

Together We Shine



The Mission and Ministries of
The Episcopal Church of the Ascension
2024-2025

205 S. Summit Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

Phone: 301.948.0122, Fax: 301.926.9012

www.ascensionmd.org

Welcome to the Episcopal
Church of the Ascension

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

MISSION STATEMENT

“Representing 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

Mid-September through mid-June, 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-5th 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. 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.

Epiphany Pageant

Children will perform a play about the Christmas story 5:00, January 5, 2025. We need actors, readers, singers and set designers.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

At the Pancake Supper, Tuesday, March 4, 2025 children are invited to create an Alleluia Banner which we will unfurl on Easter Sunday. We also create Mardi Gras masks and have a parade!

Easter Egg Hunt

Sunday, April 2025, we will hunt for eggs. 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 23-27, 2025. The program is designed for preschool-5th grade. Both teen and adult 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 will meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays 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 do not need to attend Ascension to participate in YG. Typical YG includes dinner, a spiritual lesson, and fun games—"Food, Fellowship & Fun". YG kicks off the program year with a cookout in October.

Summer Work Camp - We plan to continue working with St. James School, serving middle schoolers from severely under-resourced communities. In the past two years, the Ascension Youth has served as camp counselors for the St. James students at North Bay Adventure Camp in North East, MD. We plan to contact the leadership to do another Work Camp in the summer of 2025.

Service Projects - The students will also participate in service projects throughout the year. They will select causes that mean the most to them early in the program year.

Youth Sunday 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 and a lunch celebration with the congregation.

Please support Ascension's youths' continued success and participation in this community by offering your time and talent. One specific way is to supply lunch for the YG meetings held at Ascension.

Below is Ascension's Youth Group Schedule for Fall 2024:

- The dates for the Christian Formation for Youth at Ascension this fall are as follows:

Sunday, October 13th
Sunday, October 27th
Sunday, November 10th
Sunday, November 15th
Sunday, December 8th
Sunday, December 15th (Holiday Party)

Chairpersons: Angelique Cooper.

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.m., a group of thoughtful, committed members meet to discuss a book chosen for its spiritual themes. Contact the Rector at the church office 301-948-0122 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

The Chronic Illness Support Group

For people dealing with a chronic illness, Ascension offers a way to receive support and spiritual sustenance from a caring community. Those individuals and their family members and/or caregivers are invited to join Ascension's Chronic Illness Support Group. We pray together, offer one another upliftment and camaraderie, and share ways to continue living our lives to the fullest. We also pray for those on Ascension's extended prayer list. All that is shared in the group is kept strictly confidential.

In 2024-2025 we will hold meetings in person at Ascension on the 2nd Monday of each month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (or via Zoom, if that is preferred). Participants bring a bag lunch. 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. Many people enjoy continuing to bond and offering support to others.

If you would like to participate, call Father Javier at the Church Office (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.

Chair Person: Avin Lalmansigh

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.

THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE

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.

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 organize and participate in committee activities. Others attend some meetings and join 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 prayers at our meetings. We bond with one another in prayer and fellowship. We discuss our experiences with equity and justice. We conduct prayer vigils. We

participate with the congregation in exercises to heighten our understanding of one another.

Education: We educate ourselves by reviewing current events, reading books and articles, watching documentaries, attending presentations, participating in training sessions, interacting with community and faith leaders, and maintaining 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 educational resources, and organize excursions 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
- Efforts to reimagine public safety
- Disability rights
- Holocaust remembrance
- LGBTQIA+ rights
- Voting rights
- Foster care
- Environmental justice
- Immigration and refugee care
- Affordable and accessible healthcare
- Affordable and accessible housing
- Combatting ageism and singleism
- Substance abuse awareness and prevention

Speakers at our town hall-style meetings have included Congressman David Trone (US District 6); Pastor Dan Johnson, Director of the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, Pine Ridge, South Dakota; and AEJC member Diane Leach on Colonization's Impact on American Indians.

Topics of our film watch parties have included disability awareness, ethnic bias in the media, and refugee understanding.

We have taken excursions to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Museum of the American Indian, and other museums. We have also toured historic Georgetown with highlights of African American history.

We collaborate with faith communities such as Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Silver Spring; Christ Episcopal Church, Rockville; St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church, Bethesda; and 3GDC and Sixth & I.

Advocacy: We encourage congregants to advocate for causes that promote equity and justice. We engage in these efforts with local, state, and federal officials and with community and faith leaders. We host our diocese's Missioner for Equity & Justice for learning sessions. We partner with organizations such as the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, South Dakota, and Comfort Cases, Rockville, in ways that meet our mutual needs. We help with care for immigrants, Ascension's Christmas Giving Tree project, the church's Rockville Pride! table, and other outreach programs. We learn about proposed legislation and encourage congregants to support equity and justice bills.

