



WORSHIP AT ASCENSION

GET THE BLESSING BE THE BLESSING

Invite			Grow			Serve		
Invitation and Hospitality			Understanding our Motto			Community Engagement		
Invitation Support	Welcome Visitors	Strategic Invite Events	Education	Sermon Series	Life Together	Enhance Existing Ministries	Encourage Ministry Start-ups	SuperCharge Ministries
Provide tools to easily invite friends, family, and community to worship and other campus events.	Create a welcoming environment for Ascension visitors.	Create and implement a strategy for intentional "invite" events (existing and potential) at Ascension.	Together, discover what it means to "Be the Blessing"	Incorporate intentional sermon series throughout the year to encourage living in to our motto.	Leverage and embrace how ministry groups and life groups are central to "Be the Blessing"	Support the growth of our great outreach ministries.	Allow for creativity to explore new areas of ministry outreach.	Set aside resources and establish process to encourage ministry outreach.



ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL AGENDA
Wednesday, Jan 17th, 2023 – 7:00 PM
Location: Bethlehem Room

Call to Order and Welcome -

Jeannette

Mission Statement of Ascension Lutheran Church:

We are called to create opportunities for all people to become devoted followers of Christ.

Motto: *Invite, Grow, Serve*

Approval of Agenda -

Jeannette

Devotion -

Ed

Informational Items-

Transition Plan and Next Steps

Pastor Tim

Old Business

Get/Be The Blessing

Ed

Reserve Study

Kaylee

Land Sale

Kaylee

Presentation of Treasurer's Report –

Dave

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmands & Baptisms

All

Action Items Action Tracker -

Kaylee

Approval of Minutes –

Dec Church Council Meeting

Jeannette

Consent Approval of Reports to Council

Jeannette

1. Administrator's Report

2. Pastor's Reports

a. Pastor Tim Delkeskamp b. Pastor Steve Herder

3. School Board

4. Communications Report

5. GMT Report

Adjournment

Closing Prayer

Reminder -

Next Church Council Meeting – Wed. Feb. 21st 7pm – Bethlehem Room

Devotion for next meeting is Alan Baker! Thank you!

Reference for Association Reserves

Bill Brown Director of Operations at Oaks Christian School

Why did you seek a reserve study? **We do them consistently.**

Were you pleased with the report you were given – was it thorough?

What type of useful information did you learn in the process? **The primary reason is budgeting for capital reserves in the coming years. It looks 10 years out; it's not a science, but at least it's an idea. Another reason is auditing and showing fiscal responsibility for the asset.**

Was anything not included in your study that surprised you or that you thought should have been included?

What prep work did you do before the onsite days? **Yes! Set aside some time. We have 500,000 (?) square feet, a big campus. The more info you can give them the better the report will be.**

Is there anything you wish you had known/done before you started?

How have you used the data in your study once it was completed?

Do you plan to do another study in future? **Yes!**

Do you plan to continue to work with Association Reserves company for updates to this reserve study? **Yes**

What were key lessons learned?

[Association Reserves] Have you utilized the UPlanIt software? **Not yet, it wasn't available in last 2018 study.**

They worked with Yohan. It's approximate, but helps plan how well funded you are comfortable with being: 50%, 100%, etc.

Remember they are new eyes to your campus; they won't know the nuts and bolts like you do. It will take a few days to a week.

Reference for Association Reserves

Mike Yager, Executive Director for Belair Church

Why did you seek a reserve study?

Were you pleased with the report you were given – was it thorough?

They were easy to work with and efficient.

What type of useful information did you learn in the process?

They'll probably ask about particulars of what is or isn't important for you to understand. EG, for us, we wanted to know more about our infrastructure - Building, Roofs, HVAC, Major Equipment, and MEP's vs our FFE's -Fixtures, Furniture and (minor) Equipment.

Was anything not included in your study that surprised you or that you thought should have been included?

What prep work did you do before the onsite days?

Is there anything you wish you had known/done before you started?

How have you used the data in your study once it was completed?

I think it depends on how experienced, moreover how learned your facilities / maintenance and repair team is goes a long way in slicing and dicing the information into actual action steps.

Do you plan to do another study in future?

Do you plan to continue to work with Association Reserves for updates to this reserve study?

What were key lessons learned?

[Association Reserves] Have you utilized the UPlanIt software?

Reference for Association Reserves

Katie Striegel, Director of Buildings and Grounds

Why did you seek a reserve study?

To evaluate the campus and their funds as a whole; come up with a capital plan, to know what needs to be replaced and when, and to get an approximation/cost to plan for any work or replacements.

Were you pleased with the report you were given – was it thorough?

Yes, the report is thorough; provides an “order of execution.”

What type of useful information did you learn in the process?

Was anything not included in your study that surprised you or that you thought should have been included?

What prep work did you do before the onsite days?

Is there anything you wish you had known/done before you started?

How have you used the data in your study once it was completed?

Confirmed what was known, what was aging out; help set aside funds and come up with an intentional plan.

Do you plan to do another study in future?

Not at this time.

Do you plan to continue to work with Associate Reserves company for updates to this reserve study?

They do not have plans for another study, however she highly recommended Association Reserves; they are very thorough and the report was high quality.

What were key lessons learned?

Reference for Reserve Study Specialists

Sasoon Mananian, Sprecta Associates

Why did you seek a reserve study?

For HOA because it's mandated

Were you pleased with the report you were given – was it thorough?

What type of useful information did you learn in the process?

Was anything not included in your study that surprised you or that you thought should have been included?

What prep work did you do before the onsite days?

No prep work for the physical inspection, just need to provide data in advance. Would recommend sending as much detailed information as possible to make the reserve study as accurate as possible.

[Reserve Study Specialists] Did you have to pay extra consultation hours?

Is there anything you wish you had known/done before you started?

How have you used the data in your study once it was completed?

Yes, particularly for the annual budget.

Do you plan to do another study in future?

Yes, we use Fred at Reserve Study Specialists almost exclusively.

Do you plan to continue to work with Reserve Study Specialists company for updates to this reserve study?

Yes, we use Fred at Reserve Study Specialists almost exclusively.

What were key lessons learned?

