



*Church of the*  
**ASCENSION**  
Orlando, Florida

**2021**  
**Parish Profile**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

**“Welcome to the Church of the Ascension!”** These are the heartfelt words delivered by members of the Greeters Ministry and parishioners to all who enter our doors. We are genuine as we extend this welcome. God has directed us to love one another and show hospitality to strangers and guests. In addition to our parish family, we have many seasonal members from throughout the United States and regular international attendees. Visitors know us to be a friendly, Christian, Bible-based community. That is who we continue to strive to be through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Since 1980, Ascension has been an Episcopal church in the Diocese of Central Florida, located near the Town of Windermere and adjacent to the Dr. Phillips area in Orlando, Florida. We are a culturally diverse congregation that enjoys the richness of the Anglican liturgical heritage and sound biblical doctrine as we gather in prayer, worship and ministry.

We are excited to welcome a rector who will create experiences that will lead people of every age and at every stage in their faith journey to a deeper relationship with God and each other. We seek a leader who is able to relate, communicate and engage with our parishioners. We pray for an individual who can shepherd our parish with empathy and loving compassion while bringing a new energy to the congregation. We look for someone who has a personal relationship with God as reflected in their lifestyle, teaching and preaching. We need a rector who will follow God’s vision to grow the congregation spiritually to be the disciples God envisions us to be.



To our new rector: “Welcome to the Church of the Ascension!” We look forward to greeting you with these words, in the same manner that God has directed us to welcome everyone who walks through our doors.

## **WORSHIP + LITURGY**

Sunday worship at Ascension follows the liturgies of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Holy Eucharist (Rite II) is the primary liturgical expression at our 8:30 and 10:30 services. Music is vital to our worship, as it is one way we connect with the Holy Spirit during worship. Music at the 8:30 service is drawn from The Hymnal 1982. Music at the 10:30 service is a blend of hymns and praise music from various traditions.

Our spiritual worship is enhanced through the various choirs and instrumental ensembles that participate each Sunday. Members of the Prayer Ministry team and the Order of the Daughters of the King are available to the congregation for individual prayers during Communion. In addition to our Sunday services, we have a regularly scheduled bi-monthly Order of St. Luke Healing service. We celebrate all major feast days.



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We have strong lay involvement in all services. Lectors, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, acolytes, ushers, greeters, Altar Guild and audio/visual team members strengthen our worship time. Our team of Lay Eucharistic Visitors bring communion and companionship to our sick and home-bound parishioners. Our deacons are an ever-present source of support to the rector and parishioners.

Through our worship, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, helps us understand His Word, and equips us to do His work. All people are welcome into our community of Christian faith.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF ASCENSION**

#### ***The Formative Years: 1980 – 2002***

In 1980, 25 members of the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Winter Garden, Florida, felt the call to start a new mission in the Windermere-Bay Hill area. Bishop William Folwell assigned Rev. Warren Richardson to assist in this effort. In May 1980, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension was formally installed by the Bishop as a new mission.

Worship services were initially held in Windermere Town Hall, then moved to Turkey Lake Park and were also held in Windermere Elementary School. A former 14-acre pine tree farm on the west side of Apopka-Vineland Road was located as a building site for the church. The church now stands on seven acres of that site. The southern seven acres were later sold by the Episcopal Diocesan Board to the Lutheran Church.

Rev. Martin Nelson became our first full-time priest in August 1981. Under his leadership, the first mission statement, "To Know Christ and Make Him Known to Others", was adopted.

Rev. Ronald Hooks was called to be the second priest in 1985. Church of the Ascension was elevated to "parish" status during his tenure. Under his leadership, two worship services were established: 8:30 traditional and 10:30 contemporary. Small group involvement developed, a Healing Ministry was birthed, and church ministries expanded as the church grew. A dedicated youth minister was instrumental in building a strong youth program. During this era, the current mission statement, "To Make Disciples Who Make Disciples", was adopted and remains the mission of the church today.



