

DISCERNING *God's Call* RENEWING *Our Mission*



Question for Reflection

How do I understand God to be calling me to serve and share with Ascension this year?



October 19, 2025

DISCERNING GOD'S CALL - RENEWING OUR MISSION

by Peggy Wise

The 2025 theme of Ascension's stewardship campaign, "Discerning God's Call—Renewing Our Mission," is a strong opportunity for us to deeply consider our personal gifts and how we will use them to "restore all people to unity with God and each other" in personal and practical ways.

This theme resonates with me as I remember the story of how I came to be a part of this warm, inclusive, welcoming community. God used people and circumstances, moving me forward step by step, to call me into my main ministry here at Ascension, teaching in the Godly Play program. As a lifelong educator, retirement meant new educational directions, and I moved to Dallas and began teaching part-time at an Episcopal school. The chaplain introduced me to Godly Play when she asked me to fill in for her religion classes when she had to be away. Those were the best, the most peaceful days, and I felt joyful as I shared the stories of God with the youngest children. (Memories abound, like the little boy who asked, "Moses is the good guy, right?")

Through prayer and my experiences, I was aware that God was leading me somewhere, and I needed to prepare. I became certified in Godly Play, without a sponsoring church or more than an occasional place to teach.



I also worked regularly as part of the library team, and I shared my story with my friend, the head librarian. She introduced me to Chris Schmidt, an English teacher and former Ascension member. He asked me to come to Ascension to assist him and his wife, Laura, in children's formation! I would need to leave the church where I was; should I go? God was very direct with me, which was exactly what I needed. The message I felt in my heart was, "I've given you what you've wanted for three years. Go!" And here I am.

The second part of this year's theme, *Renewing Our Mission*, is the most personal to me, as I am in the midst of transition: the need to address health challenges meant that I needed to leave Gateway of Grace, where for the last three years I worked with refugee children and their moms. My decision was a difficult one, and I wondered if I would feel adrift. I didn't; there was immediate work to do at Ascension. Ascension itself is also in a time of transition and renewal as we seek a new rector and a new way forward. While times of renewal can be challenging both individually and collectively, trusting in God's purpose is a source of strength and comfort.

Renewal is a constant in life. We renew memberships and insurance policies; we renew our determination and our decor. Renewal may be called transformation, repentance, rebirth, or even a kind of resurrection. Richard Rohr, a well-known Franciscan theologian, calls it "reorder," and suggests that it follows a period of "disorder." As a church community, we periodically renew the vows of our Baptismal Covenant, reminding us of our purpose and our mission to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

If we seek renewal, how is it accomplished? For me, it involves being open of heart and mind, being grateful, and listening through prayer. It means being willing to see what is real and to have my mind and my life changed by following the Way of Love shown by Jesus. In addition to prayer, reading and study have played a significant role in renewing my perspective. I like to consider deeply the words of Jesus, and I read many books, including books of theology, like Rohr's *The Universal Christ*, books of truth-telling and even books on economics. One that is both theological and truth-telling is *The Church Cracked Open* by Canon Stephanie Spellers. Readers have found it to be informative about the church's past and what we need to do to further our mission and bring true unity as we seek to be Christ in the world. I highly recommend.

I'm so grateful that Ascension does an outstanding job of reaching out and being inclusive and welcoming to all people. We have many opportunities for outreach, fellowship, and study. Now it's time to make Ascension the heart of my ministry, through the food pantry and Godly Play, working with our amazing team to ensure that our children know God and that this community loves them. It's time for each of us to choose how we will give of our treasure and talents at Ascension in the coming year.

At the end of a Godly Play lesson, we often ask this question: "I wonder where you are in this story?"

