



The Ascendant

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

November 2016

Daylight Saving Time Ends November 6



Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour before you go to bed on Saturday, November 5. This is also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

Thanksgiving Day Eucharist



We will celebrate Thanksgiving in the spirit of gratitude for creation and how the earth God has given us supports our lives. Join us Thanksgiving Day in the main church at 10:00 a.m. for a Eucharist that will reconnect us to a sense of the goodness of creation, and creation as the body of God.

Mind-Body Skills Workshop

Dr. Tina Lightner-Morris will offer workshops on holistic health using research based healing therapies for 8 Mondays from November 14, 2016 to January 9, 2017 between 7pm and 9pm to help you deal with life changes, stress and illness. Participants have experienced a decrease in depression and anxiety, renewed sense of wellbeing, better coping skills to manage pain, increased energy and stamina, enhanced immune system, greater self-awareness and more. The fee is \$65 per session, \$520 for the series or \$500 if paid in full by the first session.

For more information or if you have question, contact Dr. Lightner-Morris, at 301.524.0808 or tina@lightbalncecounseling.org

What about those eighteen people in Siloam who were killed when the tower fell on them? Do you suppose this proves that they were worse than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you... - Luke 13:4

Taken in context, this is a question that Jesus asks some seekers who think people who meet a particularly grisly end deserved it. This "blaming of the victim" has a long and distinguished history. Job's "friends" assumed he was guilty because he suffered so much. In fact, one of them insisted that, bad as his situation was, "... God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves" (11:6).

Everything happens for a reason, right? Saying to someone who's down that "it must be your fault," or "well, you must deserve it," seems cruel. But we do it to ourselves, too, all the time. I get a cold and I begin to berate myself for not getting enough sleep, exercise or vitamins. I get cancer, and I start regretting all of the garbage I've put into my body over the years. But healthy people get colds every year, and people who smoke and abuse themselves do not always get cancer.

Ruthless dictators can live long and materially comfortable lives while many of the citizens of their country starve and die.

It is not a fair world. People do not always get what they deserve, and they can get what they don't deserve at all, be it good or ill fortune. Jesus says the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount: "for God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain to the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Mt. 5:45).

Blaming the victims of tragedy is our defense against the knowledge that life is beyond our control. If what happens to you is your fault, life still makes sense. If you didn't do anything to make yourself sick, mad, unhappy or dead, then it could happen to me!

Every Sunday we worship God in a big room with a reminder of the devilish logic of a fallen world that's impossible to miss. The cross reminds us of the innocent man who was tortured and killed because of who he was and what he taught. Why should we expect any different? Evil can strike at good, and does so every day. But, God can turn evil into good!

"If I say, 'Surely darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night', darkness is not dark to you, O Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike." - (Psalm 139:10-11)

Peace, and light,
Randy

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Wednesday Book Group

On November 16 Randy and the Wednesday Morning Book Group will begin exploring *Finding God in the Waves: How I Lost My Faith and Found it Again Through Science*, by Mike McHargue. From Amazon.com: "From the host of the popular podcasts, The Liturgists Podcast and Ask Science Mike, a story of having faith, losing it, and finding it again through science—revealing how the latest in neuroscience, physics, and biology help us understand God, faith, and ourselves." For a fuller description and to purchase, go to <http://amzn.to/2ecQ9DC>

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 swgathersburg@gmail.com.

Tai Chi Class

Tai Chi is an ancient tradition that helps us feel healthy and relaxed. It is a moving meditation. Claire Rosser proposes to lead a group through the 88 steps in the Yang Long Form on Thursdays from 4pm to 5pm in the chapel.

She will teach some steps each time we meet, and start with standing meditation. But mostly you would be following her as she does the form in silence. It is difficult to teach and learn tai chi, just as all complicated things are challenging, and the masters who do it perfectly have been practicing for decades. But you can begin and she will help you learn. Tai Chi improves your balance, relieves stress and restores your mind and spirit. There will be no charge for the class. A donation to the church is of course welcome.

