

The Shape

Newsletter of The Episcopal Church in Almaden

Rector

This month we begin the season of Lent, a time of renewed discipline for Christians around the world. It is a time when we typically focus a little more on personal disciplines, sometimes 'giving something up for Lent' or occasionally taking some new practice on. For some of us, giving up a favorite treat like chocolate or reducing our time on the Internet feels like a good thing for 40 days. But it's easy for Lent to become essentially another chance at self-improvement.

The 'Invitation to a holy Lent' that is part of the Ash Wednesday service exhorts the congregation to observe Lent by 'self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.'

[Continued on page 3]

Service Schedule

SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30 am and 11:00 am
Sunday School at 10:10 am

THURSDAY SERVICE

7:30 am

Rector

The Reverend Katharine Flexer

(408) 364-6524

Staff

Melanie Weiner

Youth & Christian Education

D. Asa Stern

Music Director & Organist

Bill LaVallee

Treasurer

Dennis Elliott

Administrative Assistant

Assisting in our Ministry

Doug Dunham

Senior Warden (408) 398-7911

Alex Dykes

Junior Warden (408) 839-2632

William Bond

Acolytes

Anna Spanjaart

Altar Guild

Margaret Allvey

Coffee Hour

Sharon Mills

Greeters

Betty Consorte

Worship

Jenny Hoyt

Lay Readers

Ann Avoux

Prayer Vine

Dave Byers

Ushers

Jon Mills

Senior High Youth Group

Bonnie McPherson

Junior High Youth Group

Todd Lukanc & George Romer

Stewardship

Worship Schedule

March 3 - Feast of John & Charles Wesley

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

March 6 - Last Epiphany

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

March 9 - Ash Wednesday

7AM & 7PM Holy Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes

March 10

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

March 13 - 1 Lent

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Folk Sunday

March 17 - Feast of St. Patrick

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

March 20 - 2 Lent

7:30 AM & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Healing Anointing

March 24 - Feast of the Annunciation, trans.

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

March 27 - 3 Lent

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

March 31 - Feast of John Donne

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

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Rector

[Continued from cover]

Elsewhere in our tradition we are reminded that in Lent we are to focus on three practices: prayer, fasting, and the giving of alms. I think this season offers us all an opportunity as a community together. As I speak with different members of this congregation, the refrain I hear over and over again is the desire to welcome more people into our church life. As I've been reflecting on this, it occurs to me that how we go about it fits perfectly into this structure of Lenten discipline.

We begin with **self-examination**: we take a good look at how inviting we are, and how we welcome those who come through our doors. How does our facility look? What message does our worship send to newcomers, for instance young families or those unfamiliar with Episcopal customs? Do we publicize and explain our fellowship gatherings well enough that others feel invited in? Do we tell our friends and neighbors about our church? Perhaps there is room for change – even repentance – there.

So then we **pray** about it. If we long for our church to grow and thrive, we need to pray – for the specific ministries here, for those involved in them, for discernment for how each of us can contribute to growth. And by growth, I mean growth in numbers for our community, and growth in each of our faith lives.

We look at **scripture**. The Bible has much to say about hospitality and welcoming the stranger. Consider all the instruction to the Israelites as they came into the Promised Land, how carefully they were reminded to tend to the 'aliens' in their midst. Consider the hospitality Jesus practiced, how he

welcomed people that others had pushed to the margins. There is much there to teach us as we seek to widen our welcome to others.

We **fast** from habits and behaviors that limit our hospitality. We might be comfortable with things as they are, but how comfortable is it for others? Is there something we are doing that makes another feel unwelcomed? What is the best of who we are, something to strengthen and deepen in our common life, and what should be discarded?

And finally, we deepen our spiritual practice of **hospitality**. We might already be accomplished at offering hospitality to others in our homes, cooking good meals or offering a bed to invited guests. The Christian practice of hospitality is this and more. It connects to the giving of alms. We tend to think of 'almsgiving' as simply giving money to the poor. But it is a practice that includes anything we do for the good of others, serving Christ in one another. How can we offer that kind of hospitality right here at ECA?

