

### Attendance

In the five weeks since Easter our attendance average is 338, a slight decrease from the 366 six-week average I reported in April. Our online attendance is averaging 133.

### Maintenance

Thank you for approving the \$12,600 roof repair at your council meeting in May. The repairs are scheduled for Wednesday May 15<sup>th</sup> through Friday May 17<sup>th</sup>. Jeff and I are both thankful to have this completed from our mental list of issues to complete before we get into the difficult work of summer.

Jeff, Cam, Diane, Connie, Rich, Jenni and I met to determine the critical projects that need to be completed, most specifically those that we need to complete in the summer months. Jeff, Cam, and I met after to try and determine how many hours we would need for each project, what we could complete before or after summer, and how much summer help we might need. We'll be converting the school business office into a Spanish classroom and the former Sunday School storage office into a back office for the school administration. Cam has started taking tiles of the west patio so he and Jeff can grind down the concrete there. We'll be painting classrooms, filling in the ECC pavers with sand, assembling a small greenhouse, and all of the typical summer activities to get the campus ready for another academic year. Jude Delkeskamp will be working with us full-time over the summer, and Nate Gregory is now working with us 25 hours a week through the summer. We hope to hire one medium skilled technician to focus on the classrooms and add a couple of hours of entry level labor to help us complete the ambitious list of tasks. The School Board will meet May 20<sup>th</sup> with hopefully approve the expense of our labor and projects. This is the first summer here where I have mapped out what the team hopes to complete in the brief 10 weeks between academic years. My first pass had Jeff working 676.5 hours out of the 388 he will have available. Draft 7 is looking more realistic with diverting some projects to before and after summer, as well as adding additional people.

Speaking of diverted projects, my team is so excited about the Thrivent Choice dollars you allocated to church office carpet. Thank you! The Foundation also granted our request of funding for the Bethlehem Room and entrance hallway. While we are extremely excited to get the flooring done as soon as possible, we realize that we are not dependent on the school closure to complete the task, so we will defer to September.

### Human Resources

While thanks are in order, I would also like to express my gratitude to you for approving my attendance at SHRM's Human Resources Department of One Credential. I have scheduled myself into two days of training May 23-24<sup>th</sup> to complete the seminar. I would like to attend those sessions first before deciding on the e-Learning sessions that will complement and deepen the training.

It's a great season of training for me. I have been attending the Call to Allyship book study and group discussion hosted by EDLARJ (European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice, which is re-branding to White Lutherans for Racial Justice.) We've had some great discussions,

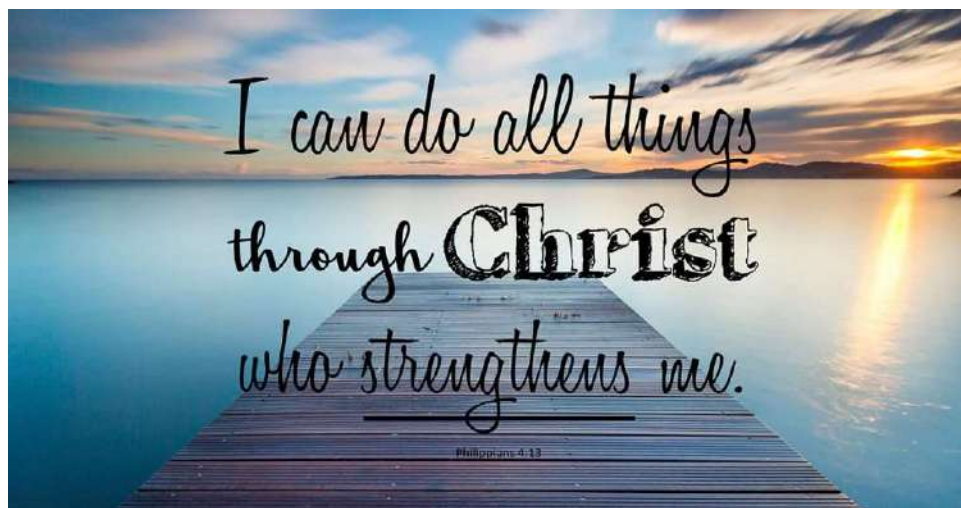
and it is nice to be community with other congregations currently in the call process. I've also registered for a couple of free webinars from CLU's Center for Nonprofit Leadership including Power of Data: Qualifying and Shaping your Fundraising, Strategies, Cash Flow Projections 101, and Developing a Successful Strategic Plan.

