

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Vestry Minutes
November 19, 2017**

PRESENT: The Rev. Randy Lord-Wilkinson, The Rev. Javier Garcia Ocampo, Senior Warden Betsy Hasegawa, Junior Warden Janet King, Rose Buck, Gordon Donnelly, Meredith Horan, Avin Lalmansingh, Gary McLaughlin, Zadinga Ogada, Luis Pedron, John Pruessner, Berenice Rodriguez. Guest presenter: Lucelia Justiniano.

The meeting opened at 1:40 with a check-in and the business meeting began at 2:01.

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

OLD BUSINESS

FRF letter. In accordance with his offer last month, John wrote a letter clarifying to pledgers that the FRF campaign is a 3-year one, and explaining how to continue the pledged gifts for this coming year and the next. Janet asked if the letter should be sent to FRF pledgers only. Zadinga suggested that we disseminate information on how to start and FRF pledge for those who haven't yet done so.

Progress on becoming independent of our bookkeeper. Parish Administrator Lin Keene is shadowing our bookkeeper, Melissa Burgos, to learn the job. When she feels confident, the church will let Melissa go, saving a good bit of money each year. Lin estimates that she'll be ready to take over in January or February.

Lin continues to need volunteer help in the church office, so that we have coverage when she attends weekly staff meetings and when she's working with Melissa. Janet said she would put it in the Sunday bulletin. Berenice suggested that if data entry is needed, we could consider getting a high school student to help out, for SSL hours.

Annual Giving Campaign. Avin related that seven weeks of our eight-week campaign have gone by. So far, the pledges have only amounted to somewhat over \$200,000, about half of our basic needs. The vestry agreed to extend the campaign by one month. Gary and Avin will work with Lin to ascertain which of last year's pledgers has not pledged yet this year, and they will be contacted. Avin said that in his experience phone calls are not an especially useful means of contact. Annual Giving Campaign speakers at the various services have been great so far but more are needed. The vestry members were urged to go to the Sign-Up Genius site for campaign speakers and to ask others to do so also.

Cookbook update. Zadinga reported that more than 200 of the cookbooks have been sold and that online ordering has ceased. There are only about ten left that we will keep for future use. The company that published the cookbook has been paid, and all the rest is profit. Senior Warden Betsy thanked the cookbook committee and the Parish Life committee for the successful endeavor.

Sweatshirt/tee shirt update. Berenice announced that the sweatshirts are mostly sold (there are a few size large ones left) and there are still a number of tee shirts available. Janet suggested that we have photos of people wearing them to post on our website and elsewhere.

Health insurance for Javier. Javier reported that the cost of his health insurance for 2018 is going up considerably – it has been \$525 per month but if he keeps the policy it will rise to \$732 next year. He said the diocese offers health insurance plans that include dental and vision, which his current plan does not, at \$833/month. He asked the vestry that the church pay a larger percentage of the cost. Betsy told him that the executive committee will decide shortly and let him know as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS

Use of church master calendar/availability of meeting areas. Gary brought this up – he’s been unable to use (or been asked to leave) areas in the church building due to Twelve-Step programs meeting in the areas. Those programs now use our facilities about twelve hours per week. And there have been times when the therapist who rents a tiny office in the office suite has needed a larger area to meet with clients but has not signed up for it. Randy noted that the 12-step programs sign an agreement citing times and locations when they start use of our facilities. He reminded the vestry that the church office keeps a master calendar/schedule, and that anyone who wants to use part of the building should sign up for it. Gordon suggested that the Sunday bulletin include information about the calendar to let everyone know about it and use it; Betsy said she’d write it and have it put in the bulletin.

Raffle outcomes. The raffle for the bed covering donated by Maria Estela Rodriguez will be open for ticket sales through December 16. Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased from Janet or Berenice. The cookbook raffle took place at the One Ascension luncheon; the winners were notified and the winnings handed out to them.

