



The **S**hape

Newsletter of The Episcopal Church in Almaden

Rector

I have a wonderful book by Philip Yancey called *What's So Amazing About Grace?* There are two versions of the book – the one I love most is mainly pictures and images interspersed with bits of prose from the original version. Sprinkled throughout are the words from the hymn 'Amazing Grace' – especially the line, '...that saved a wretch like me.' 'Like me' is repeated over and over again, printed across pictures of people waiting at a bus stop, Mother Teresa, a kids' Little League team, a convicted felon in orange prisoner's garb. One page reads simply, 'Grace is not fair.' It's an edgy book, pushing past the boundaries of who we think is acceptable and who is not. All of it shows the recklessness of grace – the radical openhearted love that is the foundation of our faith.

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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

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Assisting in our Ministry

Doug Dunham

Senior Warden (408) 398-7911

Alex Dykes

Junior Warden (408) 839-2632

William Bond & Inge Bond

Acolytes

Anna Spanjaart

Altar Guild

Kathy Mastre

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

April 3 - 4 Lent

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

April 7 - Feast of St. Tikhon

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

April 10 - 5 Lent

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Folk Sunday & Healing

April 14 - Feast of Bishops Demby and Delany

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

April 17 - Palm Sunday

7:30 AM & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

April 21 - Maundy Thursday

7 PM JV Maundy Thursday service

April 22 - Good Friday

12 PM Good Friday Liturgy

April 24 - Easter Sunday

6 AM Sunrise Service at Quicksilver Park

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

MARCH 2011 EDITION

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Rector

[Continued from cover]

This is the time of year when that grace is especially evident. In one sense it is always spring in California, but this time of year is especially so – the hills an eye-popping green, wildflowers blooming in a frenzy, trees with new leaves, birds outdoing each other with glorious song at sunrise. The world around us pulsates with life and light. Without any help from us, without any merit on our part, the cycle comes around again to new life and new birth.

In the church we enter a time of grace as well. We come to the end of the Lenten fast, we mark the profound days of Holy Week, and we burst out into the joy of Easter. Our gospel stories in the weeks leading up to Holy Week speak of living water (the Samaritan woman at the well), seeing with God's eyes (the healing of the blind man) and resurrection (Lazarus). And then we enter Holy Week itself with Palm Sunday, the procession into Jerusalem, all the misguided excitement about Jesus and what he would do – and in that same service we relive again the story of Jesus' betrayal and arrest, his suffering and death. The services of Holy Week sink us more deeply into that story – Maundy Thursday reminds us of the last supper Jesus had with his friends and the commandment he gave them (the *mandatum*, from where we get the word Maundy) to love one another. Good Friday focuses intently on Jesus' death itself. And then we wait through Holy Saturday, emerging on the other side with the empty tomb, the confusion, the delight of Easter Sunday. We go crazy with flowers and music in church and we say and sing Alleluia! again as much as possible. Familiar hymns, familiar stories – but all new again in the cycle of death and life... The cycle of grace.

It's all a lot of work – every year clergy and musicians put a particular lot of work into the services of Holy Week, which we only do once a year and which never have much attendance. Why do we bother? But then again, why do so few people come to these services? Is it really so much to schedule a few extra times for worship into one week?

I wonder if it's because the story and the liturgies are both too familiar and too unsettling. We can let church get too familiar and forget why we do it, doing our worship in ways that are lifeless and meaningless. Once a week of that is more than enough for us. We've heard the story of Jesus' passion and death before; we know the Easter hymns too well. On the other hand, if we truly allow ourselves to imagine the story, to live it again in our minds and hearts, it is deeply disturbing. Jesus' suffering is intense; Jesus' love for us, and the love he commands us to have for another, is all-consuming. It's a story that demands a great deal from us – more than an Easter dress and good behavior. Perhaps it's more than we really want.

Try it out this year. Dig into the story and the themes of the season and see where they take you. Come to worship on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and set aside the time to be there fully. Wake up early on Easter and greet the dawn. The images of grace, the story of life, are too powerful to ignore – too intense for routine and comfort. The grace of God's love for us is reckless and risky. Why not risk a little in return?

-Kate

Senior Warden

So we're in the in the liturgical season of Lent. Valentine's Day and all things pink are just a memory. We're into our rainy season, which I always thought was apropos for Lent. Grey and gloomy.

