



The SPIRE

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

September 2017

Upcoming Events

September 3rd—Noon/Library
Parish Ministry Council Meeting

September 4th—Labor Day, Office
Closed

September 8th—LA Episcopal Dodger
Night



→ September 10th
Fall Kick-Off / Coffee
Cake Potluck Competition

September 13th—Village Voices &
Choir Rehearsals Resume

September 16th—Heal the Bay
Volunteer Opportunity

September 17th—Stewardship/Know
the Facts Meeting—after the 10:15
Service/Hawks Hall

September 19th—7pm/Hawks Hall
Vestry Meeting

September 21st—6:30pm
House Church/Dinner

September 24th—Noon/Library
Parish Ministry Council Meeting

From the Rector

As I sit down to write this, the rain is still falling in Texas and Louisiana after Hurricane Harvey made landfall. Indications are that this hurricane may well be a disaster on the magnitude of Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Katrina.

Many of you may know that I have been a volunteer for six years in the U.S. Disaster Program of Episcopal Relief and Development. As a member of a team of eight Partners in Response – clergy and lay people – I help church leaders in affected areas develop and implement the ways that dioceses and the local churches can serve their neighbors. I can assure you that Episcopal Relief and Development has been and continues to be actively engaged with the dioceses that are most impacted.



I do anticipate being deployed to Texas - perhaps a couple of times – in the next few months. Some of you may be wondering what you can be doing as well in the face of this enormous disaster. First of all, you can pray for favorable weather, for those affected, and for a spirit of generosity, endurance, and dedication for a long-term recovery. Second of all, you can contribute financially to the efforts. (Episcopal Relief and Development has a dedicated fund established – you can write a check to Ascension marked for ER & D, or go to the website - <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/hurricane-harvey-response/?ID=LB17-1>. (There are a few things not to do! Don't send old clothing, don't send food items, and stay clear of scam relief funds.)

And finally, I ask your prayers for me as I prepare to walk alongside of hurting people and exhausted clergy. If Sandy was any indication, this will be a journey spanning years.

MAB+



**Sunday,
October 1st**

Blessing of the Animals

*Pet Sitting available
at the 10:15am service*

Are you an *I Just Want to Know the Facts Person?*

Do we have a meeting for you!

In the interest of full financial disclosure, your Vestry will be holding several Stewardship information meetings to discuss with you the financial facts we have been wrestling with this year. We want to share the facts of our budget, why for a second year we are facing a large deficit, ideas Vestry members have proposed for increasing income, possible consequences if this deficit is not significantly decreased, and what each of us can do to help.

Join members of the Vestry on **September 17th** after the 10:15 service, after both the 8:00 and 10:15 services on **October 15th**, and on Thursday evening **October 12th** at 7:00. We'll share the facts as we know them.



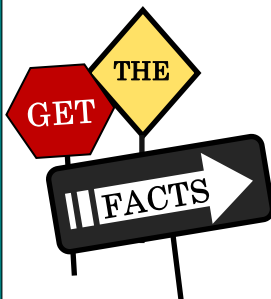
**Pledge Payment
Snapshot**

January—August 31, 2017

Budget Amount: \$208,437

YTD Budget: \$138,958
YTD Actual: \$135,420

Difference:
\$-3,538



STEW 2018 SHIP

Stewardship: Our Commitment to Furthering the Work of God

Too often, we think of Stewardship as \$tewardship. However, there's much more to it. Stewardship is the process of giving of oneself to further the work of God. The full spectrum of Stewardship can be found at Ascension, and there are many opportunities to participate.

What we do: Parishioners give freely of their time, contributing to the ministries of the Church. These ministries strengthen our bonds to God and each other. There are too many ways to comprehensively list on a single page; here are just a few:

- Breadmakers bake the bread we share during Eucharist
- Small group participants help each other to grow in Christ
- Lay Eucharistic ministers bring the sacrament and a measure of cheer to those who can't attend
- Coffee hour hosts facilitate fellowship by providing an excuse to stay after the service

What we give: Monetary giving is a) Biblically mandated, b) good for you, and c) essential to the ministry of the Church. There are many opportunities for giving:

- Annual giving supports all of the ministries of the church
 - Keeps the doors open to the community
 - Will, increasingly, support our ministry of Outreach
- Long Term giving
 - Affirms that the work of the Church will continue long after we stop attending
- Outreach giving
 - ECPAC Food Distribution and Episcopal Relief and Development address compelling human need

What we share: Parishioners strive to make the Church a welcoming place. We are called to actively share our faith and invite others to join our fellowship. (Ask folks how they came to Ascension; you'll hear some good stories.)

