



The SPIRE

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

May 2006

Our Core Ministries

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

SAMS Missionary,

Susan Delgado-Park,
will be preaching on

Sunday, May 7.

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✝ From the Rector

About three and a half years ago, delegates to Diocesan Convention heard Assistant Bishop Robert Anderson describe Natural Church Development. In his sermon he discussed the eight characteristics are a model for looking at how a congregation sees itself and by “measuring” those characteristics, can determine its strengths and weaker areas and the potential for growth. Central to this approach is the belief that rather than assessing growth statistics and strategies, a congregation’s health and spirituality are central to its potential for growth. Those eight characteristics are summed up as Empowering Leadership, Gift-Oriented Ministry, Passionate Spirituality, Functional Structures, Inspiring Worship Service, Holistic Small Groups, Need-Oriented Evangelism, and Loving Relationships. The premise of NCD is that if a congregation is willing to look at itself and be intentional about addressing the “low” areas, then it can set about positioning itself for growth in membership. Three years ago, we conducted such a survey. We were somewhat surprised and a bit daunted by the returns. While we initially questioned the methodology, the language of NCD, and the perception of our survey respondents, we soon let the information just

sink in and got past our own resistance. Looking in a mirror isn’t always the easiest thing. Nevertheless, we began in our own way to address the areas where we saw the most room for intentional change. Our “program” was definitely not out of the NCD “textbook,” but it was prayerful and deliberate. This past month, in anticipation of Bishop Anderson’s visit, we re-did the NCD survey, and the returns were exceptionally encouraging. I would call your attention to the simple graphic on the next page. (Thanks to Katie Koerber for producing this!) By using NCD as a tool for assessing ourselves, we are now able to see how it is that we have grown over the past three years, and we can focus anew on areas of potential. It is exciting to me that by intentionally adjusting some things – my own management style, emphasizing small groups and Christian education, encouraging lay leadership, and restructuring our Vestry and developing the Parish Ministry Council, we have seen growth, and our potential is reflected in this new survey.

P.S. – Thank you to everyone who contributed to our wonderful Holy Week worship and our marvelous Easter celebration.

—Fr. Michael

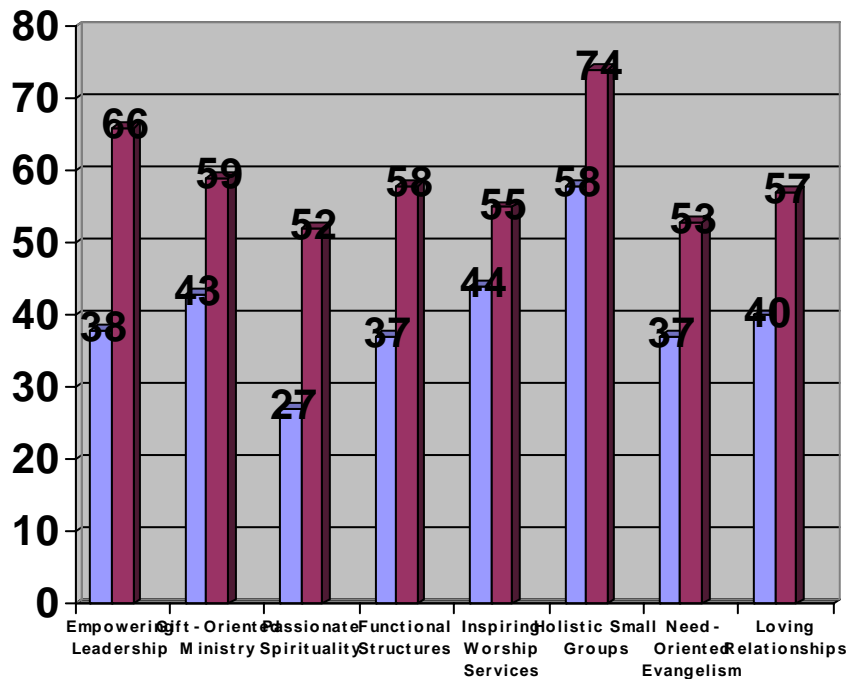
St. Mary’s News

St. Mary’s Guild and The Daughters of the King will meet together Saturday, May 13 with a potluck lunch at 11:30am in the Parish Hall. We will welcome Susan Delgado-Park, daughter and sister of Father Bob and Liz Delgado, who will tell us of her life as a missionary in South America. Everyone is welcome and we look forward to seeing Susan again. —Ann Poland

DOK Quiet Day

Daughters of the King is sponsoring a Prayer and Quiet Day on Saturday, June 3 from 10:00—3:00 for men and women. The purpose of the day will be to explore various types of prayer. The cost is \$15 per person and includes lunch. Please sign up on the bulletin board.