Musician interim update. Randy related that Karina Gomez McCarty, our 11:15 interim music leader two years ago, has agreed to be our interim 11:15 again, while we search for a successor to Jerrold. She is not interested in the full-time position. He also told the Vestry that he has a great interim for the 9:00 service, and he’ll complete the agreement by tomorrow, November 20th. This person is available for Christmas Eve services. The permanent position will be posted in December.

PIC vs Search Committee for next rector. There are two paths open to Ascension in pursuit of a new rector – the traditional profile committee, search committee path, taking about 18 months, or the new option of selecting a Priest in Charge (PIC). Under this program, the diocese acts as a “match-maker” to find suitable candidates. The candidate selected by the vestry is given a 3-year contract; at the end of 18 months, the church decides whether to permanently hire the PIC or not. If not, the traditional approach kicks in. Paula Clark of the diocese is the canon for diocesan parish transition; Randy will see if she can come to discuss this at a future vestry meeting. There is a site on the diocesan website about the PIC process, and Randy and Betsy urged vestry members to review it.

Immigration consults at Ascension. Parishioner and immigration attorney Lucelia Justiniano offered to do pro bono immigration work at Ascension on one weekend day per month for about

2 hours to help people who are threatened with the deportation. Legal advice is of enormous importance and is costly, putting it out of reach for some. She explained that it is much easier on the attorney and the immigrant if work on the case starts before an actual threat of deportation. She would need volunteer help and an office here to meet with clients; she wouldn't need storage space. The clients would be scheduled, not walk-in. Malpractice insurance would be covered by her law firm. She'd like to start by 12/3/17 if possible. John moved that the church support Lucelia in her pro bono work in support of the immigrant community. Gary seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

OPEN MIC

Zadinga asked that two more candidates be added to the discernment list for the next Vestry. Sari added them to the list.

Rose was concerned that parishioners were not aware of events to come, in particular the Epiphany pageant. Gordon reassured her that the pageant information will be in the Sunday bulletins.

Gary has been keeping attendance records – he noted that average attendance for all services per Sunday has dropped from 254 in 2016 to around 225 for 2017. He posed the question to the Vestry – what do we need to do about this? He suggested establishing a task force to dig into this, to see what the problems and issues might be. He also suggested that the vestry review the membership list, attempt to note who is no longer coming, and then contact those people. Betsy asked him to write a charter for the proposed task force and to send it to fellow vestry persons. Gary ended by urging the Vestry to take action on this.

ADJOURNMENT: At 4:26 p.m., Gary moved that the meeting be adjourned. Avin seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sari Stoddard
Clerk of the Vestry

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Committee Chairs' and Liaisons' Reports**

ANNUAL PLEDGE CAMPAIGN, Avin Lalmansingh, Chairman

(1) Pledge Campaign status for funding year 2018

As of 12/10/2017, we had received 102 pledges for a total of \$261,016.

A 2nd pledge letter was prepared and mailed out on 12/12/2017 to about 45 folks who pledged the prior year but had not yet turned in a pledge form for funding year 2018. We are hoping these 45 folks will respond to the mailing by turning in a pledge form ASAP.

We anticipate some folks will not respond and will require phone calls. Our annual "phone-a-thon" will be scheduled for the week of 12/18 to 12/22 to reach these remaining folks. Although it's the super busy week before Christmas, we ask that the Vestry help us call/email these folks. Avin will schedule the day/time to meet at church. We have multiple phones at church to make calls simultaneously. It shouldn't take more than 1 hour of your time. Gary has a wealth of information of what to say on these phone calls. We are willing to enlist other church members who would like to help out. Lin will provide us with an Excel spreadsheet with phone numbers/email addresses next Monday 12/18. Thank you in advance!

(2) Giving Campaign speaking opportunities

We thank the Vestry, congregation and Rectors who have spoken at services throughout the Pledge Campaign. This is an important effort to get the word out so thank you! We are covered for the rest of December till the last day of the pledge campaign on Dec 31st at the 1A service. No pledge announcements will be made on Christmas Eve or Christmas day services.

(3) Thank you notes

Please finish up your thank you notes and mail them ASAP. Betsy had sent a reminder to the Vestry the week of Dec 4th. Sari should provide us with an updated list of folks who are in need of written thank you notes.

