



The SPIRE

The Newsletter of the
Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Sierra Madre, California

SEPTEMBER 2007

Worship

Sundays

8am Mass
8:45 Breakfast
9:10 Education
10:15 Mass

Wednesdays

12pm Mass
6pm Mass
7:30pm Choir Rehearsal
(starting Sept. 5)

Thursdays

7am Mass

Fridays

12pm Mass

Sunday, September 9th

**Ministry
Fair Day**

&

**Family
Photo Day**

Update your photo on
the Bulletin Board and
let's get your photo up
there if it is not there
now

Upcoming Events

- September 1—Labor Day
- September 5—Choir
- September 8—St. Mary's Potluck
- September 9—Ministry Fair
- September 16—Fall program begins; Youth Kick-Off Pool Party

Introducing our New Parish Administrator

BY HANNA KANG

When Brenda Peters first walked into Church of the Ascension to drop off her Parish Administrator application, she sensed that this was the job for her.

"I saw the ad on Craigslist.org and thought, oh, this sounds really interesting. I drove by the church and realized this was a church I had been interested in as a parish before finding out about the position."

Brenda first interviewed with Fr. Michael Bamberger and then came back for a second interview with Lavette Teague, Halcyon Koerber, Carol George, and Jean Rowe. Fr. Bamberger extended the position to Brenda shortly after her second interview.

One of the questions Father Bamberger asked during the interview was, "If I went to your car right now, what stations would be auto-tuned on your radio?"

She answered, "KBIG, the only one on my player."

Brenda likes to garden, read, and walk her two dogs, Jake and Spud. Jake is a border collie-pointer mix, and Spud is a sheltie-cocka-poo mix.

A Southern California native,

Brenda moved to Sierra Madre two months ago from Orange County. She enjoys the small town camaraderie and atmosphere.

"You get the feeling that people actually care about each other here. I like going to Starbucks and greeting friendly passerby."



Brenda Peters, new Parish Administrator

On August 16, 2007, Brenda started work and jumped right into a staff meeting. She looks forward to working in a parish environment and growing spiritually and professionally. She brings a customer service and bookkeeping background, with a knack for organization and communication skills.

"I enjoy working with people. I like to feel that I am needed and am helping others with my work. I like to help people, and I'm excited to do that through this position."

Please welcome Brenda to the parish and the community by dropping off baked goods during office hours, Tuesday through Friday from 9am-2pm. As you can tell, she has a wonderful sense of humor and would love to get to know you.

Ministry Fair Table Sound-bites

FROM SUSAN CLIFTON, JEAN ROWE, MIKE BEACH, HAL BARBER

The Ministry Fair will take place on September 9th. Please join us after church and explore our ministries. We'd love to chat with you about the exciting opportunities at Church of the Ascension.

Fellowship Table

Come visit the Fellowship table and find out more about how you can get involved with the Hospitality Committee, hosting coffee hour, Men's Breakfast, St. Mary's Guild, 4th of July - Mass on the Grass and much more. We won't be hard to find...just look for the party under the large pine.

Formation Table

Join us at the Formation tables to learn about Ascension's Christian Education program. Leaders of our Catechesis classes for children, young people from our Rite 13 Youth and Senior High Youth Groups, and members of our adult Small Group classes will be there

Ascension Youth Group- Back in Action!

Hey youth of Ascension! Summer is over! Get ready for an exciting year together!

Mary Baffes and Allison Rainey will be leading the youth this year, and encourage all youth from 6th to 12th grade to join us. If you're never been to youth group, now is a great time to join in the fun.

Mark your calendars:

Sunday, September 2 - 9:00-10:00am - Meet in the Parish House to prepare for the Ministry Fair

Sunday, September 9- All morning- Be ready to represent the Youth Group well at Ascension's annual Ministry Fair

Sunday, September 16- NEW PROGRAM YEAR BEGINS!

9:00-10:00am Come and get acquainted in the parish house youth room as we break the ice for a new year together!

12:00pm-3:00pm Then, get ready that afternoon for a Kick-Off Pool Party! Bring along a favorite food, a bathing suit, and towel for a pool party at the Beach home. We will eat lunch, play water games, and have a great time together!

Sunday, September 23- 9:00-10:00am- Parish House

to describe what goes on in each program and why they have chosen to be Formation participants. Come talk with members of Daughters of the King and Cursillo about opportunities to enrich your spiritual life. Formation is a life long process. Won't you be part of the process this fall!

Presence Table

The ministry of presence is our foot-print in the community and our perception by the outside world. This ministry includes our Welcome at the church door, church tours, the blessing of the animals, and our communication media: the Spire Newsletter and our web site. All of these ministries present Ascension to the rest of the community and generate their impression of our church. They are all important and worth your consideration if you have an interest in how we appear to the world. Please stop by our booth and see how you can help.

