



The Episcopal Church of the Ascension

Hickory, NC

November 23, 2025—10:30 a.m. | Last Sunday after Pentecost: Christ the King
+ The Holy Eucharist +

Prelude

Hymn #450 “All hail the power of Jesus’ Name”

CORONATION

Opening Acclamation

BCP 355

Celebrant: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise “Glory to God”

S-280

1. Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and
peace to his peo - ple on earth. 2. Lord God, heaven - ly
King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we
give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. 3. Lord Je - sus
Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, 4. you
take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy
on us; 5. you are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re -
ceive our prayer. 6. For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One,
you a - lone are the Lord, 7. you a - lone are the Most

Continued next page



Music: Robert Powell (b. 1932), rev. Setting: Copyright © Church Publishing Inc.

The Collect of the Day

BCP 357

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Old Testament Reading

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

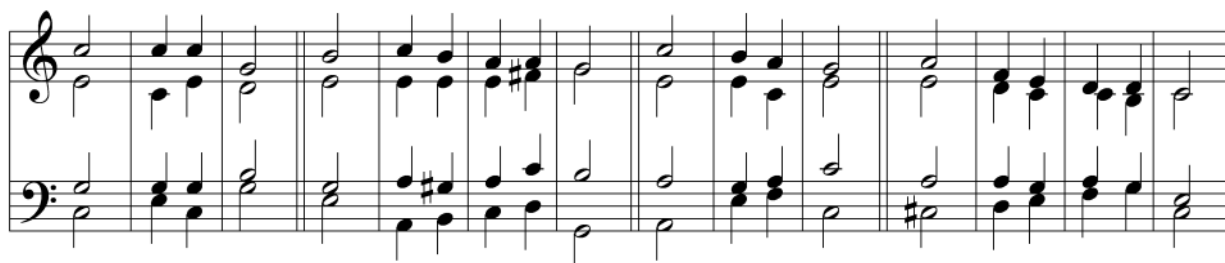
Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 46

Deus noster refugium

*The people the verses in **bold** type. The choir sings the verses in regular type.*



- 1 God is our /refuge and /strength, *
a very /present /help in /trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the /earth be /moved, *
and though the mountains be toppled /into the /depths of the /sea;
- 3 **Though its waters /rage and /foam, ***
and though the mountains /tremble /at its /tumult.
- 4 **The LORD of /hosts is /with us; ***
the God of /Jacob /is our /stronghold.

- 5 There is a river whose streams make glad the /city of /God, *
the holy habi-/tation of the /Möst /High.
- 6 God is in the midst of her;
she shall not be /over-/thrown; *
God shall /help her at the /break of /day.
- 7 **The nations make much ado, and the /kingdoms are /shaken; ***
God has spoken, and the /earth shall /melt a-/way.
- 8 **The LORD of /hosts is /with us; ***
the God of /Jacob /is our /stronghold.
- 9 Come now and look upon the /works of the /LORD , *
what awesome /things he has /done on /earth.
- 10 It is he who makes war to cease in /all the /world; *
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear,
and /burns the /shields with /fire.
- 11 **"Be still, then, and know that /I am /God; ***
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be ex-/alted /in the /earth."
- 12 **The LORD of /hosts is /with us; ***
the God of /Jacob /is our /stronghold.

The New Testament Reading

Colossians 1:11-20

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers--all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sequence Hymn #483 "The head that once was crowned with thorns" (sts. 1-3)

ST. MAGNUS

The Gospel

Luke 23:33-43

Lector: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. The people stood by, watching Jesus on the cross; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over

him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Lector: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sequence Hymn #483 "The head that once was crowned with thorns" (sts. 4-6) ST. MAGNUS

The Sermon

The Rev. Michael Alford

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The congregation may kneel as able.

Leader: In peace, let us pray to the Lord, saying, “Lord, have mercy”.

For the holy Church of God, that it may be filled with truth and love, and be found without fault at the day of your coming, we pray to you, O Lord.

Here and after every petition the People response: **Lord, have mercy.**

For Sean our Presiding Bishop, for José our own Bishop, for all bishops and other ministers, and for all the holy people of God, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who fear God and believe in you, Lord Christ, that our divisions may cease, and that all may be one as you and the Father are one, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness it may preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and forbearance may grow among nations and peoples, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those in positions of public trust, especially Donald our President, Josh our Governor, and Hank our Mayor, that they may serve justice, and promote the dignity and freedom of every person, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this congregation, that we may be delivered from hardness of heart, and show forth your glory in all that we do, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who have died in the communion of your Church, and those whose faith is known to you alone, that, with all the saints, they may have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief, but life eternal, we pray to you, O Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life to Christ our God.

To you, O Lord our God.

Silence

The Celebrant adds a concluding Collect.

Confession of Sins

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor. *Silence may be kept.*

Celebrant and People: Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Peace & Announcements

Stewardship Moment

Bob Meek

+ THE HOLY COMMUNION +

Offertory Sentence

Offertory Anthem “Jordan”

William Billings (1746-1800)

*There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasure banishes pain.*

*Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood
While Jordan rolled between. —Isaac Watts*

Doxology

OLD 100TH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Great Thanksgiving

BCP 361

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

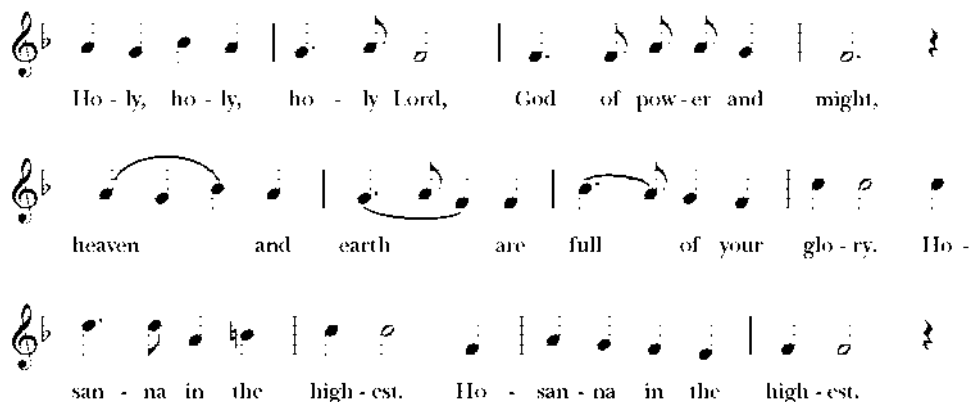
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. *The Celebrant adds the Proper Preface.*

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

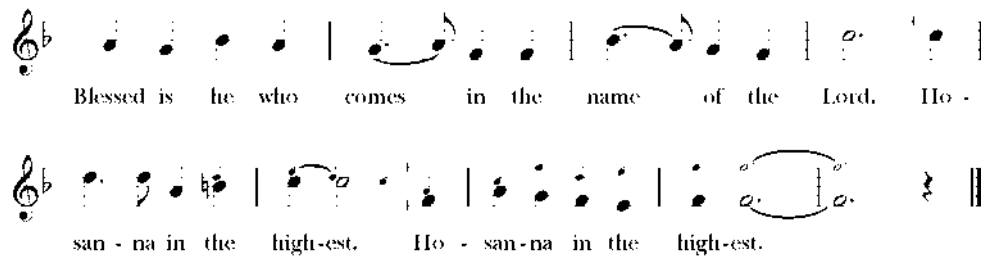
Sanctus “Holy, holy, holy Lord”

S-125



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Continued next page



Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread. A period of silence is kept.

Fraction Anthem “Christ our Passover”

S-155

This setting is not used in Lent.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Christ our Pass - o - ver is

sac - ri - ficed for us; There-fore let us keep the feast.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

All are welcome to receive a blessing if you prefer not to receive communion. Gluten-free wafers are available upon request. Consecrated bread and wine are then distributed to all who desire. While at the altar, you will be given a wafer of bread. Wine is available in two ways:

Common Cup—Drink from the large chalice (it will come first).

