

ASCENSION TIDINGS

DECEMBER 2014

Christmas / Advent Schedule

School

December 5th, A visit from St. Nicholas, 9am

December 11th, Elementary Program, 7pm

December 19th, Baby in a Manger, 9am

Church

December 21st, Christmas caroling at the home of Dave and Cristina Mattern in Briar Grove Park, 5pm

Christmas Eve

Bread and Soccer, Big Field, 9am

Eucharist, Candles, & Children lead "Sing a Song of Christmas", 5pm

Holy Eucharist with Musical Ensemble, 9:30pm

Christmas Day

Eucharist & Christmas Hymns, PJ's optional, 10:30am

Thank you Ascensionites
for helping at the Food Bank.
And thank you for your
generosity with Seafarers and
Forgotten Seniors.



It's almost Christmas, how guilty do you feel?

December is the month when people flock to help charities. If you have not volunteered to help the poor, you can start now. Some of my fondest experiences involve getting out of myself and serving the poor. Giving money to people on a street corner; however, is a more vexing problem. If

you have ever felt your heart break when someone is standing on the street corner, this article is for you. As your pastor, I encounter and pray for the needy every day. When those in need come to my office, I throw out a silent prayer: "Jesus, give me your eyes".

I have a lot of experience as a pastor working with helping agencies. Giving \$1, \$5, \$10 or \$20 out of your pocket directly to the person may not accomplish the goal of Christian charity and can actually work at cross purposes with ministries committed to the poor. Every helping organization I have worked with suggests not giving money directly to individuals when they approach you. Seems to me that the central question is how can we be kind **and** effective? Ascension, as a whole, is completely committed to helping those in need and on the margins.

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR...(CONT.)

The church has a "Rector's Discretionary Fund." This fund, among other things, is designated to helping those in financial need. The church budget accounts for some of these funds, and individuals often contribute as well. The Rector, along with WHAM, Mission of Yahweh, the Beacon and other ministries have a wealth of resources to aid financially strapped families and the homeless.

Because I have a discretionary account, I have many weekly conversations with people who need help. Sometimes, I will give money, refer to WHAM, decide to not give anything, or pay for odd jobs around campus (not around the children). Whatever the decision, it is prayerful and meant to bless the person. Are you passionate about helping the poor? Helping in the ministry? Come talk to me; I would love to work with you to find your calling.

What is the goal of giving to the needy?

Everyone needs help at some point. God gave his Son to us that we might be able to stand tall and free from shame. Sometimes, unwittingly, our charitable feelings and actions, can work against the goals of human dignity. An excellent book I recommend is called *Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupton which delves into all the ways working with the poor can go wrong and right.

If you don't give money to people, what do you do?

1. Volunteer an hour a week at WHAM. Your volunteer ministry supports the staff who help those in need every day.

A fifty pound bag of pinto beans and a fifty pound bag of rice costs about \$125 and when donated to WHAM can feed 500 people. That's about 25 cents a meal.

2. Count every person on the street corner asking for money that you see in a week. Then send a check to Star of Hope or a charity of your choice as a multiplier of that number. For example, you see 20 people, send a check for \$20 or whatever amount God has placed on your heart. Those ministries leverage your dollars in miraculous, abundant ways.

3. Spend three hours at the Food Bank. Ascension helped package 24,000 "bridge meals" for kids on school lunch programs who, without the Food Bank, would not eat on the weekends.

So whatever you do, give your heart. Maybe your heart shines through time, money or both.

The cash give is only a temporary salve

I suggest not giving money directly to people needing assistance. Dollars from your pocket can create a sense of living "off the grid". Loose cash allows the needy to avoid the harder work of getting the resources they need. Many on the streets are mentally ill or profoundly disabled, and there are many ministries specifically equipped to help them. As odd as it sounds, that loose cash can keep them unhelped and disconnected.

