

The Shape

Newsletter of The Episcopal Church in Almaden

Rector

I am not naturally easy with uncertainty. I remember a time mid-seminary, as I waited to enter the ordination process in my diocese and debated what to do about a relationship and dithered over whether to go to study in England or not. My advisor listened to it all patiently and then said, 'The only thing I can say to you is this: Embrace the ambiguity.' It was not the answer I was looking for.

With this May issue I realize I have been with you over four months. It feels like a long time since we moved here, and yet so many things have not quite settled. Our house is finally pretty well set up, but there are still some key tasks remaining

[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 & 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

May 1 - 2 Easter

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

May 5 - Feast of St. Philip & St. James, trans.

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

May 8 - 3 Easter

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Folk Sunday

May 12 - Feast of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, trans.

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

May 15 - 4 Easter

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist - Healing Sunday

May 19 - Feast of St. Dunstan

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

May 22 - 5 Easter

7:30 AM & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

May 26 - Feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

May 29 - 6 Easter

7:30 & 11 AM Holy Eucharist

MAY 2011 EDITION

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E-MAIL ADDRESS Theshape@eca-sj.org

Rector

[Continued from cover]

to be done, and more than one closet where still-unpacked boxes lurk. Benjamin and Frances have babysitters and a school, but next month both of those will exit the scene and leave us once again figuring out childcare. Jim has writing work to fill his time, but multiple other demands on that time make it hard to dig in the way he wants to. I have had ‘tea’ with many of you, and yet there are still a number of ECA folks whose stories I haven’t heard. It still confuses me that Camden curves to the right after it crosses Almaden Expressway – why can’t it be a grid? And I still haven’t figured out where to get my hair cut.

Wise people tell me to give it time. They say from experience that it takes a good six months to truly settle into a new place and feel good about it, to get to the point where getting through every day does not require an heroic mental task. I would like to skip to that part now.

But settling into a place is really a process of growing in relationship: a relationship with the geography of the land and the streets, relationship with our home, relationship with the people and their history and traditions. You can’t skip to the end in relationships; you are always growing and learning about each other all the way. You’re always changing as you do, acting upon and being acted upon by the other. It’s what we do in our relationship with God: we might get to a place of familiarity and comfort that we didn’t have at the beginning, but we never stop growing and learning. And we never stop being changed by God.

Unless, that is, we intentionally plateau in that old-shoe familiarity that we sometimes substitute for real relationship. Easy enough to do – we can go to church and say the words and not really mean any of it. But when you think about it, that would be like moving into a house and never doing the work of making it a home – leaving the furniture any old way, boxes still unpacked, no pictures on the walls. You could live there well enough if you had the necessities at hand, your cereal bowl and the coffee maker on the counter each day. But would it really be home?

So I guess I’ll keep on with our work of settling in here. I’ll try to be patient with the ambiguity – maybe even embrace it. Someday maybe I can stop looking at the map so much. Because I believe God has some work to do on me here, and on you, and all of us – with time.

Kate Flexer

From The Senior Warden

Matthew 22:36-40 *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’*

In these days of instant news and commentary, I found a little breath of fresh air recently as I was checking the status of my friends on Facebook. It was posted by my daughter, Bernadette, whom some of you know. She is one of the New Age people who look for spirituality where she can find it, and has no problem mixing different concepts of a “higher power” to form a vision of God that allows her to lead her life with self-respect and love. And she has been known to speak her mind when she feels wronged or encounters some social justice issue that perks up her ire. I’ve included her Facebook post below with her permission.

My email to the ministries of Joel Osteen. Withdrawing my support.

Bernadette Dunham, April 13, 2011

Before anyone reads the email I submitted to the ministries of Joel Osteen, I need to make it very clear that I am FULLY aware that my email will have NO impact whatsoever on Mr. Osteen, nor his ministries. And I am VERY confident in the fact that Mr. Osteen, or who ever passes on (or discards) emailed comments, will even care about my personal withdrawal of support. Neither am I encouraging anyone who read this note to do so. This is only what resonated with me. My heart was just so heavy after watching the Piers Morgan interview on the CNN website. I understand that many people were critical of him from the very start, but

I believe everyone deserves the benefit of doubt until they prove otherwise. There were so many of his sermons that resonated with me. This message is not to condemn Mr. Osteen, nor his ministries. I just wanted to share how I am responding to this particular situation. That's it.

