



Sunday, December 24th

11:00 a.m. 4th Sunday of Advent: single worship service



4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service: family service
especially suited for families with young children

5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service with special music

8:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service with choirs & brass

11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service with brass

Lutheran Church of the Ascension

460 Sunset Ridge Road

Northfield, IL 60093-2797

Phone: 847-446-8335

Fax: 847-446-8308

E-mail: info@Ascension-Church.org

Web site: www.Ascension-Church.org

In this Issue:

<i>Staff Directory</i>	p. 2
<i>From the Pastor</i>	p. 3
<i>Focus on Health</i>	p. 4
<i>Reach Out Through God's Love</i>	p. 5-6
<i>Worship Notes</i>	p. 7
<i>Stewardship</i>	p. 8
<i>Attitude of Gratitude</i>	p. 9
<i>Fellowship</i>	p. 10

Staff Directory

Curt Gerald	Pastor	PastorCurt@Ascension-Church.org
Janeen Ross	Office Administrator	Janeen@Ascension-Church.org
Gail Price	Service Ministries Leader	Gail@Ascension-Church.org
Mischa Zupko	Worship Leader	Mischa@Ascension-Church.org
Minkyoo Shin	Ass't Worship Leader	Minkyoo@Ascension-Church.org
Claudia Williams	Spiritual Growth Leader	Claudia@Ascension-Church.org
Jonathan Anderson	Youth Director	Jonathan@Ascension-Church.org
Bob Frost	Celebrate! Leader	RFrosty@comcast.net



“In the Stillness...”

The Psalmist had it right! The Psalmist was speaking to our generation as well as to his/her own when (s)he wrote in 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” There is probably no more important time in the year to listen to the Psalmist than during the month of December ... during the seasons of the church year called Advent and Christmas.

During this time that tends to be so busy, I encourage you to come to a quiet place each day. If you don't have one in your home or at your office or in your school, we're setting one up right here at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ascension! On December 2 and 3, the Worship Team invites you to join with them as we turn the fellowship hall into a quiet place ... with Christmas trees, comfortable chairs and couches, the scent of apples and cinnamon, decorated tables and soft lights, music and reading materials ... through the feast of the Epiphany on January 6, a quiet time in this quiet place will be available for you.

This can be a place and a space where we can read and meditate on the promises of the prophets ... think about the suffering servant passages of Isaiah ... remember what Paul says in Galatians 4 ... read the Christmas story from Matthew and Luke ... read Luther's sermons ... think about the wood of the manger and its connection with the wood in the cross ...

During December, I call upon every leader in the congregation to think twice before calling a meeting or setting an agenda for the meeting. Is that meeting really necessary? Could it wait for January? Will there be time in the meeting for Jesus? Some things can't be put off ... but if they can ... put them off! Let's keep the agendas simple ... the meetings short ... and the Gospel central!

The theme for December will be “A Time for Getting Ready.” When we gather in worship, the messages will be based on the following passages:

December 3 - Rotation Sunday - Text: Matthew 20:1-16 - Theme: “A Time for Generosity”

December 10 - Text: Luke 3:1-6 - Theme: “A Time to Start Over”

December 17 - Text: Luke 3:7-18 - Theme: “A Time to Remember”

December 24 - Text: Luke 2:1-20 - Theme: “A Time to Party”

December 31 - Text: Luke 2:41-52 - Theme: “A Time to Grow Up”

Pastor Curt



Focus on Health

May I invite you to take time during this very busy Advent and Christmas season to care for yourselves? Share conversation about how to do just that as we *Unplug the Christmas Machine* on Sunday, December 10 during the 9:45 a.m. Adult Forum. In their ever-popular book by the same title, Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli have written *The Christmas Pledge: Believing in the true spirit of Christmas, I commit my self to*

- remember those people who truly need my gifts
- express my love in more direct ways than gifts
- examine my holiday activities in the light of my deepest values
- be a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends
- rededicate myself to my spiritual growth

Let's explore together what that means to each of us. See you there!