Shrove Tuesday dinner was great, and I have to admit that this year was my first. I always thought that the dinner was just pancakes. I mentioned to Kate sometime before Lent that I wasn't fond of the pancake dinner because I "needed" protein for dinner. She replied that the youth group also served bacon and sausage, and I could have peanut butter on my pancakes. Wow! I became a convert on the spot. Pancakes with peanut butter, bacon & sausage, good conversation with the people at my table.

And that's how I slid into Lent. It seems like there's an intentional portal that we pass through when we enter this season. The difference is stark between Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. We trade pancakes for ashes, celebration for Lenten intentions. I'm reminded of my childhood during Lent. Fish on Friday (mostly fish sticks. Yuck!), giving up candy, trying hard to be nice to my brothers. As I look back at those days, it was mostly a time of gloomy weather and abstinence, without a clearer understanding of what Lent is really about.

And we tend to carry these childhood practices with us into adulthood. A little story as an example: I am part of a little dinner group that meets once a week at each other's houses to share a meal and keep up with our busy lives. One of these people is a longtime and wonderful friend, and very Catholic. At a meatless dinner on Ash Wednes-

day, our scheduled night, we were sharing stories as usual, and meeting a new friend I'd brought to dinner. I noticed that my friend wasn't drinking any wine, and I asked if he was not feeling well. He replied that he was OK, but he'd given up all alcohol for Lent. Well, if his intention was to be gloomy for Lent, he seemed to be succeeding. The rest of us were enjoying each other's company, but he was sitting quietly at the end of the table, and not really engaged.

In the days since this particular dinner, I've been thinking about how I can make Lent more meaningful for my faith journey. I think as adults, we all struggle with Lent. If, like me, you have this childhood baggage that you carry with you, it's easy to fall into the "give something up" syndrome. I think I've grown beyond that, looking at Lent as a time of reflection and introspection about where we are in our relationship with God, and how we integrate our faith into our daily actions.

So this is my intention for Lent: Set aside time at the end of each day to pray and think about how my routines for today meld with my faith and love of God. Am I reflecting the love God has for us in everything that I do each day? I have been discovering (not so surprisingly) those areas where I fall short. Today, traffic signals are my downfall. Not that swearing at an inanimate object is bad or necessarily wrong, but the frustration of being late because of all the red lights carries over to interactions with real people. Another repeating problem for me is dealing with my mom and her health concerns. I tend to try and solve her problems rather than listen to her needs. I know I need to work at

Senior Warden Continued

treating individuals with empathy rather than just solving their immediate problems. I've found that just sitting with her for lunch and talking about whatever is on her mind can bring a smile to her face.

The real challenge of Lent for me is not just the recognition of my actions, but changing these behaviors to show that God's love is reflected in me. That's something that's not easy, but it's a good challenge for Lent, and beyond.

And Tom, my dear friend, I'd like to have a discussion with you about how your abstinence from wine is making you a better Catholic. Perhaps over a dram of Scotch... Oh, but that means we'll have to wait for Easter.

-Doug Dunham



From the Editor



Now that the rains have hopefully begun to lift for a while, Rob and I have started to enjoy living in the forest. There is something peaceful about waking up and watching the squirrels run from tree to tree in search of something to eat. But it is more than that; we have almost succeeded in simplifying our lives as we had hoped. As things often happen, our mission was first inspired by a blend of choice and necessity, then driven by choice and finished by necessity.

After a tiring month of spending every spare second working on our house (aided and abetted by some dear friends, not the least of whom include Tim Miller and especially Jon Mills), the grand move was scheduled for March 4th. This of course meant that we really moved out on March 6th. In this process we realised that while we had been spending the past year attempting to downsize our lives — and in truth had made excellent progress — deeper cuts had to be made. As with many things in life, packing and preparing for a move starts with the best intentions and ends in a hurried frenzy.

Stage one begins weeks in advance: carefully folding clothes, wrapping the china in paper, neatly organising everything so that boxes only contain logically paired items.

Stage two is when you start labelling boxes with locations, like “hall closet” or “under the sink”. These boxed contain items that lived together, but aren’t always associated with one another.

Stage three is where the frenzy begins: you start mashing whatever will fit into whatever box you have left. You are still labelling boxes, but the descriptions become vague like “kitchen stuff”.

