Advent Practice

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

– Luke 11:1

Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

– Matthew 25:13

“Practice makes perfect.”

The saying was given a new twist for me many years ago when Leon Fleisher – the renowned pianist who gained enormous wisdom from a debilitating hand injury and then went on to become a master teacher for an entire generation of concert artists – responded to the old cliché this way:

“No. Perfect practice makes perfect.”

It took me a long time to figure out what he meant. First, it indicates what every successful performing artist knows: don’t expect anything to happen on stage that doesn’t happen in the practice room. Second, careful consistency is key. That taught

Continued, Page 2
me how to stop wasting time and unwind years of sloppy practice as I recovered from my own injury. But third – and this most important point took me a lot longer to learn – even performance is practice.

To illustrate further, the music teacher Shinichi Suzuki, after whom a whole musical method was named, was fond of offering his students an almost Zen-like teaching:

“Knowledge is not skill. Knowledge plus ten thousand times is skill.”

Like Fleisher, Suzuki recognized that knowing was insufficient. Ability was gained only through practice, and practice is a process of embodied discipline that is practically never-ending: it doesn’t stop when the lights come up and the audience is hushed.

Christian practice is much the same, and as we begin a new church year, we are immediately reminded by our Advent readings to remain alert, keep watch, with the candles burning and the prayer life kindled, for the divine performance is about to begin. It is not enough to know that Christ is coming, or to simply be familiar with the traditions and their meanings that Advent discloses to us year after year. Jesus calls us to a greater level of engagement than that. How? Through practice. This is why many of us break out our Advent calendars and wreaths.

Here are some other practices we offer through Church of Our Saviour that you might consider taking up anew in this season of practice and preparation:

The Daily Office – rooted in ancient monastic practice, the daily office is intended as the backbone of a regular, full prayer life. Morning, Noonday, Evening Prayer, and Compline are provided in the Book of Common Prayer, and there are numerous online resources that pull it all together with daily scripture readings and psalms, including the Brotherhood of St. Gregory Daily Office web app: http://gregorians.org/publications/daily_office.php. Look for the links to this resource in our weekly e-blasts and on the website, or come join a daily prayer office at 9:30 am or 5:00 pm in the parish office Mondays through Thursdays.

Forward Day by Day – this longstanding resource of reflections on daily scriptural readings is available on the counter in the Fireside Room. A number of our members rely on it as part of their practice of daily devotions.

Daily Devotions – these shorter prayer offices, beginning on page 137 of the Book of Common Prayer, are well-suited for busy individuals and families, affording you the practice of a few minutes regularly to stop and check in with God.

Mid-Advent Healing Service – Our deacon, Annette Rankin, and the leader of our Healing Team, Nancy Cone, join with me on Sunday, December 15, at 1:30 pm, to offer an open service of prayer, readings, and music for healing for anyone who struggles at this time with brokenness, illness, or a case of the holiday blues. This is a new practice for our community, which we hope to expand and continue on a regular basis throughout the year.

How will you practice before the hall lights dim, the audience is hushed, and the stage lights come up for Christmas? And what practice will you carry forward as the divine performance in your life – and our life together – begins anew?

With love in Christ to you all in this season of practice and preparation,

Br. Richard Edward+
Very little is known about the life of Nicholas, except that he suffered torture and imprisonment during the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian.

It is possible that he was one of the bishops attending the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325. He was honored as a saint in Constantinople in the sixth century by the Emperor Justinian.

His veneration became immensely popular in the West after the supposed removal of his body to Bari, Italy, in the late eleventh century. In England almost 400 churches were dedicated to him.

Nicholas is famed as the traditional patron of seafarers and sailors, and, more especially, of children. As a bearer of gifts to children, his name was brought to America by the Dutch colonists in New York, from whom he is popularly known as Santa Claus.

Almighty God, who in thy love didst give to thy servant Nicholas of Myra a perpetual name for deeds of kindness both on land and sea: Grant, we pray thee, that thy Church may never cease to work for the happiness of children, the safety of sailors, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Note from the Editor: I found a page on a blog that may be of some interest: Reading Suggestions for the Feast of St. Nicholas. The blog’s author, Jennifer Gregory Miller, recommends and reviews many books for children about the life of St. Nicholas. Check it out!
Less Than One Week Away!!!

Our Saviour’s
Fantabulous Christmas Bazaar
& Bake Sale
December 8, 2013

Please contribute
Handmade Gifts
& Home-Cooked Treats

Questions? Contact Diane Amses—planner@jps.net
or Tiana Wimmer—tianaw@me.com

Kids Alert!!!
Children’s Christmas Gift Boutique
is December 8 - This Sunday!
Bring your Quarters & Shop for Your Family
Don’t Miss it!!

