



# The SPIRE 2020

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.\*



## From the Rector

# MAY

I don't know about you, but I find anxiety to be exhausting. And talk about an abundance of anxiety – COVID 19, the economy, skyrocketing unemployment, Zoom worship, Zoom education, Zoom everything, the political back and forth, and did I mention the economy? So how are we to stay afloat, much less on an even keel, in these times?

On one level, I know I find comfort and strength in the witness of the saints of old. I think of Julian of Norwich who lived in a time of plague, war, political upheaval, and even the beginning stirrings of the reformation which would erupt 150 years later. In the midst of all of this turmoil, God gave her very simple visions – that God is Love through and through, and that “all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” I think of the courage and dedication of the Martyrs of Memphis- nuns, priests, and doctors who in 1878 stayed with the sick and the dying during an outbreak of Yellow Fever. But if you're like me, you may be thinking that God somehow doesn't seem to be sending many visions these days, and that our circumstances are far worse and much more anxious, not nearly as simple as an outbreak of Yellow Fever.

So where is God these days? What I do know is that I am seeing acts of love and kindness regularly. Since God is Love - in every act of love and kindness, there He is. I have recently found myself put into situations, or maybe I am just more aware recently of these situations, in which I sense the Holy Spirit leading me and shaping the conversation. All of a sudden, I sense redemption and grace and I am aware of the loving presence of God. I believe that the Spirit is with all of us in these times. I believe that God's love is ever-present. What is called for is for us to open our hearts, our eyes, and our lives. “And all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

MAB+

### April 2020

### Pledge Payment Snapshot



2020 Budget  
\$221,000

YTD Budget: \$73,667

YTD Actual: \$67,951

Difference: \$-5,716

## A Note From the Senior Warden – Thriving in Community

*Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*  
1 Peter 4:8-9

*A friend loves at all times, and kinsfolk are born to share.* Proverbs 17:17

During difficult times, we often hear it said that “God will not give us a burden so great that we cannot bear it.” If we believed this statement were true, we could stop appealing for God's mercy immediately. The fact is life is almost always defined by events which are beyond our control and burdens which exceed our strength. Consequently, as individuals and a community, we need to prayerfully and gratefully share each other's burdens.

While we are engaged in social distancing, we are still a community; and as such, we need to pray and support one another just as we want to be prayed for and supported. On any given day, I get discouraged and lose hope and miss attending services at Ascension. However, on any given day, I receive an email or am on a Zoom call or see morning prayer on Facebook live and am reminded that I am part of a loving community and that during this difficult period I can work on preparing for the time when we gather again physically.

If you are feeling lonely or have concerns, act affirmatively and reach out to our clergy or call a friend from church. Remember to tune in to Facebook Live or simply open up the Book of Common Prayer for Morning Prayer. Remember our community in your prayers and remember to give as you are able so that our community may continue as strongly for the generations to come as it has for the generations that preceded us. Most of all, remember that you are loved by God and our community. As Christians, we do not simply live in community; we thrive in community.

Gordon Tomaske, Sr. Warden





## Quarantine Textbook: Learn By Bishop John Harvey Taylor

White collar workers are learning the intricacies of Zoom. Tab and Anglican collar workers are learning how to preach over Facebook Live. American sign language speakers are learning how to say, “Don’t drink bleach!”

We’re quickly learning all these things and more to survive and do our jobs while in quarantine. This kind of learning is essentially instinctual. Which markets have the shorter lines and which gas stations have open restrooms. For some of our neighbors — more, perhaps, than we realize — which food banks are still open.

Learning in its academic sense is more of a struggle in these times, at least for me. In an isolating crisis such as ours, the span of hours can stand in inverse proportion to the span of attention. The first two volumes of the Oxford history of Anglicanism have sat on the bookshelf for months, waiting patiently for when I have a little more time to myself. You may ask how I’m doing with that or indeed with any long-form texts. I’ve even had trouble finishing a new book about Watergate, and I used to work for Richard Nixon. Aware that the barrage of bad news can breed distraction, anxiety, and even depression, experts advise us to tune out for most of the day. That’s not easy when germs and governments are writing our future.

A third kind of wisdom may come by sheer grace to people and societies in crisis. Those who have faith, those in the Resurrection, trust that this is so. “Does not wisdom call,” Proverbs teaches, “and does not understanding raise her voice?” The Holy Spirit blows where she will. The risen Christ stepped through a locked door to comfort his frightened friends and inspire them to go save and heal the world.

