

ASCENSION TIDINGS

February 2012



The Annual Meeting was great! We have 5 newly elected Vestry Members

Andy Smith
Patrick Schwabrow
Amy Criswell
Paul Duncan
Cathy Hollowell



This is Paul Duncan, one of newly elected Vestry member as an officer in a New Orleans "krewe" at an annual Mardi Gras Ball.

*HAPPY
VALENTINES
DAY!*

Reprise of the Annual Meeting's Rector's Report for those of you who missed the meeting

I joined you in ministry just a few months ago, and already feel right at home. I am energized by the challenges and opportunities that are ahead of us. I have enjoyed working with a great staff – Leslie Nirider, Reginald Johnson, Hilarie Rock, John Calaway and Charles Jordan – and am eager to continue our work together. Hilarie just came on staff and many people including Pat Smith, Libby Vester, Carolyn Paul, Pat Cole and others have jumped in to help her in the office.

Our 2011 Senior Warden, David Bergquist, has been my weekly collaborator as he has helped me navigate new territory. Alan Burton, the finance committee, and our Treasurer, Jack Kennedy have made my life easier by keeping a sharp eye on our financial numbers. Elizabeth Till, our Junior Warden, has overseen major repair projects with skill and grace. The entire vestry has served with dedication and great leadership.

I am thrilled to work with our newly elected vestry members as of January 22nd, 2012: Andy Smith, Patrick Schwabrow, Amy Criswell, Paul Duncan, and Cathy Hollowell. I am delighted to elect Cathy as our Senior Warden.

When I arrived, I did not realize how indebted I would be to Parish Life and Barbara Morgan for all the fantastic receptions they throw. November was an especially busy month for them. Alan Burton, Barbara Morgan and crew did it again at the Annual Meeting. We had great lasagna, bread and salad during the meeting.

Many other faithful behind-the-scenes people work buildings and grounds. The Cole's keep the fountain and fish healthy. Whenever there was a special issue with the facility, Paul Duncan and Dick June never failed to pitch in. Andy Smith, Dick Stabell, and Tom Blackwell worked on the landscaping and grounds to give us a warm and inviting exterior.

At the beginning of this new chapter in Ascension's life, I connected with every parishioner in the directory and set up "get to know the Rector" home gatherings. The stories you shared in these small groups painted a picture of abiding faith and character. Also,

thank you to those who have come to the Bryant Open Houses; Kimberly and I look forward to seeing you at more of these.

We have begun to use technology effectively. Under the administration of Sage Halford, we now have 94 people who "like" our Facebook page. Our website is much improved, and newcomers have told me that they found the website helpful in their decision to come and visit Ascension. Our weekly Happenings, sermons, baptism & wedding offerings, Tidings, contact information and disaster response are all on the website. Don Hollowell has spent countless hours giving our computers much needed care, and Dave Bergquist will be heading a newly-formed IT committee in February of this year to help us strategically use our tech resources.

New families with children are starting to call Ascension home. I give great thanks to the members of Ascension who have reached out to make all newcomers feel welcome. Our welcome of newcomers has become more systematic - a process that includes newcomer follow up from greeters, the evangelism team and me.

I give thanks for Caroline Barker who coordinates our Sunday Morning Children's Chapel during the 10:30 service. This 15 - 20 minute chapel allows parents to enjoy the sermons while their kids receive quality Christian formation geared toward young children. Carol Smith has worked tirelessly to coordinate teachers for the 9:30 education hour and to oversee our Christian Formation program. With regard to adult education, I am grateful to our dedicated teachers, especially Everett Baker and John Graves, who teach on books of the bible and Bethel. It is a special privilege for me to be able to teach the 9:30 lectionary class. Looking ahead, I plan to write a grant proposal to the Diocese to secure funds for a Director of Christian Education.