You know you are behind schedule when stage four harkens. At this point, none of the items you have left to pack fit neatly into any category; even if they did, that box has long since been loaded on the truck. Desperation and urgency fill the air. You have only a few hours to be done and you have done nothing about the dust-bunnies yet. Expediency being key, you just throw the rest of your possessions into whatever container you have left. Stage four culminates in the “trunk fill” where the sock behind the sofa is crammed next to the toaster in the car sans-boxes. Once the trunk is full everything else goes in the dumpster.

The problem with exploring all four “packing stages” is that we know where *some* of our belongings are, but most of them are just in a box in the attic, *somewhere*. It is in this state we are currently living, and it is in this state I have realised that living simply often means rethinking voluntary complexity and extravagance. So often one takes for granted what one has, not fully aware of the difference between what you need and what you like or want. At this point, what we want but do not need remains in a box. What we need, we seek out and unpack regardless of how long it may take. So often we Christians arrange some of our faith the same way, packed away very neatly in our hearts and minds, the challenge for us is to seek and unpack what we need from faith, no matter how long it takes before that which we merely want.

-Alex Dykes

Stewardship Update

Currently, we still have \$205,190 pledged for 2011 from 67 members, leaving a \$1,204 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 \$233,529.50, a \$4,171 reduction over last month due to overall market forces in response to crises in Japan and the Middle East. The recent triple-pronged crises in Japan give rise to re-ask the questions:

How well are you personally prepared? If you were prepared before, how are you prepared now, given what you have seen the forces of nature can dish out?

When was the last time you entered your earthquake (or, more generally, your disaster prep) kit?

Do you have enough cash stashed?

Is the water you have stored fresh?

Does the food cache have life left?

Take time as part of your stewardship of home and community to take stock. Do it now, not tomorrow or next week or month. As we have seen demonstrated recently, your nice stable existence can change in a very, very short time. You have time now. The most serious tragedy is missing the opportunity to help yourself and then you will be in position to help someone else in your community when disaster strikes.

Is there anyone moved to revive our Joint Venture Disaster Preparedness Plan and move it along the path to be useful to us all? If so moved, please contact me.

-George Romer



ECA Photo Directory

Exciting news! Your Vestry has decided to have an ECA photo directory. This is a wonderful opportunity to captures us as a church family – we are hoping for 100% participation! Lifetouch (recommended by St. Stephen's in the Fields) was chosen as the service provider. Here's what you need to know:

- There is no sitting fee
- Free directory for all who sit for a portrait
- Free 8x10 portrait for each family/individual
- Option to order more portraits if you would like
- The directory will also be online – this will be a password-protected, secure site and members will control their own information.
- Photo dates: April 9, 10 & 21*

To make your sitting appointment, go to the ECA website and follow the link, OR we will be available after services for the next couple of weeks to help you make your appointment – look for us in the Fellowship Hall.

*If you know you can't make it on any of those days, let us know, and we will contact you about alternate arrangements.

Need more information? Have questions? See George Romer or Inge Bond after church, or give one of us a call!

**We're on
the Web!**

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



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



Sunday School

Come to Sunday School! During Lent and Easter we will be learning about the signs and symbols of Holy Week through games, stories, food, and more. Come have some fun and learn about what Lent and Easter mean. Bring a friend!

Wanted: If you have clean, dry baby food jars with lids, empty dozen-count egg cartons, or plastic Easter eggs, we could use them! Please leave them in the basket outside the Christian Education/Music office.

-Melanie Weiner



JV Book Club

Coming Up in the Joint Venture Book Group: ***Half Broke Horses***. The Book Group will meet at Kathy Kisabeth's home on Wednesday, April 20th, 7:30 pm to discuss Jeanette Wall's book, *Half Broke Horses*. Please contact Amy Griffith or Kathy Kisabeth for details.

-Amy Griffith

Beneficio Coffee

The Sacramento-based Beneficio Coffee Co. continues to be "More Than Fair Trade," with the small farmers of Costa Rica being paid "up front" for their coffee beans, 20% of net profits given back to the farmers for capital improvements and community development, and another 10% of the net profits given to outreach and giving (usually the choice is for those funds to be also given to the farmers).

Our Joint Venture congregations serve this coffee at Fellowship/Coffee hours. It has been suggested that those who are so moved write a check from time-to-time to the Joint Venture Churches, with "coffee" in the memo section, to help defray the cost of the coffee.

