



# The Mike

The Newsletter of St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Studio City, CA

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 1 • February 2015

## Growth Groups

By the Reverend Dan Justin

**W**hen we read the book of Acts we are presented with a picture of the church as a community of shared goods. The church was a place where people lived together in significant relationships, caring for one another, and growing in faith together. We have a wonderful parish here at St. Michael's. In many ways we reflect that vision of church seen in the scriptures. We are a people from diverse backgrounds. We come together each week to worship, learn, and grow spiritually. But there is a problem. Most of us only gather on Sundays. Our church services are participatory in that we all sing and pray together. But there is not much opportunity for sharing personal stories or reflecting on what we have heard in the sermon or in the readings. However, the opportunity to talk, share, reflect, and interact is essential for spiritual growth. How do we fix this? I think the answer might be Growth Groups.

What is a Growth Group? It is a small group of people, usually ten to twelve people, who gather in a host's home each week over the course of six weeks. The group has a leader who facilitates conversation. The topic of conversation is the content of the sermon from the previous Sunday. Growth Groups provide the opportunity to share, reflect, and interact which is so essential to spiritual growth. While the topic of the conversation is the sermon, the primary benefit is the opportunity for personal interaction and the friendships that develop.

Most people join a church for two primary reasons: to grow spiritually and to connect with a community. That is why these groups make sense. They meet both needs.

**T**his past fall twelve people gathered at the home of Peter Juzwiak and Don DeRose. Jenni Hernandez led the group. This was our trial run to see if people liked the experience of Growth Groups. The group met for six weeks. Each week they would listen to the sermon on Sunday. They would receive a few questions about the sermon to reflect on

and bring to the group for discussion. After six weeks passed I met with the group to see what they thought of the experience. Every member said they enjoyed the group. In fact, they liked it so much they decided to meet for



six more weeks in the spring. They all talked about how much fun they had and how helpful it was to have the opportunity to talk and reflect on what they heard in church. Most importantly, they talked about how nice it was to come together, develop

friendships, and walk the road of spiritual growth together. I was thrilled to hear about their positive experience. In fact, I was so excited that the church is now planning a second Growth Group.

This second group is currently forming. It will meet at the home of Ron and Denise Schwartz. Maureen MacReady will be the group leader. Meetings will begin at 7:30 pm and never go

later than 9:00 pm. This group will be meeting on Wednesday evenings, beginning on February 25th. What a great idea for a Lenten devotion—join a Growth Group.

Does this sound like something you would be interested in doing? The group is forming now. This group currently has four members. Groups should never be larger than twelve people. If you are interested please send me a message at [rector@stmikessc.org](mailto:rector@stmikessc.org) as soon as possible. I will connect you to the group.

Eventually I hope to see Growth Groups springing up all over the place. Please be sure to let me know if you would like to host or lead a Growth Group. I am happy to explore how we can make that happen.

These groups are an easy way to connect with community, make friends, and grow spiritually. I hope you will consider this wonderful opportunity.

Blessings,  
Dan+

## A Holy Lent

**O**n February 18th I will stand before the congregation and invite you, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent. What exactly is Lent and how can we make it holy? For many, Lent is a season of giving up chocolate or exercising more than normal, or not watching as much television. But all of those things can be fairly meaningless if we do not understand why we are doing them. I have also heard it said that Lent is that season of the church year when we remember just how bad we are. Some assume Lent is all about our sinfulness and therefore a need to grovel before God. But that too is a misunderstanding. Focusing on giving things up or just on how bad of people we are is actually the opposite of a holy Lent.

The season of Lent, in the history of the church, was the final period of preparation for those who were soon to be baptized in the church. This period of preparation was marked by prayer, fasting, and acts of service as the new converts sought to live more like the example Jesus provides.

See *LENT*, page 2



# Lent

from page 1

Our prayer book indicates that Lent was also a time "For those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful, were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church." Lent was the time to come back to Church after falling away for some reason. It was a time to seek forgiveness.

So Lent, according to the prayer book, is about preparing for baptism, reconciliation, and restoration. Three wonderful and beautiful things that all communicate the unmerited and free grace of a God who promises that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Why then do we think that Lent is all about sin and reminding ourselves of our depravity? That is not the message of Lent at all. The message of Lent is the message that "God so loved the world that God gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). It is because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that these three wonderful and beautiful things, adoption as God's children in baptism, reconciliation, and restoration, are available to us. Jesus brings God's salvation to us freely. But it came with a price.

