

The Church of the Ascension

2018 Annual Meeting

January 27, 2019



*Let love be genuine;
hate what is evil,
hold fast to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection;
outdo one another in showing honor.
Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.
Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.*

- Romans 12:9-13

From the Rector

Dear people of Ascension,

Please join me in giving thanks...

- ✦ For all of the blessings we shared in 2018.
- ✦ For all who lead our various ministries and who contributed reports on the pages that follow.
- ✦ For nominees who have made themselves available for election to parish leadership.
- ✦ For our assisting clergy and their diverse gifts willingly shared with all of us.
- ✦ For our Wardens and Vestry members and their quiet, hard work on behalf of all of us.
- ✦ For our Treasurer, Susan Schlough, whose few pithy pages of financial reports are only a small representation of her significant week-to-week efforts on behalf of all of us.
- ✦ For Br. Nathanael Rahm, who keeps many things running smoothly during the week and who assembled much of this report.
- ✦ For all, named and unnamed in the pages that follow, who love God and Ascension and who devote their care, time and good works to sustain our ministries and mission.



The Very Rev. Patrick Raymond, Rector



**CHURCH
OF THE
ASCENSION**

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*



In memoriam

Wanda Dole, The Very Rev. James Dunkerley, Nancy Hyer,
Laurence 'Larry' Myers, Joseph Stack, DeWayne Williams

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- Lynette Hector (Vestry, 3-year term)
- Amber Zelazny (Vestry, 3-year term)
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As a matter of record

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The 2018 Pentecost Baptism of Alban Mark Galliher, surrounded by godparents, family and friends.
See wedding and other baptism and special event photos following the formal reports.

Church of the Ascension
Annual Meeting of Sunday, January 27, 2019
Proposed Agenda

I. Call to Order (during announcements at the 10 a.m. Mass)

II. Opening Prayer

III. Appointments:

- *Tim Kowalski, Clerk*

- *LaVerne Saunders, Parliamentarian*

- *Father Robert Petite, Chaplain*

- *Rachel Bridenstine, Bill Flodin, Bob Rarick, Tellers*

IV. Review and Approval of Agenda, with Amendments if Any

V. Notice of Approval of Minutes from January 27, 2018, Annual Meeting

VI. Nominations & Election

A. Report of Nominating Committee – Ken Kelling

Members will Elect:

- One Warden (2-year term) *Vestry nominee: Gary Alexander*

- Five Vestry Members

Vestry nominees for 3-year terms:

Marilyn Evans, Lynette Hector, Amber Zelazny

Vestry nominees for 2-year terms: Patrick Johnston, David Reeves

B. Opportunity for Nominations from the Floor

C. Election by Acclamation OR Balloting

VII. Spotlight: Sharing Lunch, Sharing Blessings – Cheryl Peterson

VIII. Financial Presentation—Susan Schlough, Treasurer

IX. Spotlight: David Schrader—an announcement and invitation

X. Buildings & Grounds Report – Cheryl Peterson

XI. Announcement of Election Results (in the event of balloting)

XII. Acknowledgement of Service: Outgoing Warden and Vestry Members

Chris Raymond, David Jones, Tim Kowalski, Betty Smith,

XII. Acknowledgement of Ministry, Program & Committee Reports, Leaders, Participants

XIII. Spotlight #3

XIV. Warden's Remarks: Cynthia Perrizo

XV. Open Mic (2 minute limit): Parishioner comments, questions.

XVI. Closing Hymn and Prayer

XVI. Adjournment



Nominating Committee Report

Dear fellow Ascension parishioners,

The Vestry is a very important ministry in the Episcopal Church. It is the backbone of the operation of the Parish, dealing with financial matters and upkeep of the building and grounds of our property. We are immensely grateful to all who serve on Vestry. It is an honor and rewarding privilege for all of us who have been called to serve.

Nominees for election at our January 27 Annual Meeting are as follows:

Warden, two year term:

- **Gary Alexander**

Vestry members

- **Marilyn Evans, Lynette Hector, Amber Zelazny** (Three-year terms)
- **Patrick Johnson, David Reeves** (Two-year terms)

Notes

- Vestry member **Wanda Dole** died in November, 2018, leaving a vacancy in her 2021 Vestry term. And 2021 Vestry member **Gary Alexander** has been nominated for election as Warden. It will therefore be necessary at our January 2019 annual meeting to elect at least one, and likely two, Vestry members for two-year terms. Nominees **Patrick Johnston** and **David Reeves** have agreed to be elected to two-year terms. We are prepared for contingencies in the event of floor nominations for either Warden or Vestry Member at the annual meeting.
- We share the thoughts of parishioners who may prefer to see more nominees so that elections might be competitive. Please know that we considered a dozen or so additional individuals. Some were not qualified under the definitions in our bylaws. As many declined as agreed. Some who declined asked to be considered in the future.
- A number of parishioners over the past few years have indicated that they appreciate seeing new Vestry Members, individuals who have not previously served and who may offer some new perspectives and gifts. Such is the case with a number of our present Vestry Member nominees. We appreciate their willingness to serve. The Vestry has a fairly good track record of diversity of members in terms of the usual demographics as well as areas of parish involvement, Sunday mass normally attended and more.
- We thank our Wardens, Father Raymond, fellow Vestry Members and other parishioners for thoughts, prayers, suggestions and other support, and Br. Nathanael for help with communications and compiling the nomination statements that follow.

Thank you for joining us in prayers for our nominees, for a positive, successful annual meeting and for our Wardens' and Vestry members' service and leadership.

Your Vestry Nominating Committee

- Jim Drury (2020)
- Cliff Green (2020)
- Ken Kelling (2021), Chairperson
- Tim Kowalski (2019)
- Cynthia Perrizo, *ex officio*
- Father Raymond, *ex officio*





Information on Wardens and Vestry Members from the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago



FOR WARDEN

From Canon 19. “There shall be two Wardens who shall be Communicants in good standing, and who may be distinguished as Senior and Junior, although all duties belong equally to both, and both shall be held responsible for the performance of such duties. The Wardens shall see that the Church is provided with a Bible ... and Prayer Books and Hymnals.... It shall also be their duty to provide the fair linens and the elements of bread and wine for the celebration of the Holy Communion; to procure proper vestments and vessels; and to cause the alms and other offerings of the people to be gathered in decent basins provided for the purpose. The Wardens shall have care that the Church Building be kept from all secular or other uses not authorized ...; that it be kept in good repair and clean, and that the premises around be in proper order. It is the duty of the Wardens to preserve order and decorum in and around the Church Building on all occasions whatever, and especially during the time of Divine Worship, and to admonish persons guilty of any unseemly levity or rudeness. In case there is no Rector, or in case of the Rector’s absence or inability to act, the Wardens according to seniority shall preside at all meetings of the Vestry and of the Parish.”

Leadership. Standards and expectations for Wardens are included in our parish bylaws. A Nominee for Warden should have previously served on the Vestry to insure his or her familiarity with the operation of a Parish, and must be faithful in attendance at Mass and in the practice of good stewardship.

FOR VESTRY

From Canon 20. “The Vestry shall consist of the Rector ..., the duly elected Wardens, and the duly elected members of Vestry. The Rector shall preside at all meetings.... In case of the Rector's absence from a meeting of the Vestry, or if there be no Rector, one of the Wardens (in the order of their seniority if both Wardens are present) shall preside at such meeting. The Vestry shall transact all the temporal business of the Parish; shall see that all things needful for the Public Services are provided; shall collect and disburse all moneys due for Church purposes; shall provide that ... officers be suitably appointed and faithfully discharge their duties; shall pay with punctuality ... the stipulated salaries of the Rector and others; shall inform themselves of all collections required by the Canons of the Diocese, and of assessments which may be imposed by the Convention, and take measures for the due and prompt liquidation of these obligations; and before the close of each fiscal year of the Diocese the Vestry shall collect ... a sum sufficient to liquidate all the current expenses of the Parish. The Vestry shall ... cause to be written and delivered to the Rector... a statement of the temporal condition of the Parish.... The said statement shall set forth what money, lands or other property have been received during their time of office, and from what source, what money has been expended, and for what objects, and what property has been purchased, exchanged or mortgaged, and for what purposes.”

Additional information may be found in the Ascension Bylaws, available for review by any parishioner.

Nominee Information and Statements

Following are responses provided by nominees to standard questions on the nomination form.

WARDEN

R. Gary Alexander

Employment/profession: I'm a professional actor and yoga instructor.

Number of years at Ascension: I was a member of Ascension in the late 1980s into the early 1990s when I became a member of Church of Our Saviour (COS). I've been back at Ascension since 2014.

