



Church of the
ASCENSION
Orlando, Florida

**2025
Parish Profile**



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Church of the Ascension! Ascension is an Episcopal church in the Diocese of Central Florida, located near the Town of Windermere and adjacent to the Dr. Phillips area of Orlando, Florida. We are a culturally diverse congregation that enjoys the richness of the Anglican liturgical heritage and sound biblical doctrine as we gather in prayer, worship and ministry. In addition to our parish family, we have many regular seasonal members from throughout the United States and regular international attendees. Visitors know us to be a friendly, Christian, Bible-based community.

WHO WE ARE

To help guide us in our life and service, Ascension developed the following Vision Statement:

“To build and steward a vibrant and loving church community of all ages that:
nurtures believers through biblical teaching,
worships God with reverence and joy through historic liturgy,
provides ample opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development,
impacts the world beyond our walls through compassionate service, and
eagerly shares the good news of Jesus.”

RECTOR’S COUNCIL

To assist the Rector in fulfilling our Vision, five individuals from the congregation serve on “The Rector’s Council” at the pleasure of the Rector. Based on the individuals’ gifts and vocation, they were asked to focus on one of the five areas of mission described in our Vision Statement (see Appendix). The purpose of this Council is to assist the Rector with visioning for the church and to communicate this vision to the different Ministry Heads and members of the congregation. One of Ascension’s deepest desires was to hear Bible-based preaching of the pure gospel message that would lead members to a deeper personal relationship with Christ, a daily awareness of the movement of the Holy Spirit, and a greater appreciation of the Trinity within their lives. The Rector’s Council is an important asset to the Rector in fulfilling this desire.

With prayerful thought and discussion, three areas of the Vision Statement emerged as areas that required some attention for Ascension to move forward. Those areas were Youth/Children’s Ministries, Spiritual Formation Ministries and Evangelism/Outreach Ministries. We have been taking steps towards making these better and healthier Ministries.

YOUTH

Ascension's Children's Church has experienced significant growth, both in numbers and spiritual depth. Rooted in our church's vision to nurture believers through biblical teaching and provide opportunities for spiritual growth, we offer Children's Church at both service times. Our attendance ranges from 3-16 children per Sunday. By maintaining a dependable environment, we continue to foster a vibrant and loving church community for families.



In January 2024, we launched our Pre-Teens ministry, “Forged”, as part of our commitment to developing young leaders and deepening their biblical understanding. This group averages eight pre-teens each week and mirrors the adults' formation curriculum. This shift has encouraged deeper engagement with Scripture, allowing students to see the grand narrative of the Bible while also creating opportunities for family discussions at home.

Vacation Bible School has also flourished, growing from 20 participants in 2023 to 48 in 2024, with anticipated continued growth this year. Through these ministries, we see our church's vision in action—creating a place where children are not only taught biblical truth but are also equipped to impact the world beyond our walls.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The deepening spiritual formation of the congregation began with the development of an Ascension Foundations series focusing on the areas of Scripture, Sacraments, and Spirituality. The Scripture Module, *God With Us: The Story God is Telling about Jesus*, is designed to draw people into the whole story of God as it points to Jesus, and through Jesus and the Spirit, to our participation in the sacred story. All the spiritual formation offerings then explore one of these themes of Scripture, Sacraments, and Spirituality in more depth through small group study, retreats, and Sunday morning formation hour. These themes are also carried into the spiritual formation of our children and youth.

OUTREACH

Today, the Church of the Ascension has several vibrant outreach ministries in our local community. Some of these are operated directly by the church and others are performed in conjunction with other churches, government or nonprofit organizations. In addition, we have established direct ties to five ministries in Africa, including Kings & Priests Ministries in Nigeria and West Africa, New Vine International in Kenya and East Africa, Community of Christ the Healer in South Africa, Saint Andrews Cathedral and School in South Sudan, and From Ashes to Butterflies Memorial STEM Scholarship Foundation in Ghana. We also support two missionary couple teams (one couple in Southeast Asia and another in Eastern Europe).

EVANGELISM

Currently, Ascension has a number of evangelistic groups and initiatives, but we recognize the need to expand our efforts in this area. Toward this effort, we have been establishing more communication and relationships with other Episcopal and ecumenical churches nearby to possibly coordinate evangelism within our neighborhoods. We have also provided classes between services on evangelistic topics. We are researching long-term sustainable programs, such as The Episcopal Church's "Invite Welcome Connect" and The Anglican Communion's "Alpha", that we might consider adding to Ascension's Newcomer and new member processes in the future.