Intinction—Dip the bread into the wine in the small chalice (it will come last). Do not allow your fingers to touch the wine.

In One Kind—You may choose to receive the bread only, which is equal to receiving the bread and the wine.

Hymns During Communion

#328 “Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord”

SONG 46

#467 “Sing, my soul, his wondrous love”

ST. BEES

Post Communion Prayer

Celebrant and People: Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Hymn #494 “Crown him with many crowns”

DIADEMATA

Dismissal

BCP 366

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

*The altar flowers are given to the glory of God,
and in loving memory of Sharon Goodwin,
given by Jim Goodwin.*

WORSHIP ROSTER

Sunday, November 23

Crucifer: Nancy Linker
OT Reader/Chalice: Townes Wessels
NT Reader: Sue Shoffner
Ushers: Tony Fugate, David Kilby
Children's Chapel: Erin Schuermeyer,
Gillian Cochran
Breakfast: Karen M., Ann W., & Andrea C.
Counters: Kate Esch, Kathryn Carter
Vestry Contact: Mary Elizabeth Geitner

Sunday, November 30

Crucifer: Kathryn Carter
OT Reader/Chalice: Sue Shoffner
NT Reader: Tamara Morgan
Ushers: Robert Miller, Sarah Peters
Children's Chapel: —
Breakfast: —
Counters: Stephen Williamson, Bob Meek
Vestry Contact: Mary Elizabeth Geitner

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Please pray for** Young Smith, George Gross, Pat Jones, Claudia Earle, Juanita Isenhower, Jean Atkin, Ingrid Dobereiner, the Evans family, Jordan Robbins, Mary Snooks, kc Gunter, Sara Ruth Halperin, Sue Huffman, The Sigmon Family, Jean Bolton, Martha Clark, Dan Meyer, John Isenhower, Liz Beard, Wendle Jeralds, Bobby Regenbogen, Dayle and Linda Smith, the Cecil Family, and Alice Turner
- **The 2026 Stewardship Drive is underway:** You can use the 2026 pledge link on Ascension's webpage, the QR code provided in the bulletin or you can email your 2026 pledge commitment to our bookkeeper, Diane Vezmar, at financeascension@gmail.com. You can also return the pledge card mailed to you or pick up one in the narthex or parish hall. As of November 19th, we have received 43 pledge commitments for a total of \$224,520 in commitments. This leaves a shortfall of (\$182,245) to meet our budget. Please consider turning in your 2026 pledge commitment today.
- **2025 Pledge Update** Pledge payments received through November 19th are \$238,421; which leaves a shortfall of (\$78,006) from the **Annual** 2025 pledge commitments of \$316,427. Please keep your pledge payments current so we can meet our 2025 financial obligations. Pledge payments can be made securely online at ascensionhickory.org/give, through automated payments with your bank, or mailed to the church office. If you have any questions, please email Diane Vezmar at financeascension@gmail.com.
- **No Wednesday evening Healing Service on** November 26 due to the Thanksgiving holiday.
- **The Vestry has established a nominating committee** to solicit names for consideration as candidates for Vestry. Please let Kathryn Carter, Dee Hall, or Erin Schuermeyer know if you would like to nominate someone. Nominations will be open until December 14th.
- **Exodus Homes Honor Cards** are now available for purchase in the Parish Hall. The cost is \$5 and 100 % of every donation goes directly to funding the mission. See Kathryn Carter for more details.
- **Theology for Thirsty Souls—Monday, November 24 at 7:00 PM** All are welcome to gather with



in the parlor with Michael Deckard for a casual theological discussion on *The Church and Culture*.

