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# Cow Hollow Church News

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The Episcopal Church of Saint Mary the Virgin  October 2009

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## The Gift of Creation

*The Rev. Dr. Jason L. Parkin, Rector*

Everything is a gift. The creation is not our possession. The air around and within us does not belong to us. Our lives are not our own. Everything is a gift.

This simple yet profound truth is at the center of the Christian faith, even if we do not often articulate or ponder it. For centuries, people of faith have acknowledged that life is a gift from an incessantly generous, gracious God, and that all of us are blessed with unique and precious talents, qualities, and characteristics. For centuries, however, people of faith also believed that the words of Genesis—that the human race was to have dominion over the earth, and to subdue it and all living beings—were to be interpreted literally: that the earth was made solely for the pleasure and use of humankind. As we all now know, this perspective is patently untenable. In increasing numbers and in diverse, powerful ways, Christians and people of other faith traditions now realize that the very Creation from which we come, in which we live and move and have our being, and back into which we will one day return, is, like all else, a gift: a gift from God that, like all other gifts, must be tended, cared for, respected, nurtured, loved, and engaged with profound thankfulness.

We must, as people of faith, take time intentionally to give thanks for all the blessings we have been given, including the gorgeous creation in which we have been placed. We must, each and every day, be mindful of our role not as masters of the creation, but as partners, descendants, ancestors, co-inhabitants, children of that same creation. To live simply; to strive for economic justice; to seek sustainable forms of agriculture and energy; to atone for our past and present transgressions in caring for this fragile earth, our island home; to struggle, against challenging and mounting odds, to leave for those who follow a home worth having: these are all part of the contemporary Christian calling.

It is in order to remind ourselves of these realities that we celebrate Creation Season at St. Mary's every October. This is not a liturgical gimmick or a faddish endeavor. It is, instead, a way of reminding ourselves that the One who has given us life has also placed us in relationship with the creation that is our haven and our home. So please enter into the spirit and the Spirit of this season. Creation Season exists to remind us that everything is a gift; that the creation is not our possession; that the air around and within us does not belong to us; that our lives are not our own. Everything is a gift.

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## News of Note from the Sr. Warden

*Roulhac Austin*

October is Creation Season at St. Mary's, where we learn and yearn to be good stewards of all of God's creation. We travel this earthly journey together and, through our shared worship, we make a difference in each other's lives and in the lives of those less fortunate. One of the features that sets St. Mary's apart from other involvements in our lives is the knowledge and conviction that it affords us that everyone here wishes the very best for us and for our families.

With these blessings come shared responsibilities. So it is during Creation Season that we are initiating *and concluding* our annual financial pledge drive, with pledges received to be blessed on November 1st, All Saints' Sunday, a full three weeks earlier than usual. Pledging is stating in advance the amount of financial support you expect to give St. Mary's next year; it is an action taken with gratitude for all the blessings in your life.

To whom am I addressing this plea for a more-generous-than-ever pledge? To myself! To you! If you find spiritual sustenance and renewal at St. Mary's, make a pledge. If you have children in Sunday School or confirmation class, you need to pledge. ***We all need to pledge. No ifs, ands or buts about it.*** Neither you nor I created our money; God gave us the gifts and talents to earn it. I simply must return a portion of the money God has given me to support this parish that I love so dearly.

It has been a frightening year of financial tumult and insecurity for many. This parish is no different. Your vestry wants to be responsible and responsive when we develop the 2010 budget. Our generous and timely pledges will make sure that we need not cut further our already bone-thin budget. Due to job-related moves, we've lost several of our largest

pledging families, so the challenges have never been greater to have a stable pledge base.

St. Mary's depends solely on pledges and contributions from you and me to operate. We can only do what we are willing to pay for. To keep our staff, to keep the lights and heat on, to host four Eucharists every Sunday, we need your pledge; we need my pledge.

Sketching out the annual pledge drive calendar looks like this: You are reading about pledging here first, you'll receive a personalized letter in early October, and you'll be reminded in the weekly bulletins through October.

