

life at ASCENSION

Volume 30, Number 3

June—July, 2009

The Church of the Ascension, Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street, New York City

ASCENSION DAY CELEBRATED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

We are doubly blessed at The Church of the Ascension when our “name day” returns each year. This May, not only did we have the rare privilege of mounting a full festival celebration of this joyful Feast of Our Lord, but it was also a time when we added new members to the parish through Confirmation, Reception and Re-affirmation in the presence of one of our Bishops. The Rt. Rev. Andrew St. John, our near neighbor who serves as Rector of the Church of the Transfiguration, joined us to add five new members to our parish family. Year by year our small corner of the Lord’s Vineyard is changing and growing as new people join us and as others move on because of the busy pace of urban life.

As I reflect on the joys of life in Christian community, my thoughts are often guided and enriched by the *Rule of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist* – that monastic community in Cambridge, Massachusetts to which I am affiliated as a member of their Fellowship. There is a challenging paragraph in their *Rule* which I want to offer (with a few adaptations) for consideration as Ascension Day was celebrated again and we think about the nature of our shared life in this parish:

“Every Christian is called to live in community as a member of the Church. Christ in his wisdom draws each disciple into that particular expression of community which will be the best means of his or her conversion. . . . The first challenge of [parish] life is to accept wholeheartedly the authority of Christ to call whom he will. Our [parish] is not formed by the natural attraction of like-minded people. We are given to one another by Christ and he calls us to accept one another as we are. By abiding in him we can unite in a mutual love which goes deeper than personal attraction. Mutual acceptance and love call us to value our differences of background, temperament, gifts, personality, and style. Only when we recognize them as sources of vitality are we able to let go of competitiveness and jealousy. As we actively seek to grow . . . we must ardently seek for signs that God desires to increase our diversity in culture and race. We are also called to accept with compassion and humility the particular fragility, complexity, and incompleteness of each [member]. Our diversity and brokenness mean that tensions and friction are inevitably woven into the fabric of everyday life. They are not to be regarded as signs of failure. Christ uses them for our conversion as we grow in mutual forbearance and learn to let go of the pride that drives us to control and reform our [brothers and sisters] on our own terms.”

The Rule of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, page 10

This issue of *Life at Ascension* features short descriptions of some new and renewed members of our community who made their public professions of faith in the presence of Bishop St. John. May we all take this opportunity when our parish visibly grows, to take to heart our calling to become a true expression of God’s Kingdom as we try to live as a circle of Christ’s friends. Ω

-Fr. Andrew Foster

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Vestry Notes

At its April meeting the

Vestry:

-Learned from Fr. Andrew that all Holy Week Services were well attended and that we had record attendance on Easter Day

-Heard Fr. Mark report that Derek Baker is redesigning the Ascension website and he encourages everyone to go on-line and look at it.

-Learned that Fr. Mark has been appointed by Bishop Sisk as a member of the Diocesan Council for a 3 year term and as Chair of the Social Concerns Commission of the diocese.

-Heard from Deacon Anne that Bishop Sisk has extended her covenant as Ascension's deacon for one year.

-Learned from Deacon Anne that the struggle to maintain faith-based homeless shelters continues.

-Heard from Buildings & Grounds Co-chair, Dori Dinsmoor, that the Landmarks Commission and the Building Department have approved the project to provide proper ventilation in the boiler room.

-Authorized entering into a contract to begin phase 2 of the brownstone restoration, the South clerestory brownstone and repairs to the church roof.

-Approved to give \$6,000 as a scholarship grant to Incarnation Camp from the Lapsley Fresh Air Fund.

The Vestry generally meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Meetings are open to the parish and parishioners are welcome, in advance of the meeting, to request time to address vestry. Ω
- Sibyl Piccone

IT IS TO SUCH AS THESE THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS

Last year at this time, we wrote about The Carpenter's Kids Program, a partnership between the Anglican Diocese of Central Tanganyika (DCT) and the Diocese of New York born of a meeting in 2005 between respective Bishops Mdimi Mhogolo and Catherine Roskam.