*ORIGINAL SANCTUARY*



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**Growth and Transformation: 2003 – 2020**



*CURRENT SANCTUARY*

evangelism were now the cornerstones of the parish. During this time, Church of the Ascension was a strong participant in the life of the Diocese of Central Florida, as the rector and several members served on Diocesan Council and the Standing Committee. Members of the congregation, along with the clergy, attended diocesan retreats, meetings and conventions. Several past members of Ascension were called to ordained ministry serving the wider Episcopal Church today. We are living our mission statement, “To Make Disciples Who Make Disciples.”

In 2003, Rev. James Sorvillo, Sr. was called to be our next priest. During this time, new families were joining the church, and the need to accommodate this growth was apparent. A prayer and discernment process for building a new sanctuary began. A committee was established to work with the rector and architect to design plans for the new building. The congregation participated in a building campaign and fundraising activities.

The new sanctuary for the Church of the Ascension was completed and dedicated to the Glory of God on December 24, 2008. This sacred, beautiful new space allowed the congregation to flourish and grow even further. Small group involvement increased. Bible studies, retreats, identifying spiritual gifts and



Over the following years, the Building and Grounds Committee members focused on campus improvements. The parking lot was repaved. The former sanctuary was transformed into a parish hall with an updated kitchen. Flooring was replaced in the classroom/meeting room wing of the church facilities. A new children’s playground was completed. The grounds were completely redone according to the landscaping plan that accompanied the new building expansion. The church’s Memorial Garden was renovated to become a peaceful, beautiful space dedicated to honor the memory of parishioners who have passed away. The Memorial Garden is a special visitation site for families whose loved ones are interred there.

As congregation growth continued, a new music minister joined the staff. Upon his arrival, his first mission was to research and select a new organ suitable for the beautiful sanctuary. At the beginning of 2010, a fundraising effort by the congregation was undertaken and resulted in a new organ being installed in October 2010. Under his leadership, Ascension choirs and instrumental ensembles presented opportunities for



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children, youth and adults to participate in this ministry. Music programs were developed for the Lenten and Advent Seasons, and the enhanced Music Ministry took our worship experience to a deeper spiritual level.

With an increase in membership came an expansion of our children/youth programs and the Women's Ministry, and many spiritual growth opportunities were offered for newcomers. An assistant rector was added to the staff in 2015 to enhance our ministries, especially the Youth and Families Program.

The Order of St. Luke Healing Ministry was started with seven members in 2019. Within one year, the ministry grew to sixteen members with the focus of teaching Jesus' healing love to believers. The passion of this new ministry was exciting to the Ascension family. Once again, we were following the Great Commission.

In September 2019, Church of the Ascension commissioned fifty congregants to give birth to All Souls Church and formed this mission under the leadership of our assistant rector. "To Make Disciples Who Make Disciples" took on a whole new meaning as we were blessed to start this church plant. We were now a mother church. All Souls has begun the process of becoming an organized mission, which is in process for Diocesan Convention in January 2022.

The Covid-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, and in-person worship services were suspended. The clergy and lay leaders pivoted our worship to spiritually-engaging virtual services to include Morning Prayer, Sunday worship and bi-monthly healing services. These services kept our congregation engaged and committed. We have also remained connected in community virtually by continuing Small Groups, Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, Seder Meal and other essential meetings. God has used this time to bring us closer to Him and to each other and challenge us to reach out in ways we never even thought of.

### **WHAT ASCENSION LOOKS LIKE TODAY**

Ascension has resumed our two weekly Sunday worship services, and we are operating in compliance with all guidelines set forth by the Diocese of Central Florida. Our worship services can accommodate up to 50% capacity in our sanctuary with overflow available in our parish hall. Our 10:30 Sunday service is being livestreamed via our website and Facebook. Our Order of Saint Luke (OSL) Healing Service takes place on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month and continues to be offered exclusively via livestream.

During the pandemic, many virtual opportunities were created and remain for the benefit of our parish, including Morning Prayer via Zoom on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Many of our home groups continue to meet, either via Zoom or in-person with social distancing measures at the discretion of each group. The Women's Encouragement Group meets via Zoom on Thursday mornings. These offerings help us remain connected with a small-church family feel and encourage our mission "To Make Disciples who Make Disciples".

