

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension

53rd Annual Meeting

*10:30 p.m. Sunday,
12 March A.D. 2017*





**THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
Gaithersburg, Maryland**

**Agenda for the Fifty-Third Annual Parish Meeting
10:30 a.m., March 12, 2017**

The Reverend Randall Lord-Wilkinson, Rector - Presiding

Opening Prayer: Randy

Adoption of Agenda

Minutes of Fifty-Second Annual Meeting (*March 13 , 2016*)

Nominating Committee Report

Appointment of Tellers

Casting of Ballots for:

Three (3) three year Vestry members

Two (2) Diocesan delegates

Open Discussion and Dialog with Rector and Wardens

Swearing in of new Vestry Members

OATH OF OFFICE:

I, _____, do solemnly affirm, that I will faithfully execute the office of a Vestry Member of Ascension Parish, in Montgomery County, Maryland, without prejudice, favor, or affection, according to the best of my skill and knowledge; further, I affirm my belief in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and commit myself thereto, God being my helper.

Blessing

Adjournment

MINUTES OF THE 52ND ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 13, 2016

The meeting was called to order by the Rev. Randy Lord-Wilkinson at 1:10 p.m. with prayer. Motions were made, seconded and passed to proceed, adopt the agenda, and to accept the minutes of the 50th annual meeting.

Nominating Committee Report: Randy described the new process for nominating candidates, in which the emphasis is on prayerful consideration by the current Vestry in discerning candidates and with potential candidates in discerning if they were called to that ministry.

Candidates for the five open Vestry positions (four 3-year terms), Junior Warden, Diocesan Delegate and Diocesan Delegate Alternate are as follows:

Junior Warden: Betsy Hasegawa

Vestry: Rose Buck, Janet King, Avin Lalmansingh, Gary McLaughlin, and Najama Stubblefield

Diocesan Delegate: Carleton MacDonald, Sue Snay

Diocesan Delegate Alternate: Mardia Dennis

There were no nominations from the floor.

Appointment of Tellers: Tellers appointed were Margaret Holland, Melanie Mitchell and Page Salazar.

Ballots were cast and collected. After the collection of ballots, the tellers retired for the counting. Randy asked the current Vestry members to stand; the congregational attendees applauded their service.

Randy then thanked Peg Ruppel, the retiring Junior Warden, for the fine job she has done during her 5 years of service on the vestry two of which were as Junior Warden.

Paul Kelley, Music Director announced that he was leaving Ascension after 22 years to pursue a new career position in Atlanta. He stated that when he arrived his goal was to set up a music program that was focused on worship. Paul stated the he felt his goal had been accomplished and it was a wonderful experience. He is willing to stay until the end of July. Randy praised Paul for his intelligence, wisdom and creativity.

Randy explained the process for finding Paul's replacement. The current plan is to hire interim staff for a few months to give the parish the opportunity to grieve and time for discernment regarding the identity of the new music director. The interim staff may consist of one or two people. Randy and the vestry plan to meet with April Stace Vega, a musician who consults with the diocese to discern the selection process.

Open Discussion and Dialogue with Rector and Wardens, including Budget and Finance. Items discussed included:

- ◆ The Operations and Finance Committee Report, found on pages 12 and 13 of the Annual Report, were explained by Howard. Unlike the balance budget adopted in 2014 the budget for 2015 is a deficit budget. The vestry plans to use the money from the endowment to keep the deficit as low as possible. If the year end balance is positive the surplus will be used to replenish the endowment. The funds are being drawn from the endowment's appreciation rather than from the principal.
- ◆ There was a discussion of possible sources of revenue. It was reported that the lack of the Holiday Bizarre did not impact the deficit as this event typically generated \$3,500-\$4,500 in revenue. It was suggested that we do more to publicize that we have space available for rent. Enid stated that she plans to begin placing advertisements. It was also suggested that we need to increase our pledges. It was suggested that finding alternative ways for people to pledge such as on line may generate more pledges.
- ◆ The mention of increasing pledges lead to a discussion of methods for increasing membership. It was suggested that we need to offer diversity in the liturgy and music. Those present discussed the various ways that this could be accomplished. It was also suggested that we should try to attract children with

young families. After a great deal of discussion it was decided that we maintain the 9:00 and 11:15 services in their current format.

