

The SPIRE 2022

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



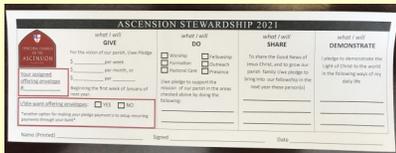
Upcoming Events

Please see the calendar on page 8 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



From the Rector

For the first time in over twenty years, the Owen family Thanksgiving feast (the actual eating is spread out over days) was held in Sierra Madre. A number of factors contributed to this location – my mother-in-law Fay is now living in Sierra Madre (and at the moment has some mobility challenges) and our son Matt and his family were able to fly out from South Carolina to be with us.

This was the first time Matt has been able to be with us in many years, and it was a first for his wife Lindsay and their kids. Obviously, it was a first for our granddaughter Elsie. She's only been in the world since January 2022! It was a glorious time of reconnecting and reminiscing. (Unfortunately, Debbie's brother Brin tested positive for Covid before travelling, and so he and his wife and their daughter had to stay away. We all tested before, during, and after the gathering.)

In the years before Debbie and I moved to our home on Ramona Avenue, we frequently hosted Thanksgiving. It became a tradition that we would take a family picture on the front steps of the Rectory. I believe that the first picture you see is from Thanksgiving of either 2000 or 2001. The second is from this year. The changes are remarkable. Both my dad and Debbie's dad have died. The little kids in the front row are now all grown up and a couple brought friends. (They're sitting in the same order.) Hair styles and colors have changed. In my case, I have less hair as well. And Elsie and James are there. Another generation has been added. I certainly have a lot for which to be thankful.

Blessings,
Father Michael+



NOVEMBER 2022 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2022 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget: \$192,500

YTD Actual: \$185,729

Difference: \$-6,771



Holidays at Hillside 2022 Annual Christmas Appeal

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

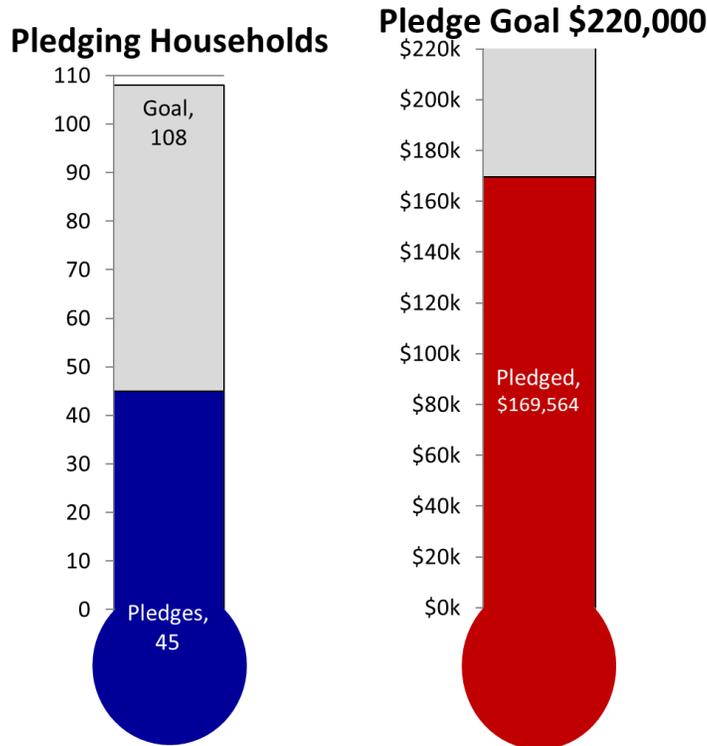
Cards in the amount of \$25 from Vons, Food for Less, Ralphs, Target, Walmart, and Amazon will make the holidays brighter for families in need.

Please leave your donations on the collection plate on Sundays or drop them off in the parish office by December 18, 2022. Deacon Ed will deliver them to Hillside. Your generosity is greatly appreciated and a blessing to those in need.



2023 Pledge Update

The numbers as of November 30, 2022



*Thank You to those
who have already
pledged!*



Meet Our New Diocesan Discerner

Hello Church of the Ascension Community!

My name is J.D. Neal. I'll be with you for these next 9 months as a discerner in the early stages of the ordination process. I hope to be a priest at the end of this journey.

