

Together We Shine



*The Mission and Ministries of
The Episcopal Church of the Ascension
2023-2024*

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Welcome to the Episcopal Church of the Ascension

" Therefore go and make disciples of all nations " - St. Matthew 28:19a

Mission Statement

We represent Jesus Christ wherever we may be

Vision Statement

The Church of the Ascension will become a community of faith where each one of us lives out our Baptismal Covenant at home, at work, and in the community. Together we will shine as if we were God's only light in the world. Our children, and their children after them, will yearn to carry forth Christ's work.

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CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Christian Formation for Children

Ascension welcomes children-their energy, joy, spirit of wonder and the honesty of their questions. We offer year-round opportunities for fun and spiritual growth. Adult volunteers are trained in Safe Church, Safe Communities and we have a policy of two adults being present when working with children.

Sunday School

September 24, 2023-June 9, 2024, we offer Sunday school classes, in Room 2 and via zoom, during both the 10:00 and 12:00 services. We use the Godly Play curriculum and invite children preschool-5nd grade to join us. This Montessori-based curriculum engages what is most exciting about religious education: God inviting us into scripture and spiritual experience. We explore sacred stories, parables and liturgy using figures and objects.

Each class begins with music and movement, including the song “This is the Day the Lord Has Made” and some simple yoga to help us prepare for the lesson. The storyteller then tells a story using the Godly Play materials. Afterward, we discuss the wondering questions, such as “I wonder what part of the story you liked best?” “I wonder what part of the story you think is the most important.” “I wonder what part of the story you think we could leave out and still have all that we need?” and perhaps most importantly, “I wonder what part of the story is about you?” Wondering questions are the heart of the Godly Play approach. Each child hears the stories of the people of God and reflects on how the stories are manifest in their own lives.

After the wondering questions we work together on craft projects, sharing ideas about the lesson as we work. Children who join the class virtually will be given a set of craft materials to use at home. We finish our class with prayers of thanksgiving and petitions. Each of us is invited to share something we are thankful for and then we pray together. Finally, children rejoin their families in the Nave for the Eucharist.

Nursery

We offer year-round Nursery care during the 10:00 and 12:00 services, in room 3, as long as volunteers are available. We welcome infants and toddlers with toys, songs and stories as we model empathy for others and wonder at God’s creation. We are seeking volunteers to assist in the nursery.

Fall Festival

October 29, after the One Ascension service, everyone is invited to gather in the Parish Hall and adjacent playground for a fall festival with lunch, games, face painting and art activities.

Epiphany Pageant

Children will perform a play about the Christmas story on January 7, 2024. We need actors, readers, singers and set designers.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Tuesday, February 13, children are invited to create an Alleluia Banner which we will unfurl on Easter Sunday. We will also create Mardi Gras masks and have a parade!

Easter Egg Hunt

March 30, we will hunt for eggs after the One Ascension Service! Congregation members are invited to contribute plastic eggs stuffed with small toys or candy.

Children's Sunday

Children play several roles in the service including reading scripture, welcoming parishioners, passing the collection plate, bringing up the gifts. Music is chosen with children in mind. The sermon is often a Godly Play lesson.

Date to be determined.

Vacation Bible School

We invite children of Ascension, relatives, friends, and neighbors to a week of fun and learning around the theme of caring for others on the mornings of June 24-28. The program is designed for preschool-5th grade. Teen volunteers are welcome!

For more information, to register your child or to join the Children's Formation Committee, please email megandidavi02@gmail.com or call 703-626-7199.

Christian Formation for Youth

Youth Group (YG) Formation—middle and high school students-meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month in the evening from 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m. in the Undercroft Commons area. Ascension's YG is open to all youth in 6th grade and beyond, and they need not attend Ascension to participate in YG. Typical YG evenings include dinner, a spiritual lesson, and fun games—"Food, Fellowship & Fun". YG kicks off the program year with a cook-out in late September.

Summer Work Camp - Each summer students travel to various areas of the country to help improve the local communities while building a lifetime of spiritual experiences through hard work and fellowship. For the past decade, work camps have focused in Philadelphia, PA and particularly St. James School which serves middle schoolers from severely under-resourced communities. In the past two years, the Ascension Youth have served as camp counselors for the St. James students at NorthBay Adventure Camp in North East, MD. There will be another Work Camp in the summer of 2024.

Service Projects - Along with the summer work camp, students participate in service projects throughout the year. They select causes that mean the most to them early in the program year, but most recently projects included Comfort Cases and curbing gun violence in schools.

Youth Sunday-this is a special Sunday in the spring where the youth run all aspects of the service, with our seniors providing the homilies. It is usually a "One-Ascension Sunday" event followed by a lunch celebration with the whole congregation.