So this season of Lent, I offer a challenge: for your Lenten discipline, spend time thinking and praying about how to welcome others to this church. What one thing could you do to help this community be a radically welcoming place? We'll be focusing in our adult education series on hospitality too, sharing our thoughts together. And then come Eastertide, we'll gather up these ideas and offer them to God and one another – and we'll set about putting them into action.

-Kate

Senior Warden

BRAAP!! BRAAP!! WHOOP!! WHOOP!!

Captain Kirk: Mr. Sulu! We're under attack. Full power to the Deflector Shields!

Sulu: Aye, Captain. Full power.

Captain Kirk: Scotty, how badly are we damaged?

Scotty: Not good, Cap'n. We canna take ano'r hit like that.

Captain Kirk: Mr. Chekov! Evasive maneuvers!

This is the scenario that played out in my head a few weeks ago when Kate fired a Photon Torpedo in my direction as I was leaving her office: “So where are you on your Spiritual Journey?” My recollection of that panicked moment was that I either pretended I didn’t hear, or I muttered, “OK, I guess” and took evasive maneuvers. I escaped, and evaded further damage. But damage was done: The question had torn my spiritual skin wide open, and it was up to me to repair the damage.

Flash back a couple of months to the time when the vestry was interviewing the final candidates for the position of Rector. We had a set of questions that each of us would ask each candidate. One of mine went like this:

Years ago, a priest asked our class a question like this: Our Spiritual Journey is like a bicycle ride. Most of the time, we’re cruising on flat ground, and the ride is easy. And then we encounter a steep hill, and we have to downshift and grind our way up the slope, sweating hard to get to the top. There’s also the fast downhill runs with sweeping turns that are exciting and fun, but don’t last long enough. There are turns and intersections that we can take, and sometimes we get lost, and have to backtrack to get back on course. And when we get tired, or hit the wall (figuratively), we pull over and sit under a tree to rest for a while. With that metaphor in mind, where are you on your Spiritual Journey?

It would be inappropriate to provide any of the answers we received, but those answers helped us in our discernment for our new rector.

Flash back to the present. Where were we? Oh, yeah! Spiritual skin, ripped wide open... I never really expected that question to be thrown back in my direction. I didn’t have a ready answer, and even if I did, it would only provide a shield to divert a deeper discussion. But it did linger, and got me to thinking about my Spiritual Journey: where I’ve been, where I’m at, and where I need to go.

Mostly I’m happy doing the flat easy pedaling, not having to think much about it, and just enjoying life as it passes by: Going to church on Sunday, helping out on vestry, doing what I can to help others, providing my particular brand of Christian leadership.

I like the downhill runs, fast and exciting, with an adrenalin rush. That would be Cursillo, with the weekend experience of Christian love and caring pointed directly at me (and everyone else). Working as Senior Warden with Kate is also very satisfying as she brings fresh and renewing ideas to ECA.

I endure the uphill grinds, when life throws an unpleasant event at me or my inquiring mind asks a question that I don’t have an answer to: Kathy’s passing, struggling with how God fits into my world today, and wondering how I can be a better person. Frankly, I’m not comfortable peddling these uphill parts, but I realize that I need to do them as it makes me stronger and more able to deal with the next one.

Senior Warden Continued

There are also the times when we turn an unexpected corner, and find a whole new view of the world in front of us. That happened to Kathy and me when we first came to ECA, and discovered that we could be questioning yet spiritual people. That was refreshing.

So I've now got this photon torpedo of a question exploding in my mind, and have been spending time pondering just where I am on my Spiritual Journey. And at this point, just pondering the question makes it big in my mind and I think that I'm at least starting up a slope that I can climb without getting too winded. There are a lot of great people here at ECA to help me, and you've been doing that for a long time. That's what makes this church such a special place.

