

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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January 6 used to be the big celebration ... one of two in the Church year ... the other being Easter. Christmas was originally a minor festival on the Church's way to the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6.

January 6 ushers us into the Epiphany season which this year runs through Transfiguration Sunday on February 18. One of the themes of Epiphany is the proclamation of Jesus throughout the world and teaching who Jesus is.

This year, that teaching ministry includes inviting our children in the fifth grade or older to the communion table of our church. I will be teaching two sessions of "Welcome to the Table" during January and February. Identical sessions will be held on Saturday mornings and Tuesday afternoons.

5:00 p.m. Tuesday afternoons

January 16, 30

February 6

10:00 a.m. Saturday mornings

January 20

February 3, 10

To sign up, email me at cegerald@comcast.net or call me at 847/446-8321.

During January and February, I'm going to teach a Tuesday morning class for adults entitled "In Search of Paul," which is the title of John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed's book which was published in 2004. During these weeks we will study Paul's letter to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians using the basic text which we all have in our homes and hands: the Bible. We'll meet on Tuesday mornings from 10:30 through 11:30 starting on January 30 and continue through February. Bring your Bible and join us in the Augustana Room! If possible, sign up by emailing me at cegerald@comcast.net or calling me at 847/446-8321.

Some folks might be ready to join our congregation. I'm scheduling two membership information sessions ... one on Saturday mornings and one on Sunday afternoons.

11:00 a.m. Saturday mornings

January 20

February 3, 10

12:01 p.m. on Sunday afternoons

January 21

February 4, 11

If you are currently a member of another Lutheran congregation, or a congregation related to the Episcopal Church USA, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, Moravian Church, or Reformed Church of America, we just need to request a transfer from your previous or current congregation. If you're currently in a church related to another denomination or if you are unchurched, we want to receive you into membership through "reaffirmation of faith." To sign up, email me at cegerald@comcast.net or call me at 847/446-8321.

Happy Epiphany!

Pastor Curt

Focus on Health



Eat Well: Be a Good Steward

Be gentle when you touch bread.
Let it not lie uncared for, unwanted.
So often bread is taken for granted.
There is so much beauty in bread—
Beauty of sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil.
Winds and rains have caressed it,
The maker's hands have blessed it.
Be gentle when you touch bread.
Author unknown

Our culture is food-centered. Food courts, pot-lucks, drive-thrus, frozen dinners. But even though most of us have access to more food than we need, we don't really value it. So we tend to eat wastefully and without hunger.

Cultivating reverence for our food is a powerful way to be good stewards of our bodies and of the food that nourishes them. Practice intentionality by eating slowly, being aware of the textures, colors, smells and tastes of each bite. Pray a blessing each time you lift food to your mouth, thanking God for it. See if this makes a difference in your relationship with food and in the way that you eat.

God, let me not take food for granted, but receive it with the deepest gratitude. Amen.

Peace and good health to you
in this new year!

Gail Price



Ascension will host our late winter blood drive on **March 18, 2007**. We ask those of you who give blood at Ascension and at Life Source to try donating at Life Source by January 15, 2007 so you will be eligible to donate with us 8 weeks later. As usual, you can donate from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We hope to see you there.

Reach Out Through God's Love



Sunday Coffee Hour

Fellowship is at the heart of Christian community, and Lutherans have a reputation for loving their coffee! Ascension's Sunday coffee hour is made possible only by the volunteer efforts of many people. Won't you join in supporting this time of fellowship by offering to assist in setting the table? You may do this anytime before 9:15 a.m. any Sunday. The process is so simple; the rewards are great! Choose the date that suits you, then sign up on the bulletin board or at the coffee table or call the church office. Thanks for your help!

Trade Coffee Project Continues

Ascension's Service Ministry will continue to make Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate products available in the new year. If you haven't yet tried them at home, visit the display in Fellowship Hall and learn how our use of these products supports family farmers throughout the world. Thanks for making a difference in their lives! See Mitch Mitchell for more information.

