

## Interim Inspirations

When Madeleine L'Engle talked about us being made of the same stuff as the stars, that spoke to me. She wrote this in the journals she wrote while living at her family farmhouse in Connecticut. It also touched me when that highly regarded author recalled that she was volunteer choir director for her village church.

I recommend her series of four journals, especially the first, *A Circle of Quiet (Crosswicks Journals)*. (Never mind the suggestion you all dispositioned to the round file. Please know I am appropriately besmirched and penitent for Advent.) The selection below gives a taste of her Christian writing voice. It is from *Bright Evening Star*. May you be blessed and a blessing in the days of Advent and Christmastide.

I walk out onto the deck of my cottage, looking up at the great river of the Milky Way flowing across the sky. A

sliver of a moon hangs in the southwest, with the evening star gently in the curve. Evening. Evening of this day. Evening of my own life.

I look at the stars and wonder. How old is the universe? All kinds of estimates have been made and, far as we can tell, not one is accurate. All we know is that once upon a time, or rather, once before time, Christ called everything into being in a great breath of creativity—waters, land, green growing things, birds and beasts, and finally human creatures—the beginning, the genesis, not in ordinary Earth days; the Bible makes it quite clear that God's time is different from our time. A thousand years for us is no more than the blink of an eye to God. But in God's good time the universe came into being, opening up from a tiny flower of nothingness to great clouds of hydrogen gas to swirling galaxies. In God's good time came solar systems and planets and ultimately this planet on which I stand on this autumn evening as the Earth makes its graceful dance around the sun. It takes one Earth day, one Earth night, to make a full turn, part of the intricate pattern of the universe. And God called it good, very good.

A sky full of God's children! Each galaxy, each star, each living creature, every particle and subatomic particle of creation, we are all children of the Maker. From a subatomic particle with a life span of a few seconds, to a galaxy with a life span of billions of years, to us human creatures somewhere in the middle in size and age, we are made in God's image, male and female, and we are, as Christ promised us, God's children by adoption and grace.

Children of God, made in God's image. How? Genesis gives no explanations, but we do know instinctively that it is not a physical image. God's explanation is to send Jesus, the incarnate One, God enfleshed. Don't try to explain the incarnation to me! It is further from being explainable than the furthest star in the furthest galaxy. It is love, God's limitless love enfleshing that love into the form of a human being, Jesus, the Christ, fully human and fully divine.

Was there a moment, known only to God, when all the stars held their breath, when the galaxies paused in their dance for a fraction of a second, and the Word, who had called it all into being, went with all his love into the womb of a young girl, and the universe started to breathe again, and the ancient harmonies resumed their song, and the angels clapped their hands for joy?

Power. Greater power than we can imagine, abandoned, as the Word knew the powerlessness of the unborn child, still unformed, taking up almost no space in the great ocean of amniotic fluid, unseeing, unhearing, unknowing. Slowly growing, as any human embryo grows, arms and legs and a head, eyes, mouth, nose, slowly swimming into life until the ocean in the womb is no longer large enough, and it is time for birth.

Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ, the Maker of the universe or perhaps many universes, willingly and lovingly leaving all that power and coming to this poor, sin-filled planet to live with us for a few years to show us what we ought to be and could be. Christ came to us as Jesus of Nazareth, wholly human and wholly divine, to show us what it means to be made in God's image.

*Interim Inspirations Cont. from pg 1*

Jesus, as Paul reminds us, was the firstborn of many brethren.

I stand on the deck of my cottage, looking at the sky full of God's children, and know that I am one of them.

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Gracious God, thank you for this your parish, a light shining with ministry. For the exciting days to come, we give you thanks and pray for your grace in discernment; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, and your Holy Spirit. Amen.

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It is indeed a pleasure to be with you these days between rectors. My work is to assist through worship, pastoral care and preschool chapels until your search process bears fruit by God's good graces. These days I am in Oregon midweek to be with failing aunties. Thank you so much for your prayers and understanding. If there is a pastoral urgency and you cannot reach me, call warden Melissa Albers who will make sure your message reaches me. My cell is (503) 351-3360. – *The Rev'd Andrea R. Maier*

**Coffee hour December 31 after 10am**

Please join us for a special coffee hour to thank Mother Andrea for her ministry with us for the last year. She is moving on to St. Marks.

Andrea has been a real blessing to St. Michael's in this time of transition. We are grateful for her kindness and care for all of us. Come and share some stories and good food.

**Prayer requests**

Please forward any prayer requests to [melisaasings@gmail.com](mailto:melisaasings@gmail.com) I will add them to our weekly Prayers of the People.

