



Church Mouse

News & Events from St. John's Episcopal Church • Oakland, California

December 2011

Advent and Feast of the Nativity

December 4 – 2nd Advent
Two-service Schedule
7:45 – Early Eucharist
10:00 – Choral Eucharist
5:00 – “This Is It!” Concert and reception

December 11 – 3rd Advent
7:45 – Early Eucharist
8:55 – Family Eucharist
10:45 – Choral Eucharist
Blessing of Toys for Tots

December 15 – Thursday
7:00 p.m. – Blue Christmas Service

December 18 – 4th Advent
7:45 – Early Eucharist & Pageant
8:55 – Family Eucharist
10:45 – Choral Eucharist
6:00 p.m. – Youth Group Holiday Celebration and Gift Exchange

December 24 – Christmas Eve
Three-service Program
4:30 – Family Eucharist & Pageant
6:30 – Early Christmas Eve service with Excelsior Choir
10:00 – Carols & Choral Music
10:30 – First Eucharist of Christmas

December 25 – Christmas Day
10:00 – Second Eucharist of Christmas

January 1, 2012 – The Holy Name
Christmas Lessons and Carols
10:00 – Choral Eucharist

January 8, 2012 – Epiphany 1
7:45 – Early Eucharist
8:55 – Family Eucharist
10:45 – Choral Eucharist



Occupy the Season



As I write this reflection, the Occupy movement is being evicted from Frank Ogawa Plaza. One accomplishment of this movement is that it has catalyzed conversations everywhere. Some support the movement, some oppose the movement, most are somewhere in-between. But nearly everyone is thinking and talking about it. The physical eviction is, perhaps, the least of the concerns of those in the movement. The movement has, at the very least, elevated the deep and profound sense that many felt evicted long ago. Many have been foreclosed on and many more feel excluded from the American dream, left behind, ignored, even cast aside.

It was not that long ago when nativity scenes were evicted from public venues and one cannot help but feel the irony of not making room for a story about a couple in search of a place. As we enter the season of Advent we remember the story of an anxious couple in politically turbulent times,

pregnant with hope, yet discovering that there is no room at the inn. The season of Advent, more than ever, brings with it a challenge to remember our faith. The turmoil in our society, the anxiety about our economy, the deep sense of injustice that seems to be prevalent everywhere is not outside of the story of God. We are right in the middle of the story now. We don't know what the future holds any more than that timid couple did as they made the long journey to a strange place to participate in a census. Like them we understand those feelings of exile and wonder if there is still room for our hopes and dreams in a world like ours.

Advent invites us back to the story of our faith, a story that can provide comfort and hope in a turbulent time. As uncertain as things seem, as lost as our world is, our faith can give us the confidence we need that God is still at work in our lives, that peace and justice are still possible for all, and that God has come to occupy us.

Scott+

Hibernation



Winter is coming soon. I love this time of year because it is a time where we bundle up and hunker down. The days are short and rainy which compels us inside, wrapped up, hot tea in hand. It is almost like I hibernate a little during this time. I tend to want to sleep more and the holidays certainly encourage me to eat more. Like the animals I hope to emerge from the sleepy days of winter a new energized person, living out the kingdom of God in my life.

Advent is a season that embodies that hibernation time. It is a time where we wait. We wait in the darkened days hoping for the transformative light of the incarnation to come. How will God transform us this year? How will the God of in-

carnation come to us? Will it be a new ministry that will capture our hearts and imagination? Will it be the revitalization of a gift cast aside? Will it be the fruition of something we have been working on a long time? How will God captivate, surprise and inform our lives?

Waiting is difficult hard work to do. It is a time that is beyond our scheduled lives. If we focus on the waiting, time slows down. A watched pot never boils my grandmother says. But if we ignore it totally we might miss out on something. Perhaps it helps us to be prepared for Christmas morning in our lives. Take some time this rainy, dark Advent season to hibernate. Take the time to prepare our souls for God to surprise us and to transform us.

Krista Fregoso



Senior Warden Discusses 'Outreach'

Our Mission Statement declares "The vision of St. John's is to manifest God's love through invitation inclusion, faith and action." For emphasis, action is underlined. The group which developed that statement did an excellent job in capturing our essence. Our church has deep roots in our local community, and we have worked hard in several areas to make that community better. This is also true for several efforts outside our city. We are committed to what we call Outreach, providing our resources to help others.

