



Giving Birth to the Word of God

By the Reverend Canon Henry L. Atkins, Jr., D.Min.

The Christian life is a process of moving from the reign of this present age to the reign of God. Our progress in this process depends a great deal on our hearing, receiving and allowing God's life giving word to be born in and through us.

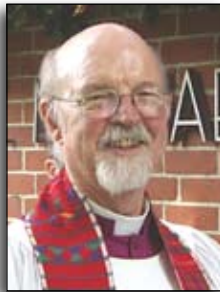
The Advent season reminds us that we have been called to be a message bearing community that is moving from one reign to another. On this journey it is easy to lose the vision of that day when God shall be all in all. It is often difficult to keep hope alive! We are sustained on our journey not only by our own sense of ethical responsibility and our own life of prayer, but by the life giving Word of God which breaks into our lives and transforms us individually and collectively.

During the Advent season the prophetic Word of God comes to us asking us to be willing even now to move out of the old reign, to see that what is crumbling around us is, in part, the birth pangs of the new reign that is coming. The Word of God calls us to repent, to literally turn around and begin moving in a different direction. We do this by hearing the Word of God and allowing the Word to penetrate our very being and transform us. However, the Word that transforms us also leads us to give birth to the Word in the world in which we live.

The call of Mary is the prime example of this process. In the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel we are told that the Word comes to Mary. Mary is both afraid and at first is not clear about the meaning of the encounter that she is experiencing. However, she allowed the Word to enter her very being. She gave the Word of God a home in her body. In due time she gave birth to Jesus, the Word that had existed since the beginning. This Word came into our world speaking of truth, peace, justice and love.

Mary literally gave birth to the Word of God in giving birth to Jesus. We are not called to give birth in the same way that Mary did, but we are called to become pregnant with God's life giving Word and give birth to this Word of truth, peace, justice and love in our world. Advent and Christmas call us to hear, receive and give birth to the Word of God.

On the Third Sunday in Advent(B) we hear the prophetic words of the prophet Isaiah from chapter 61 saying that God has sent him "to bring glad tidings to the poor; to heal the heartbroken, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a



day of vindication by our God." I recently read a story in which I believe this Word was heard, received and then born into our society.

The story took place in a small town in Iowa. A young woman had come home for spring break with a friend from her college. Whitney, the young woman, went to the 7-Eleven to buy gas for a drive with her friend to a local hot springs. As she was pumping the gas another car came into the 7-Eleven at a very high speed. The speeding car hit a pick-up truck, which was then pushed into the gas pump. The pump tumbled over onto Whitney, pinning her against her car. A fire erupted and Whitney was burned to death.

The speeding driver, who was taking prescription medication, later told the police she "could have confused the accelerator with the brake." The speeding driver was also a young woman with small children. Her husband was in the army and stationed at nearby Fort Carson.

In court the police investigation revealed negligence on the part of the speeding driver. The judge told her in open court he thought she belonged in jail. Everyone involved in the case was clear that the young mother was guilty.

When the judge was preparing to sentence the young woman Whitney's parents asked the judge for mercy. They asked that the young woman not be sentenced to prison. Whitney's parents became advocates for the young woman and her children. The parents said that the young children would suffer with a mother

in prison. Whitney's father said "One way she can make amends to us is to be a good mother." The released woman was overcome with gratitude. Whitney's parents brought glad tidings to children, released a prisoner and set a captive free. They had heard, received and gave birth to God's liberating word.

In November, 1989, six Jesuit priests, all professors at the University of Central America in El Salvador, were assassinated by soldiers from the Salvadoran army. The woman who worked for them as a cook and her young daughter were also murdered. At the time of this assassination the government of the United States was giving the oppressive government of El Salvador a million dollars a day in aid. Much of this money went to the Salvadoran military and almost all of the military leadership was trained by the United States military.

A dear friend of mine, Armando Lopez, was one of the Jesuits who was murdered. The Salvadoran army quickly moved to cover up the slayings aided in the cover up by right wing politicians in this country.