Additional commentary:

- Suggested to have a “person who is knowledgeable about the property/building and history” meet for the physical walkthrough.
- Fred at Reserve Study Specialists is well-priced, and the resulting product is just as good as the competition but much more affordable.

Reference for Reserve Study Specialists

Patti Hoster, Community Association Management

Why did you seek a reserve study?

It's mandated by the state of California for HOAs

Were you pleased with the report you were given – was it thorough?

What type of useful information did you learn in the process?

Was anything not included in your study that surprised you or that you thought should have been included?

Since it is "your" study, there is no pushback from Fred about including items in the study, and he easily adds any additional items.

What prep work did you do before the onsite days?

No

[Reserve Study Specialists] Did you have to pay extra consultation hours?

Is there anything you wish you had known/done before you started?

How have you used the data in your study once it was completed?

Yes, it is used for the 30-year funding plan. He also does a physical inspection every 3 years, and a "check-in" ever year or every 2 years.

Do you plan to do another study in future?

Yes, Fred at Reserve Study Specialists across multiple properties they manage.

Do you plan to continue to work with Reserve Study Specialists company for updates to this reserve study?

Yes, we use Fred at Reserve Study Specialists almost exclusively.

What were key lessons learned?

Additional commentary:

- Fred is easy to work with

Reference for Reserve Study Specialists

Shana Underwood, Shoreline Property Management

Why did you seek a reserve study?

It's a legal requirement every 3 years.

Were you pleased with the report you were given – was it thorough?

What type of useful information did you learn in the process?

They are more of the “middleman”, they manage over 100 properties/HOAs, so they provide the info to RSS and schedule to reserve study and update the component list as needed.

Was anything not included in your study that surprised you or that you thought should have been included?

Since it is “your” study, there is no pushback from Fred about including items in the study, and he easily adds any additional items.

What prep work did you do before the onsite days?

[Reserve Study Specialists] Did you have to pay extra consultation hours?

Fred does not bill for extra time in her experience; a lot of the communication is done via email.

Is there anything you wish you had known/done before you started?

How have you used the data in your study once it was completed?

Do you plan to do another study in future?

Do you plan to continue to work with Reserve Study Specialists company for updates to this reserve study?

Yes, they manage over 100 properties/HOAs and use Fred about 60% of the time; he is their preferred vendor.

What were key lessons learned?

Additional commentary:

- She has worked with Fred for 5+ years, he is the easiest reserve study vendor to work with. He is straightforward, has a quick turnaround, and is incredibly efficient.

Treasurer's Report for January 2024

The Church financial summary through December 31 is appended to this report. The school summary is not yet available, but will be forwarded if received in time for the meeting.

Year to Date Church Operating Results

With ½ the year now in the books (and more than half of the expected revenues and expenses), the budget to actual comparison continues to look positive. Revenues are lower than budgeted by 3.3%, but expenses are lower by 5.8%. The budget suggested the church would be in a break-even position at this point in time, while actual produces a positive variance of \$16K, after debt service. As Mike's spreadsheet notes, the as-yet-unbilled annual audit will reduce the favorable variance by about \$10,000. However, the December expenses include all items needed to settle the departure of Pastor Julie, and succeeding months will show a further salary/benefit reduction to budget until new position(s) are created and staffed.

Bad News: Lot Sale

I met with Creighton Van Horn to obtain the latest information regarding the lot sale. His and Bob Woodward's consensus opinion is that it will take **considerably longer** than mid-year 2024 to consummate the lot sale. Two city requirements are driving this opinion:

1. We need to redevelop and submit our Special Use Permit to reflect the change in lot size and configuration of the space. Kaylee is spearheading the effort to develop this change. After submission to the city, it will require their review and acceptance.
2. The parcels that make up the campus need to be redefined and a new map prepared and submitted, requiring civil engineering expertise. Once submitted, the plan will be reviewed by the city and hopefully approved. However, that is only part of the process. The city will then submit the plan to Ventura County for their sign-off, which will involve yet another review process.

The time extension will compel another renegotiation of the short-term loan by mid-summer, potentially at higher interest rates. The best information we have at this time is that the buyer will continue to support Ascension via contributions to allay the interest expense costs.

Good News: Employee Retention Tax Credit

Due to the Covid epidemic, the Federal legislature developed a tax credit program to benefit small employers who were able to retain employees through the Covid period, basically offsetting a significant part of the employer taxes for the 2020 and 2021 years for the retained

employees. Initially, we had understood that PPP funds we previously received would affect the calculation of the credit, and we consequently developed low expectations. Nevertheless, staff engaged the services of an outside expert in the program who specializes in churches, and we received the completed tax credit form from them this week. While the amount may change based on IRS review, and we have no idea how long the process will take to receive remuneration, the early indication is a very high six-figure amount. I will discuss this further at the Council meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Harkins

Ascension Lutheran Church
Budget Summary
YTD through December 31, 2023

	Church '23 - '24 Budget	Church '23 - '24 Budget YTD	Church '23 - '24 Actual YTD	Church '23 - '24 Variance	%
Revenues:					
Offerings (Church)	1,443,210	745,972	719,778	(26,194)	-3.5%
Other Revenues	37,700	19,037	19,855	818	4.3%
Total Revenues:	1,480,910	765,009	739,633	(25,376)	-3.3%
Expenditures:					
Salaries & Benefits	1,153,170	576,585	560,806	15,779	2.7%
Allocated Staff Expenses	(183,202)	(91,601)	(99,575)	7,974	-8.7%
Benevolences	62,780	31,579	31,310	269	0.9%
Programs / Committees	66,832	34,359	33,621	739	2.1%
Administrative Expenses	102,950	56,825	40,046	16,779	29.5% 10k Audit
Property Maintenance	93,750	59,375	62,261	(2,886)	-4.9%
Utilities & Insurance	94,774	47,557	44,936	2,621	5.5%
Operating Expenditures	1,391,054	714,679	673,405	41,274	5.8%
Debt Service	99,675	49,838	49,838	-	0.0%
Total Expenditures	1,490,730	764,517	723,242	41,274	5.4%
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	(9,820)	492	16,390	15,898	
Prior Year Surplus Spend	-	-	-		
PPP spend	-	-	96,844		\$50k Be the Blessing

New Members & Baptisms Report

December 2023

Baptisms for December

Name	Date of Birth	Date Baptized
Gracie Rose Storey	6/13/16	12/10/23
Paul David Farrell	06/06/83	12/31/23

New Members for December

No new members.

