



The May 2022 SPIRE

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

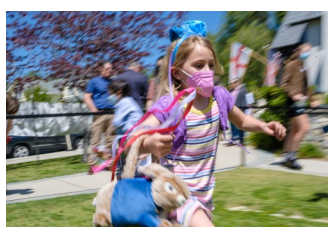


Upcoming Events

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

Easter Photos

More photos on page 6 and 7!



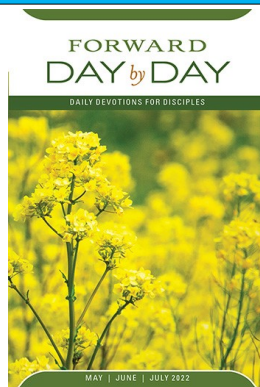
From the Rector

The last several weeks have been very busy here at Ascension. Holy Week and Easter were so much better this year when we could be together in our sacred space.

I want to extend my thanks all around. To my clergy colleagues Deacon Ed and Pastor Josh, I appreciate your preaching and your “work” at the altar. To Lynne Holl and the Altar Guild, the church was absolutely lovely and the Maundy Thursday service in the Memorial Garden was memorable. To Robert Williamson and the musicians – thank you for helping us sing the familiar music of Holy Week and Easter. To Jobi McGuffie – thank you on behalf of the Easter Egg hunters (and “hiders.”) To Lisa Wagner for providing a truly festive brunch. To Kim in the parish office – thank you for all your behind the scenes support.

As some of you may recall, I pretty much missed Holy Week and Easter last year. And, of course, we all missed out on our “normal” service in the Spring of 2020. To be able to celebrate the Resurrection this year with a semblance of normal brought tears of joy to me. Looking out on faces that we haven’t seen for two years was almost overwhelming. I came to realize that we weren’t simply celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord, but also in some ways the resurrection of our Church. It just felt so good.

Father Michael+



**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 requested.

APRIL 2022 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2022 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget: \$70,000

YTD Actual: \$72,608

Difference: \$+2,608

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 at the back of the church.

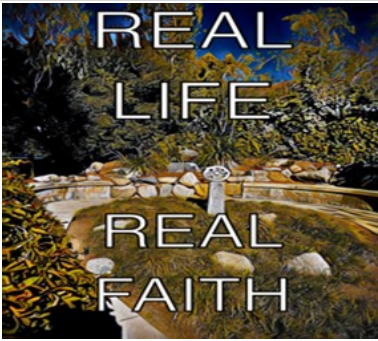
****Payment should be made by CHECK (\$40.00 for flowers and \$15.00 for a candle) **payable to Church of the Ascension.** **** Please include a note giving the date that you signed up for and any dedication.

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>





Recently, I had the privilege of interring former parishioner John Luke in the Memorial Garden next to his beloved wife Ann.

During the service, the poem *Forgetfulness* by former American Poet Laureate Billy Collins was read, a reading which deeply moved me for many reasons -- some personal, some pastoral. I was reminded of my own aging process, the frustrations that accompany the journey, and the fact that we all age and we all forget, a little at a time.

Forgetfulness is a deceptively innocent looking poem that explores the consequences of gradual memory loss. Its message builds through a series of examples of things that a human might forget ranging from an author's name to riding a bicycle.

The basic theme is forgetfulness, plain and simple; but the underlying issues are many and include that of identity versus time, tragedy versus comedy, and life story versus trivial detail.

All of us face memory loss sooner or later. The poem deals with the universal as well as the personal. The speaker appears to be experiencing this slightly disturbing phenomena: forgetting things for no good reason while trying to resist this situation by learning new facts and simultaneously losing old ones.

Forgetfulness

The name of the author is the first to go
followed obediently by the title, the plot,
the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel
which suddenly becomes one you have never read,
never even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor
decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,
to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine Muses goodbye
and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,
and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,
the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember,
it is not poised on the tip of your tongue,
not even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river
whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall,
well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those
who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night
to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.
No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted
out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

(Billy Collins, 1990)

Be well, be blessed, be patient with yourself and others.

Deacon Ed+



MUSIC_{AT} ASCENSION

NOTES FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

Mr. Robert L. Williamson

Organist-Choirmaster

This Joyful Eastertide

I would like to take a moment to thank our Choir and Guest Musicians who diligently worked hard to make Holy Week and Easter a spiritual journey to the glorious resurrection of our Lord.

