

**THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION**  
**LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA**  
**PARISH MEETING**  
**JANUARY 26, 2025**



**Agenda**

- I. Call to Order and Opening Prayer
- II. Election of Candidates for Vestry (p 5)
- III. Election of Nominees for Diocesan Convention
- IV. Senior Warden Report
- V. Junior Warden Report
- VI. Treasurer’s Report
- VII. 2024-2025 Budget Reports
- VIII. Ascension Episcopal School
- IX. Chaplain’s Report
- X. Deacon’s Report
- XI. Interim Rector’s Report
- XII. Closing Prayer

**Senior Warden’s Report**

Greetings once again on behalf of your Vestry!

I hope that all of you have had a wonderful Christmas season, and we want to wish everyone a blessed 2025.

2024 brought significant challenges and changes in the landscape here at Ascension. Our longest tenured Rector in our church’s history, Joseph Daly, retired after 16 years of service to the Parish. I want to take a minute to talk about what a blessing he has been to us over the years, and how fortunate we have been to have him as a leader. Wise, compassionate, and forward thinking...he was a visionary for the Church and school and literally brought us to another level in every regard.

In a conversation with him recently, I asked him to reflect on what he felt were a few of his most cherished accomplishments. Here is what he shared...

- Unifying the Church and School in mission across campuses with sound financial stability, while building bridges with ESA
- Leading ECA out of debt to financial stability and building a Foundation of well over 1M, and enabling pilot parish ministries
- Developing parish liturgy and integrating contemporary music and musicians into services
- Developing young and newly ordained clergy in collaboration with other dioceses to serve the whole church beyond Ascension to continue our classical tradition of faith and service
- Building international bonds in Africa and the Middle East serving their educational and medical needs

Quite the legacy, indeed! What a blessing he and his family have been to Ascension, and we want to wish him, Andrew and Aiden all the best in all of their future endeavors. Thank you, Daly family!!

Since Joseph’s departure and in the interim, we have been fortunate and blessed to have the guidance of Father Matt Woollett. His calm demeanor, and experience and wisdom have been invaluable to us over these past few months.

We are so lucky to have him around and are grateful to him and especially Harriet for sharing him with us! If you haven’t already, please take the time to introduce yourself to him and spend some time in his company...trust me when I say that you will not regret it.

As you know, we have been in the midst of a Rector search over the past two months. You should trust that your Vestry and the Search Committee have been and will continue to be diligent in our process-

**Junior Warden’s Report 2024**

Fellow Parishioners,

2024 has been an uneventful year for the most part. Repairs that were addressed this year.

- Finished the Columbarium with help of the school finding the proper brick mason.
- Sealed the roof on Coughlin Hall, the school saved us money as we used the labor of the facilities staff to help offset the costs.
- The sidewalk in front of the church from the side parking lot was fixed and is now level and a little bit wider.
- Replaced a couple of AC’s on the side of the church. Now the majority of the AC’s are replaced .
- Fixed the Road Sign at the front entrance,
- Other Regularly Scheduled Maintenance,

Some of the projects that I would like to see addressed this year in my last year before I roll off of vestry.

- Freezer in the kitchen and the cooler fixed. We lost use of those years ago and now that we are starting to have our Parish Chef cook breakfast and other meals, it would be beneficial to freeze raw ingredi-

es to identify a capable and qualified leader to guide us into the coming years at Ascension. We ask that you pray for the Church and the process, that it might bring us a special person who will care for the Parish and equip us for our ministries.

Lastly, and so importantly, I want to thank our staff here at Ascension. You are so awesome, and words cannot express just how blessed we are to have each of you! Matt, Honey, Jacob, Mona, Tom, Misty and Linda. Susan and John, as well! On behalf of everyone here at ECA, we want to thank you for all that you do for us.

Blessings to all and see you around at Ascension!

**Kelly Cox**  
**Senior Warden**

- ents when there are extra plus we can save money by buying in bulk.
- Also address the serving line steam table and see if there are any issues with it. As we continue to grow with our upcoming new rector and our fellowship needs will increase. Will help make it easier to serve and control costs for more hospitality functions.
  - Will be looking at all the doors to Coughlin Hall (nursery etc) and probably change the locks, hardware etc to make sure that they work properly and provide the security that is required for our young children and parishoners at any given time.
  - Arrange and schedule proper maintenance schedules for our organ, as with age the better we take care of it, the longer it will last.
  - Would like to look at the fence surrounding the parking area and the school yard. Has been hit and has damage on it. This would be on the bottom of the list in my opinion but does need to be addressed.
  - Railing around the deck outside and a step built on to it to aid with the step down around it. While the children have the ability to jump down, I know that it isn’t wise for me to do so.

