

# *The Shepherd's Staff Newsletter*

*The Right Reverend D. M. Ashman*

*January 2025*



## *Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary Classes*

The Seminary is currently offering the second half of Archbishop's Schultz's Survey of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time (January 7). Bishop Ashman will continue his Friday Latin and Greek classes (January 10) along with a class in World History and Religion from Egypt to the conclusion of the Byzantine (East Roman Empire) on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. Pacific Time (January 15) and a new seminar focusing on *The Great Divorce* by C. S. Lewis on Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time (January 16). All course offerings are either credit or audit.

The cost per course is \$250.00 for credit and \$50.00 for audit. Laity are encouraged to attend. Please address any requests for tuition relief to the Provost at [bishopashman@gmail.com](mailto:bishopashman@gmail.com). When you sign up for your course(s), please send your registration (below) to the following: the Provost (Bishop Ashman): [bishopashman@gmail.com](mailto:bishopashman@gmail.com). Send your tuition and another copy of your registration to Canon Matthew Weber at 2316 Bowditch P.O. Box 40020 Berkeley, CA 94704 or [saintannchapel@gmail.com](mailto:saintannchapel@gmail.com)

### **Saint Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological Seminary**

#### **SPRING SEMESTER 2024 REGISTRATION**

**(HARD COPY OR EMAIL)**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Email:**

**Cell Phone:**

**Parish:**

**Parish Priest:**

**Please list the courses you wish to audit or take for credit**

## *Provincial Anglican Church Women*

As was stated in the early December issue, the Provincial Anglican Church Women are inviting you to be part of a fund-raiser to help defray the REFURBISHING FUND for the New Oxford & Morse (Front) House at Saint Joseph of Arimathea Seminary. The building is over one hundred years old and needs some major repairs such as roofing, walls, floors and stairs. This fundraiser is easy. Just fill out the form below, write a check and you are done! No cookies to back, friends to be coerced, or functions to attend!

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$15     I do not bake, so here is the money I would have spent on baking cookies, cakes pies, candy or jam.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$25     I do not want to ask family, friends or co-workers to buy baked goods, so here is the money I would have spent on boxes, jars, wrapping paper and ribbon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50     I do not want to walk, jog, swim or run in any activity that has the suffix -thon in it, so here is the money I would have spent on a "free" t-shirt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$75     I do not want to attend any Spaghetti, Tri tip or Crab Feed, so here is the money I would have spent filling a table to attend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100    I do not want to attend any fancy balls or banquets, so here is the money I would have spent on a new outfit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$        I am making this donation to express my appreciation for having nothing to buy, sell or do except fill out this form and send a check.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: Provincial ACW  
(with notation: New Oxford House Refurbishing Fund)  
Nona Gourley, Provincial ACW President  
2038 Carlsbad Caverns Court  
Newman, CA 95360

## *Episcopal Visitation to Christ Church A Truly Remarkable Day*

On November twenty-fourth, the Feast of Christ the King, the Right Reverend Peter F. Hansen, the Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of the Western States, visited Christ Anglican Church in Carefree Arizona. All Churches dedicated to the Saviour observe as their patronal feast (i.e., their feast of title), the Feast of Christ the King. It was a remarkable and celebratory weekend and experience with three baptisms, fifteen confirmations and three receptions. Carefree is located in the far northeast corner of the Phoenix metropolitan area and is led the Reverend Canon Steven Dart, assisted by Deacon Ory Schultheis.





