



The SPIRE

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



DECEMBER 2017

Upcoming Events

December 1st – 2nd –
Diocesan Convention

December 3rd – Noon/Library
Parish Ministry Council Meeting

December 10th – Youth Group
Tree Trimming Party

December 16th –
Greening of the Church

December 17th –
Candlelight Walk in Sierra Madre

December 19th – 7:00pm/Hall
Vestry Meeting

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services

Sunday, December 24th

◇ ONLY (1) morning service at
9:30am

◇ Family Service & Pageant
5:00pm

◇ Hymns & Carols at 10:30pm

◇ Midnight Mass at 11:00pm

Monday, December 25th

1 Mass ONLY at 11:00am
NO CHILDCARE

Pledge Payment Snapshot

January - November 30th 2017

2017 Budget Amount: \$208,437

YTD Budget: \$191,067

YTD Actual: \$203,652



From the Rector

At time for tradition in worship, I will be mentioning the idea of taking on some practice during Advent to help prepare the way in ourselves for the coming of the Christ. Some folks use traditional devices – Advent Calendars – to daily note the countdown until Christmas. There ARE some Advent Calendars that don't involve bits of chocolate.

There are books of meditations for Advent. A few years ago, many people enjoyed the booklet written by Francisco Garcia published by the Forward Movement Press. Check out forwardmovement.org for their resources or even Google "Advent meditations."

Another Advent devotion is to practice intentional generosity. I'm planning to do a lot of little gift giving for Christmas online daily through the Episcopal Relief and Development website.

My friend and colleague Bruce Linsenmayer along with Episcopal Relief and Development has come up with a devotional (and PRACTICAL) approach called a Season of Resilience. (<http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploads/EducationFileModel/159/file/SoR-fullpage.pdf>) It is a one week at a time routine of accumulating everything needed for a home disaster preparedness cache. Theologically, this is brilliant. Advent is all about getting ready.

The weeks leading up to Christmas can be joyous and maddening. For some it is a time of secular and commercial craziness. I pray that we can find it a period of deeper anticipation of the dawning of God's grace and love in our lives and in the world.

Blessings, MAB+



Hillsides

Ascension Outreach Christmas 2017

This year we are participating in Hillsides Adopt a Family program. We are sponsoring three families identified by the Hillsides staff. All are single parent families. With this opportunity, "you can restore hope and bring a measure of peace to a family in tremendous need."

Sign up sheets are available in Hawks Hall. Items include shirts, pants, work boots, pajamas, bedding, kids' toys, jackets and supermarket gift cards. You can choose an item for a particular person.

A few notes to keep in mind:

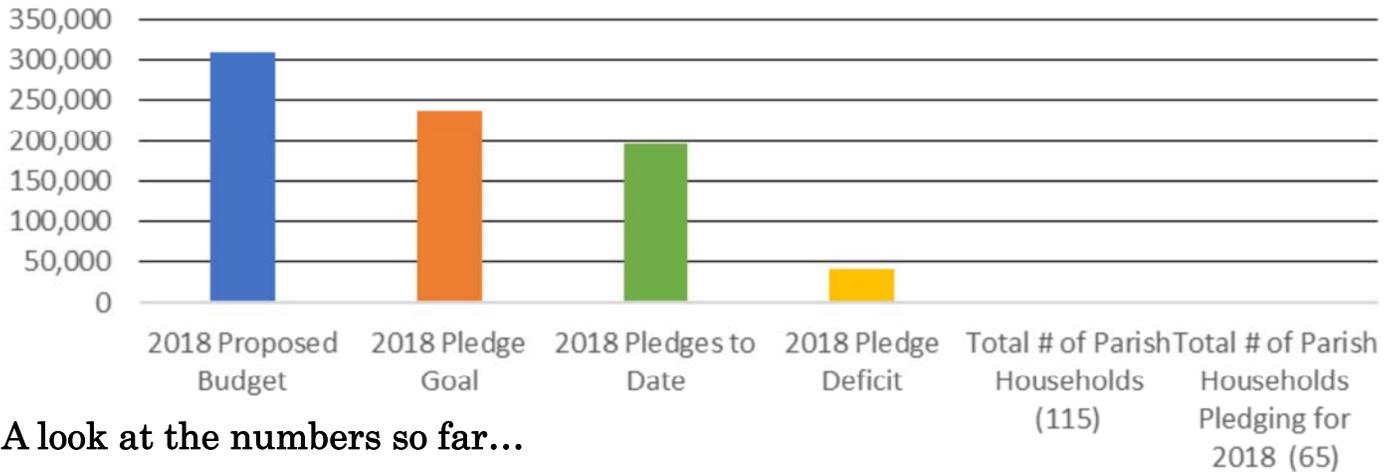
- * Items need to be at Ascension by Monday, December 11.
- * Attach a label or tag to each gift with the recipient's name.
- * Include your name if you would like to.
- * New unwrapped items only.
- * If you like you may also donate wrapping paper/ribbon/bows.
- * Please write the amount on any gift cards.