The YG program at Ascension is a collaborative effort of lay leaders, staff, parents and clergy. A special thank you to D-win (Debar) Allen for his amazing leadership in lesson planning. Please support Ascension's youths' continued success and participate in this community by offering your time and talent. One specific way is to supply dinners for the YG meetings held at Ascension.

Below is Ascension's Youth Group Schedule for Fall 2023:

- Sunday, October 8th
- Sunday, October 22nd
- Sunday, November 12th
- Sunday, November 26th
- Sunday, December 10th — Holiday party; no dinner needed.

The service project date will be added at a later date.

Please contact Angie or Trevor Hight Walker angela.hightwalker@gmail.com or walkertj@yahoo.com if you have any questions or you wish to help in any way.

Christian Formation for Adults

Adult education programs are offered throughout the church year. Keep an eye on the newsletter, bulletin, and social media accounts for multiple opportunities.

Ascension also has two established programs for adult learning:

Wednesday Morning Group:

Every Wednesday at 10:00, a group of thoughtful, committed members meet to discuss a book chosen for its spiritual themes. Contact the Rector for more information.

Education for Ministry (EFM):

This is a four-year education program from the School of Theology at the University of the South. The program covers the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, the history of Christianity after the first Christians, and the development of the church in the modern world. Extra readings address the life of faith, the role of the church in environmental issues, and the issues of justice and equity. Contact Peggy Ruppel, the EFM mentor, at plr301@gmail.com for more information.

MISSION SUPPORT COMMITTEES

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 suspended meetings during the pandemic, but we plan to restart them as soon as there is interest from one or more parishioners.. We plan to meet monthly to pray together, offer one another upliftment and camaraderie, and share ways to continue living our lives to the fullest. We will 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. Everything that is shared in the group is kept confidential, including the names of participants.

Depending on interest, we plan to meet on the 2nd Monday of each month in Room 1 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You may bring a bag lunch. Meeting together on Zoom is also a possibility.

For more information, contact Father Javier Ocampo at office@ascensionmd.org or 301-948-0122, Ext. 12.

Facilities

The Facilities Committee oversees the physical well-being of the Church including the main Sanctuary, Educational Wing, the Chapel, Ascension House and the grounds. The committee performs maintenance and repairs that are within their level of expertise and availability. The Facilities Committee coordinates with the church administrator to procure and review all maintenance and repair contracts, including but not limited to, grounds, plumbing, HVAC, electrical and periodic safety inspections, i.e., fire alarm and elevator. The

Facilities Committee is also responsible for and in consultation with the administrator to develop and maintain a spreadsheet of necessary long-term maintenance and capital projects complete with estimated costs and life expectancy. The Committee also prepares the facilities operating budget and coordinates with the treasurer to monitor and facilitate the necessary expenses. Contact Randall Adams at randall.adams53@gmail.com

Finance and Stewardship committee.

This committee is responsible for the best use and growth of all of Episcopal Church of the Ascension resources. Stewardship acknowledges profound interest and ownership of all that we manage; God is the head of our enterprise.

The Stewardship Committee applies its talents and initiative to the financial and operational well-being of the church. Typically, this will include annual budget formulation, tracking income and expenses. The Committee responds to financial queries from the vestry, and is happy to work with, and advise, members of other committees who are involved with tending other resources.

Each fall, our efforts are directed toward the Annual Giving Campaign. We are the connector between the programs and the funding parishioners. There are many ways and opportunities to support Ascension with your donations and contributions, and the Stewardship Committee can facilitate those transfers.

Personnel

This committee serves some of the role of a Human Resources department, e.g., providing job descriptions, interviewing prospective employees, organizational structure, staffing levels, benefits, etc. We are looking for volunteers with interest or expertise in these areas.

OUTREACH

Our calendar and Zoom information can be found on Realm in the Ascension Church calendar.

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.

This year, Mobile Med restarted, the Men's Shelter Lunches have continued, and our youth group gathered donations for Gaithersburg HELP. In addition, there was a successful Yard Sale and Car Wash in August. To support our friends at nearby Summit Hall Elementary School, we held a school supply drive through Linkages to Learning, "a community school partnership with an integrated focus on health, social services, community engagement and leadership to support student learning, strong families, and healthy communities."

Ascension Equity & Justice Committee (AEJC)

The Ascension Equity & Justice Committee (AEJC) is a congregation-based committee formed in June 2020 in response to the social unrest and ongoing systemic inequities that permeate our culture and 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 AEJC members attend nearly all meetings and are active in organizing and participating in committee activities. Others attend meetings when they can and participate in activities of particular interest. Others attend no meetings but read the committee's communications. Still others simply pray for the committee and our mission. Any level of participation is welcome.

