

# The February 2024 SPIRE

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



## Upcoming Events

\*Please see the calendar on page 4 for an updated list of events.\*



**February 14th**

Noon  
&  
6pm

Mass & Imposition of Ashes

## From the Rector

It was odd having Christmas fall on a Monday this past year. It made Advent so short, and then there was the layering of the non-religious hoopla layered onto the Fourth Sunday of Advent.



There's more to come in 2024.

Ash Wednesday falls on February 14<sup>th</sup>. That's right. "Remember you are but dust, and to dust you shall return. But won't you be my Valentine?" (Imagine the dilemma of all the sweets bought and presented, and then being shelved through Lent!) At least, six weeks later, Easter falls on March 31<sup>st</sup>. So, we avoid "Alleluia. Christ is Risen! April Fool's." Thank you, Leap Year. Farther along, Ascension Sunday falls on Mother's Day.

Reflecting on all these oddities led me to wonder how we do at keeping in perspective our life of faith and the claims of the culture in which we live. Perhaps it is too extreme to categorize the situation as the sacred and the profane. Mundane might be a better word.

At a time when popular culture holds a huge part of our attention, we do well to remember what is most important for us. The cycle of the year in our faith can keep us grounded. I pray this Lent will be a time of centering for all of us.

Father Michael+

## ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, February 25th

10:30am  
Hawks Hall

- ◇ Only (1) Mass on Sunday, February 25th, at 9:30am.
- ◇ A Structured Potluck will follow the meeting. (The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in Hawks Hall).

Go to page 2 for more information about the Annual Meeting.

## JANUARY 2024 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2024 Budget \$205,150

YTD Budget:	\$17,096
YTD Actual:	\$22,370
Difference:	+\$5,274

## SAVE THE DATE!

Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>

## Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Come have your fair share of Pancakes for Supper!

**Time:** 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

**Where:** Hawks Hall

**Cost:**

**\$6.00 Adults**

**\$4.00 Children twelve and under or \$20 for a family of four or more!**



**All proceeds will be donated to Friends in Deed.**

## Everything you always wanted to know about *The Annual Meeting (but ....)*



**Why do we have an Annual Meeting?** Our parish for legal purposes is a corporation. We have Parish Bylaws

which correspond to the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Los Angeles. These state that our parish as well as every parish must have an Annual Meeting to elect “directors” which form the Vestry. The Vestry has responsibility for the “temporalities” of the parish. As in other congregations, it is the custom at Ascension that reports for the previous year are received, the budget for the next year, which the Vestry has already passed, is presented, and other business may be conducted. Occasionally, the Bylaws may be amended. Our Parish Bylaws state that the Rector presides, or in the absence of the Rector, the Senior Warden presides. At the Annual Meeting, we follow standard parliamentary procedure.

**Who can attend?** Everyone interested in our parish can attend the Annual Meeting. It is required that the time and place be announced beforehand. Our Parish Bylaws require us to have present twenty members who can vote to have a quorum.

**Who can vote?** The Diocesan Canons were changed a few years ago to include persons sixteen years and older as adult communicants in good standing. The canons were amended this year to essentially specify that in order to be an elector they must be:

- ⇒ An adult member of this parish who has received Holy Communion in this parish at least three times during the preceding year.
- ⇒ An adult communicant of this parish who for the previous year has been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and has been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, in order to be considered a communicant in good standing.

A list of our qualified electors has been published by the Vestry, and *will be* posted on the bulletin board in Hawks Hall. Our Parish Bylaws and the canons do not permit either proxies or absentee ballots.

**Who can be elected to the Vestry?** Our Parish Bylaws and the Canons state that anyone qualified to vote at the Annual Meeting can be elected to the Vestry. Our Parish Bylaws also state that a member of our Vestry must be a confirmed communicant and cannot be a member of another church. **It is expected (but not required) that anyone serving on the Vestry must be willing to commit the time necessary to serve, be regular in their attendance, be an example of good stewardship, and have a passion for the work of Christ in this parish.** Some folks have already been nominated either by the nominating committee or by indicating their desire to run, and there will be time during the meeting for nominations from the floor as well.

**Serving on the Vestry...** Each year at our Annual Meeting, the parish elects a new class of vestry members – this year we will be electing three persons for regular three year terms. The “job description” includes being a committed member of the parish who is regular in attendance and giving and who is willing to offer his or her gifts for the leadership of this parish. Vestry members may have particular responsibilities or portfolios and will be serving on such sub-committees as Finance, Insurance, and Operations & Property. Meetings are held monthly, and attendance at the annual workday/retreat is critical.



Following the ONE Service at 9:30 am on Sunday, February 25, 2024 will be our Annual Meeting and (BIG Drum Roll, please!) a Church Potluck. The sign-up sheet is on the Bulletin Board in Hawks Hall. Not only do we need hot dishes, cold sides, desserts, and more; but we also will need people to sign-up for set-up and clean-up duties. (As I had noted in the January Spire, I am unable to handle all of these duties.) Therefore, any and all help will be much appreciated.

Your now very part-time Hospitality Hostess, *Lisa Wagner*



Sometimes our minds can make us feel so helpless. At times like these, hope becomes a challenge and God's love hard to imagine. And yet, there's God, always loving us unconditionally and enticing us to forge forward.

