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Edition



The Ambrosian

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church
900 Edgewater Boulevard, Foster City, California 94404

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Yvonne Sidell

Reflections from our Rector

Dear Members and Friends of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church,

Aloha! The period between Thanksgiving Day and the beginning of Advent shortens and lengthens depending upon the year. This year, we are fortunate to have had a little longer time between the two, to help us breath, but that means that once again our Season of Advent is shortened with the Fourth Sunday of Advent being December 23, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day being Monday and Tuesday. So as we enter into the month of December, the time will rush by quickly.

I am thankful that Karen and I were able to have a Thanksgiving Dinner with my mother, Mary Ota, who is now 93 years old. Our table was intimate and familiar. I was glad to be able to spend the time with my wife and my mom. Although I would enjoy being with many of my extended family and friends, what I realize is how fortunate I am to still have my mother with us.

As we move towards the celebration of Christmas and the birth of Jesus to Mary and Joseph, it is the gift of the Presence that we anticipate and celebrate. God's love is made manifest whenever two or three are gathered in God's name and in so doing we recognize the Presence.

We are a fragile lot, the human race, but we are also resilient. When we fall, we rely on the help and care of those around us. This truth was evident in the fires that took lives and homes last month, but the resilience was evident in the firefighters, the volunteers and the many people who gave their time and treasure to try to help those affected by the fires.

The community of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church is also a fragile lot. We depend upon one another to care for each other and to help us care for our neighbors. As is true of every year since I have been among you, some have moved on and some have come to be with us. And as expressed during our Stewardship Dinner celebration, we are blessed by those who share their talents and gifts, by those who share their care and concern so we can create a sense of community through our hospitality, fellowship and goodwill.

Reflections from our Rector (continued)

Although we had a great Stewardship Dinner, we are a little slow in having our 2019 pledges turned in. If you have not yet turned in your pledge for 2019, please know that your pledge is important. But as important as your pledge of your finances is, your pledge of your presence is even more important. We need to know how you will be able to support our common ministry in 2019.

Very soon the Giving Tree will appear in the Parish Hall with ages and gender of children on red tags. We are asked to purchase gifts for the children of the programs of Star-Vista.

This December, we will have preparations for the Christmas Pageant to be held on Monday, December 24 from 4 p.m. The Rev. Karen Swanson is recruiting children and youth to both lead the pageant as well as the worship service.

The Christmas Choral Concert will be held from 10 p.m. on Monday, Christmas Eve. The Christmas Eve Choral Holy Eucharist will be celebrated from 10:30 p.m. with the Rev. Karen Swanson celebrating and I will be preaching. We will also have a Christmas Day Holy Eucharist from 10 a.m.

I wish you all a holy Advent as you prepare to receive the Presence of God's love in your lives.

Yours,

David Y. Ota, Rector

Update on the 2019 Pledge Campaign: Caring for our Communities and God's World

Dear Members of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church,

To date, we have received 36 pledges totaling \$70,932. We have also received 24 pledges of time and talent. We also received 10 pledges for Altar Flowers. **The 2018 pledge total was 79 pledges for \$151,900.** Thanks to everyone who has turned in a pledge for 2019!

Keith & Charlene Adolph	April & Grant Cherrington	Nilda Chong
Bettie Davis	Kyn Dellinger	Elliott Dun & Teresa Murakami
George & Janet Gardiner	Eugene Hetzer	Joanne Kerseg
Alison LeBlanc	Dulce & Michael Lord	Judy Marshall
Dorothy Matsuo	Kirk & Brenda Matsuo	David McIntyre & Cathy Rincon
Valerie Mersh	Wilfredo & Oliva Nagar	David Ota
Clara Padilla	Karin Patterson	Don & Elizabeth Peter
Ajit Philip & Shaiji Ajit	Jimmy & Poppy Rawley	Peggy Redmond
Diane Robertson	Julio & Ngoc Rodriguez	Frank & Barbara Saunders
Sandy Schowengerdt	Yvonne Sidell	Irene Stead
Jon & Marilyn Stephens	Karen Swanson	Matt & Meltem Tanner
Andy Walker	Warren & Nellie Wong	Steve & Belinda Yuen

If you would like to make a pledge, you still can do so. Pledge envelopes are in the Foyer. The Vestry will be reviewing the final draft of the 2019 Budget at its **December 18** meeting.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2019 Pledge campaign!

