

# Ascension Messenger

June/July 2026

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH, TORRANCE, CA  
"LOVING GOD, LOVING OTHERS, BRINGING PEOPLE IN"

## Ascension Introduces New Summer Brunch Sundays

Beginning this summer, Ascension Lutheran Church will introduce a new fellowship opportunity designed to bring the congregation together beyond the normal rhythms of Sunday morning worship.

**Summer Brunch Sundays** will take place three times during the summer, combining the congregation's two worship services into a single service at **9:30 a.m.**, followed by a churchwide

potluck brunch and fellowship gathering.

The dates for this year's Summer Brunch Sundays are **June 28, July 19 and Aug. 30.**

The purpose of the program is simple: to create additional opportunities for members and friends

of Ascension to connect in one worship service, build relationships with one another, and spend time together as a congregation. While worship, coming together to receive God's gifts, remains the center of the church's life, fellowship has always been an important part of Christian community. Shared meals provide an opportunity for conversation, encouragement, and the

strengthening of relationships that extend beyond Sunday mornings.

For the past several years, Ascension has been blessed with a close-knit and caring congregation. Summer Brunch Sundays build on that foundation by creating opportunities for members from both worship services to gather, meet one another, and enjoy time as one church family. Newcomers will also have an opportunity to connect with others they might not otherwise meet. The first Summer Brunch Sunday will be held on **June 28**. To help provide a variety of foods, members are invited to bring:

**Last Names A-L:** Breakfast Foods

**Last Names M-Z:** Lunch Foods

Participation is encouraged, but everyone is welcome, whether bringing a dish or not.

The idea of gathering for worship and shared meals has deep roots within the Christian tradition. The book of Acts describes the early believers as "*breaking bread in their homes and eating together with glad and sincere hearts*" (Acts 2:46). Throughout the history of the Church, meals have often served as a natural extension of fellowship, hospitality, and life together in Christ.

Members are encouraged to mark their calendars and plan to participate in these special gatherings throughout the summer. †





# Getting to Know...

## Chris and Phyllis Melvin

THE STORIES AND FACES OF ASCENSION

If you've spent much time on the Ascension campus, chances are you've seen Chris and Phyllis Melvin in action. Whether it's Chris fixing something, organizing a classroom, or tackling one of the countless behind-the-scenes tasks that keep the church running smoothly, or Phyllis preparing for a Seder meal, singing in the choir, helping at a soup supper or potluck, or quietly stepping in wherever extra hands are needed, both have faithfully served this congregation in ways both seen and unseen for many years.

That spirit of service has shaped much of Chris and Phyllis's lives at Ascension. For them, church has never simply been a place to attend on Sunday mornings. It has been a place to worship, raise a family, build lifelong friendships, and invest themselves in the congregation they have called home for more than fifty years.

Both joined Ascension as teenagers—Chris in 1969 after returning to California from Florida, and Phyllis in 1968 after her family settled in Torrance. They met through Ascension's youth group, then known as Walther League, and the church's banner committee provided a few extra opportunities to spend time together. After Phyllis invited Chris to her school's Christmas dance in 1970, their friendship blossomed into something more. They married at Ascension in 1975 and will celebrate their 51st anniversary this June.

Together they raised three children, all baptized and confirmed at Ascension and graduates of

Ascension Day School. Today, they enjoy five grandchildren, four of whom attended Ascension Preschool.

Their careers reflected the same servant-hearted spirit. Chris worked for more than forty years as an autopsy technician at Kaiser Permanente Hospital. Phyllis operated an in-home childcare business before serving as Ascension's church and school secretary for nearly thirty years under four different principals.

Outside of church, they enjoy hiking, camping, biking, traveling, and especially spending time with their children and grandchildren.

Having worshipped under eight pastors and many vicars, they have seen much change over the years. Yet one thing has remained constant.

"We've visited other churches over the years," they shared, "but we always come back to Ascension."

For Chris and Phyllis, Ascension has been the place where they met, married, raised their family, served others, and experienced the steadfast love of God through their church family.

