



The Shape

Newsletter of The Episcopal Church in Almaden

Rector

The other day I overheard my husband and 20-month old Benjamin having a conversation. It was diaper changing time, and Benjamin was upset. Jim started cajoling him out of his fussing with questions. ‘Benji, what sound does a dog make?’ ‘NO!’ Benji replied, but then, a second later came the resigned, ‘Woof woof.’ ‘Benji, what sound does a goose make?’ Jim pursued. ‘Honk, honk,’ Benji said, sniffing. ‘Benji, what sound does a cat make?’ Jim asked. ‘Miao, miao,’ Benji replied with more gusto. Soon, he was fully into it, not crying at all. He loves this game. Benjamin has a whole repertoire of sounds – a fair number of them bird calls, a sign to me that he’s

[Continued on page 3]

Service Schedule

SUNDAY SERVICES

7:30 am and 10:30 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

July 3

7:30 & 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist

July 7 - Feast of Jan Hus, trans.

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Prayer

July 10

7:30 & 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist (Folk Sunday)

July 14 - Feast of Samson Occum

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

July 17

7:30 & 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist (Healing)

July 21 - Feast of Mary Magdalene, trans.

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

July 24

7:30 & 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist

(Instructed Eucharist, liturgy of the word)

July 28 - Feast of Handel, Bach, Purcell

7:30 AM Thursday Morning Eucharist

July 31

7:30 & 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist

(Instructed Eucharist, liturgy of the table)

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Rector

[Continued from cover]

much more nature-inclined than our city toddler Frances was. And it delights him to perform them, to engage in the banter, to get us smiling and to answer the question correctly, over and over again.

Meanwhile, Frances has discovered the joy of card games. I bought her a Crazy 8s card deck a few weeks back, homage to my own childhood games with Dad. We play it over and over again, Frances pouting furiously when I hit a winning streak and hugging me magnanimously when I'm losing. She loves the game, and so we'll keep playing it – just like she loves watching her favorite episodes of 'Caillou,' a Canadian cartoon we stream from Netflix, over and over again. The repetition is comforting, it seems.

But as my mother-in-law told us when Frances was first born, 'Nothing lasts forever with kids.' I've already seen habits and routines come and go with both of them – Benji always had yogurt for breakfast and suddenly one day he switched to toast. Now if you get out the yogurt container, he screams and twists away in his high chair. Frances too changes constantly.

I'm writing this under the tree in the church patio area. It's a nice tree, or at least, its shade is nice. But all around it, the concrete is heaved up, a treacherous surface for parties and walkers. There are patches of cement in between the slabs, places where attempted repairs have been made, trying to smooth out the inevitable buckling. But the need for change is obvious. It is a sad thing, taking out a tree. It will take a while for new landscaping to grow to maturity. But what gives comfort for a time may not always give comfort. Sometimes what was once shade-giving and life-giving can begin to block us; what was once soothing ritual can

become stultifying, irritating, preventing us from growth.

That's where the Holy Spirit comes in. Sometimes we can get lulled into wanting things to stay just the same. It's comforting to go back again and again to the same well, perform the same ritual, sit in the same place. Of course, after a time the same things can start getting a little shabby. We can try to fix up the cracks and ignore the problems, but the truth is, we're outgrowing the old ways. God has a way of causing upheaval and buckling, taking out supports, rearranging the furniture – forcing the change, sometimes, in order to help us grow. It can be uncomfortable. Sometimes growing pains can even hurt a little. But God always wants more for us, more than we can ask or imagine, as Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians. And once we come out to the new level, it sure feels better – easier to move and breathe freely.

Welcome to the season after Pentecost – it's sometimes called ordinary time, and the church colors turn green, for growth. Things at ECA are a little topsy-turvy from the way they were, and we're not sure where they're going to end up. The ordinary is changing. But we're growing – growing in relationship and trust with one another, and in our discernment about what God would have us do. Keep praying – let's see where the Holy Spirit is taking us next.

Blessings,

Kate

Senior Warden

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” -John 14:1-4

We’ve had some heartbreaking losses in the past several weeks. Ernie Werkheiser, a fellow Cursillista from St. Joseph’s in Milpitas and friend to many here at ECA, suffered a sudden and massive stroke on May 10th and passed away.

My mother, Rosemary Dunham, Mom, passed away on May 14th after an extended struggle with congestive heart failure.

