



The Mike

The Newsletter of St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Studio City, CA
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What Kind of Secular Are You?

By the Reverend Dan Justin

These days we hear a lot about the decline of the church. Solutions to the problem are being offered left and right. Normally those solutions reflect the personal tastes of the one offering the solution. Those who love contemporary worship think the way to attract more people to church is by offering contemporary worship. Those who have a bent towards social justice think the church should do more to make the world a better place. Those who are drawn to personal spirituality push for more emphasis on prayer and scripture. Those of us who love liturgy and tradition become sticklers for traditional worship. Regardless of the style the solution represents, the goal is finding ways to get more people to come to church. We want people to move from the secular world into the religious world. But is it possible that the goal itself is actually part of the problem?

In 2007 Charles Taylor published *The Secular Age*. This is an enormous tome that is a fairly impenetrable read. And yet, the book and its topic are incredibly important. As a result, James K. A. Smith, a scholar living in Michigan, wrote *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. While still a challenging read, this smaller book presents the ideas and arguments of Taylor in a more manageable package. The book is fascinating. I think it is incredibly important and absolutely worth the time for the church to consider.

What Smith presents is Taylor's journey through the history of how the world became secular and what that exactly means. Taylor suggests there have been three stages of secularity. He names these **Secular₁**, **Secular₂**, and **Secular₃**. Each of these spans a distinct period of history. Each defines what it means to be secular in a unique way. My goal here is to provide a fairly simple explanation of all this.

Secular₁ refers to a time when the world was "enchanted." In other words, it was not really feasible to not believe in God. There was the sacred and the secular. The sacred was made up of places like the church or the

monastery. The secular was a place of danger and exposure. To be outside the walls of the sacred was to be subject to evil forces in the world. Spirits, demons, devils, and curses were all a part of that secular world. Those



all of this begins to change in the wake of the Enlightenment.

who operated in the secular world—bakers, bankers, candlestick makers—needed those who operated in the sacred world—priests and monks—to protect them from these outside forces. The "enchanted world" was a world of transcendence. But

Secular₂ comes into play at this point. In this period, being secular is no longer referred to as an alternative to the sacred. Rather, to be secular is to be areligious. The secular becomes neutral ground. It is no longer the opposite of the sacred; it is the opposite of parochial. Separation of sacred and secular became a value to be desired. During modernity the culture began to see that the sacred and the secular should be kept apart. For example, public schools should be secular. One of the major features of the **Secular₂** Age is what Taylor calls "disenchantment." The modern world no longer fears the attacks of evil, invisible spirits. One of the main developments of this period is that, for the first time in history, not believing in God became a viable option. But history did not stop with this version of what it means to be secular.

Secular₃ is where the world lives now. According to Taylor, "A society is **Secular₃** insofar as religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others." The primary feature of this time is referred to as the "Age of Authenticity." People are seeking that which gives their own personal lives meaning. We are interested in finding what "works for us." We have come to understand that there are many ways—we just

need to find the best one for us. Taylor calls this "The Nova Effect" and refers to these many ways collectively as "The Third Way." There are many third ways. We just have to find our best third way. Sometimes that means picking and choosing from a variety of different ways and fashioning what we like best.

What about that disenchantment that happened in modernity? According to Taylor, the **Secular₃** Age is now haunted by it. The simple fact is that people still long for transcendence. They want the world to be a lovely, beautiful, and enchanted place. The problem for us though is that they are not turning to the church to find that beauty. According to Taylor, the symphony hall and the museum have replaced the cathedral as the location of transcendence.

If Taylor is correct and we live in a **Secular₃** age, it is no wonder the church is in decline. Our churches are structured for a **Secular₂** world. We want people to take time out of their

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Rector

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secular lives and give priority to stepping back into the religious world for an hour or two each week. We ask them to pledge time, talent, and treasure so we can keep this religious (sacred) operation afloat and available. The Church today seems to be stuck in Secular₂ despite the rest of the world having moved on to Secular₃.

