

Spires

October 2020

Church of the Ascension

13216 Detroit Avenue • Lakewood, OH 44107 • www.ascension-lakewood.org

FROM REV. VINCENT BLACK



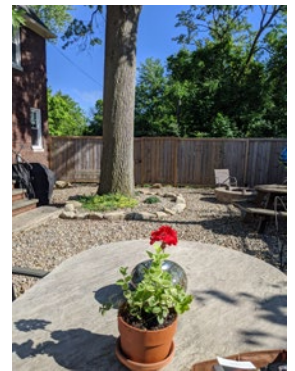
Going Deeper in Relationship with God Through Presence and Creation

I am a city boy. I grew up in Slavic Village, an inner-city neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio. I have childhood memories of lightning bugs, parks, streams, lakes, and other fun and beautiful encounters with nature. However, as I grew older, I began to prefer a more sanitized experience of nature. I liked the idea of beautiful views without any real interaction with anything creepy or crawly. By the time I was forty I had developed a real fear of spiders and a discomfort with any natural or wild creature other than human beings. In fact I remember my colleague, the Rev. Brad Purdom whom I served with on the bishop's staff, laughing at me for

telling him I would rather my car break down anywhere in the inner city than on a country road or in the middle a cornfield.

Although my irrational fear of spiders and other such things began to diminish after I finished cancer treatments in 2013, there has been a real and utter transformation over the last year. I attribute this transformation in so small part to participating in the clergy program I offered through the Shalem Institute. The practice of opening myself up to God in the present, in silence, and yes, in nature has been life changing. I have experienced a conversion.

Last summer I was still quite irritable when nature was less than sanitized. I was angry and frustrated every time I had to weed the Japanese style rock garden we have surrounding our patio. I thought the plastic and rocks and weed killer would have prevented such intruders. We had intentionally wanted rocks to diminish the time and care needed to be able to enjoy our patio. I was angry at the oak tree which is a central figure in our patio because, as it turns out, oaks are quite messy trees, always dropping something from what looks like fuz early in the summer, to clumps of leaves, acorns, etc. and then of course the standard fall leaf dropping. And I hated the bees or, more precisely, the aggressive yellow jackets that would harass us when trying to eat who seemed to tag team with the mosquitos and the spiders who covered everything with webs each night. And don't get me started on the heat and humidity!



So what changed? Everything. The daily practice of prayer and meditation and the increasing practice of centering prayer had a profound impact on me. The parish group I had convened as part of the clergy program had been meeting monthly and growing in our shared practice of silence through centering prayer. When COVID-19 hit and everything closed down we continued to meet though a teleconference and sat in silence together over the phone. Also, when the weather began to warm and we set up the patio Roger and I began going outside to the patio to have our morning coffee and to pray and mediate together.

We potted some flowers and other plants and settled into a daily routine of sweeping, weeding, de-webbing the furniture, etc. As I weeded day after day I noticed that the weeds were no longer a nuisance but a discipline and practice, like the silence itself. Cleaning up after the tree helped me connect more with the tree as a living presence sharing itself with us, allowing me to share myself with it. I watched the tall grasses grow which we had brought from our previous home, one of which was revived by a dear friend right before



she died from cancer. The geraniums which we had potted became daily reminders of my mom who loved them and of relatives in Germany and my pilgrimage to Assisi where they were in abundance.

Twice while sitting on the patio during my morning prayer a fledgling landed right by me. The first time a foot away and the second time right under my chair. Both times the poor mother frantically tried to coax the youngster away from me, of course to no avail, since they are so clumsy and clueless as they are learning to fly. So I stood up and gave her some room to usher her new aviator to safety. The first one may have been the very baby robin Kristen had pointed out to me nesting in the white spruce in the north garden. The second one was about a month later and would have been much bigger by that point, so it was from a different nest. These bird encounters were begun by a family of doves dancing on our fence two days in a row. The adult doves were cuddling when two adolescents seemed to join them and try cuddling as well. I later learned they were still feeding from mother. It was such a tender and affectionate sight.