ORDER OF SAINT LUKE

The OSL (Order of St. Luke) Healing ministry is an integral part of the Spiritual life of Church of the Ascension. This ministry promotes the understanding that healing is an ongoing process of God's will for his creation, following the example set by Jesus, who went about healing people and doing good deeds throughout his ministry.

We seek to provide an increased awareness by a strong prayer life and opportunities for the congregants to be prayed for during Sunday service and at other times.

The OSL ministry offers a monthly ecumenical Healing service in the Sanctuary and online. There is also a monthly meeting for a time of prayer and study, to encourage and strengthen each member. There is an annual healing event held for other churches in our chapter, where we meet to pray for each other or those in need of prayer.

We are grateful for this ministry and its work amongst us, as we see people's lives transformed and healings take place.

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

The Order of The Daughters of the King® is an order for women and girls who are communicants of the Episcopal Church, churches in communion with it, or churches in the historic episcopate but not in communion with it. A Daughter pledges herself to a lifelong program of prayer, service, and evangelism dedicated to the spread of Christ's kingdom and the strengthening of the spiritual life of her parish. Esther Chapter at Ascension was instituted in 2013. Nineteen members meet in person quarterly and on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month. The chapter prays daily for the church, clergy, vestry, and parishioners. Chapter activities include, but are not limited to, studies that deepen spiritual growth; hosting an Anglican Rosary worship; collaborating with The Order of St. Luke to host a Lenten Quiet Day; Sponsor Thursday Family Night at Harbor House (emergency shelter for domestic violence); collect food for pantries at St. John, Kissimmee, and St. John the Baptist, Orlando; serve in other parish ministries; participate in diocesan, provincial, and national meetings, retreats, outreach projects; and offer loyal aid to the clergy and parish at all times.

WORSHIP AND LITURGY

Sunday worship at Ascension follows the liturgies of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Holy Eucharist (Rite II) is the primary liturgical expression at our 8:15 and 10:45 services.



Music is vital to our worship, as it is one way we connect with the Holy Spirit during worship. Music at the 8:15 service is drawn from The Hymnal 1982, while music at the 10:45 service is a blend of hymns and praise music from various traditions. Our spiritual worship is enhanced through the various choirs and instrumental ensembles that participate on each Sunday.

To make it easier for our congregation to follow the services without having to juggle between the Book of Common Prayer, Hymnal and Bible, we display the words for most of our services on Overhead screens in the Sanctuary, although we still give the congregation the ability to use these books, if desired.



Our 8:15 Sunday service is livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube every week, as is our OSL Healing Service and most mid-week special services, e.g. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. In addition to our regular Sunday services, we celebrate all major Christian holy days.

Through our worship, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, helps us understand His Word and equips us to do His work. All people are welcome into our community of Christian faith.



WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM?...A BRIEF HISTORY

In May 1980, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension was formally installed by the bishop as a new mission, and the Rev. Martin Nelson became our first full-time priest in August 1981. Under his leadership, our first mission statement “To Know Christ and Make Him Known to Others” was adopted. He was followed by the Rev. Ronald Hooks in 1985, and during his tenure, Church of the Ascension was elevated to “parish” status. Under his leadership, two worship services were established, a traditional service at 8:30 and a more contemporary service at 10:30, both Rite II. During this era, our mission statement evolved into, “To Make Disciples Who Make Disciples”.

In 2003, Rev. James Sorvillo, Sr. was called to be our next priest. During this time, new families were joining the church, and the need to accommodate this growth was apparent. A prayer and discernment process for building a new sanctuary began, and a committee was established to work with the rector and an architect to design plans for the new building. A three-year building campaign and other fundraising activities were implemented, in which the congregation took an active part. The new sanctuary for the Church of the Ascension was completed and dedicated to the Glory of God on December 24, 2008.



As congregation growth continued, a new music minister joined the staff. Under his leadership, Ascension choirs and instrumental ensembles presented opportunities for children, youth and adults to participate in this ministry. Music programs were developed for the Lenten and Advent Seasons, and the enhanced Music Ministry took our worship experience to a deeper spiritual level.



