

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, December 18, 2024
Delkeskamp Home**

Welcome and Call to Order - Carrie Leonard, President

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

Motto: Invite - Grow - Serve

Approval of Agenda - Carrie Leonard

Devotion - Pastor Tim

Treasurer's Report - Dave Harkins

New Business

- None at time of agenda distribution

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmants, and Baptisms

Old Business

- None at time of agenda distribution

Approval of Minutes - Carrie Leonard

- November Council Meeting

Consent Approval of Reports to Council - Carrie Leonard

- Pastor Tim Delkeskamp's Report
- Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp's Report
- Pastor Steve Herder's Report
- Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations Report
- School Board Report
- Foundation Report
- Global Ministries Team Report
- Jen Avalos, Youth Director Report
- Communications Report
- Be the Blessing Report

Information Items

- January 15th, Council Meeting, 7pm in the Bethlehem Room
 - Devotions -

Closing Prayer

Adjournment

Treasurer Report for December, 2024

The November financial church comparison to budget is attached, as well as the cash position report. The school summary is not yet available. As the report was just made available today, I have not had the opportunity to review in detail, but will endeavor to do so before next week's meeting. Mike is also working on consolidating the school financials and we will have something before the meeting.

Church Operating Results as of November 30

The weekly offering shortfall to budget increased from 8% to 12%, amounting to an almost \$35K shortfall for November, bringing the year-to-date shortfall to almost \$70,000. Out of concern for the shortfall, our staff accountant prepared a special comparison of the first 10 days of December (not attached) to the same time last year. We were almost \$20K higher this year, and both terms included two Sundays. Wish I had a functional Ouija board to make better forecasts.

Expenses were in line with the prior month, and still considerably below budget. The \$61,980 favorability is unduly impacted by the annual audit expense, which was put in the budget (\$7,500 for the church portion) for November but has not yet been incurred (the audit is still in progress). Overall, the expenses less revenues produced a deficit of -\$8,202 to budget (-\$15.7K if the audit is plugged back in).

Cash Review

Net available (unencumbered) cash declined for the month by \$22K. There was an unusual, large cash outlay this month for the new church sound equipment, which is expected to be partially recouped from other sources.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Harkins

Ascension Lutheran Church

Budget Summary

FYE25 YTD through November 30, 2024

	Church '24 - '25 Budget	Church '24 - '25 Budget YTD	Church '24 - '25 Actual YTD	Church '24 - '25 Variance	%
Revenues:					
Offerings (Church)	1,515,371	560,896	491,051	(69,845)	-12.5%
Other Revenues	49,680	22,518	22,182	(336)	-1.5%
Total Revenues:	<u>1,565,051</u>	<u>583,414</u>	<u>513,233</u>	<u>(70,181)</u>	-12.0%
Expenditures:					
Salaries & Benefits	1,261,327	532,286	485,268	47,018	8.8%
Allocated Staff Expenses	(213,912)	(90,501)	(91,250)	748	-0.8%
Benevolences	54,068	22,528	22,528	(0)	0.0%
Programs / Committees	61,319	25,037	17,663	7,374	29.5%
Administrative Expenses	101,700	37,621	29,708	7,912	21.0%
Property Maintenance	100,770	55,547	53,918	1,630	2.9%
Utilities & Insurance	107,928	47,606	50,309	(2,703)	-5.7%
Operating Expenditures	<u>1,473,200</u>	<u>630,124</u>	<u>568,144</u>	<u>61,980</u>	9.8%
Debt Service	99,675	41,531	41,531	-	0.0%
Total Expenditures	<u>1,572,875</u>	<u>671,655</u>	<u>609,676</u>	<u>61,980</u>	9.2%
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(7,824)</u>	<u>(88,241)</u>	<u>(96,443)</u>	<u>(8,202)</u>	
Prior Year Surplus Spend	-	-	-		
PPP spend	-	-	-		

Ascension Lutheran Church

Cash & Debt Review

FYE25 - November 30, 2024

Cash

	\$\$\$'s
Cash	1,630,138
Liquid Receivables (ALS/ECC/Foundation)	100,007
ALC-ECC Investment Cash	(711,266)
Total cash	1,018,879

Reserved Funds:

AGAPE	3,721
Mission Possible	211,701
Garden Fund	52,672
Be the Blessing	35,963
One Ascension Maintenance	122,460
 Benevolence and Programs Items	 226,113
Total Restricted Funds	652,629

Available Cash related to PPP	222,829
All Other Available Cash	143,421
Total Available Cash	366,250

Debt

	Total \$\$\$'s	Annual Cost \$\$\$'s	Monthly Payments			Rate	End Date	Remaining Term
			Principal	Interest	Total			
Church Mortgage	1,055,260	98,844	4,154	4,083	8,237	4.625%	8/1/2039	14 Yr 8 Mo
ECC Mortgage	1,998,606	163,440	4,772	8,848	13,620	5.300%	8/1/2044	19 Yr 8 Mo
Construction Note	1,219,968	76,248	-	6,354	6,354	6.250%	8/1/2025	0 Yr 9 Mo
 Foundation Note	 18,666	 831	 -	 69	 69	 4.450%	 None	 NA
Total Debt	4,292,500	339,363	8,926	19,355	28,280			

New Members & Baptisms Report

December 2024

Baptisms for November

Name	Date of Birth	Date Baptized
Azalea June LeFebre	11/22/2023	11/02/2024
Charlotte Lucille Weckworth	05/16/2024	11/03/2024
Natalie Noonan	06/22/1998	11/10/2024
Wyatt Christopher Noonan	11/14/2023	11/10/2024
Lola Swanson	10/04/2013	11/10/2024
Reef Johnny Bull	05/23/2007	11/15/2024
Kai Michael Bull	06/27/2010	11/15/2024
Olivia Elaine Gomez	08/14/2024	11/17/2024
James Maxwell Scherbenski	12/10/2022	11/27/2024
Madeline Sue Scherbenski	11/09/2020	11/27/2024

New Members for November

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2024 7:30 pm**

Council Education – Land Sale (Creighton Van Horn)

Creighton reviewed the current parcel layout for the Ascension campus. In addition to reviewing the map, Creighton and Council members took a walking tour of the parcels of land to be sold. Creighton shared that, in 2025, the T.O. City Council will be easing some regulations regarding lot changes which could help facilitate the sale of the parcels.

The council meeting was called to order by Carrie Leonard at 7:29 p.m.

Council Members In Attendance: Alan Baker, Rachael Bowen, Bonny Chick, Ethan East, Dave Harkins, Carrie Leonard, John Rarick, Jeannette Ruggiero, Anna Woodward

Others: Pastor Tim, Pastor Chamie, Kaylee Searway

Approval of Agenda – Carrie

A motion was made (John), seconded (Bonny), and passed unanimously to approve the agenda.

Devotions – Carrie

The work done by Creighton and Bob Woodward and all of the other dedicated volunteers at One Ascension is furthering God's kingdom.

Treasurer's Report – Dave

The Finance team has put in lots of work planning for the day school and ECC finances.

Offerings are still behind about 8.3% from the budget. If this trend continues through the fiscal year it would result in a \$35,000 deficit by the end of the fiscal year. The Finance committee is planning to review the components of giving in order to identify any patterns or trends.

The cash review report total is down slightly which is not out of the ordinary as the cash status fluctuates from month to month.

Discussion:

- What percentage of total offerings for the year comes from the Christmas services?
Offerings at Christmas and Easter are higher than other weeks due to the increased attendance at those services. Giving trends are skewing more towards occasional giving rather than steady weekly/monthly giving. A suggestion was made to send out another reminder to congregants about considering increasing their giving. Weekly attendance has been increasing but that does not necessarily correlate to increased giving.
- What is the origin of Ascension's outstanding loans? Why hasn't the loan from the Foundation been paid off?
Information regarding the origin of the loans was not available for this meeting. The Foundation loan has a low interest rate so the focus on paying off loans has been on those loans with higher interest rates.

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

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmands and Baptisms

The baptism of Christian Houston was affirmed.

Old Business

1. Land Sale

No new updates.

Approval of Minutes

September Council meeting

October Council meeting

October combined Council/School Board meeting

A motion was made (Ethan) and seconded (John) to approve the September Council minutes, the October Council minutes, and the October combined Council/School Board minutes.

Discussion:

It would be interesting to hear more about how the Enneagram and Working Genius tests work.

Pastor Tim, Pastor Chamie, Kaylee, and Carrie are working on accountability protocols that will be shared with the congregation.

The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Approval of Reports to Council - Carrie

1. Pastor Tim Delkeskamp's report

2. Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp's report

3. Pastor Steve Herder's report

4. Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations report

5. School Board report

6. Foundation report

7. Global Ministries Team report

8. Youth Ministries report

9. Communications report

10. Be the Blessing report

The Be the Blessing report was pulled for further discussion.