On 16 November 2009, 20 years after the assassinations, the new president of El Salvador, Mauricio Funes, called upon his nation "to pull back a heavy veil of darkness and lies to let in the light of justice and truth"

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in relation to the Jesuit assassinations. The new Defense Minister General David Munquía Payes said on the same date that the army was prepared to ask for forgiveness and that he was willing to open military archives to judicial investigators. Both President Funes and General Payes are Christians who have heard, received and are in the process of giving birth to God's liberating Word in El Salvador.

Advent and Christmas call us to hear, receive and give birth to God's Word in our world. Our journey toward the reign of God, the liberation of God's creation, depends in large part upon our faithfulness to this calling. Let us pray that during Advent and Christmas we may be willing to follow the example of Mary and again give birth to God's liberating Word in our world.

Pax, The Rev. Canon Henry L. Atkins, Jr.

Stewardship Recap *by Anne Kelly, Committee Co-Chair*



Margie Mullen and I would like to thank everyone in the congregation who participated in the recent stewardship campaign.

As most of you know, we are in the second of a three-year stewardship program called New Consecration Sunday. This program encourages us to make a conscious and prayerful decision about what percentage of our income God is calling us to give to our community of faith here at St. Michaels. As a parish, we believe that our giving is an expression of thanks to God for all of God's blessings, a recognition that all we have is from God, and an understanding that we have been blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.

As of mid-November, we have received 82 pledges compared to 85 last year. Since there are several current members who have not (yet) renewed their pledge, we still hope to meet and perhaps exceed the number of pledges we received last year.

The total amount pledged this year is \$211,355 compared to \$238,385 last year. Despite the poor economy and the hardships that are being experienced by many in our congregation, we have much to be grateful for: we received 20 new pledges this year and 31 people increased the amount of their pledge.

A special thanks to the New Consecration Sunday Leadership Team members: Rodney Dickson, Leslie Chapman-Rose, Ron Schwartz, and Martha Shaw for their participation and guidance, and to Nancy Bullock, our Guest Leader again this year, for her wise counsel and encouragement. We also thank the Vestry for their support and Father Atkins for reminding us that "generosity is a major characteristic of spiritual wholeness."

Solar Outreach Update *by Betsy Foldes Meiman, Committee Chair*

Our solar panel system on the parish hall is delivering as promised. The last spread sheet Duane sent me on our electric bill through November, showed that we have on average used 30% less kWh. Unfortunately, due to the increase in electricity costs from last year, less usage does not correlate into as high a percentage of savings on our bill. I will total that at the end of the year.

The Solar Outreach Project has \$2,350 banked from donations and the benefit of performance of Betsy Hailey's *A Woman of Independent Means* with Susan Clark.

In his coverage of the Healthy Air, Healthy Communities Family Fair at Valley College, Troy Anderson of the Daily News gave us five paragraphs in his article calling St. Mike's "innovative".

Absolutely Solar has been estimating solar installations on several charities (no matter how many I ask for!) and I have been contacting others to find out their viability. For a charity to be viable, they must own their building or have a 25 year or more lease. Our old friend MEND is a perfect candidate, but their building is huge. We'd have to raise \$52,000. The after rebate price. I thought we had found our first project in The Greater West Hollywood Food Coalition (GWHFC). The cost for their building would have been an achievable \$13,000 dollars but we are on hold until the landlord agrees to a longer lease.

Penny Landreth of the GWHC will be the speaker for Bioneers SFV on December 9th. I am disappointed that we will not be able to go ahead with their building as I feel they are a very good match in spirit and initiative for St. Mikes. Ted and Penny Landreth started their operation in 1987 as a church social outreach program feeding people out of the trunk of their car. Their operation today feeds 150 people a night. UCLA medical students have teamed up with them and bring a clinic van every night. A group of volunteer lawyers have also joined in to help navigate and expedite the legal system for the clients of the GWHFC. Please join us at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall to be inspired by what can be achieved when we reach out in spirit.

Just in time for Christmas shopping, Melissa Basta and I are selling necklaces to benefit The Solar Outreach Project. Each and every one is handcrafted by either Melissa or myself from sterling silver based on Melissa's "origami sun" design and are one of a kind. There are two prices, one is \$50 (medallion only on leather string) and the other is \$75 (sterling chain with semiprecious gemstones). I will post pictures on the website soon. Or you can see Melissa or myself after church.



