



The Ascendant

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

January 2016

Epiphany Pageant: January 10



The Annual Epiphany Pageant is scheduled for January 10th at 5:00 p.m. There will be a meeting on Saturday, January 2 at 10:00 a.m. in the Main Church.

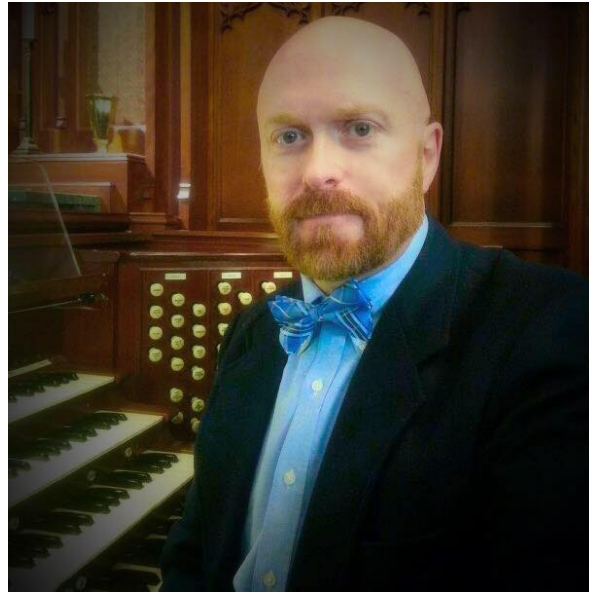
There are speaking, non-speaking, and group singing parts, and we need participants aged 5-18. Also some adult help with simple costuming and a pianist to accompany some traditional carol singing are needed. If interested please contact Gordon Donnelly after the 9:00 or 11:15 a.m. services in Room 11 or at vagordon1@yahoo.com. You can also let your Godly Play teachers know of your interest. I look forward to hearing from you.

-Gordon Donnelly

Baptisms

Baptisms are done on January 10, the Baptism of our Lord, March 26, Easter Eve, and May 15, Day of Pentecost. Please contact the Rector for more information at 301.948.0122
e x t . 1 2 o r
ral@ascensionmd.org.

Meet Jerrold Tidwell, Minister of Music



Jerrold Tidwell commences his ministry at Ascension with the rehearsals of the 11:15 ensemble on Wednesday evening, January 6, and the Ascension Choir on Thursday, January 7. He will make his debut at the 9:00 and 11:15 services on Sunday, January 10.

The Music Minister Discernment Team, Alice Benson, Gordon Donnelly, Howard Holland, Betty Knight, Page Salazar, and Rebecca Smith-Kevern, with Randy, began its work on Sunday, May 10. The team met with professional church musician and consultant April Stace Vega to talk about Ascension's needs and vision and the larger context of the evolving sacred music scene.

Our part time position was posted in several places, such as the web sites of the American Guild of Organists, the Diocese of Washington, Peabody Conservatory of Music, and Indeed.com (from which many good candidates came), to name a few.

From the very first conversation between the team and Jerrold there was a shared sense of "alignment." That discernment was confirmed when Jerrold came to Ascension for an audition and interview. After a reference check, Randy issued a call to him. He is excited about Ascension and the possibilities for creative collaboration here.

Here is a link to Jerrold's Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/jerroldtidwell>. And here he is on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jerroldtidwellorganist/>

A native of Alabama, Jerrold began collegiate music studies at the age of 17, at the University of North Alabama, as a student of Walter Urben. He received the

(Continues on page 2)

Meet Jerrold Tidwell, Minister of Music (Continued from page 1)

Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance and Sacred Music from the University of Montevallo, where he also began studies toward the Master of Music degree. Jerrold has served as Organist and Director of Music for Protestant and Catholic churches throughout the Eastern United States, and has served as a professional accompanist and vocal coach for Jacksonville State University, and Reinhardt University. He has worked extensively in the field of choral music as both an accompanist and conductor, performing with choral, solo and instrumental groups, including The Reinhardt Symphony, Pensacola Symphony, and members of the Alabama, Atlanta, and Maryland Symphonies. As a choral director, Jerrold formed The Dutch Fork Choral Society, a non-profit civic chorus based in Metro-Columbia, South Carolina, for the purpose of enhancing community arts awareness through the presentation of larger choral works. Church and civic choristers under Jerrold's direction have sung with Malcolm Archer, John Rutter, Carl Schalk, and other conductors of distinction.

