



Spires



January 2021

Church of the Ascension

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

FROM REV. VINCENT BLACK



Merry Christmas! We begin the new year still in the Christmas season. Many of us know and celebrate the twelve days of Christmas culminating with the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6th, the day the magi found the child Jesus having been led to him by the star. I hope you were able to see our magi and the other characters portrayed by our children in Ascension's video version of the pop-up nativity. I also hope you heard three other children beautifully sing of the gifts of the Magi at our Eucharist on January 3rd.



Some Christians celebrate Christmas until February 2nd. Why February 2nd? Well, you can look in your Book of Common Prayer (BCP) on page 20 and see why. If you don't have a BCP, we need to fix that. Everyone needs their own copy of the BCP in their home! Anyway, February 2nd is The Presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple (see Luke 2: 22-40). It is from this passage of scripture that we get the beautiful Song of Simeon after he takes the child Jesus into his arms, "...For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see: a light to enlighten the nations..."

Roger and I have decided to celebrate Christmas this year until February 2nd. We will keep our decorations up and light our trees, including the tree outside in front of Ascension House, until we celebrate the Presentation. We have decided this primarily because we want to focus on the miracle of Christmas, or Emmanuel, of God with us. The lights and other decorations help us to do so. Jesus is the light to enlighten the nations, the light to enlighten us, the light to enlighten our hearts, our homes, our parish, our nation, and our world!

One of the people who has helped shine the light of Christ for us and on us has been our senior warden, Corky Thacker. Corky has been our senior warden for three years and in her piece this month you can read many of the things we have accomplished under her leadership. Please read her piece carefully with gratitude and with openness. She has carried the torch for three years and now will be handing it off as her tenure as senior warden comes to an end.

In our understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ we hold as true the belief that all of us are needed, each with our individual strengths and weaknesses. Together, we serve as Christ in the world, always with Jesus as our head. We thank Corky for all that she has done as senior warden and we ask God to help us all take our places in the leadership and ministries to which we are being called. So when I ask you to prayerfully consider taking part in something or serving in some way, please do. Just imagine where we would be and all the things that might not have happened, if Corky had said no.

God loves you. No exceptions.®

FROM CORKY THACKER, SENIOR WARDEN



Senior Warden's Report

I am so deeply grateful for everyone at Ascension who's been praying for me since my Stage IV cancer diagnosis last February. I have felt your prayers surrounding me during procedures, tests and rough patches in treatment, and I'm pleased to report that they are working: My oncologist recently declared that there is no longer any cancer in my breast and she'll cease the regular progress CT scans of my chest. I will remain on our prayer list, however, as treatment will continue to address the cancerous lesions in my liver.

Although the therapies have reduced their size somewhat, the rate of reduction is not what she expected. After a few questions about my daily activities and responsibilities, she strongly advised against the current level of stress in my life and believes it is interfering with my healing. My primary care internist, who put me on blood pressure medication three weeks ago, concurs. God blessed me with good doctors, and I will follow their recommendations.

At the conclusion of our Annual Meeting on Jan. 17, I will step down from Vestry a year early. I will also reduce my responsibilities on the Finance Committee and will only participate in non-deadline projects or advising.

The new Vestry will appoint a replacement to serve out the balance of my term. As every year, the Vestry will elect a Senior Warden and Junior Warden, and will appoint a Clerk and our Treasurer. Many thanks to our outgoing Junior Warden, Owen Jones, for his recent two terms of Vestry service.

It has been an honor to have served in a leadership position for so many major aspects of Ascension's growth since Jeff and I joined this wonderful church. In this final Senior Warden's Report, it's appropriate to look back on some key achievements that we as a parish have accomplished together. Many people were involved, who were acknowledged at the time and in each year's Annual Report.

2017: We renovated the Rectory to serve as our priest's residence, saving around \$6,200 annually in salary and furthering our mission as a community-centered parish. In my roles on the Finance Committee and Vestry, I sourced materials and developed the budget, while Jeff served as general contractor to save the 20% mark-ups on labor and materials typically charged by hired contractors. We took on these tasks since we had just performed them in building a major addition to Jeff's house in 2016.

2018: This was my first year as Senior Warden. We replaced the flat roof and gutter system over the Guild Room, church offices and hallways. We also replaced the non-functioning elevator gates and had tuck pointing done around deteriorating concrete capstones on the church roof's parapets. These projects were supported by a capital grant from the Diocese of Ohio for one-third of their cost.

