



THE ASCENSION

HERALD

Volume 1

Lent/Easter 2018

From the Rector:

Recently, I embarked on a year-long certification program designed to help participants re-imagine what faith formation looks like in this day and time. It is clear that many things are coming together to change the landscape in which we are the church. We are more diverse than ever in the length of our lives, the number of generational identities, of family structure and marriage pattern and ethnic makeup. Technology has changed how and when we connect. We are more diverse in our religious beliefs and practices, and we are less likely to pass our religious traditions down to our children. In my class there is a great deal of hand-wringing about these changes, but I think it's exciting. In the first place, though we might look back with longing at a time when people went to church every Sunday, I know that the people in church on any given Sunday are there because they want to be, not because it's just what one does. The increasing diversity of our society makes us aware of the fullness of God and God's love, and the fact that there is more religious diversity around us highlights that we do not have a lock on God – God is bigger than we know and certainly bigger than we can say.

It seems to me that the task of the church has always been to embody the love of God in and through Christ to the world. That the shape of the landscape has changed does not diminish that, but calls for us to creatively discern and envision how God would have us do this work.

The class has been asking us to think of an ecology of faith in which the church supports intergenerational formation as well as age-group specific formation, helps families as they teach their children, reaches out to those who are spiritual but not religious or who are unaffiliated, and uses all the technology available to do so.

Basically, it seems that we are to strengthen the ecosystem in which the life of faith is lived out. I must emphasize that it is a *life* of faith. That means that from birth to death and beyond, faith is woven in and through our lives. We never get to the place where we know everything. The challenge is to continue to grow in the knowledge and love of God – to be shaped by that wisdom and compassion and to embody it in all that we do. This is both an individual and communal vision. We cannot speak of the church apart from ourselves, because we *are* the church.

I look forward to learning more about how we can strengthen each other and build up the body of Christ as we go. I am excited about the journey that lies ahead and I look forward to walking the road with you!

Stewart Tabb

As part of Lent, the Gospel of Luke will be highlighted each day during the online Morning and Evening Prayer services on Facebook Live.

Church of the Ascension Vestry

Sr. Warden: Susan Meredith

Jr. Warden: Bill Willey

Register: Anne Doyle

Lana Butler (Fellowship)

Donna Killmon (Pastoral Care)

Suzi Montagna (At large)

Susan Motley (Communications)

Michael Murphy (Finance)

Tim Westfall (Building & Grounds)

Courtney Wheeler (At large)

Vestry minutes are on the website. Go to <http://ascension-norfolk.org/vestry-minutes-2/>

Church of the Ascension Staff

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Lynn Farlin

Director of Music Ministries

Ginny Chilton

Day School Director

Mark Hattler

Treasurer

Jane Webster

Secretary

Nellwyn Beamon

Financial Secretary

Tracey Trimyer

NEW OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday

9:30 AM to 2:30 PM

Friday

9:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Please make a note!

The Good Book Club: Ascension will be joining other Episcopal Churches as part of the Good Book Club as we study the books of Luke and Acts in Lent and Eastertide during our online Bible Study Thursdays at 7:00 PM. These two books help us to understand Jesus' mission and how that mission was borne out in the early Church. The goal is to engage people in the reading of Scripture, and these two books are very accessible! Please join us!



Women's Thursday Bible Study:

The women's Bible study group will be starting a new series called The

Quest – An Excursion Toward Intimacy With God by Beth Moore. We will begin the study on February 15th at 10:00. AM. Contact Lynn Farlin if you want to participate so she can get a book for you.

The mission trip team will be headed to Kentucky this summer during the week of July 22-28 to work with Appalachian Service Project to help make homes warmer, safer, and drier. The team will be hosting several fundraisers and would appreciate your support and prayers.



From the Senior Warden:**Susan Meredith**

I was waiting to pick Sam up from school two days ago when I got a call from my good friend's daughter. She said, "Mom could not get up off the sofa and she has been taken to the Emergency Room." My friend's daughter is ten. She had the wisdom to call me for prayer support and encouragement.

My friend has Parkinson's. She is amazing. She continues to help others along with being a mom, wife, and part time professional. Despite the advancement in the Parkinson's disease--like not being able to move at times--she is usually upbeat and calls me with encouraging words. There are dark days for her though; times when she needs someone to remind her that she is not alone.

I like to go on long walks in the morning. I do not know what I would do without these walks! Besides enjoying the things I see outside, I like to use this time for prayer. My friend is at the top of my list each day. I ask God to heal her, find a cure for Parkinson's in her lifetime, and give her strength. And sometimes I wonder, "God are you going to perform a miracle?" "I know You can heal her!" "Please make everything all right." "Let her feel Your Presence." I am glad I can be her prayer warrior.

