

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 2023

Annual Meeting of 29 January 2023

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022

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 29, 2023

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
Charles E. Schmidt	Chancellor
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
Rashean Thompkins	Assistant Sexton
Carolyn Braden	Choir Assistant

2022 VESTRY MEMBERS

David Cholcher, Warden
Isabel Spencer, Warden
Mary Gaillard, Treasurer
Mary Gossy, Clerk

Class of 2023

Kyle Church Cheseborough
Peter Clark
Tom Rice
Jill Tildesley

Class of 2024

Vin Knight
Gale Lynch
Rachel Sedor
John Thompson

Class of 2025

Elizabeth Adams
John Grimes
Steve Hubbard
Madonna Stack-Barker

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2023 Annual Meeting Agenda

The Annual Meeting is convened immediately following the 11:00 service. Ballots were distributed electronically on the Wednesday prior to the annual meeting, January 23, and polls remained open until 12 noon, Friday, 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 30, 2022

Treasurer's Report for 2022 and 2023 Budget

Rector and Warden's Remarks

Questions and Answers

Small Group Conversations and Report back

Legacy Society Report

Necrology

Recognition of Retiring Vestry Members

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 2022 Annual Meeting of the Church of the Ascension

- Mother Liz called the meeting to order
- Elizabeth Adams appointed as Secretary of the meeting and approved by the Parish
- Madonna Stack-Barker moved to accepted the 2021 minutes which was seconded by June Fait and passed.

Treasurer's Report

- Mary Gaillard gave a summary of the 2021 and 2022 Finances which starts on page 14 of the Agenda (2021 Annual Report). Parish leadership had expected to be back to normal by 2022 which was not the case. A few highlights are mentioned below.
- Ascension received "forgiveness" for a PPP loan of \$163k this year, and so it is included in the income. We received a second loan of 163k but we cannot count it as income until it is forgiven. This is expected to take place in 2022.
- Ascension received \$250,000 for the Manton foundation for Covid 19 relief. We have used some of those funds to pay down the loan with Fiduciary which would have normally come from our rental income, and for our live streaming for church on Sundays
- Luckily the Diocese allowed a 25 percent reduction in the Diocesan Assessment in 2021, which saved about \$50,000, which we have this year but won't have next year.
- John Grimes gave a summary of the budget found on page 15 (2021 Annual Report).
- He reported that the budget includes a large deficit of \$450k, but we are expecting it to be partially offset by the PPP loan and a payroll tax credit under the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program. The finance committee budgets conservatively and constantly review the results during the year.
- He emphasized Ascension's gratitude for everyone's pledges and encouraged those who have not pledged to do so.
- We are looking at the other sources of income. Hopefully outside contributions will go up, LPE rent will increase with the lease renewal, and movie shoots will resume.
- Expenses include a budgeted 3% raise for staff to keep up with inflation and cost of living, and a modest increase for the choir.
- John reported that we have a new business manager, Kelli Long, and we are getting her up to speed on all things.
- He continued that for the operating budget, we draw down a certain amount from our endowment funds based on a twelve quarter ending formula. For 2022 this is expected to be 457k. The deficit will most likely be made up by drawing additional funds from the General and Endowment Fund. This is not ideal as the more we take, the less there is for growth.
- He thanked everyone on the Finance Committee whose names are listed at the bottom of page 16 (2021 Annual Report).

The floor was opened for questions.

- Questions:
 - Gale asked for a detailed answer about the deficit and other streams of income.
 - Mary explained that we could present a budget with a balance to zero but the reality is we want to keep programs and staff including hiring a business manager.

But we also don't want to fool ourselves into thinking we can keep drawing down the endowments.

- Prior to the pandemic we had tried to rent out office space, in addition to our rent from LPE, but Covid 19 upset these plans.
- For right now, we are okay with the PPP and ERTC but they are not long term and so we need to return to getting these new streams of income from rent and contemplate other ways of bringing in more money.

Rectors' and Wardens' Remarks

- Mother Liz said she gave report in the sermon but was happy to answer any questions
- Isabel Spencer highlighted Maurice Seaton, the departing warden's, contributions during his term which included hiring Kelli Long as business manager, which is one of the most significant developments at Ascension in a decade. He also worked with Charlie Schmidt on the new lease with LPE and cemented the relationship through 2026. She emphasized that we have been blessed to have him as warden and a former vestry member and she is grateful to have served with him.
- Maurice Seaton thanked Isabel and added that he loved every minute of being warden. He then shared a quote from the Unknown Worshiper to emphasize how much has changed, and how we will continue to change and that we need to ready. The challenges of the past two years have helped him grow stronger in his faith and he expressed hope that the Covid 19 experience has deepened other members' faith. He then thanked everyone for supporting the parish and the beloved community. Mother Liz, Isabel, and he have spent a lot of time together and could not have better partners. Hiring Kelli was one of the major accomplishments during his term and this has freed Mother Liz to focus on liturgy, outreach and pastoral care while Kelli takes care of the day-to day issues with finances and HR etc. He continued that one of the challenges we will face is giving attention to our brownstone. It will need some work in the next months and wanted to acknowledge the work Barbara Burns has put in and will continue to contribute towards this project. The question of outreach is something to think about in the months ahead. We have a duty and responsibility to nourish our members and to serve beyond our doors. He also asked that if anyone knows of anyone looking to rent an office, our offices are ready to rent and receive tenants. He is thrilled that David Cholcher has taken on the role as warden to succeed him. He then closed with another quote from the Unknown Worshiper about open Church to emphasize the significance of re-opening and how that allows us to offer love to the unknown worshiper.
- Mother Liz offered thanks and blessings to Maurice in his next phase.

Questions & Answers

- Tim Tomkins asked about the process for deciding when the church is open as opposed to closed for in person services. Wanted to speak forcefully for having the church open as much as possible. He recognizes that this is a very complicated issue but there is room to do more than Ascension has done in the past year. He shared his experience with Christmas. He pointed out that people had already balanced their risk and thinks that cancelling the service didn't capture the spirit of the Episcopal Church in empowering people to make their own decisions. He asked what is the process is for making these decisions going forward.

- Mother Liz answered that there is a Reopening Taskforce with varying opinions but that she takes ultimate responsibility for these decisions. She recognized that she has been more conservative than some colleagues and churches have varied in their re-opening process. She emphasized that we have tried hard to make the online services welcoming and we certainly tried to have the church and garden open before we resumed in church services. She pointed out that the church doesn't have good ventilation or air purification system so for the sake of public health and because many members of the congregation are older, more precautions have been taken. She emphasized that she hears his concerns and that the church is moving into a place where we will need to do this again and again. As for Christmas, the virus was virulent and many people had gotten sick. We will always be thoughtful and consultive as we can be.
- Further discussion ensued. Dennis Keene and Maurice pointed out that the church will be reopening again after the closure due to the omicron surge.
- Tom Rice pointed out that the church is also open during the week for open doors.
- Kate Rutherford pointed out that while there was a lot of pain due to not being able to meet in person, being able to meet online has been a great gift. And it has been a great joy and comfort to have the group that meets on Zoom.
- Madonna emphasized the risks of gathering for Christmas and that they were following the recommendations of the CDC to not put large groups of people together if vaccine status was unknown.
- Breaking into Small Groups
- Mother Liz asked to speak with folks you find yourself with about highlights of this year, challenges of the past year and something you hope for in 2022. Groups were then sorted in Zoom.

Small Group Reports

Group I

Mother Liz shared that for her group the high point was getting back in the church and being able to participate and excitement for the online presence and be at church when you couldn't be there physically. Music was noted as a highpoint as was evening prayer. The All-Souls service was meaningful.

Challenges included the cancellation of in person Christmas Services and the ongoing challenges with our building.

Their hope for 2022: that we stay open, that we find programs that entice people to come to church, Jacob talked about involvement at NYU, Steve is cataloguing buildings in an interactive way

Group II

Mother Posey shared that her group came to similar conclusions: the delight of being back in person, how nice it was that people who go to 9am service got to know 11amers on Zoom and being able to see them in person for different reasons later. Zoom created bridge between the 9am and the 11am services. A lot of people thought that the forums are better on Zoom and everyone loves evening prayer.

Ideas for the future: doing things more outside because it makes the Church look more welcoming. She also voiced the possibility of adding more benches in the garden and creating some regular event to be outside such as someone singing at the front doors or dramatic readings outside.

Group III

Isabel shared that everyone was very touched that Ascension is always there for 11am and 5:30 online services.

Challenges: Challenges in re-opening

Hopes for the future: People got to know each other through Zoom. Everyone is very enthusiastic about coffee hour outside and other things outside because it shows who we are. There was also a desire to keep the doors open on Sunday afternoon until we've left and engaging the NYU community. There is an interest in hiring security for the door. Bethalena also suggested sharing a list of names and phone numbers of people in the parish who are available to talk someone is needed at any time

Group IV

Maurice shared that evening prayer was described as a Godsend that kept us all together and Zoom gave everyone an opportunity to get to know one another, especially people who had physically relocated.

Some of the challenges included the practicalities of getting out of bed to go to physical church in the morning, getting new volunteers for flower guild, altar guild etc., how to sustain buildings like the rectory and long term sustainability.

Hopes for 2022 included developing a long term plan for sustainability of buildings, and thinking beyond the immediate is always a challenge. The parish will become more welcoming to families and children. The most practical suggestions included starting a talent bank and invite people to share their talents to sustain our parish.

Group V

Father Ed shared that the first thing that came out as a high point was the Voices Christmas Concert, appreciation for in person services, open doors and came back to the notion of how we have begun to examine who we are and how that contributes to who we will be. The tent is another high point.

There was not much talk about low points, but the loss of in person services and how that makes an impact on the choir.

Things hopeful for the future: use more robust participation in the Reopening Taskforce and how important the open doors are. It gives opportunities to marginalized communities for a safe space, there is relationship potential there. The group was leaning more towards the triumph of the past year, and it awakens the desire for relationship skills and beyond calling the police for incidents such as when a disruptive homeless man took residence in the garden. Finally, there was a desire for a big campaign to get people back and recognizing that one of the factors in

getting people back is recognizing the communal trauma. We need to acknowledge it and that we offer a safe space.

Mother Liz thanked everyone and encouraged people to think and pray more about these questions.

Necrology

Mother Liz: we remember and pray for those who have died in the past year and there are people beyond our community. We have lost some important people including Liz Hill and we are still waiting on the time to have the service her family wants to have.

We have had burials and memorials for people who were not necessarily active

A full list of those who have died was read followed by a prayer.

Announcements

Mother Liz announced that there are four vestry members whose terms are up and she wants to acknowledge them: Madonna Stack-Barker, Janet Fisher, Rusty Moore, and Barbara Burns. Madonna is running for another term and the others are not. She is very grateful for their service, and they have been gifted a book called "Wintering."

She continued that it is traditional to give a gift to the outgoing warden, which is a clock and delighted to give Maurice a Bulova.

Gretchen Dumler asked for information about the family of Maxine Thornton whose husband was once assistant rector at Ascension. Father Ed answered that he had welcomed Maxine's granddaughter and fiancé, and cousin and will send her their contact information.

Isabel mentioned that there was no place on the agenda to thank the clergy and that she just wanted them to know how much the parish loves and appreciates them.

Announcement of Election Results

Mother Liz shared that this was a year when we had more than enough qualified, talented candidates and people expressed how difficult it was to vote and there is a big need for the talents of everyone involved.

David Cholcher has been elected.

Elizabeth Adams, John Grimes, Madonna Stack-Barker and Steve Hubbard have been elected to serve on the vestry.

Closing prayer.

Motion to adjourn moved by Isabel and seconded by Maurice and passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Adams, Clerk

Parish Statistics

As of 31 December 2022

Attendance at all services:

Sundays (in person and online):
Weekday Services

12,314
8850
3464

Services conducted

Sunday Eucharist
Weekday Eucharists:
Weekday Daily Office:
Marriages:
Burials/ Memorials:
Baptisms:

139
58
258
3
6
5

Baptisms and Confirmations

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

4
1
3

Baptisms:

Noah Harrison Bose
Lila de la Chapell
Amelie Cloyd
Abigail McQueen
Kai Qian

5

Confirmed

Jacob Scott
Richard Mitchell Jr
Kai Qian

3

Received

0

Burials

Robert Carpenter
Michael Bruce Cogswell
Erika Engels-Petersen
Elizabeth Hill
G. Jan Jones
Alida Mesrop

6

Transfers In

0

Transfers Out

0

Marriage

James Jerry Amodeo & Kyle Church Cheseborough
Christina B. Pappalardo & R. Andrew Johnson
Jill Fairchild & Robert Quaintance Fomon

3

Baptized Members

Baptized persons on Record, 31 December 2021:	196
Added through baptism in 2022:	5
Added through Confirmation, Reception or Renewal of Vows:	2
Added through Transfer:	0
Lost by Death:	4
Lost by Transfer Out:	0
Total Baptized Members, 31 December 2022:	199

Baptisms and Confirmations

Children (under age 16) baptized:	4
Adults baptized	1
Adults confirmed, received or reaffirmed:	3

Rector's Report

When I think about the year just past, I am struck by how much of our time in 2022 was spent gradually returning to meeting and worshiping in person, restoring some aspects of our common life and adapting others. At our last Annual Meeting, only a very few of us were present in the parish hall with most of the meeting online. Although we had returned to in person worship in the fall of 2021, we had made the difficult decision to close right before Christmas due to an omicron surge and would reopen for Sunday services in early February.

In the next few months, we made a number of changes. All the pews in the church were opened. Late in Lent Bishop Dietsche allowed the restoration of the common cup (gladly received, though many have been slow to resume communion in both kinds, which is absolutely fine). On Palm Sunday our choir moved back into the chancel for the fullness of music that is such an important part of our Holy Week and Easter tradition, and there they remain. We were able to participate once again in the deeply embodied liturgical experience of the paschal mystery- processing around the neighborhood with our palms, washing feet, venerating the cross on Good Friday, kindling the new fire and hearing the story of salvation read by candlelight at the Easter Vigil. There were 217 people in church on Easter Day at 11 am, with another 135 online. Altogether, including the Vigil and all three Sunday services, both in person and watching the livestream, 524 people celebrated Easter at Ascension.

Over the months that followed, we were able to resume many more aspects of our life in person. Bishop Dietsche made a visitation on Ascension Day, baptizing one and confirming three parishioners. There were four more baptisms at Pentecost and All Saints. Weddings and memorial services, delayed by the pandemic, were finally held. Last month we finally had in person Christmas services for the first time since 2019, including the children and family's service at 5 pm as well as the festal Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. It is a blessing to be together, and one that I no longer take for granted.

At the same time, we held as many events outside as we could. Coffee hours in the garden became a special pleasure at which we were able to greet passersby. We were able to reach out to our neighbors again with our Pride Water table and Haunted Church. We blessed animals in honor of St. Francis- one of our most cherished events. We had a wonderful fall garden day making our lovely green space ready for winter. We also held a celebratory Harvest Dinner in person indoors- with “to go” containers for those who were not comfortable eating in the parish hall. Much gratitude to everyone who worked on these events- our hospitality team who schlepped refreshments outside, Steve Hubbard, Tom Rice, Gale Lynch, Rachel Sedor and many more.

We have labored throughout this time to develop hybrid capacity for both worship services and parish events. It is still a work in progress, though in recent months we have improved both the sound and the set up considerably. We have learned that we must ask “where are the cameras?” before making liturgical changes! We are still working to help those who join us online participate more fully in forums and meetings as well as worship. We are grateful for your patience and your feedback! I particularly want to thank Andrew Jones, our parish administrator, for his persistent, energetic and dedicated efforts to get this right!

Thanks also to all who have worked so hard in this liminal time to make our liturgies and our parish life beautiful, meaningful- and as safe as possible. Our indefatigable MC Tom Rice; the acolytes, ushers and altar guild; our Reopening Taskforce; the wardens and vestry; my clergy colleagues and Dr. Keene have all given countless hours of thought, invention and preparation to restore, adapt and re-envision our life together.

We also returned to forums and classes in person as well as online. Again, hybridity is a work in progress! Nevertheless, we offered a Quiet Day led by Rick Hamlin entitled “Even Silence is Praise”; forums looking at art to illustrate our Lenten gospels (who knew there were so many ways to think about a fig tree?!); discussions about issues in the wider church and the world. Our online Advent Calendar, a relatively new tradition, shows parishioners’ photography combined with scripture. Thanks also to Elizabeth Adams who once again produced our Lenten Devotional with deeply thoughtful writing by more than 40 parishioners, and to Matthew Snow for his beautiful art and design.

Online, Evening Prayer continues every weekday, led by the clergy but also by capable lay people as needed. Our Racial Justice group meets once a month, exploring racism in our own lives, the church and the world. These two online communities have developed deep connections over the past almost three years, and offer wonderful opportunities for prayer, support, learning and spiritual growth. I feel privileged to be part of them.

Caring for our historic buildings took up a lot of energy in 2022- particularly on the part of our sexton, Dwight Roberts and assistant sextons William Gordon and Rashean Thompkins. Our Business Manager, Kelli Long, also had her hands full as she dealt with no heat in the rectory and then a burst pipe and flood in the rectory basement, insurance claims and a complicated restoration impacting not only my residence but our tenant, La Petite Ecole; completing the fire alarm system; various code violations; construction of her office; and the rectory elevator.

We were finally ready to start the sorely needed restoration of our tower brownstone this year building on the painstaking research and planning of Barbara Burns. Kelli, our Buildings and Grounds Committee and Chancellor Charlie Schmidt worked long and hard to hire an architect and contractors, get contracts signed, and prepare for work to begin this coming spring. Huge thanks to our dedicated staff, Charlie and B&G chair Steve Hubbard for their tireless work on this project.

We have to pay for the brownstone restoration, of course, and I am delighted that the Manton Foundation has given us significant and necessary support, first with a grant outright for \$200,000, and then with a challenge grant of another \$200,000. We are well on the way to making the match, and encourage you to make a pledge to this important effort if you have not yet done so. We have also received a grant of \$47,500 from the Diocese of New York, and thanks are particularly due to Steve Hubbard for shepherding that application.

Our parish finances are addressed elsewhere in this report. Our pledging is strong, and I thank each of you who have made a commitment to support our parish. Thank you to our stewardship committee for their good work this fall. If you have not yet pledged, please consider doing so! However, we are facing a significant and unsustainable budget deficit- due in part to loss of rental income in the pandemic, the end of temporary Covid 19 relief, and the impact of the stock market on our investments. We need to develop more sources of income and we may well need to make some hard decisions about our budget priorities. We will talk about this at the parish meeting and beyond; for now I want to thank our treasurer Mary Gaillard and Finance Chair John Grimes for their leadership in facing these issues. The vestry has created a Deficit Reduction Taskforce, co-chaired by John Grimes and David Cholcher, to look at the big picture, and I am grateful to them along with our Finance Committee and of course Business Manager Kelli Long for hours of work and care. "Where your treasure is, your heart will be also." Thank you all for your devotion to Ascension.

One very happy piece of finance news is that the vestry has authorized the hiring of our temporary bookkeeper, Sajia Choudury, as a permanent employee. Sajia has been with us through an agency contract for over a year, and we are delighted that she will now be part of the Ascension staff.

Our wardens, Isabel Spencer and David Cholcher work really hard. They bring deep faith, lots of energy and many gifts to their roles, and they are also fun to work with. I am very grateful for their leadership, especially in this time of so many unknowns. I am glad our team will continue for awhile.

This year our vestry helped sustain and build our community as well as manage the business of the church. Thank you all, and special gratitude to those vestry members whose terms expire this year: Kyle Church Cheseborough, Peter Clark, Tom Rice and Jill Tildesley. Only Kyle Cheseborough is running again. Each in their own way has brought significant gifts to leadership; we will those who are leaving the vestry but trust that they will find other ways to serve!

I took the first part of a sabbatical in 2022, and was able to spend a month hiking, reading, and enjoying friends and nature. I will take the final two months this coming year. Thank you to our wardens, Fr. Ed and Mother Posey for helping the church to thrive during this time! I am grateful,

and hope that even as the church's business gets done we all will find time for refreshment and rest, listening and dreaming.

Our beloved Stacey Carpenter graduated from seminary, was ordained to both the diaconate and the priesthood, and began her first job as an ordained person at Christ Church, Christiana Hundred in Wilmington, Delaware all in 2022. It is a special joy for a parish to nurture and support the call to ministry of one of its members and watching Stacey grow into her vocation has been a gift to all of us. She served at Ascension on her first Sunday as a deacon and celebrated her first Eucharist here six months later; we keep her in our hearts and wish her Godspeed in her new ministry.

All of these events took place in the context of the larger church; in the Diocese of New York one of the most important things that happened in 2022 was the election of the Rev. Matthew Heyd as our Bishop Coadjutor. New leadership in our diocese will impact Ascension for years to come. I confess that I like church politics. I threw myself into work on the election and was very glad of the outcome. I was also delighted to be at (two!) diocesan conventions with my clergy colleagues, lay delegate David Cholcher and alternate Elizabeth Adams. In the diocese I continue as co-chair of the Creation Care committee; our convention has called on every church in the diocese to develop a plan for reducing our carbon emissions to zero by 2030. This is a daunting prospect, and I hope we at Ascension will rise to the challenge.

Even beyond the morphing pandemic, 2022 was an uneasy year in the world. Brutal war in Ukraine, gun violence, political polarization, the gutting of abortion rights, racism, immigrants bussed to our city without support or planning, economic challenges and of course the climate crisis all set the stage for our mandate to love God and our neighbor. These issues are often addressed in our preaching and our prayer, and we continue to discern how we are called to serve, witness and work for justice and peace in the year to come.

What are we called to be, to do in 2023? To tend to our finances and buildings, of course- always with a sense of what and whom they are for. We are here to offer our praise and prayer to God, with beauty, imagination and truth-telling. To nurture our community, finding new ways to care for each other and have fun together. To keep growing in our faith. To welcome those who come to us- have you noticed the large numbers of newcomers almost every Sunday? To attend to God's presence in good times and harder times, and find particular ways to be God's presence in a world so desperately need of mercy, integrity, love and justice. To live the life we are given with joy and gratitude.

Much gratitude for you, dear people of Ascension, and for the honor of serving as your rector.

God bless us, every one.

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 Kyle Cheseborough, Peter Clark, Tom Rice, and Jill Tildesley. Peter and Jill are not eligible to run again due to term limits. Tom chose not to run for reelection. We are grateful for their service.

These are the nominees, who are eligible under Ascension by-laws for election or reelection: Kyle Cheseborough, Ned Fitch, and Mike Surabian.. There is one vacant slot that the Vestry may appoint during the year.

In addition, the vestry has nominated Isabel Spencer for a two-year term as warden.

Eligible voters are asked to select three candidates for vestry and to cast a “yes” or “no” vote for warden.

Serving on this year’s nominating committee were Tom Rice, Jill Tildesley, and Matt Vermedahl.
David Cholcher, Chair

Finance Committee and Treasurer’s Report

The Finance Committee experienced another challenging year in 2022, with the end of certain pandemic-relief programs, and with increased expenses due to inflation and the rise in the cost of living. While not invading principal, we have drawn heavily from our endowments, where permitted, to resolve budget deficits for many years. As a result, the Finance Committee does not believe that the General & Endowment Fund will be able to sustain these increased drawdowns to cover our anticipated deficit in 2023.

To address this reality, the Vestry has commissioned a “Deficit Reduction Task Force” to explore long-term options for our finances. The Task Force consists of Finance Committee Chair John Grimes, Warden David Cholcher, Vestry Member Gale Lynch, and parishioners Ned Fitch and Rachel Matthai. While the Task Force is focusing on the long-term, rather than 2023 specifically, we will discuss this topic in more detail during Annual Meeting, and we welcome input from parishioners either at the meeting or afterwards. While not wishing to be alarmist, it is clear that we are at a critical point for our finances, and we need for every parishioner to consider prayerfully what they can do to help, including reviewing their annual pledge.

Highlights of our financial picture during 2022 are:

- PPP: We applied for and received forgiveness for the second “loan” in the amount of \$163,000 from the Small Business Administration’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 to include the \$163,000 into the income line for 2022. This government Covid 19 relief program has now ended, and as discussed in more detail below, we need to look for other sources of income apart from these extraordinary “one-time” grants.

- ERTC: After a number of months reviewing the complex calculations required to claim the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC), the Finance Committee recommended engaging an outside

firm to assist with obtaining these additional pandemic-related government relief funds (which come in the form of refundable payroll tax credits). In October 2022, we hired JWC Employee Retention Tax Credit Advisory CPA, LLC, on a contingency basis, agreeing to pay the firm 8% of any credits actually received. We are currently providing the firm with information to make the refund claims, in the amount of approximately \$160,000, which we expect to receive from the Internal Revenue Service, with interest at market rates. While not received in 2022, part of this additional income was taken into account when presenting last year's deficit budget.

- **Manton Covid 19 Relief Fund:** As reported last year, \$150,000 of the original grant of \$250,000 from the Manton Foundation (received in 2021) has been invested in a separate account at Fiduciary Trust. In 2022, we used some additional amounts on streaming technology in order to provide remote access to our in-church Sunday services. The Vestry also authorized a donation of \$20,000 from the Fund as an initial capital contribution to the Diocesan Credit Union, reasoning that the pandemic has created further economic disparity and the need for access to basic financial services which the Credit Union will provide. In addition, the Vestry authorized the use of the Fund to provide cash flow pending receipt of the ERTC amounts.
- **Outside Contributions:** Contributions for meetings such as 12 step programs, rent for groups using our space, weddings, and income from other organizations using our space for one-time projects are slowly returning. In this category, we also received \$14,000 for a fashion show in September 2022. We are hoping to source more regular items such as this in the future, as they bring significant income with little associated cost. We are actively looking to rent the two offices on the fourth floor of the Parish House.
- **Pledge Income:** Parishioners continued to pay their pledges during these difficult times, and we give a big thanks for their generosity. For 2022, we received all of the \$365,000 pledges budgeted, and we have conservatively budgeted the same amount for 2023, based on information received to date.
- **Endowment Income:** Our endowment funds declined approximately 20% in 2022, reflecting the experience of the broader market. Under the Vestry's longstanding spending rule, the amount we draw from our endowments is a percentage of the average of the most recent 12-quarter end periods, which is intended to limit exposure to any particular market.
- **Diocesan Assessment:** In 2020 and 2021, the Diocese permitted parishes to apply for relief of 25%, which we did. As with other pandemic programs, this relief is no longer available, and our assessment returned to the pre-pandemic formula, for an expense of \$171,200 in 2022. For 2023, our assessment is slightly less, at \$159,117, and we plan to apply to the Diocese for further relief for 2023.
- **Capital Projects:** A number of capital projects were undertaken during 2022, including installation of a water meter in the church building, construction of an office for the Business Manager, repair to the Sexton's apartment, repair to the roof and ceiling of the chapel, repair to the boiler, and the architect fees for the Tower Brownstone Restoration Project. (Details about the tower project can be found in the Buildings and Grounds report). In general, these projects were paid for using income from the Fair and Maintenance Funds, which are two of our restricted endowment funds.

The operating results for 2022, which are still being finalized, ended the year with a deficit of \$391,014. This was \$17,009 less favorable than budgeted. The deficit is reduced to \$228,014 when the PPP income of \$163,000 is included. Income was \$36,541 more than expected, in part due to an unexpected contribution from the Adeline Mary Dunham Fund. Expenses were more than budget by \$53,550, part of which was attributable to make-up contributions for staff retirement plans.

The budget for 2023 anticipates an operating deficit of \$323,568. The 2023 expense budget includes an 8% raise for the assistant Sexton staff, and a 4% raise for other full-time employees, partially reflecting the recent increase in inflation. In total, expenses are expected to be \$1,459,070.

On the income side, the amount we receive is projected to be \$1,135,502. The budget includes 2023 pledge income of \$365,000, which, as mentioned previously, is consistent with the amount received in 2022. Pledge income represents only about 25% of our budgeted operating expenses, making it difficult to cover our operating costs, and resulting in over-reliance on our endowment income. Faced with this situation, the 2023 budget reflects an additional 1% drawdown from our unrestricted funds other than the General & Endowment Fund, which has already been used to make up the deficit in prior years. Every expense line has been scrutinized, and every group has been asked to reduce expenses where possible. Even after this, we are faced with a significant deficit that must be made up from additional income or reduced expenses.

The Finance Committee and now the Deficit Reduction Task Force are continually looking for ways to increase income and decrease costs, and we are open to discussions with parishioners on this topic. We have a serious challenge for 2023, when the Covid 19-related relief programs will no longer be in effect.

PARISH OPERATING INCOME	Budget 2022	Actual 2022	Actual Compared to Budget 2022	Budget 2023
Pledge and Offering Income <i>(includes pledges, loose collections, special offerings at Easter and Christmas, flowers)</i>	389,200	392,031	2,831	389,250
Facility Use and Outside Contributions <i>(Gifts from individuals, weddings, donations from groups that use church facilities, La Petite Ecole)</i>	167,150	179,107	11,957	198,244
Endowment Income and Special Funds <i>(Income from various endowment funds and other sources designated for operating purposes)</i>	456,694	478,447	21,753	548,008
Total Operating Income	1,013,044	1,049,585	36,541	1,135,502
PPP Income	163,000	163,000	-	-
Total Operating Income + PPP Income	1,176,044	1,212,585	36,541	1,135,502

PARISH OPERATING EXPENSES	Budget 2022	Actual 2022	Actual Compared to Budget 2022	Budget 2023
Administration <i>(Includes auditor, telephone & internet, office supplies, equipment maintenance, insurance, diocesan assessment, bank fees)</i>	317,219	306,165	(11,054)	328,343
Building Maintenance <i>(Includes utilities, building supplies)</i>	78,305	81,625	3,320	78,864
Music and Worship <i>(Includes Choir stipends, altar guild, and flowers costs)</i>	124,400	129,736	5,336	119,915
Payroll and Related <i>(Includes salaries, health and dental insurance, pension, clergy related expenses, other payroll related expenses for all employees)</i>	847,935	909,163	61,228	908,148
Committees and Outreach <i>(Includes evangelism, hospitality, special events, church school, and stewardship)</i>	19,190	13,910	(5,280)	23,800
Total Operating Expenses	1,387,049	1,440,599	53,550	1,459,070
Operating Income/(Deficit)	(374,005)	(391,014)	(17,009)	(323,568)
Operating Income/(Deficit) Incl PPP	(211,005)	(228,014)	(17,009)	(323,568)

The members of the Finance Committee during 2022 were Mother Elizabeth Maxwell, Wardens David Cholcher and Isabel Spencer, Finance Chair John Grimes, Treasurer Mary Gaillard, Business Manager Kelli Long, Maurice Seaton, 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 2023 operating budget, which was approved by the Vestry at its January 2023 meeting, with the condition that a revised budget be presented to the Vestry in June 2023, hopefully with additional sources of income.

During 2023, the Committee continued working closely with our Business Manager, Kelli Long, with whom we have now been through a full one-year financial cycle. We continue to be grateful for the expertise and order that Kelli brings to our finances, in addition to her many other duties. Kelli led the completion of our alternative ("self") audits for 2019 and 2020, which were submitted to the Diocese in 2022, and she is working on finalizing the self-audit for 2021. Kelli led the request for proposal process that led to the hiring of our new auditors, PFK O'Connor Davies, who will perform an outside audit of our 2022 financial statements.

Sajia Choudhury continued as our part time bookkeeper during 2022, and we are delighted that she will become a permanent employee in 2023 and will continue to work closely alongside Kelli.

As a reminder, the Parish obtained a line of credit of \$2.5 million from Fiduciary Trust Company International in 2008. This allowed us to manage our cash flow, 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 interest quarterly. We have paid back some of the loan with funds from our previous 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 \$40,000 per year (which has increased from prior years due to rising interest rates).

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, 2022, the following values of the endowment funds were reported:

General and Endowment Fund	\$1,902,474
Maintenance Fund	\$864,821
Catherine B. Fair and Esther D. Hamilton Memorial Fund	\$1,156,418
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ralph Hayden Visscher Memorial Fund	\$468,495
Susy I. and Harriet E. Babcock Memorial Fund	\$395,283
Catherine B. Fair and Esther D. Hamilton Memorial Choir Fund	\$183,650
Marguerite W. Sinaly Memorial Window Maintenance Fund	\$1,001,702
John R. Meekin Music Fund	\$1,765,584
Robert E. Lowder Fund	\$1,640,471
Special Account	\$195,345
Manton Covid 19 Relief Fund	\$124,463
Maintenance Fund Addition	\$3,324,744
Various Restricted Funds (DIT)	\$84,438
Total	\$13,107,888

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

Associate Rector's Report

The number of pantry visitors Ascension Outreach, Inc. serves steadily grew throughout 2021 – obviously attributable to supply chain and other factors bringing about dramatic increases in the cost of food. Somewhat surprisingly, however, our shift from use of a client-choice model, as of March 2020, to the program's original model of distributing pre-bagged inventory items – this, as public health best-practices – also made an adverse impact on sustainability. As these challenges

presented, however, the program also closely monitored Covid 19 infection and mortality rates, which began to level off. So, the program discerned it advisable to, exercising an abundance of caution, i.e., mask/vaccine mandate for all program participants and scrupulous distancing, make a return to client-choice distribution. And this was re-initiated in February 2022. The client-choice model enables us to adhere more closely to serving a number of registered/scheduled families commensurate with our physical plant capacity for food storage. However, because the program continues to experience marked increase in need, provision is also made for serving those our schedule can't accommodate. Which means that while overflow visitors may not receive everything scheduled visitors receive, no one ever goes away empty handed. This is by no means a perfect solution. We'd love to end all hunger in New York City, of course, but that's not realistic. Nonetheless we find that our efforts in this regard are greatly appreciated, even as messaging is made clear regarding program limitations.

In 2022 Ascension Outreach's pantry also continued to serve the deaf and deaf-blind population in partnership with missioners from nearby St. Ann's Church (historically, the first ECUSA church established exclusively for the deaf).

But maybe the happiest development in 2022 was our pantry's partnership – thanks entirely to Episcopal Charities – with local growers in the Poughkeepsie NY area, who specialize in growing "Chinese" vegetables. The Farm-to-Pantry program linked us with Choy Division who provided six months of inventory, i.e., veggies for 100+ families each time we operated. It's hard to describe just how moving this was for our pantry visitors.

On another note, while the Resistance Cinema project offered a small number of Zoom screenings in 2022, questions began to take shape regarding reimagining how content might better be presented. This was, in part, the result of how dynamic post-screening discussions had become, and the desire to develop ways to offer a format and opportunity for opposing views to be creatively and responsibly shared. We'll share more information as it becomes available.

We're also pleased to share that, in 2022, Ascension Outreach, Inc. began making a monthly financial contribution to the parish, our host. For this to become sustainable, Ascension Outreach will continue growing a team to conduct grant-seeking using the Foundation Center's database. If you're interested in joining this team, or know someone who might be, please don't hesitate to contact Fr. Ed.

Additionally, Fr. Ed continued to serve as Clergy Liaison to the NYPD Sixth Precinct, among other things helping to facilitate the parish's hosting one of the precinct's popular Build-the Block meetings in December.

Finally, Fr. Ed wishes to express enormous gratitude for the parish's gift of two months sabbatical leave between September fifteenth and November fifteenth.

The Rev. Edwin Chinery, Associate Rector

Priest Associate's Report

There's an old toast that says, "May you live in interesting times." I wonder if I am the only one who wishes we would move into some more boring times for a bit. Between the continuation of

the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the Dobbs decision, we have all lived through so much this past year. And yet there have been many bright spots where hope shone through. It's been fascinating to see how many new people have walked through our doors and joined our community. The movement of the Spirit is ever present in our common lives. I remain grateful and blessed to be serving with you all at Ascension, and I continue to receive strength from your abiding faithfulness. We are all blessed to be with each other in love.

Liz and Ed each took some sabbatical time this year, which allowed me the opportunity to get to know you all even more deeply. It was a pleasure to be filling in as needed for pastoral care while Ed was gone, as well as filling in liturgically and programmatically more intentionally throughout the year. How grateful I am for our lay leaders who stepped up to lead Evening Prayer sessions when my colleagues were each away. The joy we all felt at finally being together in person again for Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas was palpable. Having our choir back in full and in the chancel made our hearts glad indeed.

It's also been amazing to conduct workshops and art programming in person and online again this year. In the spring, I was invited to offer two presentations of The Contemplative Gaze at the priests' retreat. The series of art explorations that we held at Ascension in Lent was a fascinating way to re-engage the Year C scriptures. I also led a session at the Church of the Incarnation in May. In December, I guided an all day art based Advent retreat at Heavenly Rest — their first in person retreat since early 2020. And to cap off the year, in November and December, a retrospective exhibit of 20 years of my art quilts at Heavenly Rest allowed me the opportunity to do workshops with diverse groups such as Arts & Minds, the United Nations, and church groups. Hearing a 90-year-old great grandmother's reactions to the Nativity Quilt at an Arts & Minds session made my heart glad. Thank you all, beloved Ascensionites, for your strong support of my fiber art!

The Ecumenical and Interreligious Commission of the DioNY has continued to meet both virtually and now in person. As you recall, last year, as part of the larger commission's work, a trio of us from the Episcopal/Jewish Dialogue sub-committee (Susan Auchincloss of St Gregory's in Woodstock, Meredith Ward of St Bart's, and I) worked with Matthew Mead (Christ Church Pelham) to craft a resolution addressing antisemitism in our lectionary. We presented it for a vote at our New York diocesan convention in November 2021, and it passed! It then went on to be debated at General Convention, and it also passed there! The resolution that was adopted funded a study group to begin exploring how to best implement our suggestions. Our small but mighty committee was thrilled. The background work required to get a resolution passed at GC was new to me. Over the summer, we each took turns testifying on behalf of our resolution (and against some more problematic ones on this subject) during General Convention committee meetings. It is not easy to make a strong clear statement in 2 minutes exactly! Most recently, our group lifted up the timely and necessary call for Christians to take a strong stand against antisemitism written by the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations. We will be sponsoring a field trip to the Jewish Museum in March 2023, as well as hosting some evening online events.

The larger Commission welcomed a field ed student from Union Seminary into our midst this year, Ms. Oxana Orlova, who is originally from Ukraine. As part of her field ed, Ms. Orlova has

visited Ascension and gotten to know our community a little. The commission has been blessed to get to know her more fulsomely in our larger meetings.

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 continue to make many things, including more vestments, stoles for other priests, and always new quilts. The quilt that seemed to have the strongest impact for many at the show was a quilt about Covid 19 and my experience making masks during the early months of lockdown. Viewers of the quilt were invited to submit names of those they knew who died of Covid 19, and the names will be added onto the back of the quilt.

Philippe and I continue to love living in the neighborhood. Our young adult children are both still in Queens, which means we get to see them frequently. Blessings abound.

I want to finish again with a shout out to my two clergy colleagues, without whom I could not have remained so steadfast and grounded in this wild moment in 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 among you.

The Rev. Posey Krakowsky, Priest Associate

Wardens' Report

2022 was filled with activities centering on care for our community and our physical presence.

We are caring for our community's sacred spaces. Following several years of study and planning for a much-needed restoration of the church tower, led by Barbara Burns, Mother Liz Maxwell and the wardens identified the need for an extraordinary partner in supporting at least the most pressing of three stages of this effort. The Manton Family Foundation responded with a generous grant of \$200,000 to cover the first stage, and a challenge matching grant in the same amount for the second stage. This response is the latest in a long history of investments by the Manton family in the artistic heritage and fiscal health of the parish. Parishioners and friends responded enthusiastically, and we are well on our way to the match.

We are caring for the health and well-being of our community. 2022 featured such good-news moments, as we slowly came back from the challenges of COVID 19. Mother Liz led the way to put into practice what we learned over two years. Our daily 6 p.m. Eucharist services transitioned to weekday Evening Prayer on Zoom, now better attended than the previous late-afternoon services, with an in-person Wednesday Eucharist. Worship returned to in-person, with sensitive modifications to much-loved protocols around the altar and the choral contributions to the music that historically are so essential to our identity as a worshiping community. Co-sacristan Tom Rice and Dr. Dennis Keene worked with clergy and the Reopening Taskforce to realize these activities.

We are caring for our community with staffing changes to meet evolving needs. This year was the first full year of service for our business manager, Kelli Long, our resident sexton, Dwight Roberts, and assistant sexton Rashean Thompkins. A plumbing flood in the ground floor of the rectory in January 2022 impacted Mother Liz and her family and our day school tenant, La Petite Ecole. Coordinating the needs of the school, the work of the contractors, the assistance of our own staff (including assistant sexton William Gordon), the demands of the insurance companies, and the special circumstances of our historic spaces fell to Kelli with Dwight's assistance. Our chancellor, Charlie Schmidt, was very persistent in obtaining full insurance payments, as well as advising on contractor selection.

The many other demands of our buildings, beyond emergencies, such as overseeing repairs, service contracts and city inspections, occupy our business manager's focus. Kelli is supported in financial and budgetary matters by our bookkeeper, Sajia Choudhury.

Kelli's arrival prompted the most-exciting remodeling project of the year: the beautiful design for her office. Former Warden Maurice Seaton had long advocated finding a use for the balcony above the Parish Hall but tampering with our second-most-beautiful space provided a stumbling block. Christopher Boshears' sensitive design smoothly dealt with the challenge, providing what Kelli believes is our most beautiful office.

We are caring for our clergy. In providing much-needed sabbaticals to Mother Liz and Father Ed Chinery, we were fortunate to have Mother Posey Krakowsky, our priest associate, agree to take on additional duties during those three months. For 2023, Father Ed will take his third sabbatical month, and Mother Liz will take the two that remain to her. Mother Posey has agreed to assist again.

We are caring for the changing needs of our community. No one elected to church leadership six years ago could have anticipated the challenges to come. Just four years ago our membership and pledges were on the rise, we had just found promising new tenants for our vacant offices, and we had spent a weekend with a facilitator talking about how to expand through the Village community. COVID 19 caused a complete pivot.

Amazingly, our pledges remained consistent and our hard-won shift to on-line, especially Zoom meetings and Local Live streaming for worship broadened our reach to parishioners and others. As a congregation, we are grateful to our outgoing vestry members for their service: Peter Clark, Tom Rice and Jill Tildesley. All have, and will continue to have, important roles at Ascension.

We are caring for the financial health of our parish. As we move into 2023, we continue to face the specter of deficit budgets. It has become clear that we can't rely on our endowments for more-significant help and tinkering with the current spending patterns is not enough. The Financial Planning Task Force, led by Finance Committee Chair John Grimes and Warden David Cholcher, is analyzing sources of revenue and how we spend those resources. We urge everyone to dig deep for this year to give us time for this important work.

It is an honor and a privilege to work with all of you. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

David Cholcher & Isabel Spencer, Wardens

Acolytes and Chalice Bearers

In 2022, when Ascension returned to in person services the members of the Acolyte Guild were ready to participate fully at the 11 am Sunday service minus the Chalice Bearers, but, with the return of the Common Cup, they were brought back as well. Due to our limited number of members, there are times when it is necessary to double up on the duties that we usually perform, i.e. Torch Bearers also assigned as Chalice Bearers. In the third quarter, our responsibilities were expanded with the restoration of the Offertory Procession.

The Wednesday night service, which restarted at the free-standing altar in the Spring of 2021, has moved over to the Side Altar.

Our current Guild Roster includes: Elizabeth Adams, James Amodeo, Daniel Cole, Lisa Dunn, Janet Fisher, John Grimes, David Lehmann, Rusty Moore, Isabel Spencer, Michael Surabian, Shana Weber and Stanley Weinberg. At the end of 2022, we welcomed Richard Mitchell to the Acolytes Guild.

As always, we cannot thank our members enough for all their hard work and dedication during the 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

During 2022, the Altar Guild returned to the “new normal” by serving at the regular Sunday and Wednesday Eucharists, and at special services throughout the year, including weddings and funerals.

As always, I am very grateful for the hard work of the Altar Guild members, and we were pleased to welcome Richard Mitchell to the Guild in 2022, assisting at the Wednesday evening Eucharists. Special thanks to Tom Rice in particular for his dedication to the Wednesday evening services and to training new members. Sincere thanks as well to Lisa Dunn and David Lehmann for their faithful help in washing and ironing the linens.

The guild works closely with Sexton Dwight Roberts and the sexton staff, and we appreciate their dedicated and caring attention to keeping the candles trimmed and the brass polished, among other tasks.

Members of the Altar Guild in 2022 were: Eric Achacoso, Elizabeth Adams, Eve Beglarian, David Cholcher, Garrett Dangler, Lisa Dunn, June Fait, Mary Gossy, John Grimes, Kristin Jackson, David Lehmann, Candace Lombardi, Robert McDonald, Richard Mitchell, 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

This year, the Buildings and Grounds Committee has had several emergency projects while also focusing on restoring the church's bell tower. As is unfortunately the norm for 180-year-old buildings, emergencies struck as we hoped to focus on exciting new projects. In mid-January of 2022, the rectory basement flooded due to frozen radiator lines. The event impacted La Petite Ecole and Mother Liz due to flood damage and lack of heat. All damages were repaired, and we have now active contracts with an HVAC company to ensure our boilers (both the church and rectory) are serviced each year.

The committee also had to address the chapel ceiling which was peeling paint due to water damage. After consultation with several roof contractors, we replaced the chapel roof, and our building staff repaired and painted the ceiling back to its original condition.

We also hired Champion Elevator Company to address the NYC code violations of the Rectory elevator by repairing the elevators door lock monitoring system and other needed elevator maintenance items. The repairs were made and the rectory now has a functioning elevator that meets NYC requirements.

In addition to these projects, we also focused on restoring the Church's bell tower. The scope of the work for this project addresses the conditions that are classified as a safety hazard in its "Condition Survey Report". This includes the following work: 1.) Remove, patch and/or dutchman repair of spalling and delaminating/exfoliated brownstone masonry at the top of the bell tower. 2.) Remove and reinstall/re-anchor displaced brownstone merlon blocks (copings) at the crenellations at the top of the bell tower. We also plan to conduct work in 2023 on phase two of the project which includes patching cracked brownstone masonry, repointing deteriorated mortar, restoring window frames and louvers, and provide reinforcement repair at ferrous metal tension plates and rods securing brownstone masonry walls.

The committee received a grant from the Episcopal Diocese's Property Support Committee for \$47,500 to complete the project, and we are receiving very generous support from the Manton Foundation as well as many parishioners and friends of Ascension to restore the Church's bell tower. We hope to start the project this spring, and we are still raising funds to complete all of phase two and phase three of this project.

Steven Hubbard, Chair

Business Manager Report

I was hired with Ascension during the fall of 2021. It was amazing to me all the ways that this church was different. As I began my day-to-day duties, I found myself growing a deep appreciation for Ascension. Some of my many daily tasks as Business Manager include helping ensure accurate finances, building management and personnel responsibilities. The many projects that arise and need constant attention have contributed to not one dull moment on the grounds.

When reflecting upon and reviewing our projects, what comes to mind is that "it takes a village." Collaboration is nothing new. However, it is becoming increasingly important in the modern world, as we become more connected. Collaboration is something we do very well here at

Ascension. The working relationship as a supportive team with our committees and staff has been integral to the success of Ascension.

Much of what happens at Ascension is done behind the scenes; many people have no idea of the hours of meetings, emails, and work represented by our team efforts. This is certainly true at Ascension this past year. Ascension is blessed with amazing staff. Thanks to Parish Administrator Andrew Jones who wears more hats than we have time to write about, all with a gracious commitment going above and beyond. I am grateful for the many gifts and talents Dwight Roberts brings and the hard work of our assistant sextons Rashean and William, making sure our beautiful building is cared for. Sajia Choudhury our bookkeeper with her knowledge of finances does an excellent job keeping accurate account of our finances. This team we have are essential parts of continuing the culture at Ascension we are working to create and maintain.

Ascension has challenges but we are not alone in the challenges we are facing. Many churches have struggled with navigating and rebuilding since the pandemic. Despite this transitional time, Ascension also has some wonderful things to celebrate. The church is a beautiful building located in an exciting part of the city. There is a wonderful group of people who call this their church home. We need to remember always that this church is the body of Christ. As such, I encourage all to keep praying that through all the changes, we hear God's voice, giving thanks for this church community.

Kelli Long, Business Manager

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 of whether the person should 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 spiritual formation.

In 2022, a potential aspirant continued their confidential discernment process at Ascension. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the committee continued to meet via Zoom.

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

Eve Beglarian, Convener

Docents Guild

The Docents Guild mourns the passing of its long-time member G. Jan Jones, as well as former member Erika Engels-Petersen. May G. Jan and Erika rest in peace and both rise in glory.

Due to the pandemic, the Docents' Guild has suspended activities until further notice. Members include Daniel Cole, Dorothy DeCrescenzo, Gretchen Dumler, Lisa Dunn, Peter Nordeen, Tom Rice, Maurice Seaton, Isabel Spencer, Jill Tildesley, and Catherine Tinker.

Tom Rice, Chair

Flower Guild

I stepped in to chair the flower guild in the spring and recruited volunteers to help do the Sunday altar flowers. Thanks go to Matthew Vermedahl, David Cholcher, and Matthew Snow for volunteering to also do altar flowers for Sundays. We are welcoming others who are interested in helping do the flowers. It entails buying the flowers (from the flower district, your local bodega, the Green Market, etc.), getting reimbursed (takes about a week) and arranging the flowers before the Sunday services. It is a fun and creative way to serve the parish!

Gale Lynch, Convener

Garden Committee (Buildings and Grounds)

John Merryman and I serve as the leads for the Garden Committee and pop in and out of the garden to keep it clean and trimmed. We hosted a successful Gardening & Gathering Party at the end of October to get the garden beds ready for winter and will plan a few more of those this coming gardening season. We cleaned ivy off the masonry, planted some of the Easter flowers/plants out front, and also noticed some fall out from the infamous Spotted Lantern Fly which found a home in the ailanthus tree next door to the parish hall. There was sticky stuff all over the railing and we learned it was "honeydew" exuded by the bugs. We took the Christmas greens to the recycling piles at Washington Square Park and are hoping to be able to use some of the Christmas flowers/plants in the garden this year as well. Please stay tuned for more events in the garden for gardeners and non-gardeners alike!

Gale Lynch, Chair

Hospitality and Activities Guild

2022 was another challenging year for all Guilds, especially for Hospitality and Activities. As we began to move from Zoom only to our hybrid worship we began to explore safe ways to gather in person for our coffee hours. Last year we reopened to in-person worship and held coffee hour outside when the weather permitted. As the months grew colder we began to once more meet in our Parish Hall.

Now that coffee hour has resumed after the 11am service, we are looking for volunteers to setup, cleanup, and/or bring treats. This is an easy way to become more involved in the life of Ascension and get to know your fellow Parishioners more closely. If you feel called to this important ministry please contact Matt Vermedahl.

Matthew Vermedahl, Chair

Music Program

The Pandemic continued. As 2022 began, the first Omicron wave was in full force, with many – including me – infected. The church was closed to the public, only choir, acolytes, and clergy were in the church, everyone else was watching by Zoom. We reopened on Feb. 6, things got better, and by Holy Week the choir returned to the choir stalls, masked at all times. (They had been sitting in the congregation except when singing anthems.) What a deep joy it was to have our Holy Week liturgies again, including an Easter Sunday with a huge crowd. The choir sang through May

plus Ascension Day and Pentecost, with soloists during the summer. The choir was brought back two weeks earlier than usual in the Fall to help launch a new season. In-person attendance at services has been slow to build back. And the sound for the streaming systems still needs tweaking. But we're grateful to be worshiping in church and making beautiful music, week after week. How thankful I am for our wonderful choir, a magnificent ensemble and such incredible human beings. It is an honor to work with them! We expected another Omicron surge in December, but so far it has been milder than predicted. Hallelujah!

