

THE VOICE

Pastor Justin's Message—A New Form of Ministry



Pastor Justin Lathrop

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to you this month amid a global emergency. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed just about every aspect of our lives. Life at the church is altered as well. We are no longer able to physically assemble for the many activities that had been a staple of our daily and weekly routines. However, ministry continues at Ascension! We have moved to more of an online format of connection. If you have not already, "like" our Facebook Page

(www.facebook.com/alcdeerpark), subscribe to our YouTube Channel, follow us on Twitter, or sign up to receive our email updates. You'll find a number of resources. During this time, we've taken the following steps to continue ministry in an adapted format:

- + Weekly worship continues via Facebook Live. The video is then uploaded to our YouTube channel and emailed to the congregation.
- + Weekly Wednesday Bible Study will continue in a similar online format.
- + Daily reflections, prayers, and activities for a variety of ages are posted on FB to maintain connection with our congregation.
- + Confirmation instruction continues with emailed lessons, assignments, and activities.
- + Stephen ministers continue to connect with their care receivers via tele-care.
- + Our Food Pantry remains open (deemed "essential" by the state) to serve those in critical need.
- + We will continue to participate in "Pasta and the Word" - our monthly soup kitchen in Wyandanch.
- + Multiple calls have been made to our "at risk" members (shut-in's, facility residents, seniors) to ensure their well-being and assess their need.
- + Effort is underway to call every member of our congregation to "check in" during this time.
- + All efforts are replicated in Spanish for our Latinx members. We continue to pray for all those infected and affected by Covid-19. We give thanks for those on the "front lines" of care and pray for the wisdom and guidance of our world leaders.

We will make it through this! May the God of peace who passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor J

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A Meditation on the Crucifixion

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my god, why have you forsaken me?" When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

Immediately, one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs opened and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake, they were terrified, and said, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27: 45-54)

The centurion was king of the hill. But Golgotha was a small hill. And a hill nobody else wanted. He surveys the three crosses etched against the morning sky, making sure the job has been done right, checking to see if the nails are still holding. He stops to read the plaque above the prisoner in the middle: "JESUS OF NAZARETH. THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Jesus has hung beneath the indictment since nine this morning. His legs are cramping now, his back throbbing, his arms burn, and his tendons are torn from the sockets in his shoulders.

The centurion is intrigued by how this prisoner seems to gather his pain and hold it, keeping it to himself. Why? He wonders. Why doesn't he suffer like the others, cursing and screaming and lashing out?

It's noon now, and the sun should be full flame, burning off the dark shadows. But it wasn't. The centurion uses his eyes to see the sky turn from blue to indigo to violet and finally to black. It isn't an eclipse. Not a dust storm or a cloudbank. More like an enveloping shroud of gloom.

And so the crowd on the hill of Golgotha thins after three hours, the sun refuses to come out. The sin of the world is settling on the Savior's shoulders. If he's to pay its penalty for us, he must bear its consequences including the most severe: The abandonment of God. That is the pain he feels as he cries out, "My god, my god, why have you forsaken me?"



Pastor Flora Hartford

A Meditation on the Crucifixion (Continued)

These three hours are the dregs of the cup given Jesus at Gethsemane. And the fate of humanity comes down to this one final bitter mouthful of suffering that only God's Son can swallow. And swallowing it, he slips into unconsciousness. Then a sponge of wine is poled up to him, stinging and soothing.

For three small words, Jesus raises himself from the nails one last time. He takes a deep breath and says, "It is finished." His head eases back against the wood. His eyes close. He feels the pain leaving him. He sees his Father's outstretched arms. Jesus calls to him: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,"

The ground shutters beneath the centurion's feet. The earth erupts with boulders tumbling and crashing, stone sealed tombs shaken open. And then the earth calms and there is a break in the darkness. Sunlight spills on to the hill of Golgotha. A handful of disheveled soldiers hurry to the centurion's side, their minds racing with questions. He turns his eyes from the cross of Jesus to their frantic eyes. And he gives his explanation: "Surely he was the Son of God."