(4) 2018 pledge envelopes

Lin has prepared 2018 pledge envelopes. They should be arranged on the table outside the front office for folks to pick them up after service beginning 12/24. A reminder should also be placed in the weekly bulletin.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR CHILDREN, Megan Didavi, Chair

Report from the teacher' meeting:

Here are some notes from the meeting. Please let me know if I missed anything.

Pageant practice time change to 10:30 to accommodate late sleeping youths.

We will encourage our Godly Play and Joyful Path students to sign up.

We will finish this year with the connection hour time, but will meet with parents in January to determine the best step forward. To find out how Sunday School can best serve our core families, we will divide up a list of families and contact them with a personal, handwritten note and follow it up with a phone call or talk at church. Michelle will draft the note. Randy will compile the list of families from the Spanish service, 10:15 and the 9 and 11:15.

Since the nursery is not currently serving anyone's needs, it will close by the end of the year. Sandy Ridge School wants another classroom, so Joyful path will move into Room 2 (the nursery) Room 4 will be a break room for parents of children who need to leave the service. It will have comfortable seats, toys and a video/audio of the service.

One more thing:

I forgot to mention an important point that Georgette thought of: the class time is too short. We really only have 1/2 hour between 10:00, when the 9:00 is over, and 11:00, when the Spanish service starts.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR YOUTH, Angie Hight-Walker, Chair

Ascension Youth are collecting *new* coats, scarfs, and gloves in the broad size range of “middle schoolers” for students at St. James Episcopal School in inner city Philadelphia. The Youth Group has been a strong supporter of this amazing school since its inception through our annual work camp trip. Please take a minute to learn a little about St. James School <https://stjamesphila.org/> .

A labeled bin will be in the church narthex to place your items. The winter wear will be mailed on Monday, December 18th in order to arrive by Christmas.

FACILITIES, Ted Bedell, Chair

Snow and ice removal services have been set up with the same provider as we have had the last several years, American Lawn Service.

OPERATIONS AND FINANCE REPORT, Howard Holland, Chair

To be sent separately.

No other reports received.

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Parish Life Events Calendar
2017 - 2018**

Annual events:

One-Ascension Sundays	Single service and parish-wide celebratory luncheon April 30, 2017 July 30, 2017 October 29, 2017 December 31, 2017 April 29, 2018 July 29, 2018 September 30, 2018 December 30, 2018
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	Tuesday, February 28, 2017 Tuesday, February 13, 2018
Annual Meeting Potluck Lunch	Sunday, March 12, 2017 Sunday, March 18, 2018

Special Events:

Usually several per year including:
yard sales/car washes
other fund-raising events
holiday festivals
welcomes, farewells, dedications

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Committee Chairs and Vestry Liaisons**

Standing Committees	Vestry Liaison	Chairperson
Christian Formation for Children	Gordon Donnelly	Megan Didavi
Christian Formation for Youth	Avin Lalmansingh	Angie Hight-Walker
Facilities	John Pruessner	Ted Bedell
Outreach	Gary McLaughlin	Paul Boynton
Parish Life	Janet King	On-Call volunteers
Pastoral Care	Zadinga Ogada	Randy Lord-Wilkinson
Personnel	Rose Buck	Jean Cohn
Worship	Meredith Horan	Carleton MacDonald
 Ad hoc Committees presently in effect		
Annual Giving Campaign	TBD	Avin Lalmansingh
Christian Formation for Adults	Berenice Rodriguez	TBD
Health and Wellness	Rose Buck	Laura Shay
Operations and Finance	Betsy Hasegawa	Howard Holland

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Other Reports and Communications**

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Report from the Parish Administrator**

From: **Lin Keene**

Date: Wed, Dec 13, 2017 at 7:58 AM

Subject: Fw: **Proposed path forward for transition of accounting duties**

To: Lin Keene <office@ascensionmd.org>

On Tue, Dec 12, 2017 at 9:07 PM, LINETT P KEENE <lin.keene@yahoo.com> wrote:

Randy,

As we near the end of 2017, I feel confident in saying that the church administration is heading towards a more effective, productive and positive new year. The financial meeting held on Monday, December 4th, brought all of us on board with our monetary duties and goals going forward.

