



The Franciscan



December 2023

● **Diocesan Bishop** ●

The Rt Rev John Taylor

● **Our Vicar** ●

The Rev. Sarah Kitch
stfrancis.simi@gmail.com

● **The Bishop's Committee** ●

- *Bishop's Warden*
Amy Brown
- *Junior Warden*
Dan McCarty
- *Finance*
Sam Anusiem
- *Clerk/ Communications*
Cathy Grimes
- *Service/Outreach*
Gerri Harrington
- *Pastoral Care*
Tracy Hurst
- *Worship*
Chris McCarty

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

Celebrations and thanksgivings, shared community and fellowship with one another, is what St. Francis is all about. It's all part of welcoming in a new season at St. Francis and blessing the sense of hospitality and worship. We begin our liturgical calendar once again from the beginning and the Advent Season.

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The **Greening of the Church** will take place following Sunday Service on December 17th.



Read More pg. 4



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From Our Vicar..

Celebrations and thanksgivings, shared community and fellowship with one another, is what St. Francis is all about. It's all part of welcoming in a new season at St. Francis and blessing the sense of hospitality and worship. We begin our liturgical calendar once again from the beginning and the Advent Season.

Now we turn to what is the season of charity and mercy, Grace given to us from God, through Jesus our Savior. This is a focused time as we renew our relationship with Bogota Kids Mission with our ANGEL TREE and share our resources with them for their needs. This is a focused time when we enter into preparation for Advent and allow ourselves to reflect and are quiet, awaiting the birth of our Lord. Our TAIZE SERVICES will be weekly as we pause in the mid-week, letting ourselves pray and be present to our Lord and one another. We honor the change of the seasons and the Winter Solstice as we gather together.

This is a focused time when we prayerfully enter into a Covenant and commit ourselves to this community, offering our resources of time, talents and treasure for another season at St. Francis through our Pledges. We are seeking what God has for us in the present moment and for our time to come. The Scripture continues to speak to us as we anticipate our future in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

As each one of us commit to the community and work of St. Francis we will realize this promise. We are the church collectively, and our life and worship, fellowship and shared sacred moments are what make up St. Francis. As we turn into this season of charity and mercy, Grace and Love, may we prayerfully discern what our part is to participate in the Spirit's work at St. Francis. As we await our Lord's birth, may this Advent season be our awakening into a fresh revelation of the Lord our God, even as the shepherds were startled by the guiding star. We follow that star and cast our gaze, in this focused time, on a newborn baby that is the hope for the world.



Sarah

Landscape

*Isn't it plain the sheets of moss, except that
they have no tongues, could lecture
all day if they wanted about*

*spiritual patience? Isn't it clear
the black oaks along the path are standing
as though they were the most fragile of flowers?*

*Every morning I walk like this around
the pond, thinking: if the doors of my heart
ever close, I am as good as dead.*

*Every morning, so far, I'm alive. And now
the crows break off from the rest of the darkness
and burst up into the sky—as though*

*all night they had thought of what they would like
their lives to be, and imagined
their strong, thick wings.*

--Mary Oliver, Dream Work

The landscapes we live in shape us. There are certain places on earth which sing more strongly to our hearts. Some of us are called again and again to particular places because of the impact they have on how we see the world. Places which shimmer with a kind of beauty and holiness.

Honoring this reality is a way of honoring the incarnation - God becomes flesh in the world around us. *This* place, St Francis, is such a place. It is a place that calls people to refresh their souls, find a renewed sense of commitment to God, and feel deeply loved and blessed.

St Francis is a place that roots us in the monastic practice of stability, which calls people not to run away but to stay committed to the place they find themselves. For us, it means fully embracing the way the world around you shapes your own dreams and desires and points you in a holy direction.

What are the landscapes which shimmer strongly for you, revealing a holy presence? How does the landscape you live in now shape your vision of the world?

- excerpt from Christine V.Painters
Abby of the Arts

This is a loving, accountability, with a big smile and much affection but also a gentle reminder and invitation.

When Bishop John came to St. Francis, one of the aspects of our church he affirmed was that we didn't bring up the "M" word as to what we felt was one of the most significant needs of the church. We were deeply blessed by his insight and how he shared that identified the health of a community.

St. Francis church is healthy. The strength of that is our commitment and our continued sense of human flourishing to the well being of the church community, and our strength of mission and ministry outside the church.