The AEJC offers activities and events for **spiritual growth, education, and advocacy.**

Spiritual growth: We root our work in Scripture by reflecting on Scripture passages or prayer selections at every meeting. We bond with one another in prayer and fellowship. We discuss our experiences with equity and justice. We conduct Prayer Vigils. We have participated with the congregation in exercises to heighten understanding of one another, such as the Episcopal Church's "From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference."

Education: We educate ourselves by reviewing national, state, and local news events relating to our mission at each meeting. We read books and articles, watch documentaries, attend presentations, participate in training sessions, interact with community and faith leaders, and maintain relevant content on Ascension's social media platforms. At our meetings, we share our insights about what we have learned.

We hold film watch parties and discussions, host speakers at town hall-style meetings, provide resources, and organize excursions for the congregation to raise awareness and deepen knowledge of issues such as:

- History and culture of African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, and others
- Criminal justice reform
- Gun violence prevention
- Immigration
- Efforts to reimagine public safety
- Disability rights
- Holocaust remembrance
- LGBTQIA+ rights
- Voting rights
- Foster care
- Environmental justice
- Housing

We have held town hall-style meetings with Montgomery County Councilman-at-Large Will Jawando; Congressman David Trone (US District 6); Maryland State Delegate Gabriel Acevero (MD District 39); Pastor Dan Johnson, Director of the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, Pine Ridge, South Dakota; and the Reverend Ann Moczydlowski, volunteer with Interfaith Action for Human Rights. We have heard from Ascension's own Diane Leach on Colonization's Impact on American Indians, and we have hosted sermons by Rob Scheer, Founder and CEO of Comfort Cases.

We have viewed and discussed the documentaries *Finding Fellowship*, *13th*, *Coded Bias*, and *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*.

We have led excursions to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of American History, and (with Ascension's Green Team) the Woodend Sanctuary of the Audubon Naturalist Society in Chevy Chase and the Josiah Henson Museum and Park in North Bethesda. We have also taken the Downtown Rockville African American Heritage Tour and a Tour of Historic Georgetown with Highlights of African American History. We attended the Ordination of our Deacon, Rosa Briones, at the Washington National Cathedral.

We collaborate with other Episcopal congregations and other faith communities. We have formed partnerships with Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Silver Spring, and St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church, Bethesda. We have also joined with 3GDC and Sixth & I for a Holocaust Remembrance event.

Advocacy: We encourage congregants to advocate for causes that promote equity and justice. We engage in equity and justice efforts with local, state, and federal officials and with community and faith leaders. We have hosted the diocese's Missioner for Equity & Justice in a county-wide session on how to perform advocacy. We have partnered with organizations such as Identity, Inc., Gaithersburg; the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center in Pine Ridge, South Dakota; and Comfort Cases, Rockville, with the aim of collaborating in ways that meet our mutual needs. We have helped with the care of immigrants bused to DC, Ascension's Christmas Giving Tree project, our Rockville Pride! exhibit, yard sales, Juneteenth celebrations, and other outreach programs.

We meet on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm via Zoom. For further information on our activities and the Zoom link to our meetings, email AscensionAEJC@gmail.com.

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 and Identity, Inc., Gaithersburg)*
- *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.*

Gaithersburg HELP

This organization provides emergency food and other support to needy families in Gaithersburg. HELP is 100% volunteer run, and volunteers are always needed, especially volunteers who speak Spanish. How you can participate: Bring non-perishable food to Ascension and place items in the baskets in the narthex at any time. Collections are brought up during the offertory at the 10:00 a.m. service.

For more information, contact Melanie Mitchell at 301.519.1074 or melanie.mitchell@verizon.net.

Linkages to Learning Backpack Drive - annually, June-August

This program at Summit Hall Elementary School, Gaithersburg helps remove barriers to learning. Currently, Ascension participates by collecting school supplies, then assembling backpacks containing those supplies each August. The Linkages to Learning program provides several services, we are looking for additional ways to assist this program. Contact Kristen Keating at 301-330-1208, or kkeating125@comcast.net for more information.

Lord's Table Soup Kitchen -

From October through May, the Lord's Table Soup Kitchen serves free hot meals on weekdays at 3:30 p.m. at Epworth United Methodist Church, 9008 Rosemont Drive, Gaithersburg. Assistance is also available to dining guests who need information regarding housing, medical, counseling, and other social services. Epworth United Methodist Church is located approximately one-half mile south of Ascension.

In operation since 1984, The Lord's Table is supported entirely by generous food and monetary donations from individuals, as well as faith communities, government entities, and commercial organizations.

For more than 25 years, teams from Ascension have supported the Lord's Table Soup Kitchen. Ascension currently provides a team of volunteers for the **3rd Monday of every month from October through May**.

