



The SPIRE 2020

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



Upcoming Events

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



From the Rector

In the early 1940's, Bing Crosby recorded a song written by Irving Berlin in 1940 (while Berlin was wintering in the Southwest – some say La Quinta, others say Arizona.) "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" went on to become a huge hit and opened the market for other classic holiday songs associated with the 1940's. "White Christmas" has a balance of melancholy and wistfulness that seems timeless.

A few days ago, I ventured out to Costco. I was struck by all the Christmas merchandise out in full display, and I was reminded that Christmas (and Thanksgiving) are coming. I'm not sure what our celebrations this year - both family and church - are going to look like, and I suppose neither do you. Our family generally gathers for Thanksgiving. Many households come together, and siblings and cousins are reunited. It isn't happening this year, but somehow we will feast and look forward to years to come.

Christmas is more complicated. Our family celebration is built around the Church of the Ascension's schedule. We're not sure yet what that will look like. That unknown provokes in me both feelings of melancholy and wistfulness. Like many of you, I am tired of the pandemic; and I long for the "way we used to do it."

But I do know a few things. We will celebrate a Eucharist on Thanksgiving Morning at 9 am outside. We may not be able to sing, but we can and will give thanks. We will celebrate Advent. Our wreath will be smaller this year, but we will as a community mark the time preparing for the Feast of the Nativity. One way or another, we will celebrate Christmas. It may be more modest than what we have been accustomed to experience, and the music may be much more simple.

It is appropriate to wish that things could be different. But I assure you, God's love is unchanging. The love we share with one another is not dampened. And our joy will be restored, and our Christmas can be bright.

Blessings,
Father Michael+



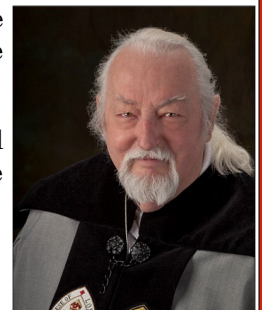
Dear Ascension Friends,

It is with sadness that I need to inform you that our beloved Verger, Mike Beach, passed away on Sunday, October 18. Mike had been increasingly laid low and had been housebound since February. Ever faithful, Mike had been praying the Daily Office up to the end.

Please keep Mike's children – Bill, Paul, Greg, and Caroline, and their families, and Susan and her family in your prayers. The family is waiting for pandemic conditions to change before the whole community can come together to celebrate Mike's life. We will keep you informed.

Rest eternal grant to Mike, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon him. May his soul, and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Blessings,
MAB+



OCTOBER 2020 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2020 Budget
\$221,000

YTD Budget:	\$184,167
YTD Actual:	\$164,471
Difference:	\$-19,696

Our Community and Stewardship

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is our community. We may build a community of friends through school or work, but Ascension is a community of people who came together deliberately to form a community devoted to the worship of God and to seek fellowship in his name. We have families that have been with this church for over 100 years and people who have joined us just recently, but all of us are equal members in this endeavor.

The stories we have heard over the past few weeks tell us that God is very much alive in our community and acting through each of us. We have learned how people have found wisdom, acceptance, purpose, and refuge. Families are born here, grow here, grieve here, worship here, and live out their faith here, all of the things that give meaning to our lives lived in accordance with a faith in God and His redeeming purpose.

This is our season of giving in gratitude for the community that God has given us. We give through service to our church and the larger community, through our presence, and through the generous financial giving that sustains us and prepares our community for the generations to come. Please remember to pledge generously in gratitude for the community we have built and which God sustains. God's blessings.



Gordon Tomaske, Senior Warden

2021 Stewardship Update



Thank You to those who have pledged!

PLEASE NOTE

A Shift in Worship Times

With Advent coming, we will be moving the time of the early Sunday "in person" outdoors service to 8am, starting November 29th. This time change may necessitate moving the online Zoom/Facebook Live service to 9:30am. We will try keeping the services at 8 am and 9 am for a few weeks and see how it goes. Thank you for your patience. We would appreciate any feedback you might have.