And so this year I invite you to a holy Lent. Not a Lent in which you give up things just for the sake of giving them up, nor a Lent in which you beat yourself up over a list of vices. But rather, a holy Lent which takes time to remember the gift of Jesus. A holy Lent where you focus on your relationship with God and growth in faith through things like self-examination, prayer, fasting, self-denial, reading, and reflecting on God's holy Word,

and yes, even repentance. And we do these things because we know that God freely offers adoption, reconciliation, and restoration. The message of Lent is good news. God loves us; God made a way for us; God has redeemed us. We join the pilgrim road of Lent, walking with Jesus as he gives his life for the life of the world. Through our Lenten disciplines we identify with the sufferings of Jesus, experiencing and living into his amazing love. And our goal is to learn to live like our Lord, Master, and Savior lived. That, my friends, will be a holy Lent indeed.

Blessings,

Dan+

## Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday

Lent is upon us. All members of the parish are invited to our annual **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper!** We will gather on **Tuesday, February 17th, at 6:30 pm** in the Ministry Center. Volunteers from the parish will be preparing a pancake feast—including our famous Monkey Pancakes. There will be family fun for the kids with Mardi Gras masks, games, and a parade. You won't want to miss it.

**Ash Wednesday** will be observed on **Wednesday, February 18th**, with services at **12:00 noon and 7:00 pm**. The imposition of ashes will be available at both services.

## New Vestry Members and Officers

At the 2015 Annual Meeting on January 18th, the congregation elected four new Vestry members. Tina Wilson, Diane Ballowe, Amber Russo, and Alex Morales. I am very excited about the gifts and talents these four people bring to the Vestry. I thank them for their willingness to serve in this important role.

There are four officers of the Vestry who are either appointed by the rector or elected by the Vestry. The appointed positions are Senior Warden and Clerk of the Vestry. The elected positions are Junior Warden and Treasurer. I have appointed Tina Wilson to serve as Senior Warden. I believe her background and experience will make Tina invaluable in this position. I am looking forward to working with her as we look to the future and set goals for the new year. Ron Schwartz was elected to be your Junior Warden. This position is sometimes called the People's Warden. Ron is a constant source of wisdom and support. I am thrilled he will continue in this position.

Jenni Hernandez was elected by the Vestry to be our Treasurer. Jenni has a strong background in finance and will do a wonderful job in this role. She has been a member of the Finance Committee for the past two years. She will now lead that committee. I look forward to working closely with Jenni as we move forward.

Jane Mason has volunteered to serve as our new Clerk of the Vestry. As Clerk she will take minutes at Vestry meetings and represent the Vestry by signing official documents as required by the Diocese and the Episcopal Church. The Clerk is not a voting member of the Vestry. I think Jane will do a great job as Clerk.

We have a strong Vestry. I am confident we have selected able, spirit-led leaders to partner with me as we seek to follow where God is leading.

Blessings,  
Dan+

### February Birthdays

Day	Name
5	Donald Robertson
8	Peter Juzwiak
14	Patrick Holder
15	David Basta
	Jon Albert
16	Ron Schwartz
20	Meredith Reese
	Naomi Fox
21	Anaïs Rodriguez
28	Michael Rodriguez

### 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 administrator@stmikessc.org to let us know. Please Note: Birthdays and Anniversaries will be celebrated on the last Sunday of each month.

## Treasurer's Corner

### December 2014—Revenue and Expense Summary

	December Actual	December Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Total Revenue	\$ 50,372	\$ 36,067	\$477,427	\$432,809
Total Expense	63,848	36,065	477,427	432,787
Net	\$ (13,476)	\$ 2	\$ 0	\$ 22



This year at our Annual meeting, I was humbled to be elected on to the Vestry and given the honor of serving this community as your Senior Warden. While I have been here at Saint Michael and All Angels, I have had the pleasure of sharing my story with many people. However, as a new member of the Vestry, I feel it may be important to share a little about myself with the congregation as a whole.



I was raised in Oxnard, CA for most of my life, but due to my father's naval military career, we were transferred to other parts of the country. My parents were Roman Catholic, and I was raised in that faith. As an adult, I searched for a church community that would meet my emotional needs. While I felt connected to the Catholic Church, it did not meet my spiritual needs. When my wife and I adopted our three children from Russia in 2002, the need to find a spiritual home grew increasingly stronger. We felt that they needed to be raised to believe in God and understand His word. We tried many churches, finally agreeing that the Episcopal Church would be the best foundation for them and for our family. In December of 2012, we found Saint Michael and All Angels Church. It took only moments to realize we had found a home. The members of this church were welcoming, caring, and understanding. We knew immediately our long search had ended.

It is this feeling of great spiritual understanding and love that I hope to bring to the congregation and the surrounding communities as I work with Father Dan and the members of the Vestry. I am continuously thankful for the blessings of the amazing individuals who are a part of the vibrant faith

community at St. Michael's, for the spiritual leadership and guidance of Father Dan, the leadership of the Vestry both past and present, and the fellowship of this parish.

