

## **Here is the slate of candidates for the Vestry!**

The Nominating Committee Is pleased to announce the list of candidates who have put their names forward for consideration as vestry members for the class 2021-2023.

They are: Edward Armstrong  
Lauren Kingsland  
Monty Petersen  
Hallie Porter  
Ruth Anna Skowronski

All of these members of the congregation are strong candidates, with much to recommend them. They have completed personal statements of their interest, concerns and vision about the Church of the Ascension. It is now your turn to prayerfully consider which three people of the group will most capably carry out the mission of the Church. We know that this is difficult; we know that you do not want to cause anyone distress if they are not chosen. Be aware, however, that each candidate has willingly chosen to serve Ascension with whatever gifts and talents they possess, and that if this does not end as a vestry member in 2021 that there are other avenues of service they will consider.

Here is the schedule of events for vestry selection:

1. Read the attached Personal Statements today, if possible. Consider them, pray for enlightenment. Note any questions you may have.
2. Plan to be present for the candidates Forum on Sunday, January 17, following whichever service you attend. Ask questions of the candidates (a moderator will be available to facilitate questions and answers over Zoom).
3. Plan to attend the Annual Meeting one week later, Sunday, January 24 following the 1-A service at 10:00am. During the Annual Meeting, you will vote for your choice of three vestry members.

We look forward to getting a major task of the church year accomplished—on time!—even with the need for extraordinary electronic assistance. And may the Holy Spirit attend our deliberations and bring us to a right and proper end. Amen

# **Edward L. Armstrong**

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## **Candidacy for Open Seat on the Vestry Church of the Ascension**

I humbly and respectfully submit this statement of my candidacy for an open seat on the Church of the Ascension's Vestry. I am a life-long Episcopalian, having been Baptized in the Church as a small child and subsequently received Confirmation at Grace Episcopal Church in Elkins, West Virginia in 1970.

I only recently joined the Ascension congregation in September of 2020. At the time, I told Reverend Ocampo that my decision was driven by a strong desire to serve the Lord, my Church, the community and humankind. Since then, I have been an active member of the Race, Equity, and Social Equity Committee. The committee service has been a labor of love and heightened my desire to leverage my skills and experience to contribute to our Church to the full extent of my ability to do so.

By way of background, I have lived in the Washington, D.C. area since 1987 and in Gaithersburg since 1994. Since that time, I have worked professionally on Capitol Hill, and served in a variety of senior positions in trade associations, and in public relations and advertising firms.

Through this work, I have developed skills that are invaluable for faith-based, philanthropic, and non-profit organizations. These skills include strategic planning, fund-raising, program development and grassroots organization, on the administrative side.

On the creative side, I have produced videos, annual reports, fund-raising materials, websites, etc. This aspect of my work often took me into the field where I was blessed to meet with front-line personnel providing services for the homeless, mentally challenged, elderly, and disabled. Seeing the need up close provided me with perspective and great motivation to do more.

I am a great believer in the wisdom and efficacy of the concept of "think globally, act locally." It has been applied to a wide variety of causes over the years—from the environment, where it is said to have emerged, to education and social justice where it has great relevance as well.

The Church of the Ascension, through its affiliations with the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, the Washington National Cathedral, the Episcopal Church, and Anglican Communion, is perfectly positioned to be a vibrant, faith-based force for hope, support and positive change within an ecosystem that extends from our local community to throughout the world.

It is an honor to be a part of this great promise and I stand ready to serve.

Sincerely,

Edward L. Armstrong

## **Hallie Porter**

### **Vestry Candidate Personal Statement**

My name is Hallie Porter. I grew up in Takoma Park, Maryland and attended church at St. Paul Rock Creek in Washington, D.C. My father was an Episcopalian and my mother was Roman Catholic. My Dad refused to have my sisters and me raised Catholic so my mother told him if he wanted us to be raised in the Episcopal faith, then he would have to take us to church. That he did. Every Sunday morning until I moved away from home. In those days, each Sunday School participant received a pin for perfect attendance. I still have mine; a pin with a wreath and 10 bars. I think the parents deserved it more than we kids. Most of the boys were altar boys and the girls sang in the choir. Since I can't sing, I got to play the bells.