We started Ascension Market as an additional summer point of outreach and an opportunity for parishioners and community members to sell their goods and raise some funds for the church. We promoted the market at Lakewood' Summer Meltdown event.

We also started a new opportunity for fellowship and outreach during Advent that we called "Community, Carols & Cocoa." We served hot cocoa at Lakewood Garden Center as they sold Christmas trees on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, marched in the Light-up Lakewood parade and sponsored a cocoa stand, caroled in the neighborhood and at church and invited everyone to our Christmas Lessons & Carols Eucharist and Feast and to Christmas Day worship. Attendance was increased at both. We also raised money for the Lakewood Community Services Center, and created gift bags of toiletries for our Community Meals guests. We applied for and received a grant from the Diocese to fund the new activities.

Our biggest accomplishment was the Vestry vote in December to elect and call Father Vincent to serve as our full-time Rector, effective January 1, 2019, and to approve the budget to support that. Many thanks to parishioners who have stepped up with their pledges and offerings this commitment requires! The Diocese continued to provide grants of \$30,000 toward our rector's compensation package for 2019, 2020 and 2021. By 2022, the support will be reduced as we are expected to be closer to full financial sustainability.

2019: In my second year as Senior Warden, I still was a little uncomfortable when I was introduced as such to visitors who joked, "Do you carry keys and lock people in here?" However, I came to fully understand and appreciate the title in dealing with roof leaks from a substandard installation of the flat roof and gutters by a subcontractor of West Roofing Systems, Inc. in late 2018. West repaired the leaks and replaced the improper gutters, but dragged their feet on the necessary plaster repairs and painting. My position put me on the same level as the roofing company's CEO, and as a warden, I was responsible for safeguarding the physical and fiscal assets of our church. He accepted our proposal to use the contractors of our choosing to make the repairs and to deduct the cost from the balance we still owed to West. These repairs included plaster and painting in the rector's office, second floor hallway, ceiling between the office and Ascension Hall, and the corridor to the nave.

FROM CORKY THACKER, SENIOR WARDEN

In the spring, an innovative 6-week program taught interested guests from our Community Meals how to cook nutritious meals in Instant Pots using ingredients typically available in food pantries. Parishioners volunteered as table captains. In the process of learning a way of simplifying meal preparation and improving nutrition together, bonds developed among the participants that erased labels of “parishioner” and “guest” that were demonstrated and strengthened at other events throughout the year. Some have joined us in worship, and many others are regular participants who also volunteer and help with the chores at our gatherings. They are members of our Ascension community. Not being much of a cook, my contribution was coaching our former Deacon, Barb Telfer, in writing her application for a Ministry and Connection grant from the Diocese for funds to contribute to the cost of the pots and food.

We made major exterior and interior repairs to correct masonry and plaster damage incurred by decades of deferred maintenance, beginning with replacement of window lintels, spalled bricks, chimney rebuilding or removal and tuck pointing, followed by plaster repairs and painting. The last of this work was completed in December 2020.

Bishop Hollingsworth presided and the Rev. Brad Purdom, Canon for Congregations, preached at our Sept. 28 Celebration of Renewed Ministry, a very touching service that officially installed Father Black as our rector. Feelings of honor and gratitude overwhelmed me as I stood with my dear friend and beloved priest, Vincent, before the Bishop and the gathered church during the Presentation. I felt humbled to serve on your behalf and proud of the people of Ascension to received God’s blessing as we began a new ministry together.

Cookie Walk was folded into our second year of Community, Carols & Cocoa events, which was supported by a Ministry and Connection grant from the Diocese for the cost of lunches, dinners, supplies and printing of promotional materials. Cookie Walk, last held in 2015, raised \$1,481 for Ascension, plus \$240 to benefit Lakewood Community Services Center.

