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The Ambrosian

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February

2015

Edition

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Dear Members and Friends of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church,

 Aloha! As we enter the month of February, I am aware of how soon we will be in the Season of Lent. But before Lent begins we have a couple of events that I want to highlight:

* On **Sunday, February 8th, from 11:30 a.m.** in the Parish Hall, Karin Patterson and Michael Radovancevich will present a workshop on preparing our homes for a disaster.
* On **Sunday, February 15th,** immediately following the 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist we will have a Mardi Gras luncheon organized by Jill Schwab, Charlene Adolph and Valerie Mersh.

 We begin our Lenten discipline with **Ash Wednesday, February 18th** with services at **12:10 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.** You are asked to bring back your palm crosses from last year’s Palm Sunday services to be made into ashes.

 Our Lenten program will be “The Hidden Power of the Gospels” based on the book of the same name by Alexander Shaia. We will be looking at the four paths of the spiritual journey and the practices that accompany them that he describes on **Sunday, February 22nd** beginning at **11:45 a.m.** in the Parish Hall with an introduction to the four paths, their questions and their metaphors:

* The first path: The Gospel of Matthew: Climbing the Great Mountain, How do we change?
* The second path: The Gospel of Mark: Crossing the Stormy Sea, How do we move through suffering?
* The third path: The Gospel of John: Resting in the Glorious Garden, How do we receive joy?
* The fourth path: The Gospel of Luke: Walking the Road of Riches, How do we mature in service?

 For the remainder of the Sundays of Lent, we will explore each path, learn to look at some of the stories through the eyes of Alexander Shaia and learn some of the practices of each path of the spiritual journey.

 Also, beginning Sunday, February 22nd, instead of our regular coffee hours following the 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist, we will be having simple Lenten lunches of soup, salad and bread. You are invited to sign up to bring some food to share before we begin our Lenten program each Sunday.

# Reflections from our Rector



During the Fridays of Lent, the service of the Stations of the Cross will held at 12:10 p.m. You are invited to join and to share your reflections.

I look forward to seeing you, and hope you will keep well during this “flu season.”

 Yours,

David Y. Ota, Rector

**Summary of the 42nd Annual Meeting of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church**

At the Annual Meeting the Rector reported that 2014 was a year of staying the course on our ministries, one of change in membership and participation as well as accomplishment. 2014 was a financially successful year. However, the average Sunday worship attendance declined from 94 to 91 each Sunday.

If we use “a running river” as a metaphor for our life as St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, like a running river it seems as if all that is changing is the depth and speed of the running river. But just as a river needs to have a snow pack in the mountains that keeps the river running in the spring and summer, so too does our congregation need to continually invite, welcome and incorporate people into the life of the congregation if we are to be a healthy and vibrant congregation.

Highlights of the year included the Rev. Rebecca Goldberg’s ordinations to the diaconate and priesthood, nine members confirmed and two members received, the many new people who have joined St. Ambrose, the program of Fellowship Dinners, the Welcome Ministry, the Lenten program on “A Failure of Nerve, Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix” on family systems theory, the growth of the youth ministry, the Vacation Bible School on anti-bullying and serving as a youth leadership training event, the Stewardship Dinner and the success of the 2015 Pledge Campaign, and the efforts of the outreach committee.

The Rector is concerned with the loss of families with children who have moved away from Foster City and its impact on the Sunday School and the Children and Family Ministry.

St. Ambrose Sea Breeze School had a large operating surplus in the 2013-2014 school year, and once again increased the health benefit for employees beginning January 1, 2015. The School began to replace old furniture and equipment and began implementing new curriculum. Ms. Jerelyn Weber completed her first full year as Principal.

The Finance Committee continued to assist the Vestry in the financial oversight of the church and school. The church had an operating surplus of $26,938.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee’s main accomplishments were completing the staining of the shingles of the facility, beginning the installation of the emergency sprinklers up in the ceilings of Rooms 1 and its hallway, the outdoor eating tables, the Principal’s office and part of the kitchen, and painting the parking lot striping and accessible parking symbols. A project that is in the works is installing air conditioning in the classrooms.

The Outreach Committee continues its local one-time outreach efforts with the Blessing of the Animals at the Foster City Dog Park, Call Primrose Fill a Box Feed a Family for Thanksgiving and Christmas, Senior Stocking Stuffers, Samaritan Houses’ Holiday Family Sharing, and its year round projects of Sandwiches on Sundays, Home and Hope and Second Harvest Food Bank. They also made grants to many organizations including El Buen Pastor located at Messiah Lutheran Church in Redwood City.

