

# The AGAPE Newsletter

December 2009

Vol. 4, No. 12

## *December Highlights*

### **Dec. 11**

7:30 pm Austin Civic Wind  
Ensemble Christmas Concert – Free

### **Dec. 20**

7:00 pm – Christmas Jazz at St. A's

### **Dec. 24**

4:30 Family Christmas Eve Service  
7:00 Christmas Candlelight Service

## *Jazz Christmas at St. Andrew's*

Sunday, Dec. 20, 7 pm - ???

Music by St. Andrew's Choir  
and many Austin jazz musicians.

No admission charge.

An offering will be taken benefitting  
local saxophonist, Tony Campise and  
HAAM (Health Alliance for Austin  
Musicians).

## Little Eyes

Thomas Mann tells a story about his father going for a walk on the beach with one of the grandchildren. The tiny child stopped suddenly to pick up a shell that was so small it was almost unperceivable. Mann's father was amazed. "How could you see such a little shell?" His grandson responded, "Because I have little eyes."

Mann was no sentimentalist. He didn't tell the story because it was cute. He told the story because it carries an insight. When we lose our eyes for the small things, something bad happens to the world of our experience.

Much of the beauty of life is lost to us when we see an abstracted whole rather than the symphony of pulses that surrounds us. A child lacks a coherent theory of life, and perhaps for that reason, is able to actually experience life instead of think about it.

When we live in long run we can lose each moment that comes along. Our purposes and plans may seem important to us, but it's a pretty bleak landscape when we do not stop for the miniscule miracles that await us along the way.

Unhappiness is the surest sign of bad religion. If life seems tedious and dull, it's a good bet that your eyes have gotten too large to see life's treasures.

Love,



## **The Giving Tree**

This year, our Christmas Giving Tree will again serve Workers Defense Project families. These families are struggling due to wage with-holding, sub-minimum wage pay, and denial of basic benefits including compensation following workplace accidents.

Looking over the Giving Tree, you will see that many of the children ask only for clothing as their Christmas wish and the families ask only for help with bills and groceries. We can help these families with these essentials to give them the opportunity to enjoy the holidays with slightly fewer worries.

Your help is needed to provide gifts for the children and to donate to pay electric or food bills. Please choose a child from the Giving Tree and buy that gift or donate a gift-card (HEB gift-cards are particularly useful) or give money to pay electric and food bills for a family (indicate Giving Tree on your check so it may be directed properly).

Gifts and donations should be delivered to St. Andrew's no later than Sunday, Dec. 20. The earlier these are dropped off, the easier it will be to make sure everything is ready for these families.

In addition, last minute shoppers are needed Dec. 21. Gift deliverers are needed on Dec. 23 and 24. Some recipients will only be home Christmas Eve, so the evening of Dec. 24 will be especially busy.

Please contact Lisa Ward at [lisa@runward.com](mailto:lisa@runward.com) or indicate your ability to help in the friendship tablets.



Dear Church Family and Friends,

The hectic holiday season can make it difficult to think about taking time each day for one of life's basic necessities: solitude and stillness. For many, this season seems to bring with it increased obligations that may or may not bring happiness and good cheer to family life. The constant rushing "to get things done" keeps our body in "fight or flight" mode and over time, raises blood pressure, causes us to over eat and become impatient. It can just wear us down.

As you go about your holiday routine this year, consider taking time each day to slow down and quiet the rush of life. When we become still, it helps us to listen to the inner voice that can bring clarity to life's challenges. Stillness and solitude can calm us, help us find inner peace and discover truths that can only come to light when we just slow down. When we take the time to disengage from people and electronic gadgets, we have the opportunity to experience clarity. With clarity and stillness we may become ready to receive possible solutions to some of life's problems. Solitude and stillness may not always be comfortable but it can help us to begin to find the pathway to face change.

In September I attended the Westberg Parish Nursing Conference in St. Louis. During a learning session devoted to spiritual practice, we discussed breath prayer. Breath prayer uses inspiration and exhalation to help one mindfully connect with God. The phrase, "*Be still and know that I am God*" can be used as a breath prayer. Take some time to sit comfortably and quietly. Breathe in and begin to recite to yourself the above phrase as you slowly exhale. Each time you recite this phrase, drop the last word. For example: "*Be still and know that I am....Be still and know that I.....Be still and know that....Be still and know....Be still and....Be still....Be*".