Plans for autumn 2024 include an information session with AEJC member Angelique Cooper on a pro bono counseling service she offers through Ascension to individuals struggling with substance use disorders and other emotional health issues, an Election Eve Candlelight Prayer Vigil, a session on proposed equity & justice legislation, a film watch party and discussion, and an excursion. Please join us!

We generally meet on the second 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 - ONGOING

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 them in the baskets in the narthex at any time. Collections are brought up during the offertory at the 10:00 a.m. service.

Linkages to Learning Backpack Drive - ANNUALLY IN THE SUMMER

This program at Summit Hall Elementary School helps remove barriers to learning. Ascension participates by collecting school supplies, then assembling backpacks containing those supplies each August.

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 (about one-half mile south of Ascension). Assistance is also available to dining guests who need information regarding housing, medical, counseling, and other social services.

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 2024-2025 program year are:

October 21, 2024	January 20, 2025	April 21, 2025
November 18, 2024	February 17, 2025	May 19, 2025
December 16, 2024	March 17, 2025	

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 office 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 office or Michelle Wood at mlwood7983@gmail.com.

The Ascension 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 to 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 the IPC on their website: <https://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/>.

The Green Team meets in person with the hybrid option on the first Monday of every month. We gather at 6:30 PM at a member's house for dinner and then we start our meeting at 7:30 PM, when others may connect by Zoom.

Trees for Sacred Places

In the fall of 2023, the Green Team was awarded seven free trees from the “Trees for Sacred Places” program sponsored by the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC). Randall Adams (Green Team member and Grounds Keeper for Ascension) and Kay Kolle (Green Team Chair) met with Liam Ulsevich (Casey Trees) on September 7 to discuss tree placement on our church grounds. The team decided to follow Susy Altman's architectural plans to plant six birch trees on the side of our church along our driveway and one serviceberry tree at the end of the driveway opposite of the birch trees. The trees were planted in the spring of 2024 and were cared by Randall Adams. The trees grew so well that they have already grown a foot!! Take a look and you will see!!!

Learning Lab and the Piscataway People

In November 2023, the Green Team hosted a learning lab series called “Decolonizing Our Relationship to the Land” which was presented by the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC). Ascension's Equity and Justice Committee (AEJC) joined the presentation as well. This presentation was important for Ascension because members of our History Committee had discovered that it was the Piscataway People who lived on the land where our church resides. Through this presentation, members of Ascension and other churches learned how the Piscataway People as well as other indigenous cultures lost land where they once lived due to colonization. We also learned about the Piscataway People's efforts to regain their land and about bringing more awareness to others about this issue. At the end of this presentation Kay Kolle invited Chief Swann (Chief of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe) and Jessica Swann (Chief Swann's daughter and member of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe) to our dedication ceremony for Ascension's newly installed rain garden, “The Piscataway Rain Garden.”

The Sacred Grounds Grant and Award

In late 2022, the Green Team was awarded a “Sacred Grounds Grant” through the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and IPC to receive free native plants and to install an understory garden at Ascension. Within the Sacred Grounds program, the Green Team hosted several informative events and activities at our church. On April 7th, 2024 the Green Team hosted “Why Native Plants” along with an NWF presentation. Participants learned the importance of native plants which not only benefit our wildlife but also help reduce rainwater runoff of pollutants. Participants

also viewed a video of the native plants on Ascension's Church grounds. On May 2 members of our church and several other churches in our IPC cohort participated in a NWF presentation "How to Garden with Native Plants." We heard helpful tips on planting and maintaining a native garden and learned about environmental resources. The "Native Plant Give Away" was held on June 9, the same day as our dedication ceremony for the "Piscataway Rain Garden." The Green Team was able to host these events with the help of the NWF and the IPC.

Ascension was awarded a Certificate of Achievement on April 1, 2024 from Jud Ashman, Mayor of Gaithersburg and member of the City Council in recognition of our distinguished efforts to improve our environment.

The Green Team looks forward to our consultation meeting on Saturday, September 14 with Kit Gage (NWF) about the placement of our understory demonstration garden. We also look forward to the Native Plant Garden Tour hosted by the IPC at Croydon Creek Nature Center on September 22.

"The Piscataway Rain Garden" Dedication Ceremony

This past spring of 2024, the Green Team was busy planning for the dedication ceremony for our newly installed rain garden. We ordered a beautiful sign for our rain garden and made wooden labels to identify the native plant types. Kay Kolle posted articles in Ascension's bulletin stating the benefits of native plants along with a link for members to make a pledge to receive free native plants and to plant them in their yards.

