

ASCENSION TIDINGS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016



Welcome to Epiphany Season and beginning of Lent!

Worship the Christ as revealed in light on Jan 17, 24, 31 and Feb 7, in the Epiphany season. The season of Epiphany started on Jan 6th, "The Epiphany" (The Magi's discovery of Jesus). The season wraps up on Feb 15th with Transfiguration Sunday. On Feb 18th, Ash Wednesday ushers in Lent. The season of Epiphany celebrates the Epiphanies or revelations of God's mercy throughout the scriptures.

Annual Meeting

Right in the middle, Jan 24th, join us for Annual Meeting and Lunch right after 10:30am to get updated on the church and vision for the future.

Super Bowl Party

Prepare for Lent the American way - tailgate! Feb 7th, starting around 4:30ish for 5:30pm kickoff join us in the Parish Hall.

Shrove Tuesday, Feb 9th

6:30pm. Scouts will be making their signature pancakes and bacon.

Ash Wednesday Services, Feb 10th

- Imposition of Ashes, no communion @ 8:30am
- Rite of Reconciliation Form II, in the church, check out the BCP, p 449 to see what it is like, 10am-11:45am
- Imposition of Ashes, Communion, no music, 12pm
- Rite of Reconciliation Form II, in the church, 5pm-6:45pm
- Imposition of Ashes, Communion, and music at 7pm

We are not doing "ashes to go" this year. However, come to the church for individual sharing and reconciliation with the clergy. Reconciliation includes confession and prayers. There is no booth like you see in the movies, we might ask you to do something but it won't include "Hail Marys". Try it out, it can be very powerful. We will have 15 min blocks, you can drop in but there maybe somebody ahead of you. Sign-ups will be published

LETTER FROM THE RECTOR...(CONT.)

Lenten Wednesday Teaching, Communion Class, and Get-to-know Ascension Class, nursery available

- 6pm Evening prayer - two hymns, evening prayer from the church of England, and brief (3-5min) reflection.
- 6:30pm soup supper and breakout for teaching.
- All classes over at 7:30pm

Deacon Mary (church library)

Reconciliation

Feb 17th

Immigrants / refugees,

Feb 24th

School to prison pipeline

Mar 2nd

Post prison life

Pastor Todd (children's chapel)

Get to Know Ascension

Feb 17th

Episcopwhat? Episcopalianisms

Feb 24th

Ministry, Stewardship, and beyond

Mar 2nd

(After going before the Bishop)

History, Politics, Worship

Robi Lasiter (upstairs)

Communion Class.

Feb 17th

Why we do it.

Feb 24th

When we do it.

Mar 2nd

How we do it.

My class, Get-to-Know Ascension, is the doorway to membership and becoming an Episcopalian. All your questions about how you become Episcopalian, why we do what we do will be answered in the class. Deacon Mary's class offers insight into reconciliation of hot button issues, and Robi will be teaching three communion classes. Adults are welcome to attend any of the three classes they wish to, while it is recommended that children attend the communion class. If they have taken it previously, then this will serve as a refresher course. .

The Final two weeks of Lenten Wednesdays, led by Pastor Todd

- Mar 9th - Inter religious reconciliation (Islam and Christianity)
- Mar 16th - "Monk-y" business. Intro to Easter Season adult class on Sunday mornings for developing a rule of life.



Annual Meeting

The annual Parish meeting is Sunday, January 24. Please make plans to attend this meeting. It will follow the 10:30 service and we are serving lunch! We will be discussing budgeting, both last years review and upcoming year, saying good-bye to our exiting vestry members and introducing the new ones. If an election is required it will take place early in the meeting. The candidates short biographies will be available in the Annual Report. This is also a good time to get caught up on the activities of the ministries in the organizational report and learn the needs of the ministries around you. Come for lunch, come for fellowship and to be a part of the future of your church.