Sunday Morning

If you are like me, you don't enjoy the "Sunday ask". The "Sunday ask" is when a person will approach you as you leave worship and say something like, "you call yourself a Christian, Jesus loved the poor....I

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR...(CONT.)

need money!" The Vestry and I consider it a privilege to serve those in need, and as part of this ministry, generally we ask them to come back on Monday. When they come back, I can meet with them one-on-one for a financial assessment and/or ask them to go to WHAM for a thorough "intake interview".

Every Sunday we have two Vestry people on campus early on Sunday morning until the last person leaves around 12:30pm. If you are approached for money, please find one of the two Vestry people of the day and let them assess the situation, which may include asking the person(s) to leave the campus.

In our financial assistance program, we may refer to WHAM; the Beacon (the Cathedral); the Way Station (Palmer Church); Operation ID (Presbyterian); etc. Money is available for rent assistance, groceries, and very specific needs. However, unless it is an extremely unusual situation, we do not give money for people to stay in hotels and motels.

We might determine that they are in a true emergency and take them to the office for help or we might ask them to leave and come back Monday. This is not because Ascension is stuffy and afraid of looking bad, it is because Ascension is committed to helping people get back on their feet through our ministries and agencies expressly created for lifting people to their full potential. Our faith is not a temporary fix of a few dollars. We believe that God, through us, can make people whole.

I would love to hear from you. I am trying to live into my Baptismal covenant: seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving my neighbor as myself and respecting the dignity of every human being.

Pastor Todd

December Calendar

- Dec 7 - Forgotten Seniors ingathering
- Dec 11 - Elementary Program
- Dec 13 - DOK meets at Libby's home for Christmas Party
- Dec 13 - December Parent's Night Out (5-9pm)
- Dec 18 - Poinsettia/Musician Deadline
- Dec 19 - Baby in the Manager, 9am
 - Kids are let out for Christmas Break
- Dec 21 - Caroling with the Matterns, 5pm
- Dec 24 - Christmas Eve
 - 9am Bread and Soccer, Big Field
 - 5pm Eucharist, Candles, & Children lead "Sing a Song of Christmas"
 - 9:30pm Holy Eucharist with Musical Ensemble
- Dec 25 - Christmas Day
 - 10:30 am Eucharist & Christmas Hymns, PJ's optional



- Jan 5 - AES Returns
- Jan 11 - Epiphany Sunday
- Jan 18 - 2015 Annual Meeting

NEWCOMER CORNER

Advent is a time of expectancy and waiting. It is also a time of noticing. So much of the newcomer ministry at Ascension is noticing and connecting. One way we try to do that is through social media. Social media can be a double-edge sword though. Sometimes it can serve to only further separate and isolate. It can be a breeding ground for bullying and ignorant thought. Anyone who has been on Facebook for any amount of time has seen plenty of things that people would never say to someone else's face.

However, social media can also be a tool for even greater connectivity. We might find out that a friend is in need, or that someone we know is sharing a great joy in their life and we get to celebrate it with them. It can also help us stay connected to people who are far away. I will typically try to find newcomers on Facebook that visit Ascension to get a snapshot of the life they share with the world.

We have another way this season. To start noticing together. Ascension has a good online presence through our website and our Facebook page, but did you know we are also on Instagram and Twitter? As a way of kickstarting our presence in those spaces we are joining with the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE), an Anglican monastic order, as they are encouraging Episcopalians and Anglicans to help create a Global Advent Calendar on Instagram. Every year during the Advent season the brothers of SSJE share something called the Advent Word of the Day, a daily reflection on advent themes based on a single word. They are meant to help us slow down and simply notice ourselves, and those around us. To take a moment and see the God who created us, who became one of us at the first Christmas and who will again return. This year they invite Instagram users to share a photo using the hashtag #AdventWord everyday during Advent based on the daily word. You can follow along on Instagram with Ascension at @AscensionHouston and with the rest of the participants in the Global Advent Calendar by searching #AdventWord. Can't wait to see what you notice this season!



Thank you to all those who attended the Food Bank Mission work. We were able to package over 1000 "backpack buddy" bags. These bags are sent home with elementary school age children who would not have enough food for the weekend.

