

*Ascension Lutheran Church
Daily Devotional
October 11, 2015 - November 15, 2015*

Connec 



"Be still and know that I am God"
Psalm 46-101

As I sit quietly to pray and to thank God for all the many blessings He has given to me and my family I think about how I am connected to Ascension Lutheran Church. I am connected through the loving Christian community that I have come to know, through our prayer group, healing service, the women of WELCA and many more. There are many people God has placed in my life to lift me up when I am down or to share the joys. I am honored to be a Deacon for our congregation, to be a servant for God, and to be of service to my church. Ascension is where I feel the presence of God and I am filled with peace.

I pray the Prayer of Protection from Unity. The light of God surround you. The love of God enfold you. The power of God protect you. The presence of God watch over you. Wherever you are, God is always with you. Amen. - Barbara Snyder

“And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.”
Luke 15:31-32

When I was in high school, I was at a Youth Quake/Retreat that had different types of speakers and bands that were geared towards youth. One of the speakers read the story of the Prodigal Son and she shared about how she couldn't understand how God could love someone like her. She felt like she wasn't a "perfect" Christian and how she felt like there were so many times she strayed from God or the church. She then shared the song by Phillips Craig & Dean called "When God Ran" and signed ASL to the words of the song. She told us that this parable shows us that no matter what we do, God will run to us with open arms when we return to Him. That this son in the story just wasted his inheritance away and his father still welcomed him with a party! This song and parable is a much needed reminder of how great God's love is for us.

Gracious God, thank You for welcoming us with open arms every day. Thank you for your amazing grace. I pray for the people that may be feeling lost. My prayer for them is that they are reminded that they are a beloved child of God and no matter what they do, God's arms are reaching out for them. Amen. - Natalie Romero

“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness” Psalm 84:10

The ways of the world are those that look like candy but turn out to be the bitterest of pills. The ways of Christ on the other hand, may seem a bitter pill in the beginning but they lead us to an exquisite feast.

Lord, please keep me from “buying in” to the world’s lies. Help me to focus my intentions and desires on the path of life to which you called me. Amen. – Owen Yung

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do in word or deed in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:16-17

As a teenaged member of a different local congregation, I always admired the Luther League kids from Ascension, because their Pastor was so lively, and they were always having such a good time. After returning from college upstate, my husband and I joined Ascension, knowing we would be having a family, and wanted our children to experience a vibrant church. As Ascension keeps evolving, there have been and will continue to be changes – all for good. I am proud to be a part of our congregation, people who see their faith as a daily challenge, and who respond with caring and action. It is what keeps me here at Ascension.

Each of us is called to minister according to our talents, and so there are always opportunities to serve, some small ways, some large ways. Worship and prayer among friends and family are a blessing we receive from our church.

Lord keep me mindful of your teachings and allow me to fulfill some need today as I go about my daily life. I pray in your holy name. Amen. – Carol Haberly

“May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other.” Genesis 31:49

My first impression of Ascension was its welcoming nature and this is something I continue to feel 5 years later. I was apprehensive when my family switched churches when I was a senior in High School because we did not know anyone and I did not have the normal activities I would have if I had grown up at Ascension such as Sunday school, confirmation camp, etc. to make friends and connections. Regardless of the fact that I joined Ascension at 18 years old, then went away to college for 4 years, and just recently moved to New Jersey, I continue to feel welcome at Ascension and think of it as my congregation. I think I feel so connected to Ascension because the congregation shares my belief that being a Christian involves carrying out God’s work both through worship but also through our actions. The following prayer is for those who are connected to Ascension but unable to make it each week to church.

Dear God,

Help me to remember to keep You in my thoughts always.

Help my actions, no matter how small, to carry out your will.

Please watch over my Ascension family in my absence.

Amen. - Jillian Manzo

“But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in and confidently rely on the loving-kindness and the mercy of God forever.” Psalm 52:8

My brother who came to visit from Florida invited me to go with him to church on Sundays. We came to MISA at Ascension, we liked it because there is a Spanish service. Because of work my brother went back to Florida. I stayed, and I continue assisting Ascension’s Misa en Español on Sundays. Here at Ascension, I feel supported, happy and not alone around people who in a short period of time became my family. I receive God’s word, his grace, his love and his amazing blessings every time I am here. I thank God for using my brother to invite me to his house of worship. This church received me with open loving arms. Thank you.