We are looking forward to reestablishing our children's ministry programming and hosting in-person Vacation Bible School in the summer of 2021. The Parenting Experience Co-op Preschool ([www.theparentingexperience.com](http://www.theparentingexperience.com)) is currently enrolling for the 2021-2022 school year. For almost 30 years, this preschool has offered a unique play-based and parent-involved learning environment and has consistently won awards as a top preschool in the Orlando area.



Ascension is known for our hospitality. We look forward to continuing our Greeter and Newcomer ministries to welcome visitors and new members in our ever-growing locale. As we welcome such a diverse body of believers, ranging in denominational backgrounds and spiritual maturity, our Ascension 101 program provides an excellent introduction to our community and the Anglican tradition.

We are blessed by many active ministries and look forward to God's continued movement and work in our midst as we grow in the coming years.

### LITURGICAL MINISTRIES

- Altar Guild
- Acolytes
- LEV/LEM
- Choirs and Musical Ensembles
- Ushers and Greeters

### PARISH LIFE MINISTRIES

- Ascension 101
- A/V Ministry
- Building and Grounds
- Care Ministry
- Children's Ministry
- Coffee Hour/Hospitality Ministry
- Daughters of the King
- Meals Ministry
- Memorial Garden
- Men's Ministry
- Momentum Teen Ministry
- Music Ministry
- Newcomers Ministry
- Order of St. Luke (OSL) Healing Ministry
- Prayer Ministry
- Veteran's Ministry
- Women's Ministry

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- Home Groups
- Rector's Forum
- Sunday School
- Women's Encouragement Group

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- American Heritage Girls
- Boy Scouts
- Co-op Preschool





## LOOKING AHEAD

### **A Welcoming, Active Parish**

While Ascension is diverse in age and background, consistent trends emerged for what brought us together at Ascension – and what keeps us coming back. In our recent survey, parishioners reflected on our friendly community and the warm, genuine welcome they consistently receive. They also appreciate the general atmosphere experienced at Ascension.

From a spiritual perspective, our members value our focus on biblical preaching and teaching, the Anglican traditions and liturgy, and the palpable presence of the Holy Spirit that exists on our campus.

Members of our Ascension family are proud of all our ministry endeavors and grateful for the engagement in our parish. A handful of ministries emerged as being central to our worship and thriving community, including:

- Music Ministry
- Home Groups
- Order of St. Luke (OSL) Healing Ministry
- Children's Ministry
- Greeter/Newcomer Ministry

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***“Ascension is a true example of the diverse Christian body, and we immediately felt like part of the family.”***

***“I have stayed at Ascension because of its loving atmosphere and all the opportunities provided to encourage the deepening of my relationship with God.”***

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### **What We're Looking Forward To:**

In our recent survey, a wide range of goals emerged as being important for Ascension in the next few years. However, the overwhelming majority of parishioners support continuing to build on Ascension's key strengths and carrying them forward:

- Consistent, year-over-year growth of our parish and ASA
- Improving our children's and youth ministries
- Further developing as a Christ-centered, authentic and loving family environment
- Remaining open to all believers with a focus on Bible-based teaching and discipleship
- Expanding outreach to the community
- Continuing to offer a blend of traditional and contemporary worship styles

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***“A living and dynamic relationship with the Lord, and a heart for leading others to grow in their tradition with Jesus through teaching scripture and leading by example.”***

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As a parish, we are excited to welcome a new rector and are united in the primary traits we are seeking in a new leader:

- A rector who is able to **relate, communicate and engage with our parishioners well**
- An individual whose **personal relationship with God and scripture-based lifestyle is reflected in his/her biblical teaching and preaching**
- A person who can shepherd our parish with **empathy and loving compassion**
- A dynamic individual who can bring a **new energy to the church community**
- A rector with a **passion for healing**

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***“A balance of vision for the future and immediate action in the present. Someone who sees the direction the church must take for growth and someone who can inject a new energy and direction to our congregation.”***

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## **OUR LOCATION**

Central Florida is more than just one of the leading tourist destinations in the country. It is also a melting pot of cultures, attracting people from across the globe. This mixture of diversity is reflected at the Church of the Ascension as well, with our congregation calling this part of Florida home for many reasons. Just minutes from world-famous theme parks, our church and the surrounding communities are perfectly located with access to top-notch public and private schools, including many higher education options with multiple universities and colleges making their home in the area.



*MEMORIAL GARDEN*

With year-round sunshine, we are just a quick car ride away from spending the day in the surf of the Atlantic Ocean or on the white sands of the Gulf of Mexico. Beyond beaches, nature is on full display in our area with numerous parks, gardens and preserves. For sports fans, we are home to the Orlando Magic, Orlando City Soccer Club, and Orlando Pride NWSL team, as well as numerous golf courses and lakes. Central Florida is also home to a vibrant arts community, featuring state-of-the-art performance facilities, museums, theaters and endless entertainment options.

Even with all of the exciting things to do that come with living in a vacation destination like Central Florida, there are still many small-town amenities to enjoy. With local farmer's markets, unique shops, restaurants, and seasonal festivals, you and your family will quickly feel at home in our community.



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## **CLOSING**

Church of the Ascension is ready to move forward and face the challenges ahead! We are excited that our new rector will be enthusiastic about our strong Music Ministry, Healing Ministry, Greeter/Newcomer Ministry, and home group experience and enhancing our Children's Ministry. In our changing world, we envision a continued virtual presence to connect with those who have a hunger to be in community with God but are unable to physically attend church services and activities. We would like a rector who will support outreach programs and events that will provide opportunities for us to help others while promoting church growth. We look forward to having our new rector partner with our Stewardship Committee to utilize our time, talents, and treasure for the growth of God's Kingdom.

We envision a teacher and preacher who gives us the knowledge of God's Word and the confidence to live and share with others what we learn. We pray for a rector who communicates with our diverse Christian community in a loving, compassionate manner, while exemplifying a personal relationship with God and living a scripture-based lifestyle.

We are confident the Holy Spirit is speaking even now to the heart of our next rector. We pray that as you seek your next call from God that you will listen to the Lord. If the Lord brings you our way, we look forward to meeting you and weaving our future together with your gifts, energy and passion. If the Lord directs elsewhere, we pray that He places you where you can serve Him best. Please join with us in prayer that God's perfect will is done!

If you are interested in applying for the position as Rector of Church of the Ascension, Orlando, please follow the guidelines on the Diocese of Central Florida website – <https://cfdiocese.org/vacancy-procedures-for-clergy>. Please note: (a) There are 3 questions to be completed and returned; (b) You must give permission for background checks; and (c) You must sign off on Diocesan Canon XVI that you are willing to comply with Diocesan standards for our clergy. You may submit a letter to Canon Scott Holcombe at [sholcombe@cfdiocese.org](mailto:sholcombe@cfdiocese.org) explaining your interest in Church of the Ascension and attaching a recent copy of your OTM. Please do not contact the parish directly.

