

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, December 17, 2025 - 7:00pm
Bethlehem Room**

Welcome and Call to Order -John Rarick, 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 – John Rarick

Devotion – Pastor Tim

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

New Business

- Thrivent Choice requests: \$300.00 for the MT/ Meru coffee project through GMT
- \$1,000.00 for thank you gifts expressing gratitude and affirming the service of One Ascension leaders. – Pastor Tim

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmants, and Baptisms

Old Business

- No old business.

Approval of Minutes -John Rarick

- November 19, 2025 Church Council Minutes

Consent Approval of Reports to Council – John Rarick

- Pastor Tim Delkeskamp's Report
- Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp's Report
- Pastor Steve Herder's Report
- Director of Operations, Kaylee Searway
- School Board Report
- Global Ministries Team Report
- Communications Report

Information Items

- Reflections on empowering and equipping, affirming and celebrating as we lead the culture of abundance at Ascension.
- The next Church Council meeting will be held on January 21, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Closing Prayer – John Rarick

Adjournment

Offerings continue to close the gap on our Q1 shortfall, which is now only 3%.

Total Expenditures are running \$36K below budget, (of which 7K for Audit is simply a timing issue) Thus our Net Surplus to the budget is roughly only \$11K (Once audit has been paid for). The cash position remains strong and the finance staff has begun the account creation with Thrivent for the Reserve Study Funds. (approved last meeting.)

Regards,

Steve Smuck

Treasurer, ALC

Ascension Lutheran Church

Budget Summary

FYE26 YTD through November 30, 2025

	Church '25 - '26 Budget	Church '25 - '26 Budget YTD	Church '25 - '26 Actual YTD	Church '25 - '26 Variance	%
Revenues:					
Offerings (Church)	1,568,409	540,151	518,070	(22,082)	-4.1%
Other Revenues	47,280	21,304	26,020	4,716	22.1%
Total Revenues:	<u>1,615,689</u>	<u>561,455</u>	<u>544,090</u>	<u>(17,366)</u>	-3.1%
Expenditures:					
Salaries & Benefits	1,332,178	559,783	536,558	23,225	4.1%
Allocated Staff Expenses	(253,453)	(107,230)	(102,763)	(4,467)	4.2%
Benevolences	54,068	22,528	22,528	(0)	0.0%
Programs / Committees	64,179	23,951	17,833	6,118	25.5%
Administrative Expenses	111,899	38,547	30,135	8,412	21.8% \$7.6k Audit timing
Property Maintenance	100,242	54,491	53,275	1,216	2.2%
Utilities & Insurance	108,418	50,274	48,439	1,835	3.7%
Operating Expenditures	<u>1,517,531</u>	<u>642,344</u>	<u>606,005</u>	<u>36,338</u>	5.7%
Debt Service	99,675	41,531	41,531	-	0.0%
Total Expenditures	<u>1,617,206</u>	<u>683,875</u>	<u>647,537</u>	<u>36,338</u>	5.3%
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(1,517)</u>	<u>(122,420)</u>	<u>(103,447)</u>	<u>18,973</u>	
Prior Year Surplus Spend *	-	67,966	-		
Reserve spend	-	-	-		

*\$30k ERC for Sanctuary Air Project, \$38k PPP for project overage (\$6.5k), replace other Sanctuary Air Units (\$31.5k)

New Members & Baptisms Report

December 2025

Baptisms for November

No Baptisms

New Members for November

Sara Allen

Jeff Allen

Eddie Brown

Fay Gardner

Sandra Gibson

Dan Hanevich

Billy Kirsch

Kierstyn Lambert

Robby Lambert

Sharon Langenbeck

Loren Lemmerman

Jesse Masek

Petra Rick

Georgette Weihrauch

Justine Wienken

Ascension Lutheran Church
Church Council and School Board Joint Meeting
Wednesday, October 15, 2025 – 5:30pm
Founder's Hall

Dinner and Fellowship - Pastor Tim Delkeskamp to lead devotion and prayer

Present Church Council: John Rarick, Creighton Van Horn, Carrie Leonard, Steve Smuck, Crystal Bryant, Ethan East, Anita Cohen (present for Al Baker), Anna Woodward (via Zoom).

Not Present: Michael Feltner

Present School Board: Ashley Steere, Jeannette McNulty, Matt Hurdle, Chris Poveromo

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

Call to Order and Welcome – John Rarick, Council President

The Joint meeting of Ascension Lutheran Church Council and School Board was called to order at 5:50 PM.

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

Motto: Invite – Grow - Serve

Approval of Agenda – John Rarick

It was moved (Ashley) and seconded (Ethan) than unanimously passed to approve the agenda.

New Business:

None

Old Business:

Update on the development of a campus alcohol policy – Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations

- Policy highlights include:
 - Beer & Wine may be served on campus for events and programs with an approved application
 - Service will be from an approved caterer and under the provision of joint alcohol insurance policy
 - One security officer required per 100 attendees

- Retail license and insurance are required if alcohol is sold (ie, cash bar)
- Careful delivery and storage
- Alcohol service ends 30 minutes before end of event
- Beverages and containers will be removed from campus at the end of the event.
- Discussion:
 - How do we handle situations like Fair Trade tastings, or Women & Wine events on campus? Details about insurance coverage for small groups, or ALC ministries TBD.
 - It has been suggested that one security provider be approved and used for all events, to ensure consistency and peace of mind.
 - Determine suggested & approved catering companies because of insurance and who has been properly vetted. How do we handle other ideas like Food Trucks, etc.?
- Possible vote at November 2025 Council meeting

Reserve study funds and update on Employee Retention Credit (ERTC) funds

- Presented by executive team (Pastor Tim, Pastor Chamie, Kaylee, Rich & Jenni)
- Having a reserve fund will allow a stable financial future, so a study was conducted to determine needs on a 14+ year timeline.
- Seven options for use of funds were presented (Options A, B, B+, C, C+, D, C+) as consideration.
- To date, \$677,623 in funds have been received as ERTC (Employee Retention Tax Credit).
 - Some proposed use of the funds include:
 - 1- Adding to a reserve fund
 - 2- Proceed with covering immediate projects (update exterior restrooms, patio resurfacing and new AC for sanctuary)
 - 3- Establish employee retention programs

Discussion:

- An employee retention program (as presented in one of the Options) has not yet been decided, but some ideas include 401K contributions, increase or update benefits program.
- Can the reserve funds be put into a long term fund with Thrivent or an investment program to prepare for projects that will be 10+ years out?
- Lots of time, thoughts and prayers have been considered on the options presented. The Options will be considered at November School Board, with an endorsement to Council. Council will vote at the November 2025 meeting.

State of the School

Ascension School – Rich Gregory, Principal

- Working to develop 5-10 year strategic plan to support a thriving school (9 bullet points that are part of the plan for consideration)
- 187 students currently enrolled
- 2 kindergarten classes this year, but now need space for growing school
- Working on financial projections, doing research (community, parents, staff)
- It is projected that in 1-3 years, the school will need additional classrooms, and physical updates.

Early Childhood Center – Jenni McCoy, Director

- 190 students currently enrolled (7 preschool classes, 3 infant and 4 Parent/Me classes)
- 34 staff members
 - Challenges:
 - public school TK is offered free
 - Tuition rates
 - Retention of quality teachers
 - Incredible positives for future success:
 - State of the art facility
 - Excellent staff
 - Reputation for being a high quality program
 - Flexibility in ages and classroom
 - Nature Explore Certification

Closing Prayer - Rich Gregory

Adjournment – John Rarick

It was moved (Carrie) and seconded (CVH) then unanimously passed to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 PM.

Information Item - Next joint meeting hosted by the School Board is TBD.



