



The SPIRE

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

October 2006

Our Core Ministries

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

Blessing of the Animals Sunday, October 1 11:45 In the Memorial Garden

Please bring pets on a leash or in an appropriate container. Pet wrangling will be provided by the youth starting at 10:00.

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✝ From the Rector

Recently I was asked what I thought at first was an odd question – “What’s the best seat in the church?” I immediately thought of Dodger Stadium and gave the standard line – there is no bad seat in the house. But as I thought about it longer, I realized there was more to the question.

First, there is an issue of practicality. We don’t have a Public Address system to amplify the voices of speakers, even when they’re doing their best to project. It follows that if you’re finding it harder to hear, you might want to move closer to the front. Also, many of our “little voices,” which can occasionally be somewhat loud, sit towards the rear of the church. (The presence of a lot of children in our church is one of the more healthy and joyous things about our church – everyone belongs at God’s table.) So if someone finds our kids distracting, perhaps sitting towards the front might make sense. (Parents – this doesn’t mean when *you* get distracted you can leave your kids in the back and move forwards!!!) But then what about the folks with, returning to the baseball analogy, “season tickets.” (We all know about our friends who have “their pew”!!!!)

The only thing I can say is that when Debbie and I had a share of some season tickets at Dodger Stadium, they moved just a little closer to home plate each year. Perhaps if we did have season pew tickets, they’d move a little closer to the altar each year.

There is also a second issue of hospitality. We often have first time visitors in church. None of us would want to deny our guests a seat or even imply that they were somehow in the “wrong” pew. We also know that newcomers to church often like to be a little anonymous at first, and they prefer to sit towards the rear rather than the front of the church. In a spirit of welcome, it is considerate to have space available that is comfortable for the newcomers. Perhaps if we were REALLY serious about encouraging folks to move forward, we might consider putting some deluxe, plush pew padding up front.

So, if there is a short answer to the initial question, it would have to be that the best seat in the church depends on who you are. But remember, the First Class seats are always at the front.

—Canon Bamberger

Rite-13 Parent Meeting

Attention Parents of youth in 6th-8th grades! Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the Rite-13 information meeting and potluck on Tuesday evening, October 10, 6:00—7:30 p.m.

We will explore what it means for your middle school youth

to embark on coming-of-age in the Episcopal Church and the Ascension Community. Come and learn how you can help to make this a meaningful experience.

Please bring your favorite dish to share.

—Allison Rainey

Looking for New Stephen Ministers

The Scripts – Kensington Episcopal Home is providing an opportunity for training several new Stephen Ministers to work with the residents at the Kensington. The Stephen Ministry is a nondenominational one-on-one Christian ministry to those experiencing crises in their lives. The Kensington has had a Stephen Ministry presence since 1996 and has been served by over thirty volunteers.

The mission of the Kensington Stephen Ministry is to care for the body, mind, and spirit of our residents. This ministry offers opportunities for one-to-one ministry by trained, lay ministers who provide effective, caring ministry for those who are experiencing transitions in their lives.

New Stephen Ministers will receive 50 hours of detailed training and mentoring in such areas as Christian care giving, listening, crisis management, how to handle depression, and working with the elderly. Classes will start in October.

Everyone interested in this outreach ministry should contact The Rev. Sally Monastiere, Chaplain at the Kensington (626) 576 1032 or Mike Beach (626) 351 9540. This is a personally rewarding ministry and very much needed by the residents.

—Michael Beach, Verger

School Days

Save the date

Saturday, October 28th

5pm-9pm

Parish Halloween Party
brought to you by our

own teens

6th-12th grades

& yes, the theme is
"School Days"

Plan your costumes now

There will be :

the ever famous haunted
basement

Costume contest

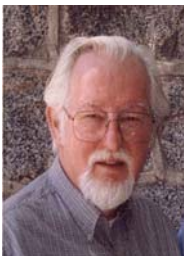
Dancing?