On February 20, 2011 CNN reported that coffee prices are "at their highest in 14 years." "Beneficio" has felt the price impact, and for the first time since 2008, there has been a need to increase the cost per bag to \$9.25. It will, however, continue to be competitive. The small farmers and their families in Costa Rica greatly appreciate your continued support!

To individually order Beneficio Coffee please contact Phyllis Chai (408) 226-7150 and remember: coffee makes a great hostess gift!

-Phyllis Chai

Future Fellowship

Put these upcoming events on your calendar and watch for details in The Shape, mid-week and Sunday bulletins. If you have questions call Amy Griffith at (408)38-5188)

April

- Saturday 16 Light rail/Caltrain event, planning lunch on Sun, April 10th at noon
- Thursday 21 Maundy Thursday Soup Supper, 6pm

May

- Saturday 7 Mother's Day Dinner at church
- Thursday 12 Dinner and Symphony featuring Jon Nakamitsu at the California Theater
- Saturday 14 Youth Dinner and Graduation Recognition
- Thursday 26 Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum outing

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

Lost & Found

Lost: One “Beneficio” coffee mug which for some time hung on a hook in the Joint Venture kitchen; if anyone knows the whereabouts of the mug, please contact Phyllis Chai (226-7150).

Lost: The DVD/study guide *One God, Three Faiths*.

If you are the borrower or have any information regarding these items, please contact Dennis Elliott in the church office (408) 268-0243. If you'd like to add anything to this list, please email theshape@eca-sj.org



Birthdays

Dennis Moran	3
Ryan Hall	4
Stephen Taylor	4
Hank Ciappa	7
Amanda Degnan	9
Steven McPherson	9
Sandie Mueller	9
Juliette Rousseau	9
Jim McPherson	10
Elizabeth Ward	10
Doug Dunham	11
Grace Yomtov	11
Gayle Byers	13
Sean McCormick	16
Matthew Degnan	20
Mariolien Ciappa	22
Laura Moore	22
Sandy Taylor	22
Tyler McPherson	25
Georgina Dunn	26
Caitlin McPherson	26

Anniversaries

Steve & Joyce Wing	19
Todd & Kimberly Axtell	29
Bryan & Inge Bond	29
Karl and Jan English Lueck	30

A Prayer for Wisdom

As some of you may already know, Martha Lou Reynolds starts Bible study off every Thursday morning with a prayer. Below is one of her many inspirational prayers.

Dear God,
Please give us the wisdom to plant your commandments, your statutes and your judgments in our hearts, to find your great mercy and love in all your creations and in your blessings. We pray to know your way, not to follow our own desires. We give you our unending devotion. We love you!

We believe in the sovereignty of God. We pray to know God's principals cannot be violated. Help us to live in the path, that you, our God has chosen for us. May we always remember that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Our desire is to be a temple of holiness so that others can know Jesus is our Lord. May we rejoice in each day you give us. We thank you, Dear God. We praise you and we love you!

We are seekers of truth, your Word. The Bible is our divine guide. May we follow your word faithfully as you fill our hearts with joy and love. We pray for wisdom. Lead us to do your will without complaining or disputing. We know you are helping us to accomplish your will. May we work hard for others, not just for ourselves. Help us to know that we will never live a perfect day unless we do something for someone who cannot repay us. May we pursue your goals in all that we do. We glorify you in all things, our God. We say rejoice, again we say rejoice! You have told us we can do all things through God who strengthens us. Please hold us in your guiding arms. We know with you all things are possible.

Thank you for extending your mercy to us, and most of all for the gift of your son Jesus Christ, our Savior. Strengthen our faith and help us to study your Word so that we grow in wisdom and commitment to your commandments. Help us to strive for a life as beautiful as the petals of a flower opening in the sun. May each of us find the glory of fellowship that brings us to You. May Your richest blessings surround us. We pray in Jesus' holy name.

Amen

-Mary McPherson

Transit Fellowship

Come out for a public transportation tour of the south bay! On Saturday, April 16th we will car pool to the Tamien station and take the light rail to Mountain View. On our way we will see downtown San Jose and the high tech industrial parks on the way. When we get to downtown Mountain View, we'll wander the streets and visit whatever shops strike our fancy. We'll find a restaurant for lunch and then take Caltrain to the Tamien station in San Jose stopping in Sunnyvale along the way to take in the farmers' market. We may even stop in downtown San Jose to enjoy the museums, etc. We have many options!

