

Ascension Messenger

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH | JANUARY 2018 | VOLUME 15

Ascension's Ministry to Children: Passing Along the Gospel to the Next Generation

"One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts." Psalm 145:4

In following Christ's command to *Love God, Love Others and Bring People into His Kingdom*, Ascension places a renewed focus on its ministry to children as we enter 2018. "We must continue to be diligent as a church to do everything we can to ensure the next generation is taught the Faith and can keep the message of the Gospel going forward until Jesus comes again," said Pastor Michael. "Ministering to this generation is a huge part of what we are called to do here at Ascension and we want to be sure we are faithful and we continue to bear fruit."

Ascension Celebrates National Lutheran Schools Week this month with the Theme, "It's Still All About Jesus"

A key part of that outreach ministry is through Ascension Lutheran School and Pre-School. With many of the students' families from unchurched homes, it is imperative they hear about the love of Jesus every day of the school year, Pastor Michael said. This month, Ascension will join 2,300 schools, pre-schools and high

schools for National Lutheran Schools week Jan. 21-28. A special service will be held at Ascension on Sun., Jan. 21 at 11 a.m., featuring music by the students of the school and pre-school along with a message of renewed commitment to this aspect of Ascension's outreach to our community.

Other aspects of the church's efforts to bring the message to young people is through the Sunday School and Youth programs. Sunday School, led by director Karen LaPointe, is aimed at helping teach children not only the Bible stories but providing the foundational elements for a life of faith in Jesus.

Friday night youth group is also a critical part of our ministry here, providing an opportunity for kids of junior and senior-high age time each week to socialize with their peers, develop Christian friendships and grow in their faith. Youth Director, Dave Ower, said between 10-20 kids meet each week. "It is so fulfilling to watch how the kids grow as they participate in each of the activities together, such as sports, games, prayer, dinner and devotion," Dave said. "It is so important to have healthy, thriving young Christians."

Mark Your Calendar



- **January 6 - 9 a.m.**
Hour of Prayer
- **January 9 - 7:45 p.m.**
Board of Lay Ministry
- **January 16 - 6:30 p.m.**
Fellowship Board
- **January 18 - 5:30 p.m.**
School Board
- **January 19 - 6 a.m.**
Men's Breakfast
- **January 20 - 9 a.m.**
Hour of Prayer
- **January 23 - 7 p.m.**
LWML
- **January 27 - 9 a.m.**
Adult Information Class

Highlights and Happenings at Ascension



(Top left): Hundreds of family and friends of Ascension Lutheran School students fill the sanctuary to see the Christmas musical, *"Dude, You Hear What I Hear?"* on December 14th. (Bottom left): Ascension says goodbye to Lois and Dick Whiteside after 35 years of service as they prepare to move to their new home in Arizona. (Top right): Kira Schneider, Allie Diecedue and Melanie Schneider sing *"Bethlehem"* as part of the Christmas Eve Sunday School program.



LWML News...

Upcoming Women's Retreat Aims to Bring Women of Ascension Together as Sisters in Christ

All women of Ascension are encouraged to make plans to be part of the LWML Women's Retreat taking place from 9 a.m.—4 p.m. on Sat., March 10 at the beautiful Mary and Joseph Retreat Center in Palos Verdes.

The retreat theme, *"A Day with Our Shepherd,"* is designed to bring the women of Ascension together for a day of refreshment in their faith and deepening of their Christian friendships. Activities will include a workshop on Psalm 23 led by Kimberly Abram, special music and activities. Breakfast and lunch will be included and the fee for the day is \$40. For more information, please contact the church office.



Women of Ascension LWML gathered in December for festive Christmas fellowship at their annual Christmas party and Cookie Swap.

Pastor's Pen

Let's be Intentional in this New Year to Love God, Love Others and Bring People In

In this New Year my prayer and hope for Ascension is that we make a new commitment to the mission that we've adopted over the years. The mission that we love God, love others, and bring people into the Kingdom of God is good mission, and one that certainly pleases the Lord, as it is nothing more than the whole of the law broken down into two commands, to love God and to love others; and then, the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations! But in order to do these things, we must be intentional.

How do I love God more? Well, we love Him more by spending more time with Him. So we must be intentional about being exposed to Word and Sacrament more often, this means being intentional about coming to church. We must be intentional about committing time to daily devotions and to prayer. We must be intentional about Bible study. We must be intentional about giving thanks to God. Paul tells us what we need to do to walk in "New Life" beginning in Ephesians 4:17 until the end of the letter. We must be intentional about putting away things that compete with God for our attention and affection. Be intentional about putting away corrupt thoughts and deceitful desires. These are the ways in which we fall more and more in love with God.