As always, I feel privledged and honored that I was chosen to serve as Junior Warden. While at times its challenging, it is rewarding because I get to take care of our church.

Remember you can always reach me via email @

[brycegodwin@gmail.com](mailto:brycegodwin@gmail.com) with any concerns that you may have or also thru the Church Office.

**Bryce Godwin**

Treasurer’s Report

Last January at the annual meeting the vestry presented a deficit budget of \$23k. Unfortunately we were not able to close the gap and ended the year with a larger unexpected deficit of \$53k. Many thanks to our dedicated parishioners, as our stewardship pledge payments were nearly at 100% of the 2024 budget while our non-pledge contributions and plate offerings fell below expectations of our estimated budget. On a happier note, I am very pleased to report that the Ascension Foundation balance at December 2024 was \$1,139,140.88 which represents an increase of 11% over last year’s ending balance at December 2023.

For expenses this past year, while our building and ground maintenance was higher than budgeted by \$18k, there were significant savings in other areas that resulted in our expenses being under budget by \$61k. The main expenditure in the building and ground maintenance line item was from the roof repairs over Coughlin Hall and church’s new air conditioning unit. The significant savings in the expenditures fell under church salaries and benefits which was a direct result of the departure at mid-year from our Vice Rector and Clergy Associate.

Looking ahead, our total pledges for 2025 compared to last year’s pledges have decreased by a little over \$3k. We have had 31 new or increased pledges, with 15 decreases resulting in a net increase of almost \$62k. The average pledge last year was \$5,471 and this year it is \$5,020. We still have not received pledges from a number of regular pledgers, and I would encourage you to check with the church office if you are uncertain of your status.

The 2025 budget recommendation for income as presented is lower than last year by 5%. Expenditures as presented are 16% lower than last year, however, this is mainly due to the exclusion of salary and related benefits for the new Rector that were intentionally left out of the budget proposal for 2025.

Although the overall budget has decreased compared to last year, Ascension has done well financially. We have healthy balances in the operating account and the Ascension Foundation. With the increase in the pledge amounts, coupled with the new pledgers, Ascension is a growing parish and continues to have a bright future.

**Joan Martin**  
**January 2025**



Ready for tomorrow today.

