



The SPIRE 2020

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



Upcoming Events

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



From the Rector

As almost everyone knows, houses of worship have been given a green light to re-open with some very strict guidelines. Our bishop, The Right Reverend John Taylor, has issued a pastoral letter with some more guidelines for the congregations in our diocese. (Some of you may know that I was part of the group that put together those diocesan guidelines.)

Your Vestry began addressing the questions about re-opening two weeks ago. We still have more work to do before we can re-open in a safe and responsible way. (It should be noted that the Bishop's pastoral letter makes it very clear that no congregation "has" to re-open, and I'm sure many will remain closed for a longer period of time.)

The Bishop has directed that the earliest re-opening date will be June 21st. The rationale for this date is that we want to learn from the experience of other churches that re-open on Pentecost. If there appear to be new clusters of infections in two to three weeks due to religious gatherings, the State of California may rescind the permission to re-open. Always, our highest value is love for one another, and we want to be a part of the solution and not the problem.

For the foreseeable future, we will continue to live stream worship at Ascension. I know that many of our parishioners, especially those at risk or who are vulnerable, will want to remain home; and we trust everyone will make the best choice for themselves and their loved ones. Already we have a team at work improving the quality of our livestreaming.

Provided we are able to meet the requirements for re-opening, I have chosen to try our first "in person" worship on Sunday, June 28th at 9 am. Some of you may recall, the last Sunday of June has been our traditional celebration of "Mass on the Grass." This event dates back to June of 1991 when we gathered outside on the Sunday following the Sierra Madre Earthquake. This year, we will again be outside in our worship space on the south side of the church.



Mass on the Grass - June 26th, 2011

Obviously, there will be new considerations. Everyone will have to be wearing a mask. There are no exceptions to this rule. If for health reasons someone can't wear a mask, they should stay at home. If a person shows up who is adamant that they won't wear a mask and won't leave, the service will be cancelled. Physical distancing will be observed. Hand sanitizer will be available and used. There will be directions to be followed. If we can do this right, and safely, then we can consider moving back inside the sanctuary.

I know for some, staying at home is the best choice. But I also know some are longing to be in the same space as the community we call our Ascension family. Again, love is our primary value, and safety is my primary concern.

MAB+

Our Vision: We serve Christ here today for those who will know and serve Christ tomorrow.

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.



May 1 - May 18 2020 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2020 Budget
\$221,000

YTD Budget: \$92,083

YTD Actual: \$81,524

Difference: \$-10,559

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Faith.

Patience

*Do not measure in terms of time: one year or ten years means nothing.
For the artist there is no counting or tallying up; just ripening
like the tree that does not force its sap and endures the storms
of spring without fearing that summer will not come. But it will come.
It comes, however, only to the patient ones who stand there as if all
eternity lay before them— vast, still, untroubled. I learn this every day
of my life, I learn it from hardships I am grateful for: patience is all.
(Ranier Maria Rilke (Letters to a young poet, 1903)*

Lord, give Your people Your peace that we may shine brightly in a dark world. Grant us the courage to live faithfully even in the midst of hard times. Let our fear of You be the beginning of wisdom rather than allowing the fear of the world to drive our actions. Amen

Submitted by Deacon Ed

From Bishop Taylor: One Body & One Spirit Emergency Appeal

by [John Harvey Taylor](#) | Mar 30, 2020 | [Uncategorized](#)



For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body. — 1 Cor. 12:13a

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. The global health crisis has affected the life of each member of our diocesan family – each of us, and all our neighbors. You are all in my prayers daily as you continue to devote yourself to the work of the gospel. Each day, I know, you are caring for yourselves and those you love, serving your neighbor and those most at risk, and continuing to support your church family by praying, worshiping, reaching out to those who are most isolated, and remembering to send in your generous pledge. Read more here.

Some among us are affected more severely than others. In the body of Christ, when one suffers, we all do. In the family of God as in all our families, when one family member is struggling, everyone pitches in to help.

That's what it really means when we say, as we often do these days, "We're all in this together."

All gifts to the One Body & One Spirit Emergency Appeal will be used to assist congregations, schools, affiliated

A prayer for a pandemic

The following prayer was read at a recent online meeting of The Episcopal Church's Executive Council. The original author is unknown; the prayer was sent to the council's presiding officers by the Rev. Devon Anderson of the Diocese of Minnesota and provided to The Episcopal News by Canon Steve Nishibayashi, secretary of convention for the Diocese of Los Angeles and a member of Executive Council.

