

The July 2024 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

based out of San Diego, California.

From the Rector

Many of you know that I am a big fan of Dodger baseball. I enjoy watching as many games as I can. Often, while watching a game, I text back and forth with my friend Greg Larkin – also known as “Canon Baseball.” Occasionally, I get invited to attend a game in person – usually with another friend – Steve Nishibayashi. (Steve is the Secretary of Convention of the Diocese of Los Angeles.) I’m hoping my love of the Dodgers will rub off on my grandkids, but they live in a different time zone.

I know it’s a little strange that I only follow the Dodgers. I’m not into basketball, football, soccer, or any other major leagues sports. So my season is 162 games plus spring training. It’s about all I can handle.

I hope you’ll join us for Episcopal Night at Dodger Stadium Friday night September 6th. It’s always fun to gather with friends from around the Diocese to enjoy a game.

Father Michael+



JUNE 2024 Pledge Payment Snapshot



2024 Budget \$205,150

YTD Budget: \$102,575

YTD Actual: \$95,285

Difference: \$-7,290

FRIENDS IN DEED*

Please join in Ascension’s monthly collection of specific “Gold Items” for Friends in Deed. They include canned tuna and chicken, hearty soups, stew, chili, pasta and pasta sauce, peanut butter, cereal, rice, oil, sugar, flour, fruit juice, and vegetable juice (V8).

Look for the donation bin at the back of the church.



Being Part of the Larger Church

I actually look forward to Vestry meetings at Church of the Ascension. Vestry meetings are a time of prayer and sharing and a place for us to address problems faced by our parish. So far this year, we have authorized funds to fix the air conditioning, replace the railing on the stairs to the choir loft, and repair the back door to the kitchen. We really do get things done.

But what do we do when we face a problem that does not have a clear answer? Earlier this year the senior wardens from our Deanery began meeting on a quarterly basis to discuss problems and solutions being faced by other parishes. Some items have included:

- How to perform a parish audit
- Sharing news about music events at other parishes
- Looking for ways to coordinate youth programs between parishes
- Sharing information on how to perform an earthquake retrofit
- Meeting with the Bishop to learn how the Diocesan assessment works

Fr. Michael was a guest speaker at our last Wardens meeting during which he instructed us on the organization of the Diocese and larger church.

We are learning that there is no problem that is being faced by one parish that has not been solved by another or, at the very least, if more than one parish has the same problem, we can work on a solution together.

This is the advantage to being part of the Anglican Communion. We learn from each other and support each other; and, most of all, we can share a prayer of gratitude that we are not alone. One might even go so far as to suggest that when we face problems as individuals, sharing our concerns in prayer and with fellow parishioners might be a good place to start.

Gordon Tomaske, Sr. Warden



Los Angeles
Dodgers
vs.
Cleveland
Guardians

Friday, September 6,
7:00 p.m.

The Dodgers welcome
The Diocese of Los Angeles!

Tickets only \$35!



**Fireworks after
the game!!**

- Sign-up sheet on bulletin board in Hawks Hall or call/email the parish office.
- Deadline for ordering tickets is July 21.



DONATE BLOOD. HELP SAVE LIVES.

Blood Drive
The Episcopal Church
of the Ascension

Parish Hall
 25 E Laurel Ave
 Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Wednesday, July 10, 2024
12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: ECTA to schedule an appointment.

Streamline your donation experience and save up to 15 minutes by visiting RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass to complete your pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment.



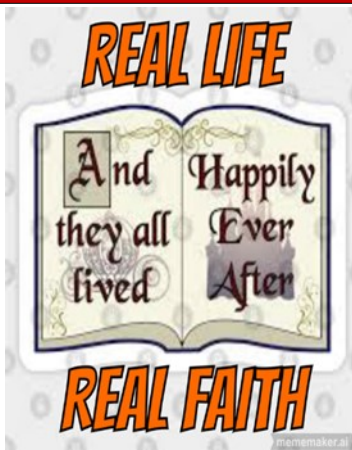
Scan to be directed to RapidPass®

Be a force for good: Come give blood in July for a Fandango Movie Ticket by email to see TWISTERS on us + TWISTERS & Red Cross umbrella July 1-14, while they last. Terms at rcblood.org/Twisters.



