



Spires



November 2020

Church of the Ascension

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

FROM REV. VINCENT BLACK



I Beloved People of God,

When we set “Faith-Filled Generosity” as the theme for this year’s stewardship campaign, none of us could have known what this year would be like. I need not remind you of the disruptions, losses, and anxieties that this year has brought to our communities, for we are all still living with the impacts. The coronavirus pandemic has tested our resolve and maybe at times has tested our faith as well. However, I believe we are stronger, more resilient, and more connected than we have ever been as a Church and as a community of neighbors. Thank you. Thanks to each one of you for doing your part in your homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, families, and here in our church.

Our stewardship and our mission this year have been focused on service. As we experienced several weeks of not being able to gather in-person, the usual focus on weekly worship was spread throughout the week as we found ways to gather virtually, taking more time to pray for each other’s needs and serve our communities. You used this time to discover, hone, and put to use the gifts you have received from our gracious God and to serve one another.

I have witnessed the countless ways that you have used your resources for the mission of the Church and to help each other. I have found it inspiring and hopeful as we plan our work together in 2021. This coming year, we will explore the way that our generosity is inspired by our faith, how we are formed and led into relationship with each other as we share our gifts with the world. This is what we mean by “Faith-Filled Generosity.”

How will you discover and use the gifts you have been given to help our church this year? How will you hear the Gospel call to seek and serve Christ in all people, and respond with generosity? As I look at each family, each individual in our community, I realize that we are the stewards of God’s manifold grace because we give to the world from what we have received and that includes sharing our church building and our gardens with our neighbors.

I invite you to receive the pledge materials with grace and prayer as you consider how you will share with God and God’s Church from what you have received. I also encourage you to visit our website and view the two videos that highlight some of our ministries, improvements to our facilities, and opportunities for spiritual growth. Videos will be posted on November 7th. Website: <https://ascension-lakewood.org>

Faithfully yours in Christ,
The Reverend Vincent Black

FROM CORKY THACKER, SENIOR WARDEN



Senior Warden's Report

Our 2021 Pledge Drive, "Faith-Filled Generosity", begins on All Saints Day, Nov. 1 and runs through Christ the King Sunday, Nov. 22. I invite you to read the following pages outlining Ascension's missions and what it costs to operate our church and carry them out.

The \$224,906 operating budget is \$8,361 less than 2020's—which reflects the loss of \$18,000 in rent paid to us by Lakewood Montessori School, which plans to buy its own building but did not open this year due to Covid-19 concerns. We intend to seek another tenant for the undercroft when the disruptions from the virus have abated, but that timing is uncertain and we have trimmed our budget accordingly.

In addition to that loss of revenue, other factors contributing to our \$168,000 pledge goal include:

- A lower budget estimate of revenue from fund raising activities due to likely Covid limitations;
- An increased budget for cleaning supplies for Covid protocols to keep our buildings safe; and
- An increased budget for Community Meals.

We are blessed to still receive a \$30,000 Diocesan grant toward our rector's compensation package in 2021.

And Diocesan capital assistance grants in the past three years have helped our parish make great strides in catching up with major repairs to our buildings, which were the result of long-deferred maintenance or the age of our beautiful church, which is around 100 years old. In 2020, the Diocese was especially generous in approving two capital assistance applications. The first was a grant for one-third of the amount to replace the undercroft ceiling that had partially collapsed (parishioners paid two-thirds, as we usually do).

The second is for replacing improperly installed roof flashings causing major damage to the interior of the nave. Details are on the last page of the pledge drive budget goals that follows, along with other major repairs we expect in 2021. Due to the emergency nature of this \$84,344 project, immediate donations could only cover one-third of the cost, so we had to apply for one-third grant and one-third loan. Paying off the loan quickly is a priority, as it will save us more than \$3,000. An anonymous donor has offered \$10,000 toward this project **as a match to parishioners' donations of \$10,000**. Please prayerfully consider making an additional gift in the space on your pledge card and note "Roof flashings" in the blank for project(s). If you'd like to donate to more than one project, kindly note the amount intended for each. We will need parishioners' donations for all three of the projects on the list.