I also feel the need to state that I never agreed with every aspect of his sermons, I do what I do with all spiritual teachings, embrace what resonates and dismiss the rest. I just felt moved to do SOMETHING. Because NONE of us are neutral, right? We cast our vote by what we do OR don't do.

Oh, one more clarification... I use the word "God" because it is the concept that Mr. Osteen and his ministries use to mean what I believe is "my inner Buddha/heart space/moral conscious/higher power". It is just easier in this circumstance to use the term "God" to convey that "thing" that jumps to life when you hear a personal truth. Confused? Sorry... hard to nail down in words... it just is...

So without further ado... Here's the email...

I was very disappointed to hear of Joel Osteen's stance on homosexuality. I had supported the Osteens and their message. I thought they were bringing Jesus' true message back to the people. That we should support each other through love and compassion, not casting people out... declaring homosexuals as sinners. Didn't Jesus often befriend prostitutes, outcasts, AND SINNERS? Jesus wanted us to WAKE UP and change our paradigm on the way in which people were interpreting the word of God. Jesus embodied an INCLUSIVE community.

From The Senior Warden

I say this with love and kindness, Mr. Osteen did declare a judgment against the homosexual community by declaring homosexuality a sin. I am unclear as to the motivations behind the statement. Unfortunately, unless our intentions are true to our words, we are our words and deeds. There are so many more skillful ways in which this could have been approached. And I am truly saddened Mr. Osteen was not more compassionate.

So, it is with a heavy heart that I am withdrawing my support of Joel Osteen and his ministries. Sadness because I was under the impression that Mr. Osteen and his ministries were helping to spread a beautiful message. A message of becoming the best possible people we could possibly be, to encompass that example of how God wants us to live our lives. To be proud of who we are and grateful for the lives we live when we are aware of God. I will not speak negatively nor support any negativity against the ministry. There is already enough negativity in the world. Nor do I stand in judgment of Mr. Osteen and his ministries. And I am not worthy of judging what others do or do not do. I leave that to God. I just pray that people search their hearts for the true message of God and it will be revealed.

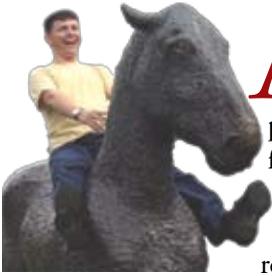
I come away from Bernie's posting with a couple of messages. First, I agree with her stance on homosexuality. I, too, believe that Jesus' message was one of love and inclusiveness. We should not stand in judgment of those that live a different lifestyle than ours. Secondly, Bernie has the ability to see God not just through the lens of Christianity, but wherever her spiritual journey has taken her, be it with Buddha, AA, or at our family dinner table. I am impressed with her open-mindedness to find God's goodness and love wherever it appears to her.

In this season of Easter, we can reflect on Jesus' message of love, and be mindful that it can hit us in the most unlikely of places. Thanks, Bernie, for being the beacon of God's love for all of us to see, and having the fortitude to speak your beliefs on the public stump (of Facebook).

With the love of Jesus in my heart,
Doug Dunham

Note (from Wikipedia): Joel Scott Osteen is an American author and the senior pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. His ministry reaches over seven million broadcast media viewers weekly in over 100 nations around the world. Osteen says that he chooses to focus on the goodness of God rather than sin. Osteen explains that he tries to teach Biblical principles in a simple way, emphasizing the power of love and a positive attitude.

