

The Witness
July 2009

Lutheran Church of the Ascension

OUR VISION: To Worship the Lord, Live by His Example, and
Reach out Through His Love

OUR MISSION: To Know and Share the Good News of Jesus Christ



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Take Church with You when You Can't Come to Church

Though there is nothing that can truly replace worshipping with a local congregation each week, thanks to the availability of a wide range of media resources, especially on the Internet, it is easier for people to hear a sermon or use other devotional resources when work, summer vacations, or illness keeps them away from worshipping together with other Christians.

A good resource produced through the efforts of a number of mainline Protestant denominations is *Day 1*, a 30-minute program delivered by the radio and online each week (it's available as a podcast by an iTunes subscription as well). A different preacher from one of the supporting denominations (including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) is featured each time. The broadcast includes a sermon given by a guest preacher, and the broadcast begins and ends with the host Peter Wallace interviewing that guest preacher. Information about the program is at <http://day1.org> including specific instructions about locating a radio station that airs the broadcast or how to listen to the program online.

Sing for Joy, a weekly program of sacred music produced at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, relates to the scripture readings heard each Sunday in many churches. Many Lutheran college choirs (among others) are featured. Brief comments between the musical selections tie them to the week's readings. The program is aired on a number of stations throughout the country, including several in the Chicago area. Listeners may also hear each program online. The broadcast can also be a way to prepare for Sunday's worship or to continue reflection on those same readings throughout the week that follows. Find more information about this program at <http://singforjoy.org>.

Also, did you know that you can easily look up ELCA congregations in a given area by using a handy feature on the ELCA's web site (<http://www.elca.org>)? At the top of the ELCA's home page is a link titled "Find a Congregation." Anyone can use this to find a congregation while traveling, and it's also a way to refer friends and relatives to congregations that are in their area. It may be especially helpful when someone is moving to a new home.

While worship is ultimately something that people do together, thanks to modern communication tools, there are ways to nourish our spiritual lives even when we must miss a week worshipping at Ascension. If you are traveling away from home this summer, hopefully one of these resources will help you to stay connected spiritually. Please know also that if you plan to miss a week at Ascension that your offering envelope may be dropped in any mailbox as well!

Dennis Bushkofsky

Interim Pastor

Focus on Health



Most of us who live in northern climates develop a keen appreciation for the joys of summer--a time of growth made possible by warmer weather, a time to enjoy being outdoors. Summer can also be a time of rest and refreshment as our hectic schedules change, a time of travel, of re-acquaintance with family and friends who visit from distant homes. I pray that your summer will be healthful in body, mind and spirit!

Please take extra care to be safe and happy during the long, hot summer. Children under four years of age and adults over 65 are more at risk for heat-related problems. Whether you are indoors or outdoors:

Drink plenty of liquids. Stay away from drinks containing caffeine or alcohol. They actually promote fluid loss.

Wear lightweight, loose clothing.

Seek a cooler spot. Being in air-conditioning even for just a few hours is one of the best ways to prevent heat exhaustion. Consider spending time at a library, shopping mall, or shady spot.

If you exercise, take plenty of breaks.

When you are outdoors:

Avoid the mid-day sun.

Wear light colors.

Wear a light-weight, wide brimmed hat.

Wear sunscreen. Sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself.

Avoid hot spots. When parked in the sun, your car can reach a temperature or more than 160 degrees. Let the car cool off before you drive it. And never leave anyone in a parked car in hot weather!

Peace and good health to you this summer!

Gail Price

Home Communion

Each month home communion is distributed to people who, because of health concerns, are unable to be present with us in worship. Sharing the sacrament offers strength and blessing, not only to those who receive but also to the people who bring communion. Please see Gail Price if you would like to share in this ministry or if you are aware of someone who would like to receive communion at home.

Blood Drive

Sunday, July 12, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 12 will be a busy day at Ascension Church! We will worship at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., attend a congregational meeting between services, and host the LifeSource summer blood drive throughout the morning and into the afternoon. Please plan to be present!

