

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, January 15, 2025 - 7:00pm
Bethlehem Room**

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 - Rachael Bowen

Special Presentation - Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp presents her 100 day analysis

Treasurer's Report - Dave Harkins

New Business

- None at time of agenda distribution

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmants, and Baptisms

Old Business

- Land Sale - report on any new transaction activity - Dave Harkins/Kaylee Searway

Approval of Minutes - Carrie Leonard

- December 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
- Christmas Insert 2024
- Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations Report
- School Board Report
- Global Ministries Team Report
- Communications Report
- Youth Ministry Report

Information Items

- February 19th, Council Meeting, 7pm in the Bethlehem Room
 - Devotions -

Closing Prayer

Adjournment

Treasurer Report for January, 2025

Between calendar year end activities, an early due date, and, more recently, power outages, the finance department has not yet produced any of the financial summaries for December. Consequently, my report is limited to **one very good piece of news**:

December was expected to be the largest contribution month of the year, with a budgeted amount of \$222,000. As it looks right now the contribution for December totaled roughly \$297,000. Putting this with the budget shortfall of roughly \$70,000 at the end of November, it seems that, halfway through the fiscal year, we are now at 100.7% of our year-to-date budget projections for the weekly offerings! Pretty clearly, our projection process could use some updating.

Expenses appear to be about in line with projections, with the staff bonuses being the only unusual expense (and per our last meeting, that is covered by PPP funds), so that when the financials are completed, they should be producing a budget surplus of between \$50-80K.

We have an upcoming Church Finance Committee Meeting on January 28th, and still plan on reviewing congregational offering statistics at that meeting. The expectation is to develop revenue projections for the next fiscal year as a pre-budget preparation.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Harkins

New Members & Baptisms Report

December 2024

Baptisms for December

No Baptisms

New Members for December

No New Members

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2024 7:30 pm
Delkeskamp's Home**

The Council meeting was called to order by Carrie Leonard at 7:34 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

Add to New Business – Thrivent grant request

Add to New Business – Staff bonuses

Consent Approval of Reports to Council – Pull School Board report

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

Opening Prayer – Pastor Tim

Treasurer's Report – Dave

Finances for the day school are in good shape. Income is at expected levels despite lower-than-budget enrollment. Middle school tuition is currently higher than expected. The positive financial position is also due to payroll expenses which are below budget.

Church finances show that weekly offerings are 12% below budget as of the end of November. Offerings for the first two weeks of December are \$12,000 higher than for the same time period last year. Expenses are in line with the budget. Actual net income (loss) to date is -\$8,202.

The cash report shows a downturn in available cash. Dave reviewed the factors that account for this, all of which are accounted for in the normal ups and downs of cash flow. There are no concerns at this point.

Discussion:

- Is the Generosity Team aware of the downturn in offerings?
This will be a topic at the next Generosity Team meeting. The Finance Team will conduct a census review of giving based on “giving units”. This study may also uncover if there is a correlation between growth in church attendance to growth in giving.

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

New Business

1. Thrivent Grant Request – Pastor Tim

The Thrivent grant request is on behalf of Louise Evenson, chair of the Global Ministries Team. Dave Nonnemacher, the Minnesota pastor who inspired Ascension's Solar Lights fundraiser earlier this year, has been invited to Thousand Oaks to speak at Ascension. This will include a special presentation for Ascension youth. Dave will also make a presentation at Cal Lutheran. The university is funding part of the cost for his plane ticket. The Thrivent grant request is for the \$345 balance for the plane ticket.

A motion was made (Anna) and seconded (Bonny) to approve the Thrivent Grant request of \$345 to fund a portion of the travel cost for Dave Nonnemacher who will be speaking to the Ascension community about his experiences in Ukraine and the solar light kits.

Discussion:

- Will this event coincide with another fundraiser?
This is being considered.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Church Staff Bonuses – Kaylee

Council discussed the possibility of giving bonuses to full-time and part-time church staff. Total estimated cost would be \$6,750. The bonus amounts are comparable to what the School Board decided for school staff. This is not a budget item but there are other possible income sources to cover this expense. Payroll expense to date is currently \$40,000 below budget. There are also restricted funds that were received for the purpose of employee retention that are available. Questions as to whether bonuses will become expected each year and what would be appropriate in leaner financial years were discussed. Bonuses could be planned for depending on the actual vs. budget situation.

A motion was made (John) and seconded (Anna) to approve the allocation of \$6,750 of restricted funds for the purpose of providing bonuses to full-time and part-time church staff.

Discussion:

Procedures should be setup to address bonuses in future budgets.

The motion passed unanimously.

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmands and Baptisms

The 10 November baptisms were affirmed.

Old Business

None.

Approval of Minutes

November Council meeting

A motion was made (Ethan), seconded (John), and passed unanimously to approve the November Council minutes.

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 report
8. Youth Director report
9. Communications report
10. Be the Blessing report

A motion was made (Alan), seconded (John), and passed unanimously to approve the Reports to Council with the exception of Pastor Chamie's report and the School Board report.

A motion was made (Anna) and seconded (Jeannette) to approve Pastor Chamie's report.

Discussion:

In her report, Pastor Chamie mentions meeting with Praise Alive worship director, Melissa Berg. Pastor Chamie was asked to share her insights from this meeting. The purpose was to get to know Melissa better and find out her thoughts on ways to grow and enhance the 10:30 service, making it inviting for all age groups. Ideas about marketing this service are being considered.

The motion to approve Pastor Chamie's report passed unanimously.

A motion was made (Anna) and seconded (John) to approve the School Board report.

Discussion:

The School Board report mentions a possible change to Ascension's "dry campus" policy with regards to the Annual Gala. Per Kaylee, such a change would not impact Ascension's insurance coverage. She will draft a proposed policy for Council to review. Ascension does not have a written policy regarding serving alcohol on campus. To date, it has been a practice, not a rule.

The motion to approve the School Board report passed unanimously.

Information Items

Next Council meeting - Wednesday, January 15th at 7:00 pm in the Bethlehem Room.
Devotions – Rachael

Closing Prayer – Ethan

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rachael Bowen



Pastor Tim's Ministry Report- January 2025

Grace and peace my sisters and brothers in Christ,

Our staff has had a couple of days to reflect on and process the Advent/Christmas season and we really feel that this year went well as it has gone in a long time. Starting with the first weekend in Advent, which included lefse making and Hanging of the Greens and then going through to Christmas Eve/Day services we stayed ahead of most of the details and avoided moving into crisis mode. Thanks to Pastor Chamie, Jenelle Smith, Wyant Morton, Nancy Lee, Milissa Berg, Matt Cahill and all our worship volunteers for being highly organized and communicative. Thanks to Jen Avalos for going through her first Christmas season as our Youth Director. Thanks to Lauren Godfrey and Rob Wisusek for taking charge of Hanging of the Greens. Thanks to Stacy Smith for developing our Christmas Eve invitations and getting them to the printer so we could give them to the school families and people in the congregation to hand them out to neighbors. It was a successful season and the attendance numbers bear witness we went from just over 1000 in attendance last year to just over 1300 this year.

My goal to **improve Sunday School** is changing in name. Per the request of Pastor Chamie, we are going to change the words **to improve our Children's Ministry**. The words are more general, and it makes sense. It gives us the ability to place Sunday School in the broader context of Children's ministry which includes additional aspects like nursery care, children's choirs, parent support classes, etc. Our goal now is to have a plan in place and a vision for the future by the end of year, even while we continue to support Sunday School teachers connect with families. We very much appreciate the job that Jenni Klemp is doing as our interim Children's ministry director in this time as it allows us to "build the plane while flying."

The goal of getting **critical mass in our youth group**, seems to be going well. I am getting good reports from Jen Avalos about both their Sunday evening Bible study gathering and her fellowship events. As I mentioned, she has done well to get through her first Christmas/Advent season. She hosted many activities including the lefse fundraiser, caroling and ice skating. As we move into 2025, I want to start tracking the number in attendance at these events. My hope is that not only will the numbers continue to increase in Bible study and youth group activities, but we will have more youth participation in worship attendance and leadership.

I am very excited about our planned work for the first couple of months in 2025. In December, our **Generosity Team** met with the Be the Blessing team with the idea of doing a joint project. The project would involve using Be the Blessing grant money to teach and inspire generosity. It was a successful meeting, and plans are underway to produce a "Kingdom Assignment." We have a few more meetings to shape the project and refine the vision but I am excited. Also, I am grateful that the month of December helped us to get back on track in terms of the budget. As you will see in the

finance report we had a very good December which came after a stingy November. A question to ask is have giving patterns changed?

In terms of the goal of **accountability**, I am grateful to Carrie Leonard and Kaylee for developing the review form. For a long time, we did not do reviews. This was something I wanted to change when I became the Senior Pastor in 2017. Since then, we have done reviews but the process has changed, it seems, each year. While I have appreciated each effort, it has been a bit inefficient as the council seems to have had to invent the process each time. Now with this form which has been adapted from a resource we found with the United Methodist Church, we should be able to standardize the process, not with just me as the senior pastor but with our other pastoral positions as well.

Finally, the goal of **identity** has been the most elusive. I admit to having spent a great deal of time thinking about it but not making much progress. As the Norwegians would say, "Uff da." I will continue to think through this important topic.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Tim". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Pastor Chamie's December 2024 Council Report

Children, Youth, & Family

- Jen Avalos and I collaborated on immediate needs in youth ministry. We also needed to spend a good amount of time working on our partnership, assessing, reworking, dreaming, and visioning for the future. With both of us being new to our positions, there is a good amount to figure out that can only come with time, trial and error, and continued conversation. One of my highlights was seeing Jen's enthusiasm as she shared youth ministry updates at our last staff meeting before Christmas. It was a stellar moment!
- Jen, Jenni Klemp, and I spent a two-hour lunch meeting off site to plan for post-Christmas happenings that we wanted to communicate with families prior to Christmas and on Christmas Eve. We also conversed about the children, youth, and family ministries in preparation for the "SWOT" report to church council in January.
- Jenni organized a great service project for families on December 8 between the worship services. Families shared with us that they would like more service opportunities. The children at church didn't quite finish all the gift bags, so I finished the rest with the 1st graders at school the next morning.
- Confirmation included a meaningful service project in tying blankets for Project Linus. Jen and I had fun with the middle and high school youth at their Christmas party as well as our first youth outing on the bus. Before we bowled, we had lunch on campus and before that, the youth were invited to come to the 10:30 Sunday service. One of the ideas we are trying is to invite the youth once a month to the 10:30 service followed by lunch and then to a fun outing. One of my goals in 2025 is to have an increase of youth attending and involved with worship.