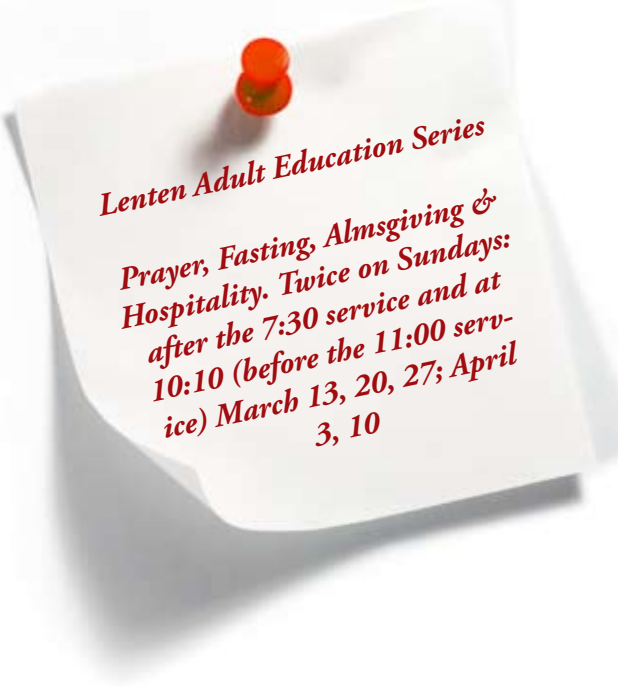
And when I finally top this hill, I'm looking forward to ride like the wind on another sweeping downhill run.

As we move into the season of Lent, it's appropriate for each of us to reflect on where we've been and where we're going as Christians in the world today. So I'd like to fire my own photon torpedo at each of you: "Oh, <put your name here>! Where are you on your Spiritual Journey?"

BRAAP!! BRAAP!! WHOOP!! WHOOP!! Shields up?

*In Christ's Love,
Doug*

Save The Date!



*Lenten Adult Education Series
Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving &
Hospitality. Twice on Sundays:
after the 7:30 service and at
10:10 (before the 11:00 service)
March 13, 20, 27; April
3, 10*

From the Editor

As Rob and I are moving into our new home by March 6th, this is an appropriate repeat from last year.



When I was a child I spake as a child, reasoned as a child and longed for expensive name-brand merchandise as a child. When I became a man I spent like a child on an adult expense account. When you are a teenager, your sense of

value is wrapped up in what you own, what you can collect, what you can *possess*. By the time you get a day job you start calling this process “the rat race”.

Last November I attended the LA International Auto Show covering the press conferences for TTAC.com (For the uninitiated, before the public opening of major auto shows, the press descends upon the convention centres like vultures for the unveiling of new and slightly-new cars while scantily clad “booth babes” prostrate themselves on the hoods of said cars, pass out champagne, wine and hors d’œuvre). At the Porsche press conference I was standing in the beverage line behind the owner of a “cars for mothers” publication and we struck up a conversation on cars [imagine that]. She was trying to decide what car to get for her husband. It “*had*” to be something more expensive than a \$90,000 BMW because some guy lower than him on the corporate ladder just bought one and you couldn’t *possibly* drive the same car as your direct report. She then asked what I drive (um, a Volvo wagon), after she regained her composure, she asked where I lived and when I said the San Francisco Bay Area, a light went on in her head. “That explains it!” She exclaimed, “down here we drive our pay-checks around”. I stood there dumbstruck for a moment, realising that while she obvi-

ously is more direct about the display of wealth, I too am trapped in this cycle as many of us are.

One of my favourite shows of all time is “The Good Life” known in the USA as “Good Neighbors”. Besides being a wonderful show because it stars Penelope Keith and Richard Briers, the plot is intriguing. The main character is Tom Good who lives in a fairly affluent suburb (think: Almaden). Tom turns 40 and decides his life is lacking something. To gain the “something”, he decides to quit his job, simplify his life and be 100% self-sufficient. Aside from the hilarity of raising goats and a cow in a suburb, Rob and I like the concepts that the show pokes a light sense of fun at: leading a simple life.