Ascension has many prayer warriors! I am grateful for them. I hope that when you need prayer you will call the office and get on the list for daily prayer by our warriors! I get a sense of strength knowing that I am not the only one talking to God about my needs.

I have come to realize that God does not always heal in the way I want Him to, but He is right there in the midst of things, beside us, and sometimes carrying us. His Power and Presence can give us an inner stability that nothing else can. I see this in my friend.

Let us be thankful as we go into Lent for what God has done for us. He has given us 24-hour access to Him through Jesus Christ's death on the cross. And we know that by His resurrection, He has overcome all things, as we too will overcome by following Him. So let's give back to God during this time of Lent by helping others. Be a friend to all. Let them know God loves them and is always with them. Be a prayer warrior!

From the Director of Christian Formation:**Lynn Farlin**

Recently I attended the FORMA Christian education conference in Charleston South Carolina. Conferences are always a good thing, because one comes away with fresh ideas, colleague connections and inspiration. As you might imagine I have lots of information to unpack after spending three days in workshop sessions, listening to keynote speakers and engaging in discussions about Christian formation and social justice issues.

On the last day of the conference Bishop Curry preached at the closing worship and that was a highlight of the conference for me. He was powerful, engaging and managed to tie the conference themes together to make that worship service a true culminating experience. At one point he spoke about baptism and zeroed in on the immersion aspect of baptism. Not immersion in the sense of the volume of water used, but rather immersion in God. Bishop Curry reminded us all that we are called to be "immersed in the life, immersed in the love and immersed in the way of God". Those words have stuck with me because they felt like a call to action especially as we enter into the season of Lent.

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We have work to do in this world! Listening to the news certainly reinforces the fact that individuals and communities are hurting. And if we are truly immersed in that powerful love and way of God then we can make a difference in the lives of others. So this Lent rather than giving something up, consider taking something on – volunteer at the Food Bank or at a school, feed the hungry, tutor, visit the sick or lonely, help a stranger – find something that speaks to you and takes you out into the world to make a difference.

Bishop Curry concluded his sermon by saying “real followers of Jesus don't leave the world the way they found it, they change the world”. I don't think he was necessary talking about huge changes. Even simple acts of kindness can make a difference in the life of another. Our faith give us the opportunity to take what we are exposed to in church, Sunday school, seasonal studies, and bible studies and allows us to translate that knowledge into action. How can you change the world as a follower of Christ?

Lenten Sundays Adult Forum

As most of you know, the Vestry has made the theme for this year one of Conversation. This Lent we will continue that theme in our Adult Forum on Sundays. For five weeks we will learn about the how and why of civil discourse using a curriculum from the Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations. This is NOT a course about politics or any particular political position; rather it is a class designed to helps us listen with an eye to enhancing understanding, and to bring values to the table in conversations about policy. I think we can all agree that the civil discourse has been in short supply for some time now and partisan stands on both sides have prevented us from finding common ground and common values. Civil discourse is deeply rooted in our history as Episcopalians with many of the founding fathers making their home in the Episcopal Church, but it is more deeply rooted still in our understanding of Baptismal life and covenant. Please join us as we seek to have a conversation about values and public life.

The theme for Vacation Bible School will be announced soon. Whatever the theme, we are sure to have some fun, explore Bible stories, and make some new friends. Mark your calendars for July 9th-13th from 9-12 AM to join in the fun. We will need some volunteers to help staff VBS. Contact Lynn Farlin if you can help.

From the Treasurer

Jane Webster

We began 2017 with a deficit budget. Through lots of hard work and careful marshalling of funds, the Vestry ended 2017 with positive cash flow and balanced finances. More critically, the Vestry has adopted a balanced budget for 2018. Unfortunately, this has caused barebones funding of all programs; the 2018 budget contains no outreach, cuts to staff hours, and a drastically reduced pledge to the Diocese.



Lenten Music Notes

Ginny Chilton
Minister of Music

I've been in somewhat of a Lenten rut the past few years. I realized this in January as I was reading a book on Lenten practices to do with children. One of the many suggestions was to have a dead branch in the center of your dining room table or up front in your church school classroom, and to have the children glue flowers to it each week. The idea jumped out at me because I could picture my

children--both at home and here at church-- loving this activity, but somehow it didn't jive with what I had come to associate with Lent. I tend to think of Lent as a uniformly somber season in the church year. If Easter is a burst of color, Lent balances it with greys and browns. Is that how you think of it, too? When Lent starts at Ascension, for instance, we get out our muted, austere paraments for the altar and the choir dons their black robes instead of the blue. But that's not all there is to Lent, which is Latin for "spring." In springtime, all may look dead at the beginning, but God is preparing the earth for new life. Likewise, there are signs even in the austerity of the Lenten season that new life is coming.

There are signs right now as we start this new Lenten season that God is doing new and wonderful things with music at Ascension. Perhaps the most obvious one is that I'm about to bring forth new life myself (**Charles Leo Maxwell** was born on January 17). I'm excited but also nervous about bringing him up in faith.