# *Christmas Altars*

*A Celebration of the Church's Continuing Ministry*

*Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Chico CA*

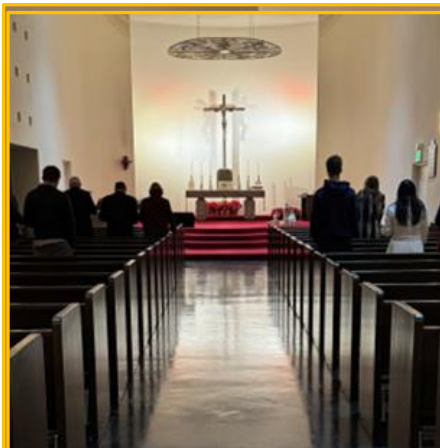




*Anglican Church of the Holy Cross, Oklahoma City OK*

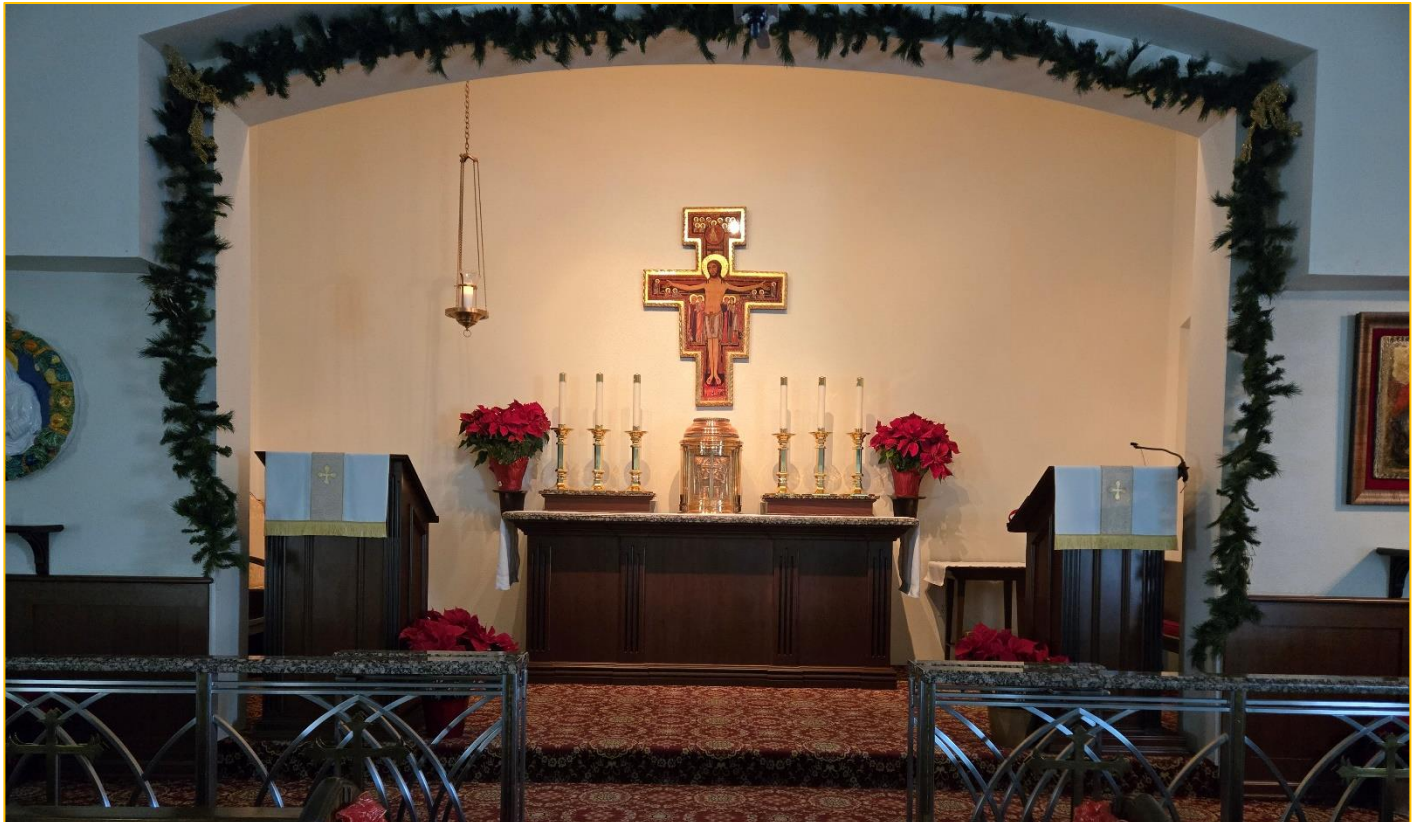


*Saint Ann Chapel, Palo Alto CA*





*Saint George's Anglican Church, Las Vegas NV*





*Anglican Church of the Atonement, Fountain Hills AZ*



*Saint James Anglican Church, Broomfield CO*





*Church of Our Saviour, Los Angeles CA*





*Saint Alban's Anglican Church, Peoria AZ*



*Midnight Mass in in Morning*



## *Saint Joseph of Arimathea Chapel, Berkeley CA*





*The Parish of Saint Mark, Portland OR*



*Saint John the Baptist, Omaha NE*





*Church of Our Saviour, Santa Barbara CA*





*A Wonderful Christmas Home Altar from Boise, ID*



*Father Ben and Sharon Brown*

*St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Woodinville WA*





*Christ Anglican Church, Carefree AZ*



*St. Nicholas Anglican Church, Scottsdale AZ*





*St. Luke's Anglican Church, Redding CA*





*Saint Thomas Anglican Church, San Francisco CA*





*All Saints Anglican Church, Tulsa OK*





*Saint Martin of Tours, Concord CA*





*Christmas Pageants*  
*Saint Peter's Anglican Church, Oakland, CA*



*Saint Thomas, San Francisco, CA*





## *Saint George's Anglican Church, Las Vegas NV*



## *Christmas Best Wishes from the Prayer List*



*I [just] wanted to wish each and every one of you a Most Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year. This is a picture of our traditional "Charlie Brown Tree" or as Fr. Ponec would say, "I want the tree that would be without a home on Christmas." A second tradition we had was to always have a Nativity scene under our tree. This one was made by our nephews, Jason and John Ponec, in 1991. Much love to all of you and to all those on our prayer list. Blessings, Deb*



## *A New Year's Day Tradition*

### *Anglican Church of the Atonement, Fountain Hills AZ*

Father John LesCallett reports that it has become a tradition at Church of the Atonement in Fountain Hills on New Years Day to bless a marriage. On January First, 2025, he blessed Ben and Debra Petro, who have been married for three years.





## *A Sermon for Christmas Eve*

WHAT WE FOCUS ON at this special time will give color and meaning and memory to our hearts and minds at Christmas. For many people, the Christmas holiday means time off with family and friends. For others, it's gifts you receive as a child, then presents you give, as parents of young ones. It's about children, or it's the food, or playing our favorite Christmas music, or the Kansas City Chiefs' game. It's brightly lit and decorated evergreen trees, or strings of lights around the roof. Or Santa and elves and reindeer. But if you listen to the classic Carols on this night, you may be convinced we should focus on otherworldly