

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

Welcome and Call to Order -Creighton Van Horn, 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 – Creighton Van Horn

Devotion – Creighton Van Horn

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

New Business

- **Approval for 8th Grader Fundraiser for Washington DC trip**
- **Welcome New Members**
- **Resolution for approving electronic voting for council**
- **Resolution for approving new signers**
- **Thrivent Choice approval of funds for Harbor House fundraiser**
- **Council Retreat Aug -Sept - get dates**
- **Pastor Tim - presents his report in person**

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmants, and Baptisms

Old Business

- No old business

Approval of Minutes -Creighton Van Horn

- June 18,2026 Church Council Minutes

Consent Approval of Reports to Council – Creighton Van Horn

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

Information Items

- **Reflections on our past year of service as Church Council members.**
- **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 August 19, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.**

Closing Prayer – Creighton Van Horn

Adjournment

FUND RAISING REQUEST FORM

MINISTRY: Ascension Lutheran School DATE: 6/30/2026

SUBMITTED BY: Kaylee Searway

DESCRIPTION OF EVENT: We are planning a One Ascension Celebration on Sunday, August 23, 2026 as a Back to School Sunday. There will be a single worship service at 10:00 am, and then food, bounce houses, lawn games, face painting, a cake walk, and a Dunk Tank! The event will be free with the exception of tickets to throw a ball at the Dunk Tank to dunk an Ascension Leader. The fundraiser will support our 8th graders in going to Washington DC in the fall of 2026. The timing of the trip has moved up from spring to fall, and costs each family about \$4,000. The students have less time to fundraise this year due to the schedule change, and the trip is coming up fast! This fundraiser is an opportunity to have some fun and to help our emerging 8th graders become leaders at One Ascension with this educational trip.

DATE AND TIME OF EVENT: August 23, 2026, Worship at 10:00, Food and fun to follow

ONE TIME / RECURRING: One Time

CHURCH RESOURCES REQUIRED: Ministry leaders will be helping with cooking, serving food, facepainting, leading games, monitoring bounce houses, making cakes, etc. A couple of our leaders like the Principal, Vice Principal, Extended Care Director, Youth Director, Pastors(?) will need to be willing to sit in the Dunk Tank and get wet.

CHURCH RESOURCES CHARGE PALS and Church Fellowship are managing the food, bounce house rentals, etc.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS APPROVAL: 

DATE: 6/30/2026

COUNCIL APPROVAL: _____ DATE: _____

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: We will obtain certificates of additional insured from the appropriate vendors.

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO: 2026./27.1
TITLE: Electronic Voting Resolution
SUBMITTED BY: Council
DATE: July 15, 2026

RESOLVED, that Ascension Lutheran Church Council agrees that the Council, Committees and organizations can make decisions via e-mail vote for the FY 2026-2027.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Former Council President Norm Nagel stated that it is important at the beginning of every council year to vote on the ability to make decisions via e-mail for any given year.
2. Legal counsel has advised that when voting by e-mail the first question is, "Do you accept voting by e-mail on this item?" This must be unanimously approved by all council members for the vote to move forward.
3. Voting on the issue itself does not require a unanimous outcome.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: No financial impact noted.

By: _____
Creighton Van Horn, Congregational President

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO: 2026/27.2

TITLE: SIGNATURE AUTHORIZATION RESOLUTION

SUBMITTED BY: Director of Operations

DATE: July 15, 2026

RESOLVED, that Creighton Van Horn, Ethan East, and Steve Smuck shall have signature authorization on all banking relationships of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church unless removed by subsequent action of the Church Council of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks, California.

RESOLVED, that Creighton Van Horn and Crystal Bryant have signature authorization on all legal documents on behalf of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church unless removed by subsequent action of the Church Council of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks, California.

RESOLVED, that Kaylee Searway and Mike Marvin shall continue to be authorized to access to view all bank account balances and transactions, and to receive information by phone, email or online regarding all Ascension Lutheran Church bank accounts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As Council members change, it becomes necessary to change signature authority on all Ascension Lutheran Church banking relationships to maintain control and oversight with regard to checks written, funds transferred between institutions, and establishment or dissolution of any bank accounts or banking relationships.

BANKING AUTHORIZATIONS:

Creighton Van Horn, President
Ethan East, President Elect
Steve Smuck, Treasurer

LEGAL AUTHORIZATIONS:

Creighton Van Horn, President
Crystal Bryant, Secretary

ACCESS AUTHORIZATION:

Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations
Mike Marvin, Senior Accountant

All signature or access authorizations other than those listed above should be removed.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: No financial impact noted.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept this resolution as written.

Creighton Van Horn, President

Date _____

Crystal Bryant, Secretary

Date _____

ASCENSION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THOUSAND OAKS COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO: 2026/27.3

TITLE: BANKING SIGNATURE AUTHORIZATION RESOLUTION -
Banc of California

SUBMITTED BY: Director of Operations

DATE: July 15, 2026

RESOLVED, that the individuals named below shall have signature authorization on only the specific Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks bank accounts as described below unless removed by subsequent action of the Church Council.

RESOLVED, that the individuals named below be authorized to access electronically, maintain all passwords to such electronic access, and be authorized to move funds between accounts within the same institution, as well as receive information by phone, email or online regarding only the specific Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks bank accounts as described below.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As Council members change, it becomes necessary to change signature authority on certain Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks banking relationships to maintain control and oversight with regard to checks written, funds transferred between institutions, and establishment or dissolution of any bank accounts or banking relationships.

