

The Witness
September 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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Healthy Families / Healthy Congregations

Several years ago in my studies in pastoral counseling I ran across some research on families by Nick Stinnett and John DeFrain. The results of this research were published in their book, *Secrets of Strong Families*. Stinnett and DeFrain offered the following definition of strong families: **Strong families can best be defined as places where we enter for comfort, development, and regeneration and places from which we go forth renewed and charged with power for positive living.**

They also identified six major qualities of strong and healthy marriages and family systems. Those qualities are:

Commitment - Members of strong families are dedicated to promoting each other's welfare and happiness. They value the unity of the family.

Appreciation - Members of strong families frequently show appreciation for each other.

Communication - Members of strong families have good communication skills and spend a lot of time talking with each other.

Time - Members of strong families spend time - quality time in large quantities - with each other.

Spiritual Wellness - Members of strong families have a sense of a greater good or power in life, and that belief gives them strength and purpose.

Coping Ability - Members of strong families are able to view stress or crises as an opportunity to grow.

It occurred to me, after reading this book, at how the above definition can apply also to congregational systems. Substitute the word *family* with the word *congregation*:

Healthy congregations can best be defined as places where we enter for comfort, development and regeneration and places from which we go forth renewed and charged with power for positive living.

Now look at the above six major qualities and do the same thing, substituting the word *family* with *congregation*. I think these six qualities would describe the type of congregation that most of us would want to be a part of. I believe that this type of congregation would be one that would attract others to us as well.

With the end of summer drawing near, we begin a new program year. I know that our staff and leadership are looking forward to this year as well. It is my hope and desire that this will be a year in which we grow deeper in our lives of faith, wider in our circle of care, and reach higher in our vision as we seek to be a strong and healthy congregation that is faithful to our mission to share the good news of Jesus Christ!

May God bless us on this journey!

Pastor Kelly

Worship Notes

ATTENTION ALL WHO PARTICIPATE IN MUSICAL GROUPS AT ASCENSION (AND THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO JOIN US): Our rehearsal schedule will be changing in an attempt to accommodate families who participate in weeknight activities at Ascension. By moving children's choir to Wednesday, we hope to encourage greater participation in all of our choirs. All choirs will be meeting on **Wednesday**, with our first rehearsal scheduled for Wednesday, September 8. Here are the times we will meet:

6:00 - 6:45 p.m. - Children's Choir

6:00 - 7:30 p.m. - Adult Choir

7:15-8:00 p.m. - Handbell Choir (Bell members in choir will be let out of choir early to attend)

There will be other activities planned around these rehearsals (for instance, a possible supervised study period for kids between 6:45 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.), and we are working to make dinner available, but the details have yet to be worked out. There are a lot of exciting events and new ideas planned for creative and inspiring worship this fall and we hope you will consider joining us on Wednesday evenings!

Rally Day worship will take place on our church lawn on **September 12 at 10:00 a.m.** (ONE SERVICE ONLY). The theme on that Sunday will be "Gather Us In" where we will celebrate God's great diversity. If you have children who would like to be involved in the service, please contact Lisa Rude at 847-846-7833.

Again, a reminder that our **fall concert**, "The Art of Cello" featuring cellist, Nicholas Photinos and pianist, Yasuko Oura, is taking place on **Saturday, October 2 at 4:30 p.m.** This dynamic duo is a husband-wife team. Nick is a founding member of the Grammy Award-winning chamber music ensemble, *eighth blackbird*, and he teaches at both the University of Chicago and the University of Richmond. Yasuko is a collaborative artist with the Lyric Opera and teaches at Roosevelt University. She has appeared in such notable venues as Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, and Carnegie's Weill Hall. Please mark your calendars and be sure to invite your friends and neighbors.

We've made a couple of adjustments to our worship life: the role of crucifer will be discontinued except on festival Sundays (Reformation, Easter, etc.). Secondly, we are going to try singing the psalms again. The worship team discussed this change and was all in favor of looking at a variety of psalm settings for use by our liturgists, choirs and congregation. We continue to invite your input and any questions you might have as we implement changes to our worship services.

Finally, make sure to save the date for this year's **Advent/Christmas program**, which is scheduled for **SUNDAY, December 12 at 4:30 p.m.** Please note that SUNDAY is correct. We will no longer be holding this event on Saturdays.

