



*"Where there is always a place at the table"*

## *Church of the Ascension Herald - September 2011*

Phone: (718) 442-4187 Fax: (718) 442-4187

Website: [www.ascensionsi.org](http://www.ascensionsi.org)

e-mail: [admin@ascensionsi.org](mailto:admin@ascensionsi.org)

### **A Reflection from the Rector**

It was a strange feeling – spooky, really, to use a colloquial word that seems to fit the best. On Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, I went about preparing the church property and buildings as best as could be done for the approaching storm, at that time expected to be a full-out hurricane with critically-high winds and a severe amount of rain. With the large old trees so plentiful on our property, and the poor drainage of the soil that requires sump pumps to keep the cellars from flooding, the prospect of significant damage was enormous. One of our parishioners tied the outdoor grills together and secured them to the fence for safe-keeping. Grand stained-glass windows were opened and then closed tightly to ensure proper latching. Cellar floors were cleared of computer equipment, low-level file drawers and storage shelves were emptied of their contents, and equipment that might be flooded was unplugged. The Rectory windows were all adjusted so that storm windows were in the proper place and latches were secure, ensuring at least in theory that windows designed to tilt inward for cleaning would not be blown open. I re-learned what the old nautical term “battening down the hatches” is all about.

There was a powerful sense of the unknown looming ahead. To comply with the Mayor’s order that everyone who hadn’t evacuated absolutely must stay home during and after the storm, Masses for the next day were cancelled.

At some point, the preparations are done. The sense of unknown still looms large, but the preparation ends and then one must sit down and confront the question, “What next?” “What happens now?” The answer is, of course, “We don’t know.” And it lands on us then... that God is the only One to whom we can turn, on whom we must rely. He is utterly dependable when everyone and everything else might not be there. We simply must let go at that point, and turn to Him, once again.

We always should be turning to God, shouldn’t we? Yet, life seems to challenge that for many people, distracting them from the One who is that ground of all being.

Theologian Paul Tillich writes in *The Shaking of the Foundations*, “The name of infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of our being is God. That depth is what the word God means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself. For if you know that God means depth, you know much about Him. You cannot then call yourself an atheist or unbeliever. For you cannot think or say: “Life has no depth! Life itself is shallow. Being itself is surface only.” If you could say this in complete seriousness, you would be an atheist; but otherwise you are not.”

Most everyone I have ever known or met has not believed, on some deep level, that life is truly shallow, whether they confess belief in God or not. Tillich would tell them that they cannot be atheists as a result. For those of us who do not need or want to be an atheist, Tillich's description of God is extraordinarily helpful. Whether terrorists kill thousands by flying airliners into buildings or the ground, whether the earth shakes and frightens us or storms wipe out all of our property – even our lives themselves – God is that depth that we know is there, no matter what we choose to call it. God is our ultimate concern, the One from whom our focus must never waver.

Throughout that long Saturday night, with fitful if any rest, I thought often of this core relationship with God, and recounted the many times that it has come through for me personally in the midst of very challenging and difficult situations. I prayed that each person that night was connecting with that core, and how it helps us. It always – **always** – does.

Sunday morning brought a strange calm. I took a big breath and looked outside to see what had happened. Exploring the property, I found the usual wind damage from the trees, including a fairly large branch fallen, then discovered that overflowing window wells were still flooding a part of the Undercroft parish hall. Generous volunteers left their own homes and problems and came to pump out the wells and clean up the water. We had survived the storm, and survived it well.

Now it is time to remember that in that core, unwavering relationship we must have with God, He requires for us to turn that relationship into action – focused on the other, and the care of self as a beloved part of God's creation. We must pray for those who died 10 years ago on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and for those who have died in these recent storms. We must pray for those who suffer today – many chronically - from these events. And we must take action to support and help – be it financially, emotionally or spiritually. There are many ways to be of assistance at all times. We each need to seek out those ways and find that thing in which we can passionately serve our Lord. Those who spend time on gossip that tears down or other ways that focus only on self need to stop and reassess. Is this how Our Lord instructed us to spend our time and energy? Is this life-giving to self and to community?

I give thanks to God for how we have come through this recent challenge and for the gracious ways that we have come together to support each other and those around us in its aftermath. Let us continue that kind of focus and that kind of work, the good work that God has given us to do.

