

The Witness
April 2010

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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In this Issue:

<i>From the Pastor</i>	2
<i>Worship Notes</i>	3
<i>Children's Ministry</i>	4
<i>Youth Ministry</i>	5
<i>Adult Spiritual Growth</i>	6
<i>Reach Out Through God's Love</i>	7-8
<i>Focus on Health</i>	9
<i>From our Council President</i>	10
<i>50th Anniversary Gift</i>	11
<i>Fellowship Activities</i>	12



***"This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."
(Psalm 118:24)***

On April 4th members, family and friends of Lutheran Church of the Ascension will gather together to worship on Easter Sunday. Joining with our brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world, we will celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord. Our service will begin with these words: *Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

For the forty days of Lent we have undertaken a liturgical, scriptural, spiritual and communal Lenten Journey *From Fear to Love*. This journey began and ended with a cross. On Ash Wednesday it was a cross traced on our foreheads with palm ash. On Good Friday we beheld the wooden cross on which our Lord was crucified. Along the way, we have been reminded of our mortality and our sinfulness. We have acknowledged that sometimes we get lost. Yet there is always the promise; the promise of a father who welcomes home the lost with open arms.

With arms outstretched on the cross, Jesus takes upon himself all of those things that get in the way of our turning back towards God: fear, brokenness, chaos, self-centeredness, etc. These things need no longer have power over our lives. We no longer need to walk a path that takes us away from God.

Three days later, we celebrate the empty tomb. Sin and death have been defeated. A new journey begins. This new path leads from the tomb and into the garden. And there in the garden, we join Mary Magdalene and the others who discover that Jesus has risen. On this new day our eyes are opened to the possibility of life lived in the embrace of our heavenly father. Through Christ, we can envision a new life lived without fear, without brokenness, without chaos, and without the fear of death.

We must remember, however, that the journey does not end in the garden. The followers and disciples of Jesus discover that they cannot keep the good news of the resurrected Christ, to themselves. It is a story that they must tell. It is a message that they must live.

It is a story that we must tell as well. There are many around us who are lost in their life's journeys. On the outside, they may seem successful. Their lives may even seem ideal. But something is missing. Life feels chaotic. Relationships are broken. They are afraid of what tomorrow will bring. They need Good News! Our mission is to reach out to them, share this good news with them and invite them into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

And so the journey continues. Next stop - PENTECOST!

Have a blessed Easter!

Dennis Kelly, pastor

Worship Notes

Thank you to all who participated in our Lenten Worship offerings. A special note of thanks to Linda Clinton for directing and Lisa Rude for assisting in "Beneath the Upper Room" and for all who participated in the drama and behind-the-scenes activities. This was a big undertaking and a very rewarding experience, one that will certainly set the stage for more creative approaches to worship in the future.

As we look forward to the coming of the Easter Season, please take note of the special offerings and celebrations that will take place:

Sunday, April 4 – The Easter services will take place at our usual worship times, 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Both services will be a blending of traditional and contemporary elements, as we did for our 50th anniversary celebration.

Sunday, April 11 -- We will begin our new experiments with the Celebrate service. We are attempting to make it more accessible to a broader cross-section of Ascension worshippers and a more welcoming experience for the visitor. Please take the time to come to that service and see what is taking shape. Your input would be most valuable as we continue to develop our plans for this service.

Sunday, April 18 – The Spring Musical, "All Nature Sings," will feature some jazz-inspired works by Aaron David Miller, text by Herbert Brokering, dramatic scenes written by our own Lisa Rude as well as Dance, Pageantry and beautiful set design. Lisa will also be directing the overall production with the aid of our Children's Ministry Leaders, Beth and Greg Peterson. This is an ideal event to introduce your neighbors to Ascension.

Saturday, April 24 – Our spring concert features cellist, Nicholas Photinos and pianist, Yasuko Oura. This dynamic duo is a husband-wife team. Nick is the cellist in the internationally celebrated chamber group, *eighth blackbird*. As a collaborative artist, Yasuko has appeared in such notable venues as Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, and Carnegie's Weill Hall.

Sunday, April 25 – The combined choir of St. Mark's and Ascension will worship at St. Mark's.

Sunday, May 2 – The combined choir of St. Mark's and Ascension will worship at Ascension.

