



## COFFEE HOST SIGN-UP



It's time to sign-up for 2012 Coffee Hosts. Sign-up sheets are posted in the kitchen (next to the new refrigerator). Feel free to sign up for as many Sundays as you would like – **there are still lots of dates to choose from!** If you have a preference, signing up ahead of time will help ensure you get the dates you want. Thank you once again for your help in providing this fun and yummy ministry at St. Anselm's.

## Annual Reports

Reminder to heads of Commissions and Guilds—your annual report is due in the office by the end of the year.

*Thank you!*



## ADVENT FESTIVAL SUNDAY

On Sunday, December 11th, the Advent Festival will be held during and after the 10 a.m. service.

We will sing Christmas Carols during the service, and after the service there will be craft projects for kids of all ages. Come and join the fun.

*We are in need of volunteers to bring salad and bread. If willing please advise Fr. John or Carol.*

## Are you or someone you know dealing with age-related issues?

Roger Cormier is a consultant who works with those who are aging. He spoke at St. Anselm's last year, and he now has a blog which is informative and may provide some good ideas. It is free and you can check it out at [starguide4growingolder.wordpress.com](http://starguide4growingolder.wordpress.com).



## Christmas Services

|                   |           |            |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Christmas Pageant | Dec. 24th | 5:00 p.m.  |
| Midnight Mass     | Dec. 24th | 11:00 p.m. |
| Caroling          |           | 10:30 p.m. |
| Christmas Morning | Dec. 25th | 10:00 a.m. |



*Canterbury Tales* is the monthly newsletter of St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, CA  
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**Sunday Services:**  
8 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
(Nursery and Sunday School)

St. Anselm's Staff  
The Rev. John Sutton, Rector  
The Rev. T.C. Yao, Associate  
Carol Fontana, Office Manager

## *The Senior Warden*

I have something shameful to confess. I don't like Advent. In fact, I start dreading it soon after Labor Day. Why? Because it leads to Christmas. Between stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, their spouses, my mother, and some friends, I have 30+ people on my Christmas gift list. Advent is a stressful whirlwind of shopping, wrapping, decorating, and trying to finish knitting projects that could have been done months ago. Last January I rejoiced when my great-granddaughter was born, healthy and beautiful. Last week, when adding her name to The List, my heart sank, though what could be more fun than buying a gift for a baby girl! In addition, I have *TWO* articles for *Canterbury Tales* due in Advent, this one on the first Sunday and the other on the fourth. If you are detecting a tone of whining self-pity, grumpy obligation and lack of gratitude, you are correct.

Shameful? Yes. I am blessed to have people in my life whom I love and who love me. There are millions who live in abject poverty and are starving, people who are homeless, including families with children, people who are alone without family or friends, who have lost their jobs, who are ill, soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and the families without them this Christmas. I am, for these four weeks, making myself the victim of the consumer culture, oblivious to the meaning of Christmas. Thanksgiving? Bah, humbug. It's the day before the shopping season begins. If you are so foolhardy as to point all this out to me or to come up with some helpful suggestion, I will not listen. If Brad were alive, he could attest to that!

I have tried to overcome this spiritual failing. One Advent, realizing that I hadn't gone to church in the two years since I'd moved to Point Richmond, I started going to the Methodist Church in town, chosen because it was halfway between my home and the mall. In John Wesley's church was my heart "strangely warmed"? No. At least not during Advent. Another year, a friend and I actually created an Advent workshop. I figured that if I taught it, I'd get it. I didn't, though everyone else did. We also read *Two from Galilee*, a moving Advent novel – for anyone who has time to read a book. Last year I put a discipline in place. Every time I bought a gift, I paused to thank God for that person, that I had found a gift, and had the \$ to buy it. That feeling of gratitude would last all of about 30 seconds. This year I'm thinking of asking John to create another support group at St. Anselm's, Jesus-is-the-Reason-for-the-Season, or maybe Christmas Shoppers Anonymous. Of course, I wouldn't have time to go to it!