- ◆ Appendix B of the Annual Meeting booklet contains a variety of statistics about Ascension including: the membership, Sunday attendance, dollars pledge per pledging unit, number of pledging units, number of baptisms, number of weddings and the number of deaths/funerals for each of the last 5 years. It also contains the names of the people who were baptized, confirmed, married or who died since the last report.
- ◆ Appendix C is a graphical representation of the trends in number of pledges and the amount pledged over the last 9 years.

Election Results: Betsy Hasegawa was elected Junior Warden. Janet King, Avin Lalmansingh, and Gary McLaughlin were elected to three-year vestry terms and Najma Stubblefield was elected to a two year term. Rose Buck was elected to a one year term. Carleton MacDonald and Sue Snay were elected to a two year term as diocesan delegates and Mardia Dennis was elected as alternate diocesan delegate.

The current and the newly-elected wardens, vestry members and diocesan delegates were sworn in.

Closing: Randy gave a closing prayer. He then asked for and received a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded and passed, and the meeting closed at 2:30 p.m.

FROM THE RECTOR

Rector's Retrospective

Another year since our last annual meeting? Amazing. By now you've heard me tell people that I am not "surprised" that my daughters are now 12 and 17. You know, that in the blink of an eye they will have grown up and launched. Well, maybe not launched! But since their mother and I created two households 8 years ago we have been dedicated to maintaining loving, respectful relationships and a mindful connection to our daughters. I haven't missed much. I have lived with them and are as deeply connected to them as is humanly possible. Thus I feel that they are precisely the ages they should be!

Not so with my tenure as a priest and rector of this vibrant, diverse congregation! In 2016 I celebrated my 32nd anniversary as a priest and commenced my 10th year as rector of Ascension! Now that seems impossible to me! And that, I think, is good. I am absorbed and passionate about my journey with you, and I believe I am profoundly blessed to have been given the gift of walking the Christian spiritual path with you, my fellow seekers and servants of God. Thank you for all that you do and are!

Staff

Some of our key players moved on in 2016. Paul Kelley, of course, is now based in the Atlanta area and is thriving.

We lost two of our Sunday morning stalwarts: Betty Lavern and Gisele Lachance, both of whom have served in excess of 20 years at Ascension! In the last couple of years they had to phone (or text) in a legitimate absence, almost entirely because of family responsibilities (read 'grandchildren'). It gradually and gently came to the point where we all agreed that continuing on was a strain all around. We really felt it when these two were not with us on Sunday. It was with profound gratitude that we said fare well to these quiet dedicated servants of Ascension, who made many friends and touched many lives over the years.

We did not decide to hire a successor to Betty. I come in a little early to unlock the church, like a country parson, and turn on the lights and the sound system, and check to make sure that \$60,000 of new HVAC equipment is still working! We now have teams of "hospitality angels" coming in to make and maintain coffee in the narthex. It's come along nicely, although it does not always run at 100% efficiency!

As to the nursery, we accepted the recommendation of an Ascension member to give Brenda Alvarez a shot at being the attendant. She's a college student and is fluent in English and Spanish. She has worked out very well for us and seems unflappable no matter how many toddlers (and other visitors) make up her Sunday clientele.

After many years working "mother's hours" at Ascension, Pia landed a full time job as a secretary at a local school. She was a good friend, very well organized, and dependable. During her tenure at Ascension she went through the transition from our being largely a paper based organization (I use that term lightly!) to a digital one. We have a new web site and are on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our newsletter, *The Ascendant*, is now all digital except for about 40 or 50 copies we mail to people who want them and keep on hand for the newcomer packets. About the only thing we use paper for are the Sunday service leaflets and announcement bulletins, which you may also download when you come to church. Pia grew into social media with the rest of us on the staff, with grace and humor.

Having a digital presence is essential for a church of this generation. Almost without exception, new people who come to Ascension have looked at our web site first. So with the help of an online job posting search engine we found Eleni Hailu, a web designer and IT professional who lives over on Emory Grove along with a number of other Ascension members! She is active in her Ethiopian Orthodox Church and brings a lot of expertise to our new position of "Media Specialist." She'd like to see us, for example, post videos of our services on the parish web site. Watch for that in 2017!

