



The October 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.



It's almost time for our annual
Trick or Treat candy give away!

Bags of individually wrapped candy
can be left in the bin located in
the Parish Hall

Candy give away is on Tuesday,
October 31 beginning at 5:00pm.

From the Rector

This month I will be away three Sundays. Some of my travels will be work-related and some vacation time.

I will be leaving Friday, September 29th and flying to Charleston, South Carolina, where I will spend the weekend with my son Matt and his family. (Yes – I will meet my new grandson!)

Monday, the 2nd of October, I will drive up to the Trinity Conference Center in North Carolina for the Annual Meeting of the General Board of Examining Chaplains. There, we will settle on this coming year's General Ordination Examination.

On Friday, October 6th, I will return to Charleston, and fly home October 8th. My next trip is vacation – I will be meeting up with friends from our days as Boy Scouts. We are renting a house boat on Lake Mojave. I'll be away from October 18th through October 24th.

On the Sundays that I am away, we will welcome three visiting clergy. On October 1st, the Reverend Canon Mark Hallahan will celebrate. Father Mark is the recently retired Rector of St. Paul's Church in Pomona where he served for over ten years. Father Mark and Deacon Ed are long-time friends.

On October 8th, a familiar friend will be returning. The Reverend Robin Kassabian will be celebrating and preaching. Mother Robin recently resigned as Rector of St. Mark's, Van Nuys. She and the kids have moved to Colorado Springs, but she will be returning occasionally to Sierra Madre.

Finally, on October 22nd, another familiar face will return to Ascension. The Reverend Tim Hartley will be celebrating and preaching. Father Tim is recently ordained and is serving at the Church of Our Savior in San Gabriel.

I am very appreciative of the support Deacon Ed will be giving to our visitors, and his availability for pastoral care for our parishioners in my absence. I ask your prayers for traveling mercies for me, my colleagues, and friends.

Father Michael+

Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, October 15th

11:45 am in the Outdoor Worship Area



Blessing of the Animals is conducted in commemoration of the October 4th Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis, arguably the most beloved of the named Saints, was particularly fond of animals of all breeds. The community is invited to bring your animals, no matter how big or small, breed or religion. Some animals may require a leash or a container, so keep that in mind.

All of God's creatures are welcome!



September 2023 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2023 Budget \$210,000

YTD Budget:	\$150,852
YTD Actual:	\$149,989
Difference:	\$ - 863

Stewardship 2023 is Upon Us!

Each year we recommit ourselves to the church by pledging our time, talent, and treasure. As Senior Warden, my job is to push all three of these items; but because I also help with the budget, I do tend to focus on the treasure portion. This year, however, the Vestry is approaching things just a bit differently.

Yes, I will be making a stewardship speech, and I will be asking for your pledge cards (followed by the usual weekly reminders about getting your pledge cards in!). But this year we will kick off the stewardship season with a "Gathering of the Saints" on Sunday, November 5th (All Saints Sunday) at 9:30am. During this service, Fr. Michael and Deacon Ed will lead the congregation in a discussion of what we love about our community and how we can grow and energize Ascension for the future. We will have just one service that Sunday with a potluck immediately following.

In order to develop a workable revitalization plan, our Clergy and Vestry want and need to hear from you. So, bring yourselves, your ideas, and a healthy appetite. Let us use this stewardship season to celebrate, strengthen, and grow our community at Ascension.

Thank you,
Gordon Tomaske
Senior Warden



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>



Save the Date

Saturday, November 18, 2023

Put it on your calendar!

Plan to come to Ascension's Shopping Party

At Savor the Flavor

More information to follow in the November Spire



A Note on Financial Stewardship

You know that your financial pledge is essential to keeping the Church of the Ascension supportive and strong. It allows us to budget for the coming year and helps us determine our priorities. But you may not be aware of the many ways you can provide financial support to our parish. First off, you should be getting a pledge card in the mail or you can pick one up at church. Return the card to us in the offering plate at one of the services or drop it off at the parish office. You can also make your pledge on the parish website by going to <https://www.ascension-sierramadre.com/give.html>.

