



The January 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.

Important News about Keys

This past week, we had to go through the process of re-keying the church, parish hall, and classrooms. If you have been issued a key with the numbers 2, 3, or 4, your keys will NO longer work. Kim is prepared to issue you a new key. Please call her to make an appointment to receive a replacement. **(If your key is a number 5, it will still work.)**



From the Rector

As the New Year approaches, I have decided to reflect a little on what I learned in 2021. It certainly wasn't the best year of my life, but I can't say it was all bad either.

2021 taught me the need to be flexible in planning for worship and community life. We had to pivot from worshipping outside to being back inside and just online. And then we resumed outside worship and then moved to in-person worship inside. And all the while, we were keeping the online option going. At last this past Christmas somewhat approximated what we knew and loved from worship before COVID.

I also learned that even if you avoid COVID, something else can get you. In my case, it was the infections that led me to be hospitalized in April and May. Like with "long – COVID," I have some residual challenges – mainly nerve pain from the surgery I had and fatigue. During my illness, I learned how much I can rely on my colleagues. Pastor Josh, Deacon Ed, and Dr. Deb kept our worship life going. Our Senior and Junior Wardens – Gordon and Ray, Kim our Parish Administrator, and Jean Rowe kept our community life together.

The realities of 2021 taught us that we can think outside of the boxes we constructed and thought were immutable. For example, having to postpone the 2021 Parish Annual Meeting gave us freedom to realize that the Annual Meeting doesn't "have" to be held the last Sunday of January. This year we've scheduled it for the last Sunday of February.

Finally, 2021 taught us that vaccines and boosters work and that we will be able to reclaim our lives.

I pray that 2022 will be better for all of us. I know that I am already anticipating the joy of having a new baby in our family when our granddaughter is born in January. I'm sure that learning how to grandparent will be a lesson in 2022.

Blessings,
Father Michael+

PS... On behalf of my colleagues and myself, we're very thankful for the generosity shown to us in the "Clergy Purse."

DECEMBER 2021 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2021 Budget \$221,000

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| YTD Budget: | \$221,000 |
| YTD Actual: | \$200,659 |
| Difference: | \$-20,341 |

A Message from St. Anne's Altar Guild...

Our most heartfelt and sincere thanks to all the generous parishioners here at Ascension. The sanctuary looked truly spectacular, all due to your love, kindness, and monetary gifts. We so appreciate your support whenever the need is there. Thank you again for everything.

A shout out also to our marvelous Altar Guild for their extra hours of service. From hanging and arranging greens to placing poinsettias in just the right places, our Christmas 2021 will be one to remember. We also wish to acknowledge our "Altar Guild Auxiliary"- Ryan and Addison LaReau, Cameron Cox, and Jay Calleton for their help on our extra days. The willingness of all these folks to give of their very precious time at this time of the year is truly a witness of devotion. THANK YOU ALL!!

In Christ,
Lynne Holl, Altar Guild Directress



13th Annual Women's Room Thanksgiving Luncheon



After expenses were paid out for the luncheon, Ascension was able to donate **\$440** to the Women's Room at Friends in Deed. Many thanks to the families who donated financially to this year's luncheon.

2021 Ascension Christmas Outreach



Thanks to everyone who participated in the Christmas Outreach project with HillSides. Together Ascension donated **\$800** worth of Ralphs and Food4Less gift cards. HillSides distributed them at Christmas-time to the folks that they serve that were in significant need.



HillSides



\$475 raised for the Hospitality Ministry!

Annual Holiday Shopping Party

Christmas Raffle

The Christmas raffle raised **\$175**. A BIG THANK YOU goes to Jo Mosier for her talent in making and donating the items. Thank you to all who participated!

Thank you to all who enjoyed the private holiday shopping party at Savor the Flavor on November 20th. Savor the Flavor donated 10% of the proceeds (**\$300**) back to the church. THANK YOU to Jean Rowe for organizing the event!

NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Before I look forward to music of the new year, I'd like to revisit 2021 and express my deep appreciation to members of the choir for their dedicated service throughout the year, culminating in a marvelous Christmas Eve service. Susan, Carol, Colette, Liz, Lavette, Charley, and Ted ~ the people of Ascension are in your debt as you have shared your talent, musicianship, and flexibility with us from week to week, especially during the pandemic.

