



Office for
Transition
Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Apr 2, 2024)

Church of the Ascension, Colorado

600 Gilpin Street, Denver, CO 80218, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | Receiving Names until 05/15/24.

vanessa@episcopalcolorado.org

| | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) | Number of Weekend Worship Services | Number of Weekday Worship Services | Number of Other per Month Worship Services |
| 117 | 2 | 5 | |
| Current Annual Compensation | Cash Stipend | Housing / Rectory Detail | Utilities |
| | | | |
| SECA reimbursement | Compensation Available for New Position | Housing Available for | Pension Plan |
| | \$135000 | | We're in compliance with CPF requirements. |
| Healthcare Options | Dental | Housing Equity Allowance in budget | Annual Equity Amount |
| Full family | Yes | | |
| Vacation Weeks | Vacation Weeks Details | Continuing Education Weeks | Continuing Education Weeks Details |
| 4 | 4 | 2 (standard) | 2 |
| Continuing Education Funding in budget over \$2000/year | Sabbatical Provision | Travel/Auto Account | Other Professional Account |
| | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Salary range is \$125 - \$145 DOE.

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

One moment we would like to highlight is our annual Christmas Pageant with Children's Ministry. This year end celebration has become a favorite event amongst parishioners across multiple generations. We ended 2023 with our Christmas Pageant in which 50 children ages 3 to 11 participated. In addition to the children participants, we also had 35 parents and Youth members that volunteered their time in helping to assist with rehearsals and putting together a birthday party for Jesus following the pageant. A large crowd of almost 200 people attended the pageant in person. We were able to livestream the pageant so that grandparents and other family members, as well as our own parishioners, were able to watch online. All of our children enjoyed being able to dress up and tell the story of Jesus' birth with a celebration in our parish hall following the pageant. One eight year old reflected, "The Ascension Christmas pageant is super fun because every year I get a new role. My first year, I got to be a lamb, then the next year, I was a Roman Soldier. This year was my favorite role, and I was a Shepherd. It's really fun to wait and see what role I will get to play!"

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

We believe that preparing for a thriving church of the future involves intentional planning guided by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. We've been very focused on building a worship community for all generations. We have strengthened programs for families through youth involvement in worship and youth-inclusive outreach. We've also stayed focused on adult parish members through Bible study, a vibrant book group, Seniors Lunch, live streamed services, and active pastoral care. To support this multigenerational approach, we've also had a major focus on hospitality to welcome persons from a variety of backgrounds in our historic neighborhood and across the metro area. We've also been attentive to a sustainable financial footing and welcoming physical structure. We used the sale of our rectory to substantially grow our endowment and completed a major renovation of our Parish Hall to create a more hospitable environment for fellowship. A future opportunity is to re-imagine the use of our large education building to help the parish continue to thrive. In all our efforts we know that our primary objective must be to make the Gospel relevant to people in an increasingly secular world.

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

Welcoming/Approachable, collaborative leadership, spiritual communicator, Inspirational and Optimistic

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Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

The Eucharist is celebrated every Sunday at 8am and 10am with the early service being spoken, and the later service incorporating our organist and adult choir. At our 10am service, all children are invited to the altar to observe the blessing of the wine and wafers and take part in the ringing of bells. All children and adults are invited to partake in the Eucharist. The 10am service is also live streamed. Live streaming, which we started during the pandemic, has become an important service to our homebound parishioners. In the Winter months, we offer ski season services at 5PM on Sundays. These informal and acoustical accompanied services accommodate our many families that are in the mountains. In the Summer, we offer outdoor service in the park once a month. These are Eucharistic Rite II services with varying musical accompaniment. Morning prayer led by lay congregants Monday thru Friday at 8AM and is conducted via Zoom. On Friday, this service is offered in the Chapel for participants or via Zoom. There is a contemplative prayer group that meets in the Chapel on Thursday mornings at 8. This gathering is also available on Zoom.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Ascension has a tradition of providing opportunities for parishioners to be involved in ministry in a variety of areas. Our worship services include roles for parishioners as ushers, lectors/intercessors, Eucharistic ministers, acolytes, livestream assistants, and coordinating Morning Prayer. Our growing parish choir, bell choir and new children's choir have also been integral to parishioner involvement. Both children's education and adult formation allow active leadership by parishioners via our Children's Ministry Committee, Sunday School program, and in activities such as Bible and Book study groups, Centering Prayer, and Senior Lunch gatherings. Stewardship is led by parishioners on our Committees for Finance, Endowment, Annual Giving, and Building Improvement. Similarly, care for our parishioners is led by our Committees for Hospitality, Pastoral Care, and also our large network of members of our Prayer Chain. Finally, ministry to the broader community is led by our Outreach Committee which provides opportunities for both adults and children to volunteer work both locally and internationally.