Contact Claire Rosser at 301.275.0617 or Cjrosser@aol.com if you have any questions.

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 November 7 and 21. Contact Lori Perine at lperine@gmail.com if you would like to join us.

LIFE AT ASCENSION

Blessing of the Cars



As we celebrate the beginning of the Christian year we pray that God be with us wherever we go. For that reason we will have the blessing of the cars on November 27 after the

11:00 am services. If you want you can decorate your car with flowers.

Lady of Guadalupe Day

Join us on December 10 to celebrate the Lady of Guadalupe Day at 7:00 pm in the Main Church. After the service we will have a Mariachi Band to sing "Las Mañanitas" to the Virgin. If you want to experience more about the Latino Traditions, this would be a great opportunity to do it. After the service we would continue the celebration in the Undercroft with more Mariachi songs and Latin-American food.

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Cell Groups at Ascension

Cell Group News: On the first Sunday of the month, the group for parents of small children, facilitated by Sarah and Brian Annear will meet in the Library at 11:00am. 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 if you want in.

Formation leaders are in conversation about grouping: contact Megan Didavi at 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!

New Music Program for Sunday School

We are so pleased to announce a new component to our Sunday School program. The last Sunday of each month will now be "Music Sunday" with Howard Hansen, Ascension's Children's Music Director. Each Music Sunday we will spend approximately 15 minutes during the 9:00 and 11:15 Sunday School sessions with Howard to learn basic music theory, explore our favorite musical traditions and learn new Bible songs. As Howard pointed out in our first session on October 30th, when we create and listen to music, our brains are fired up and all kinds of connections occur. So let's get our children fired up!



WORSHIP

All Saints' at Ascension

On All Saints' Sunday at the 9:00 and 11:15 services, 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. The list of names of the faithful departed will be inserted in the All Saints' Sunday Bulletins.

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

Día de los Muertos

On All Saints' Sunday at 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.

Veterans Day—November 11

Our office is closed on November 11, Veterans day. On this day, we pray for all military veteran, military chap-

LIFE AT ASCENSION

Adventurers to Tour Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum

All parishioners and friends are invited to join us for a docent-led tour of the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum in Old Town Alexandria on Saturday, November 12th. You can find detailed information at <http://bit.ly/2fjZQBa>

"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!

Welcome Our New Media Specialist Eleni Hailu

Eleni came to United States 13 years ago to pursue her degree in Information Technology. She earned her Master degree in Computer Information Technology and worked in different organizations in different IT fields. Currently, she is the senior software developer and is responsible for the development and maintenance of a suite of software applications and database administration. Eleni is very active in her local community and church community helping by developing the church's website and creating online platform to broadcast the church program live via Google hangout. She is also one of the recipients of 2016 Women of Color (WOC) STEM Award .



Movie Night, Friday, November 4

Everyone is welcome to meet up in the Chapel on Friday, November 4 at 6:30 p.m. to watch Men in Black 3 (rated PG-13). From Amazon: "In Men in Black 3, Agents J [Will Smith] and K [Tommy Lee Jones] are back... in time. J has seen some inexplicable things in his 15 years with the Men in Black, but nothing, not even aliens, perplexes him as much as his wry, reticent partner. But when K's life and the fate of the planet are put at stake, Agent J will have to travel back in time to put things right. J discovers that there are secrets to the universe that K never told him - secrets that will reveal themselves as he teams up with the young Agent K [Josh Brolin] to save his partner, the agency and the future of humankind."



We'll start off with pizza and whatever else people want to bring (for specific suggestions, follow the sign-up link below). 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.

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, November 3. We need 10 confirmations to make Movie Night happen...

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

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

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 MobileMed.”

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 if you would like to help, or follow this link <http://bit.ly/1DVayRb>.

