



The SPIRE

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



September 2012

From the Rector

Join us for...

**Ministry Celebration
Sunday,
September 16th**



Spirituality needs nurturing. The fires of spiritual growth, direction, and passion are designed to be stoked with new experiences and the willingness to open one's heart and mind to God. This is your day, your path, and your opportunity to fuel the fires of your own spiritual growth. Join us as Ascension celebrates the six core Ministries of our church: **Worship, Fellowship, Pastoral Care, Outreach, Formation, and Presence.**

Here's the day's plan:

On Sunday, September 16th, Ascension hosts its annual Ministry Celebration Sunday. There will be only **ONE** celebratory/commissioning service in the church at 9:30.

Following the service, fellowship, fun and, of course, food will follow in the outdoor fellowship area.

Each Ministry will have displays and handouts available for you to enjoy.

Bring your family, friends, and members of the community to learn about Ascension.

Ascension's Ministries offer opportunities to receive, to give back, and to honor God as you walk the path of your own spiritual journey. This is a win/win opportunity. Join us; our door is always open!



For those of us in the Church, each year seems to have a whole set of starting points. Obviously, there is January's start of the calendar year. We also observe the beginning of the liturgical year on the First Sunday of Advent. At this point in time, we are looking towards the start of our Fall program year. On Sunday, September 16th, we celebrate and highlight the various ministries we share here at Ascension through our Celebration of Ministry Sunday. On that morning, there will be one service at 9:30 a.m. In the midst of the Eucharist, we will highlight each of our six core ministries, reaffirm our commitments to ministry, and commission folks for specific ministries. In some respects, this celebration is all very familiar – there is a wonderful sense of continuity at Ascension from year to year. But there is also a sense of newness in the air as well. We have a new deacon – Ed Sniecinski. Our Parish Ministry Council has new members and a new energy. There are new members of our parish who are ready to join our fellowship.

I hope that in the midst of the busy-ness of this season, we can all take the time to ask or reflect on a few questions -

**FULLFILL
YOUR
MINISTRY**

What gifts can I offer for the life of our parish?

What gifts does God have in store for me if I open myself?

How can this new program year be for me a time of growth?

I believe that God's Spirit is moving in our midst, and I am excited about this Fall. And I am very thankful for all that everyone contributes to growing our ministries together.

Canon Bamberger

Ascension's Formation program for Children, Youth, and Families

(a.k.a. Sunday School)

Resumes on Sunday, September 23rd at 9am.



Children from Pre-School through High School are welcome and encouraged to attend age-appropriate religious education courses. The Parent's Group also meets in the Parish House at this time. You may register your child by downloading a registration form from our website and submitting it to the office or stopping by the Formation Booth at the Ministry Celebration. For more information, contact Jobi Harrell jobi@ascension-sierramadre.com.

It's September: summer is drawing to a close, school is back in session, and the days are growing shorter. As in previous years, late September will usher in the Stewardship Campaign for 2013 at Church of the Ascension.

In recent years, the Stewardship Campaign has focused on three types of gifts to the church: those of time, of talent, and of treasure. All three are vital; the Parish would not be able to function without any one of them.

It would be ideal if 100% of our extended Ascension family could make a financial pledge for 2013. But we don't live in an ideal world. These are difficult economic times for many families with income stagnant, expenses increasing, and resources stretched thin. But economic resources do not determine the time and/or talent we can pledge; all of us have gifts we can bring to the altar.

Each fall, the Vestry is required to prepare a budget for the coming year, based primarily on financial pledges. That the budgetary process is largely based on financial projections represents a limitation of our ability to measure the equally valuable contributions of time and talent. But every pledge in whatever form you can give is very important to the life of Ascension; through that pledge, you are giving of yourself and your resources and demonstrating that you value this church and its ministries.

Please prayerfully consider how you can best respond to God's generosity. *Jay Packer*



FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

Please join the Parish Ministry Council on Sunday, September 16, 2012 for our annual Ministry Celebration. Each ministry will have a booth to encourage your participating in one or more of The Church of Ascension ministries and to provide everyone with information on each of these Ministries.