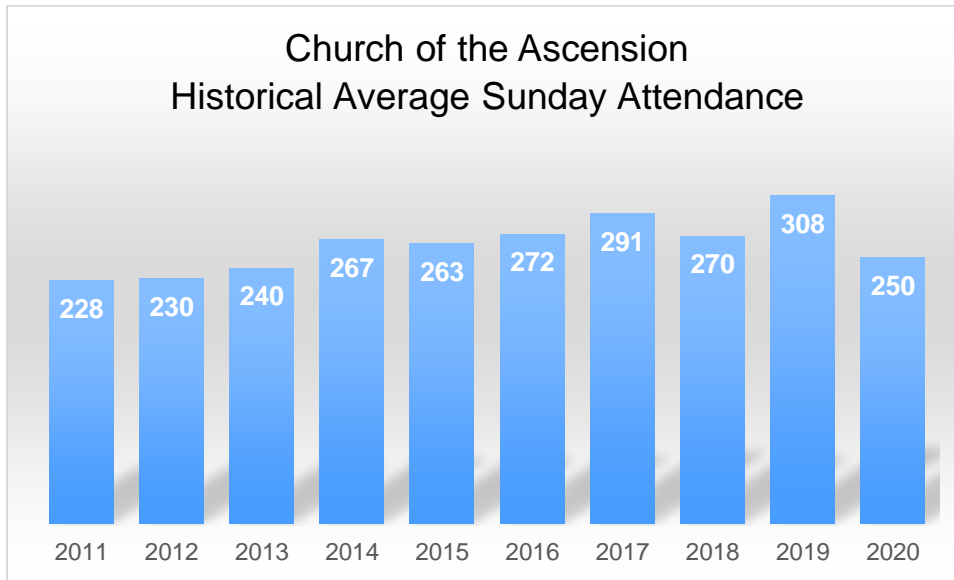


From Messiah to Ascension, from Ascension to All Souls



**APPENDIX**

**ASA Data**

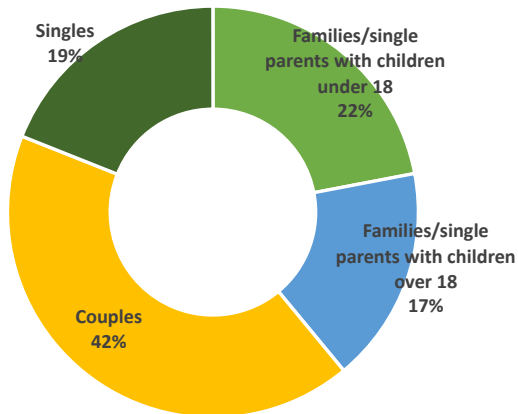


- 1) All Data retrieved from submitted Parochial Reports
- 2) ASA for 2020 is based on the average ASA for January – March prior to COVID 19 lockdowns.
- 3) 2020 reflects departure of 50 members due to All Souls Mission plant

**Congregational Demographics**

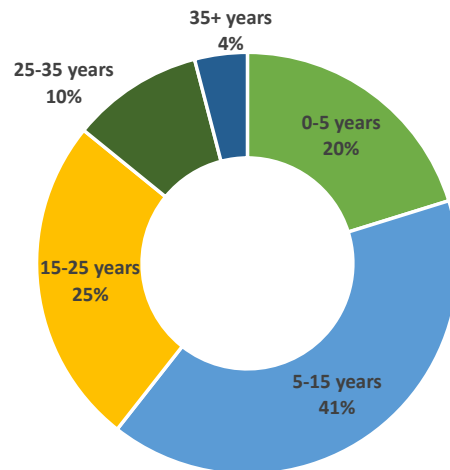
**Church of the Ascension Household Demographics**

