

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, January 21, 2026 - 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 – Ethan East

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

New Business

- **New proposals from our IT company concerning server migration and network upgrades – Kaylee Searway and IT company representative Ashley Babich.**

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmands, and Baptisms

Old Business

- Update on the status of roof repairs and the patio project – Kaylee Searway.
- Land sale update – Creighton Van Horn

Approval of Minutes -John Rarick

- December 17, 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 February 25, 2026, immediately following the Lenten service (at approximately 7:45 pm).**

Closing Prayer – Michael Feltner

Adjournment

New Members & Baptisms Report

January 2026

Baptisms for December

No Baptisms

New Members for December

No New Members

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, December 17, 2025 - 7:00pm
The Delkeskamp Home**

Welcome and Call to Order -John Rarick, President
Meeting called to order at 7:03 PM

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

Motto: Invite - Grow - Serve

*Present: John Rarick, Creighton Van Horn (CVH), Carrie Leonard, Steve Smuck, Crystal Bryant, Michael Feltner, Al Baker, Anna Woodward
Also Present: Pastor Tim, Pastor Chamie, Kaylee Searway
Absent: Ethan East*

Approval of Agenda – John Rarick

It was moved (Michael), seconded (Carrie) to approve the agenda as presented.

Devotion – Pastor Tim

Pastor Chamie led us in a devotion and asked each member to share a time in which they experienced Christ at Work, through Ascension, during 2025. We each lit a candle as we shared our experiences.

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

- 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.)*

It was moved (Carrie), seconded (CVH), then passed unanimously to approve the Treasurer's report.

New Business

- Thrivent Choice requests:

Two requests:

- (1) \$300 for the Mt. Meru coffee project through GMT
- (2) \$1,000.00 for thank you gifts expressing gratitude and affirming the service of One Ascension leaders. – Pastor Tim. This would be an ongoing fund that can be used by staff or nominating committees to thank/affirm and continue to create a culture of presenting gifts of thanks.

It was moved (Carrie), then seconded (Al) and passed unanimously to approve the Thrivent Choice fund request.

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmands, and Baptisms

Baptisms

November 2025

Confirmands

November 2025

New Members

November 2025

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

Old Business

- No old business

Approval of Minutes -John Rarick

- November 19, 2025 Church Council Minutes

It was moved (Al) with a clarification that funds of \$12,600 for employee short term disability is to come from PPP fund as amended by Carrie, then seconded (Anna) then passed unanimously to approve the 11/2025 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

It was moved (Anna), seconded (Michael) then unanimously passed to approve the Reports to Council.

Information Items

- Reflections on empowering and equipping, affirming and celebrating as we lead the culture of abundance at Ascension.
 - Crystal celebrated the Youth Ministry team and Lefse making event.
 - CVH celebrated the school and food pantry by shopping for items and then partnering with Rich Gregory to have 7th grade students help unload groceries from his vehicle. This process helped to connect those students to the concept and experience of helping with our Food Pantry.
 - John celebrated and affirmed Jenelle Smith for being engaging with Sunday School students.
 - It was requested that words of encouragement be sent to Jenelle, Spencer, Kaiya and James so they can feel the love and know the recognition they are receiving from the Council.
 - PT reflected on how the staff is working differently by experimenting and accepting new responsibilities for daily operations, while he is out on his upcoming Sabbatical (April 6-July 7).

- The next Church Council meeting will be held on January 21, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Closing Prayer – John Rarick

Adjournment

It was moved (AI), seconded (CVH) then passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 PM.



Pastor Tim's Ministry Report- January 2026

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

December 2025 was one of my favorites Advent/Christmas seasons of all time! It started with a very successful Hanging of the Green gathering that was made to happen by the leadership of Lauren Godfrey and her crew and undergirded by the work of Pastor Chamie as she put together the plan for the fellowship activities that happened before-hand. Then as we moved through December, we had a wonderful School Christmas Concert, an amazing Cowboy Christmas at the 6pm Saturday Service, a beautiful Cantata at the 9am service and then an epic Christmas Eve/Day at each of the 6 services that we made happen.

As part of the behind-the-scenes story on Christmas Eve, the wind and the rain complicated things. The power went out on our entire campus but fortunately, it was miraculously restored before our first service. We heard from SCE that it wouldn't be until 4pm (our first service was at 3pm). During the day Jeff Hengst talked with one of the SCE workers who, as it turned out, was the father of one of the ECC students. He told Jeff, "My family is going to church here today, so we are going to prioritize getting the electricity on." It came on by 1:30! After that, I suspect the rain affected attendance to a certain extent. But I am very happy about our Christmas miracle.

Our search for our ECC director is full speed ahead right now. In fact, by the time you read this we may have extended an offer. I am very pleased at how the search process is coming together. Dr. Gregory is doing an excellent job of leading the team and putting together the interviews. The team is an excellent one that consists of representatives from the Executive team, ECC Staff and faculty, and the ECC parent community. The interview process includes church and school staff as well. Our next steps of figuring out how to on-board the new director, how to communicate the hiring and how to say goodbye to Jenni well are coming up soon.

Our Safety Team is coming together. 11 of us (including Safety/Security team members Terry Shephersky and Robert Steere) had a good meeting on Saturday, January 10th and will plan to meet one more time to train on the Sunday morning safety procedures which will now include 2 security team folks. We will also plan to meet with Sunday School staff to keep them informed.

We are changing things up a bit in our Men's ministry. I am sensing a need to have a monthly event that is really reaching out to men at in our school community and beyond. We would like to make a

place where men who have little experience with church are welcomed when they come and invited to join a good, faith exploring conversation.

Finally, I continue to plan my upcoming Sabbatical (April 6th through July 7th, 2026). I am locked in on the theme and I am beginning to socialize the fact that I will be gone during those 3 months. The unifying theme of this sabbatical is *"What will life be like in 10 years?"*—a question I will explore both in terms of Ascension's future as a Christ-centered, large-tent congregation with strong leadership beyond any one pastor, and personally as Chamie and I consider the next season of life and ministry. My time on the sabbatical will include intentional rhythms of prayer, study, journaling, and church visits, along with time for family, rest, and renewal. I have been working to make sure that plans are in place to ensure continuity of worship, pastoral care, and daily ministry during my absence, and I look forward to returning refreshed, grounded, and better equipped to serve Ascension with clarity and long-range vision. I am grateful for the support of Church council on all this and can't believe that it is coming so soon!

In his service,

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

Pastor Chamie's December 2025 Council Report

(Dec 7 through January 11)

Children, Youth, & Family

Children

Sunday school completed a 4-week Christmas series. I got to teach the older kids during the 9:00 service one week. I wanted the opportunity to see the class “from the inside.” For one, I wanted the chance to get to know our kids a little better. I also wanted to be immersed in the curriculum and the space for a day so I can better understand what it looks like for our teachers and thus be better able to support them and Jenelle. I had a great time with the kids!

I loved working with Jenelle in preparing our children for Christmas Eve. Jenelle did a stellar



job in organizing the sign-ups for children who wanted to participate in the nativity scene at the 3:00 and 5:00 PM services. Together we prepped costumes and props. Jenelle also scheduled the nursery staff for Christmas Eve. It was wonderful to see so many families and to see the joy in all of our children who participated.

After Christmas, Sunday school took a 2-week hiatus. Sunday school resumed on January 11 to kick off our 6-week Bible Science series. To see what I wrote about the “why and what” behind this series, check out my church newsletter article [here](#).



Youth

On the last confirmation class before Christmas, we did a lesson, played a Christmas game, and wrapped gifts for Friends of Fieldworkers. Confirmation “adopted” a family with five children and bought 3 gifts for each child, so a total of 15 gifts. The confirmation youth broke up into five groups, each group wrapping the gifts and praying for one of the children in the family. Confirmation took a hiatus for the holidays. They resumed on January 11 with a lot of great energy!

The high schoolers had an overnight in December where they got to watch *White Christmas* and sleep by the tree in the sanctuary. For breakfast the next morning (before returning for worship), they walked down the street to the local coffee shop. Mr. Gottmer spent time over Christmas break working on a Matthew Bible study for the high schoolers as we are now in the “Matthew Year” for the lectionary readings.



Confirmation students wrapped gifts for the family of five children that they adopted for Friends of Fieldworkers.



After the high school sleepover, the youth walked down the street to the coffee shop before returning for worship.

The Youth Council met on January 4 to iron out plans for this second half of the school year. The council has such wonderful, gifted young leaders. Our youth council president Ella Festerling is an amazing example of faithfulness, participation, enthusiasm, creativity, and positive influence.



Principal Gregory welcomed families to the school Christmas show. I invited them to Christmas worship services (after introducing our CYF Team who stood beside me), and Pastor Tim led the opening prayer.

Interfacing with the Schools

December and early January included the very important work of serving on the hiring team for the new ECC Director. I know others will be reporting on this so I will simply say it was an honor to be on the team and I am excited that at the time of this writing the person we chose has said “yes!” Her name will soon be announced.

I attend the school’s Christmas show, the 2-year-old ECC show, and the 3’s & 4’s ECC show. At each of those events, I invited families to join us on Christmas Eve and/or Morn. It filled me with joy to hear the children singing the songs of the season.

We had a beautiful Christmas chapel and then were on hiatus for a couple of weeks. During the Christmas vacation, I worked on the chapel scripture/message series for the seasons of Epiphany and Lent. Then Ms. Kelsey and I met on the first day back to school to go over the whole chapel chart and she began filling in the music. We are doing a series called “My Friend Matt” with all the stories coming from the Gospel of Matthew. We have a student - Cash Brewster - who will be playing Matthew through the series.

Worship



The youth gathered around for the initial “table read” of the script for Christmas Eve.

What a beautiful month of worship. Highlights for me included Cowboy Christmas, the Christmas Cantata, and working with our youth narrators and Matt Cahill on the 3:00 and 5:00 PM Christmas services that included the youth dressing up as animals to tell the story of Christmas. This was interwoven with bell music and the children entering as Mary, Joseph, angels, and shepherds.

Christmas Eve had a chaotic start with 2 of our 6 youth actors being sick and having to switch actors last minute. But bigger than that was that we started the day with no power on campus! Our facilities crew was drenched as they worked on drying and repairing the campus. Despite the craziness, the God who brought about order in the very first chapter of the Bible hovered over the chaos of Christmas Eve and created something beautiful. I want to lift up the name of Jameson Lovell, the Southern California Edison man who got the electricity back on just in time for our services! He is a school dad and his daughters were angels at the 3:00 service. It felt like a Christmas miracle.

Jesus. I am thankful for Pastor Steve who assisted at two of the services Christmas Eve and thankful to our youth director Spencer who did the liturgy at our 5:00 service. Tim and I team preached on Christmas morning and got to serve communion with our children assisting. I want to give a shout out to Wyant Morton, Matt Cahill, Melissa Berg, Nancy Lee, and Margaret Ricci as our lead musicians. WOW - are we blessed at Ascension to have these amazing people leading music. Also many thanks to Cathi Peterson who plays the organ on Christmas morning and all of our volunteer musicians. And I can't forget the tech team led by Lan Merrill. Or Jenelle for all the bulletins and power points and readers, etc, etc! Or Lory Bryztman or Terry Shepersky as our lead usher and all of the other ushers and worship volunteers. It truly takes a team to make every single worship service happen, but

especially during the Advent/Christmas seasons. I don't want to ever take these people for granted.

We are thankful that Pastor Paul preached the weekend of December 27-28.

We kicked off the Season of Epiphany in worship on January 3-4. I preached this weekend. We handed out bags of chalk with directions on how to do the ancient practice of “chalking” your door on or near Epiphany for the new year. Over 180 bags were taken. It has been fun seeing people's social media posts about chalking their doors.



My hair stylist came for Cowboy Christmas - which was a reminder to me that it is important for us to reach out and invite people to worship. She loved the service!

Amey Roberts
1h · 🌟

Today we bless our home during the season of Epiphany. ✨
Grateful for faith, community and God's presence in our household.
Thank you, **Ascension Lutheran Church**



This Epiphany we are inviting people to read the book *Trust the Whisper*. Last year during the Season of Epiphany, church member Yvonne Zoetewey had shared with me how she had read the book and thought it would be a great Epiphany-read someday. So this year, we hope several people will read it and that we have a great book discussion night in February. And most importantly that people will be inspired to listen and follow God's leadings!

Other

Women's Ministry. I attended the Monday Morning Women's Bible Study special Advent brunch. I have been working on the plans for our January Word & Wine.



Christmas Caroling. Pastor Steve organized all of our stops to homebound members. Jeff drove the bus. We had a wonderful intergenerational group of singers. It was a tender and moving time. I cried more than once. Singing at Pastor Larry's home was especially touching. For years he sang "O Holy Night" at the 11:00 Christmas Eve worship service. His voice still rang clear and Pastor Steve captured it on video. Many people watched the video on social media and I know it touched hearts deeply.



Friends of Fieldworkers. Erin Storey has a heart of gold and I am incredibly thankful for her work in organizing the angel tree gifts. I was blessed to be with Erin when a team came to pick up a portion of the gifts (they went to a couple of different areas). We were able to spend some time together and learn about other ways we can partner and serve in 2026.

Hiking Ministry. We did our first "power hike" of the new year. We are blessed to have Tim Hillman at our church who works as a park ranger and could give us all the details of the trails after the rain. In 2026 we hope to do more "power hikes" which are longer hikes (3 to 6 miles) for more experienced hikers as well as shorter "family hikes" designed for families with children of all ages - and always near a park for some play time after hiking.



Labyrinth. The new labyrinth is completed! After worship on January 11, I did a first "lesson" about how to use the labyrinth as a way to pray. I created a guide for adults as well as a guide for children. These will soon be available in a container that will be installed by our facilities crew. Stacy also made a page for them on our [website](#). I handed out the children's guide to our school teachers at one of their Monday morning meetings and instructed them on how they could use the labyrinth with their students.



Books. We are beginning the process of updating and expanding the Christian books for children and youth in the Library. It is very exciting! This season, we have featured books for Epiphany, the Gospel of Matthew, and Faith & Science. I made a little guide to explain all of our current featured books.

Family Gratitude. I want to close with giving thanks for the joy of working alongside my husband. I think he's an excellent senior pastor. Working together on all the details for Advent and Christmas was such an absolute delight. We got to "welcome home" the congregation for Christmas. And we got to "welcome home" our adult children. Aidan

had to work Christmas Eve morning, but right after work, he got in his car and drove from Arizona in time for the 11:00 service. Then we all got to be together at Christmas morning worship which has long been a favorite for us. I also treasure the annual time in the mountains with the extended Delkeskamp family - a tradition that has been happening for around 40 years!

I was also happy that we got to take the annual iconic family photo by the Ascension Christmas tree.

Happy Epiphany! May you spot God all over the place!

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Chamie



Church Council Report – January 1, 2026 – Pastor Steve Herder

Blessed 2026 to each of you. I write this report of Advent (most of December), in the Christmas Season, and you'll read this in the Epiphany Season. For Advent and Christmas each year I display my Peruvian nativity set. The "Joy" artwork was made by our young friends in the "Praying Mantis" ECC class. The other photo is one of that class, with me, after our Friday singing.



At the other end of life, in December, I led the memorial service for Marilyn Castan. Thanks for keeping her husband, Dick, their sons Steve and Glen, and family, in your prayers. On January 3rd I'll lead the memorial service for Alan Kahn. We are keeping his wife Debbie, their son David, and her brother-in-law, Ed Klodt, in our prayers.



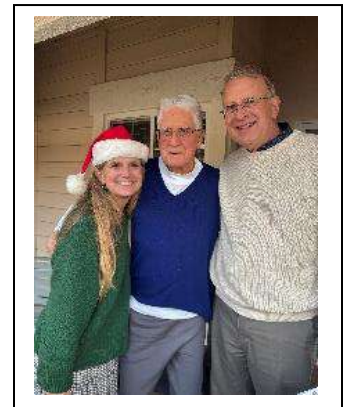
A follow up from November's service for Brenda Heinrich: remember that if you visit Chuck in his board and care home, because of his dementia, we are not talking to him about Brenda's death. He's content and well taken care of. Call me if you have any questions.



One highlight of each December is when we go Christmas caroling to some of the seniors of our congregation and community. Jeff Hengst drove the bus. Pastor Chamie and I led a large intergenerational group of carolers to sing to our loved ones. A first for us was stopping by Pastor Larry's to sing.



Did you see the video I posted on Facebook of Pastor Larry singing "O Holy Night" with our group? Very touching. We keep him and Chris in our love and prayers too as his Parkinson's and dementia progresses. The photo on the right is with Calvin Beard who is doing well at 97.





This photo is from our Christian Life Hour at Hillcrest Atria. Here are Ascension members Carol Ranschau, Dwight Lofgren, John Burgert (all residents there, with Bonnie Braaten), and then Jeff Specks who is helping me lead the singing. Thanks to Norm Guetschoff and his team for leading many other CLHs in our community. You are welcome to join us.

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.

For the past 12 years we have hosted and I have co-led the Compassionate Friends service for Ventura County. It is always on the second Sunday of December, and this event, held in many places around the world, always starts at 7pm as we



remember children and siblings who have died. This is a very emotional service. What I appreciate about it is that it is an interfaith service, and some of these colleagues from other houses of faith have become good friends of mine.



One important and memorable worship highlight for us this month was our choir's beautiful cantata. Thanks to Wyant, Margaret, all the singers and instrumentalists. This photo shows one powerful verse from our worship that morning.



Our social media outreach continues to grow. Stacy posts our daily prayer and Bible reading posts. Pastors Tim and Chamie do a lot of popular short video reels. I post things each day to encourage faith and ministry, near and far. Our tech team streams all our worship services.



Congrats, you have 2,470 fans! To keep growing, try posting or engaging daily.

Carolyn Coleman-Grady led our one adult education class in December with a strong emphasis on prayer and Bible study as we face adversities in life. It was based on her most recent book, and we encourage everyone to get a copy of it, to bless yourself or to bless someone else with it. (It was good that we didn't have more classes since our patio was "under construction." Our labyrinth is now ready for you to use! Instructions are available near the entrance of it, thanks to Pastor Chamie.)



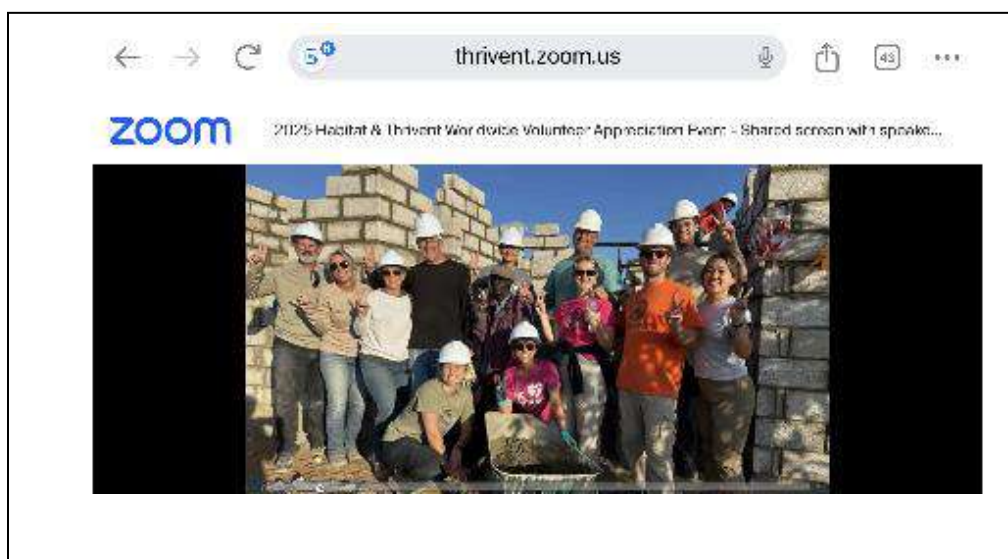
Ascension, you were very generous in the month of December with donations to our Friday Food Pantry (volunteers Kathy and Gene Coco pictured here with the cupboards of food), and generous with donating blood. One special moment was when Vicki Panaro asked me after worship if she could go thank the blood donors in Pederson Hall, because just two days before she had received two units of blood. Truly, your gifts are life-giving. Pictured in the middle is Dan Lareva donating blood.



CLU senior, Nina Dube, from Zimbabwe, presented at our December Global Ministries Team meeting. She had attended our ELCA world hunger leaders' gathering in Ohio this fall and gave us a great update from that partnership in ministry. She also shared about our gifts to last year's Gifts of Hope when we donated to the InfoHuts in Zimbabwe. Her father was just elected the Lutheran bishop in Zimbabwe.



On December 10th, some of us who went on the Habitat for Humanity summer build in Zambia participated in Thrivent's zoom meeting to celebrate all the Habitat builds around the world this past year. You see below photos of our group there. Thanks again to Sherith and Scott Squires for putting this amazing trip together!



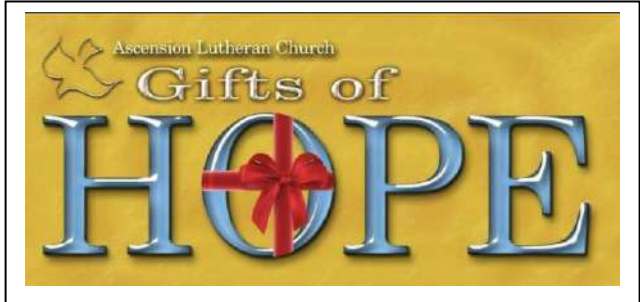
Pastor Scott Maxwell-Doherty is leading the planning team for our Southwest California Synod Assembly which will take place May 29 and 30 in Pasadena. He asked me to lead the team that plans the workshops. I gladly said yes since I love to do such educational events. If you have ideas or would like to help me prepare these, let me know. pastorsteve@alcto.org

A very blessed Epiphany season everyone, as we do some "God spotting," seeing how God is working in and through us, and around the world. Thanks for your prayers. You are in ours. See the January "365 in '26" prayer calendar at the end of this report. I'll also include the thank you note that we wrote to all the generous donors for the 2025 Gifts of Hope.

Dear friends in Christ,

This "thank you note" is going to 116 families that I am blind copying in this email.

Join us in giving great thanks to God for our 2025 Gifts of Hope ministry with all of you together contributing a total of \$112,412.68! Our Ascension school children and families will be giving more this month, especially to God's Global Barnyard (ELCA World Hunger.)



Speaking of our school, we want to also thank them for organizing the wrapped Christmas gifts for 119 children with Friends of Fieldworkers! Special shoutout to Erin Storey for leading that beautiful ministry, on behalf of our school and congregation.

Our Foundation is a long-time supporter of our Gifts of Hope as well, with special thanks to Mark and Sandra Howe for the large endowment fund that they set up for perpetual gifts to GOH!

You'd like to hear how the 2025 GOH giving was designated:
Over \$34,000 was given to our ELCA and LWR partners in South Sudan for supporting our missionaries, medical personnel, medicines, feeding children, and solar panels, etc.

For our ELCA hunger ministries, which are both in the USA and around the globe, that total is over \$30,000 (plus what will still come in from our school).

Then locally we are giving \$22,927 to Friends of Fieldworkers and \$22,924.68 to Harbor House.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Thank you for being a channel of God's peace and love, healing and hope, in Jesus' name, to our neighbors, near and far.

As we receive stories from each of these ministries, we will pass along their words of appreciation to you through our newsletter and on social media.

With deep gratitude for you
Your Global Ministries Team

<https://alcto.org/goh25/>

<https://alcto.org/global/>

By the way, we would love for many of you to join our Gifts of Hope planning team for 2026. Let me know if you'd like to help. We do need more leaders to join us in this good work. Gifts of Hope was started here in 2002 by Pastor Howie and Mary Wennes. Fair Trade ministry was started here in 2001! <https://alcto.org/fair-trade/>

Our January monthly special benevolence is our Friday Food Pantry and in February we will support our humanitarian work in Ukraine.

<https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z4JB/campaign/C-13N5R>

We echo the words of the Apostle Paul: "They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do." Galatians 2:10

"Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor." Proverbs 22:9

2025		Amount	No.Donations	After general allocation (\$1,657 ea)	
GIFTS OF HOPE	as of 1/6/26	\$112,412.68	116	\$112,412.68	1657 each
Reconciliation Church		\$14,840.00	34	\$16,497.00	
vocational training	\$50	\$1,600.00	9		
Stock a health clinic	\$75	\$2,450.00	14		
Support missionary	\$100	\$2,150.00	7		
General Gift		\$8,640.00	17		
Juba Medical Center		\$2,000.00	1	\$2,000.00	
LWR South Sudan		\$16,255.00	38	\$17,912.00	
vaccination: child	\$30	\$1,060.00	10		
feed a child	\$50	\$2,325.00	18		
solar panels	\$200	\$4,750.00	10		
General Gift		\$8,120.00	16		
ELCA (God's Global Barnyard)		\$28,495.00	58	\$30,152.00	
ELCA World Hunger Appeal		\$19,170.00	57		
10 Chicks	\$10	\$680.00	16		
Honey Bee Hive	\$20	\$540.00	17		
Piglet	\$30	\$960.00	16		
Goat	\$50	\$2,000.00	21		
Fish Community	\$250	\$3,000.00	6		
Family Farm	\$715	\$8,490.00	8		
General World Hunger		\$3,500.00	13		
Environmental Care	\$910	\$9,325.00	18		
Friends of Fieldworkers		\$21,270.00	53	\$22,927.00	
Baby love	\$25	\$275.00	8		
Laundry Love Program	\$50	\$475.00	7		
Emergency Relief	\$100	\$3,650.00	9		
Scholarships	\$200	\$4,600.00	6		
General Gift		\$12,270.00	32		
Harbor House		\$21,267.68	51	\$22,924.68	
Utility bill help	\$25	\$400.00	9		
Groceries	\$50	\$1,700.00	12		
Mental health counseling	\$75	\$750.00	7		
Car repair or rental ass.	\$200	\$1,650.00	4		
General Gift		\$16,767.68	31		
Other Gift		\$8,285.00	16		
(\$6000 is Foundation - to be split evenly)					

January 2026



First Samuel 12:23-24

“Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he had done for you.”

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
		www.alcto.org		1 <i>New Year's Day</i> Each Jan. 1 st , we remember the giving of Jesus' name <i>Luke 2:15-21</i>	2 Prayers for peace in war torn countries <i>Psalm 147:12-20</i>	3 Spotting God in our daily lives <i>Ephesians 1:3-14</i>
4 <i>Epiphany Sunday</i> Start the New Year in worship <i>John 1:10-18</i>	5 <i>Galatians 4:4-7</i>	6 Prayers for our Jan. monthly benevolence, our Food Pantry on this day of epiphany <i>Proverbs 14:21</i>	7 Prayers for our Global Ministries Team meeting @ 4 pm <i>Matthew 28:16-20</i>	8 Prayers for Pastor Tim's Coffee Talk Bible Study @ 9 am <i>Psalm 19</i>	9 Sunday School resumes Sunday with Bible Science series! <i>Genesis 1</i>	10 Spotting God in your own story <i>Isaiah 42:1-9</i>
11 Baptism of our Lord Sunday <i>Matthew 3:13-17</i>	12 For all Bible Studies and Life Groups each week <i>Luke 10:36-37</i>	13 Prayers for our youth interns, Kaya & James <i>1st John 4:7-8</i>	14 Prayers for our Lunch Bunch @ noon <i>Psalm 133</i>	15 Prayers for our ECC snow days! <i>Isaiah 55:10-11</i>	16 Prayers for ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry <i>Psalm 40:1-11</i>	17 Spotting God in your Gifts & Graces <i>1 Corinthians 1:1-9</i>
18 Week of prayer for Christian Unity January 18-25 <i>John 1:29-42</i>	19 <i>Martin Luther King Jr Day</i> Our country blessed to be a blessing <i>Psalm 67</i>	20 Feeding those unhoused today, Harbor House <i>Proverbs 22:9</i>	21 Prayers for our Church Council <i>Proverbs 3:5-6</i>	22 California Lutheran University <i>Colossians 3:12-17</i>	23 Those who are suffering, anxious, or lonely <i>Psalm 27:1, 4-9</i>	24 Spotting God in the Gifts and Graces of others <i>1 Corinthians 1:10-18</i>
25 Prayers for our GMA organ concert @ 4 pm <i>Matthew 4:12-23</i>	26 Prayers for the Pacific Lutheran University Concert @ 7 pm <i>Revelation 5:9</i>	27 Give thanks for our maintenance team <i>Philippians 1:3-6</i>	28 Prayers for our school's Chapel Service each Wednesday @ 8:45 a, <i>Psalm 100</i>	29 Those who are hospitalized & for the hospital staff <i>Psalm 30</i>	30 Prayers for our Lutheran World Federation <i>Micah 6:1-8</i>	31 Spotting God in unexpected places <i>Psalm 15</i> 20-28

Patio Wrap

Thank you for your patience as we completed the patio wrap and the labyrinth. I can't be more proud of how it turned out or more happy with the crew we chose to complete the project. The professionals at Concrete 911 were top notch contractors to work with, having wonderful attitudes with long days and less than perfect weather to contend. I was disappointed that we couldn't open the labyrinth on Christmas Eve, but the damp weather hadn't allowed it to dry properly and it needed to be sealed. The paint actually "bled" a bit on a damp morning when it wasn't quite raining, but wasn't quite dry. Josh and his team were here and cheerfully fixing it before we even knew it had happened. My own wonderful maintenance team and I served as parking and traffic directors for the December 21st services, including the cantata. We cheerfully thanked folks for parking extra far and assured them we'd be "open" for Christmas. It was actually a really fun day and an interesting way to interact with many people I don't see on a regular basis.



Directory

Ella Festerling, James Halvorson, and Santiago Vega were amazing and took many photos of families over several weekends; I really appreciate the professional way they approached the project and organized the information! Carolyn has been hard at work in office re-sizing photos sent in, making updates, and getting ready for an initial print run. There are still people asking if it's too late to get their photos in, so we are going to do one last request in the newsletter and TWAA before we start printing. We will give a deadline of February 1st to send in photos or make updates before we print.

Sanctuary Roof

Channel Islands has been on campus at twice since the last council report. We haven't had enough heavy rain to test whether the last repair completely addressed the leak over the west narthex doors.

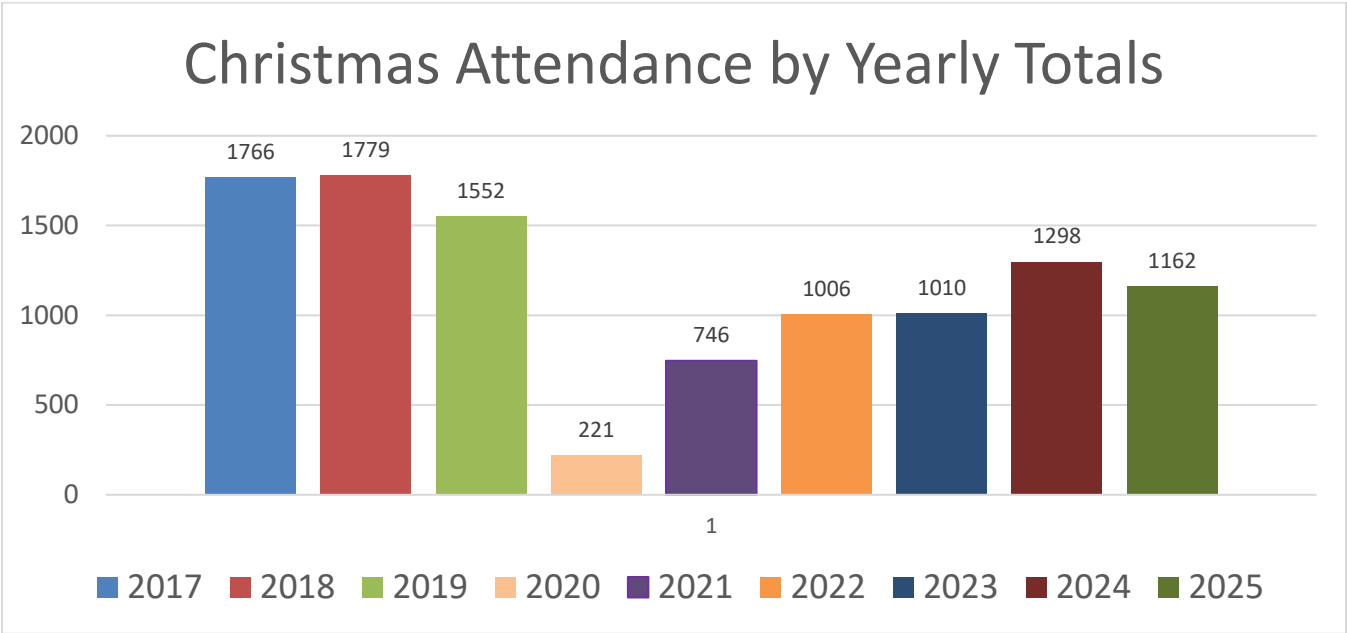
Hiring Committee for ECC Director

I'm so pleased that Brooke Costi has been announced as our new ECC Director! She went through a quite rigorous interview process, and impressed me at every turn. I'm really excited to work with her. The team selected for the hiring process was wonderful: Rich Gregory, Brittani Childers, Karyn Ring, Vanessa Reyes, Christina Lovell, Kyle Jones, and Pastor Chamie.

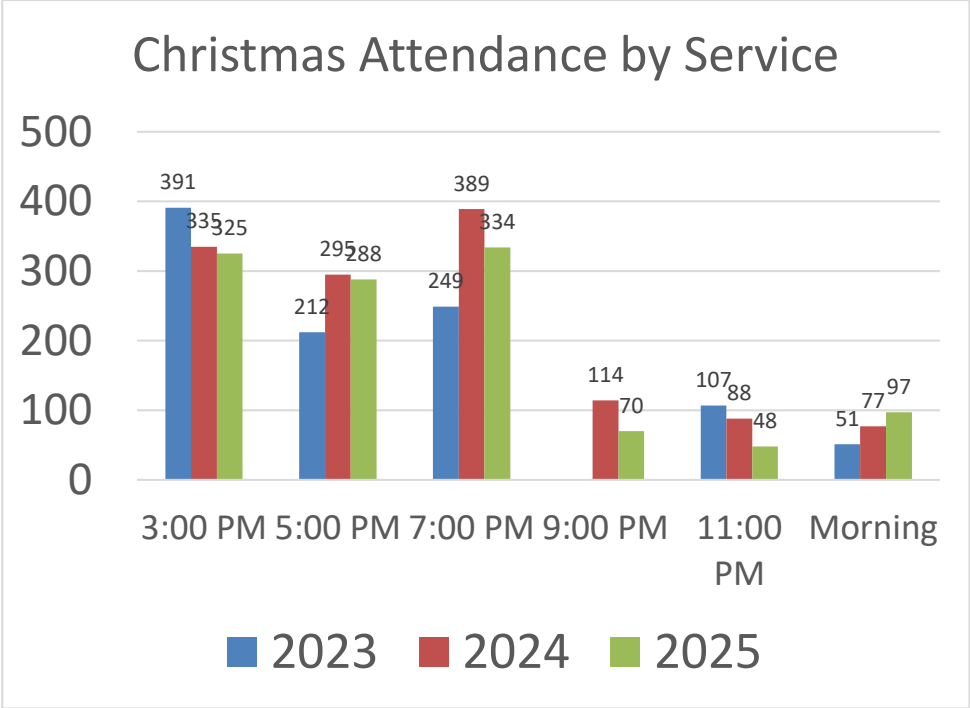
Attendance

The last six weeks of the calendar year show an uptick in the 6 week average attendance number from 422 to 438. You are likely more curious about what happened at Christmas: we had 1,162 people in worship over our six Christmas celebration services.

In general trends, having one service outside during Covid was our lowest attendance point in recent years. We experienced increases for the next four years, and now a slight decrease.



I think it’s helpful for the pastors, worship coordinators, and music teams to see attendance by service:



Maintenance

I would just like to remind you of how amazing our maintenance team of Jeff Hengst, Camden Lorentson, and Jude Delkeskamp really are for us on the One Ascension Campus. Christmas Eve came in with rain, wind, and the power off at the church by 6:37 in the morning. We had mistakenly thought we were “well prepared,” and the team would only need to work a half day to prepare for the Christmas services, but nature and So Cal Edison had other plans for us. When I got to campus a little later in the morning I found a team that was drenched to the bone, who could wring the water out of their socks! They paused mid-morning for a coffee, late breakfast, and dry clothes break before getting right back to the business of preparing the campus and figuring out how to do services without power if necessary. They had to clear tree branches that fell, check the known leaks, inspect for new leaks, get the generator up and running, move the flood lights. The pastors were right on board with communicating to music directors what each of the services might look like sans power. Lan Merrill, Char Hulse, and I moved the Pro Presenter computer in garbage bags from the sound room to the ECC so that Char could prepare slides to use in the event we did have power. I was grateful that the ECC had power so that I could set an out of office explaining that the power was out and our phone system was down. Luckily, So Cal Edison came through and power came back on before the services; I just wanted you to know the hard work the team went through to be prepared for the “what if’s.”

Finance

Frankly, my bragging about my team must continue....Camryn Lomeli ran 12 payroll cycles in December vs the usual 4 in a given month. She was prepared for bonus runs, last minute corrections, everything we threw at her in a chaotic time of the year. When she wasn’t working on payroll she set up benefits for the entire campus so the ACA reports could be run in January. I’m happy to report that we have already filed the W-2’s and the ACA reports. Before we switched over to APS payroll we had to pay a significant sum of money to an outside company to prepare the reports, which I then had to review individually and reject the first 4-5 batches before we finished. This is the easiest it has ever been!

You might be wondering what I have been doing with all my spare time: Well, I saved the school about \$6,500 over the next 21 months and got them brand new copiers and network printers over the break. They have been stuck in a less than ideal contract with old equipment and significant overages each month. The contract was designed to increase each 12 months for a five-year period. Canon was able to buy out the lease and provide new equipment at a great rate locked in for five years. The equipment was all delivered before Christmas and installed the first week of January. We’ve had Canon equipment at the church for a while; I think they will be very happy with the performance and efficiency of the new equipment. Ashley Babich was very helpful getting each school team member set up and printing very quickly.

Mike has been working hard on our audit. We have sent the required reports and documents into Joy via secured network this week. We anticipate that she will be able to return the completed audit to us by the end of February.

Thank you,

Kaylee Searway

Director of Operations



Wednesday, January 7, 2026
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, Carol Bartell, Carol Bjellend, Dave Harkins, Ethel Jordan, Louise Evenson, Kim Overton, Marcia Koenig, Mary Wennes, Paul Evenson, Pastor Steve Herder, Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp, and Dave Nonnemacher (guest via zoom).

OPENING PRAYER – Paul Evenson shared the following opening devotion and prayer: "The Work of Christmas" by Howard Thurman, and "A Prayer for Steady Steps" by Cameron Trimble.

TOPIC: GMT Plans for 1H2026 (Jan-June)

(Ascension's January Benevolence Designee – Ascension Food Pantry)

UKRAINE AND GAZA – Dave Nonnemacher, Minister of Presence in Ukraine, joined the meeting via zoom and discussed items needed to address humanitarian needs in that country. (A list of the items accompanied by photos and cost was provided by Dave and distributed to GMT members prior to the meeting.) Items discussed by Dave included funds to purchase vehicles, dual fuel generators, individual first aid kits, food packets, firewood, solar kits, and support for Gospel and Bread visits to frontline communities. Donations for Dave to use to address immediate humanitarian needs that arise when he is physically present in Ukraine are also needed.

Dave will be present at Ascension the weekend of Jan. 31-Feb. 1, attending all 3 worship services and leading the Adult Forum on Sunday morning. The benevolence focus for February is Ukraine Humanitarian Aid. The GMT members discussed opportunities for the congregation to learn more about the humanitarian needs in Ukraine through the month of February and to be invited to prayerfully consider supporting those needs through February benevolence donations.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS – Bev Selle reported that the GMT and others attending the Comfort Station during the Hanging of the Greens packaged bundles of 50 cards for detained immigrants & refugees. This project is in collaboration with Global Refuge.

GIFTS OF HOPE – Pastor Steve reported for Dave Harkins on GOH. To date, 116 donors have contributed \$112,000. In addition, 116 children's gifts were given by Ascension School and church.

REFLECTIONS, PLANNING AND REPORTS

- **FAIR TRADE** Carol Bjelland reported that the Fair Trade Lane schedule for Jan-March is set (see list). She is working with Fair Trade LA to bring in some items from their vendors. Signage is being made which will complete the artwork project.
 - **ZIMBABWE INFOHUT INFORMATION** – In the interest of time, this topic was postponed to another meeting
 - It is hoped that Nina and Angela's parents can be issued visas to travel to CLU's graduation ceremony.
 - Pastor Chamie said all are welcome to join the youth field trip to Poverty Encounter. The date needs to be confirmed.
- Pastor Steve made these announcements:
- Eric LeCompte of Jubilee had his 50th birthday on Jan 6. He communicated with Pastor Steve that there is the possibility of a Jubilee meeting with Pope Leo.
 - ELCA Pastor Khadir El-Yateem leads our ELCA global ministries and as a Palestinian Lutheran leader has had a long-term friendship with NYC Mayor Mamdani.
 - Pastor Steve said yes to leading the team organizing the workshops for the May 29-30 synod assembly. Pastor Steve asked for workshop support from members of the GMT – we will support him and the synod assembly! Location is TBD.
- Louise Evenson announced a Global Refuge zoom meeting on Jan. 23, 10-11 AM entitled "The Work of Welcome: Six Trends We're Watching in 2026"

UPCOMING 2026 GMT MEETINGS

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 LANE DATES JANUARY-MARCH

Wednesday, January 14th 12:45 - 1 PM

Thursday, January 22nd 2:30 - 4 PM

Saturday, January 24th 5:45 - 6 PM & 7 - 7:15 PM

Sunday, January 25th 8:30 - 9 AM & 10 - 10:30 AM

Sat 2/7 (before & after worship)

Sunday 2/8 (before & after 9 AM worship)

Wednesday, 2/11 (after Lunch Bunch)

Thursday, 2/12 (2:30-4 PM)

Wed 3/11 (after Lunch Bunch)

Thursday 3/19 (2:30-4 PM)

Sat 3/28 (before & after worship)

Sun 3/29 (before & after 9 AM worship)

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE FOR JANUARY 2026

Looking back at our amazing, intense, beautiful, memorable December, I marvel at all the activities, the worship services, the sermons, the music...Truly, if one had to select a perfect month to exemplify what One Ascension is about, December of 2025 would be an excellent candidate.

I pulled together data from our social media — paid and organic — as well as other advertising in December. First, these numbers reconfirm the value of reels that show and tell what is going on here and what to look forward to. Kudos to Pastor Chamie, especially, for leading the way on these and creating a steady stream.

Social media:

Paid Cumulative totals of views from Meta for Facebook and Instagram with boosts, including...

You're invited Christmas worship ad reel – 25,285 views

"It might be raining on Christmas Eve but the sanctuary will be warm and cozy and full of love... Dec. 23-24 7,288 views with 101 link clicks.

(I saw that Pastor Chamie's post featuring a graphic with Christmas tree and worship times, was getting traction, so I boosted it.)

Advent 10,906

(These were set to appear in Thousand Oaks +15 miles area with our demographic and interests.)

Organic views of 550+ totals in December, including...

Christmas Caroling <i>FB 1,561 (Insta 623)</i>	2,184
Gifts to friends of fieldworkers — <i>FB 1,193 (Insta 649)</i>	1,842
The beginning of our school's (show)... <i>FB 753 (Insta 526)</i>	1,279
A peek inside Confirmation (wrapping) <i>FB 773 (Insta 438)</i>	1,211
Last night's Hanging of the Greens <i>FB 842 (Insta 340)</i>	1,182
Hanging of the Greens preparation... <i>499 (Insta 410)</i>	909
A little update on patio renovation <i>458 (Insta 373)</i>	831
Join us for third weekend of Advent <i>352 (Insta 388)</i>	740
<i>Library 282 (354 insta)</i>	636
A snippet from rehearsals <i>499 (Insta 81)</i>	580

Many of these show 30-40% non-followers viewing — good advertising for newcomers.

January update - 2

Google and You Tube Advertising

Campaigns			
Summary of how your campaigns are performing			
	Cost	Clicks	CTR
Christmas at Ascension 2025	\$131.02	261	19.09%
You Tube - Hyper Local - Ascension TO Christmas	\$99.81	9	0.18%

Description	Quantity	Units
Youtube Promotion - 2025-12-18 - 60110793	8932	Clicks
Christmas at Ascension 2025	294	Clicks
You Tube - Hyper Local - Ascension TO Christmas	3020	Clicks
Youtube Promotion - 2025-11-28 - 74633443	42046	Impressions



According to Google, a cost per action (CPA) of \$40 is average. I need to explore this more; Google ads (and Meta also) continue to change with each update. I think we can do more.

Print Ads

We ran quarter page color ads in the Acorn and Thousand Oaks Acorn on December 12 and 19. The Acorn claims readership of 129,734 for these two editions.

Of course, we had other promotion including announcements, newsletter items, and flyers. Good advertising and promotion should add fuel to the amazing momentum here at Ascension. We will keep evolving and trying promising avenues.

Thanking you for all you do for our church,

Stacy Smith Bosco

Communications Coordinator

Hello All;

This mid-cycle communique is being sent out now that the December financials are available as promised during our January Church Council meeting. Also in the meantime another item has been requested of the CC and details can be seen below, #2. For Non Church Council members, info provided is for transparency and awareness; no further action is required.

1. Treasurer's Report:

As discussed in our January meeting Offerings have continued to be slightly under forecasts. These shortfalls in offerings have been mitigated by lower expenses. Mike Marvin has added a note that the \$7.9k audit timing favorability is included in the bottom line surplus to YTD budget of \$13,918. Adjusted for that amount, we are currently at about \$6k favorable to budget at the bottom line.

Cash positions continue to be strong. We are starting some of the approved spend from the ERTC pool, on top of the roughly \$67k spent (between PPP and ERTC) on the Sanctuary air conditioning repairs.

2. Be the Blessing Request from Ed Klodt. Please read the file below

3. Actions to be taken:

First of all, to take any action by e-mail we first must all agree to do so. If you agree, please indicate in a Yea - vote. If not, Nay. If we all agree, then we can proceed to actions. As normal we'd need a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report and separately to Accept or Reject the item #2. Be the Blessing Request. If/when we get a motion & a second, Then please provide a Yea/Nay vote for each item, # 1 & 2. If you have any questions/concerns please contact me by phone/text. My number is below.

Be the Blessing Grant Summary and Recommendation to Church Council

One Ascension's *Be the Blessing* grant endeavor went live in September 2023. The goal of this innovative initiative was to provide seed money to Ascension members who wanted to start a new ministry or grow an existing one. Church Council approved the idea and allocated \$50,000; Ascension School contributed an additional \$10,000.

Countless individuals and more than a dozen existing ministries have benefitted from these grants. To date, approximately \$36,000 in grants have been awarded for 37 different projects and ministries ranging from an expanded, community-wide Blessing of the Pets event in 2025 to a new Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program at the day school. In addition, in 2025 \$10,000 of that initial \$60,000 was allocated to *Kingdom Builders*, in which 100 individuals and groups at Ascension were challenged to reach out and minister to others. Each Kingdom Builder received \$100 to advance God's Kingdom in the world. Those recipients have shared amazing stories of how the Holy Spirit worked in their activities funded by their \$100.

Be the Blessing has encouraged more and more members to get off the sidelines and engage in ministry. Coupled with the *Get the Blessing* component, which brought people back to in-person worship, the endeavor has been a success.

At the January 12, 2026 meeting of the *Be the Blessing* Team (formerly the Generosity Team), the suggestion was made and approved by the team to discontinue the grant component of *Be the Blessing*. Grant requests have dwindled, and we feel that the program has achieved its goals. We see this as a "soft close" in which we would stop promoting the grants but consider any new grant requests in the next few months that have an exceedingly high probability of success and blessing.

The team believes that the remaining *Be the Blessing* funds (approximately \$13,000) would be better spent now on promoting Ascension's existing ministries, possibly through print, social media and video communications. Our team is currently working on ideas to leverage that, especially in showing Ascension members how they can get involved in those ministries.

We felt it was important to provide this update and recommendation to Church Council since Council originally provided the funding and support for *Be the Blessing*. We ask that you approve this shift in *Be the Blessing* funding from providing grant monies to more purposefully promoting existing ministries and how Ascension members can engage with those ministries.

Respectfully Submitted by Ed Klodt
Chair, *Be the Blessing* Team

Ascension Lutheran Church

Budget Summary

FYE26 YTD through December 31, 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	846,646	805,704	(40,942)	-4.8%
Other Revenues	47,280	24,430	29,698	5,268	21.6%
Total Revenues:	1,615,689	871,076	835,402	(35,674)	-4.1%
Expenditures:					
Salaries & Benefits	1,332,178	713,093	683,230	29,863	4.2%
Allocated Staff Expenses	(253,453)	(136,475)	(131,268)	(5,207)	3.8%
Benevolences	54,068	27,034	27,034	(0)	0.0%
Programs / Committees	64,179	31,648	25,645	6,003	19.0%
Administrative Expenses	111,899	58,230	43,877	14,353	24.6% 7.9k fav. Audit timing
Property Maintenance	100,242	61,123	58,914	2,209	3.6%
Utilities & Insurance	108,418	58,269	55,897	2,372	4.1%
Operating Expenditures	1,517,531	812,922	763,329	49,593	6.1%
Debt Service	99,675	49,838	49,838	-	0.0%
Total Expenditures	1,617,206	862,760	813,167	49,593	5.7%
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	(1,517)	8,317	22,235	13,918	
Prior Year Surplus Spend *	-	-	37,966		
Reserve spend**	-	-	65,000		

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

**\$30k Sanctuary Air Project, \$35k Patio refurbishment