

The Shape

December 2010

The Episcopal Church in Almaden

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



*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall
call his name Immanuel... Isaiah 7:14*

Opportunities at ECA

Worship

Dec 2 - 7:30 AM Thursday Morning Prayer
Dec 5 - 7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist
Dec 9 - 7:30 AM Thursday Morning Prayer
Dec 12 - 7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Folk Sunday
Dec 16 - 7:30 AM Thursday Morning Prayer
Dec 19 - 7:30 AM Holy Eucharist - Healing Anointing
Dec 19 - 10 AM Joint Christmas Pageant
Dec 23 - 7:30 AM Thursday Morning TBD
Dec 24 - 5 PM ECA Family Eucharist
Dec 24 - 10:30 PM Carols & Choral Eucharist
Dec 26 - 7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Folk Sunday

Jan 2 - 7:30 AM & 11 AM - Come celebrate our inaugural Eucharist with our new rector Kate Flexer

We are now in the season of Advent. There are a number of special worship opportunities available at ECA as we prepare for the celebration of our Lord's birth in the Christmas season. Note that on Dec. 19, there will not be an 11:00 am service. We will join with the CCAVUCC at 10:00 am for our annual JV Christmas Pageant. Eucharist and Healing will be celebrated as usual at 7:30 am.

On Christmas Eve, there will be an ECA Family Eucharist service at 5:00pm. This will include singing of familiar Christmas Carols to welcome the Newborn King. We will gather at 10:30 pm for our traditional midnight Carols and Choral Eucharist service which will include singing carols, with special music offerings by the Choir and a wind ensemble. There will be no services on Christmas Day, but there will be a Folk service on Dec. 26 celebrating Christ's birth with folk and bluegrass songs.

On January 2, the First Sunday after the Epiphany, we are planning to celebrate the arrival of our new Rector, the Rev Katharine Flexer, as we welcome her to ECA. Mark your calendars and plan to be here for this joyful occasion which will include the JV Bell Choir.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ALMADEN

SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30 am and 11:00 am

RECTOR

The Reverend Katharine Flexer

SENIOR WARDEN

Kimberly Axtell
(408) 623-6076

JUNIOR WARDEN

Alex Dykes
(408) 839-2632

MINISTRIES

ACOLYTES	Marcus Bond
ALTAR GUILD	Anna Spanjaart
COFFEE HOUR	Margaret Alvey
FOLK CHOIR	Andy Kerr
GREETERS	Sharon Mills
GOOD SAMs	Kelli Casale / Brenda McHenry
HAND BELL CHOIR	Ruthanne Adams
LAY READERS	Jenny Hoyt
MONTGOMERY MEALS	Amy Griffith
NURSERY	Dot Allfrey
PRAYER VINE	Ann Avoux
USHERS	Dave Byers
SR HIGH YOUTH GROUP	Jon Mills
JR HIGH YOUTH GROUP	Bonnie McPherson
STEWARDSHIP	HANK DeVoss, George Romer
WORSHIP	Andy Kerr

ECA STAFF

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

CONTACTING

DECEMBER 2010 EDITION	
ISSUE NUMBER	12012010
EDITOR	Alex Dykes
TELEPHONE NUMBER	(408) 268-0243
E-MAIL ADDRESS	Theshape@eca-sj.org

The Shape

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

Senior Warden

It is Advent, the beginning of the church year. It is a time when we hear once again the story of the birth of Christ. Simultaneously though, we have the end of our calendar year. Beginning and ending, old and new walk side by side.

As we follow the church year we not only anticipate the birth of Christ and his second coming but also the arrival of Kate Flexer and her family. On October 31, Kate accepted the call of the vestry to begin a shared ministry as our next rector. Kate's last Sunday at St. Michael's in New York City was December 5. Shortly afterwards, Kate, with her husband Jim Hinch and their two children, Francis and Benjamin, will travel to Long Beach to spend time with Jim's mother. They will then fly to Seattle to spend Christmas with Kate's family. Then on January 2, 2011, Kate will celebrate her first Sunday with us. New beginnings, new ministry.

As we follow the calendar year, we come to the end of service for some of our vestry and joint venture board members. My term of service as a vestry member and senior warden will end early January when we hold our Annual meeting and elections. And I am pleased to announce, with Kate's blessing, that Doug Dunham will be our next Senior Warden. I know that you will support him with your time, your prayers and offers of help as I have been supported these last two years.

But the year is not over yet, my service among you is not complete. In January we will be electing a new set of leadership to vestry, joint venture board and as our diocesan representatives. Please let me know if you would like to volunteer to serve in these pivotal roles. This year you will have the added bonus of working closely with Kate as we vision anew how God is working at ECA. The vestry will be accepting nominations through the end of December.