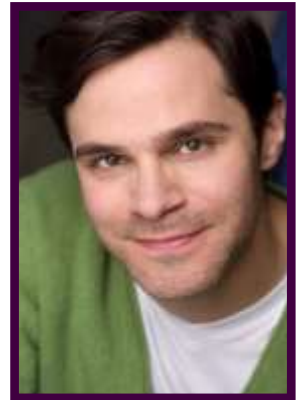
Present and Past Activities at Church of the Ascension: Since joining the vestry in 2018, I spearheaded the development and successful launch of the parish's new website. This included organizing a working group, researching providers, content development, contracting with outside vendors, managing the conversion from the old website, managing communication with the parish, and implementing a new, more efficient email service for the church. I'm grateful for the many people who helped with this long and complicated process. I continue to be involved with ongoing website maintenance and content review and with all other vestry activities. I've worked with the junior warden on planning an Ascension Connection event, have participated in parish receptions, the Thanksgiving Dinner, and have served as lector and at the altar. In my first stint at Ascension, I led the daily office one night a week, and served at the altar. I was also part of a team that did outreach work at Cabrini Green and I participated in hospitality events and other evening programs.

Activities at former parishes: I was raised in the Episcopal Church in the diocese of Western New York and have always been involved in church life, serving as an acolyte from my early teen years and participating in various youth activities. When I arrived at Northwestern in the 1980s, I participated in all aspects of the campus ministry including an active role in weekly liturgy and hospitality and special events. While at college, I also regularly attended services at Seabury Western seminary. At Church of Our Saviour, I served as lector, preacher, altar server, and helped serve meals at the weekly hot lunch program.

Present and past Diocesan activities or community/volunteer leadership: In college, I attended Diocesan Convention and participated in the election of Frank Griswold as Bishop Coadjutor. I am currently the unofficial diocesan yogi! I began a program of weekly classes and special events bringing this ancient form of physical meditation to COS in 2010 and St. James in 2012. Classes are ongoing at both locations. I have also taught yoga to the participants in the Diocesan summer camp, Summer in the City. Other volunteer activities include literacy tutoring and serving on the board of the Jane Addams Resource Corporation.

Skills and/or qualities I will bring to the vestry: I have a background in marketing: I worked for over a decade at the American Bar Association where I was successful in promoting product development and increasing membership in one of the ABA's specialty sections, and, later, as the director of Law Student Programs for the ABA's Membership and Marketing Division. I am good at figuring out new ways of approaching old problems and increasing efficiency.

As a life-long Episcopalian, I have a deep love for the church. I have been involved in various aspects of church life in this diocese for over 30 years. This broad background has made me even more appreciative of the traditions and uniqueness of Ascension. I also realize how important it is that we remain fully integrated in the diocese—to “stake our Anglo-Catholic claim,” as it were, in the wider church. As a member of the “gigging economy,” (a growing part of the workforce) I also bring the perspective of one who does not work a regular ‘9-5’ schedule. Indeed, part of my professional life involves a singing job at another Episcopal church. As a result, I'm unable to be at Ascension on Sunday mornings as often as I would like. However, as I believe is evident from the work I've done over the last year, my commitment to Ascension remains unflagging and strong. Like many of us, I spend most of my professional life among the un-churched, including those who are either ambivalent about “organized religion” or even hostile to it. This has helped me to understand better the outsider's perspective on the church and, at the same time, to see the deep desire for a means of acknowledging and accommodating spirituality.



Vision: I want to open Ascension's doors (both literal and figurative) as wide as possible, both to welcome people in but also to allow the grace of God to flow out into the world around us. I would like to continue to explore ways of becoming more a part of the neighborhood, deanery, and diocese. In other words, I want to celebrate, build on, and share our rich traditions, and to continue to make Ascension a vibrant, diverse, welcoming, and hopeful place, doing our part in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

First steps: When Bishop Lee visited last Ascension Day and met briefly with the vestry, I reported that we were in the midst of developing a new website. He mentioned that that process offered an opportunity at further defining who we are as a parish. As I continued to work on the website and on other vestry activities, I became aware how much Ascension is in need of a clear and articulated mission and vision for the future. I would like the coming years to be focused in part on doing the hard (but rewarding) work of defining our mission and vision and eventually developing short- and long-term strategies for fulfilling that mission.

VESTRY NOMINEES

Marilyn Evans Three-year term

Employment: Retired legal secretary/analyst, BMO Harris Bank, NA

Number of years at Church of the Ascension: 3

Church involvement, at Ascension and elsewhere: My involvement and service in the parish thus far has mainly included Sunday morning hospitality, the food pantry, and on-going participation in adult education opportunities: Bible study, the Ascension book group, and Sunday between-mass classes, presentations and discussions. I served as one of three lay delegates from Ascension to the November 2018 Diocese of Chicago Convention. Involvement in prior churches included Bible studies, hospitality for special events and teen ministry/gatherings.



Parish membership and Vestry service: My membership at Church of Ascension came about when a CoA parishioner began sending me (via email) Father Raymond's sermons when he served as Priest-in-Charge after apparently several very difficult years for the church. I eventually decided to attend a service at Ascension and immediately felt that I found the worship services I have been looking for all through my 40 years as a devout Christian. Church of the Ascension is the first church I have actually joined and I want to do everything I can to make sure the church thrives and that our church family grows and prospers the Kingdom. My role on the Vestry will be that parishioner who is not a city dweller but comes from the suburbs, however, being involved in the Vestry is well worth the trip. I hope that through hard work, collaboration and cooperation, all those involved in working for the church will contribute to its growth and stability for all present and future members of Church of the Ascension.

Lynette Hector Three-year term

Employment: Retired **Number of years at Ascension:** 20

Present and Past Activities at Church of the Ascension:

Sacristy volunteer, Usher, Lector, Flower Guild member, Diocesan Rep.

Activities in former parishes: Choir member, Vestry member, Altar Guild, ECW member, ERA Board Member

Present and past Diocesan activities or community/volunteer leadership: Volunteer at Diocesan Convention



Why would you like to serve on the Vestry and/or your vision for the Vestry's leadership in the coming year: When asked to do something, if you can one should say yes, so I agreed to serve.

Amber Zelazny Three-year term

Employment/Profession: Technology Research

Number of years at Church of the Ascension: 2 ½

Present/Past Activities at Church of the Ascension: Women's' Bible Study group, Nursery Task Force

Activities in former parishes: Episcopal Youth Community (EYC), Acolyte

Present and past Diocesan activities or community/volunteer leadership: Alpha Gamma Delta Social Fraternity, Chicago Booth Alumni, Girl Scouts, Toastmasters Intl.

Brief statement on why you would like to serve on the Vestry and/or your vision for the Vestry's leadership in the coming year: I would like to serve on the Vestry to gain a detailed understanding of how the church operates in a manner to serve Christ. I am a 7th generation Episcopalian and have several family members, including parents and grandparents, who have served on vestries, so I am familiar with the roles entailed.



N. Patrick Johnston Two-year term

Employment: Physician

Number of years at Church of the Ascension: 38

Present and Past Activities at Church of the Ascension: Acolyte, Vestry, Activities Chair, Church School Teacher, Server for Thanksgiving dinners

Activities in former parishes: Choir member, Acolyte

Present and past Diocesan activities or community/volunteer leadership: Representative at Diocesan Convention, Volunteer Physician at Chicago Free Clinic, Boy Scout Leader, Medical Mission work in Kenya

Brief statement on why you would like to serve on the Vestry and/or your vision for the Vestry's leadership in the coming year: I feel that the vestry should support our Rector in rendering our very best to God, through the Mass. We must maintain the buildings, vestments and the tools we use for worship. We should provide sufficient funds to maintain quality music. We should offer leadership in reaching out to visitors with warmth and Christian love.



David Reeves Two-year term

Employment: Retired from International Housewares Association System Manager

Number of years at Church of the Ascension: 35

Present and Past Activities at Church of the Ascension: Vestry, Activities Committee, Thanksgiving dinner, coffee hour

Activities in former parishes: Vestry, Organist-Choirmaster

Vision for Vestry leadership: Experiences and qualities that I hope will support my Vestry service include my past Vestry service, my love of the parish, my appreciation of our ministries of worship and music, and my long time friendships with many members.



2018 Financial Highlights

Fiscal year 2018 was a roller coaster in the markets, on which Ascension's income significantly relies.

