

# Apostles Epistle

*Nurturing connections with the divine*

A Periodic Newsletter

December 2011

Dear Friends in Christ,

May you have an Advent filled with devoted preparation for our grand celebration of the Incarnation at Christmas!

On Nov 27 the Church began a new liturgical year with the First Sunday. This is a time of preparation for us.. On Sundays we do not jump the gun and go straight to Christmas Carols. Instead we begin by hearing from the prophets and their long hopes and waiting for the promised Messiah for their people. We hear about John the Baptist, the forerunner and cousin of Jesus.

Our hymns are all expectation and remembrance of those last days just before Christ's birth – the haunting tune of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* echoes in our hearing these four weeks. It is as beloved in its shape and voice as our hymns for Christmas.

Our color for worship is blue. The Church may use purple or blue, but we draw on our Anglican roots and use a color that differentiates these days from Lent and

still has a sense of earnest readiness. This shade of blue was used at one of the great, and ancient centers of Christian worship in England: Sarum, or Salisbury.



We light an Advent Wreath at the beginning of worship marking the Sundays of Advent in community just as we do in our own homes. It is indeed a season of growing light and we rejoice in the coming of the Light of Lights, Jesus Christ.

Our Eucharistic prayers are more explicit in their theology of expectation and the Savior. At the 9:30 service the Prayer is begun in chanting in place of a spoken

start. To begin their praise of God the 7:30 uses the Canticle of Zechariah, the song offered by the father of John the Baptist at his birth, instead of the customary Gloria.

We will not criticize neighbors who fall into retail frenzy at an early date. We will instead sink our roots more deeply into the foundation of Christ and worship so that the veritable storm of gifts and food will not wash us away from the true reason for our Feast, the arrival of the Incarnate Son of God in our midst. We make our preparations with one eye on God. Thus the shopping downpour will only water our own feast and celebrations for the best and longest time of sheer jubilee – the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Faithfully in Christ,

Megan †

P.S. Keep the party going and don't take down all your lights until after the Feast of Epiphany (January 6).

## **Apostles in December**

*What's going on at Apostles during December*

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## **Bishop's Committee Report**

*Senior Warden Marilyn Myers reports on the November Bishop's Committee meeting*

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## **St. Nicholas**

*A special feature about St. Nicholas, just in time for his visit on December 4.*

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## **Advent Music**

*The rundown on the hymns and the carols we'll hear this month.*

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# Notes of Note

## Music at Church of the Apostles

***Come join "The Apostolates"***

*(Actually we're the adult choir at Church of the Apostles)*

***On our world singing tour of all the great cathedrals in Europe and beyond.***

*(Actually we sing each Sunday at Church of the Apostles, but the tour sounds like a really fascinating idea)*

***And it's free!***

*(Actually the free part pretty much involves singing each Sunday at Church of the Apostles. We also rehearse each Wednesday evening [6:30 to 8:00] and that is also without any cost to you.)*

***Join now for a free gift!***

*(Actually lots of friends, lots of fun, and a real sense of accomplishment is what you'll receive . . . and it's all free!) It is important to remember:*

- \* *You don't have to be an experienced musician*
- \* *You don't have to be able to read music*
- \* *We appreciate busy schedules; as a result, missed rehearsals and not singing on Sunday mornings (now and then) is understood*
- \* *We sing at the 9:30 service each Sunday; we don't do funerals, weddings or bar mitzvahs, and don't take requests . . . unless the tip is really big.*

*Ken Easton, Director of Music*



## BISHOP'S COMMITTEE NOVEMBER REPORT

*The Bishop's Committee met Saturday, November 19, in regular monthly session.*

*Stewardship reports were encouraging. BC members will be making follow-up calls to help finalize next year's budget as provided by the Finance Committee. I am happy to share that a quarter-time Youth Leader is in next year's budget.*

*Appreciation was again expressed to the Deuprees, and many individuals, for the incredible landscaping project recently completed on the church property. Reimbursement was set for portions of the project and donations gratefully acknowledged. A review of overall future landscaping plans and development will be discussed at the February BC meeting.*

*Dennis Stricker reported that the widening of Tangerine from La Canada to I-10 will begin in about two years and will affect our church property in a number of ways. The road is scheduled for four lanes, a landscaped median and bike paths on both sides. Plans are being put together to help Apostles deal with varying aspects including right-of-way, possible movement of some plants and, of course, our sign and lighting on Tangerine at La Cholla. La Cholla is also scheduled to be widened to four lanes which will additionally affect our church*

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## Family Activities during Advent

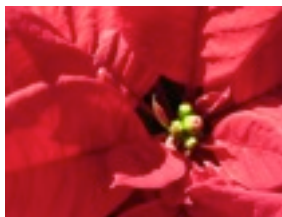
Advent is a wonderful time to engage in family activities as we welcome the start of the church year and anticipate the renewal of the birth of Jesus. Every Sunday, we have special activities for the whole family, from St. Nicholas on the 4th, the Holiday Parade on the 11th, leading up to the Greening of the Church on the 18th.