We look forward to the start of a new worship season with all of you!

Blessings,

Mischa and Minkyoo



How was your summer? We hope everyone enjoyed theirs and can't wait to see you all and exchange stories. It's been a very busy summer around Ascension and things are finally put in place for the start of our Sunday School year!

The "official" start of our year kicks off with Rally Day on Sunday, September 12th. As in years past, we will be having an outdoor worship service followed by lots of fun (games and crafts), tons of food and all of our friends! "Gather Us In" is the theme for this year's Rally Day and we hope you will all join us to kick off our Sunday School year with a bang!

The first day of rotation Sunday School will begin on Sunday September 19th at 10:00 a.m. Yes, 10:00 a.m. this year. We will be trying something different by having the children gather together in the Augustana Room immediately following the first service. We will have a light snack for the kids during our opening and then they will proceed to their classrooms to meet their teachers for the day. We're excited to be opening in the Augustana Room this year; both Beth and I feel it will make the transition from service, to snack, to opening much less chaotic and will have the kids in their classrooms ready to start in a more timely manner. Sunday School will then end promptly at 11:00 a.m., at which point we would appreciate it if you could have your children picked up so that those teachers wishing to attend the second service may do so.

We are looking for rotation teachers again, and we really need your help! We would like to remain an all volunteer teaching staff again this year, but in order to do that we need volunteers. If you could please contact Beth or myself with your availability we would greatly appreciate it. If every family (mom, dad or mom and dad together) would take one rotation each semester (a rotation consists of 3 Sundays in succession, teaching each of the three different grade levels K-1st, 2nd-3rd and 4th-5th) we would have our calendar full. That's it, 6 Sundays for the year...6 hours in the classroom with these wonderful kids. We truly do need everybody's help. Thank you in advance for volunteering!

On Friday, September 17th and Saturday, September 18th we will be hosting "Camp Ascension." Bring your tents, your sleeping bags, some snacks and beverages for your family too. We are planning on grilling up some dogs or brats and presenting an outdoor movie on the lawn in front of the big screen then falling into our tents for a peaceful night's rest. It should be a lot of fun and we hope all of you avid campers (or beginners too...what a great way to "test" family camping when you have the help of your friends getting that tent up and no bears in sight!) will join us. Just imagine how "Camp Ascension" will look to all of our neighbors driving by on Willow and Sunset Ridge Roads. Let's get a bunch of tents out there and send the message that Ascension is the place to be! We will break camp anytime before noon on Saturday. This event is open to everybody (not only Sunday School families) so please join us! You can RSVP your "site" with Beth and Greg using our email address Beth@Ascension-Church.org.

Well, it's back to work to put together the final touches for the beginning of our Christian education year. We're so very excited to have you all back!

See you in church!
Greg and Beth

YOUTH MINISTRY

This fall, I'll be starting my third year as Ascension's Youth Leader. I'll also be starting my second year of classes through Luther Seminary's MA program in Children's, Youth and Family Ministry, and I've been grateful for the opportunity to build upon my youth ministry experience and study by engaging in further theological education and reflection upon best youth ministry practices for relating to young people in the church. I've learned about several interesting and helpful studies that have been done in recent years regarding the religious beliefs of teens and the spirit and culture of youth ministry itself, and I'd like to share a few interesting thoughts from these resources with you.

In 2003, a team of sociologists from UNC Chapel Hill conducted a National Study of Youth and Religion to explore the role of religion and spirituality within the lives of youth between the ages of 13 and 17. This survey was the largest of its kind ever conducted, and the 3,300 youth surveyed were randomly selected from across the U.S., encompassing a diverse range of teenagers from many religious, racial, socioeconomic, geographic and cultural backgrounds. Youth were asked about matters relating to family and home life, friendships/relationships and school, faith experiences and interactions with the church (or lack thereof), and their future. This study was done to find out directly from teenagers themselves what the critical issues were within the lives of youth and to what extent religion or spirituality had played in their lives to date. Christian Smith, director of this study, shares the findings of this research in his book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. The long and short of the study was the following:

Adults in the United States over the past many decades have recurrently emphasized what separates teenagers from grown-ups, highlighting things that make each of them different and seemingly unable to relate to each other. But our conversations with ordinary teens around the country made clear to us, to the contrary, that in most cases teenage religion and spirituality in the United States are much better understood as largely reflecting the world of adult religion, especially parental religion, and are in strong continuity with it. Few teenagers today are rejecting or reacting against the adult religion into which they are being socialized. Rather, most are living out their religious lives in very conventional and accommodating ways. The religion and spirituality of most teenagers actually strike us as very powerfully reflecting the contours, priorities, expectations, and structures of the larger adult world into which adolescents are being socialized. (pg. 182)

Another study conducted more recently by 7 mainline denominations, including the ELCA, sought to discern what the core contributing factors were to a successful youth ministry in the context of a congregation, using a set of 34 identified characteristics of "maturing Christian youth" based on prior research studies. Through research conducted in 131 congregations that met these exemplary standards, the study uncovered important findings that affirm the best in congregational youth ministry and provide direction for enhancing and expanding ministry with youth. This Exemplary Youth Ministry study determined that,

When churches set their minds to fully enfranchise young people in their life and ministry, the lives and faith of young people are strongly impacted. When pastors, congregational leaders, parents and adult leaders work together to promote real commitment to young people as full members of the body of Christ and carry that commitment across the life and mission of the entire congregation, teenagers mature in faith and grow to respect and love their church. (Lifelong Faith, Vol. 3.4, pg. 57)

Across *Congregational Faith & Qualities, Youth Ministry Qualities, Family/Household Faith, and Leadership*, there are 44 assets that contribute to a congregation's ability to be a place that welcomes, instructs, equips and sends youth into the world with a mature Christian faith. As we go forward as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ascension and seek to implement and expand upon these assets, I'd like to ask again for your support as brothers and sisters in Christ; brothers and sisters to all of Ascension's youth. If Biblical examples of the importance of community during Jesus' life and ministry haven't already make it clear, these studies among others show us that the youth of our congregation need all of our commitment and support in order to become the mature Christians that God has called them to be. Thank you for your commitment to the young people of our congregation, and please join me and other Ascension leaders during the coming year as we attempt to further engage the youth of this community of faith!

Peace, Vanessa

Adult Spiritual Growth



MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

This Fall's Men's Bible study will be of "The Ten Commandments." Now, "The Ten Commandments" can sound as heavy and cold as the stone tablets that they were written on, but this ten-week study, using Bible passages related to each of the commandments, will show that these "old rules" are quite relevant for today. They provide a moral compass for society and serve as a barometer of our love for God and respect for others. Come and join us as we learn how life-giving and liberating it can be to live by God's rules. We will begin on Tuesday, September 28th at 7:00 p.m. Study Guides are available for \$6. If you have any questions, contact John West, 847-729-0609 or jwestx2@sbcglobal.net. All men are welcome and no previous experience is necessary. We are all here to grow in our spiritual adventure.

Ascension Book Club

The Ascension Book Club meets monthly to discuss contemporary literature through the eyes of our faith. If you would like to "try out" this group and/or become a regular or occasional member, you are most welcome! To assist in planning, please let the host know you will attend.

September 14: 10:00 a.m. at the home of Alice Kosnik: The Help by Kathryn Stockett

October 12: 10:00 a.m. at the home of Debby Schwab: Shanghai Girls: A Novel by Lisa See



Ascension Library News

A recent addition to our library is the Eric Metaxas biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, **Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy**. This portrait of Bonhoeffer presents him as a theologian who became one of the greatest Christian humanists of the 20th century. His sense of social justice caused him to fight the acquiescence of the Lutheran state church in Germany to the demands of the Nazi government, to fight against the prevailing tides of popular culture, and to bravely and faithfully defend an inclusive and open Christianity. This book, in providing a look at the mundane details of a man's life, helps us understand how Bonhoeffer's commitment to Scripture and truth gave him the courage to follow principle in chaotic times. This volume is filed under category "X- Biography", and is available for check out.

John Vonnegut,

Librarian

Reach Out Through God's Love

Lutheran Church of the Ascension has a rich history of partnering with ministries throughout the Chicagoland area and around the world to put our faith into action, to *Reach Out Through God's Love*. This year we have the opportunity to learn about many of these ministries through personal visits to Ascension by ministry leaders. While here they will invite us to support their mission through prayer, personal connection where possible, and financial commitment.