On February 6-7 the Vestry will hold its annual retreat. A part of our work will be to discuss the needs of our parish as well as the special contributions that each member of the Vestry brings to the team. Vestry members will have the opportunity to be paired with the parish ministry that best aligns with their own talents and passions. We will also look for ways to best identify and articulate our mission as members of this faith community. I pray that my contribution will give leadership to the Vestry as we set plans for 2015. The mission and vision that have been set forth at St. Michael's is clear and will continue to thrive as we convert those words into powerful, doable short and long term goals, with measurable action steps which will empower each of us to do the work that God has called us to do.

I look forward to celebrating the faith that binds us together, continuing our vision, measuring our growth as we welcome in the new, embrace where we have been, and sustain a vibrant, strong church that embraces diversity and encourages growth through prayer, scholarship, social action, and artistic endeavor. I am excited to work with each of you as we begin a new year. I hope that you will take the opportunity to share your suggestions, passions, and concerns. On behalf of the Vestry Members, thank you for your commitment to St. Michael's and for all you do to keep it strong.

A very good friend of mine from college once pulled me aside and told me that she was worried, because it was almost Ash Wednesday and she still hadn't figured out what to give up for Lent. I informed her that she, as a person of the Jewish faith, wasn't really required to give up anything for Lent. "Oh," she replied excitedly, "everyone gives up something for Lent. It's like a New Year's resolution."

I used to think Lenten disciplines were like New Year's resolutions as well, which was probably why they didn't deepen my connection with God at all. Over the years, I've given up coffee, sweets, and other *things*. But I was significantly changed one Lent when I decided to give up holding grudges. It had occurred to me that I held a lot of them, and I suspected that grasping onto bitterness might not be beneficial to me.

While I was not able to successfully let go of my anger that Lent—this work can be so difficult!—it did start me on a positive journey. And I gained a deeper understanding of what Lent is. It is not for giving up our emotional crutches, it is for letting go of them and their

## A Lenten Reflection

By Eliza Diliberti



hold on us completely. The true work of Lent is much harder than passing on chocolate or caffeine (admirable goals they may be). It requires the healing of old wounds, the death of harmful coping mechanisms that stand in the way of true growth, and the eventual courage to be reborn in Christ—to enter into an authentic relationship with God.

Rebirth is always preceded by some sort of death. Lent is a time to let go of and let die our connection to whatever gets in the way of our

salvation, be it a thing, a behavior, or a way of thinking. Grieve, if you must. Lent is the time to experience the pain of loss, even for things that ultimately hurt us. Each year the Christian calendar sets aside a time specifically for this type of spiritual work, knowing that after a period of loss and mourning for our old selves, we will be restored—through God—to new life come Easter.

And if, perhaps, the work proves too difficult to complete over the set period, our Lenten journey has at least illuminated the work that we need to do and the healing that lies ahead. If nothing else, we can learn to acknowledge our wounds and sins so that they no longer hold the mystery and power they once did.

"Remember that you are but dust, and to dust you shall return," reminds the priest who places dusty ashes onto our foreheads on Ash Wednesday. We are dust. Our worldly lives are fragile and short. This Lent, let us learn how to live each precious moment in the fullness of God's love. May we let go of doubt and fear, and instead embrace our faith in redemption and restoration. At Easter, we, too, can be revived.

# The Bishop is Coming

**S**t. Michael's is preparing for our next Episcopal Visitation. That is the Sunday when one of our Diocesan bishops visits the parish. This year we will welcome the Rt. Rev. Diane Jardine Bruce, one of our two Bishops Suffragan, on **Sunday, April 19, 2015**. Bishop Bruce will preside and preach at our services that morning.

A bishop's visit also provides the opportunity for Confirmation and/or Reception. This sacramental rite carries multiple meanings. Confirmation and Reception is how one officially becomes a member of the Episcopal Church if they have come to the church from a different tradition. People confirmed in other Christian denominations by a bishop, such as Roman Catholics, Orthodox, or Lutherans, are received into the Episcopal Church. People who have never been Confirmed in another tradition, or in a tradition without bishops, such as Presbyterian, Baptist, or Congregationalist, will be confirmed.

Those who were baptized in an Episcopal Church (or any other tradition) as an infant may also wish to be confirmed. In this instance confirmation is the opportunity for an individual to confirm the promises made on their behalf at their baptism.

If you are interested in either Confirmation or Reception please be sure to let me know. The Rev. Stefanie Wilson and Bill Wright are team teaching a Confirmation Class for younger members of the parish. I will be leading a class for adults seeking Confirmation or Reception. If you are interested or have questions please send me a message at [rector@stmikessc.org](mailto:rector@stmikessc.org). I would love to speak with you about all of this.

