



The 2022 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.



Once again we will be distributing Halloween Candy on October 31!!!!

Please bring candy donations (large bags of individually wrapped pieces) to church and they will be safely stored until the ghoulish night... thank you

FRIENDS IN DEED *

Please join in Ascension's monthly collection of specific "Gold Items" for Friends in Deed. For the month of October we will be collecting CEREAL.

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



SEPTEMBER 2022 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2022 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget:	\$157,500
YTD Actual:	\$147,229
Difference:	\$-10,271

From the Rector

On Friday, September 23rd, about 800 Episcopalians from around the Diocese of Los Angeles gathered for Episcopal Night at Dodger Stadium. History was made that night as we watched Albert Pujols hit #699 and his 700th career home run. He joins the ranks of just three other players – Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds, and Babe Ruth. (It is lamentable that the Dodgers got shutout that night.)

It was wonderful to see long-time friends at the game – some of whom I hadn't seen since the onset of COVID. But speaking of COVID, two of those friends have since developed mild symptoms and have tested positive. Fortunately, Debbie and I feel fine and continue to test negative. But my friends' illness brings home the fact that while many of us just want to be done with COVID, COVID is not done with us. People are still getting sick, and some are needing to be hospitalized. COVID continues to kill around a dozen people every day in Los Angeles County

I encourage us to continue exercising our best practices. While wearing of masks is no longer required in some areas, I continue to strongly recommend masking in church. Obviously, if you aren't feeling well, stay at home. (If you need a rapid COVID test, we have plenty here at church and are happy to drop kits at your home.)

Personally, I am anticipating two trips to the East coast in October. The first trip is to North Carolina for the General Board of Examining Chaplains, and the second is to Maryland for Episcopal Relief and Development. I will be masked in the airports and on the plane. For each of these trips, I was required to show proof that I have been vaccinated and boosted for COVID.

Like all of you, I want to get my life back. But I also want to be prudent, and I don't want to have to be calling my friends and telling them that I exposed them to the bug.

Blessings, Father Michael+

PS: Presiding Bishop Michael Curry on September 29th announced that he had Covid.

Blessing of the Animals



Sunday, October 2nd
11:45 am in the Outdoor Worship Area

Blessing of the Animals is conducted in commemoration of the October 4th Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis, arguably the most beloved of the named Saints, was particularly fond of animals of all breeds. The community is invited to bring your animals, no matter how big or small, breed or religion. Some animals may require a leash or a container, so keep that in mind.

All of God's creatures are welcome!



Caring For Each Other ~ Stewardship 2023

Dear Parishioners:

One of the defining characteristics of Christian communities is we care for each other and those we serve in the larger community. In our caring community, we are looked after individually even as we care for those near us.

During this year of pandemic and economic turmoil, Ascension has been strengthened by the loving care we have shown to one another. Our commitment to nurturing and growing our community is the way we live out our faith and show God's love to the larger community beyond the walls of our parish.

As Christians we are asked to give and give generously from what God has already given us. Let us use this stewardship season to celebrate, strengthen, and grow our community at Ascension.

During the month of October, we will be sharing stories of how we support and care for each other at Church of the Ascension during worship, during life's transitions (baptism, marriage, end of life), and for the larger community. Please join us during October as we hear short but inspiring stories from our fellow parishioners.

Please fill out your pledge card offering your time, your talent, and your treasure; and, most of all, join us in being here for each other.

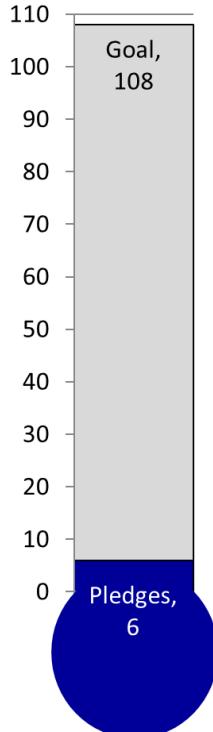
Thank you,
Gordon Tomaske
Sr. Warden, Church of the Ascension



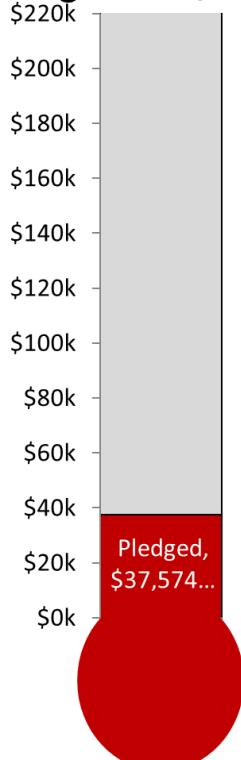
2023 Pledge Update

The numbers as of September 29, 2022

Pledging Households



Pledge Goal \$220,000



SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, November 19th

Savor the Flavor
Holiday Shopping Party



More information to follow in the
November Spire

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 one of the services 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.



