



Ascension
LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELCA
January 2020

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Merry Christmas!

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ~ John 1:9

Still in these first days of this new year we hear the words, “Merry Christmas” as the church celebrates the season of Christmas through January 6th with the feast of Epiphany celebrating the arrival of the Magi to greet the newborn king. It is an awfully full schedule for Mary and Joseph, for the Magi, for all of us. I wonder, “have you had time to catch your breath?”

I am always hungry for the season of Advent to arrive. I enjoy the darkness, the candlelight, the quiet – when I can find it. Advent does not always cooperate. Even this year as Ileen and I completed much of our shopping earlier than usual, we still found ourselves engaged in the rhythms of preparation and celebration bringing us much joy and, well, pulling us in multiple directions. As much as I commit to a “meeting-less” Advent, there are still more pieces to the church puzzle and the family puzzle and the life puzzle than usual. I think my heart and mind kind of expect Advent to be more intense – but still I try to carve out moments to light the candles of the Advent wreath and breathe prayers of hope, peace, joy, love into the lives of those I know are struggling in these long days of Advent – where the shadows can overwhelm. And before we know it, Christmas has come. Even as I have counted down the days to Christmas, somehow, Christmas Eve arrives as if I have not been preparing at all.

Still I try – to capture the moments of starlight in the night sky and angel song off in the distance. Even as I feel unprepared for Christmas Eve, or more to the point, pray for the night and the feeling to linger longer than it will – there will be a silent night that comes whether I am ready or not and it will last only as long as a night should last. And in the sunrise of Christmas Day, I will already find myself pondering what a year from now will bring when we gather, once again, to light candles to chase away the darkness. And with the arrival of the new year, we are greeted with the light of the season of Epiphany.

As much as Advent is the season of waiting, Epiphany is the season of light. From the shadows of Advent, we welcome the overwhelming light of God in the presence of a Savior sent to save the world. Epiphany provides each of us an opportunity to revel in the joy and presence of our God, come to be present with us. What joy these words might offer to us. God comes to us. No longer a whispered prophecy. No longer a promised future. Now God comes to us – to live, to love, to laugh, to suffer, and to die. But for a season in this life, we dwell in the light of Christ. So enjoy the light dear friends. Christ is born. Emmanuel – God with us.

And maybe, just maybe, each of us can find a moment to sit quietly awash in the light of Epiphany and rest, knowing that God is present with each of us – tending, healing, caring for us in ways we cannot imagine. Peace be with you.

See you in Church.

Pastor Chris

Pastoral Acts
Baptism
 Madelyn Russell Koenig Dec. 29

Las Posadas

Las Posadas is the annual advent event of reenacting Mary and Joseph’s search for lodging. This year, Ascension hosted our second Las Posadas event.

All the wings of Ascension's butterfly were in motion during this special event. We worshipped joyfully, reciting creeds and prayers and singing hymns of praise. In our walk through the building to search for an inn, the children led the way in costume, learning and sharing the story as part of their Spiritual Growth. As we reached our final posada, we shared a meal together, forming new Caring Relationships across language and culture. Finally, this special event lived out the goals of Mission Outreach as we had many visitors, and we lived out our covenant to our sister parish in El Salvador to learn about each other’s culture. The wings of the butterfly were working together to bring about a beautiful event. We hope you can join us next year as we continue to spread our wings!



Festival of the Annunciation
 The Festival of Guadalupe is an important part of the church year for Latinos. In an effort to honor this cultural tradition with our Lutheran theology, we had a Festival of the Annunciation this year.





Advent and Christmas Worship

This year, Ascension had many people attend our special worship services as we prepared for and celebrated the birth of Jesus. We began with a mid-week Advent worship and soup supper. Then Ascension's musicians, choirs and band joined together for the Advent Concert Worship, including a special Saturday night worship. The Latino Ministry held the Festival of the Annunciation on Dec. 12 (a new event) and the second Las Posadas Dec. 19, which included a meal and piñata for the children. We had the Children's Christmas Program the following week. We held four services on Christmas Eve and one on Christmas Day. We saw so many friends and families and enjoyed every minute of this busy month.



Christmas, a BLAST

BLAST students and families journeyed to Bethlehem to kick-off this special season.

