

The March 2026 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.



From the Rector



For the last couple of decades, one of the signs of Lent here at Ascension is our use of the wooden tabernacle in place of the bronze one we use most of the year. (A tabernacle is a special freestanding box in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.) I would encourage you to get up close to see it.

On the door is carved a depiction of a mother pelican feeding her babies. In Christian art, this image is a feminine depiction of Christ shedding his Blood for humanity. In early times, it was thought that the mother pelican would pierce her breast in order to provide for her young.

Our wooden tabernacle is left from the days when the Parish House served as the convent for the Community of Saint Mary sisters when they ran the Ascension Parish School. They had their own chapel in what became the dining room after they left. (The wooden candle sticks used during Lent on the side altar are also from the sisters' chapel, as is the stone in the side altar.)



While Lent is supposed to be a time of looking inward and looking ahead to prepare for Easter, I also love that it can be a time for remembering our past. On Holy Saturday, in the midst of all the busy preparations for the Feast of the Resurrection, I always feel a bit sad putting away this lovely reminder of the sacrifice of Christ. May your Lent be rich.

MAB+



FEBRUARY 2026 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2026 Budget \$165,000

YTD Budget: \$27,500
YTD Actual: \$31,850
Difference: \$+4,350

Holy Week, Easter Services

Palm Sunday March 29

Mass (Rite I) 8:00 AM
Mass (Rite II) 10:15 AM

Tenebrae April 1

Mass 7:00 PM

Maundy Thursday April 2

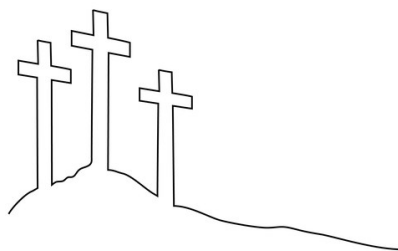
Mass 8:15 AM
Foot Washing and Mass 7:00 PM
Watch at Altar of Repose 9 PM -10:30 PM

Good Friday April 3

Stations of the Cross Noon
Good Friday Liturgy 7:00 PM

Easter Day April 5

The Great Vigil and
1st Eucharist of Easter 6:00 AM
Easter Brunch 8:00 AM
Festival High Mass 10:15 AM



INTRODUCING OUR NEW 2026 VESTRY MEMBERS



Niall Dalton

I was born in Waterford, Ireland and moved to California 34 years ago. I met my wife Lana during a one year work stay in Kentucky and we recently celebrated our 25 year wedding anniversary. Our 23 year old son, Gabriel, is our only child and is a recent graduate from Pomona College in Claremont with a degree in history. We live a short walk from Ascension on Auburn Avenue. I am a regular 8am attendee.

My work as a "bloodstock agent" in the horse racing industry keeps me closely tied to Ireland. I scout racing prospects in Ireland for a number of trainers and owners in California that race at Santa Anita and Del Mar. I travel to Ireland for two or three weeks a couple of times a year. My mother and two brothers still live there.

I have volunteered most Thursdays for the last four years at the food pantry at Friends In Deed and very much enjoy being able to help this amazing organization.



Marie Prentice

Marie Prentice and her husband, Jonathan, moved to Sierra Madre with their daughter, Phoebe, in 2010. They found a welcoming home at the Church of the Ascension just months after arriving in Sierra Madre. Phoebe was baptized soon after they joined the congregation. In 2014, their son Samuel was born and baptized the following Easter Sunday. Marie is an active member of the parish, serving on the Altar Guild and frequently ushering at the 10:15 am service alongside her family. Professionally, she works as an Engineering Program Manager for Cisco Systems and works remotely from home as Cisco's headquarters is located in San Jose. Marie has previously served on the Vestry and looks forward to the opportunity to continue supporting and serving our beautiful church community.



Dan Hanson

Dan Hanson ~ Daniel L Hanson II, "Dan", lives with his wife Nicole and four children (Daniel, Reid, Bennett & Kennedy) in Pasadena. He works as National Sales Director for Blue Streak Electronics, a Canadian-American auto parts manufacturer headquartered in Toronto, ON, Canada.