In developing the budget for 2011 the Vestry made a hard choice. It removed most money for outreach. This was done to balance the budget, however it also addressed inefficiency: every dollar we spend is subject to the assessment we pay the diocese. Thus, the impact of money given by parishioners to the church for distribution to a charity is lessened by the assessment.

However, this action should not be misunderstood. St. John's remains very committed to outreach. Recently, Jan Lewis, with the help of Ray Riess - our Outreach ministry catalyst, developed a list of the major beneficiaries of our outreach. The list of current organizations includes:

- African Partners Committee (which includes two major efforts)
- YES Uganda – Martha Helms
- Friends of Ruwenzori- KIDA – Karen Gleason
- The East Bay College Fund – Susan Stutzman
- The Ecology Group – Bonnie Moran
- Episcopal Charities
- Faith Network of the East Bay – Laurie Bennett
- Genesis Project – Jana Lane
- Outreach to Seniors: North Oakland Village – Sandra Davidson
- St. James Episcopal Church Food Pantry – Ray Riess
- School for Deacons – Mary Kimball
- Towne House – Barbara Brochard
- Vincent Academy – Sandy Brumbaum

One task the Vestry is addressing is creating a "dashboard". Just as a driver is aided by the instruments of a car's dashboard, we seek to measure and watch key drivers of activity. These measures will be reviewed and discussed at each meeting. Since Outreach is very important, we are planning to measure our performance as summarized below.

We support Outreach in two ways: by donating our "treasure" and giving our "time". No doubt our activities need money. However, contributing time is just as important. (In our busy world, it is often harder to donate time).

David Brown
Senior Warden



The Year in Worship

Eucharistic Lectionary: A
Daily Office Lectionary: Year One
Advent 2010 to Advent eve 2011

St. John's Episcopal Church

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*It ys a sotyll mouse that slepyth
in the catty's ear.*

—Hilles *Commonplace Book*, 1530

Pledge Drive Wrap Up

FAITH The Pledge Drive committee thanks everyone who helped to make this year's pledge drive a success - our "Faith in Abundance" receptions were a wonderful chance to build community and reflect on the ways that we can support St. John's work in God's world.

During our two Pledge Sundays in November, we collected over 90 pledge cards. We are so grateful to all of you who have already made your commitment for 2012! But we still have a bit of work to do; in order for us to plan for 2012 budget priorities, we'd like to get pledge commitments from every family, as soon as possible. Pledge packets are available in the Narthex. You can also email Nancy Kho at nancy@daviskho.com if you need one, or call her at 510 336 9518. Your willingness to make a financial commitment to St. John's for the upcoming year enables us to plan for all the activities we envision in 2012 to invite, include, and put our faith into action, from upgraded communications to deferred building maintenance to expanded youth programs.

Thanks for all you do to support St. John's!

Nancy Davis Kho

Mouse Articles

Articles for St. John's monthly newsletter, the Church Mouse, are due the middle of every month. Mark your calendar for January's deadline. Due to the holidays, that deadline is Dec. 12. Please email your submission to Dennis Reeve at admin@stjohnsoakland.org.



A "Giving Tree" For Towne House



Towne House Creative Living Center has been serving the Oakland community since 1969. Approximately 45 people participate in the program each day, and the full membership is about 80 people.

Members are referred to the program by psychiatrists, case managers, or other mental health providers. It is designed to assist chronically mentally ill adults. Members choose from one of three groups where they can participate in structured daily activities essential to the operation of the program.

St. John's has supported Towne House for the past 30 years in a variety of ways: Board service, volunteer service on site, and in these last years, through the Giving Tree. Each Advent we put up a green felt Christmas tree on the bulletin board in the narthex on which are pinned a specific request from each member of Towne House. The congregation is invited to choose a tag, which details the request, buy the item and return it beautifully wrapped, tag attached, to the narthex. The gifts are then brought to Towne House for their annual Christmas party. In many instances these are the only gifts participants will receive. Many are on SSI and live in reduced circumstances. Additional gifts of warm socks, or a winter scarf or gloves, are very welcome.

