

2017 REFLECTION



WORSHIP
GROW
WALK
SERVE



Ascension
Lutheran Church

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR CHRIS



Dear People of God,
As a practice in my spiritual life, I choose a book of the Bible to read each month. Some books, such as 1st John, are a breeze to finish in a month. There are other books, like the book of Psalms that cause me to play catch up all month long. I find my faith journey runs in the same vein. Some days I feel as if the presence of the Holy Spirit is right beside me. Other days, I struggle to trust that God is paying attention. At the beginning of October, I started reading the book of Zechariah. Zechariah is a prophet, sent by God, who appears on the horizon as God's people return from a 70-year exile in Babylon. Now that we are in the month of November, I am having a hard time forgetting the words of the prophet Zechariah. In Zechariah 8:12, the prophet speaks this word of the Lord:

'For *there will be* peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these *things*.'

Can you imagine hearing that promise of God as you return from 70 years of isolation, oppression, and suffering? Prophets were often called by God to provoke the people to repentance. Zechariah's call from God was more about provoking the people to hope. The people were hungry for life. They had been drudging through their days; struggling to survive; wondering if their exile would ever end. Finally, the decree of the king allowed them to return to Jerusalem but they had little hope for their future – even less hope to rebuild the temple – the center of their world. The prophet Zechariah speaks a word of hope for the immediate future of God's people who are returning from exile and a word of hope about God's promised future when God will send God's Son to save us.

Zechariah's call from God was about
provoking the people to hope.

My friends, we know the end of the story. We heard the angels sing. We saw the baby in the manger. We watched John the Baptist baptize Jesus in the river Jordan. We listened to the story of Jesus struggling with the devil in the wilderness. We witnessed the disciples leaving their nets. We drank the wine at the wedding. We followed Jesus as he healed the blind man and made the lame to walk. We wept at the tomb of Lazarus. We celebrated with Mary and Martha as Lazarus came out of the tomb. We ate at the table of tax collectors. We had our feet washed by Jesus in the upper room. We prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. We ran away when Jesus was arrested. We denied that we knew Jesus when the servant accused us. We stood at the foot of the cross while Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" We laid Jesus in a freshly carved tomb. We walked away. We went home. We believed we were living the end of the story. Three days later, God's promise came true. We heard women tell us they had seen the Lord. We ran to the tomb to see for ourselves. We heard Jesus call our name. We shouted to the entire world, "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" And now, my friends, we know the end of the story as God tells the story.

The same is true for our journey of faith. On every journey you take, you face choices. At every fork in the road, you make a choice. And it is those decisions that shape our lives. I wonder how you choose to tell the story of your life as you live in the wonder of God's grace. Someone, somewhere once said, "We are not where we have been. We are not where we will one day be...but we are on our way."

We are not where we will one day be...
but we are on our way.

My friends, the same is true for this community of faith. 'For *there will be* peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these *things*.'

The prophet speaks to us! God's promise is for us!

My friends, we know the end of the story. In the following pages celebrate how God's story is unfolding through you and the ministry and mission of God we share here at Ascension Lutheran Church. Thanks be to God for all of you! Thanks be to God for this most amazing journey of faith and life to the glory of God! Amen! Peace be with you!

Pastor Chris





66,000

Hours of worship

17

Prayer Shawls made, blessed, & gifted

14,203

Lives touched

3,336

Items distributed

216

Events which reached the larger
local & global communities

547

Cards crafted, written, & sent

400

Pots of Mt. Meru coffee
shared

*Through Ascension's
ministries, we have a
significant impact on God's
world. We are God's hands,
feet, and heart in the
communities of our
congregation, cities, and
around the world.*

*Thank you for all the ways
you put your faith into
action. Let us continue to ...
Worship. Grow. Walk. Serve.*

645

Bible study meetings

2,666

Children & Teens impacted

***We have been blessed to work with
these organizations & partners:***

Hope Center; Hebron House; SOPHIA; ERAs
Senior Network (Interfaith of Waukesha
County); Milwaukee Rescue Mission; City on a
Hill; Food Pantry of Waukesha County; City of
Waukesha; All Peoples Lutheran Church; the
Women's Center; Outreach for Hope; Christmas
Clearing Council of Waukesha County; USO of
Wisconsin; ADRC's Memory Café; Milwaukee
VA Medical Center; Waukesha schools;
Salvation Army; Hope Center; Curative Care
Center; Pro Health Cancer Center; Cloverleaf
Preschool; Literacy Council of Greater
Waukesha; WCTC; Lutheran Social
Services; NAMI; Healing Hearts of Waukesha
County; Habitat for Humanity; The Heifer
Project; and our Partnership churches in El
Salvador, Tanzania and Cross Lutheran Church
in Milwaukee.