Ministry Dream Team

We were invited to apply for a grant for growth from the Diocese of Washington to support and expand Javier's role at Ascension. He has become a beloved member of our community, and a good partner and friend. We have made him a half time assistant according to current clergy compensation guidelines, enrolled him in the Episcopal Church Pension Plan, pay for his medical insurance, and of course give him the run of Ascension House! His ministry is fruitful and vibrant and we are all inspired and cheered by the growth of the Spanish speaking community.

We are also paying for half of his legal fees to renew his religious worker visa and to get a green card. Javier is also networking on the Rockville campus of Montgomery College to start an Episcopal student community there, and if you read his report in this booklet you will see that he is involved in an array of activities in the diocese and county.

Rounding out my ministry dream team is the incredibly gifted new "Minister of Music" Jerrold Tidwell! From the very first Sunday both the choir and ensemble were elevated to a new degree of musical expression. Jerrold fits in well with the liturgical culture of Ascension in that he is enthusiastic and deeply familiar with both classic and modern hymnody and anthems. We who were directly involved in the search had no doubt that we were guided to each other by the Spirit.

Faith Formation

You will read about our teaching ministry for children and youth elsewhere in this report. I continue to gravitate toward teens (despite rearing two of them), and so I taught confirmation for youth last spring with seminarian Kate Siberine and, with Diana Gustafson, joined Angie and Trevor to insert a Christian formation segment into Youth Group meetings. This continues in the '16-'17 program year, and Mardia Dennis and Steve Heinig are also part of the team for Sunday night formation.

Ascension is an exciting place for Virginia Seminary students to come and learn about parish based mission. Diana and Kate brought so much with them, and felt that they received as much in return. Javier and I attended the first Missional Voices conference at VTS in April, which was dedicated to hearing from leaders doing ministry in novel ways and settings. I was assigned to a small "huddle" group that met between presentations, and gave the scribe for the group a hard time because he wasn't recording my brilliant remarks on the newsprint quickly enough. We struck up a conversation at lunch and among other things learned we had a mutual friend in Jason Evans, at who's home we (and Javier) would meet with others who wanted to continue exploring emerging models of ministry.

There are no “accidents” on this way we walk, so you may now have figured out that the scribe whom I made miserable was none other than Jason Cutshall, who has enriched the ministry of Ascension since commencing his field education placement here in the Fall.

The Wednesday morning book group (nicknamed WAM by its participants) continues to grow, challenge, and inspire Ascension members (and many non- and former members!) who can make a weekday morning class. It is a good example of “small group” ministry in that people not only study and grow spiritually together, but support each other. What’s really amazing is that the group so easily welcomes new participants. Impelled by our second run at the RenewalWorks survey in the Fall, cultivating the formation of more small groups is on the menu, and Jason and I are collaborating to make this happen.

Interfaith Mission

I continue to serve as a co-convener, along with a rabbi and imam (I know, it sounds like the beginning of a joke), of the Greater Gaithersburg Interfaith Alliance. For the last year the focus has been learning from the sacred books of Jews, Christians, and Muslims with the exciting young scholars from the Columbia based Institute for Islamic, Christian and Jewish studies (ICJS). Ascension has hosted a number of these conversations, needed more than ever for the health of our civic life.

Both Javier and I are as involved as we can be in Action in Montgomery and its interfaith clergy caucuses and community activism.

At the invitation of one of my Muslim colleagues I attended a meeting about refugee resettlement at the Islamic Center of Maryland here in Gaithersburg (where my daughters and I attended an iftar dinner in the summer). At first I wasn’t sure that this would bear much if any fruit, other than the consequence of a 10 minute conversation with an Episcopalian who was in between congregations. That person, Claire Rosser, now plays flute in our ensemble at 11:15 and teaches Tai Chi on Thursday afternoons in the Chapel!

As I said earlier, there are no accidents!

But on Christmas Eve, between services, I was inspired to call the caseworker for the Montgomery County Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee (also known as “New Neighbors”), and expressed interest in a Cuban family of four who did not have a “lead” congregation. You will hear more about this very shortly! At this writing Javier and I met with Shahnaz Baten, the caseworker, at the home of this amazing family (which includes two teenaged daughters). I can tell you, again, that this was meant to be.