So what is the answer? Well, I am not sure I have one. Maybe the church needs to take a hard look at itself and ask some important questions. According to Taylor, a longing for that lost sense of enchantment haunts the culture. How can St. Michael's be a place of beauty and transcendence once again for people? The culture now focuses on authenticity and each person finding their own way. Each person is on his or her own personal journey. This has a tendency to lead to isolation and loneliness. How can St. Michael's be a place that puts greater value on relationship and community? How can we be a place that invites people to journey together?

As I consider all these things I cannot help but think how lucky we are to be Episcopalian (I don't mean that to sound pretentious or

elitist). It seems to me that as the culture changes, our tradition is becoming more and more relevant. We have never sought to have all the answers; rather, we embrace questions. We have always valued beauty, transcendence, and mystery in our worship. We seek to engage all the senses and worship God with our whole selves. We have always valued community and common prayer over individual expressions of spirituality. It might be a bit bold of me, but perhaps the Episcopal Church has been Secular₃ for a long time. Who knew? So why are more people not finding their way to our church? Perhaps it is because we don't tell them about it or invite them. Of course, that may well be a very Secular₂ answer to that question.

If you are interested in all this I highly recommend Smith's book *How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Be sure to let me know if you decide to read it. I would love to discuss it with you.

Blessings,
Dan+

August Birthdays

Day	Name
3	June Van Dusen Alex Morales
4	DJ Fuller
5	Jennifer Best
9	Denise Schwartz
12	Rachel Albert-Hendley Rebecca Albert-Hendley
16	Elizabeth Bartolomea Liam Hobbs
17	Ethan Friedman
21	Owen Campbell
27	Monie Wright
30	Bella Holleman
31	Johan Agerbeek Betsy Hailey

August Anniversaries

Day	Name
14	Cliff & Joan Dektar
30	Tom Hoffman & Sarah Valka

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.

New Theological Seminary of the West Discovery Day to be held at St. Michael's

There is a new commuter seminary opening in Los Angeles. The New Theological Seminary of the West (NTSwest) is approaching theological education in different and exciting ways. They understand that many people are unable to attend traditional, residential seminaries. They also understand that some folks have no interest in ordination or full-time ministry. Some people just want to study and learn more. That is why NTSwest offers classes all over Los Angeles for both those interested in pursuing a career in full-time ministry and for those who just want to go deeper in their understanding of scripture or theology.



NTSwest will host a Discovery Day right here at St. Michael and All Angels on Thursday, August 19th, at 7:00pm. The Rev. Brian Symonds, Director of Admissions, will host the event. The meeting will be held in the Ministry Center. Brian will provide information on various programs and opportunities you may be interested in exploring. There is no need to RSVP. Just show up that evening if you would like to learn more.

While NTSwest has an ecumenical focus, it is a new seminary of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

As you do your weekly grocery shopping, remember these items that are always needed by the North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry

- 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!*

Treasurer's Corner

June 2015—Revenue and Expense Summary

	June Actual	June Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
Total Revenue	\$ 44,380	\$ 37,592	\$ 256,208	\$ 225,552
Total Expense	31,742	37,589	219,195	225,533
Net	\$ 12,638	\$ 3	\$ 37,013	\$ 19



Summer is a slower pace for many of us, and that is true for St. Michael's as well. Our parish ministries wind down for the summer, long warm days and evenings allow for time with family, summer camp, vacations, and fellowship. It is truly a wonderful time for all of us to relax just a little, renew our souls, and to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. We still have the dog days of summer heat ahead, but fall is just around the corner. Soon our children will be returning to school, vacations will end, and our lives will shift from the restfulness of summer to the return of the carpools, heavier traffic, and the coming back together to begin the start of our parish program year.

Our choir will be returning on Sunday, August 23rd, at our 10:30 am service. We are sad to hear that Kristen Toedtman is stepping down as Director of Music for St. Michael's. She has truly been a blessing to our church. Please join us on August 23rd to celebrate her last day and send her off with our blessings as she pursues her music career.

Children's ministries will begin the fall session on August 16th. Our Children's Pastor, Amber Russo, has been diligently prepping and we look forward to exciting lessons, explored in age appropriate ways, and hearing our children share their learnings and insights around our family dinner table!