Many people in our congregational family rely on donated blood to maintain their health during treatments including chemotherapy. Blood donations from people in good health can be given every 56 days. Summertime always brings critical shortages of blood products at area blood banks, and this year will be no exception. You can make a significant difference in the life of as many as three people who need the blood you donate. Healthy people ages 16 or older, who weigh at least 110 pounds and control their blood pressure with or without medication are prospective donors. If you are a potential donor, please sign up on the poster in Fellowship Hall or contact Gail in the church office to select a time which works with your schedule. For more information on donor eligibility, you may call Gail in the church office or LifeSource at 847-298-9660. Someone's life depends on your gift.

Terry Willason

Reach Out Through God's Love

Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries (IRIM)

IRIM creates opportunities for refugees fleeing war, terror and persecution to build new lives of safety, dignity, and self-reliance. IRIM is the Chicago partner of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Refugee journeys begin with fear. With their lives in danger, refugees flee war, genocide and persecution. They flee to neighboring countries that often grudgingly shelter them in hastily constructed refugee camps that lack adequate food, water, sanitation and medical care.

This year, the majority of refugees being sent to the Chicago area are Iraqis who are targets of religious persecution or persecution due to their assistance of U.S. efforts in their country. Additionally, IRIM is resettling Burmese people who fled the military junta in Myanmar (site of Cyclone Nargis), and Bhutanese people who fled an ethnic "cleansing" initiative by the monarchy of their Himalayan homeland. Many of these people, particularly the Burmese and Bhutanese, have spent years in refugee camps.

Refugees sent to IRIM for resettlement by the U.S. State Department are provided a full range of services that help newcomers quickly integrate into American society. These include providing transitional housing and other basic needs, orientation to public transportation and American money, English training, vocational training, job placement, medical referrals, and help with filing all necessary government papers. IRIM has special programs for particularly vulnerable refugees such as youth, seniors, and women. More information is available on their website www.irim.org

Ascension is gearing up. . .

Habitat for Humanity



Our next Habitat workday is July 25th. No experience or expertise necessary! Meet at church at 7:00 a.m. to carpool or contact me or the church office for directions if you would like to drive from home.

Builder Bob

Refugee Resettlement in July

Ascension is gearing up to sponsor its next refugee family for resettlement sometime in July! Donations of household goods, furniture, food and money are being accepted at this time. Also, volunteers are needed to help with furniture pick up and move in. Please see the sign up sheet in the fellowship hall for a list of needs.

The congregation commits to contributing \$4000 to assist IRIM in resettling a family including paying rent on their apartment for the first three months. Checks can be made payable to Ascension Church with Refugee Resettlement on the memo line.

For more information, please call Pam Carlson at 847-433-1578.

Pam Carlson

Worship Notes

Our Worship Team has been hard at work determining our vision for worship at Ascension for 2009-2010. After much deliberation and prayerful consideration, the team has resolved to work on the following: a more intentional welcoming presence, a worship that is a more focused, in which spiritual life is renewed, and improvement of Celebrate's outreach. When Council meets in August, we will present our goals, strategies and what we hope to achieve by the year's end.

At one of our meetings, we had an inspiring discussion about sacred vs. secular time. Mark Swenson, a valuable member of the team, suggested that many of the problems congregations face stem from an inherent conflict between the way people perceive and use time in the everyday world (secular time) and the slower, focused use of time in worship (sacred time). As activities, business and always-on communication have placed more demands on our time, many congregations have compromised sacred time to avoid losing people entirely. These compromises have made sacred time less compelling as something radically different from secular time, and as a result, have weakened it. It is our challenge to find a way to make the time spent in worship something which is profoundly different so that it compels people to make time for it in spite of busy schedules.