I was invited (there is that word again) to teach a course in comparative monotheistic religion at the Osher Center for Lifelong Learning at Johns Hopkins University on Thursday mornings from February through May, with a Jewish and Islamic scholar. Needless to say, teaching being one of my passions, I am honored and excited!

Numbers

In ministry, numbers are not the whole story, but they are part of it. Attendance at the Spanish service is measurably higher, and as the 11:15 service matures it, too, is growing slowly. Even the venerable 9 o’clock service has been busting the 100 member mark regularly. Average total Sunday attendance is gently upwardly trending (see the appendix). This is a good sign.

There is the occasional lament that unless you are me you don’t get to see who the members of Ascension are! When I came to Ascension in 2007 the service schedule was pretty much as it is now. Yes, there were 6 then as well. We have changed styles of a couple of them - significantly! - and tweaked the times of the Spanish and 11:15 service, but it’s the same menu. I am thinking that maybe on the 5th Sunday of certain months we might try having one BIG service!

And we got more money than we anticipated. There was a really well run annual giving and robust facilities reserve campaign. But, sadly, not enough, to close a deficit of around \$150,000. This will definitely require that we phase in significant changes in the shape of Ascension’s mission and ministry in 2017, especially the shape of mine.

I am grateful for the support of a stellar Vestry, and of course I have not yet mentioned that Kathy Van Arnum, now dubbed “Parish Administrator,” manages to preside over the details of day to day events at Ascension, with a truly lovely disposition.

As you can see and feel, there is a lot of joy and fruitfulness in this community, so that is hopeful. I could not be happier with the relationships and experiences I am gifted with in you. That is the Bread of Life for you and me, and as we feed on it, we will make it through a time of sojourning in the wilderness, to the next phase of our shared journey.

Love and Peace, Randy

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

Dear Friends,

During 2016 we focused a lot on financial issues and our budget, but we also continued our tradition of service as Christ’s eyes and hands to each other and our community.

A very brief recap of our accomplishments in 2016 includes:

- ◆ Mystery of the Kitchen Smell...solved! Ask a Vestry member for details.
- ◆ Installed a new sound system in the nave.
- ◆ Installed new HVAC upstairs and downstairs in the church, and repaired it in the chapel.
- ◆ Listened and learned through the Cottage Meetings about potential physical changes to the main church.
- ◆ Won a diocesan grant for \$20,000 to support Javier’s mission at Ascension and in our community; we’re applying for a repeat grant now.
- ◆ Saw the completion of the curb cuts out front to improve our accessibility.
- ◆ Hosted the Interreligious Study as a Civic Good luncheon and study with representatives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, and invited Muslim community members to speak to us
- ◆ Hosted Bishop Marianne and her staff for the Northern Montgomery County Regional Meeting.
- ◆ Saw another fantastic year for the Ascension Youth Group through their annual work camp and display of the Memorial to the Lost-commemorating victims of gun violence.
- ◆ Embraced Jerrold Tidwell, our new Minister of Music and his leadership of the Ascension Choir and the 1115 Ascension Ensemble.
- ◆ Continued onward with the Outreach projects beloved at Ascension, connected with Gaithersburg Elementary school and AIM events, and hosted an outreach retreat.
- ◆ Resumed the women’s retreat.

Janet King, a well-known and tireless member of Ascension was elected as our Junior Warden. Thank you, Janet for your common sense and dedication. Applause to those finishing their Vestry terms: Denise Lionetti, Najma Stubblefield, and Paul Whitmore-you have all been thoughtful voices on the Vestry and indispensable to Ascension; I know you will continue to be so. Thanks to the vestry members that remain including our Clerk, Sari “Amazing” Stoddard; Avin Lalmansingh; Berenice Rodriguez; Gary McLaughlin; John Pruessner; Rose Buck, and Zadinga Ogada all of whom have become very special to me through their service, forthrightness, and spirit. Finally many thanks to our rector, Randy Lord-Wilkinson who uses his 30+ years of clergy experience to teach us much and learns with us as we do our best for Ascension. Thanks, Randy.

As always, “church” happens because of the involvement, honesty, and love of our people-many working quietly behind the scenes to keep our worship space prepared, our community vibrant, and our coffee flowing. Others serve by showing up every week, bringing fellowship with them. This is what makes us a church. I feel very lucky to attend Ascension and to serve as best I can.