Saturday, May 15 – The Danae Quartet will perform at Ascension. This is a recently-added concert to our spring concert series. The 'Danae' is a string quartet comprised of Music Institute of Chicago Academy Students. MIC's Academy, housed on the Ravinia campus, is home to some of the greatest pre-college musical talent in the country, and the members of the Danae Quartet are no exception. Among their honors are a bronze medal at the Junior division of the renowned Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition as well as a Silver medal at the 2009 St. Paul String Quartet Competition.

Always with the intent of reaching out, we extend these opportunities to all as a way of celebrating God's gifts in this community. Happy Easter!

Peace to all,

Mischa & Minkyoo



Please be sure to join us Easter Sunday morning to celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Join us between services for our pancake breakfast, followed by an Easter Egg Hunt for the Sunday School kids (breakfast and egg hunt will be coordinated by Vanessa Young and Ascension's youth).

As the rehearsals continue full-speed for the Spring Musical, "All Nature Sings," we'd like to take this time to thank Lisa Rude and Angela Erland for their efforts. Lisa has been working with the dancers since February and the kids have been learning their lines, practicing their songs and even painting the scenes that will be used in the production. We still have a few dates in April that need to be on your calendars: Sunday, April 11, will be our last rehearsal during the time Sunday School meets, and Saturday, April 17, will be our Dress Rehearsal. Sunday, April 18, is the date of the performance. It is imperative that we have great attendance for these last few – but very important – days leading up to the 18th. Thank you for your continuing cooperation!

Calling all parents of any children in 3rd, 4th or 5th grade! Beth and I will be teaching First Communion classes on Sunday April 25 from 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. and Pastor Kelly will be in charge of the final class Sunday, May 2 at 10:15 a.m. The children will make their First Communion immediately following this last class (during the 11:00 a.m. Celebrate service.) Please be sure to let Beth or me know if you have a child who will be participating in these classes. You can reach us at Beth@Ascension-Church.org.

Three organizational meetings for Vacation Bible School are under our belts, and you already know – and hopefully have saved – the dates: Monday June 21 through Friday June 25, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Now it's time to "unveil" the theme for VBS 2010. It's called "HIGH SEAS EXPEDITION! Exploring the Mighty Love of God." Be prepared for an exciting and action-packed week of games, arts and crafts, drama and, of course, plenty of music! Last year we had children (and volunteers too!) from no less than seven area churches, including the three sponsor churches, Ascension, Holy Trinity and this year's host, St. David's in Glenview. Once again, we urge you to get your registrations completed early as we did reach our capacity of 100 children last year. We are looking for volunteers to help in all areas, so if you participated last year we hope you'll join us again and if you'd like to join us this year and be a part of a truly amazing and inspirational week, then please contact Beth or me!

Remember, today is God's gift to us. What we do with it is our gift to Him!

Peace,
Greg and Beth

YOUTH MINISTRY

HE IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA! Happy Easter, Ascension family and friends!!

At the end of February/beginning of March, Ascension's confirmation youth wrapped up weeks of study on the Ten Commandments, with students being able to recite all 10 (in order!) and explain what each of them mean for us as believers in God and especially as Christians. Confirmation youth also did a wonderful job helping the Sunday School children with a few service projects on the day of the Annual Congregational Meeting. As you can see in the photos below, the youth helped make pillow cases and no-sew blankets that will go to families in need. Well done, everyone!

As this edition of *The Witness* goes to print, Ascension's high school youth will have met a few times for Wednesday night LYFE, gotten ready to participate in another indoor/mid-year session of LYFE Sunset Cinema and been making final preparations for the 2010 Youth-Hosted Easter Breakfast, so.....stay tuned for updates on these events in next month's edition!

Here are a few dates and events in April for youth and parents to be sure and make a note of!

> **Easter Breakfast set-up on Saturday, April 3 at 2:00 p.m., and Easter Breakfast itself on Sunday, April 4, beginning @ 7:00 a.m. for food prep, 10:00 a.m. for serving breakfast, and approx. 10:45 a.m. for the Easter Egg Hunt for the Sunday School children.** All youth and parents able to take part in set-up/clean-up, grocery shopping, serving breakfast, or even hiding Easter eggs/helping with the hunt(!) are welcome and encouraged to help in making this exciting community event possible. Please let me know what aspect of Easter weekend you can contribute to. Thanks in advance to everyone for all your hard work!!

> **Confirmation youth will meet four times during the month of April: for class on the 11, 18 and 25, and for a fellowship activity on Tuesday, April 27.** During April and May, confirmation class will split; 6th & 7th graders will meet separately from 8th graders, who are preparing for their confirmation in May 2010. Attendance for all confirmation students is important year-round and especially for 8th graders over the next 2 months. Please make every effort to be present for scheduled class times and confirmation activities.

