



The Story is Told

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
12 November 2023

Ascension Lutheran Church
Rev. Christian W. Marien

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

I ran into Pick and Save last week to grab a few items we needed for dinner. As I stepped into a checkout line, a very nice man in front of me, looked me up and down and said, “are you Pastor Chris from Ascension Lutheran Church?” Now, I sometimes try to travel incognito. I was wearing a pretty thick jacket and a beanie - pulled low so that my eyes were barely visible. And I smiled at him and wondered where this interaction was about to take me. I replied, “yes, Pastor Chris.” He said, “I was at your church last Sunday...to see Ben Janzow.” “Yeah, he is pretty amazing,” I said. “Do you know him?” he asked. “I have met him once or twice,” I said. I promised myself that when I retold the story of this interaction, Ben would come off glowing and I would be happy to not be the focus of the story.

The story is told here at Ascension. “Which story?” You might ask. Well, there are many stories to tell here at Ascension.

- The story is told of Ben Janzow, apparently, and his guitar, which draws people to this place through the gift of music.
- The story is told of a community of people who are the heart of everything at Ascension. Faithful people who show up, step up, speak up, and serve far beyond our walls and even farther than anyone’s expectations.
- The story is told of a people, you people, who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, and visit those in prison.
- The story is told of the deep love of pastors who have been called by the Holy Spirit and this community of faith to walk alongside all of you and sometimes each other through the painful and difficult moments of this life. This story is told in my own life, and I am grateful for their selfless sacrifice of time and family to be reminded of what it means to be loved and tended by my pastors.
- The story is told of celebrations – moments of joy that cause us to catch our breath – the wedding march, the quiet voice of a child beginning the Lord’s prayer before the rest of the congregation can join in praying, the joyful noise of instruments and voices raised in praise, the glorious laughter of young and old alike, the sound of coins in the buckets of noisy offering, and the sizzle of hamburgers and carne asada that tell me that lunch will be waiting when the worship is finished.
- The story is told of the sound of taps on the bugle, the smell of fresh flowers, the tear-streaked face, and the community that gathers to say goodbye, remember, and if we are lucky, who share a bit of laughter in the midst.
- The story is told through the eyes that betray laugh lines, shoulders strengthened to support, hugs freely given, and forgiveness quickly offered.
- The story is told of community – even when we do not speak the same language. Of alfombras or sand carpets created during Holy Week and Las Posadas or The Inns, when we follow Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.
- The story is told of a young person who the world says is not enough, but here at Ascension, this young person is reminded that they are loved for who they are not for what they are able to do.
- The story is told to children of all ages - stories of the faith – stories of miracles and forgiveness and love and suffering and death and resurrection – because we have promised God, we would tell these stories.

“Which story?” You ask. Well, there are many...then again, there is only one story that truly matters. It is the story of Jesus, who comes as a baby in a manger, who walks alongside us in joy and in sorrow, who tells us we are loved, who dies on a cross for us, and rises from the dead for us. Who promises us the gift of eternal life. This is the story of Jesus. This is our story to tell. As long as there is breath in



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us, the story will be told. My friends, the story is told of a Savior who loves us – sometimes we tell that story with words...sometimes the story is told in other ways. Thanks be to God! Amen.