

THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

FIFTH AVENUE AT TENTH STREET

A PARISH OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK



Annual Report for 2021

Annual Meeting of 30 January 2022

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021

Given at the Annual Meeting of The Church of the Ascension
Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street, New York City
Parish House (Offices and Mailing Address): 12 West 11th Street, New York, New York 10011
Telephone: 212-254-8620 • Internet Address: www.ascensionnyc.org

January 30, 2022

CLERGY AND STAFF

The Rt. Rev. Andrew Dietsche	Bishop of New York
The Rev. Elizabeth G. Maxwell	Rector
The Rev. Edwin Chinery	Associate Rector
The Rev. Posey Krakowsky	Priest Associate
Dr. Dennis Keene	Organist and Choirmaster
Br. Andrew Jones, OSF	Parish Administrator
Kelli Long	Business Manager
Sajia Choudhury	Parish Bookkeeper
Dwight Roberts	Sexton
William Gordon	Assistant Sexton
Luis Ortiz	Assistant Sexton
Carolyn Braden	Choir Assistant
G. Jan Jones	Choir Librarian

2021 VESTRY MEMBERS

Maurice Seaton, Warden
Isabel Spencer, Warden
Mary Gaillard, Treasurer
Elizabeth Adams, Clerk

Class of 2022	Class of 2023	Class of 2024
Barbara Burns	Kyle Church Cheseborough	Vin Knight
Janet Fisher	Peter Clark	Gale Lynch
Rusty Moore	Tom Rice	Rachel Sedor
Madonna Stack-Barker	Jill Tildesley	John Thompson

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2022 Annual Meeting Agenda

The Annual Meeting is convened immediately following the 11:00 service. Ballots were distributed electronically on the Sunday prior to the annual meeting, January 23, and polls remained open until 9 a.m. Wednesday, January 27. Run-off ballots were not required. Results of the election will be announced at the Annual Meeting.

Opening Collect

Call to Order

Appointment of Secretary

Minutes of meeting of January 31, 2021

Treasurer's Report for 2021 and 2022 Budget

Rector and Warden's Remarks

Questions and Answers

Small Group Conversations and Report back

Necrology

Announcements

Announcement of Election results

Benediction:

O God of unbounded grace and abundance, we thank you for the Church of the Ascension, our spiritual home and an island of light and beauty in the vibrant life of this city. You have drawn countless worshippers to this place, known and unknown, to love and to serve you. Be with us now as we seek to renew our parish through the year ahead. May your spirit of benevolence and generosity inspire us to be your faithful people in our day, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Adjournment

**Minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting
of the Church of the Ascension
Held on Sunday, January 31, 2021**

The Annual Meeting was called to order following the 11 am service. Voting had been done in advance by paper ballots or on line.

Opening Collect and Call to Order: Immediately following the 11 AM service, Mother Liz called the meeting to order with an opening collect at 12:50 PM.

More than 60 parishioners were in attendance via Zoom.

Appointment of Secretary: Mother Liz asked for a motion to appoint David Lehmann as secretary and was unanimously approved.

Minutes of meeting of January 26, 2020: Unanimously approved after being moved by Isabel Spencer and seconded by Susi Braden.

Mother Liz then turned the meeting over to Mary Gaillard, Treasurer, and John Grimes, Chair of the Finance Committee.

Report of Treasurer and Finance Committee: John Grimes, Chair of the Finance Committee, and Mary Gaillard, Treasurer, gave their report, the details of which can be found on pg 11-14. Mary reported that though this has been a challenging and unusual year the parish is in “pretty good shape” financially. A deficit of \$248,000 is projected after a deficit of \$333,000 last year. The Finance Committee worked closely with the Rector and the part-time bookkeeper Laurie Ross. The federal PPP loan allowed the parish to pay staff and utilities. John is hopeful that we might be eligible for a second draw loan if we can show that our income is down by 25%. Other notes made regarding the budget included how important pledges are in this time, and pledgers who have not yet submitted their pledges for 2021 should consider doing so. Abundant Giving has made it possible to make up on some shortfalls. It has been a good year for our endowments, with an 11% increase. We will continue to draw down only 5% from the endowments which are not restricted. Another plus is that our diocesan assessment was reduced by 25%. John’s suggestion for moving into the new year is that we divide the year into periods (Jan. – Sept. and Oct. – Dec.) with the hope that services may be able to resume in the fall. No questions were posed for the committee.

Mother Liz expressed her gratitude for the Finance Committee's hard work and dedication.

Report of Nominating Committee: Mother Liz announced the names of the following candidates running for Vestry: Vin Knight and John Thompson are running for re-election. Other candidates are Elizabeth Adams, Garrett Dangler, Gale Lynch and Rachel Sedor. Warden: Isabel Spencer is running for a second term of two years.

Wardens Report: Isabel thanked the building staff and pledgers. She challenged us to recall how a decade ago we were out of the sanctuary, holding services in the parish hall. We moved forward then, and she suggests we continue as a religion of the Word and consider how we will go forward from here as a better, stronger parish. Maurice referred to today’s Psalm “holy and awesome is

your name." God is in control. And to remember the heritage expressed in *The Unknown Worshipper* (1964): "Church of the Ascension has always stood for something." In 2020 we stood for justice, democracy and compassion and against the pandemic.

Planned Giving: Liz Hill reminded us that there is no minimum for a planned gift. Include Ascension because you want to. It is not a debt.

The year in images: John Thompson who compiled this section of the meeting encapsulated it in the words: *Quite a Year!!* Images were shown of last year's Twelfth Night celebration (A huge shout out to Mother Liz's lively rendition of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*). Choir performances, scenes from the Harvest Dinner and images from parishioners own years in pictures captured the spirit of a very unusual year.

Small Group Conversations and Report back: The meeting broke into 5 small groups, led by clergy and Wardens. Questions were posed as to how do we move forward with services after a year of Zoom and where should we go with social justice and pastoral care issues. Very helpful suggestions were reported back and will be discussed and carried forward by parish leadership.

Announcement of Election Results: Mother Liz announced the election results as follows: Vin Knight and John Thompson were reelected to second terms. Gale Lynch and Rachel Sedor will join the Vestry as new members. They will be commissioned Sunday, February 7, 2021.

Necrology: Only one memorial service was held at the church this year, that of Julian Sands, husband of our dear Judith Sands. Mother Liz asked all in attendance to bow our heads in prayer remembering all those associated with our parish who passed away in 2020.

Announcements: Mother Liz announced the appointment of Ascension's first Chancellor, a person who will advise the Parish on legal matters. Charles Schmidt has accepted the position. Mother Liz thanked Mary Gaillard and David Lehmann for their service on the Vestry. She also thanked the Nominating Committee and Vestry candidates. Thank you also to Derek Baker for making on-line voting possible.

Questions and Answers: No further questions were forthcoming from the floor.

Benediction: Mother Liz led all present in the Benediction.

Adjournment: Mother Liz asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Isabel Spencer, seconded by Kyle Cheseborough and unanimously approved.

After a closing prayer, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted, David Lehmann, Secretary

Parish Statistics

As of 31 December 2021

This includes a few categories that were not in last year's report. We have begun to keep better track of those who participate in our services via livestream (both on zoom and Local Live) but we probably missed some early on.

When we were completely online, the attendance was not quite as high as it was earlier in the pandemic. Easter was down from 2020. This may reflect people having more options in the spring and summer of 2021, or may be due to zoom fatigue, or something else. I do note with interest that our Christmas numbers for hybrid but mostly online services were significantly higher than last year (for Christmas Eve attendance was more than twice that in 2020). This may be due to the livestreamed music, or to the sudden shutdown due to the omicron surge.

It's also worth noting that although we recorded 4 burials/memorials in our register, none of them were for church members. The only parishioner we lost to death in 2021, our dear Liz Hill, has not yet had a service as her family is awaiting a safer time for in person gathering.

