



# The SPIRE

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

March 2006

## Our Core Ministries

- Worship
- Formation
- Pastoral Care
- Fellowship
- Outreach
- Presence

## Diocesan Ministry Fair

Saturday, March 25

8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Check out all the possible seminars that are available to the leaders and lay members of the parish. See Diane Rhodus for more information.

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## ✝ From the Rector

Over the last few months, several of our parishioners have been in the position of re-examining “what they do.” For some, it has been a deliberate choice, and for others it has been not of their choosing. One person has retired and is asking “what now?” Another has been laid off, and another has closed the business he had been in. Still another has received a windfall and taken the opportunity to head in a new path for work that he are really excited about.

When we talk about spiritual gifts and our ministries, people sometimes have a limited view of what this means. Spiritual gifts are not just about our ability to pray or be compassionate. Spiritual gifts are the talents, virtues, and abilities that God gives each person. How we put to use our talents, virtues, and abilities in the world, and not just in the church, are the ministries – the vocations - which each of us needs to follow, and sometimes, re-examine. Each of us

has gifts, and each of us is called to ministry. The trick is to best match our gifts with our work. This isn’t just a job thing – it is a spiritual exercise best accomplished in community. I would encourage everyone to find some way – perhaps in a small group, a prayer partner, or some other opportunity, to explore the questions – what are my spiritual gifts, and how do I make best use of them?

—Fr. Michael

## St. Mary’s Guild

St. Mary’s Guild enjoyed an interesting talk with slides, by Lavette Teague, showing his trip to Portugal. Our next meeting will be a potluck lunch on Saturday, April 1 at 11:30 a.m. in the parish hall.

## Renewed Men’s Breakfasts

All men of Ascension, take note! We will be reestablishing our Men’s Breakfast Program on Saturday, March 11 at 8:00 a.m. – 9:30a.m. in the Parish Hall. Our first speaker will be our Junior Warden Christopher Brunwin. He will be sharing “One Man’s Testimony.” Please call Deacon Barrett or the church office by Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup> so that we can have a hearty breakfast waiting for you.

Future breakfasts will be held on the second Saturday of every other month and will

be a time for men of all ages to discuss our special issues and needs in the Church.

For those who like to plan ahead, our next meeting will be held on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> when the guest speaker will be Bishop Robert Anderson.

We are looking forward to reinstating an old tradition of the men of our parish. Please plan to join us on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

—Deacon Barrett

## Youth Group Happenings

We are excited about the news that we have two new Lay youth leaders assisting the rest of our team in youth ministry at Ascension. Please welcome Pat & Alison Jeffries. They will be a support team for our fellowship events, field trips and social activities. We are also thankful for the great work that Diane Rhodus and Michelle Rohrer have been doing with the teenagers during this last year and appreciate their commitment to the “Church present.” And special thanks to the parents who have provided the major support system to make it all happen.

It is a busy time with our youth, and the upcoming months during Lent and Easter will only get busier. Along with a special Lenten program during our Sunday Morning Meeting at the Parish House starting March 5th, we are excited about the upcoming fellowship events and hope that all the youth and their friends will participate. Please plan ahead now, so you do not miss the good times. If you have any questions about the calendar listed below, please contact Deacon

Barrett.

**Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>**—Pancake Supper at Ascension Church

**Sunday, March 26<sup>th</sup>**—Field trip to Forest Lawn, Glendale. Discovering the works of art about the Passion of Christ.

**Saturday-Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>**— Overnight Youth Retreat at the Cathedral in Los Angeles

**Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>**—Youth Day at Knott’s Berry Farm

**Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>**—Sunday Afternoon Blast at Boomer’s

The Youth Group is beginning a Lenten service project to benefit Operation Smile, a group that sends doctors to developing nations to perform surgeries that fix children’s cleft palates. It is a quick and rather inexpensive operation, costing about \$250. To raise funds, the Youth Group will be providing extra food at coffee hours and be collecting donations.

## Small Groups

I recently read journalist Peggy Noonan’s book John Paul the Great. In the course of the book, she speaks of her own spiritual journey. Here are a few of her thoughts on small groups. “I had joined a Christian Bible study group with some women, mostly Protestant, who were to one degree or another desperate to believe in something, but it had to be the truth. (They’d already tried the nontrue, and it hadn’t worked.) We had weekly meetings. They were important to me, in part because I learned so much about what was in the Bible – I hadn’t

really known- and also because as people got to know one another, they shared their lives and experiences, and I learned from those too. . . . They all knew- they had come to the conclusion along the way- that the lives they had previously lived were unwhole, not in accord with the peace that they somehow knew or intuited was out there, and available, and summoning.”

You are invited to visit, explore, and check-out any of the many small groups we have at Ascension. We look forward to welcoming you. —Halcyon Koerber

## Ministry Discernment for All

We were taught to share when we were children. How is it we sometimes forget that? The rule still applies. Share with those who are less fortunate than you. Share your joy with those who need encouragement. Share your laughter with those who haven’t heard any in a long time. Share your tears with those who have forgotten to cry. Share your faith with those who have none.

Your talents and treasures are your gifts to share with the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the church. The church is we, the people. When we all contribute to the

body, we are helping everyone as Christ helped all when He came to earth as our Savior. As we share the gifts (which bring us joy), we show the way for the ones who come to Christ after us. Watch for upcoming opportunities to participate in our spiritual gifts discovery. Surprises Await!