Adults: bring your donations of used gift-quality gift items (NO clothing) to church anytime before 10 AM on Sunday December 8.
Christmas Pageant Timeline

Sunday, Dec 8\textsuperscript{th}

11:00 — Costume fitting immediately after 10 o’clock service

Skip coffee hour, we’ll have snacks upstairs for the kids

Sunday, Dec 15\textsuperscript{th}

11:30 — Rehearsal

Sunday, Dec 22\textsuperscript{nd}

11:45 — Dress rehearsal

Skip coffee hour, we’ll have snacks upstairs for the kids while they are getting into their costumes

Tuesday, Dec 24\textsuperscript{th} - The Really Big Show!

3:00 — Children arrive to get into costumes

4:00 — COS’s internationally acclaimed Christmas Pageant begins!!!

5:00 — Pageant Tea in Fireside Room

Bea’s Zero Waste Tip of the Month:

Know your city’s recycling policies and drop-offs for hard-to-recycle items. For example, Mill Valley Refuse takes plastics #1-7; Whole Foods, real corks; the police station, medications; and the library, batteries.
Outreach Reaches Out to Help Others

The Mission of Outreach at Church of Our Saviour is to help others in need. Our parish and those that serve on the Outreach Committee have been doing just that this past year.

Working with St. Anne’s Circle, the parish provided school supplies, packaged in hand made fabric tote bags, for those around the world through Church World Service, as well as for local students by giving our surplus of school supplies to The Hannah Project and to a San Rafael school serving students in need.

We supported our EPIC Youth as they hosted Bread for the World last month, which acknowledges the continual fight against hunger. We also wrote letters to Congress to that point.

Our parish provided financial support to Canal Alliance, in San Rafael; Partners in Health in Haiti; and Sing with Haiti (working to rebuild the music school in Haiti); Hannah Freedom School in Marin City; KIVA; Episcopal Charities; and we provided the Giving Tree with holiday gifts going to residents of the Hillsdale Hotel in San Francisco.

We have now completed our last year in supporting 50 students through primary education in the village of Ibihwa in Tanzania, Africa, a project we all know as Carpenter’s Kids. This is a wonderful accomplishment for our forty families, who provided funding for those children for five years. We now have 35 children just finishing primary school, 7 in secondary school and 8 in vocational training.

The Outreach Ministry also provided funds for shoes, socks, soap and an annual Christmas Feast for the Carpenter’s Kids students and their families.

Carpenter’s Kids has been a gratifying project but the great distance, difficulty with access to Ibihwa, and little communication have created challenges. We have several years of photos of our students receiving their uniforms but little direct communication.

The Diocese of New York has decided to sunset the program at the end of 2015 and the Outreach Committee would like the sponsoring families to designate if they would like to continue our support for the remaining two years or end our involvement at this time. Letters are going out this week with that request.

We conducted an Outreach Survey a few weeks ago to elicit your comments about future outreach efforts and found the following:

1. **What do you regard as COS’ most important current outreach project?**

   Many were named but the most frequent was Mt Carmel (9) and “community assistance for poor & hungry” (5). Other frequently named projects were Taos trip for youth (2), Discretionary Fund (2) and “for the sick and elderly” (2).

2. **Suggestion for a parish-wide outreach activity**:

   Again many were named including reaching out to homeless here in Mill Valley, helping children in San Rafael’s
Canal District with educational needs, books, and/or a toy drive, coastal(streams) clean-up, and a project involving both young & old.

3. Ideas about guidelines in choosing organizations to support:

Many suggestions were offered, including to require parishioners to be involved with organizations that we support; fewer targets and therefore more impact; prioritizing local needs; checking on organization's track record and how much they spend on administrative vs. direct aid; programs for the elderly; and those that help the MOST vulnerable.

4. How should we balance local vs. farther abroad in our support?

15 parishioners voted to support locally first with the most common suggestion being 75% local & 25% abroad; next most common suggestion was to split our support 50/50 (4 parishioners).

5. Recommended charitable organizations:

- **Canal Alliance** was most frequently named, but also **Haiti Partners, Marin Food Bank, Episcopal Charities, Marin Hospice, FINCA** (like KIVA) and **American Red Cross**.

6. Do you think there might be a need for COS to help those in need and/or elderly with household repairs/tasks (a Honey Do group)?

   “Yes, great idea” was a frequent comment (17).