Announcements

THANKS to...

- The members of the Altar Guild who polished the brass and cleaned up the chapel on Saturday, November 10
- The Stewardship Dinner Planning Committee: Shelley Keefe, Chairperson, George Gardiner, Eva Kwong, Dulce and Michael Lord and Liva Neyroud; Registrars: Marilyn Canon, David and Lydia McIntyre, Cathy Rincon and Irene Stead
- Entertainers at the Stewardship Dinner: Charlotte and Bill Bradford, Mary, William and Jimmy Bradford; Jimmy Rawley, Noah, Charlotte and Elizabeth Rawley, Henry Albertson, Danielle Richards, the Rev. Anna Lange-Soto and members of El Buen Pastor and Ruben Neyroud
- Thanks to everyone who donated a gift basket for the raffle at the Stewardship Dinner
- Christina Rodriguez for preaching on Thanksgiving Sunday (*sermon follows*)
- The Rev. Karen Swanson who celebrated and preached on November 25

Altar Guild Bake Sale

The St. Ambrose Altar Guild is having its annual Bake Sale on **Sunday, December 2** following both the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. services. This annual fundraiser supports the Altar Guild in providing flowers when there is no donor signed up to provide flowers for Altar. They bake delicious cookies. We hope you will support this important ministry of St. Ambrose.

Study Groups in August

- **The Monday Evening Study Group** will meet this month on **Monday, December 10 at 7:00 p.m.** The meeting will be at Shelley Keefe's home, 887 Erickson Lane. The Monday Study Group is beginning a new topic, the book "God of Love: A Guide to the Heart of Judaism, Christianity and Islam," by Mirabai Starr.
- **The Tuesday Bible Study Group** will meet on **Tuesdays, December 4, 11 and 18 from 12:45 to 2:00 p.m.** in the Foyer. They are currently reading the Gospel according to John.

The study groups are open to any interested person.

Announcements (continued)

Mark Your Calendars

1st Sunday of Advent and Altar Guild Bake Sale: **Sunday, December 2, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.**, Chapel

Christmas Pageant Rehearsals: **December 2, 9, 16, and 23, 11:30 a.m.**, Chapel

Stocking Stuffers: **Thursday, December 6, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**, Boy Scout Clubhouse, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Christmas Pageant Rehearsals: **Sundays, December 2, 9, 16 and 23, 11:30 a.m.**, Chapel

Christmas Caroling: **Sunday, December 9**, to be arranged

Family and Senior Sharing Program Deadline: **Sunday, December 9**, donation deadline for providing gifts for three local families

Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting: **Tuesday, December 11, 6:00 p.m.**, Parish Hall

School Board Meeting: **Tuesday, December 11, 7:00 p.m.**, Parish Hall

Vestry Meeting: **Tuesday, December 18, 7:00 p.m.**, Parish Hall

Christmas Eve: **Monday, December 24, 4:00 p.m.**, Christmas Pageant and Family Holy Eucharist, **10:00 p.m.**, Christmas Choral Concert, **10:30 p.m.**, Candlelight Choral Holy Eucharist

Christmas Day: **Tuesday, December 25, 10:00 a.m.**, Holy Eucharist with Christmas hymns

Rector on Vacation: **Wednesday, December 26 to Tuesday, January 1, 2019**

1 Christmas: **Sunday, December 30, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.**, Holy Eucharist, the Rev. Karen Swanson, Celebrant

Annual Meeting of St. Ambrose: **Sunday, January 27, 2019, 11:30 a.m.**, Chapel

2019 Stewardship Dinner: **Saturday, November 16, 6:00 to 9:30 p.m.**, Foster City Recreation Center's Lagoon and Blue Bird Rooms

Christina Rodriguez Sermon (Thanksgiving Sunday)

Thank you Lord for your undeniable love over me. Thank you for all the people you have given to me in my life that have helped me grow as a person. I am grateful. Please watch over us as we take the steps into a new day. Amen.

