



The September 2023 SPIRE

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

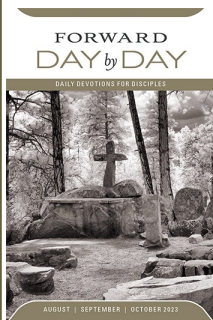


Upcoming Events

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



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!

August 2023 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2023 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget:	\$134,091
YTD Actual:	\$135,749
Difference:	+\$1,658

From the Rector

As I write this article, I am anticipating a couple of funerals over the next few weeks. In both cases, the person who died left very explicit instructions. But it is also true that sometimes the family is left with no guidance as to what the deceased would want them to do. In some cases, to quote from the Great Litany, the person dies “suddenly and unprepared.”

I hope that this season of funerals can be an inspiration for all of us to take some time to give some thought to end of life considerations.

First, do you have a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare in place? A few years ago Deacon Ed shared with me a new document that can take the place of a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare called The Five Questions. This document goes farther than a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare in that it asks about quality of life and hopes.

Have you filled out our Funeral and Burial Instructions form? This form can be easily accessed on the Parish website under Resources – Life Events. (And yes, we maintain a file for these documents in the Parish Office. These instructions make life so much simpler for loved ones.)

Finally, do you have a Will or Family Trust? Death in families, and in the Church, is never without grief and sorrow. But by planning ahead, death can be more easily addressed. Prior planning is a remarkable gift for all involved.

MAB+

“Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord:
And let light perpetual shine upon them
May their souls, and the souls of all the departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. *Amen.*”

Dear Ascension Community,

As I come to the end of my time with you all, I want to take a moment to say thank you for this last year that I have gotten to spend with you. You all welcomed me with open arms and have treated me with kindness and generosity. Participating in your community during my discernment has been a gift, and I am so grateful for the time I have gotten to spend with you.

I will miss being with you. The people of Ascension will remain in my prayers and my heart, and I would be glad to connect with any of you in the future.

My email address is jd.d.neal@gmail.com — please feel free to reach out.

Peace to you, friends. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

J.D. Neal





As we continue to explore trauma and Trauma Informed Care (TIC), it's important to remember that trauma affects us all and comes in many forms. Emotional and psychological trauma doesn't discriminate. It affects everyone regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or social-economic status. It can be a single event or a series of events. When traumatic events occur, it can take a significant amount of time to get over the memories and emotions of not being able to feel safe. Working through the effects of trauma sometimes requires professional help. Full disclosure, I've worked with my therapist for many years resulting in a healthier and more emotionally balanced life.

I've come to believe and strongly advocate for a holistic approach to wellbeing. Yes, it takes work and involves physical, psychological, and spiritual support. That old saying, "it takes a village," it's true. But there are things we can do on our own to manage stress.

It starts with realizing that there are many different types of stress. Some are predictable and have a beginning and an end, such as the holidays...Thanksgiving and crazy Aunt Tilly come to mind. Other types of stress are unexpected and/or chronic.

When stress is predictable, you can make plans to manage the negative aspects of it before it arrives. For example, if you know you have a stressful event coming up, remember Aunt Tilly, you can plan to do something you enjoy afterwards.

There's no escaping Aunt Tilly or the rest of the stress in our lives. Taking stock of our available coping skills will prepare us for whatever comes our way. Stress is guaranteed to impact us, but we have the power to determine how. That beautiful diamond on Aunt Tilly's finger started off life as rock material under high pressure. It had a choice to either crack or transform itself. Obviously, it learned to manage its stress.

Next month we'll continue exploring techniques for self-care to help with managing our stress, but in the meantime:

Be well, be blessed, do something positive for yourself.

Deacon Ed+

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.

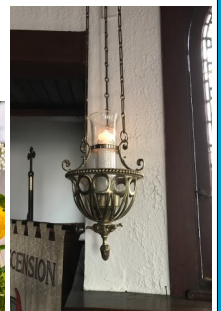
Here are the sign-up genius links:

Sanctuary Candles:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E44A4A628A7F94-sanctuary1>

Altar Flowers:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E44A4A628A7F94-altar1>



Tuesday Night Dinner Group

Do you like to eat out in local restaurants? Would you prefer not to eat alone? If you answered yes to these two questions, you might consider coming to dinner on Tuesday night and checking the group out.

This church group meets on Tuesday nights at 6:00 at five different restaurants on a rotational basis. Four are located in Sierra Madre, so you wouldn't have far to go to join them (El Portal in Pasadena is the only exception—see the attached photograph of a recent meal)

The gathering of men and women varies in size on any particular week ranging from eight to fifteen. Both eight and ten-fifteen service attendees get a chance to intermingle.

For more information about next week's meeting location, contact Ray Smith at ray@madre.net or Ray's cell phone # 626-233-1035. All are welcome!



Forward Today: The holiness of labor

August 29, 2018

Forward Today, [scott gunn](#)

Dear friends in Christ,

We are coming up to Labor Day weekend, at least for readers from the United States. You might wonder why I'm mentioning this, since Labor Day is a secular holiday, and I usually don't write about secular holidays.

It turns out that our Book of Common Prayer has a collect appointed for Labor Day. You can find the contemporary version on page 261.

Almighty God, you have so linked our lives one with another that all we do affects, for good or ill, all other lives: So guide us in the work we do, that we may do it not for self alone, but for the common good; and, as we seek a proper return for our own labor, make us mindful of the rightful aspirations of other workers, and arouse our concern for those who are out of work; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

It's a lovely prayer, isn't it? That prayer dignifies the work that we all do, whether we are employed or not. It also reminds us of the importance of all those others who work and of those who lack employment.