Please stop by the Fellowship Ministry booth; we will have hotdogs, popcorn, and a cool drink for you. While munching on your hotdog, take a minute to see what Fellowship is all about.

The Fellowship Ministry offers a Women's Fellowship Potluck Luncheon that is open to all women of the Church of Ascension, an event to which you are always encouraged to invite a friend. This group meets on the fourth Saturday of every even month; our next potluck luncheon is on Saturday, October 27, 2012 at 11:30 am in Hawks Hall.

Want to enjoy a weekly dinner out with friends from Church? Please join the Tuesday Night Dinner group at various restaurants for fellowship, community, and support.

Following both Services, you can host or sponsor a coffee hour; set-up and clean-up are provided.

Be sure to check out the other groups that Fellowship has to offer at our booth on Sunday, September 16th.

"Fellowship is our community coming together through food, fun, and friendship."

Respectfully,
Lisa Reed
Fellowship Ministry Leader



Scarecrows at Ascension

This fall, Sierra Madre will host a Scarecrow Contest, and Ascension has signed up to participate! We will create teams to see who can create the best Scarecrow Acolyte.

Do you have supplies that you could donate?

We could use accessories, stockings, and gloves to fashion the shape of our scarecrow!

Interested in participating in the project?

Please join us on September 15th at Creative Arts group from Noon – 7 P.M. for a scarecrow making workshop.

Sunday, September 30th will be the day that we put up our creations for judging on October 1st.

Please contact Jobi Harrell if you wish to assist with this project in any way! jobi@ascension-sierramadre.com or via parish office 626-355-1133



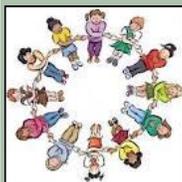
From Our New Outreach Ministry Leader, Carol Rasmussen...

I'd like to introduce myself as the new Outreach contact person and mention some ministries that Ascension currently supports. I'm sure this is only a partial list. Please let me know about your own outreach efforts, especially if you could use additional volunteers. Also let me know if there are other kinds of group projects that you would like to participate in. For example, there are mission trips that don't require hard physical labor, refugee families and seminarians who need sponsors, and many other uses for our time and talent.

Most of our corporate activities revolve around Friends In Deed, the outreach arm of the Ecumenical Council of Pasadena Area Congregations (ECPAC). You can donate nonperishable food for their food pantry at any time; there's a basket in Hawks Hall. The pantry also accepts perishable foods including fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and cold cuts; if you'd like to donate something fresh, please call me at 626-355-5135 to arrange a time when I can collect it from you.



Besides food items, we are currently collecting school supplies and backpacks for low-income families. Please drop off your donation in Hawks Hall.

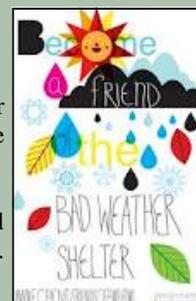


Parishioners Sandra Dickey and Pat Woods are preparing lunch the first Monday of each month for the Women's Room at Friends In Deed. (The Women's Room provides a safe haven for homeless and other at-risk women.) They would love to have help. If you can prepare a single dish—soup, sandwiches, or dessert—for 20-30 people, please contact Sandra.

When the weather cools, Ascension will again cook dinner for guests at the ECPAC bad-weather shelter. In October or November, we'll be assigned two or three specific dates and post a sign-up sheet. This opportunity is open to the entire parish, but there's only one room in the shelter kitchen for 15-20 people each time, so sign up early.



The Crop Walk gives us a chance both to fight hunger and to work together with other local congregations. This year's walk will be on October 28, with a distance of just under seven miles. You can sponsor a walker from the youth group, walk yourself, or do both.



On the international front, Diane Rhodus has been in charge of raising money for Episcopal Relief and Development to buy mosquito nets for African families. During Lent last year, parishioners donated enough for more than 235 nets. Watch for this year's Lenten effort.



I look forward to learning more about Ascension Outreach at the Ministry Celebration. Feel free to call me at 626-355-5135 or email me at carol.r@att.net with your ideas and suggestions.