If shopping isn't your thing, you may donate money instead and we'll do the shopping for you. Please mark checks or cash with "Hillsides" and put in the plate or deliver to the parish office.

Thanks so much for your help with this cause!



2018 Stewardship Pledge Drive Update



A look at the numbers so far...

- 2018 Proposed Budget \$310,299
- 2018 Pledge Goal \$237,000
- Pledged Income as of November 30 \$195,377
- **Pledge Deficit as of November 30 \$ 41,623**
- 2018 tentative budget with the projected elimination of earthquake insurance and the childcare/kitchen help position \$310,299 (2017 budget total was \$335,669)

The stewardship campaign is not complete until December 31 – your Vestry continues to hope for a good response from those who have yet to pledge, from those who might consider raising their pledge, and from those considering giving an end of the year gift.

Vestry will vote on accepting the 2018 budget at their December 19th meeting.

This month's DOers

November was a busy month of activity for many of our parishioners who deserve to be recognized for all they DO. Thanks go to

- The 35 folks who helped us raise money by attending the Savor the Flavor Shopping Party. (*We raised \$250.00!*)
- Savor the Flavor for donating 10% of the money spent to Ascension.
- The **Noecker/Rasmussen family** for hosting House Church
- All those who participated in making the Women's Room Thanksgiving Dinner a success:

**THANK
YOU**

- ◇ Those who donated money
- ◇ Those who donated paper goods and other supplies
- ◇ Those who brought food.
- ◇ Special thanks to **Deacon Robin and Richele Duffy** for each cooking two turkeys
- ◇ **Nicole Hanson** for supplying what had not already been volunteered
- ◇ Those who served including our youngest generation members **Lilah and Charlotte Meehan, Georgia Dougall, and Deacon Ed's little friend Grace**
- ◇ Those who prepared the take-away bags for the Women
- ◇ **Scott Callihan and family** for preparing the Christmas Card donations
- ◇ **Lynne Holl** for baking 60+ pumpkin loaves
- ◇ **Sandra Dickey** for baking homemade cookies
- ◇ And a double plus thank you to **Maggie Outhouse** for organizing the event and to **Richelle Duffy** for putting all the food contributions together.

Well done, DOers one and all. Events such as these do not happen without you.!

For Christmas, Blessed Christmas is Here Once More

If you are a lover of Alfred Burt's carols, that title should remind you of the refrain from his carol "Come Dear Children." But the carol that keeps running through my head at night is another called "We'll Dress the House."

I first thought of the carol the night when I got to thinking about how so many people get caught up in all the things that they think must be done for a successful secular holiday. It makes me sad when I hear someone express dread at the approach of the season – not because of the loss of family members or sad memories, but for all they have to do.



Alfred Burt, in contrast, brings out the joy of all the aspects of preparation. He rejoices in the various stages of our preparation for "A Blessed Christmas."

Describing the preparation of the house and the wrapping of gifts, he reminds us that all that we do should be a sign of gladness.

We'll dress the house with holly bright;

And sprigs of mistletoe.
We'll trim the Christmas tree tonight
And set the lights aglow.
We'll wrap our gifts with ribbons gay
And give them out on Christmas Day.
By everything we do and say
Our gladness we will show.

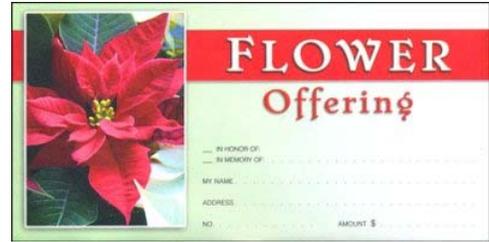
As the actual day arrives, he shifts to the preparation of the table and the special dishes that are made only at Christmas time.

We'll dress the table daintily,
Our finest treasures use,
That all a-sparkle it may be
And bright with lovely hues.
Then for the feasting we'll prepare
A kitchen full of wondrous fare,
That each from all the dishes rare,
His fav'rite one may choose.

And then, he gets to the real reason for all this preparation and what we most need to focus on: the coming of the Christ child.

And ye who would the Christ child greet,
Your heart also adorn,
That it may be a dwelling meet
For Him who now is born.
Let all unlovely things give place
To souls bedecked with heavenly grace,
That ye may view His holy face
With joy on Christmas morn.

