

# The Piper

## April, 2017



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*St. Andrew's Episcopal Church*  
*Ben Lomond, CA 95005*  
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*Where God is worshiped and the people are fed*

# Ramblings in the Redwoods

Last weekend, four of St. Andrew's delegates/alternates to Diocesan Convention were at a Deanery meeting. One speaker at the meeting said that since 2003 (I think that was his year of reference) overall attendance in the diocese has gone down by 40%. There were, I think, five exceptions. If we were to take those exceptions out of the totals, I wonder what the average drop would be?

St. Andrew's fits that profile, though we have gone down by more than 40% since 2003, I believe. I arrived here in 2009, and I think the drop since then has probably been about 40% (I am not going to go to the books and do the math).

There are obviously forces at work in society and in the church that account for this. I can only guess at what the list would look like, but I think I have a handle on part of it. First, the Church is not seen by society as having a claim on truth the way it used to in the 1940s and 1950s. The decline we're talking about started, I think, in the mid-60s and has been accelerating since then. Second, because of that loss of an authoritative voice, a lot of people now look at church attendance as less of a good use of time. Third, the average person today is busier than he or she was a few decades ago.

Of course, we have also had people moving away and moving on to the throne of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

Part of the problem, too, has been the consequence of what I think is a mistaken view of the point of church attendance. Among relatives and church attenders older than I, I have heard the idea that church attendance is like a tithe, or an offering, of time (if it were a tithe church would have to be a lot longer). There was at least some sense that the offering was somewhat grudging, especially for those who find church boring, or find that it gets in the way of other things the churchgoer wants to do. Another point of view is that it is a duty owed to God. Because of this rather grim point of view, it has the same attraction as other duties – you have to do it, so you had best get it over with.

In older days, church was part of people's life that fitted under the category of entertainment. No, TV, no radio? Well, there were books – first of which was the Bible – and there was preaching. Even

boring preaching was a diversion, and it set up the main entertainment of Sunday afternoons. Now, Sunday afternoons were different from any other day of the week. For most Americans, it was the only afternoon that they were not hard at work (the women might complain that they didn't get as much of a break as the men did). It may be the only day they allowed themselves a cigar, or a bottle of beer. But one thing that a great many town dwellers did was sit around and talk about the service and the sermon in the parlor or the sitting room.

In those days it was a waste of time to go to church if you didn't get a sermon that lasted at least half an hour. Some preachers were able to hold forth for a couple of hours. You can still find that at some Pentecostal churches, actually, but it's not as popular as it used to be. Remember Presiding Bishop Curry, talking about his Baptist and Pentecostal family, where if someone died he hoped it was a Baptist, because if it was a Pentecostal you were going to be in church all day?

Church attendance is not a tithe or offering of time, as in a sacrifice that you give away. Church attendance is not a duty, although we have at least one denomination that is still very skillful at creating guilt out of non-attendance, naming it a sin. Church attendance may be entertaining, but it is not primarily entertainment.

To understand what church services are all about, we have to go back to the beginning. What was it that kept those early Christians going to church? The services were not held in buildings called churches, whether grandiose or humble. They were held in people's houses. Constructing church buildings would have been insane, because off and on throughout the first couple of centuries of the Church the government persecuted Christians, jailing and killing them. Given that, again, what was it that kept those early Christians going to Church?

That was where, in their belief and experience, they most profoundly met God and gained the strength it took to get them through each week. Early on, when most of the Christians were Jews, they would go to Synagogue on Saturday, then early on Sunday, the first day of the week, and therefore a work day, they would meet in the morning for prayer. They met on Sunday because that was the Lord's Day, the day Jesus rose from the dead. They would have evening meetings to share the Lord's Supper, the Agape meal, with the bread being blessed, broken and shared, a meal coming next, and the wine

blessed and shared afterward. The intervening meal become rarer as it became more of a divider between rich and poor, hungry and well-fed, and the Eucharist became much like it is now.

What the early Church believed, and what we still believe, is that God is present in a room full of Christians differently and more powerfully than God is present with us as individuals. The world drains our strength. God's presence in bread and wine, and in the assembled congregation restores it.

