



The April 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.



"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

From the Rector

It has been over two years since Bishop John Taylor directed that congregations across the Diocese of Los Angeles should administer Eucharist in one kind. For many of our parishioners, giving up the Common Chalice was a painful sacrifice which was as hard to bear as the stretches when we were not able to gather in person.

Bishop Taylor has recently given the go ahead for us to resume receiving Eucharist in both kinds, beginning Palm Sunday – April 10th. Our folks here at Ascension will have essentially three options. The first option is to continue to receive in one kind. The second option is to receive from the common cup. (Please keep in mind that our chalices are made of precious metals which have an anti-microbial quality. Also, we use sacramental wine which is higher in alcohol content. After each person receives, the chalice is turned and wiped with the linen called a purificator.) A third option will be for individuals and households to receive from a small chalice into which a small amount of consecrated wine will be poured from the common cruet. Folks may choose to bring from home a glass or cup that holds special significance or to use a small glass which we will have available. Please note – the practice of Intinction (when a parishioner dips the bread in the wine) is not permitted under the diocesan guidelines.



In addition, we are going to resume passing the collection plate at the offertory and return to having the elements – the bread and wine – brought forward by the ushers. All of these changes are dependent on Southern California not experiencing another surge of Covid cases. From the outset, I have always held the health and safety of our community as a primary concern. Like all of you, I long for a return to "normal." Looking forward to a blessed Easter,

Father Michael+

Holy Week, Easter Services

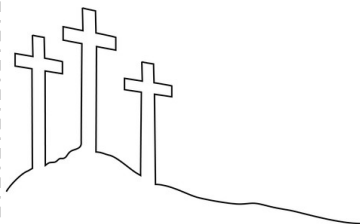
Palm Sunday April 10
Mass (Rite I) 8:00 AM
Mass (Rite II) 10:15 AM

Tenebrae April 13
Mass 7:00 PM

Maundy Thursday April 14
Mass 8:15 AM
Foot Washing and Mass 7:00 PM
Watch at Altar of Repose 9 PM – 10 PM

Good Friday April 15
Stations of the Cross Noon
Good Friday Liturgy 7:00 PM

Easter Day April 17
The Great Vigil and 1st Eucharist of Easter 6:00 AM
Easter Brunch/Egg Hunt 8:00 AM
Festival High Mass 10:15 AM
Egg Hunt after the service



MARCH 2022 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2022 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget: \$52,500
YTD Actual: \$57,731
Difference: \$+5,231



During the time he spent in the wilderness, Jesus was stretched to the limits of his imagination. We, too, often find ourselves in the wilderness with our imaginations stretched to the limits.

The gospels most definitely stretch us to the limits of our imaginations, particularly when tasking us to love our enemies. Easier said than done; but Jesus was very clear when he said, “love your enemies.” Before loving our enemies, it might be easier to simply pray for them. That alone might well stretch many of us to the limits of our imaginations.

It goes without saying that currently the most despised man on the planet hands down is Vladimir Putin...yes, him! It's doubtful that any of us would invite him to sit at our table for dinner. But I can't speak for Jesus.

I know I should pray for him. Yes, even him, the man who is responsible for the misplacement of families, children, the death of thousands of innocent Ukrainians, and who is putting the future of the world at risk, who because of his cruel and inhuman actions, we lay awake at night frightened and wondering how far the insanity will go. Yes, him.

But I'm struggling because if I cannot pray grudgingly, ragingly, reluctantly, furiously, confusedly, complicatedly for his shattered soul, what is the point of praying at all!

But there must have been a shred of holiness in the man, at least originally; there must have been a small, shriveled soul once. Maybe there was some small shivering moment much later when he sat at that long table in the Kremlin, when he felt a flicker of shame at what he's doing, at how he is wasting his life, killing innocents, destroying cities, and endangering his own people.

I hope so. I pray. I pray that somewhere, somehow, sometimes he weeps for his copious sins. Mr. Putin is a Christian. He was baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church as a boy, which wasn't all that common back in the Soviet era. His father, who worked for the NKVD (the predecessor of the KGB), was an atheist; but his mother was a devoted Christian and raised Vladimir in the faith. Putin himself has said that he became a practicing Orthodox Christian in 1993 when he was 41 years old. He openly supports the church, even using the instruments of government to promote it.