What we demonstrate: Ascensionites strive to live out God's mandates in everyday life. We are called to consciously think about what God has given us and use those gifts for the greater good:

- In our personal and professional lives, parishioners strive to be not only ethical, but moral
- Folks with the gift of free time volunteer. For example, there is a small group of parishioners who bring sandwiches and soup every month to the Women's Room.
- We strive to be a reflection of our faith

So please take this (and every!) opportunity to remember what you have been given and think about your answer to the following challenges:

What will I do? *How can I participate in the ministry of the Church?*

What will I give? *How can I provide for the financial needs of the parish now and in the future?*

What will I share? *With whom can I share the good news, and how can I make them feel welcome in our community of faith?*

What will I demonstrate? *How will I live out my faith?*

The way we choose to answer these questions is a reflection of our gratitude to God.

We must not only ask and answer these questions as individuals, but also as a community: What can Ascension give? How will we demonstrate our faith?

So in summary, please think about all the ways in which you have been blessed and how you individually and we collectively may become a blessing to others.

Pledge cards will be mailed to parishioners soon. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to God's work for the upcoming year. Thank you in advance for your continued support of Ascension and its ministries.

Your Vestry

Ascension Fall Kick-Off Sunday – September 10th
Coffee Cake Potluck Coffee Hours

7 Ways You Can Participate

- ◇ Bring your favorite Coffee Cake to the Coffee Cake Potluck Coffee Hour following your favorite service.
- ⇒ **LABEL your coffee cake AND serving piece with your name and the time of your service. Try and use disposable serving pieces, please.**
- ⇒ **Include copies of your Famous (or Infamous :-)... Coffee Cake Recipe to share.**
- ◇ Volunteer to set up and/or clean up after the day's special coffee hour. Sign-up Sheets are on the Hawks Hall Bulletin Board.
- ◇ Be recognized for your participation in the six Ministries of our Parish and commissioned to continue that Ministry in the coming year. (If you come to church, you are part of the Worship Ministry. We bet you will find that you are an important part of more than one of our six ministries.)
- ◇ Visit the Ministry picture displays in Hawks Hall. Remember past events for each Ministry and learn about plans for the future. You might just see yourself in one of the pictures. Special thanks go to Ascension's Archives Committee for providing the pictures and Nicole Hanson for creating the displays.
- ◇ Visit the display of religious items from Father Wood's home collection and participate in a silent auction to benefit Father Wood's former congregation, Church of the Epiphany, Lincoln Heights and Ascension Ministries.
- ◇ Collect tickets for visiting each of the Ministry Picture Displays plus Father Wood's Silent Auction Display.



- ◇ Use those tickets to vote for the Coffee Cake you like best from each service.

VOTE!! VOTE!! VOTE!!

Two prizes will be awarded. One prize will go to the Favorite Coffee Cake served after the 8:00 am service and one to the Favorite Coffee Cake served after the 10:15 am service.



3rd – 6th Grade
3:30 – 4:10 PM

Grades K-2
4:15 – 4:45 PM

VILLAGE VOICES RESUMES SEPTEMBER 13TH

Music Ensembles for K—5th Grade

Spring/Winter 2017 Session Details:

WEDNESDAYS: September 13th – November 15th

LOCATION: Hawks Hall, Church of the Ascension

\$125 enrollment fee for the semester

Class size will be limited

Email: Villagevoices91024@gmail.com

Download Registration form at: www.ascension-sierramadre.com

Fall Performance: November 15th at 5:00pm

Music Instructor: Jobi Harrell



Where Does My Money Go?

Thus far, we have examined the funds and volunteerism that are found in 3 of our core ministries. These included: Presence, Outreach, and Pastoral Care.

This month, we will review the most important area of our core ministries, the one that we are most familiar with: **Worship**. This area, along with Presence, is the ministry to which the majority of our funds is directed. It includes the salaries of our Rector, our assisting Priests, and our Director of Music/Organist.