Natural Church Development Survey Results



Lavender: 2003 Score

Characteristic	Point Increase	% Increase
Empowering Leadership	2	43%
Gift-Oriented Ministry	16	28%
Passionate Spirituality	25	48%
Functional Structures	21	37%
Inspiring Worship Service	11	20%
Holistic Small Groups	16	22%
Need-Oriented Evangelism	16	31%
Loving Relationships	17	30%

2003 Rankings:

1. Small Groups
2. Worship Service
3. Gift-Oriented Ministry
4. Relationships
5. Leadership
6. Evangelism
6. Structures
8. Spirituality

2006 Rankings:

1. Small Groups
2. Leadership
3. Gift-Oriented Ministry
4. Structures
5. Relationships
6. Worship Service
7. Evangelism
8. Spirituality

We Went to See Jesus

What a great theme for the youth who participated in the weekend retreat to the Cathedral Center on April 1st & 2nd! Once we arrived Saturday evening, it did not take the youth long to begin to see this theme for themselves as they explored the many areas of the Center. First were the Stations of the Cross in stained glass, then the artwork in the choir loft. This was

topped off by the wonderful spaghetti meal prepared for us by some members of the church. The youth shared this meal with eight members of St. Paul's youth group, and St. Paul's youth responded by inviting us to share in their Spanish service and breakfast on Sunday morning. Because pictures are worth a thousand words, I am going to end this article here and direct your

attention to the pictures on the youth board in the Parish Hall. There are some great stories behind what you will see, so I encourage you to find Katie, Bronwyn & Kenny and ask them to share those stories with you.

—Susan Clifton

May 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 10:30 Staff Mtg Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	4 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	5 Noon Mass	6 7:30 am LEM 9:00 Altar Guild 9:30 am Quaker Retreat
7 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass 11:30 Newcomers	8 Clergy Conference	9 Clergy Conference	10 Clergy Conference Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	11 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum 6:00 Capital Funds 7:30 Youth Parents	12 Noon Mass	13 8:00 am Men's Breakfast 9:00 Altar Guild 11:30 Potluck
14 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass	15 Spire Deadline	16 6:30 pm Vestry Mtg	17 10:30 Staff Mtg Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass	18 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	19 Noon Mass	20 9:00 Altar Guild 9:00 am Youth to Knott's
21 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass	22	23	24 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	25 Ascension Day 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum 6:00 pm Mass	26 Noon Mass	27 9:00 Altar Guild
28 8:00 am Mass 9:00 am Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass	29 Memorial Day Office Closed	30	31 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir			

Upcoming Events

- May 6—LEM Training at 7:30 a.m. in the Parish House
- May 7—Newcomer Get-Together Lunch at 11:30 am in the Parish House
- May 8-10—Clergy Conference
- May 11—Meeting for all Youth Parents at 7:30 p.m. in the Youth Room
- May 13—Men's Breakfast at 8:00 in the Parish Hall and St. Mary's Guild & DOK Potluck in the Parish Hall at 11:30 a.m.
- May 20—Youth Group Happening to Knott's Berry Farm meet at church at 9:00 a.m.
- May 25—Ascension Day Mass at 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- May 29—Memorial Day the office will be closed
- June 2—Episcopal Dodger Night
- June 3—Daughters of the King Quiet Day 10-3

Notes from the Loft

My deepest appreciation to members of the choir for their gift of time and talent during the month of April! Special thanks to:

*Sean Dougall for his oboe artistry throughout the month, but especially for playing second trumpet to Jay Cohen's first (the choir refers to this as his "trumboe") on Easter Sunday and with Josh Roach for Bishop Anderson's visit on the 23rd; *Mark Riebs for Dubois' "God, My Father, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me" on Palm/Passion Sunday; *Susan Beach for the Billings/Hopson "When Jesus Wept" also on Palm/Passion Sunday. *Liz Delgado for not missing a single service during Holy Week in spite of recent back surgery!

After gargantuan efforts during Holy Week, the choir traditionally enjoys a respite the Sunday following Easter; this year, however, because of the Bishop's visit on the 23rd, they re-

turned to duty for the festivities. I trust that the music of the month enhanced your Lenten and Easter celebrations – if so, please join me in expressing your gratitude to our choir members as you see them.