- We received larger-than-expected payouts from both Stoskopf trust funds at their year end (before markets went down)
- Our endowments ended the year down, with a change in value from \$5,327,187 to \$5,054,198

We again invested in our physical plant to be good stewards of the property

- Numerous projects that totaled \$99,254 in items to be capitalized
- The largest was phase 1 of the organ renovation with a total capitalized value of \$39,995 (more organ work to come in 2019)

We used less of the Vestry-restricted portion of the General Endowment to support our operating budget than was planned. There were two reasons for this:

- Large extra Stoskopf trusts payouts at Trust Year End that supplemented the regularly monthly income we receive from them
- Use of cash-on-hand at the start of the year
 - The original budget called for \$146,700 to be required to balance our income/expenses [4.5% of the 12-quarter average value], while the net amount used was \$33,150. We did have to withdraw endowment funds along the way because the Stoskopf money comes late in the year

Analysis of Cash on Hand	Ending Balances	Ending Balances
Operating Fund	34,929.18	27,050.01
Operating Payroll	16,794.80	25,684.63
Savings Account	4567.69	1478.23
Cash net of special funds	56,291.67	54,212.87
Building Fund	0.00	2422.74
Columbarium Fund	26,311.00	31,011.00
Society of Mary Fund	317.00	120.00
CD Recording Fund	130.00	130.00
Thanksgiving Dinner Fund	0.00	0.00
Altar Linens & Furnishings Fund	8529.60	7604.99
Garden Fund	0.00	0.00
Other Special Offerings Fund	0.00	192.86
Food Pantry Fund	3500.00	2101.00
Cash held in special funds	38,787.60	43,582.59
Total BOA w/o RDF	95,079.27	97,795.46
Rector's Discretionary Fd	3757.40	6204.00
Current liabilities	5336.10	20,880.10
Total Cash	104,172.77	124,879.46

Pledging for 2019

Pledging is down
from last year

Three-year overview

- In mid-January of **2017**, we had 63 pledges in the amount of **\$85,127**
- In mid-January of **2018**, we had 61 pledges in the amount of **\$102,583**
- In mid-January of **2019**, we had 56 pledges in the amount of **\$86,145**

Thank you to everyone who has pledged.
It makes our financial planning much easier.

- **Thank you also** to the 2018 counting teams and check signers:

Lynn Belding
Cliff Green
Jay Jaycot
Jim Lo Bello
Mike Vales
DiAnne Walsh

Operating Revenues & Expenses	2017 ACTUAL	2018 ACTUAL	2019 BUDGET	
Operating Income				
Plate & Pledge	\$148,801	\$133,534	\$123,972	
Stoskopf Trusts	\$393,116	\$439,830	\$391,757	
Endowment	\$84,867	\$70,843	\$167,240	#
Batson Oil Bequest	\$5525	\$5410	\$5374	
Other	\$96,622	\$102,236	\$101,401	
Total	\$726,931	\$751,193	\$789,744	
Non-Operating Income				
Building Fund	\$203,971	\$55,500	\$116,868	
Outreach + Pantry	\$11,950	\$11,406	\$5314	
Total	\$215,921	\$66,906	\$122,182	
Total Income	\$944,852	\$818,760	\$911,926	
	2017 ACTUAL	2018 ACTUAL	2019 BUDGET	
Expenses				
Work Outside Parish	\$95,695	\$95,659	\$108,452	
Clergy Support	\$214,646	\$210,702	\$221,609	
Worship	\$9,470	\$10,674	\$10,126	
Music Program	\$146,369	\$144,837	\$148,994	
Christian Education	\$341	\$354	\$8240	
Other Programs	\$10,850	\$13,671	\$19,020	
Administration	\$91,423	\$90,296	\$95,193	
Maintenance	\$142,863	\$148,947	\$175,113	
Capitalized Repairs	\$230,404	\$99,254	\$120,001	
Total Expense	\$942,062	\$814,395	\$906,748	
Cash on hand	\$104,173	\$124,879		
Cash net of special funds	\$56,292	\$54,213		

Acolytes Report

Jim Lo Bello, Master of Acolytes

I do not think it is necessary to explain what Acolytes do. They can be seen at every celebration of the Eucharist and all other liturgical Services. Webster's Dictionary states that an acolyte is "one who serves the priest at Mass." Having acolytes is not a necessity, but I couldn't imagine our Services without them. Acolytes do make our Services more prayerful and meaningful. Can you imagine Solemn High Mass without incense?

We are fortunate in having nineteen dedicated men and women to assist at the Altar. On behalf of the congregation, I would like to thank all of them. They play a most important role in our worship of Almighty God. If others are interested in becoming an acolyte, we can use assistance at most Services:

8:00 a.m. Sunday Said Mass
 9:00 a.m. Sung Mass
 11:00 a.m. Solemn High Mass
 4:00 p.m. Evensong and Benediction (1st Sunday of the month)
 12:05 p.m. Wednesday Said Mass
 6:30 p.m. Stations of the Cross on Fridays of Lent

We try to schedule the acolytes as they desire. Training is given as needed. Being an acolyte is an excellent way to get to know others in our parish, while being a part of the important ministry of assisting at the Altar. If you are interested or have questions, please see me, or phone/text me at 1 (224) 422-9623.

Respectfully submitted,
 Jim Lo Bello, Master of Acolytes



2018 'Average Sunday Attendance' Data

Average Attendance on Sundays at:	7:30 a.m. Morning Prayer	7:30 a.m. High/Low	8:00 a.m. Said/Low Mass	8:00 a.m. High/Low	9:00 a.m. Sung Mass	9:00 a.m. High/Low	11:00 a.m. Solemn High Mass	11:00 a.m. High/Low	4:00 p.m. Evensong & Benediction Or Other	4:00 p.m. High/Low	AVERAGE Total for All 52 Sundays
2017	4		8		19		67		36		104
2018	4	6/2	7	10/3	19	28/11	63	83/43	50	124/10	103
Change from 2017:	0%		-12.5%		0%		-6%		+39%		

Ascension Archives Report

Carol Noren, Archivist

The Ascension archives project began in September 2016. In decades past the church had an archives committee that met regularly and preserved church records according to diocesan guidelines, but the committee had not been active for at least fifteen years. An additional issue was unsuitable storage conditions; some records, stored in the basement of the rectory, were destroyed by flooding, and those kept in the room under St. Anne's nursery were subject to mildew and mold. Remedial action was needed. With approval of the vestry, appropriate archival supplies were purchased from Gaylord Archival, and an upstairs room in the coach house designated for archival storage. Susan Schlough and Jay Jacot went through financial documents to determine which were duplicates and/or no longer needed to be retained. Mother Judith Marie, OSA, made available copies of photographs, correspondence, and other materials from the convent: a valuable new addition to the Ascension collection. Shelving was purchased and assembled for the new room, and as of November 2018 nearly all records have been organized and boxed or shelved in the appropriate places. Arrangements for regular access are made with the Rev. Anna Broadbent, who now lives in the coach house.

There is further work to be done, including the following:

- Consolidate the vestry minutes (we have two or three sets from some years)
- Prepare an inventory of contents (as well as category) of each archival box.
- Complete archival encapsulation of photographs.
- Prepare two master lists: one of the boxes, and a more detailed one that includes the inventories.
- Make an online link to the master list for the diocesan archivist and possibly the church's website.
- Add to the collections of sermons by previous rectors, assisting priests, and curates.
- Update financial records, vestry minutes, and *TWAA storage periodically*. (*Note: to conform to diocesan and denominational guidelines, this means storage of hard copies on acid-free paper. Electronic storage is not considered permanent.*)
- Consult with organist and choirmaster regarding recordings and other data that should be retained from the church's music ministry.
- Continue oral history project: video interviews with people who have a particularly long or otherwise interesting connection to Ascension.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Noren, Archivist

Views from the new archive storage and work room, in the Ascension coach house.



Ascension Book Group Report

Ken Kelling, Organizer and Facilitator

The Ascension Book Group tends to follow the academic year of September to May. For the 2018-2019 term we have been and will be exploring books that have a broad variety of themes, but always remain exploring Christian messages and themes. The books for the 2018-2019 season are as follows:

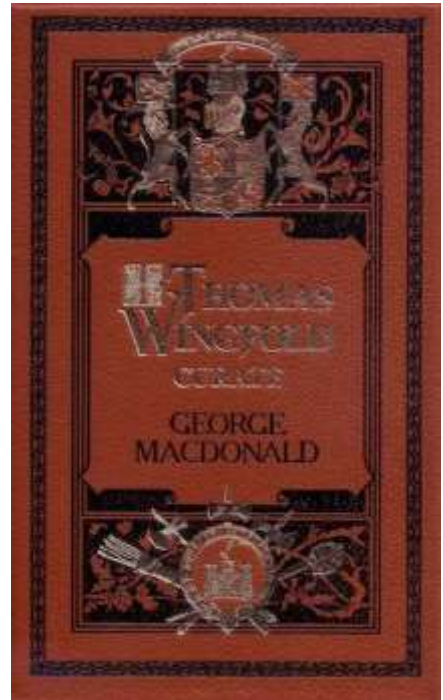
William E. Barrett (1900-1986) *The Lilies of the Field* (1962)
Charles Williams (1886-1945) *War In Heaven* (1931)
George MacDonald (1824-1905) *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* (1876)
Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) *Christmas at Thompson Hall:
And Other Christmas Stories* (1860-1885)
Ken Follett (b. 1949) *The Pillars of the Earth* (1989)
Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred & Profane
Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (1945)
Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) *Four Major Plays* (1879-1892) *A Doll's House; Ghosts;
Hedda Gabler; The Master Builder*
Louise Erdrich (b. 1954) *Future Home of the Living God* (2017)

We meet one evening each month or on Sunday after church for book discussions. Although we are a small group, the discussions can be quite lively at times. To quote one member of the group, "I enjoy reading these books because they are titles I would never have come up with on my own and yet, I am always learning how to see things in a new way." Due to the advance of the Internet and social media, our book group titles have made it out into the cyber-world thanks to TWAA. I have received emails from members of book groups from other congregations that have begun following our selection list to see what we are doing and have even received suggestions for new titles.

I receive emails or am told comments by parishioners that they are keeping up with the titles we are reading, and even reading some of the titles along with us, but do not participate in the discussions. To that I can only say that our discussions would be far richer with you there, but keep following along if you cannot make it anyway. Sometimes members have not had enough time to read every title through; by participating in the discussion anyway it has occasionally given them the push to finish reading it the rest of the way through.

We have not yet decided on a theme or even book titles for the 2019-2020 season, so if there are any suggestions get them to me or any Ascension Book Group member and we will consider them. It has been suggested and is a good idea that we have individuals moderate for an individual book title that may be near and dear to his/her heart. That would be great. Just let me know and we will follow up on that.

Respectfully submitted,
Ken Kelling, Facilitator



Deacon's Report

The Rev. Charles Farrell

My Sisters & Brothers,

It has been a joy to serve as a deacon at the Church of the Ascension over this past year and I am so pleased that the Bishop has formally assigned me to the parish. During this time I have tried to meet many of you, and I have learned to do much of the Solemn High Mass, although I am still learning the fine points of the deacon's role. I have also enjoyed serving with many of you preparing bags of food during the monthly St. Anthony's Food Pantry which is a terrific outreach ministry.



I was recently asked what the role of the deacon really is, and it occurred to me that this may be a question several of you might have. In the diaconal ordination rite we are told that deacons are ministers of servanthood who are to bring the Church to the world and the world to the Church. This is not a very helpful explanation, and because the language is too "churchy" it is sometimes misunderstood. Simply put, because deacons are ordained people who live largely like lay persons much of our role is to be a bridge between the Church and contemporary society. This role is symbolized in the liturgical part we play in the Mass. First, we proclaim the Gospel amid the people, bringing the Church through the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. And secondly, we prepare the table for the Lord's Supper and like the steward at the wedding feast, clean up afterward. I am happy to talk more with anyone about the diaconate if that is helpful.

In addition to my work on Sunday's and for the St. Anthony's food pantry I feel that it is important that I also find a place to serve personally. Currently, I volunteer at Care For Real a social service agency in Edgewater. The time I spend doing this is important to me in that it is my personal service to the needy and to God. In the coming year I am hoping that I can do more at Ascension to encourage us to increase our outreach ministries. We are a rich parish in the center of one of the great cities of this country. We must be called to look beyond our own walls and find more ways to bring the Kingdom of God into the City of Chicago. I look forward to that challenge. Thank you for your support and welcome into the Ascension Faith Community!

I remain your servant in Christ,
Charles Farrell, Deacon

Lectors Report

Avril Hector, Coordinator

"So they read from the book, from the law of God. ...

They gave the sense so the people understood the reading." - Nehemiah 8:8

I want to take this opportunity to thank all who have been so diligent in their service as Lectors to the Church of the Ascension. This is a wonderful ministry that any laity can contribute to the Eucharist. If you are interested in reading the Lessons at either the 9:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. Eucharists, at 4:00 p.m. Evening song and Benediction or at special liturgies throughout the year, please contact me or Fr. Raymond. Thanks again to all Lectors for your valued ministry to our parish.



Respectfully submitted,
Avril Hector

Building and Grounds Report

Cheryl Peterson

The Buildings and Grounds Committee continues to invest in the improvement of church properties. Meetings were held on a quarterly basis, or as needed, for the consideration of projects related to the church building proper, the parish hall, the rectory, the coach house, and the garden and surrounding grounds. Several projects were accomplished during 2018, and additional major improvements were authorized for completion in 2019.

In last year's report, the replacement of the slate roof for the church during October 2017 was the main focus for discussion. The entirely new slate roof installed by Salvo Architectural Roofing of Naperville fixed the main leak that allowed water to gush forth from the sanctuary arch in April 2017. Subsequently, B & G began to consider rehabilitation of the interior structure of the sanctuary arch which has been steadily deteriorating. Bids were obtained from 3 contractors to: 1) remedy unsightly efflorescence and shedding of the mortar; 2) strengthen the structural integrity of the brickwork; 3) replace deteriorated brick in the north wall; and 4) repair crumbling plaster on the wall above the arch and repaint this wall all the way to the peak. This interior work was authorized by the Vestry in October 2018 and the work is now underway by Touchstone, Inc. with completion expected by March 1, 2019.



Other accomplishments during 2018 include:

- ★ New or improved lighting:
 - Throughout the garden and yard areas of all church buildings and along LaSalle Street.
 - In the passageways between the security doors into Wheeler Hall and St. Michael's Hall.
 - In the alley and parking lot.
 - At entrance doors.
- ★ Garden planting and beautification, including a Japanese red maple tree, a blue spruce tree, and several donations of potted flowers and bulbs.
- ★ Replacement of the rectory boiler. ➡
- ★ Replacement of boiler holding tanks for the church and parish hall.
- ★ Exterior tuck-pointing on portions of the parish hall, the chimney, and the coach house.
- ★ Repair of a portion of the St. Michael Hall slate roof.
- ★ Major concrete repair to outdoor accessible ramp; smoothing/grinding of cement work in the garden area for pedestrian safety; repair of the wall by steps to the basement under the parish house.



- * New curtains in Wheeler Hall and new lights between the security doors into the hallway.
- * A new drinking fountain and water bottle filler.
- * Painting of the church library.
- * Cleaning/reorganization of the nursery and the kitchen. ➔
- * Repair to crumbling wall in rectory basement stairwell.
- * New, stronger sump pump in rectory basement following spring 2018 flooding.
- * Approval of a new flat roof for the lowest section of the parish hall (entrance hall) and new shingles, roof and gutters for the rectory; now awaiting city permits and better weather.



Maintenance on a weekly basis has been enhanced by a contractual agreement for cleaning services. Marco Patricio works 4-5 hours every Thursday. He also does outdoor trimming and helps with garden projects as needed. Volunteers at spring and fall workdays continue to assist with flower and bulb planting and leaf raking as well as special interior projects.

Buildings and Grounds requires a group effort, and all members deserve recognition for their dedicated efforts: Mike Vales, co-chair, Cliff Green, Jim Lenz, Jim Lo Bello, Rachel Bridenstine, and Wanda Dole (sadly missed). Special thanks to our facilities manager, George Panice, for his expert oversight of our property and his detailed attention to needed repairs. Finally, B & G is grateful to Fr. Patrick Raymond for his sustaining interest and leadership in the committee's work.



Our Church of the Ascension properties have many needs.

We welcome the energy and interest of those who might join the committee or invest in a special time-limited project. The committee is crafting an ambitious agenda for 2019 and we welcome your involvement and your financial support.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Peterson, Chair



Reflections on the Diocese of Chicago Annual Convention, November 2018

Marilyn Evans - *"... cautionary and yet hopeful ..."* Ray Suarez was the Keynote Speaker for the convention and his perspective as a journalist and life-long Episcopalian was both enlightening and entertaining. His thoughts and observations about the church in this 21st century were cautionary and yet hopeful as we go forward to do Christ's work in today's world. He was an excellent choice to speak to our diverse congregations.



Ken Kelling - *"... a very positive experience ..."* Several factors made this year's Diocesan Convention a very positive experience for me: ● Marilyn and I benefited from the well-attended workshop titled Disaster and Safety Preparedness, where we learned about the Diocesan Asset Map, essential in the event of a natural disaster, and about how to handle crisis situations that may develop in the church in the event of an undesirable intruder. ● I had the chance to meet and chat with keynote speaker Ray Suarez. ● I had the honor of being a chalice bearer for the Convention Eucharist. ● I got to spend some time with a number of familiar friends from churches all over the Diocese and made some new ones also.

James Baran - *"...challenging concepts ..."* It was meaningful to hear compassionate debate on several topics during the 2018 Convention. Transgender and nonbinary are challenging concepts today. When injustice is committed by our government with malice toward a group of people, it is our Christian duty to speak out in opposition. Resolution G-181, "Affirmation of the Inherent Dignity of Transgender and Nonbinary Persons as Beloved by God" passed with unanimous support. How fitting that the last stanza of the last hymn sung at the Convention (to Nettleton) included these words: *"Draw together at one table all the human family; shape a circle ever wider and a people ever free."*



Christopher Poore - *"... signs of the times ..."* Thanks to donors and parishes around Chicago, I attended my first Diocesan Convention, along with nine other members of the Brent House UChicago campus ministry. The Convention partly focused on asking how we can minister to young adults. Brent House Chaplain, Rev. Stacy Alan, believes in the power of showing young adults how the Episcopal Church "works" during convention. It's transformative for many to see attendees discern "the signs of the times" by creating a more inclusive, more loving church.

Witnessing our participatory decision-making process has even led some young adults to become official Episcopalians! So a big thank you to all who support-or are thinking of support-ing!-Brent House, especially as we celebrate Stacy's twentieth year of ordained ministry.

Father Raymond - *"... esprit de corps ..."* One feature that made this convention positive for me was the esprit de corps shared by those who offered their impressions above and Father Petite (who joined us Friday). I noticed three things about them, collectively: 1) they had previewed the materials and arrived well-prepared; 2) even though the worship and music (in the hotel ballroom) were so different from ours at Ascension, they took part with open hearts rather than disdain; 3) by their actions, comments and questions, individually and collectively, they demonstrated their faith in Christ and their care for the Church.



Flower Guild Report

Cliff Green, Chairperson

The Flower Guild is an important and rewarding ministry. We help to beautify the church for the glory of God by purchasing and arranging flowers on the High Altar and on the three shrines throughout the church. Parishioners donate flowers to be dedicated at a cost of \$80 for the High Altar and \$30 for each shrine. At Easter and the Advent and Christmas season, the Flower Guild creates beautiful displays to adorn the Ascension. We are a team that works well together and has fun as we perform our creative duties. The Flower Guild is always looking for new members. You don't need to be skilled, just be ready to have fun and create the floral arrangements requested. We will train you if necessary, and you can work in teams or alone. If you would like to join our team, just contact one of our members. Hoping I've not omitted anyone in error, I would like to thank the members of our Flower Guild and others who have offered assistance during the past year for their hard work, dedication and artistry, especially Marlea Edinger, Avril Hector, Lynette Hector, Mary Jane and Tim Kowalski, Judy Mintel, Carol Noren, Cheryl Peterson, Brooke Raymond, Father Patrick Raymond, Claudia Vargas, DiAnne Walsh, John West, David White ... and, of course, all flower donors.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cliff Green

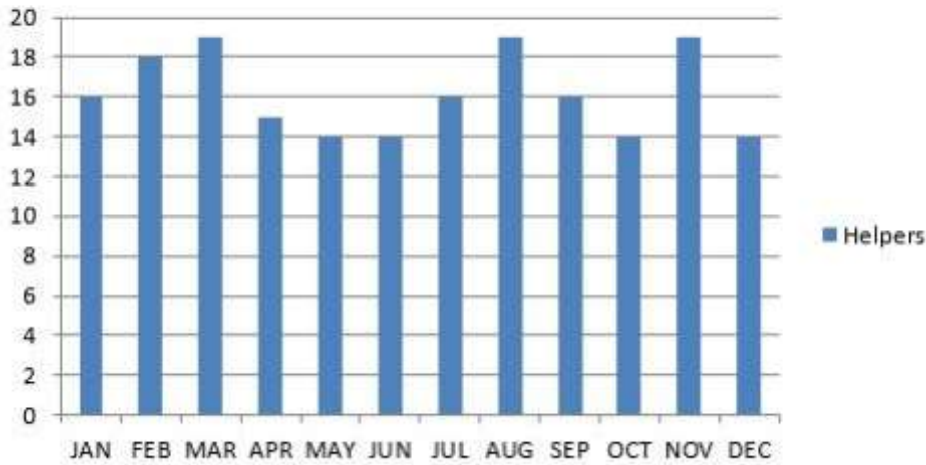


St. Anthony of Padua Food Pantry Report

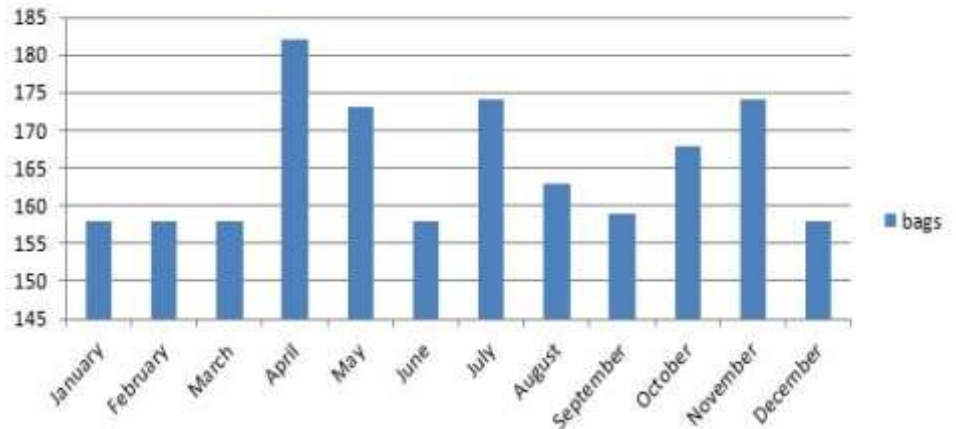
Susan Schlough, Food Pantry Coordinator

The food pantry had a very successful year in 2018. We provided an average of 165 grocery bags of food and 180 lunches each month on the first Saturday, as well as food at the door during the week for anyone who asked [distributed by Br. Nathanael]. We had a regular group of COA volunteers each month, supplemented by folks who live in the nearby community [many of whom also participate regularly]. Our Vestry-allocated budget was augmented this year by generous donations. One parishioner was able to use an employer matching funds program for food pantry donations. Another directed his pledge to the food pantry. Kuni Satai walked a 5K race sponsored by parishioners who donated to the food pantry in support of his effort. Other parishioners made special contributions to the pantry. These collective extra funds allowed us to provide meat or fish products each month, and hams at Easter and Christmas, and toiletry bags for 156 people each month. The toiletry bags were very popular with our clients. Thank you to all who helped us.

Food Pantry Helpers-2018



Bags Distributed by Month-2018



Thanks, Kuni, for running again for the Pantry

Community Thanksgiving Meal Report

Carol Noren and Robert Rarick, Co-chairs

The 2018 Thanksgiving Dinner for the Community was an even more popular venture than in 2017; we served an estimated 135 dinners in St. Michael Hall, plus another 76 in take-out meals. Because of some unexpected and late-arriving turkey donations, we were able to package and freeze the left-over meat, and then share it with our food pantry clients. We appreciate George Panice's help with setting up the dining room. Thanks also to the Rev. Anna Broadbent for allowing our cooks to use the coach house kitchen on the day of the dinner, DiAnne Walsh for her organizational expertise prior to the dinner, the friends and members who contributed roasted, carved turkeys or cash to cost the cover of other aspects of the meal, and the many volunteers who worked hard on both Saturday and Sunday to make our guests feel welcome and well-fed. The 'hosts' at each table added a dimension to our hospitality. Thank you all!



Sharing Lunch, Sharing Blessings

Cheryl Peterson



The Sharing Lunch, Sharing Blessings group was formed in October 2018 and meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month following the noontime mass. Through January of 2019, the group has met on 4 occasions with an average attendance of 12 people. The group enjoys a simple meal together, and its participants look forward to a time of informal conversation and fellowship. Each meeting usually has a theme—our favorite saints, our cherished Christmas traditions, and the wise men and women who have directed our paths in life. Our December gathering included the sending of Christmas cards to 20 individuals or families who are on the weekly prayer list or who affiliate with Ascension from afar, having relocated to other areas of the country due to work or retirement. We devote time at each meeting to scripture readings, psalms, and prayers.

This group will continue to evolve over the next year as we seek to reach out to additional members of our parish and to some of our neighbors. We will continue to encourage each other in spiritual growth through listening, learning, caring, sharing and prayer. Volunteers to help with lunch preparation are always welcome, and special requests for favorite meals are honored. Carol Noren, DiAnne Walsh, and Cynthia Perrizo are faithful helpers and cooks. Please let Cheryl Peterson know if you have a special interest in this weekday event.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Peterson, Chair

From the Choirmaster

Benjamin Rivera

I'm very grateful for Father Raymond, David White, the choir, and our guest artists who contribute so much to our worship at Ascension—in the words of the Nicene Creed, both “seen and unseen.”

Last year's (2017-2018) choir roster included approximately 65 singers, down a bit from the previous year as our regulars accepted a larger share of the work offered to them. (I continue to audition prospective singers on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are fielding the best available. As one can imagine, there are issues of competition with other church work; however, we also have several singers who make the majority of their living as soloists, and they are unavailable to us whenever a solo opportunity arises.) We used a variety of configurations, from a solo singer to 18 singers, and everywhere in between. We were joined by some guest instrumentalists, including violin, oboe, and timpani. We also added small SATB ensembles to some summer Sundays, which in past years were nearly always men-only.

This year (2018-2019) we have 10 regulars who sing most Masses, 5 auxiliaries who sing often, and many occasional singers; their names will be added to the new website soon. Speaking of, if you are ever curious about what repertoire is coming next, I encourage you to look on the website. In addition to our ongoing commitment to music of the Renaissance and standard repertoire from Haydn and his contemporaries, I am purposefully including more repertoire from the 20th and 21st centuries. We have added 20th-century Mass settings by Howells, Langlais, and Pärt to our library, and the 21st-century Tavener setting, and we will be offering them in the coming months. Thus far this year, we have sung a US premiere of a Mass by Gabriel Jackson, as well as canticles by Jackson and Howard Helvey and a Benediction setting by our own David White. In February, we will sing the US premiere of an Evening Service by Owain Park, written in 2017. There has been a real resurgence of composition for High Anglican and Catholic services, and I'm excited to mix in some of these newer works.

On the administrative side, Alexia Rivera and I have completed the reorganization and cataloging of our entire choral music library. It was a tremendous undertaking, and I am grateful that the library catalog is now digitized. It is now possible for me to search online for music in our library from wherever I happen to be, using the composer's name, a keyword, etc. It is also easier for me to find the scores quickly once I know we own them. In the process, we recycled thousands of superfluous photocopies that had accumulated over the years. The next major project is the organization and culling of our chant files, which is less urgent and can be done slowly but surely.

Thank you all for your continued support as we work to provide appropriate and excellent music for God's glory and the edification of the faithful.



Organist's Report

David White, Organist

2018 was a banner year for the parish Music Program in several ways. Under Dr. Rivera, the Choir is singing demanding repertory at a consistently high level, and has, as was the case last year, added several new Mass settings and anthems to its repertory this year.

The Vestry authorized a major refurbishing project for The Schrader Organ, in two phases, the first of which was completed with great success by our curators, The Berghaus Organ Company. Many folks know that the instrument had been enduring the slow and inexorable malfunction of vital parts original to the 1964 installation, and "Phase One" included the replacement of all the slider-motors, cleaning and refurbishing of the sliders themselves, a cleaning of 80% of the organ's pipes. The pipes are what play, so to speak, and the sliders and slider-motors are what enable them to play – so you can see that these are vital to the organ's 'good health.' We now have a beautifully-functioning, dependable stop combination-action, and no more wondering on the part of the Organist, as to whether a rank will sound when called upon!

"Phase Two" is scheduled to be completed from June through September, 2019, and will entail a complete reworking and refurbishing of the instrument's reed pipes. Watch for more details on this as it unfolds, as well as your opportunity to be an important part of this legacy of music at Ascension!

The Organist has composed several new hymn-tunes, bringing his collection of published hymns to 50, and will continue to supply anthems/canticles/hymns as needed and as thought helpful. Composed-for-us and new-to-us settings of the *O Salutaris* and *Tantum ergo* as well as *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* are being offered this year. Organ repertory ranging from the Renaissance to world-premieres have been heard as Voluntaries, including a year-long traversal of the final organ work of Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) *Livre du Saint-Sacrement* (Book of the Blessed Sacrament) a series of eighteen meditations on the life of Christ and on the Real Presence, interspersed throughout the liturgical year.

On behalf of the Choirmaster and Choir, may I say once again how enormously grateful we are to the parish for the opportunity to serve and minister in a community where music is so highly valued, and look forward to many worthy offerings to come.

S.D.G.

Respectfully submitted,
David White, Organist



*Slider motor replacement
by the Berghaus Organ crew*

Lay Pastoral Care Reports

Ken Kelling & Cheryl Peterson



Each week I regularly visit several individuals who reside in nursing care or assisted living facilities. My focus is on individuals who have either no living relatives or have relatives who do not live in the Chicago area and/or no one to look in on them. I spend quality time with them for two hours or more per individual. Sister Barbara Drell from the Sisters of Saint Anne accompanies me on one of those weekly visits. During the prayer portion of the visit, we follow the church's weekly Solemn High Mass program and recite some of the prayers and readings to prepare for receiving communion. If another resident should be nearby, such as in the nursing home, and asks to participate, we welcome that individual to share in our prayers and to receive communion if a baptized Christian.

I distribute approximately between three and five communion *hostia* per week. I meet with our rector at least once a month to give a report on my pastoral activities and to let him know how the individuals are doing whom I visit.

If I receive a specific request from a member of the parish or from a family member or from our rector, I do make other pastoral visits to hospitals and rehabilitation facilities as needed. In the past year I have made several visits to parishioners at Rush Hospital when I was asked. I have made home visits when requested. I have helped parishioners with rides to and from the doctor or the church as needed and occasionally run errands to do some minor shopping.

I work very carefully with the doctors, nurses, and other hospital or nursing home staff in order to serve as a vocal advocate for any of our parishioners in need.

If a parish member needs pastoral care for a family member, or for himself/herself when in a hospital, rehabilitation facility or any other situation, one needs only ask and I will do my best to provide whatever pastoral care is needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Kelling, Lay Volunteer Chaplain & Lay Eucharistic Minister

Beginning in February 2018 and continuing through the first week of May, I participated in a 10 week course, Spiritual Care Visitor Training Program, offered by Bishop Anderson House, Diocese of Chicago. The class of 15 people from throughout the Diocese met on Saturday mornings for 3 hours at St. James Cathedral and concluded with a service of Holy Eucharist and Commissioning led by Bishop Jeffrey Lee on May 5, 2018. I contributed observations on my experiences to several editions of the Ascension newsletter, *This Week at Ascension*, and consulted regularly with Fr. Raymond and Ascension assisting clergy. My subsequent outreach has been focused on visiting with members of our parish who are not able to attend mass on a regular basis or who are residents of assisted living or nursing facilities.

As a relative newcomer to Ascension, I am also enjoying learning about the extensive history of our parish as recalled by members who have been active for many decades. My ministry and work in the parish are very rewarding, and I'm pleased to speak with other parishioners who might be interested in certification as a Spiritual Care Visitor.

Cheryl Peterson



Also ...



Ascension hosted a Mother's Day weekend concert by the Artemisia Trio and guests.



Congratulations! Lindsay Collins and Joel Hammer, married April 7, 2018.



The corpus on the high altar crucifix, damaged in the early 2000s, was beautifully refinished in time for Easter.



A Father's Day Anglican Evensong at St. Ita's Roman Catholic Church, (at which Father Raymond preached) to honor Bishop James Winchester Montgomery, 9th Bishop of Chicago. Also in the photo: Bishop Francis Kane, Auxilliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, to Bishop Montgomery's left in the photo, Franciscan friars serving St. Ita's, and Chicago North Deanery Episcopal clergy.



Thanks to Junior Warden Cynthia Perrizo

Ascension Connections

came to life, starting with a picnic and concert at Millenium Park.

Look for more gatherings and connections in 2019



Left: Congratulations and bless you, Grady Parker, baptized on the Feast of Pentecost 2018. **Right:** Welcome, Rev. Anna Broadbent to Ascension and the coach house, May 2018. Congratulations on ordinations to diaconate and priesthood!

August 2018 Baptism of Aimee Zuleika Nevárez. Bless you!



¿Necesitas aprender inglés?
영어를 배우고 싶습니까?

Need to learn English?

This sister can help! Inquire in person most weekdays in the parish house hallway.

To the right: A fine feast —
complete with chamber music!
— for Feast of the Ascension.



G'morning, Most!

Father Raymond was on vacation in Colorado after Easter when he went for coffee in the hotel lobby and unexpectedly met our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Curry

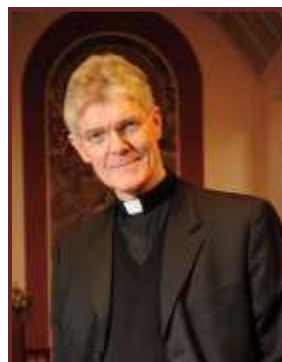


Our monstrance, used on Corpus Christi and for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, was magnificently restored in 2018.





Ascension hosted a well-attended Michaelmas Festival: Evensong, Benediction and reception. Mother Erika Takacs presided at Evensong, Welsh cathedral dean Lister Tonge preached. St. Chrysostom's Deacon Larry Green assisted.



Farmers Market Pet Blessings on (near) the October Feast of St. Francis.



Thanks to Enrique Vilaseco and the young musicians of the Stevenson High School Baroque String Ensemble for the Prelude to our All Saints Evensong.

Above and below: Thanks to all who made our Advent Festival of Lessons & Carols so beautiful and meaningful, including our seven guest clergy lectors.

Thanks to gingerbread cookie bakers and frosters for the cookies for the rectory reception following Lessons & Carols.





Church of the Ascension

1133 North LaSalle Boulevard

Chicago, Illinois 60610

www.ascensionchicago.org

(312) 664-1271

Pentecost 2018

Dear Ascension Voting Member,

As you likely know, questions about what to do with our parking lot at the south end of the church property have been in the air at Ascension for decades. Your Wardens, Vestry members and Rector have recently been asking if those questions should again be raised. We are writing to enlist your help in determining what direction(s) we should or should not pursue at this time.

Please consider taking time to share your thoughts and questions with us sometime in the next few weeks. You may share them in person at either of two gatherings to be held at the church on Sunday, June 10 — after the end of the 9:00 a.m. mass and after the end of the 11:00 a.m. mass. Or you may write a letter and address it to the Vestry at the church. Or you may write an email to either Warden or the Rector, with 'Parking Lot' in the subject line and know that it will be shared with all Vestry members. In any case, please respond so that we hear from you no later than the end of the day, Monday, June 11. The Vestry will be revisiting the matter at its June 16 meeting.

On the back of this letter you will find a preliminary account of some of the issues we have so far identified. The related lists are not exhaustive nor are they written to steer you to any particular conclusion. We are providing the material in hopes that it will help you appreciate the complexity of the matter and that it may spark your own additional or more nuanced observations or questions.

Thank you in advance for any way that you are able to participate or respond. As always, we ask your prayers for the faithfulness and well-being of all at Ascension.

Chris Raymond,

Senior Warden

Cynthia Perrizo,

Junior Warden

Father Patrick Raymond,

Rector

Parking Lot Listening and Response Sessions

Sunday, June 10, 10:00 a.m. and 12:45 p.m.

in the church library

Church of the Ascension

Summary of Parking Lot Considerations:
Primers for Parishioner-Vestry Conversations
Spring 2018

Pros and Cons of the Status Quo — our Present Situation

Pros

- Free downtown parking on the same block as the church for Ascension members and visitors
- \$95K annual revenue for parish operating budget.
- Intangible value of continuing to hold a significant appreciating asset.

Cons

- Parking for members and visitors is not always assured. In the case of incidents in the past few years, either or both Ascension and/or Diamond Parking have been at fault.
- Crime/attractive nuisance/lack of adequate security.
- Diamond Parking routinely fails to perform on terms of the present written agreement.
- Lot is an unkempt eyesore—doesn't well serve Ascension's 'curb appeal.'
- We've no plan for inevitably needed capital improvements.

Considerations pertaining to the prospect of selling/developing the parking lot

Positive Considerations

- It's a significant asset. Sale would yield a lot of money. (Estimates vary from \$8 million to \$20 million.)
- Proceeds could be divided between a) investment in and improvement of our ageing buildings and property and b) growing reserve funds for future ministry and operations.
- Improved/covered parking for parishioners and visitors could be included in agreement with a developer .
- The present economy remains strong — good time to sell.
- Unique possibility of co-development with the adjacent 'for sale' property (southwest corner of the 1100 block of Clark St.) could make our property even more desirable and valuable at this time.
- The right development could give Ascension and the whole block better curb appeal.

Negative Considerations

- We don't presently have either a compelling vision of our future mission or any long range capital improvements plan.
- We already have the largest financial reserves of any parish in the diocese. More reserves would further erode members' already-poor commitment to financial stewardship.
- We don't have adequate leadership resources at this time to undertake such a significant endeavor.
- Undertaking such a project at this time would significantly impact the Rector and his priorities, diminishing his availability for other important growth and renewal priorities.
- Many of our regular member/attendees drive from a significant distance and rely on the parking lot. The impact on an already diminished and struggling congregation during 18 months or more of construction could be a big setback.
- Uncertainty of enlisting a 2/3 majority of parishioner support in accordance with the provisions of our bylaws. Two past development projects for the parking lot failed to materialize, at least one due to lack of parishioner support.

Church of the Ascension

Background Parking Lot Information for Summer 2018 Conversations

Excerpts from the 1984 parish history by George C. Giles, Jr.

- “... in **November 1960** the vestry purchased a parcel of property fronting LaSalle Street from the rectory to Maple Street. With permission of the bishop and standing committee of the diocese, a mortgage loan was secured to pay the purchase price of \$275,000.”
- “By **1973** recurring funds from the Stoskopf trust had made possible the repayment of a debt of \$118,000 incurred during Fr. Orrick’s rectorate for the purchase of property south of the rectory ... the vestry reviewed and abandoned plans for renovating the grocery store building, which was subsequently razed.
- “By the **mid-seventies** it had become increasingly clear that the Ascension Parochial School could not continue ... in October of **1976** parents were informed that the school would close in June of the following year.”

The citations above put the ‘parking lot’ purchase in the context of an extensive development plan that was envisioned early in the ministry of Fr. Orrick (rector from 1957 until his death in 1969). The 1960 master plan included the demolition of the rectory and construction of additional church facilities, including an expansion of the Ascension School, on the parking lot site.

- Including the 1960 master development plan referenced above, two additional significant development proposals have been considered, one in the late 1980s and one in 1999-2000. The first arose from a 1987 Long Range Planning Report and a ‘Request for Proposals’ developed by the parish. The second plan (1999-2000) came about in response to overtures by developers, resulted in a development proposal involving a 99-year lease, and was thwarted by a large cash contribution from a parishioner who opposed the project.
- The Ascension congregation has not undertaken any major self-study and long-range visioning and strategic plan process since that completed in 1987. (Modest processes were undertaken in conjunction with three rector searches: 1994-1995, 2012-2013 and 2017.)
- The Vestry has chosen to consider parking lot options now largely due to two motives:
 - 1) Frequent inquiries from developers and 2) Dissatisfaction with current parking lot dynamics.Vestry members are not of one mind on how to proceed. There is no *fait accompli* decision.
- In addition to examining the “sell” (or long-term lease) option, the Wardens and Rector are also exploring alternatives for entering into an agreement with a different parking lot operator. Our current ‘licensing agreement’ with Diamond Parking ends August 15 (2018).

Parking Lot Report from the Wardens

(as shared in the June 20, 2018 newsletter)



Dear fellow members of Ascension,

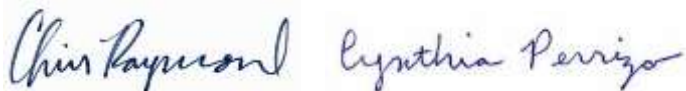
Your Wardens wish to thank all of you who came to the special parish dialogue sessions on Sunday, June 10, as well as many who submitted written comments. We also want to share our gratitude for Father Bob Petite's excellent work in facilitating the discussion. The Vestry met the following Saturday (June 16) and one large item on our agenda was to share our thoughts on the variety of points of view that we heard. We want to share with you the consensus that emerged from the Vestry's discussion.

First and foremost, it was gratifying to all that the parish was able to come together and discuss this issue in a loving and productive way. Although there was some divergence of opinions among parishioners, we were able to "disagree without being disagreeable!" It was encouraging to see the return of mutual trust, and we think the parish is well-situated to "reason together" as any parish must do from time to time in order to remain a vital Anglo-Catholic witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

That said, some viewpoints commanded a clear super-majority of parish members. A strong majority of members oppose development of the parking lot beyond a surface lot at this time. One premise particularly repeated with respect to this is a need to "develop" our congregational vitality and sense of mission before we develop our real estate. This was deemed a more pressing matter than perfecting our parking situation; equally as much, it was deemed a necessary predicate to using productively any windfalls that would result from developing a lot. Lastly, having an uncomplicated parking situation is also thought to be important to facilitating near-term growth of the parish membership rolls.

There was also agreement that it would be useful to inquire broadly among parking and valet companies to ensure that Ascension was getting the best management services possible for the lot. We already have related news. Seven respected parking lot operators were suggested to us through the help of two managing directors at a major Chicago-based real estate firm. All prospects were contacted; four expressed interest and have already been interviewed by Cynthia and Father Raymond. The interviews yielded a wealth of information and options regarding parking lot operations and a number of matters of legal compliance came into clearer view. All vendors were notified that having parking available on Sundays and Feast days is paramount. We are now planning second interviews with two of the vendors.

Thank you again for spending some time on a summer Sunday with us and sharing your thoughts. While we work on interviewing different parking lot management companies, we don't want to lose the thread of coming up with a clear strategic vision for the parish for the next five to eight years. If you may be interested in this project, please contact either of us or Father Raymond.

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'Chris Raymond' and the second is 'Cynthia Perrizo'.

Chris Raymond

Cynthia Perrizo.

January 2019 notes on provisional resolution: Numerous conversations with parking lot operators and in Vestry meetings in the summer of 2018 gave rise to multiple questions related to law, city zoning and more. The Rector, Wardens, Vestry and Treasurer were fortunate to discover a comprehensive 1998 legal analysis of our particular circumstances. A corporate tax attorney familiar with the issues provided additional counsel on a *pro bono* basis. We were advised that our present parking lot arrangement will best serve our overall interests at this time. A new agreement was therefore entered into with Diamond Parking in August 2018. Efforts continue to improve communications and the overall condition of the lot.