Living simply is different for everyone. Obviously I have no plans on taking it to the extreme that was posed in “The Good Life”, but the reality of living for a good long period of time in 500 square feet on 9 acres of forest that initially filled me with foreboding, now brings a certain sense of relief to me. We have been spending the past months downsizing everything; donating clothes we haven’t worn in years, donating books to the library so others can enjoy them, recycling kitchen gadgets by giving them to friends, and getting down to the “essentials” of our lives. (Mind you, I find my TV an essential). I have found that the constant pursuit of “stuff” has separated me from the world around me rather than giving me a sense of belonging. My only hope is that leading a simple life turns out to be a life’s mission rather than a phase. Seek that simplicity in life, value what is truly essential rather than what we are told we must have or do; in doing so you just might find God.

Alex Dykes

Stewardship Update

Currently, we have \$205,190 pledged for 2011 from 67 members, leaving an approximate \$11,000 shortfall relative to our projected 2011 budgeted expenses (ref. to Annual Report). Thank you for those who responded to our calls last month. As in any household, we need to balance our budget and would rather not cut programs to do it. So, if you have not yet submitted your pledge or would like to be part of the solution by increasing your pledge, please mail it or bring it to Bill LaVallee's mail box at church to help balance the ECA budget.

Our Endowment Fund balance at Comerica Securities at this writing is \$237,700.88, an improvement over last month. It was reduced by \$60,000 to pay for the Rectory remodel. Your Vestry is committed to paying back our loan to ourselves over a 10 year period at \$6,000 per year (budget line item).

Wiktionary has the definition of tithe as:

(archaic) A tenth.

The tenth part of the increase arising from the profits of land and stock, allotted to the clergy for their support, as in England, or devoted to religious or charitable uses. Almost all the tithes of England and Wales are commuted by law into rent charges. Concept originates in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).

A contribution to one's religious community or congregation of worship.

A small part or proportion

The real operational use concerns how you calculate the tithe:

- 10% of all income (gross)
- 10% of net income, after taxes
- 10% of net income, after all required expenses
- 10% of gross income, including all other donations to charitable causes, including creditors, government, and college expenses.

The tithe is not necessarily an “all or nothing” proposition, rationalized as, “I (we) can't possibly make ends meet, so we won't do it.” Perhaps a more palatable working model is to consider it a destination path or journey, working from definition 4 above to number 1 or more. It is all up to your tolerance for discomfort. Also, it is obviously – up to you! Being a Christian is a journey, not destination. Giving is part of the journey. Strive to tithe. We do.

George Romer
Stewardship



Intercessory Payer

What is intercessory prayer? You might have noticed that on Sunday mornings when we pray aloud the Prayers of the People, we include several names of those for whom folks have requested special prayers. You might also have heard of something at ECA called the Prayer Vine. And you may have said to a friend who's going through a tough time, I'll pray for you. What is all this praying for?

If you feel a little confused about what it means to pray for someone else, there's good reason for that. Even in our scriptures there's a wide range of ideas about what prayer does: everything from changing God's mind (think of Abraham arguing with God) to attuning ourselves to God's will (think of the letter to the Romans, 'we do not know how to

pray as we ought, but [the] Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words' Romans 8:26). Ultimately it is a combination of the two: we ask in trust for what we desire for ourselves or for another, and we yield our will to God's will. Our prayer is part of our ongoing relationship with God – not simply requests or orders we send in from time to time. The more we are in relationship with God, the more likely our prayers align with God's will. We pray for healing for another, trusting that God desires their healing, but knowing that in our limitations we can't understand just what that healing will look like. God works all things for good (Romans 8:28), but we can't always claim to know what that good is. But it is also true that when we pray for others, their needs are more present in our own minds and hearts. We ourselves can be part of the healing process in tangible ways, because we are ready to respond to those needs however we can.

