

*Church of the Ascension
2022 Parish Profile*

"Our mission is to celebrate the power of God's transforming love in Jesus by following where Jesus' love is calling us to serve the community."



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Welcome to Church of the Ascension



We are a small and welcoming parish in the Westerleigh section of Staten Island that has been in existence for 220 years. In addition to our core group of lifelong members, we have expanded our outreach to welcome new members who have joined us from other Episcopal churches, the Roman Catholic community as well as those who observe other spiritual practices. While many have come to visit Ascension through a friend or

relative, it is our style of worship and sense of fellowship that has inspired them to stay

We are a group of regular people attempting to find strength for our journeys, common and individual, from a worshiping and ministering community. We do many things well and nothing perfectly. In fact, the greatest common denominator among us is our need for God and one another. We gather on Sundays and often during the week to worship and learn, to work and minister, and to play and visit. Something about it works for us, and our deepest hope is that it will for you. We are located in an idyllic spot near Clove Lakes' Park (just one block off Manor Road.) Though our style is casual and welcoming, the physical setting provides our parish church a gentle quietness and easy reverence.



Ascension uses the Book of Common Prayer (Rite II) for all services. We celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday morning with a spoken service at 8 a.m. and a Sung Eucharist at 10 a.m. We have a small volunteer choir that sings for special services and our organist has been with us for 51 years. In the summer months we try to celebrate "Mass on the Grass" at least once or twice during the season, followed by refreshments. We also host a Healing Service once a month which takes place on Saturday at 12 noon and is led by our Deacon and one of our long-time parishioners. The service includes hymns taken from "Songs of Praise" (a supplemental hymn book), accompanied by a guitarist.



Many years ago, we developed what has become an ongoing ministry with the residents of Lakeside Manor, a Senior Care facility in the neighborhood, and our weekly Sunday afternoon Eucharists there have become a vital and important outreach to the residents. Our relationship with Lakeside has been in existence for many years, and is led by Art Ullstrom, one of our long-time parishioners. In addition to weekly Sunday visits, the residents have joined us for services on occasion and are also invited to join our parish picnics, barbecues and holiday celebrations during the year. This important ministry was started nearly 30 years ago by one of our parishioners, who later went on to become an ordained Deacon in the Episcopal Church. We are supportive of the diaconate and are currently sponsoring one of our parishioners who recently completed her first year in the program.





Many of our members are actively involved in some aspect of parish life, whether it be as a Lay Reader, Eucharistic Minister, a member of the Altar Guild, Usher's Guild, Counters or Vestry members. We began our week-long Vacation Bible School program over 30 years ago and the number of participants from Ascension, and neighboring churches continued to increase each year; however, our numbers started to dwindle as the children grew older and families moved away, and we put a moratorium on this program in 2020; we hope to reactivate it again when COVID restrictions have been removed and it is safe to do so. We view this program as a success, and seek to find new and innovative ministries that will increase our parishioners' level of involvement. We are focusing our membership

outreach to bring in more families and young people, and in turn, are looking to develop new programs that will engage and increase participation of our Youth.

In the two years prior to the onset of COVID, the Church of the Ascension saw a healthy growth spurt thanks to the dedicated efforts and inclusive style of our former Priest-in-Charge. However, COVID had a significant impact on our parish, resulting in a decrease in weekly attendance, an extended moratorium on in-person worship, quarantine mandates, and the personal choice of many parishioners to remain at home. Our Priest-in-Charge immediately initiated Internet worship and we were able to maintain, and even increase, the size of our "on-line" worship community each week. We are looking for a new spiritual leader who will provide the encouragement to continue that growth and help us to find ways to bring absent and new members back to Church of the Ascension.





We continue to livestream our in-person services, and also offer daily Morning Prayer and Compline services via Facebook Live, led by a dedicated group of volunteers who pray these offices from their homes on a daily basis. We consider these

our "satellite locations." We have developed a faithful following of Internet worshipers who reside locally, as well as in other states and different parts of the world. It is our hope to continue to integrate social media into our regular worship schedule, as it appeals to a younger audience and provides a potential source of new members, new ministries and additional revenue for our Church.



We value our membership in the Richmond Interparish Council (IPC) which enables us to participate in frequent collaborations with other parishes within the Episcopal community as well as other faith communities Island-wide, through Interfaith services that embrace the basic traditions and beliefs of all who come together. We were one of the first parishes to participate in the "Ashes to Go" Lenten program at the Staten Island Ferry Terminal when it was introduced on Ash Wednesday in 2014. We have continued this liturgical practice since that time, although COVID did prevent us from doing so in 2021. We offer pet blessings on the church lawn on the Feast Day of St. Francis for the beloved "family members" of parishioners as well as those of

neighbors who walk their dogs in the lovely park adjacent to the Church. Other outdoor fellowship events include Sunday picnics and barbecues on the church grounds for parishioners and visitors during the warmer months, in addition to our indoor Flea Markets, Oktoberfest and Lunar New Year celebrations in the parish Undercroft.





The Priest We Seek

The parishioners of the Church of the Ascension have a strong sense of responsibility to their church and to one another and have exhibited commitment, faith, support and encouragement within the church as well as within our community. The concept of their relationship with our Priest is clearly a mutual ministry that embraces trust and respect and a desire to work together to grow our parish and expand our outreach.