> **Sunday, April 11 is 'Lutherdale Camp Sunday' @ Ascension!** Please take time to stop by the display table in Fellowship Hall and speak with Executive Director Jeff Bluhm to learn more about the amazing opportunities for all ages through the outdoor ministries of Lutherdale Bible Camp!

> **Sunday, April 25 @ 12:00 noon we'll have an informational gathering about Leadership Lab 2010!** Please join us for lunch (provided) to learn more about the July 19th - 24th camp for youth in grades 8 through 12. This is a FANTASTIC event open to any interested youth, so please plan to attend on the 25th to learn more!

Peace,

Vanessa

Adult Spiritual Growth

Adult Library

A new acquisition for the Ascension library is Greg Mortenson's inspirational *Stones into Schools*, the story of the author's decade long quest to build schools, most of them for girls, in the wildest parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This book reads like a fictional adventure book, but it is not. The action never flags. The suspense is tangible, inspiring, and fascinating. And the characters are stronger, braver, smarter and truer than I could ever be (by a long shot).

The reader is determined to see how Mortenson or one of his compatriots can overcome the next challenge, and those challenges keep coming one after another. As we read, we wonder when Hollywood will come out with the movie version--and then we remember that this is not fiction at all, and we are amazed at the real-life drama unfolding in the pages. Moreover, we glimpse the peaceful, beautiful and friendly sides of countries and peoples that are too often portrayed in the media as stark, barren, and hostile. And we see a people with a tradition of illiteracy exhibiting a terrible thirst for education.

Stones into Schools is catalogued under "Q-Inspirational", currently displayed at the checkout stand in the Augustana Room, and is available for checkout.

Adult Bible Study

Thursday, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Adult Bible study has a new day for its final Bible study this program year. We will begin the study on April 15 and go through May 27. Please note that it will be on **Thursday** mornings. The seven-week study will center on the New Testament book, *The Acts of the Apostles*. *Acts* is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke and continues the narrative account of the early church. Come join us as we meet those who led the early church – Peter, James (the Lord's brother), Paul, and others. We will see how, in the power of the Spirit, they were able to carry the gospel "to the ends of the earth."



During the month of March we had a timely three-week Lenten presentation by Dr. Ralph Klein entitled, **The Passion of Jesus**. We took a look at the first three gospels and compared the Biblical accounts of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. As usual, Dr. Klein made us think about what the gospel writers were trying to communicate to us as they each gave their version of the events regarding the Passion of Jesus. Our attendance averaged around 30 participants for each session.

Our next Sunday Adult Education series begins April 11 and ends May 2. This series is entitled, *The Easter Jesus and the Good Friday Church: The Centrality of the Resurrection in the New Testament*. It will be presented by Gregory Athnos, Emeritus Professor, North Park University. Professor Athnos addresses these questions: Is the turning point in human history the Jesus of the Cross or the Christ of the Resurrection? Is it both? What event prompted the movement that swept the Roman world? Is the New Testament a resurrection document? What is the relationship between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus? How does the Resurrection affect our lives and our worship?

Come join us for the following four presentations by Professor Athnos:

April 11 *The Art of the Roman Catacombs*

April 18 *The Anticipated Messiah: What the Disciples Believed about Jesus*

April 25 *Resurrection Words and Phrases in the Acts of the Apostles*

May 2 *The Gospel According to Paul*

(If you would like one, a study guide can be obtained through the church office. The charge to cover the cost of the materials is \$5.00).

Reach Out Through God's Love

February 21 Blood Drive Results

24 units of blood were collected. Since one blood donation can save up to three people, as many as 72 lives could be saved by these donations. A sincere thank you to all who took time out of busy schedules to give the gift of life!

Willing donors included: Dick Amos, Patty Cain, Bruce Carlson, Helen Costello, Donna Craven, Corrine Donewald, Linda Grant, Janice Greenwald, Fran Gustafson, Maurice Hincapie, Caron Hoffman, Steve Kollmann, Joan Lee, Kathy McCorkle, Ron Nally, Beth Peterson, Justyne Reeves, Caryl Scott, and Vanessa Young. Six people from the community also contributed; thanks to them! Thanks also to Steve Zaleski who helped with coordination and refreshments.

The next blood drive is set for Sunday, July 25.

