

**History of Ascension Parish
1913 ~ 2013
Researched and Written by
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The early Roman Catholic residents of Halethorpe attended Mass and received sacraments in nearby parishes, such as Saint Joseph's Monastery on Frederick Avenue, Saint Clement's in Lansdowne, Saint Benedict's on Wilkens Avenue, or Saint Jerome's on W. Hamburg Street. The growing number of Roman Catholic residents in Halethorpe created a need for a place to worship within the community.

In 1911, the Roman Catholic residents of Halethorpe approached Father John Sullivan, the pastor of Saint Clement parish, with the request to create a mission parish in Halethorpe. Father Sullivan consented and corresponded with His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons to obtain permission. In his annual parish report of January 1, 1912, Father Sullivan noted that the Roman Catholic residents of Halethorpe had been attending services at Saint Joseph's Monastery because a car-line linked the two communities and commented that he planned to have a "self-supporting mission there (Halethorpe) before the end of the year" to facilitate the practice of their Roman Catholic faith.

The plans to create a mission parish in Halethorpe moved forward during 1912. A 100 foot by 120 foot parcel of land on Fairview Avenue, at its intersection with Linden Avenue, was donated to the Archbishop of Baltimore for the purpose of providing a building site for a Catholic Church in Halethorpe. A loan, in the amount of \$3,000, provided the funding necessary to commence construction. The expected completion date of the church in Halethorpe was May 1, 1913, which was Ascension Thursday that year. (January 1, 1913 annual report from Father Sullivan/ Ecclesiastical Calendar for A.D. 1913) The church was a wood-framed building with cedar shingles that had a seating capacity of 50 people. Beautifully crafted, stained-glass windows mounted on hinges provided ventilation for building. The church soon became known as "the church on the hill." The cost of the altar, stained glass windows, pews and Stations of the Cross for first Church of the Ascension totaled \$800 per the January 1, 1914 parish report submitted by Father Sullivan.

The Biblical accounts of the ascension of Jesus into heaven recorded by Luke in his Gospel 24:50-51 and the Acts of the Apostles 1:9-11 portrays Jesus being lifted up into the clouds from Mount Olive, which was a day's journey from Jerusalem. While no written documentation has yet been discovered, one could conclude that the Church of the Ascension was given its name because it was built at the top of a hill in a community that is a suburb of Baltimore City and/or the first Mass in the church was planned for Ascension Thursday.

Thus began Ascension Parish in Halethorpe as a mission to Saint Clement's Parish with Father Sullivan assigned as its pastor. Twenty families were listed on the initial registry of the mission parish. Father Sullivan was given an automobile to facilitate his commute between Lansdowne and Halethorpe. (Father Spraker comments in the Ascension Church/School dedication book and the Baltimore American newspaper article)

After the celebration of the first Mass in the new Church of Ascension in Halethorpe on Ascension Thursday, May 1, 1913, parishioners looked forward to the dedication of the building by His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons. The dedication ceremony took place at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 14, 1913 with Reverend Joseph P. Holden, rector of Saint Jerome Church, assisting Cardinal Gibbons. Mass for Ascension parishioners and their guests followed immediately thereafter. Father Sullivan was the main celebrant for the Mass and Reverend Thomas J. Kenny, rector of Saint Peter's Church, delivered the sermon. Music for the occasion was directed by Barbara Goeller (who later married and became Barbara Eichelman). Reverend Emory P. White, S.J., of Woodstock College, celebrated Mass for the congregation of Saint Clement parish on behalf of Father Sullivan and then traveled to Halethorpe to attend the festivities held in conjunction with the dedication of the Church of the Ascension. (Monday, September 15, 1913 edition of the Baltimore American newspaper article.)

His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons made a brief congratulatory address to the congregation of Ascension parish just prior to the conclusion of Mass. In his remarks, Cardinal Gibbons complimented the parishioners on the fruits of their labor and expressed his pride in the monument that they had erected to honor our Heavenly Father. He concluded his remarks with a blessing that conveyed his belief that Ascension Parish would prosper, expand, and serve many faithful in the upcoming years- "May the blessing of Almighty God be upon you, and upon your church, so that in future years, when this community has grown and when a new and larger building stands in place of this one, you may look back upon the years of work well done."(His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons as quoted in the Monday, September 15, 1913 edition of the Baltimore American newspaper article)

Joshua S. Hull, one of the land speculators and realtors for the growing community of Halethorpe, and his wife, hosted a reception in their home after Mass for the Cardinal and the priests that had joined him for the church dedication. Other dinner guests included Senator Carville D. Benson, M/M Charles W. Hull, M/M George Kostha, Mrs. Stanley Hooper, Della Dorsey, Myrtle Dorsey, John Schaub, and Alexander S Schaub.

Tragedy struck Ascension Parish on August 19, 1916. The church on the hill was consumed by fire. Fortunately, the building was fully insured to enable the parish to quickly rebuild. (Father Sullivan's statement in the Saint Clement Parish report dated January 1, 1917.) In the meantime, the Kilner family, who resided on the southeast corner of Linden and Woodside Avenues, offered the use their home to Father Sullivan as a place to say Mass for Ascension parishioners until the new building was completed.

Father Sullivan provided pastoral guidance to Ascension parishioners until his death on October 17, 1918. Father Caspar Elbert was subsequently assigned to Saint Clement Parish and also assumed the pastoral role for the Church of the Ascension. It has been noted that Lillian Knecht served as the parish's pianist/organist and John Thomas O'Donnell performed the duties of the church sexton during the time when Ascension used its church on the hill.

The first parish report filed with the Archdiocese of Baltimore for the Church of the Ascension was submitted by Father Elbert for year ended January 1, 1919. In this initial report, it was noted the Ascension Parish consisted of approximately 100 people-35 men, 45 women, and 25 children. One baptism and two funerals had been conducted during the preceding year in addition to the celebration of Sunday and holy day Mass.

Two of the weddings that took place at the Church of the Ascension during its mission period were those of George and Ann Ring in June of 1921 and George and Grace O'Donnell in November of 1922. **(Father Spraker's recording of parish history in the 1961 dedication book)**

The Ascension parishioners held a variety of fund raising events, such as church suppers, raffles, card parties, between 1913 and 1922 which enabled them to make their final mortgage payment on their church on December 6, 1922.

The growth of the communities of Halethorpe and Lansdowne between 1913 and 1920 prompted Father Elbert on January 1, 1921 to make a request to be relieved of the mission Church of the Ascension. Father Elbert's request was granted and Father Leo J. Fealy, a professor at Saint Charles College in Catonsville, was assigned to Ascension Parish.

Reverend Francis J. Flanigan was appointed pastor of the Church of the Ascension in 1922. He was initially given lodging and board at Saint Agnes Hospital until funds could be raised to purchase a rectory in Halethorpe. **(1923 Church of the Ascension parish report to the Archdiocese)** A house on the corner of Maple and Potomac Avenues, with a surrounding acre of land, was subsequently purchased to provide a home for a resident priest and space for parish expansion. The lots acquired were intended to become the future building site for a larger church, a school, and a convent for Ascension Parish. **(Record of property transactions on file at the Archdiocese Archives)**

As a resident pastor, Father Flanigan had the ability to provide more spiritual opportunities for Ascension parishioners within the parish. Daily Mass was celebrated in the Church of the Ascension and the Holy Name Society, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the National Council of Catholic Women were organized for Ascension parishioners. **(1923 Church of the Ascension parish report.)** In addition to providing for the parish's spiritual needs, Father Flanigan was also concerned about the parish's financial well-being. For example, on January 21, 1923, Father Flanigan wrote to the Most Reverend Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore to seek his permission to celebrate daily Mass in the rectory during the winter rather than in the church to avoid the extra cost of heating the building. **(Letter on file at the Archdiocese Archives)**

In 1925, Father Flanigan began to receive assistance from the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart who taught catechism to the children of Ascension Parish each Sunday after Mass. **(1925 Church of the Ascension parish report.)**

One of the documented highlights in Church of the Ascension history during the time that "the church on the hill" served as the parish's place of worship occurred in October of 1927. The Fair of the Iron Horse, which celebrated the B & O Centennial, was taking place in a nearby portion of Halethorpe. Chief Two Guns White Calf and his tribe of Blackfoot Indians **(David Shackelford, curator of the B & O Railroad Museum, confirmed the Chief's attendance at the Fair of the Iron Horse and an Internet Google search by the Chief's name verified his tribe and Catholic faith.)** attended Mass at the Church of the Ascension wearing traditional garments during their visit to Halethorpe. Parishioners provided transportation for the tribe from the fairgrounds to the church. Alice Knecht Jarboe, who was a young child at the time, fondly remembered the Indians' visit to the Church of the Ascension and recalled being so fascinated with their decorative attire that she had trouble paying attention to Mass that Sunday.

Cardinal Gibbons' vision for the success of Ascension Parish was rapidly becoming a reality as the continued development in the area brought more Roman Catholic residents to the communities of Halethorpe and Arbutus. Parish growth warranted the construction of a larger facility for worship, space to provide a Catholic education for its children, and a place to hold parish social activities. In 1926, builders with the Henry A. Knott & Company began the construction of a three level building which would house a chapel, a school, and a social hall for Ascension parishioners on the corner of Poplar and Potomac Avenues.

Parish suppers, church bazaars, and card parties were held to raise money to pay for the new facility. A general building fund was created in which donations were symbolically converted into gold flooring nails or gold bricks. Parishioners were also given the opportunity to purchase specific items needed for the new church. Usable items from the original building, such as the ornate windows, were also moved to the new facility. The chapel was ready for the Christmas midnight Mass in 1927 and the school opened in September of 1929.

After the parish completed its move to the new building, the "church on the hill" was used as a meeting place for other organizations. The building was rented for such use from 1930 to 1933. **(1931 to 1934 Church of the Ascension parish reports on file with the Archdiocese.)** The vacant building then became a playhouse for the neighborhood children. Decisions were subsequently made to dismantle the former church and sell the lots to Jim and Connie Fitzsimmons and Estelle Ruark. **(Letters regarding the property transactions from Father Ells and Father Cartwright and the Archbishop are on file at the Archdiocese Archives.)**

The second Ascension Parish building had three levels-the chapel in the middle, the school on the top, and the social hall in the basement. The exterior church entrance was majestic with a flight of terrazzo paved steps which had a marble-like appearance and tall pillars that supported a roof over the church doors. The church steps became the perfect setting for the parish's annual May procession to honor the Blessed Mother and a place to take wedding and graduation pictures. The interior of the Ascension chapel was a beautiful place of worship.

Tiered candelabras stood on either side of the altar with the Greek letters, alpha and omega, etched in the wallboard above them. A decorative curtain hung on the wall behind the altar. The paneling was made by a parish carpenter, Julius Tauber. A railing, with neo-gothic carving, bounded the altar. The windows were stained glass which depicted scenes from the life of Christ.

The parish acquired a bell which was mounted on the back (the side facing the convent) of the parish building. The belfry's shape matched the structure encasing the cross on the front the building. The bell was rung by pulling the cord that could be accessed by either entering the building from the landing of the fire escape and making an immediate left or walking to the end of the school corridor and turning right. Through the years that the building served Ascension Parish, the bell tolled for a variety of reasons-to announce that Sunday Mass or school was about to begin, to indicate that recess was over, or to count the number of years a person had lived.

In 1936, Father Joseph A. Ells succeeded Father Flanigan as pastor of Ascension parish. Ascension Parish flourished during the 1930s and in 1939, the parish growth warranted the assignment of Reverend Casimir F. Keydash to Ascension as its first Assistant Pastor. One of duties delegated to Father Keydash was the organization of a weekly bingo as a parish fund raiser to pay off the building debt. This fund raiser proved to be quite successful as a contingent of parishioners faithfully supported the weekly activity. The parish soon accumulated sufficient funds to retire its debt. Father Ells received a congratulatory letter dated January 9, 1943 from the Most Reverend Michael J. Curley which acknowledged the fact that the Church of the Ascension was among the few "no debt parishes" in the Archdiocese. (Letter on file at the Archdiocese Archives)

The impact of World War II was felt in Ascension Parish. Not only did its parishioners answer the draft or volunteered for military service, Father Keydash left Ascension Parish in 1943 to become an Army chaplain. Nine of Ascension's parishioners became casualties during World War II. They were: Vernon F. Albrecht, Harry J. Breivogel, Edward G. Crist, Francis X. Crist, Thomas B. Day (Tom Day Boulevard has been named in his honor-He was one of Halethorpe's first casualties in the war.), Richard P. Krebs, Robert E. League, Harry E. Levy, and Vincent C. Messer. The names of these parishioners who paid the ultimate price for our freedom are noted on a plaque which is mounted on the center structure of the current church vestibule.

The growth in the number of parishioners of the Church of the Ascension extended beyond the residents of the thriving communities of Halethorpe and Arbutus and included families who resided in the Kensington area. In October of 1943, Father Ells sought the permission of Archbishop Curley to begin preparations to create a mission church on Wilkens Avenue to serve the spiritual needs of the Roman Catholic families who resided in that area. Permission was granted and the Church of the Ascension subsequently purchased four acres of land from Saint Charles College to provide a building site for the proposed mission. (Letters from Father Ells, response received from Right Reverend Joseph Nelligan, and law office Galvin and McCourt who handled the transaction are on file at the Archdiocese Archives.)

New assignments of both the pastor and assistant pastor at the Church of the Ascension took place during this planning period. Father Anthony P. Mertz replaced Father Keydash as Associate Pastor of the Church of the Ascension in 1944 and the Reverend I. Mitchell Cartwright was appointed pastor to succeed Father Ells in 1946. Father Cartwright continued the work of creating the mission parish of Saint Angela near Saint Charles Seminary on Maiden Choice Lane that had been initiated by his predecessor. The proposal to create the mission parish of Saint Angela did not come to fruition, but Our Lady of Victory Parish was established to serve the Kensington area in the early 1950s.

The period of November 1948 to June 1950 found quick turnover of pastoral assignments at the Church of the Ascension. Father Cartwright left Ascension Parish in November of 1948 to become pastor of the newly formed Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. Father Mertz was appointed Administrator of the Church of the Ascension in the absence of a pastor. (Letter of the appointment is on file at the Archdiocese Archives.) Father Joseph M. Riordan was named to succeed Father Cartwright as the pastor of Ascension Parish in August of 1949. Father John P. Barbnitz replaced Father Mertz assistant pastor in June of 1950.

Father Barbnitz was quite popular among Ascension parishioners, especially the teens who often referred to him as Father John. Father Barbnitz organized a chapter of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) for the young people of Ascension parish and frequently held social gatherings for them, arranged trips, and provided support for athletic teams. Father Barbnitz was transferred to Saint Mark Parish in June of 1956 and was replaced by Father Alphonse G. Rose.

Father Riordan died suddenly on October 24, 1957, leaving Father Rose to administer the parish duties until a new pastor could be assigned. Amidst a blizzard in February 1958, Father Gerard W. Spraker arrived to become pastor of the Church of the Ascension.

It had become increasingly clear during Father Riordan's leadership that Ascension Parish had made the transition from a small rural parish to a large active center of Catholic life. This new status mandated a larger facility for worship and education of its students. Father Riordan's foresight had included the accumulation of funds to begin a new building project. Father Spraker's welcome to Ascension Parish was accompanied by inquiries about expansion. Plans were developed, proposed, and approved to construct a new parish building which would have two stories for classrooms and a lower level auditorium which could temporarily house a church with a seating capacity of approximately 400 people. A groundbreaking ceremony took place on Ascension Thursday of 1959, May 15th. (Ascension Church and School dedication book) The building was ready for school to open on September 7, 1960, but not quite finished for the parish to begin celebrating Mass. The first Mass in the new building was midnight Mass for Christmas in 1960 and was celebrated by Father Spraker. The theme of Father Spraker's first sermon was appropriately "Deo Gratias", thanks be to God. The building was dedicated on the parish feast day, Ascension Thursday, May 11, 1961 by the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough, Archbishop of Baltimore. (Ascension Church and School dedication book)

Ascension Parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee on Sunday, May 26, 1963 with a Mass of Thanksgiving. The Most Reverend Lawrence J. Shehan, Archbishop of Baltimore presided over the ceremony. Father Spraker was the main celebrant for the Mass with Assistant Pastor Father Rose and Ascension School alumnus Father Joseph V. Messer con-celebrating. Father James Lowell, S.S. officiated as Master of Ceremonies. Baltimore County Executive Spiro T. Agnew brought congratulatory greetings from the Baltimore County Government to the parishioners of the Church of the Ascension. (May 17, 1963 edition of The Catholic Review)

In April of 1965, Ascension Parish celebrated the conversion of a small store on Arbutus Avenue to a film center which seated 50 people. The primary user of the facility would be the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD). Father Spraker; Sister Therese Rose, S.P., principal of Ascension School; and William Scheidle, president of the CCD presided at the opening festivities. (April 9, 1965 edition of The Catholic Review)

Several assistant pastors served the Church of the Ascension under Father Spraker's 18 year tenure. Father George A. Limmer succeeded Father Rose in 1964, followed by Father Stanley Janaites in 1968, and Father John Bostwick in 1972. Father Gerald F. LaPorta was assigned to replace Father Bostwick in May of 1974, but chose to take an educational leave of absence instead of accepting the appointment to the Church of the Ascension. Father Wenceslaus Hlavac was assigned to Ascension in September of 1974. (May 19, 1974 and September 6, 1974 editions of The Catholic Review)

Fathers E. Gerard Huesman and John J. Mike were assigned to the Church of the Ascension in 1976 as pastor and assistant pastor, respectively to succeed Father Spraker and Father Hlavac. Father Robert F. Lentz became the assistant pastor in 1981. The reassignment of Father Lentz in 1983 created a void in Ascension Parish that reflected the shortage of priests in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. An assistant pastor was not assigned to Ascension Parish to replace Father Lentz, but instead, a new position, that of a Pastoral Associate was created. Betty VanOrder became the first Pastoral Associate of Ascension Parish.

In the early 1980's, under the pastoral leadership of Father Huesman, the decision was made to build a church for Ascension Parish to replace the temporary facility located in the basement of the school building. The property on Potomac Avenue between Poplar and Maple Avenues, where the rectory and previous church-school buildings stood, was destined to become the site of the new Ascension Church building. The final event held in the old church/school building was the 25th class reunion of the Ascension class of 1957 which took place on May 22, 1982.

The rectory and the church-school buildings were subsequently razed and ground was broken in September of 1984 for the construction of a church. The new church would have a seating capacity of approximately 300 people. Ascension Church was completed almost a year later and the first Mass was celebrated by Father Huesman in the new church on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1985. The church was dedicated on February 16, 1986 by The Most Reverend William D. Borders, Archbishop of Baltimore during a Mass which was celebrated by Father Huesman.

Father Manuel R. Roman succeeded Father Huesman as pastor of Ascension Parish on March 17, 1986. Betty VanOrder resigned as Pastoral Associate in November of 1989. Father Roman administered the duties of the parishes without an assistant pastor or pastoral associate for seven months. Sister Mary Catherine Lewandowski, O.S.F. joined the staff of Ascension Parish in July of 1990 as a Pastoral Associate.

After the new place of worship was completed, renovations were needed in the basement of the school building to convert the area into a social hall for parish and school use. These renovations included the installation of a kitchen facility to permit a hot lunch program for the school children. All the labor was donated by parishioners and friends of the Church of the Ascension. The project was completed under the direction of John Button with Paul Arca, Maurice Cook, Al Daly, Tom Doda, Jim Fitzsimmons, Ed Kachinskas, Ed Kelly, Alex Kundrick, Bill Lansinger, Ed and Ted Miller, Fred Muha, Tom Ronaghan, Norbert Rozanski, Joe and Jeff Smith, Joe Spliedt, and Ralph Thomas among the known workers for the project. The area became known as Brewer Hall in honor of Julian and June Brewer, who had provided the major funding for the materials needed for the renovations. Bishop William Newman dedicated the parish hall on November 9, 1986.

The next facilities change took place as the Church of the Ascension entered the new millennium. The Sodality of the Blessed Mother raised the money to erect a bell tower to enable the parish to resume use of its bell which had been sitting dormant on the parish center back patio since the demolition of the brick old church/school building. Construction took place from fall of 2000 to spring 2001.

Deacon Thomas Yannuzzi was assigned to the Church of the Ascension as the parish's first permanent deacon in November of 2004 and continues today in that role.

After serving the parish for nineteen years, Father Roman announced his retirement as of June 30, 2005.

Fr. Adam J. Parker was assigned as Administrator to succeed Fr. Manuel R. Roman. In 2006 Fr. Adam J. Parker was appointed the eighth Pastor of The Church of the Ascension, and then after serving for about 1 ½ years was named to be Secretary to Archbishop Edwin O'Brien. Sr. Mary Catherine oversaw the daily operation of the parish until another priest could be assigned to the parish.

Fr. John A. Williamson was named to succeed Fr. Adam Parker in 2008, and was installed as Pastor on February 17, 2008 and remains today as Pastor.

In 2009 through Fr. John's impetus to enhance the beauty of the worshipping area, there was a successful drive to solicit donations to procure statues, memorial candles and an additional bell for the bell tower. The parish purchased a house in Wynnewood to serve as the Parish Rectory.

Sister Mary Catherine Lewandowski, O.S.F, retired as Pastoral Associate in June 2009. Deacon Thomas Yannuzzi was named Pastoral Associate and Mary Beth Barnes joined the staff as Part-Time Pastoral Associate.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore, after having a committee study the viability of schools, decided to close Ascension School at the end of the 2010 school year. The building still houses the Ascension Early Learning Center and classrooms are used for meeting space in the evening. In addition the parish rents a portion of the building to Compass Academy. Brewer Hall continues to be used for various parish functions.

Fr. John has been instrumental in encouraging and providing opportunities for parishioners to enhance their spiritual life with Adult Education programs such as Discovering Christ and added devotionals.

In an effort to encourage the youth to become more active in parish life, Fr. John re-established the Youth Group for Middle School, High School and Young Adults in 2010.

Reflecting the shortage of priests in the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 2011, The Church of the Ascension became a collaborative parish with St. Augustine Church, Elkridge, Maryland. The two parishes share a Pastor, Deacons, Pastoral Associate, Director of Religious Education and Youth Minister.

Renovations to the Parish Center were made in 2011, by the parish maintenance staff, members of the Men's Club and some parishioners with construction expertise, in order to provide meeting and office space and to update the facility.

Some enhancements were made to the church interior in 2012, with the installation of stained glass panels showing Sacred Scriptures, parishioners donated funds to purchase the panels in honor of or memory of loved ones.

A parish committee planned many events for the centennial year, including conducting a theme contest. The winning slogan, "A Century of Uplifting Faith" was submitted by Mary Groleau. Souvenirs such as T-shirts, mugs, water bottles were marketed to commemorate the festivities.

The Church of the Ascension began celebrating its centennial with a Mass of May 12, 2013, with Bishop Denis J. Madden as celebrant. Events, like a family picnic in the Patapsco State Park, bowling for middle school youth, a trip to Hershey Park for students' grades 6-12, a bus trip to New York City, along with the creation of a Parish Directory, have been taking place during the latter portion of 2013. The culminating event of the centennial will be a Mass on December 22, 2013 with Archbishop Lori as the celebrant.