Dan grew up just over the border of Sierra Madre in Arcadia on Sierra Madre Boulevard and attended Maranatha High School while it was still in Sierra Madre. He was introduced to Church of The Ascension by Hal and Charity Barber, nearby neighbors and family friends.

Dan earned a BA in English from Azusa Pacific University. He serves on the Executive Committee of the California Automotive Wholesalers Association; as 2026-27 Chairman of The Auto Care Association Government Affairs Committee; on the board of directors of Pasadena American Little League, and is the co-founder friends of Pasadena High School Baseball, a non-profit foundation.

Dan's favorite activities include reading, and following his beloved Boston Red Sox.

REAL LIFE discontent



There are times in my life when I feel pulled and torn. Sometimes, it's between work and wanting to spend more time with friends and family. Sometimes, it's about wanting to sit down with a good novel but feeling guilty that the chores aren't getting done. Sometimes, it's about saying yes when I really want to say no. Sometimes. I just want to take a long walk but can't find the time.

Whatever the pull, it's the experience of being conflicted, the friction between the unsettled and restless self and its clash with that part of us that desires harmony and peace. What desires and conflicts in your life are leaving you restless, discontented, and separated from God?

It's important to distinguish from among the desires which are given to us by God which God wants fulfilled and those he does not want fulfilled. Which does he give to the soul to help it progress toward divine union, to free us and to spur us into action?

Reflection:

Is there a power or strength of character that may be discovered in that part of your life that seems to be in conflict? In your prayers, can you freely communicate not only your strengths, hopes, and dreams, but also your struggles and those areas of your life that are not at peace?

Be well, be blessed, be content.

Deacon Ed+

Bring Bells on Easter Day!

Easter is a time for joyous bell ringing. Once again, I encourage everyone to bring bells - bells of all sorts and sizes - to the Easter Day services. We ring them during the first singing of the Gloria in excelsis and with gusto during the singing of the hymn "Jesus Christ is Risen Today."

During Eastertide, instead of ringing the Angelus on the large bell at the conclusion of the service, we will ring the Regina Coeli. This joyful devotion dates from the 12th century and invites us to rejoice with Mary at the Resurrection. The text is -

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia.
Has risen, as He said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.
V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
R. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ gave rejoicing to the world, grant, we pray, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joy of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The bell will ring four sets of two strokes, with pauses between each set, followed by eight peals. As in most things, this devotion is only one option in the broad spectrum of personal piety.

As we approach Holy Week and Easter, I pray that your Lent has been a time of renewal and growth.

MAB+



INTRODUCING “Benny” Yi-Bing Chu, Cellist

By Dr. Stephen Marshall, Director of Music & Organist

Last evening, Brett and I joined a lovely crowd in Zipper Hall at The Colburn School, downtown LA. The event was the birthday (his 60th) concert of our newest musical friend, “Benny” Yi-Bing Chu, the extraordinary internationally celebrated cellist who has, along with me, fallen in love with the place and people that are The Episcopal Church of the Ascension. This program was put together by his lovely wife, Chantal, who joined Benny with her cello in the string ensemble for two lovely pieces. What a thrilling concert this was! Truly amazing!

As I note at the end of this article, we will have the distinct honor of enjoying a great deal of Benny’s music at Ascension. So, I am using this month’s article to introduce Benny to you:

Born into a family of musicians in Beijing, China, “Benny” Yi-Bing Chu began studying the cello at the age of eight under the guidance of his father, a distinguished cello professor at the Central Conservatory of Music. His mother, of Swiss-Chinese descent, was a pianist and on the faculty there.

Despite the challenges of the Cultural Revolution, when classical music was banned in China, Chu began performing publicly at an early age and recorded his first album at just ten years old. In 1983, he began to study at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris under the legendary cellist Maurice Gendron. He graduated with the prestigious Premier Prix in 1987, becoming only the first Chinese musician to earn this honor.