Scan to schedule an appointment.

1-800-RED CROSS | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App



As you know, I'm fond of saying, "and they all lived happily ever after or not." We all desire happy endings, but how realistic is that?

In 2016, I began my Spire articles under the banner **Real Life ~ Real Faith**. It's always been my intention to highlight how living our faith realistically helps us navigate through life's twists and turns, the expected and unexpected, the wanted and unwanted --always desiring another happily ever after. I have spoken about having the faith to take action, make changes, and to accept our "or not" outcomes by learning their lessons, taking appropriate action, and hopefully moving on.

Now eight years later, we find ourselves living in extraordinary, troubling, unsettling, and challenging times. So much of what we as Americans take for granted is at risk. Toxic polarization fed by misinformation, conspiracy theories, social media, AI, and blatant lies is destroying our American "happily ever after" whether we are willing to accept the inevitable or not. We feel like the world is closing in and that we're so deep inside the

unknowing and uncertainty that we can't see a way forward.

We can all agree that we find ourselves divided like never before amongst ourselves, our families and neighbors, often not knowing what to do, say, or expect. We are a house and a people divided. In chapter 3 of Mark's gospel, we are reminded by Jesus (and I'm paraphrasing) "a country or a house divided against itself cannot stand."

The darkness makes us feel small. We know what's at risk, but will we be rendered useless by our fear or be genuine agents of change? Do we have the patience and the skills to do the work or are we going to assume God's got it handled? Remember, while we're sitting around waiting for God to fix things, He's waiting for us to fix them. After all, it is our mess; yet we're always looking to place blame elsewhere.

Bound by conventions, we tend to reach for what is easy. It's clear, however, that we must not be afraid of what's difficult or seemingly impossible. We need to dig deep and tap into our innermost courage; the courage born of grace and God's unconditional love.

Living our faith in the real world begins by accepting our reality in all its immensity. Everything, even the unheard of, must be possible within it. Accepting our reality is, in the end, the only kind of courage that is required of us: the courage to meet the strangest, most awesome, and most inexplicable phenomena - sometimes simultaneously. Like the flower that bends in the wind, we must become like it, filled with deep trust.

Only then can we begin to close the divisions in our homes and in our country and heal the toxic divisions threatening our cherished way of life. Not my cherished way of life or yours, but our cherished way of life, living together peacefully in God's kingdom, in God's "happily ever after."

We will know with certainty and unwavering faith that "happily ever after" is an achievable goal when we come together embracing and honoring all that divides us and, in spite of our best efforts to sabotage it, work together.

What freedom we will begin to enjoy when we stop clinging to the disappointments of the past and the glories of an imaginary future! No longer trapped in nostalgia for what we once had, wish we had, hope someday to have, we can embrace our lives as they are meant to be. We can venture forth, empty handed and free, leaving behind all vestiges of what divides us and separates us from God.

Be well, be blessed, live in God's happily ever after (or not).

Deacon Ed+



Get ready for the Friends In Deed Back to School
Backpack and School Supply Drive

Bring your donations to the Church any
time before Monday, July 15th.



The items needed this year are:

- Backpacks--new sturdy backpacks (no red or blue colors please)
- College ruled notebook paper
- Wide ruled notebook paper (early grades will use this)
- College ruled spiral notebooks
- Wide ruled spiral notebooks
- College ruled composition notebooks
- Wide ruled composition notebooks
- Pens - blue and black
- Pencils, including #2 yellow 6-sided for younger grades; mechanical pencils
- Erasers
- Reams copy paper – 1 pkg per family
- Zipper pouch for pens and pencils (3 holed to go in binders)
- Packages dry erase markers
- Packages colored markers (NO Sharpies or permanent markers)
- Highlighters, all colors
- Packages colored pencils
- Sharpeners (must hold shavings)
- Packages 24-colors crayons (prefer Crayola brand)
- 2 Pocket Folders (prefer poly folders)
- Student scissors (such as Fiskar brand)
- Rulers (metric & customary)
- Packages 3" x 5" index cards
- Glue sticks (many schools prefer sticks to bottles of liquid glue)
- 3 ring binders - 1"- 3"
- Packages of tab dividers for binders
- Staples
- Calculators
- Packages tissue, like Kleenex brand (small little packages that can easily fit into the backpack or school desk)
- Hand sanitizer bottles
- Disinfecting wipes packets



Friends In Deed will distribute to school aged children in need. Help kids be prepared, feel confident, and have a successful school year.