Prayer: Loving Savior, Thank you for the prophetic picture of your sufferings. Certainly, those words were on your heart as you hung on that God-forsaken cross. Give me a few undisturbed minutes with this picture of you lord, so I may stand silently before you now the way the centurion did so many years ago. Amen

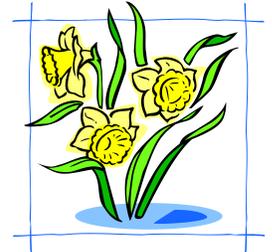
A Blessed Holy Week and Message of Victory in the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Pastor Flora

President's Corner

So, for my article this month I had planned to talk about the phrase "thoughts and prayers" and what it has meant in my life these past 3 months...then all hell broke loose with Covid -19. I have spent this first week off at home trying to come up with something to write about that means anything to anybody in this crazy time.

There are plenty of self-help articles or videos you can look up or come across on the internet right now to help you to cope and de-stress. I confess I did try a quick video on managing stress by doing "body tapping"; it helped for a few minutes, but then I was back to feeling stressed.



President's Corner (Continued)

But what was helpful was the simple act of making phone calls. Not just texting (though I have done plenty of that to check in with friends), but calling and speaking to old friends I have not talked with in a very long time.

I also volunteered to call church members who might need some support or a kind word during this unsettling time. It was refreshing to actually put a face and name together (I did cheat by using the directory) and to learn just a little bit more about each person with whom I spoke.

One lady I called has been a member of Ascension for over 50 years. She credits a friend of hers who encouraged her to "try this Lutheran church in Deer Park" and getting her to attend. Another woman I spoke to reminisced about the challenges of being a Sunday school teacher for a full year to "eight, 8-year-old boys". I replied that I too, cover a number of Sunday school classes and, while I enjoy it, I couldn't imagine keeping a room of antsy boys entertained for an hour.

I found myself asking the members I was talking with if it would be ok to check in with them again in another week or so, just to see how they were doing. I am happy to report that all are doing well, have plenty of family support, and seemed pleased by the fact that someone reached out to call them. This is an unsettling time, and we do need to find ways to keep balanced. Reaching out to others made me feel less stressed. So if you have not already picked up the phone, reach out to someone you haven't talked to in a while. It might make their day, and yours.

Stay well,

Lisa Perreira

Stephen Ministry

An important module in our teaching was called Telecare (The Next Best Thing to Being There). This module taught our Stephen Ministers how to use other methods when face-to-face meetings were not possible. We practiced telecare by phone by having our backs to each other so we couldn't see facial expressions and we learned how to listen in a deeper way. Obviously, face-to-face meetings would provide the best care, but we learned there were options that could provide another level of care.

Little did we know that each one of our Stephen Ministers would have to put this method into practice when our lives changed during the

Stephen Ministry (Continued)

Coronavirus Pandemic. Although, we shouldn't have been surprised because this is a God-centered ministry and God provides answers in all situations. All of our Stephen Ministers felt blessed to have received the training in this module and all the rest of the modules which has allowed them to provide the best care possible.

We all pray and hope that by the time you read this article we are back to face-to-face meetings, but if not we completely trust that God can work through telecare to fulfill His purpose for this ministry of listening and caring.

If you or a someone you know could benefit from meeting with a Stephen Minister, please contact Pastor Flora who is our Referrals Coordinator, or speak with any of our leaders Pastor Justin, Vicki Elfers, Don Hartford, or Pattie Komornik.

Vicki Elfers

WELCA

We are taking a break in our circle meetings until the virus is gone. We hope everyone is safe.

We received a letter from the Women of the ELCA treasurer as follows:

Thank you for the Ascension WELCA unit's donations to the Metropolitan New York Synodical Women of the ELCA for our fiscal year ended January 31, 2020 totaling \$301.50. Your gift strengthens us to live out our mission with life-changing ministries, to be a community of women, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ and committed to supporting one another, affirming our gifts, and promoting healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world. We could not do this important work without your prayers and support.