ASCENSION SCHOOL

ASCENSION
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL



December Tidings

Dear Parishioners,

St. Nicholas will visit us on Friday, December 5th at our 9 am all school chapel. We all enjoy knowing the story of this saint and receiving a special penny from him.

We invite you to join us on Thursday, December 11th, at 7 pm in the Church for our Elementary Program. It is an evening of music and story as performed by our students in grades 1-5. We hope you will come and enjoy this evening.

On Friday, December 19th, our Kindergarten students re-enact the Baby In The Manger. Our students in Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4 also participate in this program. It is one of the best ways to see young children involved in the story of Jesus' birth. The program begins at 9 am in the church.

We will enjoy some time away to celebrate Christmas and the New Year. Our last day of school is Friday, December 19th. We return on Monday, January 5th, 2015.

We wish you a joyous Christmas.

Faithfully,

Nancy Clausey
Head of School



FROM THE CHOIR LOFT



Dr. Nancy Taylor Ginsburg

In October of this year, I had the honor of joining the staff of Ascension Episcopal Church. What a joy it is to be here. I *LOVE* worship! We come together as a community to worship – to give thanks, to praise, to glorify.

As we enter Advent, we step into a time of contemplation, preparation, anticipation, and excitement – all at once! This is a wonderful time to sing and make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

Choir: Join us in the choir loft!

If others know what you are singing when you sing “Jesus Loves Me”, then you are a good choir singer...and this choir needs YOU! Seriously, nothing else matters. Being in the choir will help you “read” music and will guide you through your part. Please join us as we worship together in preparation and leadership!

Ascension’s children’s choir meets on Sundays for one-half hour, beginning fifteen minutes after the 10:30 service concludes. (That’s normally about 11:45-12:15.)

The Ascension Choir meets twice each week. On Wednesday evening, we are rehearsing from 7:00-9:00 in the month of December. On Sunday morning, we gather at 9:30 to “get it together” and 9:40 to rehearse for one-half hour. (If you are heavily involved in Sunday School, please join us by 10:00 for a final run-through of the anthem.)

Choir involvement is *flexible*. I can not stress this enough!! Everyone has schedule conflicts and/or family considerations. When you are unable to attend rehearsal or worship, we understand! If you need to sit with your family in worship, please do so; you can join us in the choir loft for the anthem.

In other words, if you are ready to sing in the choir, please talk with me. I expect we will be able to find a way to make it happen!!

Congregation: This is the BIG choir at Ascension. As we lift our voices together in song, we worship through both the text and the musical setting. You are invited – encouraged – to sing everything in the service that is not marked “offertory” or “musical offering”. Please join with the choir as we lift our voices throughout each service.

Support: There are several times of the year when outside musicians are invited to worship with us. This is a perfect opportunity to make a special gift in someone’s memory or honor...or to make an offering to the Glory of the God. This year, Ascension will host guest artists on Sunday, December 21st and on Wednesday, December 24th at the 9:30 p.m. service. We give thanks for the artistic gifts these individuals offer through worship and we give thanks to those whose monetary gifts make these offerings possible at Ascension!

Music ministry at Ascension has some very special musical offerings in progress, including.... next page.

FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

November 30 th	Advent 1	"Waiting", a musical offering that sets the tone for our Advent worship.
December 7 th	Advent 2	The prelude will be a powerful guitar rendition of "My Lord, What a Morning".
December 14 th	Advent 3	Percussion will speak in anticipation of our Lord as the choir sings the <i>African Advent Carol</i> .
December 21 st	Advent 4	This is traditionally a Sunday that looks to the Virgin Mary. The choir will raise its collective voice in a beautiful <i>Magnificat</i> , accompanied by violin and interpreted by a liturgical dancer.
December 24 th	Christmas Eve at 5:30 p.m.	The children will present their Christmas pageant. All children will be invited to participate. The Ascension Children's Choir will lead the singing.
	Christmas Eve at 9:30 p.m.	Organ, brass quartet, and choir will share the glory of the Lord's birth with fanfare and acclamation...and with awe and reverence.
December 28 th	Christmas Sunday	Our guest keyboard artist on this day is also an accomplished harpist...and the prelude will be very special! The choir will share a joyful setting of <i>Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child</i> .