To improve Celebrate's outreach, we need people with communications skills and web-based computing skills to help power our new cyber-based outreach initiative. Please inform us if you have this gift and could help move Celebrate! into a new era of discipleship. **Please note that the Celebrate service has been moved to 10:30 a.m. for the summer months.**

We hope you are having an enjoyable summer thus far. We encourage you to make worship a weekly commitment, especially during this time which tends to feel like "time-off" for so many activities.

Peace,

Mischa & Minkyoo

Celebrating 50 Years of Making a Difference

As part of our jubilee celebration this year, on June 28th we will begin "A Moment for Ministry" in our worship services which will highlight all of the wonderful ministries at Ascension. Periodically throughout the year, different members who have utilized their unique spiritual gifts across a wide range of ministries will briefly share the who's, what's, when's, where's and how's of their work. What a wonderful opportunity to lift up and celebrate how our church and its ministers have made a difference in God's world!

YOUTH MINISTRY

It's July, which means it's officially summer, right?? There will be several opportunities for the high school and middle school/junior high youth to get involved this month in fellowship, service and worship, so here are the dates and times you're going to want to make a note of!

> **Wednesday, July 8th - 8:00 to 10:00 pm, 'LYFE Sunset Cinema' @ Ascension**

This will be film #2 of the LYFE youth group outdoor movie series this summer on the front lawn at church! Bring a blanket or lawn chair and join us at 8:00pm to watch *'Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix'* on the big screen while snacking on popcorn, soda and candy alongside Ascension friends! The new Harry Potter movie comes out the following week (based on book #6 - *'HP and the Half-Blood Prince'*), so be sure to join us to brush-up on your HP trivia before the new film is released on the 15th!!

> **Saturday, July 11th - 9:30 am to 7:30 pm, Magic Waters Water Park**

Meet at church @ 9:30am to head out to Rockford for a day of fun and sun at the water park! We'll return to the church by about 7:30pm. Cost is \$15, and be sure to bring an additional \$10 for food, inner tube rental, etc. **RSVP BY SUNDAY, JULY 18TH TO RESERVE A SPACE!**

> **Monday, July 13th to Saturday, July 18th, Leadership Lab**

Youth from Ascension will be joining others from all 3 Illinois ELCA synods this week for Leadership Lab, a leadership development 'camp' for youth held at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. This year's theme comes from 1 Corinthians 9:25, *'Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.'* Please pray that God will speak to us in new ways while exploring Christian faith and leadership, and for our safe travel!

> **Tuesday, July 21st - 4:00 to 7:00 pm, volunteering @ Good News Community Kitchen!**

> **Saturday, July 25th - 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity!**

Again - all of these activities during the month of July are open to youth in grades 6 through 12 unless otherwise noted. More details (as well as the permission slips/waivers for all offsite activities) will be available online in the Youth Ministry section of Ascension's website - www.ascension-church.org/youth . Please make plans to join us!

Peace,

Vanessa



What a fantastic week we had hosting Vacation Bible School in June! The 104 children who attended learned about Moses and the burning bush and parting the Red Sea, the nine plagues in Egypt, Passover, and Jesus' resurrection. Through these Bible stories, the children learned that God is always with us, God is powerful, God does what he says he'll do, God gives us life and God cares for us. We are very fortunate to have been able to work with Laura Dillon from Holy Trinity and Julie Howie from St. David's, along with their volunteers, to make VBS such a success. We have also been blessed to have so many Ascension members with amazing gifts willing to give of themselves to make this VBS a fabulous week for the kids from 7 different churches.

In light of the continued economic struggles in our country, and knowing that the Northfield Food Pantry is providing to a greater number of families, the children's offerings from VBS were donated to the Northfield Food Pantry. For every prayer pal (stuffed turtle with a pocket on it for a note) that a child brought home, another was sent to our troops overseas. Thanks to Ruth Newman and all those who helped in the assembly process. Ruth had shared that one of the things our soldiers who are parents lack access to is something to send their children back home. So now, there will be some parents overseas who will be able to send something very special to their children. It's a small thing, but something that could make a huge difference to a child whose parent is away, fighting to defend our freedom. Way to go Ruth! What a fantastic way to spread Jesus' love around the world. And please remember our troops and their children in your prayers!

