

GOOD AFTERNOON!

WHAT'S HAPPENING (January 11)!

Worship and Education Schedule

Worship services are at 4:00 p.m., on Saturdays, and 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. on Sundays. Adult Bible Class begins at 9:15 with Pastor's study of I Corinthians. Sunday School classes are at 9:15 a.m.

Time to renew your Lutheran Witness subscriptions! Please contact the office ONLY if you wish to CANCEL a current subscription or if you wish to ADD a new subscription. The cost of an annual subscription is \$19.20 (you can place your check made out to Ascension and noted 'Lutheran Witness-2024' in the offering plate). **The deadline for changes is January 14!** (New subscriptions will begin in March of 2024.)

It's time for the Youth Winter Retreat! Twelve of our 6th-12th graders will be away for two days this Sunday and Monday at a beautiful cabin in the mountains. They will study God's Word, play games, watch movies, and have Pastor's famous pancakes! Please pray for safe travel and God's blessings on this wonderful group of kids, and for Pastor and Stephanie as well.

The Young Adult Group also meets monthly, and will meet tomorrow, Friday, January 12, at 6:30 p.m. Please contact Jenna Lawrenz at jenna.lindeman@cune.org for more information.

Every week our sermon and a few pieces of music go on-line through our Ascension Lutheran Church "You Tube" channel. During 2023 we had a little over 11,000 views, an average of 213 weekly. We have seen quite an increase from our average of 150 in 2022. Two of our weeks saw an unusually high number of views - on February 12 we had 550 views and on March 19 we had 545 views. During the year we have heard from a number of our viewers across the States, and we received correspondence from the Czech Republic and Ethiopia. Many thanks to Mike Zehnder who provides the music and the outline for the service. Special thanks go to Durwin Schmitt and Tim McClaren who videotape the sermon and edit the service for viewing.

As we begin 2024 the various people who will be serving Ascension through leadership on our Council are:

Bob Hea - President
David Kaiser - Vice-President
Margo Pasha - Treasurer
Barbara Rutter - Secretary
Jim Wert - Elders
Chuck Mielke and Terry Utecht - Trustees
Christa Kirschner - Education
Ian Kirschner - Youth
Linda Achziger - Ladies Guild
Dawn Munson - Evangelism
Shelia Beu - Congregational Life

During 2023 we saw some positive news and some negative news as we look at the numbers of our congregation. First the positive - we saw our average weekend attendance in worship jump from 195 in 2022 to 220 last year - an increase of 25 worshippers. We saw 9 people transfer into Ascension, we confirmed 7 adults and we had 12 baptisms. But our membership continues to see a decline. In 2022 we had 533 baptized members, but we ended 2023 at 509 baptized members, a loss of 24 folks. Our communicant membership saw almost an identical decline. We began the year with 483 communicant members but ended the year at 458 adult members - a decline of 25. We saw an unusually high number of deaths - 19, we had 10 folks transfer to other congregations, and 15 folks were removed after years of inactivity or moving away from the area. We thank God for His hand in this past year and we ask for His Spirit in what He desires to accomplish in this new year.

Margo Pasha, our treasurer, shared with the Church Council that our congregation was amazingly generous in this past year. We received \$106,000 more than we anticipated, and our boards and committees spent \$38,000 less than their budgets allowed. We had a gain of \$131,000 for 2023. Because of the excess funds received, the Board of Elders will be able to allocate an additional \$9,100.00 in mission funds in their meeting on January 23. Our congregation gives 10% of monies received to our mission partners and mission projects. Thank you for your overwhelming generosity.

This past week we received notice that our sister congregation, St Andrew Lutheran Church in the Montbello neighborhood of Denver, had their final worship service at the end of 2023. St. Andrew's has been serving that neighborhood since 1968 - 55 years ago. It appears that the facility will continue to be used for a number of Spanish speaking congregations. We pray God's peace upon this congregation and the future of each individual's spiritual health and growth.

Is it time to begin your study of the Bible? You are invited to join Pastor John as the Wednesday Evening Bible Class begins a study on the Book of Philippians - the Epistle of Joy. The class meets every Wednesday from 5:00 until 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall.

