



# THE GUARDIAN

**St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church El Segundo**

**The Reverend Joshua Wong, Rector**

Parish Office: 310-322-2589  
Website: [www.stmichaels-elsegundo.org](http://www.stmichaels-elsegundo.org)  
Email: [StMichaelsElSegundo@gmail.com](mailto:StMichaelsElSegundo@gmail.com)

**St. Michael's Children's Center**  
Ms. Lauren Cherrington  
School Office: 310-322-7522

**Mission Statement for St. Michael's Church**

*Growing in God's Love.  
Working in God's Spirit.*

**Worship Schedule**

Sunday 8:00am Rite I Spoken Service  
Sunday 10:00am Rite II Choral Eucharist  
10:00 Children's Worship Second Sunday of  
each month

# December 2025



### Rector's thoughts for December 2025

As I write to you, we are approaching the month of December! What a wonderful year it has been for our community here at St. Michaels. We have learned a lot about and served God together in many meaningful ways. As we prepare for the first Sunday in Advent (November 30), many stores have been heavily promoting their Black Friday sales. Every year at this time, the church and the secular world seem to be vying for the understanding of Christmas. One for stillness, while the other for profit. How much can I save by shopping early, and how much can businesses make to hit their holiday sales goals? Yet, Advent is the opposite, how much can I slow down in order to await and hear the coming savior's voice? It is easy for us to get emotionally entangled with the mad rush of Christmas gifts, so let's choose peace and anticipation.

I am also writing to you on my yearly professional week of rest, learning and rejuvenation. This week, Edward and I are in the Sierra National Forest just 14 miles from the south entrance to Yosemite. We are staying in a retreat center called ECCO (Episcopal Camp and Conference, Oakhurst) owned by the Episcopal Church. Our cabin is surrounded by trees with fall color leaves and I can see a labyrinth who currently is visited by a large family of wild turkey. There are two books I brought along to enjoy that were gifts for my installation last February. One is entitled, *The Serviceberry, Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Native American Indian scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer, and the other one is entitled, *Being Dead Is No Excuse, The Official Southern Ladies Guide to Hosting the Perfect Funeral*. I'm sure I'll enjoy both of them.

In this year-end issue of The Guardian, how appropriate that we visit inspiring people. I wish you and your loved ones a healthy and peaceful Advent and Christmas season. May your hearts be filled with joy throughout the coming year.

Peace,

Fr. Joshua+

## St. Brigit of Kildare

(ca. 451-525)



During the Dark Ages, Ireland was known as the Land of Saints & Scholars, a place of burgeoning culture and Christianity. One of those saints was St. Brigit of Kildare. The others include St. Patrick, St. Brendan, St. Columba, St. Kevin, and St. Oliver Plunkett.

On February 1, our church celebrates the feast of St. Brigit of Kildare. St. Brigit was born in the fifth century in Faughart, Ireland. Her feast day marks the beginning of spring, a season of hope and renewal. St. Brigit is also known as the patron saint of livestock, babies, new mothers, and nuns, among others. She is remembered for her hospitality and hard work, as a woman of God and a woman of the people. When her mother died, her father remarried and brought her to the king of Leinster to sell their goods. On one occasion, Brigit was left outside in the chariot, and while there, a leper approached her, seeking alms. Without hesitation, Brigit handed over her father's sword, an item of great value. When her father heard about this, he was furious, but the king of Leinster calmed her father's rage and Brigit was delivered from bondage. She then chose a life of service to God and to the poor. Brigit founded a convent at Ardagh, the first convent of strict religious observance to be established on Irish soil. It soon became a center of great activity, as many women of noble birth left their homes to the shelter of the convent. It was there that thousands came to receive instruction in the Christian faith.

When reading about the life of St. Brigit of Kildare, I am encouraged by her real and practical faith. Her life story was a reflection of St. Patrick's breastplate prayer, "*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me; Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me; Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me; Christ in my lying, Christ in my sitting, Christ in my rising...*" In all of the works she was able to do, her focus was always towards God. She never lost faith in God, and believed everything is possible.

