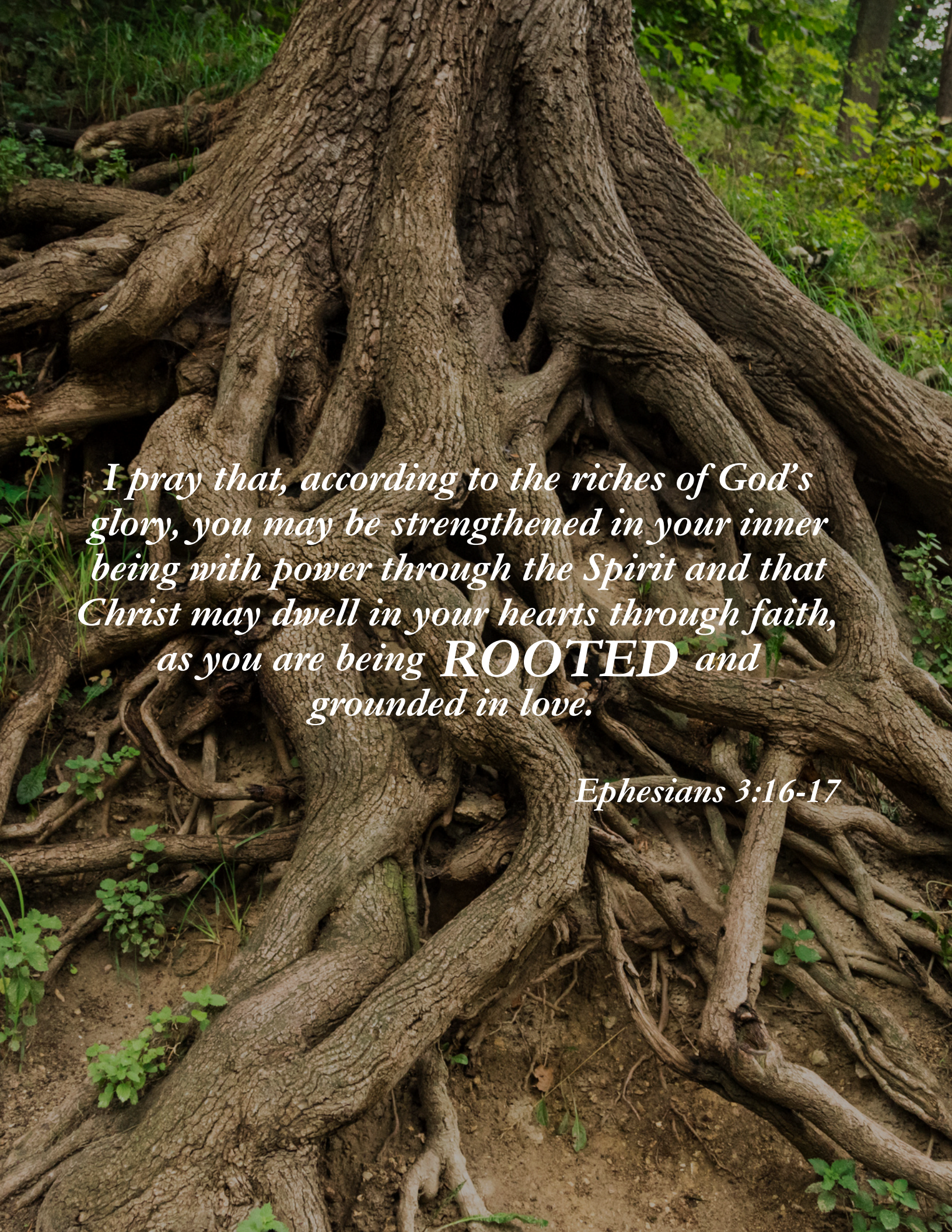




Deeply
ROOTED

Faithfully
GROWING

STEWARDSHIP 2027



*I pray that, according to the riches of God's
glory, you may be strengthened in your inner
being with power through the Spirit and that
Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,
as you are being **ROOTED** and
grounded in love.*

Ephesians 3:16-17



October 2026

Dear

A society grows great when its older citizens plant trees whose shade they know they will not live to sit in.

I did not plant the trees that shade this beautiful parish. You did – you and others like you, through years of faithful giving, starting long before I arrived. Because of your faithfulness, Ascension is *deeply rooted*.

I've been Ascension's Rector only a short time, but I've seen what your generosity built: a nave that holds us in the round allowing us to see the face of God reflected back to us as we worship, a day school that buzzes with activity each week, a garden that teaches us the power of planting, a pantry that fills the hungry with good things, and so much more. I am grateful to sit in the shade provided by your deep roots. As we embark on this year's stewardship campaign, I am mindful of your legacy of commitment to this parish.