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Archives Committee was formed in 2009 with the purpose of documenting the long and colorful history of the Church of the Ascension. We have made great progress in the past three years sorting many, many files, photographs and information into archival binders beginning with the year 1885. Our efforts have rewarded us with a journey through time - reuniting us with many parishioners and friends who have touched the life of Ascension and documenting major events that have formed our Parish.

We are pleased to share with you that we are now current - we have documented with materials on hand - our history to the present - August 2012 - 127 years!! However - we know there is probably additional information, photographs, etc. that could be reviewed. Through this message in the Spire, we are putting out a call to all parishioners who might be willing to share photographs, special seasonal event leaflets, (Christmas, Easter, etc.) - anything pertinent to the history of Ascension. If you wish to keep your originals, we are able to make copies and return the originals to you. Please include your name with your items to ensure a safe return.

The archival binders will be available for viewing at our annual Ministry Fair on September 16. We also have several copies of 'The History Of A Parish' - the book written for our Centennial - which are available for sale and might be of interest to our newer members.



Please contact Beverly Clifton at 626-355-0863 or Beth Smith-Kellock at 626-355-8637 - or - leave your items in the Archive mail slot in the supply room across the hall from the Parish Office. Thank you so much for your support, interest, and assistance.

Presence Ministry

Ascension seeks to be a community which reflects the loving presence of God in Sierra Madre through the maintenance, enhancement, and use of our historic buildings and grounds and through the welcome we extend to those seeking a place of rest and renewal. This mission includes publicity methods and personal contact. The Memorial Garden is provided for temporal as well as permanent resting.

Ministry Leader: Mike Beach



Communication keeps Ascension in the minds of the community through the press and community organizations, advertisements, and marketing. *Contact Person Michelle Tierney*

Memorial Garden Committee provides continuing and watchful care of the garden by stopping by the garden often and pulling weeds, cutting off dead flowers, and seeing that the sprinklers work. *Contact Persons: Adrienne Wilson, Elizabeth Wilson*

Photography generates pictures for the parish directory and photographs church events and other special activities for the parish archives. *Contact Person: Jay Packer*

The Spire is our newsletter published monthly which includes articles that ministries want publicized, information about upcoming events, and other items of interest to the parish. *Contact Persons: Kim Lumino, Jean Rowe*

Website Committee maintains the parish website. *Contact Persons: Alan and Michelle Tierney*

Welcome Ministry is our first contact with guests and visitors to the church to greet newcomers, introduce them to others, and express to them the warmth and openness of Ascension. *Contact Person: Deacon Ed*

Work Parties meet the first Saturday of even numbered months to weed, paint, repair, build, and do whatever it takes to maintain the church buildings and grounds. *Contact Person: Mike Beach*

NOTES FROM THE LOFT

Sincere thanks to Lavette Teague, Colette Ostrye, Keiko Sakatani, and Mark Reibs for providing such beautiful vocal anthems during the month of August.

And now - the results are in! Here are the congregation's favorite hymns:



- 216 SALVE FESTA DIES, Hail Thee Festival Day
- 335 I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE
- 460 HYFRYDOL, Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!
- 473 CRUCIFER, Lift High the Cross
- 477 ENGELBERG, All Praise to Thee
- 488 SLANE, Be Thou My Vision
- 494 DIADEMATA, Crown Him With Many Crowns
- 597 JERUSALEM, O Day of Peace
- 677 LONDON NEW, God Moves in a Mysterious Way
- 590 CWM RHONDDA, Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Granted, the survey sample was small - my appreciation to those who responded - but the results demonstrated a true feeling of kinship among us. I'm pleased to report that all of these hymns have been programmed at some time during my tenure at Ascension - and most of them at least once a year. You may be sure that you'll be singing them again at some time in the near future!

Speaking of the near future, September's upon us, and with September comes the annual call for choristers. Ascension's choir especially needs a few altos and tenors; so if you fit the bill, do come and join us - I guarantee that you won't be disappointed! Rehearsals will begin on Wednesday, September 12, 7:30 p.m. in Hawks Hall. Great music, great fellowship, great worship - what more could you want?

