



Church Mouse

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

January/February 2009

January 4 - 2nd Christmas
Two-service Schedule
7:45 - Early Eucharist
10:00 - Choral Eucharist

January 11 - 1st Epiphany
and Recovery Sunday
7:45 - Early Eucharist
9:00 - Family Eucharist
10:00 - Adult Ed:
12-step program overview
10:45 - Choral Eucharist

January 18 - 2nd Epiphany
Youth visit St. Gregory's,
SF; depart St. John's 9 a.m.
7:45 - Early Eucharist
9:00 - Family Eucharist
10:45 - Choral Eucharist

January 25 - 3rd Epiphany
7:45 - Early Eucharist
9:00 - Family Eucharist
10:45 - Choral Eucharist
Lector training after 10:45;
Annual Parish Meeting
will start at 3:30 p.m.

February 1 - 4th Epiphany,
Presentation of Christ in
the Temple (Candlemas)
Two-service Schedule
7:45 - Early Eucharist
10:00 - Choral Eucharist

February 8 - 5th Epiphany
7:45 - Early Eucharist
9:00 - Family Eucharist
10:45 - Choral Eucharist
Youth visit True Vine Baptist,
Grand Lake Theater, 10 a.m.

February 15 - 6th Epiphany
7:45 - Early Eucharist
9:00 - Family Eucharist
10:45 - Choral Eucharist

February 22 - Epiphany Last
7:45 - Early Eucharist
9:00 - Family Eucharist
10:45 - Choral Eucharist

February 24 - Shrove Tuesday
"Mardi Gras" pancake supper
& hymns, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

February 25 - Ash Wednesday

The Rector Reflects

In early December, Frank Sterling, Arnell Killian and I boarded airplanes and headed for the nation's capital. There we attended the annual International Leadership Assembly of the Gamaliel Foundation, a non-profit organization that trains faith leaders for community organizing. Whether at the local, metropolitan or national levels, the objective is for congregations to impact public policy in the interest of justice.

In the Bay Area, Gamaliel supports the regional alliance called Genesis, which St. John's helped found. Slowly but surely, Genesis has grown to include eleven other congregations, two unions and a public interest advocacy firm. An additional 10 congregations announced plans to join in 2009. If you are interested in getting involved in Genesis' work, please let me know. There is room on St. John's team for input and support.

Frank, Arnell and I wore a couple of hats in Washington: primarily we belonged to the 15-member Genesis delegation, but as members of the California caucus we also helped showcase recent community initiatives in San Diego, Ventura and Sonoma. Altogether, under Gamaliel's aegis nearly a thousand delegates made their presence known in DC at this most dynamic time.

From the Senior Warden

I Thanks mainly to the hard work of Elaine, Molly and Laurie Bennett, a "new & improved" newcomers program was launched in December. Advent, the season of the ultimate "newcomer," seemed an especially fitting time to start the campaign.

The program will coordinate the resources of Ministry Catalysts, Committee Chairs, the Stewardship Committee and others. A very important one of those "others" is you. At my former parish, it was ingrained in the culture for members to ask any persons sitting next to them who they didn't recognize if they were new to the church. When the answer was yes, the members introduced the new folks during announcements.

It's no coincidence that our President-elect worked as a Gamaliel community organizer in Chicago. In fact, it's fair to say that's where Mr. Obama got his political start. If you know Mary Gonzales, Gamaliel's lead Genesis organizer, you'll know what happened when Barack (they're on a first-name basis) answered Gamaliel's New York Times want ad for a new organizer. He got the job, of course, and promptly pulled up stakes to move to Chicago from New York. Mary was the staff person told to find Obama a used car to drive around town. Her budget was only a few hundred dollars, and the machine she came up with was classic indeed. Unfazed, the Harvard-trained lawyer set forth to meet a daunting array of pastors and community groups. To all of them he tirelessly pitched the same challenge: first find your common values, then work together to advance justice in this city. Mary said Gamaliel paid Obama the princely sum of \$10,000 a year. Her story makes you believe the American Dream is alive and well.