God's peace and joy be with you this holiday season.

Kimberly Axtell
Senior Warden

Meet Our New Rector

“It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the vestry, I announce that we have issued a call to the Reverend Kate Flexer to be our next rector, and she has joyfully accepted.”

These were the words spoken by Kimberly Axtell, our senior warden, on Sunday, November 7. With these words, ECA completed the year-long search process. The search committee did an excellent job in bringing to the vestry a number of well-qualified candidates. After a couple of weeks interviewing the final candidates, the vestry selected Kate as the best priest for ECA.

Kate comes to us as a rector waiting for her congregation. Her first call to ministry after being ordained was as associate rector at St. Clement's in Berkeley, California. From Berkeley, Kate, Jim and their young baby Francis, accepted a call to St. Michael's Church in New York. As an associate rector, Kate was in charge of youth and adult spiritual formation. This included the Sunday school, youth group, confirmation classes, young adult classes and adult forums. She also developed an innovative alternative worship service designed to reach out to those who wouldn't be interested in traditional Sunday Eucharist. Her sermons are often thought provoking, challenging the listener to think out-of-the box. Did I mention that she also sings (the youth choir in New York grew under her guidance) and runs marathons?

Kate's last Sunday at St. Michael's was December 5. After that, her and her family finished packing for the movers and flew to Long Beach to spend time with Jim's family. While in Long Beach they will

look for a new car (of course, a car is not strictly necessary in New York), then travel to San Jose to help move their belongings into the rectory. From there, Kate and her family will travel to Seattle to spend Christmas with her family.

Kate's first Sunday at ECA will be January 2, 2011. And she will be formally installed as rector by Bishop Mary on January 27, 2011.

We are all very excited as we begin this new chapter in the life of ECA!



From the Editor



As another month draws to a close and another year is soon upon us I look back on this year with a great sense of accomplishment. As a congregation came together and balanced our budget, provided our search committee with a vision and after being provided with a veritable bevy of excellent candidates we called our new rector who will be joining us in the beginning of the new year. But on a more personal note, Rob and I have begun construction on our home in earnest. While our original schedule of it being “livable” (note I did not say complete) by the end of the year may have to be shifted to the end of January we are nevertheless making fairly swift progress. As you can see in the picture above, we have walls and God (and the weather) willing we will have a roof by the 12th of December.

Fear not, we have not abandoned ECA, over the past week we have received a few calls and e-mails asking why we haven't been around. The love and concern at ECA is perhaps our greatest strength as a congregation, and the answer to anyone who is wondering is: we have been spending every free moment when it is not raining to finish our framing and put on a roof before we grow fins and gills. I'd love to write more, but at the moment we have been working so long and so hard without a break that I hurt in places I didn't even know I had. Either rheumatoid arthritis is striking me early or it may have something to do with the nearly 12,000 nails we have driven thus far.

*Merry Christmas,
Alex Dykes*

Stewardship

This ECA worship community has a pervasive character of stewardship! Our stewardship is not only alive and well, but downright vigorous!

We have emerged from a superactive and exciting 16 months where we carried on our worship and ministries with the able guidance of Fr. Frank Hegedus AND with much extra effort on the part of many of our ministries.

Our efforts have been focused on welcoming our new rector to a “healthy” worship community. Notable effort extras undertaken and completed during this interim include the search for a new rector, a successful midyear campaign to erase a budget deficit, a much needed updating and renovation of the rectory, and a major vestry effort to establish both an improved congregational financial awareness and improved asset management practices to better preserve and use our limited assets. While still not a concluded concern. It appears likely that our interest in JV’s work to realize fund restitution to their accounts is but a few months in the future.

All things considered, during this interim, we have made tremendous strides improving the “health” of our worship community. We continue to be generous with our time, talent, and treasure. This is evident in viewing the pledge status as of November 17. At this mid-point of our November Stewardship Campaign, we have received 48 pledges (70% of last year) totalling \$162,820 which is 73% of the projected 2011 budget of \$221,000. Those who have not yet submitted their pledge response are encouraged to “get your paddle in the pond”.

Next years vestry needs your responses to plan the future of our efforts for Christ!

We cannot be good stewards for Christ by just feeling good about our past year’s accomplishments. We must realize that after such a demanding year as we have endured, several of our ministries need time and talent infusions. Some of these for you to consider are the God Squad, acolytes, ushers, greeters, alter flowers; and anything else where you want to contribute to the enhancement of our worship community.

Stewardship is what you do after you declare “I believe!”