Children's Choir

Thank you for participating in children's choir! Every activity for your child/children involves a commitment on your part, and I am thankful you are part of the Ascension Children's Choir Program. I still remember being in children's choir (many years ago) and I know much of my growth as a Christian has taken place in musical settings. It's worth it!!

Please Help Gather the Children!

We are trying to build a complete e-mail and phone list for the children's choir, but I know it's not complete yet. If you know of a child/children who are singing in the choir but whose parents are not on the e-mail list, please share the news!



DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

December – the “most wonderful time of the year”, as the song goes. And it really IS the most wonderful time of the year for Christians, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. The entire season is just magical, especially for our children. I loved it when my children were younger because I found myself reliving the magic of Christmas through them. We loved the lights, the music, the special foods and the baking, the trips to the mall to see Santa, the TV specials (especially Rudolph and Charlie Brown). As much as I relished these special times, I always found myself feeling a little guilty because I didn’t feel that I was helping them to focus on the real meaning behind Christmas. We’d get so caught up in the materialistic, secular parts of the holiday that Jesus just seemed to be an afterthought. So, how can we as parents help refocus Christmas for our kids? Here are some simple ways:



Emphasize Christmas as a season for *giving*, instead of just “getting”. Instead of always asking kids “What do you want for Christmas?”, ask questions such as “What special things are you giving others for Christmas?”, or “What gift would you like to give your mom? your dad? your sister?” Teach them that the best gifts often aren’t those bought at stores, but are things such as a hug, offering to help, or a special card that they made themselves.

Use a manger scene (there are lots of unbreakable, kid friendly ones out there!) to tell the Christmas story. Use your most animated, excited voice to help capture and keep their attention. I mean....those wise men traveled a long way, following a star, to find Jesus.....how cool is that??? Once they know the story, let each child choose and hold a figure that they can use to tell or act out their part of the story as it comes up.

Help your kids find meaningful ways to become involved. Take them out into the community or neighborhood to pass out Christmas cookies. Let them help choose toys and clothing to donate to organizations who will give them to the needy. Have them participate in church activities. We’ve got lots of activities for kids going on here at Ascension – the children’s Christmas Eve pageant, our Seedlings & Youth outreach project, and Dave Maschek’s special Advent series which he presents each Sunday in Advent during the Sunday school hour are all great ways for your children to feel connected to the true meaning of Christmas. (See the articles on each for more information.)

May you and your family enjoy a truly blessed Christmas season!

Thank you, Pam Greene!

One of our most beloved Sunday school teachers, Pam Greene, has accepted a new position in Corpus Christi and will be leaving us after Christmas. For all of you who have been blessed to have had your children taught by Pam, you know what an extraordinary teacher and mentor she is to the children of Ascension. Pam has been teaching our younger children (ages 3 through 1st grade). She didn’t use a pre-packaged curriculum, preferring instead to write her own which incorporated Bible stories, songs,

games and crafts into each lesson. Knowing how much our littlest ones thrive on consistency and structure, she chose to be the primary teacher of this class week after week. Pam not only shared her knowledge and love of Jesus with our children, but she also has been a huge inspiration to the rest of us in the Sunday school department, as well. Pam, we are so thankful for your service to children's ministries, and wish you the best in your new adventures!



Youth & Seedlings Service Project – Dec. 7th

The Youth Group (grades 6 through 12) and the Seedlings (grades 2 through 5) will join together on Sunday, December 7th from 12:15 to 2:00 to make gift bags for the homeless. Pizza and drinks will be provided for lunch. We will meet in the parish hall. Anyone participating in the Pageant rehearsals can join us after you have finished.

Christmas Eve Children's Pageant

All children and youth are invited to participate in our annual Christmas Eve pageant! Rehearsals for the pageant are held each Sunday for 30 minutes after the 10:30am service (approx. from 11:45 until 12:15) in the AES music room. If you have children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews.....any children who will be attending the family service at Ascension on December 24th who would like to participate, please send their names and ages to Robi Lasiter at robilasiter@gmail.com. We will welcome children to participate in the pageant at any time, but in order to have a speaking part, attendance at rehearsals is required. We will be rehearsing the speaking parts during Sunday school.