Gamaliel sparked more delegate energy in Washington than I've experienced at any comparable meeting. In one half day, those gathered there accomplished 167 legislative office visits and produced two high profile press conferences. C-SPAN ran a two-hour special on the group;

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It's a simple enough gesture, but one that goes a long way toward putting a person at ease. That's because, by taking the initiative, those who are familiar with the church effectively say to the ones who are not, "We're glad you're here! We look forward to getting acquainted!"

So – next time you see someone you don't recognize in the pew beside you, introduce yourself and ask if they are a newcomer. If so, please introduce them at the end of the service. While the practice may seem a bit awkward at first, in no time at all it will be as natural as answering, "And also with you!" whenever you hear "The Lord be with you!" If the person turns out to be a newcomer, you've helped get them situated: others will follow-up in a more structured way. If they don't happen to be a newcomer – well, not to worry: you've just made a new friend in the parish!

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Rector Reflects

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In the conference generated national news coverage for days. Valerie Jarrett, one of Obama's senior advisors and a member of his transition team, also observed the meeting. Senators, House Representatives and other officials joined in the plenary session dialogue, urging faith communities to keep organizing and gaining a voice in policy-making at all levels.

One of our most productive discussions actually occurred after the conference was over. Gamaliel's national policy director and a number of California delegates met with Amber Ontiveros, the Federal Transit Administration manager who handles Title 6 and environmental justice issues. A major issue for Genesis now is AC Transit: namely, how to get the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to restore bus service to low- and middle-income neighborhoods. In these areas, we have seen AC eliminate route after route in response to revenue shortfalls. At the same time, MTC awarded billions of Federal mass transit dollars to BART and Cal Trans projects which cater to the suburbs.

Genesis contends that MTC's priorities are misplaced. The lack of inner city bus service forces residents to drive their own cars instead. That results in more auto emissions, of course, but it also raises a crucial social equity issue, since other poor and low-income folks can't afford to own and operate a car. Without bus service, they don't have any dependable way

The Year in Worship

Eucharistic Lectionary: Year A
Daily Office Lectionary: Year Two

St. John's Episcopal Church

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

—Hilles *Commonplace Book*, 1530

to go to work, so in the competition for jobs, they literally are left behind. Similarly, urban schools suffer, since students can't attend after-school programs if there is no bus to get them home at the end of the day. That's why school administrators, faced with the prospect of shutting after-school programs down, also are supporting the Genesis campaign. And sooner or later, AC Transit's budget woes will lead to fare increases for all students and the elderly.

As St. John's begins a new year, our country faces formidable challenges on many fronts. But the new Administration has shown it has energy and a willingness to apply fresh insights. There is cause for optimism. It's an exciting, pivotal moment, recalling the imperatives of our baptismal vows, such as the two-fold promise to strive for justice and respect the integrity of creation and all humankind. When we make good on that promise, our faith shapes this world as much as the next. Authentic progress becomes possible in our city, in the region and in the nation as a whole. Yes, we can—provided at some level we're involved.

May this new year inspire us to honor the timeless call of the prophet who envisioned justice, rolling down like streams of water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)

—Scott

God of the day and of the night:
In me there is darkness,
But with you there is light;
I am lonely, but you do not leave me;
I am feeble in heart, but with you
there is help;
I am restless, but with you there is
peace.
In me there is bitterness, but with
you there is patience;
I do not understand your ways,
But you know the way for me;
Now and forever. Amen.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45)

Senior Warden

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Old-timers and newbies alike will want to attend our 2009 Annual Meeting on Sunday, Jan. 25, starting at 3:30 p.m. We've taken a "new & improved" approach to this program, too. The agenda will include an All-parish Update, similar to the one we held in May and received excellent feedback on. Each of the Ministry Catalysts will speak for three-to-five minutes, providing highlights of their ministry's 2008 activities and outlining plans for 2009. As the various ministries still are forming those plans, there's time to contact Catalyst reps with ideas for their programs. I encourage you to do so. By respective ministry area, the Catalysts are:

Communications: Laurie Bennett
Education: Suzy Tindall
Finance/Operations: Ken Fuller
In-reach: Susan Watson
Outreach: Frank Sterling
Worship: Betsy Robinson

I'd also like very much to thank again Laurie Bennett and Michele Inama, co-leaders of the fall stewardship campaign. Total pledged income looks to be slightly above last year's, and given the dyspeptic economy, for that sum to grow at all is a truly outstanding accomplishment. The result is a tribute to the campaign committee and the upbeat spirit of so many St. John's members. That said, the Finance Committee is taking a very conservative approach to program budgets for 2009. The committee asked most church groups to scale back their initial requests in the hope that budgets can be augmented later if economic news improves. While this isn't a pleasant exercise, the parish consensus is we cannot run a deficit, and I concur.

For the nation, the new year brings many big policy questions but the ready-made answers are few. Quick fixes abound: it's always easy to look out for Number One. At such times, it's more important than ever to ponder Scott's biblical counsel, above: don't lose sight of the less fortunate, wherever they are, because it's God's business we're in, not just our own.

—Tim Johnson

Looking for Christ in All the Wrong Places

Each year in this town we seem to find more and more Christmas concerts on the entertainment calendar. The advertising claims the shows answer the need for a special Christmas feeling, but inevitably the attempt descends into nostalgia and schmaltz. This stems from the sagging momentum of the German-style Christmas imported by our Victorian forbears, and behind that, a gee-whiz, awe-and-wonder reading of the sacred texts.

To rescue Christmas from this tiresome ritual, we need to revisit the texts as partners rather than spectators. Spectators are bedazzled by stars and magi, prophecies from long ago, squadrons of heavenly angels, and as centerpiece, a birth which is miraculous mainly because it bypassed the biological preliminaries. All we can do, in the face of stories like this, is to exclaim that God is clever. Conscious of our own inability to evoke wonder, our noses press against the glass as we watch the cosmic fireworks. We come away empty-handed.

The uncanny stories of Jesus's birth take on a different light when we consider them as examples of a literary genre familiar to the ancient world. There were many such stories, none more famous than the tale of Augustus Caesar, born to his mother Atia and the god Apollo. Typically birth stories came at the conclusion of accounts of the great deeds of an individual who only could have been conceived against a celestial backdrop. Augustus brought an end to a ruinous civil war, and he presided over the longest peacetime that anyone could remember. Although the Pax Romana was fully enjoyed only if you were Romana, leaving the peasant classes impoverished, that did not keep Augustus from being known universally as the Prince of Peace, while the coins of the empire styled him Son of God. When Suetonius concluded Augustus's biography, he appended the story of Apollo coming to Atia in the temple and impregnating her. Ten months later, Atia's mortal husband dreamed he saw the sun rise from her womb, and indeed the new Caesar would be born of Atia and the God of Light and proclaimed Light of the World.

At the end of Augustus's reign, there began the life of another man whose followers felt he embodied the grandeur of the heavens – Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew.

Not the heavens of Rome's brute force, but the heaven of a God who had made a good earth and promised a land to a nation where all should enjoy its fruits. This man met violence with peace, met poverty by organizing people to share food, and met sickness with healing. This, said his followers, must surely be how God behaves. On the day this man rode into Jerusalem to the acclaim of crowds, the Roman authorities took one look at him and decided he was trouble. They executed him in the way they used to disgrace dissidents, to warn what happened when you flouted Rome's rule.

But Jesus's followers continued to experience his presence, and the movement spread. In time his story was written down, and late in the process, stories of his divine conception were added. Jesus's destiny was described in terms of heroes of the past: Matthew used the stories of Moses, Luke the story of Samuel and the titles Lord, Son of God and Prince of Peace. In other words, these birth stories were treason; if you said Jesus was Lord, you were saying Caesar wasn't.

