



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

DENVER, COLORADO



PARISH PROFILE

2024

WWW.ASCENSIONDENVER.ORG

PRAYER FOR A NEW RECTOR

ALMIGHTY GOD, GIVER OF EVERY GOOD GIFT: LOOK GRACIOUSLY ON YOUR CHURCH, AND SO GUIDE THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO SHALL CHOOSE A RECTOR FOR THIS PARISH, THAT WE MAY RECEIVE A FAITHFUL PASTOR, WHO WILL CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE AND EQUIP US FOR OUR MINISTRIES; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.



Welcome and thank you for your interest in Church of the Ascension in Denver, Colorado! This profile tells the story of our community, historic roots, recent growth, and plans for a vibrant future. As we embark on this search, our church is in a strong position. Ascension's solid foundation finds its strength in its relentless commitment to one another and robust congregational involvement. We are a warm and loving parish, with a broad multi-generational member profile. We look forward to joyfully welcoming our 13th Rector, who will lead and partner with us as we continue to invite God into our lives and carry love into the world.

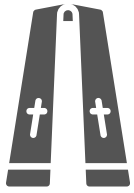


CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION IS A PLACE WHERE FAITH AND REAL LIFE INTERSECT, FROM WHERE WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE GOD'S LOVE IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD.



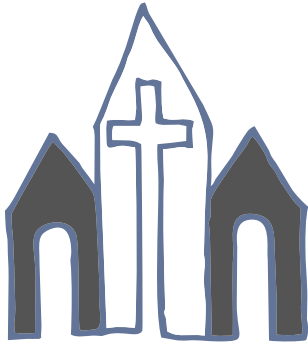
We do this through generous hospitality, serving God and one another, community involvement, and providing a welcoming place for exploring our relationship with God.

ASCENSION AT A GLANCE



12 RECTORS HAVE SERVED THE PARISH SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1904.

IN 2023...



AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE OF 117



518 TOTAL COMMUNICANTS



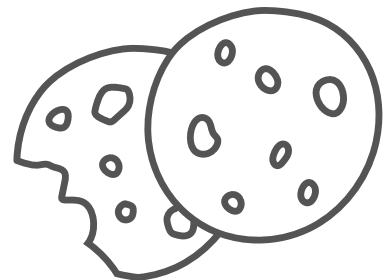
14 BAPTISMS



125 PLEDGING HOUSEHOLDS



75 ACTIVE CHILDREN AND YOUTH



OVER 2,200 COOKIES CONSUMED AT COFFEE HOUR



Something unique and exciting is going on at Church of the Ascension. All of the critical metrics of a healthy and growing church are evident, but there is more to it than that. The fellowship and enthusiasm found within our parish are contagious. Through that fellowship, we are a group of people striving to live the best versions of ourselves through Christ. Ascension is central to my family's life. It is where we worship and observe the importance of community. My children participate as readers, acolytes, and farm animals in the Christmas Pageant. They engage with people of faith outside of their immediate circle, expanding their perspective as well as their support group. For my wife and me, it is a harbor in the storm of life where we find peace and support through friendship and faith. For all of us, it shows us firsthand what it means to be a member of the living church.

-Chris Miller, Senior Warden



W O R S H I P

Worship is central to what we do and who we are. The liturgical style at Ascension is best described as broad-based and middle of the road. We offer two Sunday worship services: a spoken service at 8 a.m. and our principal worship service at 10 a.m. Normally, we use Rite Two for both services, however on the fifth Sunday of the month we draw from Rite One at the earlier service and Enriching Our Worship at the latter. The 10 a.m. service is supported by the Parish Choir and is livestreamed on our website. Clergy are assisted by lay readers, eucharistic ministers, acolytes, altar guild, and ushers. Though we strive for reverence in our worship, we take great joy in the presence of children and young families and view this as an indication of our vibrant community. Children love to gather around the altar and ring the bells during the Eucharistic prayer and serve as acolytes.



In the summer, we have one service at 9 a.m., and once a month we move to nearby Little Cheesman Park for Eucharist. In the winter, we offer Compline at 5 p.m. on Sundays to accommodate our families who participate in winter sports programs. This is mostly attended by younger families and children.

