

GOOD AFTERNOON!

WHAT'S HAPPENING (January 4)! Blessed Epiphany!

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 Undecorate!! We need a few hands to undecorate the sanctuary on Saturday, January 6, beginning at 8:00 am. Thank you!

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.)

The Memorial Service for Henry Kerluke will be on Sunday, January 7, at 2:00 p.m., followed by a meal. The Memorial Service for Rick Eastridge will be Saturday, January 13, at 11:00 a.m., followed by a meal.

Thank you to everyone! A huge "thank you" on behalf of the Christmas Families program to all of those who donated funds and volunteered this year! This year we served 15 families for a total of 93 people this season! Thank you for sharing Christmas joy! – Dana Niederbrach

It's time for the Youth Winter Retreat! 6th-12th graders are invited to get away for 2 days at a beautiful cabin in the mountains next weekend, **January 14-15**. We will leave from church at 12:30 pm on Sunday, January 14, and will be back by 3:00 pm on Monday, January 15. We'll study God's Word, play games, watch movies, and have Pastor's famous pancakes! Don't miss out! \$20 and MUST RSVP with Stephanie by January 10th!

Mama's Coffee Connection (MC²) meets monthly, and they will meet on Monday, January 8, at 9:30 a.m. Please contact Jenna Lawrenz at jenna.lindeman@cune.org for more information.

The Young Adult Group also meets monthly, and will meet on 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.

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.

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.

Poinsettias for Christmas 2023 were given by Joan Anttonen, in loving memory of Jack; Carolyn Helstrom; John and Lori Rolling; Tracy Huggins; Bill and Gloria Gaudreault; Sherry Hitzler, in loving memory of Dave; Lynne and Larry Nelson, Chuck and Gloria Mielke; Bev Carter, Marilyn and Don Loptien; Ron and Ann Kaneko, Edna and Linda Achziger, and Pastor John and Marilyn Larson. Thank you!

The New Year's Eve Dinner, catered by Romano's, was lots of fun – 110 people attended this year! Thanks especially to Nancy Lugton, Vicki and Sandra Wing, Colin and Megan O'Connell, Jeremy, Erin Aldrich and all the other wonderful volunteers!

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.

Ladies Guild Brown Bag Lunch and Bible Study You are invited to join Pastor Larson and the Ladies Guild in the Music Room next Thursday, January 11, at 11:30 am for a brown bag lunch and Bible study! There will be dessert, coffee and tea. Please remember to bring a friend, your mites, nickel bags/socks, your Bible, and please do not forget to bring your brown bag lunch!

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: The 3:00 Saturday Bible study will resume this Saturday, January 6th! Happy New Year, and we hope to see you there! Email Curt at Kengle0920@gmail.com

Ascension Quilters will meet on Friday, January 12 at 12:30 pm. For more information, call Jackie Adams at 303-798-5161.

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 John Oldefest, who will have knee replacement surgery on January 17; For Athenia Michel, who is recovering from Covid; For Adeline Newth, who suffered a stroke while visiting family in Nebraska; For Clyde Wiggins, who will have hip replacement surgery on January 9; For Candyce Uyeda's friend, Roz Modic, who is having problems with her kidneys; For Kathy Chamberlain, who will be having back surgery; For Tamara Lee, Mike Zehnder's sister, recovering from surgery to her shin bone. She will have a 3-month recovery; For Jeanine MacCluskey, who has entered hospice; For Dennis Anderson, brother of Judy Hermsmeyer, diagnosed with stage four lung cancer that has spread to both lungs; For Carol Zeller; For Ama Orr; For Barry Kratzer; For Lawrence Brown; 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.

Prayers of Thanksgiving: For Barry Kratzer, whose health and strength are returning after his hospitalization!

Flowers on the Altar are given by Dave and Carol Zeller, in joyful celebration of their 52nd Wedding Anniversary!

<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Service Time</u>	<u>Attendees</u>	
Sunday, 12/31	10:00 pm	145	
	3:00 pm	81	Total: 226

Online Views (as of January 4) for December 24: 180 views.

Stewardship:

2023	December 24-25	Year-to-Date (YTD)
Budgeted Revenue	\$12,000.00	\$624,000.00
Received Amount	\$32,885.00	\$712,233.00
Project Peter Receipts	\$172.00	\$63,604.00

Calendar (Saturday, January 6 – Sunday, January 14):

Sat. (1-6)	8:00 a.m.	Church Undecorating
	9:30 a.m.	Ladies Guild Board Meeting
	4:00 p.m.	EPIPHANY Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday (1-7)	8:00 a.m.	EPIPHANY Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
	9:15 a.m.	Adult Bible Study / Sunday School
	10:30 a.m.	Contemporary Worship with Holy Communion
	2:00 p.m.	Memorial Service – Henry Kerluke
Mon. (1-8)	9:30 a.m.	Mama's Coffee Connect (MC2)
	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
Tues. (1-9)	9:30 a.m.	Ladies' Bible Studies
	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
	6:30 p.m.	Church Council
Weds. (1-10)	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
	6:30 p.m.	Stephen Ministry
	7:00 p.m.	Ascension Chorale
Thurs. (1-11)	9:00 a.m.	Foundation Meeting

	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
	11:30 a.m.	Ladies Guild Brown Bag Lunch and Bible Study
Fri. (1-12)	9:30 am – 2:30 pm	Extended Day Preschool
	12:30 p.m.	Quilters Group
	6:30 p.m.	Young Adult Group
Sat. (1-13)	11:00 a.m.	Memorial Service for Rick Eastridge
	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.	Contemporary Worship with Holy Communion
	12:30 p.m.	Youth Winter Retreat

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CHRIST FOR YOU this week on KFUE.org: Blessed Epiphany! Begin studying 2 Corinthians on Sharper Iron (weekdays at 8:00 a.m. CT), begin a new series on the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with Dr. Cameron Mackenzie on The Coffee Hour (1/10 at 9:00 a.m. CT), and begin studying Ephesians on Thy Strong Word (weekdays at 11:00 a.m. CT). Find your favorite programs on demand at kfuo.org and the KFUE Radio app!