The Ascension Foundation

2024 Closing Balance  
**\$1,139,140.88**

PARISH MEETING	2024	2024 Actuals	2025
	BUDGET	As of 12/31/24	BUDGET
CASH INCOME			
1. Pledge Payments	\$ 520,000.00	\$ 516,049.54	\$ 520,000.00
2. Non-Pledge Contributions	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 62,532.03	\$ 60,000.00
3. Plate Offerings	\$ 22,000.00	\$ 19,530.70	\$ 22,000.00
4. Previous Yr. Pledge Payments		\$ 1,095.00	
5. AES Reimbursement	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00
6. Interest Income	\$ -	\$ 337.46	\$ -
7. Gain/Loss Sales of Investments	\$ -	\$ 38.94	\$ -
8. Other Income	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 21,642.26	\$ 20,000.00
9. Clergy Sabbatical	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
10. Transfer From CFA/ATG Fund	\$ 38,921.47	\$ -	\$ 13,000.00
11. Transfer From Caillouet Property Sale	\$ 37,300.00	\$ -	\$ 37,300.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 749,221.47	\$ 657,225.93	\$ 708,300.00
EXPENSES			
1. Outreach - Diocesan Asking	\$ 52,000.00	\$ 52,000.00	\$ 52,000.00
2. Outreach - Community	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 6,308.65	\$ 7,000.00
3. Church Salaries	\$ 231,489.99	\$ 207,020.03	\$ 208,936.57
4. Part-time Personnel	\$ 16,650.00	\$ 15,252.50	\$ 18,351.00
5. Payroll Taxes	\$ 9,447.32	\$ 10,203.87	\$ 12,189.61
6. Insurance - General	\$ 107,775.04	\$ 107,775.04	\$ 115,773.04
7. Insurance - Health & Life	\$ 15,351.48	\$ 6,762.20	\$ 877.80
7.5 Insurance - Health Savings Account	\$ 10,881.52	\$ 10,880.27	\$ -
8. Pension Fund - Clergy	\$ 20,937.76	\$ 11,695.02	\$ 1,162.62
9. Lay Retirement Fund	\$ 2,587.20	\$ 2,587.20	\$ 3,052.90
10. Travel Allowance	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 583.37	\$ 3,000.00
11. Housing Allowance - Clergy	\$ 35,189.80	\$ 28,189.80	\$ 15,563.96
12. Continuing Education	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,636.12	\$ 3,000.00
13. Parish Discretionary Fund	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,441.30	\$ 1,500.00
14. Publications-Clerical & Liturgical	\$ 500.00	\$ 575.44	\$ 500.00
15. Office Expense	\$ 28,000.00	\$ 26,030.39	\$ 27,500.00
15.5 Audit	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 9,750.00	\$ 12,500.00
16. Telephone Expense	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,360.00	\$ 3,500.00
17. Utilities	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 27,174.20	\$ 30,000.00
18. Building & Ground Maintenance	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 72,992.43	\$ 55,000.00
19. Organ & Piano Maintenance	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,000.00
20. Advertising	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
21. Parish Hospitality	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,136.12	\$ 18,000.00
22. Diocesan Convention	\$ 800.00	\$ -	\$ 800.00
23. Altar Guild Expense	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,655.93	\$ 1,500.00
24. Music & Choir Expense	\$ 39,000.00	\$ 39,000.00	\$ 39,000.00
25. Newcomers Ministry	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 290.38	\$ 1,000.00
26. Christian Education - Adult	\$ 250.00	\$ 16.55	\$ 250.00
27. Christian Education - Children	\$ 675.00	\$ 501.08	\$ 675.00
28. Youth Ministry Expense	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 749.97	\$ 1,000.00
29. Children & Family Ministry	\$ 13,500.00	\$ 12,930.59	\$ 13,500.00
30. Acolytes	\$ 100.00	\$ -	\$ 100.00
31. Nursery Ministry Supplies	\$ 300.00	\$ 234.88	\$ 300.00
34. Lay Readers	\$ 150.00	\$ -	\$ 150.00
35. Lyle Parratt Lecture Services		\$ 1,014.18	
38. Benevolence Gifts	\$ 45,334.56	\$ 30,223.04	\$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 771,919.67	\$ 710,470.55	\$ 651,682.50
NET TOTALS	\$ (22,698.20)	\$ (53,244.62)	\$ 56,617.50



## Nominees for the Vestry of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension

The nomination period for vestry was opened in November and closed December 19, 2024.



Molly Kallenberger

**Mrs. Molly Kallenberger:** Since joining The Episcopal Church of the Ascension in 2001, I have passionately supported the church's many ministries including serving as chair of the Episcopal Church Women, co-chair of the Outreach Committee, co-leader of Ascension's (former) Monday noon prayer, and as a member of both the Vestry and Father Daly's rector search committee. Additionally, I have been a member of the altar guild and a Eucharistic lay minister.

A dedicated community volunteer, I have served on numerous local boards including Hospice of Acadiana, the Lafayette Library Foundation, Healing House and the Junior League of Lafayette. I reside in Lafayette with my husband, Prent, rescue kitty, Ellie and Bernedoodle, Izzy. Prent and I have two children (now adults) who are alums of Ascension Episcopal School and three grandchildren. We feel blessed to be a part of the Ascension community.



Albert Davis

**Mr. Albert Davis:** I would like the opportunity to serve on the upcoming Vestry. I have been an Episcopalian since birth. I have also been a member of Ascension for many years. Currently I serve on the Altar Guild. I am also a member of the Men's Group and the Sunday and Tuesday Bible Study groups.

While working on my degree I served with two different police departments. Since my graduation from UL, I have had a varied employment history, from restaurant management to oil-field purchasing, and environmental engineering project management.

Throughout my education and varied employment, I have remained a faithful Episcopalian and would like to continue service to our church.



Andrew Sicard

**Mr. Andrew Sicard:** I am husband to Colleen and father to two Ascension Blue Gators, Gabe and Clara Sicard. I was raised in Lafayette where I attended Asbury Methodist and graduated from Lafayette High. After College at LSU, Colleen and I spent 9 years in North Louisiana matriculating through medical school and post graduate training.

While there, we attended St. George's Episcopal Church in Bossier City. We were married at Ascension in 2010. Currently, I am a General Surgeon practicing at Opelousas General. I enjoy cooking, reading and spending time with my family.