A motion was made (Alan), seconded (Bonny), and passed unanimously to approve the Reports to Council with the exception of the Be the Blessing report.

Discussion:

The Be the Blessing report mentions that only one submission was received for November. Does this indicate a slowing of interest? What are the committee's thoughts about this?

Dave clarified that submissions continue to be received and there is still interest in ideas for new projects. The committee is very motivated. Be the Blessing grants have ranged from less than \$1,000 up to \$6,500 for the Blessing of the Pets event.

A motion was made (John), seconded (Ethan), and passed unanimously to approve the Be the Blessing report.

Information Items

Next Council meeting - Wednesday, December 18th at 6:00 pm at the Delkeskamp home. A soup supper will be served.

The January Council meeting will focus on Pastor Chamie's 100-day report.

Closing Prayer – Pastor Tim

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rachael Bowen



Pastor Tim's Ministry Report- December 2024

Grace and peace to you my partners in the gospel!

I was a distance runner in high school and college, I would say that, starting with All Saints, then Gifts of Hope, then Thanksgiving, then Advent with the Hanging of the Greens celebration, November felt like running the 400meter race, which is an extended sprint, with no time to stop and catch your breath. The good news is that we did it together with staff and volunteers and the race ended with a victory. I will continue to report through the structure of my stated goals for the year.

My first goal was about Youth Ministry: Create Critical Mass in the Youth Groups

The plan to create critical mass in the High School youth group and the middle school is going well. While you can read about the events in other reports, from my perspective much good work is getting done. We are still in the relationship building stage and to help this, Jen Avalos' strategy, on top of running the Sunday evening Bible study gathering is creating fellowship event and fundraisers which are involving multiple youth and working on those one-on-one relationship's by meeting young people at coffee shops and attending their events (like sports and performances.) It is not easy work, as it is hard to get young people who have fallen out of the habit of doing so to commit to coming to events consistently but Jen (often assisted by her husband River) in partnership with Pastor Chamie are doing a wonderful job of working the plan that they have developed. Among the goals for the new year is creating more opportunities for young people to participate in worship leadership roles such as reading, serving communion, tech, etc.

Children's Ministry: Improve our Sunday School program

Pastor Chamie and Jenni Klemp are doing a wonderful job. There has been a consistent number of children participating in Sunday School. Pastor Chamie and Jenni are soliciting feedback as to how they can support and encourage teachers and parents. In her report, Pastor Chamie will mention the feedback as well as some extra events, such as hikes and opportunities to get involved in worship during Advent on Christmas Eve. The feedback I get from parents at venues such as our Men's Bibles and Brews is that people are noticing the momentum, and the excitement and community is building within the program.

Generosity: Teaching all people the transforming power of abundance and generosity

Our generosity team. We are putting together a plan to educate and challenge the congregation to increase giving through creating a culture of abundance. The general thinking on this is that our culture with the contentious elections and the increasing anxiety that statistics say people are dealing with, we need to teach people that God has given us enough (money, time, community) to live an abundant and joyful life. I am excited to incorporate our Foundation and our Be the Blessing team into these plans as well and the target for launching this initiative is January.

Accountability: Creating Biblical Accountability in our church staff as a way to model it for the whole church community.

The language that we have developed through our engagement with the Working Genius book and the Enneagram assessment has been helpful. We have strong, determined people working on our staff, it is inevitable that there will be conflict and differences of opinion. My hope is that those conflicts and differences can be leveraged into wisdom and working together to make the right decision. It is not easy to do. Good communication takes constant work, conflict, in the short term is so much easier to avoid. But that can't be the standard. We as a staff must, as Paul talks about in Philippians 2, "work out our salvation with fear and trembling."

I believe it is going well. Our weekly staff meetings remain an important and joyful time to gather, pray and communicate with one another. Our newest staff member Carolyn Bahr did a wonderful job of bringing our staff together for our Christmas celebration.

Identity: To help members and visitors understand who we are as a church

Of all the goals, this one may be the most interesting one to me but also the most elusive. I do believe there is important work to do here but I am not sure where to go. On one hand, there is the adage, if it isn't broken, don't fix it. In these times, as soon as one tries to define oneself in a particular way, one sets them up for judgment. On the other hand, the exercise of defining our identity becomes an opportunity to grow in self-awareness.

In addition to the "About Us" webpage and the new members class presentation, I have been mulling the idea of an "identity statement" which can be widely socialized.

To conclude my report, I pray that each of you has a wonderful Christmas. This is such a beautiful and powerful time of year. I pray that you may reflect on the blessings that you have in your life and above all the great reality of Emanuel, God with us.

Peace,

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

Pastor Chamie's November 2024 Council Report

Children, Youth, & Family

- I continue to meet weekly with Jen Avalos and Jenni Klemp and am so grateful to work with them.
- Confirmation in November included studying scripture on caring for the "orphans." We put the scripture into action by working with Dianne Beck on creating "Zeke bags" for children in foster care. The story Dianne shared with youth was inspiring and I loved seeing their creative artwork on the bags.
- One of my November highlights was the bonfire on campus on November 3 (which happens to be my birthday and was truly a great way to spend the evening) for 6th through 12th grade. We had over 30 youth in attendance. Carol Bjelland and the Fair Trade team were amazing in providing pizza and s'mores. We sang worship songs around the fire. There were games, conversations, and beautiful connections with God and one another.



- On the second Sunday of November, I visited the Sunday school classrooms once again to observe what is happening and how I might better support our dedicated Sunday school volunteers. My goal is to once a month leave with the children after the children's message at the 9:00 AM worship and join them for the Sunday school hour. I have worked this out with Pastor Steve on those dates as he will assist Tim in worship.
- Surveying children's ministry... I formulated questions that Jenni sent out to families as we work on getting their input and collecting data on children's ministries. We will continue to collect and assess data and share this with Church Council in January. I also scheduled a time after Sunday school in November to talk with parents directly about their ideas, insights, etc. This was very helpful feedback which will also be included in the January special report.
- We celebrated First Communion for ten students on the first weekend of November.
- November included a lot of prep, planning, and conversing to make the activity portion of Hanging of Greens come alive. Jen Avalos and I spent many, many hours



with lefse, including long hours on the Friday and Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend. I am very thankful for all of the volunteers and we couldn't have done it without the Hengst family, the Gravrock/Wallace families, and the Nelson family (the Nelson's are our neighbors and Irene and I first met when we were cub scout leaders for our oldest kids... the Nelson kids were a part of youth group, but are now all in college or beyond. It was so fun reconnecting with them and they love doing lefse). Many others participated, so THANK YOU TO ALL! I was moved to tears to see the youth enthusiasm at Hanging of the Greens when they brought in the poinsettias.



INTERFACING WITH THE SCHOOLS:

- I led a family hike for the ECC on November 2 and was happy that Charlotte Miranda, who leads the outdoor classroom at the day school, was able to join as well. Jenni McCoy and many of her teachers were there as well as many families. It was an excellent turn out with around 50 people. Many families were asking to do it again.
- I attended the school's special Thanksgiving Feast on the Friday before their weeklong Thanksgiving break. It was a joy to be together with every single student and

teacher TK through 8th grade in the gym.

- I helped the first graders plant seeds in the garden. I did religion class times with TK, K, 4th, and 5th grades.

Worship (and Baptisms)

- I preached on All Saint's Weekend. I really appreciated partnering with our Ascension Foundation to lift up our church memorial garden on this weekend and weave together what we did in worship (for instance, I spoke of "grief and gratitude") and how to use the garden as a place of mourning, praying, and hope. I picked up flowers from Trader Joe's to adorn the garden. I also added some chairs and left some books on prayer and grieving in the garden as a resource for those who might want to use them.
- In November I did FIVE baptisms! I felt incredibly blessed. First I baptized Lola who is a 5th grader at Ascension School. Her family has become regulars in worship. The baptism took place during the 10:30 worship and it was a delight working with worship leader Melissa Berg as she picked out such beautiful music to tie into the baptism (and then did the same music/flow when Tim did a baptism at 10:30



the following week). The weekend of Lola's baptism, our daughter was home so Hannah and I went to Barnes and Noble and she helped me pick out a devotional book to give to Lola on her baptism day. Note that we have had books for little children to give at baptism, but not for youth. When we baptize youth I really want to make sure to give them a "tool" to continue growing in their faith. The next baptism that I did was for two brothers, one in middle school and one in high school. This was on a Friday evening and they were surrounded by family and very close friends who happen to be a church/school family - which is how they connected with us. I got the boys an Advent youth devotional. The last two baptism that I did were for the great grandchildren of Darlene Williams who is very active with the Monday morning women's Bible study. This was a family gathering on the day before Thanksgiving.