Advent is coming!

This year everyone at Ascension can expect to receive "**Advent in a Box.**" We'll send you candles and short devotional materials that will help us celebrate the holy season as a community. They should arrive, either on your doorstep or in the post, around Thanksgiving.

Pastor Josh will also lead evening prayer online on Wednesday evenings: December 2, 9, 16, and 23 at 7:30 PM.





“Adopt the Fountain”

Our outdoor worship space is focused around the altar and font. For the last few years, the fountain has been maintained by a generous friend, who happened to be in the pool maintenance business. Dave has retired and moved to Ventura.

As a result, we are looking for someone to maintain the fountain.

Perhaps you know a person familiar with pools or fountains? Could you send them our way and see if this maintenance is something they can handle. We have funds to support this effort, but perhaps someone in the congregation would like to “adopt” the fountain and its maintenance. If you have ideas, please get in touch with the Junior Warden – Ray Smith--- or with Fr. Bamberger.

Christmas Flowers

Well, here we are in November and Christmas is right around the corner. While celebrations will look and be different this year, they will still happen. Whether we are worshipping inside or outside, Altar Guild will still be decorating our space. We are aiming for “simple” this year, and any monetary donations towards flowers will be greatly appreciated. Please send checks to St. Anne’s Altar Guild, c/o Ascension Church. Be sure to include any “In Memory” names. Names of donors and designations will be listed in the e-mailed bulletin. Thank you in advance for your generosity.



St. Anne’s Altar Guild

A Note on Financial Stewardship

You know that your financial pledge is essential to keeping the Church of the Ascension supportive and strong. It allows us to budget for the coming year and helps us determine our priorities. But you may not be aware of the many ways you can provide financial support to our parish. First off, you should be getting a pledge card in the mail or you can pick one up at church. Return the card to us in the offering plate at the 7:30 am service or drop it off at the parish office. You can also make your pledge on the parish website by going to <https://www.ascension-sierramadre.com/give.html>.

When fulfilling your pledge by check or cash, make sure your name and envelope/account number are clearly marked. To get your offering to church you can:

- ◇ Drop an envelope with cash or a check into the offering plate during the service
- ◇ Call the office and drop a donation off with Kim Lumino at any time during the week (except Wednesdays)
- ◇ Arrange on your bank’s website for Ascension to receive automatic payments from your checking or savings account in the amount you designate. Simply add “Church of the Ascension, 25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024” as an automatic payee in the amount and frequency you choose. When prompted for an account number, you can use your Ascension envelope/account number.



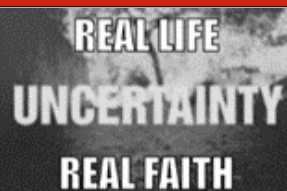
SO MANY OPTIONS FOR GIVING!

In addition, you can donate outside of your pledge by donating:

- ◇ A financial gift to support a parish project like the roof replacement or other maintenance
- ◇ Appreciated Stock. If you have appreciated stock, you may donate that to the parish and get a tax deduction while avoiding capital gains. Check with the parish office for more information and your accountant for details on the tax implications
- ◇ A car. Over the last few years, Ascension has accepted cars as donations with approximately 70% of the proceeds going to the church. Call the parish office for details
- ◇ Planned giving. When creating your will or trust, please remember your parish family in your arrangements.

From all of us at Ascension, thank you for your time, talent, and treasure. God’s peace.

Gordon Tomaske, Sr. Warden



Imagine if you will, opening the newspaper on the morning of January 1, 2020, yes 2020, and reading the headline: *“Welcome to the Year of Uncertainty.”* It wouldn’t have made much sense, but eleven months later “how prophetic.” And we still don’t know with any certainty or clarity what will happen next. To say the least, our anxiety levels are through the roof, and we’re tired of not knowing what’s coming next. If you’re at all like me, you’re sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Almost everyone worries about what will happen in the future. The prospect of not knowing if something good or bad will happen can produce a lot of fear and anxiety. However, there are things we can do to help manage our fear of the unknown.