Congratulations to Jen Wong on the recent premier of her electroacoustic composition in Cincinnati! And more congratulations to Jen for her acceptance into the doctoral program in composition at UC Berkeley, along with kudos for being awarded an enviable graduate fellowship to pursue her studies! Jen's good fortune means we'll be saying goodbye to both Sean and Jen as they relocate to the Bay area. We'll miss them and their contributions to Ascension's music, but they go with our love and with the assurance that they'll be back from time to time to share their considerable talents with us again.

Debora Huffman, Organist/Choirmaster

Youth to Knott's

Almost the last (whew!!) youth happening event of the school year is taking place on **Saturday, May 20th**. Our youth and their friends will be spending the day at Knott's Berry Farm. Events of the day will include Christian rock concerts at the theme park.

We leave sharply at 9:00 a.m. from Ascension. The cost is only \$21.95 per person. Tickets need to be purchased in advance, so see Deacon Barrett or Diane Rhodus for more information and to reserve passes. All ticket money and emergency forms for all youth and their guests (if not already on file at the church) should be given to Deacon Barrett by **Sunday, May 14th**.

—Deacon Barrett

New of Ascensionites

Congratulations to:

Greg & Holly Beach on the birth of their daughter **Charlotte Diane** on March 23.

Justin Lee son of **Gretchen & Gavin Lee** and **Emma Hopkins** daughter of **Michelle & Eric Hopkins** were baptized on Easter Sunday.

Lois Walton, Mandy Macintosh and **Jim Larew** were confirmed and **Bill Kelley** was received on Sunday, April 23 by Bishop Anderson.



Bishop Anderson visited Ascension on April 23 he is pictured with the newly confirmed and received. Pictured from left to right: Fr. Michael, Mandy Macintosh, Bishop Anderson, Bill & Will Kelley, Lois Walton, and Jim Larew.

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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From the Senior Warden

On Sunday, April 30 we will be recognizing the lay people who participate in our Worship Ministry. In addition to our clergy, at least 35 members of our parish serve in some capacity at our two Worship services every week. Some we see at the front of the church; others serve behind the scenes. On the 30th we intend to express our gratitude for the many different gifts they offer.

We need to thank our Acolytes for lighting the candles, leading our processions, serving at the altar, swinging the incense censor, ringing the sacramental bells, coming to acolyte training, and getting up early on Sunday mornings to serve our parish. We are also grateful for our Senior Acolytes who help train and support those just beginning to serve.

Week after week in teams of four or five, our Altar Guild members clean the sanctuary, arrange the flowers, polish the brass, trim the candles, wash the Eucharistic vessels, see that the fair linens are spotless, prepare for each weekday and Sunday service, maintain the Mary altar and candles, and, as we saw at Easter, were able to totally transform the church to reflect the glory of the Resurrection. We offer thanks for their hours of service.

Our Chalice Bearers serve the wine at the Eucharist. They give of their time to acquire the training necessary to serve at the altar. We thank our Chalice Bearers for the dedication they show as they serve us at the communion rail.

Our Choir faithfully rehearses Wednesday nights in order to lead the congregation in song and to inspire us with their anthems. Sometimes music can reach us in ways that the spoken word cannot, and we are grateful for those uplifting moments. How truly blessed we are to have Dr. Huffman as our Organist/Choir Master. She and

the choir truly minister to us through their music. Wasn't their Easter music glorious!

The Eucharistic Bread Makers are ladies who love to bake. They meet once a month in the spirit of fellowship to prayerfully make the bread we use at the Eucharist. We are blessed by the knowledge that the bread at Christ's table is made by their loving hands.

Presenters and Ushers pass out the bulletins, present the Eucharistic Elements at the altar, take up the offering, guide us to the Eucharist, help the infirm, are a source of all sorts of useful information, and assist new comers. A thank you goes to them for always being there as we enter the church each Sunday.

Readers read the Lessons. Some of them come forward from their seats in the congregation; others are licensed lay readers. We are grateful for the care with which they prepare and deliver the words of the Scriptures to us. Thanks be to God.

We need to also remember those who serve totally behind the scenes. Many hours go into determining what liturgy and music will be used for each service. Others do the typing, printing, collating, and folding of each bulletin. This was no small task during Holy Week! Thank you for this work of love.

We define Worship as "our community praising God in Word and Sacrament and celebrating the Christian year." The groups we are recognizing this Sunday help us to offer that praise. If you feel a call to participate in any of the Worship Ministry groups, please contact Diane Rhodus, our Ministries Coordinator.

—Jean Rowe