For those that don't know me very well, I write poetry for fun.

Sometimes for enjoyment, other times to relieve whatever stress is going on in my life.

My freshman year, going into high school, I was filled with a lot of stress.

I struggled with social anxiety meaning I was scared of how I was viewed by others in the interactions I had with them leading to a lot of self-consciousness and to make it even worse, I would try to cover it up because I was scared to leave a bad impression on people.

Mentally, I was in a constant war with myself because I was scared all the time to talk to people I didn't know. Speaking in class was even worse.

The thought of saying a single word stressed me out enough to shake, so every time the teacher would call on me, I would put my hands under my desk.

Old Testament/Joel:

"I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you."

Locusts are bugs that can devour anything in their path

I view my fears as locusts.

I found that to be similar

Anytime I would want to voice my opinion, the locusts of my mind would consume that thought immediately. Sometimes it felt like I was being eaten alive.

It was taking away from gaining the social experience of the new world of high school.

It was a hard transition for me, from knowing all of my peers in middle school to only knowing less than 10.

I was naturally timid when meeting new people so it was an ongoing cycle of feeling lonely, but not being able to branch out and meet new people.

This is why I initially struggled to make new friends.

I did love my teachers though.

At Hillsdale High school, we pride ourselves in the unique small learning community system, meaning our homeroom, also known as advisory, is designed to be a support system.

While getting closer to all of my core teachers, I started enjoying school more for the academics than the social aspect which was I was not expecting.

I remember hating the moments before lunch knowing I'd sit with my one friend

I felt lonely all the time

Except when I was in class

One day I was talking to my English teacher and we came across the topic of poetry.

It turns out that she was the advisor of the creative writing club at my school and

told me that it would be a great community to join, so I attended the next meeting I could.

I think it was God's intention that my English teacher also happened to be the club advisor because this was one of the points in time that changed my life completely.

The club leaders were super warm and welcoming. My friend and I were greeted with smiles.

I loved the energy of the club and continued to attend the meetings each Monday at lunch.

My friend knew I wrote a ton and she encouraged me to share, but I never could.

Reading out loud in front of people sounded like my worst nightmare, especially when I can barely work up the courage to make eye contact with half of them.

Christina Rodriguez (continued)

I soon found out that the club produced an annual literary magazine including art, photos, and written work done by students at Hillsdale.

The only two people I was close with in the club was my one friend I ate lunch with, and my teacher

My teacher pulled me to the side and asked me to read my writing

After, she reassured me that my writing was worth reading out loud and encouraged me to do so next time given the opportunity

I still had the crippling fears that I couldn't read out loud in front of the crowd, even if it was not that many people.

I finally convinced myself that if I am proud of my work then I should be able to read it out loud, especially since the club environment is designed to be welcoming and inclusive to everyone.

That was the reason why I stayed in the club.

The next meeting, I came in with my poem freshly printed on a white piece of paper.

I purposefully selected the poem with the least amount of words to shorten the time I needed to read.

I didn't eat anything that day because I was too nervous.

I raised my hand to share.

I walked up to the podium.

My hands were shaking so much that the paper started making obnoxious noises.

I felt the warmth from my anxiousness creep up my neck and climb my cheeks, turning my face to a bright red.

I hid my hands behind the podium.

I felt that I couldn't make words come out of my mouth, and my body turned numb.

I distinctly remember the feeling of my face being on fire, but the rest of my body, up into my fingertips felt like ice.

I started reading the first line, and the words tickled my mouth as my voice was trembling.

I avoided eye contact because I felt the piercing eyes of the audience and I imagined their judgmental thoughts as I struggled to read my simple writing.

I felt like I couldn't breathe, I felt a burning hate for each second I spent up there.

As soon as I finished I took a deep gulp of air as if I had been underwater forever.

I rushed to my seat without hesitating, continuing to stare at the floor, as I was met with applause.

I received a lot of positive feedback from the rest of the club members, which shocked me.