Council Action Tracker

Action Item No.	Action Item Description	Assigned To	Date Assigned	Date Due	Notes
1	Be the Blessing	Pastor Julie, Ed	02/15/23		Sub committee met to determine ministries that are active. In April the council confirmed intent to spend PPP monies when the subcommittee has determined their process. 9/20: Team reported their first project approval! Rachael, Camryn, and Dave will roll off the committee; Pastor Julie and Ed will be joined by Tim Hillman, Kendra Saunders, and Kathleen Rudrud. 10/18: The new group has met and solidified the requirements and criteria. Stacy Smith is building a webpage dedicated to Be The Blessing. Partnering with Mac Foreman and Generosity Team to film and tell the stories well. First project - blessing bags to Westlake HS teachers from ECC is complete. No launch date to general public yet. Pastor Julie sent a Doodle to select the next team meeting date. January update: Ed, PT, and Kaylee have met to plan a congregation launch at the end of January. Staci and Kaylee are digitizing the application process. Staci, Jenelle, Kaylee, PT are creating a current ministry list linking to spiritual gifts.

Council Action Tracker

Action Item No.	Action Item Description	Assigned To	Date Assigned	Date Due	Notes
11	Obtain proposals for an aging report/reserve study	Kaylee	20-Sep		Made inquiries with 4 companies. Rory Hernandez from Inspect Pros quotes \$2,000; it will take 1 full day onsite and 3 business days to generate report. Pacific Reserve Studies in Agoura is no longer in business. Emilee called Reserve Study Specialists in Woodland Hills 3 times and had no response. 10/18: Kevin Leonard with Association Reserves is working with Sean and Carol in the Ventura office. We'll have proposal by Friday; study takes about 8 weeks. 11/3: We'll discuss Reserve Study Specialists and Association Reserves at out joint meeting. 11/15: Wes Myers and Bob Woodward were selected to join a task force with Kaylee and check refences on the two remaining companies. December: Two references for one of the companies were obtained before the council meeting. January: Three references are available from each company for the council to consider.

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
December 20, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.**

The council meeting was called to order by Jeannette Ruggiero at 5:05 p.m.

Council Members In Attendance: Al Baker, Rachael Bowen, Bonny Chick, Dave Harkins, Ed Klodt, Carrie Leonard, John Rarick, Jeannette Ruggiero, Steve Smuck

Others: Pastor Tim, Pastor Julie, Kaylee Searway

Mission Statement of Ascension Lutheran Church

We are called to create opportunities for all people to become devoted followers of Christ.

Motto: *Invite, Grow, Serve*

Approval of Agenda – Jeannette

A motion was made (Al), seconded (Carrie), and passed unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

Devotions – Rachael

Christmas is not just about shepherds and wise men, gifts and parties. Christmas is bigger than that. It's about light against darkness, life against death, hope against despair. But most of all it is about the love of God for His children.

Informational Items

1. Acknowledgement of Pastor Julie - Jeannette

Thanks and appreciation were extended to Pastor Julie for her 5+ years at Ascension and for the lives she has touched during this time. Council gifted Pastor Julie with a personalized / engraved prayer journal which can be used to sketch out her plans for the future.

Old Business

1. Get/Be the Blessing Update – Ed

- Thanks to Pastor Julie for getting us to this point.
- The task force started from scratch, learning to build this new program.
- Pastor Julie reached out to the ECC and ALS for ministry projects.
- Dave reached out to the Global Ministries Team as well.
- Five requests have been received so far. Four were approved and one was declined.
- Most worshippers are not involved in ministry. Ed shared the “Sweet Spot” diagram – the intersection of “What are you good at?”, “What brings you joy?” and “What work needs doing?”. This could help Ascension members discover where they would find joy in serving.
- Dave’s research into ministries at Ascension will help to link members to ministries.
- This diagram will be added to Ascension’s website and kept up to date by Stacy Smith.
- Stacy is also working on communications for Be the Blessing in “This Week at Ascension” and on social media.
- A 2-3 minute video is being developed which will be shown in January to formally introduce Be the Blessing to the congregation.
- The BTB team (Kendra Saunders, Kathleen Rudrud, Tim Hillman, Ed and Dave) plan to reach out to Life Groups to encourage more service projects.

2. Reserve Study – Kaylee

Three companies were contacted and two responded with quotes for an asset reserve study. There is a significant price difference between the two companies. References were requested from both companies and Association Reserves (the company with the higher quote) provided three references: Bel Air church, Oaks Christian School, and Shepherd church. Comments from the first two references include:

- A reserve study is completed every four years, going out 10 years each time. This is done for budgeting purposes.
- The study is helpful for auditing – being fiscally responsible with larger assets.
- Association Reserves is easy to work with and efficient.
- The way the information is used is based on how experienced the maintenance crew is.
- Neither reference has yet used the “You Plan It” software.

The other company, Reserve Studies, has not yet provided references after email and phone call requests. Another request will be made after the New Year’s holiday.

Next steps for the reserve study team is to identify requirements for what the reserve study should provide for Ascension and how we will use that information.

The results of the reserve study could be helpful for Rich Gregory when school families approach him to offer donations for specific projects.

A decision that is made sooner rather than later will allow for the church and school to include funds in next year’s budget for projects that may need to be addressed in the coming year.

Kaylee estimates it will take a bit of time to gather the information that will be used in the study. The process is a new one for her and she’ll learn quite a bit, even if the decision is made to go with Reserve Studies (the lower quote).

No Council vote at this time. The ECC and school should be part of this decision as well.

Treasurer’s Report – Dave Harkins

The actual shortfall between income and expenses through November 30th is smaller than in previous months. This is due to two factors: 1) An improvement in weekly offerings, now just 3% less than budget amounts, and 2) Expenses are substantially less than budgeted amounts.

Financials for the ECC and school are not available at this time.

Giving Tuesday raised approximately \$2,000.

A motion was made (Carrie), seconded (Al), and passed unanimously to accept the Treasurer’s report.

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmations and Baptisms – The baptism of Grace Rose Storey was affirmed.

Action Items Action Tracker – No changes or updates.

Approval of Minutes – Jeannette

1. November Church Council Meeting

A motion was made (Al), seconded (Bonny), and passed unanimously to approve the minutes for the November Council meeting.

2. November Joint School Board / Council Meeting

A motion was made (Ed), seconded (Bonny), and passed unanimously to approve the minutes for the November joint School Board / Council meeting.

Consent Approval of Reports to Council

1. Administrator's Report
2. Pastor's reports - Pastor Tim Delkeskamp
Pastor Steve Herder
3. School Board
4. Communications Report
5. GMT Report

A motion was made (Carrie), seconded (Ed) to approve the Reports to Council.

Discussion:

The attendance figures included in the Administrator's report are different than what was reported in the newsletter. They should be the same.

School Board minutes are not included as their meeting was just last Monday.

A Communications report was not submitted.

A Pastor's report from Pastor Julie was not submitted.

The Reports to Council were approved unanimously.

Reminder

Next Council meeting - Wednesday, January 17th at 7:30.

Devotions - Ed

Closing Prayer – Pastor Tim

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50.

Respectfully submitted by Rachael Bowen

Attendance

Our six week average is still increasing: last month I reported 340; it is now 358 with the weekend of January 6/7 at 376. This is a great place to start 2024!

I would love to report some Christmas attendance numbers for you, but we are still circling back with a couple of usher teams to get numbers on two of the services. I can tell you with just three services reported we will have more attendees for Christmas 2023 than we did for Easter 2023, which totaled 885. Christmas of 2022 was 1006, so we are likely to exceed that total as well.

Maintenance

We were able to get some trees trimmed, steam some carpets, and clean some windows over the winter break. We're also cleaning up and moving some things around! Jeff, Cam, Jude Delkeskamp, Christian Teufel, Camyrn Force, and Mike Marvin helped clean up the Sunday School Office and clear out some supplies from our last Vacation Bible School. We moved the Sunday School Cabinets over from the Elementary School space. We'll consolidate supplies and have everything children and youth related together in a single space! It will be a nice gift to a new youth director when we hire one to have a fresh and clean office with organized materials. The School will be able to re-purpose the former Sunday School storage space into back office space, and re-purpose their business office into a classroom for next year. As an added bonus, we moved extra cabinets into Bethlehem Room for the Food Pantry; they will be able to have their supplies more centrally located and better organized.

Sonrise Room Equipment

Last October the council allocated \$1,030 of Thrivent Choice Dollars to equip the Sonrise Room as a study and conference space. Thank you! I was able to utilize some great Black Friday sales, and spent just \$577.17 on the television, mount, camera/speaker, dvd player, keyboard, and mouse. The conference table currently in the space comfortably seats eight, and moving it to the side and using rows of chairs increases the capacity. We can now view Bible Study DVD's like the Grief Share Group does, and hold Zoom or Teams conferences as many of our committees and our staff do on a regular basis. I held off on reporting our spend in December to wait and see how the camera/speaker I purchased would work. While I did purchase a 4K device like the television it is paired with, I bought a significantly cheaper one than our tech team recommended to me. The television was delivered December 22, so we have just started to set up and test the equipment. Provided that the camera/speaker works well we will be able to return \$452.83 of the Thrivent Choice dollars.

Reserve Studies

References for both Association Reserves and Reserve Studies are included in your packet. I look forward to our discussion and next steps.

Human Resources

I engaged with Light Gabler Law to update our employee handbooks. There are a couple of new pieces of information that I am working through with the rest of the executive leadership team. We may propose a couple of changes in February or March, but for now the main changes required are an increase to the minimum amount of sick time from 24 hours to 40 hours, five days of (unpaid) bereavement leave for the loss of an immediate family member, and some additional job protections around pregnancy loss. An expanded workplace prevention policy is required by July of this year, but

the State is expected to provide a template this spring. Our counsel is proposing some additional proactive language in light of the National Labor Relations Board being quite strict about anything that appears to abridge speech by employees. There was nothing problematic in our handbooks that needed to be removed, but they are recommending their added language to the majority of their clients.

I asked for edits on the Church Employee Handbook. As soon as I incorporate all of them in the Church Handbook I will make likewise revisions (as appropriate) to the TK-7 Employee Handbook and the ECC Employee Handbook.

Embracing Inclusivity: California's All Gender Restroom Laws

California adopted Senate Bill 1732 (SB 1732) in 2016, a law that requires places of public accommodation to designate single use restrooms as all gender restrooms. The bill mandates the creation of all-gender restrooms in public places, ensuring that individuals can access facilities without fear of discrimination based on gender identity. A new law effective January 1, 2024, Assembly Bill 783 (AB783), supports the All Gender Restroom Bill by requiring California cities and counties to provide written notice to all applicants for a business license or a permit of the requirement.

Many of our single use restrooms at Ascension already had All Gender signs, but we missed a couple! The new law passing was a good reminder to the Ascension team to walk the campus and make sure our common use spaces are hospitable and accommodating to people of all gender identities and expressions. Regardless of your personal views, we can all agree that Ascension is a community that values hospitality and inclusiveness.

Our church sacristy, church nursery, early childhood center, and STEM bungalow have single user bathrooms that are open to any individuals who prefer to use them. Fostering a welcoming environment is an ongoing process; thank you for your participation in making Ascension a welcoming environment to everyone.

Be the Blessing

I have gotten to participate in some fun and creative work with a team of staff and committee members to move this initiative forward! I met with Ed and Pastor Tim to dream about what full community and congregation involvement in this process would look like. We refined and streamlined the process previously set by Pastor Julie and Camryn Force about accepting applications, committee process, and check disbursement. I still have some "homework" to do in terms of making the process electronic and seamless for both the applicants and the committee, but we are getting there!