Among the many traditional Advent activities, we focus our attention this year on the Family Advent Wreath Service and the Jesse Tree. We've seen the Advent Wreath near the altar, and we have a booklet available at the Youth Table in the narthex with prayers for each Sunday in Advent. Another booklet describes the Jesse Tree, a home decoration activity using characters and symbols from the Old Testament.

And at the 5:30 service on Christmas Eve, the children will play an integral role in the worship, from child acolytes to *Away In A Manger* from our children's choir.

## Poinsettia Donations

The church will gratefully accept donations for poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas through services on December 18. Please write 'Poinsettias' in the memo field on a check and place it in the collection basket on Sunday.



## December Events

### Outreach Food Drive, December 2-3

Church of the Apostles will hold its holiday food drive at the Safeway market on Rancho Vistoso at Tangerine, **Friday from 2:00 until 6:00 p.m.**, and **Saturday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.** Many of us have already signed up for specific duties over the last couple of weeks, but everyone else should go to this Safeway during the food drive for their weekly groceries, and help us load the holiday shelves at the food bank at [Interfaith Community Services](#) (a local ecumenical service provider).

The Outreach Ministry collected 40 pairs of socks for the troops during November! Thanks to all who contributed. The socks have been sent on to Rick Hernandez of Operation Gratitude with a card from our church.

### St. Nicholas, December 4

Dean Neitske will portray St. Nicholas to our 9:30 congregation and especially to our kids on December 4, two days before the Feast of St. Nicholas in the Anglican calendar. We have brought him forward annually for several years now. Since bishop Nicholas of Myra (see page 8) is actually the person behind the story book Santa Claus it is a great reminder for all..

### Oro Valley Holiday Parade, December 10

There is still time to sign up for specific tasks at the 7th Annual Oro Valley Holiday Parade on Saturday, December 10, so contact Leslie Oley at 742-6713 or by [email](#) to join our group of dedicated parade elves. If you've signed up for the event, you'll get a packet with all the information you'll need. If you're just a spectator, take the family and position

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property.

*Several attempts to break into the church have been reported lately. Apparently the high value of copper wiring has spurred a number of area break-ins. One of our assets – our distance from adjacent roads – also makes us more vulnerable and plans to better protect the building have been proposed and are under review. The Oro Valley police will try to provide additional drive-through times.*

*Monies were approved to revitalize and improve the church library. This will include new furnishings and swapping out the space of the current library room with the space of the current music room. The music and the library teams will work together for better utilization of both areas and create a welcoming public spot to host visitors as well as function for meetings and classes.*

*Blessings to all of you. These are good times at Apostles. As always, thanks for all you do.*

*Marilyn Myers, Senior Warden*

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yourself along the route and holler when we come by. The parade starts at Ironwood Ridge High School at 9:30 and travels east along Naranja Drive to Oro Valley Town Campus.

**Labyrinth Holy Walk, December 11, 2:00 p.m.**

December 12 is the Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the holy vessel that carries "That which is not containable". We invite you to a special "Celebration of the Coming of Light" into the world in our labyrinth from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. We will walk to manifest the light, love and compassion to all who seek inner peace. Wear walking shoes and warm casual clothing. Finger labyrinths will be provided for those who are unable to walk.

**The Greening of the Church, December 18, 11:00 a.m. after Family Service**

After the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we can perform the final preparations in the sanctuary for the celebration of the birth of Christ. Everyone is invited to the annual Greening of the Church to assist with decorations, altar vestments, poinsettia placements – a myriad of tasks for children of all ages, and fun for the whole parish.

**Christmas Services**

Christmas outweighs the ordinary Sunday schedule, so please note that there is **no early service** on Christmas, only the single service at 10:30 a.m. On Christmas Eve, we have a Family Service at 5:30 p.m. and a Candlelight Service at 10:30 p.m. Services will resume the normal schedule on Jan. 1.

Also please note that the office will be closed December 26-January 2.



**Looking Ahead**

**Women of the Bible, January 29**

We are very excited to present the contemporary artist Sara Novenson at the Church on Sunday, January 29 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. Sara's art is "a prayer of giving thanks, an expression of gratitude for the beauty of nature and all aspects of our life." Her recent book *Women of the Bible* contains stories and paintings about the powerful female archetypes in the Hebrew Bible. Part of the talk will include a reading of one of the stories, as well as how her spirituality has affected her art and enhanced her life.