In addition to Sunday services, Morning Prayer is offered Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday via Zoom, and on Fridays in person in our Chapel. On Thursdays, Centering Prayer is offered in the Chapel and via Zoom. Both of these offerings are run and supported by parishioners.



MUSIC

Music is an integral part of worship and parish life at Church of the Ascension.

Whether you actively participate or joyfully listen, music enriches our experience here. Our exceptional music is led by Director of Music, Dr. Cindy Lindeen-Martin, who has continued to build on our tradition of working with parishioners of all ages. The Parish Choir leads worship in liturgy and song, singing a variety of music at the 10 a.m. service every Sunday and at special services. This diverse group of people is a strong community that works to support the church and each other. Our newest and youngest choir, the SONshine Singers, is for those in kindergarten through grade five. They work diligently on special anthems, while also learning foundations of music. Our handbell choir, Ascension Ringers, plays special pieces for services throughout the year, broadening the music program and worship experience at Church of the Ascension.



In the past, Church of the Ascension has hosted organ and music concerts. Since our beautiful Patrick J. Murphy pipe organ was installed in 2009, our continued hope is to revive and nourish a concert series to benefit not only our parish but reach out to a wider Denver and surrounding community.





“Over the past 46 years Ascension has been the local family I needed, the village necessary to raise our children well, and the means for my spiritual and personal growth. The Ascension community has always offered concern, prayers, and emotional support to us. People have picked me up when I’ve been down literally and figuratively, brought meals when one of us has been sick, and taught and encouraged our children. My husband and I have grown spiritually and personally through Ascension’s Bible studies and adult classes. Through singing, reading, listening, praying, and receiving the Eucharist at Ascension, I have become able to worship God more fully.”

-Mary Ruth Schaumburg, Parish Choir member and long-time parishioner



CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Our Children and Youth Ministries, which are supported by our Associate for Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Ministry Committee, and Youth Ministry Committee, are a pivotal part of life at Ascension. In the last five years, this has been an area of significant growth, from just a handful of families in 2019 to over 50 young families in 2024. Our ministry is so much more than just Sunday School. It is a dedicated group of people who enjoy fellowship and genuinely care for one another. We embrace fully that children and youth can and do experience God and are integral members of our church community. We offer three Sunday School classes at 9 a.m. for children and youth that are taught by rotating parent volunteers. Children and youth attend worship with their families while we offer a nursery for babies and toddlers.



A major highlight of this ministry is the annual Christmas Pageant. Children ages three through grade five are invited to participate in telling the story of Jesus' birth, while youth and parents enjoy volunteering. In both 2022 and 2023, over 50 children participated in the Christmas Pageant. Parishioners, friends, and family come from near and far for this amazing event!



In addition to Sunday School, Ascension Youth comes together once a month during the school year for fun fellowship and service events. In 2022, nine high school youth were confirmed on Palm Sunday. We have a robust roster of children that we believe will enhance Ascension Youth in years to come!

"I like Ascension because there are so many fun things to do. Sunday School is fun because you learn so much!"
-Marilyn, age 8



"I like Ascension because of the people there. Everyone is super friendly and welcoming."
-Freddie, age 10

"Ascension makes me feel happy, good, and loving. My favorite things to do there are Sunday School, prayers, Lenten Suppers, and coffee hour."
-George, age 7



"Ascension to me means helping one another and remembering that everyone was created by God."
-Foster, age 8



"I like to acolyte, it's so fun!"
-Davy, age 7

"When I think of Ascension, I think of coffee hour. It makes me feel happy. I like to play tag and hide and seek with my friends there. Being in the Christmas Pageant and serving as an acolyte make me proud."
-Adair, age 9

ADULT FORMATION



Adult Formation at Ascension is centered around book and Bible studies. The Tuesday Bible study meets over Zoom at noon and is focused on the Hebrew scriptures. The Gospel Bible study addresses the Gospel as prescribed by the lectionary each Sunday. Our book study, which began in 2020, focuses on books of a variety of genres that help us prayerfully and thoughtfully broaden our world and views. This study meets on Tuesdays at 5 p.m. over Zoom.



