

The Church of the Ascension 2010 Parish Profile



*Patuxent Parish
Lexington Park, Maryland*

www.churchoftheascension-patuxent.org

Welcome to Church of the Ascension!

Our mission is a simple one, to respond to God's love through worship, scripture study, social outreach, and song. We hope that this glimpse into our church family will convey the love of Christ that we share within our congregation as well as with the local community.

"Nice people, welcoming, diverse group, uplifting service, faithful to our religion's traditions"



We are located in Lexington Park, Maryland, in St. Mary's County. Patuxent River Naval Air Station is just up the street, and we proudly serve the military community stationed there. Our immediate neighborhood includes lower-to-middle class housing, retail shops, and businesses. Even though the county's employment base is largely defense-related, our congregation reflects the increasingly diverse workforce that calls this rapidly-growing rural area of Southern Maryland home.

"Friendly community, open and inclusive services, wonderful music program"

We are a pastorally-sized congregation that is in an interim period of healing, adjustment, and envisioning our future mission and ministry after the retirement of our beloved second rector, the Reverend Rona Harding. In the discernment of your call, we invite you to join us in our reflection upon our mission and ministry in Christ. Perhaps your new home is the Church of the Ascension!



We are part of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, in Region Six, one of six geographic regions into which the diocese is divided. Regions undertake outreach and congregational development projects as well as form the basis for clergy fellowship. Congregants serve the diocese in various ways, participating as members of commissions or trainers in education programs.

The Diocese of Washington includes the District of Columbia and the Washington metropolitan area counties of Montgomery, Prince Georges, Charles and Saint Mary's in Maryland. The diocese serves 46,000 people in 20 Episcopal schools, eight campus ministries of great diversity, and over 90 congregations, including the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint

Paul (the Washington National Cathedral). There are seven Spanish-speaking congregations and one Nigerian worshipping community; the diocese has one of the largest populations of clergy of color. In addition, the diocese is in partnership with the Province of Southern Africa and the Diocese of Jerusalem. The diocese is an active partner with the Washington National Cathedral and their programs of urban ministry and global justice and reconciliation. The Cathedral is also the site of the celebration of all ordinations as well as thrice-yearly services of confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation.

Church History

At 56 years old, Church of the Ascension is blessed to have had only two rectors. Both brought unique gifts to our congregation and will always hold special places in our hearts. We are looking forward to what God has in store for us in our next rector.

Liturgy

Patuxent Parish has brought together individuals from the Episcopal spectrum as well as people with roots in different religious backgrounds. The liturgical personality of the parish has always included a willingness to experiment. Members vary in their liturgical preferences, with the intellectual sophistication and education to explore, compromise, and evolve gracefully.

Our worship services are suffused with the restrained beauty for which the Episcopal Church is well-known. The 8 am Eucharist on Sunday attracts those who love beautiful, traditional language, while the 10:30 am Eucharist is a stirring family service with full choir.

Our Ministries at Ascension

Music

We are a singing church! Our anthems are a cross-section of different musical styles to appeal to the various preferences of our congregation. The director often utilizes the gifts of different musicians in our congregation; it is not uncommon to hear the flute, violin, trumpet, or guitar accompany our choir. For occasional youth services, contemporary Christian music is performed with a saxophone and bass added to the mix. Special performances by the Children's Choir and Handbell Choir are delightful and well-received by the congregation!



Study

Our Christian Education program is under the direction of a parishioner. Thirty-five children are registered in the program from nursery through middle school. In pre-K and kindergarten, Bible stories are the foundation for activities and crafts, and the older Sunday school classes use the Episcopal lectionary-based “Living the Good News” curriculum. We offer Vacation Bible School in the summer for our and our community’s children. Adult Christian Education has included Sunday morning discussion groups, video series and Bible Study.

Youth

“We support a youth ministry where our youth would be able to have a social outlet but also a ministry that would participate in local/regional outreach projects.”

Recently, local Episcopal churches came together to form an all-county youth group. Youth from Ascension are participating, and a parent currently serves on the newly-formed board. We occasionally have youth-led services and children’s sermons.

Pastoral Care: reaching in to one another

Volunteers coordinate helpers for special needs within the church. Parishioners provide meals, transportation, babysitting, and other services when necessary. The congregation maintains an active prayer chain, a long-standing ministry within the church, which regularly prays for parishioners and their families and friends.

Community Care: reaching out to our neighbors

“Outreach—it serves the community in ways I think Jesus would want.”