Thomas Merton writes that : “it's a risky thing to pray and the danger is that our very prayers get between God and us. The great thing in prayer is not to pray, but to go directly to God. . . .” The fact is, though, that if you descend into the depths of your own spirit and arrive somewhere near the center of what you are, you are confronted with the inescapable truth that at the very root of your existence, you are in constant and immediate contact with the infinite power of God.

I pray that Putin's dark energy is dissolved by mercy and cleansed by love. I pray that I am right in believing that there is forgiveness bigger than any sin and that somehow in ways I do not understand but believe in with awe and a little fear, that you Lord, find a chamber in your heart for even him. Yes, him and me too. And so: Amen.

Be well, be blessed, stretch yourself to the limits of your imagination, take risks, pray for the least likeable, be in immediate contact with the infinite power of God.

Deacon Ed+

A great big THANK YOU goes out to all who have helped and will help over the Palm Sunday weekend, Holy Week, and Easter. Palms were hung by Cameron Cox and Chris Bamberger, and Nan Dougall took the reins of St. Anne's Altar Guild while I was out of town. Many, many hours are involved during the Holy Week and Easter set-up, and this work couldn't be accomplished without the dedication and love of all the members of altar guild; my deepest gratitude and love to you all. Last, but not least, thank you to all who have given and those who will give generously for the purchase of the Easter flowers. Our sacred space will be radiant on Easter.

In Christ,

Lynne P Holl

Thank You!



EASTER FLOWERS

Although we are only in the beginning of Lent, we eagerly look forward to our glorious Easter Celebration in April. In order to make this service as beautiful as possible, we need your generous donations for flowers. Donation envelopes are at the back of the church. Checks should be made out to Church of the Ascension, marked for Easter flowers.

St. Anne's Altar Guild thanks you in advance for your generosity in once again helping our Sanctuary look splendid for a Joyous Easter.

Lynne P Holl, Altar Guild Directress



EASTER MUSIC

Please consider making a contribution to our Easter music program. Music offering envelopes are available at the back of the church and on the reception table in Hawks Hall.

Thank You for your support.

MUSIC_{AT} ASCENSION

NOTES FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

Mr. Robert L. Williamson



Welcome!

I would like to take a moment to thank everyone who has been so supportive and has provided encouragement to myself since my arrival at Ascension on the first Sunday in March.

I look forward to providing leadership and musical offerings for many years to come. We have a great foundation and a rich heritage of music upon which to base our future with building programs and outreach within our community.

If you have any questions regarding the music program, I would ask that you contact me directly for more information.

Join the Choir

Our choir at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension is a very dedicated and marvelous group of singers and choral scholars. We encourage youth to adults who enjoy music to consider joining the choir as a volunteer and/or choral scholar.

We rehearse every Sunday morning from 9:00 am to 10:00 am prior to the 10:15 am Rite II~Choral Eucharist Service. During the seasons of High Feast and Holy Days, we will schedule additional rehearsals as needed.

We encourage and urge those who would like to join the Ascension Choir to contact the Organist & Director of Music Mr. Robert L. Williamson to schedule an audition.

*Coli Deo
flora*

Update on the Memorial Garden

Thank you to all who have given most generous donations and support as we continue to improve the appearance of our memorial garden. Many people whom we have loved are still with us in our hearts, and they would be so pleased to know that they continue to live on in our memories. There is still much to be completed in the garden, and we would be most grateful for your participation in this most meaningful project.

Thank You,
Beth Smith-Kellock,
 Memorial Garden Committee

(Donations are made out to the Church of the Ascension)



Bring Bells on Easter Day!

Easter is a time for joyous bell ringing. Once again, I encourage everyone to bring bells - bells of all sorts and sizes - to the Easter Day services. We ring them during the first singing of the Gloria in excelsis and with gusto during the singing of the hymn "Jesus Christ is Risen Today."

During Eastertide, instead of ringing the Angelus on the large bell at the conclusion of the service, we will ring the Regina Coeli. This joyful devotion dates from the 12th century and invites us to rejoice with Mary at the Resurrection. The text is –

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
 The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia.
 Has risen, as He said, alleluia.
 Pray for us to God, alleluia.
 V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
 R. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ gave rejoicing to the world, grant, we pray, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joy of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The bell will ring four sets of two strokes, with pauses between each set, followed by eight peals. As in most things, this devotion is only one option in the broad spectrum of personal piety.

