

OTM Information, Ascension, Advance

Position Title: Full time Priest

Receiving Names until: Open

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA): 15-20 During Covid: Pre-Covid: 30-35

Number of Weekend Worship Services: 1

Number of Weekday Worship Services: Only Special Feast Days

Number of Other per Month Worship Services: 0

Institution Phone: 336-998-0857

Institution Email: ascension@yadtel.net

Institution Location

Street: 183 Fork-Bixby Road

City: Advance

State: North Carolina

Postal code: 27006

Cash Stipend: \$65,454

Housing / Rectory Detail: NONE

SECA reimbursement details:

Pension Plan: We're in compliance with CPF requirements.

Healthcare Options: ECCEBT-Episcopal Church Clergy Employee Benefit Trust

Negotiable

Dental: yes

Housing Equity Allowance in budget: Yes, it is in budget and determined by CPA

Annual Equity Amount: \$ NA

Vacation Weeks: As required by the Diocese

Vacation Weeks Details: 4

Continuing Education Weeks: As required by the Diocese

Continuing Education Weeks Details: 2

Continuing Education Funding in budget: Yes

Sabbatical Provision: Yes

Travel/Auto Account: Yes, Mileage is paid at the federal rate. .625 per mile

Other Professional Account: Clergy Discretionary Fund used by the Rector and Deacon

Yes

Church School: Sunday School Only
Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School: 3
Number of Students for Children School: 7
Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School: 2
Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School: 6
Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School: 1
Number of Students for Adults School: 5-20

Day School: NA

Narrative answers to the OTM questions, Ascension, Advance

NARRATIVE (1200 character limit including punctuation and spaces)

1. Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry, which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

The past two plus years Ascension has been dealing with the challenges of navigating through Covid, lockdowns, and the uncertainty of what is safe and not safe. We have used best practices to keep our areas clean while securing masks to aid in keeping everyone safer. It affected churches of all sizes and challenged us all to think outside the box in terms of safety for our parishioners and pantry patrons. There are two things Ascension did well during this time.

First, we've had a vibrant and active pantry ministry since approximately 2007. It started out as a back-pack ministry for our local elementary school that developed into a pantry housed in the basement of our Parish Hall. Pantry and church leadership kept the pantry open and running during this entire time and it remains open today. Many modifications were made with masks, extra cleaning, and limiting person to person interaction. Our volunteers came early and boxed up a large selection of food to distribute. Our pantry patrons remained in their automobiles while volunteers placed the boxes of food in trunks.

Secondly, with the assistance of a technology grant from the Diocese of North Carolina, Ascension was able to offer the service each week via Facebook Live which still continues. It has allowed Ascension to reach people all over our area, the country and abroad with our Wi-Fi service. We recently enhanced our Wi-Fi potential to reach as many people as possible with few problems. A member also recently donated a new iPad, stand, and microphone to make it easier to set up for the service each week. Ascension is happy to make our service available to more than those sitting in the pews each Sunday during the challenging pandemic.

2. Describe your liturgical style & practice. If your community provides more than one type of worship service, please describe all:

Ascension is a very traditional parish. All services are grounded in the Book of Common Prayer. We use Holy Eucharist Rite II and the hymns are selected to match the lessons for the church service. All hymns are selected from the hymn book with only a few exceptions. During Holy Week we have traditionally offered additional services including Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. During the pandemic we started using prepackaged bread and wine for communion. We also started printing the entire service for everyone who would like a copy of the service. We are all very happy to be worshipping in person again.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Ascension has a very active Our Daily Bread Food Pantry, where we reach 500 - 700 people each month with food, other items, and support. We have a small chapter of Daughters of the King which was begun 4 years ago. We have many members who participate as Lay Readers, Lectors, Acolytes, and we have 1 Lay Eucharistic Minister. We have a small but active and faithful Altar Guild. We have many outreach programs including: Christmas Meals delivered to area shut-ins, Fork Fireman's Dinner, 4th of July service and picnic, Community Animal Blessing and Blue Christmas service for those who have lost loved ones. Newcomers to Ascension are made aware of these opportunities to share in our ministries as they feel led. We are also open to new ministries suggested by newcomers or current members. One example of this is a request from one of our teens to revitalize our Youth Group this fall, which will happen in September-October. Our Senior and Junior Wardens stay in close touch with members through phone calls, texts, and visits. It should be noted that all tasks of the church here at Ascension, including the Food Pantry are done by volunteers, except for the Priest position.

4. As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

We are a small church family currently. As such we are in contact with each other often and offer help and comfort whenever needed. We try to stay in touch with those who are homebound.

5. Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

The Church of the Ascension, throughout its history, has always been concerned about its neighbors and what the Episcopal Church does throughout North Carolina and the United States. Consequently, Ascension has contributed to natural disaster funds both in North Carolina and throughout the United States. Ascension has supported Thompson's Children's Home, Episcopal Farmworkers Ministry in the Diocese of East Carolina, Mission Trips, United Thank Offering, served on Diocesan committees over the years, attended and provided priests for annual Historic Church services in the Diocese, and contributed to the Bishop's Discretionary Funds.

Locally, Ascension is involved in Family Promise which assists families trying to find a home, the local ministerial association, reaching out to Veterans during our annual Fourth of July service, backpack program contributions when needed, Diocesan youth camps, continuing to work with other denominations to partner with Ascension's *Our Daily Bread Food Pantry*. The food pantry is partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest

North Carolina. Through Second Harvest much food is secured for the pantry at very reduced prices or free.

Most recently Ascension donates each month to a local charity, contributed to a project of one of our young people in collecting pencils for giveaway this coming school year, involved as a site for the Cooperative Extension Agency to give bicycle helmets out to needy youth, We are also in the process of building a “blessing box” or as we are calling it “Food for the body and Food for the mind” that will be placed out front near Fork-Bixby Road allowing individuals to stop by for emergency food and books for all ages. A recent fun experience was taking the youth of Ascension and other churches along with adults on an Amtrak train ride to Raleigh, North Carolina. The State Capitol, Christ Episcopal, and historic Raleigh was visited. There is talk of planning another train trip to the NC State Fair in October.

6. How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

The wardens and members of our church visit shut-ins and those in assisted living communities that are members or have ties to Ascension. Prior to Covid, Ascension had chicken stews that were cooked outside, or a hot dog supper for the community to gather together. Many times there was a local Blue Grass band that would play for the occasion. For many years members have prepared an on-site meal for the sick and shut-ins in the community at Christmas time. One hundred meals are delivered to the homes of these individuals. Even during Covid, Ascension delivered emergency food boxes to needy individuals at Christmas.

One of the most rewarding ministries Ascension has ever offered is a free burial space for those that are wards of the state, have no family, or unable to pay for a burial space. Ascension has also offered our burial areas for unclaimed babies that have died. We have yet to be asked to bury a child, but are willing when asked.

7. Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

We have a wonderful organist, Bill Herndon, who has greatly upgraded our Music Ministry in the 4 years he’s been with us. New prayer books and hymnals were donated by members. We have upgraded and maintain our memorial garden. We have initiated a scholarship program for Davie County students for the last 3 years as part of our blessings that we receive from one of our endowments. We award \$10,000 in scholarships to deserving students each year. We have cooked and delivered Christmas meals for up to 100 shut-ins each December. During the pandemic, we partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank to deliver Emergency Meal Boxes with non-perishable food. Our Pantry leadership has procured grant money which has helped to upgrade our basement pantry facilities inside and out. In September, we will give away bicycle helmets to needy children as a partnership with NC State Cooperative Extension. As a group, our Vestry authorizes monthly donations to groups such as Dragonfly House, Family Promise of Davie, Fork Fire Department, and many others.

8. How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

During the Pandemic, we received technology grants from the Diocese. We used these funds to purchase audio-visual equipment to enable us to broadcast our services on Facebook Live. We also upgraded our Wi-Fi network to allow for greater band-width necessary for live streaming. We also updated the church's computers with a new computer for the Priest's office, the Treasurer and updated the common computer in the church office. We also purchased and had installed a Knox Box for the use of the local Volunteer Fire Department in case of an emergency to allow them access to the buildings without a delay. We recently revamped our church brochure to give visitors and to those interested in Ascension. The brochures have been distributed to local real estate offices and town Chamber of Commerce offices in Mocksville and nearby towns.

9. What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

We have a Stewardship Campaign each fall in order to complete our proposed budget for the next year. We send letters and pledge cards to all parishioners via email for those who have email and via the regular post for those who don't. We normally have a 50% return rate on the pledge cards, but the actual giving is generally much greater than is pledged. We strive to live within the projected budget. But we are an endowed church thanks to the generosity of deceased members. Due to these endowments, we are able to financially support a full-time priest. We also emphasize the need for time and talents to assist in supporting church needs and activities.

10. What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

Our church family has not really experienced conflict. If conflict did happened, it would be something that would be presented to the Priest and Vestry. It would likely be a bringing together of parties, and respectfully handled in that manner. If anything, our church has only truly experienced "concerns". And, as described above, is handled in the same manner as noted above. Our congregation is very much a family!

11. What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

Ascension is usually willing to be accepting of and flexible to change – if the changes are for a good reason, and not just for the sake of change. We are a welcoming and loving community and that sustains us daily.

12. Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

When our priest retired in July, the Vestry at Ascension decided to create a simple survey to poll our members to see what qualities they would like to see in our next Priest. After much discussion, prayer and completed surveys, we determined that we would like to see:

- 1. A leader who will grow and build our church community alongside our worshipping community**
- 2. A person who is adept at pastoral care and communication with the congregation, visitors, and the community at large**

3. A person who is a gifted preacher and communicator
4. A person who has a vision and strategy for Ascension's future

A Summary of the music program at The Church of the Ascension

Today's music program is led by Organist Bill Herndon. Prior to the pandemic, a small volunteer choir of 4-6 adults robed, processed, and led the singing of congregational music. The choir occasionally sang a hymn or simple prepared work during the service, but its main function was to support the congregational singing. While congregational singing has resumed, attendance has not yet increased to levels needed to reintroduce the choir. Since 2017, most services have used Holy Communion Rite II. The congregation has generally sung the Gloria and Sanctus. The Psalms, Proper Preface and other portions of the liturgy have been spoken.

Ascension has two significant musical instruments. The Sanctuary's organ is a 3-manual, Viscount Unico 400 digital electronic instrument. Acquired from a private owner in 2017, it is in excellent condition and provides exceptional support for virtually all classical organ repertoire. Its maintenance is supported by the manufacturer's local area representative. The Parish Hall has a full-sized upright piano which is in fine condition for an instrument of its age. It is tuned and serviced twice annually.

Bill Herndon has served as Ascension's Organist since April, 2018. Bill taught himself to play the piano at age 4. He began organ studies in the ninth grade with Henry B. Whipple at First Presbyterian Church of High Point. He studied with Dr. Robert E. Glasgow at the University of Michigan School of Music. He was also the student assistant to the University's Curator of Organs. He's held positions at several area churches, including Lexington's Second Reformed UCC and Greensboro's Congregational UCC. Prior to returning to North Carolina, Herndon served at several Episcopal churches in the Detroit metro area and St. Michael's in the Hills in Ottawa Hills (Toledo), Ohio. Bill is a member of the Piedmont NC Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. A licensed electrician, Bill works for the US Postal Service maintaining industrial electrical, mechanical, heating, and air conditioning systems and operates a small electrical business serving the Triad. Previously, Bill worked with NCDOT-Rail on station improvements from Charlotte to Rocky Mount. He shares his life today with seven rescue dogs in a 1925 fixer-upper special in High Point's historic West End neighborhood.

A brief history of Church of the Ascension's Pantry, *Our Daily Bread Food Pantry*

The community that has become Our Daily Bread Food Pantry was founded in 2007 at young parishioner Sidnee Everhart's eighth birthday party and remains the practical seat of servant ministry at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. In lieu of presents, she asked friends and family, many of which are members of Ascension, to bring nonperishable food instead to "feed my friends." One food drive rolled into another, became a Book Bags of

Hope program at Cornatzer Elementary, then Cooleemee Elementary, and then a summer feeding program distributed from the multi-purpose classroom area in the parish hall's unfinished basement. Deacon Kermit Baily and Rev. Sealy Cross unearthed Ascension's nearly forgotten 501(c)3 paperwork from the 1970s and were essential in connecting Our Daily Bread with Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina. As an associated food pantry with Second Harvest, Our Daily Bread benefits from the larger Feeding America system and is a peer group 3 of 4 pantry. Our Daily Bread even mentors other food nonprofits and ministries in the county from time to time. Our Daily Bread received its first physical revitalization in 2014-2015 as part of Sidnee's Girl Scout Gold Award Project and a major remodel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though finished ceilings and window casings are luxuries, the love-founded compassion, hospitality, and respect that bind our broader community of bread-breaking together are essential and foundational. Our Daily Bread is an all-volunteer organization, and no description would be complete without mention of Monte, Linda, Roger, Vern, Denise, Luray, David, and the young folks from Ascension and the community. We are blessed with truly exceptional volunteers of which we have many, each with boundless dedication and a story about why Our Daily Bread is part of their story and personal ministry. Our Daily Bread has also been blessed beyond measure with the support of many of our local area churches. Our Daily Bread is a great example of a truly ecumenical effort. Our youngest members are part of the next generation participating in this intergenerational, interdenominational, eclectic rural food ministry. Ascension has been irrevocably yoked with the history and future of Our Daily Bread Food Pantry and we can't wait to see who and what is next in store for this vibrant aspect of life at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension.

Church of the Ascension's Brochure can be found on the church website which is www.ascension-fork.org

Your worshipping community's website ____

www.ascension-fork.org

Your Facebook Information

The Church of the Ascension in Advance. Recent photos of The Church of the Ascension can be found on the church Facebook page.