

The Episcopal Church in Almaden

Church Profile

June 18, 2009

The ECA Personality

The Episcopal Church in Almaden (ECA) is our extended family in Christ. It is a warm family, eager to reach out to new people. We offer a place to feel welcomed and included in a true ecumenical spirit. This spirit defines our responsibility as clergy and involved laity to nurture our church family and community. ECA promises a warm, informal and friendly welcome to our guests and new members.

ECA has about 165 members in 105 family units, with an average of 120 regular communicants. Our members pledged 90% of our projected 2009 annual budget of \$198,700. The Church and nearby rectory are located in southern San Jose, California, in the Almaden Valley. The valley is nestled between rolling hills to the east and the coastal mountains to the west. The Almaden Valley is known locally for the quality of its public schools, several of which are within close proximity to the rectory.

Our parish is a mixture of both young and maturing families, and singles. ECA appreciates new ideas and approaches, while remaining well grounded in Episcopal traditions. Our children, from infants to teens, are celebrated and cherished, as are our young and mature adults, and the contributions of all are requested, encouraged, and respected. Our community is considered to be upper middle income and education.

Our church sanctuary has the altar in the center, with parishioners in tiered pews on three sides, and the Choir on the fourth side behind the altar. We refer to it as "church in the round", which fosters a warm, inclusive, and joyful worship environment which is appreciated by the congregation.

Joint Venture

ECA is committed to a uniquely successful joint venture with the Almaden Valley United Church of Christ (AVUCC). The Joint Venture Churches of Almaden, Inc. (JV) is the corporation that owns the building and land, but it is much more than simply a landlord operation. Together, the two congregations share Sunday Schools,

youth programs, special outreach projects, capital improvement, maintenance workdays, and occasional ecumenical services. Both Pastors take a leadership role in Joint Venture.

This co-operative effort has been in effect since 1969, and is managed by the Joint Venture Council. The Joint Venture Council is composed of the minister and six lay members from each church. Each congregation provides half of the annual budget. With spiritual guidance provided by both pastors, the relationship between the two ministers is important to the life of both congregations. The joint children's Sunday school and enthusiastically attended youth programs give our youth opportunities to serve the community, experience fellowship, explore their faith and worship together.

Under our Joint Venture arrangement, we share a youth director, Christian Education director, secretary, music director/organist and janitorial service. The Joint Venture Council meets once a month. Over the years, our Joint Venture opportunity has functioned very well. As with any visionary arrangement, patience and flexibility from all those involved are a necessity.

ECA History

A review of the history of the Episcopal Church in Almaden reveals much of the character of our parish. After more than a year of meetings, ECA became a mission on All Saints' Day, 1967. Our first vicar was the Rev. John F. Buenz.

For the first two years, the congregation met in homes, a rented local church, then a prune shed, which was shared with the Almaden Valley United Church of Christ (UCC). A close relationship developed between our two congregations. Because of this relationship and concerns of the Diocese (mission failures, shortage of diocesan capital, the ecumenical movement, and other factors) the Joint Venture Churches of Almaden, Inc. (JV) was established to share one facility. The two congregations moved to the present building in 1969.

Under Father John's guidance, much of the character of the congregation was formed, and ECA grew from 35 to

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95 pledging families. Following Fr. John's acceptance of a call to St. Jude's in Cupertino in 1973, the Rev. Michael Creighton became our second vicar.

During Fr. Mike's tenure, we grew to 124 pledging families and matured in many ways. We sponsored the first of four Vietnamese refugee families in 1978. We attained parish status on our twelfth anniversary in 1979. Fr. Mike accepted a call to St. Stephen's in Seattle in February 1981.

The Rev. Robert Swope became our Rector in February 1982. After a difficult period, he resigned in 1984.

The Rev. Nolan Redman answered our call in 1986. Nolan and his wife Ann came to us from their home state of Washington. Under the loving spiritual guidance of Nolan and the equally supportive efforts of Ann, ECA continued to blossom as a committed Christian Family. He enabled a wide variety of opportunities for ministry and service. Nolan and Ann left us to retire to their native Washington State in July of 2002.