Rev. Kevin Jacobson, ELCA missionary in Suriname, shared stories of his work with leadership development in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname during his home visit in July.

Julie Donovan, Executive Director of **Habitat for Humanity Lake County**, introduced us to Anthony Johnson and his daughter T'Neyah, the future owners of the home being built in Waukegan in partnership with Habitat, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, and local congregations including Ascension Church.

Susan Work, President and CEO of **Holy Family Ministries**, and Ken Erickson, Director of Church Relations, will be present in worship and adult forum on Sunday, September 19, to bring news of the ministries of Holy Family Lutheran School located in the Homan Square area of Chicago's West Side.

LSSI Sunday at Ascension is Sunday, October 3. We will be privileged to have Pastor Denver Bitner, the new president of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, as our guest preacher and adult forum leader. This will be a special time to learn more about our larger church in action--serving people in need. Did you know that LSSI serves senior citizens, children in head start programs, prisoners and their families, adoptive parents, and people dealing with addiction? Please plan to come October 3 to learn more.

To learn more about any of these ministries, please contact Ascension ministry champions:

LSSI	Nancy Nagel
Holy Family	Jon Leverenz
Habitat	Bob Reid
ELCA Global Missions	Gail Price

Contributions in support of these ministries will be gratefully received at any time. Simply specify the ministry on the memo line of your check made payable to Lutheran Church of the Ascension.



The Habitat ReStore is a building materials recycling/reuse store. Habitat accepts new and used building materials and some household goods, including furniture, which is sold to the public. The ReStore also receives new materials from stores, trade shows and vendors.

Funds raised through the ReStore build Habitat for Humanity homes. In Lake County, HFH has built over 130 homes since 1989. The Habitat ReStore is a win-win program for everyone. Donors get a tax deduction, customers get a deal, the volunteers have a blast, HFH receives funding - and the landfills are spared!

The Habitat ReStore is located ¼ mile east of Rte. 41 on the south side past Belle Plaine Rd. Turn left into the lot at the Salvation Army/ReStore sign. Go to the last door on the west. Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 9-6, Saturday 9-5.

Contact us:

ReStore	847-249-3160
HFH Office	847-623-1020



Successful LifeSource Blood Drive July 25

A sunny thank you to all who took time out on a beautiful summer Sunday morning to donate blood! A total of 25 units was collected. This gift of life could help up to 75 people in our community.

Donors from the Ascension family included: Dick Amos, Patty Cain, Bruce Carlson, Helen Costello, Fran Gustafson, Caron Hoffman, Leanne Hoffman (first time donor!), Steve Kollmann, Kathy McCorkle, Carol Mueller, Tom Novak, Jeanne Peterson, Bob Reid, Jill Reid, Joan Stevenson, Michaela Ward, and Vanessa Young. We had an all time high of 10 donors from the community.

Thanks to Missy Gustafson and Steve Zaleski who entertained the donors with refreshments and fun conversation.

The next LifeSource blood drive at Ascension is set for Sunday, November 7.

Fran Gustafson

Habitat for Humanity



Volunteers continue to reach out to help provide improved housing for families by participating in Ascension's Habitat for Humanity work days. There are three more opportunities this year to join in this service ministry: September 18, October 16 and November 20. No experience necessary. All you need is a desire to serve the Lord by serving His people. Talk to Bob Reid for further information.

Julie Donavan, the executive director of the Habitat for Humanity Lake County chapter, was at Ascension on August 15 to describe the work done by this organization. She was accompanied by Anthony Johnson and his daughter, T'Neyah. Mr. Johnson recounted how his home had burned to the ground and he lost all he had, but thanks to Habitat for Humanity and the Thrivent Builds program, he will be able to move into his new home in a month. He asked that our congregation support this ministry both with volunteers and financial contributions. Please make your check payable to Ascension with "Habitat" in the memo line, and we will be sure it gets to the right place.

Builder Bob



Get Ready, Get Set, Let's Walk!!