Also, at the beginning of summer a fawn was left on the rectory doorstep. Roger opened the door and brushed past it to his surprise. The little guy was sprawled out in the hot sun and didn't budge when he opened the door. He was worried something was wrong and called me to bless the poor little thing. I too was worried and so blessed him and put water down for him and then called the police to ask for a game warden. When the officer arrived, he tried to coax it to move but to no avail. He told us that if he took it, he would have to put it down, so we asked about moving it to nearby grass. When he put on gloves and got a blanket to wrap around it, and carried it over to some grass, mama appeared out of

nowhere. The little legs started moving and it stumbled around, so we figured it would be alright. Two days later we saw it walking around with mother but to our surprise it had a twin. So now there was mother and two babies. Over the summer they have grown and continued to show up just when we think they have moved on. At the last sighting there are only hints of the white spots so prominent just months ago.



After I returned from the second residency of the Shalem Clergy Program, the bishop granted parishes permission to start gathering again for in-person worship. Because of my experiences on our patio I wondered if one of the services might be held there since the bishop recommended to try meeting outside. However, I was worried the overhead sun would be too uncomfortable and not good for people, so I walked around the facility at 8am searching for a suitable spot. When I approached the West Garden, it was obvious that I had found it. The church itself provided shade as the sun was rising in the east. People could spread out facing the church, basking in the shade it provided enjoying the beauty of the church building itself as well as all of the trees, bushes, and flowers so lovingly tended by faithful parishioners. It was in this garden after all that we had placed numerous benches to welcome neighbors living in nearby apartments with no access to green space to have a place to sit. It was in this same garden that the employees of the Garden Center next door sit and enjoy their lunch and where neighbors bring their dogs to roll around in the grass.

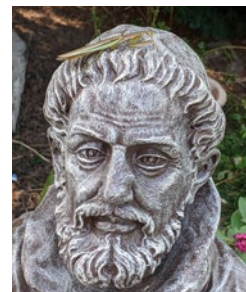
As we worshiped in the West Garden the transformation continued. I was caught by surprise to like it as much as I did. I have always been a sacred space kind of guy, drawn to cathedrals and stained glass to connect with the Holy and certainly to celebrate the Holy Eucharist! Yet there was such a beauty and peace that I experienced in that garden that I actually looked forward more to it than the service inside. On one occasion a parishioner confessed that she had not heard a thing I said during the sermon because she was enamored with the rabbits and squirrels. Without missing a beat, I responded that God obviously had a different message prepared for her. The odd thing was that I really believed it when I said it. And on another occasion a young woman asked, in a tone that was a bit ashamed, if it was wrong that she actually preferred being in the garden to being in the church. I could honestly answer that I did too. And I love our church and feel a deep connection to God inside the beautiful sacred space and even so, this summer I actually felt it more in the West Garden.

Also in the West Garden, the parish prayer and listening group formed to walk with me through the clergy program, met to debrief at the end of July. We had been meeting monthly in-person, of course, until COVID-19 hit and forced us to meet via conference call since March. At that meeting we decided to meet weekly in the West Garden in a circle for an hour including 20 minutes of centering prayer (silence), as well as

some time for scripture reading, reflection, and conversation. Our intention is to meet though October and then reassess and to move inside when it becomes too cold.

God has a way of tilling the ground and making the soil fertile. Then the seed came from a parishioner asking if there might be a possibility of scattering his pet's ashes somewhere on the church grounds. I prayed about it, did some research, talked to a few parishioners about the idea of making a raking memorial at the south end of the West Garden under a pine tree, and within weeks it has come together. Things have been trimmed and planned and a wall laid around the tree to contain the remains. We found the perfect statue of St. Francis relaxing on a tree stump with a fawn still with its spots nestled up against him. We do not have grounds keepers or landscapers. This has been rolled out through the efforts of parishioners under the leadership of Joyce, Greg, and Roger. Joyce keeps reminding me that it will not be finished by the consecration on October 10th but will be a work in progress. It will indeed be a work in progress as everything is, including each of us, but when I look at it I am amazed at how beautiful it already is. I hope you will be able to join us for our consecration of the garden, memorial, and pet blessing.