We need to restore this view of divinity now, more than ever. The majority of our world is malnourished and sick. Since 1945, violence-based geopolitical power has yielded diminishing returns. We need to embrace sacred non-violence before we go up in a nuclear flash.

Christmas is not about trying to explain wondrous events as if they literally happened, in the vain hope that somehow they will recur today. They are narrative aids – special effects, if you want – both to subvert the legends of imperial warlords and point to a far more important truth: that the life of the man Jesus shows how humanity might shape itself to inhabit the realm of heaven. Or to use a more familiar term, how humanity could realize the Kingdom of God on earth.

—*Bedivere*

[6 Jan. 1663] Twelfth-day. And after dinner to the Duke's house and there saw Twelfth Night acted well, though it be but a silly play and not relating at all to the name or day

—*The Diary of Samuel Pepys, in. 6*

Beyond the Offering Plate

Although I cherish the act of placing my check in the offering plate that then is placed before the Holy Table, I know there are many other ways of giving, each with different benefits. Alternatives available through the Diocese of California's Gift Planning Office include:

Stocks. You may donate stocks using the diocesan brokerage account, sell them tax-free and commission-free, and give 100 percent of the proceeds to your congregation or other ministry.

Fixed Lifetime Income. You may buy a charitable gift annuity to benefit your favorite ministry. Make your gift now and get the tax deduction, then receive lifetime income, after which your designated ministry receives the remainder.

Tax-free Sales & Lifetime Income. Appreciated real estate or securities may be sold tax-free and re-invested to provide lifetime income through a charitable remainder trust. The diocese can do the back-office work as well as provide a personalized illustration of benefits. The remainder may go to your congregation or any other ministry of your choice.

Poor Person's Foundations. Episcopal Charities sponsors a Donor-advised Fund that you use to give to all of your charities with church-embossed checks, while advancing tax deductions and postponing distributions from your fund.

For more information on these and other instruments, visit www.episcopalgift.org or contact your Gift Planning Officer, the Rev. Richard Schaper at 415/ 869-7812, richards@diocal.org.

One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don't clean it up too quickly.

—*Andy Rooney*

St. John's Family

Congratulations to: our own Editor-in-Chief, BOB MIDDLETON, who was elected Vice President of the Alameda Deanery...Also to JULIA SLOANE, who has been accepted into the anthropology honors program at UCLA and will do field work this summer on the topic of the role of music in youth culture... JULIE and ERNEST KNELL went to Washington DC in December to attend daughter SARAH's graduation from nursing school at Georgetown...BONNIE and JERRY MORAN drove down to L.A. to spend Thanksgiving with their daughter, MELINDA, where they enjoyed a traditional turkey dinner with 20 of Melinda's friends in a lovely home recently purchased by one of them...

BETTINA GRAY was recently elected chair of the North American Interfaith Network (www.nain.org). NAIN is a network of interfaith councils throughout Canada, the United States and Mexico. One of its member organizations is United Religions Initiative, started by Bishop William Swing in the late 1990's. Bettina represented NAIN at the International Interfaith Organizations Network (IION) meetings in Kochi, India this October, and met with other heads of interfaith networks around the globe and with local interfaith leaders in India. She reports that, "at a time when the news is full of tensions between the faiths, it was reassuring to meet so many people of earnest good will from all the main religions. Peace work between the religions is quiet and ongoing around the world, seldom reaching the news because it does not 'bleed' but even so, quietly, it leads"...

SARA EVINGER and CHERYL KELLER gave an all-French, Christmas-duets, benefit concert for the Alliance Française of Berkeley in December... TRACY OSBORN is at Pacific School of Religion studying to become a Methodist minister. Her daughters are attending her sister-in-law DORENA's Montessori pre-school. Dad COLIN joins them from Oregon this January...BOBBY MIDDLETON is serving in the Army in Korea after obtaining his master's degree in engineering from Cornell...The SCOTT SMITH Family has adopted a baby boy, EVAN OLIVER. Proud sister, ABBY is bursting at the seams... EVAN SMITH and Anika MEIER (Kim DeGroot's new family member) portrayed BABY JESUS at the 4:30 and 6:30p.m. Christmas Eve services

respectively...A huge thank-you to all who donated food for St. James' Emergency Food Pantry and toys for the Oakland Mayor's Toys for Tots and Teens drive... And that's all, folks. For now...