Our volunteers work in two shifts. From 1:00 to 3:00 pm the first shift prepares the meal. From 3:00 to 5:00 the second shift serves the meal and cleans the kitchen. The Lord's Table staff of kitchen coordinators set the menu and provide guidance and instruction to our volunteers.

Ascension's Lord's Table dates for the 2023-2024 program year are:

October 16, 2023	January 15, 2024	April 15, 2024
November 20, 2023	February 19, 2024	May 20, 2024
December 18, 2023	March 18, 2024	

We are always looking for new volunteers to join the soup kitchen team!!

Would you like to learn more about this ministry or join our dedicated and friendly 3rd Monday team? Please contact the church or Michelle Wood at mlwood7983@gmail.com.

Mobile Med

A medical van staffed with doctors and nurses works from Ascension's parking lot every Tuesday, providing low-cost/free medical care to uninsured patients residing in Montgomery County.

Ascension has been collaborating with Mobile Med for many years. Volunteers from Ascension serve as hosts to the patients in the chapel for a few hours on Tuesdays. Most volunteer shifts last two hours and volunteers may serve weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.

Volunteers need not have any medical experience. To learn more or to join our team of volunteers, contact the church or Michelle Wood at mlwood7983@gmail.com.

Men's Shelter Lunches - third Sunday every month

Volunteers donate supplies and then meet on the third Sunday of each month in the Undercroft at 9:00 a.m. to assemble 40-80 bagged lunches. These are then delivered to the county men's shelter for distribution. Contact Edith Sekasi-Wasikye at esekasi@gmail.com or look for announcements for Sign- up Genius links in our weekly Bulletin or Headliners.

The Green Team

We are a diverse group of concerned citizens who have heard the call to serve environmental justice. We are called to heal our gutted earth and to save it for future generations.

We are called to protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed, our shared living space. We are called to preserve and protect our natural environment, which is essential for all life (people, plants and animals). We are also called to educate others in the importance of protecting our natural environment and lead by example. We do this through representing and engaging Ascension by taking part in the mission and vision of the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC). Please find more information about IPC on their website. <https://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/>

The Green Team meets the first Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m.

During the Fall of 2022 the Green Team utilized a storm water practice by installing a rain barrel at the back of church. The team attended a learning lab webinar called “Maintaining Storm Water Projects” to educate ourselves for future church projects. In October of 2022, the Green Team hosted a movie night to show “The Plastic Problem,” a PBS Documentary. We had several interested participants and had a movie discussion afterwards. Under the Green Team’s guidance, our church started using ceramic coffee mugs instead of using single-use cups. This practice has reduced the waste we make at church. In February 2023, our team along with the Equity and Justice Committee, arranged an excursion to Josiah Henson Museum Park to celebrate Black History Month. We also attended a special program, “When the Stars Align: Celestial Navigation and the Underground Railroad,” where we listened to a panel of experts explain the process of navigation as well as Josiah Henson’s influence in the Underground Railroad.

With the help of the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC) the team was able to apply for a pollinator-rain garden grant through the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Then in April 2023 we were awarded this rain garden grant to install and plant a rain garden. This garden, “The Piscataway Rain Garden” was installed by Echo Green in June 2023. Among the many benefits, this rain garden reduces rain water runoff, provides food for the pollinators and brings beauty for the Church of the Ascension! We look forward to having a dedication ceremony for “The Piscataway Rain Garden” in the spring of 2024. We also plan to hold informational meetings about the benefits and maintenance of rain gardens. Our long-term desire is to apply for a solar grant once our church roof is replaced.

For questions about Church of the Ascension’s Green Team, inquire at 301-948-0122 or ascensionmdgreen@gmail.com

Grey Harman Froelich Memorial Columbarium

The Church of the Ascension offers a final resting place for you and your loved ones. The ashes can be placed into a niche or in the ground. The Grey Harman Froelich Memorial Columbarium is located on the North side of the main Church building. Rights to interment are available to all members of the Church of the Ascension and by members of their immediate families. “Immediate family” includes spouses, parents, parents-in-law, children and their spouses, and others for whom the subscriber is responsible. At the discretion of the Rector, ashes of persons who are not canonical members of the parish may be accepted for interment. All services at which ashes are interred in the Columbarium are conducted by the Rector of the Church of the Ascension, or by clergy acting with the Rector’s permission and direction. For more information, please contact our Rector or Parish Administrator at 301-948-0122 or office@ascensionmd.org

Committee for the Columbarium

Thanks to a generous gift from the Grey Harman Froelich family, longtime members of the Church of the Ascension, we are fortunate to have our own Columbarium for the parish. Dedicated in 1991, it has served as the respectful final resting place for a generation of clergy and lay members of the church.