Thank you.

Grace Schumacher

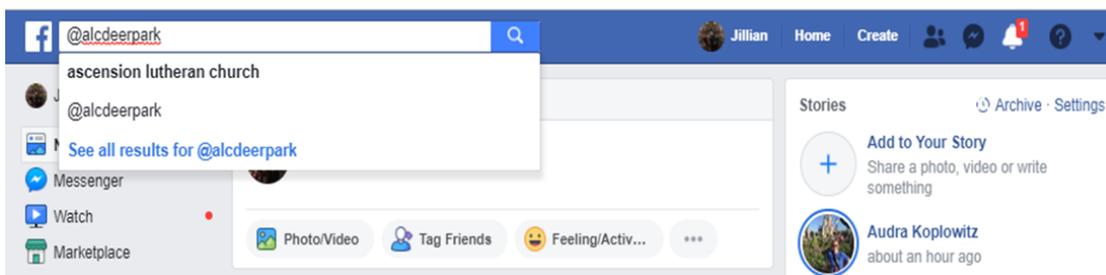
How to Like Ascension Lutheran Church's Facebook Page

Step 1: Login to Facebook by going to www.facebook.com

(If you are not already a member you will need to follow the steps on the website to create an account.)

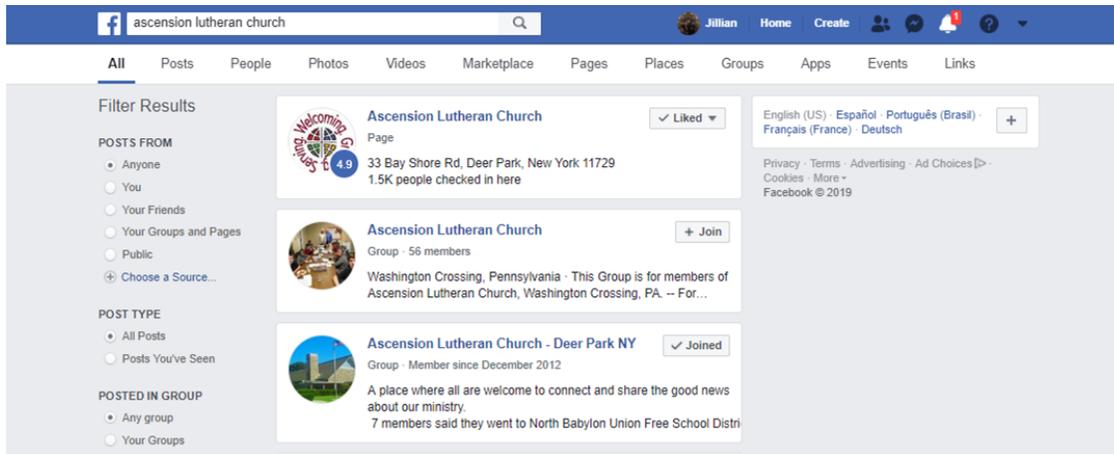


Step 2: type “@alcdeerpark” into the search bar at the top.