visitors in the skies over Bethlehem, who burst through a night sky with heartbreaking harmonies, and their voices...well, they were the voices of angels. And we sing: Sing choirs of angels, sing in adoration, sing all ye citizens of heaven above. While shepherds watched their flocks by night all seated on the ground, the angel of the Lord came down and glory shone around. It came upon a midnight clear that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the newborn king! Angels from the realms of glory wing your flight o'er all the earth. Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly host sing alleluia. Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherd's watch are keeping. Fear not, then said the angel, let nothing you affright. Angels we have heard on high, and so on. We sing about the angels singing about us. Their song rings in a declaration of peace from God's throne to the inhabitants of earth.

But we see all these angels while looking up, like the shepherds, roused from their campfire by the bright herald, and then the whole heavenly host, telling them where the Saviour had just been born. The angels were happy. What else was this event to those supernatural beings who knew better than we did what was coming? And why. St. John would later have a vision of a woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon, who was chased by a dragon, a red dragon who was the fallen angel Satan, and there was war in heaven. Michael the archangel led the angels of God against this rebellion. It might seem to have nothing to do with Christmas, except that the woman was with child and she gave birth to a boy, and Satan was trying to kill Him. That bucolic night in Bethlehem seldom gets framed as a wartime event, but this secret birth, Mary's whole life as a matter of fact, was fearsomely opposed and fraught with the greatest danger. Before the baby was just a few months old, his parents were rushing Him south to Egypt to escape the soldiers of Herod sent to murder Him. This was not a world at peace.

The angel's proclamation saw how God's desire for mankind sought peace between Himself and us. Our sins, heresies, sorcery, cruelty and lust had long challenged God's kingdom on earth, but this treason of ours inspired God to forge a path to our freedom and our forgiveness. From heaven's point of view, Christmas night was glorious. God's whole plan in creating us was to fashion creatures who might independently choose what's good and grow in stature to be His likeness and His image. Angels had been the closest things to this and already walked in perfection. It seems that the evil spirits who opposed Jesus had been against the whole human experiment from the start. Their leader slithered over to the woman and hissed doubts of God's motives in her ear. She was to have children too, and this holy process really irked the father of lies. How could he stop it altogether?