7. If there was a monthly breakfast between services, would you participate?

Yes (6); don’t think so (6) and many other less direct but supportive of the ‘idea’ of this fellowship opportunity.

8. Other suggestions:

We should focus on 2-3 recipients for the year and really make a difference to those organizations — help in different ways.

Good for spiritual growth to engage the parish in direct ministry.

Discussion groups about pertinent movies.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the surveys and we invite any interested members of the congregation to join our Outreach activities. Please consider being part of the process by attending the committee meetings: the next Outreach meeting is January 26 after coffee hour, in the Leppo Room.

—Maggie Lang

Interested in another Daily Devotional for Advent? One I recommend, that I have enjoyed for many Advent seasons, is **Following the Star**. Beautiful music, passages from the bible, reflections and prayers. — ed.
Every time we tell a story in Godly Play, we end with some “wondering” – a chance for our children to express their thoughts about what they have just heard. The questions the storytellers ask are very high level and there are no “right” answers. The children are not required to respond – but they are usually eager to participate. Often a conversation ensues where children respond to each other and questions are raised.

The process is intended to encourage the children’s innate spirituality as they contemplate the meaning of the story and listen to each other.

For most stories, there are four basic “wondering” questions, always asked in this order:

1. What do you like best about the story?
2. What do you think is the most important part of the story?
3. Where are you in the story? What part of the story is about you?
4. What part of the story could we take out and still have all we need?

Recently, after a telling of the story of the building of the first Temple in Jerusalem, our students wondered where the “10 Best Ways” (Ten Commandments) were kept today since the Temple had been destroyed:

★ “Buried so deep in the sand you would need a treasure map to find it”
★ “In God’s cloud palace in the sky”
★ “Locked up with a million chains”
★ “In my soul”

The “wondering” part of Godly Play is often the most special part to the storytellers as the children’s comments can illuminate the story in new and deep ways. When you speak with your children about the stories they have heard in the Godly Play rooms, be sure to ask them what they wondered about them. You may be surprised by what you hear!

Blessings to you and your families during this joyous season.

Tiana
Tiana Wimmer
Coordinator, Godly Play Program
TianaW@me.com
(415) 760-8698 – Cell phone
December

I enjoy singing the hymns on Sundays, though sometimes I get a bit lost if the tune is not familiar or a bit tricky. But I have always wondered… how are the hymns chosen? Is there a set roster, sort of like the lectionary for the readings? Or does the Music Director choose them?

Curious in San Rafael

Dear Curious,

Thanks for writing your Editor a letter. It can be a bit lonely being an Editor, and a little mail is always a treat!

Your Editor checked with our Rector, and this is what was found out:

The hymns are chosen by the Music Director in consultation with the Rector. Several factors are taken into account: they are related to the readings as far as possible; they refer to the church season; and consideration is given to their placement in the service – e.g. some are more suitable for the processional, some for the sequence (the one just before the gospel), and so on.

You will also notice that the Hymnal is organized by the church year, and by special occasions such as baptism, marriage, burial etc., and by general topics such as the church’s mission, the holy spirit, Christian vocation, etc. These categories can be used as a guide.

What is the oldest hymn in the book, I wonder to myself? And the newest?

---

Note: Your Editor LOVES getting notes from Readers. This shows your Editor that you are out there, reading this newsletter! Send your letters to the Parish Office, or email them to perspective@oursaviourmv.org.
There are many blessings that come with being a member of the worldwide family of churches known as the Anglican Communion. One of them is how we can all come together and work towards effecting positive change around the world. Today we’d like to use our blog post to lift up some resources and stories from our partners around the Communion.

This year the Anglican Communion Office has released a fantastic resource for the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women and Gender Violence. As the Rev. Terrie Robinson, the Women’s Desk Officer in the Anglican Communion Office, writes “Each year, more and more Anglican churches and dioceses around the Communion are using the international 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women to break the silence, challenge harmful attitudes, and engage women and men in taking action to prevent and end gender based violence.” We highly recommend reading through this document and learning more!

In 2011, the Primates of the Anglican Communion met in Dublin, Ireland. During this meeting they heard testimony about gender based violence and were moved to write a Letter to the Churches reflecting commitment to engaging with this issue. They wrote, “We acknowledged with grief that gender based violence is a global phenomenon and that all but a very small percentage of such violence is perpetrated by men against women, with devastating effects on individuals, families and society. In considering the pervasive nature of violence against women and girls, our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God. To think and behave in ways that do not live out this belief but disempower and marginalize, is to mar the divine image and therefore to offend humanity and God.”