Bishop Mhogolo was looking for a way to help the children in his Diocese, located in Dodoma, Tanzania, who were orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The disease had ravaged his country, leaving 2.5 million orphans in Tanzania, an estimated 40,000 of them in his Diocese alone. His plan involved sending these children to school. Although the government of Tanzania provided free education; a uniform, shoes and school supplies were required in order to attend. When asked what this would cost, he responded \$50. Bishop Roskam was waiting for the "per week, per month." But no, it was an astounding \$50/year/child. (Now \$60 due to increased costs in diesel fuel.) Breakfast has since been added.

Since each Diocese is comprised of 200 parishes, the program was devised to link a NY parish with a Tanzanian parish, supporting 50 children for five years of primary school with all contributions going directly to the program. Costs of (*continued on page 5*)

Life at ASCENSION

is published bimonthly by the Church of the Ascension. We welcome submissions, reserving the right to edit for style and length, if necessary. The deadline for contributions is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Sealed by the Spirit Update June 2009

We are approaching the one and a half year mark of “Sealed by the Spirit,” a five-year capital campaign to raise funds to repair and restore our church, a recognized National Historic Landmark. Ascension was built in 1840, and the church today is showing the wear of time.

Most critical to our efforts is addressing issues that have caused leaks into the sanctuary. The leaks are the result of deteriorating brownstone, aging frames around the clerestory windows, aging side aisle roofs, and damaged gutters and downspouts.

Here is an update on our progress so far:

Completed to date, April 2009

Clerestory windows restored and sealed
North Clerestory Brownstone repaired and restored

Summer 2009

Brownstone restoration on the south side, covering upper clerestory and lower west bay: The scaffolding is up, and work has begun on the south side of the church. This work will continue over the summer and into the early fall.
Replace side aisle roofs, repair flashing and drainage.

Winter 2010

Paint church interior after all leaks are sealed
Upgrade lighting in church

The Manton Memorial Organ Arrives 2010

Construction to prepare space for the new pipes
Organ delivered and assembled in church

Campaign goal:	\$2,110,000
Donations pledged to date	\$850,000
Grants to date	\$60,000

Pledge payments received to date as of the end of April 2009 are approximately \$223,000. Please keep your pledge payments current!

If you would like to pledge to Sealed by the Spirit but have not done so, please contact Fr. Andrew, Fr. Mark, or Mary Gaillard for a pledge card. Thanks to everyone for your generosity, especially during these hard economic times. Your support is key to our successful campaign. **Ω**
- Mary Gaillard

Meet Nancy Barry *Voices of Ascension's* New Executive Director



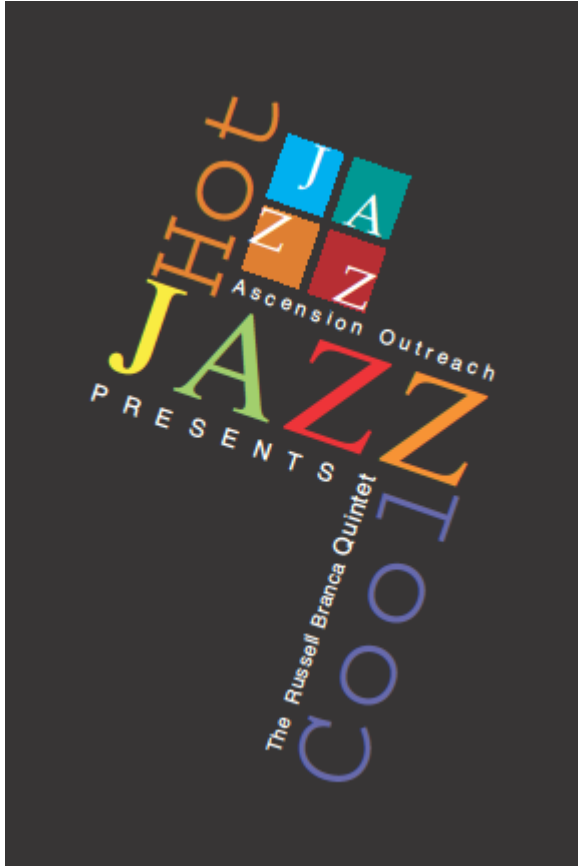
Nancy Barry comes to her new position as Executive Director of Voices of Ascension with a lifetime of experience in the arts, from her childhood vocal training with her grandmother, a choral conductor and vocal coach, through twenty five years of work as a senior executive in performing arts management. An art history major at Connecticut College, Nancy moved to New York from her native Boston intending to become an art teacher. A chance introduction led her to work with the concert office at the Metropolitan Museum, and her career since then has been as varied and interesting as her early background.