Will you fulfill a wish this year? Please take a tag, bring the gift back by Sun., Dec. 16, and Barbara, Carolyn and I will do the rest. Thank you! The joy we bring with this ministry is lovely to behold.

For more information please contact Ray Riess, 510-653-9531, rayriess@lmi.net, Carolyn Calhoun, Barbara Brochard



Some Thoughts about Bishop's Ranch

The Ranch is a place where many of us from St. John's have been refreshed and restored. The women go on retreat in March, the men go later in the spring, and the entire parish is invited for the weekend in May. The Ranch has become a place of renewal, a place to form bonds of friendship which don't happen in the same way in the church setting. Want to learn more? Please see www.bishopsranch.org. Here are some things you might like to know about Bishop's Ranch.

The Bishop's Ranch Annual Fund supports its mission: to be a place where renewal of spirit, mind and body can occur. The Annual Fund has a direct and immediate impact on the quality of a guest's visit by ensuring clean and welcoming facilities for Ranch guests. The Ranch managers strive to keep guest fees as low as possible to make the benefits of a Ranch visit available to as many people as possible; fees do not cover the entire cost of a guest's experience. As a self-supporting institution of the Diocese of California, gifts to the Ranch's Annual Fund are an indispensable part of the operations budget and vital to the continued success of the Ranch's ministry. Any contribution of any size to the Annual Fund supports Ranch hospitality and is vitally important. Just think, after a good night's sleep, a Ranch guest (maybe you!), might be standing, looking to the east and seeing the panoply of mountains shrouded in early morning fog. Or perhaps you might be sitting in an Adirondack chair, admiring the sunset through the beautiful oak grove. Perhaps you met a soul friend this year, or you may, next year. The possibilities are endless.

If this speaks to you, please make it a philanthropic priority and give at a level that is comfortable.

Please see www.bishopsranch.org on the Support Us page. Gifts and pledges received by December 31, 2011 will be included with the list of Annual Fund supporters in the annual report, to be published after January 1, 2012.

Ray Riess, member of the Legacy Circle of the Acorn Society (people who have designated the Ranch in our wills).

"Needs List" For Horace Mann – A Chance to Reward Success



Over the past seven years Horace Mann Elementary School in East Oakland has improved so much that it exited the state's "Program Improvement" category and had API test scores over 800 for the 2010-2011 school year. A committed faculty and staff, participation by St. John's and St. Augustine's in Faith Network of the East Bay's tutoring program, new backpacks filled with supplies, clothing contributions, and classroom support have all contributed to the success. And it's a happy place to learn.

But federal and state cutbacks jeopardize this progress and its sustainability. Funding is now at the 2005 level. Within its staff, Horace Mann had to eliminate the assistant principal, a part time nurse, summer school for 2012 (an enormous loss), field trips, and resource specialists. The supply budget is so low that basic items like lined paper for beginning writers is rationed so that it won't run out by January.

ST. JOHN'S CAN HELP BY RECYCLING AND DONATIONS. Many items that Horace Mann requires may be gathering dust in your home or office. Boxes for all the items listed are in the breezeway on the way to the church office. Cash donations can be made to St. John's with "Horace Mann" on the memo line. These monies will be deposited directly to the school's supply account and not subject to OUSD assessment.

- Clothes, Shoes, Jackets – the school's Second Cup of Coffee program distributes these donations once a month and informs the parents at the same time.
- Paper – wide rule lined, copier, construction, and handwriting are ALL needed
- Pencils, pens, highlighters, crayons, markers – all are well used
- 3 ring binders, folders, dividers, 3 x 5 index cards
- Paper clips, rubber bands, erasers, staples, transparent tape, glue sticks

It's obvious that there are no frills in this list, but if you have ideas, other supplies, or want to discuss what's happening at HM, let me know.

Laurie Bennett: 562-5666 or LEBENNETT1950@YAHOO.COM

Saint John's Legacy Society

Legacy: noun; A gift of property, esp. personal property, as money, by will; a bequest.