In Ascension's stewardship campaign for 2026, we received commitments totaling \$626,950. However, this year's operating expenses are expected to be \$784,000, leaving us with a significant budget shortfall.¹ When our Vestry begins a year with such a disparity between committed giving and anticipated expenses, they enter into survival-mode. They cut expenses wherever possible, defer maintenance, and hope for special gifts to cover the budget shortfall. Unfortunately, our Vestry has been in this position for the past several years. In 2027, we need to address our shortfall in committed giving, cover increased costs of operation, and pay for necessary maintenance.

We also have a vision for what *faithful growth* could look like: new opportunities to serve our Lake Highlands community, better support for our staff and systems, and – if we grow together – the ability to add to our current staff to provide better pastoral care and facilities management. None of that is possible without the people of this parish choosing, together, to plant something again.

With this in mind, we need \$975,000 in committed support for this year's Stewardship Campaign to fully fund our anticipated 2027 budget, help combat inflation, and to take some modest steps toward making our vision of growth a reality. I realize that this would be a significant increase in year-over-year commitments, but I want to be transparent about what the budget should look like if we are serious about growing.

So I have a simple invitation. If Ascension has become a place where you're putting down roots, would you make a written commitment to support our operations this year? Many of our members have been generous with regular giving, but without a commitment in writing from each person, we are unable to build an accurate budget for the coming year. Your gift, expressed in a completed commitment card, nourishes our roots and supports our growth.

Thank you for the roots you've already put down here. I'm grateful you're part of what God is doing at Ascension.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Rebecca Tankersley
Rector

¹ This does not include replacement costs for two defunct HVAC units – the one serving the main restrooms, sacristies, and east half of our offices and the one serving our narthex.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to restore all people to unity with God and each other.

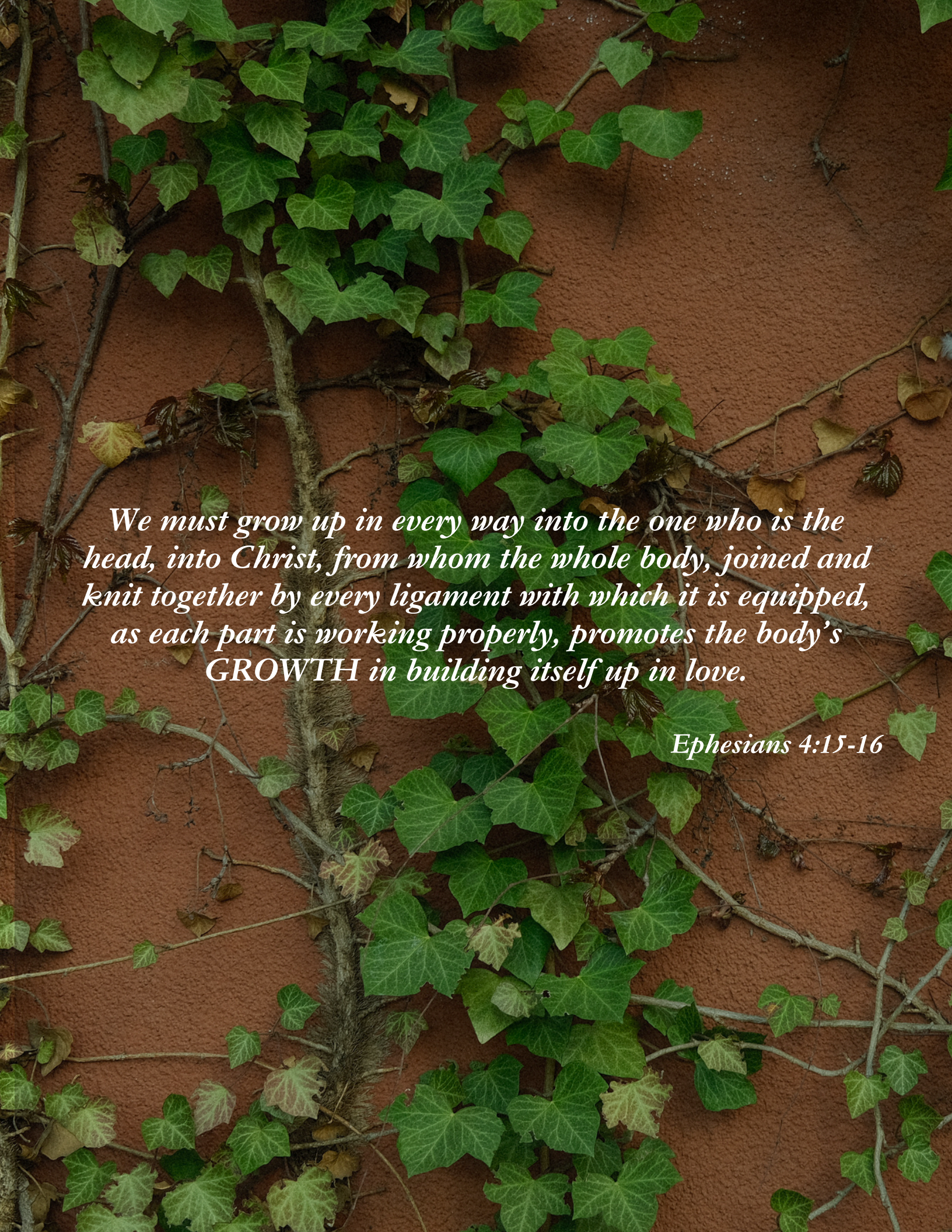
As a community of Christians, our lives are rooted in thanksgiving to God. Each week, we come together in joyful worship. Our members and guests experience God's deep and sustaining love through the Word, our music, and the Holy Eucharist, a meal whose name means thanksgiving. Through worship, we are reminded of our rootedness in Christ and fed with his body and blood so that we can grow into his likeness.

