



# The Ascendant

A Newsletter by and for Members and Friends of Church of the Ascension

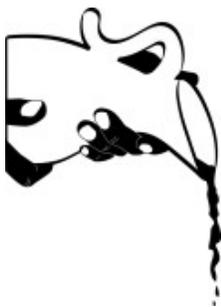
October 2016

## Blessing of the Beasts



In observance of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, we will bless your feline, avian, canine, equine, bovine, porcine, reptilian, and arachnid friends at the 5:00 p.m. service on Sunday, October 2, in the Chapel.

## Baptisms



Baptisms in the Main Church will be offered next on All Saints' Sunday, November 6. Baptisms in the Chapel may be scheduled at any time. Please contact Randy if you want to schedule a baptism, at [ral@ascensionmd.org](mailto:ral@ascensionmd.org), or call 301.948.0122 ext. 12.

Dear Ascension Friends,

I'm honored to serve as the Chair for this year's Annual Giving Campaign.

Next Sunday, October 2, we will kick off the campaign, whose theme will be "Living Generously." In the weeks following, we will explore together how we can live more generously as individuals and as a community of faith. Living Generously is more than what we do with our financial resources – though that is important. To live generously, we are also called to be open to new ideas, to welcome the stranger, to volunteer often, and to forgive those who have offended us.

Your generosity, in response to the abundance in your life, will fund the mission and ministry of Ascension and transform lives.

Here is our roadmap for this year's campaign:

- Beginning next Sunday and continuing throughout the campaign, our Sunday bulletin will include reflections written by Episcopal leaders from across the country. These reflections will cover stewardship and faithful giving in connection with the Gospel reading of the day, and we will use them for prayer and study throughout the week.
- Each Sunday, we will hear stories of personal transformation through the practice of intentional giving from your fellow parishioners.
- On the First Sunday of Advent, November 27 - the Christian New Year - we will celebrate Commitment Sunday, the culmination of our exploration, when pledges received will be offered as an act of worship and in response to all that God has provided.

Randy and the Vestry have set a goal of receiving 100% of pledge commitments from our worshipping community. We will be in intentional prayer that each of us will remain open to letting the Holy Spirit lead and guide us in a faithful response to being called to Live Generously.

Thank you for joining me as we consider how we can live more fully into a generous life. May our exploration open us to a new spirit of generosity.

Yours in Christ,  
Avin Lalmansingh

# LIFE LONG LEARNING

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## Wednesday Book Group

The Wednesday Morning Study Group will continue to read a new book, *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and finding the Church* by Rachel Held Evans. From Amazon: Centered around seven sacraments, Evans' quest takes readers through a liturgical year with stories about baptism, communion, confirmation, confession, marriage, vocation, and death that are funny, heartbreaking, and sharply honest. A memoir about making do and taking risks, about the messiness of community and the power of grace, *Searching for Sunday* is about overcoming cynicism to find hope and, somewhere in between, Church. Join us in the Library at 10 a.m.

## Yoga Class at Ascension



Randy teaches a class each week in the Chapel, at 10:00 a.m. on Thursdays This is an entry level class in which anybody can participate. Randy teaches for about 45 minutes. Wear comfortable clothing, and bring your own mat if you have one.

## Present Moment, Wonderful Moment: Still Water Mindfulness Practice Group

New and experienced practitioners are welcome on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the Chapel. Additional resources and program announcements are available via our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/stillwatermpc>

For more information, contact Lori Perine at [swgaithersburg@gmail.com](mailto:swgaithersburg@gmail.com).

## Spanish Bible Study

Rev. Javier offers a Spanish Bible Study every Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at Ascension House.

## Spanish Class

The Spanish Class with Rev. Javier Ocampo meets each Wednesday, at 6:30 p.m. at Ascension House.

## The Listening Heart Community



The Listening Heart Community is Ascension's "monastery of the heart", an intentional group for seekers in all stages of their spiritual journey to explore Benedictine and other contemplative spirituality in community. This fall and winter, we will be praying with the writings and teachings of Thomas Merton, the American mystic and Trappist monk, in observance of the centennial of his birth.

Meeting dates this month are Monday October 5 and 19. Contact Lori Perine at [lperine@gmail.com](mailto:lperine@gmail.com) if you would like to join us.