When fulfilling your pledge by check or cash, make sure your name and envelope/account number are clearly marked. To get your offering to church you can:

- ◇ Drop an envelope with cash or a check into the offering plate during the service
- ◇ Call the office and drop a donation off with Kim Lumino at any time during the week (except Wednesdays)
- ◇ Arrange on your bank's website for Ascension to receive automatic payments from your checking or savings account in the amount you designate. Simply add "Church of the Ascension, 25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024" as an automatic payee in the amount and frequency you choose. When prompted for an account number, you can use your Ascension envelope/account number.

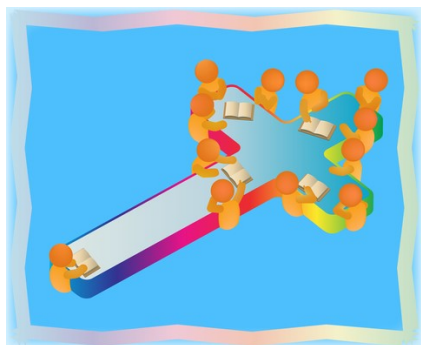


In addition, you can donate outside of your pledge by donating:

- ◇ A financial gift to support a parish project like the roof replacement or other maintenance
- ◇ Appreciated Stock. If you have appreciated stock, you may donate that to the parish and get a tax deduction while avoiding capital gains. Check with the parish office for more information and your accountant for details on the tax implications
- ◇ A car. Over the last few years, Ascension has accepted cars as donations with approximately 70% of the proceeds going to the church. Call the parish office for details
- ◇ Planned giving. When creating your will or trust, please remember your parish family in your arrangements.

From all of us at Ascension, thank you for your time, talent, and treasure. God's peace.

"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.



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

Forward Today: Where is your heart?

September 6, 2023

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus famously said, “For where you treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:25). The meaning is clear. We can lead our hearts with our treasure.

If you want to be more generous, give away some money! If you want to be compassionate, spend your money compassionately. If you want to be Christ-centered, make sure your gifts to support God’s work are the first item in your budget.



Photo by [RODOLFO BARRETO](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Jesus didn’t say this, but I like to imagine he would have added, “And where your time is, there your heart will be also.” In countless conversations with people, one theme I hear regularly is that lots of us feel like there’s not enough time. Sometimes I feel this way myself. As a society, we don’t sleep enough. We don’t play enough. We tend toward frazzled.

I’ve heard more than one person say, “I wish I had more time to pray.” Maybe I’ve uttered those words myself. One great blessing of my Medical Melodrama of 2022 is that I got my prayer life in order, better than it’s been my whole life. Now morning AND evening prayer are baked into my routine. Every day. And you know what? It’s changed me. It’s not that my problems have gone away, but when I’m anchored in prayer, I am more patient, more attentive, more joyful. (And, to be clear, I still have a LOT of room for improvement on all fronts!)

What about you? How is your calendar? If Jesus looked over your shoulder at your schedule for the week, could he tell that you follow him?

I don’t have answers here. But I can tell you that I see in my own life the difference between those times I orient my days as a disciple and those times I orient my days as someone who’s stuck on the hamster wheel of the consumer lifestyle. I don’t have it figured out yet, but the patterns are clear.

Treating each day is a gift is definitely the way to go. Spending time in prayer is well worth it—it pulls our hearts closer to God. Time nurturing friendships is a delight.

If it helps, Forward Movement has some [podcasts](#) that can help you find time for prayer even on the go. And you might like to start or end your day with a [devotion](#). There are lots of folks providing excellent materials for us when we want to lead our hearts.

Yours faithfully,

Scott Gunn, Executive Director



Frightfully!
Spooktacular!
Halloween Potluck
Sunday, October 29th
Following the 10:15 Service
Mexican Themed Buffet

*Let's enjoy this Halloween Season with a potluck with all of our Parishioners.
Great way to catch-up, enjoy good food, and have a little fun.*

*Your Hospitality Hostess will provide the main dish, which will be Carnitas
(pork) street tacos with condiments.*

*The sign-up sheet will be posted in Hawks Hall for suggested side
dishes, desserts, drinks or punch, and/or your own specialty.*

*Please prepare your dish to serve 10-12 people, and bring to the kitchen
before the 10:15 Service begins.*

CANDY BOUQUET RAFFLE!

Tickets: \$2.00 each

Or

3 for \$5.00

Respectfully,
Lisa Wagner
Hospitality Hostess



“Let everything happen to you. Beauty and terror - just keep going. No feeling is final.” (Ranier Maria Rilke) Stress is a part of our lives; but managed and understood, it can be a useful tool.