St. Brigit's generosity to others resonated with me. Her sharing came from a heart of empathy that produced compassion. In one story, she was empathetic for the dog that she sensed needed food to eat. Every love she offered, God gifted her manifold times, never allowing this saint to be without. In all her deeds, St. Brigit healed, protected and fed people; she also made sure justice was served.

for unto us  
a child is  
Born -ISAIAH  
9:6

## Church Calendar for December

Sunday November 30, First Sunday in Advent, 8 am and 10 am Services

Wednesday, December 3, Children's Chapel, 11 am

Sunday December 7, Second Sunday in Advent, 8 am and 10 am Services

Wednesday, December 10, Children's Chapel, 11 am

Sunday-Monday, December 14-22, Hanukkah

Sunday December 14, Third Sunday in Advent, 8 am and 10 am Services, **The service of Lessons and Carols is at 10am. It is also Family Worship**

Wednesday, December 17, Vestry monthly meeting at 9 am in Yeaton Hall and Children's Chapel, 11 am

Sunday December 21, Fourth Sunday in Advent, 8 am and 10 am Services, **CASE food donation.**

Monday December 21-January 2, St. Michael's Children Center winter break.

Wednesday December 24, Christmas Eve services, **4pm family service and 9 pm.**

Thursday December 25, Christmas day and season begins.

Wednesday December 31, New Year's eve.

## HOLIDAY GET TOGETHERS

By Gerri Pisciotta

The end of the year holidays are approaching. For many families the time of year when they get together—maybe for the first time in a long time. Most families have some people they would just as soon not include, but those people are connected to someone they really want—they are all family. It can become a delicate balancing act to maintain an atmosphere that encourages enjoyable congeniality.

Some basic things to start with:

Turn off phones—encourage people to focus on each other.

Try to keep conversations light and enjoyable or have topics everyone can comment on;

Maybe initiate discussion on a topic:

What was the most pleasant thing that happened to you this week?

Ask people to talk about a plan they have for next year

Avoid controversial topics like politics

Don't ask questions that might initiate conflict

Have a list of things people might enjoy talking about

What is your favorite thing to do when you are alone? With friends?

With family?

Is your life the way you pictured it would be when you were a child?

Have you changed major goals or values in the past year?

What was your most difficult decision this year?

How would you like to be remembered?



## Voices from the Vestry



Every year, my family and I drive through Altadena to look at the Christmas lights. It's simple tradition, but it's one that has always filled us with wonder. For almost 75 years, street after street has been filled with decorations reflecting a unique theme. Those evenings felt like pure holiday magic. But this year, the familiar will look different.

As I think about looking at Christmas lights this year, I find myself imagining the people who once hung them, now facing a season that doesn't look anything like the ones before. Some may be displaced. Some may be grieving. Some may still be deciding whether to decorate at all, wondering how to honor what they've lost while still moving forward.

Where houses once stood, neighbors this year have chosen to place a single, bright star. It stands as a reminder that even when traditions shift, even when the familiar is altered, the meaning of the season has not been lost. Light still shines. An invitation to honor what was and welcoming what might be.

May we honor communities like Altadena—places rebuilding not around perfection or sorrow, but around connection, reflection, and meaning. Perhaps change doesn't mean letting go of what we love, rather allowing it to transform, with us. Allowing ourselves to realize that beauty and grief can coexist.

So as I continue the tradition of looking at Christmas lights with my family this year- I'll be bringing these thoughts with me- grateful for the glow and hopeful that light can shine even in darkness.

Amy Powell

## C.A.S.E. Ingathering December 21st

If you would like to help us stock the food shelves at the pantry by either bringing some items off of our needs list or contributing money and the shopping will be done for you that would be great!

Here is the needs list for this month:

Canned chicken	Canned tuna
Progresso Soups (no chicken noodle)	
Campbell's Chunky soups (no chicken noodle)	
Canned chili	Ketchup
Cooking oil	Juices
Sugar	Salt
Coffee	Toothpaste
Cleaning supplies	





## The Feast of Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe

By the Reverend Joshua Wong



In this reflection, I'd like to give a "shout out" to the women in holy scripture as well as in the life of our church.

Paul's first missionary journey began in the late 50 AD to early 51 AD, which carried his preaching out of Asia into Europe. He began at the city of Philippi in Macedonia (north of Greece). His first European convert was a woman named Lydia who was mentioned in Acts 16. She was a merchant who dealt in purple dyed goods. Lydia's occupation suggests that she had considerable capital. When she became a Christian, she and her household were baptized, and she invited Paul and Luke along with their other companions to make her house their headquarters in Philippi.

Another woman who contributed to the spreading of the gospel was Dorcas, mentioned in Acts 9. Though not much was written about her, she was a member of the early Christian community in Joppa and was noted for her acts of charity, in particular for making garments and giving them to needy widows. When she fell ill and died, scripture mentions that Peter came to see her, and raised her to life.

