

Local Church Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Written by the Rev. James Sorvillo & D.K. Ray

Walt Disney once said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.”

Church of The Ascension began with a dream and a small band of parishioners. In early 1980, there were fewer places to worship in the Dr. Phillips/Windermere area. There was little development, and Apopka-Vineland Road was just two lanes.

A group of pioneers felt the need for an Episcopal Church and wanted a place of worship steeped in the traditions they knew and missed.

From that desire, a mission church was born out of Church of the Messiah in Winter Garden. This small band started Church of the Ascension and held services at Windermere Town Hall, Windermere Elementary School and Bill Frederick Park at Turkey Lake.

The group acquired a parcel of land on Apopka-Vineland Road, just south of Conroy-Windermere Road. Originally, they had 14 acres, but they sold one-half of the land to what is now Christ the King Lutheran Church. To this day, the two churches share a driveway.

A small chapel-style church was built and became the permanent location for Ascension. Although it was compact, the building had floor-to-ceiling windows that offered beautiful views of the trees and wildlife that framed the alter.

In the early days, church school was conducted in portable trailer-style classrooms. While a larger church was always in the plans, classrooms and meeting space took precedence over a new sanctuary.

Every year, more people joined the parish, growing the church and its ministries.

In 2003, the Rev. James Sorvillo came to Ascension, bringing with him dedication and a zest for his work. His vision was to grow the church and its reach in the community. Ascension’s mission is to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples, and Sorvillo has been an avid steward of that mission.

Every Sunday, Ascension offers three services — traditional, contemporary and “come as you are” — that balance the ancient and modern richness of its Episcopalian roots. The church reaches out to the community, helping to feed the homeless and helping those in need. Other ministries include a prison ministry, mission trips, counseling center and children’s co-op

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parenting education center that has been operating for 20 years.

Ascension has been blessed many times over, and the church now celebrates a new sanctuary with new space for worship. Two years ago, the church's organ was hit by lightning and damaged beyond repair. Today, through the generous support of the congregation, the church has a new organ that blends technology with beautiful sound.

For 30 years, Church of the Ascension has been a place of worship and community and a joy that is founded in God. Growing its parish, the church will continue its outreach and mission to serve others.

Church of the Ascension is much like Orlando: It has a core group of natives, but the rest came for a visit and have stayed for a lifetime.

Editor's Note: This article was written by a reader as part of a Community Contribution. We encourage other Southwest residents to submit their original works and/or photographs to be considered for publication in future issues. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit content for spelling, grammar, punctuation, good taste and available space. Email submissions to Lisa@kearneypublishing.com or mail them to 7901 Kingspointe Parkway, Suite 28, Orlando, FL 32819- 8386. For more information, call 407-351-1573.