

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, February 19, 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 - Alan Baker

Treasurer's Report - Dave Harkins

New Business

- Review of Pastor Evaluation process and documentation - Kaylee Searway
- Nominating Committee - Jeanette Ruggiero

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmands, and Baptisms

Old Business

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

Approval of Minutes - Carrie Leonard

- January 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
- Communications Report
- Be the Blessing Report
- Youth Ministry Report

Information Items

- March 24th, Joint Council/School Board Dinner and Meeting, 6pm in Founder's Hall, Council meeting to follow
 - Devotions - Ethan East (Council Meeting)

Closing Prayer

Adjournment

New Members & Baptisms Report

January 2025

Baptisms for January

No Baptisms

New Members for January

No New Members

Treasurer Report for February, 2025

January numbers are not yet available for church or school. I hope to be able to distribute prior to the Council meeting. The finance team was able to put together the revenue portion of the financials for January, and it put us back in a deficit position to budget; fortunately, only by 2.8%. Along with the absence of any negative surprises on the expense side, it should produce a surplus to budget through January 31st..

We had a Church Finance Committee Meeting on January 28th, and had a brief and preliminary discussion of congregational offering statistics at that meeting. More work is needed to properly prepare for the next budget cycle which will move forward in April.

The Annual Audit has moved forward; with our outside auditor from Fedderson & Co. meeting with the team February 6th. No negative surprises have been encountered to date and we look forward to wrapping it up in the near future.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Harkins

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2025 7:00 pm**

The Council meeting was called to order by Carrie Leonard at 7:04 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

Mission Statement of Ascension Lutheran Church

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

Motto: *Invite, Grow, Serve*

Approval of Agenda – Carrie

Move the Special Presentation to follow Consent Approval of Reports.

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

Devotion – Rachael

In unsettling times, it's easy to get caught up in worrying about the future. God does not want us to be obsessed about what's going to happen in the future but rather to focus on the present, to fully live in each day as He gifts it to us.

Treasurer's Report – Dave

Generous offerings in the December eliminated the large budget shortfall at the end of November and puts year-to-date giving at 100.7% of the budgeted amount. Thanks be to God!

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

New Business

None.

Recurring Business

Affirm New Members, Confirmands and Baptisms

None at this time.

Old Business

1. Land Sale – Dave / Kaylee

No update at this time.

Approval of Minutes

December Council meeting

A motion was made (Alan), seconded (Ethan), and passed unanimously to approve the December 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. Christmas Insert 2024
5. Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations report
6. School Board report
7. Global Ministries Team report
8. Communications report
9. Youth Ministry report

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

Special Presentation – Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp 100-Day Analysis

Based on experience, research, many conversations, and prayer over the past 100 days, Pastor Chamie presented her observations on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in the areas of Worship, Children and Youth Ministries, and Pastoral Care.

Worship

Strengths	Ascension has a beautiful sanctuary, great worship leaders, and a strong tech crew.
Weaknesses	Worship planning does not include leaders from the Saturday night and Sunday 10:30 services. More opportunities are needed for children and youth to lead and engage in worship.
Opportunities	Create a holistic, thematic approach to worship planning. Make use of social media (reels, podcasts, You Tube) to draw people, particularly young adults, into worship. Inspire through unique worship experiences.
Threats	Life demands that keep people away from regular weekend worship.

Children and Youth Ministries

1. Paid Staff

Strengths	New youth leader and associate pastor who are focused on this area.
Weaknesses	The new staff is still onboarding, working to get up to speed while building the program.
Opportunities	Fine tune the job descriptions; clarifying who is responsible for what.
Threats	The Children's Ministries director position is a vital one but is not in the budget.

2. Children's Ministry

Strengths	Lots of families who are looking for connection and spiritual growth; dedicated volunteers; an interim Children's Ministries director who is doing an excellent job.
Weaknesses	Rebuilding from several years of decline. Children's ministries should be more than just Sunday School.
Opportunities	Building anew with energetic families who want to be part of something meaningful; tapping into our Nature Explore schools.
Threats	A changing culture – how do we best engage?

3. Youth Ministry

Strengths	Key staff positions in place; warm and authentic leaders who really "see" the youth; congregational enthusiasm to "grow young".
Weaknesses	It's difficult to rebuild without "critical mass"; lack of youth in leadership in the church.
Opportunities	Building anew from a strong past (Pastor Chamie's experience and relationships) and the energy and new perspective from youth director Jen Avalos.
Threats	Churches with more established youth programs; a culture that isn't as "churched".

4. Children, Youth, and Ministry

Strengths	We are already seeing intergenerational growth; we have an associate pastor who is
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experienced and specially trained in this area.

Weaknesses Lacking strong and established programs.

Opportunities Create more family events; offer classes and programs for parents.

Threats Families are busy.

Pastoral Care

Strengths Pastors who love the congregation; dedicated and gifted volunteers.

Weaknesses Not enough paid and volunteer pastoral care leaders to meet all the needs; lack of a strong tracking/recording system to make sure people don't fall through the cracks; under-utilizing gift sets.

Opportunities Create a center for spiritual and mental wellness.

Threats Not answering the call to care for loneliness, disconnection, and hurt in the community.

The report concluded with a number of specific recommendations and suggestions for supporting staff, creating new avenues for "every day theology", strengthening One Ascension connections, and expanding on the garden/nature program of Ascension school.

Information Items

Next Council meeting - Wednesday, February 19th at 7:00 pm in the Bethlehem Room.

Devotions – Alan

Closing Prayer – Ethan

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rachael Bowen



Pastor Tim's Ministry Report- February 2025

Grace and peace my sisters and brothers in Christ,

January flew by. It just did. At the beginning of it, my goals were to launch our sermon series, get the nominating committee process going, get healthy so that the pinched nerve in my neck would stop bothering me, start planning my sabbatical, figure out how to fund the new sound equipment we want for the sanctuary, prepare for Lent by picking out a book to read together, schedule my 6 summer weddings with their counseling sessions, grow in my management of my supervisees and be more present for people on campus. Now that we are in the second week of February, I would say that while I am in the process of those goals, I have neither completed them nor gotten as far as I would have liked.

As I have mentioned in the past, Chamie and I are endeavoring to preach in a more series-oriented way. We believe that this will lead to more effective faith formation for the church and hope that it gives people more reason to invite friends to join us as we explore more deeper and interesting Biblical reflection. In December, our Advent series was about Peace. In Epiphany it is about Leaning to Live Wisely and Well. At this point, we have used the lectionary to guide us through the series but in summer we will likely try something different.

The nominating process is about choosing the leaders that will be elected at our June congregational meeting for leadership next year. January is a good month to start this process as it gives us time to allow those, we ask to prayerfully discern their call into leadership. It is up to me to initiate the process and work with our Immediate Past President (this year it is Jeanette Ruggiero) make it happen. Because I did not do much work on this in January to start this process, I am grateful for Carrie Leonard's helping me put together the initial process. We now have an awareness of what positions need to be replaced and an initial meeting with our committee. We have our heading! Now please pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us.

In December, because of a couple of wonderful gifts members who gave simply because of their awareness of the need, we were able to cover phase one of our sanctuary sound project. The first phase was simply replacing our old, failing analogue microphones with new digital ones. I was grateful that we were able to, amid the busy schedule, pay for and install those new microphones just before Christmas Eve. People (musicians and audience members) have noticed that the new sound is richer and fuller. With phase one complete, we set our sights on phase two, which is primarily about upgrading the drum cage, soundboard, and monitoring system. This would be a benefit for our entire worship production as it would give us more inputs to work with in our sound system, it would also clean up and declutter the view of the chancel. It would be a huge benefit to our 10:30 team as the sound, reducing the noise on the chancel, would vastly improve and setting up each week would take far less time. It is an upgrade that has been needed for a long time. Originally phases 1 and 2 cost a total of 105k. Fundraising at this point is, including a 10k grant

from the Foundation, is at \$38,125, with the 33k payment of phase one, we have around 70k to raise to complete phase 2.