Elderberry Days

The Elderberries' planning committee welcomed Pauline and Fred Felder to our team. The couple brings a wealth of travel experience and enthusiasm that we know will strengthen the program. Technically, Pauline and Fred are under-age, Elderberry-wise, which segues nicely into a reminder that all Elderberry-sponsored events and activities are open to the entire parish.

The ongoing Armchair Travelers series will resume on Wednesday, Jan. 21. Bob and Sandra Davidson will share visuals and stories from their exploration of the Baltic region in far-northern Europe. On Feb. 18, Tom Swearingen will expound on his recent foray to Australia, where he reports extra shrimp in fact are put on the barbecue when visitors appear. Croc-wrestling is discretionary, however. On March 18, Pauline and Fred Felder will escort us through either the Czech Republic or Bruges, Belgium, depending on which of their recent sorties' pictures and memorabilia they organize first. The remaining destination will be the focus of a show to be given at a later date.

All Armchair Travel programs are preceded by the Wednesday noon Eucharist and a luncheon highlighting cuisine expressive of that day's featured locale. The programs themselves then begin at 1p.m.

Our work progresses with the new database system to create an e-mail list of folks age 60 and above. When the list is finalized, we plan to distribute a brief survey asking what you'd most like to get from the Elderberries program and what you most need from it. The survey also will invite input on related topics that you deem germane.

—*Elaine Reichert*

Eco News & Notes

For St. John's, an early Green Christmas. On Dec. 4, the state-wide alliance Interfaith Power & Light held its annual "academy awards" night at All Souls Episcopal in Berkeley, and guess who won an Energy Oscar? We did, for Outstanding Achievement in Advocacy to Prevent Global Warming.

Clearly pleased to honor some of his own flock, emcee Bishop Marc Andrus praised Rector Scott Denman, Deacon Frank Sterling and the Ecology Group for their perennial promotion of conservation and creative green stewardship.

Bishop Andrus noted that advocacy is one of the most important tasks of climate change activism, and St. John's served as a pioneer. For decades, the bishop explained, the church wrote letters, carried petitions and marched in campaigns to dramatize the need for environmental protection. He described how Scott and Frank, through the Genesis interfaith group, are working to reform Federal grant-making practices that shortchange local bus service. Strengthening public transit as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions makes sense to most people, the bishop added, but St. John's and like-minded allies took the extra step of showing how transit policy raises social justice issues as well as environmental ones. He said that insight accounted for Scott's and Frank's conspicuous absence at the awards party, since they were in Washington, DC to urge Federal officials to overhaul of mass transit decision-making.

Accordingly, St. John's gleaming new (but recyclable) Power & Light trophy was accepted on behalf of St. John's by Bob Davidson, Sandra Davidson, Michelle Inama and Mary Kimball. Other Energy Oscar winners were:

Holy Nativity Episcopal Church, Los Angeles for educational material and curricula

Congregation Beth El, Berkeley for their new Green Building

Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Santa Monica for Efficiency & Conservation