Respect the time and talents of the Stewardship Committee and vestry by responding on time, please. If we don't hear from you by November 1st, being mindful of Creation Season and our duty to conserve resources, we'll e-mail you to remind you to pledge. If you do not respond, volunteers will call to check in with you, to make sure you and your family are alright and to inquire about your pledging intentions (we'd all rather be at home than calling you at supper time!) If you do not respond then, you'll receive another letter, prepared and produced by volunteers.

The fact that you pledge, that you make this commitment of membership, is what counts.

By the way, does your employer offer a matching "donations" program? Many employers will match your donation up to a certain limit. There is a place on your pledge card to indicate if this is your situation. Every penny helps!



*Faith and Funding 2009:*  
*TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY*

We invite you to join us for a fund-raising event for the 15 charities that risk losing our grants because

of the cancellation of Home for Christmas. We will have a bake sale and holiday greens sale on Sunday, December 6th. In addition, we will gather on Wednesday evening, December 9th, in celebration of those people who contribute time or treasure to this outreach-specific event; 100% of the money raised by these events goes directly to the charities. You'll find a time or treasure pledge form in the narthex for you to sign up to contribute. Many thanks to those who've already stepped up to help with hosting, logistics, catering, and selling greens and pantry goodies – we still need a few more helping hands. If you want to volunteer, please email me at [roulhac@flash.net](mailto:roulhac@flash.net).

With gratitude and faith,

Roulhac

## Sunday School News

*Belle McBride and Lindsay Walsh,  
Co-Chairs, Youth Christian Formation*

What a joy it was to welcome all our Sunday School families back to church in September! Thank you to everyone who has registered their children for Sunday School classes and the nursery. We currently have about 50 families registered. If you have not had a chance to register your children and would like to do so, please contact Belle McBride at 415-931-0997 or [mcbride4@mac.com](mailto:mcbride4@mac.com).

We'd like to extend our thanks to the new and returning Sunday School teachers, whose dedication during the year make Sundays such a fun and spiritually uplifting experience at St. Mary's.

As always, we welcome and need some additional assistance in our Pre-K class. Please contact Lisa Carey, who leads the class, if you are able to help on an occasional Sunday. Please contact Lisa at [lisapcar@comcast.net](mailto:lisapcar@comcast.net).

Cheers for another fantastic year at St. Mary's Sunday School!

## YOUTH GROUP

### October 4th - Ocean Beach Bonfire Night

Meet across from the Beach Chalet

6:30 to 8:30 pm

6th-12th graders

RSVP to Mike Stafford

[mikeystafford@yahoo.com](mailto:mikeystafford@yahoo.com)

### October 18th - Youth Group and Potluck

Youth bring a dish to share at the potluck

and then we'll meet up downstairs

6:30 to 8:30 pm

7th-12th graders

### October 25 - Youth Group

6:30 to 8:30 pm

7th-12th graders

Bring a friend! Dinner will be served!

## Fall Youth Retreat: Service and Spirituality

Please pray for our youth who are away on a service retreat at St. Dorothy's Camp and Retreat Center from October 9 to 11, 2009. They will be working on service projects, as well as praying together, living, and eating in the midst of the redwoods, and getting to know each other better in God's presence.

### 2ND WEDNESDAYS YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Wednesday, October 14th, 6:30 pm

The Plough and Stars

118 Clement Street

[theploughandstars.com](http://theploughandstars.com)

Discussion:

"Giving:" how do you choose where to spend your time, money, and talents?

Friends and newcomers welcome!

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## Parishioners' Pastoral Prerogatives

### *How to use the clergy in times of distress*

*Roulhac Austin*

Every month the clergy get together with the Junior and Senior Wardens to discuss the upcoming Vestry agenda including the salient pastoral issues within the congregation. I'm in awe of the depth and breadth of the clergy's knowledge and discreet handling of the unforeseen surprises (both positive and negative) visited on members of our congregation.

But they can only respond when they know what has happened to you and/or your family; it is always preferable to hear of your situation from you, not second- or third-hand. More importantly, they cannot respond unless they know what you expect of them. Do you expect communication by phone or email? Or is that too informal? Do you desire a visit, conversation, or sacrament?

There is no set protocol in responding to breaking news. Each situation depends upon how well our clergy know you and know how you are taking this particular "surprise" of life. Typically, one clergy person is deployed unless the skills or gifts of others are required. Often one of the clergy can minister to a whole family; other times, each family member requires his or her own spiritual guide.