Much appreciation to you all,

Betsy Hasegawa

FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN

In March of 2016 I was elected to complete Betsy Hasegawa term as Junior Warden as she took on the challenges of becoming Senior Warden. It has been a year of challenges and insights. The Vestry has set up a committee to organize Parish Life in our church. The members have meet twice in the 2017 and our first accomplishment was to organize the Shrove Tuesday Dinner. It went very well and the committee members were very pleased with the results. Our goal is to help built that community spirit that has made Ascension such a great church community to join. There will be major challenges as I and the vestry face the facts as to how to balance our budget. But it means that Parish Life and other community building activities are more important than ever before. There are new projects out there such as The Cookbook, Selling T-shirts and Sweatshirts, and joining the Sanctuary Network. Any and all ideas are welcome as we approach 2017 and all of its demands. It has been my pleasure to serve as your Junior Warden and look forward to the coming year.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Cottage Meetings Summary

The written comments of the five groups (A - E) are summarized for each area of the church under consideration for renovation. These responses are followed by some quotes and notes, taken directly off the scribe notes. All in all, about 50 people participated in the meetings.

The areas of fundamental agreement are, from most to least important:

- I. Improve Accessibility
 - A. Lower the chancel and sanctuary-eliminate the steps
- II. Improve the Sound-System
- III. Improve Lighting

Areas frequently mentioned with less agreement include:

- I. Seating-Pews vs. Chairs-arrangement flexibility
- II. Changes to the Narthex-clear pathways and access
- III. Covering the Atrium and erecting a dividing wall between the Sanctuary and the new space.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR CHILDREN

This year, *Godly Play* and *A Joyful Path* are still meeting during the 9:00 and 11:00/11:15 services, in classrooms downstairs. The classes that meet during the 9:00 service have about 4 or 5 children on average, and the 11:00 classes are smaller, especially *Godly Play*, which often has only 2 children present. Besides the usual intriguing stories and stimulating discussion, there have been some positive collaborations to report. Howard Hanson has started a wonderful monthly music program in which he teaches both classes some principles of music, as they experiment with rhythm, melody, and harmony.

During Advent both classes, often meeting together, made several Christmas Cards and ornaments for the members of Ascension who receive communion at the Sunrise Senior Living Community. Although there were only a few children who stepped up to do the Pageant this year, Gordon Donnelly directed in a way that made each child shine as they told the story of our Lord Jesus Christ's birth.

The members of *A Joyful Path* are continuing the year 2 path building on the previous year's experiences. The attendance issues are the same as with *Godly Play*. Some Sundays 4-8, but generally 2-3 in both classes.

We have been talking about a few possible solutions to the problem of low enrollment. As real estate agents say, it's all about "location, location, location." With this in mind we are planning to move the classes upstairs next Fall. This will make it easier for people to find us and parents can drop off their children and get to church more

easily. Another strategy would be to reach out to our target audiences by arranging to do a story for the 9:00, 10:15, 11:00 and 11:15 services.

We have considered merging classes. There are currently, 3 teachers for each Godly Play class and 2 for each Joyful Path class. . Of course, it is important to reach out to parents and see what their reaction would be and if they have any ideas of solutions. We hope we can keep our program intact and continue to grow.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR YOUTH

For grades 6th and up (including local college students), we gather for Youth Group on the second and fourth Sundays of each month from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. in the "Undercroft Commons," of the main church. We have nearly 20 active students, one of the largest in Montgomery County. Our leadership team is composed of four lay leaders and Randy. As we no longer have a Sunday morning educational component for middle and high school students, we have added it to the evening time-when most in this age group are more awake and engaged.

Service is a key component of the Ascension Youth program. Through a week-long summer work camp experience in intercity Philadelphia and activities throughout the year, our Youth learn and demonstrate empathy and Christ's love. This year's focus activity was a "Memorial to the Lost". Twenty-six T-shirts were hung on the church grounds to honor the children and teachers lost to gun violence at Sandy Hook Elementary. The Youth participated in learning the details of how illegal gun ownership drives much of the violence in our poorer communities, and establishing the memorial.