Catherine Lincoln, Fr. Atkins, Blase Bonpane, Susan Clark, Betsy Meiman and Melissa Basta at the November 11 Bioneers event.



From the Vestry *Betty Ferrell, Senior Warden; John Pryor, Junior Warden*

Gratitude

The season of Thanksgiving provides a time to pause and give thanks for the blessings of our lives. We often reflect on the blessings of our family, friends and our health, pausing to be grateful even this Thanksgiving, amidst a difficult financial year for many. This time of year is a reminder that we are still among the richest of all people

in the world and our daily lives are blessed in many ways. Thanksgiving is also a time to be grateful that we are a part of a wonderful parish family, a source of spiritual blessing.

On December 12th, St. Michael's will host our annual *Holiday Cheer!* event, welcoming some of the poorest of mothers and children into our parish home for a day of

food, fun, and escape from daily lives, very different than most of our own. We invite everyone to participate in this ministry. It will be a day of gratitude for the richness of our lives and knowing that it is "in giving, that we receive".

*Betty Ferrell, Senior Warden
John H. Pryor, Jr., Junior Warden*



Treasurer's Corner *by Margie Mullen, Treasurer*

October, 2009 – Revenues and Expense Summary

	October Actual	October Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Total Revenues:	\$33,229	\$30,811	\$289,222	\$321,249
Total Expenses:	\$52,836	\$50,594	\$394,689	\$444,666
Net Total:	(\$19,607)	(\$19,783)	(\$105,467)	(\$123,417)

There are two parts to each budget: projected income and projected expenses. The finance committee finished the expense part of it and the Vestry approved it at the November meeting. The income part is short \$10,000 in order to get the deficit below (\$100,000). When that \$10,000 shows up in pledges or other expected income, the finance committee will sign off on it and the Vestry will approve it at the December meeting.

Repeating what was written last month, our preliminary goal is to reduce our budgeted deficit from (\$145,756) in 2009 to a budgeted deficit in 2010 to less than (\$100,000). For those of you who are newer to the parish, the budgeted deficit in 2007 was (\$309,000), in 2008 it was (\$222,056), and in 2009 it is (\$145,756). Another drop to (\$100,000) means an improvement of \$209,000 over three years.

In just expenses, our budgeted expenses in 2009 were \$531,440. For 2010, the Vestry approved \$465,296. Unfortunately, in order to get to these numbers, we had to notify Lauren Azeltine, in the office and Ellen Gerstell, the children's choral director that their employment will not continue into

2010. There were many other smaller reductions too, in order to reduce the final numbers, but none of them as painful as having to give up Lauren and Ellen.

Lauren, in particular, has been with SMAA since September, 2005, and she has been responsible for helping create our website, maintaining it, editing and publishing the monthly newsletter, creating and publishing the weekly "This Week at St. Michael's," creating flyers for our numerous events and being the friendly voice that greets you on the phone and at the parish office door. We are very grateful to Lauren for all she has contributed and we greatly regret that we cannot continue to keep her.

Although Ellen has been with us a shorter time, the Choristers last appearance is testament to the work she has done and we thank her.

There will be more information in the coming month that will talk about some of the changes that will result in our cost reductions.

Margie Mullen, Treasurer

2009 Donations

Please be aware that all donations received in the parish office, or postmarked on or before December 31, 2009, will be credited to your 2009 donations. Monies recieved or postmarked after this date will be credited to 2010.

Offering Envelopes

For those of you who requested offering envelopes, please remember to pick up your packet on Sunday morning. By doing so, you will save the parish almost \$3.00 in postage.

Quotation for December

"Somehow, not only for Christmas but all the long year through, the joy that you give to others is the joy that comes back to you. And the more you spend in blessing the poor and lonely and sad, the more of your heart's possessing returns to you glad."