REACH OUT

Tidings for Epiphany 2016 As the seasons change, we note the change of pace and purpose in both our liturgical seasons and the seasons of our secular life. In our church seasons, Epiphany has much to do with the journey of the Magi to find the Christ child-the new king of the Jews...it also generally refers to all of Christ's life up to his baptism. In our day to day life, this time of year is dedicated to new beginnings. We usually take some personal stock of ourselves and resolve to change some of what we do or begin new projects that we think we need to add to our lives.



Interestingly enough, one of the big clear out times of our "stuff" is not in spring but just before Christmas. We seem to be getting ready to reorganize and actualize our goals. How many of us will dust off our exercise clothes and head to the gym or the roads to log miles or steps? We usually do not succeed long term with all of our new projects, but we do with some. So as you begin to gather documents to close out your financial year and list your resolutions for the new year, I encourage you to add your spiritual life to those assessments.

We would love to welcome you to one of the many ways we need assistance around the parish....we have all sorts of opportunities with fabulous benefits and some really grand co-workers. There are all sorts of time slots available and we do welcome part time folk. There are opportunities to study the Bible...and if the kind you want is not available...please let Todd or I know. We welcome input in these matters.

One of the new projects around Ascension is the formation of an Outreach Committee. It will be creating a vision of what we think Outreach should look like for us generally and then assess what we do now in light of that vision. I ask that each of you be looking at the neighborhoods around Ascension for areas you think we might be called to address in some way. Email me your ideas, we need to have many eyes open to find the projects that fit us well.

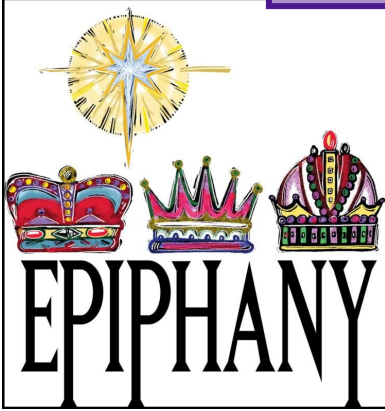
Our efforts at Walnut Bend are bearing fruit. The children in the Lunch Bunch groups have been bonding with each other as well as their mentors. If you could see them in the hall as they wait for us-you would understand what a huge thing it is for them. The teachers share how important it is in the lives of the children. It is never too late to join in these efforts! Research is showing that the earlier we can get these children involved with an adult mentor, the better the results are.

One of the best parts about it though is how much fun the adults have sharing with the children....just ask one of us about our kids!

In the coming weeks, we will begin to finalize plans for going out to work and play in the community. I encourage each of you to consider joining us in at least one of these a year.

Your sister in Christ,
Mary

DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Welcome to 2016! It will be weeks, if not months, before I get used to writing that one. Now that the hustle and bustle of Christmas is over, we are ready to get back to work in Sunday school! For the next couple of weeks, our kids will learn stories about Jesus when he was a boy and young adult, and then.....it will be Lent. Lent seems to begin so early this year, starting on February 10th. That means there are only 6 ½ weeks between the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus and all the joy that it brings, and the beginning of the season in which we observe the passion, pain and triumph of Lent and Easter. As adults, we can understand the symbolic nature and rhythm of the Christian year. However, for a child who is much more literal, the short period of time between the baby Jesus and the adult Jesus, whom we crucify and bury, is way too short.

So, how can we help our young concrete learners embrace the meaning of Lent and Easter without scaring them? During children's Sunday school, we will be teaching a children's version of a Lenten series, allowing them to learn all about the stories of repentance, forgiveness, community, sadness and joy. They'll learn about our special Lenten worship services, beginning with Ash Wednesday. They'll learn that yes, even Jesus experienced death and burial, but that death was not the end for Him, just as it is not the end for us as believers because Jesus has promised to bring us into a life more wonderful than anything we can fathom.

They'll learn and experience all of this with the loving guidance of our wonderful Sunday school volunteers. We hope to see your children there!

Mission Trip 2016 – Return to Dulac!