Outreach Table

We are reaching out to you to welcome you to the Outreach Committee table. Come chat with us.

Youth Room- Join us we begin exploring "Who We Are and What Matters to Us as Young Christians"

Sunday, September 30- 9:00-10:00am- Parish House Youth Room

Can't wait to see you all soon,

Mary and Allison

Planting Underway: Landscaping Project Update

FROM MIKE BEACH, VERGER

By the time this article is published, the hardscape (concrete work) will be done and the property being prepared for planting. The plants arrive on Monday August 20 and will be placed for final approval in the following days. Once the plants are in, the ground will be graded for grass. The final step is the laying of the grass sod. All of this should be done by the week after Labor Day.

This has been a long project and your cooperation and patience has been very much appreciated by those involved in the construction. Enjoy the new landscape and look of the Ascension grounds. There is still room for your generous pledge to the Capitol Funds Project to help pay for this upgrading of our grounds.

🎵 Notes from the Loft

FROM DEBORA HUFFMAN, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & ORGANIST

VIRTUAL TOUR OF ANGLICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS 2007 CONFERENCE

This summer was the wettest on record in the UK, central and southern England experienced flooding, the exchange rate was the highest in history, and Heathrow lost 20,000 pieces of luggage the first week of July. Against this backdrop 180 members of the Association of Anglican Musicians gathered in Durham for the traditional tenth-year pilgrimage to England. And what a week it was - incredible music, worship, architecture, history, and fellowship! The overcast skies, drizzle, rain, and lost luggage (about twenty of us - present company excluded - had to purchase new wardrobes for the week) couldn't dampen our spirits.

My home for the week was the Three Tuns hotel, which dates back to the sixteenth century, originally a stopping place for people traveling north into Scotland. Conference headquarters were St. Chad's College, adjacent to the cathedral, where several of our meals were served. Many of our worship services and meetings were held at the ancient church of St. Oswald's, located below and across the river from the Cathedral. From 1861 to 1875 the Vicar of St. Oswald's was John Bacchus Dykes, who is actually best known for the 300 hymn tunes he composed, including NICAIA (*Holy, Holy, Holy*), MELITA (*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*), and HOLLINGSIDE (*Take My Life and Let It Be*). It was moving, indeed, for NICAIA to come to life in Dykes' sanctuary through the glorious collective voice of the conferees!

The incomparable Durham Cathedral (foundation laid in 1093) was the setting for daily Evensong; informative guided tours; a fabulous organ recital on the historic Harrison & Harrison instrument played by James Lancelot, the Cathedral's Master of Choristers and Organist; and the closing Eucharist. How surreal it was to be singing the anthem, *Prayer of the Venerable Bede*, in the cathedral nave, the shrines of St. Bede and St. Cuthbert behind and before us. Bede (c. 672-735) was a Benedictine monk who is recognized as the greatest scholar of his time. His most famous work, *A History of the English Church and People*, is responsible for much of our knowledge of early English Christianity. Cuthbert (c. 634-687), Anglo-Saxon shepherd, monk, and bishop, was one of the most important medieval saints of England. The Reverend Canon Rosalind Brown, Residentiary Canon at the Cathedral, served as the week's conference preacher.

We took a day trip to York, where we toured the glorious Yorkminster, explored the town, and met with the Cathedral's current and two previous musicians in the breath-taking Chapter House.

Some of us traveled to St. Paul's Church in Jarrow (built in 685), where Bede spent his entire life. We journeyed to Hexham and participated in Choral Eucharist in the Abbey.

The week culminated with a trip to Lindisfarne (the Holy Island), the birthplace of English Christianity. Lindisfarne is a tidal island in the North Sea off the northeast coast of England, connected to the mainland of Northumbria by a causeway which is cut off twice a day by the tides. We roamed through the monastery ruins, held a liturgy for leave taking in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, then departed for Alnwick, where we shared the final meal of the conference.

During the next week my husband joined me in London for sightseeing in southern England. We took in as much of London as we could and traveled to Warwick Castle, Stratford on Avon (birthplace of Shakespeare), the Cotswolds, Christ Church - Oxford University, Windsor Castle, Salisbury Cathedral, Stonehenge, and Bath. We attended Choral Eucharist at Westminster Abbey (James O'Donnell, Director of Choristers) and Evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral - the absolute highlight of the trip. Resident musician Malcolm Archer led the choir of men and boys, concluding with Herbert Howell's hauntingly beautiful *I Sat Down Under His Shadow*.