## Outreach Retreat for "Ambassadors of Christ!"

Randy will be leading an outreach or "missional" retreat in our Chapel from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 8th. **Anyone** may come, of course, but this is especially aimed at Ascension members and friends who are already engaged in missional activity in our community or are drawn to do so and want to know more. Our purpose is to deepen our awareness of how what we do in the community, especially under the auspices of our many outreach partner ministries, define our mission. All that's required is an interest in the world around us and a desire to be a disciple of Christ. Please come and share your experiences and dreams for Ascension, and what you'd like to do with them! Through prayer, reflection, and discussion we'll identify how we, as members of Ascension, can be the hands and feet of Christ in our community. Sign up here if you plan to come: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0A4CABA82DA75-outreach>.

Please RSVP by Midnight Thursday, October 6th. We need 8 people signing up to make a "quorum." For more information or if you have questions or suggestions, contact Randy or Outreach Chair Paul Boynton at [boynton357@verizon.net](mailto:boynton357@verizon.net)

# LIFE LONG LEARNING

## Cell Groups at Ascension

Cell Group News: Starting Sunday October 2 in the Library at 11:15-12:00 noon and continuing on the first Sunday of the month is a group for parents of small children, facilitated by Sarah and Brian Annear. While the group originated from the 10:15 service, anyone who fits the profile is welcome! For the first session, the group will discuss the attached first chapter of *We Make the Road by Walking* by Brian McLaren. If you have a time to read the first chapter and the accompanying Bible passages before Sunday, great (the chapter is only 3 pages). If not, no biggie.

You can also read the book's preface and introduction at the below Amazon link. <http://amzn.to/2d87Apx>

It is based on this text from Genesis: <http://bit.ly/13yDft0>

Feel free to bring snacks/toys to help distract the little ones.



Sari Stoddard and Paul Whitmore's group is also using the McLaren book and is taking names of interested people, who will decide when and where to meet together. E-mail Sari at [sari.stoddard@verizon.net](mailto:sari.stoddard@verizon.net) if you want in.

Formation leaders are in conversation about grouping; contact Megan Didavi at [mdidavi@gmail.com](mailto:mdidavi@gmail.com) to connect.

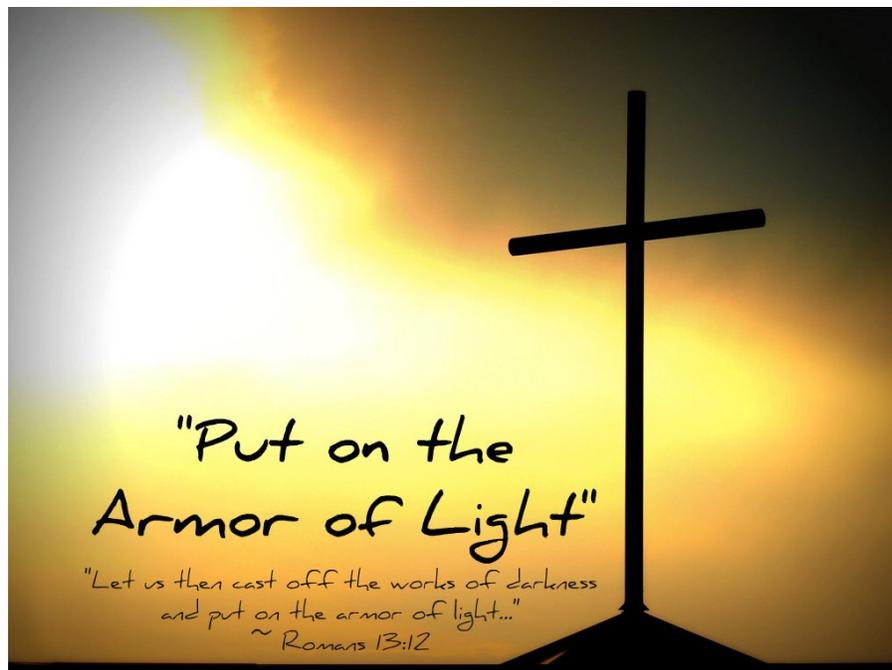
There is a rumor that alums of the women's retreat are thinking about monthly connection. Watch for a revelation.