Also let me know if you have names on the list that no longer need to be there.

**DECEMBER**

Sunday, Dec 3	Advent 1 8am & 10am Tree trimming and coffee hour
Sunday, Dec 10	Advent 2 8am & 10am
Sunday, Dec 17	Advent 3 8am & 10am C.A.S.E Ingathering
Sunday, Dec. 24	No services at 8am & 10 am
Sunday, Dec 24	Christmas Eve services 4pm - Family service 9pm – Festive choral Eucharist
Sunday, Dec. 31	8am HE - Lessons & Carols 10am
Monday, January 1	HAPPY NEW YEAR!



## Family Promise

Please donate Christmas gifts for the Children's Holiday Bash Shopping Spree. During this event, Family Promise children will get to walk around and choose gifts for their parents. Gifts will then be gift-wrapped by volunteers for the children to give to their parents. Please donate gifts from the following wishlist and bring them to church December 3rd! The wishlist for parents includes: slippers, fuzzy socks, 8-10 oz body wash & lotion sets, luffa sponge, hair turban towel, wallet, purse, Hydro flask/Stanley tumblers, picture frames 4x6 & 5x7. If you prefer donating money, please make checks out to San Pedro UMC, memo section: "Children's Shopping Spree."



Welcome Them Home Fall Fundraiser raised \$160K!!! We exceeded our hope to raise \$150K and thank our supporters so very much for your love and commitment! We are blown away by this year's generosity. All proceeds from the evening will help us continue our mission of lifting families with children from precarious situations into safety, enabling them to rebuild their foundations and transition to secure, stable homes of their own.

Would you like to meet the families in our care? New volunteers who would like to interact directly with our homeless families are required to complete the following online trauma-informed training: <https://family-promise.coassemble.com/unlock/Ds9ckbl> 3 modules to complete that will take about 2-3 hours total: Coassemble 101, Coassemble 102, Coassemble Accessibility DEIA

Please remember PV Resale Thrift Shop as you clean out your cabinets and closets! PV Resale Thrift Shop is a huge blessing to Family Promise. The thrift shop provides funding quarterly from their proceeds to 13 local charities, including Family Promise. Please support this non-profit committed to community service and the support of charities by donating items in clean, working, and very good condition. They sell almost everything: clothes, bedding, towels, dishes, furniture, small appliances, books and toys. I am happy to take donations for you if they fit in my car – let me know if you want a receipt. Palos Verdes Resale Thrift Shop is located at 2321 PCH in Lomita.

Visit Wrigley Coffee and have some fun! If you haven't been yet, you're really missing out. Monday - Sunday 7am - 4pm 437 W Willow St., Long Beach, CA 90806

With Love, Jeanie Powell, [cheeriochewer@gmail.com](mailto:cheeriochewer@gmail.com), 310-462-9904

## C.A.S.E. Ingathering December 17

Coffee—regular & decaf	Dry beans—pinto, black, lentils
Canned tuna—albacore & chunk light	Canned pinto beans
Canned chili—turkey chili, no beans chili	Jell-O boxes
Bottles of juice—apple, orange, cranberry	Cereal—kid friendly, sugary
Oatmeal—in canisters, not individual packets	Honey
Salad dressings—1000 Island, Honey Mustard	Mayo
Oil—vegetable, canola, olive	Sugar—granulated, powdered, brown
Laundry soap / Body wash / Shampoo & conditioner / Toothpaste / Toilet paper	



## CHRISTMAS

December 25--Christmas is approaching again. Christmas officially became a Federal holiday in 1870. A much anticipated time of the year--one of the major religious holidays of the year--a reminder of our faith.

It is also a time when family and friends get together and focus on their love for each other. Christmas customs and events change with technology, but the original meaning remains constant.

Many people remember Christmases of decades ago and note differences in emphasis and methods. Some people remember when sending Christmas cards was a huge time consuming event that sometimes served as a reminder to keep address lists up to date. Often now, Christmas greetings are exchanged through email or perhaps a phone call. Phone calls also have changed over the years, from a big event--long distance!--to a non-event--something easy and inexpensive.

Many people also remember spending large amounts of time finding that "perfect gift" for someone--determining what their sports interests were, or their current size and/or favorite colors. Now they exchange gift cards. Certainly easier--hopefully still meaningful.

Some people struggle to keep up with technology. Just yesterday at a music rehearsal, someone was asking if everyone had a copy of "that round thing" he made last year--he couldn't remember what it was called, finally saying--"oh yes, a CD." He could only think of a current technological term and I have to admit, I don't remember what that term was!!