Elaine LaVallee, stalwart member of our church and loving wife to Bill, suffered a massive heart attack on her morning walk on June 9th.

My Mom lived a full life, and my memory is full of experiences that she was a part of. She was a very independent person, and lived her life according to her standards. I will miss the mom that she was before she got ill, and I realize that she had given up the life that she cherished some time before she passed. She’s happy now.

It is truly sad to have these good people pass out of our lives, but their memory will stay with us to remind us who they were, how they lived their lives and affected ours. We attend their memorial services, where we can celebrate their life and share stories and experiences with family and friends.

It’s one thing to have a friend die, or a parent that’s lived a full life. But it’s the person whose long-time spouse has passed that is left with the deepest wounds. The rest of us get back to our jobs and daily routines, with all of the demands and routines that life requires. But what about the spouse who’s left with the empty house, having to adapt to a new way of living life because the person they spent most of their adult years with is no longer there? There’s a whole process of grief that will take place, whether they acknowledge it or try and suppress it. It can be very intense in the days, weeks, and months following the passing of their spouse.

I have personal experience with this grief experience. No matter how you try and control it, it happens at its own pace. After Kathy died, I was left with a hole in my soul that I didn’t know how to deal with. Kathy was the one person that I depended on to help me with this type of thing, and she was gone. I was lost. I read a couple of books that were helpful. I didn’t feel comfortable talking about my deepest feelings to anybody. I tried to keep it all contained and to control and rush the process. I didn’t have any idea or training about how to handle the emotional crisis that I was in. I had a close circle of friends that showed their love and supported me, and that was and still is invaluable. But they couldn’t help me with the deep grief that I was trying to deal with. That takes time, and I’ve always been an impatient person. Grief can be unrelenting, and it has to run its course. I’ve learned a lot about myself, and grief, in these past two years. I think I’m on a better and healthier path now. And I’m coming to terms with my friends’ mantra of “Take it slow...”

Our local chapter of the Widows and Widowers Club just got larger these past few weeks, and my

Senior Warden

heart goes out to Margaret (Ernie's widow) and Bill as our newest members. They join with Nolan, Robb, Charlotte, Jerry, Carol, Martha Lou, Frances, Jackie, myself, and all those widows and widowers in our ECA family that I've forgotten to list here.

We all share in the ministry of support for those that have experienced the loss of a spouse. It's a tough and unpredictable road they travel, and the support we can offer as listeners, helpers, and friends in prayer will be invaluable to their journey as they discover their new path in life.

*In sympathy and love,
Doug*

Communications

- Work continues on the directory. We have chosen our cover and theme and are working on the roster content. We will schedule a meeting with Dennis Phipps from Lifetouch to double check everything before submitting it to be printed.
- The Communications Steering Committee convened and is working on creating and editing content for the new ECA website. Vestry members have been asked to either review and update existing descriptive content, or create new content, for their respective ministries.
- A 3-person subcommittee has offered to edit all submissions. Areas of the new website without "owners" or current content will be divided up and content generated

Inge Bond and George Romer

Happy 85th Birthday Margaret!

On June 25th our very own Margaret Halliwell turned 85. Congratulations Margaret from all your friends at ECA! (Especially the altar guild "ladies" and all the knitwits!)



From the Editor



We know not when the hour is upon us, so it is our duty to prepare, not for ourselves but for those that we leave behind. This thought has been with me more and more this past month as my grandmother Roberta Dykes was transferred to hospice and eventually left to meet her Maker. You see, my grandmother was one of those people that preferred to put off planning around her own mortality. As a consequence, I am writing this article while trying to book a flight to Houston. Over in the Lone Star state I'll be joining my dad and aunt as we dig through piles of paperwork in hopes of finding some idea of what we are supposed to do with everything left behind. Let this be a lesson to us all.

The Book of Common Prayer tells us (on page 455) that it is “the duty... of all persons to make wills.” Additionally that it is “the duty of all Christian parents to make prudent provision for the well-being of their families... while they are in health, arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods.” What does this really mean for us at ECA? It means we need to be serious about protecting our loved ones in what is one of the hardest times in life: losing a loved one.