If you are in the US celebrating the holiday, I hope you'll set aside a few moments for prayer or conversation with those around you. Remember the dignity of work and the indignity of exploitation. Pray for those who, in our culture that assigns value to people based on income, lack employment. Think about how everyone has a vocation, and ask how God might be calling you and your loved ones to labor?

Yours faithfully,

Scott Gunn,

Executive Director



Image Source: Pixabay

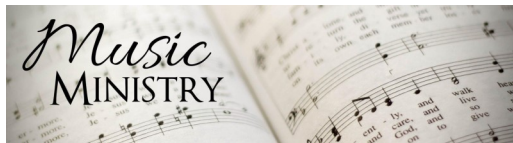


MUSIC_{AT} ASCENSION

NOTES FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

Mr. Robert L. Williamson

Organist-Choirmaster



Time, Talents & Treasures

As we approach the 2023-2024 program year, we are in need of additional singers and musicians. At the moment, two people have volunteered to sing in the choir for the upcoming season.

To supplement the choir, I am asking for donations to the music fund to assist with the costs of hiring musicians and music. Our fund has been depleted and needs to be refurbished in order to let us hire additional musicians for weekly and high feast services. If we bring in a paid singer for a Sunday morning, the average cost is \$150.00 (\$300.00 at Christmas and Easter).

Your generous gift may be given in honor of or as a memorial to a special person or persons.

Just like a song my grandmother taught me as a child-
"I am the Church, we are the Church, we are the Church together"

Singers Needed!



The choir provides musical leadership for our congregation by singing in worship each week. We need Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Basses to complete our program. We are down to two people in the choir for the new season and we need volunteers.

The only commitment is a Sunday morning rehearsal prior to worship. We meet at 9:00am each week and sing for worship at the 10:15am. If you are interested in becoming a new member, please contact me to discuss the possibilities. Remember, there is strength in numbers and singing in the choir is a great way to praise the Lord.

*Phil De
Flora*



**Forward
Movement**
inspire disciples. empower evangelists.

Forward Today: Opening up our prayers

February 15, 2023

Dear friends in Christ,



Some time ago, I was convicted by the teaching of Jesus we read in Matthew 5:43-45:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.’”

Photo by [Jametlene Reskp](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I’ve never really been persecuted in a serious way, and I don’t think of myself as having enemies. But Jesus’ teaching made me reflect on who I was praying for. So I decided to open up my prayer list.

Every day, I say morning and evening prayer. Near the end of the daily office, there is a place to add our own intercessions to the prayers offered in the liturgy. I now pray and give thanks in four categories:

- Friends
- Enemies
- Strangers
- Thanksgiving

Most of the time, I had found myself praying for friends, for people I know or particularly care about. There’s nothing wrong with that! But I decided to add “enemies” to my prayer list. As I said, I don’t really have declared enemies, but I pray for people I don’t like, people I’m afraid of, and people who might wish me harm. My list includes regular people, politicians, and others.

A few weeks ago, I added “strangers” to my list. These are people I might have met on the street or in a shop, people whose names and stories I don’t really know, but who might need prayers. On cold nights, I pray for people who must sleep outside.

Lastly, over the last few months, I also realized I didn’t have a formal practice of offering thanks to God for the many blessings of this life. So I added this to my prayers. It’s already strengthened my life to remember twice each day all the ways that God has blessed me or blessed others in my sight.

No doubt my prayer list will continue to evolve over time. But I wanted to pass my current practice along, in case it’s helpful in your life of prayer. If you don’t have a daily prayer practice, it’s never too late to start. You can just think of one or more of the categories on my list and pray in the shower, on a walk, on your commute to work, or in a quiet moment of your day.

Let us pray.

Yours faithfully,

Scott Gunn, Executive Director



"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."

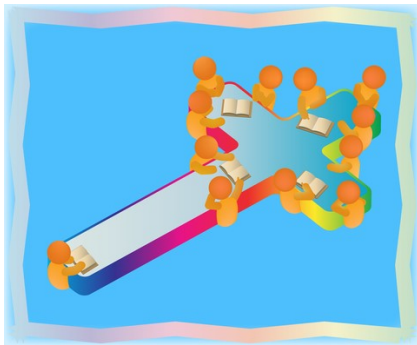
CARS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
based out of San Diego, California.

Food Ingathering

Outreach is one way we meet the needs of others from the abundance with which God has blessed us. As a church community, we who have so much must consider those who have so little. Ascension's response to the local community is to bring food for the Friends in Deed Food Distribution Center. Together we can make a difference in the lives of others.



"Between the Masses" Discussion Group



All are welcome to join a group of parishioners meeting weekly in Hawks Hall on Sundays in the 9 to 10 am Coffee Hour for spiritual (and perhaps "spirited") discussion of pre-assigned readings (usually brief!) on a wide variety of Christian themes. Reading selections are determined by the group itself. Please feel free to join the group even if you have not read the week's reading selection.

To get the reading selection emailed to you, please email Gordon and Diane Tomaske at gdtomaske@sbcglobal.net.

J.D. Neal's Despedida Sunday, August 27, 2023



Thank you to Jon Prentice and
Lynne Holl 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

SEPTEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 LA EPISCOPAL DODGER NIGHT 7PM	2
3 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	4 8:30am Yoga/Hall LABOR DAY Parish Office Closed	5 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	6 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall Men's Group Monthly Luncheon Nano Café Noon RSVP to Fr. Michael	7 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	8	9 Choir Practice 10am—Noon Hall Music Recital 2-5pm Hall Private
10 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	11 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	12 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	13 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	14 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	15	16
FALL KICK-OFF						
17 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	18 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	19 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	20 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	21 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	22	23
24 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 9am Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	25 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	26 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets Clericus Mtg Noon/Hall Vestry Meeting 7pm/Hall	27 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	28 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	29	30 Father Michael Out of Town through October 8th/NC & SC