\* \* \* \* \*

I heard a show on NPR recently which talked about the loneliness of middle-aged men. I have to say, that is too limited a sample. More and more of us make less and less contact with each other. We are forgetting as a culture what it is we draw from one another's presence. Yes, we can be aggravating at times, and sometimes we are not able to be in the presence of other people as we look to recharge our batteries. But life is not meant to be lived in isolation; loneliness is a condition that leads to mental and physical pain.

Church is not something that will always be there if we don't keep coming back to it. Is it worth our time? I would be doing something different with my life if I didn't believe it is. One of the reasons I can't do a quick, impersonal one-hour service is that goes back to the mistaken view of the church I spoke about earlier. Church is a meeting ground, a place to share our spiritual lives and our spiritual and physical selves.

I hope to see you there.



## Preschool Rummage Sale April 22!

**Remember that one person's junk is another person's treasure. If it's in good shape, still works, and someone else might want it, bring it to Stone's office now! We have to have merchandise to have a sale. No clothes...**



## ***Around the Worldwide Anglican Communion...***

### **Anglican's Relief & Development Fund Supplies Water**

Ten more homes in the First Nations community of Pikangikum in Northern Ontario will have clean drinking water by the end of 2017 as a result of a joint effort by the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Habitat for Humanity Manitoba, and a grassroots Anglican group Pimatsiwin Nipi. The collaboration marks the second phase of a project PWRDF, the Anglican Church of Canada's relief and development arm, and Pimatsiwin-Nipi (Oji-Cree for "Living Water"), a grassroots Anglican group, have been working to implement since 2011.

The first phase of the project involved the installation in 2014 of water tanks in 10 homes identified as being in serious need. At that time, 92% of homes in the community had no access to water or wastewater services, said PWRDF.

*Andre Forget, Anglican Communion News Service*

## ***Around the Episcopal Church USA...***

### **Lent Madness**

The bracket is packed with big names. The matchups can be intense. Individual results may hinge on last-minute momentum shifts. And in the end, only one competitor claims the title of champion.

March Madness? No, this is Lent Madness, and the saint who outlasts them all will be crowned with the Golden Halo. The Rev. Tim Schenck, an Episcopal rector in Massachusetts, created Lent Madness in 2010 as a feature of his blog. Two years later, he partnered with Forward Movement and added a co-conspirator, the Rev. Scott Gunn, Forward Movement's executive director. Since then, Lent Madness has grown so popular among Christians of all denominations that the tournament's website typically draws about 100,000 during the 32-saint competition. Each day, fans are asked to vote on one of two saints after learning about the saints by reading their carefully crafted Lent Madness biographies.

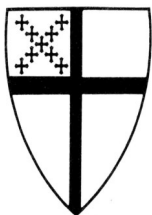
*Episcopal News Service*

## ***Around the Diocese...***

### **Church's program would let homeless sleep in cars overnight**

A pilot program, headed by West Valley Community Services and St. Jude's Episcopal Church that will allow select homeless families and De Anza College students to sleep in their cars in St. Jude's parking lot. Officials from the Cupertino-based nonprofit say many of their clients are living out of their cars and are struggling to find a place to park for the night. Representatives from St. Jude's approached the nonprofit about starting a parking lot program. "This is something that has come up a lot when we are doing intakes with clients," said workers at West Valley Community Services. "They were getting pulled over, they were not able to park in certain spots." Homeless families and students were being asked to leave their parking spots at night and had no place to go.

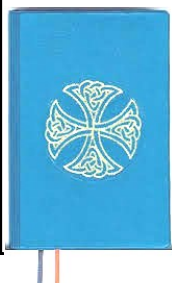
*The Daily Scan, Episcopal Office of Public Affairs*



## Why I Am An Episcopalian: Reason #60

The hymn: "One was a doctor and one was a queen and one was a shepherdess on the green and one was a soldier and one was a priest and one was slain by a fierce wild beast."