In September 2019, Church of the Ascension commissioned fifty congregants to give birth to All Souls Church and formed this mission under the leadership of our assistant rector. “To Make Disciples Who Make Disciples” took on a whole new meaning as we were blessed to start this church plant. We were now a mother church. Unfortunately, due to difficulty finding a permanent home, All Souls was disbanded at the end of 2024.

In 2023, Fr Ryan Cook accepted the call to be the fourth rector for Church of the Ascension. He re-established our Small Groups Ministry and restarted the Children's Ministry, both of which stopped during the pandemic. A Children's and Youth Pastor was hired and has successfully grown this Ministry. During his brief tenure as our rector, Fr Ryan established the Rector's Council referenced above.

During its 45-year history, Church of the Ascension has always been a strong participant in the life of the Diocese of Central Florida, as the rector and several members of the Church served on various Diocesan Councils and Standing Committees, including attending diocesan retreats, meetings and conventions. Several past and present members of Ascension have been called to ordained ministry, serving the wider Episcopal Church today, as Ascension lived up to our prior mission statements.



OUR LOCATION

Central Florida is more than just one of the leading tourist destinations in the country. It is also a melting pot of cultures, attracting people from across the globe. This mixture of diversity is reflected at Church of the Ascension as well, with our congregation calling this part of Florida home for many reasons. Just minutes from world-famous theme parks, our church and the surrounding communities are perfectly located with access to top-notch public and private schools, including many higher education options with multiple universities and colleges making their home in the area.

With year-round sunshine, we are just a quick car ride away from spending the day in the surf of the Atlantic Ocean or on the white sands of the Gulf of Mexico.



Beyond beaches, nature is on full display in our area with numerous parks, gardens, trails and reserves. For sports fans, we are home to the Orlando Magic, Orlando City Soccer Club, and Orlando Pride NWSL team, as well as numerous golf courses and lakes. Central Florida is also home to a vibrant arts community, featuring state-of-the-art performance venues, museums, theaters and endless entertainment options.

Even with all of the exciting things to do that come with living in a vacation destination like Central Florida, there are still many small-town amenities to enjoy. With local farmer's markets, unique shops, restaurants, and seasonal festivals, you and your family will quickly feel at home in our community.