All that said, we need to invite you to meet your pledge to the church. We are grounded and formed in Jesus' teaching of Stewardship and care for that which has been given to us. We are faithful to attend to the ministry of St. Francis and its outreach and God's mission for us.

Please, if you are caught a little behind on your pledge at this point of the year, would you consider catching that up? Would you consider being faithful to offer that to St. Francis?

If you find this challenging, would you please speak with me confidentially? Bishop John found St. Francis welcoming, hospitable, and loving. He felt the Spirit strongly in our life here and was deeply blessed by all that we are doing.

May we continue to faithfully bless each other and our life together here at St. Francis.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI EPISCOPAL CHURCH PRESENTING:

CHRISTMAS SING

JOIN US FOR A FAMILY FUN NIGHT OF

SING-ALONG

Sunday, December 10th

5:30 PM

280 Royal Avenue, Simi Valley

stfrancischurchofsimi.org

One of the spiritual practices I look forward to every year is praying for a word or phrase to carry me through the year. It is a beautiful way to enter into the New Year and be mindful of the Grace of God and the presence of God with us as we begin anew.

PRAYING FOR A WORD FOR THIS YEAR

In ancient times, wise men and women fled out into the desert to find a place where they could be fully present to God and to their own inner struggles at work within them. The desert became a place to enter into the refiner's fire and be stripped down to one's holy essence. The desert was a threshold place where you emerged different than when you entered.

Many people followed these ammas and abbas, seeking their wisdom and guidance for a meaningful life. One tradition was to ask for a word – this word or phrase would be something on which to ponder for many days, weeks, months, sometimes a whole lifetime. This practice is connected to **lectio divina**, where we approach the sacred texts with the same request – "give me a word" we ask – something to nourish me, challenge me, a word I can wrestle with and grow into. The word which chooses us has the potential to transform us.

What is your word for the year ahead? A word which contains within it a seed of invitation to cross a new threshold in your life?

"Lectio Divina", a Latin term, means "divine reading" and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us.

The first stage is lectio (reading) where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us. Any passage of Scripture can be used for this way of prayer but the passage should not be too long.

The second stage is meditatio (reflection) where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us.

The third stage is oratio (response) where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God.

The final stage of Lectio Divina is contemplatio (rest) where we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice.

This Christmas we have an Angel Tree in our narthex with Angels ready to fly to support the work of the Bogota Kids Mission. With a contribution clipped on these beloved angels, we offer practical help to buy needed Christmas gifts, appliances, help with getting school supplies, or any of the other daily needs for their ministries.

Please look for the Angel Tree in the Narthex as you come to church and place a check or money on these ones who are ready to fly for our giving to the community.

Blessed Flight!

Lloyd and Anita Mix THE BRIDGE November 2023

BOGOTA KIDS MISSION

Every Friday morning when Marwin, who is five, says his memory verse, I realize how much he sounds like Linus quoting the Gospel of Luke in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. At The Bridge, Marwin is one of over 100 children dedicated to memorizing scripture. It must make the Lord's heart smile as He hears these words of praise coming from the mouths of babes.

Another takes a copy of her weekly memory verse to share with her public school teacher.

"GIVE THEM MY WORD AND I WILL DO THE REST."

That was God's promise to us in the earliest stages of developing our program at The Bridge. As we have shaped our decisions to conform with this promise, God has been amazingly faithful through provision and fruit.

In faithfulness to His promise, as a part of our Christmas celebrations, we are committed to providing our students with actual Bibles or story book bibles so that they have a fleshed out overview of both the Old and New Testaments that they can read at home. These books often journey to school with the kids and are pulled out and enjoyed during any free time they might have at The Bridge.

Go and make disciples!

In the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.



\$30.00
provides for a child these Christmas gifts:

- the Word of God in age appropriate, storybook fashion
- colored pencils for school
- a Christmas treat to share with the family

Your contribution is needed and appreciated!
(We're planning for 136 children at our Christmas close-out.)





The **Greening of the Church** will take place following Sunday Service on **December 17th**.

We need your help in decorating trees, hanging garland, decking the halls with wreaths and many more tasks. No matter your skill level please, come! We need a few audience to let us know when things are straight or need to move. So please, come! Help make light work for many hands.