Blessings,  
Dan+

**T**he proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist.

*Gregory the Great (540-604)*

## A New Adult Learning Opportunity Begins

**O**n **Sunday, February 1st**, our 9:15 am Sunday Bible Study will begin a new topic. We will return to the Old Testament with a study of the book of Ecclesiastes. Explore with us the fabled Wisdom of Solomon in this fascinating and poetic book. Our first gathering will provide an introduction and overview of the book. A reading schedule will be provided. If you have never participated in the 9:15 am Bible Study you are really missing out. We have a lot of fun as we explore the scriptures together. If you have any questions please see Fr. Dan.

## About the Bishop

### The Right Reverend Diane Jardine Bruce

**T**he Rt. Rev. Diane M. Jardine Bruce was elected seventh bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles on December 4, 2009, after having served 10 years as rector of St. Clement's by-the-Sea Church in San Clemente, California. The first woman to be elected bishop in diocesan history, she was ordained to the episcopate on May 15, 2010.

Bishop Bruce's areas of specialization include multicultural ministries, stewardship, and oversight of the congregations in the southern third of the Diocese.

Bishop Bruce became rector of the San Clemente parish in 2000. She was previously associate rector of the Church of the Messiah, Santa Ana, California. Prior to ordination she served Wells Fargo Bank as vice president, compensation management and analysis. She was employed by Wells Fargo (formerly Crocker Bank) in various capacities since 1980.

Ordained a priest in 1998 in the Diocese of Los Angeles, Bishop Bruce speaks Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese as well as English. She holds a doctoral degree from Seabury-Western Seminary (awarded in May 2011) as well as a master of divinity degree from the Claremont School of Theology and a bachelor's degree in linguistics from the University of California at Berkeley.

A native of Pequannock, New Jersey, Bishop Bruce is married to G. Stephen (Steve) Bruce, a computer software engineer. The Bruces have two adult children—a son, Max, and a daughter, Jardine.





# The Calendar

February 2015

**Sunday Schedule** • *Sunday Services are 8:00 am (no choir) and 10:30 am (with choir) in the Sanctuary.*  
 • *Adult Learning Opportunity begins at 9:15 in the Ministry Center*  
 • *Sunday School begins at 10:15 with Family Sing in the Ministry Center; the children are brought into Eucharist for the Peace.*  
 • *Coffee Hour immediately follows the 10:30 am service unless otherwise noted.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> Epiphany 4 12:00 noon Youth Group (L) 12:00 noon St. Michael's Outreach (CO)	<b>2</b> Presentation of Our Lord	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (MR)	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> Epiphany 5 10:30 am Youth Confirmation Class (Purple Room)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 7:00 pm Women's Group (FR)	<b>12</b> 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (MR)	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 1:00 pm Concerned United Birthparents (FR)
<b>15</b> Epiphany Last	<b>16</b> <i>Presidents' Day</i>	<b>17</b> 6:30 pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper (MC)	<b>18</b> Ash Wednesday 12:00 noon Holy Eucharist & Imposition of Ashes (S) 7:00 pm Holy Eucharist & Imposition of Ashes (S)	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> Lent 1 10:30 am Youth Confirmation Class (Purple Room) 11:30 am Prayer Shawl Ministry	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> St. Matthias	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (MR)	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

**Locations:**  
 CO Church Office  
 MR Music Room  
 FR Fireside Room  
 MC Ministry Center  
 L The Loft (formerly the stage)  
 S Sanctuary

# St. Michael and All Angels Church

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## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## VESTRY

*Tina Wilson, Senior Warden*  
*Ron Schwartz, Junior Warden*  
*Jenni Hernandez, Treasurer*  
*Jane Mason, Clerk*  
*Karen Andrews*  
*Diane Ballowe*  
*Julie Bellevue*  
*Bill Fields*  
*Gail Green*  
*Janet Kirkpatrick*  
*Alex Morales*  
*Amber Russo*  
*Bill Wright*

## PARISH STAFF

<b>Rector</b>	The Very Rev. Daniel Justin (rector@stmikessc.org)
<b>Priest Associate</b>	The Rev. Stefanie Wilson (wilsons@campbellhall.org)
<b>Director of Music</b>	Kristen Toedtman (kristentoedtman@gmail.com)
<b>Parish Administrator</b>	Duane Steadman (administrator@stmikessc.org)

## THE MIKE STAFF

<b>Publisher</b>	Duane Steadman
<b>Editor</b>	David Connors
<b>Editor Emerita</b>	Soni Wright

## 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.*