CLOSING

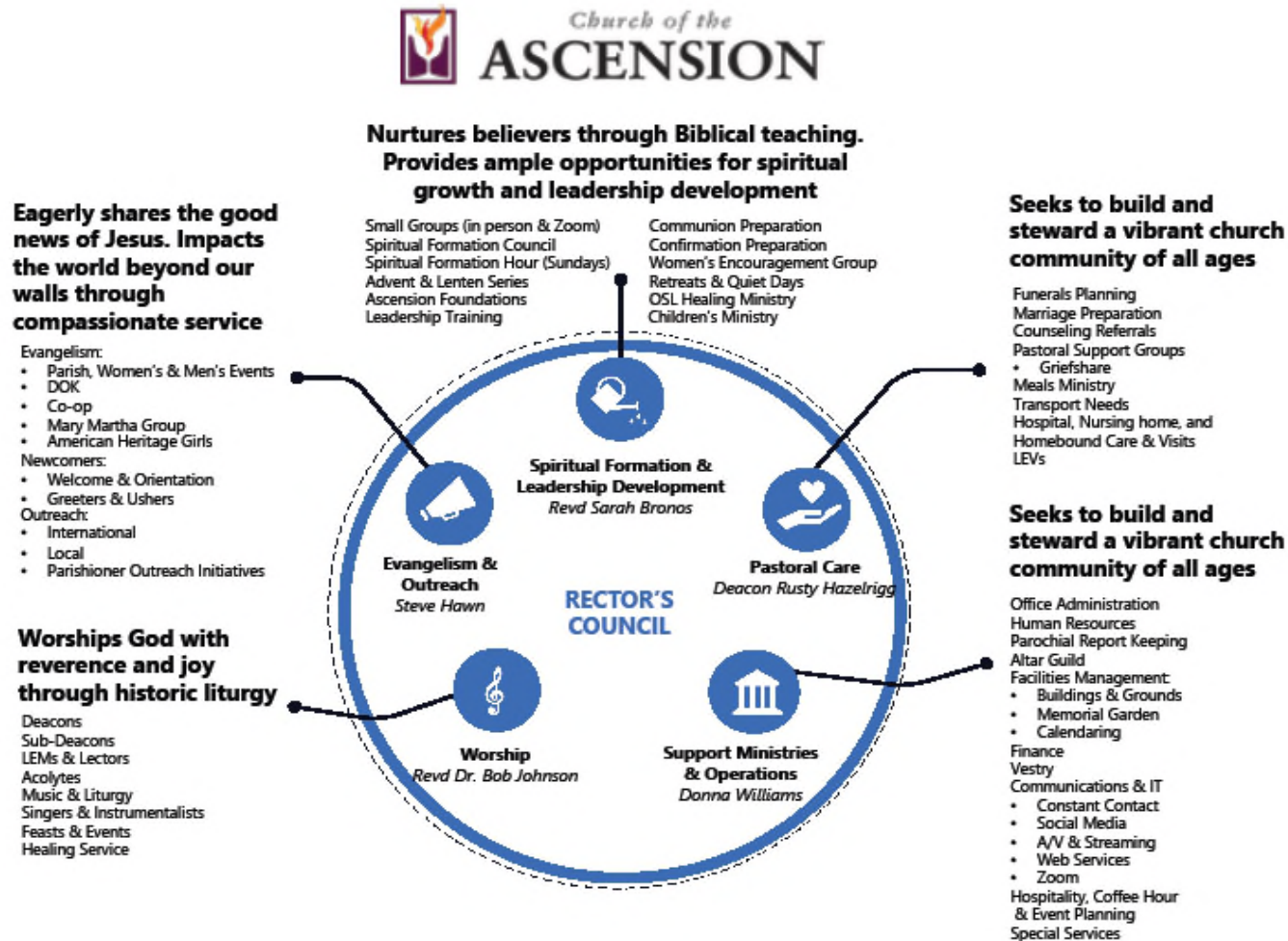
We are excited that our new rector will be engaged in our vision and will support all of the ministries that currently help this church thrive and grow in its love for the Lord Jesus. We wish for an individual who will partner with us in utilizing our gifts for the growth of God's Kingdom.

We envision a teacher and preacher who shares with us the knowledge of God's word and gives us the confidence to live and share daily with others what we learn. We pray for a rector who communicates with our diverse Christian community in a loving, compassionate manner while exemplifying a personal relationship with God.