*God in my soul, God in my heart,
God in mine eternity.*

Debora Huffman
Director of Music and Organist



Musing with Deacon Ed...

A young woman received word that her husband and two small children were just killed in a horrific auto accident. At that moment, she concluded that her life was over and not worth living. What was God up to and how could she possibly go on? What was the point?



Well she did go on... becoming a respected teacher, therapist, spiritual director, writer, and retreat leader. In her book *"The Gift of the Red Bird,"* Paula D'Arcy states that "God comes to us disguised as our lives." When I first came across the quote and her work in 2011, I was struggling to learn that lesson in the depths of my own depression, wondering what was God up to, how could I go on, and what was the point of it all. Emotionally and spiritually struggling, I vividly remember sitting at my kitchen table with a friend conducting a pity party second to none and hearing him say, "Cut the drama; no one is interested. How arrogant can you be to think that God is through with you!"

After much prayer, discernment, lonely days, and the wise voices of many mentors, I learned that God was not through with me and that he comes every day disguised as my life -- a life richly blessed with challenges, grace, and the opportunity to make a difference in new and wondrous ways.

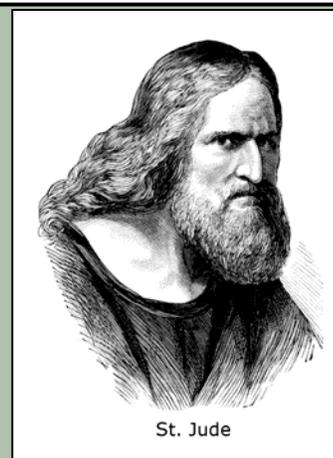
Today, I'm blessed with a reinvented ministry designed by God and managed personally by each of you. No longer an administrator, no longer a go to guy, no longer homeless without a church home, I learned that God isn't through with me yet. Sure, I still have my chores like in any household, but now I have a home to call my own -- Ascension. No longer the go to guy, I'm the *with* guy – the guy who gets to go with each of you on your journeys, sharing in the ups and downs of discovering "together."

At the Village Church, I discovered the Gift of the Red Bird...the gift of a meaningful life fully lived, a ministry with meaning beyond imagination, and the knowledge that God will never be through with me or with my new family.

How does God come disguised as your life? Perhaps more important is remembering the words of St. Catherine of Siena: "All the way to heaven is heaven."

Hey, Jude.

The hospital where I work, St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, was founded in 1957 by the Roman Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, and is now part of the St. Joseph Health system. Within the last few years, in a well-meaning effort to remind the staff and employees of their mission, hospital administrators have stopped referring to organizational units within the hospital as departments and have started calling them ministries. Thus, we now have Cardiology Ministry, a Pharmacy Ministry, a Surgery Ministry, an Environmental Services Ministry, and even (God forgive us) a Billing Ministry. The dictionary has several definitions for *ministry*, the first of which is "...the act of serving." Another is "...the Christian clergy." The last is "...a governmental department presided over by a minister." So I suppose that in the very broadest sense, a governmental agency such as the California Department of Motor Vehicles might also be considered a ministry.



St. Jude

The idea that the hospital billing department and the DMV are ministries certainly could extract every last drop of festivity from any ministry celebration, so I promise you that neither of those agencies will be represented at our Celebration of Ministries on Sunday, September 16th. What you will find are opportunities for "...the act of serving..." in the various departments that collectively constitute our *raison d'être*: Worship, Formation, Pastoral Care, Outreach, Fellowship, and Presence. Come with an open mind and heart; find out how and where you and your talents can be a conduit through which God's grace can flow into the world.

But don't stop there. As much as it pains my cynical self to admit it, the administrators at St. Jude (the jovial patron saint of hopeless causes; see above) are essentially correct: what all of us are called to do with our individual lives is ministry. Whether God has stationed you in a teaching ministry, an insurance ministry, an executive ministry, a student ministry, or a retirement ministry, the prime directive is the same: service. What you do with your life and talents will always have more credibility than what you say. As St. Francis of Assisi (a much happier saint) allegedly said, "Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words."

