

58TH ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday January 23, 2022

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension

11:00 AM



Episcopal Church
OF THE Ascension

www.ascensionmd.org

205 South Summit Avenue

**The Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Gaithersburg, Maryland**

**Agenda for the Fifty-Eighth Annual Parish Meeting
11:00 a.m., January 23, 2022**

The Reverend Javier García Ocampo, Rector

- * Opening Prayer: Javier
- * Adoption of Agenda
- * Minutes of Fifty-Sixth Annual Meeting (January 24, 2021)
- * Financial Presentation
- * Casting of Ballots for:
 - Three (3) three-year Vestry members
 - One (1) One-year Vestry member
- * Voting results

OATH OF OFFICE:

“We, having been duly elected to the office Warden/Vestry Member of Ascension Parish in the city of Gaithersburg, Maryland, do declare our belief in the Christian religion, our assent to the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church and of the Diocese of Washington and do affirm our adherence to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the said Church in the United States of America and promise to discharge faithfully the duties of a Church Warden/Vestry Member.”

- * Blessing
- * Next annual meeting January 22, 2023
- * Adjournment

MINUTES OF THE 57th ANNUAL MEETING JANUARY 24, 2021

The call for the meeting, led by Senior Warden Zadinga Ogada, was given at 11:22. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, the meeting was held online.

The Rev. Javier Garcia Ocampo asked that everyone review the recently sent email regarding the meeting, including the annual meeting booklet and the agenda. Instructions for voting online and a link to the ballot were included in the email.

The meeting opened with a prayer given by Fr. Javier at 11:26 a.m. David Mitchell moved to adopt the agenda; the motion was seconded by Ken and Rhee Howard, was voted on and approved. Junior Warden Kristen Keating moved to approve the 2020 meeting minutes; motion was seconded by Treasurer Gary McLaughlin and was passed.

The annual Financial Report was presented by Gary; we ended the 2020 year with a net of \$68,000. With only online services held from March on, due to the coronavirus pandemic, our income dropped. Several generous pledgers helped by increasing their pledges. We were also able to cut our expenses. Gary obtained \$45,000 from the Federal Government in Covid grants as well as \$5,000 from our county for reopening expenses. At some point the church will need to invest funds to upgrade our sound system; this will be a large expense.

A number of questions were asked about the financial report. Gary answered them and provided further explanations when requested. He ended the financial report by saying that we have been blessed in ending the year in good shape. He also noted that he had created a wooden box that can be used for donations during the drive-through blessings that Javier has been holding. Javier and a number of meeting participants thanked him for his hard work.

Zadinga added her thanks and noted that the position of Treasurer has been added to the Executive Committee, consisting of the Rector and the Senior and Junior Wardens.

Berenice Rodriguez of the Nominating Committee for Vestry candidates then named those running. The open positions are for three Vestrypersons and one Diocesan Delegate. She explained that since the voting was done online, it would be automatically tallied and no tellers were appointed for this election.

On behalf of the Vestry and the congregation, she thanked outgoing Vestry members Susan McLaughlin, Berenice Rodriguez and Bob Waters for their service. Vestry person James Black resigned his position due to increased job responsibility, and Arturo Rodriguez was called to serve out the last year of James' term. Berenice also recognized the Vestry secretary, Stephanie Mitchell, and thanked her for her service.

The meeting was turned over to Kristen, who gave thanks to Parish Administrator Lin Keene and Communications Specialist Jesse Velasquez. She also thanked Gary, the Altar Guild, Youth Group leaders Angie and Trevor Walker and the volunteer collection counters.

Fr. Javier also thanked Megan Didavi and Michelle Wood for their work as co-directors of our Sunday School. Megan noted that we need classes for older Elementary school children and Zadinga asked attendees for ideas.

Kristen gave as goals for 2021 upgrade of the fire panel (professionals will be responsible), decisions on Ascension House's future (those interested in this should contact Kristen), and establishment of an Outreach Committee. She asked that everyone consider joining one of our committees.

Zadinga noted that all Vestry meetings are open and are currently held online. Anyone interested in attending online should contact any of the members of the Vestry and will be given access.

Jesse and Danielle Allen then gave the election results. New Vestry people are Edward Armstrong, Lauren Kingsland and Ruth Anna Skowronski, all elected to three-year terms. Our new Diocesan Delegate is Monty Petersen.

Zadinga thanked all those who agreed to stand for election. She announced that the new Vestry retreat would be held on Saturday, February 13, 2021, from

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., virtually. The oath of office was taken by the newly elected.

The meeting ended as Javier noted with thanks that 2020 was his first full year as our rector. He also reminded participants that they can contact either any Vestryperson or him when needing spiritual guidance. He ended by giving a blessing to all.

A move to adjourn was made by Kristen and seconded by multiple people at 12:17. The next Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Sari Stoddard
Meeting secretary

Rector Annual Report

Dear Ascension Family,

In preparation for writing my annual report, I always read the report I wrote the prior year. I did that same thing in preparation for writing this report and I couldn't stop thinking about how many things and situations we have been through all together. Little did I know that we would be unable to meet and worship in our building for almost half of 2021. Little did I know that we would have to put into practice the saying that a church is more than a building...the church is the people.