Dear Lord, I ask you to heal my family from hate and discord. Because of the hate, fights and disagreements between brothers and sisters, my mother is now ill. She is bed ridden. I ask God to forgive us and to make our hearts of stone in soften hearts. Amen. - Ismael Bravo (from Mexico)

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

The opportunities are many to meet people and for friendships to develop. We only have to be willing to step out of our comfort zones and open ourselves up to new possibilities. There are very few things that can be accomplished by the work of only one person. When two people work together, in the name of God, they can lift each other up with encouragement and with the sharing of ideas. When you work with another person then they have your back and you have theirs. When a third person is brought into the team and they work for a common goal then the bond that is formed by God cannot be broken. Working on many committees and special events at Ascension I have been blessed by serving with many people with whom I have developed a bond. These bonds give us the encouragement we need to live our Christian lives. These bonds that are formed by God’s work in us, cannot be broken.

Dear Ever-loving God, bind us together in Christian love. May we all work together to further your Kingdom on this earth by living our lives in the bonds of peace. We thank you for calling us out of comfort zones to work with others to be your light to this world. Amen. - Vicki Elfers

*“Blessed are they who know their spiritual poverty,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are
they who mourn, for they shall be comforted”.*

Matthew Chapter 5

I have been a member of Ascension for approximately 30 years (I can't believe I'm that old!). I had felt I was missing something and started searching for a church home. Bob & Betty Person heard me sing behind them the first day I attended and convinced me to join the choir. They were so warm and welcoming and I felt part of a family immediately. I was married there, brought up my daughters, Jackie and Kelly there, went through a divorce there and always felt at peace and part of a community (and never judged) whenever I was there. After choir practice one night, two days after my 22nd birthday, I was followed home and attacked by a horrible criminal that was never caught. The church responded in such a great way and the pastors at the time comforted me in such a tremendous way. I never forgot that this was a family that I could count on when times were tough. Fast forward to now, my kids are grown and Pastor Justin is our leader. His sermons totally move and motivate me to be a better person. I think about his messages in my daily life and they make a profound impact every day. He and his family are some of the nicest and warmest people I have ever met. Also, Dave Johnson always made me feel like such an important part of the music ministry through choir and bells. He would literally drag us out of the congregation to come sing and made us feel like we are so important and needed. Ascension will always be my church home and an important part of my life.

**Lord, I pray for the wonderful people of Ascension; that they will continue their good work. Bless our pastors and staff and congregation always that their bodies and souls be nourished with your love so they can motivate and bless others. Amen -
Lora Sisson**

Paul writes, "For I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority." 2 Corinthians 9:2

Did you notice those last eight words, and your zeal has stirred up the majority? Passion is contagious. What do you think might happen if a community saw a church that was utterly on fire? Where all the members in that church were passionate about their worship, passionate about their relationship with God, passionate about serving one another, passionate about real deal Christianity where the rubber meets the road? I believe there is a divine attraction to that! And I believe that it would transform a community.

Sadly, most communities witness just the opposite—compromise, apathy, and boredom—not passion. Now, rather than complain, I want to challenge you to live life with real passion. Go all out for God. It only takes one person to ignite the fire of passion in others, and make a CONNECTION. I heard the story of a man who came to hear D. L. Moody preach. While sitting there the man next to him asked, "Do you come out here because you believe the things he's preaching?" His response was, "No. I come out because he believes it."

Passion is contagious! Are people catching it from you? Is your zeal for Christ stirring up those who come in contact with you? If not, ask God to put that passion into your heart today and watch what happens! Amen. - Pastor Flora

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And may it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower, And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:10-11

The first thing that connected me to Ascension and kept me coming back was being touched by the Holy Spirit through hearing the Word of God spoken here and with the powerful sermons given by the pastors. When I come to service I come away feeling filled and feeling new life in my heart. By having my name remembered after the very first visit and being welcomed, I received the blessing of fellowship in the congregation. This opened my heart to accept invitations that were continually being extended. The first invitation came from the Prayer Group and became the thread that wove me into the tapestry of Ascension. Intimately sharing prayers for others, people known and not known to me, everyone became my brother and sister in Christ. It has made me part of this church family and flowed into many other opportunities to be involved and to serve God. The experience has been life changing.