Ascension Youth have long had a close and supportive relationship with the unserved community at St. James school in Philadelphia. This year the Youth gathered over 50 lbs of gifts from the schools "need" list and mailed them in time for Christmas.

New this year has been planning Youth events with our broader Northern Montgomery County Episcopal churches. Driven by the Diocese, these gatherings leverage resources and build a larger community. Each church hosts or sponsors an event. Ascension will be hosting in March 2017 the making of "Blessing Baggies" where the Youth bring and assemble essentials for homeless.

Ascension's Youth Group is focused on forming lasting relationships through shared meals, fellowship, service and fun. The strength of these relationships is born out in the closeness of the community. Outings include bowling, trampoline parties and laser tag as annual events.

Angela and Trevor Hight Walker

HEALTH AND WELLNESS MINISTRY

Health & Wellness Ministry at Ascension is an intentional ministry focusing on both healing and health, combining the ancient traditions of the Christian community and the knowledge and tools of modern health care.

Parish Nurse Ministry

Blood Pressure Checks-Monthly blood pressure checks are offered the fourth Sunday of the month.
Health classes

Labyrinth & Other Spiritual Practices

At various times throughout the year, Ascension's labyrinth is made available for prayerful walking. In addition, other spiritual practices including retreats, a Benedictine cell and contemplative prayer sessions are offered.

Yoga

Two yoga classes are offered each week: Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. and Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel.

For more information contact Laura Shay at shayhealth@gmail.com.

OPERATIONS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Budget Development and Implementation

The Operations and Finance Committee regularly reviewed monthly and year-to-date income and expense figures, as well as prepared reports for the Vestry's meetings and for the Ascendant.

In consultation with the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry, the Committee took steps to address budget issues throughout the year, especially issues with use of the Endowment Fund to meet operating and capital expenses.

A summary of Ascension's 2016 income and expenses is below. In addition, the annual meeting packet includes a year-end Treasurer's Report showing cash holdings, reserves, and other fund balances. A copy of the most recent audit, which is for calendar year 2015, is available upon request.

The Committee has also worked with the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry on the 2017 budget. As we consider the budget for 2017, Ascension faces an increasingly serious situation. For 2016, it was necessary to use approximately \$116,000 from the Endowment to meet operating expenses. This total reflects both the \$40,000 withdrawn from the Endowment Fund when the budget was adopted for 2016 and what was needed each month to make up the difference between our income and our expenses. We project a larger potential operating deficit in 2017.

As a result of these issues, the balance currently in Ascension's Endowment Fund, which was \$266,580 as of January 31, 2017, will be exhausted by mid- to late-2018 unless we make major changes in our spending. These changes will have to include all aspects of Ascension's activities.

Ascension also faced significant building improvement expenses during 2016. It became necessary to replace the heat pump systems for both the sanctuary and main church buildings. These improvements alone totaled \$46,475.

It was also necessary to make other significant repairs, as well. We made repairs to exterior doors, the fire sprinkler systems, and addressed water damage to our buildings. To fund all of these building improvements, we needed to use money from Endowment, as well.

Highlights of 2016 Income and Expenses

Ascension's income and expenses varied from month to month during 2016 as is usually the case. Typically, we incur higher expenses earlier in the year and receive more income later in the year. That pattern held for 2016.

During 2016, we received income of \$524,165, against expenses of \$600,213. We received \$54,780 in plate receipts and \$356,226 in pledge income. Both figures were very close to what we projected for the year, with plate receipts slightly under and pledge income slightly higher than anticipated. However, we received much more Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income than expected. That was due to higher-than-planned receipts from two trusts, greater use of Ascension's facilities for funerals and other events, and a grant from the Diocese of Washington, to support our Latino ministry.

On the expense side, we had higher than expected costs largely in Salary and Benefits and General Office Expenses. Our higher costs in Salary and Benefits were partially the result of the changes in Father Javier's compensation at midyear, along with our commitment to help him with his visa application. The grant from the Diocese of Washington is offsetting a portion of Father Javier's salary. We were over budget in General Office Expenses because of costs associated with the update to Ascension's Web site.

Ascension had negative net operating income of \$76,048 for 2016 based on the income and expense figures above. But, as noted earlier in the report, our total operating deficit for the year was approximately \$116,000, which reflects our negative net operating income plus the \$40,000 we withdrew from the Endowment Fund as part of the budget for 2016.