How do I love others more? This is critical, that we love others, for it is not only a command of God, but it is His litmus test for whether or not we are truly His disciples (1 John 4:7-8). We love others more by being intentional about praying for others. We must be intentional about speaking only kind words about others. We must be intentional about helping others who are in need. This means that we must be intentional about noticing those in need around us.

I believe this begins at home, and extends into our life and church, and then finally into the world. Start by being intentional about loving your spouse; be intentional about speaking to them with kindness, letting them know that without saying it, that they matter to you. Then be intentional about telling them outright that they matter to you! Be intentional about outdoing them in honor, as Paul urges us to do (Rom. 12:10). Be intentional about letting your children know that you care!

Finally, be intentional about asking others to join you at church. Be intentional about sharing the reason for your hope, which is Christ Jesus! Be intentional about professing your faith in Christ Jesus before others.

May 2018 be a year that we at Ascension take our mission seriously and follow it intentionally.

-Pastor Michael

Member Spotlight:

Getting to Know Chris and Phyllis Melvin

Chris Melvin was born in Long Beach and his first home was in Manhattan Beach. He was seven years old when his family moved to Merritt Island, Fla. when his father became



involved in the NASA space program. In 1969, he moved back to Torrance and transferred to Ascension from Faith Lutheran church.

Phyllis (Schumacher) Melvin was born in Minnesota to Laverne and Kenneth Schumacher. Her parents, four sisters and one brother moved to California when she was five and they found a church home at Good Shepherd in Inglewood. Phyllis attended Good Shepherd from kindergarten through 8th grade and after her confirmation and graduation in 1968, the family transferred to Ascension.

Chris and Phyllis met at the Walther League Youth Group at Ascension. They both worked on making banners for the sanctuary so they could spend time together. Phyllis asked Chris to attend her high school Christmas dance with her 48 years ago.

They were married at Ascension in 1975. They have three children: Amy, Rebecca and Travis. Phyllis stayed home to raise her children because she had an "in-home" day care. All three of their children were baptized and confirmed at Ascension and attended Ascension Lutheran School. When their youngest was ready to go to kindergarten, Phyllis was asked to serve as the school secretary. She is now in her 27th year in that role at the school and is looking forward to retiring soon.

Chris recently retired from Kaiser Permanente Hospital, where he worked for 42 years in the pathology department. He now spends his days working out, running and training for triathlons and half-marathons. He enjoys taking "run-cations" where he can see God's beautiful country as he enjoys doing his favorite pastime, running. He and Phyllis enjoy taking hiking trips and spending as much time as they can with their five grandchildren, who all live nearby.

Over the years, both Chris and Phyllis have been very active in the church, working with the Youth group and being Scout leaders. Phyllis taught Sunday school for 15 years and now teaches the preschool age students. Both have been on the Board of Parish Fellowship for many years and Chris has been on Board of Lay Ministers for years. They live across the street from Ascension, so Chris takes it upon himself to daily check the facilities for locked doors and windows late at night.

They both agree, "God has truly blessed us, we are very thankful for Ascension and the Ascension family."

We Celebrate January Birthdays and Anniversaries

~ Birthdays ~

January 2 Masako Matsuoka
Johnny Torres

January 6 Suzan Billhime
Michael Davis
Rick Meynen

January 7 Kathy Wachs

January 8 Paul Brege
Erik Orre

January 11 Rudy Orre
Robert Schultz
Amare Whitfield

January 13 Bruce Morant

January 14 John Vanriette

January 16 Kimberly Abram

January 17 Erich Haeger

January 18 Zane Holtz

January 23 Susi Hirano

January 24 Leah Garren

January 25 Linda Newton

January 26 Claudia Newton
David Zurawski

January 27 Annemarie Moe

January 28 Danny Ruse

January 29 Amy Nutter

January 30 Eileen Goodsell
David Goodsell
Emenike Umeh



~ Anniversaries ~

January 4 Daren & Susie Lin

January 17 Cheyne & Sandy
Phillips-Montero

LCMS Winter Regional Workshop at Ascension

Make plans now to attend the Pacific Southwest LCMS Regional Workshop on the topic of Eschatology (the study of end times) at Ascension on Feb. 3 from 9 a.m. —3 p.m. The interactive workshop will be led by Pastor Michael Abram and will include breakfast and lunch. Registration is \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. For more information call the church office.

Ascension Pre-School News by Tammy Simpson, Ascension Pre-School Director

Happy New Year! We pray you all enjoyed a wonderful time with family and friends during the holiday.

For many of us, a new calendar year provides impetus to reflect on the previous 12 months and to consider what we've learned, what we would like to differently going forward, and what we would like to dedicate ourselves to with renewed commitment. What changes would you make as you reflect back to the past year? Would you volunteer more? Would you take more time for your family? Would you join a Bible study? It's a new year so take the time to make new commitments and remain faithful to them.