John Greenleaf Whittier (American Writer, 1807-1892)



The Calendar

December, 2009

Sunday Schedule

- Sunday Services are 8:00 AM (no choir) and 10:30 AM (with choir) in the Sanctuary.
- Sunday School (Godly Play, Middle School, Sr. High, and Adult Forums) and Adult Choir begin for all ages at 9:30 am.
- Children's Church begins at 10:30 in the Purple Room and the children are brought into Eucharist for the Peace.
- Choirsters meet in the Music Room at 10:30 am, and the children are brought into Eucharist for the Peace (unless otherwise noted).
- Coffee Hour immediately follows the 10:30 AM service unless otherwise noted.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10:00 AM Staff Meeting (CO) 7:00 PM Executive Committee (CO) 7:30 PM Community Outreach Projects Committee (UR)	2	3 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (CR)	4 Diocesan Convention	5 Diocesan Convention
6 The Second Sunday of Advent Women's Care Cottage Clothing Collection 9:00 AM Men's Group Morning Prayer Studio City Convalescent Hospital 12:15 PM Healing Prayer (MG)	7	8 10:00 AM Staff Meeting (CO) 7:00 PM Finance Committee (CO)	9 7:00 PM Bioneers (PH)	10 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (CR)	11 12:00 NOON Fourth Quarter (CO)	12 10:00 AM Holiday Cheer! 09 (PH)
13 The Third Sunday of Advent	14	15 10:00 AM Staff Meeting (CO) 7:00 PM Vestry Meeting (UR) <i>January '10 Newsletter Articles DUE</i>	16	17 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (CR)	18	19 11:15 AM Liturgical Committee (CO)
20 The Fourth Sunday of Advent 10:30 AM Advent Lessons and Carols (S) 12:30 PM TBD Youth Group (YL)	21	22 10:00 AM Staff Meeting (CO)	23 7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal (CR)	24 Christmas Eve Parish Office Closed 4:00 PM Pageant Rehearsal 5:00 PM Eucharist & Pageant 8:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 10:00 PM Eucharist with Choir	25 Christmas Day Parish Office Closed 10:00 AM Eucharist	26
27 8:00 & 10:30 AM Eucharist NO Christian Education (all ages) NO Choir Rehearsals (all ages)	28 Parish Office Closed 10:00 AM & 7:00 PM Prayer Shawl Knitting Groups (FR) (tentative)	29	30	31 New Year's Eve Parish Office Closed	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><i>Locations:</i> CO: Church Office CR: Choir Room FR: Fireside Room PH: Parish Hall UR: Upper Room YL: Youth Lounge S: Sanctuary</p> </div>	

GOINGS ON AT ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH



Father Atkins with our newest members baptized into the household of God, Rachel and Rebecca Albert-Hendley.

Thanksgiving for a Job Well Done

To: **Kathleen Taylor** and the **Healing Prayer Gathering**, for working in the gardens on All Saints' Day;
Betsy Meiman for her ongoing work cleaning our solar panels;
Betsy Hailey, for carrying on the work of the Social Justice Committee and representing St. Michael's at so many important events;
and **Everyone** for bringing much-needed food for the Interfaith Food Pantry on Sundays.

Please give these individuals heartfelt thanks for their contributions.

In the months that follow, the Vestry will continue to recognize the gifts of work and time that help keep St. Michael's a beautiful and useful campus, and a thriving parish.

Always-Needed Food Pantry Items

*Canned fruit and vegetables.
Baby food in plastic jars.
Tuna.
Peanut butter in plastic jars.
Powdered milk in individual packets.
Individual size snacks.
Bags of dry beans and rice.
Plastic and paper shopping bags.
Diapers and feminine hygiene items.
Travel-size soap, toothpaste & disposable razors.
And money!*

December Birthdays

Day	Name
1	Mary Ann Jacobson Hallie Walker
7	John Freis
9	Stormie Bookhard
14	Anna Magers
15	Laz Meiman
17	Jenifer Schmutz
19	Preston Fray Willie Pryor
21	Phyllis Bracey
23	Meg Pryor
24	Sarah Dougherty
25	Amy Byrd Matthew Aukee
28	Tati Hithe Avery Wright
29	Cliff Dektar Ed Sugar

December Anniversaries

Day	Name
5	Kendra & Jeff Walker
10	Marjie & Jay Hathaway
28	Barbara & Wesley King

Should you be listed here? Or, if you wish to leave your birthday or anniversary unpublished, give the church office a call or e-mail (lauren@stmikessc.org) to let us know. *Please Note: Birthdays and Anniversaries will be celebrated on the last Sunday of each month.*

Read the MIKE Online! All you do is go to the website, www.stmikessc.org, and click on "THE MIKE ONLINE." Back issues are available there as well. And while you're at the web site, you can shop at Amazon.com through its link. St. Mike's gets a small rebate for each purchase made through this link.

