The December 2025 SPIRE

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

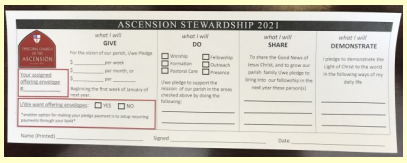
Upcoming Events

Please see the calendar on page 4 for an updated list of events.

Please Get Your Pledge Cards In ASAP!

Just a reminder that we still need pledge cards from several members of our parish family. Please take a moment to fill out your pledge card so that we can hear from you and complete our budget for next year. To return your card to the parish, you can mail it to the church office, drop it off at the church office (call in advance), drop it in the collection plate during the Sunday morning service, or fill out an electronic pledge card on the church website (look under "Give" about halfway down the page).

Blessings to everyone,
Gordon Tomaske, Sr. Warden



NOVEMBER 2025 Pledge Payment Snapshot

2024 Budget $205,150

YTD Budget:	$188,054
YTD Actual:	$176,737
Difference:	$-11,317

From the Rector

As I write this, Advent is about to begin. I realize that with all the distractions and busyness, I sometimes have a hard time engaging in the season itself.

For me, Sundays are the best. I love the Advent hymns. Saying and singing the Great Litany is something wonderful and moving. But the weekdays of Advent seem to have another agenda altogether.

If you want a short Advent meditation, you might want to go on line and enroll in Advent Word from Forward Movement. It's one word a day with about a paragraph of commentary. Sunday's word was AGAIN with this message: "In the monastic tradition of St. Benedict, the idea that each day, each hour, each moment, the opportunity to "begin again' through the grace and presence of Jesus is central. It is a way of being in the world that allows one to always be learning, growing, and changing. It allows safety for fresh starts fueled by belovedness. In this way, as we start Advent again, we are also experiencing a taste of Christ's coming again.

There are several devotional materials available as well. Forward Movement Press each year brings out a new resource. This year it is called A Light Upon My Path and is available for $12. My friend and colleague Bruce Linsenmayer along with Episcopal Relief and Development some 10 years ago came up with a devotional (and PRACTICAL) approach called a Season of Resilience. (http://www.episcopalrelief.org/uploads/EducationFileModel/159/file/SoR-fullpage.pdf) It is a one week at a time routine of accumulating everything needed for a home disaster preparedness cache. Theologically, this is brilliant. Advent is all about getting ready.

I pray that this season of Advent will be one of joy and anticipation for all of us.

Blessings,
Father Michael+

Holidays at Hillsides
2025 Annual Christmas Appeal

Let's show our generous support by providing gifts to help those in need this holiday season.

Cards in the amount of $25 from Vons, Food for Less, Ralphs, Target, Walmart, and Amazon will make the holidays brighter for families in need.

Please leave your donations on the collection plate on Sundays or drop them off in the parish office by Sunday, December 14, 2025. Deacon Ed will deliver them to Hillsides. Your generosity is greatly appreciated and a blessing to those in need.

I was 4 days old when I experienced my first Christmas. I had never thought of Christmas that way before – that it was my first; but now as I prepare for my 77th, I realize they have something in common. I certainly didn't know what to expect then, and I don't know what to expect now. Expectations are always a part of our lives. I suspect that this Christmas will be a first for most of us.

This year we remember: the fires that changed the lives of our neighbors forever, Ice raids, uncertainty and fear among many of our neighbors, questioning will LGBTQ+ marriage be preserved, the war against our trans siblings, book bans, financial strains on all of us, political uncertainty, and our deep concerns for the future of our democracy.

How do we celebrate when there's so much sadness, uncertainty, and fear? How do we celebrate when many families are experiencing an empty place at the Christmas table? Virtually hugging loved ones just isn't the same. I've even heard some say, "why bother?" Often, we associate Christmas with the color white. This Christmas for many…well, let's just color it blue. We're supposed to be happy, joyful, full of hope, and do lots of fun things. But this year, there's just a little bit that's missing.

I love Christmas, and we need Christmas now more than ever before. Anxiety, disappointment, sadness, and grief have always been part of human history; and there will always be much to be blue about…that goes without saying. Still there will always be reasons to desire new "seasons of hope."

As we prepare to remember the birth of Jesus, to embrace a new season of hope, it's easy to allow the chaos and uncertainty of this past year to dampen that hope and to get lost in our anxieties. How easy it is to forget the real meaning of the incarnation – God in human form entering into our history. That is what started Christmas, and that is what keeps it going. Hope…the hope that God will always be with us.

The Old Testament prophets delivered messages to those around them whose fears and anxieties were as real as ours and whose need for "hope" was a strong then as it is today. On the second Sunday of Advent the church prays: "Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Consider who the prophets in your life have been. Who has offered you hope in your distress, who was there in time of need, who laughed and cried with you, who encouraged you to just try a little harder, who kicked you in the butt when you were wallowing in your personal dramas? All those prophets remind us that God is indeed with us and that there's always reason to hope.

We should also see ourselves as prophets with a message to deliver, crying out in the wilderness of a hurting world. We may be approaching a new season of hope, but with that hope comes a new season of expectation that we will with God's help be both messenger and message in a world that is in pain and desperately in need of hope. The great challenge of faith in our hurting world is to remember that indeed there is hope.