The operation of the Columbarium is overseen by a custodian and the Vestry of the Church of the Ascension. The Columbarium's operating budget comes from the subscription funds of those who purchased a personal or family niche in the Columbarium, and those funds are held completely separate from the rest of Ascension's financial affairs.

In recent years, cremation of the body has increased as the desired method for repose. We receive many requests for information and advice about cremation and inurnment and we want to be responsive to this need, and the likely use of our facility. *It is now time to recruit a willing and interested committee for the Columbarium* to assure the continuation of a quiet, peaceful place to rest.

More detail is available from Kathy Froelich at 301-978-7866 or Susan McLaughlin at 301-340-7139.

Other programs...

...such as *Becoming Good Soil* and *Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake*, are looking to form a group at Ascension, too.

The Outreach Committee uses Ascension's Realm service for our email and calendar, and Zoom for our meeting space. If you would like to join the outreach committee or have suggestions for projects you would like to see taken on, or just would like a link to our zoom meetings, please contact any of:

Anne Brink	orangefishnet@gmail.com
Kristen Keating	kristenkeating@westat.com
Ascension Office	office@ascensionmd.org

PARISH LIFE

One way God joins us together is through the fun and friendship that arise when we gather for fellowship. In this hectic society, we need occasions to relax, be real, and have fun together.

Shrove Tuesday Mardi Gras Pancake Supper— Tuesday, February 13th 2024, from 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m. Pancakes, sausages (meatless options available).

One Ascension (1A) Sundays— A time for all worshippers to gather at a single Eucharist at 10:00 a.m. and share a meal afterward. The 1A dates are December 31st 2023, March 31st 2024, June 30th 2024, September 29th 2024, December 29th 2024.

Ascension History Committee

The Ascension History Committee began in 2021 as a subcommittee of the Ascension Equity and Justice Committee.

The history committee has been conducting work to learn about the history of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension Gaithersburg regarding connections to the institution of slavery and issues of racial justice. The

committee is primarily researching the history from Ascension's founding in the 1880s as a mission of Christ Church Rockville to the present time, but it is also investigating earlier decades at Christ Church Rockville before Ascension was established. We are looking into the history of the land on which Ascension stands as an ancestral home of the Piscataway people. Further, we are interviewing long-time parishioners and former clergy to gain insights about Ascension's more recent history with regard to racial justice.

We are doing this work as part of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (EDOW) Reparations Task Force, a diocesan-wide initiative to investigate the financial legacy of chattel slavery in the Diocese. The Congregational History Project, in which each congregation explores and writes up its history and its connections to slavery and racial justice, is the first component of the Reparations Task Force's work. The second component is a survey of institutional reparations initiatives to identify best practices and ways to move forward.

The Ascension History Committee has researched and drafted a report based on information on Ascension's history we gathered from a variety of sources, including the archives of the Diocese of Maryland and the Diocese of Washington, a previous history of Ascension written in 2007, and church records from Ascension and from Christ Church Rockville. We have also examined records from the 1860 census and a variety of historical documents and publications. The committee meets monthly with the EDOW Reparations Task Force and is adopting guidance from the task force in conducting the historical research.

Future activities of the Ascension History Committee will include discussions with parishioners and additional research to learn more about the history of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension Gaithersburg. For more information, contact the church or Michelle Wood, chair, at mlwood7983@gmail.com.

PASTORAL CARE

Caring for the people of God is part of the Church's mission, and that care extends to the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. As Christians, we are all called to be ministers, not only to spread the word of the Gospel, but to care for each other. Ascension offers the following opportunities:

- **Altar Flower Delivery**

After the Sunday services, volunteers take the flowers from the altar to homes of members who need some extra brightness in their week.

- **Healing Prayer Ministers**

Specially trained lay people share the ministry of healing prayer during the Eucharist at all Sunday services. They join or lead those needing prayers for themselves or on behalf of others. These prayers take place in a private annex.

- **Eucharistic Visitors**

One-on-one partnership for seniors and home-based church members provided by specially trained parishioners who extend a helping hand, pray together, and keep connections intact. Contact the Rev. Javier Ocampo at ocampo.j@ascensionmd.org or call or text at (202)370-7765.

Baptism

Holy Baptism is the sacrament — the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace - by which we become full members of the church. Any baptized person, from the tiniest baby to the oldest adult, is a full member of the church and is welcome to receive communion and to participate in the life of the church. You do not have to be rebaptized to join the Episcopal Church.