And we proved, and continue to prove, that the church is the people, and when "two or three are gathered" in Jesus' name—even over Zoom—Jesus is present.

And I am here to report to you that Ascension is not just surviving but thriving in this most unusual time! As is our custom, we have found new ways to be together, new ways to worship while keeping our Episcopal heritage intact and we have continued to form and deepen our parish in The Way of Love—as our Presiding Bishop calls our following of Jesus.

I would like to say, "What a year!" I did not expect that this past year 2021 would be so wonderful. Even though this past year has placed heavy stress on our staff and our parishioners, as we all continue to live with uncertainties in our world, it has also been a lesson in trusting God and loving one another, to persevere toward a better future.

Over this past year, we were challenged to reopen our facilities and restore some of our programs. But even this was delayed just a little bit, as we awaited some improvement in the medical conditions in our area. But many things did come back: Our Wednesday Book Club where we tried to have some in person meetings, our weekly coffee hour on Thursdays, the weekly soup day during Advent, the Youth Group meeting in the Parish Hall, as well as our liturgies and other ministries - all those activities found a way to safely meet the needs of our parishioners.

A few highlights as I see them include the visit from Bishop Mariann to Ascension on May 16th and during her visit, she installed me as your 5th Rector. More highlights include during this year we formed some New Committees, such as the History, Equity and Justice, Ascension House, and Outreach. And we now have a Young Adult ministry that meets every other week in our Library.

We had some changes on our Staff during this year; the Reverend Deacon Eugene Wright finished his three years of internship with Ascension and was sent to minister in St. Anne's. Our Parish Administrator departed, and now we are very close to hiring a new Administrator. Ascension had the opportunity to add to our staff the position of Sexton, who takes care of our building, working together with the Facilities Committee. We also welcomed our Seminarian Tracey Forfa who will be with us for another six months.

We have managed to control expenses to cover the costs of operating our parish through great efforts on the part of our staff, while still offering essential programs and events. Additionally, your continued generosity over this past year has allowed us to remain fiscally sound during these times. I cannot say strongly enough: THANK YOU for your gifts made to God through our parish!

Our parish is blessed with many members who faithfully contribute financially to the parish. Experience the joy that comes from offering, in gratitude to God for your blessings in life, a small portion of your income. Thanks to all your donations we have been able to worship together because we were able to have our sound system and televisions installed in our building.

Ascension is a great parish because of you. The combination of our generous, faith-directed parishioners and dedicated staff unites us in mission and makes us strong, even in the midst of great adversity. May this year bring our parish more restoration, more health and more peace!

Many blessings,

The Rev. Javier G. Ocampo
Rector

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

When I composed my Senior Warden's statement last year, like many people, I imagined we would be in a very different place in 2022. And while we are in a better place, it is still not quite what I hoped.

So, I have set aside the idea of the pandemic being behind us and now focus on how to keep going through it. As such, I am immensely proud of Ascension and want to remind you of some of what we accomplished in 2021.

In January, we held our first-ever virtual Annual Meeting and welcomed five new vestry members. After a great deal of careful planning, we opened our doors for in-person worship on May 2nd.

On May 16th Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde presided over Father Javier's installation as Ascension's rector. The Installation marked both an important milestone in our journey with Padre, and the first time we welcomed a substantial number of parishioners back into our church building.

To help us meet the moment, we invested in new television monitors, cameras and audio equipment to enhance both our remote and in-person experiences. Proving our adaptability, we also introduced communion kit pickups and drive-through blessings.

In August, we held our first post-Covid yard sale. It reminded me of previous yard clean up days and our 2019 meal packing event and the fun of working together. As we grew more comfortable with in-person worship, we introduced an outdoor coffee hour...And in September, the choir came back! Since then, we have become experts at in-person worship.

Our committees worked overtime in 2021. The worship committee planned the Installation, the reopening committee organized our reopening and the equity and justice committee coordinated virtual and in-person events. The facilities committee tackled several major projects, improving our HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems, replacing our fire panel and beginning the process of replacing our elevator.

Through it all, members of this congregation have shown remarkable levels of civility, compassion, and kindness, reminding me, once again, why I love Ascension. As my fifth year on the vestry and last year as senior warden ends, I want to thank everyone for the opportunity I have had to serve Ascension. I am much richer for it.

Zadinga Ogada

FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN

This has been an exciting year for Ascension. In April, we returned to in-person worship. This was both challenging and exhilarating. I am grateful to be part of a community that loves one another enough to follow the rules that allow us to stay safe. In May, I was honored to be part of Padre Javier's installation. It was an amazing, joyous occasion. In August, we had a Yard Sale. It was a big success. My favorite part was the way many of the members or the parish worked together to make it happen. It was an excellent opportunity to spend time together in-person. Things returned to normal for me personally when the choir came back in September. While it is great to be back in church singing in

the choir, I continue to be very grateful to Jesse and his team for all the work they do to broadcast the service on Zoom, YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms.

I continue to participate in staff meetings. I enjoy watching our amazing staff work together under Padre's leadership to put together the service, communication and other parish events. Words cannot express how thankful I am for the hard work, dedication and talent of our staff.