I never thought that people would listen to what I had to say.

I was so used to being silent that I've never experienced feedback like this.

I had a mentality switch here.

I figured, why stress?

Gospel/Matthew:

"...can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?"

I decided that all this wasted energy in stress was pointless.

I had been going through the beginning of high school being the cause of all my problems

After reading this poem, I felt refreshed

This experience provided a confidence boost for me that I took into the rest of the activities around me.

The following year, I joined the Hillsdale effect and the leadership class.

I became super active in the school community because I was able to branch out and meet new people.

I wasn't struggling to make new friends anymore.

Christina Rodriguez (continued)

I am also extremely thankful for the abundance of opportunities that church has provided for me to grow and develop as a person.

Following creative writing, it was also the first year the youth group went to SSP together.

SSP San Diego was a life changing experience for me.

Not only did I grow closer with other members of the youth group, but I grew closer with God.

It was a new way to view my spiritual connection with Him and myself.

I remember on the first day, St. Ambrose started the tradition of being the last church to arrive at the location (and we've continued this tradition the two years following)

Lydia McIntyre and I sat with a table that was half full.

It was four kids from Saipan.

I remember introducing myself right away, which is something I would never have done if I was still freshman me

Us sitting at that table made a huge difference

They were our closest friends that we made that week

We were even lucky enough to go to Disneyland with them after a week of hard work.

Without branching out and introducing ourselves, we may have not been able to know them as well as we got to on that trip. Making friends early made the difference.

Church has also allowed me to help with the planning of the Vacation Bible School.

Planning VBS was cool because I had never had to plan curriculum for a summer camp, and especially a church camp.

I had to tap into not only my creative part of myself, but also the spiritual.

I had to connect the activities and snacks to the curriculum.

I remember one of the stories that we told the kids was Noah's ark.

That same day the arts and crafts was to create spirit animals.

And the snack was dino nuggets.

Each day had a spiritual theme and we tried to stick with it the best we could

This is just one example of the planning it took to have strong connection each day to God.

It was so fun to watch the camp come together and seeing the kids enjoying their time as much as the counselors were.

This experience helped me develop organization and leadership skills that I cherish as some of my strongest characteristics today.

One of my favorite movies in the entire world is Perks of Being a Wallflower

And now I live by this one line from the movie:

"We accept the love we think we deserve"

I think this is important because before all of these amazing experiences, I lived into fear as Father Jay would say.

Before I could accomplish any of that I had to learn to live into love with myself.

I had to learn to accept God's love but also especially accept and embrace the love of those around me

My journey has been a complete lifestyle transformation because now I look forward to trying new things and meeting new people

I am now more active in my community and have gotten to experience the world around me in a whole new way

I am currently representing the senior class at my school being the senior class secretary

I am the co-editor of the literary arts magazine for my second year

I've made so many life-long friends (some who are even here to support me today)

Christina Rodriguez (continued)

Psalm 126

“The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.”

Thank you all for being a part of the community that has nurtured me into self-love and God’s love.

I would not have been able to accomplish any of these life changing and enriching experiences without love for myself and love for God

“In the name of God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit

AMEN”

The St. Ambrose – Sea Breeze Giving Tree *December 2 – Dec. 19*

St. Ambrose and Sea Breeze Preschool are partnering with Star-Vista’s programs to provide holiday gifts to children in need in San Mateo County. We had supported the programs of this agency in the past and have returned to support them again this year. We hope you will open your hearts again this year to help make their holidays a very special one.

SELECT A GIFT TAG

From the Christmas tree in Parish Hall

SHOP

All gifts (books, toys, clothing...) should be new and unwrapped – firmly attach the gift tag to the outside, making sure it is visible

RETURN YOUR GIFT TAG

With the **unwrapped** gift under the tree by

Wednesday, December 19

The presents will be distributed through the Star-Vista programs.

For more information about Star Vista, visit

http://www.star-vista.org/whatwedo_services/children.html



The Desk of Rev. Karen Swanson

Christmas Pageant

The children and youth of St. Ambrose will tell the story of Jesus' birth for the congregation on Monday, December 24, Christmas Eve.