The parish survey asked parishioners to identify what, in their opinion, constitutes our best practices and the areas in which we need the most improvement. Their responses to these questions are reflected throughout the body of this Profile and provide insight into our vision of working closely with our new Priest to continue, improve and grow the ministries of Church of the Ascension:

- Someone who preaches with a relevant, informal, and conversational delivery style and is comfortable in expressing his/her own opinions.
- Someone who is committed to strengthening the bonds of an inclusive community and making people from all walks of life feel welcomed, comfortable, respected and appreciated.
- Someone who will help us to continue and improve our current ministries and give us insight to develop programs and ways to attract new families with children and youth to our church.
- Someone who enjoys working with young people and will share his/her insight as we work to "revive" our Sunday School programs, parish and youth activities "post COVID." Our goal is to attract younger members and get them more involved in our worship and our parish activities.
- Someone who will offer pastoral care for crisis ministry, counseling, and visiting shut-ins, as well as welcoming newcomers and regularly participating in fellowship activities such as coffee hour.



The areas of parish life that were of the highest priority to our parishioners were:

- **Relationship Between Parish & Priest:** a sense of trust, strong family/youth orientation, respect, involvement in parish management.
- **Sunday Service:** involvement of children, the preaching, music and laity involvement. Importance of the Eucharist in our worship.
- **Pastoral Care:** crisis ministry, counseling, home visits, laity training in this area.
- **Fellowship:** welcoming newcomers, coffee hour, Priest participation, small group meetings and social activities.
- **Further Our Spiritual Development** through Lay Ministry Training, Bible Studies, and Book Groups.
- **Outreach to Groups:** Active in the community and the Richmond Inter-Parish Council. Discovering new ways to extend our involvement and our mission to the community and the greater church.

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The Reverend Deacon Geraldine Swanson

CHURCH WARDENS

Elizabeth Brown

Edward Rogers

VESTRY

Charles Brown

Debbie Duggan

Diane Gurgone – Clerk

Linda Marone

Nancy Murphy

Laura Wonica

Barbara Krause – Treasurer

Roy Williamson – Asst. Treasurer

STAFF

Lucy Merryman – Organist & Music Director

Elizabeth Orlando – Administrator

Rob Patterson - Bookkeeper

ORGANIZATIONS

Altar Guild:

Nancy Murphy, Director

Outreach Committee:

Arthur Ullstrom, Chairperson

Newsletter:

Cathy Romano

Search Committee:

Nancy Reiersen, Chairperson,

Diane Gurgone

Christina Mantz

Gordimir Magdic

Our Search Committee

Diane Gurgone



Diane has been a member of Ascension for about four years. In addition to her role on the Search Committee, she serves as an usher during our 10 a.m. services, a member of the Staten Island Inter-Parish Council and is also Clerk of the Vestry. Diane has also been involved in the planning of numerous Ascension pancake suppers, picnics, etc., and is a familiar face at many of our church events and Island-wide services.

Christina Mantz



Christina is new to Ascension and honored to be a part of the Search Committee. She began attending services here when we were one of the few churches on Staten Island to offer in-person worship, and became a member last year. She was also instrumental in the planning of the reception for our 220th Anniversary in May. Previously she was a member of Christ Church New Brighton and All Saints Church. She has already signed on to be a reader and counter at Ascension. Christina has been involved in the Search process at her previous parish and is a welcome addition to our committee.

Gordimir (Gordy) Magdic



Gordy has been a member of Ascension for close to 20 years. He's a familiar face around the church and is always there to help whenever and wherever it's needed (many times behind the scenes.) Gordy has seen his share of helping out at parish events (indoors and outdoors) as well as being a reader or assisting elsewhere during the service. He has also served as a member of our Vestry. And as many of you already know, Gordy is married to Cindy McCloskey, our deacon postulant, who is also a very active member of Ascension. We are blessed to have him as a member of the Search Committee.

Nancy Reiersen (Search Chair)



Although Nancy has only been an "official" member of Ascension since she transferred her membership from Christ Church New Brighton about two years ago, she has maintained many warm and lasting friendships with several members of the Ascension family over the course of the past several years. She has spent a good deal of her time "behind the Ascension Facebook camera," but is also involved in the Altar Guild, Wednesday Morning Prayer with Artie Ullstrom, and enjoys writing articles for the Newsletter. She is honored to be a member of the Search Committee.

OUR VESTRY AND WARDENS

Wardens

Elizabeth Brown

Edward Rogers



Vestry Members

Charles Brown

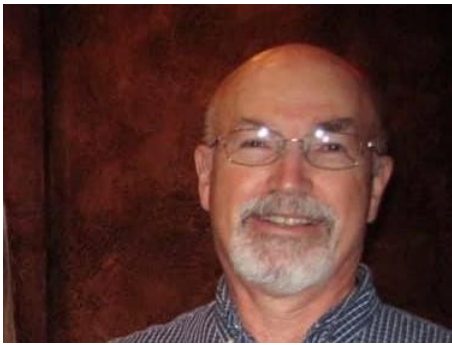
Laura Wonica

Diane Gurgone - Clerk

Linda Marone

Debbie Duggan

Nancy Murphy



Around the Parish



*Celebrating our 220th Anniversary
May 26, 2022*

