

The Piper

February, 2016

*We are simply asked
to make gentle
our bruised world
to be compassionate of all
including one's self
then with the time left over
to repeat the ancient tale*



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Ramblings in the Redwoods

How can you talk about new beginnings when the past is staring you in the face? I mean, I look at my desk and the past looks back at me. Here are things that I had meant to finish long ago but never found the time; here are things that I have a deadline to finish in the future, but they started in the past.

Can we even talk about new beginnings at all? After all, we carry the past with us. The past has created us and we continue to carry it with us. There really is an inner child in all of us, whether we acknowledge that child or not. The things we have been through, as we remember them, continue to form us even now. And even the things we don't remember continue to form us, because they helped to set a course at one time.

So can we talk about new beginnings? That's a good question to ask as we hit the borderland of Lent, 2016. Lent sets us on course to the encounter of Easter, which is all about new beginnings, new life, Resurrection. Given all the ways we carry our past (or our baggage) with us, what are new beginnings about?

I think part of the answer is to ponder the question of how we can carry the past with us and also let go of the past, allow the past to be redeemed, allow the past to be transformed in the present. There was a "time before," yes. In part of my time before now, I did not acknowledge the power or activity of God. I carry that with me. But the lessons and the formative powers of that time are transformed by the knowledge and experience I have today of God's power and activity.

New beginnings are what Lenten discipline is all about. We are



the back page

Elizabeth Forbes

I Will, with God's Help.

*All circumstances in life, even those that appear to be completely constricted, offer us room for choice. Even when we don't realize that we are choosing, we are choosing. Jesus reminds us that we have been given freedom to choose. **

Every time we baptize someone, we are asked to renew our own vows. We have a choice. We can say 'yes', 'no', or 'maybe'. Aware of our human failings, the prescribed answer, should we care to give it, has the caveat, "I will, with God's help."

One of these vows is that we will attend church, become involved with others there, and keep on praying and taking communion. Listening to the readings and sermons, offering one another God's peace, and engaging in conversations with others are ways we nurture our faith, consider the ideas of others, and reconsider and expand our own. We find out what others are doing in their daily lives and tell them our stories, as well. We find the strength to help each other, to speak out against what is wrong in our neighborhoods and beyond. We find ways to join with others from our church family in sharing the Good News where it is most needed. In fellowship we learn to accept and appreciate those with differing ideas. We learn to love ourselves as we experience ourselves being loved and accepted.

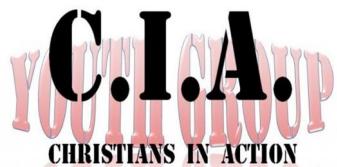
Wow! My anonymous writer has reminded me how profound and life-changing our everyday choices can be. No wonder being at church has become so important to me. I actually do get all of that out of just being there. In today's violent and often deeply depressing world, I need to be in the midst of all that goodness. Not so I can forget about the starving children, suicide bombers, and ruthless dictators. But so I can open up to the Spirit of God. So I can step away from the illusion that I can change everything. So I can find courage to change what I can—with God's help and that of others. There are peace and joy in being and doing what God has for me, right here and right now.

Thank you to all who choose to show up and offer these gifts to our community. And to those who aren't in the pews so much, I say, "Come on down!" Join us in being fed, and in boosting one another's spirits so we can meet our world with joy and love and peace.

**I ran across this while roaming the internet and didn't get ahold of the source when I copied it down. My apologies to the writer.*

Responses welcome. Contact Elizabeth, elizabethdhf@gmail.com or Paula, pauladalejansen@gmail.com





Pancake Supper Feb. 9th!

That's right. We will be back to cook everyone some pancakes on Feb. 9th. Suggested donation is \$5 per person (of course, more is welcomed).

ST. ANDREW'S YOUTH

→ Visit us at saintandrewsbenlomond.org



LENT IS HERE

Shrove Tue., Feb. 9th **Pancake Supper, 6 pm**
Ash Wed., Feb. 10th **Imposition of Ashes, 6 pm**

And we are off to the snow! Our youth group will be staying at **Camp Sylvester** February 5th-8th and skiing at Dodge Ridge. We will see everyone on February 9th for Shrove Tuesday!