There will be a luncheon planning meeting after church on Sunday April 10th for those that would like to go on this adventure. We'll look at schedules and activities. Come with ideas ,or just come to lunch and get details on the trip!

-Amy Griffith

Chili Cook-Off!

A great time was had by all this past Saturday as we gathered for the 3rd Annual ECA Chili Cook-off. This year we had 7 competitors, all vying for the top honors of "Best Overall." We also had several batches of homemade cornbread, salads and other goodies.

More than 40 people came out to taste all the great recipes and to judge them for taste, spiciness and originality. It was a great time of fellowship and general revelry and we all walked around the room red faced and sweating from the brow.

Some of these were really hot, but they were all fantastic. The voting was close in all categories and only a few votes separated the winners from the rest of the pack.

At the end of the evening, the top honors went to Ann Mayers for her "Best Overall" chili – congratulations, Ann! Look for her winning recipe in an upcoming issue of The Shape.

Thanks to all those who helped setup and clean-up afterwards, especially Anne Tysanner, who did a great job in helping to put this event together.

-Bryan Bond



Fellowship at Point Lobos State Park

Sometimes it works out to be “in the dark” so to speak. And so it was for Kelli & Matt & Lauren, and the Austin-Lane gang. Spur of the moment people; they got up on Saturday, March 12, and seeing the sun shining headed off to Point Lobos. The park was open. The skies were clear and blue. It was an absolutely perfect day on the coast just south of Carmel. They all had a wonderful time.... But where was everyone else?

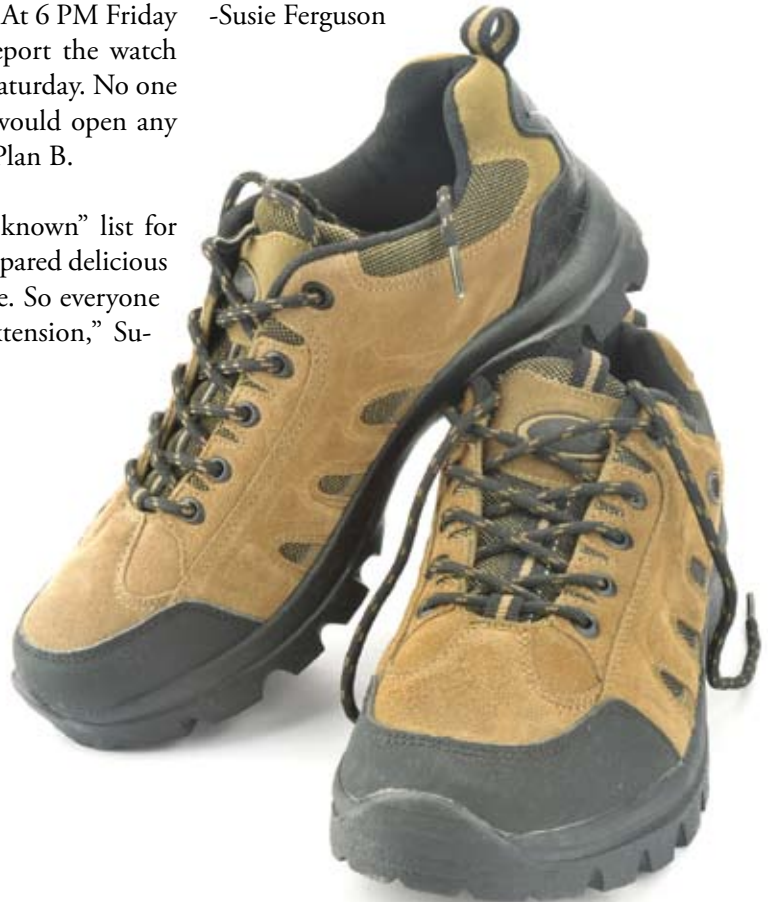
It seems that our organizers of the event trying not to “be in the dark,” had been carefully following the “tsunami watch” and in contact with the park rangers. During the tsunami watch along our coast the park was officially closed. At 6 PM Friday evening the rangers could only report the watch was to be in effect until 3 PM on Saturday. No one could say definitively if the park would open any sooner. So our organizers went to Plan B.