Despite all the challenges of the pandemic, we had two baptisms (Leonardo Bruce Cappello and Liam Udonna Staudenmeier) and one confirmation (Taylor Catalana) during 2021. It's a blessing to welcome new members to our community!

Here is the year in statistics:

Attendance at all services:

Sundays:	9,312
Weekdays:	4,575
In person:	3,276
Online:	1,778
Easter Day (not including Vigil):	7,534
In-Person Services	146
Online Only Services	77
Hybrid Services	299
	18

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Weekdays:	4,575
In person:	3,276
Online:	1,778
Easter Day (not including Vigil):	7,534

Services conducted

In-Person Only (not Hybrid) - 9:00 a.m. & Wednesday p.m.	657
In-Person and Hybrid	1,121
Online Only (not Hybrid)	6,758
Online and Hybrid – <i>includes Christmas Eve.</i>	776
Sunday Eucharists:	46

Weekday Eucharists:	38
Sunday Ante-communion:	36
Weekday Daily Office:	256
Private Eucharists:	1
Marriages:	1
Burials/ Memorials:	4
Baptisms:	2

Baptisms and Confirmations

Children (under age 16) baptized:	2
Adults baptized	0
Adults confirmed, received or reaffirmed:	1

Baptisms:

Leonardo Bruce Cappello	2
Liam Udonna Staudenmeier	

Confirmed

Received	0
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Burials

Maxine Thornton Denham (July 17)	5
Jill Fairchild (August 4)	
Emory and Andrea Jackson (August 14)	
Jeannine Page (December 4)	

Transfers In

Transfers Out	0
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Marriage

Paige Donnelly and Justin de la Chapelle (June 17)	1
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Baptized Members

Baptized persons on Record, 31 December 2020:	194
Added through baptism in 2021:	2
Added through Confirmation, Reception or Renewal of Vows:	1
Added through Transfer:	0
Lost by Death:	1
Lost by Transfer Out:	0
Total Baptized Members, 31 December 2021:	196

Baptisms and Confirmations

Children (under age 16) baptized:	2
Adults baptized	0
Adults confirmed, received or reaffirmed:	1

Rector's Report

The second year of Covid has been hybrid. By that I mean that we have transitioned to hybrid worship, of course, meeting both in person and online. But it has also, to a surprising extent, been different than I could have imagined: more complex, often two steps forward and one back, hopeful and demoralizing, disappointing but filled with significant accomplishments. Never the straight line of progress that I had imagined it would be, with us finishing the year once again closing the church due to a viral surge. But most important, 2021 was marked by our care for one another; by deep searching and steadfast faith; by hard work, struggles, tears and lots of laughter; by beautiful music, art and poetry and the grace of God in our midst. Here are some of the important events of this year that was, once again, like no other.

Worship – Our 11 am zoom services continued through Labor Day, marked by an intimacy that for many of us was one of the surprising and sustaining gifts of the pandemic. I cannot thank John Thompson, our zoom wizard, too many times for the gift of his time, skill and care in making those services happen. We gradually began to open the church for smaller services throughout the spring and summer: Wednesday evening Eucharists, and then Sundays at 9 am. We returned to in person worship, masked and distanced, with choir and hymn singing and Eucharist in one kind, on Sunday, September 12. With great joy too. This seems like a good place to say how grateful I am to Dr. Keene and our wonderful singers for their wonderful music both recorded for zoom and live with masks on. Thank you for lifting our hearts, stirring our souls and helping us pray.

We engaged a service called Local Live for streaming the liturgy and are still working out some of the kinks with sound and cameras. Nonetheless, we have been able to develop a community that is both in person and online, and I am moved by the faithfulness of those who attend. Special thanks are due to all who have helped host the online services this fall and winter: Jacob Scott, Zennie Trieu, Vin Knight, Steve Hubbard, Derek Baker and Eve Beglarian. Andrew Jones, our intrepid parish administrator, has led this effort and embraced the challenge with huge goodwill, formidable dedication, and willingness to learn. We could not have managed without him.

This year included 2 worship experiences that deserve special mention. We celebrated All Souls Day, Dia de los Muertos, at our Wednesday service. We were graced by a special Day of the Dead quilt made by Mother Posey, and an altar for our beloved dead. We intended to focus on those lost to Covid, but many of our other saints seemed to come crowding in memory, mourning and celebration. It might be the beginning of a parish tradition of remembrance. And, day in and day out, week in and week out, around 12 faithful souls gather for Evening Prayer online. The clergy usually lead, but there are other participants who are fully able to step in as needed. Throughout the pandemic a wonderful community has grown, including people from across the country and even the world as well as right here in NYC. I know we are upheld by this daily prayer, and I am grateful.

Reopening Committee – This very hard-working group not only planned our return to in person worship and our online presence; they have worked on reopening the garden and the church for visitors, protocols for groups that use our space, and questions of how to gather outside for coffee hour as the weather turns chilly. We have a tent and outdoor heaters, and we hope to keep using them through the winter months! They have also offered wise counsel as we have needed to respond, sometimes quickly, to news about Covid surges and risks in our city. I am grateful to

them all: Fr. Ed Chinery, John Grimes, Steve Hubbard, Andrew Jones, Dennis Keene, Tom Rice, Kate Rutherford, Isabel Spencer, John Thompson, Matt Vermedahl. Special thanks to Madonna Stack-Barker, a fountain of public health experience and wisdom.

Spiritual Development Programs – One of the gratifying developments of Covid time has been the large number of engaging programs offered for our learning and growth in faith. Our Sunday forums this year included a Lenten series on Justice and Reconciliation; reading Stephanie Spellers' *The Church Split Open* together; seminarian Linda Brandt guiding us through developing a rule of life; considerations of faith through poetry and art; conversations about sermons and current events; discussions of what this time of Covid has taught us and more. We had a Lenten Quiet day about Forgiveness (led by Mtr. Posey). Once again parishioners contributed to a Lenten devotional (thank you, Elizabeth Adams and Matthew Snow) and an online Advent calendar of photos.

We welcomed several guest preachers this year and being online made it easier to extend our reach geographically. We heard Dr Claudio Carvalhaes of Union Seminary on Earth Day; Fr. Sam Owen returned to talk with us about the ministry of the NY-Haiti Project; Bishop Mary Glasspool was with us for LGBTQ Pride and our own Stacey Carpenter preached from Austin, sharing her perspective and progress as a seminarian. We look forward to her ordination, God willing, as both deacon and priest in 2022.

Our Racial Justice Group deserves special mention as we continue to reckon with racism in our hearts, in our church and in our country. In a year of reading theology, listening, looking at art and considering reparations perhaps a highlight was our exploration of *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith. We usually meet on the third Thursday of the month, and welcome everyone to join us.

A new *Women's Spirituality Group*, convened by Shana Kaplanov, launched at the end of 2021. All parishioners who identify as women are welcome to participate on the second Thursday of each month.

Community Engagement/Social Justice – In March of 2021, before we opened to any other groups, we were honored to host hunger strikers from the Campaign for Excluded Workers. For several days and nights, participants in this campaign for relief for workers who had not been included in the state budget- undocumented workers, vendors, domestic workers, farmworkers and others (many of them also deemed “essential”)- slept in our parish hall and rectory parlor and held teach-ins and press conferences in our space. “Is this not the fast that I choose?”, read our Lenten sign in front of the church. Yes, it was, and praise God, the strikers won their cause in the final NYS budget.

In the late fall we served as the downtown reception center for a coat drive sponsored by the Interfaith Center of New York and other partners for Afghan Refugees housed at Ft. Dix. It was a delight to be the conduit for many boxes of coats from parishioners and neighbors, Jews, Hindus, Muslims and others, for these newcomers to our country.