I'm joining you from the far-away land of Whittier, CA where I live in an intentional Christian community-house — ask me about this some time — with my wife, Rachel; our cats Hildegard and Macrina; and our two current housemates, Ari and Nathaniel.

I've only been an Episcopalian for about 4 years now, having grown up and served a few years as a pastor in the more evangelical spaces -- although I had been a closeted Anglican since early

in my college years.

Outside of church-time, I worked as a high school teacher at a Great Books program for 5 years before making a hard left into the business world a year-and-a-half ago. Now, I work as the Director of Operations for a biomedical skincare company down in Irvine where I help make a variety of very expensive serums and creams.

When I'm free, I spend most of my time reading, listening to podcasts, hosting friends, and finding new hobbies to try out — I am currently on an artisanal butter making kick.

I am truly glad to be joining you for this next season, and I look forward to learning from each of you during my time here. Please don't hesitate to stop me and introduce yourself as I settle in over the next few weeks — I'm glad to meet you.

--

**Grace & Peace,
J.D. Neal**



Now, more than ever before, we must be patient and kind to ourselves and others. These are exceptionally stressful times in almost every aspect of our lives; and the holiday season, which seems to have snuck up on us, exacerbates our stress and increases our desire for peace, hope, and brighter days.

Fear not, brighter days are coming; and bursting the darkness of our stress is the light symbolized by the lighting of Advent's candles. We light candles during this season to mark the progression of time and to increase our sense of anticipation as we approach the day of Christ's birth. Christ is always lighting the way!

The candle's flame is a reminder of the light that comes into the world at Christmas. Each Advent candle serves as a reminder that Bethlehem's star always shines brightly and as a reminder that God is always with us despite our efforts to think otherwise when the going gets tough.

Bethlehem's star has not dimmed its glow
It beams clearly now as it did long ago
Into darkness of earth's desperate night
Bethlehem's star still offers His light.

Still now we gather awe of His might
To wonder and worship and seek His true light
Over each cradle and grave see it shine
Mercy and goodness and love so divine.

"Peace on earth and good will to all men"
A message of hope as true now as then
Come one and all, oh, come as you are.
Follow the Light of Bethlehem's star. (Janet Martin)



Be well, be blessed, follow the light of Bethlehem's star, come as you are.
Deacon Ed+

Altar Flowers and Sanctuary Candles

We would like to remind everyone that you can now sign-up for altar flowers and sanctuary candles online through Signup Genius. You can also sign-up on the sign-up sheets in Hawks Hall.

Payment should be made by CHECK (\$40.00 for flowers and \$15.00 for a candle) payable to **Church of the Ascension. ** Please include a note giving the date that you signed up for and any dedication.



Here are the sign-up genius links:

Sanctuary Candles: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0e44a4a628a7f94-sanctuary>

Altar Flowers: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0e44a4a628a7f94-altar>



Festival of Lessons & Carols Brunch

Your Choir Director & Hospitality Hostess

Cordially Invite All to Brunch

Sunday, December Eighteenth

Following the 10:15 Service of

Lessons & Carols

Hawks Hall



Please Respond to Lisa Wagner either by email: lisawagnero69@gmail.com or text: 626.710.8909 with the number in your party for brunch. This will ensure that we have a plentiful Buffet.

Church Sponsored Event



Believe it or not we are at that time of the year again where your help and contributions allow the Altar Guild to decorate our beautiful space. We count on your generosity to make this happen. Remember during Advent there are no flowers except for the third Sunday.

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 Sunday, December 18th.
St. Anne's Altar Guild

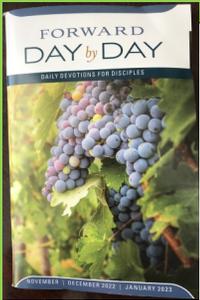


An Opportunity for Giving

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.

For names to be included in the Christmas bulletins, donations must be received by Sunday, December 18th.



Pick up a copy of the NEW Forward Movement Day by Day booklet. Copies can be found at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

A \$2 donation is appreciated. Thank You!

**FRIENDS
IN
DEED***

Please join in Ascension's monthly collection of specific "Gold Items" for Friends in Deed. For the month of December we will be collecting **CANNED SOUP**.

Look for the donation bin at the back of the church.