They then helped us celebrate the story of our Savior's birth through scripture and Christmas hymns with a special presentation during worship.

Thank you to all the children, parents, teachers, volunteers and families who made the children's activities and programs so wonderful. All glory to God!



JANUARY CALENDARS

BLAST

BLAST classes resume on Sunday, Jan. 5. Thank you to everyone who helped to tell the story of Jesus' birth and make the Children's Christmas Program in December so wonderful!

- Jan. 5 Wise Men (Matthew 2:1-12)
- Jan. 12 Large Group Opening / Jesus' Baptism (Luke 3:15-17, 21-22)
- Jan. 19 The Disciples (Matthew 4:12-23; 9:9-13; 10:1-4)
- Jan. 26 The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:15-15)

JOLT

JOLT resumes on Thursday, Jan. 9, and will meet the remaining Thursday nights in January. We hope you had a wonderful Christmas break and we are excited to reconnect with you!

CRASH

Come join us for fun and games, faith conversations, and, of course, food.

- Jan. 12 Youth group, 6 - 7:30 p.m.
- Jan. 26 Youth group, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS

“Mental Health, What If We Talked About It?”

Grapevine Speaker, Brenda Lytle RN, Sunday, Jan. 19, 9:45-10:30 a.m. in the sanctuary
We will focus on the importance of mental health and how it relates to overall health and well-being. We will talk about understanding how mental health can be affected, how to challenge the stigma of mental health, and how to take steps to care for mental health.



Blood Pressure Screening Jan. 5

Are you a health professional and looking for ways to serve at Ascension? We schedule once a month between services. Please contact Brenda Lytle if you can help. [Brenda@ascensionelca.org](mailto:brenda@ascensionelca.org) Add these dates to your calendars: **Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 1, April 19, and May 3.**

Yoga Jan. 13-Feb. 17

We'll start up yoga again this winter. It will be held in the East Hall from 6-7 p.m. and the cost is \$15 for 6 weeks. The great instructor is Jessica Popp from HumanKind Yoga. Bring your water bottle, mat, and fee to the first class.

Young at Heart

On **Wednesday, Jan. 8**, we will be meeting at Christina's on Delafield St. for breakfast at 9 a.m. No need to sign up, just stop in and we will have a table. A casual time to socialize.



On **Wednesday, Jan. 15**, we will join together in the East Hall for our monthly potluck luncheon at noon. Bring a dish to pass if you are able. After lunch there will be time for socializing and games. Hope to see you there. Great way to enjoy a winter afternoon. If you have questions, contact Celeste Defenbaugh at 262-370-4522, Beth Hoffmann at 262-542-7447, or Arlene Davis at 262-542-9119.

College Care Collection Jan. 26-Feb. 9

We will be collecting to send care packages to our college students to remind them that we love and care for them, so we are collecting donations from Jan. 26 to Feb. 9. We will assemble the care packages on Sunday, Feb. 9, from 4-6 p.m.

Do you have a child in college? For your child to receive a care package, please plan on participating in some way – either helping assemble packages and/or donating items or money for postage. Please complete the following form, or contact Tanya Maas. More info (including a list of requested items) and to sign-up for your student on our website, <http://ascensionelca.org/events/collegecare/>. Let's show our college kids that Ascension is thinking about them.



“Be The Village” Foster/Adoption Ministry

Ascension Lutheran Church would like to make a difference in foster children's lives by creating awareness, education, and promotion in our community. Please join us if you have a passion for foster or adoption care children. Mark your calendars for a Foster Care Family Carnival here at Ascension on **Sunday, Feb. 16, 12-3 p.m.** in the East and West Halls. It will be a great way to invite the community and reach out like we did with our summer picnic.

*Be The Village Ministry
Because it takes a village and everyone needs someone*



Winter GriefShare Jan. 7-March 24

Grief Share will begin Jan. 7, 6-8 p.m. in the Youth Room. It will be a 12-week session facilitated by Mary Lou Charapata. If you know someone, or have suffered the loss of a loved one and are stuck in grief...this may be a great program for you! If you or a family member or friend would like to join this program please contact Brenda Lytle at 262-547-8518 or brenda@ascensionelca.org.