Joseph Heggie

**Mr. Joseph Heggie:** I have been blessed to be a member of Ascension church since June 1989. My wife, Nanette Heggie, and I were married at Ascension in 1992. We have 1 adult son Baxter Heggie who lives in Ashville, North Carolina. I have been on the Ascension Vestry in 2009-2011 and in 2020-2022. I currently serve as a Lectern at the 8:30 am service. Before Ascension I grew up as a member of Grace Episcopal church in Kirkwood MO, graduated from Engineering school at the University of Missouri-Rolla and served in the US Army in Mannheim Germany.

Outside of church I have been employed as an engineer for Chevron since 1989. In my spare time I rehab houses with Rebuilding Together Acadiana and maintain the Shelly Drive little free library. Our family enjoys travel, Louisiana music, and outdoor activities.

### Nominees for Delegates to Diocesan Convention:

Mr. George Hall  
Dr. Kathy Knierim

## Head of School Report

Ascension Episcopal School has undergone many changes in its sixty-five years as a ministry of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. Grades and campuses have been added. Sports and arts have flourished. But through all the changes the school has sought to fulfill its mission of providing *educational excellence in a Christian environment* to the children of Lafayette and Acadiana. Generations of students have been impacted through the ministry of the Church through the school.

The first major event after the January 2024 Vestry Report was the visit to Ascension by the accreditation team from the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS), the largest regional independent school accreditation organization in the United States. The visiting team was chaired by Mr. Robert McGehee, head of school at St. Nicholas School in Chattanooga, TN. The team visited all three campuses and met with the Rector, the Vestry, the school board, students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and administration. Ascension was reaccredited for a full term, and the report was extremely complementary of our community. The following are commendations given by the SAIS team directly related to the Church-School relationship.

Ascension Episcopal School is commended for:

- Recognizing that the relationship between the church and the school is critical to the school's mission.
- Providing a substantive and impressive Christian education in the Episcopal tradition, including clear demonstration that the Christian message is a part of what happens everyday through each campus.
- Helping develop the spiritual life of the students as central to the Ascension experience.

## Chaplain's Report

Last Spring semester, the Youth Group mirrored the Rector's Forum Lent study of vices. Over the summer we had meet ups at Top Golf and Acadiana Lanes. The transitions that occurred this summer changed my responsibilities; I was our only priest between the Hyldens' departure and Fr. Joseph's retirement until Fr. Matt started in September. I walked with two couples through their engagements and to their weddings; I walked with three families through their baptism preparation. I took on All School Chaplain responsibilities this fall, providing spiritu-

The rest of the spring semester flew by with class trips in the middle and upper schools, spiritual life activities, sports, and even some academics!. In the state Literary Rally four students finished first in their subject areas. The drama team earned the only score of "superior" in the state and won for the third consecutive year. The boys golf team also won the state championship for the sixth year in a row. *The Wizard of Oz* was the middle school spring production and *Bye Bye Birdie* was performed by the Upper School. In May, sixty-two new graduates received their diplomas joining all those who came before them. A new alumni organization was also established to serve Ascension's generations of graduates.

The 2024-2025 school year opened with a celebration of our 65th anniversary which included an alumni event attended by a wide range of alumni and friends of the school. The fall was as full as the spring with academics, arts, and activities. We welcomed a new campus head at our River Ranch (PreK3-K) campus, Mrs. Ashley Higinbotham, who followed Mrs. Julie Borque who retired. We were also excited to announce the restarting of our French exchange program. In April, we will host students from La Salle Saint Louis, a school in Pont-l'Abbé-d'Arnoult, France, and in return we will send about twenty of our students to visit them in October 2025.

Ascension Episcopal School works diligently to prepare our students to thrive in every aspect of their lives. The Episcopal Church of the Ascension has given this gift to thousands of students through its school. On behalf of those currently involved in this wonderful work, please allow me to express our gratitude to you.

Gratefully,  
**Jeff Pinnow**  
Head of School

al leadership to the River Ranch and Downtown campuses as my Upper School teaching and chapel schedule allows. I am thankful for the faithful service of our acolytes. In light of these responsibilities, my focus on our youth has shifted away from regular Sunday school to individualized care for those youth who are present on Sunday mornings. Fr. Matt and I are planning a confirmation class in anticipation of the Bishop's visit. I hope to have a few events for the youth this Spring and Summer.