From the Editor



As another month goes by I am reminded that we still have yet to unpack or make any meaningful progress on our house. I think it's funny that we humans so easily settle into a routine that seems perfectly normal to each of us. Now that it has been two months since we have been living in our current situation, the lack of indoor plumbing no longer seems a burden to me. Walking down the hill to the outdoor convenience is something I actually look forward to day or night. (My mother thinks I need to have my head checked, however.) Of course modern conveniences are just that: modern. There was a time when everyone had an outhouse in the back garden, kept chickens in the yard and lived more simply.

As most of you know, Rob and I decided a while back to try being more self-sufficient in some respects, not because we needed to, but at some level to prove that we could. The result I am sure looks to the casual outside observer like a modern day episode of "Green Acres". Last week we had three chickens in the unfinished living room (live, with feathers still on), and next week will see the arrival of our first batch of 25 cheeping chicks with the remaining 25 arriving sometime in July. I never really thought I would be raising any sort of livestock when I was a child, but I suppose I never really thought about my food either.

I find it ironic that our move towards self-sufficiency and simplicity (and reduced television consumption) has been at least partially inspired by the 1975 BBC television series "The Good Life", known in the USA as "Good Neighbors". The main character is Tom Good, who lives in a fairly affluent suburb and works down-town as a draftsman. 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 in every way. For reasons that are never adequately explained, Tom figures that it would be better to farm in the suburbs than move to a farm. Consequently, and much to the chagrin of their friends and haughty neighbours, they rip up their lawn and manicured garden, replacing them with goats, chickens and row crops; even the Volvo gets replaced by a third-hand tractor. A year ago I said "my only hope is that leading a simple life turns out to be a life's mission rather than a phase." I have to say that I hold that hope more dearly now than before. We'll see how long this experiment lasts. I would encourage us all to seek that simplicity in life. Value what is truly essential and if you can get your hands dirty, in doing so you just might find God.

Alex Dykes



Stewardship Update

The following comes from Wikipedia: “Peoples everywhere have recognized and respected one or more of the core meanings of ‘stewardship’ which today include these three: “duty of service” as recognized and stressed by the Romans; “responsibility”, stressed especially by the English, and “management”, an idea the ancient Greeks equated with their own ‘economics’ (= household management).”

And, the following comes from ChristiaNet, for a Christian perspective – “The meaning of stewardship has been debated for quite some time with definitions surrounding time spent focusing on the Lord, building relationships with others and using the gifts God has given. The meaning of Christian stewardship has focused many times on tithing, but this is not the priority definition when discussing the subject. The priorities involved are how time is spent, how relationships are retained, and then how money is spent. There are a lot of things that have to do with this responsibility that many people have never been aware of. Most agree that a good idea is to spend time studying ways to become a responsible Christian. The Lord gives a few thoughts on the subject in the Bible, but those who were good stewards, were incredibly blessed. The meaning involves how the precious gifts that God has given to all are used and cared for. The good steward is someone who is doing the best he can with the things that God has given him. The reality shows up in how a person reacts in situations and how much they are willing to sacrifice to retain their responsibility.”

These perspectives all have a common thread – unselfish behavior for the common good of our relatives, friends, neighbors, nation, and the world. So, continuing on the subject broached last month, have you reviewed your disaster plan and emergency kit? If not, there is no time like the present. If you need some information, point your web-browser to the City of San Jose’s Office of Emergency Services resource center (<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/emergencyServices/SanJosePrepared>). Go to this website for guidance on preparing your Disaster Preparedness Kit for your household.

One of the points made by the San Jose Prepared training I received in 2006 (5 years ago! How time flies!), was in time of a major disaster, do not depend on our police, fire, and ambulance services; they will be overwhelmed. So, again, get prepared for an emergency in your neighborhood. As the Japanese experience teaches, get and stay prepared so you can be a good steward for your community. Jesus told us this over 2000 years ago! Get busy!

George Romer
(408) 268-4435

HEALING & RECONCILIATION

FOLLOW-UP MEETING

MAY 24 AT 7PM

On Tuesday, May 24, we will gather again at 7:00 pm for some follow-up work on the conflict and reconciliation workshops we did in March. More details to follow, we hope you can all make it!