The contrast could not be more apparent for me as my maternal Grandmother is perhaps one of the more prepared people I know. She has all her paperwork in order, trusts were set up years ago, she's discussed her wishes with everyone, bought the coffin, selected the service she wants, etc. While I am not quite ready in my own head to go that far, Rob and I have written our wills, advanced medical directives, donor cards, and we have at least attempted to communicate our wishes with our families. Prior to any lengthy or long distance vacation we whip out the paperwork to make sure it is all current and all our accounts are listed should anyone need to find them. I realise that such preparedness can make even the most realistic among us uncomfortable. I can only suggest that we learn from the lessons around us and think of the friends and family we leave behind. Of course our stewardship committee would love it if you included ECA in your estate planning, but I'll leave that between you and your Maker.

Alex Dykes

Wine & Swine

The date is drawing close so be sure you have Saturday, August 27th reserved on your calendar. We will be starting the evening off with a new ECA event: a potluck wine tasting, followed by plenty of pig and traditional back-yard BBQ sides. House wine will be provided, so be sure to sign up soon! There will be an announcement with pricing and sign-up sheets in the fellowship hall in early July. Let us know if you'll be needing child care at that time. If you'd like to help, contact Alex Dykes at alex@dykesfamily.net.

Good Question!

(This is a new monthly column to answer questions about being an Episcopalian, our customs at ECA, the building, or anything else that you've wanted to ask about – send your questions to TheShape@eca-sj.org. This month's question and answer come from The Episcopal Handbook.)

Why Is (or Isn't) Everybody Kneeling? Subjects do it before kings, some men do it when proposing marriage, and Christians have historically done this when they go to church: Kneeling.

It's an act of obeisance to authority, honor to royalty, and contrition for sin. It is one of the three basic positions Episcopalians assume in the course of regular Sunday worship.

Typically, we kneel to confess our sins, to receive absolution, and to pray (although standing for prayer is an ancient and acceptable posture). Episcopalians kneel much less than we used to. It's not because we've gotten lazy, but in order to recover an ancient sensibility toward worship; the idea that Christianity is less about endless penitence than it is about continual rejoicing in the forgiveness Jesus brings.

So when we stand we do so to show respect, like during the reading of the Gospels, which are the four books that record the works and deeds of Jesus. We also stand to say the Creed, a 1,600-year-old statement of our beliefs. And we stand to sing. Not only does this help us sound better, but it also helps us express our thanksgiving and appreciation. Think standing ovation.

When we sit, we do so to convey our readiness to learn, like we (were supposed to) do at school. We sit to listen to the Old and New Testament lessons as well as the Psalm and the sermon.

Referred to by some as “pew aerobics,” our penchant for communal participation comes from a shared belief that Sunday worship is not a spectator sport. Episcopalians are a liturgical church, the word liturgy meaning “work of the people.” So kneeling, sitting, and standing are all about inspiring us to say thanks together, the very best way we know how.



Pastoral Care

Small Repairs

If you or someone you know has a need for some kind of minor repair or simple maintenance, and it's a little beyond your capability, we have a group of about ten men who have said they are available to help you out. Call Allan Jones (408) 268-3322 and tell him the nature of your need, and he will try and match you up with someone who can take care of it for you. They're not going to remodel your kitchen or build on an addition to your house, but they can probably help you out with a leaky faucet, some touch-up painting, a squeaky door, cleaning out some gutters, a minor electrical problem, or other similar problems. Please don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

Card Ministry

Thanks to all who put cards in Margaret Halliwell's mailbox for the Card Ministry. She has asked us to let you all know she has enough cards to last for some time, so please hold off until further notice. Another way to help Margaret is to let her know about events occurring within the ECA family that would warrant a card being sent. So when you're aware of the need for a sympathy card, congratulatory card, etc., please let Margaret know.

Angel Meals & Wheels

A number of people have signed up to provide meals or rides, as needed. So if you or someone you know has such a need, please contact Anne Tysanner for meals, artysanner@yahoo.com (408) 927-7140 or Gayle Byers for rides dng_byers@sbcglobal.net (408) 268-0448, and allow us to help you.

**We're on
the Web!**

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



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



Reconciliation Recap

On June 1 we offered a final opportunity for discussion and closure on our community's process following discovery of the JV embezzlement. Marianne Schmidt and I facilitated the meeting together. Marianne offered a helpful structure for our discussion, naming concerns, what was done in response, what it felt like to folks, and what we'd like to do in the future. Issues largely revolved around communication and control, and ranged from concern about and for the perpetrator to damaged relationships in our own community.