We can all participate in intercessory prayer at ECA – that is, prayer on behalf of another – in various ways: by attentively listening to the names read aloud on Sunday and praying along with the prayer leader; by keeping each other in prayer regularly; and by joining the Prayer Vine if you feel a particular call to that ministry. The Prayer Vine is currently being coordinated by Ann Avoux. When Ann receives a prayer request, she passes it on to the people on the list by email, who then pray for those names daily. If you would like to participate in this ministry, you may contact either Ann (home phone # 408-270-2406; email: mavoux@aol.com) or Mike Schmidt (home phone # 408-323-8025; email: mschmidt8120@sbcglobal.net), and we will see that you are added to the Prayer Vine list.

Kate Flexer

**We're on
the Web!**

<http://www.eca-sj.org>



- **Worship Matrix**
- **Midweek Bulletin**
- **Sunday Bulletin**
- **Past Shape Issues**
- **Calendar**

Pastoral Care

Although my wife Marianne and I have only been attending ECA for little more than a year, it was evident to us early on that this is a caring church family made up of members who will step in to help meet any perceived need. When I was invited to be a member of the vestry this year, I chose to be part of the Pastoral Care ministry, because I noticed that, at least during the recent time of transition, it had become somewhat neglected.

I'm thinking of things like visiting those in hospitals or confined to home, providing meals or rides, etc. I know these types of things are being done, but there seems to be agreement that we need to be better prepared to meet physical needs in a manner that is prompt, sufficient, and truly supportive. If you are interested in helping to reorganize Pastoral

Care ministry, Donna and I would like to invite you attend a meeting after the 11:00 service on Sunday, March 13th.

In the meanwhile, be thinking about what this ministry should look like, and how it could function most effectively. Feel free to share your input on the 13th, or contact me sooner if you'd like. I'm convinced that some of you will have insights that will make all the difference in helping this ministry take shape.

*Mike Schmidt and Donna Miller,
Vestry liasons for Pastoral Care*



See How They Run

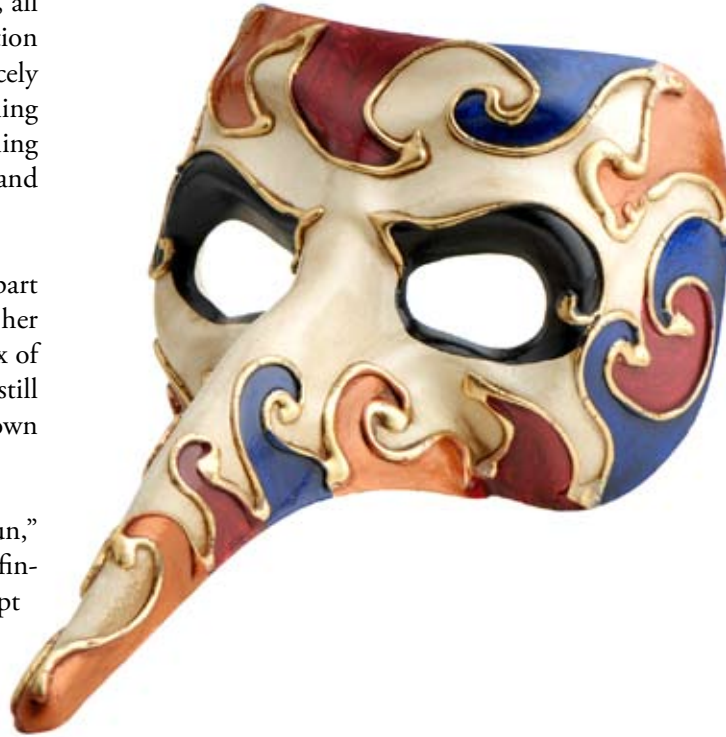
It was a great evening of fun, fellowship, meeting new friends and being in the audience for a show that kept us laughing from start to finish. On February 12th it was a sold out performance that many of us attended.