Parent's Night Out

Parents, are you feeling a little too "hustled and bustled" this Christmas season? Then give yourselves a break and send your kids to join us at Parent's Night Out on Saturday, December 13th from 5:00 to 9:00. Our Christmas PNO is always one of our best, as we celebrate in style with Santa pictures, light parades, and crafts galore! The cost is only \$10 for the first child and \$5 for each sibling. Follow the link on our website to register. Registration begins on Tuesday, December 2nd and ends on Thursday, December 11th at 9:00 pm.

As always, we are looking for new volunteers. There's no better way to get into the holiday spirit than by spending a few hours enjoying Christmas games and activities with kids, so if you're interested in helping out, contact Robi Lasiter at robilasiter@gmail.com.

Sunday School Advent Lessons

During Advent, our children's Sunday school students will be treated each week to a series of Godly Play lessons presented by Dave Maschek. Each lesson focuses on a portion of the Nativity story. The schedule will be:

Nov. 30. Three Kings start on a long journey. The prophets predict the coming of Jesus.

Dec. 7. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem.

Dec. 14. Jesus is born. Angels bring the shepherds tidings of great joy.

Dec. 21. The Three Kings arrive with gifts.

Dave is a master teacher, and his telling of the Christmas story is absolutely mesmerizing! Sunday school begins at 9:30 on Sunday mornings in the second floor classrooms.

ACTIVITIES

Christmas Musicians Underwriters



Please make an offering to help underwrite the Christmas Musicians Ensemble expense. This wonderful experience adds so much to the Christmas Eve services. Checks may be mailed to the church, placed in the offering plate, or brought to the church office. Be sure that your check is made out to the church and indicate "for Choir Fund/Christmas Musicians".

You may dedicate your the gift in memory of, in honor of, in thanksgiving for, etc., and the contribution will be acknowledged in the Christmas orders of service. Please call the office at 713-781-1330 or email Samantha at office@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org to confirm the dedication for your contribution. Thank you for your support of the Music Department. As with the poinsettias, the ***deadline for dedications and donations will be December 18th.***

Christmas Poinsettia Offerings

The time is here to sign-up to donate and dedicate a poinsettia. Sign the flower chart and write your dedication in the book below the chart. The cost is \$25, but any donation amount is welcome. Any questions can be directed to the office or to Mrs. Ann Burton. ***The last day to accept any donations or dedications will be December 18th.***



Christmas Caroling in Briargrove Park

Bring some holiday cheer to our neighbors in Briargrove Park and then retire to a warm house to share in some tasty Christmas goodies. We'll provide the scarves, you bring your voice!

All members and friends of Ascension Episcopal Church and School are invited. We will gather at the home of Dave and Cristina Mattern at 5:00pm on Sunday, 12/21/14 to begin the singing.

Advent Challenge:

As we move into advent (First Sunday of Advent was November 30th), I would like to challenge you. Each week we eat, probably at minimum, 21 meals. So starting the week of November 23, will you share a meal with somebody not in your inner circle? Then I want to hear your stories starting November 30, during the Sunday school hour at 9:30am. I will teach for about 10 minutes, then I want to share the encounters that we've had the week before.

If you want to "prepare the way of the Lord make his paths straight," do it with dinner plate, or lunch plate or breakfast plate. And it would be nice if they came on Sunday morning but that is not the goal. The paradox of being Christian is that we are citizens of heaven, but the world is not a project for us to fix. Earth and heaven intertwined is our identity. Revelation tells us that God is marrying a new heaven to a new earth. Let's work on the marriage now.

ACTIVITIES



Daughters of the King

The Daughters of the King will hold their annual Christmas party on Saturday, Dec 13th at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Libby Vester, 614 Wilcrest Dr. All ladies of the parish are cordially invited to join us for lunch, carol-singing and prayer.



Thank You!