If a visit or phone call is desired, it is enormously helpful if you can express what you want and when. Some people need a conversation as soon as possible; for others, within the week is fine. Do you need reassurance that God is with us in adversity? Do you desire the sacrament brought to the bedside? Or does interventional family counseling need to be urgent and immediate? We parishioners need to get over our steely silence to face adversity

alone – I'm as guilty as the next person. A burden shared with another is a burden halved; and a burden shared with the presence of Christ begins to transform into healing. That is why this parish exists: to make Christ's love known in the community. This is why we have three priests and two deacons to minister to us plus the lay volunteers of the Pastoral Care team to do the hands-on work of helping out. We are blessed to have available caring and willing parishioners who know how to share the presence of God in tough times.

Be honest, acknowledge your trials, and ask for the help you'd like. If you are facing surgery, do you want one of the clergy to visit you in the hospital? If so, do you want the visit before or after surgery? Please ask. Do you need rides to visit the doctor for follow-up treatments? Say the word and the clergy will turn over your request to the parishioners involved in Pastoral Care; they will make it happen for you. If you need meals because of illness or a new birth, Pastoral Care team members can help.

Do you have a child in crisis? Do you need an ear? Or do you need professional advice? Our clergy can help with intervention counseling and also offer referrals to other professionals or perhaps to another family within the congregation who is willing to talk over their similar experiences.

For example, when the Rev. Jen Hornbeck learned earlier this year that a high school student not from the parish had committed suicide, she wrote a pastoral letter to all the teens in Youth Group to reassure them, to express love, and to remind them of her drop-in office hours should they desire more reassurance.

This is a time when job loss is all too common in our congregation. For either personal crisis, or community crisis, your clergy are available; but they need to know. Don't hesitate to share in confidence with the clergy and ask for support; there may be resources within the St. Mary's community to help you.

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## Creation Care Teams Meet

Peggy da Silva

*Almighty God, creator of all things; every plant, every rock, every grain of sand proclaims your glory. May we, stewards of this magnificent earth, learn to care for our blue-green home, and all the creatures who share it, with the same sensitivity, the same mercy, the same generosity, the same love you have shown to us. Amen.*

With this prayer, led by the Rev. Sally Bingham, the Rev. Frannie Hall Kieschnick, and Bp. Steven Charleston, 50 members of the diocesan Creation Care Teams began a day of prayer and learning about environmental issues and our response.



Julie Hagelshaw and I rode our bikes from San Francisco down to Menlo Park to represent St. Mary the Virgin. We learned

about pesticides and human health, and shared experiences with other church members on gardening, food projects, water conservation, and waste management.

It was sobering and uplifting. To learn that California has only 20 years left with potable water; that the Toxic Substances Act has not been updated since 1976; and that California's main exports are waste paper and waste metal....well! We humans have been at play in the Garden of Creation and maybe we've not been thinking as clearly as we could.

Julie and I left the conference newly motivated to work with our fellow SMV parishioners to become the model of a sustainable congregation in the Diocese of California – and looking forward to October's Creation Season!

## PARISH POTLUCK SUSTAINABLE HARVEST FEAST

October 18th, 6:30 to 8:00 pm

Fowler Hall

Join us! Bring a dish: appetizer, salad, entree, or dessert and a beverage to share!

Come help with setting up and cleaning up!

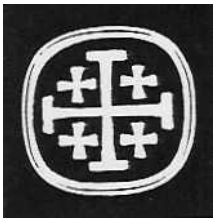
## Celebrate Creation this October

Keep an eye on the bulletin for news and announcements, but here are a few of our plans

- Reading and discussing  
*A Year of Living Biblically*
- Making our Church picnic on October 4  
GARBAGE FREE -- bring everything you can in re-usable containers
- Enjoying a Sustainable Pot Luck - 6:30 pm on Sunday, October 18 in Fowler Hall
- Charting our congregation's energy use, and setting some goals to reduce
- Going on a tour to Sunset Scavenger's recycling, trash and composting facilities
- Sharing liturgies with songs and prayers that celebrate our uniquely human place in God's creation

### **St. Mary's Women Arising**

Do you have an hour to spare just one Saturday a month from 10 to 11 am? Are you interested in sharing a short Bible passage or word that can guide you through and into a closer relationship with God and your personal life? Then come join us! We are using the *Lectio Divina* method of listening to The Word, reflecting and sharing, then going forth, living the Word as we live our challenging and joyful life. The next meeting is October, 24, at 10 am in the Vestry Room of Fowler Hall. Please call the Rev. Nancy Bryan at 415-608-8777 for further information.



