

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, May 20, 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 – Anna Woodward

Guest presentation of the Ascension Safety Team –Dave Festerling

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

New Business

- No new business

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmands, and Baptisms

Old Business

- Budget presentation for 2026/2027 to consider for recommendation to the Ascension congregation –Kaylee Searway and the Finance Team.
- Nominating Committee Report – Carrie Leonard, Past President

Approval of Minutes -John Rarick

- April 15, 2026 Church Council Minutes

Consent Approval of Reports to Council – John Rarick

- Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp's Report
- Pastor Steve Herder's Report
- Director of Operations Report – Kaylee Searway
- School Board Report
- Foundation 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 June 17, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.**

Closing Prayer – Anna Woodward

Adjournment

Executive Session

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, April 15, 2026 - 7:00pm
Bethlehem Room**

Welcome and Call to Order -John Rarick, President

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

*Board Members Present: Al Baker, Crystal Bryant, Ethan East, Michael Feltner,
Carrie Leonard, John Rarick, Steve Smuck, Creighton Van Horn (CVH)*

Others Present: Pastor Chamie, Kaylee Searway

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 (Ethan), with an amendment to add Reimbursement for Fellowship Food in New Business. It was then seconded (CVH) and unanimously approved to accept the agenda.

Devotion – Michael Feltner

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

The deficit gap between revenue and expenses has decreased to -2.5%. Based on the current outlook, it is hopeful that we will finish the Fiscal Year in the positive.

It was moved (Carrie), seconded (Al), then unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented.

New Business

- **Initial budget review for 2026/2027 – Kaylee Searway and Finance Team**

Kaylee presented the proposed budget for 2026-27, to be voted on by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. Main concern - what is the best way to approach the ask for new offerings. Other items discussed include new expenses (or proposed expenses) for updated services, maintenance or programs.

- **Fellowship Food Reimbursement**

It has been requested that we discuss a plan to ensure food items for Fellowship time after services are always available. It was suggested that we offer a reimbursement for expenses, hoping to guarantee members be willing to provide food for each weekly service. This has been tabled for potential further discussion.

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmands, and Baptisms

Seven New Members affirmed in March

Ashley Babich

Stephanie Frias

John Hajducko

Frank Messana

Ryanne Messana

Chris Stine

Bob Stine

Two Baptisms in March

Capri Noelle Messana 03/08/2026

Madelyn Ivy Meddaugh 03/15/2026

Old Business

- No old business

Approval of Minutes -John Rarick

- March 23, 2026, Joint School Board, Church Council Minutes

It was moved (Ethan), seconded (Carrie) then unanimously approved to accept the Minutes of the March 2026 Joint School Board/Church Council meeting.

- March 23, 2026, Church Council Minutes

It was moved (CVH), seconded (Steve) then unanimously approved to accept the Minutes of the March Church Council meeting.

Consent Approval of Reports to Council – John Rarick

- Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp's Report

- Pastor Steve Herder's Report
- Director of Operations – Kaylee Searway
- School Board Minutes – not submitted
- Global Ministries Team Report
- Communications Report

It was moved (CVH), seconded (Ethan) noting that the School Board Minutes are missing, then unanimously approved to accept the Reports to Council.

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 May 20, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.**

Closing Prayer – Creighton Van Horn

Adjournment

It was moved (Michael), then seconded (CVH) and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 PM.

Pastor Chamie's April 2026 Council Report

(April 6-May 10)

Children, Youth, & Family

Children

Sunday school for the school year concludes on May 17. Jenelle and I met with our regular Sunday school teachers in April to reflect on the past school year as well as prepare for ending this year with a celebration. There will be no Sunday school at the 9:00 service until September. There will be a 5-week summer Sunday school series at the 10:30 that will spin off of the them for Vacation Bible School.

Jenelle has done a lot of work for VBS in this past month. The theme is "Rome: Paul and the Underground Church." I love seeing the team of people that Jenelle is putting together. I love brainstorming and collaborating with her.

Though Sunday school for the school year will be over, Jenelle and I attended a "Team Family" webinar about ideas to support children and family ministries in the summer. We are excited to implement some new things including a summer reading program through our Ascension Library. Our children's choir under the direction of Kari Keit will meet between services through the third week of June as they prepare to sing on June 28 which is Grandparents' Sunday.

Youth



Our last Sunday confirmation session of this school year. What a great group - and a good sized group even though we were missing several people due to sports and other commitments.

This has been a very busy time of year in wrapping up confirmation for the school year. The last Sunday class was May 3. We then had the confirmation overnight on May 8 following the all-youth (middle school through high school) bonfire night. The s'mores were hosted by Ms. Carol (the youth love her) and the Fair Trade team. Darrin Kruse led music. Some of the high schoolers did a skit on prayer after Mr. Gottmer read a passage on prayer. After the bonfire, the youth played some wild and fun games all across campus. We heard so much positive feedback from the bonfire and overnight, including parents saying things like, "My kid can't stop talking about how much fun they had."

In this last month, I have read through the faith statements written by the 8th graders who will be confirmed on May 17. I have met with all 15 of them and at least one of their parents individually to talk about their faith statement, to discuss how they will continue walking in the way of Jesus in high school, and to pray for them.