May we all put the unlovely things of the season away, and together rejoice that Christmas, Blessed Christmas is here once more. *Jean Rowe, Sr. Warden*



You can help St. Anne's Altar Guild beautify our sanctuary by giving generously to the Christmas Flower Fund. Donations may be made "in memory of" or "in thanksgiving for" loved ones or for special occasions in your lives. Envelopes *are* available at the back of the Church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall. Donations can be turned in to the parish office or placed in the offertory plate. Please make checks payable to "St. Anne's Altar Guild."

For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Monday, December 18th.

Yours In Christ, St. Anne's Altar Guild

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GIVING

Please consider making a contribution to our music program for the special music we enjoy here at Ascension.

Music offering envelopes *are* at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Monday, December 18th.



I am Home

Since I hesitantly stepped into the Hospitality role, I have been wonderfully and beautifully surprised by how much giving goes on behind the scenes at this humble little village church.

Thanks to the efforts of **Maggie Outhouse** and her absolute LOVE for the women served by the **Women's Room**, I witnessed a robust group of servers, cooks & helpers who brought a glimmer of joy to some lovely souls in need of refreshment. A special thanks also to **Richele Duffy** for helping to coordinate the morning, and to all those who decorated, cooked, baked, shopped, loaded, served, cleaned, and prayed for this event. I can't wait to participate next year.

I would also like to extend thanks to everyone who has been helping in the kitchen during and following our fellowship hour after service. Without our kitchen helper, we rely on volunteers to set up and clean up the coffee and snacks. I have enjoyed chatting with you and getting to know you. Thanks especially to **Jean Rowe**, **Maggie Outhouse**, **Beth Kellock** and **Jo Mosier** who have helped with set up and/or clean up nearly every week. Your help is greatly appreciated.

I have some ideas and plans to get more of you involved, so please be on the lookout for upcoming announcements.

Submitted by Nicole Hanson, Ascension Parishioner



It seems to me that whenever I ask someone “how ya doing,” the response usually includes “oh, I’m so busy.” If the holidays aren’t enough to get “our busy” going, consider all the distractions of everyday life.... emails, texts, appointments, traffic, run here run there, chauffeur the kids, playdates, and, of course, endless to-do lists. How many of us add accomplishments to our lists that weren’t there originally just to feel that we actually got something done? Can I see a show of hands, please?

It seems to me that we have forgotten that we are human beings, not human doings. How did we end up living like this? Why do we do this to ourselves and to our children? Whatever happened to a world in which kids get muddy, get dirty, and, heaven forbid, bored? We seem hell bent on stressing out not only ourselves but our children too.

What happened to a world in which we can sit with the people we love and have slow, thoughtful conversations about the state of our heart and soul - conversations with pregnant pauses and silences that we are in no rush to fill. How did we create a world in which we have more and more and more to do with less time for leisure, less time for reflection, less time for community, less time to just... be?

The columnist Omid Safi writes “in many Muslim cultures, when you want to ask someone how they’re doing, you ask in Arabic, *Kayf haal-ik?* or, in Persian, *Haal-e shomaa chetoreh?* How is your *haal?* What is this *haal* that you inquire about? It is the transient state of one’s heart. In reality, we ask, “How is your heart doing at this very moment, at this breath?” When I ask, “How are you?” that is really what I want to know.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry the author of *The Little Prince* puts it this way:

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret; it is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

The most valuable things in life cannot be seen with the naked eye: love, friendship, hope, integrity, trust, compassion. Our eyes enable us to read our endless to-do lists, but only our hearts retransform us into human beings from human doings.

So, if you’re not too busy this Christmas and are lucky enough to run into Jesus, be prepared, for he’ll probably ask you “Kayfhallik.” And if you’re really brave, you might ask Jesus the same.

Live well, live blessed, live knowing your haal.
Deacon Ed+

Annual Christmas Auction for Afghan Raffle *and other things...*

Please visit the table in Hawks Hall on **December 3, 10 & 17** to participate in the annual auction for the afghan and nativity set lovingly handmade by our dear Jo Mosier. Proceeds from the auction are donated back to the church. The auction will close on December 17 and will be celebrated with a small Christmas Market in Hawks Hall. Please see Jo about donating slightly used Christmas decor/housewares to sell in the Christmas Market on the 17th. Only items in like-new/excellent condition will be accepted. All items remaining after the market sale will be donated to a local charity.



NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Advent is upon us – a time of waiting, of introspection, of preparation. Music for the next four Sundays reflects this time of anticipation:

December 3

My Lord, What A Morning, arranged by Robert Merton
Godfrey Ridout's setting of *O Come, Divine Messiah*

December 10

David Thorne's *Hark, the Glad Sound!*
Remember Christians All by Thomas Ravenscroft

December 17

E'en So Lord Jesus, Quickly Come by Paul Manz
Drop Down Dew, arranged by Paul Ladd, Jr.