Grief Work in Our Church: Open Your Hearts and Heal

Care Ministries hosted a speaker on November 25th, Reverend, Dr. Janis Kinens that spoke on “Grief, The Uninvited Guest” to help those struggling with grief survive the holidays. Our gratitude extends to Rev. Dr. Kinens for an amazing evening that tended to 150 people. Thank you to Don and Fred Hofstetter for the beautiful music accompaniment. Thank you to our helpers: Arlene Davis, Lori Whitstone, Geri Olson, Joann Abbs, Marilyn Harris, Patti Nolan, Pam Koszuta, and the Catholic representatives, Mary Thiel and Margarete Thompson.

Our special thanks go to Mary Lou Charapata who led the entire event and spent countless hours along with her professional talent to put together a meaningful program that touched the lives of so many grieving people in our community. Ascension is blessed to have so many people that make a difference!

HOPE Ministry

Our HOPE Ministry went caroling at Avalon Manor as a holiday service project in December. We passed out sugar cookies to the residents. Thanks to Mary Lou Charapata who opened her home to our HOPE Ministry friends afterwards to enjoy a light meal, some refreshments and fellowship! It was a great way to spend some nice holiday time with those who struggle with grief during the holidays.

Cancer Care Ministry Opens Arms Need

Our Cancer Care Ministry has six ministers who are busy assisting members of our congregation. If you know of a congregational member or family that could use some assistance walking their cancer journey, please contact Brenda Lytle at Brenda@ascensionelca.org.

Just for Fun

Bonnie and Art Thiesenhusen decided to spread a little cheer with some members of our congregation this past fall. They arranged for about 12 people to have pictures taken on heavy construction equipment in celebration of the completed road construction.

The reason? Bonnie said, “Everyone has ups and downs in life and sometimes we just have to put things aside and laugh...” This fun photo shoot made people do just that! Thanks to Mark Pichler to make this event happen!



MISSION OUTREACH



Winter Farmers' Market

How can we have a farmers' market in the winter? What kind of things will be available? Why is our church doing this? You may have had a lot of questions when you heard that Ascension was going to have a winter farmers' market. We will try to answer a lot of your questions over the next couple of months leading up to the market on March 8. Lynn Parkhurst and her committee are planning some wonderful experiences as we focus on hunger in our world/community and how we can address it in a meaningful way.

Food, Faith and Farming is a faith-based network that links farmers to congregations. Abundance. Gratitude. Hospitality. Community. Stewardship. Justice. Reconciliation. Love. These values shape our belief that the world was created by a loving, beneficent God. Food is the most tangible evidence of an abundant world and a loving God. We are all linked by food, no matter where we live on this earth. There are literally hundreds of references to food in the Bible; also hundreds of references to the land on which food is grown. Clearly, we are to be grateful for the food we eat and to be good stewards of the land that produces this food. That is evident in the creation story. As believers, we are motivated by the phrase: "That all may be fed."

Winter farmers' markets achieve several goals —

- 1) Help local farmers generate income in the winter
- 2) Help consumers gain access to local, sustainably produced farm products;
- 3) Help faith communities stand on the side of good land stewardship and economic justice; and
- 4) Raise money for Harvest of Hope Fund to provide financial help to Wisconsin farmers in crisis situations.

More information to come!

Bethlehem Market & Good Gifts

A big "Gracias" and "Asante sana" to everyone that participated in our first ever Bethlehem Market in December, where we sold items from Tanzania and El Salvador that helped to provide sustainable employment to those in need. It was a big success and we hope to bring the market back again next Advent.



Although we won't be having our Good Gifts program in the narthex in the months to come, you are welcome to purchase a gift from our program anytime during the year. Visit the catalog online <https://tinyurl.com/AscensionGoodGifts2020> and contact sarah@ascensionelca.org to purchase a charitable gift. 100% of your gift goes directly to funding the projects!



Tanzania Water Project

Visit the Ascension's Mission Outreach Facebook page to see videos of the new pipeline that we financed at our sister parish in Samaria, Tanzania.

Like Ascension's Mission Outreach on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Ascension.ELCA.MO/>

Tutoring News — Tutors Needed

Do like to work with preschool children? Are you a good team member? We are looking for several more tutors to work with our youngest English language learners. Guidance is provided. Contact Shirley Wehmeier if you can help. shwehmeier@gmail.com.