Worship, like so many of our core ministry groups, involves the work of many volunteers.

In addition to our clergy, at least 35 members of our parish serve in some capacity at our two Worship services every week. Some we see at the front of the church; others serve behind the scenes.

We need to thank our Acolytes for lighting the candles, leading our processions, serving at the altar, swinging the incense censor, ringing the sacramental bells, coming to acolyte training, and getting up early on Sunday mornings to serve our parish. We are also grateful for our Senior Acolytes who help train and support those just beginning to serve.

Week after week in teams of four or five, our Altar Guild members clean the sanctuary, arrange the flowers, polish the brass, trim the candles, wash the Eucharistic vessels, see that the fair linens are spotless, prepare for each weekday and Sunday service, maintain the Mary altar and candles, and, as we see at Christmas and Easter, totally transform the church to reflect the glory of the Christ's Birth and Resurrection. We offer thanks for their hours of service.

Our Chalice Bearers serve the wine at the Eucharist. They give of their time to acquire the training necessary to serve at the altar. We thank our Chalice Bearers for the dedication they show as they serve us at the communion rail.

Our Choir faithfully rehearses Wednesday nights in order to lead the congregation in song and to inspire us with their anthems. Sometimes music can reach us in ways that the spoken word cannot, and we are grateful for those uplifting moments. How truly blessed we are to have Dr. Huffman as our Organist/ Choir Master. She and the choir truly minister to us through their music.

The Eucharistic Bread Makers are ladies who love to bake. They meet in the spirit of fellowship to prayerfully make the bread we use at the Eucharist. We are blessed by the knowledge that the bread at Christ's table is made by their loving hands.

Presenters and Ushers pass out the bulletins, present the Eucharistic Elements at the altar, take up the offering, guide us to the Eucharist, help the infirm, are a source of all sorts of useful information, and assist new comers. A thank you goes to them for always being there as we enter the church each Sunday.

Readers read the Lessons. Some of them come forward from their seats in the congregation; others are licensed lay readers. We are grateful for the care with which they prepare and deliver the words of the Scriptures to us. Thanks be to God.

We need to also remember those who serve totally behind the scenes. Many hours go into determining what liturgy and music will be used for each service. Others do the typing, printing, collating, and folding of each bulletin. Thank you for this work of love.

We define Worship as "our community praising God in Word and Sacrament and celebrating the Christian year." The groups we are recognizing this Sunday help us to offer that praise.

Jean Rowe, Senior Warden

Volunteer Opportunity on September 16th



On Saturday, September 16, over 10,000 volunteers from all over Southern California will do their part to clean up their local beaches, rivers, creeks, and parks. And that's just part of the picture! Coastal Cleanup Day happens all around the world!

This will be Ascension's 4th year participating. We will provide transportation to the ARROYO SECO cleanup site departing from Ascension at 8:30 AM.

For carpools and more information, please contact Jobi Harrell at [\(626\) 710-3021](tel:626-710-3021).



SUMMER CAMP AT ASCENSION

August 28—September 1

A **BIG THANK YOU** to Father Bamberger and Church of the Ascension for letting some of the Gooden Families use the Church's facilities for childcare the week before school starts. With most camps closed and other friends already back in school, the childcare options were limited. The participating Gooden families would also like to **thank Deacon Robin Kassabian**

for coordinating the childcare and to Candice, Sam, and David for lending a hand.



NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Is Ascension a singing congregation? Acknowledging the writings of Brian Hehn, Director of Music Ministry for Arapaho United Methodist Church in Richardson, TX, I submit that we are, indeed, a singing congregation, but with the potential for higher levels of attainment. Hehn proposes that there are four functions of church choirs that enhance the congregation's musical development:

1: To lead and enliven the congregation's song.

The first and most important function of the church choir is to lead the congregation's song. Quite simply, we become what we sing. When we take words and put them to music, that music becomes part of who we are. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we put as much of the Word into the bodies of the congregation as possible. By giving the congregation new singing skills and confidence, we empower them for the rest of their lives to better embody God's word through music. The great church musician, John Ferguson, refers to the congregation as the "big choir" and to the church choir as the "little choir." When the congregation's song is built up, parishioners are prepared for discipleship through the soul-embracing power of song.

2: To sing music that the congregation cannot.