MUSIC_{AT}
ASCENSION

NOTES FROM THE ORGAN BENCH
Mr. Robert L. Williamson
Organist-Choirmaster

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is a service of worship traditionally celebrated on or near Christmas Eve.

The story foretells the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus. This sequence is told through nine short readings or lessons with the singing of Christmas carols, hymns, and choral anthems rounding out the service.

The Nine Lessons and Carols Service from King's College in Cambridge, England has a long tradition beginning Christmas Eve 1918. It was first televised by BBC Television in 1954 conducted by the then director of music, Boris Ord. Since the Second World War, it is estimated that each year millions of people worldwide listen to the live service on Christmas Eve.

Please join us on the fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18, 2022 at 10:15am for Ascension's inaugural service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Candlelight Carols

This Christmas Eve, our choir will provide a choral concert at 8:30pm prior to the 9:00 Christmas Eve Service.

The concert will include readings, carols, and familiar settings of well-known pieces by Willcocks, Sowerby, Ledger, and many more.

Please mark your calendars and join us for Candlelight Carols and Holy Eucharist on December 24, 2022 at 8:30pm.



Musicians for the Holidays

As we approach Lessons and Carols and the Christmas Eve Services, we are asking for donations to offset the cost of hiring some additional musicians. Please consider making a donation to the music fund in honor of a special loved one or in thanksgiving. Donors and the names of those to be remembered will be listed in the Lessons and Carols and Christmas Eve Service leaflets.

*Soli Deo
Gloria*

HOSPITALITY FUNDRAISER

The fundraiser for Jo Mosier’s Christmas Afghan and Tissue Boxes along with Lynne Holl’s Crocheted Winter Hats began on Sunday, November 20th and will continue until Sunday, December 11th when we will draw the winning tickets following the 10:15 Service.

Tickets for the raffle are selling for \$3.00 each or 4 for \$10.00. Tissue Boxes are selling for \$5.00 each, and the Winter Hats are selling for \$15.00 each. Jo also donated a second afghan to be sold at \$75.00.

I will be in Hawks Hall on each of these Sundays to sell raffle tickets and/or items beginning at 8:30 am through to the second Coffee Hour.

Come on in and have a cup of coffee and a sweet snack. Enjoy some fellowship while you take a look at what we will be raffling and selling.

Respectfully,
Lisa Wagner
Hospitality Hostess



14th Annual Women's Room Thanksgiving Luncheon, Tuesday, November 22nd, 2022

Thank You to Nicole Hanson & Lisa Wagner for organizing the event and to everyone who donated food, money, and goodies for the gift bags.



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.**



All donors will receive a \$10 Amazon e-gift card as a thank you.

Blood Drive
The Episcopal Church of the Ascension

Location: Parish Hall
 25 E Laurel Ave
 Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Wednesday, December 21, 2022
12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter sponsor code: ECTA to schedule an appointment.



Scan to be directed to RapidPass®

Streamline your donation experience and save up to 15 minutes by visiting RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass to complete your pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment.



Scan to schedule an appointment.

Give Something that Means Something®

1-800-RED CROSS | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	2	3 1:30pm Funeral/Interment/Reception for Diane Rhodus
4 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	5 8:30am Yoga/Hall Fr. Bamberger Out of Office / Clergy Support Group	6 8:15am Gooden Chapel 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	7 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 	8 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	9 8am Gooden Chapel 1:15am Gooden Chapel	10
11 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	12 8:30am Yoga/Hall	13 8:15am Gooden Chapel 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	14 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	15 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	16	17 4:00pm SMM Holiday Concert and Reception-
18 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* Lessons & Carols at the 10:15 Service followed by a reception in Hawks Hall. Please RSVP for brunch. 7pm-SM Candlelight Walk	19 8:30am Yoga/Hall	20 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets 7:00pm Vestry Meeting Hall	21 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall BLOOD DRIVE NOON—6PM	22 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	23 *PARISH OFFICE CLOSED*	24 Christmas Eve Services: 5pm-Family Service 9pm-Hymns & Carols 9:30pm-Mass
25 Christmas Day Service: 10am	26 *PARISH OFFICE CLOSED* 8:30am Yoga/Hall 6:30pm-9:30pm Photochromers Mtg-Hall Private	27 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	28 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	29 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	30	31