A few years ago St. John's church started a Legacy Society whose members support the church through a gift or bequest. This was done at that time or in a person's estate planning. I wish for each of you to consider joining the St. John's Legacy Society. Some of you may have already remembered the church in your will but may not have let the church know this.

In January, 2012, the Grateful, Glad and Giving group will sponsor a presentation on what this all means. I will also be encouraging each of you to do a one-on-one with Tim Johnson or myself. For information prior to this January presentation, or to join the society prior to the annual meeting which takes place at the end of January, please contact Scott Denman, Ken Fuller, or Tim Johnson. Below are two testimonials from two of St. John's parishioners who have found it in their hearts to join. The testimonials give two different views of how you may wish to fulfill this gift.

Ken Fuller

Remember Your Family

About ten years ago we began to form an Estate Plan. When asked if we had any bequests, St. John's was in the list of family members who we named. St. John's is as much a member of our family as we are a member of its community. We love celebrating within this embodiment of Christianity and we want to express this gratitude after we are gone as well as while we are here.

Making an Estate Plan clarified the intent and the gift. We highly recommend it.

St. John's Annual Meeting
Jan. 22, 2012

Come to Veterans' Hall in Piedmont at 4 p.m. for the Vestry elections and business meeting. Stay for the dinner and fun that will be hosted by the Men's Group.

"ONE Gift Provides TWO Tax Deductions"

When we first heard about the Legacy Society and the opportunity to add St. John's in our will, we thought "that's a great idea to reduce estate tax." But what's even better is getting both an income tax benefit and an estate tax benefit. Giving to the Legacy Society today can provide TWO tax benefits with a current income tax deduction and a future estate tax deduction. Additionally, there are no complicated estate planning requirements if you give today, and it benefits the church now rather than later. Here are three examples of what could happen with \$100 of your earned income.

Example 1: You give \$100 to the church today, so you save about \$50 of current federal and state income tax and about \$25 of future estate tax, and the church gets \$100 today rather than later (St. John's gets \$100 -- government gets zero).

Example 2: You don't give to the church today, so the \$100 is taxed at about 50% total federal and state income tax rate today, and you are only left with \$50 to give to the church later as part of your estate (St. John's gets \$50 -- government gets \$50).

Example 3: You do nothing, so the \$100 is taxed twice, first at about 50% total income tax rate today, and second at about 50% total estate tax later, leaving about \$25 for the next generation, and zero for the church (St. John's gets zero -- government gets \$75).

These examples show how donors can save both income tax and estate tax by giving now to the Legacy Society instead of later; and these tax savings are in turn passed on to St. John's as shown in Example 1. No interest or capital gains were assumed in these examples as return on capital, and if any were assumed then the advantage of giving today would be even greater because St. John's would get the benefit of compounding returns. Tax rates were assumed at roughly top marginal rate.

These same tax savings apply to annual giving/pledging to St. John's operating budget. Increasing your annual giving/pledging also provides income tax benefits and ultimately estate tax benefits. Contributing to the Legacy Society today isn't much different except you are giving a larger amount to represent a lifetime gift. The amount you give is just one way to recognize the dedication of St. John's staff and support the proactive spirit of St. John's parishioners.

Pre-Pay My Pledge??? Why?

Many of us pay our pledge to the church in weekly or monthly installments. But there are other ways to make our contribution that can make better financial sense—both for us and for our church.

One strategy is to pay your 2012 pledge before the end of 2011. The advantage is that you get your income tax deduction a year earlier—this April instead of in 2013. An advantage to your church is that they can bank your contribution and better meter their cash flow.

Another strategy has to do with how rather than when you pay your pledge: instead of writing a check, consider contributing stock or paying by means of a Donor Advised Fund. This is a legal financial technique for avoiding capital gains taxes.

Even better: if you happen to be taking taxable Minimum Required Distributions (MRD) from an IRA, you may request that your IRA custodian pay your pledge to the church directly and so completely shield this portion of your MRD from income taxation!

If you elect to pre-pay your 2012 pledge, clearly indicate this to your church treasurer so that your gift may be properly credited.

For clarification or more information on any of these strategies, please contact me. Thank you for returning a portion of God's money to the church!

