

# Parish Profile



**Church of the Ascension  
Cartersville, Georgia**

**January 2010**

## **Mission and Ministry of the Church**

The mission of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. As a member of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, we welcome anyone who wishes to attend our services, and we invite all baptized Christians to partake of the Eucharist.

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension encourages and facilitates the spiritual growth of our members and the community through Wednesday and Sunday Eucharistic services and through the work of various parish ministries, including worship, fellowship, pastoral care, outreach, Christian education, stewardship, buildings and grounds, evangelism, and finance.

## **The Diocese of Atlanta**

Among the settlers arriving with Georgia founder James Edward Oglethorpe in 1733 was a clergyman from the Church of England. The Diocese of Georgia was established in 1823 and by 1907 had grown so much that it was divided geographically and the Diocese of Atlanta was created.

Our diocese comprises middle and north Georgia with ninety-five parishes. There are over 57,000 communicants in the Diocese of Atlanta. Seven Hispanic congregations worship in the diocese and several parishes have services in both English and Spanish. Christ the King is an international congregation in Lilburn and there is a community of Sudanese immigrants at St. Michael's, Stone Mountain. We enjoy companion relationships with the dioceses of Ecuador and Rio de Janeiro, and our relationship with the Diocese of Central Tanganyika, where we have several missionaries, holds great promise.

The budget for the Diocese of Atlanta, approximately \$4.7 million, is funded by parish assessments of ten percent of annual parish net income, one of the lowest assessments in the Episcopal Church. To support ministry beyond the diocese, the diocese pays the full apportionment of the Episcopal Church. There is currently an appeal for mission funds, known as the Alleluia Fund for Mission, to start new congregations. Several agencies in the diocese make annual appeals to parishes.

The diocesan quarterly journal, *Pathways*, reaches nearly 27,000 households. Our weekly enews message, *Connecting*, contains timely announcements on diocesan and national church life. Camp Mikell, our camp and conference center near Toccoa in northeast Georgia, is the site of retreats, camps and conferences throughout the year. A number of parishes have affiliated schools, and there are several diocese-related retirement centers. Most churches in the diocese devote time and resources to the needy. Emmaus House and Holy Comforter in Atlanta are parishes with attendant outreach centers funded in part by the diocesan budget.

Chaplaincies are active at most of the colleges or universities in the diocese including the University of Georgia, Emory University, Georgia State University, and the Atlanta University Center (the largest consortium of Black colleges and universities in the world). The offices of the Bishop and staff are located in The Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta. The Deployment Officer in the Diocese of Atlanta is the Canon to the Ordinary.

Each interested applicant for a parish is screened on at least two occasions, and no candidate is considered without a full background check and interview with the Bishop.

Clergy are expected to attend the annual fall clergy conference and are invited to a pre-Lenten retreat. Study days, usually led by a scholar from one of several seminaries located in the Atlanta area, are held each year. Clergy are called upon to serve on various diocesan boards, committees and commissions as part of their service to the larger church. All clergy in new positions will attend a year of Fresh Start. Congregations support clergy continuing education, and clergy participation is expected and recorded. The Diocese of Atlanta is part of the Medical Trust of the Episcopal Church to provide healthcare benefits to clergy.

### **History of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension Cartersville, Georgia**

One of the oldest parishes in the Diocese of Atlanta, The Episcopal Church of the Ascension was consecrated on June 22, 1845. As Cartersville grew into a viable community, the Church sold its property in the country and purchased land at Ascension's current location in downtown Cartersville. Consecrated on November 6, 1875, the new Church was erected on the foundation beams of the original and was built in the "Carpenter Gothic Style." The Parish House was built in 1953, and the Sunday School wing was added in 1960. Ascension has maintained her historic appearance with some modifications to the interior of the Church during the 1960s.

Ascension remained a quiet, almost dormant, community until the late 1940s when the ministry of the Priest-in-charge, the Rev. Albert Matthews, brought a new sense of enthusiasm and outreach to the community. It was during this time that the custom of a parish picnic and outdoor service was begun, a tradition that has continued as an annual event at Malbone, an antebellum home of the descendants of W. H. Stiles. In 1957 the Rev. Douglas Winn was called to be the first full-time minister, and under his leadership, Ascension advanced from aided parish to full parish status in 1960. Since the 1960s, Ascension has had four additional rectors: The Rev. Louis Tonsmeire, Sr. (1965-1981), The Rev. Michael Carlisle (1982-1988), The Rev. Doris Graf Smith (1989-1992), and The Rev. Thomas Martin (1993-2007). The Rev. Linda Baker Pineo has served as our Interim Rector since January, 2008.

### **Parish Profile - Parish Demographics**

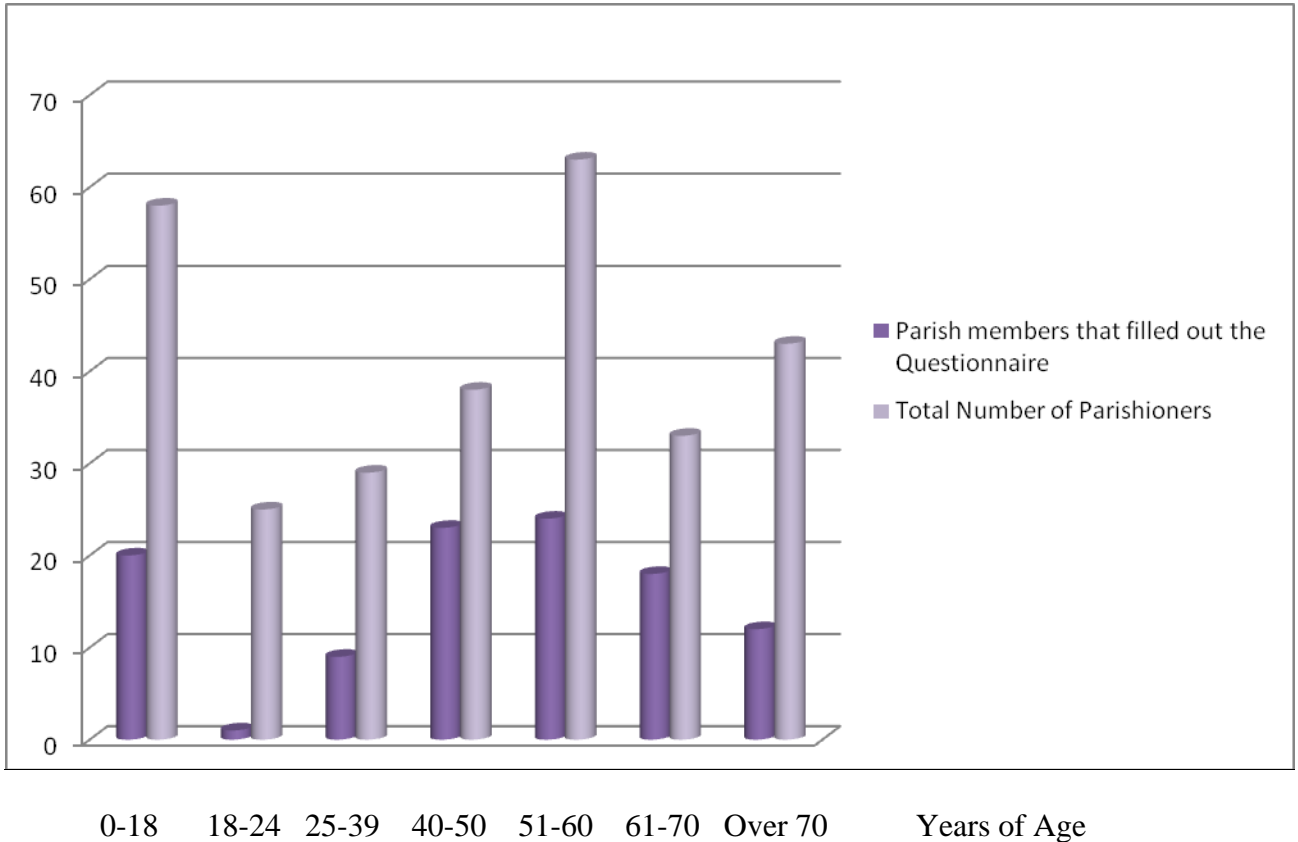
In 2009, Church of the Ascension recorded 135 households, eighty five of whom have made pledges of time, talent, or treasure. The Church currently serves over 274 active baptized members in our congregation.