May this Christmas season bring love, joy and peace to you and to all whom you hold in your heart.

Love and Blessings,  
Donna

***Be still. Be still. Be still. Be still.  
Go deep into the silence of the night.  
And robe yourself in darkness.  
See with the heart into the dark of the night.  
So silent the night.  
So dark the night.  
Be still. Be still.***

(Macrina Wiederkehr, Velma Frye)



Parking at St. Andrew's for our friends with special needs is limited. We would like to request that the circle area outside the front door be reserved for those who might be in need of being closer to our door. We encourage you to use this area for quick use if you are just dropping off items at the church.

Please note also that we have a wheelchair in our Sunrise area (to the right of Sanctuary) for those who might need assistance.



CD's and cassette tapes of Jim's sermons are available in the church office after the service each Sunday for \$1.00. These sermons, called "Lessons in Living" are also available in printed form. Look for the circular brochure holder in the foyer on the cabinet in front of the church office.

### The AGAPE News

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## Artist Team



### Retreat

Finding the Center- A Contemplative Retreat will be held on Friday Jan 8 and Saturday Jan 9. It will be at Pojima-a progressive, intentional

community 30 minutes from Austin featuring:

- Communal meals with vegetarian options
- Yoga, walking meditation and/or labyrinth
- Lectio Divina and silent meditation
- Stargazing, communal times
- Sharing of unique stories
- Spiritual art activity

In the heart of midwinter- after the rapid pace of the holidays- we are called to a time of reflection and reconnection with our core. You are invited to join fellow travelers renewing the roots of faith in a unique, pristine setting on Friday evening and all day Saturday as the New Year begins. Fostering the journey to a still, silent center, participants will deepen their awareness sharing and strengthening each other in community. Simple, nourishing meals are included in the \$20 cost for this weekend of spiritual renewal and refreshment. An intimate retreat with limited capacity; some overnight accommodations are available.

Register after the main services in December, or contact Yvette Shelton at [yshelton@austin.rr.com](mailto:yshelton@austin.rr.com)

*Original poetry shared with church school class on Spiritual Practice.*

### The Dance of Life Goes On

The rocks have been there for many years,  
As the water flows it winds its way through them,  
Going the way the rocks allow it to go,  
Creating a glorious sight and sound.

Water washing away the tears of the rocks,  
And gently changing them over the years.

The parents have been there for many years,  
As a child grows he is guided by them,  
Going where they allow him to go  
Creating a glorious sight and harmony.

Child wiping away the tears of the adult,  
Gently changing them over the years.

And so the dance of life goes on.

by Peggy Rackley *Note: This poem was written while at the "Round Rock" area of Brushy Creek the year that our son, Sean, graduated from PHS.*

Truth is the garment we wear,  
When we can see through ourselves.

by Yvette Shelton

## Guardian Team

*Wondering how St. Andrew's operates?  
What the Agape teams do?  
How you can help?*

A new edition of the **Ministry Opportunity Catalog** is now available, in the foyer on the credenza by the church office. For further information or to chat about serving in some capacity, contact Martha Rogers, [rogers33@swbell.net](mailto:rogers33@swbell.net) or 345-3969.



### Seeking Wisdom and Courage

The Stewardship Campaign is in progress. It is usually three Sundays before the total is known. Last year there were a total of 100 pledges totaling \$235,000. After the first Sunday this year, there are 77 pledges for almost \$165,084. Pledges may be mailed or placed in the offering basket on any Sunday. Please take a moment to reflect on your support in the coming year of the ministry, teaching and voice of St. Andrew's, a place for *seeking and finding wisdom and courage*

## Pastoral Care



“Fill Up Your Bucket, Self Care for the Spirit” On the first Saturday of the month, 8:30 to 9:30 am you are invited to partake in an hour designed to help bring peace and joy into your life. This time of renewal, sustenance and discovery of spiritual pathways begins with quiet, gentle breathing, meditation, readings and music. We share conversation if the spirit moves us. We close with prayer and thanksgiving.. Please join

Barbara McCarty this Dec. 5.



*Surviving the Holidays*

Hospice Austin Surviving the Holidays is a free lecture and discussion offering help dealing with holiday depression and grief resulting from the death of a loved one is being offered on Tuesday,

Dec. 8 7 – 9 pm. at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, 3134 Mesa Dr. Please RSVP to [rgreen@hospiceaustin.org](mailto:rgreen@hospiceaustin.org) - 342-4760 or [dlevine@hospiceaustin.org](mailto:dlevine@hospiceaustin.org) - 342-4784.