Staff Developments – 2021 saw some significant staff changes at Ascension. Our long-time, beloved Sexton, Len Bowman, retired at the end of June. Assistant Sexton Ravi Gayadin followed in early

September. Well before that, stimulated in part by Vince Amodei's retirement in 2019, the vestry had begun a conversation about the kind of senior staff member we need to manage the financial and other business of the church. Thus, this spring and summer search committees for the new position of Business Manager and for a new Sexton were hard at work developing job descriptions and interviewing candidates. We are delighted to welcome to Ascension Kelli Long, our Business Manager, and Dwight Roberts, our new Sexton, as well as Luis Ortiz, Assistant Sexton. They have all jumped into myriad challenges with energy and competence, and I am very grateful to have them on board. I am also delighted that Sajia Choudhury has joined us as our part-time bookkeeper. Many thanks to all who served on the search committees!

Throughout much of the pandemic, we were blessed to have Mtr. Meredith Ward at Ascension as she began her ordained ministry. In the late spring of 2021 Meredith was called to St. Bartholomew's, Manhattan as Associate Rector for Pastoral Care, and we bid her a fond farewell in May. Meanwhile, my clergy colleagues, Fr. Ed and Mtr. Posey, continue to be a great blessing both to me and to our congregation. I am deeply grateful for their friendship and their particular, complementary ministries, and never more than during these challenging times.

Lay Leaders – As the city gradually began to open up, the vestry returned to work on projects that had to be suspended in the height of the pandemic. Both our finances and our buildings have required a lot of attention this year, with work still to be done. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Mary Gaillard and Madonna Stack-Barker for all their labor to get our finances in order.

I am grateful to all who have worked so hard to help hold the community together as well as manage the business of the church and its old, beautiful and in some cases fragile properties. Thanks especially to those vestry members whose terms expire this year: Barbara Burns, Janet Fisher, Rusty Moore and Madonna Stack-Barker. Each in their own way has brought significant gifts to leadership; we will miss them on the vestry but trust that they will find other ways to serve!

At this annual meeting, Maurice Seaton steps down after six years as warden of Ascension. He has brought enormous energy and dedication to his role, and his faith and vision are contagious. I am especially grateful for his work to raise our rental income and develop our staff, as well as his commitment to our witness for social justice. Maurice, thank you! I trust that you and Gus will have some opportunities for fun and relaxation in the coming months.

Meanwhile, Isabel Spencer continues as warden, and her wit, intellect, flair and devotion to Ascension (to say nothing of her exhaustive knowledge of its building restorations) are gifts to us all.

Moving Forward – As 2022 begins, there is much to be done. I look forward to a time when we can gather in person more freely and know that we need to enhance our capacity for hybrid programs and community building beyond our worship services. It has been a pleasure to rediscover the pleasures of online coffee hours during the closures of omicron.

We experienced new intimacy and insight during the pandemic, as well as unique challenges; I hope we can continue to bring the gifts of this time with us into the coming year.

Our buildings need some significant attention- from repair of the tower brownstone to flood remediation in the rectory basement and ground floor. After some months and a lot of work on the gas lines, heat has been restored in the rectory, for which I give thanks these frigid January days. We need to plan for greening our buildings- an important priority which sometimes gets lost in the urgency of immediate crises.

I serve as chair of the Creation Care Committee for the Diocese of New York, and attention to our imperiled earth and her creatures is always in my mind and heart. The world around us is rife with injustice and pain, as well as with opportunities to love, serve and create. As I frequently say, we must discern what is ours to do and do it with all our hearts. I sense a real desire at Ascension to expand our witness and our outreach.

Fr. Ed and I are both due for sabbaticals (three months for rest and renewal granted to priests in our diocese every six years) and intend to take them on a staggered schedule over the next two years. We are planning with the vestry, each other and Mtr Posey for coverage while each of us is away. I know that there is important business that must continue, but also hope we will all have time to breathe and imagine, heal and listen for how God is calling us. I know that I need this time after the past 2 years, especially, and hope that the spaciousness for reflection, rest and new experiences it offers will be a blessing both to me and to Ascension. I am grateful.

And I am grateful for all of you. These are uncertain and challenging times, and your immense good will, commitment, humor and thoughtful faith are a tremendous gift to me. This community is resilient in part because we are willing to change and genuinely love each other. I don't know what lies ahead in 2022 and beyond, but I do believe with Julian of Norwich that all shall be well. As a favorite spiritual sings, "I don't believe you brought me this far to leave me."

May God bless you richly, dear people of Ascension.

The Rev. Elizabeth G. Maxwell, Rector

Nominating Committee Report

The nominating committee is charged with presenting a slate of qualified and capable candidates to serve on the Vestry of the Church of the Ascension. Vestry members are elected to three-year terms, with each limited to two consecutive three-year terms.

Three-year terms ended for Madonna Stack-Barker, Rusty Moore, Barbara Burns and Janet Fisher. Janet was not eligible to run again due to term limits and her voice will be missed. Barbara and Rusty chose not to run for reelection, and the vestry respects their decision and thanks them for their service.

These are the nominees, who are eligible under Ascension by-laws for election or reelection: Madonna Stack-Barker, Elizabeth Adams, John Grimes, Steve Hubbard, and Shana Kaplanov.

In addition, the vestry has nominated David Cholcher for a two-year term as warden. Eligible voters are asked to select four candidates for vestry and to cast a "yes" or "no" vote for warden.

Serving on this year's nominating committee were Joan Castagnone, Steve Hubbard, Rachel Sedor and Shep Skiff, with Isabel Spencer as chair.

Isabel Spencer, Chair

Finance Committee and Treasurer's Report

2021 was another challenging and unusual year for the Finance Committee as the impact of the pandemic continued.

Highlights of our financial picture during 2021 are:

- PPP: We applied for and received a second "loan" in the amount of \$163,000 from the SBA's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The first loan, also of \$163,000, was "forgiven" in 2021 and became a grant to the church. The application showed that the funds were used for salaries and utilities according to the rules of the program. That allowed us include the \$163,000 into the income line for 2021. We will be applying for forgiveness of the second loan this year and have therefore included it as a budget item in 2022.
- Manton Covid Relief Fund: We were delighted to receive an unsolicited grant of \$250,000 from the Manton Foundation for "covid relief." The Manton Covid Relief Fund was opened as a separate account at Fiduciary Trust, and \$150,000 was placed in it. Of the remaining \$100,000, \$25,000 was used to pay down the principal of the loan we have at Fiduciary (replacing rental income that we would otherwise have used to pay the loan), and \$21,000 has been spent to date on streaming technology in order to provide remote access to our in-church Sunday services.
- Outside Contributions: Meetings such as 12 step programs, rent for groups using our space, weddings, and income from other organizations using our space for a one-time project were down again this year compared with 2019, as meeting in person continued to be difficult as a result of the pandemic. However, we were encouraged to receive income of \$14,000 related to movie and television shoots using our facilities at the end of 2021.
- Pledge Income: Parishioners continued to pay their pledges during this time of uncertainty, and we give a big thanks for their generosity. Our pledge total for 2021 came in under budget, mainly as a result of the loss of a few large pledging units. The loss of these parishioners also impacts the expected pledge total for 2022.
- Endowment Income: Our endowments continued to be strong over the course of the year.
- Diocesan Assessment: The Diocese of New York permitted parishes a reduction of up to 25% on their 2021 diocesan assessment. We applied for and received a 25% reduction for each quarter in 2021. This resulted in a saving of \$56,300.

The operating results for 2021, which are still being finalized, ended the year with a deficit of \$344,721. This was \$26,797 more favorable than budgeted. The deficit is reduced to \$181,721 when the PPP income of \$163,000 is included. Income was \$14,105 less than expected, primarily due to the reduction in pledges and rent and outside contributions. Expenses were less than budget by \$40,902, as a result of the church and its programs being closed longer than expected due to the pandemic.

The budget for 2022 anticipates an operating deficit of \$456,343, or \$160,343 after the application of PPP and ERTC (described below). We expect the deficit to be reduced by \$163,000 when we receive forgiveness of the second PPP loan. We will also be applying for payroll tax credit through the federal Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program, a program which Congress created during the covid pandemic to provide payroll tax relief to organizations who kept employees on their payroll (retroactive to 2020). The budget includes a credit to expenses of \$133,000 which will further reduce the projected deficit.

The 2022 expense budget includes a 3% raise for full-time employees, partially reflecting the recent increase in inflation. The Diocesan assessment is returning to the pre-covid levels in 2022. In total, expenses are expected to be \$1,401,842, or \$1,268,842 including the ERTC credit.

On the income side, the amount we receive is projected to be \$945,499, or \$1,108,499 including the second PPP. The budget includes 2022 pledge income of \$365,000, which, as mentioned previously, is lower than the amount received in 2021. We are expecting to continue to receive a lower amount from outside organizations until we return to “normal” later in the year. Pledge income represents only about 26% of our budgeted operating expenses, slightly lower than the last few years. It is difficult to cover our operating costs and we rely too much on our endowment income.

Over the past number of years, we have been working on reducing the deficit, thereby reducing the amount of endowment income which is needed to pay the shortfall. This will be difficult until we return to a time when we can expect more income from outside organizations who use our space and can be there in person.

The Finance Committee is continually looking for ways to increase income and decrease costs, and we are open to discussions with parishioners on this topic. We have a large challenge for 2023, when the covid related relief programs will no longer be in effect.

PARISH OPERATING INCOME	Budget 2021	Actual 2021	Actual Compared to Budget 2021	Budget 2022
Pledge and Offering Income <i>(includes pledges, loose collections, special offerings at Easter and Christmas)</i>	397,550	386,478	(11,072)	383,000
Outside Contributions/flowers <i>(Gifts from individuals, donations for flowers, weddings, honoraria from groups that use church facilities, La Petite Ecole)</i>	87,591	80,242	(7,349)	105,805
Endowment Income <i>(Income from various endowment funds designated for operating purposes)</i>	434,745	439,061	4,316	456,694
Total Operating Income	919,886	905,781	(14,105)	945,499
PPP Income	163,000	163,000	-	163,000
Total Operating Income + PPP Income	1,082,886	1,068,781	(14,105)	1,108,499

PARISH OPERATING EXPENSES	Budget 2021	Actual 2021	Actual Compared to Budget 2021	Budget 2022
Clergy <i>(Includes clergy salaries, pensions, health insurance, continuing education & ministry expenses)</i>	268,576	257,804	(10,772)	288,763
Administration <i>(Includes salaries for Parish Administrator, Bookkeeper, lay benefits, advertising, auditor, postage, telephone, office supplies, equipment maintenance, internet)</i>	415,265	407,335	(7,930)	471,980
Music <i>(Includes salary for Music Director, Sunday Choir stipends, and music costs)</i>	160,074	156,145	(3,929)	176,501
Building <i>(Includes custodial salaries, utilities, building supplies, property & liability insurance, furniture)</i>	265,547	260,921	(4,626)	260,759
General <i>(Includes reaching out to new members, hospitality, Sunday School and nursery, adult education, altar guild, altar flowers, pastoral care)</i>	23,010	9,789	(13,221)	26,140
Outside Giving <i>(Includes Diocesan Assessment and Designated Giving)</i>	158,932	158,508	(424)	177,699
Total Operating Expenses	1,291,404	1,250,502	(40,902)	1,401,842
ERTC (Payroll Tax Credit)	-	-	-	(133,000)
Total Operating Expenses +ERTC	1,291,404	1,250,502	(40,902)	1,268,842
Operating Income/(Deficit)	(371,518)	(344,721)	26,797	(456,343)
Operating Income/(Deficit) Incl PPP & ERTC	(208,518)	(181,721)	26,797	(160,343)

The members of the Finance Committee during 2021 were Mother Elizabeth Maxwell, Wardens Isabel Spencer and Maurice Seaton, Finance Chair John Grimes, Treasurer Mary Gaillard, Business Manager Kelli Long, Charlie Schmidt, Madonna Stack-Barker, and Rachel Matthai.

The Finance Committee generally meets monthly during the year or more frequently, as required, to monitor the current year's budget, comparing it with actual income and expenses and working closely with the bookkeeper. The Committee prepared the 2022 operating budget, which was approved by the Vestry at its January meeting. Thanks to zoom we were able to keep this schedule.

We were delighted that Kelli Long was hired in the fall to fill the newly created position of Business Manager. Kelli comes with a financial and bookkeeping expertise and will be an asset for improving our finances, working on obtaining more income sources and controlling our expenses. Sajia Choudhury joined us in 2021 as our part time bookkeeper.

The Committee works with the Endowment and Investments Committee to review the results of our endowment funds. The Endowment and Investments Committee meets with our investment managers periodically to monitor, discuss, and direct the investment strategies.

We obtained a line of credit of \$2.5 million from Fiduciary Trust Company International in 2008. This allowed us to manage our cash flow in 2009 and to the present, as we completed the restoration of the Church and the renovation of the Rectory. The loan was structured so that we only drew down from it the cash that was needed at the time to pay our invoices, paying a low interest rate on a quarterly basis. We have paid back some of the loan with funds from our previous and current capital campaigns, as well as from some of the accrued income from some of our endowment funds. A large portion of the income we receive from La Petite Ecole is being used to pay down the loan as well. We still have the task of paying back the amount outstanding, which is currently approximately \$1.0 million, and in the meantime, we are paying interest of approximately \$35,000 per year.

Fiduciary Trust Company International manages the first eleven endowment funds listed below, and the Bank of New York Mellon manages the Maintenance Fund Addition. A number of smaller funds are invested in the Diocesan Investment Trust, maintained by the Diocese of New York.

Most of these funds are restricted as to their use, and others are available to be applied towards the operating expenses of the Church.

As of December 31, 2021, the following values of the endowment funds were reported:

General and Endowment Fund	\$2,722,873
Maintenance Fund	1,136,326
Catherine B. Fair and Esther D. Hamilton	1,432,669
Memorial Fund	
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ralph Hayden Visscher	565,725
Memorial Fund	
Susy I. and Harriet E. Babcock Memorial Fund	491,778
Catherine B. Fair and Esther D. Hamilton	227,767
Memorial Choir Fund	
Marguerite W. Sinaly Memorial Window	1,176,855
Maintenance Fund	
John R. Meekin Music Fund	2,199,672
Robert E. Lowder Fund	1,977,230
Special Account	220,201

Manton Covid Relief Fund	153,907
Maintenance Fund Addition	4,435,980
Various Restricted Funds (DIT)	96,968
Total	\$16,837,951

Respectfully Submitted, John Grimes, Chair; Mary Gaillard, Treasurer

Associate Rector's Report

While the parish continued to move with grace across a landscape made shifty by covid, Ascension Outreach Inc. continued to serve a population of pantry visitors that steadily grew throughout 2021 – yet we still haven't missed a single food distribution date. We're glad to restate how we'd received a significant number of donations in 2020 – an apparent outpouring of compassion, mostly from our regular donors – but, in all honesty, 2021 did a fair amount of depleting our coffers. As you're likely aware, our service population is vast majority AAPI, and insofar as Food Bank NYC doesn't offer many culturally competent food choices, we've had to supplement with wholesale purchase of things like fresh produce and cooking oil. This cut out finances in half. Nonetheless, we proceed undaunted, our hopes and spirits held high. We continue with organization of a fund-development team as part of program operations, so if you feel moved to assist in this regard, please contact Fr. Ed at fatherchinery@ascensionnyc.org. We're also very happy to share that, while several parishioners regularly serve at pantry, as many or more young pantry volunteers with helpful language skills (bilingual in English and Chinese) continue to find their way into our midst. With the initiating assistance of Br. Andrew Jones, our Parish Administrator, the program continued to refine our method of serving the local deaf and deaf-blind community. We do so in partnership with the first Episcopal Church established exclusively for the deaf, St. Ann's Church on nearby 18th Street. And finally, we're blessed that parishioners comprise the majority of our board membership. This is especially noteworthy as, in 2021, a number of measures were taken to strengthen ties between the program and the governing body of the parish. Please keep us in your prayers as that process continues to gain new vitality.