On June 9, after Ascension's 1A service, the Green Team held our dedication ceremony for the "Piscataway Rain Garden." We had many distinguished guests including the Swann family (Piscataway Conoy Tribe), Jud Ashman (Mayor of Gaithersburg and member of the City Council), John Nenghabi (City Environmental Services, Gaithersburg), members from the IPC, Naomi Edelson from the NWF, and members of Saint Martin of Tours Catholic Church, Gaithersburg. After the ceremony, people walked across the street to the Ascension House to pick up their native plants and to receive information about the environmental services the City of Gaithersburg provides to residents. People gladly accepted the native plants choosing either natives that could survive in sunny locations (such as the orange butterfly milkweed and black eyed susan) or plants that thrive in a shady location (such as coral bells and golden ragwort). For more information about this event go to the IPC's posting: https://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/piscataway_garden_072024.

Future Plans

The Green Team looks forward to the installation of our native understory garden in the spring of 2025. We also look forward to using silverware instead of disposable utensils for our luncheons after our 1A services. Our long-term goal is to apply for a solar grant or to obtain solar panels for our church at a reduced rate once the work on our roof is finished.

For questions about Ascension's Green Team, call the church office at 301-948-0122 or e-mail ascensionmdgreen@gmail.com.

Grey Harman Froelich Memorial Columbarium

The Grey Harman Froelich Memorial Columbarium, a gift from the Froelich family and dedicated in 1991, offers a final resting place for the cremated remains of members of the Church of the Ascension and their immediate families (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.

The Columbarium is located on the North side of the main church building. There are 125 niches available for niche interment (inurnment) of ashes, and a number of plots available for in-ground interment in the central garden area.

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 purchase a niche or in-ground resting place. These funds are held completely separate from the rest of Ascension's financial affairs.

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 the Columbarium Custodian at columbarium@ascensionmd.org, or the Parish Administrator at office@ascensionmd.org.

Men's Shelter Lunches - MONTHLY

Volunteers donate supplies and then meet on the third Sunday of each month in the Undercroft at 9 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.

Vacation Bible School- SUMMER

Ascension had its first Vacation Bible School for many years June 24-28, 2024. We followed a curriculum called Operation Restoration: Mending God's World, which uses stories from the Old and New Testaments to teach about God's love and how we can follow in Jesus' footsteps to make the world a better place. We met in the Parish Hall where we made stations for Music, Art, Bible Stories and Nature Activities and used the kitchen to prepare delicious snacks. After camp, the children were able to enjoy the playground.

Since this was our first year, we had a small group of children and had all ages together. Next year, we plan to have an older and younger group so we will need more volunteers. We will begin planning for our next VBS in April 2025.

Church Yard Sale- ANNUALLY (dates vary)

Ascension runs a yard sale one or two times during the year. The pricing model is "pay what you can," providing a service to all members of our community no matter what their circumstances are. Items for sale are donated by the Ascension community.

The Outreach Committee uses Ascension's Realm service for our email and calendar, and Zoom for our meeting space.

For more information on ANY of these activities, or to join our outreach committee organizing these events, please contact:

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— we are trying something new. We will be having a Pancake Breakfast on March 2nd that will also be a 1-A celebration for that month. There will be the usual pancakes and sausage to bring in the Lenten season.

One Ascension (1A) Sundays for 2024-2025 are:

2024:

September 29, Parish Picnic
October 27, Bishop Picnic
December 29, New Year's celebration

2025:

March 30
June 29

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@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 3, 2024.... All Saints' Sunday
January 12, 2025..... Baptism of Our Lord
April 19, 2025..... Easter Eve
April 20, 2025..... Easter Day
June 8, 2025..... Day of Pentecost
Summer 2025..... 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 welcomer.

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.

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)
- X (formerly Twitter): @ascensionmd (<https://x.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 9:10a.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 zhou@ascensionmd.org, or any choir member.

Hispanic Service: Provides music during the Spanish-language Eucharist. The music is led by Jesse Velásquez.

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 the Rev. Javier Ocampo at ocampo@ascensionmd.org (or call or text at (202)370-7765) 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-Ogunro, opiemagz@gmail.com, 240-481-6565.

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

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.

