

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

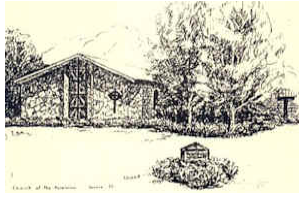
Our Parish Profile

We believe that Ascension must work to share the Good News the Lord has given us by our actions and in our lives. We believe that we are a community of faith and service, that the best way to lead others to Christ is to serve Christ.

214 Northampton Road Seneca, SC 29672

Phone: 864-882-2006 Fax: 864-882-2072

E-Mail: ascensionworship@bellsouth.net www.ascension-seneca.org



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

The Church of the Ascension located in Seneca, SC, is the only Episcopal Church in Seneca and also in Oconee County. The closest neighboring Episcopal parish is about nine miles distant in the city of Clemson, home of Clemson University. Seneca is a city of about 9,000, the largest population center in the county and Oconee County's population of 70,567. Oconee County is traditionally considered as the "Golden Corner" of Upstate South Carolina, an area of mountains and lakes, where the borders of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia converge. Seneca is located two hours or less from three major metropolitan areas: Atlanta, GA, Greenville, SC and Charlotte, NC.

Our Mission, Values & Vocation...

Our mission at Ascension is to be ***“Disciples of Christ, Called to Serve Neighbors, Near and Far.”***

We live our mission by our commitment to four **core values**:

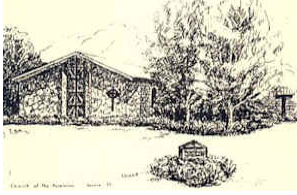
- ◆ **Compassion**
- ◆ **Fellowship**
- ◆ **Worship and Prayer**
- ◆ **Christian Education**

We believe that Ascension must work to share the Good News the Lord has given us by our actions and in our lives. We believe that we are a community of faith and service, that the best way to lead others to Christ is to serve Christ.

For us these are not just words, we spent considerable time and effort, involving the entire congregation in identifying what made Ascension a special worship community. We recognize that we need to continually improve our efforts to live our values and are currently working on developing a strategic plan to guide us in our further efforts. The development of a strategic plan is part of the diocesan Healthy Church Initiative and we would want our new rector to be involved in that process.

Our values of **Compassion and Fellowship** are two sides of our belief in the need to serve our Lord through service to others.

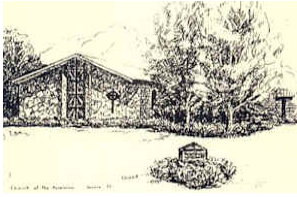
- ◆ We work to live these values through **compassion** for the many in need in our local community.
 - Our active support of The Helping Hands Children’s Home is a special mission of our parish and is supported financially by donations and many hours of volunteer time.
 - Our parish and our parishioners are involved in the development of the first homeless shelter in Seneca, Our Daily Rest, and the development of a battered women’s shelter, also a first for our community.



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

Our Mission, Values & Vocation...

- Through both budgeted support and supplemental fund raising projects our Outreach Committee provides financial support to 24 organizations providing services to those in need in our community.
 - Our ECW contributes greatly in both time and money, especially in support of the Helping Hands Home.
 - Additionally, throughout our parish there are many who personally serve our community through volunteer efforts and service on the boards of a number of charitable organizations.
 - Our chapter of the Daughters of the King, through faithful prayer and visitation, ministers to the sick and shut-ins within our parish community.
- ◆ Our **fellowship** is shared during worship and informal social activities, including:
- Sunday coffee hours
 - Our Foyers program of small, casual dinner groups, involving both long term parishioners and newcomers
 - Our active ECW
 - A Bridge club that provides fellowship and friendly competition
 - A commitment to creating and promoting a friendly worship community where all feel welcome. As one visitor to a recent reception in the parish hall commented, *"this is the friendliest church that I have ever been in."*
- ◆ Our commitment to **worship and prayer** is fostered by:
- The establishment of a worship committee headed by our interim rector to continually strengthen our worship, as well as our devoted Altar Guild and Choir.
- ◆ We work to foster our spiritual growth through continuing **Christian education**:
- Sunday class is led by parishioners and held between our 8 AM and 10:30 AM services.
 - Our Tuesday evening Family nights include a compline service, the opportunity to share in fellowship over a potluck dinner and sing-a-long, followed by a choice of classes.
 - The activities of Our Good News Committee can be seen both within the church and in the community. They continually seek new ways to spread the Good News and bring new parishioners into our fold.



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

Our Congregation...

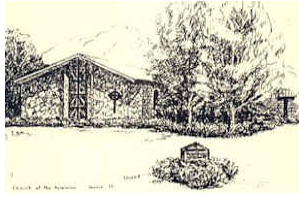
Our congregation of some 204 members represents a wide variety of backgrounds and occupations. More than half (127) of these parishioners are over 61 and retired, a reflection of the influx of retirees to our area. Consequently many are traveling, which accounts for an average weekly attendance of 110, which we would like to increase. Ascension is a very active church, as evidenced by our well maintained facilities and our many outreach efforts. As an older congregation there are often members in the hospital, nursing homes, assisted living or homebound and in need of pastoral visitation.

