

St. Mary's Guild

On Sunday, December 21st, St. Mary's Guild held their annual Christmas Drawing. The winners were Beth Smith-Kellock—Christmas Tree Skirt
Leovijilda (Alejandra's mother) - Nativity Set
Lisa Reed—Christmas Afgan

Thank you to all of you who supported St. Mary's Fund-raiser!

Knitting Group

Knitting Group forming for all ages and levels of experience. Use your hands while you enjoy the fellowship of others. Opportunities to make items for hospitals and shelters. Day and time will be determined by consensus.

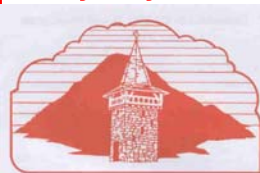
If interested, contact Betty Parnell for more information at
626/449-6060



Our vision is that the Church of the Ascension serves Christ today for those who will come to know Christ tomorrow.

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The Episcopal Church of the Ascension



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NOTES FROM THE LOFT

My deep gratitude to all members of the choir for their awesome gifts of music and time during December and, particularly, on Christmas Eve. It was a joy for me to make music unto the Lord with you!

As we look to another new year with its promise of fresh beginnings, let me encourage those of you in the congregation with musical ability to make a resolution to share your talents with us. If you play an instrument, please let me know. If you sing, do think about joining your fellow parishioners in choir – sopranos and altos most certainly are welcome, but we have a special need for additional tenors and basses. I can assure you that rehearsing and presenting the great anthems of the church will enrich your life, and the knowledge that you're doing so in the service of God and your parish will provide tremendous personal fulfillment.

My best wishes to each of you for a year filled with God's grace, peace, and contentment.

Debora Huffman

Director of Music and Organist

MY THANKS

to all who worked so hard to make this Christmas such a wonderful celebration!

And a thank you on behalf of the clergy for the generous purse!

Father Michael +

Thanks for your Presence

It is that time of year to assess what we have accomplished during the last twelve months. As leader of the Presence Ministry, I would like to thank all who participated in work parties, archive activities, upkeep in the Memorial Garden, production of new activity brochures, and writing Spire articles during this period. We have a new group added to the Presence Ministry and that is the ministry of Publicity. Ann Luke will head up this ministry in 2009. I think we had a very successful year and accomplished a lot. The Lytch Gate was painted and repaired, several windows replaced, a home for the archived articles was built, and the endless task of weeding has shown some progress in beating back this nemesis. I look forward to planning the next year and solicit your input as we define another meaningful year.

Mike Beach, Verger



The SPIRE

*The Newsletter of the
Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Sierra Madre, California*

January 2009

Worship

Sundays

8:00 Mass
8:55 Coffee Hour
9:10 Education
10:15 Mass
11:30 Coffee Hour

Wednesday

6:00pm Mass

Thursdays

7am Mass

Fridays

12pm Mass

Upcoming Events

January 10 Ordination of Allison English/ Kirby Smith 8:00 bus

January 11- Father Kirby's first Mass and Baptism as ordained Priest.

January 11- Special coffee hour in honor of our newly ordained Father Kirby Smith.

January 13- Vestry Meeting 7:00 pm.

January 24 Safe Church Seminar 8:30-12:30

January 25 Annual Meeting – one service at 9:30 followed by potluck lunch and the annual meeting

January 31- St. Mary's Luncheon 10:30-3pm.



FROM THE RECTOR

Some of you may have noticed the addition to the chapel in the north transept of a statue of the Virgin Mary holding the Holy Child Jesus on a beautiful base. These items were recently given to the parish by a former Senior Warden – Richard Lottridge— and were placed in what has been traditionally referred to as St. Mary's Chapel. (I know – it's confusing - for years the shrine in the south transept, the one with the stained glass window of Mary holding the doves, has had the larger image of Mary and the votive candles; but the other transept has been called St. Mary's Chapel as well.) The provenance of the new statue and the base upon which it rests is not clear. The base appears to be 19th century or early 20th century, but the statue itself, carved from what looks like English Oak, appears to be much older. The figure looks to be an early rendition of Our Lady of Walsingham. The story goes that in the 11th century, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Lady Richeldis of the Manor of Walsingham in North Norfolk in England. A shrine with a statue of the vision was constructed soon after and became a central place of pilgrimage through the Middle Ages. The devotion was connected to the belief that this Shrine of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Child Jesus represented their home in Nazareth. The Shrine and the original statue were destroyed in the Reformation in 1538 by order of King Henry VIII. It wasn't until 1922 that a shrine to Our Lady was re-established in Walsingham. The devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham persisted through the centuries, and I am thankful for this representation of Mary with Jesus to remind us of our heritage from the British expression of Christianity and to serve as a focus of devotion to the Mother of Jesus. I offer for your consideration these words attributed to Erasmus in 1511 upon his pilgrimage to Walsingham –