Jay Packer

5 Shoes and 1 Sock!!!



Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal 6:10

When I got home, I opened up my backpack to unload the contents: a pair of flip-flops, one white shoe, and a very dirty sock. I took time to muse at the oddity of the collection amid the jumble of emotions about the events of the day. It could have been so much worse, and for that I was grateful. Our recent trip to 6 Flags Magic Mountain was, overall, a success. We all returned in one piece, and that's saying something as our adventure was on one of the hottest days recorded this summer.

The first ride on our agenda was the park's signature ride: the first fourth dimension roller coaster, **X2**. Standing in the sun from 10 am – 11 am was not as easy as it was when I was younger, but we were able to remain hydrated and shared good conversation. When we finally got to the entrance of the ride, my friend wisely suggested that we purchase a locker to store our valuables. In went cell phones, backpacks, hats etc. We buckled in and were ready to go! As the ascent to the top of the first drop was underway, I had few concerns. I have always enjoyed the thrill of theme park rides and have never had a bad experience.

It was some time after the first drop (215 foot drop at 88.5 degrees) that I realized that it had been at least fifteen years since I had been on a 'real' roller coaster. It was some time after the second large upside down loop that I began to think that perhaps I was too old for the coaster's speed of 76 mph. My stomach was reeling in a way I did not know possible, and my knuckles were turning white from their grip on the seat handles. Although I knew I would survive, I was very eager to come to the end of the two minute long ride. As we rounded the last corner, perhaps I relaxed too much as I knew the end was in sight. Honestly, it was probably the opposite: my body responded with fear to the pair of flame throwers while tossing and swirling around. And that's when my shoe flew off.

We got off the ride and I had to face our 8 person entourage with only one shoe. "That was YOUR shoe?!" was one teen's response. We were each able to see the humor in the situation...although evidently I should have been told by the ride attendant to take off my shoes. (My loss truly paled in comparison to Deacon Ed's loss of prescription glasses which flew out of his **sealed** pocket.) We were quickly told that I could purchase a new pair of shoes at any of the gift shops located throughout the park. (*Of course!*)

The 104 degree heat on cement and blacktop permitted me to walk about 6 inches before the sole of my shoeless foot felt as if it would melt. Without hesitation, our very own Gwen Howes (who wisely wore tennis shoes and socks) took off her shoe and gave me her sock. I was able to make it to a gift store without scalding my foot, and she spent the rest of her day wearing one sock. To make matters worse, the very cheap flip-flops I purchased were so painful that within an hour, I needed 4 bandaids and was in such pain that I could barely walk. That is when Gwen accompanied me to another gift shop, and I willingly purchased the most hideous jewel encrusted pair of couture flip-flops because they were comfortable. She plunked down her membership card so that I could receive a discount, and we were finally off and running for a fun-filled afternoon full of theme park fun.



2012 Trip to Magic Mountain

Our Baptismal Covenant asks: *Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?* That day, one of our very own provided a clear and direct response to that question, and I was blessed to be the recipient of such grace. I am constantly reminded that sharing time with our young people is not only a privilege but a spiritual experience in itself. They are each amazing individuals, and the loving care they show for each other and for me gives me hope for our future.

Jobi Harrell, Minister to Younger Persons

Confirmation, Reception & Reaffirmation

As we kick off our 2012-2013 year, we remind ourselves that every parishioner here at Ascension has a ministry. Because Ministry flows from our baptismal covenant, it is important to celebrate the many ministries that make up Ascension. September 16th is our first opportunity this program year to reaffirm our commitment to God and our Community.

There is also an additional opportunity this fall for those who wish to be received or reaffirmed into the Episcopal Church. On November 18th at the 10:15 service, Ascension will host Bishop Diane Jardine Bruce. Although confirmation is the most traditional reason for a Bishop's visitation, please know that Reception and Reaffirmation are opportunities that are available to all.