We are deeply grateful for our interim musical leadership, Carl Schwartz (at 9:00) and Karina McCarty (at 11:15). Their last Sunday will be January 3. Take a few minutes to thank them for sharing our journey...

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Wednesday Morning Book Group

10 to 20 Ascension members (and friends) gather weekly at 10:00-11:30 a.m. in the Library to read and discuss challenging ideas that inform how we are to be followers of Jesus the Christ - or just beings with a spiritual dimension - in the 21st century.

We are currently exploring *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, by Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest. See the announcement bulletin weekly for chapter assignments.

ESOL Class

Free ESOL classes, English for Speakers of Other Languages, are offered at Ascension on Sunday mornings, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in Room 1. Childcare is provided. Contact Luis Pedron if you have questions at 301.922.5610.

Yoga Classes at Ascension



There are two yoga classes offered each week, both in the Chapel. Lucia Tolson teaches a class at 10:00 a.m. on Thursdays and Randy teaches a class at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. These are entry level classes which anybody can participate in. Lucia teaches for about an hour and Randy for about 45 minutes. There is a suggested donation of \$1-\$10. The Wednesday night yoga class will resume at 6:00 p.m. on January 6.

Spanish Class

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

Spanish Bible Study

Javier offers a Spanish Bible Study every Wednesday at 7:00 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. We encounter scripture and other texts through lectio divina and use contemplative practices to deepen our experience of the sacred in each moment. Meeting dates in January are Monday January 4 and 18, 7-8:30 p.m. in the library. Contact Lori Perine at lperine@gmail.com if you would like to join us.

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. An introduction to mindfulness practice is offered on the last Tuesday of each month, at 6:45 p.m., followed by a guided meditation. 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.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Action in Montgomery Event to Support Child First and Affordable Housing

Randy Lord-Wilkinson and Paul Boynton attended a December 9th gathering of Action in Montgomery (AIM) to meet with six Montgomery County council members to discuss two initiatives—Affordable Housing and Child First—that have major impact on the poor in our county. The pews in St. C’s RC church filled with 1,465 people, including students, parents and staff from Gaithersburg, South Lake and Burning Mills Elementary. The first initiative proposed to restate a total of \$54 million in the county budget to promote affordable housing that is safe and healthy. Over half the attendees indicated that they either suffered from housing issues, or had family/friends who did. One resident showed slides of toxic mold throughout their apartment that their landlord had refused to address. The second initiative, Child First, is a program, presently in several area schools, to address the growing achievement and opportunity gap found in elementary schools through early intervention and after-school opportunities. MCPS officials and staff were present to provide testimony to the need of many students and the effectiveness of the program. AIM proposed adding \$1.5 million to the school budget to add five more MCPS schools to the Child First program.

Ascension is actively involved in Child First, including providing volunteers for a reading program at Gaithersburg Elementary School. Working with AIM and others, we hope to be able to expand this program to reach out to a greater number of children. If you are interested in learning more about Child First or AIM, please talk with Randy or Paul or anyone on the outreach committee.

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 January 17. Contact Edith at esekasi@gmail.com if you would like to help, or follow this link <http://bit.ly/1DVayRb>.

“Giving Tree” Donations Exceed Expectations

As part of our Advent “Giving Tree” project, Ascension parishioners opened wide their hearts and their pocketbooks to donate many crucially needed items to help sustain Middle Eastern refugees who are now living in the Washington metropolitan area. The donations include \$1,210 in gift cards, \$192 in Metro cards, and \$332 in cash and checks for a total of \$1,734. In addition, parishioners donated warm clothes, food, and toys in significant quantities, which increase the total value of our donations well beyond \$2,000.