Remember that no one can predict the future with 100 percent certainty. Even if the event or occurrence we fear does end up happening, there are circumstances and factors we can’t predict which can ease or even disappear our anxiety.

For instance, let’s say you miss a deadline for a project you have been working on at work, one of your greatest recurring fears. Suddenly, your boss comes to your office and tells you the deadline is extended and he forgot to tell you the day before. This unknown factor changes everything.

Learn to take it one day at a time. Instead of worrying about how you will get through the rest of the week or month, try to focus on today.

Each day can provide us with different opportunities to learn new things, and that includes dealing with our problems and our anxiety during uncertain times.

Remember to take a deep breath and try to find something to do to get your mind off of your anxiety and stressors. Take a walk, listen to some music, play on the computer, call a friend, or do an activity that will give you a fresh perspective on things. This will help to distract you from your current worries.

A lot of times, worrying can make the problem even worse. All the worrying in the world will not change anything. All we can do is do our best each day, hope for the best; and when something does happen, take it in stride.

These may be uncertain times; and although we may not know what’s going to happen next, know this— God is in the middle of it all and has our backs. Together then, let us pray:

A Prayer for Uncertain Times: Sr. Cynthia Serjak RSM

God of infinite mercy, hear our prayer! In this time of bewilderment and fear, we ask you to give us the courage to take care of one another as Jesus did. For those who are ill, especially those who are frightened and alone, for those who cannot access healthcare, for those who are homeless and lost, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our sadness and grief, we ask you to give us words to comfort one another. For those who are dying, and for those who have already died from this virus, for those who tend them and for those with no one to tend them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our own anxiety we ask you to give us the courage to support one another as you would. For those who are unexpectedly unemployed, for employers who share what they can, for our government and financial institutions and those who lead them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our struggle to ensure a healthy future for all who live on this planet, we ask you to give us the hope that surpasses our current understanding. For healthcare workers, spiritual leaders and our faith communities, for artists and poets, for prophets and teachers, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our growing awareness that all life on Earth is connected, we ask for the heart to respect and cherish all life. That all peoples recognize that we are all your children, hear our prayer!

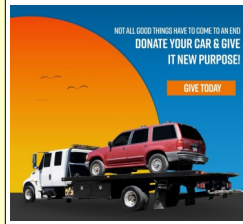
We trust in you and your power working in us. Please hear and answer our prayers. Amen!

Submitted by Deacon Ed



Pick up a copy of the new Forward Movement Day by Day booklet.

Copies can be found outside at the front of the church.



"Here's a unique way to support our parish!"

If you have a car, truck, boat or other vehicle that's become a nuisance, you can now donate that vehicle to Ascension. You'll be able to write the value of the vehicle off as a tax deduction and Ascension will benefit from the proceeds of its sale. Simply call **855-500-RIDE** or visit <http://www.careasy.org/nonprofit/the-episcopal-church-of-the-ascension> to schedule a free pickup. All you need is the vehicle's title-- the CARS service will handle the rest."

CARS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based out of San Diego, California.



NOTES FROM THE LOFT

I first met Mike Beach during the interview process for the Organist/Choirmaster position in July, 2000, and was struck by both his cordial demeanor and his rich bass/baritone voice. At our first choir rehearsal prior to a September Sunday morning service, Mike came up the stairs and introduced me to Susan, his significant other, and said, "She's a soprano ~ I hope it's okay for her to sing with us today." Well, of course it was more than okay ~ Susan became a valued member of our band, and I often complimented Mike for his effective recruitment technique! Mike continued to sing in the choir until his illness quieted his voice, and it was a sad day when he could no longer join us in the loft. My memories of Mike through the years extend from rehearsals and services, to his wedding to Susan (for which I played the organ), and to the interesting stories of his parents, who were both church musicians. After he retired, he served Ascension as its verger, as a major contributor to the design and construction of our outdoor worship space, and as a daily presence in the church office. How often he helped me out, from turning on the sanctuary air conditioning prior to my arrival on Thursdays to readying the choir battery candles for our Christmas Eve services. I will miss you, Mike ~ rest in peace, and may God grant comfort to Susan and the rest of your family.