The morning of the 24th we'll hear two selections sung by soprano Susan Beach – the Bach/Gounod version of *Ave Maria* and a setting of *Adam Lay Ybounden* by Peter Warlock.

And now - I can't deny it – just as Christmas is undoubtedly my favorite time of the year, it only makes sense that Christmas music is dear to my heart. After four Sunday mornings of Advent music, our spirits break into song with Christmas joy! Although the abundance of glorious Christmas choral music poses tremendous difficulty in making annual selections, I can guarantee that you'll be blessed, in particular, by the music of Christmas Eve. The choir will be singing for the later service, which will include:

- * John Rutter's *Nativity Carol* and *Christmas Night*
- * *Now Every Child That Dwells on Earth* by Mark W. Johnson, a friend and musical colleague from my Chicago days
- * *On Christmas Night All Christians Sing* by Ralph Vaughan Williams
- * *Thou Who Wast Rich*, a French carol melody arranged by Charles H. Kitson

And, of course, Christmas carols will be sung by the congregation. As always, this service promises to be one of joy and beauty. Do plan on joining us – 10:30 for Hymns and Carols, 11:00 for the Christ Mass.

Our celebration of Christmas will continue on the morning of December 31. As of this writing, plans for this service have not been finalized – you'll have to join us for the surprise . . .

A very blessed Advent and merry Christmas to each of you!

Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist

Save the Date!

Youth Group Tree Trimming Party

All Youth Invited! Join us in Hawks Hall on Sunday, December 10th after the 10:15 service.

A light lunch will be served.



Christmas Pageant Time!



Pageant & Music Rehearsals:

Sundays: 12/3, 12/10, and 12/17

9:00 AM - 9:45 or 10:15 - 10:45 AM

The Pageant is performed on Sunday, December 24th at the 5 PM Family Service.

Call time: 4:00 PM
Cast photo: 4:15 PM

Contact Jobi Harrell to sign up.

Don't Forget

NO HOUSE CHURCH IN DECEMBER!

OFFICE HELP NEEDED IN JANUARY!

Are you proficient in Microsoft Word? Do you know how to work with digital images and text boxes in Word? If so, you can help!

Call or email Kim in the parish office.

Fall/Winter Village Voices



Kids at Play /Sunday School November 19th, 2017





**WOMEN'S ROOM
THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON AT
FRIENDS IN DEED
NOVEMBER 20th, 2017**



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

WORSHIP, FORMATION, PASTORAL CARE, FELLOWSHIP, OUTREACH, PRESENCE
 25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024 ~ 626-355-1133 www.ascension-sierramadre.com

DECEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
					Diocesan Convention	
3 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass Noon-PMC Mtg/Library	4 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary	5 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	6 10:30-11:45 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	7 7am Mass 8:45-9:30 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 9am Forum 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary 10:30-11 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 10:30am Staff Mtg	8 Private Spiritual Direction 9:30am—1pm Rectors Office 4pm—6pm Private Music Recital Hall	9 1:30pm—6pm Private Music Recital Hall
10 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> YOUTH GROUP TREE TRIMMING PARTY after the 10:15 Service </div>	11 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary <div style="text-align: center;"> Pasadena Photochromers Meeting (private) in Hawks Hall 6:30pm—9:30pm </div>	12 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	13 10:30-11:45 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	14 7am Mass 8:45-9:30 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 9am Forum 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary 10:30-11 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall	15 Private Spiritual Direction 1:30—2:30pm Library 5pm—10pm Private Party Hall	16 CHURCH GREENING 9:45am—12:45pm Private Meeting Hall 2:30—6:30pm Private Music Recital Church/Hall
17 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass <div style="background-color: #ffa500; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> SM CANDLELIGHT WALK </div>	18	19 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group <div style="text-align: center;"> Private Daisy Troop Meeting 4:30—6pm Hall </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> 7pm Vestry Meeting Hawks Hall </div>	20 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	21 7am Mass 9am Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	22	22
24 <div style="border: 2px dashed green; padding: 5px;"> <p style="color: red; margin: 0;">Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services</p> <p style="color: blue; margin: 0;"><u>Sunday, December 24th</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ ONLY (1) morning service at 9:30am ◇ Family Service & Pageant at 5:00pm ◇ Hymns & Carols at 10:30pm ◇ Midnight Mass at 11:00pm <p style="color: blue; margin: 0;"><u>Monday, December 25th</u></p> <p style="margin: 0;">1 Mass ONLY at 11:00am *NO CHILDCARE*</p> </div>	25	26 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group <div style="text-align: center; color: red;"> JANUARY NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE </div>	27 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	28 7am Mass 9am Forum	29 Private Spiritual Direction 1:30—2:30pm Library	30 <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: red; margin: 0;">DECEMBER 30</p> 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass </div>