While the dynamics of Christmas celebrations change, the underlying themes remain the same. People still watch the same classic Christmas movies they saw decades ago because the themes are still moving and relevant.

Often to children, Christmas is too focused on gifts--but wise parents keep things in perspective, a season of gift giving, gifts originating with the first gifts to the infant Jesus--gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gifts too have changed dramatically over the past two thousand years, but probably there is no one who wouldn't appreciate a gift of gold now--even myrrh--perfume is still popular.

Customs of observance may change, but the underlying theme never will--the birth of the baby Jesus--the origins of faith.

Gerri Pisciotta

## AdventWord

DECEMBER 3-25

2023

3	WIND	15	HASTEN
4	HIDDEN	16	BEGIN
5	PRESENCE	17	SPIRIT
6	PEACE	18	REPAIR
7	GRACE	19	GIVE
8	WATCH	20	DREAM
9	AWAKE	21	LAUGHTER
10	GLORY	22	QUENCH
11	HERALD	23	PONDER
12	VALLEY	24	COVENANT
13	TRUTH	25	LIGHT
14	PATIENCE		

adventword.org



#AdventWord is an inspirational online #AdventCalendar featuring a daily prompt word selected from the Sunday Lectionary readings. Followers receive a daily meditation and image inspired by the day's word, and are invited to share their own personal reflections, art, poetry, or other creative expression.

As we await the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we invite you to find quiet moments of reflection to help you stay connected to your faith, to others, and to God.

There are many ways to participate in AdventWord! And all of them are correct! Here are a few ideas:

- Read and pray over the daily emailed meditation during Advent
- Encourage your church to include our downloadable bulletin inserts on the first Sunday of Advent
- Connect and discuss the day's word with other disciples on our social media pages
- Share your own personal meditation to inspire others—whether visual or written. Haikus and poems, paintings, photographs, personal reflections, and more are all encouraged.

AdventWord is an offering of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church.

Advent begins on December 3, 2023.

## "Finding Home in the Church: A Personal Reflection"

The power of AI (artificial intelligence) has been all over the news lately.

- It was a key point of contention in the actors and writers strikes that lasted several months.
- The President signed an Executive Order at the end of October to ensure AI development is safe, secure, and trustworthy since it holds extraordinary potential for both promise and peril.

Working in the financial industry and serving as the company's Privacy Officer, I'm concerned on how irresponsible usage could lead to fraud, discrimination, disinformation, and breaches yet I also recognize that it has so much potential for helping us make better decisions, reducing human error, and providing a deeper analysis of data.

As a test, I decided to download the application ChatGPT. I asked it to write an article on what the Episcopal church means to me. Below is the result verbatim:

*As a member of the Episcopal Church, the significance of our faith community goes beyond mere religious affiliation—it's a journey of personal growth, communal support, and spiritual connection. The church, to me, is more than a place of worship; it's a sanctuary where I've discovered profound meaning and purpose.*

*One of the most compelling aspects of the Episcopal Church is its embrace of diversity. In our pews, we find a mosaic of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, united by a shared commitment to love and inclusivity. This diversity creates a vibrant tapestry that enriches our spiritual journey, challenging us to expand our understanding and compassion.*

*The liturgy, with its timeless beauty, serves as a bridge between tradition and contemporary life. The rituals and sacraments not only connect us to centuries of Christian history but also offer a timeless rhythm in the midst of life's chaos. The Eucharist, in particular, is a poignant reminder of our shared humanity and the transformative power of grace.*

*Beyond the sacred rituals, the Episcopal Church is a beacon of social justice. Our commitment to advocacy and service aligns with the Gospel's call to love our neighbors and care for the marginalized. Through outreach programs, community engagement, and a commitment to dialogue, we actively embody the teachings of Christ in the world.*

*Moreover, the church is a refuge in times of personal turmoil. In moments of sorrow, the compassionate support of the parish community provides solace, reinforcing the idea that we are not alone on our spiritual journey. Together, we navigate the complexities of life, finding strength in shared faith and fellowship.*

*Ultimately, the Episcopal Church is a place where my faith is not confined to Sunday mornings but extends into the fabric of my daily life. It's a space that encourages intellectual exploration, welcomes questions, and fosters a deep connection with God. Through the highs and lows, the church remains a constant source of inspiration, challenging me to live out the Gospel's message of love and justice.*

*In sharing my personal reflections, I hope to convey the profound impact the Episcopal Church has had on my life—a haven of spiritual growth, a community of diverse believers, and a source of unwavering support. The church, to me, is a living testament to the transformative power of faith and the boundless love of God.*

Before making judgement, I encourage you to learn more about AI. In this example, I could not have said it better on what the Episcopal church mean to me. The only change I'd make is adding an 'Amen' at the end.