Father God, may your Word fill our hearts and feed us to grow and know just how much You love us. May we accept the invitation of your outstretched hand through the people around us to accomplish and bear the fruit that prospers Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen. -Susan Bliss

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

1Corinthians 12: 4 - 6

Everyone has gifts. Some may be easier to see than others but we all have them. Some may be great motivators, others may be well spoken, while another may be an excellent teacher, still others may be gifted in sharing their faith with others. All of these gifts and many more are what build a strong church and allow us to do God's work.

I've tried many different activities at Ascension and I have found which ones fit my gifts and my interests most, the areas where I feel I can be most effective. There are so many ways to connect to Ascension and use the gifts that God has given to you. Now is a great time to find out how you Connect at Ascension as our ministries grow, expand and become stronger. Discover how to utilize the gifts that God has given you to Connect to Him, the church community and the greater community.

Heavenly Father as we look to expand our ministries at Ascension please help me to discover my gifts. Help me to find how my gifts can be used to Connect to the community and to Connect to you. Together with the gifts of others help us to grow this church and do great works in your name. Amen.
-Rob McCarthy

“A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.” Ecclesiastes 3:4

I have always been proud to be a member of Ascension and in awe of how we are always there to share in the good times and the bad. I have seen the congregation rally around members as well as non-members. I have danced and celebrated at weddings with my Ascension family. I have attended funerals where once again the Ascension family was there to support their Church family in their time of need.

Worshipping at Ascension has provided me with the opportunity to work with fellow Christians in carrying out the ministries that God has put before us. In every family we have our time to mourn, our time to laugh and our time to dance and the best way to experience these events is with family, and I have been blessed to call Ascension my family.

My hope is that everyone would prayerfully consider becoming more involved in the activities and ministries of Our church and have the same experiences I have had. For I have received so much more than I have given. It is truly a blessing to be a member of Ascension. God's Peace -Rich Germann

***“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have,
for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”***

Hebrews 13:16

Next year I will be celebrating 40 years with Ascension Lutheran Church. Praise God! I came to Ascension to get married long ago. I was brought up Catholic and at the time we were going to be married my husband belonged to Ascension. After meeting Pastor Dragelin, I agreed to come here to be wed as it seemed like a very welcoming place. I did not become a member for many years. I was a mom who dropped the kids off at the Preschool, Sunday school and Youth group and came back to pick them up when they were done. I kept my distance from any activities. It was when my youngest daughter Amanda started going to Youth Group (my first daughter Melissa was in youth group but I guess I was not paying proper attention at that time to what was going on here) and I saw Amanda having so much fun, that I decided to start coming to services. So my door, my connection to Ascension was through my kids. I wonder how many people have a similar story. At that time I felt the warmth of the congregation – people were very welcoming. Although many were also suffering with various issues and ailments, they all came to first worship God and then connect with one another. Years and years later, I still have the same feeling. People REALLY care for each other and for others that need help. People share all they have. It really is at the heart of all we do.

Dear Father God – You take such good care of us! Please continue to shepherd this flock and surround them with your loving arms. There is a lot of good happening here and as we connect further with you, with each other and then out to the world, help us to remember that is exactly what you want us to do. Help us to be generous in your name for the tasks needed to fulfill our mission. In Your name we pray, Amen. - Pattie Komornik

“So that, even if I cannot come soon, you will know how people should live in the family of God. That family is the church of the living God. And God’s church is the support and foundation of the truth.”

1 Timothy 3:15

Why do I feel connected to Ascension? I attended a baptism at Ascension as an outsider. After the service, a small group of folks were standing outside chatting. I noticed that the Pastor was intermingling with everyone and knew their names!. I came from a much larger Catholic congregation and found myself drawn to the cozy feel of Ascension. I was interested but hesitant. I visited once and began attending regularly. I have found a place to contribute my time and God given skills to a congregation that has blessed me with Christian support and some of the best friends I could ever hope to have.