Now that Vacation Bible School is over, it is time to start planning for the fall/winter activities. In July, our Children's Ministry team will meet to choose our curriculum for the 2009/2010 school year, plan the Children's Ministry team's role in Rally Day (Sunday, September 13th) and the Advent/Christmas concert (Saturday, December 12th) and look at possibilities for other fall/winter events for our children. All parents of Sunday School-aged children, along with anyone who is interested in teaching Sunday School or being a Shepherd, are welcome to join the Children's Ministry team. We need your input and help. Please join us on Monday, July 13th at 6:30 p.m. or Tuesday, July 14th at 10:30 a.m., whichever works best for your schedule. We hope you will join us in building on the success we had last year with the Children's Ministry programs here at Ascension and making the upcoming Sunday School year even better! And one last thing...don't forget to worship with your children on Sundays throughout the summer. We would love to see all of you in church!

With God's Love,

Beth and Greg

A Message From Your Council President

Your Congregation Council has been very busy. I am pleased to begin this report with an overview of our recent on-campus retreat. Sixteen ELCA members (including nine Congregation Council members and two Staff) and Pr. Bushkofsky spent five hours in prayerful deliberation about our Vision and Mission statements; self-assessment exercises focused on determining how inviting and hospitable we are to visitors and how well we practice evangelism; and open discussion about how effectively our teams and committees operate. At the end of the day, we identified three achievable goals which we all committed to achieve between now and our September Congregational Meeting: (i) create a Fellowship Committee (Brian Lee volunteered to see this through), (ii) celebrate one of our ministries every week during the services, and (iii) place name tags in the Friendship books for visitors. We discussed many other opportunities and you will be hearing about them in the months ahead.

Council members are working hard to determine how to get our teams and committees functioning and working together, as well as reconstructing our facility in order to enhance our celebration of God's Word and make our Vision a reality. The result of our team and committee work will be reflected in a substantially revised set of Bylaws, which will be presented to you for adoption at the Congregation Meeting in February 2010.

On Sunday June 7th, your Congregation Council, the Property Committee, the Facilities Planning Subcommittee and Duain Claiborne hosted an open forum meeting on our physical plant. We described four challenges that the Congregation must face over the next three years and how we could meet them: (i) replacing the boiler, (ii) renovating the offices and parish hall entrance, (iii) renovating the sanctuary and (iv) replacing the parking lot. Various alternatives were discussed, drawings and a computerized virtual tour were presented, and numerous questions were answered. Sample pews and chair styles were also available to look at and try out. When we have our next Congregation Meeting in September, you will have the opportunity to vote on certain proposals that the Council will make to you in respect of the sanctuary. In the interim, you can review various drawings and summaries of the work that needs to or could be done, and test drive more sample pews and chairs that will be on display in Fellowship Hall. The virtual tour and other materials should be accessible on the website soon, as well.

We have a wonderful opportunity this summer to address two of the more immediate needs: replacing the boiler and renovating the office space and entrance way. After prayerful deliberation, your Congregation Council has determined to hold a Congregational Meeting on Sunday July 12th, at 10 a.m. in the Augustana Room for a presentation of what is proposed to be done to address those needs. While a Congregation vote is not required under the Constitution for such action, your Congregation Council wishes to keep you fully informed and give you the opportunity to voice any concerns and answer any questions you may have. Drawings and descriptions of the work will be presented and made available in advance, and a discussion of the related financial implications will be addressed.

Keep us in your prayers and don't hesitate to ask questions about what we're doing. You're welcome to attend our meetings, which generally are held on the third Thursday evening of each month, from 7-9 p.m. in the Augustana Room. If there is an issue you would like to discuss with us, please send a note to Diane Carlson about it not later than the Monday beforehand.

