

Fall Edition | October/November 2025

Ascension on the Mountain



Kickoff Sunday

Clergy

The Rt. Rev. Glenda S. Curry,
Bishop of Alabama

The Rt. Rev. Brian N. Prior,
Assisting Bishop

The Rev. John "Jack" T. Alvey, Jr.,
Rector

The Rev. Emily C. Collette,
Associate Rector

Program Staff

Mike Sparks,
Organist & Choir Master
Christy Smith

Parish Life Coordinator
Director of Family Ministries

Ashley Monachelli
Youth Minister

Sam Herman,
Rebecca Posey,
AEDS Director

Support Staff

Karyn Watts,
Administrative Assistant

Sarah Stevens,
Communications Director

Paige Reese,
Nursery

Tiffany Jones,
Nursery

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The Rev. Jack Alvey
Rector

Upon This Rock

"Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and acts on them, I will show you what they are like: they are like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built."

— Luke 6:47-49

These words of Jesus ground the promise at the heart of this year's *Upon This Rock* annual giving campaign. In a world that often feels unsteady and uncertain, Jesus reminds us that when we build our lives on the foundation of his grace and guidance, we cannot be shaken.

Fall Adult Formation Series: Practicing Spiritual Practices

This fall, our Adult Formation Series invites us to explore what it means to build our lives on Christ's sure foundation. From October 5 through November 2 (with a break for the Parish Picnic on October 26), we will gather Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the Sunshine Room to engage in spiritual practices that root us in God's presence.

Each week offers a chance to explore, reflect on, and embody a practice that opens us to Christ—the Rock of our salvation.

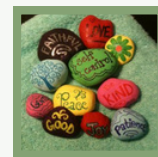
October 5: Creating Prayer Rocks

We begin the series with a hands-on intergenerational gathering. After starting in classrooms, the whole parish will come together in Ware Hall to create prayer rocks—tangible reminders of Christ as our firm foundation.

Children and adults alike will:

- Hold and decorate rocks with prayerful intentions
- Reflect on Luke 6:47-49
- Place their rocks around the church as visible signs of God's presence

This creative act will invite us to reflect on what it truly means to build a life that can withstand the storms of life.



October 12: Exploring the Daily Office

Rooted in ancient monastic tradition, the Daily Office offers a rhythm of prayer throughout the day—Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline.

This session will explore:

- The structure and purpose of the Daily Office
- How it grounds us amid modern busyness
- Ways to integrate it into daily life using the Book of Common Prayer

Through these prayers, we remember that every hour belongs to God.



October 19: Practicing the Examen

This week, we'll engage in the Examen, a reflective practice developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Examen helps us prayerfully review our day with spiritual attentiveness.

We will ask:

- Where did I sense God's presence today?
- Where did I feel gratitude?
- What moments felt heavy?



The Examen is not about judgment—it's about grace. It allows us to see ourselves and our days through God's loving gaze, and to become more open to the Spirit's movement.

November 2: Engaging Scripture with Lectio Divina

In our final session, we will explore Lectio Divina, a contemplative way of reading Scripture that invites not just understanding, but intimacy with God.

Through this practice, we will:

- Read Scripture slowly and prayerfully
- Listen for the word or phrase that the Spirit highlights
- Rest in the presence of God's living Word

Lectio Divina reminds us that the Bible is not just something we read—it's a way God speaks directly into our lives.

Practices That Ground Us in Faith

Taken together, these spiritual practices are not rules or checklists. They are holy habits—stepping stones that lead us deeper into Christ, our Rock and Redeemer.

Just as your pledges and gifts sustain the mission and ministry of Ascension, these practices sustain our lives as disciples. They help us remain steady, grounded, and secure—even when storms arise.

A Season of Giving and Growing

As we give, pray, and practice together this season, may we discover anew the joy of standing firm upon the Rock that will never fail us. Let this be a time of growing deeper—together—as a parish family rooted in the love and grace of Jesus Christ.



Upon This Rock- Annual Giving Campaign

The theme of this year's giving campaign is called "Upon This Rock" The campaign name is inspired by Matthew 16:18 which says, "Upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

The campaign will run from **Sunday, October 5th thru Sunday, November 2nd**. On October 5th, **campaign packets will be available** for pick up in the Terrill Foyer. If you do not pick up your packet by October 12th, we will mail one to your home. A **digital version of the packet** contents will also be made available on October 5th via our website by visiting www.ascensionepiscopal.org/upon-this-rock. Included in the campaign packet is a **pledge card** which we hope you'll turn in by **Celebration Sunday, November 2nd**.

