

ASCENSION TIDINGS

AUGUST 2014

You know, when I was 19, Grandpa took me on a roller coaster.
Up, down, up, down.
Oh, what a ride.
What a great story.

....

Some didn't like it. They went on the merry-go-round.
That just goes around. Nothing.
I like the roller coaster.
You get more out of it.

- Parenthood 1998



It has been a challenging summer. I have had to say goodbye to people that I have grown to love deeply. The rollercoaster does not stop, but like Steve Martin's character says, I like rollercoasters, they remind me of the surprise and shock of living. Sometimes there are glad, joyful surprises and sometimes there are unwelcome guests. Either way in life, we have the choice to embrace the life God has given or spin in circles. I'll take rollercoasters over merry go rounds any day.

I have been particularly thankful for the Renovation fund. Thank you, thank you to all who have donated to the Renovation fund. Because of your generosity we have been able to complete the first phase, the Parish Hall Bathrooms. Check them out. In order to complete the next phase, rehabbing the second floor of the Parish Life Building, we will need 8K more. I am very grateful for the 22K that has already been donated. Please consider donating to this effort by writing "summer renovation fund" on your check.

In addition to facility improvements, there has been a lot of behind the scenes work to prepare for the Fall. I thank my staff and vestry for all they do for me and for Ascension. The school has also done some major renovating in the administration building that was enabled by a special gift. Nancy, our head of school, worked tirelessly throughout the summer to get everything ready. The school campus looks great, especially the administrative offices.

You are probably aware that Ana Black has moved to Boston and we are in an active search for a new choral leader. Ro will be doing double duty in Ana's stead until we find a great fit for our choral director.

I am really looking forward to getting in gear for the Fall. Please get involved and help make Ascension even better. You may have noticed we have a lot of children at the 10:30 service. This is a fantastic. We need at least another four individuals who can help run children's chapel about once every 5-7 weeks. Contact me and I will get you connected. Caroline Barker and I will give you all you need to know about how to teach a bunch of kids during sermon time at 10:30am. It is a small time commitment, but adds so much to the community.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR...(CONT.)

Here is a snapshot of things coming into the Fall.

Sun Aug 3, Sunday School Teacher Meeting (In the Church Library following the 10:30am service)
Wed Aug 13, Regular Wednesday Choir practice resumes 7:15pm-9:00pm.
Safeguarding God's children training
Mon Aug 18, School Open House 1-2:30 in all classrooms and Parish Hall
Tues Aug 19, First Day of School
Thur Aug 28, Parent Orientation
Sun Sept 7, "Family Reunion" and Sunday School Kickoff
Return of Hot Breakfast on Sundays at 9:30
Sat Sept 13, Daughters of the King meet 10
Parents' Night Out returns, 5pm -9pm
Sat Sept 20, Financial Peace University begins
Sept 20 /21, Youth Group Event (More info to be announced)
Sun Sept 21, Food for Poor Speaker at both services
Sept 26/27, Get to Know Ascension weekend
Sun Sept 21, EYSeedlings Parent Information Meeting (Church Library following the 10:30 service)
Sun Sept 28, EYSeedlings, 12:00 in the Parish Hall. (Children need to bring a sack lunch and drink.)
Sat Oct. 4, Game Night 5:30pm - 9pm

With lots more to come!!

Peace,



Rev. Todd Bryant

Safeguarding Class Scheduled for Wednesday, August 13 at Ascension

There will be a Safeguarding God's Children training on Wednesday, August 13 from 6:00 to 8:30 in the evening. We will meet in the Parish Hall. Safeguarding is required for all persons age 18 and older who are involved in any type of children's ministry. This includes Parent's Night Out, Sunday School, Youth Group, EYSeedlings, the Christmas Pageant.....and many more. My absolute dream would be for everyone in the parish to go through the training, even if you don't think you'll be involved with children at all. Besides the fact that it's good information to know, there will be many children's programs happening throughout the year, and one of them might just jump out at you as something you want to help with. By attending the training now, you'll be good to go if and when that happens! If you would like to begin the Safeguarding process, please email Robi Lasiter at robilasiter@gmail.com or Leslie Nirider at membership@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org

Hope to see you there,
Robi L.