As Junior Warden, I am responsible for overseeing facilities maintenance. This year we had a few major facilities issues including replacement of the fire panel in the church and chapel, major repairs to the HVAC system, refurbishment of the elevator and replacement of the outdoor lights. In the midst of all of these issues we received an amazing gift. Randall Adams stepped up to help Ted Bedell with facilities maintenance. Randall recently retired as the Facilities Manager of Wesley Theological Seminary. He has worked tirelessly to research the best solution for each of our facilities issues. Once the vestry chooses the best option, Randall oversees the implementation. I am very grateful for all of Randall's help and all he has taught me. In August, our janitorial service contract ended. After a careful evaluation of all of the costs involved, it was decided that hiring a sexton to be a member of the church staff was the most cost-effective option. Now that the sexton is part of the church staff, we have more control over the work that needs to be done and the quality of the work. I hope that you will agree that the church has never looked better.

It has been an honor to serve as the Junior Warden of Church of the Ascension. I have learned a lot and have enjoyed working with and getting to know the members of a community that I consider to be family. I look forward to what the future holds for our church.

Kristen Keating

FROM THE MINISTER OF MUSIC

At the start of 2021, music and worship at Church of the Ascension were very much where we left them at the end of 2020. Parishioners still worshipped and participated from home and only a small group of participants conducted Sunday services from the church building week after week. Our music ministry suffered a devastating loss with the passing of one of our long-time choir members. People from the Education for Ministry program, choir, and congregation joined together to comfort and support his family in the aftermath.

To enhance our worship services during Holy Week and Easter, our choir rehearsed and produced two anthems. Singers recorded themselves performing their voice part at home while listening to an accompaniment track with headphones. Later, a professional videographer combined the recordings together through digital editing to make a virtual choir. The results were more polished than our previous virtual choir attempts in 2020 because everyone was more knowledgeable of the technology and technique used in this type of project.

Soon after Easter, we saw a decline in Covid 19 cases due to the growing availability of vaccination. As health metrics improved and restrictions lifted in the area, we opened our doors to in-person parishioners while working to keep Covid safety protocols in place. We also increased our participation in music by incorporating cantor duets instead of soloists. This allowed more choir members to return to the church and lend their voices to our services. The number of in-person participants gradually increased over the summer while our technology team continued to make services accessible over Zoom and social media at the same time.

In early September, our choir resumed in-person rehearsals under the condition that all returning singers be fully vaccinated and wear masks while singing. Upon their return, our choir members worked very hard to get back into the routine of rehearsing and performing each week. Their first Sunday together was met with applause from the congregation and we have been blessed by their music every Sunday since. The most notable among their accomplishments include the challenging repertoire they sang during Advent and the multiple anthems and carols they performed on Christmas Eve.

As I write this report, we are currently living through another wave of the pandemic and the recent increase in cases has made a lot of things uncertain in the life of our parish and our lives in general. Despite such uncertainty, I believe that Ascension will continue to stay strong and work hard to live out its mission to represent Christ wherever we may be. I am committed to providing our worship with meaningful, relevant music that is familiar while also pushing us out of our comfort zones from time to time so that we can explore new music together. With the continued support of our congregation, I know that we can reach this goal and work to grow our music ministry in the year ahead.

Andrew Kullberg

CHILDREN'S FORMATION

Michelle Wood and Megan Didavi lead a Godly Play class, via Zoom, for all ages of children at 3:00 on Sundays. We currently have five regulars between the ages of 3 and 9. We provide them with craft materials to keep at home, some of which are open ended and others which may relate specifically to a lesson. Crayons or pencil and paper would work fine, as well for a child who wanted to join before we could deliver the craft kit. We continue to marvel at the children's insights on the stories and caring expressions for each other. June 19 is our last planned class session for the 21-22 school year.

We would very much like to have an outdoor Easter Egg hunt for children on Easter Sunday, and we are working on plans to do so safely (masks and distancing) and will provide details as we get closer to Easter.

Michelle Wood
Megan Didavi

YOUTH Group

For grades 6th and up (including alumni both from local colleges or those visiting home), we gather for Ascension Youth Group on the second and fourth Sundays of each month from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Before COVID, we meet in person in the "Undercroft Commons," of the main church. Since COVID we have gathered using a mixture of on-line, outdoors, and in-person with masks. We have nearly 15 active students, one of the largest in Montgomery County. Our leadership team is composed of three lay leaders. As we no longer have a Sunday morning educational component for Youth in this age group, we added formation to the evening program, when most of our students are more awake and engaged. Each Youth Group meeting consists of the three "Fs", Food, Formation, and Fun! At the annual Mission Fair in September, we begin recruiting new students. Then our first meeting is a cookout in September where we brainstorm themes for the year ahead. We use mainly our own formation curriculum keeping the material simple and biblically based, and most importantly, relevant. Often, we pull from real world activities to focus the discussion. We treat students as responsible young individuals who want to learn more about the Bible and its meaning for their lives.