Ascension Outreach's collaboration with local program Resistance Cinema continued to serve during 2021 as well. The program offered 8 different screenings of socially relevant documentary films, as well as a variety of TED talks and even news clips with informative and discussion-enhancing content. We regularly host an average of 30 viewers – many are loyal and regular attendees – who offer immensely insightful observations in our post screening talk-back sessions. If you'd like to be on our monthly mailing list, please send your email address to fatherchinery@ascensionnyc.org.

The Rev. Edwin Chinery, Associate Rector

Priest Associate's Report

I start this report in the same way I did last year: What a year it has been (and that's an understatement)! Thank God for vaccines, thank God for being able to see each other again in person, and prayers ascending that the Omicron wave will pass soon. It has been incredible throughout this year to be with you all at Ascension and receive strength from your abiding faithfulness. We are all blessed to be with each other in love. I feel such immense gratitude to be a part of this community.

Because of the ongoing pandemic, I have not been able to restart my teaching ministry this past year. But I remain hopeful that 2022 will bring the kinds of changes we have all been longing for and that I will be able to lead retreats and workshops again.

In the meantime, I have tried to keep interest in this work alive by participating in arts events at Heavenly Rest (<https://vimeo.com/520595380>) as well as offering a reflection on the Facebook page of One Boat Chaplaincy for Covid Times (<https://vimeo.com/520595380>). Please be on the lookout for an upcoming article about my work in the next edition of The Episcopal New Yorker.

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission has continued to meet virtually. As part of the larger commission's work, a trio from the Episcopal/Jewish Dialogue subcommittee (Susan Auchincloss of St Gregory's in Woodstock, Meredith Ward of St Bart's, and I) worked with Matthew Meade (Christ Church Pelham) to craft a resolution addressing antisemitism in our lectionary. We presented it for a vote at our diocesan convention. It passed! We are now hoping that our resolution will go on to inform a national resolution on the same topic for General Convention this summer.

I have continued to write for The Resistance Prays (as I have since shortly after it started publishing its faithful Christian responses to Trump-ism daily, early in 2017). While TRP is only published once a week now, it continues to speak truth to power, regardless of the party that is in power. (<https://bit.ly/3g7H9QU>).

The Needlework Ministry at Ascension also continues virtually, and it is a joy to be part of that work. Please take a look at our write up in this annual report.

Speaking of needlework, I have been doing quite a bit of it here at home. And that is always a blessing and a grounding practice for me.

Philippe and I are so happy to be settled in the neighborhood, and we are so glad we moved downtown (how happy I was to be so nearby when I broke my foot this year!) Our young adult children are both still in Queens, which means we get to see them frequently. Blessings abound.

I want to finish with a shout out to my two clergy colleagues, without whom I could not have remained so steadfast and grounded in this pandemic time. We are a wonderful synergistic team, and the level of mutual support fills me with gratitude.

Thank you to this whole community for being who you are. Thank you for your faithfulness and kindness. It remains a joy to serve with you.

The Rev. Posey Krakowsky, Priest Associate

Wardens' Report

Incredibly, 2021 has been a year of great accomplishment at the Church of the Ascension, despite the continuing Covid-19 pandemic. Mother Liz (along with the staff and lay team) has done an excellent job to keep us going through three-quarters of the year with meaningful remote worship; and when in-person services restarted in September, at least half of that congregation remained on-line. Participating in the Eucharist and hearing our beloved choir in person may have been the

major reasons for returning to church, but Father Ed's coffee hour tents added to the much-needed feeling of restored community.

An important milestone was achieved with the hiring of our first (or at least first in a half-century) business manager, Kelli Long in September. Kelli directs day-to-day activities of both our bookkeeper and our resident sexton. Her presence makes it possible for Mother Liz to focus her energies more fully on worship, programming and pastoring rather than day-to-day operational management. Kelli is one of three hires at Ascension in 2021. Our long-time sexton, Len Bowman, retired after years of service to Ascension and other Episcopal churches. Sandra Bowman also retired from the position as Sunday childcare provider. After a wide search, Dwight Roberts was selected as our new resident sexton and assumed duty in October. Luis Ortiz also replaced Ravi Gayadin as assistant sexton in November. The leadership of every member of the Personnel, Finance and Buildings and Grounds committees, and in particular Kyle Cheseborough's contribution, was essential to finding the most suitable candidates for these positions. We warmly welcome Kelli, Dwight and Luis to the Ascension family.

Our ever-needy buildings received some important upgrades in 2021 and not having anyone in the space helped move some projects forward. The fire alarm system was installed with minimal visual disruption and (so far) sonic disruption. Thanks are due to many people, especially Garrett Dangler, Tom Rice and Dr Dennis Keene. Stained glass got TLC in two areas: the narthex doors and the chapel. The third-floor kitchen in the Parish House was remodeled, and new carpeting was also added in the rear of the Nave. Plans for new office space on the Parish Hall balcony were devised by parishioner and interior designer Christopher Boshears, and this space will serve as the business manager's office.

Backing up for a moment: Ascension for many years did not present services online, and the pandemic gave us the impetus needed to move us forward! John Thompson is due an incredible thank-you for introducing and then monitoring the technology that allowed us to have interactive Zoom services, with support from Vin Knight. Because we could not celebrate the Eucharist, participation in online evening prayer on weeknights, as well as intercessory prayer became to a large extent the backbone of services, providing opportunity to ask God's grace, help and mercy, but also giving the headlines of people's ongoing concerns. Mother Liz set up a rotating schedule of preachers, and we were continually challenged by the insights and scholarship of herself and Father Ed, along with Mother Posey Krakowski and Mother Meredith Ward. Further enriching those services was the return of semi-live music. Maestro Keene brought his intrepid (masked) singers back on Sunday afternoons to record music for the following Sundays. Even those with untrained ears could immediately appreciate the difference between tracks laid down at home and mixed online, and the full-bodied voices singing together with a conductor. The racial justice study group and the crafters guild continued to meet online via Zoom, continuing the work of outreach and being together as community.

The return of in-person worship provided the occasion for moving to streaming technology that could show the full range of our services: the celebrants, preachers, choir, organist, acolytes and readers. This did not just happen. It required the expertise, patience, flexibility, and pride of at least a half-dozen people. We are particularly indebted to Andrew Jones, our Parish Administrator, for exhibiting all those qualities while piloting the program.

We are indebted to The Reopening Taskforce for providing their best thinking on how to keep us all safe by employing all of the necessary Covid protocols to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

On the financial side, problems were identified that necessitated a change of bookkeepers supplied by our temp agency. Our new bookkeeper, Sajia Choudhury, has stepped up with great good humor and the required expertise to affect the transition, with significant help from Madonna Stack-Barker and our Treasurer, Mary Gaillard. Mary has moved her permanent home to Albany, NY which makes Kelli Long's role as business manager critical for the future management of the church's finances in collaboration with Mary and the Finance Committee. Mary promises to remain with us as Treasurer, whole hopefully getting a chance to enjoy many activities in retirement. This is probably a good chance to point out Mary's importance to the financial health of the Church of the Ascension. Mary has served several terms as warden, in addition to time as finance committee chair and now, as Treasurer. It is hard for us as wardens to describe Mary's importance to us: she is basically the keeper of Ascension's financial health. She is very conscious and protective of the long-term health of our church. When it comes time for spending proposals, Mary's presence is like having a gigantic hammock under you. One feels safe in the knowledge that she's not going to let you do something, shall we say, profligate.