At Ascension, we have several Sundays each year when Baptism is offered. We baptize children through their parents and Godparents, and also adults who are ready to commit to the promises of the Baptismal Covenant (see Prayer Book pages 304 and 305) and who want to participate regularly in the life of this parish. Prior to the baptism, parents or candidates must attend an orientation. **The best preparation for Baptism is participation in parish life.**

Baptismal Festivals

November 5, 2023.... All Saints' Sunday
January 7, 2024..... Baptism of Our Lord
March 30, 2024..... Easter Eve
March 31, 2024 Easter Day
May 19, 2024..... Day of Pentecost
Summer 2024..... TBA

Confirmation

Preparation for Confirmation begins at Baptism and embraces the whole of one's life and journey in and outside the Church. Special preparation for both adults and youth is offered. Confirmation is open to all high school students. The Rector may make exceptions should someone younger display a serious commitment to preparing for Confirmation.

Marriage

One of the greatest and most joyous decisions in life is the decision to marry. The clergy and staff at Ascension are delighted to help couples unite in marriage. Our policies and premarital preparation process are designed to help that union be a lifelong and loving one.

- All persons considering marriage at Ascension must contact the clergy and staff at **least four to six months prior to the wedding date.**
- The Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the persons being married be a baptized Christian. **At Ascension, we also require that the couple regularly attend services here, and if they are not already members, to explore the possibility of becoming members of Ascension.**
- The couple must attend an Imago workshop to help start the marriage off on the best possible foundation. Go to www.imagocenterdc.com for a more detailed description of the workshop.

Marriage for same-sex couples is legal in Maryland and was formally approved by the General Convention of The Episcopal Church in 2015. The same guidelines for preparation apply.

Funerals

For Christians, at death, life is changed, not ended, and the people of the Church stand together to support one another at a time of loss. The burial liturgy hallows our grief and proclaims the hope of a life that is sustained eternally by God's indestructible love. The clergy of Ascension are on call around the clock to offer solace and support at the time of death.

WORSHIP

Worship is the heart of our life at Ascension. Through the Holy Eucharist liturgy (a word that means "work of the people") found in the Book of Common Prayer, the foundation of Anglican worship since 1549, we carry out the work God has given us to do. We sing, we pray, we hear the Word of God proclaimed in Scripture and sermon, and we lift up our concerns and joys and thanksgivings to God. We gather at God's table as the living Body of Christ. We feed on the holy bread and wine of the Eucharist. And then we are sent forth to serve our community as apostles of Christ in our lives.

At Ascension, we welcome children, youth and adults to participate as leaders of worship. There is a place for you as an acolyte, altar guild member, chalice, choir member, healing prayer minister, reader, hospitality angel, or welcome team member.

Sunday Services

8:00 a.m.—Quiet, classic Episcopal Prayer Book liturgy in English. No music.

10:00 a.m.—A blend of a classic Episcopal service and a modern Eucharist, in English. Music is provided by the Ascension Choir using our unique organ and our grand piano. Hymns are taken from The Hymnal 1982, Wonder, Love, and Praise, and Lift Every Voice and Sing.

12:00 p.m.—Eucharist in Spanish with hymns mostly from Flor y Canto accompanied by music ensemble.

All three services are held in the main church. They are also streamed online and can be reached via the following links:

- Zoom: Meeting ID 941 3360 0093; Passcode 1234

[The following links apply only to the 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. services:]

- Facebook: Episcopal Church of the Ascension (<https://www.facebook.com/ecotamd/>)

- YouTube: Episcopal Church of the

Ascension (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv4FzQS2Bg8_x63nitGk-zg)

- Twitter: @ascensionmd (<https://twitter.com/ascensionmd>)

- Twitch: ecotamd (<https://www.twitch.tv/ecotamd?sr=a>)

- Instagram: ecotamd (<https://www.instagram.com/ecotamd/>)

Music

The Ascension Choir—Ascension is blessed with the Ascension Choir, an all-volunteer group led by the Minister of Music. The Choir practices each Thursday evening (beginning on the Thursday after Labor Day) during the program year (September through early June) from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and sings at the 10:00 a.m. service (beginning the Sunday after Labor Day), reporting for warm-up at 9:10 a.m. Occasionally there are extra rehearsals for major services, such as Christmas and Easter. The choir also sings for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and other services as needed. Rehearsals and warm-ups are in the choir room (Room 3) on the upper level of the office/education wing.

New or seasoned members of Ascension who are considering joining or returning to the choir are welcome at any time. No auditions are required, just the love of singing. The ability to sight-read music is helpful but not essential. Contact the Minister of Music at music@ascensionmd.org, or any choir member.

Hispanic Service Combo—Music at the Eucharistia en Espanol is offered by an all-volunteer team that employs several voices/instruments. The combo is open to volunteers who find joy in the Latino versions of Gospel music. Jesse Velasquez leads the group and uses Flor y Canto as the principal hymnal.