The first morning of having St. Francis in our garden I went out to offer some prayers for a member and my niece and I found a praying mantis resting on the head of St. Francis! I have only seen a praying mantis up close in the flesh maybe three times in my life. I was awe struck and just gazed at it being drawn into the stillness and feeling God's presence. When I returned to my office I looked up the meaning and significance of such a sighting. "Mantis" in Greek means "prophet" or "seer." It is a symbol of silence, calm, meditation, and holy presence. I was humbled and deeply moved.



I made a pilgrimage to Assisi in May of 2019 with the Shalem Institute. We spent 11 days in Assisi visiting the holy sites where Francis was born, had his conversion, and through his preaching and dedication to poverty and simplicity started a movement. At the heart of that movement is a deep love for God especially as God is manifest in creation and in all creatures. It was on this pilgrimage that I was invited to participate in the Clergy Program. It was also on this pilgrimage that I began going deeper in my faith and in my own love for God and creation. The statue we found for our garden not only embodies the relaxed and intimate connection Francis had with creation and all creatures but it also captures for perpetuity the birth of the fawn here at Ascension this summer and the forever promise of hope and new life offered to each of us through our Lord Jesus Christ. It inspires us to pray even in the middle of a pandemic those beautiful words attributes to Francis himself:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. (BCP 833)

God loves you. No exceptions.®

FROM CORKY THACKER, SENIOR WARDEN



Senior Warden's Report

Water leaks along the two gables behind the parapet walls of the church are causing extensive interior damage to the nave's balcony area and are beginning to cause damage to the sanctuary wall behind the altar. I'm told that the balcony has a long history of moisture problems and various things have been done to fix this, but the problems would recur. The structural engineer from Donan Engineering Co., Inc. inspected the roof on Nov. 4 as part of investigating our claim to Church Insurance Company for the undercroft ceiling collapse, and reported on Nov. 11, 2019 that "the water intrusion is a combination of workmanship related to flashing and tuck-pointing," which is not covered by insurance. Vagner Masonry performed the tuck-pointing in the areas cited by the engineer on Nov 18. They also applied additional sealant to the flashings, stressing that this was not the proper way to solve the problem, but would hopefully keep the church dry until we could get a roofer to install new counter and sub flashings.

The flashings installed when the roof was replaced in 2002 were not properly done; the contractor hired gave the work to a sub-contractor. The counter flashings should have been installed into the mortar joints and then sealed, but were just attached on the outer surface of the parapet walls with sealant. Moisture absorbed by the stone is causing sealant to pull away from it, creating gaps that leak. In addition, the unused chimney behind the altar wall may also be absorbing moisture that can permeate the wall and should be capped.

The temporary sealant repairs for the balcony gable flashings worked until this summer, but now plaster is falling from the wall. The ones above the altar wall appear to still be working, but we need to fix those areas quickly. At present, the painter can do some minor clean-up of small areas using a ladder that won't interfere with worship. If we wait, we risk major damage like that in the balcony, which would be much more expensive (likely \$15,000 or more) and would require scaffolding that would need to be in place for the weeks that such a project would entail. We would be unable to worship in the nave during that period. We must do the repairs NOW.

The Vestry voted to accept the roofing bid from The Regency Roofing Companies, Inc. (which does not use sub-contractors) and schedule the work for October-November of 2020; and that we apply for a capital assistance grant and loan from the Diocese of Ohio for a total project budget of \$84,344 to be funded by \$28,114 from the Parish; \$28,114 grant and \$28,114 loan that we will seek to pay off quickly by additional donations. One parishioner has donated \$20,000 that we're using as the bulk of our funds for direct payments to contractors.

And speaking of contractors, Linda Jancik of Wall to Wall Transformations and Dennis Barnhart, who have done all of our plaster repairs and painting since mid-2016, always give us favorable pricing out of consideration for the church's financial constraints and their feelings toward Ascension. Their work is excellent, and both do more than what's specified in their quotes. Linda usually bills clients for time and materials, but knows we need a total project cost for grant applications, and wants to keep her work affordable for us. Dennis' prices are always low and he typically invoices for less than he quoted or does small areas at no charge. For this project, I was expecting a quote in the \$1,500 to \$2,000 range—so I questioned the \$850 figure he handed to me. He just smiled, shrugged and said, "It's for the church."