From Jackie

It's been a while since I have seen you all and I truly miss you and look forward to coming back. After my stroke, I spent 4 weeks at Mission Oaks Hospital in rehab: re-learning walking, activities for daily living, and cognitive skills, as well as activities for functional independence.

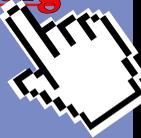
Presently I have live-in caregivers who assist in my daily living. Soon, my therapists tell me, I'll be graduating summa cum laude from Home Care Therapy!

I want to thank you for all of your loving support. The telephone calls, cards, letters, prayers, etc. have all reminded me that I am loved. I have felt I have been carried all along by Jesus – like in the "Footprints in the Sand" poem.

Love to all of you,
Jackie Whitlock

**We're on
the Web!**

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



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

May Fellowship

Get out your calendar and save these dates!

Mother's Day this year is on Sunday, May 8th. In celebration, dessert will be served after each service. Be sure to join us to celebrate mothers!

Symphony Silicon Valley will be featuring the pianist Jon Nakamatsu on Thursday, May 12th. Join us all for an evening of music and fellowship.

5:00pm Dinner at Original Joe's

6:00pm Musical Notes (talk on the performance)

6:30pm Organ recital in the lobby

7:00pm Symphony will begin

Find the sign-up sheet posted on the ECA bulletin board, sign your name and check the price category (for the tickets). The deadline is Sunday, May 8th. Everyone is invited, so be sure to bring a friend!!!

On Thursday, May 26th, its time for the Pulp Fashion exhibit at the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco. We will carpool from the church at 9 am. Lunch will be at the Museum. There is a sign-up sheet posted on the ECA bulletin board. Prices are posted, but if there are 20 or more we can get a group rate. Bring a friend!!

Amy Griffith

(408) 838-5188

Thank You All

Our recent conflict management and reconciliation training advised us to “thank the people in the trenches.” I know I sounded judgmental at the meeting, but on reflection I remembered all the people I have to thank. Looking back on the Mary Leal incident, for all the hurt and anger it caused, I see that it also brought out the best in us. I want to thank you for everything you did.

First, my personal thanks to the members of the 2008, 2009, and 2010 JV Boards. You were literally in the trenches. You dealt with the financial and legal issues in a professional, compassionate manner and then calmly turned to the Board’s regular work. It was a privilege working with each of you. I also owe a special thanks to our pastors, Stephen, Kevin, and Frank, for their pastoral guidance to the Board and to me personally. Thank you all so much for your willingness to serve in such trying times.

Second, my sincerest thanks to the Financial Review Committee. Jerry Ferguson, George Romer, Tom Gerber, and Janet Blake spent countless hours sifting through years of financial records, fighting through banking red tape, and performing other thankless tasks to create the financial report. This report became the basis for our lawsuit. Without the Committee’s dedication and hard work, we would never have recovered a penny. When you have the opportunity, please remember to thank them.

Finally, I want to thank each one of you deeply and sincerely. Your patience and understanding throughout the long and painful process were amazing. Your kindnesses to me personally were

truly appreciated and always came when I needed them most. I was overwhelmed by your notes, hugs, gifts, and other signs of affection. My thanks are long overdue. Most importantly, I want to thank you for your prayers. You are the prayer warriors who carried the process to God on a daily basis. We are so blessed to be members of such a Spirit-filled faith community. It is what makes us family.

And so a final thank you and may God shower you with blessings today and always,

Melinda Jennings

ECA in Focus

This spring, the vestry is bringing the photographic church directory to ECA! In collaboration with Lifetouch, nearly 150 church members have had their portraits taken for inclusion in both hard copy and online directories.

The photo directory project has brought some memorable moments, from a family portrait for the Wings that included Joyce's Dad the month he turned 100, to the McPhersons' pleasure in wrestling not just two teenagers, but two enormous dogs, into their family photo.

The next step is directory design (by the communications reps on vestry), and then proofreading – keep an eye out for the draft, so you can verify your entry!