## Ambassador Team



Food & Shower  
Ministry

On Saturday, Nov. 14, the Food Pantry experienced the largest crowd of people it has ever served.

Seventy-seven people, many of whom were children, came through our doors, and we gave out canned goods, milk, eggs and bread for 177 individuals! We have seen steady, but dramatic increases in our

numbers over the last six months, and we are not alone. All local, state and national reports indicate at least a 30% increase in requests for food and other assistance. Our numbers have gone up even more dramatically showing 50%-80% increases depending on the weekend.

Somehow, our generous St. Andrew’s members and friends keep increasing their giving right along with the rising needs, and like the parable of the loaves and fishes, we keep discovering that we are able to find the resources to meet the new requests. Because of your financial donations, we were able to provide food bags for every needy family and individual that came to the Thanksgiving Feast on Nov. 21, and were even able to include some holiday foods like stuffing, sweet potatoes and rolls.

As we serve more people in need, we in fact need more volunteers to help every second and fourth Saturday of the month. You can sign up for that on the white board near the Greeters’ table. We also need more people who are willing to donate milk, bread and eggs, and we need more people to volunteer to cook or prepare something nutritious and comforting on those Saturdays, as well. Please contact Lyn Whitcomb at [deuxfleurs@sbcglobal.com](mailto:deuxfleurs@sbcglobal.com) if you’d like to help in any of these areas.

Here’s what we’re short of this week: Peanut butter, chili, soup, spaghetti sauce, cereal, Ramen noodles, crackers, deodorant for men and women, and toilet paper. Because we had food bags left over, we have a good supply of canned meat, corn, green beans, canned fruit, rice, sweet potatoes and soup.

Thank you St. Andrew’s for always being there to support this ministry. It’s never been more important than it is right now!



Sale

Manos de Cristo is a Presbyterian Mission in East Austin that provides health, dental and educational services to the needy. Their annual

Tamale Sale is their major fundraiser and provides much of their operating budget. Tamale orders may be made following the 10:45 church services until Sunday, Dec. 6. The tamales are available in pork, jalapeno pork, chicken and bean and are \$10 a dozen.



Alternative Christmas  
Gift Opportunities

Are you looking for more meaningful gifts to give to your friends and families? Are you tired of commercialism diminishing the true meaning of Christmas? The Ambassador team will be offering opportunities to make contributions to benevolences such as SafePlace, Foundation for the Homeless (IHN), Manos de Cristo, Presbyterian Children’s Home, AAIM, CESSMAQ, and That All May Freely Serve. Every week until Christmas, donation cards may be purchased in the foyer following the 10:45 service.

## Educator Team



"Bringing Spirit  
Back  
to the Holidays

A special Adult Class on Sundays, Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 at 9:30 am.

The holiday season can be difficult for many, especially those dealing with loss, illness and stressful family issues. This class will help to give support to those in need this holiday season. Dr. Patty Stephens will be facilitating this class in the church library.

What are the ways in which we can foster a season of light, life and love? What are the traps that block our best intentions? Explore these questions to create more of the season you truly want.

Please sign up for the class via the Friendship Tablet on Sunday or go to our web site [www.staopen.com](http://www.staopen.com) and click on the Education page.



Theology in  
Everyday Life

Theology in Everyday Life will meet only once (instead of twice) in December. This meeting will on Monday, Dec.

7, at 7:15 pm. The subject of the discussion will be "New and Different Carols to Sing" with Bill Hornbuckle as the facilitator. In January the schedule will return to normal with the first meeting on Monday, Jan. 4, 2010. As Jim said in Sunday School class on Nov. 15, that theology is not memorizing the entire Bible but understanding and living the values it represents. Each person grows through her/his own experience. Handouts are available in the church foyer. Come and join in.



The Poiema Book Study continues the study of Falling in Love with Mystery: We Don't Have to Pretend Anymore by Richard F. Elliott, Jr.

We won't be meeting in December. The next meeting will be Sunday, January 17th at 5:30 p.m. at Poiema southeast of Manor. The discussion will center on Chapter Five: The Emerging Spirituality. Poiema will provide the evening meal. Contact Barbara McCarty for directions at 468-4012 or visit [www.poiemacommunity.org](http://www.poiemacommunity.org).