NEWCOMER CORNER

This summer has absolutely flown by! Usually this season is one where we can somewhat hit the autopilot button and wait for the business of fall to come back around. I was pleasantly surprised to find that we have had a steady increase in the number of newcomers and visitors to Ascension over the summer, some of whom have already become integral parts of the ministry we are all a part of.

Having so many newcomers means we are gearing up for a great Get-to-Know-Ascension Weekend coming up on September 26 & 27. I have a feeling it will be one of the best groups yet! In case you didn't know, this weekend serves a couple of purposes. Firstly, it is a time where newcomers will be able to bring any and every question they may have about our church, how to be involved, and what being an Episcopalian is all about. Secondly, this weekend serves as our adult confirmation class. After going through the weekend, participants will have the option to join Ascension and eventually become a member of the Episcopal Church during the Bishop's next visit. And lastly, it is a time where we get to shine in our hospitality and fellowship with great food and conversation as we all get to know each other better. If you would like to attend, be on the lookout for emails with more information or talk to one of us. If you are not on our email list, contact the office at office@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org or me at newcomers@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org.



I also want to update you with some behind-the-scenes info about the Newcomer Ministry in general. The work I do is a three year grant-funded position from the Diocese of Texas. I am thrilled and honored to be working with such supportive and visionary diocesan leaders! Our main critique of the program is that each of us seems to be doing it solo and not sharing our ideas (and failures) with others doing the same work. To combat this, another Newcomer Minister from Angleton and I formed the "Newcomer Ministry Network," a largely social-media based grassroots group that has grown to around 20 members from the region. In addition, representatives from every parish in the diocese receiving grant funds gathered at Camp Allen at the beginning of August with Bishop Fisher and other leaders to share on a more official level how things have been going. The newcomer ministry is always a work in progress. If you have any ideas of how we can be even better at inviting, welcoming, and connecting guests to Ascension, come see me!

Newcomer's Class

Join us on Sunday, August 10th, Paul, the Newcomer Minister, will be hosting a drop-in class during the 9:30 am Sunday School in the Church Library for any visitor (or longtime member) who would like to learn more about Ascension. Think of this time as a snapshot of the larger Get-to-Know-Ascension Weekends.

Attention Ministry Leaders, Members, and Newcomers



Keep in mind that the Ministry Fair is coming up this Fall. This is a great opportunity to welcome our newcomers into our various ministries, and invite our members to step up and explore new ways to serve. If you have any new and creative ideas for the fair, please let Paul know, via email. The Fair is still a little ways off, but no time like the present to start planning.

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

One of my favorite things about working in public education was, of course, summer break. I eagerly looked forward to the first of June, knowing I had 2 ½ months ahead of me where I could do whatever I wanted to do. I would sleep late, take the kids swimming or to the library, and enjoy being lazy. Then, without warning.....it was August and my freedom was nearing its end. I always marveled at how quickly the end of summer came. When I left public schools, I just assumed summers would seem longer. Well, they don't! I'm sitting here, wondering where the time went and am in utter shock that once again, it's August!! But that's OK – because with the end of summer comes a new school year, and there are some exciting changes coming to Sunday School and Children's Ministry that I hope you'll want to be involved in.



First, we're adding a class! For the past year, all children ages 3 through 5th grade have been meeting together in one multi-age class. Our group has really grown, and we will now be splitting this group into two. There will be a class for children from 3 years old through 1st grade, and a class for children in 2nd through 5th grade. This will allow teachers to make more age specific lessons, and let the older kids delve more deeply into the Scriptures. We will also continue to have a class for the older youth in grades 6 through 12.

Next, we'll be starting an "EYSeedlings" group for children in grades 2 through 5. The best way I know to describe this group is that it is a kind of junior youth group. The goals for the group are fairly simple. We want the young people of Ascension to begin forming relationships with each other; to have an opportunity to have fun and fellowship with others their own age. We want them to feel a part of a positive peer group where they know they are important, cared for, and valued. We are starting them at the elementary school age so that those bonds of friendships are formed early. Then, when they are entering middle school, they will be excited about continuing the journey together into our senior youth group. Our children and youth are an invaluable part of our parish, and I know it sounds like a cliché...but they really are the future of the church. We want to help them to grow in their relationship with Jesus, equip them through encouragement and fellowship, challenge them to grow and discover God's vision for their lives, and send them into the world to reach others. EYSeedlings will meet once a month, tentatively the 4th Sunday after the 10:30 service. More information will be coming!