To be removed from account 401002162, Checking	To be added to account 401002162, Checking
William John Rarick, Jr, Immediate Past President	Ethan East, President Elect

To be removed from account 401007733, Payroll	To be added to account 401007733, Payroll
William John Rarick, Jr, Immediate Past President	Eathan East, President Elect

To be removed from account 401800735, Money Market	To be added to account 401800735, Money Market
William John Rarick, Jr, Immediate Past President	Ethan East, President Elect

Continuing as signers on the specific Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks bank accounts as described above unless noted as removed:
Creighton Van Horn, President
Steve Smuck, Treasurer

Continuing on account 1002485280, AGAPE	To be added to account 1002485280, AGAPE
Timothy C Delkeskamp, Pastor	
Steve R Herder, Pastor	

Electronic Administrator Access for the following specific Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks bank accounts as authorized by on-line banking administrator:

Continuing with electronic access on the specific Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks bank accounts as described above unless noted as removed:	Add electronic access on the specific Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Thousand Oaks bank accounts as described above unless noted as removed:
Kaylee Searway, Director of Operations	
Mike Marvin, Senior Accountant	
Steve Smuck, Treasurer	

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: No financial impact noted.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept this resolution as written.

Creighton Van Horn, President

Date _____

Crystal Bryant, Secretary

Date _____

Pastor Tim's Sabbatical Report

What Will Life Be Like in Nine Years?

Gratitude

I am deeply grateful to Ascension for the gift of sabbatical. I am thankful to our executive team, church council, staff, pastors, ministry leaders, and volunteers who carried additional responsibilities while I was away. I am also grateful to the congregation for the encouragement, prayers, and trust that made this time possible.

Sabbatical gave me the opportunity to step away from the regular demands of ministry long enough to rest, study, travel, spend time with family, and listen more carefully to God. It was both renewing and clarifying.

The central question guiding my sabbatical was:

What will life be like in nine years?

I did not ask this merely as a way of predicting the future. I asked it as a way of discerning the future we are beginning to build today.

If it is God's will, nine years from now I will be preparing to retire as Ascension's Senior Pastor after more than thirty years of ministry here. That realization has caused me to think deeply about the kind of pastor I want to be during these next nine years and the kind of congregation I hope Ascension will continue to become.

My reflections have centered on three connected areas: personal health, pastoral vocation, and the future of the Ascension community. For the purpose of this report, I want to focus primarily on what I believe these reflections may mean for our shared ministry.

A Renewed Sense of Vocation

One of the clearest gifts of sabbatical was a renewed gratitude for my calling as a pastor.

I love being a pastor. I deeply believe this is the work God has called me to do, and I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve as Ascension's Senior Pastor.

Sabbatical helped me remember that pastoral ministry is not primarily about managing an institution, maintaining programs, or completing an endless list of tasks. Those responsibilities matter and "all business is God's business," but they are not the heart of my calling.

The heart of pastoral ministry is helping people grow closer to Jesus. It is proclaiming the Gospel, studying and teaching Scripture, caring for souls, bearing a vision that God has

given me for the church I lead, developing leaders, and helping create a community in which people can experience the transforming grace of God.

During these next nine years, I want to live more deeply into that vocation.

Many of the books I read on my sabbatical reminded me that I want to be a pastor who models spiritual health, loves the Word of God, bears the vision of the congregation, leads our executive team and church council well, and empowers others to participate fully in ministry.

This will require greater clarity about how I use my time and energy. I cannot and should not do everything. My role is increasingly to help create the conditions in which faithful people are called, equipped, encouraged, and released into meaningful ministry.

A Vision of Transformation

The central conviction emerging from my sabbatical is this:

Ascension needs to be a place where transformation happens—one person at a time.

This does not mean every program must become larger, every ministry must become busier, or every goal must be measured primarily by numbers.

It means that the life of our congregation and schools should be organized around helping people become more alive in Christ.

Transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit through which people become more deeply rooted in the love and peace of God, more formed in the way of Jesus, more connected to the community of faith, and more available for the healing and blessing of the world around us.

People should not simply be members, attend worship, enroll in our school, volunteer for a ministry, or participate in an activity. Through their connection with Ascension, they should be shaped.

They should experience grace, forgiveness, belonging, purpose, and hope. They should grow in love for God and neighbor. They should become more faithful, loving, generous, courageous, joyful, and grounded in Christ.

I pray that this gives us a deeper way to really evaluate our ministry.

We should certainly continue to pay attention to worship attendance, enrollment, giving, participation, baptisms, confirmations, Bible studies, and volunteer involvement. Numbers can tell us important things.

But numbers cannot be our final measure of faithfulness.

We also need to ask:

- Are people growing in their relationship with Jesus?
- Are people learning Scripture in ways that shape their lives?
- Are people experiencing grace, healing, forgiveness, and purpose?
- Are people being equipped to serve their families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities?
- Are our ministries forming disciples, or are they primarily keeping people busy?
- Are people becoming more hopeful, generous, courageous, and loving?
- Are they compelled to include and invite others to join them in community?

These questions can help shape our worship, teaching, leadership, school ministry, children and youth ministry, outreach, communication, and congregational life.

Living Into Our Big Tent Identity

Ascension has a unique opportunity to live more fully into our identity as a “big tent” church.

