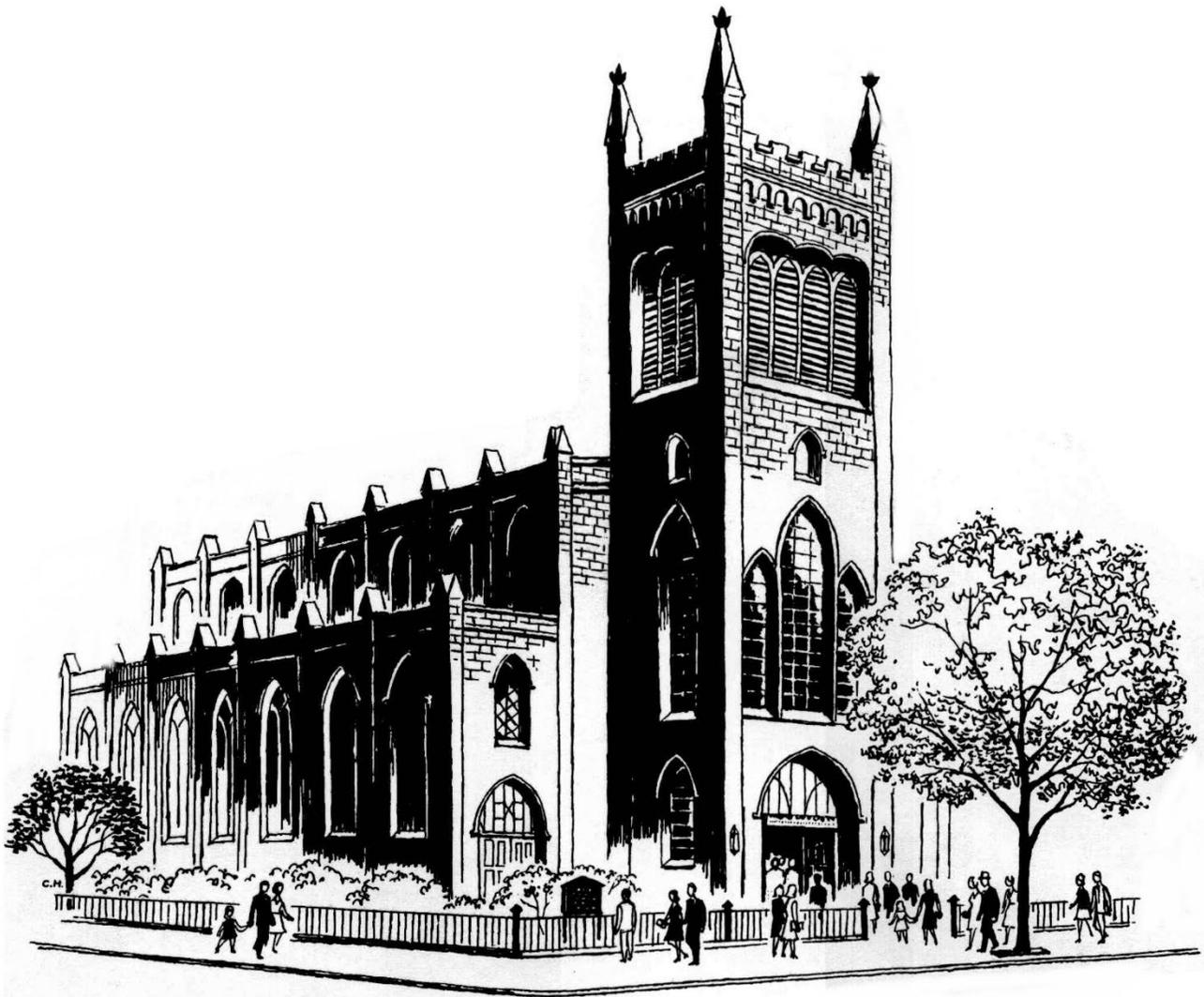


THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

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 2025

Annual Meeting of 25 January 2026

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

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 26, 2025

CLERGY AND STAFF

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The Rt. Rev. Matthew F. Heyd | Bishop of New York |
| The Rev. Elizabeth G. Maxwell | Rector |
| The Rev. Edwin Chinery | Associate Rector |
| Dr. Dennis Keene | Organist and Choirmaster |
| The Rev. Deacon Andrew Jones, OSF | Parish Administrator |
| Kelli Long | Business Manager |
| Sajia Choudhury | Parish Bookkeeper |
| Dwight Roberts | Sexton |
| Raydiant Blacknall | Assistant Sexton |
| Jamel Blacknall | Part-time Sexton |
| Carolyn Braden | Choir Assistant |

2025 VESTRY MEMBERS

David Cholcher, Warden
Vin Knight, Warden
Charles E. Schmidt, Chancellor
Mary Gaillard, Treasurer
Andrew Lin & Eloise Williams, Co- Clerk

Class of 2026
Kyle Cheseborough
Ned Fitch
Michael Surabian

Class of 2027
Sabra Brock
Zachariah Hennessey
Richard Mitchell

Class of 2028
Elizabeth Adams
John Grimes
Steve Hubbard
Tom Rice

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2026 Annual Meeting Agenda

The Annual Meeting is convened immediately following the 11:00 service. Ballots were distributed electronically on the Wednesday, January 21, prior to the annual meeting and polls remained open until 12 noon, Friday, January 23. 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 25, 2025

Treasurer's Report for 2025 and 2026 Budget

Legacy Society Report

Rector and Warden's Remarks

Questions and Answers

Small Group Conversations and Report back

Necrology

Recognition of Retiring Vestry Members and Warden

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 2025 Annual Meeting of the Church of the Ascension

DRAFT Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Church of the Ascension

Members of the Clergy, Staff, and Vestry Present In-Person

- The Rev. Elizabeth Maxwell, Rector
- The Rev. Ed Chinery, Associate Rector
- Isabel Spencer, Warden
- Andrew Lin, Clerk
- Kelli Long, Business Manager
- Sabra Brock
- Kyle Cheseborough
- Ned Fitch
- John Grimes
- Zach Hennessy
- Richard Mitchell
- Mike Surabian

Members of the Clergy, Staff, and Vestry Present via Zoom

- David Cholcher, Warden
- Mary Gaillard, Treasurer

Members of the Clergy, Staff, and Vestry Absent

- Elizabeth Adams
- Phoebe Norcross

Opening Prayer

- Mother Liz

Timekeeper

- Mother Liz

Proceedings

1. At 1:00pm, the Rector of the Parish, the Reverend Elizabeth Maxwell (“Mother Liz”), called the meeting to order and offered the opening prayer.
2. Mother Liz observed that a quorum was present, for this purpose being at least one-tenth of the total number of members qualified to vote, in accordance with the bylaws.
3. The Clerk of the Vestry, Andrew Lin, was appointed Secretary of the Annual Meeting by acclamation following nomination by Mother Liz.
4. The agenda of the Annual Meeting was presented for approval.
 - a. Moved: Isabel Spencer
 - b. Seconded: John Grimes
 - c. Approved by unanimous voice vote
5. The Chair of the Finance Committee, John Grimes, presented the Treasurer’s Report.
 - a. The Parish is making meaningful progress in reducing the deficit. This progress is attributable to (1) increase in pledges, (2) increase in facilities rentals, and (3) non-pledge gifts and bequests.
 - b. Last year, the Parish budgeted a deficit of \$281,621. The Parish ended the year with a deficit of \$246,232, which is an improvement of \$35,389. We are fortunate to have strong endowments.

- c. Our total operating income was \$1,247,333, which is \$66,914 over the budgeted amount of \$1,180,419. Income from facilities rentals was \$299,301, which is \$70,724 over the budgeted income of \$228,577. This increase was attributable to a space rental by Amazon and an expansion by La Petite École. Our endowment income was \$557,771, which is \$2,479 over the budgeted amount of \$555,292. This increase is consistent with the broader market environment. Pursuant to our Vestry's spending rule, we draw from our endowments a percentage of the average of the trailing 12 quarter end periods. For 2025, we plan to draw down 5.5% from most funds.
- d. Our total operating expense was \$1,493,565, which is \$31,525 over the budgeted amount of \$1,462,040. This expense overage is attributable to inflation and an increase in interest rates. Note the following matters relating to expenses: (1) Diocesan assessment, (2) loan repayments, (3) a 2.5% increase in payroll for staffing reflecting cost of living adjustments, and (4) small upward adjustments for parish life budgets.
- e. Mary Gaillard: Our 2025 budget reflects the fact that we paid down our loan. The loan's principal amount is now at \$722,506. We expect that the lower principal, together with anticipated interest rate reductions, will help us reduce our total loan payments.
6. The Chair of the Investments Committee, Maurice Seaton, presented on Ascension's legacy society: Ascension Angels.
 - a. In 2024, Ascension received bequests from three individuals: Lillie Burkhardt, Betty Thompson, and Barbara Burns.
 - b. There are three main ways to include Ascension in estate planning: (1) % of estate, (2) % of life insurance policy, and (3) endowing a pledge.
7. The Head of the Inviting All Committee, Zach Hennessy, presented on the spring showcase.
 - a. The parish accomplished a major milestone this year with the restoration of the brownstone. Now that the scaffolding is down, the Committee would like to reintroduce Ascension to the local community with a spring showcase.
 - b. The spring showcase is planned for Saturday, May 10, 2025. The theme is afternoon tea. The Committee also plans to host tours of Ascension and host a light fundraiser.
 - c. The tentative audience is anyone in the local community, including neighbors, elected officials, local community leaders, and history enthusiasts.
8. The Rector, Mother Liz, commended her remarks about the Parish made during her 11am service sermon.
9. The Wardens, David Cholcher and Isabel Spencer, presented their remarks.
 - a. Isabel Spencer: Reflecting on Mother Liz's sermon, the concept in the water is community. Jim McBride, a prominent novelist, observed that "if change is going to come, it's going to come through community." For this upcoming year, I want our Parish to focus on community. I am proud of our Vestry for building that community, and I want us to spread this model to the rest of the Parish. Opportunities to do so abound, including starting a new community group, joining an existing group, and filling our Parish space.
 - b. David Cholcher: With the new bishop, there is a renewed energy to things. We want to capture this energy and build on things at the Diocesan level at Ascension. I also want to congratulate Isabel on her six-year tenure as warden. Congratulatory remarks ensued.
10. Mother Liz opened up the floor for Q&A. No questions were asked.
11. Mother Liz asked two questions around three themes for a 15-minute table discussion. Following the 15-minute table-side discussions, a representative from each table shared the highlights of the table's discussion.
 - a. The two questions are: (1) When did you experience the following themes at Ascension, and (2) How can we accentuate those themes in the coming year? The three themes are: (1) joy of the Lord, (2) bringing good news to the poor, and (3) caring for the body.

- b. James Amodeo: Our table focused on experiencing joy of our Lord through the nature and city around us. One way to accentuate that joy is to join the gardening guild at Ascension, as well as other organizations that reach out to nature. Another way to accentuate that joy is to experience the state of being in church.
 - c. Vin Knight: My table focused on taking care of our bodies. We often hear that we see God in other people. That also means that we see God in us. We therefore have a sacred obligation to take care of ourselves. We should neither neglect our bodies nor overindulge in vanity. Rather, we should take care of our body so we can use it in service of God.
 - d. Gretchen Walther-Dumler: If we are to profess that we are God's instruments on a sacred mission, then we must take care of our instruments. With our Puritanical upbringings, it is sometimes hard to give ourselves credit for having real usefulness and therefore maintaining these instruments well. Additionally, our open-door initiative is very important. So many people from all over the world come and experience the beauty and glory of our church. We want to increase the number of open-door volunteers.
 - e. Jeffrey Johnson: Continuing with the theme of joy, we derive a lot of joy from singing in the choir. We also appreciated the forum for the Magnificat. As a next step, perhaps we can organize communal singing and pair it with some analysis. In terms of sharing good news with the poor, we talked about the importance of the pantry and engaging with the poor on a one-on-one basis. We also talked about our policy and strategy regarding ICE.
 - f. Sybil Piccone: We also talked about how we protect people from ICE. Although it is unlikely that we would be able to house folks, we can ensure that people have nourishing meals. We can also spend nights to care for them. We also talked about attending evening prayer to experience the joy of the Lord. It is a good way to experience community on a daily basis.
 - g. Mike Surabian: We discussed two main topics. First, we talked about what we could do for new people. What does that contact process look like? For example, we could expand the newcomers' lunch to 2x a year. Second, we talked about marketing and focusing on things that are important but hasn't received enough attention. We should get folks involved into these more-niche areas, which could make folks feel more connected to church initiative on a more individual-level.
 - h. John Grimes: Bringing good news to the poor could involve focusing on the pantry and donating to organizations. But not everything is necessarily ours to take on. Nevertheless we can offer support. We all felt joy just by being here, caring for each other, and getting past frozen assumptions by talking to people. Showing up and being visible are key.
 - i. Linda Webb: Adding on what Sybil said about evening prayer, it has been a real joy in my life to have this daily gift. I moved to Florida, and it's been a real joy to have it available. Attending Local Live services have also been an additional joy. As a priest who preached at a parish in East Village said: "If it's joyful, it must be from God."
 - j. Mother Liz: I am in active dialogue with the Diocese about immigration and ICE. This will be a topic of discussion for the Vestry.
12. Mother Liz led a moment of remembrance for people who have passed away this past year.
 13. Mother Liz led the recognition of retiring two Vestry members (Madonna Stack-Barker, Phoebe Norcross) and Warden (Isabel Spencer). We also celebrated John Grimes, Steve Hubbard, and Elizabeth Adams for completing their Vestry terms. Mother Liz presented gifts to Isabel, John, and Steve. Mary Gaillard presented a limerick to Isabel Spencer.
 14. Mother Liz announced the results of the vestry election.
 - a. Vin Knight was elected Warden.
 - b. John Grimes, Steve Hubbard, Elizabeth Adams, and Tom Rice have been elected to the Vestry.
 15. Mother Liz asked everyone to update the parish directory.
 16. A motion was made to adjourn the Annual Meeting:

- a. Moved: Vin Knight
 - b. Seconded: Richard Mitchell
 - c. Approved by unanimous voice vote
17. The Annual Meeting was adjourned at 2:28pm.

Submitted by Andrew Lin, Clerk

Parish Statistics

As of 31 December 2025

Attendance at all services: **9,959**

Sundays (in person and online): 5,019

Weekday Services 4,940

Services conducted

Sunday Eucharist 145

Weekday Eucharists: 71

Weekday Daily Office: 252

Marriages: 3

Burials/ Memorials: 6

Baptisms: 3

Baptisms and Confirmations

Children (under age 16) baptized: 2

Adults baptized 1

Adults confirmed, received or reaffirmed: 2

Baptisms: **3**

Nuri Jimwoon Chunara-Kim

Gwendolyn Farach-Colton

Eden Emlen Ziemer

Received, Confirmed **2**

Luca Bettua

Nikhil Bettua

Burials **6**

Xanthe Elizabeth Foreman Barton

Lillie May Burkhardt*

David De Porte*

Mary Ireland

Jean Rice

Stanley Jay David Weinberg*

* *Member*

Transfers In **1**

Eloise Rose Williams 1

Transfers Out 0

Marriage 3

Elizabeth Fosmire, Nathan Wiley
Susanna Treacy, Nicholas Wiegand
Claire Wyatt, Boris Opec

Baptized Members

| | |
|---|-----|
| Baptized persons on Record, 31 December 2024: | 209 |
| Added through baptism in 2025: | 3 |
| Added through Confirmation, Reception or Renewal of Vows: | 2 |
| Added through Transfer: | 1 |
| Lost by Death: | 3 |
| Lost by Transfer Out: | 0 |
| Total Baptized Members, 31 December 2025: | 212 |

Rector’s Report

Week in and week out, we gather to sing and pray, to hear and ponder God’s Word, to break the bread and bless the cup. Our worship is the fruit of many people offering their gifts to God, and I am grateful to and for you all- as well as for the grace of the Spirit among us. I start my report here, with this central touchstone of our life together as Christians, because being able to come together is such a blessing. In these times, unprecedented in my lifetime, I am especially aware of my need to ground myself in faith and community as I seek to follow Jesus. This is a moment when being the church really matters- and that means we need to be fed and equipped for the work we are called to do.

Since Inauguration Day in January 2025, the context of our ministry has been defined by rapidly increasing fear and cruelty in the world around us. Attacks on immigrants, trans people, healthcare, food benefits, USAID, diversity, equity and inclusion, protesters, universities, unions, environmental protections, other nations and democracy itself have unfolded with breathtaking speed and force. It has been a year of coming to grips with what we are really experiencing, finding courage, telling the truth even when our voices shake, building wider community, discerning what is ours to do and how to care for our neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable. It has been a year of remembering and reaffirming our baptismal covenant, perhaps most especially our vow to respect the dignity of every human being, made in God’s image.

In this, we have been blessed to be led and supported by our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Matthew Heyd. He reminds us that we are a sanctuary diocese, and that means a safe and welcoming space for all. His strong voice for justice and presence in the public square encourages me a great deal. So does his attention to such basics of congregational life as developing a new formula for our common mission share, a huge help to the finances of Ascension and to most of our neighbor parishes as well. Bp. Heyd is very fond of saying that “the Holy Spirit moves at ground level,” encouraging us to pay attention to where there is energy and new life or need in our congregations and ministries. With that in mind, here are some of the places I have experienced that movement of the Spirit at Ascension in 2025.

- Our Sunday forums spark wonderful conversation and learning. This year we have considered the perils and promise of AI with Dr. Clay Williams; the New York Haiti Project with the Rev. Canon Sam Owen and the essential work of Rural and Migrant Ministry with the Rev. Richard Witt. Immigration issues have been consistently important to us, with sessions both theological and practical. Our Lenten series focused on Hospitality in scripture, in liturgy, through participation in Ecclesia Ministry and in a Newcomer's Brunch so popular we ran out of food. We talked about our experiences of gender inclusive language in worship, our theologies of the Trinity and on the Feast of the Presentation, the Nunc Dimittis. We listened to the diocesan Hobart lecture, focusing on the book of Ruth with Pdraig O'Tuama and Bishop Mariann Budde. We discussed the celebration of Juneteenth, the Season of Creation, what happened at Diocesan Convention and the female ancestors of Jesus. We made Advent wreaths for our use at home. Our forum schedule is punctuated with conversations about how we can react faithfully to events of the day and how we discern our own next right things.
- One of the greatest joys of ministry for me is accompanying people on their spiritual journeys. This includes preparing folks for baptism or confirmation; it may also be a conversation about faith and life over a cup of coffee, in a home or a hospital room. Thank you for sharing your lives and stories with me, especially at pivotal and vulnerable moments. It is an honor to be invited in.
- We spend a lot of time at Ascension eating and talking- and in that we are like Jesus! Our 20s/30s group, the People Who Lunch, the Lenten House Eucharists and a variety of other occasions all help our parish grow deeper in our connections and care for each other. We have a lot of fun!
- We have been blessed this year with the presence of two different interns. The Rev. Joo Young Hong joined us for the summer of her transitional diaconate. She preached and served in our liturgy, shared her story with us and enriched our community as she prepared for ordination as a priest. She will return periodically to preach and celebrate at Ascension. This fall we welcomed Yunjeong McSeol, a postulant for the priesthood in our diocese. She participates in the liturgy, gets involved pastorally in the community, learns by attending meetings and has also preached and led a Quiet Day on making and using Anglican Prayer Beads. It is deeply enriching to our congregation to be able to share in the formation of new clergy.
- Our dear parishioner Elizabeth Adams was affirmed in her own discernment of a call to the priesthood, first by our parish committee and then by the diocesan Commission on Ministry. It is a great joy to be part of her vocational journey, even though we will all miss her when she leaves to go to seminary later this year. Also, our Parish Administrator, The Rev. Br. Deacon Andrew Jones, was ordained to the diaconate this year. He serves officially at St. Mark's in the Bowery but in the course of his day job here leads Noonday Prayer, responds to some pastoral walk-ins and is an occasional guest preacher.
- We continued to look for ways to learn about and support Palestinian Christians and others this year. We hosted a conversation with the Rev. Fadi Diab, Rector of St. Andrew's

in Ramallah, studied the Kairos Palestine document and welcomed the Rev. Canon Leyla King for a moving talk about her book, *Daughters of Palestine*.

- A wonderful new initiative this year was our Spring Garden Showcase, led by Zach Hennessey. Now that our tower brownstone has finally been restored, we turn our attention to our outdoor space. On a beautiful day in May, we welcomed parishioners, neighbors, families from La Petite Ecole, and others to enjoy our garden, share ideas about its further beautification, tour our church, hear some wonderful music, learn about our congregation and eat some delicious treats. Thank you to everyone who made it happen!
- Ascensionites stepped up in response to the needs of our neighbors. We protested in the streets, gave money, made sandwiches, wrote to legislators, served in our pantry, trained to protect elections, welcomed visitors to our open doors, made warm scarves and hats for a local school, wrote about our faith and values, volunteered with programs supporting immigrants and more.
- I am grateful to share the leadership of Ascension with our very hard-working, talented and faithful vestry. Special thanks are due to our wise and generous wardens, David Cholcher and Vin Knight, our finance chair John Grimes and our Chancellor, Charlie Schmidt to whom we take all manner of thorny and sensitive legal questions. I want to say a special word of gratitude also to Kyle Cheseborough, who has completed two terms on the vestry and is now stepping down for a season; his gentle integrity and faith have been true gifts to us all.
- Our dedicated staff is also essential to our parish life. Thank you to our Bookkeeper, Sajia Choudhury, Business Manager Kelli Long, Sexton Dwight Roberts, Assistant Sexton Raydiant Blacknall and Part-time Sexton Jamel Blacknall for all the ways you keep Ascension moving forward with grace and good cheer. I am especially grateful to share the pastoral ministry of this place with Fr. Ed- a most wise and supportive priestly colleague and chef extraordinaire.
- And of course, Dr. Dennis Keene, who has been an extraordinary, integral part of Ascension, making gorgeous music for 45 years, has just announced that he will retire this coming Pentecost Sunday. Working with him has been a real joy for me, both because of all that I have learned from him and his musical gifts and because he has been truly collaborative in dreaming about and planning liturgy and music for our parish. Thank you, Dennis! I will miss you, but I celebrate your enormous contribution here and wish you all good things in this new chapter of your life.

In 2026, we will ramp up our planning for Ascension's bicentennial in 2027. What has this parish contributed to our city, our world and our souls in the 200 years since its founding in 1827? How have we witnessed to the gospel of God's love for all? How has the grace of the Holy Spirit moved among and through us? And what is God calling us to in our third century? As we begin our 199th year, we will have opportunities to consider these questions together and to give thanks for the great cloud of witnesses on whose shoulders we stand.

These are times that try our souls, and also call for deepening community, perseverance in prayer and our own bold witness. May we be faithful, dear people of Ascension, to our call to love God and our neighbor. May we trust that God who has brought us this far will continue to guide and keep us on the way.

It is a joy and privilege to journey with you as your Rector.

The Rev. Elizabeth G. Maxwell, Rector

Nominating Committee Report

There are five vacancies for the election of Vestry members to upcoming terms. We are presenting four candidates for the class of 2029. The nominating committee has reviewed the qualifications of the candidates and affirms that they meet the requirements in our parish bylaws. The committee recommends the following slate for election at the annual meeting on Jan. 25, 2026:

Ned Fitch, Mike Surabian, Dorothy DeCrescenzo and Matthew Snow.

In addition, the vestry has nominated David Cholcher for a second two-year term as warden.

Vin Knight, Chair

Finance Committee and Treasurer’s Report

Ascension’s finances experienced another challenging year in 2025, with increased expenses due to continued inflation and the rise in the cost of living. Our programs and therefore expenses are robust, and our income is still working to catch up. Generous pledges from parishioners have helped make up some of the gap in income, for which we are particularly grateful. While not invading principal, we have drawn heavily from our endowments, where permitted, to resolve budget deficits for many years, and this continued to some extent in 2025.

| PARISH OPERATING INCOME | Budget 2025 | Actual 2025 | Actual Compared to Budget 2025 | Budget 2026 |
|--|------------------|------------------|---|------------------|
| Pledge and Offering Income <i>(includes pledges, loose collections, special offerings at Easter and Christmas, flowers)</i> | 428,950 | 451,946 | 22,996 | 453,450 |
| Facility Use and Outside Contributions <i>(Gifts from individuals, weddings, donations from groups that use church facilities, La Petite Ecole)</i> | 341,726 | 360,205 | 18,479 | 353,017 |
| Endowment Income and Special Funds <i>(Income from various endowment funds and other sources designated for operating purposes)</i> | 519,105 | 545,889 | 26,784 | 540,814 |
| Total Operating Income | 1,289,781 | 1,358,040 | 68,259 | 1,347,281 |

| PARISH OPERATING EXPENSES | Budget 2025 | Actual 2025 | Actual Compared to Budget 2025 | Budget 2026 |
|---|------------------|------------------|---|------------------|
| Administration <i>(Includes auditor, telephone & internet, office supplies, equipment maintenance, insurance, diocesan assessment, loan interest, bank fees)</i> | 381,619 | 367,156 | (14,463) | 321,094 |
| Building Maintenance <i>(Includes utilities, building supplies)</i> | 82,307 | 123,436 | 41,129 | 118,182 |
| Music and Worship <i>(Includes Choir stipends, altar guild, and flowers costs)</i> | 121,060 | 138,152 | 17,092 | 134,130 |
| Payroll and Related <i>(Includes salaries, health and dental insurance, pension, clergy related expenses, other payroll related expenses for all employees)</i> | 868,666 | 878,570 | 9,904 | 938,993 |
| Committees and Outreach <i>(Includes evangelism, hospitality, special events, church school, and stewardship)</i> | 24,050 | 27,273 | 3,223 | 24,850 |
| Total Operating Expenses | 1,477,702 | 1,534,587 | 56,885 | 1,537,249 |
| Operating Income/(Deficit) | (187,921) | (176,547) | 11,374 | (189,968) |

Highlights of our financial picture during 2025 are:

- Pledge Income: Parishioners have been loyal in paying their pledges, and we give a big thanks for their remarkable generosity. For 2025, we exceeded our pledge budget of \$400,000 by over \$25,000, with total pledges received of \$425,715. For a congregation of our size, this is truly remarkable, as the \$400,000 budget for 2025 was already a stretch goal. For 2026, we anticipate receiving pledges of \$425,000, which is again remarkable. Parishioners have clearly listened to our messages about our financial situation and taken them to heart.
- ERTC: In October 2022, we engaged an outside firm to assist with applying to the Internal Revenue Service for the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC), hoping to obtain these additional pandemic-related government relief funds (which come in the form of refundable payroll tax credits). The application was submitted in October 2023, and after significant delays in government processing, we received credits of \$154,366 (including interest) in 2025. After paying our consultant \$10,494 as agreed, we netted \$143,872 from this COVID-era program, which has allowed us to manage our cash flow during 2025, and defer drawing down most of our operating budget deficit.

- **Plummer Fund and Line of Credit Repayment:** For many years, we have received generous unsolicited contributions from the Plummer Charitable Foundation, which is named after Hellen Ingram Plummer, the wife of former Vestry member Charles Merrill, who founded Merrill Lynch. She is also the mother of the poet, James Merrill. In February 2025, the Fund notified us that it was winding up its affairs and that Ascension would be beneficiary of a portion of the Fund's principal. We eventually received \$399,672 from the Fund, and are grateful to the Plummer family for their generous contribution. The Vestry is considering an appropriate naming opportunity in memory of Hellen Ingram Plummer. Pending this, we have used \$300,000 to pay down outstanding principal from our line of credit with Fiduciary Trust Company International, reducing the principal amount to \$422,506 from \$722,506. With today's high interest rates, this reduces our annual interest on the loan by \$21,000, to approximately \$30,000. As a reminder, the Parish obtained a line of credit of \$2.5 million from Fiduciary Trust 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 previously had paid back some of the loan with funds from our capital campaigns, as well as from some of the accrued income from some of our endowment funds.
- **Diocesan Common Mission Share:** As discussed in prior years, the amount we were paying to the Diocese of New York in the form of our "diocesan assessment" was generally not sustainable, and thus we applied to the Diocese for relief in 2023, which we received in the form of a 75% reduction for 2023, a 50% reduction for 2024, and a 25% reduction for 2025. For 2025 our reduced assessment was \$151,038, and we were anticipating a return to 100% payment of approximately \$200,000 in 2026. We were far from the only parish in the Diocese to face challenges in paying our assessment, and after a lengthy study, the Diocesan Mission Resource Task Force recommended a new "Common Mission Share" to replace the outdated assessment model. The Common Mission Share was approved at Diocesan Convention in November 2025 and results in relief for 90% of parishes, including Ascension. The new contribution formula is 1% of expenses up to \$250,000, and 5.75% of expenses above \$250,000, as reflected in the parish's annual parochial report. For Ascension, this results in a new Common Mission Share payment to the Diocese of \$78,641 in 2026, which provides welcome relief. The Task Force also recommended a "Jubilee Moment" which was approved at Convention, pursuant to which prior arrears are forgiven (including Ascension's reduced assessment amounts for 2023-2025 noted above), contingent on payment of all agreed amounts through 2025 (which Ascension has done).
- **Endowment Income and Deficit:** Our endowment funds performed well in 2025, 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. For 2025, we increased the spending percentage from 5% to 5.5% for several funds in order to provide a modest increase to pay for operating expenses. For 2026, we are again budgeting a drawdown of 5.5% from most funds. In addition, we drew down an additional \$35,000 from various funds in order to cover the deficit. The balance of the 2025 deficit is currently being covered with cash received from the ERTC discussed above, which was a one-time event. In general, drawing significant amounts from our investments to cover deficits is not sustainable in the long term.

- Outside Contributions: General undesignated gifts/contributions and contributions for meetings such as 12 step programs, rent for La Petite Ecole and groups using our space, weddings, and income from organizations using our space for one-time events have contributed \$360,205. We are hoping to source more regular items such as this in the future, as they bring significant income with little associated costs. We are actively looking to rent the two offices on the fourth floor of the Parish House. The Diocese also plans to increase resources for property support, which is a welcome development that we will investigate.
- In memoriam Lillie Burkhardt: In early 2025, we were notified that Ascension would receive certain bequests from the estate of Lillie Burkhardt, a long time parishioner of Ascension who died in December 2024. Lillie was an Assistant Director for the University Budget at New York University and faithfully served as Ascension's Treasurer for many years. We keep her memory alive in many of our meetings by recalling her wise guidance and careful stewardship of our financial resources. In accordance with the Vestry's usual practice (which Lillie supported), her bequests of approximately \$125,000 will be added to the principal of the General & Endowment Fund.

Other ongoing items of interest are:

- Manton Covid Relief Fund: As reported previously, in 2021 we received a grant of \$250,000 from the Manton Foundation for "covid relief." In 2025, we continued to use some of the fund on streaming technology in order to provide remote access to our in-church Sunday services.
- Deficit Reduction: The Deficit Reduction Task Force continued to work on new ways to generate income and reduce expenses. We remain 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.

The operating results for 2025 ended the year with a deficit of \$176,547. This was \$11,374 more favorable than budgeted. Income was \$68,259 more than expected, mainly due to increased income from pledges and use of our facilities. Expenses were more than budgeted by \$56,885 and largely represent increased non-discretionary expenses such as fuel, light and water, insurance costs and frictional expenses associated with employee compensation. We benefited from over \$9,000 in reduced interest expense on our line of credit with Fiduciary, due to the repayment of principal discussed above, and this benefit will continue in 2026.

The budget for 2026 anticipates an operating deficit of \$189,968, which is roughly commensurate with the projected deficit for 2025. However, given the increase in the cost of living and non-discretionary expenses, we believe we are making progress. This is a huge improvement over past years where the budget projected deficits significantly over \$200,000. But we aren't there yet! The 2026 expense budget includes a 3% salary increase for staff, reflecting the increase in the cost of living, as well as an increase in the stipend we pay to the choir. In total, expenses are expected to be \$1,537,249, or about \$60,000 above the level projected for 2025 (but less than \$3,000 over the actual 2025 expenses).

On the income side, the amount we receive is projected to be \$1,347,281. The budget includes 2026 pledge income of \$425,000, an increase of \$25,000, or 6.25%, over 2025. Still, pledge income

represents only about 28% 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 2026 budget reflects an additional 0.5% 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 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 2026, although we are moving in the right direction.

The members of the Finance Committee during 2025 were Mother Elizabeth Maxwell, Wardens David Cholcher and Vin Knight, 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 Business Manager and bookkeeper. The Committee prepared the 2026 operating budget, which was approved by the Vestry at its January 2026 meeting

During 2025, the Committee worked closely with our Business Manager, Kelli Long. We continue to be grateful for the expertise and order that Kelli brings to our finances, in addition to her many other duties. Sajia Choudhury continued as our bookkeeper during 2025, and works closely alongside Kelli. We are fortunate to have them both on staff! Kelli and Sajia worked with our auditors, PFK O’Connor Davies, on our 2023 audit, which is nearly final, after which we will turn to the audit of our 2024 and 2025 financial statements.