In Christ's Love,

Fr. Richard

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## **Fall Schedule and Weekly Activities at Ascension are on the Calendar**

Fall is in the air. The wind in the trees sounds different. The leaves are just beginning to show some red and yellow amongst the green. The deer are beginning to turn to their bark colored winter coats. The hurricane is past and left most of us relatively undamaged (I understand I DO have water in my basement on SI). At least that is true here in Northeast Pennsylvania, where I have been fortunate enough to spend most of August. After a lazy summer, for me at least, it is time to look at our fall schedule for the Church of the Ascension. Here we go!

Read on in this newsletter for more about our fall events. Please follow the Sunday bulletin and for those who live elsewhere, explore our web site, [www.ascensionsi.org](http://www.ascensionsi.org), for more info regarding upcoming events.

-Marcia Novey

## **Sunday School Resumes September 11th**

Sunday School at Church of the Ascension kicks in on September 11th. Sunday School is held during the 10:00AM Mass and meets in the Sunday School room, located in the basement of the Rectory. The entrance is on Benedict Avenue and kids can be brought by starting at 9:45AM.

Once again we will use the popular LIVE B.I.G. curriculum (Hear, See and Live your Belief in God). This is a practical set of lessons with DVDs that help show ways to actively live out the Good News in today's world. We study the Bible, do crafts and creative work, have snacks and learn in a fun environment with lots of artistic supplies to help! Children aged 4 through 12 are most welcome to come any Sunday. This curriculum is great even if you are unable to attend every Sunday, so drop in any time!

## **Rector's Forum Will Be Held Throughout September, Beginning September 11th**

Fr. Richard will host a Rector's Forum beginning on September 11th at 9:00AM in the Undercroft, between the Masses. On the 11th, the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks, he will facilitate a discussion about the events of September 11th, how we were impacted, how we feel the world was impacted, and what our response has been and might need to be as people doing our best to follow the Way of Jesus Christ. This discussion will continue on the following Sundays of September. Fr. Richard looks forward to our sitting together to grapple with the topic of evil in the present day and what our responses should look like as Christian individuals and community.

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6-year-old Angie and her 4-year-old brother Joel were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang and talked out loud.

Finally his big sister had had enough "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked.

Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two men standing by the door? They are. They're the hushers!"

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## Share the Bounty Cocktail Party and Prize Drawing

The invitations for the **SHARE THE BOUNTY COCKTAIL PARTY AND PRIZE DRAWING (formerly the "Share Gala")** have all gone out and should have reached you in the mail! We are excited to have extra prizes this year thanks to the generosity of donors who have provided a \$500 cash bonus prize (first 75 entries) and a week at a private cottage in the Poconos (only those purchasing two entries will be entered into this drawing). The Gala evening takes place on **Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM**. Additional invitations and entry forms can be found in the Undercroft by the bulletin board. Please encourage as many family and friends to come as possible! The contact person this year is Gytha Darconte at (718) 442-8075. A form for share purchase appears later in this newsletter. Please encourage family and friends to enter for a chance to win of the prizes and to help support the work of Ascension Parish.

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A little boy opened the big old family Bible, looking with fascination at the old pages as he turned them. Then something fell out, and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed between the pages.

"Momma, look what I found," the boy called out.

"What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked.

With astonishment in his voice, he answered, "Adam's suit!"

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## And He Pitched His Tent Among Us!

Sunday Morning conversations with Scripture resumes the first Sunday in October. We gather in the undercroft at 9:00AM. In our conversations this season we will reflect on the journey of Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee to his death on a cross in Jerusalem of Judea. We will read from all four gospel accounts interchangeably, map out his journey, look at the places where Jesus passed through or stayed. We will reflect on His teaching in the time and context in which it occurred and the ways in which people responded or reacted. Our conversations will create space for us to share our own personal encounters with Jesus in the gospels and as our Risen Lord present and moving with us in our daily lives.

- Joanne Izzo

## Blessing of the Animals Saturday, October 1, at 1 PM

Our animal friends - our cats and dogs, rodents and reptiles, birds and fish - grace our homes and our lives. We celebrate them each year in honor and memory of Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Animals. We care so deeply for them! Please bring your animal friend(s) and join us for a meaningful Service of Celebration and Blessing of Animals. A Reception suitable for all will follow on the lawn, weather permitting.