The Mission Trippers from Ascension had such a wonderful experience in Dulac last year that we've decided to return! Our 2016 mission trip is scheduled for June 5 – 10. It is open to everyone ages 5 through 105. Children from the age of 5 through 5th grade must be accompanied by a parent, but any youth in grades 6 through 12 are allowed to travel without a parent and will be supervised by Ascension staff. The cost for the trip is \$250, however we are hoping to offset much of that cost with money raised through our fundraising efforts. Last year we kicked off our fundraising by selling water balloons to throw at Fr. Todd. This year's kickoff will be even more fun! (We haven't quite worked up the nerve to let him know what we will be putting him through to earn money this year, but you definitely will want to be a part of it!) Space is limited to 30 people, so if you are interested in attending, please let Robi Lasiter know at robilasiter@gmail.com



Can't wait to see you there!



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas
Office of the Bishop

January 4, 2016

Dear Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas:

You are undoubtedly aware that on January 1, 2016, persons licensed to carry a concealed handgun became entitled to carry them openly—in a holster—in most public places in Texas. Sadly, at the same time the Legislature also removed the gun-free protection that churches previously enjoyed under prior law. Fortunately, however, the Legislature affirmed that churches—like other property owners—have the legal right to exclude handguns from their property by taking affirmative steps to do so.

I want to be very clear: notwithstanding the change in Texas law, our longstanding policy in the Diocese of Texas remains the same—guns have no place in our churches, schools, and institutions. Other than those carried by officers of the peace or security officers on duty, we will adhere to our policy prohibiting guns on church and school property because we believe that our responsibility is to promote an atmosphere of peace and safety. The presence of firearms on church property is inconsistent with our diocesan vision of evangelism, service, and reconciliation.



Each of our congregations, schools, and institutions needs to communicate to its employees and constituents our expectation that guns will not be brought onto its property. At my request, our diocesan chancellor David Harvin has analyzed the new law and offered the attached suggestions on how congregations, schools, and institutions can implement our gun-free policy in light of what the new legislation requires. I expect the governing bodies of our churches, schools and institutions now to adopt measures that are appropriate for their own circumstances to implement our gun-free policy.

Please read the following enclosure from a posture of prayer. I am deeply grateful for your cooperation on this matter.

Faithfully,

C. Andrew Doyle, D.D.
IX Bishop of Texas

In the passing of the new gun laws and in response to the Bishop's letter on the previous page, the following signs are posted at the entrance of the church and both entrances of the Parish Life Building. These serve as a reminder to parishioners and as information to visitors that this is a gun free campus. If you have any concerns, Pastor Todd will be happy to discuss them with you.

 <p>PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.07, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH AN OPENLY CARRIED HANDGUN); A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A HANDGUN THAT IS CARRIED OPENLY.</p> <hr/> <p>CONFORME A LA SECCIÓN 30.07, DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASE POR PORTADOR DE LICENCIA PARA EL LIBRE PORTE DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), PERSONAS CON LICENCIA BAJO AUTORIDAD DEL SUBCAPÍTULO H, CAPÍTULO 411, DEL CÓDIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY REGULADORA DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), NO DEBERÁ ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD PORTANDO UN ARMA DE FUEGO DEL PORTE LIBRE.</p> <p><small>Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy TEXAS IMPACT</small> www.TexasImpact.org</p>	 <p>PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.06, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN); A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN.</p> <hr/> <p>CONFORME A LA SECCIÓN 30.06, DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASE POR PORTADOR DE LICENCIA CON UN ARMA DE FUEGO OCULTO), PERSONAS CON LICENCIA BAJO AUTORIDAD DEL SUBCAPÍTULO H, CAPÍTULO 411, DEL CÓDIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY REGULADORA DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), NO DEBERÁ ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD PORTANDO UN ARMA DE FUEGO.</p> <p><small>Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy TEXAS IMPACT</small> www.TexasImpact.org</p>
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God's Word Read Aloud in God's House by God's People

We are continuing our tradition at Ascension of reading the Bible from Genesis through Revelation during Lent. Readings are approximately 30 minutes and are scheduled on weekday mornings, evenings (except Wednesdays) and Saturday mornings. You may use the Bible on the lectern or your own. You may read in the language of your choice. You may stand or sit and if access is difficult you may sit in the pews.