—*Bob Davidson*

Youth Choir Shines in Advent Concert



On Sunday, Dec. 14 the Youth Choir presented "I Believe in Christmas" to a packed house. Twenty-seven choristers – each of them part singer, part ham – covered the components of Christmas: God, Hope, Love, Action, Recycling and Peace. Soloist Kyle Liljequist portrayed Joseph, the Father of Jesus; Robbie Tiemstra played Santa ("Be Christmas-ful," he urged); and soloist Matthew Tiemstra was completely and thoroughly Scrooge. The three teamed up as The Wise Guys. Alison Sooter, Salina Wittmer and Natalie Wynne revived their Etiquette Squad roles (Amy V, Ms. Manners and Martha S), with lessons on green eco-gifts and gift wrapping. Salina sang the solo in "Hope Will Come," and Bryn Lawson and Abigail Smith soloed on "I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas." Each choir member also had speaking parts. The show concluded with new lyrics to John Lennon's "Imagine," sung by the congregation and led by Matthew Tracey-Cook. Choir-mothering was provided by Nancy Everett, while sound and video were handled by Jim MacIlvaine, a division of labor enabling Sara E to focus on her job as cheerleader. She was proud of all 27 of her reasons to believe in Christmas. They are: Audrey Byrne, Elise Hansen, Malena Hansen, Lucy Koh, Maddy Kho, Bryn Lawson, Campbell Lawson, Kyle Liljequist, Sydney Medford, Haeley Moore, Bridget Nix, Meredith Nix, Abby Smith, Alison Sooter, William Sooter, Emma Talamantes, Sophie Talamantes, Matthew Tiemstra, Robbie Tiemstra, Matthew Tracey-Cook, Aaron Trego, Kate Walker, Salina Wittmer, Vanessa Wittmer, Emma Wynne, Natalie Wynne and Bailey Ziegmann.

The Youth and Sunday Choirs sang at the 4:30 service on Christmas Eve. Rehearsals will begin on January 6 in preparation for singing at several 9:00 a.m. services and on Easter; a spring concert will be held Sunday evening, April 26 followed by an all-parish potluck supper. New members ages six through 18 are always welcome. Contact Sara E for a copy of the schedule: sevinger@comcast.net or 510/658-2792.

IMAGINE

Lyrics by Sara Evinger/John Lennon's tune

Imagine peace at Christmas - it's easy if you try.

No wars, no feuds, no gunfire, and time to ponder why.

Imagine all the people giving time and care...

Imagine love in action - it's easy if you try.

Time and gifts for others, those trying to get by...

Imagine St. James Pantry, its shelves all stocked with food...

You may say we're just dreamers, but we're not the only ones;

We hope someday you'll join us, for our work has just begun.

Imagine there's real Christmas, I wonder if you can.

No people going hungry, community, a plan...

Imagine all the people, sharing all the world...

You may say we're just dreamers, but we're not the only ones;

We hope someday you'll join us, and our work will soon be done!

GREEN CHRISTMAS

Lyrics by Sylvia Ahern/Music by Irving Berlin

I'm dreaming of a green Christmas - my Grandma said they once were white;

But the trees don't glisten, the snowpack's missin' and no e-lec-tri-ci-ty for light.

I'm dreaming of a green Christmas, but there's no water for a tree...

Our SUV is snapping, stuffed with junk in plastic wrapping

And it's swel-ter-ing in Calgary...

Start dreamin' of a green Christmas with presents made by hand, so fine!


Feast-food money's best spent on your own continent

And lose the long post-office line...

Start dreaming of a green Christmas and type on every e-mail screen:

May your days be cool and serene...and may all your Christmases be green!

Save the Dates

 "Recovery Sunday" is **Jan. 11**. Epiphany, season of rebirth, is a time to celebrate brothers and sisters in Christ whose lives were transformed by sobriety. Members of the 12-step groups now meeting at St. John's will share Eucharist with us. At the adult education hour, Frank Sterling will describe Alcoholics Anonymous and other strategies for helping individuals and families confront substance abuse and addiction.

Jan. 15 is the start date for the Horace Mann School tutoring program, which then continues on Thursdays from 12:40 to 1:40 p.m. Tutors work with second grade students. Volunteers are trained in the Excel reading program by Faith Network, which serves as a project sponsor. For those tutors who did not take the volunteer training in November, there are opportunities helping in classrooms with reading or math. A fall term highlight was the volunteer-hosted holiday appreciation coffee for the school's 35 faculty and staff on Dec. 17. The program is a wonderful opportunity to help Oakland students and support their teachers. The school is located at 5222 Ygnacio Ave., Oakland 94601, about a 10 to 15-minute drive from St. John's. For more information on the school, visit: <http://horacemann.ousd.ca.campusgrid.net/home>. For information on the tutoring program and volunteering, please e-mail Jan Lewis, jan.h.lewis@gmail.com. The time you give will be very much welcomed and appreciated.