ECA Stewardship Committee

Turkey Drive

Well, we managed to pull it off again! Minus the big pizza oven, we cooked them ourselves – this time by Plan instead of as the result of an oven catastrophe. As most everybody knows, this is the annual event to help the Montgomery Meals team cook and freeze turkey for the meals we prepare in our kitchen to feed the homeless every other week throughout the year. This year, people signed up not only to help with the prep and post-cooking chores but the cooking itself, volunteering their own ovens to cook a turkey or two. The response never ceases to amaze – thanks to everybody who came through again!

Steve Wing (aka the Big Turkey)

Thou Mayest

On November 6, Kimberly and Todd Axtell and I attended the Diocesan Convention as delegates representing ECA. “*Thou mayest*” is our theme for this year. It comes from Steinbeck’s classic *East of Eden*, which the bishop recommended we all read. Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves is truly an asset to our Diocese and an inspiration to be around. I came away pleased to be an Episcopalian.

Some of the highlights:

Eucharist started us off. The altar was in the center aisle. The choir came in from all directions. Native American music and chanting was incorporated in service. Incense was used, but instead of the traditional method, a Native American woman “smudged” it using a feather. Bishop Mary told us to “expect the holy spirit” as we anointed one another’s hands with oil. Her message was about inclusivity, tolerance and diversity. It was special and poignant.

On the tables in the meeting hall were many items, among them a card with a small purple ribbon. The card read, “Take the pledge & wear the ribbon”.

The Pledge: In the words of our Baptismal Covenant, I pledge to “strive for justice” and “respect the dignity of every human being.” I’ll speak up against bullying, hate and intolerance whenever I see it, at church, at school and at work. I’ll provide hope for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and other bullied teens by letting them know that God loves them just as they are.

On the back:

· 9 out of 10 LGBT students have experienced harassment at school

· LGBT teens are bullied 2 to 3 times as much as straight teens
· More than 1/3 of LGBT kids have attempted to commit suicide.
· LGBT kids are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers.
· LGBT youth with “highly rejecting” families are 8 times more likely to attempt suicide than those whose families accept them.

Looking at the horrifying statistics, I, for one, am glad that the Episcopal Church is on what I consider to be the right side of this issue.

Later on in the session, Campus Ministries made a plea for funding. Two college students spoke about the positive effect the campus ministries at San Luis Obispo and San Jose State had on them. The Episcopal Church is the only inclusive church represented on these campuses. It’s the only place for some students to be accepted and spiritually fed. One young man who spoke said that coming out as a person of faith was much more shocking to his family than him coming out as a homosexual. For many, college is a time when they are most receptive to faith.

Bishop Mary asked last year that a task force be created on the Theology of Marriage. They made their report available to us. Fascinating processes and conclusions emerged. First, they sought 8 people for participation who were of diverging opinions. Using the “three legged stool” approach of scripture, tradition and reason, they studied the scriptures on the subject, they examined the history, and finally considered what society’s current experience of marriage is.

Continued on next page

Youth News

During the Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons, our Sunday School will be focused on the Biblical story of wise ones following a star to greet the newborn Jesus and Christmas traditions from around the world. We will learn through art, food, games, and stores.

Our Christmas Pageant will be on December 19 at 10:00. Everyone come and participate in our annual celebration telling our Christmas story.

Sunday School will take a break from December 19 - January 2, and then we will resume on January 9.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for our Christian education programs, please contact Melanie Weiner.

Convention

After 10 five-hour long meetings, no one's mind had changed (which was never the purpose). What emerged was a constructive dialog whereby the group identified seven elements they could all agree upon that make Christian marriage unique (plus a 50 page report on the process.). In addition, they created a 7-week guided program for congregations who want to open the discussion in their own churches. This is something our diocese can offer up at General Convention. See me if you are interested to know more.

Bishop Mary recognizes that as a body, we have a problem creating a multi-cultural church. In spite of a desire to include, we seem to systematically segregate into non-Anglo and Anglo people. She has plans to study the phenomenon to try to understand it better so we can improve. I am struck by her willingness to confront the difficult and divisive subjects and bring them out in the open to be discussed.

In addition to campus ministries, there is no end to good causes that need our support. Delegates were updated on Hope for Sudan, Nets for Life, and Bishop Mary's Scholarship Project in Tanganyika. The number of good causes for the poor is endless, but as she said, there is no escape from poverty for those mired in it. They can't wake up one morning and say, "I choose not to be poor today." They can't ignore the hunger and disease they are surrounded by. The least we can do is listen and respond when we can.

ECA can use more delegates. I highly recommend anyone slightly interested seriously consider serving in this way. You will find the blessings of your service returned many times over.

Mary McPherson