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We invite you to get to know the community of faith that is

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

Our church is nestled in the heart of downtown Clearwater in the beautiful historic neighborhood of Harbor Oaks, on the Intracoastal Waterway and close to Clearwater Beach. We are a few blocks from the city center, bordered by a working class neighborhood on one side, within walking distance of the area’s premier hospital, and a mile from the poorest elementary school in the county, with which we partner for ministry.

In Ascension’s 135 years, generations have passed along a rich legacy of faith, fellowship and generosity that defines who we are today. We try to live up to our Baptismal Covenant: proclaiming the Good News, seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, respecting the dignity of every human being, striving for justice and peace. Because of our location, the opportunities for evangelism are immense among people from all walks of life.

If you ask anyone about the culture of Ascension, you are likely to hear a glowing account of our friendliness. Cherishing all ages and all levels of our membership is the hallmark of our parish in our everyday interactions, and in our many fellowship events of celebrating and feasting.

We’ve been very fortunate to retain priests for long portions of their ministries. This has allowed our church to evolve beyond just a place of worship to a family bound in fellowship through Christ. Our congregation is loyal and dedicated. During the past 40 years, we’ve been spiritually led by only three Rectors, our most recent serving 20 years.

We are a home church to many. We genuinely love our traditions, but we honor Christ’s command to love them all, teach them all, and bring them all into His Kingdom, so we are eager to learn what changes the future will demand.

We are a hearty, healthy flock. We are searching for a shepherd.

**MISSION**
To kindle hearts and awaken hope by connecting with each other and those outside of our church, illuminating our spiritual walk with education, worship and prayer, and sharing God’s abundant love through contribution and service.

**VISION**
To be a community of Christ-centered individuals, exploring our faith and growing in faith, welcoming all, and sharing God’s great love and light with each other and the outside world.
Church of the Ascension began in 1885, when 16 adults began meeting in the second floor room of J.K. Munnerlyn’s General Store, along the waterfront of what was then called Clear Water Harbor. The name was the inspiration of one of the original members, who stated “it was a miracle the way our church did ascend from our prayers!”

Two years later, the congregation broke ground for a wooden structure with pine boards and batten siding. One of our church matriarchs, age 101, remembers attending Sunday School there. In 1895, a stained glass altar window was added, which now illuminates the chapel of the present church.

By 1925, two years after calling its first full-time rector, the congregation had outgrown the little wooden church, and a new cast-stone church was built in the Florida Gothic style popular at the time. Able to seat 250, the church was half as long as it is today, with stained glass windows that opened to catch the breeze off the Gulf of Mexico. As the city grew, so did the parish, and in 1961 the nave was doubled in size.

Today, the church is a grand historic landmark, with distinctive architecture and stained glass windows that offer a haven of traditional sacred space. Church of the Ascension remains a vibrant house of worship in our community — a church home to diverse individuals and families who celebrate faith, fellowship and service to all God’s people.
WHO WE ARE TODAY

Membership
♦ Active baptized parishioners 1214
♦ Number of Households 813
♦ Active givers of record 399 households

In 2019
♦ Baptisms 14
♦ Confirmations 6
♦ Funerals 25
♦ Weddings 6

Attendance
♦ Average Sunday attendance 311
♦ Number of Wednesday Healing Services 167
♦ Home Communions 57

Christian Formation Classes
♦ Adult attendance 127
♦ Youth attendance 25

Gender

Age
OUR WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our spiritual life flows from our worship, the study of the Bible, prayer ministries and our fellowship. Multiple small groups lend themselves to study, prayer and meditation, including:

♦ Sunday and weekday Christian Education classes
♦ Pilgrim’s Way meets Wednesdays for a potluck dinner and fellowship, followed by a movie and discussion.
♦ The Women’s Bible Study and Intercessory Prayer Group meets Thursday mornings.
♦ The Men’s Thursday Morning Bible Study and Prayer Group has met for decades at Ascension and draws men from all over the community.
♦ Alpha, a course in Christian essentials, is presented in 14 sessions, each a talk and discussion on a different aspect of faith.
♦ The Cursillo retreat focuses on preparing believers to be effective Christian leaders in the church. Some 70 members of Ascension have attended these three-day events at DaySpring, the diocesan conference center.
♦ Youth retreats and mission trips, along with Youth Alpha, are aimed at growing our community by appealing to a younger, non-traditional group.
♦ Christian Faith Yoga meets weekly to exercise body and spirit.
MUSIC MINISTRY

The ministry of music has always been an integral part of Ascension. And it is vibrant and diverse. A visit to our church, enhanced by a world-class Letourneau pipe organ, confirms the importance of music in our worship and praise to God. The impressive Gallery Organ, installed in the balcony in 2003, is complemented by a smaller organ in the Chancel. Our worship is enriched with the glorious sound of this instrument, as are weddings, funerals and other occasions, including concerts.

