

Church of the Ascension



Introduction to the Candidates
for Vestry

January 22, 2023

CANDIDATES RESPONSES TO THREE QUESTIONS

This year, we have altered the candidates' question and response methodology slightly in order to give the candidates the opportunity to offer their reasoned thinking about the most pressing issues facing the Church of the Ascension. While this style of discernment does not lend itself to direct comparison of one candidate with another as in years past, it does reveal the interests and capabilities of each one. Choosing any three of the focus questions to respond to guides the candidate into asserting his/her strongest area of interest and capability. Finally, when you, the members of the church, look over these thirteen questions, you will get to reflect on the many challenges facing Ascension right now.

Betsy Hasegawa

1. **Question 1: Have I always been an Episcopalian?**

- Yes—since my baptism as an infant in Glen Ridge, NJ.
- Strengths: Services, liturgies and music that can be traced back in the history of Christianity and of the church; it gives me a sense of tradition that is not just familiar words and melodies. I'm happy about the change to words and music that have meaning for more people today, such as using common English, supporting bilingual approaches to worship, and lay involvement including women and LGBTQ individuals.
- Weaknesses: Historically, I feel the church has the reputation of being for the rich and not as outwardly spiritual. Along those lines, legacies of enslavement and prejudice concern me. But again, I do see the church supporting diverse initiatives and congregations and recognizing that transparency and meaningful change are necessary.
 - o As a result of the exclusiveness of the past, I feel as though a lot of the church is not very comfortable with evangelism—intentionally inviting people in. I know it's harder than it sounds but I believe it is a very worthwhile goal.

2. **Question 2: Committees/activities at Ascension?**

- Helper for elementary and middle school; helper and leader of the Ascension Bazaar for a number of years; choir; vestry member and warden, EFM participation, written a few parish “announcement letters”.
- Main thing learned: Nothing can be done alone and listening is everything.

3. **Question 7: What do you think is the most important issue facing Ascension and what do you propose we do about it?**

- o The 13 questions for candidates cover a lot of issues facing Ascension and they are all important. Until I listen and learn what is being worked on by our committees and Vestry, I'm not sure I could identify one most important issue right now. However, I do have a suggestion that might help us move towards improving awareness about Ascension, bringing in young people, acting on evangelism, focus on lay participation in pastoral care, bilingual worship, and maybe even improve our funding.
- o We have a wonderful mission statement, but we never talk about it as a congregation. We don't share as individuals: how did you or I represent Christ today? Did you use your hands, your feet, your words to act as a disciple today? Did you witness someone else doing so? What happened and where were you? Maybe you saw an opportunity but something held you back—why, do you think?
- o I believe that if we get really good at thinking about this during our days and nights and sharing with each other during services, we'll get better at living our mission. If more people see us acting for Christ and hear us talking about it, hopefully they will come and see for themselves. Maybe they can show us their way of representing Christ, wherever they may be, to the great benefit of everyone.
- o We could surely use those extra hands, hearts, and minds to help us solve our important issues.

Curt Lindsay

I came to Ascension in the fall of 1990 from St. Andrew's Parish, College Park. During my time there, I served on the Chaplain's Advisory Committee for the University of Maryland Episcopal Chaplaincy. I also served on the Vestry of the Episcopal Parish of Ames, Ames, Iowa, while working on my master's degree at Iowa State. I joined the Ascension Choir in the spring of 1991 and have been in it ever since. In 2017, I was invited to co-chair the Worship Committee with Gary McLaughlin, and became its chair the next year when Gary was appointed treasurer. As that chairholder, I also became a member of the Parish Council and the ad-hoc Reopening Committee.

These experiences have provided me with growth opportunities. In choir, I've learned to be respectful of different styles of music and to be sensitive to the reality that others may like musical forms that do not appeal to me. In my committee work, I've learned to follow discussions that have frequent topic switches and to condense the proceedings to written form that allows those who were absent to feel as though they had been there. I also honed an ability to get a loosely connected group to work together on a project, namely the worship display for Ascension Expo 2022, and to get a good product done on time.

Clearly the most significant issue facing Ascension this year is the shortfall of our pledged income compared to our goal. Unfortunately, it is not just the parish that is facing this; several not-for-profit organizations are facing the same issue. I would address this by reviewing the budget line item by line item with the Vestry, determining what consequences would result by reducing or eliminating each allocation, deciding where to make reductions or eliminations, and then reporting this to the parish. You never know--in one of my previous parishes, something was eliminated that one parishioner liked so much that that person single-handedly put up the money to bring it back. It can happen.

Extending the church into the online world clearly addresses the needs of our world as it is at present. Not only are we able to bring the church to the world beyond our walls, but we are able to address one of our biggest current concerns--protection of the environment. By using Zoom for our meetings and Compline offices, we eliminate the need to travel to the church for these activities and so keep our vehicles from adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Maintaining and improving our online presence has my full support.

Fredi Diaz

4- How well do you think the English and Spanish services are integrated?

I wouldn't change anything; I like the dynamic.

What would you suggest?