Youth Sunday is an important activity for our Youth. They plan and lead the service while our high school Seniors present the Homilies. Youth Sunday was virtual in spring 2020, making it one of the first big ZOOM activities for the church and they did an amazing job! They helped us all see there could still be joy, even while not being together physically. Both in 2021 and upcoming in 2022 we have 5 seniors! This is both exciting and sad as we will need many younger youth to join our Youth Group to make up the loss. Youth Sunday will be April 24, 2022, please mark your calendars!

Service is a key component of the Ascension Youth program. In non-COVID times, a week-long summer work camp experience in intercity Philadelphia would occur that supported the St. James School. Our Youth have served there since before St. James was an official school, and they just celebrated their 10th anniversary with a wonderful on-line celebration including slides from Ascension. Bishop Curry served as the MC of the celebration. During COVID other methods of support were developed. Church-wide fund raisers were successfully implemented twice this year. For Thanksgiving 2021, Ascension

raised \$1750 for grocery store gift cards for the St. James students to have a good meal for the holiday. Also, the head of School, David Kasievich, gave an update to Ascension in November 2021 about their exciting plans for expansion in the years to come. While still a bit uncertain, we have our fingers crossed for in-person summer service at St. James in 2022. Another service activity during COVID was the collection of food for MANNA. The youth were able to collect food donations from church members' trunks and sort them into outdoor bins. With activities like these throughout the year, our Youth learn and demonstrate empathy and Christs' love.

Ascensions 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. Fun games and outings include trampoline holiday parties and cookouts as annual events.

Angela and Trevor Hight Walker
D-Win Allen

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee began meeting again in February, when plans for the rector's installation service began again. We worked with Padre Javier to choose the options offered in the New Ministry Celebration liturgy in "Enriching Our Worship 4."

The committee assisted the rector in planning services for Holy Week and Easter Even. This involved determining the number of readers that would be needed for each service, including the number of Spanish-language readers, and drafting notices for "This Week at Ascension" calling for volunteers to read.

Preliminary plans were made for Ascension Expo 2021, including updating the pamphlet "Together We Shine." In the past, the committee has been responsible for coordination and oversight of the Expo. This year, due to ongoing concerns about the Covid 19 pandemic, the format took the form of a PowerPoint presentation at sermon time on September 19. Padre Javier and

Jesse Velasquez did nearly all the production work on this, with input from the various committees and activities.

It was noted several times over the course of the year that although worship and music are important activities that should be included in Ascension Expo, there are numerous other activities that are not directly related to worship, and so it does not seem appropriate to task the Worship Committee with overall responsibility for producing and coordinating the event. This concern was addressed to the Parish Council at its December 9 meeting, and the council agreed that it would be the more appropriate body to take on this responsibility. It will do so beginning with Ascension Expo 2022 this coming fall.

Ruth Anna Skowronski obtained a set of photographs from Forward Compass that accompanied the quotation for each day given in the Forward Compass publication "Living Well through Advent" and posted them on the parish Facebook page. This part of the page was set to trigger the appearance of the photo for each day in the early hours of the morning of that day. She added Spanish translations of the quote to each photo. Arturo Rodriguez was very helpful in assisting with the translations.

Expressions of concern were received about the large banner placed over the altar to promote this year's pledge campaign. The feeling was that its size and positioning made it the dominant feature of the chancel, distracting attention away from the altar and the cross. Alternative locations were suggested for future years.

It was noted that persons involved in worship support, such as readers and Welcome Team members, are not receiving adequate instructions for carrying out their functions. There are written instructions for each activity in a notebook, which has been located. The existing instructions will be reviewed by the committee early in 2022, and any necessary updates will be undertaken.

In addition to reviewing the worship support instructions, the committee is beginning to make plans for this coming Lent.

Curt Lindsay

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

The Facilities Committee has investigated and completed the following itemized projects and repairs.

- 1) Completed the entire fire alarm restoration in the main church and educational wing. Also added the missing duct detector in the Sanctuary AHU.
- 2) Updated the fire alarm and safety device spreadsheet and made it more accessible for review as well as confirmed the location of all devices and documented these corrections on the spreadsheet.
- 3) Passed our annual fire and casualty and elevator inspection and completed the necessary minor deficiencies that were found.
- 4) Added the missing duct heaters for the Sanctuary HVAC system.
- 5) Reestablished the fresh air controls for the Sanctuary and Undercroft HVAC systems.
- 6) Cleared out all trash and unnecessary items from the Mechanical rooms and Sprinkler room.
- 7) Added two high water sensors in the rooftop units to prevent water overflow and ceiling damage.
- 8) Replaced two toilets and two lavatories in classrooms #7 & 8.
- 9) Replaced the motor and heating coils in the VAV box for classroom #2.
- 10) Completed numerous other minor repairs and adjustments in house.

Following are projects and repairs that are in process but have not yet been completed.

- 1) Finish the repair and restoration of the outside area lighting as well as the front porch entrance lights.
- 2) Restoration of the elevator
- 3) Waiting for the replacement of the deficient fire alarm panel for the chapel.
- 4) Investigating a more efficient and cost affective landscaping plan to include snow removal, mulching and edging, supplemental mowing and leaf removal as well as gutter cleaning and tree trimming.
- 5) Developing a long term listing and planning of capital needs with estimated costs and life expectancy.