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

Ascension has seen tremendous growth in our offerings to care for our worshipping community. Lay pastoral care teams provide support for parishioners in need. Multiple teams meet to identify and discuss parishioner needs and reach out through prayer, phone calls, cards, visits, and other forms of "checking-in." Ascension is blessed to have an amazing group of prayer warriors through our active prayer chain of over twenty parishioners. Weekly offerings include Morning Prayer on Zoom and in-person on Fridays. On Thursdays, a Centering Prayer group gathers in the Chapel and on Zoom. Our Bible and book studies include Gospel Bible Study on Tuesdays. These encourage reading, enjoyment, and understanding of Scripture for our current lives. Since 2020, the Ascension Book Study has read books that help us prayerfully engage diverse topics that widen our world. We have several opportunities for spiritual fellowship including Seniors Lunch, Lenten suppers, Rector's forums, Lent and Advent study at the Denver Art Museum, and the growth of Children's and Youth opportunities. Last year we also hosted a First Aid/CPR training and active shooter training for parishioner safety.

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

Pastoral care and care beyond our worshipping community is focused on in our outreach ministry and sharing our space. We host monthly lunch making to support homeless youth served by Urban Peak. We support Metro Caring through our annual Loaves and Fishes Food Drive. On Bike to Work Day, we provide a station for snacks and bike blessings. We have held a successful drive for school supplies and scholarships for St. Elizabeth's School. We hold a Thanksgiving Meal Drive for families in need. We have completed successful clothing drives for St. Francis Center. We held a successful blood drive in honor of one of our youth parishioners in December. We participate in the Annual Evening for Haiti in the Spring, hosted a Christmas market and supported parishioners traveling to Haiti with Locally Haiti. We support the Delores Project, a shelter for those experiencing homelessness. We provide an Annual Giving Tree in December in partnership with the African Community Center to provide gifts for refugees. Our Outreach Grant program has provided \$11K in grants to partners. We also try to be a space for our community by hosting two AA groups as well as a martial arts studio at the church.

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

Ascension delegates participate in the Annual Convention for the Episcopal Church in Colorado. When provided, we have had several parishioners attend High Plains Region workshops, convocation, and other regional events. We have had several parishioners participate in Cursillo and serve on boards and commissions such as the Colorado Episcopal Foundation. Several church leaders have attended Project Resource, the stewardship seminars provided by the College for Bishops, through the Diocese. We have had several active parishioners involved in Locally Haiti, founded by three Episcopal priests, and historically linked with the Episcopal Church in Colorado. Eight parishioners have made a partnership trip to the partner parish of St. Paul's in Petit Trou de Nippes in Haiti, and the current board president for Locally Haiti is an Ascension Parishioner. We are planning a concert with the Colorado Hebrew chorale, providing cultural and spiritual awareness among groups and sharing with the greater community.

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

In 2021, our parish hired its first full-time Children's and Youth Minister, Mary Margaret Murdock. Mary Margaret, the Vestry, and various committees have established this robust and energetic ministry. In 2023, the Children's Ministry program was supported by 25 Sunday School Volunteers and expanded from 1 class to 3 classes. Children, youth, and their families are active in both programming and worship, which makes Sunday School classes attractive for all ages. In the Spring of 2023, 48 children participated in Sunday School with an average attendance of 18 (this is up from 2022, when we had 27 children participating and an average attendance of 12). In the Winter months we shift our Sunday school to an evening family program called "Ski Season Sundays." This casual service of Compline, includes music, prayers, and a lesson. Our Ski Season Sundays average 32 parishioners. Our focus on building out the Children's ministry program has resulted in substantial growth and a loyal group of spirited and dedicated parishioners of all ages who worship and learn together. Susanna Shannon, a member of the Children's Ministry Committee can be contacted about this program at (846) 590-6947.

