



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, April 17th, 2024 – 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

Informational Items-

Nomination Committee Update

Ed

Call /Search Committee Updates

Pastor Tim

Budget Process Update

Dave

Presentation of Treasurer's Report –

Dave

New Business –

Roof Repair

Jeannette / Dave

Thrivant Dollars Request

Pastor Tim

Old Business

Get/Be The Blessing

Ed

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmands & Baptisms

All

Action Items Action Tracker -

Jeannette

Approval of Minutes –

March 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 -

Devotion for May meeting is Alan! Thank you!

Treasurer's Report for April 2024

The Church financial summary is appended to this report. Once available, the school summary will be distributed as well.

Year to Date Church Operating Results

Other than the weak start to the calendar year, February and March combined delivered an exceptionally strong revenue performance for Q3. Offerings year to date are now virtually at the budget (shortfall of only \$982). Recalling that the "ask" reflected 5% over last year's budget, these results are truly something to celebrate. The actual offering total after nine months reflects a 6% increase over last year's actual. That said, a small part of the difference may be Easter falling (and for the most part booked) in March, vs. last year when Easter fell April 7th.

We have discussed previously the increasing unpredictability in the monthly comparisons from year to year, but these results put us in a very strong position for finishing the year well.

The expense side of the budget continues to be better than expectations, again driven primarily by staffing shortages. The absence of a youth director and the vacant Associate Pastor position continue to be key drivers in the variance. Overall, actual to budget shows a \$75K favorability. The church actual to date is producing a \$46K surplus vs. the budgets expectation of a \$31K deficit.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Harkins

Ascension Lutheran Church
Budget Summary
YTD through March 31, 2024

	Church '23 - '24 Budget	Church '23 - '24 Budget YTD	Church '23 - '24 Actual YTD	Church '23 - '24 Variance	%
Revenues:					
Offerings (Church)	1,443,210	1,087,989	1,087,007	(982)	-0.1%
Other Revenues	37,700	28,775	31,393	2,618	9.1%
Total Revenues:	1,480,910	1,116,764	1,118,401	1,637	0.1%
Expenditures:					
Salaries & Benefits	1,153,170	883,608	830,884	52,725	6.0%
Allocated Staff Expenses	(183,202)	(139,332)	(144,813)	5,481	-3.9%
Benevolences	62,780	46,946	47,285	(339)	-0.7%
Programs / Committees	66,832	53,720	45,890	7,830	14.6%
Administrative Expenses	102,950	80,712	66,643	14,069	17.4% \$6.5k of unspent Tech budget, timing
Property Maintenance	93,750	76,537	81,694	(5,156)	-6.7%
Utilities & Insurance	94,774	71,049	70,402	647	0.9%
Operating Expenditures	1,391,054	1,073,241	997,985	75,256	7.0%
Debt Service	99,675	74,756	74,756	-	0.0%
Total Expenditures	1,490,730	1,147,997	1,072,741	75,256	6.6%
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	(9,820)	(31,233)	45,659	76,892	
Prior Year Surplus Spend	-	-	-		
PPP spend	-	-	96,844		

New Members & Baptisms Report

April 2024

Baptisms for March

Name	Date of Birth	Date Baptized
Alanna Ann Waters	10/07/23	03/02/24
Emery Jean Waters	07/26/20	03/02/24
Annie Jane Hooper	01/16/24	03/17/24
Nathaniel Khanji	05/30/23	03/23/24
Samuel Thomas Feinberg	08/05/1983	03/30/24

New Members for March

No new members in March

Council Action Tracker

Action Item No.	Action Item Description	Assigned To	Date Assigned	Date Due	Notes
1	Be the Blessing	Ed, Dave	02/15/23		The committee is taking requests. They reviewed 8 requests at their last meeting!
11	Reserve Study	Kaylee, Jeff	20-Sep		Fred needs some intial financial and project insformation before we schedule an onsite visit. Kaylee and Jeff are compiling proposals; the completed audit will inform the finance aspect.
13	Budget for new fiscal year	Kaylee, Mike, Camryn	Feb	June	Tuition increases and a salary matrix for homeroom teachers has been approved by the School Board. March results are in for the church, almost done for the school. We anticipate presenting budgets to Council and School Board in May.
14	Employee Engagement Survey	Kaylee	March	each April/May	Survey introductions were re-written and will go out to TK-7 and ECC staff next week.
15	Senior Pastor's Review	Jeannette		May	Kaylee has drafted a proposed review form for the church staff if that is helpful.
16	Names to Nominating Committee	council		Spring	

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.**

The council meeting was called to order by Jeannette Ruggiero at 6:35 p.m.

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

Others: Pastor Tim, Kaylee Searway

Absent: John Rarick, Anna Woodward

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

Move - Open Forum will take place when Louise Evenson arrives at the meeting.

Add - Update on Insurance Situation to Informational Items.

Move – Old Business to whenever Ed arrives at the meeting.

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

Informational Items

1. Pending Litigation - Kaylee

There is a pending case of litigation arising from a 2020 incident where a school child broke their leg. Ascension was served in 2022 and the court date is set for January 2025. It is hoped that there will be a settlement before that date. Accident coverage covered some of the medical bills. The general liability policy should cover other potential expenses. Ascension is represented by in-house counsel from Hanover Insurance.

Treasurer's Report – Dave

Revenues in February reversed a shortfall in January with offerings exceeding the budget amount by \$58,000. This is due to some “catch-up” offerings from families who are giving large amounts less frequently rather than steady amounts each month.

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

Open Forum

1. Global Ministries Team – Ray of Life Project

GMT member Louise Evenson presented a fundraising opportunity to purchase Ray of Life solar light kits. She became aware of this ministry from a pastor in Minnesota. These kits are made in West Virginia by people from foster care. They are lights that are charged by the sun and last for up to 21 hours before needing to be re-charged.. 4,000 kits have been sent world-wide and are still in use years later. Louise requests permission for a one-time fundraiser to purchase 100 kits (\$125 each) which would be sent to Ukraine. Additionally, 25 water purification kits (\$25 each) would also be sent. The monies raised would be used to purchase these kits which would be sent to the church in Minnesota whose members have experience with assembling the kits and a system in place to bulk mail the kits to the chaplain battalion in Mauripol, Ukraine. Each kit will be sent with a message from Ascension both in English and Ukrainian. The translation will be done by an international student from CLU. There will be an opportunity on 4/13 for Ascension members to

help assemble 10 of these kits. The fundraising effort would begin after Ascension School's Gala.

New Business

1. Fundraising Request – Ray of Life Project

It is necessary to be mindful of the number of fundraising requests throughout the year so as not to overload the congregation.

A motion was made (Carrie), seconded (Bonny), and passed unanimously to approve the one-time fundraising request by the GMT for the Ray of Life Project.

Informational Items

2. Nominating Committee Update - Ed

There are two officer openings for the Foundation. A replacement for Steve Smuck is needed for the School Board. John Rarick took over the remainder of Camryn Force's term so that is an open position along with President-Elect. Recommendations are welcome.

Old Business

1. Get/Be the Blessing Update – Ed

- Three new grant requests have been received.
- The committee is looking into personal engagement to encourage and inform congregation members about Be the Blessing.
- The committee is considering a project of their own.
- The fund balance is approximately \$55,000.

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmations and Baptisms – New members Marie and Rakesh Dagal were affirmed by the Council.

Action Items Action Tracker

- The budget is coming together. The big parts for the school are set and the church budget is next.
- Employee engagement is taking place with the ECC and ALS teachers and staff. This is not taking place for the church staff at this time. Pastor Tim, Kaylee, Rich, and Jenni meet regularly to discern the state of the culture on the campus.
- Nominating Committee deadline is the May Council meeting.