I have received positive feedback about the feel and flow of our Sunday worship and am so grateful to Charles and his merry band for all they bring to Sunday. You've noticed the JR Acolytes. They help me with the Gospel procession, and I am thrilled they are part of worship. Thanks go to Sayle Fox who has become the shepherd of the JR Acolytes. Gratitude also goes to all the teams who make Sunday shine - Altar Guild, ushers, breakfast, VOWs, LEVs, LEMs, OSL, and greeters.

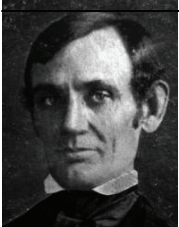
Our pastoral and prayer ministries fill me with hope. Their behind-the-scenes work helps knit us together as a fellowship of care. DOK and Men of Ascension continue their good work on Saturday. Monday bible groups continue their faithful study. Tuesday women's bible study adds laughter and inches to my waistline. Wednesday healing and Thursday fellowship/prayer ministries bring the Holy Spirit to us during the week.

We are working toward more outreach. Parents Night Out (headed by Julia Lawhon) recently kicked off. The church/school garage sale was a resounding success, raising over \$4400 that was split evenly between church and school. Special thanks goes to the tireless work of Cathy Hollowell and my wife Kimberly, as well as countless volunteers. Thanks to the planning of Donna Taylor, caroling in Briargrove Park before Christmas was a delightful outreach and evangelistic effort, with 50 smiling faces.

When the fires hit Bastrop, we filled the church with relief donations. Seafarers and Forgotten Seniors were both clear signs of Ascension's desire to help. The Gospel requires us to reach out the poor, and our weekly donations of food to WHAM continue, as well as our financial support of WHAM.

The School is a key mission field. I hope you will join me in prayer and care for the students and families of AES. Personally, it is a treat to welcome students in carpool line, teach them in chapel, and challenge them to see how hard they can give me a "high five". So far, their hands hurt more than mine, but they are practicing everyday. My wife and children are thriving in the school and church. I have gotten to know and admire many school families, while we continue to build bridges between church and school. Ronda Loetzerich and the Evangelism Team hosted an Epiphany Dinner to welcome families back to school - a fun evening attended by 86 church and school people.

We are in a position to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus in an authentic Ascension way. The road ahead promises a lot of work and sweat, but I am excited about what God has in store for this place. I pray we take seriously the gifts that we have been given. May we share these abundant gifts with all whom God has entrusted to us, both here and outside our doors.



Don't Forget Presidents Day-Monday, February 18th



Presidents Day is a combination of honoring the legacy of all Presidents and the celebration of Lincoln and Washington's Birthday which were both in February. The origin of the day began in the 1880's with President George Washington's birthday, who was commander in Chief of the Continental Army. In 1968 Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Bill, which moved a number of federal holidays to Mondays. The change was designed to schedule certain holidays so that workers had a number of long weekends throughout the year, but it has been opposed some who felt both Presidents should have a day named after them. After the bill went into effect in 1971, however, Presidents' Day became the commonly accepted name, due in part to retailers' use of that name to promote sales and the holiday's proximity to Lincoln's birthday. throughout the county.

Two great Presidents. The first remembered for selfless deeds who served as first President when he might have been king. The other for his great words that began to heal a nation after the largest battle ever fought on American soil.

All Presidents but especially the one's who helped shape our nation into what it is today deserve a special day in recognition of their accomplishments and outstanding leadership. Thank you, Mr. President!

Shrove Tuesday is February 21st.

Shrove Tuesday (also known as Pancake Day, Pancake Tuesday, Fat Tuesday, and Mardi Gras) is a term used in English-speaking countries, especially in Ireland, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Germany, and parts of the United States for the day preceding Ash Wednesday, the first day of the season of fasting and prayer called Lent.

The word shrove is the past tense of the English verb to shrive, which means to obtain absolution for one's sins by way of confession and doing penance. During the week before Lent, sometimes called Shrovetide in English, Christians were expected to go to confession in preparation for the penitential season of turning to God. Shrove Tuesday was the last day before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, and noted in histories dating back to 1000 AD. The popular celebratory aspect of the day had developed long before the Protestant Reformation, and was associated with releasing high spirits before the somber season of Lent. It is analogous to the continuing Carnival tradition associated with Mardi Gras (and its various names in different countries) that continued separately in European Catholic countries.