Pastor Tim's Ministry Report- December 2025

Grace and peace my sisters and brothers in Christ, here, gratefully submitted, is my report for the wonderful month of December:

As you can imagine, in December my job gets very focused on the events of Advent and Christmas. This year I have a wonderful partner in Pastor Chamie, and we are loving the planning of The Hanging of the Green [HOG], Advent worship and Christmas Eve services. As I write this, we are just coming off our HOG weekend and the feedback that we are receiving is that it was a wonderful event. From my perspective it certainly was. We have a wonderful group of amazing musicians and vocalists who genuinely get excited about it. We had a wonderful turn out of youth and adult volunteers to make lefse and prepare the greens on Saturday morning. At the event itself, the school community was a wonderfully present as we incorporated games, food, letter writing to soldiers and friends of field workers, selling lefse for the youth fundraiser and finally singing and celebrating together. I am so grateful to all who came out and helped make it happen. A special thanks to Lauren Godfrey in her leadership of the “green hanging” efforts.

Apart from HOG, there are many Advent/Christmas activities to plan. This includes extra advertising. This year, once again, we will be challenging the congregation to invite someone to join us for Christmas eve events. I am grateful to Stacy who is keeping all our publicity under her purview. We will advertise in the local newspaper, online ads and print invitations for our congregation to invite others to come with them. Additionally, this year we are noticing traction on the “Reels” (short videos that we are putting on Facebook and Instagram) that we are producing so we will be deliberate about doing more.

Last month I told you about Jenni McCoy's plans to move to TX and subsequently our need to start an ECC director search. That search has begun in earnest. I am happy with the composition of the 8-person search team which consists of Kaylee, Pastor Chamie, the 2 administrators of the ECC Karen and Britanni, Kyle Jones, next year's school board president, an ECC teacher and an ECC parent. All of course are being led by Dr. Gregory. They have put a plan together and are currently in the process of receiving resumes and interviewing candidates. Please continue to pray for this process.

For the new year we are going to try something new with Men's Ministry. We currently have several Bible studies available for men to attend. We are going to combine 2 of them, the Bible's and Brew and my Tuesday evening small group, to make a monthly event that is open to a wider group of men.

The hope is to address a few problems that we are currently having. 1st is giving men a place to go. Our leaders have observed that men, especially school dads, are looking for a place to connect in community. We designed Bibles and Brews to make that happen, but it has been hard to do at Tarantula Hill because of the noise and the crowds. So, we are going to make the monthly event happen at Ascension on Wednesday evenings. The goal is building Christian community by inviting, growing in faith and fellowship. I am excited about doing this. Please pray that we find the leadership to help make it happen, that men find community at this event and that we grow.

I have been working with Terry Shephersky, our head usher and a team of people to increase our safety and security during weekend worship. Some of actions we are taking are usher training for safety/security events, writing a \$200k grant to the state to provide a new door lock system and security equipment for our team, putting together a safety team that consist of 8 people who would each take a monthly turn at being present to patrol at weekend worship in a safety/security capacity. This safety team would include active duty and retired law enforcement officers who are trained and licensed for concealed carry, training on how to deescalate tense situation, etc. Ascension needs to be a safe place that welcomes all who seek a place to worship God, and we are committed to providing that safety.

Finally, I continue to plan my upcoming Sabbatical (April 6th through July 7th, 2026). I am grateful for the funding that is coming in from the budget contributions over the years and the grant that I have received from the Foundation. At this point, the plan is to focus on rest, renewal, and intentional growth as a senior pastor. Chamie and I will begin with a two-week drive up the West Coast, followed later by a father-son surfing trip with Jude, a rock-climbing trip with Dave, Hannah, and Tim, and time in Arizona with Aidan. When I am home, my days will follow a simple rhythm of early morning prayer and study, midmorning hands-on projects, and afternoon exercise, leaving evenings for rest and reading. My study focus will center on strengthening Ascension's identity as a "large-tent" congregation, developing a deeper leadership culture, and growing as a visionary leader through reading, journaling, and visiting other churches. I will also complete a few long-delayed house projects and review my retirement planning. My hope is to return refreshed, grounded, and better equipped to lead Ascension into the next season of ministry.

In his service,

Pastor Tim

Pastor Chamie's November 2025 Council Report (and through Dec 7, Hanging of the Greens)

Children, Youth, & Family



Children

Sunday school finished their 6-week “Books of the Bible: Old Testament” unit on Nov 16. Their service project focus for that unit was a food drive for our food pantry. The Sunday school children got to visit the food pantry the first weekend of November. Chris Daliedan and Lisa Burns did a great job teaching the children about how the food pantry works.



I love how Chris knelt down on the level of our youngest Sunday school class to teach them about the food pantry.

The children were so excited to carry food items down to the food pantry. It was heartwarming to watch!

Jenelle Smith and I met with the Sunday school teachers in November to look ahead to our Advent series as well as our service project of giving children piggy banks and coloring books from God's Global Barnyard and inviting them to give to Gifts of Hope.

Regular meetings with our volunteer children's ministry staff are a new and important piece that Jenelle and I implementing. Pastor Tim is emphasizing “equipping and encouraging” leadership. We want to grow at better equipping and encouraging our Sunday school teachers. We want to make sure that everyone is trained, understands the vision, and is working in sync with one another. We were grateful for great meetings and conversations with our teachers.

We added another person to our nursery care team. Nursery numbers have been higher in the last month. When the nursery was first brought back through a grant last year, we had Sundays when we would only have 0 to 2 children in the nursery for the entire morning (note that the nursery is open at



Rachel Bowen holds up the God's Global Barnyard coloring book as she teaches the older Sunday school students.

both the 9:00 and 10:30 services). In this last month, though, we have have had as many as five children in the nursery service during one service alone.

Jenelle is doing a phenomenal job as Director of Children's Ministry, including doing fantastic work in organizing the bounce house and silly seasonal games for the children for the "food and festivities" part of Hanging of the Greens.

Youth



A group of 8th graders after packing some of the birthday bags for children.

Confirmation is going strong. In November, the confirmation youth packed 30 birthday bags for the organization "Support for the Kids." They hadn't yet used their Kingdom Builder money they received last spring, so it was decided to use it to get cake mix, frosting, candles, and decorations and package these to give to school teachers who will then get them to children in low income schools in Fillmore and Oxnard. We will do birthday bags again 2-3 times in the latter half of the confirmation year as we continue to partner with "Support for the Kids." This non-profit is led by church member Cindy Niner.

One Sunday, each grade of confirmation students learned a Bible story in skit form and then performed them for one another. Then on November 30, the first Sunday of Advent, the confirmands split into groups with the challenge to gift wrap someone in their group. There was a lot of laughter with this. We hope they remember the point: they are all gifts from God and called to be a gift to the world.



Youth intern Kaya leading her 6th graders as they present their Bible skit to the larger group.



Gigi gets gift wrapped by some of the girls.



Matthew gets gift wrapped by some of the boys.

Spencer Gottmer is doing an awesome job as our High School Youth Director. He really rallied the troops for lefse-making which is a fundraiser for winter camp (that both middle school and high school can attend) and the summer trip (which is just high school). We had 32 youth and 13 adults who helped with lefse. We are particularly thankful for Cori Hengst and Don & Vicki Weeks who were adult leaders for both days of lefse-making. The line to get warm lefse on the night of Hanging of the Greens was a long one! By the end of Sunday, December 7, there were only 6 bags of lefse remaining and the youth had cleared nearly \$2000 in fundraising.



Interfacing with the Schools



Jenelle and I go to the ECC on Mondays to read to the non-nappers. We absolutely love it. In the photo to the left, little Julia is laying on my lap while Ms. Jenelle reads the group a story. Their attention span isn't long, but their cuteness and sweetness is enormous.

I am on the team that is interviewing candidates for the ECC Director position. I have loved working with Jenni McCoy. It is going to be hard to say goodbye to her as she moves to be close to her daughters and new grand baby who will be born this spring. We know how important this position is for One Ascension as a whole, so I feel grateful to be a member of the very strong hiring team, under the leadership of Principal Gregory, as we go through this hiring process.

It was very exciting to meet with Jessica Placas-Hengst and the summer "Camp Discovery" team. In the summer of 2026, Ascension's "staycation" will no longer be just for school students, but will be open to church families as well

as people in the community. Jessica is a brilliant leader of this and I love the vision she has cast. I am happy to partner with her in continuing to bring weekly chapel to summer camp. We will also have a "VBS-like" week that will be primarily led by the church June 29 to July 2.

Worship

I was particularly moved by our All Saints Weekend worship services. I preached two weekends in November, including the first weekend of Advent. November included meetings with worship leaders in preparing for Advent, Hanging of the Greens, and Christmas. I heard so much positive

feedback about the Hanging of the Greens service. We are truly blessed at Ascension with so many talented musicians.

In November, I met with Matt Cahill as he had looked for a new bell choir piece similar to last year's Christmas Eve piece that included youth narration interwoven with the bell choir. But he couldn't find a new piece. We talked about different possibilities, like maybe we could do the same script? I felt the Spirit tug and decided to write a new script and then suggest music to Matt to which he replied "Yes, this is doable!" I look forward to rehearsing with our youth cast in December and getting children to be part of the live nativity at the 3:00 and 5:00 Christmas Eve services.

After the 6:00 worship service on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, Nancy Lee and I hosted a pie and coffee social time. In terms of food and fellowship, this always happens after the Sunday morning worship services. But it is not a part of the weekly 6:00 service. That being said, Nancy Lee and I are trying to incorporate more fellowship nights. People seemed so grateful to be able to sit together and eat pie and share in conversation. We noted that there were several people who were feeling lonely as the holidays were nearing, so doing this social time was important.



Volunteers serving pie at the fellowship time following the 6:00 service on the weekend before Thanksgiving.

Other



Tim & I with youth intern Kaya at the CLU Christmas concert.

Women's Ministry. I enjoy popping in on Monday mornings to visit the various small groups that participate in the Monday Women's Bible Study. I attended the MMWBS November leadership meeting to prepare for the Advent/Christmas large group brunch. In terms of "Word & Wine," it is on hiatus until January.

Pastoral Care. As always, there is a lot of pastoral care. We pastors split the duties. We all had an opportunity to visit Brenda Heinrich in the hospital. It was a shock to have her die so quickly. Pastor Steve did a stellar job organizing her memorial and preaching. As her service was about to begin, I was sitting between Pastor Steve and Pastor Tim and feeling very grateful to be serving Ascension with both of them and to be together to do the memorial.

Connecting to CLU - and Supporting Our Youth Interns!

Tim and I attended the CLU Christmas concert. Ascension's youth intern Kaya Anderson sings in the choir - and in the Regals Quartet! It was a delight getting to listen to her sing as well as Monique Nunes who soloed with the choir in one of the songs. I also want to do a shout-out to our other youth intern James Halvorson who completed his EMT course work! It is great to have his safety eye and training upon our youth ministry program!



Photo Directory. I am excited that we are working on a photo directory. Kaylee Searway consulted with Carolyn Bahr to see if Carolyn could create this internally for us. My job has been to help get the word out and work with Spencer in scheduling our youth photographers. It was our youth who suggested getting a photo backdrop. Ella Festerling started taking photos the first weekend of December. We hope to have many people take or send in photos by the end of December. This will help us build community in 2026!

Thank You, Church Council, for helping serve dinner at Hanging of the Greens! It was a night that brought a lot of comfort and joy! We have 20 blankets to donate to Project Linus! And 32 ornaments were taken from the Angel Trees during the Hanging of the Green service - so now these children and families will be blessed with gifts from our Ascension community!



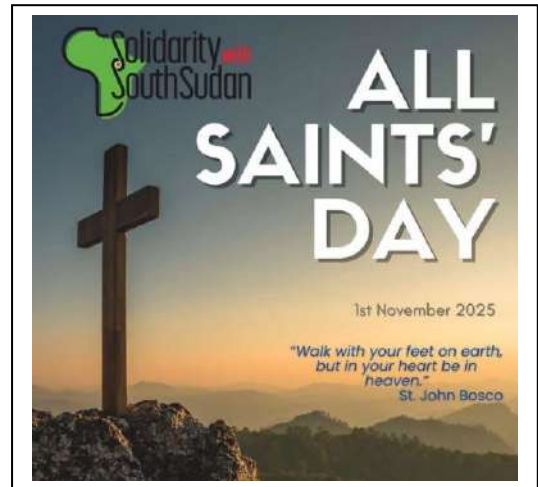
Blessed Advent!

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Chamie

Church Council Report – Dec. 1, 2025 – Pastor Steve Herder

This year's All Saints' Day (Nov. 1) and All Saints' Sunday took on extra significance for many of us as we were remembering loved ones who have died. The biggest part of my month was leading three memorial services for three of our dear friends (each one very active in our ministries in their time with us), a service for: Jean Renta on Nov. 8; Margaret Skinner on Nov. 17; and Brenda Heinrich on Nov. 20. To each of their families, and to all of us as friends and as partners in the mission of Jesus Christ, may the Spirit's peace and comfort help us.

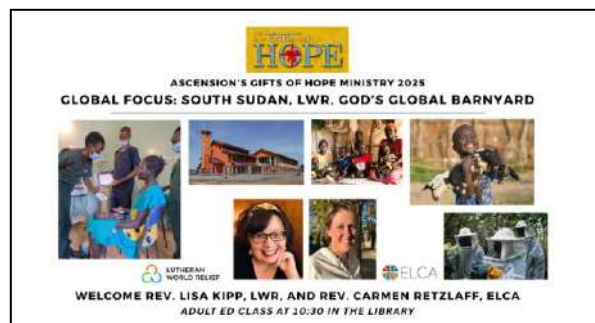
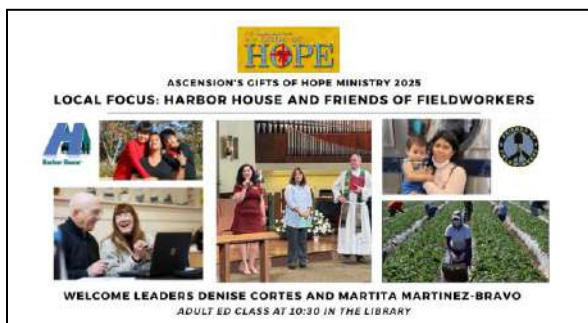


The day of Brenda's service I visited Chuck Heinrich at the senior living home that Brenda had moved him to on September 1. Because of his dementia, we are advised not to tell him about his wife's death, and he did not come to her memorial service. Chuck allowed me to take this photo of him, and I shared it at the service later that day. Thankfully Chuck is at peace and well taken care of at his new place. Thanks for your prayers.

Each month I visit a variety of senior living places. If you'd ever like to visit with me about them, I invite you to do so. I lead a simple worship service, called a Christian Life Hour, at two of them, University Village Oak View and Hillcrest Royale. Norm and friends lead them at Sunrise, Royale Oaks, Atria Grand Oaks, and Sage Mountain. Here are two photos, one from Atria and one from Oak View where Janet and Joel Weber, and Jeff Specks, helped me with the recent one.

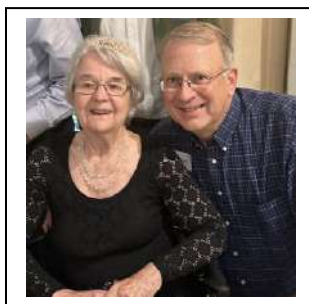


If you'd like to be in our email prayer group, please tell our leader, Linda Morrow. If you have prayer requests for our newsletter prayer list, email Stacy Bosco. Contact info for both leaders may be received from our church office, 805-495-0406.



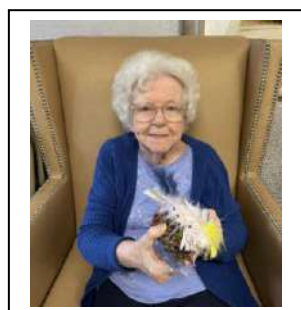
Every November since 2002 our Global Ministries Team has been lifting up our Gifts of Hope to help people and ministry partners locally and in Africa. These three graphics summarize our projects and gifts received as of Nov. 20. Thank you to all of you who are giving people hope in these ways. Gifts continue to be received through Christmas. May each of us be led by the Spirit to participate in some way. See the history of GOH in Africa page.

On Nov. 9, Pastors Tim and Chamie, Julie and I, with friends, had a grand celebration for Edith Ott's 90th birthday! Thanks to her family for organizing that fun evening.



One my favorite events at CLU each year is their Center for Global Engagement's World Fair, this one on Nov. 14. We love supporting our friends who are international students there. If any of you would like to help us get their parents here for their graduation in May, let's talk.

Thanks to our Early Childhood Center and our Day School's homemade gifts to our seniors this month. We delivered both pinecone turkeys and pumpkins topped with succulent plants! Thanks too to Dee Ruwe's donations of prayer shawls, to Valerie Krum for her caring cards, and to



Barbara Krum for her caring visits. Here's a photo of Helen Craig with her new prayer shawl. Thanks everyone for your care for our seniors!



GIFTS OF HOPE		as of 11/20	\$54,307.68	43
Reconciliation Church				
vocational training	\$50		\$450.00	4
stock a health clinic	\$75		\$1,250.00	10
support missionary	\$100		\$1,650.00	5
General Gift			\$5,275.00	10
Juba Medical Center				
			\$0.00	0
LWR South Sudan:				
vacination: child	\$30		\$100.00	4
feed a child	\$50		\$525.00	9
solar panels	\$200		\$1,650.00	3
General Gift			\$5,805.00	9
ELCA World Hunger Appeal				
10 Chicks	\$10		\$140.00	5
Honey Bee Hive	\$20		\$200.00	6
Piglet	\$30		\$240.00	6
Goat	\$50		\$600.00	7
Fish Community	\$250		\$500.00	1
Family Farm	\$715		\$3,575.00	2
General World Hunger			\$1,985.00	9
Environmental Care				
	\$910		\$7,140.00	12
Friends of Fieldworkers				
Baby love	\$25		\$75.00	3
Laundry Love Program	\$50		\$250.00	4
Emergency Relief	\$100		\$2,800.00	5
Scholarships	\$200		\$3,200.00	3
General Gift			\$5,880.00	15
Harbor House				
Utility bill help	\$25		\$100.00	3
Groceries	\$50		\$700.00	7
Mental health counseling	\$75		\$225.00	4
Car repair or rental ass.	\$200		\$0.00	0
General Gift			\$7,230.00	16
Other Gift				
			\$2,762.68	2



In this photo of our Community Concerns Team volunteers prepping food for the ministry with Harbor House, Dave Peterson is holding a new piece of artwork, by Michael Adams, that I bought this month. It's a powerful image of Jesus surrounded by people whom he calls us to care for in Matthew 25. We invite you to



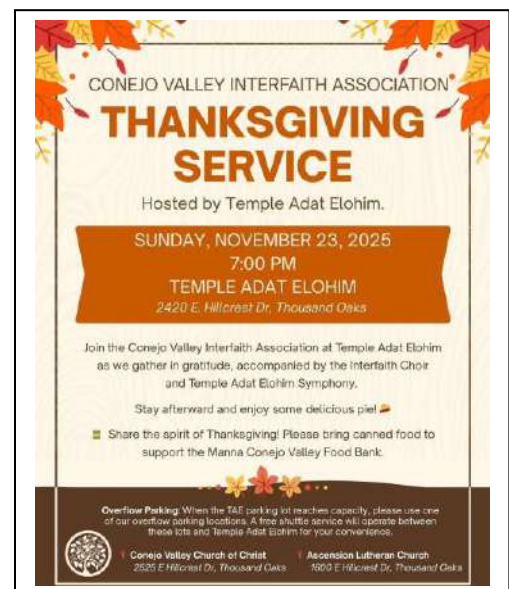
join in the joy-filled ministries of Community Concerns and our food pantry, or Global Ministries Team and fair trade (etc.), or our Senior Ministries Team visitation, CLHs, transportation or minor maintenance ministries.



On Nov. 18, for our Tuesday staff meeting, Louise and Paul Evenson, on behalf of our GMT, brought a delicious lunch for us to thank us for each staff person's part in helping with our Lutheran World Relief kits and quilts. Thanks, Louise and Paul!

Our friends down the street at Temple Adat Elohim hosted our interfaith Thanksgiving worship service and they did a fabulous job doing so. I represented us by doing a New Testament reading. The service had standing room only. Consider coming to it next year. Who knows, we may be hosting!?

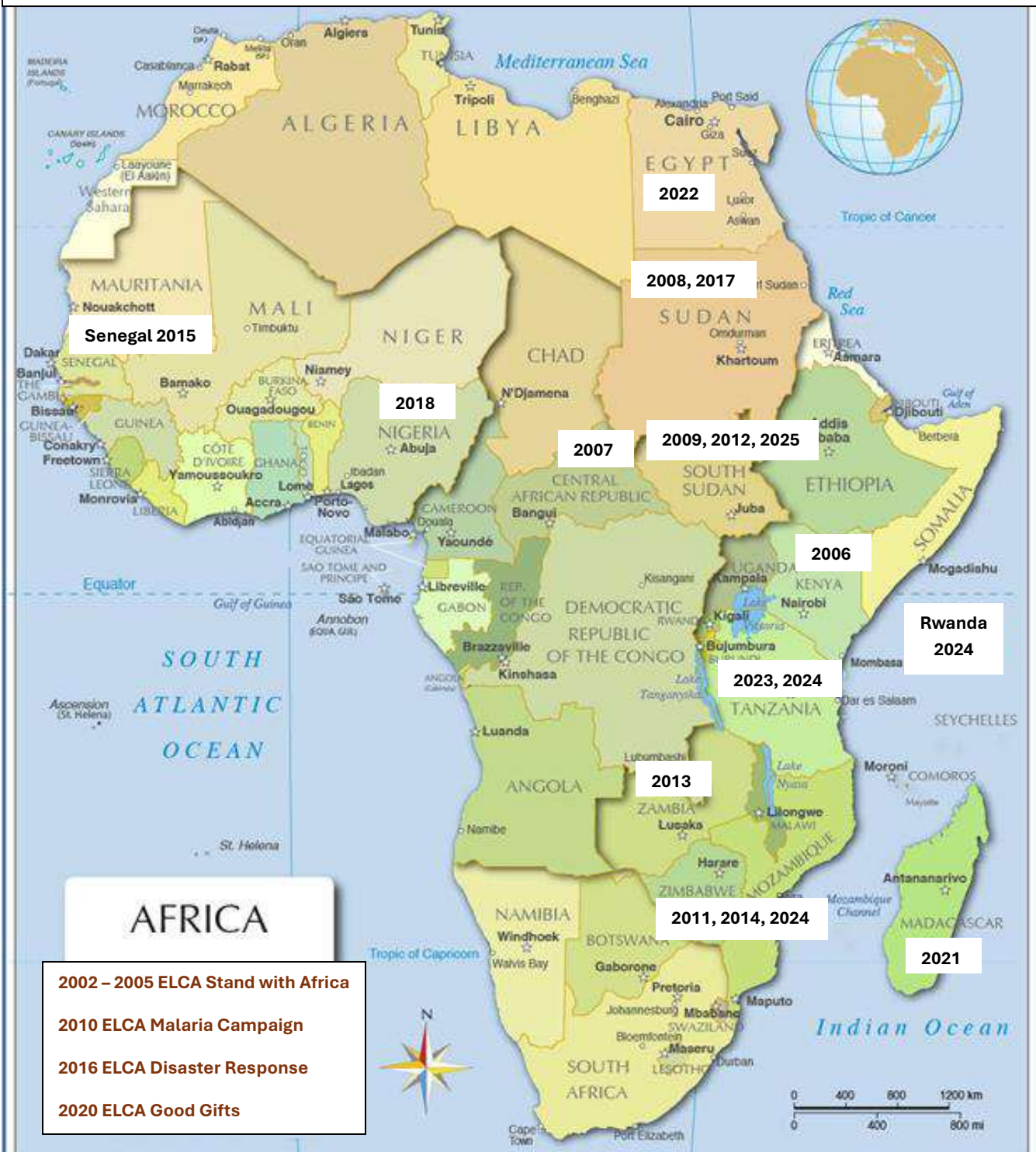
Thanks to our adult education teachers this month: Grant Pederson on legacy planning, Dr. Martita Bravo-Martinez from Friends of Fieldworkers, Denise Cortes from Harbor House, Pastor Carmen Retzlaff from ELCA Hunger, Pastor Lisa Kipp from LWR, Pastor Paul Gravrock on hymns, and Cathi Peterson on Advent in the Moravian church, and to our leader, Dr. Carol Bartell.



Julie and I enjoyed our five days, Nov. 24-28, with Natalie at her apartment in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY. Not many of us can say we took prepared dishes for our Thanksgiving meal to a friend's home, via subway into Manhattan. A fun adventure! One serendipitous surprise while there was Julie and me getting to experience a Psalms exhibit at the Morgan Library. I was in heaven! <https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/sing-a-new-song>

A very blessed Advent everyone and then 12 Days of Christmas! Thanks for your prayers. You are in ours. See the December "365 in '25" prayer calendar at the end of this report.

**Ascension's partnership with our ELCA, LWF, and LWR has given
Gifts of Hope for our siblings in Christ across Africa since 2002**



Since 2002 we have accompanied companion churches across Africa, listened to them, learned from them, prayed together, shared over \$1 million to support their ministries, and together advocated for the flourishing of God's people and God's creation.

alcto.org elca.org lutheranworld.org lwr.org

December 2025



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

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

Ascension Lutheran Church, School and Foundation
Thousand Oaks, CA

Praying this prayer each day, from Psalm 145: 20-21

“The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

This new church year
we focus on
**Matthew's Gospel of
Jesus Christ**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Our Prayer Chapel is open before and after worship services	1 Pray for our December benevolence, Jubilee USA Network <i>Luke 4:18-19</i>	2 Our ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry <i>1st Samuel 12:23-24</i>	3 Global Ministries Team meeting 4 pm led by Bev Selle <i>Psalm 117</i>	4 Happy Birthday, Diane Kusnierek! <i>Psalm 118:21-29</i>	5 Prayers for sign ups for our blood drive on December 14th <i>Isaiah 2:1-5</i>	6 Prayers for our Confirmation & High School ministries each Sunday <i>Luke 1:57-67, 76</i>
7 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> Hanging of the Greens Festivities 5 pm Service 6 pm <i>Matthew 3:1-11</i>	8 Our Stephen Ministers & leader, Norm Guetschoff <i>Galatians 6:2</i>	9 Prayers for our Early Childhood Center <i>Mark 10:13-16</i>	10 Prayers for all of our Life Groups & Bible studies <i>Romans 15:4-6</i>	11 ELCA World Hunger ministries <i>Luke 10:36-37</i>	12 School Christmas Show - 6 pm <i>Micah 5:2-5a</i>	13 Fair Trade Lane sales this weekend <i>Psalm 146</i>
14 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> Compassionate Friends Service 7 pm <i>Luke 1:26-38</i>	15 Happy Birthday, Wyant Morton! <i>Zephaniah 3:17</i>	16 Prayers for our TK-8 th grade school <i>Proverbs 3:5-6</i>	17 Prayers for our church staff in this full month <i>Matthew 13:51-52</i>	18 Global Refuge ministries near & far <i>Leviticus 19:32-37</i>	19 Thankful for Bob Tokin for leading our SAMs Tram, and for all our drivers <i>Colossians 3:23-24</i>	20 Cowboy Christmas 6 pm <i>Isaiah 7:10-16</i>
21 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i> Choir Cantata 9 am Caroling 3-5 pm <i>Matthew 1:18-25</i>	22 The ministry of our Outreach Team <i>Matthew 28:16-20</i>	23 Prayers for all worship leaders & all guests who come tomorrow <i>Matthew 9:35-38</i>	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> Worship Services 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11 pm <i>Luke 2:1-20</i>	25 <i>Christmas</i> Celebrate and share the gift of our Savior Jesus Worship @ 9 am <i>Isaiah 52:7-10</i>	26 Thankful for all our children's and youth ministry leaders <i>Isaiah 63:7-9</i>	27 Happy Birthday, Pastor Tim! <i>Psalm 147:12-20</i>
28 Thankful for all the volunteer ministries of our retired pastors <i>Matthew 2:13-23</i>	29 Prayers for all our youth and young adults <i>1st Timothy 4:12</i>	30 Prayers for our ELCA missionaries in Tanzania & Madagascar <i>Acts 1:8</i>	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i> Prayers for the Holy Spirit to guide us into the New Year <i>Romans 8:26-28</i>		alcto.org	19-37

Church Council Report
Kaylee Searway

December 17, 2025
Director of Operations

Attendance

I've previously reported our 6-week average to be tracking at 402. We are now at 422 per weekend!

Usher Count Sheet 2025							
Date:		Sat.	9:00	10:30	MISC	Total	
11/2/2025		49	329	77		455	
11/9/2025		42	307	88		437	
11/16/2025		34	268	108		410	
11/23/2025		63	265	106		434	pie social Saturday night
11/30/2025		43	270	112		425	
12/7/2025		39	262	75		376	

Directory

The only credit I can take for this wonderful project getting off the ground is speaking to my fellow executives about my working geniuses and working frustrations. We used our common language around Working Genius to ascertain that this specific project was hitting all my buttons of not enjoying the invention process of creating a new process and not wanting to galvanize people to be excited about the project. My amazing teammate Pastor Chamie was able to take this project on without it feeling like is an immense amount of work. That is utilizing Working Genius at its finest! Something I dreaded spending time on was life-giving to Pastor Chamie, and allowed her to use her phenomenal writing skills and enable some very talented youth to run with the project. Ella Festerling ordered a backdrop, procured a good camera, and took pictures in the narthex between services on Sunday. Ella took pictures and gathered updated contact info for more than 40 families the first weekend! My tenacious admin team will be wonderful at taking the information from Ella and organizing it into a fabulous directory in the new year.

Patio Wrap

I am so excited to have this project started! We were aiming for December 1st, but were not able to start until December 8th because our contractor had to wrap up some other projects delayed by weather. We're still aiming for "straight paths" by Christmas Eve! I acknowledge that this project will be inconvenient for a week or two until it is complete. It's a high traffic area and we are a community blessed to have allot going on every time period of the year, not just advent. I thank you in advance for your patience and creative regrouping around the next couple of weeks.

Sanctuary Roof

My November report included that Channel Islands Roofing had sealed three areas we thought would leak again in the last rains. Two of the areas held, but the leak over the large doors in the west narthex persisted. It's not what Jeff and I expected, but it is progress. They will come out again before next rain and apply a seal coat and red grit to match existing roof in areas where the roof is still leaking. The contractor has no intention of charging for this service as they are attempting to make good on roof even though it is out of warranty.

Admin

Thank you for your approval on the alcohol policy and updating the fundraising policy last month. I am working to update the Policies and Procedures manual on our website. It's not a terribly difficult project, but I had some technical difficulties when I accidentally erased some files... IT was able to help me get them back, but it ate up some time, which has caused a delay.

Carolyn, Stacy, and Diane have been hard at work on holiday related tasks, including the Advent Devotional! Dan Lavera did an amazing job editing, and Carolyn has copied and distributed more than 270 copies! Stacy has designed Christmas invites and coordinated all of our Christmas advertising campaigns. Diane has been incredibly helpful in hiring a new hospitality coordinator. She screened resumes, conducted interviews, and helped recruit our own Shannon Lomeli! Shannon has shown her gift of hospitality in organizing soup suppers and other fellowship events over the years.

Folding Machine

After several repair attempts we ended up purchasing a new folding machine with our technology budget. We were able to purchase the modern equivalent of the Duplo DF-915, which is called the Duplo DF-970 for just \$5,000. We were able to stay in budget after assessing that we did not need to replace a couple of computers that we had anticipated needing this year. We've generally replaced a couple of machines each year so that they don't all become obsolete at once, and we are in a good cadence.

Hiring Committee for ECC Director

Our search team has commenced! We met as a team to review the job description and our objectives in hiring for this position. Pastor Tim kicked us off with some good vision setting, Rich described the process we will follow, and I reviewed some interview basics with the team. We interviewed a couple of candidates just a couple of days later, with more to come in the next week or two. It's time consuming to be involved in the hiring process, and the interviews meetings don't always occur inside of traditional workday hours, but I have high expectations of this position and I'm excited by the applicant pool we have.

Culture Development and Running Good Meetings

It's a really busy time of year, but I didn't want to lose momentum on the good work we are doing with Working Genius and relating it to Patrick Lencioni's early work Five Disfunctions of a Team. After a great session learning about my admin team last month I really wanted to spend some time thinking about our team dynamics, and having more efficient and engaging meetings. Pastor Tim encouraged me to take two days away from the office and invest in this important culture building work. I spent the time at Serra Retreat Center in Malibu, and it will pay dividends in the time I was able to spend on it. I spent time reflecting on our specific team's map of geniuses and frustrations, noting tendencies I see in our meetings and potential improvements that we could make. I'd like to finish the assessments with my maintenance team, and discuss all of my findings with Pastor Tim and Carrie Leonard before I am ready to share them further, but I was productive.

Toward the end of the second day it came to me that it would help the executive team to understand the link between Five Disfunctions and Working Genius. It seems quite obvious to me, but then Galvanizing is not a part of the work process that I enjoy! I leaned into that discomfort; can I utilize AI to do portions of the job that are important, but not life giving to me? I asked AI for a compelling argument linking Working Genius and Five Disfunctions. It popped out a summary, which I then adapted to a one-page info sheet and a PowerPoint. Yes, in fact, I found that I could use AI to supplement my work. I've attached an example.

Finance

Last month the School Board approved our team's proposed increase for the fall of 2026 at the ECC. We are re-working some TK-8 tuition projections to see if we can implement a further increase into the teacher matrix. They are a wise group asking good questions. I hope by the time we meet in December we will have tuition decisions approved and an updated teacher matrix. It might seem strange to be spending so much time focused on 2026-2027 while we are deep in Christmas preparation, but it does really set us up well for the budget process in the spring.

Mike and Camryn have closed November and provided church results to Steve Smuck, who will likely share more in his treasurer's report. We'll have school results ready Friday morning on the 12th before their Board meeting on the 15th.

One item we did a much better job planning for this year was staff bonuses at Christmas. There was money set aside in each budget and favorable October results at each entity, so I worked with the pastors, Rich, and Jenni to come up with a distribution plan. Camryn will be adding a couple of extra payroll runs so they pay out within the calendar year.

Security Grant

As an interesting and hopefully fruitful side quest, I spent the better part of two days applying for a security grant for our campus. Pastor Tim was approached by a church member that had successfully applied for the grant at a local private school five years ago. She told us about the opportunity, and shared her application and threat assessment documents with us. The grant is distributed by the California State Nonprofit Security Grant Program (CSNSGP). Upon reviewing the 27 page Request for Proposal (RFP), I discerned that many different people could work on it, but combining my knowledge of the property and its history with Rob Steere's knowledge of security, threat assessments, and workable solutions seemed like the most efficient way to meet the grant application deadline of December 12, 2025. Pastor Tim has been working with a committee of security minded volunteers, and had a good vision of what the next phase of security upgrades for Ascension could be. We submitted a request for \$213,450 based primarily on doors and access control. We have exterior classroom doors that need to be replaced. We have a number of common area keys that have been distributed and misplaced over the many years of Ascension's history. We would like to rekey all of our locks away from the common area lock, and utilize a key card system for the sanctuary and Founder's Hall. We would have the added benefit of being able to track and to disable key cards or fobs when necessary. We would also like to add 3-5 more cameras and upgrade more of the parking lot lights for increased visibility. We submitted the 9 page application, 8 page vulnerability assessment worksheet, and 5 other supporting documents on December 5, 2025. We hope to hear that we will be awarded the grant by March 31, 2026. Prayers appreciated!

Thank you,

Kaylee Searway

Director of Operations

Working Genius + Five Dysfunctions of a Team

How Two Powerful Frameworks Create Strong, Healthy, High-Performing Teams

Why These Models Matter Together

Patrick Lencioni's **Working Genius** identifies how each person naturally contributes to work. His **Five Dysfunctions of a Team** diagnoses what gets in the way of healthy teamwork. When used together, they provide both the *relational foundation* and the *practical tools* teams need to function at their best.

1. Absence of Trust → Built Through Genius Awareness

Working Genius gives teams a shared, judgment-free language to describe strengths and frustrations. This openness naturally increases vulnerability-based trust. - Normalizes differences - Removes shame around weaknesses - Builds empathy and safety

Outcome: Team members feel known, respected, and free to be honest.

2. Fear of Conflict → Healthy Debate Through Valuing Differences

Each Genius brings a different kind of contribution. Understanding these reduces personalizing disagreements and encourages meaningful, productive conflict. - Wonder & Invention push for innovation - Discernment tests ideas - Galvanizing mobilizes action - Enablement & Tenacity execute with excellence

Outcome: Teams debate ideas, not people.

3. Lack of Commitment → Better Decisions When All Geniuses Are Heard

Commitment grows when everyone sees that the process was balanced and thorough. - Ideation is honored - Evaluation is intentional - Activation is coordinated - Implementation is supported

Outcome: People commit because the decision feels complete and collaborative.

4. Avoidance of Accountability → Clear Ownership Aligned With Genius

Accountability is easier when responsibilities match natural strengths. - Work is assigned based on energy, not just role - Expectations become realistic - Follow-through becomes natural

Outcome: Accountability becomes shared commitment, not conflict.

5. Inattention to Results → A Team Energized and Focused on Outcomes

When people primarily work within their Geniuses, engagement and output rise. - Less burnout - Higher morale - Better collective performance

Outcome: A team operating in its collective Geniuses produces stronger results.

The Bottom Line

Five Dysfunctions tells us *why* teams struggle.

Working Genius shows us *how* each person contributes best.

Together, they create a clear path to trust, healthy conflict, alignment, accountability, and results.

Healthy teams aren't accidental—they're built with intention, shared language, and the right tools.

Ascension Lutheran School Board Meeting Minutes

Date: November 17, 2025

Location: Ascension Lutheran School

Mission Statements

Church:

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

Early Childhood Center (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

Present:

Ashley Steere, Jenni McCoy, Anna Woodward, Kathy Roshanai, Chris Poveromo, Kyle Jones, Jeanette McNulty, Rich Gregory, Nelly Trumbo, Matt Hurdle, Pastor Chamie

Guests:

Brittany, Brooke, Kaylee Searwat, Mike Marvin, Camryn Lomeli

Absent:

Scott Bean

Call to Order

Chair **Ashley Steere** called the meeting to order at 6:30

The Board began by reciting the mission statements of the Church, ECC, and Day School.

Devotion by Ashley

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda

- **Motion:** Kathy moves to approve.
Second: Anna
Outcome: *Motion carried.*
- **Motion:** Nelly moved to approve all remaining Consent Agenda items.
Second: Jeanette seconded

Outcome: *Motion carried.*

Old Business

Modular Update

- Anna updated the board on her findings on past negotiations with the Modular Company, with an eye toward us buying out the existing modulars
-

New Business

- Tuition Rates for 2025/2026 School Year
 - ECC
 - Kyle moved to increase tuition by 5% for ECC for the 2025/2026 School Year.
 - Matt seconded.
 - Motion Passes
 - TK-8
 - Chris moves to increase tuitions to \$13,500 for TK - 5th, \$13,900 for 6th, and \$14,980 for 7th and 8th.
 - Nelly seconded
 - Motion fails
 - Annual Fund Update - Rich gave the board an update on the Annual Fund, and we are well ahead of plan for the year. Rich gave kudos to Nicole Cook for her hard work on the fund.
 - Staff Holiday Appreciation - Board Discussed Staff Appreciation
-

Closing Prayer

Pastor **Chamie** closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment

Motion: Kyle moved to adjourn the regular session and reconvene for executive session.

Second: seconded.

Outcome: *Motion carried.*

The meeting adjourned at **8:24 p.m.**

Next Meeting

Date: December 15, 2025

Format: In Library

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris Poveromo, Secretary

December Treats on Fair Trade Lane

FAIR TRADE

Chocolate



Fair Trade Lane is open:

- Thurs Dec 11
2:30-4 pm
- Sat Dec 13
5:45-6 pm & 7-7:15 pm
- Sun Dec 14
8:30-9 am & 10-10:30 am

ALL ARE INVITED!
The double doors to
Founder's Hall
will be open

DECEMBER

Lake Champlain mini chocolates
are **5 for \$5** wrapped in assorted
giftable packages





Wednesday, December 3, 2025

4-5:30 PM, the 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.

MEETING NOTES

WELCOME

Bev Selle welcomed all present: Andy Binsley, Beverly Selle, Dave Harkins (remote), Ethel Jordan, Jill Binsley, Louise Evenson, Marcia Koenig, Mary Wennes, Paul Evenson, Pastor Steve Herder, Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp, and Nina Dube (guest).

OPENING PRAYER – Pastor Steve

TOPIC: SHARE OUR HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

(Ascension's December Benevolence Designee – Jubilee USA Network)

ZIMBABWE INFOHUTS UPDATE - Nina Dube, CLU student, provided an update on the Zimbabwe Infohut project, one of the recipients of the 2024 Gifts of Hope campaign. Nina thanked Ascension Lutheran Church for their financial support of the Zimbabwe Infohut project. Twenty computers for Infohut schools and 2 standing wi-fi units were purchased with the funds.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER LEADERS MEETING – Nina Dube presented a power point summary of her experience at the ELCA World Hunger Leadership Conference held in Columbus, Ohio in September 2025. She highlighted the following conference themes:

- **MERGE** initiative, which addresses the overlapping root causes of hunger and injustice: **M**migrant, **E**conomic, **R**acial, **G**ender, and **E**nvironmental
- Justice and Community work – "Kindness is a calling"
- Advisory and Policy
- Global and Domestic highlights
- Youth and Young Adult inclusion was a priority

Howie and Mary Wennes, and the Wennes Family have been leaders at Ascension in their support of the ELCA World Hunger Conference.

UKRAINE AND GAZA – Ukraine is the benevolence focus for February. Future benevolence focus recipients (including Gaza) will be discussed by the pastors and reported to the GMT. The ELCA supports the Augusta/Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem which serves Palestinians; The ELCA also

has a humanitarian presence in Ukraine. Paul and Louise Evenson shared updates on the current situation and humanitarian efforts in Ukraine as shared by Dave Nonnemacher during a recent zoom meeting.

HANGING OF THE GREENS – Pastor Chamie provided an overview of the schedule for Hanging of the Greens on Sunday, Dec. 7. The theme is Comfort and Joy. Festivities from 5-6 pm will include several comfort stations for activities and food for all ages. GMT members volunteered to assist at the letter-writing station in the library. Activities from 6-7 pm will be in the sanctuary with the singing of carols, and the decorating & lighting of the tree.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

- Preparing Christmas cards for detained immigrants and refugees will be included in the letter writing station during the Hanging of the Greens event.
- Dave Harkins updated the GMT on the status of contributions to the 2025 Gifts of Hope campaign. While there are fewer giving units as of the meeting date, the monetary amount is higher than last year at this time. Pastor Chamie shared that the school is focusing on GOH during December, so those families' contributions will be reflected in the January numbers. School families also have an opportunity to donate gifts to Friends of Fieldworkers' families via an "angel tree".

YOUTH FIELD TRIP TO LEARN ABOUT HUNGER

The children and youth have a field trip scheduled Saturday January 31st to Sylmar to learn about hunger and pack dinner kits. The GMT may turn this into an intergenerational field trip to both encourage the youngsters' growth in service as well support of this important hunger ministry. We will finalize plans at our January GMT meeting.

REFLECTIONS, PLANNING AND REPORTS

- **FAIR TRADE** – November's report was submitted by Carol Bjelland and circulated to the committee via email.
- **LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF KITS** – A summary of the LWR Kits ministry in 2025 was submitted by Louise Evenson and circulated to the committee via email. Ascension exceeded their goals which were set in appreciation for LWR's 80 years of helping our neighbors globally and locally. This year hundreds of people in the Ascension community assisted in the set-up, assembly and packing of a total of 937 personal care, school, baby care and fabric kits. In addition, 113 quilts were also shipped.
- Thank-you notes were circulated from Faith in Action International and Lutheran World Relief.
- Possible focus ideas for 2026 GMT meetings were discussed.
- GMT members enjoyed holiday food and fellowship to celebrate the season.

UPCOMING 2026 GMT MEETINGS

Wednesday January 7, 2026 4-5:30

Wednesday February 4, 2026 4-5:30

Wednesday March 4, 2026 4-5:30 (Pastor Steve to lead)

Wednesday April 1, 2026 4-5:30

Wednesday May 6, 2026 4-5:30

Wednesday June 3, 2026 4-5:30

Submitted by Ethel Jordan

Fair Trade at Ascension in November!

Shop & Share with SERRV! In November there was a special SERRV “Gifts that Give” opportunity. Online shopping for Fair Trade “Wearables & Shareables” using Ascension’s special code through November 24th is a 4-way sharing opportunity: celebrating & supporting Fair Trade artisans; a discount to the shopper; a wonderful Fair Trade artisan gift (and a great story) to a very lucky someone; and a gift back to Ascension that will be given to the education & training ministries of Reconciliation Lutheran Church in South Sudan through Ascension’s Gifts of Hope ministry.

Fair Trade Lane – Saturday Evening & Sunday Morning! Fair Trade Lane was open before & after services on November 22-23rd. It was the ***Last Call*** for Red Barn Family Farms Fair Trade cheddar cheese (perfect for holiday celebrations with family & friends) – the next order will be in February. Fair Trade Lane is stocked with your Fair Trade favorites (including holiday baking essentials) & some special chocolates from Lake Champlain Chocolates in holiday gift-able packages. Beautiful hot pads & bowl cozies from Ascension’s Quilters were available for purchase -- whether you like to keep your bowl cold for ice cream or warm for soup, there are colorful cozies waiting for you! On Sunday, November 23rd, there were also some special Fair Trade artisan items such as textiles, ornaments & cards from Tanzania & Nepal available for purchase.

A Conversation about Art & Faith on Fair Trade Lane

Thursday November 20th was another day to visit Fair Trade Lane. Thursday was a bit of a cold & rainy day. Tea & chocolate were the hot items on Thursday! Thursday was also a wonderful day for conversations on Fair Trade Lane – we welcomed friends who have visited us before & we welcomed many new friends too. A student from Ascension’s School stopped by to say “Hi” after school & we’re so very happy she did. We see each other at Wednesday Chapel –always fun to share a “Good Morning” & a greeting “wave”. After checking out the special chocolates (she told us she browsing on Thursday, not buying – all good), she stopped to look at the art on Fair Trade Lane – specifically the John August Swanson prints. She asked if they were like the ones in the Sanctuary – we told her yes – that the prints were just smaller versions that had been given to us to share on Fair Trade Lane. Together, we looked closely at the print with the farmers, fields, orchards & animals. We read the words about justice together. She loved the joyous face on the Sun & we had fun finding the little frogs hiding at the bottom of the print. We moved to the larger print of Jesus’ baptism & the river. She shared with us that in her Religion class, their discussion covered all the important things that water does for the world, the most important being baptism. She started at the top of the image and followed the river to the image of Jesus’ baptism at the bottom. She recited the Scripture text she had learned in class. We both said the image of the dove in the heavenly light was a good way to end the painting. We both agreed – pictures are sometimes better than words in sharing a message. We invited her to share her art with us. We hope she does. Fair Trade Lane – a place for meeting & greeting located at the intersection of Faith & Fair Trade.

Fair Trade and Ascension's Youth

We picked up the framed Fair Trade art pieces this week & shared them with the students at Chapel on Wednesday morning - we thanked the School students for sharing their 183 hand prints! Jeff/Cam/Jude will hang the framed pieces in FH.

Let's Be The Change We Wish To See!



FAIR TRADE LANE

WILL BE OPEN

**Thursday, December 11th
2:30 - 4 PM**

**Saturday, December 13th
5:45 - 6 PM & 7 - 7:15 PM**

**Sunday, December 14th
8:30 - 9 AM & 10 - 10:30 AM**

EVERYONE'S INVITED!

The double doors to Founders Hall will be open



Summary of LWR Kits ministry, 2025

Date: November, 2025

Submitted by: Louise Evenson

In the past six years (2020-2025), Ascension Lutheran Church has contributed 2,804 Personal Care Kits and 2,196 School Kits to Lutheran World Relief.

In appreciation for LWR's 80 years of helping our neighbors globally and locally, in 2025 the Ascension community shipped 107 boxes of 113 quilts, 404 personal care kits, 498 school kits, 33 baby care kits and 2 fabric kits for a total of 937 kits.

Hundreds of people in the Ascension community assisted in the set-up, assembly and packing of the kits. Groups that assembled our kits this year included families who attended the family VBS, Sunday School children, confirmation and senior youth group, all children from TK-8th grade at Ascension School, and ECC families.

Funds for the materials for the kits were through contributions through the benevolence designated offering in June (\$2,827), a special letter to 23 households who had given previously to the ministry but hadn't in 2025 (\$2,926), and Thrivent Action Team grants (9 grants, \$2,250) for a total of \$8,003.

The price of the materials for 446 school kits was \$6.52/kit or \$2,908, excluding the cost of scissors left over from previous years, and 186 boxes of crayons donated by ALS children. The additional 52 school kits were made and donated by Lory Breitzman.

The price of the materials for 404 personal care kits was \$7.94/kit or \$3,208.

The price of the materials for the 33 baby care kits was approximately \$60/kit, or \$1,980.

Ann Lane donated the materials for the two fabric care kits.

The total cost for the materials of the kits (in-kind donation to LWR) was \$8,096.

On October 22, Cam Lorentzen delivered 107 boxes to Mt Cross LC, Camarillo to the LWR Ingathering. The 7th and 8th grade students from Ascension School assisted in unloading nearly 400 boxes of kits and quilts from 11 Lutheran congregations in the area.

A \$2,500 grant from the ALC Foundation covered the shipping costs of our kits and quilts. A check was sent to LWR in October from the LWR Kits account.

Seventy thank you notes were sent to volunteers, donors, our ALC staff, and Ascension Foundation for their participation in this ministry.

A thank you lunch was served to the staff of Ascension (14) on November 18th as part of their weekly staff meeting in appreciation for their part in this ministry.

The LWR Kits team met to review this ministry and to identify opportunities for 2026 as well as affirm what parts of the ministry we would like to continue in the future. Louise Evenson was joined by Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp and Vicki Weeks for the planning of this ministry.

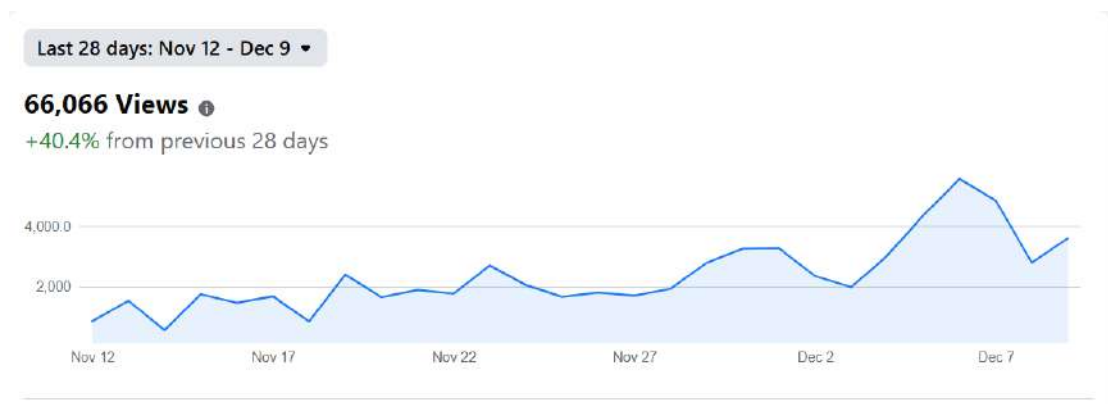
COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE FOR DECEMBER

We are only mid-way through advent, but it is already clear One Ascension is having a banner year. I will have an advertising roundup and other results next month, but for now, here are a couple of quick points.

Reels created by Pastors Tim and Chamie continue to be strong performers. The first Advent at Ascension reel, which I boosted within a 15-mile range on Facebook and Instagram, received nearly 11,000 views. It drew another 16,348 on YouTube. (The latter could be attributable to bots, but it could also be we “simply struck a chord” with viewers across the land, according to my ChatGPT search on this.)

Non-boosted content did well, too. Confirmation Gift Wrapping drew 256 Facebook views and 419 on Instagram; P.T.’s Costco Run drew 1,528 on Facebook and 599 on Instagram; Hanging of the Greens Prep had 232 views on Facebook and 356 on Insta.

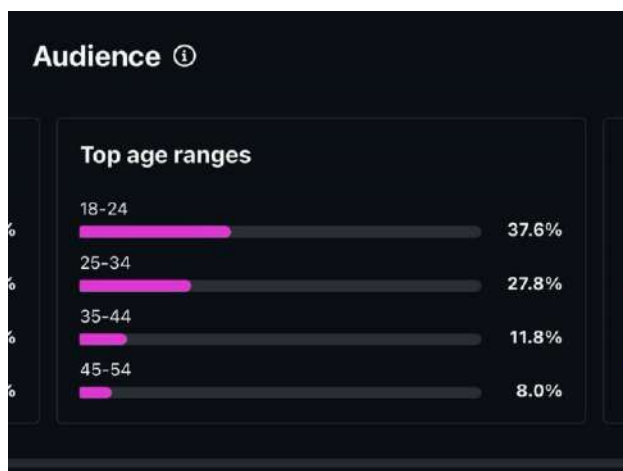
The church Facebook overall views in this past month were more than 66K, 40% non-followers.



As you can see, that’s up 40.4% from the previous 28 days.

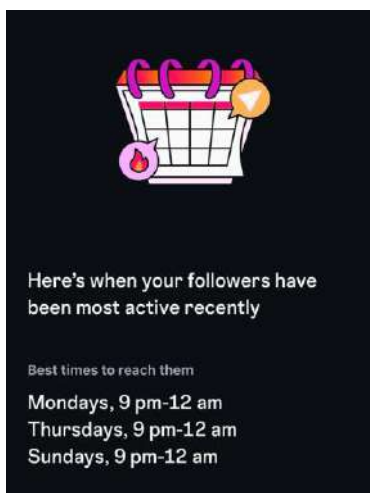
Instagram had 18,000 views, 45% from non-followers.

I’ve mentioned before how Facebook demographics skew older and more toward women, which is still true. What I found really interesting this past month is, the more youth-oriented content on our social media, the more they seem to be tuning in, especially on Instagram.



Communications -2

Also, while our Facebook audience is most active around 6 PM, on Instagram they're up later.



Meanwhile, I keep monitoring my church communications groups — ELCA and general church comms are 37,000 + members strong — where everyone is in the throes of advent activity and preparing for Christmas and the New Year. This is great for spotting trends, new ideas, concerns and reminders. For example, I found interesting a discussion of capturing data from Christmas visitors (see below). I'm sure we will be talking about that as well.

With deep gratitude for all your loving service to Ascension,

Have a blessed Christmas,

Stacy Smith Bosco