From this meeting and the March meetings with Linda Taylor, it was clear that a few things were needed for folks to have the fullest possible sense of closure to the event. First, we made available the letter written by the former treasurer to the community in apology for her actions (copies may still be obtained from Kate). Second, as announced earlier, our Bishop Mary has been in touch with the Episcopal Bishop in Western Washington and with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese to alert them to our experience, should the former treasurer become involved in a new parish. Third, folks wanted more communication about the safeguards JV has put in place in our accounting practices. Look for Brenda McHenry's article in this issue of the Shape for that information. And last, we realized that we needed a clearly stated communication on the decision not to press criminal charges. Our vestry, the CCAVUCC council, and the JV board are working on this now.

As I said at the close of our last meeting, it is hard for all of us is to sit with the complexity of human nature – complexity that is present in each one of us – and with our inability to 'fix' another human being. Ultimately our healing now is in forgiving

each other, forgiving ourselves, and moving forward in a new mission. I believe we have done our work honestly and well together in this process of reconciliation, and I am excited and hopeful for our future together. Thank you to Marianne, to Linda Taylor, and to all who have worked to hear and love one another here at ECA!

Kate Flexer

Why Do We Do That?

One feature of our worship space is that we are so very intimate – folks have often mentioned to me how they love seeing the faces of others in the community around them in worship. It also makes the altar center stage, literally – rather than far off up front, the altar space is right in the middle of everyone. No wonder questions arise about what we're all doing and why we're doing it!

I'm offering a few 'instructed Eucharists' – worship services where we stop and explain what we're doing as we go along. I'll spread the instruction over two Sundays in our 10:30 service: on July 24, we'll talk our way through the Liturgy of the Word, the first half of the service up to the Peace. On July 31, we'll go through the Liturgy of the Table, the celebration of the Eucharist through the end of the service. Come if you can and bring your questions. If you can't make it, don't worry – we'll do it again later in the year.

Kate Flexer

Three Cheers for the Red, White and Blue

Yes, here's a JV Fellowship Event just for you! On Saturday, July 16th, you are invited to join us for some great family-friendly fun. Yes, this event is for all ages: no one is too young and no one is too old to participate. Why, this is even a perfect time to invite other friends and neighbors you might like to introduce to our churches and your church family.

The evening will feature a JV Talent Show in the sanctuary after a delicious chicken dinner with all the fixings in fellowship hall. Check out our lineup so far: the JV Bell Choir will be performing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," Roger Hoyt and John Leslie will be doing a piano duet, we have several soloists, a tap dance number or two, a baseball skit, and a medley of patriotic songs for everyone to chime in and sing-along. How about you? Consider sharing your special talent with us. Just sign up on the bulletin board so we can get you in the program. Remember, there is no age limit.

After our program we will all gather once again in Fellowship Hall to enjoy a delicious dessert. Doesn't this sound like a wonderful opportunity to make new friends and get to know your church family even better? This is possibly "the event of the season" you won't want to miss. Check out the Joint Venture Bulletin Board for more details and sign up to attend, to help (that's a great way to strengthen friendships), and even perform in the show. The evening will begin with appetizers at 5:30 PM followed by dinner beginning around 6:30 PM. Adults: \$10, children under 12: free, and check out the special arrangements for youth, too, all on the bulletin board. (Sign-ups are important so we will plan enough food.)

For questions and additional information, please contact the organizers: Betty Consorte for food prep, set up and decorations; Susie Ferguson for the Talent Show.

Gifts of Gratitude

Special thanks to the following people for their service to the congregation recently:

- Jon Mills and Bonnie McPherson for their leadership in the youth groups.
- Susie Ferguson for outreach with the Cursillo Community.
- Bonnie McPherson for her commitment, time and energy to the youth group over the years, in cooking, baking, outings, planning, prayers, and teaching junior high weekly with dedication. Her experience and faith is a blessing to all of us who interact with her.
- Melanie Weiner for her dedication to youth education and support of teachers, and for never giving up when it was tough!
- Alex Dykes, Rob McClaine, Jon Mills and Allan Jones for their work restoring the rectory.
- Allan Jones for his tireless work around the church and the rectory.

If you know someone that you feel should be acknowledged, send his/her name to Mike Schmidt at mschmidt8120@sbcglobal.net, along with a brief explanation, and we'll ensure that it appears in the next Shape.