God speed.

Stephen Schwab

Property Team

A big Ascension thank you also goes to Nels Johnson Tree Experts and especially Joel Johnson for trimming our shrubs, trees and removing two dead trees. This type of work has become an annual donation from Joel and his company. Currently, we are talking with our landscaping service to evaluate how we may improve the "curb appeal" of our property.

In the past month the project to reinforce the wooden chairs was completed. Norm Lee and Don Gordon changed the outlets in the kitchen. A big thanks to them for bringing us "in code." Linda Clinton supervised the long overdue cleaning of the stove and its repair. The stove may look old, but we have been advised it is one of the better stoves made and would be very difficult and expensive to replace. If we take care of it, it should continue to serve us well (knock on wood, you know how things go when you brag about something.)

The committee sent a recommendation to the Council about replacing the boiler. You will hear more about it at a special meeting coming up on July 12th.

Projects we will be evaluating or working on in the next few months include: replacing the window adjacent to the patio door leading to Memorial Gardens, installing closers on the exit doors in Fellowship Hall, leveling the sidewalk leading to the rear entrance, landscaping mentioned above and taking a look at our cleaning needs and services.

Hope you enjoy the flowers by the front and rear entrances.

Kurt Vining

Call Committee

We are actively communicating with and interested in several candidates. We have not completed the interviews with all of the candidates, and we are still scheduling opportunities to observe them preach. Right now, summer vacations are our biggest problem. Either the candidate has scheduled something or a member of the committee is off for some summer fun. We will continue to work on scheduling and checking references when we become seriously interested in a candidate.

Kurt Vining

50th Anniversary Jubilee Celebration

Wall of Remembrance

The banners flanking the entrance to the nave are waiting for your Ascension memories. Check out the cards in the Friendship Book to jog your memories, record your memories on the cards, and place the cards in the baskets located below the banners. If you have questions, please see Debby Schwab.

Guest Preachers Join Ascension's 50th Anniversary Celebrations

While a number of former pastors of Ascension will be joining us during the anniversary banquet on November 14 and for a festival worship service on November 15, a few of them have also agreed to be guest preachers for upcoming services. These will be special times for people to hear a former pastor preach and to re-connect in a variety of ways. Former pastors will be guest preachers at both Sunday morning worship services on the following dates:

July 26 -- Pastor Michael Schnell

August 30 -- Pastor Donald Bravin

October 25 -- Pastor Don Fagerberg

Plan now to attend worship on these days and to invite former members of Ascension who may remember these former pastors to join us as well.

All Aboard!

Put on your sailor suits and join your Ascension friends and families on Sunday, July 19, for an afternoon cruise on the Chicago River and Lake Michigan aboard a Wendella boat. We will "set sail" on our narrated tour at 3:00 p.m. Reservations are required, so please sign up at church or call the office. Plan to meet at church or at dockside, which is located at the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and the Chicago River.

Church Picnic, Sunday August 16th

Pack your picnic basket and join your Ascension friends and families for an afternoon on the shores of Pistakee Lake located in Johnsburg, IL. We will gather at 1:00 p.m. at the Swedish Gym Club for an afternoon of good food, fun, and just plain old relaxation. There will be a sign-up sheet in church as we get closer to the date. Start now to think about your favorite picnic fare and plan to bring it with you. And, just a quick FYI, there is a full kitchen and two Weber grills. By the way, bathing suits are not required, but highly recommended, if you plan to swim. We look forward to seeing all of you on August 16th!

2010 Oberammergau Passion Play and Lutheran Heritage Site Tour

September 12-22, 2010

Ascension friends will journey to *Germany* next summer to visit sites significant in the life of Martin Luther--castles, cathedrals and churches—and attend the historic Passion Play in the village of Oberammergau, nestled in the Bavarian Alps. Reservations are being accepted by Trans World Travel of Highland Park. Complete details including registration forms are available in brochures at church.