•Confirmation and Sunday school had two weeks off after Christmas.

•Jenni and her family traveled to Minnesota for Christmas. She did a wonderful job of getting people into place before she left so that we would have nursery care not just on Sundays, but at the 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 Christmas Eve services. While she was away, I checked in with the nursery staff and made sure doors were opened and closed and they had the materials they needed. We have had worship services where there were no children in the nursery and then other times 1 to 4 children. In 2025, I would like to see us keep the consistency of our nursery hours and staff while expanding our communications about what we offer and also

grow the number of families with children who are coming to worship.



Interfacing with the Schools:

•Charlotte Miranda who leads the school's nature program and I led a church/school hike on December 8. We had nearly 40 people join us on the Sapwi Trails. More families than not stayed after the hike to play at the park. A few families stayed so long that we ended up all going to lunch together. I loved the many conversations that I got to have with people. It was fun to simply get to know people better. I also was able to get good feedback about family ministry and hear people's suggestions for the future. Side note here - I shared how we are blessed to

have a Nature Explore certified ECC and day school and we are working to have the church be known as well as a "nature-explore" church. Many of the school families choose our schools because of the nature-emphasis. I think our church can build more connections not just with school families, but the entire community as we expand our nature/hiking/gardening opportunities. There is a growing "food and faith" movement across the country as well as an increased desire in a screen saturated world to connect with what is real and beautiful and good and green. I thought of this, too, when Tim and I attended the retirement party for George Lange who served for so many years at Conejo Parks and Recreation. I still remember very vividly how, many years ago, when the church was visioning for the future, community leaders were invited to a luncheon on a Sunday afternoon at the church. They were asked, "How can the church serve the community?" George Lange said that we could raise a generation of young people who love our open space and protect it. I was very inspired by what he said.

- I met with Charlotte Miranda to outline the schedule for school children, Sunday school children, confirmation students, and youth to plant tomato seeds (which will happen in February) and participate in the annual tomato plant sale/farm festival which will take place at school on Fri, Apr 11 and at church on Sun, Apr 13. With the new greenhouse, we should have the best plants ever. The annual tomato sale will also be incorporated into the life of the church as a fun family event as, in the surveys, families wanted more events at church that they could all do together.
- Tim and I attended the school's Christmas show as well as the ECC's 3 & 4-year-old Christmas show and I also attended the 2-year-old Christmas show. At each of these, I invited people to join us on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning if they didn't have a church home. It was a pure delight to be at all of these shows! I loved every single minute of them!

Worship

- What a month! I felt even more appreciation and admiration for all of our worship leaders and musicians and tech crew as people prepared for Christmas. I peaked in on various practices as I wanted to say "thank you" as well as do brief recordings so Stacy could promote reels on social media that advertised Christmas. Tim, Stacy, and I collaborated and decided to spend less money (as was done in the past) on printed postcards to advertise Christmas services and more on social media boosts.
- I preached on Dec 21/22 and the scripture was Mary's Magnificat. As I was reading the scripture, and I knew the mini cantata was that weekend, it seemed that weaving music throughout the sermon might be a good approach. So I reached out to Devin Milligan (who grew up in the church back in the day and is now one of the teachers at the school). She was game at doing a creative service and singing and playing the piano in the midst of my preaching. I loved being able to work with Devin and lift up her gifts.

- Wyant needed a drummer for a special piece that the choir did one Sunday in December and I suggested that perhaps one of our youth could do it. Wyant was great at exploring this option and confirmation student Bodie Wallace ended up playing the cajon while the choir sang.
- I attended two Carillons rehearsals with Matt Cahill as I worked with the youth who narrated the Christmas story within the playing of the bells. Shelby (who is now in college, but was home for break) and Nolan Snyder (who is in confirmation) played the sheep and the donkey at the 3:00 service. Gemma Davis and Austin Wallace (both in confirmation) played the sheep and the donkey at the 5:00 service. I loved working with the youth on getting their costumes, rehearsing their lines, and helping to make the family friendly services on Christmas Eve to be special. I also enjoyed getting our little angels, shepherds, Mary, and Joseph ready for the nativity scene.
- I thought all 5 services on Christmas Eve - and our one service on Christmas morning - were beautiful in their own way. It was a lot of work - by a lot of people - but worth every bit of it. I really wanted to be at all of the services to welcome people “home” for Christmas and connect with new people and people I hadn’t seen in a long time. I got to hug at least a dozen former students from when I taught 8th grade homeroom and religion back in the day. Christmas Eve night was so full of joy that I wasn’t even tired when midnight rolled around.
- Hats off to Jenelle Smith who was amazing in doing all the bulletins, slides, and cue sheets for all the services and having everything done so timely and so well. It’s a delight to work with her.
- Worship planning for me also includes school chapel. I got to work with music teacher Kelsey Packman and the 5th graders who served as worship leaders in December. The 5th graders were very enthusiastic and fun. One of the things I have long said at school is that we don’t raise just life long learners, but hopefully life long worshipers.
- School children sang at the 9:00 worship service on December 8. More frequent participation of school children in weekend worship is one of my goals for 2025.



Pastoral Care

- The other pastors and I continued to work together to address the various pastoral care needs and take turns visiting people.
- Christmas Caroling can fall under pastoral care as well as loving/serving our community. I was happy to join the multigenerational group on the church bus as we sang at several different stops to our elder members who are living in skilled facilities or homes.

Other

- I spoke at the Women’s Monday Morning Bible Study Christmas gathering. After the gathering, I gave a tour of the new greenhouse as the WMMBS contributed to its purchase.
- I felt very driven that on Christmas Eve/Day, when we would have over 1000 people in attendance, that we needed to include an insert in the worship bulletin that listed things that were coming up in the life of the church in 2025 - things for all age groups. So I spearheaded this insert and was grateful for the contributions from others and for Stacy taking all of the material and getting it in the newsletter and for Jenelle making sure it got in all of the worship bulletins.



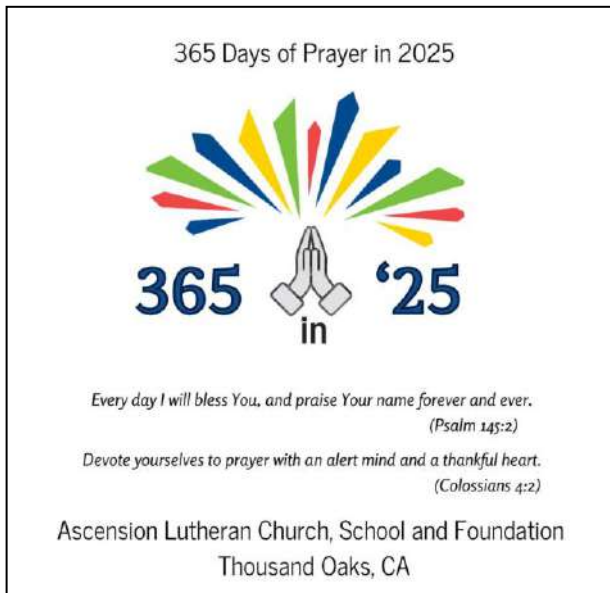
- I did as much 2025 planning as I could in the midst of a very full December, but would have preferred a couple days at a retreat center to really get all the planning, preparing, and studying better in place.
- I loved talking with Louise Evenson as we prepare for Dave Nonnemacher to come in February. I so appreciate Louie's heart for incorporating the youth in meaningful ways. I look forward to working with Louise more as we bridge the work of the GMT with children, youth, and families.
- We loved being able to host the church council at our home for dinner and our December meeting.
- I felt really blessed to be able to love the church

together with my family this Advent and Christmas. Tim and I enjoyed “extra” things like going to the CLU Christmas concert and the choir Christmas party and that we could do this TOGETHER as we serve the same church! Our son Jude and his girlfriend Cate came along for Christmas Caroling. Jude loves working with Jeff and Cam on the facilities crew and they are such a critical team to making great things happen at Ascension. I love that we are church family and Tim, Jude, and I could join Jeff and his family over at the Lorentson's house to pray for Cam before his surgery. Aidan worked in the tech room for several of the worship services. Hannah worked in the nursery on Christmas Eve and a couple of the Sundays. We loved being together on Christmas morning to lead the worship service and were happy that our nephew wanted to participate as well. I love my little family of 5 and the big extended Delkeskamp family (and that Pastor Steve and Pastor Paul covered things for us when we were on the annual extended Delkeskamp family mountain Christmas trip). And I love that our family is part of the larger Ascension family. I feel deeply blessed.



With Gratitude,
Pastor Chamie

Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – January 1, 2025



As we begin a new year we give thanks to God for the blessings of this past year and ask for the Holy Spirit to lead us into the new year so that each of us would be faithful in prayer and worship, in study of God's Word, and living Christ-like lives in our witnessing, serving, and advocating for our neighbors, the nations, and God's creation.

A bit of a carry-over from our "24 weeks in '24" will be our "[365 in '25' calendars](#), each day with a brief intercessory prayer and a Bible reading that either goes with that prayer or is a reading in prep for our weekend worship services. The readings for Thursday through

Sunday are the readings for our worship services.

We are now three months into our fully staffed team and from my perspective, the joy, enthusiasm, teamwork and hard work are all outstanding by your Ascension staff. Along with that is the dynamic ministry of our lay leaders for various teams, so thank you for your prayers for each of them, each of us. We hold you in our love and prayers as well. Special thanks to those who worked so hard to lead our inspiring Advent and Christmas worship services.

Carol Bartell and I are coordinating the Sunday morning adult education classes. In December classes were led by Rev. Dr. Phyllis Anderson (via zoom, on [ELCA seminaries](#)), and then I led a class on the work of the Jubilee USA Network and my recent trip to DC.

December 9-12 I was in DC for Jubilee events which included a Dec. 10th 25th anniversary celebration honoring the work of Jubilee chapters in New York, Puerto Rico, and here in Southern California. Our keynote speaker was [Cardinal Turkson](#) from the Vatican. The [Jubilee website](#) has both the video of this event and the transcript of Turkson's address. It was fun for me to be there with friends from the Jubilee board when I served on it for several years. Pope Francis has declared 2025 as a Year of Jubilee (Luke 4:18-19) and with Caritas we will be lifting up the work of Jubilee in 160 countries this year! Our December special benevolence was for the Jubilee USA Network, and at the last count, the offering was \$513.



For the month of January we have a good line up of classes for Sunday mornings, in this order: Pastor Chamie speaking on the season of Epiphany; Pastor Tim teaching on the Gospel of Luke; Pastor Paul sharing about his new book, *Wonder Anew*, and then me teaching on the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) (introducing the exhibit at the Ronald Reagan Library.

The December highlight for Senior Adult Ministries was of course the Christmas caroling on Dec. 21. Thanks to Jeff Hengst for driving the bus around Thousand Oaks. I wish we could also go to surrounding cities as well and visit more people. Yvonne Zoetewey adds a lot to our caroling with her flute playing.



Ascension Lutheran Church (Thousand Oaks, CA)

Posted by Steve Herder
31m · 🌐

We always gather to worship before the manger of the Word made flesh and under the sign of the cross of our Savior Jesus, and then bear His light and love out into the world, to all near and far.

(We are centered around the font to remember our identity and purpose, and we come to kneel in worship to receive Holy Communion. The wooden lecturn on the left reminds us of the Word read and proclaimed to preach Christ crucified, risen, and God with us now, Emmanuel.)

Christmas Eve, 3:00pm service.



Some of the other December key events included:

- A fun staff Christmas party on Dec. 6th here on campus.
- For the 11th year we hosted the Compassionate Friends service. It's always the second Sunday in December at 7:00pm. Families from across Ventura County come to this service to remember loved ones (children and siblings) who have died.
- The graveside service for our dear friend Eloise Cohen and a memorial service for Dr. Al France, spouse of Becky France and brother-in-law of Jim Overton.
- The Dec. 1st Hanging of the Greens, the Dec. 7th Christmas concert at Cal Lutheran; the Arete Concert on Dec. 15th, and our Chancel Choir's cantata on Dec. 22nd, and our Cowboy Christmas service on Dec. 21st.
- Our Senior Adult Ministries Christian Life Hours, Stephen Ministry (one-on-one Christian caregiving, Eucharistic Ministry, the Friday Food Pantry, GriefShare each Thursday, SAMs Tram transportation ministry, our food ministry with Harbor House;
- Our [Fair Trade Ministries](#) events through the month.

- On Dec. 4th our Global Ministries Team hosted Pastor Lisa Kipp from Lutheran World Relief to give us an update on the ministries of the kits and quilts, distributed among places of disaster in our country, and around the world.

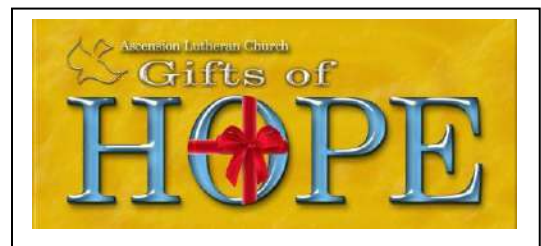
Thank you for the amazing generosity of some Ascension members, our Sunday School, and a gift from the Sons of Norway, for helping make some people in great need in our community have a brighter Christmas. Your Caring Ones and our Agape Fund help so many people in our community.

Thank you to each of the 121 families/individuals who have donated to our Gifts of Hope, for a total giving of \$93,151.13. This includes a very generous gift from our Ascension Foundation of \$6,000 (that's one thousand dollars for each of the six ministries).

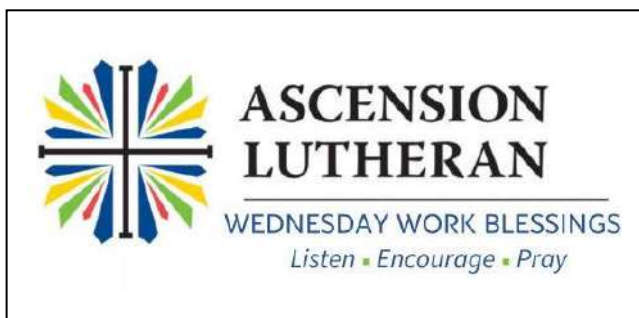
Here are the totals for each ministry through Dec.30th.

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

Kafka House in Tanzania: \$23,450
 InfoHuts in Zimbabwe: \$7,505
 Tree planting in Rwanda: \$8,282
 ELCA world hunger God's Global Barnyard: \$14,696.20
 Friends of Fieldworkers, Ventura County: \$18,918
 Harbor House, Conejo Valley: \$20,299.93.



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. The total number of families/individuals who gave were 121, compared to 108 for last year. 63 gave to Kafka House. 38 gave to InfoHuts. 43 gave to tree planting. 67 gave to ELCA hunger. 72 gave to Friends of Fieldworkers. 61 gave to Harbor House.



One of the Spirit-inspired ideas to come from our 24 in 24 prayer time is a new ministry called "Wednesday Work Blessings." Your pastors and church staff would like to support you in your place of work! Two or three of us would enjoy visiting you at your workplace for a short visit on a Wednesday. The purpose is to listen,

encourage, pray - share a blessing together - for where you use your gifts through the week to serve God and your community! We would love to get to know you better in your work context. (Of course, we always love doing this as well with home visits.) If you'd like to schedule a short visit in the next month or two, on a Wednesday, at your work or home, simply call Carolyn in our church office to set a time for us to come. She'll have a list of open times. 805-495-0406. Any questions, ask her or one of your pastors. We look forward to starting this new ministry with you and for you!

We thank Pastor Larry and Chris Wagner (and friends) for starting a different version of Lunch Bunch on Wednesday noon, Feb. 12th, a once-a-month meal fellowship event. We considered calling it "Wednesday with the Wagners" or "Lunch with Larry," but decided to keep the tradition of the Lunch Bunch name! Watch for ways to sign up for our first meal. All are welcome!

Something New for 2025!

Your church and school leadership team has been talking about the great needs of our Friday Food Pantry. Here's what we'd like to propose: Whenever you are buying groceries, think of our pantry and buy a few items for it. We will work on getting some large containers around campus to receive those gifts. Thank you for remembering those in need in our community and helping to provide the 40-60 bags of groceries that we give away each Friday!

Some personal notes: With my half-time work I have Mondays and Thursdays free (and when I go grocery shopping, I do buy things for our Friday Food Pantry). My family and I had an enjoyable Christmas time with family in southern CA. Then January 16-21 Julie, Natalie and I will be at my parents' home in Appleton, Wisconsin, to celebrate my dad's 95th birthday. God's blessings to you and your family as well! Thank you for your prayers. You are in ours.

"When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people, to make music in the heart."
- Howard Thurman



Now may the *Lord*
of peace himself give
you peace at all
times and in every
way. The *Lord* be
with all of you.

2 Thessalonians 3:16



January 2025



Praying this prayer each day, from Psalm 145: 1-2

"I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
Everyday I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever."

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Our Prayer Chapel is open before and after worship services			1 <i>New Year's Day</i> Our monthly benevolence: Our Food Pantry <i>Matthew 25:31-40</i>	2 Prayers for peace in war-torn countries <i>Psalm 147:12-20</i>	3 For those who have strayed away from the Body of Christ <i>Jeremiah 31:7-14</i>	4 All who worship online or in person this weekend <i>Ephesians 1:3-14</i>
5 Our adult education classes & SS begin again <i>John 1:1-18</i>	6 Our Early Childhood Center, staff & families <i>Mark 10:13-16</i>	7 Blessings for all Gifts of Hope that were given <i>Philippians 1:1-6</i>	8 "Bibles and Brew" for men <i>Proverbs 17:17</i>	9 GriefShare group every Thursday at 1:00pm <i>Psalm 29</i>	10 For those who need to hear God say, "I love you!" <i>Isaiah 43:1-7</i>	11 For all our anonymous supports groups on campus <i>Acts 8:14-17</i>
12 Our nursery and children's ministries led by Jenni Klemp <i>Luke 3:15-17, 21-22</i>	13 Our TK-8 School staff & families <i>Colossians 2:6-7</i>	14 First "Word and Wine" for women <i>2 Timothy 3:14-17</i>	15 Our Church Council leaders <i>Proverbs 3:5-6</i>	16 "God spotting" Where have you seen God today? <i>Psalm 36:5-10</i>	17 For couples preparing for marriage <i>Isaiah 62:1-5</i>	18 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25) <i>1 Corinthians 12:1-11</i>
19 Pray that we may see God's miracles all around us <i>John 2:1-11</i>	20 <i>Martin Luther King Jr Day</i> Our country, blessed to be a blessing <i>Psalm 67</i>	21 Feeding those unhoused today, Harbor House <i>Proverbs 22:9</i>	22 Give thanks for our maintenance team <i>Romans 12:9-13</i>	23 For all Bible studies and Life Groups each week <i>Psalm 19</i>	24 For all worship assistants including readers <i>Nehemiah 8:1-8</i>	25 Today the Church thanks God for the Apostle Paul <i>1 Corinthians 12:12-31a</i>
26 Pray that we too would bring good news to the poor <i>Luke 4:14-21; Gal. 2:10</i>	27 Our Senior Ministries and Christian Life Hours <i>2 Corinthians 4:13-18</i>	28 ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton & Staff <i>1 Peter 5:1-7</i>	29 Prayers for our Chinese neighbors for their New Year <i>Matthew 22:34-40</i>	30 Happy birthday to Ken Ypparila, "Country Spirit" mandolin player <i>Psalm 71:1-6</i>	31 Our Children & youth, ministry staff & families <i>Jeremiah 1:4-10</i>	17-49

- In the new year, we will begin a new ministry, training lay people how to do hospital visitation, even as the pastors continue to visit as well. Let Pastor Steve know of your interest.

Ministries for Adults

Check out some of our ministries for adults in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, and beyond:

- **Bibles and Brew for men**, typically meeting the first Wednesday of the month, but the January meeting will be on January 8. Contact Pastor Tim for more information.
- **Word and Wine for women**, typically meeting the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM - upcoming dates include Jan 22, Feb 26, Apr 30, May 28. Contact Pastor Chamie for more information.
- **"Lunch Bunch"** is coming back in a new and different way! All are welcome to a monthly second-Wednesday-of-the-month luncheon in Founders Hall beginning Feb. 12. Let's thank Pastor Larry and Chris Wagner for leading this. Watch for more info to come.
- **Sunday adult education classes** in January will be taught by Pastors Chamie (about the season of Epiphany), Tim (on the Gospel of Luke), Paul (on his writings), and Steve (about the Dead Sea Scrolls), in that order.
- **Bible & Blue Zones...** if you are wanting to live more healthy and wholly in 2025, join Pastor Chamie for this special 4-week class on Thursdays, 6:45 to 8:00 PM on Jan 16, 23, 30, and Feb 6. We will meet in the church's Bethlehem Room. Contact Pastor Chamie to sign up.

Children, Youth, & Families

With the addition of our new youth director and new associate pastor (who oversees children, youth, & family), we are excited to "grow young" in 2025!

- **Sunday school** for 3-year-olds through 5th grade resumes on Sun, Jan 12. Sunday school is offered most every Sunday of the school year during the 9:00 AM worship hour. Contact Jenni Klemp for more information. We have **nursery care** for infants through 4-year-olds during both Sunday services.
- **Family Movie Night, Fri, Jan 17, 6:00 to 8:00 PM**, in the gym. Youth will be selling pizza, drinks, and snacks as a fundraiser for winter camp. Bring lawn chairs and blankets as we spread out to enjoy a movie together.

- **Confirmation for 7th & 8th graders** resumes on Sun, Jan 12, and meets most Sundays from 4:00 to 5:30 PM. It is open to new students in January. Contact Pastor Chamie for more information.
- **Senior High Youth** for 9th through 12th graders meets most Sundays 5:00 to 7:00 PM. All are welcome anytime! Contact Jen Avalos for more information.
- **Special Youth Ministry Events**, 6th through 12th grade. Our next outing is to Golf & Stuff after the 10:30 worship on Sun, Jan 19. Sign up with Jen Avalos to load the church bus and have fun!
- **Winter Camp for 6th through 12th graders at El Camino Pines Bible Camp Feb 28 through Mar 2.** Sign up with Jen Avalos by Feb 1. Jen, Pastor Chamie, and Jeff Hengst (who is also driving the bus) will be chaperoning.

Caring for our Neighbors

- **Support our food pantry!** You can help by picking up a few extra food items every time you shop and donating them to the pantry. Or you could help with our January monthly benevolence (special offering) that will be for our Friday food pantry (open 10:00 AM to Noon) for our neighbors.
- Be a part of our **Global Ministries Team** or **Community Concerns Team** or **Senior Adult Ministries Team**. To learn more, contact Pastor Steve.

Our Schools

We love our schools!

- Ascension Lutheran Early Childhood Center: www.alecc.org. Jenny McCoy, Director.
- Ascension Lutheran Elementary & Middle School: www.alschool.org. Rich Gregory, Principal. Contact the school to schedule a tour and apply for the 2025-26 school year!

Outdoor Ministries

Our campus - church and school - is certified through the National Wildlife Federation as a sanctuary for bees, birds, and butterflies. Our schools are Nature Explore certified. We believe that we better know our Creator by spending time in creation.

- Stay tuned for the new **hiking ministry** we will be starting in 2025!

- Join us for an **easy family friendly hike on Sat, Jan 25, 9:00 AM** at the Chumash Center. Our hiking time on the Chumash trail will be approximately one hour.
- Join us for our **12th Annual Tomato Plant Sale** that supports our garden/nature programs. The tomato sale (and other fun plants sale) will be **Fri, Apr 11 and Sun, Apr 13**. It will be better than ever with our new greenhouse!

Coming in Summer 2025

- **Youth Leadership Camp.** This will be an AMAZING WEEK for youth going into 7th through 12th grades in the fall of 2025. Camp will run from June 16 to 20, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, at Ascension Lutheran and include off-site excursions. Contact Pastor Chamie for more information.
- **Family Faith Night Series.** Wednesday evenings, July 9 through Aug 6. Pastors Tim & Chamie will lead a family class for adults while Jen Avalos, youth, and team lead a program for children. Nursery care will also be available.

Contact Information

Call the church office at (805) 495-0406. Visit the church website at www.alcto.org.

- Pastor Tim, pastortim@alcto.org
- Pastor Chamie, pastorchamie@alcto.org
- Pastor Steve, pastorsteve@alcto.org
- Jen Avalos, Youth Director, javalos@alcto.org
- Jenni Klemp, Interim Children's Ministry, jklemp@alcto.org
- Jenni McCoy, ECC Director, jmccoy@alschool.org
- Rich Greogry, ALS Principal, rgregory@alschool.org



1600 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362



Scan QR for Newsletter

Pastors: Tim Delkeskamp, Chamie Delkeskamp, Steve Herder



Join us in 2025 as we strive to live wisely and well!

*“Oh! Teach us to live well!
Teach us to live wisely and well!”
Psalm 90:1 (MSG Translation)*

Weekly Worship

Make worship a regular habit in 2025! Weekly worship is a way to ground ourselves in God and community. **Our weekly worship services are at 6:00 PM Saturdays and 9:00 and 10:30 AM on Sundays.** During the season of Epiphany (January 12 through March 2) we will be exploring the theme **“Living More...”** Some of our sermon titles include “Living More Lovingly,” “Living More Purposefully,” and “Living More Boldly.” In 2025, how might we live more abundant lives while knowing that God meets us and loves us just as we are today?

Lent & Easter are Coming!

Christmas is the beginning of the story of Jesus coming as a baby. That story continues as we remember Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

- **Lent** begins with Ash Wednesday on March 5. We will have Holden Evening Prayer Services during Lent on Mar 12, 19, 26, Apr 2, and 9. Then join us for Holy Week services including Maundy Thursday, Apr 17, at 7:00 PM and Good Friday, April 18, at 7:00 PM
- Make sure to highlight **Easter Sunday** on your calendar: April 20! Join us that day for worship, a children's Easter celebration, and a delicious breakfast made by our youth (with proceeds going to youth ministries).

Praying & Caring

- We are excited to launch “365 in 25” as we emphasize praying each day of the year in 2025. Follow our daily prayer calendar: www.alcto.org/365in25. Look for special prayer events and retreats. Contact Pastor Steve for more information.

Attendance

I'm attaching a brief report about our Christmas service attendance this year, and compared to previous years. The short version is that attendance was up significantly for the holiday services, and the first four weekends of December were strong with an average attendance of 438.

		Sat.	9:00	10:30		MISC	Total	
12/1/2024		37	257	87			381	
12/8/2024		30	259	78			367	
12/15/2024		40	287	87			414	no count - took 6 week average
12/22/2024		112	388	91			591	
		3:00pm	5:00pm	7:00pm	9:00 PM	11:00pm		
12/24/2024	Christmas Eve	335	295	389	114	88	1221	1298
		9:30 AM						total for all 6 Christmas services
12/25/2024	Christmas Day	77					77	
12/29/2024		39	161	59			259	

Offering

December was a great month for us at Ascension in terms of both attendance and general offerings. If you recall, we wrapped up November with a \$70,000 year to date deficit in offering. I am so excited to report that we closed December with a mere \$5,533.88 deficit (preliminary number, subject to change when reports are finalized.) This means that \$297,300.36 came in for the general fund in the month of December, in addition to all the other generous gifts for Gifts of Hope and others.

Thank you from the Staff

Speaking of generous gifts, the staff is so appreciative of the Christmas bonuses they received. Thank you so much! I got so many kind and lovely emails from ECC, school, and church team members that were overcome with gratitude for both the gift and the wonderful environment they work in.

Reserve Study

I touched base with Fred this week, we should have our first draft soon after the council meeting. Jeff and I hope to review it and have the final version available for your review and discussion in February.

Carpet Replacement

Many, many thanks to the Foundation for making the new office carpet a reality for us. We are thrilled with the new carpet, and enjoyed the opportunity for some clearing out of old files, books, and junk for our work spaces. It feels like a fresh, new year!

New Payroll System

We are all systems go with implementation of our new payroll system. Camryn, Mike, and I are assisting APS with transferring data and quickly trying to wrap our minds around how the new system will work, and how best to explain it to our staff. We've scheduled 4-5 training sessions for staff members to join from January 23- February 2nd. Nonexempt employees will start clocking in on February 10th, and our first payrolls will be February 27th and 28th.

Finance

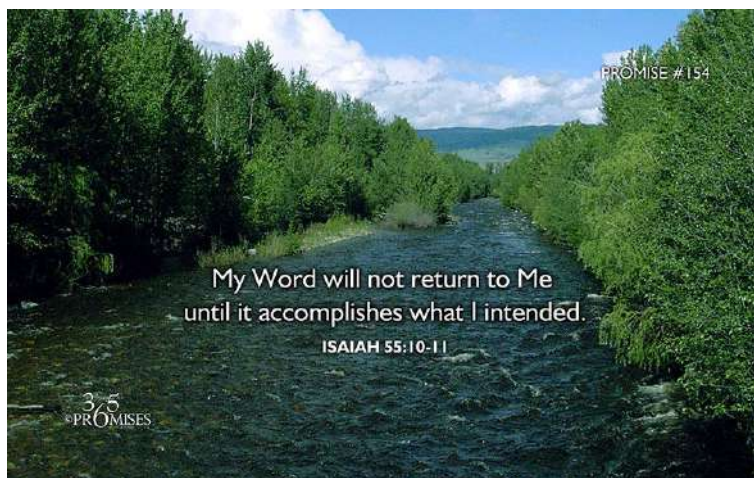
Taxes consume a fair amount of my time each late December/early January timeframe. I've verified W-2 data, sent information for ACA reporting to be completed, and will soon complete 1099's for vendors. Once I complete the continued eligibility cards for our property tax exemptions and file our sales use tax for the fourth quarter I will have touched just about every type of tax a nonprofit deals with in a year.

I'm excited to spend some time digging into a completed half year of giving data, with a hope of identifying useful trends for the generosity team as well as for budget planning.

Human Resources

I'm training Caroyln and Camryn to take lead on leave paperwork, which should free up some of my time to create needed training and continue developing our culture. I took advantage of the quiet time over Christmas break to create a training session for supervisors that will be fun to deliver in the coming weeks.

Thank you,
Kaylee Searway
Director of Operations





Christmas Attendance 2024

Christmas Attendance

IN-PERSON	3:00 PM	5:00 PM	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	11:00 PM
Christmas Eve	335	295	389	114	88
Christmas Day 9:30	77				



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1298 guests celebrated Christmas with us in person on our campus

Christmas Attendance

ONLINE	3:00 PM	5:00 PM	7:00 PM	9:00 PM	11:00 PM
Christmas Eve	57	45	41	27	15
Christmas Day 9:30	34				

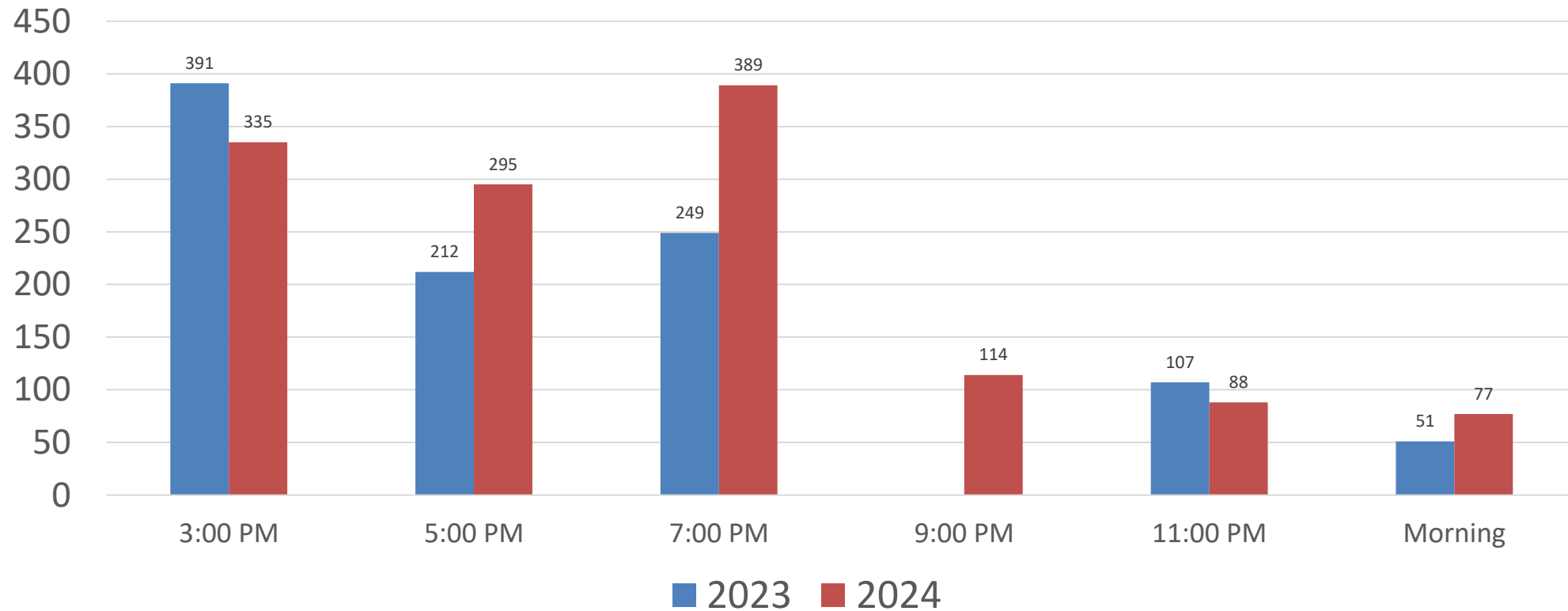


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219 views of Christmas services online for at least one minute

How does this compare to last year?

Christmas Attendance by Service

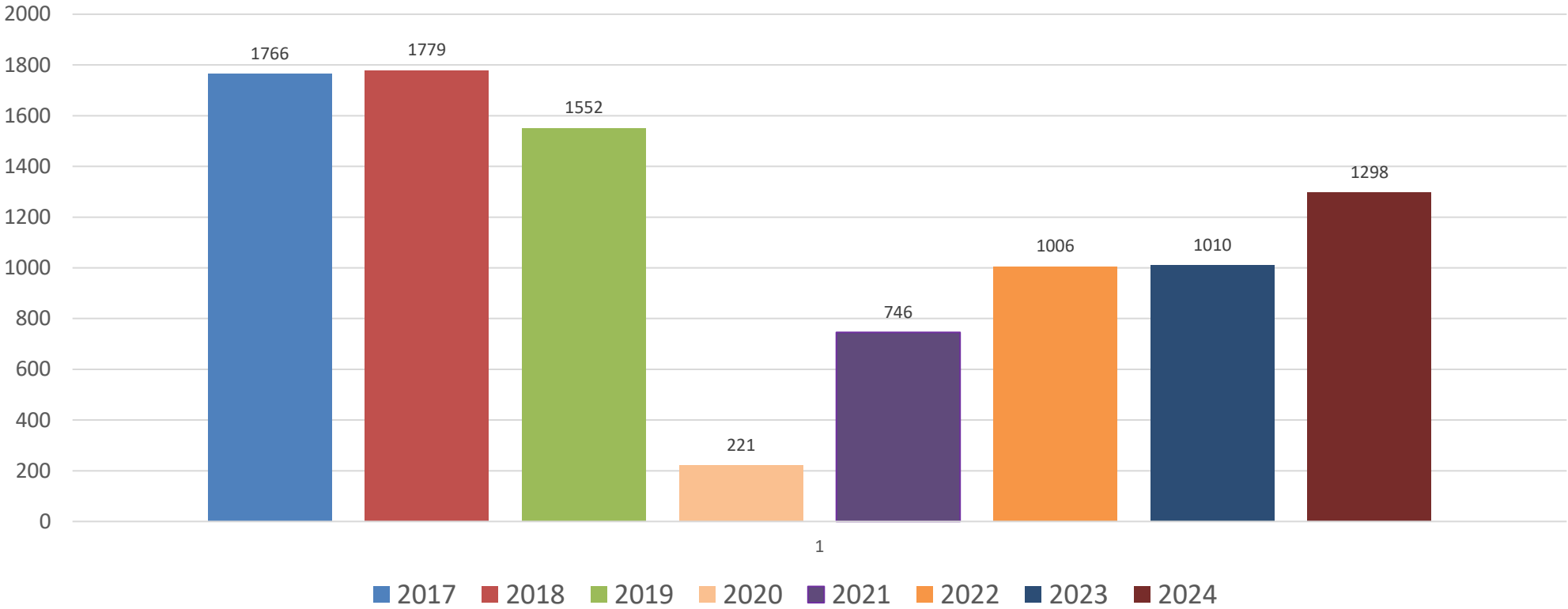


*We had 288 more visitors in 2024 than we did in 2023**

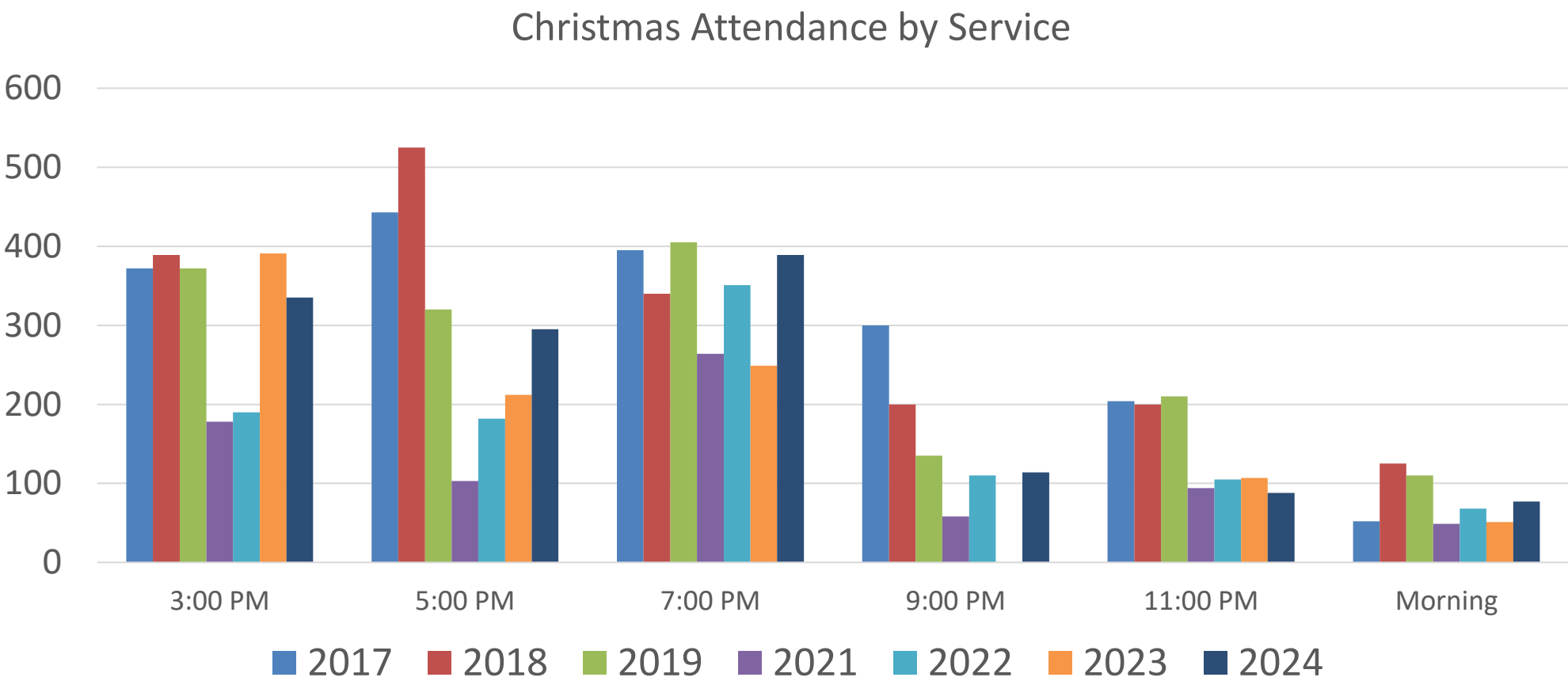
**less missing 9:00 pm data from 2023*

Recent Attendance History

Christmas Attendance by Yearly Totals



Christmas Attendance by Service



**Ascension Lutheran School Board Agenda for 12/16/24 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 - Jenni
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Agenda & Consent Agenda
 - Admissions Report
 - November Meeting Minutes
 - Financials Report
 - ECC Report
 - Principal's Report
 - Church Council Rep Report
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 (placeholder- update in C.C report)
4. Succession Planning: Treasurer and Secretary, open vacancies
5. Uniforms update

New Business:

1. ECC admissions policy revision statement-Jenni
2. State of the schools - Rich & Jenni
3. Discussion on open forum

Executive Session:

1. 2 items

Closing Prayer - Rich

Adjournment

**Ascension Lutheran School Board Meeting Minutes
December 16, 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, Rich Gregory, Jenni McCoy, Connie Angress, Jocelyn Myers, Nelly Trumbo, Chris Poveromo, Kyle Jones, Kathy Roshanai, Jeanette McNulty, Anna Woodward, Brooke Costi, Pastor Chamie, Jennifer Farrell

Absent: Scott Bean

Call to Order:

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

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

Devotion:

Jenni shared a devotion which came from the ECLA monthly devotional guide which provided imagery surrounding arrows and children: sometimes the greatest task is to let loose and let them fly.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda:

Principal's report and financial reports for discussion.

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

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

Open Forum:

Barbara Wood spoke to the board via telephone about her experience and expertise researching, cultivating, and securing major donor dollars from wealthy philanthropists for their favorite charities. She would like to set up a one-year contract with Ascension with monthly payments of \$7500 (she does not work on commission.) Her work would focus on having an effective annual fund, and not so much on major donor research. Her opinion of what an annual fund goal should be: first start by educating people about the importance of bridging the gap of tuition with annual fund money. She works with only one client at a time. She found out about our school from contacts at her previous employer Lutheran High School of La Verne (which has since closed). Her most recent employer was a private donor who supported Sacred Heart High School, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Saint Edward Retreat Center.

Old Business:

School Board Handbook Alcohol Policy

- Will be on the church council agenda for January.

Succession Planning

- Anna will continue on as Treasurer and Church Council representative for an additional year. Chris volunteers to be Secretary for the upcoming year (2025-2026 year).

Uniforms Update

- Connie provided an update. Committee has met once and all members have been tasked with jobs. Decision will need to be made by February.

New Business:

ECC Admissions Policy Revision

- Licensing requires that the ECC have an admissions agreement that parents sign. Jenni would like approval to change a portion of the "Schedule Changes" section so it reads: For any schedule change resulting in a child leaving ALECC on or after August 18, 2025, parents will be financially responsible for two months of tuition payments as stated on the ALECC Tuition & Schedule Contract after the drop date. (For example, if you tell us your child is leaving ALECC on September 20th, you will be responsible for the October 10th payment and the November 10th tuition payment). Please see the administration with any questions.

Jocelyn makes a motion to approve this change as requested. Anna seconds. Motion passes.

State of the Schools

- Rich reported that things are good at the school. 7th graders are making snowmen for their ECC chapel buddies. The outdoor classroom leads at both campuses are meeting monthly and learning from each other's programs. Christmas program was joyful.
- Jenni seconded that things are good on her campus as well. The atmosphere is festive with Christmas approaching. Assistant director Britanni planned a "12 Days of

Christmas” for the ECC staff. Classrooms are making gifts for the One Ascension community.

Open Forum Discussion: Barbara Wood

- Ashley believes Barbara Wood has a lot of experience and has passion for what she does. Ashley suggested that perhaps start with a 6-month contract.
- Flat fee is unattractive and commission-based earnings would be more appropriate. Additionally, board members could not find any information about her available online (no digital footprint).
- We should exercise caution when considering a consulting relationship as that person could leave in a short amount of time and take the donation pool and relationships with them.
- Pastor Chamie commented that the church council would not like to do any big fundraising until the lot sale is closed, and we should approach this position (development and advancement) with a One Ascension mindset (church, ECC, school, foundation).
- General consensus is that the school is at a point where we should consider development and advancement as a full-time position and one of our strategic initiatives (perhaps develop a subcommittee on this).

Closing Prayer:

Pastor Chamie closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment:

Jocelyn motioned to adjourn the meeting and reconvene for executive session. Nelly seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 8:23pm.

Next school board meeting is January 27th. Scott will lead devotion.

Respectfully submitted by Jocelyn Myers



Wednesday, January 8, 2025

4-5:30 PM, **Bethlehem Room**

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

The Global Ministries Team will do this as **we pray, work, partner and participate in God's mission around the world, using our ELCA global mission model of accompaniment.** ("God's work. Our hands.")

The scope of current ministries as well as those ministries we would like to better serve and support is reflected in our name. Inspired by the Biblical mandates to preach the Gospel and remember the poor, the Global Ministries Team will respond to God's love by sharing the good news of God's saving grace in Christ; preserving and restoring creation; and serving others through care, advocacy, education, reconciliation, solidarity with those in need, and interfaith work.

AGENDA

WELCOME-Louise Evenson

OPENING PRAYER-Beverly Selle

Topic: ACCOMPANIMENT

1. 4:10-4:50: Mission Trip to El Salvador presentation by Ascension member Bruce Thomas (in person) and Julie Jacks, trip coordinator (by zoom)
2. 4:50-5:30 GMT - REFLECTIONS, PLANS and REPORTS
 - A. Approval of Ascension's new ELCA Missionaries Daudi & Kellen Msseemmaa, East Africa (see attached profile)
 - B. Plans for BE A BEACON OF LIGHT weekend with Dave Nonnemacher
 - C. Review/discussion of GMT Monthly Reports
 - Fair Trade
 - Jubilee, USA
 - D. Report for Gifts of Hope, 2024
 - E. Calendar Items for January, February, March
 - F. Global Ministries Team-2024 Year in Review slide presentation

Next Global Ministries Team meeting, BE a BEACON of LIGHT (Humanitarian efforts in Ukraine), Saturday, February 1, 2025, 9-11 AM FOUNDERS HALL, with Dave Nonnemacher

(There will be no additional GMT meeting in February. Please plan to attend the BE A BEACON OF LIGHT presentation with Dave Nonnemacher on February 1st from 9-11 AM and/or come to the Adult Education Class on February 2 at 10:30 AM. Hear an update about how Ascension has participated in the humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and listen to Dave Nonnemacher share his story from his five in person visits to Ukraine.)

Upcoming GMT meetings:

March 5 Topic: ADVOCACY with Amy Reumann, Senior Director of ELCA Witness in Society, Washington, DC and Patricia Kisare, International Policy Advisor for ELCA (by zoom)

April 9 Topic: CREATION CARE (Earth Day, April 22)

May 7 Topic: Planning for GIFTS OF HOPE, 2025

June 4: Topic: Budget, Benevolence, Future plans for GMT.

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

The feast of Epiphany today brings the Christmas season to an end. To mark the day, here's a litany called "The Work of Christmas" composed by Howard Thurman, an African-American theologian, educator, and civil rights leader.

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

The poem "The Work of Christmas" is from Howard Thurman's The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations and is used by permission of Friends United Press. All rights reserved.

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/now-the-work-of-christmas-begins/>

JANUARY

- Jan 8 Global Ministries Team meeting, 4:00-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room
- Jan 9 National Day of Mourning for former President Jimmy Carter (Nobel Peace Prize. 2002)
- Jan 12 Fair Trade Lane open, 8:30-9:00 and 10:00-10:30 AM
Fair Trade Lane open, 2:30-4:00 PM
- Jan 15 Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) applications due.
- Jan 19 Rev Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration & Commemoration Worship Service, in person at Trinity Lutheran Church, Hawthorne and live streamed, at 3 PM. Rev Scott Hamilton Adams, preaching. Presented by the SWCA Synod & African Descent Lutheran Association-LA.
- Jan 20 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Jan 23 Women's Interfaith Network, zoom meeting, 7 PM

FEBRUARY

- Feb 1 BE A BEACON OF LIGHT, Dave Nonnemacher's presentation, 9-11AM Founders Hall
- Feb 2 BE A BEACON OF LIGHT, Adult Education Class, 10:30 AM, Library
- THERE WILL BE NO GMT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5.
- Feb 7 Lunar New Year Celebration, CLU Kingsmen Park, noon. Sponsored by Center for Global Engagement
- Feb 9 Fair Trade Lane open, 8:30-9:00 AM and 10:00-10:30 AM
- Feb 12 "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, & and the Teachings of Plants", 2025 Harold Stone Clark Lecture, CLU, 5:30 PM Samuelson Chapel, Registration required for in person or livestream.
- Feb 13 Fair Trade Lane open, 2:30-4:00 PM

MARCH

- March 4 ASH WEDNESDAY
- March 4 GMT Meeting: Topic: ELCA ADVOCACY, Amy Reumann, Patricia Kisare, 4-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room

March 6 International Women's Day Recognition Gathering, CLU, Ullman Conference Center, 5:30 PM. Sponsored by the Center for Global Engagement

APRIL

April 9 GMT Meeting: Topic: CREATION CARE, 4-5:30 PM Bethlehem Room

April 20 EASTER

April 22 Earth Day

OTHER UPCOMING DATES:

May 21-June 3, 2025 ELCA WORLD HUNGER Donor trip to Indonesia. Contact Pr Steve for details.

UPCOMING GMT MEETING DATES, 2025

Most all GMT meetings are at 4:00-5:30 PM in the BETHLEHEM ROOM, unless otherwise stated.

Jan 8 Global Ministries Team meeting 4:00-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room

TOPIC: El Salvador, Bruce Thomas and Julie Jacks

GMT-YEAR IN REVIEW, 2024

Feb 1 BE A BEACON OF LIFE, humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, Dave Nonnemacher

March 5 Global Ministries Team Meeting TOPIC: ELCA ADVOCACY

April 9 Global Ministries Team Meeting TOPIC: CREATION CARE

May 7 Global Ministries Team Meeting TOPIC: GIFTS OF HOPE planning

June 4 Global Ministries Team Meeting TOPIC: BUDGET, BENEVOLENCE, PLANNING

As of January 4, 2025



MINISTRY OF Global Ministries Team

DATE January 4, 2025

SUBMITTED BY Louise Evenson

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

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR DAVE NONNEMACHER'S VISIT TO ASCENSION AND CLU

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 4, 2025

BE A BEACON OF LIGHT

EPHIPHANY, 2025

JANUARY 31, Dave arrives at LAX at 4:45 PM (Paul and Louise will pick up Dave at LAX)

FEBRUARY 1 9-11 AM **Be a Beacon of Light**-Dave's presentation at Founders Hall, Ascension

9:00-9:30 AM Gathering and refreshments (Beverly and Kim, coordinators)

9:30-11:00 AM Dave's story with video and slides from Ukraine

Lunch with pastors??

6 PM Worship, Temple Talk

FEBRUARY 2 9 AM Worship, Temple Talk

10:30 AM Adult Education with Dave

10:30 AM Worship, Temple Talk

5:00-7:00 PM Dave with Confirmation Class and High School Youth Group, Pr Chamie and Jen Avalos Simulation light experience. Building of 10 ROL solar light kits with Dave.

FEBRUARY 3 Dave at CLU-Dr Christina Sanchez coordinates his schedule with faculty, staff, students

FEBRUARY 4 Dave leaves LAX at 9:30 AM

The February benevolence offering at Ascension is designated for on going Ukrainian Humanitarian efforts.

2. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED (What? When? Where?) Please wear your Ascension nametags!

Volunteers are needed to be **welcoming hosts** for the Saturday morning presentation. Volunteers are needed to help with the **setting up** Founders Hall at 8:30 AM, **serving refreshments** at 9:00 AM and **clean up** after the Saturday gathering at 11:00. Volunteers are needed to **drive Dave to/from** various engagements. Volunteers are needed for **publicity and promotion** of Be a Beacon of Light and to **invite others** to these open events.

3. LOOKING AHEAD (Important calendar dates)

February 1 and 2 when Dave Nonnemacher is our guest.

4. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT Louise Evenson at Lpevenson@gmail.com or 925-518-5795



FAIR TRADE MINISTRY

DATE: January 2, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Carol Bjelland

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

Fair Trade Lane dates for January and February are listed below. Schedule for March- Dec TBD.

We'll continue sharing a brief Fair Trade message at Wednesday morning Chapel Worship monthly in advance of Fair Trade Lane Thursdays. (FYI- Dec message focus was Sindyantha Extra Peaceful olive oil; Arab & Jewish women leaders working for peace; aligned with Chapel Advent Focus re: peace (even amidst disagreement/conflict))

Field trip to Ten Thousand Villages in Pasadena – Spring 2025 (currently in pre-lim planning)

Special Fair Trade chocolates for February 2025/Fair Trade Lane (order will be submitted Feb 1st)

Ascension Fair Trade 24th Anniversary Celebration – October 2025 (currently in pre-lim planning)

Fair Trade & UN Sustainable Development Goals – Adult Ed Class (TBD based on Adult Ed Class Schedule)

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

Volunteers invited to help with Fair Trade Lane Thursdays & Sundays and with special events & opportunities.

3. LOOKING AHEAD (Important calendar dates)

Fair Trade Lane Open Dates/Times January & February 2025:

Sunday, January 12th (8:30-9AM & 10-10:30 AM)

Thursday, January 16th (2:30-4 PM)

Sunday, February 9th (8:30-9AM) & 10-10:30)

Thursday, February 13th (2:30-4 PM)

4. OTHER INFORMATION

A scholarship for a farmer re: Mt Meru Coffee Project will be January 2025. The Fair Trade Lane scholarship (\$75) was funded by proceeds from special Fair Trade Lane gift box sales & other monetary gifts in 2024. The scholarship covers education & training for farming coffee & other crops for consumption & sale. The special gift boxes will continue to be available for purchase on a regular basis; proceeds will accumulate/be used for another Fair Trade Lane farmer scholarship.

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

Jubilee Update for our Global Ministries Team, January 8, 2025

Report from the Jubilee staff:

We are launching Jubilee campaigns in more than 160 countries for the next five years. Because of your support, our Jubilee 2025 efforts focus in the coming year on the G20 in South Africa, the G7 in Canada, COP30 in Brazil and moving legislation in New York, the United Kingdom and Washington DC.

On Christmas Eve at the Vatican, we joined Pope Francis at St. Peter's as he included our Jubilee interfaith and labor movement calls in his homily. He raised our calls for global debt relief to end poverty, address inequality and heal our planet. On Monday, December 23rd, the Vatican Press Office and Dicastery for Communications hosted Caritas Internationalis and Jubilee USA Network to launch our global campaigns at a press conference in Vatican City off of St. Peter's Square.

Watch our recorded press conference and Vatican Jubilee 2025 launch with Cardinal Silvano Tomasi, H.E. Ronald Lamola of South Africa, Lucy Esipila, Victor Cervantes Genina, Eric LeCompte, Caritas Africa and Caritas Oceania.

This Vatican City Jubilee launch follows more than 6 months of Jubilee interfaith and labor movement launch events that we organized and supported in Brazil, across Africa, Azerbaijan, from San Diego to Chicago to Washington DC and in Rome.

Other Jubilee2025 Selected Launch Event Links:

- In May, you can watch Jubilee's [Eric LeCompte deliver a Jubilee 2025 launch as he receives an honorary doctorate from Catholic Theological Union of Chicago and addresses the class of 2024](#) (Eric's speech starts at 107:22 minutes)
- In June, we joined Pope Francis and finance ministers as Pope Francis delivered the focus of #Jubilee2025 at the Holy See, read: [Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants in the Meeting "Addressing the Debt Crisis in the Global South"](#)
- Kigali, Rwanda in July, major interfaith and inter-religious groups Jubilee Launch: [Interfaith Africa Religious Leaders "Heralding a Debt Jubilee in 2025" Statement](#)
- In August, in Brasilia - Brazil with the G20 Interfaith Forum, we had a launch with Reverend David Beckman, Rabbi David Saperstien, Chief Dr. Doliwura Zakaria, H.E. Cardinal Raymundo Damasceno Assis, Elcior Santana and Eric LeCompte: [G20 Interfaith Forum: 2024 Imperatives and Interfaith Contributions](#)

- **In November at COP29, Azerbaijan:** [Message of the Holy Father Delivered by the Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(COP29\) in Baku](#)
- **The Washington DC launch on December 10th with H.E. Cardinal Peter Turkson, Rabbi Matt Cutler, Ruth Messenger, Imani Countess, Marie Dennis, AFL-CIO's Laura Gutierrez, Reverend Heriberto Martinez, Reverend Caleb Lines, Sobia Ijaz and Eric LeCompte:** Cardinal Turkson Keynote Speech "JUBILEE 2025: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS: The debt/development/environmental crisis." [Watch and read Turkson's speech](#) and watch the full event here: [Jubilee Interfaith 2025 DC Launch](#)
- **On December 23rd, in Vatican City:** [Press Conference: The Jubilee 2025 Pilgrimage to Tackle Debt, End Poverty and Heal Our Planet](#) and [read H.E. Ronald Lamola, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa's Statement](#)

Joint Africa Partner and Jubilee USA Network Resources:

- [African Faith Leaders Petition G7/G20 Finance Ministers](#)
- [Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar Statement to IMF/ World Bank Annual Meetings 2023](#)
- [Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar Statement to 56th Conference of African Finance Ministers](#)
- [Interfaith African Faith-Based Institutions Statement to Leaders Meeting in Nairobi for the International Development Association Heads of State Summit](#)
- [Interfaith Africa Religious Leaders "Heralding a Debt Jubilee in 2025" Statement](#)

Special #Jubilee2025 and Jubilee movement interview at Brazil G20 Interfaith Forum with Jubilee USA's Eric LeCompte: [Eric LeCompte G20 Interfaith Forum Interview](#)

Pope Francis, Holy See and Vatican Jubilee 2025 resources:

- [Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants in the Meeting "Addressing the Debt Crisis in the Global South"](#)
- [Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the LVIII World Day of Peace](#)
- [Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025](#)

Selected Press Articles and Media Resources:

- [Ahead of 2025 Jubilee, Pope Francis Rallies Global Finance Heads to Back Debt Relief](#) **National Catholic Reporter** (Jun 26th)
- [Debt Relief: Biblical Jubilee Concern is Focus of Holy Year 2025, Too](#) Catholic News Service, **The Arlington Catholic Herald** (Jun 5th)
- [Pope Calls for Global Push to Tackle Poor Nations' Debt Crises](#) **Reuters** (Jun 5th)
- [10 things to know about Jubilee 2025—the Holy Year that begins on Christmas Eve](#) **America Magazine, Catholic News Service** (Dec 10th)
- [Pope Francis calls for new global accords on debt, military spending](#) **Reuters** (Dec 12th)
- [Caritas, Jubilee USA Present Holy Year Debt-Relief Project](#) **US Conference of Catholic Bishops, CNS** (Dec 23rd)
- [Caritas, Jubilee USA present Holy Year debt-relief project](#), **Our Sunday Visitor, Catholic News Service** (Dec 24th)
- [On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis appeals for courage to better the world](#) **Reuters** (Dec 24th)
- [Professor Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate Vatican News Radio Interview about Jubilee 2025 Opening by Pope Francis](#) **Vatican World News** (Dec 24th)
- [Pope Opens 2025 Jubilee Dreaming of "New World Where Peace and Justice Reign"](#) **National Catholic Reporter** (Dec 24th)
- [As Pope Francis Opens Jubilee Doors, Francis Announces Support for Work of Church Campaigns in 160 Countries on Debt Cancellation to Address Poverty and Climate Issues](#) **Jubilee USA Network** (Dec 24th)
- Jubilee USA Network and Caritas Announce [Debt Relief Campaign for Poor Countries](#) **Catholic News Agency** (Dec 26th)
- [Minister Lamola to Address the Jubilee 2025 Pilgrimage to Tackle Debt, End Poverty and Heal Our Planet Press Conference](#) **South Africa Ministry of International Relations & Cooperation** (Dec 23rd)
- [Pope brings Holy Year and a message of hope to Rome's main prison](#) **Associated Press, ABC News** (Dec 26th)

For the last 3 years, Jubilee USA Network carefully organized for this moment with African and southern partners and international faith groups for our launches of #Jubilee2025. As we move forward and win our next five years of global strategic campaigns, find special resources and interfaith prayer and action resources at www.JubileeUSA.org.

Gratefully,

Aldo Caliari
 Senior Director of Policy and Strategy
 Jubilee USA Network
aldo@jubileeusa.org



ELCA MISSIONARY PROFILE



Daudi (David) and Kellen Msseemmaa

Children: Shalom,
Shaddai, Solomon

East Africa

EDUCATION

Daudi:

B.S. Journalism

B.A. History

Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Ill.
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Ill.

Kellen:

B.Ed. Economics, Education

Makerere University
Kampala, Uganda

HOBBIES

Daudi: Playing with children, reading, visiting people in my community

Kellen: Dancing, singing, storytelling, listening to podcasts, taking pictures

Daudi and Kellen are the regional representatives in East Africa. Daudi works with companion churches, companion synods, and mission personnel throughout East Africa, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Tanzania.

CONNECT

Companion synod: Southeastern Iowa (5D)

Home synod: Northern Illinois (5B)

CONTACT

Daudi.msseemmaa@elca.org

Kellen.night@gmail.com

CALENDAR

Daudi's Birthday

Oct. 23

Kellen's Birthday

May 4

Wedding Anniversary

Oct. 31

Shalom's Birthday

Dec. 20

Shaddai's Birthday

Aug. 8

Solomon's Birthday

Jan. 30

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE! HERE'S HOW TO GIVE:

By check: Make payable to "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" with "Msseemmaa GCS2058" in the memo line. Give through your synod office or mail your check to:
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

By credit or debit card: See elca.org/missionarygiving call 800-638-3522 and specify "Msseemmaa GCS2058."

By automatic monthly bank withdrawal, or to establish a covenant of prayer, communication and support: Contact 800-638-3522, ext. 2820, or globalchurch@elca.org.

Save the Date:

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025

9:30-11:00 AM * Founders Hall

Ascension Lutheran Church, Thousand Oaks, CA

Come and meet Dave Nonnemacher as he shares videos, slides and his story from his fifth trip to Ukraine in November 2024, when he delivered packages of food essentials, military grade tourniquets, and solar light kits funded by generous donors from our congregation and community.



COMMUNICATION UPDATE FOR JANUARY

This year, at Pastors Tim and Chamie's direction, we focused on video ads and boosting reels for Christmas promotion. The results are intriguing.

We had 10,382 plays of the "Check out our musicians" boosted reel on Facebook (out of 18,151 views of boosted video in December all told), and another 5.9 K plays on Instagram. A 20 second hyper local video "bumper" ad for You Tube, edited from that video, got another 909 plays.

Our advertising also included a Google search ad campaign (it yielded 137 clicks), a listing in the Conejo Valley Guide (online, 27.4 K followers), Invitations distributed at church and school, and one color ad in The Acorn 4 Paper Group (distributed to 95,920 homes).

All the online advertising together came out costing under \$800, while the Acorn ad cost roughly \$2,000.

Meanwhile, non-boosted reels content continues to garner attention. Standout video includes Pastor Chamie's Blue Zones reel with 626 views on Facebook and, on Instagram, 2,635 initial plays and 151 replays.

Here are some data highlights:

Completed • Dec 20, 2024 • Created by Stacy Bosco					Boost again	View results
Boosted Facebook reel						
	Video views Check out our various musicians practicing for Christmas Eve! The...	10,382 Views	7,310 Reach	2,215 ThruPlays	\$101.96 Spent of \$102.00	

Top non-video post in December:

Top content

[See all](#)

Last 28 days

Boost this post to reach up to 29943 more people with every \$102 you spend.

	Christmas caroling today brought the joy of Jesus from...	Views	Reach	Interactions
	Published by Steve Herder	1,787	703	51

(continued)

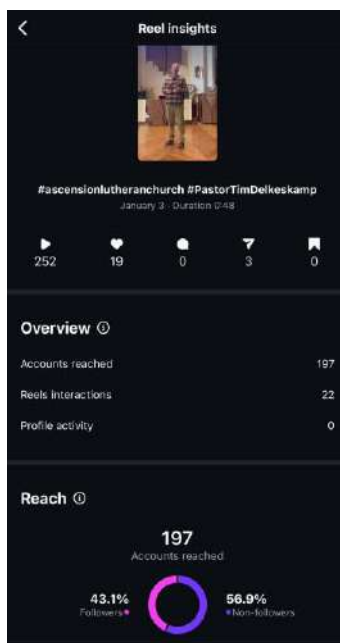
2.

Below, December Facebook overall. At bottom, note reels on Instagram tend to attract views outside our regular audience.

Thanking for your wonderful work and dedication,

Stacy Smith Bosco

Communication Coordinator



Church Council Report

Youth Director: Jennifer Avalos

Date: January 8, 2025

Confirmation Update

We are excited to resume Confirmation on January 12th and continue our journey of faith in 2025. This year, our focus will be on diving deeper into Scripture and guiding our confirmands as they grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. It has been a joy to see the progress our youth have made, and we are eager to witness their continued growth in both faith and knowledge.

The Confirmation program is an important part of our mission to nurture young people in their faith walk, and we are proud of how our students are engaging with the curriculum and applying it to their lives. As we move forward, we look forward to new service projects, fundraising opportunities, and spiritual growth moments that will continue to support our youth as they mature in their faith.

Senior Luther League Update

The Senior Luther League has had an incredible start to the new year, beginning with a memorable event on **January 2nd**. We kicked off the day with a fun pickleball competition, where our youth came together in friendly competition, laughter, and support for one another. It was a beautiful example of how Christ-centered communities can be built through shared experiences and connection. After the games, we spent time relaxing at Starbucks, further deepening friendships and creating lasting memories. The Senior Luther League continues to be a space where faith and fellowship thrive. This year, we are excited to continue offering opportunities for our students to engage in meaningful service projects, fundraising events, and

youth gatherings. These activities are designed to help them grow in their relationship with God, serve others, and connect with their peers.

The **25/25 Prayer Initiative** is also an exciting focus for the Senior Luther League this year. Our youth are deeply committed to prayer and growing together in their faith, as they connect what they are learning in Bible study with the messages shared during Sunday services and in the 25/25 prayer Initiative. It's been inspiring to see how the youth are actively participating in the life of the church, becoming one body united in purpose, faith, and service.

Looking ahead, we are excited for the future of the Senior Luther League Program and the continued growth of our youth as they journey together in faith, fellowship, and service.

Youth Events Update

As we begin 2025, we are thrilled to have several exciting youth events lined up to help our students grow in community and faith.

- **Movie Night (January 17th):** We are bringing children, youth, and families together as one church and school community. This event will provide a fun, relaxing opportunity for bonding as we watch a movie together. Youth will also be selling snacks and pizza to raise funds for winter camp, making this a great way to support our youth program while enjoying time together as a family.
- **Golf N Stuff (January 19th, for 6th-12th grade):** We are kicking off the new year with a mini-golf outing for our middle and high school students. This event provides a fun opportunity for the youth to bond, build community, and enjoy each other's company. It's

part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen and rebuild our youth program, and it's always wonderful to see students from both middle and high school connect in such a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

- **Senior Luther League Event (January 2nd):** Our Senior Luther League event was a highlight of the season. We started with a friendly pickleball competition, where students demonstrated great teamwork and supported one another. Afterward, we gathered at Starbucks to relax and deepen friendships. This event was a perfect example of how community, fellowship, and Christ-centered relationships thrive among our youth.

These events are more than just fun activities; they are opportunities for our students to grow in their faith, learn the joy of serving others, and build lasting friendships. Through each of these gatherings, we continue to teach the importance of service, community, and reflecting God's love through our actions.

As we move through 2025, we look forward to even more opportunities for our youth to participate in meaningful service projects, spiritual growth activities, and fun events that continue to foster a Christ-centered community.

Service Projects and Outreach

Our youth have been deeply involved in service projects that demonstrate their commitment to making a difference. In December, our youth participated in a heartwarming service project where they created blankets for children in hospitals and decorated pillowcases and bags for

foster children in need. These projects were made possible thanks to the generosity of Diane Beck, who provided the materials, and the support from the Be the Blessing Grant. We are incredibly grateful for their contributions, which enabled us to make a positive impact on the lives of others during the holiday season.

As we look forward to the new year, we are committed to continuing these efforts and encouraging our youth to find new ways to serve others in love and faith. Through these service projects, our youth are learning to live out their faith by reflecting God's love in tangible ways. We are excited for all that 2025 has in store for our Confirmation students, Senior Luther League, and the entire youth community. Our goal is to continue building a Christ-centered community where faith, friendship, and service come together to shape the next generation. Thank you for your continued support as we journey together in this season of growth and transformation.

God Bless

Sincerely, Jennifer Avalos Youth Director