Seafarer's Christmas Box Program - What a success!! The students of Ascension Episcopal School packed one-hundred twenty-three (123) shoeboxes. That exceeded our goal by 23% and our best past performance by 45%. You did it! Thank you for your out pouring and support.

Forgotten Senior Victory - We started with 50 bags, handed out all of them plus made 10 more bags by request. There were 10 extra bags on hand and handed out Sunday. The total number of Forgotten Senior bags handed out now totals 70. What a wonderful out pouring of support for this fulfilling program. **Remember, all bags should be returned by Sunday, Dec 7th.**

A new tradition at Ascension Episcopal Church begins this year on Christmas Eve:

Bread and Soccer!

Christmas Eve: 9:00 am - 11 am.

9 - 10 am: Soccer! We'll play an intergenerational game of soccer, all ages and soccer ability welcome. Each participant will be assigned to one of two teams. (Keeping score is optional).

10 - 11 am: Gather to share Bread in the Parish Hall.

Please bring a favorite bread to share (loaves, muffins, bagels, etc.) and some of your favorite "smears" (butter, jelly, cream cheese, etc). The church will provide coffee, tea, juice and water.



New Sunday School Offering

Please attend adult Sunday School at 9:30 for the duration of Advent to hear the newest Rector series: Advent, a study of thoughts, words, and deeds and how they shape our faith.

Questions....Details?

As always, if you have a question, need more information, an address, or details, please email the church office at secretary@ascensionhouston.org.

No email? No problem. Just give us a call at 713-781-1330.

ALTAR HANGINGS

Thank you to Dion and Pat Cole for their amazing donation of the blue Altar hangings in the church. Their gift has made this season extra special. We have included a very good description of the history of Advent colors below. You will notice the cross and crown in the hangings. The blue color, the cross, and crown all point to new beginning and ancient promises fulfilled. Advent is primarily about preparing for the 2nd coming of Jesus (Christ in glory coming to draw people to himself at the last days. Advent is not focused primarily on the 1st coming, baby Jesus. May their generous gift bless your Advent worship. See longer history below.



Why Blue During Advent?

Parament: A Parament or Parement; (from Late Latin *paramentum*, adornment, *parare*, to prepare, equip), is a term applied by ancient writers to the hangings or ornaments of a room of the state. Later Paraments referred to the liturgical hangings on and around the Altar, as well as the cloths hanging from the pulpit and lectern, and the ecclesiastical vestments and mitres.

Advent means “coming or arrival,” and the reason for the season is anticipation and preparation for the His second coming (as well as his birth). In the early church, it was also time for candidates to prepare for church membership. After the fourth century, it became a time for preparation for Christmas, and penitence was added as a standard for the whole church in the Middle Ages.

Now, many Christian churches are again shifting the emphasis of Advent from a penitential season, such as Lent, to a celebration of hope and anticipation. That in no means takes away from the fact that Advent is also a time of preparation and introspection.

In an effort to again distinguish between Advent and Lent, some denominations have changed the color of Advent to various shades of blue. Some Roman Catholic churches have changed to a blue violet. Although we, as Episcopalians, all grew up with purple and red violet, the early 12th century Black Canon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ordered black as the color for Advent! But, blue is by no means new to our church either. Before the 12th century, it was used in the Western Church.

Continued next page

Advent Blue continued...

The Sarum Rite was the original basis for the liturgy of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and where blue was used for the color of Advent. It was often specified that it be an indigo to represent the darkness before the birth. Early art shows church leaders in ornately decorated blue robes. Shades of blue symbolize royalty, the coming of the King, hope, the night sky before the dawn, the sea before creation, and Mary. Remember early dyes were made from nature. Some historians suggest that northern European dyes were made from berries that produced blue while southern Europe was able to make purple dyes.

Tradition has a rose-colored candle in the Advent wreath---not to symbolize Mary ---but to reflect the lessening emphasis on penitence, the nearing of the end of the fast, the pending birth, and the second coming. Rose or pink represents joy. The 3rd Sunday in Advent marks the halfway point. In the Roman Catholic tradition, it is called Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin for "rejoice." It takes its name from one of the traditional readings from Philippians which begins, "Rejoice in the Lord always."