Based on March 2021 Survey



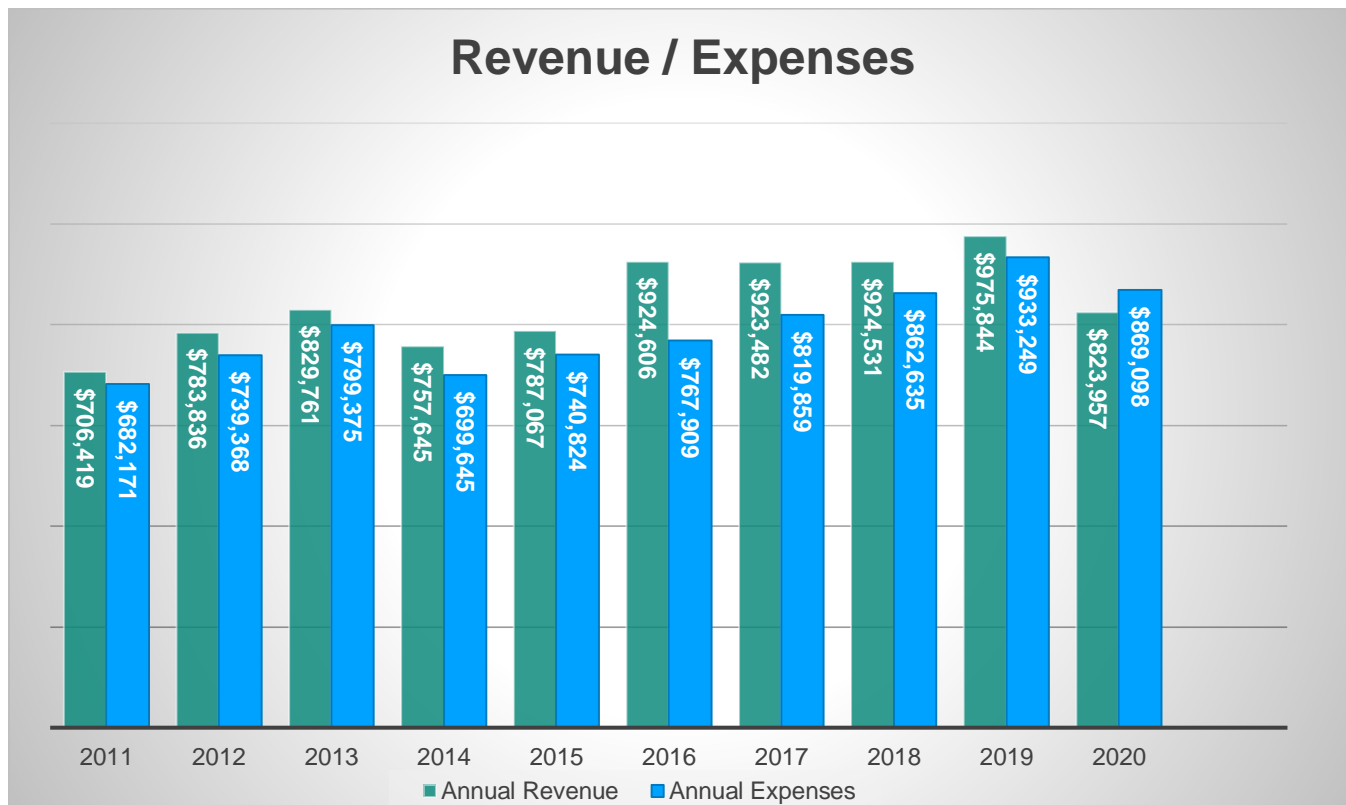
**Church of the Ascension Length of Membership**

Based on March 2021 Survey





## Financial Overview



- 1) All Data retrieved from submitted Parochial Reports
- 2) 2020 Revenue does not include the PPP Loan of \$58,527
- 3) 2020 reflects departure of 50 members due to All Souls Mission plant



**Church Administration**

**VESTRY**

Erika Johnson, Sr. Warden  
 Mark Peebles, Jr., Jr. Warden

Jeffery Arnold  
 Mary Goracke  
 Amy McClintock\*  
 Gavin Patrick\*  
 Kathy Roach  
 Lisa Swetitsch  
 Joe Warren  
 Clay Williams  
 Sherrell Wilson\*

**CLERGY & STAFF**

Erika Johnson, Presiding Officer  
 Rev. Sara Oxley, Priest-in-Charge  
 Rev. Matt Ainsley, Vicar of All Souls Mission\*  
 Rev. Bob Johnson, Associate for Liturgy and Music  
 Rev. Debby Buechner, Deacon  
 Rev. Rusty Hazelrigg, Deacon  
 Rev. Sarah Bronos, Retired Associate for Healing Ministry  
 Rev. Jim Kurtz, Retired Associate  
 Rev. Roger Miller, Retired Associate

Siju John, Children's Coordinator  
 Pattie Range, Parish Administrator  
 Doug Webber, Financial Administrator  
 Michele Gladding, Co-op Preschool Director  
 Michael Ferrantelli, Sexton

\* All Souls Mission

**Ascension's Search Committee Members and Membership Tenure**

Kathy Roach, Chair	11 years
Joan Allard, Chaplain	27 years
Jeffery Arnold	23 years
Hugh Bryan	12 years
Jason Gibson	5 years
Jessica Jackson	6 years
Margaret Roberts	13 years
Ray Schalk	15 years
Stephanie Soper	10 years
Tom Swetitsch	23 years
Joe Warren	30 years
Clay Williams	5 years



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*"To our new rector, WELCOME HOME"*