November is rich in liturgy ~ All Saints' Day, Christ the King Sunday, Thanksgiving, and the first Sunday of Advent. Hymns for the month include:

- 1, All Saints' Day ~ #287 SINE NOMINE, For All the Saints
- 8 ~ #11 MORNING HYMN, Awake, My Soul
- 15 ~ #680 ST. ANNE, O God, Our Help in Ages Past
- 22, Christ the King Sunday ~ #494 DIADEMATA, Crown Him With Many Crowns
- 29, First Sunday of Advent ~ #54 NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND, Savior of the Nations, Come

*How shall I sing that Majesty which angels do admire?
Let dust in dust and silence lie; sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.
Thousands of thousands stand around Thy throne, O God most high;
Ten thousand times ten thousand sound Thy praise; but who am I?*

*Thy brightness unto them appears, whilst I Thy footsteps trace;
A sound of God comes to my ears, but they behold Thy face.
They sing because Thou art their Sun; Lord, send a beam on me;
For where heaven is but once begun there alleluias be.
~John Mason*



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist

THANKSGIVING

FOR EACH NEW MORNING WITH ITS LIGHT,
 FOR REST AND SHELTER OF THE NIGHT,
 FOR HEALTH AND FOOD,
 FOR LOVE AND FRIENDS,
 FOR EVERYTHING
 THY
 GOODNESS SENDS.
 -RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

**12th Annual Women's Room Thanksgiving Luncheon is ON!**

Though it will look very different this year, we are still honored to be hosting the Thanksgiving Luncheon for the Women's Room at Friends in Deed for the 12th year running. Thank you in advance for your generous contributions.

Due to necessary social distancing, the luncheon will only be available to the regular guests at The Women's Room and will be held on-site. We will not be allowed to stay for the luncheon--the staff at The Women's Room will serve the meal. As such, they are only able to safely accommodate 12-15 women at one

time, and so we will need much less food this year.

We will be collecting your food donations on the morning of **Tuesday, November 24** from 9:30-10:30 in the Ascension kitchen. Please bring the food already heated if possible. If you will be bringing it cold or need to arrange a different time for delivery, please let Nicole know in advance (626-627-4681). We will be delivering the meal to The Women's Room by 11:30 and will only need one volunteer to help load and deliver.

Please be sure to label your dishes with any potential allergens (nuts, gluten, dairy, etc.). If your dish is vegetarian, please label that as well.

Each food item contribution should include approximately 20 servings and should arrive in a DISPOSABLE foil 1/2 size steam pan (12"x10"x4").

Also, please note, the menu is slightly different this year--as requested by The Women's Room. Notably, they asked for no cranberry sauce and the addition of mac & cheese.

In addition to hot-food donations, we are also hoping to provide take-home bags filled with small gifts for the women: blank Christmas cards with stamps, homemade cookies, candy, etc. If you have an idea for a gift item, you can sign-up on one of the blank slots on the Sign-Up Genius and indicate what you intend to contribute.

And lastly, if you would like to participate but it is difficult for you to contribute a physical item, we can also take financial gifts. We will first use these gifts for any necessary supplies, but all remaining monies will be donated directly to The Women's Room for them to use for their beautiful work.

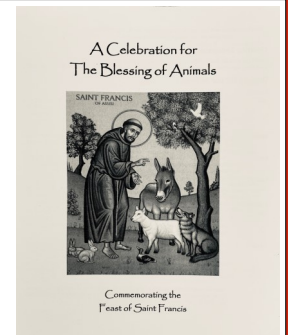
Thank you all in advance!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F054CACA72FA4FB6-12th>



**BLESSING
 OF THE
 ANIMALS**
 Sunday, October 4, 2020

**Thank You to Dan
 Hanson for the pictures!**



Annual Savor the Flavor Shopping Party
 We want to stay safe and we want to shop!
 The alternative for 2020
 A NEW WAY TO SHOP

Savor the Flavor has offered us a new option for shopping this year. They are offering us the option of shopping any time during the week of **November 15-21** and still get the church's 10% of each sale. All we have to do is mention Church of the Ascension while we are doing our shopping that week.