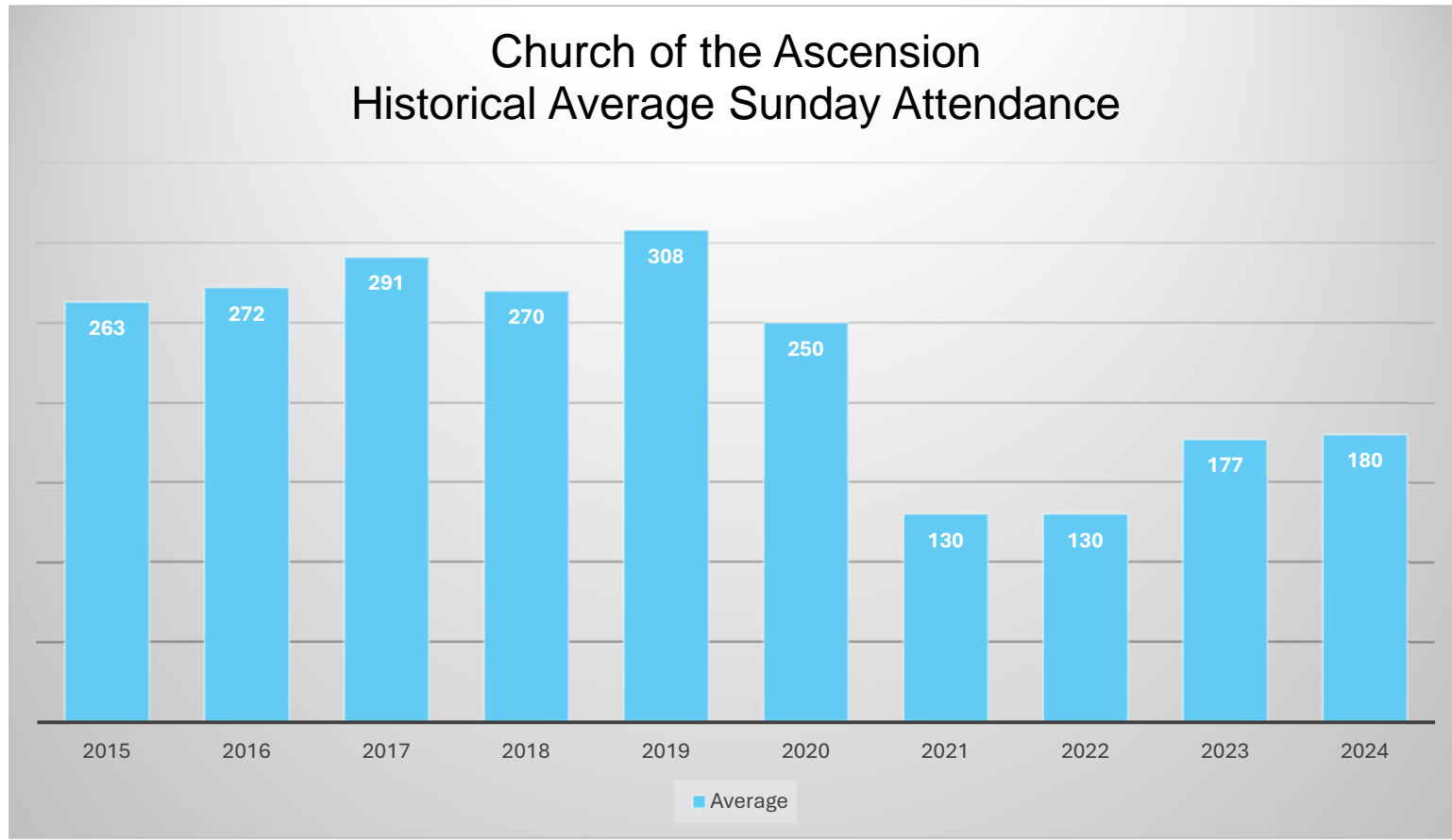
If you are interested in applying for the position as Rector of Church of the Ascension, Orlando, please follow the guidelines on the Diocese of Central Florida website – <https://cfdiocese.org/vacancy-procedures-for-clergy>. Please note: (a) There are 3 questions to be completed and returned; (b) You must give permission for background checks; and (c) You must sign off on Diocesan Canon XVI that you are willing to comply with Diocesan standards for our clergy. You may submit a letter to Canon Dan Smith at dsmith@cfdiocese.org explaining your interest in Church of the Ascension and attaching a recent copy of your OTM. Please do not contact the parish directly.

APPENDIX

Rector's Council and Ministries



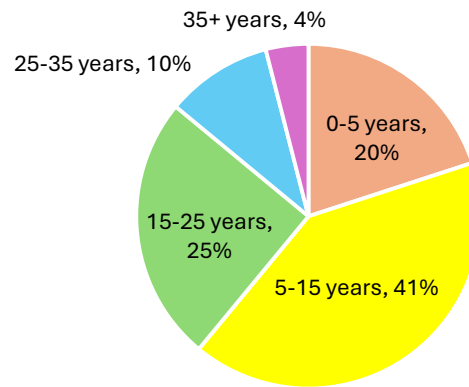
ASA Data



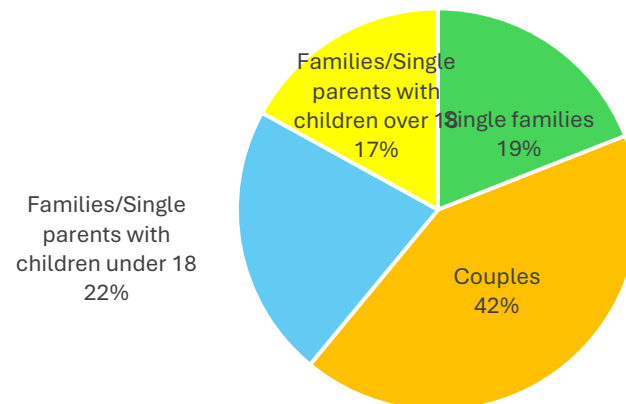
- 1) All Data retrieved from submitted Parochial Reports
- 2) ASA for 2020 is based on the average ASA for January – March prior to COVID 19 lockdowns.
- 3) 2020 reflects departure of 50 members due to All Souls Mission plant