The Altar Guild experienced a transition as Deb Sakurai-Horita stepped down as Altar Guild Directress and Charlene Adolph was appointed. Two new green altar sets with vestments were purchased.

Karin Patterson and Yvonne Sidell were elected to the Vestry. George Gardiner, Janet Gardiner and Steve Yuen were elected as delegates to the Deanery and Diocesan Convention. No alternates were elected. Bettie Davis was thanked for her service on the Vestry.

The Rector announced the St. Ambrose Award to be given to:

* Bettie Davis for serving as Senior Warden and the School Board.
* The Rev. Jay Watan for his faithful ministry as Youth Minister, School Chaplain and assisting Priest.

Father Ota also announced the appointment of Jim Neubert as Senior Warden for 2015. Following the Annual Meeting the Vestry elected Tippy Irwin as Junior Warden, Shelley Keefe as Clerk and Charles Saunders as Treasurer.

**Bible Studies in February**

The Monday Bible Study group continues to study the Hidden Power of the Gospels on Mondays, **February 2nd, 9th and 23rd** from **12:45 to 2:00 p.m.** in the home of Merilyn Vosburg. This Bible Study is led by the Rector.

The Tuesday evening Bible Study group meets on **February 3rd and 17th** in the home Warren and Nellie Wong at **7:00 p.m.** They are studying the Gospel according to Luke.

The Wednesday evening Bible Study group meets on **February 11th and 25th** in the foyer of the church at **7:30 p.m.** They are studying the Book of Revelation.

Each of the Bible Study groups is open and newcomers are invited to join.

**Mardi Gras Party**

The congregation will celebrate the “end” of the Season after the Epiphany with one last party. We are reviving our past custom of having a Mardi Gras Party this year on **Sunday, February 15th from 11:15 a.m.** in the Parish Hall. The committee led by Jill Schwab, Charlene Adolph and Valerie Mersh have arranged for a delicious meal with decorations. Please plan to attend.

**S.F. Giants games in 2015**

This year St. Ambrose will be going to three Giants games. Tickets will be sold at cost, with a $10 discount for children and youth. The games are as follows:

* **Friday, April 17th**: the Giants and Arizona Diamondbacks game at **7:15 pm.** The cost of these tickets is $19 for adults and $9 for children or youth. The seats are in View Reserve Section 325, rows 6 through 9. This is a Fireworks Night.
* **Friday, May 29th**: the Giants and Atlanta Braves game at **7:15 pm**. The cost of these tickets is $22 for adults and $12 for children or youth. The seats are in View Reserve Section 318, rows 12-14. This is Giants Orange Mustache Night.
* **Friday, September 11th**: the Giants and San Diego Padres game at **7:15 pm.** The cost of these tickets $22 for adults and $12 for children or youth. The seats are in View Reserve Section 318, rows 12-14

We will arrange to carpool with those who buy tickets. If you are interested in going to any of these games, please speak with Father Ota.

## Outreach Report - by Steve Yuen

We are still recovering from the frenzy of the Holidays. As penance for enjoying ourselves too much, our New Year’s resolutions involve discipline and self-restraint, but one or two also include being a better friend, business colleague, parent, and neighbor. And there is no better time to “get right with God” than the beginning of Lent (February 18th).

The Lenten traditions of prayer and fasting are generally solitary activities, and almsgiving focuses our attention on other people. For Christians, especially during this season, charity is not an option but a duty.

Many parishioners of all ages already engage in charitable activities, some of which are organized through the church. If you would like to join us or have any questions, please contact Steve Yuen (341-1966. stevebyuen@aol.com).

**Home and Hope**:

Home and Hope provides temporary shelter for families who are faced with unemployment, family breakup, loss of their house, and other crises. Over 30 Peninsula churches and synagogues participate in this program. On **Tuesday, January 27th**, St. Ambrose served dinner to four families at San Mateo’s Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church. We will have a report in next month’s Ambrosian. Please contact Steve Yuen if you would like to volunteer or have any questions.

Information on Home and Hope may be found at [www.homeandhope.net](http://www.homeandhope.net).

**Cambodia Academy:**

For six years St. Ambrose, Sea Breeze School, and individual members of our community have sponsored children at the Cambodia Academy (cambodiaacademy.org) in Mongkol Borei, Cambodia

Our first student, Chettra Phon, graduated two years ago. Hans Eide, founder of the school, writes:

I was able to meet with Chettra as she was on her way to work.

She is gainfully employed as a dealer at one of the casinos in Poipet which is a very small town on the Thai border, a job she certainly would not have been qualified for without your support at our school. She seemed happy and well adjusted.

