

The Shape

January 2010

The Episcopal Church in Almaden

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



Opportunities at ECA

Worship

January 3 – 7:30 AM and 11:00 AM Holy Eucharist
January 10 – 7:30 AM Holy Eucharist
11:00 AM Holy Eucharist - Folk Sunday
January 17 – 7:30 AM Holy Eucharist
11:00am Holy Eucharist - Healing Sunday
January 24 – 7:30 AM and 11:00 AM Holy Eucharist
January 31 – 7:30 AM and 11:00 AM Holy Eucharist

Special Fellowship Events this Month

Fellowship – Teens

We have two youth groups, the JHYGs (Junior High) and SHYGs (Senior High). Both groups meet on a regular basis for Sunday night fellowship and activities in the community. Check our web site for current information.

Study – Adults: Thursday mornings 10:30 AM to Noon

Study – Children and Youth

Sunday School meets Sunday at 10:10 AM to 10:50 AM
Ages 4 years through high school.
There will be no Sunday School on January 3.

Other

ECA Vestry Retreat - January 9
Joint Venture Board Meeting - January 19 – 7:30 PM

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30 am and 11:00 am

INTERIM RECTOR

The Reverend Dr. Frank Hegedus

SENIOR WARDEN

Kimberly Axtell - (408) 623-6076

MINISTRIES

ACOLYTES	Marcus Bond
ALTAR GUILD	Anna Spanjaart
COFFEE HOUR	Pete Mayo
FOLK CHOIR	Andy Kerr
GREETERS	Sharon Mills
GOOD SAMs	Kelli Casale / Brenda McHenry
HAND BELL CHOIR	Ruthanne Adams
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	
YOUTH SUNDAY	Jim McPherson, Bryan Bond

ECA STAFF

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

CONTACTING

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

Father Frankly Speaking

Last month in our Sunday forums after the services we studied the Gospel stories of Jesus' birth, including the lovely tale of the Magi, or Wise Men, who visit the Child Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. People sometimes ask, as a few did last month: "Were the Magi real?" Good question.

Whether the Magi and their star were really "real" or not is anybody's guess. Most reputable scripture scholars today question their actual existence. Part of the so-called midrashic Infancy Narratives, they explain, not real in the literal sense. Still, somehow I would like to give them the benefit of the doubt.

After all, it seems oddly reassuring – perhaps disconcerting for some – to think that the very first individuals to recognize Jesus for who and what he was were outsiders in every sense of the word. They were rich, foreigners, fortune-tellers, prestidigitators. You know; show people, Las Vegas-types, for heaven's sake. If characters like the Magi could "get" it, there has to be hope for the rest of us.

Yet for all their baggage, the agenda of the Wise Men was a simple one: To find the King of the Jews, to worship him, and to bring him their gifts. And it is this simple agenda which leads them from the "comfort zone" of their own land and people on an improbable journey of discovery to King Herod and beyond.

Epiphany was – and is – literally an eye-opener, or, as it is usually translated, a manifestation: A manifestation of the hardly believable; the improbable; some would say, the impossible. It is a manifestation of God's wisdom masquerading as human foolishness – of God's love for us made real in the person of a vulnerable infant. Perhaps it did take outsiders to recognize this all too simple

truth. Perhaps it did take magicians and conjurers, themselves masters of deception, to recognize the real in the impossible.

Under the best of circumstances, there is always a fine line between the real and the unreal – between the mystic and the schizophrenic. Our very existence and the world we live in, some scientists tell us, is strictly speaking impossible. Except here we are. All too often it is the impossible which comes to pass: the love between two people, the birth of a child, the escape from tyranny, the reconciliation of enemies.

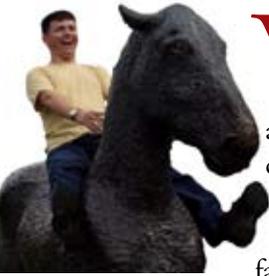
And, if there is a fine line between the real and the impossible, there is sometimes an even finer distinction between our own insight and our self-deception. We must admire the wisdom and perspicacity of three wise fellows who make their way methodically and surely across wilderness and desert, seeking an impossible reality they were sure had come to pass. If they were not real, who is?