Last Sunday, the Gospel according to Matthew 22:34-46 contains Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question of what is the most important commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind." Jesus then added the second most important commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The reflection by Rob Townes "Freely giving our all to God" included in this issue of Spires describes the sacrificial and spiritual nature of these commandments, and that all of us are invited to learn to live Jesus' greatest commandment. By doing this, he says, Faith-Filled Generosity will flourish in our lives. In my experience, striving to use all that I have and all that I am to follow and imitate Jesus Christ here at Ascension has caused my life to flourish—and pledging is a big part of that!

Sincerely,
Corky Thacker,
Senior Warden

God loves you. No exceptions.®

FAITH·FILLED GENEROSITY: my 2021 pledge

Church of the Ascension: How Our Budget Enables Us to Serve as a Community of Faith

Community outreach and support

Providing a safe space for:

- 7 weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings helping people come back to life through recovery.
- 30 parking spaces for high school students who attend St. Edward's High School.
- Trials for Hope fundraising dinners.
- Serving three monthly community meals.
- Collecting new and gently worn clothing, given to a partner church's free distribution center.

Providing:

- A Thanksgiving service for the whole community, both parishioners and non-parishioners so that no one goes hungry spiritually on Thanksgiving.
- The opportunity and yarn for people to gather and make shawls and blankets for people suffering or celebrating while sharing prayer, fellowship, and laughter.
- A safe and welcoming green space for people to gather; share a Frankfurter or a hamburger in summer.
- A consecrated space for prayer and connecting with nature at the St. Francis Pet Memorial Garden.
- Holiday care packages for those who may lack the essentials.
- Space and opportunity to gather school supplies and get them distributed to students in need.
- Physical and/or virtual space for us to become a community who cares for each other, builds relationships, grows in our faith, and has fun together.

Worship, Education and Pastoral Care

- A priest who is available to lead us spiritually by teaching, preaching, and praying.
 - Two weekly Sunday in-person worship services.
 - Live-streaming Sunday worship service.
 - Tuesdays virtual Noontime Prayer and connection.
 - Spiritual growth through silence and Centering Prayer.
 - Additional services for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Ascension Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.
 - Nursery care during Sunday services (will resume post-Covid).
 - Sunday School (at-home packets now; will resume in-person post-Covid).
 - Virtual Christian Formation classes.
 - Education for Ministry (EFM) Mondays.
- Serving as an internship site for clergy development.
- A priest who cares for our pastoral needs including counseling, births, baptisms, weddings, sickness, suffering, and death.
- A priest who helps us connect to and love our neighbors by helping us live our faith in this community.

Stewardship

- Caring for our buildings, including our beautiful church, entrusted to us by our forbearers, which we share with the community.
- Caring for our beautiful grounds with all the trees, flowers, shrubs, etc. which are enjoyed by all in the neighborhood.
- Caring for three parking lots and the surrounding driveway.
- Paying for electric, gas, phone, internet, water, sewer, insurance, office supplies and printing.

Here is a summary of the funding required to ensure we are able to serve as a beacon of hope and a witness to the gospel for all people, allowing us to worship God faithfully and beautifully, welcoming all to know a God who loves them, no exceptions.

Expenses

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Building & Grounds | \$ 18,159 |
| Shawl Ministry materials & ECW support | 650 |
| Children & Youth Education | 220 |
| Christian Education | 890 |
| Insurance (buildings & workers' compensation) | 16,590 |
| Office Expenses | 5,114 |
| Community Meals/Charity/Local Evangelism/Outreach/Members/Social | 4,623 |
| Staff & Custodial Salaries/Taxes | 18,143 |
| Telephone/Internet/Electricity/Gas/Water | 26,264 |
| Rectory Electricity/Smoke Detection/Security Systems | 1,406 |
| Worship Expenses | 3,397 |
| Rector's Cash Salary | 59,916 |
| Rector's Health Insurance/Pension/Mileage/Phone/Internet/Continuing Education | 47,734 |
| Diocesan Assessment | 20,600 |
| Credit Card Processing Fees | 1,200 |
| Total Expenses | \$224,906 |