Holy Father, Help us to be mindful of the needs of our brothers and sisters, particularly here at Ascension. Our church family needs the support of all its members to develop new paths while remaining rooted in the word of God. Help us to support the needs of the church and keep it strong so that it can be a light to people seeking the truth in Christ. - Laura Romer Owen

*“He set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.”
Psalm 40 1-3*

Most people don't like change. Joining a new Church in my mid-forties, I was skeptical as well. However Ascension is blessed with many wonderful people who helped to make that transition easier. The connections I have made in the last five years have helped ease the anxiety of finding a new church home. Everyone needs a firm place to stand. With God's help I have found that place at Ascension Lutheran Church.

Dear Lord, please continue to enable Ascension Lutheran Church to be a beacon of hope so that many will continue to sing your praises. Help others to find the connection with others at our Church and most importantly with You. Amen. - Andrew Manzo

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42

Ascension, where I was baptized and confirmed has been a place I have called home for 24 years. Since graduating college I have felt more connected to Ascension than ever and have felt the call to serve the church that has given me so much. My connection to Ascension has continued to grow by singing in the church choir, working at the ELCA National Youth Gathering, and through coaching basketball, which was something I enjoy immensely growing up at Ascension. This fall I look forward to strengthening my connection to Ascension by teaching confirmation classes. The church has most recently connected me to a daughter in Christ that I love and care for very dearly. I owe so much to Ascension and I look forward to continuing to give back to its congregation and others in the name of Christ.

Prayer: Thank God for His unending, unfathomable love for you. Pray for the opportunities to help others see and experience it as well! Amen. - Andrew Germann

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.” Acts 16:5

“The faith” is something we all desire. Having “The faith” to listen to God and having “the faith” to follow God wherever He leads us is something that I have seen modeled in numerous people at Ascension. As we live in community with each other our bonds of trust grow and our faith grows and our numbers grow. Our trust in God and “The faith” to believe that all things are possible with God is born of the Holy Spirit and it is the Holy Spirit at work in each one of our lives that strengthens our faith. In my 25 years of membership at Ascension I have been blessed to have my faith grow with the help of so many people in this wonderful congregation. From Pastors to prayer partners, from dear friends to visitors, and even from people who may have rubbed me the wrong way, I have felt my faith grow. I have seen my faith and the faith of others grow at an Adult Retreat, during a Bible Study, in a worship service and I have seen my faith and the faith of others grow over a cup of coffee or a hallway conversation or a conversation in the parking lot. It is the power of the Holy Spirit inside the hearts of all of us that grows this faith community and it is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us that makes Ascension feel like home.

Dear Heavenly Father, I give you thanks for my Ascension Family. I thank you for the work of your Holy Spirit that grows our faith and strengthens our bonds to each other. May God bless each and every one reading this devotion today, by letting them know how important they are in my life and the life of this congregation. Amen. - Vicki Elfers

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.” *Ephesians 2:19-22*

I have this picture of Ascension that has hung on my office wall for the last 13 years. It may seem odd, but I even hung it in my office in my previous congregations. It was a parting gift when I finished my term as vicar in 2002. There is an inscription on the frame that says, “You will always be a part of our family.” That’s how I think of Ascension – my family. We work together. We play together. We are one. I’m so taken with how loyal and caring our congregation is. I love how we band together to face whatever challenge is ahead. Time and again, I am fortunate enough to watch connections made and strengthened among our members. And through that, I see deeper connections make with God. This church is my family. I am so happy to see the family growing every day.

Gracious God, you call together strangers and make them members of your household. We give you thanks for the blessing of our Ascension family. Continue to guide our ministry, that we may always do that which is pleasing in your sight. In Jesus’ name, Amen. – Pastor Justin

Charlotte

I come to church to worship
and learn about God.



“For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them” - Matthew 18:20

Daphne

I go to church to
learn about God.