Sign up for a reading and include your email address. You will be sent an email reminder a couple of days before your reading. You may sign up online starting at the beginning of February on the church website, by clicking on the front page link. There will also a sign up sheet near the name tag table in the narthex on Sunday morning. Come to the church at the scheduled time and read aloud the verses assigned. The church will be open and the lights in the altar area turned on. If for some reason you find the church locked, the office has the key. If you wish to have an audience, you must bring your own. You may share this experience with a friend or church member or read on your own. It is suggested that you preview your reading the night before. If you would prefer to read at noon, choose the last reading in the morning or the first reading in the evening on that day and slide it to noon.

Please note that the Sunday paper sign-up and the online sign-up will be combined on Monday, and the newest version printed out the Friday before Sunday. So what this means, is if you sign-up late Friday or on Saturday, you will not see your name reflected on the sign-up sheet, but you are signed up. Last year we did not have any conflicting shifts, but if for some reason there is this year, Pam Schwabrow will simply contact the two parties that have signed up. One may choose to take a different time slot, or share the time. It will be up to you. Remember in the Bible it says "...make a joyful NOISE unto the Lord,..." so come as you are and read as you can.

THE PEOPLE'S SONG



-Suzanne Anderson

Did you see the *Family Circus* cartoon in the 12/31/15 newspaper? “*Guess what, Mommy! It’s only 87 days till Easter!*” I read (between the lines) an implication that there’s nothing important until then. Well, that’s just not so. Yes, Christmas and Easter are major celebrations. They are also part of the full continuum that is our Christian calendar year. We anticipate Christ with Advent, we rejoice when Christmas comes, and Epiphany continues as the joy of Christ is shared. These are three distinct seasons of anticipation, joy, and fulfillment.

On 01/10, the parish choir will sing *Christmas Joy* by Mark Schweizer. We are reminded that Christmas has meaning beyond the day itself:

*When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky has withdrawn,
When the kings see their prophesy rightly fulfilled, when the princes and shepherds have gone,
Then the true work of Christmas begins...*

On the last day in the Season of Epiphany (02/03), there is a turn in the mood. It is bright and joyful with celebration of the Transfiguration. It is also the last Sunday before Lent begins.

On 02/03, the choir will sing *Farewell to Alleluia* by Olin Jones. As you know, we don’t sing alleluia during Lent, as it is a penitential season. (Ever wonder where Alleluias go during Lent?) The second stanza reminds us:

*Alleluia cannot always be our song while here below;
Alleluia our transgressions make us for awhile forego;
for the solemn time is coming when our tears for sin must flow.
Therefore, in our hymns we pray Thee, grant us blessed Trinity.
At the last to keep thine Easter, In our home beyond the sky.
There to Thee forever singing Alleluia joyfully.*

There is so much more happening at this time of year than simply waiting for another holiday. And, as we grow through these seasons, we can appreciate Easter more fully when it does arrive.

Suzanne

-Blessings & Joy!

ASCENSION SCHOOL

Dear Parishioners,

All students, teachers and faculty returned to Ascension School on January 4th. We have two new ELP classrooms in the Parish Life Building, one for infants and one for “waddlers”, those are children just starting their crawling and moving. We have wait lists for these initial age groups and look forward to adding families to our school. Please stop by and see our newest classes. (see pictures below of the transitioned space.)

We look forward to a visit from Dr. in January. Dr. is leading pediatric cancer research at UT and will thank our students for their contribution to this project. The Student Council voted to give the Craft Fair proceeds to this worthy project.

Teachers visit with parents in January for Parent/Teacher Conferences. This is an important time for our teachers to share with parents their observations, recommendations, and thoughts about the student.

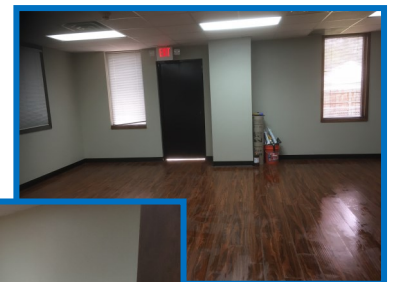
Our annual Spelling Bee is in January, this competition is for grades 3-5, and the winner goes to the competition for the Houston area.