Poinsettias will be placed at the Altar beginning **December 17th** with the greening of the Church. If you would like to contribute: contact the church office and/or place your offering in the plate with a “floral” envelope available in the Narthex. We appreciate your generosity!

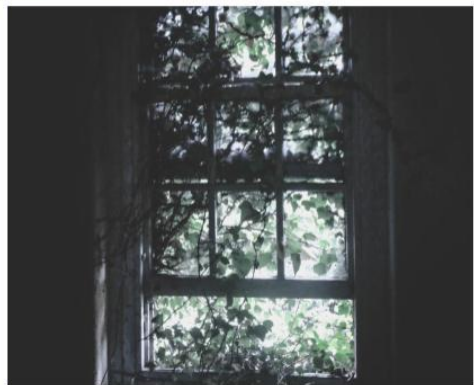
Christmas Eve Services will be regular Sunday **10:15 am service** and in the evening - **ONE** Candlelight Service with Eucharist at **6:00 PM**.

December 25th will be **Christmas Day** (no service)



Advent Study

after Sunday Service



Weekly during Advent in the back of the church with David Kitch
A time to reflect and dig deeper into the scriptures of the season

Advent Taíze Services

will begin on November 29th.
Service will be held each
Wednesday of Advent in the
Church at 6:00pm.

November 29th
December 6th
December 13th
and
December 20th



Stay Connected With Us!

- Pastoral Care through the church office (805)526-5141
- Pastoral Care via email stfrancis.simi@gmail.com
- Keep up through the St. Francis Website <https://www.stfrancischurchofsimi.org/>
- Sunday Worship In-Person 10:15 AM & Live Streamed - links in the St. Francis Weekly
 - Stay connected through weekly services and activities made available

Please remember St. Francis with your donations and pledge.

Secure online giving available through PayPal:

<https://www.stfrancischurchofsimi.org/donate>

Parish Healing Prayer Needs:

Barbara, Reina, Sylvia, Brody, Avalon, Shantel, Scott, Lee, Michael, Kim, Jean, Braydon, Hank, Fr. Steve, Al, Mary, Yvonne, Dee, Jeff, Jim, Bill & Leslie, Jan, David, Lee, Trish, Sue, Tony, Mark, Michele, Eric, Louise, Bob & family, Edith, Howard, Mary, Donna, J.D., Frances, Patrick, Margaret, Beverly, Margie, Alan, Kevin, Eve, Amy, Judy, Bernadette, Arianna, Pam, Sammie, Gerri, Steven, John, Tiffany, Leo, David, Henry, Cheryl, Ana, Susan, Peggy Pauline.

*Christmas Carols sing
Of Holiday traditions
That outlive us all.*

-Haiku by Diantha Ain

ECW – Episcopal Church Women –
Will Meet in December – Friday the
1st. Please contact Sylvia Moya or Pat
Udell if interested in joining in service.



Baby Shower Sundays

4th Sunday of the Month

Please bring your diapers, wipes and baby toiletries in support of the Baby Closet on the 4th Sunday of the Month to help support the Baby Closet and their needs.

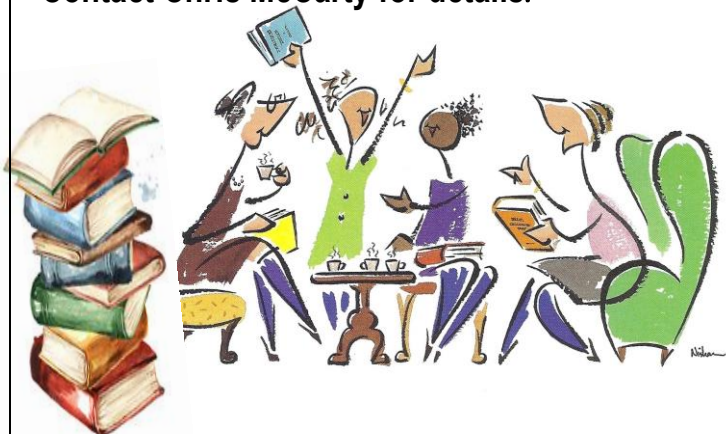
If you have any questions or are interested in getting involved, please speak with Gerri Harrington or Rev. Sarah.

The Baby Closet is open weekly

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10 am – 11am

Interested in Joining a Book Club?

Contact Chris McCarty for details.