On the last Thursday of January I took a day off to visit my daughter Hannah in San Louis Obispo. It was great. I drove 3 hours there, had a 2-hour lunch with her and then drove back for 3 hours. What to do with that 6-hour drive time? I listened to one of the books that we are considering for our Lenten read. By the time I got home I was convinced that “Liturgy of the Ordinary” by Tish Harrison Warren is our book. It is a wonderful book about incorporating the way we worship into the way we live our lives. In other words, practicing the Way of Jesus. We will encourage people to buy this book, read it in groups or as individuals and join us for our Wednesday evening preaching series.

One of the great privileges I have as a pastor is to preside at weddings. This year seems to be a particularly busy year for them. At this point, I have 6 on the calendar. One of the difficult things about them is that increasingly, people are having “destination weddings,” going to remote locations. Typically, they are on Saturday evenings, so I must figure out how to be in 2 places at once: a wedding and a worship service. With the help of some guest preachers, I am doing it. For me, doing a wedding also requires meeting with couples to do counseling 3 times prior to the wedding. Typically, because of their working schedule, couples are only able to meet on weekends. If you are doing the math, then about eighteen of my Saturdays in the spring include wedding counseling sessions. It’s a lot.

We have a phenomenally gifted and high-powered staff. For me, a huge challenge is continuing to figure out how to channel their gifts and their energy in the direction of the vision for the church. Thus, my goal is to spend more time in meetings with my supervisees. I generally don’t like meetings, but I have realized the value of having a strong, continuing conversation with the people I work with. Therefore, in 2025 I am being more deliberate about keeping those conversations going.

Throughout January, I have been dealing with a painful pinched nerve in my neck. On Christmas Eve, I woke up with it and it has not left me. Since then, I have seen 3 doctors about it and have been continually treating it with exercise, traction, anti-inflammatory, etc. I can say it is finally starting to feel a bit better but please continue to pray for my healing.

Finally, I just want to say how grateful for the continued work that happens in this wonderful place called One Ascension. Occasionally, I am reminded of the progress we have made over the years. Last Saturday I had the privilege of giving a tour to some retired preschool teachers who worked here before we built the new ECC. They were blown away! When I apologized to them for not having such a great facility when they were working here, they smiled and said that they are grateful we had the vision to build the new one. It was a wonderful moment.

In His Service,

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

Pastor Chamie's January 2025 Council Report

S.W.O.T. Analysis

- January 9th marked my 100th day as Ascension's new associate pastor. When I began last fall, I was asked to work on a "S.W.O.T. Analysis" during my first three months as I listened, learned, and discerned. S.W.O.T. stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. I brought my past experience of doing similar assessments when I served on for three years, pre-Covid, on one of the bishop's "Essential Ministries Team" that looked at churches in the Methodist Conference and helped them revive and grow.
- My S.W.O.T. analysis included looking at children, youth, and family ministries plus worship and also the church as a whole. Therefore, I had many conversations with key people who contributed their thoughts and ideas to this report including Jen Avalos and Jenni Klemp.
- My first two weeks of January I was very busy preparing to present this analysis to the church council. Pastor Tim, the current and future council president, and I had a rich conversation over a long two hour lunch about the state of the church. I condensed my findings into a slide presentation for council.
- I have now taken that presentation and made a list of action items and conversations to have with others as we continue to converse and look at ways to hold on to our strengths, grow from our weaknesses, seize new opportunities, and conquer threats.

Children, Youth, & Family

- Confirmation resumed after a two week Christmas break. We have 21 confirmation students in grades 7 & 8. As the pastor, I am the main content teacher of confirmation. Jen Avalos is also involved in confirmation with relationship building, coordinating details, and being present to lead and interact. We are also so blessed with Don Weeks and Carlah Schneider as faithful, wonderful confirmation mentors.
- We are continuing a once a month outing that combines 6th through 12th graders. One Sunday a month, we invite the youth to come to the 10:30 AM worship. Then we eat lunch on campus together. And then we do a fun activity. In January, we went to Golf-n-Stuff. We had 30 youth in attendance. We are



thankful for Jeff Hengst driving the bus for us and foresee using the bus more and more when we have such large numbers of youth.

- We had a very well-attended family movie night on Fri, Jan 17. Pizza and snacks were sold as a fundraiser for the youth. Jen, Jenni, and I all took part in this night as it was for school and church families... children and youth.
- We did a family hike and park play date on January 25 at the Chumash Center. It was such a lovely mix of church and school families with people of all different ages... from a little baby tied to their mama to grandparents who brought their littles to everyone in between. We had almost 40 hikers.



Interfacing with the Schools:

- My favorite week day is still Wednesday as it begins with chapel. I love coordinating chapel and love seeing all the students from the ECC through 8th grade all come together along with parents, church staff, members of the church congregation, and community friends.
- I made sure to spend time interacting with students by playing with the ECC kids during their outside time and visiting TK through 8th grade students during their recess and lunch times.
- I make sure every week to schedule times to be at drop-off and pick-up so I can interact with the parents.
- I love supporting Carol Bjelland as she makes monthly chapel announcements about Fair Trade and has Fair Trade Lane open once a month on Thursdays, which I always go to - so many of school families and students are becoming regulars. What an amazing bridge. Hats off to Carol for doing a spectacular job with this.

Worship

- We spent the first few days of January fine tuning the Epiphany worship schedule and themes. We wanted to do that in December, but got swamped.
- We began perusing different resources and ideas in preparation for Lent.
- I have been reaching out to a couple of people as we look at doing a trial run of a children's church choir on Sunday mornings.
- Jenelle, Tim, and Wyant and I meet weekly, but I was also happy to add some really good conversation times with Melissa who leads our 10:30 service and Nancy Lee who leads our 6:00 Saturday service.

- I am still learning the liturgy pieces of the 9:00 service - it is taking longer than I imagined. But Jenelle is making me new “cheat sheets” in a style that I think will help the way I process.

Pastoral Care

- Pastoral care is very demanding. The needs are great. My daughter predicted before I began working at Ascension that she thought there would be many women reaching out. She was right. In the past month, in addition to doing hospital visits and addressing pastoral care needs with Pastors Steve and Tim, I have had several appointments with women to address a wide variety of issues where they are seeking guidance.

Other

- Response to the fires... and a divisive cultural time in politics... we pastors - and sometime others were in the conversation like Rich Gregory - have been doing so much care and listening in terms of all the tumult in January. We have responded to fire needs. One day we recorded a reel to help promote fire relief. We have done reels and written notes to the congregation as we reach out in care and compassion. We worked at supporting first responders. We have partnered with people like the Kobe family in the school in terms of fire relief. I made sure to welcome our new school students who have landed at Ascension after their home and school burned down in Palisades.
- We began Wednesday Work Blessings - Pastor Steve’s brilliant idea - and it has thus far been such a blessing to listen, learn, and pray with people in their places of work. I think this a so important in caring for our congregation, growing our congregation, and helping all of us to live as disciples of Jesus in our everyday lives.
- Bible & Blue Zones - with nearly 40 people who registered for the class, it was a time of rich discussion and connection. I was so happy that we have 10 participants in their 20’s as well as participants in their 40’s through 70’s - it was truly multi-generational. And we have interest for “spin-offs” of the class

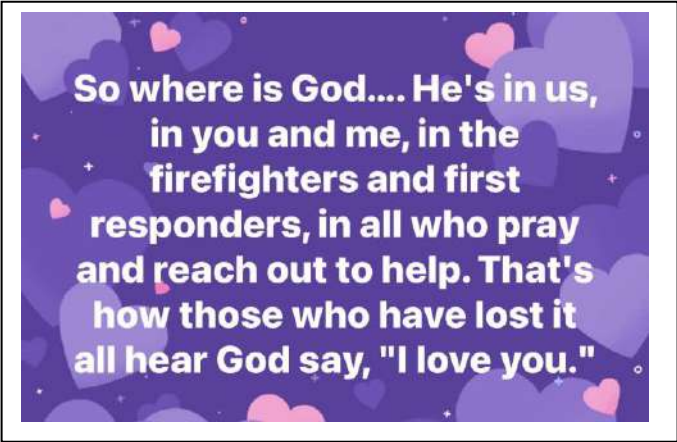


such as Dianne Beck who will now be offering an exercise class. I believe holistic classes like this - that touch on topics every human in concerned about - and then interweaving with our lives of faith - helps us deepen and grow as a church, build strong connections with one another, and reach out to the community. I also wanted to note that we provided childcare during the class which is something I think we need to consider with everything we offer because providing childcare allows more families with children to participate - that is part of growing young!