Music

Food

Fun

See you all there!



Speaking of the Verger

Mike Beach has recently been appointed our parish Verger. The position of Verger dates back to the middle ages when they were "the protectors of the procession." More recently Vergers have responsibility for the fabric of the church, both spiritual and temporal. Mike Beach will be the go-to person for buildings and grounds as well as assisting with our pastoral care.

Do You Know?

Is there anyone you know at Ascension who is home with some illness, in the hospital, or recovering from the death of a loved one?

We at Ascension have a ministry of caring via cards. Our angel who spreads this gift about is Carol Meals. Please let our office know of the situation and Carol will be notified and will send our prayers.

—Diane Rhodus
Ministry Coordinator

DOK Training will begin Thursday, October 5, 4:00—5:15 p.m. in the library. Call Diane Rhodus for more information.

Parish Directory

Ascension is in the process of updating all family information. **We are asking all members to please fill out the "Confidential Member Information" sheets located at the back of the church or in the reception office.** (They will be available on the website in the near future.) Information sheets will also be mailed with the next contribution statements. Please return them to the church office as soon as possible.

We are also currently taking pictures of the congregation for the new pictorial directory. Please contact Carol George to make arrangements to have your picture taken if you have not already been photographed.

NAMI Walk

WHOLY WALKERS – Join the fight against mental illness by supporting the 5K NAMI Walks for the Mind of America event Saturday, Oct. 7 at 8 a.m. at Santa Monica's 3rd Street Promenade. Walk with our Ascension team, Wholy Walkers, help at the walk, or offer your support with a donation. NAMI supports programs of education, research and advocacy for those suffering from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, and other mental illnesses. To find out how you can help this nationwide mental health awareness program, please see Halcyon Koerber, Father John, or Barbara Larson.

October 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:00 am Mass 9:00 Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass 11:45 Bless Animals	2	3	4 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	5 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	6 Noon Mass	7 8:00 NAMI Walk 9:00 Altar Guild
8 8:00 am Mass 9:00 Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Noon PMC Mtg	9	10 6:00 pm Rite 13 Parent Meeting & Potluck	11 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	12 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum 11:00 Staff Mtg	13 Noon Mass	14 8:00 Men's Break- fast 9:00 Altar Guild
15 8:00 Mass 9:00 Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Noon Who is Jesus?	16 Spire Deadline	17 6:30 pm Vestry Mtg	18 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	19 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum	20 Noon Mass	21 9:00 Altar Guild
22 8:00 Mass 9:00 Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Noon Newcomers	23	24	25 Noon Mass 6:00 pm Mass 7:30 pm Choir	26 7:00 am Mass 9:00 am Forum 11:00 Staff Mtg	27 Noon Mass	28 9:00 Altar Guild 5:00 Halloween Party
29 8:00 Mass 9:00 Educ Hour 10:15 am Mass Formation Sunday	30	31 Halloween				

Important Dates

- October 1—Blessing of the Animals starts at 11:45 am
- October 7—NAMI Walk in Santa Monica begins at 8:00 am
- October 8—Parish Ministry Council Meeting at Noon
- October 10—Rite 13 Parent Meeting & Potluck at 6:00—7:30 pm
- October 14—Men's Breakfast at 8:00 am
- October 15—Who is Jesus? Class at Noon
- October 17—Vestry Meeting at 6:30 pm
- October 22—Newcomers Luncheon at Noon at the Parish House
- October 28—Halloween Party at 5:00 pm in the Parish Hall
- October 29—Formation Sunday during coffee hour. Crop Walk begins at All Saints 1:00 pm and Daylight Savings time begins!

Notes from the Loft

One of my favorite composers of contemporary sacred music is Walter Pelz. Born in 1926, Mr. Pelz studied at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois; Northwestern University; and the University of Minnesota. An accomplished organist, the composer is retired from a teaching career at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, and remains active as a recitalist and hymn festival clinician.