The Bookstore will be open the first two Sundays of December in order to expedite your Christmas ordering. With Christmas just around the corner, we are featuring a book of Advent and Christmas readings – for yourself or as a gift – and a list of other books for children and for adults that would be great for gift giving. Check the bookstore table in the foyer with samples of current offerings.

### Children's Books

***Santa's God: A Children's Fable about the Biggest Question Ever***, by Neale Donald Walsch, \$15.50. In a Christmas Eve encounter with Santa Claus, Melinda asks him all the questions she'd ever wanted to ask him, and among them was the biggest question he'd ever been asked, "Who is the real God?"

***Great Joy*** by Kate DeCamillo, \$14.50. Frances is troubled when she notices that the organ grinder on the corner and his monkey are still on the street late at night, in the cold. Where do they sleep? Because she can't stop thinking about them, she is having trouble remembering her lines for the local Christmas pageant. When the moment finally comes for Frances to speak her part, something happens, and the gift of compassion allows her to share the perfect words with everyone, at just the right time.

### Books for Adults

***Watch For the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas***. \$14. Containing a selection for each day of the Christmas season, this book can be dipped into at leisure or used for daily readings. This unparalleled anthology offers wisdom, beauty, and spiritual nourishment from a wide spectrum of classic and contemporary sources.

***New and Selected Poems, Vol. 1***, Mary Oliver. \$14.50. Pulitzer Prize winning author "Mary Oliver's poetry is fine and deep; it reads like a blessing. Her special gift is to connect us with our sources in the natural world, its beauties and terrors and mysteries and consolations."

***Life Prayers From Around the World***, Roberts & Amidon, \$14.50. The mysteries and delights of life on earth are illuminated in this richly eclectic collection of poetry, wisdom, prayers, and blessings from thinkers and writers around the world. This book is a joyous affirmation of the human journey in all its forms.

***Beside Prayers: Prayers & Poems for When You Rise and Go to Sleep*** by June Cotter, \$15.50. You'll find an uplifting collection of readings, prayers, and poems arranged in specific sections to make the joys of prayer a simple, natural part of each day. Special prayers bring motivation to Morning, and lullabies and musing help us focus on the peace of Nightfall. Other readings offer Inspiration or Comfort, or guide us gently through private Reflections. *Beside Prayers* is a lovely little gift book for anyone who would like to make the enjoyment of daily prayer as constant as the rising and setting of the sun.

You can purchase these books either 1) with the usual order form, or 2) on-line through the church website at [www.staopen.com](http://www.staopen.com) using the Open Minds Books link. "How-to" directions are on a bookmark. When you use the link on the website, a small percentage will come back to St. Andrews.

*St. Andrew's Presbyterian  
Family Christmas Eve Service*

## **H**istory of the Gospel Pageant



In Medieval times the majority of the population could not read, so the Christmas story was acted out in a pageant. The actors and singers posed in a still life to form the story while the verse of a carol was being sung. The entire congregation joined in the chorus while the players moved to the next part of the story. Often the pageant began at one end of a village and gathered people as they moved toward the church in the center. When everyone arrived, they entered together for mass.

Our service this year continues this ancient tradition with our children as the actors. Our pageant combines the Godly Play story that the children have been learning in Sunday spiritual formation with lessons and carols. This simple drama invites not only the children but each one of us into the story.

We are all on our way to Bethlehem to greet the Christ child. Who will show us the way? Little children dressed as prophets, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels and Magi shall show us the way to the newborn child.

“...and a little child shall lead them.” Isaiah 11:6

## **C**hristmas Eve 4:30 pm Family Service

Invite your friends and neighbors.  
This will be a very special time.



### **Attention: Parents of All Age Children**

New this year! A 4:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service that includes a pageant led by your children, lessons and carols and candle light. Children are encouraged to come dressed as their favorite character—a prophet, Mary, Joseph, angel, shepherd, Magi, donkey, sheep, camel or any animal. A few costumes will be available at the church for visitors and anyone who needs a costume.

### **Attention: Parents of Babies 0-2**



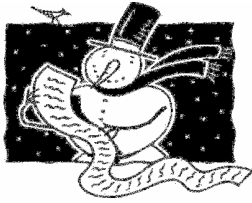
We celebrate the newborn child as a sign of God's presence among us by including our newest members—our babies. Families are encouraged to bring their infants to the pageant for presentation to the congregation during the 4:30 p.m. service.