- Helpers Overcoming Problems Effectively (HOPE)
Fifteen area churches pooling resources to help community members; one important activity: distribution of Thanksgiving baskets to over 200 families
- Ascension Food Pantry
Provides donated food to families: in 2009, helped 2100+ families
- Central America Missionary Efforts
“Tooth and Toil” team travels each year to provide medical and dental treatment for 2300+ patients in collaboration with area churches
- Habitat for Humanity
Apostle’s Build project, with a dozen churches participating, constructed a home in 2009. Still contributing by building, making donations, and providing lunches during the builds
- Three Oaks Homeless Shelter
Begun in 1996 as a shelter for men, today the organization serves individuals and families with dedicated emergency, transitional, and permanent housing programs in both the shelter facility and off-site apartments and homes; church volunteers provide dinner ingredients twice a month for preparation by shelter residents
- The Essex House
Church-owned and maintained property leased to Three Oaks Shelter, used as temporary shelter for battered or homeless women and children
- Support Group Meetings
Provide meeting place and support for organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Narcotics Anonymous

- Wrap Arms 'Round Many (WARM)
Church members provide support (meals, supplies) to another Episcopal church offering safe overnight housing and meals for up to twenty homeless persons in wintertime
- Pastoral Counseling Center
Since 1983, we have provided space for the center which serves patrons regardless of income, helping with a variety of mental health issues; spiritual or Christian beliefs are part of the therapy process only if a patient chooses

Fellowship



"I like how friendly our parishioners are, the family atmosphere of the church and the encouragement of lay leadership."

We celebrate our connections to one another through shared fellowship. Ascension members always say our church feels like a family. What our congregation lacks in numbers, it makes up for with enthusiasm and lots of heart! Our activities include:

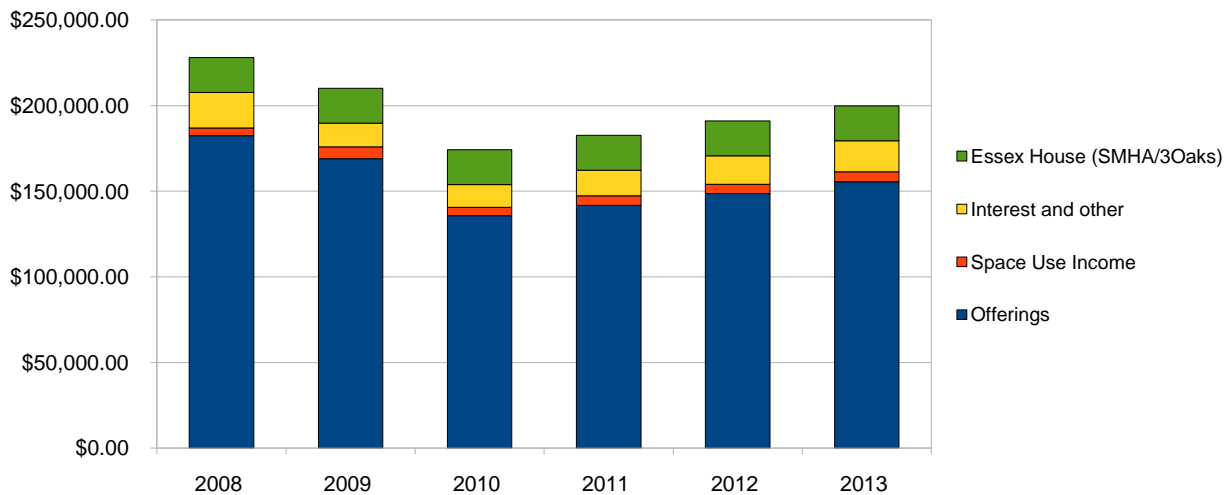
- Church Picnic
- October Pig Roast Fundraiser
- Foyers Groups: social groups of 8-10 adults who meet periodically
- Church Softball League
- Ultreya: spiritual reflection and support group based on the Cursillo movement
- Monthly Book and Supper Club
- Annual Chili Cook-off, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, and other dinner events
- AMEN (All Men Welcome) Breakfast Group and ECW