This year’s “Giving Tree” activities were coordinated with Crossroads, a branch of the International Cultural Center, which provides culturally sensitive, focused assistance to refugees and recent immigrants. The Crossroad staff graciously thanks Ascension parishioners for their overwhelming generosity.

Nursery Volunteers Needed

The nursery in the church where I grew up had a sign over the door that read, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”. We have relied on one professional nursery staff person for a long time, and she needs help now. There is a need for a team of adults (18 and up) to form a rotating schedule of volunteering in the nursery during the 9:00 or 11:15 services once a month. The required diocesan training “Safeguarding God’s Children” will be offered in November or by arrangement. Ideally we will have this additional support for the nursery program in place in time for Advent. We will create a sign-up Genius list for this, or you may contact the church office where there will be a sign-up sheet. Please help grow a more connected congregation by supporting our young families.

Thanks,
Lauren Kingsland

Gaithersburg HELP

This organization provides emergency food and other support to needy families in Gaithersburg. Non-perishable food collected at Ascension every week, and during specific holiday in-gatherings, helps to stock the pantry. Donations may be brought to church at any time and left in the narthex. For more information, contact Melanie Mitchell at 301.519.1074 or melanie.mitchell@verizon.net.

LIFE AT ASCENSION

Ascension's Adventurers to Tour Pre-Revolutionary-War Home



All parishioners and friends are invited to join us for a docent-led tour of the historic Carlyle House in Old Town Alexandria on Saturday, January 30th. This house was completed in 1753 by British merchant John Carlyle for his bride, Sarah Fairfax of Belvoir, member of one of the most prestigious families in colonial Virginia. Their home quickly became a center of social and political life in Alexandria and gained a foothold in history when British General Braddock made the mansion his headquarters in 1755. Braddock summoned five colonial governors to meet there to plan the early campaigns of the French and Indian War. On the National Register of Historic Places, Carlyle House is architecturally unique in Alexandria as the only stone, 18th-century Palladian-style house.

Travel arrangements for our tour are still being discussed, but this and other information will soon appear on Ascension's web site (www.ascensionmd.org) and in Ascension's weekly bulletins.

Information about the Carlyle House may be found at: https://www.nvrpa.org/park/Carlyle_house_historic_park.

Please contact Jan Hauber at Janet.Hauber@verizon.net, or 301.869.6953 for information about our tour.

Winter Weather Policy

At Ascension, we always TRY to have church even when the weather is bad. We realize that travelling may be very difficult for some, so please make the best decision for you and your family about Sunday church attendance. Even if we have Sunday services during inclement weather, we may cancel all other activities, such as Christian Formation for Children, Youth and Adults. Volunteer leaders, likewise, should use personal judgment about the safety of their travel that day. Cancellations will be announced by way of e-mail and on the outgoing message line at 301.948.0122.



As a rule, we will follow Montgomery County Public Schools for closing and cancellation decisions. If there is a delayed opening our morning activities are cancelled. If schools are closed, morning and afternoon activities are cancelled. In this event, evening activities still may be scheduled, so check in with the committee chair or call the outgoing message line at the church to check the status of your meeting or activity.

February Ascendant



Please email Pia Leaman by Thursday, January 21, if you have anything for the February Ascendant at leamanp@ascensionmd.org. Thank you!

Movie Night, Friday, January 8

Everyone is welcome to meet up in the Undercroft Commons on Friday, January 8 at 6:00 p.m. to watch the movie *Paddington*. 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 6:30 and we'll most likely be out and off to bed by 8:30 p.m.

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!



Blood Pressure Screenings at Ascension

On the fourth Sunday of each month there are blood pressure screenings after each service in Room 1. All are welcome.

Prayer Request Policy

The term for a prayer request is four weeks, infinitely renewable. The regular Sunday prayer list is for parishioners and their families, including extended family members. The weekday list used by the staff, called the "extended prayer list," is for coworkers, friends, and so on. When you see a name missing that you think should be included in the Prayers of the People and the list in the bulletins, say their names at service, preferably out loud, then fill out a new prayer request form, found on the welcome desk, the Undercroft Commons table, and the table near the Chapel door. - Randy

In House Notary

Our Office Coordinator, Kathy Van Arnum, is a licensed Notary Public. If you need documents notarized, bring them by the office during our office hours, Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Worship Rosters

New worship rosters for January-March, 2016 have been sent out via email. There are also hard copies available on the table in the Narthex, and in the Chapel.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



We Give Thanks for the Lives of:

Catherine Spangler who died on November 26.