SoliderCare is coming up August 15th, 16th, and 17th.

Volunteers are still in need. What an amazing way to share the love of God in a real and tangible way with veterans who have given so much in service to their country. For more information, please contact Julie Bellevue.

Another important fall event is the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. This is our time to come together and celebrate our parish home and our parish family. Please watch for more information in the weekly bulletin announcements.

The Vestry is creating a new handout that will better communicate St. Michael's many ministries from Sunday Sack Lunches to the Altar Guild; teaching Sunday School to Bible studies, from SoliderCare to visits to those within our congregation who are unable to join in our Eucharistic celebration. Participation in our ministries allows us to engage, fulfill a passion, and bring us closer in fellowship, while deepening our faith and the work that God calls us to do!

We continue to trust in God's goodness and look to Him to guide and lead us. As we begin a new year, we give thanks for the many blessings with which God has blessed our parish community. Therefore, as we begin our new parish year, we look forward to seeing each of you as we come back together. We invite you to extend an invitation to a neighbor, friend, colleague, or family member to visit us and get to know our St. Michael's community!

Sunday School Is in Session

By Amber Russo, Children's Pastor

I am really looking forward to the new program year for our children. Here at St. Michael's we already have a good program in place. We have some amazing teachers. We have beautiful, newly renovated classrooms. The children here at St. Michael's are kind, intelligent, and eager to learn.

And yet, I can still remember being a kid myself, dragging my feet, begging my mom to let me stay home and watch cartoons on Sunday mornings. Sunday School, from what I remember, was long, boring, and cold. The bargaining chip to get me and my siblings to go without a fuss was the guarantee of McDonald's hash browns after church. Cookies and donut holes at coffee hour helped too.

As the new Children's Pastor, I am sensitive to how kids feel about coming to church. How do we get our children to want to come to church on Sunday without resorting to bargaining chips? How do we make Sunday not feel like school? No kid wants to use up their weekend like that, especially considering they are in "school" Monday through Friday. We only have two short days to relax and do a few household chores before another week

of classes and homework begins. So what can we do?

My idea and commitment is to make the 30-45 minutes that children spend at Sunday School both as fun and as meaningful as possible. This can be achieved through celebration with music, creative ways of learning through exploration and play, and most importantly creating life-long friendships among our peers, families, and mentors. You can look forward to seeing some of these things begin to show up in new ways in our classrooms. And we are working on other new and different ideas as well. More information on those as we work out the details. I am confident that our Sunday School will be a place our children look forward to attending each week. And let's just admit it, a few donut holes might help too!

I've already mentioned that we have some great teachers. But we are always open to more volunteers joining us. If you like children, enjoy teaching (it's easy, no experience necessary), and want to come play with us, contact me at childrenspastor@stmikessc.org. I will give you all the information you need.

Kristen Toedtman Steps Down as Director of Music

After a summer of prayer, conversation, and discernment Kristen has decided the time has come to resign from her position as Director of Music. Kristen has done a stellar job of leading the music program here at St. Michael's. We have been so blessed by her talent and we are sorry to see her move on. Kristen's last Sunday as Director of Music will be Sunday, August 23rd. Please join us that day after the 10:30 am service for a special coffee hour. We will thank Kristen for her ministry with us.

Kristen will be spending more time focusing on her music career. In order to open up more possibilities she will be living both on the East coast and here in LA. That means she will be out of town for many weekends of the year. Luckily she won't be a total stranger. She plans to still sing with the choir on occasion as her schedule permits.

The parish leadership is currently working on a transition plan for this position. We will keep you informed as details emerge. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions.

Blessings,
Dan+

Congratulations to Stefanie!

The Rev. Stefanie Wilson and the Rev. Greg Brown are getting married this August. We are so thrilled for them and wish them heartfelt congratulations. The wedding will take place at Stefanie's home church in Orange County on Saturday, August 22nd.