*The Very Rev. Marilyn J. Engstrom, Diocese of Wyoming  
from 101 Reasons to be Episcopalian*



*Evening Prayer ~ Weds. 5:15 pm ~  
It's spoken, brief & quiet. A serving of  
faith & a moment of grace in the  
midst of our busy days. Join us.*



April	
Ed Butler	2
Henry ValldeRuten	5
Sharon Fishel	6
Donna Brough	11
Barbara Banke	14
Pauline Syres	16
Sheryl Mello	18
Iain Holtzclaw	19
Susan ValldeRuten	22
David Waller Jr.	22
Tom Fogarty	27
Joan McVay	27
Tillie Cunningham	28

May	
Cindy Garay	2
Sandi Lewandowski	2
Cathy Newfield	3
Preston Boomer	7
Janet Parske	8
Jaden Ruff	10
Barry Holtzclaw	12
Katie Garay	18
Tracie Snyder	21
Tim Cadell	21
Michael Freeman	22



## Angel in the Kitchen

*Feeln good when cookn  
Sharing the love of God  
through your love of cooking*



### Braised Corned Beef Brisket

Prep 15min Cook 6 hr 15min

#### Ingredients

- 1 (5 pound) flat-cut corned beef brisket
- 1 TBSP browning sauce (such as Kitchen Bouquet), or as desired
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 6 cloves garlic, sliced
- 2 tablespoons water

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 275 degrees F (135 degrees C).

Discard any flavoring packet from corned beef. Brush brisket with browning sauce on both sides. Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and brown brisket on both sides in the hot oil, 5 to 8 minutes per side.

Place brisket on a rack set in a roasting pan. Scatter onion and garlic slices over brisket and add water to roasting pan. Cover pan tightly with aluminum foil.

Roast in the preheated oven until meat is tender, about 6 hours.

*Allrecipes.com*

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# The Deacon's Bench

by Jim Lieb

Here we are in Spring again, so it must be Lent. If you were raised Catholic in the 1950s and 60s like I was, Lent is a big deal. We, of course, had no meat on Fridays. That was all year and the family menu usually had tuna casserole and/or mac-and-cheese that day. Lent added fasting which meant that if the usual was three hot meals per day, two of those combined could not exceed the main meal except on Sunday. There were other restrictions that I have forgotten but the season was very clearly a time of sacrifice and experiencing limits to our appetites. Your experience may vary, especially if you were raised in some Protestant tradition.

I have spoken before about the practical side of Lent. It is set in the darker and scarcer time of winter when the stocks of food stored up at harvest are starting to get low. The Shrove Tuesday dinner is using up the old stocks of meat, butter, and grain before they go bad. Lent is making what is left stretch until the early harvest came in.

One of the lessons deeply ingrained in this teaching is that as we experience the self imposed scarcity of Lent, we come in compassionate contact with the want that the poor experience every day of every season. Lazarus at the gate and the widow's offering from her scarcity were common sermon themes. Our parents understood this from growing up in the Depression and the Victory Gardens that followed. I remember my parents talking about the garden my grandfather had in the vacant lot he owned on our block. The Irish Famine Times were also still a memory in both my family and in the community. Lent reminded us of the importance of sharing. We were taught our duty to care for the less fortunate, not to despise them.

However, not everyone got the memo. One of the doctrines of Catholicism that got thrown over the side in the Protestant Reformation was the sacrament of Confession/Penance. Luther had had enough of the selling of indulgences and he was right, up to a point. God is not like Amazon, doing order fulfillment just because someone has the cash and clicks the button. Where Protestantism went too far was where, in denying that salvation was for sale (correct), it also denied that we could do anything in the salvation department (too far). Calvin, Luther's more extreme contemporary, took this even further and denied the idea of a free will, that we have the agency and capability to do both good and evil. If we have no free will and are subject to the whims of predestination, there is no need for Confession because, as Calvin said, we are helpless to save ourselves. Centuries later, the unintended consequences of this helplessness and total dependence on the random granting of grace is a spiritual climate of individual, private piety coupled to a diminished value for communal responsibility.

In taking the middle way, we Anglicans have a little bit of both. Note



that we have Confession and Absolution at nearly every communal liturgy. It says that we both recognize our culpability and our capability and responsibility to make amends. But we are also influenced by the unintended consequences. We “sorta” recognize our communal responsibility.

