



## The May 2023 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.\***



**Pentecost Sunday  
May 28th**

***Don't forget to wear RED!***

### April 2023 Pledge Payment Snapshot



**2023 Budget \$210,000**

**YTD Budget: \$67,045**

**YTD Actual: \$73,686**

**Difference: \$+6,641**

### From the Rector

At times, I lose sight of all that I have to be grateful for. I know that I would be happier if I could maintain an "attitude of gratitude" more of the time. And I do have so much for which to be thankful.

I'm thankful for my family – for Debbie, for Chris, for Matt and Lyndsay, for James and Elsie (and Jack who is on the way.) I'm grateful that Fay has settled into Sierra Madre and the British Home.

I'm thankful for the people I work with here at Ascension – for Ed, Kim, Robert, Jobi, J.D. and Jose and Alicia. I'm grateful for all our lay leaders – Gordon, Cameron, Eric, Wendy, Jon, Scott, Pam and Claudia. Coming off of Easter, I'm thankful for Lynne and the Altar Guild, and for our choir. There are folks who do so much to make life good here at Ascension. Lisa and hospitality, Jean who holds us to the tasks at hand, Maggie who does our schedules, Meg who manages our website. You get the idea – I have so many people I am grateful for.

And I am thankful to live and work in Sierra Madre – bears and all. I know my attitude of gratitude improves when I take time to count my blessings. God has blessed me richly.

**Father Michael+**



### A THANK YOU AND AN INVITATION

Greetings from sunny Santa Clarita! Trying to express thanks for seven amazing years in around 150 words or less is something of a challenge, but here we are. I would like to thank Fr. Michael and everyone who contributed to the discretionary fund that I was able to bring with me to The Church of Hope. But I also want to pass on heartfelt thanks to all of you at Ascension for the friendship and care you have offered to Jobi, Anne, Alisson, and me over the years. We've shared joys and sorrows. Seven years is a long time to sing together, to discuss things between the masses, to drink coffee, and eat Shrove Tuesday pancakes together. I'm grateful for every minute of it!

I still have about thirty words left, so here is an invitation. If you'd like to come see what a Lutheran installation service looks like, you're welcome to come on Sunday, 21 May at 3pm.

The Church of Hope  
Mint Canyon Plaza #105  
17866 Sierra Highway  
Canyon Country, CA 91351

**The Reverend Pastor Joshua McGuffie**

Our sanctuary was resplendent in green and white this Eastertide thanks to your generous donations to the Easter Flower Fund. We continue looking forward to new and imaginative ways to enhance the beauty of our space.

A debt of gratitude to the Altar Guild members who gave so generously of their time during Holy Week- Nan Dougall, Lin Garcia, Jean Rowe, Sarah LaReau, Bev Clifton, Pat Woods (and her daughter Diane) and Kathy Calleton. We also wish to thank our Auxiliary members without whom the decorating of the church would not be possible: John Holl, Cameron Cox, Chris Bamberger, Jay Calleton, Dan Reed, and Ryan and Addison LaReau. Finally, a special thank you to Debbie Bishoff for our glorious Pascal Candle.

Thank you all for your tremendous efforts on behalf of Ascension Parish.

**In Christ,**  
**Lynne Holl, Directress of St. Anne's Altar Guild**



Recently I was asked, “Why do we dehumanize others so easily?”

Dehumanization is the denial of full humanness in others and the cruelty and suffering that accompany this denial. A practical definition refers to dehumanization as the viewing and the treatment of other people as though they lack the mental capacities that are commonly attributed to human beings. In other words, by dehumanizing others, it makes it easier for me to be right and you to be wrong.

Everywhere we look we see the devaluation of human life. How do we treat migrants seeking a better life? How do we treat others who have made different life choices? The epic problem of gun violence, often for no reason, is another prime example. And these are just a few instances of our inhumane treatment of others.

It's no wonder that as individuals and as a society we have become alarmingly pessimistic. “Nothing is going to change. I certainly can't make it happen, so why bother.” My advice: don't be a pessimist.

Looking at the world through pessimistic eyes is an outlook that is personally unhelpful and unpleasant to be around. The pessimist always expects the worst and acts accordingly. A pessimistic outlook is self-defeating because if you believe you can't do something, you almost certainly won't.