2024 Creation Calendars We still have a few, they are here in the office until Sunday!

Extended Day Preschool Update We returned to preschool on Tuesday of this week. It has been great fun hearing about all the kids' holiday adventures. This month we are into WINTER, SNOW, ARCTIC ANIMALS, and NOAH'S ARK... a very fun month ahead! – Meg Stenman, Preschool Director

Early Easter Equals Early Faith-Book stories. Let's begin to pray now as we get started on the 2024 edition, our 12th edition of this beloved booklet. **You and Your story matter...to God, to you and to us.** We begin to develop this by asking each of you to join us in praying that God will bring to mind how much a part of your life HE really is. We collect these stories and publish them to read between Easter and the Ascension. Please listen carefully to the Lord's leading, as you write a 400-550-word story that tells of a time or situation that God used to bless or heal you, answered prayers, give you hope. Sign up begins now by emailing me at Heyjude264@aol.com.

or signing up on the list on the narthex bulletin board. We will need all of you to help fill the pages. Please email that you will write a story NOW, then plan to send your FAITH Story to me by **February 21** or sooner. I will be glad to interview you and help you write if you like. Call me to discuss it at 303-972-0873. With God's help and yours, this booklet can bless us and glorify God. ***Your story for His Glory!*** Thank you for your prayers and stories, Jude Donovan

Hearing Aid Batteries The church was given a box of hearing aid batteries. If you can use some of them, please stop in the office and look through the box.

Do You Have Baskets? From Lori Rolling: "We need some baskets of medium to large size for a charity event at the Littleton Elks to raise money for The Right Step program. It is a horseback riding program that works with youth and adults. The folks that they help have many different abilities from Downs syndrome to PTSD and lots of things in between.

Baskets will be accepted on the stage in the lower level (Fellowship Hall). They will be filled and auctioned off. The baskets cannot be returned."

The St. Olaf Choir from Northfield, Minnesota will perform on Sunday, January 28 at 2:00 pm at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church, 1980 Dahlia Street, in Denver! For tickets, please go to <https://wp.stolaf.edu/>

The 2024 Flower weekly signup sheet is located on the bulletin board on the landing just down from the Narthex. Simply fill out your name, dedication for a special event, and write a check for the number of arrangements, each arrangement is \$27.00, the cost for both arrangements is \$54.00, this is the same cost as 2019. If you want to share your special event with another person that is perfect – we love to celebrate everyone's special day.

You are welcome to take your donated flowers home after the last service, or you can opt to give them another good deed. The Ladies of Circle IV will take the flowers left to the homebound and hospitalized members of our church to brighten their day!

You may pay for your flowers using the envelopes located below the sign-up sheet and place it in the weekly offering plate. It is particularly important to mark your check clearly "ALTAR FLOWERS" so the offering counters do not credit it to the General Fund, but to floral budget, the church does not have a floral budget, and all Altar Flowers are made possible by donations. Please remember to pay for your flowers by the Sunday you are dedicating them.

Thank you all for your flower donations and the beauty, which they bring to our Church.

A first is coming to Ascension Lutheran Church - the GriefShare 13-Week Support Group Program, starting In February and ending in April. The program focuses on relevant grief topics (Examples: Regrets, Secondary Losses, Anger, etc.) associated with the death of a loved one.

The weekly 30-minute videos feature nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories of people. The videos are followed by small group discussions about what was viewed. Past participants have commented on the immense value of the follow-up

discussions. Grief work is so important to healing and happens when surrounded by others who understand. Experts tell us that it is normal to spend 2-5 years actively working to heal after the loss of a loved one. Confidentiality is very much part of this program. GriefShare is Christian-based but is intended for all grievers - those of faith and those without.

Please consider this program, not just for yourself, but for friends, neighbors, or family members that you think may benefit from encouragement, comfort, and help in grieving; making changes; and finding hope for the future, as well as strengthening spiritual relationships.

The 13-Week Sessions GriefShare begins at Ascension Lutheran Church:

Tuesdays - February 6, through April 30, 2024

6:30-8:30 PM

Notebook/Registration Fee - \$20

Child Care Available (upon request)

Registration: griefshare.org/findagroup

Or Contact Sherry Hitztaler at 303-913-0846 or hitz2@comcast.net

SHARING JESUS Bible Study! Written and taught by Pastor Ginkel, the group meets on Wednesdays at 10:00 am in Room 106. Please join us. Pastor Don's booklet, SHARING JESUS, is available on request.

The Saturday afternoon Bible study led by Curt and Karen Engle: You are invited to join us for the 3:00 Saturday Bible study! We hope to see you there! Email Curt at Kengle0920@gmail.com

Learning to acknowledge the abundance of God's blessings to us is the beginning step of putting together the gift plan within our overall estate plans. This Christmas when you receive gifts and consider writing thank-yous, try to communicate in those notes that you acknowledge that the gift came from the Lord through the one who gave you the gift. Then consider communicating that depth of blessing in the way you plan your estate. Your Ascension Gift Planning Counselor can help. Contact Jason Jones at Jason.Jones@lfnd.org or call him directly at (970) 988-0305.