For nineteen years Nancy directed Unity Concerts in Montclair, New Jersey, presenting the world's greatest instrumental soloists and orchestras, as well as the most distinguished singers of our time. When Unity Concerts moved to Montclair State University, Nancy became the director of the Brooklyn Music School, and played a role in the creation of the BAM cultural district. She was also the first president of the Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival. Before taking up her duties with Voices of Ascension, Nancy served for five years as Director of Development for the York Theater Company at Saint Peter's Church in the Citigroup Building. Always nurturing a deep love of choral music, Nancy says she is "thrilled to be joining the staff of Voices of Ascension and to be returning to my great love, classical music, after five years of working in musical theater. In my opinion, the voice is the greatest instrument of all. It's power to inspire, excite, and awe is limitless...I want to help Dennis Keene achieve his dreams and ambitions for the chorus, [and] I want to build on the excellent foundation that Alix Barthelmes has left me. I also want to explore new ways of marketing the chorus and of exposing new groups of people to the joys of choral music."

Voices of Ascension is in good hands. Welcome, Nancy! Ω

—Nicholas Saunders

Life At Ascension On-line If you would like to stop receiving *Life At Ascension* in paper format, and receive it on-line, please contact Father Mark at frmark@ascensionnyc.org



A s c e n s i o n O u t r e a c h P r e s e n t s

The Russell Branca Quintet
Thursday, June 11, 2009 at 7 PM

The Church of the Ascension
12 West 11th St, NY NY 10011
212-254-8620

A Fundraiser to Benefit the
Ascension Outreach
Food Pantry Program

\$25 Suggested Donation

All donations go directly
to the purchase of food

Picture, courtesy of Matthew Snow

(continued from pg. 2)

administration in Tanzania were to be covered by grants with no administration costs charged on this end. Since we are all Jesus' children, it was named The Carpenter's Kids.

Bishop Mhogolo was clear in his initial conversation with Bishop Roskam that there was no interest in becoming our "project." What was sought was a partnership, a true formation of the bonds of friendship as brothers and sisters in Christ. They wanted to know us, care about us and pray for us, and wanted the same in return. The money was just the first step; it was the monthly communications that would foster a friendship.

Presently, The Carpenter's Kids Program has 79 linked Tanzanian parishes educating 4,676 children; the goal is to educate 10,000 children by 2010. At the last Diocesan Convention, a resolution targeted 100% involvement by churches in the Diocese of New York, an action supported by the Ascension vestry. To date, about a dozen parishioners have made a five-year commitment. Please join us in this global manifestation of "love your neighbor." (Please see the special insert in this issue of *Life at Ascension*.) Ω

Deacon Anne Auchincloss

Ascension Sunday 2009

On Ascension Sunday, we welcomed five new members to the Episcopal Church and to the Ascension family. We also welcomed Bishop Andrew St. John as guest celebrant and preacher for the day. The following is a brief description of the Bishop and of James, Matthew, Michael, Shep, and William.



The Rt. Rev. Andrew St. John is a native of Melbourne, Australia, where he received his formative education. It was while attending Law School at the University of Melbourne that he experienced a strong sense of calling to the ordained ministry. He was accepted as a candidate for the Diocese of Melbourne but suspended his studies in order to practice law for several years. He undertook his theological training at Trinity College Theological School, Melbourne and was ordained to the diaconate in 1971 and priested in 1972. In 1995 the then Archbishop appointed him as an Assistant Bishop within the same diocese with particular oversight of the Western Region. Resigning from that position in 2001 Andrew took

some much-needed leave and undertook a process of discernment regarding the future direction of his ministry. An invitation from Bishop Sisk in 2002 led to an appointment as Interim Rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity on East 88th Street for 2 years commencing in late January 2003. Bishop Andrew spent two very happy and fulfilling years in this large and diverse parish with its broad program. Having decided to continue in ministry in New York he was delighted to be offered the position as Vicar for 3 years of the Church of the Transfiguration. In January 2007, the vestry unanimously called Bishop St John as the Seventh Rector of the Church of the Transfiguration.