To adopt a better outlook, reframe the problem and state steps to achieve it. “What can I do to solve my problems and issues?”

Maybe the future is not just a dark cloud. Practice gratitude. Look at what you like about your life and relationships. Feel happy and grateful about it. Do that every day.

What can we do...consider all the things we are, have, and do. We live in the USA even though it's not perfect. We have friends and family in our lives. We have food on the table, a roof over our heads, and no one is shooting missiles at us.

We can give our time, patience, and skills to serve people and donate money and time to our favorite causes. We can share our time and talents by offering to help others whenever we can. And, of course, we can extend kindness to people we know and especially to people we do not know.

Lord, in a world marked by challenges, we pray that we may find joy and life in your spirit and presence. Guard our hearts and minds against our pessimism that we may fully embrace you and all humanity.

**Be well, be blessed, be optimistic.**  
**Deacon Ed+**



*Have you signed up for the Afternoon Tea on Saturday, May 20, 2023?*

We have a delicious menu prepared, which will be served Buffet Style.

The Buffet will include:  
 Orange Cranberry Scones  
 Five Savory Tea Sandwiches  
 Three Sweet Selections  
 Fresh Strawberries & Cream  
 Earl Grey Tea  
 Sparkling Lemonade



Cost:

\$30.00 per person (12 yrs & above)

\$15.00 for children (6-11 yrs)

Children under 5 yrs free

The proceeds will be donated to the Church's Hospitality Account  
 & the Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service (IRIS)

*If you would like to attend, please use the sign-up sheet in Hawks Hall or contact  
 Lisa Wagner @ 626.710.8909 by Sunday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023*



**Palm Sunday & Easter Sunday**  
**Thank You to Jamie Gorman and**  
**Jobi McGuffie for the photos.**





# MUSIC<sub>AT</sub> ASCENSION

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

## Our Organ Needs Some Work

As you can imagine with an instrument just turning the ripe old age of 40 and the computer technology that dates back to the 1980's, we may have some problems. I am working diligently with Ballantyne Organ Builders to resolve issues with the instrument and keep the music playing. We are currently working on a proposal to bring to the vestry on what needs to be done and potential costs involved.

If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with me or send me an email regarding the issues.



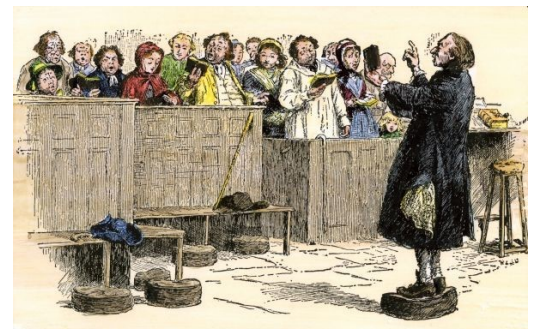
## HYMNS ~ Do you have a favorite?

As we approach the summer, it has always been my tradition to ask the congregation, "What is your favorite hymn". We all have a favorite hymn or tune that makes us smile when we sing. As I plan the music over the summer, I would like to sing your favorite hymn. I know the favorite hymn of my mother, who recently passed, was A Mighty Fortress is Our God, Tune: EIN' FESTE BURG. What is yours?

I will have a box at the rear of the church in which you can drop me a note or you can email me as well at [robertwilliamson05@gmail.com](mailto:robertwilliamson05@gmail.com).

Please keep in mind that the hymns need to come from our approved list of Episcopal Music Resources (*The 1982 Hymnal, Wonder Love and Praise, Lift Every Voice and Sing, etc.*).

*Subi Deo  
Gloria*







## Forward Today: Defined by grace and mercy

April 12, 2023 Forward Today, [scott gunn](#)

Dear friends in Christ,

I hope you're still basking in the glow of Easter! We are just three weeks into the great fifty days of the Easter season. That gives us all plenty of time for more basking and rejoicing.

Sometimes I wonder what our church would be like if all our members and all our church leaders fully embraced the world-shaking truth of Easter. Jesus Christ was totally, stone-cold dead, and then he was raised to new life. This isn't a trick or a metaphor. The earliest Christians wouldn't have gone to their martyrdom for a metaphor.



Fresco over the altar in the chapel at Chora Church (Kariye Kilisesi) in Istanbul. Photo by Scott Gunn.