Campaign highlights include **Sunday morning speakers** who will reflect briefly on how giving grounds them in the faith of Christ and his Church. Instead of gathering on Wednesdays during the campaign to reflect on the theme, we are holding **Peer gatherings** throughout the month of October. And, as indicated in the feature article, we will **explore spiritual practices** that help ground us in the faith of Christ.

These are just a few of the ways we plan to explore our campaign theme as we continue to grow in our commitment **to make Christ known by our love for all**. For more information about our campaign, contact our campaign chair Elizabeth Tanner (etanner1101@gmail.com).

Financial Summary - YTD August

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pledge Income	\$ 401,772	\$ 418,053	\$ (16,281)
Other Income	\$ 99,090	\$ 78,522	\$ 20,568
Total Revenues	<u>\$ 500,862</u>	<u>\$ 496,575</u>	<u>\$ 4,287</u>
Personnel	\$ 316,156	\$ 314,905	\$ (6,407)
Program	\$ 19,827	\$ 26,234	\$ 6,407
Outreach	\$ 38,234	\$ 40,898	\$ 2,664
Admin & Bldgs & Grounds	\$ 127,824	\$ 145,750	\$ 17,926
Total Disbursements	<u>\$ 502,039</u>	<u>\$ 527,787</u>	<u>\$ 25,747</u>
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	\$ (1,178)	\$ (31,212)	\$ 30,034

Financial Notes

As of the end of August 2025, we are operating with a slight deficit. However, this is significantly smaller than the deficit we had budgeted for by this point in the year. We have stayed "ahead" of budget primarily because spending during the first eight months has been lower than anticipated. We do expect some expenses to increase in the coming months as we address deferred maintenance on our buildings and grounds. In addition, budgeted funds for our community outreach partners are not disbursed until December. Thank you, as always, for your continued financial support. Your generosity allows us to fund a budget that helps us live into our vision: to make Christ known by our love for all.



The Rev. Emily Collette
Associate Rector



Ashley Monachelli
Director of Family Ministries

Outreach Programs at Ascension

Fall programming at Ascension has fully returned, which means all our Outreach ministries are in full swing. If you are new to Ascension or if you are looking for new things get involved with, I encourage you to consider one (or more!) of our outreach initiatives. Weekly, our **Abbey ministry** passes out over 40 brown-bag lunches to people experiencing food insecurity in the Avondale area. We are looking for people who can pack lunches on Wednesday and for people who can deliver them on Thursday mornings in Avondale (you can even sign up for both!). Our **Backpack Program** packs and delivers meals for children in the Vestavia Hills school system who are on free or reduced-cost lunches. These items are packed during the week and delivered on Thursdays to Vestavia East, Cahaba Heights, and Dolly Ridge elementary schools. On a monthly basis, Ascension prepares and serves dinner to the residents of **First Light**, a shelter for women and children in downtown Birmingham. We need volunteers for both the cooking and serving teams. This is a great ministry for families to participate in together. You can also help residents in need by bringing supplies for our monthly **Giving Hope** drive. The items we collect change monthly and will be collected in the black bin in the foyer.

In addition to our ongoing initiatives, we also offer a range of projects to join throughout the year. This spring, we participated in a **Habitat for Humanity** build with other local Episcopal Churches. This fall, we will help deliver Thanksgiving meals to families in need in the Birmingham area through **Christian Service Mission**. And in January, we will participate in a **parish-wide outreach day** over MLK weekend. More information on both events will be coming soon. To get involved in any of these programs or if you would like help finding the right outreach opportunity for you and your family, please reach out to me. I would love to connect you with the ministries that could use your gifts and talents.

The Rev. Emily Collette

Children and Youth Ministries

"They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Jeremiah 17:8

Children and Youth Ministries is committed to helping all of our children grow in their love and knowledge of God. Through Sunday faith formation classes, EYC, and other activities, we hope our children are developing deep roots of faith that will sustain them for a lifetime.

If your child hasn't had the chance to attend faith formation classes on Sunday or join EYC, we'd love to see them this fall! October is full of opportunities for children and youth to build friendships and grow in faith. EYC will continue the **study of Luke**: In September, we discussed listening to God when we are afraid and how Jesus always keeps his promise to be merciful to his people.