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A kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they drew. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's artwork. As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat or looking up from her drawing, the little girl replied, "They will in a minute!"

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### **Weekly Scheduled Activities Begin Again**

**Rector's Forum (September) and Conversations with Scripture (October and ongoing)** will be held each Sunday beginning September 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:00AM in the Undercroft.

**St. Martha's Guild** will hold the first meeting of the season on Wednesday, September 14th at 10:30AM in the undercroft. All women of the parish are invited to attend.

The **Book Group** will meet with Fr. Richard on Thursday, Sept. 15 at 12:30PM in the undercroft. Anyone interested is welcome. We will decide on a book to explore at that time. Bring your suggestions!

**We are currently conducting a survey** to determine the best evening of the week to hold our mid-week evening worship and program nights. This survey is being taken through mid-September and will be used to determine the kind of worship and programs most desired and needed during the week. Mid-week evening worship will begin again in the first week of October.

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### **THE BAPTISMAL FONT AT CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION**

The baptismal font has contained Holy Water since the baptisms of Easter Sunday. Parishes these days, especially those with a "higher Church" leaning, may keep Holy Water in the font during most or all of the seasons of the year as a constant reminder of the truly foundational nature of our Baptismal Covenant. You may choose to take of the Holy Water and make the sign of the cross as you approach or leave the Altar rail at Communion, but whether you do so or simply are aware of the presence of the water in the font as you pass by, it is a reminder that "because the rites of initiation of the Church begin with baptism and are completed by the reception of the Eucharist, the baptismal font and its location reflect the Christian's journey *through* the waters of baptism *to* the Altar" (from the website of *Pastoral Liturgy* magazine). Since the time that our last Rector, Fr. Stallings, had the baptismal font moved from a corner near the church entryway to a prominent position near the Altar rail, the baptismal font and Paschal candle are perfectly placed at Church of the Ascension to celebrate the progression and union of Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist, the two principal sacraments of the Church upheld especially in the new prayer book.

# 2011 SHARE THE BOUNTY COCKTAIL PARTY AND SHARE DRAWING

## Share Purchase Form

- **Yes!** I will attend the 2011 Share Cocktail Party and Share Drawing. I am purchasing \_\_\_\_\_ Shares at \$100 each. My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed for \_\_\_\_\_ guests (maximum of 2 guests per Share).  
(Checks payable to Church of the Ascension)
- **NO**, I will not be able to attend this year's Share Cocktail Party and Share Drawing, but I am purchasing \_\_\_\_\_ Shares at \$100 each. My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.  
(Checks payable to Church of the Ascension)
- **NO**, I will not be able to attend this year's Share Cocktail Party and Share Drawing, but enclose a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support outreach and other programs at Church of the Ascension.  
(Checks payable to Church of the Ascension)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Each Share entitles up to 2 people to attend the Cocktail Party and gives one entry into the Share Drawings, as well as the other \$500 Raffle for the **first 75 purchasers**. Your Share(s) will be sent to you in the mail once we have received your payment. A portion of each Share is tax-deductible according to IRS regulations. If all 100 Shares have already been sold, your payment will be returned to you immediately. You need not be present to win the prizes or Poconos gift. Drawing will be held 9/24/2011

# **Celebration and Blessing of the Animals**

**Saturday, October 1st at 1:00 pm**

Our animal friends - our cats and dogs, rodents and reptiles, birds and fish - grace our homes and our lives. We care so deeply for them! Please bring your animal friend(s) and join us for a meaningful Service of Celebration and

Blessing of Animals on **Saturday, October 1st at 1:00 pm.**

A Reception suitable for all will follow on the lawn, weather permitting.



**The Church of the Ascension**

**... an Episcopal Parish**

**One Kingsley Avenue  
West Brighton**

**(One block off of Manor Road across from  
Clove Lakes Park)**

**We celebrate our animal friends each year in  
honor and memory of Francis of Assisi,  
Patron Saint of Animals.**

Church of the Ascension  
One Kingsley Avenue  
Staten Island, New York 10314-2420  
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