The average Sunday attendance for our combined three services was 125 in 2008 and 131 in 2009. Over the past year, the attendance for each service was 23 at 8:00 (17%), 30 at 9:15 (23%), and 78 at the 11:00 (60%).

Ascension has 58 active young members (under 18 years of age) consistently participating in worship and/or a variety of Christian Education Programs. There is a broad spectrum of adults from various professional and educational backgrounds. We welcome cultural diversity.

When parishioners were surveyed, 90% have some college or higher education. 81% of us live in Cartersville and others commute in from surrounding communities. 71% have been Episcopalian for more than 15 years. 63% have belonged to this church for 6 years or more. A few dedicated members have been born into this parish for many generations, some whose families date back to the founding families in 1844.

**Demographics Chart for the Age of Church of the Ascension’s Congregation**



Bar Graph – Age of the People that filled out the Survey compared to the Age of the Total Congregation

	0-18	18-24	25-39	40-50	51-60	61-70	Over 70	Total
Total Congregation	58	25	29	38	63	33	43	289
Filled out the Survey	20	1	9	23	24	18	12	107

**Demographics of the City of Cartersville and Bartow County**

The Episcopal Church of the Ascension is located in Cartersville, Bartow County, Georgia. The county seat is Cartersville and is approximately 45 minutes by car from Atlanta. Since the 2000 Census the area’s population has increased from approximately 76,000 individuals to over 97,000 in number as of 2008. The City of Cartersville has experienced similar growth during the same time period increasing from 15,925 individuals to a present day number of at least 21,274. In the year 2013 the County population is projected to be 112,137 people.

From a density standpoint the City is more densely populated, as would be expected in a more urban area. Most families in both the City and the County are middle-class and are structured in a traditional nature. The average family size in both the City and in the County is approximately 3 persons.

In both the City of Cartersville and Bartow County the median resident age is 35.6 years. The population of the City is fairly evenly divided between men and women. Over 60% of the combined populations have obtained at least a high school diploma. College graduates and those with post-graduate degrees account for less than 16% of the combined populations. The median family income of the combined populations is slightly in excess of \$48,000. Approximately 8.9% of City families and 6.60% of County families are considered to be below the poverty line.

The populations of both the City of Cartersville and Bartow County are predominantly white. Blacks and Hispanics comprise from 15% to 25% of the combined populations. Hispanics presently represent the fastest growing segment of both the City's and County's residential base. Age groups for City and County residents are as follows:

	CITY	COUNTY
Under 18:	25.9%	27.9%
18 to 24:	8.7%	8.3%
25 to 44:	30.2%	33.0%
45 to 64:	20.8%	21.4%
65 and Older:	14.4%	12.2%

### **Vestry and Ministries**

The members of the Vestry serve as liaisons for each of our nine servant ministries. The Senior and Junior Wardens function as warden to the rector and warden to the people, respectively.

Each vestry member appoints a person from the parish to serve as Head of the ministry. When the number of people from each ministry is combined, a very large group of servant ministers is represented. More than 90 people from the congregation are active in the various ministries.

The Vestry meets the third Sunday of each month after the 11:00 service. Visitors are invited to attend and may offer comments or questions at the appointed time during the meeting. Minutes of the meetings are traditionally posted in the Parish Hall.

## Worship

### Worship



Ascension has a vital Worship Ministry. Many members of the church participate as acolytes (16 youth and 5 adults), altar guild members (16 women and 2 men), oblation bearers (unlimited), choristers (13 youth and 15 adults), Eucharistic ministers (24 men and women), Eucharistic Visitors (6 men and women), ushers (22 men and women), lectors (30 adults and 7 children in training at 9:15), and healing ministers (2).