Please bring your baby to the sanctuary during the Gospel reading/story time which begins the service. You will be invited to follow the last candle with your child to the front of the church.

### **Attention: Youth**

Our 4:30 o'clock service this year is a pageant/liturgy that needs 5 people to lead the children with a candle. If you would like to participate, please contact Karen Gaudet (258-5730).





Sunday School is every Sunday from 9:30 to 10:30. We are currently defining ourselves as a youth group and our goals for the coming year. We have been having very lively discussions and you are invited and strongly encouraged to join us. Take a hand in guiding the direction of youth group for 2010!

Sunday, Dec. 6, 12 noon-3pm. We will have lunch and then go to Brown Santa warehouse to volunteer in wrapping and readying presents for the Travis County Sheriff's Department.

## What's Coming Up for Youth

Wear closed toed shoes and very casual clothes. Please RSVP.

Friday, Dec. 11, 7 pm-10 pm Holiday Youth Party at Anne Mirrop's house. It is the first night of Hanukah and we can participate in lighting the menorah and enjoy a traditional Hebrew dinner. More details to follow, but save the date.

Saturday, Dec. 12, 9:30 am-1 pm Youth Group will help with Food Pantry at St. Andrew's.

Mo Ranch Mid-Winter Retreats - Grades 9-12 dates are Jan. 29-31 and Grades 6-8 dates are Feb. 5-7.

Then we are gearing up for volleyball. We want to continue to recruit for our team and go into training. An upgrade of volleyball court is on the agenda.

This is the ongoing calendar for youth group. All are welcome. Guests and new members are actively sought. It is understood that busy lives will prevent participation in everything, but the opportunities are here. It is the hope that youth members will choose a mix of social events as well as mini-service project events.

Thanks, Deanna Duplechain, Youth Activities Leader  
Cell- 512.828-1010. Email -deannaduplechain@yahoo.com

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## St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Living and Sharing Progressive Christianity

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# December 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Sunday Schedule</b> 8:30 am Worship Service 9:30 am Sunday School for all ages 10:45 am Worship Service  Names denote birthdays and anniversaries. email the church office to make corrections		<b>1 10a Bible Study</b>  Duane Skiles Steve Quay Rachel Zabriske Dick & Kathy Galloway Mark & Paula Rieling	<b>2 7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Chris Castellow Elva Gladney Mike Ziegler	3    Charles Marslett	4   Mary Browder Laura Gladney-Lemon David Marks Donna Rouse	<b>5 8:30a "Fill Up Your Bucket"</b> <b>3:15p 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday with Mike Manor</b>  Leah Chapman Chris Wallingford
<b>6 Bookstore Open</b> <b>Potluck Luncheon</b>	<b>7 7:15p Theology in Everyday Life</b>  Howard Hestand Carroll Shelton	<b>8 10a Bible Study</b> <b>7p AGAPE Teams</b>  Chris Kucharski	<b>9 7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Joyce Marshall Jim Rigby Sydney Thomas	10   Barry Becker	11   Kristi Browder Adela Mastovich	<b>12 10a – 12:30p Food Pantry Open</b>  Debbie Brown
<b>13 Bookstore Open</b>  Adam Roch	14	<b>15 10a Bible Study</b> <b>7p Session Mtg</b>  Brittney Hestand Karen Tylick	<b>16 7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Tracy Jackson Siri Thompson	17   Christy Frink Karen Nunley	18	19   Marsha Brown
<b>20 7p Jazz Christmas Music</b>  Ashtora Natalie Wendt	21  Kathy Galloway Diza Hyde	22	<b>23 7p NA</b>	<b>24 4:30p Family Christmas Eve Service</b> <b>7p Candlelight Service</b>	25	<b>26 10a – 12:30p Food Pantry Open</b>  Bill Brown
27  Tres Churchill Camille Stephan David & Peggy Rackley	28	29  Anabella Conn Cathy Marchese-Fariss Alexander Zabriske Allen & JoAnn Lawshae	<b>30 7p NA</b>  Noah Churchill Bill Hornbuckle	31 Bldg. reserved 6p  Gladys Valles Bart & Barbara Noble	<u><b>Church Office Hours</b></u> <b>Monday – Friday 9 am – 1 pm</b>  <b>Jim Rigby's day off – Fridays</b>	