January 2010 MIKE Deadline: Please send copy and/or pictures via e-mail to lauren@stmikessc.org by Tuesday, December 15. If you don't have a computer, bring your articles to the Parish Office by that time.



Loose Ends *By the Rev. Catherine Wagar*

Steven's* age was not apparent to me when we met. He is in the last stages of AIDS, so he could be forty or he could be sixty-five. He is quite thin, wears a cap to keep his head warm, and has lost several teeth. He resides in a locked room on the medical unit at Twin Towers, the County Jail in downtown LA, and his story is a little sketchy. From what he has told me, he is in jail because of parole violations—of what type he didn't say—but hopes to be released to home care around Thanksgiving because he is bedridden most of the time. He has a wheelchair, but during the several weeks in which I have visited him, he seems to use it less and less.

When we first met, he wheeled over to the door of his room—it was locked and the deputy said they were too short-staffed to allow me inside (a deputy would have to stand guard outside, he said, if I were to visit Steven in his room). So we talked through the door, which has windows that are so thick that it is hard to hear what is being said on the other side. I asked him how he was doing, and he said he was "right with God" but not yet "right with himself". When I asked him what he meant, he explained that there are some things he felt he needed to fix before he would feel okay in himself. We talked for a while, and he told me some of the specifics. I said that it seemed as if there were some things he felt he needed to finish, and he said, "Yes, that's right".

I am learning that chaplaincy at Twin Towers is largely a ministry of presence. When I go there on Wednesday afternoons, at a threshold level, simply being present seems like it's a good thing. Sometimes PRISM's Senior Chaplain, Dennis Gibbs, and I walk the cell blocks (called "pods") together, stopping, door by door, to talk with people—always through the glass—and it seems as if there is very little we can do except just be there. There is not much that can be "fixed". We take paperback books, magazines with the staples removed (Dennis says staples can be used to do tattooing, so they are not allowed), and religious pamphlets of various kinds, as well as writing paper, envelopes and golf pencils. Whatever we have, we push under the doors and the prisoners seem glad to receive them.

We never know from one week to the next whether people we have visited one week will be in the same place next week. Some are relocated to different areas at Twin Towers, or go to court, and are sentenced and transferred to prisons somewhere else in California. So, visiting is not only a "ministry of presence", it's a ministry of presence measured in moments, not necessarily days or weeks. Still, our encounters are enriching and often cut through surface veneers to more essential issues: concerns about families and children, worry about court processes and sentencing, confusion about how lives can be put back together if/when people get out. Sometimes, when we suggest it, or when we are asked, we pray with the prisoners about what they tell us, and we entrust them to the loving God, the God who promises second chances to people who earnestly intend to turn their lives onto a better path.

In speaking about some of the concerns that he did not feel right about, Steven told me about his long-time friend, David*, a man with cerebral palsy whom Steven had been caring for before he went back to jail. The story was told with great regret, because David had been forced to go to a nursing care facility, but Steven had intended to bring him back home and care for him. Now Steven's incarceration, as well as his health, would no longer permit him to do so. I asked whether Steven had been able to be in contact with David, but Steven said he did not have a telephone number for him, although he knew the name and approximate location of the nursing home where he was staying. I suggested that Steven might think about writing David a letter to tell him how much he regretted not being able to care for him in the way he had intended. Steven thought this was a very good idea; I offered to try to find the address of the nursing home and to make sure he got it.