We live in an anxious and polarizing culture. People are often encouraged to divide into groups, label one another, and dismiss those with whom they disagree.

Ascension can offer a different witness.

We can be a community in which people with diverse backgrounds, personalities, politics, experiences, questions, and levels of spiritual maturity gather around Jesus as the center.

Being a big tent church does not mean that anything goes. It does not mean avoiding conviction or pretending that our differences are unimportant.

It means that our deepest unity is found in Christ.

It means practicing humility, curiosity, patience, and love. It means learning to disagree without contempt and to belong to one another without requiring everyone to think or act exactly alike.

Over the next nine years, I believe this may become one of Ascension’s most important witnesses to our community. In a world that is becoming increasingly fragmented, we can demonstrate what it means to remain at the table together because Jesus is Lord.

Building a Leadership Culture

For transformation to become part of Ascension's culture, we must continue developing healthy leaders.

A simple leadership model which I have previously developed kept coming back to me in my reflections: **Empower and equip. Affirm and thank.**

To empower people means giving them genuine ownership, trust, clarity, and permission to lead.

To equip people means providing the training, tools, encouragement, support, and spiritual foundation they need to lead well.

To affirm people means noticing the good work God is doing through them, naming it clearly with them, and helping them tell the story of that work.

To thank people means creating a culture of gratitude in which people know that their service and their story matters.

I would like this rhythm to become increasingly normal throughout Ascension.

Staff members, council members, teachers, ministry leaders, volunteers, young people, and ministry teams should experience themselves as empowered, equipped, affirmed, and thanked.

This is not simply a volunteer recruitment strategy. It is a way of developing disciples and building a leadership culture.

It also means that our pastors and senior leaders must resist becoming the center of every ministry or decision. Healthy leadership is not measured by how much one person controls. It is measured by how well leaders help others discover and use their gifts- one person at a time.

Pursuing Health Rather Than Chasing Growth

Another important conviction is that Ascension should emphasize health over numerical growth.

This does not mean that we are uninterested in growth. Healthy churches should welcome new people, reach new families, baptize children and adults, develop disciples, and serve their communities.

But growth should be the fruit of health, not a substitute for it.

A history of the church tells us that a congregation can be numerically successful and spiritually unhealthy. It can be very busy and still lack clarity. It can offer many programs and still struggle to form people in the way of Jesus.

Therefore, we need to ask not only, “Are we growing?” but also, “Are we healthy?”

Are our leaders healthy?

Are our staff teams healthy?

Are our relationships marked by trust and honest communication?

Are our ministries aligned with our mission?

Are people experiencing joy, purpose, belonging, and transformation?

Are we handling conflict faithfully?

Are we making decisions from a place of faith rather than fear?

Are we creating sustainable ministries rather than exhausting people?

Health includes spiritual depth, peace, joy, trust, maturity, clarity, honest conversation, shared purpose, and the ability to adapt faithfully when circumstances change.

My hope is that Ascension will become increasingly healthy and that appropriate growth will follow.

Growing Young

One of the most important questions for Ascension’s future is how we continue becoming a congregation that grows young.

Growing young does not mean ignoring older members or chasing the latest trends. It means becoming a genuinely intergenerational church in which children, youth, young adults, parents, middle-aged adults, and older adults all matter deeply.

A church that grows young listens to young people, invests in them, takes their questions seriously, gives them meaningful responsibilities, and helps them belong to the whole body of Christ.

In other words, we empower, equip, affirm, and thank young people.

Ascension has an extraordinary opportunity because our congregation, school, and early childhood center interact with children and families every day. We already bless many families through education, care, worship, and community.

The next question is how those relationships can become part of a larger ministry of discipleship and belonging.

How do we help children and families experience Ascension not simply as a school or institution, but as a community of faith?

How do we help young people know that they are not merely the future of the church, but an important part of the church today?

How do we give them meaningful relationships and responsibilities within the wider congregation?

Over the next nine years, I hope Ascension continues to become a place where young people are known, valued, included, formed, and released into lives of faith and service.

Outreach and Communication

If Ascension is going to be a community of transformation, we must communicate more clearly who we are, what we value, and how people can become part of our life together.

Outreach is not simply advertising or marketing. It is the practice of making our life in Christ visible, understandable, and invitational to others.

Communication is also part of discipleship. The way we communicate teaches people what matters. It helps them understand where we are going, why it matters, and how they can participate.

Over the next nine years, we need to become more consistent in telling Ascension's story.

We need to communicate our big tent identity, our commitment to transformation, our Lutheran understanding of grace, our love for children and families, our desire to serve our neighbors, and our hope in Jesus.

Good communication can help people move from awareness to belonging, from belonging to participation, and from participation to leadership.

Preparing Faithfully for the Future

If it is the will of God, a pastoral transition will take place at Ascension near the end of this nine-year period.

I do not believe it is my responsibility to choose or control my successor. That discernment will belong to the congregation and its leaders in partnership with the wider church.

My responsibility is to help Ascension become as spiritually, relationally, organizationally, and financially healthy as possible.

A healthy congregation will be able to discern a healthy and faithful leader. A healthy leader will recognize and be attracted to a healthy congregation.

This means that succession planning is not something we should begin only in the final year. The work begins now as we strengthen leaders, clarify our identity, develop healthy systems, deepen trust, and reduce unhealthy dependence on any one person.