Others have expressed interest in the progressive dinner format for a group. The office staff is ready and willing to support that endeavor.

Not all Ascension groups need to follow the cell format. The more groups we have the better!

## First *Armor of Light* Viewing Scheduled

Trevor and Angie Hight Walker are offering a viewing and discussion of the award winning video at 8:00 p.m. on Friday, October 28th at their home in Montgomery Village, 9701 Breckenridge Place. Dessert will be served. A SignUp Genius link will be sent out soon.



# WORSHIP

## All Saints' at Ascension

At the 9:00 and 11:15 services on Sunday, November 6, we will prayerfully read the names of loved ones who have entered into the "land of light and joy" and are now part of the Church Triumphant. All Saints' Sunday is the occasion for celebrating the lives and legacies of the great saints of the church and the saints of our lives. Copies of the list of names of those for whom you have requested prayers will be available on the welcome desk in the narthex of the main church. Forms to complete will be available soon.

At 7:45, 9:00 and 11:15 we will also renew our Baptismal Covenant.

## Día de los Muertos

At the 11:00 a.m. Spanish Eucharist in the Chapel we will be observing a Latin American tradition called the festival of "Día de los Muertos." As is customary we will adorn the altar with pictures of departed loved ones, and offer our memories of them and their spiritual legacies to the Lord.



## Worship Rosters for October–December

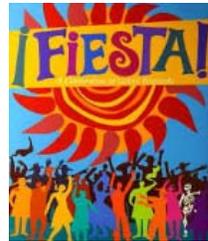
Hard copies of the October, November, and December worship rosters are now available on the table next to the office and in the Chapel.

# LIFE AT ASCENSION

## "Fifth Sunday" Brunch

Ascension's next gathering of the Fifth Sunday Brunch will take place on October 30 at 12:30 p.m. in the Undercroft. All are welcome, new and old members alike. Please bring a dish to share with the group. Watch for the Sign up genius as to what we need. See all of you there on the 30th.

## Let's Do Dinner and Dancing!



Mark your calendars for an evening of music, great food, and dancing, hosted by Ascension's Hispanic congregation, on Saturday October 22, beginning at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome! Watch the weekly announcements to RSVP.

## "New" Parish Administrator

After reviewing all relevant data and some discussion at the Vestry, we have dubbed Kathy Van Arnum Parish Administrator of Ascension. Since she came to us in 2012 her areas of oversight evolved beyond that of "office coordinator." This is especially evident in facilities management and maintenance. We rent out space in our plant more and more, and this has been a busy time in terms of capital expenses, requiring Kathy to interface with contractors and vendors. Congratulations, Kathy!

## Movie Night, Friday, October 7

Everyone is welcome to meet up in the Chapel on October 7 at 6:30 p.m. to watch *The Boxtrolls*. We'll start off with pizza and whatever else people want to bring. We do ask for a donation of \$5 per person with a \$15 per family maximum toward the cost of the pizza. We'll start the movie at 6:45 and we'll most likely be out and off to bed by 8:30 p.m.

For information about the movie, which is rated PG, follow this link to Amazon.com: <http://amzn.to/2dp5VyY>. Please bring your favorite beverage, and some to share. Snack foods will not be denied admission. You need not be a child, or have one, to attend! Dolls, favorite toys, sleeping bags and pillows are also welcome!



Please RSVP by Midnight Thursday, October 6. We need 10 confirmations for Movie Night to happen...

Sign up here: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0A4CABA82DA75-seethe>

# CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

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## Mobile Med Ministry: A Volunteer opportunity through Ascension Church

**What is Mobile Med?** If you have come to the church on a Tuesday, you may have noticed an RV parked in the lot in front of Ascension House. The vehicle is not recreational, but a medical office on wheels. It is sited at various places around Montgomery County; Tuesday it is here from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This medical office on wheels provides care and referrals for low-income, underinsured residents of Montgomery County.

“MobileMed's mission is to improve the health of low-income people who face the greatest barriers to care access. Our values include healthcare access for all, quality services provided with compassion, respect and cultural sensitivity, and organizational excellence and integrity. We provide [services] to low-income individuals in Montgomery County who have [moved here] from over 100 countries, speaking 25 languages. Patient surveys conducted by federal, state, and county agencies continually reflect excellent levels of patient satisfaction with Mobile-Med.”