There's a great deal of great music that just cannot reasonably be sung by a congregation. Whether it's too complex to be done by untrained musicians or just too difficult to be sung without extensive rehearsal, there's much music that cannot or should not be done by a congregation. By spending the time and effort to rehearse each week, the choir provides a great service to the congregation by opening up the amount of literature the congregation can be exposed to. Used appropriately, this literature has significant theological and musical implications, broadening the congregation's experience of the divine.

3: To serve as a small group within the church for faith formation.

When we sing together, a bond is created that unites us unlike any other activity. Choirs deeply love and support each other because they're more than a small group – they're a family. Through both good and difficult times, choir members are there for each other – yes, even when decorating a Paschal candle!

4: To sing beautiful and challenging music that praises God and edifies the congregation.

Singing challenging music beautifully is difficult to do and takes significant practice. It is important that when we sing, we sing beautifully because our music touches people's souls. A church choir's job is not just to sing beautifully, but rather it is to minister to the congregation and to each other in a variety of ways, helping to change the world into a more loving and peaceful place.

So, what does this mean for Ascension? First, we're all part of the "big choir," enthusiastically participating in the hymns and liturgy of our services. Second, I'm convinced that there are some of you "big choir" members who should affiliate with the "little choir!" If you're led to do so, please contact me – I'd love to speak with you. Fall choir rehearsals begin on Wednesday evening, September 13, 7:30 p.m. in Hawks Hall.

*Day by day, dear Lord, of thee three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly,
Follow thee more nearly, day by day.
~ Att. Richard of Chichester*



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist

Blessing of the Animals —Sunday, October 1st

On Sunday, October 1, we will celebrate the Feast Day of St. Francis with a Blessing of the Animals service to be held at noon outside the church. The Blessing of the Animals is a beautiful way to bring all the different aspects of our lives to God, including our relationships with our pets and the working animals who mean so much to us.

This service became associated with St. Francis because of his legendary love for animals. One story has it that while traveling with his fellow brothers, Francis preached an impromptu sermon to the birds which, rather than flying away at his approach, listened rapt with attention. Another story tells of a wolf which was terrorizing a village nearby Francis' monastery, stealing livestock and threatening the lives of the children. Francis spoke to the wolf, then led him back to town tamed, having promised the wolf that the townspeople would feed him if he stopped attacking their animals. Francis then blessed the wolf in the sight of the people, and, in response to their feeding him, the wolf was never a threat to the community again.



While I would not recommend that anyone bring a wolf or other wild animal to this service, I do understand that there will be some other exciting animals there which kids, (or any animal lover, really), will not want to miss! The Blessing of the Animals service is a wonderful outreach/presence opportunity. Be sure to invite your friends, relatives, and neighbors so that they can see how Ascension cares for everyone in our church family, even the smallest among us. Bring one or more of the animals and people that you love and rejoice as we give thanks for the multiple ways we are blessed by God's creation.



The *Choir* will resume rehearsals on Wednesday, September 13th, at 7:30 p.m. in Hawks Hall. Tenors and altos are particularly needed. See Dr. Deb for additional information.

REAL
LIFE. Real
Faith.

Some time ago I began writing my monthly article under the banner of "Real Life Real Faith." As a deacon, one of my primary roles is to interpret the needs of the world and make them known to the church. Keep in mind that each of you reading this article is the church. I suspect that the most effective way that I can interpret the world's needs is by preaching the gospel and through example. Of course that applies to all of us.

Whenever I begin thinking about a sermon (homily), the starting place is always the same...the Gospel. I read it, reread, and read it again, trying to digest what Jesus is saying to us in this time and in this place. I think about it, pray about it, look at what's going on around me and within me -- all the while trying to make some sense out of the Scripture. Sometimes interpreting these words can be a daunting task, and at other times the words just flow. Perhaps the most important guiding principle is how does the message of the gospel help us to live our faith in the real world. That can be a very personal thing for each listener.

Jesus calls us to a higher standard, and often that standard is difficult to hear let alone to live. Sometimes the gospel message makes sense, sometimes it helps us see a way forward, sometimes it makes us uncomfortable, sometimes it angers us deeply, and sometimes we just plain want to ignore the message.

I've been at this writing a long time and have experienced all of the above reactions from listeners and myself. Here's the bottom line: if I evoke a reaction, regardless of what it is, then I'm doing my job. Real faith and real life are often uncomfortable and messy. I think that's just part of life. I know it's certainly part of mine.

