

Ascension Extensio<u>n</u>

DECEMBER 2025

www.ascension-westminster.com

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Rev. Pierre-Henry Buisson

Day Off: Monday rector@ascension-westminster.com

Church Office Hours

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00 am -3:00 pm office@ascension-westminster.com

The Church Office will be closed from **December 24 – January 2**



Rector's Message

As we move from Thanksgiving into December, we enter a season that is both beautiful and overwhelming. Advent arrives quietly each year, inviting us to pause, to breathe, and to prepare our hearts for the great mystery of the Incarnation—God coming among us in Jesus Christ. Yet in our modern world, that invitation is harder and harder to accept. December fills quickly with social and family gatherings, shopping lists, travel, and even the joyful busyness of church life. Advent can easily become another busy season rather than the holy stillness it is meant to be.

This is why the Church gives us the gift of the four Sundays of Advent. Each Sunday is a liturgical pause, a moment to step out of the whirlwind and gather in the Lord's presence. These gatherings feed us, refresh us, and restore our focus as we wait for Christ's coming light. Week after week, as the candles grow brighter, we are reminded that God is drawing close.

Before turning fully toward Advent, I also want to share my joy and gratitude for the extraordinary Mistletoe Mart we just completed. Once again, I was moved—truly in awe—by what Ascension is capable of when so many of us come together with energy, generosity, and goodwill. For three days our Holy Cross House was transformed, not only into a marketplace, but into a place of community, welcome, and joy. Volunteers, vendors, guests, and parishioners created something beautiful together, and it was a privilege to witness. Events like this are at the heart of who we are: a church that serves, welcomes, and shines with life for our wider community.

(Continued on p. 2)

Ascension is called to be a family of faith so reflecting the life of Christ, that we draw all people to him.

December Worship

December 7

Second Sunday of Advent Youth Sunday

8:00 am H.E. Rite I, Stone Church 9:00 am Sunday School (Gr. 6-12), Adult Bible Study

10:15 am H.E. Rite II, Holy Cross Hall 11:30 am Fellowship Hour

December 14

Third Sunday of Advent

8:00 am H.E. Rite I, Stone Church 9:00 am Sunday School (Gr. 6-12), Adult Bible Study

10:15 am H.E. Rite II, Holy Cross Hall Sunday School(Gr. K-5) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour

December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent

8:00 am H.E. Rite I, Stone Church 9:00 am Sunday School (Gr. 6-12), Adult Bible Study

10:15 am H.E. Rite II, Holy Cross Hall 11:30 am Fellowship Hour

December 24

Christmas Eve

4:00 pm H.E. Rite II, Holy Cross Hall 8:00 pm H.E. Rite II, Stone Church

December 25

Christmas Day

10:15 am H.E. Rite II, Stone Church

December 28

First Sunday after Christmas

8:00 am H.E. Rite I, Stone Church 9:00 am Sunday School (Gr. 6-12), Adult Bible Study

10:15 am H.E. Rite II, Holy Cross Hall Sunday School(Gr. K-5) 11:30 am Fellowship Hour

Rector's Message continued...

And now, with that same spirit of community and faith, we step gently into Advent and its invitation to slow down and listen for God. On December 13, we will hold our Advent Quiet Day—a simple, prayerful space, almost like a "monastery for a day," where silence, Scripture, and reflection create room for God to speak to our hearts. And on December 21, the longest night of the year, we will gather with our brothers and sisters from the Methodist Church for a gentle Blue Christmas service, a tender and hopeful time for those carrying grief or heaviness during the holidays, reminding us that Christ's light shines most brightly in our deepest darkness.

That same day, after the morning service, our children and youth will present a special Christmas play, *Papa Panov's Magic Christmas*. This heartwarming story, rooted in compassion and hospitality, is a beautiful reminder that Christ comes to us in the faces of those we welcome and serve. It will be a joyful moment for our parish family and a lovely way to continue our Advent journey together.

Advent is also a season of gratitude and generosity, when we remember the extraordinary gift that God has given us in Jesus. I want to thank all of you who have made your pledge for 2026. Your generosity sustains our ministries, strengthens our mission, and allows us to serve our community with love. Your commitment makes a real difference. And if you have not yet had an opportunity to make your pledge, I warmly encourage you to do so. A pledge—of any amount—is a faithful act of hope, helping us plan responsibly for the year ahead and ensuring that Ascension continues to be a place of welcome, compassion, and spiritual nourishment. End-of-year giving, whether through pledges or special gifts, is a blessing to the life of our parish and a way of saying "thank you" to God for all we have received.

In your own home, whenever the season feels overwhelming, I invite you to return to a simple prayer drawn from Psalm 46. Pray it slowly, letting each line become a breath:



My hope for you this Advent is simple: that you may find moments of quiet, clarity, and grace. May you have time to breathe, to ponder, and to pray. And when Christmas comes, may you be ready to celebrate its joy—not exhausted, but renewed—by the love of God made flesh. A blessed and meaningful Advent to you and yours.

Pierre-Henry+

Advent Devotional

Advent Devotional: Living Well Through Advent:

The season of Advent, along with the thoughtful writings and reflection questions in this devotional, provides us with the opportunity to slow down so we can make countercultural choices—



choices that will help prepare us for the true meaning of Christmas. In addition to expanding on each writer's Sunday reflection throughout the week, each Monday we introduce a weekly theme related to practicing generosity.

The Enews includes an option to sign up to receive a daily email message.

Advent Quiet Day

December 13



Advent calls us not to rush, but to wait; not to fill every moment, but to make room for Christ. This gentle day of prayer will be a kind of "monastery for a day," guided by the Scriptures and the prayers of the Book of Common Prayer. We will journey through the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, with generous space for silence, journaling, and rest. The day will close with a simple celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Please register by December 8:

Login to Realm to register OR register by using the link provided in the Enews OR contact Parish Administrator, Ann Fariss, in the Church Office.

Angel Tree

The Outreach Committee hopes that you are ready to embrace Advent and all the joys that come with this season of anticipation!

Beginning on Sunday, November 30, look for items on Ascension's Angel Tree which will be filled with Christmas gift wishes from the families that our church supports monthly through The Outreach Family Friends Program. The Outreach Committee is deeply grateful for all that our church family does to support members of our community. Please return gifts to church by December 14.



Worship Assistants: December 2025

Altar Guild: Team 1

Karen Lance, Sandy White, Jenny Lui, Raymond Lui

Team 1					
	Usher(s)	Lector	Acolyte	Chalicists	Worship Slides
December 7 8:00 am	Cheryl Vecera	Barbara Sears	Jennie Grabill		
December 7 10:15 am	1. 2.	Jim Fariss	Kat Dittrich	 Sandy White John Holbert Jim Fariss 	Emelia Howe
December 14 8:00 am	Cheryl Vecera	Roberta Wilhelm	Beverly Baker		
December 14 10:15 am	1. 2.	Buck Lyon- Vaiden		 Sandy White John Holbert 4. 	Jeanne Cox
December 21 8:00 am	Don & Janice Hobart		Beverly Baker		
December 21 10:15 am	1. 2.			 Sandy White John Holbert 4. 	Lynn Lyon- Vaiden
December 24 4:00 pm	1. 2.	John Holbert		 Sandy White John Holbert 4. 	
December 24 8:00 pm		Carrie Goff	Jennie Grabill		
December 25 10:15 am		John Holbert			
December 28 8:00 am	Roberta Wilhelm		Beverly Baker		
December 28 10:15 am	1. 2.			 Sandy White John Holbert 4. 	



Our neighbors at Westminster United Methodist Church have invited Church of the Ascension to join them for their Longest Night Service on Sunday, December 21 at 4:00 pm.

This gentle, contemplative service acknowledges the grief that many carry during the holiday season while affirming the hope and promise of Christmas.

Breakfast With Santa



Pins and Needles Christmas Shop



1844 Shoppe: December

The 1844 Shoppe thanks everyone for their support throughout the year!
Thanks to your generous donations throughout the year, the Shoppe brought in well over \$5,000 during
Mistletoe Mart! Thank you for helping us continue this wonderful ministry.

As you bring out your holiday decorations—or pack them away in January—please keep us in mind when deciding what to discard. We gladly accept gently used items such as window candles, ornaments, trees with non-working lights, wreaths, nativity sets, dishes, and more.

Donations may be placed in the vestibule closet or dropped off on Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.



Come and see us in December to finish up your holiday shopping! The Shoppe will be open Fridays and Saturdays, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, through December 20. After that, the Shoppe will be closed until mid-January.





Youth Sunday

youth@ascension-westminster.com



Youth Sunday

Sunday, December 7 will be Youth Sunday during the 10:15 am service! The children and youth are invited to be active participants in the liturgy. If your child is interested in ushering, reading, being an acolyte, or anything else, please let us know.

DATE	Sunday School (Gr. 6-12)	Sunday School (Gr. K-5)	Children's Chapel (all ages)
December 7	9:00 am		Children's Sermon & Chapel
			10:15 am
December 14	9:00 am	10:15 am	
December 21	9:00 am		Children's Chapel
December 28		10:15 am	



Cookie Walk: December 20, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

We will gratefully accept homemade cookies, candies, sweets, mixes, bars, and other treats for this year's Cookie Walk! Your goodies may be made from scratch or from a store-bought mix. (Please, no chocolate chip cookies.) The Cookie Walk Elves will take care of packaging and displaying all donations. Please drop off your treats in the Church Office between December 14–18.

In 2024, we ran out of treats and weren't able to raise as much as we hoped for our programs. All proceeds from the Cookie Walk support the youth of our church and community.

Thank you for your generosity and support!

If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Howard at (410) 336-9636.



Christmas Play: December 21

Papa Panov's Magic Christmas

Based on a simple, beautiful story by Leo Tolstoy, it follows Papa Panov, an elderly shoemaker who spends Christmas Day serving those in need and discovers that, in doing so, he has welcomed Christ.

Rehearsals: Sundays, 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. 11/30, 12/7, 12/14



If you or your children would like to be involved, please contact Roberta Gore. (ncdramadamsel@gmail.com)



mistletoemart.com

Thank you so very much for everyone's assistance and support with the 51st Mistletoe Mart! It was a truly wonderful event.

Approximately 2,373 patrons attended—our highest attendance in the past six years!

The café was bustling, serving soups, salads, sandwiches, and our famous turkey dinner. The Country Store bake table was filled with delicious homemade desserts and achieved record sales. The Pins & Needles room was constantly busy as they sold their beautifully crafted items. Children enjoyed creating crafts in the Angel Room, and both children and adults were delighted to visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

It was simply wonderful to spend time with our remarkable artisans, our enthusiastic patrons, and with one another. Thank you for making this year's Mistletoe Mart such a success!

We are currently paying the bills. In early 2026 we will be in touch to begin to discuss both Ascension and Community Outreach donation opportunities.

Thank you, again! We are truly grateful for all of the amazing talents each of you shared to support the Mart. Thank you very much!

Mistletoe Mart Co-Chairs Kim Tompkins, Jenny Beeker



Thank you for returning your yard sign to church as soon as possible.

A 9" deep-dish pyrex glass pie plate is missing from the Mistletoe Mart kitchen. If you



happened to take it home by mistake, please return it to Sandy White. Thank you!

A HUGE thank you to everyone who stepped up to help with Mistletoe Mart decorating—and to all who fluffed greens and prepared everything for the decorating. You worked with a spirit of joy in your hearts, and it made the entire experience truly delightful. Thank you so very much.

A special thank you to the set-up crew... you did a GREAT job!

So grateful, Betsy Reinders

The Vestry		
Vestry/Officers	Term Ends	Ministry Liaison
Rev. Pierre-Henry Buisson		Rector
Kim Tompkins, Sr. Warden	2027	Altar Guild, Worship Assistants, Mistletoe Mart
Gary Lang, Jr. Warden		Buildings & Grounds
Nancy Starner, Treasurer		
Deborah Rio	2028	Welcome Ministry
Beverly Baker	2026	Fundraising
Liz Lowe	2026	1844 Shoppe, Pins & Needles, Book Club, Church Homes Foundation, Bible Studies
Roberta Wilhelm	2026	Buildings & Grounds
Diana Baker	2027	Youth Ministry, Fellowship Hour
David Anderson	2027	Worship Assistants
Mark Howe	2028	Stewardship, Altar Guild, Worship Assistants
Melissa Leahy	2028	St. Martha's Guild, St. James' Commission, LEV, St. Luke's Guild, Outreach, DreamBuilders MD

Invitation to Serve: Vestry Registrar

The Vestry is currently seeking a new **Registrar**—also known in many parishes as the **Clerk or Secretary of the Vestry**—to support the governance and record-keeping ministry of our parish.

According to Article III, Sections 3 and 6 of our bylaws, the Registrar is elected annually by the Vestry at its first meeting after the Annual Parish Meeting and serves a one-year term. In the event of a vacancy, the Vestry appoints a Registrar to complete the unexpired portion of the current term.

Any Voting Member of the Church of the Ascension is eligible to serve as Registrar. A Voting Member is a confirmed communicant in good standing—someone age 16 or older who regularly worships at Ascension and is faithful in prayer and giving.



The Registrar:

- Records the minutes and resolutions of all Vestry meetings and meetings of the voting members
- Maintains the official Vestry minute book and keeps the by-laws up to date and available for inspection
- Holds the corporate seal of the church
- Performs other duties as the Vestry may assign
- Assists the Executive Committee, which meets monthly to prepare the Vestry agenda and distribute documents for the monthly Vestry meeting

If you have gifts for organization, attention to detail, and a desire to serve the church in a meaningful way, please prayerfully consider this opportunity.