Approval of Minutes – Jeannette

1. February Church Council Meeting

A motion was made (Dave), seconded (Carrie), and passed unanimously to approve the minutes for the February Council meeting.

Consent Approval of Reports to Council

1. Administrator's Report
2. Pastor's reports - Pastor Steve Herder (no report from Pastor Tim this month)
3. School Board
4. Communications Report
5. GMT Report

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

Reminder

Next Council meeting - Wednesday, April 17th at 7:00.

Devotions – Dave Harkins

Closing Prayer – Pastor Tim

Adjournment

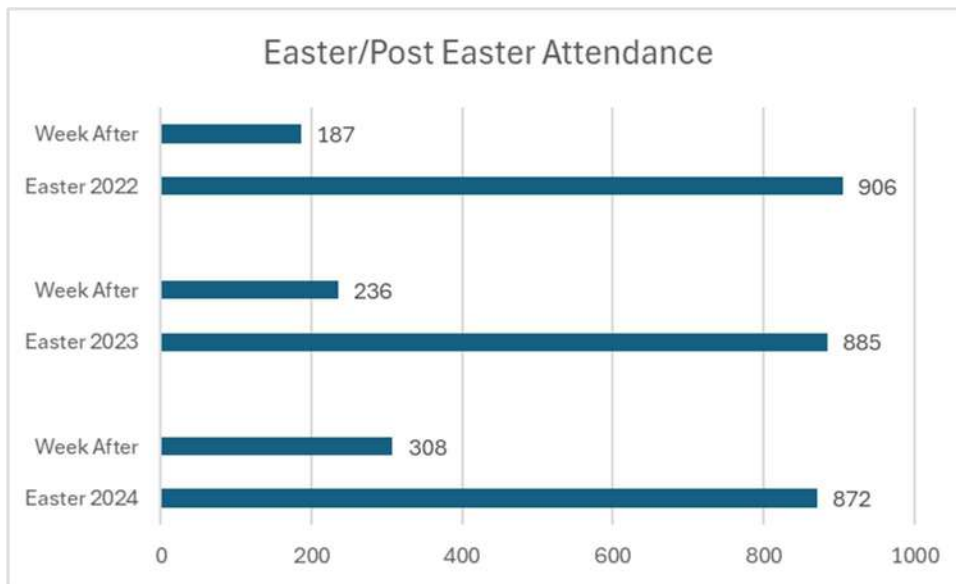
A motion was made (Ed), seconded (Bonny) and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29

Respectfully submitted by Rachael Bowen

Attendance

Our six week average, excluding Easter, has increased from 333 to 366. Speaking of Easter, we had 872 people join us to worship between Saturday night, Sunday at 7:00, 9:00, and 11:00. It's always an interesting metric to see how many guests we had for Easter, but it's very heart warming to see how many people came back for the second Sunday of Easter. This year we had 308 people a week after our big Easter celebrations, a number that has increased since we came out of the pandemic:



This graph tells a story of people whose lives are transformed by Jesus, and we express that transformation by being a community that practices regular worship together.

Maintenance

An important need we have discovered and struggled to fix in the last two rainy winters, is the sanctuary roof. We have a long-standing leak over the outer doors to the west patio, and a new leak that appeared in the most recent storms, closer to the apex of the bell tower. If you stare at the wall above the large narthex doors on the west side you will see stains of drips running down from the ceiling to the tops of the doors. The water has swollen the doors and gotten inside the mechanics of the door, causing a security issue when the doors are too swollen to close and lock. We have re-painted this area a couple of times in the belief that the leak was fixed, but time and new storms proved us wrong. Jeff has met with the roofers several times, and confirms that the current installation will continue to fail in future storms. We currently have a proposal from Local roofs for about \$12,600 to address this area of the roof. Dave can show you in his Treasurer's report that we are slightly unfavorable in our year to date spend of Property Maintenance, but overall we are positioned to end the year with a decent surplus. Please approve an additional spend of \$12,600 to repair this roof leak within the current fiscal year.

Thrivent Choice

At the beginning of April Mike gave me the great news that we have \$16,752 in Thrivent Choice dollars. Just this week he told me that about \$5,800 more was just awarded from Thrivent Choice in unrestricted gifts. In light of this information, I would like to propose two Thrivent Choice requests.

I would like \$7,366 to get new carpet in the church offices. I think it would put a good foot forward for associate pastor and youth director candidates. I have submitted a Foundation grant for the entryway and Bethlehem room flooring.

With the adoption of a One Ascension Finance structure, support from One Ascension leadership, Camryn and Mike, I have been able to grow in the human resources area of my role to be involved with hiring, onboarding, offboarding, exit interviews, compensation structures, work agreements, employee handbooks, performance improvement plans, employee concerns, and dispute resolutions. I brought a great deal of knowledge into this role, and I have continued to develop my knowledge and skills with books, classes, and seminars about HR law and employment practices. I would like to attend a two-day virtual seminar hosted by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM). They are offering a SHRM HR Department of One Specialty Credential, which is ten hours of virtual instruction of over 2 days in either May or June. I will attend the seminar, complete two e-Learning courses, and take a knowledge assessment to obtain the Specialty Credential. I am a member of SHRM, so the cost is \$1,480. Please approve \$1,480 in Thrivent Choice dollars for me to attend this training.

Human Resources

The Church's Employee Handbook has been distributed, and all signature pages have been collected! I've drafted the TK-8 and ECC Employee Handbooks for the School Board to review later this month. I have prepared and, by council will have distributed, work agreements for the TK-8 teachers. I will not be sending the ECC work agreements until after their budget is approved in May. Employee engagement surveys are ready to be sent later this month to the TK-8 and ECC teams. I'll aggregate those results and report them to the School Board in May.

Administration

We have gathered TK-8, ECC, and church calendars for the 2024-2025 school year, and started compiling them into a single calendar. We'll have a meeting with leadership from the church and both schools in mid-May to make sure we are synchronizing our events well and supporting all the events of One Ascension.

Finance

We are very deep into budget season. Dave will discuss offering aspirations with you in connection with his report. That revenue becomes a key driver in the ways we are able to support ministry. I'm looking forward to May!

Earthquake Insurance Details

I previously shared with you that our earthquake and flood insurance renewal reflected some material changes in coverage. Mt Hawley changed the policy from a Difference in Materials policy to a Named Perils policy, and added a sublimit of \$5,000,000 on flood. They will no longer cover Backfill and Cost of Excavation.

I asked our broker to look at options for supplemental policies that would bring our flood limit back to the \$14,796,988 property value and possibly cover Backfill and Cost of Excavation. None of the companies are currently offering us Backfill and Cost of Excavation, but our broker did find a supplemental policy to increase our flood limit to the full 14,796,988 for a cost of about \$10,000 annually.

With offer in hand, Jeannette, Dave, Mike, Anna Woodward, Chris Poveromo, and I set out to ask some clarifying questions: does our mortgage lender require us to cover the property for flood at the full property value? What type of flood risk is our property located in? Has our broker seen a history of flood claims in excess of \$5,000,000? I got some answers:

FEMA says our property is in the Santa Clara River Level 3 Project Area : it's a 100 year floodplain with a 1% probability of flooding every year. (We are not in a 200 year flood plain or longer, so we won't likely be able to refute the sublimit with Mt Hawley successfully, which was one of the questions asked.)

Thrivent Financial (our mortgage lender) required flood insurance for properties in a special flood hazard area, which we are not.

Our agent has not seen a history of \$5,000,000 flood claims filed.