In the evening after I arrived home from my visit to Steven, I located David's nursing home easily on the web, and sent Dennis an email with the contact information. Dennis took it, together with writing paper, envelopes and a pencil, back to Steven in the clinic on the day after we had talked. When I stopped in to say hello a week later, Steven told me that he had written a long letter to David, saying all the things on his mind and telling him how much his friendship had meant. Then Steven looked at me and said, "My medical situation is the same this week, but my heart is a whole lot better." He smiled from his bed, and silently I gave thanks to God that some things left undone can, after all, be encouraged toward completion. Next week, when I go back to visit, we'll see what else is on Steven's list.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of those described.

St. Michael's Community Outreach Projects Committee
 Bawties You to Be a Part of

Holiday Cheer! 2009

Saturday, December 12th
 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

We Need Volunteers & Donations for One of Our
BIGGEST
 Events of the Year!

Benefitting: **MEND**
(Meeting Each Need With Dignity)
 & **Women's Care Cottage**
 & **Good Shepherd Shelters**
(for Women and Children)

Bring the Whole Family!
FREE Parking
 in 2 Big Lots!

Decorate Cookies, Make Crafts, Sing Christmas Songs, Play Games!
 Cooks, Giftwrappers, & Cleaner-Uppers are ALL Welcome!

Questions? Call Jane Wilson, 818.343.8438 • e-mail: project@stmikessc.org

ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
 3646 COLDWATER CANYON AVE., STUDIO CITY, CA 91604
 818.763.9193 • WWW.STMIKESSC.ORG

2009 Christmas Flowers and Greens

Soon the Altar Guild will be decorating our church Sanctuary with evergreens and poinsettias for the celebration of the birth of the Christ child. If you would like to remember a loved one or honor a person with a donation to this Christmas celebration, please fill in the form below (or the form placed in the Sunday bulletins) and place it in the offering plate or return it to the parish office with your check, marked "Christmas Flowers" on the memo line. Any monetary donation is accepted. Please turn in this request by **Sunday, December 13th** so that we may be sure to include your dedication in the Christmas bulletin. Thank you.



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND GREENS

Given (check one): _____ in loving memory of _____ in honor of _____ in thanksgiving for

Text (please print): _____

Given by: _____

Telephone: _____

\$ Amount: _____

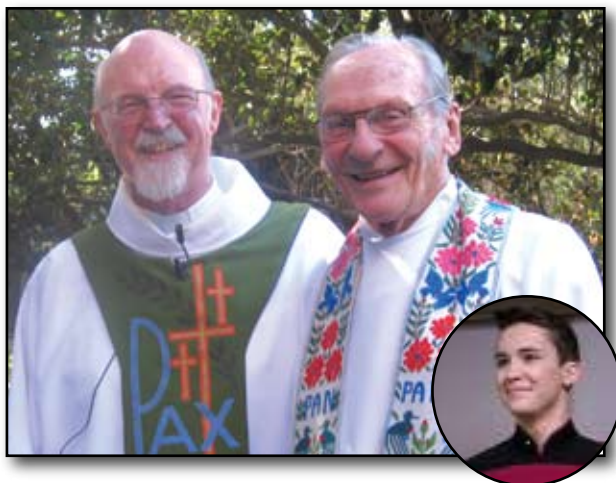
Check # _____

If paying by credit card, please check one box:

VISA MC AMEX Discover

Card no. _____ Exp. Date: _____

Authorized Signature _____



Erratum: In the November issue of THE MIKE, Father Atkins is pictured here with Father Philip Wheaton, not the actor, Will Wheaton.



St. Mike's own Lauren Azeltine pictured here at the Interfaith Power and Light Energy Oscars in San Francisco, where St. Michael's was nominated for the Solar Panel Project, along with Allis Druffel, Southern California Outreach Director for California IPL, and her associate and volunteer for the organization, Victor Valdez.

Get THE MIKE in COLOR!

Go to: <http://www.stmikessc.org/THE MIKE>
online and click on the month you want to view.

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Vision Statement

We are a welcoming and evolving community of conscience engaged in the renewal of our faith by embracing diversity and encouraging growth through prayer, scholarship, social action, and artistic endeavor.

Our Mission Priority

Our mission priority is to focus on the United Nations' First Millennium Goal: To eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.