So what does it mean that death, evil, and sin have been utterly and decisively defeated?

To be clear, Easter doesn't render suffering obsolete. The news websites assure us of that. But Easter ought to change our understanding of what defines our world. Our world is not defined by evil and death. Rather, our world is fundamentally defined by God's grace and mercy. When anyone suffers from this sinful world, they can be assured of God's steadfast love in this life and the promise of life to come.

In this vein, I am still reeling from something I heard a few weeks ago. At the Episcopal Parish Network conference in March, Jon Meacham told attendees to "stop lamenting and start leading." In other words, as a church, let's stop acting as if evil and death rule! Let's move forward in hope and love. Let's point the world to a greater truth. And, yes, let us absolutely join with others to defeat every manifestation of sin we see, whether in our lives or in the world around us.

Many seekers don't bother with church, and I don't blame them. Too often, our vision is no bigger than the talking points of the chattering class. We should know better. Our vision should be radiantly beautiful, a world in which grace and mercy abound. It's the vision of the Gospel, and it's contagious. There's a reason the earliest Christians changed the world, and it's time for us to do it again.

Happy Easter! And now let's get to work, joining with Mary Magdalene as we shout to the ends of the earth, "I have seen the Lord."

Yours faithfully,

Scott Gunn  
Executive Director



## Forward Today: Meeting Jesus

April 19, 2023 Easter, Forward Today, [scott gunn](#)

Dear friends in Christ,

On Sunday April 23rd, we heard the story of Emmaus, when Jesus met his disciples on a road. Of course, they didn't recognize him until he broke bread with them. As they reflected on their experience, the disciples said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

At one level, maybe they knew they were talking with Jesus on that road, but they couldn't quite believe it. Their rational worldview told them they had seen Jesus die, and he must surely still be dead. And yet there he was. So it's perhaps understandable if they had trouble grasping this amazing reality.



Photo by [Morgan Winston](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I wonder if it's like that for us sometimes. Maybe we meet Jesus along the roads of our lives more often than we recognize. Maybe we begin to treat church like a rote experience, and we can't quite wrap our minds around the amazing reality that Christ is present for us as bread and wine are consecrated in the Holy Eucharist.

Last month, I heard someone speak about why it's important to go to church. She said, "I feel that I might meet Jesus out in the world, but when I go to church, it's like having an appointment to meet him. He shows up every time."

That's it, right there.

Let us keep our hearts and minds open to meet Jesus in the world, especially in the last, the lost, and the least. And let us celebrate with great joy on the Lord's Day each week, as we meet Jesus himself. As we break the bread and hear the scriptures, Jesus shows up every time.

Yours faithfully,  
Scott Gunn  
Executive Director

## Another Way to Welcome Refugees:

### Help Them Keep Clean

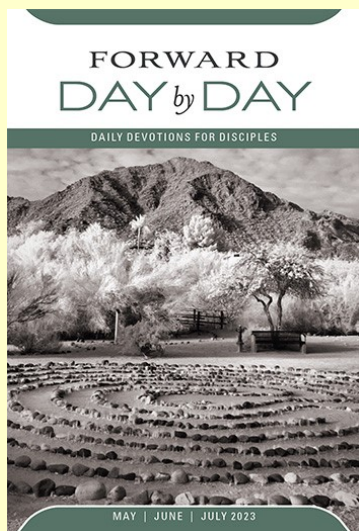
We have a new opportunity to help refugees who have just arrived in America and are settling in the Los Angeles basin. The volunteer coordinator at the Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service (IRIS) is looking for donations of welcome bags containing essential paper products and cleaning supplies that we could give to families when they get an apartment. As you're probably well aware, these items aren't cheap. A welcome bag containing one package each of dish detergent, bar soap, laundry soap, dish cloths, scouring pads, toilet paper, and paper towels adds up to almost \$50 at Von's or Ralph's.

I believe our parish could supply at least three welcome baskets to begin with. If you'd like to donate the cost of one, or part of one, make your check payable to Church of the Ascension and put Refugee Welcome Basket in the memo line. If you'd like to shop for a basket yourself, that's great! Use the list above. Please do not buy large packages that would need to be split among multiple bags so that each family can receive an intact package of everything. Smaller packages are fine—a four-pack of toilet paper or 36-ounce bottle of laundry soap, for example. Bring donations to the church and leave them in Hawks Hall. We'll furnish colorful shopping bags to carry the items to our new neighbors.

