

The Piper

December 2025



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A Message from Father Martin

A Call to a Holy Advent

Dear Friends,

We are beginning a new season in our lives, our year, and as a parish. It is Advent, our time to prepare for the coming of the Lord and the Joy of Christmas. Advent is therefore a season to clean house spiritually. To get ready for what is coming. To look up from petty stuff and let go of clutter and distractions. Just as we prepare for a party or the visit of a special guest, so this is the time to prepare for the Lord's coming into our lives anew. Time to renew our hope, which can be in short supply especially this time of year.

Our Scriptures for Advent call us again and again to wake up and pay attention, to get ready for what is to come.

Now the Scriptures do not tell us to wake up and make the Lord come. They do not tell us to get ready and then create the new future ourselves. No, the Bible calls us to wake up and **pay attention to what God is doing** in our lives and in this world.

And this is not just another Advent, like you may have observed last year, and the year before, and on and on. Think to yourself how you are not the same as you were a year ago. This is a new Advent in this year of your life. Think of what has changed in life around you. This is the first Advent for you and me at this point in our journeys. Our world is changing – it is time to wake up and pay attention to what God is doing in these new times, where we are now.

How then shall we observe a holy Advent – waking up to God, getting ready for Jesus, kindling our hope in the Holy Spirit? What shall you and I do and practice to be ready and to welcome what is coming? Personally I come back to the way of Benedict.

When the Roman Empire was falling at the end of the 5th century, in a time of great change, a lay person named Benedict began practicing a way of faith and love, of waking up to God. It became the foundation for many Christian communities and is practiced by many today. They are speaking to me – and perhaps to us – this Advent season.

The three vows of the Way of St. Benedict are **stability, obedience and openness to grow and change**. (Or, start where you are, listen, and be flexible and open.) These three vows can guide us in being awake to God and ready to welcome Christ at his coming.

Stability says to me being awake to where I am now, who I am with now, present with God as I am. That may mean letting go of regret or resistance to where I am or what has happened in my life – here we are now.

The Lord is coming – the Spirit is moving – here and now, not somewhere else. Our part according to our lessons today is to pay attention where we are.

It may mean acknowledging our failings and sins – our weaknesses and short-comings – and nevertheless being awake and ready for God's grace and love for us as we are. That is stability.

Obedience comes from the Latin *audire*, (as in audio) meaning to listen. Obedience is not to blindly and rigidly follow arbitrary rules and commandments. It is to listen to God, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit, and really respond – to obey in response to God's love and purpose and invitation, as best we hear these.

And willingness to grow and change in the context of Advent means willingness to hope in what God is bringing to birth and to light. It means being willing to grow into who God calls us to become – into the image and fullness of Christ. It is to be willing like Mary the mother of our Lord to let God's will be done in us, and to carry and care for God's grace in our own lives.

Willingness to grow and be transformed means not succumbing to cynicism about the world as it is, or to despair at our own weaknesses, or frustration at the sins and failings of others. It means being willing to go on this Advent journey and to find what God has in store and prepared for us.

Here at St. Andrew's, I call you this Advent to read one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, between now and Christmas. If you read the Bible regularly, this will be fun. If you are not familiar with the Bible, this is your opportunity to begin. Read one of the four in a modern translation. Read for the general sense of things – what does Jesus care about? See what stirs up in you. You will not be disappointed.

We also have a Bible Study on Tuesdays from 11 to Noon. No background required. Come when you can. Consider as well our Women's Circle, and the new Men's Circle just starting.

Finally, in the midst of the season's worldly busyness, take time for quiet, for thinking about what stability, obedience and willingness to grow and change can mean for you. Then talk with someone about this – a trusted friend, me? – because our faith journeys need not be walked alone.

Advent times are exciting – what will the Lord stir up? What is coming to be born in your life? Watch out.

Yours in Christ, *Martin+*

Garden of



Eatin'

Sauerbraten

This is probably my favorite beef dish. However, it takes planning ahead four days to make it so I don't do it very often. Sue Roe

3 1/2 to 4 pound chuck roast
2 onions, sliced
2 bay leaves
6 whole cloves

12 black peppercorns
1 teas. salt (or less)
1 pint red wine vinegar
1/2 cup water

Three days before you plan to serve, place roast in an earthenware bowl with onions and seasonings. Combine vinegar and water, heat to boiling, and pour over meat. Marinate three days in the refrigerator. Turn twice a day with 2 wooden spoons; never pierce with a fork.