Ascension has services each Sunday at 8:00, 9:15 and 11:00. All services are Rite II, although Rite I has occasionally been used at 8:00. The 8:00 service is a spoken liturgy. Music is offered at 9:15 and 11:00. The 9:15 Eucharist is geared toward families with young children. A spoken Eucharist is also offered on Wednesday evenings at 6:30.

### Special Liturgies

A choral evensong service is offered on Sunday afternoon once each quarter. We offered An Advent Lessons and Carols service for the first time last December in the place of evensong.

Ascension worships outdoors twice each year. In the fall, a Family Eucharist is held at Malbone, a lovely estate owned by a family of long-time church members. The Evans' Farm is a lovely setting for our spring Family Eucharist.

Holy Week is observed beginning with Palm Sunday, and includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday (noon and evening services), the Great Vigil of Easter beginning at sundown on Saturday, and three services on Easter Sunday morning. Additional services are held on special feast days throughout the liturgical year.

*Bishop Whitmore and newly confirmed members, Easter 2009; Blessing of the Animals, October 2008.*



## **Pastoral Care Ministry**

The Pastoral Care Ministry includes a dedicated group of church members who work closely with the rector to meet the pastoral needs of the parish especially in times of crisis. The Pastoral Care Ministry works quietly and faithfully. The members provide support, love, and compassion to those who are at critical times in their lives.

### Inreach

Two members of the Pastoral Care Ministry participate as healing ministers who pray with individuals at the 11:00 liturgy. Members are also involved on the flower-delivery team, delivering the church flowers to those who are in hospice, hospitals, or homebound. When there is a death, the committee delivers meals and assists however needed with funeral arrangements. Meals are also delivered upon the birth of a baby, or after other hospitalizations. There is a Eucharistic Visitors team who carries sacraments to those who are sick and/or unable to attend worship. This ministry also assists with transportation needs of the parish. An active Prayer Chain operates at all times praying for those whose names have been provided by the rector, parish administrator or Pastoral Care Vestry Liaison. Recently, the ministry added a "Helping Hands" team, which assists those who are shut-in, ill, recovering from surgery, or need extra help around their home with tasks they are no longer able to complete. Ascension is certified by the National Stephen Ministry for Lay Leaders, and it has an active chapter of Daughters of the King (DOK).

### **Outreach**

Ascension is probably best known in the community for its outreach ministry. Over a span of many years, the Church has initiated many longstanding community and social programs and has been a catalyst for positive change in Cartersville and Bartow County.



Currently the outreach ministry prepares and distributes 144 bags of groceries per week from our Food Pantry.

The food pantry is supplemented by grants, operating budget, the coffee house, special donations, silent auction, and the Bane and Blessing, a parish-wide rummage sale.

At Christmas, the Outreach Ministry sponsors the Angel Tree project to provide gifts for needy children in the community. Other activities sponsored by the Outreach Ministry include special offerings for charities at the Diocesan level, Episcopal Relief and Development, and a Support the Troops ministry which sends needed toiletries and small items for soldiers. The Red Door Fund assists people who are in crisis and need rent money, utility money, gas money, etc.

## **Christian Education**

The Church of Ascension offers several opportunities for Christian Education. A Children's and Adult Sunday School hour takes place between the 9:15 family service and the 11:00 service. A variety of teachers teach aspects of the Bible as well as what it is to be an Episcopalian to multi-aged groups of children. The Adult Sunday School varies in format and can include Biblical studies, usually from the current lectionary, or book studies. As an example, past Adult Sunday School classes have read and discussed books of C.S. Lewis and Madeline L'Engle while others have delved more into the daily readings. In addition to these Sunday school classes, Ascension has offered Bible study on Friday, and first communion as well as confirmation classes. Ascension also has an EYC group who fellowships together periodically, sponsors the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, and annually participates in the Atlanta Hunger Walk

## **Buildings and Grounds**



The Episcopal Church of the Ascension owns and maintains three buildings. The church, parish hall, and parking lot sit on a half acre of land. The church was constructed in 1874. In the 1950's, the parish hall, which includes the education wing, was built as a temporary edifice. However, it is still in use today. On the next half acre of land is Ascension House, where the Priest, Parish Administrator and Organist/Choirmaster have offices and the Choir Room and Library are housed. The Food Pantry operates out of

Ascension House as well. This building dates back to the 1890s. On a third acre of land next to the Parish House, the Church owns an apartment building that was built in 1910.

As one might imagine, these older buildings require a lot of upkeep. Until five years ago, the parish had a sexton who tended the buildings and grounds along with a lawn service. However, within the last five years, members of the buildings and grounds committee have taken it upon themselves to repair the buildings, mow the yard, and tend to the many small items necessary for the upkeep of the church. During the spring, fall, and summer, the “Holy Mowers,” a group of four to five families, mows and tends the lawn, and every other month, volunteers gather to weed the gardens and tend to general repairs of the church.

### **Evangelism**

The Evangelism Ministry works to spread the Good News with special attention to attracting and welcoming newcomers. A member of the parish writes articles about activities and services for the local newspapers. The Parish Administrator maintains a church website which describes the people and activities of the church.

In an effort to help people get to know each other, the Evangelism Ministry has produced name tags which hang in the back hall and are accompanied by pictures of each person and/or family. Members are encouraged to wear their name tags on Sundays.

Our best evangelism is done on Sundays when we welcome guests and invite them to the Table. This ministry has produced and placed in the pew racks a small pamphlet welcoming newcomers and seeking contact information. Guests are welcomed during the announcements and encouraged to sign the guest register and join with the community for fellowship at the coffee hour after church. There is an effort to follow up with guests by mail and/or phone call.

### **Fellowship**

Parishioners at Ascension enjoy many fellowship events throughout the church year. A host of volunteers organize, provide food, and clean up after these events.

A Coffee Hour is hosted each Sunday by parishioners on a volunteer rotating basis. Special receptions are held for baptisms and confirmations, and also after special services such as Evensong, Christmas Eve, Ascension, Easter, etc.

Special picnics are offered in the spring and fall following our outdoor Eucharists at Malbone and the Evans Farm. A Father/Son campout is sometimes offered in the fall. The parish enjoys a pot luck meal immediately following the 11:00 service on the first Sunday of each month.

Ascension Coffee House takes place on the second Friday of each month. One of our parishioners serves as host musician and a guest artist is featured on every program. Donations of food for the food pantry along with cash donations for ministries at Ascension are collected.

A monthly Men’s Breakfast takes place on the second Saturday of each month in the parish hall. Twenty to thirty men gather for this time of food and fellowship.

The Advent Ladies' Tea is held early in December. The Tea is especially for the women of the church who enjoy bringing friends or other relatives to enjoy sweet and savory treats together.

A Pancake Supper is hosted by the EYC each Shrove Tuesday. The proceeds benefit EYC activities.

Ascension strives to build community within the parish with many opportunities for fellowship.

### **Stewardship**

Vestry members at Ascension commit themselves to strive toward giving the biblical standard of the tithe. A signed pledge commitment from the vestry hangs in the parish hall to encourage parishioners to consider following the standard of the tithe. Pledges for the 2009 church year reflect that 85 parish households made pledges of time, talent, and treasure. Some members choose to give regularly, but do not make a stated pledge. Although the Church considers the tithe to be the standard of giving, our parish survey reflects that not all parishioners agree.

A member of our parish serves as a consultant to the Diocesan Committee for Stewardship. Members of our Stewardship Committee attend stewardship workshops hosted by the Diocese each fall. Ascension's focus on giving has been based on the Episcopal Church's working definition of Christian stewardship.

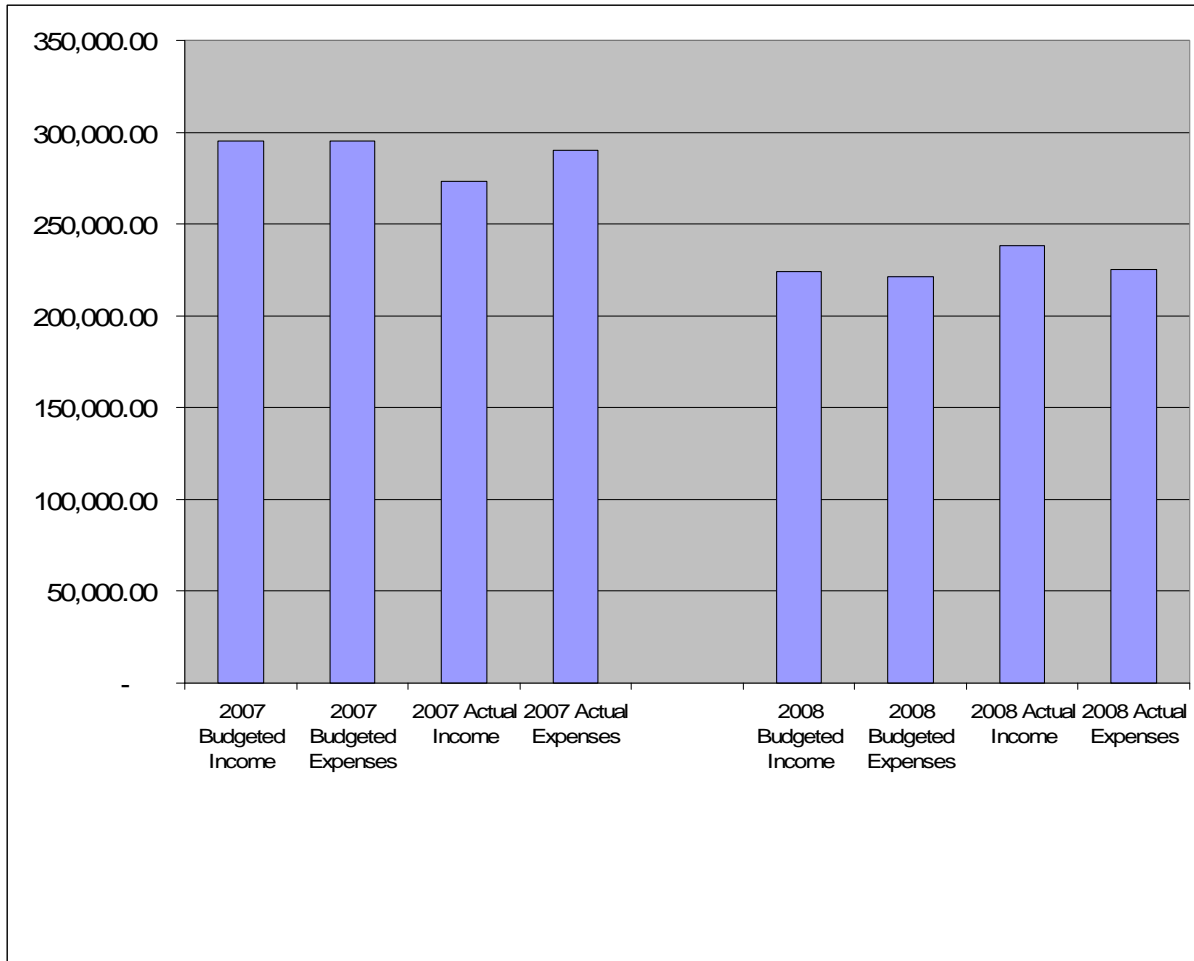
Various approaches to the Stewardship campaign have included an every member canvas, special dinners, guest speakers, letters to parishioners and personal testimonials at church and at gatherings. In Sunday School, the children have received lessons on the importance of giving of time, talent and treasure. In the survey results, parishioners, however, are divided on how they would like to see the Stewardship campaign conducted or even whether it should be highly visible.

### **Finance**

Over the last two completed years, 2007 and 2008, our contributions have decreased. We requested and received relief from the 10% diocesan assessment. Our 2009 diocesan assessment was 5% (which was actually 6+% of our budget last year) and 7% for 2010. There was a slight surplus in operating funds in 2008 which paid off the deficit from 2007.

On the chart for 2007, we had budgeted contributions of \$295,000 and budgeted expenses of \$295,059. In 2007 we were not able to keep up with the budgeted contribution amount as we fell short by approximately \$21,625. Through cost cutting measures, we were able to curtail our expenses, though not to the level of contributions.

In 2008, we had budgeted contributions of \$224,200 and were able to experience an actual contribution level of approximately \$238,120 for a contribution budget surplus of approximately \$13,920. Also in 2008 we were able to keep expenses much below the 2007 level, though we did exceed our budgeted expense level of \$221,300 by \$3775, with expenses totaling approximately \$225,075.



### Hopes and Expectations (Future Directions)

For over 100 years, the Church of the Ascension has provided a vital service to Episcopalians, Christians, and members of the community alike through its weekly services, Christian education, and community outreach. Now, as Cartersville and the surrounding communities grow and develop, the Church of the Ascension wishes to expand to continue to meet her needs.

Throughout our lifetime, the Church of Ascension has remained small compared to our larger Methodist and Baptist neighbors. And, yet given that small congregation, a high proportion of our members participate actively in several church activities. An altar guild member, for instance, may also sing in the choir, while the parishioner who is organizing the coffee hour may also be serving as lay Eucharistic minister. This is only another way of saying that parishioners of Church of the Ascension love our church and want to participate. The future rector of this parish will want to build upon the desire of the parishioners to be active members of the church.

Nevertheless, the Church of the Ascension would like to grow as the City of Cartersville and the surrounding community grows. To this end, the Church has begun a building fund known as the I AM Fund to build a new parish hall in the present location that could more easily accommodate our members and the various activities the church provides.

The Church also sees opportunity in developing its Christian Education program. Although our Vacation Bible School is successful, we would like to see creative ideas for new courses and new approaches that would pull in more members to Sunday School. More importantly, we would like to see a higher attendance at our services. It is the hope of the membership that our new rector will be willing to work within the community to bring more awareness of the Episcopal presence in Cartersville/Bartow County.

### **Rector's Profile**

The Church of Ascension is calling a rector who will create an atmosphere of spiritual growth and guidance. We desire a rector who personifies a life empowered by the Holy Spirit and maintains a disciplined program of prayer and devotion.

Ascension would like for our priest to help build upon our strengths. These especially include worship and outreach. Ascension is proud that it can offer three different Sunday services for the various needs of its congregation, including early risers who may not want a full service with music, young families who want to involve their children before taking them to the larger service and a full service with a choirmaster/organist and full choir. Likewise, we are proud of the services we provide to the community through charitable donations, fundraisers, and other activities that help provide comfort and relief to the community.

However, Ascension feels that we must grow as the community grows. We seek someone who can help us to pull new parish families into our loving Christian community. In this regard, Ascension sees a need to develop and strengthen our evangelism and Christian education. Specifically, we are seeking someone who will work with our evangelism committee on innovative ways to promote and reach out to invite the community to our parish home. We are also seeking someone who can help us with our Christian education program because with a strong Christian education program, especially with our older children, who are extremely close, we feel that we can attract more families.

With a strong commitment to evangelism and Christian education, we are certain that we will be able to strengthen our stewardship. Within the past several years, members of the church have generally contributed a greater percentage of their time, talent, and money than many nearby area parishes that are the same size. The more members that we bring in, we feel, the more we will see those commitments grow.

Of course, it is impossible to ask a candidate to be everything. Above all, we seek someone who can communicate the Good News and connect well with parishioners to promote parish organizations and activities. As several clergy have noted throughout our history, Ascension is a church where the priest does not have to do it all, where the congregation, when given the initiative and opportunity, will rise to the occasion and soar beyond expectations. We seek someone who will be our partner.