I developed a performance review form that Pastor Tim and I have agreed to use this year, and started writing performance reviews for my 8 direct reports. I created the attached document, called Portrait of a One Ascension Team Member in collaboration with Rich and Jenni's Portrait of a One Ascension Teacher. I'll be using this language with the team and intentionally calling our positive examples as they are demonstrated.

### Finance

Camryn, Mike, and I had a great meeting with Dave Harkins on May 2<sup>nd</sup> to refine what might be a realistic offering ask to the congregation. We are sharpening our pencils on pay increases and church expenses to make the budget palatable and possible while still affirming the team of their worth to the organization.

A recent monkey wrench was higher than expected proposals on tech upgrades from our IT provider. The church and school servers are both reaching end of life, and we had discussed migrating to Microsoft 365 with our storage in the cloud. There is an upfront cost, but not a need to purchase a new server every 3, 5, or 7 years. Initial numbers last year increased to a rate where we are back at the discussion table and considering other options.





## Portrait of a One Ascension Team Member

### Loves Jesus

- Seeks the Kingdom first knowing everything else will be added appropriately.
- Prioritizes their spiritual health and growth, seeks discipleship and mentorship in their faith.
- Is actively involved in the spiritual life of the school through participation in weekly chapels, staff meetings, prayer groups, devotions, and other spiritual formation opportunities as they arise.
- Models a life committed to following Jesus; imperfect, but characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.
- Sees their vocation as ministry.

### Prioritizes Their Own Health

- Works effectively and with great commitment to the church, and also prioritizes their time away from work in order to rest, retreat, and seek recreation.
- Prioritizes undistracted time with family and friends.

### Loves Their Colleagues

- No gossip: has difficult conversations face to face instead of “rallying the troops.”
- Listens.
- Sets and maintains appropriate boundaries.
- Works for the success of their team.

### Loves the “One Ascension” Community

- Partners enthusiastically with Congregation, ECC, the Elementary/Middle School, and the Foundation whenever beneficial and appropriate.
- Seeks ways in which “all boats will rise.”
- Is a thoughtful steward of the “One Ascension” campus and its resources.

### Loves Professional Excellence

- Is committed to professional development.
- Always aims to showcase the organization, their team, and themselves as professional, welcoming, and pointing to Jesus.
- Stays on track with the bigger picture goals of the organization.

### Pursues a Growth Mindset

- Receives constructive criticism without defensiveness.
- Seeks to find areas of improvement.
- Sees evaluations and observations as opportunities to grow and get better.



### **Tim's Council Report- May 24**

Grace and peace to you my family in Christ,

At the woman's breakfast gathering yesterday, a member whose son's wedding I led recently, thanked me for everything that is going on at Ascension these days. As she did so, I immediately thought about all of the things that we need to get to, all of the things that aren't happening because we are a bit short staffed, all of the things I want to get to but can't right now- though I did not mention them to her. Then, she talked about the 7 churches that are mentioned at the beginning of the book of Revelation and we went through the list together. We talked about the church in Laodicea, the "lukewarm" church and she said, "in a world where there are a lot of "lukewarm" churches, I am glad that Ascension is not "lukewarm." I agreed and she made me realize for all the things that we are not doing, at least we continue to fight the good fight against the sinful tendency to lose sight of our mission to create opportunities for all people to become devoted followers of Christ.

We continue to work hard to find both an Associate Pastor and a Youth Director. And I believe that both of these crucially important processes are still on a good track. Having connected with Tom Lindros, the co-chairperson of the Call Committee, has said that they continue to seek qualified candidates, that they have some mobility papers to review and that they continue to meet as a team. He also expressed a bit of frustration with the Synod's communication and professionalism. It is a bit sad to hear that they must carry that extra burden in their important work. If it gets worse, I am committed to help figure out how to help.

