

The SPIRE 2021

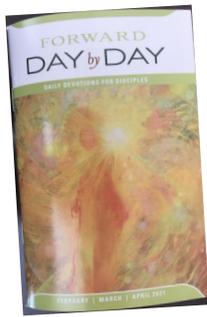
*The Newsletter of the
Episcopal Church of the Ascension,
Sierra Madre, California*



Upcoming Events

Please see calendar on page 4 for an updated list of 'virtual' events.

Copies of the new **Forward Movement Day by Day** booklets have been left at the front of the church. Feel free to stop by and pick up a copy.



From the Rector

What a difference a year makes! This time last year we had had another happy Parish Annual Meeting and were looking forward to a return to a joint Gooden School/Ascension Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. Little did we realize that Lent would go on for a whole year.

This year, Ash Wednesday (February 17th) will be observed differently. We will be mailing to each household a small container of ashes. There will be two services on Zoom and Facebook Live – one at 8am and another at noon. Included in the mailing will be a short “do it yourself” Ash Wednesday order of service. And then, we’ll be into Lent.

I personally am not intending to “give up” anything for Lent. I think we’ve all had to give up so much that anything more seems unedifying. Even Ash Wednesday seems hard after a year of being constantly reminded of our mortality.

But on a bright note, I look forward to reassessing our ability to safely gather for in-person, outside worship in a few weeks. If the numbers continue to be improving, it may be possible to safely celebrate together outside. I’m also encouraged by the number of our parishioners who are being vaccinated.

In the meantime, we’re planning a “virtual” Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 16th at 5:30pm. You’ll be invited to join in on Zoom and enjoy pancakes of your own making. (You don’t have to have pancakes... you can enjoy whatever you’d like!) It will be a time of socializing and feasting even if we can’t all be in the Parish Hall together.

Love and blessings to all...
Father Michael+

JANUARY 2021 Pledge Payment Snapshot



YTD Actual: \$22,376

What is Ash Wednesday and where did it originate?

The first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday comes the day after Shrove Tuesday. Traditionally a day of repentance, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent

At Ash Wednesday Masses and services, ashes are imposed on the foreheads of the faithful. The priest or minister marks the forehead of each participant with black ashes in the shape of a cross. Traditionally, the ashes come from the burning of the previous year’s palms. At Ascension, parishioners bring the palms they have saved from last year to the church the week before Ash Wednesday. These are burned and used to create the ashes which Father Michael imposes on us. When applying the ashes, the priest says, “Remember, O man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return” to remind us of our mortality. After the service, a worshipper traditionally retains the cross until it wears off.

Lent has been observed as a preparation for Easter since the fifth century. In the medieval period, Ash Wednesday was the required annual day of penitential confession occurring after fasting and the remittance of the tithe.

Ashes were used in ancient times to express mourning. Dusting oneself with ashes was the penitent's way of expressing sorrow for sins and faults. Following that tradition, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer designates Ash Wednesday as a day of fasting.

Lent lasts 40 days not counting Sundays because by our tradition every Sunday is a little Easter.



NOTES FROM THE LOFT

During February we move through Epiphany into Lent (can it be? ~ seems like Christmas was just yesterday . . .). Hymns for the month include:

2/7 ~ Epiphany 5

#381, TON-Y-BOTEL, Thy Strong Word Did Cleave the Darkness

2/14 ~ Last Sunday After Epiphany

#460, HYFRYDOL, Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

2/17 ~ Ash Wednesday

#142, ST. FLAVIAN, Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

2/21 ~ Lent 1

#149, OLD 124th, Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church

2/28 ~ Lent 2

#337, UNDE ET MEMORES, And Now, O Father, Mindful of the Love

With thanks to Charley Noecker and Carol Rasmussen for facilitating our weekly hymns, I trust you're finding this music meaningful as you listen or sing from home.

*O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven:
Be with us, we beseech thee, as we seek to perfect the praises of thy children on earth;
and grant to us even now such glimpses of thy beauty
that we may be made worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

~ The Royal School of Church Music



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist

YOUTH 'VIRTUAL' INFORMATION

January 31

All Ages Sunday School Zoom
11 AM

February 16

Youth Shrove Tuesday Flipping Contest!

Bring a spatula and a pancake or a stuffed animal.

We'll see who can flip and catch!

5:30-5:45 PM

February 28

All Ages Sunday School Zoom
11 AM

Lent 2021 resources will be mailed to families.

Contact Jobi Harrell for the Zoom Call information.