Deacon Thomas Yannuzzi retired as Pastoral Associate in June 2013; he continues to serve as a Permanent Deacon to Church of the Ascension and St. Augustine's. In July 2013 Deacon Robert Smith as assigned to Church of the Ascension and St. Augustine's.

Mr. Robert Sutliff was named Pastoral Associated in July, 2013.

Ascension Parish has grown from a mere 20 families in 1913 to approximately 850 families in 2013. The place of worship has changed over the past ten decades, but the close-knit relationship of the parish community has remained.

Pastors of Mission Church of the Ascension

Rev. John L. Sullivan May 1, 1913-October 1918
Rev. Caspar P. Elbert 1918-1921
Rev. Leo J. Fealy 1921-1922

The Resident Pastors of Ascension Parish

Rev. Francis J. Flanigan 1922-1936 (R.I.P. 1-28-1965)
Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Ells June 1936-June 1946 (R.I.P. 7-26-1974)
Rev. Msgr. I. Mitchel Cartwright 1946- November 1948 (R.I.P. 3-26-1989)
Parish administered by Father Anthony Mertz during interim
Rev. Joseph M. Riordan August 1949-October 1957 (R.I.P. 10-24-1957)
Parish administered by Father Alphonse Rose during interim
Rev. Msgr. Gerard W. Spraker February 1958-1976 (R.I.P. 3-3-2000)
Rev. E. Gerard Huesman 1976-1986 (R.I.P. 6-7-2010)
Rev. Manuel R. Roman March 1986-2005
Rev. Adam Parker 2006-2007
Rev. John A. Williamson 2008-Present

Associate Pastors of Ascension Parish

Rev. Casimir Keydash 1939-1943 (R.I.P. 10-17-1985)
Rev. Anthony P. Mertz 1943-1950 (R.I.P. 12-21- 1978)
Rev. John P. Barbernitz 1950-1956 (R.I.P. 11-4- 2003)
Rev. Alphonse G. Rose 1956-1964
Rev. George A. Limmer 1964-1968
Rev. Stanley Janaitis 1968-1972 (R.I.P. 8-5-2008)
Rev. John Bostwick 1972-1974
Rev. Gerald F. LaPorta assigned but chose to take an educational leave of absence instead of serving Ascension parish
Rev. Wenceslaus Hlavac 1974-1975
Rev. John J. Mike, Jr. 1975-1981
Rev. Robert F. Lentz 1981-1983 (R.I.P. 9-18-2007)

Deacons of Ascension Parish

Deacon Thomas J. Yannuzzi 2004 - Present
Deacon Robert Smith 2013

Pastoral Associates of Ascension Parish

Betty VanOrder 1983 to November 1989
Sister Mary Catherine Lewandowski, O.S.F July 1990- June, 2009
Mary Beth Barnes 2009-2011
Deacon Thomas Yannuzzi, September 1, 2009 – June 30, 2013
Robert Sutliff August 2013

Resources for Historical Information

Arbutus: A Historical Scrapbook

Arbutus Arts Festival program booklets-1977, 1987
Ascension Church and School dedication booklet from May 11, 1961
Church of the Ascension parish books, 1913-1988; 1913-1993; and 1913-1998
200 Years of Religious Freedom: Arbutus, Halethorpe, Relay, St. Denis Religious Bicentennial
Saint Clement Parish reports from 1912 to 1917-on file at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore
Ascension Parish reports from 1919 to present and correspondence-on file at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore
The September 15, 1913 edition of the Baltimore American Newspaper
The May 17, 1963 edition of The Catholic Review
The April 9, 1965 edition of The Catholic Review
The May 19, 1974 edition of The Catholic Review
The September 6, 1974 edition of The Catholic Review
Interviews with countless Ascension Parishioners and Ascension School alumni