October 5

Club 345 is invited to help collect supplies for the Humane Society at the **Blessing of the Animals**, then join EYC for dinner and Bible study.

October 19: EYC will serve dinner at **First Light**, a shelter that provides a safe and supportive environment for homeless women and children. A sign-up and more details will be shared soon.

October 26: Join us at Wald Park for our **annual picnic**—a wonderful time for fellowship and fun for all ages!

*If you are interested in serving in Children or Youth Ministries, we would love to have you! There are many ways to be involved. Please reach out to me if you'd like to learn more, Ashley.monachelli@ascensionepiscopal.org.

Ashley Monachelli

Welcome to Fall at Ascension

Summer is officially over and fall is here. The summer heat is beginning to subside, and early leaves are starting to fall. With the arrival of autumn comes the start of a new program year at Ascension — and we are certainly off to a busy and exciting start! It's worth noting that several of our ministries continue throughout the year, even during the summer months, keeping the spirit and work of Ascension alive year-round.

Stewardship Season: Upon This Rock

One of my favorite topics — stewardship — will soon take center stage as we launch our annual giving campaign titled Upon This Rock. Beginning in early October, we'll host gatherings within our various peer groups. These sessions are designed to spark meaningful conversations around the theme of stewardship, as well as our shared responsibilities and commitments here at Ascension.

New Energy in Formation and Ministries

Our Formation programs are off to an energetic and inspiring start, particularly in our children's and youth ministries.

This summer, we were blessed to welcome two new staff members:

- Ashley Monachelli, Director of Family Ministries
- Sam Herman, Youth Minister

We're also excited to have Christy Smith join our team as Parish Life Coordinator. Christy has hit the ground running, stepping seamlessly into her new role. We remain deeply grateful to Kathy Lounsbury for her dedicated service and the thoughtful way she shaped the Parish Life Coordinator role. Thank you, Kathy!

Signs of a Healthy Parish

All this activity points to one thing: Ascension is a healthy and growing parish. One way we measure this is through our Newcomer Coffees, which are typically held quarterly. At our most recent gathering, we welcomed thirteen new attendees — a remarkable sign of vitality and growth!

Growth: A Gift and a Challenge

Parish growth is a tremendous blessing, but it also presents new challenges — especially when it comes to planning for space and resources. Our Vestry is actively reviewing our facility needs, both for the short term and the long haul. We want to ensure that we can comfortably and effectively host meetings, classes, and events. Currently, we're exploring ways to improve spaces like the Sunshine Room, which offers a cozy, intimate setting — but with limited capacity. For larger gatherings, Ware Hall is the next option. Though beautiful, its acoustics present challenges. The echoing in the room makes it difficult to hear, and traditional sound amplification doesn't help. In response, we'll soon begin installing acoustic panels to make Ware Hall more voice-friendly. This is very much a work in progress, and we appreciate your patience and feedback along the way.

Looking Ahead: Long-Term Facility Planning

Looking further into the future, we're beginning to envision how we can best use — and potentially expand — our facilities to meet the needs of a growing parish. This initiative is still in the early stages, and we're committed to a collaborative and inclusive process. Your input will be an essential part of this ongoing conversation, so please stay tuned for more updates.

In Closing

This is such an exciting time at Ascension. There is so much energy, growth, and potential in our midst. I look forward to continuing these conversations with you — and to discovering together all the ways God is calling us forward as a parish.