Benefit Concert for MCIRRN

Benefit concert for Montgomery County Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Neighbors (MCIRRN) at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 9100 Colesville Rd., Silver Spring, MD on Saturday November 12, 2016 from 5–7pm. For detail information: <https://www.efcgermantown.org/news-events/>

Youth Group Fall Service Activity

November: Prepare, invite and engage with the faith-based community, fund raise for supplies

December 14th : Attend special Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence (Wed evening, anniversary of Newtown)

<http://www.stmarks.net/preventing-gun-violence/>

December 17th: Ascension Youth to lead establishment of “Memorial to the Lost”

<http://heedinggodscall.org/content/heeding-gods-call-memorials-lost> on 355 on our church grounds. Rebar grounded, PVC piping installed, names put on T-Shirts, T-shirts hung, prayer circle

Dec 18th: Dedication ceremony at Ascension

2017: Support next congregation to host the memorial

VESTRY DIGEST: SEPTEMBER 2016

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

YOUTH GROUP REQUEST: Angie reported that the Youth Group would like to hold a “Memorials to the Lost” event, as part of a program called “Heeding God’s Call”, a multi-faith movement to prevent gun violence. This would involve having t-shirts with the names of gun violence victims hung on our Route 355 corner. Angie estimates the cost to be less than \$1,000. The Vestry enthusiastically supported to project.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Howard presented our current cash position, and projected our 2017 position. The 2017 budget will likely be no more than a maintenance one, and may be austere. We are currently spending \$6K - \$8K more than our income each month. Our financial advisors and Howard recommend reclassifying a certain amount of money for less restricted use. Accordingly, Betsy made a motion that we reclassify \$80,913 from our endowment fund to unrestricted income, to give a more accurate view of Ascension’s current cash position. Rose seconded the motion and it passed.

CONSENT AGENDA: Avin moved that the consent agenda be adopted as presented; Zadinga seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Kitchen cleaning/Kathy’s email. Parish Administrator Kathy van Arnum advised the Vestry by email that there are mice in both the church and the chapel, and that the kitchen is very dirty. The Vestry agreed that professional help should be hired for a one-time deep cleaning, and that we should develop a check sheet of actions to be taken when using the kitchen.

Worship/acolyte training. Gary reported on training for the four new adult acolytes, which went well. The need for a lead person in each Worship category (e.g., acolytes, chalicists, lectors) was discussed; Randy will talk to possible acolyte leaders.

Parish Life/eliminate sexton position? Our sexton has departed and Randy recommended that we not fill the position. Setting up the coffee and food on Sunday morning can be done by volunteer parishioners. The Vestry agreed.

Annual Giving Campaign. Avin is leading this effort. The program is to run from October 2nd to December 30th, and therefore will start next week. Our goal is

\$500,000 in pledges. People who have a history of faithful giving but not pledging will be contacted and encouraged to pledge. Vestry members and volunteers from the congregation will speak at their services about the campaigns, and Howard will appear at the various services to make our financial situation clear.

NEW BUSINESS

“Shape of Things to Come”. Randy recommended establishment of an ad hoc committee to address aligning our mission with the resources we have, for Ascension’s future. Suggestions were made as to who might be good committee members.

OPEN MIC

Fund raising idea. Gary told the vestry of a bank program wherein for each new checking account opened, the bank would donate \$50 to Ascension. It would require that Ascension do its banking at that bank. Gary will check to see if the bank Ascension uses has a program of the same sort.

ADJOURNMENT: At 5:07 p.m., Avin moved that the meeting be adjourned. Paul seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sari Stoddard
Clerk of the Vestry

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

Financial Update September, 2016 Budget Development and Implementation



As we’ve reported in previous months, we have been tracking slightly higher in income and slightly lower in expenses year-to-date. Those balances tightened again in September, but the overall trend does continue to hold.

That said, we are slightly behind at this point in plate receipts and pledge income, although we are ahead in

rental and miscellaneous unrestricted income. Thus, we are ahead overall in total income to day. Details on September's figures and year-to-date are just below.

It's important to note that we continue to draw on the Endowment Fund and other reserves to meet our monthly operating expenses. In general, we have required between \$6,000 - \$8,000 per month from the Endowment to meet our needs, together with the monies from the Endowment Fund that the Vestry approved using when the 2016 budget was adopted.