To cook on day 4: Drain meat and brown thoroughly on all sides in hot fat in a Dutch oven or deep skillet. Add marinade, cover, and simmer slowly for 3 to 4 hours. Serve with Gingersnap Gravy.

For Gingersnap gravy: When meat is done, remove to platter. Remove any excess fat from liquid. Add 2 teas. sugar and 8 crumbled gingersnaps. Cook ten minutes. Thicken with a flour and water paste. (1 Tbls. flour to 1 cup cold water) Bring to a boil and boil 1 minute.

I like to serve it with sweet and sour red cabbage.

HeeHeeHee!!

A local priest and a pastor were fishing on the side of the road. They thoughtfully made a sign saying, "The End is Near! Turn yourself around now before it's too late!" and showed it to each passing car. One driver who drove by didn't appreciate the sign and shouted at them, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!"

All of a sudden they heard a big splash, looked at each other, and the priest said to the pastor, "You think maybe we should have just said 'Bridge Out' instead?"

Advent Prayer

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
Send your Holy Spirit upon our preparation for Christmas.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice
each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your
coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy
of your Kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light.

To you we say “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Amen.

by Henri Nouwen (reprinted from Sojourners Magazine, December 2025)



St. Andrew's Vestry Members

Jane Pomeroy, Senior Warden

Sara Hector

John Woolliscroft, Junior Warden

Sheryl Mello

Susan Greer

Ray Rischpater

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, please forward them to any of the Vestry members. Vestry meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 1 pm in the Parish Hall.

Advent and Christmas Announcements

This Sunday, December 7, all are invited to a special Christmas Tea, after Church in the Parish Hall (around 11 am). Adults, children and families are all welcome. A special visitor with a white beard may make a special appearance. For more information, contact Mary Woolliscroft.

On Tuesday, December 23, 11 am to Noon, we will have a **special Bible Study on the Christmas stories** in the Bible. Brings friends, and consider coming with curiosity and questions. Led by Fr. Martin. (No Bible Study on December 30)

Our Christmas Eve service will be at 7:00 pm on December 24. You may contribute to our Christmas flowers in memory or thanksgiving by signing up on Sundays.

Stewardship – Preparing for our Ministries in the Coming Year

We have begun gathering pledges or 'Giving Estimates' for 2026. So far the response have been very generous. If you have not yet submitted your 'Giving Estimate' and wish to do so, please do it soon: on Sunday or by mailing your pledge card to P.O. Box 293, Ben Lomond as soon as possible so the Vestry may prepare a responsible 2026 budget.

Alternatively, you may send an email to the Church stating your 'Giving Estimate' for 2026 to support St. Andrew's ministries.

St. Andrew's in the News

On November 1, our Diocese of El Camino Real gathered by Zoom for our Annual Convention. (Representing St. Andrew's was Barbara Banke, Jane Pomeroy, and Martin Yabroff.) The Report of our diocesan Disaster Resilience Coordinator, Katie Knapp, had the following gracious words about St. Andrew's:

*Saint Andrew's in Ben Lomond has been an absolute powerhouse for disaster resilience. It is one of our smallest parishes, but that is not limiting them at all. In early conversations, they identified their asset as the office space they had upstairs. That may not sound like a disaster resilience asset, but it has become a huge one for the Santa Cruz County community. They were able to provide that office space to the **Santa Cruz Long Term Recovery Group**, a nonprofit tasked with helping survivors of past disasters rebuild.*

Santa Cruz County has had eight federally declared disasters in the last eight years. This group has been doing vital work and desperately needed affordable office space. Saint Andrew's was able to provide it, and because of that, long-term recovery work and all the disaster networks in the county have multiplied their impact.

More St. Andrew's in the News

Again this year, in a poll conducted by the local weekly paper The Press-Banner, St. Andrew's has been voted the best place to worship in the San Lorenzo Valley!



Ramblings from a Wanderer

Lately I have been thinking a lot about faith and trust, partly because of so many things going on in the U.S. that seem to be putting a strain on the faith and trust I have in our government, but most certainly because of the major changes that have happened in my life, not just over the past few months but also over the past few years.

Selling my home in Santa Cruz was absolutely a leap of faith. Where would I go, would the buyers care for the home as I had, would I get the money I needed, would I find “homes” for all the stuff that I’d accumulated over the years and no longer wanted to carry around. At times I was amazed at how easy all of it came together; many of my questions answered and my doubts resolved.