Dennis Keene, Organist and Choirmaster

Voices of Ascension

The Omicron surge was sufficiently continuing in January 2022 that our concert scheduled for the end of the month was postponed (until November), a great disappointment indeed. But we returned in March to perform some beloved French works, including Poulenc *Litanies of the Black Virgin*, and the Duruflé *Requiem*, our signature piece. The concert was given in memory of Jeffrey Paley, dear friend and long-time Board member who had passed away from Covid 19 in 2021. In April Bach's *Mass in B Minor* packed the church, with a prolonged standing ovation at the conclusion. Our Voices of the New series continued with a collaboration with the ShoutHouse ensemble, performing Will Healy's *Orbits*. This took place in Brooklyn at Roulette. Hai-Ting Chinn became our Curator of the Voices of the New series and also organized outdoor concerts at Untermyer Gardens and Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. We named this new chamber group The Voices of Ascension Singers.

Our Fall season began most auspiciously in November with a collaboration with Young People's Chorus of New York under the direction of their Founder Francisco Núñez. The premiere of a commissioned work by James Bassi, *Protect*, began the concert. And then a rare performance of Paola Prestini's *The Glass Box* featured the Young People's Chorus and Voices of Ascension singing together, with a live visual artist creating images which were projected on a screen behind the choruses during the piece. Francisco Núñez conducted. He then led his forces in a selection of their signature pieces which thrilled the audience. After intermission, I returned to the podium with the Voices of Ascension Chorus and Orchestra in Haydn's towering *Nelson Mass*. Our annual Candlelight Christmas concerts drew very large and appreciative audiences. The chorus and I could palpably feel their gratitude for being able to experience moments of great beauty amidst another difficult year.

Dennis Keene, Artistic Director

Needle Crafter's Guild

The Ascension Needle Crafters began meeting a little over four years ago. We have about ten regular attendees. All are welcome regardless of skill level and we have very experienced crafters who are happy to teach and nurture novices. Sad to say, with ongoing health concerns, we have not been able to return to in-person meetings, so we continue our get-togethers on Zoom. We meet the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm.

Our knit and crochet projects have included 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. This past year, thanks to Madonna Stack-Barker, we have been knitting for children, many of whom live in a nearby women and children's shelter, at Roberto Clemente

School in the East Village. To date we have contributed 53 hats and scarves. A particularly rewarding moment for the knitters is that the school sends us photos of children wearing our creations.

An impressive accumulation of the work produced in the past two years was blessed on Sunday, September 18.

Over the four 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

With the ongoing Covid 19 awareness and response, we were not comfortable restarting our Nursery Care and Sunday School programs in 2022.

We are hopeful that we can start a program once again in 2023 and are exploring new ways to offer care and programming to the children that is both educational and fun in a safe environment.

Sibyl Piccone, Director, Nursery & Sunday School

Open Doors

The Open Door has attracted more souls since we re-opened them post-Covid 19 than before the pandemic! Our loyal Doorkeeping team has been able to keep us open – but we are understaffed, so there are sometimes gaps in the schedule. Please consider joining us... it's always an adventure!

Gretchen Dumler, Chair

Parish Office Report

This year has been one of rediscovering how we did all this in the before times. We continue to see improvements in our live stream broadcasts and it seems we are finding our groove there. There are a few technical additions and upgrades we are considering so we can keep increasing the quality of our productions.

Our biggest project this year was replacing our phone system. Our current phone provider, Mitel, went out of the phone business this year. After researching several vendors we went with RingCentral as our new VoIP phone company. If anyone has experience working with RingCentral, please let me know.

Br. Andrew Jones, OSF, Parish Administrator

Personnel Committee

No report submitted.

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 2022. 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 2023, 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

In 2022, the Reopening Taskforce continued to monitor the impact of Covid 19 on our worship experience. We attended to public health guidelines as we restored more dimensions of our liturgy and parish life, looked for more ways to use outdoor space and explored hybrid programs. Although we know that the pandemic is not over, the committee decided this January to disband for now, so that we can give our attention to other needs as we live into this next phase of our parish life. Many thanks to all who served on the task force: Fr. Ed Chinery, John Grimes, Steve Hubbard, Andrew Jones, Dennis Keene, Kelli Long, Mtr. Liz Maxwell, Tom Rice, Kate Rutherford, Isabel Spencer, Madonna Stack-Barker, John Thompson, Matt Vermedahl.

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

Stewardship Committee

Planning for Ascension's 2023 Annual Stewardship Campaign began in the summer of 2022, with Peter Clark producing a new campaign brochure for the stewardship appeal, and Rachel Sedor working with EmberArts in the planning and production of a performance, based on stories told by our parishioners about Ascension in their lives, to evoke the spirit of the campaign. The EmberArts production was presented at Ascension's Annual Harvest Dinner on November 10, 2022, held live in the parish hall for the first time since 2019. David Lehmann and Eric Achacoso worked on planning and management details for the Stewardship Campaign where the pledge goal remained the same as last year at \$400,000. Our team of volunteer canvass callers once again worked diligently, reaching out to members of our community to pledge their support for Ascension. As of January 24, 2023, we have received 85 pledges for a pledge total of \$368,404.92, with some expected pledges still outstanding.

Eric Achacoso & Peter Clark, Co-Chair

Ushers' Guild

During 2022 the Ushers' Guild served at the 11AM Sunday Eucharist. 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 2022 included: Robin Clements, John Grimes, Sirkka Kyle, Terry Rogers, David Lehmann, John Thompson, John Merryman, Barbara Matovu, Sarah Standing, Janet Sygar, Stanley Weinberg, Joan Castagnone, John Gibson, Madonna Stack, Rusty Moore, Shep Skiff, Kyle Cheseborough, Jacob Scott, Gale Lynch, Garrett Dangler, Richard Mitchell, and Charles Schmidt.

Steve Hubbard, Chair

Welcome & Evangelism Committee

The Welcome and Evangelism Committee, co-chaired by Steve Hubbard and David Lehmann, coordinated several activities in 2018. The Pride Parade Water Table in June was better than ever this year, accommodating parade participants who returned after a two year hiatus due to the pandemic. The Haunted Church event on Halloween also returned this year. This event is a neighborhood favorite and a great event to see the church open and welcoming children and families for scary fun as well as treats after the Children's Parade around Washington Square Park and before the Village Parade later in the evening. Further training is planned for greeters and ushers.

Steve Hubbard & David Lehmann, co-Chairs

The Church of the Ascension
in the City of New York
Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street
Incorporated October 1, 1827

Parish House
12 West 11th Street, New York, New York 10011

www.ascensionnyc.org
(212) 254-8620
info@ascensionnyc.org

Office Hours:
Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Weekly Worship Schedule
Sunday Eucharist, 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Eucharist w/ Music, 11:00 a.m.
Sunday Online Church, 11:00 a.m.
(*Ascensionnyc.org/webcasts*)
Sunday Meditation & Sacrament, 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday Eucharist, 6:00 p.m.

Weeknight Evening Prayer, 5:30 p.m.
(*ascensionnyc.org/eveningprayer*)