**Jazz Concert, February 12**

The award-winning youth jazz bands of the Tucson Jazz Institute will return this February 12 for two concerts at the Church of the Apostles. Last year's show was great fun and very successful, so we have been looking for another opportunity to bring these students back. The proceeds will be split between the students and the Church.

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## Advent and Christmas Music at Apostles

The connection between worship and music in the Christian church goes to the earliest church traditions, with the earliest artifact of Christian service music dating from the fourth century. Music remains a powerful incentive for churchgoers, often an important factor in picking one church over another. Christmas as a celebration of renewal and rebirth has inspired composers through the ages, and the season, with its traditional hymns and contemporary inspirations, remains a highlight for the Christian music lover.

Here at Apostles, music director Ken Easton has prepared a month-long musical journey in conjunction with the new liturgy, all leading up to the special Christmas services. We hear it in the processional, which throughout Advent is one of the great and memorable, if solemn, seasonal hymns *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Each Sunday the choir opens with subsequent verses, from the first two on the First Sunday in

Advent, verses three and four on the second Sunday, culminating in the last verses on December 18. *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* is based on early Christian liturgies, and the music derives from the seven great Antiphons (responsive chants) that were sung during the week preceding Christmas. The text is based on the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 which, according to Matthew, Christ fulfilled (1:23).

Among the other wonderful hymns we sing during Advent, we should focus a little attention during the offertories to note the musical highlights. On December 4, new chorister Loren Doyle will sing a solo of Albert Hay Malotte's setting of *The Lord's Prayer*, written in 1935 and popular ever since. On the 11th, the choir will sing Ken's new arrangement of *He's Got The Whole World In His Hands*, and we might expect Ken's background in rock and jazz to help us celebrate the season in style. During the offering on the last

Sunday in Advent, the choir will sing Peter, Paul and Mary's beautiful song *Light One Candle*.

In case you're wondering when we might hear some Christmas carols, the Episcopal tradition saves those until Christmas Eve, when the choir will sing at both the 5:30 and 10:30 p.m. services. The sanctuary will resound with many of our favorite carols throughout the services: *Angels We Have Heard On High*, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, and many others. At the early Christmas Eve service, we especially note the **children's choir**, who will sing *Away In A Manger* before the sermon, and an ethereal trio of flutes playing *Deck The Halls* during the offertory. Late worshipers will hear the Irish harp playing *Silent Night* at the recessional at the late one, hovering in our ears as the time approaches midnight.

And of course the choir will sing on Christmas morning, but we can't give away all of Ken's surprises.

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The concerts will be on Sunday, February 12, at 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. Tickets are \$15 each and will be on sale after both services on December 11 and 18 (in time for Christmas gifts), and then in January starting on the 8th. Tickets will also be available at the church office during normal business hours.

## Ongoing Study Groups

Tuesday's group study day at Apostles during December will be abbreviated as we all take our special preparations for Christmas. Pastor Megan's Bible study (10-11 a.m.) is self-contained, so come as you are able.

- ❖ December 6: *Exodus* 19.
- ❖ December 13: *Exodus* 20-21.

Tuesday morning Bible study will reconvene on January 10.

At 6:30 Father Bob leads the Theological Tuesday discussion group in the library. The group will conclude reading *Rabbi Paul* by Bruce Chilton this month:

- ❖ December 6: chapters 9-10
- ❖ December 13: chapter 11

## Monday Meditation

The Christian Meditation group, led by Frank Price, has moved its meeting time to **Monday at 4:00 p.m.** It will continue meeting through December 19 and pick up again on January 9. The group follows the same practice as other small meditation groups around the world that are linked together through [The World Community of Christian Meditation](#). Our weekly teachings and meditation practice



can be attended at any time and are open to all. For more information, please contact Frank at 579-8013 or by [email](#).



## Editor's Epistolary

One of the preachers that I heard occasionally before coming to Apostles had a running theme through several of her teachings, see how many times a day we can choose *not* to get offended. A 1994 book by David McCracken, *The Scandal of the Gospels*, takes its starting point from

here, and from the saying of Jesus reported by both Matthew and Luke: **Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.** A loaded warning: in several stories, Jesus goes out of his way to be offensive, which McCracken illustrates with the Canaanite woman and the Pharisees in Matthew 15. McCracken examines the various aspects of the offense (generally translated as 'the stumbling block'), and more importantly, how the response to the offense can lead either towards faith (the Canaanite woman) or away from it (the Pharisees). He gives some background of the various snares and traps in the Old Testament, but nearly all of the passages he examines in depth are from the Gospels, with special emphasis on the parables.