Michael Surabian was confirmed. Michael is originally from Phoenix, Arizona, but has lived in New York City for approximately twenty years. Michael works in Public Relations and Theatre. He likes to spend his free time going to the theatre, movies, restaurants, concerts, watching the New York Yankees games, and running. He was brought to Ascension by its inviting and welcoming community, and the beauty of the building. He most likes the people, the music, and the beauty of the liturgy here.



Matthew Vermedahl, newly confirmed, is originally from Duncan, Oklahoma, and has been living in New York City for six years. He is the Visual Merchandising Manager for Gucci, America. Matthew likes to spend his free time singing, playing tennis, swimming, shopping, reading, seeing theatre, spending time with friends and playing the piano. An invitation from David Cholcher is what brought Matthew to Ascension. Matthew loves the music and liturgy here the most. He says that Ascension has a very welcoming presence that he has also come to know and love.



William Candelaria was received into the Episcopal Church. He is from Albuquerque, New Mexico and has been in New York for twelve years. He is an attorney and discovered Ascension through its architecture (he is a fan of the work of Stanford White). He especially likes the diversity and warmth of the congregation. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the New York City Economic Development Corporation and has a strong dedication to New York City's economic growth and aesthetic improvement. He has found that one of the attractions of Ascension is the congregation's understanding of its stewardship obligations and its commitment to restore the church's infrastructure in anticipation of the new organ.

James P. Di Bartolo newly received, is from Cherry Hills, N.J. and has been living in New York City for three years now. He is an undergraduate majoring in History and Finance at NYU. In his free time he enjoys meeting with friends, reading and jogging. The NYU Campus ministry is what brought James to Ascension, and as a result of the Campus ministry, he decided to become a member of our parish. James likes the sense of community and the congregation's willingness to welcome new members. He first became interested in joining the Anglican Communion while attending Church of England services during his semester abroad in London.



Shephard Skiff was confirmed. Shep, as he likes to be called, is from Providence, Rhode Island, and has lived in New York City the better part of five years. He is a Residential Real Estate Broker for Sotheby's International Realty. Shep likes to spend his free time listening to music, playing soccer and squash, playing guitar, reading, and drawing. He says that he was drawn to Ascension by the beautiful inviting building which he saw while walking by many times. Shep likes the architecture and music of the church and feels it adds to the liturgy. Ω

Some of the photos appearing on these pages were taken by Dennis Weiscopf

Upcoming Events at the Church of the Ascension

June 4, Career Resilience: Planning for Success 6:30-8:30 p.m. Ascension Parish Hall, Jim Borland, PhD, a distinguished career counselor, shares his perspective on what it takes to succeed today, based on his extensive experience working with individuals and corporations, not-for-profits and public service organizations. All are invited to attend. Mark your calendar, invite a friend and spread the word! 6:30 p.m. Light refreshments, meet & greet; 7:00 p.m. Presentation, followed by Q&A.

June 11, Ascension Outreach Presents: The Russell Branca Quintet A fundraiser to benefit the Ascension Outreach Food Pantry Program, 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall, \$25 suggested donation, all donations go directly to the purchase of food.

June 13, The Song of Songs: A Ritualized Reading of the Sexiest Book in the Bible The Song of Songs, often attributed to King Solomon (while others claim it was written by a woman), is one of the most beautiful texts in the Hebrew Bible. It has been read allegorically for centuries as representing the relationship between God and Israel or Christ and his Church. We will read it ritually, with selections read out loud, accompanied by stimulation of all five senses. We will join our friends at Faith House, an inter-faith organization representing Jewish, Christian, Islamic and other traditions. The event will begin at 5:00 p.m. at 274 Fifth Ave., between 29th and 30th Streets in Manhattan.

June 14, Dealing with the Psychological Challenges of Career Transition Fellow Ascension parishioner Stanley Weinberg, a highly experienced psychotherapist, leads the discussion. Come with your questions and bring a friend who's thinking about career transition. 1:00 p.m. in the ground floor of the rectory, 7 West 10th Street.

June 28, Volunteers are needed for the hospitality table to welcome (and offer water and respite) to those participating in the 40th annual NYC LGBT Pride Day March. The March began as an annual civil rights demonstration beginning the year after the Stonewall Riots in 1970. Over the years its purpose has broadened to include recognition of the fight against AIDS and to remember those we have lost to the illness, violence and neglect. Please sign up in the parish hall.