Then signing a one year lease on a house in San Miguel de Allende was definitely taking a leap of faith – that I would be safe, that I would find it a good place to live, that I would find a community of friends, and so on. So far, I have found all that and more.

Having faith and trust in God to take me down the “correct” path has led me to have more than I ever expected. As I’m learning about this place, meeting new people, and becoming more settled, I’m more sure than ever that God has been taking me and taking care of me on this journey along my life’s road. And, as long as I continue to have faith and trust, I’ll continue to move through this pilgrimage with all its marvelous discoveries along the way.

When I was involved with the foundation that worked with Iraqi refugees and traveling to Jordan and Kurdistan to meet some of them, I was totally astounded by how resilient they seemed and by how much faith they had that God would provide for and lead them to where they were supposed to be. I was afraid that if anything really bad were to happen to me, that I would not have that much faith and would not be able to carry on. When I said that in a conversation with someone, she asked if I was kidding ... that losing 4 family members in the space of 5 months, including my husband, was pretty bad, and yet I had faith and trust that things would keep going on. Hmmmm...

And, now, living in Mexico (for however long I will be here) and meeting quite a few locals – many in service occupations, some entrepreneurs, artists, bakers, and shop owners, again, I am struck by the faith they have. And it shows in their joyfulness, friendliness, patience, and kindness.

And I feel even more blessed to be witness to this way of life. And feel so privileged to be on this journey, this pilgrimage, this experience of what life can be with a bit of faith and trust. And, I know every day that I would not be here had God not paved the way and led me here.

- Susan Greer

St. Andrew's Ministries

The Women's Circle



Dear Friends,

Women's Circle will change its schedule to accommodate working women's hours. Beginning in December, we'll plan to meet the first Thursday evening of the month at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary. This will coincide with the Men's Group so couples can come at the same time. The Women's Circle will also meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:30 am in the parish hall. So we will meet December 4, 6:30 pm and December 17, 10:30 am. Join us to share the journey as women in this amazing and complex world. Ann Moyer, 619-321-8596

We would like to celebrate your birthday—please give the date (month and date) to Susan Greer at sgreerincruz@gmail.com, or to Sharon Fishel



LOSS (WINGS) Associated with Suicide Prevention Services of the Central Coast, it is a support (not therapy) group for anyone who has lost someone to suicide, years ago or recently. They meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays from 6:00 to 7:30 pm (please note this is a change in time) in the Parish Hall. The Facilitator is Dr. Joan McVay of St. Andrew's. For more information, contact Julie Cory at 831-246-8750. There are no meetings in December; they will resume in January 2026.

Prayer Team

We have an active prayer team at St. Andrew's led by Sue Roe. When a prayer concern is made known to Sue, she sends it out to the group so they can be praying for you. Please contact Sue if you would like some prayers.

Also, if you would like to be one of the pray-ers, let Sue know and she will be happy to add you to the group.

Please contact Sue at Phone 562-243-4080, or by email suemhr@aol.com

Outreach Committee

If you know of or support a non-profit organization and would like it to be considered for a grant from St. Andrew's, please provide information on its programs to the Outreach Committee. The members of the committee are Susan Greer, Joan McVay, and Ray Rischpater. We are looking for additional committee members, so if you are interested, please contact Susan, Joan, or Ray. The committee generally meets after Bible Study, on the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families) meets every Wednesday evening upstairs.

Men's Circle

The men of St. Andrew's have decided that the women shouldn't have all the fun, so a gathering of men to share their lives and concerns will begin on December 4 at 6:30 pm in the Parish Hall. The plan will be to meet the first Thursday of each month.
Any questions? Call Brad Moyer 619 321-7316 or Christian Kjaergaard 650 864-4404.

COFFEE HOUR PROVIDERS

THANK YOU FOR ALL THE YUMMY THINGS YOU BRING US

If you are unable to bring coffee hour please call someone else on the list and also, please let the office know so we can put the correct provider in the bulletin. To let the office know please email staoffice@sbcglobal.net or call or text Sharon. I type bulletins, etc. at home so don't always see the updates in the parish hall.

Sharon Fishel Office: 831-247-5572

Jane Pomeroy	(408) 472-1586	December 7
Barbara Banke	345-2992	December 14
Eve Yabroff	(253) 225-8683	December 21
Emily Kjaergaard	(408) 221-3830	December 24





Join us for Worship Services on Sundays at 10 a.m. and the social hour after. The sermon may be watched on St. Andrew's Facebook page, if you are not able to attend in person.