Revenues

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Diocesan Grant: Rector's Compensation | \$32,000 |
| Restricted Fund: Christian Education | 1,560 |
| Restricted Fund: Ministry & Growth | 1,560 |
| Pledge Contributions | 168,000 |
| Plate Offerings | 7,484 |
| Special Contributions (Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, Thanksgiving, etc.) | 2,902 |
| AA Rents (discounted as Outreach) | 9,000 |
| Weddings/other facilities rental | 900 |
| Fund Raising Projects | 1,500 |
| Total Revenues | \$224,906 |

2021 Major Repairs Needed (Apart from the Operating Budget)

Expenses

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Loan for Roof Flashings Replacement & Interior Plaster/Painting Repairs in the Nave | \$28,114* |
| HVAC Maintenance Repairs (avoid service interruptions) | 2,000 |
| Repairs of Rotted Wood & Stucco, West Exterior of Church (Ballpark; getting quotes) | 10,000 |
| Total Expenses | \$40,114 |

Revenues

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Parking Lot Rental (St. Edwards High School; they also provide our snowplowing) | \$2,000 |
| Donations/Fundraising | 38,114 |
| Total Revenues | \$40,114 |

* Water leaks along improperly installed roof flashings for 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. The cause of the damage was diagnosed last November by a structural engineer, and temporary sealant was applied that worked until this summer, but now plaster is falling from the balcony wall. The sealant above the altar wall appears 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.

The Diocese of Ohio agreed that we must do the repairs NOW, and is supporting Ascension's \$84,344 project with a grant of \$28,114 (one-third of the cost) and a loan of one-third. Parishioners' up-front donations of \$28,114 provided the other third. Work is beginning on the roof flashings.

\$28,114 is the amount needed to pay off the loan immediately for this emergency project. It is a 5-year loan with monthly payments of \$524.13. We will need **at least \$6,289.56 in donations for 2021 payments, which are not included in our operating budget.** If we just make payments for the next five years, the total cost will be **\$31,448 due to interest.**

We typically raise two-thirds of the cost of major repairs and apply to the Diocese for grants only to avoid paying interest. Please prayerfully consider making an extra donation to pay for this vital repair! An anonymous donor has offered \$10,000 toward this project **as a match to parishioners' donations of \$10,000.** Please prayerfully consider making an additional gift in the space on your pledge card and note "Roof flashings" in the blank for project(s). If you'd like to donate to more than one project, kindly note the amount intended for each. We will need parishioners' donations for all three of the projects on the list.

October 25, 2020

Freely giving our all to God

*“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind’
And ... ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” – MATTHEW 22:36-39*

BY ROB TOWNES



There’s a saying that the chicken who lays an egg makes a contribution, but the chicken who makes a sandwich offers a sacrifice. One could say that Jesus was alluding to the latter when he responded to the question as to which was the greatest commandment, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all of who you are.”* He was asking for more than a contribution; he was asking for the sacrifice of our all.