Reception:

In some dioceses, Reception is reserved for those who have already been Confirmed in another denomination by a bishop in apostolic succession (Roman Catholics, Orthodox). A more widely accepted understanding of Reception is that it is a way of honoring anyone who has made a mature confession of faith in any other denomination by saying, in effect, we recognize and honor your spiritual journey in another fellowship, and we welcome you into the fellowship of the Episcopal Church as you continue that journey. The bishop lays hands on the person being received and says, "We recognize you as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we receive you into the fellowship of this Communion" (BCP, p. 418). So, if you have not been Confirmed or Received by a bishop in apostolic succession, you may choose either Confirmation or Reception.

Reaffirmation:

Reaffirmation is for people who have already been Confirmed in the Episcopal Church. Some people presented to the bishop during the service of Confirmation are there to "reaffirm" their Christian vows. These might be people who have been away from the church for a period of time and want to make a new beginning. Others might be people who sense that they are at a new stage in their spiritual life and want to affirm this new stage in ritual. Periodically, a spouse or fiancé who is already a Confirmed Episcopalian will go through Reaffirmation as a way of honoring his or her partner's decision to become a Confirmed Episcopalian, saying in effect, "We are in this together." We all go through many changes in our life's journey, and reaffirmation provides a rite for those who want to take stock of their religious and spiritual life anew.

If you are interested in Reception or Reaffirmation, please contact Deacon Ed or Jobi Harrell.



Start by doing what is necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

St. Francis of Assisi

Blessing of the Animals

Every year, Ascension celebrates the Feast of St. Francis with a Blessing of the Animals outdoor worship service.

This year's service will take place on **Sunday, October 7th** at 12:30 pm by the Baptismal Fountain.

As always, there's no need to worry about missing the 10:15 am service and having to go home for your pet! Ascension's Pet Sitting service will be there in full force!

Pets of all kinds (*including photos and stuffed animals!*) may arrive at Ascension to be watched in style by the Junior and Senior Youth Groups on the North Lawn.

Good Works!

On August 18th, Sierra Madre hosted the L.A. Hazardous & Electronic Waste Collection Program. Thank you to all who helped clean out the basement & library to make our participation in this program possible! Not only did we contribute a very large donation, but we were also able to clean out our own church home!

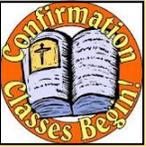


Our vision is that *The Episcopal Church of the Ascension* serves Christ today for those who will come to know Christ tomorrow.

WORSHIP, FORMATION, PASTORAL CARE, FELLOWSHIP, OUTREACH, PRESENCE

25 E. Laurel Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024 ~ 626-355-1133 www.ascension-sierramadre.com

September/October 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour 10:15am Mass	3 	4 11am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	5 5:30pm Yoga 6pm Mass	6 7am Mass 9am Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	7	8
9 8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour 10:15am Mass Noon Formation Meeting	10	11 11am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	12 5:30pm Yoga 6pm Mass 7:30pm Choir Rehearsals Resume 	13 7am Mass 9am Forum	14	15 Noon to 7pm Scarecrow Making Workshop
16 MINISTRY CELEBRATION One Mass @ 9:30am, followed by fellowship, fun and, of course, food! 	17	18 11am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group 7pm Vestry Mtg	19 5:30pm Yoga 6pm Mass 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	20 7am Mass 9am Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	21 SPIRE ARTICLES DUE	22 
23  8am Mass 9am Church School Fall Session Begins 10:15am Mass Noon PMC Meeting	24	25 11am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	26 5:30pm Yoga 6pm Mass 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	27 7am Mass 9am Forum Noon Daughters of the King Meet	28	29
30  8am Mass 9am Xian Ed. Hour 10:15am Mass 11:30am Confirmation Classes Begin Put-up Scarecrows	1 	2 11am Prayer in the Chapel 6pm Dinner Group	3 5:30pm Yoga 6pm Mass 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4 7am Mass 9am Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg	5	6  9am Parish Work Party
~~~~~ <b>OCTOBER</b> ~~~~~						