

Ascension Messenger

April/May 2026

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

Ascension's Online Ministry: Beyond Sanctuary Walls

Each week at Ascension, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in a familiar place — our sanctuary. But what we see on Sunday morning is only part of the story.

The seeds of this outreach were planted several years ago out of necessity. During the pandemic in 2020, like many churches, Ascension began exploring ways to stay connected when gathering in person wasn't possible. Pastor Michael began pre-recording sermons, the choir sang hymns from their homes, and the Worship Team recorded music separately to be assembled for online services. What began as a response during a difficult season has since grown into a ministry reaching far beyond what was first imagined.

In 2023, Chris Spartalis, along with his son Peter, stepped forward to help continue and expand this effort, beginning with livestreaming the service. "When I would sit and listen to the pastor preach, I always thought — other people should be able to hear this," Chris shared. "That's really what I envisioned: people all over the world being able to hear what I'm hearing."

That vision is now becoming a reality.

Since launching livestreaming at the beginning of 2024, Ascension's online ministry has grown from just a couple hundred subscribers to nearly 5,000, with more than 2.5 million total views and nearly 15,000 hours of watch time. Viewers are tuning in not only from across the United States, but from countries around the world.



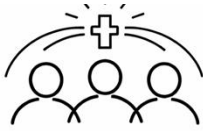
Peter Spartalis (standing) and his father, Chris Spartalis, both volunteer each week to livestream the Sunday service for the online ministry program.

"And it's not just people far away," added Peter. "It's also people close by who can't always make it to church — shut-ins, families with young children, or anyone whose schedule makes it difficult to be here in person. They can still hear God's Word at a time that works for them."

At the center of it all is the unchanging message of Christ crucified — shared not only with those in the room, but with those joining from homes, hospital rooms, and places we may never know.

Leasa Geerlings, who worships with Ascension each week from her home in Kansas, shared how the online ministry has impacted her.

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Getting to Know...

Paul & Amy Pederson

Paul and Amy Pederson have been part of the Ascension family since 2019, when they transferred in after being drawn to the church's faithful, Bible-centered preaching and the warm welcome they experienced right away.



Both lifelong South Bay residents—Amy from Gardena and Paul from Torrance—they have built a life centered on family, faith, and community. Now retired from their careers (Amy as a court reporter and Paul as a small business owner), they enjoy spending time with their two daughters, Michelle (married to Sindri Markusson) and Nicole (married to Mathew Schweitz), and their families, as well as traveling, dining out, and sharing plenty of laughter with friends.

At Ascension, their involvement runs deep. Paul serves on the Board of Lay Ministers and as Church Treasurer and is actively engaged in both the Wednesday and Saturday Bible studies. In addition, he leads a weekly men's group in their home, where men gather to discuss the Scriptures together and grow in their understanding of God's Word.

For Amy and Paul, Ascension is a place where the truth of the Bible is clearly taught and where meaningful relationships have taken root. It's those two things—God's Word and the people—that continue to make this their church home.

Paul and Amy's story is a simple but powerful reflection of what it means to be part of a church family: to be grounded in the Word, connected in community, and actively engaged in sharing and growing in the faith God has created in them. †

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"Even though I live in Kansas, I make it a priority to join the livestream at Ascension each week," she said. "This ministry continues to ground me in what matters most."

"Having attended Ascension in person, I've experienced the deep love this congregation has for one another," she added. "That makes the online experience feel personal and connected, even from a distance."

Another part of this growing reach comes through one-minute video clips, often called "shorts," created from each Sunday's message. These brief segments introduce new viewers to Ascension for the first time and

provide a simple way for others to share the message.

"It's become something multifaceted," Chris said. "There are a lot of ways people can be part of it. For those who want to share their faith but aren't sure how, this is a simple way to do it — just press a button and you can just point someone to a Gospel message online."

What began as a moment of necessity has become something more — a reminder that God's Word is not bound by walls or distance, but goes where He sends it, using people and the tools He provides. †



The Ascension of Our Lord will be celebrated on Thursday, May 14. Though it is one of the great feasts of the Church, it is often overlooked — perhaps because it falls on a weekday. But for a congregation that bears its name, this is a day worth remembering, because it proclaims that Christ reigns now, and He reigns through us.

Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus lifted His hands, blessed His disciples, and was taken into heaven. It may seem like the story is ending, but the opposite is true.

“Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.” (Luke 24:50–51)

*“We bear the name Ascension.
That means something.
We live under a reigning King.”*

This was not His departure, but His enthronement. The Ascension is the moment when the crucified and risen Jesus takes His seat as King, fulfilling Daniel 7 and receiving a kingdom that will never pass away.

Jesus does not leave humanity behind — He brings it with Him. The One who reigns at the right hand of the Father still bears human flesh. As Augustine said, Christ “did not leave heaven when He came down to us, nor did He withdraw from us when He went up again.” The Ascension is not about Jesus being far away, but about His presence filling all things.

This is the Church’s confession: Jesus reigns now. His Kingdom has begun and continues to come. The story of the world is not a decline into chaos, but the steady work of God bringing all things under Christ’s reign.

We bear the name Ascension. That means something. It means we live under a reigning King, and His Kingdom comes as we love Him, love others, and bring people in. †

Ascension Renews Lease with the Junim Suen Korean Church

Did you know that the partnership we have with our Junim Suen Korean Church neighbors represent 39% of Ascension’s annual income. Over the last six years, they have been God’s provision for our church, allowing us to survive through Covid and to continue our ministries during challenging times. In addition, they are meeting a unique need in the Kingdom – they are our brothers and sisters in Christ! Let us thank God for this partnership and please continue to remember their ministry in your prayers.

-Paul Pederson, Ascension Treasurer



Ascension Day is Thurs., May 14th!

Please plan to be part of this special service at **7 p.m.** to celebrate the Ascension of our Lord!

Little Lives, Growing in Love



At Ascension Preschool, children learn more than their ABCs and 123s. Every day, they are nurtured in a caring community where early childhood is protected, relationships are nurtured and every child is deeply known. These young lives are encouraged to grow, explore and begin to understand who Jesus is and how to love others as He first loved us.

Silent Auction Fundraiser Returns to Ascension to Support Preschool

Ascension Members Asked to Donate Items to Support Growth of This Ministry

Ascension's Preschool ministry continues to be a place where young children are nurtured in faith, learning, and love — and the Ascension church family has an opportunity to support that work in a meaningful way.

The Silent Auction, which for many years at Ascension was a highlight on the event calendar as the school's largest fundraiser, makes its return this fall after several years on hiatus.

To support the effort, individuals, groups, boards and families are invited to donate new, unused items that can be used to create

auction baskets and gift packages. These items help generate support for the preschool and its ongoing mission to provide a caring, Christ-centered environment for preschool children and families.

Suggested donations include household goods, gift items, toys or games, seasonal décor, kitchen items, and other new items in original packaging. Even small contributions can become part of a larger gift that supports the ministry. **Donations may be dropped off at the preschool or church office by August 1. †**