



ASCENSION PLEDGE 2012

The annual stewardship campaign continued Sunday, November 13, with parishioner LaVerne Saunders sharing with us why Church of the Ascension is important in her life to the end that her remarks, and those of three other parishioners, will prompt us to ponder why this Church is important in our own lives. By the Feast of Christ the King, November 20th, the Treasurer hopes to receive your pledge card which expresses your commitment to make a tangible offering of support for the work of this Church in 2012. LaVerne Saunders' remarks follow.



When Father Fertig asked me to speak about Stewardship, I wanted to decline. I felt a talk from me would be like casting the first stone when at least 100 or more should be coming my way. He said to speak about my experience here at Ascension. As I prayed on it my mind took me back to my Anglo-Catholic beginnings.

I am a cradle Anglican. I am not bragging; it is just a fact. However, when I was very young, about five or so, my older brother and I went to whatever Church the older kids took us to on Sunday. My Father worked two jobs six days a week and my Mother took care of him and my baby brother on Sunday morning, while preparing breakfast for us to eat after Church. One constant, no matter where we went, was that my mother gave me five or ten cents to put into the collection plate. That is about .50 or \$1.00 in today's, economy. I could not ascertain why I should give those strangers "my" money and sometimes used the money to buy what I needed: Candy.

One Sunday, one of the older kids took us to an Episcopal Church, All Soul's in Harlem, in New York City. The moment I walked in, I knew I wanted to be there every Sunday. I felt something special was happening there. I felt at home. The smells, the bells, the vested sacred ministers, the Altar party ... it was a comfort. The music, the adults, the other kids ... I loved it all. I told my mother about my experience and that All Souls was where I wanted to go each week. She told me about my Baptism and that All Souls was the same type of Church in which my Father was also raised. I had the connection from birth. Who knew? My pleas must have been convincing. She made sure we went to All Souls every Sunday after that—even when it meant she walked us there and picked us up after Church.

At All Souls the kids stayed in Church from the Introit to just before the Offertory. Then, we went to Sunday school. The first thing we did in Sunday school was take up the Sunday school collection which one of the older boys took upstairs and presented at the Altar with the regular collection.

The Sunday school teacher told us we were obligated to help to support the Church and Sunday school. It was our way of thanking God for our Church and our School. I loved that place so much, the Church, the School and the people, I never kept my Offering for myself. I thought about it a few times, after all I was a child. But I could not, due to my love for the Church ... and probably the fear that my Mother might find out.

When I became an adult in the Sixties, my Church life was like it was before I found All Souls. I was not happy anywhere. No one had to take me by the hand, but no place—not even other Episcopal churches—caused me to return or made me feel committed to their survival. Then my employer assigned me to Chicago in 1976.

I lived on Dearborn a couple of blocks away and knew I lived near three Episcopal churches. I had not made up my mind to which one I would go, that first Sunday in Chicago and went downstairs to buy a newspaper. I saw a man with two little girls in "Sunday Clothes" and I followed them. Why? I do not know. But, they came to Ascension. And, so did I.

The moment I walked in, I knew I wanted to be here every Sunday. It was 1950 all over again. The smells, the bells, the vested sacred ministers, the Altar party...it was a comfort. Clearly, everything occurred to the glory of God. Even the building, and of course the music, it was all so welcoming and spiritual. Keep in mind the Choir was on vacation, of which I was unaware. And, of course the friendly people ... I loved it all. I found a home.

My job required regular travel and I could not attend every Sunday. I had met a lot of people and I was making friends. So, I should not have been surprised when I received a call from a parishioner who called to make sure I was OK because he had not seen me for three weeks. He knew I lived alone and had no family in Chicago. I could not picture my caller, with whom I would later develop a friendship, but I was overwhelmed that a parishioner cared enough to inquire about me and my safety. It showed me that Ascension parishioners lived not just by words but also by deeds.

Ascension was here for me when my brain surgery caused me to become so depressed I could not stop crying one weekday. I came here and sat midway in the pews with the Church empty and just cried. After a while, the most heavenly music began to emanate from that beautiful Organ. Unbeknownst to me I was here during David's rehearsal time. The music became a part of me. It was solace to my soul. I felt about as close to God as I could get. I stopped crying. I survived that day. And, I know this place, meaning the building, the people, its spirit and its relationship with God, is why I survived my stroke, the brain surgery, and that great day of depression.

It has not just been the dark times that make me appreciate the haven God gave to me in Ascension; there have been so many good and special times in addition to the worship. The Church trips to Ravinia, bus trips to Milwaukee Zoo and German Restaurants, Mardi Gras Dinners and Shows. I still love our picnics. Most recently, the summer Thursday events gave me great pleasure.

As most of you know, Ted and I married here twenty-two years ago. If you ask him or me, we both will tell you, Sunday is our favorite day of the week because we get to come here and worship with you.

With this love I have for Ascension, I knew when I came here I had to support it to ensure its survival, just as my Sunday school teacher told me those many years ago. But, unfortunately, my stewardship at times has been somewhat like my early childhood giving: inconsistent or not indicative of what I could give. I know I should give more on all fronts. Each year I try and often do, do better. So, I can only ask of you, my brothers and sisters, that you pray on stewardship as I have but be more successful than I have been over time, moving away from 1950 and 1960 giving and attitudes; offering more of yourself in time, worship and money. If you are looking for somewhere to start, Tuesday Evening Prayer will be a good place to begin. Come join me and the Lord. We are often the only ones here. Thank you.