It is important that families understand our programs so we provide meetings for K, Pre-K, and elementary parents in January and February. We invite you to attend or offer these meetings to family and neighbors. The schedule is: K on Jan. 27th at 7:30 am, Pre-K 3 on Feb. 3 at 7:30 am, and Elementary on Feb. 23 at 4 pm.

We welcome you to our Ash Wednesday Service on Wed. Feb 10th at 8:30 am in the church.

Faithfully,

Nancy Clausey
Head of School



KiDVENTURE



CAMP ASCENSION



PLAN YOUR NIGHT OUT TODAY

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT

- WHERE:** ASCENSION EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND SCHOOL
- WHEN:** January 16, 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
February 20, 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
- WHO:** Ages 3 - 12 (must be potty trained)
- COST:** \$25 per child (each child above 2 in the same family is free)

For more information or to register for ONE or ALL nights go to
kidventure.com/ascension-pno/

ACTIVITIES AND ONGOINGS

Super Bowl Party at Ascension

Let's spread the word and fill the parish hall.... This is a perfect opportunity to invite your neighbors, friends and family members who are looking for a church home, or perhaps have been out of fellowship, or even never experienced the faith building community of Ascension! Everybody is welcome!

The Church will providing beverages, plastic ware and paper products. Please Note: **Adults beverages are BYOB in personal cooler.** (No hard liquor.)

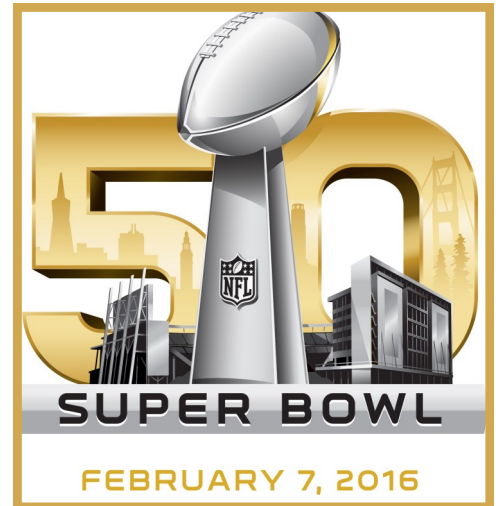
We are still working out the details, but if you have a few extra minutes, we will need 2-4 people to help with set up at 4:30 p.m. and 2-4 people to clean up during second half, leaving the Parish Hall ready for Sunday breakfast. Please let us know if you can help.

If you need or would like child care for little ones four and younger, let us know. We will try to arrange childcare. This event is open to EVERYBODY! Each attendee is asked to bring at least one non-perishable item canned good or personal hygiene/toiletry item to be donated to WHAM.

We will be providing more details as the time gets closer, but if you are interested in attending or helping to host send an email to the office. This way we can plan appropriately. An online sign-up may be available in the next week. See church publications for more information.

Doors open at 5:00 p.m. Kickoff is approximately 5:30 p.m.

See you there!!



Altar Flowers

The flower chart for 2016 is now posted in the narthex. The cost of our flowers is \$100 (which includes delivery). Please remember to sign the flower chart, the dedication book below it, and place your donation in the alms basin or send it to the office, marked flower fund. All questions can be answered by Ann Burton [\(713\) 782-6572](tel:7137826572).