Then, every Christmas Eve, a miracle happens! Sometimes it happens when I first get to the Christmas Eve service, sitting in the dim light of the church, seeing all the poinsettias and candles, smelling the pine, letting the stillness into my heart. Other years it happens when singing *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, "How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given." Most often it happens during *Silent Night*, "Son of God, love's pure light/ Radiant beams from thy holy face/ With the dawn of redeeming grace..." I start to breathe again, my jaw relaxes, tears fill my eyes, and my heart, closed for four weeks, opens. I get it! Finally I get it! This is what it's about! This baby is God's gift to us, freely given out of an abundant, unconditional love and grace. This baby will grow up to show and teach us that God is love. We don't deserve this grace, and can't do anything to earn it. Our job is to accept it, to let it in, to let it work its transformative magic in our lives. Our job is to trust in it, trust that we are loved and forgiven. I get, in those Christmas Eve moments of sanity, that because I am already loved, I don't have to buy love by finding that "perfect" gift or to prove how thoughtful and loving I am.

That extravagant love and grace puts solid ground under our feet. When I believe in it, then I can risk sticking my neck out to invite someone to church. I can risk being vulnerable in giving and receiving love. I can risk letting go and being guided by the Spirit. I can risk opening my heart to what this baby will also grow up to show and teach us, that we are not meant to be passive recipients of this love and grace, but we are called into relationship. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind and love thy neighbor as thyself." This is a radical reordering of priorities, and this is also what it's all about.

I just had an idea. Maybe, just maybe, if I read those two last paragraphs every day during Advent and follow John's suggestion in his sermon about being wakeful, then..... Dare I hope?

## Preschool Update

In recent weeks we have been doing lots of cooking. We have made applesauce, New York Style soft pretzels, and homemade pickles, to name just a few. Cooking is a wonderful way for children to develop their fine motor skills by using tools such as knives and vegetable peelers. Children also are more likely to try different foods when they help with the preparation. It is always exciting to watch a child try, and like, a food which they have never tasted before.

For the past couple of weeks we have been working on our Emotion Board. This is a project that we usually do every other year as we want each child who passes through Michael Lane to have an opportunity to be on The Emotion Board. We begin the project by talking about different emotions and how we can usually tell how a person is feeling by looking at their face. We then photograph each child as they show various emotions with their faces. The fun part is when we actually put the finished photographs on the board. As the children help put the pictures on the board they sometimes cannot actually connect the appropriate photo with the appropriate emotion. But this is all part of the learning process. Social-emotional development is the biggest area of growth during the preschool years. Reading faces is an important skill that young children need to master and that is why we love this project. We are very lucky to have Peg do the actual photographs as she is a talented photographer.

Before our break week we were also talking about Thanksgiving and how we will soon be celebrating this special holiday with our families. We had our own little celebrations in the classroom.

During the upcoming weeks of school we will be celebrating the major holidays of the season, Christmas and Chanukah. It is a wonderful time of the year full of lots of excitement. At Michael Lane Preschool we try to emphasize some of the best ideals of the season which include caring for others and giving of oneself.