Angels were created, just as we are, but from pure spirit, not matter. That is why they can't be redeemed if they fall. They never die. So, we amphibious humans are special. Some angels hate the very thought of us, but most of them love us as He loves us, and they want us to grow in stature until we surpass them in order and a new nature. When this baby is born in the night under a new star, his birthplace a barn, his bed a food tray for donkeys, this was God the Son breaking through the very wall between heaven and earth. The Logos, Word, eternal Son became a man forever, to live, to die, and rise to destroy death and sin, and the power of the evil one.

So, while we sip our eggnog, light candles, and exchange presents, we might remember that, in order to get here, a young virgin mother, her patient woodworking husband, and her newborn Son, conceived by the Word of the Father and the overshadowing Holy Spirit, were at war for us. The outcome may be a foregone conclusion, for God doesn't lose. But a lot was at stake and the casualties are your friends, sons, mothers, teachers, and heroes, who must share in the invisible battle and suffer silently as we sing silent night. We are fortunate. Most of the war was fought in heaven, much was accomplished by our Lord on Calvary, a lot by the early saints whose faith was a crime, and who won through the confusion to a balanced, reasonable, God-revealed truth for us. If it makes you want to sing, then join the angels tonight, see the sheepfold of Bethlehem as they saw it. Do you know what those lambs were? Each year shepherds tend the birth of many lambs. Late winter is peak season for lambing, and these wooly beasts turn a year old about time for the Passover. The sheep of Bethlehem were specifically under contract to the Temple at



Jerusalem for supplying spotless lambs offered in keeping with the Law. These yearlings were ceremonially slain on a Friday, some 33 years later in the Temple grounds as a wooden cross was raised on a hill overlooking the sacrifice below.

The Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world – was a Baby boy born in Bethlehem, birthplace of shepherd David, and shepherds are called to find Him in a manger. No detail is missed. This brilliant plan fulfilled everything. What did the angels know? Why were they singing such praises? This great plan of salvation gets painted across the lives of each of us in colors fitted to our personal lifepaths and experiences. The stargazing magi saw no angels, but spotted a new star and set out. The aged prophet waited in the Temple for Messiah's arrival and saw a baby in mother's arms, and he knew. Every need shall be met in God's good time. Every wound healed. Every sorrow comforted and acknowledged.

The greatest need of all was an end to our war with God. Peace on Earth. And this was the night it came. The angels sang victorious songs for Jesus. The enemy cringed in a corner and worked twisted plans for our downfall, but all his devises proved his ruin. The war in heaven, and war on earth have been settled by a baby boy who came visible on the earth this night, and we celebrate glory: the brightness only intense goodness may shine in. Angels sang glory to God in the highest. Peace, and God's good will to all the people of this world. Think of yourself reading the headline, PEACE at the close of World War II. This is infinitely bigger, with far more at stake. And the angels are our headlines. Let your hearts reach up to heaven with praise.

+PFH

## *The Law of Giving*

There is an old parable told about an unusual tree that grew outside the gates of a small town in Southern Russia some three or four hundred years ago. It was an ancient and beautiful tree, and everyone believed that it had been touched by the finger of God because, despite its age, its limbs – even in the coldest weather - were constantly laden with delicious fruit. Every year, hundreds of travelers and villagers refreshed themselves with the fruit hanging from this miraculous tree. But then a greedy merchant purchased the property on which the tree grew. And when he saw travelers and townspeople picking the fruit from HIS tree, he built a high fence around it.

The city elders pleaded with the new owner to share the tree's bounty, but the mean-spirited merchant scoffed and said, "It's my tree; it's my fruit! I bought it with my money!" And then an astonishing thing happened. Suddenly the ancient tree died! Everyone asked what had happened? Then the staretz, the holy man of the village, told the villagers that the cause of the tree's death was a result of a violation of the law of giving. It was just as predictable as any other law of nature: if giving stops, the bearing of fruit ceases, and death inevitably follows.

## *The Final Word - How We are Saved*

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's conversion to Christ came while he was imprisoned in the Gulag Archipelago in the Soviet Union. It came when he realized that the line between good and evil was not between political systems or economic philosophies, but that it was drawn through every human heart.

The justice of God is to give you what you want. We can choose to know God and to call Him by name. We can choose to will His will in our lives. The name of God become man is Jesus, derived from Joshua who led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. His other name is Love.

When the evening of life comes, we will be judged on how well we have loved. Christ will be our judge, but we are healed by his stripes. Love judges us, but in that judgment He can heal us, if we respond and accept His invitation We are healed of hate by love. We are saved from our solitude by love.

+Robert S. Morse