The Parish Choir supports our worship on Sunday mornings and at special services. Choir members sing with an open heart to Christ and a willingness to be transformed with a deeper understanding of worship through music. Our Handbell Choir brings an added dimension to our worship for selected services throughout the church year.

On Sunday evenings, singers and instrumentalists help provide worship leadership for this alternative and more casual service.

Ascension is also home to the Betty Jane Dimmitt Memorial Carillon, one of only four carillons in Florida. Its 49 tuned bronze bells ring out a witness to our faith over the Harbor Oaks neighborhood, marking Sunday services and national holidays, as well as celebrating life passages such as weddings and funerals. Concerts are held during the cooler months of the year; roasting marshmallows at the fire pit is part of the fun!
MINISTRIES AND OUTREACH

At Ascension we grow in love and service to God, as we serve within our church, as well as care for and connect with one another. Our Ministry Fair is held each year in November. We offer a variety of ministries to support the church, while enhancing participants’ spiritual growth.

Ministries — Our sanctuary is prepared for worship, and clergy are assisted by lay persons in a variety of ways, as well as reaching out to our homebound.

- Acolytes, Youth and Adult
- Altar Guild
- Flower Guild
- Readers and Eucharistic Ministers
- Eucharistic Visitors
- St. Teresa’s Guild (homebound)
- Ushers
- Vergers
- Wedding Belles
- Welcomers

Ascension Day School — Founded in 1967, it offers a variety of weekday programs for ages 2 through 4, with a curriculum designed to foster children’s academic, spiritual and social development. Free Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) is offered for 4-year-olds. Children’s Chapel takes place in the church on Wednesday. On Tuesday and Thursday, from 9am to noon, Parents’ Morning Out is offered for infants to 2-year-olds.
MINISTRIES AND OUTREACH

At Church of the Ascension we have a long-standing commitment to reaching out to those around us in many ways; this is an essential part of who we are. Outreach offers financial support to local organizations and individuals, as well as community volunteer opportunities for our parishioners.

**Angel Tree** – During the holiday season, parishioners can ensure every child experiences the joy of a new toy and clothing at Christmas. The Angel Tree supports various agencies in Pinellas County.

**Breakfast at Ascension** – Having breakfast at church is a long-standing tradition, as well as a ministry. August through April, breakfast is served Sunday morning between our 8am and 10am services. Adult and youth volunteers prepare a hot breakfast with something for everyone. It’s a great way to make and meet friends!

**Clothes to Kids** – Ascension members donate new and used clothing to this local non-profit that outfits needy school-age children at no cost.

**Cold Night Shelter** – Our youth groups make sandwiches for another downtown church that shelters the homeless during the coldest winter nights. We also provide blankets. Ascension has been assisting with the shelter for over 25 years.

**Faith in Action for Strength Together (FAST)** – Ascension is part of a consortium of local churches, bringing together community leaders and government officials to find solutions for affordable housing, criminal justice, and public school concerns in Pinellas County.

**Jamaican Mission** – Church members donate medical supplies and financial support to a mission at St. Mary’s in Port Maria, Jamaica, assisting some 200 people. In 2017, we also began an educational initiative, underwriting 35 scholarships for Albion Mountain Primary School that provide students with books, uniforms and meals. In 2018, Ascension adults and high school youth traveled there for a mission trip. The adults, including some retired teachers, conducted workshops for teachers, and brought school supplies. The youth group led a Vacation Bible School and painted the entire school.
MINISTRIES AND OUTREACH

**Little Free Pantry** – Non-perishable and easy to eat foods are stocked in a small outdoor cabinet near the carillon parking lot. This is one way we offer hospitality to our neighborhood, and to those hungry or in need.

**Pack-A-Sack** – We partner with a nearby church to ensure Belleair Elementary School children are sent home with nutritious snacks each weekend. This is the poorest elementary school in Pinellas County.

**Red Kettle Volunteers** – During the holiday season, Ascension provides volunteers for the Salvation Army’s Red Kettle program.

**Religious Community Services (RCS)**
Ascension was a founding congregation of RCS, a local non-profit organization with the mission “to support those facing hunger, homelessness, victims of domestic violence and a lack of basic needs.”