As we approach Holy Week and Easter, I pray that your Lent has been a time of renewal and growth. **MAB+**



Donations Needed for Easter Egg Hunts!

We are so excited that the Easter Egg hunt is back on this year but it will look a little different than in years past.

To ensure the health and safety for this event, please note that there will not be an egg stuffing or dyeing party this year.

We kindly request for Easter Egg hunt supplies to be **PRE-FILLED & SEALED** Easter Eggs. These specific eggs can be found in most stores with an Easter aisle.

We are also able to accept: Individually wrapped candy and small non-food items (e. Stickers, Pencils, Small Toys, etc.)

Thank you so much for helping us reframe the beloved Ascension tradition!





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

Forward Today: The neglected commandment

March 9, 2022 Scott Gunn

Dear friends in Christ,

I lead a Bible study on Tuesday evenings. Not long ago, we looked at the Ten Commandments in Exodus. One of the things we talked about is how we mostly respect and try to keep nine of the commandments. We don't murder, steal, or lie. Or at least we agree that those things are bad!



But we don't rest very well, do we? Christians have varied understanding of what Sabbath means and how to keep it. But in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere throughout the Old Testament, it's pretty clear that God wants his people to rest! There are myriad ways this is lived out in the scriptures. Jesus, too, kept the Sabbath, though he sometimes got into squabbles about how to keep it.

Jesus rested. He kept the Sabbath – though perhaps not the way others expected. God commands rest. Jesus rested. So why is it so hard for us?

In short, our culture promotes the idol of productivity. We live in a world that teaches us that our value comes from what we produce or accomplish. But that's antithetical to the Gospel. The Gospel teaches us that we are precious regardless of what we produce. The scriptures say that we are worthy of God's love and redeeming grace.

Taking a day to rest – not to check off a list of errands, but to really rest – is countercultural. When someone asks you what you're doing today, try answering, "Nothing. I'm resting." See what kind of reaction you get!

The pandemic has blurred lines of home and work. We all need rest more than ever, and it's harder than ever to get away. I hope you'll find a way to rest regularly. God literally made us hardwired to benefit from the gift of rest. When we rest, we can simply enjoy our creation and preservation by almighty God. We can remember what is truly important.

At Forward Movement, we try to model the practices of discipleship. We pray every day at the office. We practice generosity by giving away thousands of free books and booklets every year. We study the Bible together. And we rest.

We rest in several ways. Our lay staff and clergy have taken sabbaticals. Our full-time staff have every other Friday off, yielding a three-day weekend. We work hard while we're on duty, but we also do our best to give folks time away from work for family time and other activities.

This week, we've closed our office. All week long, Monday through Friday, our whole staff is enjoying a week of refreshment and rest after a very stressful few months with pandemic-related issues. I hope you'll say a word of prayer to give thanks for my hard-working and amazing colleagues at Forward Movement, that they can rest well. We love our work, and that's why we're all taking a few days away from it.

How are you doing at rest? How is your church doing? Can you allow your hard-working and probably exhausted staff and clergy to have some real rest time?

Rest. It is God's command, and God's commandments are good for us and for our world. Rest.

Yours faithfully, Scott Gunn, Executive Director



March 27, 2022

Bishop Visit

Katharine Jefferts Schori



Thank You to Jon Prentice,
Lisa Wagner, and Nancy
Pierson 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

APRIL 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 8am Indoor Worship <u>w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship <u>w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	4 Fr. Michael out of office/Clergy Support Group 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall	5 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall	6 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 	7 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	8	9 Noon—6pm Piano Rehearsal/ Recital Hawks Hall Private
10 8am Indoor Worship <u>w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship <u>w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	11 8:30am Yoga/Hall 11am Interment for John Luke/ Memorial Garden	12	13 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	14 9am Rector's Forum	15	16
	HOLY WEEK SERVICE DATES & TIMES ARE NOTED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEWSLETTER					
17  SEE 1ST PAGE FOR THE WORSHIP, BRUNCH, AND EGG HUNT SCHEDULE.	18 8:30am Yoga/Hall	19 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall 7:30pm Vestry Meeting Hall	20 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	21 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	22	23
24 8am Indoor Worship <u>w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am Indoor Worship <u>w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	25 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall	26 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall	27 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	28 9am Rector's Forum 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	29	30