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Food Raiser for St. James – Toys for Tots & Teens

Coordinated effort by St. John's staff, parishioners, neighbors and Thornhill School resulted in more than two pickup truckloads of donated food being collected at the church by Dec. 14. The bounty was loaded aboard the trucks by worshipers in bucket brigade-like relay lines, protected from rain showers by umbrella-toting helpers and chauffeured immediately to St. James Emergency Food Pantry by truckers Gordon Everett and Robert Ferguson. In addition, the Oakland Mayor's Toy Drive that day received dozens of St. John's-donated toys, delivered by Jim MacIlvaine. Thanks to everyone for their participation!

Save the Dates

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I On **Jan. 25**, Lector Training will be available following the 10:45 service, led by seminarian Gia Hayes-Martin. Gia will bring her 17 years' lector experience to bear on questions such as, What's the difference between projecting your voice and shouting? Why do we read so much scripture during worship, anyway? And how do you pronounce "Elisha?" All current and aspiring lectors are strongly encouraged to attend.

"Lay Pastoral Care with the Bereaved," is the subject of a four-part workshop to be held on **Mar. 5, 12, 19 and 26**. Hours of each meeting are 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. Stay tuned for more information in the Mouse and weekly service bulletins, or contact Sandra Ahn at sjahn_vienna@yahoo.com or 510/ 290-2850.

"Making the Road by Walking Together: an Exploration of Area Ministries," will respond to the question, What if the church was defined by collaboration, context and relationship? Area Ministry is a Diocese of California mission strategy, based on outward-facing teams which reflect the Bay region's demographic diversity. The course is for members of such teams and those who support them. It will explore theology, spirituality and structure of this cooperative practice for living out vocation. Reading and reflection will apply to real-world engagement of local communities, ongoing relationships and discernment of shared ministries. Teams will communicate extensively online while working on practical initiatives in their respective areas. Congregations are encouraged to jointly form ministry teams to attend the course. The course is offered free of charge, but participants are asked to commit to attend all four sessions. Meetings will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. on **Feb. 9, Mar. 9, Apr. 20, and May 18**. Site is Church Divinity School of the Pacific, 2451 Ridge Rd. in Berkeley. Instructor is The Rev. Sue Singer, Ph.D., CDSP Assistant Professor of Ministry Development. To register, visit the Center for Anglican Learning & Life web site at: www.cdsp.edu/center_registration.php

Out of Africa

I Why green and yellow? Friends of Ruwenzori's Nov. 15 Festival celebration theme was inspired by the Kitojo Integrated Development Association's signature colors: "Green for freshness of life, yellow for optimism and white for the totality of well-being which KIDA seeks to achieve in the community." KIDA painted its expanded clinic in bright yellow and green hues as a way of showing that Ugandans are a people of hope, despite difficult circumstances in the midst of an AIDS epidemic in a remote and impoverished area. KIDA takes a holistic approach to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and disease by addressing simultaneously the population's needs for health care, education, economic development and emotional support.

The non-governmental organization in Western Uganda is operated under the leadership of Rev. Ezra Musobozi. It is one of St. John's African Partner charities, which also include Youth Encouragement Services, directed by Carol Adams, and the Banjika High School in Tanzania. Founded by St. John's Karen and Gil Gleason, Friends of Ruwenzori is the only organization that raises money for KIDA.

The Green and Yellow Festival raised \$30,000, thanks to the many St. John's members who contributed and participated. Thank you! Every penny of the proceeds will go directly to work in Uganda. African Partners' Quilt drawing will be held at the St. John's annual meeting on Jan. 25. Until then, raffle tickets continue to be sold. To purchase tickets, please contact Sandra Davidson at sjason@earthlink.net.