For more than 53 years, our church and parishioners have supported all the RCS programs:

- **The RCS Food Bank** is the largest distributor of food in Pinellas County to the hungry.
- **RCS Grace House** – Emergency housing for homeless families.
- **RCS Affordable Housing** – The next step in the journey to self-sufficiency.
- **The Haven of RCS** – A domestic violence shelter and outreach program, that helps victims return to self-sufficiency. Notably, this program was founded by one of our living matriarchs, age 101, and her late husband in the 1980’s.

**School Supply Sundays** are opportunities to donate school supplies or monetary gifts to support our Ascension Day School, and Belleair Elementary School, our neighborhood partner school.

**Thanksgiving Dinner** – On Thanksgiving Day, we join with four other downtown churches to provide dinner to those less fortunate or who might be alone.

**The Shed Thrift Shop** has been a source of outreach funds for more than 25 years. Blessed with an abundance of faithful volunteers, loyal customers, and generous donations, The Shed provides clothing and household items at bargain prices. The $30,000 raised annually is donated back to outreach.

**Tiger Tutors** – Volunteers meet weekly with small groups of first graders at Belleair Elementary School to help improve reading and comprehension skills.
St. Paul’s School — St. Paul’s, Clearwater’s Independent School, was founded in 1968 by a group of families seeking a private school in the Episcopal tradition, combining the values of outstanding academics with respect, honesty, integrity, and inclusiveness. Through 1976, the school used Ascension as a campus. The close relationship between St. Paul’s, its families and the youth of Ascension continues today. Successive generations of the founding families are current members of Ascension and continue to play a role in the life of the school.

For nearly the past 20 years, the rector of Ascension has served as chaplain, conducting weekly chapel, Christmas Lessons and Carols, as well as the annual graduation ceremony held at the church. Our rector has also offered pastoral care to students, faculty, and their families. The bylaws of St. Paul’s School require a communicant of Ascension to have a seat on the Board of Trustees.

MINISTRIES AND OUTREACH

SCENES FROM ASCENSION
If three generations of our adult members agree on one thing, it is this: the youth are the future of our faith community.

Nothing brings us more delight than the Youth Sunday Liturgy, the Intergenerational Breakfasts, Graduation Sunday, the visits of the college students at Christmas, and, most importantly, the return of our children to be married in the church and later bring their babies for Baptism.

With this motivation, we have developed a robust youth ministry over the years. We are dedicated to improving and expanding it even more.

- **Sunday School**: Godly Play, Journeys, Middle School, High School
- **Three Youth Groups**: 4th & 5th Grade, Middle School, High School
- **Girls on the Run** Empowers girls ages 8-13, teaching life skills through lessons and running
- **Vacation Bible School**
- **Middle School Summer Retreat**
- **New Beginnings** Diocesan Retreat for Middle School
- **Happening** Diocesan Retreat for High School
- **High School Mission Trip or Pilgrimage**
- **Youth Sunday** Once a year, our older youth groups conduct all aspects of the 8am and 10am services
- **Intergenerational Breakfast** Middle and High School groups cook and serve breakfast for the parish, and talk and meet with guests.
FELLOWSHIP AND PARISH EVENTS

Fellowship is an integral part of our church community. We have many events throughout the year where we come together to get to know new members of our church family, enjoy one another, have fun, worship and pray. Many of these yearly events are made possible by the hard work and planning of our Fellowship Committee.

Annual Meeting – We gather each January to elect new Vestry members, discuss old and new business, learn the state of our church, and enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by the Fellowship Committee.

Bella Luna – This event is held annually to raise funds for Ascension Day School. The Italian-themed evening includes food, music, dancing, auctions and lots of fun!

Trivia Night – Held early in spring, this is one of the main fundraisers for our youth programs. Traditional British pub fare is served, while teams compete to answer trivia questions.

Picnic Under the Oaks – Held each spring after the 10am service, we gather on our church lawn to enjoy fried chicken and a shared dish. Adults visit with each other while children enjoy special activities.

Tot Trot – Held in conjunction with the picnic, this is an annual 5-K race organized to benefit Ascension Day School. The race begins at the church, participants walk/run over the Clearwater Memorial Causeway, and then return to the church to join the fellowship and fun.

Fall Festival – Takes place in October near Halloween. Kids enjoy fun food, a bouncy house, carnival style games and “trunk or treat” from the backs of their parents’ decorated cars.
The Fish Fry is a long standing tradition, initiated in the 1950’s by the men’s club, to raise funds to build a parish building. Held in early November, a group of dedicated men set up an impromptu fish camp to serve their “secret recipe” for fish and hush puppies. The Fellowship Committee provides traditional sides that complement a fish dinner. This is an event no one wants to miss!