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

Our practice of Stewardship is intentionally direct given the needs of our growing Parish. With 51% growth in giving units (125) and 65% growth in pledges (\$560,000) over the previous three years, we are balancing growth in numbers with the need to provide exceptional services. Much of our growth comes from families who are either new to organized religion, or Episcopalians who have not attended in many decades. We are focused on educating our parishioners on why giving matters. Our campaign consists of the following: touch base phone calls, an informal rector letter, educational postcards highlighting financials, a letter from the treasurer and head of giving, a colorful brochure highlighting the budget, Friday emails from parish leaders, personal parishioner stories during Sunday services, and finally, follow up phone calls to any family that has not pledged by January 31st for that calendar year. Our goal is 100% participation. The Giving committee is goal oriented, well organized, and transparent with the Vestry. Each Giving cycle has a theme, and in 2024 we focused on "Grace in Action - what does Ascension mean to you."

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

Our leadership and members have worked hard to create an atmosphere of open dialogue to avoid widespread conflict in recent years. However, this does not mean that we haven't had issues with potential to create debate. Many of those have been centered around changes in our philosophy around discussions of money and church funding. Our recent stewardship has created more open discussions in the church and the need to support long-term ministries and parish health. One example was our decision in 2021 to sell the house that the parish owned next to the Church, which had served as a rectory and rental housing at times. With real estate values in Denver and the cost of the aging house, parish leadership made the decision to sell the house and invest the money in the endowment. This decision was made through holding open forums, newsletter articles, and overall transparency. A similar process was conducted with the decision to renovate the parish hall (including a loan from the endowment to support the last 20% of this cost). That process also included several outlets of detailed conversation including with the broader parish, Finance and Endowment committees, and Vestry.

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?

We've had a lot of experience addressing change in our church in recent years from having our choir director pass away to trying to keep a community connected during Covid. Maintaining constant communication has served us best. From emails, letters, phone calls, meetings over Zoom or in person, keeping parishioners informed has been a priority. The second part to this communication and also equally as important is an openness to feedback. Historically, we have noticed things to fall apart when one or both of these processes are ignored. When our choir director, Tamara, passed away, a committee was formed to find a replacement. Instead of having this process run unilaterally, forming a committee allowed different members to become engaged and invested. They were able to bring their views and the views of their peer groups to be a voice which created a stronger bond for our parish. Through this committee, compensation was considered a higher priority than it had been in the past, and we were able to run a successful process in bringing in a fantastic music minister. We have learned that when we involve more people in the decision making process, we grow stronger as a community.



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Prior Incumbents

| Name | Position Title | Date Begun | Date Ended |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The Rev. Weezie Blanchard | Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | 2018-10 | 2024-04 |

| Name | Position Title | Date Begun | Date Ended |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The Rev. Lucas Grubbs | Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | 2008-01 | 2017-01 |

| Name | Position Title | Date Begun | Date Ended |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The Rev. James Harlan | Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | 2002-01 | 2011-01 |

| Church School | Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School | Number of Students for Children School |
|---------------|--|--|
| | 15 | 45 |

| Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School | Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School | Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School | Number of Students for Adults School |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| 8 | 20 | | |

| Day School | Number of Students for Day School | Number of Teachers for Day School | Number of Total Staff for Day School |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | |



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Worshipping Community Web site: <https://www.ascensiondenver.org/>

Media Links:

Online References:

> <https://www.youtube.com/@ascensiondenver2520>;

Languages Significantly Represented:

English

Provide Worship or Classes in:

References

Bishop:

The Rt. Rev. Kym Lucas

Diocesan Transition Minister

**The Rev. Canon Vanessa
Stickler Glass**

vanessa@episcopalcolorado.org; 720-677-9007

Current Warden/Board Chair

Christopher Miller

Warden@ascensiondenver.org

Previous Warden/Board Chair

Search Chair

Chris Nazar

Search@ascensiondenver.org

Parish/Institution

Local Community Leader