The Rector responds to concern that Lent is a downer

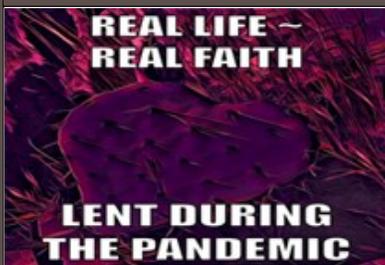


St. Swithin's

by the Rev. Jay Sidebotham

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With all the months long changes in our lives, perhaps it's time to introduce a new, and one time only, liturgical season - "Covidtide." If you recall, the beginning of the pandemic prompted a state wide emergency on March 4, 2020; and on March 19th, a statewide mandatory stay at home order was issued. For some of us, staying at home became a distraction to our Lenten discipline; and for some, it became our Lenten discipline. Now here we are again, ready to observe Lent in the midst of the pandemic. But this time we know what's coming, and we can be prepared to journey through the wilderness.

As we all sit at home due to the pandemic, let us turn to Jesus Christ, seeking his help to get us "through the wilderness" during this time of Lent. Do not forget that we are still wandering and confused in these times of Lent just as Moses and the Jews who were in the desert for 40 years and Jesus who was praying in the desert for 40 days.

For many of us the single most direct effect of the virus has been not attending Mass and other church activities. There's Sunday Zoom church and Face Book live, but they can't replace the gathering of God's people in community. So, what can we all do? First and foremost, we might implement into our daily lives new and creative ways of following the three major practices of Lent: prayer, fasting, and works of mercy.

Now is the perfect time for all members of the family to gather together in prayer, whether at home together or separated but gathered together via Zoom or Face Book Live. Pick a time and place that's convenient for everyone, work a time together into your family's schedules, and pray. Praying together doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as short and as simple as sharing the "gratitudes, hopes, and desires" of the day with one another. For others beyond our family group, praying together may just be a phone call with a friend or loved one. The prayer plan doesn't even have to be open to discussion. Listening is often the best prayer and one in which we could all use more practice.

As for fasting that's simple - what's to give up when we've already given up so much of life as we normally know it. Perhaps we can shift our focus to how our lives have been enhanced by some of those "withouts" experienced during our lives in Covidtide. We might discover just how nourished we have become in unexpected ways.

Now is a great time to help those in need in order to perform works of charity. We can help neighbors who might be elderly by going to the store for them and placing the groceries at their doorstep since elderly persons are often very vulnerable and isolated -- especially during this pandemic. The coronavirus seems to strike disproportionately at the elderly.

We can also show acts of mercy toward our neighbors in other ways. Rather than spell specific acts out, I'm going to let you figure them out on your own. Think of acts of mercy as your new Covidtide discipline...how can I be nice to others when it would be so much easier to "not be."

During this time of Lent as Jesus suffered in the wilderness and the days of Holy Week, we too are experiencing suffering through the effects of this terrible disease. But this evil and suffering can become redemptive for each one of us and the community if we unite by giving our pains and agonies to Christ. Rather than seeing suffering in a complete and negative way, the example and words of Christ show us a positive way in which suffering can be seen and accepted in human life. Suffering is a way we share in the work of the Christ. The effects that have robbed us of peace, security, and tranquility are now means in which we can share such spiritual gifts as compassion, wisdom, hope, thanksgiving, and love. The work of Jesus Christ allows surprisingly good things to come from even the worst and most fearful of evils.

Embrace Lent and see how it reveals the whole of the great tapestry that is your life and your life in community and most importantly in Christ.

Be well, be blessed, be intentional.

Deacon Ed+

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
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FEBRUARY 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31 <u>9am Sunday Worship-Rite II</u> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* <u>Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call* <u>11:00am ALL AGES SUNDAY SCHOOL</u> *Zoom Call*	1	2	3	4 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:30am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	5	6
7 <u>9am Sunday Worship-Rite II</u> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* <u>Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	8	9 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	10 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	11 9am Forum Zoom Call	12	13
14 <u>9am Sunday Worship-Rite II</u> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* <u>Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	15  PRESIDENTS DAY Parish Office Closed	16 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only* Youth Shrove Tuesday Flipping Contest 5:30pm—5:45pm Zoom Call Vestry Meeting 7:30pm Zoom Call	17 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*  LENT ASH WEDNESDAY	18 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:30am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	19	20
21 <u>9am Sunday Worship-Rite II</u> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* <u>Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	22	23 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	24 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	25 9am Forum Zoom Call	26	27
28 <u>9am Sunday Worship-Rite II</u> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* <u>Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call* <u>11:00am ALL AGES SUNDAY SCHOOL</u> *Zoom Call*						