Laying on of Hands

Every third Sunday at church, we invite people forward for healing prayer for themselves or others. It's been a tradition at ECA for a number of years, but it is probably time to explain again what this ritual is about. Prayers for healing have been a part of the church since the very beginning. One of the most direct ways for such prayer is the laying on of hands, when a priest or another trained person rests hands on someone's head or shoulders and prays for their needs. At ECA the priest celebrating asks each individual who comes forward if they would like prayers for something in particular. Each person is free to state a specific need (kept in strict confidence) or to ask for prayer without revealing why. The priest prays for that person by name – and for anyone else that person wants to pray for – and then anoints their forehead with healing oil in the sign of the cross. The oil is blessed every year by the Bishop for this use. Sandie Mueller, Pat Fox, or another trained lay member of the healing team sometimes assists silently in the prayer, resting their hands on the person as well. It is an intimate, powerful experience for all involved.

Anyone is welcome to come forward for prayer on these Sundays, for any need whatsoever – physical or mental or spiritual healing, or concern for another. If you don't want to come forward, simply remain in your pew and pray for those who do, and for any others on your heart. Refrain from asking someone later why they went forward for prayer – that is between them and God alone. But keep them in prayer, allowing God to fill in the details. The more we open our hearts to one another, allowing God to flow through, the greater the healing and deepening for all of us in this community.

Anniversaries

George & Nancy Romer	2
Jim & Elizabeth Ward	5
Arnold & Suzanne Moore	17
Bill & Toni Hird	24
Mike & Trish Reilly	25

Birthdays

Pauline Gilligan	June 27
Rob McClaine	2
Melinda Jennings	2
Jessica Fahlen	4
Chris Joslin	8
Harold Lee	9
Roberta Verderico	10
Robin Williams	10
Guido Spanjaart	11
Dom Consorte	12
Suzanne Mayo	12
Annie Estrade	18
Kabeja Fallone	20
Matt Gunderson	20
Kathryn Hussain	22
Ed Mueller	23
Arnold Moore	25
Taylor Wing	30



Stewardship

As I write this in Starbucks across from Kaiser Hospital in Redwood City and reflect on my Stewardship journey for the last several weeks, I realize how stewardship-challenged Nancy & I have been:

Our planned social visit to a Cal Poly classmate & his wife in Seattle turned into pastoral support for them both when Lillian developed severe pneumonia in her transplanted lung on the day we were due to arrive. This was to be a mere warm-up for this week.

Drove from Missoula, MT to Port Angeles, WA, bringing my sister and my niece, Julie to see their new great grandson and grandson, respectively.

Hit the ground running a day after returning to San Jose to care for our grandsons for a day. Helped Julie acquire and install a used dryer a day before shadowing her through major surgery pre-op procedures at Kaiser.

Now, we wait after bringing her to surgery at 6 PM this morning, praying that God will guide the hands of the neurosurgeons to remove a tumor in Julie's spinal column. The Lord only knows what stewardship challenge lies ahead for us in this regard.

So, the stewardship journey continues. In the months ahead, I will be calling for help to plan and execute our annual in-gathering to support our joint mission in Christ. If you are moved to be a part of that effort, please make your intentions known to me soon. Many hands make lighter and more joyful work. Thanks in advance!

George Romer

Fellowship Events

Please make note of the following July and August fellowship events. Friends and family are always welcome, so be sure to drag one along with you!

July 16th: Three Cheers for the Red White & Blue
Dinner and a show! See page 10 for more details.

July 23: Elkhorn Slough Safari, Moss Landing
We've booked a group boat trip on the Elkhorn slough at 9 AM on the 23rd. There will be a carp-pool forming at the church at 7:45 leaving at 8AM. We have spots already reserved but there may be room if you have not already signed up. Please call Amy Griffith at (408) 268-0920 if you'd like to join us. Adults, \$35; seniors, \$32; youth, \$26.

July 20: JV Book Club

This month's meeting will be at the home of Joan Wagner. We will be discussing *Still Life* by Louise Penny.

In the Community

The annual free local concerts in the park are continuing this year. Join us on July 10, 17, 24 and 31 in Greystone Park from 6:30 - 8 PM. Look for the ECA group toward the back of the crowd – bring your picnic and your dancing shoes!