Practices will begin on Sunday, December 2 and continue through Sunday, December 23. Following Sunday School (and the Holy Eucharist portion of the worship service), the children will be given 15-20 minutes to eat and relax. The practices will begin in the church around 11:45 a.m. with the children's choir, which all children who are eight or older are urged to attend in order to become familiar with the sung parts of the pageant. Practice on the drama will follow. We will conclude no later than 1 p.m.

Children with non-speaking parts need only come to the rehearsals on December 16 and 23. We will review their positions and movements first in order to keep the practice short for them. Although it would be ideal for children with speaking parts to come to all or most of the rehearsals, we understand that our young people have other commitments, and we will accommodate the children's needs as best we can.

If you would like to participate, please call Karen Swanson at 650-200-8449 or Fe Balamiento at 415-579-8879. We hope many of you can join us for this fun and meaningful experience!

Youth Ministry – by Fe Balamiento

Dear St. Ambrose,

We're starting a four-week series called "The Walk" in which we'll discuss what it means and looks like to walk free, walk faithfully, walk in community, and walk like Jesus. This week, we explore repentance. In Romans 6, Paul writes that, as believers, we share in Jesus' death and resurrection, so we are set free from being slaves to sin. We're made free.

We'll learn that repentance is a choice and that living as if we're free from sin is a choice. And we'll talk about being made new. What does that mean? How does it look? This week's message will dovetail right into next week's on walking faithfully because once we've chosen to live as if we're free, we still must choose to live right so as to avoid the mistake Paul outlines in Romans 6:1-2: *"Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply? Absolutely not!"* Please pray for us as we gather.

Two reminders for Youth ministry

December 9 Christmas Caroling

January 6 Winter Movie Night

Thank you,

Fe

December Outreach Report – by Steve Yuen

CALL Primrose

St. Ambrose members answered the call to donate food cartons containing 18 specified items to CALL Primrose, which delivered them to San Mateo families in time for Thanksgiving. Although St. Ambrose committed to four boxes, we actually filled five.

Separately, Liv Dahdah and her friends brought in four additional containers, which made St. Ambrose' total contribution **nine** boxes, along with over a dozen extra cans and packages that CALL Primrose used to complete other sets.



Processing boxes the week before Thanksgiving

THANKS go to everyone who helped feed Peninsula families in need. Below is a partial list of contributors:

Keith Adolph
 Nilda Chong
 Liv Dahdah
 Bettie Davis
 Cameron Jew
 Sydney Jew
 Shelley Keefe
 June Kudzia
 Judy Marshall
 Dorothy Matsuo
 David McIntyre

Barbara Milligan
 Teresa Murakami
 David Ota
 Jean Ozeki
 Clara Padilla
 Ajit Philip
 Diane Robertson
 Barbara Saunders
 Irene Stead
 Steve Yuen

CALL Primrose (<http://www.callprimrose.org>) is a Burlingame outreach venture founded by the Presbyterian and United Methodist churches. St. Ambrose has participated in CALL Primrose' "fill a box, feed a family" program since 2011.

Outreach Report (continued)

Upcoming Events

Stocking Stuffers: Jill Schwab is again leading the effort to prepare “stocking stuffers” for seniors, veterans, and homeless people on the Peninsula. Volunteers from Santa Clara Thunderbird Club, St. Ambrose, and the Boy Scouts will fill hundreds of gift bags with toiletries, paperback books, socks, beanie caps, gloves, scarves, and candy. If you can help, please deposit such items in or near the box in the back of the Parish Hall. Assembly and delivery of the gift bags will occur at the Boy Scout Clubhouse, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto on **Thursday, December 6** from 8 a.m. to around 2 p.m. Even if you can only spare an hour or two, please stop by! Jill will be most grateful for your help....and there will be cookies!