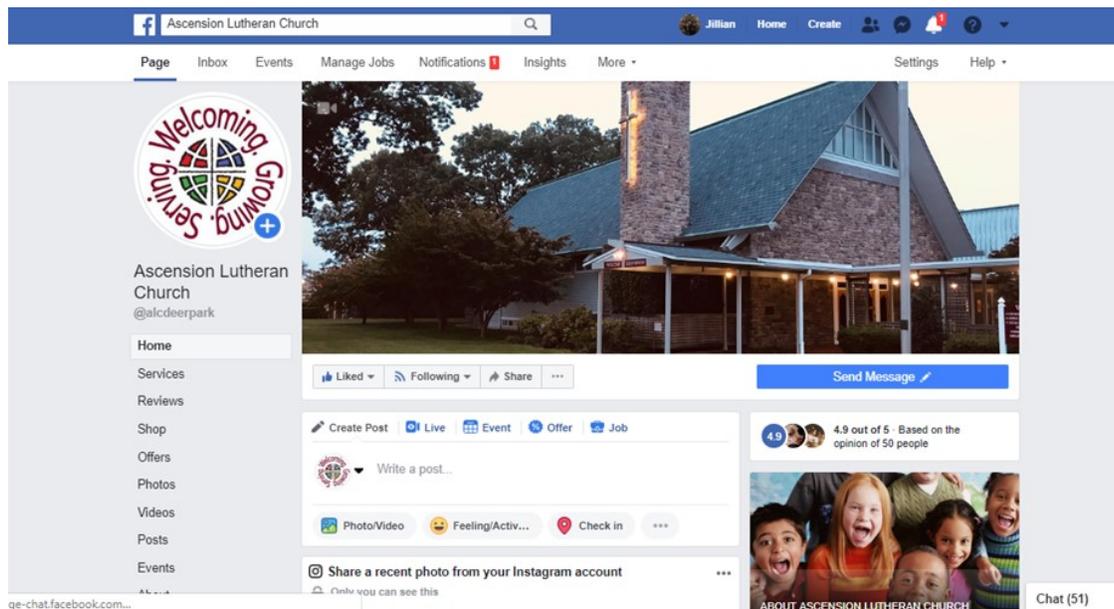


How to Like Ascension Lutheran Church's Facebook Page (Continued)

Step 3: Click on the “Ascension Lutheran Church” page (it should be the one at the top) NOT the Ascension Lutheran Church Group.



Step 4: Click the “Like” button on the left just below the cover photo. This will ensure you will see posts and updates on your newsfeed that the Ascension Lutheran Church page makes.



****We also encourage you to recommend Ascension Lutheran Church to others on Facebook by clicking “Reviews” on the left hand side.**

February 2020 Treasurer's Highlights

As I put together the February Finance report, which doesn't look too bad, my mind is on our current situation. The March report will unfortunately look much different. Our continued support is so vital to our ministries. Our congregation has always responded.

YTD RESULTS	FEBRUARY 2020
INCOME	\$133,246
EXPENSES	\$130,960
<u>NET INCOME</u>	<u>\$2,286</u>

INCOME HIGHLIGHTS for MONTH:

Contribution Income	\$34,034
Preschool	\$24,576
Thrivent Choice Dollars	\$2,588

EXPENSE HIGHLIGHTS:

Fuel	\$2,141
Insurance	\$2,750
Electric	\$843
Preschool (expenses only)	\$16,231
Gas	\$870
Mortgage	\$2,376

Other Items of Note:

February- Lutheran Disaster Fund	\$836
Investment Appreciation (loss) Mutual Funds	(\$6,096)

As always, if you have any questions or would like to discuss our church's finances, please let me know.

I pray daily for my Church family.

Your Treasurer
 Rich Germann
 izzygerman@optonline.net
 516-946-3428

Summer Camp Enrolling Now!

Ascension Day Camp staff is busy planning for an exciting camp season! Ascension Day. Ascension Day Camp is a four-week program from July 6th - July 31st. Children who attend Ascension Day Camp receive a balance of religious instruction, arts & crafts, music, dance, science instruction, and outdoor dry and water games as well as other special events. Ascension Day Camp is now accepting enrollment. Additional information as well as registration forms can be found on ascensionlutheran.org.

Jillian Manzo



Spiritual Direction

Our world is ever-changing. New technology being designed, weather patterns that produce fierce storms, and many other life changes that make it hard for us to stay in our center, with God. The COVID-19 virus has turned our lives upside down, and there were days and still are days when we are not sure if we are living real life or if we are part of the latest Sci-fi movie. We have tuned into “church” through Facebook and YouTube and have tried to keep up with Bible Studies on What’s App. I am sure there have been days over the last month where we don’t know what’s up and what is down.