Jean Thompson, who died on December 6.

"If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands." Or maybe we can say, If you're Blessed and you know it, Thank the Lord. I wouldn't want to get too evangelical, but the members of Ascension have so many reasons to be happy and to recognize the blessings bestowed upon us. Sure, we have ups and downs, and sometimes, some folks find themselves in dark places. The thankfulness in our situation is to know we will survive, we will be forgiven, and we will overcome adversities. I think there's comfort in knowing that we are getting free insurance on our souls, and our happiness, by worshipping, by walking the walk, today in and with our community.

The willingness to help, the friendliness, the open and accepting ways, the generosity of this congregation cannot be overstated. You have shown such generous spirit in supporting the annual pledge campaign. I, for one, do not know how to adequately thank you. Maybe Tiny Tim said it best, "God Bless you all, each and every one".

Just a word to the members who can't find that darn card, or who can't find time with your spouse to zero in on the number for this year. The time is now! Take a few minutes and let us know about your pledge. The cold hard world of debits and credits, of budgets and expenses demands concreteness. The great part is you will be blessed in however you respond, but if you are like me, you will feel better knowing you've done something tangible to support Ascension.

As of December 29, we have 143 pledges totaling \$291,500.



Pledge Envelopes

2016 pledge envelopes are now available on the table outside the church office. Please pick yours up as soon as possible.

Any pledges that come in with a 2016 date will be counted towards your 2016 pledge. If you have not yet pledged, it will be counted as "plate."

VESTRY DIGEST

Vestry Digest, November, 2015

Present: Randy Lord-Wilkinson, Enid Cole, Betsy Hasegawa, Rose Buck, Gordon Donnelly, Janet King, Avin Lalmansingh, Denise Lionetti, Gary McLaughlin, Najma Stubblefield, Paul Whitmore. Absent: Lauren Kingsland

Consent Agenda: Adopted as presented.

Committee Reports: No discussion.

Old Business:

Capital Campaign. Betsy shared the results of early cottage meetings, all of which tended to support improving accessibility and frank conversation. When the meetings are finished, results will be compiled into one document and shared.

Annual Giving Campaign. Avin reported that more than 90 pledges have been received. Gary will start the process of and requested assistance with making personal appeals by phone.

Music Minister Discernment. Gordon reported many qualified people have applied and interviews have begun using Skype. Second interviews will take place at Ascension. Interim choirmaster/organist has offered to stay on until permanent leaders are in place.

New Business:

Completion of Repairs, Final City Inspection at Ascension House. All repair issues have been addressed except one and Enid reported a Certificate of Occupancy from Gaithersburg will be delivered by Thanksgiving, making Ascension House an approved residence.

Curb Cut. Enid continues discussion with the Gaithersburg City Manager about the installation and costs of a curb cut in front of Ascension.

New Janitors. Enid reported that the current janitorial services contract will end 12/31/2015 and will not be renewed due to poor performance. She and Kathy developed a scope of work to be provided to interested companies, including those part of an online co-op site recommended by Action in Montgomery (AIM).

Door combination. On Enid's recommendation, a motion was passed to have the combination to the door locks changed. Gary will do the work; Kathy will distribute the new combination as needed.

Sexton, Nursery Attendants. The Vestry requested the Personnel Committee to prepare a job description for our church sexton, and for our nursery attendant, with the assistance of Rose the Vestry Liaison for this committee.

Newcomers' Brunch. The brunch is planned for Sunday December 6, 2015.

Discernment for new Vestry class. Discernment for new members has begun.

Open Mic:

Quilt for Paul Kelley. Betsy had the pleasure of showing to the Vestry the quilt conceived and led by Lauren as a gift for Paul Kelley. It will be on display in the church for a short while, then mailed to Paul in his new city.

Epiphany Pageant. Plans are underway, led by Gordon.