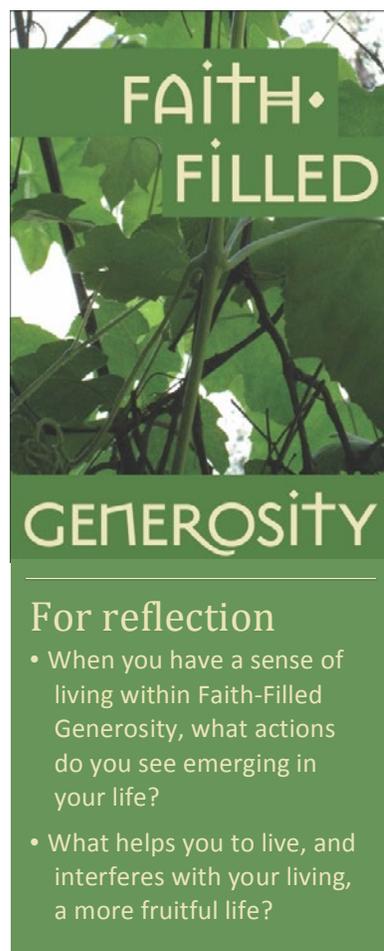
As the Latin root of the word suggests, a sacrifice — a *sacrum facere* — makes one holy. Giving generously of that of which you are a steward — your heart, soul, mind and all your possessions — is life giving. And it is countercultural. As the bumper sticker declares, *“S/He who dies with the most toys wins.”* That’s a powerfully seductive statement. Only with God’s help can we avoid being allured into thinking that it is in acquiring possessions that our life gains meaning. May we grow in the wisdom that a rich life results in trusting that it is in God we live and move and have our being.

This reflection is written while visiting Green Bough House of Prayer in Scott, Georgia. Here the three residents, with the company of 77 associates, have dedicated their lives, their all, to God and have taken on a Rule of Life to embrace silence, prayer, simplicity and living in the present moment, and accept all as coming from God. Do all for God. Offer all to God. This to me is a beautiful example of Faith-Filled Generosity.

Very few members of the Church dedicate themselves to full-time contemplative living, but all of us are invited to learn to live Jesus’ greatest commandment, trusting that in so doing, Faith-Filled Generosity will flourish in our lives.

As we move back into our church buildings, remembering only too well the COVID-19-caused absence of normalcy, may we re-enter with a renewed commitment to freely giving our all to God and faithfully loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Rob Townes received his Master of Divinity degree from Emory University’s Candler School of Theology and has spent his professional career as a nonprofit and church fundraising consultant.



FROM LEAH ROMANELLI DEJESUS, SEMINARIAN



One of my most exciting and fulfilling classes right now is Systematic Theology. From what I hear from priests I know, that's a pretty unusual experience. Systematic Theology is supposed to be intellectually rigorous, intricate, and challenging to all your centrally held beliefs. And in a lot of ways, I am experiencing that, but there's something else I'm experiencing, too: an opening. I can't decide if it's of my mind or heart or soul. Probably all three.

You see, I'm attending Bexley Seabury Seminary in Chicago online in their hybrid learning system (I was doing it before our kids had to!), but their Systematic Theology course was full this fall when I registered, so I cross-registered at another Chicago seminary that offers courses online: McCormick. Now, I know almost nothing about McCormick except that it's Presbyterian. However, the students with whom I study theology are of a multiplicity of denominations. African Methodist Episcopalian, Baptist, American Baptist, PCUSA, nondenominational, evangelical, Four Square—you name it. And the people in my class are of diverse backgrounds, too. I'm the only white woman in the class, although it's taught by two white women, one of whom is a scientist. There's a white man from Ireland, a handful of Chinese and Korean students, and a large number of African-American students from all walks of life. Some are already pastors, some are investment bankers, and some are church planters on the south side of Chicago. No two people in class hold the same opinion or have the same life experience or context. I haven't been in a setting this diverse since undergrad and listening to how other people think about God is expanding my universe and my concept of our Creator.

Most recently we finished sharing our papers on "Who is God?" This is not actually a particularly easy question to answer. We explored the idea of the Trinity together and what it meant to be made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'" (ESV). But, as Rita Rozel said in a discussion a few weeks ago, "Who exactly is the 'we,' here? We've got 'God said,' 'God said,' 'God said,' and now 'we'? Where did that come from?" And Rita's right. Although many theologians think "we" here is the Trinity, there's no definite answer. But if we are made in the image of the Trinity, what does that mean? Which part of us looks like the three-in-one?

I think we can probably agree that God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus before his incarnation are non-corporeal. So, then, is it our intelligence that sets us part from the rest of the world that we inherited from God? Our creativity and ability to use tools? The divine breath God breathed into Adam's lungs that lives on in each of us—our souls?