We currently have few young people in our parish; however, we have sponsored a local baseball team for a number of years and supported use of our property by a local Boy Scout group.

We recognize that any parish needs to be growing in order to remain healthy and would look to our new rector to help us to develop areas for growth within our community.

We consider ourselves to be of healthy pastoral size, so that our priest is central to our well being and very important to us. We are a loving and caring congregation, sharing our joys and sorrows together and with our surrounding community through our outreach programs and our individual outreach efforts.

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Active Baptized Members	207	223	211	204
Increases in Membership	22	27	7	21
Decreases in Membership	15	11	19	28
Average Sunday Attendance	108	116	118	110
Baptisms	3	6	5	4
Confirmations	2	6	4	0
Church School Students (Youth)	7	6	5	4



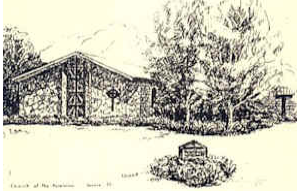
Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

Our Finances...

Ascension's parishioners are generous in sharing their time and resources for parish operations, special projects and community needs. We feel that we are excellent stewards of our assets and are blessed with our resources. We are a very special congregation with much to give each other, our community and our new rector. For example over recent years we have completed and paid for renovations and expansion of the church facilities (\$750,000), a new courtyard garden (\$11,000), memorial garden (\$18,000) and establishment of an endowment fund (\$64,235).

The following table shows our operational income and expenses for the last three years.

INCOME	2005	%	2006	%	2007	%
Identified Pledges	\$188,017	85.8	\$197,918	89.1	\$205,425	89.6
Plate Offerings	\$5,719	2.6	\$4,726	2.1	\$4,677	2.0
Other Income	\$25,466	11.6	\$19,541	8.8	\$19,280	8.4
Cost of Donated Stock	\$0		(\$100)		(\$160)	
TOTAL INCOME	\$219,202		\$222,084		\$229,222	
EXPENSES	2005	%	2006	%	2007	%
Diocesan Quota	\$31,528	15.8	\$33,503	15.3	\$33,800	16.4
Local Outreach	\$16,150	8.1	\$16,700	7.6	\$19,245	9.3
Administration	\$49,847	25.0	\$58,821	26.8	\$56,128	27.2
Church Expenses	\$4,176	2.1	\$10,210	4.7	\$5,225	2.5
Repairs/Maintenance	\$20,357	10.2	\$17,125	7.8	\$12,578	6.1
Music Expenses	\$11,394	5.7	\$12,041	5.5	\$13,174	6.4
Clergy Expense	\$55,709	28.0	\$52,889	24.1	\$53,098	25.7
Contingency Fund	\$10,000	5.0	\$10,000	4.6	\$10,000	4.8
Discernment/Search Committee			\$581	0.3	\$2,874	1.4
Seminarian Expense			\$7,599	3.5	\$600	0.3
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$199,162		\$219,469		\$206,721	



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

Our Services...

Currently our worship services are the following:

- ◆ Sunday 8:00 AM, Holy Eucharist Rite I
- ◆ Sunday 9:30 AM, Sunday School
- ◆ Sunday 10:30 AM, Holy Eucharist Rite II
- ◆ Tuesday 5:30 PM, Evening Prayer
- ◆ Wednesday noon, Holy Eucharist and Healing Service.

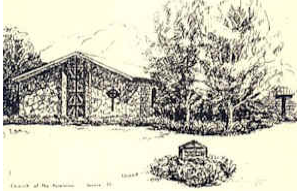
Our Commitment to our Diocese and the Episcopal Church...

The Church of the Ascension is a part of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina (EDUSC). We therefore reflect the mission of the diocese, which can be found at the diocesan website www.edusc.org

While there is a difference of opinion about issues facing the church today, our congregation as a whole views the unity of the church as overriding adherence to any doctrinal or philosophical argument. The Vestry has formally endorsed the Windsor Report.

Our History...

Further information on the history, activities and work of the Church of the Ascension can be found by accessing our website www.ascension-seneca.org



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

Our New Rector...

We pray for someone who will value our unique parish. Being retired, the majority of us have needs and wants that are different from a younger congregation.