Over the last two years, parishioners have enjoyed our Wednesday night Lenten Suppers with programs about the Episcopal church and the Lord's Prayer, as well as once a month Rector's Forums. One of our strongest groups is the Senior Fellowship Lunch. Once a month our seniors gather in the Parish Hall for a potluck lunch, often with guest speakers. This is coordinated by parishioners and very well attended!

WE WELCOME OUR FUTURE RECTOR TO BRING THEIR GIFTS AND INTERESTS TO ADULT FORMATION!

PARISH LIFE

Ascension's parishioners, clergy, and staff enjoy a vibrant and openhearted parish life. Nametags are a cornerstone at Ascension, and you are hard pressed to attend an event where people are not introducing themselves to one another and making new friends. Our rich community is multi-generational where a four-decade Ascension parishioner can be found holding one of our newest infant members in their arms during coffee hour. It is difficult to remain anonymous at Ascension, where everyone in our close-knit congregation plays some role in church life. Our Parish Hall is the heartbeat of parish life and we utilize it and our nearby parks throughout the year for annual events.



EVENTS AT ASCENSION

Pancake Supper
Lenten Supper Series
Easter Egg Hunt
Playground Pizza and Popsicles
Ascension Sunday Celebration
Newcomers Reception
Back to School Bash
Blessing of the Animals
Advent Wreath Making
Christmas Pageant
Sunday Coffee Hour

AND MANY MORE!



“More than anything else we’ve been a part of in Denver, Church of the Ascension has made us feel at home. This church and community have rooted our family in its love, warmth, and acts of service. We are grateful to raise our children alongside the families here and are excited to be engaged in Ascension’s next chapter.”

-Susanna Shannon, member of the Children’s Ministry Committee



OUTREACH

Ascension has had an active outreach ministry for many years and it is highly valued among our parishioners. Over the last several years, the Outreach Committee has worked to redefine and recommit to its structure and mission, focusing on organizations with which Ascension can have meaningful partnership. One of the major highlights of our outreach ministry among all ages is monthly lunch making for Urban Peak, an organization devoted to serving unhoused youth. In addition to serving our partners, Ascension's outreach grant program provided \$11,000 in 2023 to organizations in Denver and beyond.



2023 OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

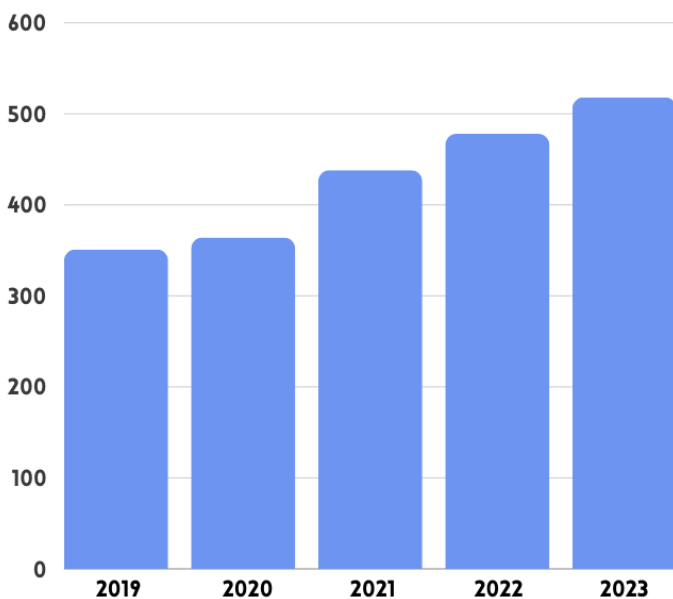
- Supporting St. Elizabeth's School students by hosting a school supply drive in August and Thanksgiving food drive in November to feed 25 families in need.
- Holding a successful drive for care packages and cards that were delivered to deployed Army and Navy personnel for Veterans Day.
- Providing beverages, snacks, and bike blessings for Bike to Work Day in June.
- Gathering needed clothing for St. Francis Center.
- Hosting the Haitian Christmas Market in December, which had more than 100 attendees and raised over \$5,000 for our partner, Locally Haiti.
- Providing gifts for refugees and families through our annual giving tree in December in partnership with the African Community Center.
- Holding a blood drive with 29 donors in honor of a young parishioner.

