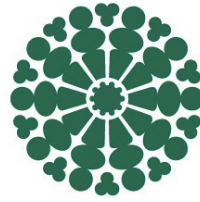


THE EPISTLE



ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Following Jesus together in prayer, worship and service.

From the Rector

Dear Friends-

Advent is a dark and quiet season of the year. Just as in Lent we withdraw a bit from our normal activities to prepare our hearts to receive anew the sadness of the cross and the joy of the resurrection, so in Advent we take a sober look at the end times to prepare our hearts to receive anew the wonder of the God/man. The shorter days and longer nights of the season are like the earth inviting darker reflections.

Each Sunday in December we will be offered sobering images of what will happen first as God returns to earth to eventually make all things right. After our recent experience in Marin of a week of smoke and ashes, perhaps the end times are a bit easier to imagine. What's so hard for each of us to look at straight is the clear biblical teaching that the end times involve God's judgment.

God is a God of both justice and mercy. There isn't one without the other just as there's no resurrection without the cross. Soon we'll be rejoicing again in the birth of our savior at Christmas and then the spread of the light in Epiphany. But now it is Advent. Let us hold our gaze steady in this time of darkness that we may rejoice all the more greatly in the One who said "I am the light of the world."

Faithfully,
Christopher



Christmas Worship and Festivities

Christmas Eve (Monday, December 24)

5pm Family service with children singing
10:30pm Service with Choral Prelude

Christmas Day (Tuesday, December 25)

10am Service

Christmas Potluck Feast hosted by the Martin family following the 10am service. All are welcome, and feel free to bring friends and family to this joyful gathering. Please RSVP to chloeadmartin@comcast.net.

Ingathering of Christmas Gifts for Ritter Center

This holiday season St. Paul's is again collecting Christmas gifts for the clients of Ritter Center in San Rafael--children, teens and homeless adults. Check the lists for ideas of what to give, and bring a new, unwrapped item to deposit into the barrel in the Narthex. Last chance is Sunday, Dec. 16. Thank you for supporting our ongoing ministry to Ritter Center!



For more information please visit our website at StPaulsSanRafael.org.
Join the community on Facebook and Twitter. Church Office Phone: 415-456-4842.

Downing Library Book of the Month

by Tom Witt

Dear bright-eyed readers of St. Paul's, December's book of the month is worth opening for the title alone: **An Alchemy of Mind: The Marvel and Mystery of Mind** by Diane Ackerman.

Here's a snippet:

"Impossible as it sounds, we have more brain cell connections than there are stars in the universe... picture the microscopic hubbub in one brain. A typical brain contains about 100 billion neurons, consumes a quarter of the body's oxygen, and spends most of the body's calories, though it only weighs about three pounds."

Come explore the mysteries of the mind and the riches of the Downing Library on the second floor above Duncan Hall. To borrow any book, just fill out a library card with your name, book title, author and date.

As always, happy reading!

Sunday Morning Book Group

"LIVING BUDDHA, LIVING CHRIST"

On Sunday, Dec. 1th, a convivial group of curious minds will be starting a book discussion of the classic bestseller by poet, Zen master and mystic, Thich Nhat Hanh. It should be a rich exchange as we contemplate peace, love and compassion at a time in history when the world could certainly use more of all three. All are invited to join us in the Upper Room of Duncan Hall, between 11:30 and 12:30, immediately following the coffee hour.

St. Anne's Guild weekly lunch

St. Anne's would be delighted to have anyone who would be interested in our group. Join us on Thursdays. We start at 11:00 in Duncan Hall and some of us knit. Bring your sandwich and we'll have tea and cookies. We have good conversation and enjoy one another.

How can I serve the least of these?

Teen Success Breakfast: Breakfast served with love to hungry teens at the Community School. Contact Ginny Horton: 415.785.7011 or hornlocker@comcast.net.

San Rafael Health Care: Help lead a simple worship service with prayers and songs for the residents at the 5th Ave. Health Care center. 11:00 – 11:25 on 1st and 3rd Sunday. Children are welcome. Contact Sue Adamson at 415.461.1798. We'll be singing Christmas Carols there at 11:30 on Sunday, December 16th. Join us!

Death Row Ministry: What began more than 20 years ago as visits and correspondence between St. Paul's rector and one inmate has grown to the involvement of 15 volunteers from three churches and 11 inmates. For the last several years we have written **Christmas cards** to them, and we will do so again this year. Look for the cards in Duncan Hall on the Sundays of Advent. To learn more about the ministry and get involved, please contact Richard (415.259.9198 or ollipops@comcast.net).

What is Your Next Spiritual Step?