The recognition and acceptance of the reality of God's love is rarer today than even the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of the Magi. But that is also true of every other age. Perhaps that is why the Church through the centuries has given us the special feast of the Epiphany at the beginning of each new year to celebrate the unlikely and even miraculous in our own lives. And, to give us courage and resolve on our own journey of discovery as we seek to recognize who (and whose) we are, and to see the star that others cannot see.

Happy New Year. Happy Epiphany.

Father Frank
The Rev. Dr. Frank Hegedus

From the Editor



What makes Christmas Christmas? Is it the packages all tied up with string? Is it children sleeping with visions of sugar plums dancing? Is it the gift giving? The fancy wrapping paper? Does it even have anything to do with Christ at all?

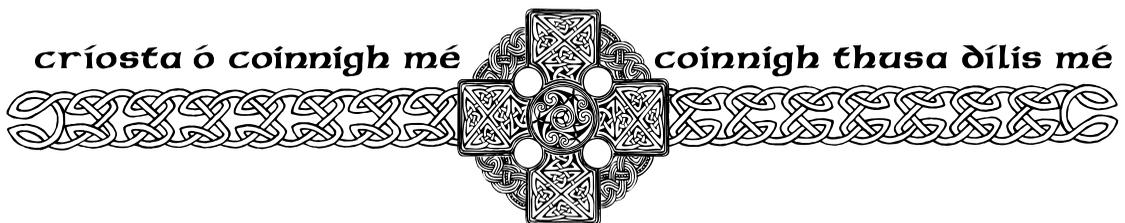
For some reason, the past few years have left me feeling increasingly more cynical about the event of Christmas, and decidedly less “christmas-y” during the whole process. It starts off with the home improvement stores that stock up with lights and tree paraphernalia right around the time that most sane people have just realised that October is around the corner. These same stores have Christmas all neatly wrapped up by the second week in December as if Christmas had never existed. Perhaps it’s the lack of family around to enjoy Christmas with, of course by that I mean my parents who aren’t exactly close enough to drop in on. Perhaps it’s the fact that as we age we lose that childlike sense of wonder and mystery about the Christmas miracle. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that when Santa brings me a toy these days, the charge appears on my own American Express bill at the end of the month.

What makes Christmas complete for you? I’d be delighted to hear from anyone, drop an e-mail to: “alex@dykesfamily.net”.

This year Rob and I recognized that we didn’t have room for a tree in our shoebox of an apartment, but some friends decided to give us a tree anyway, and there is something so wonderful about that tree as a result. A few moments ago I was informed that the county planning department had approved our request for PG&E to deliver power to our lot in the woods, and that perhaps is one of the best Christmas presents I could have wished for.

As I poke my head out of my covers on Christmas morning, gaze at the small tree next to the menorah, I have little doubt that Christmas will be just fine in my heart knowing that Christ was born and died for me, and that’s what this is really all about. Still, I can’t help some dreams of what might be under that tree...

Alex Dykes



Christmas Pageant

Our children's Christmas Pageant on 20 December was a lot of fun for everyone. As in years past, there was a part to be played by anyone who wanted to participate. This "instant" pageant concept assures that all children feel included. Special thanks to our baby Jesus – Delanie Casale and her family, our Children's Ministry Director, Melanie Click who helped organise the event.



Stewardship 2009

You may recall that the November Shape reported on the status of pledge giving as of October 14. We were specifically at that time \$ 5,923 short of being current on our pledges. Your pledge giving is the principal source for the financial foundation for Christ's work through our church. Thus it is important that we make every effort to meet our pledge goals. The tables below show our pledge giving status as of December 13 2009.

Paid or Overpaid-- 37 pledges
\$123,216 pledged to date
\$125,304 received to date
plus \$ 2088 difference on 12/13

Underpaid-- 30 pledges
\$ 64,330 pledged to date
\$ 45,145 received to date
minus \$ 19,185 difference on 12/13

Totals--67 pledges
\$187,546 pledged to date
\$170,449 received to date
minus \$ 17,097 difference on 12/13

The collective paid/overpaid receipts of part of our congregants do not exceed the outstanding underpayment difference. With over 92 percent of the year past, we are for the moment \$17,097 short of where we hoped to be. Count your blessings and then consider how to best positively influence the final 2009 total giving.

Hank DeVoss
Vestry Stewardship



Search News

The Search Committee met on Saturday, December 9th for several hours to establish goals and begin to build a spiritual working relationship as a team. We know we are a group of dedicated, hard-working people who care about the future of ECA.