Jim Busbin
Senior Warden

August/September photo recap

Club 345 Bible Presentation



Pier 23 Bowling



Men's Fireside Chat



Women's Gathering



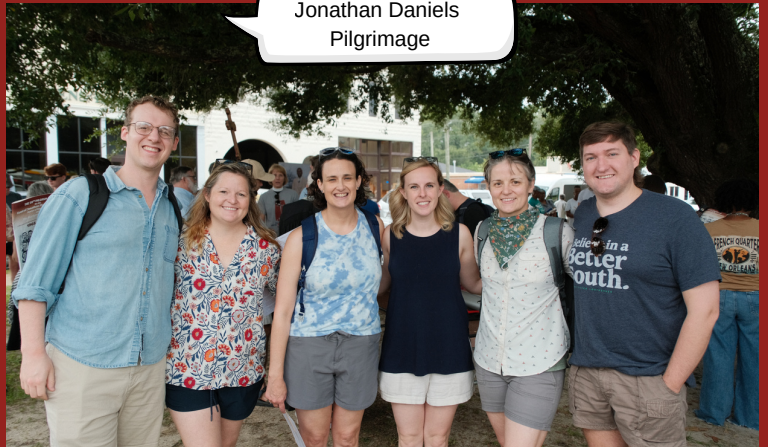
Rummage Sale



Blessing of the Backpacks



Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage



Ministry Fair



Women's Painting Class



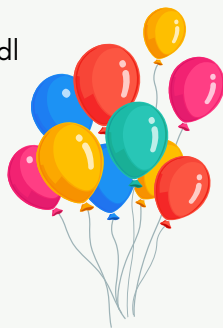
EYC



BIRTHDAYS & Anniversaries

October Birthdays

1 Nora Houston	14 Karen Fleming
1 Kelly Burke	15 Jackie Clark
1 David Whatley	17 Jack Hoerner
3 David McBrayer	18 Leslie Sharbel
4 Dana Porter	19 Beth Chancellor
4 Margot Morrow	22 Henri Carrie
6 Jean Smith	23 Lane Tyler Rothscadl
6 Sheri Coffee	24 Caroline Hottle
7 Carson Bradley	24 Ashley Vann
7 Spencer Bradley	25 Virginia Holbrook
7 Diane Wheeler	25 Virginia Creamer
9 Carolyn Woodson	29 Lissa Lutenbacher
10 Elizabeth Smith	29 Doc Porter
11 Eileen Dawson	31 Nate Campbell
14 Laura Morgan	

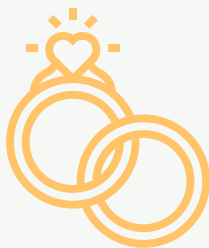


November Birthdays

1 Vaughn Sparks	15 Alex Wilson
2 Stacey Gregory	15 Faye Clyburn
3 Anna Colvin	15 Kyle Austin
4 Alice Lagrone	15 Ronald Holt
7 Ben Campbell	15 Sarah Stevens
8 Katy Mac Dillon	16 Fisher Grimes
9 Emily Collette	16 Elaine Graham
10 Jamie Grimes	19 Deborah Hooper
10 Nancy Rowell	21 Ben Mims
10 Stan Roberts	23 Martin Hoerner
10 James McDowell	24 Mo Mann
11 Davonia Buck	26 Howard Poarch
11 Meyers Dillon	26 Christian Brown
12 Audrey Morrow	26 Sidney Jackson
12 Toni Causey	29 Joseph Morgan
12 Holston Ryan	30 Randy Jones
12 Mills Whitfield	30 Clyde Smith
14 Ladd Baird	30 Sam Linton
14 Susan Higgins	30 Edra Perry
	30 Daniel Taylor

October Anniversaries

1 Phyllis & Pep Peppenhorst
 5 Katie & Holston Ryan
 7 Lori & JT Ennis
 9 Colleen & Ladd Baird
 10 Margot & Chris Morrow
 10 Elizabeth & Clyde Smith
 15 Natalie & Kevin Houston
 17 Olivia & JT Thomas
 18 Sarah & Ross Parker
 30 Carrie & Robert McDowell



November Anniversaries

1 Kathryn & Jud Bringman
 2 Kath & Caleb Smelser
 8 Lauren & Chip Dews
 14 Sarah & Drew Stevens
 23 Sarah & Charlie Ireland
 25 Gaye & Pete Shields

Anniversary Prayer

O God, You have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church; Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Birthday Prayer

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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✉ admin@ascensionepiscopal.org

u p c o m i n g e v e n t s

Stewardship Lunch | Pier 60+

October 5



Stewardship Lunch | Pier 34 & 45

October 19

Stewardship Cookout | Pier 23

October 19



Blessing of the Animals

October 5



Soup Social

October 22 & November 19



Threads of Love

October 3, 10, 17, 23 & 31
November 7, 14, 21 & 28



Women's Book Swap

October 15



Men's Fireside Chat

October 14



Parish Workday

October 18



Parish Picnic | Fall Festival

October 26



Celebration Sunday | All Souls' Day

November 2



Pier 60 Veterans Day

November 11



Women's Bunco Night

November 18



Men's Breakfast

November 20



Men's Retreat

November 21 - 23



Advent Wreath Making

November 30

TO REGISTER, RSVP, OR LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE EVENTS, PLEASE VIEW THEM IN REALM
OR VISIT THE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION ON OUR WEBSITE