Enjoy the last few weeks of summer with your family. Then, when September rolls around, I hope you and your children will join us for what I know will be an incredible new school year.

Thank you!!

Summer Sunday School Teachers Thank You!

I want to say a special "Thank You" to all of the wonderful volunteers who helped keep the children's Sunday School program running smoothly throughout the summer: Amy Criswell, Katie Kruszka, Liz & Chad Goodman, Ngozi Adimora, and Christine Searle. The gift of your time and talents was so appreciated by not only me, but the children and parents of Ascension. I know the kids had a great time getting to know all of you better!

Teaching Assistants needed for Children's Sunday School!!!

Have you ever wanted to work with Children's Sunday School, but felt you didn't have the time to plan lessons and activities? Here's the perfect opportunity for you.....Teaching Assistant! Teaching assistants are an invaluable part of our Sunday School team. They help make sure children are engaged in lessons and games, distribute materials, assist children with crafts, and support the teacher in whatever they need. It's a great way to be able to get to know and enjoy the great children of Ascension. Assistants are needed in all three classrooms: ages 3 through grade 1, grades 2 through 5, and Youth grades 6 through 12. They are scheduled on a rotating basis, so would not be required to volunteer every Sunday. If you would be willing to share your time with our children, please contact Robi Lasiter at robilasiter@gmail.com

Sunday School

Every Sunday we have Sunday School opportunities for all ages as well as Bible Study throughout the week for men and women. Keep current with these additional formation opportunities through the parish calendar.

Infants and Toddlers

The Church Nursery is available from 9 to noon on Sunday mornings for children ages 0-4. The nursery is located on the first floor of the Parish Life Building. The Program for these children is guided by two Christian adults who have taken the Safe Guarding God's Children course.

PNO ANNOUNCEMENTS

Parents' Night Out Returns September 13th New Volunteers Are Needed! Come Get in on the Fun!!

Our monthly Parents' Night Out resumes on September 13. PNO has been a vital ministry to the parents of the church, school and surrounding community. It is primarily run by volunteers. We have been fortunate to have a loyal group of volunteers who help out regularly, but as families move or their children graduate from AES and move on to middle school, our numbers have decreased. In order to continue to offer PNO on a regular basis, we need more volunteers to join us. We have a wonderful activities director who takes care of all of the planning and activities – all you would need to do is show up ready to spend an evening with some fantastic children. I promise you – you'll find yourself having as much fun as the kids! Please consider becoming a PNO volunteer so that we can continue to offer this event. If interested or for more information, contact Robi Lasiter at robilasiter@gmail.com



ASCENSION SCHOOL

Dear Parishioners,

We are having a busy, productive, exciting summer. You can see the work in the administrative offices, the new marquee with the new eagle logo. Our bathrooms in the 100 wing have been painted and re-floored and our science lab has a laminate floor, no more rugs!

The school and ELP enrollment is healthy as we head toward the new school year. We have 116 students in Pre-K 3 to 5th grade and 45 in our ELP program. I am sure as the weeks in August progress we will add at least 10 to 12 students to our school grades and 5 or more to ELP.



The first day of school is Tuesday, August 19th; our ELP program begins on Monday, August 18th. The school has an Open House on Monday, August 18th, for families to see their classrooms and meet their teachers. We have co-curricular teachers in the Parish Hall, also club opportunities for afterschool, AESOP parents, and representatives from Living Tree, our internal school communication site.

Our Parent Orientation is Thursday, August 28th, at 6:15 for ELP parents and 7pm for School parents. Our teachers present the school day, curriculum, extra events, and parties to the parents. This is an adult only evening allowing our parents time to focus on the class and all the information they will need for the 2014-15 school year.

We thank you all for your support and prayers as we enter the 2014-15 school year, I have enclosed our new logo, and the eagles are once again flying.