Family Sharing: Each year as we approach Christmas, our congregation adopts two San Mateo families who are Samaritan House clients. This year’s families each have three (3) children. We are trying to collect at least \$800 (\$400 each), which will enable us to buy presents and gift cards. We will be delivering gifts during the week of **Sunday, December 9**, so please make your donations by that date. All donations should be made to St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, designated "Family Sharing", and deposited in the offering plate or mailed to the church office. **Thank you for spreading holiday cheer to our neighbors.**

Sandwiches on Sunday (SOS): The next SOS at the Fair Oaks Community Center in Redwood City will be on **December 30** when we will be serving lasagna and salad. If you can prepare a dish and/or help with serving and clean-up, please sign up on the December sheet that will be posted in the Parish Hall. If you have any questions, please contact Rob Richards (rob.richards@tensorlabs.com, 650-577-8924).

Christmas Caroling: Join members of St. Ambrose on Christmas caroling visits shut-ins and the elderly in Foster City Care Homes on the afternoon of **Sunday, December 9**. Exact times and locations are being arranged.

Sea Breeze School News – by Jerelyn Weber, Principal

It is hard to believe that it's already December and time to prepare for Christmas!

Here at school, December is a short month, so our celebrations happen well before they would in our church communities or our homes. We already have our classroom trees up, the children are singing Christmas carols and making Christmas decorations, and many classrooms are already practicing for their Christmas programs.

Thanksgiving brought our very first Family Thanksgiving Feast at Sea Breeze. Interested families came to join their children at lunch time and took part in a traditional Thanksgiving meal served by the Sea Breeze staff. We had over 140 families join us and although it was a little crowded, many memories were made and a new tradition was created.

The end of November brought the wonderful International Dinner event for our after-school program. This program has over 100 children now enrolled and has outgrown our facility, so the event is now held at the Foster City Recreation Hall. As usual the event was well attended, the fashion show was elegant, the entertainment was wonderful and the feast was delicious.

Our See's Candy fundraiser has come to an end and I would like to thank all of you that participated. Fundraising is an important part of what we do as the funds raised help support our financial aid program and other enrichments around the campus. Our top selling class celebrates with an ice cream party and the top selling families are always invited to a Pizza Party in the evening.

The last day of school is December 20 and classes will resume for preschool on Monday, January 7 and Tuesday, January 8 for the after-school program.

Your school wishes you a holy Advent season and a blessed Christmas.

Happy New Year!

Continued Blessings,

Jerelyn Weber, Principal

The Editor's Corner—by Yvonne Sidell



All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. —Psalm 119:160

This holiday season, you will most likely hear the song “My Favorite Things” from the Broadway musical *The Sound of Music*. To me, this song has always felt out of place during the holidays, until recently. I have begun to hear it in a new light, recognizing the famous list of “favorite things” as a list of reasons to be thankful. The character Maria, who sings this song, thinks about her list of favorite things when she seeks comfort.

Christians have a list as well. Found in the Bible are promises from our Lord — keepsakes we can cling to at all times including periods of worry, trouble, or despair. These promises urge Christ-followers not to be troubled or to feel alone. They are words offering great hope because they are not the words of mere men. They are inspired, never-changing words given to us from our Savior and Lord. Read through a few of these promises below:

The Lord will give His people strength. Psalm 29:11

The Lord hears our cries. Psalm 34:17

The Lord will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4-5

The Lord will answer when you call to Him. Jeremiah 33:3

You need not be afraid. God is with you. Isaiah 41:13

The Lord will give rest to your burdened soul. Matthew 11:28-29

The Lord will comfort you. John 14:27

The Lord has given us His Spirit to guide us. Acts 1:8

You will have everlasting life when you believe. John 3:16

The list can go on and on. The Lord promises us mercy, protection, strength, eternity, love, and forgiveness. As it says in the Bible, God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18) and His word is truth (John 17:1).

We cannot look at God’s promises like we do those of our friends and family. As people, we often promise, but don’t follow through, even when we have the best of intentions. God’s Word is binding and true. These promises hold fast. We do not have to wonder if they will happen. Rather, we ought to wait in expectation. So “when the dog bites, when the bee stings, when you’re feeling sad,” I encourage you to remember all God has promised you. It is in these promises you will find great strength.

As you celebrate Christmas and other Holidays, in addition to thinking through all you are thankful for, take time to thank God for His many promises.