Thirty five ECAers and friends gathered at the Ferguson's for a pre-theater dinner... ECA style. There was a fabulous array of hearty appetizers, all very healthy and nutritious, and quite a selection of "bubbly" clear, red and white. All this fit nicely into the red, white, and blue theme of the evening celebrating Valentine's Day as well as upcoming Presidents' Day. (You remember Washington and Lincoln.)

ECA members met many new friends that were part of Susie's French class as well as friends through her college sorority. It all made for a wonderful mix of interests and professions. Conversations were still going strong when it came time to head downtown to San Pedro Street and the Tabard Theater.

The comedy of the evening, "See How They Run," was an excellent representation of Tabard at its finest. Well cast and well rehearsed, the actors kept us wide awake and laughing as we witnessed the surprising events happening within an English vicarage in the '40s. Life can be quite complicated and amusing for priests, bishops and parishioners!!

Susie Ferguson



Curtain Time!

Tabard Theatre presents “Follies, Concert Version.” Celebrate the glamour of Broadway with this award winning musical written by Stephen Sondheim and James Goldman. Theater party set for Friday, March 18th at the Fergusons and you’re invited.

First, purchase your tickets on line, www.tabardtheatre.org or even better through Lynne, the box office manager, at (408) 679-2330. Please tell her you are part of the Ferguson party.

Next, plan to join the Fergusons at their home on the 18th at 5:30 PM for a pre-show party. Please bring a hearty appetizer and beverage to share. At 7 PM we will all head downtown to San Pedro Square and the Tabard Theatre for the 8 PM show. (www.tabardtheatre.org)

Finally, please RSVP to Susie or Jerry, (408) 997-0107 your intentions to attend the pre-show party so we will be ready for you.

Susie Ferguson

Birthdays

Tim Miller	1
Hayley Moore	1
Anna Spanjaart	1
Bill Taylor	1
Jack Jackman	3
Judy Graun	4
Luke Appleton	6
Julia Machado	6
Jackie Whitlock	6
Jason Ferguson	16
Ainsley Jaciow	21
Gloria Skowronski	24
Edie Keck	26

Anniversaries

Dave & Gayle Byers	10
Henry & Judy Blankenheim	14



The Parable of the Fig Tree

The Thursday morning Bible study has been reading and discussing the Gospel of Luke. I was particularly taken with the Parable of the Fig Tree, not so much as it pertained to the nation of Israel, and God's frustration with them, but as it applies to us as individuals. In Luke 13:6-9 we read,

6 Then Jesus told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 8 " 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

Three things in the story have obvious symbolic significance. The vineyard owner represents God, the one who rightly expects to see fruit on His tree and who justly decides to destroy it when He finds none. The gardener, or vineyard keeper who cares for the trees, watering and fertilizing them to bring them to their peak of fruitfulness, represents Jesus who feeds His people and gives them living water. The tree itself has two symbolic meanings: the nation of Israel and the individual.

As the story unfolds, we see the vineyard owner expressing his disappointment at the fruitless tree. He has looked for fruit for three years from this tree, but has found none. He was perfectly justified in tearing down the tree that had no fruit. The Lord's ax was already poised over the root of the tree and it was ready to fall. However, we see the gardener pleading here for a little more time. The compassionate gardener intercedes (as Jesus

does for us) for more time to water and fertilize the fruitless tree and the gracious Lord of the vineyard responds patiently.

The lesson for the individual is that borrowed time is not permanent. God's patience has a limit. In the parable, the vineyard owner grants another year of life to the tree. In the same way, God in His mercy grants us another day, another hour, another breath.

Jesus repeatedly reminds us here and in other stories that we will be judged according to the opportunities we had. The parable teaches us that uselessness invites disaster. The most searching question we can be asked is, "Of what use were you in this world?"

This parable teaches that nothing that only "takes out" can survive. The fig tree was drawing strength and sustenance from the soil and the sun and in return was producing nothing. That was precisely its "sin".