Play for Preservation – This annual event funds our Property Preservation Fund. A golf scramble, croquet, pickle ball and bridge game are offered during the day. The evening features dinner and auctions, attended by parishioners and friends of Ascension from the community.

Christmas Party – The holiday season kicks off in early December with this event in our Parish Hall. The Fellowship Committee transforms the Parish Hall with a different theme each year and prepares an elegant buffet.

Book Forum – A monthly opportunity for parishioners to gather and share their love of current bestsellers and beloved classics.
Clearwater is located in Pinellas County, Florida, west of Tampa and north of St. Petersburg. To the west lies the Gulf of Mexico and to the southeast lies Tampa Bay. Clearwater is the county seat and is the smallest of the three principal cites in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metro area, most commonly referred to as the Tampa Bay Area. Two major airports serve the area, Tampa International Airport and St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport.

Clearwater has a rich history dating to 1897, when railroad baron Henry Plant built a hotel down the street from Church of the Ascension and another one in Tampa. The new railroad brought tourists, and Clearwater became a popular resort destination at the turn of the 20th century.

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<th>Population</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
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<tr>
<td>116,748</td>
<td>$47,070</td>
<td>44.4</td>
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<td>*2018 census</td>
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<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Average Temp.</th>
<th>Median Home Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>79% White</td>
<td>71 Winter</td>
<td>$235,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.5% Black</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18% Hispanic</td>
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The Diocese of Southwest Florida was formed in 1969, in response to the explosive growth experienced in Florida after World War II. It currently serves 77 parishes and missions organized into seven Deanery regions along the southwest coast of Florida, from Brooksville in the north to Marco Island in the south.

It is a constituent member of the worldwide Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church in the United States. The Diocese is a companion diocese to the Diocese of the Dominican Republic.

Church of the Ascension is one of 14 congregations that make up the Clearwater Deanery.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Southwest Florida is The Rt. Rev. Dabney Tyler Smith, who was elected, ordained, consecrated and seated in 2007. He is a Florida native and is the fifth Bishop of the Diocese. Bishop Smith is popular throughout the Diocese, in addition to having a favorable reputation among the leaders of the national church.

The Diocesan offices are located on the beautiful grounds of the DaySpring Episcopal Conference Center in Parrish, just south of St. Petersburg and Tampa.
OUR PARISH FINANCES

To be a healthy, long-standing parish requires a network of groups that see to the administration of the congregation. Our Vestry is made up of 12 individuals, a Clerk and a Treasurer, who carry out the business and leadership of the church. They are responsible for overseeing operations, needed improvements, parish finances and effective leadership within the parish.

Several other committees support the Vestry in specific areas. A Long-Range Planning Committee plans for the continued health and growth of the church for the next three to five years. They explore opportunities for growth and recommend long-range staffing and lay leadership needs. An Investment Committee manages various church funds, with the help of a professional advisor, and establishes policies for investments. A Finance Committee supports the development and monitoring of the budget, as well as recommending policies for consideration.

Our Stewardship Committee works to educate and encourage members to explore their spiritual and financial gifts in support of the mission and activities of the church. They emphasize the importance of tithing to support the financial needs of our parish.

Our Endowment was established with the thoughtful donations of members as well as from bequests received by the church. As the endowment funds continue to grow, we honor the past, sustain the present and nurture the future.

Our Planned Giving Committee helps families and individuals develop a pledge through their estate plans. They work in concert with the Legacy Society, which recognizes those who have made pledged gifts and encourages others to do so.

Church of the Ascension is incredibly blessed from a financial perspective. In 19 of the past 20 years, the church operated at a break-even level or better. In addition, the church is blessed with a strong and growing endowment, as well as a number of dedicated funds for spending on various aspects of church operations.

The Finance Committee and the church Treasurer project even in this year of transition, operating revenues will exceed operating expenses by a comfortable margin.

Total assets of the church include various restricted and unrestricted funds for use by the Vestry. These endowment funds have a value of more than $1.7 million.