The Organ—Ascension's music is greatly enhanced by our fine pipe organ, built by Casavant Frères of St-Hyacinthe, Québec (Opus 3801), and installed in 2001. It was the very generous donation of a longtime parishioner. The organ is primarily used at the 10:00 a.m. service in the main church.

Worship Leaders

Acolytes—lead the processions at the beginning and end of the service and assist the clergy at the altar during the service. Children (fourth grade and up) and adults are welcome to serve as acolytes. Contact Ray Chin crayh50@hotmail.com for more information.

Altar Guild—Teams of two to three members take turns preparing the church for worship on a rotating basis. Contact Shirley Allen, allen.shirleyes@gmail.com, 301-442-0707 or Ophelia Yalley-Ogunru, opiemagz@gmail.com, 240-481-6565.

Chalicians—help administer Communion by serving the cup of wine to worshippers.

Lectors—read the Lessons, and lead the congregation in the Prayers of the People. Readers should be comfortable speaking publicly and should be able to read clearly.

Welcome Teams—comprising ushers and greeters, are ministers of hospitality who greet people, provide information to visitors, distribute bulletins, pass collection plates, and assist people at Communion.

Qualifications for all Worship Leader positions are membership in the Church of the Ascension and willingness to serve as you are scheduled, on a periodic basis. Training for all Worship Leaders is provided as need arises.

Ascension Expo

Ascension Expo is a ministries fair that is held early every fall between services in the undercroft. For 2022, the Expo date is September 18. Worship Leader groups are all represented, and will describe the duties and benefits of being a member of the various teams. Contact Curt Lindsay (lindsay_curt@yahoo.com) or Ruth Anna Skowronski (ruth.skowronski@gmail.com), co-chairs of the Worship Committee, or one of the clergy. The Church office is always willing to provide additional information, or to assist in making contact with the appropriate Worship Leader.

Leadership At Ascension

Altar Guild	Shirley Allen Ophelia Yalley-Ogunru	allen.shirleyes@gmail.com opiemagz@gmail.com
Christian Formation for Adults	Open	
Christian Formation for Children	Megan Didavi	mdidavi@gmail.com
Christian Formation for Youth	Angie and Trevor Hight Walker	angela.hightwalker@gmail.com
Columbarium	Kathryn Froelich Susan McLaughlin	kathryn_froelich@yahoo.com quilter@his.com
Facilities	Randall Adams	adams.randall53@gmail.com
Health and Wellness	TBD	
Operations and Finance	Avin Lalmansingh	avin.lalmansingh@gmail.com
Pastoral Care	Javier Ocampo	ocampo@ascensionmd.org
Personnel	Kristen Keating	
Worship	Curt Lindsay	lindsay_curt@yahoo.com
Parish Life	Janet King	bkmechanical@aol.com

VESTRY AND PARISH STAFF

Vestry

Senior Warden
Junior Warden
Vestry Clerk
Parish Treasurer

Kristen Keating
Danielle Allen
Ophelia Yalley-Ogunro
Avin Lalmansingh

Class of 2024

Ed Armstrong
Lauren Kingsland
Ruth Anna Skowronski

Class of 2025

Randall Adams
Shirley Allen
Henry Musikar

Class of 2026

Betsy Hasegawa
Marcia Noble
Fredis Martinez

Parish Staff

Rector

The Rev. Javier García Ocampo
ocampo@ascensionmd.org

Deacon

The Rev. Rosa Briones
Rosa@ascensionmd.org

Parish Administrator

Julie Brewer
office@ascensionmd.org

Minister of Music

Andrew Kullberg
music@ascensionmd.org

Lay Eucharistic Minister

Tracey Forfa
tforfa@gmail.com

Communication/IT/Sexton

Jesse Velazquez
comm@ascensionmd.org

DATES TO REMEMBER

2023

Sunday, September 10 Ascension Expo
Sunday, September 10 Program Year Begins
Sunday, September 17 Parish Picnic at Walder Park
Sunday, October 8 Youth Group Begins, Potluck Cook-Out 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 01 Blessing of the Animals
Sunday, October 29 One Ascension Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, November 05 All Saints / Día de los Muertos Celebration
Sunday, November 05 Daylight Saving Time ends (set clocks back one hour- "Fall back")
Thursday, November 23 Thanksgiving service, 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve Services:
• 5:00 p.m. For Families with Young Children
• 7:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist Bilingual
• 9:00 p.m. Festival Eucharist with Ascension Choir
Monday, December 25 Christmas Day service, 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, December 31 One Ascension Sunday 10:00 a.m. New Year's Celebration