* * * * *

During a time of loss, holidays are often difficult. Customary routines have changed, new routines have not yet developed. Loneliness may be intense, and it may be hard to feel joy in the midst of holiday festivities. Familiar carols and hymns may only accentuate the loss. Some people wonder how they will make it through the holidays and may be grateful when the new year arrives.

How Will I Get Through The Holidays? is an easy-to-read book which offers hope and encouragement to those who have lost a loved one. Copies are available in the church office.

If you or someone you love is feeling a loss this holiday season, finding it hard to feel joy in the midst of the festivities, or wondering how to make it through the holidays, I hope

you will come to Ascension's **Service of Light**. This service of reflection and remembrance will be held on **Sunday, December 17, 5:30 p.m.** at Ascension. Open to all in the community, this worship service invites God's healing presence and peace through prayer, readings, and candlelighting. For those who can stay, an informal reception will follow the service.

Peace, Christmas blessings, and good health to all,

Gail Price

Northfield Senior Assistance Program

The Northfield Senior Assistance Program is designed to provide financial aid opportunities to the long-time resident senior citizen who can demonstrate a definite need for such assistance in order to continue to live in Northfield. Applicants must be 62 years or older or, if certified as disabled by a physician, 60 years or older as of January 1, 2007. The applicant must have resided in Northfield for at least the immediate preceding 5 or more years in order to be eligible for funding of \$600 paid twice during a 12 month period. Residents who have lived in Northfield for 3 to 5 years will be considered for a grant of 50% of the annual award per household (\$300 paid twice during a 12 month period). Gross income cannot exceed \$20,000 for a one person household, \$25,000 for a two person household. Medical and dental expenses shall be deducted from gross income. Total assets, excluding primary residence, property within the household and motor vehicle, may not exceed \$60,000. Applications are available at the North Shore Senior Center, Winnetka/Northfield Public Library Branch, Village Hall, and by telephone at 847-446-9200. Copies of the application are also available on the bulletin board shelf at church. Applications are due by December 29, 2006.

Reach Out Through God's Love

Fair Trade: The Gift That Gives Three Times?

This Christmas season consider giving a gift that *gives* and *gives* and *gives*.

That you are giving a quality gift that your friends and family will really appreciate.

That your gift of a fair trade product gives a family farmer /wage earner/artisan a chance to make a decent living.

Know that your gift will give you real satisfaction!

Can you locate such a gift?

The Lutheran World Relief Handcraft Project features beautifully made products from 36 countries around the world. This project insures that artisans are paid fairly and treated with respect. Your purchase provides income, dignity and hope to artisans and their families. Look for the online catalog at www.lwr.org/handcraft

Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate products are available in Fellowship Hall at Ascension. View additional products and order online at lwr.org/coffee

Heifer International offers fair trade crafts at www.heifer.org

ELCA Good Gifts offers an opportunity to honor a friend or loved one through a gift to a specific ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. You may buy a goat or a pair of rabbits, dig a well, start a small business—the possibilities are endless and are outlined in the *ELCA Good Gifts Catalog* available on the bulletin board shelf.



Habitat for Humanity

Ascension has completed another year of support for Habitat for Humanity Lake County. We had six work trips and contributed approximately 250 person hours of labor, along with making some friendships with workers from other congregations. It was truly rewarding.

Special thanks to Builder Bob Reid and his work crews: Eileen Bornscheuer, Doug Chester, Barbara Ford, Eileen Gerald, Ed Giberson, Laura Hessling, Donna Irmis, Sue Kasper, Mike Kasper, Jim Looman, Mark Looman, Joe Magogna, Julie Oimoen, Bennett Peterson, Mark Swenson, John West, Keith Williams, and Terry Willason.

A GREAT BIG thank you, thank you, thank you to all who contributed financially to this effort. We received contributions of just over **\$4,000.00**. This surpassed our goal for this year, and hopefully will set a mark to shoot for next year. Thanks are also due to the women who made lunches for our work trips, Jill Reid and Elaine Chester, and those who contributed to the Habitat Re-Store.

Ascension's Service Ministry Team intends to continue to reach out in God's love supporting this program in conjunction with Thrivent and Habitat Lake County for the foreseeable future.