The Rev. Richard L. Schaper, CFP
Gift Planning Officer, Diocese of California

(415) 869-7812 or RichardS@diocal.org
www.EpiscopalGift.org



2011 "Saints of St. John's" Named

The 2011 Saints of Saint John's were selected by current Saints at their annual gathering on November 13. Recipients will be honored at the annual meeting on January 22, 2012 where each will receive a new name button with the simple statement "Saint of St. John's" and their names will be added to the list of Saints in the Narthex. These people have given tirelessly and consistently to Saint John's for years and part of the celebration of the annual meeting is thanking them for their service.

The Saints of Saint Johns concept arose seven years ago when some of us realized we had no formal means of recognizing the years of contributions made by so many of our parishioners. Yes, we gave out one-time plaques or certificates, but we had never institutionalized a recognition program for those people who kept appearing when help was needed. Something more was needed. As a parish we needed to acknowledge, in a simple way, the ongoing contributions of so many of our members.

The first hurdle, of course, this being St. Johns, was to convince anybody that it was a good idea. "We don't like recognition - we just like to do our work" was the phrase I kept hearing from the people who would clearly be the honorees. So, when faced with almost total opposition to the idea, I exercised my then diminishing authority as Senior Warden and the 100% support of Scott and we presented two honorees at the 2006 annual meeting: John Seals and Jim Uren - one for his monumental efforts on behalf of the building program and the other for his over 50 years of growing Saint John's. Then it was clear we needed to have some kinds of rules for who qualifies (other than Scott making selections), and Mary Kimball, Scott and I gathered in early 2006 to decide on some standards for who qualifies (minimum of 10 years of active service) and on a selection process (selection is done by the existing Saints at a meal for them all held during the summer/fall of the year they are Sainted).

The second and greater hurdle was how to pick from the over 50 names who clearly qualify - including most of you reading this article - and not make the award meaningless by having one year where everybody deserving is selected. We decided to "front load" the first 6 years of Saints just to catch up for the previous 50 years

of omission. This means that we are honoring 8-12 people per year until we get to the point where each new class may have only one or two people or couples. By then I hope that most of you will be wearing a Saints button.

Two years ago we created a large plaque made from fence boards saved when we tore down the old fence on Gouldin. Ted Milhous (who else!) created a beautiful piece of art and attached all the names honored thus far. The plaque hangs in the Narthex to permanently honor these Saints.

When we talk about the honorees, it should be with the caveat: THUS FAR. Each person - and we all know who you are - who deserves this honor will, in time, receive the recognition of their parishioners. As I said, we are just playing catch up for all your wonderful work.

This year we were able to expand our group to include the following individuals and couples who have devoted tens of thousands of hours for, sometimes, a better part of their lives, to furthering the joy that St. John's brings:

Don and Lone Beeson, Carolyn Calhoon, Lilah Greene, Mike and Martha Helms, Tim Johnson, Ron Richards, Barbara Sloane, Paul and Marilyn von Ehrenrook.

With this sixth successful year, I believe the Saints are launched. Modest people do not want to be honored - but it is our job to do just that. Sincere praise and the love of the parish should not be denied to either the giver or the recipient. On a special note, since Susan and I will be less active, Nancy Lehrkind has agreed to take next year's mantle.

Dewey Watson,
Ex Officio Chair of the Saints Committee

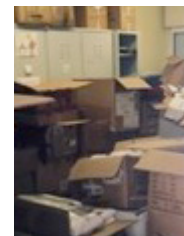


Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

Supporting Our Troops

Staff Sergeant Andrew Balcunas is home in Camp Lejeune, NC and Kalen Brockwalder of Marin, also stationed in Afghanistan will be home in a few days. We turn our attention to supporting the Chaplain's Closet at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

At Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, chaplains make daily bedside visits with sick and injured parishioners, Wounded Warriors, and civilian contractors as well as coalition troops from 44 different countries treated at LRMC. LRMC chaplains are trained to provide counseling to Wounded Warriors to help them some make sense of the traumatic experiences of war. The Pastoral staff also monitors the emotional pulse of doctors, nurses and other staff members dealing with trauma on a continuous basis, and provide counseling as needed.