FYI gambling is illegal in Thailand, so the Thai people travel to the Cambodian border where casinos are legal, but only for foreigners. No Cambodians allowed except as employees.

Unfortunately, her English is not adequate for her to write to you, but she asked that I convey her sincere thanks to St. Ambrose.

The family incomes of children who attend the school are less than $100 per month. Thanks to donations from Rotary Club International, St. Ambrose, other churches, and individuals, Chettra Phon and other graduates have real hope for lifting themselves out of poverty.

## “Celebrate Life!" – by Rev. Jay Sapaen Watan

During the Christmas Holiday I met up with a friend who I have known for over 30 years.  We went to elementary school together and I’ve known him longer than any other friend I know.  We don’t get to hang out that often because he now lives and works in Hawaii. So on his recent trip to the Bay Area to visit family, he invited me for dinner at the House of Prime Rib - a San Francisco institution noted for being meat eater heaven.  It was a great privilege to eat there, yet the whole purpose for eating together was to do more than nourish the body, but to feed the spirit with human connection.

By our worldly standards, my friend has achieved a wealth of success.  He graduated from the top public university in the nation, he has a flourishing career and is compensated well, he owns a home in San Francisco, he had been a DJ and a dancer, and he even has season tickets to the 49ers games.  But he shared with me that he was not happy.  Over the years my friend has struggled with committing to a long term relationship with a significant other.  Admittedly he has never been committed because he felt that he had to create a certain level of security in his life and he wasn't about to take any risk that would jeopardize his "happiness."  And yet what he was trying to avoid has become his reality.  So I said to him, “the goals you set for your life may be too superficial to take you to the place you want to be... taking risks and being vulnerable allows us to share what's in our heart."

The truth is success does not equate to joy, having material things does not provide fulfillment, and security does not offer peace.  We live in a culture that promotes personal success in comparison to others and envy if we don't get what we want.  But jealousy and contempt is the stuff of sin that separates us from the actual source of joy.

I believe joy has a lot to with cultivating relationships that matter - these are our interconnections with God, our neighbors, all creation, and ourselves.  In a world where many of us internalize the self-deprecating message that who we are is not enough. Where it is easy to beat ourselves up over the lessening of who we are, celebrating who we are in this moment and allowing ourselves to be loved is a good way to start living into the one the Love Supreme has called us to be.  Maybe the best measure of success isn't about accomplishments or wealth, but to whom we are committed to!  Love is about what we are willing to give.

I realize that the awareness of love is truly a spiritual practice, but the beauty of the Divine is that love of God is always unconditional and is the source of all that is.  We are made from love for love. And without love we are nothing.  St. Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians reminds us, "I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."  (1 Cor 13:2 NIV). The great spiritual prophet and truth teller Cornel West always begins his talks with the preface, “I am who I am because somebody loved me.”  And that memory of love sets us up to become the ones we are called to be in Christ!

The blessing with knowing someone a long time is that there is often the relational equity to be a lot more honest and heart felt.  As my friend and I left the restaurant I said to him, “Bro... start loving yourself in the way God and your family has loved you... And you will naturally attract someone to love you because you will be willing to walk with them into who they are becoming."  We all have a life worth living... Why not celebrate life?

## Sea Breeze School News

## With the holidays behind us, everyone has returned to school and settled back into routines.

January and February are very busy months for us, and Wendy Walker, the school Registrar, has been busy preparing for fall registration that begins on February 4. If you know of anybody that is looking for a school for their child, please have them contact the office. Classes fill up very fast and we anticipate full enrollment once again next year.

As we prepare for the coming year, we are beginning to update the classroom furniture and equipment; as well as making enhancements to our curriculum. Some of the classrooms have already received new cubbies and others have received new tables and chairs. Our goal is to have all classrooms updated by the end of this school year. It is always our goal to do our best to prepare our students for the next step in their educational journey, and for that reason, we have added the Handwriting without Tears program to our Preschool curriculum. This program introduces the children to letter formation through hands on activities and is very highly regarded in many high quality early education programs.

The children will be very busy preparing valentines for the special people in their lives, and this year we are all working hard to make extra valentine wishes for the local veterans. If you would like to add any special wishes for local veterans please feel free to drop them off at the school office. I will be delivering the wishes on the afternoon of February 9. We will also be celebrating the Lunar New Year in the classrooms with visits from families and the sharing of many yummy treats; and we have our annual visit from Dr.Lee, the pediatric dentist that comes in to teach the children about good dental health.

Have a wonderful month!