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, 2025, the following values of the endowment funds were reported:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| General and Endowment Fund | \$2,098,347 |
| Maintenance Fund | 1,001,459 |
| Catherine B. Fair and Esther D. Hamilton Memorial Fund..... | 1,474,903 |
| Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ralph Hayden Visscher Memorial Fund..... | 637,188 |
| Susy I. and Harriet E. Babcock Memorial Fund..... | 367,117 |
| Catherine B. Fair and Esther D. Hamilton Memorial Choir Fund..... | 196,190 |
| Marguerite W. Sinaly Memorial Window Maintenance Fund | 1,326,293 |
| John R. Meekin Music Fund | 1,819,957 |
| Robert E. Lowder Fund | 2,042,240 |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Special Account..... | 162,076 |
| Manton COVID Relief Fund..... | 35,106 |
| Maintenance Fund Addition..... | 3,985,629 |
| Various Restricted Funds (DIT) (as of 11/30/25)..... | 121,100 |
| Total..... | \$15,267,605 |

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

Associate Rector’s Report

Ascension Outreach continued to sustainably serve upwards of 1000 individuals each month throughout 2025, adjusting the service schedule as needed, (e.g., accommodating for absence of volunteers due to holidays). Our service population continues to be comprised almost entirely of Chinese immigrants who don’t speak English. Program leadership has received appropriate training regarding the safety and welfare of our visitor population and continues to exercise heightened awareness regarding potential (illegal) threats from federal agents. In addition to the efforts directed by program leaders toward ensuring general operations continue as smoothly as possible, the program partnered for a fourth year with Choy Division, a farm upstate that specializes in the production of East Asian Heritage Vegetables. This arrangement was made possible by Episcopal Charities who developed an arrangement with The Food Sovereignty Fund and its Farm-to-Pantry initiative. We receive a generous amount of tremendously welcome produce from May to November which delights our visitors. On another level, an energetic campaign for volunteer recruitment continues with mixed results. (It’s worth noting that we continue to welcome the 2nd grade class of neighboring Little Red Schoolhouse who comes twice each semester to help with pantry set-up – it’s a wonderful experience for us and for the students/staff.) In addition, the Ascension Outreach Board has been re-constituted and is more actively engaging in transition planning, i.e., in anticipation of the Associate Rector’s (and Executive Director of the program) eventual departure sometime in the next four years or so. Finally, new strategies continue to be employed regarding fund development, the goal being to ensure the sustainability of program staffing and covering related costs in order to provide budget support for the parish, our host entity. These steps include think-tank sessions with program volunteers who have finance expertise, and the identification of a part-time intern who conducts Foundation Center database research.

Other 2025 Associate Rector activities include:

- Served as Clergy Liaison to the NYPD 6th Precinct, hosting two of their monthly Build-the-Block meetings in the parish hall.
- Twice hosted the local project Focus Forward for graduation ceremonies. Focus Forward is a NYC based community-based volunteer organization that serves individuals engaged in court-related processes – the agency functions in a pre-trial capacity, offering a service-wrap that includes basic and financial literacy, anger management and GED preparation among other things – their outcomes are extraordinarily positive.

The Rev. Edwin Chinery, Associate Rector

Wardens' Report

At the church of the Ascension, 2025 was a year of alignment with a new diocesan direction.

Under the new leadership of Bishop Heyd, the diocese challenges us to find the Holy Spirit at work in our local communities. This mandate found resonance in the Vestry's continued focus on sharing our spaces, welcoming all, and continuing efforts for social justice. The vestry continued our efforts to make our local community sustainable for future generations, efforts greatly aided by the diocesan reformulation of our annual share in its support.

The Vestry looks forward to a joyful but bittersweet farewell for our wonderful member, Elizabeth Adams, as she progresses in her journey towards ordained life in the Church. With the impending retirement of Dr. Keene, an equally bittersweet farewell, the Vestry will participate in the search process for recommendations to the rector for a new Organist and Choirmaster. Finally, 2026 will see planning for our bicentennial anniversary move into high gear.

Vin Knight completes his first year as warden. He brings a wonderful mix of talents and experiences to the challenges of parish leadership,

David Cholcher & Vin Kight, Wardens

Acolytes and Chalice Bearers

Again, not a lot to report for 2025, except continued training for the Acolytes Guild, with the hopeful goal of everyone being cross trained in all acolyte positions (Server, Crucifer, Torch Bearer, Chalice Bearer and Thurifer.)

The Wednesday night service continues at the Side Altar. As always, thank you, Richard Mitchell for your service at the weekday service.

Our current Guild Roster includes Elizabeth Adams, James Amodeo, Luca Bettua, Daniel Cole, Lisa Dunn, Janet Fisher, John Grimes, David Lehmann, Richard Mitchell, Rusty Moore, Isabel Spencer and Michael Surabian. Starting during the Third Quarter of 2025, we welcomed two new seminarian interns, Deacon Joo Young Hong (who was ordained in September) and Yunjeong McSeol 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 and Fr. Ed for their ever available and welcomed guidance and support.

Candace Lombardi & Tom Rice, co-Sacristans

Altar Guild

During 2025, the Altar Guild served at the regular Sunday and Wednesday Eucharists, and at special services throughout the year, including Holy Week, weddings and funerals. As always, I am very grateful for the hard work of the Altar Guild members. Special thanks to Richard Mitchell and Tom Rice for their dedication to the Wednesday evening services. 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 2025 were: Eric Achacoso, Elizabeth Adams, David Cholcher, Lisa Dunn, June Fait, Mary Gossy, John Grimes, Kristin Jackson, David Lehmann, Candace Lombardi, Richard Mitchell, Tom Rice, Rachel Sedor, Maurice Seaton, Isabel Spencer and Jill Tildesley.

Earlier this year, we welcomed our seminarian intern, Yunjeong McSeol, to the Guild. 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

Ascension Investment Committee

The Ascension Investment Committee held two meetings in 2025, and is due to meet again in the first quarter on 2026. The members of the committee are: Sabra Brock, Kyle Cheseborough, Peter Clark, Zachariah Hennessey, Vin Knight, and Maurice Seaton. In 2026 we will again engage our two investment management firms to provide guidance to the committee in assessing both the performance, investment strategies and other matters related to the investment of Ascension's endowed funds. An annual review of Ascension's portfolio of investments is part of this responsibility. The majority of Ascension's investments are held with Fiduciary Trust, and a smaller percentage are entrusted to Bank of New York Mellon. The committee looks forward to taking an active role towards ensuring the continued sound management of Ascension's invested endowment funds.

Maurice Seaton, Chair

Buildings and Grounds Committee

In 2025, our focus shifted from major capital projects to thoughtful stewardship of Ascension's facilities. We made important improvements to the sprinkler system in the parish hall, reviewed opportunities to increase our energy efficiency, and assessed new regulatory requirements for the rectory elevator to ensure ongoing safety and compliance.

A significant portion of our committee's time was also devoted to the front garden, which has become an increasingly welcoming and visible part of our church's presence in the neighborhood. This work will continue into 2026 as we prepare for Ascension's 200th anniversary in 2027—a milestone that invites us to honor our past while investing in our future.

As always, we are deeply grateful to our dedicated staff and clergy for their care, expertise, and commitment to maintaining our historic building. Their work ensures that Ascension remains a safe, beautiful, and inviting space for worship, community, and service.

Steven Hubbard, Chair

Business Manager Report

As we reflect on 2025 and look ahead to 2026, we are deeply encouraged by how Ascension has remained faithful to its founding principles. We are grateful for every member of our staff and each volunteer who serves so faithfully. You truly are the heart and soul of Ascension Church, and your dedication and generosity of spirit are evident throughout every ministry of the church.

Ascension staff work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that our ministries and facilities operate with precision and care. What often appears seamless is the result of countless hours of diligence and excellent work. Their commitment allows our church community to worship, serve, and grow without interruption.