2020: My third year as Senior Warden began with four projects that originated in 2019. The first was completion of the columbarium expansion that began the previous July, because several parishioners had expressed interest in purchasing niches and none were available. After many meetings with John Winterich Ecclesiastical Design to produce a smaller columbarium to abut the original one in the chapel that the company had provided, the one they delivered in October didn’t fit the space nor match the wood or finish color. To their credit, the company agreed to start over to make the product right. Countless meetings between the firm, the carpenter, Father Vincent, me and Jeff (including our driving the carpenter to a wood supplier in Amish country) went into creating the desired result. During a visit at the carpenter’s shop to confirm the dimensions of the new unit, Father Vincent noticed the rejected one and asked if we could have it, after hearing that it was planned to be scrapped. We are grateful that John Winterich agreed, and it fits a nook in the Narthex next to the stained glass windows of Ruth and Esther and perfectly matches the woodwork there.

Before installing the extra columbarium, we needed to repair water-damaged plaster from leaking roof flashings that were still protected by a temporary caulking fix; that work was performed in March and both units were installed in April.

During the summer of 2019, a large section of the choir room ceiling collapsed. The Diocese requested that we file a claim with Church Insurance Corporation, and several months later, a structural engineer determined the cause to be age, which was not covered. His report required us to replace the entire undercroft ceiling, including the choir room area after the end of the Lakewood Montessori School year in June 2020. The work was done in July, and included new electrical wiring to meet current code and provide additional electrical outlets and energy-efficient LED lighting. Again, the Diocese helped with a capital grant for one-third of the cost.

The engineer’s report in November 2019 also cited flashings on the church roof as the primary cause of water damage occurring in the nave. Water leaks along improperly installed roof flashings for the two gables behind the parapet walls of the church were causing extensive interior damage to the nave’s balcony area and were beginning to cause damage to the sanctuary wall behind the altar. Temporary sealant was applied that worked until the summer of 2020, but then plaster started falling from the balcony wall. The Diocese of Ohio agreed that we needed to make the repairs immediately, and supported Ascension’s project with a grant of one-third of the cost and a loan of one-third. Parishioners’ up-front donations provided the other third. Work was completed on the roof flashings in November 2020. The plaster repairs and painting will be done this spring. We received additional pledges and donations from non-members that enabled us to pay off the loan by Dec. 31, 2020 to save Ascension from paying any interest. Thanks to all who contributed to this project—especially the anonymous donor who made a \$10,000 matching gift to others’ donations!

In addition to these major capital repairs in 2020, we replaced the wireless microphones in the nave to meet new frequency requirements that began in July, upgraded our sound system and purchased a camera to enhance our virtual worship and live streaming video capabilities, replaced the old mercury vapor lights in Strom Hall with energy-saving LED light bulbs, replaced a heater and a freezer in the Strom Hall kitchen, thoroughly cleaned and reorganized that kitchen and the one in Ascension Hall, upgraded our internet service and added wireless capability to the church offices and the nave, and created the St. Francis Pet Memorial Garden that is graced by a statue of the saint seated with a fawn—all while dealing with Covid-19! We also applied for and received a forgivable CARES Act Payroll Protection Program loan of \$26,500. More details will be in the 2020 Annual Report.

FROM CORKY THACKER, SENIOR WARDEN

Moving toward financial sustainability

I'd never written a grant application before, but discovered a knack for it when we needed help in funding all of the above major projects, whose costs totaled \$341,875. Our parishioners and friends donated \$260,742 and the Diocese of Ohio very generously provided \$137,359 in grants and a loan. Many thanks to all of you who walked with me in making these projects happen!

When I agreed to chair the Pledge Drive for 2019, pledges for the prior year were \$98,480. We've increased pledges each year since then, and so far have around \$142,000 pledged for 2021 despite the current pandemic. Each year, we summarized what we're doing here at Ascension and what it costs to operate our church, and our members have supplied this 30% increase. While we're not yet financially sustainable, we get closer every year.

Last year, the Lakewood Montessori School did not renew their lease. They'd hoped to buy their own building, but the deal fell through and then Covid caused them and similar businesses to suspend operations. We will seek another tenant for the undercroft space, but do not see that as likely in 2021 and did not include that rental income in this year's budget. We now have a beautifully renovated space and the unique feature of a sizable green-space playground behind the rectory, and are confident that we will again have an income stream once things settle down post-pandemic.