Where eagles learn to fly

In Peace,
Nancy Clausey
Head of School



ACTIVITIES AND OFFERINGS

Game Night at Ascension

Our first game night, on July 12, went well. We had about 25 people come and had a great time. We are looking forward the next one to be a smash on October 4, 5:30pm-9pm. Can't wait to see you there!



ACTIVITIES AND OFFERINGS



Financial Peace is a class by Dave Ramsey about finding peace with your finances. This is not a "get rich quick" scheme, but rather building wealth with what you have.

It is a 9 week class starting on September 20, 2014 at 2:30PM, and each class is about 2 hours long. Register for the class by going to www.daveramsey.com/fpu, click Find A Class, and search for the Ascension class (it's pretty simple to find). Cost for a membership kit is \$100, and only one kit is needed per family. Membership kits include all necessary materials, Dave's book, additional tools, and access to online resources. If you have already taken FPU before, you can use your previous kit; no need to buy a new one. Kits may be purchased when registering for the class, or from me before the first class. For more information contact James Berrie (berriejw@gmail.com). If the cost is stopping you from attending, please speak with Fr. Todd or James Berrie, for possible scholarship opportunity.

Upcoming Senior Bus Trips: Mark Your Calendars

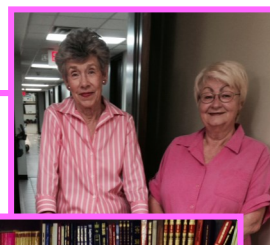
October—Monday, October 6 depart Ascension Church at 9a.m for Maas Plant Nursery in Seabrook with a lecture on local plants, drought resistant plants, and herbs. Afternoon tour of the Kegg's Chocolate Factory tour, with tour guide.

November—Wednesday, November 5 depart Ascension Church at 8a.m. for a tour of The History Center in Diboll, Texas. Afternoon tour of the Texas Forestry Museum in Lufkin - with tour guides at both locations.

December—Friday, December 12 depart Ascension Church at 2:30p.m. for an early dinner and then from 5-7p.m. attend the Christmas Yuletide at Bayou Bend with carolers and holiday decorations. This trip is still in the planning stage and may also include an evening bus ride tour of Christmas lights in the Houston area.

Pink Day

In support of Breast Cancer Awareness, and in support of their fellow classmate, our Tuesday Afternoon Bible Study Ladies had a pink day. Everyone wore pink and they passed out wrist bands during the snack portion of their meeting. These ladies are always welcoming new members, so feel free to stop in on Tuesdays at 1pm, to see if this is a fit for you.





(New Testament offered next year)

The Bethel Adult Bible Study Old Testament

Sundays, Sept. 21, 2014 – April 19, 2015

9:25 AM – 10:20AM

Ascension School Library

To Register: Everett Baker,

281-497-4222, cbaker@hal-pc.org

Thursday Bible Study

Our Bible study led by Carol Goulet and Edie Linnett, Thursdays, from 1:30 - 3:30pm. We will be studying a video series by Ray Vaderlaan entitled "With All Your Heart." We invite you to join us!! Contact Carol at dcskylark@sbcglobal.net for directions or information.

WHAM School Supply Drive & Food Donations

Every year WHAM hosts a back to school drive for school supplies. While you are shopping this year, pick-up a few extras and donate them to those less fortunate. They will also take, gently used backpacks and school uniforms.

Thank you for all your donations to the food box. Each month the contents of the box are taken to WHAM and weighed.

If you are ever curious about the monthly or yearly totals, give the office an email and we will be happy to share.



WHAM REQUESTS OUR HELP

If you have a few hours to spare even one day a week, **Second Blessing** is in dire need of volunteers in the receiving area. As donations come in they need to be sorted and put out to the sales floor. Please volunteer a little of your time, to help better the lives of others.

Hurricane Season is Upon us!!! Did you know Ascension has an:



Ascension Emergency Response

The Disaster Response Committee (formed to react to the temporary needs of our church community in times of emergency) wishes to remind all parishioners of the forms available on the church website (click on Members, and go to Disaster Ministry; the forms are highlighted in blue in the text). They are (1) an Equipment/Service sign-up sheet - these volunteers only to be called upon during a disaster situation and (2) a Member Assistance form for those who may have special needs - due to physical handicaps, living alone, or lack of proximity to friends and/or family. If you do not have computer access, please contact the church office and these forms will be provided. Remember, this effort is for the benefit of all.....