Choir:

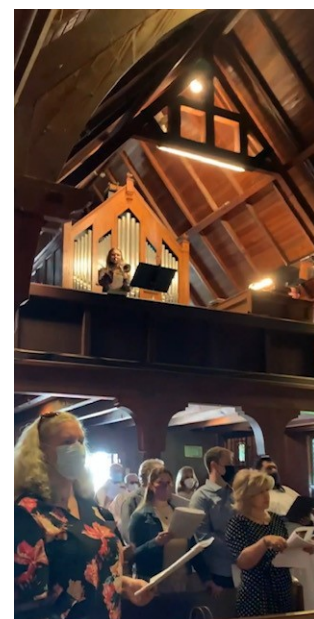
Susan Beach, Madeleine Lew ,
José Maldonado, Charley Noecker
Collette Ostrye, Carol Rasmussen,
Lavette Teague, Emmanuel Yoque,
and Lurdes Zapata



Musicians:

Violin: Larry Greenfield
Trumpet: Anne Marquardt

*Cohi Deo
Gloria*



Organ Works

Our David Harris Organ is getting some needed work. The organ, which was installed in the balcony in 1982, is getting some needed TLC. We have pipe work and mechanical issues with our instrument that simply need to be repaired and given a facelift, so to speak. (After 40 years, we all need a little love). The Vestry has approved a proposal from Ballantyne Pipe Organ Company to make the needed repairs and to move the organ console to the center of the balcony. This tonal work with the organ and new placement of the console will update the organ and meet the future needs of our music program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with me about the project.



Music and our Website

On a final note, I have updated our church website with a tab that talks about the Music at Ascension.

I would invite everyone to visit the website and look at the new additions.



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE
ASCENSION

HOME ABOUT MINISTRIES MUSIC RESOURCES GIVE CONTACT

Search





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

Forward Today: May we show forth

April 20, 2022 Forward Today, Scott Gunn

Dear friends in Christ,

Thanks be to God we have a whole season to celebrate with joy the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's just too much to fit into one day. So for fifty days we can bask in the glow of resurrection light as we seek to understand how this gift changes our lives and our hopes.

Every day of this first week of Easter is a major feast day according to our prayer book. That means each day has its own assigned lessons and its own collect. I love several of them, but tomorrow's collect really struck me as I was writing this message.

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Isn't that lovely? In Christ's suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, God has established a new covenant. And we who follow Jesus should show in our lives what we believe!



How are our lives changed by the reality of the resurrection of Jesus? What does it matter that God has decisively acted in our world to defeat sin, evil, and death? In this sometimes chaotic world of ours, can Easter joy help us to be bearers of mercy and grace? These are questions we might grapple with in this Easter season.

We spend a lot of energy on our Lenten disciplines, rightly so! But Easter disciplines might also help us live as people who follow a risen Lord. Easter disciplines might include prayer, thanksgiving, sharing, proclamation, worship, or whatever helps you grow into the full stature of Christ.

Forward Movement is here to walk with you through the fifty days of Easter. You can read [daily reflections at 50days.org](https://www.50days.org/). These are short reflections written by a group of folks, many of whom write for Grow Christians. The blog features Easter music on Monday, throwbacks to ancient writings on Thursdays, and lovely reflections on Easter joy the other days of the week.

You can get an [ebook](#) or paper copy ([Forward Movement](#) or [Amazon](#)) of my latest book, [Easter Triumph, Easter Joy: Meditations for the Fifth Days of Eastertide](#). You can cultivate a habit of daily prayer with extra alleluias on our [free prayer site](#). You can read the Book of Acts or meditate daily on one of the great Easter icons.

Whatever you do, I hope you and I will not go back to "business as usual" now that we've celebrated Easter Day. The world can never go back to business as usual now that death is defeated! Let us spend the next 47 days exploring the joy and transformation of Easter.

Blessings to you all. Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Yours faithfully,

Scott Gunn, Executive Director

<https://news.forwardmovement.org/>



Every Last Thing is a Season

April 17, 2022 By [Emily Rutledge](#)

Lately I've been wondering what would happen if we framed the liturgical seasons as a practical teaching tool for humaning instead of what the Encyclopedia Britannica defines them as an "annual cycle of seasons and days observed in the Christian churches in commemoration of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and of his virtues as exhibited in the lives of the saints."

The latter definition gives me a very 'there will be a test on this' feeling. Don't be the person to say 'alleluia' at the fraction during Lent. Be sure you know to add TWO alleluias to responses during Easter. Saint Nicholas Day is December 6th and THAT is where Santa originates from so don't be going all wild on December 25th with his arrival, that is Jesus' day. We often celebrate the transfiguration TWICE a year and if you are lucky you get to preach on it both times without having a good grasp on what the heck happened on that mountain. Then there is this long stretch of green after Pentecost (don't forget to wear red that Sunday!) where it's just 'normal church' and we call it the 'growing season' but we all kinda wonder why our big holidays are not spread out more since the liturgical seasons were created by people and not God and when Christmas and Easter get too close together it feels rushed and when it's too far apart sometimes it falls on spring break and that's never a good thing. And why is Easter always a different day?

These are all things I think about. A lot. It's the framework I've seen the church year through for my entire life. A checklist of sorts. Get excited for Jesus, celebrate his birth, get sad for Jesus, honor his death, EMPTY tomb, Thomas doubts, Jesus ascends, Holy Spirit comes... REPEAT.