We have been blessed with two low interest loans from the federal government's Payroll Protection Program (PPP) that have replaced lost rental income and allowed us to afford to continue to pay our dedicated staff. A special financial gift from the Manton Foundation intended for Covid relief was also received and has paid for the technology innovations and upgrades that have made our online presence possible.

In welcome news, to both the parish and the school, La Petite École (LPE) renewed its lease with Ascension for a further five years, up till 2026. Not only is there a confluence of mission between the two organizations but the rental income the school provides offers an essential and sustainable revenue stream to help repay the loan the church has.

These are some highlights from this year. Please read the other reports for a full picture of them.

We would be remiss at this point the very significant challenges that face us. Our old buildings require constant, expensive care and maintenance. (In recent months the lack of heat in the Rectory as a result of unexpected gas line and boiler issues was an unexpected, time consuming challenge and expense.)

Our pledges are down, mostly due to the deaths of stalwart givers. Our leaders, clergy and lay, must find creative ways to serve both an online and in-person congregation. And Mother Liz and Father Ed will not be with us for a significant part of 2022, due to deferred vacations and sabbaticals. We must work to rebuild our service groups, particularly our flower and hospitality guilds.

Further, we need to develop a strong vision that re-imagines our outreach priorities and programs for service of our members and the community, and this needs to be done in collaboration with Ascension Outreach's ministries.

While those challenges are daunting, the blessings of our beautiful landmark structures, our strong history of volunteer participation and service are sources of strength and inspiration. The revitalization that has come through technology, that opens up our services to people wherever they are in the world, and the opportunity for our hard-pressed pastors to find rest and renewal in the days ahead are matters that require our collective prayers and our time, talent and treasure as we seek to build God's kingdom in this place. We give thanks for the dedication of Rusty Moore, Janet Fisher and Barbara Burns who are retiring from Vestry. A word of thanks is due also to our ever-faithful Chancellor, Charlie Schmidt, for his many hours of legal advice freely and generously given.

Isabel would also like to add that the parish owes a debt of gratitude to Maurice Seaton whose generous leadership and service has brought light to our footsteps over the past six years of his tenure as warden. May God continue to bless our beloved Ascension community. Amen

Maurice Seaton & Isabel Spencer, Wardens

Reports of Committees, Groups, Guilds, & Ministries

Acolytes and Chalice Bearers

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, 2021 saw an abbreviated year for the Acolyte Guild.

Due to the abbreviated year, the acolytes' guild did not come back into the church until mid-September for the 11:00am service. In accordance with current communion service protocols, the chalice bearers will not be scheduled until further notice.

In the spring, a Wednesday night service started at the free-standing altar, with a celebrant and server.

Our current Guild Roster includes Elizabeth Adams, James Amodeo, Eve Beglarian, Daniel Cole, Lisa Dunn, Janet Fisher, John Grimes, David Lehmann, Rusty Moore, Isabel Spencer, Michael Surabian, Shana Weber and Stanley Weinberg.

As always, we cannot thank our members enough for all their hard work and dedication during the shortened year. Fortunately, the team did not have to endure hours of rehearsals for any of the high holyday services this past year. And, of course, we are extremely grateful to Mtr. Liz, Fr. Ed and Mtr. Posey for their ever available and welcomed guidance and support.

Candace Lombardi & Tom Rice, co-Sacristans

Altar Guild

The work of the Altar Guild during 2021 can be described as a series of "starts and stops." Members of the Guild participated in the Reopening Committee, providing input and modifying our service as needed in response to the changes in our liturgies, while keeping COVID safety considerations in mind. In the Spring, members of the Guild resumed serving at the Wednesday evening Eucharists at the freestanding altar, continuing until these services were halted just before Christmas. We also resumed serving at the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sunday Eucharists in October, continuing through the last Sunday of Advent. While we had to pause our work when services

moved on line for Christmas, we look forward to participating in services when they resume in 2022. Special thanks to Tom Rice in particular for his dedication to the Wednesday evening services.

Notwithstanding our somewhat limited role this year, I remain very grateful for the hard work of the Altar Guild members, and we were pleased to welcome Elizabeth Adams and June Fait to the Guild in 2021. I would especially like to thank Lisa Dunn and David Lehmann for their help in washing and ironing the linens.

We said a fond farewell to Sexton Len Bowman who worked closely with the Guild during his time here and always kept the candles trimmed and the brass polished. We appreciate the work of new Sexton Dwight Roberts and the sexton staff for their dedicated and caring attention to these important details.

Members of the Altar Guild in 2021 were: Eric Achacoso, Elizabeth Adams, Eve Beglarian, Stacey Carpenter, David Cholcher, Garrett Dangler, Lisa Dunn, June Fait, Mary Gaillard, Mary Gossy, John Grimes, Kristin Jackson, David Lehmann, Candace Lombardi, Robert McDonald, Tom Rice, Rachel Sedor, Maurice Seaton, and Isabel Spencer. The Altar Guild is always looking for new members--please join us!

John M. Grimes, Chair

Archives Report

Historical records of the Church of the Ascension are housed in the Diocesan Archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. They are preserved and stored in a climate-controlled environment in acid-free archival files and boxes. Ascension retains ownership of the materials.

Vin Knight, Archivist

Buildings and Grounds Committee

The most significant event for the Buildings and Grounds Committee in 2021 was the retirement of our sexton, Lenford Bowman, after decades of work in the Episcopal Church. His knowledge of church protocols and his insistence on the pristine upkeep of our buildings will be sorely missed.

After a wide search, Ascension hired a new resident sexton, Dwight Roberts. Dwight, who did some work here when we prepared the Parish Hall for services during our church renovation, has strong skills developed as an independent contractor. He put those skills to use immediately, renovating the fourth-floor sexton apartment for himself and his family. His transition was complicated by the resignation of our first assistant sexton, Ravi Gayadin, for reasons of health. William Gordon, who joined the sexton staff full-time in February, was a great help as Dwight learned the nooks and crannies of our properties. In late fall, Dwight hired Luis Ortiz as a second assistant. Luis comes with experience at St. John's in the Village.

With the arrival of our new business manager, Kelli Long, the sexton's responsibilities have shifted slightly. Kelli is taking on some of the tracking of inspections and violations, along with helping create a more robust list of service providers. Dwight will be taking on some projects for which we might previously have hired outside contractors.

As is unfortunately the norm for 150-year-old buildings, emergencies struck as we hoped to focus on exciting new projects. This year, the primary problem was the rectory hot water heater, followed quickly by trouble with the gas lines to rectory boiler and stove. After fruitless attempts to restart the heater, a new one was purchased. ConEd repaired the gas line from the street to the building, and our contractor ran new lines to the boiler and stove. The endlessly complicated process is being sorted out with the invaluable assistance of Chancellor Charlie Schmidt, and we are awaiting some fixes around the boiler and then the process of obtaining city and ConEd approvals to restart. Mother Liz has suffered through 1) lack of hot water and 2) lack of heat in the coldest months. The heat problems also affect our tenant and partner, La Petite Ecole. The lack of heat in the building is thought to have been a contributing factor when a number of pipes in the walls and ceiling of the large classroom burst. Those repairs are ongoing.

On the plus side of the ledger, our fire alarm system was at last installed and (so far) has not caused disruptions. This long-anticipated project took on new life at the time of the Notre Dame fire and was continually stymied by red tape and then Covid protocols. Many thanks to Garrett Dangler for honchoing this work from start to finish.