Mobile Med began seeing patients in 1968. There are paid staff as well as volunteers. In 2015 Mobile Med saw 5000 patients for 14,000 visits in all its clinics. MobileMed operates 10 primary care clinics; 2 are in vans. A clinic in Germantown is open 5 days a week. Mobile Med operates 2 specialty clinics including endocrine and cardiac. There is a clinic specifically for Chinese-speaking patients and one for Farsi speakers.

**What part does Ascension play?** Ascension began hosting Mobile Med in 2001. Ascension volunteers provide intake and registration, including checking Montgomery County residency status, recording contact information and a brief description of their need. Shifts are 2 hours long. The Ascension Mobile Med volunteer coordinator sets the schedule 2 months in advance, always asking for black-out dates first. No medical experience or knowledge is required to be a volunteer.

The first shift opens the waiting room in the Chapel. The last shift locks up at 3pm. We check the patient information forms for completeness—but not accuracy. That is done by the medical staff. The Mobile Med RN performs all medical interviews and triage. Typically walk-in patients are seen in the morning; pm hours are primarily for scheduled appointments. For more information, contact Jean Cohn at 240-372-3652 or spangle1@comcast.net.

## Men's Shelter Lunch Program

The Men's Shelter Lunches program provides bagged lunches, assembled in the Undercroft Commons once a month. Supplies are donated by Ascension members. Depending on the season, we provide forty to eighty lunches a month. Sign-up for contributions are through an online system and assembly occurs by those present after the 9:00 o'clock service on the third Sunday of the month. Our next meeting will be on October 16. Contact Edith at [esekasi@gmail.com](mailto:esekasi@gmail.com) if you would like to help, or follow this link <http://bit.ly/1DVayRb>.

## Lord's Table Soup Kitchen

There is an opportunity to serve at the soup kitchen on the first Saturday or third Monday each month at 1:00 pm (prep work) or 3:00 p.m. (serving) across the street at St. Martin's Church. Contact one of our experienced team leaders, Page Salazar (Saturdays, [pagesalazar@gmail.com](mailto:pagesalazar@gmail.com)) or Jennifer Smith (Mondays, [jennifer0966@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer0966@gmail.com).) We can always use more volunteers!

## Fall into Wellness Health Fair

Come to Church of the Ascension on Saturday, October 29 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., to a health fair hosted by The Diabetes Selfcare Management Institute. There you can get a free flu vaccination, information on the latest trends in health and wellness, an exercise demonstration, vendor giveaways and discounts, and some good old fashioned fun for the kids. See the posters in the narthex, chapel, and table outside the office. Questions? Contact Marjorie Madikoto at [dscmi.care@gmail.com](mailto:dscmi.care@gmail.com)

## In Our Thoughts and Prayers

We Give Thanks for the Lives of:



*Elfido Vergel*

*Jackie Waleen*

*Krista Marting*

# VESTRY DIGEST: AUGUST 2016

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**PRESENT:** The Rev. Randy Lord-Wilkinson, Betsy Hasegawa, Janet King, Rose Buck, Avin Lalmansingh, Denise Lionetti, Gary McLaughlin, Zadinga Ogada, John Pruessner, Najma Stubblefield, Paul Whitmore and Treasurer Howard Holland. Absent: Maria Estela Rodriguez.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Betsy opened the meeting by thanking Howard for all he does, and for being with us. He presented the Vestry with the church's current financial situation and walked us through the 5-page Treasurer's Report. The current year is likely to end with spending about \$15-20K less than planned. Howard anticipates that we will have a deficit of \$80-85K in the 2017 budget. That will require cashing in assets in our endowment. The consensus was to take cash from the endowment as needed. Howard is planning discussions with our auditor and our bookkeeper on the subject, and offered to prepare a "skeleton" budget for our next meeting. Knowing that we cannot continue taking money from the endowment, Randy and Howard both stressed that for 2018, we must think in new ways and think of new possibilities.

Gary noted that he has been keeping track of our Sunday attendance, and overall, we have about three more congregants per Sunday this year than we did last year. Randy agreed that we are showing small signs of growth.