2024

Sunday, January 07 Día de Reyes (Rosca de Reyes) Celebración after 12:00 p.m. Service
Sunday, January 20 Annual Meeting, 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, January 27 Diocesan Convention
Wednesday, February 04 Candlemas Day/Día de la Candelaria Celebration
Tuesday, February 13 Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras, 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, February 14 Ash Wednesday Service, "Ashes to Go" at the metro station and Noon and 7:00 p.m. Services
Sunday, March 10 Daylight Saving Time begins (set clocks forward one hour-" Spring ahead")
Sunday, March 24 Palm Sunday
Wednesday, March 27 Tenebrae, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, March 28 Maundy Thursday: Holy Eucharist/Foot washing and Stripping of the Altar, 7:00 p.m.
Friday, March 29 Good Friday:, Prayer Book Liturgy 12:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 30 Easter Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter, 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 30 Easter Services, 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 12 Ascension Day Celebration
Sunday, June 30 One Ascension Sunday 10:00 a.m.

ASCENSION EXPO 2023-24

The Rev. Javier Garcia Ocampo, Rector
Ms. Tracey Forfa, Lay Eucharistic Minister
The Rev. Rosa Briones, Deacon

Admin: Julie Brewer
Jesse Velázquez

Pastoral Care Chairperson: Fr. Javier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, Funerals • Hospice • Pastoral Partners • Healing Prayer Ministries • Flower Delivery • Eucharistic Visitors • Seabury Aging Resources 	Parish Life Chairperson: Janet King <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Ascension Sunday • Hospitality Angels • Shrove Tuesday • Parish Picnic 	Music Ministry Andrew Kullberg, Minister of Music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choir • Concerts • Evensong • Organ Marathon • Latino Music (Director, Jesse Velázquez) 	Worship Chairperson: Curt Lindsay and Ruth Anna Skowronski <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay Readers • Acolytes • Chalcists • Altar Guild • Welcome Team • Live-Stream 	Christian Formation for Children Chairperson: Megan Didavi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Godly Play • Joyful Path • Artwork • Easter Egg Hunt 	Christian Formation for Youth Chairpersons: Angie Hight-Walker, Trevor Walker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Group • Summer Work • Service Projects 	Christian Formation for Adults Chairperson: (open) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreats • Listening Heart • Labyrinth • Education for Ministry • English/Spanish Bible Studies • Diocesan Delegates • Diocesan Leaders—Líderes Latinos 	Health, Wellness, and Safety Chairperson: (open) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood Pressure Checkups • Living with Chronic Illness Support Group (Leader, Laurie Yelle) • Yoga, Tai-Chi
MISSION SUPPORT							
Outreach Chairperson: Anne Brink <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages to Learning Backpack Drive • Gaithersburg Help • Lord's Table Soup Kitchen • Mobile Med • Outreach Projects: Yard Sale, etc. • Tending Our Soil • Men's Shelter Lunches • Immigration Legal Services 	Equity and Social Justice Chairperson: Laurie Yelle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Growth • Education • Advocacy • Speaker Events • Documentary Viewing and Discussion • Activities for Building Understanding • Prayer Vigils • Excursions 	Ascension History Chairperson: Michelle Wood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish History Research • Documentation of Connections to Slavery • Contribution to Diocesan Reparations Work 	Green Team Chairperson: Kay Kollé <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake • Pollinator Garden • Community Garden • Environmental Education • Documentary Viewing and Discussion • Spiritual Growth 	Facilities Chairperson: Randall Adams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory • Ascension House • Columbarium • Sexton 	Operations and Finance/Stewardship Chairperson: Avin Laminsingh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pledge Campaign • Registrar • Audit 	Communications Chairperson: Jesse Velázquez <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media • Newsletters • Website Design 	Personnel Chairperson: Kristen Keating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination Committee

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 1 Co. 12:4-6

And just like that... another calendar year has started. It's not often that nature, politics, or our own desires permit us to reset and create a new beginning. When we consider how we have lived with, as a society as well as a congregation, we know that just about everything is going back to "normal" after summer break.

It is time to begin anew. It is time to remember the pleasure of worship together, and the satisfaction of tasks well completed. It is time to embrace the creative energy of discipleship and friendship. Let this autumn season be fruitful both for you and for the Church of the Ascension. Let it be said that the Church of the Ascension had a new beginning in the Fall of 2023!

As a practical matter, let me suggest service on one of the many committees of the Church, each of whom will welcome you in the finest Episcopal tradition. Perhaps there are other committees that we should have. Perhaps there are committees that should exist seasonally, or for a short-term purpose (remember the Ladies' Cookbook Committee?).

I value your courage in making a commitment to the community, and I certainly value your interest and knowledge. Your service on a committee will give you in-depth awareness of a particular area, and you will be helping to construct the bonds of community which foster wholeness.

May God bless this congregation, and its spirit of renewal.

With love, your Rector.
Javier