- Word & Wine for Women kicked off in January and was another multi-generational well-attended event with a couple of dozen women. Thanks to Lisa Burns for being an amazing host.

With Gratitude,
Pastor Chamie

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

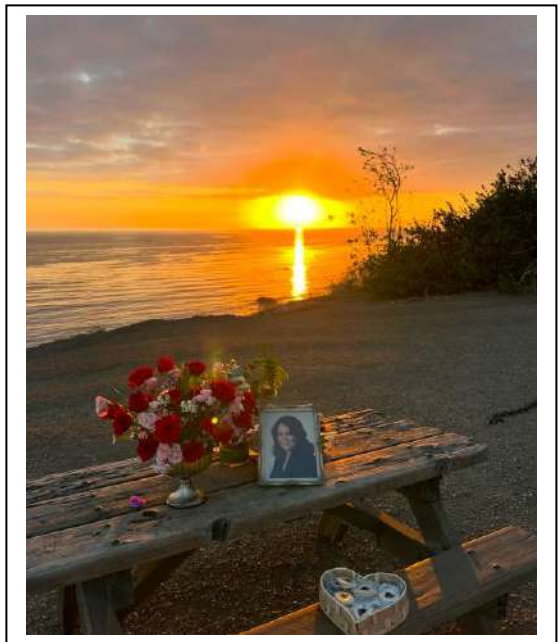


**So where is God.... He's in us,
in you and me, in the
firefighters and first
responders, in all who pray
and reach out to help. That's
how those who have lost it
all hear God say, "I love you."**

We have begun the new year, seeking to trust God and to care for our neighbors, as we have experienced the devastation of the fires around us, and the fear of our neighbors who are so vulnerable to what is coming next in their lives. All of us thank God for our firefighters and first responders, especially those in our congregation, with Captain Jeff Brown at the top of that list with his leadership in Pacific Palisades. We pray for our Bishop Bos who lost her home in the Altadena fire. Thank

you, Ascension, for all your care and prayers for those who are heartbroken with loss and questions about their future. We will continue to help and serve as we hear of opportunities. Our immediate response was for food and water gifts for first responders, led by our Rob Steere, from our church and school. (The purple graphic is from the Facebook post that I did during the fires and based on the Isaiah 43 passage where God says, "I love you.")

In January we had three friends of Ascension die, Robin Ertel, Pastor Doris Nolan, and Phil Embleton. We keep Rick Ertel, Catherine Schureman, Doris' family and friends, and Joan Embleton in our prayers. Doris' memorial service was at a beach in Malibu on Jan. 30th. Here's a photo from the service. Notice the cross in the sunset! We will miss them in our worship services, and Robin in our Women's Monday Morning Bible study, and Doris with her occasional preaching here.



As often happens in the winter months, we have had many friends who have been hospitalized. Thank you for your prayers for each person on our prayer list. This past Wednesday I was in three different hospitals, and two of them were in the busy ERs. Your three pastors share the times each week of when we visit the hospitals. If you are ever hospitalized, please let us know. Our friends Skip (who recently had surgery) and Helen Craig have moved from their home to Ivy Park at Wood Ranch.

It's a joy for me to work closely with the leaders of Senior Adult Ministries, Prayer Ministries, Community Concerns Team and Global Ministries Team.

Thanks to Chris Daleiden for leading our Community Concerns Team, Linda Morrow for leading our prayer ministries, Carol Bartell leading our Sunday adult education team, Louise Evenson for leading our Global Ministries Team, and Carol Bjelland leading our Fair Trade Ministries. If you have a desire to serve in any of these ways, talk with these leaders or with me, and we'll get you connected. Other key leaders include Norm Guetschoff with our Christian Life Hours at senior facilities and Stephen Ministry, Pastor Ron Cox and our Eucharistic Ministers, Barb Krum with her visitation ministries, Val Krum with her card ministry, Bob Token with our SAMs Team, Chris with our 3M, minor maintenance ministries, Chris with our Friday Food Pantry (and the big drive on Feb. 9), Brenda Heinrich with our GriefShare group every Thursday at 1:00pm, Barry and Tania Disselhorst with our third Tuesday food ministry for Harbor House, and Di Starzak with all our first aid, CPR, and AED machine training.



On Jan. 26 what a joy to lead a class full of adults eager to learn about the Dead Sea Scrolls and the exhibit at the Reagan Library. I did a Facebook post on this. If any group of people want to visit this exhibit, I'll volunteer to be your personal docent either on a Monday or a Thursday! The

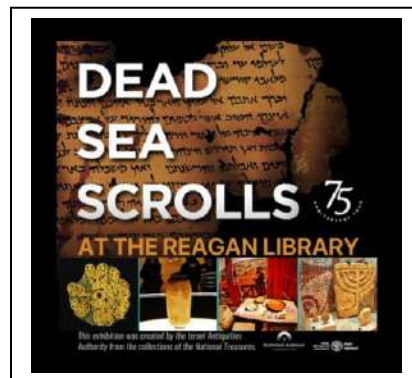
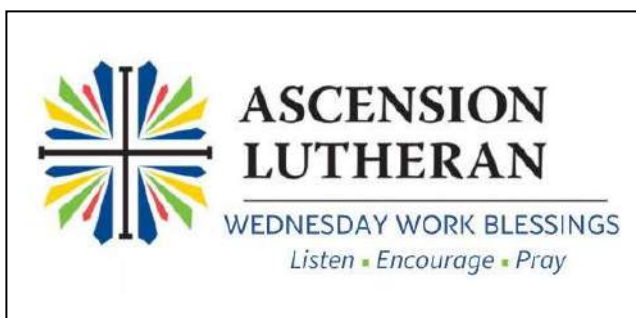


exhibit is here through Sept. 2. And if anyone would like my 50-slide PowerPoint presentation on the DSS, email me at pastorsteve@alcto.org.

Here's info about four ministries that came out of our 24 weeks of prayer in 2024.

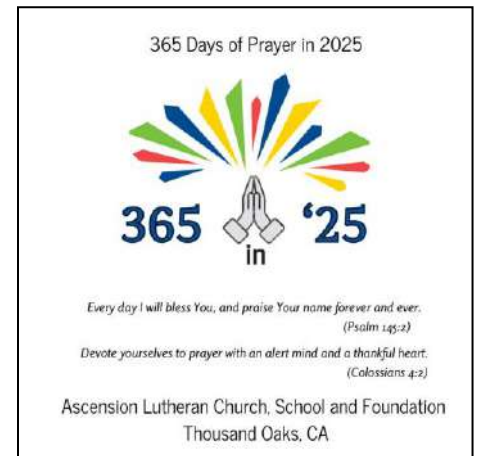
(1) "Wednesday Work Blessings."

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. Our first two visits have been [Harbor House](#) and then Paul Trent's furniture business, "[The Sofa Guy](#)." Outstanding visits!