**Jake Schlossberg**

School Financial Report

Ascension Episcopal School

Comparison of Activity Through December YTD 23/24 & 24/25

REVENUE	December YTD 24/25	December YTD 23/24	Difference in 22/23 v 23/24
Net Tuition (a)	4,854,648	4,742,719	111,929
Fee Revenue	695,870	673,672	22,198
Operating Revenue	450,061	429,483	20,578
Fundraising/Grants/ Donations (b)	249,169	403,406	(154,237)
TOTAL REVENUE	6,249,748	6,249,280	468
EXPENSES			
Employee (c)	3,990,637	4,184,870	(194,233)
School Expense	796,391	811,149	(14,758)
Administration (d)	518,657	595,976	(77,319)
Departmental	381,257	340,459	40,798
Depreciation	278,964	278,964	0
TOTAL EXPENSE	5,965,906	6,211,418	(245,512)
YTD Revenue over Expense	283,842	37,862	245,980
Cash Balance	1,998,100	1,700,104	

Notes:

- (a) Increase in tuition cost not enough to offset drop in enrollment from 22/23 to 23/24
- (c) PTO Fall Fest/Auction revenue not yet fully transferred. \$165,000 to be moved by Feb
- (c) Significant savings on payroll from last year. \$400,000 in salaries cut from last year
- (d) Admininstration savings coming from lower insurance premium over previous year

Deacon’s Report

As Pastoral Minister, I call on parishioners with a pastoral visit, usually with Eucharist and anointing. I visit those who are new, long-time members, ill, at home, in facilities or hospitals, the sick and the dying. If you or someone in our congregation is interested in a visit or conversation, please contact me.

I participate in all regularly scheduled church services and I preach when scheduled. I assist or officiate at funerals and burials. When requested, I do the same at funerals and burials that take place at local funeral homes. I officiate at all the Wednesday noon healing services replete with Eucharist, homilies and anointing. I do the same at all services at The Vincent Senior Living Facility twice monthly; our congregation consists of approximately 12-15 residents. John Moore, our church organist plays the keyboard for us; Stuart Burgess and Patti Tompkins, our choir members lead the singing. Their participation lends so much to our worship. We are blessed to have them onboard with this ministry!

Part of my ministry is to train Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors. If you have interest in learning more about any of these important ministries, please contact me.

I also chair the Outreach Committee and I have oversight of the individual local ministries. The Outreach Committee consists of four local ministries and two global. With our local ones, I call and lead the regular monthly meetings and assist each ministry when possible and applicable. Currently, our ministries include: United Christian Outreach led by Carol Bares and assisted by Gayle Lafitte and Carl Cheramie; Faith House led by Anne Patin and Carol Dore also assisted by Gayle Lafitte; LA-AID led by Susan Simon and assisted by Gayle Lafitte, John Griffin,

Janet Bernhardt and other parishioners and members of the community; Allies for Immigrants is led

by Ginger Norvell and assisted by John Griffin, as well as others. Our global ministries are “Reaching the Pygmies” and “Roots and Fruits.” Reaching the Pygmies is our annual ministry to the Batwa people in Africa and is partnered with Ascension School. Funds are sent every year that help sustain and promote their Epiphany School. Roots and Fruits is our ministry to the educational program for Christian children in the Holy Land, which is led by The Rev. Kamal Farrah. Funds are received from churches and individuals across the country and with our funding is sent to the Holy Land annually.

Additional printed information is available for each of these ministries. Those who spearhead them will be happy to share with you and you may contact me as well.

As part of Outreach, I oversee fundraising events, which include the annual “Festival International Car Park.” The monies earned at this endeavor assist in funding our other outreach projects, as prescribed by Bishop Owensby. We are also partially funded by the church, which we are most grateful for and which does assist us in serving others.

If you would like to make an appointment to visit with me, please email or contact me by phone. I am in the office during the week, however, I do spend a good portion of my ministry away. Besides Sundays, you may see me every Wednesday at the noon healing service and at CC’s Coffee Shop on alternate Tuesday afternoons. Check the enews for the CC’s schedule.

I am richly blessed by Ascension Church, this ministry and all of you whom I serve.

Faithfully,  
Rev. Honey Becker, Deacon  
Pastoral Ministry & Outreach  
[Alohamagnolia@aol.com](mailto:Alohamagnolia@aol.com)

## Interim Rector's Report

Several years ago, I attended a workshop on Stewardship at Camp Hardtner. It was a busy time in my life, and I wasn't looking forward to spending all day Saturday listening to someone I didn't know tell us how we were all doing stewardship wrong in our parishes. But the reality of that day was so different than my expectations. The workshop, led by the Rev. Kattie Hays, from Fort Worth Texas, was wonderful, filled with insights about what it means to be church today. Allow me to share a few of her insights with you today.

