



The January 2024 SPIRE

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

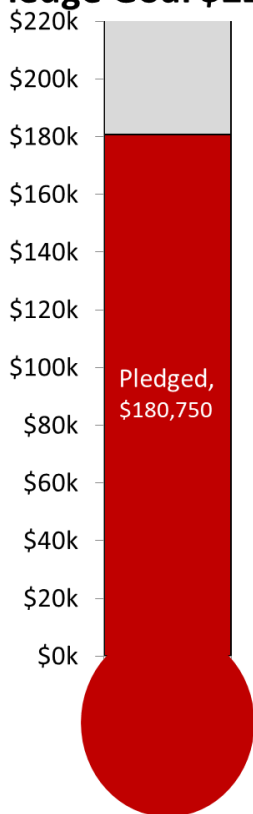


Upcoming Events

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

2024 Stewardship Update

Pledge Goal \$220,000



From the Rector

As the New Year approaches, I have decided to reflect a little on what I experienced in 2023. It certainly wasn't the best year of my life, but I can't say it was all bad either.

2023 reinforced in me the need to continue to be flexible in planning for worship and community life. When Debbie got Covid in December, I needed to prepare each week for the possibility that I might get sick as well. Without Josh as my back-up, we needed to be prepared to have Morning Prayer on short notice.

At last, this past Christmas somewhat approximated what we knew and loved from worship before COVID. A high point for me was Kennedy Hanson reading the Gospel during the Family Service.

2023 also brought new dimensions to our family life. Baby Jack arrived in July. I got to meet the little guy in October. Grandparenting is a great job.

The realities of the past few years have taught us that we can think out of the boxes we have constructed which we 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 again we're scheduling the meeting for the last Sunday of February.

Personally, on behalf of Deacon Ed and myself, we're very thankful for the generosity shown to us in the "Clergy Purse."

Finally, 2023 taught us that vaccines and boosters work and that we will be able to reclaim our lives.

I pray that 2024 will be better for all of us.

Now as I write this article, Debbie and I are looking forward to spending time with Matt, Lyndsay, James, Elsie, and Jack in South Carolina.

Blessings,
Father Michael+

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 2023 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



December 2023 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2023 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget:	\$210,000
YTD Actual:	\$194,768
Difference:	\$ - 15,232

REAL LIFE



"Just Say No" was an advertising campaign, part of the U.S. War on Drugs in the 1980's and early 90's. The phrase lives on and has become part of the American lexicon.

There are plenty of situations in which we should say "NO." In some of those situations, we'll need to dig deep within to find the courage to say "NO." Not always an easy task.

REAL FAITH

As we begin a New Year, I suggest we "Just Say No" in the context of "Just Say Yes!"

During Advent, we are reminded of the Blessed Mother's willingness to say "yes" to both shame and glory. Being a pregnant teenager without a husband is pretty shameful, and yet she said "yes." Mary also said "yes" to being the mother of God...not easy I'm sure, but certainly glorious and obviously not forgotten.

All too often our perceptions are based on expectations, and all too often those perceptions can be misleading and hold us back from making difficult decisions or simply from saying "yes" to doing the right thing when saying "no" can be so much easier. What Mary knew, what Mary demonstrated, was the importance of faith as the cornerstone of our decisions.

The New Year will bring many opportunities to say "yes" when what we really want to do is to say "no." When we look to Mary as a guide and have faith in doing what's good, what's proper, and what's pleasing to God, shame doesn't much matter; and it can open the way to experiencing the divine in new and deeply rewarding ways.

What Mary teaches us is that faith and trust will always lead us in the right direction. So, just say "yes" to shame and just say "yes" to glory...God will prompt you along. Not to worry.

Earlier this year in a homily, I introduced the acronym AATAT. **Admit**...that I need God's help. **Ask**...God for help. **Trust**...that God will indeed help. **Act**...do it – don't be afraid. **Thank**...thank God for whatever the outcome. Remember, we're simply acting on His behalf. We might not understand or even like the outcome, but that's okay.

Live well, live blessed, live like Mary!

Happy New Year!!1

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 (\$50.00 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.

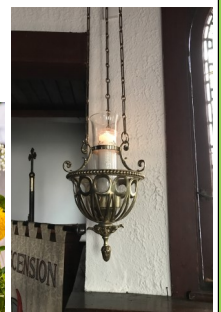
Here are the sign-up genius links:

Sanctuary Candles:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E44A4A628A7F94-sanctuary1>

Altar Flowers:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E44A4A628A7F94-altar1>



Lessons & Carols Brunch

Thank you to all who participated in the Lessons & Carols Brunch on Sunday, December 17th. I felt that we had a great turn-out, and it appeared that all had a good time. I was especially pleased that there were very few left-overs.

I would like to express my appreciation to Phoebe Prentice and Chris Bamberger. Phoebe, as usual, was extremely helpful to me in the kitchen and with clean-up. Chris was kind enough to set up all the table and chairs. My thanks to both of you!

Now onto a totally different subject:

In March 2022, we were able to return to Hawks Hall for fellowship and to share a meal with each other following the pandemic. At that time, I returned as your Hospitality Hostess. That first meal in March was for a Bishop's Visit.

