

## CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

# Letter from the Rector: Listening to God and to one another in the month of May

How do we hear from God? How do we hear from one another? These are important questions – always, and especially before making major decisions or embarking on new ventures. The short answer to these two questions is: “By listening!”

In the November edition of *Ascent*, I shared some of our preliminary thinking about our buildings and the essential repairs that are needed and the possibilities of making exciting improvements. (See sidebar.)

Since then, work behind the scenes has continued. In March the new vestry went away for a day retreat to listen, to pray, and to begin brainstorming how God might be calling us. At its meeting in April, the vestry voted unanimously to move forward with a parish wide feasibility study concerning our buildings and much needed repairs and improvements.

The vestry has also spent time thinking and praying about the huge potential we have to reach out to our neighbors with the Good News of the Gospel and how we might enter new mission partnerships to further this. Since returning from my Sabbatical last year including time at GAFCON in Jerusalem and the January visioning trip to Thailand and Singapore, I am excited and convicted, like never before, by the needs and opportunities for mission to the ends of the earth – in our very neighborhood!

We have hired both the architectural and urban design firm, Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, and capital campaign consulting firm, James D. Klote and Associates, to undertake with us an initial feasibility study to help us through this next phase of discernment.

For us to listen well, I believe there are three things we need to do: Pause, Reflect, and Respond.

### **Pause:**

We pause when we take time to be still, to be quiet and to pray. In the May *Ascent*, Mother Andrea has written more about how we can pray, reminding us that, in the words of Henri Nouwen, “*Prayer is first of all listening to God.*” Some of this pausing and listening can be done on our own. We need also to do this together. The invitation from the start is for us **together** to listen to God, seek his will, discern his calling, and then to do what he calls us to do.

### **Reflect:**

For four weeks, beginning May 12, the congregation is invited to listen together - to God and to one another. We will use our best critical faculties as we do this and we will have the help of professional consultants to help us engage in this process as we reflect on the needs and opportunities that are upon us as a congregation.

### **What Needs to be Done?**

We have known for more than ten years that serious and substantial work needs to be done to our buildings. Specifically, much of the stonework needs to be repointed, many of the window frames and some of the roofs need to be replaced or restored, and there are various other deferred maintenance issues in need of attention. This is a big project.

Additionally, anyone who has been to the Parish Hall between the services on a Sunday morning knows that our hall is full! This is a great “problem” to have, but it does need to be addressed.

How might we make the hall bigger? Is there a way to lessen or remove the congestion in the curved corridor that connects the hall to the Nave? How can we provide better restroom facilities? What else should we be doing to put all our facilities into the kind of shape they need to be to serve the mission and ministry we are being called to do?

These are some of the exciting questions that now need to be answered.

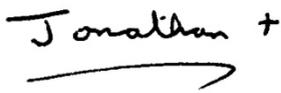
Our desire is that everyone who is a part of our church family will engage in this process. To that end, we are inviting every adult and interested young person to attend and participate in a one-hour meeting to hear a brief presentation, to give their feedback, and to listen to one another.

To enable everyone to engage in this we are setting up not one meeting but 12. Don't panic, we are asking only that you attend one meeting! But the same presentation and opportunity to reflect together will be offered at each meeting. There will be gatherings each Sunday (May 12, 19, 26, June 2) after both morning services and there will be additional meetings during the intervening weeks.

### **Respond:**

The vestry will be meeting in June prayerfully to consider how we are being called to respond to the needs, opportunities, feedback and all we will have been hearing and discerning together during this month of listening. At that meeting, the vestry will be asked to take a decision as to what we should do going forward.

Yours in Christ,



Jonathan N. Millard (Rector)  
Church of the Ascension



Please plan to attend one of the following Listening Groups. Childcare for infants – 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be provided.

Sunday, May 12 after 9am service (*New Catacombs*)

Sunday, May 12 after 11am service (*New Catacombs; sandwiches provided*)

Saturday, May 18 at Noon following the Ascension Work Morning (*Hunt Rooms; pizza provided*)

Sunday, May 19 after 9am service (*New Catacombs*)

Sunday, May 19 after 11am service (*New Catacombs; sandwiches provided*)

Thursday, May 23 at 7pm (*Hunt Rooms*)

Sunday, May 26 after 11am service (*New Catacombs; sandwiches provided*)

Tuesday, May 28 at 7pm (*Hunt Rooms*)

Thursday, May 30 at 7pm (*Hunt Rooms*)

Saturday, June 1 at 2pm (*Hunt Rooms*)

Sunday, June 2 after 9am service (*New Catacombs*)

Sunday, June 2 after 11am service (*New Catacombs; sandwiches provided*)