- **The Office will be Closed** on Thursday, November 27 and Friday, November 28 for the Thanksgiving Holiday.
- **Please help the Hickory Soup Kitchen** assist our food insecure neighbors by donating any of the following items: canned green beans, canned corn, canned sweet potatoes, canned fruits, canned fried onions, canned meats (chicken, tuna, ham), cream of mushroom soup, and boxed stuffing mixes.
- **There will be no Children's Chapel or breakfast** served on Sunday, November 30.
- **"Living Well Through Advent" Adult Formation Returns Sundays from 9:30-10:15 AM** Adult Formation classes return November 30 featuring our Advent Devotional series. Advent Devotional booklets are available at no charge in the office.
- **Thursday Morning Book Study** On December 4 we will begin a four week Advent study of angels from 10:00—11:30 AM in the large conference room.
- **A Vintage Christmas Bazaar: Sunday, December 7, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM** The Ascension Arts and Crafts Group would like to invite you to join with them during the season of giving by donating handcrafted items, art, baked goods, homemade jams/relishes, and gently used home décor items. Donations need to be priced and placed in the Sunday School room/storage room in the hallway behind the kitchen until the day of the sale. All proceeds from the Bazaar will go to Ascension's Outreach Committee to support CCM, Exodus Ministries, and the Hickory Soup Kitchen. Direct questions to Kathryn Carter, Mary Elizabeth Geitner, or Lynda Horney .
- **Vigil for Peace Sunday, December 14** from 5:30 PM—7:30 PM Under the Sails in downtown Hickory.
- **Children's Christmas Pageant December 21** Calling children of all ages! We're excited to continue a beloved Christmas tradition as part of our 10:30 AM service. Please contact Quintin Knight by emailing childrensministry@ascensionhickory.org for more details.
- **Longest Night Service—Sunday, December 21 at 5:00 PM** The holidays can be a difficult time. In recognition of this Ascension is planning a contemplative service of prayer, candlelight and reflection in observance of the longest night of the year.
- **Christmas Eve Services—Wednesday, December 24** All are warmly invited to share in this holy night of worship and song. We will gather for two services: 4:00 PM with Prelude starting at 3:30 PM and 10:30 PM with Prelude beginning at 10:00 PM.
- **Sunday Morning Breakfasts** Please come join us for a time of fellowship and connection. Breakfast is served from 8:45-9:45 AM. This drop-in-style breakfast is structured so that you can come to either worship service, as well as attend our 9:30 AM Adult Forum offering. If you are interested in providing breakfast, please reach out to Quintin Knight at childrensministry@ascensionhickory.org.
- **Ascension Creative Play** invites you to join them on Tuesdays at 1:00-4:00 PM in the Parish Hall. You are welcome to bring crafts, cards, games, or just show up to be encouraged and enjoy fellowship with others! If you have any questions contact Pat Jones at 828-320-7323 or Mary Elizabeth Geitner at 828-310-3666.
- **Have a pastoral care concern?** Contact Father Mike by email at mike@ascensionhickory.org or by cell phone at 813-786-6307.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

- **Thanksgiving Feast at Lake Logan** Don't feel like dealing with the turkey this year? Relax and let Lake Logan take care of the cooking and cleaning this year. This November 27, you're invited to a memorable Thanksgiving feast! Experience genuine Southern Appalachian home cooking and hospitality while sharing time with your family. Enjoy the magical views of Lake Logan and our

beautiful campus as we celebrate together.

- **Cold Mountain Christmas Craft Fair December 13 from 10:00 AM—3:00 PM** Join us for Lake Logan’s annual Cold Mountain Craft Fair and Holiday Concert. There will be a wonderful variety of local WNC artisans in the Bishop Johnson Dining Hall. Come enjoy an afternoon of holiday shopping, kits’ activities, a Christmas carol sing-along and a delicious holiday lunch. Contact the office for more information.
- **Honor the Winter Solstice—Wednesday, December 17, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM** Join Karla Woggon for a transformative day of reflection and renewal at the Lake Logan Conference center. Contact Karla at soulsauntering@gmail.com for more information on how to register. Cost will be \$89.



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

726 1st Avenue NW, Hickory, North Carolina 28601

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Presiding Bishop	The Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe
Bishop	The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin
Interim Rector	The Rev. Michael Alford
Director of Music	Cory Westby
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator	Quintin Knight
Parish Administrator	Heather Stone
Bookkeeper	Diane Vezmar



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