And if by any chance you missed out on being included in the directory (the directory shot is free of charge), please contact the church office and we will make arrangements for a make-up session.

Inge Bond



Anniversaries

Earl & Amy Griffith	2
John & Helen Beacher	22

Birthdays

Genie Yomtov	2
Trace Rimroth	4
Jennifer Majors	7
Jerry Ferguson	9
Jim Ward	9
Corrin Degnan	10
Jon Mills	10
Mary Beth Majors	11
Terry Stonehocker	11
Michaela Fahlen	12
Pat Fox	14
Miriam Lueck	15
Warren Willard	20
Tom Fahlen	23
Kerry Sisler	24
Danielle Petruzzelli	26

JV Book Group

The Joint Venture Book Group will be meeting on May 18th, 7:30 pm, at Betty Benson's home. The book we are reading is "Modoc" by Ralph Helfer. For more information or directions, call Betty, (408) 997-0858, or Amy (408) 268-0920, for more information.



Lex Orandi Lex Credendi

This Latin phrase can be translated, 'Praying shapes believing.' Language has a lot of power over us. It structures the way we think, the way we communicate, the way we visualize God and each other. Cranmer and other reformers in the 16th century were adamant that worship should be in the language of the people, not in some kind of arcane 'sacred' language. The prayers they wrote were in the plain English of the time, and subsequent revisions of the Prayer Book have updated that language to reflect the changes in usage. In that vein, over the last several years much of the larger church has made changes to its worship language, aimed toward making it more gender-inclusive. The changes are both to follow the changing usage of our everyday language and to affirm the theological points that God is neither male nor female, and that men and women are equal before God.

We have made a few of those modifications in our worship language at ECA. You may or may not have noticed them – they are fairly minimal, but they are symbolic. The Book of Common Prayer is something we share in common with other Episcopal churches, and when we use those texts, it is important not to alter them greatly. So the changes we've done are only those that other Episcopal churches have made. When we have the opportunity we will also use liturgies from other Anglican sources that offer more fully inclusive language and imagery – language and imagery that have been part of our tradition and scriptures, but which have sometimes been ignored or left behind. Talk to me about this if you have thoughts or questions – it's important for us to explore this together.

Kate Flexer

Pastoral Care Report

During the past month a small committee has been meeting to rethink and reorganize the pastoral care ministries. We know that we're not completely finished, but we'd like to share our progress concerning the ministries that have emerged so far out of our discussions. We want you to know how you can avail yourselves of these ministries when you have a need, and how you can contribute your time and abilities to help meet needs that arise. Please remember for these ministries to be alive there is a need for leaders step forward. The following ministries are functioning now:

Card Ministry

You may or may not be aware, but for some time Margaret Halliwell has faithfully and quietly been sending out sympathy, thinking about you and get well cards on behalf of ECA. In this time when a group of us are currently working at reorganizing the whole area of Pastoral Care, what a wonderful surprise to discover that someone has been carrying on this thoughtful ministry, wants to keep doing it, doesn't really need anything, and it's a ministry that wasn't even on my radar. Wow! Margaret did concede that if people wanted to donate cards to this ministry it would be helpful for her. Maybe the next time you're near a card aisle or store, you could get one or two extra. Or what about those cards you receive asking for donations? There is a box with Margaret's name on it in the mailbox area off the narthex.

Angel Meals (formerly called Good Sams)

Anne Tysanner (artysanner@yahoo.com) (408) 927-7140 has agreed to be the coordinator when circumstances warrant providing meals during a time of need. If you know of such a circumstance, or have need of this sort of help, please call Anne.

If you have not had an opportunity to sign up to be on the list for supplying meals, please contact Anne.

Angel Wheels

Gayle Byers (dng_byers@sbcglobal.net)(408) 268-0448 has agreed to be the coordinator when rides are needed (eg. a ride to church, a ride to a medical appointment, etc.). For people needing a ride, or knowing of a need, please call Gayle. Again, contact Gayle if you haven't yet had an opportunity to sign up on the list for supplying rides.