Phoebe was another great woman in the bible. Her name means "bright" or "radiant." She was first mentioned in Romans 16. Phoebe was a deacon of the Church of Cenchreae near the city of Corinth. She was known for her helpfulness and service to the Church. Paul calls her deacon" three times, a "servant" seven times, and a "minister" twenty times. The word "deacon," in secular Greek has the meaning of someone who is responsible for, attends to, or ministers to. Phoebe was a person of consequence who made a valuable contribution in her congregation near Corinth.

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Today our churches are still led by inspiring lay and ordained women. One such person is Deaconess Joanne Leslie who has visited us at St. Michaels. Before her calling into holy orders, she was as an adjunct professor of public health at UCLA, a medical missionary, and a peace and justice advocate with her late husband, Walter. Now, while enjoying her retirement, Joanne continues to educate herself through taking classes at seminaries. I met Joanne in a few of my classes. Joanne is an example of the many notable woman who diligently serve our churches with their talents, resources and skills.

We don't need to look too much farther than our own parish for inspiration. We have many women and men who serve Jesus Christ with attention and detail. Many theologians believe that Jesus had numerous unmentioned female disciples who served along side him who became the pillars of the early home churches. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God that resided with the children of Israel in the tabernacle was feminine, called Shekinah— "She-Who-Dwells." And the Greek word for God's Wisdom is "Sophia." This was evidenced by the early Christians who referred to the Holy Spirit as feminine and as our Mother.

It is fitting that after all these years, the Episcopal church was the earliest Christian denomination to ordain women into the priesthood in 1974. It was three years later that the first official ordination of eleven women took place. Indeed, in every culture and time, women have been in significant roles in the spiritual life of their families and our churches.

### Blue Butterfly Veterans Village

St. Michael's brightened the Thanksgiving holiday for the Veteran Families at Blue Butterfly Village with their generous food donations. St. Michaels and the wider El Segundo community donated approximately 35 bags of groceries. Kate, the VA case worker, was incredibly grateful to receive the items and let us know that they will make a big difference to the families this Thanksgiving.

Elizabeth Tobias



### Children's Center News

December is here! The children's center is filled with joy as we anticipate the celebration of Christmas. There will be lots of holiday arts and crafts and stories about the Christmas season. The children will also learn about the spirit of giving through our toy drive for Connections for Children. The children will bring in new toys that will be given to children in the Connections community. If you would like to participate, donations can be brought to the preschool until Tuesday, December 9.

We will have our annual holiday party on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 to 11:30am.

School will be closed December 22-January 2 for winter break.

Happy Holidays!



### December Birthday Blessings

8 Randy Albers

9 Stuart Galloway

24 Chris Powell

27 Ray Gross



### Christmas Poinsettias

(please print clearly)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving/Memory of  
(circle one)

Turn in to the office by Dec. 16th with  
your donation

### Poinsettias for Christmas

Each Christmas our altar is beautifully decorated with poinsettias to help us celebrate the joy of the season. It has been our tradition to give everyone the opportunity to remember loved ones and blessings in our service leaflets as we celebrate Christmas Eve services.

Please fill out this form and leave on the office desk, or put it in the collection plate or email Melissa (melissaasings@gmail.com) the information by Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> so she will have time to add your offering to the leaflets.

The cost is about \$25 per plant, and you are welcome to take one after the Christmas season is over.





## Thanksgiving Cheer

By: Mieko Beyer

Driving in LA is generally quite stressful and crowded, unless you are driving on a holiday. This is where I found myself on Thanksgiving, cruising across the freeways barely dotted with a dozen other vehicles and an ETA of 20 minutes from the South Bay to Echo Park! Choo-choo!

Why would I make this journey on this day? Because I heard very attractive news at the 8am service the weekend before from Father Joshua that volunteers were still welcome for a Thanksgiving meal at the Episcopal Diocese. I often wish I had a regular volunteer job so I'm very eager whenever I hear of a volunteer opportunity. As a teen, my after school hours were always filled with a roster of extracurriculars, from quizbowl to tennis to student poetry readings and it's funny as how an adult that extracurricular habit has stayed with me - currently I'm enrolled in an online class, an in person class and will soon join a drum group and pickleball league.

Anyway, enough about me, I'm supposed to be sharing my experience. The diocese is right across the street from the famous Echo Park lake, a lovely view coming in. Then we joined the growing huddle of awkwardly aproned, gloved and hair-netted volunteers hovering about the perimeter of a small courtyard (excluding a very focused group of four making mashed potatoes in a giant vat who were already hard at work). Soon however our moment came! An organizer of the event that day drew us out to the dining area - we took a group picture then also heard from the bishop who I also had the pleasure of meeting in the kerfuffle before. He wears Costco hearing aids which is why he had me spell out my generally unique first name for him M-I-E-K-O. A very cordial and well to do bishop he is and a wonderful public speaker.