After I left home, I was a bit adrift. Not sure where I was going to live and how I was going to live my life. I moved to Montgomery County in 1972. One thing was certain, my children were going to be raised in the Church. My daughter was baptized at St. Paul's and my son was baptized at St. Anne's in Damascus.

I was searching for a place of worship and a place where my children would learn about the teachings of Christ and the traditions that we hold sacred. Ascension Chapel (which is what it was called then) was where I found what I was looking for. I taught Sunday School for a few years, and was in charge of the coffee hour for a while. My son was in the junior choir and my daughter participated in the youth group.

I never lost my faith and I miss the fellowship of the Church and the comfort that I found here. When I married again 30 years ago, I once again came back to the church with my new husband.

I always felt welcomed at Ascension. I know how difficult it can be to be new and not know anyone. To be greeted at the door and be treated like a friend is so important. I also found that being a part of something bigger than myself adds value to my life that I would not have expected. There are so many ways to reach out to others that the church offers and I hope that we can continue them.

One thing that I have learned is that to be successful it is necessary to include as many people as possible to take part no matter how small. If only a small group of people do the work of many, they get tired and others who may have different talents may never get to use them.

### **Challenges facing Ascension in 2021-**

When and how to transition to in-person worship safely.  
Honoring the celebrations, memorials, baptisms, etc. we missed because of Covid.  
Welcoming new members and families.  
Integrating our virtual and in-person presence into the wider community.  
Caring for the physical facility, including Ascension House.

### **Personal history -**

Hollis King invited me to Ascension in 2004 when I was seeking a fresh start by myself after being married for 28 years. I became part of the choir (and hope to sing together again, some day). My service has included turns in Stewardship, Parish Life, Vestry 2013-15, Women's retreats, Capital campaigns, Discernment, and several sewing committees. Ascension is my church family. It is important to me that everyone feels welcome.

I was born in Evanston, Illinois, moved to Colorado Springs as a child and to Columbia, Missouri for college before coming here in 1984. My two sons, Ben and Chappell, are married, live in Silver Spring and Denver, respectively, and between their families I have 7 grandchildren. My mother, Ruthie Swain, lives nearby at Kindley Assisted Living at Asbury. Washington Grove is now my home for both living and working in my studio.

### **Professional life -**

#### **An artist is never poor, but is always working.**

As an independent business owner of Custom Quilts Studio, for 25 plus years, I've handled every facet of running a business from dealing with customers, staffing, production deadlines, authoring, installation of exhibits, cashflow, finances, contracts, facilities and moving.

As an Artist-in-Residence for the Lombardi Arts & Humanities program at Georgetown Hospital for 20 years I have provided a healing presence for oncology and palliative care patients, staff and families. Today, our motto, "Encouraging a creative response to illness" is done on-line.

As a Smithsonian Associates Studio Arts program teacher of quilting, mindful stitching and fiber art since 2016, I've had to learn quickly about using the iPhone as a second camera and the joys and pitfalls of students of all skill levels from all over the world.

I've served Gaithersburg Meals on Wheels as a volunteer board member, dispatcher and driver since 1991. When I could not be present for my own elderly grandmother in Indiana, the next best thing was to care for the elders here.

### **Education -**

BA from Stephens College - Classical Greek/mathematics/music  
MA from Maryland University of Integrative Health - Applied Healing Arts

### **Skills that may serve Ascension -**

Personal practices in mindfulness, meditation, and centering prayer.  
Excellent English and Rudimentary Spanish.  
Business experience - project management.  
Things textile related (except how to iron altar linens.)

### **Monty Petersen**

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I was born in Libertyville Illinois to a Catholic mother and Presbyterian father. My Episcopal upbringing began in Wisconsin where we lived from 1966-1972. My father began his first job as a Doctor in this small farm community. I attended St John's Episcopal church where I served as an acolyte with my older brother. I also sang in the youth choir. I have fond memories singing carols to the homebound at various farms with the choir. I attended Wednesday evening church school and was confirmed. My mother taught church school.