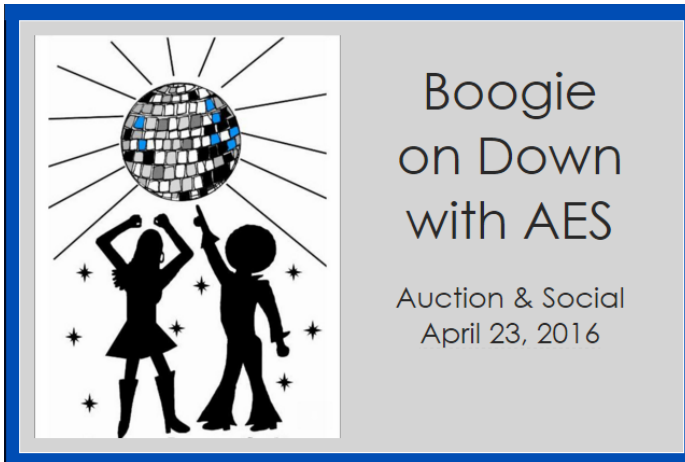
Daughters of the King

The Daughters of the King will hold their regular monthly meeting on Saturday, February 13th in the parish library, with fellowship at 9:30 AM and the meeting at 10:00. All ladies of the parish are invited to join us for fellowship and prayer and their friends are cordially invited to attend.



**Please Note: The office will be closed on January 18th in
Observance of Martin Luther King Jr.**

AUCTION 2016+



It's that time again! Auction planning has begun, and we want to tell you all about it!

First, every year AES holds an auction and social in the spring. The event is a great opportunity for parents, teachers, friends, families and church members to come together to celebrate our wonderful school with food, fun, drinks, music and dancing... and to support the vision of AES through the silent auction.

We encourage all church families to attend and participate. RSVPs will be taken starting in March. Reserved tables may be purchased beginning now. There is more information available online. Invite many to join us!

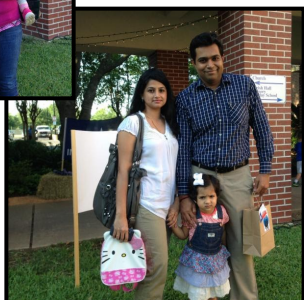
Second, our goals NOW:

1) We are beginning to procure donations for the online and silent auctions. (Online auction will take place April 15-18.) We need your help! Donation forms are available online on the AES website. or for pick up in the school office. Take them around town with you and ASK, ASK, ASK. Also what can you offer? Who do you know?

2) We need to begin getting sponsors and underwriters for our event. Underwriting opportunities include - DJ, food, wine/beer, decorations, photographer, software, childcare, etc. All sponsors and underwriters that have committed by December 18th will be recognized on our auction t-shirt. Help us!

Finally, the auction team has begun forming and has our first meeting on Friday, November 6th, 3:30-5pm in church library. If you'd like to participate, please come if you can or reply to this message.

Ready, set, go! Let's get the FEVER!



Previous Years Net Proceeds:

2015: \$53,600!

2014: \$47,800

2013: \$38,000

2012: \$24,000

2011: \$12,000



You can see that each year is getting better and better... so let's make this year the BEST one yet! Thank you for your continued and increased support!

Acolyte Training

Becoming an acolyte is a wonderful way for our youth to participate in our worship service. Acolytes carry the cross and lead the processions, light and extinguish the altar candles, and assist the pastor during Communion. Training for new acolytes may be conducted on Sundays from 9:30-10:15 AM. To schedule a training, please email the office or Paul Searle.



Way far ahead:

I know it's really early, but remember,
the time is coming for Easter Lilies & Easter Brass.



Rector's Log 2016

Numbers

As we look to a new year, we have several challenges and opportunities. You will notice our pledge numbers, average Sunday attendance and total estimated giving are slightly down. We had quite a few deaths as well as older congregants moving across the country to be with family. This challenge will be overcome by attracting newcomers with excellent worship, service, and fellowship. We are getting a small budget haircut for 2016.

We still have lots of newcomers, many of whom are calling Ascension their church home. One reality of younger parishioners is they tend to give less than well established congregants. However, if we continue to be a place people choose to encounter the living Christ, we cannot go wrong.

People

Paul Belk and Nancy Ginsburg have transitioned away from Ascension and we are delighted that Suzanne Anderson will be taking the helm of the music department at least through Easter in Nancy's absence. The newcomer minister position was a diocesan grant that cannot be renewed after the third year. We are in the process of finding a very part-time children's choir leader. We also said good bye to long time Ascension employee Reginald Johnson, which allowed us to call Miguel Agustin-Dimas to work maintaining the facility.