## OLD BUSINESS

**Update on small groups/Floris UMC.** Paul prepared a report on how Floris UMC welcomes and adopts newcomers. When a "seeker" arrives at Floris, they are actively welcomed, supplied with a newcomer's card, and tracked. When they arrive a second time, they are given a list of small groups and encouraged to join one, without any discussion of joining the church. It was agreed that at Ascension additional Welcome Team training regarding newcomers would be a sound investment. John suggested a creating a catalog of our cell groups, outside of Together We Shine. Paul was asked to get specifics from Floris, and to report back in the September meeting.

**Seminarian Jason Cutshall.** Randy said that Jason will be with us very soon, although the exact Sunday is yet to be determined. Jason will preach the sermon on September 25th.

**HVAC update.** The new system is working well; there have been no problems. We are getting a new system for the Undercroft and the lower level of the administration wing where the day school and Sunday school classrooms are.

**RenewalWorks survey.** The survey, which costs \$500, will be up and available for everyone to take in September. The survey will again help us learn what is impor-

tant to our parishioners, and where the church is on our spiritual journey. Gary pointed out that it is very important to get everyone to take the survey.

**Job retitle.** The Vestry decided after discussion that the job formerly held by Pia should be titled Media Specialist, since the new name is a more accurate rendering of the job description.

**Interviews for sexton and nursery coordinator.** Randy said that we have had a number of applicants for each of our open positions. But we may have to have a buffer period using volunteers from the congregation. Current sexton Betty Lavern has said she will work on into September if needed. And interim Minister of Information Carol Bruno is doing great - she is one of the applicants for the permanent position.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Review of office staff pay.** The Vestry discussed what the office staff does and how that compares with position descriptions, and recommended that Randy hold reviews with the staff, reporting results to the Vestry. John moved that the Parish Administrator be given an increase in salary; Paul seconded and the motion was passed.

**Grease trap treatment.** Betsy has been communicating with an EDOW staff person about the problem. This problem is widespread throughout the Diocese and elsewhere.

**Annual Giving Campaign (AGC) and Facilities Reserve Fund (FRF) Campaign.** Gary reported that we are on Diocesan consultant John Johnson's schedule for the fall. Suggestions for the AGC included specifying a pledge goal in dollars, and during services each Sunday naming those who have submitted pledges and thanking them. Another suggestion was for the children to have their own pledge campaign, to give them the feeling that they are part of and important to the church. The Sunday School teachers have talked about this and are committed to it; Denise will take the Vestry's suggestions to the teachers.

The question of the timing of the two campaigns was brought up. The consensus was to hold them simultaneously. Tentatively Randy will write the letter for the FRF and Avin will do the one for the AGC, and they will go out together in one envelope, with either a single pledge card with an area for each campaign, or as two separate pledge cards.

**Women's Retreat report.** Betsy and Janet reported enthusiastically about the retreat. They brought back the following thoughts and ideas:

**Redesignate Newcomer's Brunch as Fifth Sunday Brunch.** Some parishioners have not been attending, thinking the brunch is only for newcomers, hence the need for a new name. The suggestion was received well overall. Vestry members were asked to email any thoughts to Betsy and Janet.

**More and varied retreats.** The women suggested having a variety of half-day, close by retreats, maybe as cell-group activities, perhaps with lunch before or dinner after. Silent retreats are available at the nearby Dayspring retreat center in Germantown.

**Silent auction.** Ascension has held these as part of previous events; the retreat participants recommended holding a standalone silent auction in our narthex area in November. Ophelia Yalley-Ogunru and Suzyn Gonzales offered to arrange it. They welcome volunteer help.

#### **OPEN MIC**

**Calendar suggestion.** A parishioner suggested that we sell the Episcopal Kalendars as a money making idea. After discussion, the Vestry decided not to pursue the idea.

**Teacher's retreat.** Zadinga reported that it had been quite productive, with the teachers getting to know one another. She and Denise are preparing for the next school year, setting schedules, identifying materials needed, and other logistical plans.