Youth gathered around the campfire Friday night for worship and s'mores.



James and youth make breakfast Saturday morning after the overnight.

CYF Continuing Education



Kaya and James meet in my office for our Barna Co-Lab Continuing Education.

Jenelle, Spencer, Kaya, and James and I are in the midst of a 5-session Barna Co-Lab which takes the most current data on children, youth, young adults, and families and helps church leaders navigate and build their ministries. It has spurred good discussions and I look forward to continuing this work and will be able to share more insights and results after we conclude the co-lab.

Interfacing with the Schools

Jenelle and I continue to read to the ECC every Monday. We are also both working with different grades to do “milestone” Bible lessons and Christian teachings with students. Several church staff including me attended the school auction on April 25th.

Worship

I am thankful for Pastor Paul and Pastor Steve helping to fill in some of the gaps while Pastor Tim is on sabbatical. I am the main point of contact for our worship services. I continue to meet weekly with Wyant and Jenelle. I have also had individual meetings with Nancy Lee and Melissa as we work on aspects of worship for the 6:00 and 10:30 services. The whole worship team - all music and tech staff and then Jenelle and I met with the team to go over the spring and early summer worship calendar as well as plan Pentecost Sunday.

I am the one connecting with our guest preachers who Pastor Tim arranged to have with us during his sabbatical. Many people told me that they hope Pastor Audie Diggs (our guest preacher the last weekend of April) comes back again to preach.

It was a great joy to baptize Beau Lambert at the 9:00 AM service on May 3.

Other



One of the small groups at the April Word & Wine in my backyard.

Women's Ministries. I enjoyed hosting Word & Wine in my backyard the week that Tim and Jude were surfing in Costa Rica. I also enjoyed attending the concluding breakfast and fellowship of the Monday Morning Women's Bible Study.

Testifying in Court. I was subpoenaed by the lawyers for Nancy and Karim Iskander to testify on behalf of the family in regards to how the deaths of Mark and Jacob have effected them and the community. The civil trial for the Iskander/Grossman case may run into June. Mark and Jacob, beloved Ascension students, were killed in September of 2020. Jacob would be in 8th grade. His friends are feeling his absence as they prepare for the milestones of confirmation and graduation and he has come up frequently in their conversations. Testifying was hard; it was also an honor to be able to

share a little bit about the boys.

Pastoral Care. The pastoral care load has been quite a lot recently, especially with Pastor Tim on sabbatical and then Pastor Steve spent a few days in Wisconsin with his family.

Prayer Breakfast @ CLU. Pastor Steve, Kaylee, Jenelle, our youth intern Kaya and fellow CLU friends Chaya and Stella all attended the CLU prayer breakfast together. Dr. Nunes gave a wonderful keynote address. It was good to see other Ascension and community and church colleagues present for the event.

Engagement Party. I felt so blessed to be at the engagement party for Henry Behm and Macy Alexander. All their siblings were there and this was a big surprise



for Macy who didn't know she would come home to a full house after Henry proposed. Henry and his twin brother were in the first 8th grade class that I taught at Ascension. Their sister Addie was our well-loved youth director for several years. The Behm and Alexander families go way back in Ascension. This is one of the joys of being somewhere over many years... seeing families grow and expand and celebrate amazing milestones.

Young Adults & New Members. James Halvorson has shared with me his hopes in building a young adult group at Ascension. I have tried to encourage him in this endeavor. James is spearheading a young adult gathering at Little Cafe in the later half of May. Kaya Anderson has brought many CLU friends to worship throughout this school year. She and her good friends Chaya and Stella have rarely missed a Sunday all year. I love their enthusiasm and faithfulness to Ascension. Chaya and Stella expressed their desire to become members (Kaya is keeping her membership at the church her dad serves as pastor in Minnesota). It was fun to do a membership class dinner with all of them and then have them join on the day that Stella sang and played piano for the offering. She chose a Finish song she loved from her Confirmation years growing up in Finland. These three young woman shared they would love to get a young

adult Bible study going when they return to college in the fall (all of them will be gone through the summer). James, Kaya, Chaya, and Stella have been frequently playing pickle ball on Sundays after high school youth group with Mr. Gottmer and Tim Hillman (who is one of our high school mentors) and a few other young adults. It really makes me happy to see this organic growth of young adults. It inspires me to want to help them in any way that I can.



Sabbatical Time with Tim. Tim and I absolutely loved our road trip with our dog Luna up the coast as we traveled to Carmel Valley and then to the Redwoods and then to Trinidad, CA and then to Yachats, OR and then to Corvallis, OR, and then home. We stayed at some really neat campgrounds and forest cabins. We hiked 65+ miles in green forests. We enjoyed the damp, rainy, and cool weather. It was truly glorious and so refreshing to just soak in time together.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Chamie

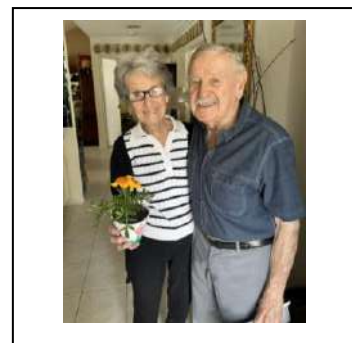
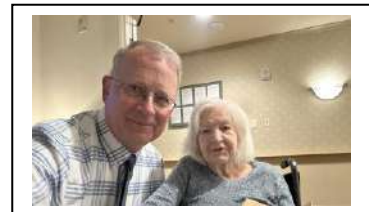
Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – For the May 2026 Meeting

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

In my last Council report to you, the whole report was about one day in the life of this associate pastor. It happened to be the first day of spring, March 20th. For this month's report I considered writing only about one week, a week that began with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and ended with many wonderful home visits to some of our oldest members. Instead, I will include more ministries in the month of April.