Sunday School: All ages. Join us on Sundays at the 10am service in the Parish Hall. Bring friends! This is a great opportunity to learn, grow, and be a role model to the younger kids too.

asked to consider the choices we want to make today based on how God wants to work to transform us, so that the impact of our faith and our knowledge of God can continually increase the way we live out God's will in our lives, the way we live out our baptismal covenant in our daily experience. So Lent is about the choices we make in service to the Kingdom of God, as I mentioned in our Annual Meeting.

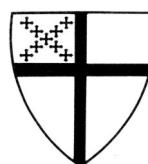
The choices we make determine whether we are actually involved in new beginnings, actually involved in transformation, actually involved in a life of spiritual growth. The choices of Lent are not just about giving up chocolate, though if chocolate is getting between you and God it is good to consider giving it up. They are about trying out choices, seeing if they take us anywhere, seeing if they take our relationships with God, our neighbors and our community anywhere. We may have things in our lives that are making us spiritually lethargic; it is good to take some time to look at those things. We may be doing harm to ourselves in ways we don't think about enough. We may be shortchanging our friends, our family, our faith community of some things that God would like us to be doing.

Lent encourages us to consider how our choices affect our spirits and our hearts. Choose wisely how you will observe this Lent. Don't choose something you can't do, and don't choose something that won't make any difference. Do choose something that will help you hear and respond to God.

Blaine



Why I Am An Episcopalian: Reason #43



We welcome the faithful, the seeker, and the doubter.

*Diana Smith, Diocese of Washington
from [101 Reasons to be Episcopalian](#)*

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24 Hour Good Neighbor Service®

CONGRATULATIONS, PLEDGERS!

We did it! What a miracle! We have actually received most of our pledges in time to prepare a budget, and have balanced our budget for 2015! Thank you!

As of the end of January, we have received 34 2016 pledge cards totaling \$72,032. Several parishioners who have supported St. Andrew's over the years have not yet returned a pledge card. We want to encourage them to do so for the purpose of maintaining our budget and keeping our Parish status. And remember, your time and skills are important and can be pledged as well.

Some of the stewardship committee will be attending the Diocesan Stewardship Workshop on Feb. 20th at St. Andrew's, Saratoga. We will report back in the next *Piper*. If you would care to join us, give one of us a call.

Your Vestry has no doubt that God wants us to continue His ministry in this Valley, and are seeking His guidance, and your input, as to what is needed. Thank you for your prayers and continued support.

Gratefully, *Jennifer Kennedy, Barbara Banke, Rochelle Kelly, Karen Van Groningen, and Kim Rooks, Pledge Secretary*



ALTAR GUILD SAYS THANKS! Thanks to the wonderful people who said they would help the foundering Altar Guild. At the Parish Meeting, when it was announced that we needed help, several people signed up. Thank you to Kim Rooks, Barbara Banke, and Jerry Fishel. Others who had already made themselves known to be willing to help are Ed Butler and Randi Alves. Thank you all so much. Gene Kodner will be making out a new schedule soon, assigning teams.. You have the gratitude of all of us currently on Altar Guild. *Deo Gracias!!*

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easier to be grateful for what you do have. I have 2 beautiful daughters, my mother, a house, work, health, friends. And my faith. PLUS I still get to come to Ben Lomond and St. Andrew's in the summers!

I will live in California again; I just don't know when. I take one day at a time. For now I thank God for all my blessings. Life is good. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



Preschool Happenings

The children have been very busy learning about community helpers in our neighborhood. On the 20th of Jan. we took a walk down to the Ben Lomond Fire Department to learn exactly what fire fighters do. The children learned that fire can be very dangerous and what to do in an emergency situation. We discussed the 9-1-1 number, to call if you need help, and that should your clothes get fire on them, you should STOP - DROP - ROLL. We got to see the brand new fire engine and we even got to get inside of it. We then stopped at Valley Churches and delivered a card the children made in recognition of all the kindness VCUM shares with others.