Most of us were taught that God would love us if and when we changed. In fact, God loves us so that we can change. Too often we overthink God's love and lose sight of the unconditionality of his love. Lent is the penitential season in which we are encouraged to make sacrifices to gain God's good favor, grace, and love...to change. But remember that God already loves us.

It's not true that we will never be holy enough, pure enough, refined enough to gain what we always and unequivocally have, God's love. This perfection message is misleading, and it puts change back on us which is the opposite of being saved. When we fall into God's mercy, when we fall into God's great generosity, which seemingly comes out of nowhere, we acquire the capacity to truly change - to become who we really are.

God loves us so that we can change. If we keep listening to that love, if we keep receiving that love, trusting that love - even with all our limitations, all our unworthiness -- we start to experience in ourselves a sense of possibility. The great mystics and saints realized that it wasn't just *possibility* they experienced, but also *permission*. Permission as it were to color outside the lines, permission to be who they really were. It's not just gay people who have to come out of their closets.

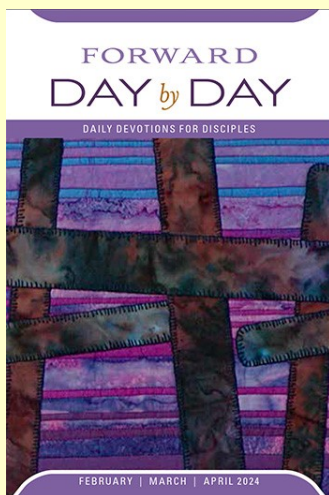
We're all in our closets. The gay rights movement, and for that matter all *rights movements*, have given us a metaphor for what we all must do. Lent offers us the perfect opportunity to do just that - come out of our closets. We're all afraid to come out of our various closets. This liberation doesn't necessarily mean being outrageous or rebellious. It is so much better than that. It is permission to be the image and likeness of God that we already are. Each of us is unlike any other image or likeness. Each of us is unique, one of a kind, one in God.

Lent is the time to hear God say to each of us, "All I want for you to give to me is to be who you really are."

Mother Teresa loved to say, "The only real success is faithfulness." To be faithful to this inner love, God's love, is our greatest success. Then we know that in God's love, all things are possible.

Be well, be blessed, come out, come out, wherever you are.

**Deacon Ed+**



Pick up a copy of the new Forward Movement Day by Day booklet. Copies can be found at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

**A \$2 donation is appreciated.**

## Lenten Goat drive with Episcopal Relief & Development

Goats are hardy, reproduce quickly, and can be raised in a variety of climates to produce staple items such as milk, cheese, and manure for farming. Each goat is \$80...let's get a whole herd! Look for the goat donation box in the church during Lent and please turn in your contributions by Palm Sunday March 24th.



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

## FEBRUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				<b>1</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  9am Rector's Forum	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Noon-4pm SM Public Library Event—One Book, One City Hall
<b>4</b> <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*  9am Between the Masses Discussion Group  9am Choir Rehearsal  <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	<b>5</b> 8:15am Gooden Chapel  8:30am Yoga/Hall  <div style="background-color: #00AEEF; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">                         Fr. Michael                          out of                          office/Clergy                          Support Group                     </div>	<b>6</b> 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	<b>7</b> 8:15am-9-45am Gooden Chapel  8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall  Men's Group Luncheon Nano Café Noon—RSVP to Fr. Michael	<b>8</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  9am Rector's Forum	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>   11am Funeral for Edward 'Mick' McEniry Private
<b>11</b> <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*  9am Between the Masses Discussion Group  9am Choir Rehearsal  <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	<b>12</b> 8:15am Gooden Chapel  8:30am Yoga/Hall	<b>13</b>  <div style="text-align: center;">                         SHROVE                          TUESDAY                          PANCAKE                          SUPPER                          HAWKS HALL                          5:30PM-7PM                     </div>	<b>14</b> 8:15am-9-45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall  <div style="border: 2px solid red; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">                         Ash                          Wednesday                          Service Times                          Noon &amp; 6pm                     </div>  7pm Vestry Meeting/Hall	<b>15</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  9am Rector's Forum  10:30am Staff Mtg	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
Father Michael Out of Town/GOE's in NC						
<b>18</b> <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*  9am Between the Masses Discussion Group  9am Choir Rehearsal  <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	<b>19</b> 8:30am Yoga/Hall    <div style="background-color: #8B0000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">                         Parish Office                          Closed                     </div>	<b>20</b> 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	<b>21</b> 8:15am-9-45am Gooden Chapel  8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	<b>22</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  9am Rector's Forum	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>   12:30pm-5pm Music Recital Hall Private
Father Michael Out of Town/GOE's in NC						
<b>25</b> <u>9:30am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*  <div style="border: 2px solid red; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">                         Annual Meeting &amp;                          Structured Potluck                          10:30am                          Hawks Hall                           *Vestry Organizational                          Meeting Follows*                     </div>	<b>26</b> 8:15am Gooden Chapel  8:30am Yoga/Hall	<b>27</b> 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	<b>28</b> 8:15am-9-45am Gooden Chapel  8am—8pm Voting Equipment Delivery/Setup Hall	<b>29</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  9am Rector's Forum  Noon Clericus Mtg Location TBD		