

The SPIRE 2021

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

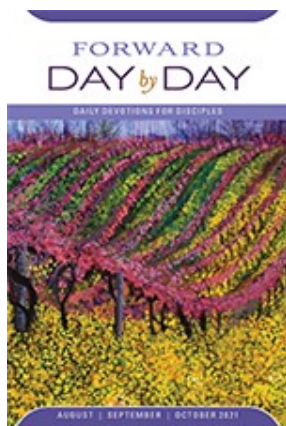


Upcoming Events

Please see the calendar on page 4 for an updated list of events.

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.



AUGUST 2021 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2020 Budget \$221,000

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| YTD Budget: | \$147,333 |
| YTD Actual: | \$145,376 |
| Difference: | \$-1,957 |

From the Rector

A recent news story carried the lead – “It’s up to my neck.” The reference was to a person in Louisiana in the midst of Hurricane Ida. He and his family were desperately hoping to be rescued from the rising flood waters. The story went on to report that they were successfully reached by the first responders.

One can only imagine how fatigued and distressed everyone connected to the disaster along the Gulf Coast must be. Indeed, the constant barrage of news, whether disaster-related, Covid-related, Afghanistan-related, politics-related, climate-related, or something else, is exhausting. For some folks, this news deluge has resulted in a sense of anger that is sometimes unfocused and usually unproductive. For others, it brings on a sense of depression that can lead to isolation and loneliness. For still others, the response is to bury one’s self in work or some other diversion or distraction.

I choose to read the news every day because I don’t want to keep my head in the sand, but I have to brace myself knowing that much of the news will be “bad news.” (This even applies to the sports section.) At times I too feel as if “I’ve had it up to my neck.”

In response, I have decided to be more deliberate in my prayers and in practicing deliberate gratitude. I know I have so much to be grateful for, but I have to keep reminding myself. I have to be intentional in reminding myself that God is in the midst of the storm with us. I know that I need to open myself to God’s presence.

Sometimes, when we’re too tired, or mad, or sad to pray in our own words, the old prayers help. The following prayer (from The Book of Common Prayer, page 814) has helped Anglicans and Episcopalians since the 17th century –

O God, the creator and preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; [especially those for whom our prayers are desired]; that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Blessings,
MAB+

Church Photo Directory



Request for photos!

We are in the process of updating the parish directory. If you are new to Ascension or if it's been awhile since you've provided us with an updated picture of your family, please email a recent photo to the church office at parish@ascension-sierramadre.com. Also, if your contact information has changed (phone, cell phone, email or mailing address), please let us know so that we know how to get in touch with you. Thank You!



There's a great deal that can be said about the world in which we find ourselves. I came across the following from the Hopi Indian Chief White Eagle. He was reflecting on our current state of affairs. I feel it's worth sharing and well worth reading.

" This moment humanity is experiencing can be seen as a door or a hole. The decision to fall in the hole or walk through the door is up to you. If you consume the news 24 hours a day, with negative energy, constantly nervous, with pessimism, you will fall into this hole.

But if you take the opportunity to look at yourself, to rethink life and death, to take care of yourself and others, then you will walk through the portal.

Take care of your home, take care of your body. Connect with your spiritual home. When you take care of yourself, you take care of everyone at the same time.

Do not underestimate the spiritual dimension of this crisis. Take the perspective of an eagle that sees everything from above with a broader view. There is a social question in this crisis, but also a spiritual question. The two go hand in hand.

Without the social dimension we fall into fanaticism. Without the spiritual dimension, we fall into pessimism and futility. Are you ready to face this crisis? Grab your toolbox and use all the tools at your disposal.

Learn resistance from the example of Indian and African peoples: we have been and are exterminated. But we never stopped singing, dancing, lighting a fire and rejoicing.

Don't feel guilty for feeling blessed in these troubled times. Being sad or angry doesn't help at all. Resistance is resistance through joy!

You have the right to be strong and positive. And there's no other way to do it than to maintain a beautiful, happy, bright posture.

Has nothing to do with alienation (ignorance of the world). It's a resistance strategy.

When we cross the threshold, we have a new worldview because we faced our fears and difficulties.

This is all you can do now:

- Serenity in the storm
- Keep calm, pray everyday
- Make a habit of meeting the sacred every day.
- Show resistance through art, joy, trust and love."

Hopi Indian Chief White Eagle

Be well, be blessed, be resistant.

Deacon Ed+

NOTES FROM THE LOFT

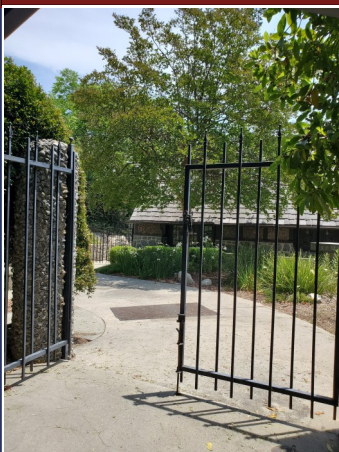
After more than a year and a half, choral music returns to the loft on September 12! Our stalwart group will be equipped with singers' masks which aid in breathing and vocal projection. I know we'll all enjoy the leadership the choir brings to our hymn-singing, service music, and anthems.

We've decided that, for the time being, we'll limit our rehearsals to Sunday mornings at 9:10 and present the psalm and one anthem each week. As I mentioned in last month's column, we're in need of additional voices ~ if you feel called to "try us out," please join us in the loft at 9:10 on the 12th.