**Jorge Cortes**



## Children's Center News

The holiday season is here and we are so excited! Last month the children had a great time learning about the fall season and Thanksgiving. This month will be filled with festive activities, stories, and songs about all the December Holidays. We will have a fun Family Christmas event on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> with a dance performance, songs and crafts for families of the preschool. We will be closed for a Winter Break from December 25 to January 1. Wishing you all a very blessed Holiday season. Lauren



## Beauty right in front of us.

Have you ever taken a visual trip of our sanctuary interior our past parishioners have left us? There is a virtual gold mine in beauty right at our fingertips. Each of our fantastic stain glass windows tell a story. Ever wonder about the meaning of these different treasures we have been left in charge of?

One of the more recent treasures is the organ/keyboard enclosure. The hand hewn dramatic wooden shapes of the enclosure are magnificent. It's more than just an enclosure, it's a functioning piece of art. The wood artisan was a church member. His name is Niall McKeown. The family moved to his home country, Ireland. While Niall was here at St. Michael's he demonstrated his talent as a master woodworker. The church had just replaced the church organ with a new multi-voice keyboard which looked just like a standard piano. Niall was asked to design and build the enclosure for this wonderful new instrument. He designed and built the new enclosure we have today. This is not just a couple wooden walls. The new instrument has a wooden soundboard so the enclosure can allow sound to travel through it. Niall designed the front wall with sound material which allowed all the keyboard sound to pass through without any dampening.

Ever wonder what those circles on the wall mean? There's a story about them. When Niall was a boy, he remembered lying under the trees next to a lake when it was raining. The design represents the circles in the water dripping from the trees made in the lake. These circles are a representation of what these drops made. Take a look and you'll see what I'm talking about. Look around our lovely church. There's so much beauty to behold!

Randy Albers

## Pledge Cards

If you haven't turned in your pledge card, there is still time. Chris and the budget committee will be working on next year's budget soon. St. Michael's depends on your generosity to enable us to continue our ministries to our congregation and the world and to call a minister for our future.

We ask that you prayerfully reflect on what the work of St. Michael's means to you and to our greater community.

You can mail in your pledge card or drop it into the collection plate on Sunday.

Look for your pledge envelopes— coming soon!

## December Birthday Blessing

8 Randy Albers  
9 Stuart Galloway  
24 Chris Powell  
27 Ray Gross



## Poinsettias for Christmas

Each Christmas our altar is beautifully decorated with poinsettias to help us celebrate the joy of the season. It has been our tradition to give everyone the opportunity to remember loved ones and blessings in our service leaflets as we celebrate Christmas Eve services.

Please fill out this form and leave on the office desk, or put it in the collection plate or email Melissa (melissaasings@gmail.com) the information by Dec. 20th so she will have time to add your offering to the leaflets.

The cost is about \$20 per plant, and you are welcome to take one after the Christmas season is over.



## Christmas Poinsettias

(Please Print Clearly)

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Email: \_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving/Memory of  
(circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Veterans Outreach

There are no words to express the gratitude of the Blue Butterfly community for the beautiful Thanksgiving gifts you and your friends donated to Blue Butterfly. It was a joy to watch as residents came in and selected bags – they were excited to see what was in them, some of which were things they said they wouldn't buy for themselves. I wish you all could have seen them.

The residents at Blue Butterfly Village will have a splendid Thanksgiving and beyond thanks to your kindness and generosity. Thank you so very much!  
Kate





# THE GUARDIAN

**St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church El Segundo**

Parish Office: 310-322-2589  
Web site: [www.stmichaels-elsegundo.org](http://www.stmichaels-elsegundo.org)  
Email: [StMichaelsElSegundo@gmail.com](mailto:StMichaelsElSegundo@gmail.com)

**St. Michael's Children's Center**

Ms. Lauren Cherrington  
School Office: 310-322-7522

**Worship Schedule**

Sunday 8:00am Rite I Said Service  
Sunday 10:00am Rite II  
with Music

**Mission Statement for St. Michael's Church**

*Growing in God's Love.  
Working in God's Spirit.*

# December 2023

**St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church**  
361 Richmond Street  
El Segundo, CA 90245

TO: