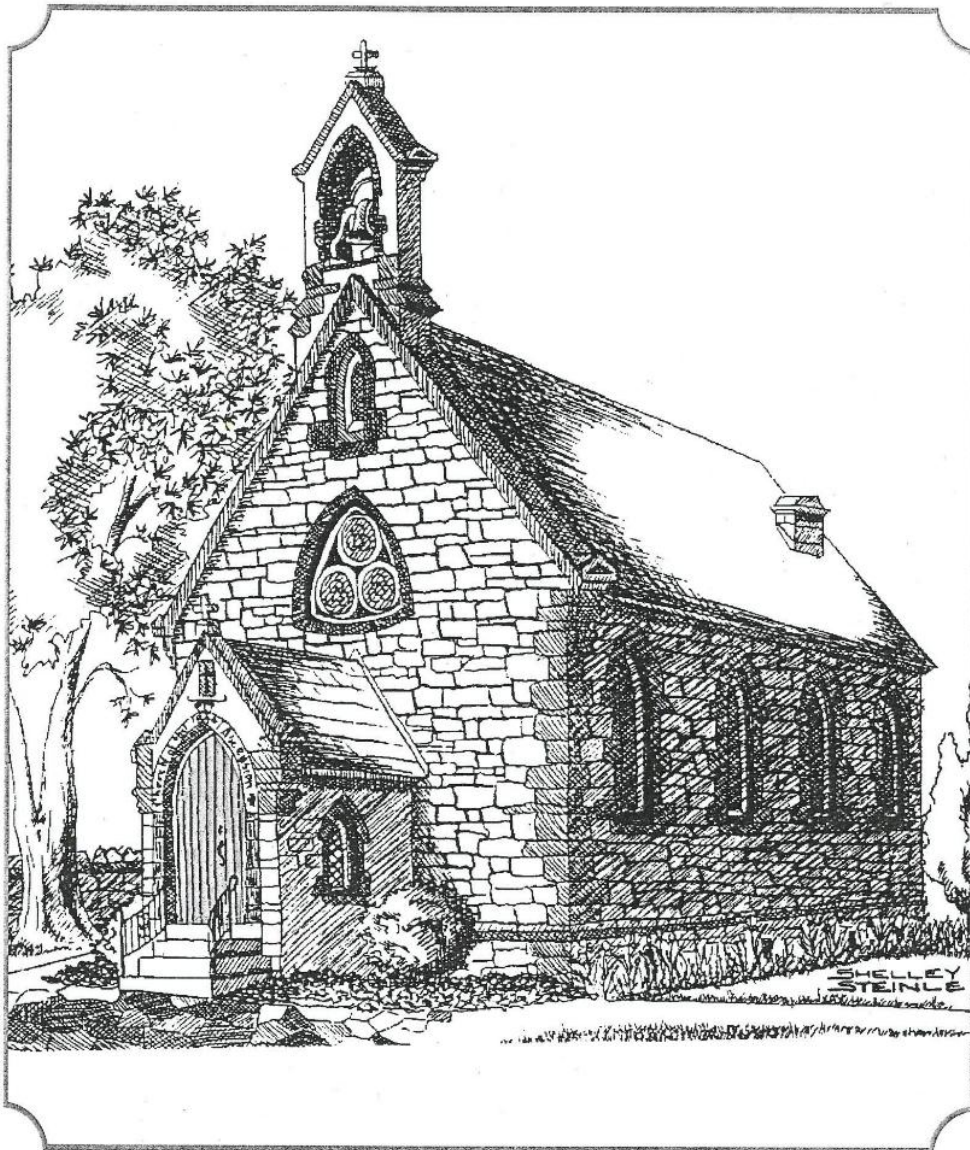


The 182nd ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
February 8, 2026



Church of the Ascension – *Founded 1844 A.D*

AGENDA – The 182nd ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
The FIFTH SUNDAY after THE EPIPHANY
February 8, 2026

1. Call to Order/Opening Prayers – The Rev. Pierre-Henry Buisson, Rector
2. Appointment of a Recording Secretary
3. Rector’s Message
4. Statement of Voting Eligibility as Specified in Parish By-laws
5. Introduction of 2026 Vestry Nominees (in alphabetical order)
Susan Considine Dave Gosnell Dennis Margroum
Lorraine Fulton Bryan Lance Kevin McIntyre
6. Election of 4 new Vestry members:
Three (3) for a 3-year term, Class of 2029.
One (1) for a 1-year term, Class of 2027
7. Recognition of outgoing Vestry members - Rector
Beverly Baker Roberta Wilhelm
Liz Lowe Diana Baker
8. Presentation of the 2026 Budget – Senior Warden
9. Remembrance of parishioners departed since the last Annual Meeting
2/1/2025 Colin Furneaux 7/18/2025 Kathy Sullivan
3/6/2025 Mary Lee Schmall 7/31/2025 Edward Long
3/21/2025 Dennis Hatfield 8/9/2025 Franne Liggon
4/11/2025 Grace Huber 1/19/2026 Jenny Beeker
10. Administration of Oath of Office to new Vestry members -- Rector
11. The Lord’s Prayer and Adjournment

Guild and Committee Reports are printed in this report.

The Vestry will briefly meet in Holy Cross Hall.

VESTRY INFORMATION

Officers

Senior Warden: Kim Tompkins
Junior Warden: Gary Lang
Treasurer: Nancy Starnier
Registrar: (position vacant)

Class of 2026

Beverly Baker
Liz Lowe
Roberta Wilhelm

Class of 2027

Kim Tompkins
David Anderson

Class of 2028

Mark Howe
Melissa Leahy
Deborah Rio

Rector's Address

Church of the Ascension
The Reverend Pierre-Henry Buisson

Jesus says to the crowd gathered around him, *"You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world."* Not *you will be*, not *you should try to be*, but *you are*.

And it matters to remember who Jesus is speaking to. He is not addressing religious professionals, or spiritual elites, or people who have everything figured out. He is speaking to ordinary people—men and women who have come with their questions, their hopes, their wounds, their doubts, and their daily struggles. He has just proclaimed the Beatitudes to them—words that turn the world's values upside down—and now he looks at them and says: *You are salt. You are light.*

Salt does not exist for itself. Light does not shine for its own benefit. Both exist for the sake of others. Salt preserves, enhances, gives flavor. Light reveals, guides, and helps people see where they are and where they are going. And both are most noticeable precisely when they are scarce—when food is bland, or when darkness presses in.

We hear these words today as a parish that has known both faithfulness and strain this past year—continuing in worship and ministry, while also facing hard financial and organizational realities. We hear them as a community gathered not only for worship, but also for our Annual Parish Meeting, to give thanks, to tell the truth about where we are, and to look forward together.

The readings appointed for today do not invite us into vague spirituality or comfortable religion. Isaiah is blunt—almost uncomfortable. God says, in effect, *"I am not impressed by your religious gestures if they are disconnected from how you live."* The fast God desires is not

performative piety, but lives shaped by justice, compassion, generosity, and care for those on the margins—lived out not only in personal choices, but in how a community orders its common life. Then, says the prophet, *your light shall break forth like the dawn*.

The psalm echoes this vision in very practical terms: “*Light shines in the darkness for the upright; the righteous are merciful and full of compassion... They manage their affairs with justice... They give freely to the poor.*” Faith is not only about what we say or sing. It is about how we decide, how we set priorities, how we steward what has been entrusted to us—individually and together.

And then Paul, writing to the Corinthians, reminds us that God’s work rarely looks impressive by worldly standards. Paul comes in weakness and fear, without lofty words, trusting not in human wisdom but in the power of God. His confidence is not in himself, but in what God is able to do through imperfect people and fragile communities.

This, too, is an important word for us to hear.

Because if I am honest—and I believe honesty is part of faithfulness—this past year has not been easy for us as a parish.

We have known change. We have known loss. We have known uncertainty. We have also known deep commitment, quiet perseverance, and remarkable generosity. And as we try to be salt and light in this season, we have had to learn again what it means to *manage our affairs with justice*, as the psalmist says, and to trust God’s strength more than our own.

We have faced real financial challenges as a parish. We ended the year with a deficit—another in a series of years in which our expenses have exceeded our income. That reality has required us to look carefully and soberly at how we live our shared life: what we spend, how we give, and what kind of future we are shaping together. With the help of consultants and advisors, and through the steady work of our Treasurer, Finance Committee, Vestry officers, and parish staff, we have continued to strengthen our financial practices and our transparency. These systems matter—not because they replace faith, but because they support it and make responsible ministry possible.

The Vestry, with care and prayer, has made difficult but responsible decisions—cutting where we could, restructuring where necessary, and discerning how best to ensure the long-term health of this parish. As part of that discernment, the Vestry did consider the possibility of having a part-time rector as one option among others in addressing our financial realities. After careful reflection, however, the Vestry made the clear and deliberate decision to retain a full-time rector, because they believe it is important for Ascension to have a priest fully available for leadership, worship, and pastoral care—without divided attention or competing priorities. This decision reflects a commitment not only to financial responsibility, but to ensuring that the light of consistent pastoral presence and leadership is not dimmed in the life of this congregation.

Like any household or community responding faithfully to reality, we are choosing to live within our means while continuing our mission. The 2026 budget is close to balanced in part because we are applying for diocesan financial assistance. This support is a one-time help, offered as encouragement and partnership—not as a long-term solution.

That is why 2026 matters so much for us—not as a year of fear or retrenchment, but as a crucial year to strengthen generosity, align our resources with our mission, and build sustainable patterns of giving and stewardship that will carry this parish faithfully into the years ahead.

Faithfulness in this season also calls us to imagination: to explore new and responsible sources of revenue, including the creative and appropriate use of our buildings and spaces, so that what God has already entrusted to us may serve both the wider community and the long-term sustainability of Ascension. All of this is part of our call to be salt and light—not abstractly, but concretely.

At the same time, our life together has continued—richly and faithfully. Worship has remained at the center of who we are. Music has continued to lift our prayers. Children, youth, and adults have gathered to learn and grow in faith. Outreach ministries have quietly and steadily served our neighbors near and far. Committees and guilds have shown up again and again, often behind the scenes, giving time, energy, and love.

This is where Isaiah’s words stop being theory and become testimony. Faithfulness is not pretending things are better than they are. Faithfulness is choosing justice over denial, truth over fear, and trust over despair. Faithfulness is caring for one another while also caring responsibly for the resources God has placed in our hands.

This is where I need to say, clearly and from the heart: you are the salt and the light of this place. I see it every day.

I see it in the Vestry, who have carried the weight of hard conversations with prayer, mutual respect, and deep love for this parish. I see it in those who are completing their terms, and in those who are stepping forward to serve—offering wisdom, time, and care for the good of the whole body.

I see it in our staff, who serve with dedication, professionalism, and adaptability, often carrying more than what is visible or named. I see it in our volunteers—so many of you—who quietly give hours of your time, week after week, to worship, music, outreach, buildings and grounds, formation, fellowship, pastoral care, administration, and hospitality.

I see it in the generosity of those who give faithfully, often sacrificially. I see it in those who worship here in person, and those who join us online—on Sundays or later in the week—still connected, still praying, still part of this body.

This is now my third Annual Parish Meeting with you, and I want to say this plainly: I am very happy, and deeply proud, to be your rector. It is an honor to serve this congregation. I am grateful for your trust, for your patience, and for the way you continue to show up for one another and for the Gospel.

Salt does not draw attention to itself. Light does not boast. And yet without them, nothing works the way it should.

When I look back on this past year, I do not see a parish in decline. I see a parish doing the hard, holy work of discernment. I see a community choosing faithfulness over illusion. I see a church that continues to worship deeply, serve generously, and love one another honestly—even when the path forward is not perfectly clear.

And yes, there is uncertainty ahead. But Epiphany reminds us that light does not wait for perfect conditions. Light appears precisely because there is darkness. Jesus does not say, *“When everything is stable and secure, then you will be light.”* He says, *“You are the light of the world.”* Right now. As you are. Together.

So today, as we gather to give thanks for the past year, to remember those we have lost, to elect new Vestry members, and to entrust ourselves again to God's care, hear this good news: God is faithful. God is present. And God continues to work through ordinary people who show up, who pray, who give, and who love.

I believe—deeply—that God is not finished with Ascension. I believe the light here is real. And I believe that as we continue to pray, to give, to serve, and to trust God and one another, we can move into the future with hope—not a naïve hope, but a grounded, resilient hope.

So let us not hide that light.

Let us not lose our savor.

And let us walk forward together—faithful, honest, and hopeful—
giving glory to God in all that we do. Amen.

Statement of Voting Eligibility as Specified in Parish By-laws

Every person not less than 16 years of age who is an Ordinary Member of the Church, and **who is a confirmed communicant** in good standing in the Episcopal Church and **enrolled as such in the records of the Church, shall be a Voting Member** thereof, with the right to vote in the election of Vestry members and upon all other matters having to do with the affairs of the Church. **A confirmed communicant in good standing means a confirmed or received member of the church over the age of 16 who has received Holy Communion in the Church at least three (3) times in the preceding year, and who for the preceding year has been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and has been faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God.**

Introduction of 2026 Vestry Nominees

Susan Ann Considine

Occupation: Currently retired. 38 years analyst, Chief of Staff and Senior Executive for the National Security Agency.

Family: Parents, Paul and Thelma Lee, living in Sykesville MD. Sister in Mt. Airy, Brother in Howard County and Brother in Newark DE. Three children, Sean, PMP for Lockheed Martin; Jess, Nurse Liaison for Care First; Jordan, DPT for Nova Care. Four grandchildren: Lorelei, James, Maisie, Fiona. One dog, Bella.

Years at Ascension: 33

Activities at Ascension: Prior activities include; Sunday School teacher for ~10 years, one full term on Vestry, Registrar while serving on Vestry. Current activities include; Altar Guild Team Lead and Treasurer, 2023 Discernment Committee, 1844 Shoppe, Realm Directory, Mistletoe Mart Committee (lead/co-lead for 2 committees), chalcist, recent member of Handbell Choir.

Ways to use my time and talent: Continuing to serve in current ministries and programs. As a member of Vestry, I hope to actively listen and respond to parish concerns and ideas to influence decisions that impact the congregation.



Dr. R. Lorraine Fulton

Occupation: Currently, I am a retired Public and Private school educator.

Family: My husband passed away on February 1, 2025. I have two daughters, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, with an additional great-one to arrive in a few months. So, sadly there are just myself and the infamous, Zippo the Wonder Cat at home, now. However, I am fortunate to have very many kind and loving friends and our beautiful and welcoming Church of the Ascension.



Number of Years at Ascension: 20

Activities at Ascension: I belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, however my husband, Colin and I have attended and shared in the love and warmth of Ascension Church ever since we moved to Carroll County, 20 years ago. We had a home in England and attended the Church of England church in our village. We were married in Church of Ascension in St. Mary's County and repeated our vows with all our English friends in Sharnbrook, UK. Both of us have tried to always be fully a part of the church here and in England. The examples below have been repeated most every year. They include but are not limited to the following.

I have:

- I served on committees such as the jury committee for Mistletoe-Mart.
- I worked in the Tea Room for Mistletoe-Mart for three years, then worked in the serving kitchen for two years and more recently serving and cleaning in the dining room.
- Attended and participated in most fundraisers.
- Played in the Handbell Choir for 18 years with practice every Wednesday night. You would think I would know what I'm doing by now...sadly not so much, but I keep trying.
- Participated in Thursday Night Bible Study for the last three years.
- Helped with the children's garden.
- Gave and purchased donations in the 1844 Shoppe to support this endeavor.
- Fully participated in the evening preparation classes for reception into the Episcopalian Church. I was received in April of last year. I enjoyed and benefited from these experiences.

I have to say, I learned a great deal during Thursday Night Bible Study, and my readings and discussions with Fr. Pierre Henry.

These are 'some' of the activities that I can remember. It would be such a humbling and yet honorable service if I could contribute whatever skills and abilities I may have to the Church Vestry.

These are 'some' of the activities that I can remember. It would be such a humbling and yet honorable service if I could contribute whatever skills and abilities I may have to the Church Vestry.

Previous church experiences: While I am not a newcomer, I would like to share with you my life-long strong personal relationship with God. Throughout my life in Canada, the UK, and the United States, it was always important to me to be a full participant and dedicated church member. As a small child, there was never a time when I missed Sunday mass and catechism class. In my home, we got on our knees in the living room and said the rosary together every evening, when my homework was done. As a young teen, my two girlfriends and I would go to mass before school every day. At that time, we sang the mass in Latin with an old gentleman named Mr. Rudderham, who was at least as old as the dilapidated and dusty organ that he made huff and puff out the music in those early morning hours. I found great joy in being there up in the church loft. I felt closer to my God for many reasons. I share this picture only because it seemed to be in alignment with the many members of my family who chose a clerical life. My two uncles were Catholic priests, as was my older cousin, and my aunt was Mother Superior with the Sisters of St. Martha. I was surrounded by role models and reinforcers that enhanced my relationship with Christ on a daily basis. It was a difficult and agonizing decision to leave my church and find my home in the Episcopalian Church. We all have reasons for making these heavy decisions. I have never regretted this decision, and I truly love our church and all that being truly present entails.

Community activities:

I have always been very involved in my community. This has been partly a result of my professional responsibilities over 50 years as an Educator and to a large part my desire to simply help others, I have listed below only those organizations and entities for whom I have had the honor of serving in Carroll County. With each of these activities I have tried to be a creative problem solver, coach, team player, listener and leader.

Carroll County Public Schools - After I retired from Maryland Public Education, I served as Assistant Superintendent for Carroll County Public Schools. In that capacity, I became very familiar with our community values and government operations and protocols.

Gerstell Academy – I served as Head/Principal of Middle School and whilst doing so, I lead the development of the middle school curriculum in alignment with state standards and our mission. I also chaired the school's accreditation process successfully, which positively impacted our professional development for all staff and the athletic program within the private school arena. I retired from Gerstell Academy, as President of the school, when my husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, so I could give more time and care to him.

Kiwanis Club of Carroll County- I served on the many community activities associated with the club. I believe the club has since disbanded.

Bonds Meadow Rotary Club – I served on numerous committees and fundraising activities according to the club's mission.

Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County – I served as Vice Chair and Chair of this group of all major health service providers in Carroll County. Our mission was to monitor and coordinate health services in the county, and acquire state funding for enhancement of such services, especially for low income underserved families.

Carroll County Public Library – I served as Director of Development for the library system. I secured funding for major projects such as the Finksburg Library Branch Public Gardens and the newly opened Exploration Commons Facility housed in the Westminster Library Branch. I formed a citizens group for the care and upkeep of the gardens at the Finksburg branch. This group of master gardeners and enthusiasts still maintains the extensive gardens.

Carroll Community College – I served on the Carroll Community College Foundation Board for fifteen years. During that time, I worked diligently with the other Board members to raise funds for students in need and worked on the capital program with facility improvements and expansions of instructional programming. I also worked at the Random House Book Fair held at the college each year.

Springdale Preparatory School – I served as Deputy Head of School and chaired the process to secure school accreditation which was necessary to draw international students from China. Among many initiatives I also established the founding parent/teacher organization. The Student Garden Club was among many other community activities I initiated. I also was responsible for the day to day operation of this for-profit school which has its corporate base in Shanghai. I also had responsibility for teacher training and the supervision of the instructional program as well as discipline for the middle and upper school students

Carroll Garden Club – I was invited to join the Carroll Garden Club three years ago. Our club is 96 years old. Last year the club had its first nationally rated flower show for the community. I was honored to have received first place for each of my four entries. Our club provides many benefits to our community beyond our cherished and beautiful gardens. Agriculture and horticulture are vital components of Carroll County history and life today. Among many activities, I serve on the Education Committee. This gives us the opportunity to offer classes for elementary and middle school students focused on the joys and life balance provided by a respect for nature. Most of the children's parents attend these classes also.

Chamber Music on the Hill (CMOTH) – I have served on the Board of Directors for Chamber Music on the Hill for about 16 years. This is a non-profit group originally associated with the music department at McDaniel College and was founded by Dr. David Kreider, who before his retirement was chair of the Music Department. CMOTH provides central Maryland and in particular Carroll County with the opportunity to enjoy live classical music and other musical traditions through a series of concerts and recitals by outstanding musicians and performers. We seek to educate our audiences on all aspects of chamber music from the Baroque Period to the 21st Century. I have served as secretary for CMOTH for the past six years. In addition, I have initiated “The Friends of CMOTH” and established a coordinator. The Friends help with logistics at our concerts and serve as Advocates in our community for promoting our mission. Currently, we have 24 Friends who have committed to supporting chamber music within in their life circles.

Carroll County Board of Elections Judge – I provide assistance with document processing and directions for Carroll voters during election day/night.

Inspirations Memory Care in Westminster – I volunteer one full day a week doing a huge variety of necessary tasks so staff can focus on other resident needs. This includes, but is not limited to laundry, cleaning floors, serving lunch, shaving and grooming the gentlemen and ladies, hand feeding those that can no longer feed themselves, calling BINGO and reading to the residents, keeping them positive and active with music, dancing, and most importantly, listening with my whole being when they want to share their concerns and feelings. I also listen and talk with the spouses and adult children, as they navigate and process this most difficult and lonely family journey.

Member of Powerful Accomplished Ladies Support (PALS) – Participate in this support group for wives with husbands who have been diagnosed and are suffering and dying from Alzheimer’s/Dementia. We meet monthly invites a woman who is in various stages of care giving. We offer support, and offer our collective knowledge and experience on manifestations of this disease as well as resources in the community. We also help our friends to see the importance of caring for the caregiver and that there is life for her or him after Alzheimer’s.

I formed a support group for Alzheimer’s/Dementia -spouses at Brightview Assisted Living in Towson, MD which continues to meet to this day on a bi- weekly basis in Towson. All of us have now lost our husbands to Alzheimer’s. I remain a part of this group, although I live in Carroll County. We also welcome new caregivers and provide assistance similar to the PALS group.

Brookshire Home Owners Association -member for 20 years and Chair for ten years, Currently, I serve on the Architectural Review Committee (ARC).

In what ways do you see yourself using your time and talents to further the ministry and programs of the church? If I am asked to serve on our Church Vestry, I will have the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills I have developed over the years. I will be a reliable team player and will help to tackle difficult issues, while respecting and learning from the input of each of my fellow Vestry members. Initially, I will probably need to spend some extra time listening and asking questions, as I process my contributions. I will definitely ponder the many good works and creative solutions that have already been explored and accomplished by the Vestry. I would humbly consider it an honor to help ensure the continued growth and community outreach of our Church of the Ascension. Together we can continue to connect, grow, and serve in fulfillment of God’s plan.

Dave Gosnell

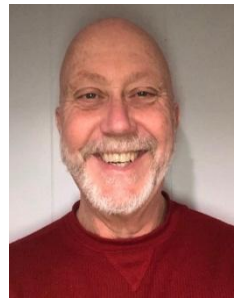
Occupation: I am a Technical and Safety Trainer for forklifts at Raymond Corp.

Family: My wife Rhonda and I have 2 Sons and Daughters-in-Law that have given us 3 lovely grandchildren.

Number of Years at Ascension: We have been attending Ascension for 1 year, have both been confirmed in the Church and I was baptized last year.

Activities at Ascension: We have been extremely grateful with how welcoming the parish has been to us. This has played a large part in encouraging us to renew our relationship with God as we had been away from the Church for some years. I assisted with the Mistletoe Mart last year, which was a great opportunity to see how Ascension comes together as a congregation and truly does good work. This was also an opportunity for me to meet and interact with the 10:15 service people. (It's like 2 churches in one!)

In what ways do you see yourself using your time and talents to further the ministry and programs of the church? We have been extremely grateful with how welcoming the parish has been to us. This has played a large part in encouraging us to renew our relationship with God as we had been away from the Church for some years. I assisted with the Mistletoe Mart last year, which was a great opportunity to see how Ascension comes together as a congregation and truly does good work. This was also an opportunity for me to meet and interact with the 10:15 service people. (It's like 2 churches in one!)



Bryan Lance

Occupation: Account Manager for an Electrical Testing Company

Family: Wife-Karen, Daughter-Sarah and Son-Nathaniel

Number of Years at Ascension – 30

Activities at Ascension: Playing drums in the Praise Ensemble, Usher, support Mistletoe Mart with set-up & tear-down/decorating. Making pancakes for Mother's Day Breakfast & Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.

Previous church experiences: Was on the Building & Grounds Committee for many years. Was on Vestry (3) other times, once as junior warden and once as senior warden.

In what ways do you see yourself using your time and talents to further the ministry and programs of the church? I would like to continue to support all the activities I'm currently involved with.



Dennis Margroum

Occupation: Owner and Operator of Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance Company 1976 – 1996,

- Maintained and repaired lawn equipment
- Chemical Operator - turf and insect applications
- Snow removal for businesses, apartment, townhouse communities and condominiums

Car Sales, new and used Toyota - 1996 – 2023

Family: Karen Margroum – wife, Scott Margroum – son, Michele Margroum - daughter-in-law

Number of Years at Ascension: Active member for 2 years

Activities at Ascension: Activity for fundraisers: Santa and Mrs. Claus
Lawn maintenance (member of Building and Grounds Committee)



Previous church experiences: Member of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church (12 plus years)

- Vestry member for 2 years
- Maintained grounds for 12 plus years
- Fundraiser activities

In what ways do you see yourself using your time and talents to further the ministry and programs of the church? I would like to continue to support all the activities I'm currently involved with.

Kevin McIntyre

Occupation: College Professor

Family: Wife Diane; daughter Adelaide; cats Chloe, Daisy, George, Kaiju, Panda Bear, Poppy, Thumper, Ventress

Number of Years at Ascension: 21

Activities at Ascension: Chalcist, lector, finance committee, very occasional Sunday school HS substitute teacher, vestry 2010-2013, former parish webmaster

Previous church experiences: I was raised Lutheran, but have been a happy Episcopalian longer than I've been involved with any other church.

Community Activities: Humane Society of Baltimore County, neighborhood assistance, public speaking on economic issues, student mentoring

In what ways do you see yourself using your time and talents to further the ministry and programs of the church? I'd like to continue to help with parish finances and contribute to outreach via the Internet, local media, and at McDaniel College. We are seeing more and more younger people investigating or reconnecting with Christ; Ascension needs to be in on this.



Worship Statistics

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Holy eucharist				
Sunday	103	105	104	104
Weekday	5	8	10	14
Private	41	55	83	91
Daily Office				
Sunday	1	1	1	
Weekday	0	2	2	12
Other Services				
Baptisms	1	4	3	3
Confirmation	6	5	3	3
Marriage	1	0	0	0
Burial	10	8	11	8
Other Offices	1	5	5	4
Attendance Holy Days				
Easter	138	208	187	161
Pentecost	95	95	112	85
Christmas Eve and Day	177	199	199	186
Sunday Average Attendance	81.3	103	104	94

Financial Report

The financial story of Church of the Ascension in 2025 is one of careful stewardship, honest assessment, and shared responsibility. Throughout the year, the Vestry, wardens, treasurer, and clergy worked closely together to gain a clearer understanding of our financial realities and to strengthen our financial practices.

Like many congregations, Ascension relies primarily on the faithful generosity of its members, along with income from fundraisers, facility use, and special gifts. In 2025, we faced real financial challenges, including lower-than-anticipated pledge income and rising operating costs. Rather than ignoring these pressures, the Vestry chose to address them directly through careful review, planning, and responsible decision-making.

This report presents the financial position of the parish at the end of 2025. Operation (unrestricted) activity is shown separately from Vestry-designated and donor-restricted funds.

I. 2025 Operating Financial Report (Unrestricted)

This section reflects unrestricted operating activity for 2025, comparing the Vestry-adopted budget with actual year-end results. Outreach and ministries supported by designated or restricted funds are reported separately in the following section.

Revenue Source	2025 Budget	2025 Actual
Pledges – General Giving	\$269,500.00	\$263,016.99
Special Offerings	\$6,200.00	\$11,422.00
Special Gifts	\$17,750.00	\$7,812.00
Loose Plate	\$2,500.00	\$4,051.00
1844 Shoppe	\$11,500.00	\$16,489.20
Church Fundraising	\$20,000.00	\$6,707.17
Mistletoe Mart (<i>released from restriction</i>)	\$33,500.00	\$33,500.00
Rental Income	\$15,900.00	\$18,050.00
Facilities Use	\$13,800.00	\$13,785.00
Bank Interest Earned	\$3,500.00	\$2,959.22
Total Revenue	\$394,150.00	\$377,792.58

Expense Category	2025 Budget	2025 Actual
Personnel & Clergy	\$227,800.00	\$224,936.32
Buildings & Grounds	\$143,785.00	\$121,017.53
Administration & Operations	\$71,727.00	\$74,820.33
Worship & Formation	\$4,840.00	\$2,850.51
Total Operating Expenses	\$446,152.00	\$423,624.69
Net Operating Deficit	(\$52,002.00)	(\$45,832.11)

II. Designated and Donor-Restricted Funds (Non-Operating)

The following funds are designated by the Vestry or restricted by donors for specific purposes. They are not part of the parish's general operating budget. Balances shown represent activity during 2025.

A. Vestry Designated Funds – Checking Account

Fund	Beginning	Revenue	Expenses	Ending
Handbells	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Stone Church Preservation Fund	\$3,362.29	\$1,432.10	\$100.00	\$4,694.39
Pins and Needles	\$1,083.90	\$2,160.00	\$797.26	\$2,446.64
Capital Maintenance	\$500.00	\$5,235.84	\$742.39	\$4,993.45
Total	\$4,946.19	\$8,927.94	\$1,639.65	\$12,234.48

B. Vestry Designated Funds – Money Market Account

Fund	Beginning	Revenue	Expenses	Ending
Memorials	\$21,588.44	\$5,200.00	\$7,520.13	\$19,268.31
Columbarium	\$50,560.43	\$13,750.00	\$18,117.72	\$46,192.71
Middendorf Loan	\$28,327.00	\$0.00	\$9,416.00	\$18,911.00
Security Deposit	\$ 1,425.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,425.00
Total	\$101,900.87	\$18,950.00	\$35,053.85	\$85,797.02

C. Donor-Restricted Funds – Checking Account

Fund	Beginning	Revenue	Expenses	Ending
Rector's Discretionary Fund	\$1,447.97	\$2,427.00	\$1,873.49	\$2,001.48
Altar Guild	\$2,766.94	\$5,053.30	\$6,397.67	\$1,422.57
St. Martha's Guild	\$4,980.04	\$2,758.14	\$3,232.19	\$4,505.99
St. James	\$4,741.44	\$1,800.00	\$885.59	\$5,655.85
Outreach	\$14,747.61	\$7,618.00	\$11,825.15	\$10,540.46
Fellowship Fund	\$1,143.02	\$7.00	\$55.26	\$1,094.76
Habitat/Dreambuilders	\$2,633.96	\$250.00	\$2,883.96	\$0.00
Children and Youth	\$4,892.35	\$3,582.00	\$3,059.00	\$5,415.35
Children & Youth Fundraisers	\$5,194.94	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,194.94
Cookie Walk Fundraiser	\$4,292.00	\$2,994.99	\$2,000.00	\$5,286.99
Summer Children Programs	\$0.00	\$2,802.34	\$2,802.34	\$396.66
Total	\$46,840.27	\$29,292.77	\$35,014.65	\$41,515.05

III. Bank Account Status – December 31, 2025

Amounts shown below reflect where parish funds were held as of December 31, 2025, and how those balances relate to the designated and restricted funds described above. "Unrestricted" represents funds available for general operating needs at that date.

Account / Purpose	Amount
Truist Checking Account	\$137,648.26
Vestry Designated Funds	\$12,234.48
Donor Restricted Funds	\$41,515.05
Mistletoe Mart – Outreach	\$10,000.00
Mistletoe Mart – Seed Money for 2026	\$12,703.93
Mistletoe Mart – Operations (<i>Released in 2026</i>)	\$25,000.00
Unrestricted money available	\$36,194.80
	\$89,676.08
Truist Money Market Account	
Memorial Funds	\$19,268.31
Columbarium Funds	\$46,192.71
Middendorf Loan Remaining Funds	\$18,911.00
Security Deposit – 30 N. Court	\$1,425.00
Unrestricted money available	\$3,879.06
GRAND TOTAL	\$227,324.34

2026 Operating Budget

Operating Revenue

• Pledges – General Giving	\$259,382.00
• Special Offerings	\$10,000.00
• Special Gifts	\$7,000.00
• Loose Plate	\$4,000.00
• Church Fundraisers	\$7,000.00
• 1844 Shoppe	\$12,000.00
• Rental Income	\$18,300.00
• Facilities Use	\$12,000.00
• Mistletoe Mart	\$25,000.00
• Bank Interest Earned	\$2,500.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$357,182.00

Operating Expenses

I. Personnel & Clergy

Clergy	\$153,000.35
• Rector Compensation	\$85,000.00
• Rector Benefits	\$65,300.35
• Rector Continuing Education	\$1,000.00
• Rector Professional Expenses	\$1,000.00
• Supply Priest	\$700.00

Staff	\$44,000.00
• Adult Ensemble Director.	\$10,000.00
• Minister of Music.	\$1,000.00
• Communications Associate	\$4,500.00
• Parish Administrator	\$23,000.00
• Nursery Attendant	\$2,700.00
• Digital Ministry Associates	\$3,200.00

Payroll & Compliance	\$8,040.00
• Background Checks	\$40.00
• Social Security & Medicare	\$4,700.00
• Paychex Payroll	\$2,600.00
• Workers Compensation Insurance	\$700.00

II. Buildings & Grounds

Utilities	\$52,730.00
• Gas & Electric – Rectory	\$2,600.00
• Gas & Electric – 23 N Court St	\$34,000.00
• Gas & Electric – Stone Church	\$4,500.00
• Water & Sewer – Sprinklers	\$1,000.00
• Water & Sewer – 23 N Court St	\$2,400.00
• Oil – Rectory	\$4,500.00
• TING Internet	\$1,730.00
• Verizon Phone	\$2,000.00

Property & Insurance	\$21,565.00
• Liability & Property Insurance	\$17,565.00
• Rental Property Taxes	\$4,000.00

Maintenance Contracts **\$40,990.00**

• Elevator Service Contract	\$3,400.00
• Pest Control Contract	\$990.00
• Yard Care / Snow Removal	\$4,000.00
• Trash Removal	\$1,500.00
• Mechanical / HVAC Contract	\$11,100.00
• Janitorial Contract	\$13,000.00
• Janitorial Supplies	\$2,000.00
• Fire Safety Inspections	\$4,000.00
• Floor Treatments	\$1,000.00

Repairs & Supplies **\$21,500.00**

• Maintenance Supplies	\$1,500.00
• Repairs	\$20,000.00

III. Worship, Music & Formation

Worship & Music **\$5,830.00**

• Copyrights	\$500.00
• Altar Guild	\$3,980.00
• Honoraria / Guest Musicians	\$250.00
• Misc. Worship Supplies	\$600.00
• Instrument Maintenance	\$500.00

Formation **\$150.00**

• Adult Education	\$150.00
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IV. Administration & Governance

Office & Operations **\$9,560.00**

• Computer & Software Upgrades	\$500.00
• Copier Lease/Maintenance/Usage	\$2,750.00
• Paper Stock	\$1,000.00
• Subscriptions & Fees	\$3,100.00
• Office Supplies	\$350.00
• Postage.	\$500.00
• Bank Fees	\$150.00
• VANCO Merchant Fees	\$810.00
• Advertising & Promotion	\$400.00

Finance & Oversight **\$45,600.00**

• Bookkeeping Services (ACS)	\$9,600.00
• Personal Property Tax	\$250.00
• Stewardship	\$1,000.00
• Diocese of MD Allocation	\$34,100.00
• Diocesan Convention	\$300.00
• Clergy Conference	\$350.00

V. Fixed Financial Obligations

• Middendorf Loan Repayment	\$17,380.00
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TOTAL EXPENSES **\$420,745.35**

OPERATING DEFICIT **\$(63,563.35)**

• Diocesan Grant	\$40,000.00
• Transfer from Memorial	\$2,000.00
• Transfer from Columbarium	\$5,000.00

FINAL RESULT **\$(16,563.35)**

Included as appendices are two pastoral messages shared by the rector with the congregation during the budget discernment process, reflecting the care and prayer guiding this work.

Appendix A: Rector's Message to the Congregation, sent on January 21, 2026

Dear Ascension Family:

Over the past weeks, your Vestry has been working carefully and prayerfully on the parish budget. **Our commitment is clear and firm: we want and intend to have a balanced budget for 2026**—one that allows Ascension to continue its worship, mission, and ministry in a sustainable way.

Reaching that goal requires **some difficult but faithful choices**. As with any household or community responding to financial realities, this means making adjustments and sacrifices. The Vestry is continuing its discernment around how best to do this, including identifying expenses that may need to be reduced and considering adjustments such as **my own compensation and work schedule**. Any adjustments adopted by the Vestry would **take effect in February**, and these conversations are being held thoughtfully and with care, always with our shared mission in view.

I also want to pause and express my deep gratitude for the generosity already shown in this season. To date, we have received **76 pledges totaling \$259,102**, given in support of the **operating budget** and the ongoing life of the church. These commitments are a tangible sign of faith, care, and love for this parish, and I give thanks for each household that has responded so thoughtfully.

As we prepare to finalize the budget this Sunday, I invite anyone who has not yet had the chance to consider making a pledge—or anyone who feels called to increase their commitment or offer a special gift—to the **general operating fund**, which supports the day-to-day life of the church. Pledges and gifts may be made online, by returning a pledge card, or by contacting the parish office. Every offering, of any size, helps strengthen the foundation on which we are building Ascension's future.

I am deeply grateful for the Vestry's dedication, honesty, and love for this congregation, and for the spirit of collaboration guiding this work. I ask you to keep them—and our shared life at Ascension—in your prayers as we continue this discernment together, trusting that God is with us as we seek a faithful and responsible path forward.

With gratitude and hope,
Pierre-Henry+

Appendix B: Walking Faithfully into 2026: A Pastoral Word on Our Parish Finances (Enews - 01/30/2026)

Over the past several weeks, many of you have heard me speak about our Vestry's work on the 2026 parish budget. I am grateful for the thoughtful attention, prayers, and generosity that have accompanied this process, and I would like to offer a brief clarification as we move forward together.

At its meeting last Tuesday, the Vestry adopted a 2026 budget that reflects both our financial realities and our deep commitment to the mission and ministry of the Church of the Ascension. The budget currently includes a projected deficit of \$16,563.35. This budget also incorporates a \$40,000 diocesan grant and \$7,000 drawn from unrestricted reserve funds, both of which help stabilize our financial picture for the year ahead.

The Vestry's hope—and mine—is that this remaining gap can be bridged over the course of the year through additional pledges, increased giving, or special gifts, as well as through careful stewardship of our resources. The Vestry will be closely monitoring utility usage, exploring new ways our buildings might be used to generate revenue, and continuing to manage expenses prudently. As part of this work, the Vestry also made the difficult decision to eliminate one musician position, a choice made solely for financial reasons and not without regret.

One important decision the Vestry reached together was that it is in the best interest of this parish for me to remain full-time. I am deeply thankful for their trust, support, and confidence, and I do not take that affirmation lightly. I see it as a shared commitment—to pastoral presence, continuity, and leadership during a season that requires care and stability.

While this budget is not yet fully balanced, it represents a faithful and realistic step forward. It allows us to continue worshiping, serving, and caring for one another, while also naming honestly the work that remains to be done. This is not a moment for alarm, but for shared responsibility, prayerful generosity, and trust that God will provide through the gifts of this community.

If you have not yet made a pledge, or if you feel able to increase your commitment or offer a special gift to the operating fund, I invite you to do so. Every contribution—large or small—makes a real difference and helps strengthen the foundation of our common life.

Thank you for loving this parish, for walking with your Vestry, and for engaging this season with faith, generosity, and hope. Please continue to hold our leaders and our shared life at Ascension in your prayers as we move forward together.

With gratitude and hope,
Pierre-Henry+

A FORM for the ADMISSION of NEW VESTRY MEMBERS
together with
THE OATH of OFFICE in THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*The election being concluded and duly certified to the Rector/President by the Tellers,
the new Vestry members shall stand with the Rector before the Congregation. The Rector
begins the Admission, saying*

Rector: Dear friends in Christ, are you persuaded that, according to the vow and promise made at your Baptism, you are pledged to the service of Jesus Christ until your life's end?

New Vestry members: I am so persuaded.

Rector: Do you willingly accept your election to serve as a Vestry member in this Parish?

New Vestry members: I do.

Rector: Do you here, in the Presence of God, declare that you will execute faithfully the office of Vestry member to the best of your ability and knowledge; and, so far as you are able, will pray daily, give and work diligently to establish His Holy Church more firmly in this community; and, by your example, will lead others to worship in His House and to hear His Holy Gospel?

New Vestry members: I will, by God's help.

Rector: Will you now raise your right hand and please recite the Oath of Office for Vestry members as set forth in the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese?

*The new Vestry members raise their right hands and together recite the
Oath of Office.*

New Vestry members:

I, [N a m e], do declare my belief in the Christian Religion and do further declare that I accede to the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Episcopal Church in the United States of America. I pledge my adherence to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Maryland and to the By-Laws of this Parish. And in obedience to the same, I do solemnly swear that I shall faithfully execute the office of Vestry member of Ascension Parish, Westminster, Carroll County, Maryland, without prejudice, favor or affection, according to the best of my skill and knowledge. So help me, God.

Rector: Will all of you who witness this Admission and Oath do all in your power to support these persons in their service to this Congregation?

The Congregation responds enthusiastically.

Congregation: WE WILL!

Rector: May Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, also grant to you the strength and power to perform them, that He may accomplish His good work begun in you.

ALL: AMEN!

The Rector, taking each new Vestry member by the hand, says individually to each these words of Admission.

Rector: [N a m e], by the authority vested in me as Interim Rector of this Parish and President of this Congregation, I receive, accept and admit you to be a lawfully elected and duly sworn Vestry member of Ascension Parish for the term of your election; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: AMEN!

The Rector concludes the Admission:

Rector: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.

ALL: AMEN!

The Congregation may applaud and greet the new Vestry members.

Adjournment

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adult Ensemble

The Adult Ensemble leads the music during the 10:15 am worship service, usually on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month and special services throughout the year. In conjunction with the Handbell Choir, both contemporary and traditional music is sung and rung that closely aligns with the scripture readings.

At Special services, we join with the Praise Ensemble for combined Worship. We meet on Wednesday's before our scheduled service at 5:30 before Handbell Choir rehearsal (Generally, twice a month unless more rehearsal is needed).

Membership has remained fairly stable over the past year. We welcome all voices.

The pipe organ in the Stone Church is played one Sunday a month, Christmas and Easter, as well as weddings and funerals. We have recently begun singing 1 hymn during the Offertory at the 8:00 am service. With this limited use, we have reduced organ tuning to once a year in the fall.

We look forward to continuing to coordinate music with the Handbell Choir and growing our ensemble.

Submitted by Mary Butler

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild services the needs of the clergy in regards to worship services, the altar, the sanctuary and the sacraments. Duties include setting up for communion and special services,

baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals. We care for the gold, silver and stainless-steel communion vessels, brassware, candles, linens and altar hangings.

The Altar Guild currently has 20 members spread across 5 teams. Each team rotates on duty every 5 months for 1 month at a time. (As a result, each team only has Christmas once every 5 years!) While on duty, teams meet on Saturday morning to clean and set up for Sunday services. On Sundays, 1 or 2 team members are present at each church service to clean up afterwards. In addition, the Altar Guild members meet twice a year to discuss altar needs, upcoming worship services and procedures.

Ideally, we have 5 members per team. Therefore, we are short 5 Altar Guild members for 2026 and are looking for new volunteers – both men & women!

We are blessed with the spiritual reverence, peace and friendship we feel while caring for God's sacred spaces. If you wish to learn more about this very special ministry, please contact Kim Tompkins (ktompkins2@verizon.net).

Submitted by Altar Guild Directress: Kim Tompkins

Book Club

In 2025, the Book Club at Ascension met on the last Wednesday of the month, at 12:30 pm in the Guild Room. The books that are read are recommended by the members, each book discussion being led by that person. We meet January through May, then September and October, to discuss the book selection for that month; June through August we informally meet and share our summer reading selections. Due to the holidays that fall at the end of November and December, we take a break. Many of the members purchase their lunch from the St. Vincent de Paul Society's Free Lunch program that is held in our Fellowship Hall each week.

Books read in 2025 included *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, *Where the Wind Blows*, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, *Dream State*, *Hillbilly Elegy*, *The Engineer's Wife*, *David Copperfield* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. We currently have 10 active members. Everyone is welcome to participate! For more information, contact Cheryl Vecera 443.794.3691 or cherylvecera@gmail.com.

Submitted by Cheryl Vecera

Breakfast Bunch

The Breakfast Bunch enjoys breakfast at Baugher's Restaurant on Sundays after the 8:00 am service. All are welcome! This photo was taken November 17, 2024.



Buildings and Grounds

The Buildings and Grounds Committee oversees the care, maintenance and repair of all church property including buildings, equipment, furnishings, grounds and all HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems. B&G members work in partnership with the Vestry on long-range planning for facility and property improvements.

Throughout 2025, the committee worked diligently to be good stewards of church resources. Through careful planning, close oversight, and a commitment to controlling expenses, year-end costs came in under budget. The committee also worked proactively with vendors to ensure that annual contracts remained stable for 2026 and in two cases successfully negotiated reduced costs. In addition, members generously contributed their own time and labor to complete many projects, further helping to keep expenses down while maintaining the safety and care of our campus. Carrying forward that goal, Dennis Margroum will continue to donate his time to provide lawn care during 2026.

Summary of Significant Projects Completed in 2025

Holy Cross House

- Automatic, timed lighting added in hallways
- Resurfacing of parking lot with rededicated handicap parking spaces
- Columbarium niches added to complete both side wings
- Repair of door locking system on HCH magnetic doors
- Installation of black metal security gate in alcove by Fellowship Hall entrance doors
- New railings at the back door of the Holy Cross Hall
- Guided children in planting annuals in the Children's Garden

Stone Church

- Scraped, repaired and painted muntins in both foyer windows
- Installation of plexiglass covering on foyer right window (left will be done soon)
- Improved the interior lighting by changing the glass panels and updating the bulbs in hanging lanterns

Rectory

- Carpet cleaning

30 North Court St Rental Property

- removal of backyard shed and significant hands-on yard work

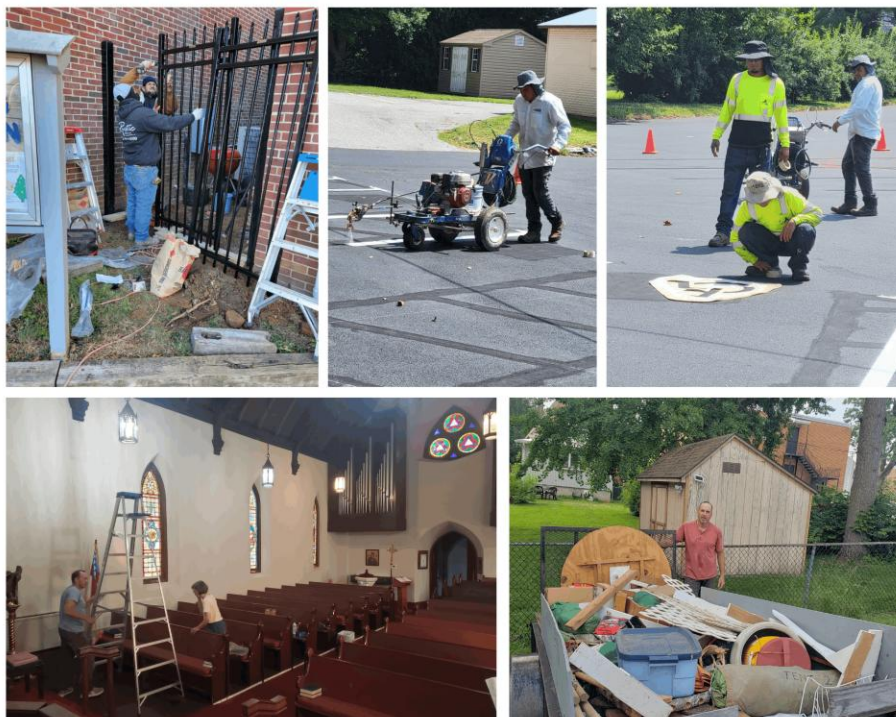
Along with the major projects, we handled many ongoing tasks such as contract monitoring, repairing bathroom faucets, unclogging toilets, replacing light bulbs, painting, organizing gutter cleanings, fence repairs, monitoring security lights and sump pumps, changing filters, yard clean ups, mulching, deadheading, supervising inspections and so very much more!

We would love to have you join us! If anyone is interested in lending a hand, sharing resources or attending a meeting, please contact a committee member. Our monthly meetings are usually held in the Guild Room on the first Monday of each month.

2025 Buildings and Grounds Committee Members:

Gary Lang/Jr. Warden, Roberta Wilhelm, Bill Sears, Buck Lyon-Vaiden, Deb Vana, Steve Vana, Helen Lang, Frank Baker, Dennis Margroum, Tom Rio, Dan Simmons

Submitted by Helen Lang



Children and Youth Ministries

Sunday School

The younger children meet the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month during the 10:15 service. The children return at the Peace to be with their families for communion. We are reading stories from Bible Heroes, and we are learning about our identity in Christ using a book from the Kendrick Brothers. The class had an outreach project packaging Halloween treats for the Humane Society and making Christmas treat bags for friends and family. We are making Valentine treat bags for the mothers at the pregnancy center this month. We continue with learning how to pray using the five finger prayer and saying the Lord's prayer. We will be entering a poster or sculpture into the Carroll County PEEP Show showcasing something we have learned in class.

Keep an eye out in March for information about the Easter Egg hunt.

Submitted by Carrie Goff

Children's Chapel

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:14).

In our Children's Chapel, with an atmosphere of worship, (carrying the cross with reverence to and from the Chapel, lighting of the Chapel altar candles, age- appropriate scripture stories, singing songs and sharing prayers), children learn how much God loves them through the Sunday Gospel teachings. Having this special time of worship with each other, we hope to instill the children's self-confidence to go out and love and serve others as disciples in their world.

The children leave for Chapel Time during the 10:15 service for about 20-30 minutes on 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays of the month. Chapel is for children of all ages, and parents are always welcome.

Submitted by Betsy Reinders

Columbarium Ministry

Inurnments for 2025:

Colin Furneaux Mary Lee Schmall Grace Huber Kathy Sullivan

Significant Events for 2025:

1. Additional niche banks were added for each side, doubling pre-existing capacity.

2. The large brass screws (4) per cover plate were exhibiting galvanic corrosion (see below) through contact with the steel frame of the columbarium. Stainless steel screws were purchased, which do not react metalurgically with iron or steel, and will be installed, replacing the brass screws, as needed whenever a cover plate is removed.



Galvanic Corrosion on Brass Cover Plate Screws

3. We have an issue with ants crawling up behind the cover plates and building nests in vacant niches. Insect granules were purchased and are kept in the janitor's closet. Whenever ant activity is noticed in the furrow between the columbarium and the sidewalk, we apply the granules, preferably before a rain is predicted, as they must be watered in. We also monitor the columbarium and remove organic debris (leaves, twigs) that might accumulate in the furrow between the columbarium and the sidewalk. At this present time, it is not possible for insect activity to come in contact with human remains.

Current State:

1. A rust removal kit consisting of sandpaper, steel wool, and spray primer is in the janitor's closet in case a cover is removed and rust is present in niches or on the frame).
2. Under the eye of the present columbarium team, only one niche has exhibited rust when opened for inurnment. The rust spot was removed and metal primed and repainted prior to inurnment.
3. For each inurnment, a video of the ceremony is made, edited, and sent to the family.
Submitted by Jim Fariss



DreamBuilders

DreamBuilders MD: An interfaith community of teens and adults building homes for those in need.

Founded in 2002 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Highland, MD, Ascension Church joined the following year. Currently, DreamBuilders MD consists of four Episcopal churches and one Jewish congregation, all of which are in Howard County, except for Ascension. Most of the week-long projects involve working after a natural disaster. In total, there have been 54 week-long mission trips plus various local projects such as with the Arc of Howard County.

In 2025, DreamBuilders MD returned to Hazard, Kentucky in June for the 3rd time (a teen and adult trip) and worked on building 3 new homes.

Projects for 2026:

1. **April 12-18, Hazard, KY.** This trip, which is already fully booked, will be our first trip to Hazard, Kentucky to do home repair rather than new construction. Based on how well it goes, we may plan more such trips in the future.
2. **June 21-27, Hazard, KY.** Triple blitz build in Hazard, KY. We moved the dates of this trip one week later than last year to avoid any conflict with high school schedules. **Registration for this trip opens on February 8.** There will be a maximum of 36 volunteers. This is our most popular trip.
3. **October 18-24, San Juan, Puerto Rico.** We are planning a week long mission trip to Puerto Rico to continue the Hurricane Maria recovery efforts. In order to secure the necessary lodging, we will need a minimum of six volunteers.
4. We continue to seek opportunities to take on one or more local, weekend projects. Information will be shared if and when suitable projects are identified.
5. We are also discussing a “scouting trip” to North Carolina in the spring to see what needs they have after the floods from last year. This is advanced planning for 2027 mission trips.

Our major fundraiser – **Spaghetti Dinner, Silent Auction & iPhone Raffle** – will take place at **Temple Isaiah on Saturday, March 14 from 5-8 PM.** For more details about how you can contribute with donations and help at the event, please read the ***Ascension Enews*** and the February or March ***Ascension Extension*** newsletter. Website: **DreamBuildersMD.org**

Check the bulletin board in the hallway by the interior entrance to the HCH for photos of past trips and more info about DreamBuilders.

Submitted by Buck Lyon-Vaiden

Fellowship

We are grateful for the assistance of the congregation with supporting Fellowship Hour after the 10:15 am service. Many members already provide coffee grounds, coffee cups and small, prepackaged food donations. During 2026 we are asking for volunteers to host each week, keeping it very simple by making the coffee and setting out snacks provided in the church pantry. (Coffee making instructions are provided!) This is such a special time to enjoy each other's company as well as welcome newcomers and visitors to Ascension!

The Third Friday of the Month potluck lunches will resume on February 20 at 12:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall!

Submitted by Beverly Baker

Handbell Choir

The Church of the Ascension Handbell Choir - the ultimate team activity! We are literally a human keyboard where everyone is important and valued. We glorify God in worship services through the art of handbell ringing.

In 2025, the Handbell Choir enjoyed providing music during 10:15 a.m. worship services from January - June. The Handbell Choir took a heartbreaking, unplanned break from June - December due to not having enough members.

Additional members have recently joined the Handbell Choir and rehearsals resumed in January!

Our joy-filled rehearsals include persons of many ages - from the young to the young-at-heart. Lynn Lyon-Vaiden is grateful for the dedication and commitment of the Handbell Choir members. New ringers are always welcome! Previous music experience is helpful but not necessary.

Submitted by Lynn Lyon-Vaiden

Lay Eucharistic Visitors Ministry

Introduction

The Lay Eucharistic Visitors (LEV) ministry plays an essential role in our church community, providing a vital connection for members who are unable to attend services due to age or health-related issues. This report summarizes the function of the ministry and highlights the significant activities and achievements in 2025.

Function of the Ministry

The primary function of the Lay Eucharistic Visitors is to share the Eucharist with those who cannot come to church due to age or health issues. By visiting these members once a month with the Lord's Supper and sharing the current events of the month, we aim to help them stay connected with the church and feel the love of the Lord. These visits offer an opportunity for fellowship and spiritual nourishment, ensuring that all members of our congregation feel cared for and included.

During each visit, the Lay Eucharistic Visitors provide the weekly church bulletin along with any other relevant information, such as *Forward Day by Day* or other pamphlets. This ensures that our homebound members remain informed and involved in the life of the church.

An important aspect of the ministry is communication with the Rector. If there are any concerns or needs identified during visits, these are shared with the Rector, but only with the permission of the member. This ensures that the care provided is respectful and protective of the member's privacy.

Yearly Review for 2025

2025 was a productive and fulfilling year for the Lay Eucharistic Visitors ministry. Five dedicated members committed their time and energy to this service. Together, we served 15 members through a total of 81 visits.

Highlights and Achievements

- **Consistent Visits:** 15 people received regular visits, ensuring a consistent connection with the church community and spiritual support. Not all homebound remained homebound for the entire year. There were 2 deaths, 2 people moved away, and 1 person returned to better health.
- **Enhanced Communication:** The ministry has improved its communication process with the Rector, ensuring timely pastoral care when needed.
- **Distribution of Resources:** Along with the Eucharist, the visitors faithfully distributed the weekly bulletin and other informative materials, keeping members updated and engaged.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** We successfully maintained a team of five committed volunteers who have shown remarkable dedication and compassion in their service.

Challenges Faced

Despite our successes, the ministry has occasionally faced challenges during the year:

- Health Concerns: Several people experienced fluctuating health conditions, which sometimes impacted the regularity of visits.

Looking Forward

As we look ahead to 2026, we have several goals and aspirations for the Lay Eucharistic Visitors ministry:

- Expand our volunteer base to include more members of the congregation who feel called to this ministry. There are currently 2 people who are interested.
- Conduct 6-month meetings for volunteers to review and solidify our group efforts.
- Strengthen communication with the Rector to continue providing responsive and compassionate care to our homebound members.

Invitation to Join the Ministry

We warmly welcome anyone interested in joining this vital ministry to contact the Rector or Sandy White for more information. Your participation would be greatly valued and would significantly contribute to the spiritual well-being and connection of our church community.

Conclusion

The Lay Eucharistic Visitors ministry has been a source of immense blessing and support for our homebound members. As we reflect on the past year, we are grateful for the dedication of our volunteers and the continuing support of the congregation. We look forward to another year of growth and meaningful service, ensuring that all members of our church feel the love and care of our church family.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for this ministry.

Submitted by Sandy White, Lay Eucharistic Visitors Coordinator

Mistletoe Mart

Mistletoe Mart #51 was held Thursday, November 13, through Saturday, November 15, 2025, and it was a wonderful event! The Mart has become one of the premier juried arts & crafts shows in the tristate area and the talent of each artisan is truly amazing! This past year there were 42 specialty shops and approximately 2373 patrons attended, the highest attendance over the past 6 years! The café was busy selling soups, salads, sandwiches as well as our famous turkey dinner! The Country Store bake table had many delicious homemade desserts resulting in record sales! The Pins & Needles room was always bustling as they sold their beautiful items! The children enjoyed the Angel Room crafts! And everyone, adults and children alike, were delighted to see Santa and Mrs. Claus! It was simply wonderful being able to spend time with our remarkable artisans, delighted patrons and **each other!**

Each year the Mart donates 25-30% of the proceeds to Community Outreach, with the balance supporting Ascension. Proceeds from Mistletoe Mart 2024 provided \$9,850 to Community Outreach (17 different organizations) and \$33,619 to Ascension during 2025. Over all these years, we have been able to donate \$261,055 to Community Outreach and \$715,844 to Ascension.

The Mistletoe Mart committee meets monthly throughout the year. We still receive some final bills in January. Therefore, during our February meeting, we will review the Mistletoe Mart 2025 proceeds and determine the Community Outreach donations.

We value the success of the Mistletoe Mart over the past 51 years. We treasure the friendships we have developed and the relationships that have been fostered with each other, our vendors and the community. And we are truly grateful for all of the time and commitment

from our Ascension family! Many hours are involved with the organization, planning and coordination throughout the year. Thank you!

Submitted by Mistletoe Mart Chair: Kim Tompkins

Outreach

The Outreach Committee had another successful year of reaching out to and supporting our church, town, and surrounding community in many ways during 2025.

Outreach continued to support financially and physically the following community agencies each month:

- **Access Carroll** (medical care on wheels to our homeless population)
- **Carroll Food Sunday** (providing food to food pantries and families in need)
- **Shepherd's Staff** (supporting families and individuals with needs not covered by Social Services)
- **Monthly cards** celebrating the season or holiday, mailed to approximately 25–30 shut-in or ill Church of the Ascension members
- **Family & Friends Program:** 5–6 families consisting of single parents with children receive a monthly bag of cleaning, paper products, and/or toiletry items to help cover needs not included in food assistance programs
- **Carroll County Youth Services Bureau** (providing gas cards to ensure transportation for mental health counseling and other services)
- **Carroll County Human Services Program** (providing funds to help with housing deposits or to prevent eviction for single-parent families in need)
- **Pregnancy Support Center of Carroll County**

In addition to the support listed above, we had several special events during the year, the following are highlights rather than a comprehensive list:

- **January – Annual Craft and Crop Day:** A day attended by many who enjoy time with friends away from daily tasks to craft and socialize. All funds raised support our Outreach projects, including assistance for a youth attending a Dream Builders trip.
- **October – Operation Christmas Child:** With the generous support of our congregation, we sent 82 boxes to other countries to share the love of Christ with boys and girls aged 17 and under.
- **December – Angel Tree:** Provided Christmas gifts and grocery cards to several *Family & Friends* families, helping ensure a special Christmas for each child and parent.

Current Outreach Committee Members:

Anne Arena, Kat Dittrich, Carrie Goff, Jennie Grabill, John Holbert, Deb Howard, Melissa Leahy, Laurie Waldrup, Pam White

In closing, many, many thanks to our Church of the Ascension congregation and members who continue to support our outreach ministries with donations of time, talent, and treasure, and who pray faithfully for our ongoing efforts to serve our community.

Pins and Needles

The Pins and Needles group meets throughout the year on Wednesday from 10:00am to 2:00pm. The group enjoys weekly fellowship among its members and creating beautiful handmade pieces, such as table runners, kitchen towels and dishcloths, Christmas ornaments, wall hangings, scarves, and hats. Each Wednesday, we have lunch together which is available for purchase from the Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen.

The main objective of Pins and Needles is to produce handmade pieces to be sold throughout the year and at the Mistletoe Mart. The income from the Mistletoe Mart becomes part of the

Mart proceeds. The sales made outside the Mistletoe Mart, as well as the annual quilt raffle, are maintained in a Pins and Needles account to be used for outreach initiatives. On a regular basis, Pins and Needles donates to DreamBuilders, Ghanaian Mother's Hope Annual Reading Camp, Operation Christmas Child, and gifts for the Angel Tree families. We also have donated funds to the Rector's Discretionary Fund and the church's General Fund.
Submitted by Debbie Bargar

Praise Ensemble

Old Hymns, New Songs, Timeless Truths: A Report from the Church of the Ascension Praise Ensemble

The Praise Ensemble exists to glorify God in worship through leading congregational music, combining all the talents of its members in a collaborative effort to follow the Psalmist's call to "let everything that has breath praise the Lord." In 2025, we have done just that, taking turns with the Adult Ensemble to lead worship at the 10:15 service and seeking to select music that blends the great hymns of the Church which have long been at the center of the Anglican tradition with recently-released contemporary Christian music that brings the Gospel to new generations. We have faced several transitions in leadership and membership, but we continue to focus on our core mission and prayerfully discern our role in the life of Ascension, together with the rest of our parish family.

We began 2025 under the direction of longtime Praise Ensemble leader Donna Parker, who developed a solid base of repertoire and composed several original settings of service music specifically arranged for our Ensemble. In this period our membership grew to include people of all ages. After Donna left Ascension, we regrouped and slightly redesigned our rehearsal schedule, occasionally combining with the Adult Ensemble for special services to create a single, unified voice—both in sound and in spirit. Throughout the remainder of the year, membership and rehearsal attendance has fluctuated, with a core group that remains constant and new people recently expressing interest.

During the summer we were blessed with the leadership of interim director James (Jay) Corns, longtime Ascension member and current music education student at Towson University. With behind-the-scenes support from members of the Ensemble and the collaboration of guest musicians who joined us for summer services, we had the opportunity to experiment with new musical influences which brought out both the genuine talent and spiritual depth of our members.

From September 2025 through January 2026, the Praise Ensemble was blessed with the musicianship and leadership of Martin Villaneuva, who expanded our repertoire and brought us a new perspective. Under his leadership, along with our customary Sunday participation, we led worship in special services at Thanksgiving and in the Advent and Christmas seasons, collaboratively led by Martin and retired director of music Dr. David Kreider. We join our parish family in thanking Martin for his service and wishing him God's blessings wherever his talents take him next.

As members know, it became necessary to eliminate the position previously held by Martin Villaneuva for budgetary reasons. Since that time, the Praise Ensemble has been accompanied and temporarily led by Mary Butler, though it is currently without a dedicated director. While this puts us in a somewhat precarious position, it also positions us well to work toward joining all musicians together into a single ensemble. We are grateful to God and to our members for the many diverse talents that make up the Praise Ensemble. We also recognize the talents present in our Adult Ensemble, and with God's help, we see this as the perfect time

to bring those talents together. We therefore ask for the prayers of our church family as we discern God's will for the future of our music ministry.

Submitted by: Chris Nusbaum, on behalf of the Ensemble

St. James' Commission

St James Commission's core value is to faithfully serve and support our church family through their grief over the passing of a loved one by providing receptions for family and friends of a parishioner who has died following the Memorial Service. St James' Commission functions through the love and volunteer support of Ascension Parishioners as needed when a Memorial reception event is scheduled.

In 2025, St James' Commission provided the accommodations for 5 receptions for the family and friends of the following beloved parishioners who have passed on to life eternal:

St. James Receptions 2025 *Note: numbers are close approximations

Deceased	Reception Date	# Attended	# Volunteers	# Vol. Hours	# Food Donations
Colin Furneaux 2/1	2/14	64	7	37	15
MaryLee Schmall 3/6	3/21	56	8	24	10
Dennis Hatfield 3/21	4/3	135	20	65	17
Grace Huber 4/11	5/31	105	7	35	13
Kathy Sullivan 7/18	7/26	120	22	34	18
TOTALS	5	480	64	195	73

Mary Butler's Mother, Mary Anthony, passed on 7/28/25. Her service was at another church on 8/6/25.

Frances Liggon passed away on 8/9/25 No reception was requested.

Providing this ministry for Ascension is a rewarding experience. It naturally aligns with our church vision as we Connect in meaningful ways with our families and their guests in hopes of Growing in faith through the opportunity to Serve others.

We hope you have felt our love and support through this past year. To those volunteers who worked beside us or donated food or funds during this past year, we Thank You from the bottom of our hearts! We are especially grateful for our Ascension family who voluntarily prayed for us, the work we do and the families we served.

Submitted through Christ's love,

St. James' Commission Leaders: Ellen Anderson, Jill Horn & Melissa Leahy

NKJV James 1:22 ~ "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, . . ."

St. Luke's Guild

One of the greatest gifts God has given to us is the opportunity to pray for one another. For over 30 years, the St. Luke's Guild has served Ascension by offering prayer requests to God. We have prayed for everything from serious illnesses to job needs to prayers for success during exam week! No request is too hard or too trivial for our God to handle.

The St. Luke's Guild is composed of members of our church family who are committed to pray for those in need, our families, our friends, and those outside of our church community. Such praying members are known as Intercessors. We have members who are housebound but consider praying for those in need as part of their ministry, and indeed it is.

When someone has a prayer request, they will notify either Father Pierre-Henry or me. I will then send out a prayer request email message to the members of St. Luke's. If wished, prayer requests can remain CONFIDENTIAL. The Intercessors will then pray as they are led by the Holy Spirit. Often we do not receive follow ups to know the result of our prayers, and that is ok. God knows. It is, however, wonderful when we learn that a healing has occurred or a prayer was answered with a good result. It is extremely encouraging to hear PRAISE REPORTS!

If you would like to learn more about the work of St. Luke's Guild or have a prayer request, please contact either Father Pierre-Henry or me. We will then share the need with our intercessors. Sometimes, we hear too late that someone has been dealing with a serious illness or issue and that makes us sad, because we would have been honored to lift that need up to the Lord on their behalf. If you are interested in knowing more about becoming an Intercessor, please let us know.

St. Luke was a physician, dealing with illness and disease during Jesus' time. We are proud for our Guild to be called in his name. And we are honored to continue to serve our church family by sharing the burden of praying with them. Please never hesitate to contact us. God listens.
Submitted by JoAnne Kreider 410-790-2431 lamjoy@hotmail.com

St. Martha's Guild

Our purpose is to support the Rector with receptions, celebrations and other receptions as desired. We work at the Rector's direction. We also make contributions to members of our church who are involved in religious studies and mission work.

We meet after the 10:15 service when we have events that need to be discussed, September through June. Our members are Beverly Baker and Melissa Leahy (Co- Presidents.), Nancy Starner (Secretary), Sharon Schwartz (Treasurer), Cathy Tibbs (Correspondence), Liz Lowe, Betsy Reinders, and Jill Horn. Our small but mighty group is active throughout the year in serving our rector and parish.

Looking back at 2025, our committee participated in the following:

In January, Ascension hosted the "Fresh Start" program. A light luncheon was served. We received wonderful feedback from the group participants.

In February, Ascension hosted one session of the Westminster Ministerium's Black History Month series on Racial Justice and Reconciliation. St. Martha's Guild hosted this meeting. Parishioners from other churches attended the event.

In March, another successful Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper was held. We are always so grateful for such wonderful parish participation for this event. Despite a price increase and a time adjustment, attendance was great, and we served between 150-200 folks. As always, we served plain, blueberry, chocolate chip and gluten-free pancakes and of course sausage and applesauce.



On May 29, Ascension Day, we hosted a reception following a regional Confirmation service.



Our members completed the year in June with a delicious dinner together at Paradiso's Restaurant.

We continued our tradition of providing Thanksgiving and Christmas cards to some of our needy families in the community.

St. Martha's Guild looks forward to providing the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 17th. We look forward to seeing you, and if you would like to help, please let us know.

We welcome new members...no specific skills necessary...just a desire to serve.

Submitted by Melissa Leahy

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study

The Sunday Morning Adult Sunday School meets 9:00 - 10:00 am in the Guild Room. We use the lectionary for that Sunday's 10:15 am service as our lesson plan. Our purpose is to amplify the readings, dig deeper into their meaning and strengthen the understanding when the readings are presented during the worship service. Our goal is to enhance the parishioner's experience during the worship service through a better understanding of the lectionary and its integration into the worship service.

Two leaders: Bobbie Gooding and John Holbert lead the discussion following the recitation of each selection. Each participant in the class is afforded the opportunity to recite the lectionary and then the leader(s) that morning follows with incites/questions related to that reading. The recitation and follow up discussion are intended to increase understanding about that particular reading. We normally have 5-6 participants each Sunday; there is room around the Guild Room table for any who want to participate.

Submitted by John Holbert

The 1844 Shoppe

Introduction

The 1844 Shoppe was established with a mission to support our church's financial need to repay a Middendorf loan. The shop has evolved into a community endeavor, embodying the spirit of giving and volunteerism.

Mission and Vision

Our mission is to provide financial assistance to our church while fostering a sense of community and support among our members. We envision a future where the 1844 Shoppe continues to be a place of generosity, service, and connection.

Achievements

- Supported various church initiatives through fundraising efforts.
- Engaged community members in volunteer activities, strengthening communal bonds.

- Expanded our reach and impact within the local neighborhood.

Financial Overview

In 2025, we successfully raised over \$10,000; these funds have significantly contributed to the church's budget, allowing for the continuation and expansion of essential services and programs.

Future Goals

- Increase fundraising activities to support more church projects
- Recruit more volunteers to enhance our service capacity
- Broaden our outreach efforts to include more community members
- Initiate a stronger online presence to increase exposure and improve revenue

Challenges and Opportunities

- The 1844 Shoppe is getting limited exposure due to its location
- Signage is needed to promote awareness of the shop's existence
- Funds for additional signage are nonexistent due to budget constraints
- We have an opportunity for increased revenue by posting higher ticket items to Facebook Marketplace and other online sites. The challenge is acquiring someone with the ability to take on that area.

Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to all our volunteers, donors, and community members who supported The 1844 Shoppe during 2025. Your dedication and generosity are the foundation of our success.

Conclusion

As we look ahead, we are inspired by the possibilities for growth and impact. Together, we will continue to uphold the values of service and generosity that define our community. Thank you for your continued support!

Submitted by Sandy White

Thursday Night Bible Study

The Kingdom of God: Our Life With Jesus the King

This collection of thirty-eight short thought-provoking devotional Bible studies contemplates those questions and explores our life with Jesus the King. It examines the miracles and message of Jesus about the kingdom, including the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and parables like the parable of the sower (also called the parable of the soils or seed) and the mustard seed.

Journey to the Resurrection.

How can you apply Jesus' crucifixion to your life in practical ways? How can you and those you lead see the deeply spiritual practices in Jesus' journey to the cross? *Journey to the Resurrection* answers these questions.

Telling Others the Story of Jesus

Most likely, if you are a believer, you want to share your faith in Christ with others. But many times, Christians aren't totally sure about what to say and how to say it. Drawing from New Testament stories, we figure out the basic core of the gospel, a core that can be easily shared with others.

Spiritual Warfare: Overcoming the Enemy

Are you ready for battle?

Whether you realize it or not, you live in the midst of spiritual combat. Your enemy is dangerous, destructive and determined to keep you from effectively serving God. In order to defend yourself against his attacks, you need to know how the enemy operates.

The Hiding Place

Corrie ten Boom was the first licensed female watchmaker in the Netherlands who became a heroine of the Resistance, a survivor of Hitler's concentration camps, and one of the most remarkable ministers of hope in the twentieth century.

In World War II she and her family risked their lives to help Jews and underground workers escape from the Nazis. In 1944 their lives were forever altered when they were betrayed, arrested, and thrown into the infamous Nazi death camps. Only Corrie among her family survived.

This is her incredible true story--and ultimately the story of how faith, hope, and forgiveness triumphed over unthinkable evil. For 35 years millions have seen that there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still. Now *The Hiding Place*, repackaged for a new generation of readers, continues to declare that God's love will overcome, heal, and restore.

Everyone is welcome to join us, in-person or via Zoom, for Bible Study, Fellowship, Prayers and Compline.

Submitted by Lynn Lyon-Vaiden

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

The **Tuesday Morning Bible Study** generally meets from 9:30-11:00 on first, third, and fifth Tuesdays in Room 202 (Pins & Needles room).

Our studies of the Bible—sometimes a particular book and sometimes a topic—are discussion-based, as we share our thoughts, questions and insights. Members of our group use several different translations, and this adds to our understanding and appreciation of God's word.

In 2025, we began the year with an in-depth study of the Women in the Bible in the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. Then we looked at the topic of Proverbs and Parables. We ended the year studying the letters from James and Peter.

This year we began by studying the letters from Jude and John. Then we plan to delve into the Apocryphal writings.

Our meetings always begin with devotions led by a member of the group, and we end with prayer. There are 20 members of our group, and others are always welcome.

Submitted by Bill and Barbara Sears



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