James and I will need your help! God is doing a new and wonderful thing with the choir, too, as Karla Robinson and Frank Whitman lead music while I'm away. Karla came to my last choir rehearsal to introduce some of the anthems she had selected and we had an absolute blast. Her personality and music selections brought a jolt of life into us, and got my creative juices flowing for what more we can do in choir and worship once I return. And on my last Sunday, our newest group of handbell players (Jane Hedgecock, Will Hermann, Elsa Kinnear, Samuel Kinnear, and Phoebe Montagna) played in worship for the first time. This group had so much fun rehearsing that they insisted on playing several pieces.

These are just a few examples of where I've seen God at work around here lately. I expect that God will continue to bless us in new and unexpected ways this Lenten season. Keep your hearts ready and your eyes (and ears!) open!

Pastoral Care

Donna Killmon

Pastoral Care has had a busy fall and winter. For our homebound, we have provided beautiful Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets. Now that February is upon us, we have a new project. It's spreading some love to those who cannot make it to church. We are asking all church members to send a Valentine or two to someone on our list to let them know they are loved and missed, but not forgotten. We have also reached out to our sick members with cards, visits, help with doctor appointments, and meals. None of this would be possible without your hard work and assistance. For this we are truly grateful. Thank you to all who brought in items for the baskets, sent valentines, and provided many meals for those in need. Next time you are at church, look around, and you will see the many hands and feet of Christ. Love from Bill Willey, Jane Hedgecock, Chuck Spence, Marilyn Meek, Sally Miller, Phil Todd, Suzi Montagna, Anita Mitchell, Richard Drumwright, Pearl Windle, Lee Davenport, and Donna Killmon, If you have an interest in serving on this committee, talk to anyone listed above.



From the Junior Warden & Building & Grounds

Bill Willey/Tim Westfall

Two significant upgrades to the church property have occurred within the last couple of months. You may have noticed that it's looking a lot brighter around Ascension lately. That's because all of the light bulbs and fixtures have been upgraded to LED's. Chuck Beers put in a lot of time on this project, working with the folks at Dominion Energy and Design Electric, Inc., to get this done. Design Electric did a terrific job installing all the new lights and fixtures, and Dominion Energy will provide us with a rebate of almost 50% of the cost. With the energy savings generated by switching to all LED lighting, it is estimated that the lighting upgrade will pay for itself in 3-4 years. Many thanks to Chuck for a job very well done.

Last summer we were informed that the range hood over the stove would require a safety upgrade, as it no longer complied with safety regulations. Merrill Dorman agreed to take on this project, and after working with several contractors and City of Norfolk safety inspectors, the work was completed in January when it passed the City inspection. The range hood is now tied in to the overall BFPE safety alarm system, so that if there is a catastrophic fire on the stove, our alarm system automatically notifies the Norfolk Fire Department. This project took much longer than anticipated, but thanks to Merrill's diligent efforts, it finally got completed. Many thanks to Merrill and the ladies on the Special Projects committee, who agreed to use Special Projects funds to help with the cost of upgrading the kitchen range hood.

Easter tide: We are putting together small groups to follow the curriculum put forth by the Society of St. John the Evangelist – Meeting Jesus in John. The groups will meet in homes, and I hope, online, to help people delve into where they see Jesus in their lives. Look for more information in the coming weeks.

Lenten offerings: Who better to speak a word of truth and hope to a world in deep hurt and despair, than we, the Body of Christ? Because we believe that the church has an important role in building the kinds of communities in which people minister to each other in sometimes desperate need, James Medley--Rector of Good Shepherd--and I are joining together to teach SoulShop, a series of lessons designed to give people the resources they need to respond to suicidal desperation. Please come and learn some skills that might save someone's life. A simple direct question might be all it takes to open the door that allows you to reach out and guide a friend or relative to the help they need to get through. Lenten Wednesdays 5:30-7. Dinner provided.

Good Shepherd February 21

Ascension February 28

Good Shepherd March 7

Ascension March 14

Good Shepherd March 21

Schedule of services for Holy Week: March 25 - April 1

Palm Sunday: March 25. Services at 8:00 and 11:00 with Christian Formation at 9:30 AM

Maundy Thursday: March 29. Agape meal and program at 6:00 PM. Service of Footwashing and Holy Communion at 7:15 PM. Overnight prayer vigil after the service.

Good Friday: March 30. Holy Eucharist from the Reserved Sacrament and Service of the Solemn Collects at 7:00 AM.

Good Friday evening: Stations of the Cross outside (weather permitting). Our neighbors at Talbot Park Baptist Church will join us for this service at 6:30 PM.

Easter: April 1. Services of Holy Eucharist at 8:00 and 11:00 AM. There is no Christian Formation.