In the second creation story, in Genesis 2, God says that it's not good for man to be alone, so God creates the animals and has Adam name them all. Adam is to care for them, now. But in the midst of Eden, surrounded by everything God has declared good, Adam is lonely. "The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:20). Only then does God create Eve, Adam's partner and equal, co-laborer in Creation.

What if the way we are created in the image of God—the three-in-one Trinity—is that we are created for relationship? Because the theological lessons that we learn from the Trinity are that there can be unity in diversity, like in my theology class, and that together, we can help each other become more than we are when we're separate. We learn intimacy from the way the Trinity interacts with itself, creating, tending, caring for, saving, and inspiring humanity. We learn that even when they appear to be separate, as when Christ is incarnated, they are never actually apart from each other. So, what if Adam's loneliness in the garden, is actually a reflection of the Trinity? What if the way we were created in the image of God is that we are created to be in relationship?

Again, there is no correct answer, here. We can only guess and hope at the mystery of God. But if we are created for relationship, no wonder sheltering at home is so hard. No wonder people make decisions that are not in their best interests and go out in pursuit of friends and family and escape and our numbers skyrocket. No wonder we feel so isolated when we stay home, so lonely.

As we think about what to do for the holidays that are approaching—whether to travel to see family, whether to follow family traditions of togetherness that we've lived into for generations and that have become so meaningful to us—there is no one-size-fits-all answer for everyone. We can only guess and hope and pray. But in the meantime, I hope that in our mind's eye, we can gather together everyone we love—past, present, and future—and thank God for those relationships. And when we grieve them, and being separated from them, I hope we can reach out to God. We are made for connection not only to each other, but also to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. I hope we can let ourselves rest in that embrace. I pray that we can rely on that life-giving relationship that never goes away, that can't be separated from us: neither [by] death nor life, nor pandemics nor elections, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor fires nor hurricanes, nor anything else in all creation. Nothing can separate us from the love of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

November 2020



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|--|--|---|------------------|------------------|
| <p>1</p> <p>8 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> <p>10:30 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> <p><i>Daylight Savings Time ends</i></p> | <p>2</p> <p>5 pm - Trials for Hope Meal <i>(Take out only)</i></p> | <p>3</p> <p>12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 9)</p> <p><i>Election Day</i></p> | <p>4</p> | <p>5</p> | <p>6</p> | <p>7</p> |
| <p>8</p> <p>8 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> <p>10:30 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> | <p>9</p> | <p>10</p> <p>12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 9)</p> | <p>11</p> <p><i>Veteran's Day</i></p> | <p>12</p> <p>6 pm - Community Meal <i>(Take out only)</i></p> | <p>13</p> | <p>14</p> |
| <p>15</p> <p>8 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> <p>10:30 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> | <p>16</p> | <p>17</p> <p>12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 9)</p> | <p>18</p> | <p>19</p> | <p>20</p> | <p>21</p> |
| <p>22</p> <p>8 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> <p>10:30 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> | <p>23</p> <p>5 pm - Trials for Hope Meal <i>(Take out only)</i></p> | <p>24</p> <p>12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 9)</p> | <p>25</p> | <p>26</p> <p>10:30am Service <i>(No Meal)</i></p> <p><i>Thanksgiving Day</i></p> | <p>27</p> | <p>28</p> |
| <p>29</p> <p>Advent begins</p> <p>8 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> <p>10:30 am- Service <i>(Make reservations)</i></p> | <p>30</p> | | | | | |

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](#)



NOVEMBER CELEBRATIONS



BIRTHDAYS

November 03: Henry Hildebrandt
November 06: Arthur Sent
November 09: Geoffrey Killey
November 09: Meg Knapp

BIRTHDAYS

November 10: Vincent Black
November 10: Susan Lewallen
November 20: Sue Campion
November 21: Bethany Foster

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.

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.