- (2) A carry-over from our "24 weeks in '24" is 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. At the end of this report you have the February calendar.
- (3) We are thrilled that Pastor Larry and Chris Wagner have volunteered to bring back a form of Lunch Bunch, once-a-month, beginning on Feb. 12. This will be the second Wednesday of each month in Founders Hall. Please sign up on the previous Wednesday by calling the church office. We look forward to gathering again for this mid-week lunch. All are welcome!
- (4) The fourth ministry is one that has not started yet. Judy Marshall and I want to set up a time to train people to also be involved in hospital visitation ministry. So watch for that training event, and talk with either one of us if you feel the calling to care for people in this way.

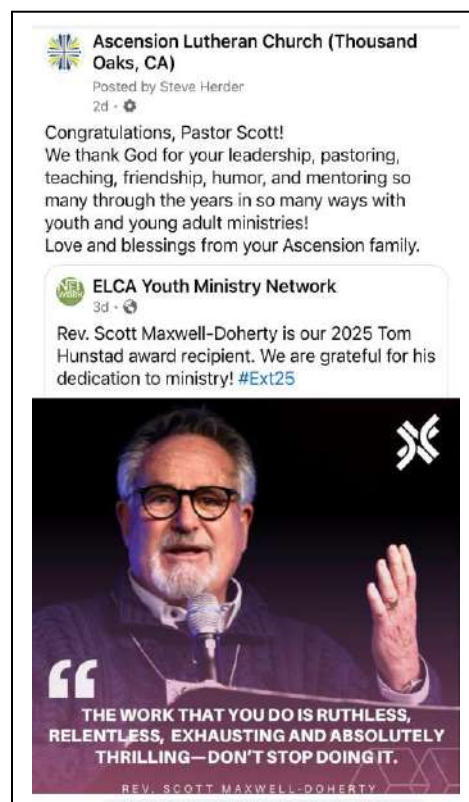


February is a big month for our GMT with Dave Nonnemacher here speaking on his ministries in Ukraine. This is our Feb. monthly benevolence, bringing light and hope to the people of Ukraine. At our Feb. 5 GMT meeting we'll focus on our synod's relationship with the Lutheran church in El Salvador, and Ascension's Bruce Thomas' mission trip there this past summer. We'll also hear about Colleen Hutchings' dental mission trip to Kenya this past summer. Louise will also give a 99-slide show report summarizing our GMT work for 2024!

A few continuing education, one-hour events, for me this past month included a zoom meeting with Wartburg Seminary learning about their recent trip to Greece and Turkey, the cities of Paul. I went to a class at Senior Concerns on how people who have hearing loss. I participated in a webinar with our ELCA and Global Refuge on how we can help advocate for refugees and immigrants, and a webinar that CLU student Nina Dube led with her father, Bishop Dube from Zimbabwe and President Nunes, on being caring community locally (with our fires) and in Zimbabwe (with their flooding). Your three pastors and principal also attended President Nunes' excellent address on the state of the university at California Lutheran University.

One fun project at the end of the month: I came in on Thursday to work on the bookshelves in the Bethlehem Room, organized them, and put them on shelves with various categories. Come and "check" them out! (*Mondays and Thursdays I'm usually out of the office.*)

On a personal note, Julie, Natalie and I were blessed to be able to be in Wisconsin for five days, mid-January, to help celebrate my father's 95th birthday. We missed our family from IL because the little girls had a cold. My dad appreciated the card that many of you signed here. My parents send their love to all of you, and they worship online with you each weekend, often twice! God's blessings to you and your family as well! Thank you for your prayers. You are in ours.



February 2025



Praying this prayer each day, from Psalm 145:3

“Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.”

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 Love for guests & visitors who come to our worship services <i>1 Corinthians 13:1-13</i>
2 Our Senior High Youth Group with Jen Avalos & Pastor Chamie <i>Luke 4:21-30</i>	3 Our monthly benevolence: Support for Ukraine <i>2 Corinthians 9:6-12</i>	4 “Thank Your Mail Carrier” Day <i>2 Corinthians 3:1-3</i>	5 Louise Evenson who leads our Global Ministries Team <i>Matthew 28:16-20</i>	6 Happy birthday, Pastor Ron Cox, Eucharistic Ministry Leader <i>Psalms 138</i>	7 Our ELCA missionary in Madagascar, Rev. Kristin Engstrom <i>Isaiah 6:1-8</i>	8 For our Foundation Trustees <i>1 Corinthians 15:1-11</i>
9 For all pastors, preachers & our Outreach Team <i>Luke 5:1-11</i>	10 Our children & youth planting tomato seeds this week <i>1 Timothy 4:12</i>	11 Other houses of faith in our community <i>1 Samuel 12:23-24</i>	12 Our first monthly Wednesday Luncheon today at noon! <i>Psalms 133</i>	13 California Lutheran University <i>Psalms 1</i>	14 <i>Valentine's Day</i> Those who are suffering, anxious, or lonely <i>Jeremiah 17:5-10</i>	15 Happy Birthday, Pastor Larry Wagner <i>1 Corinthians 15:12-20</i>
16 For all our music ministries <i>Luke 6:17-26</i>	17 <i>President's Day</i> Prayers for our country and all our leaders <i>Micah 6:8</i>	18 Those who are hospitalized & hospital staff <i>Psalms 30</i>	19 For our church staff <i>Ephesians 4:11-13</i>	20 Fair Trade Lane <i>Psalms 37:1-11</i>	21 For any family relationships that are strained <i>Genesis 45:3-15</i>	22 Garden Work Day on Campus <i>1 Corinthians 15:42-53</i>
23 For our tech team, office staff & finance staff <i>Luke 6:27-38</i>	24 For our school board <i>Philippians 4:4-9</i>	25 For our outreach ministry on social media <i>Lamentations 3:21-24</i>	26 Prayers for our neighbors north in Canada and south in Mexico <i>Acts 1:8</i>	27 Mesa Farm, Ojai, mesafarm.org <i>Psalms 99</i>	28 Pray for our youth at winter camp at El Camino Pines <i>Exodus 34:29-35</i>	16-38

Attendance

Attendance for the first six weekends of 2025 is a bit light with an average of 364 per weekend vs the 438 average we were experiencing in December of 2024. Online is averaging 142 views exceeding one minute.

<u>Date:</u>	-	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>9:00</u>	<u>10:30</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>1/5/2025</u>	-	<u>45</u>	<u>219</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>335</u>
<u>1/12/2025</u>	-	<u>54</u>	<u>250</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>390</u>
<u>1/19/2025</u>	<u>MLK Weekend</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>363</u>
<u>1/26/2025</u>	-	<u>41</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>322</u>
<u>2/2/2025</u>	-	<u>59</u>	<u>253</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>396</u>
<u>2/9/2025</u>	-	<u>43</u>	<u>238</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>378</u>

New Payroll System

We are in the middle of the first week of our team clocking in and out of the new payroll system. Camryn just led a great training course for the managers who will be approving timesheets. It's an intuitive system, but Camryn taught us some nice short cuts and tricks to get the information that managers need to keep their eyes on consistently. I think it will be a great scheduling tool and give us good information to optimize our teams.

Budget Season

It's my favorite time of year! I had a lovely vacation with my husband and dear friends the first week of February, and now I am ready to roll up my sleeves and start working on our budgets for 2025-2026. Mike and Camryn have done job of great analysis on the giving patterns for the first half of this fiscal year. I hope that data will be helpful to the Finance Committee and Generosity Team in identifying what our offering budget should look like next year. Camryn is building a budget template with year to date and budget information to guide our discussions with the various leaders about their areas of ministry. I plan to meet with Dave Harkins soon to discuss our potential timelines and refine our processes to run smoothly this year. I've communicated with Ashley Steere at the School Board to create a plan for engaging the comps committee, School Board, and school leadership on the TK-8 and ECC budgets.

Reserve Study

We have received the initial draft of our study from the vendor. A group of people will meet and discuss the results the day after our council meeting, with the goal of being ready for a more in-depth discussion at the Council and School Board joint meeting in March.

Human Resources

Caroyln Bahr and Camryn Force are doing an amazing job with the many leaves of absence that need to be managed on a campus with 105 employees. It's taken the time-consuming task off my plate, freeing me up for some other items, as well as ensuring that employees get the quick response they deserve.

I held a refresher for supervisors about worker comp and how to handle an injury on the job, a topic worth revisiting from time to time. I'm now working with Pastor Tim and our security team on a training for front desk employees and ushers about how to respond when a government agency shows up on campus. My hope is to give the team that receives the public a peace of mind that they have thought about what questions they should ask and what actions they can take, something we have not spent much time thinking about until the recent administration changes.

Carrie Leonard and I have collaborated on the Pastor Review attached to this report. Our intent is to use it each year for each of our three pastors, with the ability to send it to the District Superintendent of the Methodist Church per their required oversight of a Methodist pastor. The first page would be essentially the same for each of them, with reflections and ministry objectives that pertain to our church, before moving on to more specific sections about their performance and contributions on the following pages. The annual cadence would be for the Senior Pastor and the Council President to collaborate on the ministry objectives in April. This lends well to our Bylaw requirement for the Senior Pastor to share ministry objectives with the Congregation each year, as well as inform the performance review process for the lay staff. The Council President would then prepare pages two and three for each of the pastors. They will hold the reviews and obtain signatures from each Pastor after the May meeting, and email copies to Human Resources for file retention before the end of June each year. Pastor Chamie's review would be sent by the Director of Operations to the District Superintendent of the Methodist Church before the first of October every year.

Roof Leak Update

As it rains on Thursday February 13th the ceiling and insulation has fallen down the restroom between the music room and the church nursery. The roof and the HVAC unit directly above were both recently replaced, an area of HVAC piping was still old, and leaked through. The leak seems to be spreading to include the ceiling over the extended care room/church nursery. We made a plan to move extended care to Pederson Hall for Friday, and then reassess the situation before the church nursery is needed on Sunday morning. The roofer has already been out to make an assessment and partner with us for a plan to repair it. Jeff and his team will likely do the interior insulation and drywall repair. We are blessed that next week is "winter break" and we won't have students on campus, expect for an extended care group that can utilize other spaces of the campus.

A new small leak popped up in the bride's closet of Founders Hall, just under a joint between the old roof and the new roof.

You might recall that we recently spent \$12,000 repairing the sanctuary roof. An earlier version of this report said that the leak over the west doors of the narthex is dry. No sooner did I hit, "Send" then Jeff called me to report that it too was leaking. The leak directly over the bell tower is leaking. We also anticipate that the leak over the sanctuary hallway on the choir side is still not fixed, although it is not leaking as rapidly as the west side.

As I said above, the roofer has been out to assess the situation, but we do not have a solution proposed to us quite yet. The situation has been changing by the hour. Jeff and his team have been attentive and responsive. Zach Martino and the extended care team have been flexible and helpful. We'll get through this and back to sunnier days!

Thank you,

Kaylee Searway
Director of Operations



Evaluation Year:

Congregation: Ascension Lutheran Church

Address: 1600 Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

Average Weekly In-Person Worship Attendance for the past 12 months:

Average Weekly Online Worship Attendance for the past 12 months:

Average Weekly Worship Attendance for the past 12 months (In-person + Online):

What are the Ministry Objectives the congregation has accomplished this year?

What challenges occurred in the life of the congregation this year?

What are the Ministry Objectives for the coming year?

Pastor Name:

Called As:

Call Date:

Total Personal Days Taken:

Last Sabbatical Date:

How did this Pastor address the challenges of the congregation this year?

Describe the collaboration efforts of the Church Council (and/or their representatives as applicable) with this Pastor throughout this year.

How is this Pastor uniquely gifted to lead the congregation in the Ministry Objectives for the coming year?

Describe the Pastor’s strengths, skills, and leadership style. Cite examples.

In thinking about the Pastor’s role at Ascension, including the Early Childhood Center, Ascension Lutheran School, and the Foundation, what area(s) does the Pastor need to improve or seek training in working with any or all of these entities?

Pastor Signature

Date

Council Representative Signature

Date

Council Representative Name: _____

Ascension Lutheran School Board Meeting January 27th 2025

Convened at 6:36 by Ashley Steere. Present: Jenni McCoy, Rich Gregory, Ashley Steere, Anna Woodward, Nelly Nassar, Jeanette McNulty, Kelsi Ramirez, Kathy Saneinia, Pastor Chamie. Not present, Chris, Scott, Jocelyn

- 6:40: Mission statements read
- 6:43: Devotions led by Pastor Chamie: Story of Esther; for such a time as this
- 6:51: Ashley asks for motion to approve agenda
 - o Anna so moves
 - o Nelly seconds, passes unanimously
- Consent agenda: Ashley pulls admissions, Kyle pulls ALS financials
- Admissions: Correction to the report: Opting out needs to be complete by Feb. 15th, not Feb. 1st
- Financial Report: Question about auction expense. Auction expenses are left outstanding until revenues from auction come in later in the year – and they almost always cover those expenses. Tech expenses: we're underbudget due to tech coming out of prior year's budget in June.
- Ashley asked if for next year we can explore a field trip transportation budget.
- 7:10: Old Business
 - o Brief summary of Connie's email regarding uniforms
 - o Brief update on discounts and whether we move to "tier 2". Clarification that we can vote through email.
- 7:20: State of Schools: Jenni
 - o 180 students enrolled for next year
 - o Summer filling up nicely
 - o Service projects for fire survivors
 - o Parent workshops for Spring
 - o 2 new student teachers CSUCI
 - o Training happening for new HR software – will be learning curve
 - o 3 exceptional teachers followed CPR perfectly and saved a choking child.
 - Ashley brought them cards and flowers from the school board
- 7:27: Rich
 - o Hillcrest/Bethany merger
 - o Palisades family
 - o Marketing push/website – Nicole Cook
 - o Staycation 4's and 5's
 - o Opt outs: 3 so far
 - o Friendly
 - o 2nd Kindergarten
- 7:42: Jenni thanked the school board for her staff for the Christmas bonus
- 7:46: Spring retreat set for March 12th on campus
- 7:51: Closing prayer and meeting adjourned: Nelly made the motion, seconded by Anna, unanimously approved

**ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
FOUNDATION REPORT TO THE COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 19, 2025**

The Marketing/Education theme for the Foundation this year will be on legacy giving. A newsletter article will focus on individual giving. Three presentations on legacy giving are planned, one on March 9 and the other two in September and November.

A social media strategy for the Foundation was reviewed and discussed. It will be tied to an digital strategy for One Ascension. First steps will involve review of the Foundation Facebook page and the ALC website.

At its February meeting the Foundation approved grants totaling \$13,500:

- \$3,000 to the Global Ministries Team to be used to help pay for a new vehicle to be used by the Mariupol Chaplain's Battalion the Ukraine.
- \$10,000 to Ascension Lutheran Church to be used towards upgrading the sound system.
- \$500 to Lutherans Restoring Creation to support their program to build church "climate resilience hubs" to help communities when disaster hits.

The Foundation's total assets totaled \$1,860,640 as of December 31, 2024. The equity markets have been very strong this year, resulting in the equity portion of the total portfolio slightly exceeding the allowable maximum of 75 percent. Late in 2024 the Foundation sold \$120,000 of its equity funds and used the funds to purchase a money market fund currently paying slightly more than 4%. This reduced the equity holdings to 70% of the portfolio and provided cash assets that can be used for grants and scholarships. Some of the funds may also subsequently be used to purchase equity funds again if the market suffers a major reversal.

Alan Baker
Foundation Representative to the Council



Wednesday, February 5, 2025

4-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room

Meeting Notes

Meeting Notes

WELCOME Greetings to all present: Andy Binsley, Beverly Selle (via zoom), Bruce Thomas (guest speaker), Carol Bartell, Carol Bjelland, Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp, Christina Sanchez, Ethel Jordan, Jenni Klemp, Jim Overton, Jack Koenig (visitor), Julie Jacks (guest speaker via zoom), Kim Overton, Louise Evenson, Marcia Koenig, Mary Wennes, Paul Evenson, and Pastor Steve Herder.

OPENING PRAYER "The Immigrant's Creed" was shared by Mary Wennes.

TOPIC: ACCOMPANIMENT

1. MISSION TRIP REPORTS

Bruce Thomas and Colleen Hutchings were given funds from the Global Ministries Travel Fund for their 2024 global ministry trips. Each year, funds are received at Ascension from the Ozzie and Louise Peterson endowment for global ministry travel.

Mission Trip to El Salvador

Julie Jacks (trip coordinator) and Bruce Thomas (Ascension) presented information on their mission trip to El Salvador last August.

- Pastor Anna-Kari Johnson (ELCA) started this mission effort in 1997. The annual mission trip is scheduled for the first week of August, and Julie has been participating since 2006. This was Bruce's first trip with the group.
- There are 42 Lutheran churches in El Salvador; 6 new congregations have been founded since 2006.
- Trip activities included medical and dental care visits, church visits, college ministry updates, current school challenges, and church worship services.
- Bruce reported on visiting Faith and Hope Church, Ascension's sister church.
- Information about the 2025 El Salvador mission trip will be shared in the future.

Mission trip to Kenya

Colleen Hutchings (Ascension) provided the GMT with a written summary and video of her life-changing mission trip experience traveling to Kenya last summer with a group from Eastside church in Anaheim. While there, she worked with a team that provided dental care and education to children and adults. She expressed her gratitude to Ascension's Global Ministry Trip Fund for the donation that helped her participate.

2. REFLECTIONS, PLANS, AND REPORTS

A. Approval of Ascension's new ELCA missionaries Daudi & Kellen Msseemmaa, East Africa

Louise reviewed Ascension's current support of missionaries and distributed the profile of Daudi & Kellen Msseemmaa. Previously, Ascension was supporting Rev Wal Luot Reat in South Sudan who has now retired. The Global Ministry Team approved the proposal that Ascension provide support for the Msseemmaa's missionary work in East Africa in addition to Rev Kristin Engstrom in Madagascar. Each month, the benevolence from Ascension's general fund includes a \$332 contribution for ELCA missionaries.

B. GMT Monthly Reports

Fair Trade - Carol Bjelland presented the Fair Trade Ministry's monthly report and highlighted the upcoming Fair Trade Lane dates. Other related upcoming activities include a field trip to Ten Thousand Villages in Pasadena (in the preliminary planning stage) and the 24th anniversary celebration of Fair Trade at Ascension (in preliminary planning stage for Oct.).

Be a Beacon of Light with Dave Nonnemacher – Louise Evenson presented the report on the **Be a Beacon of Light – Ukraine** project and re-capped the activities with Dave Nonnemacher at Ascension on Feb. 1-2. Louise expressed thanks to all those who assisted during the weekend. On Monday, Feb. 3 Dave, Olha Isaieva, and Dr. Herb Gooch presented at a Global Forum at CLU. Dr. Christina Sanchez was thanked for her role in that event.

C. Report for Gifts of Hope, 2024

Louise distributed the final report of the Gifts of Hope. \$92,266.13 were contributed and funds are being distributed. Pastor Steve reported that the Harbor House check was presented at chapel on Feb. 5; Carol Bjelland reported presenting the Friends of Fieldworkers check at a lunch meeting on Feb. 5. At that time, Carol also received an update on local fieldworkers in Ventura County.

D. Calendar Items for February, March, April

"Important Dates" for Feb, March and April was distributed and discussed. An upcoming movie entitled No Address (about homelessness) will be shown in a local theater on Feb. 28 with a portion of the proceeds going to support Harbor House. Watch for details.

Pastor Chamie announced the return of the Lenten soup suppers. Tomato seed planting and tomato plant sales are also happening again this spring. A single church service at 10 AM and a Global International Fair is being planned for Pentecost (June 8). More details to come.

E. Global Ministries Team – 2024 Year in Review

A slide presentation on the multitude of activities, projects, and accomplishments of the GMT in 2024 was presented by Louise. Gratitude and appreciation were expressed to all who participate in the global ministry of Ascension. Special thanks to Paul Evenson for his assistance in formatting the presentation.

OTHER:

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.

Submitted by Ethel Jordan



MINISTRY OF Global Ministries Team

BE A BEACON OF LIGHT-Ukraine, with Dave Nonnemacher

DATE January 30, 2025

SUBMITTED BY Louise Evenson

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

Be A Beacon of Light-Gathering with Dave Nonnemacher Feb 1-2, 2025

Gathering refreshments-Beverly Selle, Kim Overton

Pray for Ukraine stars-Mara Hassenbein

Greeters-Mary Wennes, Bonny and Ian Chick

Prayers-Our pastors: Tim, Chamie and Steve

Hospitality for Dave-Paul and Louise Evenson, ROL team, CLU

Audio Visual-Pastor Steve Herder, Paul Evenson

TWAA, News Releases, Invitations-Stacy Smith and Louise Evenson

Dave will be at all weekend worship services and will be presenting at Adult Education class. Dave will lead the assembly of 13 solar light kits with Confirmation class and Senior Luther League on Sunday.

On Monday, Dave will be hosted by CLU's Center for Global Engagement and be a presenter at their Global Forum. CLU graduate Olha Isaieva '24 will also be presenting with Dave and Dr. Herb Gooch.

During the month of February, Ascension has designated the monthly benevolence offering to Ukraine-Humanitarian Response. Announcements will be made verbally and in TWAA. Pew envelopes are available in the sanctuary as well as at the Feb 1st gathering in Founders. A Foundation grant request was submitted to encourage gifts for this special offering. (Decision will be made February 8).

Various expenses for the weekend are being covered by Thrivent Choice Dollars, a Be the Blessing Grant, personal donations, & the GMT Travel fund. The Center for Global Engagement is sharing in the travel costs for Dave.

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

Inviting, welcoming, serving, cleaning up, driving Dave and Olha. Invite your friends!

3. LOOKING AHEAD (Important calendar dates)

February 24, 2025—Begins the fourth year of the aggression/invasion into Ukraine.

4. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT Louise Evenson AT

Lpevenson@gmail.com or 925-518-5795.

Hello Everyone!

Thank you for letting me share the experience I had in Kenya this past summer! I traveled with Eastside church in Anaheim as I have a friend who is in charge of the dental team that has been there for the past three years. There were about 50 of us in total who went and we were divided up into micro teams, one of which was dental.

We stayed in Nairobi for the most part and traveled daily to Pangani. This is a suburb in the Mathare Valley which is one of the largest slum areas in Kenya. It is about 4 miles long and is home to about 1 million people.

The church is partnered with Missions of Hope International (MOHI). They have several schools in the surrounding area, that with the help sponsorships are able to provide each student with schooling, daily meals, uniforms, dental and medical help.

We were able to walk thru the slums and talk to some of the families that live there. We asked what there concerns were and prayed with them.

We spent three days in Pangani then drove to the countryside to another MOHI school in Nyeri. We worked three days there, cleaning teeth, teaching oral hygiene care and doing dentistry. About 95% of children and adults have never had their teeth cleaned, which was a shock to me. They were so kind, humble and slightly afraid of the unknown, but very grateful to have been able to get dental care.