At the end of our services, we are sent into the world to love and serve our neighbors. The roots grown in our Harvest of Hope Garden nurture and grow the clients of the Elaine Kadane Food Pantry. Our children's and youth ministries employ the rootedness of your offerings to raise and grow the next generation of faithful followers of Jesus. Your sacrificial giving empowers countless ministries to share the love of God we experience here out into our divided, broken, weary world.

This year, we encourage you to consider prayerfully how you might support Ascension's mission more deeply. We need your time, your talent, and your treasure to ensure that we are able to carry out our mission.





A photograph of a red, textured wall covered in green ivy. The ivy leaves are heart-shaped with prominent veins, and some are showing signs of aging or damage. A central, thicker, brown stem of the ivy runs vertically down the wall. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

We must grow up in every way into the one who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's GROWTH in building itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



FOOD PANTRY

Each month, we served an average of 230 families and 340 children, distributing 46,000 pounds of food with the help of 30+ dedicated volunteers, and gave out 217 gift cards in December.

HARVEST OF HOPE COMMUNITY GARDEN

13 gardeners tended 21 plots in the Harvest of Hope Community Garden, including 3 plots dedicated specifically to the Ascension Food Pantry, contributing 1,389 pounds of fresh produce to the pantry.



ASCENSION DAY SCHOOL

Ascension Day School served 81 children across 9 classrooms, supported by a staff of 16 teachers and 2 administrators. Summer programming grew to 85 children, with a summer teaching team of 6 to 8 staff members, depending on the week.

SANDBRANCH WATER MINISTRY

64 volunteers delivered over 800 cases (512,000 ounces) of water to 300 Sandbranch residents over 4 quarterly deliveries, adopted a family of five children and their mom for Christmas, and gave out \$2,500 in gift cards to 50 families.



SANDBRANCH SPECIAL PROJECT

In a timely gift to the Sandbranch community, Ascension raised the funds needed to replace an extremely leaky roof overhang at the church's front entrance — completing the repair just in time for their 148th anniversary celebration held August 23–24.

We celebrate the impact of our ministries—both within our parish and beyond. Numbers tell a powerful story that reflects the love, service, and faith that define our community.



AUSTIN STREET CENTER

Our Austin Street Center ministry gathered on 4 Saturdays to serve 181 lasagnas to those in need, with an average of 10 dedicated volunteers showing up each day to prepare, serve, and share a meal with our neighbors.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND YOUTH GROUP

Sunday School reached 12 children with the help of 7 teachers, while Youth Group engaged 18 youth under the guidance of 4 adult leaders.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Children's Chapel welcomed an average of 22 children, supported by 21 rotating adult volunteers and 11 youth volunteers. In the Nursery, 5 children were on the rolls, cared for by 2 workers.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

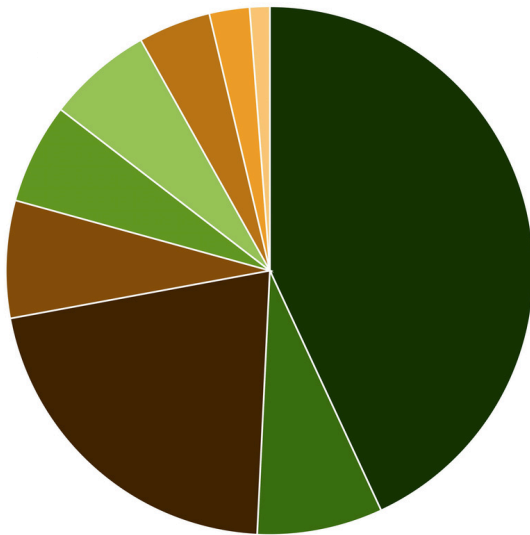
Vacation Bible School was a wonderful opportunity for outreach, drawing 25 children in total — 7 from our own church family and 18 from the surrounding community. The week was made possible by 4 adult volunteers and 8 youth volunteers.