We have recently had new families join our tutoring program with several young children who have limited English experience. We are looking to have more tutors in order to address the children's specific needs.



Christmas Party

Our fall tutoring program culminated with an entire group event where students of all ages, tutors, and volunteers from the congregation met to make bird feeders, wreaths, aprons, bird houses, fleece hats and scarves, and Christmas ornaments. Our lunch of sloppy joes, fruit salad, and cookies was made by our middle school boys and elementary school children. The boys made the sloppy joes from scratch – no canned sauce for them. They also cut up strawberries, bananas, grapes, and oranges for the salad. The elementary school students decorated cookies for dessert.



This year, the youngest children made snowmen from empty milk jugs and made ornaments to take home. Led by Ron Marien, men made bird houses and bird feeders. They learned to use both power and hand tools. The women had a variety of options including aprons, and fleece wreaths, hats, and scarves. Enjoy the pictures as they tell the wonderful story of people of different ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds working together and having fun! Thanks to everyone who made this such a fun event!

Cross Meal Help Needed

We will be serving a meal at Cross Lutheran Church on Wednesday, Jan. 8. If you are interested in helping prepare and serve the meal, please be at Ascension by 9:15 a.m. We will carpool and leave by 9:30 a.m. and we return between 1-1:30 p.m.

If you are interested in learning more about what we actually do, call Arlene Davis or Marge Schroeder and we will be glad to talk to you. It is very rewarding to go there and visit and serve the community. If you would like to participate by providing a dessert, please have it at Ascension by 9:15 a.m. We will be serving our spaghetti dinner this time and we need two people to prepare meat. Call Arlene Davis at 262-542-9119 if you have any questions or wish to volunteer. Thanks for all of your support.



Blessing Box

During January, we will collect basic food for those who come to the Blessing Box on a regular basis for food to help them through the week. Keep an eye on weather predictions as canned foods can be damaged if weather dips too low. The school children are back in school so snacks are always welcome.

COUNCIL

I wanted to use my last President's Column to review our year and prepare for a new Ascension congregational president and council.

First I want to thank everyone who has served Ascension this past year, whether it was serving on council, serving as wing leaders or in wing activities, serving on project teams, or serving as church staff. There is a lot of willingness to collaborate, patience, kindness, openness to change, and partnering that is required to make an organization function well. Thank you again for your service.

One of our council goals this year was to **strengthen council leadership**. We did this by setting up monthly meetings between Pastor Chris and the president/vice president, monthly meetings of the council executive committee, reinitiating a council spring retreat, reading Pursuing God's Will Together to learn about individual and group discernment as our leadership prepared for decision making, bringing together presidents and vice presidents from three Waukesha ELCA churches to share best practices across congregations and to support each other as congregational leaders, and we strengthened Council relationships with Synod staff Rev. Matt Short, Matthew Brockmeier, and Rev. Kristin Nielsen.

A second Council goal this year was to **promote organizational health and wellness**. We did this by reviewing and revising our Ascension Constitution with this year focusing on updating the 'required provisions' from the Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA 2019. We also explored use of technology to facilitate communication of the council and wing meetings with the goal to allow people to call in rather than being required to come to church for meetings, we reinstated a monthly President's newsletter column to facilitate communication between council and congregational members, we focused on creating a crisis team with a training module developed, and the council reviewed and recommended to the congregation the sale of two properties to allow for reallocation of our resources.

Our third council goal was to **increase member engagement experiences**. We did this at our Annual Meeting using a bilingual format for oral presentations and written materials to allow engagement by our Spanish language members, inviting Ascension congregational members to participate in the ELCA Churchwide Assembly as volunteers, inviting members to participate in a call committee as we begin a search for a second pastor, and working to support church leadership development.

My hopes for the future are that we will continue to improve our church by focusing on **programs, processes**, and the **people** who are serving Ascension. I would encourage you to become more engaged in service to Ascension. I am proud to have served Ascension as your President this past year. Thank you for the opportunity. May you feel God's presence in your life in a deeper way this next year.

Jay O'Grady

President of Ascension Congregation and Council

THANKS!

A big "Thank You!" from Ascension's staff to all of you in our church community. Your many gifts, treats, cards, care, support and love sustain us during our busiest time and reflect the joy of the season.