Forward Today: Fearless faith

May 1, 2024 / Forward Today / Scott Gunn

Dear friends in Christ,

Last weekend, I visited the Diocese of Northern California to speak about evangelism at their revival, Fearless Faith. The name of the revival got me thinking.

Fearless faith could suggest that we practice our faith without fear. It's tempting to find ourselves limiting how we practice our faith, as individuals or congregations, out of fear. We might worry about money, or what people will think of us, or whether some new ministry will succeed or fail.

What if we practiced our faith boldly? There's no reason not to invite people to our churches. There's often more money available than we think. Even if some new ministry doesn't take off, we will learn something—so there's rarely a total failure. Fearless faith is closer to the adventure that the Gospels suggest when we choose to follow Jesus.

But there's another way to read that title, Fearless Faith. As we just heard last Sunday in the epistle, perfect love casts out fear. Our culture is bombarded by messages peddling fear. "Be afraid of those people." "Be afraid of that place." "Be afraid that you might not have enough money." "Be afraid that your appearance is not sufficiently beautiful." It's nonsense, and it's antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In faith, we will realize we don't need to be afraid of anyone or any place. We will realize there is enough. We will realize that we don't need to "look more beautiful" because we are all made in the image and likeness of God, and nothing could be more beautiful than that!

So if we fill our hearts in faith with the love of Jesus Christ, we will immunize ourselves against the bombardment of fear.

I am always working on practicing and believing a fearless faith. I hope you are, too. Be not afraid!

Yours faithfully,
Scott Gunn
Executive Director



Rooted and Growing Evangelism workshop at the Fearless Faith Revival. (Photo: [The Episcopal Diocese of Northern California on Facebook](#))

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 (\$50.00 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.

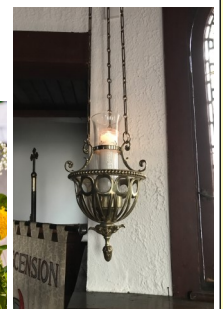
Here are the sign-up genius links:

Sanctuary Candles:

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

Altar Flowers:

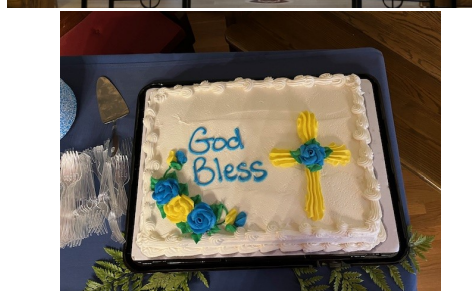
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E44A4A628A7F94-altar1>



BISHOP KATHARINE JEFFERTS SCHORI VISIT

June 9, 2024

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

JULY 2024

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| | 1 8:30am Yoga/Hall | 2 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets | 3 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 4  PARISH OFFICE CLOSED | 5 | 6 |
| Father Michael Out of Town/VACATION | | | | | | |
| 7 8am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* | 8 8:30am Yoga/Hall | 9 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets | 10 BLOOD DRIVE NOON—6PM HAWKS HALL | 11 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg | 12 | 13 |
| Father Michael Out of Town/VACATION | | | | | | |
| 14 8am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* | 15 8:30am Yoga/Hall | 16 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets 7pm Vestry Meeting/Hall | 17 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 18 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum | 19 | 20 |
| 21 8am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* | 22 8:30am Yoga/Hall | 23 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets | 24 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | 25 8:15am Mass 9am Rector's Forum 10:30am Staff Mtg | 26 | 27 |
| 28 8am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* 9am Between the Masses Discussion Group 10:15am <u>Worship w/Eucharist</u> *Facebook Live* | 29 8:30am Yoga/Hall | 30 6Pm Tuesday Night Dinner Group Meets | 31 8:30am Yoga/Hall 5:30pm Yoga/Hall | | | |