Souper Bowl of Caring

Souper Bowl Sunday, February 4, 2007, is when we collect non-perishable food such as cans of soup and money to feed the hungry. Soup pots and youth will be at the exit doors where donations can be left. The donations will be taken to a local food pantry where they will be used to feed needy people in our area. Please see the poster on the bulletin board.

Souper Bowl Sunday was started seventeen years ago when a prayer on game day inspired a group of youth to do something more than to celebrate a football game. They created the Souper Bowl of Caring, a youth-led grassroots movement that is now an international event. Since going nationwide in 1990, more than \$33 million has been raised.



Thanks!

Children of LSSI's Head Start programs and their families are grateful for your contributions of toys, mittens, gloves and scarves received during the Christmas season. The gift cards you offered will be used by the LSSI Women's Network Depot Project to meet specific family needs for food, clothing and incidentals as they occur.

Bethel Christmas Family Sharing



Many thanks to all of you for making the Bethel Christmas Sharing Program a success again this year! Through the generosity of many, 55 Bethel families and 7 seniors (from newborn to 101) felt the love of Christ this Christmas.

Refugee Resettlement at Ascension

...whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.—Luke 3:11

Many, many thanks to all of the people who helped relocate the Jia family, recent refugees from a northern province in China. The Jia family (father, Yachuan Jia; mother, Hui Dong Zhao; daughters, Ziming Jia (age 12) and Ziyu Jia (age 4), and Grandmother, Min Xu) is Falun Gong, a persecuted minority in China. After fleeing China, the Jia family lived in Thailand for a year and a half. There, both Hui Dong Zhao (mother) and Min Xu were imprisoned for seven months for protesting the practice of organ harvesting among Chinese prisoners.

The Jia family is now living in Rogers Park and is very grateful to the Ascension congregation for all of the furniture, household goods, and food that were donated to outfit their apartment. They are working with IRIM (Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries) and will soon begin English classes and job counseling. A visit to the church by the family is expected sometime soon.



Spiritual Growth

Just Walk Across the Room

January begins the season of Epiphany. This season is about making Jesus known to others. This is an appropriate time to come together as a church and discuss simple steps to point people in our lives to Jesus in a natural and relational way. It's not about a method; it's about having genuine concern about others around us and trusting that God will guide us in relationship with them as we seek to point them to Jesus.

Just Walk Across the Room is about simple steps for pointing people around you to faith. Copies of the workbook that will be the topic for our adult forums at 9:45 and 11:00 a.m. January 21st-February 11th, and Saturday mornings starting January 20th-February 10th will be available to purchase in the Fellowship hall. One *Just Walk Across The Room* book by Bill Hybels will be provided for every family.

The Experience of Community

The experience of community is described for us in Acts 2:42. "All the believers devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer." (NLT).

Community is something most of us, if not all of us, seek. A place to belong, a company of people who we know accepts us, loves us, and walks the journey of faith with us.

This community described for us in Acts is similar to the experience of a small group that is growing together. At Ascension, our small group ministry seeks to grow in faith through prayer, learning, fellowship, and caring. A small group is a place to belong.

Right now we are preparing to launch our small group ministry for the season of Lent. We are in the process of training small group leaders in our model small group that will facilitate the experience of praying, learning, and caring in community. We hope that you consider what small groups could mean for your life. We ask that you continue to pray for our model small group as we grow in our leadership skills and in our passion for helping others grow in community.



January 7th

9:45 a.m.: Caryl Scott will be sharing slides from her recent trip to Israel. She will be discussing what she learned regarding the culture and history in the Holy Land.

11:00 a.m.: Keith Williams will continue talking about what Dr. Jon Laansma began at the Spiritual Disciplines Saturday in November regarding deeper study of Scripture.

January 14th

To be determined

January 21st -February 11th

9:45 & 11:00: Our discussion on *Just Walk Across the Room* will begin. This is a four-week series on how to begin to point people to Christ in a natural and relational way. If you are looking for a way to share your faith for life through the relationships you have with others and without being weird, this will be a great learning experience for you.