FOR's first 2009 fund-raiser will be Jan. 23 (a Friday night), a colorful, Mexico-theme party at Nancy Lehrkind's Piedmont home. Requested donation is \$40 per person. Space is limited, so reserve soon to gilgleason@comcast.net or call 925/ 376-0519.



On Feb. 1, Friends of Ruwenzori members Delia O'Hara and Karen and Gil Gleason will travel to Uganda at their own expense to work for three weeks as KIDA volunteers. Joining them for the first time will be Dr. T. R. (Terry) Shively, DDS, a member of St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Spirit Lake, Iowa. Dr. Shively will provide free dental treatment to clients of KIDA's rural Kitojo clinic and to children residing at Carol Adams' Manna Rescue Home in Fort Portal. The team welcomes donations to purchase dental supplies, malaria drugs and mosquito bed nets for the YES and KIDA facilities.

—Karen Gleason

Darwin Can Clarify, Deepen Faith

I This year will bring an avalanche of books, lectures, TV programs and articles on Charles Darwin. It's 200 years since Darwin was born. It's also 150 years since he was pushed to publish *On the Origin of Species* earlier than he intended by learning of plans of Alfred Russel Wallace, the naturalist who, independently, had the same natural selection theory that Darwin had supposed all his own. Since Darwin wasn't alone in thinking up the theory or in assembling evidence in support of evolution, are we right to make such a song and dance of his anniversary?

The short answer is, Yes. On the *Origin of Species* is the most important biology book yet written, and Darwin did as much as anyone – including Copernicus, Newton, Marx and Freud – to change how we see ourselves. Yet why do I, a fairly conventional Christian (albeit one whose academic background in evolutionary biology), believe a Darwinian world-view matters more than ever?

Above all, because Darwin de-centers humanity. In this he completes the work that Copernicus and Galileo began. The fact is, we are not the center of the Universe. The Universe existed long before we came on the scene.

De-centering does not mean, of course, that we matter any less. Rather, it helps us to appreciate that we do not sit in a distinct category from the rest of creation. A shorthand way to think of it is that other

sentient creatures can be considered rather like young children in terms of their capacity to think, to feel and to experience pain and pleasure. The great apes that are heading towards extinction in the wild (and which still are used in some countries for medical research) really are our relatives.

Darwin was apprehensive about how his work would be received, realizing that it would be controversial. In the event, the reception generally was positive. Even the Church of England accepted its message, partly because it had no wish to be boxed into a corner as the Roman Catholic Church had been over Galileo two centuries earlier.

Creationists find a Darwinian view incompatible with their understanding of God and the world. They prefer a literal reading of the early chapters of the Bible or the Koran. In my opinion, the Darwinian world-view not only is compatible with religious faith but also deepens it and makes it more intelligible.

Consider the old but vital question, Why does God allow suffering? A good answer is that God gave creation the ability to evolve itself, including the capacity to feel pain and pleasure. Perhaps natural selection, as Richard Dawkins argues, is written into the fabric of the world. And perhaps those with a Christian faith do well to remember that the Word of God is a person, not parts of a book.

—Michael Reiss is Professor of Science Education at the University of London and a priest in the Church of England.

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Mardi Gras Pancake Supper & Hymn Sing

Hosted by St. John's Youth Group and their families
St. John's Episcopal Church, 1707 Gouldin Road, Oakland, CA.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 p.m.

Hymn Sing



Please request your favorite Christmas, Epiphany or other hymns by leaving them in Sara Evinger's mailbox or emailing her at sevinger@comcast.net (No Lenten or Easter hymns, please.)

Join us!

Cost: \$5 adults, \$3 children 3 to 12

Please sign up on the wall in the Narthex.



PANCAKES
SAUSAGE
HASH BROWNS
ORANGES
FELLOWSHIP



Parishioners, youth, families and friends needed to set up, cook, serve and clean up from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. or 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Contact Kellor at kellor@stjohnsoakland.org

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



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