Another building block for achieving financial sustainability is planned giving. This has moved from an agenda item for Finance Committee discussions when I first joined it in 2016 to the establishment of the Church of the Ascension Endowment for Clergy Support (Dec. 31, 2019 balance: \$46,345); the Church of the Ascension Endowment for Facilities Upkeep and Maintenance (Dec. 31, 2019 balance: \$26,530); and a Legacy Pledge Fund (Dec. 31, 2019 balance: \$7,700). The goal for each of the two endowments is \$1 million, which would generate annual revenue of \$40,000 for each of those items in Ascension's operating budget in perpetuity, based on the historical level of earnings in the Joint Investment Fund of the Diocese of Ohio where these accounts are held. Jeff and I recently updated our estate documents to support the endowments (although I hope to not be funding them anytime soon)!

Opportunities to grow in service

I asked for the Sr. Warden's job description at the beginning of my first term, but our Parish Regulations and any other sources I found offered more broad concepts than specifics. So I've applied my talents and professional background where they fit and where God (and Father Vincent) led me. The Lord blessed me with a pretty broad skill set, which I've been pleased to apply to meet many of Ascension's needs.

As I reviewed my activities over the past few years, I can see why my doctors are advising me to rest now. In fact, it would probably be best for several other people to pick up these responsibilities! It would also offer opportunities for more parishioners to discover new applications for your skills and/or discover abilities you don't currently know you have. Through giving all that I am and all that I have in these endeavors, I've found new meaning in my life, made new friends and experienced a new happiness in service to this special church where my wonderful husband and I were married.

Thank you all for your support and prayers during these years and in my current spiritual journey.

Sincerely,
Corky Thacker, Senior Warden

**THANK YOU CORKY FOR ALL YOU HAVE
DONE AS SENIOR WARDEN.**

**OUR SUNDAY 10:30 A.M. SERVICE IS AVAILABLE ON BOTH
THE ASCENSION FACEBOOK PAGE AND
ON THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION WEBSITE:**

<https://ascension-lakewood.org/main/>

January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 <i>New Years Day</i>	2
3 10:30 am - Service is now available on both the Ascension Facebook page and website	4	5 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call 5 pm - Trials for Hope Meal <i>(Take out only)</i>	6	7	8	9
10 10:30 am - Service is now available on both the Ascension Facebook page and website	11	12 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 6)	13	14 6 pm - Community Meal <i>(Take out only)</i>	15	16
17 10:30 am - Service Online 1 pm - <i>Annual Meeting via Zoom</i>	18 <i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</i>	19 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 6)	20	21	22	23
24/31 10:30 am - Service is now available on both the Ascension Facebook page and website	25 5 pm - Trials for Hope Meal <i>(Take out only)</i>	26 12:12 pm- Noon day prayer via conference call (See Page 6)	27	28	29	30

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting will be on January 17th at 1pm via Zoom. You can use the internet to connect to Zoom but will need to download the app first. You can also call into Zoom. The information to connect or call in is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83481002478?pwd=ZlJkLytvVGdlcHFOVWFGMHRMZmdmZz09>

Password: Ascension

Meeting ID: 834 8100 2478

Passcode: Ascension

Or to call in:

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,83481002478#,,,,*712043150# US (Washington D.C)

+13126266799,,83481002478#,,,,*712043150# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 834 8100 2478

Passcode: 712043150

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcCA5JLI4f>

All parishioners are encouraged to attend the annual meeting as the whole parish is responsible for the governance of the church. The meeting will last no more than two hours. We will elect new vestry members. There are three open positions. Rita Rozell, Greg Sent, and Jeff Sommer have been nominated to serve on vestry and have agreed to stand for election .

In-person worship on Sundays

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.

8 am and 10:30 am services will be in the church. As a rule we will enter via the center aisle, and exit via the side aisles maintaining social distance.

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 worshiping God and bearing witness to the world of God's unwavering love.

If you plan on attending church in person please register at <https://ascensionregistration.eventbrite.com> before 12pm on the day before.

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](#)

JANUARY CELEBRATIONS

ANNIVERSARIES

January 13: Mary & George Staley
January 28: Grace & David Buehler



BIRTHDAYS

January 07: Anna Sutterisch
January 10: Susan O'Donnell
January 12: Melissa Schlosser
January 22: Yolanda Harris
January 22: Barbara Kutza
January 25: Tyler Lewallen



CLOTHING DRIVE



Due to COVID-19 we are no longer collecting clothing for St. Luke's. Please do not drop off clothes at church. The dropbox has been removed.

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

You can pick **Church of the Ascension** to donate to on **amazonsmile** and amazon will donate a percentage of your total purchase to the church.

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.