Lee Nirider, Committee Chairman

Prayers for Africa

Please join Ngozi Adimora and Angela Morales in the church following the 10:30 service on Sunday to pray for the peoples of Nigeria and Liberia, that the situations get resolved without the further loss of life or suffering. Feel free to grab some refreshments at the post service coffee, but please be sure not to take the food or drink back into the church. These ladies look forward to having your support.



Daughters of the King

The Daughters of the King will hold their regular monthly meeting on Saturday, August 9th in the parish meeting room, with fellowship at 9:30 AM and the meeting at 10:00. Sammie Valenti will show a DVD featuring international DOK chapters, entitled "Looking to Jesus – Spreading His Love Around the World". All ladies of the parish and their friends are cordially invited to attend.

Attention: Men of Ascension

All Men of Ascension are invited to meet at **La Madeleine on Westheimer** monthly, on the second Saturday at 8:15am for breakfast and fellowship.

The purpose of these meetings is to focus on building biblical men by engaging in study, accountability, and prayer. We have men speak from within the group or invite outside speakers.

Please RSVP with Ray Valenti at 281.568.8129, so he can let La Madeleine know how many are coming.

You may also contact him with questions or for more information.



Altar Flowers

Please check the flower chart posted in the narthex and consider making a dedication and donation. Any amount is acceptable and goes toward the cost of the flowers. There can be more than one dedication per Sunday. Flowers will be on the Altar every Sunday except during Lent. If you have any questions call Ann Burton.
713-782-6572

Seafarer's Ministry

We know it is a little early to be announcing, but let's take advantage of the end of year sales, and back to school sales. If your children get new shoes this year, please set aside the shoe box for our Seafarer's Ministry Collection.

The Seafarer's ministry is one of our most successful ministries. This year, we kick-off on September 28, (you may bring your donations and shoeboxes at this time) and the ingathering and blessing of items is October 26. The collected items are sorted and packed into the shoeboxes and wrapped by Ascension school children on Community Service day which is November 25. Please see the letter below from the Port of Houston for a list donatable items.

There will be designated collection areas in the narthex beginning September 28.

Ministry to the Port of Houston – www.houstonseafarers.com



HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL SEAFARERS' CENTERS

HOWARD T. TELLEPSSEN SEAFARERS' CENTER

9250 High Level Road (Upper Wharf 23); Houston, TX 77029

P.O. Box 9506; Houston, Texas 77261-9506 (Exit 29 off East Loop I-610)

PHONE: (713) 672-0511 FAX: (713) 672-2444

LOU LAWLER SEAFARERS' CENTER

1700 E. Barbours Cut Blvd.

P.O. Box 1434 ; La Porte, Texas 77571-1434

Christmas Gift Box Program 2013

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

"Merry Christmas!" in several languages: Vesela Koleda (Bulgarian), Frohe Weihnachten (German), Vrolijk Kerstfeest (Dutch), Selamat Hari Natal (Indonesian), Krismas Mubarak (Urdu), Feliz Navidad (Spanish), Maligayang Pasko (Tagalog), Mutlu Noeller (Turkish), and Veseloho Vam Rizdva (Ukrainian). The word "Christmas" is a compound word, coming from Old and Middle English meaning "Christ's Mass."

Every year we have been blessed by the love and generosity of others who donate Christmas boxes for the seafarers from around the world. We have witnessed over and over again the true joy and excitement in the seafarer's faces when we board their ships with these gifts. It doesn't matter what country they are from or how they say "Merry Christmas," the love of Christ is with them through your kind love and support.

Crew sizes vary between 8 and 30, with an average number of 22 seafarers to gift per ship. In 2012, we placed 10,544 gifts on board 465 ships which had seafarers from 68 different countries! These gifts had been donated to the seafarers by 217 churches and organizations! The Christmas boxes are personally carried to each ship by your staff of Port Chaplains—"your staff of chaplains" because we are funded by denominational mission funds in this ecumenical ministry. We begin shortly after Thanksgiving and continue gifting seafarers until all the gifts have been distributed! We are gratefully prepared to receive your gift boxes anytime—you can't be too early or too late to bring your gifts to one of our two Seafarers' Centers!