Finally, the Treasurer's Report also included in the packet shows the balances as of December 31, 2016, in all of the funds maintained by Ascension. These are unaudited figures and they may change. Of note, the new Facili-

ties Reserve Fund shows a balance of \$21,630. That balance has grown since year's end and will be used should any building repair needs surface during 2017.

Howard Holland

OUTREACH >> COMMITTEE FOR MISSION RETREAT

Ascension's Mission: "To be ambassadors who represent Christ."

Past missional activities for which the "sun has set:"

- ◆ G Sharp
- ◆ Rebuild
- ◆ Attic
- ◆ HELP Walk for Hunger
- ◆ Teen Moms
- ◆ Dwelling Place
- ◆ Annual Women's Shelter Dinners
- ◆ Missional cells
- ◆ Rotating homeless shelters
- ◆ Montgomery County Fair Booth & Cart
- ◆ Holiday Bazaar

"What's Happening Now:"

- ◆ Men's Shelter Lunches
- ◆ Linkages to Learning Fall backpack drive
- ◆ Lenten Rice Bowl
- ◆ Advent/Christmas Giving Tree
- ◆ Twice monthly Lord's Table service
- ◆ Mobile Med
- ◆ Meals on Wheels
- ◆ New: "Felicidad" lunches for day laborers
- ◆ Youth Group annual mission trip to Phil.
- ◆ Youth Group Fall 2016 gun violence awareness project

Emerging Missional Activities:

- ◆ Montgomery College community startup with EDOW Grant for Growth to expand Javier's ministry
- ◆ Ministry with Spanish speaking ministry (again, partly funded by EDOW grant)
- ◆ Interfaith collaboration
- ◆ Refugee support via Montgomery County Interfaith Commission for Refugee Resettlement
- ◆ Possible missional activities to Liberia and Haiti

Consensus was to change name of leadership of this aspect of Ascension's ministry to "Committee for Mission."

Respectfully submitted, Paul Boyton, Chair; Gary MacLaughlin, Vestry Liaison,
for the Committee

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Ascension's Sunday services are settled. Each one appeals to certain members of the parish, and the variety of services means that no matter what style of worship one may prefer, he or she will find it here. Attendance at most has been stable, with the 9:00 traditional service seeing the largest congregation, and the 11:00 Spanish language service has shown significant gains. The Spanish language service's congregation is very cohesive and they usually have a fellowship meal together in the parish hall after their service. For Christmas Eve we have settled into a pattern of three services: 5:00 pm for families with small children, and 7:00 and 9:00 pm a full service with choir and organ. On Easter Sunday we have two traditional services at 9:00 and 11:00 am.

Jerrold Tidwell has now been with us over a year. There is great respect and affection between him and the 9:00 choir and the musicianship of the choir is now at a very high level; we reprised the John Rutter *Te Deum* this past Easter. The choir continues to invite interested singers to talk with any of us or with Jerrold about becoming members. There is no audition, just come; the ability to sight read music is helpful. Jerrold also directs the ensemble at 11:15 which includes piano, two guitars, oboe, conga drums, and other instruments. All the musicians at that service are volunteers except for Jerrold Tidwell (piano) and Howard Hanson (guitar).

The Epiphany Pageant went very well this past January, in large part due to the enthusiasm of everyone who took part and the organizational skills of Gordon Donnelly.

The Altar Guild teams support specific services, rather than specific Sundays. Each team also rotates being available for unscheduled services such as funerals. The Altar Guild is also responsible (volunteers only) for washing all the various linens used in our services. The Guild is open to all members of the congregation (yes, men too!).

We continue to have an active group of worship leaders, in such positions as Welcome Team (aka ushers), chalicists, lectors (who read the lessons, psalms and prayers of the people), acolytes (not just youth; adults are invited to sign up too), healing prayer leaders, and flower ministers (who take the altar flowers to shut-ins, the sick, and the grieving).

Anyone interested in the altar guild or any of the other worship leader positions can contact Sari Stoddard at 301-325-8791 or sari.stoddard@verizon.net. Training is provided.