Congregational Demographics

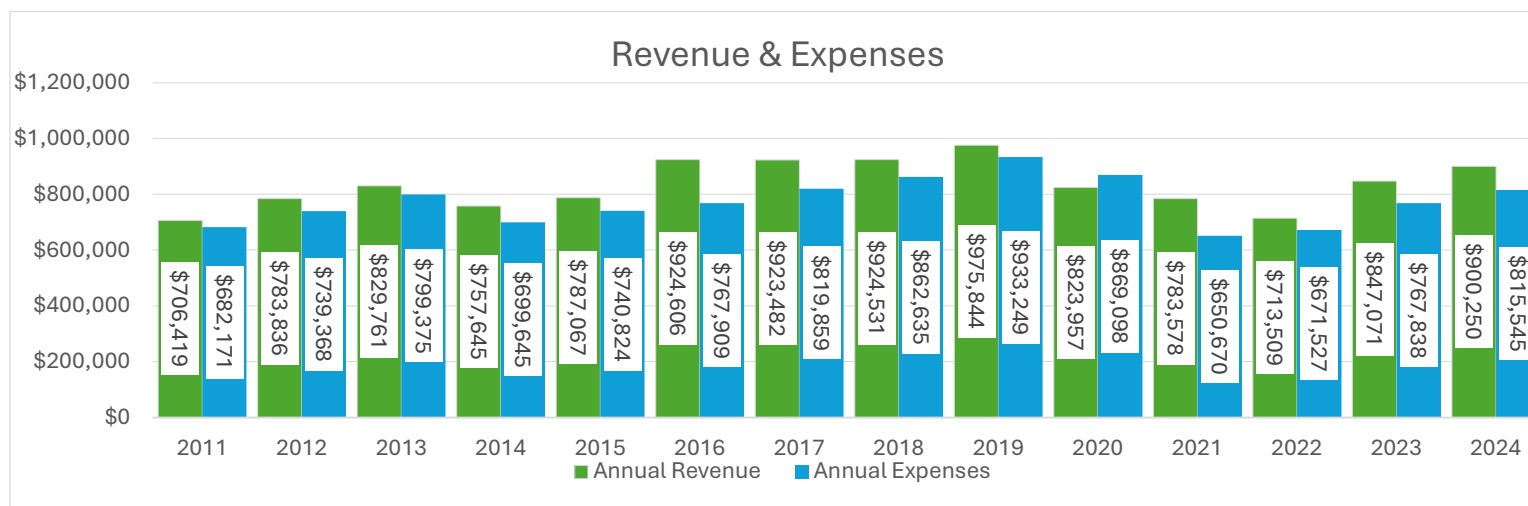
Church of the Ascension Length of Membership
Based on March 2021 Survey



Church of the Ascension Household Demographics
Based on March 2021 Survey



Financial Overview



- 1) All Data retrieved from submitted Parochial Reports
- 2) 2020 Revenue does not include the PPP Loan of \$58,527
- 3) 2020 reflects the departure of 50 members due to All Souls Mission plant
- 4) 2023 Revenue does not include Mortgage Gift of \$264,846

Church Administration

VESTRY

Beckie Bass, Sr. Warden
Jim Bjostad, Jr. Warden
Kathryn Angulo
Michelle Lewis
Terry Linberg
Phillip Manno
Lawrence Mokwunye
Eric Roach
Katherine Schwab

CLERGY & STAFF

Beckie Bass, Presiding Officer

The Rev. Dr. Bob Johnson, Associate
for Liturgy and Music
The Rev. Stephanie Soper
The Rev. Sarah Bronos, Retired
Associate for Healing Ministry
The Rev. Rusty Hazelrigg, Deacon
Donna Williams, Parish
Administrator
Anna Snider, Children's Ministry
Siju John, Technology and Media
Coordinator
Doug Webber, Financial
Administrator
Shamir Walker, Sexton

Ascension's Search Committee Members and Membership Tenure

Clayton Williams, Chair	8 years
Joan Allard, Chaplain	30 years
Kathryn Angulo	11 years
Lewis Ashenheim	34 years
Hugh Bryan	15 years
Steven Hawn	11 years
Madison Hubbart	21 years
Laura Patrick	9 years
Margaret Roberts	17 years