21,236

Volunteer hours served

230

Performances by our ministries

774

Cans of soup donated

1,384

Items created & donated by
Ascension's Knit Wits

769

Meals shared

91

Care packages delivered

100

Books borrowed from
Ascension's libraries



*The Lord says,
"Before they call I
answer; while they
are still speaking I
will hear."*

~ Isaiah 65:24



*The sacrament of Holy
Communion is a
tangible reminder of
God's great love for us.*

~ Pastor Chris



*The Little Free Library is
a simple way to connect
with the community.
People are now
returning books and
donating from the
neighborhood.*

~ Kathy Williams



*The Daniel Plan
may seem too
extreme or too hard
but with a positive
approach and the
support of the group,
it didn't end up being
difficult at all.*

~ Daniel Plan
participant

*I now know why people take
mission trips. I feel like I
have known them along
time.*

~ Member regarding El
Salvador delegation

*Making music offers
refreshment for the spirit in
the midst of busy lives and
challenging days.*

~ Vicki Taylor



*Being a tutor has
opened my eyes to
the struggles of
refugees and new
immigrants. I have
learned so much
from them.*

~ Literacy tutor

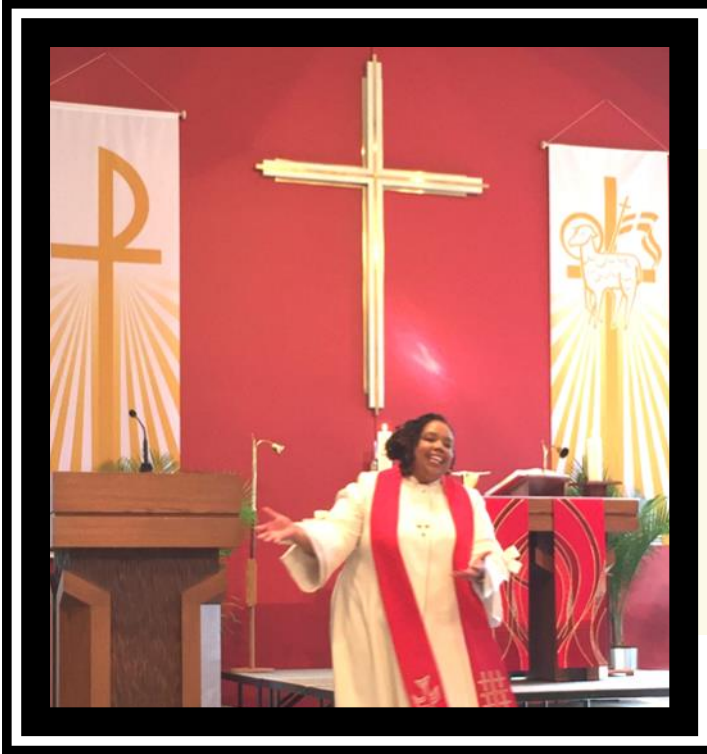


*We serve a scandalous God.
Jesus did things that upended
all of history.*

~ Pastor Angela Khabeb



A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ANGELA



I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect.

~ Romans 12:1-2

Our faith calls us to lives of active discipleship marked by spiritual maturity. Transformation is part of God's promise of grace. Our transformation begins to take shape even when we don't see it, even when we don't feel it. Transformation does not mean that we become perfect people or that we become religious fanatics. Transformation means that, like the caterpillar, we shed our former way of living so that we can embrace promised renewal. St. Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us that godly transformation comes through discipleship and discipleship is costly. But radical transformation matters. It matters because God is in the business of transforming lives and transformed lives have the potential to transform the world. Isn't it humbling to know that the God of the universe invites us to be the hands and feet of Christ? God's word encourages us to resist conforming to the world around us and we are assured, through God's mercy, our minds can be renewed. We are called to live into our baptismal identity.

The Rev. Daniel Erlander in his baptismal manual, *Let the Children Come*, coins the phrase, "storied waters." In the waters of baptism we join a community of believers. When the ordinary element of water is joined with the Holy Spirit and the Word, a miracle unfolds in our midst. Because the newly baptized person now becomes part of the great divine narrative. In these storied water is your story, my story, all of our stories. But not just that- the story of Adam and Eve rests in these waters. The story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea—it's in the baptismal waters. The story of David and Goliath, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the story of Jesus calling the disciples to fish for people, and even the story of our ministries at Ascension Lutheran Church are in these storied waters. Do you know what else is in these waters? Our true identity. Our true identity as children of God.

Our faith calls us to lives of active discipleship marked by spiritual maturity.

St. Paul was fond of using the familial language of "sisters and brothers" in Christ. As the Body of Christ, we are a vast family that spans nations, languages, and cultures. Our Christian family encompasses Christians throughout every time and place. We are not alone on our faith journey because we are blessed with the remarkable gift of abundant community. After all, we are created in God's image and our God exists in divine community - God the Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity continues to call us into a similar unity within the Body of Christ. Yet even within this miracle of spiritual kinship, lies both blessing and burden. Thank God the complexity does not outweigh God's gift of diverse community. God's narrative is big enough to encompass all of our stories. Sisters and brothers, the divine narrative has no beginning and it has no end.

Each of our journeys tell a story. Our many and varied narratives connect us to the broader Divine narrative. Thereby, connecting us to every other child of God. So as we continue our ministry at Ascension, we do not walk this path alone. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. We walk in the footsteps of faithful saints who have gone before us.

God's narrative is big enough to encompass all our stories.

Ultimately our Christian identity is what defines us. We are free in Christ and our Christian freedom informs every facet of our lives. We are called to walk in mercy and love. As we continue on our journey, the seed of faith grows and takes root. And through the transformative power of God's Spirit, it blossoms and bears fruit. The journey can be lengthy and even difficult. But God strengthens us so that we resist the urge to shrink from the process. The Holy Spirit empowers us and brings out the best in us. We are a family. An imperfect, struggling, growing, amazing, powerful family of God. Jesus brings us back to the baptismal waters, to the storied waters and reminds us of our identity and our baptismal promise that we, along with all our wonderfully different stories, are part of the family of God and we have been marked with the cross of Christ forever. May God continue to strengthen our ministry as sisters and brothers in the body of Christ.

Pastor Angela

We are a family. An imperfect, struggling, growing, amazing, powerful family of God. Jesus brings us back to the baptismal waters, to the storied waters and reminds us of our identity and our baptismal promise that we ... are part of the family of God and we have been marked with the cross of Christ forever.



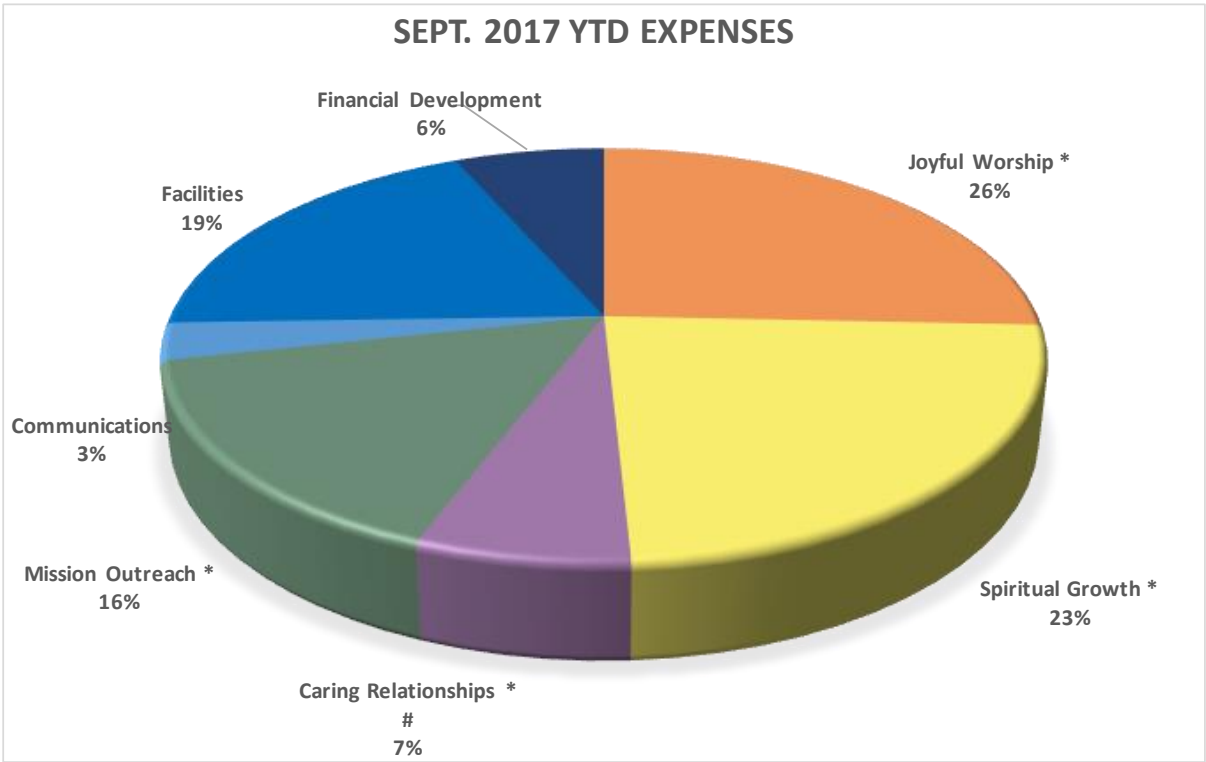
FINANCIALS

MEMBERSHIP & OTHER STATISTICS

The financial leadership tracks the giving and spending for all areas including the Butterfly Wings, which includes Joyful Worship, Spiritual Growth, Mission Outreach, and Caring Relationships. These areas represent the mission of our church. Therefore, administrative spending is allocated to each of these areas based on their current spending on a percentage basis. Other areas of spending are also shown. It's helpful to see where contributions are going. Ascension programs serve the spiritual needs of its members, the local community, the area, and the world. Your generous giving makes it all possible!

God Bless,

Darwin Moore, Treasurer



Joyful Worship *	\$137,459
Spiritual Growth *	\$125,851
Caring Relationships * #	\$35,575
Mission Outreach *	\$84,438
Communications	\$15,527
Facilities	\$101,244
Financial Development	\$35,309
Sept. 2017 YTD Expense Total:	\$535,403
* Includes Administration Spending	
# Includes Leadership Development Spending	

The following is a brief and, as yet incomplete, snapshot of our membership and other statistics for 2017. Complete information will be in the February 2018 newsletter.

Amy Gilgenbach, Director of Administration

	2015	2016	2017**
Baptized Membership	1124	1107	1060
Confirmed Membership	879	895	872
New members, including baptisms	48	58	47
Number of households	nr	467	446
Releases/transfers (by request, inactivity or statistical adjustment)	237	69	32
Deaths	9	6	11
Confirmation	7	13	9
Total number of people (including children) actively participating in the life of the congregation	1072	974	904

** Projected

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them.

MATTHEW 18:20

	2015	2016	2017**
Average weekly worship	444	417	438
Baptisms	18	17	13
Marriages	4	8	4
Funerals	9	9	12
BLAST	87	79	67
JOLT (gr. 6-9)	37	41	58
CRASH (gr. 9-12)	38	45	46
Total children involved in Spiritual Growth ministries	162	165	171
Small Groups	nr	170	178

** Projected



Executive Staff

Lead Pastor
Rev. Christian W. Marien
PC@ascensionelca.org

Pastor
Rev. Angela T. Khabeb
PA@ascensionelca.org

Director of Administration
Amy Gilgenbach
Admin@ascensionelca.org

Director of Care Ministries
Brenda Lytle, RN
Brenda@ascensionelca.org

Director of Faith Formation
Tony Acompanado
Tony@ascensionelca.org

Director of Music Ministries
Vicki Taylor
Vicki@ascensionelca.org

Support Staff

**Administrator - Joyful Worship
& Spiritual Growth**
Tamie Greenwood
Tamie@ascensionelca.org

**Administrator - Caring
Relationships &
Mission Outreach**
Kate Mattson
Kate@ascensionelca.org

Praise Band Leader
Ben Janzow
Ben_janzow@yahoo.com

Nursery Staff
Becca Tenwinkel

Ministry/Operations

Director of Ministries
Kelly Hoeg
kelly.hoeg@gmail.com

Director of Operations
Peter Laper
Peterlaper@gmail.com

Church Council

President
Cynthia Carlson
Cynthicarlsenalca@gmail.com

First Vice President
Craig Greenwood
Ctgreenwood1@att.net

Second Vice President
Jay O'Grady
Jayograd@wi.rr.com

Secretary
Linda Hansen
Lindahansen@wi.rr.com

Treasurer
Darwin Moore
myddm1@twc.com

Council Members-at-Large
Chris Holloway
Chritine.holloway@cdw.com

Bryn Kirk
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Becky.klotz23@yahoo.com

Aaron Niezwaag
theniezwaag@gmail.com

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Cathy Rapp
Cathrinerapp@sbcglobal.net

Wing Leaders

Joyful Worship
Amy James
Jamesgang247@aol.com

Spiritual Growth
Vacant

Caring Relationships
Cheryl Anspach
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Mission Outreach
Shirley Wehmeier
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Ascension

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

9 a.m.—5 p.m.

FRIDAY

9 a.m.—12 p.m.