Facility

Parish Life Bldg

The parish life building remains largely unchanged except for the parish secretary and rector's office. Both Sam and I will have our office in the old sanctuary / school admin building. This will allow more babies and early walkers to join the school. My previous office has become the Sunday morning child care room. The church library and children's chapel remain unchanged.

Rationale: We do not currently have a pressing need from classroom space on Sunday morning while the school is growing and can use PLB space to open enrollment for more kids. I want to emphasize, the church retains all authority to reallocate space based on need.

Challenge: Let's create a pressing need for Sunday morning classroom space by inviting families to be part of our community. If you look back at our 50th Anniversary booklet (p20), we had 140 kids from PreK to High School with 34 adult leaders in 1983. The only way we will achieve even half that is through actively inviting families to be part of our community and having great programs for kids.

Assessment: In order for us to not hinder, in any way, the church's growth, the church will reevaluate space allocation every year or earlier if needed.

Challenge 2: See my section on summer and fall that offers one piece of the puzzle to support church growth. We are exploring moving Sunday School time to be in the middle of the 10:30 service like it was in the mid 1970's. We are thinking about getting into the groovy wayback machine and combining Sunday School and worship! This will help us really support your work of inviting families.

I see space allocation as a benefit to the church and school. First floor real estate is very important for small child care. This will increase our foot traffic, help the school increase its enrollment, and create a pathway to the church.

Parking lot

You probably noticed our newly resurfaced parking lot. Thanks to the tireless work of the Vestry we were able to complete this in 2015. Almost! The contractor for the lot broke the drainpipe in the school carpool line. It currently drains very slowly. We considered legal action, but deferred as it would take too much money to make it worth the hassle. We hope to have the drainage problem fixed in early 2016.

A/C

The school had an air conditioner failure that has been fixed.

Sabbatical

From Diocese of Texas sabbatical guidelines: A sabbatical is defined as a clergyperson taking at least three months away from their primary ministry: for rest, refreshment, recreation, travel, reading, study, hobbies and the renewal of personal relationships.

I have been blessed to receive a Diocesan Sabbatical grant of \$7500 from the Quinn foundation. The mission of The Bishop Quinn Foundation is to help build the Church. Quinn's mission is facilitated by the clergy of the Diocese of Texas taking sabbatical time, resulting in the holistic care, growth and development of its excellent clergy.

I have had lots, I mean lots of ideas for sabbatical. It ranged from interviewing preachers around the world, to traveling through five of the ten national Episcopal seminaries. Then I spitballed ideas of interviewing the rural elderly for an audio journal. Are you tired yet?

In conversations with many clergy, bishops, a lay people, I have come to the conclusion that less is more. I want to take a long road trip (Midwest and south) with the family, write a lot, and possibly get certified as a yoga teacher (unless it is cost prohibitive, so then maybe not).

Mike Black, our Senior Warden, has graciously accepted a second year term and will be helping me figure out a plan of action in my absence from mid May to mid August. We already have two long term supply clergy who have agreed - The Rev. Will Hood (recently re-licensed in the Diocese) and Bob Flick (currently working with the Episcopal Health Foundation and retired from Lord of the Streets ministry.) We only have three weeks that are still to be covered by priestly ministry.

Summer and Fall

I have asked Robi to lead a focus group to think about how our common life could be better served with some modifications to Sunday School and fellowship on Sunday. We are not going to consider changing service times. However, the formation habits of parents have changed dramatically in the last 5 years across congregations. Sunday School is becoming more and more optional. I have asked Robi to think about how we might better serve parents while answering our call to form disciples for Jesus.

The big change, *might* include moving Sunday School from 9:30am into 10:30 worship. Logistically that means after the opening song in 10:30 worship, Sunday School age kids are invited but not required to go to Sunday School (same location as current Sunday school) for about 30mins. They would come back in time for communion. Children's Chapel volunteers and Sunday School volunteers would be invited to join one large pool of child ministry volunteers. As much as I love Children's Chapel, there are 25 kids missing a deeper formation opportunity by not attending Sunday school.