There are two kinds of people in this world – those who take out more than they put in, and those who put in more than they take out.

We are all in debt to life. We would never have survived without the care of those who loved us. We have inherited a civilization and a freedom we did not create. There is laid on us the duty of handing things on better than we found them.

The parable teaches us that by God's grace we get a second chance, but eventually our chances will run out. God doesn't shut us out, but we, by deliberate choice shut ourselves out when we don't do our part.

Figs

As with all of the parables in the Bible we can glean many different messages from the parable of the fig tree. One message is that we all live on borrowed time.

Please join our friendly group on a Thursday morning at 10:30 in the choir room and share in some interesting discussions. We don't have all the answers and we don't all agree, but we are all seeking to comprehend what the scriptures say and to understand how to apply them to our lives today.

Mary McPherson

Chili Cook-Off!

Come out for the third annual Chili Cook-Off and remember: Tasters are as important as cooks! This is a fellowship event, so even if (especially if!) you have no interest in cooking up a pot of chili, come out and savor the fruits of others' labors, along with corn bread, salad, and drinks (lemonade and coffee provided - other beverages are welcome, BYOB).e

When is it? Saturday, March 19th, beginning at 5PM (chili cooks, bring your crock pots/casseroles by 4:45)

Want to compete? Sign up now to bring in your best offering and see how it stacks up against the rest!

There will be several categories to compete in, including:

-Vegetarian

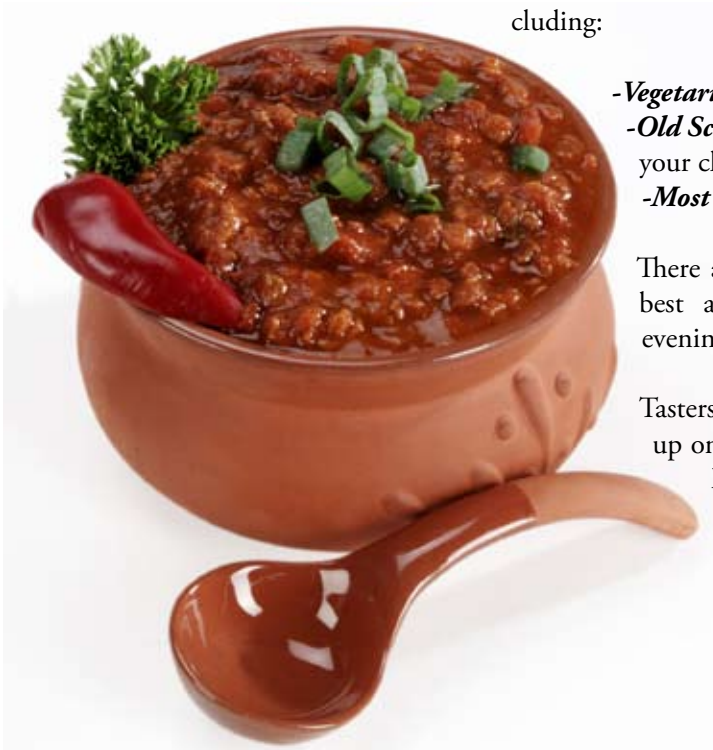
-Old School Chili (takes you back to your childhood)

-Most Unusual

There are no rules, just bring your best and come to enjoy a fun evening of food and fellowship.

Tasters and cooks alike, please sign up on the poster in the fellowship hall! See you there!

Bryan Bond



Fellowship at Point Lobos State Park

On Saturday, March 12, 2011 meet at Piney Woods Picnic and Parking Area for fun and fellowship at Point Lobos State Park. Join us any time after 8 am. The park opens at 8 am; entrance fees are \$10/car (\$9 with a senior in the car). Sorry, no pets are allowed.

This park is very popular, located just south of Carmel on Hwy 1. When the park is full, visitors wait in a line to enter on a one out/one in basis. If the park is full, you can park along Hwy 1 and walk in for no charge.