First, Katie said that the Church of the future will be more into lateral giving and caretaking. In other words, members of a community of faith saying to one another: "I have your back. Will you have mine?" She goes on to say that the Church exist to help people find their way back to the heart of God. Jesus, in today's gospel, announces to the people of Nazareth that the dream of God proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah has been fulfilled in their hearing. The fulfillment of that dream is what Jesus called the Reign of God, and he preached it continuously.

Another way to describe God's Reign is a world where God gets everything God wants. What does the world look like when God gets everything God wants?

It looks like the beloved community. It looks like the absolutely best dream you ever had—the perfect dream-state—that proves to be true upon waking.

It looks like a place where *koinonia*—that close intimate relationship of fellowship, sharing, oneness, and love—is practiced daily. In other words, to want what God wants is **the** fundamental human project. Moreover, to want what God wants is the fundamental project for The Episcopal Church of the Ascension. Of course this has practical consequences for all of us. It means that we really do have one another's backs. It means that we are willing to work tirelessly

for a more just social order. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once observed, since the moral arc of the universe is long and bends toward justice, we might as well join in and participate in the dream of God, to do our part in making God's dream a reality.

Finally, Dr. Hays observed that this is a hard time to be Church. One reason why it is hard is due to the fact that many churches are still trying to be all things to all people. Perhaps a better narrative would be to discover our niche, to use the set of gifts that Ascension possesses to make God's dream a reality. Perhaps this is the work that we are called to do today, at this moment in time. According to Dr. Hays, every faith community is challenged to discover a new narrative, a better story for their church. As a Church in transition, there is no better time than the present to begin questioning what a better story for Ascension might look like; what new narrative do you want to tell about this church community? We can do this by asking the following questions. When in the last year did it feel good to be church? When did we feel most truly ourselves? When did we feel most alive doing the work of God's Kingdom?

In other words, ever since the Word became flesh, those who follow Jesus try to embody God's word as well. Almost everyone has a word that he or she has a gift for bringing to life. One person brings the "compassion" to life. Another person brings the word "justice" to life. Someone else has the gift of embodying the word "prophetic". The moment a person acts on his or her particular word, it becomes flesh. The word lives among us and we can see its glory.

Congregations embody words as well. The problem is that some church communities think they have to embody all the words in the scriptures, try to become all things to all people. In reality all we have to do is put flesh on only several words in the gospel.

What words does Ascension embody. Certainly, Ascension embodies the word *teach* very well. As Jeff Pinnow said at last year's Annual Meeting: "Ascension Episcopal School has invested over 1,000,000 hours in the lives of its students." That's a lot of teaching, not to mention the teaching that takes place at vestry meetings, Children's Church, Adult Bible studies and other small group gatherings. When you think about it, Ascension puts a flesh around the word *teach*!

Another word that Ascension embodies is *service*, as in "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). As Deacon Honey mentioned in her report, Ascension currently supports four local outreach ministries and two international ministries. But there's room for more. As your Interim Rector, I have made it a policy not to initiate new ministries, letting that task fall to the new Rector. But that doesn't mean we can't prepare for the future, till the soil for new ministries to be planted. Already, we have heard a report on Bridges Ministry (putting flesh on both the words "teach" and "service"). Other ministries waiting in the wings are St. Joseph's Diner and the Innocence Project of New Orleans (IPNO), as well as interest in beginning a prison min-

istry. It's like a buffet—there's something for everyone to participate in.

Sill another word Ascension embodies is *worship* ("When they saw him they worshiped him" Mt 28:17). Thanks to all of our liturgical ministries—lectors, ushers, greeters, altar guild, music ministry, acolytes, deacon and priests—Ascension embodies the word "worship" is a way that is beautiful, inspiring, meaningful and soulful. Our weekly Sunday Eucharist, as well as our midweek healing service, feeds us sacramentally so that we are prepared to meet the challenges of the week again, and again, and again.

Naturally, there are other words that Ascension embodies, words like *console/Stephen Ministries*, and *generosity/stewardship*. But what words will you choose to bring to life, what will Ascension's niche become as you travel the road to Emmaus, your hearts burning within you as Jesus makes himself known to you in the breaking open of your lives, one to another!

Peace in Christ

**Fr. Matt Woollett+**

**Interim Rector**