The Administration Team provides guidance and oversight for the daily operations of the church, including the administration of church business, contract management for services such as phone systems and office equipment, the installation of new computer infrastructure, and efforts to reduce costs through improved ordering systems. The team also meets weekly, including one-on-one meetings with staff to review goals, tasks, and ongoing projects. In addition to managing staff, monitoring projects and facility repairs, and attending monthly meetings, I maintain relationships with vendors, contractors, and tenants, collaborating with others to ensure the most effective and efficient use of church resources.

Throughout the year, I have continued to focus on staff development, financial monitoring, overseeing garden renovations alongside the Buildings and Grounds chair, and completing our annual audits in partnership with our bookkeeper, Sajia. I have also enjoyed brainstorming with Brother Andrew on ways to increase Ascension's visibility and expand facility usage. These efforts, along with the many daily operational tasks, are made possible through the support of our exceptional sexton staff—Dwight, Raydiant, and Jamel—whose dedication keeps the church running smoothly.

Our team would not be complete without the remarkable talents of our parish administrator, Brother Andrew. His ability to take on additional responsibilities while maintaining excellence is truly impressive, particularly in welcoming and engaging new user groups through tours and ongoing conversations. Sajia, our bookkeeper, consistently goes beyond expectations, bringing skill, accuracy, and dedication to her work. Her contributions are a tremendous asset to Ascension. Head Sexton Dwight leads by example through his strong work ethic and commitment, setting a standard for the entire sexton team. Our assistant sextons, Raydiant and Jamel, are deeply appreciated for ensuring the facility is clean, polished, and well cared for, and for their willingness to step in wherever needed with a positive and team-oriented spirit.

Looking ahead, 2026 brings both exciting and challenging opportunities. I look forward to sharing continued good news as we build on our progress and move forward together in the months ahead. Ascension would not exist without the tremendous efforts of our volunteers, donors, supporters, and—most importantly—our dedicated staff. Thank you all for your faithfulness and hard work.

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 an intentional relationship with the aspirant on the behalf of

the parish and advises the Rector in their 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 2025, after several years of meeting together in person and on Zoom, the committee finished their work of discernment with Elizabeth Adams and proudly recommended her to Mother Liz as a potential aspirant.

Committee members in 2025 were: David Cholcher, Peter Clark, Janet Fisher, Ned Fitch, Sibyl Piccone, and Eve Beglarian.

Eve Beglarian, Convener

Deficit Reduction Taskforce

In July 2022, the Vestry commissioned a Deficit Reduction Task Force to explore long-term options for our finances, in light of many years of significant deficits in our operating budget.

In 2025, the Task Force consisted of Finance Committee Chair John Grimes, Wardens David Cholcher and Vin Knight, Vestry member Ned Fitch, and parishioner Rachel Matthai. The Task Force met to consider various scenarios to increase income and reduce expenses, and we have been discussing these with Mother Liz and the Finance Committee during 2025, in particular as part of the recent 2026 budgeting process. We continue to experience energy around increasing income, both from parishioners (as evidenced by this year's stewardship campaign) and outside groups that use our space.

As discussed in the Finance report, Ascension still faces a significant deficit in our operating budget for 2026, roughly commensurate with the deficit in 2025. However, given the increase in the cost of living and non-discretionary expenses, we believe we are making progress. The task force will continue to meet on an ad hoc basis in 2026 and welcomes ideas from parishioners on how to address our deficit.

John Grimes, Chair

Docents Guild

On May 17 and 18, the church with the Docents Guild, along with Tom Rice, hosted the Sacred Sites Open House Weekend. We had a very large turnout for 2025, welcoming over 125 visitors over the two days, from both the Sacred Sites invitees list as well as walk-ins. This number surpassed the already large numbers that we welcomed in 2024.

Other groups were hosted in the church, and more upcoming tours are in the works.

Daniel continues to do research on John la Farge and the windows, with the aim of contributing to the Ascension History Project as it progresses. This included time in Portland, Maine, where

he visited the Cathedral Church of Saint Luke, where he studied John La Farge's acclaimed and contemplated painting "The American Madonna".

If anyone is interested in an after church tour / lecture on the altar piece of the windows, please contact Daniel to arrange.

Members of the Docents Guild: Daniel James Cole, chair; Gretchen Dumler, Lisa Dunn, Vin Knight, Peter Nordeen, Maurice Seaton, Isabel Spencer, Jill Tildesley, Catherine Tinker, Madonna Stack-Barker, Nancy J. Llewellyn, Joan Castagnone, David Lehmann, Juen Fait, Sibyl R. Piccone, Tom Rice.

Daniel James Cole, Chair

Flower Guild

The flower guild this year consisted of Matt Vermadahl, David Cholcher, Fr. Ed and Matthew Snow. As discussed in last year's report, artificial flowers have replaced the use of real flowers on both the high altar and side altar as well as on the shelves lining both sides of the interior of the church. The artificial flowers are quite decorative and indistinguishable from the real thing. While so far this has not been cost effective it has been labor effective - greatly cutting down on the hassle and concern of who will arrange the flowers for any given Sunday. Start up capital is crucial and necessary when transitioning from one system to another and in the first year of transition there are often overruns. So in the past year we have gone over budget. But we do expect to see savings in the coming year now that everything is set up and operational. (Christmas was an exception. Donations are often made for Christmas decorations and this Christmas we did save \$500 over the previous year.) The times when there are real flowers on the altar will be when they have been requested and paid for by a parishioner to commemorate a particular event. From Easter of 2026 through Thanksgiving, it is anticipated that there will be no additional outlay of cash on the church's part for flowers thus savings a considerable amount of money.

Matthew Snow, Chair

Hospitality and Activities Guild

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"
(Hebrews 13:2)

The Hospitality Guild has continued to struggle with its number of volunteers and primarily consists of and is mostly provided for by myself and David Cholcher. We have continued to offer treats both savory and sweet, and do our best to accommodate any dietary restrictions or allergies made known to us when possible. There is a handful of volunteers who bring baked goods and candies on occasion and I am very grateful - keep them coming, please and thank you! Dwight, Raydiant, and Jamel are also amazingly supportive with setup and breakdown. A huge thank you to them!

We need to rebuild this vital ministry. Don't you want the chance to entertain angels? I hope you will prayerfully consider joining the Hospitality Guild. I am available most Sundays to speak with you personally about the opportunity or to hear any ideas on how to improve our volunteerism.

Matthew Vermedahl, Chair

Music Program

Our wonderful choir sang from the Fall until Pentecost, plus Holy Week, Christmas Eve, and Ascension Day. Soloists shone forth during the summer months. I am so thankful for the exceptional talent and commitment of our choir. Their musical gifts and humanity bring so much to our worship. It is an honor to work with them. Special thanks to Susie Braden, personnel manager of the choir – a difficult task indeed! Also, thanks to Nathan Wiley, our excellent Librarian and Amy Goldin who takes care of the choir robes.

I recently announced my plans to retire from my position as Organist and Choirmaster of Church of the Ascension after almost 45 years. My last Sunday will be May 24, 2026, the Feast of Pentecost. I will dearly miss this incredibly special Parish which has been home to me for so long. Thank you all for including me in your family. It has been the greatest gift of my life to be here at Ascension. I send much love to everyone.

Dennis Keene, Organist and Choirmaster

Voices of Ascension

Even though I am retiring from my position as Organist and Choirmaster of the Church of the Ascension, I will remain as Artistic Director & Conductor of Voices of Ascension for years to come.

2025 was the first year under our new Executive Director, Jonathan Bradley, and the organizational growth has been truly amazing. With increased marketing our concerts are regularly either selling out or getting close to a full house. Concerts included our ever-popular Candlelight Christmas concerts which expanded to three performances this year (a fourth expected next season!), Bach's monumental St. Matthew Passion, and an evening of Palestrina and luminaries of the Roman Renaissance, a survey of American music from three very different perspectives: a program weaving together threads from multiple immigrant traditions of American choral music; and Voices of Mannahatta; a site-specific multimedia exploration of the land on which the Church of the Ascension sits through a commission by composer Danielle Jagelski, an enrolled member and citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.

Dennis Keene, Artistic Director

Open Doors

The ministry of the Open Doors gained in visitors in 2025, with August being the busiest at 611, and January the fewest at 228. The annual total was 5,397 visitors! Tom Rice tallied these numbers, so you know I'm not making this up!

What is more: more neighbors now know the Church will be open from noon to 3 on weekdays - almost dependably. Aye, but there's the rub! We simply do not have enough volunteers. We have a fabulous Door Team and a couple of backups - all noble and dedicated, but we need a couple more. So, I urge you to consider that God might be calling you too to the Door!

Gretchen Dumler, Chair

Parish Office Report

Local Live, our prior live stream company, sold their church business to Live Connect. This has turned to our advantage as it provides more options for recording outside the church, such as

parish hall. Many thanks to our volunteer producers this summer who took on the ministry to make sure our Parish Hall services were broadcast

The USPS declared our older Neopost postage meter as obsolete and they no longer supported postage upgrades. This required us to get a different model from Neopost. It's smaller and doesn't have as many features, but it works and the monthly payments are less.

We continue to rent space as much as we can. Our most common clients are Co-ops renting for their annual meetings. We've hosted concerts, weddings, funerals, concerts, various meetings, holding and catering for local production crews, This continues to be a good source of income for the parish – this year we made almost \$60,000!

On a personal note, I want to express my thanks for the parish's support and presence at my ordination to the diaconate, and for the gift of a beautiful Deacon stole.

The Rev. Andrew Jones, OSF, Parish Administrator

Planned Giving Committee/Ascension Angels Legacy Society

Who is an Ascensions Angel? Each and every person who has made provision for our beloved church in their will or estate plans is automatically a member of the Ascension Angels Legacy Society. 'THANK YOU' if you are already an Ascension Angel! Your generosity will ensure that future generations can enjoy all the benefits of being a member of the Ascension community, in perpetuity. In 2026 we plan to host at least one event to celebrate the generosity of every Ascension Angel, and encourage all to undertake end of life planning, and consider options that benefit our beloved church in your estate plans.

Each year the annual pledge materials ask if Ascension is in YOUR will/estate plans. If you wish to discuss how to make a planned gift, notify Ascension that you have already made a bequest or planned gift, or simply want to find out how to purchase a niche in Ascension's columbarium, please contact: Andrew Jones at the parish office: 212-254-8620 or email: apjones@ascensionnyc.org, or Maurice Seaton: 201-282-7283 or email: mjseaton@yahoo.com

Maurice Seaton, Chair

Stewardship Committee

The theme of Ascension's 2026 Annual Stewardship Campaign came from a quote by the renowned author, poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou—"Giving liberates the soul of the giver." As in past years, Peter Clark and Elizabeth Adams put together an attractive campaign brochure for launching the stewardship appeal.

In the fall we relied on many veteran canvass callers to reach out to members of our community asking them to pledge their financial support for Ascension for the coming year.

Our annual Harvest Dinner to support stewardship at Ascension was organized by Rachel Sedor and took place in the parish hall on November 13, 2025. Instead of having the usual guest speaker talk about stewardship, as in past dinners, Mother Liz arranged for group discussions among the dinner attendees on the importance of stewardship and the reasons that inspired them to support Ascension.

Our pledge goal for the 2025 Stewardship Campaign was \$425,000, up from \$400,000 in 2024. As of January 22, 2026, we have received 88 pledges for a pledge total of \$404,496.32, with some expected pledges still outstanding.

Eric Achacoso & Peter Clark, Co-Chair

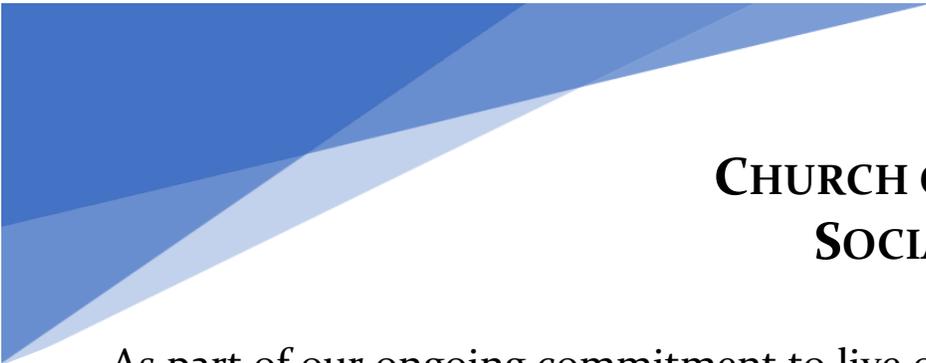
Ushers' Guild

In 2025, the Ushers' Guild continued its vital ministry at the 11:00 a.m. Sunday Eucharist. Guild members warmly welcomed and seated congregants, assisted those with special needs, collected and presented the offering, and helped ensure an orderly flow during communion.

Being an usher is more than a duty—it is a sociable and rewarding way to serve our church community. We always welcome new members to join this meaningful ministry.

We extend our deepest gratitude to those who served this year: Robin Clements, Hannibal Insfran, John Grimes, Terry Rogers, Laurence Rawlins, David Lehmann, Andrew Lin, John Merryman, Barbara Matovu, Janet Sygar, Joan Castagnone, Madonna Stack, Kyle Cheseborough, and Charles Schmidt. Their dedication and hospitality continue to be essential in creating a welcoming and well-organized worship experience.

Steve Hubbard, Chair



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION SOCIAL JUSTICE SURVEY

As part of our ongoing commitment to live out Christ's call to love one another, Ascension is exploring how our parish can deepen its witness to justice, compassion, and dignity for all people. This brief survey invites you to share your perspectives, hopes, and experiences as we discern how God is calling us to act in our community and beyond. Your voice matters, and your participation will help shape our shared ministry. Follow the QR code or go to <https://bit.ly/3LY9f4y>.



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)