

### Attendance

Our six week average is 333, slightly down from the 338 reported last month. Our online views of 1 minute or greater down slightly from 140 to 135. Ash Wednesday's 7:00 pm service brought 190 people to worship, and consequent Lenten services have averaged 79 people.

### Maintenance

Cam, Jeff, and Jude have freshened up the paint on the large concrete staircase in the middle of campus and added some reflective strips to each stair to assist with visibility at night. Jeff has been painstakingly dissecting and reconstructing each of the four doors from the narthexes into sanctuary. He's reinforcing the structure so that the doors and frames can support the hinges.

One of the fun process improvements we are working on at the moment is a maintenance request form with tracking in Google Sheets. We hope it will allow anyone with a concern to communicate it effectively to the team, and that will help our team track and follow up on items of concern. We've tested the process with a couple of key individuals and we are planning to make adjustments before we broaden the test group. Stay tuned for more to come!

### Sonrise Room Equipment

A new combination of camera, microphone and speaker has been ordered, and will hopefully be installed in the next week. We see greater need for conference calls and Zoom in our near future with so much work being done by the Call Committee and Youth Director Search Committee; this tech will be helpful when several groups need to meet at the same time.

### Human Resources

I have distributed the updated Church Employee Handbook to the staff. They are currently reviewing it and sending me the signature pages, with a deadline of March 25<sup>th</sup> to have all the signature pages returned.

I've drafted the TK-8 Employee Handbook and asked some key individuals to confirm a couple of policies before it is ready for the School Board. The ECC will be next!

Pastor Tim has been recruiting, and Camryn has been following up with a crew of nursery attendants to offer child care during Sunday morning services. As soon as we have a couple of individuals hired and through their Safe Church training we'll be ready to roll out nursery care on Sunday mornings.

Camryn and I both served on the compensation committee for the School, and we recently got a significant pay raise into the salary matrix for homeroom teachers. We've both put in a fair amount of work validating and updating data. Staci Hammerschmidt and Rich Gregory are helping me confirm and verify how many university semester credits each teacher has obtained in addition to their degree so that we can make sure they are in the correct column of the salary matrix. It's important pre-work to preparing work agreements for the next academic year, a task I hope to have completed in late March and early April. Having very accurate tuition forecasts and salary projections is the first step toward a "rediculously accurate" budget.

## Finance

As we round out completing the TK-8 compensation for next year I'm working to validate and then update the ECC's salary worksheet in a similar manner. Jenni, Brittani, and Karyn Ring have done an amazing job registering families for fall, filling in scheduling opportunities, and providing my team with very accurate tuition forecasts. As I alluded one paragraph ago and many times before, when we nail the revenue and largest expense on each entity (our people, as they should be), everything else becomes small potatoes on very detailed budgets...

I am going to keep this short as I have spreadsheets to update and budgets to create... thank you for allowing me and my team to serve.

*Kaylee Searway*





## Church Council Report

Pastor Steve Herder

March 4, 2024

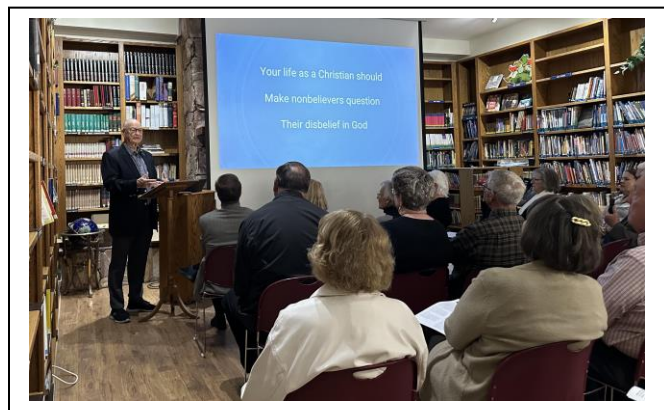
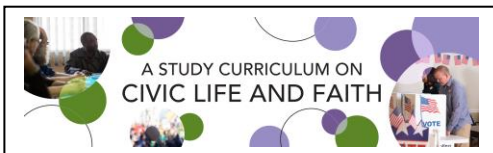
In this Lenten season we appreciate our worship leaders, and those who work behind the scenes, to make our worship services so meaningful. Pastor Tim, Principal Pastor Rich Gregory, Pastor Paul, and our Wednesday preachers have given



us outstanding sermons, and our music groups are each a huge blessing. Our sanctuary cross (on the left) and my purple stole (on the right) each show the “Jerusalem Cross,” with the four smaller crosses around the larger cross, most widely interpreted as representing the five wounds of Christ.

On Sunday, March 3, was the sixth and final class in the ELCA series “Civic Life and Faith.” My topic to lead was on how each of the parts of our worship services impacts our life of discipleship through each week, that is, how does it influence our civic engagement. Below is the link to each of the six sessions and the videos. We thank each of our teachers: Carol Bartell, Paul Evenson, Paul Gravrock, Ron Cox, and Karsten Lundring! The library was packed each week with eager participants.

[Studies for Civic Life and Faith - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(elca.org\)](https://www.elca.org)



You see from the graphic above that our Ascension Facebook outreach is now up to 2,331 people. We do two to six posts every day. Each Monday Susanne Hopkins shares a devotion. May the written word of God, with a passage or a prayer that we post each day, keep pointing us to the Living Word of God, Jesus our Savior! We seek to use it as a good outreach ministry for our congregation, school, and foundation, and for our local and global ministries. The more that you like, “love,” comment, or share, the more your friends and family can participate in the Ascension ministries, and have their faith strengthened. Thanks, Stacy, for our Instagram presence!