To learn more or express interest, please speak with Fr. Pierre-Henry+ or Senior Warden, Kim Tompkins, or contact the parish office.

Thank you!

Highlights from the November 25, 2025 Vestry Meeting

Present: The Rev. Pierre-Henry Buisson, the Rev. Canon Dr. Kristofer Lindh-Payne, Canon to the Ordinary for Leadership, Kim Tompkins (Sr. Warden), David Anderson, Mark Howe, Melissa Leahy, Liz Lowe, Deborah Rio.

Excused: Beverly Baker, Diana Baker, Gary Lang (Jr. Warden), Roberta Wilhelm.

Fr. Pierre-Henry opened the meeting with prayer. The only agenda item for this meeting was to discern next steps regarding how to manage church responsibilities and ministries with limited volunteer resources. Canon Kristofer facilitated the meeting, reviewing the discussion topics and congregation input from the Adult Forums held Sunday, August 24, and Sunday, October 26.

The Vestry reviewed the Adult Forum input. There was Vestry discussion, consensus and a quorum for five focus areas: Music Ministry; St. Martha's Guild & St. James Commission; Children & Youth & Summer Programs; Outreach & Mistletoe Mart; and Fellowship Hour. The Vestry ranked these five categories and will systematically review and discern next steps regarding changes in these areas. The Vestry will begin with the Fellowship Hour and recognizes there is a lot of energy around the Music Ministry.

Canon Kristofer ended the meeting with prayer.

Stewardship Campaign Update

We have received 67 pledges so far (\$227,690), including 10 new pledges. In addition, on Ingathering Sunday, November 9, a total of 78 canned goods were presented at the altar and donated to Shepherd's Staff. If you have not yet returned your pledge card, you may still submit it online, by mail or by bringing it to the church office. Every gift strengthens our ability to plan faithfully and to continue serving as Christ's hands in the world.







Book Club 2026



January 28: *My Friends* by Fredrik Bachman

February 25: Great Expectations

by Charles Dickens

March 25: The Sound and the Fury

by William Faulkner

All are welcome.
For more information, please contact
Cheryl Vecera at 443.794.3691 or
cherylvecera@gmail.com

The Book Club's selections for the first quarter of 2026 are now available. Consider sharing them with family and friends as Christmas gift ideas!

December Bible Study Meeting Dates Tuesday Morning

Sunday Morning Bible Study Hour

9:00 am

December 7 December 14
December 21 December 28

Bible Study 9:30 am

December 2 December 16 Thursday Night Bible Study

6:30 pm

December 4 December 11
December 18

Handbell Choir

I heard the bells on Thristmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail,
With peace on earth, goodwill to men."

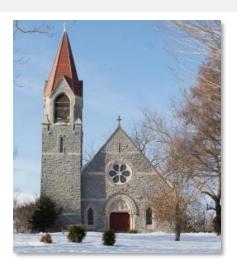
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Carillon Concert: December 14 at 3:00 pm

Buck Lyon-Vaiden will play a Christmas Carillon Concert on Sunday, December 14 at 3:00 pm in Tagart Memorial Chapel at McDonogh School.

Guests may enjoy the concert from their car, bring a chair and sit outside of the chapel or sit inside the chapel. **The concert will also be livestreamed**; **look for the link in the Enews.** For those attending in person, Buck will be glad to meet you after the concert in the chapel foyer and give you a tour of the tower and carillon.



Church Office Notes





	Church Staff
Rev. Pierre-Henry Buisson	Rector
Ann Fariss	Parish Administrator
Lynn Lyon-Vaiden	Communications Associate/Handbell Choir Director
Mary Butler	Organist/Adult Ensemble Director
Martin Villanueva	Minister of Music
Travis Collins	Digital Ministry Associate
Suzanne Walter	Nursery Attendant