Fran Gustafson

New Refugee Family Expected this Spring

IRIM (Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries) continues to settle a steady flow of refugee families and has asked us if we'd like to help out again, to which we responded with an enthusiastic "Yes"! Sign-up sheets for needed household items (from furniture to dishes to everything in between) are posted in the Fellowship Hall. Please sign up for what you'd like to contribute but do not bring items to church at this time. We don't know who the family is yet but anticipate receiving them sometime in late April or early May. We are also collecting monetary donations at this time to cover the cost of the family's first three months' rent. As the date gets firmed up, volunteers will be needed to load/unload the truck, set up the apartment and meet the family at the airport upon arrival. If you'd like to participate in this ministry, sign up to contribute and/or call Pam Carlson at 847/433-1578.

Habitat for Humanit



Builder Bob is back, and has planned another summer of construction with Habitat for Humanity Lake County. Ascension crews will participate every third Saturday, April thru November; the first work day is Saturday, April 17. Volunteers of all skill levels are encouraged to join Ascension's work crews; youth 16 years of age are welcome to participate with parental permission. Crew members may travel together from Ascension or meet at the work site in Waukegan.

Please sign up on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall, or contact Bob Reid at rhaid1351@sbcglobal.net for more information. Then watch the bulletin board for photo updates of the Build.

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is sponsoring the home for Anthony Johnson and his daughter T'Neyah. Ground breaking was March 20. Ascension, in combination with many other Lutheran congregations in Lake County and northern Cook County, will contribute 30% of the cost for this home. Ascension is committed to a \$4000 donation to this project. Please consider including Habitat in your contributions this year. Make your check payable to Ascension with Habitat in the memo line. (Please do not send donations directly to Thrivent or Habitat Lake County).

Builder Bob Reid

You are invited and encouraged to attend these special events which support Ascension's ministry partners in bringing comfort, joy and justice to people in need in our communities and throughout the world.

**Lutheran Day in Springfield
Wednesday, April 21, 2010**

Join several hundred Lutherans and friends in Springfield to learn about key issues affecting our state, advocate for people in need, and spend time in fellowship with other advocates. The morning is reserved for advocacy training; the afternoon includes fact-to-face advocacy with legislators and a prayer service in the Illinois Capitol Rotunda. Please contact Gail Price for more information and to make travel plans.

**LSSI Women's Network Brunch and Fashion Show
Saturday, May 1
The Meadows Club, Rolling Meadows**

Members of the LSSI Women's Network, including Ascension members Marlynn Anderson, Jan Leverenz, Nancy Nagel, Gail Price, and Gloria Rowley, invite you to attend the Network's 26th Annual Forget-Me-Not Brunch and Fashion Show. Doors open at 10:00 a.m., giving you time to shop for unique handbags, jewelry, gift items and much more in boutique shops. Then, you will enjoy brunch and a professionally staged fashion show, featuring the latest styles and colors of the season. Please note the date change this year; it will NOT be held on Mother's Day Weekend.

This fun, relaxing event will benefit the *Bonding with Books* program, which incorporates books into all aspects of the preschool experience at LSSI's five Head Start sites in Chicago. An invitation is on the bulletin board and Network members have more information.

**Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries' Annual Benefit
Many Voices, One Vision
Friday, May 7, 6:00 p.m. reception, 7:30 dinner and program
including world cuisine and music, silent auction and raffle
Chicago Cultural Center, Preston Bradley Hall**

IRIM invites you to share in the celebration of new life experienced by the many refugees who come to Chicago each year in search of a better, safer way of living. In addition to enjoying their foods, you will hear the stories of people from around the world. An invitation is on the bulletin board; contact Charlie Price to learn more.

**Holy Family Lutheran School Partners in Hope Benefit
Friday, May 14
Northbrook Hilton
6:00 p.m. Cocktails and silent auction; 7:30 p.m. dinner**

Experience first-hand the joy of sharing this evening with the students of Holy Family Lutheran School! Come for dinner and the evening program; you will be blessed by the songs, strength, and commitment of these young people. Jan Leverenz and Joan West will gladly tell you how to make reservations.



Focus on Health

Know and Control Your Blood Pressure

Ascension's Health Ministry Team offers blood pressure checks at least one Sunday morning each month; watch the bulletin for dates. Then roll up your sleeve and take the first step toward keeping your blood pressure under control. Know your numbers! If you wish to check blood pressure during the week, call ahead and I will be happy to see you.