You’ve all heard the phrase, “it’s not all bad.” Well, neither is stress. Positive stress occurs when you perceive the stressful situation as an opportunity that will lead to a good outcome. This positive expectation is in contrast to the times when you perceive a stressor as a threat that will produce a poor outcome.

Positive stress motivates us to handle challenges or complete tasks. Remember Aunt Tilly? She needed to renew her driver’s license and take the written test. Well, the pressure encouraged her to study, do her best, and to get her license renewed. Looks

as if she’ll make it to Thanksgiving dinner after all. The point is that stress can ultimately lead to feelings of satisfaction and well-being...at least for Aunt Tilly.

There are times when all of us face challenging memories and experiences. Grief is a great example. It’s okay to embrace sadness. When we try to limit our range of feelings to only the positive, a practice psychologists call “emotional suppression,” this restraint can actually backfire and lead to depression and anxiety. Remember, it’s okay to have bad as well as good feelings.

I remember that when I was first diagnosed with depression, I knew I was in a rut. Falling into a rut or feeling there is nothing to look forward to is another type of stress. Research shows that our brains are wired for novelty. In fact, starting something new causes the brain to release dopamine, which is known as the “feel-good” neurotransmitter. It also stimulates the “reward” portion of our brain, causing us to crave even more of whatever it is that gives us pleasure – in this case new experiences.

What new experiences are you willing to try? Last June, Chris and I pushed through our fears and went zip-lining.



Managing our stress and fear takes patience.” Without patience, we will learn less in life.” (Mother Teresa) Patience allows us time to process change. Why is patience so important? It’s important because it makes us pay attention.

And perhaps the most powerful tool we have is prayer.

Heavenly Father, I come before you full of fear and anxiety. I ask that you help me through this day, this hour, and each and every moment. I lay every problem and worry before you. I will focus on the fact that you love and care for me.

Be well, be blessed, pay attention, pray.

Deacon Ed+



ANNUAL THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON FOR THE WOMEN'S ROOM OF FRIENDS IN DEED

SAVE THE DATE, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023

Once again as traditional with our Church, we will be serving a traditional Thanksgiving lunch to the ladies of the Women's Room of Friends in Deed (aka, TWR). This year we are teaming up with "The Cookie Ladies," a group of women who prepare monthly hot lunches for TWR.

A sign-up sheet will be available on the bulletin board in Hawks Hall mid-October 2023. Not only are we requesting prepared food donations; but we also need monetary donations, volunteers to help serve at TWR, and volunteers to help fill goody bags for the ladies.

Please bring your prepared food dish to the Church kitchen on the morning of Monday, November 20th between 9 and 10:30 am.

More information will be available at the time the sign-up sheet is posted.

Thank you,
Lisa Wagner
Hospitality Hostess

FRIENDS IN DEED needs your help —

LET'S STOCK THE SHELVES, ASCENSION

Focus on these items:

OCTOBER – Cereal & peanut butter

NOVEMBER – Canned veggies, Stuffing mix, pie fixings

(canned pumpkin/fruit), crust mixes

DECEMBER – Canned tuna/chicken, hearty soups, chilis and stews



WORSHIP, FORMATION, PASTORAL CARE, FELLOWSHIP, OUTREACH, PRESENCE
25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024 ~ 626-355-1133 www.ascension-sierramadre.com

OCTOBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <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*	2 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	3 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	4 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall Men's Group Luncheon Nano Café Noon—RSVP to Deacon Ed	5 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	6	7
Father Michael Out of Town through October 8th/NC & SC						
8 <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*	9 8:30am Yoga/Hall	10 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	11 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	12 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	13	14
Father Michael Out of Town						
15 <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*	16 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	17 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets Vestry Meeting 7pm/Hall	18 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	19 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum	20	21
BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS @ 11:45AM			Father Michael Out of Town—Vacation			
22 <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*	23 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	24 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets	25 8:15-9:45am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall	26 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	27	28
Father Michael Out of Town—Vacation				Deacon Ed Out of Town—Vacation		
29 <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*	30 8:15am Gooden Chapel 8:30am Yoga/Hall	31 6pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets Clericus Mtg Noon/Hall				
Deacon Ed Out of Town—Vacation						
Spire Creator: Kim Lumino, Parish Administrator						