In the United States, the term Shrove Tuesday is less widely known outside of people who observe the liturgical traditions of the Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, and Catholic churches. Because of the increase in many immigrant populations and the rise of highly publicized festivals, Mardi Gras has become more familiar as the designation for that

Scouts Serving on February 5, 2012

Scouts will serve in worship at the 8:00am and 10:30am service. If you are/have been part of scouting, come in your scouting attire. Scouts are a wonderful part of our community, come out to support them.

Boy Scouts

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the nation's largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness.

BRYANT OPEN HOUSE and Super Bowl Pre-Game Party

Please come by on February 5th from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm. There will be wine, cheese, and snacks. Please RSVP to kharvin@hotmail.com for directions. We will have the TV on and the beer chilling for the pre-game show. We kick you out a little after kick off!



Ascension Episcopal School UPDATE

Dear Parishioners,

On behalf of all our faculty, staff, and families we sincerely thank you for the delicious and gracious Epiphany supper. We had many families attend and many more stating they could not be there but would certainly attend in the future. The next day, we were on the playground and it was close to 6 pm when one of our students came to me and said he was hungry, I told him his mom and dad would be here soon and then he could have dinner. "Where is it tonight?" he asked, "Because last night we were in the big room". He truly wanted another dinner here at Ascension. We also are so happy with Parents Night Out and the safe, nurturing place for our families to leave their children. Many of the parents commented on how great it would be to have some time together with adults and not have to worry about their children. What gifts you have given to so many of our families. Thank you all so very much.

The month of February brings us many different ideas, programs, and thoughts.

We start on February 1st with a Pre-School Preview for all families with children who will be three by September 1, 2012. Our terrific Pre-School team of Mary Langlinais and Pam Warak will tell you all you want to know about our program and we will go over the daily routine and changes in Pre-School as they differ from the program you child has been attending. This will be held in the School Library at 7:30 am.

We will have an Elementary Preview on February 15th, for all families who will have children in grades 1-5 next year. We will give each teacher time to briefly describe the year and what you can see and expect through this amazing journey. The students may go to early morning care for no cost as their parents attend this preview. We will be in the School Library at 7:30 am.

We celebrate Valentine's Day this month, remembering all we love and all who love us. We will also begin the Lenten season with an Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, February 22nd at 8:30 am in the Church. You are most welcome to join us for this service.

Our First Grade will have a presentation on Wednesday, February 29th, in the Parish Hall at 8:30 am

In Peace,
Nancy Clausey



ANNUAL REPORT ADDITION

Ascension Episcopal School Annual Report

January 2012

This has been a successful year for Ascension Episcopal School. We ended the 2010-11 school year with 89 students in grades preschool through fifth grade and began the 2011-12 school year with 100 students. We have added a few more students and as we begin 2012 we have 103 students in preschool through fifth grade. Our Early Childhood Program remains strong with 45 students. Our total enrollment is 148 in our school. We are working hard to keep our enrollment at this level, but want to grow each year. Our hopes are to have two sections of each grade level from preschool to 5th grade. We currently have two sessions in our preschool through first grade so in the future we will continue this growth. We also hope to expand our Early Childhood Program, many of the age levels currently have a wait list and we have the vision to expand as soon as we have the classroom space to accommodate the needs of our youngest students. We want to continue to provide safe, loving, Christian care for these students and their families.

We started two new traditions this year through the planning of our Ascension Parent Organization. At the beginning of the school year we enjoy a Back to School Bash, a time on a Friday evening for our families to gather, eat, play, and enjoy the fellowship our school community provides. At the end of the school year we have our End of the Year Party, with similar food, fun, and fellowship. We are proud to say attendance is over 100 people consistently at each event and our entire community from teachers to the youngest students participate.