WE HOPE OUR FUTURE RECTOR WILL HELP US STRENGTHEN OUR OUTREACH MINISTRY!

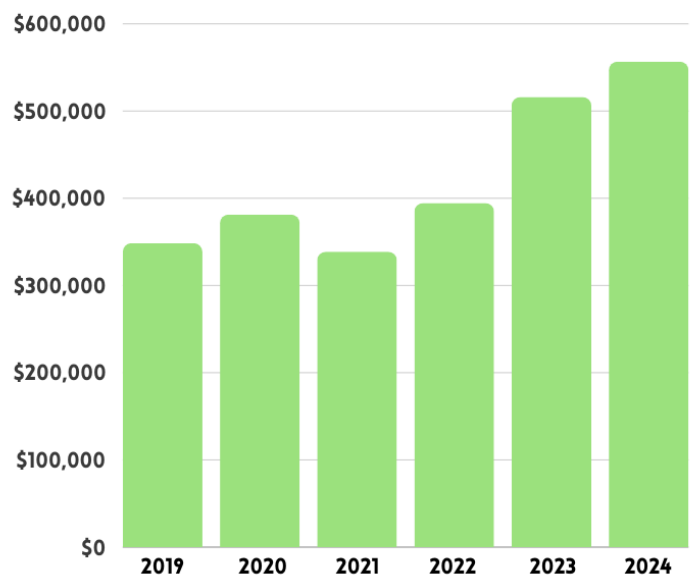
STEWARDSHIP

Ascension is fortunate to be supported by many gracious parishioners. Nearly 100% of our parish households make pledges which fund over 90% of our budget. Ascension has built remarkable momentum and unprecedented growth in membership and giving over the past 5 years. The 60% growth in annual pledges since 2019 enabled the church to invest in its clergy and staff, as well as enhance our building. The Annual Giving Committee has worked to educate the parish on the budget needs of our congregation, and we are proud of the prayerful financial participation from our members. Our finances are overseen by our volunteer treasurer, paid third-party accountant, parish administrator, rector, vestry, and Finance Committee. Beyond annual pledge growth, Ascension has received meaningful special gifts, including multiple gifts that supported the \$750,000 renovation of our Parish Hall in 2022, the most significant capital improvement to the parish building in 60 years.

ASCENSION MEMBERSHIP
48% GROWTH 2023 VS. 2019



TOTAL ANNUAL PLEDGES (EXCLUDING SPECIAL GIFTS)
60% GROWTH 2024 VS. 2019



The Endowment Fund exists to maintain the viability of the ministries and programs of Ascension, as well as the capital needs of our historic building. Annual 4% draws from the Endowment Fund support our operating budget and the church has previously tapped the endowment for loans and special projects. In 2021, Ascension sold the adjacent residential property purchased in 1959, adding over \$1,000,000 to the fund. The Endowment Fund's balance of \$1,013,809 as of February 2024 provides an additional source of financial stability for our parish.

More recent efforts by the Endowment Committee have resulted in 20 couples and individuals participating in The Ascension Legacy program for planned giving. Financial literacy, transparency, and collaboration between all constituents is a hallmark of our growing institution, and is important to our parishioners.

HISTORY

For over a century, Church of the Ascension has served as a treasured Denver neighborhood parish. In 1904, Mrs. Thomas Ward started a mission in a tent to meet the need for a neighborhood Sunday School. The little mission that she formed quickly outgrew its original quarters and in 1909, expanded to a vacant plot six blocks away at the corner of 6th Avenue and Gilpin Street, where a temporary chapel was built. In 1909, a brick church was built to seat 100 people.