Of course, we miss Pastor Tim while he is on sabbatical. I worked almost full-time with so many good ministries going on at (and beyond) Ascension Church, School, and Foundation. The first photo is from when I arrived very early Easter morning. The second one is a unique one, from behind the altar on Easter morning, as people were coming for Holy Communion. Thanks to so many staff, musicians, altar guild, youth leaders, and volunteers who made our Holy Week so special again this year. Pastors Tim and Chamie's Easter sermon was so powerful, as was the Good Friday cantata by our choir.

Our Early Childhood Center decorated small flowerpots and planted spring flowers for our seniors. I was able to joyfully deliver twenty of them in home and assisted living visits. Starting from the upper left: Carol Ranschau, Steve and Dick Castan, Helen Craig, (lower left): Ingrid Domin, Badia Ashamallah, Stephanie and Milton Berty. Thanks, ECC!!



More senior ministry news: Lunch Bunch happens again on May 13! Thanks to Chris Wagner and team. Prayers for Pastor Larry's well-being. Two of our Eucharistic Ministers are out for health reasons. Let Pastor Ron Cox know if you'd be interested in bringing Communion to seniors' homes. Thanks to many of you who are making caring phone calls and visits to homes and hospitals. Big news, we now have a volunteer parish nurse once again. Thanks to Debbie Kahn for saying "yes" to that calling. More info will be coming soon. Many of you remember Diana Doerfler who used to be our parish nurse. Valerie Krum continues her beloved card ministry. Bob Tokin leads our transportation ministry, "SAMs Tram." Contact him if you need a ride to church or to another appointment. With our volunteer drivers we do what we can, if they are available at that time. Here's a photo that I took of one of the places where Norm Guetschoff leads a Christian Life Hour. The last CLH that I led at University Village Oak View I was thrilled to have Janet and Joel Weber, and Lucy and Ron Peterson there! Kirsten and Karsten Lundring often come too, as does Jeff Specks. Speaking of University Village, we just had two more members move there, two more are preparing to move there, and my mother-in-law, Mardie Heller, will be moving there this summer. Julie and I will be happy to have her close by and a member of Ascension! You'll enjoy her too.



The other ministries that I oversee have been blessed with many volunteers. Prayer ministries. Adult education classes. Community Concerns Team. Global Ministries Team. This past month we dedicated our Fair Trade Lane. Charlie recorded that and is editing a short highlight video to share with all. This photo is from that ministry.

I led the synod team in planning 18 workshops for our synod assembly on May 29 at the Hilton in Pasadena. Here's the assembly logo with three of the workshops; great design by Ascension member, Gary Trumbo, owner of Signarama in Camarillo.



We are grieving the loss of four loved ones: Pastor Willis Moerer (I'll lead his graveside service in early June), Janice Bascou, Donna Mae Corra (whose service Pastor Chamie will lead in Westlake on June 18), and Sherry Breitung (whose service I'll lead here on May 16 at 10am). This summer we may have a special weekend in our three services to remember Pastor Moerer and to give thanks to God for his life, love, and wonderful ministries among us.

A couple of other April ministry moments: On April 18 I zoomed with friends and church partners in MN for the EcoFaith Summit; that evening I led the music for our Saturday service; on April 20 I led a Bible study on Luke 24 at University Village Oak View; on April 21 Di Starzak provided a refresher course in CPR and AED etc. for our staff and ushers.

A few more photos from the month of April: Thanks to Jude Delkeskamp for installing this artwork of Jesus' welcome to people ("Welcome the Stranger" by Michael Adams), and a John August Swanson poster ("Let's Work Together: Make a Difference"), in our Friday Food Pantry welcome area. Glad that Hannah stopped by from college and could be in the photo too. The photo with the children was one of many experiences I had this month singing with our youngest. This one was a special chapel service during Holy Week that was led by Pastor Chamie and Jenelle Smith. The family Easter photo includes Julie's mom, Mardie on the right, our daughter Natalie next to her, and then on the other side is our good friend Kevin from Palm Springs who visited us that weekend. The dove meme represents our continual prayer for peace in our world. God, make us all instruments of your peace and of your love.

Mark your calendars: July 25-26 our ELCA missionary, Pastor Kristin Engstrom from Madagascar, will be with us! Children and youth, come with all your questions about Madagascar!



May 2026

God bless you in your daily Bible reading and prayers
The Thursday to Sunday readings are to prepare you for weekend worship.
The Monday - Wednesday readings are for our meditation as we
pray through the book of Colossians. Take time to contemplate the meaning
of each phrase. Share your faith with others.

365 Days of Prayer in 2026



Every day I will bless You, and praise Your name forever and ever,
(Psalm 143:2)
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
Prayers for Pastor Tim on his sabbatical through July 5th		Prayers for all who need God's healing strength			1 CLU Choir concert 7 pm in our sanctuary <i>Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16</i>	2 May monthly Benevolence: Agape Fund for the needy <i>1 Peter 2:2-10</i>
3 Prayers of gratitude for our Foundation Trustees <i>John 14:1-14</i>	4 Blessings for Calvin Beard who is 98 today <i>Colossians 1:1-2</i>	5 Prayers for Regina Banks and our Lutheran office of Public Policy <i>Colossians 1:3-5a</i>	6 Join our Global Ministries Team at 4 pm <i>Colossians 1:5b-8</i>	7 <i>National Prayer Day</i> Pray for our country's leaders <i>Acts 17:22-31</i>	8 6 th - 12 th grade bonfire here at 7 pm <i>Psalm 66:8-20</i>	9 Prayers for our Bishops Yehiel Curry & Brenda Bos <i>1 Peter 3:13-22</i>
10 <i>Mother's Day</i> Pastor Paul Gravrock preaching on Mother's Day <i>John 14:15-21</i>	11 Prayers for Pope Leo on his one year anniversary on May 8th <i>Colossians 1:9-10</i>	12 Prayers for Pastor Chamie as she leads so many ministries <i>Colossians 1:11-12</i>	13 <i>Fair Trade Day</i> Lunch Bunch & Fair Trade at noon <i>Colossians 1:13-14</i>	14 <i>Ascension Day</i> Prayers for Ascension Lutheran Church in Los Angeles <i>Acts 1:1-14</i>	15 Prayers for CLU's graduation day <i>Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35</i>	16 Prayers of peace for every place of conflict and war <i>1 Peter 4:12-14</i>
17 Confirmation Sunday Young Adults 5 pm @ Little Calf <i>John 17:1-11</i>	18 Prayers for all our women's and men's ministries <i>Colossians 1:15-16</i>	19 Prayers for our ELCA seminaries <i>Colossians 1:17-18</i>	20 Thanks to God for our Church Council <i>Colossians 1:19-20</i>	21 Prayers for our GriefShare group that meets every Thursday @ 1 pm <i>Acts 2:1-21</i>	22 Pastor Steve's 19 th Anniversary at Ascension <i>Psalm 104:24-34</i>	23 Thankful for Jenelle Smith's ministries (no Saturday worship) <i>1 Corinthians 12:3b-13</i>
24 One service at 10 am, then Pentecost International Fair <i>John 20:19-23</i>	25 <i>Memorial Day</i> Honoring those who died while serving our country <i>Colossians 1:21-23</i>	26 Thankful for Jeff Hengst, Cam Lorentson, & Jude Delkeskamp <i>Colossians 1:24-26</i>	27 Prayers for our ELCA missionary, Pastor Kristin Engstrom <i>Colossians 1:27-29</i>	28 Blessing for our school garden and all who tend it <i>Genesis 1:1-2:4a</i>	29 Prayers for our Synod Assembly in Pasadena <i>Psalm 8</i>	30 God bless our staff and their families <i>2 Corinthians 13:11-13</i>
31 Faith Quilts Sunday <i>Matthew 28:16-20</i>	alcto.org (805) 495-0406	alecc.org	alschool.org	ascensionfoundation.org	elca.org	lutheranworld.org 13-27

Church Council Report
Kaylee Searway

May 20, 2026
Director of Operations

Attendance

This year's final count for Easter weekend worship was 1135 over 4 services; surpassing 2025 by 80 attendees! Average worship attendance since April 5th has been down at an average of 396. (The six-week average before May 5 & 6 was 433.)

Maintenance

The School Board has approved summer projects that include converting the current maintenance area into a welcome center for the TK-8 admin team. We'll be moving around some TK-8 admin offices to create an additional classroom as we will have two kindergartens and two first grade classes for 2026-2027. Our maintenance team is moving to a roomy shed near their storage bins.

We were already planning to have contractors renovate the exterior restrooms next to the church nursery this summer. Given that, a refresh of the Kinder's outside play area, and some storage cleanup, our maintenance team will have a very packed 10 weeks of summer!

Tech Upgrade

We will be migrating away from our church's onsite server in late May. After we mapped the drives, Bryce and Josh at Anchor Point have been working with each church office team member to get their access to files onto One Drive and SharePoint. Josh has led one training for some "Power Users" who will help lead the change. We have team-wide training next week for everyone to see how it works before we make the final switch before Memorial Day. We will use what we learn during the church migration to prepare for the school server migration.

Finance

Our team is feeling good about the work we have done on the school, TK-8, and ECC budgets. Thank you for the feedback you provided on the church budget at your April meeting. We presented the TK-8 and ECC budgets to the School Board and obtained their approval in late April. The Finance Committee met April 28th and made their recommendation for the church budget. We are proud to share it with you!

Staff Meeting Changes

Pastor Chamie and I have enjoyed experimenting with staff meeting times and dynamics. We have learned that our team prefers an earlier time frame in the day, and that several varied styles are helpful. We've had very task-oriented meetings to focus on calendar and sets ups before major events. We've had more generalized team building and mission focused meetings about why we work in the areas we do and what we find most fulfilling about our work. We always enjoy time together for prayer and devotion.

Human Resource Matters

Approving budgets is just the beginning; implementing wage changes and new budgets takes some attention and effort as well. I have prepared work agreements for the TK-8 teachers. I'll switch gears to wage statements for the rest of the TK-8 team and the church staff. Pastor Chamie and I have started preparing for performance reviews with our respective direct reports. Once I finish those it will be time to prepare the ECC teachers' work agreements by the end of June, as well as revise the three Employee Handbooks. Never a dull moment!

Thank you, *Kaylee Searway*, Director of Operations

**Ascension Lutheran School Board Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2026**

Remembering Our Mission:

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

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

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

ONE ASCENSION Motto: COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY

Attendees:

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

Guests:

Kaylee Searway, Britney Childers, Mike Marvin, Camryn Lomeli, Heather Hartson

Call to Order:

Kyle Jones called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

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

Devotion:

Nelly Trumbo led a devotion from the book of Romans on the theme of perseverance.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda:

Motion to approve the agenda initiated by Nelly, Anna seconded. Motion passes.

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

Old Business:

- No items pulled from the Consent Agenda

New Business:

- Construction Bids - Kaylee Searway presented a report on Construction Bids, including:
 - A new Kindergarten Classroom, including a bathroom - repurpose of Principal Office/Reception Area)
 - A new Reception Area - Repurpose of the current maintenance area
 - A new maintenance area -
 - Ashley moved to approve a budget of up to \$200,000 from available cash to fund the new construction project for the summer of 2026, including a new 1st-grade classroom, a new reception center, a new maintenance area, and all related projects. Kathy seconded. Motion passes unanimously.
- 2026/2027 ALS/ALECC Budget -
 - Kaylee presented the budget
 - Chris moved to approve the FYE 2027 ALS/ALECC Budget, as presented by the finance team, with an estimated consolidated budget surplus of \$1,825. Anna seconded. Motion passes unanimously.
- Board Nomination Committee: Paul Farrell has accepted a position on the board, pending approval from the congregation.
- Staff Survey - surveys have gone out to the ALS, and surveys will go to the ECC staff at the end of the summer due to the director change.
- Bank of America resolution - Chris moved to approve a draft resolution to change the signers on the BofA accounts, adding and removing various employees and board members. Jeanette seconded. Motion passes unanimously
- School Calendar Resolution - Nelly moved to approve the ALS and ECC calendars with the adjustment to the Good Friday extended care. Kathy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Closing Prayer:

Pastor Chamie closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjournment:

Kyle motioned to adjourn the meeting. Matt seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Chris Poveromo

**ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
FOUNDATION REPORT TO THE COUNCIL
MAY 13, 2026**

At its May meeting the Foundation approved six grants totaling \$21,800:

- \$750 to Fair Trade ministries to create video recordings of the past, present and future of Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry.
- \$1,000 to Mara Hassenbein to purchase supplies needed for making high school faith quilts.
- \$2,700 to Mara Hassenbein to supplement the increasing cost of supplies to make the LWR quilts.
- \$3,600 to Rich Gregory to purchase walkie-talkies for the day school.
- \$1,000 for purchase of bibles to present to the 5th graders as a gift from the Foundation to show our support to the school.
- \$12,750 to Pastor Steve Herder to fund two groups in great need: \$10,000 to fund our support for local neighbors through the Agape Fund, and \$2,750 to support LWR emergency fund for work being done in the Middle East.

The Foundation also approved 12 student scholarships totaling \$29,360.

An adult education class will be held on Sunday, June 7, featuring a talk by Steve Camandalian, an investment banker from Thousand Oaks.

The Foundation's total assets were \$2.1 million as of late April. Notwithstanding the volatility of the financial markets this year, the funds have performed reasonably well year to date. A small change was made to the investment portfolio in April to sell a marginally performing equity fund and replaced it with one that has consistently done well. The change amounted to approximately 1% of the total portfolio.

Alan Baker, Foundation Representative to the Council



Wednesday, May 6, 2026

4-5:30 PM, Bethlehem Room

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

The Global Ministries Team will do this as **we pray, work, partner and participate in God's mission around the world**, using our ELCA global mission model of accompaniment. ("God's work. Our hands.") The scope of current ministries as well as those ministries we would like to better serve and support is reflected in our name. Inspired by the Biblical mandates to preach the Gospel and remember the poor, the Global Ministries Team will respond to God's love by sharing the good news of God's saving grace in Christ; preserving and restoring creation; and serving others through care, advocacy, education, reconciliation, solidarity with those in need, and interfaith work.

MEETING NOTES

WELCOME

Pastor Steve, meeting leader, welcomed all present: Andy Binsley, Beverly Selle, Bruce Thomas, Carol Bjelland, Dave Harkins, Ethel Jordan, Jill Binsley, Marcia Koenig, Mary Wennes, and Pastor Chamie Delkeskamp. CLU graduating seniors Nina Dube and Angela Abelo were guests.

OPENING PRAYER – Beverly Selle offered the opening prayer.

UPDATES FROM NINA AND ANGELA

Nina and Angela gave a report to the GMT on their experience at the National Model United Nations conference in New York City in April. Pastor Steve later distributed an electronic copy of their presentation slides to the GMT members. The GMT Trip Fund had paid for their flights.

FAIR TRADE - Carol Bjelland

- The 25th anniversary of Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry remains a focus all year.
- Pastor Steve led a service of blessing and dedication for Fair Trade Lane on Wednesday, April 29. The script of the dedication service was distributed with the meeting agenda.
- A CLU librarian purchased Fair Trade Lane items for study break snacks for students.
- Gifts for the 16 confirmands were assembled by GMT members prior to the meeting.
- A youth gathering bonfire with Fair Trade s'mores is on May 8.
- The May schedule for Fair Trade Lane includes May 13 (lunch bunch), May 14 (school) and May 16 & 17 before and after worship services.
- Fair Trade will offer a taste of several fair trade food products at the Pentecost International Fair on May 24. GMT members are invited to assist at the Fair Trade table.
- Carol will be attending and presenting a workshop at the Equal Exchange Annual Summit in Norton, MA in June.
- A list of expenditures related to Fair Trade activities in May was distributed.

PENTECOST INTERNATIONAL FAIR

- There will be one service at 10 on Pentecost (May 24.) There will be no Saturday evening service on May 23.
- Pastor Steve announced that there will be a table featuring Zimbabwe and Zambia.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY – May 29-30 in Pasadena

- Eighteen synod workshops have been arranged by Pastor Steve.
- Carol Bjellend will be presenting a workshop on Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry.
- Several GMT members plan to attend the assembly.

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF KITS

- LWR will be the recipient of June's special monthly benevolence offering.
- A leadership person for Ascension's LWR 2026 Kit Project is needed.

GIFTS OF HOPE 2026

- Pastor Steve distributed 2 handouts which served to inform the group's initial discussion of the 2026 GOH campaign. The handouts were entitled "Impact Report and Proposal: Gifts of Hope Campaign" and "Africa Projects for Consideration by Global Ministries Team, Ascension Lutheran Church, Gifts of Hope Campaign 2026."
- Pastor Steve encouraged GMT members to read the handouts and prayerfully consider the project options prior to the June GMT meeting.

UPDATES: PARTNERS IN UKRAINE, EL SALVADOR, TANZANIA, MADAGASCAR, AND PERU

- Ukraine: February benevolence offerings to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine totaled \$15,277.50. \$13,748 was sent to Dave Nonnemaker, Minister of Presence in Ukraine, to purchase 12 generators, 1 eco flow mobile battery, first aid kits, food & medicine parcels, and loaves of bread.
- El Salvador: Dave Harkin shared an update he received from Valerie on the dental project in El Salvador. An application for non-profit status has been submitted.
- Tanzania: Missionary Daudi's newsletter was shared at the meeting.
- Madagascar: Missionary Kristin Engstrom will be visiting Ascension July 25-26.
- Peru: A portion of a letter from Pastor David was shared.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Space is available to attend the Prayer Breakfast at CLU on May 7.
- Regina Banks is speaking at the Spring Conference Assembly at Holy Trinity at 7 pm on May 7.

UPCOMING 2026 GMT MEETINGS

Wednesday June 3, 2026 4-5:30 Focus on Gifts of Hope 2026 and LWR

All year we will focus on our 25th Anniversary of Ascension's Fair Trade Ministries.

Submitted by Ethel Jordan

Ascension Fair Trade Report

May 2026



Let's Be The Change We Wish to See!

Friday Night Fair Trade Fun - May 8th

Ascension's Youth invited us to join them for their bonfire - we can't come empty-handed. The perfect thing to bring to a bonfire – the fixin's for Fair Trade S'mores! We're looking forward to an evening of meeting & greeting, a little learning about Fair Trade chocolate & lots of ooey-gooey S'mores made all the tastier with Fair Trade chocolate! The group numbered more than 40. It was wonderful to join the Youth in song, worship & fellowship.

Fair Trade Lane – A Faith Path to Justice for People & Planet. Dedication & Blessing – April 29th

We thank Pastor Steve for creating & writing & leading us in a very beautiful & meaningful Dedication & Blessing of Fair Trade Lane. Thanks also to young friend Bodie for reading Scripture; to Charlie for video recording this special event (to be shared later this year as we continue our 25th Anniversary celebration); and all who joined us

CLU Students Take A Study Break...The Fair Trade Way!



We're so glad Erin, CLU, Library and Outreach Programs contacted us to get some tea and chocolate for their study break programs. We love that the students are enjoying these Fair Trade treats. Erin shared that the chocolate went fast! We thank Erin & the CLU for connecting with us. We look forward to more connections in the future.



Fair Trade & Fair Trade Lane in the Merry Month of May

Fair Trade Lane will be open **4** times in this merry month of May.

On May 10th, Fair Trade New Member welcome kits were shared with new members joining our Ascension Community.

On May 17th, Ascension's Global Ministries & Fair Trade Teams & members will give gifts of Fair Trade hand-carved olive wood peace doves from Palestine & a little bit of Fair Trade chocolate, to Ascension's 16 Confirmands.

On May 24th, Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry will again join in the Pentecost International Fair, serving Fair Trade Herbal Tea - iced EE Hibiscus, Peppermint & Vanilla Rooibos teas- and Chocolate Chip Cookies & Chocolate-dipped Dried Mango made with EE Dried Mango & Chocolate Chips.

On May 29th, Ascension Fair Trade will share the story of Fair Trade & Fair Trade at Ascension with those gathered at our SWCA Synod Assembly in Pasadena. We look forward to this opportunity to share about Fair Trade with others & to extend Ascension Fair Trade hospitality & help to other congregations who may want to bring Fair Trade to their congregations.

The month of May is indeed a merry one for us at Ascension, but it is also merry for everyone around the globe.

Saturday May 9th is World Fair Trade! We can't think of a better way to get the celebration started than by joining with Ascension's Youth at the bonfire on May 8th.

Fair Trade Lane: A Faith Path to Justice for People and Planet

**Prayers and Songs of Dedication to
God
Wednesday, April 29, 2026**



Welcome! Psalm 118:24; Colossians 3:17

Song: “For the Fruit of All Creation” - #679

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, creator of all people and the planet, we gather today to dedicate this Fair Trade Lane to your honor and glory, because of your call to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with you, because of your invitation to see you Jesus as we serve the most vulnerable in our community and world. We say boldly that this Fair Trade Lane is dedicated to be a faith path to justice for people and planet. We thank you and celebrate 25 years of stewardship through our Fair Trade Lane. We thank you for the vision that started this ministry and the hands that have sustained it. Bless this space, both the fair trade products, and the artwork by children, youth, and adults, that it may continue to be a sanctuary of justice, fairness, community, joy, respect, love, and welcome to all, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Litany of Dedication:

Leader: For twenty-five years, this ministry has chosen to stand with farmers, artisans, and workers across the globe.

Congregation: **We dedicate this space to economic justice and fair wages.**

Leader: In a world of overconsumption, we choose to support sustainable practices that care for your creation. We seek to lift up the Ten Blocks of Fair Trade principles.

Congregation: **We dedicate this space to the protection of our planet.**

Leader: Through coffee, chocolate, crafts, and olive oil, we connect our community to our global neighbors.

Congregation: **We dedicate this space to building bridges of love and solidarity.**

Leader: As we celebrate this 25th Anniversary, we recognize Marcia Koenig, Carol Bjelland, and all the past leaders, and all past and present volunteers and supporters.

Congregation: **May this Fair Trade Lane be a testament to your grace and justice.**

Closing Blessing:

May the products on these shelves, and the colorful, joy-filled artwork around us, remind us of our commitment to you, God. May every purchase be an act of justice. May each person who comes feel welcomed and loved, in Jesus’ name. Go forth and act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. Amen.

Song: “Canticle of the Turning” - #723

“For the Fruit of All Creation” ELW 679

1. For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God
For these gifts to ev'ry nation, thanks be to God.
For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping, thanks be to God.

2. In the just reward of labor, God's will is done.
In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done.
In our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

3. For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths
that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to
God.

“Canticle of the Turning” Hymn #723

Verse 1

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
could the world be about to turn?

Refrain:

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

Verse 2

Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.

Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn. [Refrain]

Verse 3

From the halls of pow'r to the fortress tow'r
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
ev'ry tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn. [Refrain]

Verse 4

Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
is the promise which holds us bound,
til the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around. [Refrain]



FAIR TRADE LANE

WILL BE OPEN

Wednesday, May 13th

12:45 – 1 PM

Thursday, May 14th

2:30 – 4 PM

Saturday, May 16th

5:45 - 6 PM & 7-7:15 PM

Sunday, May 17th

8:30 - 9 AM, 10 - 10:30 AM & 11:30 - 11:45 AM

EVERYONE'S INVITED!

The double doors to Founders Hall will be open

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE FOR MAY

As people continue to grapple with ethical issues that come with social media and AI in these times, I believe the more information we have, the better for making good choices. For example, while so many of us have concerns regarding Facebook, they must be weighed along with the positive communication opportunities the platform continues to provide, particularly when used to share scripture, prayer, helping and other opportunities as well as news of Ascension and the wider church — all of which Pastor Steve, especially, has been doing for the better part of two decades.

Our church **Facebook page drew 53.3K views** in the last month alone, with 2.5 K dedicated Followers. For the church **Instagram**, we have 603 dedicated Followers.

Other current stats:

For our website, **ALCTO.org**, we had 4,000 visitors/10,000 visits in the past month. Sundays are always heaviest, with around 300 views. Current Top 10 pages: 1. Front page, 2. Livestream, 3. Calendar, 4. Meet the Pastors, 5. Index, 6. Signups/Announcements, 7. Staff Directory, 8. Solid Food Podcast, 9. About Our Worship Services, 10. Map and Directions

For ***This Week at Ascension***, we continue to have an open rate averaging about 55% weekly with 1,193 contacts.