**"All your Children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall
be the peace of your children" - Isaiah 54:13**

*“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith,
with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts
of the evil one” Ephesians 6:16*

There have been many times when I have felt very connected God through Ascension, but one particular instance stands out in my mind today. I was traveling to the city via the Deer Park train station, where I spotted a fellow Ascensionite. She looked a bit distressed, so as we waited for our trains we sat and chatted, she unburdened herself as we spoke, we ended our chat with a prayer and both went on our way.

I felt at that moment God had sent me to that station to take that train so I could be of comfort to a fellow member of faith.

Dear Lord, may you continue to work through us to make a better world. Help us to be there for those in need. Help us smile on the inside as well as the outside. Help us to be that friend someone needs. Amen. - Debbie DeMarchis

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Psalm 23

I have been fortunate enough to have “mountain top” encounters of God’s presence; when I went to the Youth Gathering as a teenager, when I led my first mission trip, when I graduated college, the birth of my daughter, and the list can go on. A few years ago, I found myself only feeling God’s presences during the “good” times. It made the ordinary days, even more difficult. It made the difficult days worse. I wanted to cling to the feelings I had during these “mountain top” moments. After being at my first church, my first “real” job, the pastor left under very difficult circumstances. I was the only paid staff, and I really only had about a year of experience doing youth ministry on my own.

The Sunday that the pastor announced his resigning was extremely difficult. A lot of questions; a lot of unknown; and A LOT of questions. I sat in my office and cried. I probably wailed. I was consumed by all of the questions that I didn’t have answers to. The only thing I could think to do was to open my Bible. It opened to Psalm 23. I read it about 10 times; I closed my eyes and prayed. I started to recite the Psalm. I felt someone put their hand on my shoulder and my entire body relaxed. I stopped crying and looked to see that I was still alone in the room. I smiled and knew that I was in the presence of God. I knew that even though I was in the valley, God was with me. That experience was such a different and deeper spiritual connection, than any “mountain top” moments. I now know that if its personal relationships, financial struggles, or day to day frustrations, that I am not alone. Ever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your constant presence in our lives. Thank you for the gift of Your Holy Spirit, so that we may be reminded that You lead us to calm waters and we should not be afraid. I pray for those that need Your presence and need to be reminded of Your everlasting love. I ask this all in Jesus’ name, Amen. - Natalie Romero

“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” Mark 9:3

My connection with Ascension began as a young child. I vividly remember sitting in church with my family and hearing the story of Jesus and the Children. I remember the feeling of peace and security that surrounded me. I had someone watching over me!! To this day, I only have to look at the stained glass window above the altar of Jesus ascending and feel that same sense of peace.

My daughter was goalie for the first time in 5 year old soccer. There had been a scuffle at the goal. Sensing his granddaughter was “in trouble” my dad, her Pop-Pop, made his way to the goal post to stand behind her. He stared down at the other team. He was behind her all the way. “Don’t mess with my Grandkid” he seemed to say. We hold our children/grandchildren dear and are always watching over them, though we understand that they need to find their own way. This is no different from God holding each of us dear, and watching over us. We are God’s children. We can be secure in the knowledge that he is always watching over us and will lift us if we fall. Remember, if the Lord can be for us, who can be against us.

O Lord of Innocence, help me honor the child in me as you do, and joyfully accept my welcome into your kingdom. Amen (Taken from the September book of Devotions) - Joanne Rodgers

“For with God, all things are possible.” Mark 10:27

“Be bold and strong! Banish fear and doubt! For remember the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9. I believe in this verse because when something happens, whether it’s bad or good, I feel that God will always guide me in the right direction. I believe in God, I believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I believe that bad experiences will help you get through the hard times.

Soon I am going to be taking a leap of faith. I am moving so I will be going to a new school. I haven’t told anyone yet, because I am not sure if I want to go or not. I am scared that I won’t like it and won’t make any friends. I don’t want to leave Deer Park because I have been here since I was little. Now I will be in a new house, a new school with new people and I don’t even know if I will like it or not. However, I have faith that God and Jesus put this challenge in my way to show me I have strength to overcome it.

Noah’s Ark, which is one of my favorite bible stories, shows that Noah has the strength to save himself and all the animals from the flood that destroyed every living thing on earth. God’s purpose of the flood was to destroy all the wickedness and sin, not to destroy all the people. He told Noah to take two of each animal, one female and one male, onto the Ark. After a year, God told Noah to come out of the ark.