A clergy colleague who’s been married over 20 years told me that he and his spouse have found brand new things to talk about. Church members kept from their friends describe richer conversations on the phone that they ever had at coffee hour. All over the church, we’re seeing the institutions we love being made livelier even in the valley of the shadow of death. For many, the vision of a more decent society is taking shape as we experience the indictment of our health and economic disaster falling harder on the less privileged.

My own 50-day Eastertide lesson plan is to pick one thing I can theoretically do each day to gather as much Resurrection wisdom as I can.

**Exercise** — of course! **Advocate** for those most at risk. **Meditate** for precious inner peace. **Call** someone whose name pops into my head. **Pray** to help restructure my day. **Engage** with a local organization that helps others.

**Explore** by taking a socially distanced drive. **Eat Joyfully**, as though our meals are Holy Eucharist. **Reciprocate** someone else’s kindness, giving the grace of heaven a boost. **Remember** what we learned from our families of origin about responding to anxiety.

**Inquire** discerningly about events and decisions that affect your health and freedom. **Give Thanks** for everyone who’s helping me be safer at home. **Make Someone Smile**, and share God’s delight in a human face full of Resurrection light.

**Drink Wisely**, because addiction will bide its time until spirits are low. **Hope**, as though the whole world depends on it.

Today: **Learn**, since for those walking in the light of the empty tomb, everything preaches, and everything teaches.

*The Rt. Rev. John Harvey Taylor is bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles. This essay appeared on his Facebook page on April 28.*

## Pandemic Time

We are in chaos. And things are strange.  
We’ve been quarantined inside the safe and the ordinary,  
which does not, cannot feel ordinary, with the very air drifting around  
us dangerous.

And what do we want? Order Restored? No.  
This time to think, to feel our pure feelings,  
to remember what it is to exist,  
in the quiet, in our bodies, in our life –  
whatever yearning is fledgling here,  
it is not for an Ordinairiness in which no birds sing  
to take back over the world again.

This time, so soft around us now,  
this long slow time,  
time as our animal bodies know time to be,  
time that features morning, noon and night,  
time where work is one of many moments  
in which we do what our bodies tell us is right to do, right then:  
this time has reminded us  
of our human nature,  
our human Beingness,  
our beautiful and sacred  
There’s-a-real-Me-ness  
that fits just right  
that’s cradled just so  
in the soft Real Realness  
of Being.  
What do we want to go back to?  
Not the tyrannical rush of the imposed this-is-your-time-we’ll-tell-you-  
what-your-time-is Ordinary.

We want to enter the stream in a new place,  
a place of safety yes, but also of  
our humanness continued  
in whatever new ordinary comes to be.  
We want to not forget  
what we’ve remembered:

What it’s like to live within time, the way time was meant to be lived in.

How it is to be human like this,  
what we’ve felt again, about who we are, on our own.

How love is not one task of many, but a substance of us.

How the bottom of your soul, you whom I’ve never met, feels just like  
the bottom of my soul.

While chaos swirls its invisible storm around us,  
we’ve been sat down inside our existence.  
And when we go back out there,  
we want still to exist: in the way we’ve re-learned:  
Soft. Caring. Patient. Wise.  
Willing to let be the good things, and able to enjoy them, slow.  
Willing to stand up for our rediscovered fellow human souls,  
so many of whom are saving us,  
so they can live their slow soft lives too, held in goodness.

We want to live a more I’m-human-and-so-are-you-and-isn’t-that-good  
life than the one we had before.

**Amy Pringle - Rector of St. George’s, La Canada**

REAL  
LIFE. Real  
Faith.

What I miss most about not worshipping in church is sharing the wonderful post-Resurrection gospel stories together. Stories filled with love, hope, and new life. Stories foretelling of a new normal. The disciples gathered in the upper room sheltering in place, wondering what their new normal without Jesus might be like. Other disciples walking to Emmaus talking to each other about all the things that had happened in Jerusalem encountered Jesus, whom they didn't recognize.

It seems to me that we are all on the road to Emmaus, walking towards some kind of new normal. This year, God is offering us a new post-Resurrection story. Corona is becoming a new pathway of revelation and resurrection. What new learnings is the Spirit provoking in Pandemic time? What new empowerment might be growing?

I'd like to offer a new definition of *Pan-dem-ic*: an opportunity to turn a mess into a blessing and create something new. We are being presented with a unique opportunity for transformation on a global level. If we look beyond ourselves, we will realize that we're not alone. Most of the planet is on the road to Emmaus. James Thurber wrote: "Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness." As each of us walks down our own road to Emmaus, will we recognize Jesus?

As I read Luke's gospel account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, something Jesus said really stuck out: "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart."