CrossTraining on Tuesday Nights

CrossTraining continues in January from 6:00-8:00 p.m. This is an evening for everyone at Ascension. Our adult group continues a series entitled *Life Rules: Instructions for Life Winners* by Andy Stanley. Winners play by the rules. In kindergarten, ignoring the rules was a blast--especially if you could get away with it. But as adults, we understand that rules are for our protection... and that if we break God's rules, we cause heartache and broken relationships. Take part in this discussion-oriented and life-changing experience on Tuesday nights. Our senior high group has a small group led by Jonathan Anderson. The junior high kids experience confirmation and small groups and the children participate in children's choir and Bible and recreation time with Jeanne Schambach and Brittany Lindstrom. And if you don't want to cook on Tuesday, make sure to stop by for a delicious dinner at 6:00 p.m. Cost for dinner is \$6 per person.



A Men's Bible Study will begin again on Tuesday January 19, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. We will begin the study of the Gospel of Luke. All men are welcome. Come and join in as we learn GOD'S WORD and enjoy the fellowship of Ascension friends. Study Guides are available in the Church office.

Crossways International Bible Study

Join us as we continue to survey and explore the Bible with *Crossways International*. This is a Bible study that delves deeply into the Biblical narrative and its major themes. This next series we will deal with the Conquest through the Babylonian Exile.

We will continue to offer two weekly groups: Monday evenings beginning January 8th from 7:00-8:30 p.m. led by Donna Irmis and Wednesday afternoons starting January 10th from 1:00-2:30 p.m. led by Ruth Willason. Preparation consists of 1-2 hours per week of Bible reading and answering questions. Materials are \$11 and they can be picked up in Claudia's office.

A Christian Look at the Art of Spain

Through slides and discussion, Alice Kosnik will introduce participants to the art of El Greco, Diego Velasquez, Francisco Goya, Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí. Their work spans Spain's history from the 1500's through the late 20th century. You will learn how each artist's life and the events occurring in Spain during their lifetimes affected each painter's work. The class will culminate in a trip to the Chicago Art Institute (with perhaps a tapas lunch?) to see many of these Spanish paintings. Because this will be a Christian look at Spanish art, the group will be able to discuss how the reformation and counter reformation affected El Greco, comment on the feelings evoked by the Velasquez Crucifixion picture, talk about morality issues raised by Goya, and see how Dalí uses religious images in his highly unusual pictures. Alice is eager to discuss the religious feelings evoked by much of this art with fellow Christians! **This begins January 10th at 10:00 a.m. in the Augustana Room.**



Over the past couple of weeks, the children's ministry has been in the process of deciding what they would like to contribute their weekly offering to. Well! The votes are IN! This year, the children will be giving their weekly offering to Holy Family Ministries. Holy Family's mission is: **"In partnership with Chicago's low-income communities, we provide safe havens where children and adults learn, grow spiritually, find hope and broaden life skills."** Holy Family's goal is to make available to Chicago's low-income minority population programs that can enhance the quality of individual and community life.

Holy Family Lutheran School is a private, faith-based school that seeks to provide a high quality education for kindergarten through eighth grade students at an affordable price. Their goal is to educate the "whole child" so that every student will be ready to compete academically and to thrive socially. This school was founded in 1985 and is located in Chicago's West Humboldt Park neighborhood. The school is home to 150 students at the current time.

Holy Family Lutheran School is very important to its community for several reasons. Those reasons include the low-income families, the single-parent households, high crime rates, and the failing neighborhood schools.

The project that the children have chosen to help with is this: The school does not have the proper facilities to continue to serve the children. There is no reception area, meeting room, or library. There are only eight toilets for the whole school. One class meets on the choir loft because there are not enough classrooms. The board has committed to obtaining a better facility, and has raised almost \$5 million dollars to date. However, there is still much ground to cover financially, especially in the area of furnishing the classrooms. The children have decided to use their Sunday School offering to help furnish these new classrooms. We believe that the children can impact and help this building project. The project is called *Building Hope*. Holy Family School students have always beaten the odds, and we want to continue to help in this process.

The children set a goal last week of \$500. In order to make this goal a reality, we need commitment from not only the children, but their families as well. Can you help? Will you help? At the end of the year there will be a pizza/ice-cream party to celebrate the meeting of their goal, as well as the end of the year. Please make the decision to be a part of this great opportunity to give.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call/ask.