To me, belonging to a church means that you have faith. I believe that whenever you are in trouble, God will always be there for you. My mom has impacted me in my faith by bringing me to Sunday school when I was younger and now driving me to church on Sunday. Understanding your religion and believing in God is what Confirmation means to me. – **Confirmation Faith Statement – Amanda Lee**

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 19:14

I like Sunday School because it is fun and we get to talk and have a good time. - Madison

I like the church because it always welcomes anyone that likes to come here. I also like it because it gives people time to thank God for everything that God gives us. - Amber

It is really good to be with God because you know that God will never stop being with you. Being at the church makes me feel safe. - Maddelena

Dear God, it is through the children of Ascension that the connection with You will grow. Please watch over them as they find their connection to your love. In your name we pray, Amen.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul.” Matthew 22:37

If you listen well, you can hear God calling you to take some action. This devotion is a product of listening. I was thinking about writing a second devotion for the Ascension Mission Appeal but kept finding other tasks that I needed to do so it went on the back burner. This morning, I decided to head back to bed before starting work to catch a quick 30 minutes more of sleep before I started my work day. While I had my eyes closed, He was calling to me. Giving me ideas of what I could write. At first I said that I would do it later but guess what! He kept giving me more information and I decided to get up and write this devotion.

He talked to me about love. Love for our Church, love for all the people within our church and love toward all the people we can help through the church. That is what he wants. He wants us to take action to make things happen. It is our time to devote ourselves a bit more in getting His work done.

Dear God – you provide us with so much! Help us to listen to the guidance you provide us and let us follow you to where you think we should go. Help us to take the necessary action to make this Appeal successful. You know that the success of this appeal will help us to take care of and serve more people in you name. That is really all you want us to do and we certainly want to please you. Help us in taking away any doubts on how we can help others through our own actions – big or small. In your name we pray, Amen. - Pattie Komornik

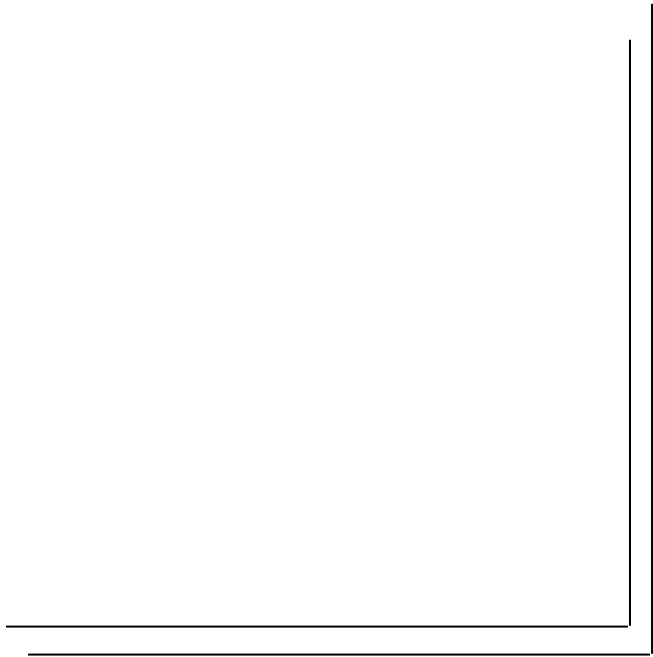
Over 40 years ago I was looking for a church for myself and my family. I had been to two churches in the area and I did not feel comfortable at any of them. Then one Sunday I went to Ascension. The first hymn was "Jesus is calling, calling to you and to me." I suddenly felt at peace and I knew this was where I belong.

Ascension is where I met and fell in love with Jesus.
- Anonymous

*“Come and see what God has done; he is awesome
in his deeds among mortals.” Psalm 66:5*

We need each other to get to where God wants us to go. My life experiences have shown me how I need God’s people around me to lift me up and hold me.