Since then, I have enjoyed making many themed meals and organizing potlucks for our Church. But at this time, I find that I need to cut way back. I would love to pass the reins onto someone else. If someone picks up this fellowship ministry and needs help for a special project, I would be happy to assist. As I explained to Father Michael, I am giving up about 85% of the Hospitality duties.

It has been my pleasure to have been your Hospitality Hostess.

Have a very Blessed Happy New Year. Be healthy, happy, and love one another.

Lisa Wagner



Jobi McGuffie's Farewell Party



Thank you to Jon Prentice for the photos.





Christmas Eve Service

Thank You to Dan & Nicole Hanson for the pictures!



Messages from St. Anne's Altar Guild



WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT THIS CHRISTMAS. YOU ALLOWED US TO MAKE OUR BEAUTIFUL SANCTUARY EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL FOR THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

ST. ANNE'S ALTAR GUILD

NEW SIGN -UP SHEETS FOR WEEKLY FLOWERS AND SANCTUARY CANDLES ARE UP. DUE TO RISING COSTS, IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO RAISE THE DONATION AMOUNT TO \$50.00 FOR FLOWERS. THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING.

ST. ANNE'S ALTAR GUILD



15th Annual Women's Room Thanksgiving Luncheon

After expenses were paid out for the luncheon, Ascension was able to donate **\$478.51** to the Women's Room at Friends in Deed. Many thanks to the families who donated financially to this year's luncheon.



2023 Ascension Christmas Outreach

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Christmas Outreach project with Hillsides. Together Ascension donated **\$805** in gift cards. Hillsides distributed them at Christmas-time to the folks that they serve that were in significant need.



Hillsides



Annual Holiday Shopping Party

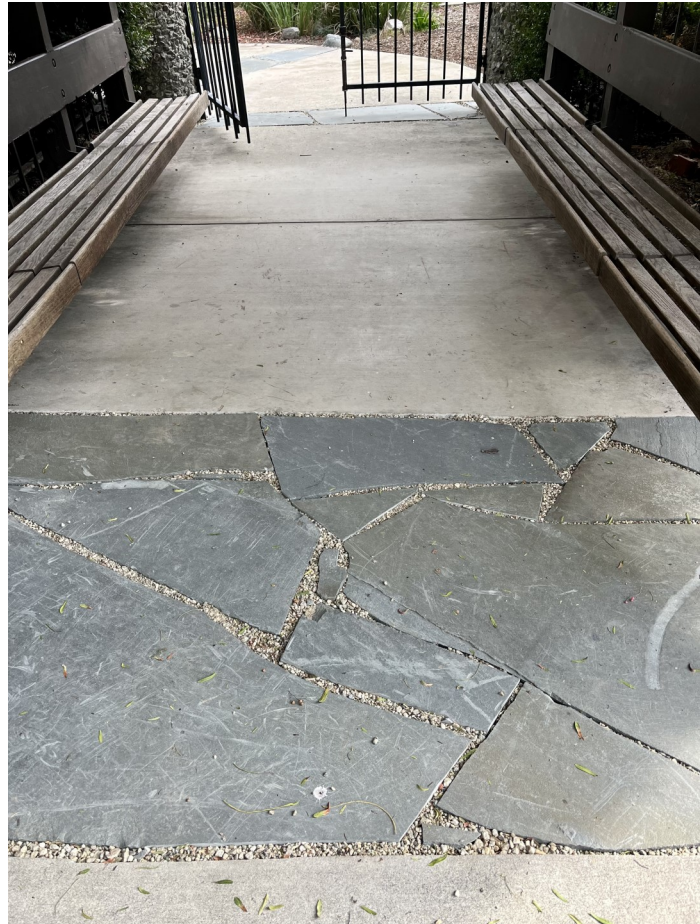
Thank you to all who enjoyed the private holiday shopping party at Savor the Flavor on November 18th. Savor the Flavor donated 10% of the proceeds (**\$300**) back to the church.

Update on the Memorial Garden

Your Tithe Dollars at Work

As we move into the new year, be sure to visit our Memorial Garden. We recently undertook the task of eliminating a number of problem cracks in the walkway by adding some attractive bluestone. I hope you like what you see, and that the improvement will make this sacred space all the more inviting and special. Not to mention more safe. Here are some before and after pictures.

Cameron Cox, Junior Warden



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

JANUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1  Parish Office Closed	2 Parish Office Hours: 9am—Noon	3 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	4 Parish Office Hours: 9am—Noon	5 Parish Office Hours: 9am—Noon	6
Fr. Bamberger Out of Office / Vacation						
7 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	8 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	9 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	10 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall Men's Group Luncheon Nano Café Noon—RSVP to Fr. Michael	11 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:15am Staff Mtg	12	13
Fr. Bamberger Out of Office / Clergy Retreat						
14 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day 8:30am Yoga/Hall	16 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets Vestry Meeting 7pm/Hall	17 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	18 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	19	20
21 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	22 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	23 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets Clericus Mtg Noon/Hall	24 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	25 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:15am Staff Mtg	26	27
28 8am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal 10:15am Worship w/Eucharist *Facebook Live*	29 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	30 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	31 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall			