



Ascension
LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELCA
December 2016

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PASTORS' PERSPECTIVES



Dear People of God,
“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.” The familiar table grace many of us learned as children is also an Advent prayer full of hope and longing. In Advent, although we are preparing for the annual Christmas celebration of Jesus’ birth long ago in Bethlehem, we are also keenly aware of the need for Jesus to come again, bringing the fullness of peace and justice with his promised reign. The story we tell begins with the God of Israel, who saw the suffering of the people enslaved by Pharaoh and came down to deliver them. This same God sees the suffering of people today and will come again bringing freedom from death and sin. The coming of Jesus promises life to all creation and assures victory over all God’s enemies.

The challenge we face as Christians is to tell the Advent story and be heard when we are surrounded by a multitude of competing stories distracting and confusing us. The Jesus whose coming we proclaim in Advent is the “joy of heaven,” God’s love sent

to earth for the sake of all creation

The words of author Blair Meeks: “We are entering into the new church year under the banner of Advent. God has heard the cries of God’s people. John the Baptist will call us from the river Jordan. Mary, the mother of Jesus, will sing to the glory of God. A star will light the sky on fire and stop to rest over a stable.” Come, Lord Jesus. I am ready for all of these moments. I am hungry to hear the stories, renewed in my own ears, of God’s tending of our lives once again. Come, Lord Jesus.

I wonder - are you hungry? Do you hunger for peace? Do you hunger for joy? Do you hunger for hope? This is the time of God’s choosing. Are you ready?

Poet Ann Weems writes these words:

*Our God is the One who comes to us in a burning bush,
In an angel song, in a newborn child.
Our God is the One who cannot be found locked in the church,
Not even in the sanctuary.
Our God will be where God will be with no constraints, no predictability.
Our God lives where our God lives,
and destruction has no power and even death cannot stop the living.
Our God will be born where God will be born,
But there is no place to look for the One who comes to us.
When God is ready God will come even to a godforsaken place
Like a stable in Bethlehem.
Watch...for you know not when God comes.
Watch, that you might be found whenever, wherever, God comes.*

My prayer for each of you is to let your hunger for God call you to new life in this season of Advent. As we move toward Christmas, you are invited to join us on Sunday morning for an Advent Bible Study on Dec. 4 to help you get more through the season of Advent. Advent Concert Worship services are Saturday, Dec. 10, at 6 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 11, at 8:30 and 10:45 a.m. Children’s Christmas Pageant Worship services happen on Sunday, Dec. 18, at 8:30 and 10:45 a.m. Christmas Eve worship services, at 2:30, 4, 5, and 11 p.m., will arrive with candlelight, communion, and carols to give glory to God. Join us in one of these moments or in every one of these moments.

Watch, that you might be found whenever, wherever, God comes.

Peace and joy be yours in these days of Advent,

Rev. Christian Marien

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him, not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

*...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.
John 1:1-5, 14*



Here we are again, entering the holiday season. Amid the merriment and chaos, at the heart of Christmas, is the Incarnation. Christmas is a celebration of a miracle. The miracle of our God entering humanity through the person of Jesus Christ. That means that although "Jesus is the reason for the season," we are the reason Jesus was born.

Every Christmas, churches all over the world recreate the Nativity story through pageants, plays, and concerts. Over the centuries, we Christians look to scripture from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke to proclaim our savior's birth narrative. However, John's Gospel uniquely illuminates the Incarnation, the divinity of Jesus. As many of you know, John's Gospel is very different from the other Gospel books. Unlike, the Gospel of Matthew, John does not speak of the virgin birth, the star in the east, nor the three wise men bearing extravagant gifts. However, John's Gospel does offer something else. Instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh, John's Gospel speaks of authority, empowerment, and incarnation. And unlike Luke's Gospel that gives us a vivid description of Jesus' birth complete with angels, shepherds, and a manger — John illustrates for us a nativity scene of creation, life, and light. So when we align John's Gospel with Matthew's and Luke's, we begin to see a fuller picture of this babe in a manger. "In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him, not one thing came into being." Through John, we learn that the babe in the cradle is the co-creator of the cosmos.

"Jesus was the Word and the Word was God." Then, as if that weren't enough, something even more amazing happens. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." God, through Jesus, intentionally entered our human experience. Divinity took on humanity; immortality was swaddled in mortality; and the newborn King became the light of the world. From the dawn of creation, Jesus was prepared for this journey - the journey to leave heaven and come to us. I do not pretend to fully understand the mystery of the Incarnation. Who can? Theologian, John Shea, shares an adorable story of the birth of our savior. This brief anecdote gives us a glimpse of the Incarnation through the eyes of a child:

She was five, sure of the facts, and recited them with slow solemnity, convinced every word was

revelation. She said, "They were so poor they had only peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to eat and they went a long way from home without getting lost. The lady rode a donkey, the man walked, and the baby was inside the lady. They had to stay in a stable with an ox and an ass (hee-hee), but the Three Rich Men found them because a star lighted the roof. Shepherds came and you could pet the sheep but not feed them. Then the baby was borned. And do you know who he was?" Her quarter eyes inflated to silver dollars. "The baby was God." And she jumped in the air, whirled around, dove into the sofa, and buried her head under the cushion, which is the only proper response to the Good News of the Incarnation.

The miracle of the incarnation defies our understanding. The mysterious and unexpected miracle is that the God of all creation, in Jesus Christ, came to humanity so that through Jesus Christ, humanity can come to God. John's prologue is at once profound and quite simple. God has entered humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. That's simple, right? But even the most accomplished theologian has to bow to the great mystery that surrounds the incarnation. Even though this Christmas story is over 2000 years old, the wonder is yet new.

This Christmas, may we experience the radical, awesome, incredible proclamation that the Word continues to dwell among us! The Word continues to come to us. Jesus comes to us in the scriptures. Jesus comes to us in the baptismal waters. Jesus comes to us in our times of worship. So as the busy Holiday Season gets underway and we begin to rush and hurry, chasing sales and bargain hunting, may we be mindful of John's vision of abundant life. May we appreciate the abundance we have in community, the abundance we have in God's Word, and the abundance we have in our Savior. As John reminds us, "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."

Rev. Angela Khabel

JOYFUL WORSHIP

Important Dates

Saturday, Dec. 10, 6 p.m.

Advent Concert Worship

Sunday, Dec. 11, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m.

Advent Concert Worship

Sunday, Dec. 18, 8:30 & 10:45 a.m.

Children's Christmas Pageant
Worship

Sunday, Dec. 18, 7 p.m.

The Longest Night Service

Christmas Eve Worship Services

2:30, 4:00, 5:00, & 11:00 p.m.



Sing We Now of Jesus: BLAST Children's Christmas Program

Ascension's children will share the story of Jesus' birth through songs, readings, and a live nativity during morning worship at 8:30 and 10:45 on Sunday, Dec. 18. Come and hear the story that never grows old as told through the sweet voices of children--Sing We Now of Jesus! (More information on pg. 6).



News of Great Joy!

Advent Concert Worship December 10/11

*On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring:
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful king's birth.
--Sussex Carol (English Traditional)*

The musicians of Ascension invite you to join us in worship for our annual Advent/Christmas Concert Worship services on Saturday, Dec. 10 (6 p.m.), and Sunday, Dec. 11 (8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.). The Ascension Choir, Handbell Choir, Praise Band, Children's Choirs and instrumentalists encourage you to extend an invitation to family and friends to come and share in the "News of Great Joy" given to us by God at the birth of Jesus.

Portraits of the Nativity

The Jubilate Chorale, December 3/4

Music and visual art combine to create "Portraits of the Nativity" in the Jubilate Chorale's upcoming Christmas concerts. The chorale will be joined by special guests The Nordic Brass. Performances are Saturday, Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m., at St. John's Lutheran Church in Brookfield; and Sunday, Dec. 4, 4:00 p.m., at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Oconomowoc. Tickets are available from Ascension members Scott Greger, Sara VandenHeuvel, and Vicki Taylor or by visiting www.jubilatechorale.org.

The Longest Night Service

The Holiday Season is quickly approaching and for many, the holidays are a festive time marked with joy and cheer. It is a time to spend with family and friends – a time to enjoy great food and spirited fellowship. For most people, this is their favorite part of the year and they have anticipated its arrival for months. They are revived by all of the energy that surrounds this season... the baking, caroling, shopping, and visiting. For them, Christmas really will be merry. Unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone.

On the opposite end of the celebration spectrum, there are those who have been dreading the holidays. This time of year, they are confronted with challenging situations, painful memories, or heavy hearts. They may not feel like singing “Joy to the World” or “Deck the Halls.” The reasons abound. Perhaps some have experienced the loss of a loved one and this will be the first Holiday Season without that person. Or perhaps the loss occurred years ago, yet the holidays still hold a certain sadness - never quite the same since their loved one(s) died. Some families may be enduring the heartache of miscarriage or infertility. Others may be battling an illness or attempting to fathom a recent diagnosis. Some individuals may be dealing with empty nest syndrome or otherwise separated from family and friends by great distance. Some families are weathering a stormy divorce. Others may be overcome with financial worry or dealing with unemployment. Other families may be suffering through foreclosure. Some are lonely or depressed. And still others may simply be overwhelmed by the stress of the season. Although the factors may vary widely, there is one constant - our burdens can seem magnified during the holidays.

As the body of Christ, it is vital that we provide an alternative for worship during the holidays. Remember Paul's mandate to believers in his letter to the Romans? We are to “rejoice with them that rejoice and to weep with them that weep.” This year, we will do just that. In addition to our usual Christmas celebratory services, we will also have The Longest Night service on Sunday, Dec. 18 at 7 p.m. The service is called “The Longest Night” because in the Northern Hemisphere, the Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year and falls on or near Dec. 22. (In some congregations, this type of worship service is also referred to as “Blue Christmas.” This name comes from the liturgical color blue during the season of Advent. The color blue symbolizes hope).

During this service, worshipers are invited to enter God's presence and feel safe. Their emotions are welcome as well. Anxiety, grief, tears, and even anger are wholly acceptable. This service of prayers, readings, and thoughtful music is not an all-night vigil, but rather, a time to take a moment of holy calm in the midst of our circumstances and reflect. It is a time to pause, breathe, and lament. Oddly enough, in our shared discontent, God reminds us that we are never alone. Please know that the Longest Night service is open to the entire community. Therefore, feel free to extend an invitation to someone you know who may be hurting this time of year. This is what it means to be the body of Christ.



Singing cheerful songs to a person whose heart is heavy is as bad as stealing someone's jacket in cold weather or rubbing salt in a wound. ~ Proverbs 25:20 NLT

Pastoral Acts: Baptisms

Ilene and Alexis Bell

October 30

Calogero Tagliavia

November 20

SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Road to Bethlehem

On Sunday, Dec. 4, from 9:45–10:35 a.m., BLAST will host Road to Bethlehem, an event that focuses on connecting children and parents to the season of Advent and the celebration of our Savior’s birth. Together, children and parents will rotate through interactive stations in East Hall. There will be tables in the center of the room available so anyone may come and watch the excitement unfold. Don’t miss it!



Children’s Christmas Program

Join us for the Children’s Christmas Program that will take place at both services on Sunday Dec. 18. Led by Ascension’s Director of Music, Vicki Taylor, our three-year-olds through 5th graders will celebrate the story of our Savior’s birth through scripture and Christmas hymns. The final rehearsal will take place in the sanctuary on Saturday Dec. 17, from 9:00–11:00 a.m.

BLAST Schedule

Dec. 4	9:45–10:35 a.m.	Road to Bethlehem
Dec. 11	9:45–10:35 a.m.	Jesus is Born (Luke 2:1-20)
Dec. 17	9:00–11:00 a.m.	Christmas Program Rehearsal
Dec. 18	8:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.	Christmas Program
Dec. 25		No BLAST – Christmas Break

Mime Lunch, Orientation, Tryouts, and Life of Jesus Event

The upcoming Mime performance season will kickoff on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 12–1 p.m. with a brief, yet informative, orientation for senior high students and parents of those interested in participating in Mime this upcoming season – this will take place over a potluck lunch. Parents will depart after lunch and the students will continue by taking part in the Life of Jesus event and tryouts.

All 9th grade Confirmation students and parents are expected to be in attendance.



CRASH Schedule

Dec. 4	5–9 p.m.	Progressive Dinner
Dec. 11	12–5 p.m.	Mime Lunch Orientation Tryouts and Life of Jesus Event

Progressive Dinner

On Dec. 4, from 5-9 p.m., join us for a fun evening spent together celebrating the faith and friendships built in CRASH. We'll indulge in appetizers, entrees, and desserts each one hosted at a different location. A hilarious and exciting gift exchange wraps up this beautiful evening.



JOLT

Thursday evening JOLT sessions take a break in the month of December. During this time, students will be working independently on their assigned Advent project. All Advent projects are due on, or before, JOLT resumes on Jan. 5, 2017. JOLT students are expected to attend and participate in worship regularly throughout the month of December.



CARING RELATIONSHIPS

Hope Ministry Brings Hope & Joy to People Surviving the Holidays

HOPE Ministry (Healing Our Pain...Eventually) is a new 2016 Care Ministry offering a place for those who are suffering loss. Many of our GriefShare participants have found a place in this ministry for socialization and giving back to others. In November, HOPE Ministry connected with a family from Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. A single mother with four children suffered the loss of her husband last summer due to street violence. "It is hard to enjoy the holidays this year and it is tough with my kids, when money is spent on bills and I just can't afford to give them anything extra," explained this newly widowed mother. HOPE Ministry participants were able to respond to the needs of this family over Thanksgiving by providing them with a box of food and a DVD gift of *Surviving the Holidays*. The Ministry plans to provide for this family over the Christmas holidays also. "The holidays are not always happy for everyone, but making a difference to others helps me heal as I suffer my own grief over the holidays," offered a GriefShare/HOPE Ministry participant.



*The holidays are not always happy for everyone,
but making a difference to others helps me heal as
I suffer my own grief over the holidays. ~
GriefShare/HOPE participant*

SOS

SOS Angel Ministry enters a "new age" of technology for helping with needs in our congregation. As we enter the new year in 2017, stay tuned for the changes. We plan on recruiting members using Sign-up Genius. You can sign up for a little or a lot of time through e-alerts, the Ascension webpage, and bulletins. Perhaps you may be on the receiving end of this ministry in the future.

YOGA Returns January 9

Care Ministries will be hosting another six-week session of yoga from Monday, Jan. 9-Feb. 13, from 6-7 p.m., in East Hall. The cost is only \$12 for the entire six weeks (\$2/class)! Bring your fee, mat, and water bottle on Jan. 9 and let's get in shape and reduce our stress in the new year!

New GriefShare Program Beginning January 10!

Please feel free to join us for a new GriefShare weekly series from Jan. 10–March 28, from 6-8 p.m., in the Youth Room. Our GriefShare program helps participants not only from our own church but from our outside community. The beauty of this program is that we see growth in how people are able to overcome their sadness and get back to a “new normal” for their lives. They make relationships with people in the group who connect with them, and our program is filled with tears along with laughter.

Free meals are provided to our participants beginning at 5:30 p.m. in West Hall. The meals are provided by the wonderful small and large groups in our congregation and are greatly appreciated! If you have a small group and would like to make a meal for this group, please contact Brenda Lytle, 527-8518 or brenda@ascensionelca.org.



Mark Your Calendars!

Blood pressure checks will be done between church services in the Hearth Room once a month. Care Ministries is providing health professionals for this free service for health promotion!

December 4, 2016

March 5, 2017

January 15, 2017

April 2, 2017

February 12, 2017

May 7, 2017

Knit Wits

Thanks to all the Knit Wits for their dedicated work this summer and fall, and thanks to everyone at Ascension for your generous contributions of yarn. We now have an overflow of yarn for our winter knitting!

Pastor Chris blessed over 500 hats at the 5th Annual Hat Blessing, Nov. 13. The hats have been distributed to the Waukesha Christmas Clearing Council, the Salvation Army, Cross Lutheran Church, and Hope Center. We will continue to distribute hats to these and other local charities all winter. We also delivered more lapghans (lap afghans) to the Clement Zablocki VA Medical Center in West Allis.

New members are always welcome to join Knit Wits. If you can't join, but still want to knit or crochet for charity, we encourage you to make hats or lapghans and we'll distribute them for you. For more information, contact Maddie Goetter, 262-527-4013. Happy holidays to everyone, and remember to help keep the community warm!



CARING RELATIONSHIPS

Gratitude

Thanks to everyone for your thoughts, prayers, and support during the last five months as I helped my sisters care for our 94-year-old mom. Mom died in peace, without pain... she got 14 years of quality life from a pacemaker designed to last eight years. She died laughing and still telling jokes. She wanted to spend the holidays this year in heaven.

*Maddie and Marwin
Goetter*

Many Thanks

Thank you to all the wonderful people who have helped my son Bob Stoll through his bicycle accident recovery! Thanks to Pastor Chris and Pastor Angela for their prayers and presence on that awful night of the accident. Thanks to all who have provided countless miles of volunteer driving to appointments and employment as well as all the wonderful delivered meals and continued prayers. You are truly the hands of Christ in action.

Shirley Stoll

A Taste of the Daniel Plan: H₂O

We have reported before on the importance of drinking plenty of clean, fresh water to optimize your health. Many people prescribe to the old fashioned “drink eight glasses of water” rule. A more accurate amount to drink is half of your body weight in ounces. In other words, if you weigh 100 pounds, you should drink 50 ounces (about 1 ½ quarts) of water. A 200 pound person should drink 100 ounces (almost a gallon) of water. If you drink coffee or other caffeinated beverages, that amount should be increased since those beverages are actually dehydrating.

It is encouraging to see that so many people have substituted their beverage choices from sodas and juices to water. According to recent advertising efforts, the soda companies have also taken note. You may have seen them scrambling to reformulate their beverages to lower sugar and calorie options which appeal to those taking stock in their health. If you are a water drinker though, you might want to ask yourself, “What’s in my water?”

Here are some rather alarming statistics regarding our drinking water. According to the EPA, “Each year in the US, lead in drinking water contributes to 480,000 cases of learning disabilities in children and 560,000 cases of hypertension in adult males.” The CDC reports that “35% of the reported gastrointestinal illnesses among tap water drinkers were water related and preventable.” In fact, the administrator of the EPA classifies drinking water contamination as one of the top four public health concerns.” Wow! We find that alarming.

Unfortunately, even with all the chatter out there, many people still do not realize what is in their water. Others that are aware of the dangers found in tap water may have switched to bottled water. They may be surprised to hear that bottled water is actually less regulated than the water that comes from your tap. Consequently, their bottled water may be no better than what they have coming from their tap.

Here are a couple of tips for you to follow as you consider your drinking water options. If you wish to drink your tap water, consider using a water filter of some kind. RO systems (reverse osmosis) are becoming quite popular. They are relatively inexpensive and fairly effective in removing most contaminants. If you have well water, have your well tested on a regular basis and take appropriate steps necessary to remove any unwanted contaminants. If you are using your tap to refill bottles, make sure any plastic containers are BPA free. Even better options for refillable containers are glass or stainless steel.

If you choose to buy bottled water from the store, do NOT drink those labeled “purified water” or “drinking water.” Many store brands and even national brands such as Nestle PureLife, Aquafina, and Dasani are just tap water or may have undesirable additives in them. Stick with high quality brands or spring water, artesian water, or Smart Water. Also, watch the labels on the emerging plethora of sports waters that are hitting the shelves. Marketing efforts may give the impression they are good choices but you need to be your own detective to make an informed choice.

To start your journey to health, go to www.danielplan.com or <http://www.danielplan.com/healthyhabits/fire-roasted-red-peppers/> to check out our suggested recipe for this month. ~ Steve & Carol Spieker



Annual Cookie Swap

With the hustle and bustle that is the Christmas season, who has enough time to bake all of the cookies that we would really like to? Don't fret! Supermoms is again hosting the Annual Cookie Swap. 'Tis the season to indulge in the finest cookies this side of Waukesha!

Thursday, Dec. 8, 6-8 p.m.

Martha Merrell's Books, 231 West Main St., Waukesha

Here is the general concept: Bake three to five dozen of one kind of cookie. Come to the party, have a cup of coffee/beverage, enjoy good company, complete some holiday shopping, and leave with an assortment of three to five dozen delicious cookies!

If you want to participate, kindly notify Jessica Jahner at jessicajahner@gmail.com or 414-213-3679 by Dec. 3 with the type of cookie you will be bringing. We hope everyone can bring a different kind of cookie to keep the swap exciting. Once we know the number of people attending, we will notify you with the confirmed quantity of cookies each person needs to bring. If you would like to be entered into the Best Tasting Cookie contest, please plan on bringing an extra dozen cookies for sampling.

Back by popular demand! Norm, the owner of Martha Merrell's, will be giving his book talk again on great new books for kids and adults. This has been a favorite part of past years' swaps. See you there!

Annual Cookie Swap
Thursday, Dec. 8, 6-8 p.m.
Martha Merrell's Books, Waukesha



From Wartburg

On behalf of the Wartburg Theological Seminary community, it is my privilege to thank you for your recent gift of \$500 to the Student Account Fund of Anthony Acompanado.

Wartburg Seminary recently began its 163rd year of forming leaders for God's mission. As we reflect on the early years of this ministry, many things are different, but this remains constant - Wartburg Seminary prepares leaders who are sent out to "Engage God's People" and bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in need of personal and social healing. It's because of the faithful support of friends like you that we can continue to prepare servant leaders who bring the saving message of God's grace to the world.

Thank you for being a valued partner in the formation of future pastors, lay leaders, chaplains, and teachers in congregations and communities of faith throughout the country and the world.

Janelle Koepke

Vice President for Mission Support

Young at Heart

On Saturday, Dec. 10, YAH will be taking our trip to the Schauer Center in Hartford. We will be leaving Ascension at 1:30 p.m. from the rear parking lot and heading to Hartford to see the Broadway Guys. After the show, we will go to the Mine Shaft for dinner. We should be back at Ascension at approximately 8 p.m. On Wednesday, Dec. 6, our group will meet at Denny's on Grandview Blvd., at 9 a.m. for breakfast. If you are able, join us for a casual breakfast and socializing.

Our next potluck luncheon is Wednesday, Dec. 20, from noon-3 p.m. Please join us and bring a dish to pass if you are able. After lunch, we will be singing Christmas carols. There will be time for cards and Sequence after that.

Remember Young at Heart is for any Ascension member over the age of 55 and you don't have to register to join in the fun. Hope to see you at one or all of the above events. Have a blessed Christmas and joyous New Year. If you have questions, contact Celeste Defenbaugh at 262-370-4522, Beth Hoffmann at 262-542-7447, or Arlene Davis at 262-542-9119.

MISSION OUTREACH



El Salvador Partnership: Spring Break Trip

Are you looking for a warm place to go for spring break of 2017? Join us for a mission trip to El Salvador. Spring break next year is April 8-15, which is Holy Week. This will enable our delegates to be part of some of the Salvadoran Holy Week experiences. We will leave on the Saturday before Palm Sunday and return the following Saturday so we will be home for Easter. We will spend time with our brothers and sisters at our partnership congregation in San Jorge and will also visit the agroferreteria we helped build. More details will be announced in the new year. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Wehmeier Aparicio, weh22@hotmail.com.

Partnership Gift Catalog

Mission Outreach has prepared a gift catalog for items that our global partners need. Gift items range from \$2 for a year's worth of fluoride treatments for a child in El Salvador to \$6 per foot of pipe for the Kikwe water project in Tanzania to \$18 for bus fare for a family to travel to a Mission of Wellness site to \$200 for purchasing a key for a grand piano for the Cultural Arts center at Tumanini University Makumira where Randy Stubbs is on staff. There are pages of gifts at all prices. Gifts can be selected by individuals, families, or Ascension groups. Catalogs will be available beginning in Advent at church at www.ascensionelca.org.

Tanzania Partnership: Gift Ideas

Please consider stopping by the coffee cart to purchase coffee for people on your gift list. In addition to regular and decaf coffees in whole bean or ground, flavored coffees and k-cups are available. If you don't see what you want, please let the coffee hosts know and they will be sure to have it for you the next week. Every bag, package, or even cup of coffee purchased helps a farmer in Meru Tanzania support his/her family. Without our help, they do not have a market for getting a fair price for their coffee. This is a gift that keeps on giving.

In Our Own Backyard: Books

Our Little Free Library is a grand success. We continue to collect new or gently used books especially for children and teens. We are especially looking for Christmas-themed books during December.



Endowment Fund

The purpose of the Ascension Endowment Fund is to enhance the ministries, missions, and physical premises of Ascension apart from the annual budget. The Endowment Fund completed the 2016 income distribution of available funds based on 5% of our 12/31/15 balance (\$53,332), giving \$900 for each of the following:

Mission Outreach – Financial support for our Cross Lutheran Church partnership to help fund meals served by Ascension at Cross.

Ministries – Purchase music notation software and computer hardware for Director of Music Ministries.

Facilities – Strengthen and increase reach of Ascension’s wi-fi signal and help purchase artwork for Library/Conference Room.

We are now welcoming funding requests for next year, which must be turned in by **March 31, 2017**. Request forms are available on Ascension’s website, <http://ascensionelca.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-growth/ascension-endowment-fund/>, or in the church office. Approximately \$900 of funding is available for each of the three categories in 2017. You can discuss your request with the pastors or a member of the Endowment Committee: Rick James (rickjamesuw72@gmail.com), Ev Stone (evstone@s-hwealth.com), or Ric Simon (ricsimon@yahoo.com).

Please prayerfully consider making a legacy gift to the Ascension Endowment Fund through one of the methods below to ensure that the Ascension ministries and missions you have supported during your lifetime will continue to thrive when you are in your heavenly home.

Life Insurance - By naming the Endowment Fund as a beneficiary, you can practice Christian stewardship with a substantial gift at death by means of small contributions during your life.

Individual Retirement Accounts – As with life insurance, by naming the Endowment Fund as a beneficiary, you can practice Christian stewardship with a substantial gift at death and also eliminate the taxes paid at distribution of the funds.

Will Bequest - When preparing or revising your will, you can make provisions for the Endowment Fund in several ways with complete confidentiality.

Appreciated Investments - Giving appreciated assets such as stocks and real estate starts generating income immediately plus it can reduce your taxes.

Ric Simon

Endowment Committee

For where your
treasure is,
there your heart
will be also.

~ Matthew 6:21



Journey to Generosity

We invite you to continue to pray about your response to the 2017 budget. Stewardship letters and pledge cards were mailed in November. If you didn't receive a letter, please contact the church office. Pledge cards are available in the narthex.

Did you know you can give to Ascension from your Apple phone via the Give+ app by Vanco Services? Download it from the App Store soon so you can be ready when you want to make a donation. Don't have an Apple phone? You can always give to us on our website, ascensionelca.org, and click "Online Giving."

YOUR COUNCIL AT WORK

Council News

On Sunday, Nov. 13, at the annual congregational meeting, the voters' assembly elected an outstanding council for the next year. The new council's term of office begins Feb. 1. The members are as follows: Cynthia Carlson, president; Craig Greenwood, 1st vice president; Jay O'Grady, 2nd vice president; Patti Mueller, treasurer; Linda Hanson, secretary; and Roger Nordberg, Becky Klotz, Cathy Rapp, Bryn Kirk, Aaron Niezwaag, and Chris Holloway as members-at-large. Please keep these men and women in your prayers. We thank outgoing council members for their faithful service: Alan Gilgenbach, Jeremy Poling, Marcy Schaefer, and Paul Wehmeier.

The council also received the recommendations of the budget team. They were carefully reviewed and approved. A listening session was held on Nov. 6 for members of the congregation. The budget was then presented and approved at the annual meeting on the 13th. In the process of putting together the budget, the leaders of the various programs and ministries were involved. No raises were given. The church's contribution to pension funds was reduced. As we look to 2017, council recommended that the budget be increased by \$10,000 or 1.6% from the 2016 budget. We are asking that you pray, think, and discuss your response to God's love and grace as you plan your giving for 2017. Per the request at the congregational meeting, the council will be carefully monitoring this during the new budget year.

Please continue to pray for all of your brothers and sisters at Ascension.

Paul Wehmeier,

Council President

Financial Report

In October, the contributions were less than budgeted, and the total income was less than budgeted. The actual expenses were less than budgeted; however, greater than the total income. This resulted, again, in a deficit for the month.

For Ascension to end the year in a positive financial position, the monthly giving to the general offering needs to increase by only \$42.00 per family unit in November and December.

Let's rejoice in the coming of Jesus with our financial gifts.

Patti Mueller

Treasurer

Only \$42 more per family in November and December could balance the church budget!

<i>General Fund Activity</i>	October 2016 Actual	October 2016 Budget	Variance to 2016 Budget
Income			
<i>Contributions</i>	\$48,100.49	\$57,000.00	\$(8,899.51)
<i>Rent, Interest, other income</i>	\$4,709.33	\$5,395.83	\$(686.50)
<i>Restricted Income</i>	\$3,250.00	\$3500.00	\$(250.00)
Total Income	\$56,059.82	\$65,895.83	\$(9,836.01)
Expenses			
<i>Communications</i>	\$1,566.81	\$1,991.66	\$(424.85)
<i>Facilities</i>	\$8,349.39	\$8,982.32	\$(632.93)
<i>Financial Development</i>	\$3,822.13	\$3,756.00	\$66.13
<i>Leadership Development</i>	\$0.00	\$33.33	\$(33.33)
<i>Administration</i>	\$21,394.10	\$22,280.91	\$(886.81)
<i>Caring Relationships</i>	\$2,179.07	\$2,345.25	\$(166.18)
<i>Joyful Worship</i>	\$7,839.00	\$8,054.49	\$(215.49)
<i>Mission Outreach</i>	\$4,178.00	\$3,208.34	\$969.66
<i>Spiritual Growth</i>	\$7175.16	\$7,071.90	\$103.26
Total Expenses	\$56,503.66	\$57,724.20	\$(1,220.54)
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$(443.84)	\$8,171.63	\$(8,615.47)

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
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Director of Music Ministries

Vicki Taylor
Vicki@ascensionelca.org

Support Staff

Administrator - Joyful Worship & Spiritual Growth

Amy Stryker
AmyS@ascensionelca.org

Administrator - Caring Relationships & Mission Outreach

Kate Mattson
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Praise Band Leader

Ben Janzow
Ben_janzow@yahoo.com

Nursery Staff

Becca Tenwinkel
Victoria Kirk

Ministry/Operations

Director of Ministries

Kelly Hoeg
khoeg@wi.rr.com

Director of Operations

Peter Laper
Peterlaper@gmail.com

Church Council

President

Paul Wehmeier
paulkw@wi.rr.com

First Vice President

Cynthia Carlson
cynthiac1966@live.com

Second Vice President

Craig Greenwood
ctgreenwood1@att.net

Secretary

Marcy Schaefer
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Treasurer

Patti Mueller
mombski@aol.com

Council Members-at-Large

Alan Gilgenbach
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Bryn Kirk
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Becky Klotz
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Roger Nordberg
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Jeremy Poling
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Cathy Rapp
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Wing Leaders

Joyful Worship

Amy James
Jamesgang247@yahoo.com

Spiritual Growth

Sheri Greger
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Caring Relationships

Cheryl Anspach
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Mission Outreach

Shirley Wehmeier
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Ascension

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OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

9 a.m.—5 p.m.

FRIDAY

9 a.m.—3 p.m.

December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>KEY EH East Hall HR Hearth Room N Narthex NR Nursery PR Prayer Room S Sanctuary WH West Hall YR Youth Room</p>				1 10am Al-Anon WH 5pm Angel Choir 5:30pm Joyful Sounds 6pm Youth Bells 7pm Ballantyne Sm Grp 107 7pm Care Ministries PR	2	3 9am Set-up for Road to Bethlehem
4 ADVENT 2 8:30am Worship 9:30am Blood Pressure Check HR 9:45am Road to Bethlehem EH, WH 10 am Adult Ed S 10:45 Worship 5pm CRASH Progressive Dinner EH 6pm Daniel Plan 107 6pm AA Beginner WH 7pm AA closed WH	5 9:45am Al-Anon WH 12pm Private NR 5:30pm Prayer Group PR 6pm Yoga EH 6:30pm AMEN 107	6 6:30am Early Bird AMEN 107 9:30am TGIT 107 9:30am Women's Bible Study HR	7 8am Private PR 9am YAH Breakfast at Denny's 9:30am Cross Meal 12pm Private NR 12:30pm Women's Nurture Group PR 6pm Ringers 6:30pm TNT EH 7pm AA Wisdom WH, HR 7:30pm Choir S	8 10am Al-Anon WH 10am TGBG PR 5pm Angel Choir 5:30pm Joyful Sounds 6pm Youth Bells 7pm Ballantyne Sm Grp 107	9	10 8am Concert Prep S 6pm Advent Concert Worship
11 ADVENT 3 8:30am Advent Concert Worship 9:45am BLAST 10:45 Advent Concert Worship 12pm Mime Events YR, S, EH, WH 4:30pm Council, Offsite 6pm AA Beginner WH 7pm AA Open mtg EH	12 9:45am Al-Anon WH 12pm Private NR 1pm Living Letters 106 6pm Yoga EH 6:30pm AMEN 107	13 6:30am Early Bird AMEN 107 9:30am Women's Bible Study HR 7pm Holloway Sm Grp 107	14 8am Private PR 11:45am Men's Nurture Grp 106 12pm Private NR 6pm Ringers 6:30pm TNT EH 7pm AA Wisdom, WH 7:30pm Choir S	15 Newsletter Deadline 10am Al-Anon WH 7pm Ballantyne Sm Grp 107	16	17 9am Children's Pageant Rehearsal S, EH
18 ADVENT 4 8:30am Worship Children's Pageant 9:45am BLAST EH, WH 10:45 Worship Children's Pageant 12p Praise Band S 6pm AA beginner 7pm AA closed WH 7pm Longest Night Service S	19 9:45am Al-Anon WH 12pm Private NR 5:30pm Prayer Group PR 6:30pm AMEN 107	20 6:30am Early Bird AMEN 107 9:30am TGIT 107 9:30am Women's Bible Study HR	21 8am Private PR 12pm Private NR 12:30pm Women's Nurture Grp PR 6pm Ringers 7pm AA Wisdom, WH HR 7:30pm Choir S	22 9am Sanctuary Prep 10am Al-Anon WH 10am Cloverleaf Program EH 10am TGBG PR 7pm Ballantyne Sm Grp 107	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 2:30pm Worship 4pm Worship 5:30pm Worship 11pm Worship
25 CHRISTMAS DAY 10am Worship 6pm AA beginner 7pm AA closed	26 Office Closed 9:45am Al-Anon WH 12pm Private NR 6:30pm AMEN 107	27 6:30am Early Bird AMEN 107 9:30am Women's Bible Study HR	28 8am Private PR 12pm Private NR 7pm AA Wisdom, WH HR	29 10am Al-Anon WH 7pm Ballantyne Sm Grp 107	30	31