Ed was wise to highlight that we have so many well-functioning ministries and opportunities for service already at Ascension. We had a wonderful conversation about spiritual gifts, and how discovering them could open doors for members to get involved with both new and existing ministries. Stacy and I have been getting some resources from the ELCA, and hoping to incorporate their spiritual gifts assessment into our website. Stacy and Jenelle are helping to work from the active ministry list that Dave Harkins recently updated to create a list of ministries with some short descriptions and a contact person. Pastor Tim and I discerned which spiritual gifts are most likely associated with participating in those ministries. Our hope is to have members participate in the spiritual gifts assessment, and then engage in service that utilizes their gifts. It could be within an existing ministry at Ascension, and it might be something brand new.

Kaylee Searway



Pastor Tim's Council Report- January 24

Grace and peace to you my family in Christ. It was an intense December as December can sometimes be. For me it was especially impacted as it was marred not only by my own 2 weeks dealing with the RSV virus but also with my poor puppy's struggle with a nasty parvo virus (she's better now). Despite personal setbacks, many great things happened around here in December, especially around Christmas time, including special Wednesday evening Taizé services, Hanging of the Green, each of our school's music programs and our Christmas eve services. All went wonderfully well. I want to thank all who joined together to help make it all happen. We have a truly wonderful community of staff and volunteers who love to make important contributions.

Of greatest urgency and important right now is our transition of leadership. As I reported at December's council meeting, we are in the process of reviewing pastoral roles and reexamining our staff's organization chart so that we can produce accurate and effective job descriptions for both our Youth Director position and our Associate Pastor position. Having this done will really catalyze our ability to empower the Call Committee to do their incredibly important work.

In the meantime, I have added much of Pastor Julie's former duties to my job description. This work includes overseeing confirmation, Sunday school, and ALS Chapel. I have very much appreciated the ways volunteers such as Cameron Force, Don Weeks, Carlah Snyder, Rick Ertel, Rachael Bowen, Jenny Klemp, Chamie Delkeskamp have stepped up to the plate to help in these ministries as I go through the learning curve and figure out my role. It's been fun and life-giving to get more involved in these ministries.

If I know myself though, I will need to keep an eye on my hours. I don't want to get too burned out. In this way I appreciate that Pastor Steve has increased his halftime hours to $\frac{3}{4}$ time, that Pastor Paul is helping with various projects including taking on the oversight of our Lenten preaching series and that Jenelle Smith (who continues to do excellent work) is adding hours to her job to help me with various projects.

Finally, I am excited to present to you an update on the transition process at our meeting. I hope to, along with Kaylee Searway and Carrie Leonard, present the job descriptions of our new Youth Director Role as well our Associate pastor role. It is my role to oversee this process and shepherd it along as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Tim

Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – January 9, 2024

Blessed New Year, friends in Christ!

On January 5th, I shared this message on our Ascension social media:

Here on the last day of the Christmas season, we want to thank you, dear Ascension family, for all your recent expressions of love and appreciation to your pastors and our staff. We thank God for each of you and your partnership in the ministry of Jesus, as the Spirit leads us all!

Keep our church leadership in prayer as we seek God's guidance in finding a new full-time associate pastor and a new full-time youth director. Thank you!



In the meantime, Pastor Tim will be taking on more responsibilities including teaching Confirmation on Thursdays [he's looking forward to teaching the Bible with them] and Pastor Steve will do more as well in this interim time.... Our most important work weekdays are our visits with you, so don't hesitate to call, email, or ask for a visit. Pastoral care is a priority!.... Thank you for your prayers for our synod, ELCA, and all our local and global partners in ministry, for peace in our world.

This week Pastor Tim and I had a good conversation over lunch about my moving from half-time to three-fourths time, at least in this interim time, the next three to six months, as we seek to call an associate pastor. I'll keep doing what I've been doing in my half-time role the last sixteen months: pastoral care; Senior Adult Ministries Team; Prayer Ministries; Community Concerns Team; Global Ministries Team; sing with our ECC on Fridays; and do two to six posts on social media each day. Our Facebook page now has over 2,200 followers.

What I'll add in this interim is more time helping to lead the 9:00 service, working with Carol Bartell on our Sunday morning adult education time at 10:30, and being the pastoral rep to both our Monday Morning Women's Bible Study and our Ascension Foundation. I'm very happy to add each of these ministries for this interim, and I look forward to working with the lay leaders in each of these ministries.

This morning I asked Diane in our office for an updated list of our members, from our oldest, Irene Sansam, at 100 years young, down to those who are now 65! The total number in this group is 423. As I look to connect with you through the year, don't hesitate to reach out to me for any updates from you and your family. Here are the other numbers. We have one who is 100! There are 23 people in their 90s, 110 in their 80s, 199 in their 70s, and 90 people in that half-decade time, between 65 and 69. That's a lot of friends for you to get to know. Everyone, please wear your name tag when you come to worship!

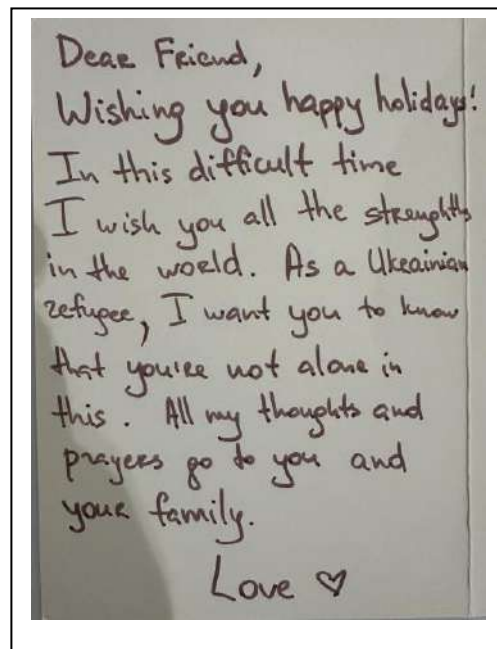
Below are some highlights of ministries since my last Council report. The Global Ministries Team hosted a dinner celebration for Nina Dube, Cal Lutheran student, from Zimbabwe, who is now doing a “semester at sea,” traveling and studying in a dozen countries this semester. (Photo by Christian Teufel.) Our GMT Gifts of Hope update is at the end of this report! Thanks to so many for your generosity!



For the 10th year we have led, with interfaith leaders, the Compassionate Friends ceremony on the second Sunday of December. This is an event for all of Ventura County for families who have lost a child to death. This is a caring outreach ministry that Ascension hosts for our community and I have helped lead it each of these past ten years.



Also, for several years we have been one of three national hubs to receive Christmas cards that are then distributed to refugees and immigrants across the country. This ministry is coordinated by our Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. The card on the right was written by Olga, from Ukraine, and a graduate student at Cal Lutheran. We sent 2,002 cards!



Each month we lead “Christian Life Hours” in six senior living facilities in our area. This photo is from Sunrise in Westlake. The friend in the green on the right is Vi Peterson, mother of Deb Papageorge! This month I started a new worship service at Hillcrest Royale. We thank Norm, Barbara, Dennis, Jeff, Jan, and Marilyn, for helping to lead these CLHs. The residents love it when we come!



Christian Life Hours

Calendar reflects each month

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1:30pm ATRIA Grand Oaks					
3:30pm University Village Oak View	10am Royal Oaks Inn		2pm Sunrise Senior Living - Westlake		10am Hillcrest Royale	
	4:30pm ATRIA Grand Oaks				1:30 and 2:00pm Sage Mountain	
	10am Royal Oaks Inn				1:30 and 2:00 pm Sage Mountain	

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." - Colossians 3:16-17

SUNRISE SENIOR LIVING - WESTLAKE VILLAGE
3151 Tecoma Rd.
Westlake Village, CA 91361

ROYAL OAKS INN
41 N. Taylor Rd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

SAGE MOUNTAIN SENIOR LIVING
3400 Avenida Vista de
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

HILLCREST ROYALE
409 E Hillcrest Dr.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

ATRIA GRAND OAKS
1177 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

UNIVERSITY VILLAGE OAK VIEW
3307 Campus Dr.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

For more information, please contact:
Pastor Steve Hunter - pastorsteve@cal Lutheran.org | Jeanne Gorcheloff - jgorcheloff@gmail.com

We thank all our music leaders, worship leaders, staff, and tech team, for all the wonderful Advent and Christmas worship services this past month, including our choir's cantata, and our handbell choir's special music. Nancy Lee and Country Spirit led a beautiful Christmas Cowboy service. Our 10:30 service with Praise Alive is growing with more young families. We thank Margaret Ricci for playing the pipe organ at all five Christmas Eve services and Cathi Peterson for playing Christmas morning. In mid-December, I surprised you and preached on Psalm 85 and Jesus' baptism, the two art pieces by John August Swanson in our east and west entrances! Christmas caroling to some of our oldest members is a special tradition and blessing. We thank Elijah Lomeli for driving the bus and Yvonne Zoetewey for leading the singing with her flute! Photos at the bottom of the page are of Donna Corra and Dr. Al Leland. Blessed to be a blessing!



In next month's report I'll share more updates from our prayer ministries, Community Concerns, Stephen Ministry, Eucharistic Ministry, and the new ministries that I get to work with you, the leaders of them, in this interim time. Thanks for your prayers.

as of 1/8/24

				After Allocation
GIFTS OF HOPE 2023 CAMPAIGN				
		\$87,071.00	104	\$87,071.00
Meru, Tanzania		\$32,586.00	47	\$33,403.00
Bibles for Evangelists	\$12	\$456.00	5	\$456.00
Goats for widows	\$50	\$2,600.00	26	\$2,600.00
Field school: farming	\$75	\$675.00	6	\$675.00
Build a House for widow	\$2,500	\$16,905.00	11	\$16,905.00
ECC Offering (below)		\$1,000.00	16	\$1,000.00
General Gift		\$10,950.00	15	\$11,767.00
ELCA World Hunger Appeal		\$13,710.00	56	\$14,526.00
10 Chicks	\$10	\$870.00	31	\$870.00
Honey Bee Hive	\$20	\$840.00	23	\$840.00
Piglet	\$30	\$1,170.00	25	\$1,170.00
Fish community	\$250	\$750.00	2	\$750.00
Cow	\$500	\$500.00	1	\$500.00
Family Farm	\$715	\$5,720.00	6	\$5,720.00
General World Hunger		\$3,860.00	11	\$4,676.00
Friends of Fieldworkers		\$23,350.00	43	\$24,166.00
Bag of Groceries	\$25	\$3,025.00	20	\$3,025.00
Laundry Love Program	\$50	\$1,050.00	12	\$1,050.00
Angel Love (unplanned)	\$100	\$2,225.00	9	\$2,225.00
ECC Offering (below)		\$415.00	10	\$415.00
General Gift		\$16,635.00	19	\$17,451.00
Harbor House		\$14,160.00	46	\$14,976.00
Bag of Groceries/Family	\$25	\$1,475.00	19	\$1,475.00
Tank of Gas/Family	\$75	\$750.00	6	\$750.00
Rental Assistance	\$100	\$1,725.00	9	\$1,725.00
General Food Gifts		\$10,210.00	23	\$11,026.00
ECC		\$1,415.00	18	\$1,415.00
Friends of Fieldworkers	\$25	\$415.00	10	\$415.00
Vaccinations Tanzania	\$25	\$675.00	14	\$675.00
Clinic visits Tanzania	\$25	\$325.00	9	\$325.00
Other Gift		\$3,265.00	7	
Checks ordered for distribution 12/21/23:				Residual
Milwaukee Synod (Tanzania Project)		\$28,000		\$5,403.00
ELCA World Hunger		\$8,600		\$5,926.00
Friends of Fieldworkers		\$20,200		\$3,966.00
Harbor House		\$12,700		\$2,276.00

Ascension Lutheran School Board Agenda for 12/17/23 Mtg. at 6:30 p.m.

On Campus (Library) & WebEx

1. Call to Order
2. Remembering Our Mission
3. Opening Devotion/Prayer
4. Approval of Consent Agenda
 - Previous School Board Meeting Minutes
 - Principal's Report
 - ECC Director's Report
 - Church Council Rep Report
 - Finance Reports
 - Admissions Report

Old Business:

1. State of Schools – Rich and Jenni
2. Discussion on any reports pulled from Consent Agenda
3. Update on Staff gifts
4. Update on Insurance Renewal
5. School Board handbook review (?)

New Business:

1. Academy Marketing Recap

Closing Prayer - Pastor Julie

Adjournment

**Ascension Lutheran School Board Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2023**

Remembering Our Mission:

***Church:** We are called to create opportunities for all people to become devoted followers of Christ.*

***ECC:** In a loving Christian community that is rooted in nature, our young learners have large amounts of time to investigate, explore, and have hands-on learning experiences. Our teachers facilitate problem solving, encourage collaboration, and foster independent thinkers through play-based opportunities.*

***Elementary Middle School:** Ascension Lutheran School is dedicated to nurturing each student, providing academic excellence and creating bold, compassionate leaders who inspire and serve others in their walk with Jesus Christ.*

ONE ASCENSION Motto: COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY

Attendees:

Scott Bean, Jenni McCoy, Nelly Trumbo, Rich Gregory, Kyle Jones, Pastor Julie, Chris Poveromo, Kathy Roshanai, Ashley Steere, Steve Smuck, Jennifer Farrell (webex), Connie Angress.

Absent: Anna Woodward and Jocelyn Myers

Call to Order:

Scott called the meeting to order at 6:36pm.

The board recited together the mission statements of the church, ECC and elementary school.

Devotion:

Kyle led the devotion with Luke 16:10 on faithfulness and deceitfulness. Proverbs 22:26 on establishing patterns during upbringing to build healthy habits.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda:

Finance Reports for school and ECC pulled for discussion.

No meeting minutes for month of November as we had our joint Church Council/School Board meeting that month.

Motion to approve agenda and consent agenda items initiated by Ashley. Steve seconded. Motion carried.

Old Business:

State of Schools

- Rich spoke about culture on campus. Gave kudos to team on their working together during this busy season, including Christmas program coordination. Spoke to the “Can Do” attitude on campus they are feeling right now.
- Balance on maintaining positive culture now that we are out of “crisis mode”, as now is the time that can switch to “complaint mode”.
- Jenni spoke to how Robert Steere (new security guard) has become “Father Christmas” on campus. Decked out ECC and school campus with Christmas decorations.
- Getting ready for school registration at ECC and school. Financial aid applications open.

Discussion on pulled ECC and Elementary School/Middle School Budget

- On the school expense report, item 810301 for instructional aids and for auxiliary staff, which are both currently under budget for the year. Per Rich Mike stated that as teacher budget is over by 30k there may have been a mis-planning/mis-coordination and utilized in that facet instead. The auxiliary overbudget due to not having hired extra church help d/t pastor Chamie leaving and 5-6k to go towards contract re-writing.
- Conference line item and school districts funds are due to cover home room teachers attending conference in January.
- On the ECC school expense report, item 810301 also shows similar variances on sub, teachers and instructional aids. Jenni explained that is due to staff leaving, substitute teacher utilization and hiring of additional staff members.
- Clarification on abbreviations noted: PC is pre-school and IC is infant center some teachers moved from one center to another physically but were not moved on the accounting side.

Clarification on Admissions Report: 158 as of January. 2 oldest Brodit siblings will be leaving.

Update on School Board

- Ashley provided updated on school board handbook updates. As Pastor Julie is being called outside of ALS, recruited other board members to assist in updating the handbook. Nelly and Kathy volunteered to help. Goal to have all handbook changes completed and approved by June 2024.

New Business:

Teacher Compensation Subcommittee

- Chris provided a summary on the formation of a sub-committee to examine teacher compensation increases and benefits. The committee will seek to make a recommendation for both short term and long-term strategies to increase/supplement teacher compensation.

- Short-term would have recommendation by February meeting.
- Long-term objectives on ongoing strategies
- Subcommittee members: Chris, Kyle, Mike, Anna, Kaylee, Jenni and Rich.

Pastor Julie Sendoff:

Thanked Pastor Julie for all of her amazing work on the school board and in helping to make this a truly One Ascension group/campus.

Closing Prayer:

Pastor Julie closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment:

Nelly motioned to adjourn the meeting. Chris seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 7:24pm.

The devotion schedule for the remainder of the year is as follows:

January – Jocelyn
February – Kathy
March – Nelly
April – Steve
May – Anna
June – Scott

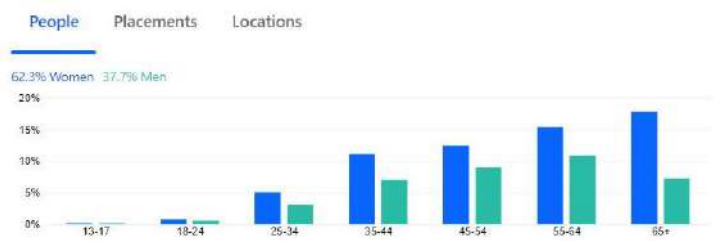
Respectfully submitted by Ashley Steere

Here is a breakdown of our paid Christmas Advertising:

Acorn (two weeks, four editions, color ads; 3 col X 3 ½" and 4 col. X 5")	\$2400.00
Direct Mail Postcard (\$450 printing, \$180 USPS delivery, two postal routes)	\$ 630.00
Google ad	\$ 140.00
Instagram – two “boosts” of Christmas invite video	\$ 78.00
Facebook – one ad, paused	\$ 67.00

As you may recall, our local paper, The Acorn, has had changes in ownership and editorial leadership over this past year. Now comes news that our long-time advertising contact (and one-time Ascension member) Sue Martin has retired. We will be working with Advertising Director Nick Oliveri. Of course, in the past it was nice to deal with friendly acquaintances at the paper. I hope that our new contacts continue the mutually beneficial relationships we’ve had.

