

The SPIRE 2020

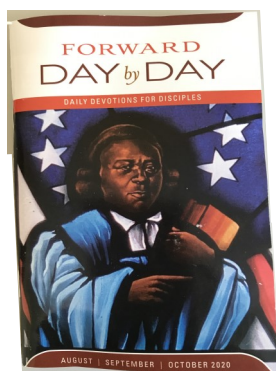
The Newsletter of the
Episcopal Church of the Ascension,
Sierra Madre, California



Upcoming Events

Please see calendar on page 8 for an updated list of 'virtual' events.

Copies of the new **Forward Movement Day by Day** booklets have been left at the front of the church. Feel free to stop by and pick up a copy.



Episcopal Relief & Development's COVID-19 Response Fund

"Join us in prayer and action. Help us be there in times of uncertainty.

Your gift enables us to prepare for emergencies around the world — including the recent outbreak of the coronavirus. With your help, we can equip our partners on the ground with crucial support to assist local communities and meet the changing needs as this crisis unfolds." Go to <https://support.episcopalrelief.org/covid19/> to contribute.



Episcopal
Relief & Development
Working Together for Lasting Change

From the Rector

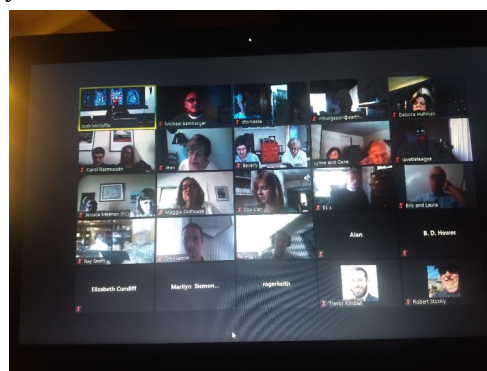
Finally, it arrived. And like everything else in the season of pandemic, it was and continues to be weird. I'm speaking, of course, about Dodger baseball. First, there is the empty stadium, empty sbut filled with artificial crowd noise. The announcers aren't anywhere close to the game itself. There's this expanded roster that seems so contrived. And designated hitters in the National League? There was a bench clearing non fight with a bunch of serious glares. To top it all off, on Wednesday, July 29th, in the top of the 13th inning, Edwin Rios hit a lead off home run scoring TWO. Don't even get me started about the cut outs of Dodger fans who are willing to fork out hundreds of dollars to have their pictures in the stands. A season with an Asterix.

How do we cope when the familiar no longer is familiar? In all honesty, I'm sure almost everyone has been so ready to be over the pandemic for weeks. Yet, all indications are that we have a long way to go to return to anything resembling "normal."

I've discovered a few tricks that I'm willing to share, in no particular order. I've added more music to my daily routine. (My sister gave me one of those internet gizmos — all I have to do is say "Alexa, play KUSC.") I've added more humor. (I've signed up to receive the Borowitz Report online.) I've added more serious reading AND pleasure reading to my routine. I try not to watch the television news, but I read three newspapers every day. I go to the office every day (except on my days off.) I've quit worrying about the fact that I wear the same kind of outfit day after day. (Hawaiian shirt and shorts) Finally, I try to remember to count my blessings. While Covid 19 has affected our family in a very powerful way, my mother-in-law is slowly recovering. Debbie and I are still employed. My son Matthew is home from deployment. Worship (with an Asterix) is still happening. And I still get to see some of you on Zoom.

I pray you all are well and safe.

Father Michael+



Let's Keep Ascension Moving Forward....

Please consider, as you are able, keeping your pledge current, especially during this time of Covid -19. The Church still has financial obligations in spite of our reduced capacity. You might consider signing up through your bank for auto-pay scheduled giving , or, perhaps, mailing your pledge to the parish office. You can also make a pledge payment or donation online via the church website. Go to: <https://www.ascension-sierramadre.com/give.html>.

Your gifts are fuel we use to

"...Keep Ascension Moving Forward....".

Thank You

JULY 2020

Pledge Payment Snapshot



2020 Budget
\$221,000

YTD Budget: \$128,917
YTD Actual: \$121,548
Difference: \$-7,369



Yes, God prays too.

We are standing in the doorway of a defining moment for humanity, our American way of life, and Christianity. History will be the final judge of how we rise to the occasion, and God will most certainly weigh in. Silence is not an option. It's time to get noisy, and time to speak out.

As the pandemic takes its toll and lingers on one month into next and with nowhere to turn, we wonder “where is God in all of this?” We pray and pray, yet everything remains the same or gets worse, and we can't help but think am I the only one praying.

Maybe we're not praying for the right things. Here we are practically begging God to fix this mess while totally unaware that He is praying too and is as frustrated as we are. Obviously, we're not on the same page. While we steadfastly pray that God will fix our mess, He's praying that we'll fix our own mess.

We need to ask ourselves what can we do to answer God's prayer. It may not be as difficult as one might imagine. It may be as simple as taking responsibility and speaking up for what's right. It might be as simple as having faith that God will provide us with all we need to make a difference and with the courage to take action.

In 1946, German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoller wrote about the cowardice of the German people to speak out against the incremental purging of chosen target groups. Over the years, there have been many adaptations published in the spirit of the original; but the common themes of persecution, guilt, repentance, and responsibility always ring true. He writes: “First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, but I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the gays, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't gay.”

A more contemporary spin might go like this: They suppressed the right to vote, and I didn't speak up because it wasn't my vote. They separated families and put children in cages, and I didn't speak up because it wasn't my family. They called peaceful protesters thugs, anarchists, and rioters to suppress the truth, and I didn't speak up because my privilege blinded me. They sent their police into our cities, and I didn't speak up because it wasn't my town. They called the pandemic a hoax – so many died, and I didn't speak up because I didn't know what to say. They denied medical care to the most vulnerable, and I didn't speak up because I had health insurance. The ending is always the same: finally, they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.