- **Morning Prayer:** Tuesday at 7:30am in the church.
- **Bible Studies**
 - Wednesdays 10-11am: Gospel of Mark
 - Thursday 6:15-7:15pm: Ecclesiastes
- **Spiritual Forum:** Sundays 9-9:40am: Reading Early English Christian poetry. Duncan Hall.
- **Christian meditation:** 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7pm in the Upper Room.
- **Afternoon 20-minute meditation in the church:** Tuesdays at 5pm
Thursdays at 5:45
- **Discipleship Groups:** small groups with a longer term commitment focused on spiritual maturity and loving community with the poor.

St. Paul's offers many ways for you to learn, pray and grow spiritually

St. Paul's History Corner

By Joy Moss

As we celebrate St. Paul's 150th anniversary, let's take a look at some of the former church members who are memorialized with their gifts to the glory of God and in remembrance of loved ones.

The plaque reads: "This creche is given by George F. Bont to the glory of God and in memory of John Stephen O'Neill"

George Bont owned the California Steel Products Company in Richmond. His son-in-law was John Stephen O'Neill. John took his two son's fishing in Klamoth Falls, Oregon. While there he received a phone call informing him that his business, O'Neill's Hardware in San Rafael had burned to the ground. John suffered a fatal heart attack and died at age forty-four. He left a wife Janet and four children. His memorial service was held at St. Paul's Church on August 30, 1960. George Bont moved to San Rafael to live with his daughter and her children.

On December 17th, 1961 St. Paul's Church held its first "assembling of the creche pageant" The nativity figures of the creche were placed in the manger by children and adults of the parish. Afterwards the tree was lit and carols were sung. One of the pageant directors was Mrs. John O'Neill.

Several years ago Janie and Bruce Burtch were in Portland Oregon and attended The Grotto's Christmas Festival of Lights. This is a huge choral festival held in a chapel in a park setting. One of the features of the park is a grotto with a beautiful life sized creche. Amazing to Janie and Bruce was the realization that the creche although on a larger scale was identical to St. Paul's creche. Doing some research, Bruce discovered the name of the company that created the creche. The Demetz Art Studio is an Italian company that is still in existence in Ortisei, a small town in Northern Italy in the Dolomites. This company continues to make Christian statuary carved from linden wood. Bruce corresponded with the company and found they no longer make the creche in the size that St. Paul's owns. This creche is very precious and valuable. St Paul's is very fortunate to have received this gift and thanks to Janie and Bruce Burtch for not only discovering its origin, but for restoring it back to its original beauty.



Children and Youth at St. Paul's

This time of year always seems extra special for the kids, doesn't it? The music, the lights, the sweets, the hot chocolate, the snowmen, the angels... but especially Baby Jesus. He reminds us what gifts our own children are to us, what a gift He brought us, coming to Earth. This beautiful time of advent fills us with the anticipation of light and celebration. We have a lot going on this season and hope you'll join us. Saddle up next to a young family and let them know how you appreciate them! The future of our church is manifested through the Christmas season, through our children...

- * Dec 2nd and Dec 16th are Godly Play, Dec 9th is Music Sunday School, Dec 23rd is Family Sunday, Dec 30th is our Christmas Coffee Hour hosted by the families.
- * Throughout Advent, we will be learning Away in a Manger and singing it at the 5:00 service on Christmas Eve.
- * December 16th at 11:30, as a congregation we will carol at San Rafael Healthcare Center.
- * January 6th the children will perform the Epiphany Pageant (rehearsals will be on Dec 30th and at 9am the day-of.)

God Bless Us everyone! For more info: Kati Dombrosky: kdombrosky@gmail.com 415-846-1700

Marin Episcopal Youth Group

Our joint Episcopal youth group for Middle and High School students has more great activities planned for the month of December, including service and fellowship at St. Vincent de Paul and the Street Chaplaincy dinner, going to see Kelly Robinett in A Christmas Carol at the San Anselmo Playhouse, and their regular gatherings for fun, food and conversation at Nativity.

Contact Rev. Gerry Caprio at geraldcaprio@hotmail.com to find out more and sign up!

Good Tidings We Bring...

...to our friends at the San Rafael Healthcare Center. Please join us for **Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 16** after the 10am service. Coffee hour will be short and sweet. Walk or drive to 1601 5th Ave. and we'll meet at 11:30 and be done by 12:00. This is a wonderful way to participate in our long-time ministry to the residents of SRHC. Don't worry if you don't know the words (we provide the lyrics).



Greening of the Church

Volunteers are needed to help hang the garland and deck the halls for our Christmas Services. Please meet in the church after the 10am service on Sunday, December 23.

Christmas Flower Donations

The beauty of our Church at Christmas time is legendary! But only if you help. If you would like to have flowers given in memory of someone you love, please contact Alex Elliot at isaiah24257@gmail.com or call him at 415.488.7930. There is no specific dollar amount required. If paying by check, please either send your check by mail or bring it in on a Sunday and put in the offering plate by **Sunday, Dec. 16**. Please specifically note what it is for.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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