In August 2002, the Rev. Stephen Mills was called as Rector. Under his leadership and spiritual guidance, the ECA family continued its wide variety of ministries in our valley and around the world. The parish has had to deal with the increasing pressures of modern family life which subsume energy and time which has traditionally been reserved for church activities. ECA and its Joint Venture partners nurtured vibrant Christian Education and Youth programs throughout these years and continued to be leaders within the Diocese in outreach and assistance programs and in spiritual development programs like Cursillo. Fr. Stephen is now on vacation and Sabbatical leave until his planned retirement at the end of August.

Our spiritual leaders greatly influenced our lives in many ways. They helped us gain confidence in ourselves and in our ability to serve the church and the community. Our parish population has been somewhat reduced in size in recent years, but we continue to find ourselves in a host of good works and activities.

Worship

ECA is a Eucharist centered congregation with active laity participation in our services. The Altar Guild prepares the church for the services. Lay readers, acolytes and ushers all contribute in their respective functions.

Our typical Sunday schedule is:

7:30 A.M.	Holy Communion, Rite 2
9:00 A.M.	UCC holds their service
10:00 A.M.	Joint Venture Sunday School for children and adults
11:00 A.M.	Holy Communion, Rite 2 with music

Once a month, a healing liturgy is integrated into the Sunday service. We try to have a joint worship service with UCC twice a year.

In musical expression, we enjoy wide variety of musical styles in our services with a balance between traditional and more contemporary music. We prefer Bible centered sermons that relate to every day life.

The Vestry

ECA's Vestry is made up of members of our congregation who have been elected to serve 3-year terms. We elect a third of the Vestry each year at the annual meeting in October. Vestry Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, and are open to any interested ECA member.

The Vestry is comprised of thoughtful, dedicated, energetic laity from all age groups and family situations that actively participate in the spiritual and secular elements of church leadership. These leadership characteristics are quite common among the other members of the ECA family, and many have served on the Vestry over the years. The current members of the Vestry are actively involved in the spiritual growth of our family and the development and continuation of successful ministries. The Vestry recognizes that all this would not be possible without the spiritual and practical guidance of a loving and gracious pastor.

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ECA Ministries

ECA provides a wide variety of opportunities for participation in ministry. These ministries are focused in the areas of Worship, Christian Education and Spiritual Development, Pastoral Care, Outreach, and Fellowship.

The ECA web site, <http://www.eca-sj.org/>, presents useful information about the ministries and activities of the parish.

Goals and Expectations

The people of ECA are looking for an Interim Priest to help our congregation manage its transition from its current leadership, through the search process, to the call of a new Rector for ECA. We hope that this person will desire to lead and encourage others to develop a deeper spiritual life, to plan and conduct liturgical services of corporate worship, and help persons of all ages understand and live the Christian Faith. The Interim should provide pastoral care to people at significant points in their lives, e.g., death, dying, sickness, birth, trauma, and success. The Interim should have the ability to nurture and equip people for growth within the community of faith. The priest and laity must minister to visitors and newcomers. It is important to assist the laity to counsel and communicate effectively with all members of the parish. Conflict resolution skills are essential to help the parish family to look and move forward while preparing for selection of a new Rector. Energy and enthusiasm for shared ministry and enabling the laity is very important to us.

Some of the leadership qualities we will be looking for in a new rector are as follows:

1. Commitment and Energy - A person who is reverent and enthusiastically committed to Christ and to the preservation and growth of our ECA family.
2. Compelling vision - A person who has a sense of where we are going as a body of believers and a sense of our outreach with the community at large.

3. Competency - A person who has the skills to do the job effectively and has a sense of humor. He/she should have the demonstrated ability to preach dynamic, challenging and scripture based sermons and conduct liturgical services.
4. Caring - A person who respects others and is supportive to people in need; a person who has compassion, is tolerant and demonstrates good interpersonal skills.
5. Courage - A person who is willing to take risks and is resilient as issues change; a person who is honest and willing to learn.
6. Creative - A person who is innovative with problem solutions and with worship opportunities.
7. Confronting - A person who will face issues and resolve them in a Christian manner.
8. Collaborative - A person who is unifying, is accepting and tolerant of others and who can thrive in our Joint Venture relationship.

We hope that our Interim Priest will reflect a number of these qualities and help us to lean forward while we conduct our search and call.