Starting January 1st, the QuickBooks files will be transferred to our server, so I can begin using both it and Server Keeper to retain records of deposits and weekly checks. After the 2018 budget is complete, Melissa and I will enter it into QuickBooks.

My training in the accounting processes has just begun due to the lack of turnover associated with Kathy's departure which slowed the original plan discussed during my hiring. Thankfully, due to your support and patience, things are on track and I feel confident with the day to day running of Ascension. The next step is the smooth transition of the accounting responsibilities from Melissa to myself. I suggest that Melissa continue to come in for a couple of months after the 2018 budget is entered in QuickBooks to complete my training and provide oversight at a lower retainer. Thus far, I have learned some of Ascension's financial history and understand its basic areas, but more needs to be done so I can complete this next transition. Once I am more versed in handling Ascension's accounting and have a more thorough knowledge of the required financial reports, Melissa's assistance should be changed to an as needed basis.

Melissa's expert knowledge of QuickBooks and 20 years of experience have been a great help in instructing me about the requirements and responsibilities of Ascension's financial environment. I am thankful to the Vestry for allowing Melissa to remain with us longer than initially planned. Her presence has made it possible for me to focus my initial efforts on Servant Keeper, and my role as Parish Administrator. It was especially helpful in this year's busy and successful pledge drive.

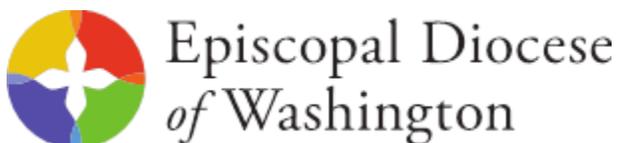
Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Letter from the Diocese regarding our Diocesan Pledge

From: Paul Cooney <pcooney@edow.org>

Date: Thu, Dec 7, 2017 at 4:40 PM

Subject: 2018 Congregational Giving

To: ral@ascensionmd.org



In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints... For this reason, we have not ceased praying for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:3-4; 9-11

Dear Randy and Vestry Members of Ascension,

On behalf of all that we share in ministry, I write to thank you for your financial commitment to the Diocese of Washington. For 2017, Ascension is among the congregations that increased its financial commitment by one percentage point of normal operating income, moving incrementally toward tithe. Countless people are blessed by your generosity and commitment to collaborative ministry. For together we serve a loving, life-giving, and liberating God, following our Lord Jesus. Together we are the Episcopal Church in the District of Columbia and the Maryland counties of Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles and St. Mary's.

In keeping with the commitment to increase one percentage point per year, I ask that in 2018 you consider an investment of \$31,450. I pray that you experience your financial gift, while sacrificial, as an investment in our common purpose and one that strengthens your capacity to be both faithful and fruitful in ministry.

2017 laid important foundations in our collective ministry. We established the Strategic Financial Resources Commission, a body whose sole purpose is to assist in building the financial and ministry capacity of our congregations. In its first year, the commission has sponsored several workshops, consulted with numerous congregations, and initiated its first pilot program. In 2017, we ordained and placed five deacons and two priests in strategic ministry settings in the diocese. We made strides in strengthening the collaborative ties across the diocese. Our campus ministries are now all in collaborative partnership with neighboring Episcopal congregations. We planted a new Latino congregation in a strategic neighborhood. The Bishop Walker School will be celebrating its 10th anniversary of making a decisive difference in the lives of almost one hundred young boys in the K-5th

grades, and eagerly anticipates moving into its new location at THEARC this coming January. In addition, we distributed close to \$185,000 in congregational growth grants for mission and ministry projects throughout the diocese. As more churches follow Ascension's example, we will be able to designate more funds from the Soper Fund directly back to congregations.

In 2018, we will continue our collective purpose to engage our changing world with an enduring faith in Jesus Christ. The work of increasing ministry capacity in all our congregations, through leadership development, strategic financial investment, and collaborative endeavors will continue and, through God's grace and our faithfulness, bear more fruit.