- Speaking of baptisms, I met with Pete Swavely to talk about faith chests. He shared the history of him making them. They used to be given at infant baptisms. Then the plan was to give them one year after baptism. We are currently in discernment of how we might recognize this baptism milestone.
- Tim, Melissa Berg, and I all met together to reflect and wonder about the 10:30 worship service. After Tim had to leave, Melissa and I continued to conversation. I love her heart and energy. I look forward to working with her in the months ahead to grow our 10:30 worship service.
- I continue to find the weekly worship meetings with Wyant, Jenelle, Tim, and I to be helpful and productive. I am so grateful that though Wyant is retiring from CLU, he will continue at Ascension. I admire his amazing work with the choir. Tim and I went to the Arete concert "Come to the Woods" that Wyant directed in October at CLU. It was a phenomenal performance. When I was there, I was also giving thanks for the joy of pastoring with my husband. We could enjoy the concert together while at the same time showing our support for Wyant. If we were serving separate churches, most likely we wouldn't have had the time to go to the concert together and I know that we wouldn't necessarily want to go alone. How good it was to be together and weave life and ministry.
- We continue to grow into doing more reels as we give sneak peaks into the upcoming sermon. Stacy has noted high views on these on social media. My favorite November reel to record was when Jenelle, Tim, and I headed up to the holiday church attic. From there we recorded a reel inviting people to Hanging of the Greens.
- November had continued planning of the HOG service which including talking with music leaders and the tech team as well as designing the flow of the worship and the readings that were shared that night.

Pastoral Care

- I did visits at Los Robles hospital. Tim, Steve, and I are trying to share the load. One of the things I have learned is that there is a lot of pastoral care needed at the school. For instance, I met with a few parents who are having struggles in their life and needed a sounding board and prayer. I met with a student having high anxiety about spending Thanksgiving with the parent who has limited custody.
- Tim and I felt blessed to go together to the home of one of our young church families and pray for their 4-year-old who was sick. We are happy that he has much improved!

OnBoarding

- Late on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving I FINALLY got access to 13 years of my school files. Our tech support company seemed to struggle with the fact that I now work on the church side, but formerly worked on the school side. I was so grateful to get my old files which includes children and youth ministry curriculum that I wrote or purchased. I also got access to Pastor Julie's old files so I can see if there is any children, youth, or family materials that might be helpful.
- Camryn taught Jen and I how to use the credit card payment program so we could use this for lefse. I was happy to learn - and Camryn set up a great system - but also happy that Jen was the main point person for this.

Other

- Story telling... I have been working at sharing what is happening in various areas of ministry by writing newsletter articles and social media posts. I am thankful that Jen and Jenni are great storytellers for children and youth ministries.

- I have loved being involved with prayer ministries with Pastor Steve and the team. It was great to have youth leaders and so many children, youth, and families at our November prayer gathering where I led the teaching and Rich Gregory led the music. After a planning meeting on prayer for 2025, Carolyn Coleman-Grady and I took a picture with the cross and bell tower behind us.

With Gratitude,
Pastor Chamie

P.S. Keep looking up! Below is the group on the ECC hike looking for woodpeckers. I love their focus. It inspires me to keep my focus on Jesus who is leading the way.



Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – Dec. 1, 2024

You Are Invited to:



24 Weeks of Prayer
June 16 to
November 30

*Strengthened through
the Spirit,
Know the love of Christ,
Filled with the fullness of God*

(from the prayer in Ephesians
3:14-21)



Ascension Lutheran
Church
Thousand Oaks

At the last Council meeting, you received my four-page summary report of our 24 weeks of prayer and some of the blessings that we experienced from it. Our prayer team met on November 20 to reflect on these past months of focused prayer and to begin to plan for 2025.

Pastor Tim coined the phrase “365 in 25” that we will be using as we continue in some similar ways as 24 in 24. Most importantly, we will continue with the daily prayer calendar with the short intercessory prayers and then a Bible passage that either relates to that prayer or is a reading that is part of the lectionary for our weekend worship readings. The January and February calendar is set. We will not snail mail these but will distribute them in many other ways. We appreciate Stacy doing the daily posts (on social media) of these prayers and Scripture.

Our prayer chapel will continue to be open around our worship services as well as each Wednesday noon. Pastors Tim and Chamie were doing the Saturday campus prayer walks before 24 in 24 and will of course continue them. The monthly prayer gatherings will be scheduled on an as needed basis, when a preacher or teacher or a healing ministry feels called to offer an evening (or weekend) gathering for prayer.

Our “365 in 25” prayers will often focus on the prayers of Psalm 145 as well as Paul’s admonition to pray in Colossian 4:2. We hope that many of you, from praying the prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 often these past months, now have that powerful prayer memorized. May you be “filled with the fullness of God,” and “know the love of Christ,” as you are “strengthened through the Spirit.” Thank you for your prayers as we proceed, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us!

- ✦ **Pray Ephesians 3:14-21** each day (see front), and pray the Psalms.
- ✦ **Worship each week** and invite others.
- ✦ **Pray** for our Call Committee, the next Associate Pastor the Spirit is leading here, and the Search Committee for a Youth Director.
- ✦ **Pray** for our church, school, and foundation.
- ✦ **Come to our prayer chapel** for a quiet prayer time. (Open every Sunday, 8am-9am, 10am-10:30am. Every Wednesday, 12pm.)
- ✦ **Join every Saturday for a Prayer Walk** from 4:45-5:15pm.
- ✦ **Pray** for each heart to be filled with the fullness of God; know the love of Christ and be strengthened through the Spirit.

365 Days of Prayer in 2025



*Every day I will bless You, and praise Your name forever and ever.
(Psalm 145:2)*

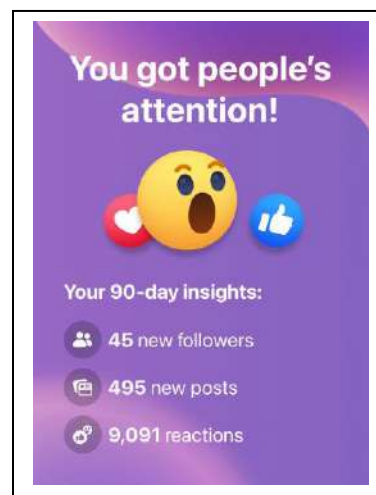
*Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.
(Colossians 4:2)*

Ascension Lutheran Church, School and Foundation
Thousand Oaks, CA

In November, Sunday morning adult education classes included Paul Evenson's excellent class for [our Foundation](#) on legacy giving with personal stories from Lory Breitzman and Jim Overton, and then our two-week focus on Gifts of Hope that I coordinated, and Nov. 24 we concluded with Carol Bartell's fascinating talk about Lutheran colleges and universities.

Each day I enjoy doing two to six ministry posts on our [Ascension Facebook page](#). Here are two graphics from this past month. Pastors Tim and Chamie's video "reels" are adding a lot to our outreach.

Your pastors did much pastoral care this month with people in the hospitals, and nursing homes. Please let us know when you may be there for surgery, and we will visit you before and after the surgery. Thank you!



Some of the other November big events included:

The prayer gathering led by Pastor Chamie, Pastor Rich, Dianne Beck and the youth;

A gathering at CLU for [Global Refuge](#) with director Krish O'Mara Vignarajah. I also had a fascinating talk with her husband, Collin O'Mara, CEO of the [National Wildlife Federation](#), about global economics!

The memorial service for our dear friend Bill Swiontkowski;

Our Senior Adult Ministries Christian Life Hours, the Friday Food Pantry, GriefShare each Thursday, SAMs Tram transportation ministry, our food ministry with Harbor House;

A wonderful thank you meal for volunteers at the home of Barry and Tania Disselhorst;

Hosting ELCA rep Pastor Carmen Retzlaff share with us about [ELCA World Hunger](#);

Our Global Ministries Team meeting where I shared about the work of the [Jubilee USA Network](#);

Our [Fair Trade Ministries](#) event with the youth group event in which we provided the s'mores with Fair Trade chocolate!;

The "World Fair" at Cal Lutheran, sponsored by the [Center for Global Engagement](#);

I met with Pastor Larry and Chris to prepare for our first monthly Wednesday luncheon for all, on Feb. 12, exciting news!;

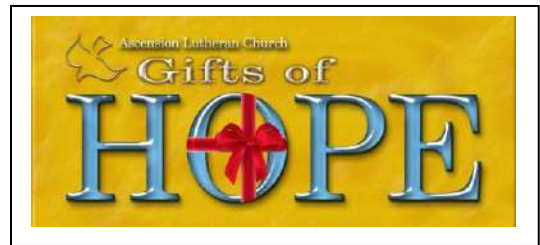
The office move and the new carpeting!