JV Money Management

Some folks have asked about changes made in how Joint Venture Council is now managing its money. Here are some policies and procedures that we have instituted in the last 2 years:

Two years ago the Council hired a professional bookkeeper, Dee Dumont, who keeps the accounts, writes -- but does not sign -- the checks, and makes monthly reports to Council.

The Treasurer reviews the bank statements online and hard copies are mailed to the church.

We are closing out the account at Wells Fargo, which has proved to be troublesome. We have opened a non-profit, interest-bearing checking account at Heritage Bank of Commerce, a local business bank with a number of branches in the area. Our account is at the Los Gatos branch. All checks require 2 signatures and a system of check requests including receipts has been instituted. We do not have a credit or debit card, but have provided a small petty cash account for incidental expenses.

We have kept the money from our lawsuit settlement at Fidelity Investments where it is earning a good return. We are able to write checks from this account as well (with 2 signatures).

There is also discussion about bonding the treasurer, and doing a review or audit of our books. These will require additional expense, and we need to assess the value of them. In short, our money is being handled in a professional and businesslike manner.

Brenda McHenry

Christian Ed & Youth

The final regular SHYGS and JHYGS meeting of the school year was on June 12th and we have now moved into our summer schedule of weekly BBQs combined with hang-out time, games and other activities. All junior high, senior high and collage kids are welcome to join us on Monday evenings from 6 PM to 9PM on the patio. The group will discuss other possible activities during our July meeting (we are committed to at least one or two trips to the beach once the weather warms).

VBS is coming up the last week of July, and Melanie will need lots of help from both adults and youth to make it successful. Please contact her if you are available.

The Christian Ed and Youth committee is still reviewing resumes of potential candidates for Melanie's position, as she is due to leave that position at the end of August to pursue her studies.

Bonnie McPherson
Youth Vestry Liaison



VBS is Coming!

Shake It Up Cafe is coming to ECA. We will explore the Bible as an exciting cookbook filled with recipes for living out God's Word. Come join us for the fun! If you know any friends or family members who would like to join us, pass this along to them.

By celebrating biblical festivals, we will:

- Be ready for God
- Give happily to God
- Believe fully in Jesus
- Remember Jesus often
- Celebrate God forever

Join us July 25-29 from 9AM until 12:00 for games, crafts, stories, and fun. VBS is open to ages 4 through entering 5th grade. Youth are encouraged to join us as leaders!

Registration is available online at www.eca-sj.org and there is a hard copy of the information available in the church office.

Any questions? Hearing that still small voice calling you to participate? Please contact Melanie Weiner at meljweiner@gmail.com or (408) 307-3709.

Melanie Weiner



Bond. Inge Bond.

007^{3/4}

If your Shape was late this month, it's my fault. The vestry decided that each month one member will write an article to be included in the Shape. July is my month. Turns out I'm a bit intimidated by the prospect of writing about my faith (in front of God and everyone, such as it is). The truth is, most days I have a mixed relationship with faith. I'm a researcher by trade, from a family of engineers and medical folk. We deal in evidence.

I don't have the oft-cited personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What I do have is a conviction that his teachings, and his Father's sacrifice, are models for how we as humans should try to behave. I am a better person when I serve, when I listen, when I look for the good, and when I forgive.

I have thanked God for healing every night since my brain surgery in 2009. Gratitude, for me, comes much more easily than faith.

At our Sunday services I take comfort in, and derive peace from, the creeds and the opportunity to pray and to think. I welcome the reminder to be thankful for all that I have, and to consider the vast

numbers who are so much less fortunate than I. I ask for the strength to open my heart and my mind to faith and trust, to stop thinking about bills and menus and adolescence.

I feel guilty sometimes for my skepticism. I worry that I have denied my children the opportunity to build their own faith by not demonstrating a strong enough belief. I wonder if it is OK for me to be at church, to be a member of this church, when I waffle as I do. I trust, though, that this questioning is human, that I am not the only one who has these feelings, and I make the choice to move forward, to try to grow my faith.

Lately I've been working on what Kate termed my "prayer muscle." In her first sermon here, Kate reminded us that it takes 30 days to build muscle memory, to take a new behavior and make it a habit. I walk on the trail and try to use that time to build my prayer muscle, to look at the beauty that surrounds me and listen for God. I can't tell you that I hear him, but I certainly see his good work, every day, in the goodness of others, the love and service of my friends and family at ECA, and the awesome planet we call home. That is evidence enough for me.

Inge Bond

The Shape
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