Jeanne Schambach

Worship Notes

For those of you who were able to make it to Ascension for the program on December 9th, you know what a treat it was to see and hear so many members of the church participating with all their hearts in what was truly a first-rate production and a magical evening. We made many new friends that evening, several who signed our guest books, and we will continue to make contact with them in the future. This place is making great strides in reaching out to the community and I just wanted to write a special note of thanks for all the hard work so many put into this program. From those who sang in the choir and children's choir, to those on the welcoming team, to those who prepared refreshments and decorated the church and so many others.... kudos on a job extremely well done. It was a very special night for a lot of people and you all played a huge part in that.

You are encouraged to attend **Bach for the Sem** at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 1500 W. Belmont Avenue, Chicago on January 14th at 4:00. It's a wonderful afternoon of beautiful music! Ticket information can be found on the bulletin board.

Peace and joy to all as we move through this season and keep finding ways to bring the Holy Spirit into the midst of all you do.

Blessings,

Mischa & Minkyoo

Nametags have been updated. Please let the office know if yours is missing and we'll get a set printed. Thank you for wearing yours each Sunday.

Walk with *Jesus*

My family and I listen to quite a bit of Contemporary Christian music. While so much of today's modern music is filled with negative messages of hate, of judgment, and of instant gratification, so many of today's Christian artists are lifting up songs of faith, hope, and doing God's work in the world today. Two of my favorite Christian songs tie together nicely with the themes we've been discussing in our stewardship program.

One is "He's Always Been Faithful to Me," by Sara Groves. She sings:

Season by season I watch Him, amazed
In awe of the mystery of His perfect ways
All I have need of, His hand will provide
He's always been faithful to me.

Another of my favorites is a song called "Legacy," by Nichole Nordeman.

I want to leave a legacy
How will they remember me?
Did I choose to love?
Did I point to You enough
To make a mark on things
I want to leave an offering
A child of mercy and grace
Who blessed Your name unapologetically
And leave that kind of legacy.

When I think about these songs, I am reminded of the two key themes we've carried forth in the stewardship campaign this year:

Theme #1: We give back in grateful response for how richly God blesses us! Sound like "He's always been faithful to me"?

Theme #2: Ascension is engaged in very important and exciting ministries in our community and in the world, and so we give so we can keep playing our role in God's mission here! Does "Did I point to You enough to make a mark on things" ring true here?

Sunday, December 3rd, was Celebration Sunday, when we received the 2007 financial commitments of many of the members and friends of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension. It was exciting to see so many people step forward in faith and describe their giving plans for 2007. Many people have responded with significant increases in commitments, including tithes and increases in proportional giving.

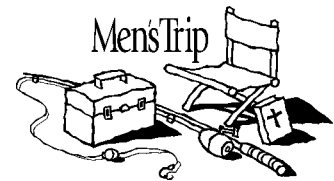
To those of you who have already responded, I sincerely thank you for your generosity! And to those who have not yet made a commitment, I'd ask you to prayerfully consider how God is calling you to respond, be it out of faith for all God provides, or to help Ascension continue to carry out such important work locally and globally. As we've said before, no matter how generously we give, it's impossible to out-give God!

In Him,
Bruce Carlson, Stewardship Leader



Ascension Men's Group Go Fishing

This year's "Ascension Lutheran Lunkers" Canadian fishing trip is scheduled for the week of July 7, 2007. Temple Bay Lodge is hosting a free lunch and fishing seminar on January 6, 2007, and anyone interested in attending the lunch is asked to contact either Bob Reid or John West no later than December 31, 2006. You may call them also if you have any questions regarding the upcoming trip.



Ascension Women's Luncheon January 11 — 12:00 noon



The Ascension women's luncheon will be held on the **second** Thursday of the month in January. Join us Thursday, January 11th at 12:00 p.m. at Hackney's on Lake for food, fellowship and the chance to hear our guest speaker, Terri Gens of LSSI. She is a dynamic speaker so her program is sure to be interesting. Please plan to attend and feel free to bring a friend.