Prayer Vine

If you'd like to be involved in the prayer vine, please email Ann Avoux (mavoux@aol.com), and she will add you to her list.

Visitation

Visiting shut-ins and those who are hospitalized, as well as LEM (Lay Eucharistic Minister) service, will be under the supervision of Rev. Kate. If you are interested in this type of ministry, you can speak to Rev. Kate. There is Diocesan training available.

Receptions

We know that there are many people who have helped in the past to provide food, flowers, etc. for specific events which are not fellowship functions, such as memorial services, but we haven't yet found someone to coordinate this ministry. There is list of people who are ready and willing to help. Please let me know if you feel called to lead this ministry.

Pastoral Care Report

The following ministries are in the concept stage:

Small Repairs

This would be a new ministry. Our thinking is that there may be some ECA members who, because of limited finances or the lack of someone to call, are in need of simple repairs or a small maintenance item-- maybe changing some light bulbs, cleaning out a gutter, or setting up a new computer. We have a couple of men who are willing to perform this kind of service, but we don't yet have someone willing to be the coordinator. Let me know if you are called to this ministry, either to be the coordinator or to be on the list of people willing to make small repairs.

Special Needs

We recognize that some ECA members may have needs that don't seem to fit any of these other categories, and we want to meet any such needs if at all possible. We probably can't start a ministry for every type of need, but if you have a real need that doesn't seem to fit, I would encourage you to contact Rev. Kate, or me, Mike Schmidt, or whoever you feel comfortable sharing your need with, and let us determine what we can do.

Prayer Requests

There are at least two methods to receive prayer support at ECA. First, there is a Prayer Request form located on a clipboard (on lectern near bottom of stairs) in the church narthex. This is for people to write their prayer requests for "in church" prayers. You need only write the first name of the person to be prayed for during the "Prayers of the People" portion of the worship service. Names can be added any time during the week and are normally kept on this list for one month. Rev. Kate monitors this list.

If you would like more concentrated and sustained prayer support, you may contact Ann Avoux (ma-voux@aol.com) (408) 270-2406, who coordinates the Prayer Vine. There are currently about 15-20 members of the Prayer Vine, and Ann will pass your request on to them, along with a brief explanation concerning the request. Your prayer request will be confined to the Prayer Vine; in other words, it will be kept confidential. In addition, it is important for the person requesting prayer to follow up with Ann when their need for prayer support has been fulfilled.

If you, or someone you know, are in need of prayer, please don't hesitate to use whichever of these two ways that seems more appropriate. Knowing that others are standing beside you in intercession can be a great help and comfort.

Mike Schmidt

Vestry representative for Pastoral Care

Gifts of Gratitude

“Gifts of Gratitude” and “Golden Grapes” are terms that were used in the past to show appreciation to individuals who have lovingly given their time and skills for the ECA congregation. Whatever the name, it’s a good practice to acknowledge one another’s efforts. If you know someone that you feel should be acknowledged, send his/her name to Mike Schmidt (mschmidt8120@sbcglobal.net), along with a brief explanation, and we’ll ensure that it appears in the next SHAPE. Let others know that their efforts are appreciated, and let us all know the good work that they are doing.

The following people deserve special thanks for their efforts in service to the congregation:

- Andy Kerr - for his leadership of the folk music group, keeping the herd of elephants under control.
- Mary McPherson, Nicole DeVelbiss, and Hans Spanjaart - for their hard work making the web site attractive and up to date.

- Mike Schmidt - for tackling Pastoral Care and breathing new life into a fallow ministry.

- Anna Spanjaart - for heading Altar Guild and keeping it running smoothly for several years.

- Amy Griffith - for always being available for preparing food--20 years of heading Montgomery Meals and working endlessly to help our church family.

- Susie Ferguson - for keeping the ECA bulletin boards up to date and looking great

- John McPherson and Hank DeVoss - for their hard work on Saturdays, mowing the lawns and clearing off the patios and parking lot.