2018 will also be a year of investment in collaborative opportunities in spiritual growth and deepening relationship to Christ; works of compassion and striving for justice. The diocesan staff is committed to working throughout all eight regions of the diocese, serving in every way we can, to strengthen Christian community, invest in leadership and faith formation, and serve alongside you as Christ calls us to be his hands and feet in the world.

A commitment form is attached to this email for your convenience. We would be most grateful if it is possible for you to submit your completed form to us by January 15, 2018.

I will never tire of thanking God and the entire diocese for the gift of serving as your bishop. Thank you for your faithfulness and love.

**Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Giving Tree**

From: LUCELIA JUSTINIANO <lucelia0408@gmail.com>
Date: November 30, 2017 at 12:13:14 PM EST
To: Berenice Rodriguez <berenice.rodriguez.84@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Giving Tree

Hi,

I do know of 2 families which are in dire need right now. I have obtained their consent to share their information and stories with the vestry for their consideration.

Ilsia Gutierrez is a recent arrival from El Salvador. She came fleeing violence with her three children (ages 4, 6, and 14). Several of her cousins have been killed in El Salvador and she was under direct threat from local gang members for reporting a domestic violence incident that involved one of their members. The whole family is in removal proceedings and faces a tough fight for asylum in the US.

Adolfo Sanchez is the father of Henry Sanchez whose case obtained national attention when he was falsely accused of raping a girl at Rockville High School. Henry became the poster child/scapegoat for the anti-immigrant sentiment around the country as I am sure most of you have heard something about his case. All charges against Henry have been dismissed, but in the process, Adolfo was detained by immigration authorities forcing his 2 other children (ages 21, and 14) out of their apartment. Adolfo was released from ICE custody on a \$20,000 bond (which is as ridiculous as it sounds since he has no criminal background at all) but the family was able to pull together through loans from friends. After Henry's charges were dismissed, the state released him into ICE custody and now is holding him on a \$40,000 bond which the family is unable to pay. Adolfo's wife has also struggled greatly with caring for her 9 children since she depended on him to help provide for her children (the youngest 7 living with them ages 2, 4, 9, 9, 13, 15, and 21). Henry lived on his own from ages of 14-18 and reunited with his father when he was 18. He has never before been any trouble with the police here or in his native Guatemala. He endured substantial physical abuse at the hands of his mother while he lived with her in Guatemala and fled Guatemala due to gang threats. There is no doubt that he needs guidance and therapy to overcome his past trauma. However, what he has received so far in this country is downright injustice. Adolfo, Henry, and his two brothers are all currently in removal proceedings.

I come across so many devastating stories but I feel like extending a hand to either one of these families will renew their hopes in the U.S.

Thank you.

Lucelia R. Justiniano, Esq.

Episcopal Church of the Ascension

Reorganization of Rooms

Hi, all. Some updates. First, I did tell Brenda Alvarez that we were discontinuing the nursery and that her last day would be Sunday the 31st.

She acknowledged that no toddlers (age 3 and down) or infants (and their families) were utilizing the space. Older children, who should not have been in the nursery, were.

Room 2 is going to be the new location of the Joyful Path class, leaving Room 11 downstairs open and available for rental.

Room 4 is going to become a place of refuge for families with babies and toddlers who are so inconsolable that they will need a break from the liturgy. We want to feed sound and maybe video into that room. There's a network jack in there and we have a brand new flat screen TV that's still in the box. A fairly inexpensive solution should be available.

We just need a cool name for the room. In the old days it would've been called a "cry room." I like "Sanctuary." That's a bit political maybe...

Lucelia is cool with moving her interview space into the Library. Her clients will still use Room one for intake purposes and as a waiting room.

I need to inform Matthew Watson about this to see if it still fits into the parameters of his Eagle Scout Project.

Also, an adult will need to check in on the Place of Refuge (still working it) to ask people who shouldn't be there to move on. Possibly a Welcome Team member.

Randy