Loving Heavenly Father, increase our awareness of your love for us and your delight in us so we can show the world the difference you make in our lives. Amen. – Marie Wascher



“Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, “prompt to do it”) giver [whose heart is in his giving].” 2 Corinthians 9:7

It's hard sometimes to not feel resentful when someone asks you to do another thing for them. "I already do enough" we think, sometimes muttering under our breath. It's important for me to remember though that God has blessed me with so many things, including an ability to be able to help others. That's what this Appeal means to me. A chance to feel more connected to Ascension and to God, and to provide more opportunities to provide assistance to others.

Lord, Please give me the strength to look within my own heart and help me find more to give to help myself and others feel more connected to Ascension and to God. Amen. - Andrew Manzo

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38

If you try to live your life from the perspective of: How can I give? How can I help? With all those you encounter you will be amazed at how your perspective will change. When you approach each interaction with a sense of service you will see that gratitude and blessings will come your way from places you didn't expect them to.

Dear Lord, grant me the focus and energy to give the best of myself in every situation to honor you and practice Your message of love and mercy. Amen. - Terry Little

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight”
Proverbs 3:5-6*

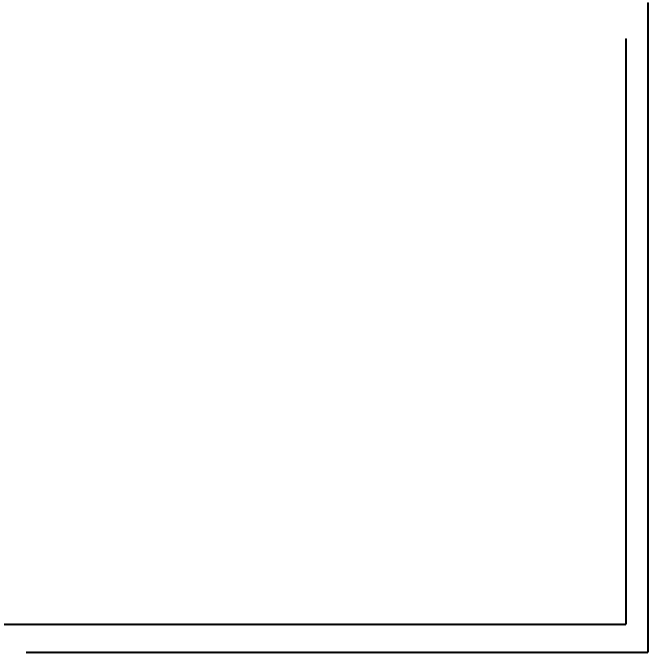
The student bible helps us to better understand how to connect with God. Nodding is God’s direction is not enough; this verse is saying that you must know him by living closely with him, relating to him personally in every aspect of your life. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart and in all ways acknowledging him. He will make straight your path. Our church, Ascension, is the support I need to help connect with God.

Heavenly Father, help me (us) to trust you first an over all else, in each moment of every day. Though Jesus Christ, Amen. - Jim Muller

“As you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts” - Ephesians 5.19

One of the first connections with Ascension that I made was through the choir. I kept that connection for years, not continuously, sometimes it would stop for a while, but it always came back to me again. Not only the singing and hearing others sing but the fellowship of the choir was a very special connection for me.

Thank you Lord for the gift of music and song that brings your light to our spirits. Amen. - Sharon Pullen



“You are always with me, and everything I have is Yours” Luke 15: 31

For the first 18 years of my life, I went to church every week, participated in as many events as possible, and was a member of several choirs. Once I started going to college, I began drifting away from the church. My beliefs never changed, but for some reason I began seeing everything I was doing as a chore rather than something I enjoy. During that time, I went to two different colleges where I learned a lot about myself and did a lot of growing up. Now that I'm back home, I began going back to church every now and then when I'm not working. I had this anxiety about people not recognizing me or treating me differently because I stopped showing up for a while. I soon realized how irrational of a thought that was when I was welcomed back with open arms by everyone. I especially realized the how awesome the Ascension family is when I went to the ELCA National Youth Gathering this past summer. It was so nice being part of not only the Safety & Security Team as a whole, but as a part of the mini Ascension family within it. We never went anywhere alone, and there was a constant sense of belonging that made me feel really comfortable – like I was home. Also, whenever I crossed paths with our youth group there, they started conversations with me, high fived me, or just gave a quick "hi," whether they knew who I was or not. It's little things like that that make Ascension really special. It's a family that always welcomes people in with open arms and will never leave anyone behind. Ascension is a place I'm proud to call home. **-Katherine Neidig**