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.



SO MANY OPTIONS
FOR GIVING!

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>



Almost every spiritual tradition teaches that regular rituals of stillness and silence improve our overall sense of wellbeing. Modern scientific research shows that meditation offers a host of benefits. Plus, it's cost free. And yet, many of us resist committing to a regular practice—including people who enjoy meditation. I've experienced this resistance myself, so I get it.

There are periods when I resist sitting on my prayer chair—usually when I need it most. And yet, when I do maintain a consistent practice, I feel more balanced, abundant, connected to my authentic self, and empowered. Meditation has freed my mind, supported my body, uplifted my spirit, and shifted the trajectory of my life in positive ways.

What causes us to resist when we think about setting aside a few minutes each day to meditate?

Here are a few common blocks and tips for overcoming them.

You don't want to experience uncomfortable emotions. The stillness of meditation connects you more closely with your emotions, some of which may be unpleasant. Keeping busy prevents you from feeling these emotions. If there are some unconscious ones that you would prefer to avoid dealing with, you may find yourself resisting meditation.

Solution: Regard the potential discomfort of meditation as a pathway towards greater wellbeing and satisfaction.

You feel guilty. Most of us live in a culture that doesn't recognize that getting rest and feeling relaxed enhances health, creativity, happiness, and productivity. Meditation, simply *being*, takes you out of *doing*. You may unconsciously feel guilty for not doing enough.

Solution: Prioritize self-care.

You don't have time. Not having enough time is one of the most common excuses for not meditating. When I hear this pushback from folks in my Spiritual Direction practice, I ask them to consider all of the time that they spend on their smartphone or watching TV. A meditation practice can begin with as little as three minutes daily and then gradually increase.

Solution: Try starting with three minutes.

You find meditation boring. Meditation isn't meant to be exciting. It's an investment in your holistic health. Establishing a meditation practice is about creating a habit or ritual that allows you to present the best version of yourself each day. You take a shower daily. No one stops showering because they find it boring.

Solution: View meditation as a shower for your mind.

You feel that meditation takes too long to work. Meditation commonly delivers noticeable benefits within eight weeks of daily practice. But you may notice small changes well before that (even as soon as after the first session). The effects of meditation are cumulative, meaning that the benefits increase over time.

Solution: Consider meditation as an investment in your long-term wellbeing, similar to how you might think of exercise or proper nutrition.

You're not sure how to do it. Meditation is a practice with a process. Many people think they are doing it incorrectly or that something is wrong because thoughts interrupt their practice. Videos, apps, classes, and coaches are readily available to support you. Teachers like Jack Kornfield, Ram Dass, and Sharon Salzberg share their teachings for free on YouTube.

Solution: Take advantage of the numerous resources available to get you started.

You're confused about what meditation is. Meditation takes effort. It is not the same as resting. When you rest, your mind drifts. Meditation is about focusing your attention on the present moment and thereby cultivating presence. Being in the present is important because if you are not in the present, you are either in the future (anxiety) or the past (depression). Research shows that practicing presence may help to reduce symptoms of both anxiety and depression.

Solution: Commit to it—it will become enjoyable. And most importantly, you will create an addictive habit that you will no longer resist.

Be well, be blessed, be still.
Deacon Ed

HOSPITALITY FUNDRAISER

Beginning the first Sunday of November, Jo Mosier will be selling raffle tickets for her annual Christmas afghan and her homemade tissue boxes.

I would also like to invite other crafters to donate their handmade knitted or crocheted crafts items, such as scarves, hats, blankets or slippers, which will be sold along with the raffle tickets. The raffle tickets and other donations will be available for purchase beginning Sunday, November 6, 2022 following both services and will continue each Sunday up until Sunday, December 4, 2022. On the 4th, we will draw the winning raffle tickets.

Please drop off your donations at the Church on or before Saturday, November 5, 2022.

All proceeds will help increase the Hospitality budget for special social events/coffee hours.