We want you to know that we will be meeting as a group twice a month and as sub-committees more often. As the whole church moves towards the work of the ECA profile, the in depth procedure that will be put into place is called Appreciative Inquiry. This is a proven positive discernment method. It looks forward and creates an environment that is the core for ECA to find the best candidates who match our profile. It will be vital that everyone has their voice heard in this process. Please put two very important events on your calendars during which you will have a chance to participate. On February 21st and March 7th the 11 o'clock services will begin at the normal times and conclude about 30 minutes later. People will then be able to join in community to voice their thoughts in a guided process. More details about these dates will be forthcoming. Please, please plan to participate,

In addition, the Search Committee will be in retreat on Saturday, January 9th. Our pledge to everyone is to continue to be open and transparent with our communication with you all. We have lots of work ahead and continue to request your prayers.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with your thoughts.

Nancy Romer
Chairperson

Birthdays

Matthew LaRochelle	1
Sharon Mills	4
Steve Wing	10
Inge Bond	11
Patrick Ward	11
Jacqueline Rousseau	12
John Beacher	13
Karl Lueck	22
Henry Blankenheim	24
Jacob Fahlen	26
Hans Spanjaart	27
Lynda Fahlen	28
Payton Jaciow	28
Doug Lukanc	28
Will Bond	29
Frank Hegedus	29

In memory of Kathy Dunham, January 15

Anniversaries

Dennis & Mary Moran	6
Dennis & Gloria Skowronski	11
Hank & Mariolein Ciappa	13
Lola & Tom Fahlen	16
Bill & Elaine LaVallee	19
Bill & Sandy Taylor	26

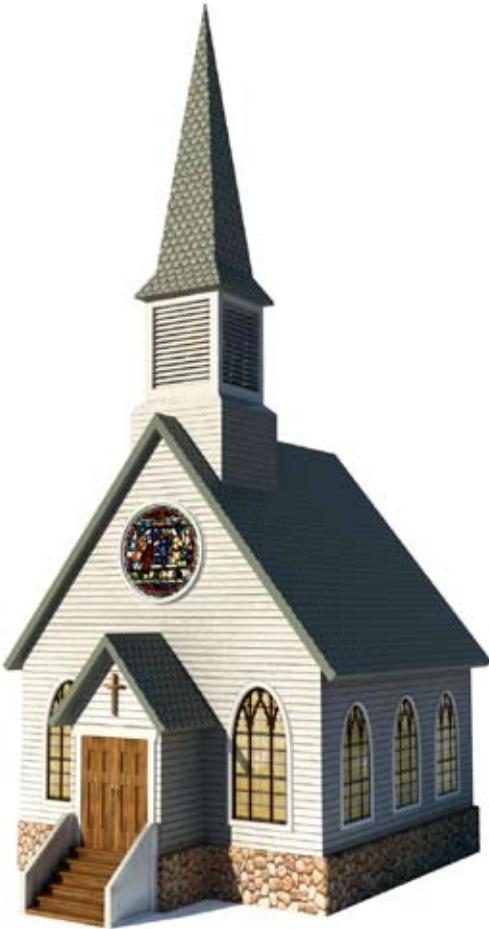
“That Was the Church That Was”

The history and development of a parish community can tell us a lot about its present, and its future. The Episcopal Church in Almaden has not been around for centuries like some churches, but it has grown up with its surrounding community of Almaden, and its short history is filled with people of determination and holy vigor.

As we prepare for our future with a new rector in a New Year and decade, let's take some time to look back and see where we have been. How did we get started? How have we ended up where we are today? What have we learned along the way? What is so great about ECA?

Join with Father Frank and fellow parishioners as we study the stories and events of our past forty and more years. Bring your own anecdotes and recollections! What was the best thing that ever happened around here? The funniest? The saddest? The proudest? The “serendipitousest?”

Sunday forums on January 10, 24, and 31 from 8:40am – 9:10am and 12:15pm – 12:45pm. The History Channel has nothing on us. You will not want to miss it!



Safeguarding Our Children

I had a conversation Friday with the Rev. Kathy Crowe, who is in charge of training people who interface with youth in the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real. As most of you know, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Group Leaders and those in charge of the Nursery are required to take a course focused on protecting the children under their care. Kathy also strongly suggests that other members of the church in leadership positions take the course.