In 1912, the Rev. Henry S. Foster became our first rector, serving 28 years at Ascension. Under his leadership, the mission was elevated to parish status in 1913. A significant fire in 1917 led to a complete rebuild of the church and parish house in 1918. The Rev. Edwin B. Thayer was called to serve as rector in 1950. During Father Thayer's tenure the church saw a period of great growth. Sunday School enrollment reached a high of 440. In 1959, a two-story wing was added to meet the demand for classroom and meeting space. More recent rectors included: Laurence Spencer (1961-1972), Robert Burrows (1972-1980), James Short (1980-2001), James Harlan (2002-2011), and Lucas Grubbs (2012-2017). In 2004, the Church Building was designated a Denver Historic Landmark.

Recent years have included maintenance and restoration projects, as well as growth in our membership. From February to October 2022, Ascension completed a restoration of the Parish Hall, two classrooms, the interior of the music room, and outdoor lightwell that provides outdoor gathering space adjacent to the Parish Hall. In the 116 years since our humble beginning, Ascension has had only 12 rectors. The Rev. Louise Browner Blanchard served Ascension from 2018 until her retirement in the spring of 2024. Our parish prayerfully and eagerly awaits welcoming the 13th rector to our beloved church.

STAFF AND VESTRY

The Ascension vestry manages the affairs of the parish and consists of the rector, who serves as presiding officer, and nine parishioners who are nominated by the vestry and elected by the parish at the Annual Meeting. Vestry members are elected to three-year terms with the option to serve an additional term. The senior warden is nominated by the rector and the junior warden is nominated by the vestry. Both serve one-year terms and are elected by the parish at the Annual Meeting. The clerk and the treasurer are both elected by the vestry, and the treasurer is a non-voting vestry officer. The vestry meets monthly and for special meetings as necessary.



Church of the Ascension is supported by a hard working and dedicated staff. Though small in number, each member is an expert in their field and manages their programs with diligence. They value teamwork, flexibility, and collaboration!

Parish Administrator - Sarah L. Dougherty

Associate Rector - The Rev. Amy M. Feins

Priest Associate - The Rev. Garry Horle

Director of Music - Dr. Cindy Lindeen-Martin

Associate for Children, Youth, and Family Ministries - Mary Margaret Murdock (vacant July 2024)

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD



Church of the Ascension is centrally located in Denver and surrounded by the Congress Park, Capitol Hill, and Country Club Historic Neighborhoods. Situated on the corner of Gilpin Street and 6th Avenue, Ascension is truly a neighborhood church. The church is tucked into a residential area just two blocks south of Cheesman Park, where we hold outdoor summer services and our annual Easter egg hunt. The nationally recognized Denver Botanic Gardens are a short walk from our church doors. Our neighborhood is a charming mix of residences and commercial shops and is pedestrian friendly with sidewalks throughout.



Directly across 6th Avenue is Novo Coffee shop, which acts as our unofficial “front porch” on Sunday mornings. You will almost certainly find fellow parishioners gathering here for a cup of a coffee while children are at Sunday School or as a natural meeting spot for various groups and committees. On the same retail block as Novo, we are fortunate to have a treasured neighborhood restaurant, a delightful flower shop, a hair salon run by one of our parishioners, and a century-old meat market. Our church is a 20-minute drive from stunning hikes and within an hour of world class ski mountains. Ascension is an easy 10-minute drive to Denver’s downtown core with all of its sports and cultural offerings and a 10-minute walk into Cherry Creek North, a vibrant shopping and dining district. With 300 days of Denver sunshine, Ascension is perfectly located for strolls around this charming and welcoming neighborhood community.



“I found Church of the Ascension when I wasn't looking for a new church home. The deeply spiritual worship, superior music, and infectious welcome of its people are magnetic. I was pleased when I introduced my now-husband to Ascension and he wanted to get involved in the various offerings, too. He chose Ascension as the place we should marry – it has become our spiritual home.”

-Brian Ward, Parish Choir member and lay worship leader



TO APPLY...

Please email your cover letter, resume, OTM portfolio, and links to two sermons (video preferred) to the Rev. Canon Vanessa Stickler Glass, Canon for Transition and Wellness at vanessa@episcopalcolorado.org.

We joyfully look forward to collaborating with you!



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