Respectfully,
Lisa Wagner, Hospitality Hostess



MUSIC AT ASCENSION

NOTES FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

Mr. Robert L. Williamson
Organist-Choirmaster

Choral Evensong

In a previous communication, Choral Evensong was scheduled for October 30, 2022 at 4:00 pm.
Due to scheduling issues, Choral Evensong will be postponed till 2023.

Musicians for the Holidays

As we approach the Holy Feast Days and Christmas, once again we will need to hire additional musicians to augment our services.

In order for us to meet the incurred cost of hiring these musicians, we are requesting donations be made to the Music Fund.

Your generous gift may be given in honor of or as a memorial to that special person or persons. The gift and names will be listed in the 9:00pm Christmas Eve service leaflet.



Singers Needed!

The choir provides musical leadership for our congregational singing during worship each week. We need Sopranos, Altos, Tenors and Basses to complete our program. The only commitment for this group is a Sunday morning gathering to rehearse. We meet at 9:00 a.m. each week and sing for worship at the 10:15am service.

If you are interested in becoming a new member, please contact me to discuss the possibilities. Remember, there are strengths in numbers and singing in the choir is a great way to meet new people.

*Cohi Deo
Gloria*

Refugee Assistance Continues

In the last few months, we've helped several new refugee families sponsored by the Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service (IRIS). Guided by the families' caseworker, we've been able to provide home goods and, equally importantly, information they need as they begin their life here. These families are all fully supplied now. We've been very impressed with their resilience and how rapidly they are moving forward toward assimilation—getting kids in school, finding jobs, taking English lessons, etc.

IRIS has gone through some staff changes, including a new volunteer coordinator. She's been in touch with me, and we've discussed how we can best support their work. She agrees that it could be useful for us to focus on collecting kitchenwares that we can immediately supply to new families that arrive. Other supporting groups with greater financial resources have been ordering beds and furniture to be shipped to the new arrivals, but kitchenwares appear to fall through the cracks. Several parishioners have offered to provide goods; I'll be in touch as soon as this effort takes shape a little better.

The volunteer coordinator is also looking for help with English teaching on Zoom. It's unclear what our exact role would be; we might be asked to lead classes using existing lesson plans, or it might be more useful for us to provide materials and backup for classes that are already under way. Several parishioners have already offered to help with this. If you also would be interested in donating an hour every week or two for a semester, please let me know. You don't need teaching experience, just goodwill and an interest in meeting people from a very different culture. We probably wouldn't get going till the spring.

IRIS wants anyone who volunteers for them to fill out three forms. I'll leave copies of the forms at church; if you fill them out, you can drop the completed forms in my choir music box in the vesting room, and I'll send them on to IRIS. (The forms aren't necessary if you're just supplying goods.) If you feel a call to join this work even though you don't know exactly what you have to offer, let's talk. We're all stepping forward in faith at this point, and your experience may end up being just what a new family needs most.

By Carol Rasmussen



Helping people

Los Angeles Diocese Episcopal Dodger Night September 23, 2022



THANK YOU!

I would like to thank all of you who made our Fall Kick-Off Potluck such a big success! For those who brought in dishes of delicious food, for those who helped with clean up, and for those who enjoyed the food and fellowship in Hawks Hall.

It made my heart sing to see the Hall so full of people enjoying conversations and catching up with fellow parishioners. It certainly has been a very long time since we were able to resume our Coffee Hours in such a big way.

My heartfelt thanks to everyone,

**Lisa Wagner
Hospitality Hostess**



Thank You to Jon Prentice and Lisa Wagner 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

OCTOBER 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 Blessing of the Animals 11:45am <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u> 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u>	3 8:30am Yoga/Hall	4 8:15am Gooden Chapel 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	5 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 	6	7	8
		Fr. Bamberger Out of Town/GOE's in NC				
9 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u> 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u>	10 8:30am Yoga/Hall	11 8:15am Gooden Chapel INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	12 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	13 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	14	15 11am Interment Russell Repogle Private
16 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u> 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u>	17 8:30am Yoga/Hall	18 8:15am Gooden Chapel 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets 7:00pm Vestry Meeting Hall	19 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	20 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	21	22 11am Memorial Service Jerry Welton Private
23 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u> 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u>	24 8:30am Yoga/Hall 6:30pm-9:30pm Photochromers Meeting Hall Private	25 8:15am Gooden Chapel 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	26 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	27	28 8:00am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel	29
		Fr. Bamberger Out of Town/ER&D Maryland				
30 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u> 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> <u>*Facebook Live*</u>	31 8:30am Yoga/Hall					