The words of John the Baptist offer an important spiritual posture for this season:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

The future of Ascension does not ultimately depend upon me or any other individual leader. The church belongs to Christ. My calling is to serve faithfully, prepare wisely, develop others, and trust God with the future.

An Invitation to Shared Discernment

This report is not intended to present a finished nine-year strategic plan.

It is an invitation.

It is an invitation to our executive team, church council, staff, ministry leaders, school community, and congregation to help discern what God is calling Ascension to become.

I hope we will wrestle together with questions such as:

- What does transformation look like at Ascension?
- Where are we already seeing it happen?
- What parts of our ministry most clearly form people as disciples of Jesus?
- Where are we spiritually and organizationally healthy?
- Where do we need healing, clarity, or change?
- What does it mean for us to live as a big tent church?
- How can we empower and equip more people for meaningful leadership?
- How can we affirm and thank people more intentionally?
- How can we grow young while honoring every generation?
- How can we communicate our identity and mission more clearly?
- What should we begin doing now to prepare Ascension for a faithful future?

These questions cannot be answered by one person. They will require prayer, conversation, courage, patience, experimentation, and shared leadership.

A Nine-Year Hope

In nine years, I pray that Ascension will be a healthier, more joyful, more deeply rooted, more outward-facing, and more intergenerational congregation.

I pray that we will be known as a place where people encounter grace.

I pray that we will be known as a place where people are formed as disciples of Jesus.

I pray that we will be known as a place where people with real differences can gather around Christ.

I pray that we will be known as a place where children, youth, and families are deeply valued.

I pray that we will be known as a place where leaders are empowered, equipped, affirmed, and thanked.

I pray that we will be known as a place where spiritual and relational health matter more than institutional ego.

Most of all, I pray that Ascension will be known as a place where transformation happens—one person at a time.

I remain incredibly grateful to serve as Ascension's Senior Pastor. I look forward to discerning and building this future together.

New Members & Baptisms Report

July 2026

Baptisms for May

Name

Date Baptized

No Baptisms

New Members for June

No New Members

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Council Agenda
Wednesday, June 17, 2026 - 7:00pm
Bethlehem Room**

Welcome and Call to Order -John Rarick, President

Meeting called to order at 6:58 PM

Present: Creighton Van Horn (CVH), John Rarick, Michael Feltner, Alan Baker, Anna Woodward, Steve Smuck, Crystal Bryant (Via Zoom)

Not Present: Carrie Leonard

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 (CVH), then seconded (Ethan) to approve the agenda with the following modifications:

NEW BUSINESS:

1- Include a report from Pastor Chamie regarding Beach Baptisms.

2-Foundation Budget for Congregational Meeting requires changes, to be presented by Alan Baker.

The Agenda, with changes, was unanimously approved.

Devotion – Crystal Bryant

Treasurer's Report – Steve Smuck

Due to the timing of our meeting and close of May finances, the Finance team is still working on a report. The actual report will be emailed when completed. The offerings in May were a bit light, but expenses were also light. No major changes from what we have seen month over month, this year.

It was moved (Alan), then seconded (Anna) and unanimously passed to accept the Treasurer's Report.

New Business

• **Approval of the Agenda for the June 28, 2026 Congregational Meeting** – John Rarick

It was moved (CVH), then seconded (Ethan) and unanimously passed to approve the agenda for the Congregational Meeting, with revisions listed below.

**Revise Foundation Budget Presentation for Congregational Meeting -
Al Baker**

*Alan has suggested that the report to the Congregation has the following change:
Replace existing budget line of — (zero), to add a line item of \$150,000.00
This is a conservative view of a long term average (7-8%),over time. This
number has been realized even with expenses. This net number helps to better
explain the growth and value of the portfolio.*

*It was moved (Alan), then seconded and unanimously approved to accept the
changes of the Foundation Budget Report.*

Revisions to the Congregational Meeting Agenda-

*There are a few typographical errors in the President's letter and the minutes.
Changes have been noted and new versions will be sent to Carolyn.*

*It was moved (Michael), then seconded (Ethan) and unanimously approved to
accept the revisions as listed.*

**• Discuss having the ad hoc Safety Committee becoming a subcommittee of the
property and management committee – John Rarick**

*A comprehensive report was submitted by the ad hoc safety committee. This report
covered many items for consideration, concerning a variety of safety protocols. There is
discussion about adding a sub-committee under the Property & Management
committee.*

*This sub-committee would be created to set protocol regarding all measures concerned
with One Ascension safety. It would also be important to have a representative from the
safety committee be appointed to the P&M committee.*

*It was moved (CVH), then seconded (Ethan) then unanimously approved to create a
Safety Committee, as a sub-committee under the Property & Management committee.*

• Beach Baptism -

*The council watched a video of Youth Group students who were baptised at the beach
by Pastor Chamie, Pastor Rich Gregory and Spencer Gottmer. This was such a*

powerful experience for all. PC also shared a story about a new TK parent who saw the video and has asked to be baptised at the beach.

Recurring Business

- Affirm New Members, Confirmands, and Baptisms

Baptisms

Robert David Lambert IV 05/03/26

Juliet Annmarie Ochsner 05/16/26

New Members

Stella Lindstrom

Chaya Valenzuela

Confirmands

Brooklyn Brewster

Ryder Bryant

Evan Beerman

Piper D'Amore

Kellan Gallagher

Daniel Hopkins

Luke Hughes

Oliver Keit

Alison Kruse

Gianna Lisi

Sienna Grace Oberhaus

Rylan Perry

Sierra Sheremtiev

Enzo Viallavicencio

Bodie Wallace

Old Business

- No old business

- **Approval of Minutes** -John Rarick

May 20, 2026 Church Council Minutes

It was moved (CVH), then seconded (Michael) and unanimously approved to accept the May 2026 Council Minutes as presented.

Consent Approval of Reports to Council – John Rarick

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

It was moved (Alan), then seconded (Ethan) and unanimously approved to accept the Reports to Council as presented.

Information Items

- **Reflections on our past year of service as Church Council members.**

John shared many thanks, and in return the Council thanks John for his leadership. CVH recognized John's words of appreciation to individuals as he engages with our congregation.

- **Reflections on empowering and equipping, affirming and celebrating as we lead the culture of abundance at Ascension.**

CVH celebrates the many volunteers among the church groups.

Ethan celebrates PC and Kaylee for holding down the church during PT's sabbatical.

PC celebrated a day with the Youth Leadership group at CLU.

- **The next Church Council meeting will be held on July 15, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.**

Closing Prayer – Crystal Bryant

Adjournment

It was moved (Ethan), then seconded (Alan) then unanimously passed to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 PM.

Pastor Chamie's June 2026 Council Report

(June 8-July 8)

Children, Youth, & Family

Children



We passed out "Team Family" bags in the library to help families grow in faith during the summer. We also encouraged families to check out books in our library. It warmed my heart seeing one of our littles check out a book on a Sunday after worship!

The big thing for children in the past month: VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL! Vacation Bible School was a tremendous blessing! Due to a registration glitch, we unexpectedly welcomed approximately 14 additional children, bringing our total attendance to 71 children. While this required us to quickly recruit additional teachers and volunteers, God provided exactly what we needed. We are especially grateful for volunteers who stepped in at the last minute, including Crystal Bryant, as well as my niece, a third-grade teacher from Chino Hills, who spent the week serving alongside us.

In all, more than 50 volunteers helped make the week possible. As Jenelle shared during Children's Time following VBS, she was deeply moved by the generosity, flexibility, and joyful spirit of our volunteers. We are now in the process of writing thank-you notes, a task that may take some time!

With remodeling and construction limiting our available space, we truly reached maximum capacity, but it was a wonderful week of sharing Christ's love with children and families as we "adventured in Rome" with the apostle Paul (who was brilliantly portrayed by Barry Disselhorst).



A small group of VBS kids pose at the backdrop of the "Underground Church." They learned the secret symbol of the Jesus fish! It was fun trying to bring a bit of Ancient Rome alive for the kids!



VBS children gather by candlelight in "Paul's Library" to hear stories from the apostle Paul.

Youth

A highlight of the month was Youth Leadership Camp, with 25 participants growing in faith and leadership together. They broke up in small groups to shop for various service organizations, they made lunches for Harbor House, they painted set pieces for VBS, they led summer chapel under the oak tree, they reflected on leadership and calling and did a vocation-centered scavenger hunt across the CLU campus. And they deep cleaned the youth room and added new decor and brought a fresh look!

During the summer, Spencer Gottmer is serving full-time in youth ministry for six weeks, while James Halvorson is splitting his time between church youth ministry and Ascension's Camp Discovery. Camp Discovery continues to thrive this summer with both church and school children participating under the excellent leadership of Jessica and her team.

We were also delighted (I was truly giddy) to welcome former Youth Director Addie Behm and her new youth group from Hawaii. They stayed in the Church Dugout for several days, and our youth enjoyed hosting them with a taco bar and game night, creating new friendships and strengthening connections across ministries.



Youth Leadership Camp makes lunches for Harbor House as part of our focus on service.



The youth add new banner photos to the Dugout walls after deep cleaning the room.



Past youth director Addie is flanked by her former youth who now serve in ministry!

Interfacing with the Schools

This past month I have enjoyed leading summer chapel under the oak tree! I have also worked collaboratively with church, school, and ECC leadership to plan our Back to School Picnic on Sunday, August 23, following our combined 10:00 a.m. worship service (with our Saturday evening service still taking place on August 22). This year we intentionally moved what has traditionally been “Rally Sunday” from September to “Back to School Sunday” in August so that we can bless teachers and students as they begin the school year, while inviting families into the many ministries and opportunities beginning this fall through the church.

Rather than a traditional Rally Sunday in September, we will celebrate a “Narrative Worship Weekend” on the weekend following Labor Day, taking time to explain the meaning behind the

various parts of our worship services. We hope this will both introduce newer members to our liturgical traditions and provide longtime members with a meaningful refresher.

Worship

It was a joy to welcome Dr. John Nunes to preach this month, and I am grateful to Pastor Paul for leading worship on Grandparents' Weekend where we did a special blessing for grandparents. I continue to prayerfully prepare each week's worship services and preached during the second weekend of June and again on the first weekend of July.

Other Ministries



July Women's Word & Wine on the church patio when I taught about the labyrinth. Many of the women walked the labyrinth after the lesson.

For **July's Word & Wine** gathering, we met on the church patio where I taught about the history and spiritual practice of walking the labyrinth.

James Halvorson organized a **Young Adult Bowling Night**, with approximately a dozen young adults participating. James and I also attended a *Be the Blessing* meeting and are grateful for the grant that is helping to launch and support this growing young adult ministry.