Live well, live blessed, live uncomfortably (sometimes), Deacon Ed+

Calendar of Events

Parish Event	LA EPISCOPAL DODGER NIGHT	September 8	7:00pm
Youth Event	YOUTH SUNDAY	September 10	10:15am
Volunteer Opportunity	HEAL THE BAY	September 16	8:30am
Youth Event	SCARECROW SUNDAY	September 24	9:00am
Volunteer Opportunity	WIGGLE WAGGLE WALK	September 24	8:00am
Youth Event	ST. FRANCIS PET SITTING	October 1	10:15am
Youth Event	PIES & SIDES	November 19	11:45am
Youth Event	CHRISTMAS TREE TRIMMING	December 17	11:45am
Volunteer Opportunity	CROP WALK	November 5	Noon
Youth Opportunity	PAGEANT REHEARSALS BEGIN	December 3	9:00am

From the Senior Warden

It's September; summer is over, and school is back in session. September is also the beginning of Ascension's Stewardship campaign. The Vestry is working hard to prepare for this year's campaign; our goal is 100% participation by our Ascension family.

We define 100% participation as receiving a pledge card from every family, pledging your time, talent, and, hopefully, some of your treasure to Ascension. The "treasure" pledge is important because it allows the Vestry to prepare a realistic budget for the coming year.

Because we can only fund salaries, services, and programs with money we are guaranteed to receive, the budget is developed primarily by the pledges made by our parishioners. Financially, we do need to increase our pledge donations. This past year, our pledges fell over \$20,000 short of what is needed in a bare bones budget. In all honesty we cannot maintain our level of services with the same deficit another year. Those who can afford to increase their pledges are encouraged to do so. Understanding that some in our parish may have a limited income, we are asking for gifts of time and talent.

When you receive the Stewardship packet in the mail this month, please read the information, prayerfully decide what you are able to Do, Give, Share, and Demonstrate, and help us achieve our goal of 100% participation.



Jean Rowe

Youth Group Trip to Universal Studios August 27, 2017



*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

SEPTEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 <div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Deacon Ed Vacation</div> 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass Noon-PMC Mtg/Library	4 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">LABOR DAY OFFICE CLOSED</div>	5 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group <div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Gooden 2017-2018 School Year Begins</div>	6 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	7 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">7am Mass</div> 9am Forum 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary 10:30am Staff Mtg	8 <div style="background-color: #000080; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">LA Episcopal Dodger Night</div> <div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Private Spiritual Direction 9:30am— 1:30am Rectors Office</div>	9
10 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">FALL KICK-OFF/COFFEE CAKE COMPETITION AFTER BOTH SERVICES</div> 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass	11 Fr. Bamberger Out of Office—Clergy Support Group	12 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	13 10:30-11:45 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 3:30-5pm Village Voices Resumes/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	14 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">7am Mass</div> 9am Forum 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary	15	16 <div style="background-color: #000080; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Heal the Bay Volunteer Opportunity</div>
17 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">11:30am: Stewardship/Know the Facts Meeting in Hawks Hall</div>	18 8am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary <div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Pasadena Photochromers Meeting (private) in Hawks Hall 6:30pm—9:30pm</div>	19 10am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group <div style="background-color: #000080; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">7pm Vestry Meeting Hawks Hall</div>	20 10:30-11:45 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 3:30-5pm Village Voices/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	21 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">7am Mass</div> 9am Forum 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary 10:30am Staff Mtg <div style="background-color: #000080; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">6:30pm House Church/ Dinner at Deacon Robin's home</div>	22	23
24 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour/Sunday School 9am-10am-Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:00am Childcare 10:15am Mass Noon-PMC Mtg/Library	25 8am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary <div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Pasadena Photochromers Meeting (private) in Hawks Hall 6:30pm—9:30pm</div>	26 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">OCTOBER NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE</div>	27 10:30-11:45 Gooden K-1 Music/Hall 3:00 Organist Rehearsal/Sanctuary 3:30-5pm Village Voices/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal/Hall	28 <div style="background-color: #800000; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">7am Mass</div> 9am Forum 9:45am Gooden Chapel/Sanctuary	29	30