Since life has felt like Lent for the past two years, my heart has had to rethink how to move through these seasons. I am beginning to view them as a practice for my life based on Jesus'. When I was a runner I used to imagine that I was just getting myself prepared for the inevitable moment I would need to outrun someone trying to capture me. My son will sometimes talk through exactly what he will do if, by chance, he becomes stuck in between a mama bear and her cubs. I have a friend dedicated to outdoor survival just in case she becomes lost in the woods as a person who does not even hike.

The liturgical practices seem much more helpful than outrunning an imaginary abductor, fending off a bear, or building a fire to purify drinking water.

In Advent we practice anticipation and receiving the unexpected. We practice the experience of what we've been hoping for, ending up being much different than we imagined. We practice recognizing the upside down Kingdom of God. A baby is our redeemer. Our perfectly planned life looks *nothing* like we planned and is somehow still good and holy. We worship a God of the unexpected.

In Lent we practice mourning, simplicity, and intention. We recognize our own mortality. While for some mortality is a momentary stomach drop in the car pick-up line realizing someday every single person surrounding us, even our precious babies, will die. Then we snap out of it as soon as backpacks are dropped and days are debriefed. For others mortality is a faithful companion they carry with them through treatments or grief or pain. Death is inevitable and the practice of how we walk with it and where it can lead us is transformative. For much of the past two years the entire world has been entrenched in a kind of Lent. There has been sacrifice, there has been loss, there has been heartbreak and anger, and there has been lots of grief.

Through all of our Holy Days and seasons we practice being human. The inevitable arc of our own lives and those around us. Birth and mountain-top moments and final meals and betrayal. All of our liturgical cycles and seasons can line up with our own lived experiences but they keep moving in ways that our own lives do not. I was a pregnant person during Advent TWICE and it was magical. Mary and I were totally in sync. But I've had 35 other Advents to understand and practice anticipation and hope and am better at recognizing it when it shows up in July as an unlikely friendship or as a mid-march snow storm. I lost a dear friend on Ash Wednesday seven years ago and the liturgical season mirrored my heart but I also sat vigil as my mother transitioned from life to death in the blazing August heat.

And now, as we walk into Easter, we once again join the practice of THE WORST THINGS IS NOT THE LAST THING. I wrote about the experience of Easter two years ago and how Jesus rose but we were all still stuck at home. I had no idea how long that Lent would last. In many ways we are still in it. But here comes Easter, again. It is a reminder to us all that the metaphorical deaths we experience constantly as humans (friendships ending, lost jobs, failed classes, family strife, disease) are redeemable. The practice of Easter is critical in our ability to move through life. Jesus showed us how we can fear, we can suffer, we can be betrayed, we can fall very short of others and our own expectations, and still we can rise.

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

I often think of Jesus as the 33-year-old man he was and what he would think of The Church today. I wonder if he chuckles at the altar linens or if those beautiful flowers on the altar mean much to him. I know we get it wrong a lot in church and I hope we always strive to do better but I also believe church is one of the only places we get to practice doing life. Each year we practice welcoming unexpected salvation on Christmas, we name our mortality on Ash Wednesday, we walk through unavoidable pain on Good Friday, and we resurrect on Easter. I think Jesus wants that for us and for our children. I think he wants us to practice doing life together so that when it happens, for real, we can also do that together but we've already had some practice.



Public Domain photo via by [Kelly Sikkema](#) on [Unsplash](#)

This Easter I am practicing resurrection. I am practicing hope. I am practicing knowing that no matter how bad it gets there is redemption, even after death. I want my children to practice, too. I want them to know how all the seasons are holy and natural and universal. I want them to know that when their personal Lents arrive, Easter will follow. I want them to sing songs of celebration with their friends when they are surprised by unexpected joy and to look at their lives knowing that everything,

Every.

Last.

Thing.

Is a season.

<https://www.growchristians.org/2022/04/17/every-last-thing-is-a-season/>



April 17, 2022 Easter Sunday



Thank You to Jon Prentice, Lisa Wagner, Jobi McGuffie, Lynne Holl, and Robert Williamson 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

MAY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	2 Fr. Michael out of office/Clergy Support Group 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall	3 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall	4 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall 	5 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	6	7
CLERGY CONFERENCE IN RIVERSIDE						
8 MOTHER'S DAY <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	9 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall	10 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall	11 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	12 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	13	14
15 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	16 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall	17 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall 7:30pm Vestry Meeting Hall	18 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	19 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	20	21
22 <u>8am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	23 8:30am Yoga/Hall 1pm Gooden Drama Class/Hall	24 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall	25 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	26 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg 1:10pm Gooden Chapel	27	28
29 ASCENSION SUNDAY <u>8am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group <u>10:15am Indoor Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live*	30 	31 11am Gooden Chapel 1:15pm Gooden Chapel 12:30-3pm Gooden Drama Classes/Hall				