Community Service continues to be important in our school as we have our Annual Community Service Day the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, preparing donations for CAPS, Lord of the Streets, Wham, and the Seafarers. We also donate to children at Christmas through the Salvation Army Angel Tree, helping children to enjoy Christmas. Each day we are encouraged to think of ways to help others and share the gifts we have been given.

Our Annual Fund for the 2010-11 school year met and slightly surpassed our goal of \$30,000 and we are grateful for the support of our families and friends of Ascension Episcopal School.

We thank the members of Ascension Episcopal Church for their support of Ascension Episcopal School; together we are helping to make a difference in the lives of children and their families.

In Peace,
Nancy Clausey

ANNUAL REPORT ADDITION

LEV Annual Report

January 2012

The **ministry of Eucharistic Visitors to Persons Who Are Ill or Infirm** is simply referred to as Lay Eucharistic Visitors (LEV). All LEVs are licensed by the Diocese of Texas and must complete “Safeguarding God’s People” every 5 years. All visits are made in pairs: a husband & wife, two males or two females; only one of each pair must be a “licensed LEV”. The consecrated elements are given to the LEV of the day on Sunday or another major feast day and “sent” from the congregation with a communal prayer to administer communion to those members who are temporarily or permanently unable to attend church with the rest of the congregation. As during a church service in the sanctuary, communion must be delivered on the day that it is consecrated and any remaining elements must be entirely consumed once the scheduled visits are completed. All LEV visits are to be recorded in the church register. LEVs relay to the rector communicant’s desires for a visit and/or any changes in the health of the individuals to allow the rector to shepherd his flock most effectively.

This ministry began under the auspices of our Interim Rector, Robert Wareing in November of 2010. The number of LEVs has remained at 8 and the number of potential recipients has varied from a high of 8 to a low of 2, the average number being 4. Most Sundays the LEVs make at least two visits and in addition to the spiritual food of the Lord’s Supper, we provide some solace, prayers, and brief companionship to those who may feel cut off from the love and presence of the Ascension congregation. We have made visits to Ascension members in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, individual homes and nursing homes giving communion to all present in the room who desire it. The liturgy utilized is entitled “Distribution of Holy Communion by Eucharistic Visitors to Persons Who are Ill or Infirm”. Through this ministry each of us feels enabled to respond to the Lord’s call to visit and pray for the sick. Whenever we remember to request it, the Altar Guild provides a bouquet of flowers drawn from the altar flowers that day.

If you or a loved one is unable to attend church due to an accident, injury, or a medical situation and desires communion, please contact the Ascension Church office with your name, address and location.

Wendy Willeford
LEV Coordinator

Senior Warden's Update

As your new Senior Warden I would like to take the time to thank Dave Bergquist for the fantastic job he did in 2011. It was a year of change and some turmoil and he handled everything with his usual gracious style. Being Senior Warden has a "the buck stops here" feeling to it, but you would never have known it when Dave was in charge. Never fear, he is still on vestry and ready to head up the much needed Technology and Security Committee.



Ascension is ready to rock and roll. You could feel the excitement in the air at the annual meeting. We have a great new group coming on to the vestry - Amy Criswell, Paul Duncan, Andy Smith and Patrick Schwabrow. We owe great gratitude to Camilla Nichols, Bob Harris, Jim Jackson, Dick June and Van Greene for all the superb work they have done during their tenure.

There is an old and well worn tradition here. If you have been on vestry you get to do a lot of the same work you used to do...you just don't have a title and with a bit of luck you do not have to write reports. Once you know how the church is operated you feel compelled to keep helping, it is a wonderful tradition and we thank everyone who works so hard to keep things moving and shaking.

The annual meeting went smoothly. Alan Burton devised a new and excellent way to route people through the troughs of lasagna in an efficient way. Barbara Morgan and her crew of smiling faces set up, served and cleaned up with skill. Barbara also had to rip off her apron and scurry to the front table to take notes as clerk to the vestry.