In 1986, at the Geneva International Music Competition, Chu gained international acclaim by being the first-ever Chinese cellist to win a prize at any such international competition. This milestone launched his European performance career. In 1989, he was appointed principal cellist of the Sinfonieorchester Basel in Switzerland, a position he held for fifteen years.

In 2004, after 21 years in Europe, Chu returned to China to serve as Professor of Cello at the Central Conservatory of Music. There, he became a pivotal figure in advancing cello performance and chamber music education nationwide. He founded the Chu Yi-Bing Cello Ensemble and established the SuperCello Festival in Beijing. He continues to champion classical music with passion, accessibility, and innovation.

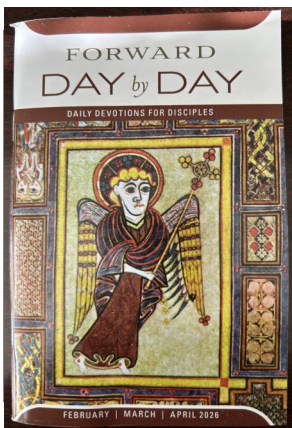
Benny will be sharing his cello (made in 1781 by Gagliano) and himself (made in 1966 in Beijing by his lovely parents) with us during various Worship Services at Ascension, including Easter Sunday! Then, on Sunday, May 17, 4:00PM, Benny and I will present a full concert featuring Benny – right here at Ascension! SAVE THE DATE and bring your family and friends to share the joy! What a thrill!



**FRIENDS
IN
DEED***

Please join in Ascension's monthly collection of specific "Gold Items" for Friends in Deed. They include canned tuna and chicken, hearty soups, stew, chili, pasta and pasta sauce, peanut butter, cereal, rice, oil, sugar, flour, fruit juice, and vegetable juice (V8).

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



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 requested.

EASTER FLOWERS



Although we are only in the beginning of Lent, we eagerly look forward to our glorious Easter celebration in April. In order to make the church as beautiful as possible, we need your generous donations for flowers. Flower donation envelopes are in the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall. Checks should be made out to Church of the Ascension, marked for Easter flowers.

St. Anne's Altar Guild thanks you in advance for your generosity for once again helping our Sanctuary look splendid for a Joyous Easter.

Lynne P Holl, Altar Guild Directress

EASTER MUSIC

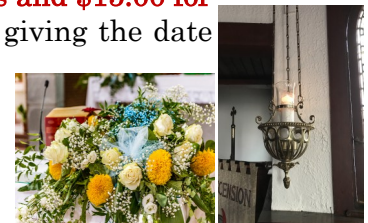


Please consider making a contribution to our Easter music program. Music offering envelopes are available at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

Thank You for your support.

Altar Flowers and Sanctuary Candles

The **2026** sign-up sheets for altar flowers and altar candles are now available on the bulletin board 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.





SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER

February 17, 2026



Thank You to
Jon Prentice for the
photos.



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

MARCH 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	2 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall Fr. Michael out of office/Clergy Support Group	3 10am-10:30am Gooden Chapel	4 8:15am-9:00am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall Men's Group Luncheon Nano Café Noon—RSVP to Fr. Michael 6Pm Wednesday Night Dinner Group Meets	5 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	6	7
8 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	9 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	10 10am-10:30am Gooden Chapel	11 8:15am-9:00am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 6Pm Wednesday Night Dinner Group Meets	12 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	13	14
15 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	16 8:30am Yoga/Hall	17 10am-10:30am Gooden Chapel 7pm Vestry Meeting/Hall	18 8:15am-9:00am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 6Pm Wednesday Night Dinner Group Meets	19 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	20	21 2pm-5pm Music Recital/Hwang Hall Private
22 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	23 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	24 10am-10:30am Gooden Chapel Noon Cleric Mtg Hall	25 8:15am-9:00am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 6Pm Wednesday Night Dinner Group Meets	26 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	27	28
29 PALM SUNDAY <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	30 8:15am-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	31 10am-10:30am Gooden Chapel				