Linda lives up the street on Grace Avenue and Dennis lives nearby in Cleveland. They are part of our Ascension community, even though they choose not to worship and aren't members. Talk about giving your time, talents and treasure!

I hope that those of us who are members or part of our in-person or online worship will follow Dennis' and Linda's example and do likewise! We will need everyone's gifts to repair and preserve our beautiful church.

Sincerely,
Corky Thacker, Senior Warden

FROM LEAH ROMANELLI DEJESUS, SEMINARIAN



Friends, as of writing this, you have welcomed me into your midst for just over two weeks. I am so grateful for your hospitality, warmth, and openness. Although the time we are able to spend together in this pandemic is brief, I have enjoyed getting to know you in snippets as we stand on the church steps in the sunshine. To date, the lay committee who have pledged to walk with me over the next two years met once, I gave my first sermon in a mask, you've welcomed my husband and step-son and many of his stuffed animals (my step-son's, not my husband's!), celebrated my birthday with the altar flowers our first Sunday together, worshiped together at Tuesday's noon prayer, and showed me your indefatigable feeding ministry. Of all the things I have seen and heard in worship and conversation, the community meal is perhaps the most indicative of the Spirit I see living in your midst: a Spirit of endurance. In every mention of Covid-19, worship logistics, food restrictions, and a fervent desire to be together I hear a constant refrain: Well, we will figure it out.

At a time when it feels like much of the world has stopped, Ascension continues on. The obstacles to life together during a pandemic are many, but this congregation is figuring it out. You have figured it out. You will continue to figure it out. The one thing it's clear you won't do is give up or stop your kingdom work. This resilience is a testament to your love for each other and the community God calls you to be. I am so grateful for your example. I am so grateful for your willingness to keep working. I learn from you daily.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you'd like to take me up on last month's offer of ice cream or coffee and a chat. You can email me at leahromanelli@gmail.com. I look forward to continuing to get to know you all!

Thanks & peace,
Leah Romanelli DeJesusWith thanksgiving,

THE WEEKLY PRAYER LIST

The weekly prayer list is used for those who need extra prayers due to illness or a particular challenge or hardship.

It is important to remove people from the prayer list, not just add to it. We all need prayers and so we pray for the gathered congregation each week when we meet but not each member of the congregation is prayed for by name.

All names will be removed from the prayer list at the end of November as we end the liturgical year. We will start with a new prayer list the first Sunday of Advent. For those wanting to add or remove people from the prayer list please call the office.

PET BLESSING AND MEMORIAL

There will be a pet blessing and memorial on October 10th, at 10 am in the West Garden.

Please bring your own chairs if possible and remember to have all pets on leashes or in cages.

For those who would like to spread their pet's remains at the service in the Saint Francis pet Memorial Garden, please make arrangements with Father Vincent revvincentblack@yahoo.com

Donations for the Saint Francis pet Memorial Garden will be placed in the Garden Fund



October 2020



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 9 am - Autumn Yard Clean-Up
4 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	5 5 pm - Trials for Hope Meal (Take out only)	6 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 7)	7	8 6 pm - Community Meal (Take out only)	9	10 10:00 am- Pet blessing and memorial
11 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	12	13 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 7)	14	15	16	17
18 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	19	20 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 7)	21	22	23	24
25 8 am- Service (Make reservations) 10:30 am- Service (Make reservations)	26 5 pm - Trials for Hope Meal (Take out only)	27 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 7)	28	29	30	31

In-person worship on Sundays

Please call the office at 216-521-8727 to let us know if you are coming and how many in the party. Imagine it is like making reservations at a restaurant for now. This will help us better plan and be prepared. Of course we will also accommodate visitors and others who may not have been able to call ahead. We will also continue to offer a virtual worship opportunity as well.

Please do not come to church if you are not feeling well.