Elizabeth Till as Junior Warden and Jack Kennedy as Treasurer did stalwart work all year - and you could not wipe the smile off Jack's face when he announced we still had money in the bank!

I promise you faithfully that I will do my very best to represent you as Senior Warden. I have utmost faith that Ascension has the best Rector it could possibly have prayed for, and he has the best wife and family. We are not just moving forward we are flying with wings and bringing in new parishioners every week. Love them as you have always shown your love to me and you will have them forever.... Or as Fr.Todd says.. "for ages and ages"

So let it be. Cathy Hollowell.



**Remember Ascension Episcopal Church and School
in your will.**

The Senior Bus Trip for February 25th to see the AD players. The play is entitled "What Really Happened at Villa Real." Your cost for the play and bus trip is \$25 in advance. Please have your money turned into the church



Tuesday Morning Men's Bible Study

Starts on January 31st at 6:30-7:30 am and will be led by the Rector in the parish hall. We will start with First Samuel that tells the story of Israel transitioning from a confederacy of tribes to the monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon).

The Daughters of The King will meet Saturday, February 11th at 9:30 am in the church library. Our speaker will be Mary Sears on what God has done in her life. All ladies of the church are invited.

PARISH LIFE / JANUARY, 2012

On Sunday, January 22, Ascension celebrated our Annual Parish Meeting with a wonderful lunch and with the election of five new Vestry Members. Parish Life furnished a delicious lunch that consisted of delicious lasagna from the Lasagna House and green salad prepared by faithful Parish Life Helpers. There was also bread, delicious cookies, ice tea, lemonade, water and coffee.

We tried a new way of setting up the serving lines which was Alan Burton's great idea of having two serving lines with the Lasagna served by the Parish Life Volunteers. The Parishioners moved through the lines quickly.

I would like to thank all the wonderful people who volunteered to help. This lunch would not have been the great success that it was without these folks: Ann Burton, Alan Burton (who priced and ordered the Lasagna) and helped in kitchen; Elizabeth Till, Faye Armstrong, Ann Wilkerson, Dana Sutton and Carolyn Paul. Cathy Hollowell put on the table cloths, and Cathy along with Jackie Bergquist took them all off and put them away. Tom Sutton and Dick Stabell helped Reginald take down and put up the extra tables and chairs. It takes all these wonderful folks to make these types of celebrations so successful.

Thank You never seems enough, but it comes straight from the heart.

Barbara Morgan, Chair

Lent | 2012

Ash Wednesday

with Imposition of Ashes, Feb 22nd

8:30am | 12pm | 7:00pm (no nursery)

Every Wednesday in Lent after Ash Wednesday:
Come join us Wednesday nights for our Lenten Series

- 6:00pm Evening Prayer
- 6:30pm Faith stories from parishioners and friends with Q & A.
- 7:00pm light soup supper served by various ministries
- ◆ **Faith Stories:** there will be stories shared from a life long Episcopalian, Recent Convert, Liberian, Nigerian and more
- ◆ **During Faith Stories, for Kids:** Kids Program: PreSchool -5th grade program during the faith stories. No program during spring break (Mar 14th).
- ◆ **Kids and Food:** Parents can come by 6pm with a sack dinner for their child if their child does not want to eat the soup supper. Nursery open from 6pm-7:30pm.
- ◆ Clean up and Choir Practice after.

Lent at Ascension Includes Our Children...

Who: Preschool -5th grade

What: Kids Program for Lent

When: 6:30-7:00pm (during the faith stories)

Through a weekly lesson and activities, the children can experience the 40 days of Lent in a way meaningful to them. Even our youngest ones can reach out and share God's love with others through the simple acts of making care packages and creating Easter cards.

Please note this program will not meet during Spring Break.



Bible Reading during Lent

If you would like to read the Bible in church during a 30min slot at set times during the day. Please sign up in the Narthex as Lent gets closer, or email him at jedeloyogeospace.com. The sign up sheet will have a variety of times. There will be assigned readings for each day and by the end of Lent the whole Bible will have been read in Ascension's sanctuary.

Holy Week | Easter | Ascension Day 2012

Holy Week

- April 1st. Palm Sunday: 8am and 10:30am service *nursery for both services*
with palm procession starting the in covered walkway.
- April 5th. Maundy Thursday: 6:30pm, *nursery provided*
- April 6th. Good Friday: 12pm, *no nursery*

Easter Day

April 8, Easter Day: 8am 10:30am childcare at both services and music at both services.
Easter Egg hunt following the 10:30am service.

Ascension Day

May 17, Ascension Day (Thursday)

We are working with school to develop joint celebration

Two Confirmation Classes before the Bishop High comes on Sunday June 3, 2011

Two Confirmation Classes before the Bishop High comes on Sunday June 3, 2012

Dates: Late February and After Easter. Fr. Todd is calling all newcomers from the last six months. If you are interested in being received, confirmed, or reaffirming please contact him: rector@ascensionhouston.org.

We will have a “Liturgy of Belonging” following the confirmation classes, where the whole congregation can see and welcome the graduate class on Sunday morning. And on June 3rd, the Bishop will be with us for confirmation, reception and reaffirmation into the Episcopal Church.

The dates of the classes will be determined after talking with everyone. When the Bishop comes, you can:

- **Be received (if you are an active Christian from another church)**
- **Reaffirm your confirmation in the Episcopal Church**
- **Be confirmed (affirming their baptism as an Episcopalian, and make a fresh commitment to Christ)**

Our Community Participation

- * Briar Forest Super Neighborhood
- * Church Supplies and Services (Houston Church Co-Op)
- * Houston Westchase District
- * West Houston Assistance Ministries (WHAM)
- * West Houston Chamber of Commerce

Lifeline...is a nondenominational social and support group for widows and widowers. Meetings are the first Thursday of each month in the Parish Hall at 7:30 PM. Please contact Jo Ellen at 281-498-4981 for more information.

WHAM Food Drive...We now receive non-perishable food items for distribution to those in need in our community every Sunday. These donated items are moved to the West Houston Assistance Ministry facility for distribution by volunteers.

Staff

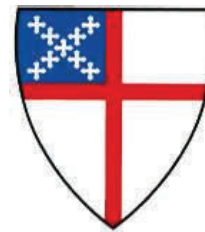
The Rev. Todd Bryant Rector; Charles Jordan, Organist-Choirmaster; Leslie Nirider, Membership Hilarie Rock, Secretary; Reginald Johnson, Sexton; John Calaway, Bookkeeper.

In Memoriam

We pray for the repose of the souls of
Susanne Anachebe and Ernest Nwangwu
 and we pray for the Holy Spirit's comfort for their family and friends.

The Vestry

Cathy Hollowell (Sr. Warden), David Bergquist, Andy Smith, Patrick Schwabrow, Amy Criswell, Paul Duncan, Alan Burton, Jack Kennedy (Treasurer), Barbara Morgan (Clerk), Buddy Roberts, Dana Sutton, Elizabeth Till (Jr. Warden), and The Rector.



Music Department

In January, the Adult Choir warmly welcomed Larry Pless as a new tenor and his wife, Dale, alto. Please give prayerful thought to joining the choir!

The School Board

The Rector, Bob Egan (President), Ann Seitz (Secretary), Gemma Williams (Treasurer), Cindy Cadle, Cleveland Johnson, Olive Gomes, Terry Kahn, Karl Loetzerich, Marike Owen, Frank Schageman, Pamela Schwabrow, Pat Smith, Ray Valenti, and Ex-officio members: The Sr. Warden, The Jr. Warden, and The Head of School.

Ascension Disaster Response Committee

Bob Harris	713-443-6567
John Coppock	281-293-0888
Jim Jackson	713-785-6909
Dick June	713-784-4429
Suzanne McMath	832-687-0864