In 1972 our family moved to the affluent Boca Raton Florida. My church attendance waned. The Episcopal church was not particularly welcoming and there were few young people my age. In my senior year of High school, 1978, my parents separated and my dear mother succumbed to alcoholism. Soon after, my father remarried to a nurse with two teenage children.

In 1978 I went to the college of Engineering at Tulane University in New Orleans. I was, unknown to my pals, in quite a blue mood and overcast New Orleans suit that blue mood well. At Tulane I regularly attended Episcopal services. I was the primary acolyte. Father Smith's Sunday services at 5 PM followed by dinner with my fellow students were enormously helpful in my recovery from the loss of my mother. Father Prim Smith was a highly educated southern gentleman with a gentle voice and balding head of curly hair. Eventually I withdrew from Tulane and considered returning home or joining the armed services.

In 1982 I began working for IBM in Boca Raton and shortly thereafter married Toshiko Shono, a Japanese catholic and fellow student at Tulane. In 1987 IBM moved us to Gaithersburg Maryland where my first child was born. Two more children followed, all beautiful girls. My wife and I struggled over our children's religious upbringing and we were perhaps too liberal in allowing them to make their own decisions about their spiritual lives. The few times we tried to attend church as a young family, we felt pressured to place our preschool toddlers in the Sunday school. As overprotective parents, that separation made us very uncomfortable. My full time attendance at Ascension was driven by my troubled soul as my lovely niece was diagnosed with inoperable brain cancer and later died.

### Vision

My vision for Ascension is to continue to support all the good things we do. I love Ascension because it maintains the Episcopal traditions that make me feel closer to God. I have attended Ascension regularly for about 5 years. I serve as an occasional Acolyte which I find very satisfying. I thoroughly enjoy the liturgy, ceremony, and spiritual guidance which Father Javier provides. Andrew's musical direction is also vital to our wonderful services. Let's keep it up and get back into our beautiful church. I place great faith in COVID vaccines and would focus efforts on our elderly members with information and assistance through volunteerism where needed. My wish is that we could have a come as you are service at 5 PM with a potluck communal meal where we can converse as we do at coffees. I would encourage members to fly an Episcopal flag at home as a reminder that Christian faith is alive and well in our community and to start a conversation with the curious.

Sincerely, Monty Petersen

Dear Ascension Family,

My name is Ruth Anna Skowronski, and I am honored to be considered for a position on the vestry. My partner, Luis, and I have been parishioners at Ascension since 2013. We discovered Ascension when we were searching for a church that offers a Spanish service, welcomes all, and focuses on building a community in Christ. We could not have imagined how Padre Javier and the many friends from both the Spanish and English services would become an integral part of our faith journey. Luis' first language is Spanish, and I learned Spanish in school and through using it in my job as an ESOL teacher. I feel doubly fortunate that we participate in both the Spanish and English services.

My great-grandmother attended the Church of England, and then she attended the Episcopal Church after immigrating here. I was raised in the Catholic Church, but I have chosen the Episcopal Church because my personal religious beliefs are better reflected in the teachings of the Episcopal faith. I am enrolled in our Education for Ministry course to deepen my understanding of our church's history and traditions, and I hope this leads to more involvement with church ministry. I participate in services as a bilingual reader and am currently on the Worship Committee. In addition, I am privileged to be a part of the Race, Equity, and Social Justice Committee where our goal is to find ways to make Ascension a beacon of equity and empowerment for our surrounding community. Within Ascension, I hope to find more ways to bridge our language and cultural diversities to support our One Ascension efforts.

Every year brings many blessings and some challenges for Ascension, and the past year was no exception. Yet, we have remained strong and connected in ways that no one could have imagined before. The vestry will prioritize safety as it guides Ascension to reopen. I believe I can contribute to this effort because my background has prepared me for the responsibilities of stewardship. I have earned graduate degrees in economics, accounting, and education, and have developed the requisite skills for analysis, planning, and most importantly, collaboration. One of my strengths is that I am a respectful listener who weighs all sides and presents complex ideas to help others understand. Cooperation will be crucial to ensure a safe reopening, strengthen our membership, and encourage financial growth. I would be honored to serve God, the Church, and our congregation in pursuing our mission through prayerful discernment. Thank you for your kind consideration.