In addition to their more traditional duties, LRMC chaplains also manage the Wounded Warrior Ministry Center, more commonly referred to as the Chaplain's Closet. Because of the speed of transporting Wounded Warriors from the battlefield to medical treatment facilities, some arrive with little more than the clothes they're wearing. But thanks to the Chaplain's Closet, by the time a Wounded Warrior departs LRMC for more long-term care in the U.S., he or she is loaded down with personal items such as clothing and toiletries, thanks in part to the generosity of a long list of donors.

St. John's is proud to join this group of donors. Four boxes were shipped in mid-November to the Chaplain's Closet containing hand-knit scarves, crossword puzzle books, magazines, toiletries and snack foods. Thanks to all of you who contributed, including Jan Lewis and Margie Bowman (hand-knit scarves), Jana Lane (a whole box of crossword puzzle books) and Helen Nicholas (postage).

Please consider addressing Christmas/holiday cards to this address.

Our contact is Marie Shaw, a civilian working in the Dept. of Emergency at Medical Command for Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC).

Sara Ervinger

St. John's Family

LUCY and MADDY KHO are appearing in The Nutcracker with the Oakland Ballet School the weekend of December 17 and 18, at Regent's Theater on the Holy Names campus. Contact nancy@davisvishko.com if you'd like to purchase tickets. MADDY invited SARA E to be her GrandFriend at the Julia Morgan School for Girls' GrandFriends Day in November.....ROBERT TIEMSTRA appeared in The Miracle Worker at Bishop O'Dowd in November. Watch this space for news about his brother, MATTHEW's upcoming performance in "How to Succeed in Business" after the first of the year... SARA and JOE EVINGER enjoyed their October trip to Belgium and Holland, where they specialized in Art Nouveau walking tours and art museums. Highlights included the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Magritte Museum in Brussels. Both were thrilled not to get run over by either bicycles or trams...GORDON and NANCY EVERETT had a wonderful trip to China, an "amazing country--so much history, so much culture, and so different from ours. Tibet was particularly impressive, so colorful and so religious. The altitude, over 12,000 feet, made it an effort. Would not have missed it for the world...felt like I was visiting the Vatican. Lhasa is truly the center of their religion and thousands of pilgrims were visiting"... DEWEY and SUSAN WATSON were assisted by SCOTT DENMAN and BONNIE and JERRY MORAN in preparing a luncheon celebrating the St. John's Saints in November (see Dewey's article in this Mouse)...

Please submit your items for St. John's Family to Sara Evinger at sevinger@comcast.net

We Celebrated Day of The Dead

Thanks to Joan Bonsey and friends, St. John's celebrated "Day of the Dead" on Nov. 6. Whether it was the sugar skull that caught your fancy, or a contribution to the ofrenda, or hot chocolate, we all had fun.



Meet Dima

Through the Children's Cultural Connection, the Levandowski Family is hosting a nine year old boy from Ukraine for three weeks in December. You will see him at St. John's over the holidays. Here is how you will know Dima.



Even at his small age, the boy is very smart and has an adult attitude to life. The little cutie is always smiling, he has elated mood for all 24 hours a day. Dima is a calm kid,

he never argues with his friends and everybody from the smallest to the biggest likes him a lot. The boy is gifted - he can be a part of school theatre, can play for a school soccer team, also outdoor games are a great admiration of him. Dima likes painting, drawing and making little things from paper (origami).

As parents of darling Meredith who was brought to their family through adoption, the Levandoskis have connections with other parents in our community who have also experienced the joy of adoption. Children's Cultural Connection is run by a friend of theirs who owns an adoption agency in California. The kids come from the Ukraine to the US for three weeks and live with a host family and experience typical American life. The children all return to the Ukraine, but the hope is that while they are here visiting, they might be introduced to and have an opportunity to spend time with a family that is considering adoption.

Laura writes, "We are hoping to let other families in the community who are thinking about adding to their families through adoption know about the opportunity to meet Dima. He will be spending the holidays with us and we will bring him to St. John's with us for church. The best way of finding these children their 'forever families' is by passing this information on to other families we know. Hopefully, a friend of a friend of a friend of someone at St John's may be considering adding another child to their family through adoption and we are hoping to share this information with our St. John's community."