I'd also like to thank those who contributed to the Christmas music fund, which allowed for our terrific guest quartet.

On January 2, I'll be on vacation and Jobi McGuffie will be providing service music.

Anthems throughout the remainder of the month include:

1/9 – *Christ is the World's True Light* by Walter Kendall Stanton

1/16 – John Rutter's *As the Bridegroom to his Chosen*

1/23 – *One Faith, One Hope, One Lord* by Craig Courtney

1/30 – Hal Hopson's *The Gift of Love*

May Ascension's music continue to feed your souls throughout the coming year.

*Come, let us anew our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year, and never stand still, till the Master appear;
His adorable will let us gladly fulfill,
And our talents improve by the patience of hope, and the labour of love.*

~Charles Wesley



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist



My brother-in-law said to me recently, “Where here have you been my whole life.?” While I was deeply touched, his words also got me thinking about “timing.’ Whenever I think about the timing of things in my life, it always comes down to the same thing -- when I think things should happen or should have happened and when God thinks I’m ready for them to happen. For the record, God always prevails. How is it that God always knows when “we’re ready” long before we do?

It’s that time of the year again to say, “Happy New Year!” We want our New Year to be filled with hope, and we are full of expectations for good things to come our way. And yet, we are also filled with anxiety, often the biproduct of what’s happening around us. To be anxious is to be human. The question is what to do with our anxieties? How’s

this for a simple answer: have hope, hand our anxieties over to God, and have faith. Everything plays out as God intends and in his time. It never fails.

Cameron Cox recently sent me this photo. It was taken in October 2010, the day his son Avery was confirmed by Bishop Bruno. You’ll notice Fr. Michael and I standing to the side looking on. In that moment, I had no idea that 15 months later I would be leaving the bishop’s office and wondering what’s next. Talk about anxiety.



Here we are in 2022, and I’m celebrating my tenth anniversary of ministry at Ascension. Coming to Ascension may not have been what I expected would be next, but God most assuredly had a plan.

A lot has changed for all of us over the years, but a few things have remained constant. We are a community of second chances, a community of unconditional love, and a community unafraid to extend radical hospitality to friends and strangers alike. On a personal note, please accept my humble appreciation for all the kindness, support, and love each of you has extended to me each and every day of the last ten years.

As we wonder about 2022 and the secrets it holds, remember that with hope and faith everything will play out as God intends. It never fails!

Be well, be blessed, and trust in God’s plan and in his timing.

Deacon Ed+

Memorial Garden Update

If you have stepped into the Memorial Garden recently, you’ll notice there have been a few improvements. There have been some rock terraces added to prevent erosion and some new plants added. We are also going to be replacing some of the rose bushes. We will be buying bare root roses this coming month based on the recommendations of a landscape designer – Leigh Talmo. If you would like to contribute to this effort, checks should be notated “Memorial Garden Roses.”



Christmas Eve Services

Thank You to Dan & Nicole Hanson for the pictures!



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
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JANUARY 2022

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|--|--|--------|--|
| | | | | | | 1  |
| 2 8am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 3 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall Fr. Michael out of office/Clergy Support Group | 4 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall | 5 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 6 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg 1:10pm Gooden Chapel 2pm-5pm Organist Rehearsal | 7 | 8 |
| 9 8am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 10 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall | 11 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall | 12 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 13 1:10pm Gooden Chapel 2pm-5pm Organist Rehearsal | 14 | 15 |
| 16 8am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 17 8:30am Yoga/Hall | 18 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall 7:30pm Vestry Meeting Hall | 19 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 20 1:10pm Gooden Chapel 2pm-5pm Organist Rehearsal | 21 | 22 Piano Rehearsal/ Recital 12-6pm Hall Private |
| Father Michael Out of Town/Family Leave | | | | | | |
| 23 8am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 24 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall | 25 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall | 26 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 27 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg 1:10pm Gooden Chapel 2pm-5pm Organist Rehearsal | 28 | 29 |
| Father Michael Out of Town/Family Leave | | | | | | |
| 30 8am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 31 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall | | | | | |