

# Church of the Ascension

## Introduction to the Candidates for Vestry

January 18, 2026

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### Janet King

**Background:** I am a mother, grandmother, and great grand mother. I am retired . I have a long term relationship with my partner Bruce Kirby from St. Peter's Episcopal Church. We were very blessed to have met at EFM classes, and share our common interest of reading, traveling ,and staying active in our communities.

***What Year did you start to attend Ascension . What attracted you? What keeps you coming?***

I came to Ascension in 1985 while adjusting to being newly divorced. During this tumultuous time I was searching for a church that I would feel comfortable attending regularly. My sister suggested I go to Ascension, which she had attended while visiting me. I have been attending ever since. A large part of the reason at first was because I was raised Catholic and the mass was so familiar to me. I have worked with and have gotten to know so many fellow parishioners, it is a big part of why I have stayed.

***What direction would you like to see Ascension go in the next 3 years?***

I feel the energy of having younger parishioners take leading roles in the church. They have new ideas and I think are on a good direction to lead us into the future. They are trying to expand our outreach programs to the community, which I feel is the most important direction we can follow.

***What skills would you bring to Vestry?***

A lifetime of experience. My sister is an Episcopal priest. I have been on the Vestry before. I am aware of the challenges facing the church today. I have a lot of common sense, or so I have been told, and I hope to bring that to the Vestry.

***What programs are most important for you, and which do you think will be most helpful to fulfill our mission?***

For years I put on the 1-A luncheons for the church. So they hold a special place in my estimation as one of the most important programs. But I am trilled with the new Parish Life committee and their energy and willingness to expand beyond just the 1-A luncheons. I like the efforts of the Outreach committee to reach out to the community around us. I am encouraged to see the efforts of the Social Justice group and the help offered to the community that surrounds us. As a group I feel we are trying to fulfill the mission we had set.

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**Carlos A. Renteria**

***Background: (Share any information to help the parish identify you, for example, service usually attended, relationship status, children, occupation, or whatever you feel defines you best)***

I am a native Phoenician (from Phoenix, Arizona) of Mexican heritage, and Biomedical Engineer. I grew up in Litchfield Park, Arizona, and eventually earned my Bachelor's Degree from Arizona State University. I eventually moved to Champaign, Illinois for graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I met my now wife, Elizabeth Golebie. We have a newborn daughter together named Marisol Golebie Renteria, a dog named Winnie, and cat named Kira. I began attending Episcopal services in 2017 thanks to Elizabeth, who also had recently begun attending Episcopalian services in Champaign, Illinois. I was officially confirmed in 2019, and have continued learning and growing as an Episcopalian since then. To grow in our faith, Elizabeth and I participated in the Revive program by Forward Movement at our previous church, which helped us more deeply appreciate the structure and history of the church, different methods of prayer, and reflecting on our spiritual journey. I hope to continue my development by serving Ascension as a member of the vestry, and continued participation on our Worship Committee.

***In what year did you come to Ascension and what attracted you to Ascension? What keeps you here?***

Elizabeth and I joined in 2024, shortly after moving to Gaithersburg. What most appealed to us was the presence of both English and Spanish services which provided us an added layer of spiritual growth. What keeps us is the warmth of the community, especially the amazing church leadership. The current leadership, including the vestry, clearly cares deeply about Ascension, and we appreciate being able to continue growing in our faith here.

***What direction or directions would you like to see Ascension go in the next 3 years?***

I am most eager to encourage more young families to join the church to ensure a vibrant church for the future. I hope to bring my perspective as a new parent to help support Ascension's programs and resources for families. I am also committed to continuing to support our Spanish-speaking community, as a frequent attendee of the 12pm service. My hope is to help the Spanish-speaking congregation grow, and continue looking for ways to bring together all parishioners as one community.

***What skills would you bring to the Vestry?***

I am a native speaker of English and Spanish and would be eager to use my communication skills in both languages to keep our church members connected and promote Ascension's growth. I would also bring my experiences as a new parent and a 12-pm service attendee to represent these perspectives on the vestry. Moreover, I enjoy going over options and developing solutions with a team, and would look forward to working together with the vestry to address parish needs.

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***Which parish programs are most significant for you, and which do you think will be most helpful for Ascension to fulfill our mission and vision?***

I have been serving on the worship committee for the past year and have enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to engage with church leadership and help support directions for church worship. I believe all of the parish programs are significant, and I especially hope to be more involved in those that help bring together our multicultural community, such as the Spanish/English classes, 1A masses, and parish-wide social events. These programs help support Ascension's mission of "Representing Christ Wherever We May Be" by helping more easily connect with others, respecting and supporting all people in our church and in public, and extending support to the many within and beyond our church that need it. I hope as a member of the vestry to continue to support these programs, among others, in our mission to love and serve the Lord.

**Eliane T. Dunn-Johnson MHSA, RDN, LDN**

***Background: (Share any information to help the parish identify you, for example, service usually attended, relationship status, children, occupation, or whatever you feel defines you best)***

I attend the 10 am service alone at present, but in the past with my children (Elise, Nuelle, and Manny Johnson). My husband and I were married in this church on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Though my Episcopalian preacher kid husband prefers to stay at home and pray daily, I prefer to fellowship in the presence on my Ascension family. I am a clinical dietitian by profession but have moved into management roles in both of my jobs due to my strong leadership skills – critical thinking, engagement of people, and financial transparency. I was also a member and leader of the treasury committee in my college student government.

***In what year did you come to Ascension and what attracted you to Ascension? What keeps you here?***

I was brought to Ascension by my Liberian church mother, the late Harriet Eleanor Cooper, in 1994, when I attended Hood College in Frederick, MD. Ascension immediately became my church home not only because it was a sister church to my birth church, St. Stephen Episcopal Church in Liberia, but because I developed lifelong relationships with its parishioners outside of church. These are my neighbors – Megan and Jan; my coworkers at Adventist – Betsy and Gloria; my family friends – Florence and her family, Wadai and her daughters, Hawa and her family, Enid and her children, Angelique; and friends of my family – Debar and Shirley and Lovetta. I developed other great relationships working with Christian formation – Zadinga, the late Johnetta, Lovetta, Michelle, etc. All the Godly Play teachers, Angie and Trevor, and Sari kept me coming when it was most difficult because they loved my children and helped them to grow into compassionate and socially responsible young adults through youth group and acolyte schedules. I enjoyed flower delivery ministry. And I am loving the Green Team ministry led by Kay. Ascension is a very special and international church home that welcomes everyone as they are.

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***What direction or directions would you like to see Ascension go in the next 3 years?***

I would like to see Ascension's membership grow exponentially to bring in greater depth and diversity which will hopefully spill over into our growing music ministry. I would like to see our Children Formation participants incorporated more into the main service with songs or a choir and Godly Play lessons. I would like to explore avenues for revenue generation from the community. But more important I would like to see us include the youth in key roles in outreach ministry.

***What skills would you bring to the Vestry?***

As previously stated, I am currently a mid-level manager previously in corporate and now in government for the past 30 years. These positions have helped me to develop my leadership skills and abilities over the years – analytical and critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and financial stewardship to name a few. Just the other day my daughter Nuelle said to me, “Mom even if something is a mess you will find a way to make it better – you are a problem solver.” I was surprised that she recognized my strength. But my sister Pastor Pushie put it best when plans for my mother's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday had to be changed from one country to another thanks to Haiti's civil unrest, she called me a DISASTAR. She said I turned a potential disaster into an enjoyable experience.

***Which parish programs are most significant for you, and which do you think will be most helpful for Ascension to fulfill our mission and vision?***

For me personally, I am excited to get more involved in the overall business of the church to see where I can help us to raise funds. But the programs that I enjoy being a part of are Christian Formation, Green Team and Flower Delivery because I get to interact with various individuals and various age groups. What I think would be helpful to the growth of the church are Choir, Christian Formation, Green Team, Racial Equity and Social Justice, and Youth Group. I say this because the children are our future, if we don't engage them to train them up in the way that they should grow we will die as a church. What matters to these young children are the principles of sustainability and RESJ. They want to feel connected to believe that they too have a voice in our church.