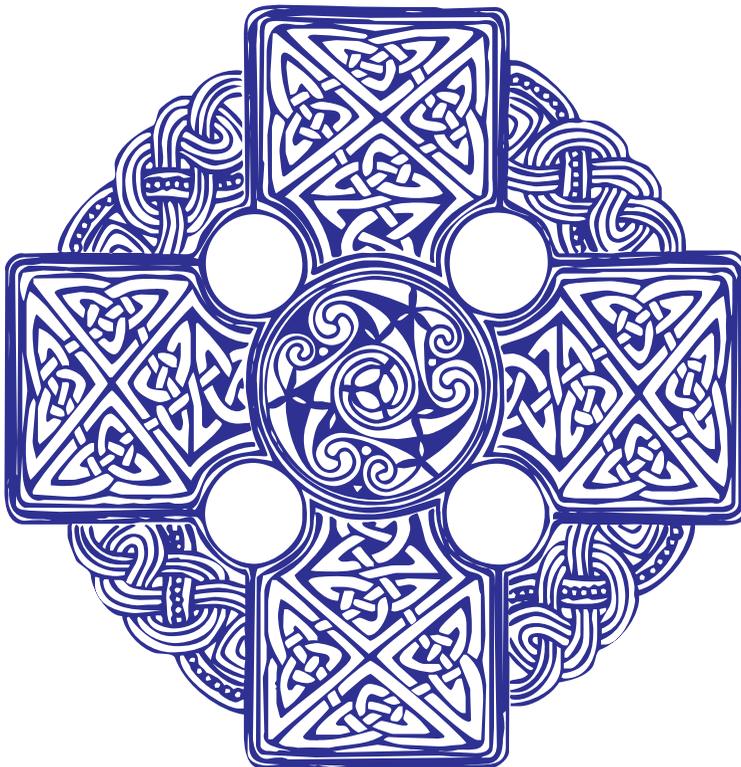
Kathy has offered to come to our church to teach the course, "Safeguarding God's Children". The class will be held on January 10 at 1:00 pm. The class lasts about 3 hours. Part of the course will be focused on various methods of doing background checks on employees who work with children. Please consider this a commitment, and pencil it into your 2010 calendar!

Please RSVP to Francie Kerr (408) 997-3651 or franciekerr@aol.com with the following information by January 4th:

- How many will attend class (Kathy needs to know how much material to bring)
- How many people would like lunch (Togo's sandwiches for about \$4.00 each)
- How many will need baby-sitting (number and ages of children)

Thanks so much for the leadership you all provide to our youth!

Francie Kerr
Joint Venture Council



Christmas Party

Our 2009 year of fellowship closed out with a fabulous event, our annual Christmas Party. We were so very fortunate to have Betty Consorte and Joan Wagner volunteer to chair this very popular event, and what a wonderful job they did! If you were there, you know. First, everyone gathered in the Narthex for a delicious array of appetizers. It was a great place to begin mixing and mingling with friends we knew and some new folks to meet.

When the 75 guests adjourned to fellowship hall for the dinner it sparkled with twinkling white lights on the ceiling which reflected beautifully off all the stars that hung so lovely above each table. We have Alex Dykes and Rob McClaine to thank for our décor for the evening.

After dinner we found our way up into the sanctuary for a very special entertainment program led by Andy Kerr and his “merry men,” Doug Dunham, Alex Dykes, Rob McClaine, and Roger Hoyt on the ivories (piano). They recruited others to participate in the program (even you, if you were there.) After the wild and raucous song and “sing-fest” we all found our ways back to fellowship hall for dessert and our raffle, organized by Suzanne Mayo.

Once again many offered their hands of support for setting up, cooking and clean up and a variety of other tasks that made the evening a great success.

This was the first fellowship event that the “author of this article” did no more than put up the sign-up poster and then invited some guests to join us for the evening. As a result she does not know all the people who should be thanked. It was a wonderful event, as always. Everyone who helped on it, from planning, shopping, cooking, setting up, welcoming, and taking down/clean-up deserves a great big THANK YOU. Thank you for your help and work on it... and thank you to all who attended! You are equally important. Without you, there would not have been a party.

As we move into 2010 let us all continue at ECA with our gift of hospitality. Let's encourage one another to attend our fellowship opportunities, make new friends, and grow closer to old friends, and better yet, bring more friends into our midst.