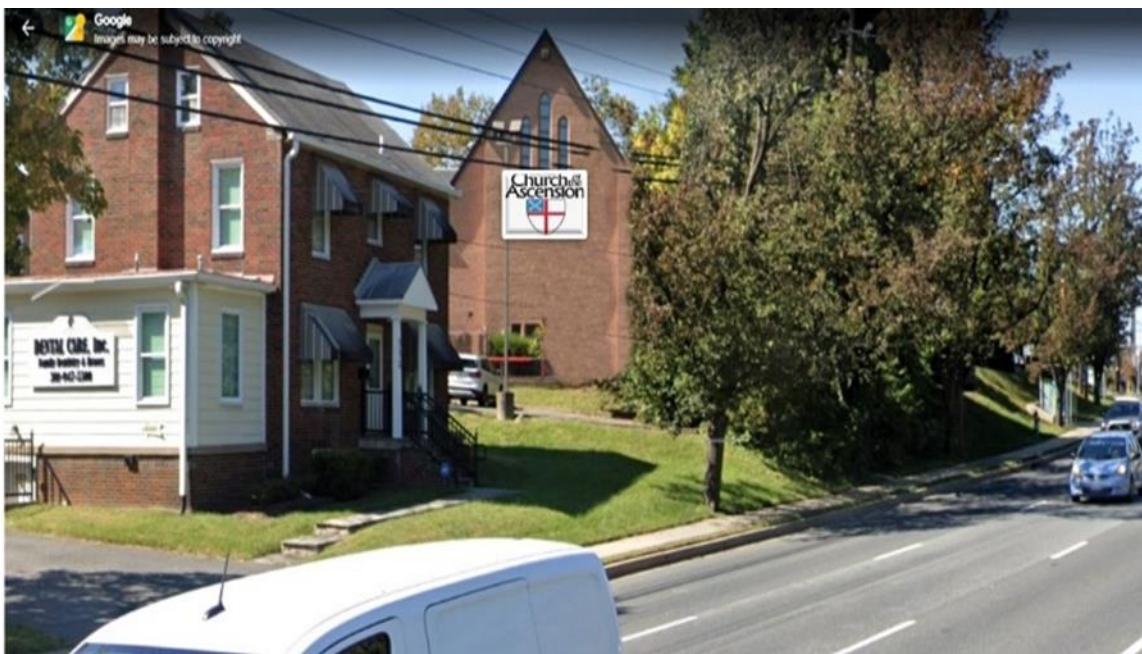
- On bilingual services, we should have a person who can translate Spanish to English and English to Spanish; I am sure we have some members who can help.

5- We are in a hard place right now, financially. Describe how you would take stock of the situation, as well as how you would prioritize competing needs.

- Save money
- Our congregation can do many things or projects together.
- Example, ground maintenance. I am sure God gives you a skill, now is the time to use it.

7- What do you think is the most critical issue facing Ascension?

- I think, besides financially, we are not getting new members, there are a couple of factors that can influence, next-door Church; our church is less visible, and if you are coming from the south, you don't know in your left side is an Episcopal Church.
- We could do something like this. **Example of signs hanging on the wall facing to the south.**



11. What special skills or talents do you bring to ascension? Legal, financial, building. Trades, arts.

- Ground Maintenance etc.....
- Bible Study!

Henry Musikar

1. My grandparents were Jewish, but not particularly observant except for cultural aspects, e.g. holidays, songs, and cuisine. My parents were atheists, but I attended a Sunday school that taught Yiddish (not Hebrew), literature, history, song, and dance. I have studied a variety of religions, but I did not become a member of a congregation until Ascension, where Father Javier baptized me. I believe that my experience helps me understand people who may be contemplating similar choices.

2. I am a member of the welcoming committee. It has given me the opportunity to interact, however briefly, with everyone who attends 10:00 services, and to better understand the process of the service.

11. I am an IT security analyst with a background in technical and other communications, and I have been vice president of Homeowners Associations. My experience would help me assist in determining, streamlining, improving, and communicating church processes and policies, including considering opportunities for automation. I worked for a startup for years that flamed-out because of the inefficiency of their accounts receivable, and I believe that making it easier for people to contribute and understand their contributions might help Ascensions finances.

Yours truly,

Henry Musikar

Marcia Noble

I have been a resident of Germantown for about 14 years but am originally from central Massachusetts. I usually attend the 8:00 a.m. service but sometimes attend the Spanish language service. I am a member of the 8:00 a.m. welcoming team and Altar Guild, and I am a reader, and a healing prayer provider. I have been involved in the Equity and Justice Committee and EFM. I have provided special prayer workshops, Bible studies, and Novenas during Advent and Lent. I have been involved with the Ascension community for about a decade but did not become a regular attendee and member of the Ascension community until about four years ago. While I was still attending St. Nicholas in Germantown about 8ish years ago, I worked on a project with Padre Javier to help with Spanish document translation, which introduced me to Ascension. I loved the multicultural community. So, I made it my church home.

How well do you think the English and Spanish services are integrated? What would you suggest?

While I love our 1A Sunday Services that integrate both English and Spanish, I feel that the integration of the two communities housed in Ascension has not gone much beyond this service. I would like to see more integration in all aspects of Ascension. First, I feel a bilingual listening session would be in order, to hear the desires of both communities on the topic with the hopes of identifying ways in which the two communities can come together. Language and culture are only a barrier if we continue to make it so 😊

How do you think young people can be drawn to Ascension? What is your view about Evangelism and how would it work?

I would like to handle these two questions together because I think they go hand in hand. To attract young people, we must provide a message and activities that would be of interest to them. My experience in visiting non-denominational churches with relatives is that they do have greater numbers of young people and young families. It is my opinion that younger people in these churches appear to be attracted to the offerings of short-term opportunities to serve in some social justice manner, such as soup kitchen, protest, clothing collection drives, etc. They also appear to be attracted to practical ways to develop and live in a spiritual manner. We can provide these types of opportunities as well as spread them into the community to attract more and younger people. One example is providing a workshop on the Way of Love that provides very practical approaches to living our faith. I also believe another offering that would be helpful both in attracting younger people and internally helping our church family is discussions and workshops on evangelism. The diocese provides exciting approaches to addressing evangelism, and Episcopalian evangelism in particular, that can be developed into a workshop here at Ascension.

Thank you all for your time and consideration.