This could allow us to have three offerings in the regular school year at 9:30. Kid's program (music or drama practice), Adult choir practice, and adult formation. This is still in the "think tank" stage and we will be inviting ministry volunteer and leader input over the coming Spring semester and we might try it on for size in the summer.

We cannot sit back and hope for the best. I challenge you to help Ascension grow through volunteering your time and inviting families to be part of our community. All are welcome, but they often don't come unless we bring them.

Change of gear -

Civil conversations

2016 is the time to stop yelling at your phone, family, or TV! In the midst of very uncivil conversations in the US about trigger issues, I believe we can continue the highest level of kindness in all of our conversations, both one-on-one and through electronic media.

I have this hope that we can continue to be people who bring the light of Christ to a dark world. We are marked by God to be as a community of faith in which we honor each other's strongly held beliefs. Our convictions are too important to trivialize with yelling and attacks.

Issues like politics, race, sexuality, guns, and law enforcement culture are things we should talk about as people of faith. But as your pastor, please do not hope that I will advocate for your particular belief, except Jesus! Scripture might be helpful for understanding where I am coming from:

Joshua 5:13-14 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD."

No, I don't see myself as a "captain of the host of the Lord," but you have given me a sacred responsibility. God has called me to help us be a family, a family with Christ at the head of the table. We can be better than the stereotypical family that gets together on Thanksgiving and chooses to yell at one another then zone out in front of the TV. I think we can model a different way, a way of love for everyone.

Practical Matters

If someone volunteers with beliefs that make you feel uncomfortable as a ministry leader, let me know so that I might help everyone involved. Especially with hot button topics like human sexuality. With the Supreme Court decision making same-sex marriage national law, I want to reiterate the commitment I made to you when I came to Ascension.

As a commitment to Ascension, I will not sponsor for ordination nor marry same-sex couples. However, I take seriously my diocesan responsibility to be a pastor for all people. If someone is not a fit for Ascension, I am expected to work very hard to find a fit for them within the larger Episcopal church.

We are stronger together

The members of Ascension are diverse in many ways, and our beliefs are varied as well. I would like for this community to make space for civil conversation and for genuine disagreement. Let us remember that it is Jesus who makes us a family; Jesus is the one who make strangers family and enemies friends. May we find a way to genuinely love and cherish people different from us.

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

Disaster Response

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...

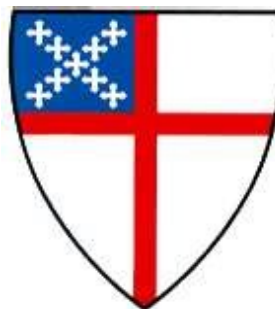
We now receive nonperishable food items for distribution to those in need in our community every Sunday. These donated items are moved to the West Houston Assistance Ministry facility for distribution by volunteers. Look for the wooden box in the Narthex! Contact:

Staff

The Rev. Todd Bryant, Rector;
 The Rev. Mary Reddick, Deacon;
 Robi Lasiter, Director of Religious Education
 Suzanne Anderson, Organist Choirmaster;
 Leslie Nirider, Membership;
 Samantha King, Secretary;
 Ann Seitz, Bookkeeper

The Vestry

Mike Black (Sr. Warden), John Searle (Jr. Warden), Jeri Platt (Clerk), Thom Fenner, John Edel, Matt Murphy, Carol Goulet, Clement Falayi, Cindy Breton, Cheryl Coppock, and The Rector.



The School Board

The Rector, Dana Murphy (President), Todd Breton (Vice President), Amy Criswell (Treasurer), Ann Seitz (Secretary), Cindy Cadle, Patrick Gallagher, Shay James, Tom Konitzer, Beatrice Menendez, Marike Owen, and Ex-officio members: The Sr. Warden-Mike Black, The Jr. Warden - John Searle, and The Head of School -Nancy Clausey

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.