The last two days we traveled to the Masai Mara National Reserve and went on safari for two days. That was amazing!

My experience there was life changing and felt so grateful to be able to help. Thanks you Ascension for your donation and helping me make it happen.

Colleen Hutchings

FAIR TRADE MINISTRY

DATE: January 25, 2025 for February 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Carol Bjelland

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

Fair Trade Lane Schedule Feb-April 2025 is included below. Schedule for May- Dec TBD

Ascension Fair Trade Email Communications in January 2025 included information re: January/Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Email communications also included invitation to the SISV event (Jan 30, Jan 31 & Feb 1) Re: Human Trafficking Awareness. Fair Trade focus for 2025 is connections. January focus – How Fair Trade connects with the fight against human trafficking.

Field trip to Ten Thousand Villages in Pasadena – Spring 2025 (currently in prelim 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 prelim planning)

Fair Trade & UN Sustainable Development Goals – Carol & Pastor Steve will lead this Adult Ed Class March 30th

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

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

Thursday, March 13th (2:30 4 PM)

Sunday, March 16th (8:30-9AM & 10-10:30 AM)

Thursday, April 10th (2:30-4 PM)

Sunday, April 13th (8:30-9 AM & 10-10:30 AM)

4. OTHER INFORMATION

In our monthly Chapel message (January 15th)/Epiphany focus, we shared how we see the beauty of God's wonderful creation in the faces of the very happy & well-cared for Fair Trade cows of Red Barn Family Farms (Fair Trade Cheese) in Wisconsin. We shared the story of Red Barn and how Red Barn carries forward The Light of justice for people & planet in what they do & how they do it. We so very much enjoy these opportunities to share a Fair Trade message with students, staff & families. And, we so very much enjoy meeting & greeting everyone on Fair Trade Lane – Fair Trade Lane Thursdays are filled with art, laughter, conversation, meeting & greeting & chocolate!

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

Wow! Food Drive, Ray of Life, Wednesday Workplace Prayer Visits, Youth Excursions and Winter Camp, Sunday School, Prayer Ministries, Fair Trade, Blue Zones, Bibles & Brews, Women & Wine, Faith and Fitness, Hikes, Adult Ed, and more I can't fit...As someone who keeps track of it all, I just have to say Congratulations to Everyone!! The spirit and the level of involvement at Ascension is cause for celebration -- at a time when One Ascension has never been more needed.

We are making a change to Vimeo from Facebook Live as the source of our worship live streams, after due consideration and research. The decision was made because Facebook no longer has technical support available for us, it uses bots only to flag potential copyright violations, and the flags have become increasingly frequent and bothersome.

A little story: Early on in our live streaming history, a message popped up on the back end of our Facebook page during a service when Howard Sonstegard was directing the choir in a lively song. It was Facebook questioning whether this was the Boston Pops, led by Arthur Fiedler. (Howard later said he had mixed feelings about it; while it was nice to be equated with the Boston Pops, Fiedler had died in 1979.) All I had to do in those days was answer no, this is a live performance by the Ascension Lutheran Church Chancel Choir led by Howard Sonstegard, who is also very much alive.

How different things are now. There is no one to tell that we pay for rights, that we're not using other choirs' recordings -- anything. There are scary looking warnings, audio getting cut, strange foreign words that show up in the back end of our page. Meanwhile, Vimeo offers human support, less aggressive copyright flagging that's moderated by humans, more security, the opportunity for private, password-protected live streaming, along with higher quality, for a fairly low cost. Lan Merrill says he can set up the TriCaster to feed to both Vimeo and Facebook, and we can pick up the Vimeo feed on ALCTO.org, so we intend to do that until people are used to the change. We are told there is a way for viewers to communicate with one another on Vimeo during a live stream -- which makes this all the more attractive. This change also eliminates my possibly-paranoid fear that some copyright/bot problem could cause the entire Ascension FB page to be suspended.

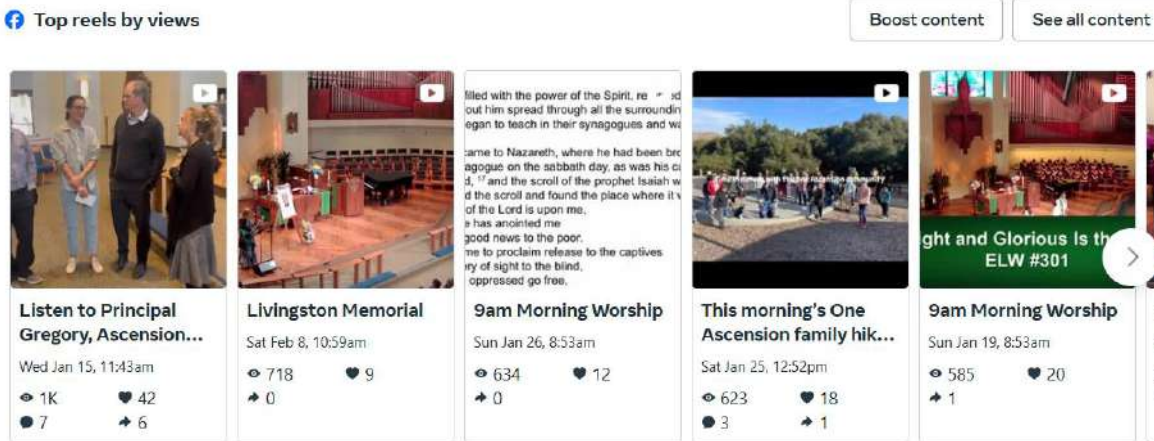
How sad that would be. Right now, I am seeing that our Ascension Facebook page had 77, 565 views in the last 28 days. It is, unlike so much on social media, a source of inspiration, faith, good news, and as we all know, it also is a great marketing tool.

Posts and reels continue to get great attention. Currently, we are running Mark Foreman's beautifully planned and prepared social media campaign for Kingdom Builders, with video and graphics. Our top five Facebook posts for February are shown below.

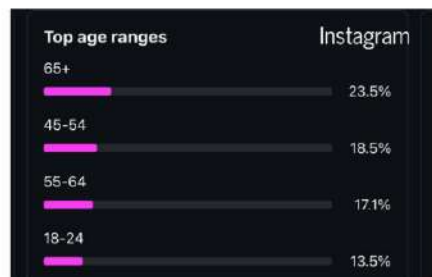
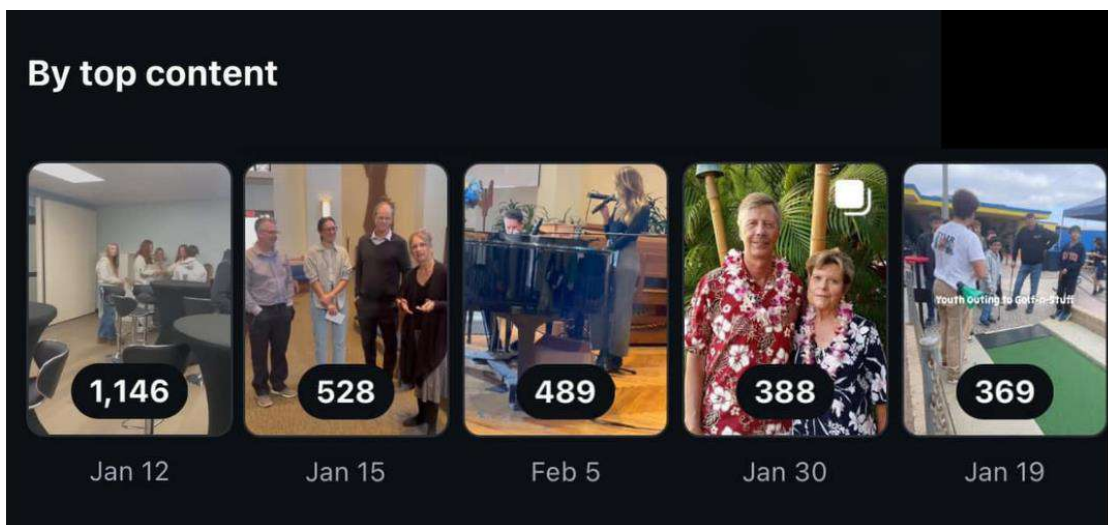
	Our Southwest California Synod's Bishop Brenda Bos announces her pause from work, after the loss of her home in the Altadena fire, and she so eloquently encourages us to take care of ourselves too when we need to pause, to pray, rest, take a walk in nature, and let God...	Views	Reach	Interactions
	Thu, Feb 6	5,142	2,196	35
	A beautiful California sunset and an invitation from Pastor Chamie to sign up for the "Bible and Blue Zones" class: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4DA8AD2-54186382-bible .	Views	Reach	Interactions
	Mon, Jan 6	1,066	988	9
	Wednesday Work Day Blessings Today Pastors Tim & Chamie went to visit long time church member Paul Trent who owns The Sofa Guy on T.O. Blvd. They got to talk with Paul about how his faith influences his work... in things like how he treats people and runs a business...	Views	Reach	Interactions
	Wed, Jan 29	2,144	881	39
	Tonight was the first monthly "Word & Wine" gathering for women. Many thanks to Lisa Burns for hosting. The theme was "connections." Small groups of women played a get-to-know-you game called "connect the dots." Pastor Chamie talked with the large group about...	Views	Reach	Interactions
	Wed, Jan 22	2,023	769	36
	Our Bishop and her spouse have lost their home in the fires. Let's lift them in prayer as we continue to pray for all of the heartbreaking loss and our hard working firefighters. As the power remains out at church, you can email staff if you have needs as they work from hom...	Views	Reach	Interactions
	Wed, Jan 8	1,679	743	94

Comm – 2.

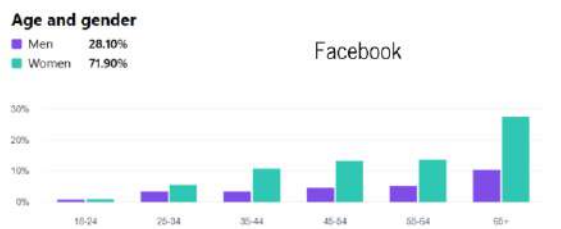
And the top five FB videos:



Below are the top five February Instagram content pieces, plus some demographics.



Gender:
73.6 %
Women
26.4 %
Men



Thanking you for your generous commitment,

In Christ,

Stacy Smith Bosco

Be the Blessing Report for February 2025

The Be the Blessing team continues to meet monthly to review the grant requests and follow-up on grants given to determine results. For the last three months joint meetings have been held with the Generosity Team in preparation for rolling out Phase 2 of Be the Blessing. For the February meeting, there were no new grant requests to consider (although one was received just after), and only the joint meeting with Generosity was held. The lone request will be considered in an electronic discussion Feb. 13th.

On February 9th, I participated with others in the adult education class to recap the results of the first year of Be the Blessing. The gist is:

- Requests reviewed – 33 (8 from school members)
- Grants approved - 26, for a total of \$26,240
- Examples include:
 - School projects, from 3-year olds to the 7th Grade Service Academy to provide support and nurture to Westlake H.S., Royal Oak Senior Living, food for needy families, care bags for foster youth, etc.
 - Local endeavors involving Harbor House, special events at existing ministries like Food Pantry and Fair Trade, enhancing Blessing of the Pets for greater community involvement, restarting the social ministry of Lunch Bunch, etc.
 - International outreach, like solar lights for Ukraine, training for farmers in Tanzania, etc.

I opined during the meeting that we were happy with the variety of and enthusiasm for the projects, but were still looking for greater involvement from members who were not already participating in congregational activities. I was substantially corrected by a couple of class participants who were very thrilled by the extent of participation by some otherwise inactive members; they felt this was making a very big difference.

I was happy to be corrected.

Respectfully submitted for the committee,

Dave Harkins

Church Council Report

Youth Director: Jennifer Avalos

Date: February 12, 2025

Confirmation Program Update

It's been a powerful start to the semester in our Confirmation Program. So far, we've been engaging deeply with the creation story in Genesis, reflecting on how God's design is woven into every part of our lives. In Genesis 1:31, we read, "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." This verse has reminded us that we are each part of God's good creation, and we have a vital role to play in His plan. Just as we nurture our growing tomato plants as part of our community garden project, so too are we called to nurture our faith, allowing it to grow and bear fruit for His kingdom.

This semester, we're excited to continue our study with new service projects, fun youth events, and meaningful Bible study sessions. We're grateful for the continued growth of our Confirmation Program, as we now have **21 students enrolled**. This expansion is a testament to how God is working in our community and drawing young people closer to Him. We are thrilled to welcome a new student to the Confirmation class, along with their family, and look forward to walking alongside them in their faith journey.

Senior Luther League Update

The Senior Luther League continues to grow, and we're excited to announce that we now have **10 students** in our high school program. This growth is a beautiful sign of God's work in the lives of our youth. As we begin the months of February and March, our Senior Luther Leaguers have decided to dive deeper into the book of Romans. They'll be reading four chapters each week, then breaking into small groups to discuss what they've learned and how they can apply it to their daily lives. These Bible study sessions have sparked meaningful conversations and

provided opportunities for fellowship and prayer. It's inspiring to see these young people build relationships, encourage one another, and grow together in faith.

The 25/25 Prayer Initiative

Our 25/25 Prayer Initiative will continue after our study of Romans in March. This initiative invites our youth to commit to dive into scripture and take time in prayer, fostering a deeper relationship with God through prayer and reflection in scripture.

Youth Events Update

- **Family Night/Pre-Winter Camp Meeting (February 23rd)**

We're thrilled to host our Confirmation Family Night on February 23rd, where families can gather in community, play games, and connect with one another. This evening will also serve as a pre-winter camp meeting for parents and students to ask any last-minute questions before heading to camp(6th-12 grade students).

- **Winter Camp at El Camino Pines (February 28th - March 2nd)**

Winter camp is just around the corner, and we are excited to share that **26 students from 6th to 12th grade are registered to attend!** We are especially grateful to have our Accession bus that will take us to El Camino Pines, where our youth will experience the beauty of God's creation, enjoy fellowship, and grow in their faith. Please keep us in your prayers as we embark on this retreat and ask that God continue to guide and bless our time together

Service Projects and Outreach

Our recent service project was an incredible reminder of the power of light in both a literal and spiritual sense. Dave Nonemacher shared his powerful testimony about the Solar Light Ministry, which has brought light to many in Ukraine who are enduring power shortages. A memorable part of the evening was a simulation that allowed our youth to experience what it feels like to be in total darkness, helping them empathize with those in Ukraine.

Our youth, ranging from 7th to 12th grade, worked together to assemble 13 solar kits as part of this meaningful project. It was a beautiful example of our youth coming together, using their hands and hearts to make a tangible impact for the Kingdom of God. We are grateful for everyone who contributed to this effort and for the opportunity to serve in this way.

Confirmation Gathering/Project Update

This past Sunday, our Confirmation students gathered for a special time of fellowship after the 10:30 AM service. After enjoying a snack, students met with their mentors to share reflections and deepen their connections. We then moved to the bungalow, where the youth planted tomato seeds as part of our community garden initiative. This hands-on activity reminded us of God's goodness in creation and His purpose for each of us.

Through this project, our youth learned about stewardship, patience, and how, like the seeds they planted, their faith has the potential to grow and bear fruit. We closed our time together with a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for His presence and the opportunity to grow in faith.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Avalos

Youth Director