We are also working the budget for 2017. We are monitoring pledges received to date and will be developing a budget for the Vestry to consider, based both on the income we expect to receive and what expenses for 2017 are likely to be.

September Financials and Year-to-Date Summary

For September, our income was greater than we projected, and expenses were roughly what we had expected.

Total income for September was \$41,729. Ascension received \$4,405 in plate receipts and \$26,406 in pledge income. Those totals were higher than projected for the month, although as mentioned above, totals in these categories year-to-date are slightly behind expectations. Rental Income and Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income were ahead of projections.

For September, our total expenses were \$45,839. With the exception of Salary & Benefits, we were under budget or only nominally over budget in all of our expense categories. We were over budget in Salary & Benefits because we are now showing the expenses for Father Javier's salary in this category as opposed to classifying those expenses as Temporary Expenses.

We had negative net income for September of \$4,110 based on the income and expenses figures just described. As of September 30, we have received income of \$377,166, against total expenses of \$437,833, creating negative net income for the year of \$60,6698. Total income is roughly 3% higher than anticipated, and expenses are roughly 4% lower than projected.

The balance in the Endowment Fund as of September 30, 2016, is \$310,433. This total reflects use of the Endowment to help meet operating expenses so far this year.

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

PLEDGE UPDATE AS OF 11-01-16



- 53 Pledges for the Annual Giving Campaign, total \$127,597
- 26 Pledges for the Facilities Reserve Fund, total \$49,740

Thanks to those below who have pledged to the annual giving campaign:

Mary Anna Culkin, Don & Martha Marks, Jake & Ophelia Yalley-Ogunro, Christopher & Susan Ahalt, Levin B Broughton, Jemima Carr, Cynthia Perley, Neil & Nathalie Scott, Carolyn Dowling & John Bjerke, Jennie B Cargill, Nancy & John Carman, Beverly Stennett, Gary & Susan McLaughlin, Mary N Waldron, Russell E Weber, Kelvin W Basier, Suzanne E Hood, Monteath B Petersen, Janet King, Betty B Knight, Marjorie Madikoto, Richard & Susan Snay, Margaret Tellu, Stewart & Lavina Williams, Carleton MacDonald, Claire Rosser, Paul Whitmore, Laura Shay & Linda MacNeil, Donna R Moss, Martha Lubet, Sari Stoddard, Avin Lalmansingh, Ceda & Zadinga Ogada, Rose & Jeff Buck, John B Pruessner, John & Kelly Ten-Hagen, Ann & Jim Utterback, Don & Jean Cohn, Kevin Conway, Johnetta Mars-Gibson, Sylvana F McIntosh, James & Antoinette Babcock, Phyllis Eddy/Joseph Deffenbaugh, Betsy Hasegawa, Troyce Holland, Lauren Kingsland.

And to those who pledges to the Facilities Fund:

Carleton MacDonald, Claire Rosser, Paul Whitmore, Laura Shay & Linda MacNeil, Donna R Moss, Martha Lubet, Sari Stoddard, Avin Lalmansingh, Ceda & Zadinga Ogada, Rose & Jeff Buck, John B Pruessner, John & Kelly Ten-Hagen, Ann & Jim Utterback, Don & Jean Cohn, Kevin Johnetta Mars-Gibson, Sylvana F McIntosh, Janet King, Marjorie Madikoto, Betsy Hasegawa, Lauren Kingsland, Elizabeth Lennon, Algernon Thomas, Roy Bevington & Constance Finch, Margaret Donnellon, Joyce & Andrew Bvumbe, Chris & Rachel Ruggeri.



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November 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
Assistant to the Rector	Javier García Ocampo
Seminarian	Jason Cutshall
Minister of Music	Jerrold Tidwell
Parish Administrator	Kathy Van Arnum
Media Specialist	Eleni Hailu
Children's Music Leader	Howard Hanson
Chapel Musicians	Eric O'Loughlin Samuel Munguia

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