IRIS will be letting us know of needs for furniture, kitchen wares, etc., as the new families arrive.

Submitted by Carol Rasmussen





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!

## Fr. Michael receiving his Sierra Madre Citizen of the Year award.

April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023



## Altar of Repose in our Memorial Garden



## 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>





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

## MAY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b> <b>8:30am</b> <b>Yoga/Hall</b>  <b>Fr. Michael</b> <b>out of</b> <b>office/Clergy</b> <b>Support Group</b>	<b>2</b>  <b>8:15am</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>  <b>6Pm</b> <b>Tuesday Night</b> <b>Dinner Group</b> <b>Meets</b>	<b>3</b> <b>8:30am Yoga/Hall</b> <b>5:30pm Yoga/Hall</b>  <b>Mens Group</b> <b>Monthly</b> <b>Luncheon</b> <b>Nano Café</b> <b>Noon</b> <b>RSVP to</b> <b>Fr. Michael</b>	<b>4</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  <b>9am</b> <b>Rector's Forum</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> <b>8am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>  <b>9am</b> Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group</b>  <b>9am</b> Choir Rehearsal  <b>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>	<b>8</b> <b>8:30am</b> <b>Yoga/Hall</b>	<b>9</b> <b>8:15am</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>  <b>6Pm</b> <b>Tuesday Night</b> <b>Dinner Group</b> <b>Meets</b>	<b>10</b> <b>8:30am Yoga/Hall</b> <b>5:30pm Yoga/Hall</b>	<b>11</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  <b>9am</b> <b>Rector's Forum</b>  <b>10:30am</b> <b>Staff Mtg</b>	<b>12</b> <b>8am</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>  <b>1:15pm</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> <b>Mother's Day</b> <b>8am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>  <b>9am</b> Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group</b>  <b>9am</b> Choir Rehearsal  <b>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>	<b>15</b> <b>8:30am</b> <b>Yoga/Hall</b>	<b>16</b> <b>8:15am</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>  <b>6Pm</b> <b>Tuesday Night</b> <b>Dinner Group</b> <b>Meets</b>  <b>Vestry Meeting</b> <b>7pm</b> <b>Hawks Hall</b>	<b>17</b> <b>8:30am Yoga/Hall</b> <b>5:30pm Yoga/Hall</b>	<b>18</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  <b>9am</b> <b>Rector's Forum</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>  <b>Afternoon Tea</b> <b>Fundraiser</b> <b>1:00pm</b> <b>Church Hall</b>
<b>21</b> <b>8am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>  <b>9am</b> Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group</b>  <b>9am</b> Choir Rehearsal  <b>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>	<b>22</b> <b>8:30am</b> <b>Yoga/Hall</b>  <b>6:30pm-</b> <b>9:30pm</b> <b>Photochromers</b> <b>Mtg-Hall</b> <b>Private</b>	<b>23</b> <b>8:15am</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>  <b>6Pm</b> <b>Tuesday Night</b> <b>Dinner Group</b> <b>Meets</b>	<b>24</b> <b>8:30am Yoga/Hall</b> <b>5:30pm Yoga/Hall</b>	<b>25</b> <b>8:15am Mass</b>  <b>9am</b> <b>Rector's Forum</b>  <b>10:30am</b> <b>Staff Mtg</b>  <b>Noon</b> <b>Clericus Mtg</b> <b>Location TBD</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>  <b>Music Recital</b> <b>Church Hall</b> <b>6:30pm-8:30pm</b> <b>Private</b>
<b>28</b> <b>Pentecost Sunday</b> <b>8am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>  <b>9am</b> Between the Masses <b>Discussion Group</b>  <b>9am</b> Choir Rehearsal  <b>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</b> <b>*Facebook Live*</b>	<b>29</b>   <b>Parish</b> <b>Office</b> <b>Closed</b>	<b>30</b> <b>8:15am</b> <b>Gooden Chapel</b>  <b>6Pm</b> <b>Tuesday Night</b> <b>Dinner Group</b> <b>Meets</b>	<b>31</b> <b>8:30am Yoga/Hall</b> <b>5:30pm Yoga/Hall</b>			