Pastoral Letter from the Rector on the Ministry of Ordained Women at Ascension

Advent 2018

Dear people of Ascension,

For a variety of reasons, and with the support of both of our Wardens, I am considering lifting the parish's ban on the ministry of women priests. I'm writing now to share my reasoning and to invite your responses, including your participation in upcoming conversations.

I don't intend here to delve into theological arguments *for* or *against* women's ordination. If your views on this matter are more traditional, please know that, having once shared those views, I understand at least some of the reflection and prayer that may have led to your convictions. If, on the other hand, you've long supported women in ordained ministry and wonder '*What's the big deal?*', I ask you to be sensitive to pastoral and legacy matters here. Ascension was once the national epicenter of resistance to women's ordination in the Episcopal Church.

You may know that, as Rector, I have sole canonical authority to decide this matter. But unilateral action by a Rector with regard to potentially divisive matters rarely serves the good of a parish. I therefore ask you to consider how you may share your thoughts and questions, and to listen to the thoughts and questions of others, in a way that will best serve both the present membership and the best future that we can envision here.

Please consider taking part in one of two listening sessions that Father Bob Petite has kindly agreed to facilitate on Sunday, December 16, after the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. masses. I also invite you to be present and to share your thoughts with Wardens, Vestry members and me at our next Vestry meeting on Saturday, December 15 (beginning at 1:15 p.m.). You may also, of course, convey your views directly to me or our Wardens or any member of the Vestry.

I pray that the considerations I've added on the back page of this letter may prompt rather than stifle our positive exchange of thoughts, hopes and questions. Whatever discomfort any of us may feel, the topic seems well-timed for Advent, as we are compelled to ask once again what it means for us to *prepare the way of the Lord*.

In Christ and with prayers,

The Very Rev. Patrick Raymond, Rector

praymond@ascensionchicago.org

Some of the Rector's considerations regarding women priests at Ascension - Advent 2018

- + The overall ministry environment in our diocese continues to migrate from a time when women clergy were a novelty. Women have been called to and now serve in 32 out of the 68 full-time Rector positions in the Diocese of Chicago. Many also serve important leadership roles in our diocese.
- + As I've noted before, the call of Mother Erika Takacs to serve as Church of the Atonement Rector is a signal event. We at Ascension have not picked up *any* Atonement members seeking refuge in a male-clergy-only parish. I've been told that Bishop Montgomery was present for Mother Takacs' first Sunday, in July, and that when she finished the mass, he leaned to a retired priest next to him and said, *"Well, we've got nothing to teach her, do we?"*
- + I believe it's fair to imagine that the next episcopal election in the Diocese of Chicago may well result in our having a female bishop.
- + Following Father Dunkerley's death in August, I am finding it more difficult to fill our mass rota with available male clergy. Father Petite was away for six weeks this fall. Father Richard Daly, who has assisted on a half dozen Sundays over the past six months, may be moving out of state early in 2019. Being able to welcome, train and schedule female clergy may improve our chances of continuing to offer the Solemn High Mass.
- + Ascension's deteriorating attendance for the past dozen years or more generally mirrors the trend in other Episcopal and mainline congregations. We are clearly not attracting new members in search of a parish where women do not serve at the altar. Young newcomers here with whom I speak universally find Ascension to be appealing *in spite of* and *not because of* the absence of female clergy here.
- + Most of the young adults who shared their stories at a recent Sunday forum explained their draw to the Episcopal Church in terms of LGBTQ-friendliness and, for the former Roman Catholics in particular, *'the surprise and blessing of experiencing a woman at the altar.'*
- + St. James' Cathedral Curate and Deacon Anna Broadbent (who lives in the Ascension coach house) will be ordained priest on December 23. She and I have preliminarily talked about partnering to attract more young adults to our Wednesday evening mass, possibly followed by a meal and adult education opportunity, once or twice a month. The endeavor may or may not contribute to our renewal but seems worth a try.
- + In my nearly three years at Ascension, only one parishioner has shared views with me in opposition to the ordained ministry of women. A dozen or so others have shared their thoughts that *'it's time to move on from the past'*. I hope through the December 16 listening sessions to get a better understanding of more members' thoughts and hopes.
- + One Ascension member who has been in congregations with both male and female clergy observed that there do tend to be differences, even if hard to put into words, in how women lead worship. I was cautioned away from the expectation that there would or will be 'no difference'. This led me to wonder about ways we might engage and prepare parishioners in the event that we do welcome female priests here.
- + I envision that the welcoming of women clergy would be a gradual process. Our familiar, male go-to clergy will remain active and be scheduled here much as at the present time. I would also like to envision a time, in a few years, when most or all of us might mainly focus on the faithfulness, gifts and authenticity of the priest who is ministering rather than on her or his gender.

Rector's notes on the December 16, 2018, Listening Sessions

regarding the ministry of women priests at Ascension ...
with thanks for Father Petite for facilitating the gatherings.

About 20-25 people shared in the conversation following the 9:00 a.m. mass and about 25-30 following the 11:00 a.m. mass. A majority of those present at both gatherings made some contribution or asked a question.

Many spoke in favor of welcoming women priests at Ascension, including the individual who has been a member at Ascension the longest and the newest member. Paraphrases of some comments include:

- "I didn't know that this was an issue anywhere in the Episcopal Church. I'm a seventh-generation Episcopalian. We had a woman priest in my home church when I was 7."*
- "I came to Ascension in large part because of the welcome I received as an out gay man. It seems contradictory that the same inclusive value doesn't extend to women priests."*
- "I'd probably be Roman Catholic, but I want to be part of a 'catholic' church that has women clergy."*
- "It seems as if including women priests may be attractive to families. These days, parents with daughters might be reluctant to join a parish that excludes female clergy."*
- "Some male priests don't want to be associated with Ascension these days out of solidarity with women colleagues who aren't welcomed here."*
- From a number of individuals: *"I don't want to go to a church because the priest is a man or a woman. I want a priest who will help me grow my faith in Christ."*
- "We've got to consider the changes for women in all professional and leadership roles in the past decades."*

Some had questions rather than comments. Others addressed secondary issues.

The biggest concern expressed at the Vestry meeting on Saturday, December 15, and at both Sunday sessions was for the integrity of Ascensions liturgies. Some shared fears that 'everything will change.' I responded by noting that the Rector of any parish has responsibility for its liturgies. Clergy who share their ministries here at Ascension are all committed to learning our norms. (This does *not* mean, however, that there will never be any changes to any part of our worship!)

At both gatherings I was asked if I intend to hire a female priest *on the staff*. The answer is no ... at least not at this time. We don't envision creating or recreating any staff clergy positions at this time. Any women priests or deacons would serve and function for now in the same way as our male assisting clergy.

- One individual observed that our considerations of diversity should include race, and that we should include clergy of color, whether men or women. (This is a value I support and welcome help in pursuing it.)

No one spoke in opposition.

In comments to me or to others (passed along to me), some parishioners have understandably conjectured that members whose views are more traditional may not have felt comfortable voicing their thoughts. This in itself is telling, since there was a time when those who supported the ordained ministries of women would have felt similarly reticent.

Over the past three years, I've received two letters from one parishioner with whose faith convictions the ordination of women is inconsistent. I don't believe that I or the wardens or any Vestry members have received any other remarks, emails or letters in opposition. We continue to welcome all thoughts and questions, however.

Two individuals have suggested that in the event we welcome female clergy, the clergy schedule should be published in advance. This was commonly done in many parishes in the 1980s as they transitioned to female clergy, and I think it is reasonable to consider such a practice here, at least for an initial period of time.

Next steps. At both gatherings I took a few moments to explain the following.

I made the Vestry aware of my views on the question of women priests in conjunction with interviews before I was called as your rector. I also made a commitment that I would not get ahead of the Vestry. Although I have the canonical authority to make this decision unilaterally, I aim to lead in concert with rather than in tension with the Vestry.

The next related Vestry conversation will be at the meeting presently planned for Saturday, January 19.

I'm envisioning a process of incorporation that will be gradual – although I am thinking more in terms of several months rather than several years. A number of gifted women priests I know have been aware of our conversations at Ascension and have kindly asked, "How can I help?" (One, as an example, came to the Episcopal Church and was confirmed here at Ascension but moved on when she was unable to pursue here ordination here.)

I've had preliminary conversations with soon-to-be Mother Anna Broadbent about sharing the ministry at our Wednesday evening mass and exploring the possibility that it might provide a venue to build a regular young adult following. This may be one reasonable starting place for welcoming women priests.

January 2019 update: At the January 2019 meeting of the Vestry, a quorum of Wardens and Vestry members unanimously approved the following resolution:

"Moved, that the Wardens and Vestry encourage the Rector to move ahead with integrating women priests and deacons into the sacramental life and ministry of the Church of the Ascension, and that the Rector timely communicate with the Vestry and parishioners on related steps, and that the Rector and all members of the parish are urged to demonstrate sensitivity and respect in the context of members' continued diversity of theologies, views and experiences of the ministries of ordained women."