December 2023 Schedule for Holy Ministry

	Dec. 3	Dec. 10	Dec. 17	Dec. 24 AM	Dec. 24 PM
Lector (O.T./Psalm)	Kerri-Jo H.	Eden S.	Bernadette	TBD	TBD
Lector (Epistle/P.O.P)	Suzanne L.	Gerri H.	Chrissy B.	Reuben A.	Chrissy B.
LEM	Lisa N.	Chrissy B.	Tracy H.	Chrissy B.	Rob W. Kristin W.
Usher / Greeter	Chrissy B.	Rebecca S.	Joe Z.	Ted W.	Tony F. Reuben A.
Altar Guild	Chris M.	Cathy G.	Tracy H.	Gerri H.	Chrissy B.
Preaching	David K.	Rev Sarah	David K.	Rev. Sarah	Rev. Sarah

January 2024 Schedule for Holy Ministry

	Dec. 31	Jan. 7	Jan. 14	Jan. 21	Jan. 28
Lector (O.T./Psalm)	Susan S.	Kerri-Jo H.	Eden S.	Bernadette	Susan S.
Lector (Epistle/P.O.P)	Reuben A.	Suzanne L.	Reuben A.	Chrissy B.	Gerri H.
LEM	Tracy H.	Lisa N.	Tracy H.	Rob W. Kristin W.	Chrissy B.
Usher / Greeter	Ted W.	Reuben A.	Ted W.	Rebecca S	Joe Z.
Altar Guild	Tracy H.	Chris M.	Tracy H.	Cathy G.	Chrissy B.
Preaching	David K.	Rev Sarah	David K.	Rev Sarah	David K

Please let the Church Office know if you are unable to serve on your scheduled day. Thank you for Serving!

DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 ECW Mtg 8 pm AA PH	2
3 Advent 1 David Kitch Preaching Eucharist with Music Advent Study 6:30 Men's AA PH	4 Samaritan Dinner 8 pm Men's AA	5 Baby Closet 10-11 6:30 pm Women AA 7 pm AA PH 8 pm Women AA	6 10 am Healing & Eucharist Service 6pm Taize Service 7:30 pm AA PH	7 Baby Closet 10-11 7 pm NA Clare Rm	8 8 pm AA PH	9
10 Advent 2 Rev. Sarah Kitch, Preaching 10:15 am Eucharist with Music Advent Study 5:30 p Xmas Sing! 6:30 Men's AA PH	11 8 pm Men's AA	12 Baby Closet 10-11 6:30 pm Women AA 7 pm AA PH 8 pm Women AA	13 10 am Healing & Eucharist Service 6pm Taize Service 7:30 pm AA PH	14 Baby Closet 10-11 7 pm NA Clare Rm 6 pm H.H. HOA	15 8 pm AA PH	16 Private Event
17 Advent 3 David Kitch Preaching 10:15 am Eucharist with Music Greening of the Church Advent Study 6:30 Men's AA PH	18 8 pm Men's AA	19 Baby Closet 10-11 6:30 pm Women AA 7 pm AA PH 8 pm Women AA	20 10 am Healing & Eucharist Service 6pm Taize Service 6 pm W.R. HOA 7:30 pm AA PH	21 Baby Closet 10-11 7 pm NA Clare Rm	22 8 pm AA PH	23
24 Advent 4 Rev Sarah Kitch Preaching 10:15 am Eucharist with Music No Bishop's Committee Mtg XTMAS EVE 6:00 pm Candlelight 6:30 Men's AA PH	25 Christmas Day 4-5pm Samaritan Dinner 8 pm Men's AA	26 Baby Closet 10-11 6:30 pm Women AA 7 pm AA PH 8 pm Women AA	27 10 am Healing & Eucharist Service 7:30 pm AA PH	28 Baby Closet 10-11 7 pm NA Clare Rm	29 8 pm AA PH	30
31 New Year's Eve David Kitch Preaching 10:15 am Eucharist with Music 6:30 Men's AA PH						

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Newsletter – DECEMBER 2023

St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church
280 Royal Avenue, Simi Valley CA 93065
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TO:



Sunday Service:
10:15 am
Wednesday Service:
10:00 am Healing
Wednesday Taize:
6:00 pm
Christmas Eve Sunday Service:
10:15 am
Candlelight Christmas Eve Service:
6:00 pm