As we walk through the doorway of this defining moment, let us break the silence, make noise, and pray: Holy One, hear the prayers of your servant who calls upon you, and grant that I may know and understand what things I ought to do, and that I may have the grace and power to accomplish them. Help me to speak up for others so that they will speak up for me. Lord, never let me walk alone.

Be well, be blessed, make noise, and show up.

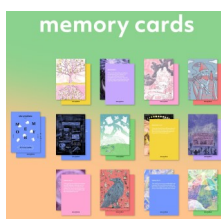
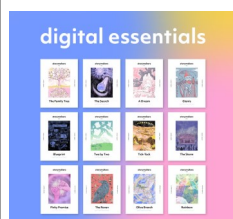
Deacon Ed+

CHECK IT OUT:

Online materials for summer family formation available for free from **StoryMakers**. This innovative online curriculum hopes to equip families to be able to share the Gospel in a meaningful way through videos, magazines and vibrant visuals. Other options are available for purchase or by subscription.

<https://www.storymakersnyc.com/videos?>

[ss_source=sscampaignt&ss_campaign_id=5ef0ca8a5c619965a01a2504&ss_email_id=5ef0d90389972270f259787d&ss_campaign_name=Free+Summer+Fun&ss_campaign_sent_date=2020-06-22T16%3A15%3A30Z](https://www.storymakersnyc.com/videos?ss_source=sscampaignt&ss_campaign_id=5ef0ca8a5c619965a01a2504&ss_email_id=5ef0d90389972270f259787d&ss_campaign_name=Free+Summer+Fun&ss_campaign_sent_date=2020-06-22T16%3A15%3A30Z)

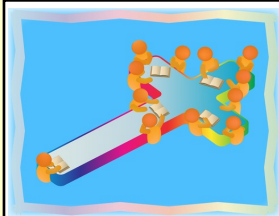
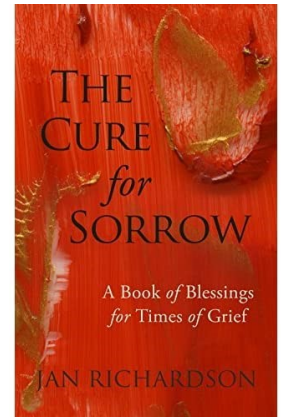


I mean, I'm used to living in those threshold-y, liminal, betwixt places, but I am keenly aware that this is one of the longest, most stubborn between-spaces ever. Whatever these threshold days (weeks, months) are holding for you, may there be grace. May there be sustenance. And may there be, perhaps, a few angels to meet you.

BLESSING FOR THE PLACE BETWEEN

When you come to the place between.
 When you have left what you held most dear.
 When you are traveling toward the life you know not.
 When you arrive at the hardest ground.
 May it become for you a place to rest.
 May it become for you a place to dream.
 May the pain that has pressed itself into you give way to vision, to knowing.
 May the morning make of it an altar, a path, a place to begin again.

—Jan Richardson
 from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*



“Between the Masses” Discussion Group

Did you know that the Between the Masses Discussion Group is still meeting every Sunday via Zoom call (*after the 9am service and coffee hour*)? The group meets for spiritual (and perhaps “spirited”) discussion of pre-assigned readings (usually brief!) on a wide variety of Christian themes. Reading selections are determined by the group itself. Please feel free to join the group even if you have not read the week’s reading selection.

To get the reading selection emailed to you, please email Gordon and Diane Tomaske at gdtomaske@sbcglobal.net. The Zoom invitation is the same one that is used for Sunday worship.

NOTES FROM THE LOFT

August 1 marks the twentieth anniversary of my affiliation with Ascension. I look back on these fabulous years with gratitude ~ all of the Sunday services, Christmas Eves, Easters, Evensongs, weddings, funerals, even a 2007 centennial concert in honor of Sierra Madre. In addition to the music, from the ordinary to the glorious, I’m grateful for the people of Ascension ~ the parishioners, the choir, the clergy ~ for your unswerving support. I’m particularly indebted to Lavette Teague, who initially introduced me to Ascension and encouraged my consideration of the position. I’m grateful for your support through crisis points in my personal life ~ from medical issues such as wrist surgery and knee replacements to, and most significantly, my husband’s passing. These years have been a celebration of Christian love and worship for which I’m most appreciative.

Today we find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic when our physical worship has been curtailed with no particular end in sight. God alone knows when we’ll be together again, but I look forward to that time. Thank you for the privilege of serving in your midst ~ I look forward to our continuing relationship!

*At the still point of the universe, all that is not silence is song,
 and all creation, hearing it, dances for joy.
 The song of the universe is the song of life, its rhythms defined by the cadence of time,
 its beauty in its holy harmony.
 The song is sung best when sung by the heart.*

~Alfred V. Fedak



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist

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

AUGUST 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 9am Sunday Worship Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* Between the Masses <u>Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	3	4 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	5 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	6 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:30am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	7	8
9 9am Sunday Worship Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* Between the Masses <u>Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	10	11 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	12 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	13 9am Forum Zoom Call	14	15
16 9am Sunday Worship Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* Between the Masses <u>Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	17	18 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only* Vestry Meeting 7:30pm Zoom Call	19 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	20 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:30am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	21	22
23 9am Sunday Worship Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* Between the Masses <u>Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	24	25 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	26 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	27	28	29
30 9am Sunday Worship Facebook Live & Zoom Call <u>Virtual Coffee Hour after service</u> *Zoom Call* Between the Masses <u>Discussion Group after coffee hour</u> *Zoom Call*	31					