This alternative will let us maintain the proper social distancing and shop on our own time line. It is safer not to be crowded together in a small shop, particularly as we start to move into flu season. I know we will miss the tasting, the wine, and the chance to shop together. But we can still see all the great merchandize, ask what the specials of this year are, earn money for Ascension, and help support one of our local shops. Savor the Flavor has always extended great hospitality to us over the years. Let's help make the holiday season profitable for this store in 2020.



Forward Today: Just two things
 October 21, 2020 [Forward Today, scott gunn](#)

Dear friends in Christ,

This coming Sunday's Gospel reading brings us Jesus giving the Great Commandment. When asked which commandment in the law is the greatest, Jesus answers,

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19 here as he focuses the entire faith on just two things: we are commanded to love God and to love our neighbors.



Talk about easier said than done! It's easy to say we love God, but to love God with our whole being would be quite something. Take the mind for example. If I loved God with my whole mind, I wouldn't be filling my mind with distractions such as mediocre television and social media scrolling.

And when Jesus tells us to love our neighbors, he is of course not just talking about the people who live next to us, people who are likely to be in our same cultural group, race, and economic status. He takes care elsewhere to teach us that our neighbors are, well, pretty much everyone.

Love God, love people. It seems so simple, and yet it is so hard to do.

When the world feels like it's spinning out of control, we can become immobilized by a feeling of powerlessness. What can I do about all the problems? Just two things.

We can start with our own lives by loving God and loving our neighbors. Love is magnified as we share it. If more of us spent more of our energy loving God and loving our neighbors, the world would look different. Our church would certainly look different.

So I invite you, this very day, to just doing as Jesus commands, just two things. Love God. Love neighbor.

It's impossible on our own, but we have a church filled with fellow disciples to be our companions. And we have the grace of God to help us.

Yours faithfully, Scott Gunn, Executive Director

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Photo: [Pixabay](#) <https://news.forwardmovement.org/>

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

NOVEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 ALL SAINTS DAY 7:30am Outside Worship w/Eucharist-Rite I 9am Sunday Worship-Rite II Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service *Zoom Call* Between the Masses Disc Grp after coffee hour *Zoom Call*	2	3 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	4 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	5 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:30am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	6	7 Bishop's Gala https://diocesela.org/news/bishops-gala-website-live/
Parish Office Closed						
VOTING IN HAWKS HALL						
8 7:30am Outside Worship w/Eucharist-Rite I 9am Sunday Worship-Rite II Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service *Zoom Call* Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour *Zoom Call*	9	10 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	11 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	12 9am Forum Zoom Call	13	14 Diocesan Convention 2020—Virtual
15 7:30am Outside Worship w/Eucharist-Rite I 9am Sunday Worship-Rite II Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service *Zoom Call* Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour *Zoom Call* 10am Diocesan Convention Eucharist on YouTube https://diocesela.org/news/2020-diocesan-convention-preview/	16	17 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only* Vestry Meeting 7:30pm Zoom Call	18 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	19 9am Forum Zoom Call 10:30am Staff Mtg Zoom Call	20	21
22 7:30am Outside Worship w/Eucharist-Rite I 9am Sunday Worship-Rite II Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service *Zoom Call* Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour *Zoom Call*	23	24 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	25 Communion under Special Circumstances 8:30am—10am *By Appointment Only*	26 Thanksgiving Day Mass at 9am *weather permitting* 	27	28
Parish Office Closed						
29 1st Sunday Advent 8:00am Outside Worship w/Eucharist-Rite I 9am Sunday Worship-Rite II Facebook Live & Zoom Call Virtual Coffee Hour after service *Zoom Call* Between the Masses Discussion Group after coffee hour *Zoom Call*	30					
Spire Creator: Kim Lumino, Parish Administrator						