**ADJOURNMENT:** At 4:55 p.m., Avin moved that the meeting be adjourned. Zadinga seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sari Stoddard

Clerk of the Vestry

## **CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS**

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### *Financial Update August, 2016*

#### **Budget Development and Implementation**

As we move further through the year, we remain focused on our month-to-month income and expense figures, comparing these numbers to projections for the year based on the budget the Vestry adopted for 2016, and assessing what the current figures mean for Ascension's overall cash position.

As we've reported for the last several months, we are still tracking slightly higher in income and slightly lower in expenses year-to-date. Those balances tightened in August, but the overall trend continues to hold.

That said, we are still incurring negative net income from month to month because our expenses are greater than our income. See below for details on August's figures and year-to-date. Capital improvement expenses during August were slightly more than \$11,000, putting additional pressure on our cash reserves. These expenses included replacing the heat pump and updates to the HVAC system. The balance in our Bank of America checking account

(or operating account) stands at \$65,386, which raises questions about the relationship between the \$80,913 portion of the Endowment Fund held in operating account and our total cash holdings.

If we subtract the \$24,327 balance of the Other Restricted Funds (see item #6 under Cash Balances by Fund Category on the Treasurer's Report, which is page 2 in the financials, and the detailed list on page 3) from the \$67,909 balance of the operating and savings accounts, we have in effect \$43,582 in available cash for operating and capital improvement needs.

In response, we recommend reclassifying the cash portion of the Endowment Fund as unrestricted reserves and consider making a withdrawal of \$40,000 from the equity portion of the Endowment Fund to provide additional reserves for the remainder of the year.

#### **August Financials and Year-to-Date Summary**

From the Executive Summary report on page 4, our total income for August was less than we projected, although expenses were also less than what we expected, too.

Total income for August was \$39,944. Ascension received \$3,155 in plate receipts and \$27,818 in pledge income. Unlike July, when plate receipts and pledge income exceeded projections, both were less than expected in August. That is especially the case for pledge income, which was \$9,502 less than forecasted. It could well be that our projections for the month were higher than they should have been, although August has been a surprisingly strong month over the last several years. Helping to offset the shortfall, Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income was ahead of projections, even considering that we are recording the income from the Diocesan grant in that category.

For August, our total expenses were \$49,945. Fortunately, our expenses for August were also less than planned. We were significantly under budget in the area of Salary & Benefits because of the transition in personnel. However, after many months of being under budget in both Utilities and Facilities, we incurred higher expenses in both areas, for former likely due to the very hot temperatures during the month. Nevertheless, we remain under budget in these areas year-to-date. These gains are helping with higher costs in Programs Ministry, which continue to be more than planned.

We had negative net income for August of \$10,001 based on the income and expenses figures just described. As of July 31, we have received income of \$335,436, against total expenses of \$391,994, creating negative net income for the year of \$56,558. Total income is roughly 1% higher than anticipated, but with the shortfall in plate receipts and pledge income during August, we have fallen behind in both areas year-to-date.



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October 2016

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension  
205 South Summit Ave.  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-2315

*Address Service Requested*

*"We are ambassadors who represent Christ." - 2 Corinthians 5:20*

## Contact Us

Phone: 301.948.0122 Fax: 301.926.9012  
eca@ascensionmd.org www.ascensionmd.org

## Parish Staff

Rector	Randy Lord-Wilkinson
Assistant to the Rector	Javier García Ocampo
Seminarian	Jason Cutshall
Minister of Music	Jerrold Tidwell
Parish Administrator	Kathy Van Arnum
Interim Media Specialist	Carol Bruno
Children's Music Leader	Howard Hanson
Chapel Musicians	Eric O'Loughlin
	Samuel Munguia
Nursery Coordinator	Magda Tosta

## Sunday Services

7:45 a.m.—Holy Eucharist  
*"Meditative" service, no music - Main Church*

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
*Classic sacred music of the Church accompanied by Choir and Organ—Main Church*

10:15 a.m.—Eucharist for Young Children and Families  
*Storytelling of the Gospel with children's songs—Chapel*

11:00 a.m.—Eucharist in Spanish  
*Songs and prayers in Spanish—Chapel*

11:15 a.m.—Holy Eucharist  
*Music and liturgy in the vernacular accompanied by instrumental ensemble—Main Church*

5:00 p.m.—"Last Chance Church" Eucharist  
*Informal service with music blending Gospel and jazz influences—Chapel*