We continue to give thanks for the leadership of the Communion Primates on this issue, and give special thanks for our own Primate, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori. If you missed her sermon from yesterday, please click here to read it!

Here are just two examples of how churches around the Communion are getting involved in the 16 Days of Activism:

In England, Bishop Andrew Watson, the Bishop of Aston, in the Diocese of Birmingham, and the Church of England’s Chair of the Panel for World Mission and the Anglican Communion, participated in the White Ribbon campaign and visited with women who have been victims of abuse. More information about the Church of England’s commitment to eliminating gender violence can be found in this Anglican Communion News Service article and in Bishop Andrew’s interview and statement on the White Ribbon campaign.

In Malawi, the Anglican Church is participating in the 16 Days of Activism for the first time. In the Diocese of Southern Malawi, Anglicans participated in a 12 kilometer march through the city of Blantyre to mark the beginning of the 16 Days. Fr. Willard Kamandani of the Diocese of Southern Malawi said, “Our participation is meant to address the lack of women’s voices in society as well as in the Church.” A full news article from ACNS is available here.

We look forward to sharing more reflections, news, and resources throughout the rest of the 16 Days of Activism.

– Elizabeth Boe is the Episcopal Church’s officer for global networking.
A Season for Congregating

Holidays bring families together, and so do baptisms. On All Saints Day, Miss Charlotte Nelson, vocally protesting in her christening gown, was baptized in the company of her dad, Chris Nelson, and her mom, Jennifer Ramsey, as well as Jennifer’s dad, stepmom, sister, and more. Once happily back in her mom’s arms, Charlotte appeared entirely willing to follow her dad’s example and become a willing part of our parish. Chris Nelson was also baptized at Church of Our Saviour some years back.

Jennifer, however, is a more recent Californian, coming here from Indiana twelve years ago, and though she doesn’t miss Indiana, she does miss her family. She had been very much looking forward to having them here for the baptism, to hosting a high school friend at Thanksgiving and to seeing her mom again at Christmas. (The family alternates Christmases in Indiana with mom.)

The Nelson-Ramseys live in Mill Valley and fortunately do not have to cope with a long commute. Chris is a Marin attorney and former DA who has worked in many aspects of the law, most recently, says Jennifer, in bilingual document reviewing.

She’s employed in Marin as a personal assistant for a Ross family. This raises a question.

What does a personal assistant do? "Everything," she says — pets, home, business, “making sure that all the dots in their life connect." Jennifer sees her job as similar to that of an extra spouse.

Until fairly recently, Chris and Jennifer had only been here twice for Easter, but Chris felt a connection to the church, and they both believed it was important for Charlotte to be baptized. They began attending about the time Br. Richard Edward returned from sabbatical, and (no surprise here) connected with him right away. "He makes you feel very comfortable and at ease," says Jennifer.

When they’re not on the job, this busy couple admits to being foodies. They love cooking, trying new things and learning. Right now, the family Jennifer works for has its own wine label and is teaching them about wine.

They also enjoy taking small road trips around the Bay Area, to San Francisco and Half Moon Bay, and going on longer excursions up to the wine country, especially when visitors are in town.

Many in our church remember times when there weren’t many children in the congregation and delight in the numbers of youngsters among us now. Babies bring us together, especially at Advent. Welcome, Charlotte!

A Note from Your Editor: My apologies to the Nelson-Ramseys, and especially to Charlotte. I did not have a photograph of the family at press time, so I chose to substitute with an image of an unhappy naked baby being DUNKED! How many out there vote for a giant copper cauldron, I mean font, in place of our venerable old Baptismal Basin? Altar Guild? How do you vote?
This Fall in EPIC we have been combining spiritual reflection with frequent service opportunities. Our reflections during our 10 a.m. youth gathering have been very engaging. Some recent themes include “death and life” in Christian spirituality and in the life of Jesus, and the importance of youth and their role in the church. I am ever inspired by and grateful for the youth’s openness, questioning, and engagement in our reflections.

We have also begun to establish a relationship with the Manzanita Childcare Center in Marin City, where we have volunteered twice to spend time with the younger children. This has been a really fun and rewarding service opportunity, and we will be making it a regular monthly outing on Monday afternoons. The youth also volunteered at the Marin Food Bank on the day before Thanksgiving.

In many ways, our youth are leading the way in our community, not least of all in their commitment to service. In this season of giving thanks, I am deeply grateful for the privilege of being their youth minister! Thanks to all of you for your support of our youth programs at Church of Our Saviour!

God bless.