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.” Job 2:11

I had a birthday recently and was amazed by the amount of birthday wishes I received, whether by card or in person. The warm of friendship I felt, humbled me. And, if you are like me, more than half of your friendships are church related. That says a great deal about the Christian fellowship we share at Ascension. But friendships don't just happen, they are cultivated and require intentional effort. God tells us that He is always with us and is not limited by time or space. Jesus wants us to live abundantly worshiping Him and serving each other, our forever friend. When we support our church, we are using our time, talents and resources to infuse our love of the Lord into our friendships and church programs that invite all to the table at Ascension.

Lord, help me to cultivate my friendships and support our church, taking neither for granted. Help me to foster true friendships, recognizing the Godly traits in my brothers and sisters. Help me to be a vessel of your love, remembering that you want me to live abundantly in Christian community with others as you promise to live abundantly in me. - Anonymous

“For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and his truth endures to all generations.”

Psalm 100:5

I believe that God is creator of everything. Creator of man, creator of life, and creator of Heaven and Earth. I believe that Jesus is our Lord and Savior and that he died on the cross for our sins. He was sent here for our salvation and he loves all his children. I believe and have faith in God...I don't need evidence that he is real; that he is alive and moving. God is love, God is peace, and he is strength. God is the reason we can love, he brings peace into our lives, and he strengthens us to overcome difficulties and challenges. Jesus is the reason we can be forgiven of our sins and he is the reason we have eternal life.

There are some people in my life who have positively impacted my faith in many ways. Someone that has impacted my faith is my youth director, Natalie. Natalie has helped guide me in the right path, which is the Lord. I've always had faith in God, but Natalie has been a big help, who has led me more and more to Christ during a very difficult time in my life, when I needed him the most. Pastor Justin is someone who has impacted my faith as well. He preaches the truth of the Lord and guides me to God. My parents have also been a big impact on my faith. They brought me up to love and serve the Lord and if it hadn't been for that, I'd probably be lost in life today. When my mom got sick with cancer, it impacted my faith even more. In this time, I looked to God for help and comfort and to help me cope with seeing my mom in pain. When my mom passed away, it was comforting to know that God was with me every step of the way and that he would be no matter what. When my mom was close to death, I

called upon the Lord more than ever before. I found peace when I did this and it strengthened my faith in God.

I have been a Christian my whole life. This doesn't necessarily mean I always knew what it meant to be a Christian though. To me, being a Christian isn't only saying that you love God or just going to Church or saying you are a Christian just to say it or because your parents made you be a Christian. It's not just about saying you are a Christian; it's about living it...sharing God's love, peace, forgiveness, and joy with the world. To me, being a Christian means that I have a close personal relationship with Jesus. It means I have faith in the Lord and in my heart, I know that God is the truth and the way.

I am so grateful for the Lord. Without Jesus, I don't know where I'd be today. I wouldn't have my amazing family, like my parents, my sisters, even though we fight a lot, I'm still grateful for you two, my Aunt Lori, my Godmother Theresa, my cousin Vinnie, my Nanny, my Grandma, and more to help, guide, and support me throughout my life. I wouldn't have my wonderful friends, especially my best friend, Kelly, to be there for me when I need them the most. Without God, I never would have been blessed with such a fantastic mother or father. Though my mom is no longer physically here with me, she has made me the person I am today. My dad is so strong and he continues to raise and lead me in the right path. I thank God for giving me such great parents.

There are so many things God has blessed me with in life, some that I take for granted every day. I am blessed to be able to go to school and get an education, blessed to have a home and a roof over my head, to have food and water to keep me alive, and blessed to live the happy life I live today. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. I am thankful for all he has done for me and I will love and serve my entire, eternal life. – **Confirmation Faith Statement Daniel Benson**

“So they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' Then they set their hands to do this good work.” (Nehemiah 2:18)