Be the messenger, go tell it on the mountain that God is with us and in God all things are possible. Let your every action, your every word be a statement of hope in a hurting world. Let your hope be a beacon of light.

Go then and be prophets sharing the message that yes, in God all things are possible…we just need to give God permission to be a part of our lives. With God, there will always be seasons of hope. With God, it's always easy to be happy, joyful, and to do fun things. Once again, let's color the season white.

Be well, be blessed, be prophets of joy, gladness, and hope.
Deacon Ed+

VESTRY NOMINATIONS DUE NOW

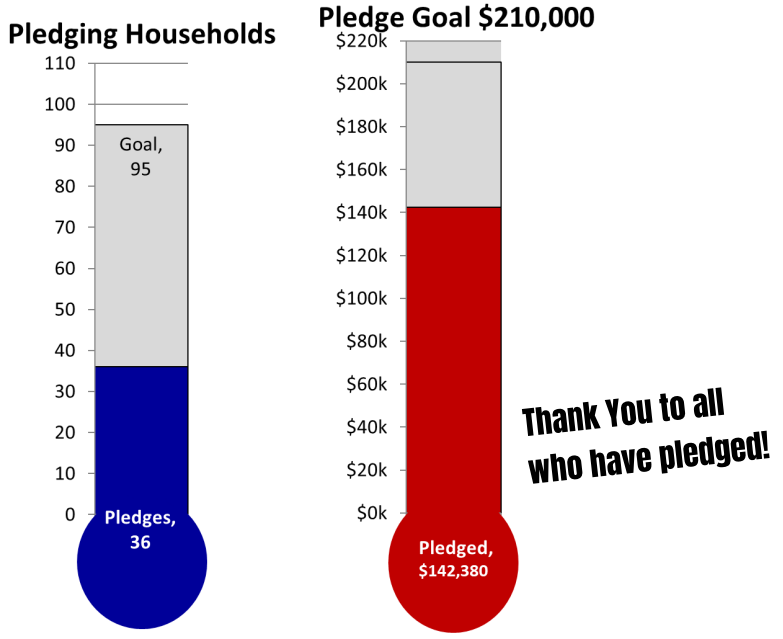
Each year at our annual meeting, we elect three new members of the Vestry, the body within the congregation that, with the Rector, leads the parish. Vestry members are elected for three year terms. Vestry meets once a month throughout the year. Additional meetings (and committee meetings) are held as needed. A Vestry member must be willing to accept the responsibility of regular attendance and be willing to serve on one or more committees.

Now is the time for the parish to nominate next year's Vestry candidates. According to the Diocesan guidelines, a Vestry nominee must be 16 years of age or older and be a confirmed communicant in good standing in the Episcopal Church. He or she must also attend church services at Ascension regularly and be a pledging contributor to the parish. A member of the Vestry may not be a member of any other church.

Names of nominees should be submitted to Father Michael or any Vestry member **by December 25th.**

The date for the annual meeting is **To Be Determined**.

Stewardship Update
The numbers as of December 1, 2025



It is once again the time of year to order Christmas flowers to decorate our already beautiful sanctuary and it is your generosity that makes this purchase possible.

Donation envelopes are located at the back of the Church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall. Thanking you in advance for your making this another beautiful Christmas season.

For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Tuesday, December 16th.
St. Anne's Altar Guild

An Opportunity for Giving

Please consider making a contribution to our music program for the special music we enjoy here at Ascension.

Donation envelopes are located at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Tuesday, December 16th.

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

WORSHIP, FORMATION, PASTORAL CARE, FELLOWSHIP, OUTREACH, PRESENCE

25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024 ~ 626-355-1133 www.ascension-sierramadre.com

DECEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall Fr. Michael out of office/Clergy Support Group	**2** 10am-10:30am/ Gooden Chapel	**3** 8:15am-9am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall Men's Group Monthly Luncheon/Noon Nano's Café RSVP to Fr. Michael 6pm- Wed Night Dinner Grp Meets	**4** 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	**5**	**6**
7 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	**8** 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	**9** 10am-10:30am/ Gooden Chapel 5pm-9pm Music Recital/Hall Private	**10** 8:15am-9am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 6pm- Wed Night Dinner Grp Meets	**11** 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	**12**	**13** 3:30pm—8pm Sierra Madre Music—Music Recital/Hall Private
14 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	**15** 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	**16** 10am-10:30am/ Gooden Chapel Noon Clericus Mtg Hall 7pm Vestry Meeting/Hall	**17** 8:15am-9am Gooden Chapel 6pm- Wed Night Dinner Grp Meets	**18** 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	**19**	**20** Church Greening at 9:30am
21 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 7pm Sierra Madre Candlelight Walk	**22** 8:30am Yoga/Hall	**23**	**24** 4:30pm Hymns & Carols 5pm Christmas Eve Mass	**25** 10:00am Christmas Day Mass *PARISH OFFICE CLOSED*	**26**	**27** Fr. Michael Vacation through January 3rd
28 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	**29** 8:30am Yoga/Hall	**30**	**31** 6pm- Wed Night Dinner Grp Meets			

Fr. Michael Vacation through January 3rd

Spire Creator: Kim Lumino, Parish Administrator