“Hail, Jesus' Mother, blessed evermore, Alone of women, God bearing and Virgin, others may offer to thee various gifts, this man gold, that man again his silver; a third adorns thy shrine with precious stones. But this poor soul... Bringing..., asks in return for his most humble gift that greatest blessing, piety of heart, and free remission of his many sins.”

Take time to look at this marvelous carving, ponder the prayers of the saints over the centuries that have been offered in its presence, and perhaps offer this or some similar prayer –

O Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life,

As you overshadowed Mary that she might be the Mother of Jesus our Saviour,

so work silently in my heart,

to form within me the fullness of his redeemed and redeeming humanity.

Give me his loving heart, to burn with love for God and love for my neighbor;

Give me a share of his joy and sorrow,

His weakness and his strength, his labor for the world's salvation.

May Mary, blessed among women, Mother of our Saviour, pray for me,

That Christ may be formed in me, that I may live in union of heart and will,

With Jesus Christ, her Son, our Lord and Saviour.

*From the Pilgrim's Manual,
Walsingham*

Yours in Christ,

MAB+



SENIOR WARDEN'S BLOG –

Kathy and I recently returned from an extended vacation that took us to the Eastern seaboard and Canada to view the fall colors. Part of our trip was by boat and part by train, forms of transportation which gave us plenty of time for reading. Thus, I was able to catch up on some books that had languished by my bedside, including Michael Chabon's *Gentlemen of the Road*, and a revisiting of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English. Initially, both of these books seem to base their stories on a travel experience; but, in reality, each deals with the human condition and the search for meaning. They each tell us of a pilgrimage.

The 30 travelers in *The Canterbury Tales* are on their way to Canterbury to venerate the relics of the martyr Thomas a Becket, but each pilgrim has a more personal reason for the trip, a reason that Chaucer explores in the Prologue and through the tale that each pilgrim relates. From the sanctimonious knight to the bawdy miller to the lusty wife of Bath to the wicked pardoner, we see the high and the low, the rich and the poor, each struggling to reach a place and attain a purpose.

Traveling in Khazaria (southern Russia) during the tenth century, *The Gentlemen of the Road*, namely a huge Abyssinian and a tall thin Frankish-Jewish medic, are con men, staging bloody battles to encourage betting on the outcome and then making off with the purse after faking the death of one of them. Chabon, with great wit and swashbuckling romanticism, has these bounders do good almost against their will, restoring a Jewess to her family throne. Like Chaucer's pilgrims, these two travelers also struggle for a place and endeavor to achieve a purpose.

In neither work do we ever discover if the pilgrims find their place or attain their goal. We only glimpse part of the pilgrims' lives, and the ending remains untold. But the reader has been entertained, and the triumph of good over evil is once again reiterated. Stories such as these, as ambiguous as they may ultimately be, have a place and a purpose because they help us reassess our own place and purpose.

Unlike the travelers in these two books, we at Ascension have an advantage. We already have a place and a purpose. Sometimes that place and purpose are not so obvious or are obscured by personal, familial, or even global problems. But we are certain of God's love for us through Christ and our fellow parishioners. We know where we are going and what we must do. Father Michael reminds us of that each Sunday. As we embark on the journeys of this new year, some fraught with economic turmoil, may we each be secure in the knowledge of God's love and resolve to share that knowledge with our fellow pilgrims.

Yours in Christ.

Ted

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AND POTLUCK

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25TH, 2009

ABOUT 10:30 A.M. IN THE
PARISH HALL

The Annual Parish Meeting is a time for our church community to come together and discuss the past year, elect new leaders and look at the future. In the spirit of community, we will be having only one service on January 25th at 9:30 a.m. A potluck brunch and meeting will follow the service. A sign-up sheet for the brunch is on the bulletin board. Please plan on attending this important event.

Why do we have an Annual Meeting?