The Glenview CROP Walk for Hunger is scheduled for Sunday October 17 at 1:30 p.m. We'll meet at the Glenview United Methodist Church, 727 Harlem Ave. This is a great opportunity for us to work together to eliminate hunger in our world. There will be a choice of a 1K, 3K or a 5K walk. Even if you can't walk, you can donate to one of Ascension's walkers. Please give generously for those who need food. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact Irm Claiborne, (phone 847.256.3302)



Focus on Health

Flu Prevention Clinic

Flu shots, which for this season include the H1N1 strain, will be offered to adults at Ascension Church on **Sunday, October 17, 8:45-11:15 a.m.** Cost is \$25 per injection. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois PPO insurance, Medicare Part B, cash or check are accepted for payment. Pneumonia shots will also be available. Invite friends and neighbors to worship with you that day and stay healthy in body, mind and spirit.

Safe Sitter Babysitting Class

SafeSitter babysitting preparation will be offered to 11-13 year old students at Ascension Church in two parts on **Friday, November 5, 4:00-7:00 p.m.** AND **Saturday, November 6, 12:30-4:30 p.m.** Both parts are required for satisfactory completion. Cost is \$40 and scholarships are available. Classes are open to Ascension students and children in the community. Class size is limited. All classes are taught by Ascension instructors. Registration will close Friday, October 29. Contact Gail in the church office for more information.

Peace and good health to you!

Gail Price

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"LET'S MOVE"

A nationwide campaign has been launched by the White House to fight childhood obesity. The new "Let's Move!" campaign, led by First Lady Michelle Obama, demonstrates a commitment to solving the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation. In addition to this new health campaign, President Obama announced the creation of an interagency task force on childhood obesity. See <http://www.letsmove.gov/>.

"CHILD NUTRITION ACT"

The U.S. Senate passed the much-discussed child nutrition act, entitled the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Healthier school meals will help to combat childhood obesity, Details are at <http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/programs/>

Understanding Body Mass Index

BMI stands for Body Mass Index. Your BMI is calculated from your height and weight. An online calculator is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/>. BMI is a fairly reliable indicator of body fat for most adults, with athletes and the elderly being two exceptions. BMI is an inexpensive alternative to direct measurements of body fat, such as underwater weighing, but it is only one of many factors that you and your health-care provider should use in evaluating your health status.

Being overweight means that you or your child has a body mass index that is above the 95th percentile for his or her age. A body mass index that is above the 85th percentile for his or her age puts your child at risk of becoming overweight. As children return to school this fall, may we recommit ourselves to their healthy eating and regular exercise.

Linda Clinton

Financial Report

Budget Update

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| Income budget for the year through July 31 | \$322,000 |
| Actual income for the year through July 31 | \$317,567 |
| Income shortfall | \$ (4,433) |

If you are behind on your pledged giving or have the financial means to contribute more than you pledged, please make a contribution to help us sustain our ministries. Did you know that you can make your contributions electronically? Ask Diane Carlson for details.

Richard Kreutzfeldt, Treasurer

Celebration of Life Gardens

Ascension's Celebration of Life Gardens, dedicated in November 1998, consist of three areas connected by a flagstone path, symbolizing our Christian life journey - The Circle of Baptism, The Circle of Word and Sacrament, and The Circle of Eternal Life (Ascension's Memorial Garden). Everyone is invited and encouraged to step into and enjoy the Celebration of Life Gardens.

A color brochure is available in the church office. It contains answers to some of the most commonly-asked questions, along with beautiful color photos of the gardens. Packets of information about the Memorial Garden, including the contract to reserve a space, are available in the church office. Please contact any trustee (Leroy Botkin, Chris Casey, Duain Claiborne, Fran Gustafson, Steve Zaleski) or Diane Carlson for further information.

Fellowship

Ascension Women's Luncheon

September 9 at 12:00 noon

Hackney's on Lake.

This is the first meeting of the fall season and Ascension member, Dorothy Kirie Kinnaird will be our guest speaker. She is the presiding Judge, Chancery Division, State of Illinois, Circuit Court of Cook County. Judge Kinnaird will be speaking on the November election, the candidates and other information on the elections. You won't want to miss this interesting and informative meeting. The luncheon is open to all of Ascension's women **and men**. Join us and feel free to bring a friend!