Used with verbal permission from St. Paul's Cambria in California
<http://www.stpaulscambria.org/why-do-we-use-blue.html>



PNO ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our monthly Parents' Night Out for December will be on December 13th. Registration opens on December 2nd and runs through December 11th on the church website. Please remember this is a first come first serve basis. Invite your friends and neighbors. PNO is not an Ascension exclusive.

December PNO is one of the most favorite PNO's of the year! We'll be bringing in some of "traditional" activities such as pics with Santa and the light parade along with plenty of Christmas games and crafts. We want lots of kids to be able to enjoy these festivities, so we need lots of volunteers. Please sign-up to volunteer so that we may offer more spots in registration.

PNO is a vital ministry to the parents of the church, school and surrounding community. 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, our numbers have decreased. We need you to join us. The wonderful activities director takes care of all of the planning and activities – all we need is you to come spend an evening with some fantastic children. You'll find yourself having as much fun as the kids! Please consider becoming a PNO volunteer so we may continue to offer this event. If interested or for more information, contact Robi Lasiter at robilasiter@gmail.com.



ACTIVITIES AND ONGOINGS

Quarterly Giving Statements

Thank you for every penny of donation to Ascension Episcopal Church and its ministries. Your contributions have enabled us to make a difference in our community. Let us continue to reflect the salvation the Lord has given us by sharing all things he has given us; our gifts of the spirit, our wealth, and our time. Your contribution statements were sent just before the Stewardship Drive and should have arrived last month. Consider it as you learn about the ministries of our church. If you have questions email Leslie at membership@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org or give her a call at 713-181-1330.

Important

2014 Tax Deductions

Please remember that in order to be included in 2014 Tax Deductions the office must receive your contribution by December 31, 2014. If your check is dated December 25, 2013 but is not received until January 2015, it will be credited on the **2015 Statement**. Holiday mail may suffer delays due to increased volume and vacation schedules. Give early, give often and gladden your heart.

Thank you to all who pledged for 2015. Our goal is 120 pledges and as of December 1st we have 97. We are close to meeting our goal. If you haven't pledged yet, please be reminded that your pledge card can be mailed to the church, dropped off in the office, placed in the offering plate, and now we have an online option. Go to the church website, under the contact/about us tab, there is a giving page, and at the bottom you will find a downloadable file which can be scanned and emailed back. Our just email us with what you want to pledge.

Thank you!!



Vestry Nominations

Do you know a person who demonstrates a passion for Ascension and shown themselves to be a leader? We would like the congregation to submit the names of people they think would be good vestry members, no later than December 12th by nominating online at:

<http://www.ascensionepiscopalchurch.org/vestry-nominations.html> or dropping the nominees' information into the offering plate with the title "vestry nomination".

Each nomination should include: the nominee's name and what you think qualifies them for this leadership position. The Nominating Committee asks that you **DO NOT** speak to the person you are nominating before submitting his or her name. The vestry will confirm each person's willingness to serve before their name goes on the ballot. Thank you for your help in this process which is vital to the ongoing life of Ascension.

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

Hurricane Season Is Here

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

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...

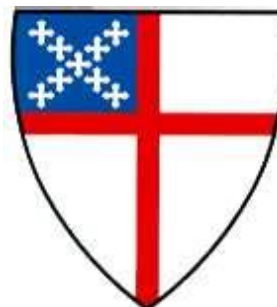
We receive nonperishable food items for distribution to those in need in our community every Sunday. These donated items are moved to the West Houston Assistance Ministry facility for distribution by volunteers. Look for the wooden box in the Narthex! Contact: office@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org

Staff

The Rev. Todd Bryant, Rector; Nancy Ginsburg, Choir Director; Leslie Nirider, Membership; Samantha King, Secretary; Reginald Johnson, Sexton; Ann Sietz, Bookkeeper; Paul Belk, Newcomer Minister; Robi Lasiter, Dir. of Religious Education

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, Shay James, 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.