## Witnessing to God's Will in Your Will

*The Rev. Richard L. Schaper, CFP,  
Gift Planning Officer,  
Episcopal Diocese of California*

"I won't lie to you," publicly confessed the seminary alumnus to faculty and trustees, "my wife and I are not tithers. We don't yet give ten percent of our income to the church or other charities. We have a goal of getting to ten percent but we are not there yet."

"However," he said, "last month Margery and I wrote a family trust and in our estate, we tithe. And I'll tell you this," he affirmed, "it is a lot easier to tithe on your estate than it is on your income!"

I think most of us can identify with this sentiment: it's easier to be generous with our estate than it is with our income. As we ponder our pledge to the church for the coming year, we weigh our desire to put our money in this important direction with competing claims for family, retirement, and so many other things. When it comes to budgeting our giving, it can be hard to focus and to balance.

But a time will come when we won't need any of this money, and all of our assets will be distributed to others. To whom shall we give them?

For those of us who have remembered the church in our wills or estate plans, we have done this because of the importance of the church in our lives and our appreciation of the importance of faith and compassion in our world. We want to be a part of paying forward the blessings that we have received. We want there to be a community of faith to witness to future generations.

If you have already included the church in your personal plans, please let the clergy know that you have done so. And please accept the invitation of Bishop Marc to come to the Cathedral at 3 pm on Sunday afternoon, October 25. Bishop Marc wants

to personally thank you for this generous act of faithful stewardship. Over 830 people in our diocese have already included the church in their wills and estate plans. I hope that you will consider joining us. You can reach us at 415-869-7812.

### **Book Group**

St. Mary's Adult Christian Formation has started its own book group. If you are interested in joining please contact our team leads. Fall focus: God in Fiction. First book: Jim Crace, *Quarantine*, (paperback) Picador USA, 1998. Group Leads: Natalie Hala and David Crosson at [hala90crosson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hala90crosson@sbcglobal.net).

### **Men's Breakfasts**

Active since this spring, the men of Saint Mary's have been meeting once a month on the third Saturday for a morning breakfast group. The goals of the meeting are to foster fellowship and dialog between new and old congregants at St. Mary's and greater understanding of the Bible and contemporary issues. The next scheduled meeting is October 17 at 8:30 AM in Fowler Hall. A \$5 donation is appreciated to defray the costs of the food. For more information please contact Joe Jennings at [josephwjennings@sbcglobal.net](mailto:josephwjennings@sbcglobal.net).

### **Men's Christmas Lunch**

We are planning a traditional Christmas lunch, possibly with Barbecue, libations and singing. Men interested in participating in the Annual Men's Christmas Lunch contact Michael Coholan [Michael@hilltopllc.com](mailto:Michael@hilltopllc.com) or Dan Glunt [dan@fpins.com](mailto:dan@fpins.com).

## ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ **Cow Hollow Church News via Email**

In the interests of Creation Season conservation, you may like to receive your parish newsletter via email instead of on paper. If so, please contact the parish office via Roni Crews at [office@smvsf.org](mailto:office@smvsf.org).

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# Music News



*Fr. Jason Parkin*

## Children's Choir

First, it is with true delight that we welcome our new Children's Choir Director, **Britt La Gatta**. Britt, who started working with the youngest choir on Wednesday, September 30, is a native of Marin, and grew up at both the Episcopal Church of Our Savior in Mill Valley and St. Stephen's, Belvedere. After graduating from Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, NY, with a Bachelor of Arts in Music, Britt moved to New York City, where she sang professionally, married, and began her family. She moved back to Marin County some years ago, where her second son was born; and for the past 12 years, has been the soprano section leader and Director of the Children's and Family Choirs at Old First Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. In addition, Britt also teaches private voice and beginning piano to students of a wide age range; and she and her husband, Lou, run a real estate company in Marin. Britt brings a wealth of experience with children and with liturgical music to our ministry at St. Mary's, and we are thrilled she has joined us. Please take a minute to welcome her to St. Mary's -- and don't forget that there is always room in the choir for new members!