His brief words were practically a rallying cry! Did you know under the current administration they will stop counting the hungry? Does stopping such a tabulation erase a problem? I suppose some think so. But that day the volunteers were assiduously, nay rebelliously counting the hungry that came through with each meal ticket. Hundreds were expected.

But would they really come? As we all stationed up an anxious cloud misted over my head as it usually does about every 15 seconds - was this too much pie? How could anyone eat all this pie? There were so many empty chairs and long tables - what if no one came? What if they didn't like it?

Also what if everyone who came was bonkers? A common prejudice towards the needy in LA, but it nervously crossed my mind. How would I be able to make conversation? I was starting to panic.

Soon enough however, the line flowed in, some solo flyers, some with their children, a lady with a stroller of three joyful white terriers, young people, older people, people ages in between. They bustled through the buffet line, then swung over to the drink station, then passed the very important 3 woman manned PIE STATION (read: where M-I-E-K-O was situated).



Politely, some inquired rather daintily when they were allowed to take a slice? We gladly surrendered a small (compostable!) plate to them with the handsomest served slice we could find amongst our mostly mangled looking offerings (a novice but earnest pie serving effort). Some very bold and very dessert oriented tumbled past us picking up a slice of each variety with nary a second thought and a determined bee line to the tables (pecan! Apple! pumpkin!). My favorite were two ladies who marched in together to our dessert table and each took a slice of pie, dumping it victoriously upon top of their heap of mashed potatoes, turkey and stuffing, gently casting aside the plates which I meekly recycled. Well of course, isn't that exactly where a slice of pie belongs? Naked like Lady Godiva upon her mount of savory steed?

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My favorite activity of the day turned out surprisingly to be telling as many guests as I met "Happy Thanksgiving!" as I am often tongue-tied, it's a relief to have something routine to say to strangers. Every effort was reciprocated back with cheer, kindness and a smile.

It was a very nice meal, with very wonderful guests and very cheerful hosts. I highly recommend adding it to your Thanksgiving calendar next year if your schedule is able.



**Our two "church"  
mascots, Ranger and  
A rrow.**

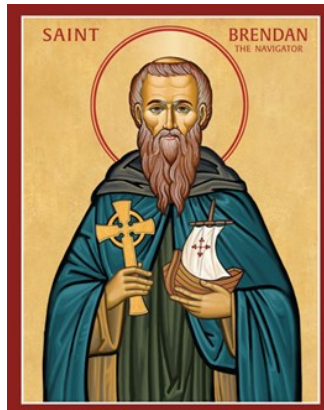


**OUR "FRIENDSGIVING FEAST" SO MUCH GREAT FOOD!  
THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED.**



## Brendan of Clonfert (484-577)

By the Rev. Joshua Wong



One of the places I have wanted to visit is Ireland because Celtic Christianity has so much to teach us about charity and the importance of education. Brendan of Clonfert was one of the earliest Irish monastic saints and is one of Ireland's most famous. Sometimes, he is referred to as Brendan the Navigator.

Born in Tralee, Ireland, he lived during the golden age of Irish monasticism at which time Ireland was a center for learning and evangelization. He is mainly known for his legendary voyage to find the "Isle of the Blessed." The written narrative of his journey comes from the *Immram* (old Irish tales that are Christian in nature that preserve old Irish mythology), and from the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot).

Saint Brendan's feast day in the Anglican Church is celebrated on May 16. Brendan of Clonfert's life can be summed up by the single phrase, "the leading of the Divine." He always sought the guidance of the Divine, whether it was the wind that directed his navigation, how he was to act as a guest in new territories, or how they would be supplied with provisional needs. Every step of Brendan's voyage was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was recorded that the abbot was known to have immediately taken a tablet and stylus and wrote down what God had revealed to him.

Throughout their navigation led by the Divine, his voyagers would wonder if they should settle at a location. Many times, they felt God's answer was no. "No, you may not, for that is not God's will." Then, followed by, "There, God has prepared your..." For example, they sailed around an island for forty days because the wind never blew them close enough to the shore. The liminal space they were in caused many monks to become distressed, imploring the Lord for help.

Reflecting on this story brings up a question for us today: In our lives, are we in any liminal space waiting for the Lord to lead us, our family or our world? Just like Brendan, we live constantly in the unknown, but it is here when God often reveals the most to us. When life is all planned out, would we be missing out on the peripheral miracles that happen on the side?

May we be inspired by Brendan of Clonfert's life focused on the leading of the Divine.