The Good News is that God has been the constant through it all. In the physical and the emotional storms of our lives God has been there. In health and in sickness, God has been there. In times of plenty and in times of want, God has been there. When life is happy and you are surrounded by family and friends and when life seems lonely and you don’t know which way to turn, God has been there. For many people it is easy to feel God when everything is sunshine and roses, but on the rainy, bleak days it is hard to feel God’s presence.

I urge all of us to pray. To pray to see God’s graces all around us and to pray to feel God’s love through every fiber of our being. Praying to see and feel God in a new way is what will get us through those difficult days. But for many people it’s hard to know where to begin or how to pray to God for the graces we need. That is where Spiritual Direction comes in. If you have ever felt like there was more that God wants you to see or if you have ever felt like God wants you to do more, I would encourage you to seek out a Spiritual Director. A Spiritual Director is trained in listening to your story and assisting you to seek out God’s graces for you.

If any part of this article has touched your heart in some way, please feel free to call me (631-827-4379) or email me (velfers@optonline.net) and we can discuss the possibility of Spiritual Direction.

Vicki Elfers

Knitting/Crochet Group

Hats off to the knitting group and a **big thank you** to them. We distributed 620 hats to the groups below:

Lutheran Social Services--Hicksville	100 hats
Grace Baptist Church	50 hats
NYC Homeless	75 hats
St Daniels, Sinking Spring, Pa.	60 hats
Rodham Adult Home--Brentwood	50 hats
Nurse Susan/LI Homeless	25 hats
Pasta + Word	100 hats
Ascension Friday Homeless	50 hats
Westside Food Pantry, Saylorburg, Pa,	110 hats

There were 620 warmer heads because of the talent and work of these ladies. Thank You!

Anita Quynn

Ten Proven Ways to Kill Your Church

Rev. Dr. John H. Krahn

- 1) **Attend only when you absolutely feel like it.**
- 2) **When you do attend, find fault with something.**
- 3) **Do not give generously to the Lord's work.**
- 4) **Only make your regular weekly offering on the Sundays you actually attend.**
- 5) **Volunteer for nothing.**
- 6) **Do not pray daily for God to bless your church and its ministry.**
- 7) **Do not read your bible regularly and never attend a church bible study.**
- 8) **If you do not like something the pastor or the church leaders are doing, do not tell them, but tell everyone else of your displeasure.**
- 9) **Never invite an unchurched person to your church.**
- 10) **Never ask the Lord, "What do you want me to do as a member of my church?"**

Dr. Krahn is the author of the bestselling book, *From Surviving to Thriving—A Practical Guide to Revitalize Your Church*. It is available from CSS Publishing Company, Barnes and Noble, and Amazon.

THE VOICE

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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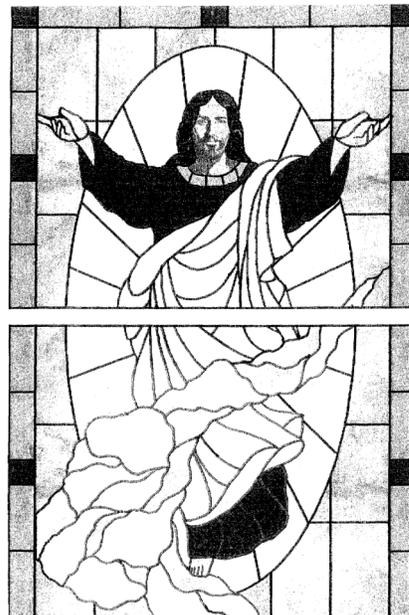
Services

Wednesdays: 6:00 pm
Sundays: 9:00 am & 10:30 am

Misa Services

Sundays: 11:45 am

Justin Lathrop, Pastor
Flora Hartford, Associate Pastor
Patty Avila, Pastor



We're on the web!
www.ascensionlutheran.org

Ascension Lutheran Church
33 Bay Shore Road
Deer Park, New York 11729

Address Service Requested