## Interim Leadership

As many know by now, we are truly blessed to have as our interim musical leaders **Dennis Henkelman**, **Chip Grant**, and **Jan Parkin**. Dennis, who has been our regular summer organist for several years, and who filled in for part of Michael Secour's sabbatical two years ago, is a wonderful and creative organist, and a beloved presence for the adult choir and the rest of the congregation. Chip, whom many will know from his frequent appearances as our substitute bass section leader and soloist, is a singer and conductor who has experience in being the Director of Music at St. Helena's Episcopal Church in Beaufort, South Carolina; and he has already incorporated several of his professional musician friends and colleagues into our 11:00 am worship. Jan is no stranger to many in the parish; but most are not aware that her first master's degree is in choral conducting, and that she was the Director of Music, organist, or choir director in several churches in the Chicago area earlier in life. Dennis is serving as organist at both the 9:00 and 11:00 am Eucharists, while Chip and Jan are conducting the Adult and Youth Choirs, respectively. We are fortunate indeed to have as our guides and leaders three such dedicated and talented musicians. Thank you, Dennis, Chip, and Jan!

## Music Search

The search for a new Director of Music continues apace. Even after our August 20 deadline, new applications arrived to join the 90-plus we already had received! The search committee created a list of semifinalists toward the end of August, and all nine of these candidates were interviewed by phone. At about the same time that this issue of the newsletter reaches your home, the committee will be striving to form a list of finalists, who will then be invited to come to St. Mary's for an audition and simulated rehearsal. It is not an exaggeration to say that the quality of applicants has been as astounding as the number, which is both a blessing and a challenge! Please keep the committee in your prayers as we seek to discern the guidance of the Spirit.



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## HIGHLIGHTS—OCTOBER 2009

*Also visit [www.smvsf.org](http://www.smvsf.org)*

### YOUTH GROUP

- **Ocean Beach Bonfire – October 4** 6:30 to 8:30 pm, meet across from the Beach Chalet
- **Youth Group – October 18** 6:30 to 8:30 pm, 7-12th graders; downstairs after Potluck dinner
- **Youth Group – October 25** 6:30 to 8:30 pm, 7-12th graders; dinner served; bring friends

### SPIRITUALITY & PASTORAL CARE

- **Spiritual Support Group – 2nd & 4th Sundays**  
4 pm in the Vestry Room
- **Wednesday Prayer** 7 am in the Chapel. On October 28, an All Saints' Day/Day of the Dead altar will be set up.
- **Nursing Home Ministry – Sunday, October 25**  
1:30 pm at 2707 Pine Street

### OUTREACH

- **San Francisco Food Bank – Sunday, October 25**  
9 am to noon. Ages four and up welcome. Contact Stephanie Lehman at 415-441-6193 or [slehman21@yahoo.com](mailto:slehman21@yahoo.com)
- **Raphael House Ministry – Monday, October 5**

### MEETINGS & MISCELLANY

- **Deadline for the November Cow Hollow Church News**  
Tuesday, October 20. Please email articles to [lnkyword@aol.com](mailto:lnkyword@aol.com) and [office@smvsf.org](mailto:office@smvsf.org)
- **Collections in the Narthex**  
–Collection of packaged foods for St. Gregory's Food Bank  
–Collection of travel-sized toiletries for women at St. Luke's Hospital

### SAVE THESE DATES

- **Annual Parish Picnic and Blessing of the Animals –**  
Sunday, October 4 at 12:30 pm
- **2nd Wednesday: Young Adult Group**  
October 14, 6:30 pm, The Plough and Stars
- **St. Mary's Men's Group Breakfast**  
Saturday, October 17, 8:30 am, Fowler Hall
- **Parish Potluck** Sunday, October 18, 6:30 pm, Fowler Hall  
Bring a dish
- **St. Mary's Women's Group**  
Saturday, October 24, 8:30 am, Fowler Hall