Evergreens and the Advent Wreath

Dennis Bratcher (excerpted from THE VOICE, an Internet web site of CRI/Voice, Institute, a global and ecumenical ministry dedicated to providing biblical and theological resources for growing Christians)



The beginning of Advent is a time for the hanging of the green, decoration of the church with evergreen wreaths, boughs, or trees that help to symbolize the new and everlasting life brought through Jesus the Christ. (St. John's 'greened' the church during a family event on Nov. 20.)

The Advent wreath is a popular symbol of the beginning of the Church year in many churches as well as homes. It is a circular evergreen wreath (real or artificial) with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the center. Since the wreath is symbolic and a vehicle to tell the Christmas story, there are various ways to understand the symbolism. The exact meaning given to the various aspects of the wreath is not as important as the story to which it invites us to listen, and participate.

The circle of the wreath reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The green of the wreath speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. Candles symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. The four outer candles represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The colors of the candles vary with different traditions, but there are usually three purple or blue candles, corresponding to the sanctuary colors of Advent, and one pink or rose candle. One of the purple candles is lighted the first Sunday of Advent, a Scripture is read, a short devotional or reading is given, and a prayer offered. On subsequent Sundays, previous candles are re-lighted with an additional one lighted. The pink candle is usually lighted on the third Sunday of Advent. However, different churches or traditions light the pink candle on different Sundays depending on the symbolism used.

The Season of Advent



Happy Advent to everyone. First, thanks to all who attended our Advent Family night on November 20th. We made dioramas that we'll then use in an advent calendar. This

electronic advent calendar will be delivered each day to your email account. We hope you like the local art work, the biblical story, and the prayer. And here are other Advent activities at St. John's.

Christmas Family Service

Please mark your calendar for the annual family Christmas Eve service and pageant which will be at 4:30 p.m.

Unplugging the Christmas Machine

During this time of year, with the family gatherings and gift giving we can't forget the meaning of Advent. Waiting... If you find yourself spinning with the holiday frustrations, maybe it is time to take a moment out and reevaluate why we do everything we do. Remember that we are waiting for ray of hope, a miracle that will be delivered on Christmas day. An intriguing website, AdventConspiracy.org, seeks to just that. It seeks to re-imagine all that we can do with the Advent season that so often gets skipped in favor of the Christmas season. I mention all this as a capstone to the wonderful program that my wife offered for the "Unplug the Christmas Machine" discussion group. In case you missed the program, please check out her online discussions and downloads that helps families put the spirit back into this busy holiday season. For details check out: <https://sites.google.com/site/unpluggingatstjohns/>

Tuesday night Pizza Club

Thank you to all the youth that attended our last pizza club in November -- especially all those who brought canned goods to donate to St. James food pantry. Our last Pizza Club of the year will be on December 3rd. We ask everyone that attends to please bring a toy to donate to the Mayor's Toy Drive for Oakland. We'll have more games and of course pizza!

*Thank you to all and happy holidays,
Tom Fregoso*

Mission Trip News

Looking for an Apple Angel!!!

The mission youth are in a contest for who sells the most bottles of olive oil and vinegar. We hope to offer the winner a new Ipad. The contest ends in May.

We are also setting up a fundraising raffle in the spring. We would like to raffle off an Ipad, Iphone and the new Kindle Fire.

Do you know some one who could help us out with a discount? Or would you be willing to buy one of these items to donate to the raffle? Please contact Kellor Smith if you can help the mission trip raise money.

Twenty-five youth and five adults are returning to New Orleans to volunteer in shelters this June. Please help us out!

Flavored olive oils and vinegars are still available each Sunday. The youth will be on the patio at 10 and after the last service. Or you may place your orders with a youth over the phone.

THEY MAKE GREAT HOLIDAY AND HOSTESS GIFTS.

Shop locally, and think New Orleans in 2012.

Youth Group at the Food Bank

Eighteen youth volunteered at the Alameda Community Food Bank on Nov.20th. They worked very hard boxing holiday food boxes to be given out at local Oakland shelters and food banks during the last week of Thanksgiving.

Your donations are still needed to the ST JAMES FOOD PANTRY this month too. So please ask your friends and neighbors to donate along with you this month.

Let's help fill the shelves and tummies of families in need this month.