While there are several repair and restoration ideas on our agenda, none is more important than the emergency work that must be done to safeguard the church tower. Barbara Burns has been a creative chair of our brownstone subcommittee. While we have had studies that tell us our brownstone is deteriorating, Mother Liz asked for an assessment of what work is truly urgent. After considering several proposals, Barbara urged us to hire Vertical Access, whose workers swarmed the tower and façade like spiders, supported by harnesses, tapping away to determine weak spots. The subsequent report identified two areas that pose potential safety hazards. The vestry approved hiring an architect, who is now drawing up specifications to send to potential contractors.

There have been other stops and starts during the year, other ideas tested and awaiting attention. One of the most delightful was the stained-glass repair undertaken for the narthex doors and the columbarium chapel. If you haven't looked, focus your attention the next time you pass through the chapel on the window opposite the altar. The repaired window is gemlike...small, with its colors clear and sparkling. It's a great reminder of why it's a privilege to serve on this committee at this beautiful church.

Isabel Spencer for the Committee: Mother Liz, Maurice Seaton, Gale Lynch, Lisa Dunn, Tom Rice, Sibyl Piccone, Barbara Burns, Charles Schmidt, Mary Gaillard

Isabel Spencer, Convener

Discernment Committee

The Discernment Committee plays a role in helping individuals in our parish discover their "call to ministry." The committee enters into an intentional relationship with the aspirant on the behalf of the parish and advises the Rector in her consideration to recommend the person to move from the parish discernment level to the Diocesan level. The committee also serves to support those already in the process leading to ordination.

Taking a journey with someone who hears God's call in their life is a profound honor. It involves listening not only with our ears but with our hearts and challenging each other to focus on the still small voice inside the aspirant as she or he discerns what the next step might be in their spiritual formation.

In 2021, two potential aspirants initiated the confidential discernment process at Ascension. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the committee met via Zoom, a situation that unfortunately is likely to continue until the health crises ends.

Committee members in 2021 were: David Cholcher, Peter Clark, Janet Fisher, Sibyl Piccone, and Eve Beglarian, Convener

Eve Beglarian, Convener

Docents Guild

The Docents Guild mourns the passing of its long-time chair, Liz Hill. May Liz rest in peace with her beloved Charlie and they both rise in glory.

Because of the pandemic, the Docents' Guild has suspended activities until further notice.

Members include: Daniel Cole, Garrett Dangler, Dorothy DeCrescenzo, Gretchen Dumler, Lisa Dunn, G Jan Jones, Sara Jones, Peter Nordeen, Tom Rice, Maurice Seaton, Isabel Spencer, Jill Tildesly, and Catherine Tinker.

Tom Rice, Chair

Flower Guild

The parish is actively recruiting new members of the flower guild.

In as much as our dear Sara Jones – who served tirelessly and with great enthusiasm and creativity for so many years – has discerned, as of last year, that the time has come for her to move to a permanent location outside NYC, we are casting a very wide net in hopes of identifying two or three people who will find a delight very similar to Sara's in this vital and essential ministry.

In Sara's words, "It is a great opportunity for a creative person with a passion, it is a joyful ministry. In addition to enhancing regular worship, floral decor at the church is always a great way to celebrate an important occasion, whether it be a wedding, a baptism, an anniversary, or a memorial."

Please consider joining the team! You'll receive all the information and assistance you need to make our worship space and the worship itself, as beautiful as can be.

Fr. Ed Chinery, Convener

Hospitality and Activities Guild

2021 was another challenging year for all Guilds, especially for Hospitality and Activities. With continued services on Zoom for most of the year, it made gathering together physically impossible. However, the continued blessing has been the success of our Zoom services, and the subsequent online adapted Coffee Hour. It has been amazing to see how many folks stick around afterwards to chat and have coffee! This summer we were able to come together for an outdoor BBQ to celebrate Len Bowman's career and that was the first time we had gathered all together in person

in over a year. How great it was to be reunited! In September we reopened to in-person worship and held coffee hour outside when the weather permitted. As the months grew colder we realized the need to adapt the coffee hour to keep it safe and also warm, so the Reopening Committee purchased a tent with heaters so we could continue our great fellowship safely outdoors as comfortably as possible. Unfortunately, the surge in the Omicron variant forced us to return to online services only for the congregation, so coffee hour as reverted back to its online version for the time being. As head of the Guild I am continuing to represent Hospitality in the Church Reopening Task Force, assisting in ways to plan our reopening and future gatherings safely. We look forward to more online community (and soon back to in-person) and we will be planning new ways to expand and improve on such. If you have any ideas of your own to share about activities or how to enhance Hospitality - whether online or in-person - please let me know! Thank you all for your participation during another unusual year - looking forward to a brighter 2022 and hope we can all be together in person soon, for good!

Matthew Vermedahl, Chair

Music Program

The Pandemic continued. And at the beginning of 2021, and all through the Spring and Summer, we continued recording anthems and hymns in the church with 10 singers on Sunday afternoons. The singers wore "singer masks" and were spread 15 feet apart, front to back, and 8 feet apart to their sides. To keep everyone together I conducted from the center aisle and had an organ accompanist. I recorded an organ prelude each week on Saturdays. The music we recorded was played on subsequent Sunday Zoom services and also for Holy Week. Jeffrey Johnson continued to prepare Introit chants of incredible inventiveness, which he would do live each week.

On September 12, after a year and a half, we returned to in-person services at the 11am service with full choir. Everyone wore masks at all times, except readers and preachers. The choir only gathered in the choir stalls when singing an anthem. Otherwise, they were more safely scattered in the Nave. These services began to be streamed live via Local Live company so that people could either choose to come in person or watch the service remotely. As I write this report in January 2022, we are still working out glitches in these streaming services.

When the surge of cases of the Omicron variant came in December, it was decided it wasn't safe to have in person attendance at services. So, the only people in the church were priests, acolytes, readers, and musicians. This started with the Christmas Eve service 2021 and remained that way until February 6, 2022. I myself tested positive right before Christmas and had to replace myself for all Christmas services! The first time in my life I missed Christmas Eve.

I am so grateful for the incredible hard work and unfailingly dedicated spirit of our wonderful choir members. God bless you!

Dennis Keene, Organist and Choirmaster

Voices of Ascension

The calendar year 2021 started with no concerts scheduled at all. Like all musical organizations we were in a wait and see position. But some important virtual projects occurred.

In January came the virtual premiere of *Astronautica – Women in Space*, an exceptional multi-media piece of art with a libretto Hai-Ting Chinn created from interviews of women astronauts, commissioned music from 9 women composers (including our own Bora Yoon!), and recorded performances by Trio Triumphantix. This was the first project under the new umbrella of Voices of Ascension called Voices of the New. It was a sensation.

But the first choral music making occurred in late May when 14 singers – all fully vaccinated – were able to make a video recording of some favorite choral pieces at the DiMenna Center which was later broadcast via streaming. Then a couple of weeks later, the group sang for a live audience outdoors at the Untermyer Gardens in Yonkers, New York. Curiously, this was at a time before Omicron when doubly vaccinated people could actually be together without masks. And that's how we and the audience were at that joyous concert.

In the Fall *Astronautica* had its live in person premiere at Symphony Space's Thalia theater. The large audience stood en masse at the end!

The Voices of Ascension made their first full return to live concerts with the Candlelight Christmas concerts in December. Everyone was masked. And, fortunately, the concerts occurred early enough in the month to avoid shutdowns due to the Omicron variant. At the end of each concert, the audiences stood and clapped, seemingly forever, clearly expressing their gratitude in hearing live music again.

Dennis Keene, Artistic Director

Needle Crafter's Guild

The Ascension Needle Crafters began meeting a little over three years ago. We have about twelve regular attendees. All are welcome regardless of skill level and we have very experienced crafters who are happy to teach and nurture novices. In these painful and often lonely times we have traded gathering around the table in our cozy rear parlor for meeting in our cozy homes via Zoom.

Our knit and crochet projects include lap robes for chemo patients, scarves and caps for the Christmas at Sea program, and baby clothes and blankets for newborns, the children of young mothers at risk.