We are very grateful.

Pastor Chris, Tony, Edwin, Vicki, Amy, Sarah and Tamie

Thank you!

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OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY
9 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
FRIDAY
9 a.m.—12 p.m.

January 2020

Epiphany

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		31 New Year's Eve	1 New Year's Day Church office closed 7p AA WH	2 10a Al-Anon WH 10a TGBG PR 12:30p Women's Group PR	3	4 9:30a Tutoring 12p Knit Wits WH, K
5 8:30a Worship S 9:45a BP screening 9:45a BLAST 10:45a Worship S 10:45a Span. Wor. EH 6p AA begin. WH 7p AA closed WH	6 Epiphany 9:45a Al-Anon WH 2p Prayer Group 6:30p AMEN 106	7 6:30a AMEN 106 9:30a TGIT PR 9:30a Women's Bible HR 6p GriefShare YR 6:30p Latino Bible Study CR	8 9a YAH @ Christina's 9:30a Cross Meal 11:45a Men's Lunch 1:30p Affirmation Class 6p Handbells S 7p AA WH 7p Ballantyne 106 7:30 pm Adult Choir	9 10a Al-Anon WH 6:30p JOLT	10	11 9:30a Tutoring
12 8:30a Worship S 9:45a BLAST 9:45a Talk n Tie 10:45a Worship S 10:45a Span. Wor. EH 6a CRASH 6p AA begin. WH 6:30p Anspach Grp 106 7p AA closed WH	13 9:45a Al-Anon WH 1p Living Letters 6p Yoga EH 6:30p AMEN 106 6:30p Call Team PR	14 6:30a AMEN 106 9:30a Women's Bible HR 6p Exec Comm PR 6p GriefShare YR 6:30p Latino Bible Study CR 7p Holloway Mtg 106 Newsletter Deadline	15 12p YAH Potluck EH 6p Handbells S 7p AA WH 7p Ballantyne 106 7:30 pm Adult Choir	16 Youth Gathering Mtg 10a Al-Anon WH 10a TGBG PR 12:30p Women's Group PR 5p Angel Choir MR 5:30p Joyful Sounds 6p Youth Ringers S 6:30p JOLT	17 Youth Gathering Mtg 6p CRASH <i>Lazertag</i>	18 Youth Gathering Mtg 9a Knit Wits EH 9:30a Tutoring
19 Youth Gathering Mtg 8:30a Worship S 9:45a BLAST 9:45a Mental Health Talk 10:45a Worship S 10:45a Span. Wor. EH 6p AA begin. WH 7p AA closed WH	20 9:45a Al-Anon WH 2p Prayer Group 6p Yoga EH 6:30p AMEN 106	21 6:30a AMEN 106 9:30a TGIT PR 9:30a Women's Bible HR 6p GriefShare YR 6:30p Latino Bible Study CR 7p Council 106	22 11a Staff Meeting 1:30p Affirmation Class 6p Handbells S 7p AA WH 7p Ballantyne 106 7:30 pm Adult Choir	23 10a Al-Anon WH 5p Angel Choir MR 5:30p Joyful Sounds 6p Youth Ringers S 6:30p JOLT	24	25 9:30a Tutoring
26 8:30a Worship S 9:45a BLAST 10:45a Worship S 10:45a Span. Wor. EH 12p Praise Band S 6a CRASH 6p AA begin. WH 6:30p Anspach Grp 106 7p AA closed WH	27 9:45a Al-Anon WH 12p Knit Wits WH 6p Yoga E 6:30p AMEN 106 6:30p Call Team 6:30p Wing Ldr Mtg PR	28 6:30a AMEN 106 9:30a Women's Bible HR 6p GriefShare YR 6:30p Latino Bible Study CR 7p Holloway Mtg 106	29 6p Handbells S 7p AA WH 7p Ballantyne 106 7:30 pm Adult Choir	30 10a Al-Anon WH 10a TGBG PR 5p Angel Choir MR 5:30p Joyful Sounds 6p Youth Ringers S 6:30p JOLT	31	

Key

CR—Conf. rm
EH—East Hall
HR—Hearth rm
MR—Music rm
N—Narthex
PR—Prayer rm
S—Sanctuary
WH—West Hall
YR—Youth rm
Italics offsite



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