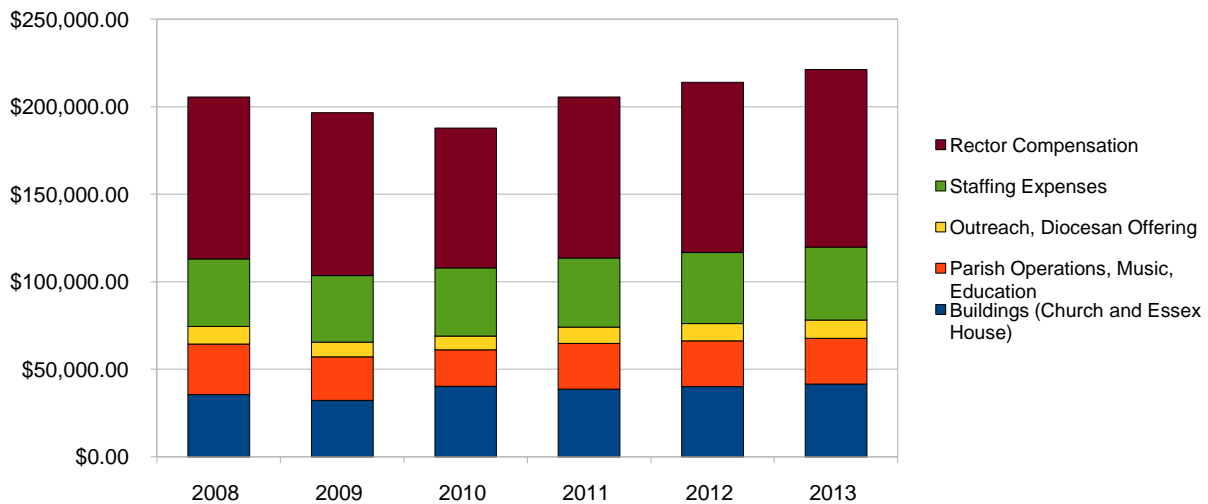
Time, Talent, and Treasure

Our church has been in essentially the same financial situation for the last five years, having a tight budget but living within our means. For 2010, our projected income dropped approximately 15%, and the budget was adjusted accordingly. As of midyear 2010, our income is running ahead of projections. We have a balanced budget; we work from received income and parishioners step in with contributions for special needs. Essex House rental income provides a significant supplement to the General Fund. We have reserves available and have no debt.

Income



Expenses



Our Way Forward

Aspects of Reverend Rona's somewhat sudden retirement caused hurt and regret within our church community. It occurred in the context of perceived miscommunication and broken processes for addressing concerns within the parish. We are moving toward better communication and internal governance for the future, intentionally using the interim period for healing and reconciliation. We are confident that God will lead us forward in a shared ministry with our new rector, based on open communication, clear mutual expectations, periodic self-evaluation, and effective congregational leadership.

We are exploring new approaches to sustainable ministries, living the gospel by building bridges to our community. Ideas that have been suggested are tutoring programs, finding space for WARM, volunteer advocacy programs, senior ministries, and child/elder abuse education/prevention programs. We need to address some of the problems that come with the stresses of the economic downturn, especially in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the church. A facility next door to the church may become available soon, which could provide space for new programs.

Sharing ministries/ministers and facilities with other congregations and faiths merits consideration as well. Recently we have held joint services and educational programs with a nearby Lutheran church and would welcome the opportunity to expand our outreach to the community in partnership with area churches.

The Rector We Seek

“Someone who has fresh ideas on how to build youth programs and participation of young families. Someone who understands small town life and has innovative ways of building membership in a smaller community.”

The Church of the Ascension is ready to begin a new chapter! To meet the changing needs of the Episcopal Church, we are seeking a rector who will lead us in continuing the mission of Jesus, reaching out to our neighbors in collaboration with other churches and community organizations. We want our new Rector to share with us in:

- building our church community, strengthening our current body and attracting new members
- maintaining and improving our strong outreach programs
- developing new outreach opportunities consistent with community needs and parish resources
- sustaining pastoral care in the parish
- addressing the needs of youth in our congregation
- fostering the development of lay leadership
- supporting our music ministry
- creating opportunities for Christian formation and education

Summary

We are looking for a rector who can harness the diversity and energy at Ascension and guide us to focus our talents. We need a shepherd to help us formulate the plan to lead us in God's chosen direction, welcoming all, regardless of race, age, ethnicity, economic class, disability, or other characteristics. The ideal candidate will help us continue to be an inclusive parish, facing our challenges with renewed purpose. At Ascension, our future is based upon expansion of the warmth, fellowship, and love that says "there is room for everyone here". We are excited about our journey and look forward to meeting those who wish to lead us!



Please direct inquiries to Mary Sulerud, Canon for Deployment, at

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More details about our church and our ministries available at

www.churchoftheascension-patuxent.org