Br. Willie Van Doren, n/BSG, Youth Minister
Church of Our Saviour will be adopting 50 individuals from the Hillsdale Housing site. The Hillsdale opened in 2005 under the management of Episcopal Community Services (ECS) to provide permanent supportive housing to 84 formerly homeless adults. Each individual living at the Hillsdale is able to access case management, mental health services, job counseling, health education classes, educational and vocational services and much more.

The Hillsdale was built in the early 1900's as a hotel but was transitioned in 1999 to be used as a housing site in the "Housing First Program" for formerly homeless individuals by the City of San Francisco and Human Services Agency. The "Housing First Program" sites in San Francisco are SRO (Single Room Occupancy) hotels that have shared bathrooms on each floor and one shared kitchen facility for the entire building.

After residents of the Hillsdale pay for rent and food each month, there is very little left over for basic essentials or a personal item. For the holidays all of the supportive housing residents request a simple gift (under $25) such as sweatshirts, bed sheets, blankets, robes and other essential items. A few of the residents may request larger items and cooking appliances, such as a toaster oven or microwave, but don't feel like this is mandatory gift request to fulfill.

They will be happy with whatever they receive!

Fifty ornaments bearing the names and gift requests will be placed on the Giving Tree in the Fireside Room by November 24. If you would like to participate, take an ornament from the Giving Tree and shop to fulfill the request. Wrap the gift, attach the ornament and place it under the Tree by December 15.

Please contact Jane Brophy (414-477-7608, janebrophy@aol.com) with any questions.

The whole family can participate in Warm Wishes. On Saturday, December 7 at 9 AM the Parish will again participate in stuffing backpacks for the homeless men and women of Marin. Each backpack will have new gloves, scarf, hat, wool socks, and a rain poncho to help someone living on the street get through the winter. This event takes place at Unity in Marin, 600 Palm Drive, Novato. For more information, visit the Warm Wishes website.
The Perfect Gift for the Person Who Has Everything

Ever notice why folks donate flowers for the Sunday altar?

For my little sister on her birthday.
In Thanksgiving for my family and friends.
In gratitude for the birth of our great-grandchild.
In honor of my mother’s birthday.
For my parents on their 50th wedding anniversary.
For my wonderful spouse on our first anniversary.

Flowers are often given in memory of a loved one, but you can honor anyone with a beautiful altar bouquet to mark a special day.

Call Rose in the office of Church of Our Saviour. Tell her you’d like to make a $40 donation to dedicate Sunday’s flowers to someone you love (please give a couple months advance notice). Imagine how pleasantly surprised and honored they will feel.

Our Saviour’s Christmas Bazaar Needs You!

Are you Baking and Making for the Holidays? Bake and Make a few extra to add to the mix of handmade goodies for sale at our wonderful Christmas Bazaar on Sunday, December 8th, after services. See Page 4 for more information and who to call. Cheers!

Mary Wilson’s Spicy Pecans

In a small bowl mix together, then set aside:
- 1 1/2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon coarse Kosher salt
- 3/4 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

In a medium pan, melt together:
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt

Then add:
- 3 cups pecan halves, toss together

After coating pecans with butter mixture, stir in the spices from the small bowl. Place pecans on a baking sheet that is covered with foil (spread out nuts into a single layer) and bake at 250°F about 45 minutes.

Need an idea for what to whip up for the Bazaar? Mary Wilson’s Spicy Pecans are a big seller! You will love them. Thanks, Mary!
Here are some Celtic Knot designs for you to color and cut out. They could make really pretty Christmas Tree ornaments! Have fun! If you want to learn about Celtic Knots, go to this website.
The Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, BSG, Rector
415-244-1860

The Rev. Annette Rankin, Deacon
415-298-2479

Albert Campbell, Music Director
510-710-1215

William Carl VanDoren, n/BSG, Youth Minister

Rose Scarff, Parish Administrator

Jeff Johnson & Gay Rawlins-Johnson, Co-Treasurers

Terry Peck, Sexton

Joan Peck, Editor, Perspective

Rosalind Patterson, Coordinator, Perspective

2013 Vestry

Doug Roberts
Michael Mooney
Scott Johnson
Susie Gilmor
Bill Ibershof
Mark Tarpey-Schwed

Senior Warden
Junior Warden
Clerk
David Hofele
Mo Stout

Sundays
8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite I
9:45 a.m. Children & Youth Programs
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite II

Wednesdays
10:30 a.m. Eucharist & Bible Dialogue

Monday-Thursday:
9:30 a.m. Morning Prayer
5:00 p.m. Evening Prayer

The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour
10 Old Mill Street
Mill Valley, CA 94941