BLESSING BAGS

Our youth put together Blessing Bags for members to keep in their cars and share with those they encounter in need. On an average Sunday, 15 to 17 bags go out into the community, adding up to nearly 800 bags of essentials distributed throughout the year.

OUR 2027 BUDGET



Total Budget | \$975,000

- Staff and contractors — \$420,000
- Assistant rector (hoped hire) — \$75,000
- Facilities and operations — \$208,000
- Insurance — \$70,000
- Replace 2 HVAC units — \$60,000
- Reserve for deferred maintenance — \$62,750
- Liturgy and music — \$43,250
- Formation — \$24,000
- Hospitality ministries — \$12,000

Ascension also anticipates spending approximately \$67,000 next year in ministry to our community, supported entirely through member gifts to restricted accounts which are separate from this budget.

How to Grow a Forest

Growing a budget is a little like growing a forest. A forest takes every kind of tree to shelter a whole community: seeds and roots as much as old growth. What kind of giver are you?



Seeds — under \$1,500 annually

Every forest begins with a seed. Without seeds, there's no root, no sapling, no canopy; faithful giving that sustains Ascension often starts small, with a decision to plant seeds.



Roots — \$1,500 to \$4,999 annually

With water and sunlight, seeds become roots, mostly invisible but essential to everything that grows above it. Becoming deeply rooted is a next step toward faithfully growing. Roots are essential at Ascension.



Saplings — \$5,000 to \$9,999 annually

With roots in place, a sapling begins to rise, reaching upward and helping Ascension minister to our community.



Canopy — \$10,000 to \$14,999 annually

A sapling that keeps reaching becomes a canopy, rising above the rest of the forest to let light reach everyone underneath it. Giving at this level lets Ascension's shelter and shade stretch further, over more of our community, as faithful growth becomes something others can rest under.



Old Growth — over \$15,000 annually

A canopy sustained year after year becomes old growth. Long, steady commitment from givers in this range anchors Ascension for years to come. It holds the canopy up and gives younger trees room to grow.

Last year, 55 households made commitments totaling \$626,950.

6

Seeds

Under \$1,500

16

Roots

\$1,500- \$4,999

14

Saplings

\$5,000 - \$9,999

09

Canopy

\$10,000 - \$14,999

10

Old Growth

over \$15,000

A GUIDE TO GIVING

When we realize that everything we have belongs to God and is a gift from God, it makes it a little easier to think about how we use the money God has entrusted to our care. We are stewards, called to use God's money for the building up of God's people.

First Time Commitments

If you're new to Ascension we hope you've found us to be faithful, welcoming, and authentic. Our life together depends on the support of our parish family. We plan for the year ahead based upon Commitment Cards from you.

We have many givers who faithfully contribute without completing formal Commitment Cards. We are grateful for all gifts and use each one to operate. However, we are unable to budget around this kind of giving. Please consider making your giving official in 2027 so we can plan more effectively.

Scripture asks us to return to God the first 10% of everything we earn. When we do this, we show the depth of our thankfulness and the fullness of our devotion to Jesus. This level of giving requires sacrifices on our part which, in turn, moves our hearts closer to Christ (Matthew 6:21). If you're not ready to commit to that level of giving, ask God for guidance about where to start or how far to stretch. Generosity is a virtue that, by God's grace, can grow over time.

Continuing Commitments

We are so grateful to those who've continued to say "yes" to God and Ascension. Your financial support makes a direct impact on what we can accomplish as a community. We need your support more than ever and invite you to consider how God may be calling you to share in 2027.

NEXT STEPS

Pray to God, asking for guidance in considering God's provision in your life and making a financial Commitment.

Consider whether you are able to *grow* from the *roots* you've already put down.

Make a Commitment for 2027 to Episcopal Church of the Ascension by completing a Commitment Card or entering your commitment online.

What happens if I make a commitment and can't meet it?

While we are asking for a serious commitment, a Commitment Card is not a contract! We understand emergencies or changes in financial situations can happen during the year. You can always revise your Commitment, and this does not affect your standing at the church in any way. If your circumstances change and you need to make a revision, please contact Amy Maceo, our Parish Administrator, who will confidentially update your commitment as needed.