As the pandemic hit, Needle Crafters Posey Krakowsky, Buff Kavelman, and Madonna Stack made hundreds of masks.

Our usual work has gone on and we have baskets of scarves, hats, lap robes, and baby clothes ready for delivery as soon as it's safe to do so.

Over the three years we have been in existence we have continued to build community, to learn from each other, and to enjoy the satisfaction of providing something tangible and useful for people to enjoy.

Joan Castagnone, Chair

Nursery & Sunday School

Due to the ongoing Covid 19 epidemic there was no Sunday School or Nursery Care this past year, 2021. We were hoping that the Fall would bring the opportunity to have children return, but as you know, we couldn't do it. We are hopeful that in 2022 we will once again welcome children back to our program.

In June, we said goodbye to our dear Sandra Bowman who retired from Ascension, along with her husband Len. In her typically dedicated way, Sandra stood by for the first half of the year, ready to welcome the children back into the Nursery if we could reopen. She will be missed by all who were so fond of her. We gave her a small gift and a note of appreciation that was signed on behalf of all of us who knew and worked with her.

Sibyl Piccone, Director, Nursery & Sunday School

Parish Office Report

In many ways 2021 seems a redux of 2020 - a sort of merry-go-round of in-office and remote. But thanks to the grace and flexibility of parishioners, clergy, and staff we made it happen and God was worshiped and praised!

In addition to learning new ways of doing things and relearning how we did things in the "before times", we've had exciting changes in the office. The Parish Office got a little busier and more crowded as we welcomed our new bookkeeper, Sajia Choudhury, and our business manager, Kelli Long. Along with our new Sexton, Dwight Roberts, we quickly began running like a well-oiled machine.

As if just keeping up with all the changes wasn't enough, we wired the church for livestreaming capabilities and installed new Wi-Fi hotspots. We researched and selected a livestreaming company (LocalLive) that has made our livestreamed services much more accessible and better looking. Many thanks to the volunteers who served (and serve) as our Zoom hosts each week, enabling us to keep our online community worshiping together.

There's always more to do and this year we anticipate a new copier (the 5-year lease on the old one is over), and upgrading our internet from Spectrum Business to FiOS to give us much faster bandwidth and accessibility.

Br. Andrew Jones, OSF, Parish Administrator

Personnel Committee

Despite the continuing pandemic, the Personnel Committee continued to meet virtually and had a very productive year. We participated in the discussions concerning the hiring of three new employees for Ascension and in the interview process. In addition, we developed a Conflicts of Interest policy which was approved by the Vestry and implemented in early Fall 2021. It was signed by all key employees and committee volunteers at Ascension, who are responsible for recommending or hiring, vendors; signing contracts; or the purchasing of supplies and materials using Ascension funds.

We presented and discussed the 2021 revised Employee Handbook to the Vestry. Based on issues identified during the interview process for the three new employees, we decided to revise the

employee handbook in regards to vacation, sick time and holiday policies. We expect to implement a new handbook in early 2022.

We presented to the Vestry the recommendation to identify Juneteenth as a holiday for the staff and to change the wording of Columbus Day to Columbus Day (Indigenous People Day) in the handbook. When the Columbus Day holiday name change is approved by federal, and state governments, we will switch to the new title for this holiday. This recommendation was approved by the Vestry in December 2021.

I wish to thank the Committee members, who consist of Mother Liz; our wardens, Isabel Spencer and Maurice Seaton; Kyle Cheseborough; David Cholcher; Rusty Moore and Kelli Long.

Madonna Stack-Barker, Chair

Planned Giving Committee/Ascension Angels Legacy Society

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic the Planned Giving Committee and the Ascension Angels Legacy Society did not host an active program of events and activities in 2021. We continue to encourage all members of our Ascension family to include the parish in their estate plans and to inform us when you have done so. Each year, including in 2021, the annual stewardship materials ask if Ascension is in your will or estate plans. We appreciate all those who have made provision for a legacy gift to enable Ascension to continue to be the spiritual home for generations to come. If you wish to receive any information about planned giving options, or about purchasing a niche in Ascension's columbarium, please contact Andrew Jones at the parish office: 212-254-8620 or email: apjones@ascensionnyc.org

Maurice Seaton, Chair

Reopening Taskforce

The Reopening Taskforce keeps a finger on the pulse of the pandemic and how it affects our parish's health – both the physical well-being of parishioners and guests, and of the parish as a whole. It is by no means an easy task to balance what we want with what we can do.

This year saw us move from tentative steps in reopening to fully reopened (with masks and social distancing, of course), then back to a last-minute shutdown the day before Christmas Eve due to the Omicron variant. Key in all our discussions has been keeping what we've gained during this period: a strong online community, a strong in-person community, and a deep love of our liturgy, music and commitment to service.

Submitted by Br., Andrew Jones, OSF, Parish Administrator
The Rev. Elizabeth G. Maxwell, Convener

Stewardship Committee

The theme of Ascension's stewardship campaign this year comes from Psalm 95 and its inspired hymn, "O Come Let Us Sing Unto the Lord, Let Us Heartily Rejoice In the Strength of Our Salvation." Given the economic uncertainty that continues because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the campaign goal did not change from last year's goal of \$400,000. Our annual stewardship campaign event, The Harvest Dinner, was held remotely again on Zoom due to the pandemic. Our team of canvass callers once again worked diligently, reaching out to members of our community to pledge

support for Ascension. As of January 27, 2022, we have received 82 pledges for a total of \$334,127, with some expected pledges still outstanding.

Eric Achacoso & Peter Clark, Co-Chair

Ushers' Guild

During 2021 the Ushers' Guild served at the 11AM Sunday Eucharist from September until Christmas Eve. Guild members greet and seat worshipers and help with any special needs. They collect and bring forward the offering and open pew doors at the time of communion. This is a pleasant and sociable form of ministry, and new members are welcome. Those who participated in 2021 included: Robin Clements, Mary Gaillard, John Grimes, Sirkka Kyle, Terry Rogers, David Lehmann, John Thompson, Robert McDonald, John Merryman, Barbara Matovu, Sarah Standing, Janet Sygar, Stanley Weinberg, Joan Castagnone, John Gibson, Madonna Stack, Rusty Moore, Shep Skiff, Kyle Cheseborough, Jacob Scott, Gayle Lynch, Garrett Dangler, and Charles Schmidt.

Steve Hubbard, Chair

Welcome & Evangelism Committee

The Welcome and Evangelism Committee, co-chaired by Steve Hubbard and David Lehmann, was mostly conducted online during 2021. Mardi Gras in February was celebrated with an online bingo game to help greet new and long-time parishioners. The Greeters Guild was still active during 2021 along with the clergy and the Reopening Committee in seeing that newcomers (both in-person and online) are made to feel welcome. For 2022, we are discussing better ways to greet members who are new through live stream services services.

Steve Hubbard & David Lehmann, co-Chairs

The Church of the Ascension

in the City of New York
Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street

Parish House (offices and mailing address):
12 West 11th Street, New York, New York 10011

Telephone: (212) 254-8620, Facsimile: (212) 254-6520
Internet Address: www.ascendingnyc.org

Office Hours:
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Return to Regular Worship Schedule
Starting Sunday, February 6, we will return to our regular worship schedule.

Sunday
Holy Eucharist (Side Altar) 9:30 a.m.
Holy Eucharist w/ Music (Church & Livestream) 11:00 a.m.
Ascensionnyc.org/webcasts.
Coffee Hour – In-Person and Online
Meditation & Sacrament (Church) 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday
Holy Eucharist (Church) 6:00 p.m.

Evening Prayer Every Weekday (Zoom): 5:30 p.m. ascensionnyc.org/eveningprayer.

Open Church (Church) Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays, noon to 3:00 p.m.