You may not be aware of this, but you're already familiar with this composer, having heard *Peace I Leave With You*, *Show Me Thy Ways*, and *Stay With Us* over the past several years. This summer I discovered two new anthems by Mr. Pelz: *We Praise You, Christ*, which the choir sang on September 17th, and *Let The People Praise Thee*, scheduled for October 29.

The essence of *We Praise You, Christ*, a setting of Thomas Troeger's moving text to the tune *Abernathy*, is

found in the refrain: *We praise you, Christ! Your cross has made us one.* You may recall my mentioning Thomas Troeger in the past – he's a minister and prolific poet whose texts abound with fresh imagery that challenges the listener. What a joy it was to find this collaborative work by such a respected composer and hymnist – I hope it spoke to you as it did to me! The second Pelz anthem, *Let The People Praise Thee*, is an exciting setting of Psalm 67.

Some additional repertoire for this fall includes:

- *How Good to Thank Our God*, music by John Ferguson of St. Olaf's College and text by poet Brian Wren. This anthem was edited by Anton Armstrong, who was one of the conductors at last winter's festival the choir participated in at Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.
- *Children of the Heavenly Father*,

by Austin Lovelace – a setting of the beloved Swedish folk tune

- *The Lord Bless You* by Johannes Matthias Michel – listen for the jazz harmonies!

And of course there will be some familiar standards that we've all come to love:

- Mozart's *Ave Verum*
- *Thou Wilt Keep Him in Perfect Peace* by Samuel Sebastian Wesley
- Handel's *Swell the Full Chorus*
- *O Lord, Increase My Faith* by Orlando Gibbons

The choir and I trust that the anthems of this season will warm your soul and enrich your worship.

—Debora Huffman
Director of Music and Organist



Pictured on the left is the crowd enjoying the Ministry Fair September 10.

Pictured on the right is the Men's Breakfast work party setting up for the Ministry Fair.



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

**WORSHIP
FORMATION
PASTORAL CARE
FELLOWSHIP
OUTREACH
PRESENCE**

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension

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From the Sr. Warden

At the Church of the Ascension, we embrace the belief that we are always moving towards becoming the person God calls us to be. We call this growing process Formation. In order to help each other grow, we believe we should provide educational offerings for people of all ages where we can study, worship, pray and mutually support one another.

On Sunday, October 29th we will recognize all those who participate in our Formation Ministry, both those who teach and facilitate our groups and those who come to these meetings in order to grow in their faith.

We have a wide range of educational offerings to celebrate. Let me tell you about them.

- **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd:** Our children begin their formation in our Catechesis classes which are rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the church, and the educational principles

of Maria Montessori. Catechesis 1 (3-6 year olds) and Catechesis 2 (7-9 year olds) meet every Sunday between the two services.

- **Youth Program:** Our 6th-8th graders continue their formation in our Rite 13 class; our 9th to 12th grade students belong to Youth Group. The emphasis of both groups is on formation in the Christian faith and tradition, as well as mutual support and encouragement. They meet every Sunday between the two services and at other scheduled times for fun events and service projects.

- **Small Groups,** our lay led gatherings of adults, meet weekly for various pursuits; some focus on Bible study, others on examination of a topic, others on prayer, others on fellowship and support. Some meet between the services; others meet during the week.

- **Daughters of the King** is a nation-

wide organization of women in the Episcopal, Lutheran and Roman Catholic Church. Our chapter meets regularly for prayer and to plan various forms of service.

- **Adult Education** In addition to small groups, we offer traditional classes such as The Rector's Forum, support classes such as Cursillo for those who have completed the three day weekend, and special seasonal and topical opportunities for adults to grow in their understanding of the faith.

Formation Sunday is a celebration of all of us as we are all participants in the lifelong process of developing our Christian faith. As we offer thanks for our continued growth in faith, we also have the opportunity to say a special thank you to those who are a part of our Formation Ministry.

—Jean Rowe