One other action that got lost is the Examination of Conscience, the preparatory part of the sacrament. Every time we enter into this sacrament, we are reminded to take moral stock of what we have done and not done. Given that most of our failings have a communal connection, a lot of that examination covers our behavior toward others. Central to this is our attitude toward the “poor” which is plain in the vocabulary we use to describe conditions such as poverty.

The terms “deserving poor” or “truly poor” contain a moral judgment that somehow distinguishes between, in Calvin’s terms, an “elect” or “saved” poor person and a “damned” or “nonredeemable” poor person. In practical terms, there is no such thing as a “truly”, i.e. morally good poor person that we might be obligated to help. This is a mythical person who one can feel compassion for rather than the dirty guy on the street who is asking for a quarter. In making that distinction between a mythical person and the real suffering person before us, we are letting ourselves walk by because Calvin’s teaching tells us that, given that God has no obligation toward him, neither do we.

In Lent we are reminded of our responsibilities both to our community and for our actions. Matthew 25 makes no such distinctions and emphasizes the point by saying, “the least of my brothers”. The fasting and voluntary privations we practice put us in the poverty our brothers and sisters live every day. This season reminds us to work on the examination of both our individual and our communal consciences. This means examining not only whether you or I give a quarter when asked but also examining how our government, the expression and agent of our community, treats the least of our brothers.

A budget is more than just a tool for the accounting department to do their job. Its most important function is to define and express priorities. That which is most important gets the most money. Our government’s budget is our budget. Its priorities are our priorities. Upon examination, how do they stack up?

St. Andrew’s Women’s Reading Group

When: April 18, 7 pm

Where: Barbara Bain’s house

Book: The Gravity of Birds, by Tracy Guzman

All are welcome!

Call Jean for more info, 335-5682.



## ***It's Good for the Earth***

### ***& It's a Way to Give to Local Charities***

### ***It's Redeeming California!***

If the container is clearly marked as **CA redeemable**, it will bring cash to St. Andrew's, which we in turn give to a local charity.

#### ***What Do I Have to Do?***

***Sort 'em:*** Aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass.

***Rinse 'em.*** (Discard the caps.)

***Bag 'em*** - in separate plastic bags.

***Deliver 'em*** - next to the gardening shed, to the right of the Parish Hall.

It's simple:

**Sort—Rinse—Bag—Deliver.**



*... Walking the Way on God's good Earth.*

## How do you get those scrip gift cards?

Just contact Sharon Fishel at 831-247-5572 or s.fishel@att.net or sfishel@pacbell.net. Tell her which retailer you want scrip for and give her a check. Orders need to be in by the end of each month and the cards arrive in about a week. What stores do you buy from on a regular basis? Consider buying scrip for food, gas, prescriptions or other regular purchases. They're great for gift buying. Whether you wrap up the gift card itself or use it to purchase that special gift, St. Andrew's benefits.

Here are just a few of the **750** participating retailers:

*Safeway.....Whole Foods.....Nob Hill.....Exxon.....Shell.....Arco  
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Wendy's.....Burger King.....Taco Bell.....CVS.....Walgreen's.....Rite  
Aid.....Best Buy.....Office Max/Depot .....Staples.....Dell  
Computers.....Southwest Airlines..... Delta.....Hyatt ...Petco...  
PetSMART.....American Girl.....Joann's...Bed Bath & Beyond  
.....Marshall's.....Land's End.....Old Navy.....Gap.*

There is a longer partial list in the Parish Hall.

Last year, St. Andrew's earned around \$350 from scrip. We can easily increase that by planning ahead.



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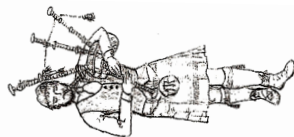
**Jim Flynn, Agent Lic. # 0552992**

6941 Highway 9  
Felton, CA 95018-9719  
Bus 831-335-3421  
[jim.flynn.buhq@statefarm.com](mailto:jim.flynn.buhq@statefarm.com)  
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### The Other Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to stop beating  
myself for not doing things perfectly, the  
courage to forgive myself because I'm  
working on doing better, and the wisdom  
to know that you already love me  
just the way I am.