Mary is hoping for multifaceted relationships that let us be ourselves while sharing God’s communion and grace.

The key word at this Diocesan Convention in Salinas was “Muevete!” Get a move on it. Get things moving! Move on!

Sandie Mueller

Youth Group News!

The junior and senior high youth groups (JHYGS and SHYGS) now have a home on the web. You can find online picture galleries of our events, an online event calendar, and soon information on the upcoming ski trip. You’ll find it all (and soon much more) at: <http://www.jvyg.org> Please note you will have to register before you can view pictures due to privacy concerns.

Alex Dykes & Jon Mills

Christian Education

Our Christian education program is moving along smoothly for the most part. There are still some kinks to be worked out, but the teachers and I are working on them. The junior and senior high classes will soon begin field trips to worship with a variety of bodies of faith. The first trip is a visit to Shir Hadash, a Reform Jewish temple, for a Friday evening Shabbat service. We will meet with the rabbi and attend the service. This will take place on Friday, December 5. We are to arrive at Shir Hadash at 5:45. Also in the works are visits to a mosque, a Catholic church, a Unitarian Universalist church, and several more. There will be discussions in Sunday School and in the Youth Groups about their experiences on these trips, and we are working on an adult education class that will tie in as well.

The search for a new Christian Education and Youth Director has been temporarily suspended while our churches complete stewardship campaigns. When we have more information about our finances, we will resume the search.

Melanie Click

JV Interim Christian Education Director



Gifts of Gratitude

Jon, Bonnie, Rob & Alex - For their fabulous work with our youth. Please keep them in your prayers during the busy holiday activities with the JHYGs and SHYGs

Hank DeVoss - Who took on a BIG project (stewardship) and is still working to encourage more pledges

Susie Ferguson - To our truly amazing retiring senior warden, thanks beyond measure for sharing so many of your gifts

Birthdays

Jonathon Beacher	1
Marion Grunge	2
Martha Lou Reynolds	2
Patricia Kabeja	4
Betty Consorte	5
Shelley Moore	5
Lola Fahlen	6
Donna Miller	7
Faith Mills	7
Ellie Mills	11
Susie Ferguson	13
Susanne Moore	16
Colleen DeVoss	16
Stephen Mills	16
Kathleen Eagan	19
Francie Kerr	19
Gary Keck	19
Jason Skowronski	19
Hannah Ward	23
Toni Hird	24
Bethany Lawrence	27
Ed Criner	30

Your 2008 Vestry: Praise & Thanksgiving

We at ECA are blessed to have special and unique servants for Christ. Just take a look at the individuals who have been serving you this past year and some of their gifts that I recognize and appreciate.

Ron Howie – Junior Warden

Strong man of faith, “always ready to give an answer as to what he believes” Hard and tireless worker. Serves and goes the extra step – this year is yet another example.

Steve Wing – Finance & Communication

Epitome of service in quiet ways without any great fanfare. Turkey Man. A “thoughtful” pulse within our midst. Devoted to our ECA family just as he is to his own.

Jim McPherson – Youth & Christian Education

High energy “doer” with enthusiasm for life and service. Represents one of the “great cooks” at our church that we have seen in action.

Tim Miller – Fellowship

Example of today’s challenges balancing work, family and serving God. Serving on overload.

Kelli Casale – Pastoral Care & Good Sams

A wonderful example of “growing in faith and service” while developing confident leadership qualities. A bold witness of the power of God’s grace extended to all.

Pat Fox – Pastoral Care

A sensitive, caring individual with sincere and good intentions for the betterment of our ECA family.

Sam Sarmecanic – Outreach Ministry

A quiet support for his vestry members. Always willing to learn and grow in his faith and in his service to others.

Kimberly Axtell – Spiritual Development

Truly a woman of prayer and faith. Caring and concerned about God’s people and our earth home. Ready and willing to lead to her fullest potential

Sharon Mills – Youth and Christian Education

Committed to serving with an optimism and a mile. Dedicated servant to our ECA family in many capacities besides vestry.

Hank DeVoss – Stewardship

Another one of our vestry who stepped out to grow his faith through study of God’s word and through fellowship with other Christians during his time of service. Always willing to share his faith and understandings and blessings.

Andy Kerr – Worship

Represents ECA’s historical memory on our vestry. A passion and heart for worship and the “work of the people.” Using his God given talents to richly bless our lives at ECA.