Bethel Christmas Family Sharing

Bethel New Life helps families and seniors in need in Chicago's West Garfield neighborhood. Through the Bethel Christmas Sharing program you can sponsor one of these families. Sponsoring a family (or senior) includes providing a Christmas meal for the family and a wrapped gift for each child within the family. Larger families may be shared by two or three Ascension families. Bethel families are posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. Packages should be placed (in boxes marked 1 of 2 and so on) in Fellowship Hall by 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 17th. Monetary donations and grocery store gift cards are always welcome.



Christmas Is A Time For Sharing

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is our church in action--touching those in need whom we never see. At Christmas time there are special needs as LSSI brings cheer into the lives of many. Won't you help?

Help us decorate the mitten tree with mittens, gloves, and scarves. The need is greatest for teens, women, and children.

The women of The Women's Network of LSSI will shop for Christmas gifts for children in the LSSI programs. You can make the shopping possible by donating gift cards from Kohl's, Target, or Walmart--\$10 and \$20 denominations are preferred, but any denomination is appreciated. A collection box is on the shelf under the bulletin board.



Serving at the Good News Community Kitchen takes on special meaning at Christmas. Plan to take a break from the bustle and be present to encounter the people for whom Jesus lived and died. They are to us the face of Jesus. The date, Tuesday, December 19. The time, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. For more information please contact Irm Claiborne or sign up on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.

Help!



If you are one of the many people who enjoy Ascension's fellowship on Sunday mornings, please offer to assist in setting the coffee table anytime before 9:15 a.m. The process is so simple; the rewards are great! Choose the date that suits you, then call the church office or sign up on the bulletin board. Thanks for your help!

Worship Notes

The time is coming to *GET READY!* I say this realizing it can be taken two ways:

1. Oh my goodness, I have to do the Christmas shopping, the decorating, prepare for all the relatives coming into town....argggh, and the office Christmas party.....*CALGON TAKE ME AWAY!!!!!!*.....

2. I can't wait to Celebrate Jesus's birth...what can I do this year to make myself, my family and my church ready for those moments when the Holy Spirit is upon us.

I know that my sacred memories of Christmas have everything to do with the atmosphere of that special time than anything resulting from the dizzy spells of seasonal mania. This year, we want to come together as a church family in a spirit of Thanksgiving and Rejoicing with an emphasis on being a source of **STRENGTH** and **REJUVENATION** for one another as we *GET READY!* together for the celebration. Let us be of one mind as we approach the Advent/Christmas season, lifting up one another and lifting up this church as a witness to His Holy Birth.

On **Saturday, Dec. 2** and **Sunday, Dec. 3** we are having a "**GETTING READY!**" gathering at the church where we will be doing such things as decorating fellowship hall and the sanctuary, playing Christmas music and sipping hot cocoa. This year, the Worship Team came up with some wonderful creative ideas for making a magical atmosphere in this place for Christmas and realized that one of the most important components of that is having people together, so please consider coming by for a couple of hours on either **Saturday, Dec. 2 between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.** or **Sunday, Dec. 3 between 12:00 p.m. (after Celebrate!) and 6:00 p.m.** This will be a relaxed, family time together while making our church beautiful.

On **Saturday, Dec. 9 at 4:30 p.m.** we have our big Advent/Christmas Production, "**A Light Still Shines.**" The Advent/Christmas production is always a great celebration where magic is created as much by your presence and participation as it is by the performers on the stage. I ask that you not only **SAVE THE DATE**, but also **INVITE FIVE** of your closest friends along. Overflow accommodations will be made as always (seating in the organ loft, projection and seating in fellowship hall). We do still need a couple more volunteers to help pick-up and return rental equipment, so please contact us if you would be willing to serve (mzupko@sbcglobal.net).