This past Sunday evening, we hosted the Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team and 88 people from various houses of faith, for a dessert potluck and for hearing the stories of refugees and those who work to help them settle here. (Eleven of us represented Ascension.) In 2023 our CIRT helped 50 families from 10 countries including Afghanistan, Ukraine, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Thailand. Some of you help donate or move furniture! Our Matthew 25:35 Outreach Ministry Fund contributes to these needs as well.

Our Global Ministries Team is in the midst of promoting the assembly of Welcome Baskets for these refugees. Thank you to each ministry team, each family, each person that is working on assembling them. More updates will come from our GMT on this. Please see the GMT report in this council packet related to our [Fair Trade Ministries](#), the February focus on our missionaries, Pastor Kristin Engstrom in Zambia and Pastor Wal Reat in South Sudan, our new project Ray of Life for solar kits for the people in Ukraine, along with a water filter with each kit. A group also did Laundry Love with Friends of Fieldworkers! Louise Evenson is leading our team in amazing ways and we appreciate each person on our GMT. Thank you to our Church Council for the [Be the Blessing grant! We encourage all of you to brainstorm a ministry grant and to apply!](#)

Once every 18 months our ELCA holds a [national gathering for Hunger Leaders](#). Five of us from Thousand Oaks represented our Synod in Houston for this, Feb. 1-4. Mary Wennes and I were so pleased with how well our three friends from Cal Lutheran engaged in the whole gathering. They were CLU staff member Dulce, and students Angela and Freya. The five of us will report at our GMT meeting on March 6. The gathering honored the Wennes family for creating an [endowment that funds this national gathering!](#) It was a good time to remember with love and gratitude, Howie Wennes. (The photo on the right is with Rev. Dr. Haemin Lee, the new director of ELCA World Hunger.)



One other seed to plant, from the GMT, is that if you are interested in a synod trip to El Salvador in early August, see our chairperson, Louise Evenson, or me.

Your pastors would ask you to let us know when you are in the hospital and when you return home. Sometimes it's a short interim at a physical rehab place, and we appreciate visiting you there too. Our love and prayers are with each of you who are healing and those who are still hurting. Here's a photo of a home visit with Marilyn Castan. Also at this great place are Norma Schillerstrom and Dr. Allen Leland who just turned 99! We thank our high school youth for making some Scripture cards and encouragement cards for us to give to our oldest members!



Here's another example of our love and care for our seniors. Barbara Krum reports this for the month of February: she visited 12 members for a total of 20 visits, 9 with Holy Communion, as a Eucharistic Minister. She had seven non-member visits at senior places, and three with Holy Communion. Thank you, Barbara!

Norm Guetschoff, Barbara Krum, Jeff and Jan Specks, Dennis Gray and Marilyn Reeve lead the Christian Life Hours at Royal Oaks Inn, Atria Grand Oaks, Sage Mountain, and Sunrise Westlake. I lead them at University Village Oak View and Hillcrest Royale. If you'd like to learn more about this fabulous outreach ministry, talk with anyone of us. To learn more about: Eucharistic Ministry, visit with Pastor Ron Cox, GriefShare with Brenda Heinrich; or Stephen Ministry, Norm Guetschoff. We thank each person in each of these caring ministries.

We grieve the loss of some of our beloved ones recently: Patricia Beatie, Bill Munn, Verlon Meyer, Mickey Johnson (she and Les were married for 78 years!), and Joann Beard. May Jesus our Good Shepherd comfort their families, and us, with the good news of life eternal.

If you'd like to join our email prayer group, let Linda Morrow know. She sends out two or three emails a week to keep us updated on prayer requests from individuals, ministries, and ELCA Prayer Ventures.

Our Community Concerns Team, led so well by Chris Daleiden, has been very active with our food pantry ministries. Thank you for responding generously when asked to contribute this past month. It was a tremendous response! Thanks to Tania and Barry Disselhorst and other families who help with the monthly hot meals program on the third Tuesday of the month. Our neighbors appreciate all your gifts for Caring Ones and the Agape Fund.



Most Thursday mornings I attend the Cal Lutheran chapel service at 11:25. I highly recommend it if you can get away at that time. Rev. Scott Hamilton Adams is an inspiring worship leader, preacher, and led some powerful prayers for students last week.

Our congregation's Green Faith Team is working, with leader Kristine Werner, on a project to make our congregation "greener!" Stay tuned. Our Synod Green Faith Team is planning a Zoom event at noon on World Water Day, March 22 at noon.

We have a new team, led by Council member Bonny Chick. She has gathered a great group of people to plan our next blessing of the animals. The reason we are starting already is because we are planning a much bigger event. It will be on Saturday, Oct. 5, from noon to 4pm, with several vendors, food trucks, games for children, and opportunities for our animals to be blessed! If you'd like to help us plan, join us on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 4pm in the Bethlehem Room.

In the early 1990s when my father was in El Salvador with our ELCA bishops, he received the cross on the left from Bishop Gomez (who is still the bishop there!). When I told this story to Pastor Cruz Calles (from El Salvador) at the ELCA hunger gathering in Houston, he then gave me his cross (the photo on the right). Notice that after all these years, they still paint the same scenes: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Christian community, and Luther's rose in the middle!



***Blessings on your  
Lenten journey to the cross and empty tomb!***

***Thank you for your prayers as the Spirit leads us in calling our second  
associate pastor and hiring a youth director.***