Please try to pack a shoebox **FULL** with items such as these:

BAND-AIDS
COMB
DENTAL FLOSS
DEODORANT
DISPOSABLE RAZORS
FLASHLIGHT

KLEENEX & Q-TIPS
LOTION & LIP BALM
NAIL CLIPPERS
NEEDLE & THREAD
SHAVING CREAM
SOAP & SHAMPOO

TOOTHBRUSH
TOOTHPASTE
ADDRESS BOOK
CALENDAR
DISPOSABLE CAMERA
GUM & HARD CANDY

KEY CHAINS
PAPER & ENVELOPES
PENCILS & PENS
PLAYING CARDS
PUZZLES & GAMES
POSTCARDS

SOCKS
STAMPS
TEXAS SOUVENIRS
T-SHIRTS
BASEBALL CAPS

The seafarers appreciate these items tremendously. Please be sure your gift box is packed full of items! **As there are very few women and children onboard the ships these days, we would request that the gift boxes primarily be packed for male seafarers.** Please avoid including items that will melt or break, and pack batteries separately from the items they are powering.

Remember Ascension Episcopal Church and School in your will.



Contact: Leslie Nirider at
membership@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org

Lifeline is a nondenominational social and support group for widows and widowers. Meetings are the first Thursday of each month in the Parish Hall at 7:30 PM.

For more information please contact

Jackie Clift

281.497.2663 or email jackieclift5@hotmail.com

Hurricane Season Is Here

The Disaster Response Committee wishes to remind all parishioners of the forms now available on the church website:

<http://www.ascensionepiscopalchurch.org/disaster-ministry.html>

On that page are two downloadable forms:

1. An Equipment/Service sign-up sheet – these volunteers only to be called upon during a disaster response situation.
2. A Member Assistance form for those who may have special needs – due to physical handicaps, living alone, or lack of proximity to friends and/or family. If you do not have computer access, please contact the church office and these forms will be provided.

Ascension Disaster Response Committee

Lee Nirider	713-464-8544
Jim Jackson	713-785-6909
Faye Armstrong	281-558-6817
Suzanne McMath	832-687-0864

WHAM Food Drive...

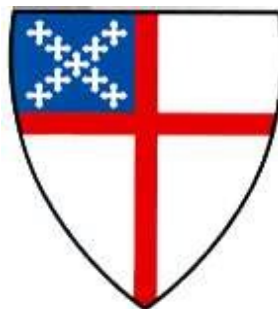
We receive nonperishable food items for distribution to those in need in our community every Sunday. These donated items are moved to the West Houston Assistance Ministry facility for distribution by volunteers. Look for the wooden box in the Narthex! Contact: office@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org

Staff

The Rev. Todd Bryant, Rector; Rolethial McKelvey, Organist; Leslie Nirider, Membership; Samantha King, Secretary; Reginald Johnson, Sexton; Ann Sietz, Bookkeeper; Paul Belk, Newcomer Minister; Robi Lasiter, DRE

The Vestry

John Searle (Sr. Warden), Jim Anderson (Jr. Warden), Jeri Platt (Clerk), Thom Fenner, John Edel, Patrick Schwabrow, Laurie Taylor, James Berrie, Matt Murphy, Carol Goulet, Michael Fox, Mike Black, and The Rector.



The School Board

The Rector, Amy Criswell (President), Terry Kahn (Vice President), Ann Seitz (Secretary), Gemma Williams (Treasurer), Dana Murphy, Cindy Cadle, Todd Breton, Nancy Searle, Marike Owen, Beatrice Menendez, Patrick Gallagher, and Ex-officio members: The Sr. Warden, The Jr. Warden, and The Head of School

The Mission of Ascension Episcopal Church

Our Mission as faithful followers of **Jesus Christ** is to love the **Lord** and one another unconditionally. We proclaim **God's** truth found in Holy Scripture and make disciples through Evangelism and Christian Education, while ministering joyfully to all **God's** people.