Susie Ferguson
Outgoing Vestry Fellowship

Chick Flicks

“Chick Flicks” returns in January! Yes, Chick Flicks is back on Friday, January 29th. We will begin at 6 PM with appetizers. Dinner will be served at 6:30 PM with the movie selection starting at 7 PM. As of this date (the Shape deadline) the movie has not been confirmed. Please check the Fellowship Bulletin Board for details and our sign up for the evening. “Chick Flicks” is an opportunity for the women of our parish and their guests and friends to “look at some spiritual concepts within the framework of secular movies.” Please consider joining us and bringing your friends. This is a great time to introduce other women to our church family.

For more information and details please contact: Susie Ferguson, 408-499-6381 cell, or Joy Austin-Lane, 301-385-2900 cell, for more information or to volunteer to help them with this event.

Susie Ferguson & Joy Austin-Lane
“Chick Flicks” organizers for January



JV Book Club

The book club will meet at 7:30 pm at Betty Benson's home on Jan 20th. The title of the book this time is: *Sarah's Key* by Tatiana de Rosnay.

The San Jose Public Library had 10 copies available throughout the system, or you can grab a copy on Amazon.com or your local bookstore.

Vestry Retreat

Your vestry, the elected leadership of the parish, will be meeting in retreat for prayer, study, and reflection on Saturday, January 9, at a neighboring church. This year will be particularly significant to our future as a parish community as we elect and call a new rector. The vestry feels it is important to enter this year – and this year's work – in a prayerful and thoughtful fashion. Keep them in your own thoughts and prayers on this special day.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting - Part 2 - will be Sunday, January 17. We will gather together at 10:15 a.m. (or after UCC is finished with their worship service) in the Church sanctuary. Come and hear an update about what God has been doing in the life of ECA, celebrate the vestry members who have completed their service and welcome our new vestry members. We will continue our worship service at 11 a.m.

Evangelism

The following is a re-print from April 2008, but for some reason I was inspired to bring this back out of the archive for an encore.

What is it to be Christian and spread the word of God? The New Testament tells us we are to go out into the world and proclaim the faith (in a nutshell) so why is it that many of us, especially we Episcopalians, seem to avoid doing so? I have no answers here, no insight, just a quick ponder if you will.

This past month has been very busy for me, my travelling schedule for Coit has gone from the doldrums to gale force and this has caused me to really notice the difference between our offices in the west and our offices in the south. As political correctness has a deep foundation in California it should be no real surprise that the office I work in has really no sign of what faith the workers espouse. Come to think of it, none of the companies I have worked for have had a terribly religious work environment. Not that there is a policy against such things, but it seems that it is polite in modern culture to not discuss one's faith so as to not offend others. This begs the question: how does one evangelise without offense?

I spent almost a week in our Houston office last week, and I was kind of "wierded out" by the office because everyone has a picture of Jesus, or psalms, or some new testament quote, or some of those ever so popular biblical themed chain letters posted all over their office or cubicle. In the public areas there were also little religious knickknacks posted on the bulletin board. Somehow, and I don't know how or why, but the overtness of their faith made me feel uncomfortable. Which really struck me, seeing as I'm a Christian myself.

Many modern Christians struggle with evangelizing to other faiths; it is as if the unchurched of any kind are the fair game and its dirty pool to try and convert someone on "the opposite team." This is a double-edged coin as there is always some other religious group trying to convert us. Can we honestly gain offense when a Muslim talks of his faith, when we do the same to them? The rationale is always: of course we can because *we* are right. Ponder.

As I sat in my hotel room after the second day I was forced to question why I said to myself "there's too much God in this building." Can there ever be too much God in our lives? Why should he not be at work? Could we honestly expect Jesus to go to work every day dressed like anyone else engaged in the rat race, carrying a briefcase and neatly leaving the fact that he's the son of God in the lobby?

In the end I decided to myself: what I consider overt displays of religion are really a cultural thing, and what else can be said about it? I doubt that those who proudly display their faith seek to make others uncomfortable, despite the end result. By the same token, I doubt that those of us who are more private in our faith lack the drive to bring others into the fold. The thing that we ought to ponder is: what if there was that one person who is seeking faith and we could be the person to bring them to God? What if our perceived stiffness, reservations and politeness prevents us from helping someone? These are the great mysteries of our modern non-sectarian society.

Alex Dykes