Current and Former Clerg	y and Friends Who Would App	oreciate Receiving Mail
The Rev. Eddie Blue Lucy Brady 7 Park Ave., Apt. 1 Westminster, MD 21157	Virginia Birmingham The Meadows at Sun Valley 4113 Ridge Road Westminster, MD 21157	Jim Lambert 438 Klee Mill Rd. Eldersburg, MD 21784
The Rev. and Mrs. Pierre-Henry Buisson 23 N. Court St. Westminster, MD 21157	Brenda Bornt 409 Dutch Ship Rd Pasadena, MD 21122	Mrs. Dee Long 5825 Oklahoma Road Apt. 232 Sykesville, MD 21784
The Rev. Sam Edleman 297 Luther Dr. Westminster, MD 21158	Marion Britton 499 South Hills Ct. Westminster, MD 21158	Barbara Marley-Cass 4422 Black Rock Rd, Apt. 4 Hampstead, MD 21074
The Rev. and Mrs. Ronald Fisher 24 Evergreen Trail Severna Park, MD 21146	Linda Coker 6500 Ridenour Way E, Apt 3B Eldersburg, MD 21784-6220	Nancy McAllister Spring Arbor of Severna Park 345 Richie Hwy Apt #221 Severna Park, MD 21146
The Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Nsengiyumva 36332 Via Marcia Fruitland Park, FL 34731	Doris Detorie 181 Greenvale Mews Dr. Westminster, MD 21157	Sue Metz 1284 Weller Way Westminster, MD 21158
Rev. Dr. Bill Pugliese and Arlena Pugliese 745 Hess Court Westminster, MD 21157	Larry Embrey Longview Nursing Home 3332 Main Street Manchester, MD 21102	Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Myers 26 Milton Avenue Westminster, MD 21157
The Rev. Barbara and Bill Sears 1000 Weller Circle Apt. 221 Westminster, MD 21158	Eila Mae Hogans 430 Avenel Circle, T1 Westminster, MD 21158	Mr. and Mrs. Ted Neil 3392 Avrill Rd. Caledonia, NY 14423
The Rev. F. Allan Weatherholt, Jr. The Rev. Anne Weatherholt 712 David Ave. Westminster, MD 21157	Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Jones 1037 Western Chapel Road New Windsor, MD 21776	Mr. Wilson Ramsey P.O. Box 333 Craigsville, VA 24430

Upcoming Events and Opportunities		
DECEMBER		
Breakfast With Santa		December 6
Advent Quiet Day at Saint George's Episcopal Church	9:00 pm – 3:00 pm	December 13
Christmas Cheer at the Rectory	6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	December 19
Cookie Walk	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	-December 20
Christmas Play		December 21
Longest Night Worship Service at Westminster United Methodist Church 4:00 pm December		December 21
Christmas Eve Worship: Holy Cross Hall: 4:00 pm Stone Church: 8:00 pm December		December 24
Christmas Day Worship: Stone Church: 10:15 am		December 25

Men's Retreat: January 30 - February 1

Men's Retreat at the Claggett Center January 30 – February 1, 2026 Register by January 15, 2026

Start the new year grounded, connected, and inspired.

Join us for a weekend of fellowship, spiritual renewal, and fun. Step away from your daily routine and into a supportive space where men of all ages explore faith, purpose, and community together.

Enjoy meaningful worship, small group conversations, hearty meals, and classic camp fun—including indoor putt-putt, games, and plenty of laughter.

Come to connect. Come to reflect. Come as you are.

In 2026, we will gather around the theme Authentic Connection in a Time of Male Loneliness. Participants will learn and wonder together things like "What does it mean to be a Man in 2026? How can men find and make community now?" With Keynote Speaker Rev. Peter Mayer, and Canon Travis Smith serving as Chaplain, participants are sure to leave this year's Men's Retreat feeling connected, cared for, and inspired.

REGISTER by January 15, 2026.



Women's Weekend: February 20 – February 22

Women's Weekend at the Claggett Center February 20 – February 22, 2026 Register by January 15, 2026

Step into a weekend of rest, renewal, and reconnection.

The Claggett Women's Retreat is a sacred pause in the middle of winter—a time to gather with women of all ages for meaningful conversation, inspiring worship, creative workshops, and joyful community.

In 2026, we will gather around the theme **Who Is My Neighbor? Loving All in Divided Times.** We will begin with exploring the Episcopal identity as women, and then wonder together about what that means for how we interact with people who are different than us and who hold different views. With plenary speakers from the College for Congregational Development and the One America Movement, participants are sure to learn new things and leave with fresh insights on the world we live in today.

REGISTER by February 5, 2026.



Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to contribute to the Poinsettia Fund, and help beautify the churches at Christmas time, in memory of or in honor of someone, or in thanksgiving for someone/something, please fill out the form below and return to the Church Office by **December 23.**

Checks should be made payable to Church of the Ascension in whatever amount you feel is appropriate. Please put "Poinsettias" on the memo line of your check. (The total cost for Poinsettias is expected to be \$965.) Please print the names of those you would like included:

Your Name:	Email or Phone:
	_

Church of the Ascension

23 North Court Street Westminster, MD 21157