The other pressing issue is the replacement of the Sanctuary HVAC system. The church has spent well over \$10,000 on the repair of this unit over the last 12 months. It was decided to shut down unit #3 heat pump instead of spending another \$2000 in repairs that may not solve the issue. Research is now underway as to what are our best options to replace this system. Time is of great importance here as we have minimal AC capacity come April.

Randall Adams
Facilities Co Chair

ASCENSION HOUSE COMMITTEE

Unfortunately, the Ascension House Committee did not meet very often this year. The purpose of this committee is to determine how we should use Ascension House. The committee came up with a few good ideas. However, all of the ideas require that we do some renovations such as fixing the cracks in the wall and replacing the carpet. These repairs cost money that we simply do not have at this time. We are continuing to heat the building so pipes do not freeze and paying for a pest control company to keep it rodent free. The house is occasionally used by the Seventh Day Adventist community for group meals. We also used it as a sorting and staging area during the yard sale preparation. The Ascension House continues to be an important part of our campus. Finding a way to use the house remains a priority.

Kristen Keating, Chair

GREY HARMAN FROELICH MEMORIAL COLUMBARIUM

The year of 2021 has been another challenging year. New plants were purchased and planted ... much thanks to Kathryn Froelich, Dorett Sutherland, Linda Waters and Randall Adams. Special thanks also to Gary McLaughlin working his magic on the bench which is used for quiet reflection. Hilgartner Stone from Baltimore cleaned the brick facing both the niche side and the side that faces 355. In addition, they recommend a system that will improve the

overall niche appearance. Funding for these improvements and maintenance comes from subscription fees to the columbarium. Repairs to some blank niche covers will be undertaken soon. I also am investigated putting steps and a walkway from the side Church steps down to the columbarium. The committee will continue with the upkeep and upgrading of the garden. The committee will also look at the fee structure. We also want to have a brochure both in printed and electronic forms available by mid spring.

If you are interested in any other information, please contact the Rector or me.

Gordon Donnelly

ASCENSION EQUITY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE (AEJC)

We welcome you to the Ascension Equity and Justice Committee (AEJC) at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Gaithersburg. The AEJC is a parish-based group formed in June 2020 in response to the social unrest and ongoing, systemic inequities that exist in our country. We are dedicated to promoting justice and dismantling inequity and injustice in our church, our community, and our country.

Our committee is open to anyone feeling a call to action around issues of equity and justice. Whether you are an Ascension congregant or a member of the wider community, you are cordially invited to join. Some members attend nearly all meetings and are very active in organizing and participating in committee activities. Others attend meetings when they can and participate in activities of particular interest to them. Others attend few or no meetings but keep up with issues of interest by reading the committee's communications. Others simply pray for the committee and our mission. Any level of participation is welcome.

Current members are Laurie Yelle (Chair), Rev. Javier Ocampo (Rector), Danielle Allen, Ed Armstrong, James Black III, David Burton, Richard Chasdi, Wadai Dennis, Megan Didavi, Tracey Forfa, Sharon Hayden, Hollis Ann King, Janet King, Diane Leach, Marcia Noble, Mary Rouse, Ruth Anna Skowronski,

Gail Unterberger, Bob Waters, Michelle Wood, and Rev. Amy Yount. Will you join us in 2022?

We meet on the first and third Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm, currently via Zoom. For further information and the Zoom link to our meetings, contact us at AscensionRESJ@gmail.com.

Accomplishments: Since its inception, the AEJC has celebrated the diversity of our parish and our community by:

- Acknowledging and respecting the inherent dignity of every human being and celebrating our differences.
- Bonding with one another in prayer and fellowship.
- Rooting our mission in Scripture through the Scripture, Prose, and Prayer exercise at our meetings, in which members present a selection from any tradition and offer their reflections on it for discussion.
- Listening carefully to each other's deeply thoughtful presentations about our experiences with equity and justice.
- Examining current and past inequalities and considering how we can live into our interconnectedness using our God-given talents to lift up every member of our human family.
- Educating ourselves by keeping abreast of current events, reading books and articles, watching films and programs, attending presentations, participating in training sessions, walking in marches, discussing issues of equity and justice with one another, following events and information offered by the national Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (EDOW), and interacting with religious and community leaders. Ed Armstrong prepares a written news brief of relevant local, state, national, and international issues, events, and legislation for every AEJC meeting.
- Conducting advocacy for causes that promote equity and justice.
- Partnering with like-minded organizations such as Identity, Inc., Gaithersburg, and 3GDC.
- Offering programs that explore topics relating to societal and religious diversity as well as equity and justice. Activities have included:

(1) introducing congregants to the “From Many, One” exercise developed by the national Episcopal Church involving one-on-one listening/sharing sessions to bridge the differences that divide us; (2) sponsoring “A Conversation on Equity and Justice,” an event for the congregation featuring Ascension’s rector Father Javier Garcia Ocampo and Hazel Monae, EDOW Missioner for Equity & Justice; (3) engaging in social justice efforts with Maryland State legislators and City of Gaithersburg officials, including a presentation by MD State Delegate Gabriel Acevero (MD District 39); (4) partnering with Sixth & I and 3GDC on a *Holocaust Remembrance Day* event followed by a discussion with our congregants; (5) viewing and discussing the films *Finding Fellowship* and *Coded Bias* with congregants; (6) holding a Voting Vigil of Prayer during the presidential election; (7) issuing a Statement on Ascension Support for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; (8) creating and maintaining a large body of relevant content on Ascension’s social media platforms (thanks to Danielle Allen); (9) encouraging AEJC members to participate in Ascension outreach activities such as Mobile Med, the Lord’s Table, and preparation of lunches for the men’s homeless shelter; (10) taking an excursion in November to the National Museum of African American History and Culture followed by a Zoom discussion of experiences and impressions; (11) reaching out to the Youth Group about our events and other opportunities to participate in activities aligned with our mission; and (12) researching and documenting Ascension’s history with regard to race and other aspects of its diverse background in coordination with the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (this project is now handled by its own full committee, the Ascension History Committee, chaired by Michelle Wood).

Plans for 2022: We will continue with the type of activities described above and plan to expand these activities. Specifically:

- On Thursday, January 13, at 7:00 p.m. we hosted via Zoom “A Conversation on Criminal & Social Justice in Montgomery County” with Montgomery County At-Large Councilmember Will Jawando, moderated by Ed Armstrong. All Montgomery County Episcopal churches were invited to participate (through Rev. Beth O’Callahan, Dean of Upper Montgomery County Episcopal Churches).

- In February, for Black History Month, we will present to the congregation an exhibit on the AEJC's 11/20 excursion to the National Museum of African American History and Culture Museum prepared by James Black III.
- If Covid conditions permit, we will hold parish-wide excursions to sites connected with our mission on the second Saturday of every other month, hopefully beginning in February (Feb. 12, April 9, June 11, etc.). Possible sites are the Holocaust Museum, the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Glenstone Museum in Potomac. We plan to follow these excursions with discussion (probably via Zoom).
- In February or March we plan to host a return Zoom event with Hazel Monae, EDOW Missioner for Equity and Justice, on "Learning How to Do Advocacy." All Upper County Episcopal churches will be invited (through Rev. Beth O'Callahan).
- In April we plan to host a Zoom event with Congressman David Trone (US District 6) to discuss legislation and advocacy related to our committee's mission. We plan to invite all Episcopal churches in District 6 (through Rev. Beth O'Callahan).
- We will soon present to the congregation selections compiled by Ed Armstrong from our Scripture, Prose, and Prayer exercise. We will encourage parishioners to submit selection from any tradition, with their reflections, for inclusion in the compilation.
- We are preparing a Resource List of books, articles, films, TV programs, and events on race, equity and social justice for educating the AEJC and our congregation. The list will be distributed to the congregation, and everyone will be encouraged to contribute further selections.
- Members of Ascension's Green Team, an AEJC sub-committee led by Gail Unterberger, have completed the Faithful Green Leaders Training offered by the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake and are planning to apply what they have learned to an environmental justice initiative at Ascension.
- We plan to strengthen our connection with our Spanish-speaking congregation. We hope to hold an event with Padre Javier speaking on "Deconstructing Stereotypes of LatinX People: The Cultural Misappropriation of Latin American Customs and Traditions and the

Confusion between Genuinely LatinX Culture and Colonial Impositions upon It.” View Father Javier’s speech at: <https://fb.watch/92DxSILOXp/>

- We plan to hear a presentation by AEJC member Diane Leach about her heritage as an Indigenous Person.
- We plan to offer congregation-wide events viewing and discussing films such as (1) MPT Independent Lens documentary *Ferguson Rises*, which shares the personal story of Michael Brown Jr.’s father, Michael Brown Sr., seeking justice and healing: <https://www.wgbh.org/program/independent-lens/ferguson-rises>; (2) the documentary film *13th*, which examines the U.S. prison system and looks at how the country's history of racial inequality drives the high rate of incarceration in America: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8&t=61s>; and (3) the film *My Name is Pauli Murray* when it becomes widely available.

Our Mission Statement

My commandment is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:12

Mission: As our Lord commands and to which we commit in our Baptismal covenant, our mission is to take active and deliberate measures to assure that the inherent dignity of all peoples is acknowledged, respected, and protected. By all peoples, we mean every adult and child of every race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, religious background, and socioeconomic status under God’s creation. We do not overlook but rather respect and celebrate our differences as God intended. We remember and live into our interconnectedness, knowing that we are only as strong, healthy, happy, and satisfied as the least of our human family. We use our God-given talents to lift up every member of our human family.

We will achieve this through active and deliberate measures such as:

- *Creating a safe space to discuss inequities within our church and in our community*
- *Becoming a Beloved Community by moving from an inclusive congregation to a connected congregation where all feel they belong*
- *Encouraging members to work toward actively eliminating injustice*

- *Participating with activities/organizations that are already working to bring equity (e.g., Habitat for Humanity; Identity, Inc., Gaithersburg; and 3GDC).*
- *Providing educational opportunities for the congregation and community on issues of social justice, race, and inequity that empower them to speak up and speak out against instances of injustice*

How:

- *Celebrate culturally important days/activities that are present in our community.*
- *Make use of national and diocesan programs such as the Episcopal Diocese of Washington's Sacred Ground dialogue series and the national Episcopal Church's initiative "Becoming a Beloved Community," which includes the "From Many, One" project.*
- *Host seminars, town hall-style meetings, vigils, film viewings, lectures, discussions, and service projects for our congregation and the community, including other faith groups.*
- *Encourage the sharing of stories and experiences.*
- *Recommend media (films, books, articles, lectures, workshops, seminars) that provide diverse perspectives.*
- *Conduct a racial audit: research and write up Ascension's history with regard to race and other aspects of its diverse history.*

Laurie Yelle

01/07/2022

ASCENSION HISTORY COMMITTEE

Ascension History Committee Members:

Michelle Wood (chair)

Megan Didavi

Janet King

Marcia Noble

Ruth Anna Skowronski

Laurie Yelle

Rev. Amy Yount

The Ascension History Committee began in 2021 as a subcommittee of the Ascension Equity and Justice Committee. In December 2021 the group became a full committee. The Ascension History Committee has begun working on a project to learn about the history of the Church of the Ascension regarding race and racism. We are researching the history from Ascension's founding in 1880 to the present time. We are doing this work as part of a Diocese-wide initiative called the Reparations Task Force. The purpose of the Reparations Task Force is to investigate the financial legacy of chattel slavery in the Diocese of Washington. The congregational history project is the first component of the Reparations Task Force, focusing on exploring the history of congregations and the connections to slavery.

To learn more about the Reparations Task Force, please visit this link from the EDOW website or watch a 13-minute YouTube video about the project.

[Telling the Truth About Racism - Episcopal Diocese of Washington \(edow.org\)](https://www.edow.org/telling-the-truth-about-racism-episcopal-diocese-of-washington)

[2021 Report from the Diocese of Washington Task Force on Reparations - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

The committee has begun locating information about Ascension's history in the Ascension office and gathering records from the Diocese of Maryland and Diocese of Washington. We have begun researching the origins of the land and the source of wealth used to found and develop Ascension. We are also researching the history of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County to understand the context for Ascension's origins. We have also been exploring resources and lessons from foundational work conducted across the national church to understand the church's history and role in systemic racism. We are reading the Rev. Stephanie Speller's book *The Church Cracked Open* to help ground this work.

The committee has been investigating the founding and building of Ascension as a mission church of Christ Church Rockville. We began conducting research about the founding clergy and vestry. We also began gathering background information about Gaithersburg and Summit Hall Farm, where Ascension is located. We developed a template for documenting key events, dates, and information about our history and for recording source material. We interviewed one long-time parishioner in November 2021 and plan to conduct additional interviews to develop oral histories to supplement the document review. The goal of the committee is to prepare a written report as part of EDOW's congregational history project.

The committee is following guidance from the EDOW in conducting its work. Since September 2021 members of our committee have been joining monthly meetings convened on the first Saturday of every month at 11:00 am by the Rev. Peter Jarett-Schell of Calvary Episcopal Church of the EDOW Reparations Task Force. Our committee is using resources from EDOW archivists, including a template for the congregational history report, to organize our work.

In 2022 the history committee is planning several activities:

- Disseminate information about the history committee to the Ascension congregation and invite other Ascension parishioners to join.
- Review the documents provided from EDOW for organizing the history report and begin filling in details from our research.
- Identify areas for inquiry such as details about the founding vestry committee from Christ Church, Gaithersburg area events, connections to local historical organizations.
- Coordinate with history committee at Christ Church in Rockville to learn more about the history preceding Ascension's founding.
- Meet with EDOW archivists Cathy O'Donnell (St, John's Norwood) and Franklin Robinson (EDOW) for advice on reviewing documents, ways to summarize, suggestions for other sources.
- Review materials and documents on site at Ascension.
- Conduct additional interviews to develop oral histories to complement the document review.

Michelle Wood 1/4/2022

CHRONIC ILLNESS SUPPORT GROUP

If you are dealing with a chronic illness, Ascension offers a way for you to receive support and spiritual sustenance from a caring community. We invite you (and your family and/or caregivers) to join Ascension's Chronic Illness Support Group. We meet monthly to pray together, to offer one another upliftment and camaraderie, and to share ways to continue living our lives to the fullest. We also pray for those on Ascension's extended prayer list.

Some people come to the meetings only during the course of their treatment, and others remain in the group even after they have regained their health. They enjoy continuing to bond and offering support to others. All that is shared in the group is kept confidential.

In ordinary times, we have met on the 2nd Monday of each month in Ascension's Room 1 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Participants have brought a bag lunch.

In spring of 2020, we suspended our meetings because of the pandemic. Laurie Yelle will restart the monthly in-person meetings when conditions are safe.

In 2022, we will explore offering monthly meetings to participants via Zoom. If you are interested in this option, please contact Laurie Yelle at lyelle@aol.com or call the Church Office at 301-948-0122.

Laurie Yelle 1/7/2022

TECH ANNUAL REPORT

In order to support the online church experience, Jesse has spearheaded the upgrading of Ascension's equipment. He researched, ordered, and installed two IP cameras, a soundboard, transmitters and receivers, microphones, and a computer to manage everything. Jesse made use of the donated televisions by installing them in the Nave and Narthex to allow people to see the members who joined through Zoom. He also made it possible for families using the Place of Peace to watch the service.

We had three new members learn and assist with making the services available online. With the choir resuming its activities, we have lost one of those new people. Danielle, Stephen, Isabella, and Marcia make it possible to stream the

services concurrently on Zoom, YouTube, Facebook, Twitch, and Twitter. Together, they monitor the Zoom chat, enable readers on Zoom to broadcast themselves into the Nave, adjust the sound separately for both within the Nave and the online broadcasts, switch between cameras within the church and Zoom so all speakers can be seen during the service, and share pre-recorded content during the services. They also monitor the Zoom service for anyone who might join with malicious intent to disrupt the services.

Because they attend all services during the day, these volunteers have taken on many of the other duties regularly managed by other ministries. They make coffee, set up for and clean up after communion, decorate the altar with flowers and change the altar cloths, clear away debris from the walkways and road following storms.

We readily accept additional volunteers who can assist with managing the services so we can alternate who serves each weekend. With our current volunteers, we serve during all services.

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee serves as a bridge between the Church of the Ascension and its surrounding geographical and spiritual communities. As representatives of Christ, we seek to understand the needs of our neighbors and to coordinate outreach activities of the parish. We actively seek out and create opportunities for our church members to interact with the greater community, sharing what our church has to offer.

After a hiatus in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Outreach committee is working on getting back up to speed, and excited to be able to work on projects that had to be shelved in 2020.

In 2021, we sponsored the Church Yard Sale and Car wash, coordinated the backpack drive for Linkages to Learning at Summit Hall ES, renewed our support for Mobile Med and the Lord's Table soup kitchen, and are continuing to assemble and provide lunches for the county Men's Shelter.

We meet monthly on Zoom to plan for upcoming events. We are looking to expand our activities in 2022. If you see a need that you'd like to help address at Ascension or in the surrounding Community, you are welcome to join us! To participate in our in-person activities, you must be fully vaccinated.

Coming up for 2022:

The County will be moving the Men's shelter from the current temporary facility (80 beds) to a permanent one (120 beds) in early 2022. We anticipate needing additional volunteers, both to donate lunch supplies and to help at 9am on third Sundays to assemble the lunches for delivery to the shelter.

We restarted work for the Lord's Table in December of 2021- we will be continuing to look for volunteers to help out for cooking at our Monthly 3rd Monday time slot. (Both January and February time slots are holidays- Come join in!)

Mobile Med support continues on Tuesdays, where Ascension volunteers serve as hosts for the Mobile Med van, providing paperwork assistance and a welcoming place to sit for those waiting for appointments.

Church of the Ascension

Treasurer's Report Cash and Reserve Funds

December 2019 (unaudited)

Cash Account Balance Per Balance Sheet	
BOA Checking	\$211,418.61
BOA Savings	\$52,531.511
BOA Columbarium Account	\$ 16,382.34
M&T Endowment Account	<u>\$406,207.12</u>
Total Cash	\$686,539.58
 Cash Totals by Cash Classification	
Unrestricted Reserves	\$216,732.50
Restricted Reserves	<u>\$469,807.08</u>
Total Cash	\$686,539.58
 Cash Balance by Fund Category	
1) Unrestricted Reserves	\$216,732.50
2) Endowment Fund	\$406,207.12
<i>Held in an account with M&T Bank, managed through the Diocese of Washington</i>	
3) Facilities Reserve Fund	\$50,159.05
4) Memorial/Worship Fund	\$ 9,500.47
5) Columbarium Fund	\$16,382.34
6) Other Restricted Funds (Special Offerings)	\$ 3,940.44
 Reconcile Change in Cash to Total Income	
Total Net Income (Accrual Basis)	\$0
 Change in Cash	 <u><u>\$0</u></u>

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

	2018	2019	2020	2021	BUDGET 2022
INCOME					
Plate and Pledge	452,348	397,750	375,200	408,198	400,000
Rental Income	48,965	56,444	46,508	42,278	43,000
All Other Income	23,032	11,054	11,713	32,214	32,000
Trusts/Endowments	86,644	13,191	4,362	10,235	11,000
TOTAL REVENUE	610,989	478,439	437,783	492,925	486,000
EXPENSES					
Salaries and Benefits	206,120	211,812	203,499	263,259	267,984
Mortgage Interest	16,449	13,738	10,868	7,760	7,160
Diocesan Pledge	26,572	29,366	32,214	30,250	30,350
Utilities	37,861	33,903	30,370	37,021	41,006
Accounting	10,485	2,658	2,205	11,067	9,000
Ministry/Outreach	11,301	14,414	13,180	11,182	12,079
Office/General Expense	19,148	21,483	11,165	8,501	8,670
Facilities	65,376	92,192	65,862	91,212	93,327
TOTAL EXPENSES	393,312	419,566	369,363	460,252	469,576
NET REVENUE	217,677	58,873	68,420	32,673	16,424