I sent Dave Harkins, our Treasurer, a copy of last year's policy to review the flood provisions; he recalls and affirms that Earthquake coverage was the main driver for seeking the Mt Hawley policy originally; flood was just sort of included and along for the ride.

Consensus of our Council President, Treasurer, School Board Treasurer, School Board member in the insurance business, broker, and myself is that we can choose to pass on the supplemental policy and still have met our lender requirements and maintained the earthquake coverage.

I do not intend to pursue the supplemental flood policy unless directed by the council.

Kaylee Searway



Tim's Council Report- April 24

Grace and peace to you my family in Christ,

My vision for the Ascension community is about transforming lives, one life at a time. I am blessed to see that happen on a weekly basis. On example of this is on the Saturday before Easter I got to baptize young father. He had been coming to worship for about a month with his family, he made an appointment with me, asked me all sorts of good questions and decided that he was ready to be baptized. I am not a crier but he and I both wept throughout the baptism as his 3-year-old son looked on. Those moments come by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit and remind me of the deep purpose that I get to be a part of as a pastor. In the busyness of this current season, its moments like these that keep me going. I want to continue to help the Spirt orchestrate more moments like this- one life at a time.

These moments are also why we are working hard to find both an Associate Pastor and a Youth Director. And I believe that both of these crucially important processes are currently on a good track. For me, the month of March was about launching the amazing group of people that we elected for the Call Committee. After 3 initial meetings in February and early March where Carrie Leonard and I helped form the team, we left them to the work of electing co-chairs of the committee, selecting roles, and doing the work of networking, listening the various constituencies of the congregation (including staff, retired pastors, leaders, and the entire congregation) and working with the Synod. Now that they are launched, I am at their call to help however I can even while I continue to encourage the congregation to pray for their work.

With the Seach Team, I am playing a more hands-on role. The team is a smaller team made up of good people (Joel Halvorson, Scott Squires, and Jenifer Marvin) who are currently meeting weekly. At this point we have amassed several resumes and are even interviewing candidates. I am glad about this as there is great urgency in getting a Youth Director in place. The summer would be an excellent time to begin to rebuild a community that has sadly seen a great deal of deterioration over the last few years. I really grateful for the work that Diane Beck has done with our high school and for our confirmation mentors Carlah Schnieder, Cameryn Force and Don Weeks for continuing to help in this time.

Holy Week and Easter were particularly special this year. I owe a huge debt of thanks to my wife, Pastor Chamie for taking the lead on our chapel experiences on Maundy Thursday and

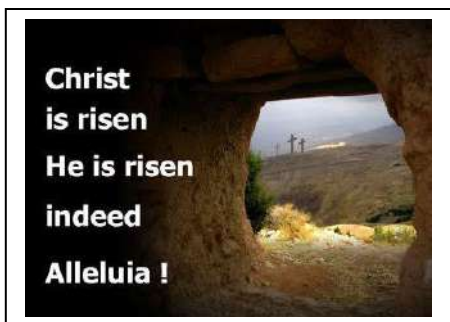
Good Friday. This includes helping ALS to bake fresh bread for both Maundy Thursday services, procuring a real, live donkey so that the kids could walk celebrate the Palm parade, and putting together a very moving Tenebrae service for Good Friday. In addition, because many of the students don't attend church, we also included an Easter celebration at the very end of our Friday Chapel so that people could celebrate the risen Lord. We also had wonderful evening services. Our Carillons led the Music on Maundy Thursday and pastor Ron Cox preached. Our Good Friday service was wonderfully put together and there was a lot of beautiful music and good quiet time during the service so that people could contemplate the cross. We received a lot of good feedback. We hired Pastor Paul Gravrock to lead the worship planning throughout Lent. What a great job he always does!

Easter itself was amazing to me. Kaylee will note the attendance figures in her report and, with the egg hunt and the breakfast with was quite a celebration. What amazed me is how many people came out to help. This includes so many extra communion servers, easter breakfast workers, Egg Hunt helpers. I was worried about how it all might get done this year with our open positions, but it all worked. Thank you to Jenni Klemp for all the work that she did in helping to organize the breakfast and the egg hunt.

Finally, I am shouldering extra pastoral work, which includes Confirmation, helping with Youth, managing our interim youth helpers, and additional preaching. To be honest, this has gotten heavy at times I am feeling spread thin. It is against my nature to let things fall through the cracks or leave things unattended but some of that is happening and it is difficult to accept. It makes for long days and extra stress. I do appreciate watching the people of Ascension step up to the plate and I very much look forward to a new season when we will have these 2 key roles filled. Once that happens, I believe that many more lives will be transformed through our work.

He is risen indeed!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Tim".



Church Council Report

Pastor Steve Herder

April 4, 2024

A very blessed Easter Season to each of you! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! We worship

every Sunday (or Saturday evening!), and each Sunday is a “little Easter” that we celebrate Christ’s victory over death, and the gift of life that he gives to us! Our faith is renewed, our lives filled with hope, and in the community and fellowship of the people around us, we encourage and love one another, strengthened and motivated to serve and love our neighbor and God’s creation through each week.

Your Senior Adult Ministries Team worked very hard, especially during Holy Week, to visit as many people as we could, often bringing a gift, such as a succulent plant (our ECC painted the pots, prepped, and planted 24 of them!), a bag of Easter goodies made by Barbara Krum, a beautiful crocheted cross by Kathie Ferkin, a “Christ in Our Home” devotional book, and often, most importantly, Holy Communion. Here are a few photos from our visits during Holy Week.



More senior ministry and caring ministry updates:

+ We are leading Christian Life Hours (worship services) at six senior living facilities, some once-a-month, some twice-a-month. Thanks to Norm Guetschoff and his team for leading most of them and I lead two of them.

+ Bob Tokin is coordinating and scheduling our SAMs Tram drivers!

+ With Beverly David moving, we are now looking for a new person to coordinate our 3M: Minor Maintenance Ministries.

+ Thanks to Brenda Heinrich for leading our [GriefShare](#) Group each Thursday, Valerie Krum and her card ministry, Pastor Ron for coordinating the schedules of our Eucharistic Ministers, and Norm for leading our [Stephen Ministry](#) (one-on-one Christian caregiving). Ask us if you'd like more info on any of these.

In this interim time, before we have our new full-time associate pastor, I am serving as the pastoral rep to our Monday morning Women's Bible studies, [our Ascension Foundation](#), and our Sunday morning adult education classes which Dr. Carol Bartell coordinates. We thank the leaders of each of these ministries for the outstanding work that they are doing!

On Monday, March 11, our Women's Bible Study had a fellowship time with all five groups, and the highlight was hearing from Dianne Beck on praying the Psalms. The women gave offerings for our missionary, [Pastor Kristin Engstrom, in Zambia](#) (\$565) and to the [Conejo Free Clinic](#) (\$255).

Our Sunday classes in March included: March 3 – me leading the last session of Civic Life and Faith; March 10 – Lisa Higginbotham, Regional Gift Planner from our ELCA Foundation on estate planning (questions? Email lisa.higginbotham@elca.org); March 17 – Dr. Christina Sanchez, with international women students from Cal Lutheran, to share their stories, and how Ascension can partner with them; March 24 – Founders Hall was open for Fair Trade Lane, seeing the Refugee Welcome Baskets, and our food fellowship time.



Our 2023 Gifts of Hope international project of building ten homes for widows in Meru, Tanzania has started! Praise God!

On the right is a photo from Ukraine of the distribution of Ray of Life solar kits! On April 13 we will be assembling ten of these solar kits in Founders Hall! 10am to Noon.