Vestry meeting process. The process of preparing for a meeting by reading reports submitted by members and other parties in advance was revisited, as recommended by Enid and Betsy. Some believe group discussion of each item is more useful overall than reading in advance; others see positive aspects in both. Paul suggested holding to a firm end-of-meeting time, and allowing some items to roll over to the next month; no conclusion was reached.

Undercroft door repair. An estimate of \$2,300 was received for repair of the door at the bottom of the narthex stairs, leading into the undercroft. Enid will review this amount with Michael Lam, Inc in order to get his opinion on why this costs so much. Thoughts that perhaps this is a fire-door required by zoning law with special, expensive requirements.

Missing door hardware. Gary reported the door to a ladies' room in the school area has no handle or handle hardware. Gary got a quote from a locksmith for \$500; Enid will present that to Mr Lam for review as well.

Meeting adjourned. 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Hasegawa, Junior Warden.

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

Financial Update November, 2015

Status of 2015 Budget

As noted in the last several reports, our income and expenses continue to reflect trends from recent months. In particular, our Plate income remains below projections year to date, while other income categories are either at or above expectations, including Pledge income. On the expense side, we remain close to expectations for the year in most areas, but expenses for Utilities are over budget, together with Miscellaneous Expenses and Programs Ministry.

These trends have to be interpreted in the context of our adopting a deficit budget for the year, which means that we will need to address the operating shortfall as we close out the year. The operating deficit at year's end will likely be roughly \$35,000 - \$38,000 absent any significant changes in trends year-to-date.

Development of 2016 Budget

For 2016, we will need to address how to meet operating expenses if our income is roughly similar to this year's levels. We will be sharing detailed information on the projected 2016 budget in early January, including at all of the worship services on Sunday, January 10.

November Financial Figures

In November, we had a stronger month from an income perspective than in September or October. Combined with lower expenses for the month, we currently show positive net income for November.

Total income for November was \$51,478. We received \$5,723 in Plate receipts and \$38,588 in Pledge income. Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income was over budget in November. Sandy Ridge Academy did make an additional rental payment in November, which has now been applied or accrued to December. Year to date, Plate receipts continue to trail projections, while Pledge income is running ahead, along with Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income.

For November, our total expenses were \$42,526. General Office and Facilities expenses were both slightly higher than expected, at \$1,520 and \$4,337, respectively. Utilities expenses were again high for the month, at \$2,240. All other areas are on

budget, or over or under budget by small amounts. In addition, expenses during November reflect over-paying our Diocesan pledge. We are working with the Diocese to correct and apply any excess amount both to our December payment and 2016, if need be.

Based on November income and expenses, we had positive net income of \$8,951 for the month. That has helped reduce our operating deficit, which currently stands at negative \$30,817 year to date, based on income of \$474,554 and expenses of \$505,371.

Finally, the balance in the Endowment Fund is \$473,549, as of November 30. The portion of the Endowment held as cash in Ascension's operating account is \$153,827

Howard Holland, Treasurer and Chair, Operations and Finance Committee, hhollbike@verizon.net.

THANK YOU

Upon my arrival home late last evening I was greeted with a box at my door. Inside was the most beautiful gift from Ascension. Words can simply not describe the beauty that filled my soul when I saw the quilt for the first time. What an amazing combination of love..... Warmth.....good will.....art..... and god's blessings all in one!

I will cherish it forever as I will my fond memories of Ascension. Thanks to everyone who participated in making me such a beautiful gift. I know it took many hands and countless hours of love and hard work.

Merry Christmas to all! - Love, Paul Kelley





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January 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

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Parish Staff

Rector	Randy Lord-Wilkinson
Spanish Language Missioner	Javier García Ocampo
Minister of Music	Jerrold Tidwell
Seminarians	Kate Siberine
	Diana Gustafson
Office Coordinator	Kathy Van Arnum
Communications	Pia Leaman
Children's Music Leader	Howard Hanson
Chapel Musicians	Eric O'Loughlin
	Samuel Munguia
Sexton	Betty LaVern
Nursery Director	Giséle Lachance

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