The trip was a goldmine of experience and learning, some of which undoubtedly will be incorporated into our musical life here at Ascension. A pictorial description of the trip may be found at the following web site: <http://deboraspictures.spaces.live.com>. (Be forewarned, though, there are almost 300 pictures!)

CALLING ALL SINGERS!!

Ascension's choir will resume rehearsals on Wednesday, September 5, at 7:30 p.m. and will begin singing for mass on Sunday, September 9. There are openings for all voice types, with a particular need for tenors.

Why sing in choir? Singing is fun, it's good for you physically, and it's great camaraderie. The most important reason, though, is to lead people through worship to an experience with God. If you're considering how you may best use your talents for God's glory, I encourage you to consider joining the choir.

News of Ascensionites

**Mother Beal will be returning
from her time away
on September 8th.**

**Katie Koerber takes off for
Hillsdale College.**

ST. MARY'S GUILD

I invite all women of Ascension to our next St. Mary's meeting and potluck luncheon on Saturday, September 8th at 11:30 am in the Parish Hall.

St. Mary's is a wonderful group of ladies that gets together about 4 or 5 times a year to help with our social activities at Church, (i.e.) Ministry Fair, Easter Brunch, Evensong reception and other special events. St. Mary's also helps children in need of camper sponsorships; therefore, on occasion we'll arrange fund raisers. As many of you know Jo Mosier and her daughter donates a beautiful afghan each year for our annual Christmas raffle. Please join us on September 8th for fellowship and our potluck luncheon. —Lisa Reed

*Our vision is that the
Church of the Ascension
serves Christ today for
those who will come to
know Christ tomorrow.*

**WORSHIP
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The Episcopal Church of the Ascension

25 E. Laurel Avenue
Sierra Madre, CA 91024
626-355-1133

www.ascension-sierramadre.com



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

From the Senior Warden JIM LAREW

*The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—
who can understand it? ¹⁰ the Lord test the mind and
search the heart, to give to all according to
their ways, according to the fruit of their doings. —
Jeremiah 17:9-10*

Our family has faced enormous points of joy and some challenges since my last column. Our joy is that we welcomed a new sister-in-law into the Lew-Larew clan last month when Kara's brother married a lovely young woman who we both consider sister and good friend. And perhaps I should not call the other side "challenges". Perhaps it is really "trying situations", as challenges imply something to be overcome. These trying situations might just be something we need to get through. Long story short, our family and extended family's matriarchs are suffering physically with cardiac issues and cancer. We are struggling through the death of a friend and how present we were for him in his final months. Our family also struggles with the cancer of a beloved animal companion.

I don't know why it comes as a shock to me. "Death and taxes are one of the only certainties we have in life", they say. With car-

diac disease and cancer reaching epidemic proportions, it's highly probable that we know someone personally that has been touched with these afflictions. So why then, am I so shocked and surprised when I hear that someone I love and care about has been affected? I, myself, have had early stage melanoma removed from my back. I, myself, have been affected. And yet, I am still stunned at the probability, the unlikelihood of a trying situation.

I've been reading a book called The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable. A black swan is a large-impact, hard-to-predict, and rare event beyond the realm of normal expectations. The term comes from the ancient Western conception that all swans are white in color. In that context, the black swan is a metaphor for something that could not exist. The 17th century discovery of black swans in Australia metamorphosed the term to connote that a perceived impossibility actually came to pass.

These had been seemingly black swan events to me and Kara. All these trying situations seemed improbable, but they're not. Where are our expectations? Has our desire to be good natured planted our heads firmly in the sand? Throwing cold water on the notion that life should be smooth and always positive has helped us understand that these are not black swan events. We are called by God to help

ourselves and others navigate the rough waters of life through living a Christ-centered life, but it demands readiness. Readiness for a life that has bumps. Readiness to help others through trying situations. Readiness in expecting life's curves. Death and taxes are certainties to some, but our certainty also lies in God as our compass to navigate our way through the bumps and curves, valleys and peaks.

Our Christian faith is not a Teflon® coating and does not provide guarantees of a life without obstacles. It does, however, call us to live a life that prevents us from causing ourselves suffering and suffering to others. And it serves as a guide for us to navigate the trying times which we have little control over. Ascension is this place that helps us navigate, helps us prepare, helps us grieve, and helps us celebrate. Father Michael has preached this readiness on numerous occasions. I implore you to ask him how you can be better prepared for the certainties in life and how you can help others that may have found themselves less prepared.

I am grateful to contemplate this sitting on one of our new concrete benches overlooking our new hardscape. We smoothed out many of the bumps that make it difficult for all of us to navigate, but we left in a few curves just as a reminder.

Youth of the Ascension: Rock out to www.redmusiconline.com. Peace.