As for me (Susie Ferguson)

A story teller with a passion for “word pictures,” and tangible visuals to express the unseen in a concrete way. Plus a love and a heart for hospitality.

I believe your vestry represents the best that is in all of you at ECA.... Your hopeful natures towards the unknown future. Your willingness to show grace to one another. Your sincere desires to serve those in need. Your hungers to grow in faith, prayer, ser-

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Vestry

vice, and wisdom. Your openness to the Holy Spirit for direction, guidance, and encouragement. Your unbelievable tireless giving and serving and ministering to one another. And finally, your continual witness of God's love in this world.

Serving with all these individuals and together serving all of you have been great blessings this past year. Let us all continue to serve ECA in the coming year and be a blessing to the many around us.

*Susie Ferguson
Senior Warden*



From the Treasurer

As the third quarter ended, I took a few minutes in each October 12 service to share where we are in the “treasure aspect” of our stewardship. Specifically, I reported that 35 (of a total of 69) pledges were up to date or overpaid! I also reported that some 31 pledges were collectively \$13,720 underpaid. Counting the overpayment of pledge amounts(\$17,924), we were \$3,574 over the 3rd quarter portion(\$146,524) of the 2008 pledged total of \$190,600. As this is being written we are 6 weeks into the final quarter of 2008. In keeping with the thoughts and pledge in the vestry letter sent to you earlier with your Annual Pledge packet, and also, since it is your “treasure” which the Vestry collects and disburses for Christ's work through ECA, the following table contains our November 12,2008 financial status:

The overpayment of a small majority of the pledges is nearly equal to the outstanding underpayment difference. The positive total difference is nearly all due to un-pledged gifts. The effort of those who are not up to date on their pledges shows a 9 percent improvement since October 1. For the moment, we are in a positive financial position. Even so, it doesn't take much of an unplanned expense to overcome our modest positive difference. Therefore, we continue to urge those who are behind on their giving to count your blessings and then consider how to do your best to bring your pledges up to date.

*Hank DeVoss
Vestry Stewardship Liaison*

	No. Pledges	Pledges to Date	Rec'd to Date	Difference
Paid/Overpaid	36	\$105,090	\$121,387	\$16,297
Underpaid	33	\$64,710	\$48,567	-\$16,143
Gifts/Not Pledged	-	-	\$12,859	\$12,859
Totals	69	\$169,800	\$182,813	\$13,013

Stewardship

The following is a brief talk on stewardship presented to both services on October 19. In response to a request of a few in the congregation, the text of that talk is repeated below:

Good morning! I'm reasonably sure that most of you heard Susie Ferguson's "Conversation with God" last week with its powerful message regarding stewardship. I have two comments relative to that "Conversation with God." First, having served on the vestry for nearly a year under Susie's able role as Senior Warden, I want to share with you how very blessed I believe we are to have such a talented, giving, and dynamic soul as our Senior Warden and congregational leader for ECA.

Secondly, I want to remind you of a most meaningful statistic that Susie shared last week. Specifically, she determined that 84 of our 100 families in the congregation are active in one or more ministries of ECA. That in a word is phenomenal! Speaking as your vestry stewardship liaison, God bless you, and please accept a well deserved thanks for all that you do! In my relatively brief time as a member of ECA, I am still inspired by the atmosphere of love and fellowship which is so obviously pervasive here at ECA. And, which I must admit, together with Debbie Bishop's enthusiastic invitation to attend was certainly a factor in moving this experience but somehow incomplete soul to where he believed he more devoted to the Lord ---with a lot of room to grow. My personal thanks to all of you for being such a meaningful part of what to me has been a blessed transformation in my life.

Some of you are aware that in May I had the opportunity to participate in Cursillo. That experience was, without doubt, a beautiful, meaningful one for me. I should add that counting the 10 ECA members on the Cursillista Rooster for 2008, some 77 ECA members have participated over the years!

I hold strongly that Cursillo is a big factor in how effectively we participate and practice stewardship in this small island of God's Kingdom!

Back to my vestry stewardship liaison role, each of you has received a pledge packet this past week. Following your earnest thoughts and prayers, let me urge you to continue your phenomenal participation in ministries where you have a calling, and, if you have not to date, undertake to pledge of your treasure in accord with your conscience and capability to support the visions and missions of ECA.

Thank you and may God continue to bless us all.

Hank DeVoss