Available locally at the UA library, *The Scandal of the Gospels* is an academic book, and McCracken takes his philosophical inspiration from the protean and multifaceted Danish writer Søren Kierkegaard, but for the most part the

book is relatively light on theoretical jargon. At its most accessible, the book unwraps some of the more difficult parables, including the vineyard laborers in Matthew 20 and the unforgiving slave in Matthew 18. All of the teachings are in the context of Jesus' life, in itself so offensive to the dominant powers that He was crucified. McCracken takes up this aspect looking at the Gospel of John, which, although it contains fewer parables than the synoptic gospels, is still a story of the essential offense, that a man claims to be the Son of God.

In the modern world, more psychological in its view of life, we

talk about being "stressed out" when we get offended at distracted drivers, bad-tempered cashiers, and idiotic politicians. Here though, the stresses are the schemes of the devil to penetrate our whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11); or we can choose to turn them around and to continue practicing the peace of Christ despite the troubles of the moment. During this Christmas season, practice the peace, stay safe, and treasure the spirit.

– All blessings –

### **Disclaimers and credits**

*In our article about music we've highlighted some of the planned*

*selections, but we must also note that schedules may change even at the last moments.*

*The portrait of Sarah is copyright by Sara Novenson. Sarah is one of the Women of the Bible that she may discuss during her presentation.*

*The parish photo below is by Rodney Kugizaki and was taken on November 13.*

*The photos on pages 1 & 2 are by Elizabeth Deupree. The Blessing of the Animals on November 20 pictures are from the [album](#) on Apostles @ Facebook, taken by Gretchen Poellot. The remaining photos are my own.*



# Saint Nicholas

There is a real saint behind the American Santa Claus and similar characters who appear in other cultures in December. In fact, we would maintain that the real Nicholas was a far more appealing and impressive figure than the kindly, but rather limited gift-givers who have displaced him in the popular imagination. Nicholas was born in Asia Minor, in the city of Myra, around the year 260. The many wonderful stories (legends?) about Nicholas tell us a great deal about the saint and are undoubtedly founded in reality, but one of the less well-known events in his life really sets forth his significance as one of the foremost of the saints of the Church.

Nicholas was one of the 318 bishops who attended the very first ecumenical council of the Church, the Council of Nicaea in 325. In a particularly heated argument over the divinity of Christ, Bishop Nicholas boxed the ears of the heretic Arius. In that act, Nicholas demonstrated the essential connection between faith and life, between believing and acting. The bishops of the council did not condone the violent act and disciplined Nicholas, but in the end they affirmed the orthodox view and condemned the heresy of Arius.

The connection between believing and acting characterized everything Nicholas did, even when his methods, as at the council, were not entirely exemplary. His empathy with victims of misfortune and disaster and his generosity, no matter

what the cost to himself, established his fame and made him one of the most beloved saints of all time. When an impoverished father was on the verge of selling his three daughters into prostitution, Nicholas came to the rescue with sacks of gold to provide dowries for each of them to be able to marry. When a wicked innkeeper killed three lost boys, chopped them up, and pickled them, Nicholas discovered the crime and restored the boys alive to their mothers. When a ship was floundering in a storm and about to sink, Nicholas calmed the storm and saved the lives of the sailors. Whenever possible, his good deeds were performed in secret and, needless to say, they have continued long after his death.



The stories about the saint have led to many customs for keeping his feast, and have also led to alterations in his personality. While the details vary, it is the custom in many countries for children to leave their

shoes outside of their doors when they go to bed on December 5th, the Eve of St. Nicholas. Some leave notes for the saint, some leave carrots and hay for his horse, to be sure that he will stop at their house.

St. Nicholas leaves fruit (usually an orange) and candy and other treats in the shoes--unless the children are undeserving, in which case a lump of coal is all they get. The origin of this custom lies in a version of the story of the gold which was left for the impoverished girls. The gold was an anonymous gift that Nicholas tossed through a window in the middle of the night and it landed in the shoes or stockings of the girl for whom it was intended. An orange is a good look-alike symbol for a lump of gold.

Whether gifts are given on St. Nicholas Day or Christmas, this holy and kindly saint can inspire the way we keep both days. He reminds us that generosity and self-sacrifice are central to our faith as Christians and care and concern for children, the poor, and all who are in danger or need is a particular responsibility of Christians.

*This article is abridged from [Full Homely Divinity](#), a resource site for Anglican Parish Life. The stained glass window of St. Nicholas and the three lost boys is at St Mary's Church, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, England. The image comes from the [St. Nicholas Center](#), which has more information than you could ever want to know about St. Nicholas and all of the customs in all the world that celebrate in his honor.*

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**Deacons**

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[The Rev. Jon Skaug](#) – 834-6147

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[The Rev. Brian Ticknor](#) – 797-0759

[The Rev. Cynthia M. Spencer](#) – 825-7730

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Dennis Stricker – 544-7716 (Junior Warden)

Wil Harri – 825-8227 (Treasurer)

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Donna Barker – 575-9393

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\*Click on the link to send an email.



## About Apostles Epistle

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