In other words, it has been home. †



## More Than Familiar Words

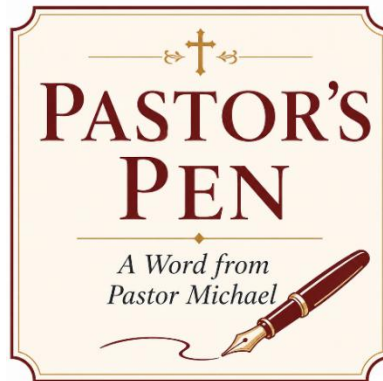
### *Understanding the treasures woven throughout our worship*

Beginning with our first Summer Combined Service, you may notice a few changes to the way our worship service is presented in the bulletin. Some titles will be updated, brief descriptions will appear beneath certain parts of the service, and occasional spoken introductions may help connect one portion of the liturgy to the next.

These changes are not intended to make our worship less Lutheran or less liturgical. Quite the opposite. They are intended to help us better understand and participate in the rich treasures that have always been present in the Church's worship.

The liturgy is more than an order of service. It is the gathered people of God meeting with Christ through His Word and Sacraments. In worship, heaven and earth are joined together in Him. We gather with believers throughout the world, and with angels, archangels, and all the saints who rejoice in God's presence. As Scripture says:

*"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering..."*  
(Hebrews 12:22)



Over time, liturgy can become familiar, and we may lose sight of the purpose behind its various parts. Several years ago, I included brief explanations as footnotes in the bulletin. Now, I see the value of weaving those explanations directly into the service itself.

From the Kyrie, where the Church cries out for mercy and healing for the world, to the Sanctus, where we join the worship of angels and saints before God's throne, each part of the liturgy tells a portion of the Gospel story and invites us more deeply into the life of Christ.

Our prayer is that these small changes will help all of us—lifelong Lutherans and first-time visitors alike—hear God's Word more clearly, and better understand the wonderful reality that Christ gathers us into one holy assembly in His presence. †

— Pastor Michael

## Ascension Worship Team Receives Generous Response to a Ministry Need

In less than six weeks, the Ascension family responded generously to a request to help provide the funds to purchase a new drum set for the Worship Team. Thanks to that outpouring of support, the new set is now in place and serving the congregation's 10:30 a.m. Sunday worship service.

The previous drum set faithfully supported the Worship Team through more than 17 years of rehearsals and Sunday services. Over time, however, years of wear and tear took their toll, and it became clear that a replacement was needed.

More than the purchase of an instrument, this gift reflects a shared commitment to the ministry of worship and the congregation's ongoing song of praise to God. The Worship Team expresses heartfelt gratitude to this congregation and to God for this generous support. †

## Lights & Legacy: The Silent Auction Returns

*Popular Fall Fellowship Event Makes its Return to Ascension*

After several years on hiatus, one of Ascension's most cherished traditions is returning this fall.

The Silent Auction was once a highlight of the Ascension calendar and the preschool's largest fundraiser. This October, alumni, church members, preschool families, and friends of Ascension will once again gather for an evening of celebration, fellowship, and support of this important ministry.

The event, themed *Lights & Legacy*, celebrates 77 years of serving the community while investing in the future of Ascension Preschool. Guests can look forward to silent auction shopping, unique gifts and experiences, dinner and drinks, music, fellowship, and a 50/50 raffle. The event will take place on **Saturday, October 17, at 5:00 p.m.** at Ascension Church and Preschool.

**Tickets are on sale now.** Early bird tickets are available for **\$30 through September 15**, with general admission tickets priced at **\$40** and tickets available **at the door for \$50**.

Preparations are already underway, and donations are still being collected to help create auction baskets and gift packages.

Members and friends of Ascension are invited to contribute funds or new, unused items such as household goods, gift items, toys, games, seasonal décor, kitchen items, and other items in their original packaging. Donations may be

dropped off at the preschool or church office by **August 1**.

Together, this special evening will honor Ascension's history, celebrate its present, and help support the ministry's future—ensuring that Ascension Preschool continues to nurture children in faith, learning, and love for generations to come. †

### Celebrating Miss Natalie



This summer, Ascension Preschool says goodbye to Natalie Lopa, known and loved by generations of preschool families as "Miss Natalie," as she begins a new chapter, relocating to Utah to be closer to family.

For more than twenty years, Natalie has been part of the Ascension family—as a preschool parent, church and school member, and beloved member of the preschool staff. Through her kindness and love for children, she has blessed countless preschoolers and families.

We thank God for Natalie's faithful service and pray His richest blessings as she begins this new season of life. She will be greatly missed. †