Our parish for legal purposes is a corporation. We have Parish Bylaws which correspond to the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Los Angeles. Parishes must have an Annual Meeting to elect "directors" who form the Vestry. The Vestry has responsibility for the "temporalities" of the parish. It is the custom at Ascension that reports for the previous year are received, the budget for the next year, which the Vestry has already passed, is presented, and other business may be conducted. Our Parish Bylaws state that the Rector presides; or, in the absence of the Rector, the Senior Warden presides.

Who can attend?

Everyone interested in our parish can attend the Annual Meeting. Our Parish Bylaws require us to have present twenty voting members to have a quorum.

Who can vote?

The Diocesan Canons were changed a few years ago to include persons sixteen years and older as electors. Basically, any baptized person who has been attending services for the past sixty days and is on record as giving financially is eligible to vote. Our Parish Bylaws and the canons do not permit either proxies or absentee ballots.

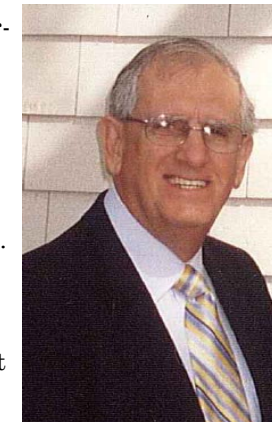
Vestry Nominees

As we go to press with this issue, there are four nominees for the four Vestry positions. (See page 3 for biographical information.) As always, there will be an opportunity to make nominations for Vestry positions from the floor during the Annual Meeting.

And the nominees are:

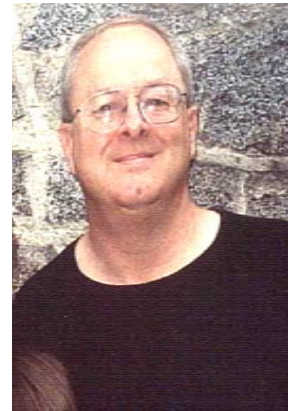
Ross Kellock

Born in Scotland, Ross Kellock emigrated to Canada as a young man. He spent fifty years in the insurance business and owned and operated his own insurance brokerage firm. Widowed after forty years of marriage, Ross has two children and four grandchildren living in the Toronto, Ontario area. He married Beth Smith in 2005 and now makes Sierra Madre his home. For the past three years Ross has provided oversight for Ascension's insurance program and been part of the team that has conducted the internal financial audit for Ascension. He is looking forward to making a further contribution to the Church of the Ascension as a Vestry Member.



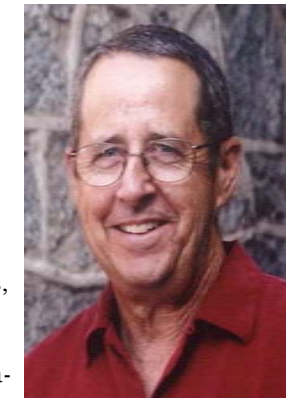
Tom Duffy

Tom Duffy, his wife Richele, and their daughters Kate and Sarah have been members of the Ascension family for three years, attending our 10:15 services. They live in Arcadia with their 19 animals and are in continual motion working on their 86 year old home. Tom graduated from Cal Poly Pomona and is involved in Information Technology Management, currently acting as a consultant to a number of small technology companies. In his free time, he serves as Board Chair for the Volunteer Center of San Gabriel Valley. Tom can frequently be seen around the church grounds working on one project or another with the Men's Group.



Gary Griffiths

Gary Griffiths is a local boy attending PHS, PCC, Cal State LA, and Cal Poly Pomona. He served in the Navy for 2 ½ years as a medic corpsman during the Vietnam War. An educator at Pasadena High School for 33 years, Gary served as Athletic Director for thirteen years, Department Head of the PE Department for thirteen years, taught English and Social Science, and was the head coach for football, baseball, and swimming. A five year retiree, Gary and Gloria, his wife of forty years, spend lots of time with their four children and six grandchildren. During football season, Gary helps his eldest son David with his football program in Big Bear. Gary and Gloria can be seen ushering at the 8:00 service.



Betty Thorn

Born in England, Betty Thorn moved to Ontario three weeks after marrying her high school sweetheart Bertram. She worked at Queen's University as the Office Manager for the Dean of Women. When the couple moved to Illinois, she worked at Northwestern University as the Office Manager for the Mechanical Engineering Aeronautics and Astronautics Department. After moving to Arcadia, she became a stay at home mom, raising four sons. In 1980 she became Office Manager at Monroe Elementary School in Monrovia. The family began attending Ascension at the 8:00 service in 1990. Betty's four sons were married at Ascension, and four of her seven grandchildren have been baptized here.