Our Global Ministries Team coordinated the assembly of 21 Welcome Baskets for refugees (mostly going to ones in the San Fernando Valley). Thank you to each ministry team, each family, each person who assembled them. Thank you for your amazing support of our [Fair Trade Ministries](#), which is number one among all Lutheran congregations, and number six among all houses of faith! Our new GMT project for the second quarter of this year is Ray of Life for solar kits for the people in Ukraine, along with a water filter with each kit. Watch for more updates from our chairperson, Louise Evenson. There is already a link on our website giving page. 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!](#)

YOU ARE INVITED

GLOBAL MINISTRIES TEAM

PLEASE
Come and Hear about
ELCA WORLD HUNGER
as it celebrates its 50th year.

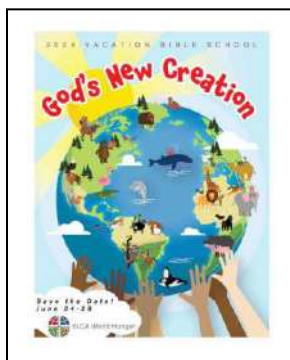
MARCH 6
4 PM - 6 PM

BETHLEHEM ROOM
ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
3000 N. HILL STREET, SUITE 100
THOUSAND OAKS, CA 91320

50
YEARS
OF
WORLD
HUNGER

Presentations will be given by those who attended the recent leadership gathering from Ascension and CLU: Mary Vennes, Pastor Steve Herder, and our CLU partners, Freya, Angela and Dulce.

Come and hear how our contributions through Ascension Lutheran Church to ELCA WORLD HUNGER are making a difference, worldwide!



We are thanking Jenni Klemp and our children's ministries for choosing to lift up our ELCA world hunger ministries with our Vacation Bible School the last week of June. God's New Creation.



On March 12 several of us from GMT went to the International Women's Dinner at Cal Lutheran for an evening of inspiration, music, friends, and food. Thanks to Dr. Christina Sanchez of the Center for Global Engagement for inviting us. She is also a leader on our GMT.

This month we received a very generous gift of \$60,000 from the Gene Haas Foundation in Oxnard for our Agape Fund. We are humbled by their trust in us to use these funds in the best possible way with those who are in the greatest need in our community. What a blessing for our Community Concerns Team to share with those in need.

Our Community Concerns Team, led so well by Chris Daleiden, has been very active with our food pantry ministries. Thank you for responding generously. 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.

One very big highlight of the month was the ordination service of Pastor Amanda Berg on March 16! She serves at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Simi Valley. What a blessing too the next day when Pastor Amanda baptized her granddaughter Annie Hooper.



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. Note: May 2 is [National Day of Prayer at Cal Lutheran](#), 7:30-9:30am

Two musical highlights for the month were the Augustana College Choir here on March 22nd and then on the 24th, at Cal Lutheran, Dr. Wyant Morton's choirs. Both were fantastic! Take advantage of these opportunities when they are offered.

[Our Facebook page](#) now has 2,335 followers. We do a few posts each day to encourage faith and ministry. This is a good way to share your faith values with friends and family.

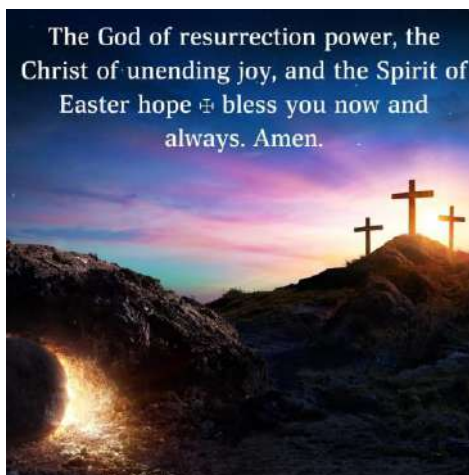
Our Blessing of the Animals team, led by Bonnie Chick, is prepping for a big event on Saturday, Oct. 5. Join us for our next meeting, on April 24, at 4:00pm in the Bethlehem Room.

On March 22 each year our synod's [Green Faith Team hosts a zoom event for World Water Day](#). Our speaker was Dr. Linda Ritterbush, from Holy Trinity and Cal Lutheran, speaking on care for our Ventura River watershed.

Pastor Tim and I, with the staff, have updated our Monthly Benevolence ministry, with each month focusing on learning and giving opportunities for a local or a global ministry that we love to support. For the month of April, it will be the [Conejo Free Clinic](#), at 80 E. Hillcrest. Deborah Kahn, a member of Ascension, and on staff at the clinic, will give a temple talk about this amazing community ministry on Sunday, April 7. For a list of the 12 months, [see this link on our website](#).



Thank you for your prayers as the Spirit leads us in calling our second associate pastor and hiring a youth director. And think of a new ministry that you could do with a grant from Be the Blessing!



Prayers for One Ascension Leadership

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.”

Colossians 4:2

“In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints.”

Colossians 1:3-4

LEADERSHIP

Church Council

Alan Baker
Rachael Bowen
Bonny Chick
Dave Harkins
Ed Klodt
Carrie Leonard
John Rarick
Jeannette Ruggiero
Steve Smuck

School Board

Scott Bean
Kyle Jones
Jocelyn Myers
Chris Poveromo
Kathy Saneinia
Steve Smuck
Ashley Steere
Nelly Nassar-Trumbo
Anna Woodward

Foundation

Alan Baker
Stefano Borzone
Anita Cohen
Paul Evenson
Susanne Hopkins
Sandra Howe
Lori Hillman
Doug Morrow
Roy Sanchez
Jim Thompson
Don Weeks

ECC STAFF

Christina Alfaro
Stacy Andrews
Jessica Bunting
McKyla Byrd
Brittani Childers
Tiffany Chivaroli
Esperanza Flores
Laurie D'Alonzo
Kayla Fromberg
Lauren Jajja
Ariana Hiatt
Liz Hoskinson
Stacy Kealty
Arely Kendall
Jen Ledesma
Nicole Lewis
Karen Martinez
Tanya Mathews
Jenni McCoy
DeAnna Means
Amanda Munoz
Michele Paniz
Jessica Peters
Jessica Placas
Vanessa Reyes
Karyn Ring
Marissa Saldivar
Mariela Sanchez
Nasha Sobieski
Elizabeth Van Mourik
Heather VanVorst
Greta Weinstein
Josie Zapata

CHURCH STAFF

Dianne Beck
Melissa Berg
Stacy Bosco
Matt Cahill
Emilee Crites
Jude Delkeskamp
Pastor Tim Delkeskamp
Camryn Force
Nathan Halvorson
Jeff Hengst
Pastor Steve Herder
Charlie Hulse
Diane Kusnierek
Nancy Lee
Camden Lorentson
Mike Marvin
Lan Merrill
Wyant Morton
Margaret Ricci
Cameron Ruggiero
Kaylee Searway
Jenelle Smith
Christian Teufel

Search Committee for Youth Director:

Scott Squires
Jennifer Marvin
Joel Halvorson

Call Committee: Tom Lindros, Hannah Hurdle, Crystal Bryant, Michael Feltner, Susie Smuck, Gwen Thompson, Scott Searway

TK- 7 ELEMENTARY STAFF

Acsiris Silva Almanza
Connie Angress
Ashley Babich
Brian Bishop
Elizabeth Bonilla
Mary Bordokas
Mike Burditt
Cindy Cina
Aidan Delkeskamp
Jennifer Farrell
Spencer Gottmer
Pastor Rich Gregory
Staci H
Camille Harrington
Heather Hartson
Carolina Lopez
Karen Manion
Zach Martino
Amanda McGrail
Devin Milligan
Charlotte Miranda
Tina Mohler
Kelsey Packman
Stephanie Pagano
Erika Quiroga
Andrea Sandoval
Kendra Saunders
Robert Steere
Sara Wallace

Updated 4.9.24



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www.conejofreeclinic.org

Founded in 1976, the CFC has an all-volunteer team of over 100 medical, dental, and legal professionals who provide free services for low-income and uninsured residents of Ventura County and North Los Angeles County.

In 1998, CFC moved to its current location in the Community Conscience “Under One Roof” building. This place houses a variety of social service agencies, including Lutheran Social Services (right next door). In 2018 the new state-of-the art Dental Clinic was completed.

CFC provides free services to low-income, uninsured adults and children in our community since 1976. Medical services. Dental services. Legal services. Advocacy services (if a patient needs more help than we can give). Child and youth services. Breast cancer screening (for about 300 women each year). Private Practice Partners (help at other offices, such as audiology, colonoscopy, dermatology, MRI, occupational rehab, oral surgery, optometry, pediatric dentistry, physical therapy). Team members come from Los Robles Hospital, Amgen, Kaiser Permanente, UCLA, private practice and the Ventura County Bar Association.

The fully free services are supported by people, foundations, houses of faith, civic groups, business/industry. The CFC does not receive state or federal funding.

In 2023 CFC served 3,397 people with 96 volunteers and about 110 staff members, (about 90% of them being volunteers)!

Volunteer opportunities: administrative (one or two days a week or month); need Spanish translators; medical and dental professional volunteers (one or more days a month); legal volunteers.

Donor inquiries: Susan Murphy at smurphy@conejofreeclinic.org

Ascension member, Debbie Kahn, is the Medical Operations Director.

Please keep this wonderful ministry, the Conejo Free Clinic, in your prayers and support! This is one of the services that Ascension’s Community Concerns Team supports! Conejo Free Clinic is Ascension’s Monthly Benevolence for April.
www.alcto.org/benevolence/



Ascension Lutheran School Board Agenda for 3/18/24 Mtg. at 6:00 p.m. – Following Joint Meeting and Dinner with Church Council at 5pm.

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

Old Business:

1. Discussion on any reports pulled from Consent Agenda
2. Suggested names for Board nomination

New Business:

3. Initial Budget Review: April meeting
4. School Board Handbook
5. Employee Handbook

Executive Session:

1 item

Adjournment

Closing Prayer - Rich

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Joint Church Council and School Board Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

The council meeting was called to order by Jeannette Ruggiero at 5:20 p.m.

Council Members In Attendance: Al Baker, Rachael Bowen, Bonny Chick, Dave Harkins, Carrie Leonard, Jeannette Ruggiero

School Board Members in Attendance: Jocelyn Myers, Chris Poveromo, Kathy Roshanai, Ashley Steere, Nelly Nassar-Trumbo, Anna Woodward

Others: Pastor Tim, Kaylee Searway, Rich Gregory, Jenni McCoy

Opening Prayer - Jeannette

Devotions - Rich

As followers of Jesus, we not only tell others the Good News but we are good news. We are good news people who know that Jesus is the best good news.

Approval of Agenda – Rich

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

New Business

1. Update on Call Process for Associate Pastor – Pastor Tim

The Call committee has met four times. Pastor Tim and Carrie attended the first few meetings to get things moving along. The committee is casting a wide net in the search for candidates, going beyond the group of pastors who have indicated they are open for a new call and including pastors who are not necessarily looking for a call, asking the Holy Spirit to intervene in this process. Pastors from other denominations that are full communion partners with the ELCA are included in this search. Recommendations from church and school families are welcome.

Tom Lindros is leading the committee. They are currently fine-tuning their approach to the interview process.

2. Update on Youth Director Search – Pastor Tim

Again, a wide net is being cast for candidates for this position. The job has been posted on the employment website, Indeed which has generated about 14 responses per day. Candidate interviews will commence in the next few weeks. The ideal candidate will be someone with the skills and experience to build community. Rich has been part of this process as well.

Old Business

1. Land Sale – Kaylee

Bob Woodward and Creighton Van Horn met last Friday. The city of T.O. is requiring Ascension to file a Special Use permit. In addition, the city has requested a map of the parking that will be available to make sure that the five parking spots that will be lost due to the sale of the former ECC will be accounted for somewhere else on the campus. This map will include the landscape plans for the garden. These are the same plans that were previously presented to the School Board. No timeline has been set for when the city might sign off on these documents.

2. Asset Reserve Study – Kaylee

Reserve Studies has been engaged for Ascension's asset reserve study. Financial results have been provided

to our contact, Fred along with a list of the asset improvements that will need to be done in the future.

3. E&O Insurance Update – Kaylee

The church and school have each had \$1,000,000 coverage for D&O insurance for a long time. After discussions at the last combined School Board and Council meeting in November, new coverage was obtained for \$5,000,000 E&O coverage and \$3,000,000 EPLI (employment practices liability insurance). These increased limits provide more realistic financial protection for the school and church in the case of a lawsuit.

The coverage is layered as follows with different insurance companies providing coverage for each layer.

Base	\$1,000,000	D&O
	\$1,000,000	EPLI
	\$2,000,000	Aggregate
2 nd Layer	\$2,000,000	D&O
	\$2,000,000	EPLI
3 rd Layer	\$2,000,000	D&O

Ascension has already been notified that the 3rd layer of coverage might possibly not be renewed even though no claims have been filed.

Ascension’s Earthquake and Flood insurance will be increasing by \$6,000. Earthquake coverage is required based on the size of the church and school and our fixed assets.

First Impressions of 2024 – 2025 School Year

1. Ascension School – Rich

ECC enrollment is full for Fall 2024!

Registration for the summer session is taking place now and is currently at 75% of school enrollment. Staffing for the summer is complete.

A budget meeting with Kaylee and Mike Marvin is scheduled for tomorrow.

ECC parents have indicated they would like to help the ECC and ALS be more combined and to help improve donor relations.

100 tickets have been sold for the Gala in April which will be celebrating Ascension School’s 60th anniversary. All ALS teachers have been sponsored. Everyone is welcome!

In light of La Reina’s impending closure at the end of the school year, tours were given to 11 La Reina families. La Reina has been encouraging students to look for a school that also has a high school so it’s uncertain if any of these families will choose ALS. Rich offered a prayer for the La Reina staff and families.

What is the takeaway for ALS based on the sudden closure plans at La Reina? The board at La Reina is accountable to the nuns. The Ascension School Board is accountable to the Church Council which is accountable to church members. The relationship between our School Board and Council, which is intentionally nurtured, is a different story from La Reina. School finances are managed by Ascension Church staff which provides accountability on the financial side. It’s important to be mindful that anything offered by the ECC or ALS should be something (e.g., the middle school) that can be sustained long term. A lesson can be taken from the strong support provided by La Reina alumni. Cultivating a strong ALS alumni community

would be beneficial and begins with developing a sense of identity for current students. How many alumni are unchurched? How do we bring them back to the church?

Current ALS enrollment is 158 students. The goal for the 2024 – 2025 school year is 170 students but that may fall short as some families are finding the increased tuition to be out of their reach. Rich will talk individually with those families who are opting out for next year. All teachers except for possibly one are staying for the next school year.

It's not possible to market ALS to ECC families due to a shortage of classroom space. The School Board is reviewing this issue to see if there's a way to find more space.

Update on School Board Retreat / Future Strategy - Rich / Jenni

The 2030 Vision emphasizes these areas:

- Welcoming
- Creating
- Developing
- Inspiring
- Nurturing

These apply to both the ECC and ALS. Performance reviews for the ECC director and ALS principal will include analysis of progress in these areas. Rich shared a very detailed spreadsheet that further breaks out these five areas from general goals to specific actions.

Service Day, which is held once a year, will include both the ECC and ALS this year.

New Business

1. Set Date for next combined meeting – Jeannette

October 16th, 2024 at 5:00 pm was selected for the next combined School Board and Council meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made (Carrie) and seconded (Al) and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23.

Respectfully submitted by Rachael Bowen

**Ascension Lutheran School Board Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2024**

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 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:

Jenni McCoy, Jocelyn Myers, Ashley Steere, Nelly Trumbo, Rich Gregory, Chris Poveromo, Kathy Roshanai, Anna Woodward, Kyle Jones

Absent: Steve Smuck, Scott Bean

Call to Order:

Ashley called the meeting to order at 6:38pm.

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

Devotion:

Nelly lead the devotion from Psalm 84:12. Blessed is the man who trusts in you. At any moment there are good things as well as ugly things happening, but trust in God brings inner peace.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda:

Ashley asked to add the Spring Retreat Minutes to the consent agenda.

Financials pulled for discussion.

Motion to approve agenda and consent agenda items initiated by Jocelyn. Nelly seconded. Motion passes.

Old Business:

Financials

- Chris asked about debt service for the loans established for the construction of the ECC. One is long term and built into the ECC budget, and the short term one's debt service is currently being paid Robert Yonkin. The land sale (when it happens) will provide the ability to pay off the short term loan.

Chris makes a motion to approve the financial reports. Anna seconds. Motion passes.

Board Nomination

- Rich met with Ed Klodt and confirmed that there is an open position on the school board which will need to be filled for next year. Rich commented on the requirements for a potential board member, which include Ascension Lutheran church membership, and non-reactive team player qualities.

New Business:

Initial Budget Review

- Rich clarified that this will happen in April (presented in April and approved in May.)

School Board Handbook

- Ashley read through the proposed changes. She was commended along with Kathy for their work with the updates. Final edits will be made and approved next month.

Jocelyn makes a motion to update the bylaw in School Board Bylaws 10.02.d. to "The Board may, at its own discretion, form special subcommittees from time to time to serve the School's purpose and needs. Such special subcommittees may consist of persons who are not members of the Congregation or School Board. All special subcommittees, however, shall be chaired by a School Board member who has sole responsibility for the subcommittee's actions." Kathy seconds. Motion passes.

Employee Handbook

- Vote to approve the changes will be made at next month's meeting.

Motion passes.

Executive Session:

The school board meeting moved into executive session at 8:29pm. Rich and Jenni were invited to stay. All other guests were excused.

Closing Prayer:

Rich closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment:

Jocelyn motioned to adjourn the meeting and reconvene for executive session. Nelly seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 8:29pm.

Next school board meeting is April 29th.

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

April – Steve

May – Anna

June – Scott

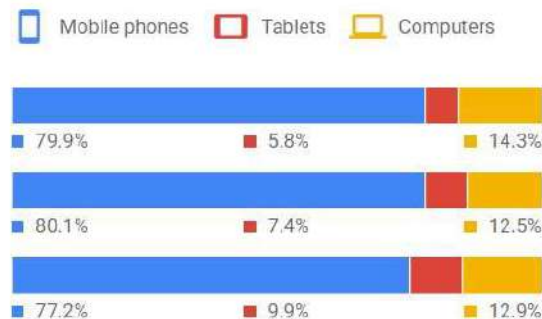
Respectfully submitted by Jocelyn Myers

Our Easter advertising and promotion were slightly different this year, as we navigate changes outside our control and make some deliberate changes as well.

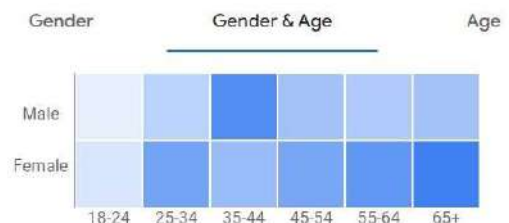
First, as I've mentioned previously, along with the shrinking size of our local paper, *The Acorn*, which was purchased by an out-of-state media company last year, we have increased ad rates. We are also working with a different team than friends of the past. We cut our commitment there to one week of ads in four editions instead of two, and smaller ads, but still the beautiful full color of our Ascension Easter mural.

We had a Google ad the week before Easter, with a pay-per-click cost. According to Google, it had 13.3 K impressions and 394 click throughs. Here are a couple of highlights among the metrics they provide:

Ad performance across devices



Summary of the demographic groups your ads are reaching by age and gender



I filled in many search terms, but did not use all the AI suggestions (“Explore our specials...”)

For social media, I did an event and two or three daily posts about Holy Week and Easter services and Jenni Klemp’s Egg Hunt and Easter Breakfast online flyers on Facebook. I stuck to free posts this year since we have had several instances of spam and mal actors appearing in our church Facebook world that seemed to coincide with paid ads and tagging to local outlets’ Facebook pages. Not worth it.

On Instagram, in addition to the free advert posts, I did do a couple paid boosts. One was a brief video ad with great audio of our fabulous choir and congregation singing, for a super, *Easterific* vibe! It got 4,609 plays and drew 81 visits to our profile.

For neighborhood outreach invites, we supplied postcards for two of our closest postal routes and used the USPS’ Every Door Direct Mail.

With great appreciation for your wonderful work,

Stacy Smith Bosco



Wednesday, April 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 Bonny Chick

1. FOCUS: CREATION CARE

REVIEW: Highlights from ELCA SOCIAL STATEMENT on the Climate Crisis, 2023 Paul Evenson

"We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believe God's intention revealed through the Scriptures is that all people have life abundantly and flourish.

"We believe God yearns and strives for Earth's ecological well-being, and we trust that "God's faithfulness alone sustains the Church and renews our faith, hope, and love."⁶⁰ As God's people we address the climate crisis with active hope rather than paralyzing despair. "Captured by hope, we proclaim that God has made peace with all things through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:15-20), and that the Spirit of God, 'the giver of life,' renews the face of the earth."⁶¹

May the Holy Spirit renew this church's sense of emergency and empower us to faithful and fervent action in this Kairos moment."

VIDEO: Katharine Hayhoe, Climate Scientist, ASPEN IDEAS, March 2024

"HOPE is the best weapon against climate change. Why? Doesn't that seem too passive for such a pressing issue? The short answer is: we will not act if we feel we have already lost. If there was nothing we could do about climate change, giving up would be a logical response. The good news is, we can still make a difference, if we take swift action. When we realize that the future is in our hands, that means we can make a difference. That is what hope is based on." Katharine Hayhoe

DISCUSSION: What can I do to be more Eco-Friendly at home, work, school and community? Share what you are doing! Pastor Steve

RESOURCES for Creation Care. Please bring favorite resources you want to add to our list of websites, newsletters, checklists.

2. Review of GMT Monthly Reports and Volunteer Needs (5:00-5:30 PM)

WELCOME BASKETS for Refugees-summary

Center for Global Engagement, CLU

Fair Trade

Ray of Life Solar Light kits

Lutheran Lobby Day

3. SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: Mission Trip to El Salvador, August 1-6, 2024

Contact: Valerie Constantino at Valerie.constantino@gmail.com for application, related forms, questions.

4. Next meeting, May 9 2024, 4PM Bethlehem Room.

FOCUS: Advocacy

"I have long understood that climate change is not only an environmental issue – it is a humanitarian, economic, health, and justice issue as well."

Environmental activist, Frances Beinecke

APRIL

April 4	Global Café, Jack's Corner, CLU, 12-2PM Earth/Sustainability
April 10	Global Ministries Team meeting, 4-5:30, Bethlehem Room
April 13	Ray of Life solar light kit assembly, 10-noon, Founders Hall
April 16	National Faith and Climate Forum, Christ the Shepherd, Altadena
April 18	Fair Trade Lane open, 2:30-4:00 PM
April 19	Earth Day Sustainability Fair, CLU Kingsmen Park, 12 PM-2PM
April 20	Arbor EARTH DAY, 10-2PM, Community Center next to TO High School Ascension School GALA, Four Seasons, 6-10PM
April 21	Fair Trade Lane open, 10:00-11:30 AM with Adult Education Class.
April 28	Ray of Life solar light kits, Adult Education Class 10:30 AM, Library

MAY

May 8	Global Ministries Team meeting, 4-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room
May 9	Fair Trade Lane open, 2:30-4:00 PM
May 10	CLU Graduation Day
May 15	Lutheran Lobby Day, Sacramento. Register by May 7.
May 18-19	50 th Anniversary of Scandinavian Festival, Kingsmen Park, CLU noon-7PM
May 19	Fair Trade Lane open, 10:00-11:00 AM Fair Trade Wine Tasting Event, afternoon, Details TBD

JUNE

June 5	Global Ministries Team meeting, 4-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room
June 24-28	Vacation Bible School, God's Creation, VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
June 9, July 14 and August 18	Fair Trade Lane open, 10:00-11:00 AM

ELCA EL SALVADOR MISSION TRIP, 2024 August 1-6, 2024. jjjacks7651@aol.com

GMT MEETINGS with Proposed focus presentations, 4 pm BETHLEHEM ROOM

April 10	FOCUS: CREATION CARE
May 8	FOCUS: ADVOCACY including FAIR TRADE, LIRS (Global Refuge), BREAD FOR THE WORLD
June 5	FOCUS: Budget decisions for 2023-24 Fiscal Year. (ALC's budget year is July 1-June 30.) Designated accounts for GMT projects. Determinations for budget priorities in 2024-25.

April 10, 2024



Wednesday, March 6, 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."

MEETING NOTES

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER Carol Bartell

1. **FOCUS: ELCA WORLD HUNGER-Embracing hope. Taking action. Moving forward.**

- a. Presentation by attendees to the 50th ELCA World Hunger Leadership gathering (Pr Steve, Mary Wennes, Dulce, Freya and Angela)
 - i. The Mary and Howie Wennes Hunger Leadership Endowment at the ELCA was established in 2016 in honor of Howie and Mary Wennes by their son as a surprise tribute to his parents. The endowment makes it possible for the ELCA to host the ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering every 18 months by providing funding support for 2 candidates per synod to participate with a minimal contribution of \$150 from each sponsoring congregation.
 - ii. Mary Wennes shared reflections on progress made but noted that there are still many hunger issues including 1 in 3 people have inadequate access to food, including in the USA, and 10% of the world population is food insecure (exacerbated by climate change, war COVID, etc.).
 - iii. Three representatives from CLU (Dulce, Angela & Freya) attended the conference. Dulce & Angela attended the meeting and shared their reflections on the conference (including a video) and commented on next steps at CLU. Ideas included: establishing a campus hunger advocacy day in Fall 2024; offering a Spanish language translation or service for Chapel; and expanding offerings through the campus Community Cupboard. Angela emphasized the impact of social media & peer-to-peer messaging to reach students. She also shared her poem, Lift Every Voice.
- b. Sharon Magnuson, ELCA Major Gifts Officer for World Hunger and Disaster Response, offered an update (including a PPT slideshow)
 - i. Gifts of Hope is a building block on the ELCA's World Hunger work. Ascension Lutheran Church was praised for its efforts/championship of the program.
 - ii. Sharon noted that a newsletter with updates showcasing the stories of the recipients of funds is forthcoming. Some general examples of impact were

shared (e.g., Zimbabwe/honeybees project; Cambodia/pigs; Kenya/women working in field—mothers and daughters; Malawi/woman sent to farmer training program)

- iii. Lenten Challenge 2024. In honor of [ELCA World Hunger](#)'s 50th year in mission and ministry, the 5 synods in ELCA Region 2 are challenging one another to raise money for ELCA World Hunger. The challenge: Participate in some spiritual and/or physical practices during the 40 days of Lent, 2024. Approximately 750 people (@150 churches) are participating. Details are online at [Lentenchallenge.org](#)

2. GMT Monthly Reports and Volunteer Needs (5:00-5:45 PM)

a. WELCOME BASKETS for Refugees

- i. The Ascension community offered an incredible response to the call to prepare welcome baskets for refugees. This service project was organized by Louise Evenson, Carol Bartell and Carol Bjelland.
- ii. Groups will be making all three types of Welcome Baskets: Bathroom, Cleaning and Kitchen baskets.
- iii. An \$800 grant was received from Be the Blessing initiative to support this Lenten service project. The GMT will use the grant money to provide the plastic bins for the welcome baskets and supplement missing items.
- iv. On Monday, March 25 at 2 PM in Founders Hall, anyone is welcome to help to sort and prepare the kits for delivery to Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team before Easter Sunday.

b. Center for Global Engagement

- i. Special thanks shared with Carol Bjelland & Kim Overton for their committee work to help plan for the 2nd Annual International Women's Day program. All GMT members are invited to attend the IWD dinner (March 12, 5:30pm-7pm). It was requested of the GMT to bring desserts for attendees.
- ii. Fair Trade Team will be joining CLU for the 2nd Annual Earth Day/Sustainability Fair on Friday, April 19 from 12-2pm in Kingsmen Park. Carol Bjelland requested helping hands for setup/implementation/clean up. [Note: We will also be celebrating Arab Heritage Month during the program with food, music, and tea.]
- iii. Annual Fundraising Drive: April 10 is the [CLU Cares Day campaign](#). The campus is raising funds to support its work in educating leaders for a global society. CGE is outreaching to community/friends/partners to contribute to the Global Engagement Fund. The GEF assists students in need and educational outreach initiatives.
- iv. Christina encouraged anyone who is not receiving the [monthly email newsletter](#) from CGE to let her know if they want to be added to the list or to send an email request to global@callutheran.edu.

c. Ray of Life Solar Light kits

- i. Louise Evenson will present fundraising request to the Church Council for their approval on March 18th. If approved, it will allow the GMT to initiate fundraising activities in May-June for the ROL kits
- ii. Solar light kits are \$125 with an additional \$25 for the water purifier, which is included with each solar light kit.

- iii. Seeking words of encouragement referencing light and/or hope to include as a card/insert message to the kits. Olha Isaiva from CLU asked to translate messages into Ukrainian.
 - iv. Solar light kit assembly is slated from 10am-12pm on April 13th in Founders Hall with Dave Nonnemacher on zoom to lead the assembly process. All are welcome to come and see the process.
 - v. April 28: Ray of Life solar light kit Adult Education class, Library, 10:30-11:30.
- d. Fair Trade Lane dates were shared.

3. Upcoming Programs:

- a. Mission Trip to El Salvador, August 1-6, 2024
 - i. Open to all (families, parents, etc.): this mission opportunity is provided by two pastors who have been leading this mission trip for decades for the ELCA.
 - ii. Contact: Valerie Constantino at Valerie.constantino@gmail.com for application, related forms, questions.
- b. World Water Day, sponsored by SWCA ELCA Synod, March 22, via zoom, will focus on the Ventura River and water shed.

4. Closing Prayer/Reflection

5. Next meeting: April 10, 2024, 4PM Bethlehem Room.

FOCUS: Creation Care

Submitted by Christina Sanchez



MINISTRY OF WELCOME BASKETS for REFUGEES Lenten Service Project

DATE March 26, 2024 SUBMITTED BY Carol Bartell, Carol Bjelland, and Louise Evenson

1. Summary of Welcome Basket Service Project

On March 26, 2024, the following were delivered to Chris Soltow of the Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team, United Methodist of Westlake Village:

27 containers filled with 21 complete sets of WELCOME BASKETS

5 Kitchen Kits

9 Bathroom Kits

5 Cleaning Kits

2 Utility Kits

\$690 in gift cards (\$125 Walmart gift cards, and \$565 Target gift cards)

\$400 check to Refugee Fund at United Methodist Church of Westlake Village to be used for mattresses or other necessary furnishings for refugee families.

Groups and families in the Ascension Community who assembled welcome baskets and donated gift cards included:

Small Groups: Klodt/Hopkins, Kelly/Rudrud, Rickard, Evenson, Gravrock

Women's Monday Morning Bible Study groups. Men's Ministry group.

Youth and Confirmation class. Early Childhood Education staff.

Church Council, the Global Ministries Team, the quilting group, the choir and the carillons.

The Chick and the Weeks families

Financial contributions included:

\$800 BE THE BLESSING GRANT (for containers and other essential items for a refugee family)

\$690 in gift cards

Under the supervision of Jenni Klemp, the children of Ascension painted WELCOME hearts and placed them in each Welcome Basket

Special thanks to the Global Ministries Team, the WELCOME Basket team (Carol Bjelland, Carol Bartell and Louise Evenson), the hand-painted WELCOME hearts by children of Ascension, the BE THE BLESSING grant team who approved our request for funds, and Cam Lorentzen who delivered the WELCOME kits to Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team storage rooms.

2. LEARNINGS, OBSERVATIONS, AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE WELCOME BASKET SERVICE PROJECTS:

The Ascension community responded with enthusiasm and generosity for this Lenten service project. Some people were in 3 or more groups and participated by buying something for each. (i.e. choir, small group, women's Bible study). Some groups didn't initially recognize themselves as a "ministry group of ALC."

More storage bins were needed than originally anticipated. Kitchen items were bulky and required more than one 70- quart HEFTY storage bin. Kitchen kit containers were labeled and color coded 1 of 3, 2 of 3, and 3 of 3 to keep the completed kit together. Other groups who have made kitchen baskets have used a tall trash container with a lid to put their kitchen items in. In the future, we should clarify with the Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team what kind of container is preferred.

The children's participation in painting WELCOME hearts were an added touch of warmth and welcome to each of the bins as well as an opportunity to learn about migrants and refugees. Children placed WELCOME hearts in each bin.

The Be the Blessing grant (\$800) was especially appreciated for the containers (27) and other items. Having one kind of transparent container with a lid for all the kits was helpful in transporting to the storage center for Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team.

Large labels were made for each kind of kit and attached to the inside of the container for easy identification.

Most items were purchased at Target or Home Goods with an average cost per kit of approximately \$175.

The estimated gift valuation from Ascension to Conejo Interfaith Refugee Team through this project is \$5,165.



MINISTRY OF GMT-Ray of Life Solar Light Kits

DATE April 3, 2024 SUBMITTED BY Louise Evenson

1. WHAT'S COMING UP? (What? When? Where?)

On March 18th, the Ascension Church Council approved our fundraising request for 2nd quarter, 2024 for the Ray of Life solar light kit project.

On March 31st, a grant request was submitted to the ALC Foundation for \$2,500 for 100 water purification kits at \$25 to be included with the distribution of the solar lights.

A press release was written and released to local news media (ACORN, VC STAR, KCLU, ECHO, SW SYNOD of ELCA, local non- profits and others) the first week of April.

Words of Encouragement for recipients of the solar light kits were written and translated into Ukrainian by Olha from CLU to be included on cards in each solar light kit. Personal greetings can be written on one side of the card.

A donor page has been set up and is live to accept donations through the Ascension Lutheran Church donation page.

Individuals have been invited to the assembly of 10 solar light kits on April 13th led by Dave Nonnemacher via zoom. Photos and videos will be taken for a video for the congregation. Anyone is welcome to attend and see the solar light kits assembled.

April 28th will be the main launch of the project for the congregation. The ROL project will be the focus of children's sermon, the Adult Class, refreshments at hospitality time, and video during worship.

An envelope is being developed for donations for this project. It will be available in the pews through June.

2. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED (What? When? Where?)

Any GMT member who is interested to see the assembly of the solar light kits is invited to FOUNDERS HALL on Saturday, April 13th from 10-noon.

Volunteers are needed to hand out envelopes for gifts after services on April 27-28.

Volunteers are needed to participate in the Sat evening, April 27th service to introduce this opportunity to the worshipers in attendance.

Volunteers are needed to help with refreshments after services on April 28th. Contact Beverly Sell.

3. LOOKING AHEAD (Important calendar dates)

April 13th, Saturday, ASSEMBLY of 10 ROL solar light kits, Founders Hall, 10-noon with Dave Nonnemacher on ZOOM. ALL ARE WELCOME to come and see!

APRIL 28th, Sunday, the kick off to the congregation for the ROL solar light kits.

Additional plans are being developed for May and June to keep this project in people's minds and hearts.

4. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT Louise Evenson or Pastor Steve Herder AT lpevenson@aol.com and pastorsteve@alcto.org

FAIR TRADE MINISTRY

DATE: April 1, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Carol Bjelland

1. WHAT'S COMING UP? (What? When? Where?)

Fair Trade Lane is open Thursday, April 18th (2:30-4 PM); art focus for April: The Pollinators

CLU/CGE Earth/Sustainability Day – Friday, April 19th, Kingsmen Park (Noon-2 PM)

Fair Trade Lane is open Sunday, April 21st (10-11:30 AM); art focus for April: The Pollinators

Sunday Fun-Day: Sunday Sampler – Adult Ed Class – Sunday April 21st (10:30-11:30 AM) -Founders Hall; Expert-led tastings of coffee, chocolate & olive oil. Each round of tasting approx. 15-20 min. 1-2 rotations depending on timing. Samples of other products from Fair Trade Lane will also be available.

2. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED (What? When? Where?)

Volunteers invited to help with the CLU event April 19th – tentative timing: set-up (10:30 AM; event (Noon- 2 PM); pack-up (2-3PM)

Volunteers invited to help with the Sunday Sampler & Fair Trade Lane Sunday, April 21st – will need 1-2 people covering Fair Trade Lane 10:30-11:30 while the tastings are happening; need 1-2 people to help with FH/Fair Trade Lane set-up Sat April 20th

3. LOOKING AHEAD (Important calendar dates)

Fair Trade Lane Open Dates/Times:

Thursday, May 9 (2:30-4 PM)

Sunday, May 19 (10-11AM) – Fair Trade Wine Tasting Event/Sunday Afternoon at Beverly's house. Details TBD.

Sunday, June 9 (10-11AM)

Sunday, July 14 (10-11AM)

Sunday, August 18 (10-11AM)

4. OTHER INFORMATION:

For 2023, Ascension Fair Trade was again in the Top Ten among all of the customers in the Equal Exchange interfaith/community segment nationwide.

Mt Meru Coffee Project included Ascension in their 2023 Annual Report for the gift of the scholarship for farmer training. MMCP also gave a "shout out" to Ascension in a recent communication to the MMCP Board & Ambassador Group.

We look forward to partnering opportunities w/MMCP & EE.

We look forward to growing Fair Trade & Fair Trade at Ascension.

The Fair Trade Lane transformation is underway. After the new door is installed, art will be moved to an updated art wall.

5. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact: Carol Bjelland (carolb@netscape.com; fairtrade@alcto.org); 805-657-3731