Now that God has got our attention, it would be in our best interest to be still, to listen, to learn, to put fear aside, and to figure out what Emmaus is going to look like. Now is our chance to turn this mess into a blessing and create something new, not just for us, but for all creation.

As we recover from this horrible pandemic, however long it takes and whatever devastation must be endured and grieved, we must stay alert to new awakenings and new learnings. Together we need to remain vigilant to the mystery of divine mercy as our world is being reshaped.

Sure, we'll have questions, and sometimes those questions are complicated. But Jesus is always leaving clues along the way, and his answers are often simple.

I learned a new post-resurrection story this year. Easter Sunday afternoon I went for a long walk. I couldn't get out of my head how odd this Easter seemed and what was the point of it all. There must be something to learn from all of this. I remembered something Bishop Curry said earlier: "it certainly didn't look like, feel like or smell like Easter, but it was Easter anyway."



When I was about to head home, I decided to walk further. Along the way, something caught my eye; and it now sits on my desk as a constant reminder of the Easter I almost missed.

Our questions and our prayers may be complicated, but Jesus always provides the answer when we look around in awareness, not in anger and fear.

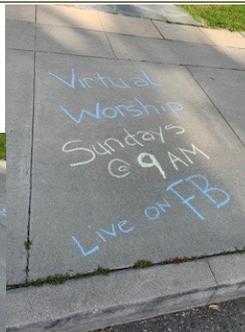
How did Jesus know that I needed something to hold in my hand on my way to Emmaus?

**Live well, live blessed, live aware, live with hope. Deacon Ed+**

## Easter Vigil



## Chalk Fun



## Social Distancing Birthday



## NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Post-Easter thoughts ~ April 5 was only the second time in fifty-six years that I didn't play an Easter service (the first was in 1967 when I was on maternity leave), so indeed it felt strange. How did you spend the day? I began by worshipping through our live-streamed service, followed by listening to the hymns and anthems I mentioned in last month's Spire. Then I listened to Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, watched the service from the National Cathedral, and finished by watching the Easter organ concert from the cathedral. A lovely dinner with my daughter capped the day. So in spite of our social distancing and an empty Ascension sanctuary, celebration of the risen Lord happened ~ and I'm so grateful for the technology that made this possible. Now what?

Patience. Mendelssohn's beautiful anthem comes to mind: *I waited for the Lord*, from "Hymn of Praise" - ("Lobgesang," Symphony No. 2 - Opus 52, Number 5) *I waited for the Lord, he inclined unto me; he heard my complaint. O blessed are they that hope and trust in the Lord.*

During the long days and weeks of home confinement ahead of us, it's good to remember that God is with us. Keep singing. Let music lift your spirits!

*Rise heart; thy Lord is risen ~ sing his praise without delays.*

~ George Herbert



**Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist**

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](http://www.ascension-sierramadre.com)

## MAY 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
<b>3</b> <b>Sunday Worship 9am</b> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <b>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</b> Zoom Call Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group after coffee hour</b> Zoom Call	<b>4</b> Virtual Clergy Conference 7pm—9pm	<b>5</b> Virtual Clergy Conference 9am—1pm	<b>6</b> Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live & Zoom Call	<b>7</b> 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:15am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> <b>Sunday Worship 9am</b> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <b>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</b> Zoom Call Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group after coffee hour</b> Zoom Call	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live & Zoom Call	<b>14</b> 9am Forum Zoom Call	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> <b>Sunday Worship 9am</b> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <b>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</b> Zoom Call Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group after coffee hour</b> Zoom Call	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Vestry Meeting 7:30pm Zoom Call	<b>20</b> Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live & Zoom Call	<b>21</b> Ascension Day Worship 8am Facebook Live & Zoom Call 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:15am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> <b>Sunday Worship 9am</b> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <b>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</b> Zoom Call Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group after coffee hour</b> Zoom Call	<b>25</b> Memorial Day Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live & Zoom Call 	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live & Zoom Call	<b>28</b> 9am Forum Zoom Call	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> <div style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"><b>ASCENSION SUNDAY</b></div> <b>Sunday Worship 9am</b> Facebook Live & Zoom Call <b>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</b> Zoom Call Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group after coffee hour</b> Zoom Call	<div style="border: 1px dashed purple; padding: 10px;"> <p>Don't forget to check out our website at <a href="http://www.ascension-sierramadre.com">www.ascension-sierramadre.com</a> for all of the latest information on our worship, prayer, and Christian Ed opportunities during the coronavirus safer at home county ordinance.</p> <p>Thank You to Maggie Outhouse for all of her work in keeping the website updated with all of the changes.</p> <p>Thank You Maggie!</p>  </div>					
Spire Creator: Kim Lumino, Parish Administrator						