As our 2008 parish survey indicated, we are looking for the following characteristics in a new rector:

- ◆ Delivers meaningful sermons
- ◆ Provides pastoral services
- ◆ Reflects spirituality in own personal life
- ◆ Exhibits strong leadership

While not the most important, the following traits are significantly important::

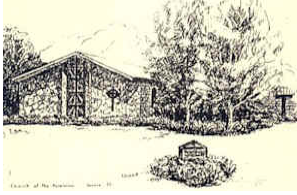
- Participates in and supports church activities
- Has a pleasant personality
- Will welcome new ideas and suggestions to improve the church

Somewhat important traits are the following:

- Is a good administrator
- Is welcoming to new people (tie)
- Is interested in community involvement (tie)
- Demonstrates ability to teach

When asked if there were any other issues regarding a new rector they would like to address, about half of our parish survey respondents offered additional thoughts. The primary issues raised were as follows:

- ◆ Support for the Episcopal Church and our Diocese
- ◆ Desire for services to be conducted in a holy and sacred manner according to the prayer book and sermons based on strong Biblical knowledge
- ◆ Desire for a rector who is caring and willing to shepherd his congregation



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

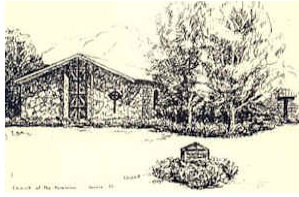
Our Local Community...

Oconee County is the westernmost county in South Carolina, with the Blue Ridge Mountains occupying roughly the northern quarter of its area. Besides the Blue Ridge, other major features of the county are three manmade lakes - Jocassee to the northeast, shared with North Carolina; Keowee in the east, partially shared with neighboring Pickens County and partially enclosed within Oconee County; and Hartwell to the west and south, shared with Georgia (west) and Anderson County (south). The climate is a major factor in many decisions to relocate here: beautiful springs and autumns, mild winters, and bearably hot summers. Recreational opportunities are many and varied, including fishing, hunting, boating, camping, mountain hiking, river rafting, and golfing.

Although closures of large-scale employers such as the mills have had serious impacts on the county, other industries and businesses have arisen in recent years to absorb most of the impact. In the 1960s Duke Power (now Duke Energy Corporation) began work on the Oconee Nuclear Station, one of the earliest nuclear power generators in the United States. This process created Lake Keowee, and subsequently Lake Jocassee, drawing an influx of retirees, sports and recreation seekers, and others, creating large numbers of construction and service-sector jobs. The worst effects of the plant closings were thus mitigated, and the county's population has actually grown from the pre-Lake census of 40,000 in 1970 to 66,000 in the census of 2000, and is currently projected to be 70,567.

Oconee's economy is fueled by its lakes and related construction and recreational/hospitality businesses; a diverse industrial base of some 60 industries; and a large healthcare sector. A small but very visible agricultural base still exists. The county's three largest employers are the School District of Oconee County, Duke Energy Corporation and the Oconee Medical Center.

The county is governed by a Council-Administrator form of government at the county seat in Walhalla. A single integrated school district comprising eleven elementary, four middle, and four high schools, and a career center, is administered by a Superintendent and an elected Board of Trustees. Higher education is available within easy commuting distance at Clemson University and Southern Wesleyan University in Pickens County, and at Tri-County Technical College and Anderson University in Anderson County.



Church of the Ascension Parish Profile

Our Local Community...

Oconee Medical Center in Seneca is the only hospital in the county. It offers a wide range of medical services, and is constantly investing in new facilities and technologies to enhance its diagnostic and treatment capabilities. The nearly-100 physicians on its medical staff represent virtually all medical and surgical specialties. Oconee Medical Center also has a nursing home and rehab center at Lila Doyle and has a hospice program with a new resident facility – The Cottingham House.

Culturally, the Blue Ridge Arts Council (housed in the former Ascension mission church) seeks to promote awareness and growth of the arts, bringing together talent in creating art-learning workshops, hands-on classes, art education in the schools, scholarships, and gallery shows. Oconee Community Theater (Seneca) and Clemson Little Theater (Pendleton) each provide diverse, high-quality stage productions that showcase the talents of local, nonprofessional actors and support staff. Each stages four to six productions per season and each also conducts youth workshops each summer. The Walhalla Civic Auditorium also stages many diverse productions during the year. The Brooks Center for the Performing Arts at Clemson University is an ultramodern facility which presents more than 75 performances per year, including touring stage shows, international symphonies and chamber ensembles, lectures, student productions, and youth and family programs. Tickets are available to the public.

The City of Seneca was founded in 1873 as "Seneca City" at the point where new rail lines met, being built eastward from Atlanta and westward from Charlotte. Seneca is governed by a Mayor - Council - Administrator form of government. Although small in numbers, the city's administrative staff provides most services of a larger municipality. The Recreation Department operates an excellent program that offers activities and facilities for every age group.

Many of Seneca's earliest structures are still in existence, and a very energetic, combined public-private program has been underway for a number of years. Of particular note has been the reclamation of "Ram Cat Alley," with its upscale antique shops, trendy clothiers, arts and crafts, and restaurants.

One of the distinct benefits of life in Oconee County is the relatively low cost of living. Housing, with the exception of lakefront properties, is reasonable. The following chart provides a "snapshot" comparison of Oconee with some of the major market areas east of the Mississippi:

	Raleigh	Boston	Chicago	Atlanta	Miami	Oconee
Median Home Cost	\$191,800	\$423,800	\$277,900	\$233,900	\$315,900	\$112,700
Overall Cost of Living*	117	132	112	109	112	94

*US Average = 100 (All factors considered, including food, housing, and utilities)