Carleton MacDonald, Worship Committee Chair

Appendix A: Financials

Ascension Budget: 2015-2017

	End of 2015 Budget	Unaudited End of 2016 Budget	Preliminary 2017 Budget
Income:			
Plate	\$52,565	\$54,780	\$56,000
Pledge	\$391,832	\$356,226	\$359,069
Rental Income	\$26,283	\$27,902	\$26,000
Misc.Unrestricted Income	\$60,762	\$85,257	\$48,000
Total Income	\$531,442	\$524,165	\$489,069
Expenses:			
Education and Training	\$275	\$1,780	\$3,250
Salaries and Benefits	\$303,652	\$340,954	\$372,961
Mortgage - Principal & Interest	\$63,274	\$62,173	\$62,200
Diocesan Pledge	\$16,913	\$21,473	\$26,572
General Office Expense	\$14,638	\$21,256	\$20,000
Utilities	\$42,139	\$39,316	\$42,337
Accounting	\$29,233	\$29,750	\$31,500
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$2,491	\$768	\$2,500
Outreach Programs	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,800
Ministry Programs (<i>Parish Life, Education, Worship, Music</i>)	\$13,787	\$14,791	\$19,350
Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0
Facilities	\$66,744	\$66,452	\$70,500
Total Operating Expenses	\$554,646	\$600,213	\$652,970
Net Income from Operations	-\$23,204	-\$76,048	-\$163,901

Church of the Ascension

Treasurer's Report Cash and Reserve Funds December 2016 *(unaudited)*

Cash Account Balance Per Balance Sheet	
BOA Checking	60,350
BOA Savings	2,523
BOA Columbarium Account	16,671
M&T Endowment Account	262,175
Total Cash	341,718
Cash Totals by Cash Classification	
Unrestricted Reserves	78,143
Restricted Reserves	263,575
Total Cash	341,718
Cash Balances By Fund Category	
1) Unrestricted Reserves	78,143
2) Endowment Fund	262,175
Held in an account with M&T Bank, managed through the Diocese of Washington.	
3) Capital Improvements & Building Repairs	-43,416
4) Facilities Reserve Fund	21,630
5) Memorial/Worship Fund	2,498
6) Columbarium Fund	16,671
7) Other Restricted Funds (Special Offerings)	4,018
Reconcile Change in Cash to Total Net Income	
Total Net Income (Accrual Basis)	1,053
Change in Cash	(4,896)

Appendix B: Facilities Reserve Fund

Over the past couple of years Ascension has replaced aging equipment and invested in facilities upkeep to maintain the beauty of our campus and buildings. Some of these improvements were long overdue and expensive (e.g. replacement of two HVAC systems). Additional plans are in place to focus on some core elements such as increasing accessibility by lowering the chancel and improving the lighting in the narthex and worship space. Ascension embarked on a 3-year Facilities Reserve Fund in 2017 to raise \$100,000 to fund the remaining improvements and to replenish the Facilities Reserve. As of February 2017, we have received 65 donations for a total of \$87,512. Renovations will be made on an ongoing basis as the money becomes available.

Appendix C: From the Parish Office

Membership

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1,321	1,084	1,099	1,056	1,017

Average Sunday Attendance

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
276	284	259	245	254

Dollars Pledged per Pledging Unit

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
\$2,357	\$2,360	\$2,292	\$1,981	\$1,997

Number of Pledging Units

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
205	192	188	179	169

Number of Baptisms

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
16	25	6	5	7

Number of Weddings

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
2	5	5	0	1

Number of Funerals/Deaths

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
4	7	6	8	3

Baptisms: **Kasimobi Christine Ogwuru**
Kambria Catherine Ogwuru
Kanayo Joshua Ogwuru
Charlotte Mary Doss
Daniel Odocukwu Odina
Raegan Louise Karver
Alexis Eileen Karver

Funerals/Deaths: **Caryl Miller Thomas**
Barbara Athey
Louis Breeze Spencer, Jr.

**SLATE OF NOMINEES FOR THE
ELECTION OF OFFICERS AT THE
ANNUAL MEETING OF CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION**

March 12, 2017

VESTRY—Vote for three
Gordon Donnelly
Meredith Horan
Luis Pedrone

DIOCESAN DELEGATE—Vote for two
Mardia Dennis
Carleton MacDonald
Sue Snay

You must sign in to be eligible to VOTE!