And finally, our destination, **Christmas Eve**. As you may or may not know, Christmas Eve falls on a **SUNDAY** this year, so our service schedule will be as follows:

- 11:00 a.m. - Traditional Morning Service (w/ Piano and Organ)**
- 4:00 p.m. - Early Christmas Eve Service (w/ Piano and Organ, soloists)**
- 5:30 p.m. - Christmas Eve Service (w/ Piano and Organ)**
- 8:30 p.m. - Late Christmas Eve Service (w/ Choirs and Brass)**
- 11:00 p.m. - Late, Late Christmas Eve Service (w/ Brass)**

The 4:00, 8:30 and 11:00 p.m. services will all be the same in terms of content and will vary only slightly in terms of the music since we only have access to certain musical groups at certain times. Just know that the Worship team is doing its utmost to prepare sacred and meaningful services at all times. We look forward to worshipping with you in many ways this season!

Blessings,

Mischa & Minkyoo

Stewardship

Walk with *Jesus*

Each of us is on a walk with Jesus. Every day we have the opportunity to learn from Jesus on that walk, just as his first disciples did. As we disciples walk with Jesus, he wants us drawn closer to him. Jesus wants our walk always to be drawing us deeper into our relationship with him.

Jesus talked often about money as he walked with his first disciples. Jesus recognizes that the lure of money can erect a barrier between him and his children. He says so quite clearly in Matthew 6:24, when he says, "You cannot serve God and wealth." Clinging to "stuff" blocks our relationship with Jesus.

On November 12th, guest preacher Craig Morton joined us and related the story from the book of Mark of the faithful giving of the poor widow. Jesus watched as the wealthy "gave out of abundance" while the widow "out of her poverty put in everything she had." Jesus asks all disciples everywhere, in every age, to remember her gift and to remember her faithful exercise of one of the gifts of God's Spirit: the discipline of giving.

Jesus wants us to be a generous givers. He wants this not because the church needs our money. He wants this because Jesus knows that we need to give. **We need to generously give ourselves and our possessions away in order that we might follow our Lord.**

In the book of James, Paul strikes a similar theme regarding good works. He notes that God intends for us to do good works. But Paul makes a clear distinction: Good works do nothing to help us obtain God's promise of eternal life-- only the grace of God does that. **But good works follow naturally as we experience the love of Christ.** And so through the love of Christ, we are doing many important ministries at and through Ascension, taking part in His mission in the kingdom on earth.

We give faithfully in response to our blessings and to be good stewards. We do good works through our ministries out of our love of Christ. Hmm... could it be that our **Walk with Jesus** is meant to take us to an important intersection, where faith and good works meet at the cross of Jesus?

Estimate of giving cards should have arrived at home by this time. We will offer and dedicate our responses to God during worship on the first Sunday in Advent, December 3.

Attitude of Gratitude

Thanks to people from Ascension who supported Lutheran Social Services of Illinois through participating in the recent award dinner dance, *Amicus Certus*. Three hundred fifty people attended this record-breaking event sponsored by the LSSI Women's Network, and over \$200,000 was raised. Your generosity is so appreciated by LSSI and its clients.

*Nancy Nagel, Marlynn Anderson, Elaine Chester,
Jan Leverenz, Eileen Gerald, Teri Colmar, and
Gail Price*

* * *

Thanks to Maxim Health Care, Ascension was able to offer flu and pneumonia shots to our people and invite the community to take part as well. Remember, the most important thing you can do to prevent the flu is to wash your hands!

* * *

Thanks to people who contributed baby needs, to those who knitted baby caps, and to the confirmation students who assembled Midwife Kits. The kits were shipped to Global Health Ministries in Minneapolis. From there, they will be placed on a container ship and sent to a partner health ministry in a developing country. Thanks also to Kathy Weinstein for giving leadership to the project.

* * *

Thanks to all who provided food for the Thanksgiving Food Gathering.



Ascension Women's
Christmas
Luncheon

The annual *Ascension Women's Christmas Luncheon* will be held at 12:00 noon on Thursday, December 14, at the home of Marion Young, 1058 Adelaide Drive, Northbrook.

You are invited to bring a gift for the children of LSSTI's Head Start Programs, three- to five-year olds. Blocks, ethnic dolls and wooden puzzles are suggested. It is best to avoid toys with batteries. You may also donate gift cards from Target or Kohl's in \$5, \$10 or \$20 denominations.

This is always a special event so please plan to attend. Call the church office to reserve your place.