Thank you to each of the 68 families/individuals who have donated to our Gifts of Hope, for a total giving of \$65,186. This includes a very generous gift from our Ascension Foundation of \$6,000 (that's one thousand dollars for each of the six ministries). Many of you are giving these gifts in the name of a loved one for a Christmas gift this month.

Here are the totals for each ministry through Nov. 27. Gifts can continue to be given through the end of December.

[Gifts of Hope 2024 - Ascension Lutheran Church Thousand Oaks](#)

Kafka House in Tanzania: \$15,870
InfoHuts in Zimbabwe: \$5,590
Tree planting in Rwanda: \$6,012
ELCA world hunger God's Global Barnyard: \$7,695
Friends of Fieldworkers, Ventura County: \$13,390
Harbor House, Conejo Valley: \$15,577
(Undesignated gifts are \$1,052.)



What a beautiful list of examples with which we are blessed to be a blessing, near and far! Thank you, Ascension Lutheran Church, School, and Foundation! With the love of Jesus, you are bringing hope to the hurting in our community and throughout Africa, and for the first time ever with Gifts of Hope, we are supporting a "care for creation" ministry with Pastor John in Rwanda and the tree planting there. May you and yours receive great joy in your Gifts of Hope this year!

Some personal notes: Now with my half-time work I have Mondays and Thursdays free. The Monday mornings in November I did an online course with [Yale on "Praying with the Mystics"](#) and Monday evenings an online photography course with friend [David Hessemer](#) from Oaks Christian leading it. My family and I had an enjoyable Thanksgiving both with a weekend in Carlsbad and then on the day itself with a smaller group of eight of us. Also, often this month Julie, Natalie and I enjoyed a dinner with friends. Now, a blessed Advent to each of you!



Attendance

Our six week average has increased from 378 to 406. Our online viewership is down slightly from 155 to 148. Hanging of the Greens had 85 views of one minute or longer.

Reserve Study

Jeff and I completed the onsite meeting with Fred, and he is preparing his initial report. A notable portion of our discussion revolved around which entity of the campus was responsible for certain aspects of capital maintenance. It's more complex than an apartment or townhome association that can divide the capital space by the square footage of the units to access each party's portion. We have several budgets and reserve accounts that relate to capital spend. We needed to differentiate expenses we all share from expenses that rest with the church, the day school, the ECC, or a combination. It wouldn't be helpful to throw all the large expenses into the "everybody" box and water down the budgeting and planning we do at the entity level. Jeff and I were advised that we will need to take some time with the first draft to check that expenses are allocated to the correct areas. We should have the first draft in late December or early January.

Church Patio and Labyrinth

Our pastors have cast a vision for a beautiful 7-circuit prayer labyrinth on the patio space outside the sanctuary and the prayer chapel. We've been discussing it with the vendors that gave us proposals for the stain and finishing. They have asked some really good questions and helped us explore our options. We don't want to rush, so we are going to continue refining the plans, and wait for our reserve study to be completed in January. That will help us make the best decision with the most information.

Handrail for Choir

Members of the church choir have expressed the need for an additional handrail to improve access from the choir loft to the sanctuary. This request highlights concerns about safety and accessibility, particularly for individuals who may have mobility challenges or require additional support while navigating steps, particularly when the choir comes down for communion.

The vision is to install a sturdy and aesthetically appropriate handrail in the middle of the chancel steps. We would like it to be removable to keep the space flexible to our needs, while still adhering to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines for height, diameter, and extension. Of course, we would also like to complement the sanctuary's architectural and interior design to maintain visual harmony. I have consulted with a contractor that had an idea about a removable rail, but the iron fabricator did not think he could create it. I remain open to innovative ideas, and I am eager to partner with professionals who can propose a practical and elegant solution to this important need. Please let me know if you have an idea or if you know a contractor I should be meeting with.

Carpet Replacement

Old carpet and glue are coming out of the Bethlehem Room as I type. I am sitting on my laptop in the main office as my own office and closet are packed up. I'm really looking forward to an opportunity to dust everything, and be deliberate and tactical about what I bring back into my space. Some winter cleaning will make for a fresh New Year!

New Payroll System

We have signed an agreement with APS Payroll! Camryn is leading us through the data migration process. We'll train hourly employees on clocking in and out in late January and early February. Our plan is to start clocking in and out by mid February and run our first payroll in March. This is a great project for Camryn to take point on and show her leadership skills. She'll be keeping Mike and I on task with implementation objectives, and helping me to design and deliver training content.

Christmas Celebration

We had a lovely celebration in the Bethlehem Room, munching on some good barbeque from Smokin' Steve's, and decorating Christmas ornaments for Mesa Farms. A Be the Blessing grant blessed Mesa with a pre-lit tree, a tree skirt, and a star for the main communal space in the main house. We had a great time with markers, glitter, curled paper, and acorns to decorate 50 clear ornaments. I was able to deliver the ornaments to Mesa the following Monday in time for their weekly community dinner together.

Mesa Farm

I have been honored to be asked to serve for two years on a Cabinet to enter a with Mesa with the task of raising funds toward a comprehensive campaign. The campaign will solidify the funds needed for five years of operational budget as well as make some infrastructure improvements like remodeling some outbuildings and adding solar. I'm including an information sheet with my report. I'm passionate about their mission of ending youth homelessness in Ventura County, so please ask me if you are interested. I'd love to chat about how they are approaching that mission, and I can arrange a tour of the farm if you would like.

Finance

The School Board approved our plans for tuition and staff increases at the ECC and day school for the 2025-2026 school year. As I have mentioned before, these are the key building blocks of the budgets for the ECC and Day School. We'll start digging into the details in February for an initial budget draft completed in April. On the church front I am keen to spend late January doing some analysis on our giving trends. Being half way through our fiscal year and finished with December we hope to pull some decent data trends that will inform the Finance Committee, Generosity Team, and Council decisions around budget on the same timeline as the School.

Human Resources

Human Resources is an area in which I am currently attempting to "zoom up" into a higher level of leadership and make sure that I am meeting the needs of the organization as a Director. The tyranny of the urgent with Human Resources is everyday things like leave paperwork, new hires, and status changes. Some of these tasks my team is able to help with (Thank you, Camryn Force and Carolyn Bahr!) but others are leaving me drained and stuck in the weeds. Pastor Tim is helping me strategize some of the simpler tasks so that I can focus on items like culture and leadership development. We have learned that the supervisor team as a whole needs some risk management training that I would like to develop, and I have been needing to prioritize some time for conflict resolution between staff members and supervisors. I have been reviewing some of my old favorites on leadership; like "It's Your Ship" by Michael Abrashoff, and finding some new favorites, particularly on generational gaps and how Millennials are experiencing the workplace.

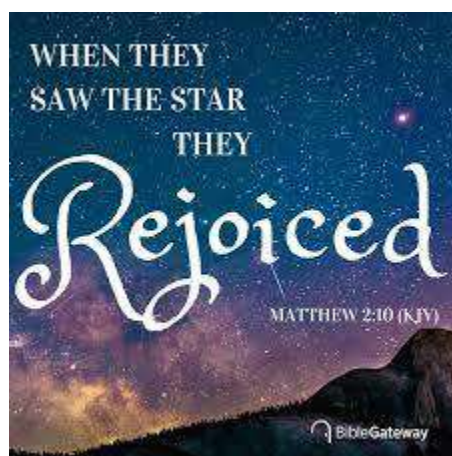
We are continuing to use the language of Working Genius and Enneagram to discuss how we interact with each other in the workplace. The executive team has made a study of the Working Genius, but we need to figure out how to broaden that learning to the rest of our church team.



Fun Ornaments



Mesa's New Tree



Thank you,
Kaylee Searway
Director of Operations



mesa

Cultivate Possibility

Mesa is an innovative transitional housing community for young adults age 18–24 who are facing homelessness.

In August 2024, Mesa welcomed its first residents to its 10-acre site in Ojai where a unique approach to housing with wrap-around evidenced-based wellness services is provided.

- **Housing** 10 tiny homes and a main house offer individual living spaces in a safe, beautiful setting
- **Vocation** Vocational training, job placement, and academic programs promote independence
- **Wellness** Holistic wellness and trauma-informed services support health and resilience
- **Community** mentor and volunteer opportunities build healthy relationships and strengthen support network

Mesa has launched a \$6 million campaign to build its capacity, ensure sustainability, and set the stage for future expansion and replication.



“As a former foster youth myself, Mesa’s mission is personal to me. Providing young adults with the tools they need to be successful is crucial to creating both an equitable and healed community.”

ELIZABETH CLEWS
FORMER MESA BOARD MEMBER

Facing Overwhelming Odds

Right now in Ventura County, over 300 young adults age 18–24 are living on the street or in shelters. Thousands more teeter on the edge of homelessness as they live doubled-up with other families, couch surf among friends, stay in motels, or cycle through jail, hospitals, and treatment facilities.

Many of these young people have aged out of foster care. Several are college students struggling to afford rent in today's housing market. A significant number experienced housing insecurity as children or felt forced to leave untenable living situations. No matter the reason, the odds of achieving a stable future are stacked against them.

Current responses are not working well enough to stem the rising numbers of young people experiencing housing insecurity and to break the generational cycle of poverty and trauma.

The financial burden on society is immense.

Consider that taxpayer-funded services for one chronically homeless person cost \$50,000 a year on average; multiply that by the 2,400 people in Ventura County who are unsheltered today. Now consider the lost potential of young lives—the cost is immeasurable.



FOSTER CARE

- ▶ 20% of foster youth are unhoused the day they age out.
- ▶ 50% of foster youth are homeless or incarcerated within 2 years of aging out.



SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

- ▶ 44% of young adults experiencing homelessness have been in the justice system.
- ▶ 20% of community college students are at risk of homelessness.



INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT

- ▶ Without intervention, 22% of former foster youth see their children enter the same system.
- ▶ Housing insecurity as a child increases the chance of experiencing homelessness as an adult by 40%.



MESA CO-FOUNDERS
KYLE THOMPSON AND DAN PARZIALE

An Upstream Solution

Mesa was born out of a desire to help young people facing homelessness defy the odds and shift the trajectory of their lives. In 2020, co-founder Dan Parziale, then Senior Director of Housing Navigation at LA Family Housing, teamed up with community-minded entrepreneur Kyle Thompson to find a new solution to the statistically poor outcomes for youth exiting the foster care system and for young adults with unstable upbringings.

Recognizing that housing was a necessary but insufficient solution, they laid the groundwork for a novel, community-centered, evidence-based approach that integrates transitional housing with whole-person wellness and trauma-informed support services tailored to young adults ages 18–24 who are facing homelessness.

With the partnership of the County of Ventura and People's Self-Help Housing, Mesa won a Homekey grant through the California Department of Housing and Community Development to make this vision a reality.

Mesa's model fills a gap in housing and supportive services for a growing number of young adults who otherwise rely on expensive and already-burdened services such as hospitals, mental health treatment centers, law enforcement, and shelters as crisis stopgaps. By intervening early, Mesa offers a cost-effective solution that prevents them from becoming entrenched in the homeless system and gives them a solid path to create a happy, healthy, and productive future.

Tiny Home Community

Thirteen young adults—all experiencing homelessness in Ventura County—are now living at Mesa. This design provides a safe and welcoming space for residents, as congregate living can create uncomfortable situations for young adults, especially those identifying as LGBTQ + who make up over 10% of the unhoused population in this age range. With a beautiful, supportive, and safe space to live for up to two years rent-free, participants can build toward permanent housing and independent living.

Ten tiny homes surround a main house, which provides a balance of privacy and community building with its communal kitchen, dining, library, and family room. Another two residents live in private bedrooms in the main house.

Mesa is at maximum occupancy and fully staffed by a live-in house manager, full-time case manager, and program coordinator. Operations are led by the executive director, development and finance director, and operations director.

Holistic Approach to Wellness

A stable place to call home is essential, but it takes much more for participants to truly thrive. Mesa provides a whole-person approach to wellness and self-sufficiency that is informed by each participant's unique history and wishes for their future. With a case manager on site, residents design a program to pursue their interests and meet their goals, drawing on a coordinated network of existing supports:

- ▶ Mental, behavioral, and physical health supports and counseling
- ▶ Education, skill development, and tutoring
- ▶ Vocational training, internships, and job placement
- ▶ Financial literacy and independent living skills
- ▶ Therapeutic programs, such as yoga, meditation, equine, and art therapy
- ▶ Permanent housing placement and rental assistance

At its core, Mesa believes healthy relationships and a supportive community are vital to building resilience. Mesa balances offering programs on site with activating connections within the community. Opportunities to work with mentors in the community help participants build the resources necessary to navigate future challenges.

Finally, Mesa's incredible 10-acre property in the Ojai Valley provides opportunities for participants to discover the healing power of nature and the therapeutic potential of regenerative agriculture. A developing hub of on-site community businesses will support education, job training, and mentoring.



Comprehensive Campaign

In a very short time as a new nonprofit, Mesa has built a strong team of staff and volunteers, cultivated strategic partnerships with the County of Ventura and aligned organizations, and established a solid base of support from generous donors and community members. Its growing reputation as a trusted nonprofit is based on its conviction to pilot a bold new solution for an entrenched problem, its staff's expertise with the target population, and the strength of its community and donor network.

Building on this success and momentum, Mesa is well-positioned to strengthen its operational sustainability through a \$6 million campaign. Through this campaign, Mesa will secure 5+ years of operating funds to meet its annual budget.

The campaign will also raise capital funds to complete infrastructure improvements such as:

- Remodel outbuildings into a Wellness Center for group therapeutic offerings, meditation space, yoga, and fitness center, and an onsite workshop for broad programming options.
- Solarize the property to control long-term energy costs and provide a renewable source of energy.

The campaign will help Mesa expand and diversify its base of support. Philanthropy is vital to Mesa's long-term financial stability. Mesa invites community members, businesses, and foundations vested in the health and vitality of Ventura County to join in this exciting and ambitious effort. With this support, Mesa will establish a cost-effective and sustainable model that yields proven, evidence-based outcomes that can be replicated in communities across the state and beyond.



Mesa is committed to preventing homelessness among young adults ages 18–24. Its program is an upstream solution that will break the cycle of housing insecurity, end long-term dependence on costly interventions, and empower young people to build the life they imagine for themselves. This campaign is vital to creating a foundation that will sustain Mesa for the long term.

mesa

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION:
HI@MESAFARM.ORG MESAFARM.ORG
(805) 646-4460 EIN: 85-2978137

**Ascension Lutheran School Board Agenda for 11/18/24 Mtg. at 6:30 pm
On Campus (Library) & on Zoom**

Call to Order

Mission Statements

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

ECC: *To nurture the whole child, establishing a lifelong learner and a foundation of faith.*

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

ONE ASCENSION Motto- COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY

1. **Opening Devotion/Prayer** – Devotions - Kathy
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Agenda & Consent Agenda
 - Admissions Report
 - October Meeting Minutes
 - Financials Report
 - ECC Report
 - Principal's Report
 - Church Council Rep Report (n/a)
4. Open Forum

Old Business:

1. Discussion on any reports pulled from the Consent Agenda
2. Subcommittee Updates
3. Discussion on School Board Alcohol Policy
4. Succession Planning

New Business:

1. Tuition Rates - Kaylee & Mike
2. ECC admissions policy revision statement-Jenni (December meeting)
3. State of the schools - Rich & Jenni
4. Uniforms update

Executive Session:

1. Staff gifts

Closing Prayer - Rich

Adjournment

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

Remembering Our Mission:

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

***ECC:** To nurture the whole child, establishing a lifelong learner and a foundation of faith.*

***Day 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:

Ashley Steere, Scott Bean, Rich Gregory, Jenni McCoy, Connie Angress, Jocelyn Myers, Nelly Trumbo, Chris Poveromo, Kyle Jones, Kathy Roshanai, Jeanette McNulty, Anna Woodward, Mike Marvin, Camryn Force, Lindsey Robinson, Jennifer Farrell, Pastor Chamie

Call to Order:

Ashley called the meeting to order at 6:39pm.

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

Devotion:

Kathy shared a devotion quoting Philippians 4:6-7: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. This message was especially poignant when she made the decision in 2019 to sell the restaurant business she built.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda:

Principal's report and financial reports for discussion.

Motion to approve agenda initiated by Jocelyn. Chris seconded. Motion passes.

Approval of consent agenda items initiated by Jocelyn. Chris seconded. Motion passes.

Old Business:

Principal's Report

- There was a question about the challenges facing 1st grade as mentioned in the principal's report. Rich shared that the Fall parent/teacher conferences revealed some concerns from parents about the 1st grade class being behind academically. Several measures have been taken to address these concerns, including the purchase of additional curriculum as well as adding additional in-classroom hours for Natalie Heyman, the resource teacher.
- Rich also shared the teachers will be implementing a new practice of meeting periodically in their grade cohorts (TK/K/1, 2/3, etc) to share each's classroom progress.
- It was also commented that educating parents on what is developmentally appropriate (age when start reading, etc), could alleviate some parental anxiety around academic progress.

Subcommittee Updates – Discount Standardization

- Jeanette presented an amendment to multi-student discount. Currently, the Church discount for the ECC is 10% for one student, and the Church discount for the Day School is \$538 for one student. The multi-student discount at the ECC is 10% for child 2+, and the multi-student discount at the Day School is an additional \$200 for child 2+.

- Why a Multi-Phased Approach:
 - Allows time to “grow” into the discounts
 - Works towards a One Ascension discount policy
 - Competitive with our surrounding schools
 - Creating brand loyalty
 - Recognizing families for their financial commitment
 - Supporting families through varying economic cycles
 - Encourage families to stay in the One Ascension family

- Phase 1

- Introduce a multi-student discount to the day school for 2025/2026 school year
- Offer 5% discount to 2nd child
- Offer a 10% discount to every child beyond the 2nd
- Discounts are not additive (can't combine faculty and multi-student discount)
- Discounts are applied to the lowest tuition currently paid
- Multi-student discounts to not cross campuses

	ECC	Day School	Financial Impact
Current State			
First Child	0%	0%	\$0
2nd Child +	10%	~1.5%	
Phase I – Introduce Multi-Student Discount to the Day School			
First Child	0%	\$0	~\$20,000
2nd Child	10%	5%	
3rd Child +	10%	10%	

○ Phase 2

- Expand multi-student discount to families that have a child at both the day school and the ECC
- Offer 5% discount to 2nd child at the day school
- Offer a 10% discount to every child beyond the 2nd
- If family has two children at the ECC honor the 10% for the second child at the ECC
- If family has one child at the ECC and one at the day school, apply the 5% multi-student discount to lowest tuition
- Discounts are not additive
- Discounts are applied to the lowest tuition currently paid

	ECC	Day School	Financial Impact
Phase I – Introduce Multi-Student Discount to the Day School			
First Child	0%	\$0	~\$20,000
2 nd Child	10%	5%	
3rd Child +	10%	10%	
Phase II – Cross Campus Multi-Student Discount			
First Child	0%	\$0	~\$45,000
2 nd Child	10%	5%	
3rd Child +	10%	10%	

○ Phase 3

- Standardize the multi-student discount across the One Ascension
- Offer a 10% discount to every child beyond the 1st
- Discounts are not additive
- Discounts are applied to the lowest tuition currently paid

	ECC	Day School	Financial Impact
Phase I – Introduce Multi-Student Discount to the Day School			
First Child	0%	\$0	~\$20,000
2nd Child	10%	5%	
3rd Child +	10%	10%	
Phase II – Cross Campus Multi-Student Discount			
First Child	0%	\$0	~\$45,000
2nd Child	10%	5%	
3rd Child +	10%	10%	

○ Multi-Student Discount Milestones:

- Phase 1 goes into effect for the 2025/2026 school year. Income foregone is estimated to be ~\$20K.
- Phase 2 goes into effect when the following criteria are met: day school economic attendance increases to 182 students (~14 student increase from 2024/2025); no decrease in economic attendance is incurred at the ECC (base line is the 2024/2025 school year). Income foregone is estimated to be ~\$45K (3 students). Other considerations include the increase in costs associated with one more teacher for the expansion of TK.
- Phase 3 goes into effect when the following criteria are met: day school economic attendance increases to 185 students; no decrease in economic attendance is incurred at the ECC (base line is the 2024/2025 school year). Income foregone is estimated to be ~\$60K (5 students).

- Rich commented that forecasting in this way should be considered when other topics like teacher compensation and benefits are considered.
- Jeannette also commented that we could consider adding an alumni discount of 5% (not detailed in the current presentation).
- Scott discussed whether a conversation could be had with the Foundation and requested that the \$20K financial impact (loss in revenue) presented in Phase 1 might be covered by the Foundation. Mike commented that there are currently 2 scholarships offered by the Foundation.

Nelly makes a motion to roll out Phase 1 exclusively of the multi-student discount so that discounts now include 5% for 2nd child at the day school and 10% for 3rd child and beyond. These discounts are not additive. Kathy seconds. Motion passes.

School Board Handbook Alcohol Policy

- Wes Myers presented at the last meeting to address the lack of policy regarding alcohol at on campus events. He suggests adding the following language to the School Board Handbook:
 Alcohol: Any sanctioned fundraising event on campus is limited to beer and wine only and all alcohol must be served by a licensed and insured third party bartending vendor. Such vendor must name Ascension Lutheran Church and School as additional insured on its policy and provide proof of the same prior to performing bartending services on campus.
- It was discussed that the next step should be to notify the Church of our intention of adding some sort of policy and language to the School Board Handbook.
- Ashley recommends adding this to church council's agenda, and Pastor Chamie will connect with Carrie Leonard, council president.

Succession Planning

- The position for school board President-Elect is still vacant. If no current board member expresses interest in the position before January 1st, Ashley agrees to continue her Presidency for an additional year.

New Business:

Tuition Rates

- Mike shared Rich's and Jenni's recommendations for a tuition increase for the 2025-2026 school year, which include a 3-4% increase at the day school and a 3% increase at the ECC.
- Mike did not run a proforma P&L projection just yet, but was able to explain that 80% of expense is salary and matrix adds 2.5% jump, so then 20% of remaining expenses could not increase more than 5/6% to maintain budget projections in the black (reflecting this year's budget 2024-2025)
- Rich recommends a tiered rate increase. He would like to incentivize enrollment in 6-8th grades by not increasing tuition, because enrollment needs to increase in these grade

levels. It was discussed that this might signal a lack of faith in our middle school program, and a tuition increase could eliminate that sentiment.

- It was highlighted that the cost of the preschool program at the ECC is more expensive than TK, so perhaps there is room to increase TK tuition to make it more commensurate with the ECC's program. It was noted that these programs and campuses are very different. Licensing and other costs at ECC are also factored into the ECC rates.
- Chris commented that if there is demand for our program, it would be prudent to increase tuition.
- Pastor Chamie commented that the ECC capital campaign was predominately funded by church families, not school families, so nurturing the relationships between the church and school is integral if an additional capital campaign for improving the school campus and garden happens in the future.
- Ashley recommends moving 6th grade tuition into the 7/8th bracket and eliminating the third tuition bracket.

Chris makes a motion to implement the tiered rate increase with the 2025-2026 tuition rates at \$12,575 for TK-5, \$13,500 for 6th, and \$14,980 for 7th and 8th grades. Scott seconds. Two oppose. Motion passes.

Nelly makes a motion to increase ECC tuition rates by 3%. Anna seconds. Discussion includes whether teacher's salaries will also increase by 2.5% per the matrix, which they will. Additionally, it was asked how large of a percent salaries are of expenses, and they are approximately 72%. It was also recommended to consider adding an additional "floating" full time ECC teacher, but this discussion can be revisited during budget preparations. Motion passes.

Extended Care Rates & Discounts

- Rich and Jenni propose that the ECC, discounted, summer rates for children of teachers carry over to Summer Staycation at the day school campus.
- Ashley recommends adding a Calendar for when extended care is offered for staycations and student free days.

State of the Schools

- Jenni spoke on changing the transition dates for her classes. Classrooms now transition at end of May, and new students start the Summer Session in June. It will take at least a year to smooth the transition, but she hopes to keep classrooms together through the Summer, with new enrollment and classroom transitions happening in Fall (August).
- Jenni would also like to change her admissions agreement so that parents are responsible for an additional 2 tuition payments after giving a 30-day notice of their intention to unenroll. Jenni will consolidate and formalize her request to change this policy and present it for board approval at the next meeting.
- Rich shared the amazing work the school community did, shepherded by Rob Steere and Erin Storey, to help support families affected by the fires. They collected and delivered over 2 tons of supplies.

- Rich also spoke about the amazing work the holy spirit is doing at One Ascension. 11 baptisms scheduled in December and 19 kids in the confirmation program, with many being Ascension students.
- Rich also sent an email about volunteer elective teaching to parents and has gotten a great response, everything from lawyers, flight training ground instruction, etc.

Uniforms Update

- Connie created a committee with 6 people. 7 companies to look at with samples from 1 of these companies. Meeting this week. Connie expects it will take at least 2 years to transition.

Closing Prayer:

Pastor Chamie closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment:

Jocelyn motioned to adjourn the meeting and reconvene for executive session. Kyle seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:33pm.

Next school board meeting is December 16th. Jenni will lead devotion.

Respectfully submitted by Jocelyn Myers

**ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
FOUNDATION REPORT TO THE COUNCIL
DECEMBER 18, 2024**

The Marketing and Education Committee is preparing several new campaigns to increase awareness of the Foundation and provide church members with useful financial planning tools. A significant part of their efforts involves recognition of the need to shift some of the focus to younger generations (less than 50 years of age).

Discussions are underway to review the Foundation's identity, its fit within the One Ascension family and its fit in today's social messaging. Initial conversations have already occurred with the school. We expect forthcoming engagements with school leaders to advance discussions on initiatives of mutual interest.

The Foundation's total assets totaled about \$1,875,000 as of December 4, 2024. The equity markets have been very strong this year, resulting in the equity portion of the total portfolio exceeding the allowable maximum of 75 percent. As a result, the Foundation has sold off \$120,000 of its equity fund holdings and placed the proceeds in a money market fund currently paying 4.25% to get back below the allowable maximum.

Alan Baker
Foundation Representative to the Council



Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024

3:30-5:30 PM, Founders Hall

Meeting Notes

Meeting Notes

An informal social time with light refreshments was held in Founders Hall from 3:30-4:00 PM.

WELCOME - Louise Evenson welcomed everyone and introduced the guest presenter, **Pastor Lisa Kipp from Lutheran World Relief.**

In addition to more than two dozen Ascension LC members, guests from Emmanuel (N. Hollywood), Our Redeemer (Oxnard), Holy Shepherd (Simi Valley), and New Hope (Agoura Hills) were in attendance.

OPENING PRAYER - Louise Evenson opened the meeting with an Advent poem entitled "FIRST COMING" by Madeline L'Engle.

1. FOCUS: Lutheran World Relief's Humanitarian Response – Presented by Pastor Lisa Kipp, Director of Congregational Engagement at LWR

Pastor Kipp shared moving stories and videos of LWR's domestic and global humanitarian response. Some of the many highlights of her presentation included the following:

- LWR is currently working in 36 countries and will mark their 80th year of service in 2025.
- In 2024, LWR expanded their humanitarian efforts to include domestic locales.
- Three ways that LWR is at work in the world:
 1. Emergency Humanitarian Response
 2. Long-term Sustainable Development
 3. Quilts and Kits
- Five of the many crises the LWR responded to in 2024 were highlighted through stories and videos of first-person accounts from those who received aid:
 1. **Ankara, Turkey earthquake of 2023** – continuing long-term response that has evolved to meet needs over time;
 2. **Baltimore, MD bridge collapse in 2024** – quilts and kits for Chinese nationals stranded on ships in the harbor;
 3. **South Sudan flooding in 2021** – ongoing response to needs, including setting up mobile health clinics;
 4. **Middle East (current crisis)** – LWR staff in Lebanon have been providing aid; and
 5. **Asheville, NC hurricane-related damage** – quilts and kits have been distributed to veterans who experienced loss of personal items when their living facility was flooded.
- Pastor Kipp noted that responding to needs in Ukraine has been the largest relief effort in the 80-year history of LWR, and the type of relief has evolved to meet changing needs over the course of the war.

2. GMT Monthly Reports

Fair Trade Ministry – Report by Carol Bjelland was distributed via email by Louise Evenson prior to the December meeting.

Gifts of Hope – Update was distributed via email by Louise Evenson prior to the December meeting.

3. **Calendar** – The list of important calendar dates as of Dec. 1 was distributed via email by Louise Evenson prior to the December meeting.

4. **Next Meeting** - Wednesday, January 8, 2025 4- 5:30 PM Bethlehem Room

FOCUS: El Salvador – Presenters: Bruce Thomas and Julie Jacks

GMT - Year in Review, 2024

Post script: In her Dec. 6 email, Louise included this thank-you: “A special thanks to Pastor Steve Herder for his technical support and hospitality for our guests, Marcia Koenig for bringing poinsettias for the tables and fresh, grapes for our pre-gathering time, for Bonny Chick who welcomed our guests, and for Paul Evenson who brought the coffee to go with the various sweet treats we shared. My gratitude to all those who helped after the meeting to fold table cloths, and pack up and load cars with various items to be returned.”

Submitted by Ethel Jordan

12.9.2024



FAIR TRADE MINISTRY

DATE: November 25, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Carol Bjelland

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

Proceeds from the sale of the Fair Trade Lane gift boxes will go to the Fair Trade Lane Scholarship Fund. Our friends at Mt Meru Coffee Project share that \$75 can cover the cost of education & training for one year for a Fair Trade farmer in the Meru Region, Tanzania. When the Fair Trade Lane Scholarship Fund reaches \$75, we'll give those funds to MMCP to send to Tanzania for farmer education & training.

Fair Trade Mini Chocolate Bars are available for purchase on Fair Trade Lane. Dark chocolate; milk chocolate; & white chocolate varieties. \$5 each. Quantities are limited. These chocolate bars are from a chocolate shop in Ventura, CA.

There will be 2-3 holiday gift baskets prepared/available for sale on Fair Trade Lane in December.

We will share a special Fair Trade message at Chapel Wednesday, Dec 11th. (Past monthly Chapel Messages: September/Soccer Balls; October/Lady Bugs; November/What FAIR can mean)

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

Volunteers invited to help with Fair Trade Lane Thursdays & Sundays.

3. LOOKING AHEAD (Important calendar dates)

Fair Trade Lane Open Dates/Times November to December 2024:

Dec 5th (2:30-4PM)

Dec 12th (2:30-4 PM)

Dec 15th (8:30 – 9 AM & 10-11AM)

4. OTHER INFORMATION

We thank Jenni Klemp for the Fair Trade Lane sign she created & installed. And we thank her for creating the design for the special gift boxes.

We thank Stacy for creating the fliers for the special Fair Trade Lane gift boxes.

We thank Carolyn Bahr for creating the fliers for the special Fair Trade holiday chocolate treats and for designing our new Fair Trade business cards.

If there is an open date in the Adult Ed Class schedule, we'll organize a class on Fair Trade Coffee

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

as of Nov. 27, 2024

GIFTS OF HOPE

\$59,186.08 68

Kafika House, Tanzania

\$14,870.00 31

Safe place for children	\$25	\$1,075.00	8
Travel to Kafika	\$50	\$650.00	4
Children surgeries	\$72	\$2,325.00	6
Ave.cost for surgery	\$1,000	\$2,300.00	3
General Gift		\$8,520.00	17

Infohut, Zimbabwe

\$4,590.00 21

Bibles/Devotions	\$30	\$460.00	7
Computer for the bldg.	\$100	\$1,500.00	5
General Gift		\$2,630.00	11

Care for Creation, Rwanda

\$5,012.00 21

Seedling of a Tree	\$2	\$392.00	8
Supplies for tree planting	\$10	\$610.00	8
Training:churches/schools	\$100	\$1,500.00	2
General Gift		\$2,510.00	12

ELCA World Hunger Appeal

\$6,695.00 40

10 Chicks	\$10	\$500.00	14
Honey Bee Hive	\$20	\$620.00	17
Piglet	\$30	\$1,140.00	20
Goat	\$50	\$1,950.00	23
Fish community	\$250	\$350.00	2
Family Farm	\$715	\$1,015.00	2
General World Hunger		\$1,120.00	7

Friends of Fieldworkers

\$12,390.00 35

Laundry Love Program	\$50	\$2,200.00	10
Scholarships	\$100	\$6,000.00	7
General Gift		\$4,190.00	24

Harbor House

\$14,577.00 37

Bag of Groceries/Family	\$25	\$2,026.00	10
Tank of Gas/Family	\$75	\$1,275.00	5
Rental Assistance	\$100	\$2,200.00	7
General Food Gifts		\$9,076.00	23

Non-designated gifts

\$1,052.08 1

as of Nov. 28, 2023

Prior Year Comparison

\$66,310 63

Meru, Tanzania

\$25,960 30

ELCA World Hunger Appeal

\$6,730 32

Friends of Fieldworkers

\$19,035 25

Harbor House

\$12,085 31

Other gifts

\$2,500 2

DECEMBER

Dec 1	Hanging of the Greens at ALC. Sanctuary
Dec 4	Global Ministries Team meeting, 3:30-5:30 PM, Founders Hall Topic: Lutheran World Relief's Humanitarian Response, Pr Lisa Kipp
Dec 5	Fair Trade Lane Open 2:30-4:00PM
Dec 8	Holiday Sock Care Kits, Sunday School, between services.
Dec 12	Fair Trade Lane open, 2:30-4PM
Dec 15	Fair Trade Lane open, 8:30-9:00 and 10-11:00 AM
Dec 25	Christmas Day!

UPCOMING MEETING DATES, 2025

All GMT meetings are at 4:00-5:30 PM in the BETHLEHEM ROOM

Jan 8	Global Ministries Team meeting 4:00-5:30 PM Bethlehem Room TOPIC: El Salvador, Bruce Thomas and Julie Jacks
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GMT-YEAR IN REVIEW, 2024

Feb 5	Global Ministries Team Meeting
March 5	ASH WEDNESDAY Global Ministries Team Meeting
April 9	Global Ministries Team Meeting
April 20	EASTER
May 7	Global Ministries Team Meeting
June 4	Global Ministries Team Meeting

As of December 1, 2024

YOU ARE INVITED TO A PRESENTATION

by Pastor Lisa Kipp of Lutheran World Relief
in Founders Hall,
Ascension Lutheran Church,
1600 E. Hillcrest Dr., Thousand Oaks

Wednesday, December 4
Informal gathering, 3:30-4 PM,
Presentation and question time, 4-5 PM

If you are a **quilter** or **kit maker**, or a
compassionate person this is for you!

Pastor Kipp will share updates
photos and videos about LWR's humanitarian
response domestically and globally, including
Asheville, NC, and Ukraine.

Please join us for this informative presentation!

About Lutheran World Relief

Affirming God's love for all people, Lutheran World Relief works with Lutherans and partners around the world to end poverty, injustice and human suffering. Founded by Lutherans in the United States at the end of World War II, LWR tackles global poverty by helping people adapt to the challenges that threaten their livelihoods and well-being. They provide aid in emergencies and help families restore their lives. They partner with local leaders to grow rural economies and build healthy communities, breaking the cycle of poverty so our neighbors all around the world can thrive.



About Rev. Lisa Kipp

Rev. Lisa Kipp serves as the Director of Congregational Engagement at Lutheran World Relief. In her role, she leads a team that connects congregations across the United States with LWR's work of bringing lifesaving aid and long-term hope to our most vulnerable neighbors around the world. As part of this work, she also oversees Lutheran World Relief's Quilt and Kit Ministry, a program that has been a part of the fabric of thousands of Lutheran congregations for over 75 years. Prior to this role, Rev. Kipp served an ELCA congregation in Rochester, MN, for nearly twenty years. She continues to live in Rochester with her husband and three sons.



**LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF**

Church Council Report
Youth Director: Jennifer Avalos
Date: December 11, 2024

Confirmation Program Update

From October 6th to November 3rd, our students focused on the **24/24 Prayer initiative**, and starting from November 3rd to December 22nd, we are focusing on **Acts of Hope** as part of our service project curriculum. During this time, the students are diving deeper into the theme of service as they carry out meaningful outreach within the community. It is exciting to see how these acts of service are allowing our youth to be a light of Christ, spreading hope and love during this holiday season. Each month, we continue to explore new themes, enriching our faith journey together and empowering our youth to live out their faith in tangible ways.

In December, we are placing a special emphasis on **serving others** and deepening the connection between service and our faith. Our students are actively participating in community service events, including **caroling to senior homes, participating in a Service Project during our White Elephant Christmas party for the youth**. These experiences are allowing them to make a real impact while tying into the spirit of the season and our Confirmation curriculum.

This approach not only helps to deepen the students' understanding of God's love but also creates opportunities for them to serve others in practical ways, building strong relationships

with the church and the community. We are excited to see how these experiences will shape their spiritual journeys.

Bible Study and 24/24 Prayer Initiative 9th-12 grade

Our Bible Study sessions on Sundays have been a powerful time of spiritual growth. It has been a joy to witness our youth's enthusiasm for the 24/24 Prayer initiative, which we have integrated into our Bible study discussions. This initiative has given our students an opportunity to dive deeper into Scripture, learn from each other's perspectives, and encourage one another as they grow in their faith.

It's been amazing to watch students ask insightful questions and support one another in their spiritual journeys. I am so proud of the way they are growing in their faith, and it's a privilege to be part of their lives during this transformative time.

Lefse Weekend Update (November)

Our Lefse weekend in November was a great success with an excellent turnout. Families and youth participated on different days—November 29th for preparation, November 30th for forming, making, and selling the lefse Dec. 1st. We had the remaining three tubs of lefse balls that were made/prepared again December 2nd and 5th, and began selling fresh lefse packs on December 8th. Now, doing one more push for our final Lefse sale on December 15th.

It was a joy to see the amazing smiling faces during Lefse weekend, and it was a pleasure to work alongside our youth and families to support this beloved tradition fundraiser, which is so dear to our community and church.

Service Project Focus/Youth Events for December

As we move into December, our Confirmation students are diving deep into our service project initiative, which is a key component of our curriculum this month. These service projects are not just acts of giving, but opportunities for our youth to experience the true spirit of Christmas through serving others. They are engaging with the community in meaningful ways, putting their faith into action, and shining the light of Christ during this holy season.

The service projects include:

- **Caroling (December 21st):** Our youth will be participating in a caroling outreach, visiting senior homes and community centers to bring joy and cheer through Christmas carols. This will allow them to be a tangible reminder of Christ's love to those in need of companionship and holiday cheer.
- **White Elephant Christmas Party (December 15th):** As part of our service-focused Christmas celebration, we will also be holding a White Elephant gift exchange for the Confirmation/senior Luther League. Along with the gift exchange, students will be giving of their time and resources as they prepare for this fun and meaningful event, which ties directly into our service project theme of fostering community and connection during the holiday season.
- **Ice Skating Trip (December 22nd) 6th-12 grade:** Our ice skating trip is another way to connect as a community, with free meals and fellowship provided. While this is a fun activity, it also serves as a way for our youth to relax, connect, and build bonds in service to one another before the holidays.

Through these activities, we are intentionally teaching the students about service, community, and the joy of giving, helping them understand how they can reflect God's love through their actions.

COMMUNICATION UPDATE FOR DECEMBER

Here are the top 20 viewed pages of our ALCTO.org website this past month: Livestream, Calendar, Seasonal Worship, Meet the Pastors, Signups/Announcements, Staff Directory, About Our Worship Services, Index, Worship, Map and Directions, Contact Us, 24 in 24 Prayer, Gifts of Hope 2024, Be the Blessing Grants, Links to Past Livestream Worship Services, Fair Trade, Career Opportunities, Find Help, Ministries, Benevolence. (The newsletter is on a different site. Also, these numbers indicate page hits, and don't tell us more sophisticated things such as whether one person went back to a page numerous times.)

We're directing Advent and Christmas views to Seasonal Worship, so it's working. We also saw, in October, that users found the Blessing of the Animals special page.

Search terms that led users to our website -- besides Ascension Lutheran Church and Ascension Lutheran Thousand Oaks and other iterations -- included Prayer Shawl patterns (always a top item in search for us) and this, which is something Pastor Steve posted quite a while ago:

<https://alcto.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Microsoft-Word-BIBLE-READINGS-HOSPITAL.pdf>

So, when people want Bible Readings for the Hospital and Prayer Shawl patterns, Google is sending them to us. (The prayer shawl search led 180 users to us last month, so there you go.)

Meanwhile, our Google Business listing purportedly sent 861 people to the website last month. I haven't looked at that in a while. Maybe we can utz it up for Christmas!

Mail Chimp recent email open rates: Giving Tuesday 56.8; November 21 59.6; November 27 60.9; December 5 61.3.

Pastor Steve's mighty Facebook is up again, now with 2,400 followers, and the church Instagram broke 500 followers at long last. This is the continued result of the surge in activity mentioned last month, with Pastor Chamie's arrival.

Instagram constellation: Senior Luther League 205, AL School 759 (727 FB), ECC 282 (349 FB), Gifts that Give 190, Life Groups 72.

It will be interesting to see what kind of numbers come in the rest of this month, always our top month.

Thanking you for your generosity and dedication,

Stacy Smith Bosco

Communication Coordinator

Be the Blessing Report for December 2024

The Be the Blessing team met December 2nd to review the two submitted grant requests and to discuss new ways to project the “be the blessing” initiative to the congregation.

The first grant request, a church staff initiative to make ornaments, purchase and deliver a pre-lit tree with boxed ornaments to Mesa Farm. This community was recently constructed and newly occupied by mostly young adults out of the foster system. The funding as approved was for \$200 for the materials.

The second request was for \$3,000 to pre-fund a senior-lunch program in the image of “Lunch Bunch”, which had been inactive since Covid. While the team agreed to the value of the program, questions about the amount, the availability of money from the old Lunch Bunch account, and ongoing funding expectations, required further research.

With respect to future activities of the Be the Blessing program, it developed that a concept involving prefunding of congregational activity via Be the Blessing funds was discussed at the Generosity Team meeting. Both BtheB and Generosity teams felt there would be value in a meeting to flesh out the idea and plan for specific activity early in 2025. To that end, a joint meeting was set up for the afternoon of December 23rd.

Respectfully submitted for the committee,

Dave Harkins