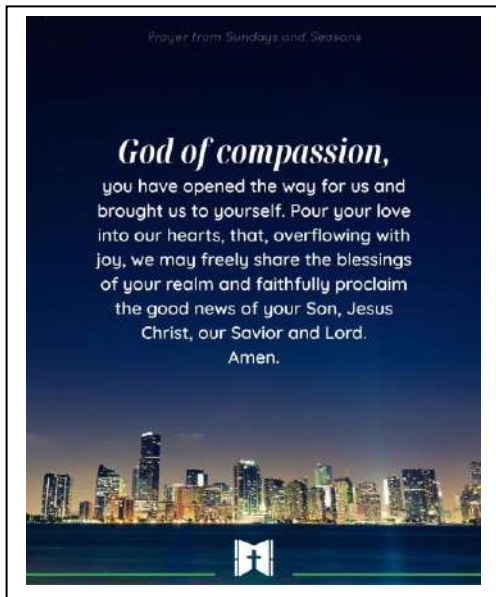
Beyond these specific events, I sought to faithfully attend to pastoral care, the ongoing needs of the congregation, and the daily life of the church office while Pastor Tim concluded his sabbatical and Pastor Steve was away on vacation.

As I finish this report, I am on a **mini retreat at Serra Retreat Center in Malibu**. My hope is to experience both physical and spiritual rest now that Pastor Tim has returned from sabbatical. I will also be prayerfully visioning and planning for this new year ahead (July 2026 through June 2027) as at the retreat center, I don't have the daily distractions and can focus on some important groundwork! I will also be meeting (via zoom) with my clergy coach while on retreat.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Chamie



Serra Retreat Center



Church Council Report – Pastor Steve Herder – July 6, 2026

Welcome to our new Council members, and a big thank you to all who are continuing to serve, and to those who have completed their time of leadership. With you, we are thankful both to have Pastor Tim back, and for Pastor Chamie and Kaylee leading us so well during the sabbatical time.

Here are some of the ministries from the month of June that I'd like to share with you. I won't go over all the details of the many ministries that are taking place among the ministry teams and leaders I'm blessed to work with.

Last month I highlighted my visits with our oldest member, Skip Brenner, 99. Sadly for us and her family, she died on June 12. I led the memorial service for her on the 16th at the senior living place where she had been living in Pasadena. I'm glad that Linda and Doug Morrow could be there too. Thanks for your prayers for Mike Brenner and the whole family.



On June 12 I led the memorial service for Pastor Willis Moerer in Westlake. That was a private service just for his family. We will dedicate our three worship services on August 15-16 with a time for us to remember him and to thank God for his long and loving ministry among us at Ascension.



Here are some photos from other visits with our dear senior members of our congregation: Chuck Heinrich, and Hazel Arrillaga. If you'd like a visit from us, please let us know. Also, let us know if and when you are in the hospital. We'd like to come and pray with you.



We appreciate Pastor Ron Cox coordinating our Eucharistic Ministry, bringing the Sacrament to people who cannot come here to worship. (Thankfully, many are able to worship online with us.) In July we will commission the new group. More on that in the next Council report.

Lunch Bunch photos! We will not meet in July but sign up by August 5 for the August 12 Lunch Bunch.



On June 13 I enjoyed being part of the retirement party for Joyce Nenne, after her 48 years of being a nurse at Los Robles Hospital. (With Joyce are dear friends Ann Lane and Frances Marshall!)

June 14 was the Christian Life Hour at University Village Oak View. That's a highlight of the month for me.

We are blessed to now have Debbie Kahn serving as our volunteer Parish Nurse. Watch for her newsletter articles and her times for doing blood pressure checks for you on some Sunday mornings. Thanks, Debbie!



Then from June 25 to July 6 Julie and I had a wonderful first-time trip to Alaska with Holland America cruise, and time in Vancouver and Victoria. The time was special with friends Steve and Susie Lundeen Smuck, and our friends Steve and Carla Frantl from Wisconsin. On Sunday, June 28, I ended up leading the worship service onboard! Fun to preach on Jonah, with a focus on Jonah 4:2, as we were cruising, looking out the windows at the beautiful ocean. Yes, we saw whales too that week! I hope that all of you will get some time this summer to appreciate God's beautiful creation.



Save the Date!



Pastor Engstrom



Pastor Retzlaff

July 25-26

We will welcome Pastor Kristin Engstrom, our missionary in Madagascar, to be our preacher at all three services for the weekend.

And we will learn more about our Gifts of Hope projects in southern Africa. Pastor Carmen Retzlaff, our ELCA representative who is helping us plan our Gifts of Hope, will also be on hand here. Thanks to her, we've never had better and earlier prep for an upcoming GOH.



July 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.



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	(805) 495-0406		1 For all who are battling cancer or serious illness <i>Colossians 3:11</i>	2 Prayers for peace among nations <i>Zechariah 9:9-12</i>	3 Pray for Camp Discovery & Director Jessica Placas-Hengst <i>Psalms 145:8-14</i>	4 <i>Independence Day</i> 250 Years! Blessed to be a blessing! <i>Romans 7:15-25a</i>
5 Prayers for our oldest friends & neighbors <i>Matthew 11:25-30</i>	6 Today we welcome back Pastor Tim from sabbatical! <i>Colossians 3:12-13</i>	7 Grateful for John Rarick congregation president this past year <i>Colossians 3:14</i>	8 Prayers for our Eucharistic Ministry with senior adults <i>Colossians 3:15</i>	9 For all of us as we study God's Word <i>Isaiah 55:10-13</i>	10 Prayers for our construction crews working on our campus remodels <i>Psalms 65:9-13</i>	11 Prayers for those in Africa afflicted with Ebola <i>Romans 8:1-11</i>
12 For our new Church Council as they meet Wednesday <i>Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23</i>	13 For our children and youth ministries, Pastor Chamie & team <i>Colossians 3:16</i>	14 Creighton Van Horn, our new Congregational president <i>Colossians 3:17</i>	15 For spouses to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ <i>Colossians 3:18-22</i>	16 For all of us to be faithful witnesses to God <i>Isaiah 44:6-8</i>	17 Thank God for our Fair Trade Ministry <i>Psalms 86:11-17</i>	18 For our Pastors and Staff <i>Romans 8:12-25</i>
19 Pray for our Southwest CA Synod Bishop Brenda Bos & ELCA Bishop Curry <i>Matthew 13:36-43</i>	20 For each person's work in their place of employment <i>Colossians 3:23-4:1</i>	21 Pray for those unemployed or under-employed <i>Colossians 4:2</i>	22 Prayers of God's peace for all in prison Word & Wine 7 pm <i>Colossians 4:3-4</i>	23 Prayers for wisdom for all who govern <i>1 Kings 3:5-12</i>	24 For all teachers this summer <i>Psalms 119:129-136</i>	25 Prayers for those with disabilities (ADA law - July 1990) <i>Romans 8:26-39</i>
26 For Pastor Kristen Engstrom, ELCA missionary here today <i>Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52</i>	27 Happy Birthday Cam Lorentson! <i>Colossians 4:5-9</i>	28 Prayers for nature (World Conservation Day) <i>Colossians 4:10-13</i>	29 Write a letter of encouragement today <i>Colossians 4:14-18</i>	30 For all food ministries near and far <i>Isaiah 55:1-5</i>	31 Prayer for all who are calling upon God's help <i>Psalms 145:8-9, 14-21</i>	27-31

Welcome to the 2026-2027 Council! Thank you for serving. It's an honor to work with each of you. I'm glad to say that Pastor Tim's sabbatical will be complete before the July council meeting. It's been a fun and productive time, but I think I can say we missed him as staff team.

Attendance

I'll often report a 6 week average on weekend attendance. Six weeks ago we had a single service for Pentecost on May 24th with 384 people attending worship. The average for the 5 weeks following is 398 people per weekend.

Maintenance

The campus is transforming quickly. The new maintenance shed is well organized. The new TK-8 reception area, classroom, and exterior restrooms are coming along. Jeff, Jude, and Camden are working hard along with the great team of contractors we have hired.

Finance

The first of the month falls on a Wednesday this month, truly the earliest a third Wednesday of the month council meeting can fall...I can promise you no results...Camryn and Mike are working quickly and efficiently to close May, June, and the year. They have already opened the new year and done some communicating about new budgets, although more is probably needed.

Human Resources Matters

It's a very chaotic time of year in terms of payroll changes and healthcare enrollment. There are about 95-105 employees on campus between the ECC, TK-8 and church. Being on a fiscal year that begins July 1st means making changes to payroll amounts and employee statuses. The academic year at the TK-8 and ECC schools mean terminations in June, hiring over summer, and usually a rush of changes before the year starts mid August. Camryn has been amazing at keeping on to all the changes, and the payroll software we chose last year has been a big help with both hiring and managing changes.

I'll keep this short as I already wrote about 5 pages on notes to update Pastor Tim on this morning. Three months is a great deal to catch up on; I'll be praying for Pastor Tim. I'm working to wrap up enough items to take vacation from July 6th to July 10th. I'll see you at the Council meeting,

Thank you,

Kaylee Searway,

Director of Operations



Ascension Fair Trade Report June/July 2026



Let's Be The Change We Wish to See!

Equal Exchange Annual Summit, June 12th, Wheaton College, Norton MA

Equal Exchange staff, customers, partners & friends had the opportunity to learn about Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry at the recent Summit. There were about 225 attendees from local & global locations, including producers, business customers & partners, as well as members of the interfaith & community group. Carol Bjelland and Lisa Burns attended & represented Ascension. (Their participation was fully self-funded; no Ascension general or ministry funds were used). Carol conducted a workshop sharing about Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry; a bit of history as well as the many facets of the ministry and its programs and events. Several workshop attendees signed up for the Ascension Fair Trade email list. Phoebe/Lutherans Restoring Creation, attended our workshop & joined in a photo. EE asked if the workshop presentation & discussion could be made into an article to be shared by EE with its customers, including community & interfaith group, this Fall. Stacy and Carol are collaborating on this article.



In addition to hearing the keynote speaker (Santiago Paz Lopez, Mgr, Norandino Co-op, Piura region, Peru) share about the work of the co-op and its farmers, Lisa and Carol attended workshops about the history of/work at Cypress Pond, GA (delicious EE Pecans come from Cypress Pond Farms); the work of the Panzi Foundation, supporting survivors of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (proceeds from the sale of EE Congo Coffee help support Panzi's work in DCR); the review of EE's 40 year history.

A "Thank You" Note from Equal Exchange (6/23/26):

Dear Carol,

Thank you again for presenting your workshop, "Ascension Lutheran's Fair Trade Ministry: 25 Years of Faith and Justice," at the Equal Exchange Summit. The workshop content was interesting and inspiring; participants were excited to learn the details of your creative programming over the years.

As you know, we are delighted to present you with a speaker stipend of \$500. When I mentioned this to you, you requested that we apply it to the Equal Exchange Small Farmers Fund (SFF) as a contribution. This letter acknowledges that your stipend has been applied to the SFF in the name of Ascension Lutheran Church. Thank you so much. Your donation will support training for co-op farmers, some of which was eliminated when USAID funding was cut. The SFF allows some critical educational programs to continue.

The Ascension Lutheran Fair Trade Ministry has continued to grow over the past quarter century and is an inspiration to us at Equal Exchange and to our participating Interfaith communities. Please pass on our deep appreciation to your congregation. And as always, Carol, thank you for your excellent leadership.

Fair Trade Lane Will Not Be Open in July

Ascension Fair Trade's 25th Anniversary - Update

The history of Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry continues to be shared in articles in ***This Week At Ascension***. Faith & Fair Trade: A Wine & Fair Trade Tasting Journey will be held October 10th (3-5 PM). Special celebration events will be held October 15th, 17th & 18th. Ascension's Fair Trade Ministry will lead Adult Ed Class October 11th. Now is a very good time to join the Ascension Fair Trade email list to get the scoop on Fair Trade info, opportunities & events.

Everyone is invited to volunteer to help with Anniversary & other events. Contact Carol; fairtrade@alcto.org.

COMMUNICATION UPDATE FOR JULY

First, thank you all so much for your time, talent and dedication to our beloved church. I have updated the narthex monitor slider and Congregational Leadership page on ALCTO.org with you, our leaders for this year. If you see anything that needs changing in that regard, or have any questions when it comes to websites, live streams, our This Week at Ascension newsletter, our social media, advertising, or any other matter with which I might be of assistance, please email ssmith@alcto.org or text/phone me at (818) 621-3542.

It's fun to look at data for our online world and realize how it flows with the seasons. For example, our overall online viewership reflects the fact we've gone from peak spring to relaxed summer this past month. Our total Facebook video watch time, which includes worship services, was down 15% for the past 28 days from the previous month. That prior period included Confirmation, Pentecost, the school "Willy Wonka" production and Jens Lindemann & the UCLA Brass.

However, reels video views on Facebook were up 52 %! That corresponds to busy times outside the sanctuary. Kudos to Pastor Chamie, the CYF Dream Team, and volunteers for a rollicking summer so far.

Here is a rundown of our top 10 reels of the past two months. (Except for the Fair Trade talk, they were created by Pastor Chamie):

Pastor Chamie construction update (1918 FB/566 Insta); Youth Bonfire (1630 FB/NA Insta); June 17 Camp Discovery (1417 FB/484 Insta); Youth – Visit from Addie & Co. (1250 FB/774 Insta); Pentecost Fair (1156 FB/233 Insta); Carol Bjelland Fair Trade talk (1031 FB/ NA Insta); Youth Leadership Camp (855 FB/460 Insta); Summer Day in the Life of Ascension (798FB/NA Insta); Labyrinth invite (641 FB/310 Insta); VBS (still getting views as of this writing — 459 FB/ Instagram 390).

Top posts without video of the past two months: Praying for our firefighters during Simi Valley fire in May (9,647 FB/430 Insta); Prayers for Pastor Moerer's Family (3,146 FB/311 Insta); P.T. is back (2,715/286 still getting views); Remembering Brenda Heinrich on her birthday (2,349 FB/NA Insta); Southern California Synod Gathering 2243 FB/NA Insta); Pastor Steve's 19th Anniversary prayer card 1938 FB/291 Insta); Rev. Dr. Nunes' podcast card (1926 FB/NA Insta); Rev. Dr. Gravrock podcast card (1,787 FB/NA Insta); Skip Brenner appreciation (1648 FB/254 Insta); Susanne Hopkins' devotion with Pentecost Fair photos 1610 FB/NA Instagram); June 10 Lunch Bunch recap (1330 FB/NA Instagram).

(Aside: I had no idea Substack-created podcast promotional cards would get attention. I'll use them more.)

We've opened a new opportunity, thanks to Monica Ballard, of posting on our Ascension Linked-In Page, which currently has 150 followers. I love her writing. The series she wrote, which was

2.

made into word videos (also posted in TWAA and social media) invited people to reconsider investing from a Christian perspective and were thought-provoking. Linked-in is an appropriate venue for the Foundation to do messaging of this kind.

I continue to wrestle with the conundrum of wanting to publicize things and recognizing that, especially in these times, safety/privacy considerations have to come first. At least a couple of publicity opportunities had to be deliberately bypassed. It gets tricky. Looking ahead, we may wish to put more website pages under code locks or take other privacy-enhancing measures.

Speaking of websites, I mentioned last month that we had to migrate our sites to the Divi 5 WordPress builder. Divi 4 support is going to cease, and Divi 5 is a complete remake that is more secure, among other changes. My husband, Dominick, is part-way through the process. Our Foundation site is completed. Working on this will require learning, but users shouldn't notice a difference.

In His Service,

Stacy Smith Bosco

Communication Coordinator