Thanks from all those in need.

Mission Trip Fundraiser

Christmas Eve 4:30 Pageant and Eucharist **RESERVED PARKING AND RESERVED FRONT PEW!!**

This can be yours!!! There is an silent auction going on at St John's now. You will find the bid sheet in the front hall of the church. Bidding starts at \$75 with \$10 increases. The auction ends on Sunday, Dec. 18th at 5 p.m.

This is a great way to make a tax deductible donation to the mission trip and enjoy the Christmas Service with a guaranteed parking spot and great seats!

Pizza Club

Tuesday, Dec. 6 from 6-7 p.m.

Bring \$5 for pizza and a new unwrapped toy for the toy drive.

Holiday Toy Drive for the children and teens of Oakland.



Please leave your new unwrapped gifts in the basket in the narthex by Dec. 11th. Books, games, sports equipments, sport team hats, dolls, cars and trucks are good ideas. Remember the babies and teens too.

All gifts will be blessed on Sunday Dec 11.th If you want to donate toys after that date please don't leave them at the church Please take to a fire station near your house .

Thanks

Gift Ideas

OLIVE OILS AND BALSAMIC VINEGARS in three flavors each are available every Sunday from members of our Youth Group. Here is an extra-delicious way to support the Mission Trip to New Orleans in 2012. Come taste the combinations and be amazed how zesty and tangy the youth group can be.

St. John's Bulletin Board

Musical Notes



This is It— Sunday, December 4 at 5:00 p.m. THIS IS IT - a program of traditional and obscure carols in French, Spanish, English and Latin with sopranos Sara Evinger and Cheryl Kellor with pianist, Miles Graber. Reception to follow.

Christmas Eve Youth Choir — is open to all former Youth Choir members 2nd grade through college, and new members who can read and like to sing. Rehearsals: Tuesday, 12/6 and 12/20 from 7:00—8:00 p.m.; and Saturday, 12/24 at 3:45 p.m. for the 4:30 p.m. Pageant & Family Service. For more information and to RSVP so we have enough music, please contact Sara Evinger, Associate Minister of Music at sevinger@comcast.net or 510.658-2792.

Excelsior Choir— This all-women's choir meets every December to prepare three and four-part women's music for the 6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service. Rehearsals will be held after the 10:45 a.m. service on 12/18 and Christmas Eve at 6:00 p.m. Please contact Sara Evinger, Associate Minister of Music at sevinger@comcast.net or 510.658-2792 if you would like to sing with us.

Advent Adult Faith Formation

When: Dec 11 and Dec 18
10:00 AM to 10:45 AM

Where: Library, first floor, left of Narthex.

Topic: "What Do You Expect?"

A class that will follow the scripture readings during Advent and to explore how we can grow with the Holy Spirit. This is a drop-in class where all are welcomed for any session.

Join your Adult Faith Formation committee members- Rev. Krista Fregoso, Anne Meyer, Nancy Hall and Sandra Ahn for lively discussions.

Readings:

Dec 11 - "Greatly Rejoice in the Lord"
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Dec 18 - "Nothing Will Be Impossible With God" Luke 1:26-38

St. John's Annual Meeting Jan. 22, 2012

Come to Veterans' Hall in Piedmont at 4 p.m. for the Vestry elections and business meeting. Stay for the dinner and fun that will be hosted by the Men's Group.

BART Caroling Terminated



Our days of caroling inside the BART station at Rockridge are over. The current construction will not be completed until at least the end of December, and when completed will convert the space

we have used these past 30+ years and make it available for fare gates and ticket machines, in order to make the station more accessible to the disabled.

It would be nice to choose another place to do our community outreach, rather than abandon this annual tradition. Most retirement homes are well booked at this time of year. Perhaps we can combine with another group (e.g. the seminarians at St. Albert's Priory on Chabot, thus providing more tenors and basses). Or find other places which provide

- a) parking
- b) a nearby place for the Youth and others to have supper afterwards
- c) easy access for the keyboard and accessories

Please ponder this situation. If you have answers (God bless!) – or even further questions, please contact Sara Evinger.

St. John's vision is to manifest God's love through invitation, inclusion, faith and action



St. John's Episcopal Church

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