It has been a busy summer for Stefanie. She has led a trip to Haiti, served as camp chaplain at Camp Stevens, led a youth pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and planned a wedding. I am not sure how she managed all that.

Stefanie will be back with us here at St. Michael's beginning the last week of August. It will be great to see her again and have her back with us here at St. Michael's.

August is Handbell Ministry Month

By Chris Flick

Did you know that August is Handbell Ministry Month here at St. Michael's? We in the St. Michael's Handbell Choir would like to take the month of August to share with the congregation our joy in participating as a part of worship on Sunday Mornings.

On each of the last four Sundays in August, beginning on August 9th, the Handbell Choir will play during the service at either the beginning of Communion, or during the Offertory. Plus, on Sunday August 16th, the service will include a special "Blessing of the Bells" as a part of that Sunday's service. Directly following the conclusion of Mass on each of these four Sundays in August, the bell choir will reassemble in the Ministry Center where there will be the opportunity for everyone to have a "hands-on" experience of what it's like to ring bells.

We invite you to join us in worship, and then join us in the Ministry Center, August 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to our Handbell Choir Director, Polly Davis, or any of our members; Judy Adams, Chris Flick, Gail Green, Peter Juzwiak, and Michael Mitchell.



Rector Elected to MEND's Governing Board

MEND (Meeting Each Need with Dignity) has long been one of St. Michael's outreach partners. Each December they send a busload of kids and their families to participate in our Holiday Cheer event. Over the years many of our parishioners have volunteered at their facility in Pacoima. MEND provides a variety of services including a food bank, clothing store, showers, dental care, medical clinic, vision care, and educational resources. Their clients are the homeless, unemployed, elderly, and needy families who desperately need assistance. Currently MEND is picking up and distributing the sack lunches we put together on the first Sunday of each month. The Mission Statement of MEND reads: With dignity and respect, powered by volunteers, MEND's mission is to break the bonds of poverty by providing basic human needs and a pathway to self-reliance.



This spring I was contacted by MEND asking if I would be interested in serving on the governing board. I saw this as a wonderful opportunity to deepen our relationship with this outreach partner. I am thrilled to have the chance to work more closely with MEND. I am certain I will learn a tremendous amount through this experience.

I also hope that many of you will decide to get involved through volunteering at MEND. There are so many ways to serve. You can help distribute food, work in the clothing department, volunteer in the education department, help plant sustainable gardens, or greet clients as they arrive. Please let me know if you are interested in learning more about the work of MEND and about volunteer opportunities. I will be happy to help get you connected..

Blessings,
Dan+

The Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
August 2015						1
2 Pentecost 11 9:00 am St. Michael's Outreach (CO) 11:30 am Sunday Sack Lunches (MC)	3	4	5	6 Transfiguration	7	8 1:00 pm Concerned United Birthparents (FR)
9 Pentecost 12	10	11	12	13	14	15 St. Mary the Virgin SoldierCare Weekend
16 Pentecost 13 10:30 am Sunday School Resumes	17	18 7:00 pm Vestry (L)	19	20	21	22
23 Pentecost 14 11:30 am Prayer Shawl Ministry (MC)	24 St. Bartholomew	25	26	27	28	29
30 Pentecost 15 12:00 noon Pastoral Care Committee (FR)	31	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 resumes August 16 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.				
September 2015		1	2	3	4	5 1:00 pm Concerned United Birthparents (FR)
6 Pentecost 16 9:00 am St. Michael's Outreach (CO) 11:30 am Sunday Sack Lunches (MC)	7 Labor Day	8	9	10 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (MR)	11	12
13 Pentecost 17	14 Holy Cross Day 6:30 pm Book Discussion Group (Jacobson Home)	15 7:00 pm Vestry (L)	16	17 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (MR)	18	19
20 Pentecost 18	21 St. Matthew	22	23	24 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (MR)	25	26
27 St. Michael & All Angels 11:30 am Prayer Shawl Ministry (MC)	28	29	30	Locations: CO Church Office MR Music Room FR Fireside Room MC Ministry Center L The Loft (formerly the stage) S Sanctuary		

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THE MIKE STAFF

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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.