Also Davey tree service came and we watched them remove an old dead tree that was falling down across the street. They were also cutting down branches that were close to power lines. The crew explained that trees get old sometimes and need to be removed to keep from falling down on things or people and hurting them.

Finally, on the 16th we held another fundraiser, Original Art Works of Love. We made almost \$200 and had a great time expressing ourselves through art.

We currently have 13 children enrolled and if anyone knows of a preschooler who needs a happy, loving environment in which to learn and grow, tell them about us. If you know anyone who has empty planters they no longer use, we sure would like to have them. Used toys as well.

Thank you to the people who cleanup and take out the trash. We appreciate you, and we love you all.

God is good, Sherry Stone



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then the epiphany came

By Carol Free

I was inspired by Sharon Fishel's recent article in the Piper to write some reflections of my own. As I sit here in Pennsylvania with two feet of snow on the ground and more still coming, I am yearning to be back in Ben Lomond with my church family and my home on Pine Street. But I am in Pennsylvania for a reason: my mother. She is 89, and I have been told countless times how lucky I am to still have my mother. I embrace that, especially on the days when she tests my patience, which is about 7 days a week. She is frail, has macular degeneration, severe arthritis in her back; 2 unsuccessful hip replacements, and a severe hearing loss. I tried to fit her with better hearing aids but she refused. She still lives alone in the house I grew up in, as I promised her years ago I would never put her in a nursing home. I live 4 blocks away and help her daily, doing shopping and house maintenance, bringing her dinner, taking her to the hairdresser every week and keeping her company.

For my first 4-5 years back in my hometown I resented the role I felt I was assigned. Now in my 13th year here, I am 11 years past due for returning to Ben Lomond. Back in 2003, when Kathryn and Connie were little, I wanted them to be closer to their grandparents and extended family, who are all in Pennsylvania. My girls were abandoned once in China and have no family they know of there. I wanted them to know the security and love of having family members close, so I decided to go back home for 2 years. TWO. Another St. Andrew's member did that with her girls and returned to Ben Lomond in 2 years, so I figured I could do it too. I moved back to Easton, PA, left my house on Pine Street furnished for our return, and bought a house in PA without seeing it first. It was only going to be 2 years...I could live in anything for 2 years...I thought. Besides, it was only \$89,000! I decided that was too much once I saw the house!

When my second year in PA ended and it should have been time to move back to CA, my mother's husband died. Although she was independent, it didn't seem right to leave her at that time so I decided to stay one more year. Then her health deteriorated. I couldn't leave her then. She has fallen twice and landed in nursing homes for rehab. I am thankful that I am here. I feel God directed me to be here. But 10 years ago I was angry at feeling that I had to stay when I really wanted to be back in Ben Lomond. I questioned why I was doing something I wasn't really enjoying, missing everything about CA, and taking a big hit on my income since I had to hire another person to run my business in CA. I struggled with indecision, telling myself I'll just stay one more year and then return to CA.

Then the epiphany came. I am here for a reason and I will fulfill the promise I made to my mother and to God. Period. Stop whining. Serenity Prayer. Accept the things you cannot change, change what you can, know the difference. Now I realize that I am blessed to be able to be my mother's caregiver. It is an honor. This is what God would expect of me. This is what I expect of me. I am my brother's/mother's keeper. How lucky I am!

I thank God every day for the blessings in my life. I ask God to allow me to help others. Instead of being angry at what you don't have, it's so much

An interesting web site you might like to explore:

Mockingbird is a ministry that seeks to connect the Christian faith with the realities of everyday life in fresh and down-to-earth ways. Behind our entire project lies the conviction that none of us ever move beyond our need to hear the basic good news of God's Grace.

*„,and another web site: **Homebrewed Christianity***

Since 2008, *Homebrewed Christianity Podcast* has been bringing you the best nerdy audiological theological ingredients. You will find conversations between friends, theologians, philosophers, and scholars of all stripes to help in expanding and deepening the conversation around faith and theology. Previous guests have included N.T. Wright, Catherine Keller, Marcus Borg, Brian McLaren, John Dominic Crossan, Walter Brueggemann, Phyllis Tickle, Diana Butler Bass, Richard Rohr and many other influential and emerging Christian thinkers. We hope you listen, question, think, and then share the Brew!