—Diane Rhodus, Ministry Coordinator

# March 2006

## Upcoming Dates

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 7:00 am Mass' 10:15 Staff Mtg Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass	2 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	3 Noon Mass	4 7:30 am LEM Mtg 9—11 Altar Guild
5 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Noon Who is Jesus	6	7	8 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 6:30 Lenten Supper 7:45 Choir	9 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	10 Noon Mass	11 9—11 Altar Guild
12 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Wisteria Fete	13	14	15 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 6:30 Lenten Supper 7:45 Choir	16 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	17 Noon Mass	18 9—11 Altar Guild
19 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass	20	21	22 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 6:30 Lenten Supper 7:45 Choir	23 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	24 Noon Mass	25 9—11 Altar Guild
26 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Noon Youth Hap.	27	28	29 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 6:30 Lenten Supper 7:45 Choir	30 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	31 Noon Mass	

- March 1—Ash Wednesday Mass at 7:00 am, Noon and 6:00 p.m.
- March 4—LEM Breakfast and Meeting at 7:30 am
- March 5—"Who is Jesus?" class in the parish
- March 8—Lenten Potluck Suppers begin every Wednesday during Lent at 6:30 pm in the parish hall
- March 12—Wisteria Fete in town, church parking will be limited
- March 26—Youth Happening to Forest Lawn
- March 26—Lenten Even-song at 5:00 p.m.

## Notes from the Loft

Sometimes things unfold in unintentional yet meaningful ways. As I've been reviewing the choral anthems of Transfiguration and Lent, it's been interesting to note that many of them were written by living composers. Although it wasn't my intent to seek only anthems by contemporary composers, the resulting selection certainly is testament to the relevance of ancient truths to today's living.

"Transfiguration," the recently-published anthem written by Craig Phillips and sung on Transfiguration Sunday, is based on the striking text by the 13<sup>th</sup>-century mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg. Elegantly crafted, with a richly evocative organ accompaniment, the anthem portrays the entire cosmos rejoicing at the glorification of Christ:

*O burning mountain, O chosen sun, O perfect moon, O fathomless well,*

*O unattainable height, O unattainable light, O clearness beyond all measure,*

*O wisdom without end, O mercy without all limit, O strength beyond resistance,*

*O crown of all majesty, All creation humbly sings your praise:*

*Bright stars, high mountains, depths of the seas, rushing waters,*

*All these break into song at heaven's proclamation:*

*This is my Son, my beloved, My chosen One. Alleluia!*

Phillips' setting of "Transfiguration," coupled with Joel Martinson's anthem of the same title, which references our response to the event, leads us into the season of Lent. Our Lenten repertoire by twentieth-century composers for the month of March includes:

March 5—Search Me, O God – K. Lee Scott; Silent Devotion and Response – Ernest Bloch

March 12—Teach Me, My God and King – Craig Phillips; We Adore Thee, Christ Our Lord – Mozart, arr. Thomas Hoekstra

March 19—Who Is This That Comes From Far – James Hopkins (Ascension premier)

March 26—Eternal Grace – Lloyed Pfausch

Finally, be sure to circle the date: LENTEN EVEN-SONG, Sunday, March 26, 5 p.m. The service will feature yet more music of our time, specifically "Stay With Us" by Walter Pelz, the magnificent new anthem "For God So Loved the World" by Craig Phillips, and "Teach Me Thy Song" by Craig Courtney. Do plan on joining us for this time of contemplation and reflection.

—Debora Huffman  
Organist/Choirmaster

## Lenten Program & Suppers

The Lenten Program will commence on Wednesday evenings starting March 8<sup>th</sup> with evening prayer at 5:45, Mass at 6:00, followed by a "non-structured potluck soup and salad supper" at 6:30 and a program at 7:00 (there will be a sign up sheet, and meatless is strongly encouraged). Our program will be led by Fr. Michael and guest speakers and will focus on concerns around the end of life – ethics, healthcare options, advance directives, funeral planning, and grief and recovery. Programs will last approximately 45 minutes.



*Morning worship and Eucharist at Camp Stevens during the Parish Retreat at the end of January..*



*The Episcopal Church of the Ascension*

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PRESENCE**

## Notes from the Sr. Warden

At our Annual Meeting in January, Father Michael described Ascension as a Program Church, the current buzz word for churches with our population and number of programs. A program church has more things going on than one clergyman can possibly organize, lead, and attend. For example, during education hour we have five small group meetings for adults; and Catechesis, elementary Christian Education, and Youth Group meetings for our youth. Father Michael knows and supervises what goes on in these classes, but obviously he can not be leading all of them. He needs to be at the door greeting people after church and being able to talk with those who need his spiritual guidance. Consequently, both clergy and lay people have become an essential part of the education hour leadership. As the number of parishioners has increased, we are beginning to have more than

one activity going on at the same time during the week. The night twenty-six people participated in feeding the homeless at the Cold Weather Shelter, there was a Wednesday Night Mass going on to celebrate Epiphany and to pray for the homeless and those who were serving them that night. Currently, we have 51 different groups at our church ranging from Altar Guild to Lay Weeders, from Choir to Stephen Ministries, from Catechesis to Daughters of the King, from St. Mary's Guild to Lay Eucharistic Ministers, from Small Groups to Prison Ministry. Please note that I have named only ten of the fifty-one. That number indicates that many of us are not only worshipping at Ascension but are also participating in the other activities of the church on Sundays and throughout the week. Our parish will continue to increase the number of programs as we reach out to meet the needs of our di-

verse congregation. We want to have activities that fit the specific spiritual needs of all of us. If you want to know more about the many activities of our church and how you can get involved, do consider contacting Diane Rhodus, our Ministries Coordinator, at 626-355-1133 or check our web site at [www.ascension-sierramadre.com](http://www.ascension-sierramadre.com).

The process of becoming a Program church did not just happen. According to Father Michael we have been in transition for the past six years. So it's a natural progression for us, and one in which we should rejoice. Let us pray that God will guide us as we expand into this new stage in the life of Ascension.

—Jean Rowe