All will be required to wear a mask and keep a social distance of 6 feet. Please bring your own mask. Masks will be available if you forget to bring one.

Hand sanitizer will be provided, and you are asked to use it. It is recommended that you have your own hand sanitizer as well.

There will be no coffee hour following the services at this time. People may socialize at a safe distance outside on the lawn or in the garden.

8am service will be held in the West Garden weather permitting. Otherwise it will be in Ascension Hall. Those attending 8am service are asked to enter the building through the West Entrance unless the assistance of the elevator is required. When calling ahead please specify whether you will bring your own chair or need one to be provided for outdoor worship.

10:30am service will be in the church. Those attending 10:30 service are asked to enter and exit through the front doors in the Nartex. As a rule we will enter via the center isle, and exit via the side isles maintaining social distance. Those requiring the assistance of the elevator are welcome to enter and exit through the East Entrance.

All these things may seem to be a burden and to diminish our experience of worship. The devil, the power of evil, wants us to be discouraged and to give up hope. We need to be mindful that we worship God as our Creator and Redeemer and that all our hope on God is founded! We will not give up gathering as the Body of Christ simply because it is less than ideal. Remember we follow a Lord who was terribly inconvenienced by the crucifixion but in the end rose from the dead and freed us from death and despair. So in this season we gladly bear the burden of keeping each other and ourselves safe while simultaneously worshipping God and bearing witness to the world of God's unwavering love.

Noon day prayer Tuesdays At 12:12pm via conference call

On Tuesdays there will be a conference call enabling you to call in and join Father Vincent and other members of our Ascension community for:

- Noonday Prayer (10 minutes),
- A reflection from Forward Day by Day (5 minutes),
- Time for us to check-in with each other (20 minutes),
- Time to ask questions and exchange information (10 minutes),
- Prayer for the Church of the Ascension.

This will give everyone access to our priest and allow us to continue together in prayer and fellowship.

We will start noonday prayer promptly at 12:12 and end just before 1pm.

Please do not call in before 12:05pm.

You can call in for all or part of the time.

We will use the Book of Common Prayer pp. 103-107.

Dial-in number: (425) 436-6300

Access code: 593523#

Use *6 to mute and un-mute yourself when trying to talk.

REMINDER TO THE PARISH AND COMMUNITY

- Community Meals will continue as scheduled. **Meals will be prepared for take-out**
- Vestry Meetings will be virtual until further notice.
- Please click on the link for a list of phone and internet AA meetings [Online Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous](#)



OCTOBER CELEBRATIONS



BIRTHDAYS

October 2nd: Frances Richardson
October 2nd: Charlie Spada
October 7th: Kinzley Gillies
October 13th: Teddie Black
October 22nd: Ray Dittebrand
October 25th: Jenny Christ

BIRTHDAYS

October 29th: John O'Donnell
October 31th: Joe Sgambellon

ANNIVERSARIES

October 26th: Jenny & Michael Christ

AUTUMN YARD CLEAN-UP SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3RD

Come and join us for an hour or two as we ready our church yard for its winter rest.

All are welcome to join us as we work outside, socially distant from each other.

Bring your families or just yourself and help us . . .

- ❖ Cut the iris and salvia back
- ❖ Remove weeds and lightly mulch the grounds (yes, only LIGHT mulch required this time around!)
- ❖ Trim the hedges

Our yard has been so beautiful this year. Thank You! Together we have worked to nurture what God has provided for our church and community to enjoy: a retreat for worship, reading, meditation, conversation, and rest as well as a place for deer, bunnies, birds, bees and butterflies.

PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS TO THE CHURCH

Please mail in your pledges/financial offerings so we can continue with the ministries of the church as well as meet our financial obligations.

OR

YOU CAN USE PLASTIC TO DONATE TO THE CHURCH!

At theascensionshop.com you can use plastic to donate to the church. Credit and debit cards are accepted. One time, Weekly, Bi-Weekly, and Monthly contributions can be entered. All contributions will show on your annual statement. Just take a look! With thanks to theascensionshop creator Michael Crowdes; send questions to crowdes@gmail.com.