For Artificial Intelligence, I have been trying to use my personal Claude account judiciously, including exploring other church's policies. At one point, I saw that a church had its staff complete an AI ethics learning module. When I asked what that was, Claude created a full learning module in a few minutes. It's not bad. I didn't install it anywhere, but I did ask Claude to put together some highlights of the major themes from the learning module to share with you. At least, there are some good points to think about. This is all from Claude, aka the world at large, not me. (Next page).

Thanking you again for your dedication and time,

Stacy Smith Bosco

Communications Coordinator

AI ETHICS & TRAINING — HIGHLIGHTS

Ascension Lutheran Church | Quick Reference for Staff & Volunteers

THE 6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Every use of AI at Ascension must be guided by these principles:

Human dignity	AI must never demean, manipulate, surveil, or harm any person — member, visitor, or staff.
Transparency	Be honest when AI has substantially contributed to content or communications.
Accountability	A named human being must always be the approving authority for any AI-generated output.
Truthfulness	Never use AI to fabricate quotes, scripture, theology, or statements by real persons.
Pastoral primacy	Pastoral care, counseling, and spiritual direction must never be delegated to AI.
Stewardship	Weigh the real financial, time, and privacy costs of every AI tool — free tools carry hidden costs.

WHAT AI MAY BE USED FOR

The following are permitted uses, subject to policy requirements:

Administrative & operational:

- Drafting memos, agendas, meeting summaries, and correspondence templates
- Data entry assistance, spreadsheet analysis, financial reporting support
- Generating first drafts of event announcements, newsletters, and bulletins

Communications & creative:

- Brainstorming social media content, sermon series graphics, and outreach ideas
- Transcribing sermons or meetings for archival purposes
- AI-generated images for publications (disclosure required — see below)

Sermon & teaching preparation:

- Research assistance: commentary summaries, historical background, illustrative stories
- Drafting sermon outlines and discussion questions — for pastoral review and rewriting
- Creating children's curriculum materials, reviewed by ministry leads before use

WHAT AI MUST NEVER BE USED FOR

The following are absolute prohibitions — no exceptions:

- Impersonating a pastor, elder, or staff member in any communication
- Entering counseling notes, medical information, or confession-related content into any AI tool
- Generating sexually explicit, hateful, or illegal content
- Creating deepfakes or manipulated media depicting real individuals without documented consent
- Using AI to automate decisions about membership discipline, financial aid, or pastoral referrals
- Deliberately concealing AI use where disclosure is required by this policy

DATA PRIVACY — KNOW YOUR LEVELS

Before entering any church information into an AI tool, identify its classification:

Level	Examples	AI Use Permitted?
Public	Service times, events, announcements	Yes — freely permitted
Internal	Staff names, ministry budgets, schedules	Yes — with approval; use non-identifying content
Confidential	Member contacts, giving records, employment files	Restricted — approved tools only; no consumer AI
Protected	Counseling notes, medical info, minors' data	PROHIBITED — under no circumstances

If you suspect a data breach

Stop using the tool immediately. Notify the Technology Steward within 24 hours. Document what data was entered and into which tool. Do not delete the session — it may be needed for the breach assessment.

WHEN TO DISCLOSE AI USE

Transparency is required in the following contexts:

Published articles or newsletters substantially written by AI	Add a brief note: "Drafted with AI assistance and reviewed by [name/role]."
AI-generated images in church publications	Include a caption or credit: "Image created using AI tools."
Automated chatbot or AI assistant on church website	Display clear disclosure to users before and during any AI-handled interaction.
AI-assisted meeting summaries	Include a header note indicating AI was used to generate the summary.

KEY SCENARIO TAKEAWAYS

These real-world cases were covered in the interactive training:

- Sermon prep: AI may assist with outlines and research, but the delivered message must be the pastor's own, fully reviewed and rewritten.
- Member data: Never enter member names, contact details, or attendance records into a free/consumer AI tool. Use only approved tools with identifiers removed.
- Prayer requests: An automated receipt acknowledgment ("We received your request") is acceptable. A pastoral-feeling AI response is not — follow-up must be human.
- AI images: Permitted for publications with a disclosure caption. Extra care required if the image depicts realistic human subjects.

QUIZ — KEY ANSWERS TO REMEMBER

Absolute prohibition	Using AI to impersonate a staff member or pastor in any communication — no exceptions.
Data breach response	Stop using the tool immediately and notify the Technology Steward within 24 hours.
Never in any AI tool	Protected data: counseling notes, medical information, disciplinary records, minors' data.
Using a new tool	Only after confirming it is on the Approved Tools List or receiving written approval.
Pastoral primacy	Spiritual care, counseling, and direction must never be delegated to AI — ever.

NEXT STEPS AFTER COMPLETING TRAINING

- 1 Complete the interactive online training module (if not done already).
- 2 Score 80% or higher on the 5-question quiz.
- 3 Print or save your completion certificate.
- 4 Sign the Policy Acknowledgment Form (Appendix C of the AI Use Policy).
- 5 Return the signed form to your department head or the Technology Steward.

Questions? Contact the Technology Steward or your department head. | AI Use Policy v1.0 | Ascension Lutheran Church