Are you making resolutions for the New Year? Have you selected a Word for 2024? Consider making both PRAYER!

Grant us grace, O God,
to begin this year in Your faith
and to continue it in Your favor,
that being guided in all our doings
and guarded all our days,
we may spend ourselves in Your service
and finally, by Your grace,
attain to the glory of eternal life;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

~ written by W E Orchard, 1877-1955

If you'd like to join the Ascension Prayer Group, we meet on Zoom every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 2:30 pm. Contact MargoALPasha@yahoo.com

Prayers: For Valorie Flickinger's husband Robert, who will soon be receiving radiation treatments for prostate cancer; For Judy, Janet Heisz' sister, who lives in North Dakota, and is ill; For Marilyn Wert; For Edna Achziger; For Lila Loots' brother, Gordon, who is nearing the end of his life; For John Oldefest, who will have knee replacement surgery on January 17; For Kathy Chamberlain, who will be having back surgery; For Jeanine MacCluskey, who has entered hospice; For Carol Zeller; For Ama Orr; For Barry Kratzer; For Lawrence Brown; For our young people and their leaders at this weekend's Youth Winter Retreat; For peace in Israel and Gaza, in Ukraine, and throughout the world; For our country; For God to send His Holy Spirit on all believers for strengthening of faith and witness.

Prayer of Thanksgiving for Dennis Anderson, Judy Hermsmeyer's brother, that cancer has not gone to his brain. Prayerfully, chemo will slow down the tumors growth and maintain quality of life as long as possible.

Prayers of Thanksgiving also for the birth of Fred and Kathleen Wucherpennig's new grandson, James Donald Schwein, on January 8! Baby James was born at 8 pounds, 9 ounces, he is the son of Fred and Kathleen's daughter, Rachel, and her husband, Tyler, who live in Highlands Ranch. Many blessings to their family!

Prayers of Thanksgiving For Clyde Wiggins' successful hip replacement surgery on January 9! Prayers for his speedy recovery at home.

<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Service Time</u>	<u>Attendees</u>	
Saturday, 1/6	4:00 pm	72	
Sunday, 1/7	8:00 am	71	
	10:30 am	82	Total: 225

Online Views (as of January 9) for December 31: 120 views.

Stewardship:

2023	December 31	Year-to-Date (YTD)
Budgeted Revenue	\$12,000.00	\$636,000.00
Received Amount	\$7,970.00	\$720,203.00
Project Peter Receipts	\$100.00	\$63,704.00
2024	January 6-7	Year-to-Date (YTD)
Budgeted Revenue	\$12,600.00	\$12,600.00
Received Amount	\$12,493.00	\$12,493.00
Project Peter Receipts	\$375.00	\$375.00

Calendar (Saturday, January 13 – Sunday, January 21):

Sat. (1-13)	11:00 a.m.	Memorial Service for Rick Eastridge
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	4:00 p.m.	Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday (1-14)	8:00 a.m.	Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
	9:15 a.m.	Adult Bible Study / Sunday School
	10:30 a.m.	Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
	12:30 p.m.	Youth Winter Retreat
Mon. (1-15)		Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
		NO Extended Day Preschool
	3:00 p.m.	Youth Return from Retreat
Tues. (1-16)	9:30 a.m.	Ladies' Bible Study
	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
Weds. (1-17)	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
	10:00 a.m.	Bible Study with Pastor Ginkel
	5:00 p.m.	Bible Study with Pastor John
	6:00 p.m.	Confirmation
	6:00 p.m.	Gloria Dei Ringers
	7:00 p.m.	Ascension Chorale
Thurs. (1-18)	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
	1:30 p.m.	Koinonia
Fri. (1-19)	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
	12:30 p.m.	Quilters Group
Sat. (1-20)	9:00 a.m.	Heritage Fine Arts Workshop
	4:00 p.m.	Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
Sun. (1-21)	8:00 a.m.	Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
	9:15 a.m.	Adult Bible Study / Sunday School
	10:30 a.m.	Contemporary Worship with Holy Communion

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CHRIST FOR YOU this week on KFUE.org: Continue studying 2 Corinthians on Sharper Iron (weekdays at 8:00 a.m. CT), finish studying Ephesians and begin Philippians on Thy Strong Word (weekdays at 11:00 a.m. CT), and worship with us in Daily Chapel (weekdays at 10:00 a.m. CT). Find your favorite programs on demand at kfuo.org and the KFUE Radio app!