*May we who are merely inconvenienced
remember those whose lives are at stake.*

*May we who have no risk factors
remember those who are vulnerable.*

*May we who have the luxury of working from home
remember those who must choose between their health or paying their rent.*

*May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
remember those who have no options*

*May we who have to cancel our trips
remember those who have no safe place to go.*

*May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market
remember those who have no margin at all.*

*May we who settle in for quarantine at home
remember those who have no home.*

*As fear grips our country
let us choose love.*

*During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other
let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.*

REMINDER

Pledge payments or donations to the church can be made online via the church website. Go to:
<https://www.ascension-sierramadre.com/give.html>

Learning Lessons, Forging Paths

Everyone is welcome to join a zoom panel that Pastor Josh is organizing to discuss lessons the Church has learned during the stay-at-home order. Panelists include Episcopal Priests and Lutheran Pastors from across California. The panel is tentatively scheduled for the evening of Thursday, June 25.

More details TBA.

What are you going to do with your life today?



Those of you who follow me on Face Book or follow the Ascension page have seen this bitmoji periodically throughout the pandemic. It started out as a little humor and a desire to offer inspiration and food for thought as we adjusted to the new normal of being at home. As the days and weeks all blended together, it was important to be reminded of the wonderful opportunity that existed to learn about ourselves and those around us without the daily traffic that clutters lives.

As we get closer to what we hope will be the finish line, we might just want to take stock of what we know now that we didn't know then about ourselves. We might ask: "What have I learned that makes me a better person? What have I discovered that I really need and what I can do without? How has my life gotten simplified or complicated? How has my relationship with myself, my loved ones, my neighbor, my community, the world, and with God changed?"

Whether we realize it or not, all of these things have indeed changed. Without a little self-examination now, we run the risk of getting caught up in the same old - same old and unconsciously falling back into familiar and comfortable patterns -- some of which may no longer serve us well.

As far as life goes, we will always be contending with "this, that, and the other thing." If "this" is now (covid-19) and now becomes "that" again in the future, I'm sure we all want to be better prepared, remembering and utilizing the lessons we've learned this time around.

And then there's always that "other thing." Three months ago if I said you would be self-quarantined, the economy would come to a grinding halt, the entire planet would be going through the same thing, schools would be closed, millions of people would be unemployed, we couldn't be with friends and family, and thousands and thousands of God's children would die alone without us being able to grieve properly for our loved ones ...well, you would have said I was crazy.

There will always be the next thing. There will always be some other thing, imaginable or not, that we will have to deal with.

So "what are you going to do with your life today?"

Remember Jesus' words in John 14: "I will not leave you orphaned." I will remember that we are resilient people of faith. I will remember the words of Barbara Johnson: "we are Easter people living in a Good Friday world." I will contemplate that Pope Francis characterized the world wide trauma of 2020 as: "God's call on people to judge what is most important to them and to resolve to act accordingly from now on."

Be well, be blessed, act accordingly from now on.

Deacon Ed+

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NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Trinity Sunday, Pentecost 1, June 7 ~ traditionally the choir's final Sunday of the choral year before going on summer hiatus. Don't have to worry about that this year ~ the choir's been on mandatory hiatus since March 8! Nevertheless, we'll be celebrating Trinity Sunday sans choir ~ think *NICAEA, Holy, Holy, Holy*. Pentecost will continue to be observed throughout the remainder of the month, and music will be derived from each week's lessons whenever possible.

As we inch closer to returning to worship within the sanctuary I'm anticipating returning to the organ. Yes, we've missed choral music and hymn-singing, but we've also missed the organ voluntaries that have called us to worship and punctuated our leave-taking. As choral music, and singing in general, will be postponed for some time to come, we'll rely on the console and pipes as our instrument for worship (hopefully months of inactivity will neither have affected the tuning nor encouraged ciphers!). I trust you'll find this music meaningful.

God be with you as you strive to stay safe, healthy, and strong.

*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
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JUNE 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MAY 31 PENTECOST Sunday Worship 9am Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service Zoom Call Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour Zoom Call	1	2	3	4 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:15am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	5	6
7 Sunday Worship 9am Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service Zoom Call Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour Zoom Call	8	9	10 Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live	11 9am Forum Zoom Call	12	13
14 Sunday Worship 9am Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service Zoom Call Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour Zoom Call	15	16 Vestry Meeting 7:30pm Zoom Call	17 Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live	18 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:15am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	19	20
21 FATHERS DAY Sunday Worship 9am Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service Zoom Call Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour Zoom Call	22	23	24 Evening Prayer 5:45pm Facebook Live	25 9am Forum Zoom Call	26	27
28 Sunday Worship 9am Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service Zoom Call Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour Zoom Call	29	30				