The Youth Search Team's process is currently running at full speed. We've interviewed 9 candidates, done a 2<sup>nd</sup> interview with 3 of those candidates who we believe were qualified enough to go further in the process. Sadly, a 4<sup>th</sup> second interview candidate (one who we were excited about) took herself out of the process. In the process, the first interview was a zoom call. The second was an in-person interview and the third will be a more extensive interview where we'll invite the candidate on campus to meet with staff, students, etc. Sadly, we have not found someone we are excited enough about to invite to a 3<sup>rd</sup> interview. As we continue to look, we are branching out to connect with other youth ministry networks. We are even considering hiring a "headhunter" type of person. In the meantime, Dianne Beck, Jenni Klemp and some other parents are looking to create a schedule for summer that will include activities and bible studies for the high school (and perhaps middle school) folks. It is very important that

we provide continuity for the young people that we have so that we can give them an opportunity to form the base of a group that we can build on.

It has been a pleasure to lead our confirmation program in these last months. We will be confirming 4 wonderful 8<sup>th</sup> grade students on May 19<sup>th</sup> at our 9am service. Preparations are underway for that right now. Our last meeting is this Thursday evening and as a reward, we will be taking all 13 students on the bus to In n Out Burger to celebrate the year. I'm very grateful for the adult mentors, Don Weeks, Carlah Schneider, Camryn Force and Jeff Hengst for all the help they provide to this program.

It seems that it's been another busy pastoral care season in these last weeks. Pastor Steve has been quite busy as the pastoral care lead. I am so grateful for his saying "yes" to additional time commitment during this interim period. Pastoral care, such as attending to people at the end of life and visiting people in the hospital can come in waves but we are riding them. All are invited to attend Dick Ruwe's, Allen Leland, and Don Meyers and Jan Shaw's memorial services. We will grieve but we will grieve with hope.

Finally, I end with some of moments of fun amid ministry:

- It was an honor to speak at the Moorpark Highschool Fellowship of Christian Athletes a few Fridays ago. I was invited by Ella Festerling and I was warmly welcomed.
- In the past few months, I have started to read stories to the 4yr olds of the ECC. They are a wonderful audience!
- I got to lead a wonderful wedding for John Ernst and Gloria Benefato on a recent Saturday afternoon.
- Finally, talk about combining 2 loves: I got to take our high school youth group rock climbing at Boulderdash Gym in Westlake.

Who knew being a pastor could be so fun!

He is risen indeed!

*Pastor Tim*

## Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – May 4, 2024

Today, again, we are thanking God for the leaders, members (all ministers), and staff of Ascension church, school, ECC, and Foundation, for how God blesses us to be a blessing to one another, our community, and world, **to love with the love of Jesus!**

This morning was an outstanding quarterly meeting with our Foundation Trustees, led by Foundation president, Stefano Borzone.

From left to right: Anita Cohen, Paul Evenson, Susanne Hopkins, Alan Baker, Roy Sanchez, Stefano Borzone, and Lori Hillman. Four that could be with us are Sandra Howe, Don Weeks, Doug Morrow, and Jim Thompson. (For good reasons!)



Alan is our council rep and will report more to you, but here are some of the morning highlights. Treasurer Roy Sanchez shared the very positive news that the nine-month net change in investments, that ended March 31, was up 16.6% since June 30, 2023. The fund balance is \$1,783,780. Today we gave away almost \$17k in scholarships to 16 undergrad and grad students, as well as \$10k total to two seminary students, Naomi Mbise and Regina Banks. For grant requests we gave a total of over \$21k, divided among Ray of Life Solar Lights Kits (and water filtration kits) for Ukraine, one education event to discern the call to pastoral ministry, a Soroptimist women's scholarship fund, and help to make our Bethlehem Room more welcoming to the many community groups that use it, mostly support groups. We are also excited to give \$5k to start an Endowment Fund for our school.

The recent **school Gala and Auction** was highly successful and fun, and our Foundation was well represented and recognized at it. A big shout out to our School



staff, Principal Rich Gregory, event coordinator Sara Wallace, and all who helped make the Gala such a super event on April 20<sup>th</sup>! Great job Brock and Sherith Squires telling us about your school experiences. Very proud too of our ECC Director, Jenni McCoy and her staff; all but two ECC staff were able to come.

April's monthly benevolence was for a local ministry, the [Conejo Free Clinic](#). Deborah Kahn is medical clinic operations manager and is an Ascension member. The CFC provides medical, dental, and legal services free of charge to the most vulnerable in our community. Our Monday morning women's Bible studies gave gifts for the CFC and for our ELCA missionary, Rev. Kristin Engstrom, who is now transitioning her work from Zambia to Madagascar.

Thank you, Ascension, for the 21 **welcome baskets**, \$690 in gift cards, \$400 in cash! Our Conejo Valley Refugee Team will distribute to newly arrived refugee families in Southern California. Thank you to our Global Ministries Team.

Our GMT big project for April and May is supporting **Ray of Life Solar Light Kits for Ukraine**. We hope to be able to send at least 100 of these precious gifts. [Here's the link if you'd like to help](#). Louise and Paul are leading this effort, and Andy Binsley taught



the Sunday morning class on it. Pastor Tim and Olha Isaieva (a Cal Lutheran grad student from Ukraine) presented, in worship, about our Ray of Life ministry. The photo on the right is of our GMT and friends who assembled ten of the kits. This is a one-of-a-kind solar powered light source, made in the USA, providing light up to 18 hours of 1000 lumen light for families without power. Ray of Life can also charge a cell phone to keep in touch with loved ones. Bringing hope and light to the people in Ukraine!

Here's the Tuesday group from **Community Concerns** prepping meals for the food ministry for Harbor House at Holy Trinity. If you'd like to help, talk with Tania or Barry Disselhorst, or our chairperson, Chris Daleiden. Let her know too if you'd like to help with our Friday food pantry. Donations to our food pantry are always needed.



What a joy for our [Fair Trade Ministries](#) to have some great improvements made to our FT Lane! If you'd like to learn more, or help, talk with Carol Bjelland.



On April 8 and 9 our staff was re-certified by Di Starzak in our CPR and AED, first aid, training.



Other April highlights included: Pastor Paul's baptizing Preston James Harrison; the Call Committee update on April 14 to the group gathered in Founders Hall, and their prayer requests; Sunday classes by the Evensons on their border experience, Pastor Paul teaching on baptism, Fair Trade class and taste testing, and the Ukraine class; the Arete concert at Cal Lutheran; Earth Day; the food fellowship after worship; plus, **all our regular ministries** of prayer, Senior Adult Ministries, Christian Life Hours at senior living places, Monday Morning Women's Bible Studies, Stephen Ministries, GriefShare, a team prepping for our next Blessings of Our Pets (Sat. Oct. 5), **each ministry that happens so faithfully each month.**

Thanks to the ten who represented us at the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual **Prayer Breakfast** May 2 at Cal Lutheran. Carolyn Coleman-Grady, Carrie Leonard, Jenelle Smith, Rich Gregory, Kim Overton, Kirsten and Karsten Lundring, Kaylee Searway, Pastor Tim, and me.





**Most importantly**, for this past month, was pastoral care for several of you, with much time in prayer and care, at home or in the hospital. We are deeply grieving with you the deaths of three of our dear brothers in Christ, **Dr. Al Leland** who died on April 21, **Dick Ruwe** on April 25, and **Don Meyer** on April 28. We send our love to all their family and friends. Dick's service will be first, on May 11 at 2:00pm, then Don's service on June 1 at 2:30pm, and Al's service on June 8 at 11:00am. We thank God for each of these tremendous men of faith and for their love of God, family, the church, and the community. May Jesus our Good Shepherd bless them forever and hold their families closely. (The services should be livestreamed if you cannot be here in person.)

Finally, we are working on a special prayer emphasis for us, for **24 weeks in 2024!** This will be from **June 16 to November 30**. The team that has been planning this are Carolyn Coleman-Grady, Linda Morrow, Kaylee Searway, Stacy Bosco, Pastor Tim, and me. Other leaders have been adding excellent ideas, and prayers. So far, we have been brainstorming many more ideas than what we could implement, so keep us in prayer as we give more focus to what God is calling us to in these 24 weeks. Reach out to me with your ideas or if you'd like to help. [pastorsteve@alcto.org](mailto:pastorsteve@alcto.org)