Also noteworthy as we look at this most recent ad season: I suspended a Facebook ad when we noticed a decided uptick in junk coming into our Facebook messages, plus a particularly annoying spammer that showed up in a few of our followers’ comments. Pastor Steve and I had a conversation about a seeming correlation between casting our net wider with ads and mal actors showing up. (He is now up to more than 2,200 followers on that page, which is truly remarkable, so I endeavor to handle with care.) Even before suspending the video invite ad, we had 2,274 “thru plays,” which Meta Business tells us means 3 cents a play, with a “lookalike” audience to Ascension’s:

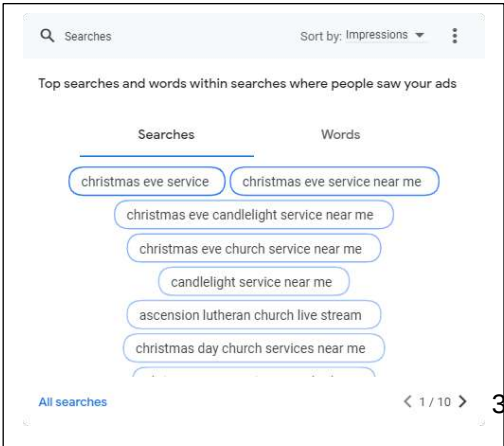
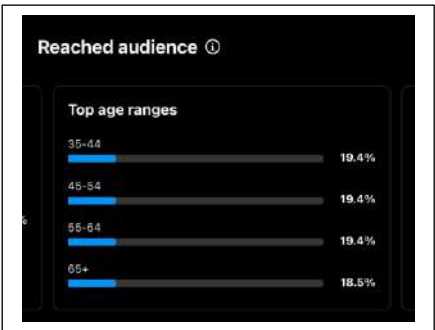


I had the same video ad on Instagram with 1,078 plays. With a surge in content including the daily Advent Devotional posts and sharing of more of Pastor Steve’s Facebook content, we gained about 35 new Instagram followers over the season for a total now of 435. Instagram skews a little younger. (See below, left.)

Also, on our Google ad, we find: 18,700 Impressions, 268 clicks at a cost of \$139/52 cents per click. I’m including our top searches/search words (below, right).

Thank you for your generous time and wise leadership,

Stacy Bosco





Wednesday, January 10, 2024

4-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room

Mission Statement: With our congregation, we are "called to create opportunities for all people to become devoted followers of Christ." Together we "invite, grow, serve."

The Global Ministries Team will do this as we pray, work, partner and participate in God's mission around the world, using our ELCA global mission model of accompaniment. ("God's work. Our hands.") The scope of current ministries as well as those ministries we would like to better serve and support is reflected in our name. Inspired by the Biblical mandates to preach the Gospel and remember the poor, the Global Ministries Team will respond to God's love by sharing the good news of God's saving grace in Christ; preserving and restoring creation; and serving others through care, advocacy, education, reconciliation, solidarity with those in need, and interfaith work.

AGENDA

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER by Carol Bjelland

1. YEAR IN REVIEW of Global Ministries Team activities, projects, people.

2. PLANNING FOR 2024

Priorities, ideas/funding for new ministries.

What will we continue to emphasize? Who will lead our priorities? How will we fund our priorities? What new ideas could we develop into a global ministry through the ALC grant program?

3. Review of GMT Monthly Reports and Volunteer Needs (5:15-5:30 PM)

Gifts of Hope-Summary

Fair Trade

ALC Adult Education

Great Music at Ascension

Center for Global Engagement, CLU

ELCA World Hunger Leaders Gathering, Houston, Feb, 2024

4. Next meeting, February 7, 2024, 4PM Bethlehem Room.

We will learn about the ELCA Missionaries we support, ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM), and ELCA Women Leaders.

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve. - Albert Schweitzer

PEOPLE OF GOD, as you leave this place, you go into a weary world, so speak tenderly. Do good that is yours to do. Choose connection. Hold onto hope. And remember that Christ took on flesh for you. You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing. The world needs it. Amen.

January, 2024

January 9 AMY JILL LEVINE, [youtube.com/lutherseminary](https://www.youtube.com/lutherseminary) 5 PM

Join us on January 9, 2024 with renowned New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine. Professor Levine will deliver a lecture on "The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector: Why Knowledge of Jewish History Matters for Christian Preaching and Teaching." She describes herself as an unorthodox member of an Orthodox synagogue and a Yankee Jewish feminist who works to counter biblical interpretations that exclude and oppress.

January 10	YEAR IN REVIEW & PLANNING FOR 2024 for GMT, 4PM, Bethlehem Room
January 11	FAIR TRADE LANE open, 2:30-4:00 PM
January 14	Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr, Adult Class, Louise Evenson, 10:30 AM
January 14	"THE VOICE OF TRUTH", Martin Luther King, Jr service at CLU's Samuelson chapel at 3 PM. Sponsored by the SW Synod of the ELCA and African Descent Lutheran Association of Los Angeles (ADLA-LA)
January 21	Mt Meru Coffee Project Team, Adult Class, Carol Bjelland, 10:30 AM
January 26	LWR Update with Pr Lisa Kipp, noon-1:30, Bethlehem Room. RSVP to Louise
January ?	Sort/Organize books for Friends of Fieldworkers

UPCOMING in FEBRUARY:

Feb 1-4	ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering, Houston, TX.
Feb 8	Global Café, 12:15-2:00 PM, CLU Student Union, Teas of the World Fair Trade Lane Open, 2:30-4:00 PM
Feb 11	Fair Trade Lane Open, 8:00-9:00 AM and 10:00-10:30 AM
Day/Time ?	Friends of Fieldworkers GOH follow-up, CHILDREN'S BOOKS and LAUNDRY LOVE, Oxnard

MARCH

March 3	Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team REFUGEE AWARENESS event and Potluck Dessert Reception, Founders Hall, 6:30 PM.
March 12	International Women's Day Community Celebration Dinner, 5:30-7 PM, CLU

LOOKING AHEAD

April 4	Global Café, Jack's Corner, CLU, 12-2PM Earth/Sustainability
April 9	Earth Day/Fair Trade Event, Kingsmen Park, CLU, 12-2 PM TENTATIVE
May 18-19	50 th Anniversary of Scandinavian Festival, Kingsmen Park, CLU noon-7PM

GMT MEETINGS with Proposed focus presentations, 4 pm BETHLEHEM ROOM

February 7	FOCUS: ELCA Missionaries, ELCA YAGM, ELCA Women Leaders
March 6	FOCUS: ELCA WORLD HUNGER, Speakers from Leadership Gathering
April 10	FOCUS: CREATION CARE
May 7	FOCUS: ADVOCACY including FAIR TRADE, LIRS, BREAD FOR THE WORLD

January 8, 2024