St. Andrew's Women's Reading Group

When: February 9th, 7 pm

Where: Lynn's house

Book: Everything I Never Told You,

By Celestine Ng

All are welcome!

Call Jean for more info, 335-5682.



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The Deacon's Bench

by Jim Lieb

Two Corinthians went into a bar...

I can't remember where it started or which news show was on but there was a clip of The Donald during one of his religious phases and the way he said, "2 Corinthians..." immediately filled out the rest in our minds. I don't know the rest of the joke; what they said, what they did, or whether there were any Rabbis involved. I only got as far as the bar. But still, it seems our country is all about religion as politics, religion as comedy gag line, religion as a cover for corporate behavior. How does one find, let alone stay spiritually centered in such a noisy environment? One has to wonder if many Americans are even aware that there is something called a spiritual life and that nurturing one's spiritual life is the core purpose of religion.

This has been the season of Epiphany. Like Advent, it is supposed to be a time of surprises but after years and liturgical years of church calendars, we are not surprised much anymore. An epiphany is a "manifestation" of something, something with feeling, a thought, an insight, an "Aha!" moment. At first it was not there and now it is. An epiphany is only an epiphany the first time around. It quickly gets old and obvious the second time around. We all have epiphanies every now and then. Some are little, some are big. The really big ones change everything.

Many years ago I worked at a small computer systems company in San Jose. There were many days when I didn't even notice that everybody else had gone home and it was dark outside. I was deep into chasing a bug. I would try one thing and then another. I'd stare at lines and lines of code trying to come up with one hypothesis or another as to why the thing was crashing. Eventually my office phone would ring and Cathe would be on the other end asking, "Are you planning to come home any time soon?" I'd finally look at the clock and it would be maybe 8, maybe 9, sometimes 10pm. I had been chasing a bug into nowhere and lost all track of time. At that point I knew the correct answer and replied, "Yea, sorry for not calling or leaving on time. I'm coming home." I'd get on I-880 (CA 17 back then) and head north to Fremont. By the time I passed under

then next overpass, usually Montague Expressway, it would come to me. "Aha!" I'd say. The problem was now obvious. It was also obvious that an even more wise response is to not turn around but to leave it for the next day. That happened enough times while coming home from that job that I started calling it the "Montague Expressway Effect". Years later I'd tell the story to developers I was mentoring when they would be struggling with a problem. "Go home", I would say, "It will come to you by the time you get to the 2nd or 3rd overpass."

It is hard to imagine someone like Jesus coming into the neighborhood and saying and doing things that were both astonishingly new and blatantly obvious at the same time. The real "Aha!" moment was a long time ago. When was the last time any of us could be moved to exclaim, "Aha!", in a church or religious setting? Not often. We are very good at tradition but scared silly of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is an idea that has bounced around the Church almost from the beginning. Back then people would encounter something that Jesus said or did and suddenly experience an "Aha!, so that is what he meant! Only someone divine and close to God would say that!" We kept having this experience and needed a name for it. It seemed obvious that the experience was of God's presence so we started calling it not only "spirit" but the "Holy Spirit", that which moves us deeply, an encounter with God. But we've been there before. I've passed under the Montague Expressway overpass many times since that job and only occasionally to I remember the "Montague Expressway Effect".

These are turbulent times. Climate change is real but little seems to change in government policy or business attitudes. We seemed to come through the struggles of accepting our LGBT brothers and sisters in our country and in our church and now we find ourselves in the Canterbury Penalty Box for the next three years. Tina Fey gets one more round with her Palin imitation and sizes up Sarah as, "Two Corinthians short of a Bible." We ruefully smile at the joke. It is both true and on us.

It is time to step back. Turn off the TV (you'd miss Downton Abbey if you blew it up). Enter into silence away from the immediacy of what is swirling about. Wait for but don't search for the Montague Expressway Effect. It will come. We will find our way through the thicket. The Holy Spirit always does if we are quiet enough to hear it. Remember, it is the end of the world (as we know it) and that is a good thing.