The church also has a Clergy Housing Trust, an Operating Reserve Fund, nine temporarily restricted funds and 12 specialty funds. This last category of funds includes an Undesignated Giving Fund for operating support, if needed.
BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

The Ascension campus sits on almost 5 acres and has 7 buildings. The church has a total of 35 glorious stained glass windows, including the original 1895 altar window. Next to the church is the Blandy Memorial Garden, a secluded place where families inter the ashes of loved ones, and return for remembrance and healing. The church administration building, which houses classrooms and offices, Ascension Day School and the McCune Library, is connected to the Parish Hall by a courtyard. The thrift shop, a former carriage house, and a maintenance building are also on the campus. Our full-time Sexton lives in a 1920’s house on church property. Supporting the maintenance and upkeep of our church, building and grounds are:

- **The Property Preservation Fund** provides for the repair and preservation of our historic church and our property. It is funded, in part, by the proceeds of the annual Play for Preservation event.

- **The Sacred Spaces Committee** is dedicated to preserving and developing our gardens and sacred spaces. They raise funds and oversee many improvement projects outside of the church budget.
BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Administration
North Side

Courtyard

Administration
West Side

Church Porch

East Side
CURRENTLY SERVING OUR CHURCH

CLERGY
The Rev. Leo Crawford, Interim Rector
The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Hehr, Interim Associate Rector
The Rev. Dr. Doris Buchanan Johnson, Interim Associate Rector
The Rev. Linda Barley, Deacon
The Rev. Sandy Jamieson, Deacon

Associated Clergy
The Rev. Dr. Bill Shiflet, Clergy Assistant
The Rev. Norman Howard, Clergy Assistant

STAFF
Dr. Matthew Estes, Music Director
Alyce Goldsmith, Parish Life Coordinator/Calendar/Small Group Formation
Seth Hunnicutt and Clay Farrar, Technology Ministry
Susan Katte, Assistant Youth Minister/Outreach
Brian McCracken, Sexton
Marcia Nauman, Financial Secretary/Membership/Outreach
Pam Rilling, Day School Director/Assistant Youth Minister
Maggie Talbot, Parish Secretary/Visitor-Member Liaison

VESTRY
James McArthur, Senior Warden
Kyle Jones, Junior Warden
Jeff Jennings, Treasurer (ex-officio)
Marte Toohill, Clerk (ex-officio)
Kathy Biddle
Kelly Corcoran
David W. Howell
Clark Lea, Jr.
Margaret Metz
Rachael Moore
Karla Myers
Sam Pilato
Carey Rowan
Jodi Sibson

SEARCH COMMITTEE
Drina Meyer, Chair
Sam Pilato, Chaplain
Kelly Corcoran
Bette Crown
Elizabeth Dale
Molly duPont Schaffer
Mary Margaret Florie
Jeff Jennings
Joan Kline
James McArthur
Margaret Metz
Hannah Moore, Youth Representative
Bennett Walling

SUPPORTING OUR STAFF
St. Gabe’s Guild
volunteers assist as receptionists, greet visitors and help staff in the work of the office.
OUR FUTURE RECTOR

It is the privilege of the Vestry and Search Committee to expect the very best for the welfare of our community. In that spirit, we are praying for:

A Rector who works with Jesus Christ, caring for souls and directing them through the joys and sorrows of their spiritual journeys.

A Rector who can inspire and educate with compelling preaching and teaching, who is able to clearly relate the Word of God to the realities of our lives.

A Rector who can lead our growth as a parish, reaching out to younger, non-traditional and unchurched children of God, while nourishing those who have been a substantial part of our identity.

A Rector who recognizes the variety of gifts in our community and is willing to utilize them for the greater glory of God and the work at hand.

A Rector who understands our need to evangelize and reach out to those around us, whose only chance to see the Face of Christ may be in our example.

A Rector who eagerly supports programs such as Cursillo, Alpha, and diocesan retreats at Dayspring as an aid in the work of bringing Jesus to all.

A Rector who is a good steward of our physical campus, our church and other buildings, our sacred green places, by selecting and supervising a skilled and efficient staff.

A Rector whose method of communication is positive and hopeful, and who possesses a joyful spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS ALREADY CALLED YOU.
PLEASE COME AND FIND US.
APPLICATION PROCESS

If you discern that God may be calling you to Church of the Ascension, please submit the following to:

The Rev’d Canon Richard H. Norman
Canon to the Ordinary
The Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida
rnorman@episcopalswfl.org

- Résumé/CV
- A copy of your updated OTM profile
- A letter of interest that highlights how you feel you meet the needs of Ascension and why you feel called to serve as our Rector.

APPLICATION DEADLINE — September 21, 2020
701 Orange Avenue, Clearwater, Florida 33756

Sunday Holy Eucharist at 8am, 10am & 5pm       Wednesday Healing Eucharist at 10am
727-447-3469       churchofascension.org       office@churchofascension.org

July 2020