Kim and Peg

## Upcoming Events in December



|       |         |            |                                                       |
|-------|---------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 3     | Sat     | 9:00 a.m.  | Choir Rehearsal                                       |
| 4     | Sun     | 9:15 a.m.  | Altar Guild Meeting                                   |
|       |         | 11:30 a.m. | Cancer Support Group                                  |
| 5     | Mon     | 6:45 p.m.  | Executive Committee Meeting                           |
|       |         | 7:00 p.m.  | Vestry Meeting—2012 Budget                            |
| 6     | Tue     | 11:00 a.m. | Contemporary Bible Study                              |
|       |         | 1:00 p.m.  | Grief Support Group                                   |
|       |         | 3:00 p.m.  | Christian Formation Meeting                           |
| 7     | Wed     | 9:00 a.m.  | Hatha Yoga                                            |
|       |         | 3:00 p.m.  | Property Commission Meeting                           |
| 8     | Thu     | 2:30 p.m.  | Preschool Board Meeting                               |
| 10    | Sat     | 9:00 a.m.  | Choir Rehearsal                                       |
| 11    | Sun     |            | <b>ADVENT FESTIVAL SUNDAY</b>                         |
|       |         | 11:00 a.m. | Advent Party & Lunch                                  |
| 12    | Mon     | 7:00 p.m.  | Vestry Meeting (tentative)                            |
| 13    | Tue     | 11:00 a.m. | Contemporary Bible Study                              |
| 14    | Wed     | 9:00 a.m.  | Hatha Yoga                                            |
| 18    | Sun     |            | <b>OUTREACH SUNDAY</b>                                |
|       |         |            | <b>Canterbury Tales Deadline</b>                      |
| 20    | Tue     | 11:00 a.m. | Contemporary Bible Study                              |
| 21    | Wed     | 9:00 a.m.  | Hatha Yoga                                            |
| 24    | Sat     | 5:00 p.m.  | <b>THE CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT</b>                      |
|       |         | 10:30 p.m. | <b>CAROLING</b>                                       |
|       |         | 11:00 p.m. | <b>MIDNIGHT MASS SERVICE</b>                          |
| 25    | Sun     | 10:00 a.m. | <b>CHRISTMAS MORNING SERVICE</b>                      |
| 26-29 | Mon-Thu |            | <b>The Church Office will be closed for the week.</b> |
| 31    | Sat     |            | <b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>                                 |

## ***WEEKEND FAMILY RETREAT?***

A number of years ago, during the early years of St. Anselm's life, we had an annual family weekend retreat at the Bishop's Ranch in Sonoma County.

It was a wonderful weekend for us to spend some time with our family and other members of St. Anselm's at this beautiful ranch in the lovely rolling hills in the heart of Sonoma County's Russian River Valley. The Ranch, which is owned by the California Diocese, was a gorgeous place to go with our kids and other happy families from St. Anselm's. There were programs for the kids, discussion groups by the patio fire, relaxing and sipping some fine wine while enjoying spectacular views and marvelous food served in the beautiful dining room on the ranch. All in all, it was a place to connect with each other and gave our children an opportunity to get to know each other better, all of which strengthened our St. Anselm's family relationships.

We thought that it might be a fine idea to rekindle this event or one like it. What we would like to know, is anyone else in our parish interested in attending such a weekend. We would start on a Friday evening and finish on the following Sunday after breakfast. We might go to Bishop's Ranch or another venue, depending upon availability. We would try to schedule the event in the Spring or early Summer and stay within a moderate distance from Lafayette.

So, we need to know if you are interested. Please call our wonderful church secretary, Carol, at the church office or call us at home at 925-283-0453 or email us at [ajswimmer@comcast.net](mailto:ajswimmer@comcast.net), so we can start a list of interested families or individuals. If we get enough positive input, we will begin the planning of this wonderful event.

Sara and Al Swimmer

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## ***PLANNED GIVING***

### **PRE-PAY MY PLEDGE??? WHY?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Next *Canterbury Tales* deadline is December 18th**



★ ***EPIPHANY PARTY*** ★

★ In all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, please save the date and attend our fun-filled **Epiphany Party** on Saturday January 7 at 6:00 PM in Jackson Hall. The signup sheet will be posted in Jackson Hall so that we will know how many are planning to come. Attendees, please bring two dozen appetizers or a finger food dessert, to make for an easy handling and clean-up. Also, please plan to bring a wrapped “white elephant” gift – the sillier, the better -- for EACH member of your group. This is one of the most talked-about social events of the year, so don't miss out. See you there!