*When in our music God is glorified, and adoration leaves no room for pride,
It is as though the whole creation cried Alleluia!
~Fred Pratt Green*



Debora Huffman, Director of Music and Organist



Hello...some of you may remember me from the 80's and the 90's...and even from the first decade of the Millennium! Life and times took me away from Ascension and Sierra Madre, but Covid brought me back. In the late summer of 2020, I began participating in Ascension services after an upheaval in the Episcopal church where I live. I wanted more comfort, familiarity, and stability in the world I was experiencing, so I began with church. "Protestants vote with their feet," Father Michael once said. I voted with my laptop and with a longtime sidekick, Bob McCready. On December 17, 2020, Bob asked me {on bended knees} to marry him. He knew Father Michael from my mom's service a few months earlier, and the three of us agreed on a January 2021 date to meet outside at Ascension to discuss getting married there.

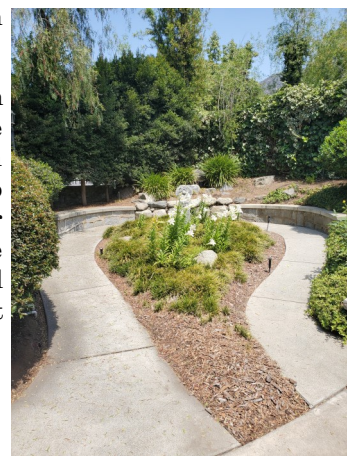
Bob, Father Michael, and I sat on a stone wall on a mild California winter morning. Father Michael did his due diligence and reminded us that we "are no spring chickens"... (we told him we were in disguise) ...then Bob and I strolled the church grounds, mulling over the idea of an outside ceremony...which led us to the area of the Memorial Garden.

Covid permeated all corners of our reality at that point in time. Inoculations were just beginning and gatherings were only sung about in hymns, poetry, and protests. Bob and I both love gardening; and as we looked at the sacred space of the Memorial Garden, an idea was born to regenerate the long dormant plantings and space. Mike Beach and Adrienne Wilson had passed on...and I felt compelled to reenter my time at Ascension with a commitment to the roses and the souls who rest there. My childhood friend Pat Lyon, a consummate gardener, member of Pasadena Beautiful (and St. Edmund's), signed on with me to dig, weed, and replant where needed.

This was still January or maybe early February, 2021. As I searched my memory for Ascension parishioners who might be enlisted to help, I literally ran into two at the top of my list while I was at Taylor's: Beth Smith-Kellock and Nancy Beckham. Nancy graciously donated her gardeners for a day of "hedge fun," and Beth offered to recruit Beverly Clifton in the initial tidying time that Pat and I tried to plan. You may remember that Beth wrote an article about Lew Watanabe, who designed the fountain in the garden's northwest corner. Thanks to Pat's persistent pulling, we could see the fountain once again! It became clear that the brass plates commemorating those parishioners who have been buried in the Memorial Garden needed more cleaning than soap, water, and brushes could do. Jennifer Jesser and her husband, Jim, made a generous donation to the Memorial Garden Fund; and I planned to write an article for The Spire...Ha! I am a few months late.

During that time, Ray Smith and the Vestry have reworked the gardening and irrigation plans for the Memorial Garden; and as the days hopefully cool and rain gathers in the clouds of our prayers, I would like you to take some time and sit in the quiet of the Garden space. Perhaps, as I do, you will smile at the memories of people like Wilma Clark, who always wore hats and was skeptical of female acolytes...or Paul Clifton, who was ever present and ever kind...There is still work to be done to restore the plantings and the plaques. Going forward, I will be asking for volunteers of many kinds...and I hope you will find yourself saying, yes, I would like that. I can assure you that there is a peace that passes all understanding as you spend time in the Ascension Memorial Garden.

Karen McCready, Ascension Parishioner



Sign-up for Flowers and Sanctuary Candles!

Sign-up using Sign-up Genius (see links below) or in person at the back of the church.

Payments should be made by cash or CHECK (\$40.00 (flowers) and \$15.00 (Sanctuary candle) ****checks 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

SEPTEMBER 2021

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|--|------------------------|---|--|----------|
| | | | 1 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 2 9am Rector's Forum Rector's Office GOODEN SCHOOL 1ST DAY BACK! | 3 | 4 |
| 5 <u>8am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 6 LABOR DAY * PARISH OFFICE CLOSED | 7 | 8 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 9 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum Rector's Office 10:30am Staff Meeting | 10 | 11 |
| Deacon Ed Vacation | | | | | | |
| 12 <u>8am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 13 8:00am Yoga/Hall | 14 | 15 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 16 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum Rector's Office | 17 3pm-Mem Svc for Lois Walton/ Oakdale Cemetery, Glendale | 18 |
| Deacon Ed Vacation | | | | | | |
| 19 <u>8am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 20 8:00am Yoga/Hall | 21 7:30pm Vestry Meeting Hall | 22 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 23 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum Rector's Office 10:30am Staff Meeting | 24 | 25 |
| Deacon Ed Vacation | | | | | | |
| 26 <u>8am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Indoor Worship</u> w/Eucharist *Facebook Live* | 27 8:00am Yoga/Hall | 28 | 29 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 30 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum Rector's Office | | |