July 9, Parish Barbecue This year's annual Parish Barbeque is shaping up to be the most delicious yet. Please join us at 7 p.m. We'll supply fantastic food from the grill. All you need to do is bring a salad, bread, side dish, or dessert. Sign-up in the Parish Hall.

July 12, Am I called to ordination? If you think that you may have a call to the ordained life as a priest or a deacon, or simply want to find out more, then join us for an informal discussion about the process of ordination at 1:00 p.m. in the ground floor of the rectory. Fr. Mark Hummell, will lead the discussion.

July 21, Cooking with the Bible-Part I The bible is peppered with stories of meals; these range from simple meals put together quickly in order to feed a few unexpected guests, to elaborate feasts carefully prepared to please dozens of partygoers for many days. *Cooking with the Bible* looks at eighteen of these meals found in the Scriptures, providing full menus and recipes for re-creating some of the dishes enjoyed by the peoples of biblical times. We will review recipes in the book, from the accomplished chef and biblical scholar, Father Rayner Hesse, who is also an ordained Episcopal priest. We will select recipes to prepare for our dinner the following week. This event meets in the ground floor of the rectory at 7p.m.

July 23, Faith & Film, War Dance, Set in civil war-ravaged Northern Uganda, this Best Documentary nominee for the 2008 Oscars follows the lives of three youngsters who attend school in a refugee camp and find hope through a rich tradition of song and dance. In the parish hall at 7p.m., popcorn & beverage served, Rated: PG-13, Run time: 105 minutes.

July 28, Cooking with the Bible-Part II We will share a meal from the recipes we selected and prepared. This event takes place in the home of Fr. Mark & Peter Christensen. Ω

The Church of the Ascension

in the City of New York

Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street

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TELEPHONE: (212) 254-8620

THE REVEREND ANDREW W. FOSTER, RECTOR

THE REVEREND MARK HUMMELL, ASSOCIATE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Members of The Church of the Ascension,

We are writing to inform you about a program that we think will touch your hearts. It is a partnership between the Episcopal Diocese of New York and the Diocese of Central Tanganyika in Tanzania, started by Bishop Roskam. The program is called The Carpenter's Kids, and its purpose is to give the many HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children in Tanzania a hope for a better life.

As you know, Africa has been especially hard hit by the AIDS epidemic. Millions of people have died and millions more will die in the years to come. This horrible illness leaves many children orphaned without resources in an area of the world already impoverished. Bishop Mdimi Mhogolo has invited the Diocese of New York to enter into a partnership whereby our parishes will be linked with parishes in Tanganyika to support these children in need. The Carpenter's Kids program will provide a school uniform, shoes, school materials and breakfast every morning. Through this support of basic education the children are given a chance of living a better life.

Administrative costs are minimal. All the money raised goes directly to the program of direct aid to the children. Many parishes in the diocese have already signed on to sponsor groups of fifty children. We are hoping that Ascension will be able to make a similar commitment for at least 50 children which is the minimum number of sponsorships needed to establish a parish-to-parish linkage. This program is not restricted to parishioners, so please feel free to distribute this information among your friends. The commitment is for \$60 per child each year for five years.

We would like to add the observation that this is a rare opportunity, in the midst of so much misunderstanding in the Anglican Communion, to reach out in the true spirit of the Gospel to help those in need. Already bridges have been built within the Diocese of Central Tanganyika that would never have existed without this program.

We are asking that you fill out the enclosed commitment form and return it with your check to either Father Mark or Deacon Anne no later than Sunday, September 13, 2009 when we hope to celebrate our achievement as a linked parish with the Carpenter's Kids. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me, or committee members, Sarah Standing and Deacon Anne. Please keep our parish and the people who await our help in your prayers.

Stanley Weinberg, Chair of the Social Concerns and Action Committee

THE CARPENTER'S KIDS PROGRAM

A partnership between the Episcopal Diocese of New York and the Diocese of Central Tanganyika.

I pledge to support _____ child/children for \$60/year/child for five years.

This will cover the cost of a school uniform, shoes, school materials and breakfast.

OR

I would like to make a one time donation in the amount of \$_____.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Checks Payable to: The Church of the Ascension

Memo Line: Carpenter's Kids

**Give this form and your check to either Father Mark or Deacon Anne
or mail them to the Parish Office, 12 West 11th Street, NY, NY 10011.**