Twenty-one people were on the “known” list for Point Lobos. Many had already prepared delicious salads, desserts, and snacks to share. So everyone was re-routed to “Point Lobos Extension,” Su-

sanne and Arnold Moore’s backyard in Los Gatos. Gathering there everyone picnicked under their pines, strolled along their garden paths, studied their flora, and played bocce ball. Conversation went from serious to silly. Feasting went from nutritious to decadent. Bocce went from skilled & calculating (there’s much to be said for “home court advantage”) to “just give it your best shot.”

So it seems whether you were at Point Lobos or in the Moores’ backyard on Saturday, March 12th, it turned out to be a great day for fun and fellowship with your ECA family.

-Susie Ferguson



Tabard Theatre

It was another great evening of fun, fellowship, meeting new friends and being in the audience for the last production of Tabard's 10th season, "Follies, Concert Version." Not a light hearted song and dance show that many may have anticipated, but a poignant look back 30 years as the characters/entertainers reminisced their dreams, hopes and desires in relationship to their current lives.

Again a number of ECAers had the opportunity to meet a variety of people from Almaden and beyond at the Fergusons' for a pre-theater dinner... ECA style. Yes, there was no shortage of tasty and savory

delights to satisfy everyone's palates and plenty of sparkling beverages to quench their thirsts.

Tabard is making plans for an exciting 11th season which will once again include some music ("Tin Pan Alley Rag"), some drama ("The Story of My Life" & "Crossing Delancey"), some new works ("Bandstand Beat"), and some old favorites ("It's a Wonderful Life"). If you weren't able to join us this year, perhaps next year ECA's theatre evenings will fit into your schedule.

-Susie Ferguson

Holy Week Worship Schedule

April 17 - Palm Sunday

7:30 AM & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

April 21 - Maundy Thursday

7 PM JV Maundy Thursday service

April 22 - Good Friday

12 PM Good Friday Liturgy

April 24 - Easter Sunday

6 AM Sunrise Service at Quicksilver Park

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist



Reconciliation

On two Tuesday evenings in March, we met at ECA to learn and talk about conflict and reconciliation. Our ongoing conflict and lingering feelings around the past embezzlement of funds prompted me to invite the Rev. Linda Taylor to work with us. Linda is rector of St Mark's, Santa Clara, and is trained in a process of reconciliation with Ron Claassen at the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies. Linda led us the first evening through an overview of the dynamics of conflict and the process of reconciliation. Although it was information some of us had heard and worked with before, it prompted several 'a-has' and gave a context for us as we began working on our own conflict issues. Over the next week, two of those at the center of the conflict agreed to meet and begin a process of reconciliation, facilitated by Linda. They shared the experience of that conversation with the larger group on the second evening, and the group broke into small groups of four to try it out for ourselves. Each person had a chance to tell their story and feelings from the situation, and each person summarized what another had said, a chance to articulate another person's position as well. Gathering back in the large group, we shared the experience together. Many spoke to how profound it was simply to be heard, to have a chance without interruption to express their feelings and concerns and know that others were listening to them. We continued with more conversation in the large group and finished in prayer.

Many said that two pieces of information were helpful to learn. First, there is a letter of apology from the former treasurer that we will make available to everyone to read. Second, Bishop Mary is communicating with the Roman Catholic Church in the state of Washington, where the former treasurer has relocated – an attempt to alert others in

the church world to avoid further harm. The hope is that both of these will go some way toward helping people let go of some of their anger at and anxiety over the individual involved. The work of forgiveness there is ongoing for many and will take time. I trust that we are all praying about this, and I will look for opportunities for us to engage more fully with forgiveness in the weeks ahead.

But in the larger sense of our own community, the session conversations were a great start to the work of reconciliation we have before us. Of course, that work is not yet done. This process of listening to one another and of speaking our truths to each other is something we must continue to engage with, both as we heal from the damage of the embezzlement and as we move forward into new conflicts. We will look for ways to continue the practice we began in these sessions, in adult forums and other venues. And each of us will need to continue to practice understanding and hearing one another, and forgiving one another, as we move forward.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to all of those who were willing to begin engaging with this process. It took great courage to do so. And I thank Linda Taylor for her marvelous work with us. May we continue the good work of loving one another well.

-Kate Flexer