



## ASCENSION PLEDGE 2012

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*The annual stewardship campaign continued Sunday, November 20, with parishioner DiAnne Walsh 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 this past Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, the Treasurer hopes to have received 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.*



Thank you, Father, for giving me the opportunity to tell my story. I came to Ascension 35 years ago as a bride to be. We had been told by our good friend, Father Wells, that if we wanted a church wedding, then we needed to go to church. He thought that we would find a home at Ascension and it would appeal to me, the cradle Episcopalian, and Jim, the lapsed Roman Catholic. We began to attend church regularly—after all, I wanted a church wedding.

Father Wells was right. We found a home and in fact, we found a family. We took part in the worship and activities of the parish and made many friends. We rejoiced with each other and mourned as we lost those taken too early. And here we baptized our daughter Courtney. The people who make up our extended family we met here.

I've learned many things at Ascension ... how to plan and cook a sit-down dinner for 150; that, when ironing the small altar cloths they need to be folded in thirds; how to chant the

parting of the Red Sea at Easter Vigil; how to teach young people about God; how to build a columbarium; and what it takes to maintain this holy but old place; and best of all, continue to learn more about my faith.

But I love this church because at Ascension I became a Christian. I learned what it meant to practice my faith each day, not just on Sunday: what it means to be part of a Christian community, warts and all. Yes, we do not always agree with each other, and sometimes our feelings are hurt, or we do not like how things are done. But each Sunday we find ourselves back in our favorite pew, worshipping with each other—because we are a Christian community and we know in our heart that in this place we feel God's presence.

While I was thinking about what I would say, I realized that while I was gone for twelve years I have been back for twelve years. I did not lose my faith in that time, just did not practice. My friend Ann Cassidy asked if I would come to the healing mass before my mastectomy. If not for me, then for her. I did, and realized that I had missed this most holy place. After I healed, I returned. But like Doug, I decided I would worship but not get involved. Not this time. I told Ann not to ask me to do anything other than attend mass. Some of my old friends were still here and I was meeting new ones. It took a couple of years but before long, I was once again participating in the life of the parish. Since returning, I realize that my faith is stronger, not only for attending mass and for participating in the life of this parish, but by the many classes I've attended. We have excellent teachers here who share their knowledge and their faith, and each of you shares your knowledge and faith when we are in class.

The past year and a half has been difficult for me as I traveled to Florida every month caring for my parents and as I lost my Dad in February and as I moved my Mom back to Chicago and saw her settled. Sometimes I can barely bring myself to smile or say hi ... which is not like me. But once I have knelt in my favorite pew and attended mass, by the end I am better and I know I can carry on. Because of God and each of you ... who have continued to say hi and ask if I am okay and have prayed for me and who have made my Mom feel so welcome. For that, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

For the last four weeks, you have listened to Scott, Doug, LaVerne and I tell our story about why we love Ascension. I hope by hearing our stories you have thought about your **own** story and why you love and support this holy place. We begin a new church year next Sunday and a new calendar year on January 1<sup>st</sup>. May we continue our journey of faith together.

Thank you for listening.