Welcomers—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 2024, the Expo date is September 15. Worship Leader groups are all represented, and will describe the duties and benefits of being a member of the various teams. Contact Ruth Anna Skowronski (ruth.skowronski@gmail.com) or Curt Lindsay (lindsay_curt@yahoo.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-Ogunro Open	allen.shirleyes@gmail.com opiemagz@gmail.com
Christian Formation for Adults		
Christian Formation for Children	Megan Didavi	mdidavi@gmail.com
Christian Formation for Youth	Angelique H Cooper	angel.givehope@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	Ruth Anna Skowronski Curt Lindsay	ruth.skowronski@gmail.com 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

Minister of Music

Etienne Zhou
zhou@ascensionmd.org

Deacon

The Rev. Rosa Briones
Rosa@ascensionmd.org

Candidate for Holy Orders

Tracey Forfa
tforfa@gmail.com

Parish Administrator

Julie Brewer
office@ascensionmd.org

Communication/IT/Sexton

Jesse Velazquez
comm@ascensionmd.org

2024

- **Sunday, September 15:** Ascension Expo
- **Sunday, September 15:** Program Year Begins
- **Sunday, September 22:** Youth Group Begins
- **Sunday, September 29:** Parish Picnic at Walder Park
- **Sunday, October 06:** Blessing of the Animals
- **Sunday, October 27:** One Ascension Sunday, 10:00 a.m. - Bishop's Visit
- **Sunday, November 03:** All Saints / Día de los Muertos Celebration
- **Sunday, November 03:** Daylight Saving Time ends (set clocks back one hour - "Fall back")
- **Thursday, November 28:** Thanksgiving service, 10:00 a.m.
- **Tuesday, December 24:** Christmas Eve Services:
 - 5:00 p.m. - For Families with Young Children
 - 7:00 p.m. - Holy Eucharist Bilingual
 - 8:30 p.m. - Festival Eucharist with Ascension Choir
- **Wednesday, December 25:** Christmas Day service, 10:00 a.m.
- **Sunday, December 29:** One Ascension Sunday, 10:00 a.m. - New Year's Celebration

2025

- **Sunday, January 05:** Epiphany Day - Día de Reyes (Rosca de Reyes) Celebration after 12:00 p.m. service
- **Sunday, January 19:** Annual Meeting, 10:00 a.m.
- **Saturday, January 25:** Diocesan Convention
- **Sunday, February 02:** Candlemas Day/Día de la Candelaria Celebration
- **Tuesday, March 04:** Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras, 6:00 p.m.
- **Wednesday, March 05:** Ash Wednesday Service, "Ashes to Go" at the metro station, and Noon & 7:00 p.m. Services
- **Sunday, March 09:** Daylight Saving Time begins (set clocks forward one hour - "Spring ahead")
- **Sunday, March 30:** One Ascension Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
- **Sunday, April 13:** Palm Sunday
- **Wednesday, April 16:** Tenebrae, 7:30 p.m.
- **Thursday, April 17:** Maundy Thursday: Holy Eucharist/Foot washing and Stripping of the Altar, 7:00 p.m.
- **Friday, April 18:** Good Friday: Prayer Book Liturgy, 12:00 p.m.
- **Saturday, April 19:** Easter Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter, 8:00 p.m.
- **Sunday, April 20:** Easter Services: 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m.
- **Sunday, June 01:** Ascension Day Celebration
- **Sunday, June 29:** One Ascension Sunday, 10:00 a.m.



ASCENSION EXPO 2023-24

The Rev. Javier García Ocampo, Rector
 The Rev. Rosa Briones, Deacon
 Ms. Tracey Forta, Candidate to Holy Orders

Admin: Julie Lively
 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 Etienne Zhou, 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 • Chalcidists • 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: Angelique H. Cooper Stephanie Hasty <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
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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 	Operations and Finance/Stewardship Chairperson: Avin Laminsingh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pledge Campaign • Registrar • Audit 	Green Team Chairperson: Kay Kolle <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 (Custodian, Kathryn Froelich) • Sexton 	Personnel Chairperson: Kristen Keating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination Committee 	Communications Chairperson: Jesse Velázquez <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media • Newsletters • Website Design
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“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms”. 1 Peter 4:10

As we transition from a warm and relaxing summer into the new program year of 2024-2025, I extend a sincere welcome to each of you! This summer has been filled with many blessings and enriching activities, and I hope it has provided you with moments of rest, connection, and renewal. Whether you spent time with family, traveled, or enjoyed the beauty of the season, I pray that you have experienced God’s grace and peace.

Now, as we embark on this new season, I am excited to share our vibrant and diverse calendar of activities. Our beautiful Church of the Ascension will be filled with opportunities for spiritual growth, fellowship, and service. From faith formation classes and Bible studies to outreach ministries and community events, there is truly something for everyone.

This year, we’ll be building on the strong foundation laid in past seasons, seeking to deepen our faith, engage in meaningful service, and foster even greater bonds of community. We are also excited to introduce new programs that reflect the growing needs and interests of our parish family, including English classes, more events to gather and celebrate, activities in our community, and more ways to serve both our local and global neighbors.

I encourage you to take part in the life of our parish in whatever way you feel called. Whether through worship, volunteering, or attending one of our many events, your presence makes a difference, and together, we can make this a year of continued growth and joy.

Blessings to you all as we begin this exciting new chapter!

With love,
Javier