Advocate Health Care offers this advice on blood pressure control:

Blood pressure readings provide a quick picture of the heart's health. High blood pressure, a.k.a. hypertension, is sometimes called "the silent killer" because there are often no symptoms. That's why a regular blood pressure check is a wise idea.

If your blood pressure is higher than 120/80, reducing your salt and sodium intake is one easy step to take to help bring it down. Although we need very little salt—just ¼ teaspoon a day—Americans typically consume ten or more times that amount!

Take this quick quiz to see what you know about reducing salt and sodium intake. From the list below, Identify the five seasoning which ought to be avoided:

bouillon cubes	garlic powder	onion powder
capers	garlic salt	rosemary
cumin	ketchup	soy sauce
fresh garlic	mustard	thyme

The salty, high sodium seasonings are bouillon cubes, capers, garlic salt, ketchup and soy sauce. Other tips for reducing salt in your diet:

- eat fresh or frozen rather than canned vegetables
- avoid smoked or cured meats such as ham, bacon, sausage and hot dogs
- stay away from cheeses, salty snacks, canned soups, pickles and olives

Your taste buds can be your guide. If a food is salty, either choose a different food or season it differently. You'll be amazed at how delicious well-seasoned but unsalted food can be!

(Advocate Congregational Health Partnerships Congregational Health Quick Hit, vol. 7, issue 5)

Peace and good health to you,

Gail

A Message from our Council President

The Journey from Maintenance to Mission

Pastor Kelly's theme this Lenten season has been our journey of faith. His backpack has been stocked with necessary tools and his sermons packed with anecdotes that have driven home his messages about the track of our individual spiritual treks. Having enjoyed his company for six months now, we know this is no coincidence.

As a congregation, we are on a parallel track away from maintenance toward mission. Four years out of the last ten, we were without a senior pastor. For a decade we have been in maintenance mode: focused on preserving our habits, our traditions and our facility. We've done a good job of surviving personal and communal crises, and we have safeguarded our financial foundation. But now we have a called spiritual leader and he is challenging us to answer God's call. We don't want to miss this opportunity. We've waited long for it.

During the Annual Meeting, you heard both Pastor Kelly and me lay out a shared vision for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ascension. The common themes were change and growth into mission. You will hear much about these in the months ahead. Among other things, plans to change the sanctuary will be finalized, seven of our members will go through Koinonia leadership training, and your congregation council will focus on strategic issues as we continue to step along the pathway toward renewal with the Synod. There is much to do. Throughout it all, we will rejoice in our first 50 years while we build for the next 100.

It is wonderful to be part of God's people in this place. Keep lifting up. Why? Because I/we believe. Happy Easter!

Stephen W. Schwal

50th Anniversary Gift of Gratitude

When the Lutheran Church of the Ascension was founded in 1959, we received a monetary gift of \$4,300 from the Augustana Synod. Throughout this year of Jubilee, the 50th Anniversary Team has been mindful of this gift and has encouraged that a gift of gratitude be given to another developing congregation. The ELCA actively promotes development of new congregations across the United States. Funding is usually a joint effort of the church-wide ELCA, the local synod, and the local congregation.

On Sunday, March 21, The Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, Director for ELCA Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, preached at Ascension and brought insight into this most important work of the larger church. Now we have an opportunity to thank God for the blessings we have received as a congregation. You will be invited to make a contribution to the support of a developing congregation in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod. You will soon receive a letter from Pastor Kelly describing the ministry of San Estaban Martir, Carpentersville, and encouraging your grateful support. This thank-offering will be received through May 2 and the totality of the gift announced at the conclusion of the 50th Anniversary celebration on Ascension Sunday, May 16, when Metropolitan Chicago Synod Bishop Wayne Miller will be our guest preacher. The 50th Anniversary Team and the Council trust you will be generous in your response.

Fellowship

Ascension Women's Luncheon

Thursday, April 15 at Noon

The Ascension Women's Luncheon will be held on Thursday, April 15 at 12:00 p.m. at Hackney's on Lake. Please note the date for April, changed because of Holy Week. Our speaker will be Rachel Stark-Inch, who will speak on MayaWorks, an economic development project (a fair trade organization) for Mayan artisan women in Guatemala. They create beautiful weavings, jewelry and other products in Guatemala, and their products are sold in the United States, thus providing them with employment and other benefits. Her talk is titled "The Story of MayaWorks: Interweaving Lives, Discovering One World". All women are invited.