Piney Woods is a centrally located picnic area with tables and restrooms. It is also a very easy walk to an area along the coast, which is accessible for climbing and tide pooling. Great for kids! There are quite a number of hikes that offer variety of terrain and scenery. Whether you like to hike along the coast or in the trees and forested areas, you'll find something you like at Point Lobos.

Bring your own food and beverages for the day. There are beaches at which you may swim (if you are brave). The ocean will be very cold. It could be windy or chilly so bring sweaters and/or jackets for comfort. Lawn chairs work well around the picnic table area for larger groups. Most importantly bring your spirit to explore God's creation.

Rev. Kate will lead us in an outdoor Eucharist, weather permitting. Gather at the picnic area at 11:30 am for worship together, and then enjoy lunch.

This year's trail masters, Jerry and Susie Ferguson, Arnold and Susanne Moore, and George and Nancy Romer will plan to be at the park by 8 AM to claim some tables in the picnic area for us all to share. We are not able to reserve the area and tables. Come when you can, the earlier the better to enjoy the day's fellowship. This is a great event to bring other family and friends. Check the ECA Fellowship Board for more details on the park and activities for the day's adventure.



Come to the Feast!

If you've been in church recently, you may have noticed that communion looks a little different. Maybe even a little messy and disorderly. What's happened to our Episcopal sense of decorum??

There's a sentence that the priest says at the very end of the Eucharistic prayer, after the breaking of the bread: 'These are the gifts of God for the people of God.' These are called the Words of Invitation, and it's meant to be an invitation to the table. It was the norm at ECA that at this point, the clergy, chalice bearers, and acolytes would receive communion first, then the choir, and only then were the people ushered forward to the altar. We've reversed that order now, with the clergy and chalice bearers receiving communion last, once the people have received. This is becoming more the practice in many Episcopal churches. Catholic churches still insist the priest receive first, as their doctrine states that by doing so, the priest finalizes the sacrifice of the Mass; in other tradition, the host of a meal typically received first to show the food was good to eat (i.e. not poisoned). In our modern context, however, hosts typically eat last, taking the role of servant to the guests. If we are truly offering an invitation to the feast, and we believe that invitation is to receive the bread of life, then we should make that a reality. Would we invite our guests to the dinner table, only to say, wait to eat until I do? Even worse if those guests were desperately hungry – as we all are, in our longing for God.

So the practice at ECA now looks like this: the acolytes and choir receive communion first, enabling the choir to regain their seats and prepare to sing the communion music. Each person returns to their seat once they have received, rather than the choir rising as a body once all have received. That way everyone is able to approach the altar with eagerness, all of us being fed at the table together. Once all have been served, the clergy and chalice bearers give each other communion and then clean up the dishes and clear the table. It may look a little less neat than you're used to – but remember what it feels like to be truly hungry, and come and eat.

Kate Flexer



Future Fellowship

Put these upcoming events on your calendar and watch for details in The Shape, midweek and Sunday bulletins.

March

- Tuesday 8 Shrove Tuesday, Pancake dinner, 5-7pm
- Saturday 12 Point Lobos Hike, 8 am (Page 14)
- Friday 18 Pre-theater party at the Ferguson's for "Follies, Concert Version." (Page 11)
- Saturday 19 Chili Cook-off, 5 pm (Page 13)

April

- Saturday 2 Jelly Belly Factory Tour

May

- Saturday 7 Mother's Day Dinner at church
- Thursday 12 Dinner and Symphony featuring Jon Nakamutsu at the California Theater
- Saturday 14 Youth Dinner and Graduation Recognition

June

- Saturday 18 Father's Day Bar-B-Que

July

- Saturday 16 John Leslie Entertainment

August

- Thursdays 4, 11, 18, 25 Music in the Park

September

- Tea and Antique appraisal

October

- Oktoberfest

November

- Saturday 5 ECA Birthday Party dinner

December

- Saturday 10 Christmas Party